

Get Into the Groove of Ben Smith

Ben Smith is the drummer for the legendary rock band HEART and is one of the world’s most respected and talented rock musicians. In 2016 he formed a new band ROADCASE ROYALE with Nancy Wilson of HEART and former PRINCE Vocalist Liv Warfield. ROADCASE ROYALE includes Chris Joyner on keys, Dan Rothchild on bass, and Ryan Waters on guitar. Ben has been performing, songwriting, recording, and producing for over thirty years.

In addition to HEART, led by Ann and Nancy Wilson, Ben has worked live and in studio with countless other gifted artists including Taj Mahal, Cyndi Lauper, Lovemongers, Pete Droge, Don Gilmore, Tracy Nelson, BoyMeetsGirl, Deniece Williams, Peter Frampton, P.F. Sloan, Cornelius Bumpus, Danny O’Keefe, Sugar Pie de Santos, and with Jazz, Blues, and New Age legends such as Nancy Wilson, Ernestine Anderson, Glenn Alexander, Phoebe Snow, The Songcatchers, Kenny G, and banjo prodigy Danny Barnes.

Early Life

Ben was captivated by a great beat 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. At that moment, he knew he wanted to be a drummer. Fast-forward to today, Ben is one of the most respected and talented musicians worldwide.

Drawn in by the rhythm and the music, Ben was inspired during his years at Garfield High School in Seattle. Playing in the school’s stage band, he was introduced pop, funk, and soul which was trending at that time. This didn’t deter Ben’s teacher Clarence Acox from introducing the band to jazz artists like Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard, which had a profound impact on Ben’s music career. At 15, he 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, band-mates 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

As a young performer, Ben moved to New York where his friend Paul Anderson suggested that he play with vocalist/songwriter Gene McDaniels, who took him under his wing. Gene introduced him to Ted Brancato, Carrie Coltrane, Libby Torrance, and other significant artists in the scene. They wrote and recorded songs for various projects over several years including film work for Michel Legrand, recordings for jazz artist 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 he was doing side projects in the jazz scene. 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 rock 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 on tour playing drums for LOVEMONGERS as well as their opening act Elaine Summers. Ben has had the honor of rocking with HEART ever since.

Television & Film

An appearance with HEART on The RuPaul Show, kicked off a long career of television and live concert broadcasts, including Jimmy Fallon’s The Tonight Show, Conan O’Brian, 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 studio and on concert tours, sharing the stage with DEF LEPPARD, JOURNEY, CHEAP TRICK, SHAWN COLVIN, TODD RUNDGREN, JOAN JETT AND THE BLACKHEARTS and other legendary acts, including HEART’s newest album on Concord Music Group titled, “Beautiful Broken”. The album was released in the Summer of 2016, and produced by Dan Rothchild and Nancy Wilson.

It was the long term collaboration with the Wilson sisters that led to a 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 working 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 the soundtrack for Crowe’s Drama/Comedy, “Elizabethtown” starring Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst, and Susan Sarandon.

Other projects include feature films such as, “The Great Buck Howard” featuring composer Blake Neely, “Smoke Signals”, “Around the Fire”, “Skins”, and “Mod Squad” with 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; performing and recording with Glenn Alexander, Tracy Nelson, Boy Meets Girl, producer Thom Bell, songwriter and producer George Merrill, songwriter and guitarist Paul Allen, Danny O’Keefe, and Danny Barnes.

He worked on various projects for producer Mark Wolfson; performed and 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 launched **Ben Smith Music Company**, turning a profound dream into reality, with the help of a friend and successful entrepreneur. With expertise in the music industry as well as business development, **Ben Smith Music Company** works with artists, musicians, and business professionals to provide quality recording, production services, talent consulting and coaching, drum clinics, and team building.

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

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

For the Love of Live Performance

Ben’s talent as a musician and bandmate was highlighted in 2013 when HEART was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, and were officially honored with 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 creating a frenzy of positive feedback which launched a 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, including a benefit for Crohn’s Disease performed at the Seattle Symphony with Ann Wilson and Mike McCready of Pearl Jam.

HEART has made guest appearances on TV talk shows such as Jimmy Fallon’s The Tonight Show and 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.

In 2016 Ben visited the fabulous Sunset Sound Studio in LA to record the drum and percussion tracks for HEART’s latest record with Concord Music Group released in July of that year. In addition to recording with HEART, Ben has recorded with Mycle Wastman, DreamWreck, Chad Quist, Megs McLean, and other talented artists including his work on Ann Wilson’s second EP, which was released in late 2016.

Ben also accompanied longtime friend and bandmate, Ann Wilson on her wildly popular solo tour, The Ann Wilson Thing, which is now known as, Ann Wilson of Heart. Ann’s solo project is one from the heart, highlighting Wilson’s talents and abilities as an artist.

Ben continued to perform with HEART throughout 2016 including a tour through Canada with JOAN JETT AND THE BLACKHEARTS as well as four special shows in the United Kingdom performing and recording with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. In July of that year, HEART again joined forces with JOAN JETT AND THE BLACKHEARTS and rock legends CHEAP TRICK, for a monumental “Rock Hall Three for All” tour across the nation.

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