Would it surprise you to know that 5 out of every 10 bottles of premium whisky is never drunk?

That’s one of the findings of the Mediazone Group’s Consumer Survey on Whisky sales in the Asia Pacific.

Whisky, to many, is bought as art is. To be admired, loved and stay as part of a treasured collection; even a memory of a great friendship!

The ‘water of life’ as it was earliest called, whisky has been the choice of the working man and the aristocrat alike. To some it was ‘fire water’ that held the power to make problems and fear vanish and to others, it was the inspiring nectar of the Gods that was to be savoured with the warmth of a cracking winter fire.

While time rolled on whisky making grew into a craft upon which a multi-billion dollar industry grew. While the history of whisky in Hong Kong is not as clear, what is now certain is the sheer investment potential it holds. Amidst a new wave of interest toward Japanese whisky, the old Grands like Macallan are selling bottles tagged around the $500,000 mark!

Price is Always Right!

Good whisky commands top dollar is something you hear often. What’s meant though is not that the drop’s pricey, but rather, whisky lovers will happily pay for their dream in a bottle. The precious lava was overflowing at a whisky fair in Hong Kong recently and a mere mention of a prospective feature sent the most proactive of distributors and brand leaders rushing to send their beautiful bottles in for a review, along side taster’s notes. We binned the notes. Our writers are perfectly capable of forming their own opinions in terms of taste, beauty of bottle and exquisite packaging. We won’t touch on prices because a) this review appears online and to a global audience and Hong Kong prices won’t help; b) our readers comprise folk to whom price isn’t an issue. I shall also avoid the taster’s jargon to spare you the agony of having to sit through details that you should be discovering yourself. I’ll just place pointers. Enjoy.

Glenmorangie’s SIGNET

BUY FROM: Moet Hennessy Diageo www.mhdhk.com

“The star’s signature box itself has priceless gift value. Open it and be prepared to be in for a show. The sleek dark treasure is snug like an old relic waiting to be teased into the twilit evening. The gold signature Glenmorangie motif glistening in the light inspires vibrant cel-
celebration as its deep dark ambers tease the eye of any true whisky aficionado. First impulse it to put it in a showcase where it belongs but whisky as mysterious as this beauty is too tempting to put away.

One sip and the senses erupt all at once. The rain falls, the fire cracks, a friend smiles. The toast to a friendship of a lifetime is about to begin as the first precious drops of the precious whisky kiss the dainty glass.

The sip. The aroma is captivating as the first blasts of this creamy creation hits straight home. Rich chocolate malts carry strong vanilla based coffee notes alongside that unmistakable Glenmorangie tangy orange, deep ginger and light cinnamon. Obviously, a secret, this beauty is a very clever mist that has to be lived through, to experience. It hides its age well but as a whisky lover, I taste the years and know that some part of this mystery is older than me and I am 50. I add a few drops of water and the glass takes on a magic of its own. The delicious aromas seem to waft up to the nose and linger all too briefly. Another sip and I savour the galaxy of voluptuous flavours, the enticingly smooth sip and I savour the galaxy of voluptuous flavours of a moment that will live on as the moment when our worlds touch in texture. We sip in silence and celebrate the moment when our worlds touch in rapture of a moment that will live on as the moment when our worlds touch in texture.

But the usual Highland Park dryness is delayed by an urgent watering of the mouth.

A repeated tide of malty sweetness and somber fruit is hurried away by prim chocolate and tannins from over-brewed tea.

And all are well matched and perhaps a little overwhelmed by the sway of bold wood, stony earth, strident herbs, and decisive smoke. Each of these notes is experienced across the core.

The immediate finish is a tad bitter, with a good deal of tea tannins that smack of young casks rather than the deeper, sodden wood that comes with very old whisky. The smoke becomes even more noticeable over time, and builds with further drinking. The long finish is stony, like wet gravel, a touch sour, like berries, and a little ashy from all that dampened smoke. It’s a good choice to accompany rich meats and heavy cheeses. It’s an acquired-taste for this reviewer. Well worth a try.

