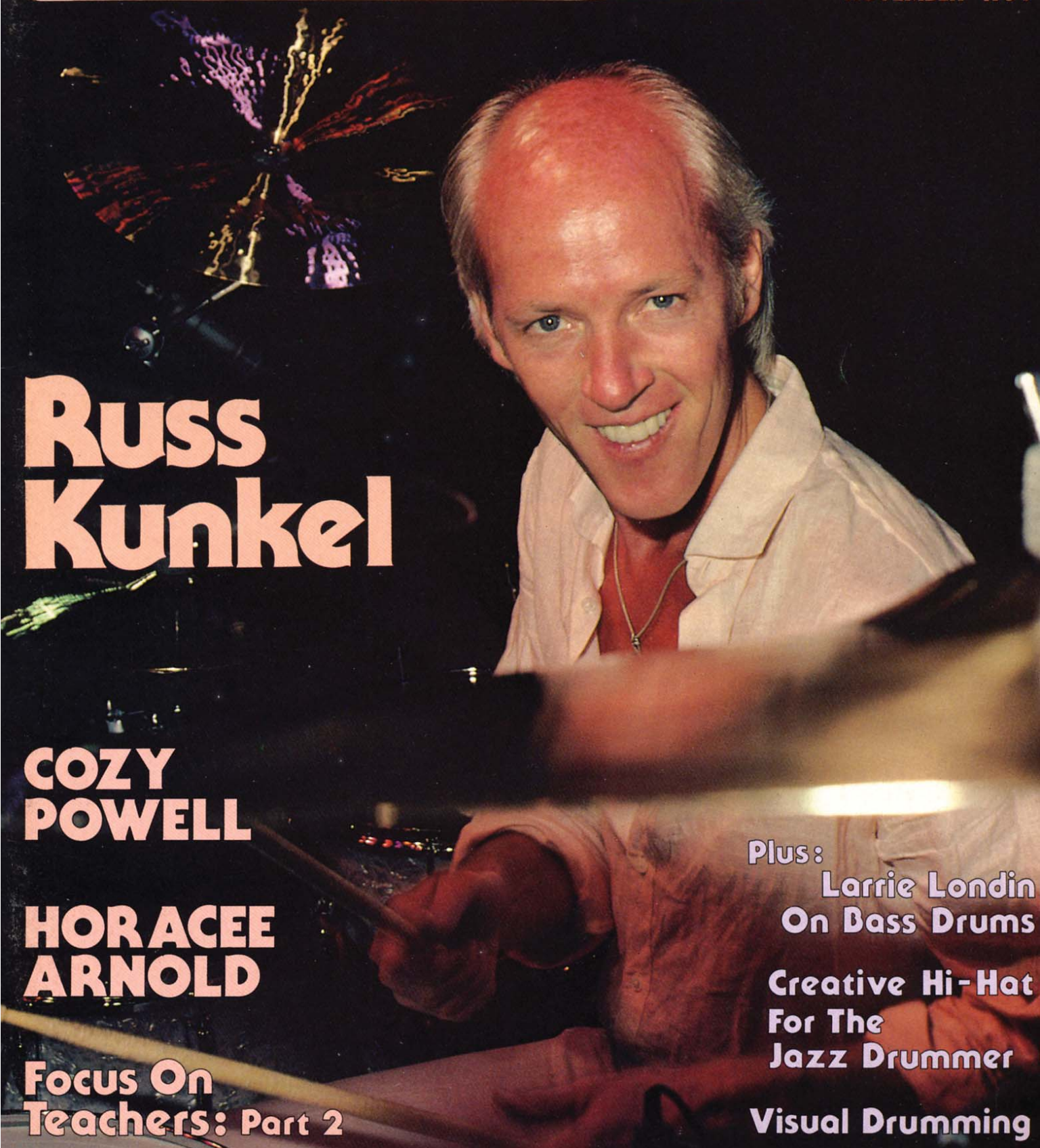
MODERN DRUMMER™

The International Magazine Exclusively For Drummers

$2.50
(In USA)
NOVEMBER 1984



Russ Kunkel

COZY POWELL

HORACEE ARNOLD

Focus On Teachers: Part 2

Plus:

