

## OLD MUTUAL TROPHY WINE SHOW 2014

### TRANSCRIPT OF JUDGES' FEEDBACK SESSION, 8 MAY: GRANDE ROCHE PAARL.

**Panelists: Michael Fridjhon (chair), Fongyee Walker (China), Gerard Basset (UK), Veronique Drouhin-Boss (France), Cathy van Zyl MW, Christian Eedes, Francois Rautenbach, Trizanne Barnard, JD Pretorius, James Pietersen.**

**MF:** Good morning and welcome to the feedback session from the 2014 Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show.

As a general summary. This was pretty much the same number of wines as last year, one or two more - 1 040 wines judged. It was a year in which, by and large, the benefits of a couple of good vintages showed across the board in the sense that there really was a very strong result. What we have seen even more so was the extent to which quality now runs through the Cape wine industry from the apex of the pyramid right the way through. Typically, five or ten years ago, we would always find a couple of gold medal wines, because there were always good gold medal wines to be found, there would be a thin array of silvers, there would be a bunch of bronzes and a very significant number of also-rans.

This year it was very clear that the depth of talent in most of the big classes is simply extraordinary and for panelists – and this is something I will ask some of the people who judged for many years and what we were staggered about – was just how hard it was to keep wine out of the medals. We enjoy our reputation as the most rigorous of wine shows. We like people to think that a bronze medal here is like a bronze medal at the Olympics – not just a prize for having entered your wine – that you really had to have produced something of quality in order to obtain the recognition of a bronze medal.

It was really difficult in many of the classes to push wines out of the medals, because they were there on quality. Once you went through the bronze, the cut-off between bronze and silver – often very clear and so obvious – that you wonder how to make the gap from a high bronze into a lucky silver – was not variable. They really flowed into each other and in the strong classes the same could be said for the golds. Some of the high silvers five years ago would have been top golds. There really is a very clear sign to all of us that the wine industry is producing lots of very good wine. At this stage I have no idea what that means in terms of price point, but I should think that there will be enough good wines for punters with every kind of purse to do their shopping.

There are always questions that come up at some stage, so I thought I might dispose of them quickly.

There are more and more screw-caps – a total of 285 of the 1 000 wines are now closed with screw-cap and in some of the more obvious classes like Sauvignon Blanc, screw-cap dominates to 70%. Even in the red wine classes it is generally over 10%. So we are seeing a very clear sign that the industry is accepting closure change. That said, we re-poured 262 of the 1 000 wines. Let's be clear that I instruct the panels occasionally to do so just for arbitrary reasons. If you think the wine doesn't have enough fruit, get another bottle! The producer has gone to all the trouble of submitting wines. We make sure we have backup bottles. People who have gone to the trouble of entering must assume that their wines have got aromatics and flavour profiles that are worth judging. So if a wine doesn't have that, call for another bottle. Probably the cork taint in those is much less than 262, so the Twitterers among us should not say that 25% of all the wines were corked. It was nothing like that. But we did re-pour a great number and in doing so I'm sure we dealt with everything from production under screw-cap closed wines, to panelists simply saying "I wouldn't mind seeing another bottle". At the end of the day's judging when we're looking at the gold and silver candidates of a class, it is sometimes nice to pour a fresh bottle of everything and give everyone a chance from the same additional bottle.

A lot of re-pouring doesn't mean there was a lot of taint. We ended up – and all the numbers are subject to audit confirmation – with about 23 trophies with museum classes involved and there are additional trophies. The top white wine will win the trophy in its class and it will be the trophy-winner for Best White Wine of Show. In addition we had 14 golds, 121 silvers and 469 bronzes which is the highest medal count in total that we have ever had at the show. Trophies and golds are up there with the higher years, silvers are midway between last year and the year before and bronzes are higher than previously, with a very good showing of bronze medals indeed.

The judges' average over the three days of judging was between 353 and 335 wines judged. The judges who had the light load of 335 wines to do over three days and the heavy load was 353 – 110 to 120 wines a day.

An interesting statistic which we have for the first time is the average score of the judges. All their scores are averaged and they were in a very narrow band in which the lowest score average was 71.2 and the highest score was 75.1. So judging was done in a very narrow band. This does not mean that there are not controversial moments where someone is on 90 and someone else is on 70 and my job, as show Chairman, is to try and find a consensus rather than an average between the two.

