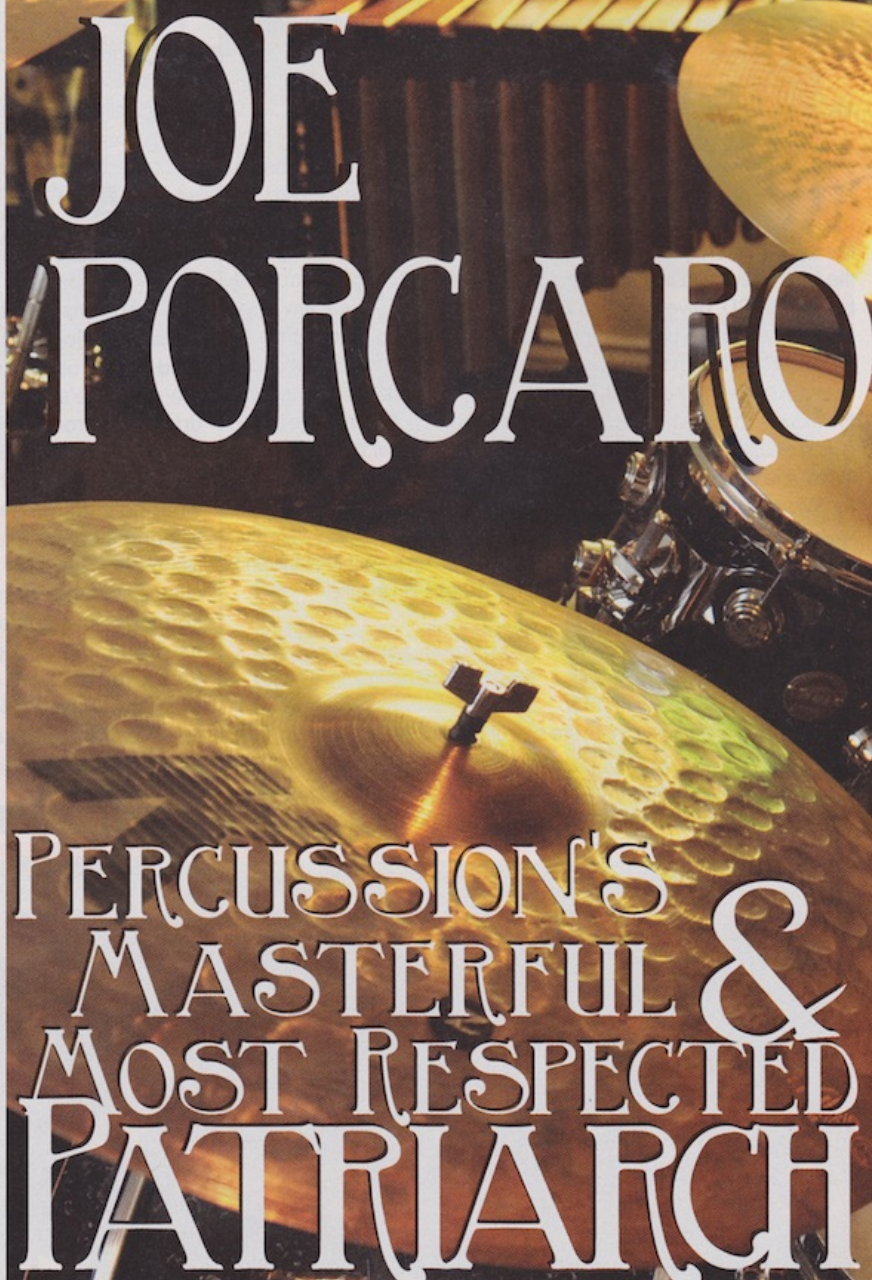


Papa Joe. Joe P. Jo Po. Boom Boom Pops. Mr. Porcaro. Endearing nicknames are usually associated with people whom we like to be around. This is definitely the case with Joe Porcaro. Those who know him know that he is the consummate gentleman; always welcoming anyone he meets with genuine interest and kindness. No matter where you come from, he makes you feel like you've known him for years, and makes you instantly feel good about yourself. A rare trait indeed, Joe is 'old school.' His warm, Italian-American demeanor is infamous, and, simply stated, Joe Porcaro is a percussion industry treasure. This world-renowned teacher, session master and percussion virtuoso never boasts, always compliments and continually inspires. His humble beginnings and path of extremely hard work, his distinguished success amidst inconceivable family struggles, is the stuff of legends. A term easily thrown around, it's a title entirely appropriate in this case.

Joe and his wife, Eileen, raised four beautiful and enormously talented children, instilling in them the value of compassion, empathy and respect. Their son Jeffrey, sadly gone from us much too early, remains one of music's most recorded, revered and important drummers. With his brothers, bassist Mike Porcaro and keyboardist Steve Porcaro, their Grammy-winning band Toto released some of popular music's biggest hits. Along with his successful career as a composer for many TV and film scores, Steve also composed one of Michael Jackson's biggest hits from the *Thriller* album, "Human Nature." Their sister Joleen also played percussion, and according to her brother Jeff, had the best rhythm in the family! With the crazy and demanding schedule of the music business, the family still to this day manages to reserve time each week to share a meal. In recent years, the Porcaros have endured immeasurable struggle and heartbreak, but amidst these unbelievable life challenges, it's truly inspiring how positive and grounded they are.

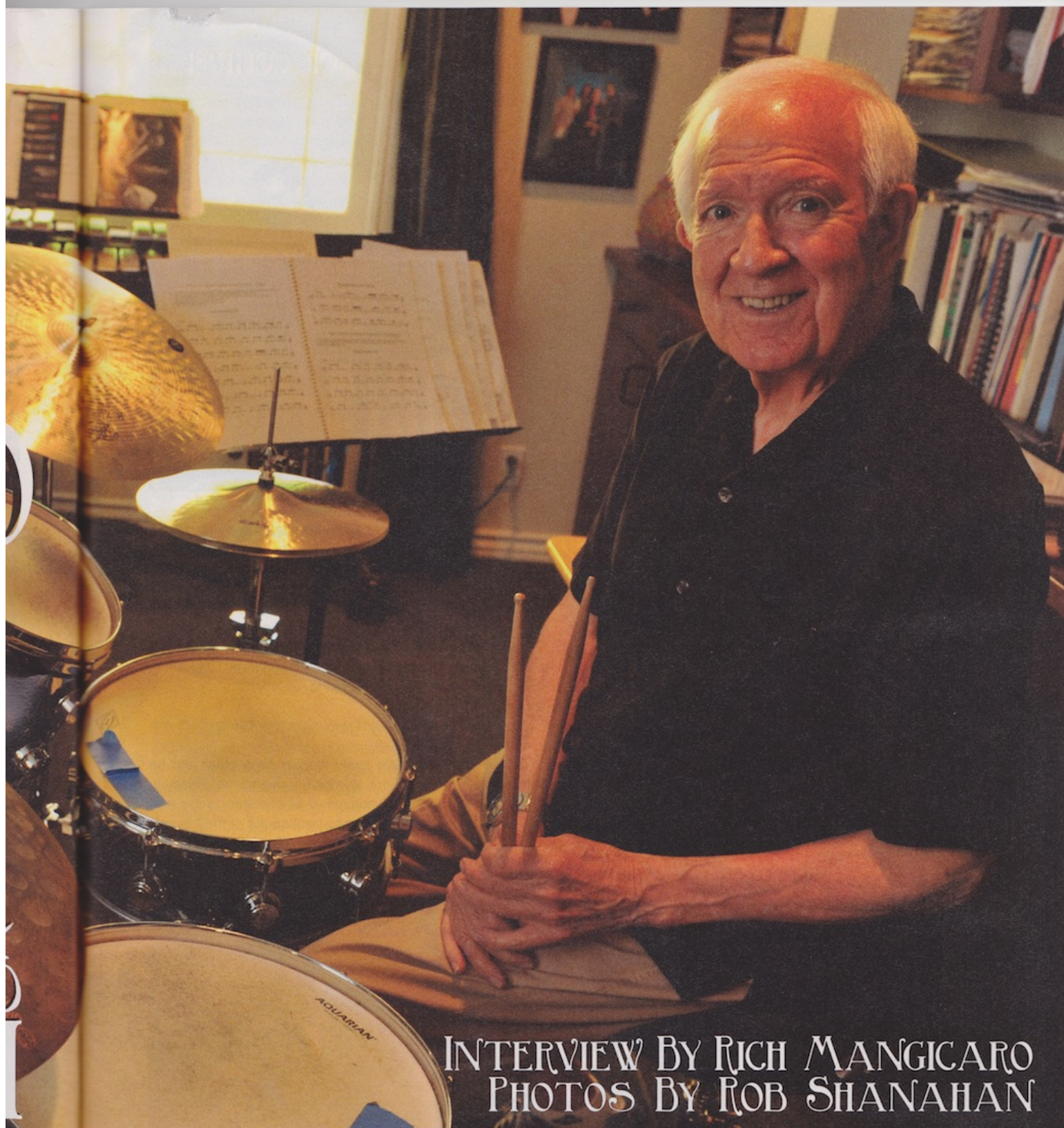
As Joe began telling his life story and how music became his calling, the sheer clarity of his recollection was amazing. The artists he's played with, the teachers who influenced him, the colleagues who helped him along the way—he concernedly and fondly pays homage to each of them. Joe Porcaro has performed on soundtracks for many of Hollywood's top grossing films, working with iconic composers such as Lalo Schiffrin, James Newton Howard, John Williams, Jerry Goldsmith, James Horner and Danny Elfman, to name just a few. His performances on television soundtracks and main titles include "Hogan's Heroes," "Hawaii Five-O," "Mission Impossible," "Charlie's Angels," "I Dream Of Jeannie" and many others. As an educator, Joe has written two world-renowned instruction books, *Odd Times* and *Joe Porcaro's Drum Set Method*, and was the co-chairman of the Percussion Institute of Technology (PIT) in its infancy, along with Ralph Humphrey. Now in his early 80s, Joe continues to teach and co-chairs the Percussion Department at the Los Angeles Music Academy (LAMA) in Pasadena, California, and still gigs at least once a month.

