CLAIMS

1. A container for consumer goods comprising:

a box for housing the consumer goods;

an inner frame mounted within the box and having an upper portion extending above the upper edges of the box; and

a hinge lid connected to the box along a hinge line and pivotable about the hinge line between an open position and a closed position, in which the inner surfaces of the hinge lid are in contact with the outer surfaces of the upper portion of the inner frame;

wherein the inner surfaces of the hinge lid and the outer surfaces of the upper portion of the inner frame are at least partially covered by a sealable coating layer of a sealable material such that ~~and wherein prior to the first opening of the hinge lid~~ the sealable coating layers on the contacting surfaces of the hinge lid and the inner frame ~~are~~ can be bonded to each other to form a hermetic seal prior to the first opening of the hinge lid.

2. A container according to claim 1 wherein the sealable material is selected from the group consisting polyolefin, PVDC or an adhesive wax.

3. A container according to claim 1 or 2 wherein at least one wall of the container comprises an inner panel and an outer panel overlying the inner panel, wherein the contacting surfaces of the inner panel and the outer panel are covered by a sealable coating layer of the sealable material and wherein the sealable coating layers on the contacting surfaces of the inner panel and outer panel are bonded together to form a hermetic seal.

4. A container according to any of claims 1 to 3 wherein the hinge lid and the box are formed from one or more laminar blanks and wherein the inner surfaces of the one or more laminar blanks are fully covered by the sealable coating layer.

5. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the consumer goods are wrapped in an inner liner comprising one or more lines of weakness defining an opening tab, wherein the opening tab is adhered to an inner surface of the hinge lid such that movement of the hinge lid to the opening position brings about separation of the opening tab from the remainder of the inner liner to provide an access opening in the inner liner.

6. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the consumer products are wrapped in an inner liner at least partially in contact with the box, wherein the outer surface

of the inner liner and the inner surface of the box are at least partially covered by a sealable coating layer of the sealable material and wherein the sealable coating layers on the contacting surfaces of the inner liner and the box are bonded to each other.

7. A container according to any preceding claim further comprising a layer of a resealable adhesive applied over the sealable coating layer in one or more areas on the outer surface of the inner frame, wherein the resealable adhesive releasably seals the hinge lid in the closed position.

8. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the front wall of the hinge lid comprises a pull tab extending from the free edge of the front wall.

9. A container according to any preceding claim further comprising an adhesive tear tape applied over one or more of the free edges of the hinge lid prior to the first opening of the hinge lid in order to seal the hinge lid in the closed position.

10. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the sealing force of the bond between the sealable coating layer on the inner surface of the hinge lid and the sealable coating layer on the outer surface of the inner frame is between 4 Newton and 7 Newton.

11. A container according to any preceding claim further comprising an adhesive label provided over the free edges of the hinge lid and connecting the hinge lid to the box portion prior to the first opening of the container, wherein the label comprises a line of weakness substantially coinciding with a free edge of the hinge lid such that the label is separated along the line of weakness when the hinge lid is moved to the open position for the first time.

12. A container according to any preceding claim comprising a cut extending from opposed ends of the hinge line across the back wall to the adjacent side edge of the back wall of the container, wherein each cut extends no more than 2 mm from the side edge.

13. A hermetically sealed pack of smoking articles comprising a container according to any preceding claim with a plurality of smoking articles housed within the box portion, wherein the bond between the sealable coating layers on the inner surface of the hinge lid and the outer surface of the inner frame is intact to provide a hermetic seal.

14. A method of hermetically sealing ~~a container for~~ consumer goods, the method comprising: providing a container according to any of claims 1 to 12 ~~comprising: providing a~~

~~sealable coating layer on the inner surfaces of the hinge lid and the outer surfaces of the inner frame~~; providing the consumer goods within the box portion of the container; moving the hinge lid of the container to a closed position; and bonding the sealable coating layers of the contacting surfaces of the inner frame of the container and the hinge lid to provide a hermetic seal.