

Official Selection Cannes Film Festival 2004

Goatworks & Les Films de la Croisade present

Mondovino

A film by Jonathan Nossiter

Running time: 130 minutes

"Brilliant"

- ***Vogue***

"Intoxicating"

- ***New York Post***

"It's a vast, global soap opera - *Dallas* among the vines - and a very accurate mirror of the world at large."

- ***LA Times***

"Subtle, full-bodied, characterful, blessed with a long elegant finish that keeps you thinking."

- ***Time Out***

"If *Sideways* made you curious about vino, this fierce, funny doc opens up a world worth debating"

- ***Rolling Stone***

"Like *Love, Actually*, how could one not love a film that is a portrait of so many interesting people as well as a portrait of an industry that faces the immense problems of commercialisation and globalisation?"

- ***European Films.net***



SYNOPSIS

Across three continents, "MONDOVINO" weaves together the family succession sagas of billionaire Napa Valley power brokers, the rivalry of two aristocratic Florentine dynasties and the efforts of three generations of a Burgundian family fighting to preserve their few acres of land. But are all these struggles secondary to the exploits of a gleefully mischievous pirate from Bordeaux who spreads the gospel of modernity from Italy to New York to Argentina?

Wine has been a symbol of Western civilization for thousands of years. Never has the fight for its soul been as desperate. Never has there been so much money -and pride- at stake. But the battle lines are not what you'd expect: local versus multinational, simple peasants versus powerful captains of industry. In the world of wine, it is never the usual suspects.

CHARACTERS
IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

YVONNE HEGOBURU
Winemaker, Jurançon, France

BATTISTA & LINA COLUMBU
Winemakers, Sardinia, Italy

MICHEL ROLLAND
Wine consultant, Pomerol, Bordeaux, France

AIMÉ GUIBERT
Winemaker, “Mas de Daumas-Gassac” Aniane, France

MONDAVI FAMILY
Shareholders, Robert Mondavi Winery, Napa, California, USA
Robert, father, founder – Margrit, his 2nd wife – Michael, eldest son, former CEO
Tim, youngest son, former co-CEO, technical director

DE MONTILLE FAMILY
Winemakers, Volnay, Burgundy, France
Hubert, father – Étienne, son - Alix, daughter, former *vinificatrice* in a Boisset’ subsidiary

BILL HARLAN
Real Estate Developer, owner, Harlan Estate, Napa, California, USA

PATRICK LÉON
Co-CEO and technical director Château Mouton-Rothschild, Bordeaux, France

XAVIER DE EIZAGUIRRE
Co-CEO, marketing director Château Mouton-Rothschild, Bordeaux, France

NEAL ROSENTHAL
Wine importer, New York City, USA

MICHAEL BROADBENT
Wine director, Christie’s, London, England

JEAN-LUC THUNEVIN
Founder of Château Valandraud, St-Emilion, France

JEAN-CHARLES BOISSET
Director, Groupe Boisset Nuits-St-George, France

BERNARD MAGREZ
CEO, William Pitters, Bordeaux, France

FRESCOBALDI FAMILY

Owners, Frescobaldi Spa, Florence, Italy
Marchioness Bona – Marquis Vittorio, her husband CEO
Marquis Dino, Vittorio's brother, author of family history "Privilège de la Naissance"

ANTINORI FAMILY

Owners, Antinori Srl, Florence, Italy
Piero, CEO, family business Albiera & Allegra Piero's daughters, marketing
Lodovico his brother, founder of *Domaine* Ornellaia

SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

Manager, "village d'Il Borro" Il Borro, Tuscany, Italy

JAMES SUCKLING

Critic "Wine Spectator Magazine" Il Borro, Tuscany, Italy

MASSIMO & PATRIZIA VINCI

Wine shop owners, Volterra, Tuscany, Italy

ISANETTE BIANCHETTI & INALDO TEDESCO

Winemakers, Pernambuco, Brazil

ETCHART FAMILY

Vineyard owners, *domaine* San Pedro de Yacochuya, Cafayate, Argentina
Arnaldo x3 = father, son & grandson and Marco, youngest son

ANTONIO CABEZAS

Winemaker, Cafayate, Argentina

MONDOVINO CHARACTER BIOS

YVONNE HEGOBURU

“I planted vines when my husband died. Ever since then, all this love inside me, I give it to the vines. I talk to them. I have an exchange with them.”

