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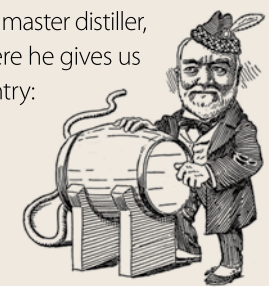
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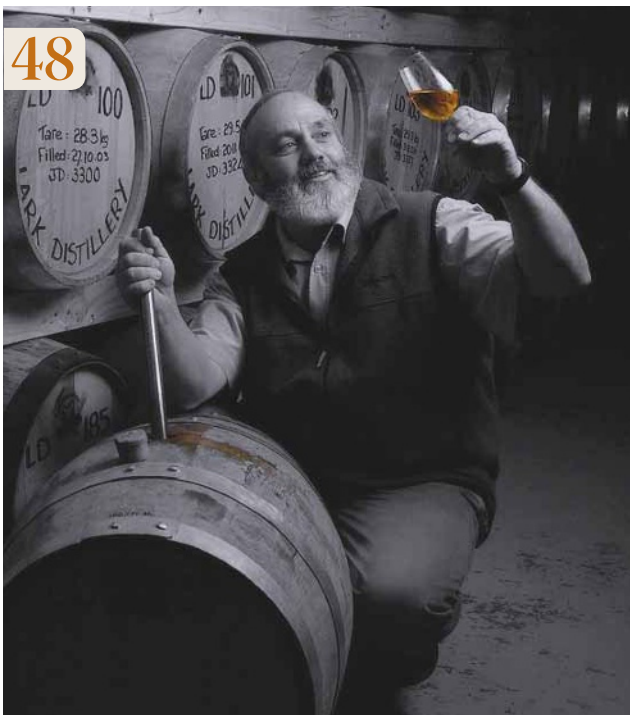
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COVER: Fraser Hughes of the GlenDronach Distillery.
PHOTO BY PETER SANDGROUND



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George T. Stagg
Gold, San Francisco World Spirits Competition

Sazerac Rye
Gold, San Francisco World Spirits Competition

2008

DISTILLER OF THE YEAR, San Francisco World Spirits Competition

Buffalo Trace
Gold, Los Angeles International World Spirits Competition

Eagle Rare Single Barrel
DOUBLE GOLD, San Francisco World Spirits Competition
Gold, BEST OF CATEGORY,
International World Spirits Competition





FROM THE PUBLISHER

By John Hansell

Blogs, Tweets, and All That

You're reading *Malt Advocate*. A wise decision! But as good as it is, *Malt Advocate* can't entertain you every day of the year. What can you do after you're done reading this issue until the next issue arrives? Get your daily fix of fresh whisky information online! It's the perfect complement to your *Malt Advocate* subscription.

As I mentioned last issue, your first stop should be the *Malt Advocate* website (www.maltadvocate.com.) Enhanced even more since your last issue of *Malt Advocate*, you have access to real-time whisky news feeds, a searchable database of more than ten years of whisky reviews, information on our upcoming WhiskyFest events, our Marketplace filled with whisky-related items for purchase, and a listing of specialty whisky retailers around the world.

One of the areas of new media that has really taken off recently is whisky blogs, and I'm deep into it. If you want to know about new whiskies months before they are released, along with reviews of them to help you decide whether they are worth buying or not (and who wouldn't?), then the one thing you must do while you're on our website is click the link to my blog, "What Does John Know?" (You can also access my blog directly by going to www.whatdoesjohnknow.com).

What can you do after you're done reading this issue until the next issue arrives? Get your daily fix of fresh whisky information online!

I post information on my blog almost every day, often multiple times a day. Topics include advanced information on new products, product reviews before whiskies are released (and before they are published in *Malt Advocate*!), whisky news and commentary, special offers from the whisky companies, and even guest bloggers, like distillery managers and master blenders.

Perhaps the best thing about my blog is the interaction and feedback from the thousands of people who are reading these postings worldwide. We engage in lively discussions that encompass all aspects of whisky.

One of the new additions to my blog in the past couple months are the links to many other great whisky blogs, forums, podcasts, and websites. There are dozens of them, and I encourage you to check them out. That should keep you busy for quite a while.

If all this blogging isn't generating enough whisky information to keep your brain entertained between magazines, the world of whisky has now invaded Twitter. People are tweeting about whisky on their Twitter accounts (in 140 characters or less). I'm doing my share too. I regularly tweet about small tidbits of whisky information, too small for a formal blog posting, but still noteworthy. You can follow me directly on Twitter (@JohnHansell) or you can find my recent tweets on the blog. To keep information flowing in both directions, all my blog postings are automatically summarized as tweets for those following me on Twitter, with a link to my blog.

Why don't you join us in this new media adventure? Get involved! When you finish reading this copy of *Malt Advocate*, turn on your laptop and continue your whisky exploration until your next issue of *Malt Advocate* arrives. Your portal for all this? www.maltadvocate.com!

John

John

Malt Advocate

MAILING ADDRESS:
167 Main Street
Emmaus, PA 18049

VOICE: (610) 967-1083
FAX: (610) 965-2995
E-MAIL: mail@maltadvocate.com
WEB: www.maltadvocate.com

PUBLISHER & EDITOR | John Hansell
john@maltadvocate.com

EVENTS & MAGAZINE DIRECTOR | Amy Westlake
amy@maltadvocate.com

MANAGING EDITOR | Lew Bryson
lew@maltadvocate.com

EVENTS & MAGAZINE MANAGER | Joan McGinley
joan@maltadvocate.com

WRITERS
Stephen Beaumont, Jonny McCormick, Dave Broom, Dominic Roskrow, Lew Bryson, Gavin D Smith, Iorwerth Griffiths, Terry Sullivan, John Hansell, David Wondrich

ADVERTISING MANAGER | Amy Westlake

COPY EDITOR | Sam Komlenic

CIRCULATION MANAGER | Kathy Fox

OFFICE MANAGER | Melanie Gochnauer

GRAPHIC DESIGN | Zurek Design, Inc.
info@zurekdesign.com

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Jim Murray- Whisky Bible 2009

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By John Hansell

Inspiration

Dear John,

I'm currently deployed to Iraq, and in a recent care package was a copy of your great magazine. As a native of Kentucky with ties to Scotland, whiskies of the world are near and dear to my heart. Your issue inspired me to write a few words about America's Native Spirit while I'm far from home. Perhaps there are others who share my longing for the taste of a good dram, too.

Kindest Regards,
Alex Griffin, SSgt, USAF

Thanks, Alex; we're happy to have inspired you. We wanted to share your thoughts on bourbon, and hope others enjoy them as much as we did.

My Old Kentucky Home Far Away

I use my sleeve to wipe the sand and sweat from my forehead, and it only further dirties my face. My body armor is tight today, and my helmet is getting heavier. Aside from the flies and the heat, the only thing on my mind is home; and bourbon on the rocks. The water in all the stacks of plastic bottles looks at me and teases. This potable water couldn t be further from the water on my mind. Because the water that runs through my blood is from the limestone of the Bluegrass.

America s Native Spirit is always in my mind. It s forever a fixture at family gatherings or a late night rendezvous. It's there, joining the party on ice. Maybe it s sharing the glass with Coke. Or perhaps it s dressed in its winter costume, as eggnog, as the lights go up on the Christmas tree. It s there. It s a part of Kentucky. It s a familiar smell or taste. Like rain on August blacktop, the feel of a winning tote ticket in hand, or Mom s Hot Brown fresh from the oven; they are a part of the Commonwealth. Home.

From the bottom shelf and standing room only in the Churchill Downs Infield 3rd turn, to the top shelf and a comfortable seat next to my father, Bourbon is there. It marks weddings and homecomings, birthdays and wakes. It lubricates social situations, and it serves as a nightcap after a long day at work. But as the hard times come a-knockin at the door, it will be a while before I'm able to taste Kentucky's finest again. Or even a good Islay, for that matter. The days of whisk(e)y on the battlefield have long since passed. Even so, the Bluegrass and its bourbon will always be alive in my mind as the long days in Iraq roll on.

Cheers, Alex! Serve in honor, come home in safety.

Dear John,

Please convey my thanks to Reverend Sullivan for this issue's article. It was simply brilliant. My neighbors can hear me laughing while on the throne a few times a year. Those poor Mormons don't drink, so I don't tell 'em why.

Dave Belknap
Redwood City, CA

We thought it was one of the Reverend's best, Dave. Just don't laugh so hard you drop your drink; it might shatter.

Dear John,

I really look forward to every issue and to the email newsletter. Recently toured Wild Turkey, Four Roses, Maker's Mark, Buffalo Trace, and Heaven Hill distilleries; lots of new information and experiences, like tasting white dog and the sour setback.

Please consider doing an article on the Tom Moore distillery and their product line, perhaps some information about the Sazerac acquisition and their plans for the future. Also, please consider a tasting review of the Jim Beam product line.

Thanks
Dave Schwan
Littleton, Colo.

Thanks, Dave. There's certainly a lot to talk about with the Tom Moore distillery changing hands.

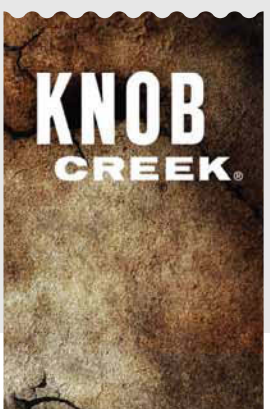
CORRECTION

In the last issue's Whisky News, we referred to Frank Coleman as the president of the Distilled Spirits Council of the U.S. Mr. Coleman is the senior vice-president of the council; Dr. Peter H. Cressy is the president and CEO. We regret the error.



Thanks for nothing.

You see, because we have so many loyal customers out there, demand for Knob Creek® Bourbon has finally outstripped supply. And rather than compromise quality for quantity, we're letting it run out. Until the next batch is finished aging for its *full* 9 years. So you may experience something of a shortage at your local liquor store very soon. But not to worry, the next batch will be bottled and on the shelf in November. We appreciate your understanding and your love of Knob Creek.



drink smart®

Knob Creek Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, 50% Alc./Vol. ©2009 Knob Creek Distillery, Clermont, KY.

By Lew Bryson

Whisk(e)y



Parker's Golden Heritage

Parker Beam has been distilling at Heaven Hill for an amazing 50 years, and the distillery commemorates that with a special edition of the Parker's Heritage Collection: **Parker's Golden Heritage**. This bottling contains bourbons from each decade of Parker's tenure; yes, even a very small amount of 40 year old bourbon from the 1960s. It makes a superb blend, as is only fitting for what it represents. Cheers, Parker Beam! Amazing details available from Larry Kass (502-413-0220; lkass@heavenhill.com).



Suntory Yamazaki 1984

If you thought Suntory's Yamazaki strongly resembled Scotch whisky before, now it gets even more so: it's time for limited releases! **Suntory Yamazaki 1984** will be available in the U.S. market in October, but only 300 bottles, at select retailers. This whisky shows off the effects of *mizunara* oak aging, a Japanese oak that gives unique aromas and flavors to the spirit as it ages; something that makes this whisky decidedly different from Scottish single malts. Learn more from Tanya Thomas (tanya@tbtpr.com).

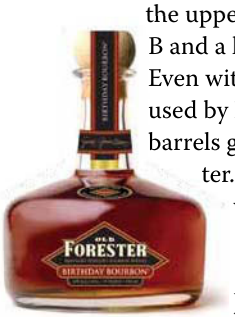
GlenDronach Single Cask Batch One

You just never know what you'll find when you buy a Scotch whisky distillery. In the case of GlenDronach, the new owners found some great barrels of whisky, and they're sharing the first of them as **GlenDronach Single Cask Batch One.** There are five vintages in this first series: 1971, 1972, 1992, 1993, and 1996, in ages ranging from 38 to 13 years old. All were aged in *oloroso* butts, all are bottled at cask strength, non-chill filtered, and without added color. Ask Alistair Walker for details (awalker@benriachdistillery.co.uk).



Old Forester Birthday Bourbon 2009

The annual release of the **Old Forester Birthday Bourbon** has become an interesting lesson in the distiller's art, as each year's bottling presents the tiny variations that can make such a difference in whiskey. This year's release comes from 98 barrels that were distilled in 1997 (and is bottled at 97 proof), and then aged in the upper floors of warehouse B and a larger warehouse, J. Even with the 'cycling' system used by Brown-Forman, these barrels got quite a bit hotter. Always an education with the OFBB. Get your schooling from Svend Jansen (Svend_Jansen@b-f.com).



Three Times Eight from Gordon & MacPhail

Gordon & MacPhail always has something new for you, and this time is no exception. There are three new 8 year old malts, from the **Highland Park, Tamdhu,** and **Glenrothes** distilleries. All the bottlings were aged in re-fill sherry casks and are bottled at 43% ABV under the MacPhail's Collection label. They are quite affordable at a suggested retail of $34.99. For exceptional details, contact Classic Wine Imports at 781-278-2022.





New Dalmore Line

The Dalmore has completely revamped their line of single malt whiskies; only the 12 Year Old remains. The new line includes the **15 Year Old, Gran Reserva**, the **1263 King Alexander III**, **The Dalmore 40 Year Old**, and a very high-end **50 Year Old** that comes only in 100 ml bottles. It's a whole new world for The Dalmore (see what John thinks of them in this issue's Buyer's Guide, p. 72). Get all the details from Laura Baddish (lbaddish@thebaddishgroup.com; 212-221-7611).

Ardbeg Corryvreckan

One of the biggest whirlpools in the world lies between the islands of Jura and Scarba, a surging monster that almost drowned George Orwell when he went swimming while staying on Jura in 1948: **Corryvreckan.** That's what Ardbeg named their newest U.S. release, and like its namesake, it's a powerful force of nature at 57.1% ABV's worth of peat and Ardbeg character. The Admiralty guide says no one should attempt Corryvreckan "without local knowledge;" get yours: info@ardbeg.com.

Balvenie Madeira Cask

Balvenie malt master David Stewart has chosen the next edition in Balvenie's series of 17 year old limited editions, finished in various woods: **The Balvenie Madeira Cask**. Described as a "spicy counterpoint to the rich sweetness of last year's RumCask," the Madeira cask was finished in casks once used to age the Portuguese fortified wine. Strong, spicy details available from Sam Simmons (samuel.simmons@wgrantusa.com)

The Last of The A.H. Hirsch Bourbon

Sadly, all good things must come to an end, even things as good as **A.H. Hirsch 16 Year Old Bourbon.** The very last drops of this Pennsylvania-distilled and aged bourbon are being bottled in hand-blown bottles, sealed with hand-made T-corks, and packaged in a hand-crafted mahogany humidor box. These are the last 1,000 bottles of this exceptional whiskey, and if you failed to stock up, it's going to cost you: they are priced at $1,500. Get the very last details



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from Preiss Imports' Ken Young (kyoung@preissimports.com; 858-458-9172 x102).

Four From Signatory

Signatory delivers four new bottlings of single malts. Take a look: **Dalmore 1990** (matured in sherry butts, 43% ABV), **Caperdonich 1996** (11 year old, 43%), **Blair Athol 1998** (non-chill filtered, 46%), and **Bunnahabhain** (9 year old, peated, non-chill filtered, 46%). All four are bottled without added color. Get the details from Richard Patrick (rpatrick@totalbeveragesolution.com; 843-284-4487).



Robert Burns Blended Scotch Whisky



Just in time for the 250th anniversary of Robert Burns, Isle of Arran has created **Robert Burns Blended Scotch Whisky**. The poet was known to take a wee dram occasionally, of course, and would have appreciated the affordable price ($24.99 suggested retail). If you'd like a bit more information, check importer A. Hardy's website (www.ahardyusa.com), or call David Lewis (847-966-1515).

Four Roses Single Barrel 2009

Four Roses has released another version of their **Four Roses Single Barrel**, an ongoing excursion into the complexities of their varied bourbons. The 2009 selection will be uncut, non-chill filtered, and is expected to yield up to 1,800 bottles. It is bottled at 11 years of age, and selected by master distiller Jim Rutledge. Get uncut information from Nick Clark (nclark@bch.com; 502-589-7711).

Red Stag

Jim Beam took four year old bourbon, added natural black cherry flavor, and called the result **Red Stag**. It's at a full 40% ABV, and with the black cherry



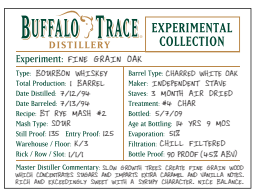
flavor it is ready to mix up simple, easy cocktails, at the bar or at home. Labeling requirements say it has to be called "bourbon whiskey infused with natural flavors," and that's just what it is. Let Katie Young put the cherry on top of your hot information sundae (kyoung@qorvis.com; 202-683-3123).

Deanston 12 Year Old

Deanston is keeping things simple. Their new **Deanston 12 Year Old** is a Highland single malt, non-chill filtered, and "We have added nothing whatsoever," they say, so no coloring. The whiskey is bottled at an honest 46.3% ABV. That would not appear to leave much room for questions, but if you have any, ask Peter Schwartz (peter@interbevusa.com).

More Experimental Collection Releases

If you like the funky little whiskey experiments that Buffalo Trace puts in those funky little 375 ml bottles, two more are on the market. The **Experimental Collection** takes a look at the effect of barrel-wood grain on aging. Fine Grain Oak and Coarse Grain Oak were both in their barrels for almost 15 years. Fine Grain is "rich and exceedingly sweet," Coarse Grain is "dry with a balance of smokiness and wood." Get the funky little details from Kris Comstock (kcomstock@buffalotrace.com).



Dewar's 18

We've noticed a lot more attention and care given to blended Scotch whiskies lately, in recognition that this style can be quite sophisticated. In that vein, **Dewar's 18 Founders Reserve** has come to the U.S. market. Dewar's master blender takes selected Scotch whiskies, blends them, and then allows them to rest in selected oak casks, "marrying" the whiskies. Pay attention and care about the details from Lindsay Mason (lmason@hawkinspr.com; 512-266-2300).



Glengoyne 40 Years Old

Glengoyne 40 Years Old is the oldest single malt ever released by this 175 year old distillery. Unpeated, natural strength of 45.9% ABV, from a single sherry butt, the whisky represents the pure nature of Glengoyne (and the hand-blown Glencairn crystal decanter isn't bad either). There are only 250 of them, at a suggested price of $5,730. When you've caught your breath, you can get details from Iain Weir (iain@ianmacleod.com), or at www.glengoyne.com.

Benromach 1969 Commemorative

Benromach has released just 40 bottles of a 40 year old single malt whisky to celebrate the 40th anniversary of their global brand ambassador, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston, becoming the first person to sail single-handed and non-stop around the world, a feat he accomplished the year that the **Benromach 1969 Commemorative** was distilled and barreled. Sir Robin was presented with bottle number 1. A singularly appropriate commemoration, bottled at 43.8% and individually numbered. To inquire about joining the voyage, contact the folks at Gordon and MacPhail (info@gordonandmacphail.com).



Arran Pomerol Cask Finish

Isle of Arran Distillers has a new expression, **Arran Pomerol Cask Finish**. The whisky is aged for eight years in traditional oak casks before being transferred to Pomerol wine casks from Chateau La

Continued on page 78



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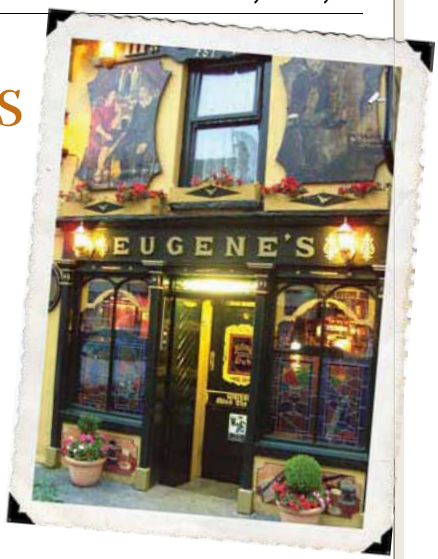
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By Lew Bryson

Ireland Whiskey Trail Opens



Scotland and Kentucky each have "trails" to celebrate their whisky/whiskey makers, and they are powerful tourism generators, customer loyalty boosters, and great guides for the whisky enthusiast (depending on which side of the visitor center counter you're on). Ireland had no trail; indeed, they had only three distilleries, hardly worth a goatpath, let alone a trail.

That's changed now, since someone got the brilliant idea to add whiskey museums and Ireland's best whiskey pubs and bars to the mix, and created The Ireland Whiskey Trail. It's a website guide to the distilleries—Midleton, Cooley, and Locke's—and the distillery museums at Tullamore and Jameson in Dublin, and a fine list of whisky bars, hotels, and whisky shops. The valuable thing is that each entry is linked to a map, so you can see where everything is in relationship to the others, and each entry—each bar, hotel, distillery, even golf clubs with exceptional whisky selections!—comes with a detailed description that makes decisions easy to reach.

It is a bit disappointing to learn that the Trail is only in the Republic, and neither Bushmills nor the Duke of York pub up in the North are included, but that's why you read *Malt Advocate*. It's going to be easy enough for you to find them…assuming you have the time or energy left after your days on the Ireland Whiskey Trail. Get started at www.irelandwhiskeytrail.com.





Knob Creek Runs Dry

"Thanks for nothing" said the note that came with the empty bottle of Knob Creek sent to whiskey writers and key retail accounts. Beam Global recently announced that there was no more 9 year old whiskey left in their warehouses to select from for production of Knob Creek, the best-selling whiskey in their Small Batch Bourbon line. Kelly Doss, Beam Global's category director of bourbons and whiskey, reminded us of the origins of the whiskey that's run out. "Think about it; nine years ago we had just survived Y2K," she said. "Booker Noe was still living, still the master distiller; he laid that whiskey down. We will not sacrifice the quality, we will not bottle it one day short of 9 years."

Another important thing to remember is that nine years ago, it would have taken a wild genius to predict the way small batch bourbons have taken off. Beam's distillers perhaps erred on the side of caution, but who knew? It's very difficult to predict consumer demand nine years out on any product, let alone one that's undergoing a generational renaissance. Rye whiskey's been in the same situation for quite a while; Larry Kass of Heaven Hill recently intimated that supply of Rittenhouse Rye will hit a bottleneck soon; a short one, but stocks will be tight.

It's the price of success, as we've said many times. The question is whether the customers will still be there when new supplies come on line.

Brown-Forman Cooperage Open for Tours

If you never got a chance at the 'back door' private tour of Brown-Forman's Blue Grass Cooperage; sad news, you never will. That's because they've changed the name to Brown-Forman Cooperage, and opened it to the public for regular tours; no more friend-of-a-friend needed to see whiskey barrels being made.

Brown-Forman is unique among spirits companies in making its own barrels. The 1,500 white oak barrels made here every day are used to age spirits such as Jack Daniel's, Woodford Reserve, Old Forester, Early Times, Canadian Mist, and El Jimador and Herradura tequilas.



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Visitors will see the lumber yard, stave selection and barrel assembly, the important charring, and finishing, where the barrels are "proofed" and any leaks corrected. They'll also experience the sounds and smells of barrel-making. "The aromatic smells are the best part of the tour," said Brown-Forman master distiller Chris Morris. "By toasting and charring these barrels, we activate natural flavors and aromas in the wood which give our spirits such distinct tastes."

All Brown-Forman Cooperage tours must be set up in advance through Mint Julep Tours by calling (502) 583-1433 or visiting www.mintjuleptours.com.

Will Diageo Destroy the Scottish Whisky Industry?

Diageo has announced plans to close the Port Dundas distillery in Glasgow and "a packaging plant in Kilmarnock," leading to the loss of 900 jobs. At the same time, plans were announced to consolidate packaging at their plant at Leven in Fife, which would add 400 jobs to the payroll there. The company cited a worldwide sales drop of 7% in the first quarter of 2009. (Diageo has been cutting staff at a variety of global operations, including 70 jobs at an "alcopop" plant in Australia in June.)

The loss of 900 jobs—or 500 jobs after the re-alignment—would be bad enough. But that "packaging plant in Kilmarnock" is the Johnnie Walker plant. Closing it would end a 189 year association of the brand with the town, where John Walker began blending his whisky in 1820. Workers, union leaders, and area MPs are irate. It's not just the jobs, they argue, it's a lack of solidarity, of keeping faith with the heritage of the world's largest whisky. Shock was expressed when Diageo was found to be increasing marketing and promotional spends by $147 million at the same time as the job cuts.

Malt Advocate
Holiday Gift Guide
Coming in December

We try to bring you news of the best new products every issue, but this December, Vol. 18, No. 4 of *Malt Advocate* will debut our new **Holiday Gift Guide**. Just in time for holiday giving (and not so far ahead of time that you forget where you hid the gifts) we'll be bringing you information on the best, most interesting, and most attractive new whiskies (and whiskeys!), gift packages with glasses and special tins, whisky books and media, and whisky paraphernalia that arrives in our offices. (Hint to companies: if you've got neat stuff, let us know!) This will all be hands-on, no catalog-copying: if we don't see (and feel, and taste) that it's good, we won't tell you that it's good. Because that's how we do it at *Malt Advocate*!

