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When Condition K went down a man more than one year ago, it gained an accomplished drummer whose ability and personality breathed new life into a stalling project.

Through this new drummer, it gained a new bassist and, eventually, a new name -- Until We Rise.

It also gained a color-coded xylophone. Say what?

"I looked at him and was like, 'Man, how is this going to work?'" vocalist Manian Van Hacker recalled of former Breaking Benjamin drummer Jeremy Hummel bringing his son's instrument to a rehearsal.

The xylophone, a tuned percussion instrument maybe more synonymous with marching bands than a rock group, seemed by Van Hacker altogether out of place. But Hummel sat down Indian-style, began to strike the instrument's bars and soon after struck up the chorus for one of Until We Rise's first songs, "Only Human."

Van Hacker laughed as he retold the story saying, "The xylophone is almost a must have now."

It was an unpretentious moment for a band as focused on making music as they are on having fun while doing so. A moment among four new friends who enjoy playing together.

With Mick Lower on bass and guitarist Torr, Hummel and Van Hacker round out Until We Rise, Shinbone's Band of the Month.

It was September 2004 when Hummel's wife gave birth to a baby boy. He sought 30 days paternity leave. Five days into it, he said he was removed from the band.

"I did not leave the band. A lot of people have the perception that I left because I have no desire to tour. That's not true," Hummel said.

Hummel devoted himself to his family, got back into teaching the drums and focused on a few projects, including an acoustic venture with the Badlees Bret Alexander. He explored a few other musical avenues, including with some national acts, but nothing came of it. He was being patient.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out if you come from being in a successful band that sold one million records, you're not just going to jump into any old situation. It has to be something you feel strongly about.

"People will be curious and you can't get involved with something that's not good."

Fast forward to April 2006. He'd happened onto Condition K, who happened to need a new drummer after Kyle Taylor parted ways with the group (Lower soon after replaced former bassist Curtis Tankersly, who left to pursue something different). Hummel passed on his phone number and told them to get in touch.

"I was like, call him, but there's no way in hell that guy's gonna want to join our band," Van Hacker recalled telling Torr.

It wasn't that Van Hacker had no confidence in his band. After all, they encountered regional success and built a healthy fan base, but adding a musician with Hummel's credentials may have seemed a bit of a stretch for a group without a label. "When you open for Bon Jovi, play shows up and down the East Coast and then nothing happens, you kind of get discouraged a bit.

"We didn't know if we had the credibility to attract him musically," he said.

Van Hacker was wrong. Hummel took in a show at the Dragonfly Club in Harrisburg and said he liked what he saw. They met up the next weekend, a meeting that shook up Van Hacker's nerves a bit.

"This guy was in Breaking Benjamin, we didn't know what to expect. He wasn't an ego bastard, which we were hoping he

VAN HACKER



TORR



LOWER



HUMMEL

UNTIL WE RISE

wouldn't be," Van Hacker said.

In fact, Van Hacker and Torr found that Hummel is a stable individual and a family man. Confident, even when driving the family minivan. Everything clicked. Hummel admitted it was tough initially joining a new band after having been in a group that went platinum. However, that quickly faded as he almost immediately felt comfortable with the group. The vibe was right. Van Hacker said the feeling was mutual among himself and close friend Torr.

"The relationship is respectful and everyone is open to each others ideas, especially when writing music. For me, it's three people I enjoy being around," Hummel said.

After Lower was recruited to join, they wrote songs and played under the former moniker of Condition K for a few months. The band was new, though, and needed a new name. They chose Until We Rise.

Hummel had been through the highs and lows of being in a nationally-known band and said, this time around, this group will take everything at their own pace. Everyone agreed, Van Hacker said.

"There's never been any pressure since the beginning. Our objective since day one is to get together, write good music and have a good time.

"I don't want to say you shouldn't have drive and determination, but the focus can be fierce and you may not enjoy what happens, even when you get prize. It should be fun to be in a band, that's one of the things that we try to do," Hummel said.

Both Hummel and Van Hacker said the positive meaning associated with Until We Rise, with picking yourself up and out of a hard luck situation, struck a chord with in them. Their music, too, will veer toward the positive and away from the stale, if not trendy method of writing and singing only of gloom and doom.

"This whole negative connotation in lyrics and music, it's become old anymore," Hummel said.

Van Hacker agreed. His early material was dark, but it was therapy. You live and you move on. "Teenagers, they miss the point. They think it's great to always be in pain.

"Rock and roll is supposed to be fun. It's not always dangerous and painful. And it does hurt, believe me."

The group debuted live under the name on March 10 at Gullifty's Underground in Camp Hill where they played a 12-song set, including music from their EP "Trois Chansons" ("Three Songs" in French). Van Hacker said he was impressed by Hummel's professional demeanor in the studio and is encouraged by his ability on stage. He said he and Torr had both strived to improve as musicians, a direct result of playing with Hummel.

"There's this extra thing Jeremy has. A preciseness and hugeness in how he played. Obviously, the guy knows what he's doing."

Until We Rise has got a lot of material in the tank but released just three tracks to give a taste and get some feedback. They will continue to write more music and build on new ideas toward their first record, which has no estimated launch date yet. That's OK with Van Hacker and Hummel. No pressure, they say. Just fun.

"We're just gonna try to continue to build a fan base.

There's no pressure. Our goal is to write good music, record it and play it live for people. That's our focus. Whatever may happen will happen.

"I think it will be only a matter of time until it gets in front of enough people. If I think something's good, I'm thinking other people probably will too," Hummel said.

Find Until We Rise on MySpace or at www.jeremyhummel.com. Their EP is available at Joe Nardone's Gallery of Sound.