

# HALFWHEEL



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## AWARDS, SELECTED

### 2014 AWARDS: PACKAGING TOP 10

By Charlie Minato [@charminato](#) · On January 6, 2015



As we've done for the past few years, it's the end of another year and time to reevaluate the best of what the cigar industry delivered in the form of packaging from the past year. It was a good year for the boxes and bands that cigars come in, good enough for the staff to nominate nearly 40 different entries. That list was slimmed down to 18, of which the top 10 are below.



#### 10. JOEL SHERMAN 75TH CELEBRATION

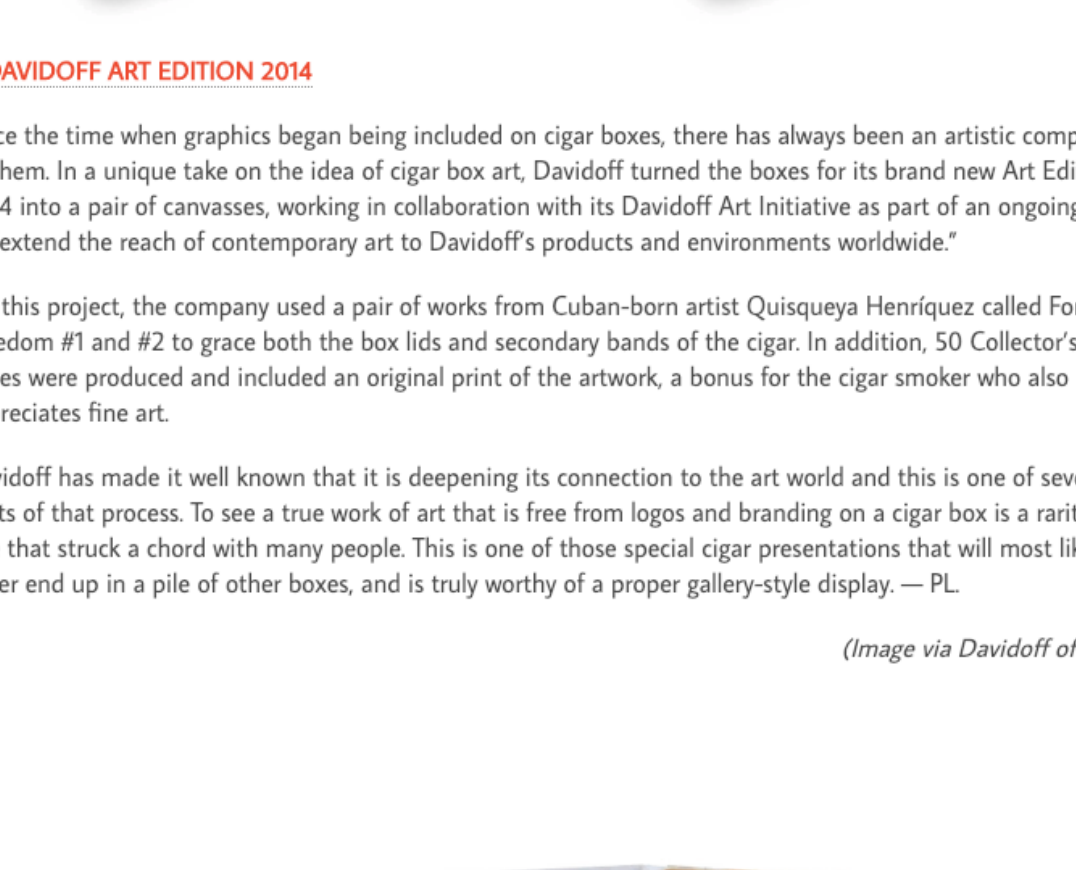
Created in commemoration of CEO Joel Sherman's 75th birthday, the packaging for the Joel Sherman 75th Celebration takes inspiration from Sherman's history as a musician, with a crest on the front of the box that was inspired by a bass drum he played when he was younger. In addition, each box contains a note from Sherman himself explaining his love of cigars and his history in the family's business.

The overall package is quite striking when first viewed, and boasts a unique combination of an unusual sized cigar, understated but memorable bands and gorgeous box exterior with complimentary colors of black, red and white. — Brooks Whittington.



