Rudy in Vanity Fair

12 Jun 2012 by Jancis Robinson

American wine writer Michael Steinberger has been rather quiet of late as he has been entangled with the *Vanity Fair* editorial team writing a long article about the Rudy Kurniawan fake-wine story we have been following for so long on this site.

The July edition containing the result is now available in paper form in the UK and the article has just been published online under the somewhat predictable headline A Vintage Crime.

Steinberger's old friend Ben Wallace, author of *The Billionaire's Vinegar*, published a long article entitled Château Sucker on the same topic for *New York* magazine last month, so it was important for Steinberger to deliver some new nuggets and not just a rehash of the 95-page relevant thread on winebeserkers.com that has itself played an important part in the tale.

Having rapidly scanned his piece, I offer the following observations and shortcuts to the new stuff:

- Rudy was a major buyer of old burgundy from, of all people, Patriarche! Perhaps this was the only source he could find of affordable liquid that could reasonably be passed off as burgundy.
- Those famous Domaine Ponsot Clos St Denis wines from the wrong vintages were possibly inspired by a bottle of Christine Ponsot 1947 Clos St-Denis bought by Rudy. He presumably confused this with a Dom Ponsot bottling when in fact Christine Ponsot was a sous-marque used by négociant Émile Chandesais which had no relationship with the Ponsot family of Dom Ponsot.
- Laurent Ponsot is convinced that Rudy did not act alone and says that he suspects he knows the identity of his mentor/accomplice.
- Rudy never seemed to have a girlfriend but sometimes brought his mother to wine tastings. He took over the restaurant Melisse in Los Angeles for her 60th birthday celebrations attended by the likes of Jackie Chan and, inter alia, a jeroboam of (what was taken to be) Pétrus.

Steinberger's usually racy, fluid style seems to have been somewhat solidified by the rigours of the *VF* editing process but there is lots of nourishment here.