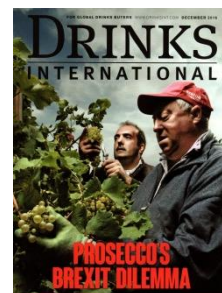


OLIVIER DAUGA – WINEVOX

DRINKS INTERNATIONAL – DECEMBER, 2016

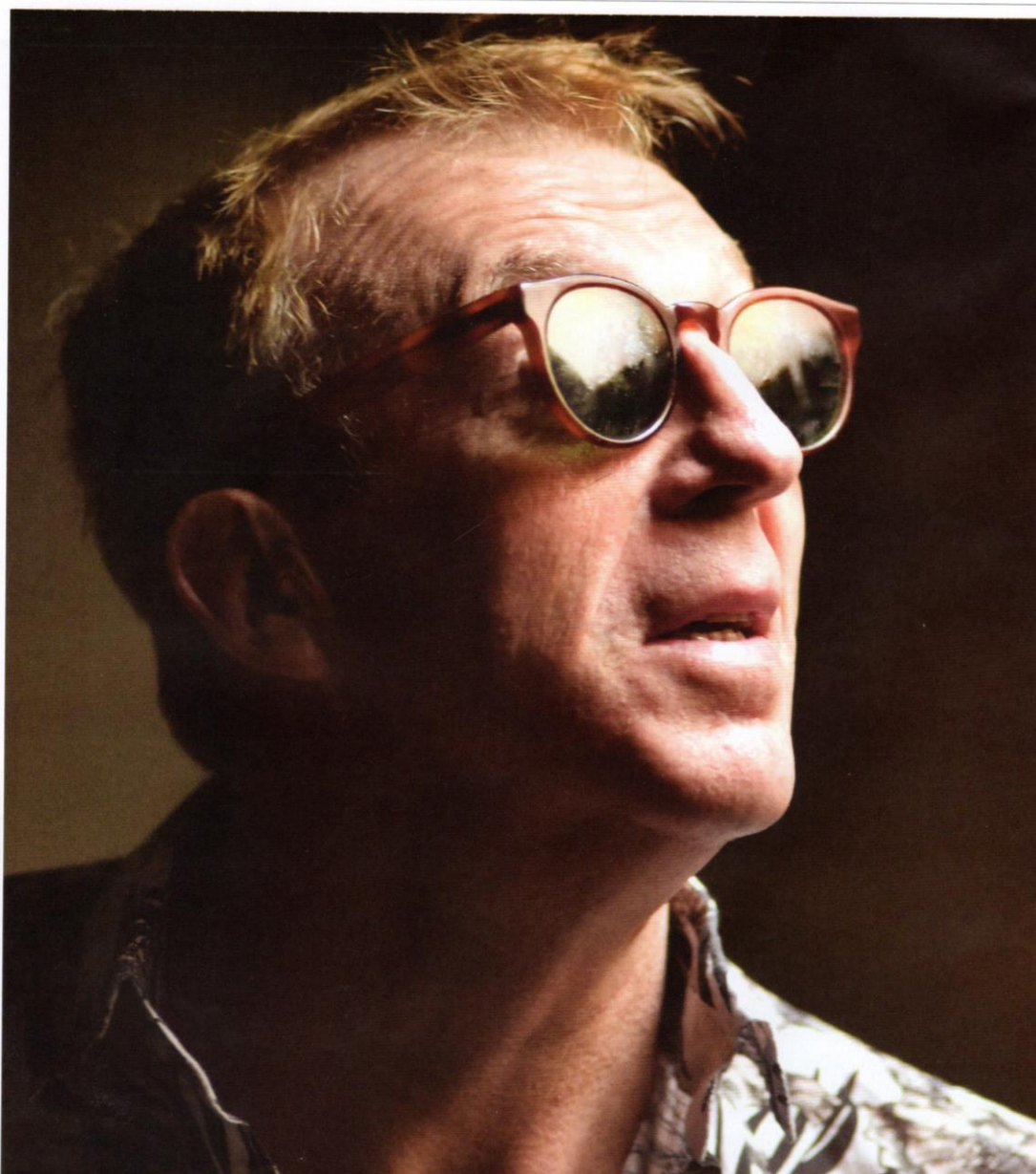
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PROFILE

FEATURING // OLIVIER DAUGA



LE PASSION

FIRST IT WAS RUGBY THEN HE DISCOVERED HE HAD A GREAT PALATE. HE CONVERTED. **CHRISTIAN DAVIS** TOUCHES DOWN WITH FLAMBOYANT WINEMAKER OLIVIER DAUGA

I **DIDN'T GO TO** school, says garrulous French winemaker Olivier Dauga. But then he corrects himself. "Well, I did but all I wanted to do was play rugby."

