

The Hanes Wine Review, March 2009 Edition

So, as has been discussed previously, Hanes is quaffing more beer than wine of late. The worm is starting to turn, but beer has been dear for a couple of months now. Mostly because Hanes doesn't really know much about beer except that he has been drinking it since the 8th grade and the bottle has never let him down. Being responsible for managing a beer department with over 125 different beers meant tackling a fast learning curve. Burp. But now it's mostly copasetic and a solid base of knowledge has been acquired. That said, there's still some stuff which seems weird to Hanes.

First, who knew there were only two basic categories of beer? These being ale styles and lager styles. It's not so far-fetched as in the wine there's red and white. But beer always seemed to be more diverse in structure and lineage to Hanes. Of course, ale and lager styles have a zillion sub-styles but there's supposed to be some vague familial resemblance so that these two main styles remain relevant. FYI, there's also a side category called hybrid styles which includes fruit beers, herbed or spiced beers and smoked beers. These additives prevent the beers from being categorized as either ale or lager in style although one might assume that the beer being adulterated is initially either an ale or lager.

Most beers consumed in the U.S. appear to be lagers. This is because all the huge "macro brews" like Budweiser, Miller, Coors, etc. are lagers. Hanes looks at this like the world of wine. The sorts of wine Hanes writes about are a minuscule fraction of the total wine consumed in the country, most of which is box wine, jug wine or otherwise totally cheap undrinkable swill. So too with beer. Most "high end" imports and domestic "craft" or "micro brew" beers are made and available in such small numbers that the audience for them is in turn fairly small. However, this product output is growing with new craft brewers opening up or expanding operations. Which leads to another weird thing.

Hanes don't drink no Spudweiser. Usually, when he goes out and drinks beer it's stuff like Newcastle, Boddingtons, Sam Adams, Stella Artois, Anchor Steam, etc. It is interesting to note that these beers are not really macro brews (that is watery lagers) but no longer are they considered to be "craft" beers. All these beers are made in very large production numbers and available just about anywhere in the country, 365/24/7. You want a Bass, Sierra Nevada, or Hoegaarden and you can get it, no sweat. Maybe a decade or so stuff like Saranac or Harpoon seemed like a "micro brew" but no more. These beers simply represent a more distinctive "high end" mass market brew. Some of these breweries kind of admit this fact by way of creating some small batch, narrowly distributed beers to kind of retain some street cred with the geeks. But, again as opposed to a generation ago, hardcore beer geeks aren't all that jazzed to pound Foster's or Harp anymore.

Getting with the program, Hanes has been chugging small production beers. These come in regular 12 ounce bottles or sometimes in 22 ounce "bomber" bottles" or even half gallon "growlers," these being capped jugs filled at the brewery. Conversely, many small production imports come in 11.2 ounce bottles which is a total gyp. The European large bottle "bomber" like format seems to be 16.9 ounce bottles which is kinda OK, better yet are the big ole 25 ounce bottles.

All these beers are expensive. Hanes has paid up to \$17.49 for a single six-pack. That is nuts. Back in the day, spending \$6.99 on a six-pack felt like a decadent splurge. Most craft beers cost \$10.99 and up for six-packs and over \$6.00 for a bomber. That's a lot of wine Hanes could be buying. Thankfully, one of the nice things about micro brews is that there is supposed to be a limited amount available locally. These sort of beers are only supposed to have limited distribution or import quantities. Hence, you can taste a good portion of what's around locally if you sample, say, 4-5 beers a night for four months in a row.

It's interesting that, based on beer review websites, there's a sub-culture of beer geeks who "share" beers and trade them across the country like baseball cards. Hanes is not there yet. He is also keeping his Thurman Munson rookie card.

From what can be gathered at this early stage of beer geekdom, California and Colorado are the two big homes of American craft brewing. Michigan, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York have a bunch too. But it's a widespread phenomenon and craft breweries are just about everywhere. Getting distinctive imports is more difficult and isolated to more urban or suburban areas. Not many Norwegian Porters being sold in the hinterlands of Wyoming. But Hanes could be wrong.

Back to styles. The only lagers which get respect are German, Czech and other European versions. Pilsners are part of the lager family and these are often made by craft breweries. Bock and Doppelbock styles seem popular for lagers. At least they sell at a slow, steady pace.

