FBI arrest Rudy Kerniawan

9 Mar 2012 by Jancis Robinson

See also Rudy - pictures and details, and the Wine fraud thread in our Members' forum.

As reported here in yesterday's *New York Times*, the young Indonesian wine collector and dealer based in southern California known as Rudy Kerniawan, has been arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and charged with knowingly selling counterfeit wine.

Longstanding visitors to this site will know that we have been following this story for at least six years. Late in 2006 we reported on the lavish single-owner sales organised by Acker Merrall & Condit in New York which were later attributed to Rudy (see That crazy, single-owner Acker sale).

In 2009 we told the tale of how Laurent Ponsot, whose dramatic intervention at one of those sales resulted in the withdrawal of considerable quantities of Ponsot wines from it, had become Burgundy's Sherlock Holmes.

Two months later we reported, re the litigious wine collector Bill Koch, Koch goes for Rudy and followed that up with The strange case of Acker & Rudy.

Things went a little quiet for a while and little was heard of Rudy K, who had previously, despite his youth, been a very visible member of many American tasting groups. It was assumed by some that he had fled the United States. But last month southern California lawyer Don Cornwell alerted us via this thread on our Members' forum (even ahead of the considerable coverage on the American, less libel-conscious winebeserkers.com forum) that he suspected some of Rudy's wine collection was resurfacing in a London sale on 8 February.

I devoted my most recent *FT* column to the subject of Fighting fakes, noting that the FBI were getting involved in wine fraud. I myself was recently contacted by an FBI agent, who was spookily conversant with email correspondence I had had with Rudy in November 2006 when researching my article on the Acker single-owner sale.

We await developments and are intrigued that wine counterfeiting equipment was found chez Rudy. Some of those involved in selling fine wine believe that nothing should be written about this subject because it could harm the fine-wine business. This may be why this topic has been curiously under-reported elsewhere. But we applaud the likes of Don Cornwell and fine-wine consultant and Purple Pager Maureen Downey of Chai Consulting and their determination to clean up this unsavoury aspect of the subject we all love by exposing blatant malpractice.