

Motivation and Dedication:

Now that my Heavenly Father has given me the “Sandbox” vision where I can see the approval of His smiling face when I am in the “sandbox” of drumming, an approval I never got from my dad, I am finally free from feeling guilty for doing this thing I enjoy so much. The Father made me this way and is thrilled to see me so captivated, enthralled, and “in the zone.” He wants me doing what brings me so much joy. He wants me to “rest” in being the “real me” instead of continue “striving” to be a “reflected image,” trusting Him to be “The Provider” – even if my dad dropped the ball on that one. In fact, I choose to “let go” of the voices of those who have held me back – I “let them off the blame hook” of responsibility for my present and future life. They will no longer be my excuse for inaction. Instead I “let God” be “The Responsible One!” Really, all that I am and have comes from my Heavenly Father, so I give this drumming back to Him – and the responsibility of it “going somewhere worthwhile.” I am no longer going to “bury this talent” entrusted to me because I fear that if I invest it, I may lose it, and my Lord (Master) will be mad. No, I see His smile and hear Him say “Play, play, play – as long as you want!” I will no longer be immobilized by all the evil voices saying “Shouldn’t you be more responsible and do something more important? This is a waste of valuable time! What’s this going to amount to anyway? How is this going to pay off? Maybe you should turn this into a service (teaching) or a product (books, CDs, DVDs, websites) to legitimize it, and show something for your time! Shouldn’t you be focusing on success and plan for retirement?” No, these voices can go back to hell where they came from! He alone can “restore the years lost to the locust!” He alone makes good out of evil! He alone returns what was stolen! He alone mends back together what was torn apart! He alone is The Healer! Therefore, I commit (honestly reveal, roll off my back onto His, dedicate, and entrust) this drumming to Him and trust that He knows “the details” of how this will “play out” together for the “highest good” of myself, others, and Him. I can’t see “around the corner” but I can trust the Lord who can! So, I’ll take one step at a time by faith, knowing that the Lord who gave Himself for me will be there watching out for me and “guiding me into all truth.”

Main Objectives:

1. Confidently know that I am “rightfully paying the price of admission” for becoming competent by establishing a practice habit of 2 hrs/day for 5 days/wk within 2 months (11/17/13) and 3 hrs/day within 4 months (1/17/14), so then in 6 months (3/17/14), I can never again have to say: “If I hadn’t chickened out in 1977 and again in 1998, where would embracing my love for simply drumming have taken me?” Still I can’t see the study of drums as only a means to an end, because as much as I really enjoy performing, I’ve always wanted to really “give myself over” to the exploration of simply learning drumming. And I’m really fulfilled doing this!
2. In 6 months (3/17/14), evaluate if I’m ready to play in a good sounding, good paying band. I want to feel confident in my competence, but not arrogant. Set new drumming goals at this time. I’m done trying to start bands with “wanna-be” musicians. It eats up too much time going over and over the same material and never getting enough “play time” in. This really takes the “fun” out of drumming.
3. Take lessons from Pete Swan to 1) motivate and inspire me toward by goals and hold me accountable to this end, 2) guide me so that I’m not using up time “reinventing the wheel” that could be better spent simply “modeling excellence,” 3) streamline the learning process to keep from being discouraged from “majoring in the minors.”

4. I have to be careful not to try and “legitimize” the joy of learning drumming and playing by trying to create services (teaching) and products (books, CDs, and DVDs) that distract from this. Nevertheless, as I’m exploring books, lessons, and other drum materials, and start accumulating good drills, groove, fills, techniques, etc. I can store this information in a logical fashion topically in files. That way I can pull out these “Best of the Best” sheets to maximize warm-ups, drills, crash-coursing, and refreshing on a regular basis or when I need to “bone-up” on something for a student or gig. I also see the need to make learning much more step-by-step systematic and methodic than the books I’ve seen. There’s still too many “leaps” for me or the average student. Also, they really don’t give you the “whys” or logically organize it so that you can pull out the ideas on the fly. I’d like to fix this along the way for myself and for those I pass it on to. Therefore all this material will be a good way to “spice up” my teaching, and my custom modifications/applications may come in handy later in producing products that will help more students. However, I need to keep in mind that these are by-products and not the focus of my learning.
5. That brings me to what to do with “The CoreBeat System” that’s been sitting on my computer for too long. It’s no longer “my legacy or claim to fame” – I gave up this vanity a long time ago. I’ve given this all back to the Lord where it belongs! It’s His responsibility to do what He wants with it. I just know that I want it to bless people and for this to be a by-product (not the focus) of my learning. I also know it’s no longer going to be a solo project because this “control” burnt me out. I’m going to continue to let John Herzog “produce” it as I feed/teach him material from it. He’s enjoying the process and so we’ll “go with that flow” and see where it goes and how it pans out. The key is that I’m going to take this step by step by faith, and trust the outcome will be good for both of us and all those who will enjoy the product(s).