Yes, I did say his early 80s. We should all take heed.



JOE PORCARO

PERCUSSION'S MASTERFUL & MOST RESPECTED PATRIARCH



INTERVIEW BY RICH MANGICARO PHOTOS BY ROB SHANAHAN

Rich Mangicaro: How did this all begin for you? I believe your father was a musician, right?

Joe Porcaro: He was a carpenter by trade and also played the trumpet very well. In the Italian village where he was from, many of the men played musical instruments and performed at the summer festivals. When he came to the States, he played trumpet in an

Italian symphonic band. That band needed a snare drummer and he knew all the pieces from playing trumpet. He already had some natural drum chops, so he became their snare drummer. Back in Connecticut where I was raised, he belonged to an Italian-American World War Veterans club. He taught bugle and snare drum, as well as played in their drum and bugle corps.

RM: How did you start learning drums?

JP: My dad used to take me along with him to the drum corps' rehearsals. He was teaching the drummers the 2/4 and 6/8 drum cadences and I began learning them just by watching. After school, I'd set up my dad's snare and practice what I heard. At that time, my dad had a friend who gave him a small kit, which we had at

HAVING THE TALENT IS CRUCIAL OF COURSE...



the house. I'd set up the drums and play the street beats I learned, while keeping time with the bass drum. Then, when I was about nine, I became a member of the drum corps, playing field drum. By the time I was 10, my dad took me to the symphonic band rehearsals in Hartford and they wanted two snare drummers to play the cadences. I didn't read music yet, so I would play along with my dad. After the roll-off, I would drop out and my dad would continue playing. They even gave me a band uniform! I eventually became more interested about reading music, so I could continue playing along with dad. My first exposure to learning note values and time signatures was actually from a clarinet player in the band. Even though I was young, after a while, it started making sense to me. Then a few years later, we moved to Hartford and that's when I first met Emil Richards. We went to Catholic elementary school together and our priest came to the class one day and asked if there were any musicians. He wanted to put a band together for the CYO dances. I said I played snare in the drum corps, but I didn't own a drum set yet.

RM: Talk about your first drum set.

JP: Check this out, I used the corps' scotch bass drum and had spurs put on it. I didn't have any money and needed a foot pedal, so our priest bought a pedal from the local music store. I used my father's snare drum, got a cymbal holder and used one of the marching piatti [handheld cymbal] for my ride cymbal. Lastly, for a tom tom, I took a field drum and a long screwdriver and put it between the rods of the bass drum and the field drum: that was my tom-tom holder. That was my

first drum set. We would then rehearse and play mainly waltzes and polkas. No lessons yet, just started on my own. That's how I got started playing drum set.

RM: Did you have private instruction as a child? And, how old were you when you began taking lessons?

JP: Well, we used to have this theater in town where big bands played. I would go to the Friday matinees and watch the pit band. One time after they were done, I went to the stage door and met their drummer, Bob Schulze. I was about 13 at the time. I asked if he taught and he said yes, so I took a few lessons with him. Then one day, I went down to the local park, where they had a bandstand. I came down this hill and heard this big band, so I ran down and got right in the front and saw the drummer swingin' his butt off. I got so excited, went around

to the back and the stage door was open. I could see everything he was doing—I was freaking out! After they finished, I asked him if he taught and he said, with a cigar hanging out of his mouth, "Yeah, I teach." That drummer was Al Lepak. At that time, lessons were about two bucks and I shined shoes to pay for them. After my first lesson, that was it. I found my teacher.

RM: I didn't realize you went so far back with Al Lepak!

JP: We really took to each other and he helped it all make sense to me. Reading, time signatures: it all became clearer with him. He had just gotten out of the Marines and was going to New York to study, while teaching percussion at the Julius Hart School of Music, which is now the University of Hartford. I used to go down and watch him, bring him coffee, carry



his drums, whatever. Eventually, when I was about 16, I'd sit in with the rehearsal band on Saturdays and really got some incredible experience. I even got my Union card by that time so I could do gigs on the weekends. Because of my age though, I had to have a sponsor. A couple of years later, my sponsor recommended me to a bandleader, a trumpet player named Carl Angelica, who was looking for a drummer. Carl had this steady gig doing an all-gay review, five nights a week and he asked me to play. So at age 18, that was my first really serious gig: reading charts, the whole thing.

RM: Wow! Back then though, that type of show was probably more of an underground thing, right?

JP: Oh yeah. In fact, at our first rehearsal, the band leader told the actors and dancers, "If any of you guys mess with my young drummer, you're gonna hear from me!" And remember, my parents were from the 'old country,' so I couldn't tell them what kind of gig that was. And, they never asked. They just knew I was working and helping support the family, so they respected that. Even at 17 I was a professional Union musician, so they knew I was serious. I was still studying with Lepak and going to gigs with him where he'd let me sit in on society gigs, weddings, etc. I learned grooves like the foxtrot, various Latin feels, polkas, really an invaluable experience.

RM: Yeah, casuals are really great for expanding your knowledge of different styles. So you were doing big-band gigs, casuals, theater-type reviews, all by age 18. What about your early symphonic influence?

JP: When the Hartford Symphony started, I was about 19 and they were holding auditions. I went down and who was there—my first drum teacher, Bob Schulze! Anyway, I got the gig. I played a snare drum excerpt and a cymbal part from a Tchaikovsky symphony. Lepak was also in the section. Then, the guy who auditioned and got the mallet position eventually backed out, so I told Lepak about Emil. Soon as Lepak heard him, he got the gig immediately. So Emil, Al and I were in the symphony together. Also at that same time, Emil and I formed a jazz quartet with a blind piano player, our lifelong friend Dave Mackay. We were called the Tempo Four, and this is also when Emil changed his name from Radocchia to Emil Richards.

RM: Didn't you also get married around this time?

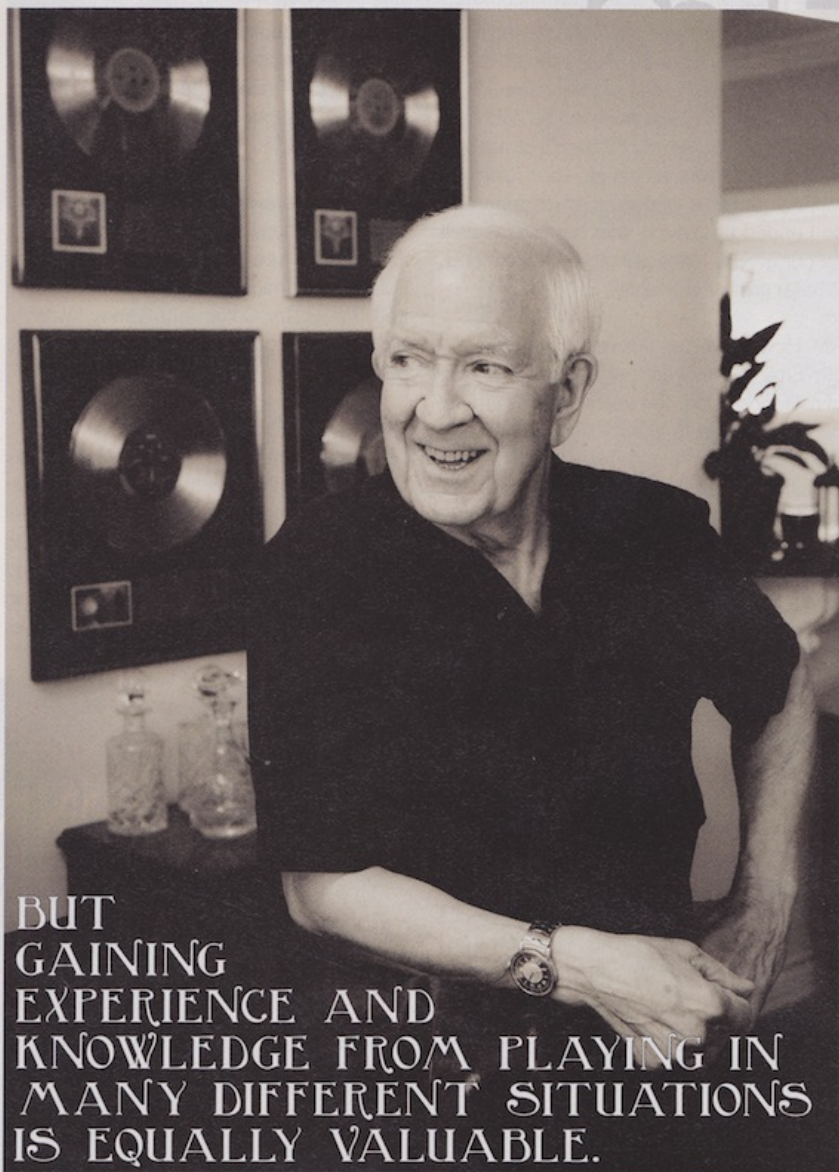
JP: Yes, I got married at age 23 and we had four kids in a row: Jeff, Mike, Steve and Joleen. But before the kids, I was working in various jazz clubs, which was my first experience playing five nights a week