Ales tend to get first grouped by "national styles" although Hanes is sure these groupings are fungible. American, English, Scottish, Irish, Belgian, French, Finnish, German and Russian seem to be the major national styles. Note, you don't have to be in America to make an American India Pale Ale. It's a recognized style and it can be made in any country, same for Belgian Pale Ale, etc.

The next level is stuff like India Pale Ale, Stout, Porter, Dubbel, Brown Ale, Old Ale, Wee Heavy, Witbier and too many more to mention. Google the whole list if you like. Next, there are "super duper" ratcheted up versions which have "Imperial" or "Double" preceding the style, e.g., American Imperial Stout. These are noted for their higher alcohol levels or their high gravity nature. The "gravity" of a beer is a measure of the density of a liquid or solid compared to that of water and thicker beer has higher gravity. This is a grave matter.

Hanes has kind of stopped here. The actual specifics of beer brewing goes unrecognized, Hanes can barely stay up with wine vinification processes. The brain ain't getting any bigger and it sure is getting wetter. Ditto for paying attention to what kind of hops, malts, yeasts are employed. There's an incredible amount of information out there. Get at it, tiger! That ales use yeasts that ferment at the top of the vat and at temperatures of 60° to 75° while lagers use bottom fermenting yeasts at around 34° is sufficient for Hanes's purposes.

Maybe the beer bug will prove tough to shake and Hanes will not only continue to study beer arcana but also brew his own. It's possible, home brewing would be another excellent reason to never leave the house...

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This month's big winners... You get a real consistent product out of Casalfarneto from the Marche, Italy. The 2007 Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore "Fontevecchia" is right up there with previous vintages and, unlike many other favored Italian white wines, still under \$20 at around \$17 or so. Think I caught the 2006 Lagier Meredith Syrah a little too late after bottling and release, suspect it is starting to shut down some. But still very nice and, with continuing kudos, the price is the same as the very first release of the 1998 vintage. Château de Saint Cosme is hit or miss for Hanes these days but the 2007 Côtes-du-Rhône (which is supposed to be 100% Syrah) is pretty good at around \$18, moderate value to be found here. Not much Gewürztraminer goes down the Hanes gullet anymore but the 2007 version from Scherer in Alsace was a pleasant reminder of the charms of the grape and one must assume that \$22 is the going rate for entry level "tradition" bottlings these days.

The best \$15 and under picks... Not much sampled in the cheapie range this month. But the unoaked 2007 Four Vines "Naked" Chardonnay ain't bad for the \$15 or so it costs. More value out of Gascogne, France – the 2007 Domaine de Ballade \$11 blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Colombard is another cheapskate's delight. As far as entry level Australian Shiraz goes Woop Woop does not suck, which is indeed saying a lot. It's \$14 hereabouts and worth it if you don't prefer to drink Beaujolais seven days a week.

And the disappointments... The 2007 Tensley blanc oddly disappointed since all previous vintages tasted were quite delicious and delightful. Hmm. Maybe the 2008 will be out soon. Lots of people dig it but Hanes can't get overly excited about the 2007 entry level wine from Portugal's Quinta do Crasto called, uhh, "Crasto." Nothing shitty about it, just not the value that can be found from many other Portuguese red table wines. Does have name recognition, if such a thing may be claimed for any Portuguese red table wines.

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Unlike *those other* professional reviews, Hanes only will share what he likes if it is *currently available* in stores for immediate purchase. If these wines are not to be found in some of your local stores, they suck and that's not Hanes's fault.

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on the *older [or non-imported] wines* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/oldervintages2009.html>

If you are interested in reading tasting notes by Hanes on *beer* he has recently consumed, these notes are gathered here: <http://www.haneswinereview.com/reviews/beer.html>

Here's the order in which Hanes humbly provides the wine review information:

Winery/Producer Name

Region of Origin, Appellation, Brand Name/Wine Style, Single Vineyard [if any applicable]

Grape Type

Vintage Year, Price Hanes Paid [if available], Alcohol Percentage [if available]

Tasting Notes, Hanes's Numeric Score [on the traditional, yet inane, 100 point scale (which for Hanes truly begins at around 80 points and more or less ends around 94 points)]

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And here's Hanes's wine reviews for March!

