

Neltner

SMALL BATCH

WAYLON JENNINGS THE OTHER LIVE
 WAYLON JENNINGS RIGHT FOR THE TIME
 JESSIE COLTER LIVE FROM CAIN'S BALLROOM
 HANK WILLIAMS III TAKE AS NEEDED FOR PAIN
 SHOOTER JENNINGS the other live
 TWIGGY RAMIREZ SHOOTER JENNINGS YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Soul, Spirit, Suds and Song

Neltner Small Batch delves deep to define the essence of meaningful brands.

Make your way through the rolling hills of Camp Springs, Kentucky, and it might surprise you that such an idyllic setting can be found just minutes from downtown Cincinnati. Stands of trees alternate with open fields where the sun sets morning mist aglow.

As century-old farmhouses pass on both sides, you unknowingly slip right by the Neltner Small Batch studio—no signs, no shiny facade, no gilded accolades shouting “look at me.” Not that they haven’t earned a few, but they’re simply the byproducts of good work, not the motivation for it.

The shop is creative ground zero for Keith Neltner. Designer, craftsman and dynamo. Friend, husband and father.

Values nurtured by an upbringing of hands-on hard work mesh perfectly with artistic sensibilities sharpened in what many argue is the center of the consumer-marketing universe.

Without fail, his roots have kept him grounded. Nothing drowns out a cacophony of industry buzzwords like the crack of an ax splitting a log. It’s an honest noise. A motion of certainty with a measure of accomplishment. This sincerity defines Neltner Small Batch, and the artisanal focus that fuels it.

The work is molded by a partnership of people equally driven and dedicated to their particular craft. Many creatives are drawn to the energy of NSB, but the fortunate few who are invited to join a project have a tangible authenticity about them—they prefer swinging an ax to slinging the bull.

Assembling such a tight and highly talented creative team has given NSB an incomparable range of branding, storytelling and packaging capabilities. Prospective clients who come knocking on NSB’s door (if they can find the shop) encounter a group that shares the passion to identify, draw out and hone the soul of their brand.



Boone County Distilling Company

“But would you want to have a drink with him?”

That’s a question sometimes asked when one is trying to benchmark a person’s character. Imagining that Boone County Distilling Company could be thusly pressed in regard to Neltner Small Batch, the answer would doubtless be a resounding, “Hell, yes!”

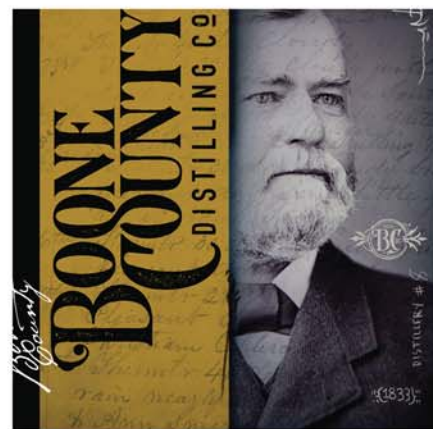
In need of an identity for their newly resurrected distillery, Kentucky’s Boone County Distilling Company reached out to NSB for their unique insight. It’s often a lack of content that makes a brand’s story difficult to tell, which made Boone County unusual: There was so much depth to their history and so many colorful characters that the challenge became where to start and how much to share.

Finding something meaningful at the core of a brand—its soul—is essential, as everything that defines the brand’s character builds out from that point. The original Boone County Distilling Company began to reveal itself to NSB through disparate news stories and article remnants amassed from the Internet, libraries and cemetery visits, and tours of the quiet streets of Petersburg, Kentucky.

“To say we wrote the story—it’s more like we dug it up and breathed life into its bones again” explained Neltner.

“Sitting with the Lewis Loder diaries and peeling through those pages that he wrote under a lamplight from 1857-1904 was the heart to bring these fabled tales forward. His day-to-day telling of events really started to paint the picture of this river town that was centered around this incredible distilling industry that has all but faded away into the Ohio River mist.”

