

The Man Behind The Name



Jeremy Hummel

By Evan Pollack



“Hard work beats talent,
when talent doesn’t work hard.”

Jeremy Hummel. I had seen his name many times as it orbited my professional world. Initially I associated it with his prolific contributions to *Modern Drummer's* Concepts and Teachers' Forum columns. Later on, I caught glimpses of it on the first two records by the platinum-selling Breaking Benjamin. Most recently, I began receiving emails from the Sabian Education Network asking me to check out his webinar presentations for their drum teaching community. Well, in the music business, if a name keeps coming up, you tend to catch the hint—something valuable is behind it.

With this in mind, I started researching the works of Jeremy Hummel. I re-read his articles and felt the full weight of his words. I heard the passion and precision he contributed to those early Breaking Benjamin records, and although I did not get to see those Sabian webinars, I did continue to see the shout-outs in my inbox, letting me know that Jeremy was being asked to do even more of them.

Who was Jeremy Hummel? Knowing him by name alone didn't seem to answer the question. But what if I met with him to discuss his thoughts and actions during his times of creativity, adversity and success? I could then say that I knew him... at least for a couple of hours. So I reached out to Jeremy and asked if he would be willing to sit in a room with a fellow musician, teacher and writer to talk about his life. He graciously said yes to my request and off I went to capture our conversation.

What you're about to read is an interview with a man who is passionate about his family, his music and his calling to teach. He's humble yet sure of himself. He's an educator yet still teachable. He's compassionate yet honest. His name is Jeremy Hummel and you are about meet him.

Growing Up Hummel

EP: We're sitting in your teaching studio located somewhere in Pennsylvania.

JH: Selinsgrove. It sounds like the word ceilings, without the letter "g."

EP: Got it. Did you grow up around here, and if so, what was it like?

JH: I grew up ten minutes from where we are right now. It was fairly normal. This was not a big musical climate, although back then there were a lot of places where bands could play. In fact, my dad played in a band. Growing up, it was kind of middle class—Little League, going to school. It was, like I said, normal—whatever normal is.

EP: You just mentioned that your dad was a musician. What was that like, growing up with a father who played?

JH: He still plays guitar to this day and as I was growing up, we had records everywhere. My dad bought records all the time, a couple every week. I didn't realize it at the time but man I was fortunate to grow up in an environment where there weren't many genre breakdowns. Music was either good or not good to my dad and that's kind of how it was for me.

I can still visualize the one Average White Band black and white cover [laughs]. We had everything from those guys to Miles Davis, so I kind of absorbed it all. Also, my dad's band would rehearse at our house; that meant that I could go downstairs and watch and listen to those practices. I was taking it all in.

EP: You must have seen him play live. Did you ever get roped into being a roadie?

JH: On occasion, and if I did, I really wanted to. I actually started playing clubs when I was nine. My cousin and I formed this band called Lightning, a really elaborate name, right? We used to open up for local bands. We had such

a blast because we truly loved doing that. I remember back at that time, being a young person, walking into these clubs and noticing the smells. I loved the way the amplifiers smelled in the summertime. Little things like that, I was totally into the whole music experience.

EP: Nine years old, opening up for bands. You were playing in bars at that age?

JH: It was a very different time back then. There weren't the same intense Liquor Control Board laws as there are today. We would get to play with older bands at places like that because for a lot of those guys, it was cool and nostalgic for them. They'd be thinking that they had these two young kids living the dream.

I remember one guy at the roller skating rink coming up to us after we performed saying, "I have to get your autograph because one day when you make it big I can say I saw them!" [Laughs] We grew up in an environment where we rehearsed all the time, played clubs and music was just in the fiber of everything we did.

EP: So, your dad's a guitar player and you found the drums?

JH: No [laughs], the drums found me.

EP: How'd that happen?

JH: Well, when I was three, I was at a cousin's birthday party, and often at birthday parties you get the gifts passed around. "Ah, look what Johnny got!" My cousin got this toy drum and when the drum came to me, my cousin never got it back! It was *his* birthday present, but through it, I found my calling. I got my first drum set at age five. And at nine, that red [Ludwig] Vistalite kit over there [Jeremy points behind me]—that was the next kit.