General approach to learning and playing music I’d like to lean toward:

1. I don’t want to spend the time memorizing or reading detailed charts necessary to copy other drummers to only play covers or standards. This really takes too long and stifles the creativity of coming up with my own “feel” and enjoying “going with the flow” of what the music is telling me. I need some structure to be confident where I’m going, but I really want the competency to lock into the groove and improvise what’s best in the moment. I really dig that interaction and spontaneity – it’s magical and divine! That’s where I most feel the pleasure of God in that creative process where I’m really listening and feeling instead of so much thinking or performing. It’s a beautiful place to stay for as long as you can. It is pure joy!
2. I enjoy good covers and standards, but always felt that I and the audience so much more enjoy the energy and newness of originals. We all feel the creativity, as long as they are good. So, this is ultimately the direction I’d like to go. Now, what’s also really cool is re-mixing covers. That’s almost the best of both worlds.
3. As I go along in my learning, I’d like to collect on my “Best of the Best” sheets, signature grooves, fills, ideas, etc. from key drummers historically and currently, with a little biographical sketch for a framework, so that I can learn from the masters, and adapt this to my own playing, and be able to pass this on if need be to my students.
4. I’ve always felt that the listeners need to get way more involved than they normally do. The energy of performing is a thousand times greater than simply watching. DJs and Karaoke have taken over because they involve the audience more, especially the later. My “Xceptional Xperience” band idea is to explore merging these different approaches with the traditional performance idea by 1) Clearly displaying lyrics in a Karaoke way so that listeners connect to the meaning of the words and song, 2) Having the singer go out into the audience and get the bolder people to sing along, especially in the chorus, 3) Get people up on stage more often and buddy up with them playing cowbell, tambourine, or a hand-drum, like I did with Krakatoa. People ate it up and many got hooked and wanted to learn music! This is also a great way to plug lessons.

Styles I'd like to focus on:

1. I'd like to collect on the "Best of the Best" sheets/files essential grooves, fills, etc. for every style of music, so at least I'm not ignorant of them and can access them if need be for any future gigs, projects, or teaching needs. However, when it come to focus of my playing, I need to narrow it down to what I like most.
2. Swing, Bebop, New Orleans and Dixieland, some Big Band, and Contemporary, Smooth, Pop, and Acid Jazz, but not Modern, Free, Avante-Garde, or Modal Jazz since I like to hear clear "tuneful" melodies. I'd be open to exploring Jazz Fusion with Rock, Funk, Latin, and other World music. I really like Big Band Swing but don't want to go to far out on the limb as it's difficult to get that many players together and not so many opportunities to play anymore.
3. Funk because of the syncopated, interlocking rhythms and emphasis on complex grooves, extended vamps, African, Jazz, Soul, and early R & B influence, and more variety of instrumentation (horn sections). I like its Fusion with Rock and Jazz, though I'd like to explore all derivatives.
4. Rock – but more oldies but goodies, some Surf, some British, some Hard, some Garage Band, some Progressive, and some Psychedelic Rock. I'm burned out with so much of the "same old same old" bar rock I listened to for too many years. Grunge, Screamo, Punk, Disco, most Country, and Glam Rock just bore me. I'll have to be selective when it comes to rock.
5. Reggae, Caribbean, Brazilian, African, Cuban, Latin, and other World music influence. Although, it's interesting to know the hand-drum and percussion parts, I'm more interested in their adaptation to drumset parts and/or adding them in directly for variety and texture. However, I don't want to be a percussionist. Nevertheless, it good for dubbing in parts on recordings, or in my teaching to add perspective and reach more people.
6. Odd-Time and Mixed-Time, especially in music from Tool, Dream Theater, and Lucuna Coil and others who have incorporated World Music into a Rock Fusion.
7. I'm very interested in Spirit-led Contemporary Christian Worship music. I've experienced the free-flow guidance of the Holy Spirit in directing the structure, direction, progression, and length of the music. It's rare to find musicians that can let go of the "steering wheel" and go beyond improvisation based on your own skill. It does take a high level of competence but also a lot of humility to "Let Go, and Let God" musically. It's extremely exhilarating to hear what just "happens." Beautiful and transcendent. I'd like to meet more people who can do this and play with them! All the skills I acquire are at His disposal. However, I'm not really interested in "entertaining the saints" in big churches. They are too programmed and structured. Their "form of godliness" quenches the Spirit and so is powerless. Religion turns me off. So, if and when I play in such a group, it will need to be for more "free-form, Spirit-led" worship experiences and outreach to a world that desperately needs to see, hear, and feel the "real thing" instead of lifeless religious ritual.

