

**OLD MUTUAL TROPHY WINE SHOW 2015
TRANSCRIPT OF THE JUDGES' FEEDBACK SESSION – Thursday, 7 May 2015**

Judges:

Lisa Perrotti-Brown MW, John Gilman, Trizanne Barnard, Gary Jordan, Nkulu Mkhwanazi, James Pietersen, JD Pretorius, François Rautenbach

Unable to attend Feedback Session: Steven Spurrier

Show Chairman: Michael Fridjhon

MF: Good morning to you all and thank you very much for coming to the feedback session of the 2015 Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show. It has been a really interesting week and, much as I'd like to pretend that it was a roller coaster week, it's gone with extraordinary smoothness. As the judges found a common sense of focus the tastings were quicker, the results were sharper and I think there's a feeling of slight relief that the job has been done. I can tell you as Show Chairman – and I do not see any of the results until after the trophy judging in case my casting vote is required – I have now seen the results and I have to say to the panelists - you've done a brilliant job. There are a whole lot of wines there that one would expect to see on the winners' podium and there are enough newcomers to perform what I always think is part of the function of the show, which is to act as a talent scout for the industry and to pull out wines that reflect where we're going, not only where we've come from.

We had 1 085 entries of which three were withdrawn. So 1 082 wines were judged. That means that we averaged almost 361 wines per day by three panels, which is roughly 120 wines per panel. One or two days up on that number – one or two days down, depending on how the classes shaped out.

Subject to audit, we have 20 for trophies, 12 golds, 88 silvers, 430 bronze. To put those numbers in context, pretty much the same number of trophies, but fewer golds this year – 12 compared with 30. Silvers were down as well – 88 compared with 121 and bronze at 430 compared with 469. Given that the entry numbers were up by 5%, that is a significant drop in golds, silvers and bronzes and I think that probably reflects the vintages on the tasting bench, but I think there may be a lot of discussion around that and why that might be the case.

32% of wines overall were closed under screw cap. Cork is 67%. We called 175 re-pours. Those re-pours are not necessarily a reflection of cork taint. There's a general feeling that there's less and less cork taint. That's a function of better cork qualities, more DIAMs and the fact that the more screw caps you have the fewer re-pours you'll have. I didn't say that to be controversial, I think it's a fact of life. When we called re-pours it was sometimes really on a whim to see if there would be more fruit from the next bottle. It was to give every wine a fair chance in terms of its opportunity to win a medal or a trophy at the show.

We have a number of judges who have worked a lot harder than I have in the last three days. I'm going to pass the microphone to Lisa Perrotti-Brown on her first visit to South Africa as one of our three international judges. Steven Spurrier who couldn't be here today as he had to be back for the Decanter Awards Trophy judging in the morning. We hoped that we might be able to have that judging moved but it wasn't possible, but he did a full day of judging yesterday and therefore his contribution is obviously acknowledged.

LPB Thank you very much Michael. It's been a fantastic few days of tasting – a rigorous few days. It's my first time to South Africa and I was very keen to be able to take an opportunity, as I have done over these past few days, to really get a great overview of what the country is capable of producing across all wine styles. That perhaps gives a better picture to go forward and understand the potential of the country, than taking it wine by wine, just looking at boutique wines or, dare I say, just looking at the commercial that tends to be exported a lot more than perhaps the finest wines.

It was really exciting for me. There were a lot of bright sparks that I saw throughout the judging. I had some challenging days of judging. I don't know if Michael planned it in the great design of things, but I'm really pleased with the categories that I got in particular, because they were probably the categories that were of greatest interest to me. I did around 64 pinotages on the first day and on the second day around 100 shirazes – those were not the shiraz blends, but the straight shirazes – and on the third day cabernets which was very exciting indeed.

Although you do very fine sauvignon blancs and chenin blancs – almost effortlessly well – being able to look really up close over a broad selection of your pinotages, shirazes and cabernets was particularly exciting for me, because that's where you will be able to go out and give the fine wine world some challenge. I see raised eyebrows if I include pinotages in that category because I do think it's not a grape variety to be dismissed whatsoever. I think that, based on what I have tasted, there are some really exciting wines being produced in the pinotage category, but not many of them. I think it's going to involve taking a long hard look at how pinotage is being produced, first of all in the vineyard looking at things like yields and ripeness. It looks deceptively easy to grow probably, because it grows like a weed, but it's not an easy grape variety to ripen and that's what comes across when you're tasting a vast range of them and when you're looking very closely at what's in the glass. It's really hard to get those fully evolved flavour compounds, to keep the greenness in the background, to get the tannins fully ripe so you have a delicious and harmonious wine. When it comes to oak and getting the oak just supporting in the background – if you're going to use it at all – because in my view it's not a grape variety that needs very much if any oak. It's got a lot of expression all on its own.

