

Victoria: Australia's Vine Mixologists

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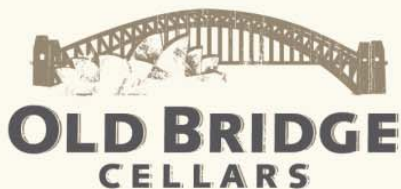
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Victoria is Australia's ultimate state of contrasts. Unlike Australia's other states, pretty much all areas of Victoria have land conducive to high-quality wine production. And although it is the country's second smallest state (smallest if you don't include Tasmania), it is home to some of Australia's coolest viticultural regions (e.g. Henty) as well as among the hottest and driest (areas to the far northwest, such as Mildura and extending south toward the Grampians) and wettest (such as Gippsland) vineyards. This state produces fortified wines and concentrated, full-bodied Shirazes that are among the finest in the nation. And yet equally fine are this state's delicate, perfumed Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Sparkling wine and Riesling offerings. Plus Victoria produces a whole gambit of grape varieties and styles in between. Home to more individual wineries than any other state, you could even say that Victoria's vine mixologists are driving the recent stirrings of recognition by global wine consumers of Australia's incredible vinous diversity - but this is ultimately dependent on recognition of the enormous value of Victoria's diversity by the gatekeepers (importers) within export markets.

Australia's Great Dividing Range has much to do with the stark contrasts in climates between Northern and Southern Victoria. Apart from the differences in altitude in areas like the Strathbogie Ranges and Macedon Ranges, the climatic extremes largely have to do with this mountain range's rain shadow effect. Areas to the north of the mountains tend to be dry to semi-arid and relatively hot. Whereas regions to the south, including Henty, Gippsland and the Melbourne "dress circle" (composed of the Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula, Sunbury and Geelong), are generally temperate to cool and receive relatively higher rainfall.

Victoria's stark climatic contrasts mean that fairly flexible grapes like Shiraz and Chardonnay that can ripen well across a broad range of climates produce a myriad of regional styles, which should in one manner of expression or another satisfy the cravings of just about anyone who likes wine. Apart from this multitasking duo, a wide diversity of grape varieties across the state is not just desirable but necessary to ensure wines with optimal flavor and phenolic ripeness. Consequently, Victoria effortlessly manages to produce varieties and styles that pose a marginal to significant ripening struggle for the other states. It was in Southern Victoria where Pinot-focused pioneers such as James Halliday and Philip Jones set up camp with Coldstream Hills (Yarra Valley) and Bass Phillip (Gippsland), respectively. And areas of Victoria continue to make ideal testing grounds for innovation, with interesting and indeed impressive examples of unconventional Aussie-grown cultivars such as Nebbiolo, Prosecco, Moscato, Sangiovese, Marsanne, Roussanne, Pinot Meunier, Savagnin, Bordeaux Blends and Touriga Nacional.

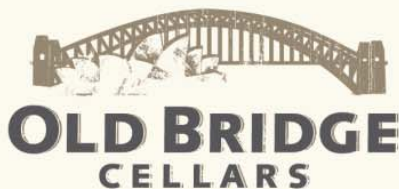
Victoria's climatic contrasts are just part of the story behind the diversity that this state yields. The soils here are among the oldest in the world that with the churning effect of the topography, make for an enormous range of soil types and strata even across a relatively compact area. Heathcote makes a point of its elderly Cambrian soils (formed about 542 million years ago) dotted about this GI and composing some of the oldest soils in this state, if not Australia. The strata of dark brown gravels, fine clays and ironstone and the extent of topsoil depth are clearly visible at the region's colorful mining sluicing reserve of yesteryear - Pink Cliffs in Heathcote - where I was guided



during my most recent visit by Ron Laughton of Jasper Hill. Another very good example of the diversity of soil types and their contributions to wine styles is apparent at Kooyong and Port Phillip Estate in Mornington Peninsula. There, winemaker Sandro Mosele has focused on the more volcanic soils at Port Phillip as opposed to the sedimentary soils at Kooyong and even within Kooyong's range of the varying soil types and their contribution, for example his Pinot Noir labels: Ferrous (where the vineyard is laced with ironstone pebbles) and Meres (with more clay in the topsoil). Honestly, wines like these are every bit as exciting as you can find in famously delimited regions of Burgundy!

