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BIG RED ISSUE PART I

Dutschke, KAESLER, Battely, YERING STATION RESERVE, Two Hands, BURGE FAMILY WINEMAKERS, Cloudy Bay, CULLEN DIANA MADELINE, Grosset, De BORTOLI, Grant Burge, PENFOLDS SUPERS, Tapanappa, TULLOCH, Pipers Brook, and lots more ...

WINE OF THE MONTH



TAPANAPPA WHALEBONE VINEYARD CABERNET SHIRAZ 2004

Teeth stained purple. Lips numb. Head buzzing with alcohol. I've been tasting non-stop red wine at a mad rate over the past six weeks, and the results are starting to come through. Here, in the following dozen or more pages, are the 100 Red Wine Reviews that make up the April 2007 edition. There are a lot more red wine reviews on the way as I work my way towards the TOP 100 RED WINES of 2007 (Part II and Part III to be released before then), to be announced in June in the Red Wine Album book (see page 14 for details). The 2004 and 2005 Australian red vintages have produced a rage of brilliant wines. Time to start sorting them out ...

A.Mano

A.Mano Primitivo 2005 (19.95)

Yay. This is beautiful. Full, rich, savoury sweet wine with an ever-drying, ever-chewy, ever-interesting finish, all for less than \$20. It's also now available with a screwcap seal. You bloody beauty. Sweetly exotic, gently but noticeably oaked, full of the flavours of flowers and dry earthen fields and plum-splashed tar – for fear that I am about to get rhapsodic, let me just say that it's a bonza, chewy, flavoursome, ridgy-didge Italian wine, and that everyone should grab themselves a few bottles. At least. Drink: 2007-2010. 88 points.



Angove's

Angove's Long Row Shiraz 2005 (\$10):

Soft, sweet, raspberried, attractive, not bad at all. Good quaff. Drink: 2007-2008. 83 points.

Barking Owl

Barking Owl Western Australia Shiraz Viognier 2004 (\$16.50) screwcap:

This is produced out of the Millbrook winery. It's soft and pluggable and just a little sweet. Sugared plums, eucalyptus, charry oak and a medium-length finish. It's pretty good value. Drink: 2007-2009. 84 points.

Battely

Battely Beechworth Durif 2005:



I would argue that this is the best Australian durif that I have tried. It reminds me a lot of a good nebbiolo. It's tannic and dry on the finish and yet floral, pretty, sweet and gorgeous through the mouth, roses and aniseed and gritty, mineral earth-like flavours giving it a distinctly Italianate feel.

Given another five years bottle age, it should make for wonderful drinking. Drink: 2008-2015. 94 points.

Battely Beechworth Syrah 2005:

Lovely follow-up to the beautiful 2004. Packed with sweet fruit flavour – aniseed, raspberry, blueberry – and lifted to further dimensions by exotic notes of graphite, cedar and toast. Lots of brightness and oomph. Fruity, ripe, flavoursome tannins. A touch rawer than was the 2004 at this early stage of its life,

which augurs well for the future. This is another beautiful example of the rich, sweet flavour grown out of the Battely estate vineyard. Drink: 2008-2015. 93 points.

Battle of Bosworth

Battle of Bosworth McLaren Vale Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$24) screwcap:

I like wines like this. It doesn't hold anything back, with lots of sweet, bold, tethered fruit in the



blackberry jam and raspberry spectrum. It also though has a sweet, soupy, winter aspect of stewed vegetables – in a good way. Drinking it is like supping on a favourite dish. I just wish that it had a littler more length. Drink: 2007-2014. 89 points.

Battle of Bosworth McLaren Vale Shiraz 2005 (\$25) screwcap:

There's a core of sweet, spicy, raspberried fruit here but it dries out nicely on the finish, making for a satisfying drop. An earthiness comes through with time in the glass, but it still remains a simple, reliable, warm shiraz that probably needs a bit more going on. Drink: 2007-2013. 87 points.

Black Chook

Black Chook Shiraz Viognier 2005 (\$18) screwcap:

Boom of flavour for the price. Made by Ben Riggs, and very much in the Ben Riggs style – lots of flavour, lots of alcohol, lots of black fruit power.



Tastes of charcoal, brandy, stonefruit, blackberry jam, and is hot on the finish – this wine provokes the proverbial dragon's breath. You cannot deny the amount of flavour it delivers though. Drink: 2007-2008. 85 points.

The Black Chook Sparkling Shiraz NV (\$18):

I'd claim this as a genuine rival to Seppelt Original – and I don't say that often. It's clean and sweet, medium-bodied and easy to drink, the finish fruity and dark and earthen. This has been beautifully put together, at a nice price. I knocked back a bottle much quicker than I was intending. Drink: 2007-2010. 88 points.

Brini

Brini McLaren Vale Blewitt Springs Shiraz 2004 (\$19):

Straightforward, generous, ripe, plush shiraz, flooded with blackberry jam-like flavour and seasoned with vanillin oak. It's not rocket science, but it is lovely. Value. Drink: 2007-2011. 88 points.

Brini McLaren Vale Shiraz Grenache 2004 (\$16) screwcap:

Wow, there's a lot of punch here. Ripping for the price. Thick, plummy, raspberried, tarry and intense, creamy oak adding texture more than flavour. It's warm too, but no complaints about the delivery of flavour. Drink: 2007-2012. 89 points.



Brini McLaren Vale Limited Release Sebastian Shiraz 2004 (\$TBA):

Lovely. Smooth as a golden handshake.

Rich but reserved, elegantly tannined, smoky, toasty, full of fleshy, dark, plummy fruit, very powerful and yet, darn it, very easy to drink too. It's an ooze of melted plums, the odd pang of creosote giving it an exotic edge. Typical McLaren Vale shiraz, but a top rendition of it. Drink: 2007-2017. 93 points.

