

May 2008

ANDREW HEWITT

Australia's Most Inspirational Drummer

THE BLACK PAGE



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ANDREW HEWITT



Since the inception of The Black Page, I have been introduced to so many amazing drummers, and in turn they have been generous enough to share their stories with me. It was through Aussie drummer Chris Brein that the name Andrew Hewitt first came up. I perused the net for the guy touted as "Australia's Most Inspirational Drummer" and found myself smack dab in the middle of motivation upon surfing Andy's site. If ever I decide a fill is too hard to play, a rhythm too difficult to master and a technique too complicated to comprehend, someone please kick me.

Once in awhile someone enters your world and shows you that life really is only as easy or difficult as you make it. My friend Andy has many reasons to not be a drummer, nor does he have the advantages that as drummers we not only need but, are for the most part born with: fully functional limbs. Instead Andy has been given the gift of a never-ending desire mixed with the will to achieve the seemingly impossible.

I know for a fact I will never hear Andy speak the words "I can't", it simply doesn't exist in his vocabulary. Some call it Chi, some call it soul, but whatever earthly term you give it, to watch Andy play is to witness it in its purest human form. In the end Andy knows what lies on the stage is only everything you bring to it and even he will tell you it's just all in a day's work.



Andrew, how did you become a clinician in the first place?

I worked in the I.T. industry as a programmer for a long time, and after the bottom fell out the industry in 2001, I had to decide what I should do next. I had been playing drums in various bands since the late 80s, so something musical was definitely on the cards. I was talking to a few drummer friends, and they were suggesting I should aim at becoming a drum set educator and disability advocate.

In April 2004, I was very lucky, I was included in *Modern Drummer* magazine's "On The Move" department. This definitely gave my drumming career a good head start. Only a handful of Australian drummers have appeared in *Modern Drummer*, so it was a dream come true.

In August 2004, I was thrown in at the deep end; I was asked by a local drum store (Billy Hyde's Drumcraft) to hold a twenty minute clinic at their annual drummer playoff event. During this clinic, I performed two songs, and a drum solo, and talked about the challenges of having a disability such as Cerebral Palsy, and overcoming physical obstacles to play drums.

Your clinics are unique. Tell me a bit about the approach you use, especially with household items.

I try to keep each clinic different, so as to suit the needs of my audience as I am not always performing in front of drummers. In most cases I use backing tracks as my main performance pieces as well as drum solos.

The household items idea was from talking to my drumming friend and mentor Chris Brien (www.chrisbrein.com). I was doing a regular weekly drum workshop at a disability centre in Sydney last year, and found some people with severe disabilities couldn't connect with the natural tones of the drums, because of the sound and volume of particular drums, so I needed to find an alternative to suit different people's needs

Chris suggested that I experiment with toilet brushes, pastry brushes and whatever else I could get my hands on, which has helped many of my clients who may have varying levels of disabilities connect with the drums better and also playing with household utensils is a lot of fun and can really make drums and percussion instruments sound awesome. You haven't lived until you've performed a toilet brush solo on the drums in front of a live audience!



What is Cerebral Palsy and how does it affect your body?

Cerebral Palsy is a condition that affects parts of the brain that controls our motor skills to function properly. Basically signals don't get through properly, so things don't work, as they should. For me, it's fairly mild but it restricts me to walking on crutches and sometimes using a wheelchair. It mostly affects my balance and movement in my arms and legs. Sometimes when I am tired my speech may become affected.

What obstacles have you physically had to overcome to allow yourself the pleasure of playing a drum kit?

My biggest problem I have always had is getting a loud punchy kick drum sound; this is due to the lack of strength and control in my legs. To overcome this I use a trigger on my bass drum, which runs through a Roland TD8 module.

Another thing is that because I don't have much lower leg control, my kick drum playing comes from the hip. So I have to make a rocking motion to work

the pedal. This makes it much harder to get the consistency and timing needed, but as they say, practice makes perfect.

Has drumming improved your physical condition compared to others who have had CP as long as you?

I wouldn't say improved. But I think if I hadn't been playing drums all these years my physical condition could have been much worse. CP doesn't get worse like other conditions such as MS, but there are other factors that set in, such as arthritis, gout, etc., that anyone can get. So you have to keep on top of it.

