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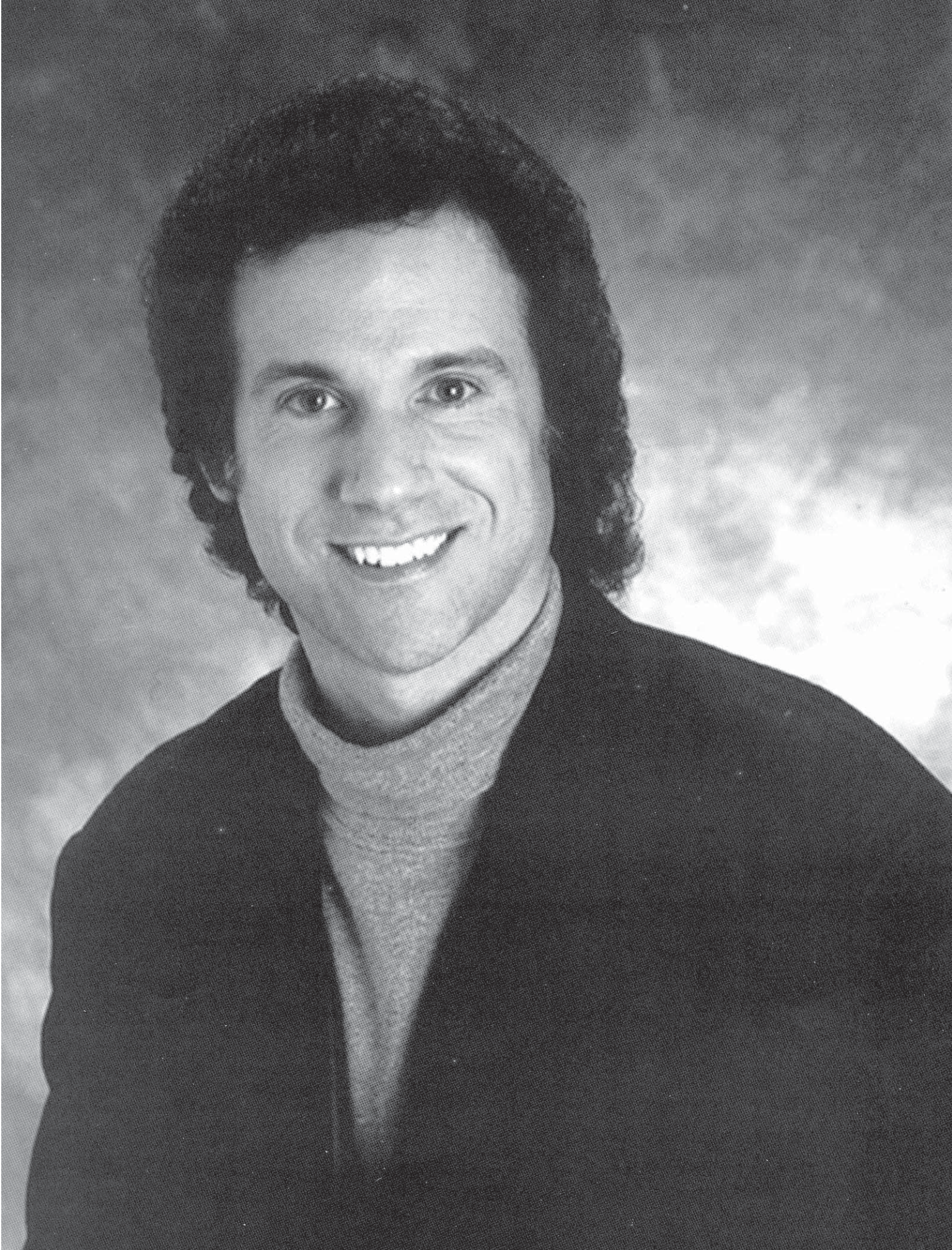
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DAVE BLACK IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF WHY A BROAD AND WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION, AS WELL AS EXTENSIVE PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE, ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE LONGEVITY OF A MUSICIAN'S CAREER. **BY RAY DEEGAN**

PERFORMER, AUTHOR, COMPOSER DAVID BLACK

Dave realized early in his life that success comes from working smart, as well as hard. Black has achieved enormous success as an author and educator, having co-written "Contemporary Brush Techniques," with Louie and Henry Bellson, and the universal best selling drum method series that includes 'Alfred's Drum Method,' Books 1 & 2, 'Alfred's Beginning Drumset Method' and 'Alfred's Beginning Snare Drum Duets.'

As an accomplished composer and arranger, Dave Black has written with and for the bands of Louie Bellson, Sammy Nestico, Bill Watrous, Bobby Shew and Ed Shaughnessy. He is the recipient of 12 consecutive A.S.C.A.P Popular Composer Awards, as well as having received two Grammy nomination/participation certificates: one for his performance contribution on Anita O'Days Grammy-nominated album 'In a Mellow Tone' and the other as album-track composer on Louie Bellson's Grammy-nominated album 'Airmail Special.' Add to this the publication of 23 jazz band compositions, 16 concert band compositions, 4 string orchestrations, 12 books and 2 videos and you have what amounts to an incredible career in anyone's language.

Dave Black's most recent books are 'Drumset Independence and Syncopation' and 'The Essential Dictionary of Orchestration' which has received world-wide critical acclaim from the likes of Marvin Hamlisch, Randy Newman, Elmer Bernstein and Maurice Jarre to name just a few.

While in Australia on holiday in August 1999, I was fortunate enough to talk to Dave about his incredible career achievements.

Is there any work involved in your visit to Australia or is it purely a vacation?

