

REVIEWS OF **VERTICAL**: Passion and Pinot On The Oregon Wine Trail

Vertical Reviews as of 1/7/2016

Review: Vertical – Passion and Pinot

<https://mindonthevine.co.uk/124-2/>

NOVEMBER 22, 2016 BY PADDY

Anything, but Merlot.

Sideways was one of those rare films that brought wine into the spotlight and into the living room. There aren't many movies produced by Hollywood with a devotion to wine or with wine as a main theme and Sideways by Rex Pickett launched it into the mainstream.

Vertical is the sequel to sideways and is rather different. Miles is now a successful author with lots of tours, publishing events. He now has money, freedom and success.

The book is a melting pot of great things, it's funny, sad, poignant and uplifting as they go on the road to the International Pinot Noir Celebration in Oregon. Accompanying Miles is the now broke and divorced Jack, the mum who wants to live with her sister in Wisconsin and the dope smoking nurse Joy.

There's real emotion in the pages and more than once I've laughed, tutted and had to put the book down to think about the experiences that Miles and co have experienced throughout the book.

The best thing about the book is the emotional voyage that you go on and it is a spectacular read.

This book isn't just about the wine it's about the journey and the trials and tribulations that Miles encounters on the road that makes it great.

It's well worth buying and hopefully, it's made into another movie.

You can purchase this book direct from the publisher, and Amazon.

This book was provided by the publisher Loose Gravel Press.



Rex Pickett's Next Journey: Vertical, The Next Chapter of Miles and Jack

<http://www.dallaswinechick.com/rex-picketts-next-journey-vertical-the-next-chapter-of-miles-and-jack/>

Vertical Beachside Read at the Four Seasons Punta Mita Resort

For those of you who read Sideways by Rex Pickett, the book that almost single handedly changed consumers' willingness to drink Merlot, you remember the premise. Two good friends, Miles and Jack, go on a last hurrah trip the week before Jack is to marry in the Santa Ynez wine country. Jack is facing the life change of marriage and Miles is facing the life change of divorce as well as the instability of his career and not knowing his place in the world.

The book started a movement – of pinot, of pilgrimage to the places featured in the movie and showcased the love of wine from two not so likeable wild and crazy kind of guys. The book focuses on relationships – friendship, wine and relationships – and exposes the flaws in all. Rex has now written his second book, Vertical, which tells the next journey for these two men.

Fast forward seven years and the tables have turned. Jack is a divorced, down on his luck alcoholic who has definitely lived his glory days. Miles is now a successful author with a movie that has become a blockbuster. He is now the celebrity. But his life is far from perfect. He is spiraling into a cycle of drinking, depression and self depreciation. But the speaking gigs keep happening, the wine keeps pouring and even after he publicly drinks the spit bucket at a tasting (with no recollection), he continues the downward spiral.

His mom, Phyllis, has suffered a stroke that has left her incapacitated and stuck in an assisted living home – and frequently tells Miles how miserable she is. He knows she wants to go live with her sister in Wisconsin and he finally has a way to get her there. Since she is wheelchair bound and Miles is deathly afraid of flying, he decides to engage Jack to help drive her from the assisted living home in Carlsbad to Wisconsin by dangling \$10,000 and a trip to the International Pinot Noir festival in Oregon.

It's funny – insert a pot-smoking caretaker, a dunking machine, a Viagra mishap and lots of other laugh out loud moments – and you can see this is the next successful screenplay.

It's poignant – anyone who has had to deal with the loss of a parent, watching a friend go down a dark path, dealing with alcoholism or making bad decisions leading to the loss of someone you loved – will see this is more than two wild and crazy guys on a last rampage.

It's a great snapshot of the Willamette Valley – the wineries, the people, the tasting rooms, the scenery and the new pilgrimages that will begin because of this book.

And, finally, it's an introspective by Rex. I only met him once briefly at the Wine Bloggers Conference, but you can see the self depreciation, the fear of losing the success and when you hear him talk about what he wished he had known prior to the movie, you get those flashes of the fears that Miles has. He's a great writer who brings the people, pinots and pathways truly to life.



Vino-Sphere

<http://www.vino-sphere.com/2016/12/top-three-wine-lover-books-for-christmas.html>

Vertical: Passion and Pinot On The Oregon Wine Trail by Rex Pickett

What wine lover doesn't know Sideways by Rex Pickett? The movie adaptation won more than 350 film critic awards as it followed the adventures of Miles and Jack in California wine country. Some may recall it as the movie that torpedoed Merlot sales.

The good news is that Miles and Jack are back in the saddle, this time taking their antics to Oregon. Times have changed. Miles is now a successful author and Jack is a down on his luck alcoholic with his best days in his rear view mirror.

There are over-the-top moments aplenty, including Miles nearly drowning in a vat of Merlot at the International Pinot Noir festival. Vertical is published by Loose Gravel Press and is available on Amazon or your local bookstore for \$14.95 in paperback. As in the original, adult themes abound.



Oregon Wine Press

<http://www.oregonwinepress.com/pr-vertical>

September 30, 2016

Vertical - Miles and Jack are back—again!

The famous, wine-drinking twosome from the international hit, Sideways, now have their sights set on the Willamette Valley and Oregon's Pinot Noir rich landscape.

