



# The Flyer

PRESTIGE AGENCIES

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## Prestige Agencies land major New World contract

By Robert Beaumont

Prestige Agencies, the agency arm of Playford Ros, has been appointed the sole UK agent for Foxes Island Wines of Blenheim, New Zealand, owned by leading Kiwi winemaker John Belsham

These wines will be offered to other distributors, as well as to key retailers and small hotel and restaurant chains across the country. The wines are now available.

This is a notable coup for Prestige Agencies. Foxes Island were previously represented by Moreno, based in London.

Johnny Pearson, director of Prestige Agencies, said: "This is a huge boost for us – and a triumph for a David over a Goliath. Foxes Island has an excellent reputation. To represent them in the UK is a tremendous honour."

John Belsham of Foxes Island Wines said: "The wine business now is overpopulated by the corporates and we have been looking to build a significant relationship with a small professional company whose philosophy tallies with ours. Prestige Agencies is that company. We both believe in great wines and quality service."

"This is a very important move for us. The UK is the most important export market for New Zealand wines and we believe Prestige Agencies are best placed to raise our profile and our sales there. We aspire to be the best and we want to work with the best," he added.

Foxes Island Wines is a small family owned boutique wine company producing premium wines from fruit grown on his two small estates located in the very heart of the Marlborough, New Zealand winegrowing region.

Owner and Winemaker John Belsham is a perfectionist and his wines reflect the passion with which he practices his trade. The philosophy behind Foxes Island Wines is one of quality and the pursuit of complexity in fine wine style. Consequently, each release is of very limited production.

With a magnitude of international experience, John commenced his career in the wine industry in the Medoc, France in 1977, working for a small family owned Chateau. John has maintained his French links and is currently consulting to Chateau La Coste in Provence where he is assisting in the redevelopment of this property into a modern world class operation.



"Let go now John, your hurting me!"

John's background with the New Zealand wine industry is vast. He has held senior winemaker roles for Matua Valley Wines in Auckland, and Hunters Wines in Marlborough. His first Foxes Island Vintage was released in 1992. In addition to operating his own winery, John is also the Technical Consultant for Craggy Range Vineyards in Hawkes Bay, is currently consulting to Te Awanga Estate, Hawkes Bay in the development of their winery, and provides consulting advice to another three emerging wineries in New Zealand. He has held the role of wine consultant to Air New Zealand since July 2000.

John has judged in a senior capacity in the Air New Zealand National Wine Competition, The Australian National Wine Competition, and in various other Australasian competitions. He was Chairman of Judges of the Air New Zealand National Wine Competition from 1999 – 2003, and is a regular panellist for Cuisine magazine's wine reviews.

## The Cristom story

I am absolutely delighted to be representing Cristom Wines. The wines, of limited volume, complement the Prestige Agencies wine portfolio perfectly as they are produced at a small, family-owned, vineyard.

Cristom's founder and owner, Paul Gerrie, used his skills as an engineer and avid researcher to pursue his passion for wine. On his travels to France, he was introduced to the traditional growing practices of the Burgundy region. He learned that soil (terroir) and site were key in developing the complexity of the fruit.

After a 1991 visit to the International Pinot Celebration in Oregon, Paul decided the time was right to leave the East Coast and bring his family and his passion for great Pinot Noir to Oregon's burgeoning wine country.

But their journey wasn't complete without a winemaker who shared Paul's vision of "letting the land make the wines." Enter Steve Doerner

who, after a quarter century of experience, still believes the winemaker's job is to "optimize what nature – the vineyard – provides." In addition to his reputation as a master winemaker with "keen intuition" (possibly from his French heritage), Steve is a biochemist who had been making wine in California.

And so with a passion that only wine enthusiasts embrace and a precision that can only come from a chemist and an engineer, the two set out to cultivate their vision, which today, can be seen in the seven distinct vineyards on Cristom's 65 acres.

As are most trained scientists, Paul and Steve are keen observers. While they are still advocates of tradition, they continually experiment both in the vineyards and in the cellar. A recent example is the introduction of Viognier to the Willamette Valley. Cristom was one of the first to plant it, even though conventional wisdom assumed the climate was too wet. "We planted it on our sunniest



acre and got nice vintages right away," explained Steve.

**Prestige Agencies are proud to offer:**

Pinot Noir 2003 @ £135.66 per dozen  
Viognier 2004 @ £155.56 per dozen  
Mount Jefferson 2003 @ £165.56 per dozen  
The Marjorie Pinot Noir 2002 @ £250.56 per dozen

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# 'Crazy' Winemaker has style

By Johnny Pearson

It was felt that the Prestige Agencies portfolio was missing a vital link and after a bit of deliberation, we felt we should be looking to California. With California being the biggest exporter of wine to the UK, we wanted to grab some of that action but, in true Prestige Agencies style, be a bit different.

Enter Mat Garretson with: "Any importer who knowingly takes on a winemaker who's a Spurs fan, who has patterned his logo after a 1980s' Style Council album, and who labels his wine with obscure Gaelic references is certifiably crazy. Prestige Agencies is such an importer. God help us both."

