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RUDI GOLDMAN (Director/Producer): *Burgundy: People with a Passion for Wine*. Media in English/Rudi Goldman Productions, Amsterdam, 2017, 60 min, DVD NTSC Format, all Regions, \$19.95.

The best documentaries—on any subject—are informative, entertaining, and even touching. Think of Ken Burns’s PBS series, *The Civil War*, or—in the realm of oenonomy—Jason Wise’s *Somm* (reviewed, volume 8, 2013, pp. 238–241). Rudi Goldman’s new film, *Burgundy: People with a Passion for Wine*, meets at least the first two requirements, which are necessary, if not sufficient conditions for documentary film excellence.

Goldman’s film surpasses another recent documentary about the Burgundy wine scene, David Kennard’s *A Year in Burgundy* (reviewed, volume 9, 2014, pp. 100–103). Both offer high-quality cinematography, beautiful to view from a Blu-ray disc on a large-format, high-definition display. But whereas Kennard employed a ponderous narrator to tell his viewers what to think, Wise and now Goldman trust their respective audiences to come to their own conclusions, stimulated by the pictorial, musical, and verbal inspiration the films provide.

One reason we do not miss the presence of a narrator in *Burgundy* is that several of the film’s dozen talking heads—all winemakers *and* wine lovers—are both articulate and insightful. It is fortuitous that we can benefit repeatedly from the thoughts of an American, Alex Gambal, who left the world of real estate decades ago to explore Burgundy, and after attending the adult viticultural school in Beaune, launched Maison Alex Gambal in 1997. His Pinot Noir grapes range from those sourced from Grand Cru vineyards in Charmes-Chambertin and Batard-Montrachet, to Premier Cru, and more modest Communal and Regional bottlings.

In a striking segment that will be of particular interest to readers of this *Journal*, Gambal describes what he calls “the irony” of Burgundy. Only two cépages may be grown and vinified in the region—Pinot Noir and Chardonnay; and the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée (AOC) rules on planting, growing, harvesting, vinification, and bottling are exceptionally severe. Yet, these constraints, this discipline leads to the production of celebrated products—the Grand Cru and Premier Cru wines of Burgundy.

We are reminded of the discipline that is provided by a musical form, such as a Baroque trio sonata (or—for that matter—by an academic discipline, which may

limit scope and acceptable methodology, and thereby lead to rigor and insight). Gambal laments those who operate within the discipline of Burgundy, possess a superb instrument (their particular terroir), but due to their lack of skill or temperament, fail to produce a product that measures up. They possess a Stradivarius, but play it like a fiddle.

Of course, this raises the ongoing issue of the relative importance of terroir versus the skill and dedication of the winemaker in the winery. To some degree, Gambal's critique flies in the face of conventional wisdom. For many years, it has been accepted that terroir is the greater determinant of quality in old world wines (hence, the convention of naming wines by their location), while there has been considerable doubt about this in the case of new world wines (hence, the convention of naming wines by varietal).¹

A somewhat different—and distinctly French—take on the Burgundian irony is offered by Jacques Lardière, retired head winemaker of Maison Louis Jadot in Beaune. Reflecting on how the combination of excellent terroir married with the constraints of the AOC system can produce such a sublime product, he concludes with a mischievous smile, “C’est magique.”

The person with the second-most air time in *Burgundy* is not only interesting, but charming—Véronique Drouhin-Boss, the fourth-generation winemaker of Maison Joseph Drouhin in Beaune (as well as Domaine Drouhin in the Dundee Hills of Oregon). She takes us into the 11th century cellar, where she played as a small child, and opens a series of bottles, beginning with a Chardonnay—the Maison's Clos des Mouches, from a vineyard purchased by her grandfather. Tasting this Premier Cru, she is captured by the nose of the young wine, and reflects with us on how the nose will evolve as the wine matures. Later, we return to her cellar to taste the superb 2009 vintage of Joseph Drouhin Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin.

That Burgundy produces excellent vintages perhaps no more than once per decade is a consequence of its climate. The weather is a significant challenge, with its short growing season at 47 degrees latitude (albeit with many sunny days). The consequence and drama of the stochastic relationship between climate and weather is brought home through our experience of a hail storm, which lasts only four minutes, yet results in the loss of 50% of the year's crop!

In this world, dedicated small-scale vigneron (owner-grower-winemakers) continue to operate. Sixty-year old Bernadette Ecobichon, sitting in her modest home in Meursault, aspires to maintain her family's long tradition of excellence. In Puligny-Montrachet, each sub-area is incredibly small, ranging from one hectare to 10 hectares (and totaling no more than 25 hectares). From this terroir come

¹ An econometric analysis of this debate can be found in this *Journal* (Cross, Plantinga, and Stavins, 2011, 2017).

wines that age gracefully for 30 years or more, such as in Chassagne-Montrachet, where Philippe Duvernay, the winemaker and co-owner of Domaine Coffinet-Duvernay, uses his pipette to extract and taste a sample of the young wine, aging slowly in oak barrels.