Things quickly got emotional, and perhaps overblown. Alistair Carmichael, the Liberal Democrat MP for Orkney and Shetland, warned that closing Kilmarnock could have dire consequences. "If you allow the link to be broken," he said in a press conference, "then ultimately it will lead to the destruction of the Scottish whisky industry and to the destruction of the Scottish economy. This is not just about the work force—it is about the fate of the industry. What is being proposed here could ultimately do to our whisky industry what happened to our steel industry and our coal industry."

Hold on there, Alistair. We don't remember anyone braying about



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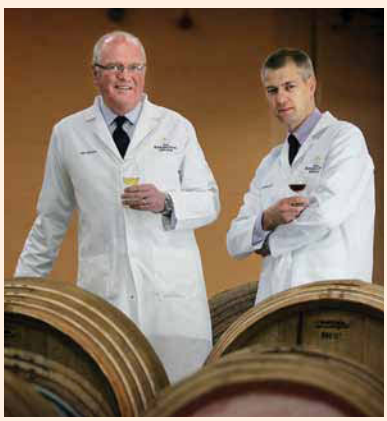


Famous Grouse Master Blender John Ramsay Retires

John Ramsay, the master blender for The Edrington Group, has finally retired after a two and a half year training and handover period; new master blender Gordon Motion is now in charge. The Edrington Group is probably best-known for their Famous Grouse blends, and Ramsay has shepherded them through some new product introductions: a peated Black Grouse, and Snow Grouse, blended to be best enjoyed chilled.

Ramsay, who had been with The Edrington Group since 1991, has also been responsible for overseeing quality control for some of the best-known and respected single malts: The Glenrothes, The Macallan, and Highland Park. "Looking back," Ramsay said, "there are a number of highlights that really stand out, from creating Highland Park 18, 25 and most recently 40 year old expressions, and moving The Glenrothes whisky to a vintage."

It's been said that *Malt Advocate*, particularly with our WhiskyFest events, has helped make master distillers the "rock stars" of the whisky world, subjects of reverence among whisky drinkers, where they used to work in obscurity. With the growing interest in fine blended Scotch whisky, and the growing numbers of truly flavorful blends, maybe it's about time for master blenders to get their turn in the spotlight. The job is demanding, requiring keen senses and a memory like a supercomputer, and personal sacrifice: no garlic, no smoking, no cologne! Few are chosen: there are only six master blenders in the industry.



Hats off to John Ramsay, and here's to his successor, Gordon Motion, and to all the master blenders.

the danger to the future of the Scottish whisky industry when Diageo announced plans to build Roseisle. Nor do we recall anyone being horrified when Diageo sold so much Cardhu to Spanish hipsters that they had to change the liquid in the bottle (although we were horrified about the label they then put on it…a little).

In short, when Diageo responded to the upside of the world economy, it was all wonderful, and they were heroes. Now, when sales slide by 7% in one quarter alone, and the company tries to save money by rationalizing operations, they're suddenly The Whisky Antichrist, poised to destroy Scotland's entire economy? They did, after all, relocate the bottling operations within Scotland.

We hate to see whisky industry jobs lost, but maybe the time to have cried was when Diageo was coming together. It seems that many of the things that the public and whisky aficionados alike decry about the course of the whisky industry—jobs moved about like a pea in a shell game, cheap stock sold for 'own brand' whiskies, closing of distilleries with unique qualities—stem from the consolidation of the industry more than anything. Where were the MPs then?

Really, though, the enemy here is not Diageo, even though closing the Kilmarnock Johnnie Walker plant seems exceptionally tone-deaf, nor is it consolidation of the industry. The "enemy" is the world economic crisis stepping on a fortuitous expansion of the world whisky market. If people no longer have money to

Continued on page 82

what is old is news again

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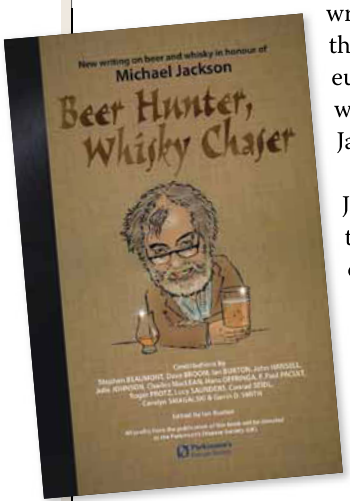
By Lew Bryson

A Book He'd Like to Have Read

Beer Hunter, Whisky Chaser: New Writing on Beer and Whisky in Honour of Michael Jackson
Edited by Ian Buxton
Classic Expressions, 2009
ISBN 978-1-906000-04-2

We have come not to bury Michael Jackson; but neither have we come to praise him. At least, not directly.

Ian Buxton was inspired to create this *gedenkschrift*, a memorial volume, when Michael Jackson died in 2007. He chose this form—a set of new essays on the topics of beer and whisky by thirteen writers—rather than a collection of eulogies because of who—and what—Jackson was.



"Michael Jackson was not the first writer on either beer or whisky; arguably, he was not the finest, but he was indisputably the most influential."

It is this influence that led Buxton to invite writers to honor Jackson by doing what he inspired them to do: write with personal insight and passion about beer and whisky. Eulogies would not do for this self-effacing man who worked, *hard*, right up to the last day his chronic disease allowed him.

So you'll find few mentions of the man himself here, as writers considered history, culture, their own personal journeys that Michael inspired, food, occasion, and even politics, all through the prism of malt beverage. This is some of the foremost drinks writers talking about what moves them (or how they grew to be moved), all as a tribute to the man who inspired them to take that passion and write about it.

There are overviews, like Julie Johnson's history of craft brewing. Charlie MacLean takes a focused look at numbers and trends in Scotch whisky. Dave Broom and our own John Hansell offer intensely personal stories of how they came to be whisky writers.

And yes, Michael's partner Carolyn Smagalski does offer, fittingly, a eulogy. Not because Michael needs one. As this book fulsomely shows, his memorial is the breadth and acceptance of beer and whisky journalism; his eulogy is the books, articles, blogs, and beer dinners that increase by the day.

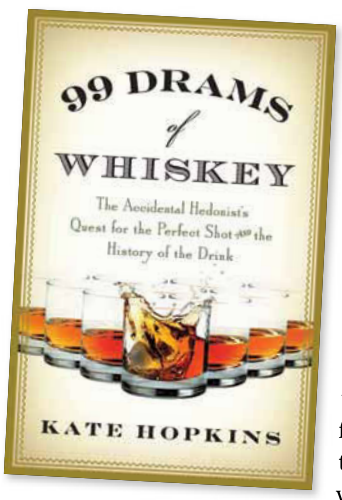
Michael needs no eulogy…but we do. We feel a need to celebrate, and remember. *Beer Hunter, Whisky Chaser* fills that need with solid writing and enjoyable reading. With all profits going to Parkinson's Disease research, it fills other needs as well.

Farewell, Michael. Rest in peace; the work goes on.

A Fresh Palate

99 Drams of Whiskey
Kate Hopkins
St. Martin's Press, 2009
ISBN: 0-312-38108-5

Kate Hopkins has gained her notoriety as a food blogger, writing *The Accidental Hedonist*, not as a whiskey writer. While she's not ignorant of whiskey, this was admittedly a voyage of discovery. She'd be learning about whiskey while taking us on the trip with her. What could a person who already knows whiskey learn from a book like that?



Perspective. Hopkins's is fresh as new make off the still, and about as eye-opening. Granted, there are, inevitably, times when you read stuff you already knew: distilling, Prohibition, whiskey smuggling. But she has a wide-ranging mind and finds the damnedest things interesting, so there's bound to be something new here for you.

Meanwhile, she's also tasting those 99 drams: fearless tasting notes of 99 whiskeys, and as Chuck Cowdery notes on the jacket, that's "nervy, especially with so many experts ready to slap you down for the smallest misstep." The nervy part might also be "tasting" whiskeys like Imperial, the feared bar-brand blend, but Hopkins calls it clear: "It tasted like Dow Corning on a bender."

Writing like that keeps the book fun, if taken in the right spirit. That is, don't take your whiskey (or yourself) too seriously. It keeps the serious stuff interesting and fills out the corners.

It's also a bit annoying after a spell. Hopkins has a friend along, and their conversations just aren't as funny as they must have seemed to her at the time. That's when you start to wonder if the lax self-editing many bloggers fall into carried over into the book.

She's also not quite as self-aware as she'd like to be. Despite plentiful comments about the Scottish tour guides giving her "the sales pitch," she clearly bought at least some of it. When she gets to Kentucky, she's taken by the sight of the pot stills at Woodford, stands in awe of them, and her "respect for the bourbon leapt up by several steps." She'd been drinking the Scottish pot still Kool-Aid without even realizing it.

In the end, while the book suffers a bit from too much Kate, there is a great deal of well-presented information here, provocative and unabashed tasting notes, and a big dose of that fresh perspective. A fresh perspective, like a blind tasting, that can teach you things you may never have learned otherwise.



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Mackillop's Choice
Maker's Mark
Michael Collins
Michter's
Midleton
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Old Forester
Park Avenue Liquors NY
Pig's Nose
Redbreast
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(ri)1
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Scapa
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By Lew Bryson

Monique Huston

We never intended for our new A Round With... interviews to be strictly with distillers. We never intended for them to be all men, either. Monique Huston, the knowledgeable, personable, dynamic woman who is the general manager of Dundee Dell in Omaha, Neb., gives us a great example why not.

If having over 700 single malts was easy, every bar would do it. What are some of the things you and owner Pat Gobel have done to acquire the Dundee Dell's massive malt menagerie?

Our "menagerie" began with Pat's purchase of the Dundee Dell just over twenty years ago (The Dell opened its doors in 1934). Pat loved whisky and collecting. He started with his Sunday afternoon "secret knock" tastings with a few single malts and two friends, BJ Reed and Bill Wakefield, who at the time were professors at our local university. The passion really spread from this unlikely trio to the rest of the staff.

"Often, the first time that people meet me, whether enjoying at dram at the Dell, or offsite at a tasting, their instinct is to assume that I don't know anything about scotch. I can only describe it as this; they talk to me as if I were a puppy, like any sound that I make is adorable, unintelligible, and without content. Fortunately, those are the exception."

By the time I joined up in 2000, we had a knowledgeable staff and a substantial collection together. My first Christmas party at the Dell, Pat poured me a Strathisla 40 (1955 Gordon & MacPhail bottling), and the deal was sealed. Our need to seek out new and rare bottles has carried us here and there, annual pilgrimages ("business trips") to Scotland and WhiskyFest have kept me informed. I find our managers and broad range of "Dramateurs" are constantly scouting bottles, too! The physical monthly inventory and massive overhead are the downside, but we'll continue to suck it up.

Let's drink through the day: what are Monique's suggested whiskies for the First of the Morning, Lunch, a Sunny Afternoon, a Snowy Evening, Dinner, On the Town, and Nightcap?

It's just a typical day! My sense of smell and taste are best in the morning, so when we receive new malts, I love to crack them in the wee hours.

First of the Morning: something light and easy, Lowland Auchentoshan 12 is perfect, some great memories there!

Lunch: we're awake and ready for some punch, time for my favorite lost distillery, Port Ellen. I love the 23 year old 1982 from Provenance: sweet sherry and smoke.

Sunny Afternoon: my happy-day favorite, stranded-on-a-desert-island dram, the Glenmorangie Claretwood: amazing wine notes, super sweet, long finish.

Snowy Evening: Laphroaig Cask Strength 10, just a superb warming dram.

Dinner: my great all-rounder, Highland Park 18.

On the Town: Depending on the weather, either Glenfiddich 15 Solera Reserve or Talisker 10.

Nightcap: Do I have to? Glenfarclas 21, perfect finish, sherried and long.

On any given Friday night, how many people in the Dundee Dell will be from more than 50 miles away, and how did they find out about you?

The Dell seats about 150 people, but I'd say a dozen or so on a given Friday. (The rest? We call ourselves Dramateurs [like dram-amateurs]: we've always got something more to learn about whisky.) It depends greatly on the time of year and events in the city. We see a huge influx of people seeking new drams during Berkshire Hathaway meetings, the College World Series, and last year's Olympic Swim Trials. Our annual August Bill Folsom Mega Tasting draws a full house from as far away as California, Washington, Arizona, Montana, New York, DC, Texas—even Scotland! Our staff gets to travel a bit, so word of mouth seems to be the way. I have had people approach me at WhiskyFest and let me know about a secret whisky vault in Nebraska!



We've got to ask: what are the pros and cons of being a woman in such a predominantly man's world as Scotch whisky? Or is it just not that big a deal?

My first reaction is to say that it's not a big deal. It hasn't always been this way: women like Martine Nouet and Rachel Barrie are instrumental in paving the path. Often, the first time that people meet me, whether enjoying at dram at the Dell, or offsite at a tasting, their instinct is to assume that I don't know anything about scotch. I can only describe it as this; they talk to me as if I were a puppy, like any sound that I make is adorable, unintelligible, and without content. Fortunately, those are the exception. Usually after a few minutes and a stern, confident chat, we're all on the same page. The Pros: when you know what you're talking about and look good doing it—people listen!

Let's get personal: where did you grow up, what did you think you'd do, how did you develop your love for whisky, and how did you wind up at Dundee Dell?

I grew up in tropical Omaha, Nebraska. I think that I've always wanted to be a teacher, although my proposed subject matter has changed a bit! A happy accident sent me to the Dell in 2000, waiting tables while attending school up the street at UNO. My love for whisky was fostered by Pat Gobel, Bill Wakefield, BJ Reed, and Chuck Cooper. These four guys have been amazing in my whisky education. The opportunities they have afforded me, from Pat sending me to Scotland, to the guys letting me eavesdrop on their experiences and allowing me to sample what twenty-plus years of collecting have gained them. Their passion and foresight built the Dell's collection, and made sure that it was still here to sample now.

As a bourbon drinker, I think that my future here was clinched when on my second Friday waiting tables, my suggested end-of-shift drink, consumed to the tune of George Thorogood's "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer," was a shot of Maker's, a Speyburn 10, and a Bud Light. It's a helluva place.

You have quite a few silent distilleries listed on your menu: Banff, Dallas Dhu, Port Ellen, Rosebank. Do you get protective about pouring these ever-rarer malts, or is it a case of "they made them to drink"?

Some of both. I get a bit protective when the occasional jackass comes in and simply wants to try the most expensive dram on the list. I can appreciate the $600 price tag, but not when it's consumed on the rocks or all in one shot. I find that I am suddenly out of the next couple of drams that they've located by price. Those are few and far between.

More often, I find someone that's excited and eager to learn; I'm suddenly pouring samples of things they didn't even ask for (sorry, Pat!). This is part of how the Dell has grown so quickly. Give a Lagavulin drinker a rarity like Port Ellen, and they're hooked!

What could the whisky business be doing better for bar/restaurant operators?

Our biggest issue is with allocation of new and rare whiskies. Because education is highest on our priority list, and we've got the budget of a single, independent bar/restaurant, we don't do a large bulk business like our pals at Binny's. A few bottles would go a long way here, and we've definitely got the market to buy them. It's frustrating to read and hear about things that you can't possibly get your hands on; our customers read about them too!

I would also like to see more of an effort made by Brand Ambassadors to get to small markets. I spent a week in April in the Dakotas, and found whisky enthusiasts everywhere! Jamestown, ND, population 15,000: we had 60 people attend a tasting on a Tuesday! They were ecstatic that we could take the time to come up. It's very easy to cater to the coasts and big cities, but there are untapped markets all around.

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By Gavin D Smith

Peat

Mentions of peat lovers, "peat freaks," and "heavy peat" permeate the talk of the whisky cognoscenti these days. The smoky tang that can fill a tasting room is the defining point of Scotch whisky for many people. Although not one of the essential ingredients of Scotch malt whisky, peat is nevertheless often seen as synonymous with Scotland's national drink, and in many instances it plays a significant role in shaping its character.

Essentially, peat is vegetable matter decomposed by water and partially carbonized by chemical change over thousands of years, often forming bogs or mosses. The type of peat created depends on the plant material from which it is derived, principally grass or heather, and on whether its location is inland or coastal.

In parts of the Scottish Highlands and islands, peat remains a useful source of domestic fuel, a role it originally gained due to the often treeless nature of the landscape, which denied inhabitants wood to burn on their fires.

In traditional whisky-making practice, the role of peat was as fuel in the malt kiln, where the germinating malt was dried to prevent it from consuming the starch due to be transformed into fermentable sugars during the mashing process.

As well as serving the purpose of providing heat to dry the malting barley, peat also impregnated the grain with a characteristic aroma and flavor, which carried through all the subsequent production and maturation sequences to influence the spirit when it was finally consumed.

Ultimately, coal came to be used as the principal kiln fuel, rather than peat, and many whiskies became correspondingly less smoky, but a quantity of peat was also usually used in the kiln to provide 'traditional' character. This continues to be the case today, although a number of well-known single malts, such as Glengoyne, make a virtue out using entirely unpeated malt, claiming it allows the essence of their spirit to express itself more effectively.



What is referred to as 'peatiness' in whisky is caused by a spectrum of phenolic compounds, and phenol levels of peating are measured in parts per million (ppm), with the lightest malt being peated to just one or two ppm, while the most heavily peated Islays will use malt with a phenolic level in excess of 50 ppm.

One of the main reasons why many of the whiskies distilled on Islay are more heavily peated than those produced elsewhere is that in the past, coal had to be transported by sea from the mainland, adding to its cost and inconvenience, whereas peat was to be found in abundance close to the island distilleries. The continued use of significant amounts of peat in the various distillery maltings on Islay led to a distinctive style of whisky, one whose individuality makes it highly prized by many modern drinkers.

Additionally, peat harvested in island and coastal locations produces more pungent smoke when burned than peat from inland areas of Scotland, and this factor plays a part in determining the profile of island single malts.

In many distilleries, particularly on Scottish islands, the provision of peat was a task undertaken by production employees during the annual 'silent season' of late spring or summer. At that time, they would be required to harvest and transport peat from the peat 'lots' owned or rented by the distillery. This practice, though usually now carried out by contractors rather than distillery staff, continues to this day.

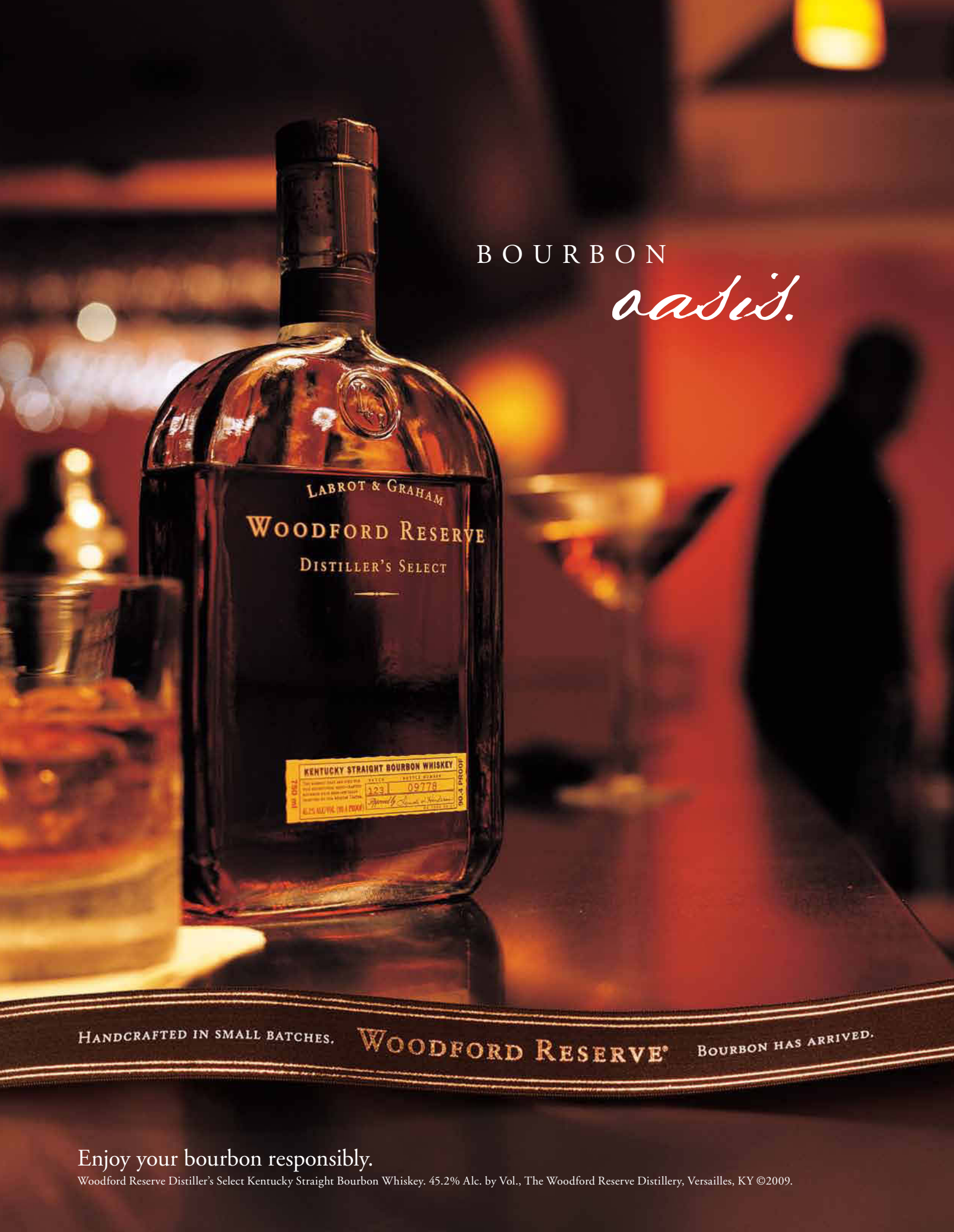
Peat is a notably smoky fuel, often containing up to 50 per cent moisture, and during kilning, the peat is burned, avoiding flaming, to produce pungent smoke, known in Scotland as 'peat reek.' The peat is burned during the early stages of kilning so that the products of combustion are most effectively absorbed by the malt.

At the modern Port Ellen Maltings on Islay, where Diageo produces peated malt for Caol Ila and Lagavulin, as well as several other island distilleries, there are three kilns. Each is principally heated by fuel oil, but also has an associated peat fire.

The hot, smoky air fills a chamber below the floor of the kiln and is blown up through perforated steel plates in the kiln floor. The peat smoke element attaches itself to the green malt, and the concentration of 'peatiness' is determined by the length for which the fuel is burned. To achieve a ppm level of 15 to 20, peat might be burned for some 12 hours, but to achieve the 35-40 ppm level required for Lagavulin, the duration could be up to 18 hours.

In geographical locations where peat is a prominent feature, process water

Continued on page 82



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By David Wondrich

Super Bonus Round!

Well, yes. Gary Regan is—and it pains me so severely to admit this that I'm reduced to inserting ridiculously long parenthetical statements just to delay it as long as I can (I'd almost rather come home to find the window-blind installer passed out on the carpet after drinking all my William Larue Weller; it's that bad)—right. I *am* a cheap bastard. Short arms and deep pockets. Throw nickels around like they were manhole covers. Stretch a dollar until you could wear it for a belt. Hell, stretch it until *I* could wear it for a belt (I am not one of those slender, aesthetic types who can survive on a diet of lettuce leaves, canapés, and rusk). I did not realize that this is the case until just the other day, when I looked over my previous columns for this magazine. In all but two of them, I offered you, gentle reader, but a single drink. One drink! That's like no drink at all. In the remainder, I dug deep and extracted two. At least two drinks are…ah, hell, I'm not even going to try. Ten drinks in two years? Regan is right.

But I'm a firm believer in the possibility of redemption. In that spirit, here are an unprecedented FOUR obscure and delicious cocktail recipes, each made with rye whiskey, and each linked to a different American city.

Plymouth Punch

I haven't been able to find out a thing about J. E. Sheridan, from whose 1901 Complete Buffet Manual this delightful critter hails, but its name and those of a handful of other drinks unique to his book suggest some connection to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Whether he was a bartender, a barfly, or a mere editor and compiler, he knew a fine drink when it bit him on the tongue.

Put ¼ of a lemon and 1 ½ teaspoons sugar into a cocktail shaker and muddle them together. Add 1 ½ oz. straight rye whiskey and ¾ oz. sloe gin (coincidentally, by far the best brand is Plymouth).

Fill with ice, shake, and strain into a chilled champagne coupe. Float a teaspoon of dark, fragrant rum on top (easiest to do if you pour it out of a jigger over the back of a spoon) and garnish with a slice of fresh peach (or not).

Kansas City Cocktail

Provenance: *Toasts and Cocktails,* published circa 1911 by the S. Hirsch Distilling Co, Kansas City, makers of Quaker Maid Rye. Additional information: none. Taste: finger-licking.

