

Wine of the week

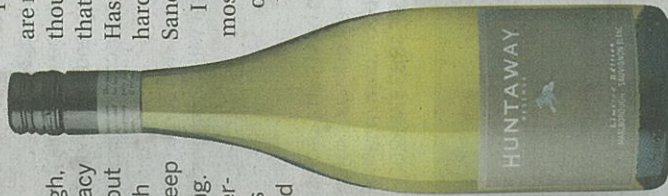
Huntaway Sauvignon Blanc 2011

RRP \$23.99

I may have made some disparaging comments about savvy over the years,

but this is a lovely reminder of what made it great. From the Wairau

Valley in Marlborough, it's zingy, racy and fresh, but with enough weight to keep it interesting. Mouthwatering flavours of citrus and passion-fruit prevail and the zesty acidity keeps you coming back for more.



CHEERS

Capital value in Wellington

I WENT to Wellington recently and was amazed — yet again — at how many good bars there are down there.

I do love Auckland, but every time I go south there are new, exciting places to check out. It looks as though Wellington is getting an edge on Auckland in that regard. Familiar hotspots like the Malthouse, Hashigo Zake and Motel continue to excel, while it's hard to think of a music venue in Auckland that tops Sandwiches.

I got in amongst it a bit while I was down there and mostly the bars were great, but there are some operators who think that simply being in Wellington is enough to ensure the money rolls in. It isn't; you need good drinks and good service as well to have any chance of making an impression.

I'll give you some examples; I went to Hippopotamus in the Museum Hotel overlooking the waterfront. This is a magnificent restaurant and bar. There's no other way to describe it. From the exquisite menu to the themed cocktail list (presently based on Grimm's fairy tales), this was class with a capital C.

The service was perfect and the place looked

Wellington challenges Auckland with its range of great bars, says **Don Kavanagh**.



spectacular and I will be back as soon as I can get a flight to Wellington. I intend to spend some time and probably a lot of money there.

Later that same evening, I went to the Bangalore Polo Club, which shifted to Courtenay Place from Christchurch following the earthquakes. I'd heard it was good, so I thought I'd check it out. I wish I hadn't, to be honest.

While it looked great, it was expensive and it was full of people I wouldn't have thought would be served — including one chap who was in such an advanced state of refreshment that he could hardly sit up straight. My worries about the place were confirmed when it took the five staff on duty six minutes to decide I was worth serving, even though there were no other customers looking for service.

So much for their promise to treat everyone like a



The chandelier-lit bar at Hippopotamus Restaurant, at The Museum Hotel in Wellington. SUPPLIED

maharajah; I felt more like an untouchable.

It was a low point, but it hasn't put me off the capital as an entertainment centre. I know that for every Bangalore Polo Club there is a Matherhorn and that makes up for it all.