To help keep my fitness levels up, I am doing hydrotherapy sessions, which is physiotherapy in a shallow heated pool, and of course I usually do two to three hours a day on the kit.

How does the medical community react to using music as a form of therapeutic exercise for conditions like CP?

For myself, each performance I do, I am showing people with disabilities and the people who work in the disability sector, anything is possible. I did a

presentation at the Australian Music Therapy Association conference in Melbourne last October. The people at the conference were professional music therapists, and they were totally amazed by the ideas I had come up with for working with people with disabilities.

Do you set up differently compared to some "abled" drummers?

My drum kit set-up is pretty standard, except I have a ten inch tom fitted with a mesh head just to the left of my snare drum, which acts as a trigger pad and I use this ten inch tom to trigger a bass drum sound to enable me to play bass drum notes with my left hand if need be. This set up enables me to play double bass drum patterns by using my left hand instead of my left foot while my right foot plays the bass drum which creates a similar sound of someone playing a double pedal with their feet.

Because I can't use my left foot too well, I have also started using a remote hi-hat on my right side, with the pedal sitting next to my kick pedal on the right. This is allowing me to play open/close hi-hat grooves with the right foot, and using the left hand to play kick and snare.



Tell me about *Drums In Motion*.

In 2002, while I was contemplating what to do next, I decided to develop some ideas to help people with disabilities find their own creative element using drums and percussion instruments. This was when *Drums In Motion* was born.

The idea was to play simple rhythms on drums and have people with many severities of disability play on hand drums and percussion instruments in a drum circle joining in and having fun.

I held my first *Drums in Motion* workshop at the Spastic Centre of NSW in Sydney in March 2004, and have since appeared in many places across Australia holding workshops and performing at various events and disability organisations.

In 2006, I worked at a camp in Adelaide for kids with CP who were fairly severe and couldn't speak. Some kids as young as five, using electric wheelchairs, and a pathfinder laptop device to communicate. These kids were amazing, nothing would stop them. Even with their disabilities so severe, put a drumstick in their hand, and they knew exactly what to do.

In the near future, I am looking at expanding and teaming up with TRAP (www.traponline.com) *The Rhythmic Arts Project*, which is an organization based in the USA run by Eddie Tuduri. Eddie has some wonderful ideas, and his workshop program is very well structured. He has been saying to me for quite some time that he thinks I would be the perfect person to bring TRAP to Australia.

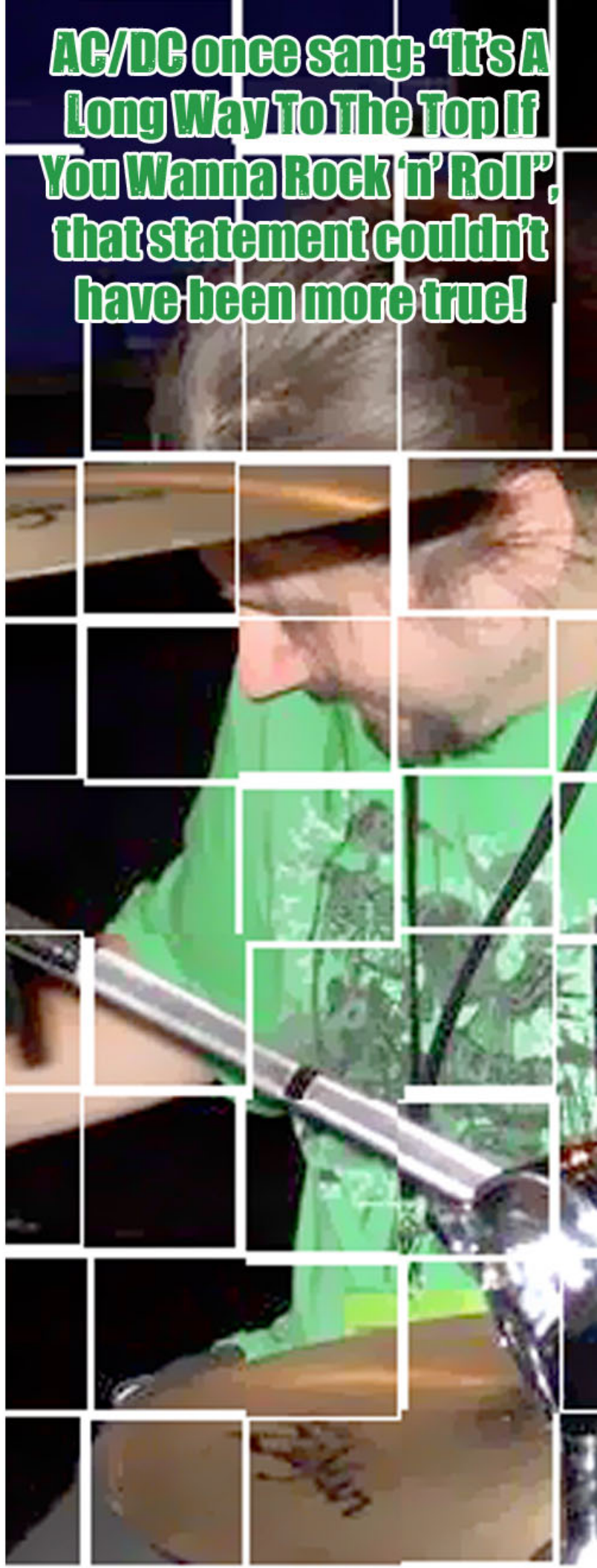
Away from the spotlight, the clinics, and the drums, what do you like to do on your down time?