To gain the fullest understanding and appreciation of the brand, NSB compiled and crafted the entire story, ultimately focusing on the year the distillery was founded by William Snyder. And so, “Eighteen 33” proudly graced the first bourbon bottled in Boone County since the distillery shuttered in the early 1900’s under the weight of the Whiskey Trust.



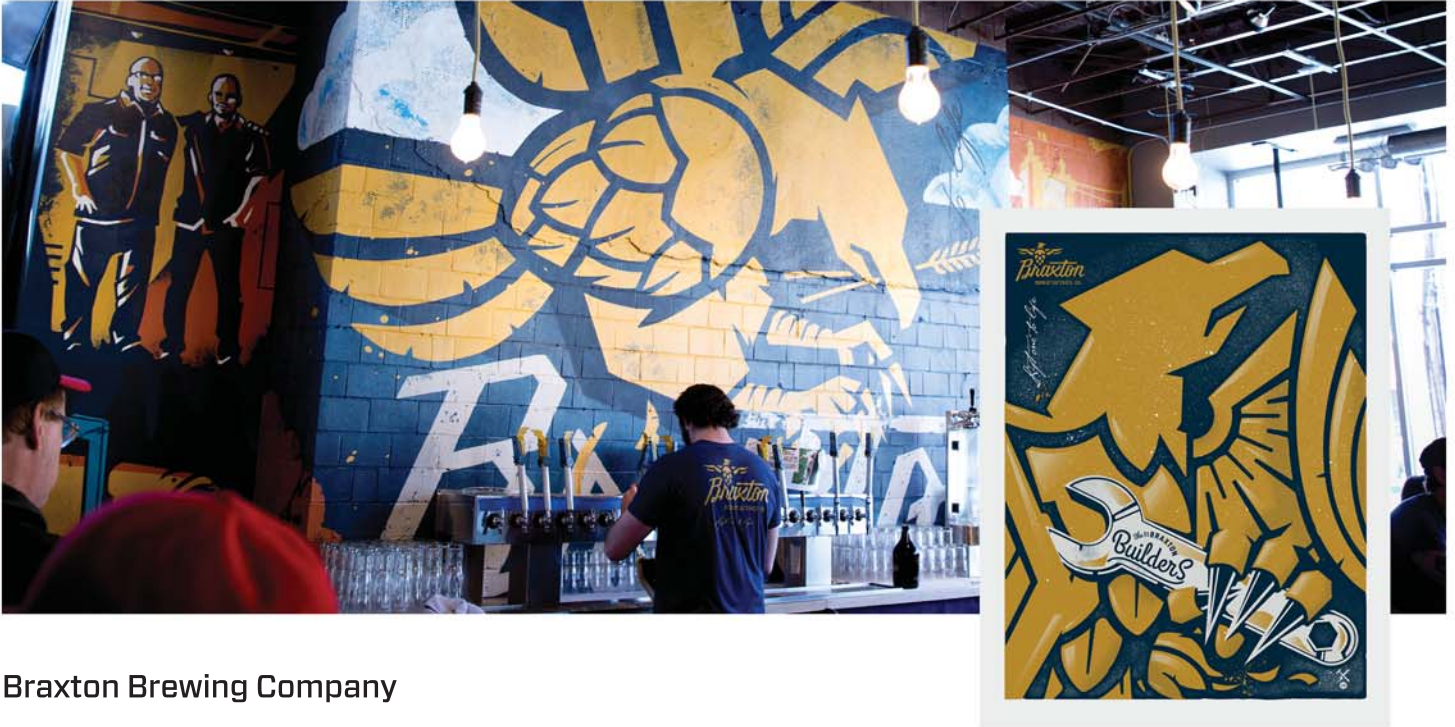
The most conspicuous brand element naturally became the most important: the bottle. For NSB, the design of the bottle was critical. The form was a strategic brand choice inspired by pre-prohibition bottles that had a flask-like quality. NSB worked with Bruni Glass in Italy, providing sketches and photos, and even an amber bottle that Neltner himself pulled from the Kentucky earth.



