Ellington Official Biography

Ellington was one of the most talked about band during the early 2000's but also one of the most unfortunate and forgotten. Luckily, just enough material was recovered to be able to document this band properly.



Original Ellington logo

Ellington was formed in 2000 with Jeff Legris on bass, Dan Arcari on guitar and Anthony "Wolfman" Spagnolo on drums. The trio had met while attending Cardinal Newman Secondary School, the Catholic school in Stoney Creek, Ontario. After some rehearsals, Jeff asked his high school friend Matt Prisk to come check them out while they jammed at Tony's house. While there, Matt picked up a guitar to jam with them, and this line-up would stick. By the end of the year they had stabilized themselves with Wolfman on drums and Dan on guitar, while Jeff and Matt alternated on guitar and bass between songs, as Matt was learning to play bass at the same time. Matt also took lead vocals with Jeff doing the backups. It was then that Matt named the band, after a street in their hometown of Stoney Creek, "Ellington Avenue". In the spring of 2000 the band moved from Anthony's house to Dan's parents garage for a little while before finally settling in a jam space on Mary Street in downtown Hamilton. The place was a total dump and after decorating it, was dubbed "The Cockmaster".

Each member listened to such different music that influences were all over the place. Matt was heavily into The Smashing Pumpkins, Cap'n Jazz, The Promise Ring, Sunny Day Real Estate, Weezer and the whole Jade Tree Records catalog, while Dan was

into heavy metal, nu-metal and emo such as Metallica, Deftones, Tool, Moneen, Grade, Mineral Elliot and Jimmy Eat World. Jeff on the other hand was into glam rock and alternative such as David Bowie, Ours, Suede, The Cure and wasn't inspired by the entire emo/post-hardcore movement of Southern Ontario. Being in high school, their options for playing shows were quite limited and still new to them. The first place the band played was at the Arena Hall in Stoney Creek where the Saltfleet Soccer team usually played. This was followed by a couple of private parties and finally a night at their own school, where a certain new fan named Adam Veselisin saw them play. Ryan Hook also created a website for Ellington (www.itsmysite.com/ellington) that year. The band site was notorious for its message board, which, it seems, had every teenager from Stoney Creek, multiple times. As a new username could be chosen each time you visited the site, many hilarious threads had been started and quickly became the go-to place for a good time.

In the autumn of 2000 the band approached drummer Adam Veselisin, who was attending a public high school but was playing in another Cardinal Newman band, Adelaide, to replace Wolfman. The band felt that they needed a better drummer to progress where they wanted to be. Matt, Jeff and Dan met up at Adam's house one day after school to discuss the new joining before calling Anthony to let him know that he was being replaced. That night, Adam was surprised when Wolfman called him and asked him if he was the new drummer in Ellington. Although caught off guard, Adam simply admitted that he was, which resulted in an amicable relationship between the band's ex-drummer and new drummer. Wolfman wound up supporting the band at all their future shows and remained a fan. Simultaneously, Adam quit his position in Adelaide and brought his Hot Water Music and Misfits obsession to Ellington. At this point, Ellington had two songs fully written: "It's Easy Being Nothing" (also known as "…And Then Nothing") and "Sound of Victory"; with a new song "Broken Bottle" (also known as

“Broken Green Bottles”) half-way finished. With Adam in the band, two new ones were quickly written: “The Killers” and “Vixen”.



Adam Vezelisin at the rehearsal space during 2001. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook



Adam Vezelisin at the rehearsal space during 2001. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook



Adam Vezelisin at the rehearsal space during 2001. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook

The band then moved their rehearsal space to Adam’s father’s pest control company building where they were given an office space. They quickly decorated it with glow in the dark stickers and posters of naked women. This was hardly the themes of a business location, and the personnel made it clear to them, but they were only teenagers trying to have fun. The first two believed shows with Adam on drums were at the Corktown in Hamilton on February 17th 2001, and later that evening at a shady wrestling ring in the industrial mountain section of Hamilton. This show in particular was an odd pairing, where they played with nu-metal acts and were made very aware that their style of music wasn’t welcomed there, with lights constantly getting turned off during their set. A

third show would be played shortly after at the Stoney Creek Lions Club Hall, where Ellington would become a frequent attraction. During this time, Ellington also developed a close working relationship with fellow Stoney Creek band Zyon, as four of the members had attended Cardinal Newman.



