

Toasting the corporate beer pig

Alexander Keith's 202nd birthday extravaganza

BY JOHN CULLEN AND
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Some red-nosed lush is on the stage dressed as Alexander Keith. He raises his glass and asks the audience to recite an oath of allegiance to his beer. The drunken hoard follows him through the oath like sheep, re-affirming what everyone already knows, "those who like it like it a lot". And those who like it enough drank some of it for free at Alexander's 202nd birthday party.

"Who's that guy on the stage," Andrew shouted, more than a little annoyed.

"That's an Alexander Keith impersonator," I replied.

"What a rip-off," Andrew whined. "I paid ten bucks for this ticket. I'd rather see his exhumed body than some imposter."

"Settle down Andrew. There's no way they were gonna' dig him up, and besides, you didn't even pay for the ticket."

Andrew looked slightly baffled. "I didn't?"

"No, they sent them to us and every other media outlet that might be able to help them sell beer," I said, becoming bored with his lack of memory. Andrew pondered this for a moment. And, with a few beers under his belt, you could almost see the wheels moving. He was on the threshold of something profound. I waited with feigned anticipation.

"John, this is very serious," he said with furrowed brow. "You know what they're trying to do, don't you? They're trying to slip their corporate message in our unsuspecting cerebrums."

My previous disinterest quickly turned to worry. Andrew was slowly changing into his conspiracy-theorist clothes. I had seen him in this delusional state many times before. There were 800 potential victims at the party that night; none of them with the capacity to handle Andrew's paranoia. I braced for the worst.

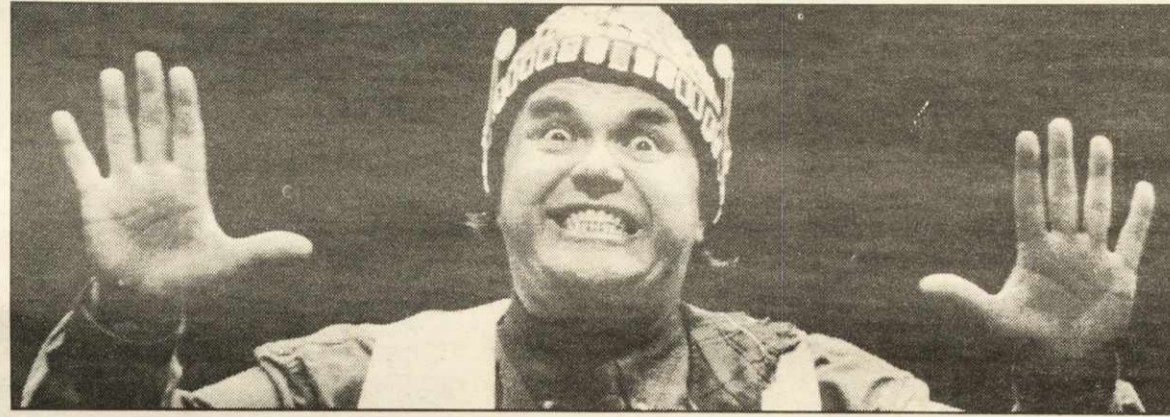
"They're using us as test animals for market research," said Andrew seriously. "Sure they have some corny 'heritage' ads on TV to make us feel at ease, but they're employing some pretty modern tactics of brain-washing. Filthy corporate pigs, I don't want your two free beers, I have to stay sharp gotta' keep the edge...expose...dirty agenda."

And with that, Andrew ripped up his tickets, and tossed them on the floor. I scrambled to pick them up and went in search of scotch tape.

Throughout the evening Andrew stalked around the room taking notes on happenings he felt were suspicious. When he found

something juicy, he would return to continue his rant.

"This is preposterous," he shouted in my ear. "They've got these people dressed in 18th century costumes wandering around the room, and the women all have



Crazyman says: "A mind is a terrible thing to use."

blank looks on their faces; like they're robots. John, I must save them...I think they've already been converted."

"Yeah great Andy," I replied. "And while you're saving them, could you swing by the bar and get me a beer?" I handed him the scotch-taped tickets, and he was on his way.

A long time had passed since I'd seen Andrew. Truthfully, I didn't mind. I wasn't there to start riots or piss off the corporate machine. I wanted to schmooze, network and belong. Everyone was doing it, and people like Andrew stick out like an inflamed hemorrhoid on the ass of society.

Some tall guy with a red shirt and glasses tried to convince me that he was the editor of *The Coast*. I tried to talk shop with him, but he was more interested in my dating history, leading me to believe that he knew nothing about newspapers. He was an imposter like Alexander Keith.

Looking around for an escape from the prying questions, I noticed a commotion at the bar. It was Andrew. I ran over immediately.

"What do you mean I can't buy beer here," Andrew was yelling, "this is the bloody bar isn't it?"

"Sir, you have to buy tickets at the counter over there, and then come back and give me the ticket. I've told you several times," said the nervous bartender.

"I know what you said," Andrew screeched. "I just wanna' know why. I bet you never thought to ask why. They've got their hooks in you too, don't they?" The bartender was looking scared and Andrew showed no signs of letting up.

"Even though they've got you brain-washed, they still won't let you handle the money. The money, that's what it's all about. That's what they want, and they're afraid

to let you get a taste of it. How much is the Beer Pig paying you for this stint?"

"Minimum wage plus tips, sir," said the bartender.

"Aha-hah," said Andrew with an air of satisfaction. "No wonder they

"Are you trying to say that Belgians are designing our beer labels?" I asked innocently.

"Exactly," said Andrew.

"Why don't you go tell Alexander-the-imposter about your little idea." I said, trying to get rid of him.

shouted Andrew as he ran. "There is no way I'm gonna' swear allegiance to your pissy ale."

As he prepared to lunge at the bloated-brewmaster, he was intercepted by two 76th Highlanders in full formal dress.

Andrew kicked, screamed and blubbered a little as the Highlanders dragged him from the banquet hall.

"How much are they paying...dear God, put that bagpipe down...don't you know...alienation...workers...dirty work...how much pay? No...ouch...hey, no underwear."

I sauntered towards them and pleaded for leniency, and they asked me if I knew how to calm him down. The thought of babysitting Andrew for the rest of the evening was unappealing.

"Uhhh...let him rot," I decided. "I'm really starting to enjoy this Keith's stuff, and these are my kind of people."

Story may not necessarily be true

Without a word, Andrew bolted towards the doorway where Alexander was greeting the guests.

"I've figured you out, Beer Pig,"

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