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Nice wines at an even nicer price

The Ad Hoc range of wines delivers well beyond its fighting weight

Larry Cherubino had already built an impressive reputation when he arrived at Houghton to take up the role of chief winemaker.

In his few years there he certainly cemented that reputation with a series of outstanding wines.

However, since he surprisingly walked away from the job, he has successfully built on that reputation as a consultant to a number of very good smaller producers while also creating his own labels. Some of his premium-end wines are stunning, but this week it is two reasonably-priced

current drinking wines that I want to highlight.

The wines, released under Cherubino's Ad Hoc range, are a cabernet merlot and sauvignon blanc semillon, two of the standard-bearers of WA wine styles. He has produced wines that deliver well beyond their fighting weight with a touch of class and expressiveness that you don't normally see at this price.

And in both cases Cherubino has allowed the inherent fruit flavour to emerge while maintaining perfect balance throughout the wines.

A couple of rieslings worth attention too are the Alkoomi, which

is a nice return to form for these guys, and the Castelli, which continues the early excellent performance of the emerging new producer.

I have also included the Sandalford Margaret River shiraz, which shows that while we often laud red varieties such as cabernet and merlot from this region there is plenty of quality shiraz down there too.

And if value for money is what you're after, it's impossible to go past the new Deep Woods Ivory semillon sauvignon blanc and the Leaping Lizard cabernet merlot, both of which sit around the \$15 mark.



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THE WINES

When you pay around \$20 you don't expect to get a wine of this quality

LARRY CHERUBINO AD HOC ETCETERA CABERNET MERLOT 2009 (\$21)

When you pay around \$20 you don't expect to get a wine of this quality and sophistication, yet here it is. Medium-bodied and richly flavoured with a tight controlling mix of ripe tannin and fine-grained unobtrusive oak. Spot on. 93/100

LARRY CHERUBINO AD HOC STRAW MAN SAUVIGNON BLANC SEMILLON 2010 (\$21)

Crunchy and pure with such a beautifully refreshing and precise mouth feel. The nose of tropical gooseberry and a light dusting of herbaceousness has a touch of minerality to keep it honest. The palate length is a feature of a perfect wine for current drinking. 92/100

ALKOOMI RIESLING 2009 (\$20.35)

This is something of a return to form for Alkoomi riesling. It's bright and tight with a bracing acidity and citrus influence that maintains a tight edge to the finish. I like this leaner style of riesling, though there is still good fruit intensity on the palate. 90/100

CASTELLI ESTATE RIESLING 2010 (\$20)

Delicate riesling from the Porongurup. Opens with a distinctive lime and floral mix on the nose. The palate has a softness and almost pulpy feel yet it retains a crisp freshness. It's a lovely wine for current drinking but should handle 10 years in the cellar. 92/100

SANDALFORD MARGARET RIVER SHIRAZ 2009 (\$19)

Loaded with savoury spicy fruit which attacks from the first sniff. It is intense and this carries through into the deep and punchy palate that is both focused and long. Deliciously flavoursome in the mouth with fully ripe tannins and well-weighted oak in support. 91/100

DEEP WOODS IVORY SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC 2010 (\$14.95)

Fresh crunchy vibrant blend with abundant, lively tropical flavours balanced by an appealing herbaceousness. It's balanced and flavoursome with a crisp finishing acid. Just a little squeeze of lime juice livens up the palate. 90/100

LENTON BRAE CABERNET MERLOT 2009 (\$24)

This is a high-class cabernet merlot for this price. It's a firm, controlled blend with ripe powerful cabernet driving hard and the slightly fleshier merlot filling in on the palate. Well-weighted oak sits comfortably in the mix. An excellent wine for cellar for drinking now. 91/100

LEAPING LIZARD CABERNET MERLOT 2008 (\$15)

Opens with a decent belt of dark chocolate and ripe plum on the nose underpinned by some quite powerful blackcurrant and edgy black olive. The palate has really got some punch for this price point. Nice understated oak allows the fruit to dominate. Very good little wine. 89/100

SECRET LANE SEMILLON SAUVIGNON BLANC 2010 (\$19.95)

Piercing aromas of gooseberry and limey stone fruit. The palate opens up with an attack of vibrant, zippy tropical fruits balanced with a squeeze of lime and a little herbaceousness. The balance is excellent in a beautiful drink-now wine. 89/100

