



# The natural

Margaret River's Cloudburst is setting a benchmark for biodynamic wines, making its drops hot property

**T**here is a moment in James Cameron's sci-fi opus *Avatar* that Will Berliner loves to reference when discussing his Margaret River vineyards. "Y'know, it's like when all the tribespeople in the movie sit together beneath the 'Tree of Souls,'" he says, in his soft American drawl. "For that moment, they are all connected, every living thing ..."

For any student of biodynamics and its applications to modern viticulture, the idea of 'connectivity' is not a new one. A vineyard existing as a single living organism could be seen to illustrate one of the core principles of biodynamics, yet few winemakers have translated this belief system into wine quality to the level that Will Berliner has with Cloudburst ([cloudburstwine.com](http://cloudburstwine.com)).

The wines are expensive, the grapes yield in small quantities and there is no cellar door, no sign, no branded T-shirts, no marketing spiel. The phone number is buried on the website. Only a handful of people have ever managed to get in to see the place for themselves. Public tastings are virtually non-existent.

It's clear that Berliner hasn't got a commercially responsible bone in his body – and he insists he wouldn't have it any other way. "My interest has not been in making money," he shrugs. "Generating sales, developing marketing, scaling up volume, all of that has never appealed to me. My sole focus has been on doing whatever it takes to create the highest quality wine from this remarkable vineyard."

His property is located in the sub-region of Wilyabrup, connected to the lush natural bushland of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. To achieve the remarkable purity and depth of flavour of his wines, his small landholding's vines are harvested by hand and close-planted to create competition for nutrients and water. Wild yeasts, low intervention, small parcels and constant observation nurture the flavours of the land into the bottle, creating wines of intensity, freshness and an almost primal intensity to their mouthfeel and texture.

In a region known for 'premium' wines, Cloudburst has achieved something of a

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cult status, fuelled in part by Berliner's standing among the new 'natural' winemaking fraternity emerging in Margaret River.

For a winery so young and a price point so high, the elephant in the tasting room is value. (Though, incidentally, it will come as no surprise that Cloudburst doesn't have a tasting room.) How well do these spectacularly expensive wines stack up? Is it just hype and zeitgeist?

After first tasting his wines in 2013 and nearly every year since, I can say with complete certainty that Cloudburst can and most likely will achieve the standing of its illustrious Margaret River counterparts such as Leeuwin Estate, Mosswood, Vasse Felix, Voyager Estate and the like. This label is almost instantly iconic and unquestionably a wine of the times. I recommend that you buy whatever of its output you can.



Cloudburst  
2014 Cabernet  
(\$325) and 2014  
Chardonnay  
(\$300)