around town. By this time, I was playing with the symphony and in the jazz-club scene while working as a chauffeur during the day. The club where I played was great because many great players like Zoot Sims, Al Cohn and others would come in. I was the house drummer so I got to play with a lot of great guys. That's where I met Mike Mainieri. We got to know each other and he liked the way

was better with Bobby, and given my new domestic responsibility, I went with Bobby. After about four months, I came home and it was then, while working at that club, when I met Mainieri, so I worked with Mike after that.

RM: When did you start playing mallets? That's an entirely different discipline.

JP: At that time, both Emil and I were



**BUT
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IS EQUALLY VALUABLE.**

I played. So, I did his album and went on the road with him.

RM: Was that your first road gig?

JP: Well, before working with Mainieri, a saxophone player named Joe Roccisano recommended me for the 'post-Dorsey' Tommy Dorsey Big Band. I went on the road with them for a month, all while Jeff, Mike and Steve were just infants. While I was on the road, I got a call from Tony Bennett's bass player and he told me Bobby Hackett was looking for a drummer. The money

drafted. The Korean War was happening and Emil had to go. I didn't, due to my asthma. The symphony was short a mallet player and Lepak told me, "You'd better get busy!" All along, he had been giving me mallet lessons, but now I really had to work on it. My reading got much better from this and eventually I was playing some really difficult pieces including "Porgy & Bess," one of the hardest xylophone parts. I memorized that sucker!

RM: Wow, I remember that part. We all tried

to tackle that in school! At that point, did your focus become mallets or drums?

JP: Both. I was still playing jazz gigs in town when Emil was discharged and came home. Right after he returned, he introduced me to a jazz pianist from Japan named Toshiko Akiyoshi. She needed a drummer so I ended up playing at a club in Boston named Storyville with her. I remember one time, Miles Davis came to town and played that club at the same time we were playing it, so we were opposite each other. Man, I'll never forget this: I had to follow Philly Joe Jones with Miles! The place was packed. We also alternated sets with Max Roach's group one week, which was amazing. Then Carmen McRae came in and needed a drummer; so I ended up playing with her too, as well as our group. I was onstage all night long. What a great experience!

RM: How did you end up moving to LA?

JP: Emil had moved there after he got out of military service. Ten years after his arrival, he came home to Connecticut to visit and said, "Come out and visit me!" By this time, Emil had established himself in film and TV soundtrack sessions. I was working day and night, not making that much money and supporting four kids, so at first, I hesitated. I was doing *Man Of LaMancha* and was getting bored with the whole pit thing, so

one day I talked to Eileen and we decided together that I should go check LA out.

RM: What was your first LA experience like?

JP: I went with Emil on his sessions and he was doing everything: TV, film, jingles, you name it. Back in those days, we'd leave the house for an eight or nine AM call and sometimes, not get home until midnight. It was incredible. I really observed what was going on. He took me to a Don Ellis gig and I loved all the odd-time stuff they were doing. I had experience already with odd-time, from the symphony and also playing for belly dancers.

RM: Who were some of the other players back then, also working in the studios?

JP: Let's see...Larry Bunker, Victor Feldman, Gene Estes, also Frank Carlson, Lou Singer, Irv Cotler and Kenny Watson. Most of these guys are retired now, or have passed on.

RM: How long was that first trip?

JP: I was there only a week. While I was there, I realized that I had to work more on my four mallet and tympani chops, if I was ever going to consider that career. So I told Emil to give me a year. I went home and worked my butt off and in exactly one year, I moved: August 1966. It took us two weeks

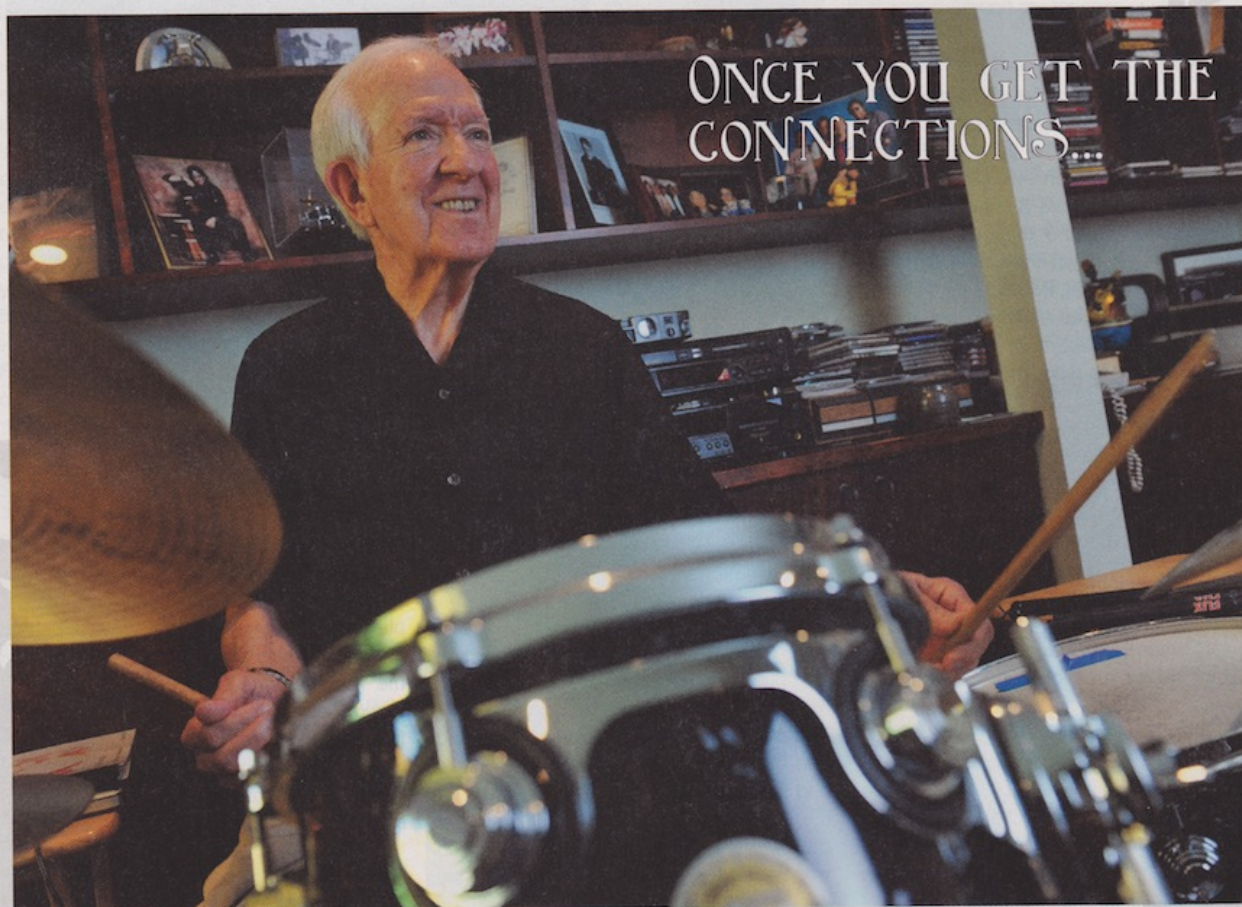
to drive there and by our second week, I was working playing casuals. Our first house was in Burbank, near NBC Studios and we lived on the same street as actor, now director, Ron Howard. He and Jeff were friends and used to hang together.

RM: When you got to LA, how did you first begin acquiring work, considering you were the new guy there? Was it Emil that helped you break in?

JP: Right around that same time, Emil actually left the country for a year, to travel and to study meditation. But, yes, Emil was instrumental with many introductions that helped me. He let me do it my way though, and I had to prove myself. He suggested I join the Musician's Contact Service, which was a good way for the contractors to get to know your name. He also suggested I reach out to other drummers. One of those drummers was Chuck Flores. Chuck was really nice and told me about the Union Big Band rehearsals, so I started going to play at those and eventually, guys started recommending me. I met a few bandleaders and in December of that year, I worked 23 casuals!

RM: How did you end up playing with the Don Ellis Band? They were a really hot band in the '60s!