---

**Highland Park – Dark Origins.**

★★★★

**BUY FROM**

Edrington Hong Kong

[www.edrington.com](http://www.edrington.com)

A black beauty of a bottle, this single malt is a drop with strong character.

While it does not impose a lot of youthful burn, it suggests a younger single malt of good quality enhanced with some older spirit.

At its core is a satisfying malty lilt, laced with spice, fruit and mellow peat, like traditional Highland Park, only with more smoke and a good deal more sherry.

The name Dark Origins apparently refers to the high percentage of first fill sherry casks present in the expression. It is also meant to harken back to the illicit still days of Highland Park’s eighteenth-century founder.

Dark Origins has the most out-front smoke of any Highland Park in the core range. Yet, it is not so much a smoky flavor as it is a burnt one. Even the fruit and sweeter notes are more like over-baked apples.

The body is like most of the core range, Medium-weight with a little oil. But the usual Highland Park dryness is delayed by an urgent watering of the

---

**Black Grouse**

★★★★

**BUY FROM**

Edrington Hong Kong

[www.edrington.com](http://www.edrington.com)

Strangely, this was my first time to have tried this treat which is fairly commonplace in these parts. The bottle itself is impressive and clearly distinguishes itself as an above the cut drop.

From common knowledge, the Black Grouse is a woodier spin on The Famous Grouse — the best-selling blended Scotch in Scotland. The Famous Grouse has a nice pedigree as it is: It’s made primarily of Highland Park and Macallan whiskies. And with The Black Grouse, things take a deeper, darker turn.

It’s clear from simply looking through the bottle that this Grouse is a darker spirit in color. The nose indicates clear peat territory — none of the constituent whiskys in Famous Grouse are heavily
peated, if they’re peated at all — its smokiness lingering in the nostrils as it plays on the tongue as well.

But Black Grouse offers more than just a simple smoke bomb. Once you push past the peat it’s sweet, sugary with a finish that reminds one of the vanilla-laced kick of a moderately old Bourbon. There’s no escaping that smoke and woodiness in the end, but Black Grouse is really quite balanced in a way that so many ultra-peated single malts miss out on.

Certainly, a reasonably priced bottle, when the going gets tough, this bottle is good quality at a price most can afford.

---

**Naked Grouse**

BUY FROM
Edrington Hong Kong
www.edrington.com

A welcome addition to the reviewer’s table, the Naked Grouse is not unknown in these parts. The appearance of the scotch whisky is a beautiful reddish amber color, extremely clear and bright. As expected, it left a distinct liquor lacing on the side of the glass, when swirreled.

My initial impression of the aroma was the point at which I became extremely excited. I was always under the impression the aroma of spirits like scotch or brandy were too robust and potent. The Naked Grouse, by contrast, has an initial aroma profile of sweet cherries, with notes of caramel and brown sugar. The beautiful bouquet did a great job of masking the 80 proof alcohol content; something many novice drinkers might find very positive.

My first sip was surprising. I did not expect the amazing complexities my tongue was detecting. After an initial warmth rolled through my mouth, I detected smoky, sherry-esque notes, which was soon followed by a sweet, fruity profile. After a few sips taken neat, I decided to change things up, and try it on the rocks. Even after a few moments, the aroma profile shifted. I believe the ice helped sharpen the sweet taste notes in the whisky, bringing the initial taste forward on my tongue. I also noted the aroma became more smoky, as if the ice released the smoky notes from suspension.

I was very pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed The Naked Grouse. My overall evaluation cannot be numerically-quantified; I don’t have enough background on the complex composition and aging process to justify a number. The time has come to remove the stigma from scotch as an old man’s drink. I will certainly be adding this to my list of evening muses, during a conversation with friends and family.

