

Jumpseat Performance Notes

This one is a strict groove-template. When I was first asked to perform drum clinics I needed a couple of tracks that were all about groove. Simple, phat, straight groove. I took inspiration from some popular tracks which I thought had that relentless driving beat quality and I created "Jumpseat" in about two hours from loops and samples while travelling from London to Vienna on a plane (hence the title "Jumpseat"—I was travelling to my first drum clinic in 1999 and I missed a flight but the airline gave me the "jumpseat" on another plane because I happened to know most of the crew on that flight from "way back in high school"... weird coincidence).

The drumming on this track is simple but "to the point." I start with a funky little beat in a dotted 16th-note feel. I develop the groove over the course of the first two sections by changing the dynamic parameters of the beat. When I change a pattern (say, a right-hand hi-hat pattern) I also change the dynamics drastically, and sometimes I will move onto a different instrument at the same time. This makes the transitions sound more "machine-like"—as if played by a drum computer. I wanted to recreate that digital feel of programmed drums but add some spice at the same time. The song basically rattles along until the drum solo happens. There I solo wildly and freely over a series of kicks that increase in frequency so there is an automatic "build-up" and once I've gone ballistic with double-kick and cross-sticking crashes I humbly withdraw back into my "safety zone" of the straight groove.

I used to play this song as the opening track at clinics for a number of years because it was simple, yet flashy. It starts with a count-in: 1,2,3,4 and bang!—into the groove. What better way to start a drum-show than a count-in I thought, and after performing it a few times I got the vibe that the audience enjoyed listening to the track as much as I enjoyed playing it.

Here's a little story in connection with this song:

Had I missed that flight (on which I wrote "Jumpseat") and consequently the drum festival I was supposed to appear at, my life would be very different right now!

This was my first appearance at an international drum festival. It was called "Austrian Superdrumming 1999." The promoter was a man named Gerhard Jessl, owner of the "Drumhouse" stores in Austria. I was billed alongside Virgil Donati, Dave Weckl, Billy Cobham, and a number of other incredible drummers. At that point in my career I was not at all into doing solo performances and I had successfully "avoided" doing clinics for many years, even though I had been a "name" drummer in the European music scene for quite some time. I agreed to do it for Gerhard who was (and still is) a friend and who was (and still is) doing a lot for the drumming community in Austria, so I wanted to support him and when he asked me I agreed immediately (not at all considering the consequences of course) because the town of Gmunden in Austria is beautiful and the cuisine and the local beer are excellent!

I was living in London, England, and my focus was touring and recording with bands. Playing without a band seemed really strange and also fairly boring to me. I was proud of my work in studios and on stages around the world, backing artists and playing tasty beats to propel the music and to make people move. I wasn't at all into the "drum thing." I had the utmost respect for all the great drummers out there but the "drum scene" seemed so tough and unforgiving, so self-indulgent and ultra-critical. I just didn't want to expose all my flaws and shortcomings to the public. It was much easier to hide all the stuff I hated about my playing when working with a band!

I didn't have to stretch much to make things work when I was part of a team. It was easy to sit back and enjoy the show while drumming the show! I had time to "cruise" and catch my breath after more challenging songs. I wasn't the focus of attention unless I had to deliver a short solo. If there was a solo, it was usually over in a blink and I was back in "cruise" mode for the rest of the show.

Solo drumming to me seemed almost redundant, yet really artistic and interesting. I was strangely attracted to it but at the same time I didn't quite see the point of it. I was surprised to see how many people showed up at clinics and drum festivals and I was stunned to see that the drumming community is a worldwide "scene." Every country in the world seems to have its own drum magazine (usually even more than one), there are online forums, and there are a gazillion websites dedicated to drumming and drummers. There are instructional books, DVDs, CDs, and of course all the drummers performance DVDs and CDs. There is a substantial worldwide fan base and a drumming community that was appreciative, liberal, and extremely supportive of everyone's art. I was really intrigued by the whole thing.

I remember sitting down to play "Jumpseat" for the first time only hours after I had finished the tune on my laptop. I was using a minidisc player to run the track live. Since it was the first time I ran a MD (not ADATs or MPCs or computers like with most bands I

was working with); I was a little clumsy and the song started while I was still putting my headphones on and I had to stop it before the groove started. All the audience heard was 1,2,3,4!, the count-in of the tune. So I tried again ... I had the cans on, sticks in hand, towel in place, water “check,” snares on “check”... and I press the button... 1,2,3,4 ... and I realize my headphones aren’t plugged into the MD player! So, for the second time I stop the track, fix the problem and try again. Surprisingly, there’s applause ... ? They’re just being kind, I thought. Attempt number three: 1,2,3,4, finally, into the song!

