

MMA 2015



The Gathering of the Drams

12 Great years

of

Malt Maniacs Awards

MMA 2015; Author's Foreword

Welcome to MMA 2015, a process which started for me in mid-July with sending out my invitations to participate to all my contacts new and old and, which will end in December with the publishing of this Post-MMA report shortly after the initial results announcement.

As is usual with MMA I quickly received some early entries then again as is usual everything quietened down as people enjoyed thoughts of summer holidays rather than whisky competition entries.

My deadline for entries was 26th September which would allow time for 'filling' which is the weekend dedicated to pouring all entries into sample bottles for each judge.

As it happened I received requests from two entrants for a slight deadline extension as they were just bottling some new releases which they'd like to enter. This fitted in with my plans as my actual filling weekend was set to be 3rd & 4th October, with packing and postage to be done by Wednesday 7th. This alone was no small feat as this year saw a total of almost 3,000 sample bottles being filled, secured and packed into 14 parcels for shipment to 8 countries across four continents, incurring a total postage cost in excess of €1,300. Add to this a cost in excess of €1,100 for the sample bottles and it becomes clear that MMA is indeed a logistical conundrum for just over 300kg of whisky samples.

There's no sponsorship or entry fee for MMA, each judge pays their own postage and sample bottle costs and this is exactly how MMA has been run since its inception in 2003. Our three fundamental rules have always been and will remain to be:

- No entry fee
- 100% Amateur
- 100% blind

Of course, back in 2003 The Maniacs collective was much smaller than it is today with just twelve members and none were from whisky's professional ranks but MMA was born and that first year saw 61 entries being submitted with nine judges taking part.

For the record three gold medals were awarded that year to Talisker 21y 1981-2002 OB, Brora 30y OB bottled 2002 and Ardbeg 21y 'committee bottling' with the overall Supreme Champion being the Talisker.

Since then our Supreme Champions have been:

- **2003 Talisker** (21y, 1981-2002, OB)
- **2004 Brora** (30y, bottled 2003, 55.7%, OB)
- **2005 Laphroaig** (31y, 1974-2005, 49.7%, OB for LMDW)
- **2006 Yamazaki** (1984-2005, 56%, OB)
- **2007 Laphroaig** (27y, 1980-2007, 57.4%, OB)
- **2008 Lagavulin** (21y, 1985-2007, 56.5%, OB)
- **2009 Karuizawa** (1972-2008, 65%, No.1 Drinks)
- **2010 Glendronach** (38y, 1972-2010, Cask 700, 49.5%, OB for Taiwan)
- **2011 Glendronach** (39y, 1972-2011, Cask 712, Oloroso Sherry Butt, 49.9%, OB)
- **2012 Glendronach** (40y, 1972-2012, Cask 713, Oloroso Sherry Butt, 50.2%, OB for LMDW)
- **2013 Karuizawa** (1973-2013, No.1 Drinks, cask No.1607, 67.7%)
- **2014 Kavalan Solist** (OB S060904031 57.8%)

Today, 12 years on from our first MMA in 2003 our fundamental rules haven't changed and even though our collective has grown to 29 members including six professionals, we believe that upholding

our traditional values of no entry fee, keeping MMA 100% blind as judges receive only a series of individually numbered sample bottles and that we select our panel of judges from only our amateur ranks, helps to keep MMA both unique and one of the most respected whisky competitions in the annual calendar.

We even impose what we call a 'radio silence' upon judges as they aren't allowed to discuss any aspects of MMA or judging during the competition. The benefits of this are that each judge has the ability to work at their own speed, in their own environment and typically spend much more time with each sample than they would in a 'professional' competition held centrally at a single location over just a few days.

2014 – Missing in Action

I concluded my Post-MMA report last year with the news that it looked like a delivery of entries had not made it to MMA HQ. After publishing the results I was contacted by one entrant asking why none of his entries had even achieved a bronze medal, especially when they usually did quite well in MMA.

To cut a long story short I received no delivery nor delivery notification from the courier in question. After enquiring they sent me a scan of the signature which had supposedly received the delivery at my address. The name was unknown to me and after weeks of searching wasn't known anywhere in this town. As this all came to light towards the end of 2014 when the delivery had supposedly been accepted in September, the courier claimed no responsibility and refused to even look into the matter any further, saying it was now too late. I can only assume that someone, somewhere had an unusually merry Christmas with a rather valuable parcel of whisky.

As a preventative measure to any repeat of this sad episode, this year I asked all entrants to let me know that they were sending entries and I can confirm that all expected parcels did arrive.

It's now late October, the filling weekend successfully saw all entries refilled into the judges' sample bottles, albeit taking a few hours into a third day. Then all parcels were safely despatched and I could finally relax with a few days away with my dear wife whilst the parcels began their often long journeys. Most have now arrived with the judges, one has been sitting in Customs for almost two weeks, but then Mumbai Customs Officers do seem to be a law unto themselves. Two more still need to complete their journeys to American judges, but I'm confident these will soon arrive. Letting those judges begin their MMA tasks for 2015.

This just leaves me to ponder what could be?

We have some magnificent whiskies entered into all three price categories for 2015. After the success of Kavalan last year when they produced our overall Supreme Champion it's no surprise that we have more Kavalan entries this year (from various sources) than ever before. But don't write off Scotland so easily; I'm keeping my eye on various entries including a magnificent-looking Macallan 'Remix' which if I'm not mistaken is the first Macallan we've seen in my 5 years of coordinating MMA. There's also the oldest whisky I've seen entered which is the 1950-2010 60y Glen Grant from G&M and a list of too many others to mention, all of magnificent ages. But MMA is about whiskies of all price ranges and styles and this year we have some mouth-watering prospective head-to-heads especially in the peated categories and, perhaps slightly more unusually a selection of single grain entries including Carsebridge, Strathclyde and Cameronbridge.

So much glorious whisky and so little time!

Sláinte Mhath

Keith Wood

MMA 2015; The Winners

As usual the main focus and 'raison d'être' of our competition is our Awards process where our entries are split into three categories based upon retail price. We have the Daily Drams category for whiskies which typically retail for a price up to €50. Premium category is for whiskies priced from €51 to €150 and Ultra-Premium category for whiskies over €150.

Within each category we offer just five **Awards** comprising Supreme Winner (the entry with the highest average points total across all judges' scorecards, then Best Sherried Whisky, Best Peated Whisky, Best Natural Cask and a Thumbs Up award for an entry which we believe deserves a special mention.

So, without further ado I'd like to confirm our results for 2015:

Supreme Champion of MMA 2015

Kavalan Solist (OB), Sherry Cask No. S060904024



Ultra-Premium



Supreme Winner

Glenfarclas (OB) "Family Casks" 19y Oloroso Casks 3913 & 3914 58.7%



What some of our judges said:

Olivier Humbrecht (95pts) sherry at its best. No faults. Classic good age malt whisky. Delicious. More please!

Krishna Nukala (94pts) Typical sherry bomber. Lots of oak wood. Dried fruits and oriental spices like cloves, nutmeg etc. Christmas cake with lots of nuts and dried fruits like, raisins, prunes and dark fruits. On palate it stars with some dryness. All the dried fruits return with an explosion. Exceedingly sweet with some tannins. Everlasting sherried finish.

Paul Dejong (89pts) Super-duper wow! Heavy Sherry of the best kind! Over-sherried.... Yet so nice!

Ultra-Premium; Best Sherried Whisky

Macallan "Remix" (OB) Special Asian Release, 58.9%



What some of our judges said:

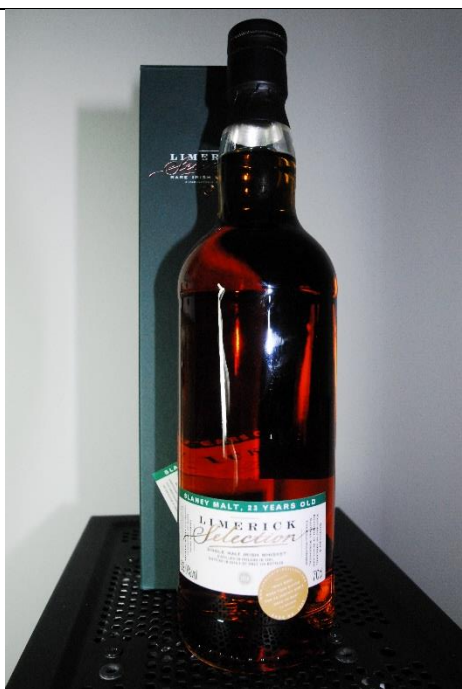
Olivier Humbrecht (91pts) Nice deep amber colour. Rich sweet woody nose. Lots of pine, resin, beeswax aromatics. Vanilla cream. Beautiful round attractive palate. Some age without the dryness. Great long finish, very juicy and attractive. Great dram.