Stir well with cracked ice:
2 oz. straight rye whiskey | ½ teaspoon Luxardo maraschino liqueur
1 teaspoon pineapple syrup* | 2 dashes Angostura bitters

Strain into a chilled cocktail glass, twist a swatch of thin-cut lemon peel over the top, and adorn with a ripe strawberry (or not).

* To make the pineapple syrup, stir 2 cups demerara sugar and 1 cup water over low heat until the sugar has dissolved. Let cool. Peel and core a pineapple, cut it into ¾- inch cubes, and soak them in the syrup overnight. Strain, bottle, and keep refrigerated.

Preakness Cocktail

Sadly, drinks that win cocktail contests almost never achieve lasting, and rarely even fleeting, popularity. I don't know what it is, but the hearty handshake, the moderate-sized check, and the engraved shaker are just about the best a bartender can expect from such shindigs.

Every once in a while, though, someone gets the ring on the peg. In 1936, George, head bartender at Baltimore's Emerson Hotel, pulled it off when his recipe for a cocktail to celebrate the first annual Preakness Ball carried off the palm. Eventually, it was replaced as the official drink of the Preakness by the insipid Black-Eyed Susan, but it's still in all the cocktail books. (It didn't hurt George's chances, I must point out, that he took the conservative route and submitted a simple variation of the Manhattan.)

Stir with cracked ice:
2 oz. straight rye whiskey | 1 oz. Martini & Rossi red vermouth
2 dashes Angostura bitters | ½ teaspoon Bénédictine

Strain into a chilled cocktail glass and twist a swatch of thin-cut lemon peel over the top.

Frisco

Finally, one of the simplest and best drinks I know. A strong drink for tough times, it first surfaces in a San Francisco bartender's guide from the early 1930s. They needed it then; we need it now.

Shake well with ice:
2 oz. straight rye whiskey | ¾ oz. Bénédictine
A thin-cut swatch of lemon peel.

Strain into a chilled cocktail glass and twist another swatch of lemon peel over the top.

Note: Some people stir this. They're technically correct, but this one's butch enough to need a little air shaken in. Others make it with lemon juice. They're wrong. (Okay, that is in fact a good drink, but it's better with lime juice, and it's called a "Junior." Go with 1 ½ oz. rye, ¾ oz. each of lime juice and Bénédictine, dash of Angostura; shake and strain.)

There. Four whole drinks and a little lagniappe at the end. And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!



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By Stephen Beaumont

The Social Stuff

Like many urbanites, I live in a condominium. It sits in a tower that soars 36 stories into the heart of downtown Toronto, which in turn is part of a four-building complex said to house about 3,000 people.

In other words, the series of concrete, steel, and glass monoliths in which I live is effectively a small town situated within a very large city. We share many of the kinds of amenities you would find in a small town—a spa (the neighborhood barber shop), a food store (the corner market), a gym (the local "Y"), a courtyard patio (the town square), and even guest suites (the village inn)—and live more or less in each other's pockets, as you would in a small town.

What we don't have that you usually find in a small town is a sense of community.

There are ten other units on my floor, of which I know the occupants of exactly one—my immediate neighbors—well enough to exchange a few words when we meet in the hall. With the rest I will generally share no more than the most basic pleasantries, and sometimes not even that, a few having proven themselves to be almost vehemently antisocial. The rest of the occupants of the complex may as well be strangers in an office tower, for all I know them.

I mention this because I have been thinking a lot about community and neighborliness lately, mostly about the lack of either in a big-city setting. It is a powerful symbol of modernity, I think, that the people who live the closest to many of us these days are also those who we keep at the greatest distance. It also, I feel, explains at least some of the appeal and a great deal of the contradiction we find in craft beer and quality whisky.

The urban disconnect from community has been well-documented and needs no more comment from me, save for what I feel has leapt into the breach. Look around our cities and large towns and you will find all manner of apparatuses designed to replace the social network that formerly existed around the local store, corner bar, or in the case of my youth, neighborhood pool. Some people take to book clubs, which I have heard frequently turn out to be far more social than scholastic, while others find community in their office clique. For others still, there are running clubs, municipal action groups, Star Trek conventions, online fantasy games, continuing education courses, celebrity fandom, and...well, you get the point.

Then there are those of us for whom beverage forms a part of our social structure. No, no, don't be embarrassed, it's okay. You're not a geek because of it. Not really, anyway.

Sure, we all know people who are just a little too into it all. The ones who fret about the exact provenance of this expression or the precise style categorization of that ale, who obsess about their drinks to the point that it's all a bit, well, unhealthy. But surely they constitute only a small minority. For the rest of us, the social lubrication of drink works in several ways.

If ever you have attended a WhiskyFest, or any other beer or whisky or spirits event, for that matter, you'll know all about how these places foster a sense of community. The common bond that is an interest in, or passion for, beverage can unite even the most disparate groups, from the punk sipping Four Roses Single Barrel to the Orthodox Jew nosing the Macallan Fine Oak 17 Years Old to the guy in the Brooks Brothers suit taking a time out with a glass of Anchor 'Our Special Ale.' In fact, watching strangers interact over a dram with what sometimes borders on elation is one of the great sights at any WhiskyFest or whisky fest.

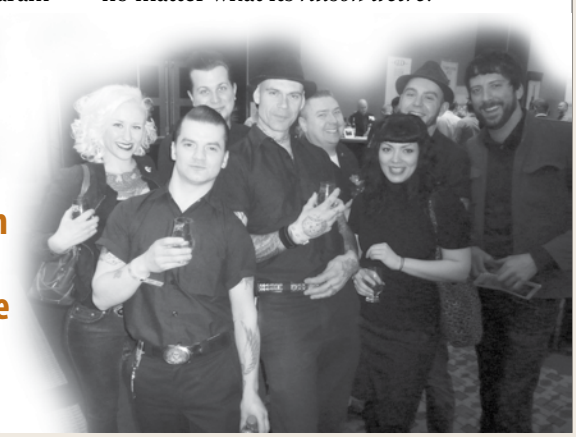
This is our community, and it exists not only at festivals and tasting events, but in better beer and whisky bars, bottle-buying societies and even, for moments however brief, at liquor stores while lingering over and discussing the merits of a specific bottle or six-pack. In fact, the very magazine you hold in your hands is the product of such community, as you'll find when reading John's deeply personal essay in the new book, *Beer Hunter, Whisky Chaser,* about which you'll no doubt find more elsewhere in these pages.

The common bond that is an interest in, or passion for, beverage can unite even the most disparate groups.

But I mentioned earlier a contradiction inherent in this sense of community, and indeed there is one. A large one. You see, because of the aficionado nature we share, it is almost second nature for us to try to recruit others to the fold, sometimes with a zeal bordering on evangelistic. (I plead guilty on that count.)

Yet to bring others in is also to dilute the stock, as it were, adding more people, possibly some with greater means and lesser appreciation, to not only the purchasing pool vying to rare bottles, but also the community as a whole. And since it is the nature of a community to make it difficult for outsiders to penetrate its ranks, hence fostering a sense of exclusivity, that compulsion comes clashing loudly against our desire to help spread the good word. Contradiction, indeed.

Still, so far as contradictions go, it is a generally manageable one, and one in which the "Hey, try this!" gene seems to win out over the "You're not worthy" chromosome ten times out of ten. Which, thank goodness, is precisely the way it should be in a healthy community, no matter what its *raison d'etre.*



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By Lew Bryson

Prison or Playground?

Everyone knows how tightly the definition of bourbon, rye, and Tennessee whiskeys is regulated. The government has set rules for the types of grain used and the proportions, the use of barrels, the age and labeling, and the proof off the still, into the barrel, and into the bottle. No flavorings, colorings, or additives can be used.

While these rules leave room for differences in flavor and character, they are to some degree restrictive and predictive. Given the guidance and requirements, it's no surprise when bourbons come out tasting so similar, so…like bourbon.

Which is good, if you like bourbon. And I do, I do! But there are many people who do not, just can't abide it, and many people who have never tried it and probably never will.

Despite our best efforts, bourbon still has a reputation as being harsh, smoky, or musty, and a cultural image as redneck joy juice, fight fuel in a bottle. Blame it on the young raw whiskey sold after Prohibition, blame it on Hollywood or popular fiction, but perception is reality.

If people don't like the taste, or don't *think* they'll like the taste, how can we persuade them to try it? A lot more bourbon capacity is coming on-line soon, as Scotch whisky is continuing to go up in price. It's a great opportunity to get more people drinking bourbon. How can bourbon companies sell whiskey to people who are scared of bourbon?



Well…who said they have to sell them whiskey?

I recently received a bottle of Jim Beam Red Stag, a "Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey infused with natural black cherry flavors." It came without warning, and I looked at that label and thought, 'They did *what?*'

Then I got to thinking about the bottle of Wild Turkey American Honey I bring home to my wife after every trip to Kentucky. The folks at Wild Turkey have been telling me that American Honey is selling well, and they think it has great potential. Given the way my wife, who has very little love for bourbon, has taken to it, they may well be right.

The first taste I had of American Honey, three years back, evoked a simple evaluation: "Yuck." It was too sweet, one-dimensional. It must have been tweaked, because now it presents as richer, with a bit more bourbon character. I've been known to nip a bit of "her" bottle.

Red Stag takes that even further. The first thing you notice is the sweet cherry, right up front and surprisingly natural. It is a natural essence, not an infusion from actual cherries. "The addition of whole fruit has been purposefully avoided," said brand manager Adam Graber, "to eliminate the presence of any degradation by-products, such as pectins and anthocyanins, which would add an unappealing cloudiness and sedimentation." It worked; the stuff was clear, and tasted like cherry.

But the important part for me was that behind that cherry was solid, 80 proof bourbon. Jim Beam did not go liqueur-strength on this stuff, and while it is sweet, it doesn't pussy-foot. You know you've got a drink in your hand.

Graber confirmed my guess on the target market. Red Stag's "fresh, contemporary taste" is aimed at "both longtime Jim Beam fans and new consumers who may not have previously considered the bourbon category," he said.

Well, maybe. I know several bourbon drinkers whose reaction to the idea of Red Stag was familiar: "Yuck!" I did sit down with one of them, we sampled, and he admitted that while it wasn't for him, it was well-executed. Chuck Cowdery, author of *Bourbon, Straight*, quoted Lincoln to give his impression of Red Stag: "If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you will like."

What Cowdery also suggested was that this was not for those who enjoy straight bourbon, but was suited for cocktail drinkers. I got to thinking about that. I love bourbon cocktails, but if a cocktail shaker were a garden, I'd have a black thumb. I can't make anything more complicated than a highball…I can do a lemon wedge on a good day.

"If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you will like."
– ABE LINCOLN



But Red Stag? I dropped some ice in a shaker (yes, I have one; you never know when a bartender might visit), poured in a measure of Red Stag, two dashes of bitters and a little sweet vermouth, and then shook the bejayzus out of it. It wasn't a Manhattan, but it was tasty and enjoyable (unlike the Manhattans I've made).

Graber noted that "As off-premise consumption grows, Red Stag provides the ultimate base for at-home mixability at an affordable value." It worked for me.

Will it bring more people to bourbon? Jim Beam clearly hopes so. The bottle and label say "Jim Beam," so they're not afraid of the affiliation. It's a short step from Stag and Coke to Beam and Coke, which is how most people drink their bourbon anyway.

Way I see it, if it sells bourbon whiskey, it's a good thing. Besides, I think I want another one of those fake Manhattans. It's getting towards cocktail time.

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"An exemplary Highland Park… Whiskies like this one remind me why I fell in love with whisky in the first place"
John Hansell, *Malt Advocate*



We'll leave the last words to Paul; "It fits my profile of what makes a perfect whisky, which is to say it's totally in harmony, there are no rough edges and everything is melded together brilliantly."

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Water of

Arguably, water is the least debated component in *uisge beatha,* yet from the distillers' perspective the importance of the source, its quality and quantity cannot be underestimated. Ranging from geology and chemistry to microbiology and civil engineering, we can promise you one thing; whether you add water or ice to your dram is one exhausted topic you won't find here.

There's a saying that "Today's rain is tomorrow's whisky" and in Scotland, both are in bountiful abundance. As a youngster, I would climb Scottish peaks with my father, he clad in comfortably worn hiking boots and me in squeaky wellington boots. Hot and thirsty from the exertion, we would scoop up cool handfuls of stream water gushing through the heather. Welcome relief, however we would always cautiously glance up the hillside in case the spring contained unwelcome contributions from the haphazard meanderings of sheep with a casual regard for personal continence.

A distillery may buy-in tons of malt and thousands of oak casks, but there is one undeniable element that governs the physical location of every single distillery, and that is its water source.

Later, I'd wait to ease my aching feet as the peaty bathwater surged along rattling pipes, convulsing like a bronchitic expectoration from the chunky taps. Clean, fresh water should never be taken for granted, and clearly, water is fundamentally important to malt whisky production. Think about it—a distillery may buy-in tons of malt and thousands of oak casks, but there is one undeniable element that governs the physical location of every single distillery, and that is its water source.



Euan Shand
Duncan Taylor & Co.

Aye, You've Got It, Lad!

Euan Shand is managing director of Duncan Taylor & Co., Ltd., and is currently overseeing the creation of a new distillery in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, expanding the business from their core whisky brands and quality independent bottlings. "We got stuck into the fine detail of planning the distillery about three years ago," he said, "but didn't really look closely at the water source in the beginning. We just needed to know that there was a good water source with a reasonable supply of a potable quality, with sufficient [volume] for cooling."

He sought specialist assistance in locating the water source for his distillery by bringing in an octogenarian known as "The Waater Maanie" in the local Doric dialect. Dowsing or doodlebugging for water (known as water divining in Scotland) is a mysterious craft where a forked stick or L-shaped divining rods are used as an adjunct to the dowser's own abilities to seek out concealed sources of water.

"We invited Neil Mutch, the water diviner, to walk the site," Shand said, then excitedly recounted his own divine experience. "I discovered at the same time that I can actually water divine, believe it or not! I knew I had it, as my grandfather had it before me and I remember as a kid he took me out with the divining rods and I managed to find

Life

Dowsing or doodlebugging for water (known as water divining in Scotland) is a mysterious craft.

by Jonny McCormick

sources. My senses were pretty keen, and when old Mr. Mutch was there, I did the same and sure enough it worked. He told me, 'Aye, you've got it, lad!'

"Next, water specialists Filpumps sunk a couple of boreholes," Shand added, "and first hit water pretty near the surface. Despite a couple of good seams, the diviner and the borehole guys were convinced that there was more to go. Mr. Mutch had a real good feeling and advised drilling another 20 feet to around 120 feet down, and by God, he was right! I just knew the second they hit it, because there was copious amounts of water spewing out. It was like striking oil!"



This water source at Carvichen in Huntly used to be the original source of water for the townspeople of Huntly around 150 years ago, originating from a natural well. The borehole company confirmed that there would be sufficient supply for meeting the distillery's needs for mashing, cooling, bottling, and cleaning purposes. As the groundworks progress, Euan is now planning to produce a little more than his original stated annual output of 1.1 million liters, including installing a larger mash tun.

The Water Must Go Back In

The same water source will be used to bottle the whisky on site, although as elsewhere, water for this purpose is run through a reverse osmosis unit. This provides a pressurized filtration process to yield the water free from solutes and contaminates on a similar principle to kidney dialysis or obtaining drinkable water from seawater. However, each distillery has its idiosyncracies, and not everyone draws water from deep underground.

Three years ago, Malcolm Waring took on the mantle of Old Pulteney distillery manager in his hometown of Wick. Old Pulteney distillery receives its water from Loch Hempriggs, lying south of Caithness town. The water courses down a man-made lade *[a watercourse, or millrace]*, designed and built by the accomplished Scottish civil engineer Thomas Telford (1757 – 1834). Flowing over Caithness slate for over three miles, there is only a 12 and a half foot drop between the loch and the distillery. The lade incorporates ingenious underground culverts to prevent run-off from adjacent fields contaminating the supply.

"Hempriggs is a natural soft water loch," Waring explained, "and was used to carry water for the mains and the mill, now our warehouse # 5, when they extended Pulteneytown. Now, the distillery has the sole use of the water, which means our responsibilities include maintenance. On the oldest feu that we've got from 1827 [a *feu used to be the commonest form of Scottish land tenure*], it states that anybody using the water on the way down must return it to the water course; they can't redirect it or use it for other purposes. So you could use it to turn a water wheel, but the water must go back in.

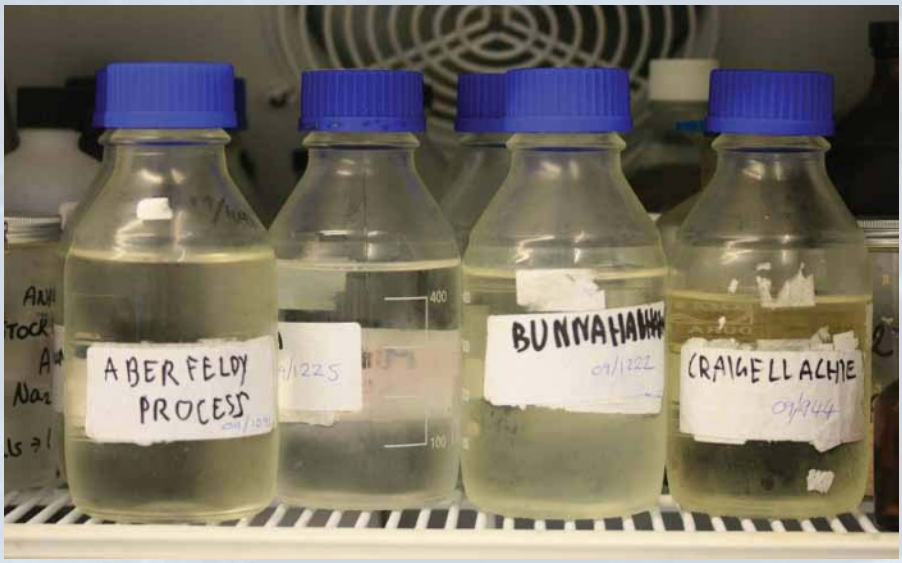
"As it's an open lade, we are subject to the Caithness weather," he said. "If it snows, it can actually block completely and stop the water. Hot weather can cause problems too; as it dries up a bit, the water gets warmer and you don't get the same effect for cooling. A cool, wet summer is fine by us."

The first potential influence of water on the final flavor of whisky is during malting, although Pulteney stopped malting on site 50 years ago, "These days, our malting is done down in Crisp Malting at Portgordon," Waring noted. "The water would have its part to play on the final characteristics but how big that would be? It's hard to say." However, the Loch Hempriggs water is used during mashing, and Old Pulteney runs 30 mashes every 12 days. The volumes used are consistent and considerable, with 24,000 liters required to fill each of the six washbacks, and subsequently 13,200 liters to charge the spirit still. The water used for cooling worms is returned to a hot storage tank, which is used for other purposes, such as cleaning.

"We try to minimize losses where possible," Waring said, "so we monitor closely how much we actually use. When the

ambient temperature of the water is warmer in the summer time and larger volumes are used to cool the worts, we find we can only reuse so much, and the rest is expelled."

Elsewhere, the worm tubs act as heat exchangers, with hot water flowing over the top and returning to the lade, which ultimately leads to a marine discharge out in the harbor. Water quality is part of the regular calendar of any distillery.



"We have a filter setting as it comes in from the lade, goes through a clean-up, and enters the holding tank for us to use," Waring explained. "We get samples checked at the accredited independent laboratory, Tatlock and Thomson. We've just had an analysis back, actually."

Absolutely Crucial to Spirit Quality


Dr. Harry Riffkin
Tatlock & Thomson

"Water analysis should be done four times a year in most distilleries" advised Dr. Harry Riffkin, Tatlock & Thomson's managing director, a Scottish company that has been in the whisky business since the 19th century. "The water is crucial for the mashing process and should have the right mineral content to maximize the enzymatic conversion of starch to sugar. Huge extremes of pH would be disadvantageous to mashing, so you certainly don't want acidic water; a neutral or higher pH is preferable. Remember, during malting you have a barley grain developing a full complement of enzymes, growing roots and shoots, and doing everything it would in the field, and suddenly you fire heat through it and start killing off the enzymes. In mashing, the enzymes are already compromised, but calcium and magnesium in the water are important as they're part of an enzyme complex. Similarly, zinc is an integral part of yeast fermentation."

Most water used in the production of malt whisky is soft water, essentially low in calcium and magnesium. But consider Highland Park and The Macallan, which have hard and soft water sources, respectively. The Macallan's soft water contains 20-30 ppm calcium and 4-6 ppm magnesium, whereas water for Highland Park carries 50-70 ppm calcium and 20-25 ppm magnesium.

"Water at The Macallan is taken from underground boreholes by the Spey," disclosed David Cox, head of brand education for The Macallan. "The hardness of water at Highland Park is extremely variable. It can be as low as the Speyside sites, but sometimes up to seven times the hardness levels. This is down to Orkney being a relatively small island with erratic replenishment of groundwater reserves; that is, no mountains, winter snow melt, rivers, etc."

Once distillation begins, water remains pivotal to the process, Riffkin asserted. "The quantity and temperature of water coming through the condensers is absolutely crucial to spirit quality," he insisted. "The key chemical reaction in wash distillation occurs at the top, where the Lyne arm hits the condenser. You need vast quantities of consistently cold water in the condensing process to make Scotch whisky. If you slow the rate of water down, or it warms up, you will lengthen the period of time through the condenser where the sprit will move from a vapor to a liquid, and this affects the quality.

"Distilleries used to produce different summer and winter spirit," he also noted. "Bunnahabhain recognized this many years ago and put in systems that ensured the condensing water was consistent all year round. There are

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"You need vast quantities of consistently cold water in the condensing process to make Scotch whisky."

Dr. Harry Riffkin
Tatlock & Thomson

very few places worldwide where you can pull water from a natural resource at under 10°C [50°F] all year round to use at a distillery. You can do that in Scotland in lots of places."

Very Stringent Discharge Rules

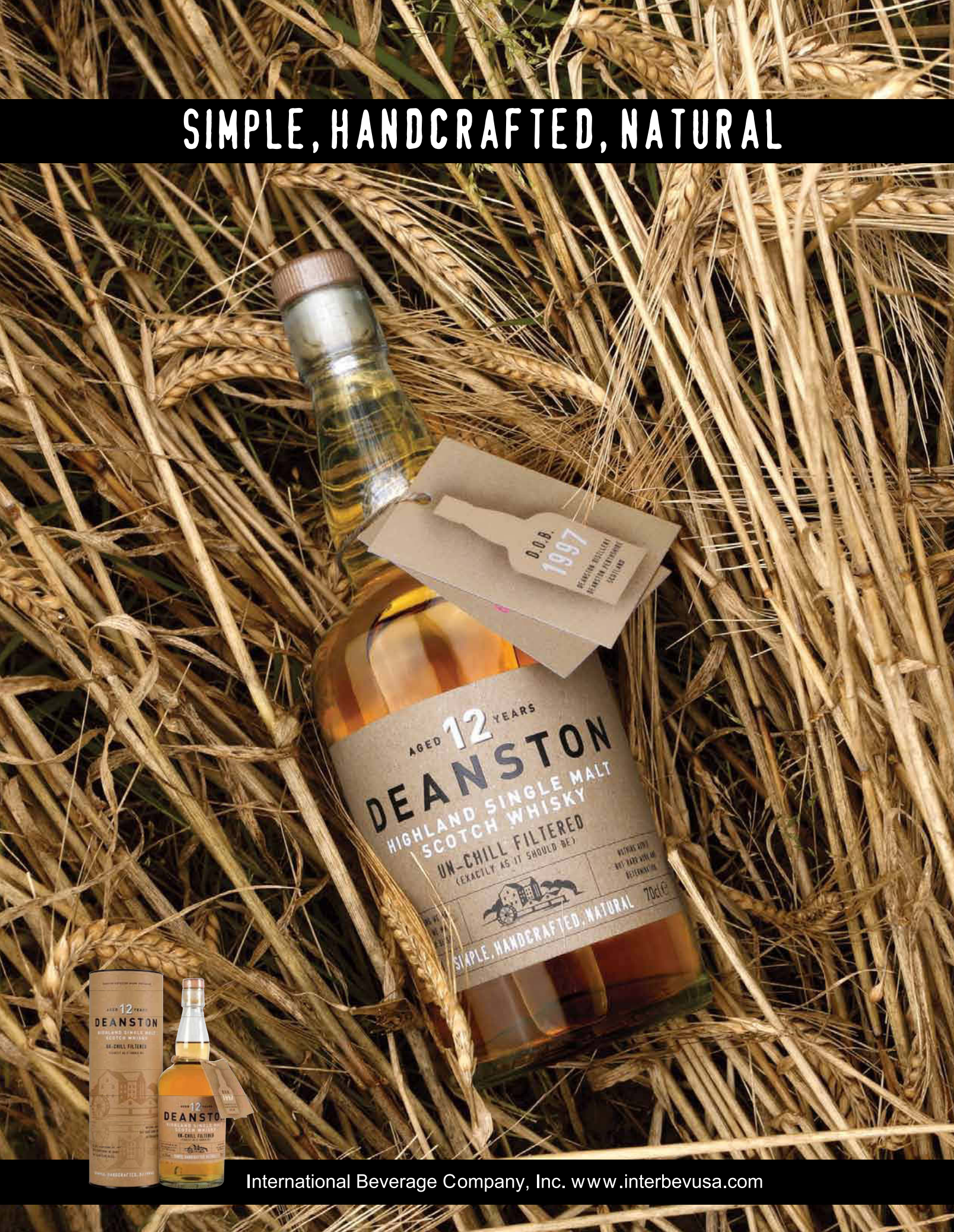
Tatlock & Thomson monitors water sources for the presence of bacteria that can cause human disease, such as *E. Coli* and *Enterococci*. Sand filters clean many sources naturally, but water can be UV treated before reducing whisky to bottling strength. "Borehole water and deep, fast-flowing river water are less likely to become contaminated compared to groundwater sources like lochs," acknowledged Riffkin. Other contaminants are vanishingly rare to detect, and the majority of pesticides do not distill over into the final product.