Loose Gravel Press is releasing Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail by author Rex Pickett, who wrote the first hit, Sideways.

Re-edited and illustrated with New-Yorker style chapter headings and vignettes, the new release will be available on Amazon.com November 1.

"It is a very funny novel," says Tim Moore, publisher of Loose Gravel Press. "It is a richer, deeper and more significant work—in many ways—than Sideways."

Originally released as Vertical in 2011 on a self-publishing small-press run, Moore took the unusual step of buying the copyright from author Pickett.

"We felt Rex had written a masterpiece," said Moore, whose company is releasing Sideways: The 10th Anniversary Edition alongside the new Vertical: Passion and Pinot. "It just needed the input of top editors to expose the real brilliance of the story."

In this novel, Miles and Jack leave California along with Miles's wheelchair-bound mom, her dog, and her pot-smoking caretaker. Their destination is Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where his mother will live out her last days with her sister.

But first, Miles has a date as the honorary emcee of the International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC). Pickett's treatment of the famous Oregon Pinot Noir festival is nothing short of hilarious, with scenarios which Moore believes will bring Hollywood's cameras to Oregon's Willamette Valley.

"The scenes are a director's dream—some unbelievably funny and others deeply touching. And who would not want to film in the Willamette Valley? It's a no brainer—money on the table."

Early editions of Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail are available for Oregon wineries to carry beginning October 20.



WineLaLa

<http://www.winelala.com/single-post/2016/07/07/Winelala-Really-is-coming-back>

By Noelle Allen

Have you ever been given a book that was supposed be awesome, only to find out the awesomeness begins once you 'get into' it?

Happily, Vertical is not that book.

Vertical opens with Miles, now a famous writer and wine personality, following the success of his book and movie Shameless, scrambling to get himself to a speaking event. The simple task of showing up at the right place at the right time proves to be much more difficult than succeeding in the literary world however, and we are reintroduced to Miles the Man, a very different person than Miles the Celebrity, a dichotomy with which he grapples throughout. Miles is a mess, and half the time I wanted to shake him and tell him to pull himself together, but it right away becomes apparent that Miles is aware that he's on two journeys: one is the Oregon Trail to entertain at wine events as the emcee. The other is personal and characterized by all that goes along with personal journeys: poignancy, self awareness, and self deprecation.

Luckily, hilarity acts as a balancing counterpoint. While Miles the Man struggles with himself and his relationship with his mother, who is also on the trip, and of course his best friend Jack (returning from Sideways) who's along too and battling his own demons, Miles the Celebrity and Jack continue to find themselves in ridiculous, wine fueled, college road trip type situations that more than go sideways, providing legitimate head shaking and laugh out loud moments. All self reflection is abandoned at the sight of beautiful women and barrels full of Pinot Noir. But morning always comes.

Vertical is written fluidly and wittily. It is a sesquipedalian beauty (meaning, uses lots of big words), not dumbed down to be simple, yet smartly includes a dictionary in the back so that all of the 'rexicon' (Rex Pickett's lexicon) can be quickly referenced.

At once you as the reader are pulled right in, hence the lack of investment time to 'get into' the story. Vertical could have easily been written in first person, probably as a semi autobiography, but instead Pickett lets Miles tell it in third. You cannot help but feel that you and the author are in an animated conversation about life. Two friends bonding over wine, sharing the crazy, the sad, and everything in between over a glass or five of Pinot Noir.

I recommend.



L'occasion

<https://jillbarth.wordpress.com/2016/11/02/books-for-winelovers/>

Vertical by Rex Pickett and Stoller Family Estate 2013 Dundee Hills Reserve Pinot Noir

“The food and wine setting was almost too fairy-tale for a Pinot lover-cum-gourmand. My mother couldn't stop raving about her belly of pork in puff pastry. I took great delight in my Beef Bourguignon spilled over a delicate, parsley-infused crepe. Dessert was a warm hazelnut cake.” and “I'm sorry about everything that's happened. This whole trip and everything. It was probably a mistake.”

I include two quotes from Rex Pickett's Vertical because this is novel in two stories, in my opinion. Readers will recognize the playful – even obscene – side of Miles of Jack, memories of Sideways, in many parts of the story. But there is a more heartfelt, relatable element that builds strength through the book. If you start this book, be sure to finish it because the transition near the end is powerful. For the glass of wine you need with this book, I've chosen Stoller Family Estate 2013 Dundee Hills Reserve Pinot Noir. As this adventure is set on the “Oregon Wine Trail”, this wine is the utmost match. This is a very special release chosen from the best vineyards and aged 10 months in French Oak. Something to share with a loved one...because life is short, as the story exhibits.



MetroNews

<http://www.metronews.ca/views/liquid-assets/2016/12/06/2013-erath-pinot-noir-wine-review.html>

By: Peter J. Rockwell Metro Published on Tue Dec 06 2016

If fans of 2004's wine-themed movie *Sideways* could have one Christmas wish it would have to be that someone would finally bring *Vertical*, the sequel to the novel that inspired the film, to theatres.

Apparently *Sideways*' director, Alexander Payne, isn't interested, so *Vertical*'s author, Rex Pickett, has just re-issued an edited version of the book (now subtitled *Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail*) in what I assume is an attempt to garner interest from elsewhere in Hollywood.

