

Ben Smith Official Biography

Get into the groove of Ben Smith

People don't often leave concerts overflowing with excitement directed at the band's musicians. Nevertheless, incredible vocalists depend on the performance of their musicians to deliver as a phenomenal band and bring that beat to the music that we all know and love. In fact, a great beat is what captivated Ben at the early age of five when he went to see his dad's friend "Uncle Frank" perform for the first time with their community Scottish Pipe and Drum band in San Francisco. Fast forward to today, Ben is one of the most respected and talented musicians worldwide creating Ben Smith Music Company from a dream formed from his performances and collaboration with legendary artists in all areas of entertainment.

Ben has worked with Heart, otherwise known as Ann and Nancy Wilson, Taj Mahal, Cyndi Lauper, Lovemongers, Pete Dinklage, Don Gilmore, Tracy Nelson, BoyMeetsGirl, Deniece Williams, Peter Frampton, P.F. Sloan, Cornelius Bumpus, Danny O'Keefe, Sugar Pie de Santos, and with Jazz and Blues legends such as Nancy Wilson, Ernestine Anderson and Glenn Alexander, Phoebe Snow, The Songcatchers, Kenny G, banjo prodigy Danny Barnes, and countless other gifted artists live and in the studio.

Captivated by the rhythm, drawn in by the call of the music and the beat of the drum, Ben was inspired and got involved during his years at Garfield High School in Seattle. Playing in the school's stage band, Ben was introduced primarily to pop, funk and soul as they were the trending genres at that time.

This didn't deter Clarence Acox, Ben's teacher at the time, from introducing the stage band to jazz artists like Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard, which undoubtedly had a profound impact on Ben's music career. At only 15, Ben began playing with artists at local cocktail lounges and nightclubs. Inevitably, his work at Seattle hot spots introduced him to renowned musicians who became his mentors, bandmates and friends. Driven by a fierce desire to grow as an artist, Ben worked with his mentors to expand his musical horizons, leading to the rediscovery of a variety of genres which continue to inspire and influence his music today.

From the Stage to the Studio

Ben's good friend Paul Anderson suggested Ben to play with vocalist/songwriter Gene McDaniels, who took Ben under his wing while he lived in New York, introducing him to Ted Brancato, Carrie Coltrane, Libby Tarrance, and other significant artists in the scene. They wrote and recorded songs for various projects for several years (film work for Michel Legrand, recordings for jazz artists Nancy Wilson and many others).

It was also in this era that singer/songwriter Phoebe Snow acknowledged Ben's talent as an accompanist for vocalists, leading to 3 years of collaboration while Ben was also doing side projects in the jazz genre. His time in New York was cut short when Ben chose to move back to the West Coast to take care of family. Opportunely, Seattle was the right place to be for rock music and Ben loves to rock!

I Heart Rock

It was fate that Ben began performing with the eventual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, legends Ann and Nancy Wilson in 1994 with their band Lovemongers, including founding members Frank Cox and Sue Ennis. Their first CD together, "Home Alive", was a compilation in support of organizations fighting violence against women and led to some very busy Lovemongers years.

Ben made the most of this opportunity, and on one tour played the drums for Lovemongers and for their opening act Elaine Summers. Ben has had the honor of rocking with Heart ever since 1995 with an appearance on The RuPaul Show, kicking off a long career of television and live concert broadcasts, including Jimmy Fallon's The Tonight Show, Conan O'Brien, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, The Today Show, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, Jimmy Kimmel Live! and many others. During this time, Ben worked with Heart in the studio and on concert tours, sharing the stage with Def Leppard, Journey, Cheap Trick, Shawn Colvin, Todd Rundgren, Joan Jett and the Black Hearts and other legendary acts, including Heart's newest album on Concord Records titled "Beautiful Broken". The album is slated for release Summer of 2016, produced by Dan Rothchild and Nancy Wilson.

Music for the Big Screen

It was the long term collaboration with the Wilson sisters that inevitably led to a completely new chapter in Ben's musical journey. Nancy Wilson was composing, performing and producing music for movies and she knew Ben could bring just the right rhythm. He showcased that rhythm in the legendary Cameron Crowe film "Almost Famous".

The film also features songs and music recorded by Peter Frampton and Mike McCready of Pearl Jam and included songs by the band Stillwater, with drum parts recorded by Ben. The compilation soundtrack for this film received a Grammy award, and Cameron Crowe received a 2001 Oscar for Best Screenplay for this film.

Ben continued his successful music collaboration with Nancy Wilson on Cameron Crowe's psychological thriller, "Vanilla Sky" starring Tom Cruise, Cameron Diaz and Penelope Cruz. The movie included the song, "I Fall Apart", sung by Cameron Diaz. Next up was Cameron's Drama/Comedy "Elizabethtown", starring Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst and Susan Sarandon.

Other collaborations include a number of feature films, including "The Great Buck Howard" featuring composer Blake Neely, "Smoke Signals", "Around the Fire", "Skins" and "Mod Squad", which all feature composer BC Smith, as well as "High Water", with composer Phil Marshall.

