

This concept had humble beginnings, but now is a cult wine connoisseur's dream.

"I was in Washington state," Sanders says. "I went to see a winemaker. He had one barrel of a wine he had made and was at a loss as to what to do with it.

the boring chateaus on the label is over, thank God!" For instance, the art on the Lost Highway Project labels range from pictures of Sanders' dog to a mosaic from an artist whose work Ronnie just happened to see in a restaurant. Both inside and outside of the bottle, Sanders keeps giving wine lovers what they want.

'We love great wine but hate all the pomp and ceremony that, at times, is associated with the wine industry.'

Michael Twelftree, proprietor of Two Hands Wines

I tasted it and thought it was great. He wanted to bulk it off, but I told him not to. He sold it to me and I bottled it up." In 2000, the Lost Highway Project featured the premier of the first 100 percent Malbec that Andrake Cellars had ever produced.

What is even more striking than the "I know a friend who knows somebody who makes wine" approach to a successful wine, is the avant-garde art on the labels. From graphic designs to mosaics to rock posters, all picked up along the way, the label art is worthy of any rock star wanting to kill a bottle.

"Wine has got to be relative," Twelftree says, "and an important part of this is fun. The day of

Creative and cult thought even runs as deeply as the name of this undertaking.

"I got the idea of calling this the Lost Highway Project," Sanders says, "when I was driving through the desert, wondering what I was going to do with this wine. It was raining in the desert, which never gets rain, and it reminded me of that scene in David Lynch's 'Lost Highway.'"

From staunch connoisseurs to wine collectors all the way down to the cool customers, everyone can't help agreeing with what Sanders has strived for. The wine is in the people's hands now. Palatable packaging, even more palatable wine, and more subculture than you can shake a stick at are the hallmarks of a unique vision that cuts through the clutter.

Here's to Vine Street Imports. Here's to the future of wine sales.

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3 TIPS FOR WINE SALES

The wine market is constantly in flux, and there are some surefire ways to keep up with certain changing trends.

KNOWLEDGE & THE COOL FACTOR

People who drink wine today don't say, "Look at me, I'm drinking wine," the way they used to. Though the image and pomp is still there, more people know which wines they like, and tastes overall are becoming more defined. Make sure the wine you sell isn't just affordable, but also desirable.

WINE & ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment media influences everyone. For instance, Cosmopolitan sales shot up on-premise when the acclaimed TV show "Sex & the City" featured the cocktail. What does this have to do with wine retail? Watch the movie "Sideways," and then watch pinot noir disappear from the shelves. Remember, you aren't so much a retailer as you are a shepherd.

SHE'S GOT THE LOOK

As younger customers come in looking for wine, it helps your business when a contemporary, eye-catching label grabs their attention. Keep the stock that sells well to your regulars, then mix up the rest with fresh, attractive labels.