YVONNE HEGOBURU, 6 1/2 hectares, Appellation Jurançon (Béarn, SW France)

Yvonne planted her vines in 1986, following the death of her journalist husband, on a site where vines had been planted from at least the 16th century. But in 1940 the vines were left to die, when the men went off to war, to Germany or into the Resistance. It was decided the slopes were too steep for even young women to cultivate. Yvonne, now 77 years old, tends the vines herself. She grows the grapes according to the principles of “Biodynamie”, which exclude the use of any chemicals, pesticides or herbicides.

BATTISTA COLUMBU

“We mustn’t be distracted by the phantoms of progress, which can destroy us and destroy nature, and bring suffering to others. Here in Sardinia, we have a millennial culture. We ought to live in tranquility on this earth. And there’s room for others.”

BATTISTA & LINA COLUMBU, 1 1/2 hectares, Appellation Malvasia di Bosa, (Sardinia, Italy)

Because the family *domaine* is too small to support even one person, Battista Columbu pursued a career in politics as a member of the Sardinian Party. Sardinians say that he’s the only local politician who ended his career with a house that is the same size as it was when he started.

MICHEL ROLLAND, wine consultant (Pomerol, France)

Considered the world’s leading wine consultant, Rolland is indisputably the most influential and highest-priced. He is technical advisor, through his Pomerol laboratory, for over 400 *domaines* in Bordeaux. He consults in 12 countries, including the United States for Robert Mondavi, Staglin Vineyard, and Harlan Estate, and Argentina for the Etchart Family. He is also the oenologist for many of Bernard Magrez’s properties from Bordeaux to Morocco, Algeria and Portugal, including the newly established *domaine* in Aniane, Languedoc. In India, he is the first person to make wine.

AIMÉ GUIBERT

“Wine is dead. Let’s be clear, wine is dead. And not just wine. Fruits. Cheeses....

Wine is an almost religious relationship between man and the natural elements. With the immaterial. It takes a poet to make a great wine.”

AIMÉ GUIBERT, 40 hectares, Appellation Mas de Daumas Gassac (Aniane, Languedoc, France)

Guibert established *domaine* Daumas-Gassac in 1979, in Aniane, a village of 2,400 inhabitants, when Bordeaux oenologist Henri Enjalembert discovered he had a singular *terroir*. Guibert is considered the pioneer of renaissance of quality winemaking in Languedoc. Even by his detractors.

ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY (Napa, California)

Robert Mondavi, son of an impoverished Italian immigrant from the Marche region of Italy, founded the Robert Mondavi Winery in 1966, and built it into a 1/2 billion dollar a year business. The Mondavis produce over 100 million bottles worldwide from Napa to Chile to Australia to Tuscany. His sons Michael and Tim inherited the position of joint CEOs in the early 1990s, and took the company public in 1993. Very recently, at the request of the shareholder-appointed board of directors, the family stepped down from running the company.

MICHAEL MONDAVI

“We want to start a dynasty. Ten, fifteen generations from now, it would be great to see our heirs making wine on some other planets. That could be kind of fun. “Beam me up, Scotty, send me some wine from Mars or something.”

HARLAN ESTATE, 20 hectares (Napa, California)

After developing his successful real estate business in Northern California, Bill Harlan created Harlan Estate in 1985. Michel Rolland began consulting for him in 1998 (three years later he also became a consultant for the Staglins). The Harlan wine received its first top score of 100 points from Robert Parker in 1994. It is now one of the most expensive and sought-after red wines in the world, the pioneer of what the Wine Spectator Magazine terms “Cult Wines.”

STAGLIN FAMILY VINEYARD, 18 hectares (Napa, California)

After serving as an officer in Vietnam, Garen Staglin was appointed to the modeling committee under Henry Kissinger during the SALT talks between the US and the Soviet Union. He subsequently founded several Silicon Valley software companies, including eONE Global, worth 200 million dollars. He purchased his Napa Valley vineyards in 1985.

