

# Will's World

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Blog post: [Time Pour](#)

It is really hard to write about Will Berliner, the life force behind Cloudburst in the Margaret River. So much has already been written about this intriguing man. Wine writers the world over have been fascinated by the philosophy of a wine newcomer who has forged a very individual path and created some extraordinary wines.

They write of his soft Northeastern American accent, his days as a documentary filmmaker, his interest in organic farming and the mystical world of shamanism. There are the stories of the accidental way he came to be a winemaker, his very unorthodox methods, his winning of 3 trophies at the Margaret River Wine Show at his first attempt, and the stratospheric prices (by Australian Standards) of his wines. Most of all there are stories of how good his wines are and how the great restaurants of the US and Australia stock them. Will Berliner is a riddle inside a conundrum wrapped in an enigma.

So what value can there be in writing about a man that so much has been written about already?

Perhaps I can tell you about the man I know and not the caricature that seems to have evolved in the press.

No, this is not a piece to reveal that Will is a different bloke than he portrays in the media. Far from it. I just happen to think that he is a far more than the quirky American dude making expensive wines in the Margaret River. Far more.

A recent phone call is a great place to start. We chatted as the usual honking of geese in the background and the flaky mobile reception made him sound like he was calling from a market alleyway in Hong Kong. At one point he breaks off the conversation to count the new born goslings and goes into a slight panic when he comes up one short. Seconds later the prodigal son returns and order is restored. "What do you do with those bloody geese?" I ask. "They are my workers" he proudly replies "they make a mess of kikuyu grass". Fair enough.

The conversation moves on and Will mentions, without pause or fanfare, that the previous night he won the Trophy for the Best Single Vineyard Estate Red Wine at the prestigious Margaret River Wine Show.. Again !! (he won in 2013). What the? I force him to rewind and discover that his 2014 Cabernet is the trophy winner "but I forgot to enter it in the Cabernet Class" he confesses, with all of the care of a wistful schoolboy who has left his lunchbox at school, again. Pure Will... an accidental trophy followed by an accident.

We talk longer. About the fellow that turned up at the winery for a tasting and then had 10 cases of Cloudburst airlifted to his wedding in France, about his stress over starting up his own winery, about the issues with distributors, local politics, poor payers and the cost of hand weeding a 2ha vineyard.

You see I reckon that people see Will as an eccentric guy who has lucked upon a good grape growing plot and is raking in the cash from his over priced wines.

But this is not the truth at all. Will Berliner is a man driven by passion and principle who used his understanding of organic farming and pure common sense to challenge many winemaking myths that grip the industry. His success and media profile has ruffled a few feathers despite his unwavering openness and friendliness. No-one likes a blow in who shuns local tradition yet delivers critically acclaimed wines - at the highest price point in the region. (Mind you it hasn't taken people long to see his stake in the ground and move out their own prices)

# Will's World Cont.

Will is a man of principle and is very determined. He simply believes that in comparison with the best wines he has tasted from all over the world that he is reasonably priced for the quality of his product. He thinks that the extraordinary lengths that he goes to in the vineyard, creating wines that are universally acclaimed, allows him to seek a premium price. The wine cognoscenti would prefer that he stay within the pack. They don't like an upstart putting himself out there. Sure, many of us smarties have tried to brow beat him with the 4 x 2 of "normal behaviour", but he steadfastly refuses to buckle.

It's not as if he is kidding himself about the quality of his wines. Two of Australia's most respected independent critics put it thus :

"I can honestly state that I have never, ever tasted a first group of releases from any winery – Australian or from elsewhere – at this level of quality" Jeremy Oliver.

"I can confirm it's all true : Cloudburst really does exist, the wines are exceptional and rare and very expensive" Huon Hooke

Despite all of this, the critical acclaim, the show trophies, the cavalcade of top end restaurants listing his wine, the celebrities and sheiks....Will is still just a battler trying to carve out an existence; endeavouring to get fair value for an extraordinary product that extracts every last ounce of character and personality from his being.

Will Berliner is a proud and determined human of rare gifts that history is still to make its judgement on. But he is fast approaching the tipping point of consistently outstanding quality that will one day see him hailed in the same breath as the greatest wines of the world.

Next time you need to buy a rare gift for a friend, don't buy the usual. Buy a bottle of Cloudburst Wine and give a gift that truly is handcrafted and rare and made by a man who is slightly magical.