

look

YOUR LOCAL GUIDE TO PERSONAL STYLE

FALL 2008

THE TROUBLE WITH TERRY

IT'S MORE THAN JUST JASON PRIESTLEY'S CHARM
THAT HAS TAKEN TDM TO THE OKANAGAN

the taste of home

MEET THE PIONEERS WHO GROW HARVEST AND COOK LOCAL PRODUCE

plus FASHION RETAILERS *on* WHAT'S HOT THIS FALL



The intoxicating of Terry David Mulligan

Wine is all the rage with broadcaster-actor Terry David Mulligan, who is now rooted in the vineyards of Naramata and shares a TV show about “the juice” with Jason Priestley.

WORDS
TOM ZILLICH

PICTURES
SHAWN TALBOT

“WAIT A SEC, WAIT A SEC, HOLD ON.”

With that, Terry David Mulligan puts down the phone and makes me, well, wait a sec. It’s been only a few minutes since I put in a call to the veteran broadcaster-actor at his house in the Naramata area north of Penticton, to which he and his wife, Meg, have “transitioned” from West Vancouver.

All around, it’s easy to blame it on the grapes.

“It’s tough to open a bottle of wine while talking on the phone,” says Mulligan, explaining the *phonus interruptus*.

He grunts, the cork goes POP!, a loud sigh is heard as the liquid is poured, and all is good on a scorcher of a day up at Mulligan’s new lakeview retreat.

“What bottle is it?” I inquire.

“Well, it’s a rosé . . . a nice summer drink,” he reports. “The label’s worn off,

though, and I can’t read it. It could be Quail’s Gate. . . . I don’t know.”

Uh-huh. Another couple of a certain age uproots from the Coast and moves to the Okanagan to cheerfully uncork untold numbers of vino, mid-afternoon. Sounds like retirement, but don’t dare tell that to Mulligan. Truth is, he’s busy as hell, and quite often motors several hours west to work-camp himself at his “other” residence in West Van (which just happens to be located about two blocks from the place he vacated for the move to Naramata Bench).

First off, there’s the weekly Tasting Room radio show the broadcaster does from a converted barn at his semi-rural new digs, which boasts a view of some of the valley’s top-drawer vineyards. Then there’s Hollywood & Vines, the season 2 TV show that sheds much light on, yes, wine, and co-stars his ol’

buddy Jason Priestley. Clearly, the media man known far and wide as TDM has reinvented himself as something of a wine guru, a role he’s grown into over the past few years.

“It wasn’t until I hooked up with Priestley that I really started drinking it, I guess, and I was never, ever a drinker of beer or hard liquor,” he relates.

“Jason was the guy who said, ‘What (wine) are you drinking? Oh, throw that crap away!’ Once he, in particular, said, ‘This is a red, this is a white, these are the levels you want to attain,’ that was it for me. What’s the line? Life’s too short to drink bad wine.”

Their trip-y TV show, which roams North America and the world to find intriguing people involved in the winemaking industry, reveals Priestley to be the real expert of the two, and Mulligan’s OK with that assessment. Theirs is kind of a teacher-student relationship



when it comes to “the juice,” as Priestley is fond of calling it.

“He sure knows his stuff, very much so,” raves Mulligan after taking another sip of the chilled blush. “And my role (on the show), kind of having stumbled into it, is to be the audience, the people learning about this stuff who didn’t know anything about wine, or very little, and didn’t want to be embarrassed by their lack of knowledge anymore — ordering in restaurants or whatever. I know more (about wine) than I let on (on the show), but I’ll never catch up with Jason. He’s the man.”

When reached in Los Angeles, Priestley managed to find time to chat with LOOK while busy directing an episode of *The Secret Life of an American Teenager*, the TV show starring Molly Ringwald.

The North Van-raised Priestley, who rose to fame as hunky Brandon Walsh on *Beverly*

Hills 90210 but “knows nothing about” and has “nothing to do with” the planned TV remake of the hit serial drama, loves working with Mulligan (“an iconic Canadian figure,” he offers) and cruising *Hollywood & Vines* with the guy who did CBC radio plays with his mom in the 1970s.

Priestley discovered wine early in his 90210 days, when he’d frequently drive with his then-girlfriend to California’s Napa and Sonoma wine regions for tastings fit for a celebrity.

“I was in a very unique position,” he recalls, “in that, I’d be there in a tasting room of Silver Oak and Caymus (wineries) and someone would tap me on the shoulder saying, ‘Hey, Jason Priestley, I want to take you back in the barrel-aging room and show you some stuff’ — very privileged stuff, stuff that 95 per cent of the world’s wine drinkers would never

be able to do, like drinking the stuff right out of the barrel. Those kind of experiences were priceless in my wine appreciation.”

Priestley’s passion for the grape has grown to the point that he’s become part-owner of Black Hills, the desert estate in Oliver known for its *Nota Bene* and *Alibi* labels. It’s not “his” winery by any stretch; the actor-director is “merely part of the group that formed the general partnership to purchase the property, eight of us, with a whole bunch more involved in the limited partnership.”

Whatever the boardroom scenario, Priestley’s work with Black Hills keeps his hand in the creation of the juice he loves. “It’s fantastic,” he says of the business. “I love it.”

