

For immediate release

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BALBLAIR

Established in 1790
Highland Single Malt
Scotch Whisky

Balblair Introduces Whisky 'Vintage' As Premium Choice

Inver House Distillers will today (28th February 2007) celebrate the re-design and re-launch of Balblair Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky by unveiling a striking new 'vintage' identity in London's Groucho Club ahead of a major international launch in Edinburgh next week.



Inspired by the 4,000 year old Pictish symbol standing stone, Clach Biorach, which overlooks the distillery, Balblair's new design has been carefully crafted and positions the whisky as the premium choice for connoisseurs across the country and into Europe, the US and Asia.

As well as giving Balblair a fresh new look inspired by its Pictish links, its makers have moved away from the traditional age description of whisky (i.e. '10 years old') in favour of vintage expressions; hand-picked, specially selected 'years' that represent the very best whisky the distillery has to offer.

"We've worked hard and paid tremendous attention to detail to create a whisky that's exceptional – from its taste, to its presentation," said Karen Walker, Marketing Manager of Inver House Distillers. *"It's a different choice for those who love quality. A huge amount of attention has been paid to Balblair's every detail and, as well as looking splendid, its vintage approach highlights the selection process of whisky, illustrating the alchemy behind a great malt."*

Balblair's non-traditional, vintage expressions will better communicate and marry the age of the spirit together with its distinguishing character. 1062 casks were personally sampled by Inver House's Master Distiller, Stuart Harvey in a bid to find these whiskies of excellence; spirit that has reached the exact point of 'optimum maturation', its absolute peak. Three vintage expressions were finally chosen from 1997, 1989 and 1979.

Intriguingly complex and satisfying whiskies, each Balblair vintage is strongly individual, full bodied and feature notes that include apricot, orange, green apple, cloves, vanilla and honey. Other Balblair years will continue to mature under the watchful eye of the Distillery Manager, John Macdonald until they reach their point of perfection.

Its makers have also lavished obvious care on Balblair's design, crafting its presentation to ensure that every detail echoes the quality of the whisky inside. The result is a magnificent product imbued with a delicate opulence. Balblair's dark, lustrous keepsake box, both rich in texture and deep in shade, pulls gently open to reveal honey coloured whisky, encased in a new, pebble-shaped bottle and couched in a smooth cream interior.

Design cues are heavily influenced by Balblair's heritage. Its Distillery, located in Edderton overlooking the Dornoch Firth, is built on a former Pictish settlement, which still features a 4,000 year old Pict symbol stone, Clach Biorach – originally used by the Picts as a calendar and gathering place. This inspired Balblair's unique new pebble-shape, embossed with the brand name in ancient Pictish script and an etched signature 'B' logo. All three expressions also feature a large black cork lid, with the signature B imprinted on it.

Each Balblair bottle is presented in a category-leading box featuring one of three atmospheric images of the view up the Dornoch Firth towards the distillery, taken by local photographer Finn McRae at different times of the day to reflect the natural changing light from dawn until dusk. Each image correlates to one of the vintages, beautifully portraying the distillery's surrounding area, which was originally founded by John Ross of the Clan Ross in 1790 and is now one of the oldest working distilleries in Scotland.

Karen Walker, Marketing Manager of Inver House Distillers is delighted with the results. *'We have spent a great deal of time researching Balblair's heritage and reflecting its true identity in the whisky, drawing from the distillery's unique heritage but at the same time appealing to modern drinkers who covet excellence and originality. These vintages represent the very best Balblair and we're sure that they will appeal to whisky lovers around the world.'*

The Balblair re-design is the work of Glasgow based agency Curious Group, who delved deep into the product roots and distillery history to create a truly stand-out new identity.

Stephen Halpin, Managing Director of the Curious Group commented: *'This was a really exciting project for us to work on. Inver House's bold vision for Balblair was passionate, yet considered. Their dedication to producing something special, something really different for a global market shone through and we relished the challenge of producing a design that met with their ideal and mirrored the way that the whisky has evolved. The finished result, which brings Pictish influence and premium status together, is one we're very proud of.'*

Balblair will be available in specialist whisky stores throughout the UK in March, with distribution in France, Demark, UK, Japan and Sweden shortly after, followed by other export markets from April.

The re-launch campaign will be supported by an integrated through-the-line marketing programme that includes advertising, online activity and exciting initiatives with like-minded brands, more detail of which will be announced in spring 2007.

www.balblair.com

For further media information please contact:

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Notes to Editors:

The Balblair Porfolio includes;

1979	–	46% (70cl)	-	£84.99
1989	–	43% (70cl)	-	£39.95
1997	–	43% (70cl)	-	£27.99

Balblair **1979** is amber in appearance with radiant golden honey highlights. A superbly balanced malt with warm aromas of honey, toffee and vanilla that come from the long years of maturation in American oak barrels. Cloves, oranges, bananas and pears can also be detected in the aroma adding to the complexity of this exceptional Vintage. Sweet, honey vanilla flavours combine with cloves and spices leading to a rich, full-bodied, long-lasting, finish.

Balblair **1989** is mid-amber in appearance with honey-gold highlights. A full-bodied malt with aromas of raisin, green apple and hints of banana and lemon. The American oak barrels, used in the distillate's maturation, lend a warm toffee, vanilla fragrance. On the palate there are raisins and fruits with a rich spiciness leading to a long, complex and ultimately smooth finish.

Balblair **1997** is subtly amber in appearance with rose-golden highlights. This full-bodied malt is fused with the aromas of pineapple, apricot and lemon to create a long-lasting sweet finish. On the nose, the American oak barrels used in the distillate's maturation, produce an inviting, spicy fragrance. Hints of oak, spice and raisin combine with the sweetness of vanilla to create a long-lingering, creamy smooth finish on the palate.

INVER HOUSE

With an enviable standing and refreshingly original approach , Inver House is increasingly recognised as one of the industry's most interesting companies, having developed a diverse, high quality portfolio of brands. With headquarters based near Airdrie, the company has five distilleries – Pulteney, Balblair, Speyburn, Knockdhu and Balmenach – that each produce their own distinctive, individual single malt whisky. Currently sold to 85 countries worldwide, Inver House's products include:

- Old Pulteney – one of the UK's top 15 single malts, this flagship brand is known as 'The Genuine Maritime Malt' and reputed as one of Scotland's finest whiskies. Old Pulteney also supports an exciting programme of sailing and maritime events
- Balblair Single Malt Whisky – premium vintage whisky inspired by its Pictish roots but with a contemporary design and international focus
- anCnoc – boutique malt and key supporter of Scottish arts and creative industries
- Speyburn – value-for-money whisky, which has established itself as the 8th largest selling malt brand in the USA

Inver House also produces a range of blended malts, blends, vodka, gins and liqueurs, such as Scotland's Original Cream Liqueur, Heather Cream.