

# Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences

## The Weekly Wine Commentary

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### The Value of a Brand

#### Brand over Quality

In January 1981 I covered a National Football Conference

**B**rands rule. In all categories of commercial goods worldwide, brands are the gold standard, from household cleaning products (is Tide that much better than other laundry detergents?) to tires (are Michelins better than Kumhos?). The list goes on.

It would take a tome to detail all the brands that claim superiority over non-branded items—and such a book would be inconclusive unless the authors noted that each product must be separated into one of several categories. For me there are three such separate and unconnected categories. Or you could define a dozen.

#### WINE HOOLIGANS

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### Tasting Notes

#### EXCEPTIONAL

2014 Sea Monster Octopussy

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Wine Hooligans was founded by Dennis Carroll (Purple Wine Co.) to let some of the industry's wildest minds do what they want to do under a variety of labels. Here's a look at what some of them are doing under the Wine Hooligans banner.

Also, see the Bargain of the Week for another of the Hooligans' wines.

#### Exceptional

2014 **Sea Monster** Octopussy, Central Coast (\$20): A blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay

with smaller amounts of Riesling, and Grenache. The aroma is subtly spicy, with the Riesling showing through. The Grenache blanc adds minerality, and the Sauvignon Blanc adds a lemon verbena element. The Chardonnay adds a bit of weight, which is offset by good acidity. This is one of the most exciting white wine blends I've ever tasted.

#### Bargain of the Week

2013 **Cycles Gladiator** Merlot, Central Coast (\$11): Dark cherry, tea leaf, and a delicate mint (pine?) note add interest to this classy varietal version of a grape that can easily be boring. Made by Adam Lazar, first wine maker for Cycles, a Wine Hooligans. See above.

#### Instant Icon?

Penfolds, the largest and most image-conscious Australian wine company, has quietly released a new line of wines dedicated to the late wine maker Max Schubert, creator of Australia's best known red wine, Grange.

There are three wines in the line at present: 2012 The Max Schubert Cabernet Shiraz, \$450; 2013 Max's Shiraz Cabernet (no price posted yet), and 2013 Max's Shiraz, "The Promise," \$50.

I was fortunate enough to taste The Max Schubert wine while we were in Australia and it is very fine wine and has the structure to age.

Question: Is it worth \$450?

Answer: Is *any* wine worth \$450?



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