An objective analysis of the best low-cost whiskies (2012)

Unless you are exceedingly wealthy - a whisky lover looking for his next tipple has a delicate choice to make. There is huge variability in taste ratings, price, quality, and availability. A simple web search reveals thousands of opinion polls yet these are framed more in debate than rigourous analysis. Recent efforts to systematically group together expert ratings have provided information on over 16000 bottlings and even tables of top whiskies. Yet most are rare, unavailable or out of many of our means. Here I attempt to find out which are the best-rated low-cost bottles available.

First of all I must recognise that I am not the first to attempt this analysis. Indeed, Seth Brown conducted an admirable assessment of single malts using the LA Whiskey Society ratings (www.drbunsen.org/malt-analysis.html) which is well worth a look. The motivation for this analysis was three-fold: (1) including other types of whisky; (2) expanding to a larger database; (3) providing an estimate of value per cost.

If you're just interested in the results best skip to the final tables.

Databases used: Malt Maniac's Whisky Monitor (MM; www.whisky-monitor.com), 16200 bottles, 51000 ratings
LA Whiskey Society (LA; www.lawhiskeysociety.com/whiskey_list.php), 2000 bottles, 5250 ratings

Method: 200 commonly available whiskies selected
Including 145 scotch single malts, 14 world single malts, 19 blended & the rest made up of vatted/ grain/pot still/bourbon/tennessee/rye and a wheat whisky.
Original Bottlings only
Price Range £20-75 as determined by (www.thewhiskyexchange.com) normalised to 70cl
Ratings limited to 2008 onwards (or up to 2002 if there are less than 5 ratings)

Inevitably, this selection remains subjective as I wasn't going to find a price for all available bottlings and certain (e.g. Cardhu 18yo, Caol Ila Moch & Glencadam 21yo) including new bottlings like Kilchoman 100% Islay had insufficient ratings. Therefore I'm sure one or two of you will say I've missed out your favourite brand and for that I can only apologise. Selected whiskies are shown in Table 1 overleaf.

To begin I only used the MM scores as there are many more tasters (27) with on average 1887 ratings each.

Some simple stats:

Median MM ratings per bottle of 16 ratings with 88% of bottles having 5+ votes (fewer votes for American whiskey)
Median Standard Deviation of MM Scores of 4% with 90% under 6%
Median Score of 80.3 with 50% between 78.5 & 83.1
Median Price of £37.5 with 50% between £30.5 & £49.5

Score vs Worth:

To get a measure of whether each whisky is worth the price I decided not to assume a simple linear relationship between price and expected quality. Instead I assumed that quality increases quicker with cost at lower price bands. A 2nd-order polynomial was fitted through the data between £20 & £50 and projected to £75. Beyond £50 the relationship doesn't hold which is likely due to these being priced according to availability or collectability rather than quality.

Whisky worth was determined as the difference between actual score and the score predicted (based on price) from this relationship. Half (100) the whiskies tested sit with ±2 percentage points of the expected score determined from the equation with 36% & 24% whiskies under- and over-value respectively (See Figure 1).

Table 1 - List of the 200 whiskies used in analysis showing average scores from Malt Maniacs, current price from Whisky Exchange & estimated worth.

BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	WORTH	#VOTES	SD
SCOTCH SINGLE MALT					
Aberfeldy; 12yo; 40%	30.95	79.6	0.2	26	5.0
Aberlour; 10yo; 40%	25.75	80.1	2.4	43	4.1
Aberlour; 16yo/Double Cask; 43%	40.25	82.5	0.3	36	3.9
Aberlour; A'Bunadh; 60%	35.49	86.4	5.6	179	3.9
An Cnoc; 12yo; 40%	29.95	79.1	0.0	56	5.1
Ardbeg; 10yo; 46%	35.95	85.9	4.9	50	3.4
Ardbeg; Still Young; 56.2%	69.95	85.3	-1.8	21	3.4
Ardbeg; Blasda; 40%	74.95	80.1	-7.3	33	3.6
Ardbeg; Corryvreckan; 57.1%	61.95	88.1	1.8	42	4.3
Ardbeg; Uigeadail; 54.2%	49.75	88.3	3.9	51	3.0
Ardmore; Traditional Cask; 46%	28.25	81.1	2.5	17	2.7
Arran; 10yo; 46%	31.95	80.0	0.3	36	4.4
Arran; 14yo; 46%	39.95	80.6	-1.5	10	5.9
Auchentoshan; 12yo; 40%	28.95	78.3	-0.5	13	3.3
Auchentoshan; 18yo; 43%	59.95	83.2	-2.9	5	4.0
Auchentoshan; Classic/Bourbon Oak; 40%	24.95	76.6	-0.8	5	5.0
Auchentoshan; Three Wood; 43%	37.95	77.4	-4.2	25	5.8
Balblair; 10yo; 40%	33.75	79.5	-0.8	24	5.5
Balblair; 16yo; 40%	69.95	81.1	-6.0	15	3.8
Ballechin; Marsala Matured; 46%	61.95	85.5	-0.8	10	1.0
Balvenie; 12yo/DoubleWood; 40%	30.75	80.8	1.4	37	4.6
Balvenie; 12yo/Signature; 40%	32.95	78.9	-1.2	15	5.4
Balvenie; 15yo; 47.8%	49.49	81.7	-2.6	39	4.2
Ben Nevis; 10yo; 46%	29.49	82.6	3.6	16	3.5
Benriach; 12yo; 40%	27.49	79.5	1.2	10	6.9
Benriach; 16yo; 40%	36.25	80.3	-0.8	22	3.9
Benriach; 19yo; 55%	71.95	86.8	-0.5	10	3.0
Benromach; 25yo; 43%	68.75	82.8	-4.2	6	2.1
Benromach; Traditional; 40%	24.95	77.1	-0.3	16	5.2
Bowmore; 12yo; 40%	27.49	80.1	1.8	15	3.8
Bowmore; 15yo; 43%	47.95	77.2	-6.8	32	8.3
Bowmore; 18yo; 43%	72.95	80.4	-6.9	10	4.7
Bowmore; Legend; 40%	25.49	77.4	-0.3	20	3.3
Bruichladdich; Laddie Classic; 46%	35.75	80.9	0.0	13	4.4
Bruichladdich; Peat; 46%	36.95	80.4	-0.9	16	4.6
Bruichladdich; Rocks; 46%	31.25	79.9	0.4	11	5.0
Bunnahabhain; 12yo; 46.3%	33.95	82.3	1.9	53	3.6
Bunnahabhain; 18yo; 46.3%	63.95	85.2	-1.3	29	4.8
Bunnahabhain; Toiteach; 46%	53.49	82.8	-2.3	22	3.6
Caol Ila; 12yo; 43%	31.95	82.6	2.9	57	4.5
Caol Ila; 18yo; 43%	65.49	84.4	-2.4	21	2.9
Caol Ila; Distillers Edition; 43%	47.95	83.1	-0.9	37	2.8
Caol Ila; Cask Strenth; 61.6%	49.95	86.7	2.3	31	2.9
Cardhu; 12yo; 40%	30.75	76.0	-3.4	23	3.9
Clynelish; 14yo; 46%	34.25	80.9	0.4	53	3.8