---

**Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban – Port Cask Finish**

BUY FROM
Moet Hennessy Diageo
www.mhdhk.com

The color of this lovely drop is probably the most impressive and compelling quality. The Men of Tain describe it as ‘the darkest and most intense’ of their special matured lines, and they’re right. It’s a beautiful dark amber shade, not unlike a deep stained cherry wood. You pour a glass and just want to stare at it and give silent thanks to all the people involved in bringing this gift from idea to completion.

In terms of smokiness, I put the whisky well below the heavily peated Islay scotches like Lagavulin and Laphroaig.

Still it still boasts a superior smoke content to milder brands like Macallan or Glenlivet. The lack of smoke however is made up for by the richness of the flavor and the outstanding balance of heat and spice. It has a very pleasant and delicate smoothness that makes it incredibly drinkable.

This is a scotch you can drink all night. It calls you back for more and is an absolutely perfect match for a few close friends sitting outside on the deck for many hours as daylight levels fade, alcohol levels increase, and it turns into one of those nights that you never wish to end.

I don’t care if I’m disagreed with but this is certainly an after-dinner whisky. It is a classic heart warmer, satisfying for those of us who enjoy the occasional celebration of life at a cost that’s not too heartbreaking.

The taste is enduring and the little hints of citrus and caramel increase as you get into your second glass. This whisky is so balanced and drinkable that it doesn’t need company at all. It’s perfect neat and all by itself.
It’s a first for those tasting the range for the first time. Labeled as The Original, this flagship offering from Glenmorangie shows just how good a baseline offering can be when you take time to craft a distinguished product.

It’s light, fruity, malty and has depth of flavor that is hard to beat at its age and for its price.

The story goes that Glenmorangie started as a farm brewery but in 1843 it began distilling. In 2004 the Distillery was sold to Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton for around $300 million Pounds and soon after the purchase the now iconic curvy bottles were introduced. This look and the renaming of the different variants to French sounding names has helped position Glenmorangie as a luxury brand.

Overall this is an awesome whisky. It’s light, fruity and malty without being overly sweet.

It’s big floral and fruity notes come wafting out of the glass with malt coming up close behind. Honey paves the way for some banana nut muffin and a sweet natural tasting vanilla.

Big rolling waves of tropical fruit, orchard fruit and malt surge out of the glass and coat the palate like a blanket. Some patches of honey and cracker are sewn in with a sweet buttery thread. It’s a smooth and almost refreshing going down making it a good companion for a quiet read of a good Dan Brown book.

Relatively new to Hong Kong drinkers, Teeling is a welcome addition to any whisky bar worth its name.

It is a sourced, blended Irish whisky, married and finished in ex-rum casks, non-chill filtered. The rum casks are particularly unusual, as bourbon and sherry barrels are much more common in the Irish whisky business, and most Irish whiskies of this type are bottled at 40%. Teeling is also a small batch.

The look grabbed me right from the start. The dark green glass of the bottle is very close to black, and resembles an old Port bottle – its Edwardian-style label is just superbly classy.

In the glass, the whisky has that straw yellow color that bespeaks of Irish whiskey character. The nose is something like an apple pie with rum thrown in for seasoning: sweet, fruity, lightly spicy. A tinge of piney wood imparts a crisp, bracing aspect to the scent.

I found the flavor a tad syrupy and mellow, hinting at dark, spiced rum. This is sweet whiskey, but a little woodiness and pepper in the taste keeps it from becoming too sweet. The finish flows out of the peppery note and into a nice, warm glow.

Try it with ice/water, to enjoy a more richness, chocolate on the finish.

Some of Hong Kong’s bars for the well-heeled do stock this treasure but this is my first time to have explored its charms.

This 17 year-old from The Balvenie is aged in first/second-fill bourbon casks, with up to another year in first-fill Oloroso sherry casks, and was the first Balvenie I ever tasted.