I think this is an opportunity for the judges to comment for themselves and then to field questions specifically from you. I'm going to start with Christian Eedes, who has judged probably longer than anyone else at the show and therefore probably has an overview to offer that will give a sense of where the 2014 show was, relative to previous years.

**CE** This is my eighth year of judging and there is a very definite sense of a growing maturity within the industry and a growth in sophistication. It is fantastic to observe and perhaps it's to be expected. Judging coincided with 20 years of democracy and it's well documented that post-apartheid we're better traveled and more open to what the rest of the world is doing and it is starting to show in our wines which is great to see.

**MF** I will pass the microphone to Fongyee. The internationals said they'd like to hear what the locals say before they commit themselves.

**FW** Thank you Michael for inviting me and the rest of the international judges. I think this is a wonderful opportunity to see what South Africa has to offer. For some reason I got onto the panels which were a little stingy with the golds. We had some interesting classes which were quite challenging – a very large Merlot class where you felt that not a lot of love had been put into these Merlots. However, that was balanced by a fantastic Chenin class – a real mind-blowing experience for me – to see the diversity of style and to see that so many different styles have been produced so well. It wasn't all going down one road, but taking lots of different paths, but each of those paths produces medal-worthy wines at the end of it. I am from China and we don't see much of Chenin Blanc, being a predominantly red wine market – very exciting.

The only thing I would caution as an international judge coming from a very developing market is that I really work on getting people to enjoy wines. Many people in China don't drink wine. It's a beer and spirits or tea-based culture. So I'm trying to persuade people that wines are lovely and delicious. The one thing that worried me a bit, was having to call for re-pours of so many bottles and particularly the high instances of cork taint. The people I deal with don't know what these faults are. I can recognise that a wine should be more fragrant and know what's going on, whereas nearly everyone I deal with just recognises that it doesn't taste good. This leaves a bad impression. So I would love to see more consistency. That is what I would point out for my market, but thank you very much for the opportunity and there is so much potential here and I would love to see it in another twenty years.

**MF** What do you think is the attitude in the Chinese market to alternative closures to cork?

**FW** Again, we're a developing market and don't really have the experience so people think cork is the only closure. However, what I do see is my market changes very quickly and people learn very, very quickly. Already I see in Beijing and Shanghai, which are our most sophisticated cities, a movement very much towards screw-cap, towards looking at the cork, judging the quality of the cork. There is a very definite awareness of that closure. We have a horrific climate for keeping wine – far worse than yours. Corks get affected very quickly and people are not silly, they are picking up on this.

**MF** Thank you. Just to summarise - there were 57 entries in that Chenin class. It finished with 3 golds, 10 silvers, 31 bronzes – so 44 of the 57 wines actually got medals – it is the best result in a large class that we've ever had in the history of the show. I'm going to pass the microphone to Cathy who will talk about her impressions and pick up on this.

**CvZ** You said that the Chinese drink mainly tea, beer and spirits. In my opinion tea and beer particularly are slightly astringent and slightly bitter drinks. What is the Chinese response to sugar in a wine?