I read it when it was first released in 2011, and while Miles and Jack are up to some of their old tricks, things get dark, and a lot less wine inspired, halfway through. Wine lovers on your holiday shopping list will relish it, especially if it comes wrapped with a bottle of Oregon Pinot Noir. The 2013 Erath Pinot Noir (\$24.95-\$29.99) is a bright, balanced take on the famously fickle grape variety. Layered with cherry fruit and subtle spice it makes a perfect mate with turkey.



Grape Experiences

<http://www.grape-experiences.com/2016/09/vertical-passion-pinot-oregon-wine-trail-rex-pickett/>
Sep 27, 2016 Cindy Rynning

Remember Miles and Jack from *Sideways*? They're finally back in Rex Pickett's new book, *Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail*. As a sequel to our favorite wine story *Sideways*, the book and movie that helped move Pinot Noir to the front of the tasting table, wine lovers craving another hilarious, yet heartwarming story with plenty of raucous adventures now have it. Rex Pickett delivers.

Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail is a story about relationships as much as it is about wine.

Because of the success of his book, *Shameless*, Miles is finally making a living and has been asked to speak at the upcoming International Pinot Noir Celebration in Oregon. However, an entourage joins him. Miles' mother, who deplores the nursing home she's been sent to after her stroke, has begged Miles to take her to Sheboygan, Wisconsin to live with her sister and reluctantly, he agrees to do so. Tagging along with Mom, is her dog, Snapper, and Joy, her pot-smoking caregiver. Needing more than a fair amount of support for what he has dubbed the "harebrained, cockamamie Oregon/Wisconsin/invalid journey", Miles bribes good 'ole buddy, Jack, with plenty of cash to join the ride. There are a few more relationships to discover along the way as this unusual group has some of the most wacky, madcap adventures yet!

And there's wine...plenty of it. From go-cups and flasks in the car, to Miles' episode of dumping a bucket of wine over his head to, well, use your imagination, wine is on almost every page. Pickett takes the opportunity, though, to share interesting and useful factoids about our favorite fruit of the vine throughout the book: before, during and after the craziness. The *Vertical Vocabulary* (perfect!) and *Itinerary of Wines and Locations* (actual places we can visit!) are a real treat at the end.

I loved discovering another side of Miles as his relationships with Jack, Joy, and his Mom progress; the conclusion is poignant and fitting. You may just forgive Miles for the insanity that ensued during the first 381 pages while you continue laughing at Pickett's incredibly entertaining, well-written story.



GoodReads

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/30556713-vertical>

From the author of Sideways, the sequel to the world's most beloved wine novel. Its ten years later, and the two on the road buddies-Jack, now divorced, and Miles, dealing with new found fame as a writer-reunite and travel to Oregon's famed Pinot Noir wine country to attend the International Pinot Noir Celebration. Unable to keep it simple, Miles steals his septuagenarian mother away from her senior housing prison, which means bringing her pot-smoking caretaker as well. Not only do Miles and Jack find themselves in troubled, new relationships and almost unfathomable hilarious situations, but they confront sobering challenges of being over 40-and looking at 70. All of this set in the heart stoppingly, wine-rich beautiful landscape of Oregon's own Burgundy country.



SeanMunger

<https://seanmunger.com/2016/10/11/vertical-passion-and-pinot-on-the-oregon-wine-trail-book-review/>

Posted on October 11, 2016 by Sean Munger

Vertical, the sequel to the wine novel Sideways that was made into an immensely popular movie in 2004, is really two books in one. Rex Pickett's follow-up to what the cover bills as "the world's most beloved wine novel" is, for about three-quarters of its length, almost un-put-downable — hilariously funny, boozy, raunchy, and filled with guilty pleasures that will make you laugh out loud, cringe and groan at appropriate moments. That's the first book. The second, which breaks upon the reader abruptly and without warning, is dark, depressing, tragic and filled with deliberate emotional anguish and awkwardness, though its heart is undoubtedly in the right place. I'm not sure yet whether bolting these two stories together is a stroke of creative genius or a serious flaw that diminishes the overall novel tremendously. On the whole Vertical is pretty enjoyable, but it has some significant issues.

Disclosure: Loose Gravel Press, the publisher, gave me a free copy of Vertical in exchange for an honest review. This review does contain some spoilers.

The story won't make any sense to you if you don't know Sideways, but don't worry—having seen the movie is enough to get you up to speed. Some years after the events of Sideways, Miles Raymond, a novelist and oenophile, has struck it big with his novel about wine, Shameless, which was made into a hit movie. (Yes, it's metafictional). Now rich, booked with publicity and writing offers and full to the gills with free samples of Pinot Noir, his favorite wine, that winemakers have been giving him for free, Miles has broken up with his Sideways girlfriend Maya, who's become a vintner herself, and is using his fame to have affairs with various wine-loving women. Clearly he thinks his long years of sipping rotgut \$5 Merlot are over.

The infamous spit-bucket scene from Sideways! This gag is referenced, very metafictionally, in the opening pages of Vertical.