Brini McLaren Vale Sebastian Shiraz 2004 (\$28) screwcap:

Beautiful oak-fruit integration. There's a lot of bright, racy, red and dark berry flavour here, and it finishes with a decisive twist of ground spice – this is a lovely drinking wine. Cedary oak has sunk into the fruit to perfection. It's not complex, but the components are very good quality – there's a lot to love here. Drink: 2007-2015. 90 points.

Buckshot

Buckshot Vineyard Heathcote Shiraz 2004 (\$28):

Soft, flavoursome, lipsmacking shiraz. Mint, mulberry, iodine and plums, cedary (and beautifully integrated) oak layered throughout. Nice wine. Very smooth. Just becomes a bit dilute on the finish. Drink: 2007-2010. 87 points.

Bullock Road

Bullock Road South Australia Cabernet Shiraz 2004 (\$14) screwcap:

Dark, semi-intense, tasting of charcoal and blackberry

and of mediocre length. Reasonable at the price. Drink: 2007-2008. 83 points.

Burge Family Winemakers

Burge Family Winemakers Barossa Valley Garnacha Dry Grown Grenache 2005 (\$25):

Pure, structured, fruit-driven grenache. A great example of this label. Adorned with flavours of raspberry, aniseed, dry chocolate and red pebbles, it sits bright and vibrant in the mouth before coating your gums in chalky, expansive tannin. The alcohol is high (15%), but the wine is very good. The value too is exemplary. Drink: 2007-2014. 92 points.

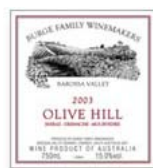


Burge Family Winemakers Barossa Valley Limited Production Shiraz Souzao 2005 (\$25):

Lovely to smell, lovely to drink. Rich, solid, warm and hearty – it would be the perfect tonic for a cold winter's night. It tastes of coffee grounds, dark chocolate, brandied plums and red, iron-rich earth, the rich, fruity clout of it rippling all the way through to the finish. I tasted it over 24 hours and it held firm throughout – I suspect that you could drink this any time over the next five years, with great pleasure. Drink: 2007-2013. 89 points.

Burge Family Winemakers Barossa Valley Olive Hill Shiraz Mourvedre Grenache 2005 (\$32):

Stand-out wine. Beautifully balanced, beautifully flavoured, long and juicy and satisfying. Full of plums, blackberry, smoke, graphite, chocolate and cedar flavours, it keeps ringing through your memory long after you've swallowed the last of it. This is a single vineyard wine, made from a vineyard sitting atop a ridge of limestone. As Rick Burge quite correctly points out: it's not just from the Barossa, or from the southern Barossa; it's specifically from Olive Hill, and carries distinctive tastes because of it. This is a top-notch wine from a top-notch producer. Drink: 2007-2014. 94 points.



Cheviot Bridge

Cheviot Bridge Coonawarra Hunter Valley Cabernet Merlot 2003 (\$12.95) screwcap:

Grainy, savoury, easy-going red wine that has enough sweet fruit and enough spicy appeal to make it a

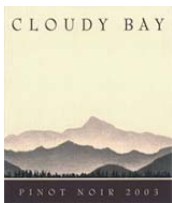
winner at the dinner table. An excellent mid-week option. More savouriness than sweetness, with mulchy, cherried, peppery, earthy flavours fleshing it out. Lovely tannin profile too. I like it. Drink: 2007-2010. 84 points.

Cheviot Bridge Heathcote Shiraz 2004 (\$12.95):

Good drinking at the price. Delivers a decent hit of eucalyptus, plums, dark currants and sandalwood-like flavour, the finish fruity and sweet after a rather savoury, appealing mouthful. Maybe a touch gamey, but pretty easy to recommend for early, easy-going consumption. Drink: 2006-2008. 84 points.

Cloudy Bay

Cloudy Bay Pinot Noir 2005 (\$40) screwcap:



Punchy, weighty, flavoursome pinot noir. Big on flavour and varietal definition, but generally lacking in finesse and, perhaps, charm. Like a rock that's yet to be sculpted. Dark, sour cherries, cedar, woodspice, big tannins. Drink: 2007-2011. 89 points.

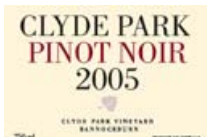
Clyde Park

Clyde Park Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2001:

A touch of oxidation and, at least from the bottle I opened, a hefty amount of development, though not unattractively so. Lots of spice, soy, truffle, leather and mineral flavours, carried along on a juicy palate that lingers satisfyingly. A touch volatile, but in a good way. This is no better than a quaffer, but it's a good one at that. Drink: 2007-2008. 84 points.

Clyde Park Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2003:

Lovely wine - though very ripe. Pretty but firm, varietal, expressive, more-ish and mighty drinkable. Fragrant with, and tasting of, violets and cherry-plum and earth, it's balanced and persistent and bound to



age nicely medium term - though, as this note suggests, it's drinking delightfully now. It is at the riper end of the pinot spectrum, but it has settled into itself very nicely. I almost scored it higher. Drink: 2007-2012. 90 points.

Clyde Park Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2004 screwcap:

And this is better again. Indeed, this is very fine. Power, spice, interest, length, structure - you name it, it's pretty much got it. Lots of dry, chalky cherries,

minerals, earth and spice, its tannin and acid structure suggesting that it'll go a few years yet. I wish I had seen this while it was still the current release - this is very good, and high value at the \$27 price it was sold at. Drink: 2007-2013. 92 points.

