

*Stephen Tanzer's*  
**INTERNATIONAL WINE CELLAR**

**Issue 171: November/December 2013**  
**The Best New Wines from Washington State**

**2010 Syrah The Beautiful Walla Walla Valley - 93** (\$60) (includes 2% co-fermented viognier): Good deep red-ruby. Very sexy perfumed nose melds dark berries, smoke, flinty minerality and bacon fat; reminded me of Cote-Rotie. Lush and sweet but with surprising lift to the flavors of dark berries, minerals, camphor and warm earth. The suave, long finish is enlivened by a complex floral quality. I like this style!

**2010 Syrah Morrison Lane Walla Walla Valley - 90(+?)** (\$45) (15% alcohol): Good deep ruby-red. Subtle, soil-driven aromas of boysenberry, brown spices, dried herbs, mocha and licorice. Then distinctly cool on the palate, showing little in the way of fruit sweetness. There's good breadth here but with its firm acidity and broad tannins, this is very much under wraps today. I don't find the ripeness that the 15% alcohol suggests, and I'm not sure where this can go in the bottle.

**2010 Syrah Phil Lane Walla Walla Valley - 92(+?)** (\$70) (13% alcohol): Bright medium ruby-red. Superripe aromas of cherry, coffee, spices and toasty oak. Supple on entry, then juicy and brisk in the middle, with lively acidity framing and intensifying the pungent red berry and spice flavors. A smoky nuance gives this a Cote-Rotie touch. This rather powerful, classically dry wine finishes with terrific saline length, with its firm but ripe tannins reaching the front teeth.

**2010 Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah The Creator Walla Walla Valley - 92(+?)** (\$55) (70% cabernet sauvignon vinified with whole berries and 30% syrah done with whole clusters; from the "Rocks"; spent up to 55 days on its skins): Good bright ruby-red. Aromas of black cherry, black olive, five-spice powder and pencil shavings. Sweet, silky and light on its feet, with lovely inner-mouth perfume to its flavors of flowers, spices and olive tapenade. A peppery nuance gives this wine a taut quality. Building tannins call for a few years of cellaring.

**2010 Merlot Stoneridge Vineyard Washington State - 92** (\$45) (aged in barrels for 25 months): Good bright, deep red. Dark berries, cherry and mocha on the nose. Enters the mouth with sweet, bright cherry fruit, then turns more medicinal and cool on the back half, showing distinctly Bordeaux-like reserve to its flavors of berries, cedar, mocha and coffee. Firmly structured but not overextracted, this rather powerful merlot needs cellaring.

**2010 Malbec Broncho Stoneridge Vineyard Washington State - 92** (\$70) (100% malbec): Saturated bright medium red. Aromas of blackberry, blueberry, coffee and brown spices. Sweet, concentrated and nicely delineated, with cassis and blackberry fruit flavors complicated by roast coffee and intriguing graphite minerality. Still youthfully tight in a cool-year way, and structured to repay aging. Proprietor Charles Smith is particularly interested in making wines with cool-climate snap, and he made it clear that he's a fan of the 2010 vintage.

**2010 Syrah Pheasant Vineyard Wahluke Slope - 90(+?)** (\$35) Good bright, deep red-ruby. Medicinal cherry, licorice and a whiff of mocha on the nose. Uncompromisingly dry and a bit warm in the early going but with very good intensity to the tightly wound red berry flavors. This needs time in bottle to express itself.

**2010 Syrah The Deal Sundance Vineyard Wahluke Slope - 91** (\$40) (13.5% alcohol; 30% new oak): Good full medium red. Ripe scents of smoke, rose petal and brown sugar. Silky and savory in the mouth, with a seamless texture to the red fruit and bacon fat flavors. The suave finish shows fine-grained tannins and excellent building length. Charles Smith noted that all of these syrahs were vinified with at least 50% of their stems.

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**2010 Syrah Cougar Hills Walla Walla Valley - 90(+?)** (\$45) (14.5% alcohol): Bright, deep red. Ripe cherry and black olive scents are perked up by floral and spicy high notes. Juicy, spicy and tightly wound; less plush today than The Deal but with strong acidity giving the mid-palate excellent clarity and perfume. Finishes very long and bright, with a youthful tartness.

**2010 Syrah Old Stones Walla Walla Valley - 90(+?)** (\$45) Good deep ruby-red. Dark cherry, mocha, brown spices, camphor and subtle stem notes on the nose, along with a hint of raisin. Less fruity than the Cougar Hills bottling but plush, showing notes of chocolate, spices and cinders. The dusty tannins will require at least a year or two of patience.

**2011 Viognier Lawrence Vineyard Washington State - 91** (\$40) (from a vineyard in the Royal Slope area; aged in one-year-old barrels for 14 months): Bright, full golden-yellow. Very ripe, expressive aromas of mirabelle, lichee and honey. Large-scaled, broad and dry, showing considerable alcoholic clout to the flavors of peach, pineapple, licorice and lichee. Less refined than the viognier made by Charles Smith under his KVintners label but undeniably opulent. Boasts decent underlying structure but I'd still consume this over the next 12 to 18 months.

**2012 Viognier Columbia Valley - 91(+?)** (\$25) (from Den Hoed vineyard, at 1,400 feet; no malolactic fermentation; done entirely in oak but without any new barrels): Straw-yellow. Lemon candy and lime on the enticing nose. Juicy, bright and light on its feet, with a refreshing, even tart character to the flavors of white peach and ginger. At once focused and saline, finishing with complex, ripe tree fruit flavors and virtually no phenolic roughness. This very suave viognier finished with just two grams of residual sugar, according to Charles Smith.