

Let's go back to move forward

By Dom Famularo

I am a true believer that if we study the past great players, we will see the evolution of our art form. Modern drum set is only just over one hundred years old. It was the early players who forged ahead to push this contraption of an idea at the start of the 20th century to open doors for us now in the 21st century. As the drum set performance developed, the actual set up had to also change. The size and wood of the drums, the addition of more toms, the stronger boom stands, the double pedal, the 2-legged hi-hat stands, the incredible variety of drum heads, the endless choice of stick woods and sizes, the new sounds and sizes of cymbals and the vast amount of drum educational books and videos to choose from on the internet! So many great changes in just a few short years! But, for me it is the great players who played what they felt and opened doors of expression for us all by pushing themselves to new heights. This is really inspiring! Let's remember these great forefathers of modern drum set.

BABY DODDS played with Louis Armstrong and started the ideas of drumming as we know it now!



CHICK WEBB had his own Big Band and was the favourite drummer of Buddy Rich.



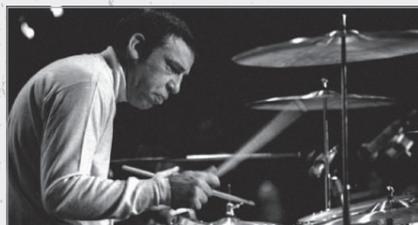
GENE KRUPA with Benny Goodman was the first to solo a non-melodic instrument and create absolute craziness with each performance. I never met him, but had the chance to speak with him on the phone at a lesson with Joe Morello. He called to speak with Joe during a lesson and Joe handed the phone to me to talk with him. I was just 19 and stunned when he said hello. He had a soft calming voice and was very supportive to me, saying, "You are the next generation of drummers." He said to keep going! He passed away about a year later.



PAPA JO JONES had played with the Count Basie Band and was such a gentleman. I took two lessons with him at the Professional Drum Shop in New York City. He had such a touch, and was so musical with great technique. He was called Mr Hi-Hat because he could solo and hold an audience at the edge of their seats on only the hi-hat! Amazing!



BUDDY RICH always played at 100% every show! I met Buddy in 1971 backstage introduced by my Long Island teacher Al Miller. Al and Buddy were in the Marines together in World War 2 and were partners. Whenever Buddy was in town he would call Al and Al would take me. Watching Buddy backstage from the side was a university of knowledge. Always inspiring!



PHILLY JOE JONES played in New York City many times and I had the chance to get to hear him and know him. I would join him on a practice pad reading Charlie Wilcoxon rudiment solos before he went on stage. I made many mistakes and Philly never made mistakes! We would laugh each time we finished! Then he would go on stage and just open up and play wonderfully!



ROY HAYNES lived near me on Long Island and hearing him play many nights was enthusiasm personified! Very intense! "Roy is still active playing at the writing of this article at 92!!!"



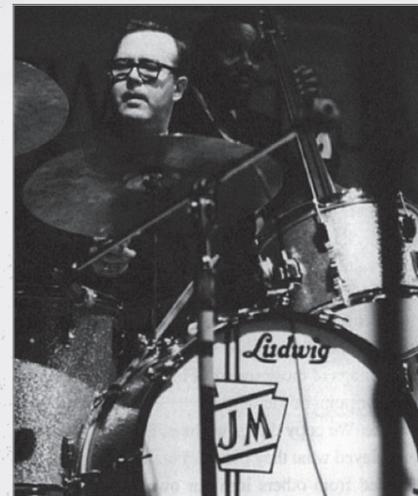
MEL LEWIS had a band with trumpet player Thad Jones called the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Big Band. Check out the song, "Central Park North". Mel was so relaxed, it looked like he was going to fall asleep... but he drove the band like a force of nature!



ART BLAKEY had the band The Jazz Messengers. So many great, talented players were discovered in his band - who are still playing! - and were catapulted by Art. Art would play a closed buzz roll from very soft to screaming loud to drive the band into a new section! I can still feel myself being lifted off my seat when he played!



JOE MORELLO played with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. You must hear the songs, *Take Five*, *Blue Rondo a la Turk* and *Castilian Drums*.



ELVIN JONES was the push behind John Coltrane and was creative every night in a different way that totally amazed me, and he never repeated himself! I took one lesson and he played for me for the entire hour! He is a huge influence to so many drummers!



TONY WILLIAMS joined Miles Davis band at seventeen years young and played with so much energy and musical maturity! His freedom on the set was smooth but always with a fire that heated the stage!



ED SHAUGHNESSY played on the USA late night talk show, Johnny Carson, five nights a week with the Doc Severinsen Big Band, the top players just killing it every show. I would stay up to just hear the band. Buddy Rich was on the show often, Johnny was also a drummer and featured Buddy and Ed in a solo that is on YouTube! A must watch!



MAX ROACH could play tunes on the drums without the band and you would hear exactly the melody. And as he improvised, the song was still in your head. I took a lesson with Max and we listened to old recordings and spoke about what we heard. So musical!



ROY BURNS played with the Benny Goodman band after Gene Krupa and was such a clean player who became a great educator and author.



LOUIS BELLSON was the first to play double bass drums in jazz in the 1930s and people said it would never last, but Louis had the last laugh. I once played a concert with Louis and Steve Smith in Vancouver Canada. Steve and I were backstage on the side watching Louis play after us, and we just looked at each other in shock. He played so great and taught us how much work we had ahead of us!



I have not gotten to all of them, but this is a good start for you to research each of their playing. Go to www.drummerworld.com and click on their names and read up on these legends! Inspiration to motivate us is at your fingertips! Use your computer to research these great artists that will still amaze you even though they are no longer here! They created the wave and now we must keep the wave moving! Having recently played the AUDW 25th Year, this brought so many great top players on the same stage. Attend as many live performances as you can to be a part of this exciting journey that was started before our time! We have the tools to keep building on the great foundation given to us! Let's build even more stories for the next generation to continue! Go back to learn to move forward with the spirit of these legends in your mind and heart!

Enjoy the inspiration...

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Onward and Upward
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