The story really gets going when Miles, who lives in the L.A. area, is invited to MC a Pinot Noir wine festival in Oregon. Deathly afraid of flying, Miles decides to drive up to Oregon and to bring his friend Jack, a now out-of-work actor who's down on his luck and who caused much mischief in Sideways. But in addition to this errand Miles seizes the opportunity to break his handicapped mother, Phyllis, out of her prison-like assisted living facility, deciding he'll drive her to Wisconsin, her old home, to live out her final years with her sister. Phyllis has had a stroke, is in a wheelchair and is inseparable from her pot-smoking Filipina nurse Joy and her yappy dog Snapper. Miles rents a handicapped van, packs the back with wine and the motley crew start the boozy trip up to the Willamette Valley, meeting a series of minor comic disasters along the way.

Constructed this way, Vertical is a classic "road trip" story, which entirely makes sense because Sideways was too. Pickett flings one after another comic and tragi-comic set-pieces at us, and they're pretty funny and cringey at the same time, which is exactly how they're intended. Recreating the most famous scene from Sideways, Miles, at a wine event, empties a spit bucket over his head; the moment is captured by a cell phone camera and goes viral on YouTube. He and Jack meet two foxy girls from Spain and proceed to pair off, but Jack overdoses on Viagra and winds up in the hospital with priapism, resulting in a gory but hilarious emergency room scene. Miles's mother gets an impacted molar that they don't have time to remedy if they're going to make the Pinot festival, so Miles convinces Snapper's veterinarian to pull the tooth with dental tools designed for animals. The wines that Pickett describe blast forth in bacchanal glory. He gives a list of them at the end: Bonaccorsi Pinot Noir 2007, St. Innocent Freedom Hill Pinot Blanc 2008, etc. It's all great fun, and in fact even more radical and daring than Sideways, whose antics seem tame by comparison. Pickett's a genius at comic, satirical writing, and he's mostly poking fun at himself.

Author Rex Pickett talks about Vertical—and why he doesn't drink wine anymore.

Unfortunately the fun ends quite suddenly. Phyllis's health takes a turn for the worse at the Pinot Noir festival, Snapper gets his leg nearly ripped off by a car, Joy deserts the group after being accused of stealing and Jack goes home, leaving Miles to transport his invalid mother thousands of miles across the country to Wisconsin alone. This part of the book is about Miles finding himself and bonding with his mother, but the last quarter of Vertical is one of the most depressing stories I've read in a long time. There's no more wine, no more laughs and no more

fun. The story is deeply and intensely personal and Pickett, who dedicated the book to his mother (who died in 2000), is obviously laying his heart bare to us. As I said that heart is clearly in the right place, but I really had a hard time getting past the sudden and abrupt change of tone and the descent into darkness. Finishing the book was a real slog for me, something I totally didn't expect as I flew eagerly through its first three quarters.

I think both stories in *Vertical*, the fun boozy wine story and the heartfelt family story, are certainly valid, and Pickett obviously had a lot to discover about himself in each of them. What I can't figure out is whether the decision to bolt these two stories together was itself a bad one, or whether the job of integrating them wasn't done right, but something obviously didn't work for me. It's a bit of a tall order to transition between gags involving spit buckets and Viagra mishaps to a very serious story about dying, broken families and alcoholism. As I was turning the final pages I found myself wanting to put the book down and go have a glass of wine.

elk-cove-pinot-noir

This is not technically one of the wines featured in *Vertical*, but it's from the same winery—Elk Cove Vineyards of Gaston, Oregon—as a Pinot Gris that the characters drink on page 235.

Still, that said, *Vertical* is a lot of fun, and on the whole I think wine lovers will enjoy it. The book has a few technical peccadilloes—some editing and formatting errors, for example—but they don't detract too much from the experience, and the evocative line drawings by Michele Phillips are quite charming. For its first three quarters, *Vertical* is probably better than *Sideways*, more outrageous and more fun. The last quarter is dense, depressing and not very much fun at all. As I said, it's really two books. How well they fit together with each other I think will lie mostly in the eye of the beholder.

Grade: B



BC Wine Trends

<http://bcwinetrends.com/2016/09/16/vertical-passion-pinot-on-the-oregon-wine-trail-book-review/>

Like other readers that enjoyed the boozy Jack and Miles saga, I came to their adventures via the 2004 *Sideways* movie. This was the one that launched Paul Giamatti to stardom. In case there is someone who missed *Sideways*, it's the story of two men reaching middle age with not much to show but disappointment embarking on a week-long road trip through California's wine country, just as Jack is about to take a trip down the aisle. The movie inspired me to travel to the Santa Barbara wine area many times to visit the wineries and restaurants frequented by Jack and Miles. My BCWinetrends blog made early use of the *Sideways* theme to discuss the relative fortunes of Merlot and Pinot Noir as a result of *Sideways*.

With this preamble, let's take a look at Rex Pickett's next book, *Vertical – Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail*.