- FW** It's generally a good idea, however, saying China is like saying the whole of Europe. For instance the tea we drink in Beijing is actually flower tea. It's not bitter or astringent and we add sugar. Particularly in certain areas the palate is definitely sweet. All the food they eat is sweet, but I think the first time you pick up a wine you don't like it. So with that beginner palate there is a definite preference towards sugar to round it out.
- CvZ** Firstly I want to thank our international judges for allowing us to judge at a pace on Monday and Tuesday so we all had some time off to vote yesterday. Secondly I'd like to talk about the Sauvignon Blanc class which I judged yesterday. I had a wonderful time judging this. I've been mulling over in my mind recently because I've just come back from judging at IWC in London and I judged across a wide variety of categories and countries and a couple of those were New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs and Sauvignon Blancs from Chile and Argentina, etc. It got me think again about what style of Sauvignon Blanc should South Africa be producing. I have to say after judging yesterday, I firmly believe that South Africans should not over produce one particular style. We have so many terrific terroirs, so many different climatic influences and such a vast difference in the age of our vineyards that we can actually produce very good Sauvignon Blanc across a variety of styles. Herbaceousness is fine as long as it's not over the top. Similarly, the slightly sweaty ones are also quite nice. Judging yesterday I certainly found representation and very good examples of every style you can imagine and I was vastly impressed and thrilled to have judged it. Having said that there were a couple of lightly oaked Sauvignon Blancs which we got to taste and I've seen an improvement in the treatment of the oak when it comes to Sauvignon Blanc. I definitely think we're on the right track. Thank you.
- MF** I'm now going to ask Veronique, who has judged several times in South Africa, but this is the first time at the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show, and who, in one day managed to get through the 90-odd Chardonnays followed by the nearly 40 or so Pinot Noirs. She had one day of being in Burgundy in South Africa so maybe that would be a good place to start.
- VD-B** Thank you for inviting me. It was a real honour to be here and taste all of these wines. This is the third time I've been to South Africa – the first time was six years ago – and the improvement has been amazing. When you taste the mood is important and focus is important. I agree with everyone that the level of quality was very high. I also think we are not here only to pay compliments, but you might also hear what I thought as a wine-maker and the things I would point out. First I would say I agree that the use of oak is a lot smarter than it used to be. We came across much less old school heavily oaked Chardonnay. There were very few of those, which was very nice. I thought the wines showed a lot of purity which is not that easy to get. The other thing I would say is one important thing is the viticulture and what you plant in the soil is very important. So now the question is whether you have made the correct clonal selection, and then made sure that the rootstock is appropriate to the soil. It is very important and I'm talking from my own Oregon experience. I started with different clones, and it takes time, but I can see an amazing difference on my estate. The second thing is the growing practices. Do you want to go organic? It could be something interesting to try. So people ask me is it a bad plan to grow organically. I don't know if it's a bad one, but I'm sure if you do grow organic you give your vineyards much more attention because you cannot use chemicals and sprays when there is an infection. You have to be in your vineyards every day, you have to look at your vines. If nothing else, growing organic means more hands-on viticulture.
- MF** Veronique thank you. It is now Gerard's opportunity. He was one of the tasters at the above 350 wine mark. Perhaps you would share your impressions.
- GB** Thank you very much Michael. For me it was a great experience and of course my colleague judges and I enjoyed it. I judged the Riesling, the Viognier, Bordeaux blends, Cabernet, sweet wine and Pinotage and sparkling wine. I really thought overall the quality was excellent with some stunning examples. I would say the big classes – the Bordeaux blends and the Cabernet – were very consistent. The most disappointing was the sparkling wine. We had a few very good ones but also some that were not so good with the aromatic profile not very appealing and a little bitter. I greatly enjoyed the Pinotage. We had around 50 and it was very positive. I'm not fanatic about it but it was very interesting and a rare opportunity to taste so many Pinotages. Of course we did have wines which were fabulous. I would have given more golds. I have judged at many shows and at many of them you find some great wines that do justice to their categories and then you find some that are disappointing. Overall the quality was very high so well done.
- MF** Thank you. I am now going to move to the two first-time judges. Trizanne can pick up on her experiences. She had some quite fun classes.

**TB** Thanks Michael. I would just like to take the opportunity to thank everyone. I'm privileged to judge here. I thank the organisers, the judges and the producers for entering such beautiful wines. I had the pleasure of judging niche whites – White blends, Sauvignon Semillon, Semillon on its own, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and red blends. Just to start off I think the South African industry is doing a great job with our whites. There are some beautiful wines and good consistency in our white wine production. Semillon is a hard sell as a wine, but if we continue creating wines at the level and of this quality, we will be able to sell a lot more of this wine.

Niche whites was a very interesting category, but a small one and I think there is room to enter more niche whites and not the usual suspect white blends, because we are producing good quality wines there. With Sauvignon Semillon I think we have to be very site specific and very meticulous in choosing our parcels and very meticulous in putting the blend together. If you use oak, use smart oak. You can't just *gooi* it all together. It has to be really thought out and crafted for you to put a high price point on that wine. I think there is huge potential Sauv/Sem blend.

There were beautiful Chardonnays. I had the privilege to judge with Veronique and she is a world class, absolute master of Chardonnay, being a producer herself and she had so much praise for this category which I think is a feather in the cap of each Chardonnay producer. We're getting it right. We're making focussed and detailed wines. We are not over-oaking. In general we have the focus of this category down to a T. I hope this will have a ripple effect on all our categories many years from now.