EP: Those drums are in great shape! You take good care of your memories.

JH: Well, for a while, they kind of sat dormant. Finally,

after seeing them just sitting there, I got to the point where I felt I needed to get them out again. There's a local guy, Jack Lawton, who actually goes out to a lot of the trade shows. He does drum restoration and helped me restore the kit.

EP: I gather that this baby was your main set for quite some time.

JH: Yeah, I used those red Vistalites at rehearsals and gigs with my cousin. And of course, I practiced all my stuff on this kit.

EP: What kind of things would you practice?

JH: I would play along with all kinds of music. This is one thing that I think is very different for kids today versus when I was younger. As a drum teacher, I'll teach my students a song and in the process, I'll give them the sheet music for it. When a kid comes back in a week or two, I'll usually ask, "Did you play with the recording?" And often the kid will say, "No. I didn't get a chance to because I wanted to fix this one part on the sheet music." Really? [Laughs] Isn't the fun of this supposed to be to play along with the song? It's at that point that the student and I have the conversation where we remind ourselves that playing with music is what we want to be doing here. I really believe that I developed a good pocket through playing along with records. I want my students to experience this too.

EP: I agree. It's probably the best way to soak up the feel within the music. Who were some of the musicians that you soaked up as a teenager?

JH: Well, John Bonham for sure. Neil Peart, of course. And a lot of Def Leppard back then too. I also listened to Van Halen. Oh, and I definitely listened to The Allman Brothers. With the Allman Brothers, I knew that there were two drummers, so I would try to play both Jaimoe's and Butch Trucks' parts at the same time. At one point, I realized that since no one was around to show me how to improve my independence and coordination, I could play along with the Allman Brothers. Merging the drum parts really helped me improve that independence I was shooting for.

EP: Wait. Growing up, you had no drum teacher?

JH: Not really. I was self-taught in terms of the drum set. I just got it. I did band in school, so I learned how to read. Now that I teach drum line and give drum lessons, my reading is finely tuned. But when I was coming up, I was pretty much doing it on my own.



EP: Was there anyone else that you were listening to?

JH: I also listened to a lot of hip-hop. As a teenager I was into Eric B. and Rakim, and N.W.A. In school I was big into playing basketball and that's where I was exposed to a lot of groove-oriented music. Later on, I started to appreciate more of the jazz world.

EP: All right. I'm going to push you. Give me one surprise drummer who no one would ever guess that you listened to.

JH: All right, I've got one for you. Gary Mallaber. He played on all that classic Steve Miller Band stuff. He's also played with Bruce Springsteen. He played on Van Morrison's entire *Moondance* record. And he's also on Eddie Money's "Two Tickets to Paradise." He's also on "Baby Hold On."

EP: That's a killer track!

JH: What's really cool is that whenever I've played him for people, I've said, "Here. I'm going to play you the fills in 'Two Tickets to Paradise.' Now I'm going to play you the fills in 'Take the Money and Run' [Steve Miller Band]. You can totally hear that this is the same cat!"

But you know the track that really surprised me? "Moondance" from Van Morrison. Gary's playing on that song and that entire record was really chill. That's cool because so much of his other playing was in your face.

EP: You mentioned earlier that you didn't really have a drum teacher around to show you the ropes. How about mentors? Did you have any mentors lighting your path?

JH: Yes, I did. His name is Bill Caviston and when I was a teen, he was a great mentor to me. Bill wasn't a drummer. He was actually a great high-school basketball player and he taught me an important life lesson.

When I was in eighth grade, I went out for the basketball and made it only because I played really hard and showed some passion. But my nickname on the team was "Animal" because I did not have any grace or finesse on the court. I was kind of raw.

Here's the interesting thing. During that season, I actually fell in love with the game and I wanted to get better.

Well, one day I saw Bill on the playground and asked him directly if he would help me. He said, "I'll help you but I'm just letting you know that you're gonna work." So he took me on. He gave me things to work on. I gave myself things to work on. And through this process of working with Bill, I saw what he was instilling in me. It was the idea that if you wanted something and you worked hard for it, you could do whatever you

wanted. Understanding this lesson was really important for me.