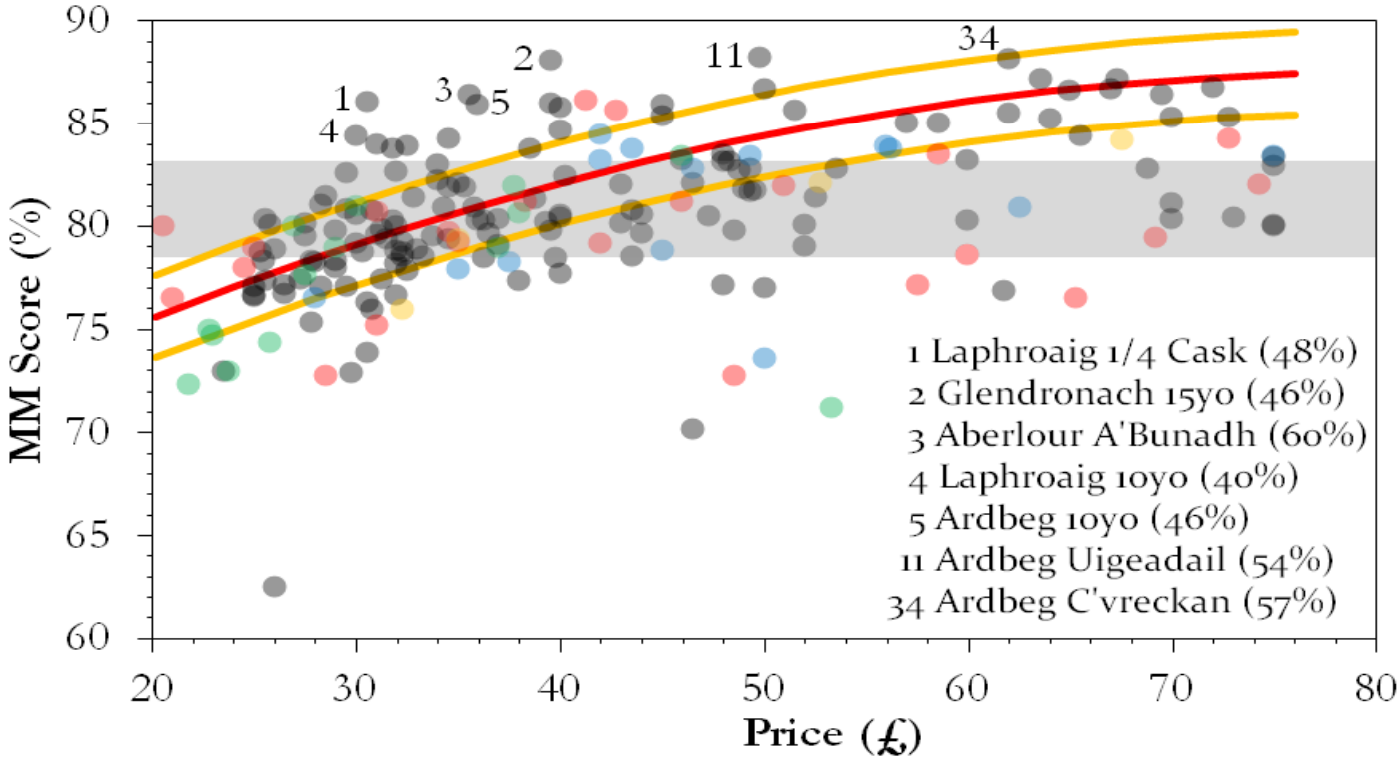
BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	WORTH	#VOTES	SD
Clynelish; Distillers Edition; 46%	48.75	82.7	-1.5	27	4.1
Cragganmore; 12yo; 40%	31.49	79.4	-0.3	43	3.9
Cragganmore; Distillers Edition; 40%	43.95	80.6	-2.5	18	5.1
Dalmore; 12yo; 40%	35.95	80.3	-0.7	24	2.4
Dalmore; 15yo; 40%	46.49	82.1	-1.6	8	2.0
Dalwhinnie; 15yo; 43%	32.49	77.8	-2.1	11	5.2
Dalwhinnie; Distillers Edition; 43%	48.49	79.8	-4.3	6	4.6
Deanston; 12yo/Unchillfiltered; 46.3%	32.25	78.8	-1.1	27	4.0
Deanston; Virgin Oak; 46.3%	39.95	80.4	-1.6	9	5.5
Edradour; 10yo; 40%	30.49	73.9	-5.4	8	7.4
Glen Elgin; 12yo; 43%	34.49	79.4	-1.1	27	4.9
Glen Garioch; 12yo; 48%	36.95	79.1	-2.2	18	3.9
Glen Garioch; 15yo; 43%	69.95	80.3	-6.8	9	4.4
Glen Garioch; Founders Reserve; 48%	29.49	77.1	-1.9	13	4.9
Glen Grant; 10yo; 40%	25.25	78.8	1.3	9	5.6
Glen Moray; 12yo; 40%	30.49	76.3	-3.0	6	4.5
Glen Ord; 12yo; 43%	51.95	79.0	-5.7	21	4.1
Glencadam; 10yo; 46%	30.95	84.0	4.5	6	3.3
Glencadam; 15yo; 46%	42.95	80.2	-2.7	35	4.1
Glendronach; 12yo/Double Cask; 43%	29.95	80.6	1.5	34	4.5
Glendronach; 15yo/Revival; 46%	39.49	88.1	6.1	20	3.2
Glendronach; 21yo/Parliament; 48%	69.49	86.4	-0.7	10	3.0
Glenfarclas; 105; 60%	39.95	85.8	3.7	20	2.8
Glenfarclas; 10yo; 40%	27.95	78.3	-0.2	20	4.3
Glenfarclas; 15yo; 46%	39.95	84.7	2.6	27	3.5
Glenfarclas; 21yo; 43%	59.95	80.3	-5.8	18	4.3
Glenfiddich; 12yo; 40%	26.49	76.7	-1.2	36	4.8
Glenfiddich; 15yo; 40%	31.95	78.8	-1.0	20	3.4
Glenfiddich; 18yo; 40%	39.75	78.5	-3.5	20	4.4
Glenglassaugh; Revival; 46%	36.25	78.5	-2.6	2	2.1
Glengoyne; 10yo; 40%	30.25	78.7	-0.5	15	2.8
Glengoyne; 17yo; 43%	49.25	81.7	-2.6	26	3.6
Glenkinchie; 12yo; 43%	33.25	78.6	-1.6	33	5.9
Glenkinchie; Distillers Edition; 43%	43.95	79.6	-3.4	17	5.5
Glenlivet; 12yo; 40%	25.45	78.3	0.7	19	3.0
Glenlivet; 15yo/French Oak Reserve; 40%	34.49	81.9	1.4	22	3.1
Glenlivet; 16yo/Nadurra; 54.5%	45.95	83.2	-0.3	46	4.9
Glenlivet; 18yo; 43%	42.95	82.0	-0.8	33	3.5
Glenmorangie; 10yo; 40%	27.25	77.4	-0.8	23	4.2
Glenmorangie; 12yo/Lasanta; 46%	38.75	81.3	-0.4	21	4.6
Glenmorangie; 12yo/Quinta Ruban; 46%	39.25	80.2	-1.7	32	5.2
Glenmorangie; 15yo/Nectar d'Or; 46%	48.95	81.8	-2.4	32	4.6
Glenmorangie; Sonnalta PX; 46%	74.95	82.9	-4.5	13	4.5
Glenrothes; Select Reserve; 43%	31.25	77.4	-2.1	9	3.7
Glenturret; 10yo; 40%	31.95	76.6	-3.1	14	4.3
Hazelburn; CV; 46%	32.75	81.4	1.4	12	3.5
Highland Park; 12yo; 40%	28.49	81.4	2.8	29	4.0
Highland Park; 18yo; 43%	56.95	85.1	-0.6	39	4.2
Highland Park; Leif Eriksson; 40%	74.95	83.3	-4.1	6	5.9
Inchmurrin; 12yo; 40%	25.95	62.5	-15.3	6	3.6

BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	WORTH	#VOTES	SD
Isle of Jura; 10yo; 40%	25.49	80.3	2.7	12	3.8
Isle of Jura; 16yo; 40%	43.49	78.5	-4.4	11	3.5
Isle of Jura; 18yo; 40%	61.75	76.9	-9.4	9	3.5
Isle of Jura; Superstition; 43%	28.95	78.0	-0.8	23	6.2
Kilchoman; Machir Bay; 46%	38.49	83.8	2.1	5	2.4
Knockando; 12yo/1997; 43%	28.25	77.1	-1.5	10	2.3
Knockando; 18yo/1990; 43%	49.95	77.0	-7.4	4	1.8
Lagavulin; 12yo; 57.5%	66.95	86.7	-0.2	26	2.9
Lagavulin; 16yo; 43%	44.95	85.9	2.6	49	3.4
Lagavulin; Distillers Edition; 43%	63.49	87.2	0.6	35	2.9
Laphroaig; 10yo; 40%	29.95	84.4	5.3	23	3.1
Laphroaig; 18yo; 48%	67.25	87.2	0.3	10	1.3
Laphroaig; Quarter Cask; 48%	30.49	86.1	6.7	37	3.9
Laphroaig; Triple Wood; 48%	39.49	86.0	4.0	9	1.6
Ledaig; 10yo; 46.3%	32.25	79.2	-0.6	21	5.0
Longmorn; 12yo; 40%	33.95	83.0	2.6	7	2.4
Longmorn; 16yo; 48%	47.25	80.5	-3.4	29	5.0
Longrow; 14yo; 46%	47.95	83.5	-0.5	17	4.5
Longrow; CV; 46%	35.25	81.9	1.1	23	3.5
Macallan; 10yo/Fine Oak; 40%	27.75	75.4	-3.0	11	4.7
Macallan; 12yo/Sherry Oak; 40%	34.95	82.1	1.4	14	4.1
Macallan; 15yo/Fine Oak; 43%	43.49	80.8	-2.2	22	3.7
Oban; 14yo; 43%	36.49	79.7	-1.5	35	4.8
Old Pulteney; 12yo; 40%	25.95	78.9	1.1	38	5.7
Old Pulteney; 17yo; 40%	52.49	81.4	-3.5	43	4.3
Scapa; 14yo; 40%	74.95	80.0	-7.4	26	5.5
Scapa; 16yo; 40%	51.95	80.1	-4.7	31	4.3
Singleton of Dufftown; 12yo; 40%	31.95	78.2	-1.5	26	5.1
Smokehead; ; 43%	31.75	83.8	4.1	14	3.1
Speyburn; 10yo; 40%	24.95	76.7	-0.8	26	4.4
Springbank; 10yo; 46%	34.49	84.3	3.7	11	4.5
Springbank; 12yo/Cask Strength; 52.2%	44.95	85.4	2.1	13	1.9
Springbank; 15yo; 46%	48.25	83.1	-0.9	15	4.5
Springbank; 18yo; 46%	72.75	85.3	-2.0	27	2.7
Springbank; CV; 46%	32.25	78.5	-1.3	11	3.8
Strathisla; 12yo; 43%	29.49	80.9	1.9	8	3.0
Talisker; 10yo; 45.8%	32.49	83.9	4.0	58	3.2
Talisker; 18yo; 45.8%	64.95	86.7	0.0	27	3.4
Talisker; Distillers Edition; 45.8%	51.49	85.6	0.9	11	2.1
Talisker; 57' North; 57%	58.49	85.0	-0.9	48	2.3
Tobermory; 10yo; 46.3%	28.95	79.8	1.0	18	6.6
Tomatin; 12yo; 40%	27.75	78.4	0.0	27	4.2
Tomatin; 15yo; 43%	39.49	79.8	-2.2	11	3.6
Tomatin; 18yo; 46%	49.25	82.8	-1.4	12	4.8
Tomintoul; 10yo; 40%	26.49	77.1	-0.8	31	5.3
Tomintoul; 16yo; 40%	31.75	80.3	0.6	31	4.1
Tormore; 12yo; 40%	23.49	73.0	-3.9	11	7.2
Tormore; 15yo; 46%	39.95	77.7	-4.4	7	7.3
Tullibardine; 10yo; 40%	46.49	70.2	-13.5	13	5.3
Tullibardine; 1993; 43%	29.75	72.9	-6.2	9	5.1

BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	WORTH	#VOTES	SD
WORLD SINGLE MALT					
Amrut; Cask Strength; 61.8%	43.49	83.8	0.8	28	3.7
Amrut; Fusion; 50%	41.95	84.5	1.9	18	4.0
Bushmills; 10yo; 40%	27.95	76.5	-2.0	30	5.9
Connemara; Cask Strength; 57.9%	46.49	82.8	-0.9	44	4.0
Kornog; Taouarc'h Trived; 46%	62.49	80.9	-5.5	9	2.8
Mackmyra; Preludium; 50%	49.95	73.6	-10.8	13	5.3
Nikka Miyagikyo; 10yo; 45%	56.15	83.8	-1.7	5	2.9
Nikka Miyagikyo; 12yo; 45%	74.95	83.4	-4.0	19	2.9
Nikka Yoichi; 10yo; 45%	55.95	83.9	-1.6	9	3.7
Penderyn; 41; 41%	34.95	77.9	-2.8	9	6.1
Penderyn; Madeira; 46%	37.49	78.3	-3.1	10	5.8
Suntory Hakushu; 12yo; 43.5%	49.25	83.5	-0.8	26	3.2
Suntory Yamakazi; 10yo; 40%	44.95	78.8	-4.5	5	1.8
Suntory Yamakazi; 12yo; 43%	41.95	83.2	0.6	5	3.4
VATTED MALT					
Compass Box; Oak Cross; 43%	34.49	79.7	-0.8	14	4.7
Compass Box; Spice Tree; 46%	38.25	81.2	-0.4	10	3.8
Famous Grouse; 18yo; 43%	50.95	82.0	-2.6	3	2.0
Johnnie Walker; Green Label 15yo; 43%	30.95	80.7	1.3	19	4.2
BLENDED WHISKY					
Ballantine's; 17yo; 43%	45.95	81.2	-2.4	10	7.5
Ballantine's; Finest; 40%	20.49	80.0	4.3	3	6.1
Black Bottle; 10yo; 40%	34.95	79.2	-1.5	13	4.8
Bushmills; 1608; 46%	59.95	78.6	-7.5	11	9.4
Chivas Regal; 12yo; 40%	24.49	78.0	0.8	3	9.5
Chivas Regal; 18yo; 40%	48.49	72.8	-11.4	4	12.3
Cutty Sark; 12yo; 40%	30.95	75.2	-4.3	17	7.2
Cutty Sark; 18yo; 43%	57.49	77.2	-8.6	18	8.0
Dewar's; 12yo/Double Aged; 40%	28.49	72.8	-5.9	9	7.6
Dewar's; 18yo/Double Aged; 40%	65.25	76.5	-10.2	2	2.1
Jameson; 18yo; 40%	72.75	84.3	-3.1	4	1.5
Johnnie Walker; Black Label 12yo; 40%	24.95	79.0	1.6	7	5.8
Johnnie Walker; Gold Label 18yo; 40%	58.49	83.5	-2.4	6	4.1
Nikka Taketsuru; 12yo; 40%	41.95	79.2	-3.4	6	3.2
Nikka Taketsuru; 17yo; 43%	74.25	82.1	-5.3	18	6.3
Nikka; From the Barrel; 51.4%	41.25	86.1	3.7	7	1.2
Suntory Hibiki; 12yo; 43%	42.75	85.7	2.9	3	3.2
Suntory Hibiki; 17yo; 43%	69.15	79.4	-7.6	9	1.9
Whyte & Mackay; 13yo; 40%	20.95	76.5	0.6	4	4.1
GRAIN WHISKY					
Compass Box; Hedonism; 43%	52.75	82.1	-2.8	27	4.8
Greenore; 8yo; 40%	32.25	76.0	-3.9	21	8.4
POT-STILL WHISKY					
Green Spot; Single Pot Still; 40%	34.95	79.4	-1.3	5	6.3
Redbreast; 15yo; 46%	67.49	84.2	-2.7	14	2.6

BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	WORTH	#VOTES	SD
BOURBON & TENNESSEE					
Buffalo Trace; Bourbon; 40%	23.75	73.0	-4.0	1	-
Four Roses; Single Barrel; 50%	37.95	80.7	-0.9	3	5.1
Knob Creek; 9yo; 50%	27.49	77.7	-0.6	3	6.7
Maker's Mark; ; 45%	22.95	74.8	-1.9	4	1.7
Wild Turkey; 101; 50.5%	25.75	74.3	-3.4	3	2.5
Wild Turkey; Rare Breed; 54.1%	45.95	83.4	-0.2	5	2.3
Woodford Reserve; Distiller's Select; 43.2%	26.95	80.0	1.9	4	2.2
Jack Daniel's; Gentleman Jack; 40%	28.95	79.0	0.2	2	1.4
Jack Daniel's; Old No 7; 40%	21.75	72.3	-3.9	3	15.8
Jack Daniel's; Single Barrel; 45%	37.75	82.0	0.5	1	-
RYE & WHEAT WHISKY					
Rittenhouse; Straight Rye/100 Proof; 50%	29.95	81.0	1.9	4	1.2
Rittenhouse; Straight Rye; 40%	22.75	75.0	-1.6	2	1.4
Wild Turkey; Rye; 50.5%	36.95	79.0	-2.3	1	-
Bernheim; Original; 45%	53.25	71.3	-13.8	4	16.2

Figure 1 - Relationship between Malt Maniac Score and Price for 200 whiskies (circles) including scotch single malts (black), world single malts (blue), blended & vatted whiskies (red), bourbon/tennessee/rye (green) & others (yellow). Percentile range (25-75th) of scores is shown as grey shaded area. Second order polynomial used to approximate expected relationship is shown as red line whilst ±2% scores above/below polynomial is shown by yellow lines. High performing examples by score or worth are indicated.



TOP SCORING WHISKIES UNDER £75 (Table 2)

Below are listed the top 25 highest rated whiskies under £75 according to the Malt Maniac scores.
Single malt scotch whisky features heavily representing all bar two of the top 25.
Peated Islay whiskies such as Ardbeg, Laphroaig, Lagavulin & Caol Ila make up much of the top 10.
Only a few entry level whiskies are represented including Ardbeg 10yo & Lagavulin 16yo.
Two Japanese blends (Nikka from the Barrel & Hibiki 12yo) complete the top 25.
Ardbeg Uigeadail, Ardbeg Corryvreckan & Glendronach 15yo (revival) score over 88%

Table 2 - Top 25 highest scoring whiskies (Whisky Monitor)