GROUPE BOISSET (Burgundy, France)

Founded in 1961 by 18-year-old Jean-Claude Boisset, the Boisset Group has grown into the number one company in Burgundy in sales, and the third biggest in France. Boisset's son, Jean-Charles, is now at the helm, extending its stake in international ventures in the US, Japan and Canada.

CHÂTEAU MOUTON-ROTHSCHILD (Pauillac, Bordeaux, France)

A Bordeaux 2nd Growth according to the famous 1855 classification, Château Mouton was acquired by Baron Philippe de Rothschild in 1922. In 1973, thanks to the Baron's lobbying efforts, Mouton-Rothschild was promoted to 1st Growth status, the only instance in history of any Bordeaux chateau managing to change status. In 1979, Mouton-Rothschild allied itself with Robert Mondavi to create the first luxury Californian wine, Opus One. After Philippe's death in 1988, his daughter Philippine de Rothschild took over.

Mouton-Rothschild is headed by a three-person directoire. The co-CEOs are Patrick Léon, technical director, Xavier de Eizaguirre, marketing director and Pierre Guinchard, financial director.

JEAN-LUC THUNEVIN, vigneron, 6.5 hectares, Appellation Château de Valandraud (St-Emilion, France)

Jean-Luc Thunevin bought a small plot of unclassified land in St-Emilion in 1991 and renamed it Chateau Valandraud. Working almost from the start with Michel Rolland, he became the first well-known "garagiste", a term used by the most prominent advocate of Valandraud, Robert Parker, to describe producers of small quantities of highly prized, expensive wines made with what he describes as "radical viticulture." Valandraud today sells for \$300-\$400 a bottle.

BERNARD MAGREZ, CEO and founder, William Pitters (Bordeaux, France)

Bernard Magrez founded William Pitters in 1964. Taking advantage of the boom of mass distribution in supermarkets in France, he turned the small drinks company into one of the top *negociants* of wine in Bordeaux. In parallel, he has developed in collaboration with Michel Rolland, activities in smaller-scale "garage" wines across France, in Algeria, Morocco, Spain and Argentina. More recently, he has acquired a plot of land in the small village of Aniane in the Languedoc, in association with Gérard Depardieu, as the spearhead for their joint venture called, "Les Clefs du Terroir".

HUBERT DE MONTILLE

“Where there are vines, there’s civilization. There’s no barbarism.”

FAMILLE DE MONTILLE, 8 hectares, Appellations Volnay, Rugiens, Pommard. (Burgundy, France)

Hubert with his wife, Christine, his son Etienne and his daughters Alix and Isabelle are *vignerons* on 8 hectares of vines in Volnay and Pommard, Burgundy. Hubert became a trial lawyer in Dijon to supplement his income from the family *domaine*, which he ran simultaneously from the age of 20 (4 hectares at the time), beginning with the harvest of 1950. Etienne started making the wine with him in 1991 and has been its chief winemaker for the last few years. Alix worked as winemaker at the *negociant* house, Ropiteau, subsidiary of Burgundy giant, Jean-Charles Boisset until she tendered her resignation in 2003. Because the family *domaine* is too small to support two families, she and her brother have started a small winery label together, buying grapes from small landholders and making the wine themselves.

ALIX: Whore wines come right on to you.

HUBERT: They’re trickster wines.

ALIX: They’re wines that come on to you. And then they drop you.

HUBERT: They drop you like that!

ALIX: In fact, they’re “traitor” wines.

HUBERT: But the modern world is used to that. This world likes to be fooled.

NEAL ROSENTHAL

“In Bordeaux, the terroir is there, but they’re destroying it. They’re suppressing their terroir. Just as our freedoms are being suppressed here, in the US. People say: “let’s be patriotic, therefore let’s give up our freedoms. Let’s not debate anything anymore. Let’s just accept.”

There’s a battle between resistance and collaboration. It’s not between modernity and tradition. Because you can be modern while respecting tradition.”

NEAL ROSENTHAL, Importer, Rosenthal Wine Merchant (New York, USA)

Neal Rosenthal started as a retailer with a small wine shop in upper Manhattan in the 1970's, near his father's pharmacy. He gradually began to import the wines himself, representing artisanal winemakers from France and Italy much the way a book editor, gallerist or film producer works with an author, artist or filmmaker. He has established himself as one of the leading American importers of European wines of *terroir*.

