

Australian Wine Companion 2017

JAMES
HALLIDAY
AUSTRALIAN
WINE
COMPANION

BALGOWNIE

94 pts Balgownie Shiraz 2013

With warmth comes richness and with richness comes seamless. It's flush with dark/sweet plum, mint and smoky/chocolatey oak, the volume of flavor making ultra fine-grained tannin feel barely discernible. Drinks well now, but will age well.

92 pts Balgownie Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

Stern and sturdy. Blackcurrant, dark chocolate and mint flavors come rushing out the gates before the mood swiftly changes as tannin, wearing a fierce face, enters the room. It will live a long time but the question of balance will always hover over it.

BROKENWOOD

98 pts Brokenwood Graveyard Shiraz 2014

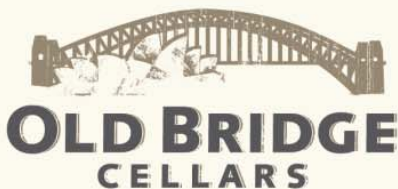
It hardly needs be said this is a great Graveyard, shortlisted for Wine of the Year. It is full-bodied, with intense intersections and trails of black fruits, earth, leather, spice, oak and ripe tannins running in all directions. Its magic is that it remains coherent, with its line (or focus) never compromised.

90 pts Brokenwood Beechworth Pinot Noir 2014

The color suggests the wine will develop reasonably quickly, and the bouquet and palate lend weight to that idea with savory, sappy characters on the long palate; there are sufficient fruit notes to give pleasure now and over the next few years, thereafter a lottery.

95 pts Brokenwood Hunter Valley Shiraz 2014

Not, as one might imagine, a regional blend from many sources, but from young vines on the Graveyard Vineyard and declassified wines from the original plantings. Vivid crimson, it is a seriously good Shiraz, with dark red fruits enriched with a sauce of French oak and peppered with the firm tannins that will protect its longevity: a bare minimum of 30 years.



CULLEN

99 pts Cullen Vanya Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

An extraordinary wine from the oldest ('71) estate plantings, wild fermented and matured for 19 months in French oak (47% new). Deeply colored and highly fragrant, the palate takes you on a mesmerizing ride with a mid-palate peak of pure, unalloyed cassis fruit, then a swish of integrated savory tannins before rising again on the dark fruit line of the finish thanks in part to 3% Petit Verdot. 388 dozen made.

98 pts Cullen Diana Madeline 2014

89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Petit Verdot, 3% Merlot and 2% each of Malbec and Cabernet Franc blended after fermentation, hand-picked and sorted, destemmed (66% whole berries), wild-fermented in stainless steel, average 23 days on skins, matured in French oak (69% new) for 18 months. Right in the slot of the style established (with some polishing and refining) over the years. The complexity of the texture and structure is second to none, led by the born to rule Cabernet, the other varieties obviously of minor importance, but important nonetheless. The might of the tannins is the key to this great wine.

96 pts Cullen Kevin John Chardonnay 2014

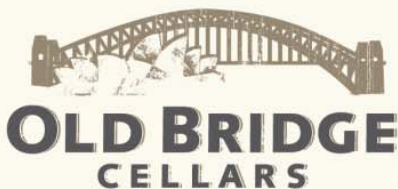
Hand-picked, whole bunch-pressed, wild-fermented in new French oak, matured for 8 months. The seemingly simple vinification has not resulted in a simple wine. There are multiple layers of fruit and oak (the percentage of new oak up to 100% from 30% in '13) ranging through white peach, nectarine, fig and then entering the world of wild fermentation in new oak path. The result is a complete wine of very high quality.

96 pts Cullen Mangan MMPV 2015

An 84/12/4% blend, hand-picked and sorted, destemmed (66% whole berries), wild-fermented in stainless steel, 21 days on skins, matured in French oak (42% new) for 7 months. Exceptionally deep crimson-purple; this is all but in name Merlot (1% more would do the trick), and by the length of the straight, the best in Australia, sold at a fraction of its intrinsic value. Gloriously supple blackcurrant fruit flows like a river of gold through the palate in the manner of the great vineyards of Bordeaux on the Right Bank, oak and tannins seamlessly joined.

95 pts Cullen Mangan White Blend 2015

58% Semillon, 40% Sauvignon Blanc, 2% Verdelho, wild-fermented, 22% of the blend aged in oak for 4 months. A three-dimensional fact sheet to cover all the facets of this wine, but it all comes down to the way it has absorbed the oak, and having done so, how the synergism of the two main varieties totally blinds any attempt to work out exactly what either are contributing at any point of time. Harmony, balance and length is the take home lesson.



