



1. US ambassador to Singapore HE Frank Lavin (in the dark suit) does his bit to promote California wines 2. The impressive turnout at the *Sideways* premier in Singapore. 3. Lavin with the various representatives who staged the event. 4. Wine enthusiasts checking out the range of California wines.

## Marketing wines with a movie

■ photography LIM HWEE PENG

PROMOTING wines through a movie represents an innovative, unconventional approach in wine marketing – more so when the setting and subject matter of the movie is specifically oriented towards the California wine country.

In an industry that is pretty much stiffened by traditional practices, such opportunities are rare and can be considered avant garde. The joint efforts of the Wine Institute of California and 20th Century Fox in promoting this multi-award-winning movie broke new ground and was an approach that many trade professionals viewed favourably.

Molly Low, brand manager for Beringer Blass said: “Besides the apparent exposure, such activity also provides the wine trade with an occasion to educate and promote wines to different industry professionals, thereby increasing the outreach that the usual promo-

tional activity finds hard to reach.”

The gala premiere of the movie in Singapore saw media representatives and VIPs from the entertainment industry as well as wine and hospitality trade professionals intermingling at the event.

Janice Tay, marketing director for 20th Century Fox, commented: “It was interesting to execute this promotion with a wine marketing board, which was a first for our company. Being able to tap into the expertise and members of the Wine Institute, we were able to target the movie at the right crowd and provide a component of the movie (the wine) for the audience to enjoy.”

Prior to the film screening, guests were served California sparkling wine – the first wine that was highlighted in the movie – and they were suitably impressed by the fine quality of the bubbly. A stupendous range of fine California wines

was also served to the 300 distinguished guests, who included the US ambassador to Singapore, HE Frank Lavin.

Some of the prominent wineries that participated in this event include Beringer Vineyards, Clos Du Val Winery, E&J Gallo Winery, Kendall Jackson Vineyard Estate, RH Philips, Robert Mondavi, as well as the much-noticed Sanford Winery & Estate.

Naturally, there was also Pinot Noir, the one wine that was prominently featured in the movie and the favourite of the male lead. The finicky wine was well promoted and it generated much interest among members of the audience.

Marketing wines in such a relaxed environment is bound to have converted many attendees to be wine lovers and this winning combination’s success is sure to spark more innovative approaches to wine promotion. – LHP