

sponsored profile



ALL IN GOOD SPIRIT

This year's IWSC Annual Awards Banquet, held at the City of London's Guildhall, will see the Spirit Communicator of the Year being crowned. Here, we highlight the five drinks experts who have been nominated for the prestigious award

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THIS NOVEMBER WILL see the return of the Annual IWSC Awards Banquet, a glittering event held at the City of London's Guildhall that celebrates the great and good of the drinks world. Among the prestigious awards is the much-anticipated Spirit Communicator of the Year Award, sponsored by Chivas Brothers.

The highly coveted award seeks to crown someone who has stood out and made an exceptional contribution towards increasing public awareness of and interest in the dynamic spirits industry, which continues to grow and expand in line with shifting trends. It not only champions people in the industry and rewards excellence but celebrates someone's story to inspire others. This underlines one of the key aspects of the IWSC itself – that it is all about the people who make up the industry.

RECOGNISING TALENT

This year's shortlist comprises of five talented professionals who have used their unique skills and knowledge to further interest in spirits in increasingly diverse platforms and media.

Richard Stoppard, CEO of Partner Businesses and Group CMO for the ISWC, said the candidates had hugely impressed the judging panel, made up of industry experts, master distillers, Masters of Wine, wine and spirit buyers and sommeliers,

"We were hugely impressed with the four shortlisted entries, all of whom have proved, against tough competition, their ability to successfully harness the modern world of communicating to convey their message about an age-old topic: spirits," he said.

The list includes: drinks writers and commentating duo Neil Ridley and Joel Harrison, who are best-known for their unwavering passion for fine spirits and cocktails; apéritif advocate Amanda Victoria, communications director at The Scotch Malt Whisky Society and founder of drinks blog Apéritif Hour; spirits author, journalist and educator Dave Broom, who retains a particular penchant for whisky, courtesy of his Glaswegian roots; and Olivier Ward, co-founder of Gin Foundry and the resident gin

aficionado on popular Channel 4 programme *Sunday Brunch*.

MEET THE FAB FIVE

Neil Ridley and Joel Harrison see themselves as "the champions of the underdog", seeking out artisanal and unusual spirits from around the world. Celebrating 10 years in the industry this year, the duo travels widely, including to Beirut, Japan, the US and Taiwan, to educate, inform and entertain about a category they believe tends to be overlooked and under-represented in the wider media. This encompasses everything from international tastings and TV work, to writing articles in national newspapers, specialist and food magazines and websites, as well as embracing social media. They are also publishing *Straight Up*, a follow-up to their award-winning book, *Distilled*, which has been translated into eight languages.

Amanda Victoria is something of a trailblazer in the spirits world. Her current role as communications director for The Scotch Malt Whisky Society sees her create original media content that focuses on education and lifestyle. But her skills were honed working in some of New York's cutting-edge bars, including Please Don't Tell, Pegu Club, and Dutch Kills (Milk & Honey group), and through her consultancy work with premium spirits brands and by launching several small spirit brands in new markets. She has also worked with companies such as Bacardi, William Grant & Sons, Rémy Cointreau, Moët Hennessy, and Pernod Ricard on educational programmes.

She cites her twin passions as words and spirits, and embraces the challenge to find innovative ways to communicate spirits knowledge to consumers, drawing inspiration from the industry's long history in binding people together through tradition and geography.

Whisky writer **Dave Broom** has spent his working life in the drinks world, from working on a bottling line to a seven-year stint at Oddbins and running a real-ale pub before becoming a drinks journalist and later an author. This vast experience has not only helped him write 12 books and become the brains behind

www.scotchwhisky.com, but has also sharpened his skills for training and education. This has seen him teach WSET courses, talk at consumer fairs, act as a spirits consultant on TV and develop collaborations with White Lyan's Ryan Chetiyawardana. This all taps into his belief that retailers and bartenders need information they can dispense in bite-sized nuggets, while consumers need to be given the confidence to find the spirit that best suits them.

Olivier Ward is the editor of Gin Foundry, an encyclopaedic review site/gin resource, through which he aims to celebrate the category and help people find the perfect drink. He is also the resident gin aficionado on Channel 4's *Sunday Brunch*, and has trained as a distiller in his own right. A busy 2016 saw Ward take the site's 'meet the maker' show, *Junipalooza*, to Australia for an inaugural craft gin event Down Under, which attracted more than 2,500 people. He also published a book for premium mixer brand Fever-Tree and create a map

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of open-door distilleries in the UK to encourage people to check out their local gin maker. Gin-themed pop-ups, Twitter tastings and gin masterclasses complete the line-up.

The Spirit Communicator of the year winner will be announced at the IWSC Annual Awards ceremony on 15 November, during the IWSC Annual Awards Banquet at the Guildhall in London. If you have won trophies or have been shortlisted and wish to attend the event, don't hesitate to contact the IWSC at pip.mortimer@iwscgroup.com.