

I'LL DRINK TO THAT!

by Howard Paul
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JJG readers can now celebrate a collaborative effort sure to bring a smile to any guitar aficionado who also savors a glass of fine wine with dinner. Luthier **Robert Benedetto**, an enthusiastic consumer of red wines (though he would not describe himself as a connoisseur) established the unique wine/instrument affiliation with Napa Valley vintner **David Miner**, president and co-owner of Miner Family Vineyards, who both plays and collects guitars. The duo has bottled a very elegant, limited production 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon.

The collaboration intends to draw parallels between wine and archtop guitars: special relationships with suppliers to guarantee the best available raw materials; balancing the chemistry of the materials with the artistry of the maker, who must envision a specific out-come which cannot be realized until the very end of the process; the subtleness of the aging process through which both develop more complexity and structure with careful aging; and the passion of the experienced artisan who controls the development but never loses sight of the intended audience.

Miner commissioned Benedetto to make a non-cutaway oval-holed hand-carved archtop with a “natural” spruce top and “wine-stained” maple sides and back. In this case, loosely reminiscent of the fictional “Red Violin,” Benedetto prepared the wine colored stain utilizing fermenting Cabernet Sauvignon drawn from oak barrels stored in the vineyard’s 20,000 square foot mountainside caves. He incorporated a stunning hand-cut grapevine inlay motif in abalone and mother-of-pearl and affixed the Miner family logo on the rear of the headstock. A tortoise shell binding with fine-line purfling was incorporated into this purely acoustic instrument.

Miner Family Vineyards blended, bottled, and markets the premium red wine which shares the Benedetto and Miner Family logos. Miner winemaker Gary Brookman very carefully selected a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon (75%), Cabernet Franc (13%) and Merlot (12%) from both Oakville and Napa (Stagecoach Vineyard) appellation. The wine was bottled in June 2004 after 18 months in new French oak barrels. The *2002 Miner Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley “Benedetto Signature Series”* is a very limited release of only 100 cases (1200 750ml bottles), and will sell exclusively through the vineyard sales department at \$100 per bottle. Miner chose an elegant Bordeaux style bottle, gold silk-screened lettering, and a dipped wax seal covering the traditional cork stopper. While it can be drunk immediately, it is expected to be at its peak in 5-7 years, and could potentially age more slowly. To order wine, or to arrange a tour of the facility and a tasting, visit www.minerfamilyvineyards.com or call 800-366-WINE.



(see more below)



vintages. The concert was broadcast live on public radio, and was followed on August 28th with a Pizzarelli, Alden and Paul concert at the vineyard for members of the Napa Valley Opera House.

To commemorate the official release of the wine, Miner and Benedetto hosted a concert and wine tasting event, open to the public, at the Miner Family Vineyard's Tasting Room on famed Silverado Trail in Oakville, CA, August 27th, 2005. Guitar legend Bucky Pizzarelli, Howard Alden, and Howard Paul helped establish what the Miner and Benedetto families hope will become a recurring celebration of mixing grapes and guitars. The concert gave the audience an opportunity to tour the winery wine caves, listen to Benedetto Players, and taste some exceptional Miner Family wines, including the Benedetto Signature Wine. Both Miner and Benedetto left the door open for the production of future