

Across the Green Line

It was a popular product say about 100 years ago—they called it “Mother’s Helper” among other things. A judiciously administered dose quieted the kids down so you could sleep or go about your business. Great for mom, but did she know she was giving the kids a spoonful of opium?

The guys at Southern Diversified pose a similar question about today’s labels. Does the back of the label support what’s on the front? Some products may say “Green” on the front, but the ingredients on the back are a far different color, says Vic Barnhill, the company’s technical support manager. Know what you’re selling—if you don’t, your customers may call you on it.

These guys are serious about it. Yea, we know Mythic Paint sponsors the Green column, so bear with us. We’re not doing a hard sell here. TPD’s done with the hard sell stories and the puff profiles because we hate writing them and you hate reading them.

Southern Diversified was born out of Mississippi State University in Hattiesburg; it was originally a college-funded paint research project. The initial labels looked more academic than consumer oriented and touted its relationship with Southern Miss. There’s a polymer science research center in Hattiesburg, so the connection isn’t as strange as all that.

But what customer wants to buy someone’s college research project and put it on her walls? Unless her own kid researched it, anyway.



editor
JERRY RABUSHKA

Mythic is qualified to be an “everyday” paint, they say. A first line. Not to sell as Green but to sell as paint. The price is in line with your usual premium paint, and Vic adds, not being a legacy line helps your marketing approach. If you sell a brand that’s nothing but safe and has only been safe, you don’t have to answer the questions of “what have you been selling me before” or “what’s in your *other* paint?”

Sometimes we forget about the painters. They’re more than just a body attached to an applicator. Just like the homeowner, a painter breathes in whatever’s in the air around him. It’s to his own benefit, as well as the homeowner’s, to paint with something good for his environment. We all share the same world, but we don’t share the same lungs. So if you paint yours up, your career is... well... choked off. It’s a good reason, whatever your brand, to offer your customers and contractors a safer alternative. Saving a few bucks a gallon won’t matter if you can’t breathe. Well ok, go spend the money on cigarettes, then maybe it won’t matter.

Got dogs? Cats? Birds? Birds are pretty delicate, and probably prefer paint with no toxins. Canary in a coal



Paint Out of the Corner

Paint that’s safe shouldn’t be sold out of a far corner in the store, say the folks at Southern Diversified. Company President Rocky Prior remembers the old days, because he helped develop the first low-VOC paint back about, what was it, 15, 16 years ago? He remembers what we all do. It didn’t work so well. But as a researcher, he could build on that initial formula to design more successful products.

mine and all that. Vic and Rocky say this is a big deal, if you push the point. Ask your customers if they have pets. Pets have no choice except to live in the environments they’re given. Many folks will pay thousands of dollars for surgery to save their dog’s life and will be happy to pay for a paint that won’t hurt the dog.

Mythic picked a retro-style of labeling, sort of ‘50s pastels, old time cursive, logo shaped like a guitar pick. People remember it. People say “Whassup with this ad. Is it supposed to be like that?”

Says Vic, you remember the logo. If someone asks you to draw the logo, you’ll be able to do it, more or less.

What’s to take away from this? Whatever brand you buy, sell, or trade... Green is expanding beyond Green. Remember when Low Temp paint was a big deal and now everyone does it? That’s most likely where Green is headed. Some will lead, some will follow, and you can choose where in this line you stand. **TPD**