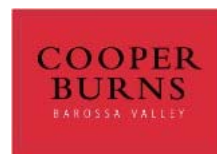
Clyde Park Bannockburn Pinot Noir 2005 (\$27, current release) screwcap:

Slightly sweeter than the 2004 and yet it seems better balanced, and better defined - this is really good wine. Sappy, stinky complexity lies behind sweetly cherried, almost floral fruit, the effortlessness of it quite beguiling. This should be terrific drinking in another three years. Drink: 2008-2014. 93 points.

Cooper Burns

Cooper Burns Barossa Valley Shiraz 2004 (\$30) screwcap:

If you like Rockford Basket Press shiraz, I suggest that you track this down. It's very much in the same style. Fresh, juicy, flooded with dark, balanced, medium-weight fruit flavour and seasoned with coffeed, smoky, chocolatey oak. It's almost an old-fashioned style, but a very effective one - and this is a good version of it. Drink: 2007-2014. 90 points. www.cooperburns.com.au



Cullen

Cullen Margaret River Diana Madeline 2005 (\$90) screwcap:

This is a boomer. It is the best since 2001. It is strong, pure, muscular, wrapped in big arms of tannin and statuesque in its bright, clean, dark fruit profile. There's a sense of the tall, dark and handsome about this. It presents as a straight, perfumed, controlled burst of plums, blackcurrant, cedar, cigarbox, musk, chocolate and cloves, the merest tip of eucalypt giving it lift and life. This is a 20-year, long-haul wine. Don't touch it for a long time. Blend this year is cabernet sauvignon 75%, merlot 16%, malbec 5%, cabernet franc 3% and petit verdot 1%. Drink: 2018-2027+ 95 points.



D'Arenberg

D'Arenberg McLaren Vale Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 (\$65) screwcap:

Perfumed, sweet, malty, rich and warm. It might be

easy to dismiss it, if it weren't for the tremendous anchor of tannin, long, taut, and beautifully formed. Iodine, earth, blackberry – the flavours are every bit McLaren Vale cabernet. It will age for 20 years with ease. It is quality. Drink: 2014-2025+ 92 points.

De Bortoli

De Bortoli King Valley Windy Peak Sangiovese 2005 screwcap:

The flavours are right but there's something insipid about it.

DE BORTOLI WINES

Sour cherries, hazelnuts,

creamy oak and lots of acid, the combination of it not quite reaching medium weight. Nice, chalky tannin. Good for sloshing down with the family at the local bistro – with noise all around. Drink: 2007-2008. 82 points.

De Bortoli Windy Peak Shiraz 2005 screwcap:

Spicy-sweet style in the lighter vein, a nice line of savoury fruit leading to firm-ish, chewy tannins. Made for the table. Attractive minerality. Bang on, if touch a touch too sour. Drink: 2007-2009. 85 points.

De Bortoli Yarra Valley Reserve Release Syrah 2005 (\$45) screwcap:

A world away from the common impression of Australian shiraz. Bear in mind that I'm talking about a shiraz, but this is minerally, flinty, almost steely on the finish, the whole package rammed tight with tannin and ground spice and bright, dark, cherried fruit. There are notes too of star anise, sap, cinnamon, twigs and smoke, and for distinctiveness in the Australian context it has to be tasted to be believed. It is a Burgundy-styled syrah, in need of ten years in the cellar. Drink: 2013-3020. 94 points.

Devil's Corner

Devil's Corner Tasmania Pinot Noir 2005 (\$17) screwcap:



This comes out of the Tamar Ridge stable. It smells good – floral, fruity, pure – but is hard and rubbery in the mouth, with off-putting smoke and burnt rubber flavours dominating. Good structure, but the crowd has gone home. Drink: 2007. 80 points.

Dutschke

Dutschke Barossa Valley Lyndoch GHR Four Vineyards Shiraz 2005 (\$25) screwcap:

Big, sweet, grainy, like sucking on malted blackberries after they've just re-asphalted the road out front. Lots of power here. Lots of fruit sweetness. Lots of value. You have to like them big and warm, but if you're in that mood; this delivers. 15% alcohol. Drink: 2007-2013. 91 points.

Dutschke Barossa Valley Oscar Semmler Single Vineyard Shiraz 2005 (\$50):

Wonderful Barossa shiraz. Tight, silken, fleshy, loaded with soft dark fruit flavour and then punchy and structured through the finish. Sweet fruit galore, but in a controlled package. Alive with refreshing acidity. Notes of tar and licorice. Coffeed oak seamlessly integrated. Warm finish, but by then the seduction is complete. Drink: 2007-2013. 92 points.

Dutschke Barossa Valley Single Vineyard St Jakobi Shiraz 2005 (\$32):



Has a fair whack of sweet dark fruit but quite a bit of restraint too, its savoury, grainy, lipsmacking tannins holding it all in place. Not that it's a shrinking violet. It's warm and big, raisined, fresh with malty, baked plum-like flavour and pumped with the

striking flavour of sun-hardened licorice-sticks. Warm and fruity through the finish – I wouldn't be surprised if this registers above 15% alcohol. Drink: 2007-2013. 90 points.

Dutschke Barossa Valley Sami Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$30) screwcap:

Wayne Dutschke decided to bottle this separately because he thought the cabernet looked so good – it won't be a regular bottling, and will only appear in super cabernet vintages. Must say, I have to agree with him. This is super, and super value. It's essence of cabernet: sweet through the palate, grainy, leafy, long and succulent. The alcohol is high, but doesn't show in the wine. This is beautiful. It will age. Drink: 2007-2015. 93 points.

