

It's getting quite difficult to draw a line between the new wave of the Cape wine industry pushing the vinous equivalent of the envelope, and the so-called Young Turks. Fifteen or so years ago, when Eben Sadie left Spice Route to launch Columella and set up what has now become Sadie Family Vineyards, it was possible to characterise what he was doing as "innovative and cutting-edge." In other words, it was serious and sober, built on a known methodology, but with fruit sources that had largely been disregarded by mainstream producers. The madness was inherent in the vision and the risk. In space race terms it was like looking at Sputnik and planning the moon mission.

That was a generation ago. Now there are literally dozens of small producers - professionals rather than amateur garagistes - making anything from three to 30 barrels of wine. In space race terms, they are the college aeronautics club of today compared with NASA in the '60s. They are generally viticulturally adept so even though they buy grapes, they are actively involved in the farming process. Many are less scared of "things going wrong" - so they are less conservative than the generation which preceded them: if you want the adrenaline high of a tightrope walk over the Niagara Falls, there's no point in arranging a safety net.

Operating under the umbrella of Zoo Biscuit, they include some of the more established of the edgy producers (such as Alheit and Crystallum) with some real newcomers. A few weeks back they put together a tasting at Natte Vallei (which true to its name was cold, wet and damp) which was a fascinating statement of the new world of South African wine.

John Seccombe's Thorne & Daughters Zoetrope Chardonnay and the Rocking Horse 2014 blend were standout wines. The former has a tight, concentrated freshness which promises prolonged and complex ageing. The latter, which combines Chenin, Roussanne and Semillon, delivers fragrance without flabbiness. Alheit's 2014 Cartology is a significant step up on the 2013: intense, precise and completely delicious, it makes the point that fine wine does not need to be inaccessible.

New to the scene, Hogan is already in transition between the bottled 2014 and the still-in-barrel 2015. The latter is showing both the benefits of the exceptional vintage as well as greater confidence from winemaker Jocelyn Hogan Wilson, formerly at La Bri. Peter-Allan Finlayson's Pinot Noirs (Crystallum) have long enjoyed a serious following. While the Mabalel vineyard is too young to deliver any real complexity, the Cuvée Cinema is consistently one of the Cape's best examples. Incidentally, the current release of the Peter Max (R240) is significantly less expensive, but at least as enjoyable.

Craven's Clairette Blanche 2014, as well as the (intentionally) slightly pink 2015 Pinot Gris may be a bit geeky for some, but both have a linearity and authenticity about them - and at R135 per bottle, even the pricing is genuine. Marelise Niemann's Momento selection includes a fabulous 2014 Chenin where 15% verdelho lifts the fruit and gives the wine freshness and precision. Donovan Rall's Chenin blend is equally fine, as is Trizanne Barnard's Trizanne Signature white, (though here she works with semillon and sauvignon blanc to weave her magic in a more Margaret River/Bordeaux kind of way). Duncan Savage's 2014 semillon is delicious and accessible, while still retaining a real core of freshness and fruit intensity. J H Meyer's wines offer a range of origins and styles: I particularly liked the line-up of Pinots from three separate appellations - as far afield as Elgin and Craddock Peak.

All of the Zoo Biscuits (visit www.zoobiscuits.co.za) - from the band of newcomers to

those who have been producing small quantities for several years - need to be taken seriously. Mostly their pricing is consumer-friendly - and considering how small the average production, you have to assume they have alternative sources of income if they aim to get through the year without collapsing under the burden of debt.