The final bottle structure is both masculine and utilitarian, and has a great hand feel that displays the custom labels beautifully. “We wanted the design to feel new, but also feel like something 150 years old that you just discovered sitting on a shelf,” said Neltner. The labels, printed in the Northern Kentucky river town of Newport, are hand-applied and utilize special printing techniques that give the finished Eighteen 33 product a distinct strength and shelf presence.

The Eighteen 33 story was also brought to life in the retail space in Boone County, as well as online, where a timeline features the multitude of characters that played a part in the early days of distilling—a chapter of American history that is once again being told.





Braxton Brewing Company

The beer started flowing in the garage on Saturdays when Evan Rouse was only 16—still too young to enjoy the fruits of his own labor (wink). Nevertheless, he became quite good at the craft, and his passion for home brewing evolved into a family business. In 2013, Neltner Small Batch sat down with the Rouses in their Union, Kentucky, kitchen to map out what would become the Braxton Brewing Company.

In March of 2015, Braxton's beautiful "tap room of the future" opened to more than 3,000 thirsty followers and introduced the brand that NSB helped build. The overall design language traces its roots to the garage where the brewing started. NSB's most prevalent visual, the oversized hop eagle mural, was installed as the centerpiece of the massive concrete block bar. The eagle is reminiscent of strong American iconography, classic in design yet purposefully contemporized.

NSB tapped into the depth of the brand to extend its attributes across platforms, and to everything from packaging to signage to apparel. They even created a short film about Braxton that can be seen at www.borninthegarage.com. Through storytelling, digital media and traditional marketing, NSB has created for Braxton a brand that leaves a strong and lasting impact in the craft beer community, even in the midst of the industry's boom and an already crowded market.



In Perfect Harmony

There is nothing but certitude in Keith Neltner's explanation of how the visual and audial arts are closely intertwined. Music evokes imagery more vivid than anything bound by reality; design conjures melodies composed nowhere in the universe but one's own imagination.

Throughout Neltner's life, art and music have always been strongly connected, but in 1999, these two obsessions joined in earnest. A fortuitous meeting with Hank Williams III at one of his concerts led to the creation of Neltner's first gig poster and launched a decade-long relationship with "III" that unleashed a unique visual style rock historian Paul Grushkin coined as "rural urban."

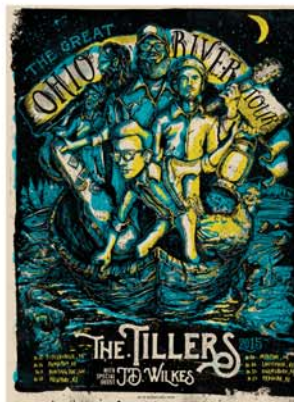
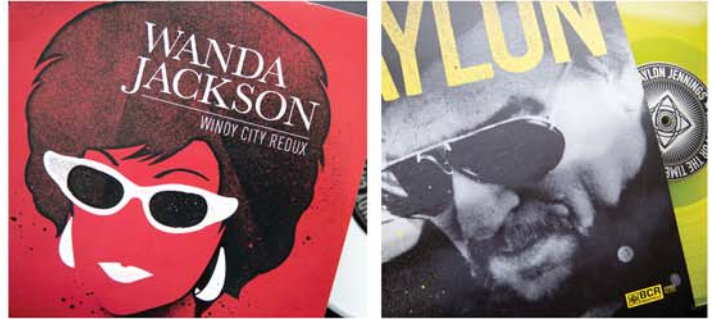
Just as importantly, that moment at the Vogue in Indianapolis set Neltner on a course that would make him an influential member of the music art scene. His work spread out further and further from Camp Springs, Kentucky. Posters, T-shirts and CD liners would weave his name through seedy rock clubs, smoky bars and tour bus conversations. His art started to take hold in places far from home, yet never left its true roots.