MICHAEL BROADBENT, Wine Director, Christie's (London, England)

A Master of Wine, author and auctioneer, Michael Broadbent has been in the wine trade for over 50 years. He has been head of the wine department at Christie's since 1966. He is the author of "Vintage Wine: 50 years of Tasting the World's Finest Wines" and "How to Approach and Appreciate Wine." He is widely considered the world's most experienced taster.

SCHRÖDER & SCHÛLER, Négociants (Bordeaux, France)

Founded by two North German immigrants in the 18th century, Maison Schröder & SchÛler is one of the oldest Bordeaux trading companies. Having survived numerous historic upheavals –including the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the German occupation in the 1940's- it is now run by Jean-Henri SchÛler, his son Yann and his daughter-in-law Marie. In addition to bottling over 15 million wines a year, they own several Bordeaux Chateaux, including Chateau Kirwan (3rd Growth) in the town of Margaux. Michel Rolland has been their consultant at Kirwan for the last few years.

ROBERT PARKER

"I always say about myself; if there's a legacy for Robert Parker, it's that he leveled the playing field. In this stratified caste system of wine, dominated by elitists and reactionaries, Robert Parker brought an American, a democratic point of view. I think that *has* been a revolution."

ROBERT PARKER, Wine Critic (Monkton, Maryland)

After practicing law for 10 years, Robert Parker turned to wine criticism, publishing the Wine Advocate in 1978. He and his magazine were launched to international fame after his precociously favorable reviews of the unusually ripe, California-like 1982 vintage in Bordeaux. Since then, Robert Parker has become indisputably the single most influential wine critic in the world, determining with his ratings the price of wine in most of the world's regions, including the multi-billion-dollar a year Bordeaux trade.

THE FRESCOBALDI FAMILY (Florence, Italy)

Tracing the family banking business back to the 11th century, the Frescobaldis' history is closely intertwined with the commercial, artistic and political history of Florence. The family has grown wine in Tuscany for 700 years. It is now the second most successful wine company in Tuscany, with sales averaging \$50 million a year. Its current CEO, the Marchese Vittorio Frescobaldi, created numerous joint ventures with the Robert Mondavi Winery, through such brands as Ornellaia, Luce and Danzante. Today these joint ventures represent approximately a 1/3 of the entire Frescobaldi output.

THE ANTINORI FAMILY (Florence, Italy)

One of the oldest noble families in Florence, the Antinoris have been involved in the arts and history of Florence for 800 years. Their wine sales rank number one in Tuscany and third in all of Italy. CEO Marchese Piero Antinori is credited with the radical modernization of Tuscan wines and the successful relaunching of the image of Italian wines abroad.

Lodovico Antinori, his brother, founded Ornellaia separately from the family business in the early 1990s. Planting in the historically unheralded Bolgheri region along the Tuscan coast, Ornellaia became the leader of the "post-modernist movement of Super Tuscans" (a Wine Spectator term for wines that flout the historic appellation laws). In 1998, Lodovico Antinori brought in Robert Mondavi as a minority partner and eventually sold the entire winery to the Mondavi family. He has since joined forces with his brother Piero, to develop a winery in neighboring Bibbona, Tuscany.

THE BIANCHETTIS, vigneron, 6 hectares (Pernambuco, Brazil)

Isanette Bianchetti and her husband Mauro Tedesco, both oenologists, emigrated from the south of Brazil (several thousand kilometers away) in the 1980's to the valley of the "Rio de Sao Francisco" in Pernambuco state. Working for the Botticelli vineyard, they helped to establish the first vines ever planted in Northeastern Brazil, in an oasis deep in the sparsely populated backlands. Because of the proximity to the equator but with an absence of humidity, this is perhaps the only region in the world that has two and a half successful harvests per year. They founded their own label, Bianchetti, on 6 hectares of vines in 1997. Their wine is currently sold only on the local Brazilian market and averages \$2 a bottle.