Today, when students first start lessons with me, I make sure to tell them this quote: "Hard work beats talent, when talent doesn't work hard." Bill Caviston's influence taught me this. And now throughout life, I always carry that mentality with me. No matter if you apply this to a business concept, a self-improvement program or a relationship, if you work at something, you can immensely improve

it. Not enough people know this so I think it's important for us as teachers to try to pass this lesson along.

EP: Wow. I don't think they're calling you "Animal" anymore.

JH: [Bursts out laughing]

Breaking Into the Big Time

EP: You grew up in this small town where you and Benjamin Burnley co-founded Breaking Benjamin. What year did the band actually form?

JH: 1998. Ben and I both went to Selinsgrove High School, although we were not in school at the same time.

EP: When I first heard the band, I found the music to be dark and powerful, melodic and soulful. How did you guys define yourselves?

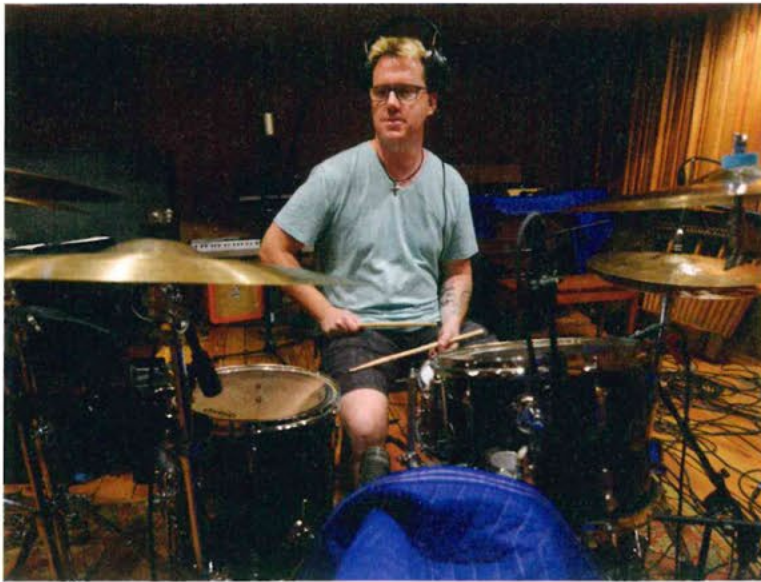
JH: When we came up, we had a lot of what people now call nu metal. There was Korn, Linkin Park, Incubus, Papa Roach, Disturbed, Godsmack, that kind of music. And so, being in our early twenties, we were influenced by the musical climate as well as our pent-up aggression and testosterone.

EP: Yeah, Breaking Benjamin was different. You didn't just sound like a bunch of pissed off guys! [Jeremy laughs]

Now, you were with the band from 1998 to 2004. On the road, in the studio, in relationships, what were some of the life lessons you learned through your days with Breaking Benjamin that you now pass on to your students?

JH: That's a very big question! [Laughs] I always felt that I knew this, but having been in that band, seeing and being in a lot of different experiences, it reinforced in me that treating people with respect, despite any level of success one might have, was the way to go.

Another lesson that was reinforced was to just be myself. Sometimes in the bigger rock world, you almost expect that you have to play the cool guy. But I never really felt that way. During my days with Breaking Benjamin, I figured out that if you are true to yourself as you go about



your day, you learn more about who you are as a person and what you value most.

EP: How about the pressure of making things work when the gremlins are out to play on the stage or in the studio?

JH: I learned how to deal with that. You have to know in a pressure situation how to give a show and not look like a jerk because your monitor isn't working. When those times hit, I basically focused on

my inner strength and natural abilities because when I did that, it was much easier to communicate my needs to others without aiming any disrespect towards them.

I had a really neat experience that happened just a few weeks ago with the band I now lead, Into the Spin. We're an 8-piece band and recently we had a keyboard sub come fill in for us. We're playing this show and for some reason all of this high-pitched crackling is coming from where the keyboardist is sitting. At first the band starts to look around, and then we kind of realize it's coming from the keyboardist's gear. And of course one of the thoughts that goes through your mind is, "He's a pro! Didn't he check his stuff before he came?" [Laughs] But I didn't give in to the distraction. I just kind of looked over at the guitar player and tried to laugh about it. I never thought to myself, "I need to be cool here." That thought never crossed my mind.