#	TYPE	BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	**SCORE**	WORTH
1	SSM	Ardbeg; Uigeadail; 54.2%	49.75	**88.3**	3.9
2	SSM	Ardbeg; Corryvreckan; 57.1%	61.95	**88.1**	1.8
3	SSM	Glendronach; 15yo/Revival; 46%	39.49	**88.1**	6.1
4	SSM	Laphroaig; 18yo; 48%	67.25	**87.2**	0.3
5	SSM	Lagavulin; Distillers Edition; 43%	63.49	**87.2**	0.6
6	SSM	Benriach; 19yo/1986; 55%	71.95	**86.8**	-0.5
7	SSM	Lagavulin; 12yo; 57.5%	66.95	**86.7**	-0.2
8	SSM	Caol Ila; Cask Strenth; 61.6%	49.95	**86.7**	2.3
9	SSM	Talisker; 18yo; 45.8%	64.95	**86.7**	0.0
10	SSM	Aberlour; A'Bunadh; 60%	35.49	**86.4**	5.6
11	SSM	Glendronach; 21yo/Parliament; 48%	69.49	**86.4**	-0.7
12	BL	Nikka; From the Barrel; 51.4%	41.25	**86.1**	3.7
13	SSM	Laphroaig; Quarter Cask; 48%	30.49	**86.1**	6.7
14	SSM	Laphroaig; Triple Wood; 48%	39.49	**86.0**	4.0
15	SSM	Lagavulin; 16yo; 43%	44.95	**85.9**	2.6
16	SSM	Ardbeg; 10yo; 46%	35.95	**85.9**	4.9
17	SSM	Glenfarclas; 105; 60%	39.95	**85.8**	3.7
18	BL	Suntory Hibiki; 12yo; 43%	42.75	**85.7**	2.9
19	SSM	Talisker; Distillers Edition; 45.8%	51.49	**85.6**	0.9
20	SSM	Ballechin; Marsala Matured; 46%	61.95	**85.5**	-0.8
21	SSM	Springbank; 12yo/Cask Strength; 52.2%	44.95	**85.4**	2.1
22	SSM	Springbank; 18yo; 46%	72.75	**85.3**	-2.0
23	SSM	Ardbeg; Still Young; 56.2%	69.95	**85.3**	-1.8
24	SSM	Bunnahabhain; 18yo; 46.3%	63.95	**85.2**	-1.3
25	SSM	Highland Park; 18yo; 43%	56.95	**85.1**	-0.6

BEST VALUE WHISKIES UNDER £75 (Table 3)

Below are listed the top 25 best value whiskies under £75 according to the Malt Maniac scores.

All have a rating of at least 80% and are under £50

Similar dominance of single malt scotch whskies with just 3 others (blends)

Entry level whiskies represent over half the top 25 whiskies

Laphroaig has three bottlings in the top 10

Aberlour, Ardbeg, Caol Ila & Glenfarclas each have two bottlings in the top 25

Eleven of the whiskies were also amongst the highest scoring including:

The top 3 - **Laphroaig Quarter Cask, Glendronach 15yo & Aberlour A'Bunadh**

Table 3 - Top 25 best value whiskies (Whisky Monitor)

#	TYPE	BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	**WORTH**
1	SSM	Laphroaig; Quarter Cask; 48%	30.49	86.1	**6.7**
2	SSM	Glendronach; 15yo/Revival; 46%	39.49	88.1	**6.1**
3	SSM	Aberlour; A'Bunadh; 60%	35.49	86.4	**5.6**
4	SSM	Laphroaig; 10yo; 40%	29.95	84.4	**5.3**
5	SSM	Ardbeg; 10yo; 46%	35.95	85.9	**4.9**
6	SSM	Glencadam; 10yo; 46%	30.95	84.0	**4.5**
7	BL	Ballantine's; Finest; 40%	20.49	80.0	**4.3**
8	SSM	Smokehead; ; 43%	31.75	83.8	**4.1**
9	SSM	Laphroaig; Triple Wood; 48%	39.49	86.0	**4.0**
10	SSM	Talisker; 10yo; 45.8%	32.49	83.9	**4.0**
11	SSM	Ardbeg; Uigeadail; 54.2%	49.75	88.3	**3.9**
12	SSM	Springbank; 10yo; 46%	34.49	84.3	**3.7**
13	BL	Nikka; From the Barrel; 51.4%	41.25	86.1	**3.7**
14	SSM	Glenfarclas; 105; 60%	39.95	85.8	**3.7**
15	SSM	Ben Nevis; 10yo; 46%	29.49	82.6	**3.6**
16	SSM	Caol Ila; 12yo; 43%	31.95	82.6	**2.9**
17	BL	Suntory Hibiki; 12yo; 43%	42.75	85.7	**2.9**
18	SSM	Highland Park; 12yo; 40%	28.49	81.4	**2.8**
19	SSM	Isle of Jura; 10yo; 40%	25.49	80.3	**2.7**
20	SSM	Lagavulin; 16yo; 43%	44.95	85.9	**2.6**
21	SSM	Longmorn; 12yo; 40%	33.95	83.0	**2.6**
22	SSM	Glenfarclas; 15yo; 46%	39.95	84.7	**2.6**
23	SSM	Ardmore; Traditional Cask; 46%	28.25	81.1	**2.5**
24	SSM	Aberlour; 10yo; 40%	25.75	80.1	**2.4**
25	SSM	Caol Ila; Cask Strenth; 61.6%	49.95	86.7	**2.3**

COMBINING LA & MM DATABASES

So far all the analysis has been conducted on ratings by the Malt Maniacs but what happens if we combine these data with those of the LA Whiskey Society? First, the categorical ratings were transformed into equivalent numerical ratings. This was done using the LA percentiles for each rating and determining the MM equivalent so the datasets would be comparable (Table 4). Only 144 of the 200 whiskies analysed had LA ratings and there were fewer ratings per bottle.

