

OLD MUTUAL TROPHY WINE SHOW 2017 | JUDGES' FEEDBACK SESSION 5 MAY 11H00 – 12H00

MF: Ladies and gentlemen good morning! As wine industry events go, this is pretty much as on time as anything ever is in the wine industry and considering, as you will hear, that the trophy judging involved more wines than were normally to be anticipated, the judges have had a busy morning and we have to time this exactly so that they are still sharp and alert and ready to field the kinds of questions I know are lurking in the room.

Before we kick off, there is this moment – I suppose reminiscent of a chef's parade – except that under these circumstances, when we call in the chefs and the kitchen staff, you've at least had the dinner. In fact, over the last four days the wine judging has taken place with an extraordinary line-up of staff, many of whom have been doing this for years, who come back every year to Grand Roche to help and assist and who make the event run pretty much as seamlessly as it does.

I thought before we get into the nitty gritty of the discussion, this is an opportunity for all of us – and I think especially for the judges – to pass on their thanks and to ask you to help them with a round of applause for the people who have worked the back room, not just over the last four or five days, but in the case of Alex Mason-Gordon and Michael Crossley, over many months. Alex and Michael you know, but Ashley and Varni, Hazel and Mario, Lizette, Respect, Shannon, Lee, Kurt, Dylan, Simone, Arward, Ntsiki, Admina and Edila... you guys are the grand crew. You are absolutely fantastic and we really want to say thank you to you. These guys are up long before dawn. Many of them still have to get here and then while the judges are rousing from their slumbers and contemplating the difficulties of breakfast at Grand Roche, they're out there making sure the rooms are ready, the wines are poured and the 8 o'clock start, which is something that takes place with more precision than anything else in the wine industry – everything is ready to roll. Thank you all very much indeed. It's a lot of hard work and we are deeply grateful to all of you. Alex and Michael thank you very much indeed. That's it guys. Thank you!

Then to the business at hand:

On Monday afternoon – it being a public holiday and therefore not working time for anybody – everybody sitting at the panel here was given the opportunity of tasting a bunch of old South African wines. It's something we've been doing for pretty much the last ten years. The old wines are sourced from all over the place. It's at one level a hit and miss affair, because old bottles didn't necessarily have good storage and many of the people who made them, didn't make them with 40 or 50 years of longevity in mind. We certainly had wines going back to the early sixties. I think the oldest this year was 66 and we're not talking about fortified wines. We're talking about cabernets and the like, so 50 year old wine, which, I have to say, is what we have seen over the course of this old wine tasting. What it does do is sets a context for the judging panels. We realise that part of the business of judging wine is not only to give the punters something that they can go out and buy today, but also in a way to track and to direct the track of where the industry is and where the industry should be going.

So some time ago we introduced the concept of museum classes into the show and what we were trying to then was to say to people that wines are also age-worthy – a concept that was pretty alien to the industry five or ten years ago. An important on-consumption retailer said to me that if a red wine is more than four or five years old on his wine list, he can't sell it. People do not have the confidence of even five year old South African red wines. I think what we've now developed in this country is a culture in which people understand, appreciate and enjoy the taste of young wine and aren't necessarily able to understand, interpret, or comes to terms with, the transformation that takes place in the bottle, so that an old wine is something that we can understand and appreciate.

Many young wine makers say to me that they've never tasted older South African wines. They have no idea of what kind of future they should be building into the bottle. The relevance of all of this is that when I look at the pattern that has emerged into the results of this year's show, (a) we've got certainly more gold medals and trophies than we've had in the past two or three years. I think partly that's a function of vintage. A lot of what was on the tasting benches was 2015 and you've all heard the wine makers saying – whatever Jan Boland said – that he'd waited 40 years for that vintage. It really was a splendid vintage and the quality of that vintage is evident in the results that have been achieved.

The other thing that is very clear to me – and so this is an opportunity for me to thank the judges – is that the dynamic of a judging panel, in many ways, helps to determine the outcome. When a panel gels, when people understand each other's aesthetics, they can work through the classes, they can deal with their points of difference and they're better able to position the wines correctly, in the sense that they can agree what is a gold, what is a silver, what is a bronze, what is out of the medals and it leaves the discussion around those marginal, the calibration wines – is it a high bronze or a low silver? Is it a high silver, or is it into gold? Those discussions can then be done with more leisure and more thoughtfulness and probably a greater sense of the precision they're trying to achieve. So this year the combination of the right vintages, the right dynamic of the panel and a very important thing, which to me is now evident - and I suppose in many ways is the take-out message – is that the industry that we have been saying for some is really moving into a new space, that the young guns and the kind of lunatic fringe and the very dedicated and methodical wine makers are all paying so much better attention to what they're doing, that we're really seeing better wines made, even in more difficult vintages.

So we do have a lovely array. We have fabulous diversity. We have stood here in the past and said "sorry there are no golds in" and go through big classes – pinotage, pinot noir – and say "sorry, nothing made it to gold". We're seeing wines across a broad range of categories that comfortably made it into the gold medal class. That's a brilliant message in terms of how the industry has lifted its game and lifted its game across a spread of classes.