The next day, our guitar player sent me a text that read, "Hey! I just want to let you know that you were a really good leader last night by not letting that sound issue overwhelm the situation. I just looked over at you and you were just kind of smiling. That really helped me." I thanked him for taking the time to notice this, but honestly, I wasn't thinking about being a great leader at the time. I was just trying to move forward during that set. I'm really glad that it helped him and the rest of the band.

EP: Your connection with Breaking Benjamin ended on a professional level in 2004. But in a lot of ways, it sounds like you took a lot of your experience and put it to work for you in other areas of your career.

JH: I took the experiences that I had with Breaking Benjamin and applied them to Into the Spin. A lot of people have noticed that I've kept this eight-piece band together since 2009, but I never think, "Oh, it's all me." I just think that the reason Into the Spin has lasted this long is because even though I lead the band, I want my bandmates to feel like they're a part of things. I try to treat them well, and this has certainly helped the band and me as we continue on.



Teaching - The Early Years

EP: Let's talk about teaching.

JH: Great! I was teaching before Breaking Benjamin. However, I needed to stop when the band began doing lots of traveling gigs. When I wasn't in the band anymore, it was a no-brainer. The first thought in my head was that I was going to go back to teaching.

EP: This might sound silly but I'll ask anyway. How did you know that you could teach?

JH: As far as private lessons go, I feel that the ability to connect with people and inspire is at least 50 percent of the pie. Having come from a background of being interested in self-improvement and seeing results in my own life, I felt I could impart that on others. Working one-on-one with people, there's not a "one-size-fits-all" approach. A good teacher will be able to learn what makes a student tick—which approaches work, and which ones do not. That's something that I instinctively felt I could do well, and remains the cornerstone of my teaching practice today.

EP: That first year, how did it feel as you returned to teaching?

JH: It was challenging, fun and scary at the same time because even though I knew that I was going to have some money coming in from Breaking Benjamin, I also knew that teaching was now going to be my main means of income. What you see down here in my teaching studio today was not always like this. Once my wife and I agreed that teaching was the going to be a major part of our world, we dropped the ceiling, had a wall built for soundproofing reasons, and eventually put in carpeting down here. We did all of this before I had a single student on the roster.

EP: Got it; you basically got the place all dressed up and ready to go. How did you get students?

JH: I started reaching out to the drum teachers who were

working at the music shop where I taught before Breaking Benjamin. I knew I didn't want to step on any toes so I simply said, "Hey guys! I just want to let you know that I'm back in the area. If there are any students that come along that you're not able to see or that you might be able to pass on to me, that would be fantastic." I also called a couple of local schoolteachers and just started marketing myself. Gradually, word-of-mouth referrals started bringing students in.

EP: You basically followed the Nike slogan that tells us all to "Just Do It!"

JH: Right. I mean, the worst that someone can say is no. I just started off that way. I slowly built things up. But what I had to do was balance my teaching and my role as a family guy. My wife and I had a newborn and I had to create a way that would allow me to teach and still be around to help my family. There was all of that going on back then. Still is!

EP: Word-of-mouth referrals are the best indicators that a teacher is doing something right. But there's got to be something deep inside a teacher that makes a student come to his first lesson and stay around for a year or six! Why do you think students stick around on your roster for a while?

JH: I think it's this: Even though this is my primary means of income, I don't teach for money. I teach for the joy of passing on drumming and because I want to make an impact in the lives of others. I also teach because sometimes teachers can have a positive impact on a kid's life at times when parents can't seem to make the connection. I know from working with my son in coaching over the years that there are some things that a dad will say or do that will resonate with his kid and some things that just won't. However, if a kid is able to come to a place like a drum lesson, where he is able to have that good positive influence surrounding him, there's a real beauty in that.

Teaching - Today

EP: Over the years, most people adapt to the times, even teachers. What's changed in your teaching? Are there any technological breakthroughs that you're currently using to make your life a little easier?