Dutschke Barossa Valley Single Barrel Shiraz 2005 (\$55) screwcap:

The rarest of the Dutschke red releases and there's no doubting its deliciousness. It's the smoothest, softest, most yummy of the whole range, the dark fruit flavour like a magic carpet ride of black

Barossan power. Coal, aniseed, tar, raspberry, blackberries, coffee and woodsmoke, the oak like a snug glove around the creamy, chocolaty, delicious centre of fruit. It's perhaps a little on the simple side, but as a purely hedonistic exercise, it's 'the goods'. Drink: 2007-2016. 93 points.

Grant Burge Barossa Valley Willow Bend Merlot Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon 2005 (\$20) screwcap:

This is a really good wine. Clearly from an excellent cabernet year in the Barossa. It's warm and long, structured and yet generous in its fruit impact. One taste and I was diving back for more. Dust, chocolate, blackberries, tar, it's all here and it's all good. Low oak influence. Maybe a touch too warm, but for twenty bucks there a helluva lot of bang here. Drink: 2007-2013. 90 points.

Five Virtues

Five Virtues Great Southern Shiraz 2005 (\$35) screwcap:



Unusual wine in that it's a blend of 15 different parcels of shiraz from all over the Great Southern wine region – which is vast. This really is the Great Southern shiraz. The nose is perfumed and sweet, the palate juicy and smooth. It has good flow through the mouth, and a real, effortless drinkability. It's polished, lifted by ground spice and jubey cherries, and if the tannin structure had shown just a touch more class, it would have scored very highly. I like the wine. Medium bodied. Drink: 2008-2015. 89 points.

Fox Creek

Fox Creek McLaren Vale Short Row Shiraz 2004 (\$28) screwcap:

Yes, it's a nice wine. It's rather porty and rich but it manages to stay alive and vibrant, saturated plums meeting cloves, cedar, raspberry and loamy earth. There's a touch of the exotic here. It's good value too. Drink: 2007-2010. 90 points.

Grant Burge

Grant Burge Barossa Abednego Shiraz Grenache Mourvedre 2002 (\$60):

A new flagship for Grant Burge, made from the fruit of vines more than 50 years old, all the grapes hand-

picked. It's very fragrant, very minty, very fruity and not at all overwhelmed by oak – it's a delicious wine, despite being riddled with mint and eucalyptus. Raspberry, earth, malt, decks of licorice and blackberry – it's quite a joy to sink into. Drink: 2007-2015. 91 points.



Grant Burge Barossa Valley Meshach Shiraz 2002:

Cor, cop the oak on this baby. It's coffeed, citrusy, vanillin, clovey, almost soapy, all of which flavours and fragrances I dare say come from the oak. In the mouth it races with acidity, and admittedly it's here that the fruit wins through, plummy and earthy, perhaps even a touch undergrowthy. I think it will hold together okay medium term, and probably even overcome its oak concerns – but it'll never be anything special. Drink: 2008-2016. 88 points.

Green Point

Green Point Yarra Valley Reserve Shiraz 2004 (\$47) screwcap:

Tight, spicy, serious, liqueurous wine, big on meaty, black cherry-like flavour and robed in classy, cedary, spicy French oak. Very fine, very good, silken tannin. Lengthy. Some signs of sappy, twiggy, herbal influence. But very much a ripe, sophisticated, cool climate shiraz in the best sense of the words. It needs seven or eight years in the cellar. Drink: 2013-2019. 92 points.

Grosset

Grosset Adelaide Hills Pinot Noir 2005 screwcap:

I'm re-tasting this because the first bottle I had of it was off-puttingly reductive. Both bottles I've tasted from were sealed under screwcap.



This bottle is much better, cleaner, purer, longer and more attractive, with good structure and fruit power. It's varietal, sour-sweet and coiled in on itself for now. It should age well. Drink: 2010-2016. 89 points.

Grove Estate

Grove Estate Wines Hilltops Cellar Block Reserve Shiraz Viognier 2006 (\$36) screwcap:



The viognier is slightly on the high side, but boy there is a lot to love here. Full but elegant, ribbed with spice, long and seductive – this is a quality cool climate wine, no questions asked. Spicy, dark cherried fruit, integrated oak, clean, polished presentation – if you like Clonakilla shiraz viognier, I dare say that you'd like this. Drink: 2007-2018. 92 points.

Grove Estate Wines Hilltops Reserve Nebbiolo 2006 (\$30) screwcap:

I'm on to this. It's good. It's bold and tannic, floral and long, oodles of spiced plum and Bonox-like flavour powering it along. It probably lacks a touch in the ethereal stakes, but the structure is good and the length excellent. Would be fascinating to see it in seven or eight years. Drink: 2010-2016. 89 points.

Grove Estate Wines Hilltops The Partners Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 (\$30) screwcap:

I wouldn't call it overly varietal but I do admire its quality. It's malty, sweet, bold and inviting, the generous rush of fruit throwing tar and blackcurrant in a heady torrent. Soft tannins. A light spray of dried herbs. Lengthy. Very good. Drink: 2010-2016. 91 points.

Haselgrove

Haselgrove Coonawarra Reserve Cabernet 2004 screwcap:



It opened oak-dominant but it settled down to be an elegant expression of Coonawarra, medium-weight and slightly herbal, mulberried fruit swishing throughout. It almost seems almost too elegant for its own good, but I suspect that time will be kind to it. Drink: 2011-2016. 88 points.

Hochkirch

Hochkirch Shiraz 2005 cork:

A lot of people will love this wine. It's syrupy and silken and blushed with sweet, soft, mouthfilling blackcurrant, the effect as it rushes from the glass confronting in both its intensity, and its classiness. This is in many ways a very special wine, with ripe

glycerol tannins, pulpy, meaty, fleshy fruit, integrated spice and controlled, cedary oak. The only caveat is that the wine also displays aromas, and flavours, of



tinned corn and asparagus, which many will love, and many others will find unpleasant. The score reflects a middle line. Drink: 2008-2014. 89 points.