94 pts Cullen Mangan East Block 2014

72% Petit Verdot, 28% Malbec blended after fermentation, hand-picked and sorted, destemmed (66% whole berries), wild-fermented in stainless steel, matured for 17 months in new French oak. This is naked, unbridled power resting on a Game of Tannins, which in turn trembles on the brink without going over. I will be interest in seeing how it develops ? and when.

d'ARENBERG

97 pts d'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings GSM 2012

Not your average GSM blend. This release raises the stakes on the style. It's raked with tannin, shot with herbs full of dust and dry spice notes, and also flush with succulent, fresh blue- and black-berried fruit. Tannin is scintillatingly fine; length is a long-held note. One can only marvel.

97 pts d'Arenberg The Dry Dam Riesling 2008

Re-release. Extraordinary show career: 6 trophies including Best Riesling in Adelaide Wine show '15, and 15 gold medals including Perth, Sydney and two from the Canberra International Riesling Challenge. The color is green (amazing in itself, the palate perfectly balanced and still fresh as a daisy, bursting with citrus/lime flavors, the length and balance impeccable. A once in a lifetime McLaren Vale Riesling offered at an absurdly low price.

96 pts d'Arenberg The Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

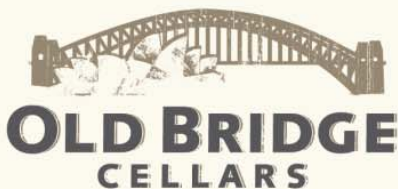
Beautiful cabernet. Fresh at heart but fully franked with flavor. Boysenberry, asphalt, blackcurrant and assorted green and dry herbs. Perfect set. Waves of fine, dry, not-to-be-messed-with tannin. Kicks up dust as it leaves the mouth.

95 pts d'Arenberg The Athazagoraphobic Cat Sagrantino Cinsault 2011

A 95/5% blend; named after Audrey Hepburn, a cat who often followed Chester Osborn around the winery, terrified of being forgotten. The unusual but meritorious nature of the wine is likely to be lost in the hubbub of the labels of this and its \$200 Old Bloke sibling. This is a seriously interesting wine, which clears the savory/tannin bar with some ease, although you wouldn't think so at the first sip. The perfect match for food, because it will simply want to make you eat more, not drink more.

95 pts d'Arenberg The Dead Arm Shiraz 2013

Crushed and destemmed, cultured yeast, open fermented with heading down boards, followed by up to 18 months in French oak. Inky purple-crimson hue; a powerful archetypal d'Arenberg Shiraz, swimming with black fruits of every description, dark chocolate and a generous helping of chewy tannins.



95 pts d'Arenberg The Derelict Vineyard Grenache 2012

Chester Osborn had the vision to acquire old, even derelict, vineyards when Grenache was disregarded once its use in fortified wines had ended. The usual d'Arenberg completion of one-third of fermentation in barrel has served very well: this is a Grenache with macho attitude, red and blue fruits in a basket of integrated tannins and oak. Good as it is now, it will be best in another 10 years.

95 pts d'Arenberg The Laughing Magpie Shiraz Viognier 2012

Matured in 50/50% French and American oak (8% new) for 20 months. It's odd how the co-fermentation of viognier can appear to intensify the regional signature, it's certainly written large here, but there's a spark of fresh fruit with a different pitch to its note. All this adds up to an impressive example of this key wine in the d'Arenberg menagerie.

95 pts d'Arenberg The Love Grass Shiraz 2012

Shows the great '12 vintage to full advantage, my grumbles about the label notwithstanding. Comes as close to elegance as one can expect from the generous d'Arenberg Shirazs. There are spice and licorice notes, to the finely pitched black fruits, dark chocolate in the background. Finely ground tannins provide a savory farewell to a wine that could be enjoyed anywhere, anytime.

95 pts d'Arenberg The Dry Dam Riesling 2015

An utterly impressive wine from a winery best known for its flotilla of red wines; its fruit has the juicy flavor and mouthfeel of the kind expected of a dry Mosel Riesling; the intensity of the fruit is heightened by the crisp, crunchy acidity on the finish and aftertaste. The Dry Dam name is an anachronism.

94 pts d'Arenberg The Old Bloke & The Three Young Blondes Shiraz Roussanne Viognier Marsanne 2011

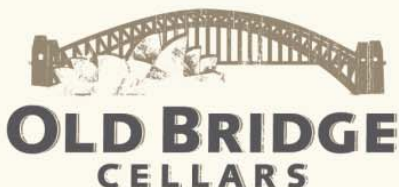
A 91/3/3/3% blend. I simply shake my head in wonder at the accusations of sexism generated by this clever label, and indeed wonder if it isn't a clever move by d'Arenberg designed to draw attention to the label (and this wine). For the record, as it were, there is a complex array of juicy red and black fruits with a crosscut of fine, leathery tannins.

