

HAUTE LIVING

John Legend's Surprise Performance Helps Auction Napa Valley Raise \$15.8 Million

BY KELLY E. CARTER | HAUTE SCENE, NEWS | JUNE 7, 2015



Auction Napa Valley goers are probably still on a confetti-high today after a memorable Live Auction Celebration on June 6 that featured a surprise performance by Grammy-award and Academy Award-winner **John Legend** and a record-breaking \$2.4 million lot for Opus One's Chair's Lot. The four days of fabulous festivities, which included elegant vintner dinners, a lively Napa Valley Barrel Tasting and online bidding, ends today. This year's edition of the Napa Valley Vintners annual fundraiser raised \$15.8 million for community health and children's education.

Haute Living was on the scene for all of it. On Saturday, 850 casually-festive dressed guests gathered under the big tent at the Live Auction Celebration, taking place for the 35th consecutive year at Meadowood Napa Valley. After the final blast of confetti had fallen to the floor, we caught up with 2015 honorary Auction Napa Valley chair and CEO of Opus One **David Pearson**, who covers our [May/June Auction Napa Valley issue](#), to get his thoughts on the Live Auction Celebration. Although this year's \$15.8 million take is down from last year's record-breaking \$18.7 million, the numbers are still astounding.

"Yesterday someone asked me how much money I thought we we would raise," Pearson said. "My answer was, 'I have no idea.' What I knew yesterday was that we would raise millions of dollars for the people of the community of Napa and that's what we did. And that's astounding. Whatever [the final number] is, everyone should feel such satisfaction and pleasure at having raised all of the money for the people who really need it. I'm very proud of what we've done."

Once the final numbers were in, Pearson said, "While \$15.8 million is a number that reflects the abundance of giving that we will extend to families in Napa Valley, I am reminded of a singular example of how far these funds go in creating a strong, cohesive community. Just a day after the South Napa Earthquake last August, an immediate cash infusion of just a few thousand dollars to the American Canyon Family Resource Center provided essential food and emergency supplies to a multitude of families in dire need. Imagine what we can continue to provide for our community with this year's Auction Napa Valley's proceeds."

In the past year alone, the NVV has invested \$23 million in the Napa Valley community. Since its inception in 1981, the NVV has given more than \$145 million in Auction Napa Valley proceeds to Napa County nonprofits. Every year, Auction Napa Valley funding enriches the lives of more than 90,000 clients in Napa County.



John Legend performs at the Live Auction of Auction Napa Valley 2015. Photo by [Jason Tinacci](#)

One of the weekend's highlights was Legend performing his hit "All of Me" immediately prior to the sale of Live Auction Lot #30, a collaboration between Legend and Raymond Vineyards, whose always entertaining proprietor **Jean-Charles Boisset** took the stage to help Legend and auctioneer **Fritz Hatton** get the crowd going. The lot, which includes six etched bottles of Napa Valley wine, a dinner party for 30 and a private performance by Legend, sold for a total of \$850,000.

However, that was not the top lot of the day – the Chair's Lot, donated by Honorary Auction Chairs, the Opus One Team, and including a 35-year vertical wine collection of Opus One magnums, a two-week tour and visits with some of the world's most renowned winemaking families, tripled and sold to three different bidders, raising \$2.4 million and becoming the charity wine event's top grossing lot of all time.



Paddle 150 won the lot for a 12-iter bottle of Screaming Eagle.

A Balthazar (12-liter bottle) of Screaming Eagle 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon went for a mind-blowing \$500,000, the same amount a bidder paid for a similar lot in 2013. Every year, the cult wine vineyard produces only one Balthazar. The rare vessel, along with the other lots, was on display at Friday's Napa Valley Barrel Auction at HALL St. Helena winery. The bottle was held in a cage made of salvaged steel from the Mare Island Naval Shipyard and created by the oh-so-talented Richard Von Saal of [VonSaal Design Build](#).

New this year at the Live Auction Celebration was comfy, lounge-like seating with couches and coffee tables and flash lots, which started at \$100,000 and went down.

