

SA's Andy Watts to be inducted into Whisky Hall of Fame

Andy Watts, Distell's master distiller of South African whiskies Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky and Three Ships Whisky will be inducted into *Whisky Magazine's* Whisky Hall of Fame. Watts will receive this accolade in recognition of his commitment to the South African whisky industry and subsequently, the World Whisky Category (whiskies produced outside of Scotland, the USA and UK).



Andy Watts

The induction will take place on 25 March during an online ceremony when the Global Winners of the Icons of Whisky Awards together with the World Whiskies Awards winners will be announced. The honour of Whisky Hall of Fame has been bestowed on just a handful of people since its inception in 2004, as a permanent tribute to their lasting contribution to the whisky industry.

Richard Rushton, Distell's CEO, says this achievement is tangible proof of the lasting legacy that Watts has accomplished for Distell and South African whisky.

"Making whisky in those early years certainly came with its challenges yet Andy persevered. With an unwavering passion for whisky, he dedicated his career in not only establishing the South African whisky category and subsequent worldwide recognition for the exceptional whiskies produced here, but today inspires a new generation of local craft whisky producers.

"He continues to be the driving force of the industry and we commend him for his dedication, innovation and commitment to South African whisky," says Rushton.

Career journey

Watts's career didn't start off in the world of whisky. He grew up in Penistone in Yorkshire, England and arrived in South Africa in 1982 as a professional cricketer with Derbyshire CCC planning to spend six months a year coaching at schools throughout the Boland.

Within three years, he landed a position at the then Stellenbosch Farmers Winery (SFW) where he became involved in blending spirits. He was invited to Scotland by Morrison Bowmore Distillers to work hands-on at its three distilleries – Auchentoshan in the Lowlands, Glen Garioch in the Highlands and the legendary Bowmore Distillery on the Isle of Islay.

He returned to South Africa determined to prove that the country can produce internationally award-winning whiskies. Back at SFW, he was tasked, along with the company's technical services department, to transfer its fledgling whisky operations from the R&B Distillery in Stellenbosch to The James Sedgwick Distillery in Wellington, taking up his position as distillery manager in August 1991.

In addition to a host of global awards achieved for the whiskies and the distillery, Watts was awarded in 2016 and 2018 the title as 'Rest of the World Master Distiller/Master Blender' in *Whisky Magazine's* Icons of Whisky Awards and in the 2018 awards went on to be named as the 'Global Icons of Whisky Master Distiller/Master Blender'. More recently he received the '2020 Global Icon World Whisky Ambassador Award' for his passion in not only creating whisky but in sharing knowledge of South African whiskies around the globe.



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Lauren Hartzenberg 16 Oct 2020



After spending 25 years as manager of The James Sedgwick Distillery, Watts took up the position as Distell's head of whisky in 2016. He is responsible for the company's South African whisky portfolio focusing on the process, quality and style of their whiskies, providing strategic guidance to the production of the range of Three Ships Whisky and Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky.

Watts is also instrumental in providing the vision for the Three Ships Whisky Master's Collection – the limited release whiskies made available from time to time to showcase the innovation of South African whiskies through an online live sale – and a range of exclusives produced for local and international retail.

His vision to produce whiskies sustainably has resulted in The James Sedgwick Distillery, the only commercial whisky distillery in Africa, being at the forefront of innovation. With his guidance, the distillery has won numerous international accolades for ingenious sustainability projects that lessen the impact on the environment.

The induction will take place live on 25 March at 12.30pm (GMT) on *Whisky Magazine's* Facebook (@WhiskyMagazine) and YouTube channel (Whisky Magazine).