



TROY LUCCKETTA

STORY
MICHAEL
AUBRECHT

Perhaps no one can more eloquently sum up the extraordinary career of drummer Troy Luccketta than the man himself. “I never wanted to be just a rock ‘n’ roll drummer,” he said. “For me, it’s always been about the music and diversity.” With a career spanning three decades on the stage and in the studio, Luccketta has more than lived up to that mantra. From routinely filling the roles of drummer and producer, teacher and activist, the diversity of his experience rivals that of many of his peers.

Best known as the hard-hitting timekeeper behind the ‘80s mega-band Tesla, Luccketta has quietly assembled a body of side work that may surprise even his biggest fans. An incredibly humble musician, he admits that he is only now beginning to comprehend the influence that he has had on an entire generation of drummers. Many of these drummers are now full-fledged professionals who routinely make it a point to credit the man who inspired them to pursue their craft.

FACING THE FACTS

A native Californian, Luccketta’s journey began like many drummers, in a garage with a snare drum. What made his experience unique was his innate talent for playing it. “I can’t say that I had always wanted to be a drummer, but once I played that snare drum, I knew,” he recounts. “When I was about ten years old, a couple of friends and I were standing around this old snare drum in a buddy’s garage. We were just staring down at it. My friends in the room knew that I wanted to play, so **one of**

them handed me a pair of spoons, and I immediately starting playing ‘Wipeout.’ I played it nearly spot on. My friends looked at me in amazement. There was something special about the expressions on their faces and the feeling that I got from playing that drum that struck me. From that day forward, I was a drummer.”

Following this newfound instinct, Luccketta immediately set about to get himself a proper drum set. One paper route led to a second and eventually to a third, marking the start of a workaholic mentality that has become a balancing act throughout the drummer’s career. He eventually saved up a precious \$55 to purchase a used three-piece Crest drum set in faded marine pearl. Luccketta recalled the tremendous sense of accomplishment that he felt after purchasing that kit. “I loved those drums! It was a beginner’s set and only had a bass drum, rack tom, snare and a ride cymbal. My mother eventually got me a hi-hat later for a birthday present.”

As a member of a family of music enthusiasts, Luccketta credits his mother, sister and brother with introducing him to a wide variety of genres by sharing their eclectic record collection that spanned everything from Motown to Led Zeppelin. “‘Proud Mary’ [Ike and Tina Turner’s version] was the very first song that I ever played,” he said. “I remember how it started out kinda slow, then built up and changed tempos to a fast, rockin’ jam. That was my first introduction to dynamics and tempo changes. The break at the end of that song was explosive and very cool!”



THE UNTOLD STORY

PHOTOS
JOE KEISER
ROSS HALFIN
PAUL GRIFFIN
PHYLLIS HERRON

Shortly after obtaining his kit, Luccketta started a two-man band. Their first gig was a performance in front of the sixth-grade class. He said, "My friend, who had a guitar, and I wrote two little funky jams, a total of two riffs, and the talent show was our first concert performance. We played both numbers and the kids seemed to enjoy it." Although he didn't realize it at the time, this inaugural event foretold an illustrious stage career that would see the drummer playing to millions of fans around the world. "That day was really my first step. Since then, my journey has taken me from the classroom, to the club, to the arena."

As he nurtured his natural talent for drumming, making music was all that mattered in the eyes of young Troy Luccketta. "We never thought about being professionals, or rock stars, or whatever other aspirations kid musicians have," he said. "At that age we were just really having fun. The amazing part is that I still operate in that same mindset today. **No matter what I have achieved as a player, I'm still having fun.** I love performing. Looking back now, it's been a natural progression, but back then, I was simply having fun. That's why Tesla works so well together. We're still a bunch of guys having fun."

Carrying a cassette recorder wherever he went, the young drummer recorded himself and friends whenever the inspiration arose. Perhaps this habit foreshadowed the other part of Luccketta's professional career as both a producer and an owner of multiple recording studios. He said, "Some people might be amazed that kids our age were actually composing music and

writing lyrics, but we were having a blast and learning a lot. What amazes me now, looking back, is the sincerity in it all. All these years later, I still look at producing music with the same enthusiasm. Make honest music. Stay true to yourself and, in most cases, people will appreciate the sincerity."