The red blends was a hard category to judge and interestingly we gave medals to the varietals which were not the usual suspect varietals – the lesser planted ones and perhaps we should look more into these types of varietals, because perhaps our climate is more conducive to these varietals than the maritime noble wines. All in all it was a fantastic experience. Just one last note – after 20 years of democracy we have to wake up and smell the TCA because we have serious cork issues and if we want to stand out as a world class wine-producing country we have to get it right on the closures. We have all the tools out there to help us and we should be using them, thank you.

**MF** Thanks Trizanne. JD will add to that, then two more judges and questions from the room

**JD** Morning ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much Michael for having faith in the young judges and giving myself and Trizanne the opportunity to be part of this collective knowledge of the judges here. It has been incredible. As a young wine professional it's a great privilege to learn from everyone. Thank you for that.

It has been a really fun, hard three days. It's the first time I've done the full three days. In the previous years I've only done one or two days. I did Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot, Chenin Blanc and other red blends and had great fun judging with Fongyee. She was really excited about the lot that we were doing and so was Veronique on especially the Burgundy varieties. I was very surprised at how we were scoring our whites down and she was much more complimentary than we were.

The Chardonnay is incredible. There are some really fine wines – very focussed, very poised. Merlot was hard work. I'm speaking from both sides of the table here. We produce a lot of Merlot. It is a variety that a lot of people buy and it's an easy sell, but judging on the 50 Merlots, there aren't many great Merlots in this country. You go to other red blends like Cinsaut. They make beautiful wines, beautiful blends and I really think we need to investigate what other varieties we can use. On a technical issue a lot of wines have specifically CO<sub>2</sub>. There were some Chardonnays that should have been entered into the Cap Classique. We pay a lot of money as producers to enter wine into these shows, so technically we need to be on top of our game in every aspect of producing wine, but specifically bottling it. It's the last step that we have control. We all need to focus on that. The TCA is also something to take note of. Thank you.

**MF** Thank you, JD. I have to say that at this year's academy Charles Hopkins made the point in a white wine lecture about how so many people in the industry are delegating bottling to mobile bottling and then do not take control of the line, sulphur levels, oxygen levels – you land up in fact handing over the crucial last component to the third party and then assume that they know what they're doing or they care. Now to Mr Pietersen.

**JP** It's great to see such a fantastic turnout and such an interest. I tasted with Gerard through the three days, Cathy helped me along the way as well. Thank you. It was a really good tasting with Gerard. He was very supportive, especially with Pinotage and I learnt a great deal from tasting with him.

On the varieties, Riesling was interesting for me. A beautiful wine came through right at the top and there were a few others I thought were very strong in a small class. In relation to Trizanne's comment earlier on other varieties - Tom Carson mentioned this last year as well – don't be afraid to experiment. There are fantastic other wines to be made and the consumer needs to be excited and taught to try something else. The more you make these fantastic Rieslings and other varieties, the more the consumer will veer away from just drinking more imported wines. That said, I got to chair Cabernet Sauvignon – 94 wines – with Trizanne and Gerard. Cabernet Sauvignon is very important for most wine-producing countries in the world. We paid a lot of attention to make sure we put out wines of quality. The class as a whole was very strong. I've done five years as a judge and one as an associate and in the beginning tannin detail was still lacking. You need a nice dry finish if you want to make a great wine. I feel that in the Cabernet section we are getting there. The top wines have superb structure. So well done to the winemakers. The top ones that came through are world class. Thank you.

**MF** Francois your summary of the classes and general comments.

**FR** To reiterate the small Semillon category. What was obvious there was there is real care being taken with those wines. Whoever purchases this is rewarded with a superb wine. In the same breath if you're not making that effort, then perhaps it's not worth bothering.

A particular point in terms of the Sauvignon Blanc/Semillon blends – I didn't check my facts, but I think there's substantial growth in how many are being produced, but I got an overall impression that there's this opportunity being seen as to charge more, to use Sauvignon Blanc to gain more speed of sales and then looking at the cream of the crop you produce wine that you will charge substantially more for. What is happening is that you're creating an expensive-looking wine. Don't lose the finesse and elegance of the wine and end up just putting anything into the bottle. Great white Bordeaux has always been about superb wine and the same thing applies here. We've always looked forward to fantastic top ends with our wines. There were a few of those, but there were too many where there was no reflection of excellence. So what was missing in Sauvignon Blanc showed in a small way in Semillon. There needs to be even more attention to detail in the top wines. The good ones were no problem, but there was a big chunk at the bottom. Don't experiment at the customer's expense. If you're going to charge more for something, make the same effort that other top producers are making.