Izway

Izway Barossa Valley Mates Grenache Shiraz Mataro 2006 (\$20) screwcap:

Oh yes, this is totally, totally delicious. Glorious wine at a glorious price. It tastes of luscious, bright, winsome smoke, blackberry, charcuterie, small squishy raspberries and ground spice, the interest and joy of it bleeding out onto its sleeve. I could drink this every night. Ripper. Bargain. Drink: 2007-2012. 92 points.

Jamsheed

Jamsheed Yarra Valley Shiraz 2005:

I like the style but I'm still not sure that it's there. It's spicy, cherried, savoury, floats nicely through the mouth – but then falls a bit short. Maybe it needs further time to settle. Maybe the tannins are just a bit severe. Drink: 2009-2014. 85 points.

Juniper

Juniper Crossing Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon Merlot 2004 (\$16) screwcap:

Good value. Flushed with sweet red berry-like flavour and yet dry and structured on the finish. It's a nice mix of affable quaffability and serious intent. I'd drink it over lunch. Gravel and dried herbs, cedar and currants, all massaged into an attractive, fluent package. Drink: 2007-2010. 87 points.



Juniper Crossing Margaret River Shiraz 2004 (\$17) screwcap:

Ripe and bold through the mid-palate but then dry and astringent on the finish. Glossy, polished dark cherry flavours. Cedary oak. Green herbs to close. I don't find the combination attractive. Drink: 2007-2009. 82 points.

Juniper Estate Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon 2003 (\$32):

Wild. Flavours of undergrowth, game, mulberry and

chocolate, the finish horsey and dry. Drink it young, and it's both interesting, and satisfying. Drink: 2007-2010. 85 points.

Juniper Estate Margaret River Shiraz 2003 (\$29) screwcap:

Good Margaret River shiraz. Leathery, cherried, gamey, savoury and dry, its medium weight, fruity flesh off-set by undergrowthy tannins. Just starting to develop. Drink: 2007-2010. 86 points.

Kaesler

Kaesler Barossa Valley The Bogan Shiraz (\$50) 2005:

This has all the flavour components Kaesler lovers look for – dense, ripe fruit, spicy coffee, toasty oak, hints of bright red berries and mounds of squashed dark beauty – and it all tastes very good. It's a great big warm drink, and it's great big warm fun. That said, it's not as persistent as I'd like it to be, and it does finish with a brandied sting. Drink: 2007-2012. 89 points.

Kaesler Barossa Valley Old Bastard Estate Single Vineyard Shiraz 2005 (\$160):

It's a monster. It's made from vines that were planted in 1893, and the grapes from the 2005 season were ripened to produce a wine that declares itself at 16% alcohol. At that, it's going to taste warm and finish even warmer, and it does. But on the way there it seduces its big red heart out. It's very well structured, but the tannins are coated in a glycerol, chocolate-like texture and flavour, the result being smooth, milky, tasty and divine. The mid palate is all sweet, black, tongue-staining berried fruit, elements of toast, sweet beefstock, red earth and tar packing it to the gills with flavour. It smells good, and tastes good, though it does knock you around – a couple of glasses and I was both begging for mercy, and enjoying myself immensely. These wines are not to everyone's taste, but they are some kind of miracle. Drink: 2008-2019. 94 points.

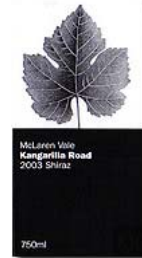
Kaesler Barossa Valley Old Vine Shiraz 2005 (\$60):

This is right on the money. Its legion of fans are going to love it. It's bold and expansive, sweet and coffeed and spicy, a riot hitting your mouth as soon as you



pop the cork and get it going. Smoke, graphite, sweet brandied plums, mocha, chocolate – it's one with the lot. Totally irresistible. Drink: 2007-2014. 93 points.

Kangarilla Road



Kangarilla Road McLaren Vale Sangiovese 2005 (\$17) screwcap:

There's a lot of coffeed, caramelly oak here and it's doing its best to cloud out all varietal charm. Sweet raisins, anise, raspberries and oak – soft and gluggable, but you'd be better off just buying a shiraz. Drink: 2007-2008. 84 points.

Majella

Majella Coonawarra The Musician Cabernet Shiraz 2006 (\$19.90) screwcap:

Another lovely release. Soft, berried, dusty, every-so-slightly creamy and regional to its core. It tastes and looks pretty damn wonderful, all fruit flesh and dark, broody colour. Yum. Drink: 2007-2011. 89 points.

Mantons Creek

Mantons Creek Mornington Peninsula Tempranillo 2003 screwcap:

Dull, bricking colour and very dry in the mouth, tarry and cherried, yeasty, quite long and quite tannic. Demands food. Could do with more punch. Drink: 2005-2007. 82 points.

Marchese di Frescobaldi

Marchese di Frescobaldi Castello di Pomino Pomino Rosso 2001 (\$31.95):



It's a pinot noir grown in Tuscany, though it's blended with sangiovese and merlot. Madly, I think it's bloody delicious – though not exactly pinot-like. Leathery, earthen, tannic, full of nutty flavour on the finish and very dry as it closes. Very Italian, and satisfies the craving. Drink: 2007-2012. 87 points.

Marchesi di Frescobaldi Castiglioni Chianti 2004 (\$23.95):

Balanced and good, but a bit too heavy on the cheesy, leathery, gamey flavours – very much a drink young proposition. Lots of drying tannins. Lots

of nutty flavour. Drunk young, with hot pizza, and it can be easily enjoyed. Drink: 2007-2012. 84 points.