Rich Howard (88pts) The nose starts on cranberry, blackcurrant, plum, red liquorice, small sticks and twigs, and hints of warm panna cotta. The palate offers deep, dark fruits, blackcurrant, plenty of leather, dark chocolate, black coffee and dark wood. A drop of water lightens the nose just a touch, leaving dark fruits ... maybe some milk chocolate now. Overview: dark fruits, dark chocolate, dark wood.

Krishna Nukala (94pts) On palate - it is simply delicious, nectar meant for gods- Unbelievably good stuff.

Ultra-Premium; Best Natural Cask Whisky

Adelphi "Slaney Malt" 23y Cask No.8585 59%



What some of our judges said:

Olivier Humbrecht (97pts) Nice intense beautiful fruits, lots of exotic/passion fruits, very complex. Waow! Absolutely fabulous. I'll keep my nose on this glass the whole evening. The palate just follows up. Massive fruity aromatics that work so well. Full intensity, perfect structure and power, long finish. An amazing achievement! So great and so more-ish. Long intense finish, not burning, nothing to add or take away. Perfection. A dream!

Paul Dejong (89pts) Wow! Fruit bowl, nice tropical notes, orange, chocolate... Superb!

Krishna Nukala (86pts) Excellent delicious palate. Very sweet and round, lovely finish.

Ultra-Premium; Best Peated Whisky

Wilson & Morgan "Barrel Selection" Caol Ila 25y Casks 4707 & 4708 54.3%



What some of our judges said:

Krishna Nukala (89pts) Strongly phenolic- Lots of peat and smoked fruits. Cardboard smoke, salt liquorice etc. On palate- very full bodied. Sweet and bitter and spicy Very long peat and smoke finish.

Rich Howard (86pts) a strongly phenolic nose, with smoked fruits, smoked cheddar, plums dropped in ash, warm asphalt in the sun, a drift of freshly-spent gunpowder on the tail. The palate is quite brisk and fairly extreme, plenty of burning fruits here, smouldering oak, hot rubber and plastic, and a touch of sulphur. A drop or two of water tames the nose a bit, more on smoky fruits and berries now, charred wood, far less asphalt and/or rubber, still a touch of matchstick and gunpowder drifting in the distance... Quite a bit of water is required to turn this into a fairly extreme but fairly enjoyable smoky and fruity dram.

Ultra-Premium; Thumbs-Up Award

Overeem "Old Hobart" Cask OHD-074 60%

(Awarded for outstanding performance of this and all Overeem whiskies this year)



What some of our judges said:

Krishna Nukala (91pts) Rich nose, with some lactones. Complex dried fruits. Faint hints of interesting/weird smoke. Very heavy sweet nose. Lots of fruit candies. Poached pear or apples. Dry palate. Very sweet and complex. Mild smoke return on palate with loads of fruit candies and exceedingly long finish. Brilliant whisky.

Patrick de Schulthess (89pts) (Nose) lactic acid fresh yeast lemon grass curry spice, peppery. (Palate) cognac, herbal tea, overripe apple, camphor (Finish) long camphor.

Rich Howard (88pts) (Nose) cranberry and blood orange... dusky, almost savoury fruits, then fresh cherries and vanilla... palate along much the same lines, with spicy citrus and berries, a hint of liquorice, black coffee, cigar tobacco, sticks and twigs.

Premium Category



Supreme Winner

(& MMA Supreme Champion)

Kavalan Solist (OB), Sherry Cask No. S060904024



What some of our judges said:

Olivier Humbrecht (94pts) Very inviting and enjoyable nose. So classic. Fantastic! Age but no dry tannins in excess. Lots of cask influence in perfect balance. Great power. Long mellow finish. Successful dark sherry.

Krishna Nukala (90pts) Very sweet, smooth and long lasting. A sherried monster.

Paul Dejong (90pts) Yes! Again opulent full-bodied Sherry.... Good, very good!

Rich Howard (94pts) Loads of cigar tobacco and quality oak tannins. Deep dark fruits and berries, chocolate and caramel and quality oak. An excellent dram...

Premium; Best Sherried Whisky

Kavalan Solist Sherry Cask No. S081229019 (OB for Asia Palate Assoc) 56.3%

Kavalan Solist Sherry Cask No. S081229020 (OB for Asia Palate Assoc) 57.1%



Premium; Best Natural Cask Whisky

Ichiro's Malt Chichibu "Chibi Daru" 53.5%

A bottle of Ichiro's Malt Chichibu "Chibi Daru" whisky. The label is white with black text and features a small illustration of a person. The bottle is dark glass and contains a golden liquid.	<p>What some of our judges said:</p> <p>Paul Dejong (90pts) Nice spicy tropical fruitiness. Topy.</p> <p>Patrick de Schulthess (87pts) creamy, flowery, long, nice woodiness.</p> <p>Olivier Humbrecht (86pts) Attractive straight style. Easy delicate balance but nice power. Fruity, develops exotic fruits.</p> <p>Rich Howard (86pts) very interesting, and quite nice.</p> <p>Krishna Nukala (84pts) With a drop of water we get some smoke. Dry ashes On palate very sweet and quite enjoyable. Very good finish.</p>
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Premium; Best Peated Whisky

Blackadder "Raw Cask" Peated Amrut Cask BA20/2015 62.1%



What some of our judges said:

Olivier Humbrecht (90pts) Nice medicinal iodine peat nose. Powerful long palate. Classic strong peat, very well balanced finish. Great peat smoke maritime malt. Warm long finish.

Patrick de Schulthess (89pts) (Nose) milk chocolate, woody, flowery, creamy ginger beer. (Palate) Peaty, maritime, flowery, creamy, long & complex. (Finish) short but intense, very nice, elegant.

Rich Howard (88pts) A feisty dram full of smoke and tropical fruits.

Paul Dejong (86pts) Subdued Sherry and peat, spicy, forest, meaty Good.

Premium; Thumbs-Up Award

Amrut (OB) Spectrum 50%

(Awarded for 'cask innovation' for creating a finishing cask of 5 different woods)



What some of our judges said:

Krishna Nukala (94pts) Unbelievably good whisky. Out of this world. Oh, my god!! What is this whisky?

Patrick de Schulthess (86pts) sherry, nuts, almond, oily, woody, cashew nuts.

Rich Howard (85pts) the nose offers blood orange, hints of cranberry sauce, a touch of not-too-dark chocolate, a touch of tree bark. The palate is quite brisk, and along the same notes, growing a touch herbal and tannic on the finish. Water opens up the citrus and sour-ish berries on the nose, a hint of vanilla now, a touch of red liquorice... still a whiff of milk chocolate. The palate less feisty and bit spicier now, with cinnamon and nutmeg, black coffee and tree bark. Nice with a drop or two of water.

Daily Drams category



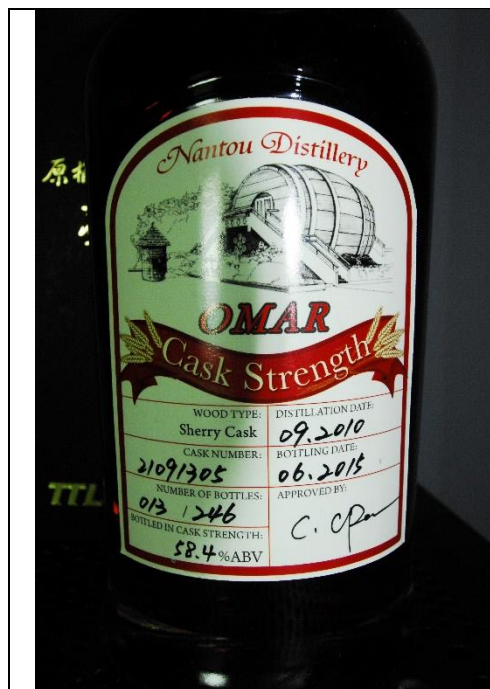
Supreme Winner

TTL Nantou (OB for Aroma TW) Sherry Cask No.841 58%

	<p>What some of our judges said:</p> <p>Olivier Humbrecht (93pts) Complex peat sherry combination. Light medicinal/herbal nose. Sharp long intriguing palate. Fire, maritime, dry, some fruit.</p> <p>Krishna Nukala (90pts) Fruit bomber. Lots of sherry. Excellent woody notes suggesting a well-aged whisky in a sherry cask. Mild smoke too. Brilliant nose! Heavy sherry and oriental; spices- cloves, cinnamon and dry fruits. Heavy full bodied mouthfeel with a long, long finish.</p> <p>Rich Howard (90pts) An inviting nose of mandarin orange, orange marmalade, fresh blueberry, a handful of twigs and sticks, just a touch of charred oak in the background.</p>
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Daily Drams; Best Sherried Whisky

TTL Nantou "Omar" Sherry Cask No.21091305 58.4%



What some of our judges said:

Krishna Nukala (90pts) Rich sherry, lots of candied fruits- Very sweet, brown sugar nose. Lots of dried fruits. A little later some organics and vegetal matters. Dry on palate- very fruity and sweet, all the dry fruits return on palate. Exceedingly long finish.