THE ETCHARTS, San Pedro de Yacochuya (Cafayate, Argentina)

The Etchart winery was founded by Basque emigrants in Cafayate, Northwestern Argentina in the mid 19th century in a region known to have produced quality wines since the Jesuits first accompanied the Spanish conquests in the 17th century. Arnaldo Etchart (the third of five Arnaldo Etcharts) sold the family winery and the right to the family name to French multinational Pernod-Ricard in the 1990's. Following a stint as their consultant at the previous winery, Michel Rolland founded the San Pedro de Yacochuya winery in partnership with Arnaldo and his sons, Arnaldo and Marco in 1996.

ANTONIO CABEZAS, vigneron, 1 hectare (Tolombón, Argentina)

Antonio Cabezas has one hectare of white Torrontes grapes and red Malbec grapes in the town of Tolombon, 5 km from Cafayate. To supplement his income of \$60 a month from the wine he sells (about \$1.50 per bottle), he does various odd jobs working in other people's vineyards.

JONATHAN NOSSITER

Jonathan Nossiter has directed four feature films. His most recent, "Mondovino" premieres in Cannes in the Official Selection in May 2004. It's both a feature film and a 10 part television series about the rich, the poor and the powerful in the world of wine, from Paraguay to Brooklyn to Florence.

"Signs & Wonders" (2000), a psychological thriller shot in Athens, Greece was produced by MK2 and Nick Wechsler, with Charlotte Rampling and Stellan Skarsgard. It premiered in competition at the 2000 Berlin Film Festival.

"Sunday" (1997), a black comedy he also directed and co-wrote about a one day love affair based on a case of assumed identity, starred David Suchet & Lisa Harrow. It won the Sundance Film Festival's Grand Jury Prize for Best Film and Best Screenplay and the Deauville Film Festival's Grand Prize for Best Film and their International Critics' Prize and was shown in "Un Certain Regard" at Cannes.

He also directed "Resident Alien" (1991), a feature length comedy mixing documentary and fiction about the end of Manhattan's bohemia, with Quentin Crisp, John Hurt and Holly Woodlawn. It was theatrically released in the U.S. in 1992 and was shown in numerous countries (including the BBC in England, Berlin Film Festival, Toronto Film Festival).

His documentaries include "Losing The Thread" (2001) for RAI in Italy and the Sundance Channel in the US, an hour long film on art fraud, tourism and the male ego in Tuscany (premiere Rotterdam Festival) and "Searching for Arthur", a look at Arthur Penn in New York, for Telepiu's Italian series "Directors on Directors" (premiere at Locarno Festival) and "Making Mischief", a half hour, personal documentary diary of the preparations for "Signs & Wonders".

His training includes: the study of painting at the Beaux Arts in Paris and the San Francisco Art Institute and Ancient Greek at Dartmouth College, assistant directing in English theatre (The Newcastle Playhouse, King's Head) and assistant to the director Adrian Lyne on "Fatal Attraction". A trained sommelier, he has made wine lists and trained staffs for a variety of New York restaurants, including "Balthazar", "Rice", "Il Buco" and "Pravda." He has also written about wine for New York Magazine, "Wine & Food" and "The Forward".

The son of a journalist, he was born in the US and grew up in France, England, Italy, Greece and India.

Interview with JONATHAN NOSSITER

Though you're a filmmaker, you also have a career in wine. How did that begin?

For me, wine has always been linked to friendship, to pleasure. I became interested in it when I first worked as a waiter in Paris at the age of 15. Later I got a degree as a sommelier in New York, where I made wine lists for a number of restaurants. Because my father, Bernard Nossiter, was a foreign correspondent for the Washington Post and the New York Times, I grew up in France, Italy, Greece, India and in the States. Early on, I saw how he got the feel for a given country just by talking to all kinds of unlikely people. Having met winegrowers from around the world over the last 20 years, I've come to realize that somehow this singular world is weirdly representative of the world at large. The reason is simple. Wine is more like people, in its infinite complexity, than anything else on the planet. It's one of the clearest expressions of both the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions. And rather than preserving these traditions as rigid artifacts, it keeps them fluid, vital and modern. Wine really is a kind of guardian of Western Civilization. To look at the world of wine today is necessarily a way to look at how we feel about our past and at what we're preparing for the future. The news from the front, in my eyes, is both exhilarating and terrifying.

Who are winemakers?