Score Summary:

97 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2010
96 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2006
96 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2003
95+ pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2012
95+ pts	Jasper Hill Emily's Paddock Shiraz and Cabernet Franc 2013
94+ pts	Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 1 2012
94 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2009
94 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2007
93+ pts	Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay 2013
93 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2005
92+ pts	Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Nebbiolo 2013
92 pts	Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2004
92 pts	Giant Steps Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay 2013
91+ pts	Giant Steps Harry's Monster 2013
91 pts	Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Riesling 2014
91 pts	Mea Culpa Chardonnay 2013
91 pts	Mea Culpa Pinot Noir 2013
91 pts	Mea Culpa Shiraz 2013
91 pts	Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 2 2012
91 pts	Yarra Yering Pinot Noir 2012
91 pts	Yeringberg Proprietary Red 2012
90+ pts	Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Pinot Noir 2013
90+ pts	Yarra Yering Chardonnay 2012
90+ pts	Yeringberg Chardonnay 2013
90 pts	Yarra Yering Underhill Shiraz 2012
90 pts	Yeringberg Pinot Noir 2013
89 pts	Giant Steps Applejack Pinot Noir 2013
88 pts	Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir 2013
88 pts	Yeringberg Marsanne/Roussanne 2013



- 88 pts** | Yeringberg Marsanne/Roussanne 2013
- 87 pts** | Innocent Bystander Syrah 2013
- 87 pts** | Innocent Bystander Pinot Gris 2014
- 87 pts** | Yeringberg Viognier 2013
- 86 pts** | Innocent Bystander Pink Moscato 2014

Full Reviews:

97 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2010

Deep garnet-purple, the 2010 Cluster M45 Shiraz has lovely floral and herbal notes wafting over a solid core of youthful blackberries and black cherries with nuances of Chinese five spice and cloves. Great intensity and balance in a rather modest medium-full body with great graininess to the tannins and plenty of freshness. It finishes long. Note that no 2011 Cluster M45 was produced.

This illustrious partnership between Michel Chapoutier from France's Rhone region and Ron Laughton of the Heathcote estate, Jasper Hill was founded in 1997 and the project yielded its first vintage in 2003. Formerly called "Cambrian," "Cluster M45" is now the U.S. label for this wine, known as "La Pleiade" elsewhere. It is made from 100% Shiraz from a 20-acre single vineyard just south of Jasper Hill's Georgia's Paddock, which is planted with a 50/50 mix of vines taken from Jasper Hill and Chapoutier's vineyards (imported from France). In December 2014, I visited with Ron Laughton in Heathcote and tasted through a vertical of every vintage made of La Pleiade/Cluster M45.

96 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2006

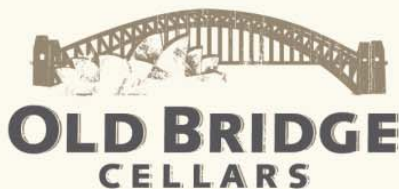
Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2006 Cluster M45 has quite a meaty nose with game hints over black cherry pie and blackberry preserves notes plus nuances of black loam and chargrill. Full-bodied and richly fruited with lovely, velvety tannins and a just enough acid to support the concentrated flavors, it's finishing with great length.

96 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2003

Deep garnet in color with the faintest hint of brick, the 2003 Cluster M45 Shiraz displays a gorgeous nose of warm mulberries, red plum preserves and raspberry coulis with nuances of baking spices and sandalwood. Full-bodied and generously fruited, it still has a lot of vitality and fruit, textured by medium to firm chewy tannins and bestowing nice freshness in the long finish.

95+ pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2012

Medium to deep garnet, the 2012 Cluster M45 Shiraz presents lovely red and black cherry notes, black raspberries and kirsch with hints of menthol, aniseed, pepper and lavender. Medium-bodied, elegant and showing very fine tannins, it has just enough acid to lift the rich fruit and a good long finish. It should age very well. Note that no 2011 Cluster M45 was produced.



