

PAUL WERTICO

MAKING MUSIC

Your playing is often described as "musical". What does that word mean to you?

Being called "musical" is a wonderful compliment. I think a musician is someone that plays for the music rather than playing to draw attention to themselves—but it's much more than that. It's about understanding all the aspects of the music you're playing, integrating your sound with the sounds around you, making sure each piece of music "comes alive" and thinking like a "musician" and not just a "drummer". It's about MAKING MUSIC! "Musical" drummers may not get noticed as much but they usually end up getting a lot more gigs, since musicians that hire drummers are more concerned about how the music sounds and feels, not how much chops the drummer has. My goal is to grow and mature as a musician first and a drummer second.

You are mostly known as a jazz/fusion player from your years with Pat Metheny. What are some other styles that you listen to?

I've always loved all kinds of music. Placing music into categories has always bothered me, since I feel that truly great music crosses any and all boundaries. Also, the word "fusion" often gets a bad rap because of its association with overly busy players and mathematical sounding compositions. Fusion at its best represents putting together elements of different musical styles and in the process, coming up with new sounds, grooves and possibilities. If you think about it, most music can be labeled as fusion music because most music combines different elements of jazz, blues, R&B, rock, country, poetry, classical and different ethnic styles.

How important are "chops"?

Chops are great as long as you have the creativity, musicality, emotional depth and discipline to utilize them in a meaningful and musical way. The real issue isn't so much about if you have a lot of chops or not. What's more crucial is about how much "music" you can create using the chops you have!

You do a lot of teaching. What are some of the most common issues your students seem to need help with?

Yes, I do teach a lot (both privately and at three music schools) and it's one of my favorite things to do. I think that "passing the

torch" is one way to ensure that our vision of music lives on! As far as common needs of many students, a lot of them come to me in need of understanding the basic mechanics of playing (utilizing the forces of nature such as gravity and momentum) in order to play more effortlessly and efficiently. Some need to understand the logic of time, feel and groove. Others come to me to understand the concept of "flow", while others seek inspiration and wisdom. There are many different reasons students come to me. I also don't follow a set curriculum, I treat each one of my students as an individual, because, that's what they are!!!

Explain the linear style of time keeping as opposed to a more traditional, more vertical style?

The basic difference between the linear and vertical styles of playing is that in the more traditional approach one hand maintains a repetitive pattern with the other hand doubling certain notes while in a linear groove the hands almost always hit at different times. Think of a fast samba beat. Using the traditional approach, the hand playing the hi-hat or ride cymbal would play constant eighth notes (R) and the snare pattern would play some notes in unison (U), for example:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +
U-R-U-R-R-U-R-U R-U-R-R-U-R-U-R

Using a linear approach, the sticking would be:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +
L-R-L-R-R-L-R-L R-L-R-R-L-R-L-R

With the linear approach, since one hand is not keeping a steady rhythm (and thus having to work so hard), it's easy to play faster tempos. Yet the pattern still gives the illusion of "everything" being played. A lot of the ride cymbal patterns I played with the Pat Metheny Group used random linear type sticking patterns. Other drummers that use a linear approach range from Charlie Watts to Dave Garibaldi to Jack DeJohnette.

You use a lot of different cymbals in your setup. How do they complement your drums?

First of all, I LOVE cymbals. Cymbals can be so musical and expressive. I use many different models of Paiste cymbals because each has their own character. My cymbal setup can range from two or three cymbals, for a basic jazz or rock gig, to thirteen or fourteen cymbals, like I used with the Pat Metheny Group.

It really depends on the type of music I'm playing. If I'm playing jazz, then I want my cymbals to "blend" with the drums. I want the kit to sound like one big instrument with no sonic gaps. If I'm playing rock, then I want my cymbals to augment my drumset, so that the drums carry the weight of the beat and the cymbals add color and dimension.

In the last couple of years you've really become fitness minded. How has this affected your playing?

Working out has given me the strength and flexibility to execute my ideas in a much more controlled and relaxed manner. I feel a new confidence in both my playing and my appearance. My wife, Barbara, is a certified Pilates® instructor and she showed me the importance of working on my abdominal muscles, which is a person's core and power center. Once your core is strong, it becomes so much easier to balance yourself and thus have a stable foundation off of which you can build. I only wish I had known the proper methods of stretching and exercising years ago, but then again, it's all part of the process of growing as a musician. That what makes all of this so much fun!

What advice would you give to aspiring young drummers?

- HAVE FUN.
- Play every note (and rest!) like you mean it. Never "coast" through a gig!
- RESPECT the music, the other musicians and the audience and give them everything you've got. This not only takes talent, it takes commitment, concentration, courage, passion, expertise and a love of what you're doing.
- Practice correctly. Develop positive habits, not negative ones.
- Listen to as much recorded music as you can (both current and past music in all styles), attend as many live gigs and clinics as you can and study with experienced teachers (who are good players themselves).
- Meet other musicians, producers, promoters, engineers, etc.
- Remember that in art and music, there really is no "right" or "wrong". Be true to your unique vision and always believe in yourself!
- Always remember to GROOVE!!!



Paul Wertico's DW Drum Setup

Bass Drum	16x20" Collector's Maple
Snare Drums	5x14" Collector's Maple 10+6
Tom-Toms	7x8", 8x10", 9x12", 14x14", 14x16" Collector's Maple
Hardware	5002AH Delta II Accelerator Double Bass Drum Pedal, 5500TD Delta Hi-Hat, 9300 Snare Drum Stand, 9900BD Bass Drum Tom Holder, 9999 Single Tom/Cymbal Stand, 9700 Straight/Boom Cymbal Stand (x4), 9100 Throne, 909 Angle Adjustable Cymbal Stackers (x5)