Those barrels are also a key part of the creation of the wines of Burgundy, and we are privileged to visit one of the most renowned of all cooperage—Tonnellerie François Frères in Saint-Romain, where we go through the process from sawmill to final toast, guided by Romain Schneider (who insists, of course, on the complete superiority of French to American oak!).

Like most wines, those of Burgundy are best enjoyed when dining, and fortunately there is abundant opportunity for good pairings throughout the film. We stop at Le Charlemagne, where Laurent Peugeot, the chef/owner of a Michelin-starred restaurant in Pernand-Vergelesses, emphasizes that just as every small part of Burgundy differs in regard to wine, so too with regard to cuisine. At Château de Santenay, we join a dinner for winemakers, where Jérôme Brochot, Michelin-starred chef/owner in Montceau-les-Mines, explains his thought process for pairing wines with a meal. And Olivier Leflaive, the winemaker and owner of Maison d'Olivier Leflaive, sits at a table in his restaurant in Puligny-Montrachet, and explains the importance of balance, which for him means that “the best wedding between the wine and the food” must be executed with “finesse and elegance.”

What is a French wine documentary without some visits to the banquets that are such a large part of the wine scene in that country? We visit the Palais des Congrès de Beaune for the Great Burgundy Wine Festival, a three-day event of tasting during wine auction weekend. Three thousand different wines are tasted!

A visit to the Hospices de Beaune provides an opportunity for retired winemaker Roland Masse to taste the 2013 vintage in barrels and predict how it will taste in two to ten years. This leads to the November 2012 auction, the 152nd such annual auction for charity for the local hospital. It is important each year, because it is the first presentation of the harvest.

Finally, at Château de Meursault, we join La Paulée de Meursault, a dinner with abundant wine for winemakers and invited lovers of Burgundy from around the world. The wines are poured by the winemakers themselves for the 800 assembled guests. Here we see many of the winemakers we met earlier in the film, now sitting for dinner or standing to pour their wines. Remarkably, one invited guest, Anthony Hanson, British Master of Wine and senior consultant to Christie's, proceeds to swirl, sniff, ... and then pour his entire glass into a spit bucket *without* so much as putting the wine to his lips. The winemaker is crushed, but so it is in the real world.

Overall, the film's testimony to the people who have a very special passion for the wines of Burgundy reminds me of a high-point in Alexander Payne's feature film, *Sideways* (reviewed, volume 1, May 2006, pp. 91–93), when Maya (Virginia

Madsen) asks Miles (Paul Giamatti) why he is so enamored with Pinot Noir. He responds with a memorable statement that might have been uttered by any of the real-life characters in *Burgundy*:

“It’s a hard grape to grow. ... It’s thin-skinned, temperamental, ripens early. It’s not a survivor like Cabernet that can grow anywhere and thrive even when neglected. Pinot needs constant care and attention and in fact can only grow in specific little tucked-away corners of the world. And only the most patient and nurturing growers can do it really, can tap into Pinot’s most fragile, delicate qualities. Only when someone has taken the time to truly understand its potential can Pinot be coaxed into its fullest expression. And when that happens, its flavors are the most haunting and brilliant and subtle and thrilling and ancient on the planet.”

Near the end of *Burgundy*, New York sommelier Michael Madrigale (recently of the Boulud restaurant empire), is one of the guests at La Paulée de Meursault. Clearly in love with the wines, the cuisine, and the passion that permeates the luncheon, he turns to the camera and confesses that each year “there’s something magnetic about Burgundy that brings you here.” Enough said, except for some personal advice, based on my own experience with the film. Make sure you have a good bottle of Burgundy available in your cellar—perhaps a Premier Cru, if not a Grand Cru – that you can open and enjoy, as I did, with the film or shortly thereafter. You will not regret it.

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JENNIFER SEGAL (ed.): *Reds, Whites & Varsity Blues: 65 Years of the Oxford & Cambridge Blind Wine-Tasting Competition*. Pavilion Books/JSNewMedia, London, 2013, 256 pp., ISBN 978-1909108288 (hardcover), £35

Beginning in 1953, the University of Oxford and Cambridge University each fielded teams for annual blind wine-tasting events at which typically six undergraduates from each institution met to blind-taste a dozen or so wines, half white and half red. The wines had to be identified by the contestants, and points were awarded for correct identification: In the 1960s, for example, guessing the type of wine correctly was worth 5 points, the vintage 2, the district 1, the commune 1, and the