



The KROW (Key Review of Wines) Issue 27

The overall standard of Australian wine has never been higher how ironic then its global reputation is declining. The official bodies representing growers and producers are desperately trying to come up with ideas that will ease the pain and turn the tide of negativity that is washing across the industry.

Sadly the reduction of the industry appears inevitable. The upside being that once the dust has settled and everyone has finished blaming everyone else the industry that emerges will be stronger.

Meanwhile there are truckloads of bargains out there so take advantage of them

Happy drinking

Tony Keys

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How I mark

Marking wines can be an emotive issue and there is no enforceable rule on what scale should be used. I use the 100 scale for quality rating devised by American critic Robert Parker. The Australian show system uses marks out of 20; several writers use stars or symbols, many out of five. I consider a wine of average quality to be 85 and, believe me, there is nothing wrong with a wine earning 85 points.

In truth, the value of a wine is directly related to the wealth of the drinker. Those with untold millions in the bank may think nothing of drinking bottles worth hundreds of dollars/pounds/Euros, while those with an overdraft and more pressing financial matters might find spending over \$10, £5 or €10 an unjustifiable expense.

With regard to value for money, wine can be divided into two sections: those up to 100 dollars/pounds/Euros and those over. Once a wine is over this amount, then scarcity, fashion or plain pomposity is what you're paying for.

Up to that amount there really is a quality-to-value ratio. The hard part is expressing the value. I've experimented with charts and held long debates about a critic's role in pricing. Many reviewers make no comment; others use symbols. The most honest system I can think of is plain opinion (mine). When I look at the price of a wine, it's the one the winery has sent me. Often they can be found cheaper on special. I judge value for money by comparing wines in the same peer group. When I say "works better with food" it's because I have tasted it on the bench and then with food, as certain wines often taste better in this context.



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When a wine hits the right spot words don't always come to mind it's just an inner feeling. Those that affect me in that way have an illustration accompanying them

Riesling revelled

Pipers Brook Vineyard Tasmania Riesling 2009: I'm not sure if these are the oldest Riesling vines in Tasmania but they must be up there. Anyhow terrific wine a long taste profile that builds slowly but with great elegance and continues to give pleasure long after swallowed 93 points top end price at \$27.50

www.kreglingerwineestates.com



Frogmore Creek 'FGR' Tasmania Riesling 2009: Full on sweetness balancing

acidity absolutely nothing wrong with sweet Riesling wine when the quality is this good 93 points and good value at \$24 www.frogmorecreek.com.au

Frogmore Creek Tasmania Riesling 2008: Simply beautiful wine rapier like on the palate it follows a wonderfully fluid line dropping off flavours as it travels. 93 now but more to come as it ages and worth its \$24 www.frogmorecreek.com.au Graeme Phillips writing in The Sunday Tasmanian 7th February gives it a three bottle rating which translates to 'very good'

***Riesling Summary:** Brilliant simply brilliant what more be said?*

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Dear old Gurty & Verd

Pewsey Vale Eden Valley Gewurztraminer 2009: The notes say the wine has a potential for a decades ageing and it does; beautiful spice and classic Gewurztraminer characters the only drawback is its youth however it still rates 91 now and with up to four more (I predict) as it ages well worth paying \$25 to put away for next year or the year after www.pewseyvale.com

Currency Creek Estate 'Water Ribbon' Fleurieu Peninsular Gewürztraminer 2009: One of the most beautiful noses I have come across in Australian GT, its tight in the mouth not giving its best at the moment but it will 90 now more points to come and very good value at \$17 www.currencycreekwines.com.au

Deen De Bortoli 'Vat 6' Riverina Verdelho 2009: A very well made wine that has a point of difference perhaps it's the use of new and old oak or the addition of Arneis, whatever it works 88 points good value at \$13 or less www.debortoli.com.au

Hangin' Rock 'Odd One Out' Victorian Verdelho 2009: Hum, it is white it is drinkable and it has a small amount of interest 88 points and pushing price at \$20 www.hanginrock.com.au

***Gurty & Verd summary:** The Gurt's showed very well and the Verds OK so all in not bad. The nose of the Currency Creek was stunning I could have lingered and not drunk. Both the Gewürztraminer's are for putting away.*