A winegrower is at once a farmer, a businessman and an artist. His attachment to the earth is simple and humbling, dependent as he is on the cruel whims of nature. But at the same time that he works the land, the wine that he fashions is linked to the greatest cultural ambitions –and pretensions– of his time. And like an artist, he tries to give pleasure and provoke exchanges between people. However the great difference between the two is that the work the winegrower pours his soul into is necessarily ephemeral. It avoids the artist's trap that Orson Welles warned against: "the only thing more vulgar than working for money is working for posterity."

Do you see wine reflecting cultural changes?

Absolutely. For example, it's not a coincidence that there was a wine boom in the States in the 1970's. Californian wine at that time was sometimes excessive, too intense or even challenging to swallow. But it was intriguing, radical and invigorating. Winegrowers then shared the same desire for discovery and experimentation as Cassavetes, Scorsese or Coppola of the period. In the 80s, with the arrival of the Reagan era, wine immediately began to change. Overnight this previously raw and unpredictable liquid became polished and media-savvy: easy drinking wines in fancy packages. Wines that were designed for reasons of prestige and economic power. I don't think it's accidental that at the same time in Hollywood, films became more complacent...unapologetically commercial products. The small Californian wineries from the 70s that resembled the Burgundians in their

artisanal ambitions began to sell out to big business. Coca Cola bought Sterling Vineyards in the 80s. A decade later, Coca Cola sold the winery to Diageo, an even more multinational company, exactly when it became absurd to talk about the idea of “a country of origin”, an identity, for a global company. I think that the next stage of evolution, what we’re living through today, is the voluntary co-opting of small scale artisanal production (“organic farming”, “terroir” etc.) into the cultural and economic needs of the new world order.

Is this what you had in mind from the start, an inventory of the global order?

No. The origins and what remains the heart of the film are much more personal. I set off with a friend of mine, the Uruguayan filmmaker Juan Pittaluga, to do a kind of casting of winegrowers from different regions. As Juan and I began to talk winemakers in Burgundy, we were both struck by the intensity of father-son relationships and how that intensity expressed itself, in love and tension, in the production of something tangible.

Naturally we began to think about our dads, both of whom died quite young but having left behind powerful expressions of their love and their engagement with the world around them. The notion of personal transmission from generation to generation, of what gets passed on and what dies away...or is lost...or is consciously rejected, became, for me, the grail of this adventure across three continents.

What was especially exciting was that in almost every encounter my own preconceptions were turned on their head. Someone who declares himself a conservative, a reactionary even, turns out to be more fundamentally radical and progressive than a family who votes “left” and espouses a bag full of notions associated with “resistance”.

Why did you choose Burgundy as your starting point?

I spoke about California, but what happened in Burgundy in the 70’s was just as interesting from a political and economic standpoint. Burgundian winegrowers at the time were very isolated from the economic and cultural pressures of the modern world. Their wine had been appreciated for thousands of years –at least since the Romans invaded Gaul- but they had long dropped out of fashion. Wanting to join the emerging global marketplace, they succumbed to all the trends of the time, including the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. Miraculously, their attachment to the land and to their culture was so strong that they quickly discarded these toxic expressions of progress and concentrated instead on finding personal ways to express their patrimony in a modern idiom, to create a vital bridge between an ancient culture and the world they live in today.

They quickly understood that they were trying to protect a simple, universal idea, expressed most clearly for me by a Sardinian winegrower, Battista

Colombu who said: "The most critical act in a deceitful world that tries to destroy our individual dignity at every turn, is to protect that dignity at any cost."

You have opened the doors of a very private club. How were you welcomed into the world of wine?

Very well, even by those who didn't share my ideas. There's a natural conviviality in the world of wine. Even those people who produce wine for the least idealistic reasons find it difficult to resist the kind of natural seduction that comes out of the bottle. There really is a magic that occurs in the natural transformation of grapes into wine. And even though it's true that the world of wine has been veiled for too long by a kind of "omerta", or vow of silence, anyone who drinks or makes wine is instinctively gregarious.

Did you set out on your adventures as a wine lover, an insider?

More as a "discoverer," I'd say. I've always tried to avoid the snobbery of wine connoisseurship...all that ridiculous jargon about the "aromas of pear blossom or...the scent of my grandmother's lace underwear..." Unfortunately wine has become associated with all of the most exclusive aspects of a certain lifestyle. Especially in places that are not traditional winegrowing cultures, like the US, England and the Far East, wine has become a kind of symbol of elitism and pretension. I've always tried to fight against that.

