

Dom Famularo

Interview by Sean Mitchell // November 20 2012



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Here is our latest interview with Dom Famularo. As always, the video transcription is below for your reading pleasure. Let us know what you think ... comment, like, tweet. We wanna hear from you!

<https://youtu.be/2KxVGP1IOq8>

Hey, everybody, Sean here from The Black Page. I am with my very good friend Dom Famularo. If none of you know Dom it's because you've been living under a rock. Get up from under that rock - get to know Dom!

Dom, it's always a pleasure. We happen to be at PASIC 2012, so I guess we will open the floor with that. My first year here, I hate to admit it, but my first year here—my eyes totally opened. Dom, you've been coming here for over 30 years. I've seen so much here I can't even explain it—and for the price, I'm talking under \$300. You have a year now to save.

P-A-S is the Percussive Arts Society, an organization that was started over fifty years ago by the likes of the great minds of guys like Vic Firth who got together and said, "You know, we need to have a drumming community meet on a yearly basis." So they called it Percussive Arts

Society. What they have here is their international convention, so PASIC (P-A-S-I-C) is Percussive Arts Society International Convention. What happens is they move it around each year; it's in Austin, Texas, this year. Next year it will be in Indianapolis, which is where their headquarters is located. It happens in Nashville and different parts around the US.

What's amazing about it is it collectively brings together all of these different drummers of all different types of drumming. There's drum set players here; there are classical players here, mallet players here, drum core guys here—and girls—and it's pretty powerful to have all these drummers come together for a three-day session. There are events happening all day - you can walk from room to room - and there's an exhibit area of all the companies that set up all their gear, like Vic Firth and all these super companies, all the different drumhead companies, which is just amazing to have! You can walk around the exhibit area. All the publishers are here so you see all the new books, you see the new companies, you see what's happening, and you go by and see the different clinics that are happening. It's three days of intensity.

What we just gave was one of the Vic Firth PDT (Private Drum Teacher) seminars that I host and Vic Firth organizes as a company. We had 120 teachers here, and we're teaching the teachers how to build their teaching business. It's a PowerPoint presentation. It's exciting; there are questions, there's brainstorming, there's paraphernalia—and all the publishers send a book or two that they want to give to these teachers to kind of see their idea. So these teachers walk away with about two- to three-hundred dollars of product, of books and DVDs. It's incredible what they walk out of here with!

Absolutely and if you are an educator, I highly recommend it. This was my first Vic Firth Seminar, and if you're an educator or even thinking of becoming an educator, this is the place to be. Steve Gadd was here today sharing his insight. Vic Firth, himself, was here, and the guys from Vic Firth. If you leave here and aren't successful, get out from under your rock!

Steve Gadd came by. Steve had performed here with the show. I've know Steve for over 30 years, and we had asked Steve if he could come by and say a few words to the teachers and he said, "Absolutely." So Steve was here; Stanton Moore was here, and he performed here also doing a clinic and performing at the show—and Zoro, all these fun players! They just happen to come by and talk and are in the room. We did, actually, a group picture of everybody which will be sort of exciting - you'll see it all around the internet. Great, great fun! To me it's an important adventure to have here and the whole educational scene has a real big part of my heart of what is happening with drumming because you're trying to raise the level of drumming education worldwide, as I have back in my studio back in my home with The Drumshed (it's a studio that's built that has really high-end technology, flat screen TVs, video cameras and recording sets that help the student to learn better). I think that's what it's about.

To add to that, Dom, you are working on something right now, musiclearningcurve.com, which is an interactive thing.

This is really fun. What this is, I put together in my studio the ability to be able to have a live session. A couple of cameras; I'm live. We announce when it's going to be on; you go by and pay your \$10 for the session. It's an hour long about a specific subject matter, and I'm able to take on-line instant message questions or email questions. So right there it's happening while I'm talking to the world. The first one we had about 267 drummers online, and to be able to reach ten countries at the same time while we are speaking at this level—it's live and you're asking questions. and I'm saying, "Jeff Salem sent in a question from Toronto"—it's just so powerful to have the technology used for education. For a mere \$10 (US) you can have the accessibility of having me there, as we build this. I've spoken to many of my friends (the Steve Gadds, Steve Smiths) and they've said, "My gosh, when you get this thing set where everybody

understands what it's about, I'll come by and do it." And you can talk to them and you can play, and demo and ask questions. It really is so huge now going on in the twenty-first century! Bring it on—get out from under the rock!

As well, and of course, because you're Dom Famularo, there's always something going on. You have a new book coming out.

I'm having so much fun. Earlier this year I had a book come out called *Groove Facility* co-written with one of my guys that owns one of my schools in Marseille, France, Rob Hiron—great, great guy; great, great book, *Groove Facility*. It's kind of an idea. In my book *It's Your Move*, the last page of the book, the exercise is called Groove Facility. We took that exercise and expanded it to book form. It's got Rob on there and the book comes with a DVD so you're hearing Rob explain exercises; right there you see him talking about it, he explains exercises. It is so powerful. The book has been selling very, very well because it's really kind of helping students break down their grooves to understand how to play a groove and how to feel comfortable with it, how to make it sound comfortable.

Last year I came up with a book called *Drumset Duets* which was co-written with Stephane Chamberland, who's a phenomenal young drummer in Quebec, Canada, (also one of my associates with the school). Stephan is a wonderful young player who's kind of adventuring now into more open-handed playing. We put the book together *Drumset Duets*, which has two drummers playing together, or you can play with the CD that comes along with it, so that book is great. Now I'm coming out with another book in January called *Odd Feelings* co-written with Massimo Russo - who is a young, young phenomenal drummer in Italy that's also involved with one of my schools. He's got a Wizdom Drum Shed in Vibo Valentia, Italy. Great wine, great food and wonderful people of Italy! So Massa is incredible as a player and we put this book together, *Odd Feelings*—again one of the excerpts of pages from my book *It's Your Move*, and we expanded on it. So with that now, that book will come out in January and I'm working on a few other books with other guys, so it's fun to see all this grow and develop.

