

SOMETHING

FROM NOTHING

by Ross Laurenza

He has been named one of the most influential artists of the past 20 years. He is the ultimate Phoenix of Rock 'N Roll, rising from the ashes of tragedy to spring anew. Dave Grohl, former Nirvana drummer, now front man of Foo Fighters has had a long and winding journey throughout music history. Today you will get an inside look at all the peaks and valleys along the way.

Born in Ohio, Grohl's family moved to Northern Virginia when he was three. Sadly when Grohl was just six years old his father walked out on the family, leaving Dave's mother to raise Dave and his older sister.

Some of his first performances were at the Braddock County Youth Club in Springfield, Virginia. He formed his first band at age thirteen: H. G. Hancock. The band's name was a combination of Dave and fellow band member Larry Hinkle's last initials along with the

last name of their physical education teacher. The boys heard a rumor Lynyrd Skynyrd found their name through a similar process (Brannigan, 2012).

When you grow up in suburban Virginia there aren't many opportunities to get out. You could become a machinist or a miner. The main lure of politics lay just 10 miles up I-95 in Washington, D.C. But Grohl strived for more. He often dreamed of leaving VA and becoming a super star.

He was an excitable youth, very energetic and always on the go. His performance on the drums wowed crowds with the ways he was able to pound the skins. Like a man possessed, Grohl soon gained local recognition while playing with Dain Bramage on the local punk circuit.

One of Grohl's first big breaks was getting the opportunity to play drums for one of his punk rock idols, Screem. Grohl joined Screem in 1986 and toured with the band across the US and into Canada at the age of 18. After experiencing life on the road Dave's view of the music scene expanded. Screem's next tour would take Grohl across the Atlantic



to Amsterdam and cities in the UK. Europe was another incredible experience. He was able to see parts of the world he never imagined possible back home in suburban Springfield.

After a trip to the West Coast with *Scream* derailed leaving the band stranded in Los Angeles, Grohl was saved from what seemed like the end of the line by the chance to join up and coming band from the Pacific Northwest, Nirvana.

Grohl propelled himself to stardom when he joined Nirvana in the early 1990's. He played drums on Nirvana's album *Nevermind*. He also began recording side projects on his own. He played all the instruments and recorded the vocal tracks for his "Pocketwatch" album (Jackman, 2012).

Nirvana gained worldwide stardom in the early 90's. Their album *Nevermind* was certified platinum just nine weeks after its release in 1991. Being certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America means the album shipped 1,000,000 units (Montgomery, 2011).

With songs like *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and *Lithium*, Nirvana helped launch the Grunge music scene into the stratosphere. Sadly, that came to an end all too quickly for

Grohl and fellow members on a fateful day in April 1994. After writing an emotional note to the world, Kurt Cobain, lead singer of Nirvana, placed the business end of a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. The band immediately disbanded.

Devastated, as the world collectively grieved, Grohl began to rebuild. Grohl had this to say of the tragedy,

When Kurt died I was lost. I was numb. The music I had devoted my life to had now betrayed me. I had no voice. I turned off the radio. I put away my drums. I couldn't bear to hear someone else's voice singing about pain, or joy" (NME, 2011).

Later in '94 he went into the studio with producer Barrett Jones and recorded what would be the first Foo Fighter's album *Foo Fighters*. Grohl played all the instruments save for one song, as well as handling vocal duties (Rolling Stone).

Grohl filled out the band's line up with Nate Mendel, Will Goldsmith and former Nirvana guitarist Pat Smear. Goldsmith would leave two years later while the band was producing *The Colour and the Shape* and Taylor Hawkins was brought in to hold down the drum kit duties. Hawkins was previously the drummer for Alanis Morissette. Chris Shifflet was the last addition to the current lineup, replacing Pat Smear

Songs like *My Hero*, *Big Me* and *Learn to Fly* cemented the band's status on MTV with hilarious music videos featuring the perfect blend of hard rock and humor. The band under Grohl's direction moved into the 2000's on a torrent pace.

Dave took a break from the band in 2002 lending his drumming talents to Queens of the Stone Age. He played the kit for the band's entire album *Songs for the Deaf*, and toured briefly with the band before returning to the Foo Fighters.

