

The New Generation

A Modern Philosophy On Drumset Teaching

by Jeremy Hummel

As a drum instructor, I've seen my role and purpose expand greatly over the past few years. In its simplest form, teaching others was a way to share my knowledge of the instrument, and, hopefully, earn a living in the process.

However, I've come to realize that educating means so much more than just explaining notes on a page or sharing a few concepts I picked up from my own experience. While every generation surely feels the same about the ones that follow, I must say that kids today are different.

In this article, I'll outline some of these differences. I'll also offer a few ideas that I've incorporated to better serve my students—who may be, after all, artists of the future.

Getting Started

I get a large number of students, and most of them come to me because they want to play drums—meaning not just the snare drum, but the whole drumset. I've heard too many stories of young drummers not enjoying lessons—or giving up their studies altogether—because they were at the mercy of when the teacher felt they were “ready to move on.”

If a student comes to me and already owns a drumset, we are going to do drumset playing, regardless of that student's experience. And while my instruction includes rudiments and fundamentals, I don't feel that it does a student any good to have his drumset staring him in the face in his bedroom as he repeatedly plays “LRLRL.” I think it's safe to say that nearly every beginner who's relegated to the snare drum quickly wonders, “Why do I have to do this?”

A Method To The Madness

When teaching fundamentals, I believe it's important to show how certain rudiments can be used on the drumset. For example, a paradiddle can be applied to create many cool patterns. I demonstrate this by placing the “L” on one drum, the “R” on another, and doing a variety of things with the bass drum. Or how about showing how a double-stroke roll can be worked into a cool-sounding fill?

How much more motivation would a student have if what we're teaching sounds like something musical? If we can show students how these sticking patterns will benefit them, they'll be more likely to be willing to go through some of those “not so fun” beginning exercises.

Some teachers take the position that putting beginners on a strict diet of rudiments helps to weed out the “wanna-bes.” My

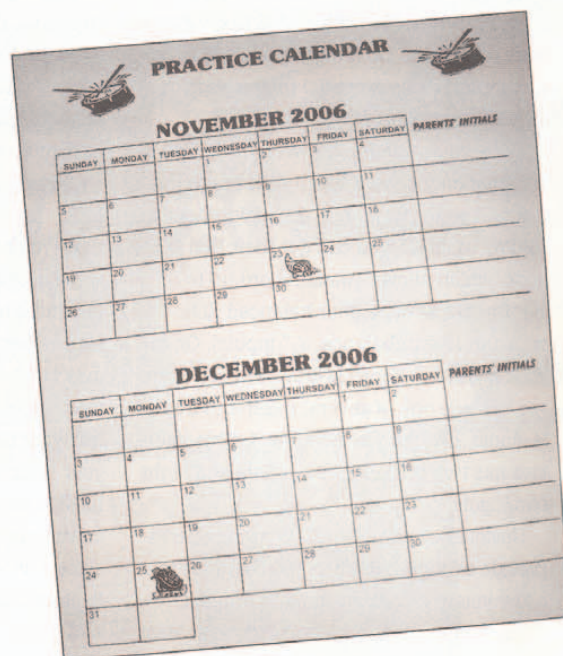
philosophy is that I'd rather reel *in* drummers than turn them away. The comparison I like to use is when Mr. Miyagi was working with Daniel in the movie *The Karate Kid*. Remember how Ralph Macchio's character wanted to learn karate so badly but all he was instructed to do was “paint the fence” or “sand the floor”? Granted, he did use all of these techniques eventually. But he had to wait a long time to see how to incorporate them into his ultimate goal. My point is: Why make someone wait?

I basically strike a deal with my students. We agree to do equal parts technique/hand exercises and drumset—as long as they hold up their end of the bargain. If the hand exercises begin to drop off, we spend less time on the drumset.

Who Inspires Them?

We live in an age where Internet downloads and piracy have made record sales plummet, and when most bands' careers are so fleeting that before we have time to realize who they are, they're gone. I've recently noticed how many kids I teach don't even *have* favorite bands. When a lot of us were coming up, we could have rattled off our ten favorite bands with no problem. My only dilemma was always who was going to be left off the list. These days it's more about favorite *songs*.

We need to create awareness in our students, by passing along great music of the past and present. Sharing knowledge can go beyond drumming. Explain why The Beatles were great, point out



Students are responsible for maintaining—and following—their practice calendars.