

LARRY CHERUBINO

Larry Cherubino is a born and bred Western Australian. He grew up in the Swan Valley, and his first taste of the wine business was a vintage job at Houghton. After a period of study and travel, including a stint making wine at Tintara in McLaren Vale, Larry returned to Houghton as chief winemaker.



Larry

In 2003 he left Houghton to run his own wine-oriented consultancy business which eventually grew into the Larry Cherubino wine brands, of which there are several.

I first met Larry when he was making a big impression at Houghton, and have followed his progress with great interest. Having just tasted my way through his current portfolio, and been delighted with the overall quality, I decided to review all of the wines.

Larry sources grapes from the key quality regions of Western Australia, so this collection provides a picture not only of his brands, but of the impact of regionality on aroma, flavour and style in general. Most east-coasters aren't as familiar with Western Australian wines as they should be, so come along for the ride.

The Whites

2013 Cherubino Great Southern Riesling This wine shows a little development in colour and nose that is appropriate for two years in bottle. The palate is particularly impressive, with power, a steely edge and a little “European” grip. It’s bone dry, and Larry’s nod towards Alsace. (\$35.00) ★★★★★☆



2015 Cherubino Porongurup Riesling There’s a fascinating slate-like aroma here which I often detect in rieslings from Eden Valley and the Mosel. It complements the restrained perfumed varietal aromatics. The palate is pure, long, racy and dry – absolutely brilliant. This riesling was still vibrant two days after initial opening, and deserves to be cellared for 3-5 years. (\$39.50) ★★★★★

2015 Cherubino Great Southern Riesling Very limey, with a hint of slate. An intense, exuberant riesling in the lime juice style. Enjoyable now because of its power and vibrancy, but it will reward cellaring. (\$35.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Ad Hoc Wallflower Great Southern Riesling A lemon/lime style with a whiff of white flowers. There’s steely acid under fruit with good initial drive that tapers off on the finish. (\$21.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Pedestal Margaret River Pinot Gris The nose is very engaging, showing apple flan and brioche aromas which are vibrant and far from simple. The palate is long and textural, with ideal grip and acidity. Really good value. (\$25.00) ★★★★★☆

2015 Ad Hoc Nitty Gritty Pemberton Pinot Grigio There’s fresh poached pear with good weight of fruit and well judged grip. However it’s just a little short on the finish. (\$21.00) ★★★★★☆

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2015 Cherubino Laissez Faire Frankland River Fiano Shows fresh peach/apricot aromas and good fruit weight. A slight sweetness matches good acidity and grip. (\$29.00) ★★★☆

2014 Cherubino Margaret River Chardonnay The multi-faceted nose delivers white peach, grapefruit, a caress of oak and a whiff of toasted hazelnut. A creamy texture and balanced grip feature on the long satisfying palate. Give this wine another couple of years to show at its best. (\$49.00) ★★★☆

2014 Pedestal Margaret River Chardonnay There's plenty of value here, in that this is a very serious chardonnay complete with complex barrel ferment influences and a fresh textural palate. Very good drinking. (\$25.00) ★★★

2014 Cherubino Laissez Faire Porongurup Chardonnay A white peach/nougat style with an attractive creamy feel. Acidity kicks in on the finish. (\$39.00) ★★★☆

2015 Ad Hoc Straw Man Margaret River Sauvignon Blanc Semillon Very much new-mown grass with a whiff of snow pea. There's a little barrel influenced texture and a zippy acid finish. (\$21.00) ★★★☆

2015 Pedestal Margaret River Semillon Sauvignon Blanc Grassy, with a hint of passionfruit. A slight sweetness is balanced by fresh acidity. (\$25.00) ★★★

2015 The Yard Channybearup Pemberton Sauvignon Blanc This wine shows vibrant gooseberry with a subtle lees input. The creamy, dry palate offers good fruit weight and acidity. (\$25.00) ★★★

2015 Cherubino Pemberton Sauvignon Blanc A powerful gooseberry/citrus style with a hint of barrel ferment complexity. Mouthfilling and textural. (\$35.00) ★★★☆

2014 Cherubino Porongurup Sauvignon Blanc Showing some development as well as apple and gooseberry characteristics. It's a touch broad and firm but has plenty of flavour and good acidity. (\$35.00) ★★★

As expected, the sauvignon blancs and chardonnays are strong, but the rieslings steal the show. The Great Southern region of Western Australia has been a growing force in riesling, and wines like the 2015 Cherubino Porongurup Riesling show it has well and truly arrived.