Paul Dejong (84pts) Heavy, smoky sherry, raisins, chocolate, coffee...

Rich Howard (85pts) the nose offers a handful of berries (raspberry, blueberry and some blackberry), concord grapes and a touch of vanilla crème. The palate is both dusky and punchy, stewed dark fruits, black coffee, black liquorice, fresh twigs, a dusting of soot, singed wood. Overview: dark fruits, dusky and sooty.

Daily Drams; Best Natural Cask Whisky

Nantou (OB) "Omar" Bourbon Cask No.11090105 56.8%



What some of our judges said:

Patrick de Schulthess (91pts) (Nose) cedar wood damp forest creamy milk chocolate. (Palate) cedar and pin wood, white fruit, coffee, apple pie. (Finish) Long rich liquorice, nice woodiness.

Paul Dejong (89pts) Liquorice, red fruit, tropical, very good! ... No, very good! Bourbon like!

Krishna Nukala (88pts) Dried coconut, Excellent, varnished wood, coconut, candy sweet, very sweet and dry, excellent mouthfeel, delicious long finish.

Olivier Humbrecht (84pts) Nice rich quite powerful round palate. Good length. Some exotic fruits on finish. Attractive.

Daily Drams; Best Peated Whisky

Lagavulin 16y OB 43%



What some of our judges said:

Rich Howard (87pts) A dash of antiseptic, a whiff of fresh gauze, hints of baked custard... I think I know what territory we're in here. Overview; sweet and smoky done right.

Krishna Nukala (86pts) Horse stables. Peat and smoke. Sweet on nose. Wet chalk. Almost like Lagavulin. Nice, round, medicinal sweetishness on palate. Long peaty finish.

Patrick de Schulthess (86pts) very long, maritime, salty oyster, nice.

Olivier Humbrecht (84pts) Classic rich peat.

Daily Drams; Thumbs-Up Award

Edradour (OB) Ballechin 10y Bourbon & Oloroso Casks & Heavily Peated 46%

(Awarded for great quality and solid performance from this small Independent distillery.)



What some of our judges said:

Olivier Humbrecht (88pts) Light medicinal iodine nose. Strong smoky, bonfire ashes aromatics developing on the palate. Good alcohol strength but there is a sense of sweetness. Pure style, no wood influence. Nice finish.

Krishna Nukala (86pts) Beautiful smoke and peat. Heavy salts, like brine. Sea breeze accompanied by sweet fruity notes from rear.

MMA should be considered to be two competitions rolled into one; firstly and primarily we have the actual Awards which I have just detailed above. All except the Thumbs-Up Awards are decided upon highest average scores across all judges within each category. The Supreme Winners are the outright highest scoring whiskies, then Best Sherried, Natural and Peated are the highest scoring entries by cask and whisky type. The scores do play a part in our Thumbs-Up Awards, but perhaps more importantly we consider other parameters like value for money and consistency of quality.

Secondly, we award a series of medals to recognise the overall quality of entries; any entry managing an average score of 90 points or more across all judges will receive a gold medal which means that, in our opinion, these are exceptionally outstanding whiskies. 85-89 Points will receive silver medals which confirm that, again in our opinion, these are excellent and highly recommendable whiskies. Any which gain 80-84 points receive bronze medals and are acknowledged as good everyday drams.

Once again this year we have awarded just four of our coveted Gold Medals which, along with our Silver and Bronze Medals are detailed in our official MMA 2015 Judges' Scorecard:



Our official scorecard showing all MMA Gold Medal final scores and also individual scores from each judge:

Pts	Gold Medals	OH	Pds	OK	HCY	RH	KG	KN	PD	DW	RK	PS
91	Kavalan 'Solist' (58.6%, OB, NAS, Sherry Cask c#S060904024, 551 Bts., 2012)	94	87	84	92	94	92	90	90	91	92	90
90	Kavalan 'Solist' (56.3%, OB for Asia Palate Assoc., NAS, Sherry Cask c#S081229019, 522 Bts., 2015*)	94	87	85	91	91	94	91	82	95	92	88
90	Kavalan 'Solist' (57.1%, OB for Asia Palate Assoc., NAS, Sherry Cask c#S081229020, 526 Bts., 2015*)	93	89	84	90	90	92	93	86	96	92	85
90	Glenfarclas 19yo 1994/2014 'Double Cask' (58.7%, OB, Oloroso c#3913&3914, 556 Bts.)	95	85	86	91	86	88	94	89	94	90	90
Pts	Silver Medals	OH	Pds	OK	HCY	RH	KG	KN	PD	DW	RK	PS
89	Glendronach 21yo 1993/2014 (56.4%, OB for Kenny Hsu's Coll. TW, NAS, Oloroso Sherry Butt c#477, 589 Bts.)	88	85	84	90	94	93	90	91	88	92	87
89	Kavalan 'Solist' (55.6%, OB for Whisky Luxe TW, NAS, Sherry Cask c#S081229026, 527 Bts., 2015*)	93	86	82	90	90	92	92	84	89	90	92
89	Macallan 'Remix' (58.9%, OB, NAS, Special Asian Release, 500 Bts.)	91	88	86	92	88	91	94	89	91	90	79
88	Kavalan 'Solist' (56.3%, OB for Asia Palate Association, Sherry Cask c#S081229018, 522 Bts., 2015*)	91	84	89	87	92	92	93	87	93	88	80
88	Slaney Malt 23yo 1991/2015 (59%, Adelphi, Ireland, c# 8585, 134 Bts.)	97	90	90	85	84	91	86	89	88	89	80
87	Glenglassaugh 41yo 1972/2014 (50.6%, OB, Sherry Butt c#2114, 582 Bts.)	91	84	85	89	88	91	87	90	89	90	83
87	Nantou 3yo 2010/2014 (58%, OB for Aroma TW, Sherry Cask c#841, 240 Bts.)	93	84	84	92	90	88	90	77	89	88	92
87	Chieftain's Collection 'Speyside' 22yo 1990/2012 (46%, Chieftain's, First Fill Sherry Butt c#5162, 693 Bts.)	84	83	85	90	87	90	93	90	84	93	85
87	Amrut 'Spectrum' (50 %,OB, NAS, Bourbon, Hand-crafted 5 wood, 1000 Bts., 2015)	90	86	87	85	85	92	94	71	92	91	90
87	Glendronach 21yo 1993/2014 (53.6%, OB for Aroma Taiwan, Oloroso Sherry Butt c#479, 542 Bts.)	93	86	83	89	88	88	92	89	91	76	82
86	Glen Grant 60yo 1950/2010 (40 %, G&M, First Fill & Refill Sherry, c#2750&2760)	90	83	86	94	88	91	86	91	74	93	80
86	Amrut 5yo 2010/2015 (56.5%, OB exclusive for Taiwan, Oloroso Sherry, c#3823, 600 Bts.)	92	95	87	90	86	90	93	72	90	90	70
86	Amrut 'Peated' (62.1%, Blackadder Raw Cask, NAS, c#BA20/2015, 182 Bts., 2015)	90	89	86	84	88	92	82	86	82	87	89
86	Kavalan 'Solist' (57.1%, OB for Life Whisky Tasting Club, NAS, Sherry Cask c#S081229025, 511 Bts., 2015*)	88	86	84	89	89	89	92	82	88	91	77
86	Glendronach 11yo 2003/2014 (55.3%, OB for Aroma Taiwan, PX Sherry Puncheon c#4006, 690 Bts.)	89	85	85	91	91	82	91	83	85	86	86
86	Overeem 'Cask Strength - Sherry Cask' (60%, OB, NAS, c#OHD-074, 47 Bts., 2015*)	74	89	89	89	88	81	91	81	89	88	94
86	Tomatin 36yo 1977/2015 'Rare Casks - Batch 1' (46%, OB, c#48&30142, 798 Bts.)	94	88	90	84	85	86	85	89	87	88	77
86	Home Blend 35yo 1980/2015 (47.6% Wilson & Morgan, , Blended whisky, Sherry Butt c#26, 529 Bts.)	90	85	82	90	88	83	90	86	84	91	83
86	Glendronach 25yo 1990/2015 (51.6%, OB, Batch 12, PX Sherry Puncheon c#1375, 656 Bts.)	92	85	83	88	92	88	90	74	90	76	94
86	Caol Ila 25yo 1990/2015 (54.3%, Wilson & Morgan, Oloroso finish, c#4707&4708, 408 Bts.)	89	85	87	87	86	91	89	77	84	87	88
86	Chichibu 2011/2015 'The Peated (Cask Strength)' (62.5%, Number One Drinks, 5980 Bts.)	87	88	86	87	84	86	88	89	89	87	79
86	Nantou 4yo 2010/2015 'Omar' (58.4%, OB, Sherry Cask c#21091305, 246 Bts.)	83	85	85	86	85	82	90	84	92	89	87
86	Kavalan 'Solist' (Peaty Cask) (54%, OB for Whisky Live Paris, NAS, c#R070507001, 114 Bts., 2015*)	83	85	89	92	89	81	88	89	85	88	79
86	Nantou 7yo 2008/2015 'Omar' (50.1%, OB, Sherry Cask c#21090080, 240 Bts.)	87	84	90	86	89	85	93	89	81	85	78
86	Nantou 6yo 2009/2015 'Omar' (56.8%, OB, Bourbon Cask c#11090105, 190 Bts.)	84	91	84	87	84	80	88	89	88	88	84
86	Glenlivet 19yo 1995/2015 (58.1 %, Signatory CS Collection, Sherry Butt c#166951, 526 Bts.)	79	87	85	92	91	90	91	73	87	86	85
85	Chichibu 2010/2014 'Chibi Daru' (53.5%, Number One Drinks, 6200 Bts.)	86	85	86	83	86	88	84	90	87	85	84
85	Bowmore 18yo 1997/2015 (58%, Blackadder Cask Strength, 242 Bts.)	86	88	87	89	84	87	78	89	84	84	88
85	Ballechin 11yo 2004/2015 (54.6 %,OB for Vintage Wines, Heavily Peated, Manzanilla Sherry c#270)	86	87	85	88	83	85	88	74	89	88	90
85	Nantou 6yo 2009/2015 'Omar' (56.3%, OB, Bourbon Cask c#11090106, 163 Bts.)	87	85	82	83	86	83	88	89	81	86	92
85	Caol Ila 30y 1984/2015 (50.5 %, LMDW Artist #5, Hoghead c#2763, 205 Bts.)	89	86	87	84	87	87	83	89	71	85	93
85	Overeem 'Cask Strength - Port Cask' (60%,OB, NAS, c#OHD-029, 125 Bts., 2015*)	75	84	92	78	88	83	91	84	90	91	84

