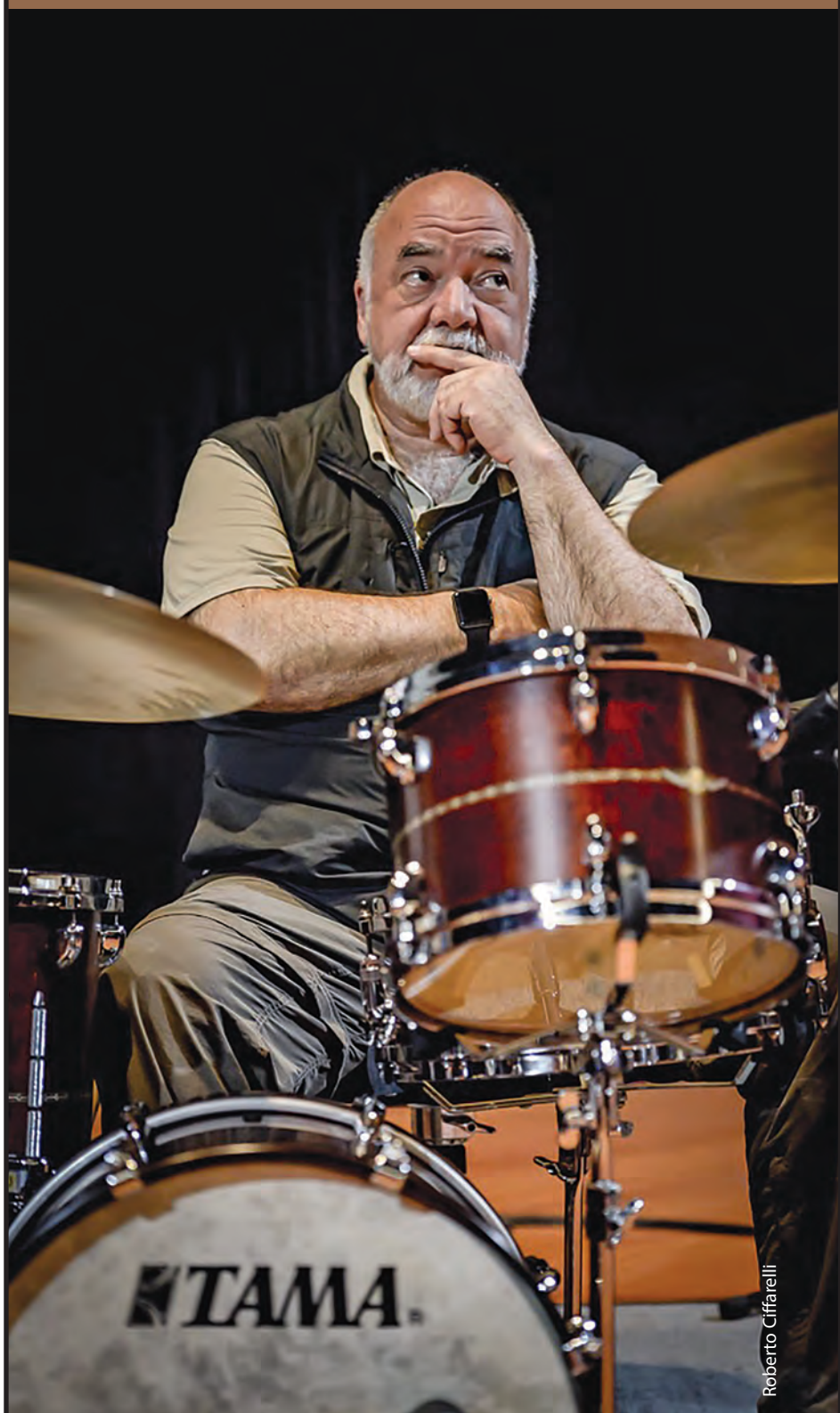


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Roberto Ciffarelli

- FOREWORD -

Dear Reader,

This book is about me ... at least on its surface.

