

## **Steve Smith 2017 Biography**

Steve Smith's drumming, while always decidedly modern, can best be described as a style that embodies the history of U.S. music. His original love of rudimental parade drumming is evident in his intricate solos. Likewise, his command of jazz, from New Orleans music, swing, bebop, avant-garde to fusion, is applied with his powerful rock drumming sensibilities and allows him to push the boundaries of all styles to new heights. His musical focus is committed to the exploration of improvised music incorporating styles as diverse as Blues, Jazz, R&B, Funk and South Indian Carnatic.

Originally drawn to the drums by hearing marching bands in parades as a child in his native Massachusetts, Smith began studying the drums at age nine, in 1963. After high school, Smith studied music in Boston at the Berklee College of Music from 1972-76. There he received instruction from such renowned teachers as Gary Chaffee and Alan Dawson.

In 1974 Smith's professional career began in full, at 19 years old, with his tenure in the Lin Biviano Big Band, which he toured and recorded with for the next two years, while continuing his Berklee studies. At that same time he also performed with bebopper Buddy DeFranco and was a member of free-jazz group The Fringe featuring George Garzone. In 1976, Smith began his

association with jazz-fusion by joining violinist Jean-Luc Ponty's group and recording the 1977 landmark fusion album ***Enigmatic Ocean***, which also featured guitarist Allan Holdsworth. It was while touring with rocker Ronnie Montrose a year later that Smith was asked to join the popular rock band Journey which brought his playing to the attention of a rock audience.

With Journey, Smith toured around the world and recorded numerous successful albums including the immensely popular ***Escape*** (Columbia 1981) and ***Frontiers*** (Columbia 1983), both of which garnered the band many Top 40 hits. To date the Journey catalogue has worldwide sales of over 80 million albums. In 1985 Smith left Journey to pursue his original passion, jazz, and to continue his developing career as a session player.

Over the past 40 years, Smith has played on many hits with such diverse artists as Bryan Adams, Mariah Carey, Zucchero, Claudio Baglioni, Andrea Bocelli, Y&T, Dweezil Zappa, Ray Price, and Savage Garden.

Smith began leading his own jazz-rock-fusion band ***Steve Smith and Vital Information*** while still a member of Journey, the group recorded their first Columbia album in 1983. Vital Information's release, ***Where We Come From***, was voted Best Contemporary Jazz Recording of 1998 by the Association For Independent Music. The band's 2007 Hudson

Music release, **Vitalization**, gathered critical acclaim around the world and features Steve's interest and abilities with rhythms from India including the South Indian rhythmic vocal art-form: Konnakol. Coinciding with Steve's 2007 move to NYC the group has evolved into **Vital Information NYC Edition** featuring deeper jazz roots. VI NYC Edition has two releases: **Viewpoint** (2015) and **Heart of the City** (2017).

Smith has also maintained an extensive touring and recording career, appearing with many jazz luminaries such as Mike Mainieri's group **Steps Ahead**. This band, which included virtuosos such as Michael Brecker, Richard Bona and Mike Stern, was one of the most successful electric jazz groups and Smith contributed greatly to their tight, energetic sound for seven years (1986-1993 and again from 2005-present). Other high profile jazz touring and/or recording gigs that have filled the drummer's schedule include such artists as Ahmad Jamal, Stanley Clarke, Randy Brecker, George Brooks' Summit and the Buddy Rich Big Band, with whom he has performed in many tribute concerts to the late drumming idol. Smith joined Journey in the recording studio in 1996 to record the reunion album **Trial By Fire**.

Smith's calendar often includes many drum clinics in which he is able to display his phenomenal techniques and concepts to

drumming students around the world. Steve has been on the teaching staff of the **Drum Fantasy Camp** since 2007.

From 1998-2005 Smith produced and played on 16 electric jazz albums for the Tone Center label with a revolving cast of talented players including Dave Liebman, Frank Gambale, Stu Hamm, Tom Coster, Larry Coryell, Jerry Goodman, Howard Levy, Steve Marcus, Scott Henderson and Victor Wooten. In 2009 Tone Center release a compilation album called: **The Best of Steve Smith-The Tone Center Collection**. In 2004 Steve toured with Soulbop, and all-star funk-jazz group featuring Bill Evans, Randy Brecker, David Kikoski, Victor Bailey and Hiram Bullock. In 2005 the group released an album entitled **Soulbop Band Live**.

In 2005 Steve was invited to be first drumset artist to perform at Zakir Hussain's annual concert in Mumbai, India called **Homage to Abbaji**, a concert dedicated to the memory of Zakir's father and tabla guru, Allahrakha. In 2009 Steve played at Carnegie Hall in NYC with a special quartet version of Zakir Hussain's **Masters of Percussion** that also featured "Vikku" Vinayakram and Giovanni Hidalgo. In 2014 Steve toured the U.S and India as a featured member of Zakir's group Masters of Percussion. From 2011-2015 Steve toured with the virtuosic jazz pianist Hiromi as a member of her "Trio

Project" (subbing for Simon Phillips) which also featured Anthony Jackson on bass.

Smith's explosive solos and intricate timekeeping served to gain him much acclaim from sources such as Modern Drummer magazine, whose readers voted him the #1 Fusion Drummer of 2012 and 2105. In 2017 Steve topped an unprecedented three categories in the MD poll: #1 Rock Drummer, #1 MVP and #1 Educational product for his Hudson Music Book/DVD **Pathways of Motion**.

In the late 80s and early 90s the Modern Drummer poll voted Steve #1 "All-Around" Drummer five years in a row and in 2001 the magazine named Steve as one of the "Top 25 Drummer of All Time," in 2002 he was voted into the "Modern Drummer Hall of Fame" and in 2003 his Hudson Music DVD **Steve Smith Drumset Technique - History of the U.S. Beat** was voted #1 Educational DVD of 2003. The 2008, 2009 and 2010 Drum! magazine readers poll voted Smith #1 Jazz Drummer, and in 2009 Drum! readers voted **Steve Smith Drum Legacy - Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants** the #1 educational DVD.

In 2013 Steve expanded his artistic endeavors by co-authoring a Hudson Music book (with Daniel Glass) called **Roots of Rock Drumming**, a behind the scenes look at the origins of rock drumming (1948-1965), and joining forces with SceneFour to create

a collection of drum-art on canvas called ***Fabric of Rhythm***. In 2017 Steve and SceneFour released a unique coffee table Book+LP with all of Steve's 13 art pieces plus a 44 minute vinyl LP with 14 solo drumset compositions. To view the collections go to: [www.stevesmithdrumart.com](http://www.stevesmithdrumart.com)

In 2016 Steve rejoined Journey to tour with the group for the first time in 32 years. On April 7, 2017 Steve, along with Journey band members Gregg Rolie, Aynsley Dunbar, Neal Schon, Ross Valory, Jonathan Cain and Steve Perry, were inducted into the ***Rock and Roll Hall of Fame***.

As a drummer, Steve Smith has worked for, and with, the best. He is consistently pushing the boundaries of creative drumming and constantly expanding his strong musical voice at the top of the international drumming community. As an educator, Smith is both the eternal student and perpetual teacher of the drums. His highly lauded educational DVDs ***The Art Of Playing With Brushes*** and ***Drum Legacy-Standing On The Shoulders Of Giants***, are state of the art showcases of his playing and teaching skills. He is one of the few drummer-bandleaders who continues to bring world-class bands to all corners of the globe with a tireless regime of live performances.

[www.vitalinformation.com](http://www.vitalinformation.com)