Pts	Silver Medals	OH	PdS	OK	HCY	RH	KG	KN	PD	DW	RK	PS
85	Amrut 5yo 2010/2015 (62.8%, OB for Whisky Master TW "Lesson 8", Ex-Bourbon finish (peated), c#2425, 170 Bts.)	90	88	83	89	84	88	85	76	86	85	86
85	The Glenlivet 'Nadurra Batch No. OLO614' (60.7 %, NAS , First Fill Oloroso., 2014)	74	87	83	85	92	86	90	81	84	86	92
85	Benriach 18yo 1996/2014 (54.4%, OB for Asia Palate Association, PX Sherry finish, c#4521, 717 Bts.)	82	85	86	90	88	82	90	89	89	90	68
85	Caol Ila 12yo 2003/2015 (58.1%, Adelphi, c#301266, 285 Bts.)	88	87	86	88	83	87	85	79	87	87	82
85	Edradour 14yo 2000/2014 (56.8%, OB for GI Jane, c#2033, 674 Bts.)	75	84	87	90	90	83	91	75	XXX	89	89
85	Aberlour 'A'bunadh Batch 50' (59.6 %,OB, NAS, Oloroso Butts, 2015*)	88	85	86	87	83	80	90	82	88	86	83
85	Kavalan 'Solist' (57.1%, OB, NAS, Bourbon Cask c#B100723021A, 199 Bts., 2015*)	92	87	87	88	80	85	81	86	84	81	86
85	Mortlach 27yo 1987/2015 (56.8%, Adelphi, Sherry Hogshead c#3104, 271 Bts.)	87	87	87	89	89	85	88	88	88	88	61
85	Clynelish 22yo 1992/2014 (62.1%, Blackadder Raw Cask, Oak Hogshead c#7166, 190 Bts.)	90	85	88	87	86	85	83	78	88	85	82
85	Caol Ila 9yo 2004/2014 (58.5%, G&M for TWE, Refill Sherry Hogshead c#30655)	86	86	82	85	87	89	87	82	87	84	81
85	Edradour 10yo 2004/2015 (55.9 %, OB, Sherry Butt, c#443, 980 Bts.)	79	88	85	86	91	80	90	73	93	87	84
85	Lagavulin 16yo (43%, OB, 2015*)	84	86	83	80	87	87	86	82	87	83	90
85	Amrut (61%, Blackadder Raw Cask, NAS, Sherry Cask finish, c#BA2015/21, 370 Bts., 2015)	85	83	86	83	82	85	87	89	84	88	83
Pts	Bronze Medals	OH	PdS	OK	HCY	RH	KG	KN	PD	DW	RK	PS
84	Amrut 4yo 2011/2015 (59%, OB for Whisky-L Taiwan 2015, Port Pipe c#2714-A, 380 Bts.)	84	88	80	85	87	83	91	84	89	83	80
84	Laphroaig 16yo 1998/2015 (59.9%, Signatory Vintage for TWE, Refill Sherry Butt c#700389, 585 Bts.)	84	86	84	82	82	88	90	71	89	91	87
84	Arran 9yo 2005/2015 (57.8%, OB for LMDW, Sherry Hogshead c#2005/037, 312 Bts.)	76	88	88	87	89	81	90	69	91	90	85
84	Benriach 35yo (42.5%, OB, 2015*)	87	88	84	88	87	77	88	92	70	90	83
84	Glenlivet 18yo 1996/2015 (46%, Signatory Vintage for LMDW, First Fill Sherry Butt c#83266, 471 Bts.)	86	85	85	85	91	87	86	78	85	87	78
84	Benriach 20yo 1994/2014 (54.7%, OB for Aroma Taiwan, Oloroso Butt, peated, c#808, 678 Bts.)	91	89	90	86	82	88	90	75	84	87	70
84	Kilchoman 5yo 2009/2014 (58.3%, OB for Abbey Whisky, PX Sherry Cask finish, c#285/2009, 270 Bts.)	82	87	87	85	80	90	88	71	86	86	90
84	Shinshu Mars 3yo 2011 'Komagatake' (57%, Number One Drinks, 2015*)	87	87	80	89	85	88	88	88	85	68	86
84	Lagavulin 19yo 1995/2014 (54.7%, OB, Feis Ile 2014, European Oak Sherry Butts)	87	89	81	79	85	85	87	76	82	83	95
84	Ballechin 10yo (46 %, OB, Heavily Peated, Bourbon & Oloroso)	88	84	86	87	78	85	86	79	87	87	82
84	Glenjoyne 'Cask Strength - Batch 003' (58.2%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	83	85	83	82	84	87	89	86	85	82	82
84	Aberfeldy 21yo (40%, OB, 2015*)	85	86	79	87	83	75	83	87	87	90	86
84	Glenrothes 25yo 1990/2015 (56.6%, Douglas Laing XOP, Sherry Butt c#DL10784, 285 Bts.)	87	84	81	78	88	82	85	86	89	83	85
84	Mortlach 25yo (43.4%, OB, 50cl, 2015*)	85	87	84	82	88	80	86	87	74	87	87
84	Speyburn 26yo 1988/2015 (52.3 %, Berry Bros., c#2114)	88	86	86	87	85	77	85	84	77	89	83
84	Finch 'Barrel Proof' (54%, Hofgut Aglishard, Bourbon, Red wine finish, 50cl, 1724 Bts., 2015)	83	93	87	85	86	81	85	86	86	87	86
84	Kornog 'Tauarich Chwechved 14BC' (58.2%, OB, Single Bourbon Barrel, 2015*)	88	85	85	80	83	77	85	89	83	84	86
84	Glendullan 38yo 'Singleton' (59.8 %, OB, Special Release, 3756 Bts., 2014)	82	83	84	81	87	85	87	89	80	86	80
84	Robust Smoky Embers 23yo (54.3%, Cadenhead, Batch 1, Blended whisky, 2015*)	91	84	86	86	88	80	80	78	86	83	82
84	Ledaig 16yo 1998/2015 'Carn Mor' (56.2%, Morrison & Mackay for HNWS, Hogshead c#700244, 258 Bts.)	88	88	83	85	81	85	73	89	84	85	83
84	Flaming Heart (48.9 %, Compass Box, NAS, 15 th Anniversary Ed., Toasted French Oak, 12060 Bts.)	82	87	87	84	85	85	86	84	82	83	79
83	Longrow 12yo 'Red Pinot Noir' (52.9 %, OB, 11y Bourbon Casks, 9000 Bts., 2015*)	86	89	81	89	80	88	89	70	85	78	88
83	Glendronach 21yo 'Parliament' (48%, OB, Oloroso & PX Sherry Casks, 2015*)	79	89	76	87	90	84	92	81	88	77	80
83	Glenfarclas 25yo 1989/2014 (46%, OB)	88	83	82	85	83	89	87	81	85	90	70
83	Laphroaig 12yo 2002/2015 (50%, Douglas Laing OMC, Refill Butt c#11511, 332 Bts.)	83	87	80	87	70	90	84	91	86	88	77
83	Kilchoman 5yo 2010/2015 'The Trilogy' (60.5%, OB for LMDW, Bourbon c#260/2010, 267 Bts.)	89	87	88	84	79	77	80	81	87	85	86
83	Strathclyde 27yo 1988/2015 (53 %, Berry Bros., c#62118)	86	86	89	86	84	77	82	86	86	77	84
83	Talisker 'Skye' (45.8%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	84	86	88	90	85	83	80	84	84	82	76
83	Benromach 10yo '100 Proof' (57 %, OB, 2015*)	84	87	84	83	87	88	81	78	86	81	83
83	Laphroaig 16yo 1998/2014 (49.1%, Douglas Laing Old Particular for HNWS, Refill Hogshead c#DL10579, 300 Bts.)	87	84	82	87	78	82	81	82	74	90	94
83	Arran 18yo 1996/2015 (50.5%, Single Malts of Scotland , Puncheon c#896928, 624 Bts.)	84	82	82	84	84	80	89	78	85	87	85
83	Caol Ila 10yo 2005/2015 (56.4%, G&M for McWhisky, First Fill Bourbon c#301545, 233 Bts.)	88	84	86	84	83	89	74	78	87	82	84
83	Benriach 17yo 'Septendecim' (46 %, OB, Peated, 2015*)	78	86	82	88	84	83	83	87	75	85	88
83	Amrut 'Fusion Batch #5' (50%, OB, 75cl, 2015)	88	84	86	77	86	80	84	79	82	86	86
83	Benriach 12yo (46%, OB, Sherry Wood, 2015*)	83	84	86	86	84	82	85	76	84	84	84
83	Ledaig 10y 2004/2015 (60.4 %, LMDW Artist #5, Sherry Butt c#900179, 588 Bts.)	86	87	68	90	82	91	92	77	86	84	75
83	Lagavulin 12yo (54.4%, OB, Special Release, 2014)	79	83	83	89	85	85	70	81	85	87	90
83	Edradour 11yo 2002/2014 (58.5%, OB for GI Jane, Sherry Butt c#1211, 50cl, 991 Bts.)	82	83	84	89	82	80	91	73	89	86	78
83	Amrut 'Naarangi' (50 %,OB, NAS, Oloroso infused w. Orange, 900 Bts.)	86	85	86	86	87	79	83	71	83	89	82
83	Glenfachaers 18yo 1996/2014 (46 %, Berry Bros., c#1161)	83	82	83	82	82	83	81	90	87	80	84
83	Mosstownie 35yo 30.11.1979/15.5.2015 (48.1 %,Signatory, Bourbon Barrel c#25756, 29 / 171)	81	87	82	78	88	80	82	86	82	81	90
83	Overeem 'Cask Strength - Bourbon Cask' (60%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	87	86	90	82	77	81	80	84	84	79	85
83	Talisker 'Storm' (45.8%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	82	86	86	84	83	83	79	84	81	82	85
83	Edradour 21yo 1993/2015 (51.2 %, OB, Sauternes cask finish, c#8/737/2, 293 Bts.)	81	86	90	81	88	70	89	80	88	80	82
83	Caol Ila 12yo (43%, OB, 2015*)	79	84	83	85	88	83	80	90	68	84	90
83	Caol Ila 10yo 2004/2015 (60.1 %, G&M, First Fill Sherry Butts)	89	85	81	88	80	90	85	89	82	84	61
83	Highland Park 'Dark Origins' (46.8%, OB, NAS, "Double" 1st Fill Sherry Casks, 2015*)	78	85	84	84	82	82	86	72	91	84	85
83	Talisker 'Port Ruighe' (45.8%, OB, NAS, Port Casks, 2015*)	89	85	85	89	89	77	83	84	73	77	82
82	Royal Brackla 30yo 1984/2015 (54.1%, Cadenhead, Bourbon Hogshead, 192 Bts.)	93	79	84	78	86	82	90	80	77	87	76
82	Caol Ila 'Moch' (43%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	83	86	84	87	81	75	79	86	85	86	
82	Port Askaig 16yo (45.8%, Speciality Drinks, 2015*)	75	87	85	85	88	82	80	84	81	84	79
82	Tamdhu 'Batch Strength - Batch 001' (58.8%, OB, NAS, Sherry Casks, 2015*)	70	87	86	84	84	82	90	81	83	84	79
82	Carsebridge 38y 26.10.1976/24.8.2015 (55.8 %, Signatory Vintage for LMDW, Hogshead c#130950, 184 Bts.)	76	86	91	84	79	81	88	90	X	65	87
82	Bunnahabhain 27yo 1987/2014 (51.9%, OB for TFWS Taiwan, Refill Hogshead, 190 Bts.)	78	82	87	90	84	78	77	82	85	87	79
82	Clynelish 18yo 1996/2014 (52.7%, Whisky Agency, Refill Butt, 360 Bts.)	87	84	83	80	75	85	88	79	86	83	79
82	Talisker 10yo (45.8%, OB, 2015*)	87	86	82	87	78	78	81	78	81	81	84
82	Finlaggan 'CS 58%' (58%, Whisky.com.TW, NAS, 2015*)	86	85	82	93	83	78	85	75	65	87	90
82	Clynelish 21y 1992/2014 (49.8 %, LMDW Jam Session #3, Bourbon Hogshead c#1510/9)	83	85	83	78	88	82	84	76	84	79	87
82	Ballechin '#8' (46 %, OB, NAS, Heavily Peated, Sauternes Hogsheads, 2015*)	87	86	87	80	82	80	85	74	86	82	80
82	Kilkerran 'Work in Progress 7' (46%, OB, NAS, Sherry Wood, 2015*)	82	87	88	85	87	91	86	69	80	78	75
82	Littlemill 26yo 1988/2014 (51.2%, Art Taiwan / Bow Bar Sapporo, c#7, 147 Bts.)	78	87	88	77	83	72	82	89	80	84	86
82	Benriach 17yo 1998/2015 (48.9%, OB for TWE, PX Sherry Finish, c#7758, 704 Bts.)	80	84	80	84	86	82	90	78	84	81	77
82	Benromach 2006/2015 'Peat Smoke' (46 %,OB)	89	87	76	86	85	83	75	84	82	78	81
82	Kornog 'Sant Ivy 2015' (59.6%, OB, NAS, Single Bourbon Barrel, Peated, 2015)	77	84	85	80	82	77	80	88	77	88	87
82	Talisker 18yo (45.8%, OB, 2015*)	84	82	85	85	87	80	78	80	79	88	77
82	Carsebridge 38y 26.10.1976/24.8.2015 (55.8 %, Signatory Vintage for LMDW, Hogshead c#130950, 184 Bts.)	83	83	84	79	72	85	87	81	80	83	88
82	Anon 13yo 2001/2015 'Batch 001' (51.5%, Abbey Whisky, 90 Bts.)	77	87	86	80	82	85	88	69	84	76	90

