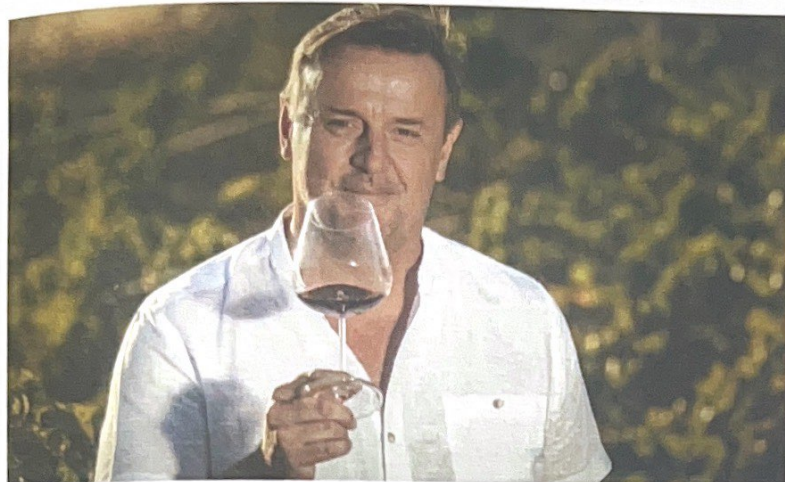


Q&A

"I asked for Lee Scratch Perry's autograph like a 10-year-old kid"

Norrel Robertson MW



Norrel is a Scottish-born winemaker and grape grower who has been based in Spain for the past 21 years. His company, El Escocés Volante (The Flying Scotsman) owns over 40 hectares of mainly old vines in the heart of the Sistema Ibérico in Aragón, with a focus on dry-grown, high-altitude and regenerative viticulture.

What's the first wine you remember drinking?

Asti Spumante. My mum used to buy a bottle sometimes as an aperitif at Christmas. At university I discovered Bulgarian reds and then took a part-time job at Oddbins, which led to a full-scale immersion and the beginning of my wine journey.

What job would you be doing if you weren't in the wine trade?

Before really getting bitten by the wine bug I always fancied journalism or teaching, but I am a lousy teacher. I remember applying for a postgraduate in music journalism with Prof Simon Frith in 1992, but my proposal to study the evolution of electronic dance music from Kraftwerk

onwards fell on deaf ears.

How do you relax?

Cooking, drinking wine, and when I get the chance I really enjoy walks in the country. Our house is just outside the old town in Calatayud and in two minutes you are walking in the Sistema Ibérico.

The best book you've read recently?

I think the last book I really enjoyed was *Pure* by Andrew Miller.

Give us a Netflix recommendation.

My wife and kids are signed up to all sorts of stuff but I have never got into it. I love Radio 4 and the World Service. I think they are some of the last bastions of impartial media with a level of programming and investigation which is untouchable.

Do you have any sporting loyalties?

I grew up supporting Dundee Utd – I think the first team to beat Barcelona home and away in Europe.

Who's your favourite music artist?

I tend to get obsessed with an artist for a month or so and I am horribly retro in

my tastes sometimes. The last two weeks I have been watching lots of XTC videos and interviews on YouTube. During Covid I became obsessed with Khruangbin. If there is something that I go back to over and over again it is Parliament-Funkadelic.

Any superstitions?

I don't cut my nails on a Sunday – a nonsensical habit I inherited from my father.

Who's your favourite wine critic?

That depends who has given us the most points most recently.

What's your most treasured possession?

Any of the 40-plus hectares of vineyards we have bought, recovered and planted. As first-generation grape growers and wine producers we don't take for granted any inherited land or wealth. I still have to pinch myself when I walk into our vineyards and realise what we have.

What's your proudest moment?

The typical stuff. Becoming a father, getting married, becoming an MW in 2000, getting my postgrad in Viticulture & Enology in New Zealand.

What's your biggest regret?

That my father did not live longer to see what we have achieved. I was/am a bit hyperactive/ADHD/dyslexic and was a bit of a handle when I was younger. Supposedly my father addressed the family saying that one day I would surprise them all, and it would have been nice to share some milestones with him a bit later on.

Who's your hero?

Not sure if I have any really. I remember waiting at Barcelona airport in 2006 and out walked Lee Scratch Perry. I asked for his autograph like a 10-year-old kid.

Any hidden talents?

I am a pretty decent cook when I put my mind to it. I normally beat people hands down when it comes to name that tune. I will normally guess a song within a couple of seconds, unless it is anything post-1994.

What's your favourite place in the UK?

I will always have a soft spot for Edinburgh as it's where I spent most of my formative years in Oddbins. I met my wife there and our first son James was born there.

If we could grant you one wish ...

To leave the world happy. ■