Today, one of Neltner's most cherished music relationships is as Shooter Jennings' "in-house" artist. The Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter initially approached Neltner about working together, and though they often collaborate remotely, Jennings says the two have forged an immutable bond:

"I love that he has a really dark sensibility about his art. I feel lucky to consider him a partner and a friend."

The intense allure of music has elevated it to a key area of interest at Neltner Small Batch. It was a logical step, because as with a brand, the spirit and strength of music lie in drawing an audience and telling them a meaningful story. So it is that music is not only the focus of NSB projects, but also bleeds backwards to shape other brand work in a fruitful crossing over between media.

NSB realizes how pushing such parameters can make brands recognizable and generate a powerful emotional response. To ultimately succeed, though, a brand must be able to sustain this appeal over time. It has to maintain that connection with its audience—with the people. And it's this idea of interdependence that keeps Neltner in tune with the musical aspirations of Small Batch.



Authentic Brand Craftsmanship

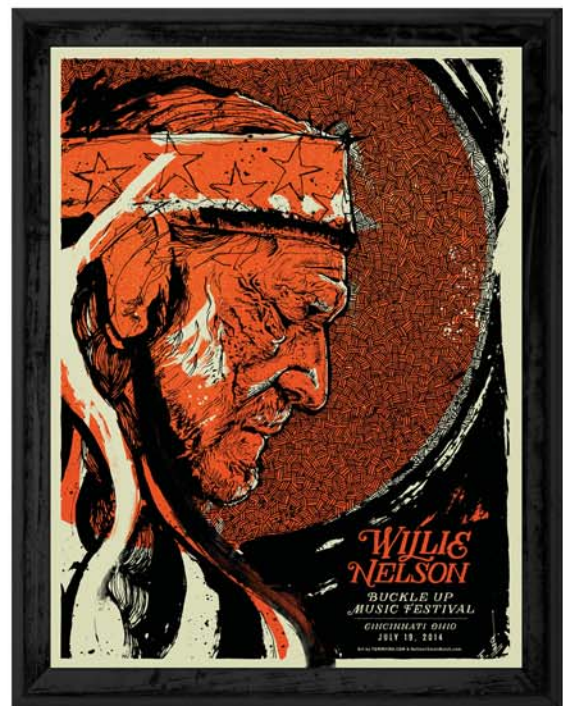
Standing with Keith Neltner outside his studio, just a stone's throw away is the refurbished farmhouse where his family waits for him to finish working—some playtime with dad is expected before dinner.

The farmhouse, the studio, the fencing, the landscape—everything here has been built, rebuilt or in some way altered by Neltner's hands. If it had a history before he touched it, he has contributed the next chapter. And with each thing he fashions anew, a different part of his own story is told.

For Neltner, there is no dissonance between what can be done with a hammer and what can be done with an idea. He is invested equally in every

endeavor. Which is why terms such as “soul” and “storytelling” aren't simply thrown around as self-promotional rhetoric—these are weighty words used sparingly for meaningful brands.

Bourbon, beer, music... NSB is drawn to brands that have something real to share, something unique that connects with people. Uncovering that quality and helping it shine brilliantly for a brand is what Neltner Small Batch is all about.



Shooter Jennings
and Keith on the set
of *The Other Life*.



Such an impression was clearly made on the Gnarly Gnome, a well-known craft beer blogger who reviews brews in Braxton's home range: "I look at this and can instantly imagine grabbing a beer from the fridge in the garage for my dad as he's tucked away under a car changing the oil. I can see this can being passed around a living room on a Sunday afternoon during a football game 25 years ago. Somehow it's simultaneously modern and retro."

What could there be about a beer can that stirs this kind of sincere consideration? It's the genuine passion that radiates undeniably from an authentically crafted brand that tells the story of an authentically crafted beer. It's the brand's soul.