The audience literally erupts into a thunderous applause, screaming, yelling “yeah baby!” and all ... a solid 2 and 4 clap is coming from an audience full of drummers (every drummer’s dream—the audience can keep time! ... but of course, they’re all drummers too!)

I got hooked. Performing for an audience that really understands what you’re doing is very special. The audience understand nuances, concepts, and ideas. Even fragments of ideas will be analyzed and mostly appreciated. It’s a unique and very satisfying position to be in. You can perform for specialists who really appreciate your art and skill, your ideas, your creative output. The listener really listens and the reactions you get are so much more detailed and subtle. The appreciation and the embrace of the crowd at the end of this particular show was much more intimate and heart-felt than anything I had experienced before.

I had already played regularly for huge crowds of 250,000 people and more, but it never felt like this before. First of all, I was getting all the attention (and all the applause with it), and it was the kind of applause that was unexpected, surprising and therefore more impactful.

This wasn’t showbiz, it was a reaction to real, in-depth understanding, and an honest show of appreciation. It wasn’t clapping because a pyro goes off or because a dancer does a breakneck-move, it was all drumming-related applause....

At that point drumming re-entered my life on a whole new level. I had been playing nonstop for 26 years at that point and drumming had become second nature, you know ... the thing one does for a living. A passion yes, but a passion that turned into a job. A great and fun job, but it was still a job. Now, after playing the drum festival I felt inspired again, for the first time in years.

I needed that inspiration to give my playing more attention again.

As it happens, it was also the first time Karl Heinz Menzel from Sonor saw me play up close. At the time, Sonor was working on a series of pedals including the “Twin Effect” pedal and Karl was interested in my heel-up and heel-down foot technique. I had known Karl for many years at that point, but only from a distance. After my show Karl asked me to try a prototype pedal backstage in complete secrecy, doors locked and curtains drawn. I thought he was going to pull out the final photographic proof of the alien shipwreck in Roswell or something of that magnitude, but it was much better: a “Twin Effect” pedal.

It looked more alien than ET’s mothership. This strange contraption was extremely well designed and of impressive, solid build. I had to try it.

I was able to pull out some cool patterns right away and Karl asked me if I would like to get involved with the promotion of the “Giant Step” series of clinics and interviews, etc.

Coincidentally I had just switched to Meinl cymbals and my first signature line of cymbals was being released. Norbert Saemann (A & R for Meinl), who was at the festival representing Meinl, asked me if I was up for some promo-activities (meaning clinics, etc.)

Two months earlier I had found distribution for an instructional video which I had recorded in 1995 and my distributor also asked me at the drum festival to consider some promotional activities to promote the video ... clinics, interviews, that sort of thing.

There was something going on and I thought I’d better see the signs and act quickly. Everyone was talking clinics. It was flattering but also strange for me.

I felt if I was going to do clinics I would have to work a lot on specific drumming concepts and ideas to be more flashy and I would need about a year with that new pedal to incorporate it in my playing. I felt totally unprepared for doing solo shows. I had no concepts, no idea what to play, no tracks to play to apart from the one I just “whipped up” on the plane. I was anticipating a lot of very hard work if I wanted to do this.

My friend Conrad Schrenk had also given me a few other songs to play along to. We had recorded them about a month earlier and I wanted to use them because I liked them, remembered them easily, and they seemed tricky enough to present at a clinic. I played the festival, did a few one-off clinics, recorded a “giant step” video to showcase the new pedal four weeks later (one year to get used to the pedal ... yeah right!), and I did a clinic tour a few months later. Interviews followed. I did more clinic tours between tours with bands I was working with; I started appearing at drum festivals all over the world; doing solo tours all over the world; I was getting a lot of press in drum magazines and I was performing at every major international drumming event on the planet. I was introduced to Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel from Hudson Music by my friend Ian Croft, who at the time was my artist relations manager at Sonor drums, and Rob and Paul asked me to do another instructional DVD which we called “Creative Control”...

And here we are today! The music I scrambled together back then for my first clinic has made it many times around the world with me, onto a very popular DVD and finally, all the way into this book!

It's been quite a trip! Thank you Gerhard, Karl, Norbert, and Conrad. Thank you Ian, Rob, and Paul. And thank YOU very, very much.

To the crew of OS 495! Rotate!

NOTATION KEY

hi-hat w/ foot bass drums toms snare ride open hi-hat crash China or jingle hats x-hat

Jump Seat

♩ = 112

composed by: Thomas Lang
music engraved by: Michael Dawson

A slightly swung 16ths

B

C solo over hits

A

39

43

D

47

51

55

B

59

63

B

67

71