

Top Australians in London

7 Jun 2009 by Jancis Robinson

Here are notes on some decidedly superior Australian wines to keep us going while Julia completes her tour of Australia and has time to neaten up all the notes she took on the wines in the bottles shown here.

Every year my wine writing colleague Matthew Jukes chooses his 100 Best Wines of Australia 2009. They're always interesting and I try to go to his presentation of them to the trade on the first evening of the London Wine Trade Fair in May at Australia House. (See [here](#) for details of how you can win a pair of tickets to taste the 100 Best at Australia House on Tuesday 30 Jun.)

I went along this year as usual, as you can see from this picture of Matthew and me, plugging his selection and the tasting sheet he always provides, with some particularly racy descriptions of them. Below are my notes on the 30+ wines I had time to taste at his trade presentation, together with his much more eloquent descriptions in italics. He has also obediently put each of them into one of the categories Wine Australia has devised as part of its 'branding initiative'. The category least represented, and one not tasted by me, is BC or Brand Champions.

There are several really good buys here. Search for GV (good value) and VGV (very good value). Wines are listed in the order they were presented in the tasting. You can find the complete list at www.matthewjukes.com

NSW - New South Wales
SA - South Australia
Vic - Victoria
WA - Western Australia

RH - Regional Heroes
LA - Landmark Australia
GN - Generation Next

WHITES

Philip Shaw, The Architect Chardonnay 2008 Orange, NSW 15 Drink 2009-10

The drama quotient is on red alert with this unoaked, yet searingly dry Orange Chardonnay. The Shaw manifesto states that every wine released from this operation should challenge the drinker with every sip. The leesy, tangy, white-knuckle fruit on display here makes your brain pop with excitement as you murmur appreciatively into your glass.

I found this a little dull and vapid, I'm afraid, but perhaps it was served too cool?

£10 GN

Primo, Joseph d'Elena Pinot Grigio 2008 Adelaide, SA 16.5 Drink 2009-10

At ten years old, Elena herself (Jo's daughter) must be very proud of her namesake - this beautiful, herb and sweet-spiced-punctured Pinot Grigio. Coming from only a one hectare plot I have always been a fan of this wine but, to date, I have never quite had the confidence to write it up. The vineyard has come alive in 2008 and therefore, I have no hesitation whatsoever in commending it to you in this 100. I know what Elena will be drinking on her eighteenth!

This wine uses the new, catch-all GI Adelaide because although the admirable Joe Grilli is based in Adelaide Plains, the grapes for this pretty accurate rendition of Pinot Gris were actually grown in McLaren Vale. Full bodied and assertive even if less perfumed than many Pinot Gris.

£11 GN

Willow Bridge, Wild Ferment Sauvignon Blanc 2008 Geographe, WA 17 Drink 2009

With raspingly vibrant Sauvignon fruit, this re-badged wine sets out to stem the flow of Kiwi Sauvignon onto the shelves and into our fridges. With ninja-like precision, and a glittering array of aromatics, proud Aussies can now fight back with

this Asian-fusion whirlwind of flavour.

Very WA, all grassy herbiness and very lively and correct without added sweetness.

£12RH

Pikes, The White Mullett 2008 Clare Valley, SA 17 Drink 2009

Just to show that the South Africans aren't the only people in the wine world to make 'something out of nothing white blends' so successfully, Pikes Mullett is a Riesling/ Viognier/ Sauvignon Blanc/ Chenin Blanc blend which confounds the sceptics and defies belief by tasting incredibly complex, as it should do, but also downright delicious at the same time (which most don't). Mulletts all round please.

VGW - inspired, zesty, full, truly intriguing blend at a good price. Really easy to like - complete and broad on the palate.

£8 GN

Fox Gordon, Princess Fiano 2008 Adelaide Hills, SA 15.5 Drink 2009

Australia's finest Fiano this year is made by Tash Mooney. There is more richness and beauty here than before and yet it still sits below Viognier on the exotic scale, so if you are looking to broaden your horizons beyond Chardonnay and the like, then rest a while here taking in the spectacular texture and invigorating complexity that Princess Fiano offers.

Very full and broad - almost overweight, as is Fiano's wont. Off dry and lacking a bit precision. Tastes more potent than the 13.5% specified on the label.