The Top Ten Live Auction Lots were:

Opus One Chair's Lot

Napa Valley Vintners: Fund-A-Need

Raymond Vineyards

Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate

Vine Trail

Screaming Eagle

Chateau Montelena, Joseph Phelps Vineyards and Quintessa

Staglin Family Vineyard

Dana Estates

Colgin Cellars

Hestan Vineyards

As a prelude to the last lot of the day, Fund-A-Need, where bidders give differing amounts of money purely to benefit the needs of children in Napa County, the crowd quieted to watch five-year old Mia dance touchingly on stage with her father. Mia, who lives with her family in Napa County, was helped in part by Auction Napa Valley funding to receive treatment for spina bifida when she was just a toddler.

The glorious day began with guests, many whom arrived to Meadowood in Lexus vehicles, greeted with a refreshing glass of sparkling wine as they picked up their paddles and strolled to the main tent for a "Wine Country Market Lunch" orchestrated by celebrity chef **Michael Chiarello**.



Guest arriving at Meadowood Napa Valley for the Live Auction Celebration.

Chiarello's lunch was reminiscent of strolling through farmers' markets in Italy, France and Napa Valley. Guests feasted on small plates of Hog Island oysters with mignonette, fried chicken with wildflower honey, quiche Florentine, cassoulet, polenta antica, insalata di tomate e' burrata and other delicious dishes. Wine poured freely at multiple stations.



Lunch at Auction Napa Valley

From there, it was time for the big show. The Niner Noise, a drummer corps from the Bay Area, serenaded the women, many who wore hats fit for the Kentucky Derby, and men as they strolled toward the spacious, clear-span white tent for a rousing auction of 51 extraordinary lots of Napa Valley wines and special experiences.



The Niner Noise

As the Live Auction ended and guests strolled to a twilight dinner by renowned international Chef **Pierre Gagnaire**, Auction Napa Valley's online E-Auction, which had opened on May 31, came to a close, netting a new record of \$612,500. Gagnaire's meal included tomatoes stuffed with eggplant purée, black olive and red peppers perfumed with rosemary and onion, and cod steak poached in olive oil on a Maine lobster rillette. After the feast, guests kicked up their heels on the dance floor.

The Top Ten E-Auction Lots:

Scarecrow Wine

Grgich Hills Estate

Kapcsandy Family Winery

Beaulieu Vineyard, Sterling Vineyards, Provenance Vineyards, Hewitt Vineyard and Acacia

Sherwin Family Vineyards

Crocker & Starr Wines, Outpost Wines

Clif Family Winery

Gamble Family Vineyards, Gemstone, Saint Helena Winery, Revana Family Vineyard

Parry Cellars

Dalla Valle Vineyards



Dinner

Photo Credit: Olivia Hsu Decker

At Friday's Napa Valley Barrel Auction, some 2,000 guests sampled 120 coveted Napa Valley wines, nearly 90% from the much-anticipated 2013 vintage, directly from the barrel, while having a chance to spend time with the winemakers and vintners themselves. The Napa Valley Barrel Auction raised a record \$1.9 million through the sale of these Napa Valley wine futures. Friday's guests also strolled the art-filled grounds at HALL, while enjoying sips of 100 current release Napa Valley wines and tasty bites from more than 40 of Napa Valley's celebrated chefs and food purveyors. Melka Wines was the big winner at the barrel auction with a barrel of his 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon going for more than \$100,000.

The Top Ten Barrel Auction Lots:

- Atelier Melka
- Realm Cellars
- Mayacamas Vineyards
- Shafer Vineyards
- The Mascot
- Continuum Estate
- Arkenstone Vineyards
- Spottswode Estate Vineyard & Winery
- Larkmead Vineyards
- Cardinale

One of Friday's most crowd-pleasing moments was the first subtle, then enthralling flash mob performance of "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's immortal Ninth Symphony, a gift from the owners of HALL St. Helena, Kathryn and Craig Hall, and produced by Festival del Sole. More than 80 instrumentalists and vocalists from throughout the Bay area were conducted by Mike Ling poised atop an upright wine barrel.



Philippe Melka celebrates having the highest priced barrel lot at Auction Napa Valley 2013.

Photo Credit: Jason Treacht



Geneviève Janssens, Jean-Charles Boisset and Margrit Mondavi



Jean-Charles Boisset and Naoko Dalla Valle



Two times the Jean Charles Boisset.



Jean-Charles Boisset welcomes John Legend as a guest at Raymond Vineyards.



Guests enjoy dinner in the Crystal Cellar at Raymond Vineyards.