Pts	Bronze Medals	OH	PdS	OK	HCY	RH	KG	KN	PD	DW	RK	PS
82	Glenglassaugh 30yo (44.8%, OB)	87	82	80	84	86	75	83	79	73	88	87
82	Bowmore 17y 1996/2013 (49.8%, LMDW Jam Session #3, Hogshead c#960051)	83	80	88	91	90	75	78	76	81	85	77
82	Ballechin 11y 2004/2015 (56.1%, LMDW Trilogy 2015, Manzanilla Cask c#277)	88	88	77	90	79	92	85	71	84	89	61
82	Black Snake 'Vat 2 Second Venom' (57.7%, Blackadder, Sherry Butt finish, 342 Bts., 2015)	82	87	85	86	80	80	81	66	88	86	82
81	Elements of Islay 'CI7' (58.5%, Speciality Drinks, NAS, 'Caol Ila', 2015*)	80	85	83	83	81	78	75	81	86	81	88
81	The English Whisky Co 7yo 2007/2015 (63.5%, Blackadder Raw Cask, Sauternes cask c#804, 224 Bts.)	75	87	84	87	93	80	87	73	81	75	78
81	Craigellachie 13yo (46%, OB, Batch 83-LH88, 2015*)	72	84	81	80	79	87	86	76	81	84	90
81	Bunnahabhain 26yo 1987/2014 (46%, Berry Bros., c#2787)	79	84	84	80	79	80	85	74	82	85	88
81	Singleton of Dufftown 12yo (40%, OB, 2015*)	78	86	82	86	84	81	85	75	82	80	80
81	Finlaggan 'Ileach - Single Cask' (58.5%, Vintage Malt Co. TW, NAS, c#VMW 002, 330 Bts., 2015*)	79	85	84	87	85	88	88	74	81	88	60
81	Edradour 15yo 'Fairy Flag' (46%, OB, Ex-Bourbon, min. 7yrs in Oloroso, 2015*)	76	84	86	88	86	75	88	78	81	80	77
81	Armorik 7yo 2008/2015 'Maitre de Chai' (46%, OB, c#3325&3322, First Fill Oloroso (4y) finish, 1700 Bts.)	86	83	84	77	78	79	84	78	82	83	84
81	Bunnahabhain 8yo (43%, G&M The MacPhail's Collection, 2015*)	83	85	80	87	76	83	78	74	84	84	84
81	Nantou 'Omar' (46%, OB, NAS, Sherry Casks, 2015*)	78	92	84	84	86	85	86	79	72	80	71
81	Springbank 10yo (46%, OB, 2015*)	77	88	79	87	83	85	77	79	81	81	78
81	Clynelish 18yo 1997/2015 (53.3%, Wilson & Morgan, Tokaji Wood finish, c#6493)	87	88	85	88	77	87	88	64	84	80	67
81	Black Snake 'Vat 6 First Venom' (56.3%, Blackadder, NAS, PX Sherry Cask finish, 398 Bts., 2015)	79	86	81	83	85	71	80	76	87	85	82
81	Littlemill 23y 1990/2014 (52.3%, LMDW Jam Session #2, Bourbon Hogshead c#30)	76	83	84	77	87	77	83	91	83	84	70
81	Clynelish 17yo 1997/2014 (55.2%, Berry Bros., c#4050)	92	84	80	76	82	77	81	77	86	81	79
81	Bunnahabhain 24yo 1989/2014 (42.9% Berry Bros., c#5716)	76	85	83	82	83	75	77	88	84	85	77
81	Peat Reek (46%, Blackadder, NAS, c#Ref: PR2015-3, 452 Bts., 2015)	84	85	86	84	75	81	82	74	82	84	77
81	Aultmore 25yo (46%, OB, Batch No.41, 2015*)	74	83	85	82	85	85	80	78	80	84	77
81	Tomatin 'Cask Strength Edition' (57.5%, OB, NAS, 2015*)	79	86	80	82	88	87	85	67	81	75	82
81	Glenlivet (Minmore) 18yo 1996/2015 (53.7%, Cadenhead, Bourbon Barrel, 180 Bts.)	89	84	87	78	85	75	82	81	84	84	62
81	Mortlach 18yo (43.4%, OB, 50cl, 2015*)	81	84	81	84	81	70	85	84	76	83	82
80	Glencadam 22yo (55.3%, Abbey Whisky, 96 Bts., 2015*)	84	81	83	84	84	77	82	78	74	79	84
80	Bunnahabhain 16yo 1998/2014 (54.3%, The First Editions, 90 Bts.)	79	84	83	78	83	72	81	75	80	85	87
80	Oban 'Little Bay' (43%, OB, NAS, 100 cl, 2015*)	78	84	84	82	82	75	82	78	74	85	83
80	Elements of Islay 'Oct1' (65.4%, Speciality Drinks, NAS, 'Octomore', 50cl, 2015*)	87	88	91	90	50	91	85	79	81	84	60
80	Craigellachie 23yo (46%, OB, Batch 67 KA23, 2015*)	86	84	72	82	86	85	78	74	72	87	78
80	Aultmore 21yo (46%, OB, Batch No.107, 75cl, 2015*)	86	83	79	83	80	82	78	79	71	77	86
80	Aultmore 18yo (46%, OB, Batch No.481, 2015*)	80	83	78	85	75	80	80	80	77	84	81
80	Cameronbridge 25yo 1990/2015 (60.6%, Douglas Laing Old Particular, Refill Butt c#DL10806, 282 Bts.)	82	86	76	83	83	83	85	79	86	79	60
80	Mortlach 'Rare Old' (43.4%, OB, NAS, 50 cl, 2015*)	84	84	77	79	76	77	82	87	81	75	80
80	Cardhu 'Amber Rock' (40%, OB, NAS, Toasted Bourbon Casks, 2015*)	84	86	83	75	82	78	79	82	77	80	76
80	Kornog 'Taouarch Eilved 15BC' (46%, Glann Ar Mor distillery, Bourbon Barrel, 2015*)	82	84	83	79	73	72	77	76	77	88	90
80	Singleton of Dufftown 18yo (40%, OB, 2015*)	72	83	78	75	87	78	84	76	83	81	84
80	Nantou 'Omar' (46%, OB, Bourbon Casks, 2015*)	73	84	81	82	83	80	80	75	81	82	79
80	The Six Isles (43%, Ian MacLeod, NAS, Blended whisky, 2015*)	84	84	87	86	80	81	65	76	73	78	86