Marchesi di Frescobaldi Morellino di Scansano Santa Maria 2004:

It's got those gorgeous Italian scents of almond paste and fresh leather, here married to cherry liqueur and blackcurrant. I could go this, but in truth the tannins are harsh and it does not feel cohesive in the mouth. Nor is it long. One for die-hard Italophiles. Drink: 2007-2009. 84 points.

McIvor Estate

McIvor Estate Heathcote Cabernet Merlot 2004 (\$25):

Love the fruit profile of this wine. It has a bit of class about it. It's blueberried, minerally, soft, earthen, loaded with ultra-fine tannin and soft through the mouth. There's some eucalypt in there too, but it's at a minor level. I thought it was a bit abbreviated on the finish at first, but it spread out with time in the glass. Very nice wine. Drink: 2008-2014. 89 points.

McIvor Estate Heathcote Nebbiolo 2004 (\$30):

It's easy to set too-high standards with nebbiolo because it's probably the grandest grape of them all – so I hope I'm not ripping into this too harshly. It seems to me though to be muddled, lashed with coconut, cherried of fruit and otherwise dull, the length good but definition and nuance missing. It's also minty. Drink: 2010-2014. 83 points.

McIvor Estate Heathcote Sangiovese Reserve 2004 (\$35):

I always find traces of eucalypt in Italian varieties particularly disturbing, and while there's not a lot of it here, there's enough to put me off. Otherwise it's a lovely wine: full of savoury tannin, rich with dark cherry/blueberry fruit flavour, pretty on the nose and serious in the mouth. It finishes rich and mouthfilling, and should age well. A sangiovese to watch – this is concentrated for the breed. Drink: 2009-2015. 90 points.

McIvor Estate Heathcote Shiraz 2004 (\$30):

Really good. Peppery, floral, pumped up with deep, plush, dark berried fruit and then juicy and silken on the finish. The fruit has totally consumed the oak, and the warm length of it is satisfying. Love the mix of musk and violets here. A winner. Drink: 2007-2014. 92 points.



Mount Pleasant

McWilliam's Mount Pleasant Hunter Valley Shiraz 2004 (\$65) screwcap:

The first Maurice O'Shea shiraz ever to be released under screwcap. Great move. The wine itself though, from this vintage, is not stellar, with thick, blue, 100 percent French oak swamping what minerally, plummy, cherried fruit that there is. It's a soft, supple, easygoing wine, with little tannin and, apart from the heavy-handed oak, excellent fruit-acid balance. The overall flavour of the wine though is not a particularly attractive one. If you do buy one to drink, give it an hour in the decanter – it helps the oak subside. This release was also estate-bottled – another excellent move. Drink: 2008-2013. 87 points.



Medhurst

Medhurst Yarra Valley Shiraz 2004:

Farmy, raspberried, cherried fruit is matched to drying, ripping, horsey tannins. Nice perfume. Seems to be drying out fast. Drink: 2007-2008. 84 points.

Michael Unwin

Michael Unwin Acrobat Cabernet Sauvignon 2002 screwcap:

Nice. Maybe a little feral and wild, but full of curranty fruit and banged up with flavour. A real good drink. Oak way in the background. Fruit, lively fresh finish. This is good. Drink: 2007-2012. 88 points.

Michael Unwin Acrobat Sangiovese 2004 screwcap:

Huge tadpole of a wine. Super floral, super savoury, jumps from the glass and then attacks the front palate – before quickly sliding away. Tremendous fun while it lasts. You'd go a long way to find a more floral wine. An experience. Drink: 2007-2008. 85 points.



Michael Unwin Acrobat Shiraz 2002 screwcap:

Good drink. Lovely mix of savouriness and bold, sweet, fruity appeal, baked plums and blackberries mingling among menthol, cloves and lots of deliciously ground spice. Good weight, good flavour,

good stuff. Drink: 2007-2011. 89 points.

Michael Unwin Barbera 2004 screwcap:

Much like the sangiovese of the same year except gamier, horsier and drier through the finish – indeed, it signs off decidedly tannic and chewy. I like it, but there are flavours here that some will find offputting. Drink: 2007. 84 points.

Mt Jagged

Mt Jagged Southern Fleurieu Single Vineyard Reserve Shiraz 2004 (\$35) screwcap:



It smells like caramel but has an attractive savoury edge through the palate, tarry blackberry meeting sand, dry earth and malty oak. It's not overly persistent but it is satisfying – though not, really, at the price. Drink: 2007-2012. 87 points.

Oakridge

Oakridge Yarra Valley Pinot Noir 2005 screwcap:

I was keen to find that Oakridge pinot had come of age – but this isn't quite there. It just lacks a bit of definition, and brightness. Sour cherries, lots of tannin, flashes of rhubarb and earth – it's all good, but all not quite enough. Drink: 2008-2013. 87 points.

Oakridge Yarra Valley Shiraz 2004 screwcap:

Very nice wine. Sour cherries, plums, cedar and a mix of white and black pepper, all attractively presented. It lacks x-factor for me, but the wine is good. Drink: 2007-2013. 88 points.

Parker Coonawarra Estate

Parker Coonawarra Estate Terra Rossa Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 screwcap:

Classic Coonawarra. Beautifully structured, made to age, curranty and savoury at once, powerful but not overly so, varietal but not in your face about it. Blackcurrant, dried herbs, toast, dark berries and lots of chalky tannin. A complete package. Very good wine. Drink: 2013-2018. 93 points.



Parker Coonawarra Estate Terra Rossa First Growth Cabernet Merlot 2004:

First class. Brilliant wine. Richly fruited, gloriously structured, long and firm and potent. A powerhouse

of sophisticated control, the dark fruit authoritative and the oak masterfully entwined. This is varietal, regional, and pure. Highly recommended. Drink: 2014-2024. 95 points.