It was a revitalizing experience for Grohl. The 2000's would bring albums *One by One*, *In Your Honor*, *Skin and Bones*, and

Echoes, Silence, Patience & Grace. The latter is one of my all-time personal favorites. It's a very energetic album with songs *The Pretender*, *Come Alive*, *Let it Die*, and *Long Road to Ruin*. You can listen to it on a long road trip, rocking out at a backyard cookout or to get motivated at the gym. It is, in my mind, the quintessential Foo Fighters album.



It won two Grammy's in 2008 for Best Rock Album and Best Hard Rock Performance. The *Foo Fighters Greatest Hits* was released in 2009 with several new tracks, but the band would remain on a brief hiatus until 2011. This time away gave Grohl an opportunity to play with legendary bassist John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin. Grohl, Jones and Queens of the Stone Age front man Josh Homme created the rock super group *Them Crooked Vultures*. For many young kids growing up in the 70's and 80's Led Zeppelin was the gold standard of inspiration. To this day generations of teens in their garages rock out to the tunes *Stairway to Heaven* and *Black Dog*.



Grohl's new bandmates won the Best Hard Rock Performance Grammy in 2010 for their song, *New Fang*.

The same year Foo Fighters were back together and producing their album *Wasting Light*. *Wasting Light* is one of Grohl's great masterpieces of his career. Ditching the comforts of the conventional recording studio, Grohl and Foo Fighters recorded on reel-to-reel tape in Grohl's garage.

Paul Brannigan reflected of his experience interviewing the band while visiting the Grohl residence in 2010.

"I arrived to find the man of the house in his garage, holding up scuffed album sleeves and fingerprint-smudged CD cases from his personal record collection to a webcam delivering images for a 24/7 live stream on Foo Fighters' website..."

Behind him, producer Butch Vig stood splicing two-inch analogue tape on a 24-track Studer A800 reel-to-reel tape machine. In the room next door, eighteen of Grohl's guitars stood erect in flight cases, tuned and ready for use. In the adjoining garage, usually reserved for Grohl's Harley Davidson motorcycles, Taylor Hawkins's drum kit sat encircled by mic stands. 'It gets fucking loud in there,' said Grohl, closing the door with a smile." *Wasting Light* would go on to win the 2012 Grammy Award for Best Rock Album. It was the fourth time Foo Fighters won best rock album in a 10 year span. Grohl had these thoughts to share about the album in the *LA Times*,

"I think this is by far the most rock record that we've ever done. That was our intention, and that's why we did it with Butch. It has to sound huge. It has to feel big. I want to hear 80,000 people singing the chorus of 'These Days' because, to me, that's what it's all about."

2014 has brought a new triumph for Grohl and his band mates with the production of their eighth album *Sonic Highways*. The band traveled the United States selecting eight cities essential for shaping rock n' roll. They have recorded each of the eight songs in the selected eight cities, Austin, Seattle, New York, New Orleans, Chicago, Los Angeles, Nashville and Washington, D.C.

