

## **Karuizawa cask 4592**

**1977 (bottle 2010), 'Noh Series,' 60.7%**

The (sadly mothballed) Karuizawa distillery is at the opposite extreme to Eigashima. Peated malt, small stills, and sherry casks give a single malt of uncompromising weight and solidity. Those of you who thought Japan was all about the ethereal and limpid, think again. In musical terms, if Eigashima is the Modern Jazz Quarter, then Karuizawa is late period Coltrane, or if you prefer, it's Black Flag to Eigashima's Carole King. Anyhoo, did I mention this bottling (like all of this quartet from Number One Drinks) is green? Or at least has a color akin to tarnished silver? The note is all chicory and coffee, earthiness and cardamom - whisky reduced to some weird essence by long maturation. The effect is one of an old-fashioned cough medicine (with less laudanum).

The palate is explosive with masses of camphor, tar, licorice, and squid ink. This is Japanese whisky at its most extreme, and fainthearts should not venture here. Those with a taste for the big and the bold will love it, however. £130. Price in US dollars was converted at time of review.

—Vol. 19, #3