



JAMES HALLIDAY

### Due for a revival

**I**F IT SEEMS TO YOU THAT grenache has been around forever in Australia, you'd be right. James Busby brought back grenache vines sourced from Roussillon as part of his vast collection assembled during his time in Spain and France in 1831.

It quickly made its way to South Australia, and for the next 130 years was largely used to make tawny port (as it was then called) and other fortified wines; plantings in other states were (and are) minimal. During this time it was Australia's major red grape, but it is now relegated way behind shiraz, cabernet sauvignon and merlot. Since 1995 the annual crop varied between 20,000 and 24,000 tonnes (except for an anomalous fall in 2010 to 10,000 tonnes).

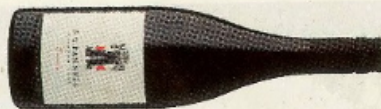
In a microcosmic way, this reflected its fall from grace in Europe and elsewhere. In the late 20th century it was the world's second most widely planted red variety, its epicentres being France and Spain. In France it has now been

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passed by cabernet sauvignon and merlot, and its plantings in Spain have halved since the late 1980s. Why? First, there is only one truly great wine made from 100 per cent grenache, Château Rayas in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Then consider the alphabet soup of up to 13 varieties approved for any red Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Small wonder grenache is usually blended with other varieties.

In Australia, GSM (grenache shiraz mourvèdre) blends have become de rigueur. But grenache has a champion preaching about it with all the fervour of a born-again Christian. Steve Pannell would be the first to acknowledge the winemaking and marketing wizardry of d'Arenberg with grenache blends, and the one varietal ironically labelled The Derelict Vineyard. Having had a glittering career with Hardys in its heyday, with sumptuous McLaren Vale shiraz swathed in quality oak, his decision to nail the colours of his own winery, SC Pannell, to the grenache masthead might seem surprising.

Given that he makes wines of wonderful perfume and elegance, Pannell should be forgiven for thinking he needs to argue the merits of grenache simpliciter over the grenache shiraz or shiraz he also crafts with such skill. But we all come with baggage, so it was that his 2008 Shiraz Grenache was one of the surprise highlights of the Landmark Australia Tutorial 2010.



### 2009 SC PANNELL McLAREN VALE GRENACHE

This is the first 100% grenache released since '06, an indication of the high standards Pannell sets for his wines. It comes from a single 60-year-old McLaren Vale Vineyard (Taranga) and it is here, according to Pannell, that its character is created. It is an extraordinary wine, with pinot-like fragrance and perfume, the red berry fruits swathed in a silky embrace, the all-important tannins on the finish at threshold levels, no more. 14.5% alc; screwcap

**Rating:** 96 points

**Drink:** to 2017

**Price:** \$55



### 2010 SC PANNELL PRONTO BIANCO

If Steve Pannell had his way, details of the blend (pinot gris 43 per cent/sauvignon blanc 30 per cent/riesling 27 per cent) wouldn't appear anywhere, his attitude stemming from his experience in Spain. What matters is the whole, which is more than the sum of the parts, parts that will vary from vintage to vintage. It has a complex amalgam of wild herb, citrus and stone fruit with a fleeting touch of lavender; the very fresh and crisp finish reflects its low pH and high natural acidity. 13% alc; screwcap

**Rating:** 93 points

**Drink:** to 2013

**Price:** \$25



### 2010 SC PANNELL McLAREN VALE ARIDO ROSE

Made from 64-year-old, dry-grown grenache vines and hand picked. The grapes are crushed, and left in an oxygen-free tank press for three days, looking as much for phenolics as for colour, and achieving both in spades. Vibrant puce in colour, it has brightly fragrant raspberry and Turkish Delight aromas, then crisp and crunchy red fruits on the palate with texture to burn; a bone-dry finish rounds off a very distinguished – and different – rose. 13% alc; screwcap

**Rating:** 95 points

**Drink:** to 2013

**Price:** \$20