Ellington performing at the wrestling ring on 2001

On March 17th 2001 they played in Hamilton at the “Transit Union Workers Hall” aka “The Hall”, booked by Paul G. of Redstar Records, who also worked at Sonic Unyon Records. One of the weirdest place a band like Ellington would play would be Boiler’s Bar & Grill in Stoney Creek. A local dive bar with the best chicken wings where bands usually wouldn’t be playing. Both Ellington and Zyon were asked to play the restaurant’s anniversary on March 24th 2001, but were told to only play covers. Ellington, who would usually refuse to play other bands’ songs, covered “Boys Don’t Cry” by The Cure, “Paint it Black” by The Rolling Stones and a Weezer song and

still managed to sneak in a couple of their originals. Ellington also played a hostel/punk squatter space in Waterloo where cops showed up; this wasn't the most reputable show in their repertoire.



Ellington performing live at unknown venue. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook

On April 30th and May 1st of 2001 the band went to Harlow Sound Studio to record their first four song demo EP with Greg Dawson (before he opened up his own BWC Studio later that year). The plan was to have the best sounding material for a self-released CD, tentatively titled "Looking Back to Find Forever", because back then, every band in Southern Ontario needed one to break through. Additionally, Matt brought in one of their friend, Cassandra Risotto, to play piano parts in the song "Vixen". During the recording session, some drunken bottle smashing incidents occurred which didn't reinforce the friendship between the band and the producer. When the band ran out of time after recording almost all of the instruments in two days, they were forced to find another studio to finish

their demo.



Matt Prisk when Ellington performed at the Lions Club Hall in 2001. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook



Dan Arcari when Ellington performed at the Lions Club Hall in 2001. Anthony Spangulo all the way on the left. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook



Jeff Legris when

Ellington performed at the Lions Club Hall in 2001. Cassandra is on his immediate right. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook



Adam Veselisin when Ellington performed at the Lions Club Hall in 2001.. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook

Jeff’s father had an acquaintance that operated a studio in Oakville, where the band set up shop to track all the vocals and some left over guitar overdubs. The band was set to enter the studio on May 26th but it took the producer nearly a month to set up the tapes. It was finally on June 19th that the members went in to start recording the vocals. By early July, all the music overdubs were done as well as vocals for two songs, the band aiming to finish up the recording by the end of the month. But this session was also plagued by negative incidents.

The producer, Keith, was an elder man, who liked to live like a hermit and wouldn’t allow any visitors or friends of the band to attend their studio time. To appease the producer and as this was mainly for vocals, the band asked Adam not come, and instead passed one of their friend, Alan Nacinovic of

Zyon, as their drummer. However when came time for Adam to provide his backup vocals, the producer became furious that an outsider was now present, who in the end turned out to be a band member from the start. But this would only be a minute incident compared to the female vocalist the band brought it to sing on “Vixen”. During her recording session, she was accompanied by both of her parents, her brother and even their dog! Needless to say, the producer was enraged with the amount of people present in his personal bubble space but still allowed her father to stay and coach her through the session. By the end of the female vocalist session, the father and producer were worst enemies.

After months of endless retakes and of working with a slow producer, the EP was finished in late August of 2001. When the band first entered the studio, a specific fee was agreed on but when the producer handed the band an outstanding bill for five thousand dollars, more than triple the amount originally discussed, it was the bands turn to be outraged. Ellington had no means to pay this amount and so the producer kept the recordings. Numerous attempts have been made over the years to obtain them on an agreed price, but time after time, the bitter producer increases the amount.