Techniques I'd like to bone up on:

1. Snare Drum Reading: I'm going to leave this mostly to my time with Donna and other advanced students. I'm more interested in adapting this to drumset warm-ups, drills, beats, fills, etc.
2. Drumset Chart Reading: I'd like to be more competent in playing through standards and making my own quick charts. I particularly like Figure interpretation. However, I want this to come after I've build more competence playing, so closer to the 6 month mark (3/17/14).
3. Rudiments: Again, I'm going to the leave the Snare Drum Rudiments, Stick-Control, and Chop-Building to my time with my advanced students. I'm more interested in adapting these to drumset warm-ups, drills, beats, fills, etc. I'd like to continue "fleshing out" the rudiment section of the CoreBeat System and get this

ultimately published – it's some revolutionary in the systematic categorization, study, creation of rudiments. Maybe I can come up with a "Rudimental Ritual" from my "Best of the Best" sheets, but not as complicated as Dawson's. However, I'd like to make this more drumset-oriented and so more musical and applicable for myself. Maybe I can take some of Rod Morgenstein's ideas?

4. Improve my Left-Hand Traditional Grip, but also the Matched Grip and explore more of Jim Chapin's, Sanford Moeller's, George Lawrence Stone's, and others techniques to help me play faster, easier, and for longer periods without hurting my hands or wrists.
5. Brushes: I think it's beautiful and fascinating so I'd like to learn some key ways to "fake it until I make it," but I don't want to spend too much time on this because I like using sticks more. Also, trios and small bands in quiet places that pay are tougher to come by and don't have as much "energy" usually. I'd like to explore brushes not only in Jazz but World music, like Latin and Brazilian. I have books by Cameron, Kirk, and Thigpen.
6. Single Bass Drum. I'd like to float more on my pedals like Gary Chester, Dave Weckl, and Virgil Donati. I'd like to find out if Sliding Doubles or other Doubles techniques are better than the Heel-Up, Toe-Ball, Ankle Pivot method I learned from Brian Harris that I've been using ever since. Also, whether Flat-Footed is useful, like I had first learned but rarely use. I'd like to nail down the appropriate seat height in relationship to these techniques. I learned hip 2" about knew but noticed many people sit higher to float better. Later on I can add more Double Bass Drum in, since the Styles I want to focus on don't really require this now.
7. Funk/Rock: All the steady-time feel ostinatos (like New Breed has), but also linear broken-time. Focus mainly on SD/BD dialogue with RH/HH ostinatos, and HH°/Ride Bell use for accentuation, phrasing, figures, etc. Authors of books I have I'd like to explore and "rip" to my "Best of Best" sheets are: Rick Latham, Ron Spagnardi, Jim Payne, Dave Weckl, Steve Smith, James Morton, and David Garibaldi.
8. Swing: LH/BD/HH independence, RH alternative patterns, and some polyrhythmic interpretations as long – as long as it's not too difficult or distracting. I'd like to interpret Figures and Long/Short rhythms better. I'd like to use some of my books by Pickering, Dawson, Riley, Spagnardi, Buddy Rich, Ron Fink, Ted Reed, and Dahlgren/Fine.
9. Shuffles: Explore the different 1/8 and 1/16 shuffles used in rock, blues, jazz, and country. I like the lift and energy alternative to swing and straight feels.
10. Linear: I'd like to explore Gary Chaffee, Rick Latham and others.