Coming to the shirazes it I think my expectations were higher than I came away with at the end of day 2 in terms of gut feelings about shiraz. I think there's a lot of potential here for shiraz. It's a much more forgiving grape than pinotage or cabernet. It will grow in a wide variety of climates and soil types and still produce outstanding wine, but as I said, with pinotage it doesn't mean you can be complacent about producing shiraz.

I think there were a lot of quite hard and lean shirazes. Maybe that's a little unfair as I'm a reviewer for Australia and I tend to taste a lot of very big, rich shirazes, but the trend there now is for a cooler climate's more elegant styles and they are doing that very, very well. Having fully developed flavor compounds is extremely important, whether it's the cooler climate style, or it's the warmer climate style. Both are valid expressions of the grape variety. Certainly we didn't mark any wines down for being one or the other, but you do need that full spectrum. You need a lot of complexity and shiraz will give it to you. You need a certain softness in the tannins. Having hard tannins on shiraz is just a no-no and you need to be very, very judicious with the use of oak, particularly if you're aiming for something a little more elegant. It easily gets swamped, particularly if you're using American oak. There were a lot of examples of clumsy wine-making I think in terms of the American oak.

Coming to the cabernets, this may sound a little controversial but it was my most exciting day! I thought there were some really exciting bright sparks in the cabernet categories, some real classics that also spoke very uniquely of South Africa. What is exciting for me as an international wine reviewer and commentator is finding a country, a region, a winery that can get cabernet fully ripe and expressive and make something great of it. This doesn't happen very often. There are so few places on the planet where you can make really great cabernet. If you can, do it because the world wants that. It's not that you're being a copycat Bordeaux or Napa Valley look alike. You can do it and express South Africa. But what you're offering the world is an opportunity to collect something that is really great and a great example of a grape variety that is not easy to ripen. If you do have the terroir for it and you can do it, you should do it. It's a great gift to the wine world. I was very excited by some of the examples I saw. They were just stunning wines that can age for 20 or 30 years and more when we look at the wines that we actually wound up giving golds to. So it was my exciting moment and something I personally would like to take away from South Africa and follow the development of cabernets in this country and look at them as being real collectors' wines in the future.

Thanks.

MF I'm going to pass the microphone to Gary Jordan who has come back having missed a year and I'd like to ask Gary to comment on the highlights and also perhaps to make some comments about the old wine tasting we did on Sunday. That was really a thought provoked by Lisa's commenting on the age worthiness of cabernet. At the old wine tasting – which is an informal start to the three days of judging – we had three wines from 1965 all of which were in immaculate condition and every one of which you would very comfortably have slit the throat of your next door neighbour for if you knew you were going to get a wine that good.

GJ Thanks Michael. When one tastes wine or judges wine in particular, one is looking at really just a snapshot in time of the development in the life of that particular wine. When you look at what we were tasting at the old wine tasting, which we always do on the Sunday night, it's really quite incredible to see how there are some examples of South African wines so far back in time, where they were doing things quite differently to what we're doing as winemakers today, that have outlived

many of the people who made them and many of the people who owned those properties and still continue to give a lot of pleasure and will age further. In trying to do the analysis – and there's a lot of discussion that comes through - about what was the makeup of those wines, what did people understand about winemaking or the chemistry of wines during that time. There's a lot that can come out of that – the fact that you didn't use 200% new oak in those days in some of those vines. The fact that there were bush vines and there was less use of irrigation. The yields were lower. People didn't necessarily understand about working the wine to death and so you don't have those dried out flavours; perhaps even the use of some other varieties – there was a lot of incidence of Cinsaut being used in some cabernet in many of those old South African cabs for instance, which is, in many ways a lost tradition in South Africa.

When you take that into context and then say what is happening in the South African wine industry right now - I've been privileged to be on the Shiraz panel for many years now – to see the whole gamut of change, from some very bretty, leathery, extremely overworked and dried out examples of which there were many in that year that we judged with Jancis Robinson. To find that there are far fewer faulty wines – in that whole flight there must have been 15 wines that we would have judged as faulty. It still does amaze me when somebody puts in a wine which is so obviously bretty or so obviously has such a problem. Maybe that is a question of being forced to by whoever owns the property – we're not sure.

When you look at the styles coming through – and it was quite interesting to see now over the years how the use of stalks for instance is a little more prevalent in some shiraz. We all learnt a lot from Lisa as well regarding the use of that and how you can negatively have some of the greener flavours particularly with the use of stalks and green tannin by not doing it judiciously. There were a few examples of that which just went over the top and that was an interesting lesson for me. Some was used well, some was just way overdone.

Nkulu It's a great pleasure to be here. It's been a really exciting three days. It's my first time here as a senior judge, I mean a junior judge. I've been here as an associate for the last three years. I tasted on three different panels, but I'd say my highlights were chardonnay – there were really some fantastic examples, really well-used oak, great purity. I also tasted pinot noir. That was hard work. I had great expectations, but I'd say there were very few examples that were really smartly made. I thought there was a problem with too much oak for such a delicate variety. Yesterday I tasted Sauvignon Blanc which was also an exciting category with lots of variety in terms of styles. I found there were many examples which were quite floral and fragrant. I must say in that category what really excited me were the few older examples that really showed well. They were between five and seven years old.