The story follows Miles' ill-fated scheme is to snatch his mother from the San Diego assisted-living facility she hates. Then travel via Oregon's Willamette Valley for the International Pinot Noir Celebration, the location of an over the top Pinot fueled orgy, to her sister Alice's home in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. The road trip includes the foursome and Snapper the dog, bundled into Miles' Rampvan. Along with a now rich and famous Miles and his stroked out mother Phyllis are her pot-smoking Filipina nurse Joy and an alcoholic and now divorced Jack . The trip winds it's disastrous course through wine country with Miles and Jack cavorting with voracious women and draining far too many bottles of expensive Pinot Noir supplied with the hope of a product placement in the movie sequel. Miles and his mother part company with Jack and Joy after the IPNC and the books takes on a more serious tone as they continue alone to Phyllis's final destination.

I read the first version of Vertical when author Rex Pickett self-released the book in 2011 and loved the core story but felt that it needed better editing. This year Tim Moore, the publisher at Loose Gravel Press, re-release an improved book by deleting the excesses and updating the ending. I won't spoil the ending but only say Miles has an interesting phone call with Myra of Sideway's fame and a more hopeful ending for Miles' new found sobriety.

An early highlight in the book for me was Miles rant at the Shell Beach pinot festival where he hatches the plot to extract mother from the nursing home. Several critics didn't find this part funny, but they obviously hadn't over indulged with other Pinotphiles and completely let their hair down or they too would have appreciated the drunken humour.

On the journey through Northern California, they stop in Paso Robles at one of my favourite Paso wineries – Justin. Mile's quaff's a bottle of their most expensive wine, a Meritage called Isosceles, 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec, 2% Petit Verdot. Miles loves the wine and extolls its virtues as an excellent "palate change". This is probably the only time Miles has a positive comment on Merlot, so he must be mellowing from his Sideway days!

The Oregon Willamette Valley part of the adventure is a boozing and frolicking highpoint for Miles and Jack. There are interesting boudoir scenes and expensive Pinot name dropping but I missed the vineyard and wine tasting room hijinks of Sideways. Pickett apparently relied heavily on local wine writers Katherine Cole and Fred Gunton for the wine details on this section which is very well written.

Once we are free of Jack and Joy on the subsequent trip to Wisconsin, Pickett elevates his writing to a higher level. This is exceptional prose highlighted by vivid character development and interaction as Miles deals with the common generational problem of how best to cope with an ageing parent's final months or days. The author brings clarity to the relationship between Miles and his mother and Miles finally confronts his alcoholism and his loneliness.

As a lover of wine stories, I would definitely recommend picking up the latest version of Vertical – Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail.



The Sommelier Update

<http://arrowheadwine.blogspot.com/2016/08/the-sequel-to-sideways-vertical.html>

Twelve years ago we saw the fall of Merlot and the rise of California Pinot Noir. The movie, Sideways was released, and we all followed Miles, an aspiring writer, and his friend Jack, a washed up soap star, travel through the Santa Ynez Valley on a wild wine binge and sex romp. We met Maya and Stephanie (Terra in the book), and the ultimate betrayal of love. When we last saw them, Jack was getting married, and Miles, still unpublished, was meeting up with Maya.

Flash forward, and Rex Pickett has written a sequel to his book (and the movie), called "Vertical – Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail". A previous version of the sequel was released a few years back, with a very limited press run. I received the newly revised and re-edited edition for review. While I do wine and wine event reviews, it has been a long time since Mrs. Whirry's Honors English class in high school. I think the last book review was a comprehensive review of the works of Kurt Vonnegut!

Vertical takes place seven years after the events of Sideways. Miles and Jack have switched roles. Jack's marriage has ended in divorce, and Miles has a successful book, that was turned into a movie: "Shameless", which recaps the entire adventure we all watched (or read) in Sideways. Miles' success with the book and movie, have made him a rockstar in the world of wine, in particular the world of Pinot Noir.

Willamette - photo credit to lifecylceadventures.com

Once again, Miles and Jack set out on a trip. This time, Miles' mom (Phyllis) and her caretaker, a pot smoking Filipino named Joy, are along for the ride, as well as Phyllis' dog, Snapper. Phyllis had suffered a stroke, and needs to go home to Wisconsin to be with her sister. Miles, who is afraid to fly, will drive his mother to Wisconsin, but is coordinating the drive with speaking engagements in Paso Robles, and the International Pinot Noir Celebration in the Willamette Valley.

Miles and Jack seem to be in a continuous drunken stupor for the first three quarters of the book. They clearly have a drinking problem (and sex or relationship issues) that starts with an open bottle for breakfast, and continues while driving the rented rampvan down the highway. Miles' drinking problem becomes self-evident after he almost drowns in a tank of Two-Buck-Chuck Merlot, and is later forced to continue his journey to Wisconsin, with his handicapped mother, on his own.

At this point, the reader realizes this is more of a story about a mother and son, coming to grips with their lives as they currently are. The back drop, and possibly the source of Miles' current condition, is his celebrated wine grape. Is it just by chance that the first book was titled "Sideways" (the position that many feel when they've had too much) and the second book is titled "Vertical" (the position you might be in, once you sober up)?

75% of the book takes place in wine country. For anyone who has traveled to the wine regions of California and Oregon, the descriptions are very accurate. You can picture the entire trip. The other 25% takes place in the desolate landscapes of Montana, South Dakota and Wisconsin. It is here, along the barren countryside, that Miles' soul is stripped clean to the understanding of who he is and who his mother is. I will admit that there were many scenes I chuckled at, many scenes I could easily visualize, and one scene, towards the end, where I actually shed some tears.