I have now, by the way, also seen what the winning wines are. I don't get to see them until after the trophy judging. I can say also that the diversity is reflected in the number of different appellations. There's a wonderful spread of quality wine across a wide area of the country's wine-producing regions. That's very exciting news as well. I think, as a rule of thumb – and we are going to test this question a wee bit with the judges – I think wood has certainly been better used and more subtly handled than in the past and that contributes to the last remark I make, before I hand the microphone over to the judges to talk about things themselves.

We have fewer museum class trophies and golds than in previous years, despite the fact that we have a slightly higher percentage entry. What that's telling me is that, in a way, the past's not as good as the present. I have a stat here which took a bit of digging out. In 2016 we had 9 museum class golds, of which 6 became trophies, out of a turnout of roughly 30 trophies and golds. This year we have over 40 trophies and golds and only 3 of the trophies were museum class and only 4 of the golds were museum class. So the percentage of golds and trophies occupied by museum-class wines has dropped significantly. That's telling me what I was saying earlier – we've got a much clearer message coming from the young wines of the industry and that's a very encouraging feature.

I don't have hard stats, because to be completely honest, they're going to be put through the audit mill – that is as I've said, between museums and regular, between trophies and golds, 41 – and that's up, give or take, 30% on last year. The silvers are over 100. That's a good number. We've been up once long ago at about 170, but we've also been down to 70 or 80, so I think it's a fair proportion of silvers to golds. The bronze medals are pretty much the numbers they always are – in the 400s. So we have a really strong top half, in a show that attracts roughly – just under this year – 1000 entries. Half the wines have certainly received one or another accolade. I know that's a very low

figure compared to other shows, but it does really reinforce the message we sound out, which is that any medal at this show, is a medal you can be proud of.

That's enough from me at this stage. I do want to pass the microphone down to various of our judges and I am going to, Eduardo. I think this is your first trip to South Africa. He is from Chile. Given everything else, your first impressions, having looked at the line-up of these wines.

EB Hello everybody. First of all I want to say something about this contest, about the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show. I am not being politically correct now, I promise you, but this is the most fair and respectful wine show for the wines in all the world. I have been in 30 different countries all around the world, in Asia, Europe, America and this is the most respectful and fair.

The wines have lots of opportunities to show and to make a difference and if there is controversy in the panel between judges, one just scores 90 points or 97 and the other scores 60, we re-taste the wine and we ask the judge: "Why did you put 90. Why did you put 60 and we discuss the wine. For example in my panel only one judge awarded 90 to a sweet wine and because we re-tasted and agreed: "You were right, I'll change my mind. That doesn't happen in any other country in the world. It's solely an average score. So the most interesting wines, always on the edge, have no opportunity in our contests.

I wanted to say congratulation to Michael Fridjohn and his team. I will copy this competition in Chile. It's a very smart idea. You should open a franchise! I don't want to be the only one talking in short statements about what my impression of South Africa and South African wines is. It's my first time here. Of course I have tasted, many years ago, the South African wines. I am impressed how each year the wines are better. 15, 20 years ago I tasted some chardonnays and they were terrible, awful, over-extracted, full of barrel, sweetness. Now I am amazed with the new chardonnay, especially from the coastal side of South Africa.

I also tasted with Michael Fridjhon in the Six Nations Wine Challenge (in Australia). When I became a judge, seven or eight years ago, I said Chile will have great results here. South Africa is a piece of cake for us. We will beat South Africa like this! I was completely wrong. I was amazed with the quality of your sparkling wine. I was amazed by the quality of the sweet wines. Then I would say: "The Chilean wines will easily defeat the Sauvignon Blancs from South Africa. I was wrong. One trophy was a sauvignon from South Africa. So you are always surprising me – always!

I would like to remark that it's not all good things of course. There are three things I think you need to improve. Don't promote the *Tonnellerie Francais*. Promote your wines. You use less barrels. The French don't need that. They have enough money to do their own marketing! Show the fruit, not the wood.

Second – try to escape from the sun. South Africa – and also my country – is a very sunny and beautiful country. The new plantings should avoid the sun. especially in the afternoon. If you are designing new vineyards, try to escape from the sun and try to manage some viticulture technique. We are implementing a lot of new things in Chile. We can talk after this about that – to protect the fruit in the vineyards to receive indirect sun – not directly on the grapes. Don't burn your fruit. It's sweet but it's also fresh. Keep than in mind.

The third point I want to make is always try to be honest and authentic with your wines. You are an amazing country, amazing people. You are very warm, very funny, always with a smile, very natural and do the same with the wines. Don't try to produce something you are not. I'm talking especially the pinotage. You're trying to do pinotage so it could be a cabernet sauvignon – full of barrel, very ripe. Do it the opposite way. It's Pinot and Cinsaut. Show the light fruit, show the tension, show the seed, show the life of the wine. Be alternative with your grapes, be honest and show without shame

and without interference your vineyards, your climate and the personality of your winemakers. I will finish now and thank you for hearing me and your patience.

MF Thank you very much Eduardo. I've passed the microphone to Heidi Mäkinen, because she is also an international judge and also a first time visitor to South Africa, although you work with Gareth Ferreira, so South Africans are not completely strange to you. We'd love you to talk about your impressions.

HM Thank you Michael. First of all, I couldn't agree more with Michael saying about the arrangements of this wine show. I would like to pass my sincere thanks for especially Michael Crossley and his team. All the arrangements have been absolutely amazing. Timings are always hard when you do this, especially when our panels have been elaborating our talks and conversations about the wines and still everything has been manageable and everything has been spot on every time we enter the room to taste the wines.