I also tasted méthode cap classique, viognier, riesling and pinotage. There were really some smart pinotages and I believe we've moved a long way and we're making a lot of really pure and fresh products.

MF I'll pass it firstly to JD Pretorius and let him add his comments on the two or three classes that struck him as the most impressive or the most disappointing. We have had a few disappointing classes, which we'll come to in a moment.

JD Morning ladies and gents. It's been a fine week, challenging in some cases, but also very rewarding. I kicked off with other white varieties on Monday, along with wooded sauvignon and white blends. It was really amazing to see Steven Spurrier – who has already left – but who would shout "phenomenal!" in the middle of tasting. He was so excited that he couldn't contain himself. There were definitely interesting styles and wines there including Grenache Blanc. The Sauv Sem as a bank (Sauvignon blanc semillon as a blend), probably the best category I've judged. What is good to see about that is that it's distinctly not sauvignon blanc. I think people have figured out that sauvignon semillon as a category is different to sauvignon and it's different to semillon. There were really nice wines in that, particularly well done.

Day 2 was shiraz which was a little more challenging. I'm a big fan of whole bunch fermentation myself, but it doesn't always work and that's one thing, as a winemaker, you need to assess. Yes, it's a core method and it does add a lot of character, but it's not always a positive thing. We did find some nice wines though.

Yesterday was other red blends, shiraz-based blends and then Cape blends. The other reds were really challenging. There seemed to be a lot of "whatever's left in the cellar" blends going on and

some were really dirty and clumsy. Some were really nice. The shiraz-based blends were brilliant, with two really nice golds in that. The Cape blends were very elegant and not viciously oaked. They were pretty well handled.

MF Trizanne

TB Hi everyone. I had the privilege of tasting on the chenin blanc panel. This is always a strong category and so it should be. There was still quite a bit of use of oak which I think is unnecessary and producers should be slightly wary of over-oaking. In general it was a very good category – strong, beautiful wines. There was some reduction which should not be in a category like chenin, so producers should be careful how they handle their fruit and also their closure.

I also judged on the merlot panel. It remains a tricky category. There is still a lot of work but we're coming along, but merlot is a difficult grape as a lot of our producers know. I unfortunately don't have the answers, except that you have to be very careful where you plant. Be very site specific, how you handle the fruit, when you pick and don't over-oak because the greenness will show every time.

Then I was on bordeaux and cabernet. Again two very strong categories. There is so much potential with those wines as Lisa said, especially with the cabs. It's hard work and one has to be really meticulous with your site choice and with your picking and what you do with the wine. You can't just (almost "gooi") throw all the varieties together and make a Bordeaux blend. It's meticulous blending. If there's greenness it's going to show – you can't mask it. In general, I think we had some beautiful wines and as a wine industry we're definitely moving in the right direction.

Thank you.

MF I'm going to pass it now to John Gilman, who's our first American judge in the history of the show, so a very special welcome. John hails from New York which means I suppose that he's less of a slave to the Californian wine industry than those that might be coming from the far west. He's spent a lot of time in Europe so I think he really brought a very interesting perspective into the categories he judged. You're going to talk about chardonnay and chenin.

JG This is my first visit to South Africa and I was very, very excited to come, because when I was a merchant and a sommelier, before I became a full-time journalist, I used to drink and sell South African wines with some regularity and had really fallen out of the circle of what was going on here, so I was very excited to see what had happened in the last ten years since I became a journalist.

I was very excited about the quality of what I tasted. Starting with chenin blanc – I know chardonnay is the workhorse white wine here and it's the one that everybody gets into the market easily and it's the one that sells the easiest, but I was really excited about the quality of the cheniens across a wide variety of styles. I think it's a varietal that has tremendous future here – it's had a great past. You have a lot of old vines to work with which I think is really useful and that showed in a lot of the wines we had. There was mid-palate concentration and intensity that was effortless in style. They were absolutely lovely wines. It was so nice to revisit them this morning when we came back to do the trophy tasting and really see the different styles. It's really a varietal that has great potential. I think it can handle a little bit of oak, but you have to be judicious with it.

Chardonnay was my second day and I really enjoyed the chardonnays. There were some really world class wines and I thought the overall quality – at least of the panels I was on – was the highest overall quality. There were very few wines you would fault for technical. If you were really going to nitpick, some of the wines were maybe a little safe, a little commercial and middle-of-the-road, but I think there's more personality lurking in a lot of those wines. I don't know where the chardonnay vineyards are planted here because it's my first visit, but I think it's one of the things that will be interesting in the future, is to really find the spots where chardonnay excels in terms of terroir and really try and focus on getting vineyards planted in the right spots, where they can really sing. I suspect if we went back and looked where the vineyards were of the trophy wines and the gold wines in the chardonnays that we had, we'd find that they are really in some of the prime spots for chardonnay and it might be nice to emulate getting the vineyards in those spots again. But it was a really strong category.