DAVE: It's really a vacation but I have made the time to visit a couple of the local schools, the Alfred office in Sydney and I have agreed to do a couple of interviews, including this one for DrumsScene and another for The Australian Music Educators Magazine. There seems to be some interest, by a number of schools in the area, in me returning to Australia for the purpose of just doing band and percussion clinics. The idea would be for me to return and clinic some of my drum books and to conduct some of my concert band pieces.

Actually, they wanted me to do some of those things this time around, but I

really wanted to treat this first visit to Australia as a vacation. I definitely want to return in a working capacity sometime in the near future.

Do you consider yourself primarily an educator?

Well, yes and no. Although I work in the educational field, my degree is in percussion performance with a minor in composition. I performed for many years but my focus is now on writing books and compositions, in addition to my job as Director of Instrumental Music for the Alfred Publishing Company. Because I currently do not teach privately or in a school system, I wouldn't consider myself an educator in that sense but, because of the number of educational books I've written, that would certainly make me an educator at some level.

Initially having performed for many years, can you tell us about your experience as a performer and composer?

I finished my degree in 1981 and traveled around the world for a lot of years, working and/or recording with a variety of artists. I've had the great honor and pleasure to have worked with Anita O'Day, June Allison, Alan King, Louie Bellson, Jerry Hey and Gordon Brisker (to name a few), in addition to having performed with a number of Broadway-type shows, on cruise ships and in lots of clubs!

What have been some of the memorable career highlights for you to date?

That's a hard question, but I would have to say the highlights for me are always the FIRSTS! The first major album credit, the first Grammy nomination, the first published composition, the first book, etc. One of the highlights would certainly have to be the success of "The Alfred Drum Method Series." The sales and reaction to those books has certainly exceeded anything we ever imagined.

I understand that Alfred's Drum Method, Book 1 is now the world's current best seller. Is this true?

To the best of our knowledge, that is in fact true.

What first inspired you to play drums and at what age did your interest begin?

I knew at the age of seven that I wanted to play drums. That interest began as a result of my parents taking me to see the local parades. It was always such a thrill when that drum line marched by. At that moment, I just knew that drums were the instrument for me. However, because we couldn't afford a drum at the time, I started on guitar (which I studied for two years) and then switched to

drums in the fifth grade. Once that switch happened, I never turned back! I studied percussion privately all the way through junior high, high school and, of course, at the university level.

From junior high school on, I practiced between four to six hours a day. And, believe it or not, my parents didn't really mind.

I grew up on the east coast in Bowie, Maryland but eventually knew I would have to end up in either New York or Los Angeles if I was going to have a chance at making it in music. During my junior year in high school, I met Louie Bellson. That year, he was one of the featured artists who appeared with my high school jazz band, and he stayed at our house for 3 days. He, in fact, is the one who encouraged me to come out to California and study with him.

I had already been accepted to North Texas State and the University of Miami but did a complete "about face" and headed to Los Angeles instead. I've been in L.A. now for 23 years and my friendship with Louie has remained very strong throughout. In fact, I consider him to be a second father figure.

Apart from Louie, who were some of the other drummers that influenced your early education?

I would have to mention Ed Shaughnessey, Steve Schaeffer, Nick Ceroli and my college percussion teacher, Joel Leach. All these guys were not only great teachers, but played an important role in my personal life as well.

Because it all started with him, however, I still have to credit Louie Bellson as being my biggest influence. Having had the opportunity to hang out with someone of that stature over the years has been

a tremendous education and thrill. Everybody knows he's one of the nicest human beings you'll ever meet, and I credit him for being one of the single most influential people in my life, both professionally and personally!

Here is a great example of Louie's influence and kindness. Because I didn't have a car the first two years of college, he would come pick me up at the school dormitory (in his orange Corvette) and take me along with him to his gigs and/or recording sessions. Those trips were some of the best experiences of my life. Can you imagine hanging out with him at a recording session with the likes of Sarah Vaughn, Oscar Peterson, Pearl Bailey, etc.?

He introduced me to a world I may never have gotten to experience.

Additional influences would have to include my junior high band director, Cleme Weems and my high school composition teacher, Gordon Gustin. They've all kept up with my career and continue to be very supportive.

Looking back to when you were 16 years old in high school, did you ever imagine that your musical interests would blossom into such a successful career?

It's really gone far beyond anything I would have ever imagined. When I was that age, all I wanted to do was just play drums. However, after travelling on the road for a few years, I knew I didn't want to continue doing that for the rest of my life. I also had other interests, such as composing, and wanted to be able to pursue those interests as well. While on the road, I also realized I would need to broaden my horizons in order to

be able to survive in the music business.

It's amazing how life can change. At the time, all I wanted to do was make a living playing drums. I had no idea that my interests would change and that I would be able to achieve a certain amount of success in other areas.

So, Dave, is your plan to come back next year?

Well, probably not next year but certainly sometime within the next couple of years. This has been a really great trip with some nice surprises.

For instance, one day my friend Merrilee McNaught and I were walking through the "Rocks" area of Sydney on our way to the open market. We heard a concert band playing in the park area just in front of the Museum of Contemporary Art. By the time we got there, the band had just finished their last piece and Merrilee introduced me to the band director. During the course of our conversation, we came to find out that the director had been working on one of my concert band pieces called "Star Quest" for a festival performance the following week. He was really stunned, not only by the fact that I was in Sydney, but that I just happened to be walking through the area while his band was playing.

The people here in Sydney have been really wonderful! I very much look forward to coming back and being able to work extensively with some of the great talent that seems to be prevalent within the industry at all levels, both educational and in live performance.


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