

on air

Drummer Matt Sorum  
was a guest on  
"Rock on the Rocks."

PHOTO: JONAS AKERLUND



**ROCK 'N' ROLL**

**FANTASY**

ON HIS NEW PODCAST, JACK DANIEL'S U.S. BRAND AMBASSADOR ERIC "ET" TECOSKY INVITES MUSIC LEGENDS TO RAMBLE ON, SING THEIR SONG, AND SHARE THEIR STORIES

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

**When asked for the inspiration behind his new video podcast “Rock on the Rocks,”**

Eric “ET” Tecosky jokes that “it’s an attempt to get Robert Plant to talk to me.” Though the bar expert makes no secret of being heavily influenced by musical idols from The Beatles and Bowie to Sinatra and The Stones, he says, “All roads lead to Led Zeppelin.”

The latest project of the first Jack Daniel’s brand ambassador—which he finally found time to launch after the pandemic upended his busy travel and events schedule—sits squarely at the intersection of music, pop culture, and booze. He just started dropping episodes on YouTube (for details on how to access, follow Tecosky on Instagram @superhype), during which he interviews not only musicians but also rock photographers, producers, and a rotating cast of bartenders—who provide the drinks, naturally. But don’t expect softball questions or canned responses. “We all hear the same ten stories: ‘Paul is dead’ [or] ‘If you play “Stairway to Heaven” backward, you hear satanic messages,’” he quips. “There’s so much more from the people who lived it.”

To put it in musical terms, Tecosky is looking for the rare B-sides rather than the smash hits—those surprising details often organically unearthed during a casual chat between mutual music lovers over a few fingers of whiskey. For the first few episodes, he talked with Alec Byrne, whose lens captured everyone from Jagger to Hendrix; Terry Reid, the English rock vocalist and guitarist with what Tecosky dubs “the greatest voice you’ve never heard”; and Matt Sorum, a former drummer for Guns N’ Roses, The Cult, and Velvet Revolver who was also a regular at an L.A. bar Tecosky managed. Sorum, it turns out, used to play the Marriott at LAX prior to his days behind the kit with GNR. Who knew? (To continue the metaphor, maybe only hardcore GNR fans—the kind who can tell you that the flip side of “Welcome to the Jungle” is “Mr. Brownstone.”)

“Rock on the Rocks” is a passion project for Tecosky, technically unrelated to his role at Jack Daniel’s. But the whiskey brand is and will always be intrinsically linked with music. Jack Daniel himself was a big fan of music who sponsored a local act, The Silver Coronet Band. Fast-forwarding a few decades, Frank Sinatra was introduced

to Jack Daniel’s in the early 1950s by Humphrey Bogart. (Tecosky recalls growing up on Sinatra, and the brand’s limited-release Sinatra Select, aged in barrels with deep grooves to render a bold yet smooth spirit, is an homage to Ol’ Blue Eyes.) In the post-Rat Pack era, photographer Neal Preston captured Jimmy Page backstage taking a long swig from the iconic bottle—a bottle that went on to become as much a part of Slash’s persona as his silver belt buckle-adorned top hat; meanwhile,

than 200 album covers, including The Doors’ iconic *Morrison Hotel*. Tecosky happens to know him pretty well.

Because of COVID-19, guests on the podcast so far have all been remote—but if all goes well, he’d like to start shooting it at an L.A. bar or on the road. In his downtime, he’s started playing the guitar and has already amassed a collection that includes a 1958 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop Reissue and a lightweight, travel-friendly Yamaha Silent Guitar.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEC BYRNE

**Photographer Alec Byrne signs an image he captured of David Bowie.**

country star Eric Church sings that Old No. 7’s “black label’s like black powder for my soul.” As Tecosky puts it, “Music is authentic to the brand.”

And “Rock on the Rocks” is a way for Tecosky to pay tribute to that connection. As time marches on, he points out, “We are losing so many people we love—bands, producers, managers, musicians. Why not tap into bartenders I know, have them make a cocktail, sit back, relax, and hear stories from people like Henry Diltz?” The legendary official photographer of Woodstock as well as an accomplished folk performer, Diltz lived in Laurel Canyon during its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s and shot more

Tecosky muses that if he had a time machine to transport him to any concert in history, he’d return to Led Zeppelin’s 1973 tour: “Everything was firing on all cylinders. . . . It was Zeppelin in all their glory. They even had a private jet.” Alas, time travel doesn’t exist, but Tecosky and his listeners can continue to live vicariously through his interviewees on “Rock on the Rocks.” To add to the illustrious guests he’s already interviewed, his bucket list includes people like Neil Diamond and Dolly Parton—whom he calls “an American treasure”—and, of course, anyone connected to Led Zep.

Mr. Plant: It’s your move. **LT**