JP: I went to visit my friend Joe Roccisano



and attended some of their rehearsals. I began hanging with the band members and one thing led to another. I met Don and he said he needed a percussionist and asked me to join the band. I of course agreed—it was right up my alley. I played timbales, toys and some drum set too. That was a fantastic band.

RM: I think that many people don't realize that your experience and path to success comes from doing it yourself...learning and working from a very young age. I think when people think of Joe Porcaro, the player and respected teacher, they think you did the college route. You really did all this from just working and from establishing your network of connections.

JP: I'm a real street player. This is important—this is what true experience can do for you. Having the talent is crucial of course, but gaining experience and knowledge from playing in many different situations is equally valuable. I was able to musically switch gears. For example, when I played in the symphony, I played the dotted eighth and sixteenth notes the way they should be for that style. When I would play a jazz gig, I knew you had to swing the eighth notes.

RM: Didn't you also play drums for a circus once?

JP: Yes, a couple of times. First time was back East with the Barnum & Bailey Circus. I played percussion and Lloyd McCausland [from Remo] played drums. By that time, I had already acquired 17 years of experience with the Hartford Symphony and also doing various musicals, so I was used to playing many different styles. One of the first LA contractors that called me was Jules Chaikin. He asked me if I wanted to play drums for the Russian Circus, a week stint at the LA Forum. That gig was a trip. While I had my hands full concentrating on the music, I also had to keep my eyes on the various acrobats, the high-wire acts, the horse acts, etc. They all had commands for me but the conductor didn't care, he just wanted me to play the charts. It was nuts! I made notes as not to miss anything, it was a great gig to bring the kids, they loved it.

RM: Which experience would you say was instrumental in getting you into the recording scene in LA?

JP: Good question. I got a call from the service [Musician's Contact Service] to sub for a studio percussionist. It was for a rehearsal on a piece that the LA Phil's tympanist and composer Bill Kraft had written. I got nervous, so I asked to see the part ahead of time. I saw the music and knew I could play it, so I went to the rehearsal and met the other percussionists. Eventually Bill Kraft came in; I introduced



myself and he got very upset. He didn't even know I was subbing! I assured him I could play the part, but he said that there was also other music I had to play, including a few Pierre Boulez pieces and one by Stravinsky. Well, we did the rehearsal and it went fine, so Bill asked me if I could do the upcoming concerts. I knew that this was an important connection for me, so I decided to take the gig. Also in those rehearsals were Kenny Watson and Ralph Greirson, who later on became good friends and important colleagues.

RM: So, you were creating your own studio network connections?

JP: Yes. Later on, I acquired some of my gear from Kenny and we became good friends. So many things came from that rehearsal experience. Bill Kraft remembered me when the LA Philharmonic played the Hollywood Bowl and they needed another percussionist; he recommended me and I got hired. Little did I know that by learning the Boulez notation system in those rehearsals, it would later connect me with Lalo Schifrin, who eventually called me to play on one of his film scores. He had

attended those rehearsals too and was a major fan of Pierre Boulez's unique system of composition.

RM: What was your first film score date?

JP: I think it was called *Hell In The Pacific*. One percussion effect that we used was to turn a concert bass drum sideways and put rice on the head—when you hit it, the rice would rattle, which helped the jungle scenes. Another effect we've used over the years is to take a coin or triangle beater and

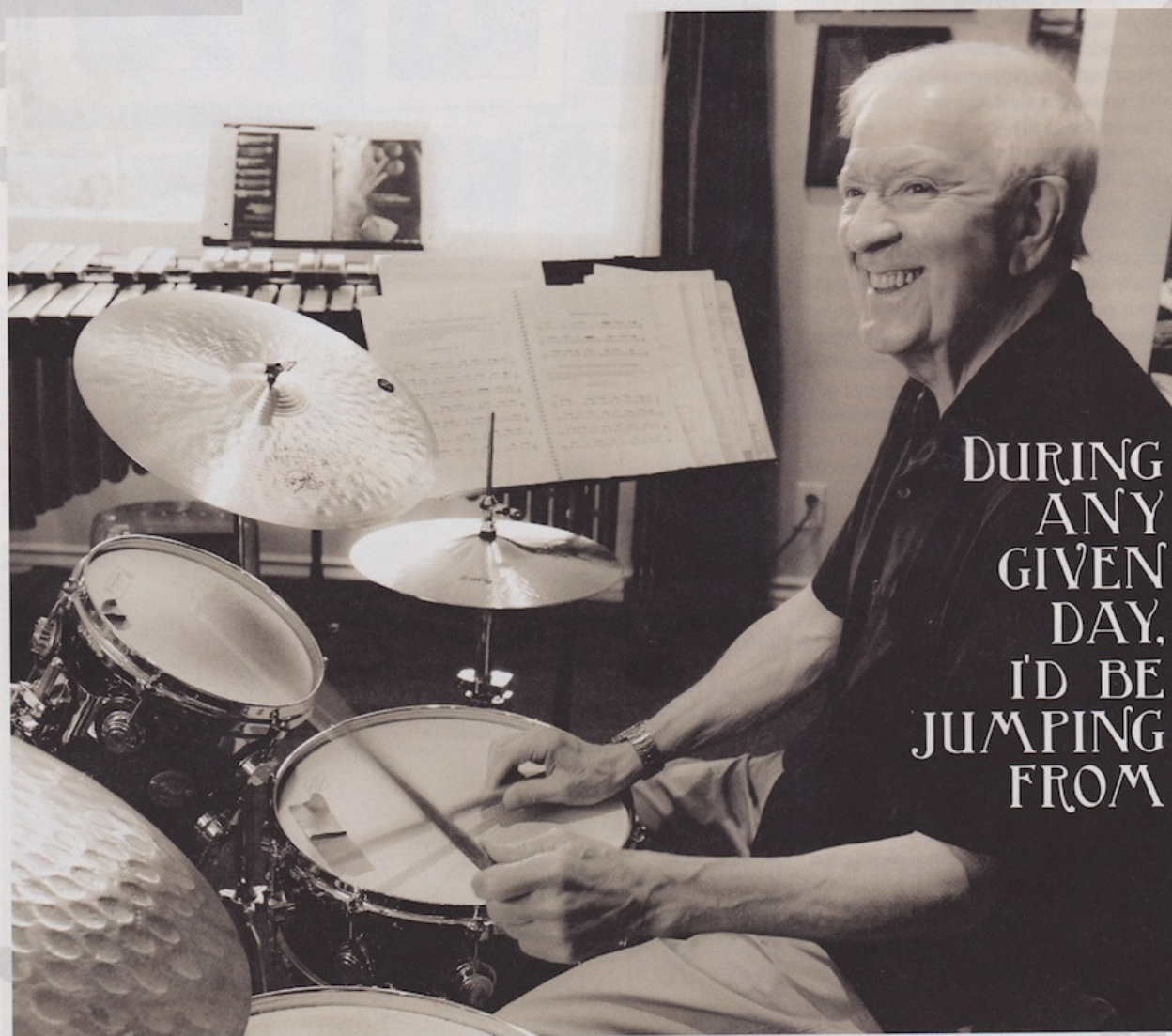
RM: I love all the alternative ways to use percussion. You and Emil could write a book about just that! As you were getting more calls to do film-score sessions, were you still playing drums live?

JP: Yeah, I was doing so many things. Right at that time, I got a call from my old friend Dave Mackay, who was playing with Chet Baker and they needed a drummer for a week at Shelly's Manne-hole—a famous jazz club owned by the great Shelly Manne. Of course I took that gig. What's important

sessions back then, so I began getting calls every week from Bobby. Plus, back then, other composers would attend scoring sessions that they weren't working on, so the network of musicians became familiar to all of them.

RM: So would you say the Bobby Helfer connection really helped launch your film-score recording career?

JP: Yes, he and Bill Kraft. From Bill and the contractors at Paramount, along with work from



DURING
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DAY,
I'D BE
JUMPING
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scrape a gong or thundersheet. It's very effective for scary scenes. And I have to mention the Waterphone, while we're talking about percussive effects. For those who don't know what it is, the Waterphone has a stainless steel resonator bowl that usually contains a small amount of water, with a cylindrical neck and has brass rods around the rim of the bowl. You play the rods with a violin bow and it has a very ghostly sound; it can really make your arm hairs stand up!

about the Chet Baker gig though, was getting to know Shelly. He'd heard that I was both a drummer and percussionist and he was doing a big TV show at the time called "Daktari." He put my name in for it and within a week, I was doing that show. My TV soundtrack work began coming in. At that time, I was also working with The Don Ellis Band, and through Don's pianist, Mike Lang, I met Bobby Helfer. Bobby was contracting many of the major film score

Helfer, I was working every week. So you can see where I'm going here—how interconnected players are and how important it is to be prepared and get along with everyone you meet. I can't stress this enough: Once you get the connections, you have to be ready.

RM: Can you recall some of the big movies you worked on back then?

JP: Oh, there are so many. Let me see... *Breakout* with Charles Bronson; *The*

Getaway and *Bullet* featuring Steve McQueen; *Dirty Harry*; *Enter The Dragon*, the Bruce Lee movie; *The Godfather*; *The Deer Hunter*...