Indeed, it is not just the water source leading to the distillery that is under scrutiny. "Distilleries are governed by accreditation on the by-products of production," Riffkin explained. "Heavy metals don't distill over into the final product, so copper from the surface lining of the stills is the only metal to be found in spirit. During distillation, it strips out organo-sulfur compounds and it helps spirit maturation. Distilling is different from brewing; you are distilling the alcohol and most esters out of the fermented wort, but then you are left with everything else.

"Distilleries do generate effluent," he said, "and you can begin to concentrate heavy metals in the effluent treatment process. Waste goes to land spreading or animal feeds, but the drying process for by-product production burns more fuel. Some distillers will have to use effluent treatment so that it can go into a water course. A long sea outfall for distillery waste is acceptable, as it acts as a reasonable nutrient for some of the sea-dwelling organisms and it's not detrimental. However, there are very stringent discharge rules to prevent river pollution. Our new ICP-MS machine will allow us to measure multiple elements (copper, lead, zinc, etc.) in effluent analysis down to the parts per trillion levels in a fraction of the time with lower costs per element for our customers."

This is just a drop in the ocean to a topic with unfathomable depths, but aren't you glad that beneath the surface, someone, somewhere has all this under control?

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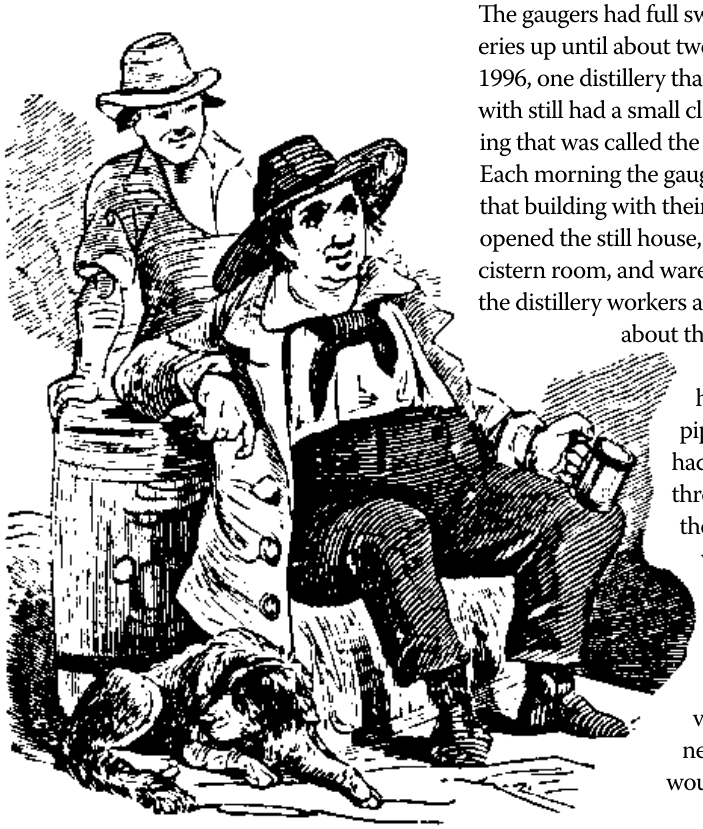


International Beverage Company, Inc. www.interbevusa.com

Gaugers, Pretties, and Mules

By Jerry O. Dalton

"Hey Jerry, you want to have a little snort?" That was Booker Noe's backyard invitation to have a drink of bourbon. In the whiskey country of Kentucky, that invitation often translates to a leisurely drink and conversation while the sun gives way to dark. Years ago there were many topics of conversation for whiskey men sitting in ladder-backed, cane-bottomed chairs leaned up against the shady side of the house or on the porch. Crops, cows, and prime fishing holes were regulars. But toward the bottom of the glass, or fruit jar as the case might be, a real favorite was how to fool the gaugers, whose job was to regulate the production, storage, and disposition of whiskey for Uncle Sam.



Under the Watchful Eye

The gaugers had full sway in the distilleries up until about twenty years ago. In 1996, one distillery that I'm acquainted with still had a small clapboard building that was called the gauger's shack. Each morning the gaugers came out of that building with their sets of keys and opened the still house, bottling house, cistern room, and warehouses so that the distillery workers and staff could go about their business.

Every building had locks, every pipe flange and valve had copper wire threaded through the bolt holes. The wire had a small lead gauger's seal holding the ends together so that if the flange or valve was disconnected, the wire would be broken as evidence of tampering and potential illegal whiskey use.

These efforts notwithstanding, more than a few drops of bourbon found their way out of the gaugers' clutches into the waiting receptacles and appreciative gullets of the whiskey men of the distilleries. This may have been less a function of the desire for a drink and more for the pleasure of out-smarting the people who were paid to guard and gauge.

There was always a loose flange in the distillery that slowly dripped white dog. If it were in a corner out of the beaten path, a drinking cup or half-pint bottle would be strategically placed to accumulate the vagrant elixir. Anyone with a wrench, a quick hand, and a cup could loosen a pump seal ever so slightly and produce a pencil-sized leak that was just as quickly captured and consumed. But the gimlet-eyed gaugers were on to such obvious ploys, and the creative Kentucky spirit turned to less obvious pursuits of alcohol.

Outwitting the Gauger

The gaugers were prone to watch the high-proof stuff closely and let the lower strength alcohol watch itself. So the fermenter hand, when he was monitoring the progress of a vat of mash, could sample it with a cup. Near the end of fermentation, the contents of the vat are called distiller's beer. Back then it would have probably ranged from seven to nine percent alcohol. If one downed about a pint of it, it was roughly the equivalent of having a bowl of oatmeal and half a shot of whiskey. Distiller's yeast [from the propagation tanks] also was in great demand both for its alcohol content

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and its palliative effects on the digestive tract. Those who drank it claimed that it was a moving experience both in the figurative and literal sense.

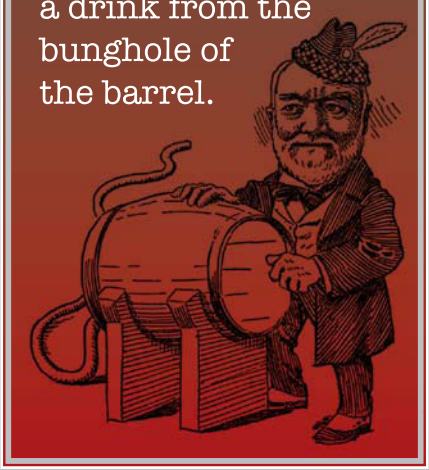
There was a story that came out of one distillery that recounted by far the most ingenious method of beating the gauger and the distiller out of their due. Stillmen noticed that the whiskey tank for the distillate was positioned in a critical spot at the base of the still. Stills are equipped with pressure relief vessels to prevent them from exploding in the event of an overload. The vessels are filled with water and when pressure builds up in the still, it blows the water out, thus venting the still to atmosphere. This occurrence is called "blowing the bottle."

The whiskey tank in the case at hand was directly below one of these bottles. The stillmen took note of this and made a depression in the top of the whiskey tank by jumping up and down on it. When their version of happy hour approached late in the afternoon, the still would mysteriously experience a surge of steam, thus blowing the bottle. The stillmen would rush to get the steam under control and to refill the pressure relief vessel. In the meantime, the whiskey from the top of the still blew through the bottle and dripped into the depression on the top of the tank below. By the time normal operation was restored, a gallon or so of good white dog had accumulated in a high proof pond on top of the tank. There it was dipped up, safe from the notice of both the distiller and the gaugers.

Dipping your Mule

Liberating libation from the gauger's clutch was also practiced by warehousemen who handled the finished whiskey. When a crew was moving the barrels in or out of a rack house it was impossible to keep track of every man. If you paid attention to the back pockets of some pairs of overalls, you could see the outline of a flat round object that could easily be a twist of tobacco or a snuff can. Sometimes it was, but often this was a tightly rolled rubber tube that was known as a "mule."

On his way down from the upper floors of the rack house, he would detour to a strategically-placed barrel known to contain good whiskey. There he would use his **mule** to extract a drink from the bunghole of the barrel.



The owner of the mule would slip off, nominally to get a drink of water or to answer nature's call. On his way down from the upper floors of the rack house, he would detour to a strategically-placed barrel known to contain good whiskey. There he would use his mule to extract a drink from the bunghole of the barrel. The warehouseman usually had an apple in his dungaree jacket, a bite of which served as a chaser for the bourbon.

The men's overall bibs would rub against the barrel as they leaned over it to ply their mule and the choice barrels soon acquired a slightly buffed or polished appearance. Such barrels were called "pretties" by the warehousemen. It was not uncommon to hear the men talking among themselves, saying, "Have you seen your old pretty?" as they worked through the day.

You could find the pretties if you knew what to look for. There would be a barrel stave or a piece of wood laying on the dunnage nearby. The bungs were in loose and a little tap was all that was needed to get them out. There would usually be a chew of tobacco laying there where the warehouseman took it out to get their drink.

The warehousemen kept a careful watch out for company men and gaugers. Periodically one could hear a voice from the lower floors call out "Eyeball!" That was the warehousemen's notice that the pretties should be abandoned, the mules put back in their stalls, and barrels rolled with particular diligence and vigor until the disciplinary danger passed.

There were lots of ways to "get a little snort" as Booker used to say. Next time you're having one, raise a glass to Kentucky spirit and spirits. Remember that gaugers were Kentuckians too. Truth be known, probably even they had some pretties and mules.

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Loose Coopers & Tight Coopers

By Jerry O. Dalton

I was involved in barrel-making long before I became a distiller. It was before I even knew what a cooper does for a living. On the farms around Bowling Green where I grew up, in drought years and such, tobacco didn't bring in enough money to keep things going for the rest of the year. Corn mostly wasn't a factor because the fields weren't big enough to produce the amount of corn needed for a significant payday.

In those tough years the farmers sold off some stave timber out of their woods. I didn't really know what stave timber was at first, only that it had to be a white oak log that was at least eight feet long before the first knot. My only real acquaintance with oak was the rough-cut oak boards and posts that were used for building fences on the "rich" farms where there were horses. I helped my father, a contractor, build a few of those.

Oak was extremely hard and tough, properties that make it good for whiskey barrels, and driving a nail into it was an adventure in sparks, bends, and auxiliary cussing. My old man taught me to run the nail up along side my nose or into my hairline before trying to drive it. The oil that the nail picked up lubricated it enough to make it drivable. Another result was that the carpenter got a black stripe beside his nose or on his forehead from the nails, which were coated with anti-rust material of some kind. So to this day, when I'm in a cooperage or around new barrels in the cistern room, I think of white oak logs, board fences, and black stripes from my childhood.

Years later, when I started working for a paint and varnish company in Louisville, I learned what a cooper is. There was an old gentleman there, Mr. Catlett, who took me around just after I'd hired in. He showed me the big arched brick enclosures where tubs of varnish had been cooked over open fires since the 1870s. He also showed me a large room that was lined with tanks that held various solvents and resins. Originally it had been the cooper shop, and was still called that by the old timers there. He told me that there were two types of coopers, loose coopers and tight coopers, and assured me that it had nothing to do with their morals or state of inebriation.

Even a tight barrel will lose some bourbon. That is the much-renowned **"angels' share"** that all bourbon folk know about.

When people started to learn the cooperage trade, they generally built barrels that were at least a little prone to leak, that is, loose barrels. The loose barrels were good enough for use in the varnish business because as the varnish oozed through the joints it solidified, and "healed" the leaks. When the coopers became accomplished at their craft, the barrels that they made had very few small leaks. These barrels were tight, and good enough to store whiskey. The coopers would graduate to higher-paying jobs in the distilleries, and attained the title of "tight coopers." So Mr. Catlett taught me something important about the bourbon business even before I was in it.

Even a tight barrel will lose some bourbon. That is the much-renowned "angels' share" that all bourbon folk know about. I once was told that the white marks across oak grain that can be seen in furniture and some barrel staves are "angel tracks." Perhaps the heavenly imbibers become heavy-footed if they over-indulge. Bourbon has enough dissolved solids in it to heal a small leak during the many years that it matures in the warehouse. But some whiskey would even get out of a perfect barrel, if there were such a thing. It migrates right through the wood of the staves and headpieces, especially if stored high in the house, above the fourth floor, for example. That's why the proof increases in barrels stored on the higher floors.

The water molecule is smaller than the alcohol molecule, and can get through the oak stave faster. More water gets out, leaving the alcohol to concentrate slightly, driving the proof up. The opposite happens on the lower

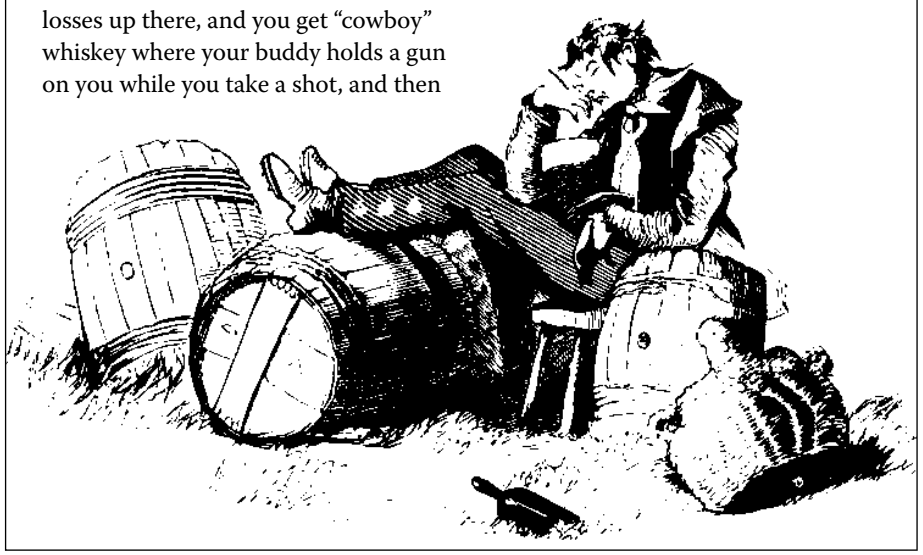
floors, where water actually migrates into the barrel from the humid air in the warehouse. There the proof will go down, even though there is a net loss to the atmosphere. On the first through the third floors, the whiskey that is entered at 125 proof might come out as low as 122 proof after four years. I've heard some pretty exorbitant claims about whiskey high in the house, stories of 140 proof and more. After four years, the highest that I've seen is up around 128 to 130 proof, but I may have led a sheltered life.

The bourbon that is high in the house gets some sharp edges to it. It's hotter and harsher than the same production stored on lower floors. Some folks apparently like that bite and mistakenly associate it with sour mash. Truth is, the temperature and humidity on the high floors cause a deeper and more rapid penetration of whiskey into the barrel staves that pulls out more wood components, some of which supply the raw edge that I'm talking about. Also, the more rapid losses of water, and resulting higher alcohol content, tend to dissolve some flavor compounds that don't dissolve as quickly lower in the house. Add in the concentration effect of increased losses up there, and you get "cowboy" whiskey where your buddy holds a gun on you while you take a shot, and then you hold the gun on him to return the favor.

It's not all a bad thing, though. Low in the house the same sour mash bourbon will go at things at such a leisurely pace that after four years it comes out bland and a little watery. Most people wouldn't believe the radical difference that storage level imparts to bourbon. Here's where we find out what a happy marriage is. When individual barrels of bourbon are combined and allowed to stand for a day or so, the shortcomings of profile tend to disappear. The harshness of the high floors mingles with the blandness of the low floors. The unbalanced tilt toward woodiness of high storage fills the void in the profile of low storage. The little warts and bumps of one barrel are offset by the merits of another.

The combined whole is a marriage of hundreds of idiosyncrasies that somehow add up to much more than the sum of the parts. Bourbon mixed under the careful ministry of the distiller produces the happy marriage that finds its way to the appreciative consumer.

Thanks to the tight coopers and to the woe of the angels, more of it does so than would otherwise.



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Australian Malts: Ready For

The final installment of our worldwide look at craft whisky distilling concerns Australia, where things have not been easy; something Australians are used to.

They're used to dealing with knockbacks in Australia—it sort of comes with the territory.

At the risk of making appalling generalizations, the folk down here are equipped more than most for hardship and toil. They're directly connected to the people who put the 'trail' in Australia, part of an umbilical cord stretching back just 220 years to the birth of this fledgling nation, a nano-second in time when you consider the age of the continent itself and the fact that the indigenous Aboriginal people can trace their ancestry back more than 40,000 years.

Everything that modern Australia has achieved has been won through struggle and gutsy determination, part of an ongoing battle against earth and the elements in one of the most unforgiving landscapes on the planet.

Australians cling to their homeland with pride, but must constantly deal with nature at its cruelest. We talk of Australia as a collective, and it has worked hard to create a cohesive national identity, but it is a vast desert punctuated by island cities, an unforgiving mass marked by extremes of temperature and terrain, where bush fires can rampage viciously and where earth, river, and sea are home to some of the planet's most deadly creatures.

To survive here, Australians have carved out communities on the continent's fringes, tapping into a relatively small, yet remarkably opulent supply of natural resources, excelling at rugged farming methods, and overcoming many setbacks to make this country an earthly paradise.

Nothing's Easy

So, too, with making whisky. If it's a tough task to establish successful and reputable whisky-making anywhere, it's ten times the battle down under. Over the decades there have been several attempts to establish Australian whisky, and several false dawns. Seeds have been sown many times in this barren and arid land, and many times they have withered away.

But Australians see knockbacks as challenges, and today Australian whisky makers have succeeded in establishing a permanent foothold for their industry. Where once the country produced the odd excellent malt and a much larger lake of indifference, today consistency and quality go hand in hand.

Australian whisky has come of age, and yet those knockbacks keep coming.

The most recent one came just this March with the decision by the Malt Whisky Society of Australia to postpone its fall convention. Held every two years since 2003, the fourth convention was due to be held in Hobart, but a lack of sponsorship gave the organizers no choice but to pull the plug.

The Society's chairperson, Craig Daniels, says that a combination of factors led to the decision. "We were hit by a 'perfect storm,'" he says. "The body lan-

THE WORLD?

by Dominic Roskrow




Craig Daniels

guage and atmosphere from sponsors changed perceptibly, and we require major sponsors to provide both the core budget and the key content to the program. Without them we didn't have anything to promote. I think the marketing budgets of the main players are in the firing line once again."

This story isn't unique, of course. Find a whisky event anywhere in the world right now and you'll find a fall-off in sponsors. But the effect of the downturn on whisky in different territories has been patchy, and some regions have fared better than others. Is Australia faltering before it has even begun to fly properly?

On closer inspection, it would seem not. On the contrary, the convention's postponement may well be as a consequence of an increasingly mature and professional whisky market in Australia. The Malt Whisky Society is no longer the only show in town. This year sees Australia's first international whisky festival, and it's in Sydney, which may well have appealed to sponsors and exhibitors more than Hobart did. New Zealand is staging its established and popular Dam!Fest this year, too, further stretching budgets targeted at the Antipodes. Some sponsors might simply have snubbed the Malt Whisky Society because, having established routes to market on the back of previous conventions, they simply don't need it any more.

They Come, They Go

There is one other key factor, too. The continued high demand for Scotch whisky in emerging markets such as southeast Asia has meant that many whiskies have been sucked out of countries such as Australia to satisfy the palates of Taiwan, India, and China. That in turn has presented Australian whisky an opportunity to fill the vacuum in its own territories. Perhaps for the first time, Australian producers have whisky of sufficient quality to meet the demands of the discerning Australian malt drinker. Now there's just the matter of making enough of it.

> "We are finding that some of the Scottish whiskies owned by the larger distilling companies are losing the very characteristics that attracted customers to them in the first place"
>
> Bill Lark, Lark Distillery



Casey Overeem and Bill Lark, Old Hobart Distillery





David Baker, Bakery Hill

There have been plenty willing to try, over the years. Trying to get a grip on the domestic whisky industry is a tricky business, and the landscape changes rapidly. Read through *Malt Advocate*'s feature on Australia from five years ago, and it is littered with reference to distilleries that no longer exist or have ceased production. Australia's biggest distillery, Heller's Road at Burnie, for instance, stopped producing whisky a couple of years ago to focus on making vodka.

Today there are about a dozen distilleries making whisky for at least part of the year, but they vary in size, from small cottage operations to established commercial concerns. In all, probably just nine are producing regularly and seriously, and some of these have yet to bottle anything.

Of those nine, five are on Tasmania. The choice of Hobart for the MWSOA's convention may well have been a victory for heart over head, because while international whisky makers might see Tasmania as a commercial cold spot, the island has established itself as the capitol of Australian whisky. With a climate conducive to barley growing and oak aging, a plentiful supply of pure water, and its own peat bogs, it provides the perfect platform for whisky making.

It's here that two of Australia's best known whisky names are producing. Sullivan's Cove is one of the country's few export success stories, while Lark Distillery is home to the Lark family and, alongside Bakery Hill Distillery on the mainland, is producing the country's most exciting malts. The other major distillery in Tasmania is Nant, which, while it hasn't produced whisky this year, is in the process of commissioning its own brewing equipment so that it can increase production.

Two other distilleries started producing spirit last year. Mackey is a pretty but very small and part-time operation, while the Old Hobart distillery relies on wash from Lark Distillery and Sullivan's Cove, and is probably filling two or three 100 liter casks a month.



Hark to The Lark

Wherever you look in Australian whisky the name Bill Lark comes up. It says much about the reputation he has built for himself that in June he flew to Scotland to advise on setting up a new distillery operation in Fife. Often described as the father of Australian whisky, he has a reputation not just for making quality whisky, but for being generous with his time and advice when it comes to other new distillers.

He has worked hard to establish Australian whisky, and is aware that its time has arrived. Awarded a 'thumbs up' award from the Malt Maniacs last year for the most exciting new release in the premium whisky category worldwide, he believes that it was just the tip of an Australian whisky iceberg.

"The quality of Australian whisky has improved greatly across the board," he says. "It is now fairly common for visitors and customers to say they prefer our whisky to other whiskies. What they really seem to enjoy is the big, complex whiskies we seem to be able to produce here in Tasmania. I understand that in the past, Australian whiskies were often released far too young, and the character and consistency was not always there, but I believe those days are now behind us and we are capable of delivering quality whiskies that the market expects."

This is a view shared by Ken Bromfield, organizer of Whisky Live Sydney, which took place in June this year. "Australian whiskies are very clean, and increasingly they are showing the purity of their ingredients," he says. "I believe the quality of the whiskies aging in Australia will really surprise the world. There will be a lot of heads turning, and all looking Australia's way. It's the beginning of exciting times for the industry here.

"Even this year at Whisky Live," he continued, "I think whisky drinkers were

> "There is an unfortunate legacy left by previous industry participants that has cast a pall over Australian whisky"
>
> Craig Daniels, Malt Whisky Society of Australia

surprised at how many Australian whiskies there are, and how good they are. In the past they have not been something of quality like they are now, but it has taken decades to get here. So the new whisky drinkers will probably take them on with keen interest. The older whisky drinkers may look on curiously. I think they will get a pleasant surprise."

Bad Memories

Ironically, says the MWSOA's Craig Daniels, it may take international recognition before many older Australians overcome their 'cultural cringe' and accept that Australian whiskies can really match up to the world's best.

"There is an unfortunate legacy left by previous industry participants that has cast a pall over Australian whisky," he says. "Anybody who was born in the 1960s or before, and remembers Gilt Edge, Bond 7, and Corio wouldn't rate Australian whiskies. They were ordinary, bordering on appalling. The new Australian whiskies struggle against that collective memory."

These are early days yet, and the vast majority of Australia's output is still maturing in warehouses. But what is being released is getting better by the year. In early 2009, I had the pleasure of tasting more than a dozen releases from Lark, Bakery Hill, and Sullivan's Cove, and all of them were truly excellent. A young and immature release from Limeburners showed enough promise to suggest that three years from now, the Great Southern Distillery at Albany will be producing monsters, too.