As he grew older Luccketta soaked up as much music as he could while maintaining an open mind to various styles and genres. In middle school, he played the bass drum and the snare drum in the concert band, but for the most part he remained self-taught. To this day, he acknowledges that this lack of early formal academic training molded him into a musician instead of a drummer, reinforcing his lifelong philosophy of *music first*. Now as a clinician and teacher himself, Luccketta remains acutely aware that cultivating talent takes plenty of effort, but it should also feel like play. "I want people to love what they do. My passion for the instrument came through in my playing then and it still comes through now. When I sit down on the drum stool, I'm still a kid at heart. I want my students to want to play their instrument. That's how you get a kid to learn. Make it all work, and you run the risk of driving them away."

Partial to drummers who bridged the gap between a rock and jazz feel, Luccketta credits players like John Bonham, Mitch Mitchell and Ian Paice with showing him the way. "Those guys all knew how to lay down a solid backbeat while simultaneously making it swing. If you listen to a lot of the things that Bonham was doing, or the way Mitchell worked around Hendrix, it always



had a lot of swing.” He added, “Honestly, if you listen to the things that Bill Ward from Black Sabbath was doing, in what was considered then to be the heaviest band ever, you hear the influence of swing. Most of the top hard-rock drummers at that time, I believe, were Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa fans among others in the jazz world. That entire hard-rock, heavy-metal genre had a great swing in their groove.”

Like most developing musicians, playing along to records was Luccketta's primary method for building chops. As he matured as a young man, he also matured as a musician and started branching out in his tastes in drummers and the music they created. Studio masters like Jeff Porcaro, David Garibaldi, Steve Gadd and Mark Craney infiltrated his psyche and had a profound effect on how he approached the drum set.

Today Luccketta still recalls the countless hours he spent listening to Toto, Gino Vannelli and Steely Dan records, learning as much as he could from his predecessors. and their influence on him went far beyond the drum set.

“Those guys, all of them, had a unique style that enabled them to play a lot of different music. They were never pretentious. As session guys, it was never about them, it was always about the artist. Clearly they embraced their role. That resonated with me and is the foundation for how I approach everything.” He added, “Tesla was (and is) like that. **We never pretended to be anything other than ourselves. Our look and our songs have always been natural, stripped down and honest.** Even how we conducted ourselves at the height of our popularity was in that unpretentious mindset. The promoter would send us a limo and we'd ask for a van.” (Laughs)

TESLA

After high school and playing around the San Francisco scene in bands such as Whisper, Benny and the Jets, 415 and the Eric Martin Band, Luccketta joined the group that would ultimately change his life forever. In 1985, he became the drummer in a Sacramento band named after the eccentric inventor Nikola Tesla. After playing several showcases in Los Angeles, Tesla quickly scored a deal with Geffen Records and released their debut album, *Mechanical Resonance*, in 1986. The resulting hit singles “Modern Day Cowboy” and “Little Suzi” steamrolled onto the charts, and the associated videos were in regular rotation on MTV. Soon after, *Mechanical Resonance* reached the Top 40 and eventually went platinum. The follow-up release, 1989's *The Great Radio Controversy*, produced three more hits, “Heaven's Trail (No Way Out),” “Love Song” and “The Way It Is,” propelling the band to superstar status.

As Tesla's popularity grew, so did the musicianship of its members. The band's blistering backbeat and echoing snare became the envy of drummers everywhere, and the man behind it was recognized as a standout in the genre. In a period where outlandish fills and stick twirling dominated the scene, Luccketta's solid groove-oriented style harkened to the classic rock of days gone by. Another factor that made Luccketta stand out in the '80s was not what he played, but more noticeably, what he didn't play. When drum sets literally surrounded (and eventually eclipsed) the very drummers who played them, Luccketta emerged as an individual by using a more conventional four- or five-piece kit. This lack of extraneous equipment further enhanced the stripped-down rock 'n' roll feel of the band's rhythm section.