My drumming takes up a lot of my time, but I do like to hang out in cafes and drink lattes, occasionally go to see bands, go to the pub with some mates for a beer or two, going to the movies. I also do a bit of website design from home. Everyone in the music biz knows that unless you are right at the top, it is very tough to live completely on drumming. My website design helps pay the bills. AC/DC once sang "It's A Long Way To The Top If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll," that statement couldn't have been more true.

What does a disabled drummer face when entering the music industry?

I hate to say it, but discrimination is a huge factor musicians with a disability often face. I have had so many bands turn me down because they didn't think I

AC/DC once sang: "It's A Long Way To The Top If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll", that statement couldn't have been more true!



I could cut it. Musicians with a disability have to work much harder to prove themselves.

Having said that, one of my biggest drumming inspirations is in one of the biggest bands in the world, and has a disability. After seeing the video clip for “Pour Some Sugar On Me” back in the late 1980’s, I was hooked. Seeing Rick Allen do what he does with one arm is totally amazing. The guy’s spirit is similar to mine, nothing will stop us.

What can be done to improve opportunities for younger musicians who do have disabilities?

All the time I see that things are improving such as people’s attitudes changing towards people with disabilities. It’s no longer a case of putting a person with a disability in the corner and forgetting about them.

I do a lot of work within the disability arts sector around Australia. I have worked with so many talented musicians with various disabilities. One organization in particular is called Club Wild. They are based in Melbourne, but occasionally do disability friendly dance parties in Sydney. I was very lucky to be able to perform at the Sydney Opera House on a number of occasions with a live band featuring all artists with disabilities.

There are websites now dedicated to musicians with disabilities, which is more and more encouraging. One site in particular which I am involved with, Handidrummed (www.handidrummed.com), which features drummers from all over the world with various disabilities.

You are touted as Australia's most inspirational drummer. What words of wisdom can you pass along to other drummers?

I think, if anyone ever doubts themselves or their abilities, they should think of people worse off than themselves. I do it all the time and it encourages me to keep pushing for the ultimate goal. I think it’s a matter of wanting something so bad, that you will do anything to get there.

I also would like to thank DW Drums, Zildjian Cymbals and the Vic Firth PDT Education program, which was on a recommendation from Dom Famularo.

Dom and I have become friends since I started doing the disability workshops, he has always been full of encouragement, and I always try and catch him when he is out here in Australia.

Funny story – I was at a Vic Firth seminar in Sydney last July, and the venue had a lot of stairs, so I had some friends from Billy Hyde’s carry me up the stairs. Later, Dom was talking about being pro-active in his speech, and it was then I became part of one of his jokes. He says “Now here’s Andy, he got here and found there were stairs, so he had 3 guys carry him up like a friggin rock star to sit here in the front row. How’s that for pro-activeness?”

I thought being part of one of Dom’s jokes, “Cool, I got it made!!!”

**Click here to visit [Andy at
www.drummerstix.com.au](http://www.drummerstix.com.au)**

PRACTICING

PERSEVERANCE

per•se•vere: (verb) - -to persist in a state, enterprise, or undertaking in spite of counter-influences, opposition, or discouragement.