Key Award Winners are shown in bold Text

Ultra Premium Category

Premium Category

Daily Dram Category

Gold Medal – 90 points and over

Silver Medal – 84 to 89 points

Bronze Medal – 80 to 84 points

X – Broken sample

This year's judges; OH Olivier Humbrecht, PdS Patrick de Schulthess, OK Oliver Klimek, HCY Ho-Cheng Yao, RH Rich Howard, KG Konstantin Grigoriadis, KN Krishna Nukala, PD Paul Dejong, DW David Wankel, RK Rob Karlsson, PS Peter Silver.



MMA 2015; Judges and scoring

What about judges for 2015? Ahh yes here comes my annual plea to our collective; *"Dear Maniacs, who'd like to subject their noses, palates and livers to sampling up to 200 whiskies in no more than six weeks?"* Yes, that's what being a judge amounts to. By the time samples have been filled, packed, posted, delivered and received the typical time left for judging is 4-6 weeks depending upon postage times.

This year we did things a little differently as one Maniac offered his services but wasn't sure if he'd be able to complete the task in time due to a heavy work schedule. We agreed to give it a try hoping his parcel would arrive quickly and also have an extra reserve judge just in case he didn't complete. The good news is that his parcel did arrive quickly, within 4 days to be exact, so the reserve judge wasn't needed meaning we still had a full complement of 12 judges. Or so I thought, but as often happens another judge was inundated with work commitments and couldn't meet our deadline.

On the subject of judges a question which is often asked of me is whether we impose any specific judging method or criteria on our MMA judges, perhaps like the repartition system of, for example a 25/25/25/25 split of scores between attributes like appearance, nose, palate & finish ... etc.

We prefer not to impose such criteria, or for that matter any specific judging criteria other than keeping everything totally blind. Each of our judges, although amateur, is highly experienced in whisky tasting and already has their own tried and tested methods of scoring and most have already scored hundreds, if not thousands of whiskies in our online database; The Malt Monitor. Of course this means there is an emphasis on personal preference, but judging and scoring is always subjective and will vary a little between individuals, so this is exactly why we utilise a panel of 9-12 judges for MMA and take an average score across the board from all those submitted. Also, in some previous years the scorecard team decided to ignore lower or 'rogue' scores where one judge maybe scored a whisky much lower than all the others, perhaps suggesting a contaminated sample. Once again this year, like last year, our scorecard team decided not to do this and to trust and accept all our judges' scores.

Here's what a couple of our members replied when asked about their own scoring criteria:

"I for one do never use 'repartitions' (such as 25/25/25/25) because I've never managed to find one that would work with all whiskies. I tend to think that 'proportions' between nose and palate, for example, change with styles and, above all, with the whiskies' ages." Serge Valentin.

"Regarding the scores to be allotted to appearance, nose, palate etc... I strongly feel that it will not work out. Scoring for appearance is definitely ruled out for me. Even if points were to be given to each parameter; how many points would you allocate to appearance, how many to nose, how many to palate, how many to finish and the last dimension which is most important for me; how many to overall feeling and impression?" Krishna Nukala.

"I too disagree with the 25/25/25/25 scoring process as to me it so limits the range of scores for particular items. I usually have a first impression of score after the initial nose/taste.....and then I might adjust once I have had a few more noses/tastes. But I usually fall within a few points of my initial impression. If I am at all conflicted, I will mark it for a re-taste. But this is based upon what I recall from what I have liked and disliked before." David Wankel

Finally on this topic, I'm affording the last word to one of our professional members; *"Like you, my scores are founded on experience, and based on overall flavour (aroma, taste, mouth-feel, finish); but unlike you, I never publish my scores!"* Charles Maclean.