94 pts d'Arenberg The Ironstone Pressings GSM 2013

Matured in used French (81%) and American (19%) oak for 12 months. Deep crimson-purple, unmatched by virtually any Barossa Valley GSM; the alcohol, too, is strikingly low in GSM terms, then there is the powerful array of red and black fruits. Good now, but will be better still in 2+ years. This is a unique style, patented - so it seems - by d'Arenberg.

94 pts d'Arenberg The Galvo Garage Bordeaux Blend 2011

Made using the one-size fits all vinification method used by d'Arenberg, but stands apart from most of its siblings thanks to the charge of high quality tannins that provide structure for the black fruits led by Cabernet and Petit Verdot. Impressive wine at any price, let alone this.



94 pts d'Arenberg The Laughing Magpie Shiraz Viognier 2011

Has an unusually high percentage (10%) of co-fermented viognier, justified by the depth and complexity of the shiraz, and also by the unifying effect of completing the final third of the initial open fermentation in used French and American oak. It's a remarkable outcome for the vintage, shrugging off the impact of the rain.

94 pts d'Arenberg The Wild Pixie Shiraz 2013

Matured in French oak (10% new) for 12 months. Bright crimson-purple, presumably ex co-fermentation with a small percentage of Roussanne: an intense and complex wine with layers of black fruits, positive tannins and the oak infusion ex barrel ferment that I find enjoyable. The net result is a spicy, medium to full-bodied wine with a long future.

93 pts d'Arenberg The Broken Fishplate Sauvignon Blanc 2015

93 pts d'Arenberg The Noble Mud Pie Viognier Arneis 2015

92 pts d'Arenberg The Lucky Lizard Chardonnay 2014

92 pts d'Arenberg The Love Grass Shiraz 2013

92 pts d'Arenberg The Noble Wrinkled Riesling 2015

91 pts d'Arenberg The Coppermine Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

91 pts d'Arenberg The Sticks & Stones Grenache Souzao Tinta Cao 2011

91 pts d'Arenberg The Wild Pixie Shiraz 2011

91 pts d'Arenberg Stephanie The Gnome Rose Shiraz Sangiovese 2015

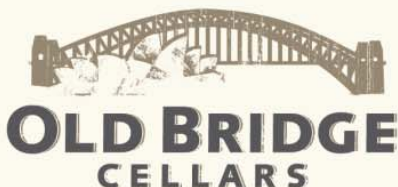
91 pts d'Arenberg The Noble Botryotinia Fuckeliana Semillon Sauvignon Blanc 2015

90 pts d'Arenberg The Conscious Biosphere Aglianico Petit Sirah 2012

90 pts d'Arenberg d'Arry's Original Shiraz Grenache 2013

90 pts d'Arenberg The Footbolt Shiraz 2013

90 pts d'Arenberg The High Trellis Cabernet Sauvignon 2013



GIANT STEPS

97 pts Giant Steps Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay 2014

The bouquet is arresting in its complexity, with a faint echo of funk, but the palate defines this wine, with its ripples and whirlpools of white peach, grapefruit and creamy cashew, all brought to a driving finish thanks to its natural acidity.

97 pts Giant Steps Lusatia Park Vineyard Chardonnay 2015

A great Upper Yarra vineyard now owned by De Bortoli. Lifted fruit blossom aromas with a wraith of barrel ferment; the palate is exquisitely balanced, with the classic white peach/grapefruit duo filling the mouth without even trying.

97 pts Giant Steps Lusatia Park Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015

Superb color; the ultra-fragrant bouquet is picked up unceremoniously by the brilliant palate and dispatched to the boundary. Takes the concept of elegant generosity onto another level with more movement in the chorus of red fruit flavors than you might think possible. This combines elegance with spicy, savory intensity.

97 pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015

Naturally, shares the superb color of its siblings; here generosity takes the stage with richness and tannins woven into the superabundant red and black fruits by invisible mending. A brilliant wine by whatever standards you may choose, the lower Yarra Valley refusing to take a backwards step.

97 pts Giant Steps Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015

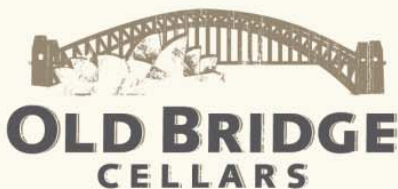
Significantly deeper color than prior vintages, likewise depth of fruit; the bouquet and palate are driven by black and red cherry fruit of exceptional generosity. Small wonder Giant Steps says this is its best vintage yet, but teasing with an unusual touch of dark chocolate.