JH: One thing we have now that we didn't have when we were growing up is the Anytune app. Are you familiar with that?

EP: Is that the app that slows songs down without changing the pitch?

JH: Yeah. When we were younger we had to slow the record down. With the Anytune app, you can slow the speed of the song down to any tempo you need without that muddy slow-motion sound. Now there's no excuse for not playing along with the song. I use this app a lot.

Another thing that I do differently now is video record the lessons for my students. They bring in an SD card to all their lessons and I put it in my camcorder. That way they can take the lesson home with them. If they forget

how I broke something down they have it right there. So, it's really helpful.

EP: That's golden because when you think about it, kids learn three ways—aurally, visually and kinesthetically. If you give them something they can see and hear, they're more likely to remember the information. How about Skype lessons; have you embraced this form of teaching?

JH: Thanks for bringing this up. Yes, I'm totally on board with educating people through Skype. I've found that I'm really comfortable with the technology used in this medium and because of this, students who study with me on Skype feel comfortable too. Technological tools are allowing teachers to reach, and more importantly, help students all over the world. That's why I want to do even more Skype lessons. I see its potential and I want to use it to help others.

EP: Let's talk about your students. What's different about them today as compared to when you first started out?

JH: Well, today's kids are facing the "instant gratification" challenge. Based on the way life and popular culture work today, students feel that if they don't get something right away, then something's wrong. I understand this mentality because today's kids consume music very differently. I don't think they've ever known a life without free music.

When you and I were young, we bought the one CD or record a week and therefore music had more value to us. But most of today's kids haven't experienced that investment, and as a result, music and the work that goes into making it has become undervalued.

EP: How do you handle that instant gratification within a lesson?

JH: I like to cut to the chase. Let me share this with you. I just had a student recently who really wanted to play "Roxanne" by the Police. Now if a student wants to come in and do some Stewart Copeland, I'm usually shouting inside, "Let's do it baby!" So we started working on the song, but within two weeks he came back saying that he wasn't sure if the song was really meant for him. I gently asked, "Is it really that the music's not for you?" At that point, he kind of came clean and revealed that he was feeling overwhelmed about the skill level required to play the song. As a teacher, I got it. I then assured him that it was all cool and that we could do something else. I don't want to have to force a kid to practice. It's enough to try to get them to practice to begin with, let alone making the challenge too frustrating for them.

But for most students, to help them with "instant gratification" issues, I set things up like this: I give them some short-term and long-term goals. Let's say that I assign a few pages in a drum book; I'll ask a student to play each example four times with the idea that they'll eventually be able to connect all the beats on the page. That's a short-term goal.

But if we want to do a Rush tune, then every time we get together, we work on little nuggets, and eventually put the entire song together. The mastery of that Rush song becomes a long-term goal.

I also teach them something that I've learned through my own experience as a musician—when you're practicing, if it's just not working out right, take a break. Do something else. There's a pretty good chance when you come back to it, it's going to be easier than it was before.

EP: I appreciate you mentioning this. As a teacher and student, I've had to take a lot of breaks myself.

JH: One more difference I see in the lives of students today as compared to when we grew up; there seems to be more competition between music and sports these days. It's not like it once was. You've got all these travel teams, and these kids are just burning the candle at both ends all the time. I'm not saying it's good or bad, because if a kid wants to be doing that and they're truly happy, that's awesome. But if they're being driven by parents to do this stuff, that's not such a good thing. I'm hoping that all of us become more aware that kids need balance in their lives.

360° Around the Drum Industry

EP: Let's talk about you and the drum industry. What gear are you playing these days?

JH: I proudly use Ludwig drums, Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, Evans drumheads and LP percussion. When performing with my group Into the Spin, I generally use a 5-piece kit, along with an auxiliary snare and an assortment of cymbals.

EP: Have you noticed that manufacturers have taken steps to reach out to the drum teaching community?