£10 GN

Leasingham, Bin 7 Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 16.5 Drink 2010-13

Back to top form in 2008, Bin 7 is sniper-like in its accuracy as it targets your palate with unerringly accuracy and Saharan-dry, Clare Valley Riesling fruit. Price-point-wise this wine over-delivers by a mile, plundering, as it does, from the Classic Clare pool which give it its central core of life-giving, lemon and lime fruit.

Tight but fine and mineral-scented with masses of lime fruit. Bone dry but not too austere (unlike some Clare Rieslings).

Not a bad price.

£10 RH

O'Leary Walker, Watervale Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 16.5+ Drink 2009-14

This year, the Watervale cuvee triumphed over the Polish Hill version in the annual O'Leary Walker taste-off, but it was a close run thing as usual. There is bracing acidity and lemon and lime spice, bounding out of the glass in this wine, and at this price you should buy as much as you can carry.

Hint of talcum powder on the nose - very good depth of flavour and real fruit on the mid palate. Really reverberates and should improve. VGW

£10 RH

Pewsey Vale, Prima Riesling 2008 Eden Valley, SA 16.5 Drink 2009-12

There is an unwelcome element of worthiness in recommending a purposefully low alcohol wine, however, like many beautiful German Rieslings, Prima is downright delicious and so its alcohol level is not the reason why it has made the grade this year. The jocular, garrulous, tumbling fruit cocktail of flavours with its cool, long lick of juiciness on the finish all make this a stunning wine and one which revels in the challenge of modern day Asian and Indian cuisine. P.S. it's sealed with a Vino-lock too, so there is even more fun to be had watching sommeliers eyes pop out of their heads when they see it.

Methinks Jukesy doth protest too much about this 9.5% wine. It's a very worthy inclusion - light, off dry with excellent balanced even if not quite as much finesse as some German Rieslings with a similar structure.

£11 GN

Plantagenet, Riesling 2008 Great Southern, WA 16 Drink 2010-13

The WA Riesling revival is in full swing this year and Plantagenet, a newcomer to The 100, is perhaps, on one level, a square peg in a round hole. (However that is our problem, not the wine's!) Taste it again and appreciate the angular, cool, mineral-driven nature of this wine and see just how appealing it could be to the greater public and how the responsibility might fall to producers like this to introduce Riesling to its true, new audience rather than relying on the more famous Clare and Eden Valleys.

Herbal perfume and absolutely bone dry. Still pretty tight, but it should get there....

£11 RH

Tamar Ridge, Kayena Vineyard Riesling 2008 Tasmania 15.5 Drink 2010-11

This wine was, for me, the biggest single shock of the ADTs [Australia Day Tastings - JR]. After having sipped the KV

Sauvignon (qv) I then moved on to this Riesling and was horrified when I wrote 19 out of 20 in my notebook. The drive and determination coupled with the downright deliciousness of this wine on the palate, was, and still is, completely all-enveloping. Legend has it that there are magnums out there too!

Not especially aromatic and bone dry - a bit vegetal even. I found this rather ungracious and felt it could do with a bit more fruit.

£11 RH

Pikes Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 16.5 Drink 2009-12

Neil Pike seemingly has a season ticket to 100 Best and this will not change as long as he continues to enchant us with wines like this one. Fleshy, ripe, cool and incredibly detailed, 2008 Pikes Riesling is a joyous wine and one that deserves to cast its spell on a far wider fan base.

Heady nose and then off dry on the palate. Has more fruit, and zest, than most. Well made and not too politically correct on the residual sugar.

£13 RH

Pewsey Vale, The Contours Riesling 2004 Eden Valley, SA 17.5 Drink 2006-16

This is the first 'un-Germanic' Contours we have seen in years and yet it still has the late-release, genie-in-a-bottle appeal which makes Contours such an unmissable proposition. With no petroleum on the menu you will have to make do with rhubarb compote, green peach and waxy honeycomb notes which do only one thing - make you ravenously hungry and want to run out to the nearest and finest purveyor of victuals in your borough.

Lovely development on the nose, then round, smoky, toasty and great, well balanced mouthful of mature Riesling fruit on the palate. Well done, Yalumba, for continuing this policy of releasing mature Riesling from their Eden Valley vineyard.

VGW

£13 LA

De Bortoli, Estate Grown Viognier 2008 Yarra Valley, Vic 17 Drink 2009-11

There is a zen-like precision to this Viognier which leaves you feeling calm and cool and unlike many other wines made from this grape, not at all weighty or fruit-soaked. There is infinitesimal detail here on the nose and palate but it is all delivered in an almost monastic manner as opposed to a wild western 'yeehah' so often encountered with this variety.

