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Originally from Garfield Heights, Scotty left Cleveland in 1992 and has lived in LA ever since. Nearly twenty years after he took his drum set, a bag of clothes and \$150 to live in a city he knew little about, Scotty has

SCOTTY KORMOS

By Helen Marketti

As the drummer for the house band on The Singing Bee (CMT), Scotty Kormos knows that opportunities are about timing, networking and going after what you want.

proven that determination and ambition can help make dreams a reality.

"My first interest was actually motorcycles instead of drums," said Scotty. "That was until my neighbor got a snare drum. After that, I had another friend who had a drum set and I remember thinking that was so cool. So I guess I was subjected to the drums by my friends. It takes a lot of physical work to be a drummer

so having played a lot of sports when I was growing up helped. I felt I was a natural at it."

"As a kid I loved listening to RUSH. I thought the drumming of Neil Peart was amazing. I'm also a fan of KISS, Led Zeppelin and The Who. I love all those great, classic rock and roll bands."

"When I was in junior high is when I started becoming more interested in bands and playing the drums. During my senior year in high school, I was playing with a Top 40 band, Fast Lane. We were playing all the clubs in Cleveland and they had to sneak me in because I wasn't old enough," Scotty recalls.

"Playing drums is a way to be in front of people yet still have a barrier between them and myself. I don't think I would have the guts to be a singer and be out there in front of people. I've always been completely happy being in the back. As long as people can hear me then that's all that matters."

"There is some sort of primal connection when I play the drums," said Scotty. "I often play barefoot. People sometimes ask me why I do that. It makes me feel more connected to the drum kit. I can feel the bass guitar resonate on my feet more than if I wore shoes. Playing barefoot also helps with keeping things consistent because shoes vary with thickness. Playing drums is all four limbs moving at once. Its part of my job to take care of myself by eating right and exercising too."

Moving from Cleveland to Los Angeles seemed to happen at the right time. "I was in the band, Zaza which was pretty popular at the

time. I had a good four year run with them and as with most bands, things change. I didn't know what I was going to do next and didn't have anything else lined up as a musician. I started to think that if I was ever going to have a shot at anything I would need to make a move right then," explains Scotty. "I had the support of my family so I knew if things didn't work out I could come back home and probably could go back to the job I had which was selling Apple computers."

"The first couple months in LA were rough. I didn't like it and thought I would come back home. It's such a culture shock from having lived in Cleveland. It seemed everyone here had an agenda and it's not yours. I didn't even know most of my neighbors. Everyone kept to themselves. So I was ready to come back home but my sister encouraged me to stay for at least six months. Then I started to become acclimated to the area and opportunities started coming. I have been out here since 1992. In August, it will be twenty years so it's been awhile."

Scotty continues, "When I moved out here I got a job working at the coolest Mac store around since I had experience and knowledge with Apple computers. I worked in the store that some of the celebrities would go to. Some of my clients were Tommy Lee, Drew Carey, John Goodman and some of the guys from Poison. It seemed if any of the celebrities wanted a Mac, they came to our store. I was a geek but I was a cool geek." (laughs) I dressed a little more "rock and roll" than my coworkers. After awhile, I got to be the "Mac guy" for Steve Dorff who is a major, major songwriter for many artists."

"One day, Steve called me and said his son, Andrew, had a record deal through Sony, was on his way to Europe and needed a drummer. He said he could get me an audition. I went to the audition, got the gig and went to Europe. When I got back, I kept in contact with Steve.

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I did some studio work for him also. He knows my drumming, knows he can trust me and knows I'm a hard worker."

It is through Steve Dorff that Scotty became the drummer for the house band on The Singing Bee (CMT). "The Singing Bee" is through CMT but is filmed in Hollywood," said Scotty. "It was interesting to find a house band in LA that could also play country music. When I was younger my dad listened to Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell and all those artists so I kind of inherently had absorbed all of that as a young kid and that came in pretty handy later on."

"Anyway, Steve called and said the gig was for a game show that might not make it past the first season but he needed a band that could play country. I didn't even have to audition for it. I sent a picture to him of DSB (Don't Stop Believin') which is the Journey tribute band I'm in also. I suggested to Steve that maybe he could use the guys in DSB since we all knew each other and worked well together. Steve sent our picture to CMT and we were hired without an audition because the network trusts Steve and in turn, Steve trusts me. That's how it works out here. Your friends get a gig and bring you along or you get a gig and bring your friends along. Getting gigs are mostly by referral. It's all networking."