But, digging just a bit deeper than simply cataloging who I've played with or what brand of drums I use should reveal not only a history of modern American music from the 1950s onward, but a good case study for the "nature versus nurture" paradigm. Not so much a chicken and egg dichotomy, but an exploration of the "tabula rasa" or blank slate described by the English philosopher and empiricist John Locke. If I'm allowed to think of myself as a good drummer, then: are good drummers born? Or are good drummers taught to be, well, "good"?

So, yeah, this book is about me. It is, however and more accurately, about music education in the United States and the state of the entertainment industries, musical instrument development, jazz music and jazz musicians and how everything collided in the early 1960s (the same time I was beginning to get pretty good on the drums).

Music informed my every moment. Perhaps I sought it out, but it was easy to find back then. I'm not talking YouTube-easy, but every radio station or television program did use jazz to sell their shows to America. Jazz was everywhere, it seemed. I learned to speak the vocabulary because I was immersed in the language. My nature was to be curious. But life nurtured me... along with my family and a long list of jazz musicians and educators who paid it forward time and again.

One of the first albums my father or teacher got for me when I was six years old was "Movin' In," by the New York studio drummer and percussionist Specs Powell. The next albums were Art Blakey's "Drum Suite" and "Gretsch Night at Birdland." Soon after I attended my first summer jazz camp which was held on the campus of Indiana University during the summer of 1961 where I met, among others, Louis Hayes and the members of the Cannonball Adderly Sextet. Other mentors at subsequent camps included Donald Byrd, Oliver

Nelson, Ron Carter and Alan Dawson. These four men were my friends as well as my teachers. Meanwhile, my listening library was brimming with albums by Max Roach, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Elvin Jones, Jimmy Smith, Charles Mingus, Shirley Scott, Dizzy Gillespie, Roy Haynes, Roland Kirk, Wes Montgomery, Milt Jackson, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Herbie Hancock and Thad Jones (in addition to Stan Kenton, Stan Getz, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Dave Brubeck, Gary Burton, Gary McFarland, Cal Tjader, Mike Mainieri ... and Leonard Bernstein!). All to enumerate that my first musical heroes were, and remain, the black artists whose genius developed and produced this unique American art form that would bring the greatest respect and accolades to this country, as well as the greatest joy and meaning to this young drummer. There was never any question in my mind of who created this music.

My musical education continued apace. My parents sought out the best instruction they could find. I can't count the number of doors that were opened for me. Now, I was fortunate to also have been born with a cheerful heart, and there's no doubt that my enthusiasm matched my thankfulness as well as good manners. What I'm trying to say is that I'm certain that my respect and love for these men was apparent enough to them. Still, the amount of good luck and their good will astonishes me and I've never taken it for granted.

I meditate and I pray gratitude for my good fortune and I wish it for every person who hears the call of the drum. May your families and loved ones provide you with even a fraction of the support I received from my own ... you will be blessed. And to all of my mentors, colleagues and friends: THANK YOU. In addition to everything else I've learned, I can tell the reader this: whatever your level of involvement might be with drumming, music will ALWAYS be there for you.

- **Peter Erskine**

P.S. My thanks to interviewers Mark Griffith and Rick Mattingly, as well as to Jon Krosnick, David Hakim and the team at Modern Drummer.

- INTRODUCTION -

For the last 40 years, I have been a *Modern Drummer* reader, and for the last 30 years, I have been a professional drummer and private drum teacher. During this time, I have been asked by Ron Spagnardi, Bill Miller, and Adam Budofsky to write for the magazine. Last year, David Hakim and David Frangioni approached me to become the Director of Content for the LEGENDS Series.

But this isn't about me! As of now, there have been a few LEGENDS books that I have directed. Since no "introduction" to any legend should be needed, I wanted to take this opportunity to explain what we are doing with the LEGENDS series.

We devised a new modus operandi that we thought would work very well for LEGENDS. Since each legend had already been interviewed many times for *Modern Drummer*, had also written books and done instructional videos, and since we were already planning on including all of their previous feature interviews... What use is yet another interview? As one of the LEGENDS team said to me, "How many times can you talk about a drum part to a song, or what kind of sticks do you use?" EXACTLY!

