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Drummer hangs out with the Hip

Professor gets his chance to meet with drummer Johnny Fay

By JENNY POTTER, THE NUGGET
Updated 2 years ago

Rob Graham never thought a second hand set of drums would be his ticket to partying with the Tragically Hip, but the set got him back stage twice Saturday night when the Hip played North Rocks the Bay.

Last year, the Nipissing University professor and part-time musician was purchased a custom Ayotte drum set previously owned by Johnny Fay, drummer of the Tragically Hip.

When he heard they were coming to North Bay to play this summer, he had hoped to meet with the legendary drummer, whose drums now sit in his basement.

Graham was contacted by the Hip's management and got a chance to go backstage before their performance Saturday and chat with Fay.

Graham knew the drums were played by Fay on the Hip's 2006 album, World Container, the album's world tour and their 2005 live DVD, That Night in Toronto, but he learned a lot more about their history from Fay himself.

He said Fay remembered that drum set and had mixed feelings about selling it last year.

"He said his wife didn't want him to sell it," Graham said.

The set also has a custom blue hue that Fay picked out himself, and since the company has changed owners, it can't be reproduced.

Graham even managed to bring his snare drum with him so Fay could see it again and sign it for him.

"It was a little more work to get it through," he said adding that Fay was impressed by the fact that the drum was in such good shape.

"It made my dream come true," Graham said. They chatted for a few minutes got some pictures and then Graham and his wife headed back to the crowd to see them perform.

Then Graham got a text message on his cellphone asking if he wanted to hang out with the band backstage after the show.

"I thought I'd just get a picture but this exceeded my expectations," Graham said. "He's quite a guy to see me before and after the show."

Though the entire band was there, Graham spent most of the time talking drum details.

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"It's great to get higher level insight," Graham said adding that Fay gave him some names and numbers for other contacts in the percussion business.

"It was really informal, like hanging around having a pop or a beer with your buddies," he said.

Though his snare drum is signed, Graham still plans to use it when he plays with his his classic rock band Midlife Crisis.

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