It was remarkable at the end of the day that we commented to each other that we had expected to have this massive acid attack and it wasn't there. It was actually pleasant to taste the Sauvignon Blancs because they've mellowed in a good way. There isn't this harshness and certainly from our customers' perspective around the world I think there's going to be some exciting movement with South African Sauvignon Blanc far more drinkable than it was before. Well done.

I don't want to steal any thunder from Christian on Shiraz, but while I'm excited to hear the improvement in Cabernet, I think Shiraz needs more precision. Whether you're making a leaner style or a very full style doesn't matter. What is important is precise wine-making and how you put it in the bottle etc. There is a lot of disappointment. At the top end there were lighter and bigger wines and they were beautiful but there weren't enough of them.

**MF** Thank you Francois. I will now open this to questions to the panellists responsible for the classes or category under interrogation.

**Q** I was very pleased to see a greater number of museum class entries and that it shows the consumers and the winemakers that our wines can age. Having been privileged to attend the tasting on Sunday when we had some magnificent wines dating back to the early 70's and even '59 – which showed elegance and balance – would anybody like to comment on any style changes generally in every category that indicates we are going to get much better age-worthy wines from those categories.

**MF** That's a tricky one to take only because people would have had museum class entries in every class that had museum class entries and no-one would have seen them across the board, except today, where the trophy winners in the museum class were lined up alongside the golds and trophies in the standard classes. Maybe that's the best way to approach the question.

- CE** Regarding my earlier remark about growing maturity I think when it comes to particularly reds we seem to have stepped back from those high pH wines which can only bode well. The word balance is bandied around and everybody says they've made a balanced wine, but I think if the modern era of South African wine started in '94, we were so desperate to impress the rest of the world that I think we tended to overdo it. The increasing restraint that the wine has shown must go towards ageability.
- Q:** My question is for Gerard. You mentioned sparkling wines. Could you expand on this a bit more?
- GB** I was expecting a lot of developed aromatics etc. or a fresh style, but what we had was unbalanced, harsh, bitter and unpleasant. I thought this category was unbalanced.
- MF** I would like to add, having only seen the class as the discussion point, in some way it's inevitable when you judge the Cap Classique class that in the back of your mind there is some kind of Champagne template and you're expecting the wines in some way (if they're successful) to manifest themselves in the way that would see it as Champagne. Certainly from that perspective it was a disappointment, but there was a very exciting wine which I think was a Chenin Blanc, which finally finished as a silver. I think there's a message in that wine. It was beautifully done, beautifully handled. It certainly showed that there, once again, the technology to make hand-crafted, bottle fermented wine is certainly there and we're not necessarily dependent on the so-called Champagne varieties to get to a conclusion.
- GB** I just want to add that it was disappointing for me because I have tasted some delicious sparkling wine in South Africa and perhaps I was expecting more.
- Q** What I would like to know is, looking Cape blends, is this still an exciting category? Do you think it's something South Africa should take forward e.g. Pinotage-based blends?
- FW** I think they're very exciting. I got very excited when I began to judge them. I think the thing that was very disappointing for me was the reliability of them. There were so many second bottles. I think because you're using a blend of very funky varieties. Perhaps some people are just experimenting with them and perhaps don't know how to handle them. We had a lot of problems with apparent VA and brett. There were closure problems as well. When they were good they were so drinkable. With the Cape blends, particularly the Pinotage the trick was not to let the Pinotage dominate and that often happened. You were tasting a wine and only getting Pinotage with nothing else coming out. I would agree with my other panel members that the really exciting blends were these very exciting varieties. The Treger Nationale we had one that I thought was the most enormously pretty and wonderful wine and very different on the nose. So if you're going down the blends route I'd love to see more of these interesting varieties. If you are doing the Pinotage-based blends – which I got very excited about last time I was here – to avoid the Pinotage bullying everybody else into submission.
- MF** Just a quick stat. Yesterday we did all the non-Bordeaux blends, Shiraz blends and the Pinotage blends. So Shiraz-based blends, Pinotage-based blends and other blends and the highest medal count was in the "other" category. The lowest medal count, which was still not unrespectable - it was 38% in total – was for Pinotage blends. So there was a significant difference in the final medal take.
- Q** I have a question about Shiraz or Syrah wines. In South Africa we call some wines Shiraz and some Syrah. I just wondered if you picked up where they were labelled Syrah were they more old world or cooler climate style. Did they live up to the name of Syrah and Shiraz and did the Shiraz perform better than the Syrah and vice versa.
- MF** The wines are entered into the same class. The panellists don't know whether they're labelled Shiraz or Syrah. All they do is they have a class. Certainly in its own way it's the tightest class. It's always the largest and was this year. People are doing their very best to sift them and I don't think the question of what the labelling says is of any consequence. What might be a nice question to ask is whether we're seeing a stylistic change over the last five years in terms of more the one style or more the other.
- CE** I chaired the Shiraz panel. I think the Syrah/Shiraz distinction is pretty much irrelevant. You find winemakers making very elegant Shiraz and calling it Shiraz and very big involved Shirazes and calling it Syrah. It's more a marketing term with very little substance. That said, our top Shirazes were, hopefully, in a more elegant style, regardless what the label says. There certainly are some

