

A Barrel of Lights



Hornet HP
Trackhead

Amerlux makes timeless Old Forester Distillery experience more colorful

During the economic boom following the Civil War, a block-long stretch of cast iron-framed buildings on Louisville’s Main Street—famously known as Whiskey Row—became the hub of Bourbon Country and big business in Kentucky.

A block from the Ohio River, the West Main Street Historic District was originally the city’s business thoroughfare and once home to nearly 90 bourbon distilling companies.

Today, only one of those companies can proudly say they have operated continuously from then to now: Brown-Forman and its founding brand, Old Forester, credited as being America’s first bourbon to be sold in sealed glass bottles to ensure quality.

Located at 119 W. Main Street, Old Forester Distillery is housed in the same building that the brand originally called home before Prohibition. The company returned to the 70,000-square-foot facility following a \$45 million renovation that now highlights the sights and smells of bourbon making—from fermentation and distillation to barrel-making, aging and bottling—all under one roof. The revamped space now functions as a working distillery and an immersive guest experience.

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— **Keenan Miller**, Senior Lighting Designer at Focus Lighting



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But after the architectural challenges of renovating the building to meet the facility’s desired functions were met, another task remained: how to best light the multipurpose facility.

“Our client’s goal was to weave the guest experience into the distilling processes and create a contemporary perspective on Old Forester’s time-honored art of making bourbon,” says Justin Keenan Miller, Senior Lighting Designer at Focus Lighting.

Miller’s firm worked with Bravura Architects and experience designers at Imagination to create a continuous integration of best practice lighting principles from retail, hospitality, museum and industrial design.

“The new design required thoughtful consideration of architecture, history, branding and storytelling, but the real challenge was staying true to these creative considerations while providing the functional light required for a working production facility,” Miller says.

The lighting team responded by conducting extensive research to understand the optimal lighting conditions for showcasing the bourbon and process of creating it, including tours of other operating distilleries. Through their research, the designers discovered the need for a clean, 2,700K background when observing the bourbon during tasting sessions.

Enter Amerlux. More than 1,000 of the award-winning LED manufacturer’s fixtures were installed throughout the facility, for focused illumination and dramatic ambient effects:



Hornet HP Adjustable Downlight

155 Hornet adjustable downlights were used in hallways, lobbies, galleries, event spaces and for barrel-aging illuminating purposes.



Hornet HP Fixed Downlight

277 Hornet fixed downlights were installed in hallways, restrooms, events spaces and the bottling plant.

575 Hornet track heads (shown on cover) used for orientation, barrel aging, cooperage and fermentation lighting. They were also installed throughout the welcome area, museum, bottling plant, atrium, elevator lobbies and gallery.



Cylindrix III Mini Trackhead

Four Cylindrix III mini LEDs were mounted to illuminate the facility's barrel conveyor.

"The Amerlux products provided the exceptional dimming required to shape a comfortable experience

for visitors," Miller says, adding that Hornet recessed fixtures accent the tasting rooms' brick and wood walls, as well as its wood tables and flooring, highlighting the materials' warm tones. "Additionally, the fixtures' crisp 2,700K color does a wonderful job of showcasing the colors and textures in Old Forester's bourbon."

Another design challenge, Miller says, was illuminating the tank-shaped, cooper-colored doubler at the foot of a 44-foot-tall column still that brings the distillation process to life and serves as the building's you-have-to-see-it-to-believe-it centerpiece. Amerlux Hornet track head family were used to accentuate the color of the doubler. "The product's ability to hold up to three accessories was also a major benefit," Miller said.

By upgrading the project's fixtures to LED, the Old Forester team has not needed to replace or adjust any of their lighting since the venue opened, maintaining the look of the design, Miller said.

"Together, with the architecture of this historic building, and the contemporary presentation of the distilling process, lighting for this immersive experience helps tell the rich story of this beloved Kentucky brand," he added.



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Photos by Ryan Fischer

PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Scope

Old Forester Distilling Co. returned to the building it originally called home, a 40,000-square-foot facility on W. Main Street, in Louisville, Kentucky, following a \$45 million renovation project that included the installation of more than 1,000 Amerlux LED lighting products.

In all, 155 Hornet adjustable downlights, 277 Hornet fixed downlights, 575 Hornet track heads and four Cylindrix III mini fixtures were used around the facility, including hallways, lobbies, welcome areas, galleries, event spaces and tasting rooms. They were also used for barrel aging, cooperage, fermentation and orientation purposes.

Architect

Bravura Architects, Louisville, Kentucky

Experience Designer

Imagination

Lighting Consultant

Focus Lighting, New York, New York

- Michael Cummings, Principal Lighting Designer
- Justin Keenan Miller, Senior Lighting Designer
- Joshua Spitzig, Senior Lighting Designer
- David Kinkade, Project Manager
- Ryan Fischer, Photographer

Upgrade Benefits

- Exceptional dimming required to shape a comfortable experience for visitors.
- Fixtures' crisp 2,700K color showcases the hues and textures of the bourbon's color and density.
- Wonderfully accents the tasting rooms' brick and wood walls, as well as its wood tables and flooring, highlighting the materials' warm tones.
- Because of Amerlux's long-lasting LEDs in their Hornet and Cylindrix III product lines, there has been no need to replace or adjust any lighting since the venue opened, maintaining the look of the design.

Have an upcoming project? Let's bring your vision to life.

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