

DRUMS - BEGINNER

Corral your young pounders and use this material as a guide for your workshop with them. **Phil Rowley**, a fulltime professional drummer and drum teacher in San Diego, wrote it with students in mind.

The DVD contains two excellent videos for drummers. One features some well-known Christian professionals talking about the role of the drumming in a band, the importance of the drummer, etc.

The other video is Phil giving some examples and explanation of some of the material covered in this session.

Consider showing the "Worship Performance" video too. It covers some excellent ground concerning the role of rock in worship.

Drummers have the most demanding job of anyone in the band. Not only do you need to have independent control over your four limbs, you have to get the song started, keep the tempo going, and know exactly where you are in the song at all times. Whew! This workshop will help you to get started playing in band.

Simplify!

When you try to play what you hear on the radio or a CD, you might be biting off more than you can chew. Many times a beginner drummer will try to play sixteenth-notes on the hi-hat, when all they can handle is eighth-notes. So break down the groove so you don't have to move so fast. You can do the song with a much more simplified beat, and it'll still work.

Count!

Everyone can count to four or eight, until they start playing drums! Then they seem to make some measures have five beats instead of four, or they drop a beat during a fill, landing on what should be the "1" of the next measure, but it's only the "4" of the previous measure. That means the band has to completely adjust, and everything sounds out of whack. So, even if you have to count out loud to yourself. COUNT! "ONE two three four. TWO two three four. THREE two three four..." and so on. ALWAYS know where you are in a measure, and in the 8-bar or 12-bar phrase.

Keep The Tempo

Don't speed up or slow down within a song – unless you're supposed to. Two things tend to throw off the tempo when playing a song: when you try to do something that's over your head, and when the song gets louder or quieter. When you get to a part that is too difficult for you to play, you shouldn't try to play it anyway and hope for the best. Instead, simplify the part and keep the song rockin'. Also, pay close attention to the tempo of a song when you get to loud parts or soft sections. Musicians tend to naturally speed up when getting louder, and slow down when getting softer. Don't make that mistake, and don't follow the other musicians when they do!

Dynamics

"Dynamics" means the varying of volume within a song. Every song should have a "shape" – think of a football, an upside-down pyramid, or a rollercoaster. A "football" would start soft, be loudest in the middle, and end soft. An "upside-down pyramid" starts softly and builds in volume until the end. A "rollercoaster" varies the volume throughout the song – find where the main "peak" is and plan accordingly. You don't have to always play loud. Play softest in the verse, and louder in the chorus and solos. Every time you come back to that part of the song, come back to that same volume.

How to Act In Rehearsal

Drummers have a horrible reputation as troublemakers during rehearsal. You can help change that perception among your bandmates by following these guidelines:

- **Avoid Noodling** – When there's a break in the action the natural inclination is to start messing around with your drums, playing little cool riffs that are fun and impressive. However, when the band isn't playing, usually someone's trying to make a point that is important for the band. Even if the singer's telling the guitarist to "back off a little during this section" – you should be paying attention and picking up clues to make the song better. But if you're messing around, you'll miss out – with the added "benefit" of irritating the rest of your bandmates.
- **Pay Attention to the Leader** – Every band needs a leader, someone who is in charge during rehearsals. Without a leader, rehearsals turn into jam session, fun, but unproductive. Maybe you are that person in your band; but if not, you need to pay attention to whoever is the leader. The leader determines what song is being rehearsed, what part of the song is being polished or learned, etc. As you're avoiding your noodling tendencies, pay attention to what the leader is trying to accomplish and cooperate to get the most of your rehearsal time.

- **Always Know Where You Are in the Song** – Sometimes a certain section of a song needs work. If you know where you are in the song, going back to the troublesome section is easy. If, however, you let your mind wander and are merely playing along with the band, you won't have a clue what to do when the leader says, "Let's start at the second chorus. Take the second repeat."

Wrap Up

For any musician, the phrase "Practice Makes Perfect" is important. But for a drummer, the phrase needs to be altered a bit: "Perfect Practice Makes Perfect." Sitting down at the drums and banging away is easy and natural – and leads to all kinds of bad habits and hindrances to becoming really good. A drummer, more than anyone else in the band, has to pay attention at all times when they are playing. So pay attention!