Cutting peat in Tasmania

The upsurge in quality and consistency means that the whiskies are starting to be noticed across the world, and this in turn is changing perceptions at home. The first wave of international awards for Australian malts, coupled with limited stocks, means that the best releases have been positioned as premium products and command premium prices.

"There's no doubt about that," says Bill Lark. "Every month we are finding it easier to have our products positioned in high-end outlets throughout Australia, and in fact they are now seeking us out. This demand also seems to be growing internationally without any effort on our part, and we can now see export being a major direction for our business."

Not Just Another "Whisky"

To really thrive on the world stage, Australian whisky needs to be more than just good. It has to have something unique about it, too. Increasingly, there are signs that the best whiskies from down under are starting to develop a character of their own, particularly in Tasmania.

"That's absolutely the case," says Ken Bromfield. "The barley's different, the water is different, the aging climate is different. There are definitely flavors present that are undeniably Australian, and as the number of distilleries in Australia increases we will find more and more unique qualities, and eventually

Australia's New Wave



Great Southern Distilling Company, Albany
Produces Limeburners single cask whiskies: immensely popular, selling out almost on launch.

Highland Valley, Mount Beauty
Constructing a distillery at Mount Beauty in Northern Victoria, close to the Kiewa River. Kiewa is Aboriginal for 'sweet water'.

Hoochery, Kimberley, Western Australia
Produces a respected Australian rum, but has recently launched a corn mash whisky made from Australian corn, charcoal-filtered and bottled at 40%.

Mackey Distillery, Hobart
Part-time operation run by Damien Mackey; has yet to bottle. Has started distilling, but has only produced a handful of casks on the distillery's 300 liter pot still.

Old Hobart Distillery, Hobart
Yet to bottle, but producing two or three 100 liter casks a month from an 1800 liter wash still and 600 liter spirit still.

The Australian Distillery, Illawarra, New South Wales
Makes a range of spirits including Gun Alley, a triple-distilled sour mash whiskey bottled at 40%.

Timboon Railway Shed, Victoria
Small distilling operation making single malt whisky to Scottish standards. Probably doing between 10 and 20 casks a year.

Wild Swan Distilling Company, Swan Valley, Perth
A new venture already winning awards for vodka, but yet to bottle its first whisky. First bottles should be available in 2010.

"The makers are driven by quality foremost, unlike in Scotland where the bigger distilleries are driven by yield. I'm disappointed in the recent malts from some distilleries in Scotland."

Craig Daniels, Malt Whisky Society of Australia

an Australian style."

Bill Lark agrees, pointing to the raw materials in Tasmania as further proof of this trend.

"Each Tasmanian whisky differs to the next but there are characteristics that run through them all," he says. "We can only put this down to the character of the malted barley. At Lark we peat smoke our malt with peat from our own bog. The peat would have been formed of vegetation and other organic matter from forests containing native Australian species. They give it a unique character."

Australia would seem to have another advantage, too. Its distilleries tend to be small and artisanal, in stark contrast to the major producers in Scotland and elsewhere.

"Australian malts are handcrafted, and the makers are very hands-on across the whole production cycle," says the Malt Society's Craig Daniels.

"The makers are driven by quality foremost, unlike in Scotland where the bigger distilleries are driven by yield. I'm disappointed in the recent malts from some distilleries in Scotland. What they produce now is unrecognizable from the output bottled in the 1980s and 1990s. The quality of Australian whisky is definitely improving; I'm not convinced that this is the case in Scotland."

Old World, New World

This is a very provocative but fascinating point. About seven years ago, one big whisky maker and owner of several Scottish distilleries argued that because so many distilleries were sourcing their malt from the same places, new make spirit in different distilleries was becoming increasingly similar. So much so, said the producer, that it was going out of its way to buy-in malts with various specifications to provide more diversity. The subject is rarely referred to in Scotland, and yet Daniels isn't the only Australian to raise it. Bill Lark makes a similar point.

"We are finding that some of the Scottish whiskies owned by the larger distilling companies are losing the very characteristics that attracted customers to them in the first place," he says. "Striving for volume and price seems to have affected the character of those whiskies in a negative way, so that customers are looking for hand-crafted whiskies that can deliver on depth and character.

"My thought is that the Scottish industry needs to be careful that they do not kill the goose that laid the golden egg for them in the first place."

Is this the potential marketing route that Australian whisky makers will seek to exploit, in the same way that their wine counterparts seized on the intransigence and arrogance of old world wine makers, particularly those in France?

Maybe. With a handful of world-class distilleries up and running, another bunch producing but not yet bottling, and the potential for some future players to experiment outside the Scottish whisky-making framework—there is evidence that this is starting to happen—these are very exciting times for Australian whisky.

If they do go down this route, it's worth sitting up and taking notice. The Aussies are a tough bunch, and they know how to put up a good fight…once they have picked one.

New world whisky? Mark my words: if they continue to make whisky as good as the stuff we've had this year, it really is just a matter of time.



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How to Have BIG WHISKEY FUN in Bardstown, Kentucky

ADMIT ONE

BARDSTOWN

By Charles K. Cowdery

Although whiskey has been made in Kentucky since the late 18th century, and always has been one of the commonwealth's leading industries, its tourism potential has been exploited only during the last decade or so. Most Kentucky distilleries now welcome visitors, and more tourists come each year. They all have to eat, drink, and sleep somewhere.

If you visit Kentucky as a bourbon fan, you surely will find yourself drawn to Bardstown, which bills itself as Bourbon Capitol of the World. Bardstown combines whiskey, history, and small-town charm like no place else in the Blue Grass State.

For whiskey enthusiasts, the local bourbon producers are the principal attraction. Tom Moore is the only distillery in Bardstown proper, but the town is a good base for visiting several others. Heaven Hill has all of its operations there except its distillery, as does KBD (Kentucky Bourbon Distillers) Ltd., a prominent non-distiller producer. The Jim Beam, Booker Noe, and Maker's Mark distilleries are nearby, as is the aging and bottling facility for Four Roses. Most give tours and have tastings.

The area is also dotted with clusters of aging warehouses at the sites of long-closed distilleries. There is nothing much to see at those places that you can't see from the road, but whiskey-aging warehouses have a distinctive look and their omnipresence provides a lot of the local color.

The phone book is full of Beams, Boones, Dants, Mattinglys, and other legendary whiskey names.

So, dripping as it is with whiskey and whiskey heritage, you would expect Bardstown to be a great place to drink Kentucky bourbon whiskey, right?

Yes and no.

The "no" part is that if you expect Bardstown to have dozens of unique little bars, all steeped in history and packed with gregarious and knowledgeable local bourbon enthusiasts … sorry, it just doesn't. The key to drinking bourbon and enjoying yourself in Bardstown is to make your own big whiskey fun.

Let's begin with the nearest thing Bardstown has to a bourbon-bar ideal, Old Talbott Tavern. Located on Courthouse Square in the official center of town, Talbott Tavern is a hotel, restaurant, and bar, and is genuinely historic. It began as a stagecoach stop in the late 18th century and claims such famous guests as George Rogers Clark, Daniel Boone, exiled French Prince Louis-Philippe, and Jesse James.

Although the Talbott's dining rooms have a historic feel, including the one on the east side of the building that formerly was the bar, the current bar does not. It has an excellent bourbon selection, and a capable and friendly staff, but it tilts more trendy than classic.

The other bars in Bardstown are even further from the mythical ideal, and more just the bar part of a restaurant. They are perfectly good bars and will pour you a good, honest glass of bourbon for a reasonable price, they're just not very bourbony.

Two pleasant examples within an easy walk of Talbott Tavern are Kreso's on North Main Street and Xavier's in Spalding Hall on North Fifth Street. At Kreso's the bar is in front, day-lit with a nice street view, in contrast to the windowless Talbott. Xavier's is in the basement of Spalding Hall, which also houses the Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History. It takes full advantage of that building's 180 year old brick and stone foundation and has a cozy, grotto-like atmosphere.

Outside of the immediate downtown







The key to drinking bourbon and enjoying yourself in Bardstown is to make your own big whiskey fun.

area, I recommend BJ's Bar and Grill on Commerce Blvd., which is pretty similar to the rest of the local offerings.

In 1797, when Louis-Philippe, Duc d'Orléans, future king of France, visited Bardstown, he came with an entourage that included his two younger brothers. This is still good advice. Make the trip with buddies, not because the locals today are as "coarse, idle, and inhospitable" as the prince found them 212 years ago, but because they are just not that into you. If you want to share your passion for bourbon with someone while in Bardstown, bring a like-minded person or persons along.

Although Bardstown has several hotels, your best bet may be one of the superb bed and breakfasts. Most are small enough for three or four couples to take them over completely. Several are within convenient walking distance of the bar-restaurants already mentioned, as well as other local attractions such as the Getz Museum.

The Jailer's Inn, right next to Talbot Tavern, is the old county jail. You can sleep in a cell if you wish, but the main rooms are spacious and well-appointed. In nice weather, breakfast is served in the walled exercise yard out back, which makes it a lovely private oasis in the center of town.

Other good B&B choices are the Red Rose Inn and Beautiful Dreamer on East Stephen Foster, Rosemark Haven and The Veranda on North Third, Shadowlawn on West Flaget Ave., and Victorian Lights on South Third. There are several more just outside of Bardstown or in nearby communities such as Bloomfield, Cox's Creek, and New Haven.

There are also a few nicely-appointed houses that can be rented for a week or weekend. They include the two Colonel's Cottage Inns and the Bourbon Cottage.

The idea is to move your posse into one of these accommodations and set up a private bar. Most places will be cool with it. The hotels are generally okay with it too, since most don't have their own bars. The General Nelson Best Western, on West Stephen Foster Avenue, has a large gazebo on the property that is world-renowned for the impromptu bourbon tastings staged there by hotel guests.

The Bardstown-Nelson County Tourist & Convention Commission has an excellent web site at VisitBardstown.com, with a guide to all of the lodging and dining choices.

To stock your private bar, the place to go is Toddy's, on South Fourth Street across from Pioneer Park. Established by the late Toddy Beam (yes, those Beams), it is now owned and operated by Guthrie McKay, a colorful character in his own right. The bourbon selection is vast, the prices only slightly inflated, and you are more likely to bump into a fellow enthusiast there than at any of the bars.

Toddy's is the only liquor store downtown but there are several others on the outskirts. If you are going to be in Louisville or Lexington, the Liquor Barn chain has a great selection and generally the state's best prices.

Bardstown is a great little town, with an appealing core of 200 year old vintage red brick buildings. There are many places to stay, eat, and drink. There are also many other things to do. Most tourists come to visit My Old Kentucky Home State Park and see "The Stephen Foster Story" outdoor musical. Abraham Lincoln's birthplace is nearby. So is the Abbey of Gethsemani, where Thomas Merton lived and wrote, and which is famous today for its cheese, fruitcake, and bourbon fudge.

Other than the distilleries, the most important attraction for bourbon fans is the Oscar Getz Museum. Getz was a distillery executive who collected whiskey-related artifacts, which were donated to the city after his death. The museum is small but lovingly cared for and many of the docents are from local distilling families. The building was originally a school, and don't forget it has a bar (Xavier's) in the basement.

Another answer to the where-to-drink-in-Bardstown question is Louisville. It's only about 30 minutes away and has all of the travel amenities you would expect from a major city, including several bourbon bars. I recommend the Old Seelbach Bar and the Maker's Mark Bourbon House and Lounge, which are a few doors apart on Fourth St. Also good is Proof on Main, on Main St., and Bourbon's Bistro, which is a little bit outside of downtown on Frankfort Ave.

Another solution is to visit Bardstown during the annual Kentucky Bourbon Festival in September. There are many more places to drink during the festival, both official and unofficial, and plenty of bourbon enthusiasts around to share with. Room prices are higher, but even then Bardstown is a pretty economical place to visit.

In recent years, bourbon whiskey has become a much bigger part of Kentucky's tourism mix, but that isn't fully reflected in its tourism infrastructure yet. The bourbon-oriented visitor who wants to visit distilleries by day and explore the drink itself at night, will find options for the latter quite limited.

The best solution is to buy a few bottles and partake privately, which is perhaps sad if you're traveling alone, but perfectly sensible with several compatible friends.

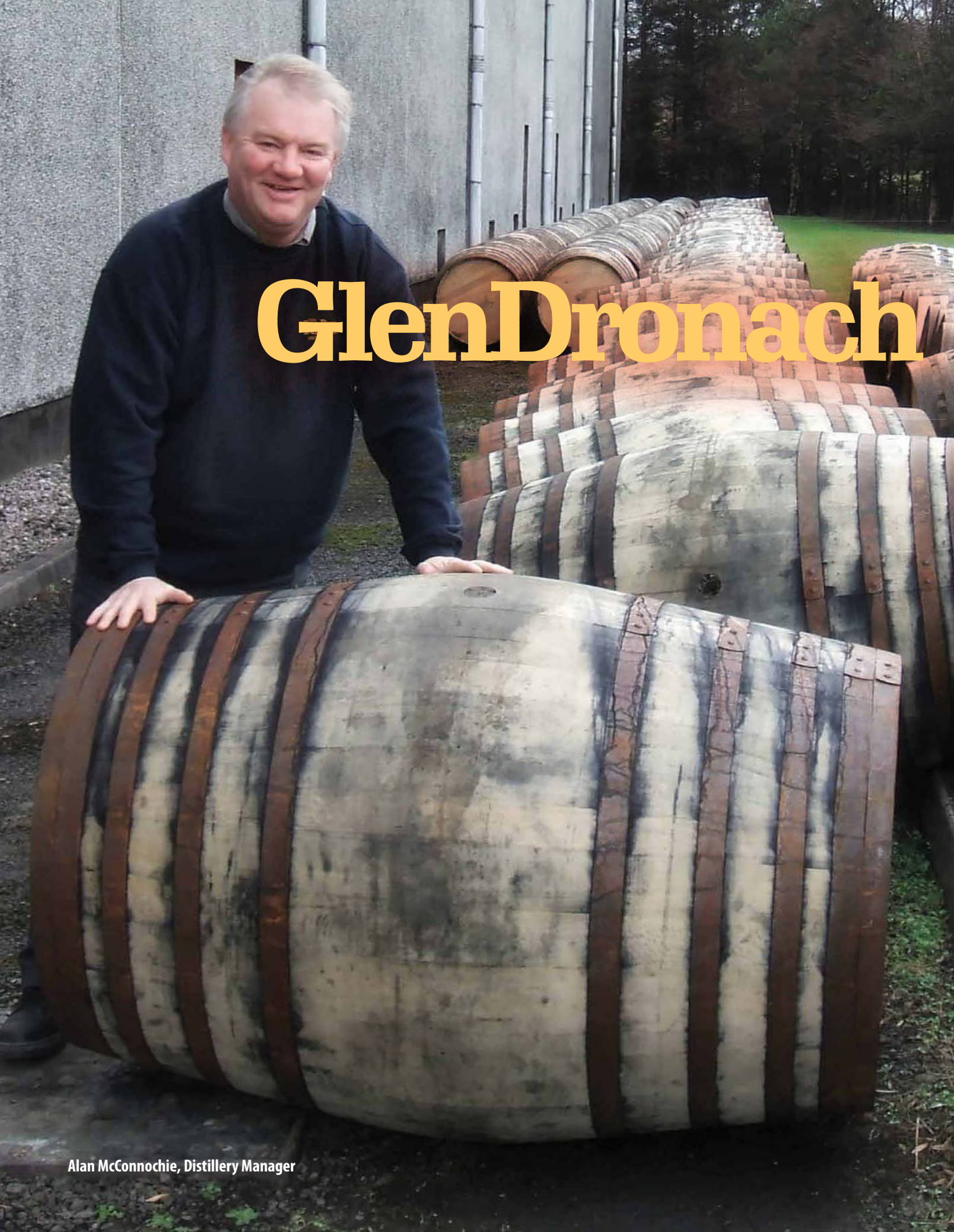
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GlenDronach



Alan McConnochie, Distillery Manager

Glows Once More

by Gavin D Smith

GlenDronach was silent from 1996 to 2002, and until the 1996 closure, floor maltings were in operation—much later than at most Scotch whisky distilleries.



Glendronach distillery is located in the quiet valley of the River Forgue, some ten miles from the Aberdeenshire market town of Huntly, on the eastern fringes of Speyside. The place has a sense of remoteness about it, a feeling of self-containment. It seems to be part of an agricultural community where the rhythms of life have not changed too much with the passing of years and decades. Here whisky-making appears close to its age-old farming roots.

Legend has it that a colony of rooks inhabited Glendronach in the days when the area was popular with illicit distillers. The birds are thought to bring good luck, but they also acted as a first-class early warning system if any excise officers appeared in the vicinity.



Those rooks certainly brought luck to the distillery's founder, but in these times of political correctness, when we almost feel the need to apologize for enjoying alcohol at all, it should be noted that the following story involves not only whisky, but also prostitutes, so readers of a particularly sensitive disposition should perhaps skip to the ninth paragraph right now.

Assuming that you are all still with us, however, here goes.

Hey, Big Spender

Back in the years after the Excise Act of 1823 made legal distilling in the Scottish Highlands more financially tempting than had previously been the case, one James Allardice established Glendronach distillery in 1826. Soon he was seeking markets for the single malt whisky he made there.

Deciding to try his luck in Edinburgh, Allardice headed south to the Scottish capitol with a barrel and a flagon of Glendronach, only to find a singular lack of interest among the many tavern landlords he approached.

Heading disconsolately back to his hotel, he was accosted on the Canongate by two prostitutes who asked him to buy them a drink. Being a thrifty Highlander, Allardice declared that there was no need for such extravagance, as he had a plentiful supply of whisky in his hotel room.

In due course the 'ladies' emerged, suitably refreshed, from Allardice's hotel and later returned for another bottle to share with friends. Seeing no point in carrying all his stock of Glendronach home, the distiller gave away the remainder of the flagon to his new acquaintances, only to find word of his whisky spreading on the streets, and soon it was being requested by name in the city's pubs. The landlords who had previously refused to deal with Allardice now began to place orders, and

the future of Glendronach distillery was soon secure.

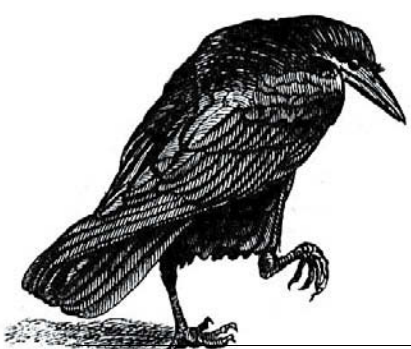
For better or worse, 'ladies of the night' no longer figure in GlenDronach's marketing strategy, but the—slightly apocryphal—story of James Allardice and the Edinburgh working girls is just one small part of the heritage of this fascinating distillery and single malt whisky, which is as rich and multi-layered as the dram itself. But more of that later.

The Long and Winding Road

A significant part of GlenDronach's heritage is intertwined with two famous Scotch whisky distilling families, namely the Grants and the Teachers. In 1920 Captain Charles Grant, fifth son of William Grant, founder of Glenfiddich, paid £9,000 for Glendronach, and ownership remained with the family for the next four decades.

Then, in 1960, Glendronach was acquired by the Teachers, who also almost qualify as 'whisky royalty.' The distillery subsequently passed into the hands of Allied Breweries Ltd. in 1976, along with the rest of Teacher's assets, and was then part of large-scale drinks companies for some 30 years, as Allied Breweries morphed into Allied Domecq, which in turn was taken over by Pernod Ricard subsidiary Chivas Brothers in 2005.

GlenDronach was silent from 1996 to 2002, and until the 1996 closure, floor maltings were in operation—much later than at most Scotch whisky distilleries. Glendronach is also notable for being the last distillery in Scotland to operate coal-fired stills, though 'health & safety' issues precipitated conversion to steam in 2005.



Chivas Brothers did not find Glendronach fitting comfortably into its Scotch whisky portfolio, which was somewhat overburdened with riches after the acquisition of Allied assets, and it was therefore not surprising when, in August 2008, an announcement was made to the effect that the BenRiach Distillery Company Ltd had purchased Glendronach.

Sharp-eyed readers may already have spotted apparent inconsistencies in our spelling of GlenDronach, or Glendronach, depending on whether we were referring to the distillery today or in a historical context. Sharp-witted readers may even have grasped the parallel between the capitalization of the second syllable in the name and that of BenRiach.

"It's our signature," declares BenRiach managing director Billy Walker, and the revised spelling has been incorporated into the revamped GlenDronach packaging, brand literature, and signage.

"Chivas was happy to sell Glendronach," notes Walker, a master blender whose impressive 30-year whisky industry resumé also includes a period spent working as operations director of Burn Stewart Distillers. "It's not easy to focus on them all when you have lots of good distilleries, and GlenDronach didn't fit Chivas' volume model."

"GlenDronach was once in the top five single malts, and was Allied's number two, after Laphroaig. It was a single malt of substance in terms of market presence, and it was always on our radar."

— BILLY WALKER



Geoff Bell, Wayne Kieswetter and Billy Walker.

The distillery manager at BenRiach, and now GlenDronach, is Alan McConnochie, who, like Billy Walker, brings a wealth of experience to the role. His early career was spent in the White Horse and Long John bottling plants, before spells at Laphroaig, Ben Nevis, Bunnahabhain, and latterly Tobermory, from where he was head-hunted by Walker to run BenRiach.

"I was pleased they bought GlenDronach," says McConnochie. "It's a good, manageable size to sit alongside BenRiach and there's a nice contrast between the typical Speyside of BenRiach and the stronger Highland character of Glendronach, primarily known for its sherry influence. The two brands complement each other, rather than compete."



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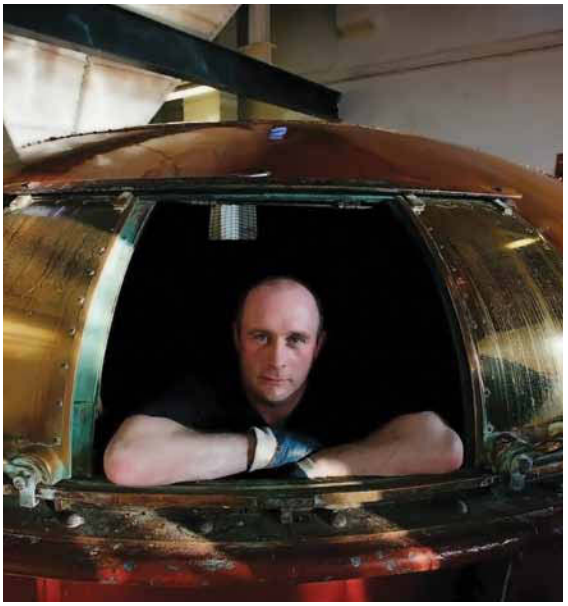
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Despite its location, GlenDronach is classified as a Highland rather than a Speyside single malt, and Billy Walker adds that, "GlenDronach was once in the top five single malts, and was Allied's number two, after Laphroaig. It was a single malt of substance in terms of market presence, and it was always on our radar."

You & Me & the Bottle Makes Three

The 'our' in question comprises Walker himself and the two prominent South African businessmen whose backing facilitated the 2004 purchase and subsequent resurrection of BenRiach. Like GlenDronach, BenRiach was another Chivas distillery surplus to the company's requirements.

Geoff Bell and Wayne Kieswetter first met Billy Walker in the 1980s, during his time with Burn Stewart, when they were purchasing spirit to use in their own South African whisky blending operation.

"Wayne and Geoff have huge commercial interests in South Africa," explains Billy Walker, "acting as agents for Diageo, Chivas, and other companies, as well as having their own blending business. BenRiach's purchase was intended to help secure them a supply of vatted malt. Then, when we went through the inventory, we found examples of peated and even triple-distilled whisky, so we decided quite a lot of stock was too interesting not to market individually."

The BenRiach business plan of offering singular, short-run editions, as well as more 'mainstream' aged releases, sold through independent retailers, is being applied to GlenDronach, which was purchased for a figure in the region of $24.5 million.

Economically, this may seem an injudicious time to be expanding any commercial concern, but as Billy Walker says, "The single malt sector is hot. You can work with relatively modest volumes and the business can still flourish."

Geoff Bell and Wayne Kieswetter are smart, professional operators, whose interests include shipping, trucking, and electricity supply, in addition to their involvement in the drinks industry in southern Africa. The Scotch whisky business is clearly attractive to them personally, "a lot more enjoyable than the shipping or trucking ventures!" as Bell says, but there is no sense that their Scottish distilleries are rich men's playthings.

Billy Walker may be regarded as fortunate in having their backing, but he has fully justified the trust placed in him by leading the BenRiach Distillery Company Ltd to record a 30 per cent increase in annual turnover during 2008.

That's The Way I Like It

A tour of GlenDronach in the company of Alan McConnochie reveals an attractive distillery of real integrity, and one in which the staff take evident pride. So what of the firm's latest acquisition?

"There's lots of wood and brass in the place—nice and traditional," says McConnochie "The distillery works 24 hours a day Sunday to Friday, three shifts per day, and we work with one mashman and one stillman per shift."

