



Dan Aykroyd Talks Spirits, of Vodka and Ghost Varieties



He has earned an Emmy and has been nominated for an Oscar, but Dan Aykroyd is after a different category of award these days. With 3 million of his skull-shaped bottles already sold across 32 countries, Aykroyd's Crystal Head Vodka (https://crystalheadvodka.com/news) has been taken gold medals at both the World Spirits competition in San Francisco and Moscow's Prod Expo.

"If Russians don't know their vodka, the Japanese don't know their sushi," he says.

The man behind "The Blues Brothers" and "Ghostbusters" is trying to "revive the vodka category" with his Newfoundland, Canada-based liquor, removing common additives like sugar and citrus oil and instead retaining sweetness with a peaches-and-cream corn mash.

"Our tasting notes are sweet, vanilla dry, crisp, with a kick of heat off the finish," he says. "A kick of heat off the finish? I left the highway when I heard that they had given us those notes."

Aykroyd, a friend of Ronnie Wood and Keith Richards, has recently put together a special edition Crystal Head Vodka gift pack for the <u>Rolling Stones' 50th anniversary</u> (<a href="http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/rolling-stones-50-years-music-working-relationships-10-

(http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/rolling-stones-50-years-music-working-relationships-sobriety/story?id=17063762) tour, boasting 14 never-before-released live Stones tracks handpicked by Mick Jagger, as well as a glass stopper.

While one might expect a beverage with brown sugar to be housed within a Rolling Stones box, the combination made perfect sense for Aykroyd. "We just thought we've seen a skull or two on Keith's fingers," Aykroyd said, also noting a Canadian connection in the Stones' deep love for the Toronto area, where they rehearse, mix and tour quite often.



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As Aykroyd, 60, explained to us how perfect the gift set is for Father's Day, we had the chance to ask him about his career, his recent cameos and a few upcoming projects, all in the context of the vodka business, of course.

Q: You guested on "Saturday Night Live" last month, and in that episode you were serving 'SNL'-inspired drinks as a bartender, with a row of Crystal Heads behind you.

A: That was the set designer. I didn't even have to ask. That's my friend Keith, of course. I know him from the early days of the show, and the set team there, and they just, without even thinking about it, they had the heads, because they knew that I was playing the bartender. So, naturally, what am I going to serve? The drink of the 5-Timers Club is Crystal Head, all of the cocktails are made there with Crystal Head. So even though I never get to wear the jacket and I never get to be pampered, I do get to supply the product and do the bar.

Q: So what is in a Vodka Gilly, besides hair?

A: The Vodka Gilly is 2 ounces of Crystal Head, grapefruit juice, a splash of soda water and two maraschino cherries, to match her eves.

Q: So are you watching the show regularly, do you check in once in a while?

A: Does the alumnus of Villanova watch the basketball games?

O: Do you have any players, characters, sketches that stand out to you in recent seasons?

A: Certainly, I love Judy (Grimes). I love Fred Armisen's drummer. I love when he speaks Spanish. I love him! I love them all, Sudeikis (http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/entertainment/2013/04/olivia-wilde -my-wedding-plans-with-jason-sudeikis/) - master impressionist - Hader's game show host and Vincent Price. I loved Wiig there and these new ladies are fantastic, the champagne bubbly ladies that they did. It was really spectacular work. I watch all the time. They did a thing called Maine Justice, where they're all from Louisiana, I was in that but I got cut, And I'm really upset about it, and I'm going to demand I be in the next one.

Q: When your vodka was first made available, the timing was very close to the release of "Indiana Jones 4." That movie had cone-headed aliens with crystal skulls, while you're well known for Coneheads and selling Crystal Head. As if that wasn't enough confusion, you were also in "Temple of Doom." What's going on here?

A: Steven [Spielberg] and I are old friends, he hired me for "1941" and he named the dog in Poltergeist after E. Buzz Miller, one of my characters from "Saturday Night Live," and he put me in "Indiana Jones: Temple of Doom." But I think I kind of asked him to be in that. He made the aliens in his movie coneheads. I guess it paid tribute to the [F.A.] Mitchell-Hedges skull, which is referenced in the film.