MMA 2015; Working out who won what

Sounds easy really doesn't it? Get scores from judges, put them into a spreadsheet and let the computer work out the overall average score for each entry, simple? Well, that bit is reasonably simple but we have three (price) categories of entries and within each category we look to assign five Awards for supreme winner, best sherried, natural and peated entries and then a Thumbs-Up winner. This means that someone has to not only collate the judges' scores, but also analyse every entry to work out the cask type and attributes of each one and assign the correct Awards (and Medals). So each year we assign a scorecard team whose responsibility it is to do this. In addition as entries arrived here at MMA HQ I start to build what I call my master spreadsheet which contains full details of each entry, including sender, distillery, bottler, strength, cask details and number(s), whether natural colour and NCF, bottle number, outrun... etc. This spreadsheet forms the basis of what will eventually become our officially released scorecard but not without lots of conversion work. Primarily the entry details need to be converted into what we call our Monitor Format and I assure you; this is no easy task. In fact it took various people two full days to complete. Now finally we can release our MMA results. But wait a minute, we appear to have two winners of one award. Even when we take the scores to two decimal places they both have the same score; 90 points exactly. OK, so this year we have joint winners of "Best Sherried Whisky – Premium category" and guess what? They're sister casks from the same distillery!

Throughout 3-4 days the scorecard team discuss all candidates for Awards, some are obvious, others not so; for example when it comes to our "Thumbs Up" Awards they're not purely based upon single highest score(s) although the scores do play a large role alongside various other criteria.

Finally our scorecard is completed as we prioritise it by score and in groups of medals from gold to bronze. So, just 3-4 days after receiving the last judge's scores we've reformatted everything, worked out the Awards and Medals for this year and are now ready to publish the results simultaneously on our MM&F facebook page, our website and also on fellow Maniac Lawrence's Whisky Intelligence website so a little more pressure as I have to prepare a press release for him too.

Talking of press releases; don't forget to inform the winners. Oh well, just another batch of e-mails to send out after which another batch of requests for MMA Award & Medal graphics come steaming back at me. Dear MM Graphics person, could you once again this year Please?

I guess what I'm trying say here is that MMA isn't only about our poor hard-working judges who have to nose, taste and score an inordinate number of whiskies in an impossibly short time, but also a selection of various other Maniacs working behind the scenes on various tasks to make MMA a success so I'll end here by thanking each and every one, including of course our judges!

MMA 2015; The Conspiracy Theory

I'm not generally a conspiracy theorist but then neither do I believe in some coincidences, perhaps along the lines of "if it's too crazy to appear normal, then it probably isn't normal".

Back in my foreword I alluded to a missing parcel from last year which, sadly I didn't know was to be expected so never missed it. Only after our results were published in December did it become clear that a parcel of entries sent in early September hadn't arrived. The parcel contained combined entries from a distillery and also an independent bottler, having a total value of over €1000.

The sender and I both contacted the courier company (dare I say DHL-Express?) who sent a copy of the signature scan from the person who supposedly accepted the parcel at my address. Needless to say the name is totally unknown to me and not only doesn't exist in our street, but it doesn't exist anywhere in this town!

The courier then refused to investigate further quoting "it was too long ago now" as the reason.

Hmmm, dare I suggest someone had a rather merrier than usual Christmas last year?

I was supplied with the name of the person which is how I could check around and find that they just don't exist here, but just in case you recognise this signature please let me know And no, the name in question doesn't relate too exactly to the signature.



Now fast forward to 2015, one year later and parcels are steadily beginning to arrive



But even by late July there's a hint of problems to come, specifically from one courier who appears to have just one central receiving and distribution centre for Germany in Leipzig which swallows everything arriving from non-EU countries. By the end of the first week in August they already had three parcels for me and were asking for details from me before releasing them.

Duty and VAT are an accepted part of MMA as I receive many parcels from around the world and this year I'd made it clear to senders that they will have to reimburse these charges for their entries. No problems so far.

Sadly, our friends in Leipzig were not going to make life so easy. As further parcels arrived safely more were held in Leipzig and for each parcel I received the same standard e-mail from them. This basically said they had a parcel for me and I had to supply details of contents and how much I'd paid for them, preferably by scanning and sending my invoice for the purchase. Obviously I'd made no purchase and mostly I wasn't even sure what actual bottles were in the parcels.

To make things even worse DHL-Express (oops, did I say DHL-Express and not Leipzig here?) were continually asking for my "EORI" number; something I eventually learned is a specific ID number for businesses (and only businesses) importing and exporting goods.

Eventually they were holding up to 9 parcels at any one time and even after 3-4 weeks nothing that had entered their distribution centre had emerged from it.

It became so bad that I was now getting at least 4 e-mails every day and up to 3 telephone calls per day always about the same parcels. I compiled a fully explanatory e-mail explaining MMA and that I didn't buy any of the parcels, know their value or even know what was inside the parcels, but if they just deliver them I'll pay the Duty & VAT costs upon delivery.

No, not good enough, only my EORI number would do.

To cut an even longer story short and explain my frustration here is a transcript of just one of many of those telephone calls which I endured from late August to mid-September:

"Hello, this is xxx from DHL-Express in Leipzig, can I speak to Mr. Wood please?"

"Yes, that's me, how can I help?"

"We have a parcel for you and need some information about it. Specifically about the contents and value. We also need your EORI number to release it."

"Well, I sent you a mail about this parcel already. It probably contains whisky for our annual competition. Apart from that I have no idea which whisky or what its value is."

"But we need the value to assess it."

"Can't you read the Airway bill / manifesto from the sender which accompanies the parcel?"

"But we need your EORI number"

"Never heard of that, will 123456 do?"

"Sorry it has to be a real EORI number for your business"

"Look, I have no business and wouldn't recognise an EORI number if it fell out of one of the many trees in our garden onto my head. Wait a minute, you said business?"

“Yes”

“I have no business, why do you think I do?”

“The parcel is addressed to Malt Maniacs Awards and that must be a business according to our system. Also the parcels state ‘samples for MMA – no commercial value’ and only businesses can receive these.”

“Have you tried using a better system, perhaps a more accurate one like google?”

This particular conversation was overheard by my wife who exploded into fits of laughter at this point, but so it went on and on and on and on Pretty well every day for 4-5 weeks. Yes the parcels did eventually start being released and forwarded to me with a “pay me now in cash or I’ll take it away” policy from the DHL-Express drivers.

Then things turned even sillier when I received another e-mail and telephone call about two parcels in particular. They were from two separate people in the same company and had been held in Leipzig’s black hole for a few weeks now. Basically they demanded (again) my EORI number before 5pm that day or the parcels would be returned to sender(s). They even sent a mail to the senders asking them to urge me to give them my EORI number or else. I received a panic mail from the senders about this.

To try and speed things along the senders then paid the total of €135 directly to DHL-Express to ensure immediate delivery.

Delivery was indeed initiated, but with a demand for me to also pay €135 because “our (DHL-Express) system doesn’t show it as having been paid by the senders.”

End result; bottles received but not very happy senders.

Despite Leipzig other entries were steadily arriving and our entries soon reached what I call the point of no return, which is when I declare MMA will definitely run no matter what. In this case that number was surpassed pretty quickly and I started to wonder where and when it would stop.



Meanwhile, back in Munich and our now notorious MMA-prevention officers in our own airport centre send a letter along the lines of; “Dear Mr. Wood, we see it’s that time of year again and we’d like you to pop along and speak to us about a parcel or three and some VAT & Duty.”

Two parcels were pretty simple but the third not so. I contacted the sender and asked what it contained; just one bottle but a special edition just for Asia. A bit of googling soon told me it had an original release price of around \$1700 (US) so I asked the sender to mail me something showing an actual value or price. What he sent was not accepted by the Customs people so they also started googling only to find the bottle on a UK online auction site, for sale (not sold) at between £2200 and £5000. They felt benevolent and accepted the lower value, imposing a DUTY and VAT charge of over €600. I suggested the seller have the bottle returned but he decided he wanted it entered into MMA and paid me the charges.

In the end this year saw me having to pay a record total of €1135 in Customs charges on behalf of the senders who all thankfully reimbursed me. Thank you to all.

Deadline day for entries arrived and was surpassed by absolute deadline day a few days later as I once again had a couple of requests for extensions which I granted. If you want to know just what deadline day looks like, then I’ll let my kitchen show you;



Surely there can't be more? All else went to plan?

Well, there were a couple more hiccups along the way as two parcels arrived smelling rather conspicuously of whisky. In one three bottles were totally shattered and in the other the bottle neck was broken cleanly away from the body. I'll leave you to guess which courier was involved here.



Fortunately the three shattered bottles were replaced in time, but the one with the broken neck was already an almost deadline day entry and I wasn't able to accept a replacement in time.

As a final thought I received one absolute deadline day entry but was unable to accept it even though I had authorised the late delivery. A bottle arrived unbroken and with no signs of leakage within the parcel, but the bottle (not the parcel!) was actually opened and a good dram was missing from it! I won't embarrass the sender by posting a picture.

Do I see a shattered Blackadder Peated Amrut in the above top right picture? A good job that was able to be resent in time methinks!

A geography lesson; Mumbai capital of Paraguay

Come on now, you're pulling my leg here Keith? We all know Paraguay is not in India, don't we?