RM: With soundtrack sessions, many people don't realize that the first time you see the music is when you walk in the studio that day. They don't realize when watching their favorite movie, the music was created by musicians who are sight-reading. This in itself is a true art...talk about this.

the essence. That's all we'd get before the recording started. So yeah, you had to be a great reader. And I've seen some parts that were either very hard or near impossible, maybe written by someone who was not a percussionist. Then we'd have to discuss it with the composer. We had to make him or her happy, but be able to execute it as well. The tympani parts on movie scores have gotten crazy—very difficult and very often, follow the contra-bass lines. The tympanist generally brings between eight and ten

on *The Fugitive*, during one of the chase scenes where Harrison Ford was running from the cops, there was a parade scene and you saw a drum corps marching. The recording they had of the drum corps was so bad that James asked me to rewrite all the drum parts to try and match what we were seeing on film. I did that and then we all went in and re-recorded the parade scene and doubled each other, to sound big. Check it out when you watch that film.



A RECORD DATE, TO A JINGLE, TO A STUDIO CALL.

JP: When the music is passed out, there are certain players in the percussion section that are considered specialists—mainly the tympani and mallet players. All the other parts are split amongst the rest of us. Once we begin working, the composer or conductor would maybe do one or two run-throughs, make a few adjustments and then the red light would go on. The sessions were broken down into morning and afternoon, three-hour sessions each. Time was of

tymps now, just to cover it. One might think that by using that many drums, the player would then avoid the need for tunings within a given cue, not true. They also have to tune while playing, even with that many drums!

RM: There really should be a video filmed of a film score tympanist in action!

JP: For sure. On James Newton Howard's scores for *Alive* and *The Fugitive*, I played tymps on those. One interesting thing

RM: Can you talk a bit about working for Union scale? I think many musicians today either don't understand the basic breakdown or never get the chance to work on a Union date.

JP: When you first open the music—called 'the book'—the first instrument you pick up pays Union Scale, which is a set amount per hour, decided by the Music Union. The second instrument you play is your first double, the third would be your second double, and so on. So, the first instrument

pays full union scale. Your first double you play is double the union rate; the second double pays 50% of that and the rest of the doubles pay a percentage of the second double. Note: if you're considered a specialist, i.e. tympanist, vibe player or mallet player, playing one instrument through the session, usually you're initially paid double-scale, as you're reserved to be that specialist. The percussion family is broken down into a 'family of instruments'. Examples of the families: tympani, vibes, mallets include xylophone, marimba, bells, chimes. Latin instruments include congas, bongos, timbale, toys, etc. Percussion includes piatti, snare drum, etc. Electronics. Middle Eastern includes frame drums, doumbek, etc. Indian includes tabla, kanjira, etc. There's more to it than this, but this gives you an idea of how it's broken down. I would suggest checking with the Union for really getting detailed info on how the instruments are listed.

RM: Can you recall a few films that you worked on that stand out as really special experiences?

Those days where you went home and thought, "Wow, what a day that was!"

JP: Well, there are quite a few. One would have to be *The Godfather*. What a great score. Also, Maurice Jarre's score for *Gorillas In The Mist*, there was a lot of percussion on that. Anything I did with Jerry Goldsmith. His score for *Star Trek-The Motion Picture* was great. I also worked on Chinatown with him. Also I have to mention Dave Grusin's score for *On Golden Pond*, it was just beautiful. It really depicted the emotion of the script. And, of course, *Rocky*, many people remember that theme as much as they remember the film itself. Bill Conti really nailed it with that score.

RM: You worked on one of the eeriest film scores I've ever heard: Howard Shore's *Seven*. He also composed the music for *Silence Of The Lambs*, *Gangs Of New York* and more recently *Hugo*. What an amazing composer. He really knows how to illustrate the scenes that make our skin crawl! What about working on the music for *The Exorcist*?

JP: Well the main title, which everybody

knows, was of course "Tubular Bells," by Mike Oldfield. Lalo Schiffrin was the film's original composer but his score was rejected by the film's director. Lalo had written six minutes of music for the initial film trailer, but audiences were reportedly too scared by its combination of sights and sounds. So [William] Friedkin ended up using modern classical compositions and some other music by Jack Nitzsche. But, we still got paid!

RM: That's so interesting to hear. Music plays such an important role in horror films and obviously that one has more controversy than we realized. Joe, once a big film you've worked on gets released and you go to see it, what's your experience? Are you generally pleased or disappointed with how the score is mixed?

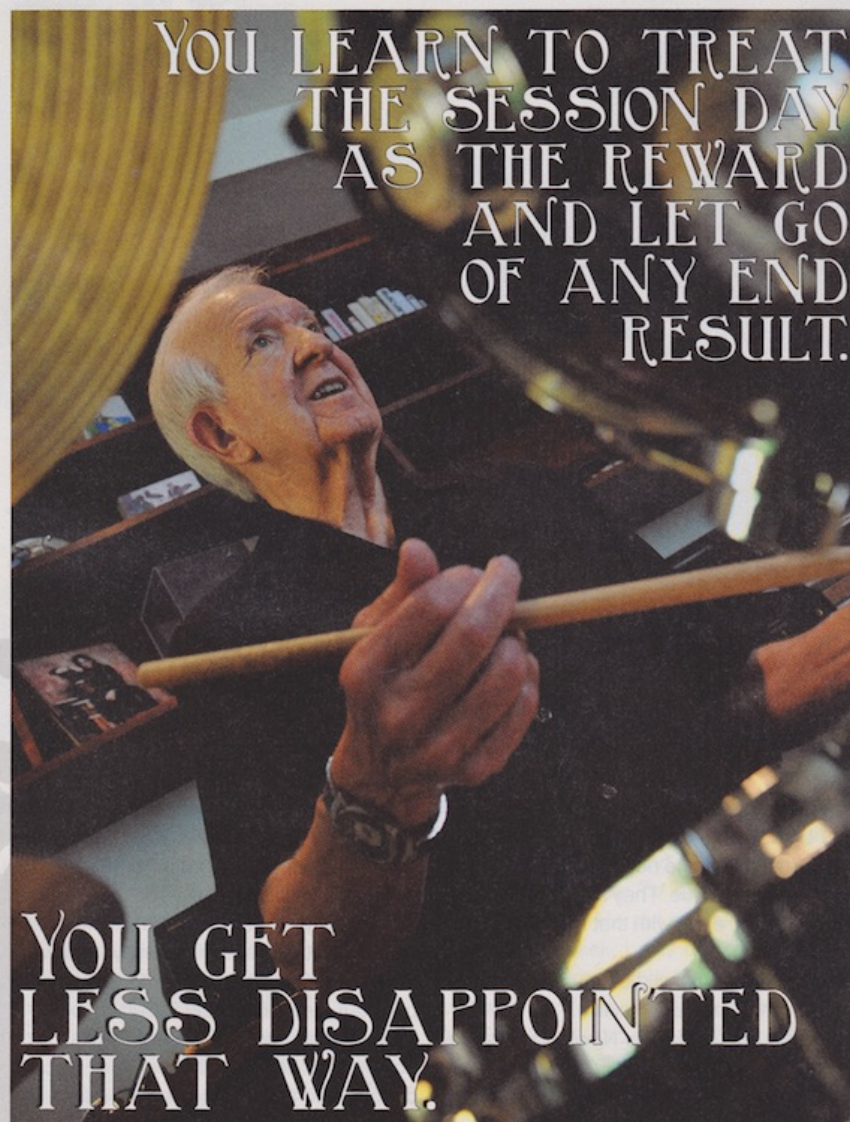
JP: Both. I sometimes get bugged when the music is buried under car crashes or whatever sound effects they're using. When we did *Waterworld*, Mike Fisher and I got into some hip stuff with bata and tabla, and we felt great about it. Then of course when we saw the film, you couldn't hear any of it. Many times, when the recording is finished, the director will come in with the final word and think the percussion is getting in the way of the scene, so it's either mixed way down or edited. So, we're at their mercy. You learn to treat the session day as the reward and let go of any end result. You get less disappointed that way.

RM: You had studied tabla years ago, right?

JP: Yeah, first with Harihar Rao. I took a few lessons from him. Some of Lalo Schiffrin's scores required tabla and he asked me to play. Later, I studied with John Bergamo for about six months. In the past 10 years I've taken some lessons with Aloke Dutta. [Aloke's other pupils include Danny Carey, Terry Bozzio, Simon Phillips and Mike Fisher.]

RM: Tell me about your recording work in the rock and pop scene?

JP: Well, even before the film recording work, I was doing record dates with a group of session players now known as "The Wrecking Crew." We recorded with Nancy Sinatra, Duane Eddy, Boots Randolph, Little Richard and Glen Campbell, to name a few. Glen was also the guitar player on a lot of those sessions; he was a major session guy. Back then, I played marimba for the Rolling Stones, percussion on Pink Floyd's *The Wall* and I played congas for a Joe Cocker record. There's a lot more, but those come to mind right now. Oh, and with Sonny & Cher, I did a lot of their record dates. I was also doing tons of jingles at that time; sometimes two or three a day. During any





given day, I'd be jumping from a record date to a jingle, to a studio call [film session]. We were incredibly busy. I remember one time I wanted to take some time off, to go back East to see family and I had to turn down 23 studio calls to take the vacation. And that's not including the calls that came in after I began the trip.

