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Guitarist Nick Colionne Shares The Holiday Spirit Year Round With Jazz Fans And Students In His Hometown, "The Big Windy" *Page 14*



WAJ Cover Pairing:
Tobin James Cellars
Nick Colionne

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David Pack

BY JONATHAN WIDRAN

David Pack gathering inspiration among the Oakville cabernet vines of his friend Jeff Gargiulo, CEO of Gargiulo Vineyards in May 2008. David and his close friend of over 30 years, David Benoit, began their first composing sessions for *Oakville Crossroads* during this time.

The former Ambrosia frontman and Grammy®-winning jazz and pop producer combines his dual passions for wine and jazz with the groundbreaking recording *Oakville Crossroads: Music To Celebrate Old Friends and New Wine*.

Best known to millions as lead singer of the famed rock band Ambrosia, David Pack is also the singer/songwriter behind the enduring classic pop hits “How Much I Feel,” “Biggest Part Of Me,” and “You’re The Only Woman.” After his years as a rocker in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, Pack became a Grammy®-winning producer across an incredibly diverse range of musical genres, including pop, rock, jazz, R&B, country music and gospel. While working with legends ranging from Leonard Bernstein and Quincy Jones to Aretha Franklin and Andre Crouch, he also amassed some exciting credits in the jazz world. These include projects with Branford Marsalis, Chick Corea and Patti Austin, as well as vocals on several classic albums by his lifelong friend, the legendary jazz pianist/composer David Benoit.

Beyond Pack’s success as a producer and his affinity for classic all-star projects

like *Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration* and *Songs of West Side Story*, which have kept him busy behind the scenes, he’s also pleased many longtime fans by sharing his voice with the world, once again, on his 2005 Peak/Concord Records album *The Secret Of Movin’ On*, which featured famed rockers from his heyday like Journey’s Steve Perry, Heart’s Ann Wilson and Eagles’ Timothy B. Schmidt. Recent projects include *The Purpose of Christmas*, which raised money for Pastor Rick Warren’s Global Peace Initiative, and a new musical called “The Bubble: A Dot Comedy,” about last decade’s Silicon Valley financial bubble and crash, which made its debut at the New York Musical Festival in 2008.

A major wine aficionado and collector of Napa Valley wines since the ‘70s, Pack is most excited these days about a labor-of-love recording project he’s conceived that combines his dual passions for music and

winemaking. Titled after the street where Silver Oak Cellars and Gargiulo Vineyards are located, *Oakville Crossroads: Music To Celebrate Old Friends and New Wine* is being written and recorded in Napa, both at studios and dedicated music areas on the properties of Silver Oak, Twomey Cellars (owned by Silver Oak) and Gargiulo Vineyards, which is owned by Pack’s good friend, winemaker/musician Jeff Gargiulo. Pack and the musicians he records with—including legendary Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek, Dave Koz, Alan Parsons and Billy Dean—will be “artists in residence” at these wineries while the project is in session.

The mostly vocal project got off to a great start in May when Pack and Benoit, inspired by the heavenly terroir of rolling vineyards around Gargiulo’s lush property (next door to the prestigious Screaming Eagle), wrote an initial song called “Harvest” and then “Vineyard Stomp,” which

Pack calls "a celebratory Napa anthem for all grape-stomping brethren to dance to barefooted among the vines." Pack explains that his project's song titles and lyrics will be infused with winemaker terminology such as "crush" and "bud-break," terms with a wealth of multiple meanings.

Pack is fashioning *Oakville Crossroads*—whose costs will be underwritten by select sponsors—as a multimedia project that will ultimately include a DVD (with footage of the writing and recording sessions, in addition to conversations with winemakers about their craft) and an exclusive coffee table book. "The idea is to simply capture time in a bottle," the singer says, "by creating a time capsule that helps preserve the memory of close-knit friendships and shared experiences between winemakers, musicians, culinary artists and their communities. I'm excited about this because it's the first time any recording artist has ever tried to capture the unique spirit and beauty of Napa, the art of winemaking, and the way it ties into the spirit of the community by actually collaborating on songs with each winery-partner."