Luccketta credits his admiration for Leonard Haze (original drummer for the band Y&T), John Bonham and a clear appreciation

for the proper use of double-bass drums for holding him in check. "I loved the no-nonsense look and sound of Haze and Bonham. They were strong single-bass players and inventive." That being said, the one player that did impress Luccketta with his double-bass footwork was Cozy Powell. "In my opinion, Cozy was the guy at the time who truly and effectively used the double bass." He added, "Now don't get me wrong, I understand how far double-bass drumming has come and I can fully appreciate what some of these guys are doing today, but that wasn't me. When I was 17 years old I bought a double-bass Ludwig Vistalite kit and used it for a few weeks. **The second I took that extra bass drum away, I immediately realized that the single bass fit my style of play.**"

As Tesla continued to grow in popularity, Luccketta tried and quickly discarded the ever-popular double-bass pedal. (He has since added it back into his setup but uses it sparingly.) When other drummers were relying on gimmicks and lighting themselves on fire, he stayed the course and remained true to both his technique and his persona. He said, "They used to show up at video shoots with hairspray and spandex and I'd simply say, 'Um, that ain't gonna happen.'" Despite refusing to follow in the extravagant footsteps of their peers, Tesla continued to sell very well. "We wore jeans and T-shirts instead of leather and studs, and our music remained at the forefront. The audience got that." In retrospect, Tesla may have unknowingly carried the banner for the genre's founding fathers who had also rebuffed pretentious appearances. After all, Deep Purple or Led Zeppelin never wore makeup.

Then something incredible happened, something that no one in the music industry could have ever predicted. It was the kind of "something" that literally changed the face of music in a way that people can only truly appreciate years later. Tesla, one of the most popular rock bands on the planet, unplugged their instruments. The mere concept of an acoustic hard-rock band is not that shocking today, but back then, at the height of the hair-metal movement, when artists routinely competed to see who could stack more Marshall amplifiers or inflict more damage on the audience members' eardrums, it was ludicrous. And therein lies the irony. By turning down the volume, Tesla inexplicably resonated louder than ever.

PULLING THE PLUG

In 1990, the band performed a series of intimate, acoustic-based shows resulting in the live album *Five Man Acoustical Jam*. The ballsy and innovative recording was an instant hit, reaching the Top 10 charts and soon after, platinum status. It contained informal, acoustic versions of their best-known songs in concert, plus a few favorite covers. Their version of the Five Man Electrical Band's 1971 hit "Signs" became another Top 10 hit, as well as the band's highest-charting single. Many people credit this record with igniting the entire unplugged movement that resulted in an MTV series and an entire craze that was emulated by artists such as Eric Clapton and Nirvana.

Luccketta is proud of the part that Tesla played in helping to ignite an entire musical movement, but he also believes that the accolade isn't solely theirs. "We weren't doing anything different than what had already been done back in the day. I just think the period in which we did it may have been a bit more risky," he said. The story behind Tesla's transformation toward an acoustic set is really a simple one. "We were asked to play a couple of unplugged shows and decided to record one. None of us had any idea it would be received the way it was," Luccketta recalled. "The irony is that Jimmy Page is friends with our bassist Brian Wheat, and even he mentioned that we had something to do with that. I'm sure Brian probably thought, 'Yeah right! We all know where

this came from. Can you say 'Led Zeppelin'?" (Laughs)

Playing in an "unplugged" atmosphere presented a unique situation for the drummer whose echoing backbeat had become a mainstay in Tesla's foundation. Luccketta recalled the change. "That whole unplugged period allowed me the opportunity to expand my percussion ensemble. I added some bongos off to the side and played with Hot Rods. I really just incorporated more dynamics. Looking back, it shifted my approach." This unique experience also had an impact when the band plugged back in. "That whole acoustic routine was a lot of fun. I literally began hitting the drumhead differently because I understood things better. Not just knowing the 'when' or 'how' to strike, but more importantly, 'why.' Some of my best finesse playing has since been done on our heavier songs." (The band has since reprised their acoustic tour in 2012 to packed houses.)

