

# World Whiskies Conference

*It was clearly indicated at the third World Whiskies Conference in April 2008 that not only whisky drinking but also whisky production has become a global concern. But what did the participants really say and talk about? Who better to guide us than its promotor and Conference Director Ian Buxton.*

Like a good Scotch Whisky, in its third year the World Whiskies Conference has begun to exhibit effervescent youth combined with a growing maturity. The Conference is starting to take on its own natural colour and develop a distinctive character. It's evolving nicely.

As regular readers of the Malt Whisky Year-book will know, I started the World Whiskies Conference in 2006 and act as the Conference Director. It's my job to recruit the speakers, trying always for a varied yet balanced programme; stroke and encourage the vitally important sponsors and even, if time permits, sell a few more delegate tickets: I like to think of myself as the Conference's Master Blender!

So this isn't an impartial report on the 2008 proceedings. Think of it rather as an inside view of an exclusive, senior-level, trade-only event that is rapidly gaining a reputation as the global whisky business summit. As whisky drinkers you're naturally concerned to eavesdrop on what was discussed and learn who was there.

## All the heavy-weights were there

But to begin at the beginning: the Conference this year was a two day session, held on 15-16<sup>th</sup> April at the Radisson Hotel and Conference Centre in Glasgow. Delegates came from all parts of the industry and all over the world. We altered the programme slightly this year, grouping the most senior speakers into one plenary session on day one, then splitting into two tracks for sessions on a wider range of specialist topics.

Our presenters included Paul Walsh (CEO, Diageo); Dr Vijay Mallya (owner and Chairman of India's UB Group and Whyte & Mackay of Scotland); Tom Flocco (CEO, Beam Global); Dr Peter Cressy (President & CEO of DISCUS, the US trade association for the distilling industry); John Teeling (Chairman, Cooley Distillers); Kuni Himeno (MD, Suntory Europe) and Kenny Mackay (MD, Scottish Liqueur Centre). As we shall see, there were also a number of other important speakers and the audience went home happy, if slightly punch-drunk by the amount of material to be absorbed. The opening session had aroused a lot of



*Paul Walsh - CEO of Diageo since 2000 and now also the Chairman of the Scotch Whisky Association*