Whenever I make a wine list for a restaurant and train the staff, I insist that they describe the wine in their own terms, from their own gut reactions. You shouldn't fake your way through a bottle of wine any more than an actor should fake his emotions. Even the most inexperienced drinker or spectator can immediately spot a phony approach. For the film, I wanted to get as close as I could to a general spectators' point of view, to people who couldn't give a damn about wine but who are sensitive to simple, everyday pleasures that are somehow essential to our basic enjoyment of life. I think the traditions of these pleasures are in fact essential to our survival as a culture

Are there two opposing worlds, between the wine growers who maintain traditional, cultural and rural values, and those who support the globalization of wine, what some call "the international taste"?

No, I don't see it like that. I've tried to avoid a simplification of the struggle between the good and the bad and make a film that both takes a stand but is fiercely tolerant of opposing views. It's a notion I know my father stood for. For me, "Resistance" is an ethical, not an ideological position. In the world of wine, like in France under Vichy, those who resist come from all social and economical classes and all ideologies. While few people's lives are in danger today, I think there's a more subtle form of repression in the world that makes the notion of resistance and collaboration much more ambiguous. Whether you're a reporter or a civil servant, a doctor or a shopkeeper, there are choices in everyday life that determine how you conform or question the uses of power around you. These same struggles are present for winemakers,

from the far reaches of Argentina to the palazzos of Florence.

You introduce us to Michel Rolland, a famous oenologist who works with major wine houses in twelve countries. Who is this man really?

Rolland is like the Spielberg of the wine world, as Jean-Luc Thunevin – Rolland’s colleague and Robert Parker’s protege- suggests in the film. Rolland is a pure expression of his era, as even his adversary, Aimé Guibert admits. He instinctively understands the trends and aspirations of his time and knows how to capture them in a product that anticipates what consumers will accept. He’s the best known winemaker in the world beyond any doubt. While I was deep in the heart of Argentina finishing up the film, I expected someone to possibly bring up his name, but I never imagined I’d hear someone say, “Michel Rolland completely transformed Argentinian wine and now, thanks to him, it’s completely different from what it’s been since the Jesuits first introduced wine here in the 17th century.” He’s like a highly successful business or political consultant, perfectly adapted to the global marketplace.

How have the Californian wines from Napa managed to establish themselves so strongly?

In the 15th and 16th centuries, great Florentine families like the Medicis and the Strozzi supported poets and painters as a way of affirming their own social and political positions. Today, art has been abandoned as a symbol of prestige in favor of wine. It’s more prestigious in an international society to have your name on a wine label than to have your portrait made by a painter or photographer, or even a filmmaker.

Since the end of the 80s, Californian wine has imposed itself on the global marketplace not only in terms of sales but also in terms of influence on wine production elsewhere in the world, including in countries like France and Italy.

Your film is almost like a 19th-century novel, with an epic cast of characters from high Bordeaux society to humble pioneers in the Brazilian backwoods.

During the shoot, I realized it was like being in some kind of Dickens or Balzac novel. I tried to adapt how I directed to reflect this. There was such an enormous range of people from all cultures and social, economic and ideological backgrounds, with all the pretensions (and humble aspirations) that the post-industrial world can offer. Because of the vividness of these people, often felt like I was working with a international cast of great actors.

Is all this specific to the world of wine?

I loved the idea of sharing with a viewer the thrill of seeing these private lives that often felt like they had the intensity of fiction. Maybe because the wine world is so inconsequential in real terms in the world, I had unusual access to its leaders and power brokers. I think it allowed me to reveal the human face of globalisation, to film with unusual intimacy the emotions and psychology of those who wield power and influence.

It seems to be a world where the sky's the limit. The Mondavi brothers picture themselves creating a dynasty that could have wine growing on Mars!