Also, I couldn't agree more with Eduardo saying that the people here are amazing and I think the whole rigorousness of this wine competition is really, really good. I think it's a very trustworthy competition and those stickers that will end up on some wine bottles should be looked at. I think it's a very honest competition in that sense.

It is my first trip to South Africa and I must be honest and say that I did not know much about South African wine before. If you had asked me any opinions about the South African wine industry last week, I couldn't tell you much. This week I do have some opinions. They're quite shallow, but I think I will develop them after the trip and further on in my career.

I was mainly judging white wines this week. We had a bit of pinot noir and niche red varieties, but mostly my focus has been on white wines. There is one particular category that has risen up and that is chardonnay. I really believe South Africa is doing a great job with chardonnay. Luckily I haven't been tasting the old-fashioned chardonnays from this country that much, because I've heard what they were like and I see them in other parts of the world way too much. I think what we were shown in these three or four days that we've been here, is a very distinctive style and I think that is the future for South African chardonnay. Intellectual use of oak, good ripeness to balance the oak, but not promoting the French *Tonnellerie*, but more the purity of the fruit. Age-worthiness coming from the fresh acidity and clever wine making, respecting the grapes already in the vineyard and not destroying the quality in the winery are the key things for me in chardonnay.

There were some categories, like the white Bordeaux blends that we tasted, that were really thrilling and also oaked sauvignon blancs that I really enjoyed. If you had asked me five years ago what would be my opinion about oaked sauvignon blanc, I would have said why would somebody want to oak sauvignon blanc? It's an aromatic variety, you should show the fruit, but over here I've seen the great balance you can do with the grape – balanced, green aromas with a sharp, piercing acidity and then broadening it up with good use of oak. I think it's a very interesting style and I think you do it very well.

MF Thank you very much Heidi. I think we'll pass the microphone down to François, because I remember last year he was pretty much at the end of the queue and everyone had said all the things that needed to be said. There's a law of diminishing returns as you get to the end of the exposure point. François you're up this time. You can't wriggle it!

FR Thank you Michael. Much appreciated! In many respects to reiterate what has already been said. I was interviewed and asked what were my impressions over the last few years, because I've been doing this every year and it's been a really privilege, because you do see how the wines move. One of the core take-outs is that it's a steep pyramid in South Africa. The top grouping of wines are almost head and shoulders above the middle class. Our middle class does offer great value for money. In

many respects, they are under-valued. But that top end, when you see the purity and delicacy that can be brought out, it is extraordinary. It's very, very exciting. We're now starting to see – certainly chenin blanc on Tuesday showed that there is some real personality emerging as well, because purity on its own doesn't have a lot of value if you don't bring personality with it and that's exciting to see.

What Heidi said about the Blanc fumé, the wooded sauvignons, there you're seeing a very, very good return. A relatively small entry, but of those, nearly all of them were exceptionally exciting. That's the kind of thing we have a huge future for, in that top end and then if we can bring it downward. The oak – without question. Maybe with tougher economic times it'll be a good thing, because if you put the money you have into the vineyards, you're going to see some wonderful results. For example the merlot category, I popped around a table to move the glasses and it was wonderful to see it was red-toned, almost rose petal toned, rather than those black, inky things we used to make. So that's a major step forward.

Obviously there is still more work to do in the vineyards, but the good ones are moving along so that is the positive news. Sauvignon – 2016 vintage was not easy, but again it proves that those people who were out there and really understood what to do, they did get good returns. I think a lot of other people – perhaps you want to sell them as quickly as you can. If the case is that a little bit of oak with sauvignon is going to give you a much better return on investment in your price point in the retail market, it's not a bad move, but of course purity – good stuff!

Shiraz – similar to merlot in a sense that again there wasn't a massive array of over-developed wines. We're starting to see some real consistency in terms of more precise approach which is good to see. Great progress! Of course now the goal posts are moving, so we're now wanting to see more and more of those. Thanks very much.

MF Thank you very much François. Nkulu this is the second time you've judged as a senior judge and probably the fourth or fifth time that you've been here. I think it's time for you to share your impressions.

NM Thank you very much Michael. It's always a great pleasure to be back at this wonderful venue. I was really impressed with what I came across, but I'd just like to start off with the negatives or shortcomings and that is cabernet franc, which is a grape variety which I'm excited about, but having gone through the examples yesterday, I think there were very few elegant examples that showed great finesse and that had purity. I found some of them had too much oak, which is an issue and they were a bit clumsy and not as focussed as I like to see cabernet franc.

Cabernet sauvignon was very exciting. I think it's a very strong category, which has a lot of competition with all the varieties that are coming up in the country, but I thought there were some amazing, smartly made wines, which had elegance. They are big and powerful, obviously being cab, but they showed great finesse, great intensity and the wines were really great. So I really look forward to tasting those wines.

I also tasted chenin blanc on Day 1. I thought there were some great examples of chenin blanc. Chenin is very diverse and we really had to pay attention because there are a lot of different styles. I thought the wines you pulled out were really great, having judged this morning the trophy winners.

I did not judge chardonnay, but I thought the examples of chardonnay were really amazing and it was great to see quite a few museum class examples that came through.

Thank you Michael.

