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Recently, I had the opportunity to sit down with Zoro the Drummer to conduct what I anticipated would be quite an interesting and in-depth interview. What transpired all that time surpassed all I had imagined about Zoro.

I knew from prior research that Zoro was more than just some stick-wielding poser with a fancy name. Much more.

Born and raised in Grant's Pass, Oregon, Zoro began playing drums as a junior in high school. Upon graduation he moved to Los Angeles to accelerate his music career, but decided that an education at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he went from L.A., would be a better plan.

Since his return to L.A. from Berklee, Zoro has landed successful jobs with members of Earth, Wind and Fire (some

of his personal heros), Rockwell, New Edition and Bobby Brown. Currently, Zoro is a member of the Lenny Kravitz band and is enjoying his work immensely.

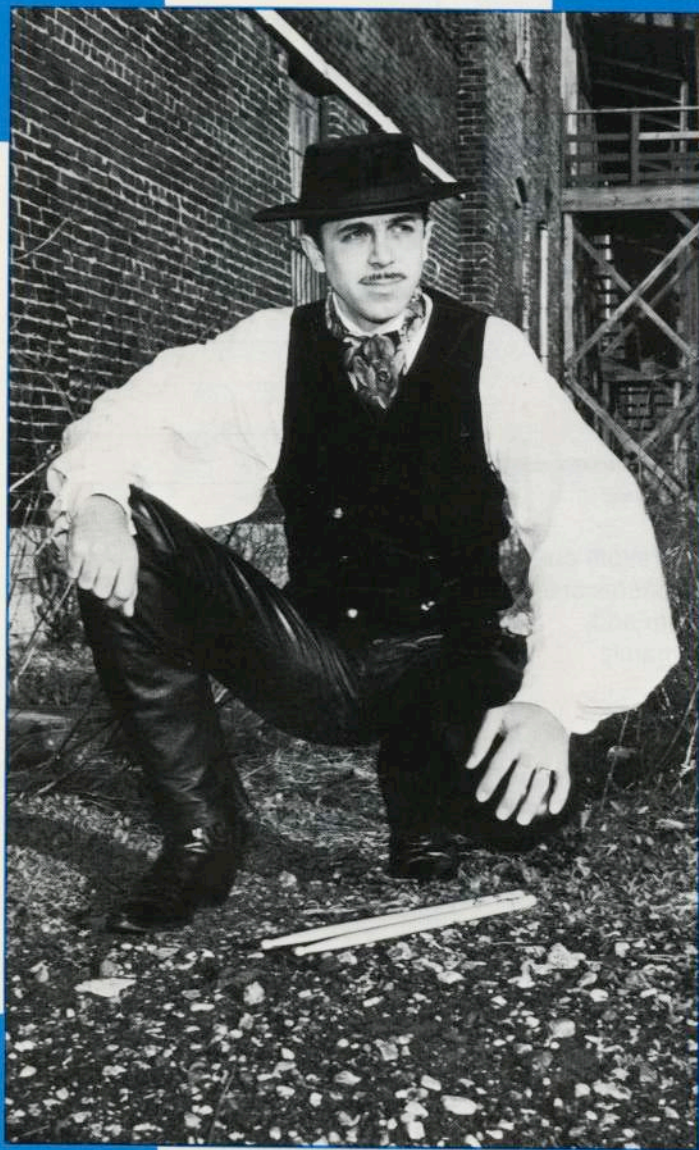
There is still more to Zoro though. He is not just a drummer, but an astute businessman, a devout Christian, quite a hot commodity in the drum industry, working with such companies as Premier drums, Sabian cymbals, D.W., Vic Firth, Crown, Evans, Jemm Practa Pal, Percussion and others, and an incredibly thoughtful man whose philosophies and experiences I now present, just as they were presented to me by Zoro.

I've always liked Elvis. I like his singing and I like his songs. Not only that, but he was Elvis. He was cool and I and 90% of everyone I knew thought he was cool and wanted to be like him. When he died, I started buying more of his old records. It was like, the fact that he wasn't around made me more aware of him. So, I bought a bunch of his albums and got into the whole music thing and then I bought a guitar. I played guitar for about a week and decided I was terrible. Then I tried singing for a while because I liked singing, but I soon realized I have no singing ability whatsoever. And, through all of this, I finally came to the conclusion that the drums were what I always wanted to play even before my whole Elvis thing. It was Elvis' death that sparked my interest in music and helped me discover drums.

In any negative situation, the key is to focus on what can be learned or gained. When I was first gigging I was fired from a lot of gigs because I didn't play hard enough, I wasn't a hard enough hitter. Now I'm too hard of a hitter. I told myself back then that I was never going to lose another gig for not hitting hard enough so I learned from that. I've learned more from my bad gigs than others. It's when I played a gig and someone came up to me and said, "Man you're doing all the wrong things," that I learned. When you're doing the right things, nobody really says anything. Whenever nobody's telling you anything, you know you must be doing alright. No news is good news. But, all my bad situations have helped me to grow, and I'm sure I haven't seen the last of them.