After plugging back in, Tesla released their third studio album titled *Psychotic Supper*. Although it did not achieve the same commercial success as its predecessors, it is still considered by the band to be one of their best albums. A fourth release in 1994 titled *Bust a Nut* followed and shortly thereafter, the band embarked on an amicable and self-induced four-year hiatus. Luccketta elaborated on the break. "We were dealing with some issues at the time but there wasn't a typical band breakup. No one was angry or bitter. We had basically worked nonstop for over ten years, were attempting to perform five-man material as a four-piece band and desperately needed a break to rediscover ourselves." (The band reunited in 2000 and has since recorded a bevy of new albums including *Replugged Live*, *Into the Now*, *A Piece of Time*, *Reel to Reel Vols. 1 and 2*, *Forever More*, *Alive in Europe* and *Twisted Wires and Acoustic Sessions*.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Although they did not share in the publicly scathing *Behind the Music* moments that many of their peers experienced, there was a dark period for Tesla that didn't make it to the front pages of the music papers. Substance and alcohol abuse was a concern and Luccketta himself voluntarily entered a rehab facility to confront his problem. "I did a 30-day stint in rehab that completely turned my life around. I was doing some unhealthy things and I took it upon myself to deal with it, privately, in a way that didn't infringe or impact any of the other members of the band. I went in, I got healthy and I've been clean and sober over 20 years now." Today, Luccketta prides himself and his bandmates on the abandonment of their hard-partying ways. "If you come backstage at a Tesla show, you will find a dry scene. There are no drugs or alcohol present. For us nowadays, it all about living a long, healthy life—not a hard one."

While on hiatus, Luccketta maintained his rigorous schedule, doing an impressive measure of session work as a drummer and producer, as well as dedicating himself to pursuing music education as a student and a teacher. It was during this period of time away from Tesla, that Luccketta embarked on an amazing journey. "This is the part of my story that most people are unaware of. Not only in regard to the musical directions that I explored and the projects I was involved with, but also the studio tracks that I've played on for over 25 artists."

Due to the tremendous rigors of Tesla's recording and touring schedule, Luccketta had little time over the years to spend pursuing any intense study of drum theory. He did routinely workout with pal Steve Bellino who played drums for Ronnie Montrose. "Steve and I spent many years together, almost on a daily basis, going through quarter-, eighth-, sixteenth-, triplet-, double-, etc. note patterns on the drum pad. We did rolls and rudiments and eventually became so in tune with one another that we were like a mini snare-line. We locked in with the metronome and spent hours working through those exercises." He added,



"Steve's actually the one who taught me how to do a double-stroke roll and turned me on to and took me through Ted Reed's book *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. That led to my discovery of Louie Bellson's book *Modern Reading Text in 4/4*, which taught me about how to play more effectively. He's an amazing drummer and I miss those days."

Transitioning from the tour bus to the studio and doing more sessions was a surprisingly easy step for Luccketta. As is commonplace in the recording scene, engineers and producers routinely recommend players for jobs. By establishing a reputation as a dependable and competent timekeeper who showed up ready to work for the artist, Luccketta found himself performing on a wide variety of records. "The first really diverse gig I got was an R&B session in 2001 for a wonderful artist, Freda Payne. The original call I received was for Mary Wilson from the Supremes, but when that fell through, I ended up playing a few tracks on the Freda Payne record."

That session led back to the recommendation from the engineer and producer for an appearance on a track by Lenny Williams from Tower of Power for an HBO special. "It was just one song, but getting the callback meant a lot to me. I would like to add that on all of those recordings, you would never know it is me. In other words, **unlike in Tesla where I was the member of a band and had a distinct 'voice,' these session jobs were all about fulfilling the artist's and producer's vision.** I took me completely out of it." This humility and clear understanding of his role in the studio has enabled Luccketta to perform on a lengthy list of genres ranging from rock, pop and jazz to R&B, country and even classical.