95+ pts Jasper Hill Emily's Paddock Shiraz and Cabernet Franc 2013

Deep purple-black colored, the 2013 Emily's Paddock Shiraz and Cabernet Franc offers a tantalizing nose of crushed blackberries, mulberries and black cherries with hints of dried mint, chocolate box, sandalwood, marmite toast and roses. Solidly built with tons of muscular fruit and structured like a brick house, the medium to full-bodied palate gives layers of complex flavors even at this youthful stage and a very long finish.

94+ pts Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 1 2012

Produced from the original 1969 vines of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot, the 2012 Dry Red No 1 possesses a deep garnet color and is beautifully scented of red and blackcurrants, black cherries and red plum with underlying cedar, violet, menthol and dried herb hints. Medium-bodied, it gives outstanding intensity supported by firm grainy tannins and oodles of freshness, all leading to a very long, earth- and herb-laced finish.

94 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2009

Deep garnet with a touch of purple, the 2009 Cluster M45 Shiraz has notes of fragrant earth and forest floor over youthful black fruits and tar. Full-bodied and built like a brick house with firm chewy tannins and a nice acid backbone, it has a wonderfully long, earthy finish.

94 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2007

Deep garnet colored, the 2007 Cluster M45 Shiraz offers a lovely perfume of roses and potpourri over a core of cassis, blueberries and mocha plus a waft of anise. Medium to full-bodied, it fills the palate with blue fruit and Indian spice flavors, plus chewy tannins and balanced acid, finishing long.

93+ pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay 2013

The 2013 Sexton Vineyard Chardonnay opens with grapefruit peel, lime blossom, mandarin peel and peachy notes with underlying struck match, marzipan, fresh ginger and coriander seed nuances. Medium-bodied, it offers great elegance and complexity in the mouth with citrus, stone fruit and exotic spices layers complimented by just enough toastiness and a silken texture. It finishes with commendable persistence with freshness that keeps you wanting more.

93+ pts Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Shiraz 2013

Deep purple-black in color, the 2013 Shiraz Georgia's Paddock has a broody nose of crushed blackcurrants, black plums and warm blackberries with hints of star anise, dark chocolate and Szechuan pepper. Rich, voluptuous and full-bodied in the mouth, it is far from "heavy" and offers great freshness to juxtapose the concentrated flavors while the approachable, rounded tannins contribute velvety texture through the long finish.

93 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2005

Deep garnet with a hint of purple, the 2005 Cluster M45 Shiraz reveals gorgeous fruits of the forest coulis and blueberry pie scents with suggestions of cloves, cedar and bacon. Medium to full-bodied, quite structured and chewy, it's showing a bit more age than the previous two



vintages at this stage, but still has loads of life, going long and spicy in the finish.

92+ pts Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Nebbiolo 2013

Pale to medium garnet colored, the 2013 Georgia's Paddock Nebbiolo is a little reticent on the nose to begin, offering notes of warm currants, mulberries, kirsch and tar with hints of underbrush, black pepper, aniseed and cloves. Medium-bodied and not shy on the tannins, it offers plenty of very sophisticated and expressive Nebbiolo flavors with just enough lively acidity to lift the long finish. I've veered on the conservative side with my score, although this wine is already showing a lot of promise. Like so many great Nebbiolos, it really needs time.

92 pts Chapoutier & Laughton Cluster M45 Shiraz 2004

Deep garnet colored, the 2004 Cluster M45 Shiraz presents an earthy/meaty, charcoal-laced nose with notes of cassis and preserved plums at the core plus truffles and a hint of licorice. Full-bodied, it's a bit hot on the mid-palate and finish, with chewy, slightly hard tannins supporting the generous, muscular fruit, finishing long.

92 pts Giant Steps Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay 2013

Lovely lemon curd, white peach and mandarin-peel notes open on the nose of the 2013 Tarraford Vineyard Chardonnay with nuances of flint, ginger and cedar. Medium-bodied, it fills the palate with lively citrus and stone fruit flavors supported by a crisp spine of acid before finishing long and minerally.