Therefore, we at LEGENDS have done everything to assure that LEGENDS is a very different experience. Each book is about all aspects of ONE legendary drummer: New interviews, old interviews, never before seen pictures, transcriptions, artist commentary, and much more. I insisted the new in-depth interviews didn't discuss the same subjects the artists have talked about before in older interviews, especially since those interviews are all included here, side-by-side, in this one book.

As preparation for the LEGENDS interviews, I re-read and take notes on every one of the artists' previous interviews for *Modern Drummer*, I read their books, and I watch their

videos. Along the way, I make notes about subjects that I would like to see further expanded upon. I asked the artists if there was anything THEY had never been asked about, or hadn't talked about publicly? Lastly, I research their careers to find any interesting dark corners not yet explored.

For those of you that have been wanting longer interviews, you've come to the right place! There aren't ever any space constraints in LEGENDS. This is where you'll find new 20+ page interviews in the same place as past *Modern Drummer* feature interviews. You'll also find new interviews of these drummers talking about specific sessions and songs throughout their careers, and many pages of them talking about their "gear evolution."

Amazingly, we always come up with a huge list of new and unexplored subjects and questions for every interview. The LEGENDS interviews are not your typical interview. The artist and I take **A LOT** of time to talk. Most importantly, the artists themselves take an integral role in creating this book you are holding. Many legends have contributed rare photos, unheard recordings (included as digital downloads,) their handwritten charts, and other drumming rarities.

The LEGENDS Collection books (in both digital and high quality print formats) are intended to educate and be enjoyed by drummers, other musicians, and music lovers alike. Legendary drumming exists within great music, for me it's always been about music *and* drumming. Many years ago, *Modern Drummer* created the bar for music magazines. In that tradition, we at LEGENDS are raising the bar and setting a new standard for drum and music publications.

– **Mark Griffith**

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER



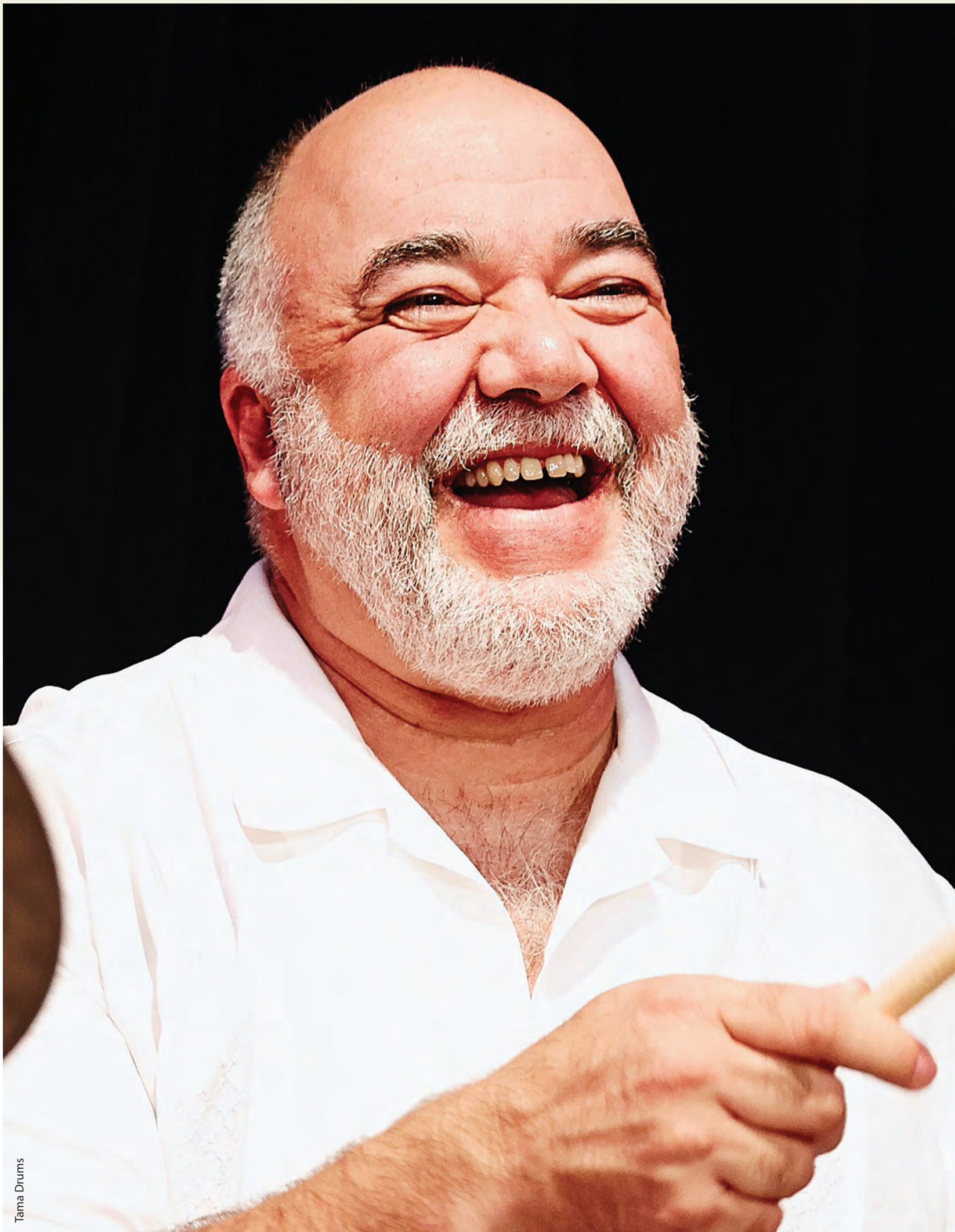
Peter Erskine is a true inspiration, one of the most versatile drummers in history, and a musical chameleon! I remember first getting into Peter's playing when he was with Stan Kenton, following him to Maynard Ferguson, and then to one of my all-time favorites, Weather Report. Those three iconic musical settings would be enough for any drummer to establish a career, but over 600 albums later, Peter's musical journey has been, and is, filled with drumming in so many different settings. Quartets, Big Band, Electric Jazz, you name it, and Peter plays it...masterfully!