"My contribution as a sideman is distinctly different than my contribution as a member of a band. If I sent someone a dozen

studio tracks that I played on and asked them to identify the drummer, none of them would say 'Troy Luccketta from Tesla.'" One of the most surprising names to see on Luccketta's session resume is that of the legendary Doris Day. "Recording those tracks in particular was a very special experience for me. When I first got the call from Chris Boggs I was surprised, but also honored. I played on about a half-dozen songs, three of them were with brushes, and best of all, I got to tell my mom that I was on a Doris Day record!"

TWIST OF FATE

The most extraordinary session experience that Luccketta remains most proud of is his contribution to Keith Emerson's critically acclaimed *The Three Fates Project*. Recorded in Munich and Los Angeles over nine months starting in summer 2011, this ambitious recording incorporates some of the top progressive-rock players in the world with a 70-piece orchestra. Emerson joined Marc Bonilla, Luccketta and six-string bassist Travis Davis with conductor Terje Mikkelsen and his Münchner Rundfunkorchester to capture a series of epic instrumentals. The result was heralded as a crowning achievement. In particular, the 20-minute version of the Emerson, Lake & Palmer classic, "Tarkus," allowed Emerson to add a depth to an old composition that he couldn't have accomplished in the early '70s. Other re-imaginings of ELP work include parts one and two of the sweeping "The Endless Enigma Suite," "Abaddon's Bolero" and the two-part interpretation of Aaron Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man."

Luccketta's percussion work on *The Three Fates Project* is superb and has been recognized by his peers as an incredible example of how musicians can take on potentially terrifying challenges and reach new and unforeseeable heights. Most



impressive is the way the drummer was able to maintain the rhythmic feel of a groove while performing classical compositions with such precision. The clean sound and clarity in the tuning of the drums, as well as the meticulous playing of them, is remarkable. Luccketta recorded his portion in an isolation room while the rest of the musicians performed in the adjacent hall. His only view was provided by a series of small windows that enabled him to view the conductor. One would never know this, however, as the cohesiveness of the performance overshadows the physical disconnect between the orchestra and the percussionist. Mind you, they were communicating in German, so the only time Luccketta responded was when Terje, the conductor, would ask, "Are you ready?"

Clearly touched by the experience, Luccketta credits the diversity of skill and style that he had obtained over the years for enabling him to spread his wings beyond the limitations of the '80s hard-rock era. He also credits his faith for giving him the strength to succeed. "I have a spiritual/God side that has given me guidance and strength for many years. I am very blessed to do what I do, and I clearly understand that my accomplishments are not solely my own. I rely on my faith, because without it, I would not be here. Today, I am at a point in my life when I can look back and acknowledge that it's not about me. **Life is more than just music and work. It's about building relationships and affecting people in a positive way.**"

According to Luccketta, *The Three Fates Project* clearly illustrates this notion of submitting to the bigger picture. "That whole project in particular, was the most incredible event that I've ever been part of. I did not grow up listening to ELP for the simple reason I felt I couldn't play progressive music, but this seemed so right. The opportunity for me to go way out of my

comfort zone resulted in an amazing education. Originally I was slated to accompany the band and perform in Mongolia with an orchestra. After some unforeseen travel issues prevented me from accompanying them, I had resolved myself to the fact that it was not happening. To be honest, part of me was relieved because I wasn't totally convinced that I could do it. A few weeks passed and then I got another call from Marc Bonilla. This time he said 'Troy, you gotta get over here—now.' Things were apparently not working out with the current situation. So, I literally took a leap of faith, flew to China/Mongolia, and prepared to perform."