RM: That brings up a good point. With any line of work, one needs time off. How does a busy session player plan this?

JP: Many times, it's a very last-minute thing. You see a window in your schedule and you have to grab it. Believe it or not, even if you're established and you take time off, when you come back, it can take a while to build the momentum back up. It's a very unforgiving industry. The product is the bottom line. All of us, no matter what level, have those thoughts of, "If I take time off, leave town, take a tour, will I still get the calls when I return?"

RM: I remember talking to Jim Keltner once about this. He advised most wisely though, to appreciate the down time.

Let's talk about your children. When did they start getting into music?

JP: Well, Jeff and Mike began learning music in elementary school in Connecticut. Jeff had a practice pad kit. He, Mike and Steve were freaking over The Beatles back then, learning all their music. They lip sync'd to their big hits at school functions in the area and won first prize at one. That was a big thing for them.

RM: How old were they when you realized that they were getting serious about making music their life?

JP: At a very young age I used to show Jeff stuff at the drum set. When he was eight or nine, I'd take him to the drum shop where I was teaching and sometimes he'd get some instruction there. By the time he attended high school, he was already playing casuals and weddings, stuff like that. Their school had an incredible music program and Jeff played in the school's musicals. He really learned a lot about legit playing and improved his ensemble reading there. His school, Grant High School, had some great musicians attending, in the likes of Tom Scott, Steve Lukather and Michael Landau, along with Mike and Steve P. Near the school, there was this electronics store and they had a studio there. Jeff used to play on demos, on his way back home from school. Right around that time, I took him to a Glen Campbell rehearsal, for Glen's live TV show I was doing. Jeff was about 16.

Now, David Paich's father Marty Paich was the conductor for the band. It was summertime, so Marty also brought David to the rehearsal, and sometimes, let him sit in on piano. I introduced Jeff to David, and one day we took a lunch break. On our way to lunch, the contractor asked me who Jeffery was and then told me that I shouldn't bring him to rehearsals. While we were gone, Jeff and David stayed behind and jammed together. Paul Humphrey was the drummer for the show; I played percussion. When we came back from our break, Paul said, "Who's that playing my drums? That kid can play some shit!" I

said, "That's my son Jeff." And there ya go, before you knew it, David was coming to our house and jamming with Jeff. Soon after, Jeff and David, along with my son Mike, formed a band called Rural Still Life. They played school dances, and also every Sunday at a jazz club called Dantes. By this time, David was making a name for himself, writing for people like Glen Campbell. Rural Still Life would rehearse every night in our garage and there was this Battle Of The Bands each year at the Hollywood Bowl. They entered the competition and I think they came in fourth place. The judges were heavyweights: Lalo Schiffrin, Henry Mancini, cats like that. When they were handing out the awards though, that night they presented a new award that they'd never done before, for the "Outstanding Musician" of the evening, and Jeff got it. After that, people around town started talking about him.

RM: So, here are three of the guys from Toto already playing out and getting some notice when they were young. Was the music they were playing the early beginning of Toto tunes?

JP: Well, they weren't just playing rock, they were also into stuff like Blood, Sweat & Tears, you know, more jazz-rock style, and Jeff was playing the shit out of that stuff. They really created a stir playing Dantes, and a lot of music industry heavyweights used to come and check them out.

So, now Jeff's name is starting to get around the studio scene and guys were starting to ask about him. One day, Rural Still Life was playing a Halloween dance at



a local park and Jules Chaikin, the top contractor in town, came to see them and was impressed with Jeff. During a break, Jules went up to Jeff and asked if he was related to Joe Porcaro, and Jeff said, "He's my Dad." The next day, Jules called me and said, "Why didn't you tell me that you had a son that could play like that? Can he read?" He then asked me to bring Jeff down to audition for a rehearsal band at A&M Studios, led by Jack Daugherty, the producer of The Carpenters. Now dig this—the drummer normally doing those rehearsals was Hal Blaine and sometimes Hal would get hung up on a record date. So they were looking for a drummer to sub for Hal and the rehearsals were held on Saturday. Jeff was 17 at the time and still in high school. That band consisted of all the top Hollywood studio musicians.



RM: One of the things I remember so fondly about Jeff was his confidence and his charisma. He would walk into a room and that room would change. Did

he have that early on? Was he nervous?

JP: Not at first, but when he found out who the other cats were in the band, he did get a little nervous. When he thought about it more, he started panicking, so he asked his friend Kelly Shanahan to come with him. They get there and Jeff says to Jack, "Hey, I brought a friend of mine, maybe you should hear him, he reads better than I do."

RM: Wow, that's interesting. As you know, Jeff had a reputation for recommending other drummers for a session or gig, if he felt he wasn't right for it. That started way back then!

JP: Oh yeah! And meanwhile, Jim Keltner was also playing as a sub for Hal. Jim had just recorded a hit record at that time with Delaney and Bonnie.

Anyway, they heard Jeff, they liked him, and he began rehearsing with the band every Saturday, and they would record every rehearsal. This was 1971 and they made an album from this called Jack Daugherty & The Class of 1971. Both Jeff and Jim played on it, along





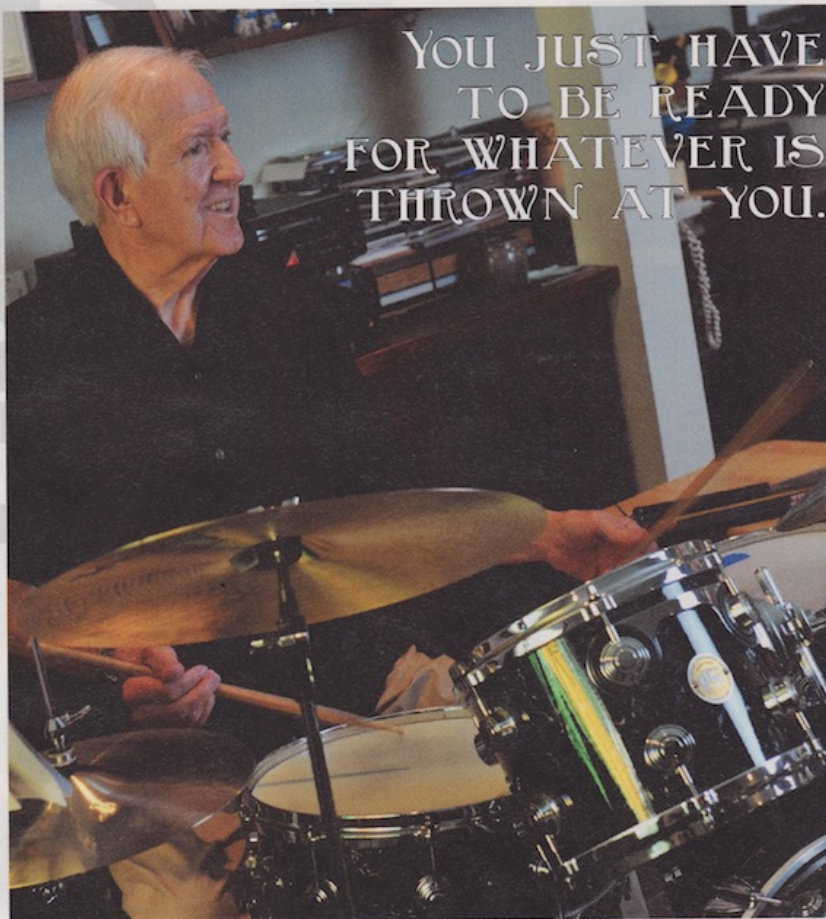
with Hal Blaine, Paul Humphrey and John Gueri—and here's Jeff at just 17 years old! Just after that, in January of '72, Toto's original bass player David Hungate was working on a Sal Marquez session at Leon Russell's house and Keltner was supposed to be playing drums.

Hungate recalls, "I wanted the chance to play with Keltner. By the time I got there, they were running the tune and the drums were somewhere in another room. I put on the phones, thinking it was Keltner playing and he was knocking me out! We cut a track and I went in to meet Jim and was shocked to open the door and see this little kid with a deep 'hipster' voice. It was Jeff. At that same time, I was playing with Sonny & Cher. Willie Ornelas was playing drums and doing a good job, but Jeff was Jeff, so I lobbied hard for them to hire him. I think Sonny had worked with David Paich and of course he and Jeff went way back, so it was natural to hire David. My feeling has always been that Toto really started when Paich met Jeff and it built from there. I was just lucky to get in on it."

RM: Ah! I was going to ask you how Jeff got the Sonny & Cher gig at such a young age.