I must tell you that we were developing this prior to the "Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull" movie. And when I heard Steven was doing this, I called a meeting with him. I went into his office because he's the pope. I said, "Steven, we're not trying to rip you off with this product. I've always loved the legend of the heads." He said, "Me too, wait'll you see the movie" type of thing, and he saw this and said, "Dan, this is beautiful. I would love to put this on every table at the premiere," however they don't do those half-a-million dollar premieres anymore. They put the money into prints and ads. I left him with a bottle, some of my wines and other stuff.

Q: Are we going to get a Cone-Crystal-Head eventually? You could fit a lot more vodka.

A: That would be spectacular. We do have a [1.75-liter] head, in this shape, and I should look into that. I guess I would have to license that from Paramount and NBC. I should look into that, sure.

Q: In December, in an interview with Esquire

(http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/entertainment/2012/12/dan-aykroyd-lays-downghostbusters-3-ultimatum/), you went on record saying that if the principal cast wasn't secured in the next 3-4 months for a third "Ghostbusters," you'll be in Australia selling Crystal Head. You're not in Australia right now, I've noticed.

A: I'll be there in October.

Q: What's the verdict? Has the studio stepped it up. Do they have an extension. Should fans have hope?

A: I feel re-encouraged, reinvigorated by the pages that I have seen. I know that we're expecting half of the screenplay to be completed very soon. It should be into production by the fall and be shooting by the new year. I won't say anything, it's very exciting. The Higgs boson and the particle theories, gluons and mesons, that really gives us a scientific base in terms of our fictional storytelling, to open up to another dimension and have something horrible come through.

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Q: You're active on Facebook and Twitter promoting Crystal Head and answering fan questions. Are you regularly on those social networks or do folks on your team have to pin you down to sign in for updates?

A: Folks have to pin me down because, for one thing, I don't have a laptop. I don't have an iPhone, and I refuse to carry them because they're immensely hackable. Not that I have any big-bad secrets but sometimes I get defense briefings from people. I have UFO stuff that I don't want people seeing that comes to me, which I prefer to come by fax or Fedex or mail.

But they call me and give me the questions and I write all my stuff. I write 99 percent of what you see and, otherwise, it's just press releases. There's some ... people are mean on the Internet. It's unbelievable. It really is the devil's gateway. It's the bathroom wall, in its worst way. And in its best way, it's the greatest source we can have to promote freedom and compassion and also a general feeling of mass consciousness which we're going to need to get through the next 10 years. We are going to all have to join our hearts, join our souls, touch the universal life-source, be more considerate of each other. Or it's just not going to work.

Q: I think, in a way, that's being changed a little bit. YouTube and now Facebook are allowing some of the best comments to rise to the top.

A: Well, a lot of these companies operate on something called, and I know you've heard this term, the humiliation algorithm. You know that term?

Q: No, actually.

A: The humiliation algorithm relates to how these search engines encourage bad, and negative reports, negative searches to come to the top above positive ones. You put in a name, you can see the worst about a person. Because it's the most profitable, because human-kind likes to see disaster. But we've got to turn it around, and the Internet can do it and we can do it personally, but we need a massconsciousness experience on this planet to arrest the negative energy that's dragging us down climatologically, mentally, spiritually, financially.

Q: Or else the slime will rise up from the streets and Carpathians will walk the earth?

A: Did you see? We were onto it, the negative energy. And now, we're going to really put it into ninth gear, in this third one. It's going to be very, very exciting. I've been more encouraged than I ever have been. It sounds real now. We've got a sharp new writer on it, Ivan [Reitman] is on it, Harold [Ramis] is on it, I'm on it, And if I can put the catch-net on Billy [Murray] and bring him in, it will be wonderful, if he decides to do it. There will always be a hole for him.

Q: Right, because it seemed like he read the Eisenberg-Stupnitsky "Ghostbusters 3" $\,$ script.

A: Didn't read it.

Q: He said he at least glanced it (http://uk.movies.yahoo.com/bill-murray---no-onerecognises-me--130432200.html).

A: I don't think he read it, because, you know what? If he'd read the second draft that I completely rewrote, he would be doing the movie. If he'd read that draft. The part I wrote for him.

Q: I hope that you release that draft some day, so the rest of the world can see.

A: Ah, no point. No point.



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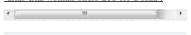
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