

HIDDEN TALENT



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Raj's battle of the bands

New York Partner Raj Gandesha has been passionate about music from an early age.

He grew up in Canada in the 1970s, when punk began showcasing songs with a social conscience.

Raj says: "I'm a big Joe Strummer fan and the first gig I went to when I was 13 was to see the Clash. I love the way music can make a social commentary and span cultural divides, genres and influences.

"As a kid I enjoyed going into downtown Vancouver to visit record stores and try to find the next big thing. I really liked how discovering new music opened up whole new worlds to me."

Raj began playing music in the ninth grade when a friend needed a bass player for his aspiring band.

"I didn't play any instruments, but it inspired me to learn," he says. "I persuaded my father to buy me a bass and joined the band. We played my friend's original music at parties and practiced in the basement of my parent's house."

Raj continued to play music when he went to University in Oxford, England, adding the guitar to his repertoire and enjoying the UK music scene, where the likes of Radiohead and Oasis were just starting out.

He returned to Canada in 1991 after earning a Philosophy degree before teaching in the Toronto area. Raj ultimately followed in his father's footsteps by training as a lawyer and moving to New York to join the Firm in 2002.

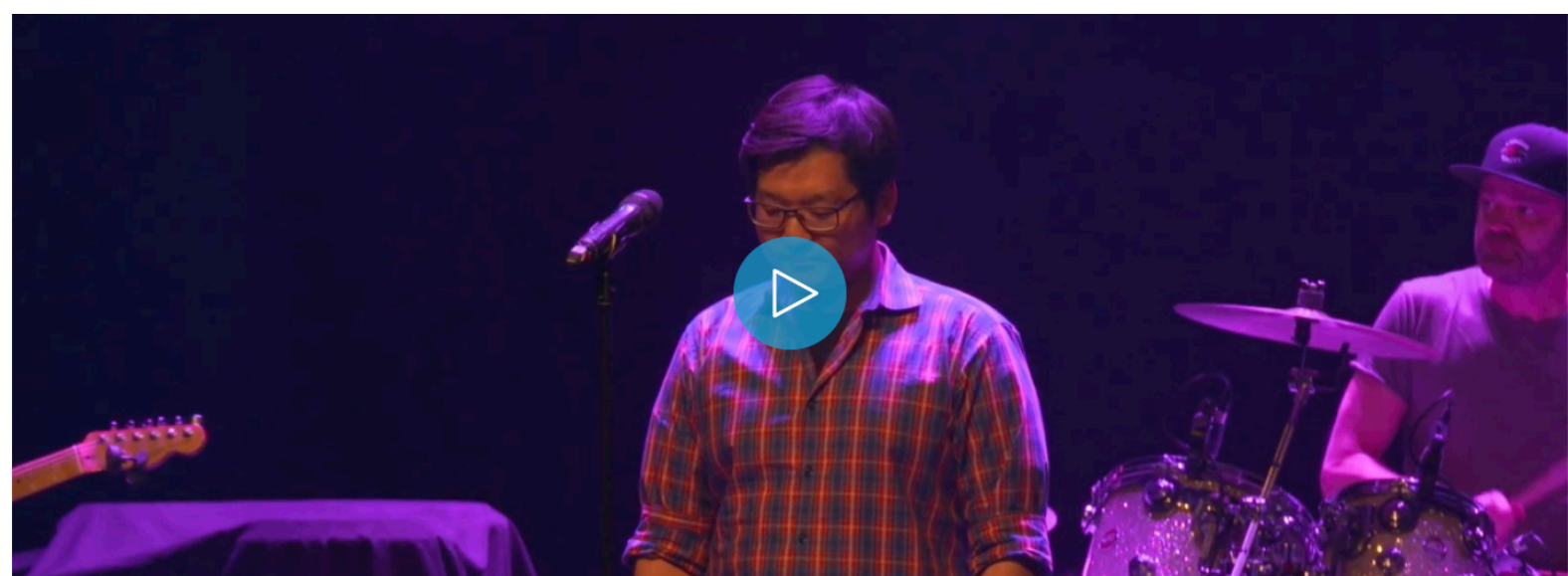
He says: "My father was a lawyer in Uganda before we moved to Canada, but couldn't practice law in Canada, and he always wanted me to carry on where he left off, so I joined White & Case, initially as a summer associate."



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Raj continued to play music for fun and dabbled in home production in his spare time using Apple's Garage Band software, until, in 2014 when he got talking to (now) Partner Josh Weedman, who told Raj he was learning to play drums, but had reached a level where he needed to play alongside another musician.

"I mentioned I played guitar and bass, so we decided to meet regularly, renting out a studio by the hour and playing songs together.

"Word spread and it wasn't long before we had the makings of a band coming together."



"Music is so great for bringing people together and connecting and it's great to be able to do that with family and friends and colleagues at work."

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IP Associate Charles May joined on lead guitar, with Commercial Litigation Associate Daniel Cohen on rhythm guitar and IP Partner Adam Chernichaw on vocals, followed by Anti-Trust Associate Kate Swisher on keyboard and backing vocals.

Raj says: "We eventually named ourselves Mistrial (after dabbling with a few other names) and started playing at summer associate events and holiday parties, initially playing songs by the likes of REM, the Who, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the Strokes."

Over the years, we've had several line-up changes, with Daniel moving to London and Adam and Charles leaving the Firm, but we've added New York Tax Associate Grayson Weeks on guitar and Brian Kim (a non-White & Case lawyer) on vocals. The band also includes one non-lawyer, Quinton Cannon on lead guitar."

As well as playing at Firm events, Mistrial regularly enter the annual New York Law Firm Battle of The Bands organized annually by Law Rocks to raise money for good causes. The most recent Law Rocks show was on October 20, 2022.

"It's a lot of fun," says Raj, "The event is always at the Gramercy Theater, which is a great music venue. The winner is the band that raises the most money for charity and, while we haven't won, we raised nearly \$6,000 last year for the New York Office's chosen charity, Hour Children, playing songs by artists including Simple Minds, the Cars and Franz Ferdinand. We consistently get top marks from the judges for creativity, technical ability and audience participation."

Raj's wife trained as an opera singer, so the couple also play music and work on songs at home, although they haven't shared their music yet with the broader public.

Raj says: "Music is so great for bringing people together and connecting and it's great to be able to do that with family and friends and colleagues at work."