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Picky Pinot Gris/Grigio

Pewsey Vale Eden Valley Pinot Gris 2009: Tasting Pinot Gris has become an unwelcome chore so many 'nothing wines' dull and dreary slops of grape juice. Thankfully this wine has something going for it; the balance is right the flavours leaning towards the richer style but not cloying it's very enjoyable to drink now 90 points and for me just worth \$25 although I would prefer to see it under \$20 and possibly it is when on special. www.pewseyvale.com

Found Stone SE Australian Pinot Grigio 2009: Tasty, very tasty indeed; don't look too hard for there's not a lot there but it's a good drop 88 points and great value at \$10 www.bertonvineyards.com.au

Patina (Orange) Pinot Gris 2008: (Jenny Stonier tasting note) Full bodied and oily with clean, dried pear characters make this well made, well balanced wine a delightful accompaniment to food. 92 points and good value at \$22.

www.patinawines.com.au

Hanging Rock 'Odd One Out' Victoria Pinot Gris 2009: Classic pear nose and standard PG flavours easy wine to drink 89 points OK Price at \$20 but I would rather spend it on another wine www.hangingrock.com.au

James Oatley 'Tic Tok' Adelaide Hills Pinot Gris 2009: Yer like this; good pinot Gris colour which is a dirty off-white and it tastes just right 90 points worth the \$18 www.robertoatley.com.au



Forty Two Degrees South Tasmanian Pinot Grigio 2009: Serious PG for a change; This is a beautiful wine although not yet developed I give it 91 now but think there will be a point or two more as it gets some bottle age very much worth its \$24 www.frogmorecreek.com

Ninth Island Tasmanian Pinot Grigio 2009: Has a faint tinge of colour in the wine making it look off-white but that is good in PG; clean and fragrant nose, very sharp in the mouth and needs to settle down but will be a good wine later in 2010; 89points now more to come pushing the price barrier at \$21.50 but Tas wine always has that extra edge so still worth it www.kreglingerwineestates.com

Pinot Gris/Grigio summary: *Not a bad half dozen which is a change from the average. Australian producers are looking at Pinot Gris to replace the flagging interest in Chardonnay and counteract the ever increasing flow of New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc. Unfortunately much of what is made rates very low and by the time the producers have worked it out the consumer will have moved on.*

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Straight savvy and Savvy's & Sem's or Sem's & Savvy's

Penny's Hill 'The Agreement' Adelaide Hills Sauvignon Blanc 2009: I got white peach on the nose but not yet ripe; fuller on the palate than I expected for a savvy it had texture 91 points and good value at \$19 www.pennyshill.com.au

Braided River 'Wairau River' Sauvignon Blanc 2009: Not as aggressive as many NZ savvy's either on nose or palate and some good flavours as it travels 90 points and price is right at \$19 www.cheviotbridge.com.au

McWilliam's 'Balance' Semillion Sauvignon 2009: The 'Balance' refers to this being a wine that Weight Watchers has endorsed. Its only 8.5% alcohol and one 150ml glass has a Weight Watchers Points value of 1. It's easy drinking and OK no need to go over the top and its doing a good job 87 points and I think on the pricy side at \$17 www.mcwilliams.com.au

Evans & Tate 'Classic' Margaret River White 2009: The notes say its to be enjoyed as a 'fresh, zesty and youthful wine' it is that but at the time I tasted it perhaps too 'fresh' I can't dismiss it I just think a little more bottle age will help 88 now with a couple more waiting to be bestowed. In one way worth \$20 but with so much wine out there its top heavy in price www.mcwilliams.com.au

Mount Avoca Pyrenees Semillon Sauvignon Blanc: A very refreshing wine that I tasted and rated 89 points but sat with friends on the veranda chatting and found many favourable comments so I will up it to 90 admitting influence and at \$16 good value. www.mountavoca.com.au



Rosabrook Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc- Semillon 2009: Attractive nose of herbs, grass, flowers beautifully balanced with a seamless journey from beginning to end pure enjoyment all the way 93 points and outstanding value at \$20 www.rosabrook.com

Summary: *I'm beginning to think I over compensate when it comes to Savvy. It stems from not liking it therefore I make a great effort to be fair and as can be seen they get good marks. The stand out was the Rosabrook*

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Favoured child Chardonnay

Ballast Stone Currency Creek Chardonnay 2008: Very sound, very satisfying, very enjoyable Chardonnay 90 points and good value at \$17 www.ballaststonewines.com