Entertainment on Tap

Ben's entertainment collaborations went on to include live CDs and DVDs performing with Heart and working with various labels and producers. Ben participated in drumming projects for producer Don Gilmore; various recordings for producer/writers Pete Droge and Elaine Summers; TV music and concert dates with Peter Himmelman; recording with new artist Saint Claire; shows and/or recordings with Glenn Alexander, Tracy Nelson, Boy Meets Girl, producer Thom Bell, songwriter/producer George Merrill, songwriter/guitarist Paul Allen, Danny O'Keefe, and Danny Barnes.

He worked on various projects for producer Mark Wolfson; performed and/or recorded with PJ Newman, Taj Mahal, Sue Pelino, Deniece Williams, Kate Borkowski, Terry Holder, Christine Evans, Tingstad Rumbel, traveling on tour with Heart throughout the US, Canada and overseas.

In 2014 Ben made one of his longtime dreams a reality with the inception of Ben Smith Music Studio. His vision was to create a quality recording studio where fellow musicians could record and produce awesome music. His goal was to help in the development of talent for aspiring artists and to offer his expertise of the music industry to help them achieve their own dreams.

In 2015 Ben reached even greater heights and turned an even more profound dream into reality by way of his business partnership with friend and successful entrepreneur, Valda Sarty. With expertise in the music industry as well as business development, the duo formed the shared vision, Ben Smith Music Company. As a team they work with artists, musicians and business professionals to provide quality recording, production services, talent consulting and coaching, drum clinics, and team building. It's 2016 and Ben is having the time of his life and has been busier than ever working with partner Valda Sarty on the continuous development of Ben Smith Music Company.

The company's current ventures include producing, recording and rocking out with Ben's own band DreamWreck, as well as performing with and recording an array of talented artists, cutting-edge wellness pioneers and authors, and writing and producing his own music at Ben Smith Music Studio in Seattle.

Clients and artists that have graced the studio include Ann Wilson, Dimestore Prophets, Wynne Dacey, George Baxter-Holder, Dos Manos, Carl Funk, Diana Kazakova, Sue Pelino, DreamWreck and many others.

For the Love of the Stage

Ben's talent as a musician and bandmate was highlighted in 2013 when Heart was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and were officially honored the title of Rock and Roll Legends.

Throughout 2013 Ben continued to rock the Nation with Heart on tour including their awesome performance at the "Kennedy Center Honors Led Zeppelin" Concert. The tribute featured Ann and Nancy Wilson alongside Jason Bonham performing "Stairway to Heaven". The tribute performance got over 3 million hits on YouTube and created a frenzy of positive feedback which launched the very successful collaboration tour across the country. Jason Bonham and his band opening each show and then joining Heart for a Led Zeppelin encore, complete with a choir arrangement for "Stairway to Heaven" as the last song of the set.

In addition to touring with Heart, Ben showed off his talent performing in live shows with his band DreamWreck and several other artists. 2013 culminated with a Holiday Concert DVD performance, featuring Heart joined by Shawn Colvin, Sammy Hagar, Pat Monihan, and Richard Marx.

Ben kicked off Spring 2014 on tour with Heart throughout Canada and recorded with numerous artists, including Danny O'Keefe, instrumentalist Paul Hubert, and guitarist Jeff Fogarty. Ben ended the year on a high note performing with Heart on the Grammy Women Who Rock cruise in November. Ben continued to tour with Heart in 2015 performing for thousands of fans, and supporting the community. He showed some love playing at a benefit for Crohn's Disease and performed at the Seattle Symphony with Ann Wilson and Mike McCready of Pearl Jam.

Heart made guest appearances on TV talk shows such as Jimmy Fallon's The Tonight Show and graced stages across New Zealand touring with rock legends Foreigner and 3 Dog Night. All in all, Ben has toured with Ann and Nancy Wilson and Heart for 22 years, with 7 international tours during that time.

2016 has been an amazing year so far, Ben visited the fabulous Sunset Sound Studio in LA to record the drum and percussion tracks for Heart's latest record on Concord Music Group slated to release in late July. In addition to recording with Heart, Ben has recorded with Mycle Wastman, DreamWreck, Chad Quist and Megs

McLean and other talented artists including his work on Ann Wilson's second EP, which is due for release later this year.

The drummer has accompanied longtime friend and bandmate, Ann Wilson on two of her wildly popular solo tours, The Ann Wilson Thing. Ann's solo project is one from the heart, and though, a very different genre from the Rock and Roll we are used to from her historic role in Heart, it accurately highlights Wilson's talents and abilities as an artist.

Ben toured with Heart through Canada and on various tour dates already this year, sharing the limelight with powerhouse Joan Jett and the Blackhearts. In late June Ben will continue to tour with Heart on four special shows across the United Kingdom and in July Heart will again join forces with Joan Jett and the Blackhearts as well as rock legends Cheap Trick, for a monumental "Rock Hall Three for All" tour across the nation.

With his love of music working it's magic, Ben is ready to share his passion on tour and through his work with artists in the Ben Smith Music Company recording studio.