GlenDronach boasts a splendid, cast iron mashtun with a copper dome and eight Oregon pine washbacks. "Wood is a good insulator against heat gain and loss," notes McConnochie, "so wooden washbacks are good in winter. The temperature is about the same summer and winter, which is good for consistency, and the bursts of cold weather we are prone to here don't affect us.

"We have a long fermentation which lasts a minimum of 60 hours. It's what they've always done here and it works well, so we've just left it. We haven't changed anything in terms of timings. You get a smoother distillation from a longer fermentation."

Three of the washbacks are due for replacement this summer, and McConnochie declares, "They'll be replaced with wood. There'll be no stainless steel at GlenDronach!"

In keeping with this traditional approach, McConnochie notes that, "Everything's controlled by valves rather than computers. It's done by personal judgment. For example, the guys 'bring the stills in' by looking at the level in the sight glasses on the stills. It's a slow distillation, and it always has been. There's time for the spirit to react with the copper so you get a 'clean' spirit. Slow distillation equals better whisky in my book."

Referring to the 'health & safety'

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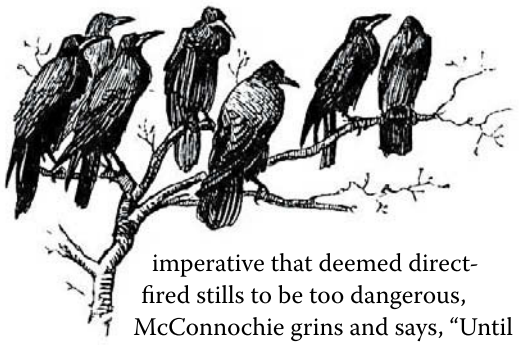


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imperative that deemed direct-fired stills to be too dangerous, McConnochie grins and says, "Until 2005 the stills were heated by open fires, but now we have signs in the stillhouse saying no photography, due to the supposed risks of a spark from camera flashes!"

Inevitably, there is a body of opinion that considers spirit distilled using coal-fired stills as superior to that made with steam, but McConnochie considers that, "We find it very consistent, and there's no obvious difference between pre-steam and post-steam spirit."



The Best is Yet to Come

So much for the plant inherited from Chivas Brothers, but what does the future hold for GlenDronach as part of the BenRiach Distillery Company?

"The sale included some specific stock, and we also did some exchanges with Chivas which enhanced our inventory," says Billy Walker. "The stock goes back to 1968, which allows us to do quite a bit. The core range will be the existing 12 year old, which we are keeping, plus 15 and 18 year old expressions which we launched in April, along with the 33 year old, first brought out in 2005. There is likely to be a 40 year old vintage later in the year, and we will also be releasing various single cask bottlings."

Walker declares that, "GlenDronach is a very special sherried malt; a big, rich whisky which deserves a big wood experience. It's a whisky that works really well with sherry."

Accordingly, some $4.9 million is being invested over a five-year period in ex-sherry wood, sourced directly from Spain, and an ongoing, three-year program that involves re-racking around 50 per cent of the entire inventory into fresh, *oloroso* sherry casks is currently under way. On-site warehousing comprises three traditional dunnage and three more recent, racked warehouses, capable of holding 45,000 casks in total.

Alan McConnochie points out that, "Some new make is going straight into ex-sherry casks, but we will start a lot of our new-make spirit off in bourbon wood for four or five years and then finish it off in sherry wood."

Billy Walker declares that, "We don't compete in the mass market; our peers would be single malt brands like Glengoyne. We share the same values and target the same markets. We have great plans for GlenDronach in our markets in the UK, Germany, U.S., Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, France, Canada, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, and China, amongst others."

Clearly, The Macallan will be in Walker's sights, along with other single malts notable for their sherry influence, such as Glenfarclas and The Dalmore.

On site, the distillery visitor center also plays an important part in future plans for the brand. It was first established back in 1976, when not too many distilleries were keen to allow the public onto the premises, and it has recently been upgraded and refurbished. However, Wayne Kieswetter says, "We don't want to over-commercialize it—it's about giving visitors an experience they don't get everywhere else. There'll be no gimmicks, we'll keep it simple, and people won't feel they're on a treadmill."

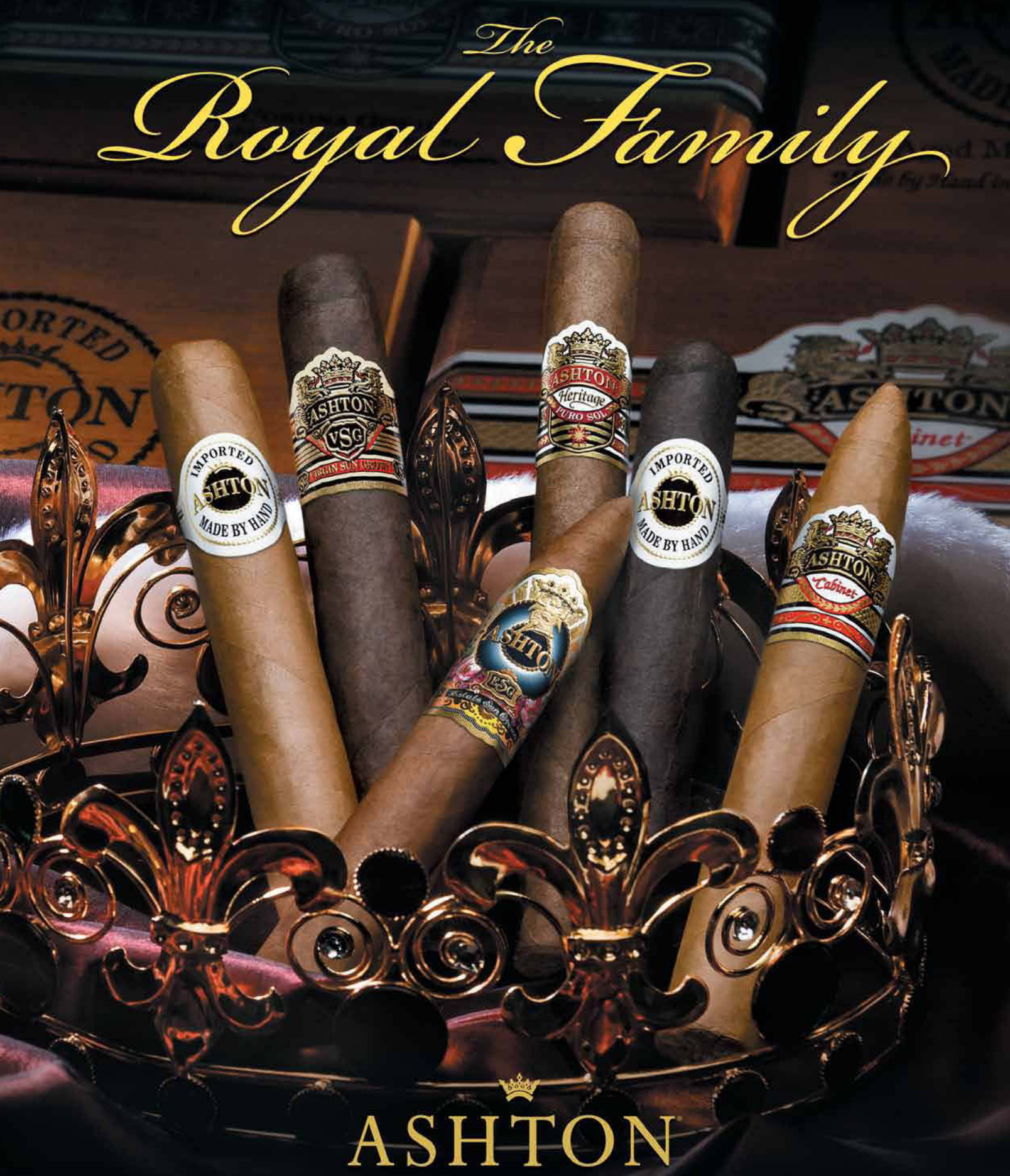
Billy Walker says that, "We want people to walk away as GlenDronach ambassadors—we want to engage them in a passionate way."

The splendid 18th century Glen House, once home to James Allardice, plus additional on-site accommodations, give the GlenDronach team lots of scope to host visiting overseas retailers, importers, and other guests in a way not possible at BenRiach, while corporate evenings and tasting events are also ultimately likely to be on the agenda.

"As a team, we are amazed what we've done with BenRiach," insists Billy Walker. "We want GlenDronach to be Distillery of the Year within three or four years, so we need to be close to the inventory and the brand."

Wayne Kieswetter says, "It's all about making it fun. We all have fun when we get together, and we hope to bring that sense of pleasure and enjoyment to the consumers. I have to say owning Scotch whisky distilleries is just about the most enjoyable of all our businesses!"

The good news for Billy Walker and company is that those rooks are still nesting, circling, and calling in the sky above GlenDronach, continuing to act as a good luck omen. Though it is unlikely that luck will be required to play too much of a part in the welcome revival of one of Scotland's great single malts, which, at long last, is receiving the attention and respect it so richly deserves.



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Japanese Whisky's Sun is Rising

By Dave Broom

In terms of specialist bars, Tokyo's Zoetrope has, I reckon, managed to find a niche of a niche. Come to think of it, it's found a niche of a niche of a niche. Owner Atsushi Horigami used to work in the film industry, so when he opened a bar, he wanted it to have a movie theme. That means he has a screen across one wall and a movie menu to choose from. He loves film soundtracks as well, and always plays a different one to accompany the movie of your choice. See? Niches.

He's also passionate about "western-style spirits," but explains that since there are so many Scotch whisky bars in Tokyo, he wanted to specialize exclusively in "Japanese-made, western-style spirits." Niche of a niche. So, settled in at the bar, Harold Lloyd clowning on the screen to the *Seven Samurai* soundtrack, we start. The challenge is, where to begin? There are 300 Japanese whiskies behind the bar and crowding the bartop. It's a living liquid archive detailing the evolution of what is currently the hottest property in world whisky.

In the years of sitting slack-jawed at the selection of drams available in Japanese bars, I've come up with a simple solution. Start long. Tonight, that means Yamazaki 10 year old *soda-wari* (whisky, ice, soda water). It settles the nerves, gives you time to prepare…and it refreshes you. It's also authentic. *Soda-wari* or *mizu-wari* (with water) has long been the way to drink whisky in Japan.

Roll 'Em

My eyes flick back to Harold Lloyd. The movie is as old as the Japanese whisky industry. Horigami-san's "western-style spirits,"

especially scotch and bourbon, first landed in Yokohama in 1859, part of a society-altering wave of imports that also included bread, beef, and beer. Given the allure of this exotica—and the Japanese sensibility for absorption and improvement—it was inevitable that Japanese whisky would appear.

Its appearance was driven by Shinjiro Torii, who started a liquor importer called Kotobukiya in 1899. In 1919, he launched his own blend of Scotch whisky called Tory's. It wasn't sufficient. He wanted a Japanese whisky made at a Japanese distillery.

A new silent movie scrolls across my mind.

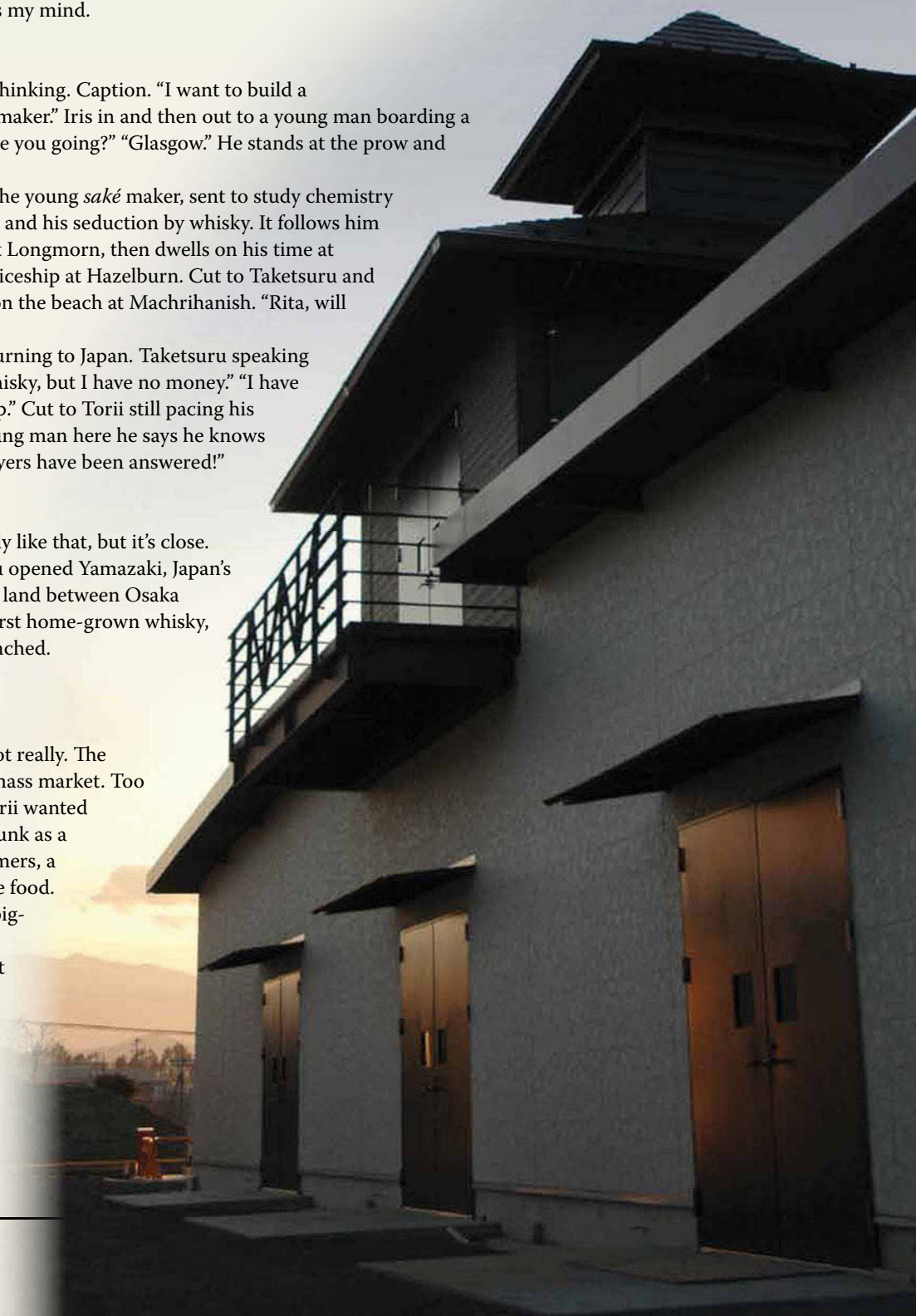
> SCENE ONE.
> It's 1918. Torii is in his office, thinking. Caption. "I want to build a distillery. But I need a whisky maker." Iris in and then out to a young man boarding a ship. "Taketsuru-san, where are you going?" "Glasgow." He stands at the prow and looks across the ocean.
>
> The rest of the film follows the young *saké* maker, sent to study chemistry at Glasgow University in 1918, and his seduction by whisky. It follows him to Speyside, where he works at Longmorn, then dwells on his time at Campbeltown and his apprenticeship at Hazelburn. Cut to Taketsuru and a young Scottish girl walking on the beach at Machrihanish. "Rita, will you marry me?" "Yes!"
>
> Cut to the young couple returning to Japan. Taketsuru speaking to a friend. "I want to make whisky, but I have no money." "I have heard of a man who might help." Cut to Torii still pacing his office. "Torii-san! There's a young man here he says he knows how to make whisky" "My prayers have been answered!"
> FIN.

Okay, it might not have been exactly like that, but it's close. Between them, Torii and Taketsuru opened Yamazaki, Japan's first dedicated whisky distillery, on land between Osaka and Kyoto. Six years later, Japan's first home-grown whisky, Shirofuda ("White Label") was launched.

Mixed Reviews

And the rest is glorious history? Not really. The Shirofuda wasn't a success on the mass market. Too heavy, too smoky, too powerful. Torii wanted something lighter, that could be drunk as a thirst quencher in the steamy summers, a whisky that would go with Japanese food. Enter Kakubin, still one of Japan's biggest sellers.

This might have been the catalyst for the split between the two founding fathers. Torii went his way, founded Suntory, and developed whisky-drinking *mizuwari*-style. Taketsuru founded his own firm, Nikka, and headed north to Hokkaido, his mind still filled with visions of Scotland.



Shirofuda's failure is instructive. It showed that Japanese whisky couldn't merely be a copy, that it had to conform to different cultural sensibilities. Equally, both the founding fathers knew that if they were to create an industry from scratch, they had to approach whisky-making in a different way from their colleagues in Scotland, who could draw on centuries of whisky-making heritage.

In simple terms, Scotch whisky-making was intuitive. It drew from oral history, was the result of fine-tuning over generations, was part of the culture of the land. Japan had to take a scientific approach from the word go. They didn't have 200 years to spare before they got it right. This different approach has in many ways been a defining difference between the two industries. Japanese distillers had to work in different conditions, a different climate, and appeal to a different palate.

Next Reel

My *soda-wari* has gone. "Have you tried the new Hakushu Heavy Peat?" asks Horigami-san. No, but I'd love to. A glass is poured. It's got Hakushu's pine notes, but there's a medicinal edge. Smooth, balanced, clean; a peat fire in a deep forest. It's miles away from the freshness of Hakushu 10 and 12 year old, with their visions of moss gardens and dripping bamboo.

It isn't a *volte-face* on the part of the distiller, but evidence of the solution to another challenge that faced Torii and Taketsuru. A blender of scotch can draw, these days, from roughly 90 distilleries, each with its own individual character. If a flavor is lacking from its own portfolio, stock can be exchanged with a commercial rival. That doesn't happen in Japan. Nikka and Suntory have two distilleries each but they need as many flavor components for their blends as their Scottish colleagues. Solution? They make as many different styles as they can in their distilleries.

That means when you visit a Japanese whisky distillery, you have to get used to talk of different peating levels, different yeasts, and in Suntory's case, a mass of different-shaped stills. Yamazaki and Hakushu each have six pairs of stills: small, large, some with uptilted lyne arms, some with downwards; there's worms and condensers, steam heating and direct fire; as many parameters are built-in to maximize the number of flavors produced. Factor in ex-bourbon, ex-sherry, and refill barrels, new American and Japanese oak, and you can begin to see how it's possible. Innovation has been an integral part of Japanese whisky-making from the word go. It's normal. In Scotland, in my opinion at least, innovation is only used when the going becomes tough.

That smokiness in the Hakushu is also seen in the distillery's older expressions, not because they used to make it that way, but because of another major difference from scotch. In the single-distillery, single-character model, the only way you can differentiate between your whiskies is by age (and wood). In Japan, however, each expression from a distillery can be a blend of different whisky streams.

Time for another. Horigami-san pours a Yoichi. This is where Taketsuru built his dream distillery: on the western coast of cold Hokkaido, local peat on hand, local barley growing. Even now Yoichi stands apart: rich, complex, briny. It's a Japanese spin on Longrow, which seems only appropriate given Taketsuru's Campbeltown experience.



Double Feature

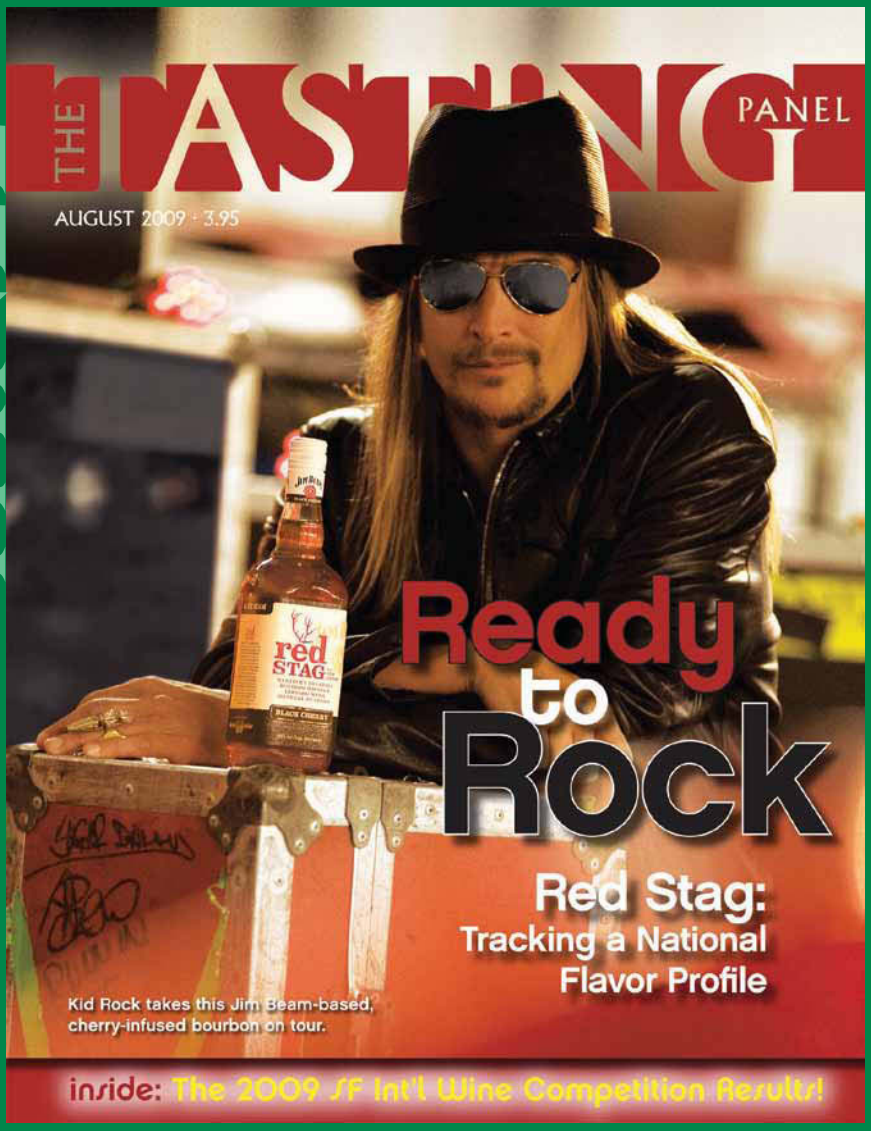
Two more drams are brought out for us. A wine cask-matured Karuizawa, which sounds odd, but makes sense, as this small distillery—next to an active volcano—was originally a winery. Karuizawa does things differently. Its tiny stills only make a single style of whisky, it's stuck to using Golden Promise, uses peated malt, ages exclusively (apart from these odd wine casks) in ex-sherry. The result is a big, bold, oily/sooty, solid style. Then there's his bottling of a malt from the now-defunct Hanyu distillery, whose owner, Ichiro Akuto, has recently built a new plant at Chichibu, where he is going down the multiple-distillate route.

Horigami is warming to his task. Nikka rye; Coffey malt; a new distilled beer from a brewer; and Special Mysterious Whisky (which sounds exciting, but is in reality a bottling for mystery writers). The head spins.

They're all different, all individual, but—vitally—they all share a Japanese character. Which is? It's hard to put a finger on it precisely, but try this. Scotch reminds me of a burn running fast over boulders, the complex flavors churning about in a head-rushing melee. Japanese whisky is a limpid pool, in which all the flavors can be seen clearly. They all, even the big smoky ones, have a clarity of flavor, a lifted intensity, a transparency. What they don't have is maltiness.

Expect to see much more of them. Yamazaki is the eighth-biggest single malt in the world on Japanese sales alone. Yoichi won best single malt in the World Whisky Awards. The small-batch releases of Karuizawa and Ichiro's malts sell out in Europe the moment they are released. Maybe Japan's time has come.

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Baby Powers

by Cormac Mac Connell

The high road to Purgatory staggers like a drunken tinker through the wiry Donegal village of Pettigo and then straightens its back for the mountains, just the way a tipsy tinker would, and for sure it staggers and meanders a bit, hesitating at twisty bends, before it eventually comes to Lough Derg, which is the Gaelic for Red Lake. There it stops, beside peaty lapping waters, and you are just a short boat ride out across the lake from Saint Patrick's Purgatory.



PHOTO: MICHAEL KORMAN, ABOUTIRELAND.COM/DONEGAL/IRELAND

St. Patrick's Purgatory

And here, brothers and sisters, you will suffer for your sins for three days. And here, I sinned mortally, *mea culpa*, *mea maxima culpa*, over thirty years ago now with a little spirited lady called Baby Powers. And dammit, 'twas well worthwhile though I may yet descend into the darkest reaches of Hell because of it. I'll tell ye my confession now, since this is a very Irish Catholic kind of yarn, and many of the sternest amongst ye will deny me absolution.