Browns 'Melba Family Reserve' Padthaway Chardonnay 2007: Not exciting but sound 90 points price is \$25 there are plenty of others out there \$5 cheaper and a couple or three points above www.browns-of-padthaway.com

Bloodwood Orange region Chardonnay 2009: Pale green in colour lovely clean nose a mix of spice and wild flower but caught from a distance not full on. Tight to start and doesn't fully come out as it journeys but one day it will, more like Chablis then Meursault and very different from most Australian Chardonnay. 90 points but more to come and \$25 is a good price www.bloodwood.biz



Printhie 'Mount Canobolas Collection' Orange Region Chardonnay 2008: A new release from a producer who is leaping up the quality rankings. The new wine is good in fact very good I still feel there is room for fine tuning but I am already looking forward to future releases worth 93 points touch on the pricy side at \$35 but when it starts to challenge the Australian great Chardonnay's it will appear cheap www.printhiewines.com.au

Mount Eyre 'Three Ponds' Hunter Valley Chardonnay 2009: The back label says 'full of ripe melon and peach flavours' and I go along with that just adding its not over ripe full-on but all within balance and very enjoyable 91 points and worth its \$20 www.mounteyre.com

Hanging Rock 'The Poppet Head' Central Victorian Chardonnay 2008: Tight wine and elegant with fine long flavours a wine above its price point \$19 and 92 points www.hangingrock.com.au



Deen De Bortoli 'Vat 7' Mixed Region Chardonnay 2008: To start its quite

light but the clever blending of different regional styles brings it to life in the middle and carries on to the end 89 points good value at \$13 or less
www.debortoli.com.au

James Oatley 'Tic Tok' Mudgee & Pemberton Chardonnay 2009: Good nose and some smart flavours as it travels well put together and a solid 90 points but there are a lot of Chardonnays out there around \$18 to choose from
www.robortoatley.com.au

Chardonnay summary: *what a group of beauties so many individual flavours representing regions and styles; how can people not love these wines?*

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Odd White

Hanging Rock 'Odd One Out' Heathcote Viognier 2008: Classic peach nose with interesting flavours swirling around the mouth very enjoyable 90 points and worth its \$20 www.hangingrock.com.au

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Merlot plus one

Whistler Barossa Valley Merlot 2008: Interesting wine, although the oak has been kept in check the American factor still comes to the fore on the nose and front of palate. Sharing the wine with others one woman remarked on the lovely sweetness of the smell and initial flavour. As the sugar is a low 2.5 g/l I assume it's the sweet smell of the oak combined with the opulent fruit that gives this impression. 91 points and worth \$26 www.whistlerwines.com

Found Stone SE Australian Merlot 2008: plenty of fruit and some structure easy drinking drop worth 88 points and very worth \$10
www.bertonvineyards.com.au

Heggies Eden Valley Merlot 2007: Being honest as a Merlot its good but for me as a complete wine its dysfunctional a reluctant 90 points as it is not what I want it to be and I feel very expensive at \$29 www.heggiesvineyard.com

Mount Eyre Hunter Valley Merlot 2009: Red and juicy wine well made and attractive has more of an interesting edge than many Merlot's so worth the money and 89 points \$15 www.mounteyre.com

Browns 'Edward Family Reserve' Padthaway Malbec 2003: I found it harsh on first taste, harsh when I went back to it and harsh the next day persevered and tried it with dinner didn't work there either clumsy wine 83 points and for me not worth \$24 www.browns-of-padthaway.com

Summary: *Rather a lacklustre bunch Whistler from the Barossa in the starring role as for the Malbec words fail as did the wine*

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Sensual Shiraz

Deen De Bortoli 'Vat 8' Australian Shiraz 2008: Not complex but a lovely juicy wine, easy and pleasant to drink 89 points and good value at \$13
www.debortoli.com.au

Brown Brothers 'Patricia' Victorian Shiraz 2006: Quite a regional mix of grapes 41 percent Heathcote 35 percent King Valley and 24 percent Pyrenees. The Brown's follow the Penfolds Grange theory of taking the best bits from all that is available to them and by putting them all together come out with the whole being better than the parts. To my mind all they have achieved here is a middle class suburban blend it's not for me but give it 91 for all those it will please and who are prepared to pay \$46 for it www.brownbrothers.com.au