Ellington pin featuring the band’s second logo.



Ellington’s second logo used on the ItsMySite website.

The band had started promoting their upcoming CD EP as early as the spring of 2001. In June of 2001 they got 2″ pins made. Two versions of the pins exist, each featuring a different band logo. During the summer their website would also get hacked by a mysterious, jealous person in Stoney Creek but the band was able to recover it quickly. Additionally, club owners became scared to book Ellington. While on stage they would forget themselves in the emotion and intensity of the songs and equipment would get hit and land all over the place. Guitar wires would often get disconnected and Jeff would almost always jump over the drum set into Adam, often resulting with microphones coming straight at him. A broken microphone incident during one of their show at the Casbah in Hamilton gave the band a notoriety that wasn’t in their favor. Nevertheless the band was loved by their fans, were well talked about on the 905 forum (Ontariomusic.com) and packed the clubs they played almost every time. An important live attraction was during their last song, “It’s Easy Being Nothing” when Derek Petrella (from Zyon) would come replace the drummer during the last build up of the song, allowing Adam to scream his guts out on vocals during the emotional ending of the masterpiece.



Ellington at Lee’s Palace in Toronto, August 13th 2001. Photo courtesy of Colin Young

But even with trouble getting booked, Ellington would play in all the connecting towns and the Niagara region, including Caledon, Streetsville, Brampton and of course Burlington. Burlington was “the” place for emo and post-hardcore in the early 2000’s but Ellington felt out of place next to Boys Night Out, Silverstein and Allendale. On May 11th of 2001, the Saltfleet Arena held a Battle of the Bands, where Ellington also played. On May 27th 2001 they played the Moose Lodge in Brampton with Silverstein, Ten Speed Hero, Eva Destruction, 58 Skivies and Harbinger. Ellington also played at Polo’s in the Hess Village on June 9th 2001. On June 30th 2001 they were invited to play the ten hour long YMCA festival at the Legion in Waterdown. The concert also welcomed Silverstein, The Pettit Project, Bayside, Jerk Circus, Simpleton, Shift-D, The Axis Of Interval, Handheld, 11 Minutes Away, The Next Best Thing, The Table Dancers Of The Amazon, Guiodingus, Slickness In General, Scratch ‘n Sniff and ISU. Earlier that day the band members of Ellington got into an argument and did not make up until minutes before their having to go on and were pretty drunk and happy by that time. On July 14th they played

at the Transit Union Worker's Hall in Hamilton with Bayside, The Pettit Project and The Henchmen.

The band also played with Rise Over Run, Hanging Hearts and The Sneak Preview at the Mind Bomb Cafe in St. Catharines. And with Rise Over Run again during a Port Erie festival in a gym-styled venue. One of their most memorable show would be at Lee's Palace in Toronto on August 13th 2001, as the band was previously booked to play the Casbah, but after being cancelled by the promoter, for reasons mentioned above, they quickly found another major venue to perform. On August 31st 2001 they played at The Raven in Hamilton.



Jeff Legris on June 9th, 2001 when Ellington played a show at Polo's in Hess Village. Photo courtesy of Ryan Hook

Back at their rehearsal space, friction with the pest control company was growing. Ellington would often come back drunk from shows and set off alarms when dropping off their equipment. After drunk-driving a forklift in the middle of the night and forgetting to lock-up, the band was finally asked to pack their gear and find somewhere else. It was then late

August of 2001 and Matt was going off to school at the University of Waterloo. The band's rehearsals were less frequent than during the summer and when they did meet, it would be at hourly rental jam spaces.