This is a whisky with quite a subtle nose. It is pretty sweet, with honey, vanilla and plenty of fruit, especially apple and grape, present. This is not a sherry bomb, but you can clearly smell the sweetness of the Oloroso sherry. The woodiness peaks through too, giving some nice nutty hints also.

This whisky is rich, oozes with character and flavours. Wood, chocolate, fruit, vanilla, and gentle spiciness envelop the sweet sherry and bourbon characters. I’m always interested that the fruit and sherry flavours don’t dominate this whisky too much; instead they contribute to the sweet mellowness.

Offering quite a dry and long finish, its floral flavours are far more present, yet they don’t overpower the sweet woodiness. Hints of lingering red wine and caramel in there also. I find it nicely warming in these cold nights that promise to stay. I hope the bottle does too.

Enjoy!

Slyres Edition No. 3

Buy from Vabella Entertainment & Beverages Limited www.veb.hk
Bavarian beauty, this is the precious blood of all sweeter whiskies and should have a prime place in every whisky lover’s home. Don’t bother with the little writing in German on the bottle or the tag caressing the bottle’s neck. If you get a bottle, just get a few friends together and uncork. At the start, it’s a fairly strong whisky, not one to be taken lightly. It’s lovely darker amber colour and very different from its Scottish cousins.

It’s more like a fruit liqueur made of plums or peaches. I also get malt, light oak, vanilla, marzipan, nuts, honey and a bit of alcohol. Certainly a surprise thanks to its sweetness, this warm, brave number is to be relished in the plus comfort of a private jet or the waterview balcony of a mansion amidst some serious contemplation of the finer things in life. Yes, I am partial to drops with this strength of character and wonder just how it will taste and feel after 10 years.

Its nose brings forth assorted fruit, vanilla, honey, malt, oak and citrus peel. With a bit of water it’s still drinkable but it gets too light. Better sip neat.

Macallan Rare Cask

All dressed up, the bottle is a gift leader though it’s label doesn’t say how old it is. Macallan’s new Rare Cask uses handpicked first-fill sherry casks from the top 1% of barrels currently aging at the distillery and the result is a richer, darker, more chocolately version of Macallan with a thicker profile and a complex palate of raisins, sultana, orange peel, and ginger.

With the current craze for first-fill sherry whisky, the Rare Cask represents an aggressive and more modern approach from the typically conservative Macallan. This is bold, chewy, full-bodied single malt that showcases the deep stocks and the immaculate wood management from Scotland’s most iconic distillery. It’s a whisky that provides a peek into the most choice sherry-aged whiskies currently available. My yardsticks it is a decadent drop well worth boasting of. It’s a mantelpiece drink that you can sip by the fireside while taking about what matters most. It’s a confidence sharer and on all accounts a drop well worth writing home about.

Buffalo Trace – Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey

Buy from Woodside Wine + Spirits Limited, Hong Kong
www.wwsus.com

This is not a single malt scotch so I wonder why it was sent but mine is not to ask why, but to drink and ....

There were no notes accompanying the bottle and I’m glad this isn’t a blind tasting. To be fair, lets say this. Whisky, like anything, is different things to different people. To the cowboy in us though, this number is a runaway hit. It’s strong, a sort of masculine whisky that’s challenging to say the least.

Buffalo Trace Distillery has been making bourbon whiskey the same way for more than 200 years. In tribute to the mighty buffalo and the rugged, independent spirit of the pioneers who followed them, comes the brand’s signature Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whisky.

This deep amber whiskey has a complex aroma of vanilla, mint and molasses. Pleasantly sweet to the taste with notes of brown sugar and spice that give way to oak, toffee, dark fruit and anise. This rugged beauty finishes long and smooth with serious depth. Should it be an addition to your bar? Yes. Would you miss it? I don’t know. Is it worth a try? Certainly. Would I serve it to an informal table? Yes! Yes!