We moved on to pinot noir and I'd been warned that it was a work in progress. I put my nose in the glass of the first wine and thought what are people saying, this smells fabulous. This was something that happened again and again through the entire range of pinot noirs we tasted. Aromatically, I thought this is going to be splendid and then once we got onto the palate the wines really had trouble

with their oak. A lot of them ended up really dried out from their new oak on the back end. I think probably it's a little fragile. If I was a winemaker I'd be trying to approach the beautiful woman in the corner, rather than my old mate I played rugby with. I think you have to take that approach with the winemaking. Maybe 1 or 2 wine barrels, the pinot noir would be an interesting experiment. There are a few producers in Burgundy and one of the most famous producers – Jacques Frederic Mugnier went through a patch of five or six years where he used zero new oak for all of his wines, including his grand cru. Now he's settled on - for his Musigny and Bonmares – 20% to 30% new oak, depending on the style of the vintage. 10% for his Premier Cru and Village wines. It's interesting that he's had a lot of influence on younger winemakers in Burgundy specializing in Pinot Noir, who in the 1990's were using a lot of oak, a lot of toasted oak and they're starting to rein back from that style. He is someone who would be worth taking a look at for pinot noir here in South Africa.

I finished up yesterday with red blends. As JD said we certainly had some examples that seemed like whatever the bin ends in the cellar were found its way in. When we tasted the old wines on Sunday – which Michael emphasized again and again was that a lot of these wines were blends – creative blending of grapes that wouldn't necessarily be considered a logical mix on the international scene, I think would work really well together. I think cabernet does beautifully with shiraz. We found it was doing beautifully with pinotage. Carrignan would be another lovely blend and there were some really nice wines, but there were some very anonymous, middle-of-the-road wines. I'm not sure that those are the wines you want to hang your hat on in the future.

It was a great tasting. I really enjoyed participating and hope to come back someday soon.

James Thanks for coming to listen to us. This is my fifth or sixth year in a row and one of the remarkable things of the last two years is that there is a refinement that is now coming through, definitely on the palate definition of the wine and I think that is something to notice.

I won the lottery this year as I tasted white Bordeaux, other whites, cabernet, chardonnay which were great categories. Chardonnay was fantastic, super wines. Cabernet was particularly exciting. The wines had personality, they had nice texture and people seem to be understanding that you don't have to put merlot in the mix. It's less green. Pinot noir was tough. I think John touched on all the issues there.

One of the most exciting areas was that, after we'd tasted the white Bordeaux, there was a small group of other whites and other reds and there were some really interesting wines. I think one of the most important things is that we build personality to our wines. We found lovely roussanne, interesting grenache blanc, lovely cinsaut, interesting malbecs, quirky wines that are as exciting for the consumer. It's exciting for us to experiment and see what can come from that.

We're making better wines and it's great to see people doing a better job.

Thank you.

MF Thank you for all you do and in fact all the panelists at this year's show. I'm going to pass this to François. That comment on cinsaut – when we tasted the old wines, just about every one of those red wines would have had cinsaut in it, either co-crushed, part of the blend or cinsaut called cabernet. By the time you went back to the 60s and 70s the percentage of cabernet available in the industry was tiny and it's a reasonable assumption that 70% plus of the old cabernet came from bush vine cinsaut. Some of them were completely extraordinary. When I look through the number of cinsauts entered this year, it's tiny. I think there were three altogether. Cinsaut used to be almost as prolific as chenin blanc. It's pretty much vanished. The bits that have come back, or are being replanted, offer a very small sample, strikingly clear evidence that we should be paying attention.

I'm now going to pass it to Francois to wrap up from the judges' perspective.

FR Morning all. Just a brief overview because it's been very eloquently put by most of the panelists, but just to support Lisa on pinotage – there were some with some wonderful fruit, although there are definitely challenges with virus and ripening. Just because it ripens a bit earlier than the cabernet it doesn't necessarily mean that you cannot give your vines the love and attention they deserve. There were some where the purity of the fruit was great – they were just substantially overworked.

I think there's a serious area (inaudible) your new oak. In fact doing Bordeaux the next day, I would say that in many respects the pinotages had more oak than the Bordeaux reds. Somehow that didn't make a lot of sense. Moving to the Bordeaux reds, Stephen was quite specific that in many

instances it was an idea that wasn't working and that really if we do that analysis, in time to come once we've looked at those wines, a lot of the wines where there was a high percentage of merlot, it wasn't working, because of the challenge with merlot, not necessarily the rest of the wine.

