



HIGH DESERT *hospitality*



Didn't think Joshua Tree recording studio Rancho de la Luna could get any cooler? Meet its new eponymous mezcal.

WORDS BY KRISTIN SCHARKEY

Move over, Clooney. There are two new spirit makers in town. Joshua Tree musicians and producers Dave Catching and Bingo Richey are teaming up to release Rancho de la Luna Mezcal – a new spirit named after Catching's recording studio – this month.

"In the course of our work there at the studio, in our quest for the finest hospitality, we've ended up supplying a lot of tequila over the years," explains Richey, who formed the band Mojave Lords with Catching in 2015. At one point, the pair's "dear friend Hutch" even created a Patrón bottle tree with their increasingly-accumulating supply.

"The guys were like, 'Bingo, you're a hustler, get out there and get us an endorsement with this stuff,'" Richey says. "I thought about it for a minute and I said, 'Why don't we just make our own booze and then we can use it to sponsor some interesting ideas and events?'"

Five years later, the pair are enjoying the fruits of that labor. Enter their mezcal, handcrafted at the Los Jarvis palenque in Oaxaca, Mexico.

"We thought we would start with the purest form of the Appalachian, start with the mother's milk," Richey says. "It's such an amazingly clean alcohol and the sugar is really simple to assimilate. If you don't mix it with anything, it's very difficult to experience a hangover with it."

The pair's particular style features hints of anise, apple and orange oils, and less of the traditionally pronounced smokiness. It's made with maguey (an agave plant) called espadin, which Richey says is the most common maguey

grown in Santiago Matatlán, the "World Capital of Mezcal." It's distilled twice after being roasted in a large pit oven with 20 percent mesquite and 80 percent Spanish oak, and ground in a stone mill by horses, he explains.

The mezcal will be available in hand-numbered bottles labeled with repurposed agave fibers and debut in liquor stores, bars and restaurants in 43 states – with distribution in Europe planned later. When asked if the name of their LLC, Rancho de la Luna Spirits, hints at expansion plans, Richey responds: "Yes, there are. That's about as much as I can say about it right now."

Locally, you will be able to find the mezcal at Pappy & Harriet's Pioneertown Palace. The Rancho de La Luna brand also will sponsor a monthly concert series at La Grange in Yucca Valley to support the Sweet Relief Musicians Fund, which provides financial assistance to career musicians. Hosted by Steve Agee, the podcast-broadcasted performances will kick off with Victoria Williams in May or June. In the meantime, you can listen to the Rancho de la Luna Mezcal playlist on Spotify, with every record ever recorded at the studio.

On his website, Catching – a guitarist with Eagles of Death Metal and Earthlings – notes that the studio is not open to the public and shown by appointment only. But with this new mezcal, you can get a taste of the epic music that continues to be created at the rock 'n' roll mecca in the Mojave. 🌵

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