It's strange. Like in a novel, their own ambitions have turned against them. It's as if the wine world has blended Balzac's world of "Lost Illusions," with the TV series "Dallas" with the Mexican soap opera, "Pueblo Chico, Infierno Grande" (Small Village, Big Hell). Very recently, the board of directors of the publicly traded Mondavi corporation replaced the family in the running of their own company. What the Mondavi brothers set in motion a decade ago by aggressively going public and competing in the global marketplace has come back to bite them. The empire that their father so painstakingly built up from nothing is no longer in their hands.

According to Alix de Montille, "you make wine as a reflection of who you are."

Absolutely true. I almost put in the end credits: "whatever you think of any given character is exactly what you'll think about the wine they make."

Do we make films as a reflection of who we are?

Probably. Inevitably. Maybe fatally. I went at this subject matter in the same way I tried to make my other films, without making any distinction between "fiction" and "documentary." In the fiction films I've done, I've always tried to provoke the actors into a vital exchange with the environment in which we shot, from David Suchet with the homeless shelter in Queens to Stellan Skarsgard with a herd of goats in the Greek mountains. With Mondovino I tried to prod these non actors into the fullest, most vivid expression possible of who they actually are. It was like working with actors towards the same goal, but by opposite means.

I shot over the course of nearly two years, with a rare sense of delight. I hope that my previous experience shooting feature films in 35mm gave me the necessary discipline and craft sense to fully exploit the freedom and spontaneity of the new lightweight digital technology. Thanks to the pioneering work of Tommaso Vergallo at Digimages, the 35 mm end result feels closer to me to the texture of 35 mm films of the 70's -the period I love the most in colour filmmaking - than anything I've done before.

It was also a conscious decision on my part to shoot with two friends, the Uruguayan director Juan Pittaluga and the Caribbean-Brazilian photographer,

Stephanie Pommez. I think the energy of three curious friends showing up with a discreet camera as opposed to a self conscious film crew with defined objectives and working parameters allowed for an unusually human exchange between camera and subject. I feel like the camera itself became an extension of who I am and of what and how I perceived the worlds that I encountered. I've always operated the camera a lot in the films I've made, but never with so much sense of intimacy and joy of discovery. Even if the camera seems like it had a little too much to drink at times. I'm all for clear-headed engagement, but I'd hate to imagine a world without a little drunkenness.

JONATHAN NOSSITER FILMOGRAPHY

FEATURE FILMS

MONDOVINO (2004), Director, Producer, DP, Editor.

SIGNS & WONDERS (2000), Director, Co-writer

Cast Charlotte Rampling, Stellan Skarsgar

Official Selection Berlin Film Festival 2000

SUNDAY (1997), Director, Co-writer, Producer

Cast David Suchet & Lisa Harrow

Best Film and Best Screenplay, Sundance Film Festival, 1997

Best Film and International Critics' Prize, Deauville Film Festival, 1997

RESIDENT ALIEN (1991), Director, Writer, Producer

Cast Quentin Crisp, John Hurt, Sting

Winner, Florence Film Festival, 1991

DOCUMENTARIES & SHORTS

LOSING THE THREAD (2002), Director, Co-Producer

Cast Lorenzo Pezzatini

MAKING MISCHIEF (2001), Director, Producer

Cast Charlotte Rampling, Stellan Skarsgard

SYMPATHY FOR THE DISTRIBUTOR (2000), Director

Cast Stellan Skarsgard, Charlotte Rampling

Toronto Film Festival

MONTREAL TRUST (2000), Director, Montreal Film Festival

SEARCHING FOR ARTHUR (1997), Director

Cast Arthur Penn

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

Directing, Photography, Editing
Jonathan Nossiter

Associate Producer, Sound, 2nd Camera
Juan Pittaluga

Assistant & Co-Camera Operator
Stephanie Pommez

Assistant to Director, Associate Producer
Laurent Gorse

A Production of
Goatworks Films & Les Films de la Croisade

Producer
Emmanuel Giraud & Jonathan Nossiter

Co-Producers
Sophie Dulac Productions, Ricardo Preve

Executive Producer
Tommaso Vergallo

Line Producer
Catherine Hannoun

Production Manager
Francois Drouot

Post Production
Digimage (Angelo Cosimano, Juan Eveno)

Sound Mixer
Nostradine Benguezzou

Colorist
Guillaume Lips

Languages English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese

Format: 1:85/Color- Dolby SR - Running time: 130 minutes