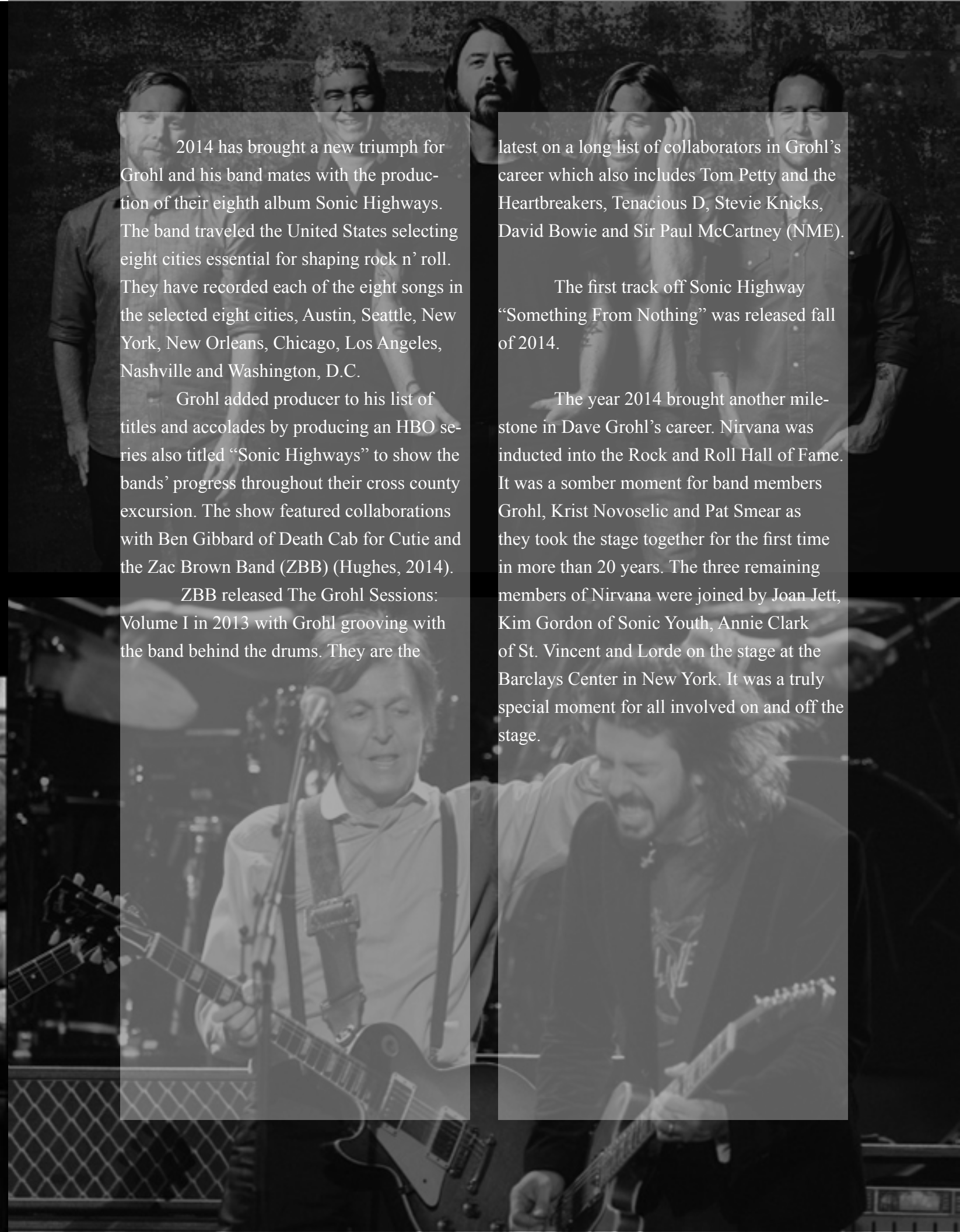
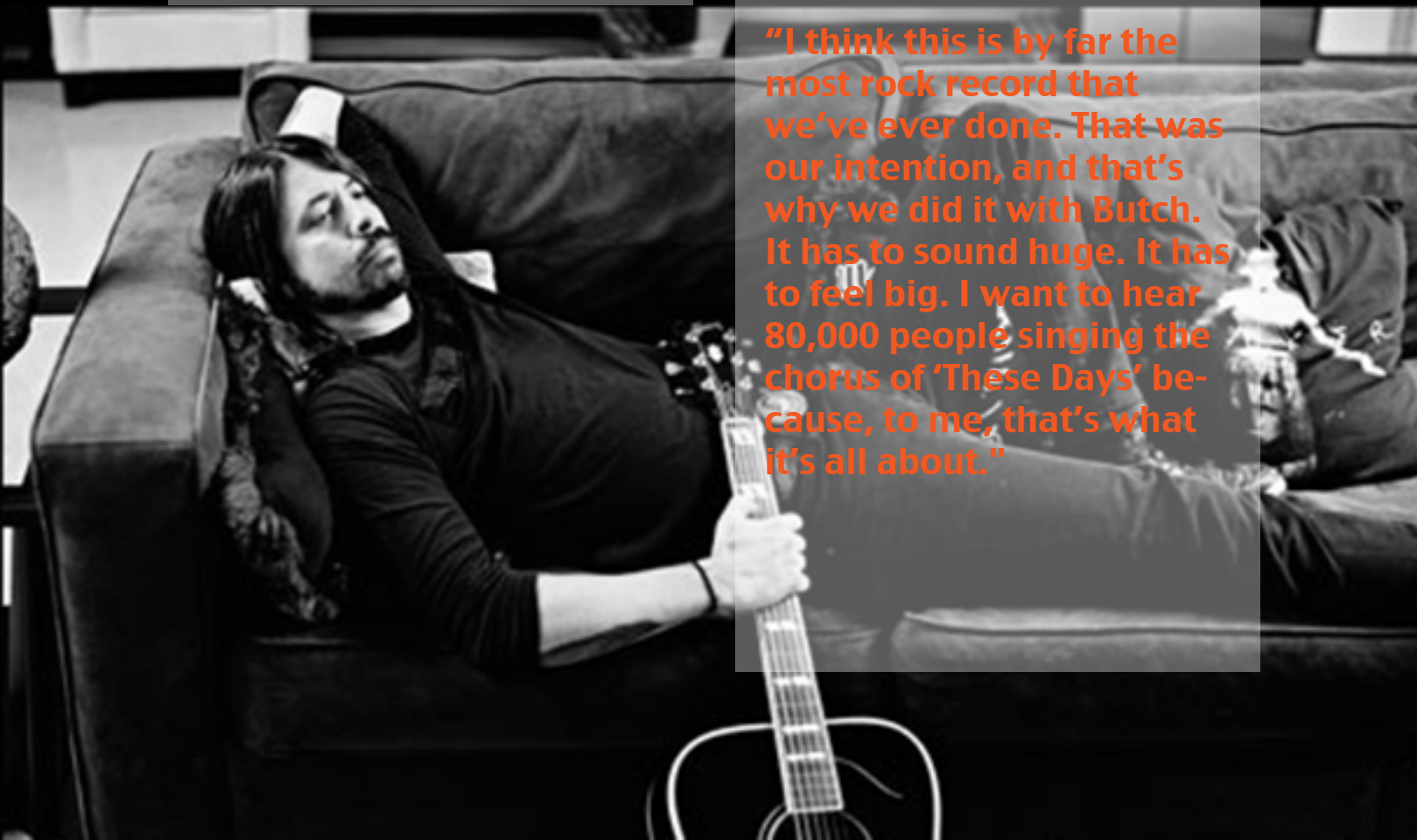
Grohl added producer to his list of titles and accolades by producing an HBO series also titled "*Sonic Highways*" to show the bands' progress throughout their cross county excursion. The show featured collaborations with Ben Gibbard of *Death Cab for Cutie* and the *Zac Brown Band (ZBB)* (Hughes, 2014).