Some simple stats: (full results overleaf)
Median MMeq ratings per bottle of 3 ratings with 27% of bottles having 5+ votes
Median Standard Deviation of MMeq Scores of 3% with 96% under 6%
Median Score of 80.0 with 50% between 76.8 & 83.0

Table 4 - Correspondance between LA Whiskey Soc Ratings and Malt Maniac scores. Malt Maniac equivalent (MMeq) scores were calculated on the basis of the corresponding percentile values for each of the rating categories.

RATING	DESCRIPTION	#VOT	CENTILE	MMeq
A+	Perfection	4	0.04	98
A	Virtually Ideal	213	2.10	93
A-	Excellent (Definately want to own)	733	11.07	90
B+	Great (Definately want to own)	1152	28.96	86
B	Good (Might want to own)	1230	51.57	83
B-	Good (Worth trying)	898	71.76	79
C+	-	485	84.88	76
C	Fine to drink (If nothing else)	284	92.18	72
C-	-	135	96.16	68
D+	-	52	97.93	64
D	Unpleasant (Not recommended)	46	98.86	53
D-	-	19	99.48	40
F	Horrific (Avoid at all costs)	18	99.83	20

Figure 2 - Correspondance between LA (MMeq) scores and Malt Maniac scores for 144 whiskies.

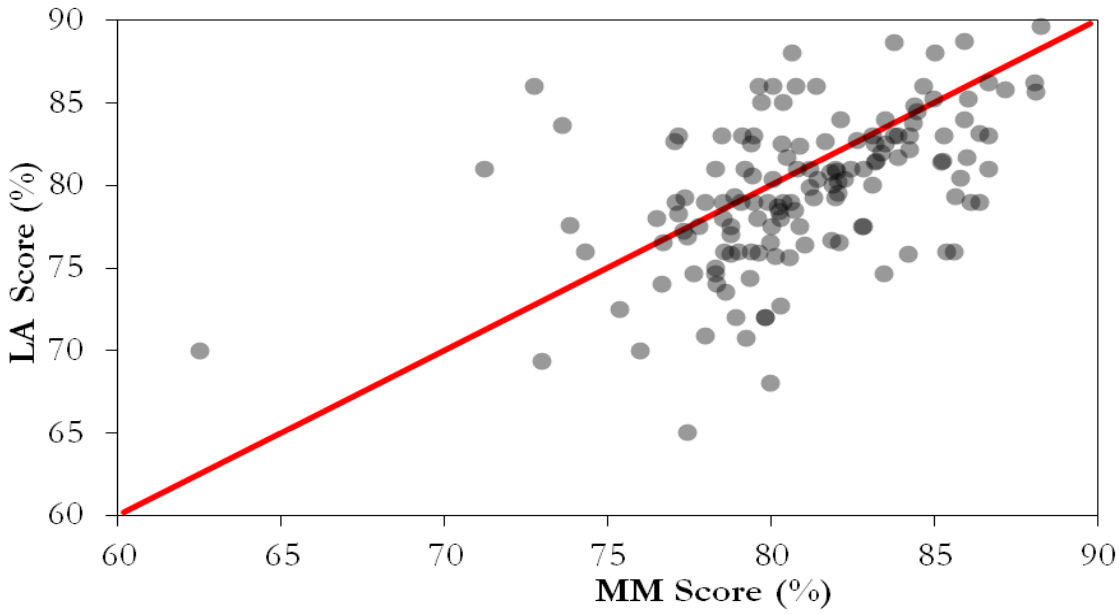


Table 5 - Top 20 highest scoring whiskies (Combined). Parentheses show change relative to Table 2 with red indicating a climb. Glenfarclas 105, Hibiki 12yo & Talisker DE dropped out the Top 20.

#	TYPE	BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	**SCORE**	WORTH
1 (-)	SSM	Ardbeg; Uigeadail; 54.2%	49.75	**88.5**	4.1
2 (-)	SSM	Ardbeg; Corryvreckan; 57.1%	61.95	**87.7**	1.4
3 (-)	SSM	Glendronach; 15yo/Revival; 46%	39.49	**87.5**	5.5
4 (-)	SSM	Laphroaig; 18yo; 48%	67.25	**87.2**	0.3
5 (-)	SSM	Lagavulin; Distillers Edition; 43%	63.49	**87.0**	0.4
6 (-)	SSM	Benriach; 19yo; 55%	71.95	**86.8**	-0.5
7 (2)	SSM	Talisker; 18yo; 45.8%	64.95	**86.6**	-0.1
8 (-)	SSM	Caol Ila; Cask Strenth; 61.6%	49.95	**86.6**	2.2
9 (6)	SSM	Lagavulin; 16yo; 43%	44.95	**86.4**	3.1
10 (-)	SSM	Aberlour; A'Bunadh; 60%	35.49	**86.3**	5.5
11 (2)	SSM	Laphroaig; Quarter Cask; 48%	30.49	**86.0**	6.7
12 (5)	SSM	Lagavulin; 12yo; 57.5%	66.95	**85.9**	-1.0
13 (3)	SSM	Ardbeg; 10yo; 46%	35.95	**85.7**	4.7
14 (6)	SSM	Ballechin; Marsala Matured; 46%	61.95	**85.5**	-0.8
15 (9)	SSM	Highland Park; 18yo; 43%	56.95	**85.4**	-0.2
16 (4)	BL	Nikka; From the Barrel; 51.4%	41.25	**85.3**	2.8
17 (6)	SSM	Glendronach; 21yo/Parliament; 48%	69.49	**85.2**	-1.9
18 (8)	SSM	Talisker; 57' North; 57%	58.49	**85.0**	-0.9
19 (3)	SSM	Springbank; 18yo; 46%	72.75	**85.0**	-2.3
20 (6)	SSM	Laphroaig; Triple Wood; 48%	39.49	**84.9**	2.9