The 52-year-old was a semi-professional rugby player. One of his cousins was Benoit Dauga, one of the best rugby players in the world in the 1960s. He captained the French national team on nine occasions and was part of the team that won a Grand Slam in the Five Nations in 1968, as well as the championship wins in 1967 and 1970.

Nevertheless, his family is seven generations in wine at Château de Pontet, a Bordeaux Supérieur house in the village of Vêrac.

He tells *Drinks International* that he worked at Martell in Cognac doing various jobs, where it was discovered that the young rugby fanatic had a good palate. "They said: 'Stop playing rugby and go to school, Olivier.' I loved my life, rugby, the girls. No problem!" But the young Dauga heeded the advice and went to work at Sociando Mallet in the Médoc in 1988. The president of his rugby club knew the owner. He went back to school, evening classes. After two years he stopped playing rugby altogether.

NEW JOB, NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

From Sociando Mallet, he went to Château La Tour Carnet, a fourth cru classé in Haut Médoc in 1992. "A new job with responsibilities and I had a family with two children. It was very different," he says.

From director of operations, overseeing 42ha, he went to Château Rollan de By and Haut-Condissas in 1999 as technical director, caring for 40ha producing 300,000 bottles of wine.

Bordeaux and the Médoc is very traditional with lots of rules and regulations,

whereas Dauga is a bit of rebel and a non-conformist, but very much a team player. "For many, the consumer does not exist," he says candidly.

In 2000 he branched out on his own, creating Le Faiseur de Vin (the winemaker). He went to Margaret River in Australia and was blown away by the winemaking. "It was like a revolution for me. It was: 'Wow!' Bordeaux has lots of history and traditions. Whereas Margaret River was a new area. There were new aromas, it was very exciting."

Subsequently he visited Tasmania and the Yarra, but Margaret River has a special place in Dauga's heart and on his palate.

RESPECT WINEGROWERS, THEIR WORK AND ACCEPT TO PAY THE RIGHT PRICE TO ALLOW THEM TO LIVE IN DIGNITY

Having worked in Morocco, the Ukraine, Australia, Spain, the Luberon, Aix-en-Provence and Bordeaux, Dauga can be a difficult man to pin down. His anchor is his partner, Catherine Socasau who also works at Le Faiseur de Vin. Her career background includes wine merchant, a courtier and a sales director in a large Medoc chateau, before starting work with Dauga in 2004. Together they are not just consultants on winemaking, but on everything from labels to marketing.

They have recently worked for Vinadeis in the Languedoc-Roussillon, which is claimed to be the largest still wine co-operative in France, having been created by the merger of Val d'Orbieu and Uccoar and a partnership with the French agricultural co-operative, InVivo. It has 2,000 wine producers and 400 employees. Its La Cuvée Mythique being one of its best known brands.

Asked what is there left to achieve, he replies: "Make wine in the US." **DI**

DAUGA IN A NUTSHELL

■ What does he dislike and like? "I dislike arrogance and scornfulness. I like humbleness and passion."

■ Is he lucky? "Yes, but you need to trigger luck".

■ If there is one thing you'd like to do to change the world, what would that be? "Protect nature and pass on a cleaner world to the next generation."

■ What is your message to the trade? "Respect wine-growers, their work and accept to pay the right price to allow them to live in dignity."

■ And finally what would be his epitaph? "Protect life, protect nature."

VINADEIS

Dauga's chosen wines from this association include: Le Val My Secret Peak Rosé made from Grenache Gris/Cinsault; Domaine de Cazelles-Verdier, Les Pierres qui Chantent and IGP Pays d'Oc Chardonnay; Château La Pirouette from the Médoc (Cabernet Sauvignon 50%, Merlot 40% and Petit Verdot 10%); Château Notre-Dame du Quatourze, a Syrah/Grenache/Mourvèdre/Carignan from the Languedoc and Château Cantinot a 100% Cabernet Franc from Blaye in the Côtes de Bordeaux.