91+ pts Giant Steps Harry's Monster 2013

A Cabernet Sauvignon dominant Bordeaux Blend sporting a very deep opaque purple color, the 2013 Harry's Monster offers notes of crushed black plums, blackcurrants and blackberries with hints of vanilla, toast, cedar, pencil lead and cloves. Medium-bodied, the palate is densely packed with black fruit and spice box flavors with firm, grainy tannins and just enough acid to lift the long, somewhat woody finish. It really needs time to show its true colors but this is a very promising young wine!

91 pts Jasper Hill Georgia's Paddock Riesling 2014

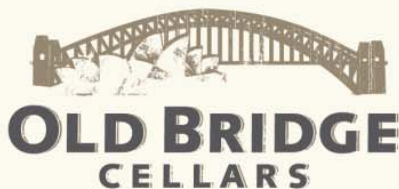
The 2014 Riesling Georgia's Paddock has a beautifully expressive note of honeyed apricots, spiced apples and warm pears with touches of jasmine and lime blossoms. Dry, light to medium-bodied and with deliciously approachable freshness, it finishes long with commendable poise.

91 pts Mea Culpa Chardonnay 2013

The 2013 Mea Culpa Chardonnay has a seriously citrusy nose with intertwined notes of lemons, grapefruit and oranges over hints of lime leaves, flint, crushed stones and white pepper. Medium-bodied, it gives tons of expressive citrus and mineral flavors in the mouth marked by a racy acid spine that carries the flavors to a long finish.

91 pts Mea Culpa Pinot Noir 2013

Pale ruby colored, the 2013 Mea Culpa Pinot Noir is a little funky and gamy to begin, then gives



way to a beguiling core of red cherries, pomegranate and sautéed herbs with touches of underbrush, lavender and anise. Delicate and softly spoken in the mouth, it offers quiet intensity with beautifully silky tannins and a long finish of earth and red berry flavors.

91 pts Mea Culpa Shiraz 2013

Medium to deep garnet-purple in color, the 2013 Mea Culpa Shiraz leaps from the glass with ripe blackberry and blueberry scents complimented with menthol, cloves and Chinese five spice accents. Medium-bodied, it fills the palate with expressive black berry and exotic spice flavors supported by firm, chewy tannins and lively acidity before finishing long and spicy.

91 pts Yarra Yering Dry Red No. 2 2012

A medium-garnet colored "Rhone Blend" of Shiraz and Marsanne, the 2012 Dry Red No 2 offers a nose of kirsch, stewed plums and spice box with hints of dusty earth and Ceylon tea. Medium-bodied, it offers great intensity and tension within an elegant package with plenty of spicy red berry flavors, a solid backbone of chewy tannins and a long, earth-laced finish.

91 pts Yarra Yering Pinot Noir 2012

Pale ruby colored, the 2012 Pinot Noir has a somewhat rustic, stemmy nose giving way to a delicate core of red cherries and raspberries with hints of violets and fertile loam. It fills the mouth with vibrant red berry flavors and harmonious herbal- and earth-laced accents, is well supported by chewy tannins and lively acid, and finishes with great length.

91 pts Yeringberg Proprietary Red 2012

A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot, the 2012 Proprietary Red displays a medium to deep garnet-purple color and gives notes of crushed black cherries, black raspberries and roses with hints of cedar, pencil shavings, cinnamon and cloves. Medium-bodied, it fills the palate with vibrant red berry flavors and a pleasant toastiness supported by crisp acid and firm, fine-grained tannins and a finish with wonderful persistence.

90+ pts Giant Steps Sexton Vineyard Pinot Noir 2013

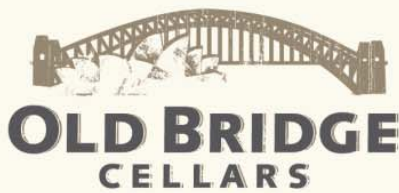
Pale to medium ruby-purple in color, the 2013 Pinot Noir Sexton Vineyard is just a little reticent, offering subtle notes of black cherries, mulberries and wild thyme with underlying violet and black pepper hints. Medium-bodied, it offers plenty of pepper-laced black cherry flavor and a good grip from the chewy tannins and lively acid, though it's a little bitter toward the finish.