#### 9. ZINO PLATINUM MAKE OF TEXAS COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Zino Platinum has again commissioned some impressive art, this time from Houston, Texas-based artist GONZO247 for their Make of Texas line. With four different pieces for the boxes, each box fits together to make a larger canvas. Each are impressive on their own and work as an individual piece, but fitting together the overall artwork is fantastic. From the box artwork all the way down to the bands the release looks great and deserves a spot in the top 10. — Brian Burt.



#### 8. AVO 88

The team behind the AVO brand has never been shy about reminding consumers of the fact that its namesake comes from a rich musical background, particularly when it comes to the presentation of its annual limited edition. While we've seen **CDs included and song titles printed on bands, sheet music and a flash drive** as well as a cigar designed to **look like a trumpet**, this year seemed to bring a certain level of serendipity to the release that was captured and presented beautifully. Avo Uvezian made his name playing the piano and he turned 88 in 2014. With a piano having 88 keys, the basis of the Limited Edition 2014 was born.

The cigar itself received a secondary band with a piano keyboard, but where the packaging really shined was the boxes and retail display. The boxes themselves received a black, high-gloss piano finish with the logo for this year's release prominently featured, but it was a pair of subtle details that helped to sell the presentation: the first was to have the lid open similar to the way a piano keyboard a point that was highlighted by the retail presentation, which placed the cigars in a piano exactly where the keyboard would be. The second was to package 16 cigars to a box in two rows of eight, or 8+8, once again reconnecting the release to the 88 name. Having the stars align the way they did for the AVO 88 this year requires handling it with near perfect execution while making sure it stays true to the core brand, something this year's release did exceptionally well. — Patrick Lagreid.



#### 7. DAVIDOFF ART EDITION 2014

Since the time when graphics began being included on cigar boxes, there has always been an artistic component to them. In a unique take on the idea of cigar box art, Davidoff turned the boxes for its brand new Art Edition 2014 into a pair of canvases, working in collaboration with its Davidoff Art Initiative as part of an ongoing project to "extend the reach of contemporary art to Davidoff's products and environments worldwide."

For this project, the company used a pair of works from Cuban-born artist Quisqueya Henríquez called Forms of Freedom #1 and #2 to grace both the box lids and secondary bands of the cigar. In addition, 50 Collector's Edition boxes were produced and included an original print of the artwork, a bonus for the cigar smoker who also appreciates fine art.

Davidoff has made it well known that it is deepening its connection to the art world and this is one of several fruits of that process. To see a true work of art that is free from logos and branding on a cigar box is a rarity, and one that struck a chord with many people. This is one of those special cigar presentations that will most likely never end up in a pile of other boxes, and is truly worthy of a proper gallery-style display. — PL

(Image via Davidoff of Geneva)



#### 6. LA COLMENA UNICO ESPECIAL

Warped Cigars return to the cigar business has been one of many things, perhaps most notably, packaging. Kyle Gellis has put out both cigars and accessories that come in pretty boxes and none exemplifies this more than the La Colmena Unico Especial, a 5 x 48 belicoso that was offered solely to retailers who attended the trade show. While it features the same beehive-themed band—*la colmena* translates into the hive—the packaging is completely different. The Unico Especial comes in a small can of 10 cigars that is packaged in a display box.

It should be noted that we heard from retailers that the can itself might have caused damage to the unique pigtail closed feet, our can managed to have a few still intact. While the nature of the can probably didn't prevent the tails very well, it's hard to say if any box would have done it particularly well. As for the packaging itself, it's another example of some great new school approaches by a young company. — CM.



#### 5. DAVIDOFF ORO BLANCO

As I said in my review of the Davidoff Oro Blanco, the packaging is really impressive in pictures, but it's quite different in person. Slowly, one by one, the rest of my colleagues encountered the coffin of Davidoff Oro Blanco in person. One quipped about "how this wasn't the top place on the packaging list" while the others simply picked up the coffin and felt the weight.

Oro Blanco is a lot of things, a very good and unique cigar, but its packaging is just another example of how well Davidoff is doing things these days. It looks great in pictures, but you can't really understand it until you pick it up. — CM.



