



WINE

by Michael Cooper



Reaching for the stars

Celebrities savour their wine affinities.

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, Cliff Richard, Francis Ford Coppola, Gerard Depardieu, Johnny Depp – the list of celebrities who own vineyards and wineries, or have linked their names to wine brands, is long (approaching 100, according to Wikipedia). Is it a trend in New Zealand?

Paul Henry's Own Pinot Noir 2015 (★★★★, \$30), launched recently, was blended from grapes grown at four Central Otago sites. Deep ruby, it is a softly mouthfilling (14% alc/vol), vibrantly fruity red, with generous ripe cherry, plum and spice flavours.

"The advantage was my superior palate," boasts Henry, "as I was able to distinguish the key selling points and king hits from each vineyard." Invivo, which produced the wine, expects it to "raise eyebrows, divide opinions and get people talking well into the evening. Instead of getting up people's noses, he is slipping down their throat!" In fact, the wine is unlikely to raise any eyebrows – it's a skilfully crafted, mainstream style, worth cellaring, but already delicious.

Of 20 shareholders in Invivo – controlled by Kiwis Tim Lightbourne and Rob Cameron – the sixth-largest is Irish TV presenter Graham Norton. From "chief winemaker Graham Norton" – not to be taken seriously, but apparently Norton was involved in the final blending – **Graham Norton's Own Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc 2016** (★★★★, \$19) has a punchy, aromatic bouquet. Medium to full-bodied (12.5% alc/vol), it's vibrantly fruity, with strong ripe melon, lime and capsicum flavours, a slightly salty streak, a faint

suggestion of sweetness and a crisp, lingering finish.

Most celebrities, Norton and Henry among them, simply collaborate with an established wine producer, but others invest directly in the business. Depardieu owns vineyards in several countries, including France, Spain, Argentina and the US.

Everyone wants to drink Sam Neill's wines, launched from the 1997 vintage. **Two Paddocks Central Otago Pinot Noir 2014** (★★★★, \$55) is the best yet. Grown in the estate's vineyards at Bannockburn, Alexandra and Gibbston, and matured in French oak casks, it is deep ruby, very fragrant and supple. A generous, savoury, complex red, it is full-bodied (13.5% alc/vol), with strong ripe cherry, plum and dried-herb flavours.

Radio personality Leighton Smith produces eye-catching wines at his vineyard in Clevedon, South Auckland. From a traditional grape of Piedmont, in north-west Italy, **Clevedon Hills Arneis 2014** (★★★★, \$27) is a weighty (14% alc/vol), dry white wine, sweet-fruited, with youthful, ripe lychee, pear and slight spice flavours that build to a strong finish. **Clevedon Hills Syrah 2014** (★★★★, \$40) is deeply coloured and mouthfilling (13.5% alc/vol), with vibrant plum, spice and black-pepper flavours, smooth and rich. ■

WINE OF THE WEEK

**Two Paddocks
Central Otago Pinot
Noir 2014** ★★★★★
A taste of stardom.
\$55