JH: Yes, I do see that. I also see teachers helping to influence students in what they buy. Hey, you know what I would like to see drum companies do? I think it would be awesome if each company gave some products to hypothetically thirty to fifty teachers so students could see and hear the products. I would love to see a company like



Sabian say, "Here. I want you to have a set of hi-hats, a crash and a ride to test out with your students." I'd love to see a stick company send twenty different pair out to a teacher who could then say to his students, "Try these and see how they feel." I bet it would have an impact.

EP: Tell me about the webinars you've participated in for the Sabian Education Network [SEN].

JH: I did a webinar for Sabian on how to retain students. You know how we drum teachers want to learn how we can attract more students? Well, my webinar focused on another component of that which is how we keep those students once they sign up for our lessons. I also participated in a webinar where I talked about how drum teachers could effectively promote their services.

In addition to the webinars, I participated as a member of an educators' panel for SEN at the Philadelphia University of the Arts. The Sabian Education Network is a great place for drum teachers to connect by exchanging ideas. Joe Bergamini runs it and holds live sessions in different cities. If any drum teachers are reading this, SEN does not cost anything to join and offers a wealth of knowledge. Check it out!

EP: It sounds like SEN keeps you busy. Have you had time to participate in other music industry events?

JH: Sure. I've also given presentations at PASIC [Percussive Arts Society International Convention] in the past, both as an individual clinician and on education panels.

Words About Words

EP: I first came across your name on the bylines of your columns. How did writing for them become a reality for you?

JH: When I was off the road I spent time at home. And being that I was at home, I occasionally had time to read drum magazines that I couldn't get to before. While I was reading different articles, I started realizing that there were some concepts that I had developed through my own teaching that I thought could help people.

Here's the thing, and this is the same philosophy that I carry for any music-industry outlet that asks me to write or that I want to write for: If I, Jeremy Hummel, am going to put something out there, I want it to have substance and I want it to help other people. That's why I write. I'm not one of those guys who will sit down and churn out two articles a month just because I want to write something. I have to get to the point where I think a concept is pretty good and that it could help a lot of people before I start writing a submission.

Revving The Engines For Tomorrow

EP: I'm staring at this flier with a speedometer on it and it seems to have your name on it. What's this?

JH: What you're referring to is my RPM program. RPM stands for Rudiments and Reading, Precision and Maintenance.

EP: What's the idea behind it?

JH: They're eight to ten week group lessons that I've started up at Vivace Music, here in Selinsgrove. I'm showing kids how to build up their reading, technique and general excitement over something as cool as drumming.

I don't look at this as just a thing where I'm doing a couple of classes and that's it. I'm looking at this as the next level of my teaching and business. Every year in the fifth grade, the kids at school usually pick the instrument they want to play in band. In the Fall, I'll go to those back-to-school orientations where you've got everybody there with their signup sheets for Girl Scouts, for basketball, and all those extracurricular activities. I'm going to take

my RPM program into that environment so I can build it from the school level on up.

EP: You're really excited about this.

JH: I am. Students of all ages can benefit from RPM. And as the drumline instructor for my local high school, I can vouch that this program can help build the skill level and enthusiasm of rising high school percussionists.

One of my mentors is the author Jack Canfield; most people know him from his "Chicken Soup for the



Soul" book series. I've read many of his books and have really resonated with his business philosophies. One day I was taking a walk and tossing around the idea for this yet to be named RPM program. I had been living with the idea for a long time but I wasn't really acting on it. I started thinking about some of Jack's concepts and this one came up: When we're getting a new project started, we might have the initial idea, but we can struggle with how to turn that into a reality. When we reach this struggling stage, the real question we have to ask ourselves is, "What is really holding me back?"

EP: Got it. Jack's insights pushed you into taking further action.

JH: Right. On that walk, while I was thinking about the rough idea for the RPM, I asked myself, "What am I doing here? Why aren't I just putting this program together? What's holding me back from doing this?" All of a sudden I started thinking about what it would involve to bring this to life. I started thinking about a way I could brand the

program with a great name. RPM. It just came to me. After that walk, literally within twenty-four hours, I was on the phone with the graphics guy and within a week, I had my advertising ready to roll. As soon as I had the fliers in hand, I began getting out and doing the RPM programs.