There is so much to learn from Peter's playing, approach to drums and career that we cannot wait for you to explore this Legends book! You are going to really enjoy reading Peter Erskine Legends, soak it up, go deep into each style and please be as inspired as we were in creating it!

David Frangioni

CEO/Publisher of *Modern Drummer Publications, Inc.*






Tama Drums

Peter Erskine

The Doctor Is In

By Mark Griffith



Peter Erskine's new band is called Dr. Um. He also has an Honorary Doctorate from Berklee School of Music. But the idea of Dr. Erskine goes much deeper than that. I have never met another drummer who is more tuned into the psychology of being a professional musician than Peter. He will immediately (and humbly) deny this, but it's a fact. I'm sure it helps that his father was a psychiatrist. But it goes even deeper than that. Peter just relates to musical performance on a much deeper level. Prepare yourself for a profound encounter with a true LEGEND! Have a seat on the couch, the doctor will see you now.

"I think from as far back as I can remember, I knew I was going to be a drummer. It wasn't that I *wanted* to be a drummer, I *knew* it. From when I started playing at age 4, I was *going* to be a drummer, that was just it. Period.

My father was a bass player originally, but by the time I was born he was a practicing physician and had become a psychiatrist, but there was always music around the house. He had a conga drum from Cuba, which I still have. As a kid I really enjoyed playing that drum along with some of the recordings he had at home. I actually started taking lessons when I was five. It's funny because as a kid I was the youngest of my family, I had one older brother and two older sisters, and I was spoiled. Whether it was a bottle, food or music, I could just kind of look at something and grunt or point and it would be given to me. My father's doctor friends were worried about the state of my mental development, and they suggested to him that I be tested because I simply grunted a lot. I wasn't speaking

day, and offers a brief thought about, or memory of, that drummer. He also provides a YouTube link to a favorite song that the drummer is on. The drummers are presented in no real order of importance or chronologically. Some of the drummers are well known to us all, and some aren't. I have loved the randomness, and the sincerity of Peter's idea.

