

Up Close with Kaveh Rastegar '01E

A sought-after bassist provides a glimpse into his musical world.

Interview by Kristine Thompson

Kaveh Rastegar '01E, songwriter and master of the upright and the electric bass, has performed with hundreds of musicians, played on countless recordings, and written or cowritten songs for artists from Bruno Mars to the Grammy-nominated jazz ensemble Kneebody, which he cofounded at Eastman with classmates **Adam Benjamin**, **Shane Endsley** '97E, and **Ben Wendel** '99E. He's been part of John Legend's band for five years and had a small role in the film *La La Land*, which Legend produced.

This summer, he releases his solo debut, *Light of Love* (Ropeadope).

"Everything really took shape at Eastman," says Rastegar. "I was around such an incredible cast of unique

What was one of your most memorable experiences on tour?

A few years ago, I was on a California tour with Colin Hay, former front man of Men at Work. And there's Paul McCartney, in the front row. After the gig, Paul came back stage and hung out with Colin, the drummer, keyboard player, and me. He was so friendly and interested in everyone around him.

Any other surprises?

I once got locked in a car trunk just minutes before playing in front of 80,000 people at a crowded stadium in Palermo, Sicily, with Luciana Ligabue. Before each performance, the band had to move from our backstage locker room to the concert stage. That night, a rather small sedan showed up. The only room for the drum-



WRITE IT DOWN: "Write down your dreams, no matter how crazy," says Rastegar. "Then, keep checking that list."

and fantastically interesting and talented musicians. For me, it was kind of like when Harry Potter goes to Hogwarts and sees other kids like him. It opened up my mind, my heart, and my playing."

What songs first grabbed you?


So many. The first song that I ever learned by ear on the bass was "Fascination Street" from the Cure's *Disintegration* album. That bass line was so cool. Joni Mitchell's "Silky Veils of Ardour" from her album *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* is another great tune. Talking Heads' "Big Country" from *More Songs about Buildings and Food* always brings me back to a special time in my life. The Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter" from *Let It Bleed* always makes me feel energized—it's a powerful tune in every way.

mer and me was in the trunk. Everyone got out, doors slammed shut, but, in the hustle and hurry, no one remembered us. It took some finagling to figure out how to get out fast, and I lost my pants in the process. Crazy!

What would surprise people to know about you?

I speak Italian fluently, enough French to get by, and a little Spanish and Farsi. My father is an Iranian immigrant, so I picked that up from him.

What advice do you have for aspiring musicians?

Write down everything that's important to you. Write down your dreams, no matter how crazy or unattainable they may seem. Then, keep checking that list. If you take the time to articulate them in writing, they become more real, more doable. 

Kaveh's Playlist

Here's what Rastegar is listening to now:

"Tangled Up in Blue"

Bob Dylan
Blood on the Tracks

"Equatorial"

Lô Borges
Via Lactea

"Coming in Hot" (2002 remastered version)

Peter Tosh
Wanted Dead or Alive

"Long Distance Love"

Little Feat
The Last Record Album

"Can't Take a Joke"

Drake
Scorpion

"Hit it and Quit It"

Funkadelic
Maggot Brain

"Spirit"

Al Jarreau
We Got By

"Going Down"

Freddie King
Getting Ready ... (World)

"Didn't I (Blow Your Mind This Time)"

The Delfonics
The Delfonics

"Powa"

Tune-Yards
Whokill