MF Thank you Nkulu. Thanks you for saying what a fun this place this is to be judging at. Somebody did tell me the anecdote of Michael Caine being asked why he'd made Jaws 3 and his answer was: "The

Bahamas". I don't think the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show is Jaws 3, but I do think that this is a good reason alone for coming here. The Grand Roche has been a very comfortable judging venue and although most judges are accustomed to tasting in agricultural halls, under much less salubrious circumstances, we have had a fun time this week and it's been great to be here.

I'm now going to pass the microphone down to Heidi and the one we want you to talk about is fizz!

HD It's always a pleasure and a privilege, particularly when you start the judging with bubble. This year, Michael surprised me and allowed me to chair the panel, which was even more thrilling to me, particularly since this year we popped! It was awesome. It was really a class that showed so well, also the benefit of a track record of knowing where we've come from and how significant the progress has been with cap classique in a very, very short space of time, in a category that is growing in double digits year on year and doubling every five years. It really is remarkable how comfortable we're starting to feel in our bottle-fermented bubbly.

What stood out for me most again was the purity. Amazing purity of fruit and in this competition a lot of credence is paid to temperature, as well as judging the wine in large glasses, which, compared to other competitions, really benefits all styles. We taste the wines randomly – not in categories and the benefit of that is that when we have the call-backs of the high-scoring wines, what showed very clearly this year, is how well performing chardonnay is as far as cap classique goes.

For me the point to ponder with pinot noir is perhaps the work that it's doing in a bubble, in a cap classique, what is it that isn't doing, that a lot of our blends.. why they're not showing as well and as purely as the chardonnay blanc de blanc styles.

The prowess and patience of the winemakers is really showing and the patience. No longer are they just a lot of fizzy chardonnays on the table, there's lovely layers, gorgeous, pristine freshness of fruit and overall absolutely delicious drinkability. I would very happily swallow most of them. Given it was the beginning of the competition, we were a bit restrained. They were really brilliant.

It was also really nice to see a smile on Eduardo's face, because we always think about our bubbly so fondly, because they're so close to emotion and he was impressed by them. To end, one of my favourite sayings is "the only pain I can bear is champagne", so if you're going to be sick, you'd better be "cap classique".

MF Thank you Heidi. I'm doing two things now. Christian, I'm booking you at the end for pinot and chardonnay. I think it's a very important message and you did chair that panel. So don't anybody else tread too deeply into that territory. I want to pass the microphone now to Narina.

NC Firstly Michael, a great show. Thanks for inviting me. It's really a privilege for me to have judged this year. Also Michael Crossley and Janice – well organised and well-run event. Thank you very much.

First year here and for me a winemaker's perspective. With the challenges we have, especially looking at the sauvignon panel I was on, as Francois said, it was a challenging year, but if you stick to your gut and follow what you know, we are still able to make good wine. We can make brilliant wines. I also did the chardonnay and pinot noir. I won't say a lot, but yes they were two really surprising categories. Loved the chardonnays – always love chardonnay, but it was really nice to sit on a panel and you see people thinking about what they're doing, but also having fun in the process.

I also judged some of the white blends and the Bordeaux white blends. It's exciting seeing that people are playing around a bit there and putting layers – as I call it – in wines. The other thing close to my heart is the wooded sauvignon blancs. If you do it well, it really adds another dimension to sauvignon blanc and as François said, it's not always the easiest sell, but you can put a higher price on it and you make stunning wines. We have the potential. Thank you very much for having me.

MF Narina thank you. I'm now going to pass the microphone to Neil Beckett, one of the internationals who has been here before – about ten years ago, I know that you did do the Bordeaux blends. One of the things that's quite important, given the slightly patchy nature of these classes in the past, is to ask you specially to talk about those reds.

NB Thank you very much Michael. I'll very happily do that. I feel I have to begin by agreeing completely with Eduardo and Heidi just about how brilliantly conceived and executed the Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show is and I congratulate you, Michael and Michael and Janice and Alex and all their colleagues and all the producers who enter their wines and the sponsor, for making it all possible.

As you say, I was lucky enough to be here ten years ago. I was excited then, I'm even more excited now. I think there's been huge progress across the board. I shall come to Bordeaux and cabernet very shortly, but I'd just like to add one word on chardonnay. I was as excited as everybody else by that, but I think one of the things I admired there, was the way in which the pendulum as not swung too far. I think the general direction is absolutely right, but elsewhere around the world I think the pendulum has swung too far sometimes and you find what Michelle Bettane calls reductive gimmickry. I thought the best wines in that style avoided that. So I congratulate you for finding the sweet spot, which is often somewhere in the middle.

The progress that I admired most was in the red wines. I was fortunate enough to be on panels that were looking at the Bordeaux blends and also at the cabernets themselves, which are two very important classes. I think the biggest advance I feel is in the judgement with which wines are made. I also found less oak, maybe there could be less still as Eduardo said, but on the whole I thought it was very much better judged than ten years ago. Also the acidification.