EP: In your RPM programs, you're teaching reading, rudiments, precision and maintenance. How exactly are you doing this?

JH: Here's how it works. Every student who signs up for RPM gets a binder that looks pretty formal. I give them all handouts designed to help them improve their reading, their rudimental knowledge, their precision and their understanding of how to maintain all of this stuff.

Everyone gets a Vic Firth Rudiments poster too, and over the weeks, we work to check those off, at least at a basic level. Every group is different so I try to keep things flexible. And whatever we don't cover in the first round of classes, if they sign up again, that's where we pick it up.

EP: I like this. It's a new business model for group lessons. Everybody's kind of working as a team within the lesson from day one. If you were going to try to convince me to join the RPM classes, what would you say?

JH: I'd say that there are two main benefits to these classes besides the knowledge. One, you're getting this information at a much cheaper rate than a private lesson. And two, there's no pressure on you to practice. You can go home and not touch the stuff all week long. But here's the thing. If you come back next week, and these other kids have it together, you're most likely going to feel a little uncomfortable because you're kind of stinkin' the joint up. That group mentality is going to fuel your motivation.

But it's not all completely reading and technique stuff. We play rhythmic games too. And actually, the games are usually what the students like the most. For example, we'll play a rhythm game that's kind of like that basketball game Horse, where students have to repeat back the phrase I play. It's great ear training.

I look at RPM like this: If you build it, they will come. That's what I'm trying to do. I'm building this program with each go-around and working on moving it forward so that students feel the value and want to keep coming back.

The Mentor Factor

EP: Sitting here and talking with you, I would have to consider you to be a mentor—someone whose influence lasts with people for a long, long time. With that said, I have two closing questions for you. Here's the first one. If there were only one lesson that you could teach students, what would that lesson be?

JH: I would teach students the importance of keeping the same enthusiasm they had when they first started to play, no matter where they ended up in their musical careers. That's really hard to do, especially if playing the drums becomes a profession.

In 2013, I had a shoulder injury and it was the first time where I wasn't playing, performing or teaching. My entire life was in a real funk because I felt I wasn't doing what I was here to do. The band I lead had to get a sub for me and I had to take a break from teaching for a little bit. During that time, I concentrated on band bookings and administration work, but when I finally recovered and got back to playing music, I figured out some things. While

I recognized that doing a good job and making money in the music business is great, doesn't the true enjoyment of this business come from playing your instrument and playing with others? I really appreciated the act of making music so much more after having it taken from me for a short period of time.

That experience also changed my approach to teaching in a sense because I became aware that not every student was going to be as passionate as I was about the drums.

I kind of let go of the idea that every student had to be the next Buddy Rich. I now was thinking that if a student was getting fulfillment out of just learning a couple of songs, or playing only on weekends, let them do that.

There are different levels of passion and it's silly of me to think that everyone would share the same feelings I have towards drumming. So again, keeping enthusiasm alive in any way possible is what I would pass on to any musician. It's hard. But it's important.

EP: Last question. What advice would you give to musicians who are thinking about a career in teaching?

JH: Six words; do it because you love it.*



Homilies on Hummel

I would be remiss if I left out these words of appreciation for Jeremy's work. True, I might have handed these folks the brush with my questions, however, those who gave the answers painted the real portrait of his character.



Isaiah Ryder - 7 year-old student

EP: What do you like best about Jeremy?

IR: Working with Jeremy is fun but it's sometimes hard work. He helps me get through stuff. I feel he is probably the perfect drum teacher.

EP: What stuff has Jeremy shown you that makes you feel like you're getting better on the drum set?

IR: Jeremy has had me working on different styles of music like rock, funk, Bossa Nova, R&B and reggae. If Jeremy had not asked me to play these different grooves, I would have stayed playing and listening to rock and roll.

EP: What's your favorite part of your drum lesson with Jeremy?

IR: I like when Jeremy and I work on the trap set. He'll joke around with me. He jokes about ice cream, or pizza, or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Evan Ryder (Isaiah's dad)

EP: How did you learn about Jeremy and his lessons?