JP: Yep, Willie Ornelas had to leave. After Hungate told Sonny about Jeff, the next thing he knew was he gets a call to come to Sonny & Cher's house. Jeff asked me to go with him, but I waited outside while he auditioned. He got the gig that night and they wanted him to go on the road. He hadn't yet graduated high school and I told him he couldn't go until he graduated. Jeff insisted he was going, so my wife went to the school's principal and we found out that he already had enough credits to graduate. Considering this and the fact that Jeff was so active with all the school's music activities, the decision was made between the principal and us, to let him go, providing he came back to attend the graduation ceremonies. They were on the road for a while and eventually, Sonny & Cher got signed for the TV show. Instead of using one of the established studio drummers in town, Sonny insisted they use Jeff





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on the show. Sonny did get flack from his musical director and producer of the show. They thought Jeff wouldn't have been able to do all the reading required, as well as play all the different music styles for such a variety show. Sonny talked them into letting Jeff play one show, and Jeff having the ears he had, nailed it. But here's the funny part of this story—the guy who was contracting that show was the contractor for the Glen Campbell show—the guy who told me never again to bring Jeff to a rehearsal. And now here he is hiring Jeff for "The Sonny & Cher Show!"

RM: That's so inspiring! How soon after that did you and Jeff begin working on the same gigs?

JP: We did some Sonny & Cher dates and sessions together. Also, Marty Paich began using Jeff on TV recording dates, like the "Ironside" TV show. We did Boz Scaggs's *Silk Degrees* together, which was basically Toto as Boz's band. Through Jeff and Paich, James Newton Howard came on the scene; he was a keyboard player and arranger for Elton John. James began doing all the string arrangements for Toto. Years later, Jeff, Emil and I began playing drums and percussion for all of James's film scores. We all did a direct-to-disc record called *James Newton Howard & Friends*, a band that Steve P. put together on Scheffeld Labs, which became

quite an in-demand release. [Editor's note: the drum track on "Tandoori" is a must, to be heard by every drummer.] Eventually, James became the big-time writer that he is today.

RM: What about Steve and Mike?

JP: Steve P.'s band in high school consisted of Steve Lukather, Michael Landau, John Pierce and he had Carlos Vega as his drummer. When he turned 17, he left high school early, like Jeff, to tour with Gary Wright in support of his *Dream Weaver* album. Mike was freelancing around town, doing his thing and ended up playing with Michael Franks and Seals & Crofts. After *Silk Degrees* was released, Jeff and Steve toured with Boz, with Mike joining Boz's band for later tours. Later on, Jeff and Steve had won multiple Grammy Awards for *Toto IV* and their bassist David Hungate decided to move to Nashville. Mike then became the bass player for Toto. So, you see how this all works: had Jeff not come to that Glen Campbell rehearsal with me that day, he might not have met David Paich. It's all connected somehow.

RM: I remember the year they won all the Grammys for *Toto IV* very fondly. It just felt like Toto saved popular music that year!

JP: Oh yeah, that was a great night. I was

so proud of them. Also, another one of my proudest moments of the boys was when they did the score for the film *Dune*, that sci-fi movie, starring Sting. We did the music at Jeff's studio and there was a lot of percussion. It was a lot of fun for us. Jeff also directed one of Toto's videos for their song "Till The End," as well as created the artwork for many of their albums. He had many sides of his artistic expression. And Steve also scored the music for the Eddie Murphy film, *Metro*, which was incredible. He wrote a real tough score. Since then, he's written a lot of great music. Currently, Steve is writing the music for FX's show "Justified."

RM: I know you have worked for Frank Sinatra. Talk about some of the great singers you've played for?

JP: I first worked for Sinatra back in the '60s, playing at a political event when Hubert Humphrey was running for president. I'll never forget that—Buddy Rich was also on the same bill as us. Then later on, I played percussion on some events with Frank, along with Liza Minnelli; one of which was The Super Bowl. In '93, right towards the end of his career, I played on his *Duets* album. We recorded the orchestra at Capitol Records and Frank was there with us. He sang his scratch vocals as we tracked, then did his final vocals later. I remember one night he got bugged with the woodwind section, so he took the baton from the conductor and lead the orchestra himself. He knew what he was doing. Then, back in the '70s, I played on a lot of the live TV shows for Peggy Lee, Bobby Darin, Smothers Brothers, Glen Campbell, they all had variety shows. Dean Martin, Sammy Davis, a lot of great singers were guests on those shows. That was a special time in television.

RM: Absolutely. We always looked forward to those shows. It was exciting to see who the guests were. When you stayed up late for "The Tonight Show," it was special. It seems that today's nighttime TV hosts all have the same monologue. What about jazz records you've played drums on. Do you have any favorites?

JP: I did a record for Singer's Unlimited and a couple with Roger Kellaway, which I like a lot. I've always loved the record I did with Mike Mainieri. I also played on a Gerry Mulligan record, both John Guerin and I played on that. And of course, all the records I've done with Emil Richards are very special to me. The first album I did in LA was with Emil, a record called *New Time Element*, which was all in odd meters. That was a fun challenge.

RM: When did you begin teaching at PIT?

JP: Early '80s. The school first began as GIT, for guitar students. When they added the bass and drum programs, I was approached, along with Ralph Humphrey. We basically split up the categories; I taught jazz and playing technique, and Ralph handled the rock and odd-meter stuff. Of course, we both crossed over for certain needs. We also brought Joey Baron in to teach jazz drumming. He's a wonderful jazz drummer, totally underrated: one of the best jazz drummers anywhere, for sure. Many might know him for his 'outside' playing stuff, but he's a true bebop player and can really play anything. You should hear him play samba. Man, I miss him. He's a very musical, classy drummer.

RM: Do you remember some of the students you taught back in the day, who are now successful drummers, out there working?

JP: Let's see, Toss Panos, Curt Bisquera, Matt Laug and Enzo Todesco, these guys came through early on. And Ed Roscetti; he didn't actually study at the school, but was studying privately with me. After a while he ended up as one of our teachers at the school. He's still teaching there to this day and is a really talented instructor and published author. Oh, and there's Taka Numazawa, he's one of the top drummers in Japan. He was very close with Jeff and wrote a book about him; he called Jeff his 'drum brother.' Maria Martinez also worked with me and she ended up teaching here too. Bob Zimmitti and Alan Estes, two guys who are now very busy in the film session scene, worked with me.

RM: I've met quite a few of your students over the years, many became very busy players. Some I signed to Paiste! Your prior students stretch around the world. Speaking of published authors, let's talk about your books. Did you get the idea for your first book while you were teaching at PIT?

JP: Actually, my first book's conception started way back before I came to LA. My *Odd-Meter* book idea started when I was working with The Don Ellis Band. We did a lot of odd-meter stuff in that band. Also, working with Emil and always talking shop with him inspired me to write that book. I wrote that book in honor of Don's previous drummer, Steve Bohannon, who tragically lost his life in an auto accident. I loved the way he played and was really into him. After that, from all my work on sessions and live dates, I began keeping notes on licks, figures and fills that I played, or was asked to play. I'd compiled quite a collection from the varied situations I worked in. As I started assembling the ideas for the book, I realized that all this stuff was basically snare drum rudiments orchestrated on the drum kit. As

I wrote, I applied it all to different styles, and before I knew it, I had enough material for another book. I remember one time I was on a film session, and between takes, I would have my manuscript out, writing figures and taking notes. Shelly Manne was on the date and came over and asked, "Joe, what the hell are you doing?" I told him I was working on some stuff for a drum-method book and he kidded me about it, "You don't need that stuff. Who plays rudiments? Just play the drums!" He was always great for a conversational debate and was such a natural. But, if you listen to Max or Philly Joe Jones, you can hear that Philly studied out of the Wilcoxon book. Shelly really dug Philly Joe, so I told him, "If you're playing like Philly, you're playing rudiments!" [As we were talking, Joe's dog Philly Joe, a very enthusiastic Jack Russell, was insistently panting next to us, cracking us up!]

RM: Do you recall a session or film cue where rudiments were the key ingredients to a scene's success?

JP: One time we were doing a Henry Mancini score and there was this chase scene. I was on percussion, and Shelly was on drums. The producers wanted the drums to sound like a train and weren't happy with what was coming from the drums. So on our next break, I showed Shelly a groove that Jeffrey showed me—something he heard Steve Gadd play. It was inverted paradiddles, sped up on the snare, along with the feet playing in four or

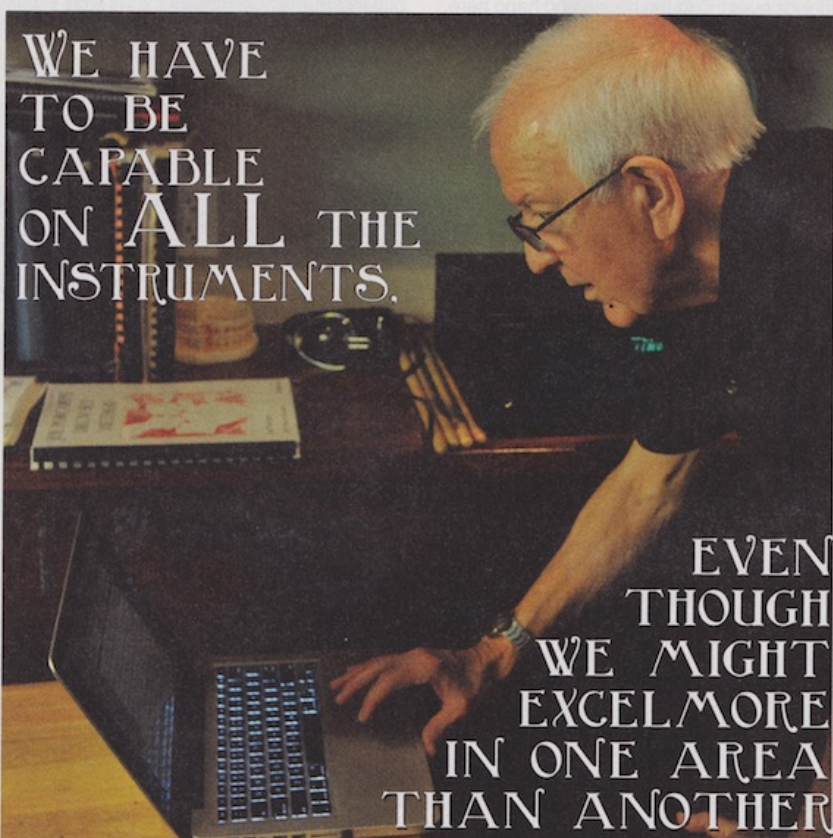
bass drum on 'one' and the '&' of two.' Shelly got it immediately and after the break, Mancini came back and asked, "What have you got?" Shelly played the part and the producers loved it. It was the vibe they wanted. After that, Shelly came to me and said, "I wanna sign the intro to your book!"