Too Close to Hell

Saint Patrick's Purgatory, on a small island in the center of the Donegal lake, has for many centuries been the harshest penitential exercise for what is still an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. Thirty years ago, the ethos of that religious culture was still very harsh and binding. For the seven weeks of Lent leading up to Easter, for example, everybody had to fast quite sharply, being only entitled to one full meal and two light snacks daily. This at a time when farming was a robustly manual profession demanding much more food than that. After three weeks you could see strong men visibly losing weight and complaining of being exhausted every afternoon. That's just one index to the times that were in it. The popularity of Saint Patrick's Purgatory on Lough Derg was another. It's still popular but it's a lot easier today. Now you can visit for just one day.

It drew pilgrims from all over Ireland and beyond during its long summer season. It was not Purgatory at all, it was a Hell. It was worse for people resident in the North West, where I was raised, because it

And here, brothers and sisters, you will suffer for your sins for three days. And here, I sinned mortally, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa, over thirty years ago now with a little spirited lady called Baby Powers.

was only a short bus journey away. As a schoolboy, when you did an important examination, or, later, when seeking work, your mother packed a lean overnight bag and packed you off to what they locally called "The Island." You went away from home fasting from the previous midnight and you came back THREE days later still fasting and unable to eat again until that midnight. And in between you suffered all sorts of deprivations. In fairness, all the parents went to The Island themselves during the season too, not avoiding what they sent their young clans to do.

When you were heading off for the first time, quite excited and ignorant of the real penances ahead, they'd have a wry smile on their faces as they told you that it was not too hard at all, that you'd sail through it all effortlessly.

Liars! Through their teeth! All liars on that score. And you joined them with glee yourself later when a younger brother or neighbor was making their maiden trip. It will be no trouble to you, you'd say, having survived. But in truth it was, and still is, quite dreadfully demanding and punishing. When I was under my parents' roof I did it three or four times, like all the local teenagers. And if penance buys a high place in Heaven then I would be guaranteed a grandstand recliner were it not for that hot and sensual encounter, years later, with the spirited Baby Powers. That was my downfall.

Headfirst Into Hades

You see, just before that fall, I was working for a new current affairs magazine in Dublin called *This Week*. I was a young feature writer and it was my job to come up with unusual feature ideas and material at the weekly brainstorming sessions. And, largely because it was totally forbidden to take photographs in Purgatory at that time (instant expulsion in disgrace!), I suggested that a photographer and I would travel to Purgatory as allegedly genuine pilgrims, suffer all the penances and tribulations, and that the photographer would sneak some illicit shots to illustrate the story I would write.

They went for it with outstretched mouths and the following day a lovely photographer called Paddy Langan and myself hit the road for Donegal and Purgatory. We stuffed ourselves with a good lunch before arriving and made a few purchases like extra cigarettes (you could smoke) and headache tablets and plasters for wounds and eventually found ourselves on the pilgrims' boat heading for Purgatory. The small island is capped by a huge domed Basilica which seems to leave little room for anything or anybody else.

We landed. It started. We took off our shoes in the spartan Men's Hostel and left our bags atop narrow hard beds we would not see again until the following night. Then we plunged into a wet world of unending prayer and suffering. You have to make about ten or twelve "Stations," maybe even more, in your sorely suffering bare feet over that evening, the full night, and the following day. Those Stations involve endless prayings and Masses both inside the Basilica and, worst of all, outside in the rain scourging the Basilica, praying the while, and walking around little rough stone walls (originally monks' cells) before eventually kneeling at the bases of crosses in the center, praying more, and then shambling away in the rain to start all over again.

The only food is toast or inedible oaten cakes, sugarless black tea! You discover that Lough Derg Soup is merely hot water with pepper and salt, you get too lightheaded to enjoy a cigarette. There are several occasions when you must stand with your back to the Basilica, spread wide your arms, and renounce the World, the Flesh, and The Devil. And then go staggering on.

Passion in Perdition

You have not even enough energy, after the first ten hours, to admire the beautiful young women from the Women's Hostel. But, being young and wild then, it was sometime in the wee small hours of that first night that I had my sensual encounter with Baby Powers in a quiet shadowy corner near the Women's Hostel.

It was a mortal sin, a hideous crime in such a saintly place, but I was driven too mad with desire to care. I caressed her warm smooth curves with both hands, there in the shadows, there in the rain a-pouring, and then my lips met hers! Desire set me on fire, from those hungry lips to what used to be called the loins! It was orgasmic, magical, the hot blood coursed through my veinage as never ever before.

I was consumed with desire more than ever before or since. Unforgettable! I was out of my mind.

I forgot about the pains of Purgatory, the sore feet, the hunger, the giddiness. I was consumed with desire more than ever before or since. Unforgettable! I was out of my mind. And, of course, because I was so young and passionate, it was all over far too soon and inside ten minutes she was gone. And I was standing there alone. A sinner.

I never told Langan. This is the first time I have ever confessed in public that when we did our shopping in Bundoran I slipped into the off-licence and bought the Baby Powers. You would not dare to chance bringing a full bottle of one of Ireland's most popular blends into Purgatory so I purchased the miniature one-glass size that all of us call the Baby Powers. And that was my sin. And I feel the better of getting this off my chest.

And some of ye will maybe give me absolution. And the photographs which Pat Langan sneaked were sensational in the magazine. And my decent enough article opened with the line, "The high road to Purgatory staggers like a drunken tinker…"

By John Hansell

Buyer's Guide

OVERVIEW *Whiskies might be getting more expensive, but there is no shortage of new ones. For example, there's an entirely new Dalmore line, reviewed below. Other distilleries, like Laphroaig and Ardmore, have introduced some very nice older expressions. I was really impressed (and intrigued) by the new Black Bull blended scotch, too! And for those of you who don't think India can make some high-quality whisky, just give Amrut a try. Pretty good stuff for whisky that's about five years old.*

Purpose
An increase in the number of alcoholic beverages makes it very exciting to be a drinker these days. However, it has also created the need to provide you, the consumer, with a guide to select a beverage you will enjoy.

Scope
All products available for purchase in the United States will be considered for evaluation. A special effort will be placed on reviewing new products and comparing them to established ones.

Procedure
Every attempt will be made to procure products that are in good condition and unadulterated. To insure this, distillers, importers, and wholesalers are encouraged to submit samples for review.

The tasting notes and ratings published are those of John Hansell, publisher and editor of *Malt Advocate* magazine. Tastings are generally conducted blind in groupings from the same style for relative comparison. Then, every effort is made to re-sample products being reviewed under typical drinking conditions (e.g., a 1.5 oz. pour for a whisky).

Tasting Notes, Ratings, & Prices
The tasting notes help readers decide if they will like or dislike a given product, based on their own personal preferences for specific aromas and flavors. The rating provides a relative comparison of quality with reference to competing products. This is important because some products achieve greater balance, character, and complexity than others.

Please note that we sample far too many products to publish reviews on all of them. The products listed in our Buyer's Guide usually reflect our most positive experiences. However, we will also review products we don't particularly like if there is a point we are trying to make.

Realize that the best way to learn is to taste them yourself and draw your own conclusions. For this, there is no substitute. We are merely providing a guide for you to reach this goal.

Unless otherwise noted, spirits prices are for a 750 ml bottle.

Single Malt Scotch

96 Ardbeg Corryvreckan, 57.1%, $85
Powerful, muscular, well-textured, and invigorating. Even within the realm of Ardbeg, this one stands out. The more aggressive notes of coal tar, damp kiln, anise, and smoked seaweed are supported by an array of fruit (black raspberry, black cherry, plum), dark chocolate, espresso, molasses, bacon fat, kalamata olive, and warming cinnamon on the finish. Quite stunning!

95 Laphroaig, 25 year old (2008 Edition), 51.2%, $500
The flavors evolve on the nose and palate, with peat kiln smoke, fresh asphalt, damp earth warehouses, morning-after campfire ash, and old boat dock contrasting nicely with toffee apple, crème caramel, delicate raspberry preserve, and dried citrus. Long, smoky, spicy, briny, seaweed, dirty martini-tinged finish. This whisky comes from a combination of both sherry and bourbon casks, and the marriage works. I also like that it retains some of its youthful brashness, while showing the depth that maturity affords a whisky. A delicious, well-balanced, old-fashioned Laphroaig.

(Reviewing this whisky gave me an excuse to open a "fresh" bottle of its predecessor, the 30 year old, and here are my thoughts. The 30 year old is softer, mellower, drier, and more debonair. The 25 year old is bolder, more youthful, more dynamic, richer, and sweeter—bottling at cask strength really helps here. Both whiskies are very nice, but quite different in personality.)

95 Lombard "Jewels of Scotland" (distilled at Brora), 1982 vintage, 50%, $200
Bottled in 2004, but just recently put in circulation here in the U.S. (Very strange.) It's worth the wait. It's fresh (even at 22 years old), appetizing, spicy, and briny. There's a sweet foundation of vanilla wafer and caramel, with a slightly oily texture. White pepper, seaweed, mustard seed, lime, gherkin, and teasing gin botanicals add complexity. Spicy, salty finish. A vibrant, dynamic expression of the shuttered original Clynelish distillery. Quite stunning, actually. Find yourself a bottle before they're gone!

92 D&M (distilled at Scapa), 19 year old, 1989 Vintage, 52.7%, $150
This single cask bottling of Scapa is a beauty! Brilliant gold color. Clean and fresh on the nose and palate, with

RATING SCHEME

95-100	A classic! All components are balanced appropriately, with the complexity and character expected in a classic.
90-94	Outstanding! One of the best for its style. Distinctive.
80-89	Good to very good. Plenty of character and no identifiable flaws. Worth seeking out.
70-79	Average. No unique qualities. Flaws possible.
60-69	Below average. Major flaws. Avoid.

Focus on Amrut Indian Whisky

Impressive for their age (around 4 years). Many will be surprised to discover that these whiskies were produced in India. Well done! (Note that prices are approximate, as they are not yet for sale in the U.S.)

80 Amrut, 46%, $40
A mouth-coating whisky, and oily in texture. Ripe vanilla malt, peaches & cream, polished oak, roasted nuts, and a hint of coconut cream pie. Soothing, creamy finish. A pleasant "anytime" dram. Bottled at 46% to better display its fine textures and subtle nuances.

82 Amrut, Limited Edition (bottled 2007), 61.9%, $60
Similar to the standard Amrut, except that it's drier and spicier, with suggestions of bourbon. Not as creamy as the standard expression, but a bit more sophisticated.

84 Amrut, Limited Edition, Peated, (bottled 2008), 62.78%, $70
Good balance between ripe barley, rum-like sweetness, and damp kiln smoke. Dried oak spice, bourbon char, brine, and anise add complexity, peaking on the finish. An interesting contrast to the other Amrut whiskies. This whisky could pass for a youthful Islay malt.

complex bright fruit (peach, tangerine, golden delicious apple, honeydew melon, pineapple), spice (cinnamon, vanilla, subtle cocoa), appetizing brine, and beach pebbles, all on a bed of creamy, squeaky-clean honeyed malt. Dynamic, appetizing, briny, dried-spice finish. A delicious, superbly-balanced whisky that makes a great aperitif, but I could drink this any time. (Bottled exclusively for D&M Aficionado's Club.)

91 Port Askaig, 17 year old, 45.8%, £50
A new line of Islay single malts from Specialty Drinks, an extension of The Whisky Exchange. (The bottle doesn't tell you which distillery this whisky came from, but if you look at a map of Islay you can probably figure it out.) I like this expression better than the more expensive 25 year old. There's impeccable balance and more vibrancy in this 17 year old, with seaweed, smoked Spanish olive, coal soot, pencil shavings, citrus, and anise, along with subtle kipper and fresh-picked ginger. All this is layered on a bed of oily, honeyed malt. Salty, peppery, sooty, tarry finish. Nicely done!

90 Ardmore, 30 year old, 53.7%, $450
The oldest Ardmore I have tasted. Smartly bottled at cask strength and not chill-filtered. (The entry level Ardmore "Traditional" is at the opposite end of the age spectrum, tasting quite youthful.) My initial concern with this 30 year old was: would the wood dominate the lovely floral, smoky notes I enjoy so much with Ardmore? The wood is certainly present, but the smoke still comes through. There's a gently layered sweetness that complements the smoke (toffee, deep caramel, subtle honey), licorice root, bourbon barrel char, coffee grounds, and high cocoa chocolate, with subtle dried citrus and a suggestion of floral soap. Dry finish, with more bourbon barrel char and licorice root. Considering that Ardmore has historically been a blending malt, most of the stocks right now are much younger. This is a rare treat. It's a wee bit thin in body and a little on the dry side from 30 years on wood for me to rate it in the mid 90s, but it's still a very enjoyable whisky.

90 The Arran Malt, Madeira Wine Cask Finish (2008 Limited Edition), 50%, $75
This is not a single-cask bottling like other recent wine-finished releases, but the casks they selected are very good ones. Lovely antique amber color. The Madeira dovetails beautifully with the malt and oak, and it has matured nicely for a whisky less than ten years old. Lush notes of orange marmalade, raspberry tart, and *panforte*, all wrapped up in rich toffee and a dusting of nutmeg, cinnamon, and cocoa. A dry, resinous, spicy, tactile finish adds balance, complexity, and additional dimension. Smartly bottled at a higher strength. Some of these wine-finished Arran whiskies are impressive. This is one of them.

90 The Balvenie, Madeira Cask, 17 year old, 43%, $120
A harmonious marriage of fruit and spice. More balanced than last year's sweet Rum Cask release. In fact, this is one of the most deftly-balanced whiskies I've tasted this year. Bramble, ripe nectarine, caramel apple, honeyed vanilla, and golden raisin, spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg. Soft (for Balvenie), lingering, warm, dried spice finish.

90 Glenmorangie Sonnalta PX, 46%, $70
The first of Glenmorangie's new "Private Collection" line of whiskies for Travel Retail. This one is finished in Pedro Ximenez (PX) sherry. With PX being so rich and intense, and Glenmorangie spirit so subtly complex and delicate, does the sherry dominate here? No, it doesn't. Still, this is viscous and very textural for a Glenmorangie. I'm picking up *rhum agricole* drenched with honeyed apricot, toffee almond, chocolate-covered raisin, glazed citrus, and cherry pits, all leading to a leathery, tobacco-tinged finish. A visceral whisky with plenty of grip. Great for after dinner.

88 Springbank, 18 year old, 46%, $190
Nice to see stocks distilled after the 1980s 'silent period' turning 18 years old. The sherry influence here is complementary, but not overpowering. Notes of toffee almond, vanilla fudge, chocolate-coated citrus, bramble, and candied ginger. Polished leather, dried spice, and a hint of brine on the finish dries it out nicely and keeps it interesting. Not quite as dynamic and complex as some of those legendary pre-1980s Springers, but it's smooth, well-rounded, and more-ish.

Focus on the new Dalmore line

The new Dalmore range is very exciting and shows the many personalities of the whisky. In my reviews, you'll find flavor descriptors common to all the expressions (marmalade, spice), but I tried to point out each whisky's distinctive individual characteristics. Overall, I like the new line very much. However, I would like to see these whiskies bottled at 43% (or better yet 46% and not chill-filtered). It would have made an improvement across the board.

84 The Dalmore, 12 year old, 40%, $45
Half the whisky was aged in bourbon barrels, the other half in sherry casks. This whisky has always been on my short list as one of the finest, most affordable 12 year old single malts available. While the price may have gone up a bit (I remember when it was $20!), the quality remains the same. It's fresh and lively. A well-balanced dram, with its tell-tale orange marmalade accompanied by tangerine, pineapple upside-down cake, vanilla-soaked barley, subtle brine, and caramel, all leading to a spicy cinnamon and dried vanilla finish. A nice "every day" dram.

84 The Dalmore Gran Reserva, 40%, $65
Aged exclusively in first-fill casks (60% of it sherry cask), and its oak intensity shows. Sweet, but with a steady dose of dried spice, oak resin, and teasing tobacco to back it up. Silky texture and lush, with fallen orchard fruit, tangerine, chocolate-covered orange, and lemon meringue. A firm dried spice finish rounds it all out. Sort of like The Dalmore 12 year old pumped up on steroids.

88 The Dalmore, 15 year old, 40%, $80
Those who are fond of ripe, sherried whiskies will enjoy this new 15 year old. It's aged entirely in sherry casks. The sherry is nicely layered (but not sappy or cloying) and the Dalmore spirit is big enough to handle it. Lush fruit, richly textured and fleshy, with a warming spice impact on the finish. Orange marmalade, glazed citrus, and key lime pie are enveloped by sweet toffee/molasses notes, and spiced with cinnamon, clove, ginger, and subtle chocolate. Soothing and restorative in nature. Good for after dinner—or with a cigar.

88 The Dalmore 1263 King Alexander III, 40%, $200
Master Blender Richard Paterson's excellent adventure. This whisky consists of Dalmore aged in a wide variety of casks, including cabernet sauvignon, madeira, Matusalem sherry, marsala, port, and bourbon. This diversity shows in the whisky's complexity and unique flavor profile. There's a lot going on in here. Very rich, but balanced with oak spice and gripping resin (especially on the finish). Sweet layers of toffee, molasses, and vanilla fudge provide a foundation for red plum, ripe red raspberry, black cherry, blueberry, orange marmalade, kiwi, grape skin, and toasted almond. A very busy whisky which requires a good dose of mental participation to really appreciate it and sort all the flavors out. In this regard, very much like Glenmorangie Signet.

82 The Dalmore, 1974 Vintage, 42%, $1,250
Beautiful complex fruit on the nose. Tannic grip on the palate—especially on the finish. The tell-tale orange marmalade combines notes of orchard fruit, caramel apple, fried pineapple, banana nut bread, unsweetened chocolate, grape skin, and plain toast, peppered with cinnamon and ground espresso bean. Distinctive and evolving on the palate—and humming along quite nicely—until the oak turns a bit austere and aggressive on the finish. For this reason, it's my least favorite of the range.

93 The Dalmore, 40 year old, 40%, $3,000
By far the softest and gentlest of the range, and oh so drinkable. Hard to believe that this whisky is 40 years old, actually, as it shows no sign of excessive oak. Instead, there are soothing layers of caramel and toffee as the whisky's foundation. Add orange marmalade and other juicy citrus fruits, cinnamon spice, graham cracker, and lightly toasted almond. A gentle, subtly sophisticated Dalmore, and an interesting comparison to the much different, more visceral 50 year old. If I were a rich man, I could drink this whisky every day—it's so easy-going.

96 The Dalmore, 50 year old, 52.8%, $1,500/100ml
The Dalmore is one of a handful of whiskies that seem to be able to age in the cask for many decades and still improve. This one is incredibly viscous on the nose and palate (and very heavy on the tongue), with chewy toffee and old pot still rum. The classic Dalmore marmalade note shines throughout, along with vanilla cream, an array of dried spices (especially cinnamon and evergreen), juicy oak, forest bedding, rancio, old armagnac, polished leather, tobacco, maple syrup, dark chocolate, almond macaroon, and subtle espresso. Long, mouth-coating finish. The flavors evolve like waves lapping on the palate—especially the interplay with the oak. I can't drink this whisky slowly enough. A rare experience for the lucky few who can afford it.

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86 The Arran Malt, Pomerol Wine Cask Finish (Limited Edition), 50%, $80
Stylish and sophisticated. Fresh, honeyed floral, green grapes, kiwi, plum, and currant jelly. Hint of cinnamon and nutmeg. Soft, gently sweet finish. Pleasing sweetness to go with the fruit.

85 Port Askaig, 25 year old, 45.8%, £75
Still in the same vein as its 17 year old sibling reviewed above, but it's softer, mellower, with more wood impact (especially on the nose and back end of the palate) and tea leaves. Perhaps even some mild tobacco. Darker sugars in this one (molasses?) rather than honey, and more berried fruit along with the citrus, which struggles to reveal itself. Dry, resinous finish. An enjoyable dram, even if the wood outstays its welcome. But if you have to pick between the two expressions, go for the 17 year old and pocket the change with a smile on your face.

83 The Arran Malt, St. Emilion Wine Cask Finish (Limited Edition), 50%, $80
Rich, good body, blueberry muffin, black cherry, a lot of tannic grip (perhaps a little too much for balance). Not as polished as the Pomerol or Madeira.

Blended Scotch Whisky

94 Black Bull, 30 year old, 50%, $200
Well, what have we here? A blend of 50% malt and 50% grain (a very high malt content for a blend), and bottled at 50%, too! The whisky was blended first (very unusual), before being aged in sherry casks for its entire life. Antique amber/chestnut color. Full sherry impact, but never cloying—the higher alcohol level and grain whisky cut through the sherry and add balance and drinkability. This is a fruity-confection delight, with raisin chutney, fig cake, orange-almond scone, and chocolate-covered cherry. Add to the mix richly-textured toffee, old oak, polished leather, and a cinnamon-spiced tobacco finish. A rare treat! A great old blend that malt drinkers will embrace.

91 Dewar's Founder's Reserve, 18 year old, 40%, $80
Available for several years, but now finally making its debut in the U.S. The higher-end Dewar's expressions (Dewar's 12 year old and Dewar's Signature) are very good blends. This one is situated smartly between the two. The malt proportion is rich and creamy; the grain whisky is crisp and well-integrated. Antique gold color, with notes of butterscotch, vanilla wafer, strawberry rhubarb pie, and citrus drizzled with honey. Lovely floral notes in the aroma, along with a pleasing, dried spice finish. I could drink this stuff all day long!

84 Isle of Skye, 8 year old, 43%, $29
What a surprise! Really thick and malty for a blend (there's a high malt content here for sure), and also nicely mature for 8 years old. Great balance too, with the island aggressiveness tamed by a rich, malty elegance. Delicious honey, toasted oak, firm peat, dark chocolate, and glazed citrus meld nicely with the malt, leading to a honeyed, lightly-peppered finish. Very enjoyable.

Blended Japanese Whisky

88 Hibiki, 12 year old, 43%, $55
Well-rounded, solid malt backbone, and very drinkable. These are the main characteristics of this impressive blend. Honeysuckle, vanilla-coated malt and fruit (pineapple upside down cake, lemon tart, plum, bramble) are the primary flavors. Ripe barley, marzipan, beeswax, and clove round out the palate. Gentle, soothing finish. Suntory can make a 12 year old blend this good with just two malt distilleries? Scotland, are you taking notice?

Focus on Buffalo Trace Experimental Collection

Here are the two new BT Experimental Collection whiskeys. This time the focus is on the type of wood. More specifically, this experiment looks at the growth rate of the wood and its impact on the whiskey. Both whiskeys are the same age, but I think I would have liked the Coarse Grain Oak expression if it were bottled several years earlier, where there (theoretically) would be less impact from the wood. If you buy both bottles, you might want to tinker around and blend these two together, say four or five parts Fine Grain Oak and one part Coarse Grain Oak.

94 Buffalo Trace Experimental Collection, 14 year old, Fine Grain Oak, 45%, $47
Aged in slow-growth wood. I love the balance in this whiskey, with all the flavors presented harmoniously. Rather lively for a bourbon approaching 15 years. Notes of bright fruit (peach, kiwi, golden raisin), soft vanilla, crème caramel, lemon meringue, and coconut macaroon, then drying out nicely to a rather sophisticated, cinnamon-tinged, polished oak finish.

80 Buffalo Trace Experimental Collection, 14 year old, Coarse Grain Oak, 45%, $47
Aged in fast-growth wood. Quite the antithesis of the "Fine Grain Oak" release above; the comparison is interesting. Darker fruit (plum, blackberry), and darker sugars (maple syrup, toffee). Resinous and becoming quickly dry on the palate, with leather, tobacco leaves, grape-stem tannins, barrel char, and dried spice. A heavier, more textural bourbon than the Fine Grain Oak expression. I like this whiskey a lot until the dry, leathery oak notes begin to dominate the latter half of the palate. That, my friend, is the coarse grain oak in action.

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Bourbon Whiskey

97 Parker's Heritage Collection, "Golden Anniversary", 50%, $150

This bottling celebrates master distiller Parker Beam's 50 years of service by including whiskey from each of the past five decades. This is a fabulous whiskey: seamless and incredibly complex, with an impeccable marriage of youth and maturity. It's also very even-keeled throughout—quite different than last year's equally impressive PHC, a 27 year old, whose personality was more like an exhilarating old wooden rollercoaster ride (and also brandished more oak). Look for candied citrus, nectarine, blueberry, and sultana anchored by a nougat center, laced with honeyed vanilla and orange creamsicle. There's a dusting of cocoa powder, brittle mint, and cinnamon, too. Tobacco leaves, polished leather, and teasing bourbon barrel char round out the palate, emerging more prominently towards a warming finish. A classic!

90 Four Roses Single Barrel (2009 Limited Edition), 58%, $80

Deeper and darker than some Four Roses, but with plenty of bright, lush sweetness. Notes of toffee, honey-drenched nuts, and ripe summer fruit. Nicely spiced, with cinnamon, nutmeg, and a dusting of mocha. I just love the honey influence. A well-balanced whiskey, with all the flavors taking turns to shine. Great integration of flavors, too! One of my favorite Four Roses single barrel bourbons, which will grow on you with every sip.