For those of you who love Pinot Noir from the California Central Coast... be prepared. Those beloved wines do get a pretty good amount of disrespect from Miles when he addresses a large crowd at the IPNC. Of course, he is in Oregon, and is playing to the crowd. Can we now expect a shift from California Pinot Noir to Oregon Pinots?

The book was a quick read, at almost 400 pages. Rex Pickett has a large vocabulary, and has included a personal dictionary at the back of the book for some of his more obscure words. If you are a fan of *Sideways*, check out this sequel, when it is made available. I hope that if they can get enough sales of the book, they will consider a sequel to the movie, and we can all watch Miles and Jack in their glory again.



BuyWine

<http://buywine.com/vertical-passion-and-pinot-on-the-oregon-wine-trail-64348-sotm-detail.aspx>

Author: Alma & Joe Filutze

Date: 10/27/2016

Known best for his popular book "*Sideways*", author Rex Pickett has done it again with a new sequel to his original book "*Sideways*", and brings us "*Vertical - Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail*", a story about Miles and Jack who venture to Oregon 10 years after their legendary Santa Ynez Valley quest. Loose Gravel Press, which is an independent publishing firm focusing on American novels and specific trade books, is releasing this new addition of *Vertical*.

"Originally released as *Vertical* in 2011 in a self-published, small press run, this new release has been reedited for wide distribution and illustrated with New-Yorker style chapter headings and vignettes."

Vertical offers another fun filled adventure as the two men travel to Oregon dragging along his mother, dog, and her pot-smoking caretaker, who are rescued by her son Miles from a senior housing prison. Miles plan is to drive his mother back to her hometown of Sheboygan, Wisconsin so she can live out her remaining days with her sister. There is a catch though. Miles has to stop at the International Pinot Noir Celebration because he has the privilege of being Emcee to the event.

The story is filled with humorous and surprising situations that will leave the reader satisfied and filled with pleasure.

So whether you're vertical or sideways, you'll be sure to love this new sequel by Rex Pickett!



WineWalkabout

http://www.winewalkabout.net/2016_09_01_archive.html

Sideways was an over the top, pretty funny lost weekend buddy road trip story, and one that had a significant impact on the wine industry (for better or worse). Rex Pickett's sequel 'Vertical' continues a similar type of story but aims higher than it's predecessor and will have you reflecting on ones own human condition, and in most all ways succeeds, other than it probably will not change the wine industry (a good thing).

Vertical starts of a little like Sideways meets the Hangover. The story goes through basically three stages with a ray of sunshine at the end. A hell of a good time with drunken debauchery and the start of a long road trip which then goes through a period where it spirals into falling apart to a lone dark stretch fighting openly with personal and physical demons to the final destination. The final ray is the reconciliation of mother and son. Touching enough to bring a tear with an emotional rawness that will make some bleed.

Confessing that the book sideways has not been read here but the movie has been seen and often discussed.

Rex Picket uses the first person lens of his alter ego, Miles Raymond and is quite the wordsmith. Another confession... Had to use the word dictionary in the back of the book a few times.

The premise is that Miles wrote a book about the boys weekend in sideways called Shameless and shortly after a movie by the same name makes him a huge celebrity with all the fame and wealth that goes with it. His sidekick Jack has had the reverse fortune and is divorced with a child and on the skids. Both have a serious drinking problem and not in a good way. Miles concocts an idea on how to fulfill his mothers wishes to leave the nursing home and go live with her sister in Wisconsin via the International Pinot Noir Celebration in the Willamette Valley and everyone's favorite two wino's hit the road again. This time its in a handicap van with Miles' disabled elderly mother, her pot smoking nurse, and his moms poorly behaved dog Snapper in tow. Sounds like a bloody good time ay? Well, at times it is, but at other times, well, it is soul searchingly sad.

So off they drive. Passing through Santa Ynez they stop at their old haunts including the now bustling Hitching Post where Miles is treated like a rock star. At every stop the wine and food is comped as vintners thank him for their booming Pinot sales in the wake of 'Shameless' and even with his invalid mother in tow, Miles and Jack find plenty of star crossed women along the way to satisfy their lust including a couple of Spanish women on a 'Shameless Tour' of the

Santa Ynes area. Once they discover Miles' identity they both are more than willing participants in a weekend fling up in Paso Robles. This is the fun part of the journey. It soon turns tense and dysfunctional (OK, more dysfunctional). This is where the story takes on a dark quality that at times is uncomfortable to read.

The last part of the book follows the bugged relationship between Phyllis and Miles as they travel to Wisconsin. This gives 'Vertical' a conclusion that may split readers on the satisfaction of how the story comes to its end.

For those who are curious there is clearly plenty of room for a third book to be written.

Oh and on the question of whether this book should be made into a movie... Yes!

*Happy Wine Adventures,
Cheers,*



Dracaena Wines

<http://dracaenawines.com/tag/international-pinot-noir-celebration>

Tag Archive: International Pinot Noir Celebration

When Sideways Goes Vertical

Dracaena WinesI was approached by Lee from goodtobeyou.com and asked if I would be interested in reading an early edition of Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail by Rex Pickett.

Am I the Right Person?