See what we mean?

The fact that Paso Robles has emerged as the state's leading "Rhône Zone" can be attributed in no small measure to Mat Garretson. This former Atlanta wine retailer and restaurateur was already a fan of Syrah, but it was his introduction to Viognier that opened his eyes to the entire spectrum of this exotic family of grape varieties.



Mat Garretson superimposed onto vineyard.

"In 1983, a fellow retailer gave me a bottle of wine labelled 'Condrieu' as a birthday present," recalls Garretson. "I wasn't too impressed... until I opened the bottle." That bottle sparked an obsession so complete that Garretson is often referred to as 'Mr. Viognier' by his fellow winemakers.

In 1991 Garretson founded The Viognier Guild. Although he had left the wine trade three years earlier to work in his family's business, what began as an informal organization dedicated to promoting Rhône wines quickly became a full-time job. "I soon realized that my real passion was wine, and thought, 'do I want to be 80 years old and lamenting the fact that I didn't follow my passion?'"

In 1997 while on a sales trip for Eberle in Denver, Mat was introduced to Amie White, the woman who would later become his wife. "We met at a restaurant," recalls Garretson, "and while she was very attractive, it was after finding out she loved Rhône wines, could speak French and that we shared the same birthday that it became obvious that we were meant for each other." 1997 was also a year of new beginnings professionally, as Mat made his first commercial harvest of Syrah. Garretson Wine Company was born.

On April 1, 2001, the Garretsons took yet another leap of faith and opened their own winery and tasting room. "The ability to focus on one full-time job instead of two has resulted in more quality time for my family," Garretson believes, "and it is resulting in better wines under our label."

The Garretson story continues but the best way to learn more about this fascinating winemaker is to visit his "wacky website" [www.garretsonwines.com](http://www.garretsonwines.com)

When Mat approached Prestige Agencies, we jumped at the chance to represent his wines in the UK. Mat said: "Having my wines represented in U.K. wine market has been a desire of mine since I started my winery in 1997. Finding the right people to represent my wines in the U.K. was always the obstacle. In Prestige Agencies I've finally found the ideal relationship. They understand the New World, are enthusiastic about it, and seem to have a great deal of fun selling wine. In other words, we speak the same language."



## The Editor's choice

By Johnny Pearson



Call me fickle, but I have changed my view on the Kaiken Malbec Reserva '03. Don't get me wrong, I still think the wine is worthy of its title of 'Best International Single Red Varietal' from Decanter, but **Kaiken Cabernet Sauvignon Reserva '03** has won my heart. Try this extremely fruity wine with your Sunday roast and you will not be disappointed. Best value of the month at £8.49 rrp.



Talk about improving with age. The **Marklew Merlot '03** has come of age. The change in this wine over the last few months is incredible. It has also been awarded a place on the distinguished wine list of South Africa Airways in First Class. £11.49 rrp.



Another Merlot! We all know that Jim Irvine is Australia's "Master Merlot Maker". His Grand Merlot and "The Baroness" are exceptional wines but for me, the **Springhill Merlot** is outstanding and with a retail price of £9.99, it will be hard to beat.



**Dalwhinnie Pinot Noir '04** is a strange one to list in my wines of the season. Reason being it is not here for another couple of months. Due to the success of the '03, the '04 vintage will be sold on allocation. My colleague, Simon Kershaw, recently visited Dalwhinnie was told that the tones of eucalyptus will be reduced as the trees close to the vines have been cut back allowing more fruit to take over in the wine. I can't wait to try it! £22.99 rrp.



And now for something completely different. Jim Irvine is featuring quite heavily in this edition, and rightly so. The second of his wines to appear and certainly the most unusual is the **Merlot Brut (mv)**. If you've had a bit much wine and fizz over the festive season, why not try something radically different. This is a fruity, not too dry, sparkling merlot from Eden Valley. Bring on Summer and those BBQ's. £15.49 rrp.

## 'Factoids' - some interesting facts about wine and things

### Did you know:

1. Dalwhinnie vineyards were discovered by David Hohen, the same geologist who discovered Cloudy Bay. He found them by helicopter.
2. Kaiken of Argentina is produced by Montes of Chile! Kaiken is an ancient Indian name of a wild goose indigenous to Patagonia, which criss-crosses the Andes for feeding rather like Montes has to make wine.
3. Wines from California are now the largest wine imports to the UK.
4. 2 out of 3 people over the age of 50 prefer New World wine.
5. Not only is Australia a big wine producer, you can fit the UK into it 16 times!

6. Only 5% of an oak tree is suitable for making barrels.
7. When Mount Vesuvius buried Pompeii in volcanic lava in A.D. 79, it also buried more than 200 wine bars.....disaster!
8. The average age of a French oak tree harvested for use in wine barrels is 170 years!
9. The wine industry generates 145,000 jobs in California.
10. In King Tut's Egypt (around 1300 BC), the commoners drank beer and the upper class drank wine.

And finally, my favourite quote of the moment: *"I cook with wine; sometimes I even add it to the food."* W. C. Fields