Doing other red blends on the third day – I'm a great supporter of blending – I think there were some superb blends and the other red blends too that came out, and it was without question a nuclei that was way ahead of the red of the group of wines. In those instances they were a specific grape that was very well crafted and then there was nuance and personality blended in with other components – not big chunks dropped in; a few percent of something that created something very specific in the wines. That can work in Bordeaux in the same way. If you've got great cabernet as an example, then utilize that and bring the nuance through the others. If by chance it's going to be 30% merlot it may not work, but you may have some rows as part of a vineyard and that part of the merlot is fantastic – use it, but use it judiciously.

Just a word of warning. It specifically came through in the Bordeaux and I checked with the cabernet team – the 2011's – there was a lot of them. I think it's perhaps people who were moving 2010's initially. I would suggest you make a serious move to move those out the cellar as fast as you can, unless you're one of the really serious producers and produce something great, because as an overall overview of 2011 Bordeaux – they're in trouble. There is serious browning, serious tiring – I would be very careful and relook your wine.

Otherwise fantastic and I'm sure Michael will say some words on that. The team once again did brilliantly and it was a pleasure for the judges to be here. It worked like clockwork and it was easy from the perspective that everything we needed was right there on time with no problems at all. So thank you very much.

- MF** I think you've all listened very patiently. It's quite important to field questions and questions from the floor. Let's have questions and if you know to whom you want to address it, either because of the role that that person plays, or because that person has already said that he or she was on a particular panel, address it or otherwise I'll field it and pass it to whoever I think is best likely to answer.
- Q** Has anyone said anything about where we're going?
- GJ** Chenin, merlot, shiraz and sauvignon blanc – some very big categories for us and it was very interesting tasting them knowing as a winemaker what we've gone through in this 2014 vintage. I think most regions had fairly large sauvignon blanc crops. The nice thing about tasting it is that we're not bombarded or given a lot of information so you can't judge a wine when you're looking at a vintage for instance. So 2014 and 2013 could be up against each other. That was quite nice. It was quite interesting to see afterwards as all we could get was information on the vintage and you saw that there were some people who had thinner, more watery sauvignon blancs and they were 2014 - but you saw that there were some producers who really had fantastic effort, really concentrated wines, incredibly well done job in the cellar and those wines stood out. They could stand out quite easily against 2013's. As was mentioned we had a few much older wines as well, which stood head and shoulders above many of the younger wines too. So it showed that a lot of the top sauvignon blancs can age in South Africa.
- Q** Perhaps a more general question to Lisa and John – On your first visit to South Africa, when you get home and somebody asks you to describe what is South African wine?
- LPB** Whenever somebody asks me a question like that when I go to a country I try not to be too glib because it's very difficult to sum up a country that is as diverse and has the history that South Africa has. Having said that, I think there are a lot of people in the wine world, particularly where I live now in Asia, who are very curious about what's going on in South Africa, because they don't really hear much about South Africa and there aren't many South African wines exported there. Maybe the only thing they think of when they think of South African wine is pinotage, whereas the potential is in other grape varieties like sauvignon blanc – not just at the commercial end, but at the higher end, with barrel-fermented sauvignon blanc/semillon blends. With chenin blanc billed as an easy-drinking everyday wine, but also as a fine wine as well. The chardonnays coming out are extraordinary. A lot of potential for shiraz here in its own style. I think it's all over the place in terms of styles with shiraz here and finding a style and a way of expressing South Africa through shiraz will be really interesting. Of course, as I've already mentioned, being the next great cabernet sauvignon producing nation. So I think going back I'll have my work cut out for me, because it's not going to be a simple

easy sentence to say to people. There's a huge story to tell which really needs telling. People like me shouldn't be telling the story. You producers need to be travelling to the key markets of Asia, particularly if you want to start in real hubs like Hong Kong and Japan is coming back right now and is a massive market for fine wine. Really you have to go and do the hand sell there and tell the stories, because there are markets there just waiting to taste wines like you guys have.

JG I echo what Lisa said. The diversity of South Africa – one of the questions I was poised to answer at my interview earlier today was the question of Australia has shiraz that it can hang its hat on and other regions have one grape that defines them and what would that be for South Africa. My response was going to be 'what's the grape that France hangs its hat on' – there isn't one. Each region has its specialities and I think that you should really embrace your diversity.

The potential to make extraordinary wines across a wide range of varieties and that's something you should enjoy and promote. I don't think you should say we need to find chenin and push chenin as the next great wine. Or our sauvignons are the best, or our chardonnays. I think there's potential across the board with all these wines. In the US we don't see a lot of South African wines either. Lisa has more experience than I do because she worked in the UK wine trade for quite a while. I think if you want to start looking at the American market, I think grocery store, entry level wines have to be a little better in the US, so they won't find an audience with the flood of wines that we have from across the globe. I think you could be at a higher price point in the US market because we're very accustomed to overpaying for our wines. I think that entry level wines are going to have to be a notch above what the UK supermarkets are willing to pay for it.