Larrie Londin On Bass Drums

Creative Hi-Hat For The Jazz Drummer

Visual Drumming

CHERS: PART 2

JOEL LEACH

by Dave Black

Joel Leach, Professor of Music, joined the California State University, Northridge faculty in 1969, having taught previously in the public schools of Lansing, Michigan, at Michigan State University and at Texas Tech University. At C.S.U.N., he is chairman of the jazz, percussion and studio music programs. He teaches applied percussion, percussion ensemble, percussion methods, and master classes. He also conducts the Studio Orchestra and the award-winning C.S.U.N. Jazz Band. Joel is the author of Percussion Manual For Music Educators *(Belwin Mills) and coauthor, along with composer Owen Reed, of* Scoring For Percussion *(Belwin Mills). He is a published musical arranger, President of Studio 4 Productions (a publishing and recording company), and an L.A.-area jazz disc jockey. In addition, he serves as advisor/consultant for various musical entities on both coasts. Mr. Leach is past President of the National Association of Jazz Educators (N.A.J.E.) and has served on the Executive Board of the Percussive Arts Society (P.A.S.), and numerous other national and international organizations and associations.*

DB: In recent years, has jazz education in the public schools and universities been increasing or decreasing?

JL: There is no doubt that jazz education has been increasing across the board. The N.A.J.E. monitors jazz education nationwide and has figures to document its growth.

DB: What's not being done in our public schools and universities that you would like to see done?

JL: Sufficient emphasis is not being placed on the art of improvisation. You see, the fundamental difference between jazz and Western European music is that jazz is a *performer*'s art. In jazz, *how* something is being performed is more important, generally speaking, than *what* is being performed. It's the spontaneity of jazz—the improvisation—that lies at the very heart of the art form. If improvisation is overlooked or just given a token glance in the instructional program, then the very heart of jazz has been neglected. I frequently hear high school and college jazz bands with excellent, tight ensembles, but with weak solos. Sometimes, they go so far as to cut the solo sections altogether. Once in a while, they write solos out for the students to play. It's much easier, I guess, than teaching them to improvise, but it's an unacceptable alternative.

DB: How important is it for teachers to be honest with their students about their potential for "making it" in the music business?

JL: Extremely important. I think it is safe to say that teachers often feel uncomfortable discussing students' musical shortcomings with them, but it is dishonest to allow students who lack the fundamental skills and abilities to earn degrees and pursue careers when their teachers could tell all along that they lacked the essential qualities. We all respond to praise, and when young students receive praise from their families and peers for their success on a musical instrument, it may well be the first time they have had the feeling of success, so they continue to dig in. When they graduate from high school and are considering their options for a career, they may well decide to major in music just because that has been the only area in which they have ever excelled at all. As teachers, we must keep in mind that, just because students excell somewhat, it doesn't necessarily mean that they have the skills to become professionals in that field. We have the responsibility to pull back and evaluate students objectively, and try to advise them honestly. It's tough and it feels uncomfortable, but it is absolutely essential.

Just keep in mind that it is dishonest to allow young people to pursue four- or five-year degrees only to learn at the end that they don't have the qualities to become professionals and never did. I've talked with many students who have reached their senior year in college and only then realized that they couldn't make it in music. In retrospect, they were aware of the fact that their teachers knew it all along, but didn't counsel them honestly. At that point, they chose to begin a new course of study after having "wasted" as much as two years on a major they weren't equipped to excell in.

DB: Is just being a good player a guarantee for "making it" in the music business?

JL: To succeed in music, particularly in the studio area, it is equally important that you have business savvy and be the kind of person others enjoy working with. Studio players, unlike those in major symphonies, are hired on a "per-job" basis, and failure to perform musically as well as a failure in the social arts can cause a career to wither almost immediately. There is not much room in the studios for unreasonable egos and excessive rudeness. To a great extent, studio work comes from friends' recommendations. These contacts are invaluable and must be cultivated.

DB: Should students deciding to go into the music business major in a more secure aspect of the business, such as music marketing, music education, and music merchandising, as opposed to getting a performance degree?

JL: If you want to be a performer, then you have to become exceptional on your instrument. Similarly, if you want to go into music merchandising, you have to sharpen those skills. A college degree with a major in music doesn't guarantee you employment as a performer. But the wide spectrum of musical knowledge gained, along with the general knowledge gained in all of those other courses really goes a long way toward making you a better individual. It's true that, if you are a monster on your horn, nobody cares if you ever got through college. That's a saying I hear a great deal out here, particularly by those who never went to college themselves, but it is also true that the college degree is invaluable in a number of ways that you might never suspect when you are earning it. Many people choose to change their careers today, sometimes after having invested a substantial number of years and having been quite successful. A college degree makes you more employable in cases such as that. Furthermore, with a degree in music, for instance, you are a lot closer to obtaining a degree in another field, should you decide to go back for re-education, than if you had never gone to college in the first place.