90+pts Yarra Yering Chardonnay 2012

The 2012 Chardonnay provides expressive apricot, mango and guava aromas with nuances of toast, marzipan and allspice. Medium-bodied, it fills the palate with tropical and stone-fruit flavors with refreshing acidity through a good, long and savory finish.

90+ pts Yeringberg Chardonnay 2013

The 2013 Chardonnay is delicately scented of honey-drizzled white peaches and clotted cream with hints of baking bread and marzipan. Medium-bodied, it offers plenty of creamy stone fruit



and bready flavors supporting by just enough freshness and finishing with great length.

90 pts Yarra Yering Underhill Shiraz 2012

Medium garnet in color, the 2012 Underhill Shiraz is a tad reticent at this youthful stage, offering glimmers of red fruit preserves notes plus underlying dried herb, Chinese five spice, pepper and lavender hints. Medium-bodied, it has great expression and vibrancy though is just slightly lacking in generosity with a firm spine of chewy tannins and long, refreshing finish.

90 pts Yeringberg Pinot Noir 2013

Pale ruby colored with a hint of purple, the 2012 Pinot Noir offers a subtle nose of fresh cranberries and wild strawberries with hints of forest floor, violets and fallen leaves. Light to medium-bodied, it gives just enough elegant red berry and earthy flavors in the mouth with a light grip of acid and chew of tannins, finishing with lingering notes of stewed tea.

89 pts Giant Steps Applejack Pinot Noir 2013

Pale ruby-purple colored, the 2013 Applejack Vineyard Pinot Noir gives pronounced red and black cherry aromas with cinnamon stick, toast, violet and cloves suggestions. Medium-bodied, it provides plenty of cherry and baking spices flavors in the mouth supported by soft tannins and just enough acidity, finishing with great length yet lacking somewhat in depth.

88 pts Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir 2013

Pale ruby colored, the 2013 Pinot Noir gives notes of kirsch, cranberry sauce and raspberry preserves with hints of cinnamon stick and forest floor. Medium-bodied, it gives a good amount of juicy berry flavors supported by approachable chewy tannins. It finishes with good length but perhaps just a little simple.

88 pts Yeringberg Marsanne/Roussanne 2013

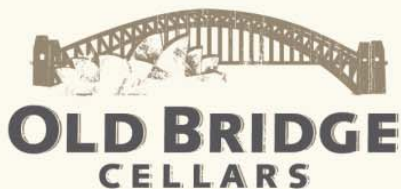
The 2013 Marsanne / Roussanne has delicate notes of peaches and ripe apples with underlying yeast, toasted almond and nutmeg hints. Medium-bodied, it has plenty of savory / yeasty character on offer in the mouth with a lively acid backbone and medium to long finish.

87 pts Innocent Bystander Syrah 2013

Medium to deep garnet-purple colored, the 2013 Syrah offers a moderate intensity of red and black plum aromas with hints of black pepper, aniseed and Mediterranean herbs. Medium-bodied, it leads with firm, somewhat astringent tannins that render the fruit a little lean, finishing tannic and savory. This is a pleasant alternative to fruit forward Shiraz, but you need to be able to enjoy wines of restraint with a bit of "chew."

87 pts Innocent Bystander Pinot Gris 2014

The 2014 Pinot Gris gives delicate notes of fresh peaches, pear drops and nutmeg with a hint of honeysuckle. Some yeasty notes come through on the medium-bodied, dry, silken-textured palate and offer a pleasant savory note in the finish.



87 pts Yeringberg Viognier 2013

The 2013 Viognier has a very faintly scented nose of peaches, honeysuckle and baker's yeast with a touch of nutmeg. Medium to full-bodied with a lovely satiny texture, it offers just enough honeyed peach flavors with balancing acidity and a medium to long finish.

86 pts Innocent Bystander Pink Moscato 2014

Pale salmon-pink colored, the 2014 Moscato offers an intensely grapy and honeysuckle-scented nose with notes of rosewater and honey-drizzled peaches. Light-bodied, fizzy and sweet in the mouth, it is a classic example that can't fail to win over lovers of this style.