"People often have asked me how I became successful," said Scotty. "I always say that the phrase "music business" is two words: "music" and "business". Many musicians just focus on the music and not on the business. I call these guys "basement geniuses" because they will work on their craft so they can be the best player. There are drummers out there who are better than I am but what you need is your bag of tricks so you can keep working. You need to network and make contacts. You need to work with people and understand them. You are a professional and what you are doing is a service to others. You play drums and get a check. You're being paid to help fulfill someone's vision of a song. If you're not good at taking advice and direction, extending your hand and asking for a chance then no one will ever know who you are."

"I've talked to producers and have told them that I would do a free drum track for them and if they like what I do then I hope they will come back to me," said Scotty. "Thankfully that has worked pretty well for me. Nearly everyone I have done a free track for has come back and offered me work. It's all about networking and keeping yourself out there."

"Most of the recordings I do are done

here at my studio in my home. I don't see the other musicians most of the time. I send out my drum files to the other guys and that's mostly how it's done. It's more convenient for everyone and cheaper than getting together in a studio. Don't get me wrong, I would always prefer to work in a studio with a bunch of other musicians and have that whole experience. There is a spark and spontaneity of working in person with other musicians and creating music. That's when you come across something that starts out simple then turns into something really cool. You can take things in so many different directions. You definitely lose that when each of you are recording your own tracks at home and passing the files along. The personal connection is lost."

Scotty has kept himself busy with a variety of projects. "There is a new acoustic artist, Pete RG and he's being hailed as the new Johnny Cash. His voice is deep. I have been playing on his stuff. The Singing Bee is still going strong. We may be taping in January or February for the next season and those episodes will air during the summer. I just played on a demo for Mitch Allan who is a very prominent songwriter and in the band, SR 71. He was one of the guys that I was trying to do a drum track for. Every now and then, I would check in with him and let him know that I was still interested in drumming for him sometime. It took me two years and it finally paid off. In early December, he asked me to play on his demos. One of those songs is actually being pitched to Tim McGraw. I'm also keeping busy with DSB (Don't Stop Believin'). We're the number one Journey tribute band and the only one that travels coast to coast."

Scotty shares his thoughts on why DSB seems to be so popular. "We're coming up on our third anniversary. I think the music of Journey is timeless whereas some of today's music is "time lost" if you get what I mean. Some of the songs that are popular now won't be remembered a few weeks from now, so that is "time lost". The song catalog for Journey on the other hand is epic, timeless, and classic. Everyone is familiar with their music. When we step out onstage, the audience is ready to hear the music of Journey. That's why they have come to a DSB show. People want to hear the songs as they were recorded and DSB is able to do that. Also, it's more expensive to see Journey in concert. You can pay \$150 for a ticket to see them or pay \$15 to \$20 to see us. (laughs) We do a great job recreating the music."

One of Scotty's other projects is a song he wrote for a character in a book. The song, "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" was written for the book, I Work with Crabby Crappy People

(www.wendywoman.com). "It's a book about how to survive in today's corporate America," said Scotty. "It's about surviving downsizing and working with employees who do just enough to get by. There are so many books out there about being positive, thinking positive and all the rah-rah but they never really give you the mechanics of how to do it. This book does. I wrote "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow" for one of the characters. I produced the song drummed on it and sang it. The song will be available through iTunes next month. The book will be released next month, too. (February 2012) I wrote a lyric for the song that says you can't look forward if you're always looking in the rearview mirror. That's why windshields are so big and the rearview mirror is so small. You should be spending your time looking forward at the big picture instead of looking at what's behind you. I had to build the song around what the author's vision was."

Another business venture is endorsing drum products. "I am very picky about what I associate myself with," said Scotty. "I have to believe in the products that I am using. I've had relationships with these companies for a long time. I wanted to be loyal to them and it has paid off. If I need something, they are able to accommodate me. I endorse DW Drums, Paiste Cymbals and Vater Drumsticks."

Scotty has been able to stick with what works for him and it has worked well. He said he has learned a lot over time and just in the past year alone. "I know a lot of kids dream of being a rock star and have an image about how that might be. When it kind of happens, there isn't a party, trumpets sounding or fan fare. It just kind of happens and one day you look back and think, "Wow, I did it." After all these years, I can say that I've kept myself working in music. I am able to record tracks for people all over the country and all over the world. I always have offered a free drum track to producers. That's how musicians get their gigs is going to the person who is producing the music. If you get on that person's radar, then you have a chance to show what you can do. Even if they have their list of regular guys they turn to, sooner or later that person may not be available due to a schedule conflict so then you may have the opportunity to play. You have to continue to network and connect. You can't just sit back and think, "I'm a great musician so why isn't this happening for me?" You have to play the game to stand a chance of winning the game. I guess I'm too stubborn to quit."

For more information on Scotty Kormos:
www.scottykormos.net