Pfeiffer Rutherglen Shiraz 2008: Rich ripe NE Victorian Shiraz I can't get over excited about it but hard to put it down as it's far from a duff wine 88 points and a lot of Shiraz out there for \$21 not so good value for me.
www.pfeifferwinesrutherglen.com.au

Hanging Rock Heathcote Shiraz 2006: Rich Christmas fruitcake nose with a hint of savoury, great structure has a real presence in the mouth before it starts its journey plenty of flavours unfolding and mixing leisurely building to a magnificent finish 95 points and I think a couple more to come as it ages worth \$70 www.hangingrock.com.au



Hanging Rock 'Rich Reef' Victoria Shiraz 2007: Not a good vintage for Victorian Shiraz but the Ellis family have crafted this one very well hints of spice all along its journey with length of flavours good wine 91 points and good price \$19 www.hangingrock.com.au

Rymill Coonawarra Shiraz 2005: Very classy on the nose, still a hint of oak on the palate rather a taut wine to start gains fullness as it travels but never gets fat a good drop 90 points and very good value at \$25 or below. www.rymill.com.au

Browns 'T Trellis' Padthaway Shiraz 2007: It's a different style of wine from older vintages the clumsy style has gone and the fruit is left to express itself 90 points and good value at \$18 www.browns-of-padthaway.com

Currency Creek Estate 'Ostrich Hill' Fleurieu Peninsula Shiraz-Viognier 2007: So very soft to start all chocolate and truffle but some grip appears in the middle lifting the wine for the rest of its journey this really takes it from a 87 to a 91 point wine good on the aftertaste as well and excellent value at \$17
www.ballaststonewines.com

Stonemason Currency Creek Shiraz 2008: Another wine from Ballast Stone and what a cracker it really tastes \$5 better than the \$12 price it carries, rich but not slickly great construction that is it has a good nose a beginning middle and ends well 90 points. www.ballaststonewines.com



Angove 'Vineyard Select' McLaren Vale Shiraz 2008: Ripe lack plum with hint of chocolate on the nose soft top notes but power underneath supporting the whole 92 points and very good value at \$18 www.angove.com.au

Ballast Stone McLaren Vale Shiraz 2008: Has all the rich chocolate tinged with spice that McVale does so very well 91 points and great value at \$17

www.ballaststonewines.com

Chapel Hill McLaren Vale Shiraz 2008: Seductive nose in the mouth rich to start but, a lovely bitter (good) edge comes into play many flavours unfold as it travels 92 points and worth its \$30 www.chapelhillwine.com.au

Penny's Hill 'Cracking Black' McLaren vale Shiraz: The name is the description cracking wine 91 points worth the \$22 but there is a lot of competition out there under \$20 www.pennyshill.com.au Ray Jordan writing in The West Australian 11th February describes it as 'a real crowd pleaser' and gives it 89

Red Knot McLaren Vale Shiraz 2008: Fruitcake nose then fills the mouth with an array of flavours and seem to hit all parts at once rather than a journey; exuberant comes to mind 90 points and a good buy at \$15 www.redknot.com.au

Dowie Doole McLaren Vale Shiraz 2008: Such an enjoyable wine from first sniff to final swallow I couldn't fault it but it lacked a wow factor still gets 92 and worth its \$25 www.dowiedoole.com



Printhie 'Mount Canobolas Collection' Orange Region Shiraz Viognier 2008: Moot point I know but its more Syrah then Shiraz it's a different style and takes Australia in a new direction its rather wonderful 94 points and good value at \$35 www.printhiewines.com.au

Mount Eyre Coonabarabran Shiraz 2009: Nose of mixed dark fruits sits very well in the mouth and is a pleasure to drink. I think Mount Eyre is a very under rated producer and suggest you get on to them ahead of the rush, 91 points very good value at \$15 www.mounteyre.com



Meerea Park 'Alexander Munro' Hunter Valley Shiraz 2007: A full expression of the Hunter Shiraz style the only difference I found was a hint of pepper on the nose giving an extra edge to the savoury style 93 points now but more as it ages as for price \$70 is a lot but this is a wine that should be up amongst the most fated that Australia has to offer therefore yes it is worth it. www.meereapark.com.au

Meerea Park 'Hell Hole' Hunter Valley Shiraz 2007: As with its brother (Terracotta) it has the hunter earthy nose and immediately releases savoury flavours those flavours go deep and last long the whole effect in the mouth is a wonderful sensation. I found it more forward (slightly) then Terracotta therefore more enjoyable to drink now and worth a point more as well 94 also worth \$50 www.meereapark.com.au