In 2005, with the help of Gargiulo and David Duncan, CEO of Silver Oak, Pack was able to fulfill his longtime dream of being a winemaker by creating a cabernet he calls "Friends Blend" and a merlot, both of which were packaged in 2008 under the Pack Family Wine label. Drawing on his rock and roll contacts including String's longtime art director Norman Moore who designed the label for him, the wine was vinted exclusively for sharing with friends and family.

Pack dates his love for the wine of Napa Valley to trips he took there in the '70s with his best friend Mike Zuanich. The two

became "wine geeks," recording notes and creating dated "wine books" that included soaked-off labels of each wine they tasted. He says his epiphany as a budding California wine connoisseur happened when he tasted his first Silver Oak Cabernet Sauvignon in 1978. Over 30 years later, Silver Oak's CEO & President David Duncan was the first winery to sign on for sponsorship of the new recording.

The pedigree of Pack's extensive collection of wines is 90% Napa Valley, but he credits two major music figures for cultivating his interest in French wines as well. It was producer Alan Parsons who introduced him to his first French wine when he was in L.A. producing Ambrosia's second album, *Some-where I've Never Traveled*. Pack got even deeper into his burgeoning love of the grape, including French grapes, when he worked with Al Stewart as a backing vocalist on the singer's legendary *Year of the Cat* album (which also featured a young Peter White).

"Al is one of the most knowledgeable people about fine French wine in the music business," Pack says. "He began reinvesting his royalties into his collection of top French wines like La Tache, the crème de la crème of France, starting in the early '70s. Over the years, he built a wine cellar worth millions."

Influences from classical and jazz greats played their part, as well. "When I worked with Leonard Bernstein producing records for his daughter Jamie," Pack explains, "he introduced me to Chateau Pichon Lalande. I was grateful, too, when Quincy Jones sent me a gift of his favorite wine, Chassagne Montrachet. I've been lucky that I've always been surrounded by friends with sophisticated palates.

"The way great winemakers do their

do our music. We blend sounds, arrangements, orchestrations, performances, production and mixes. A great record, like a world class wine, is all about the way you mix the sounds together. Just as a timeless song starts with a great melody, the winner has to begin with great grapes. Then, the art of how we blend and develop these elements into the final product is where the rubber meets the proverbial road!"

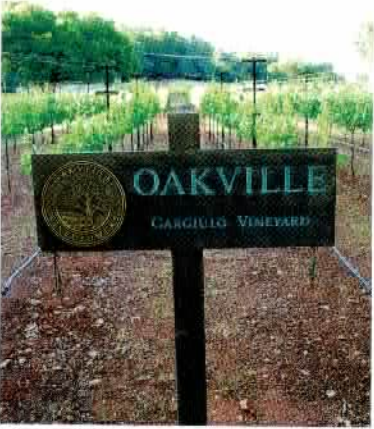
All Photos by David & Stacey Pack



Silver Oak CEO David Duncan and David Pack jamming during a recent charity concert at Gargiulo Vineyards, sponsored by Silver Oak.



David Pack, Alan Parsons, and Jeff Gargiulo performing for a private event that included Chateau Montelena's Bo Barrett & wife Heidi Barrett, Pillar Rock's Ron & Teri Kuhn, Silver Oak's CEO David Duncan, and other Napa VIPS.



David Pack and long-time friend Mike Z (Zuanich) in Napa while bottling David's first ever Pack Family "Friends Blend" Cab & Merlot—a barrel cleaning hose battle!



Gargiulo Vineyards CEO Jeff Gargiulo, David Benoit, and David Pack take a break from the first *Oakville Crossroads* recording sessions May of 2009.