

Major Scale

HOUSE BAND WINES ARE IN SYNC WITH MUSIC VENUES, REACHING AN UPBEAT AUDIENCE

by E. C. Gladstone



House Band Wines' Joel Quigley (left) and founders Patrick and Rebecca Krutz (right) flank artists Tom Jacob of hermes and singer-songwriter Hyim.

Your typical wine release party might take place in a fancy hotel event space, elegant mansion or atmospheric barrel room. That's not House Band's style though. For their coming out party held October 14, they rented Hollywood's famous SIR Sound Stages (where U2's Bono was rehearsing just hours before), brought in some indie rockers, cranked up the volume and let the juice flow.

House Band Wines has a new angle, marketing specifically to live music venues, and the people who visit them. So it's fitting that the youngish crowd at the event was decked out in black clothing, tattoos and radical hair—not exactly the usual fine-wine crowd.

"We're music geeks," Joel Quigley, House Band's MC and Artist Relations Director tells THE TASTING PANEL. "We hate going to clubs and festivals and not being able to get good wine."

House Band certainly brought the wine. Their first release slate includes a 2010 Chardonnay, 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon and 2009 Merlot, as well as NV White and Red blends (dubbed "+3" and "+5" as a nod to guest-list entourages). Winemaker/owner Patrick Krutz may speak with an endearing Mississippi drawl, but he's been bottling vintages in California for over seven years for his Krutz Family Cellars. For the House Band portfolio—all enclosed with fast, easy-opening screwcaps—he sourced grapes from all over California to produce the easiest, most endearing wines he could make at a palatable price.

And to prove wine and music make good party partners (if there was a question), House Band teamed with artist booking site Sonicbids.com to find ten emerging artists to sponsor. The best, hermes, was invited to open the evening, before indie rockers SUDDYN cut loose. Only hermes lead singer Tom Jacob could make the trip from London, but even solo, his songs made a strong impression on the crowd.

Quigley has also introduced 375-ml. flexible pouch packaging for House Band, already garnering great interest, he says, for venues where glass bottles are prohibited. "They're gonna love the pouch at Glastonbury," says Jacob, referring to the renowned British rock festival. Pouches also provide a number of positive environmental aspects. Quigley expects them to retail for \$4.99.

In between the bands, Krutz assembled his family onstage with the musicians to thank everyone for coming, and sum up his mission with five simple words: "Hope y'all dig the wine."

housebandwines.com



Tasting Notes

House Band 2010 Chardonnay (\$10.99) Pale green-gold color and a bold creamy/tart nose of custard apples and peaches. The palate is crisp and clean with tart citrus and apricot and a little wood on the soft finish. Good with medium-soft cheeses.

House Band NV White +3 (\$8.99) With a pale straw color, this blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and 5% Muscat Canelli has a modest citrus nose. The softly juicy palate, with notes of Golden Delicious apple, pear and lemon paired well with Chef Frank Miller's fried shrimp and spring rolls.

House Band 2009 Merlot (\$10.99) A soft nose of berries and a little orange zest yields to a ripe cherry-berry palate with a dash of black pepper in the finish. 81% Merlot jazzed up with Petite Sirah, Petit Verdot and other red varieties.

House Band NV Red +5 (\$8.99) A true blend, with 60% Merlot, 30% Syrah, and small parts Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Sirah and Petit Verdot, the "+5" has a rich purple color with a pleasant nose of plum and spice. The slightly chewy, softly tannic palate offers cherries, blackberries, plum with touches of leather and oak on the long finish. This paired with Chef Frank's grilled skewers and spicy pizza.

House Band 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon (\$10.99) With a deep red-ruby color and relatively low alcohol (13.5%), this is on the softer end of the spectrum of California Cabs, offering juicy cherry, plum and a little dark chocolate. 86% Cabernet/14% Merlot blend. ■■