The story of how Mulligan and Priestley reconnected, post-90210, to work on a show about wine starts with, quite naturally, a fishing trip. Somewhere out on a Boston whaler with lines in the water, they began talking about reds and whites and, after sharing some laughs about how many free bottles of hooch they’d be able to land with such a TV-show venture, hatched a plan. They looked around, didn’t see another wine-based show they really, truly liked, and set out to make theirs accessible and fun by giving it rock ‘n’ roll attitude.

On his many junkets to Hollywood to interview movie stars, Mulligan began throwing wine-related questions at the likes of Harrison Ford, Steve Martin, Will Farrell and Jim Belushi. Presto, it was instant (and often very interesting) material for the show’s first season, which in its second season, this time on Superchannel starting in January, will see Mulligan and Priestley invite celebs along for the ride to wine destinations.

The first batch of *Hollywood & Vines* shows brought viewers to out-of-the-way places like Walla Walla, the Washington town best known for its sweet onions. The co-hosts also found it to be a grape-growing region of the quirkiest kind, its rich dirt tilled by the likes of “Sir” Charles Smith, a rock-band manager with the best Sideshow Bob-style lid imaginable, and cool attitude to boot. In Denver, meanwhile, they learned about champagne and Mario Andretti’s wine, and even zoomed around the track in a pace car at the city’s grand prix, where they chatted about fermented beverages with, among others, Steven Page of the Barenaked Ladies.

“It’s not much about the wine, actually,” Mulligan says of the show, “it’s the people around the wine who interest me, the winemakers and those who drink it. I was really taken with the people; they were straight-up and no B.S. They jokingly refer to themselves as dirt farmers, but many of them come from finance, banking, teaching, the medical profession, first-aid workers. . . . It’s those stories, the characters they are, that we want. Don’t give me the corporate guy, the guy out of the boardroom, give me the guy who completely changed his frickin’ life to do this, make wine. That’s interesting. And we’re able to find those people, most of the time.”

At the moment back in Naramata, the former voice of *MuchMusic* is weighing options with Meg about planting Muscat →

Opposite A break between takes; Mulligan and Priestley rest their weary palates while shooting their new TV show *Hollywood & Vines* at the Sumac Ridge Winery in Summerland.

Top If you can’t stand the heat; hands on, with Sumac Ridge Winery executive chef Roger Planiden.

Above left Naramata, a favoured retirement haunt among Vancouverites. TDM has never been busier since his move there.

Above The Celebrity Chef whips up a storm.

→ grapes, and the timing of the initiative. They're rapidly running out of tilled area near the house, so one possibility involves corralling some neighbours to "double up" on some of the plants. Collectively, he admits, none of them really know what they're doing, but they're learning as they go.

In certain ways, he and Meg have found it difficult to adapt to life in wine country (what, no morning-paper delivery?!). But the beauty of the area, and their century-old house in particular, caused the couple "to run out of excuses why they couldn't move up here" when they discovered it while taping a segment for *Hollywood & Vines* a couple years back.

From his studio in a renovated barn, Mulligan sometimes calls Priestley's wife, Naomi, as pre-clearance for her husband to be a phone-in guest on the Saturday-morning show about wine. With a year-old daughter in the picture now, Priestley's time at home is precious — as is life itself, really, after he nearly died when his race car slammed into a wall at Kentucky Speedway in August 2002.

"I'm feeling fine," the actor says, when asked. "That was six years ago now. I retired as a professional driver but I still get behind the wheel. (Racing) is a young man's game. Now that I'm a father, it makes the decision a lot easier, too. →

terry's tipples

QUAILS' GATE'S ROSE (FROM KELOWNA).
"So good, it's meant to be drunk NOW. I'm hoarding it."

DESERT HILLS' GAMAY (OLIVER).
A hit-and-miss miracle, but even in the off years it's a treat."

"Great huge reds from BILL EGGART at FAIRVIEW CELLARS (OLIVER) are among the best reds in Canada."

GOLDEN MILE (OLIVER) — "it's all good, and POPLAR GROVE (NARAMATA BENCH), it's heady juice."

"Also in Oliver, BLACK HILLS' CARMENÈRE — who knew? Yes, there's Alibi and Nota Bene; however, this (limited-edition) wine buckles my knees."

"The wines by JEFF MARTIN of LE FRENZ (PENTICTON) are proud, outspoken, gifted, and the best-kept secret in all of Canada could be OLIVER'S LE VIEUX PIN — a classy winery with world-class wines."



Above & left Their off-screen rapport and on-screen chemistry are key ingredients in the success of *Hollywood & Vines*.

→ I do a lot of carting, go-carting, just for fun."

As for the TV show, it's all about having fun with wine.

"We're astounded that we got year 1 in," Mulligan says candidly, "and we're equally astounded that we have a year 2. The thing is, we have four partners. We're not in it for the money, it's for the adventure. Somewhere down the road, all this work might pay off, but not right now. All we're doing is having a ball filling content, and maybe if there's some weird karma at work, we might make money off it. It's a joy, and we love it a lot." ●

priestley's picks

LES MONTES DAMNES (from Sancerre in the Loire region of France), \$18 in the U.S. "Great, approachable white French wine, with balanced sugars and acid, pears, pineapple. Light."

ETUDE'S ROSÉ (from the Napa region), also \$18. "Spectacular. Tony Soter does it again. Find it, hug it, drink it. Think strawberries."