A new wine from the talented Steve Webber. Smoky, reductive but pretty rich and tense on the palate - very far from the usual perfume and flesh that so many Viogniers offer. A sort of cross between Cuilleron and Coche-Dury. One to watch.

£15 RH

Gemtree, Moonstone Albariño 2008 McLaren Vale, SA 15 Drink 2009

While not harnessing quite as much intensity as some Northern Spanish versions of this grape, Gemtree still manages to seize the transcendental appeal of Albariño with its tart, candy floss nose, spiders web crystalline zestiness and raspingly, dry finish. It is fascinating to see how swiftly Aussie winemakers create wines in their back yard after having found them on tour around the world.

Presumably this is actually made from Savagnin (see [Australian 'Albariño' isn't](#)). I found it a bit sweet and surprisingly, lacking acid.

£17 GN

Grosset, Springvale Watervale Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 17 Drink 2012-20

Another Watervale wine, and this time from the guru himself! Jeff's 08s are all delicious but the wine to buy must be this one, on account of its extraordinary line and length. I am always amazed at just how much passion and craftsmanship goes into these wines and in the greater scheme of things, they are still woefully underpriced.

Very fine, tight, pure and extremely young - much more youthful than most of these Australian whites.

£17 LA

Skillogalee, Trevarrick Single Contour Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 16+ Drink 2014-19

Is this the finest Riesling of the 2008 vintage in Australia? It certainly tastes like it today but, as you know, this is a competition that will run and run with anything up to ten other players in the field. Suffice to say that Trevarrick is in my cellar already and I promise not to touch it for five years.

For the moment the experience of tasting this is just a bit too much like sucking lemons for me to be more generous with my score. Extremely tight and dry, but it may well turn into a luscious swan..? Matthew may well have more experience than me of this wine and its evolution.

£18 LA

Jim Barry, The Florita Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA 17.5 Drink 2009-20

Peter Barry and the gang have now got The Florita vineyard back where they want it and it is a joy to see this vineyard responding so beautifully to their care and attention. 2008 Florita Riesling is slippery smooth, all-pervading and incredibly rewarding already which only serves to throw up a handful of problems for the keen collector, principally, when should we drink this wine? I would find it hard to say no to a bottle today knowing full well that it is already on such devastating form. However, given five, ten or even fifteen more years it will surely continue to thrill its audience.

Lovely broad opulent nose and then great combination of ripeness and precision on the palate. It's already delicious but seems to have enough tucked in there for an admirably long life. For background see [Great Australian Rieslings back to 1973](#).

£21 LA

KT and The Falcon, Peglidis Vineyard Riesling 2008 Clare Valley, SA ?? Drink 20??

Only 350 cases of this wine were made and only a tiny fraction of this number will make it to St. James's Street, so act now if you want to own one of the purest expressions of Clare Valley terroir available. The illusion in the glass is that this wine is already starting to drink well, but please exercise restraint though because Peglidis is only one year into its twenty year life span.

Unfortunately this wine arrived only at the end of the period during which I was at the tasting and may have suffered therefore. Julia expresses enormous admiration for it in her account of [Landmark Australia - Day 5](#) whereas I found it had a slightly sweaty nose and was just too austere and dry on the palate for me. I'd like the chance to taste it again! 12%
£21 RH

Penfolds, Yattarna Chardonnay 2006 Australia 17.5 Drink 2010-15

Rather than sneaking over the line this year, Yattarna has ram-raided our fortress and it is worth every penny of its fruity price tag. The restraint and bashfulness on the nose is wonderfully endearing, coupled with the way in which the palate releases its gifts incrementally, this is a truly mesmerising wine. It is hard to find a longer finish anywhere else on the planet.

See my enthusiastic tasting note [here](#)

£40 LA

Leeuwin Estate, Art Series Chardonnay 2006 Margaret River, WA 16.5+ Drink 2009-15

Art Series Chardonnay makes its annual appearance at Australia House with metronomic regularity and this is because it is, and always has been the most consistently brilliant Chardonnay in Australia. However, this means that every year, it has to raise its game and we are delighted to report that once again it has done just that. Flabber your ghastr and learn that this wine is made using 100% new oak, too, and you will see that the fruit in Art Series is of true Grand Cru quality! It is worth noting that 2007 Leeuwin Prelude Chardonnay is also on a high this year proving that this estate has a divine touch with this grape.

