



Depth of Field

The captivating wine and photography of Jesse and Andy Katz

by Marcy Gordon

photos by Sarah Bradbury

Jesse Katz and Andy Katz

The first inkling something different is going on with Devil Proof is found on the label. It's immensely provocative—the image of a Cuban woman smoking a cigar is full of attitude along with a strong sense of confidence and self-assuredness. Two traits that winemaker Jesse Katz also exemplifies.

Before he was even old enough to drive, much less drink, Katz traveled the world's most famous winemaking regions with his father. By the time he entered high school he'd visited more than 60 countries. His early exposure to wine culture at great estates such as Chateau Mouton Rothschild, Argiano, Sassicaia, and Domaine Leflaive kindled an interest in wine that led Katz to almost unheard of success while still under 30 years old.



Katz honed his skills working with some of the most recognizable names in wine—Paul Hobbs, Bob Foley and Andy Erickson—and in 2012, launched his own label, Devil Proof Vineyards, devoted to making the finest Malbec possible in California. Since then, the honors and awards have been flooding in, including a listing on both “Forbes” and “Wine and Spirits” 30 under 30 lists, being named Cult Winery of the year by “The Tasting Panel Magazine” and earning the highest rating from Robert Parker for any Malbec from California.

The Devil Proof private tasting lounge doubles as the photography gallery for Andy Katz, Jesse’s father. And it comes as no surprise that father and son share more than the space, they also have a shared love for wine, travel and photography.

“[As I] traveled the world at a young age with [my father], I thought I might want to be a photographer as well,” Katz says. “Still to this day, I love taking photos, but my father’s ability to see things is just amazing.”

Andy Katz shot the infamous Devil Proof label image during a father/son trip to Cuba. It’s the embodiment of a local saying: *Live well, drink well, and the devil can’t get ya!* And in that manner, you become Devil Proof.

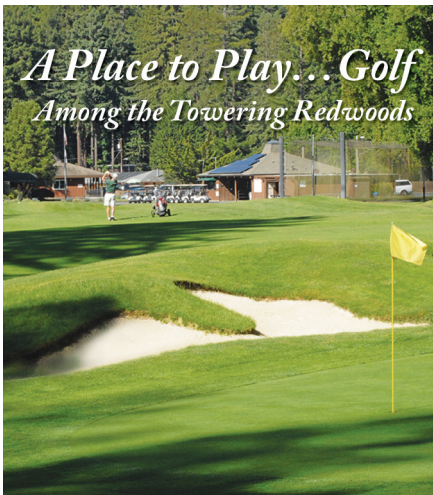
“The label immediately stirs an emotion, the interplay of the photo art and the wine combined tells a story, tells of a place and invokes conversation. As it opens, you too open up to the experience,” Katz explains.

Photography and wine both present an ongoing moment—an image captured on film persists through time, and wine represents the vineyards, the weather, winemaker and year it was made. Elements of photography, such as balance, saturation, focus, sharpness, warmth and texture, are aspects in wine as well. It begs the question—how do the protocols of photography and wine intersect?

“Depending on what you focus on and what you are working with, wine has parallels to photography, and there are many similarities between an honest photo and an honest wine. But if you



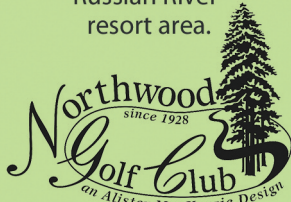
Lauren House pours wine in the Devil Proof private tasting lounge, which doubles as the photography gallery for Andy Katz, Jesse’s father.



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tweak what Mother Nature gave you too much it's suddenly apparent that it's not a good thing. It rings false," Katz says.

In effect, a highly manipulated wine is like a photo where someone has gone 'crazy with the cheese whiz' on the HDR settings, making it appear completely unnatural.

"Texture," says Katz, "is really what I pride myself on and focus on in wine. I want to create something with depth, something that keeps changing and building on itself and evolving."

Collaborating on a wine with his father was a natural development. "My father is the greatest wine lover I've ever met—so passionate about photography and wine."

Together they created Aperture Cellars, a small production line of blends from Alexander Valley: label art and photography by Andy, wine by Jesse.

While his father's focus is on the landscape with regard to how to best portray it in a photo, Jesse's focus is on the terroir and how to best capture its essence in the bottle.

"I'm a winemaker due to my early travel to great wine regions as a child. I could not articulate it at the time—but that sense of terroir was early engraved in me."

After experiencing his first sips of wine in Burgundy at 14, Katz was struck at how the Pinot Noir of two different villages could vary so much from one place to another.

"To this day I'm fascinated by that concept of terroir and it drives my winemaking. Devil Proof is very specific in the sense that it focuses on the site—I'm looking for a great terroir that can produce wine in the style that I love. And I want it to evoke conversation and thought when people drink the wine." **SD**

Resources

Devil Proof Vineyards
devilproofvineyards.com

Aperture Cellars
Aperture-cellar.com

Andy Katz Gallery
andykatzphotography.com

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