>Only two known new songs were written during this period. The first of which was "Paper Beats Rock, Rock Beats Hip Hop". To demo this new new song, Ellington met up at Dan's parent's house and set up most of the instruments in the basement. Matt, Jeff and Dan recorded the bass and guitar tracks on a computer and then programmed a drum machine as they had no way to properly record live drums. No vocals were recorded until many months later, when the band was already broken up. Matt ended up recording his best possible vocal track and after burning it on a CD, drove up to a party with Dan and Wolfman blasting the song to introduce it to ex-band members. Other material was also recorded during this basement session but none of it amounted to a complete song. The second new song was titled "Guts and Grass" and was recorded by Matt alone on acoustic guitar and vocals while on a computer at the university. This was the last known song written during the bands' existence but it never made it to a band practice.

http://youtu.be/P6dk3VdSSZE
That summer, Jeff had also joined Chris Gray for a last attempt to reform The China White but ultimately started the foundation for a new band, Loveless .1. Some of the last shows Ellington would play included Grill One on September 14th 2001 and The Spot in October of 2001. That fall they also played at the University of Waterloo. The performance was filmed and would be the first and only time the band performed their song "Paper Beats Rock, Rock Beats Hip Hop" live. Although the band announced an upcoming acoustic show in Brampton in November of 2001 on their website, Ellington would breakup before the end of the year. Jeff and Chris recruited Dan to play bass and Derek on drums for Loveless .1., while Adam ended up joining the ashes of Bayside for a new band named "Klesk" and later

“Delaware”. Matt went on to form “Anomie”. By this time, Ellington was completely forgotten.



Ellington logo and year span used on their website after their breakup.

Years later, probably around 2006, Matt reunited with Jeff one evening at his jam space and after having a few too many, decided to finally record vocals on the songs for the planned EP. They gave a new layer to “The Killers” and “Vixen” using a free version of Pro-Tools, which unfortunately resulted in preview-version soundclips in the songs, but finally allowed long time fans to hear what the band might have sounded like after both studio times were done.

Matt was also nice enough to provide me some of the lyrics.

Vixen

Safer surrenders in secondary summer’s. Sad souls sing songs for me to keep. Strange breeds of sanctity, off egg white eyes, sedimentary beings will bleed a melodramatic sea. Tell time don’t ask are we heaven bound. Twilight sky liars I spin around these carousels. Here I am, porcelain. Blinding lights I know are paper thin. In dreams it always seems so hard to stay away. Awake. Tomorrow comes and I’m running out. Eye’s can’t pretend that their overwhelmed by all the faith. Tall drinks and “hey are you comin’ out?”. Quick sands of fire that I can’t hold up to the wall. And on and on tonight will trickle on. Here I am setting stones. I’m not the one who will carry you home. Softer sounds cement to dreams of it being real, of it being me. The lights die behind her. The lights die don’t tell me I am the one. She keeps callin’ me back for

another one, keeps callin’ me back and I am the one.

The Killers
Downtown Mary goes all the way. Blood thirst for always. Gum rotten guts. Two more, more working order. Am I the one, or am I just the next one? And believe I am the iron. Believe I am the one. Believe in something cooler than your fields of fire. (And it’s all for faith, and it’s all an oath, all these tiny automatic shapes are in my veins and in my soul. So long, so long. Hey youth. I’m sick of you. Sick of all your fucking news. Hey youth, you’re all I knew, all I have to loose. You’re not that theatrical. Fade and waste away. Blue hollow thinning heads. Superstars who know their only dead. Fade and waste away. You know, you know the end is here.

It’s Easy Being Nothing
Oh Adam Please come home today I want to look into your brain to Fathom, what the fuck is wrong with you Your fucking attitude of sarcasm will bring you to your grave you fool Oh Adam Please come home today Ill drag you out and spill your guts Oh Adam Watch what you say to me you infinitesimal ectopy Your broken face Your broken home Haunt you in your winter You’ll be displaced You’ll be dissolved You will never see summer A final whisper The golden days of shame Devour and the filaments arrange and tangle what you cannot say and strangle your final whisper unconsciousness delays the moral Adam you’ll fucking burn…

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