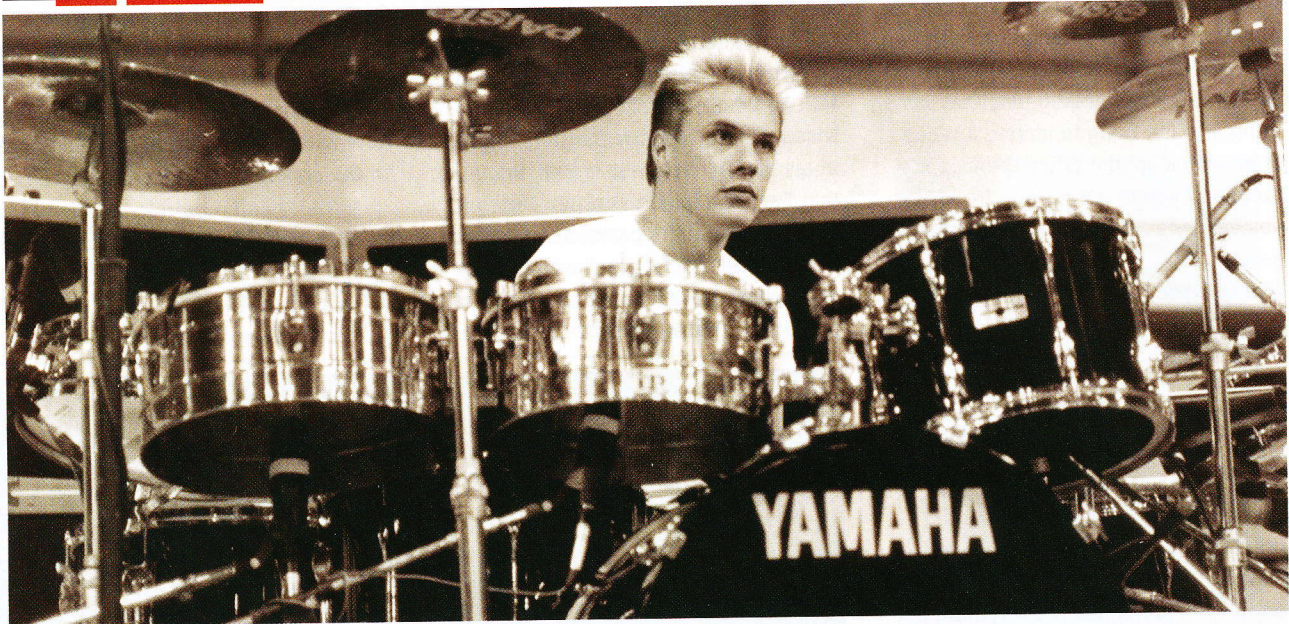


12 REASONS TO LOVE



LARRY MULLEN JR.

U2's gradual progression from an unpolished pack of Irish teenagers schooled on classic rock and post-punk to shape-shifting superstars is due in large part to the skills of the band's drummer, Larry Mullen Jr.

Pick any phase from U2's thirty-year (and counting) career, and you'll hear Mullen pacing things with some sort of twist. It could be the martial drubbing of a timbale, a metronome-like pulse, a loose and funky groove, a ceding of his turf to loops and drum machines, or an explosive garage rock wallop.

Such a versatile arsenal is the mark of a player capable of hanging with wholesale change, which Mullen is. He's never been a look-at-me-play-my-drumkit virtuoso, just the absolute perfect timekeeper for the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame band. From the brash urgency of 1980's *Boy* through the eclectic yet accessible sounds of U2's latest set, *No Line On The Horizon*, Mullen has laid down many memorable performances on record. Here, we celebrate twelve of them.

"BULLET THE BLUE SKY," 1987

Mullen opens this howling song from *The Joshua Tree* with a lurching beat. His kick drum is cinched up tightly with Adam Clayton's bass line, and his 16th-note hi-hat pattern plays a hypnotic foil to the slide guitar smeared throughout the song by the Edge. Aside from a rattling snare fill at the breakdown, Mullen never deviates much from his intro part, a Bonham-like groove you recognize instantly.

"SUNDAY BLOODY SUNDAY," 1983

There wasn't a young drummer anywhere in the mid-'80s who didn't mimic Mullen's "rat-a-tat-tat, tat" intro to "Sunday Bloody Sunday." It's one of the most recognizable drum figures in rock history. And it sets the stage for a song where Mullen's roots as a marching band drummer are put to good use.

"WHERE THE STREETS HAVE NO NAME," 1987

On the rare occasions when you heard real drums on Top 40 radio circa 1987, they were gated and triggered beyond

recognition. Depressing. "Where The Streets Have No Name" is an anomaly. In the anthem's verses, Mullen plays a tribal pattern on the snare with the snares thrown off. Then, in the soaring chorus, he drops in huge cymbal crashes, with the snare accenting 2 and 4. It's primal timekeeping—the complete opposite of what was being heard on the radio back then. Thank goodness.