96 pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay 2014

You can't make great wine by numbers, but the seamless balance of the wine stems from the perfect ripeness linked to its alcohol (or vice versa). Having taken on board the complex white flowers bouquet, it flows across the palate like a shower of confetti, dispensing stone fruit, grapefruit and splashes of balanced acidity.

96 pts Giant Steps Primavera Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015

Another take on this great vintage, with savory, spicy aromas and flavors surging over the bouquet and palate alike, putting whole bunch fermentation up in giant neon letters. The tangy, herbal, forest floor characters will always be the *raison d'être* of the wine, and I hope I'm around to see how this evolves over time. From the Upper Yarra Valley.



95 pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay 2015

A complex, multi-message bouquet hinting of the (relative) richness of the palate; unashamedly lower Yarra Valley with layers of grapefruit and white peach flesh and skin.

95 pts Giant Steps Yarra Valley Chardonnay 2015

An intense blend of grapefruit pith/zest/juice is coupled with shiny acidity on a palate that is a great example of the Yarra Valley's ace in the hole with chardonnay: extreme length.

95 pts Giant Steps Yarra Valley Pinot Noir 2015

Matured in French oak (25% new) for 11 months. Bright, full color; the wine progressively shifts and builds ground from the bouquet through to the palate, finish and – in particular – the aftertaste, by which time the sheer power of the dark red/purple fruits takes hold. Balance in a bottle.

95 pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Pinot Noir 2014

The fruit profile of the Lower Yarra Valley is distinctly different to that of the Upper Yarra, but Flamsteed's touch is gentle in each case. Here the tannins are a little more evident, underpinning the savory/spicy nuances to the fruit, oak less important. The strength of the wine is in its length and balance.

95 pts Giant Steps Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir 2014

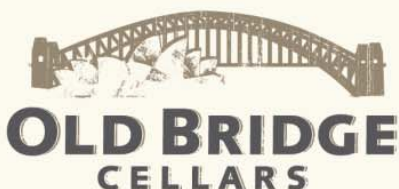
The relatively light color and perfumed bouquet are typical of this vineyard, as is the understated elegance and finesse of the palate, spicy/savory red fruits and silky tannins in a back-up role.

95 pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Merlot 2014

Warmed for fermentation to start, once complete the fermenter sealed with water bags for three weeks maceration on skins, matured in French oak (40% new) for 17 months. This is near the very top of the merlot tree in Australia, needing no apology of any kind. Excellent color, a come-hither bouquet and a palate alive with flowing cassis and plum fruit; the tannins are A-grade, the oak providing the frame for a perfect portrait of an oft-maligned variety.

95 pts Giant Steps Harry's Monster 2014

50% Merlot, 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petit Verdot from the Sexton Vineyard, fermented separately, then treated à la Sexton Merlot, blended Jan '14 and matured in French oak (40% new) for 18 months. Pussyfooting with Cabernet and Merlot doesn't pay off, especially where you have the depth and varietal clarity of the grapes here, the Petit Verdot providing a rock solid bridge between the two varieties.



JOHN DUVAL

97 pts John Duval Eligo Shiraz 2013

Represents the best wine of the vintage, sourced from the Barossa and Eden Valleys, matured for 20 months in French hogsheads (75% new). The aim is a structured (achieved in spades) and elegant (give it 10 years) expression of Barossa shiraz. My query on elegance is due to the obvious French oak: it simply needs a Grange-like decade to come into integrated balance.

96 pts John Duval Entity Shiraz 2014

From old vineyards in Krondorf, Marananga and Eden Valley, open-fermented with submerged cap (header board), matured for 15 months in French oak (35% new). Succulent, rich and powerful, with predominantly black fruits and some spice. The hallmarks are its supple mouthfeel and effortless balance.

94 pts John Duval Plexus SGM 2014

A 47/32/21% blend drawn from old vineyards in a number of districts, Krondorf the one constant, fermented with submerged cap (header boards), matured in French hogsheads (10% new). As is appropriate, complex, but largely fruit-driven, with red cherries/berries and plums to the fore, oak and (particularly) tannins taking a back seat.

KILIKANOON

94 pts Kilikanoon Prophecy Shiraz 2014

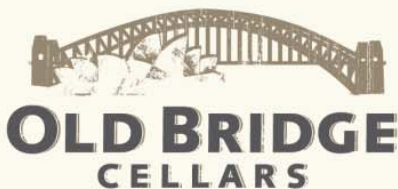
Machine-harvested, open-fermented, cultured yeast, matured in French oak (30% new) for 18 months. The bouquet comes at you in a rush of black fruits and cedary oak, but any apprehension of excessive extract disappears instantly on the palate. While full-bodied, it is very well balanced.