Wines have to have precision and focus. The red blends that we had, the ones that I had real issues with, we either that they were a little alcoholic for me, I like lower alcohol wines. Others where the blends cancelled out each other – you had a nice shiraz component and whatever it was blended with, the shiraz component vanished when you got to the palate. The wine ended up neutral and chunky. As other judges have touched upon try and put the blends together so that you have wines that accentuate each other's positive attributes, rather than cancelling them out.

I think in the US market the higher end wines are going to find it a calling very quickly. They are world class wines that compete very favourably with what's going on in California. California has a real renaissance starting, an underground movement to move back to the cellar wines they made in the 60's and 70's – a rejection of what's happened in the 80's and 90's for the bigger, more block buster, monster truck style wines. Particularly in New York those wines are completely out of favour. They're still quite popular with Texas oilmen, but beyond that you don't see those wines in New York in the top restaurants, you don't see them in collectors' cellars. It's a derisive category.

You want to feature with those wines that have great nuance and balance and we tasted plenty of those wines across a number of different varietals. I think that's really where the potential is – to show your higher end wines and use those as the entry to get people in the US to pay attention to the real, fun and serious things that are going on in viticulture in the cellars here in South Africa.

Q John you've been pretty strong in the past about the cause and effect relationship between screw caps and reduction. Reduction has been a bit of a yoke around the neck of South African red wines in the past. Given that you're quite sensitive to it, was that something you found or picked up at all in the red wine categories?

JG I didn't at the red wines, as much as I looked for it. I found it more with the whites than the reds that I tasted. I do really think that screw caps are the worst thing to happen to the world of wine since phylloxera. I talk about this a lot. In general screw caps tend to be for the entry level wines and those are going to the consumers that have the least experience, the least sophistication. We had a riesling last night that I thought was really lovely and reduced as hell. Everyone said South Africa just can't make riesling. I said let's get a decanter and see if that's true – because it was just brutally reduced on the back end. It was permanently reduced and I would love to have seen that wine with natural cork.

The tendency is to do a lot of aromatic whites with screw caps and I think they're the most prone to reduction, so I think it's the worst match. I'd rather see screw caps with chardonnay than I would with riesling or sauvignon blanc – in a heartbeat. But I'd rather see it not at all because I like to age my wines. We saw this in the museum entries from varietals that you wouldn't necessarily think of as age worthy, that the wines aged brilliantly and probably the museum wines were under screw cap, so I can eat my hat a little later. I just really think that with entry level wines you need to understand

that the consumer is going to be the least sophisticated. If they get a reduced wine and it smells a little like overcooked asparagus, they're going to say X winery makes really crappy sauvignon blanc and they'll never buy another bottle from you. Lisa can speak to this much better than I can, but with Australia the real market share that they lost in the last decade in terms of entry level wines – and they've really been down - I think is attributable to screw caps although nobody wants to discuss that because they're so popular down under. You know, La Tache, Romanee Conti, Lafite - they're not under screw cap.

You have to treat the consumers you're trying to nurture and bring along to start buying your \$40 and \$50 bottles of cabernet shiraz blends that are going to blow them away, but you have to get them into the seat first, before they hear the concert and you can't do that if they get a reduced wine out of the blocks, because they don't know it's reduced.

I was doing a tasting where Penfolds were celebrating a 50th or 60th anniversary. They did a big tasting in New York with 75 or 80 journalists and it was splendid tasting and then they broke down the room and used the same room for lunch that they did for the tasting. We milled around in the bar where they poured their riesling which was under screw cap. There were probably 80 blue chip journalists of New York there for the day. It was completely reduced and the only two people who knew it were myself and the winemaker at Penfolds. People were saying they make spectacular red wines but why on earth do they make riesling. For lunch they served riesling 10 years older out of magnum, cork finished – absolutely brilliant – stunning wine. I had at least a half dozen journalists say to me afterwards it's too bad they don't make riesling the way they used to. It's something to keep in mind.

MF There's no question that reduction is a winemaking rather than a closure error.....! You brought some wine to dinner last night – cork closed wine - and if I remember rightly it was corked?!

Q Any comments on the MCC category.

LPB It wasn't a bad category to judge at all. It was the first category I judged and generally I think there were some pretty smart wines there. There were not many wines. There were a lot of people who could probably be a little more ambitious with what they're looking to produce. By ambitious I mean maybe a little bit more lees, time on lees, a little more time in the bottle before it's released. Really looking to express the best out of a wine that is made in the champagne method. That said some of them worked. Some of them were just straightforward fresh, fruity examples. But to be honest I found most of them pretty palatable. Nothing that was going to set the world on fire but pretty interesting stuff.

Francois Just to add to that. You can see the reflection of the explosion of producers, which is exciting because it's a category that's grown dramatically, but just because you've opted to produce some as an extension to your portfolio, I'm not sure that that's necessarily your best choice. If you're not going to look at what you're doing – picking early isn't enough. The creativity of the purity coming out of the vineyard blended correctly is the base of the wine and is the most important part that the Champenoise always talk about.