Where acid adjustment was there, it seemed to me to have been better done than ten years ago and it also seemed to me that more of the wines had their own natural balance. I understand that there's anxiety about green notes and pyroxenes and vegetal notes so on. I'm not always so scared of those. I think that a slight vegetal character is just part of the varietal character. It's a reminder that the wine comes from the earth and from a vine and I would rather have a little of that – something that was just a little on the greener side, but with its own natural balance – than something that had been pushed to over-ripeness and then had to be corrected with too much acidity. I'd always far, far rather have something that had a natural balance, even if analytically the acid was on the lower side. That's something that applies not only to South Africa. I have to say it applies to Australia, California and even nowadays to Burgundy. In warm vintages, I'm always slightly terrified by how much acidification seems to be going on in Burgundy. I do think that was the biggest single improvement I saw in the red wine classes. In cabernet and in Bordeaux blends I thought there were some outstanding world class wines.

MF Thank you very much indeed Neil. Saved for last firstly James and secondly Christian, both of whom – and that's one of the reasons I have kept you there - you judge probably more winemaking panels than most people. In other words you are tracking progress, not just on a once-a-year basis, but you're seeing it across a number of different environments and that's the one thing I'd like you to touch on, together with the fact that the red blend class, in all its different manifestations, has started to produce some quite interesting personality and that's worth commenting on.

JP Thank you Michael. Thank you to my colleagues, judges. It was a lot of fun. I seem to be very lucky, this is my eighth year and I seem to always have a lot of fun with the international and local judges. We work very hard and then Michael makes us work even harder. We thought we'd done our best, then he makes us stand and think and work and look again.

I chaired across twelve different categories which is quite a spread. We can't go through all of those. But what was interesting was to see the diversification of South African wine. Bordeaux whites,

Bordeaux reds, other whites, niche varietals, etc. What Michel has touched on that is interesting is there seems to be a willingness to experiment, to have more fun, to start using different cultivars and we saw that especially in the other white niche varietals. We saw quite a bit of Marsanne, Rousanne, some Verdelho, we saw different varietals being tested and applied with good wine making. That was really exciting, to see that cutting edge willingness. On the last day I tasted other red varietals – shiraz-based red blends and then pinotage blends. These three categories produce wines where I saw a lot of excitement, a lot of variation and stylistics. People were looking at the Duoro, people were looking at the Rhône, people were looking at Italy. There was an excitement and a lightness and again a willingness to see where we can take this.

On the back of that, after eight years of tasting wines here, there's a marked movement from heavy, extracted wines, to having more respect for tannin, the acidity and a delicate playfulness in wines. I really appreciated that and I think that's one of the significant shifts I'm seeing. We're willing to make dryer wines and instead of trying to make wines that are more up front, making wines that are more detailed and that offer more drinking pleasure. That was a great takeaway. Thank you very much.

MF James thank you. I'm passing the microphone down to Christian. Christian, you didn't judge last year, so in a sense coming back here you're apart which must also be something worth commenting on, as is the part that I've flagged which is pinot and chardonnay. Chardonnay, as you've all heard, has probably been the class of the show. It's not the first time it's been that, so when there's progress in a class that's already strong, I think it's worthy of real exposition.

CE Thank you Michael. Every police force needs good cops and bad cops and I normally end up being the bad cop! Chardonnay, I think you will have gathered, showed spectacularly well. Why is that? I think first of all, as Narina who was on my panel said: "it's a great grape to start with". It's proved itself around the world and I think in the South African context it responds very well to the right site and sensitive winemaking, so that's why I think the grape is doing as well as it is. That's not news to you. What was a very pleasant surprise was a line-up of around twenty pinot noirs, which I want to contrast with around eighty pinotages which were dreadful!

I've been quite sceptical about South African pinot for a while, but suddenly we seem to have gone to the next level. Whereas pinotage, which I've been quite bullish about, seems to have got stuck again. I think it's really interesting to compare the two. For one you've got different industry sectors working with the two grapes. You've got the new wave guys with pinot and the old school guys with pinotage. Where we are starting to succeed – and there is a lot of success to be shown coming out of this year's competition which has already been mentioned. Much more sensitivity, much more thoughtfulness. Where we're not succeeding – and if I've said it once, I've said it a hundred times over the course of my judging here – is it's too ambitious, it's overdone, it's ham-fisted. I really want to encourage that lightness of touch, that sensitivity. James was talking about experimentation. I think there are structural issues that we cannot get away from, that we have to address that tend to get swept under the carpet. Those are leaf fold virus and drought. James is talking about playfulness and excitement, I think the guys who are experimenting with new varieties it's more than just having fun. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't have fun, but you have to take a 10, 20, 50 year view. Is late-ripening cabernet the right grape to plant on latitude 34 in a drought-prone wine-growing region? Probably not, because it's not going to get to full phenolic ripeness.

We're compelled to really think about what our winelands can actually give us. Coming back to pinot, if you think about where pinot's planted, it's in cool coastal regions and the guys are working really, really hard to work out how to get the best expression of pinot. There is no by-the-book recipe winemaking. We're not going to make it if we keep playing by those rules.

MF Christian thank you. Just before the microphone does come back, having spent the time you have excoriating the pinotage class, it's probably worth pointing out that you did have two or three golds, which is a higher gold medal count in one year, than probably in the last five years combined, which

says that there must be a polarisation within the class. You're going to have to answer to that, as long as you agree. In other words that there are people who are plying that same thoughtfulness to pinotage, but I guess what you're saying is they're a frightening minority.

CE That's exactly it. There's no depth.