It is fair, at this time, to say that the music industry is more unstable than it has ever been before. This instability is caused

continued on page 90

whether that person shall succeed or fail. I honestly believe the person who works at music because of the satisfaction involved in just improving artistically is the individual who becomes successful. No one says that a person is going to be a superstar on that premise alone. The individual who does the job well and tries to be musical will succeed. If the public puts the label "superstar" on you, you either wear it well or you don't. Hopefully you *do* wear it well.

***Leach** continued from page 19*

by a variety of factors, including electronic musical instruments, the public's new awareness of the coupling of audio and video, changing work patterns, and more free time than ever before. Most of my friends who rely upon their entire salary base from studio employment are experiencing belt tightening unlike they have ever seen before. I *don't* think any of us can tell what the music business will be like in ten or 20 years, but I *do* know it will be different! Young players need to have their feelers out in all directions and to be sensitive to the changes as they take place. These changes are taking place at a faster rate than ever before. Now more than ever before, it is important that you have that college degree behind you with all of the fine training it represents and all of the security it has to offer.

DB: Do you think it's important for students to find something else outside of music to fall back on, in case music should fall through?

JL: That's a tough one. I know that sociologists say that by the year 2,000, it will be commonplace for people to have at least two totally unrelated careers in the span of their lifetimes. We are seeing some of this even today. Again, I would have to say that it is extremely important for young people to put most, but not all of their irons in one fire, and to keep other skills and interests at the forefront of their minds at all times. For instance, while obtaining a music degree, it sometimes takes only one-and-a-half to two years more to earn a degree in business. Or while earning a music performing degree, one can also earn a degree in music education in as little as one year more. There are limitless options available. When the person is young, that's the time to get a broad education in preparation for the future. I'm already seeing more and more of that here in Los Angeles.

DB: If you are a good player, what are the chances of making it in music, especially in the bigger cities such as Los Angeles and New York?

JL: It's a combination of talent, perseverance and diplomacy. The very, very finest players hit town and word gets around. Within a short period of time, they are working. That's probably the top two percent. For the rest, it takes perseverance. That includes exposure by hanging out and working small gigs with other young, rising talents, and being available for varied rehearsal bands, etc. As for the diplomacy part, that has to do with one's ability to work with others, being eager without being pushy, being confident without being arrogant and being a giver rather than just a taker. One last thing—luck—being in the proverbial right place at the right time. That's something that can't be planned.

DB: Do students growing up in bigger cities, such as Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, have a better chance of making it, than those students who do not grow up in a big city?

JL: Yes, I think they do, providing they actually exercise the many options open to them. After all, they live near the world's finest players and can hear them frequently in clubs and concert venues. That has to be worth something.

DB: With the music business being so up and down, should parents encourage their musically inclined children to continue in music?

JL: I happen to believe that children should have the right to choose to explore their interests to the best of their abilities. That includes the so-called "unstable" areas, such as music and the rest of the arts. There is now and will always be a need for musicians and artists. It's just that the type of need is quite likely to be different from what we know today. That, again, is where the flexibility part comes in.

DB: Would you encourage your children?

JL: Naturally, my children are exposed to a tremendous amount of music, with my involvement in music education and the professional musical community of L.A. My 14-year-old daughter Julie and 10-year-old son Christopher have already had the opportunity to appear on nine LP recordings, in a number of stage productions and in various other musical activities. At this time, they are both exhibiting interest and abilities in music, and I try to be very supportive. If and when they indicate that they want to pursue careers in music, I will try to support them, all the while being as protective as any other father. With my close proximity to the business, I think I can help guide them and keep all their options open so they can adapt as things change.

DB: What educational level is the most crucial stage in a young musician's life? Is it at the elementary, junior high, high school, or college level?

JL: That's a tough one, because depending on the student's rate of growth, any or all of them may be important. It is safe to say, however, that if students don't get involved seriously with music by the time they are in junior high and then continue throughout high school, it is unlikely that a musical career would be a viable option. For string players, the elementary level seems to be the best starting point. One more thing—the *quality* of the program to which the students are exposed has *everything* to do with their potential for growth. If the program is weak in applied instruction or the director is lacking in musical growth and appreciation for the arts, it's almost like having had *no* training at all.

DB: In what areas of the music business do you feel students have the best chances for survival?