CALIFORNIA RED

McPrice Myers Wine Company
San Luis Obispo County, Paso Robles, Beautiful Earth
Blend
2006, \$32.00, 15.4%

While the purple core achieves full opacity, its depth doesn't seem forced and seamlessly transitions to dark red magenta rims, quiet glow to it. Very smoky, toasty nose of salted meats, salami, sea breeze, given this more rugged profile the black currant, cassis, black cherry fruit comes through clearly, bringing with it toffee, citrus blossom and mint leaves, as it dissolves the alcoholic fumes become more present. Full-bodied, quite densely packed, yet not devoid of a sense of forward movement. Complete ripeness in the plum, currant, cherry fruit without excess juiciness, like a pill dissolving in the mouth, each next second brings more out but in a controlled, timed manner. Compactness cloaks much of the tannin, although the acidity can grease the wheels some. Orange, lemon citrus, garden flowers and herbs, trace of new leather there. But very little of the salinity found in the nose. Coconut, caramel and mint represent the oak presence. Flavors persist through the finish and it grows in stature with each additional sip. Should benefit from even short-term bottle time. 85% Syrah, 9% Grenache, 6% Mourvèdre. 89

Lagier Meredith
Napa Valley, Mount Veeder
Syrah
2006, \$50.00, 14.7%

Black purple core of complete opacity, the thin rims set in dark ruby-magenta, any dried spots noticeably stain the inside glass walls. Slight reductive funk to the nose of saddle leather, merde, worked over barnyard earth and beef bouillon, needs air time to blossom into licorice, orange zest, dried potpourri and finally taut black currant, cherry fruit scents, never fully unclenches. Full-bodied, at present dominated by its structure with dusty tannins and punishing acidity working the velvet ropes and resonant flavor ain't on the VIP list. This is not to say that you don't get your fair share of flavor, just smells and tastes like a wine perhaps prematurely shutting down. The cherry, plum, currant fruit dark and savory, simply doesn't spread as wide or linger as much as other vintages out of the gate. The orange to grapefruit citrus prominent and adds a mouthwatering quality. Develops a floral side too and a dried beef jerky element, keeps the oak very neutral. Real chewy finish. Quite curious to see this after its slept for awhile. 89

Havens
Napa Valley
Merlot
2005, \$20.99, 14.5%

Dark purple core, this swiftly segueing to very wide burnt crimson red rims, clear but the color makes it look a little dirty. The nose shows a grainy, burnt sort of oak with cedar and frying butter notes, a sort of metallic earthiness surfaces with anise seed and dried herb accents, the plum, black currant fruit scents more dense than juicy, overall clouds up the nostrils well. Full-bodied, dry, although not clearly from tannin, this tends to slow down the pace forward appreciably. As in the nose, there's sweetness and density in the plum, currant, cherry fruit but little wet

juiciness. Cedar, leather, dried herbs, dried orange peels, fennel and licorice, lot going on but comes back to that caked, dried dirt road thing. No one can complain that it's a soft, innocuous Merlot. 87

CALIFORNIA WHITE

Lambert Bridge Winery
Dry Creek Valley
Sauvignon Blanc
2007, \$24.99, 14.1%

Crystal clear pale green-white straw color, superb reflectivity, beautiful for all its transparency. Gentle nose of lemonade, limeade, sweet but not sugary, floral with a hint of black licorice, quiet apricot, peach to pear fruit scents never a major part, while overall soft of touch lingers nicely. Medium-bodied, here the lemon to lime citrus zestier and has bite, boosted by the acidity as well as more mineral water notes. The licorice and baking spices touch more obvious whereas the florality fades a few steps into the background. Peach, apricot, melon, pear and nectarine fruit alternate between juicy and crisp. Rounds out some towards the finish, which increases its palate presence and length. Built in a pleasing style while holding onto some complexity. 88

Patz & Hall
Russian River Valley, Dutton Ranch
Chardonnay
2006, \$45.99, 14.2%

Greenish cast to the trim golden color, better sparkle than most peers, hue drops off as it approaches the rims. Gentle, streamlined nose of fresh cream, orange sherbet, touch of butterscotch, the oak well knit into the orange spice and apple, pear, apricot scents, the fruit too displays decorum, in the end, though, all this tactfulness contributes to a swift denouement in the nostrils. Medium-bodied, quite fluid and swiftly paced in the mouth, no rough patches nor bumps to be found. Orange, lemon citrus accompanied by a mineral water element, together they help the acidity temper any oaky ginger, clove, vanilla bean, butterscotch flavors. Semi-terse presentation of the peach, apricot, pear, yellow apple fruit, refreshing for it, just catches you a little off guard. Only a very little alcoholic heat peeks through. Thoughtfully put together. 87