Subject to the vagaries of global warming, Clare and Eden Valley will maintain their high standards with riesling, but Great Southern, Henty, the Canberra District and Tasmania have joined them on the top tier and added considerably to diversity.

The Reds

2013 Cheubino Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon A classic rich blackcurrant style with hints of leaf and cocoa. The palate is long, with spot-on oak integration and firm but highly polished tannins. Cellar for a decade at least. (\$75.00) ★★★★★☆

2013 Cherubino Cowaramup Margaret River Cabernet Sauvignon This is a ripe blackberry/blackcurrant style of cabernet with a little leafiness. It's flavour-packed and comparatively supple, but not as good a cellaring style as the previous wine. (\$49.00) ★★★★★

2012 Cherubino Frankland River Cabernet Sauvignon What a stunning wine. Cassis and plums show out, together with cedary nuances and suggestions of leaf. The palate is utterly luxurious and the tannins are sublimely fine. Give it 8-10 years. (\$110.00) ★★★★★

2013 The Yard Riversdale Frankland River Cabernet Sauvignon An opulent wine indeed, crammed with cassis flavour. Overtones of roast coffee beans add to an impressive bouquet. A satisfying, well balanced wine. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2012 Cherubino Great Southern Cabernet Sauvignon An ultra-fine cabernet with aromas of violets, blackcurrant and leaf. It has the classic firm structure and length. Cellar 7-10 years. (\$49.00) ★★★★★☆

2013 Pedestal Margaret River Cabernet Merlot This is a fresh, flavour-packed red with blackcurrant, plum and leaf characteristics backed by fine tannins. Impressive. (\$25.00) ★★★★★

2014 Ad Hoc Avant Gardening Frankland Cabernet Sauvignon Malbec Plummy red fruits. There's a good initial impact of fresh flavour, but the finish is slightly short. (\$21.00) ★★★

2014 Laissez Faire Great Southern Syrah This is a very appealing spicy blackberry style which is vibrant and primary in nature. The palate is filled with varietal flavour backed by savoury tannins. Cellar 3-5 years. (\$39.00) ★★★★★

2014 Ad Hoc Middle of Everywhere Shiraz Another vividly purple wine. It's a cracking good drink, with spicy blackberry aromas and flavours in a display of varietal vivacity. (\$21.00) ★★★★★

2014 The Yard Riversdale Frankland River Shiraz The nose is fascinating, offering blackberry, toasted nuts and black truffle. The seamless palate features fresh varietal flavour and fine savoury tannins. Cellar 5-10 years. (\$35.00) ★★★★★☆

2014 The Yard Acacia Frankland River Shiraz Perfumed blackberry and violets. A firmly structured, medium-bodied style that needs a few years to soften. (\$35.00) ★★★★★

2014 The Yard Justin Frankland River Shiraz For cellaring, this is the pick of the Yard trio. The blackberry/dried herbs/tilled earth nose is captivating, and the palate is long, with firm, fine tannins. A touch of class. (\$35.00) ★★★★★☆

2014 Cherubino Frankland River Shiraz There's some real WOW factor here. The classic shiraz blackberry is rampant, but there's much more. The slightly spicy flavour comes in layers and the oak folds in beautifully. There are no edges in this wine. Cellar up to ten years – maybe longer. (\$55.00) ★★★★★

2014 Laissez Faire Frankland River Syrah Grenache Blackberries in profusion, with a whiff of raspberry. This is a wine of substance without being too big in alcohol. It's fresh from start to finish, with nicely firm tannins. (\$25.00) ★★★★★

2014 Laissez Faire Frankland River Grenache Striking purple colour. The intense mulberry/licorice aromas and flavours are very impressive indeed, and the richly flowing palate is balanced by savoury tannins. (\$29.00) ★★★★★☆

I enjoyed exploring this captivating portfolio of Western Australian wines. The red side of the range leans to Frankland River, one of Australia's truly under-appreciated wine regions. Not only does Frankland River produce exceptional shiraz, its best cabernet sauvignons rival the cream of Margaret River. Larry Cherubino made that point during his time at Houghton, and he makes it emphatically now.

Lester Jesberg

RATING SCALE

★★★★★	Outstanding	97-100 points
★★★★☆	Highly Recommended	93-96
★★★★	Recommended	90-92
★★★☆☆	Recommended	87-89
★★★	Agreeable	85-87
★★☆☆	Agreeable	82-84
★★	Acceptable	80-82
★☆☆	Acceptable	77-79
★	Barely Acceptable	74-76
☆	Unacceptable	71-73
No stars	Undrinkable	<71

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