How soon he would be called upon to perform was something that Luccketta could not have possibly anticipated. "I remember that I was still setting up my gear and when I sat down on my stool to adjust something. The conductor and I locked eyes and he motioned as if I was ready to go. I knew the music because I had studied the charts, but I had literally arrived in the room 15 minutes before—I didn't even have my drums completely set up. All the other musicians had been working there for weeks, so I took a deep breath and nodded 'yes.' Surprisingly, the first rehearsal went great. I played through some of the songs on a three-piece kit and surprised myself. It was true classical music and the vibe was angelic. You have to understand that this gig required a gentle touch onstage with the orchestra that was light years away from beating the crap out of my drums and rock drumming." (Laughs)

Unfortunately, things did not go as smoothly the following day. Luccketta explained, "During the second rehearsal I found it extremely challenging to follow the conductor because in that setting you have to drop the time. Metronomes are not the clock for an orchestra, the conductor is. You might play the same piece of music repeatedly and it will be at a different tempo from where you just played it. I had never done this before, so it was literally trial by



fire for me. I started coming in early and he would stop everyone. This happened a couple of times, and the bottom line is that I blew it. That night I was discussing my dilemma over dinner when Terje said to me, ‘Troy, picture yourself driving a car into an intersection of oncoming traffic. Then, take your foot off the gas, (paused silence) and then you punch it!’ The next day everything went great and the show turned out fine.” That performance led to the recording sessions for Emerson’s record and one of Luccketta’s most critically acclaimed memories.

NOW AND THEN

One of the most notable differences between the era in which Luccketta and Tesla were achieving success and today’s music scene is the transition of drummers from actual bandmates to sidemen. Whereas most drummers in the ‘80s and ‘90s music scene were considered equal members both in name and—in many cases—writing contributions, today’s biggest artists tend to prefer to use session players and touring musicians. Luccketta is very aware of the fortunateness of his timing in the annals of musical history. “I get that and fully realize today how lucky I am to be a band member for 27 years in a group that still has four of the five original members. That said, it seems we always want what we don’t have. Session guys want to go on tour and touring guys want to do sessions. Singers want to be ballplayers and ballplayers want to be singers. **I’m lucky for sure, but that doesn’t necessarily mean I saw it that way back in the day.**”

In the early ‘90s Luccketta had the unique opportunity to participate in the National Drum Association’s “The Memory Remains,” the first John Bonham tribute on Long Island in New York, featuring some of the greatest drummers in the business.

Prior to the current Bonzo Bash and Bonzo’s Birthday Bash, an annual jam-fest held on the drummer’s birthday, Bonham’s son Jason joined Luccketta, Ian Paice, Frankie Banali, Tommy Aldridge, Denny Carmassi, Bobby Rock and Rob Afusso to pay homage to the icon. “That was an amazing experience,” he said. “We all performed one song apiece and then all of us played ‘Communication Breakdown’ together. My individual song was ‘Nobody’s Fault’ and I remember playing that with as much heart as I could. Jason was sitting in the audience during soundcheck and he gave me the greatest validation I could ever hope for. I will never forget when he said, ‘Your balls are much bigger than mine, mate. I would have never attempted that one.’”

After establishing a reputation as one of the most respected drummers in all of rock, Luccketta ironically felt a deep desire to pursue drum lessons. “I never got to go to a school like Berklee College of Music or North Texas State University [now University of North Texas], but I had played professionally since I was 17 years old and had more than a decade of ‘on the job training.’ As I got older, I wanted to get back with a teacher and even pass some of my knowledge on in that same capacity.” He called drum-guru Steve Smith in ‘96 who had to decline Luccketta’s request for some drum lessons due to his own obligations, but Smith turned his former touring pal on to a Berklee school grad named Rob Hart. Luccketta went on to study with Hart for a year. He also studied classical piano. Luccketta added, “I later moved to Scottsdale, AZ in 2001 where I spent a lot of time over the next six-plus years with Dom Moio, a wonderful Latin-jazz player and an amazing teacher. I followed him on a lot of gigs. (Laughs) I took a semester at Mesa Community College with him on hand percussion, covering the basics on congas and hand techniques and other Latin instruments. I also spent a lot

of time with Denny Seiwell [Paul McCartney] over the years. He's an amazing all-around drummer and great jazz player. He's personally done a lot for me. That was a great time in my life."

Paying it forward, Luccketta took on 22 students for one solid year with a weekly schedule. One of his students was Thomas Pridgen, who went on to become a highly respected clinician and member of The Mars Volta and The Memorials. "Thomas was amazing from day one," he recalled. "It was obvious that Thomas was a prodigy, so I really didn't expect to teach him any chops, he already had them. My approach was to prepare him for his audition for Berklee and give him some basic reading skills. We spent a few months together and the rest is history. He's incredible and I'm proud to have been a small influence on his career."

