

# A Touch of Hollywood comes to Osoyoos

Story by Andrea Dujardin-Flexhaug



Well-known movie and television actor Jason Priestley practices his interviewing skills at the Osoyoos Celebrity Wine Festival recently with B.C. radio host Terry David Mulligan (l) and Oliver wine expert Jay Drysdale. Photo by Andrea Dujardin-Flexhaug

A touch of Hollywood came to the South Okanagan on a hot mid-June weekend recently, at the first annual Osoyoos Celebrity Wine Festival. Leading the glitzy celebrity lineup was well-known B.C. born actor Jason Priestley, who played host for the event along with Emmy award winning producer Chad Oakes. Priestley is a co-owner in Black Hills Estate Winery, located between Oliver and Osoyoos. The winery along with Destination Osoyoos were co-sponsors of the unique opportunity for guests to mingle with television and movie stars, and enjoy area fine wines and cuisine.

"There are so many exceptional wineries in the area, and this event and the media coverage we're creating will help bring some richly deserved exposure to the great wines of the region," explains Priestley. Priestley is best known for his 10 year stint as an actor/director on the hit show *Beverly Hills 90210*, and coming along to Osoyoos with him was another cast member from that show Tiffani-Amber Thiessen.

Also mingling with the mainly out of town guests were seasoned movie actor Bruce Greenwood, Canadian radio personality Terry David Mulligan, Canadian Olympic Gold medal winning athlete Michelle Cameron, representing Miracle Hydrate cosmetic line, The Medium t.v. star David Cubbitt and Cameron Daddo of CSI.

President of Black Hills Estate Winery and festival organizer Glenn Fawcett says proceeds from the festival totaled \$45,730, and went to support several good causes, Providence Children's Center in Calgary and the Osoyoos Child Care Centre. A banner evening was held at Osoyoos's new Walnut Beach Resort, with wine tasting, some high stakes wine

auktioning, and a stellar performance by the silky smooth voices of the internationally recognized Canadian Tenors. With a record that just went Gold in Canada and upcoming tours to Ireland, Holland and Asia, the four member group has taken the world by storm. This, however, was their first time in Osoyoos, and as member Remigio Pereira observes the town was "very hot, fantastic, it's so beautiful though."

On the following evening, Black Hills Winery celebrated the release of its popular Nota Bene blend wine, with festival guests once again enjoying wine and food, live music, vineyard tours and barrel room tastings. Priestley and gourmet celebrity chef Ned Bell of the Food Network did their part by serving up BBQ halibut on a grill. Priestley patiently paused in his cooking duties intermittently to sign autographs, chat warmly with guests and pose for photos with fans. Priestley has that born in Canada, down to earth personality, grew up on hockey and fishing persona that has never left him despite his Hollywood fame. He also has an obvious sense of humour. North of 50 chimed in with a few questions for Priestley, and inquired about whether or not he cooked at home in Beverly Hills. "Yes, I do, all the time. Every day," he answers smoothly. "Every day?" we persist. "Every day," he assures us. "What is your specialty?" we wonder. "Everything is my specialty. I love to cook," he replies. We take him at his word about the cooking, and pursue another line of enquiry, his interest in the sport he grew up with in Canada, that of hockey. Priestley said he does indeed still play hockey, in L.A., and points out that he is, after all, Canadian. Didn't he become an American citizen?

"I have dual citizenship," he says. "I would never give up my Canadian citizenship. I'm a Canadian. I just happen to have more than one passport now."

Priestley adds jokingly, "It's all the rage these days. All the kids are doing it."

Meanwhile, Priestley says that he and his wife Naomi are awaiting a special addition in their family life, the arrival of a second child. And with his customary humour, "I do have another baby on the way, yeah. Coming soon to a theatre near you."

Priestley's counterpart on 90210, Tiffani Amber Thiessen, also travelled from L.A. to Osoyoos to appear at the wine fest, and she added a gracious presence that comes from a lifetime in the public eye. "I was invited by my dear friend Jason Priestley," says Thiessen. Born and raised in southern California, Thiessen has been a working t.v. and film actress ever since the age of 15 when she joined the t.v. show *Saved by the Bell*. She has a new show entitled *White Collar* coming out in August on the USA Network. She says she has spent a lot of time in Vancouver and loves it there, but has never been to the South Okanagan until now. She is well acquainted with two elements in this weekend festival, fine wines and charity causes. "Especially being from California, we have wonderful wines," she says, noting that Osoyoos is not that far really from her home state, "so I can imagine that it's got wonderful wine."

Like many successful celebrities, she believes in giving back to others. "I run a cancer clinic for kids out in Idaho which I do," she says, with a trip planned there as soon as she returns from this event. The cause of the fight against cancer became personal for her in her own family. "My grandmother passed away on my dad's side, but I think cancer touches everybody," she says. "I think everybody has a story, and anything that involves kids, and if I can put a smile on a kid's face I feel like I'm in heaven."

Familiar actor Bruce Greenwood also mixed with the guests, "and I'm just here for the charity really," he comments. Greenwood has appeared in numerous movies over the years, most recently as Captain Pike in the new *Star Trek* movie. A busy actor, he has a movie coming out in October entitled *Mao's Last Dancer*, which he says is "about a ballet dancer based on the book by the same name." And for a complete change of pace, he adds he will probably be doing a western in the "deserts" of Oregon in the fall.

Global t.v. show *Entertainment Tonight* was at the festival to capture all of the excitement, and planned to tour other areas of the South Okanagan to broadcast a special week of coverage. Radio host and wine connoisseur Terry David Mulligan also planned to feature it on his radio show and on his website [www.tastingroomradio.com](http://www.tastingroomradio.com). "It's a great way to dialogue with the audience and industry," he says about this inaugural festival. He gives kudos to the celebrities who gave up their time and attended it, noting "it was Jason and Chad that got the ball rolling."

"It was great to see all the wineries supporting the event," he comments. Mulligan sees the festival becoming an annual attraction, adding, "It can only get better and better," and proclaims it "a solid charity event."

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Hollywood actress Tiffani Amber Thiessen of *Beverly Hills 90210* fame is interviewed by media at the first annual Osoyoos Celebrity Wine Festival in June. The weekend event provided guests with the opportunity to rub shoulders with A-listers from the film and television industry while enjoying the South Okanagan's best cuisine and wine. Photo: Andrea Dujardin-Flexhaug