That's such an incredible thing. We had a seminar with Dan Britt, a mutual friend of ours, and one of the questions posed—and I was interested to hear your take on it—was the introduction of open handed or cross handed. Maybe speaking to some of the educators who kind of wrestle with that ... at PASIC we've been talking about the open mindedness as much as this was right at one time and that was right; nothing's "right." It's what's right for each person. How would you approach? Do you start right away with the open hand?

First of all, Dan Britt is a wonderful player, a student of mine, and an educator. He did a great, great job performing here at PASIC and explaining about many concepts in his book *Drumopedia*, which is a great beginner book to get people started. The open-handed concept ... the concept of playing cross-handed when you cross your hands then to playing open-handed where your weaker hand (my left hand) is now playing the hi-hat and taking the more responsibility. I have two ride cymbals that I use so I can play left-hand ride, right-hand ride, or left-hand hi-hat and a second hi-hat to my right to play right-hand hi-hat. So I never cross my hands; I'm always playing open no matter where I am.

This concept to me has dramatically freed me. I made the change after playing thirty-seven years traditional cross handed player. I began to play ten years ago, match-grip and open-hand. So it's been ten years—a decade of me doing it. I will never go back because of the feeling I have of more creative expression and comfort-ability. I don't have any beginner students. Eighty percent of the students I teach are teachers and I tell them to plant the seed to play it both ways. On the drum set in your studio you should have two ride cymbals and two hi-hats. Let the student play it right-handed and let them play it left-handed—just, if anything, to develop their weaker side because your strong hand is here and your weak hand is here. And if

you practise evenly, after a year this happens, and you get better but there's still that gap. But when you add open-handed playing to it, just to get that feel—now when I'm playing this way and my left hand's working a lot more, I'm bringing that left hand up to a higher level so it balances my hands. And I ask the question, "How would you feel as a player if you had two strong hands? Two right hands? Where would your creativity be? Where would your comfort zone be? Where would your open-mindedness to try new ideas be?" It would be endless. That's what this is about; the open-handed mentality is about taking your left hand and playing it and developing your weaker side—lifting it up.

I wrote a book with Stephan Chamberlain called *The Weaker Side* about that idea, where eighty percent of the patterns you play, you play with your weaker side. I use *S* and *W* as opposed to rights and lefts (*S* and *W* for *strong* and *weak*) so under the note is *S* and *W*, so it doesn't matter whether you're a righty or you're a lefty, you'll be able to find out what works for you. That book, preparing you out of even books like *Stick Control*. *Stick Control* is an extremely important book to play, and you see that's the first book to kind of get down as far as technique to do with your hands and your feet. 'Cause when you get that together and work it out, then you go onto *The Weaker Side*, then you start to open up books like *Accents Rebound*, all this playing stuff starts to open up where you feel the idea in your head can more easily be executed. That's what the whole thing is about—good, fun stuff.

Once last question for you, Dom. You've travelled to twenty-two countries this year, you are actually on your way to Paris. A good friend of ours Frédéric Rimbert is here and you're going to be at the opening of his school in France. For the readers out there and the viewers watching, in the next couple of months where can they see you and where are you going to be?

As always, my schedule is exciting. I go to France the first week, December 6th, 7th, and 8th to the Drumming Lab, which is going to be another extension of the Wizdom Drumshed (it's right in the centre of Paris in between the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, a great location for the drummers to go by, to the beautiful city of Paris) to experience drumming through the eyes of Frédéric.

Then in January I'm off to the NAAM show. At the NAAM show I'll be doing several series of educational lectures called The Sessions. The Sessions is a great, great panel of industry people, and we have all people from all different instruments come in and they speak about the empowerment of what tools you need to be successful in this industry, whether you're involved in performing, or backstage production, or engineering or management—whatever it is. We have all these panel members. I host that and also I am a part of the panel. It's exciting (thesessions.org).

If you go to www.thesessions.org and check it out, it really is helpful to musicians. So if one is in your area come on by and be a part of it. I'll be doing that in January too. Then I'm off to South Africa, I'm off to the Ukraine, back to France, off to Germany, and off to Italy. I do China again part of next year. I'm off to Australia for the Australian Ultimate Drummers' Weekend again. This is phenomenal—the AUDW (Australian Ultimate Drummers' Weekend)! What Frank Cornelia does out there in Australia is so exciting. I just finished playing there in August. We did the actual show on the weekend of the AUDW. It is so exciting, so energizing, so drumming fun and then after the actual event happened we went on a tour—myself, Dave Weckl and Thomas Lang. We did six cities in seven days throughout Australia, sold out events, and *Drum Scene Magazine*, which is the magazine down in Australia, hosted that tour. *Drum Scene Magazine*, check it out even though it's in Australia; it's such a great publication for drumming and the enthusiasm of drumming.

Here I am at 59 years young, still highly enthusiastic about playing and teaching and being a part of it—and still doing it. I came out of the rock many, many years ago, and I realized I just wanted to keep on learning. Once you commit to learning, once you commit to looking for the information that's out there on the internet and even in your own local area, that's when you step out from the rock, and that's when you begin to learn. That's when you begin to find out where your talent is at and where the true sense of being able to share this talent throughout the world is.