

Contact: Rachel Boon

REQUEST TO AWARD AN HONORARY DEGREE
AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Action Requested: Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to award an honorary Doctor of Science degree to Mr. John "JR" Robinson at Spring 2025 commencement.

Details of Mr. Robinson's Accomplishments: Iowa State University is requesting approval from the Iowa Board of Regents to award an Honorary Doctorate to Mr. John "JR" Robinson at Spring 2025 Commencement in recognition of his extraordinary contributions to the music industry, his philanthropic efforts and his enduring influence on established and emerging music genres.

Iowa-native John "JR" Robinson is widely recognized as the most recorded drummer in the history of music, with a discography that includes over 10,000 recording sessions for the music, television and film industries. His work can be heard on 60 Grammy-award-winning records, over 200 Billboard Top 100 singles, and 30 #1 hit songs. Collectively, the albums he has performed on have sold over 500 million copies and have been streamed over a trillion times on digital platforms.

Mr. Robinson's interest in music began at a young age. He started playing piano at age five, drums at age eight, and formed his own band at age 10. His early talent was evident as he played with the Iowa Big Band at age 14 and secured a professional gig with the Tommy Dorsey Band while still in high school. After graduating from Creston High School in 1973, he attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, Mass., where his exceptional drumming skills were discovered during a music tour across the Midwest. In 1978, he moved to Los Angeles and quickly established himself as the most in-demand studio drummer in the country.

Throughout his illustrious career, Mr. Robinson has received numerous accolades. He won a Grammy award in 1984, was inducted into the Iowa Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2005 and the Rock Godz Hall of Fame in 2019, and has appeared on the cover of Modern Drummer magazine four times. In 2016, Rolling Stone magazine recognized him as one of the top 100 drummers of all time. His contributions to iconic songs by artists such as Michael Jackson, Lionel Richie, Whitney Houston, Lady Gaga and Madonna have left an indelible mark on the music industry.

Mr. Robinson's influence extends beyond his recordings. He has been a prominent figure in the development and evolution of electronic drums and drum machines in commercial music. His innovative approach, combining acoustic drums with analog drum machines and sequenced samples, has paved the way for the digital libraries now used in nearly all popular music. He continues to share his expertise through instructional DVDs, books, and online tutorials, inspiring a new generation of musicians.

In addition to his professional achievements, Mr. Robinson has dedicated his talents to philanthropic projects. He played on the charity single "We Are the World" by USA for Africa, raising money and awareness for the Ethiopian famine in 1986. He has also been involved with the Muhammad Ali Celebrity Fight Night Against Parkinson's Disease since 1999.

Faculty members from Iowa State's Department of Music and Theater nominated Mr. Robinson for the honorary doctorate degree. This nomination is supported by Iowa State's Faculty Senate Honorary Degree Committee and Executive Board; Senior Vice President and Provost Jason Keith; and President Wendy Wintersteen, who is pleased to present it to the Iowa Board of Regents.