

MAY 2022

international

# MUSICIAN



OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF MUSICIANS OF THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA



## THE REDDCOATS

A NEW GIG FOR OLD FRIENDS:  
Gregg Bissonette, Andy Timmons, Matt Bissonette & Mike Medina

---

HOW MUSICIANS GET PAID FOR STREAMING

---

102ND AFM CONVENTION NOTICE

---

LOCALS CELEBRATE  
JAZZ APPRECIATION MONTH

THE  
REDDCOATS

# THE REDDCOATS ARE COMING

Industry  
Veterans  
Form  
Supergroup

**T**he Reddcoats is a young band made up of veteran musicians: Matt Bissonette, Gregg Bissonette, Wally Minko, Andy Timmons, and Mike Medina. Collectively, they've logged thousands of hours touring and recording with industry icons. They share years of mutual admiration and bring an incredible depth of experience to their music.

Reddcoats is really about a shared passion for music, explains bassist, vocalist, and Reddcoats co-producer Matt Bissonette, a member of Local 47 (Los Angeles, CA). "We just wanted to have fun and play all the music that we grew up loving—jazz, rock, fusion, Latin—all the styles."

"We love The Beatles; Weather Report; Earth, Wind & Fire; Afro-Cuban bands—Reddcoats is a combination of all of this," says Gregg Bissonette, Matt's brother and drummer for the band who's also a member of Local 47.

The Bissonettes have been jamming all their lives. The pair grew up playing in their dad's band and exploring music together. Gregg recalls going to see The Beatles perform when he was just 7 years old and Matt was 5.

Matt, who now tours with Elton John of Local 47, has played with Joe Satriani and Rick Springfield. Gregg has worked with Local 47 member Ringo Starr and His All Starr Band, Don Henley of Local 72-147 (Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX), and Carlos Santana of Local 6 (San Francisco, CA). The brothers toured together with the David Lee Roth Band.

GRAMMY-nominated Local 47 keyboardist Minko has worked with Pink, Jean-Luc Ponty of Local 47, and Toni Braxton. Highly regarded Local 72-147 guitarist Timmons has toured with Danger Danger and Olivia Newton-John. Percussionist with The Reddcoats, multi-instrumentalist and co-producer Medina, also a Local 72-147 member, has worked with Edgar Winter of Local 65-699 (Houston, TX) and Victor Wooten.

The friends first connected in north Texas, where Medina met the Bissonette brothers some 30-plus years ago at North Texas State (now the University of North Texas). "We knew Andy for being a guitar legend around Dallas," says Matt. Minko has been friends with the Bissonettes for over 20 years, and the three have done tons of recordings together, both for their own projects and for countless clients.

Timmons says he's crossed paths with the others over the years. "I've long admired their careers, but it was friendship that drew us together," he says. "Mike is a lifelong friend. When I moved back to Texas in the early '90s, we started playing together. I've known Gregg and Matt since 1978."

After years of bumping into one another, they finally formed a band in 2020. "While on the road with Elton John, I had the day off in Dallas," says Matt. As the story goes, Matt met up with Medina at a gig that Timmons' band was playing and they just knew they had to do something together.

The Reddcoats had only just begun to collaborate as a band when the COVID quarantine hit, forcing them to work on the passion project remotely. As the group's main songwriter, Matt developed one tune at



**The Reddcoats (clockwise from top, left): Bassist and vocalist Matt Bissonette of Local 47 (Los Angeles, CA); guitarist Andy Timmons of Local 72-147 (Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX), drummer Gregg Bissonette of Local 47, percussionist and co-producer Mike Medina of Local 72-147, and keyboardist Wally Minko of Local 47.**

a time, having each member add their parts. It was a process that went smoother than any of them could have imagined.

"When Matt started coming up with these tunes and asked me to play, I was thrilled," Timmons says. "I would listen to the track where Gregg and Matt had recorded drums and bass, and maybe a bit of Wally's keyboards. Matt's an incredible writer with a great melodic sense. He left space for everyone to add their personality."

"Having done many sessions with bands, sometimes it's a little difficult to feel comfortable and be yourself and play naturally," says Timmons. "It was a pretty magical connection. There are some really beautiful moments that usually only happen when guys are in the room together—and sometimes not even then."

"These guys are such great musicians that I didn't have to say anything. Everybody just came to the table. I'm incredibly indebted to their musicianship," says Matt. Half a year later, they had nine songs recorded and their first, self-titled LP.

The Reddcoats agree that some of the magic comes from their years of work in the industry. "Now, at 60 years old, I feel like I see the world from a different perspective, not just selfishly through me. I think that carries over with music," says Matt. "I don't know that 20 years ago it would have been the same thing. I'm glad we waited this long. Everything always works out for a reason."

Gregg says, "Growing up in the same house, playing in the same band, Matt and I go certain places just because we're brothers and have jammed together longer than any of the other musicians. But Andy played along with it and Wally as well. It just seemed like it was guys playing in the same room."

"I wish we had been together, but I don't think it could have turned out any better," says Matt. "Being remote is kind of strange because you can really sit on your part, analyze it, and take your time. I think that's charming, but I think this band could also pull it off in one take."