We have all heard the expression “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again.” I can remember hearing this so often as a child while trying to tie my shoes, ride my first bike, doing school work, and many other new tasks in life. As children and grown adults, we are all faced with new obstacles daily, but what made us push through and keep trying to tie our shoes or ride that bike?

In my career as a musician, there are too many new obstacles to list, and they pop up everyday as I have said. Whether it is students having difficulty with a drumming exercise or concept, problems in my own playing (don’t even get me started on this one, way too many to list), gear issues, booking gigs or sessions that overlap, etc., there are many problems/tasks in our lives that force us to take one

of two actions. We can take the easy way out and quit, or we can buckle down and persevere through the problem. If we take option #2, we will be better people and musicians as a result of our hard work.

One of my pet peeves in teaching is when the students use the word “hard”: “This is so hard to play!”, “I can’t do this; it is impossible!”, “Can we do something easier?” AAARGGGHHHH !!!

I don’t let them use the word hard; we use the word “different”. If we say something is hard, we put up a roadblock for ourselves, and make it even tougher to move ahead. If we view the exercise as being different and truly embrace this, we are more likely to succeed and persevere.

Anything new we ever learn is just “different”, and after we work on it for a while, it is no longer “different”. Think about the first 1/8 note beat you ever learned; could you lay it down instantly? Maybe, but if not, can you lay it down now? I am guessing so, and you probably don’t even think about it while you are playing (just like tying our shoes).



PERSEVERANCE

AS A

YOUNG MUSICIAN

When I started to play drums back in 1983, I was very determined to learn all that I could. I was also like many other musicians and had very little patience. I wanted to be Jeff Porcaro, and wanted it yesterday! This attitude has both a good side and a bad side. The bad side was that with a little more patience, certain exercises and concepts would have been easier and less frustrating to understand. The good side was because of my stubbornness, I didn't give up. I had a passionate hunger for information, and wanted to be the best that I could be. I couldn't let myself be defeated by these patterns and exercises from a book.

I remember learning songs by Rush, Toto, Yes, and many other bands that required a lot of time and effort. These songs seemed very hard at the time, and there were times I thought about just quitting and moving on. I chose to dig in and work through these tough sections in the music. The odd time signatures, phrases with 32nd note bursts, 16th note triplets, and many others almost got the best of me.

One such example of this was my determination to play Iron Maiden's "Run To The Hills." This wasn't so much a problem with the beat and patterns, as it was the tempo of the song. The fast 16th notes on the hi-hats were taking their toll on me. I could get about 1 minute in and my hands would lockup (darn Clive Burr!). As I tried harder and harder, I realized that I needed to slow down and examine my hand technique. I was squeezing the stick way too hard, like I was choking a snake. I was also holding my breath as I tried to keep up with this song, our muscles don't work well under these conditions.

My solution was to practice with a loose grip, make sure I was breathing and only play at a comfortable tempo. I would also try playing to the song only every other day, and not eight times everyday. Well, in a matter of two weeks, I was up to two minutes into the song! I was really learning a lesson in how slowing down and being patient can actually help me in my pursuit to play faster. What a concept. Needless to say, I kept working this way and could finally play to the whole song, and learned some very important lessons about perseverance through this journey.

PERSEVERANCE

AS AN

INSTRUCTOR

I have been doing clinics and workshops in this area for a while now, and, to put it bluntly, this community needs more drum events. I remember being a young drummer and being able to attend several drum clinics that came through our city: David Garibaldi, Peter Erskine, Tom Brechtlein, Terry Bozzio and many others would be here to share their knowledge with us. But as of late (the last ten years or so), we haven't had a lot of these events here, and I think this needs to change. In 2006 I started a drum day which we called Drummin' Sunday, and it involved three Saskatchewan drummers doing clinics on various topics.

For 2007, I wanted to have a "name" artist be our clinician. My thinking was why get a mediocre clinician; why not go right for the top. So on September 10, 2007 I sent an email to one of the best, Billy Ward. I wanted to find out details on his clinic information, and to see if he would travel here from New York for a clinic. He was very interested, and we came up with a plan to have the clinic on Sunday December 16, 2007 here in Regina. With all the planning and excitement, here is a list of things that happened leading up to our Drummin' Sunday event finally happening on April 20, 2008.

