

driven by the same instincts he always has been. "If I'm interested in an idea, whether it's brewing a beer with Rick Astley, opening a ramen restaurant in Copenhagen or opening a little bar in the Faroe Islands, we make it happen, even if it's not a cash cow. I'm easily bored, so I'm always challenging myself to keep it interesting."

A big part of Mikkeller's appeal is bound up with its creation story. In the mid-2000s, Bjergso was a science teacher in Copenhagen who, fed up of lagers that all tasted the same, started dabbling with brewing in his kitchen at home. Before long, his brews, created with a journalist friend, Kristian Keller, started winning national homebrewing competitions, and the pair decided to put their names together and start a business.

Success came fast, in late 2006, with a beer called Beer Geek Breakfast, an oatmeal stout made with coffee and chocolate that gave notes of burnt toast. "At a time when most brewers were playing things safe, it sent the beer world crazy," says Bjergso. It was named stout of the year by the influential Rate-

beer.com website, and still has a 100 per cent rating on the site. "Early on, we were very driven by breaking all the rules," says Bjergso.

The biggest rule they broke is the one that says brewers should have a brewery. Because they couldn't afford their own, they hired existing breweries to make their recipes, which were coming thick and fast. "It meant we could concentrate on designing recipes and labels, which we love doing, and leave the rest to the experts," says Bjergso. The concept of "gypsy" brewing — also known as "cuckoo" or "phantom" brewing — was born, something that is now standard practice for thousands of brewers across the world.

Keller quit the company in 2007 to concentrate on journalism but Bjergso was just getting started. While a typical craft brewer might come up with 20 new recipes a year, Mikkeller will produce closer to 200, from Belgian Lambics to unfermented sour beers and ales brewed in bourbon barrels. Today, there

are more than 1,680 Mikkeller creations listed on Ratebeer.com, many with esoteric ingredients like Vietnamese Kopi Luwak coffee or chipotle chilli. The 8m litres sold globally each year are produced at breweries in Belgium, Norway, Denmark, the US and UK, then exported to its outlets worldwide.

In terms of volume, Mikkeller's output is modest compared to a brewery like Sierra Nevada, which produces 147m litres a year. But while Sierra Nevada pretty much just does beer, Mikkeller has become a very different beast. Its first bar in Copenhagen's Vesterbrogade district was an instant success in 2010 (the first year that Noma was voted the world's best restaurant, when Brand Denmark was the height of cool). Three years later, the company opened its first foreign bar, in San Francisco, in partnership with Bay Area bar owner Chuck Stilphen. In early 2014, Mikkeller opened its first Bangkok bar (there are now four) with Jakob Morkenborg Rasmussen, a Dane who had started a craft beer import business. As a model, it was almost as neat as gypsy brewing — Mikkeller supplies the beer while local partners run the bars.

With revenues of €26.8m in 2017, it can no longer really claim to be a plucky outsider brand, and in 2016 it sold an undisclosed stake to US private equity company Orkila Capital. Like any indie band that has gone on to play stadium tours, Mikkeller's growth has drawn detractors, most prominently Jeppe Jarrit-Bjergso, Mikkeller's twin. While the brothers had a symbiotic relationship in the early days — Jeppe ran a craft beer shop and would stock and export



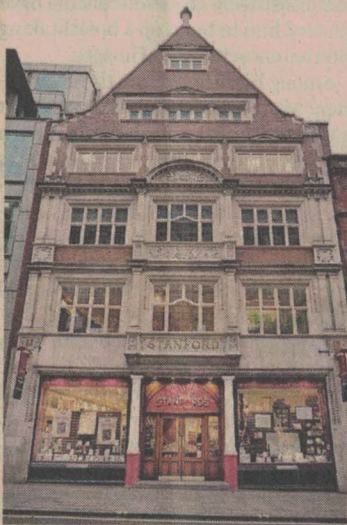
Bjergso with the singer Rick Astley (left), his partner in a new Mikkeller bar in Shoreditch, east London

Short cuts

London Stanfords, the venerable travel bookshop which claims to stock the world's largest collection of maps, is to leave its premises on Long Acre after 117 years.

The company was founded in 1853 and 20 years later expanded to set up print works at 12-14 Long Acre, in Covent Garden. It continued to grow, winning a warrant as cartographer to Queen Victoria, then in 1901 the Long Acre site was renovated to become a shop. Early customers included Florence Nightingale, Ernest Shackleton and Captain Robert Scott and the shop has remained popular with expedition planners ever since. "It is a place of inspiration as well as a source of information," says the explorer Benedict Allen.

After providing charts for Amy



Johnson's solo flight to Australia, a miniature atlas for Queen Mary's doll's house at Windsor — and a map of Dartmoor for Dr Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* — the store was hit by an incendiary bomb in 1941. It survived only because the tight stacks of thousands of Ordnance Survey maps on the upper floors stopped the spread of the flames (they were later sold with charred edges).

In January, the company is due to move to new premises a few hundred metres away on Mercer Walk, where it will have more warehouse space for its growing online business. The existing, Grade II-listed shop was acquired by Picton Property Income in 2010; Picton is now in discussions with other potential tenants.

Tom Robbins

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