Heady, rich, layered with a suggestion of allspice and slightly salty edge. Not yet especially subtle but to judge by previous vintages it will be eventually.

£50 LA

REDS

Tamar Ridge, Devil's Corner Pinot Noir 2008 Tasmania 16.5 Drink 2009-11

A relative newcomer to the Tasmanian wine scene it is extraordinary to see how far and how fast Tamar has come and the proof, as always, is in the Pinot. This little Devil is nothing short of incorrigible with its chunky, cheeky Beaujolais-esque crunch on the palate and summer pudding aroma. We need more of these wines in the UK, because nowhere on earth can produce them with the joie de vivre (and value for money) that this wine has in spades.

Light, dull red. Sweet and light on the nose - super fruity. Not bad value at all.

£11 GN

Knappstein, Riposte The Sabre Pinot Noir 2007 Adelaide Hills, SA 16 Drink 2010-12

A Grand Vin approach to winemaking only results in a noteworthy outcome if the fruit used is of tip top quality. Tim accesses stunning raw materials for The Sabre, and then builds an enigmatic wine from the ground up, inlaying intricate oak marquetry and a definitive Adelaide Hills gout de terroir for good measure. It's also £10 less than it should be, so thank you Tim.

Deep ruby with an odd mealy nose - a little odd (is that the gout de terroir?). More study needed on my part?

£15 RH

Ten Minutes by Tractor, 10X Pinot Noir 2007 Mornington Peninsula, Vic 17 Drink 2009-13

With showy (almost slutty) fruit intensity and a 'near-Barbera-like' palate, 10X is about as boisterous and marauding as this variety has ever been. Welcome this frat-house Pinot with open arms though, as long as you invite its sage uncle, 2006 McCutcheon Vineyard Pinot Noir, too, as a chaperone, because you will then see that TMbT has got all of the bases covered for this awesome grape.

Intense, spicy with great freshness and integrity. Good, well judged stuff that finishes dry.

£19 GN

Yabby Lake, Pinot Noir 2007 Mornington Peninsula, Vic 16.5 Drink 2009-12

There is an elemental energy to this wine that signals the arrival of a Pinot with a true sense of terroir. Youthful (as you would expect) but brimming with energy, the sauvage aromas and whirlwind plum and cherry flavours are yet to be tamed. They will undoubtedly fall into line in the coming months. Yabby is one of the hottest properties in Australia right now!

More obvious sweetness than its 10X neighbour - you might criticise it for being a teensy bit obvious - halfway to Central Otago perhaps?

£24 RH

Bremerton, Tambllyn 2006 Langhorne Creek, SA 16.5 Drink 2010-13

Langhorne Creek is a massively important wine region in Australia and Bremerton is its beacon of excellence. Tambllyn is another complex blend (Cabernet Sauvignon / Shiraz/ Malbec/ Merlot) which uses the very finest notes of each of its constituent varieties to play the most soulful music in the glass. With incredible harmony and heart-warming melodiousness this is a wine which could open this region up to a brand new, world wide audience and a few number ones, too!

Deep crimson. Sweet and sour with some rather rhubarb-like notes. Some real interest here.

£11 RH

First Drop, The Big Blind Nebbiolo /Barbera 2007 Barossa Valley, SA 16.5 Drink 2009-12

As a rule, I find it difficult to get my head around the legion of Italian and Spanish grape varieties now planted in Australia. Only a few examples have made it into the 100 this year but the Big Blind for me, is the bravest and it also has the most to lose! For these reasons I am delighted to congratulate Matt Gant on making a wine that completely stopped us in our tracks. This is a valid and eminently collectable 'Super Piemonte' wine made by a thoroughly delightful ex-Essex lad - Bloomin' marvellous!

This looks much older than two years but it certainly delivers true Piemontese flavours with some pzazz and delicacy.

Well done.

£16 GN

Glaetzer, Anaperenna Shiraz/Cabernet 2007 Barossa Valley, SA 17 Drink 2010-15

Ben continues to raise the bar year after year with his spectacular, eponymous wines. '07 Anaperenna is a sensitively assembled wine (bearing in mind its dimensions) and even in its youth it is showing us just how serious a proposition it is with an extraordinary depth of field and a palate that continues to open over hours. This must be one of his greatest releases to date.