- Emails to Billy Ward and supporting companies to get this event in line (I believe 400 emails was my last count!).
- December 16 – event cancelled as bad weather stalled Billy in Minneapolis.
- More emails to everyone to plan new event on Sunday March 9, 2008. (This one totaled 300 or so emails)
- March 7 – event cancelled due to bad weather again. Billy didn't even have to leave his house this time.
- More emails to everyone to plan a new event on Sunday April 20, 2008. (This one only entailed about 100 emails).
- April 20 – The clinic and master class happen with only a 14 minute delay on the incoming flight.

The event was amazing, and everyone had a great time. I could have quit after the first two attempts, but I would have been living in the what if's: "What if I had of followed through?" I don't like living in the what if's and neither should you.

PERSEVERANCE AS A WRITER

I am very excited that this is my 13th article for *The Black Page* magazine. I am honored to be part of this wonderful project that Sean Mitchell has put together,, and I believe that it will be huge.

Every month I search through ideas and snippets that I have for articles, or I will just come up with a new concept all together. Either way, some of these (not many though) almost write themselves, while others take time, a lot of effort and some serious perseverance. Even if I start an article and realize that it isn't going anywhere at this time, I do try and finish it and don't just quit. If I quit, it is just an unfinished piece. But if I battle through, another idea may arise in this creative journey.

WE CAN ALL PERSEVERE

All of the great musicians of our time have never had things just fall into place; they have had to overcome obstacles (some greater than others) to achieve their goals. Look at Rick Allen from Def Leppard as an example. Here is a drummer who loses his left arm and his band stands by his side until he is ready to get back on the drums. The hours of practice, patience and perseverance that must have gone into his recovery would be unfathomable for most of us.

We all have to overcome obstacles everyday, and will forever. To be successful at anything, we have to know how we deal with these obstacles personally, and adapt accordingly.

Don't ever be afraid to take a chance and try new things. Don't get discouraged when things aren't going right; work through it the best way you can, and you will be rewarded for your hard work.



Jayson Brinkworth is an accomplished drummer, percussionist and vocalist. Click on his image to link to his website.

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COORDINATION & CHOP BUILDERS

by Ryan Carver



Coordination is a key element in creativity. Being able to express yourself on command is a goal for many drummers. These exercises are some that I use to practice coordination, and to build some chops. Alternate hands in the first measure, then follow the various stickings in the second measure. The left foot on the hi-hat is a key part. Try to lock with the hi-hat. Once you are comfortable, increase the tempo, then phrase the patterns around the kit. Try to groove for 3 bars, then fill for one bar. Then groove for 4 bars and fill for 4 bars, phrasing each pattern around the kit. Enjoy!

Stickings:
R B L B R B L B
R B R B L B L B
R B L B R B R B L B R B L B

Stickings:
R L B B R L B B
R R B B L L B B
R L B B L R B B

Stickings:
R B L B R B L B R B L B
R B R B R B L B L B
R B R B R B L B L B

Stickings:
R L B B R L B B R L B B
R L B B L R B B R L B B

Ryan Carver is a member of the Academy of Drums faculty, the Vic Firth education team and the Percussive Arts Society. Click either link below to visit him on the web.

www.carverdrums.com www.myspace.com/ryancarver



LIFE, LIBERTY

& THE PURSUIT OF A NEW LANGUAGE

by Sean Mitchell

Insecure feelings creep up on the best of us. Case in point, during the weekend of April 26th and 27th, 2008, I attended Canada's premier drum fest, The Cape Breton International Drum Festival. As a young aspiring drummer I was obviously awestruck by the fact that I was hob-knobbing and having supper with my idols. One night it was dinner with Carmine Appice, Alan White, Danny Seraphine, Ed Mann, Dom Famularo and Liberty DeVitto; and, the next day it was a one-on-one discussion about Motown with non other than Funk Brother alum, Uriel Jones. Never mind the fact I watched each pro perform the grooves that made them the legends they are today. You haven't lived until you've seen the man himself, Michael Shrieve, perform "Black Magic Woman!" For a guy from the Canadian prairies, it was a weekend of intense emotion and heartfelt awe,

combined with the raw desire to sit down and jam along side Liberty DeVitto, as he hammered out "Angry Young Man." As I sat and watched each performer amaze me, there was this nagging feeling that I wasn't a *good* enough drummer to share the stage with them. I didn't have the experience to sit along side Danny Seraphine and say we are *peers*. (Notice the language here, folks. It's all about the language)

"These are legends, Sean," I would say to myself. "They are above you. They sit upon the pedestals you create and are only to be admired."