Penfolds

Penfolds Barossa Valley RWT Shiraz 2004 (\$150) screwcap:

A \$150 red wine sealed under screwcap – for both prestige and reliability, this wine takes some beating. It is almost guaranteed to impress. The fruit is purple, powerful, smoother than a game-show host, long and lingering, the mix of blueberry and violets, cassis and milk chocolate flavours all of heady and rich and wonderful. For all that, the oak is very well tamed and the flow of flavours easy and sure – it's an elegant expression of the Barossa, and yet still a powerful one. It is a wine without downfalls, except for the fact that at this early stage, it does lack complexity. Time will need to take care of that if it's to genuinely warrant higher points; as a young wine, it tastes very, very safe. Drink: 2013-2024. 93 points.

Penfolds Bin 707 Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 (\$160):

I'd heard reports that this was less encumbered with oak than usual but the bottle I drank was still heavy with seasoned, cedary, spicy vanillin, the established oak-driven style of the label clearly intact. That said, the wine shimmies with class, the musky, dusty, curranty flavour of it long and dry and its fine, fleshy, filligreed tannins reaching long through the mouth. It is a wine in a style, true, but quite a superb example of it. Drink: 2015-2025+ 94 points.



Penfolds Bin 95 Grange 2002 (\$500):

A precise, definitive, lattice-structured wine of great power and poise. This vintage is a great example of what Grange is, and of how new American oak and rich South Australian shiraz can seamlessly combine to form a sophisticated whole. This is not an over-powered wine, but it is beautifully powered, with a great push of meat, plums, smoke, vanillin, cassis and bright, rich blackberries pouring through your mouth. Its wealth of fine-boned tannins is, though, what sets this wine apart, and gives it the best long-term cellaring potential since the 1996 vintage Grange release. This should be a 25+ year wine. It's a classic example of precision wine engineering. (And indeed,

for my personal taste, it is the best Grange since the 1996). Drink: 2015-2035+ 96 points.

Penfolds Magill Estate Shiraz 2004 (\$90):

Beautifully balanced wine. Fruity, sure, energetic, vibrant and generous, its blueberryed, raspberryed, blackberryed core darted with charcuterie, game, cedar and the first blushes of leather. The latter notes make me think that it's a relatively short-term wine, but while it lasts it will be thoroughly delicious. Succulent! Of the 2004 super-premium Penfolds, the Magill Estate is the one to take to dinner as a young wine. Great fun. Drink: 2008-2015. 93 points.



Penfolds St Henri Shiraz 2003 (\$80):

I was disappointed at first. I thought it was prune-y and raspberryed and lacking in brightness and definition, and bound to develop early. With time in the glass though it revealed swathes of exotic black pepper spice, and the subtlety of its tannin structure started to gradually pull through, giving the wine form and class. It is a remarkably spicy, almost meaty wine for a St Henri and, thank God, shows far less oak influence than have some other recent St Henris (which were starting to make the large, old oak story of St Henri look like a myth). This, like so many St Henris before it, is a deceptively good wine. It's more warm-year Rhonish than usual, but within allowable St Henri limits. Medium term, it should age well. It's a 5-8 year wine though, rather than a 10-20 year wine. Drink: 2011-2016. 91 points.

Pepperjack



Pepperjack Barossa Shiraz 2005 (\$23):

Solid wine. Well structured too. Cakey dark fruit slides through the mouth, dripping with flavours of chocolate and mocha and warming alcohol. It finishes gravelly, warm and well. Drink: 2007-2011. 87 points.

Pikes

Pikes Clare Valley Lucio Sangiovese Merlot Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 (\$16) screwcap:

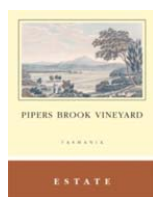
Good, chewy, savour little number, light in body but sweet-savoury in profile – and satisfying. I took this to lunch and drank it with char-grilled fish, and was more than happy. Tannin grip gives your tongue time

to hang onto the modest flavour here. Nice. Drink: 2006-2008. 85 points.

Pikes Clare Valley The Dogwalk Cabernet Merlot 2004 (\$17) screwcap:

Developing fast and prematurely drying out. Drink up. Game, undergrowth, mint, currants, charcoal, cedar – there's a lot here, especially at the price, including a fair dose of farm-floor funk. If that's your thing, you'll find a lot of pleasure here. Drink: 2006-2008. 84 points.

Pipers Brook



Pipers Brook Estate Pinot Noir 2005 (\$37):

Reserved, tight, coiled wine, built for the future. Flavours of ground spice, clay, dry twiggy cherries and lots of citrusy acidity. Grainy tannins. Needs another three years in bottle. Drink: 2010-2015. 88 points.

Tapanappa

Tapanappa Wrattonbully Whalebone Vineyard Cabernet Shiraz 2004 (\$70):

This will live for a long, long time. It's a statuesque wine, firm and dense and serious. It smells dusty and soy like and layered, and it tastes magnificent – it does that rare thing of offering up a lot now, while at the same time suggesting strongly that there is still a lot more to be revealed. Dense blackcurrant, chocolate, dried herbs, dust, ground spice, and lots of well-formed, rigid, muscular tannin. It is a touch on the warm side, but it is a magnificent wine. Drink: 2015-2025+ 95 points.



Tiller

Tiller McLaren Vale Koota Gra 2005 screwcap:

Blend of merlot, shiraz and grenache. Light and fruity, no oak in sight, raspberryed and sweet-ish before a dry finish. No real length. OK. Drink: 2007-2008. 82 points.

