

A Cellar Fit for a King (of Leon)

Drummer Nathan Followill fills his cellar with wines he finds on tour

BY SOPHIE MENIN

Nathan Followill, the 32-year-old drummer for the American arena-rock band Kings of Leon, was born in Oklahoma City, the eldest son of a Pentecostal evangelist. He founded Kings of Leon as a teenager with his brothers Caleb and Jared and his cousin Matthew. The band has achieved spectacular success over the past decade, winning multiple Grammy awards and amassing platinum album sales. Along the way, he's also built a world-class wine collection of more than 500 bottles.

Nathan refers to his brothers and himself as "wine guys by default." Having spent the better part of the past six years on the road with short breaks to record, they've been introduced to fine wines while being entertained by promoters the world over.

"We're able to travel and experience great wines from every region. Each time we play a bigger location, the wines get better and better. We discovered Numanthia through our Spanish promoter, along with Vega Sicilia. When our European promoter Pete Nash introduced us to Puligny-Montrachet, we had never tasted anything like it before."

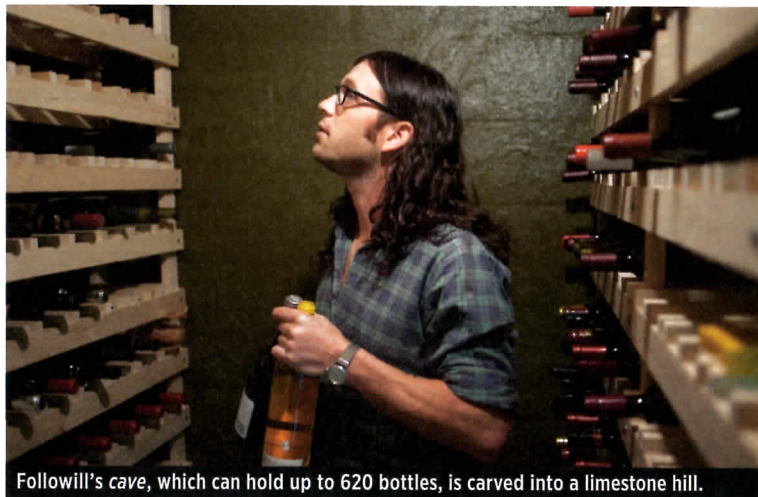
As the band's popularity soared, their wine experiences became more and more elaborate. "Sometimes promoters would buy us birthday year wines," Followill recalls. "I quickly realized 1979 was a horrible year for Old World red wines. Caleb was born in 1982 and Jared was born in 1986. Their wines kicked [my wine's] ass every time. Now I request



Kings of Leon drummer Nathan Followill with his wife, singer-songwriter Jessie Baylin



Classic bottlings join less-familiar names in Followill's Nashville cellar.



Followill's cave, which can hold up to 620 bottles, is carved into a limestone hill.

ABOUT NATHAN FOLLOWILL'S CELLAR

- NUMBER OF BOTTLES:** 500
- CELLAR CAPACITY:** 620
- AGE OF CELLAR:** Built in 1974
- OLDEST BOTTLE:** 1938 Livia-dia white Muscat from the Massandra Collection
- LARGE-FORMAT BOTTLES:** Magnums or jeroboams of Numanthia-Termes and M. Chapoutier Ermitage Le Pavillon
- MOST BOTTLES:** Sea Smoke Southing
- SMARTEST PURCHASE:** 1962 Penfolds Grange Bin 60A
- VERTICAL:** Château Latour back to 1991

Champagne at 'birthday bottle' parties."

The core of Followill's collection is built upon the wines he has discovered while traveling. He takes pictures of his favorite bottles with his iPhone as reminders of good times and indicators of what he will purchase. Current images include a Sea Smoke Southing, which he drank shortly before his wedding to singer-songwriter Jessie Baylin; a Prager Grüner Veltliner, on the list of Kai Mayfair in London; and an M. Chapoutier Ermitage White de L'Orée, the first white wine he'd ever seen decanted.

Followill houses his collection in a cave-like basement space below his Frank Lloyd Wright-style home, which is carved into a limestone hill in Nashville.

"I found an unused storage area full of cobwebs and added cedar racks and a glass door. The limestone controls the humidity and temperature. People tried to convince me to build an elaborate cellar with a table for entertaining. ... I prefer a more rustic aesthetic." Within the cellar, the collection is divided into four sections: Drink Now; Dinner Party; Special Occasions; and Don't Even Think About It/College Fund.

Expect his collection to grow: While their performing contract now calls for wines such as Pahlmeyer, Peter Michael and Château Latour to be available backstage, he uses his spare time on tour to peruse wine-shops for elusive favorites. And now that the band has its own plane, he hopes to be able to visit vineyards. "Our schedule has been so tight up until now, the wines had to be brought to us," he says. □