It was of course my job that weekend to gather interviews and photos for our magazine. By attending the festival as press rather than as a performer, that too fanned the insecurity flames even more. Of course I was treated like gold by all performers,

creator Bruce Aitken and the festival staff alike. My insecurities had no real foundation and were only the self-defeating tapes that play in my head from time to time. Needless to say the old insecurity dial was cranked up to ten (eleven if you're a Spinal Tap fan!). Then it happened without warning. During my interview with Liberty, Mr. DeVitto, in his thick Brooklyn accent, crushed the illusion of legend and shattered the pedestal I had sat him on like a glass house.

"When I was a kid and I saw Buddy Rich, I felt very insecure in my playing. When I saw like say Dom Famularo play, I was very insecure in my playing, even though I had gold albums on the wall."

Could it be? Is it possible that even Liberty DeVitto himself had some level of insecurity? The guy who can crush the 2 and 4 harder than anyone around? A guy that has been to the line more often than any drummer of his caliber? The guy who consistently plays as if every note were his last? Here was a man that I have idolized from day one of my drumming career admitting insecurities about his own playing. What was worse was that I dared relate to said comment, which of course took me down yet another self-defeatist path.

"I don't really care if other drummers like the way I play. I want guitar players, bass players, keyboard players, and singers to like the way I play. Because I found out a long time ago, the odds of me going in to a recording studio with another drummer are really small!"

Upon listening to these new tapes (the ones I was literally making with my voice recorder as I interviewed Liberty, Dom, Alan, Uriel and Ed), I discovered the secret to unlocking the power behind insecurity. Yes folks even your deepest darkest fears have a purpose.

A very wise man once said to me "If you are not nervous, you are not ready." In every challenge there lies the ability for us to discover the limitless bounds and the skills that we possess. However, it is not until we are faced with life's challenges (aka gifts, for those of you paying attention to message of this article) that we are able to reassess the language (there's that word again) we use on ourselves and become able to work through insecurities, proving ourselves to be twice the person we were even two hours ago. We evolve every day, and with each day we are presented with new challenges. If there were no challenges, nothing would change.

As my weekend wound down, I found myself once again having dinner with my very good friend Dom Famularo (notice the change in language here folks).



Dom Famularo (l) and Liberty DeVitto (r) during some down time in Cape Breton

After dinner a jam session ensued as one would expect. Dom got up with the band, played a tune, and then did something I am now glad he did. He turned to me from the stage, pointed the sticks toward me, and said, "Sean get up here." For those of you yet to follow Dom onstage let me just say, it gives new meaning to the word self-expectation. I now welcome high variations of this.

As I sat on the throne, I took note of the players still mulling about the room. Carmine Appice, Danny Seraphine, Liberty DeVitto, Dom Famularo, Alan White, Michael Shrieve, Uriel Jones, Aldo Mazza, and Ed Mann. All legends.

In the end we are all drummers, and we all speak the language of rhythm. Each of us represents our own path with different levels of skill, popularity, experience and insecurities. That night I played a couple of tunes in the presence of some drummers who happened to have achieved legendary status for doing the one thing they (and I) love doing. Playing drums. ■

TED GOOD MUSIC
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**Congratulations to new
owner Ian Robinson!
From THE BLACK PAGE**

THE FINAL WORD



www.cbdrumfest.ca

Thank you so much to every one who came saw and enjoyed. Was it life altering? You bet! We are so grateful for your support in what we are doing here in Cape Breton, This festival is now one of the most important in the world as it brings together all peoples from all walks of life, all culture, all sexes, and all beliefs. All women and mankind can learn from this mix of togetherness, if only the whole world could develop this vibe, the kids of the future would have a brighter outlook. It was an amazing experience and I doubt we will ever come down from it.

But without you, it would not have happened, so from the bottom of our heart, we thank you. The most important ingredient: love and peace.

Gloria Jean, Bruce and family,
and the CBdrumfest family

See you next year!

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