I think a lot of them were reflective of the commercial end, so short time on the lees, you're not building on even if you did put great stuff into the base wine. So there is some work to do, but again overall not good in the category. So it's not a case of there's major problems. It's more about now refining and getting the difference between commercial and serious.

MF We certainly have seen medal counts down this year and if I look at the vintages that contributed the most gold medals in proportion to the total number of medals – I don't have the total per class – 2013 and 2012 had the highest density of gold medals and in fact probably the highest density of silver medals. So I think one of the reasons we're going to see the medal count down this year is the prevalence of 2014 wines in the mix. It's clearly not a vintage at this stage that's delivering to the expectations of the judges.

Another stat which I'm sure will warm the hearts of the folk at Amorim, the cork taint numbers are dramatically down within the corked category. They are significantly down. I put some of that undoubtedly to better corks to the greater prevalence of Diam as a closure and so realistically in modern wines – and John does make a point that older corks are not only going to suffering with all the other things that come with age, including where there has been more or less oxidation, but there are cleaner corks now and there are cleaner alternatives within the cork category and so TCA really

wasn't a big deal on the judging benches, it was much more interesting a big deal over the dinners. In other words it's the wines that people have brought that weren't produced in the last four or five years where you see that higher incidence of cork taint. More questions.

Q It was interesting to hear what John was saying about the pricing of our wines. I've believed for a long time in our export market we focus on what is affordable in South Africa and we're pricing accordingly. You go anywhere else in the world virtually and you'll find that the scale of pricing is quite different. I think a lot of our wines are suffering in reputation because they're seen as cheap.

JG I think that's absolutely true. When I got here on Saturday night and looked at the wine list I couldn't believe how low the prices were for South African wines. I was astonished. I think you need to understand that you do have some flexibility there. The key is the quality that's in the bottle. It's worth putting a little more care, maybe some older vines, maybe some better parcels, maybe a little less new oak. With the wines that were a little over oaked, if you just use the same barrels the following year you can get your cost of production down a little and maybe get a better wine too. I think you've definitely got room, particularly in the US market. We do have high prices. You're not going to hear that from the importer you talk to. He's going to try and get that extra margin. You definitely have some room to play with. If you look at the prices in several other regions, particularly California. I think your wines stylistically have a lot of similarities with what's best in California and you avoid some of those things that are not so interesting in California.

Q Herbaceousness in South African reds has been a problem in the past. Do you feel we are controlling it and that it's becoming better?

LPB The South African judges that we had were really sensitive, maybe overly sensitive to the pyrazenes and green characters, particularly in cabernet. If the fruit's ripe and it's in the background and it's a lovely herbal or bayleaf character as opposed to that real green streak, I thought it was actually quite pleasant and fresh and I think the global wine community – not just journos and soms (sommeliers), but also consumers – are seeing that a little bit of herbaceousness in cabernet is actually quite a lovely thing. You don't want to or have to ripen it out completely to get a nicely balanced wine. So I was actually very pleasantly surprised in the cabernet. That may be a little different when we get to pinotage, where the greenness can be an almost offensive streak through the wine and usually a foreshadowing of the hardness you're going to get from the tannins on the back palate. So there's a lot of work to be done with pinotage in that area and that's something that people need to be, and probably are at the moment, hyperfocussed on. With cabernet I wouldn't be so dogmatic about a little bit of greenness.

Francois There's a difference between that fresh herbaceousness – and we were using the word "freshness" over the last few days – and that's wonderfully positive. You need freshness in wine. Don't ripen it to the point where it's dead. But there's a difference between that and when the green sits along the top of your tongue down the centre and that's the memory of the evening. There's a world of difference between those two.

James I think that's a very prevalent question because I think one of the things that we're making a clear distinction on when we're tasting, is to look at pyrazenes versus herbal versus fresh. With cabernet I found that there's a nice movement towards purer wines, more fruit but also keeping that freshness and quality tannins. We need to make the distinction – herbaceousness cabs love. It gives it freshness, it runs through nicely and I found that there is definitely a move towards more texture and really finer tannins. So I think cab is doing fine with notes of herbaceousness.

MF One of the advantages of international judges is that they push out the sides of the aesthetic expectation. So Lisa often called up for review the wine that might have seemed slightly too herbaceous/fresh to the local judges. Speaking as the Chairman I saw she was angling quite often for those wines and bringing the other judges with her to that point, so that the presence of international judges on these panels does contribute to a change in the overall aesthetic. It takes a few years to make its way through the system, but Lisa certainly made that as a contribution. We'll see more of it and it's because people before her have been doing that, that there is this segmentation in terms of what you're tasting and what you're prepared to tolerate.

Christian I just wanted to put a question to the panel. How much is leaf roll virus still an issue?

MF To ask the question is to say to what extent was there evidence of stressed fruit characters because that's the way it manifests and in cabernet you'd get it often in the mint/eucalyptus harder tannins, so

if somebody from that or the Bordeaux blend panel want to talk about stressed characters on red wines?