I was a bit apprehensive about saying yes to this opportunity because unlike so many other people I know, I did not love the movie Sideways. People talk about it as if it were this amazing movie that they adore. I, however, do not feel that way. I saw the movie, and thought it was ok, but not the end all be all of movies. It isn't a movie that I have a desire to watch over and over again. (is that sacrilegious?) It isn't a movie that I would download to my ipad to help me make it through those long cross-country flights. (The Hangover, Ocean's Eleven and Grosse Pointe Blank are on my ipad)

As I was pondering the question of if I was the right person or not, The Hunger Games, Maze Runner and Divergent entered my mind. I then decided to accept the generous offer from Lee.

The Movie In My Mind

I love to read! (I'm sure my mother has a huge smile on her face right Dracaena Winesnow after reading that sentence.) I enjoy sitting down, preferably with a glass of wine by my side, and curl up with a good book. I know right away if I am going to enjoy the book or not. If the writer engages me, I no longer see words on a page but the characters come to life in my mind as if I

am watching a movie (does that happen to anyone else?) and I don't want to put the book down. If the author and I are not sympatico, then I see words instead of actions and I know it is going to be a tough read.

I was so excited to start reading Vertical. Not being sure what to expect from it, I was hoping the author would not send Miles and Jack on a second trip doing the same thing as the first. Sideways 2 was not what I wanted to read.

You Had Me at Shell Beach

The book opens with Miles at a Pinot Conference in Shell Beach. Immediately upon reading, I was intrigued. I admit that the book had somewhat of an advantage in the fact that I already had the images of Paul Giamatta and Thomas Haden Church in my mind. Having not read the original book, and only having the movie to go on, there was quite a bit I didn't have a memory of, so there was plenty of opportunity for my mind's eye to come into play. I'm so thrilled to say full heartedly, that it did! Snappers, Joy, Phyllis, even the characters that they met along the way came into crystal clear view in my mind. The movie was rolling and I didn't want the end credits to start scrolling.

Vertical, at times, had me laughing so hard, that I had to put the book down, pick up my phone and tweet:



Then there were times that I physically let out a huge gasp of fear and astonishment. (Snapper) And ultimately, settling in and developing empathy for the Phyllis and Miles and their relationship. The book takes you on a ride, not just in the car with Miles and Jack but in your feelings. If you can read this book and not assess your personal relationships with your family, I will be completely surprised.

Close to the Heart

I have beta read for several books and loved acting in that role. As a beta reader you read a book prior to publication. The author is at the final stages of finishing the book and is just looking for opinions on the book itself. Maybe something isn't as clear as the author thinks it is because they are so close to the story, or they have written something later in the book that contradicts something earlier. My job was to critique it. However, I have never read a book with the intent of writing a review. I think the most difficult thing about writing this review is that I don't want to give away anything that can ruin the book for others.

First off, one of the things that I loved (albeit, this may be specifically to me) was the road trip itself. They leave southern California, and head up to Paso Robles to do a gig at Justin. The author knows his way around Paso, because the description was spot on.

After Paso, they travel to Fresno. (which if you know me, you know we now live in Fresno) so I enjoyed reading about my new home town. Semi spoiler alert – it is in Fresno, that I laughed my tail off and had to send that tweet!

The Fastest Three Paragraphs

Here we go; Think Chris Berman and “The Fastest Three Minutes” as I share the story of Vertical.

Miles, now a celebrity is still extremely neurotic. While his agent books him at as many wine events as possible, Miles drinks as much Pinot as possible. He is also popping as much Xanax and Viagra as he can. Phyllis, his mother, has had a stroke and is living in La Villa de Muertes (I love the name) and wants out! She wants to go live with her sister in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Acro and aerophobic Miles steals his 75 year old mother from the nursing home and drives her to Wisconsin.

Mile’s has agreed to participate in a wine event at Justin Winery in Paso Robles, and be the Master of Ceremonies at the International Pinot Noir Celebration in Oregon. He decides he is going to kill two birds with one stone, so he calls up his good friend Jack and pitches the idea of taking a road trip, filled with lots of wine, women and adventure. Oh yeah, and by the way, they will have Mile’s wheelchair bound mother, her energetic and yappy dog, Snappers and pot smoking aide, Joy with them.

Jack, of course, agrees to the adventure. On the trail, Jack and Miles find a few amorous women to help pass the time as well as all the Pinot they can drink. Phyllis, Jack and Miles get into some very interesting situations thanks to the benefit of alcohol. While Joy, the aide, takes every opportunity to take a few puffs of her “Mary Jane” along the way. Miles and Phyllis (only them) finally make it to Sheboygan, only to find that life isn’t always greener on the other side.

Briefly, here are a few of my highlights of the book. I don’t think they will give anything away, but I hope as you read your copy, you will laugh (or cry) along with me and enjoy it as much as I did.

of course there is another spit bucket incident

Jack and his medical visit in Fresno

*Snappers and his happy energy – then not so happy Snappers
a vet pulling Phyllis’ tooth*

Phyllis in her wheelchair on the vineyard hill

The wine dunking booth complete with floating breasts

“I made chocolate!”