In addition to his newfound passion for teaching, Luccketta became further interested in working on the other side of the glass as a producer. Beginning in 1993, he eventually owned and operated four recording studios under the moniker of TML Studios/Productions. "My work as a drummer has absolutely aided me in my work as a producer. I understand creating music from a musician's perspective. I know how to effectively set up mics and I am extremely comfortable in that role. I've done a ton of demos for folks and continue to produce them for all kinds of acts, mainly independent artists and one 'big' one. That 'big' one in particular would be Gamma 4 [Ronnie Montrose], so that was great. I got to record one of my heroes, Denny Carmassi. I do have to add that I don't claim to be an engineer. Trying to do it all is way too much, so I always bring in the experts to turn the knobs. That way I can focus on producing. Once again, **it's all about the song, whether I'm sitting behind a drum set or a mixing console, my goal remains the same, 'music first.'**"

BEING SOCIAL

Like many of their peers, Tesla are only now beginning to understand their influence on a generation of middle-aged adults who now bring their children to Tesla shows in order to introduce them to the mighty five-man band that inspired their youth.

Luccketta himself is just beginning to "get it." "Honestly, I had no idea of what kind of impact I had on anybody. Only after I moved to Nashville and started talking to this new generation of players, did I start to see that my work had truly meant something to them. That means a great deal to me." In an age where there is a clear divide between a "drummer's drummer" and a "musician's drummer," Luccketta has managed to bridge the gap between both with his tasteful technique and an earth-shattering groove. His scope of work and his no-nonsense approach to music-making is a shining example for younger players who want to be successful on the stage and in the studio.

Since moving to Music City, Luccketta has assembled his own band, Saville Row. According to the band's bio, they began when Luccketta introduced Mika Greiner, former lead vocalist with the West-Coast band Redline 5, to his longtime pal and guitarist Marc Bonilla. Mika and Marc began writing material in their spare time and brought in Luccketta to handle the drums and help with the recording and demo process. It was natural that longtime bass bud Travis Davis would round out the group. The band has enjoyed several globally syndicated television and film placements. "Last Goodbye" has been featured on the hit show "Justified" and they have also been internationally featured on NBC's hit series "Las Vegas" with their ballad "Hard To Let Go," both of which have resulted in a groundswell of reaction from viewers from coast to coast and overseas. The

broad appeal of Saville Row's musicality and energetic live performances has generated new interest from fans and the music industry in a short amount of time.

Admittedly a little late to the twenty-first century, Luccketta is making a more conscious effort toward directly engaging his audience through the use of social media. His website is currently in development and his Facebook page continues to attract more followers. He is also making more in-person appearances at clinics and events. It seems that the man who once shied away from the spotlight has finally accepted his role as a mentor. His participation in pal Rich Redmond's [Jason Aldean] incredibly successful "2013 Drummer's Weekend" in Nashville was touted as one of the best.

CHARITY STARTS...

Luccketta's biggest efforts, however, continue to take place outside of music. He has been actively and enthusiastically involved in promoting and supporting multiple charities. His initial entry into fundraising events was a very painful journey. In his own words, "You don't pick these causes, they pick you." After experiencing several tragedies involving close friends who had succumbed to illnesses, Luccketta did what he could to assist the families of lost loved ones as they grieved and struggled to deal with the financial woes that typically follow.

As he began to see the positive impact that his connections could make in supporting various causes, Luccketta stepped up and took the initiative to reach out to his network of generous musicians to make a difference. "I had watched so many of my friends get sick. John Shevenell and Lissa Wales, for instance, were both wonderful people and after they got ill, I did what I could to be there for them. Tesla was there with me, too, with Shevy's benefit, and we were able to raise some money to assist. With Lissa, I put a show together at the Celebrity Theatre in Phoenix. Unfortunately, both passed away. It was then that I jumped right in."