monstrous Shirazes out there – 14% to 15% alcohol. It's not an illegitimate style but certainly won't get gold at this competition.

- MF** What I have noticed is that generally the red wines have started to dry again. Four or five years ago we were seeing wines that were 14.5% alcohol plus and if you cast your eye down the sugar analysis at the end of the show you saw a lot of those wines were sitting somewhere between 5 and 10 grams of sugar.  
There were still a lot of wines at the 4.5 and 5 gram mark. I think the alcohols were certainly down. There was one really scary wine at 15.9 for alcohol and still with 5 grams of sugar. Compared with a few years ago where that seemed to be the way forward, I don't have that impression from this year's judging.
- Q** I have a question about the alcohol. In some regions you tend to have a little higher alcohol than you should. Does the high alcohol take away from the elegance or do you still find nicely balanced, higher alcohol wines?
- CE** The 15.9% alcohol that Michael mentioned in fact got silver. It's not impossible to make convincing wines at those alcohols, but I think that whole trend stems from us trying to make a statement, trying to get recognised by the rest of the world and the international wine media. With the growing maturity of producer, critic and public, those wines work only up to a point. I think the future lies in more restraint.
- MF** I'd like to add that panellists, when they're judging, don't have access to those technical details. As show chairman I do and the panel chairman can access it if it's a matter of importance. We even jumble the vintages so that the wines are always judged on their merit. The question arises because for example it's a museum class entry and tasting a little mature raises the question if it's a young wine that's oxidised, or an old wine that's matured gracefully. That information is available on demand and certainly at the review stage I certainly look at that and discuss it with the panel and that's where we see wines where, the high alcohol content is not noticed, then the wine has been successfully made. Sometimes one of the panellists will say the wine is very thick, very sweet, very rich and we don't want to be seen rewarding that style.
- FW** One must be careful about alcohol as well because the extracts and how you work the wine is also of real importance, in fact almost more so. There were a lot of clumsy wines and then there were high alcohol wines, or relatively high alcohol wines, that were "less is more". So if you are in an area where you are going to get the higher alcohols it doesn't necessarily mean that you need to work the wine so hard. In fact, at one point Christian made the comment that too many times he couldn't see anything through the wine and they were too black. This was interesting, because the wines that did the best were not like that. So restraint is effective.
- Q** My question is to the panel in general. There is a natural movement globally towards natural wines and wine-making. It is very difficult to discern sometimes what is a natural wine. Was there any general feeling amongst the panel that there were certain wines that stuck out because they were more natural and had a purity of flavour?
- MF** Veronique did you have a sense that you could distinguish so-called natural wine-making from more manipulated wine-making? Was it evident to you?
- VD-B** It is not easy. We definitely had some wine that showed a mild, beautiful, elegant complex component, but if that related to the fact that they were grown in a very natural way is very hard to answer. We also came across a lot of wines that we thought the wine-making was very intense. So the answer is I wouldn't be able to tell you which wines stood out because they were made in a natural way.
- GB** I agree with Veronique. Natural wines are very popular in the UK now, especially with young sommeliers. Personally I like some of them, but I don't think everybody should do natural wine. I'm not against beautiful natural wines, in fact I like them very much, but natural must not be an excuse for bad wine-making. But we couldn't say because we did not have the information.
- VD-B** I would just like to add that in our case we work in a very natural way in the vineyards. In the winery we use SO<sub>2</sub>, we do some refining if needed. If you want to have an opinion you need to try this. We found it worked for a very short time, but not long term. The wine ages very quickly. Some people like it. Our friends in Burgundy who did not go completely natural and they have customers for that.