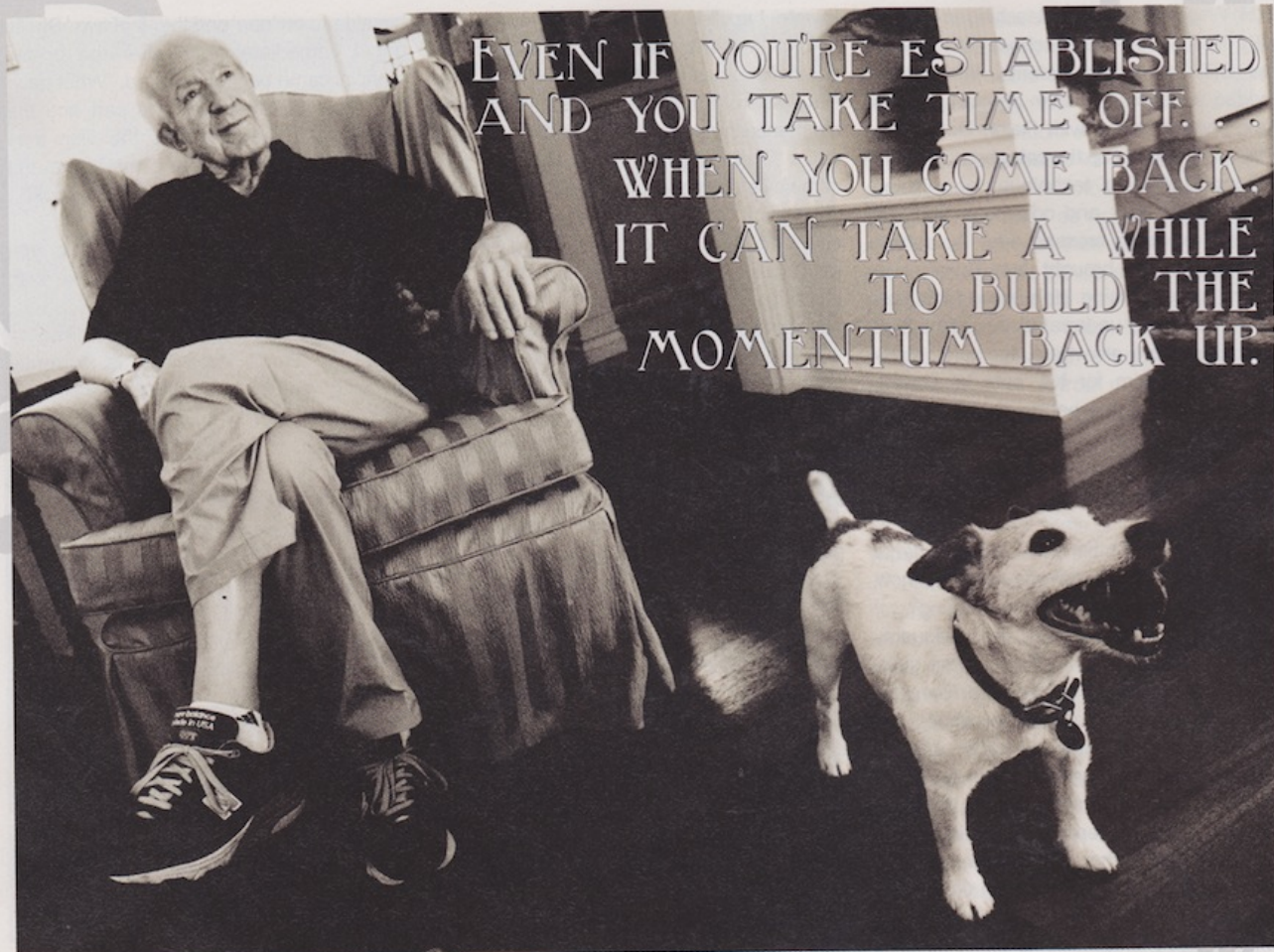
RM: Ah, nice...that's beautiful. And you initially self-published, but now they're both published by Hal Leonard, right?

JP: Yes. *Odd Times* was re-titled *Groovin' With The Odd Times* and is currently released with them. *Drumset Methods* is now titled *Groovin' With The Rudiments* and will be released in December, I believe.

RM: Over the years, you've successfully juggled the rigorous demands of the entertainment industry, while enduring immense family hardship. Through it all, you've managed to keep a very close family bond. In this day and age, this is very inspiring. How have you done this so positively?

JP: For years now we've kept Sundays as family day. Even when the kids were young, we'd have our Sunday dinner and our house was always open to their friends. We welcomed everyone. One night, I'll never forget, when Jeff was young, he had just finished a gig and was tired but wanted to go out with his friends. I knew he was wiped and he had to work again the next day, so I put my foot down and said no, he couldn't go.





EVEN IF YOU'RE ESTABLISHED
AND YOU TAKE TIME OFF...
WHEN YOU COME BACK,
IT CAN TAKE A WHILE
TO BUILD THE
MOMENTUM BACK UP.

He was bugged, but I told him, "Bring your friends over the to the house and hang here." Whatever they were going to do out, I let him know they could feel comfortable doing it at the house... and it worked. From then on, the kids used the house as the meeting place, for hangs, rehearsals, and all of that. So I guess my 'tough love' paid off.

RM: It says a lot about you, both as a father and as their early musical influence. The discipline it takes to be a successful studio percussionist is quite involved. Please talk about how you developed proficiency on so many instruments and what your practice was like?

JP: You just have to be ready for whatever is thrown at you. One day, I might be asked to play snare drum, another day drum set, one day xylophone, another day tympani, and so on. You really have to be ready for anything. Often times, I'd be the only guy on the date, so I'd be jumping around between drums, mallets, whatever was needed and I loved it. I would say, the main instrument I put a lot of time into was mallets. Four-mallet reading isn't easy, and many times, the mallet parts are pretty difficult. When I was first married, Eileen and I would play flute and marimba duets together. One of my daughter's favorite childhood

memories was falling asleep to her parents playing duets. I remember one time I was working for some singer on a session and Vinnie Colaiuta was on drums and I was playing vibes. The vibe part was just chord symbols, so it was a heavy comp gig and it was all over the place. I went home and wrote out all the chord voicings. I don't play jazz vibes every day, like Emil, who would automatically know how to voice chords, so I had to work on it. After you do that for a while, you can just look at the chords and know how to voice them more quickly. We have to be capable on all the instruments, even though we might excel more in one area than another. We're expected to play it all, so you'd better be prepared. My practice routine would often shift one day from mallets to tabla, to congas, to snare drum, whatever I felt I needed to work on. For example, I spent years and many hard hours on tabla. Tabla is a bitch and takes a lot of practice. Not just to get a sound out of the drums, but to know the classical Indian theory of rhythm and how to execute them.

RM: Did you ever feel that because you had to be proficient on so many instruments, that one area would suffer?

JP: Yes, drum set. I would get a call for a drum set part on a TV show and because of

all the other stuff I'd be doing that week, I'd realize I hadn't touched the kit in a week. As I got busier as a studio percussionist, I had to forsake my drumming in order to make all that happen. Since I retired from the studios five years ago, I've really been enjoying just playing jazz drums around town.

RM: What advice would you give young players on how to structure their practice regime?

JP: The first thing I would tell any student is make sure you have an incredible teacher, even if it means you have to drive far, get on a bus or a plane. Make sure it's a teacher you feel compatible with, that you resonate with. Then, the teacher will show you how to practice. A good teacher won't put up with laziness, so you'll learn how to work towards your goals, with their guidance. If you're inspired with your teacher, you'll work hard and it will pay off. For me, I was always good in math and that's all that rhythms are, math. I'd recommend that you don't skip math classes! Also, get out and play in live situations—small orchestras, local groups, whatever. Play well, get along with your fellow musicians and be respectful and punctual—you just never know who might be watching you. ✨

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