The name Reddcoats is a salute to their love of British rock. "I always thought it would be amazing to see 'The Reddcoats are coming' on a billboard," says Matt. Their first album puts together some *(continued on page 16)*



**web hosting**

As low as  
**\$19**  
per year  
for AFM members

**AFM**  
AMERICAN  
FEDERATION  
OF MUSICIANS  
UNITED STATES CANADA

**Designed by musicians  
and run by musicians  
for AFM members.**

**Services offered by  
AFM GoPro Hosting:**

- ✓ Email and phone technical support.
- ✓ Web hosting for new and existing sites
- ✓ Domain Name registration, transfers and renewals.
- ✓ An exclusive AFM members only service.

**AFM GoPro  
Hosting**

**We know what  
musicians need.**

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

(continued from page 15) amazing genre defying tunes, including band favorites “Michael Collins,” rich in harmonies and melodies, and “Redcoat” with its mix of styles.

“Redcoat goes from straight ahead quarter note at 3,000 into Bootsy Collins,” says Medina.

Certainly, passing the tunes back and forth gave the veteran musicians something to focus on during quarantine, when they’d typically be touring with other bands, which they all say they’ve missed.

Gregg says, during the pandemic, he heard many musicians saying, “oh man, I’ve been busier than ever; work’s coming in like crazy and we’re doing all these sessions online.”

“But nobody was busier than ever in the way that they *want to be* busier than ever. We love playing on our own and recording, but we don’t love it anywhere near when we have an audience,” he says.

If nothing else, the days they spent confined to home studios made them see their passion for live performance in a fresh light. “We get pretty jaded. You put in your in-ears and play the show and watch the audience’s reaction. When you are away from it for a while, you realize that’s why we do this,” says Matt.

The Reddcoats were able to get together in August 2021 for a single live performance, with just one rehearsal beforehand. “We had never played a gig together and we were all a little bit nervous. We got out there and fed off the clapping—that giving back from the audience. That’s the beauty of music. I’m just hoping the world doesn’t get comfortable with ‘on the couch sessions.’ It’s not what we are meant to be doing,” says Matt.

“Human interaction is way too important,” says Timmons. “It starts selfishly because we want to play good for ourselves but it’s really about giving that to other people and for people to be in the room to feel it together, that’s the goal. There’s nothing like it.”

For the Reddcoats, the AFM has been a part of their careers from the start. They are thankful for the support, royalties, and residual funds during their years of work in the industry.

“I joined in 1979,” says Medina, a 15-year executive board member for Local 72-147. “My drum set teacher was Ray Hair—who’s now international president—and he told me I should join. A few years later, I joined the executive board. I learned a lot from Ray and all the things he did in the organization.”

The Bissonette brothers joined Local 5 (Detroit, MI) even earlier, in the mid-70s, when they played in their dad’s Detroit band. They later joined the Dallas-Fort Worth local, when they moved to North Texas for college, and then transferred to Local 47, when they began working in Los Angeles.

“Matt and I got to do the show *Friends* on NBC for 10 years,” says Gregg. “Thank God for the union for collecting royalties for that. That’s a big check that comes every year.”

Timmons joined the Dallas-Ft. Worth local around 1988, when he first started doing jingles. Minko has been an AFM member since 1976, first joining Local 24 (Akron, OH), where he played in a dance band while in high school. He joined Local 47 after moving to Los Angeles in 1985.

While the veteran musicians of the Reddcoats are pretty set in their careers, they do worry about the future of the industry they love. Technology has upped the competition that young musicians face and they wonder if things will ever be the same following pandemic closures of live shows. They offer key advice for young musicians following in their footsteps.

“With music kind of losing its value and being deemed ‘nonessential’ young musicians should look for new ways to earn money,” says Matt, adding that home studios are now essential. “Never underestimate your talent and just keep working at it. All of us have gotten better over the years.”

Medina teaches commercial music at Collin College in Frisco, Texas, where he stresses the importance of soft skills. “You can be a great guitar player or recording artist but if you don’t have skills with people, you’re dead in the water,” he says.

“That’s similar to what I tell my students,” says Timmons. “Treat every gig like it’s the most important gig you’re ever going to do. Respect the music and respect the other players. You never know who is in the audience. Be the absolute best person you can be. It’s not just about the 90 to 120 minutes you are on stage, it’s also the other 22 hours in a day.”

“Treat people the way you wish they would treat you,” says Gregg. “We’re making a living and we get to play our instruments. Have fun and be prepared. When you’re out there on the road, don’t put other people down. Bands are like families; you have to be respectful.”

“Be somebody that people want to hang around with and you’re going to get more gigs,” he says. “Try laughter—without screwing around too much. People like being around people that make him laugh.”

Minko adds, “It’s more important now than ever that you be diverse; learn as many different styles of music as you can, get your home studio together, work on songwriting, learn to arrange, produce, and teach. All these skills inform the others and working in one area often leads to gigs in another. The more you can do, the more employable you will be.”

“What Gregg said about being friendly to everyone is so true,” he adds. “The guy in the band that you don’t even notice may end up being the head of a big music company someday—I’ve seen that happen more than once!”

As pandemic restrictions loosen, the five musicians are thankful to be resuming their careers. Matt has been on the Elton John Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour since mid-January, which will likely conclude this fall. He’s begun a YouTube series featuring his own compositions on fretless bass.

Gregg has been touring with Victor Wooten and Steve Bailey, and is doing multiple sessions in LA. He’s scheduled to resume touring with Ringo Starr in May. Minko has been working feverishly on big band scoring, while producing multiple projects in LA and the Cleveland area. Medina continues to teach. He frequently gigs in the Dallas area on both drums and bass. Timmons has been creating podcasts and recently released a solo project.

They also promise that as soon as their busy careers allow, the Reddcoats are coming, again!