



## Author Interview

### **When did you start playing drums? Who were your favorite bands at the time?**

I started playing quite late actually, 16 or 17 I believe. I was still very much into music before that time. I was messing around with bass and guitar, but nothing hit home. The first time that I sat behind my friend's kit was when I knew I found the right instrument. Around then, Dream Theater and Linkin Park were probably my favorites. They were great gateway bands for me.

### **What do you mean by gateway bands?**

Well, Linkin Park was kind of the gateway to bands, period. Before then I was listening to hip-hop because of where I grew up. I didn't really listen to the radio and that's all that was around me. My sister played me Linkin Park which had me instantly hooked. From there I started to check out other bands mostly being rock oriented. Around that time I started to take some serious interest in music and decided to play bass for a few years. Once I found Dream Theater it broke the mold for all kinds of music and possibilities. It brought me to prog and heavier metal right away as far as genre, but it also brought curiosity to searching for new music and bands that really started to mold my ears. I was finding myself looking for feelings from different bands and sounds that I couldn't always describe or find. I'm still looking to take that further today.

### **What about playing drums made you switch over from bass?**

I guess it was just more natural. I remember trying to learn music theory around 13 or 14 and not really knowing what to make of it. It was always over my head a bit. This was the age of tablature so I was always online looking up songs to play around with. It was rhythm that always caught my ear. I could pick up the rhythm no problem when playing to



music from tabs. Expressing myself on bass was always a challenge that I never seemed to overcome. One day I sat behind my friends drum set and was able to do what I had in my head... relative to the time. With that, it just felt like home to me. There was always interest and fire behind it.

**Once you got into playing, did you teach yourself or take lessons?**

It was a bit of both. I taught myself to read the best I could for a few years before taking lessons from a few teachers. Once I found my current teacher that I'm still with today, it's been game on. It's been endless practice and a lifestyle since. For better or worse!

**I'm curious as to what the better and worse may be...**

It's very much a roller coaster. Physically and emotionally. I feel like I go through periods of severe drought and depression over playing. Then I'm fired up and going to practice at 3:30 AM before I go to work, and then hitting it again after. Well, depression and disillusion strikes even then too, but always to triumph later! With those questions and pains of learning I feel you gain much more than what you were after in that practice session. I've learned so much about myself and life from being locked up in the practice room. It's about learning who you are.

**You seem dedicated to your craft. What are you working on these days?**

Honing my craft is priceless to me. Progression and taking things as deep as I can, and then looking to take it deeper. Again, for better or worse. You're not just looking at drums and grooves. You're looking at yourself. You look at your mind and character.

These days I'm working on re-evaluating my fundamentals, and working everything out from my mind before I sit down and play them on a drum set. Fundamentals being subdividing, origin, pulse, and internal technique. Aside from that I have been dealing

with concepts and melodies. Taking a figure and playing over it and expanding on it as far as I can. Seeing my different breaking points. Trying to find what I hear in my head and what I can actually execute.

**Did you work on any of this for *Wildwood*?**

Definitely. I feel like it's always a work in progress. Again, you take it as far as you can, and then try to take it further. I like to think that each album you release is a snapshot of where you are in your playing and development. You can always hear what you really had together, what some of your struggles may be, and your limits creatively and physically.

**What was the writing and recording process like for *Wildwood*?**

Trying. I feel like *Wildwood* almost broke me at some points. It wasn't just the album. I had a lot going on in my personal life that I wasn't ready to deal with but had to face. There were a lot of challenges behind the drum set as well. It was all written over the course of a year. At some points I was completely unmotivated and clueless as to where to go with things. I was starting to question if I even wanted to do this with my life anymore. It wasn't until we recorded the song *Horse Dysphoria* that I got the fire back and really felt passion for playing again. I found the strength to face what I needed to face on and off the drum throne.

As far as the process, Robb and I have a different method to laying down an album. He shows me the songs and I'll write the form. Usually with an OCD amount of notes and questions. I'll practice what I need to and we will lay down a scratch drum track. From there he'll finish the song, layers and all. Then I go in and write my final drum parts and lay them down. Most of this is all done away from each other. We have more conversations about what we want conceptually as well as the notes being played.