"DESIRE," 1988

The fascination with American roots music U2 hinted at on *The Joshua Tree* was in full bloom on the studio tracks tacked on to the live album *Rattle And Hum*. The Bo Diddley beat Mullen plays on "Desire" was completely out of character yet so totally spot on it could've passed for a lost single from the Chess Records archives.

ACHTUNG BABY, 1991

When U2 released *Achtung Baby*, they sounded like a totally new band—one with a fairly raw and distorted sound, plus a looseness in the bottom end you never figured they were capable of.

While the songwriting on the album is some of U2's most enduring, *Achtung Baby* is really brought to life by the way tracks like "Mysterious Ways," "Ultra Violet (Light My Way)," and "The Fly," to name a few, absolutely swing. Mullen and Clayton are the true stars of this album.

"GLORIA," 1981

A young Mullen put on his own little variety show in "Gloria." From the Beatles-y "Ticket To Ride"-like beat he plays as the song fades in to the double-time parts to the way he keeps the verses surging with a clatter of 16th notes on the hit-hat, he proved early on that he was capable of handling many different feels—often within the same tune.

"[PRIDE] IN THE NAME OF LOVE," 1984

All the trademarks of Mullen's sound in the '80s are represented on this uplifting single: a 16th-note hi-hat pattern, measure-long snare rolls with alternating accents, and Larry's patented tom hit (usually a floor tom, to the left of the snare) on the "e" of 4. Like he did on many tracks during U2's first phase, Mullen weaves these parts together seamlessly, proving himself to be an unobtrusive player with a style all his own.

"VERTIGO," 2004

This track hits you like a ton of bricks, mostly because of Mullen's simple-as-it-should-be kit work. There's really not much else to do on a song as straightforward as "Vertigo" but to keep the beat and accent when you need to, then repeat as necessary. It's that streamlined approach that makes this one of Mullen's finest recorded performances. And it's the little things too: the stick clicks to open the song, the double snare hits to accent Bono's melody in the verses, and the spot in the choruses where Mullen beats the crash cymbal like it owes him money.

"WITH OR WITHOUT YOU," 1987

"With Or Without You" rises from a whisper to a scream to a full-throated roar and then settles back down

again, all on the strength of Mullen's performance. His part is a layered arrangement of drums and percussion, with the close-miked and roomier sounds of his kit mixed in and out to great dynamic effect. It's not so much studio sleight of hand as it is capturing a great drummer at work from several different angles and fusing the results together. And Mullen always captures the dynamics of the track live. See the *Rattle And Hum* movie, or YouTube, for proof.

"ELEVATION," 2000

When U2 has consciously tried to make dance music, like on the loop-heavy *Pop* album, the results have been too rigid and synchronized—nothing at all you'd want to shake it to. Tracks like "Elevation" prove the band needs Mullen and Clayton working together to make things swing. This song from *All That You Can't Leave Behind* marked a hip-swiveling return to *Achtung Baby's* funky form. A classic example of U2 making fantastic dance music without trying too hard.

"GET ON YOUR BOOTS," 2009

With its trippy mash-up of alt-rock and dance-floor styles, the first single from *No Line On The Horizon* harkens back to the era of *Pop* and *Zooropa*. Mullen's live kit work—like the rattling Ringo-style fill that opens the song and repeats several times—alternates with loops, giving the dark yet infectious track a man-versus-machine feel. And even though Mullen plays nice with technology, the drummer is going to win that matchup every single time.

"I WILL FOLLOW," 1980


Everyone thinks of the iconic guitar riff when "I Will Follow" comes to mind. But it's Mullen's steady beat and simple fills that keep the song chugging along. This is the beat a million songwriters have programmed on their demos in hopes their drummer gets the hint: Don't get in the way of the riff.

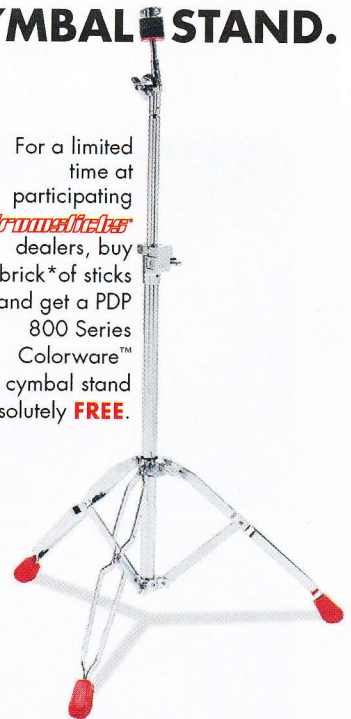


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