ZBB released *The Grohl Sessions: Volume I* in 2013 with Grohl grooving with the band behind the drums. They are the

latest on a long list of collaborators in Grohl's career which also includes Tom Petty and the *Heartbreakers*, *Tenacious D*, *Stevie Nicks*, *David Bowie* and *Sir Paul McCartney* (NME).

The first track off *Sonic Highway* "Something From Nothing" was released fall of 2014.

The year 2014 brought another milestone in Dave Grohl's career. Nirvana was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. It was a somber moment for band members Grohl, Krist Novoselic and Pat Smear as they took the stage together for the first time in more than 20 years. The three remaining members of Nirvana were joined by Joan Jett, Kim Gordon of *Sonic Youth*, Annie Clark of *St. Vincent* and Lorde on the stage at the Barclays Center in New York. It was a truly special moment for all involved on and off the stage.



Grohl ever remains the family man. He lives in Encino with his wife Jordyn and two of his daughters Violet and Harper. Grohl also has a daughter Ophelia with his first wife Jennifer Youngblood.

From his early days in Virginia through his years with Screaming Trees, Nirvana and now with Foo Fighters, Dave Grohl has been an inspiration to countless individuals. His work with HBO in 2014 is a testament to how talented he is. As the years have passed he has brought forth some of the greatest musicians in collaborative efforts for the music community as well as several causes including Autism Speaks, Stand Up to Cancer, The Elton John AIDS Foundation, Whatever it Takes, LIVE Earth and LIFE Beat. He joined Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Paul McCartney, Bon Jovi, Roger Waters, The Who and others in support of the Hurricane Relief Foundation.

The “Niceest Guy in Rock” continues to hone his craft and I hope we will see even greater things from Dave Grohl in years to come. He is a true rock and roll renaissance man and will undoubtedly go down as one of the most influential artists of this generation.

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