

BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO DRUMS

PART 6: EDUCATION

Words: Toni Cannelli Photography: Richard Ecclestone

In which we bid a fond farewell to top drum teacher Toni Cannelli, with his words of good advice still ringing in our ears...

Welcome to the last part of *The Beginners' Guide to Drums*. We have now covered basic hand technique, buying a kit, setting up and tuning a kit, how to read music, and creativity. This final part will deal with a very important part of your development – musical education.

When I was growing up in the '70s, I had no access to the amazing array of drumming info that exists today. The only way I could learn was by going to gigs, so this will be my first topic this month.

LIVE MUSIC

The best education for a drummer is to go to any live performance, be it at a school, local pub or club, mainstream venue or arena. When you witness live music you understand the role of a drummer completely. I try not to home in on the drummer all the time, I just enjoy the sensation of the music with the drumming as part of the arrangement.

One of my earliest experiences was being taken to the Royal Festival Hall in London at the age of nine. I saw one of the greatest drummers of all time, Buddy Rich. Afterwards I could not wait to get home and practise. It really fuelled my passion for drumming. On the other hand, I also used to go to some dodgy Working Mens Clubs and saw some awful bands where the drummers were really just terrible.

I would take note of the drummer's shortcomings, such as bad timekeeping and drum fills that went completely out of time and context. I would go home and work on my playing and make sure I avoided their mistakes. So get yourself out of the house and check out some gigs!

DRUM TEACHERS

The fastest way to get your drumming together is to visit someone who can already do what you need to learn, and learn it from them one-to-one.

Before you look in Yellow Pages for a drum teacher, speak to any other drummers you know who take lessons and get some feedback. You must find a teacher with a good reputation

and track record. When I was a teenager looking for a drum teacher I was given a tip by a drumming friend to check out a teacher called Bob Armstrong. I was lucky enough to get regular lessons with one of the best drum teachers in the UK and it had a profound effect on my playing. I became a pro-drummer at 17 so I owe a lot to Bob. Not only might I have studied with a lesser teacher and wasted my money, but his knowledge and experience have made me, in turn, a better teacher.

So before taking a lesson with a teacher, find out what track record they have with regard to bands they have played with and gigs they have done or are doing, and what kind of work their ex-students are doing. This will give you a good idea of just what you will be able to gain from being taught by them.

DRUM SCHOOLS

You may want to go to school to study the drums. My advice would be to ring around and find the course that appeals to you. There are some good places, like Drumtech in London, the Academy Of Contemporary Music in Guildford, and Dave Hassell's place in Salford. I do a seminar called *The Complete Modern Drumset*. Contact Drummers Alliance for further details.

DRUM BOOKS & VIDEOS

I have found hundreds of drum books and CDs and instructional drum videos on the market. The video is a great way to learn because it's a drum lesson you can rewind and freeze-frame. There are also a lot of drum books with play-along CDs (minus drums), so you can play along and simulate the feel of actually being in a band situation.

Unfortunately there are some pretty awful books and videos available, so I will recommend some of my favourites which I also use in my own teaching.

DRUM BOOKS:

1. Buddy Rich's *Modern Interpretation of the Snare Drum Rudiments*

This is the drummers' bible! It covers lots of hand exercises (rudiments) and all the basic

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► snare drum reading. This is certainly a 'must have' book.

2. *Rhythm Section Drumming* by Frank Corniola

This book is amazing. It takes you through all the essential grooves you need to know in a very intelligent way, with a play-along CD that covers the summary exercises of each chapter. There are 10 songs (minus drums) that have great drum parts written out.

3. *It's Your Move* by Dom Famularo

Dom's book shows the hand techniques you need to learn ie matched grip, French grip, the free stroke and Moeller stroke, plus lots of great exercises and ideas. A really fantastic book.

DRUM VIDEOS

1. Jeff Porcaro

A short but sweet video made by one of the best groove drummers of our time. Jeff covers the important grooves and styles, plus you hear him play with a rhythm section.

2. Gregg Bissonette, *Private Lesson*

Gregg covers a lot of ground on this video. It is a well thought out video with something for everyone. One of the best on the market.

3. Akira Jimbo

This is the future of drumming! Akira Jimbo is a one man band with technique and coordination to kill for. Also, Akira's duets with his bass player are simply out of this world.