92 pts Kilikanoon Duke Grenache 2013

Machine-harvested, open-fermented, cultured yeast, matured for 15 months in used French oak. In a different league to Prodigal, coming from two 80yo and 100yo vineyards. There's fresh, dried and liqueured red fruits to choose from on the supple palate.

95 pts Kilikanoon Baudinet Blend 2013

50% grenache, 40% shiraz, 10% mataro, open-fermented, cultured yeast, matured for 15 months in French oak (10% new). A very typical Clare Valley GSM with deeper colour, greater structure, more dark fruits and all-up attitude and character doubly surprising given that grenache, not shiraz, is the senior partner.



LEEWIN ESTATE

98 pts/BEST CHARDONNAY Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay 2013

Supremely elegant and finely balanced, and has absorbed the new oak in a manner worthy of a Grand Cru White Burgundy, leaving the fragrant bouquet and finely structured palate of startling length to occupy center stage.

98 pts Leeuwin Estate Art Series Chardonnay 2012

A very youthful bright green-quartz color sets the scene for a riveting wine of exquisite purity and finesse. It almost floats in the mouth, so effortless is its invocation of all things Chardonnay: white flowers, white stone fruits and immaculately balanced acidity. Oak? Well, yes it's there, but rendered mute by the fruit. Has greater staying power than any other Australian chardonnay.

96 pts Leeuwin Estate Art Series Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

Destemmed, culture yeast, matured for 21 months in French oak (40% new). The headline, the main text and the footnotes all say one thing and one thing only, purity. And I suppose I should add elegance. They simply don't come better in this mode.

96 pts Leeuwin Estate Art Series Shiraz 2013

Leeuwin took time to come to terms with its Shirazs, but is now master of its destiny. It has black cherry and plum flavors in superabundance, plus finely tuned tannins, its modest alcohol is the key.

94 pts Leeuwin Estate Prelude Vineyards Chardonnay 2014

Most Chardonnay vignerons would give their eye teeth to have a wine as good as this as their entry point. Light, bright color, and a juicy array of nectarine, white peach and gentle citrus fruit have distracted all attention from the oak. A lovely wine.

94 pts Leeuwin Estate Prelude Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2012

Leeuwin Estate Prelude Vineyards Cabernet Merlot 2012 94pts The bright hue sets the scene for the bright cassis and redcurrant fruit of the palate, which has meticulously put the oak into its back pocket.

94 pts Leeuwin Estate Siblings Sauvignon Blanc Semillon 2015

A 66/34% blend, fermented with cultured yeast in used French oak, matured in oak for 3 months, then 7 months in tank. Bred in the purple, with snow pea to start, next a parade of tropical fruits, striking citrus to finish, the oak influence evident in texture not in flavor.

93 pts Leeuwin Estate Art Series Sauvignon Blanc 2014

Sits brightly in the glass. Watery straw-green. Passionfruit, cut grass, gravel and warm, breadly flavours. Hits up with a considerable amount of flavor (and texture) but is never sharp or in your face; it's a welcoming wine.



93 pts Leeuwin Estate Art Series Riesling 2015

92 pts Leeuwin Estate Siblings Shiraz 2013

MOUNT MARY

97 pts Mount Mary Chardonnay 2014

Gleaming straw-green; a patrician of barrel fermented chardonnays that has long since stood proud in the Mount Mary pantheon; fruit, oak and acidity are fused so tightly together deconstruction isn't possible and, in any event, would be irrelevant. Great Yarra Valley chardonnay, great length.

PENLEY ESTATE

88 pts Penley Estate Phoenix Cabernet Sauvignon 2014

At the upper end of ripeness, with cassis fleshed out further by plummy notes; tannins and oak provide an element of balance in a good, but not great, cabernet.

PLANTAGENET

95 pts Plantagenet Shiraz 2013

An infusion of ultra-fragrant spice, pepper and licorice opens proceedings, the vibrant red cherry and blood plum fruit unfazed by that, if only because it is in no way threatened by tannins or French oak. Classic cool climate style.

SHOOFLY

89 pts Shoofly Chardonnay 2015

Pale straw; hints of citrus, peach and melon; the palate is straightforward and tightly proportioned.

89 pts Shoofly Pinot Noir 2015

From the King and Yarra Valleys. Pale mid-red; cherry and spice, with a touch of mint and earthy complexity; rounded and well balanced, the palate is silky and generous.