Sensual Shiraz Summary: *What a beautiful selection the Hunter leads McLaren Vale by a whisker but its not really about first and second its about contrasting tastes these are really world class wines*

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Cabernet Blends

Currency Creek Estate 'The Black Swamp' Fleurieu Peninsula 2005: Quite

the blend Cabernet Sauvignon with bits of Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot could be described as a classic Bordeaux blend. It does have that smell of Bordeaux about it but with much more fruit. Very easy to drink has a beginning, middle and end 89 points very good value at \$17 www.ballaststonewines.com

Baritone 'Maxim' Limestone Coast Cabernet- Shiraz 2008: The notes say 'a robust red' to use a Prime Minister Rudd expression 'you know something' it is, just that and it went down a treat 89 points and very good value at \$13 for a litre bottle No web site

Houghton 'C.W. Ferguson' Great Southern Cabernet Malbec 2007: Almost but not quite sounds harsh but when discussing wine of this quality 94 points and price \$49 the finer detail comes sharply into focus it's a great wine to drink with friends and discuss and the quality is there without doubt. www.houghton-wines.com.au

Evans & Tate Margaret River 'Classic' Red: A blend of Shiraz and Cabernet it's a very well put together wine and extremely enjoyable 90 points and just value at \$20 but if found cheaper then go for it, one tip chill it a little it works wonders and it went well with the tucker I had the night of tasting (pork chop & salad). www.mcwilliams.com.au

Brands 'Laira' Coonawarra Cabernet Merlot 2008: Classic Coonawarra style and very good as all Coonawarra Cabernet dominant wine should be; thankfully most is returning to a standard after a decade of some poor wine debasing the region 92 points and value at \$22 www.mcwilliams.com.au

Formby Adams 'Cutting Edge' Langhorne Creek Cabernet-Shiraz 2007: Broad wine in fact leading to plump easy drinking and well received by the people I shared it with I wasn't as keen. 88 points ok price \$19 www.brothersinarms.com.au

McWilliams '1877' Cabernet Sauvignon-Shiraz 2005: No regions named on the front of the bottle but in tiny script on the back Heathcote, Hilltops and Coonawarra are mentioned. It's another Penfolds Grange approach; take the best parcels and blend for the best wine. I wasn't over impressed with the oak on the last offering but this I find better in fact it's a superb wine with a long life ahead of it the only drawback at the moment is its youth so its one to buy and put away for at least five years 91 points now several more to come as it ages as for \$85 pricy but a damn sight cheaper than many others out there claiming top dog www.mcwilliams.com.au

Summary: *An interesting selection of wines with the McWilliams leading the pack*

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Solo Cabernet Sauvignon:

Deen De Bortoli Vat 9 Cabernet Sauvignon 2008: Region or regions not stated; is 'juicy' an accepted wine term? Maybe not but that's how I found the wine and very acceptable 88 points and good value if found under the recommended \$13 www.debortoli.com.au

Leconfield Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon 2008: It's a big alcohol wine at 14.5% but carries it well although it lacks poise a plump wine 90 points and

pushing price at \$30 www.leconfieldwines.com

Formby Adams 'Leading Horse' Langhorne Creek Cabernet Sauvignon

2007: Rich yet earthy nose leading to a palate that has plenty of grip to start with flavours unfolding as the wine travels long on the finish and it gives plenty to think about 92 points and good value at \$19 www.brothersinarms.com.au

Ballast Stone 'RMS' McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon 2005: Not very Cab like on the nose I even got a hint of pepper Although 2005 its still tight in the mouth and the unbalanced fruit is to much to the fore it didn't ring my bell 90 points and I think expensive at \$50 www.ballaststonewines.com

Ballast Stone McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon 2008: Plenty of McVale chocolate character well supported with tannin/acid it's a style I enjoy 90 points great value at \$17 www.ballaststonewines.com

Solo Cabernet Summary: *One grape and a vast array of flavours and textures, it's really hard to sum up*

Deen De Bortoli 'Vat 1' Riverina Durif 2008: Powerful wine with plenty of bite its for drinking out of tumblers while tearing chunks off a sourdough loaf and chewing on a lamb chop, great stuff 90 points and well worth \$13 www.debortoli.com.au



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