MF OK. Just to clarify that. You might be surprised to see that, believe it or not, there were indeed pinotage gold medals. There is a roving microphone. There are people here champing at the bit to answer your questions. I'd like to assume there are some people in the room with a few questions ready to ask, so if you put up your hand, Janice will bring the roving mike. She will rove the rover. Who's got a question?

EB Hi Eduardo. I would like to know what you think about pinotage.

Always pinotage for judges that are non-domestic. It's scary. It's always scary, because it's so difficult to understand. You made it even more difficult, because you have pinotage in so many different directions. I have tasted thirty pinotage – and that's not counting pinotage blends, only pure pinotage – and I had to really concentrate and focus on the wines, because some of them are over-extracted, some are very green. I was always looking for this subtle detail, this elegant pinotage and it's difficult to find it. It's still difficult, but you can do it. I have tried a bunch of pinotage of that style and they are really, really beautiful wines. You should produce and try harder in that. Go deeper in the pinotage. It's a variety that's really worth it.

MF Eduardo, thank you very much indeed. Are there questions from the floor, or do some of the international or local judges wish to ask themselves a question on the basis that's been done by Eduardo? John?

Q On the subject of pinotage, it's been grown everywhere and is this perhaps one of the factors, that we're growing it in the wrong places? I've always believed that pinotage should be treated very much like pinot noir and for years we've had these tough, tannic, over-extracted, every swear word you want to put into it has come into play, but there have been a few pockets and my belief is that one of them is the Bottelary area, which has got some really good pinotages. Should we be more area specific with it?

MF Good question. Christian's taking it.

CE I chaired the pinotage panel and I'm still slightly traumatised. I don't think it's about site at all. I think you've got great new wave pinotage from Spionkop and Elgin, all the way through to David and Nadia in the Swartland, so in this instance I don't think site is the big issue. I think approach is the big issue. To stick my neck out, for all the good work that the ABSA Top Ten has done, I think the style that they're currently driving is not helping the class.

I couldn't agree more with what Eduardo is saying. We have to look for more finesse from the grape. Huge black fruit with charry oak – it's out of fashion guys. It might get you a top ten at ABSA, but it's not what I and my fellow judges are going to reward. In global terms I'm not sure those wines are selling. There might be a market segment that still wants it, but for people who appreciate fine wine super ripe, super extracted, super oaky is not going to cut the mustard.

MF Somebody in the room with a question?

Q I've got two questions. Firstly sauvignon blanc, the blanc fume category – give the winemaker some tips. What makes it exciting. Then, little has been said about chenin. South Africa has a lot of emphasis on chenin, so where's the excitement in that category.

MF On the sauvignon blanc or blanc fume wooded, sauvignon blend – Narina’s going to take that one.

NC As Eduardo said you need oak but don’t support the French too much. It’s clever use of oak. Yes, you can introduce a bit of new oak, but limit it. Experiment first with one or two barrels and see how the vineyard that you selected goes with that cooper, etc. Even if production budget wise you have a good vineyard is going to your top selling sauvignon blanc, but it’s a good sauvignon, take 10% of that vineyard and put in a couple of barrels and see how it goes. In the end you can even maybe blend it back. So try to experiment more and get to know your vineyard’s ability to handle the wood. That’s number one.

White wine barrels last a long time. Again I have in the past used 200 to 500 litres as I think again it’s a case of for your site, for your variety experiment a bit as to size and stuff and first do it small. Don’t mess up the whole production. The other thing is using your lees, not *batonaging* and rolling barrels till whenever. Use the lees a bit, because I always believe that’s your glue between the fruit purity from the grape and the barrel. In short, that’s more or less what I can give you. Look at working the lees, but not too much and play around with the oak a bit. Experiment for the right site and the right bloc that can handle the wood. You have to have an intense sauvignon to be able to handle the wood. You’ll have to use one of your top blocks you’ll have to use for that.

MF Who chaired the chenin panel? François. Two things that were very clear to us – we had a bit of a discussion. In the past we used to have a trophy for unwooded and for wooded sauvignon. Then we said this is sauvignon blanc. You don’t have a trophy for wooded and unwooded cabernet – you can only have one trophy. The discussion that emerged – and we touched on it again today – is that in fact those are wines in two different directions internationally. If you’re looking at unwooded sauvignon blanc, your benchmarks can be New Zealand, Sancerre, they’re about fruit purity and fruit purity alone.

When you bring oak to sauvignon and you do it correctly, in some kind of way you’re gravitating towards white Bordeaux Graves – it’s a different style of wine. So I have to admit, we’re going to look at that going forward in terms of category. The approach has to be different. Whereas in the past what used to happen is that the oak was used to fix up a sauvignon that hadn’t been properly ripened. Either it had gone too far and you needed to get flavour and aroma back from the wood, or you needed to conceal some defect in the wine or the winemaking. It’s so clearly not the case anymore. There is such integrity in the wooded sauvignon category and such purity with the best examples of the unwooded, that I do think essentially we’re looking at two different beasts. The microphone goes to François to talk about Chenin.