Rye Whiskey

90 Delilah's "15", 15 year old, 50%, $150

Well matured, but still with a spicy rye mean streak. There's a lush sweetness that tames both the resinous oak and the bold rye spice…it's a harmonious balance between the three, actually. Warming cinnamon and cool mint meld with sweet corn, *rhum agricole*, honey-kissed citrus, pecan pie, and cocoa powder, leading to a long, dry, spicy, leather-tinged finish. Bottled to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of Delilah's bar in Chicago. A worthy effort!

89 High West Rocky Mountain Rye (Batch #2), 21 year old, 46%, $130

Made from a mash containing 53% rye, and aged in used barrels. The relatively low rye content, along with being aged in used wood, means this is one soft, smooth rye whiskey. Gentle mint, green tea, cinnamon, nutmeg, roasted nuts, glazed fruit, and candied corn all lie on a bed of vanilla and caramel. I tasted a "work in progress" sample last year which showed more oak. This expression is much better. Not as complex or dynamic as the flagship "Rendezvous Rye" from High West (which I rated a 95), but I could drink this stuff all day long.

86 High West Rocky Mountain Rye (Batch #1), 16 year old, 46%, $80

Made from a mash containing a whopping 80% rye. The antithesis of the 21 year old reviewed above. This is one bold rye whiskey which gets more powerful as it develops on the palate. It's crisp, clean, and very spicy (cool mint, hot cinnamon), with molasses, caramel, honey, golden raisin, kiwi, coconut shavings, and a dusting of cocoa. A lighter-weight whiskey when compared to High West's flagship Rendezvous Rye, but this whiskey throws a mean punch!

79 Templeton Small Batch Rye, Batch #2, Barrel #173, 40%, $35

The labeling is a little confusing. Small batch implies a marriage of multiple barrels, not just a bottling from a single barrel; the label seems to imply both. Plus, there's no indication of the source of this whiskey, or its age. Regardless, this is one of the sweetest and mellowest rye whiskeys I've tasted. Spicy fresh mint, cinnamon, white pepper, and subtle clove are tamed by sweet notes of toasted marshmallow, cotton candy, creamy vanilla, candied fruit, and red licorice. Soft finish. Rather gentle for a rye whiskey.

77 Cascade Peak Oregon Organic Rye (Batch #1), 50.2%, $52

This whisky is only 10 months old, made from 85% rye and 15% malted barley. It's vibrantly spicy (cinnamon, mint, licorice root, nutmeg), fresh, and clean. Bright citrus and peach also entertain. Rich, underlying vanilla notes try to tame the beast, but they're really no match. Warm, spicy finish. There's a lot going on here. Yes, it's youthful, but far more mature than I expected. This whisky is certainly drinkable now (for those who like their rye whiskey young and bold), but I would like to see it develop some more on oak. That's the only thing missing here. It shows great potential.

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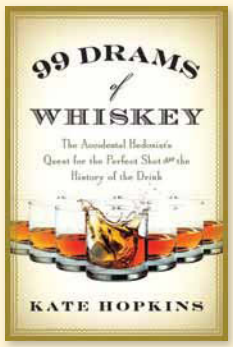
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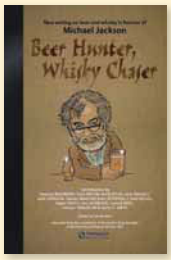
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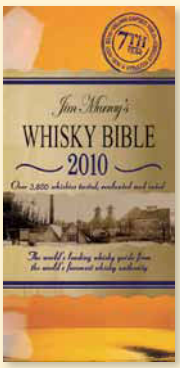
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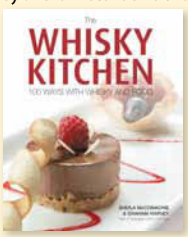


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New Products

Continued from page 12

Conseillante in Bordeaux. After an additional six months in the Pomerol casks, the whisky is bottled. Get more details at www.ahardyusa.com, or call David Lewis (847-966-1515).

Two Rare Ones from Laphroaig and Ardmore

Beam Global suggests (we assume somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that investors look at these two rare bottlings as potential liquid assets. **Laphroaig 25 Year Old** and **Ardmore 30 Year Old** are in limited supply, but quite drinkable. The Laphroaig, aged in *oloroso* and bourbon barrels, is bottled at cask strength (51.2% ABV), as is the Ardmore (53.7%); the Ardmore was aged in bourbon barrels and handmade quarter casks. Quite the pair, these two! More information is available at their two websites: www.laphroaig.com and www.ardmorewhisky.com.



Black Bull 30 Year Old Blended Whisky

The big blends just keep on coming, and this one's stamping and bellowing. **Black Bull 30 Year Old Blended Whisky** is a full 50% malt whiskies and 50% grain whiskies that were blended and then aged in sherry casks for a minimum of 30 years. It is non-chill filtered and bottled with its natural color, a "deep chestnut hue." Duncan Taylor has released 600 bottles to the U.S. market in this first batch. Get the facts—no bull—from Ken Young (ken@preissimports.com; 858-458-9172 x102).

Springbank 11 Year Old Madeira Finish

Preiss Imports keeps the Springers coming: there's a limited 900 bottles of **Springbank 11 Year Old Madeira Finish**. It's bottled at an authoritative 55.1% ABV, after its brief but important stay in wood used for the fortified sweet wine. Interested? Want more information than this? Talk to Ken Young (ken@preissimports.com; 858-458-9172 x102).



Old Pulteney 30 Year Old



It is the oldest Old Pulteney. The distillery has released **Old Pulteney 30 Year Old** after carefully watching over it since the late 1970s. The whiskey snoozed away in the northernmost non-island Scotch whisky distillery, before being bottled at 44% ABV and boxed up in a sailcloth-lined walnut burr presentation case. Carefully watched details available at www.old-pulteney.com.

Suntory Hibiki 12 Year Old Blended Whisky

We asked, we begged for more Japanese whisky, and we got it. Suntory will be launching their **Hibiki 12 Year Old Blended Whisky** in the U.S. on October 1st. There are Hakushu and Yamazaki malts in the blend, and some aged grain whisky from Chita. The whisky is partially matured in plum liqueur casks. Beg for more information from Tanya Thomas (tanya@tbtpr.com; 212-477-8090).



Other Products

There are many other pleasures to enjoy; here are some new ones that came across our desks.

Samuel Smith's Yorkshire Stingo

Samuel Smith's beers were an introduction to English ales for many an American beer aficionado, and the news of a big new tasty one is sweet indeed. **Samuel Smith's Yorkshire Stingo** will be released in limited amounts every

August 1, "Yorkshire Day." Stingo is fermented in the brewery's renowned slate-lined "Yorkshire Squares," aged for over a year in oak barrels, and then bottle-conditioned at a solid 8% ABV. It is vintage-dated for those who like to age beers. Or you could just rip it open and drink it. Get big tasty details from Craig Hartinger (craigh@mdvbeer.com; 253-656-0321).

Session Black

Grab a stubby, 11 oz. bottle of dark lager: Full Sail's **Session Black**. A follow-on to their successful Session Lager, Session Black also bridges the craft, macro, and import categories: a little more, a little less, a little different, and a lot of refreshment. It's 5.4% ABV, all-malt, and designed to be drinkable. It's a beer you and your friends can all enjoy. Grab the stubby details at www.fullsailbrewery.com.

Estrella Damm Inedit



The brewmasters at Barcelona's Estrella Damm brewery worked with acclaimed chef Ferran Adrià of elBulli (named world's best restaurant five times by *Restaurant* magazine) to create **Inedit**, a beer specifically designed to pair with food. It is brewed with a blend of malt and wheat, with added spices. The result is lightly carbonated, with "a soft full body." Get more details from Kelly David (kdavid@5wpr.com; 212-584-4323).

Deschutes Red Chair IPA

Deschutes continues their 22 oz. bottle and draft releases in the Bond Street Series with **Red Chair IPA**. Don't expect to get socked on this one; puckering bitterness was not the aim. Rather, Red Chair goes for the kind of enjoyable ride suggested by its name, inspired by the old-school wooden ski lifts at Mt. Bachelor. This is about hop flavor and aroma. "My favorite beer ever!" said Deschutes bartender Bobby Martin. Get enjoyable details from Renée Davidson (renee@campbellconsulting.com; 541-350-3525).

Atlantico Rum



As the Cocktail Culture continues to boost sales of rye and bourbon, rum is getting a lift as well. **Atlantico Rum** comes from the Dominican Republic: a dark, aged rum that's ready to jump into a Dark & Stormy or a Zombie. Atlantico starts with selected aged rums, married for one to two years in small bourbon barrels, then aged in a solera-like system for another 15 to 25 years. Quite a trip. Boost your information at www.atlanticorum.com.

James River Plantation Sweet Tea Vodka



Finally, a flavored vodka that makes sense to a bourbon drinker! **James River Plantation Sweet Tea Vodka** has that Southern taste, coming from real brewed tea blended with five-times distilled vodka. On the rocks or blended with lemonade, it's a drink to get you relaxed on the verandah. Get more information from David Lewis (847-966-1515).

Deschutes Black Butte XXI

It's a big deal when a brewery turns 21; they're finally legal! Deschutes made a big deal out of their flagship Black Butte Porter by beefing it up to 11% ABV, adding cocoa nibs and locally-roasted coffee, and aging part of the batch in Stranahan's whiskey barrels. The result: **Deschutes Black Butte XXI**. It's big, it's black…it's a limited batch. Grab it while it's legal. Beef up your info by contacting Renée Davidson (renee@campbellconsulting.com; 541-350-3525).





Two From Grand Teton

Grand Teton is still having fun with their Cellar Reserve line. The latest is **Howling Wolf Weizenbock**, an unfiltered 8% bruiser with authentic Bavarian *weizen* character. Their new summer seasonal, **Lost Continent Double IPA**, grew out of a Cellar Reserve beer. Lost Continent is also 8% ABV, with three pounds of hops per barrel in the kettle and an additional pound for dry-hopping. Find more details; contact Chuck Nowicki (ChuckNowicki@GrandTetonBrewing.com; 888-899-1656).

Avery Sixteen

Avery Brewing celebrates its sweet sixteenth year—Avery? Sixteen years? When did that happen?—with **Sixteen Anniversary Ale**. Sixteen is in the style of a saison, dry and estery, with yeast-generated spiciness and additions of jasmine, peaches, and honey. It seems significant that for a change, this is a beer released without mention of hops. It's 7.9% ABV, and available in 22 oz. bottles and draft for a limited time. For brewery-generated details, contact C.V. Howe (cv@averybrewing.com; 303-440-4324)

Hennessy Black

Hennessy Black is a real landmark for the well-known cognac company: it is the first major launch since Hennessy V.S. was introduced way back in 1961.



The idea is to create a more mixable cognac, to break out of the cognac category. It is a blend of 25 to 35 *eaux de vie* aged together in previously used Hennessy barrels, for a "more gentle wood influence." For more gentle details, take a look at www.hennessyblack.com.

Guinness 250 Anniversary Stout

Guinness celebrates a real landmark with their **Guinness 250 Anniversary Stout**. It's not just a big new bottle with a different (and quite attractive) label, either. This is the first new stout from Guinness since 1966, when we first got draft Guinness. It's carbonated, for one thing—even on draft—and significantly stronger than draft Guinness, at





5% ABV. It's only out for a limited time, so grab it while you can. Different (and quite attractive) information available from Maeve Hagen (mhagen@taylorpr.com; 212- 714-1280).



Root Liquor



Root beer went commercial at the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876. Before that, root 'tinctures' were the more popular form of these herbal drinks: potions more like schnapps or bitters. Philadelphia's Art In The Age museum has recreated one of these drinks: **Root Liquor**, an herbal tonic made with organic ingredients at 40% ABV. They've also created a number of cocktails to make with it. Get to the root of the information: contact Laura Price (laurap@qcmercantile.com; 215-922-5220).

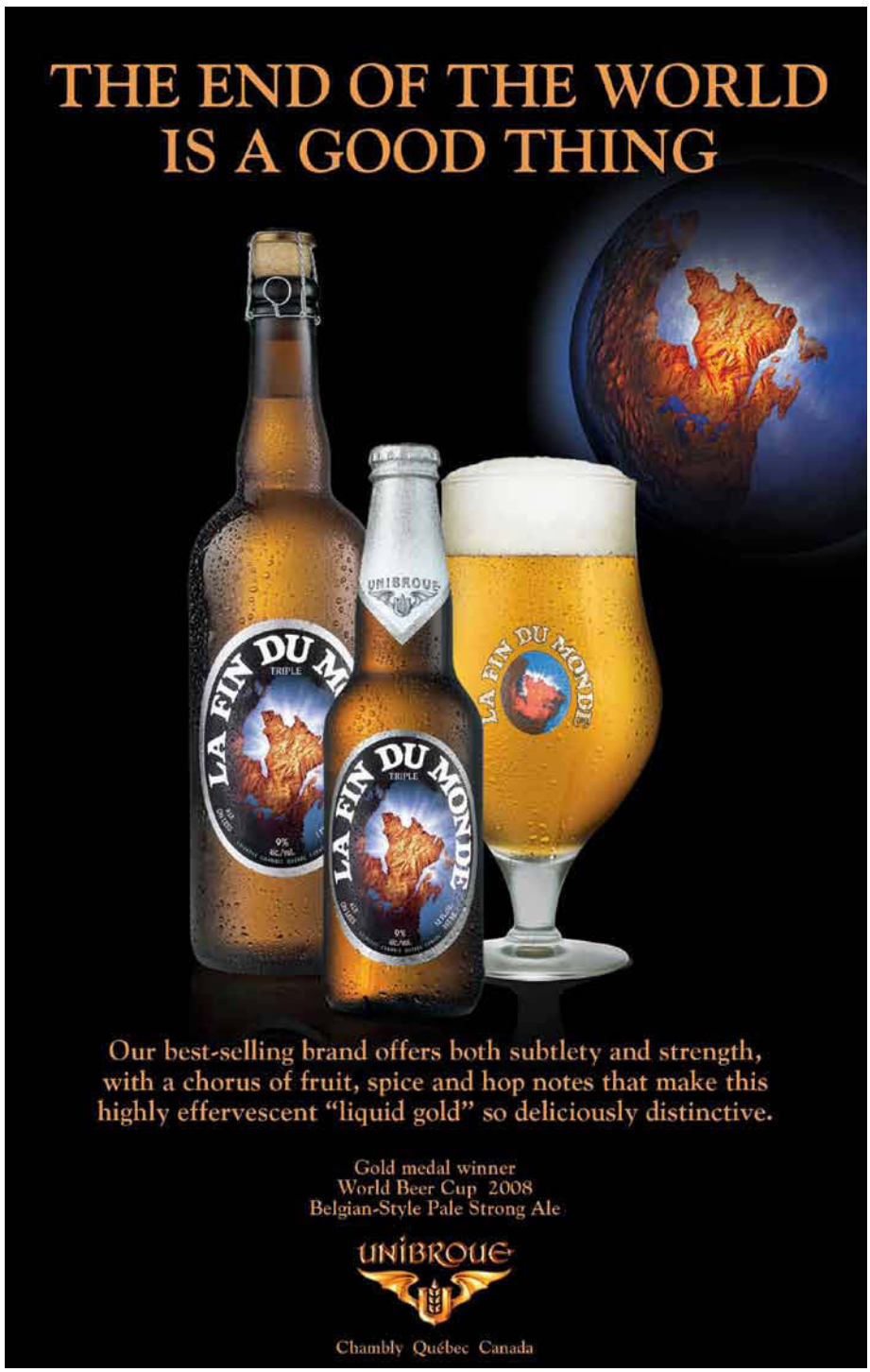
Fireman's Brew



Fireman's Brew was originally conceived by two Los Angeles firefighters (while fighting a summer brush fire; what better time to think about beer?) as a beer made by firefighters for firefighters. Business sense prevailed, and now everyone can enjoy Fireman's Brew Blonde, Redhead, and Brewnette. When you do, part of the proceeds go to the Fallen Firefighters Foundation to help the families of fallen firefighters. Hot stuff: get the details from Jordan Kaye (310-402-3921; jordankaye@gmail.com).

Ron Abuelo 12 Años

We told you about Ron Abuelo rums from Panama a while back; the Añejo and 7 Años, created from the juice of the distillery's estate-grown sugar cane. Now you can step up to the more mature, richer, rounder **Ron Abuelo 12 Años**. Their distillers select the best small oak casks of spirit and allow them to age to a full 12 years. Step up to full information: contact Janet Mick (212-941-5595) or visit www.ronabuelo-rum.com.



Whisky 101

Continued from page 28

for distilling purposes and water for domestic use passes over or through it, often imbuing it with a distinctive, brown color.

There is an effect on the water's flavor as well as its color, leading to the theory that the water used in the steeping stage of malting, and subsequently in mashing, adds to the peatiness of the spirit. For many years this was accepted as fact, though today more distillers and commentators are questioning the degree of influence that peaty process water has on the finished product.

Although 'peaty' malt whiskies tend to be associated with Scottish islands such as Skye, Islay, and Orkney, there is nothing to prevent any distiller producing a heavily-peated version of their whisky. Recently, there has been an increasing tendency to market more heavily-peated expressions of mainland malts, such as Tomintoul, BenRiach, and Edradour.

Partly this is intended to provide single malt line extensions. In some instances, the practice has also been undertaken to create quantities of peaty, Islay-style malts that may be used for blending purposes as the popularity and price of 'original' Islays rise, and their supply to blenders becomes more limited.

In these times of ecological sensitivity, some distillers have sought ways of reducing the amount of peat they consume for conservation-related reasons. Notable among these is Morrison Bowmore Distillers, whose Bowmore distillery on Islay now utilizes peat 'caff' in its kiln. Caff is macerated and baked peat, which creates more smoke and less flame, cutting weekly consumption from twelve tons to between three and four tons.

Peat may be an 'optional extra' rather than a legal requirement in modern Scotch whisky production, but for many aficionados it is as important an ingredient as the trinity of barley, yeast, and water.

Whisky News

Continued from page 18

buy whisky, there is no point to bottling it. The whisky boom is over (for a while, anyway).

Will the industry contract as it did in the 1980s? Probably not; it looks like the huge consumer swing in Western Europe and America to vodka and light rum that took place over the last forty years may finally be slowing down and swinging back to whisk(e)y and gin, which should cushion things somewhat. But there will be adjustments from the



go-go period of the past ten years. We've had to adjust way down here at *Malt Advocate*. It's no surprise that a company like Diageo, so heavily invested around the world, is affected.

It's worth remembering that Diageo did eventually reach a compromise with the Scotch whisky industry over the Cardhu labeling controversy. Negotiation may be a better tool to reach for than confrontation if Scots want to see the Kilmarnock Connection continue.

Wasmund's Sponsors a "Blend Your Own" Contest

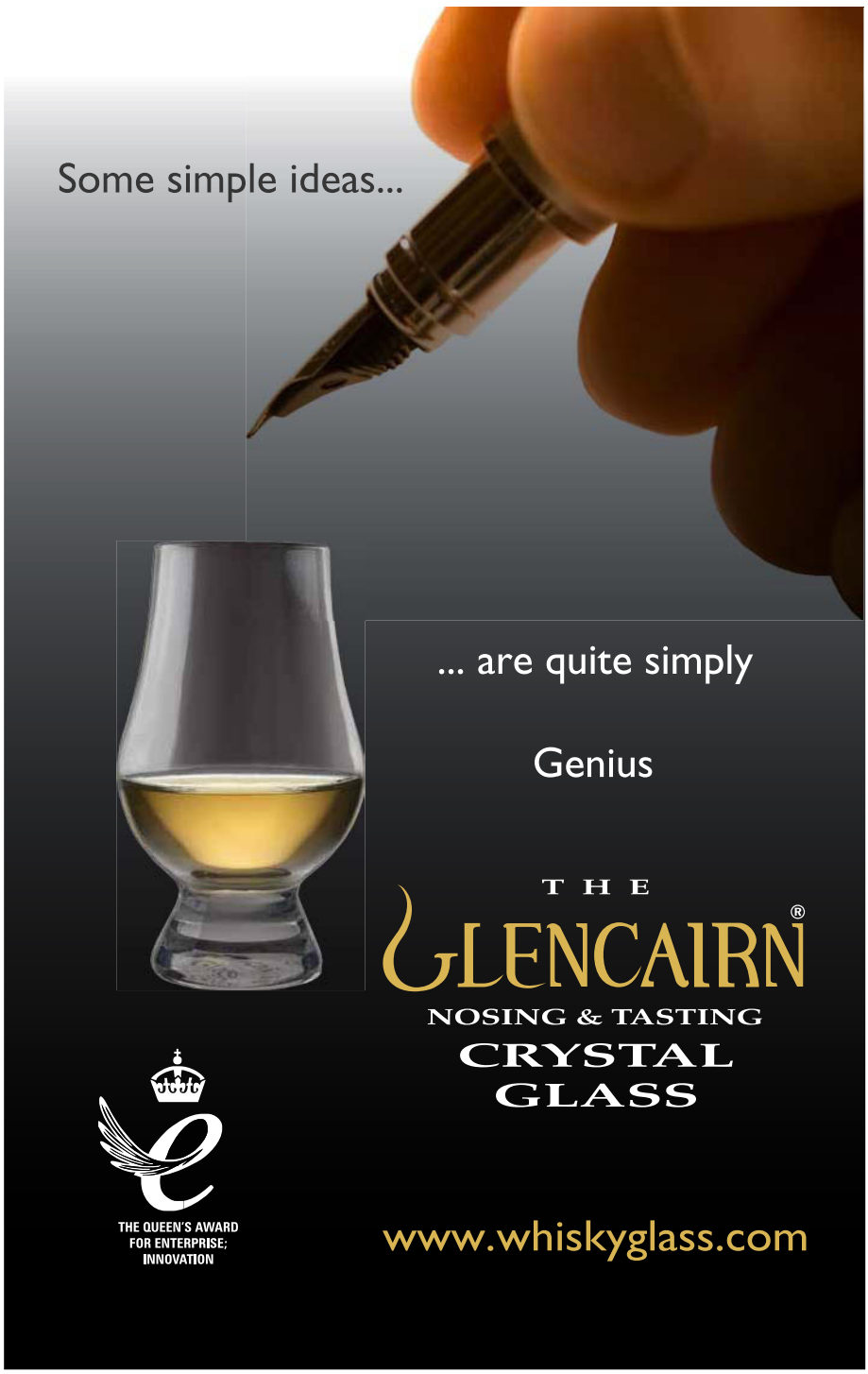
Just when we thought we'd seen it all… Wasmund's, the single malt whisky makers from Virginia, got together with Julio's Liquors of Westborough, Mass., to offer customers a chance to blend their own whisky, the results to be judged on Repeal Day, December 5, 2009. Customers paid $99.99 to buy a small oak barrel and two bottles of Wasmund's, and an empty sample "blind pig" bottle to decant their entry into. Entrants had to use the barrel and the two bottles of spirit, but were allowed to add to it "any ingredients (as long as it won't kill anyone)." Heat it, chill it, store it on end; the samples are due December 2.

Sorry: all blending kits had to be purchased by August 1. But we applaud this kind of effort. Not only is it fun, it's highly educational for the customers, and tears away a bit more of the veil of mystery from whisky. Involving the drinker like this is good for everyone.

Fake "Scotch" Scotched After Decades in Court

The Scotch Whisky Association's dogged protection of Scotch whisky's identity has finally paid off in an Italian case that has dragged on since the late 1980s. That's when the SWA became aware of imitation Scotch whisky being sold in Italian cities: "MacQueen," "Clan 55," "Royal Club," and "Sullivan," all frauds containing only small amounts of genuine whisky. The man behind the sales, Angelo Vendrame, had even set up a shell company, Alex Albright Ltd., in the UK, which the SWA said was to suggest legitimacy.

A variety of Italian courts ruled on the case, including the court in Mr. Vendrame's home of Belluno (which rejected the SWA's case). But the Italian supreme court has provided a final ruling on appeal, upholding the SWA's contention. Sale of the brands has been stopped. The SWA was awarded $106,000 in legal costs and has been given the chance to apply for damages, which is currently under consideration. Bravo, SWA!



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David Markowitz (in the red shirt) and his two friends visited all eight working distilleries on Islay to celebrate his 60th birthday. Jim McEwan captured this shot of them perched atop his casks at Bruichladdich.



Malt Advocate's own design guru, Pamela Wilson, visited Finger Lakes Distilling in New York with husband Jim; they're flanked by master distiller Thomas McKenzie on the left and President Brian McKenzie.

Mark Pierce's first bourbon was the Hirsch 16 year old — lucky guy — and seven years later it led to this beautiful bourbon bar in his West Hartford, Conn. home. A natural progression.





Peter Siegenthaler relaxes with some great reading material in the tasting lounge of his new whisky shop, Cadenhead's Whisky & More, in Baden, Switzerland.



Lt. Kenneth B. Maatman, U.S. Army retired, age 89, celebrating Memorial Day with a dram of Macallan at his son Thomas' cottage on the shores of Lake Michigan.



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