ER: I became an acquaintance of Jeremy's because we both worked with the local high school's marching band. I was a brass instructor and Jeremy worked with the drum line. It was evident that my son had some natural ability so my wife connected with Jeremy about getting lessons for Isaiah. He was willing to give Isaiah a try even though he was only 5 years old at the time.

We wanted Isaiah to stick with Jeremy as his drum teacher for a number of reasons. First, Jeremy's strong reputation in the drumming world stands out. Beyond this, his willingness to connect with Isaiah on his level and his ability to push Isaiah to reach his maximum potential is amazing! Jeremy has demonstrated over and over again that his teaching is individualized to each student's needs.

EP: What do you see in Jeremy that makes him a great influence in your son's life?

ER: It is evident almost immediately that Jeremy has a genuine care and concern for the entire person. Being a good person is more valuable than being a great drummer and Jeremy communicates that to Isaiah! In a lot of ways, he fulfills the role of a mentor in the midst of his drum lessons.



Reagan Shatzer - 13 year-old student

EP: Do you have a good time working with Jeremy?

RS: It's fun to work with him. Everything has improved since I started working with him from scratch. He got me off to a good start and he's continuing to make me a better drummer.

EP: What's the coolest thing that Jeremy does in your lesson?

RS: He assigns me cool grooves and songs I've never heard before.

Jeff Shatzer (Reagan's dad)

EP: Have you noticed an improvement in your son's ability to play music on the drum set?

JS: My son requested a drum set three years ago for his 10th birthday. He had no prior experience with percussion whatsoever and now he is now starting his fourth year of

regular lessons with Jeremy. Yes, he has grown significantly and continues to show interest in a variety of percussion instruments and styles of music.

EP: Have you seen improvement in other areas of Reagan's life since he has been studying with Jeremy?

JS: Reagan has struggled at times with balancing school, sports and with all that is required with his drumming. However, with Jeremy's encouragement and consistent nurturing, he has continued to pursue percussion and to grow steadily.

EP: As a parent, what do you think of Jeremy's character? Can you name any qualities that he consistently displays as teacher and community member?

JS: Jeremy's role as father is evident in his posture and patience with the students, particularly those of similar ages to his own children. He's fair, but firm. He's encouraging with the appropriate amount of praise while still challenging them to do more. What's more, his passion for percussion excites his students.



Dan White - Adult Student

EP: From an adult perspective, what are some of the aspects of your lessons with Jeremy that you truly appreciate?

DW: My lessons with Jeremy are always fun and encouraging. He's got a great sense of humor and he's tactful in correcting my mistakes. I've always felt that Jeremy really takes a personal interest in my progress. When we work through lesson material, it's not just a "notes on the page" review but a study in how to apply the material in a musical way. We pay attention to the details - stickings, accents, dynamics, adding just the right amount of swing, even body positioning, which makes all the difference in making the beat come alive. Because of Jeremy's consistently positive approach to learning, I enjoy

playing the drums more than ever and I consider myself lucky to have found such a knowledgeable teacher.



Joe Bergamini
Drummer, Clinician, Educator, Author,
Senior Drum Editor for Hudson Music,
Co-owner of Wizdom Media, LLC and
Director of the Sabian Education Network

EP: Joe, how did you first become aware of Jeremy Hummel?

JB: I saw his articles in Modern Drummer and then heard him with Breaking Benjamin.

EP: What has made you regularly feature Jeremy as a guest speaker for webinars produced by the Sabian Education Network?

JB: I think Jeremy is one of the top drum teachers in the US. I could see from his published articles that he was passionate about what he was doing. But more than that, I noticed that he had a thriving business and was doing creative things with it. It didn't hurt that Jeremy was very good at networking and keeping in touch with me, which is a great skill in itself! All of this, coupled with his playing ability, has made me want to call on him to participate in our webinars.

EP: Is there anything about Jeremy's personality, work ethic or attitude that makes you stop and say, "Man, that guy's the real deal as a communicator?"

JB: I think he just has a great mix of terrific personality, drive, skill and communication ability that is needed for success in today's drumming world. Jeremy delivers his information in a very personable way and I've gotten nothing but rave reviews from SEN members about his presentations. I look forward to working with him in the industry for many years to come. ✨