This Shiraz/Cabernet blend is thick, chewy and tarry yet manages not to fall over itself. There is real class here, though those who insist on elegance should probably look elsewhere.

£32 LA

Paxton, Quandong Farm Shiraz 2007 McLaren Vale, SA 16.5 Drink 2010-15

This biodynamically grown Shiraz complete with bee-emblazoned label is a delicious concoction of black liquorice, morello cherry and crème de cassis. With a ten year life ahead of it, I suspect that we are a few years away from its peak, so swirl vigorously and try to knock those bees off the bottle.

I'm intrigued by the Chinese name of this farm. Very deep colour and obviously very serious stuff with an appetisingly dry finish, good balance and real 'twang' to this - far from one of the 'dead fruit wines' of Barossa of which Brian Croser has been so critical.

£15 GN

Glaetzer, Bishop Shiraz 2007 Barossa Valley, SA 16+ Drink 2011-16

The Bishop has true balance in 2007 making it a much more welcoming, but no less complex, wine and in addition to this

it is a medium-weight Barossan Shiraz, drawing its energies from purity of fruit as opposed to overt muscle. This is the way forward for Ben and his wines. And as they both mature we will be in for even more excitement in years to come. Extremely youthful with the acidity and tannin still very evident. I'd wait quite a while.
£19 RH

Teusner, Joshua 2007 Barossa Valley, SA 17.5 Drink 2009-14

The magical, unoaked GMS blend is one of Australia's least recognized weapons, and with examples as masterful and as attractive as '07 Joshua available we are hoping that we will see more of them in the future. Kym Teusner has a way with his wines that is nothing short of mystical, coaxing every last molecule of charm from every grape and leaving any trace of coarseness behind - everybody please take note.

Naughty heavy bottle but a very impressive wine. Dense but very lively and racy with real freshness and transparency. Great lift and persistence. Wears its 14.5% alcohol lightly. GV
£20 RH

S C Pannell, Shiraz / Grenache 2006 McLaren Vale, SA 17 Drink 2009-12

Steve Pannell mentors his McLaren Vale Grenache encouraging it to perform at the highest level in his wines. For that reason his blend makes the cut this year over his straight Shiraz. Both wines are showstoppers but this renegade variety is entranced by Steve's calming influence, making this wine a truly wondrous treat.

Intense red. Very thick and sweet and spicy with more than a nod to Châteauneuf though the tannins are better managed than in some southern Rhône reds.
£23 RH

Dutschke, Oscar Semmler Shiraz 2006 Barossa Valley, SA 17.5 Drink 2009-16

Wayne Dutchke's famous Shiraz is a fraction of the price of some of the Barossan big guns, but it in no way holds back in any department of perfume or concentration. In fact, texturally, this wine is succulent, luxurious and brocaded without ever being gaudy, and none of this excitement is reliant on oak, because it is all thanks to his phenomenal fruit.

Super spicy on the nose yet dry on the finish and firm structured yet with absolutely masses of juice and fruit in the middle. Still for a way to go too.

£25 RH Imported by Genesis in the UK.

Penfolds, Grange 2004 South Australia, SA 19.5 Drink 2010-60

It was with great trepidation that Q and I tasted a pre-release screening of this wine and our delight was unimaginable when we realized, in stereo, that it was one of the most delicious wines of the past twelve months. The massive crescendo of flavour and soaring tannins roll on for minutes and the harmony is kept in perfect check at all times. This vinous pantechicon is absolutely stunning and I will watch it with great interest over the next forty years (if I am lucky). See my enthusiastic tasting note [here](#).

FORTIFIED

Seppeltsfield, Cellar No 9 Muscat NV Rutherglen, Vic 17 Drink 2009-14

It is worth pointing out that this wine is only available in 75cl format, which must make it one of the greatest value sweet wines in the known universe. Why we in the UK don't drink containers of this nectar at dinner parties is beyond me, given that this is exceptional value for money, as well as ancient and heroic and it makes everyone else in the room better looking instantly.

Pale tawny, super transparent, molten Demerara sugar. Very slightly rancio, extremely sweet and pretty chewy. Very long indeed. I could imagine lapping this up with fresh walnuts. Great stuff. See my [background to Seppeltsfield](#). VGV
£10 LA