FR All those sauvignons that we found, retained their sauvignon character and the wood was a beautiful Armani suit as an addition. The personality component is what comes in. If you read a bit and you enjoy the time with the judges, you become a more interesting person. I’m much more interesting today than I was on Monday! That’s the thing where the oak has a supportive role with the sauvignon. To come to the chenin, it’s a similar thing. When do you enjoy peaches and apricots the most? When they’ve just come off the tree, or they’ve been through a proper cold chain and they’re crunchy and they’ve got beautiful purity of fruit. That was what was interesting about the chenin blancs. If they are looking like tired old yellow peaches and orange apricots, I think that time has passed and what we were seeing was that the wines that were really galvanisingly exciting had that tension between great acidity, with a naturalness about that, which was completely absorbed by the brightness of the fruit. I’m talking about wines that had spontaneous ferment seemingly and were in oak, but there was this vibrancy in the wines and attention-grabbing and that was important. In no ways did the chardonnays overshadow that little group of chenins that were fantastic and exciting.

There are still one or two that are overdone, but of course we didn’t reward them.

MF Thank you François. More questions from the room? Neil wants to add something.

NB There were just two styles that I'd like to mention, which we haven't touched on very much so far. I think one of the most exciting tastings that we have held at the World of Fine Wine was white blends. We had Andrew Jefford and Jancis Robinson and Andreas Larssen, a former world champion sommelier who is particularly fond of white wines. They were genuinely excited by what they tasted there. The Sauvignon Semillon blends, as well as the more exotic blends, with chenin, the Rhône varieties and Palamino and so on, that have maybe got more of the attention recently, I didn't judge that class, but I think the one that I tasted this morning was a very worthy trophy winner and I think it's a very exciting category.

The other one is deeply unfashionable, which is the sweeter wines – noble late harvest and the porn star wines. I believe strongly that the quality is superlative. I thought that ten years ago and I thought that the wines we had this year were every bit as good. It's a style that's struggling all over the world. There is a crisis in Sauternes, with even a lot of very top properties struggling and I'm sure it's very difficult, but I think something very precious would be lost if the few brave producers who persevere with those styles were to give up. I think the best of the wines are really wonderful.

MF Neil, thank you for that. That was really good!

Q The one word that has been cropping up a lot in your feedback is purity, often purity of fruit. My question is how big a role in this competition generally did you see on the wines things like more funky flavours, naturally made wines, because I'm still of the old school where I believe that inoculated yeasts will actually give you that absolute purity of fruit that you want. So how big a role do you think you're seeing between funky wines and what is this purity you're talking of?

MF James, are you going to take that one or does somebody else want to do it?

JP There are definitely wines that have more interest surrounding them, but purity of fruit is the centre of the wine. There's a shining element that comes through. If I understand your question correctly, we aren't letting wines through that are just weird and wonderful. There needs to be a sense of control. There needs to be a sense of refinement and where purity of fruit is important for us, is to have it ... coated tannins. You want the fruit to run through from the back to the tannins at the back. So you want the fruit to be what the wine's about. In terms of inoculated versus wild, we didn't really have that kind of information, but we were certainly looking for wines that have interest. If I can veer off a little bit, this brings me to another point. There's a great sense of precision that goes with purity of fruit and maybe with inoculated wines, but there's also a bit of interest comes with veering off that path. So this would be the next step and the feeling that I get that I'm hoping we're going to is that with this purity of fruit, we're now moving towards a world where we have to look at a few dings and bashes in our chardonnays and our top wines, to give them further personality. Purity of fruit is really important, but we need to build personality into wines as well. I don't know if I really answered your question there, but for us the wine has to shine. You want to have a sense of freshness, a sense of tension, a sense of live and verve and drinking pleasure and that comes from the fruit being celebrated.

MF Other questions in the room? While you're thinking about it, those of you who are interested in social media, I've been told that #OMTWS2017 is trending on Twitter, 5th in South Africa. Obviously Zuma's done nothing today! I've got some stats which are still pre-audited, so they need to be confirmed. There are some quite nice patterns here, which is that on a daily basis the panels worked through roughly the same amount of wines each day – 334 on the first day, 332 on the second and 294 on the third – and produced roughly the same number of medals on each of those three days – 202, 227, 205. Since there's no major formula or anything else, it does suggest that across the classes there's obviously a really strong batch of wines and they get into medals. Then there are wines that are either knocking at the door, or aren't in with a chance at all.

The total bronze count was 458. I don't think I can pick up bronze from last year. The figure looks very similar to me.

The silver medal count was 135, the gold medal count in all was 41 and some of those obviously converted up to trophies having been winners in their class.

Museum medals awarded really does bear out what I said earlier. The total number of museum class medals was 36, against 48 from last year, but the museum class entry last year was higher.

The golds are down this year, in fact they're down in all categories. We've lost some of our nostalgia about those wines and that's a measure, more of the excitement of what the younger vintages are showing, than any defect in what's coming through in the older museum class entries.

Are there no more questions to ask?

Q This is probably more of a trade question than anything else, but it would be interesting to know from you... I didn't hear much being spoken about rosés and the style of rosé and where it's going in South Africa and the more over extracted phenolic styles, and the sweeter styles, to the dryer styles perhaps lifted up with certain varietals in those rosés. So to the panel in general and maybe some of the international guests as well could give us their thoughts are on the style of rosé and where it's going.

MF So the first question, before the chairman of that panel gets to say what he always says about rosé and then has to admit this year he was wrong, I'm going to ask Heidi what do you think should be the direction in which rosé ought to be going? It's not what you did or didn't see, but where do you think the role of rosé fits in with consumer expectation?