JL: This is an interesting question, in that students who love music generally tend to think of only the performance side of the art. There are, of course, many other avenues open such as music publishing, concert production, music engraving, music periodicals, musical instrument manufacturing, musical instrument sales, etc. The list goes on and on. M.E.N.C. [Music Educators National Conference] did an excellent explorative article on this a few years

back. I hope they will update and reprint it in the future.

DB: What are some of the most useful tools used in aiding students?

JL: There are literally thousands of things available on the market to use in training our young people. Among the newer and more innovative publications are the Jamey Abersold recordings which concentrate on the art of improvisation. Jamey has set the pace in that area and has an excellent variety of materials available.

DB: With the future of music heading towards electronics, do you feel that educational institutions should make their students aware of this new technology?

JL: I'm not so sure that the entire future of music is heading toward electronics. Certainly a sizeable portion will, but I doubt that electronics will replace all live music. And yes, I do feel that educational institutions should acquaint their students with the electronics. Electronics will be a bigger part of their lives than yours and mine, and they simply must learn how to use them to their fullest.

DB: Where do you see the music business and music institutions heading within the next ten years?

JL: I wish I knew. I wish anybody knew. As I mentioned earlier, we are presently experiencing the most turbulent period the music industry has seen in this century caused by a variety of factors, not the least of which is changing musical tastes. All I am quite sure of is that there will be a music business and there will be a need for performers. How much and how many is open to question. It certainly will be different from what it is today, but I'm not in a position to say how different it will be. I am an optimist in that I don't believe we should all throw in the towels now, and begin counseling students away from music. But it is going to become more and more important for the students to be broadly educated and very versatile in order to find fulfillment in music. Frankly, I don't think that's too much to ask.

Igoe continued from page 20

He had no use for a lot of popular music, and made no attempt to hide his feelings. He recalled playing on record dates with Fabian, Frankie Avalon, and other teen idols of the '50s. He found the new trends in pop music a comedown after the polished professionalism of the swing he had played with Benny Goodman, Woody Herman and company. But the heyday of the big bands was by then clearly history; the money was in records with titles like "Splish Splash." "I was on one date, and I really was sick of it—playing twist music and all that stuff. There were a bunch of guitars on the date. All *the* New York recording players of the day were there. Bucky Pizzarelli was there. And we got the word: 'Okay fellows, let's run this down.' We played it down, and it went off pretty well. The guy in the booth said, 'Okay, let's try it again. Hey, Sonny, you know, it really sounds like you don't mean it.' And I, being one of these persons who usually says what he thinks, said, 'Well to tell you the truth, I don't.' I never got called by those people again, even though, on the next take I played the hell out of it, just to make up for what I had said. But I really didn't care, because that's not what I really like to do." His idea of music was the sort of stuff being produced by arranger Gene Roland for Basie, Herman, and Kenton. But there wasn't much of a market for that kind of music.

"I was getting a little disillusioned with the way you had to play, then, on the records. You know, rock 'n' roll was really here then. And you had to play so much straight 8ths with heavy backbeats, and all that crap. I just couldn't stomach it," Igoe said. "Rock is all built on straight 8ths. Nobody played that, years ago. If you played that, you were considered corny. But now, it was like a whole different bag." He was bothered, too, by the way that even the old pros seemed to be trying to roughen up their sound.

"One time I was on a record date for Perry Como. The orchestra got there at ten in the morning, and we ran over two very simple tunes. It took us about 15 or 20 minutes to run these things down. Then we waited around an hour and a half for him to come. He listened to the tunes and said, 'Fellows, they sound too good.' You know, here you spend all your life trying to be good and play clean and that sort of thing. Now somebody comes around and tells you that it's too good. He wanted a certain thing, I guess, and we weren't doing it. It was too polished—too professional sounding. That was the way things were going and I didn't like it. So I sort of phased myself out of the recording."

Economics dictated his growing involvement in teaching. Without touring, it was simply not possible to make a living, playing just the music he liked. Gigs that were the most satisfying musically often were not financially acceptable. He recalled playing in an all-star group in the early '50s at the old Downbeat Club on 54th Street. "The lineup of the band that I was playing in was: Bill Harris and Kai Winding on trombone, Charlie Mingus on bass, I was the drummer and the piano player was Harvey Leonard. Opposite us in the other band were Charlie Parker, Max Roach, and Percy Heath. The job was from nine to four. We played alternate sets. Those people were all well-known jazz players and we all made $12 apiece," Igoe said. Igoe turned more to teaching, first in New York and then later in Jersey.