Four Vines
Santa Barbara County, Naked
Chardonnay
2007, \$14.99, 13.9%

Golden brown color, very deep without giving up shine, hue dulls at the rims but the shine persists. Crisp nose overall, despite being unoaked it still does not lack for creamy vanilla accents, tropical pineapple, guava scents join with more traditional apricot and green apple fruit, some banana bubblegum there too, citrus blossom, no intellectual heavyweight but attractively broad in array. Medium-bodied, possesses a dusty mouth texture which is at partial odds with the juiciness of the tangerine, lime citrus and nectarine, apricot, mango, pineapple fruit. Thankfully, there's sufficient acidity to finally tilt things in the latter's favor and let the juices flow. The floral side remains quiet without gaining the lift to spread out. Very credible length without losing the core of its flavors. (Screwcap) 87

Brutocao
Mendocino Valley, Feliz Vineyard
Sauvignon Blanc
2007, \$13.99, 13.7%

High degree of sparkle to the green-white color, dances nimbly in the glass, this in spite of the complete transparency. There's a soft creaminess to the nose which evokes vanilla flavors but not true oakiness per se, juicy lemon and lime citrus, not particularly floral but the ripeness comes through in the apricot, peach, melon scents. Medium-bodied, while not all that acidic has a quite firm mouth feel and grips the palate tenaciously. As a result, not the most refreshing wine ever but no discrediting the buoyancy of the grapefruit, lime, tangerine fruit as well as the nectarine, peach, apricot and hint of pineapple fruit. You get a pleasing burst of black licorice too. Minimal herbaceousness, little sour or bitter about it. More about approachability than vibrant cleansing. And approachable. (Synthetic Cork) 87

Tensley
Santa Barbara County, Blanc
Blend
2007, \$20.99, 14.3%

Credibly deep golden color, a little orange bronze here and there, general translucency helps to deepen, rims still washed out. The nose does not come across as complex but does have a nice layering to it, mint and wet flower petals, well-concentrated peach, apricot, pear and persimmon scents without the forcing of the issue, that said, is definitely bottom heavy and could use some lift and airy perfume. Full-bodied, not sluggish as it were, more as if just awakened from a long nap and not quite sure how to move swiftly. Melon, pear, apricot, peach fruit frame the attack and taper off from there. For a white wine comes close to clove notes along with the cinnamon and allspice. Something causes it to hiccup in the mid-palate so it's not as fluid as it might be and has to scramble to throw together vanilla cream, orange and lime citrus and then violets to steady the boat. You keep thinking it's just about to come together but then it just doesn't. 57% Grenache Blanc, 28% Roussanne, 15% Viognier. 86

NORTH CAROLINA RED

McRitchie Wine Company
Yadkin Valley
Merlot
2006, \$23.99, 12.3%

Bright violet core with enough ruby to it to allow its squeaky clean character and some transparency to show, more deep ruby to red magenta colored rims, fetching surface shine as well. Very ripe, almost like powdered candy nose of raspberry, strawberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit, thankfully doesn't slouch softly in the nostrils, especially as there really are no foils for the fruit, just warm caramel and orange blossom notes. Medium-bodied, quite smooth in texture. This noted, there's noticeable bell pepper, grass notes and a suggestion of mild phenological underripeness, this all but fully masked by the sweetness of the raspberry, blueberry, cherry fruit which ain't shy about expressing itself. The orange to lemon citrus juicy as well and more sweet than sour. Lowgrade caramel and toffee accents for oak. The tannins present but appear to be "managed" to suit the end goal. Trace of leather or cow hide but not earthy. Turns semi-sour at the end as it coalesces into mouth perfume, more

cranberry and lemon notes. If you had it you'd finish your glass, no doubt. 87

FRANCE RED

Saint Cosme, Château de Rhône, Côtes-du-Rhône
Syrah
2007, \$17.99, 14.0%

Red-ruby to violet colored core, has good brightness and reflectivity, segues to a reddish magenta around the rims, not quite pink. While the nose does display softer milk chocolate, carob notes, the main driver is the white grapefruit, dried flowers and cracked leather elements, the black cherry, blackberry fruit scents nothing pushy nor showy, finds an aggressive pacing and then stays within itself, flicker of black pepper. Medium-bodied, while it feels mildly extracted remains within normal parameters and thus just comes across as juicy, with abundant raspberry, red cherry, blackberry fruit. Tree bark, olive pit and back road dirt accents pair up with white grapefruit to orange citrus to keep it alternating between zesty and earthy. The fruit right now throwing a blanket over any game or meat shades but they might gain clarity with further bottle time. The tannin and, more so, acidity, control the texture and keep it on the dry side as well as slow things into a midtempo pacing. Drinking quite nicely now with the aforementioned upside potential. 88