HM Everybody says rosé is trending and looking at some of the stats all over the world that seems to be the fact. I've personally always thought rosé is a wine category that you should take seriously. It's not just a lovely sip on the summer terrace, ice cold and with sometimes even with ice blocks inside the glass. I think rosé wines can be made in a serious way, where they can be matched with food. I think the ones that match with food the best are the ones that have got structure to them. So they're not just fruity, candied styles with a bit of sugar making them easy to drink. Reference to blush wines, white Zinfandels. That is a very big category and I understand why people drink it, but I think there is enough of that bulk made in the world, so I wouldn't see that as a tip to how South African rosé should be made. I would prefer the more restrained styles, similar approaches to those done in Provence in southern France, with a touch of crunchiness, a touch of phenolics, but not over-extraction. Just a very refined style with a good, fresh acidity.

MF Christian do you want to add to that?

CE Eduardo, my colleague, was also on the rosé panel and he muttered under his breath: "rosé is not really a wine!" Do you want to make a million litres of pink wine that keeps the business running, or do you want to make a small batch of wine that gets stocked at 67 Pall Mall. What's your intention? You need to unpack that for yourself. The other point I would make is given the intrinsic nature of rosé, it's going to be bloody difficult to make a gold medal rosé, whatever style you make it in. It's inherently got limitations in terms of what you can do, whether you make it out of shiraz, or pinotage, or merlot, or cabernet franc. How ambitious do you want to get with your rosé?

MF I have an answer for you on my right.

HM I think when you create a rosé, you should be thinking about creating a rosé and not a by-product of a red wine. In general the grapes should be grown very differently when the intention is to make a good rosé and not just a red wine and then do something with the rest and make some money out

of it. I would see in a wine club, as in 67 Pall Mall where I work, I would see that style that is made intentionally, in a pure way, a quality minded style to be sold. We don't sell blush wine.

MF We're going to pass the microphone down to Heidi, because we all talk about rosé a little bit offishly, but probably some of the most expensive champagnes in the world just happen to be rosé, so before we're totally dismissive of rosé, what's your thought about rosé fizz?

HD Rosé is one of the biggest within the class and one of the fastest growing categories. I was also on that rosé panel and what I found interesting is that there is only a handful of seriously styled, made with intention rosés in South Africa. There are so few of them and they're expensive. So if you can't at least convince somebody why they should buy that rosé, instead of a really fine white wine that's sometimes a lot cheaper than you get a serious style of rosé for, you're dead in the water. If you want niche, you're going to get niche results so it's going to be tiny and really a fascination exercise, rather than a serious statement.

Rosé bubbly is certainly growing. In our line-up we didn't have many, which was rather sad, but it's also a matter of how you work it – whether it's skin contact or blended and it's one of the ways that the elevation of complexity can be brought to the fore, without becoming too blousy. I think as well there is a consumer expectation now of fine rosé, rather than sweet rosé or well-fruited rosé when it comes to bubbly. So we're seeing there has been a trend towards far more delicate rosés, rather than very full, pink colours.

MF Thank you very much indeed. Any more questions in the room before we move to a wrap-up.

I'd like to say that it was in fact a really, really smoothly run and highly enjoyable Old Mutual Trophy Wine Show to be involved with. It went very well. You can hear from the enthusiasm of the panellists that there was a lot of good wine in a lot of different places and I think that's a very important message for the industry, both as producers and the industry as consumers. It's a symbiotic relationship, where if the consumers don't know how exciting things are, they're not going to encourage the producers who, in their own way and often very quietly, are transforming the profile of South African wine.

Finally I would like to say that Old Mutual's involvement with the show since 2002 has played a key role, not only in our being able to put together a show where the judging environment does work well and where we have enough judges from around the world to make a contribution and to share their insights, not only in a feedback session like this, but as importantly in the kind of wines that consistently get rewarded and, in that way, send a message to the industry.

The industry, as you know, is a key player in the economy of the Western Cape, the economy of South Africa. I think our producers sometimes over-emphasise exports, because they depend on them in the absence of a buyer of last resort – what the old KWV used to be. Many exports have taken over as a bulk disposal mechanism, but there's a very narrow band right at the top which is getting attention in the wine-drinking capitals of the world and South Africa, which was almost absent even ten or fifteen years ago from smart wine lists everywhere, is now there. Increasingly it's visible in editorial. It raises the profile of the country, it raises the flag and it also feeds a wine tourism industry, which in itself is a major employer in this country. All of that does require investment and it requires investment from outside sources, because sadly the industry itself does not have a big budget to promote South Africa, so the producers and those who support the producers, like Old Mutual, are the people who actually help to change the quality of life for literally hundreds of thousands of South Africans who depend on the success of the wine industry to do well.

For the few wine writers left in the industry, that in itself is also a reflection of how things have changed – it's an important message to get out there, that although wine is, if you like, middle class indulgence, it's a middle class indulgence that does help to lubricate not only the consumers, but the

wheels of commerce and the economy and in that way contribute to the velocity of money in South Africa.

Thank you all very much for being here. As you know we have transformed the end part of this event, so that we can now continue with meeting and mingling, where we have some snacks, finger food, something to drink and the weather which was rainy when you arrived and clear while you were inside, is getting overcast again in celebration of the fact that we're about to move outside and continue with our discussions there.

Thank you all very much indeed.

ENDS