Peter: Well thank you! One of the most revealing ways to talk about oneself without actually talking about oneself, is to talk about others. This was a style of discourse that I observed in my first boss, Stan Kenton. He had learned in his later years, that when he was asked to pay tribute to a colleague, he never inserted himself into the conversation. When Stan spoke, it was always just about the other person. I felt that this revealed as much about Stan as it did about the person that he was speaking about. So I always make a conscious effort to do the same.

"I think from as far back as I can remember, I knew I was going to be a drummer. It wasn't that I *wanted* to be a drummer, I *knew* it."

because I had everything I needed, and I was very content. The only time that I seemed to really speak up about things, was when it had to do with music. It's odd that this particular acorn seems to have grown into this kind of an oak tree, but it's just always seemed like what I was supposed to do ... it's certainly what I've always enjoyed doing."

Peter might not have talked much as a kid, but as you'll see in this interview, that has changed. He began teaching at the Stan Kenton camps when he joined the band at 18 years of age, and he continues teaching today at USC. Anyone who gets to study drums with him at USC is very lucky. Peter is a master communicator who has built quite a reputation as a master educator. His videos, books, apps, clinics, and play-alongs have invited us along on his journey of drumming and musical discovery. Even a mere visit to his Facebook page isn't met with endless mentions of "my gigs," "my recordings," "me" and "I." It's a learning experience.

MD: I have been following your Infinity Drummers postings and concept on your Facebook page for a while. And for those who don't know what that is, I'll explain. Peter chooses a different drummer every

Whenever someone asks me to make a comment on a drummer that has recently passed, I try to speak without much (if any) use of the pronoun "I" or "me." I was also getting a little tired of saying "Here's something I did" in interviews; So I decided that it would be fun to celebrate some things that someone else did. Most musicians love to play DJ, so those ideas converged as the impetus for the Infinity Drummers idea. Occasionally I do insert myself into the discussion of these drummers, to act as a bridge or to create some relevance.

MD: It also adds some legitimacy or authenticity to your observations when you can draw on some first-hand experiences.

Peter: All of these "Top 10" and "Best of..." lists that people create are highly problematic for me. By focusing on one drummer every day, the Infinity Drummers concept removes the pressure from the creating of my 10 favorite, or the 10 best, or whatever... I didn't have to narrow my point of view, I could just focus on one drummer every day. When the pandemic settled in, and it became obvious that we

were going to have plenty of time, I began to consider the contributions of many players, and the Infinity Drummers concept took shape.

The order of the drummers that were chosen was random. The performances that I chose aren't necessarily the best (whatever that means.) Nor were the songs that I linked intended to be the most important or the most popular performances. They're

bandleaders (Maynard Ferguson and Joe Zawinul) who have played with Frankie Dunlop, and I love Frankie's drumming. Next, you and Steve Gadd both followed in the footsteps of a terrific drummer named Donald MacDonald. Like Steve and yourself, Donald played with Mike Mainieri, and Donald's playing has always knocked me out, unfortunately he's virtually unknown in drum circles. Something tells me that you can shed



Roberto Ciffarelli

just performances that I have experience with, I have listened to, and that caught my ear. So it's subjective, it's fun, and I'm glad people are enjoying it.

MD: As an extension of that idea, I have picked five very different drummers that I would like you to expound upon. Some of them are lesser known in some circles, which makes it all the more fun. All of them are important to the history of great drumming and music, and I'm guessing pretty important to you, so we'll start there.

I have always heard you as sort of a modern-day Alvin Stoller or Paul Humphrey, so I want to ask you about them. I know you have worked with two

some light on him for me. And lastly, in my research for this interview I see that you consider the criminally underappreciated Bobby Ramirez to be important to your own development. Those are the five, and those are the reasons that I picked them. But I have a feeling that discussing those guys will lead to many more. Let's start with an early influence of yours, Bobby Ramirez. He was the drummer for the Edgar Winter group called White Trash and later the drummer for the band LaCroix.

Peter: That's quite a list of drummers. I personally didn't know that much about Bobby Ramirez, I knew him through the first two recordings that he made with