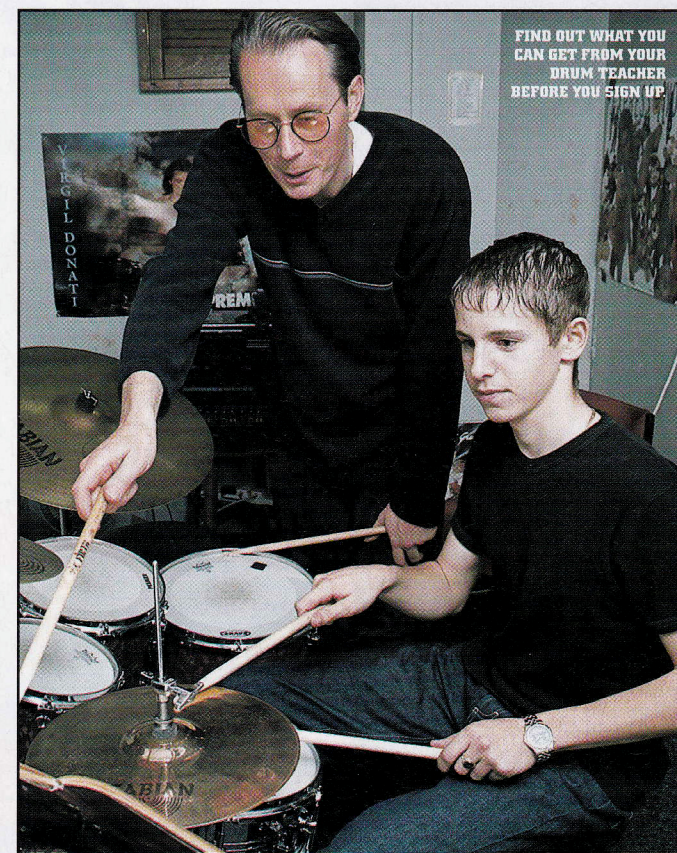
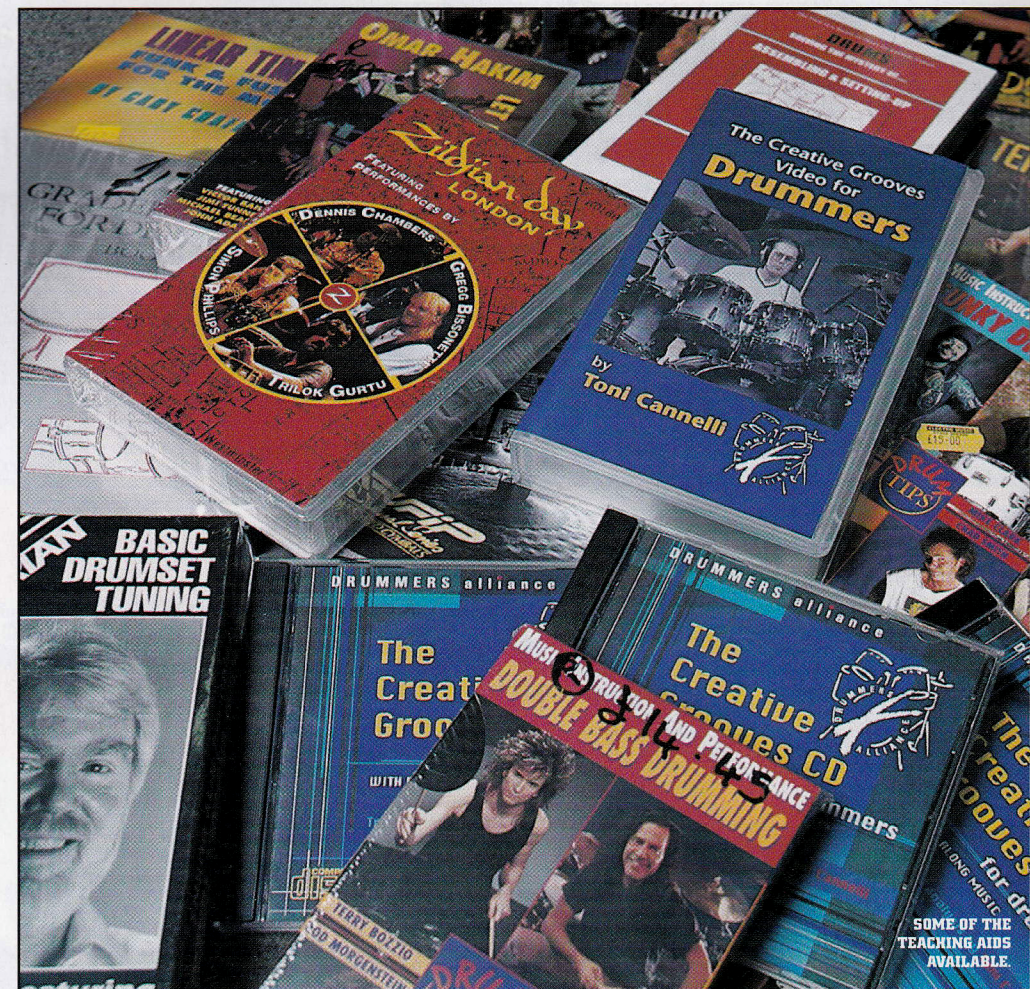
DRUM CLINICS

The drum clinic is a solo performance by a pro-drummer. You get a chance to see the drummer up close and ask questions. It's a good idea to go to the clinic with some well-thought-out questions so that you can come away better informed, rather than just amazed.

Remember that success leaves clues. Think of yourself as a Sherlock Holmes and search out just what it is about a particular drummer that has made them successful. Then piece together your own skills package and carve your own path.

THE DRUMMERS' ALLIANCE

The Drummers' Alliance started up in 1987 with the goal of promoting the art of drumming. We have put on four national competitions to find the best undiscovered drummers in Britain and we have done hundreds of workshops all over the UK. Drummers' Alliance have



put together two educational products – the *Creative Grooves* CD and the *Creative Grooves* video – and we also offer drum seminars and one-to-one tuition. If you want more details phone Drummers Alliance on 0114 2684678 or visit the website at www.tonicannelli.com.

I hope you have enjoyed this series and have gained something from it. So until the next time, have fun and keep practising. ♦

COMPETITION
FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN A SET OF SABIAN CYMBALS AND A LESSON WITH TONI CANNELLI SEE PAGE 85.