Tim Adams

Tim Adams Clare Valley Shiraz 2005 (\$19) screwcap:

A mouthful of squished ripe berries. Amazingly bright, full and fruity. Almost cordial-like in its

fruitiness, except that the flavours are dark and rich and the warming sense of alcohol is always apparent. Extraordinarily easy to drink. Great fun. Simple, sweet, berried, curranty, minty. Lovely oak handling. Yum. Drink: 2007-2012. 87 points.

Tulloch

Tulloch Pokolbin Dry Red Private Bin Shiraz 2005 (\$35) screwcap:

Prime Hunter Valley red in a gloriously old-fashioned style. This, I am quite sure, is how the old Hunter classics looked as young wines. Expressly earthen, savoury and yet fruit sweet, with raspberries, almonds, licorice, twigs and vanilla flavours moulded into a medium-weight, unprecocious, easy-going package. It's a bespoke shiraz, tailored to drink well with food at any stage of its life. I love it. This is another example of both a great Hunter vintage, and the new wave of outstanding wines coming from the region. Drink: 2007-2020. 94 points.



Two Hands

Two Hands Barossa Valley Aerope Grenache 2005 (\$90):

For sheer deliciousness it takes some beating. It's jubeey, jellied, sweet, soft, silken in the mouth and blaring with candied, red, smoky-spicy berry flavour. There's even a dash of aniseed, giving it a subtle resemblance to licorice allsorts. For all that though, it lacks persistence, and interest beyond simple, sweet fruitiness. Drink: 2007-2015. 89 points.

Two Hands Barossa Valley Ares Shiraz 2005 (\$120):

Ares is invariably a big, soft, fruit-massive style, the smoothness of it like a mass of dark berries and chocolate melted into a dessert-like ooze. That, again, is what this release is like – it is phenomenally delicious. Take a slice of chocolate cake, another of black forest cake, another of brandy-laden Christmas cake – mix them together, pour on chocolate topping and extra port wine jelly – and you have this. It's a dessert wine, as a big Barossan red. If it had more persistence, it would be the perfect example of the style. Drink: 2007-2015. 92 points.

Two Hands Barossa Valley Gnarly Dudes Shiraz 2005 (\$25) screwcap:

Glossy, lifted, pure, fruity, cedary ... and just plain delicious. Notes of smoke and sour cherries too,

though it's basically just a perfectly pitched bang of dark fruit flavour. Silken. Clean and pure. Lovely easy-going red. Drink: 2007-2010. 88 points.

Two Hands Barossa Valley The Bull and the Bear Shiraz Cabernet 2005 (\$45):

Big warm brandy-like red, baked blackberries and tar the order of the day. Nice wine, but lacks vibrancy – it tastes overcooked. Dried herbs, clay, cedar, cloves, and muscular, forced tannins. Warm finish. Drink: 2007-2012. 86 points.

Two Hands McLaren Vale Angels Share Shiraz 2006 (\$25) screwcap:

A whopping 16% alcohol but it carries it well. Fleshy, pure, bright, jubeey and sweet, the fruit doing all the talking – there's no real oak to be seen here. Chewy finish. Good wine. Drink: 2007-2009. 87 points.

Two Hands Barossa Valley Bella's Garden Shiraz 2005 (\$55):

There's a lot to like here. It's fruit pure, struck with delicious aniseed and raspberry-like flavour, full of fragrance and full of succulent, dark, heady fruit, the wealth of it pulsing right through to the close. It would easily have scored very highly if it weren't for the alcohol leaping out of the finish – so much so that it disguises a degree of the flavour. Drink: 2007-2012. 91 points.

Yering Station

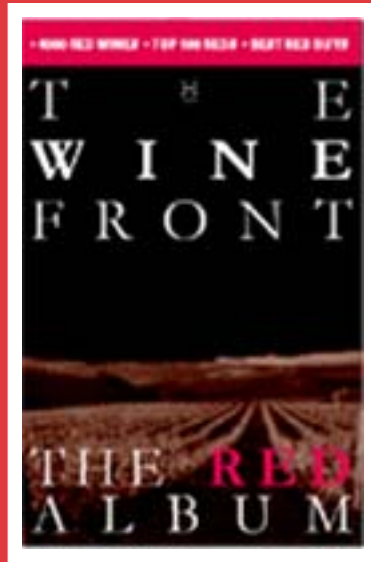
Yering Station Yarra Valley Reserve Pinot Noir 2005 (\$64) screwcap:

I want some. It's only seen 25% new oak, and the lightness and delicacy of it is outstanding. It is a wine about fine, elegant structure, about dryness, about integrated, bright, coiled varietal fruit, and ultimately about a great deal of promise; this wine should age magically. Congrats Yering. Drink: 2007-2016. 95 points.

Yering Station Yarra Valley Shiraz Viognier Reserve 2005 screwcap:



Tighter and less flamboyant than its previous releases, its spicy, chalky chewiness keeping it well in check. It will be better in six to eight years. All the fruit here is shot through with peppery spice, cloves and cardamom seeds giving the plummy, cherried hit of it a good deal of herbal interest. Oak is beautifully integrated. This label has come of age: it's now a cellaring wine. Drink: 2011-2018. 92 points.



THE RED ALBUM: BOOK

They said it would never happen – but it's The Wine Front's FIFTH BIRTHDAY this month. The first edition (then, of course, called Winefront Monthly) came out in May 2002. As a celebration The Wine Front will publish a bloody big book of reviews called The Red Album, in June 2007. This book will include, in one easy '*you can even read it in bed*' resource, essentially every RED WINE REVIEW published in the pages of The Wine Front over the past five years. This numbers about 4000 full red reviews. For good measure, the book will also (for the first time ever) include a list of The Wine Front's TOP 100 RED WINES.

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