Pervenche, Château la Bordeaux, Lalande de Pomerol
Blend
2006, \$24.99, 13.0%

The core achieves complete purple hue and just nudges across the line into opacity, the rims betray a dark red magenta hue, sturdy enough in the glass. Fresh nose, lively mixture of blackberry, red cherry, cranberry, raspberry fruit scents, "good cop" foil for the tobacco ash, leather, green pepper, stone shard accents, while has a drying presence in your nostrils, not entirely unforgiving and does end on a pleasing floral note with traces of sweet garden herbs. Medium-bodied, good teeth to the tannins, increases both mouth presence and overall solidity. The fruit core is strong enough to persist through to the mid-palate, pleasing cherry, blackberry, Italian plum, darker in profile than the nose. Tea leaf, graphite, tobacco ash and stone dust the more obvious of the other flavors. More pronounced orange, lemon citrus edge here. Does open up with air time but this is one that might prove best in its youth as the tannin will be around for some time to come. 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc. 87

FRANCE WHITE

Scherer, André
Alsace
Gewürztraminer
2007, \$21.99, 13.0%

Deep golden color, verging on copper, the sparkling surface pairs agreeably with the block-like wholeness of the liquid below, very pretty if may appear advanced due to the nature of the hue. Generous nose of honeysuckle, dewy orange blossom, tangerine rind, stays close to a more streamlined array of apricot, peach and nectarine scents than develop deeper tropicality, produces more stone and stream water accents than nuttiness, hence dissolves with more freshness than many of its immediate peers. Medium-bodied, inclines towards a compactness rather

than spray itself hither and yon. The tangerine, pink grapefruit, lime citrus the star of the show from start to finish, luckily in a zesty manner which bolsters the floral component as well. The nuttiness just a tick stronger here, that said, you do get more pineapple, guava notes alongside the apricot, peach base, crisp fruitiness. The acidity gives itself a workout trying to amp things up further. Sweet baking spices extend the finish and aftertaste. 89

Champault et Fils, Roger
Loire, Sancerre, Les Pierris
Sauvignon Blanc
2007, \$21.99, 12.5%

Flat and semi-translucent rich gold hue that turns brassy at times, holds nicely to the rims giving a very solid, block-like look. Good degree of flinty smoke and minerality to the nose, chalk and limestone, produces a black licorice edge amidst the floral notes, succinct pear, apple, apricot scents, more fills out the whole than trying to be the whole. Medium-bodied plus, lots of palate traction and push into the tongue. The floral dimension amped up here, underscores the white grapefruit, orange citrus absent in the nose. The acidity has a charge to it, yet, with squared shoulders rather than sharpened blade. Rounder feel to the fruit then, green melon, yellow apple, apricot without any tropicality. The smoke, stoniness and flint aspects subdued, basically switching places with the fruit nose to mouth. Slowly tapers off at the end without releasing your mouth pores until the very end. 88

Ballade, Domaine de
Southwest France, Vin de Pays des Côtes de Gascogne,
Colombard Sauvignon
Blend
2007, \$10.99, 12.0%

Pale glow to the yellow-white straw color, has enough translucent shimmer to cover up for the hue loss along the rims. Punctures into the nostrils with tropical pineapple, guava fruit alongside nectarine, apricot scents, arch pink grapefruit and tangerine citrus notes, metallic minerality, grassy without seeming green, too edgy for the florality to show gracefully, there's a less or malo type of cream in there as it dissolves, suggesting whipped cream too. Medium-bodied, as opposed to the nose, here the acidity yields a keen enough blade that very little is going to soften the overall brunt. All that pineapple, star fruit, papaya, nectarine, green apple bite is there to caress the wounds it inflicts. Naturally revved up further by the grapefruit, lemon, orange citrus. As in the nose, too many megawatts for the floral side to spread. For all of its energy, not unbalanced and, once more, not herbaceous to a fault. The kind of wine that if you were amped up and needed to slam some back real quick, 2-3 glasses would go like that. 70% Sauvignon Blanc, 30% Colombard.
(Agglomerate Cork: REF) 88