- James** We've got herbal, we've got pyrazene and we've got mint and eucalyptus and you need to pull them apart. I think we do quite a good job of it. That minty/eucalyptus character is definitely still there and it would be something that we'd be remiss if we just put it on the back burner. Virus is still very much a part of our problems. It's nice to highlight what's good about a category, but I think that's a very good question and so virus is still very much in the room and I think we need to guard against it because, at the end of the day, you can't get quality tannins out of a stressed vine.
- JD** Just to add to what James has just said, we are all very focused on greenness on things like cabernet, merlot etc. What was really interesting while judging with the international judges on things like pinotage and shiraz and things that, in my mind, don't have issues with greenness, because they don't have pyrazene greenness. A lot of judges picked up on greenness. I think virus has a big influence there, especially in something like pinotage which doesn't have a long ripening season. It definitely does play a big role.
- MF** We had a couple of bottles of rooibos tea, coloured with red wine, but actually there were a few samples and as you probably know it is now an authorized antioxidant in the wines. Did anyone have it more than once?
- LPB** I had it both times. At first on the shiraz panel – I had no idea about rooibos tea – but I flagged it up straight away and, I have to say, chucked the wine out because it was not a great character. I could spot that even though I had no idea of what was going on with that wine, I knew there was something very odd and not great and that was not terroir. It's overpowering the fruit and it detracts from everything that makes wine wine, which is an expression of a grape variety and of a time and a place. We got it on the cabernets as well. There was a cabernet that had exactly the same thing. As soon as I knew it was rooibos shiraz you could pick it out like a sore thumb. I think if you're aiming to make a really great wine that expresses fruit and expresses where you're from, rooibos is probably not the best idea for an antioxidant. I'd rather have no sulphur wine and no antioxidant personally.
- MF** Tea and coffee is another beverage and one should add to that that you wouldn't necessarily reward a wine that's been steeped in wood chips, even though it may be an allowable flavor.
- James** I'd like to add as well – just in case people think we're a little frivolous and just dismissing the category or style completely out of hand – there was a lot of debate and discussion on it, particularly on the panels that I was chairing. The way that we looked at it as judges was to step back and ask how do we approach this category, this new style of wine. We looked and said how would we judge any overtly over-oaked wine. It's a fault of being completely over-oaked. In that way we also looked at some of the rooibos tea examples, which were overt.
- MF** We're running out of time and I want to say something while they're in the room. The logistic management that goes into organizing this show is extraordinary, because from the moment the rules are set down for the year to the publication for the guidelines for entry, to the flow of entries themselves – and there is this obvious belief, which I can hardly point a finger at being the kind of person who thinks you should get to the airport roughly seconds before the departure gate closes – but the same truth seems to apply to the industry, that just because the deadline for entries is the 28th March doesn't mean that they all need to come in on 28th March, but they always seem to. So there is this sudden and intense tsunami of entries which has to be managed and has to be checked and each and every wine is literally checked against its SAWIS certification, so that as far as possible we know everything we do need to know about it should there be a query on the day. The judges will confirm that when we want detail, chapter and verse on a wine at the final judging stage – either because there's a dispute around whether it really is alcohol, whether there isn't perhaps something else in the blend – all those questions which aren't evident on the tasting bench, but can finally be confirmed if somebody wants to wrestle a wine into a particular medal class. That information is not only on hand, but has been verified. That is the work primarily of Alex Mason-Gordon, who then absolutely manages the stewarding of the show through the days of judging – more than assisted by Michael Crossley, who does some of the more technical wine stuff, but the also handles a lot of the management and the flights and all the arrangements around this and the arrangements that flow from the results. Both of them are assisted by an extraordinary team of people who are Ashley and Wanie and their team of people who have stewarded and sat in the rooms and listened to the endless debates around wines and then suddenly been asked to produce another 6, 12 or 18 fresh pours from the old bottle, or from a whole bunch of new bottles because

suddenly it's the end of a long day and we want to give the wines an absolute second chance at the top, because they've been standing open and what would they be like if they were opened fresh, the way the punters get them.

So there is a logistical organization here which is completely extraordinary and I would like to ask all the judges for a round of applause for an extraordinary team who perform an amazing task and long hours brilliantly and with absolute dedication. To all of you a very, very grateful thank you.

I want to add that without Old Mutual's corporate sponsorship at this level it would not be possible to assemble the kind of overseas judges we bring in to work in an environment as easy and pleasant to work in as this is and to be able to run a wine judging academy, which I think is certainly making a contribution, not only to our judging panels, but to the industry as a whole.

There will be a chance for people who want to ask more direct questions of the judges to mingle a little afterwards.

Thank you all very much for making the effort to be here. I do hope that the hour you get interacting – admittedly on a very broad scale with the judges – is useful to you in terms of your own thinking, of the way you make wine, of the way you mean to market it and the way you're going to interact with the wine communication industry which is a very important adjunct to the production and sales side of the wine business.

Thank you all very much indeed.