**CE** I think in response to that question is if we reference the tasting that we did on Sunday, where we were looking at the old wines, there was a marked brightness and purity about the wines from the '60's and even the '59. One of the things that I take away from that is that those wines were made with a technical attention to detail. So in reference to natural wines I think we must be careful that natural wines is a marketing thing at the moment and if we want to make great wines that we can look at in forty or fifty years' time, one must still make sure that the detailed wine-making is spot on.

**Q** I'd like to go back to Pinot Noir. Veronique said it was fairly disappointing as a category and you mentioned a few aspects, but in terms of the actual taste and the oaking on the wine, can you elaborate a little more on that and why it was disappointing?

**VD-B** The reason most of them was disappointing was bitterness. Colour I don't mind. Pinot Noir is a naturally lightly coloured grape variety and lightly textured. The key is to find a balance to give enough fruit. So the problem was that a lot of the wines were herbaceous, a bit bitter on the finish, sometimes didn't really taste or smell like Pinot Noir. The wines that I took out to me really had the elegance, complexity and refinement. It's a wine that can be so well textured. You never look for high tannins. The oak is crucial with Pinot. If you put too much the wine will lose the fruit and dry out. With my little experience with Burgundy in Oregon, the elevage can go up to 40% or 50% new oak, but usually will never get more than 20%. So where are you in this category? I don't know, but in Oregon I'm going 20% maximum 25% new oak. It doesn't mean the rest is 10 or 15 year old barrels, but I rarely go beyond that, because it overwhelms the wine. People like it, but it's too much and it does not age well. Remember in the wine new oak always stays where it is but the rest will change.

**CE** It would remiss of me not to mention Chenin. It's our most widely planted grape and, as Michael has said, it was a very strong category. I would like to propose that it was a very difficult category to judge because every wine had merit and warranted discussion. It's all over the place in the best possible way. I don't think we will ever get consolidation and I don't think we should look for it. All that said, I would like to propose that in terms of helping the consumer we put "Wooded" and "Unwooded" on the label. We do it with Chardonnay, everybody gets it and I think we should start doing it with Chenin.

**MF** I would like to do a quick review and one of the things I like to do is thank the backroom. I'll start by thanking the panellists. I also want to thank the two associates: Nkulu Mkhwanazi's been here for all three days and has really had 350 wines as well. Heidi Duminy has done two days. These are people who have had a lot of experience as associates and it's a process that takes time, does have apprenticeship and, I'm convinced, yields a very desirable result. So to the associates who came and gave of their time and of course the panellists who came long distances and gave time very generously, gave insight, dug into their resources, their tasting, thought and aesthetics – and this is everyone on the panel – because the engagement between the judges is a crucial part of how this show works. It is not arithmetical, it is not a matter of statistical averaging. Everybody is in fact a juror and in the end the intention is that the wine reflects, as far as possible, the consensus of the panellists. This also means that everybody must also be prepared to engage intellectually and verbally in the discussions about the important wines and styles and how it evolves.

I take this opportunity of thanking the panellists, who really have contributed to an enormously smoothly run show. All of us who were tasting the trophy line-up today should be pleased with the work the panel has done and absolutely delighted at where the industry stands with its very top wines.

As a panellist I would like to acknowledge the amount of work that goes into ensuring that this thing runs smoothly – Alex Mason-Gordon who has given the last six or seven weeks of her life in its entirety; Michael Crossley, who works throughout this period with the show, as well as with his day job and both of them have given a solid ten days now to making sure that the submissions are entirely correct as per the entry itself and do it with a sense of detail that meant on occasion, where an older wine had been brought in and came from two separate certifications, an eagle eye picked up that in the six bottles that arrived, they weren't all from the same certification batch. This was identified and fixed in time. Just the day-to-day running that when the panels arrive here at 08.00 the first flights are already poured and long after everyone has retreated to their emails, cell phones and dinners, the room is tidied, the glasses are managed and maintained. The grand crew – thank you all very much indeed.



To the crew from Grande Roche, thank you all very much indeed. So to Alex Mason-Gordon, Michael Crossley, the Outsorceress team and of course to the judges thank you all very much. After 13 years of Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show judging there is a real sense of having arrived. Thank you all.

ENDS