Table 6 - Top 20 best value whiskies (Combined). Parentheses show change relative to Table 3 with red indicating a climb. Ballantine's Finest & Hibiki 12yo dropped out the Top 20.

#	TYPE	BOTTLE	PRICE (£)	SCORE	**WORTH**
1 (-)	SSM	Laphroaig; Quarter Cask; 48%	30.49	86.0	**6.7**
2 (-)	SSM	Glendronach; 15yo/Revival; 46%	39.49	87.5	**5.5**
3 (-)	SSM	Aberlour; A'Bunadh; 60%	35.49	86.3	**5.5**
4 (-)	SSM	Laphroaig; 10yo; 40%	29.95	84.5	**5.4**
5 (-)	SSM	Ardbeg; 10yo; 46%	35.95	85.7	**4.7**
6 (-)	SSM	Glencadam; 10yo; 46%	30.95	84.0	**4.5**
7 (4)	SSM	Ardbeg; Uigeadail; 54.2%	49.75	88.5	**4.1**
8 (-)	SSM	Smokehead; ; 43%	31.75	83.8	**4.1**
9 (1)	SSM	Talisker; 10yo; 45.8%	32.49	83.7	**3.8**
10 (5)	SSM	Ben Nevis; 10yo; 46%	29.49	82.6	**3.6**
11 (9)	SSM	Lagavulin; 16yo; 43%	44.95	86.4	**3.1**
12 (-)	SSM	Springbank; 10yo; 46%	34.49	83.6	**3.1**
13 (6)	SSM	Isle of Jura; 10yo; 40%	25.49	80.6	**3.0**
14 (5)	SSM	Laphroaig; Triple Wood; 48%	39.49	84.9	**2.9**
15 (1)	SSM	Caol Ila; 12yo; 43%	31.95	82.7	**2.9**
16 (3)	BL	Nikka; From the Barrel; 51.4%	41.25	85.3	**2.8**
17 (1)	SSM	Highland Park; 12yo; 40%	28.49	81.3	**2.7**
18 (4)	SSM	Glenfarclas; 15yo; 46%	39.95	84.8	**2.7**
19 (5)	SSM	Glenfarclas; 105; 60%	39.95	84.7	**2.6**
20 (1)	SSM	Longmorn; 12yo; 40%	33.95	83.0	**2.6**

COMBINED RESULTS

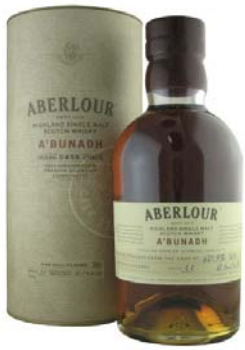
Overall the mean scores of the two datasets are similar. Very little difference is noticeable between Tables 5&6 and Tables 2&3 based on just the MM dataset. This is mainly due to the higher number of MM ratings which exert a greater influence on the combined results. Mean position change with the top 20 scores and values are of just 3 and 2 positions respectively. The top 6 remain unchanged in both cases. Blends in particular lost out in the LA database with all slipping down/out of the tables.

TOP SCORING WHISKIES UNDER £75 (Table 5)

Single malt scotch whisky features heavily representing all bar one of the top 20.
Peated Islay whiskies such as Ardbeg, Laphroaig, Lagavulin & Caol Ila make up much of the top 10.
Only a few entry level whiskies are represented including Ardbeg 10yo & Lagavulin 16yo.
Talisker 57' North is the only entry in Table 5 not present in Table 2.
The top 3 - **Ardbeg Uigeadail, Ardbeg Corryvreckan & Glendronach 15yo**

BEST VALUE WHISKIES UNDER £75 (Table 6)

All have a rating of at least 80% and are under £50
Entry level whiskies represent over half the top 20 whiskies
Laphroaig has three bottlings in the top 10 whilst Ardbeg & Glenfarclas have two in the top 20
Eight of the whiskies were also amongst the highest scoring including:
The top 3 - **Laphroaig Quarter Cask, Glendronach 15yo & Aberlour A'Bunadh**



CONCLUDING REMARKS

Here I set out to try and objectively determine which are the best low-cost and available whiskies. Although I won't pretend to have fully answered that question I hope to be able to help whisky amateurs - to some extent at least - determine which might be their next purchase, as a gift or for oneself. However whisky appreciation will always be subjective and your tastes will never be matched by someone else (even whisky experts). Such analyses will always be limited by the number of tastings and databases like these are often inherently biased towards single malts. And, as I've already mentioned some of you may prefer yet another bottling particularly independent ones not considered here. I have done this as an independent but enthusiastic amateur and any analytical mistakes/omissions made are my own.

Whatever dram you choose next

Happy Drinking!