Entries were received, or at least all expected ones have arrived, filling has been completed and now I have to load up the car and take the parcels to the Post Office, which of course, in Germany means DHL.

This had to be done over two trips and two days but obviously I took the parcels for the furthest-away judges first on Tuesday 6th October. All were checked-in and about to start their long journeys around

the world. I returned home armed with receipts and online tracking numbers ready to send the links to the relevant judges, allowing them to see just where their parcels were.

Imagine my surprise when I find a parcel for India which I left at the Post Office just an hour ago has already begun its journey to **Paraguay!**

When I returned to the Post Office the next day with the remaining parcels I took along a copy of the online tracking information (as below):

Sendungsnummer		350008559268
Verlauf Ihrer Sendung		    
Produkt / Service		Sendung in das Ausland (Paraguay)
Ausländische Sendungsnummer		CL780370987DE
Status vom Di, 06.10.2015 17:08		Die Sendung wurde vom Absender in der Filiale eingeliefert.
Nächster Schritt		Die Sendung wird ins Start-Paketzentrum transportiert.
⚙️ Detaillierter Verlauf Ihrer Sendung		
Datum/Uhrzeit	Ort	Status
Mi, 30.09.2015 10:30 Uhr	Deutschland	Die Sendung wurde vom Absender in der Filiale eingeliefert.
Fr, 02.10.2015 00:10 Uhr	Aschheim, Deutschland	Die Sendung wurde im Start-Paketzentrum bearbeitet.
Mo, 05.10.2015 04:29 Uhr	Saulheim, Deutschland	Die Sendung wurde im Ziel-Paketzentrum bearbeitet.
Di, 06.10.2015 14:10 Uhr	IPZ-Ffm, Deutschland	Die Sendung wird ins Zielland transportiert und dort an die Zustellorganisa Online Sendungsverfolgung: http://www.correoparaguay.gov.py/web/guest/62.jsessionid=A6641D190f
Di, 06.10.2015 17:08 Uhr	Deutschland	Die Sendung wurde vom Absender in der Filiale eingeliefert.
📧 Kostenlose Statusbenachrichtigungen verschicken		

Yes, you read it correctly; my parcel appeared to have been posted a week earlier and was being sent to Paraguay. Obviously the Post Office assured me this was impossible and “could not happen” etc. ... but I wanted clarification especially after they showed me the parcel was still sitting there right in front of me awaiting collection today as I’d just missed the pick-up on the previous day.

Half an hour of phone calls to DHL later they suggested I pay another €200 to re-post the parcel and get a new ID number for it. Of course they would (?) reimburse my original payment. No, it doesn’t work like that; they can sort this out immediately please! This was now looking like the impossible had happened again with DHL; two parcels assigned the same number. Aye, right, impossible!

By the following day the tracking info actually showed “India” in the destination field and all really did look a little more normal-ish.

After a mere week or so the parcel appeared to have arrived in Customs in Mumbai and Krishna went along to collect it. No, not this time; the parcel was not there and its exact whereabouts were at this time untraceable. I tried calling the DHL helpline but they were less than helpful as they suggested Customs in Mumbai must have incorrectly sent the parcel to someone in Paraguay; “Can you try to explain how that could happen please?” is a gross understatement of my actual comment(s) to them.

After much discussion as to exactly which quarter of Mumbai was actually in Paraguay I set an official trace in action and a claim against DHL for total replacement of contents and postage.

Amazingly, after being missing in action and untraceable for 4 weeks now, the parcel suddenly arrived in Mumbai Customs within 4 days of my trace being requested but nobody could explain where it had been or why it had been misled.

So, do I now believe in conspiracy theories?

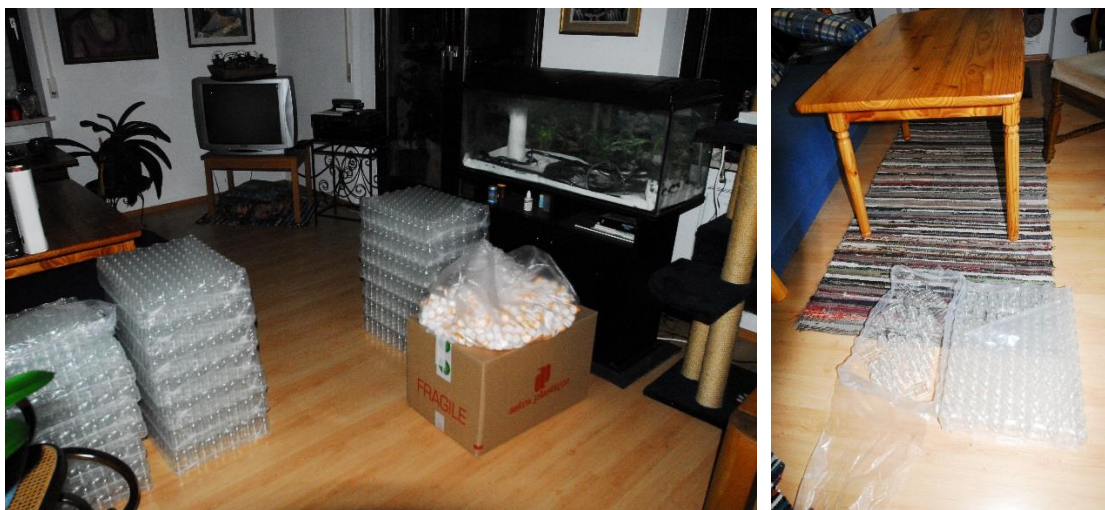
It's a hard decision that I'm still not 100% convinced of, but then I believe in coincidences even less.

MMA 2015; 3000 bottles, 300kg and 12.5 judges

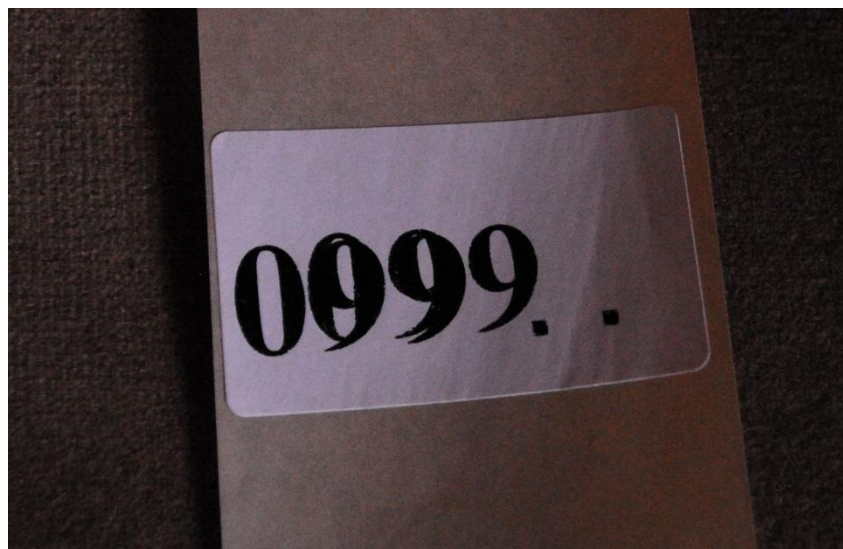
Half a judge? Not really but as I already mentioned we were prepared for one in particular who may drop-out due to work commitments so another who lives nearby was ready to step in just in case. Fortunately our reserve judge wasn't needed in this case.

We uphold a traditional rule that we don't disclose the exact number of MMA entries each year, but I can say that this year has seen the largest number of entries in my five years of MMA and led to around 3000 sample bottles being filled and a total of over 300kg of parcels to post at a cost of over €1300, not including the €1100 cost of sample bottles.

Basically, for those of you who occasionally swap samples MMA means going from this to this:



Now, I wonder if our Maniac who printed the MMA sample bottle labels knew something I didn't this year?



MMA 2015; And finally ... what about the left-overs?

This is a question which is asked annually and 2015 has been no exception. Our optimum number of MMA judges each year is 10-12 and each judge can choose between 3cl or 6cl samples. You may think choosing 6cl is a no-brainer but when it comes to far-away judges the difference in postage costs can be very significant at €200+.

This year our full complement of judges has meant very little left-overs for me, although I do have my full set of samples for my MMA archive which is growing steadily year on year:



I guess that's it now for another year so I'll just take this opportunity on behalf of all our Maniacal Collective to wish you:



Keith Wood is a relic of the late 1950's and a self-proclaimed Old Luddite. He currently lives in Bavaria and is married to the delightful Sabine who doesn't quite share all his passion for whisky.

He has been one of the Malt Maniac collective since the beginning of 2011 and has now organised the last five Malt Maniacs Awards. Each year he questions whether this will be his last and to be honest, this year he's seriously asking whether it's time to hand over, or not? Let's see what happens.

Slàinte Mhath,
Keith Wood