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Hundreds wait in line to have wine bottles signed by rock star

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Hard rock clashed with organic soda pop Tuesday as roughly 850 metal fans transformed the northern parking area of Whole Foods Market, 3360 E. Speedway, into a pre-concert-like hangout.

Eager black-clad fans chain-smoked, sipped coffee and mostly just killed time in line while radio station KFMA (92.1-FM) blared songs such as "Prison Sex" and "Aenima" by the prog-metal act Tool.

The gathered were waiting to get bottles of wine signed by Maynard James Keenan, the frontman for Tool, the alt-rock group A Perfect Circle and the experimental solo act Puscifer.

The Jerome resident — known to fans as Maynard — has been producing wine in-state through his vineyards, Caduceus Cellars and Merkin Vineyards in nearby Cornville, since 2004.

In 2007, he partnered with fellow vintner Eric Glomski to start Arizona Stronghold, using grapes primarily from Cochise County.

Whole Foods carries three Arizona Stronghold selections that are about \$25 a bottle.

Keenan, one of the most beloved singers in modern rock, and Glomski are on a bottle-signing tour throughout the Western United States.

Tuesday was its first stop in Tucson and one of the best-attended.

First in line was Jordan Nobel, 21, who had waited outside Whole Foods since 9 a.m., even though the signing didn't begin until 4:30 p.m.

"Totally worth it!" she exclaimed after she exited the signing booth.

For Arizona to get on the map in the wine world, more need to get involved in both making and trying the state's offerings, said Keenan and Glomski before the event in one of the back rooms at Whole Foods.

The signing events are a way to help this process along.

Keenan, dressed in light brown boots, a dark jacket and blue jeans, seemed less elated about the signings than those lined up outside.

"I love it. I can't get enough of it," he deadpanned.

Outside, the line to meet Keenan and Glomski stretched the length of the plaza and could have made it across the parking lot to Ike's Coffee & Tea had it not started to wrap around itself.

With a mix of confusion and irritation, regular shoppers drove through the spectacle, honking whenever, say, a tattooed woman in fishnets being led around on a dog chain might wander in front of a moving Toyota.

When told the singer from Tool was signing wine bottles, 59-year-old Ronnie Sartin Sr. replied, "I've got tools at the house."

Luis and Angelina Meraz, 30 and 31 respectively, came decked out in black Tool T-shirts and bought four bottles to get signed.

"He's, like, my idol," Luis said of Keenan.

Holly Nocera, 31, said meeting Keenan was a "dream come true" after having seen Tool some 20 times in concert.

"This was just surreal," she said, clutching six signed bottles. "I named my cat after Maynard."

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