A Roller Coaster of Emotion

This is not just a story of friendship. Not even just a story about family. Nor is it a roadtrip saga or a wine story. This is a story of an individual that finally confronts his demons. It’s a story of a mother and son, who were only that in name, finally becoming “family.” A story that proves no matter how much distance you think is between two people, if you want to narrow the gap, it is always possible.

Vertical the Book, touches on a lot of sensitive issues. The story line involves alcoholism, stroke, and end of life decisions. The joy that a dog can provide, the perils of taking drugs and even a DUI come into play. Yet, somehow, Rex Pickett lets you know it will all be ok. It’s ok to be sad

and its ok to laugh. This book makes you do both. I recommend reading this book. And I hope it does become a movie. (especially for the Fresno scene) So go ahead, order the book on their website or on Amazon and read it! If you enjoy it as much as I did you can help make the movie become a reality. Head to www.LooseGravelPress.com and share your thoughts.

~Sláinte!



The Prince of Pinot

<http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/1876/>

Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail This recently released book by Rex Pickett is a sequel to the book *Sideways*. Pickett follows the friendship of Miles and Jack as they drive and drink their way through the Willamette Valley. Originally released as *Vertical* in 2011 in a self-published, small press run, this new release has been re-titled and reedited for wide distribution and illustrated with New Yorker style chapter headings and vignettes. In this novel, Miles and Jack along with Miles's wheelchair-bound mom, her dog, and her pot-smoking caretaker, heading to Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where his mother will live out her last days with her sister. First, Miles has a date as the honorary emcee of the International Pinot Noir Festival.



Wine Travel Adventure

<http://winetraveladventure.com/2016/11/26/1099/>

**A review of *Vertical*, the sequel to *Sideways*
NOVEMBER 26, 2016**

Vertical, by Rex Pickett, is a funny, sad, sexy, depressing, curious and at times bravely comic novel tailored especially for men and women who like to drink wine. The novel, published originally some years ago but updated and released in a new edition in 2016 by Loose Gravel Press, is the sequel to *Sideways*, Pickett's first novel upon which the 2004 hit movie was based.

Sideways, both the novel and film, followed the comic misadventures of Miles and Jack, who drank and screwed their way around the Santa Ynez Valley in California's Central Coast wine region. Fans of *Sideways* will be pleased to learn that Miles and Jack are back at it in *Vertical*, drinking and screwing aplenty. Although the novel's subtitle suggests that the twosome do all their carousing on "the Oregon Wine Trail," this is somewhat deceiving. While they do tarry, a bit, at a pinot festival in the Willamette Valley, they also pass through such places as (naturally)



Santa Ynez Valley, Fresno, Clear Lake, and on the road to Wisconsin, a state better known for its cheese than its wine.

Besides his novels, Pickett is a screenwriter (although he did not write Sideways the movie), and Vertical has a “Little Miss Sunshine” quality to it, as Miles’s wheelchair-bound Mom, her pot-smoking Filipino maid, and a star-crossed dog named Snapper join the boys in their often-amusing wine-soaked, sex-soaked romps. It would be similarly deceiving, however, to describe the book as “a romp.” There is too much serious stuff going on here for that, as Miles (and Jack, to a degree) must deal with the very somber, very depressing end of life issues facing his mother.

Vertical, like Sideways, is semi-autobiographical; the action takes place after the movie has come out and its phenomenal success has paid off handsomely for Pickett aka Miles, who has become a minor celebrity, raking in book royalties and lucrative fees for making personal appearances at wine events. Jack, meanwhile, is now divorced and fallen on hard times. He takes a back seat in the novel to his perpetually downbeat friend whose Eeyore-like personality is not, to my tastes, nearly as entertaining as Jack’s Randall Patrick McMurphy. Even Miles’s mother gets fed up with her son at one point, telling him, “Oh for God’s sake, Miles, stop being so neurotic. Get over it and live your life.”

Is there wine in Vertical? Yes, aplenty. As well as the expected hosannas for pinot noir, Miles’s



favorite grape, and put-downs of his bête-noire, merlot. (Unsolicited advice for Miles/Rex: Open up, my man! There are many fine varietals besides pinot.) But, for me, the novel is less about being an oenophile and more about one man’s effort to come to grips, in an entertaining and commercial fashion and yet also honestly, thoughtfully and sometimes painfully, with the fundamental currents of his life: his mother, his best friend, women, sex, relationships, drinking and writing. In this respect, Vertical is a success. —Kevin Nelson

Eat. Drink. Mississippi.

<http://www.eatdrinkmississippi.com/the-wine-guys-gift-ideas-for-wine-enthusiasts.html>

Another book is a sequel to Sideways, the book made into a 2004 movie starring Miles and Jack. Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail is Rex Pickett’s sequel. Miles is relocating his aging mother to Wisconsin but first passes through Oregon with Jack beside him. Their habits haven’t changed any since their last drunken escapade.

OnlineAthens

<http://onlineathens.com/features/2016-11-29/wine-guys-gifts-wine-lovers-not-wine>

Another book is a sequel to "Sideways," the book made into a 2004 movie starring Miles and Jack. "Vertical: Passion and Pinot on the Oregon Wine Trail" is Rex Pickett's sequel. Miles is relocating his aging mother to Wisconsin but first passes through Oregon with Jack beside him. Their habits haven't changed any since their last drunken escapade.