ITALY WHITE

Casalfarneto, Azienda Agricola
Marche, Verdicchio dei Castelli di Jesi Classico Superiore,
Fontevecchia
Verdicchio
2007, \$16.99, 13.5%

While the light golden straw hue is a bit washed out, there's a translucent firmness which grants it a more noticeable presence in the glass. Anise and mint combine in the nose with lemon oil, violets and just ripened apricot,

peach, Bosc pear notes to make for a full, while restrained, nose, in no way weak but without anything to prove. Medium-bodied, tends to stay close to the tongue and bottom of the palate but derives moments of lift through the lemon, mandarin orange citrus. The sweetish cooking herb element persists, more of a generalized wildflower feel here. The acidity has the oomph to focus and crisp up the apple, pear, peach, apricot fruit, erect bearing. With time, and at a slightly warmer temperature, stone and spring water notes appear. At the same time, comes up with a pleasing golden honey note as it finishes. 89

SPAIN RED

Alejandro, Sociedad Cooperativa San
Calatayud, Las Rocas de San Alejandro
Garnacha
2006, \$11.99, 14.5%

While dark, the burnt red tones blend fully into the purple core, stays fully brick red through the rims, overall clean in appearance. The nose possesses a pleasant floral lift and a powerful core of white grapefruit zest, after this initial thrust deepens into milk chocolate, fully ripened blackberry, black cherry fruit scents, a touch of smokiness, any oak treatment appears in proportion to the whole. Medium-bodied, here that white grapefruit and lemon citrus also evokes pineapple and shaves a lot of fat off of the plum, cherry, blackberry fruit, the latter remaining long and juicy nonetheless. The floral dimension has a meadow twigginess to it as well, conjures up an outdoorsy feel. A smoky, roasted character develops towards the end. Displays better acidity than you'd expect, a subtle freshening presence. In the end remains an uncritical quaffer but not a dummy per se. (Synthetic Cork: Supremecorq) 87

PORTUGAL RED

Crasto, Quinta do
Douro Valley, Crasto
Blend
2007, \$17.99, 14.0%

The core is just purple enough to push the dark ruby out to the rims, more red than magenta, adequate clarity given the overall darkness of hue. Mint, caramel, butterscotch and coffee bean all make it into the nose first, yet without the whole coming off as an oak bomb, perhaps due to the salted dried meat, saline and forest pine notes, plump is one way to put the cherry, plum, blackberry scents, lending roundness and elevating the total sweetness to produce added persistence. Medium-bodied, has the juicy extraction here, just not the same intense sugariness. Plum, cassis, blackberry comes with a slight prune to fig edge, however, it feels like a tannic punch shaves off a good bit of sugar. Shows orange citrus, mint and floral water accents, particularly during the mid-palate. Just when you think it may stay unduly monochrome, you get a little twiggy earthiness and hay. Runs out of steam towards the end, but huffs and puffs as much as possible to get there. 50% Tinta Roriz, 20% Tinta Barroca, 15% Touriga Franca, 15% Touriga Nacional. 87

AUSTRALIA RED

Woop Woop

South Australia, South Eastern Australia

Shiraz

2007, \$13.99, 15.0%

Unblemished, crosses over into opacity in the full purple core, deeply saturated brick red to garnet rims, sits solidly in the glass. The nose has a certain roughhewn toast to it, kindling wood and ash alongside caramel, butterscotch oak notes, the blackberry, blueberry, black cherry fruit scents are not overdone and even at times along for a touch of smokiness and beef jerky. In the mouth it's medium-bodied, the tannin and, to a lesser extent, acidity, tightens the flesh and create a light sandpapery texture which agitates the tongue and makes it more open to flavors. The plum, blackberry, blueberry fruit as a result much sweeter through the attack, derives some length from the caramel, butterscotch oak notes but as it's not very oaky this only gets it so far. The smoky dimension much more prominent, at times may add a sour bite. As you finally swallow the lemon citrus and pressed flowers achieve deepest presence. Can't say it is more refined than its immediate competitors but does go much less by the "playbook." [Synthetic Cork: Zork] 88