Igoe said there are limits to what any teacher can do for an aspiring drummer,

no matter how good that instructor is. "You can't put ideas in a person's head. I've had students say, 'You're going to teach me how to play a drum solo.' I can't teach you how to play a drum solo. To play a drum solo, you have to want to show off. Students have told me that they want to play a drum solo, yet when they come in here, they're so inhibited that they barely can say hello to me. So you have to want to show off, number one, in order to be a successful soloist. Number two, you've got to have some ideas. And number three, you better be able to execute them. That's where a teacher comes in. But you have to have the ability to improvise. Most of the drumming is improvisation 99% of the time anyway. Even when you're playing written parts in a band, you're improvising everything you're playing until you get to a certain point where you have to play a certain figure or something.

"I don't tell my students what kind of styles they can play. I've got to give them the tools so that they can do what they want to do, and do it better than they ever could have without having met me. You get mostly young kids today who are just into rock. They're not aware of other kinds of music a lot of times. I play some Dixieland things for some of these kids and they go bananas. They say, 'I've never heard anything like that; that's great.' When I play big band things, they say, 'Gee, you never hear anything like that. Can I get that?' So if they can't get it, I'll make them a cassette. They'll take it home, and try to play with it. Then, they'll bring it in, play it for me, and I'll tell them what they are doing wrong. All of a sudden, they can play it. I make pupils who say that they don't want to play anything but big band and jazz learn to play some rock too. But mainly it's helping them improve at what they want to do."

Igoe commented that the best advice he could give drummers trying to better themselves would be to listen to a wide variety of recordings, and to play along with them. "I think that's the greatest way to practice. When I was a kid I had every record that Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Count Basie, Glenn Miller, and every band you ever heard of made." And he practiced until he could re-create the work of all of the leading drummers.

"A lot of the young drummers don't listen to enough music. And they don't sit down and play with records. I've even heard some teachers say that you shouldn't sit down and play with records, which I think is absolutely ridiculous. Young drummers who are sitting home need music to feed on in order to learn how to play. You have to have an inspiration. You have to look up to Steve Gadd, Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones, or whoever you want to look up to. Listen to those people, and try to play along with them, so you can get an idea of what they do, how they anticipate, how they set up figures, how they play breaks, and that sort of thing. That's how a drummer gets an ear. If you play with a record, you're usually playing with top people. It's their best attempt at what they're trying to do at that particular time. That's why the record is out. And that's really how you can learn how to play. Then, naturally, you get the services of a good drum teacher who can correct any bad habits that you might be getting into," Igoe said.

He commented that, while the music he's most comfortable playing is big band jazz and Broadway show music (he'll occasionally sub in Broadway pit orchestras), he can appreciate drummers playing in different genres. He said he never cared for the drumming of some popular rock figures, such as Ringo Starr. "But I hear a lot of things today that I like from different groups like Spyro Gyra, from funk groups, and from what they loosely call 'contemporary' today—Gadd and Harvey Mason. They are absolutely incredible. Some of those guys sound like they have 12 arms and ten feet."

Igoe spent two years working on his book, *Get Your Fills Together*. "There are about ten million drum books out. But I did this book because there was nothing on the subject of how to play in a band. There were no drills, so to speak, on how to set up different figures in an arrangement. I wrote this book as a series of drills, so that, eventually, when the reader looks at a figure, it will be like looking at the alphabet. This is not a method book on how to play a paradiddle or a roll. I have students who aren't playing that book; you have to get people to a certain point before you can really teach them anything. In fact, there are a lot of teachers out there who can't handle the book. They haven't had the experience of playing in a band themselves. So it's a book that's not practical for them, because they can't do it themselves. Don Ellis had a marvelous band. He was a trumpet player who also played the drums. He loved the book and he used to use it on trumpet clinics. He also used it on drum clinics with his drummer. So did Peter Erskine, when he was with Stan Kenton."

The Slingerland four-piece drumset with Zildjian cymbals that Igoe has used for years is in his studio. Facing it is a video camera, a television monitor, and a couple of tape recording decks. Igoe noted, "I was one of the first teachers in New York using an audio playback system with students. I'd have them play with an arrangement, and then we'd record it. I'd have the music on one track and the drums on the other track. I would play it back, we'd listen to it, and I'd be able to show where they were off. Now I do the same thing with video. We can see the pictures, we can hear the music, and we can hear the drums. I can say, 'When you do that, you're awkward,' or something like that. The video's