#### 4. VIAJE ZOMBIE ANTIDOTE

Viaje has had a lot of fun with its post-apocalyptic themes, especially with the Zombie line. This year's new twist was the Zombie Antidote, which was packaged in a very medicinal looking jar, complete with a blood splattered label that had all the necessary "drug facts" on it. Even the cigars themselves were perfect shapes to mimic a syringe, which is just another small detail that put this release's packaging over the top. — BB.

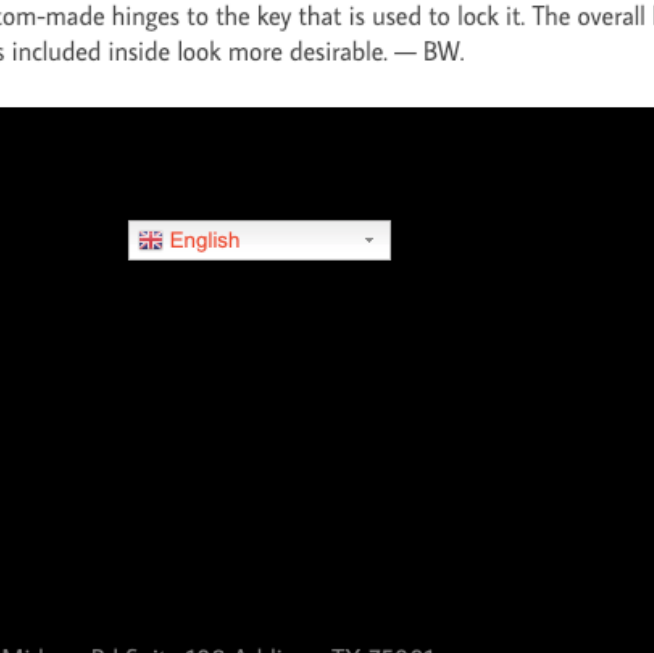
(Image via Atlantic Cigar Co.)



#### 3. LAS CALAVERAS EDICIÓN LIMITADA 2014

Crowned Heads is no stranger to well thought-out packaging or theme-released cigars and yet, Las Calaveras stands out. The cigar itself did well and the packaging is arguably the company's best. It's a relatively simple box with a great color palette to honor Día de Muertos, a Mexican holiday honoring the day of the dead.

Everything is simple with clean lines and a new, yet classic look that contrasts great against the Ecuadorian habano oscuro wrapper. There are subtle touches as well, a small crown on the top of the band, an upside down heart in the skull. — CM.



#### 2. DAVIDOFF LIMITED EDITION 2015 YEAR OF THE SHEEP

Half of the 10 entries on the list come from Davidoff of Geneva and the flashiest of the company's entrants is the Davidoff Limited Edition 2015 Year of the Sheep. It's a high-gloss wood box with a striking red top and a stylized logo that looks more ram-like than sheep. While there are times that the changes made to Davidoff's signature white label look have appeared awkward, the red and gold contrasts well against the white and the dark browns of the tobacco and wood.

This might seem odd given that the Davidoff Year of the Horse won **last year's packaging award**, but the Year of the Sheep packaging is arguably even better. At the very least, this is even further *outside the box*. The only problem for Davidoff and its Limited Edition series is *how do you top this next year?*



#### 1. PADRÓN 50TH ANNIVERSARY THE HAMMER

If there is one packaging option that was the talk of the 2014 IPCPR Convention & Trade Show, it was the Padrón 50th Anniversary humidor, produced to commemorate the Nicaraguan cigar company's 50th year in business.

The humidor itself was designed by Nelson Alfonso, who is the founder of the Atabej, Bandolero and Byron brands and who has also worked as a packaging designer for Habanos S.A. Constructed by Golden Age, each individually numbered humidor holds 50 6 1/2 x 50 cigars and includes a name plate as well as a hygrometer and a temperature gauge.

Viewing the humidor in person, it is obvious that no detail is left to chance, and no expense was spared in the production, from the custom-made hinges to the key that is used to lock it. The overall look is a sight to behold, and only makes the cigars included inside look more desirable. — BW.

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