

Ian Ball at C. Donatiello Oct. 19

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So this is what it's like to live in Wine Country, I thought, looking around the C. Donatiello Winery last Sunday afternoon. I've lived here for some 15 years but have evidently been wasting my time going to the grocery store and the beach and the dentist's office and my own office when I assuredly should have been drinking cult Pinot outside in the glorious October sun enjoying a nearly private show by Gomez vocalist, guitarist and harmonic man Ian Ball. It was Ball's 33rd birthday. His mum and dad were there from England. So were his 16-month-old son and his wife, ready with a fresh diaper and a smile. For reasons that I can't begin to conjure, Ball elected to spend his birthday at the C. Donatiello. Couldn't conjure, that is, until I arrived and realized that I would like to spend my 33rd birthday there, too. Too bad the winery didn't exist way back then.



About 100 people came out to see Ball play a set from his new album *Who Goes There*, an informal afternoon show after a grander night the evening before at the Red Devil Lounge. Self-described “wimpycore” musician Buddy opened with a sweet set infused with tales of girls gone wrong and longing. All of this musicianship occurred on a small deck extending out from the guest cottage on the winery's property. Artists often spend the weekend there when performing; on other days, it acts as the Green Room. On this day, it offered extra space for the crowd to

gather in when Ball invited—OK, *demand*ed, it was his birthday after all—that we all join him on the deck. Balancing over the drummer and his kit, I held myself unsteadily upright as we all sang the refrain of his last song's chorus and then ripped “Happy Birthday” to happy atonal shreds.

This was the last of the Live from the Middle Reach series that C. Donatiello launched this year. The “middle reach” is not, as I have erroneously assumed for the entire summer, some Tolkien reference. Rather, it's the section of the Russian River Valley appellation where the winery is located. Most of these Sunday afternoon shows are free; a few, ticketed. This? Superb.