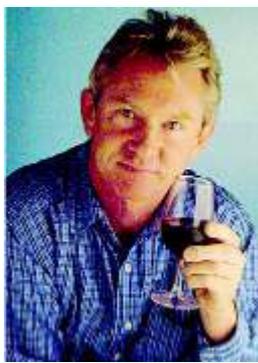




A special room rate



with Max Crus

Ms L found the perfect place, only 100 metres from the venue, the epicentre of our big visit to the big smoke and dirt cheap. Well, it was labelled "Construction Special" so we expected dirt as part of the package.

In hindsight, it was lucky we didn't check in until 1am – as full as two responsible drinkers of decent bubbly can get – the shortcomings of the Construction Suite were not immediately apparent.

Indeed it wasn't until 7am the next morning that they reared their, and our, ugly heads.

Why is glass so loud, we wondered, as three skip-fulls of bottles were emptied directly below our window?

We also wondered from where so much glass might come, but our echoing craniums gave some clue.

Then at 8am, the deepest hour of a drunkards dreaming ... was that a doorknock?

The cleaning lady was thinking ... "was that a response?"

No. Might as well come in then.

Greeted by our groans, she retreated to more compliant room.

They say it's the little things that one remembers from a hotel, specially true in our humble "Atco" apartment, the toilet a case in point.

The stupid little seat simply wasn't big enough for your bum, let alone anything else.

And speaking of pulling the chain, the "Kenny" quandary set off another chain of events, starting with those stupid little "rock-hard", hard-to-open soaps and a the stupid little shower cubicle too tight to turn around in.

Then the stupid little milk containers.

Who chose 16mls as the volume?

What sort of volume is that?

Two are still inadequate, three no

better, and four highlights just how ordinary UHT milk tastes.

Then there's the little glasses, the little kettle cord, the little bed-side lamps, with little cords too, then the piece de resistance, although we could muster little, the little view of the little office opposite.

Little wonder we were keen to get out of there.

Here's a taste of the night before:

Optimiste Marquis Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, 2006, \$24. An optimist would say that this is the best of all possible wines, a pessimist believes that is true. At least Ricardo didn't claim the comment as his own. **8.4/10**

Phil Ryan Signature Shiraz Mount Pleasant Limited Release 2006, \$25. Last man standing, Bruno, couldn't resist a taste of the last bottle standing. Far too sophisticated for a blokey bash but we managed. **8.8/10**

Koonowla Clare Valley The Ringmaster Cabernet Sauvignon 2006, \$16. Don't you love getting more than you bargained for? Which reminds me, I never did understand mum saying I would get just that if I didn't behave ... wouldn't anyone

want more? Great gear for the dough.

8.7/10

De Bortoli 'Emeri' Sparkling Sauvignon Blanc, NV, \$14. Good concept but maybe there's good reason Sav Blanc rarely if ever makes an appearance in Champagne. **7.5/10**

Killerby Cabernet Sauvignon 2005, \$25ish. Like a teenage girl, lovely perfumy smell but needs time to settle down, and it's dry, just like her mother. **8.2/10**



wine of the week

► **Hanging Rock Heathcote Shiraz 2005, \$50ish.** This is big-boy, big-red stuff with a big price to prove it. Can't wait to try the bigger boy, bigger red, \$100 version. **9/10**