One of the most successful events championed by Luccketta was the 2008 Station Nightclub Benefit Concert. In February of 2003, the fourth-deadliest nightclub fire in U.S. history occurred at the Station Nightclub in Rhode Island. After the pyrotechnics used at a Great White show ignited the building, 100 patrons were killed and over 230 were injured. This tragedy hit close to home as Tesla singer Jeff Keith's personal assistant was lost in the fire. The band was also moved after meeting several of the survivors at after-show meet-and-greets. In 2005, the band held a special benefit show with performances by Shinedown and Carmine Appice with Pat Travers. The event quietly raised \$100,000 with virtually no press or publicity. "That whole show was done completely under the radar," he said. "We were there for the benefit of the families and no one else."

Seeing the potential for additional aide, Luccketta reached out across his network to bring together an eclectic blend of all-star performers to put on an even bigger show. The effort came to fruition in 2008 at the Station Nightclub Concert and was broadcasted on VH1. Hosted by Dee Snider, the event raised over \$600,000 and kept the memory of the tragedy in the public's consciousness.

In 2010 the drummer participated in a tribute album titled *Mister Bolin's Late Night Revival*, a compilation of 17 previously unreleased tracks written by guitar legend Tommy Bolin prior to his death in 1976. The CD includes other artists such as HiFi Superstar, Doogie White, Eric Martin, Jeff Pilson, Randy Jackson, Rachel Barton, Rex Carroll, Derek St. Holmes, Kimberley Dahme, and The 77's. A percentage of the proceeds from this project was used to benefit the Jackson Recovery Centers.





Luccketta also started his own foundation in 2012 with longtime friend Eric Friedrichs. Currently referred to as Rocking 4 Wellness, it will soon be rechristened as A Song 4 Wellness. According to the foundation's mission statement, "The purpose of Rocking 4 Wellness is to bring artists and musicians together from around the world for one common goal: to inspire and empower people with real solutions to wellness and a higher quality of life by providing knowledge, wisdom, resources, support groups, research and a centralized wealth of information for returning to wellness, by combining real nutrition and balanced hydration for the body, for a return to wellness." It is a purpose that he is adamantly passionate about.

He is currently planning a series of benefits for 2015. He stressed, "By the way, I can't and don't do this alone! We need you! Visit our webpage at www.rocking4wellness.org. Look at all the people in our 'About Us' section and see our support team."

...AT HOME

In addition to charity-promoter, the role that Luccketta relishes the most is that of a father. "My family's time had suffered so much over the years while I was touring with Tesla, I got to the point when I had to stay home and give them my personal attention." Luccketta started his own roofing company with longtime friend/drummer Denis Bostok, and for a time they had ten employees. "I wanted to watch my son go through high school. You can't do that while you're on tour. I went into the construction business and was pretty successful at it. I did manage to do a tour in '98 of Japan with Eric Martin, but only on the agreement that I could bring my son with me." He added,

"Eric, I love you for that."

"I want to also mention, it is still very challenging for me; I still don't have enough time for my daughter Skylar who is now 11, but we do the best we can. I'm just trying to achieve some balance. **Life is a journey and we always seem to end up where we are supposed to be.**" Luccketta has maintained the family tradition by passing the baton to his son, Troy Jr., who now plays the drums in the Oakland, California metal band known as 6 Weeks Sober.

AND THAT'S THE STORY

Over three decades after he first picked up the sticks, Luccketta continues to wear a variety of hats as both a musician and an activist. Although his contributions on the stage remain evident, it is his efforts beyond it that truly garner our applause. Selflessness, gratitude, humility and sincerity—the very aspects that benefited his work as a musician—are now being used to benefit people around the world.

While many of his colleagues from the 1980s have fallen by the wayside or disappeared, Troy Luccketta continues to inspire. By staying true to himself and his music, he has remained relevant and still positively influences drummers of all ages and stages. It is a role that he now embraces and one that he looks forward to fulfilling for many years to come. When asked about his drumming legacy, Luccketta's reply was both sincere and steadfast, "I just want people to remember me as a simple guy, who always put the music first. ✨"