I used to sit down with an old Zildjian catalog and look through all the names in the endorsee bio and most of the guys were from L.A.. So, I'd get their numbers from the directory and I was surprised that a lot of them were listed in the regular phone book. I called a lot of guys up and eventually, by knocking on all the doors I made connections. All those guys are good guys. They're musicians who went through the same thing, so when they see somebody who's like themselves, they can't help but be cool and give some advice or help you out. I always made sure people could hear me play. Everything I did was done so that I could jam with people or get advice on my playing.

I realized I needed to spend half of my time on drumming and half on business. Personally, I would have liked to spend all of my time on drumming and not worry at all about business, but there's no guarantees that anybody's gonna call you. People have to know you. People have to have heard of you. People have to like working with you. Personality has a lot to do with the people who work and the people who don't. There are some amazing musicians I know out there who don't hardly work because they're just hard to deal with.



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Some guys just never take the time or have the patience to deal with the business aspect of things. That's one thing that's a necessity. There's no way around it. You can stay in the basement and become the world's most amazing drummer, chances are if a few cats hear you, you might eventually start working. But then, your communications skills as a person are so low it's hard to continue working because you can't keep the flow going, you can't keep your relationships with people going.

It's a business partially of personalities. When you spend two or three years on the road with the same cats on a given gig, they're going to want to like you and get along with you in order for you to keep that gig. And as soon as they don't, that's when you're in jeopardy. It's very political and, unfortunately, I don't dig the politics of any of it but it's gonna be that way. I'm not going to be able to change it so by dealing with it and adapting to it, it works out. You need a good personality no matter what you do, whether you're a drummer or an accountant, you're always dealing with other people.

I always try to regain that feeling of when I first started to play drums. There was always this certain feeling that went through me while I played drums. That certain innocence, that certain pure love for music that ran through me and nothing got in the way of that. As much as I love playing now, I always try to recapture that feeling. It's such a beautiful feeling, just me, my drums and music and I try as hard as I can in the business today to regain that. Every now and again I get that same spark and that same energy that I used to have

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By Chris Olsen

their styles and take any gig you can. If you want to be Joe Cool drummer and you're not interested in being a versatile musician and you only want to play one thing and you want to try to make it in a gimmick band, then go for that and don't waste your time doing all the other stuff. You can get to where you're going a lot faster if you know what you're trying to do. There's no sense fooling yourself. If you know the bottomline of what you want, you don't need to check with anybody on it. That's just you. You're the one who's going to be dealing with the situation. You're the one who's going to get respect or get no respect. There are tons of bands that get recognized everyday with musicians who can't play. If that's what you want, that's cool; you don't have to be whatever. There's a lot of people who make a lot of money who aren't musically respected, but they don't care. They're laughing all the way to the bank.

I'm a Christian and I believe in God and I believe that God has done many good things for me. My faith in Him and my faith in myself have brought me into some very good situations that might be called luck. On the other hand, luck is the type of thing where, the harder you work, the luckier you seem to be. Is it luck that someone calls you to do a gig and you happen to be qualified to play that gig? They wouldn't be calling you if they didn't know that you're good enough to do it. That part's not luck. There is a certain thing as luck, like being in the right place at the right time, but I find that my luck has come more from my hard work and from God steering me in the right direction. He has seen what I have tried to do and has helped to make some of my dreams come true and that's not luck. It's not luck that I believe in Jesus Christ, it's my faith. It's what helps me through thick and thin and the fact that I've been presented with some good situations, well, that's just God looking after one of His children.

The Bible says that if you have faith you can move a mountain and I have faith. I have faith in my career, I have faith in my abilities and I have faith in God, but faith means nothing if it's not active, if you're not working at it. If I say, "I believe one day I'll make it," and I'm working at it really hard and God sees all of my trials and errors, that's when somehow something goes right. You're not merely saying you want to be good and you want gigs and you want success. You're saying it with some authority because you're doing it. I do believe that I have had good things happen to me and I believe that Jesus has been looking after me. I feel lucky in that, for the short time that I've been in the music business, my short, 11-year career, it's been great thus far and I've enjoyed every minute of it. I've been playing with known people for about seven years now and I feel lucky and I feel blessed and I'm extremely thankful to those who have helped me. I feel especially lucky to have my wife, Andrea, travel on the road with me. We were married on the Bobby Brown tour, in fact, Bobby was my best man, and since then she's become my Assistant Road Manager. It's not often you get to travel with your wife and I feel very fortunate. She does everything for me.

I'm just trying to be as good as I can be. I'm just trying to reach my full human potential and I'm nowhere even close to even scraping the surface of it. That's what keeps you going. The fact that you want to be your best is what keeps you interested and keeps you inspired when you see players who are better than you because you realize that you have the ability to reach that, if you work hard enough.

Having a name can never hurt you. It's what you do with that name that will hurt you.

and I love it. That's when I know that I'm doing the right thing.

You really have to figure out what it is you want in the music business. If you're going to get into it, it's a lot easier to get to where you're going if, in your early days, you can figure out what you want. Do you want to be the world's most amazing player and just impress everybody at clinics? Do you want to be the world's best groover and get all the gigs? Do you just want to be able to express yourself musically? Do you want to be a rock star and make a lot of money? Do you just want to be in videos and be cool? What do you want to do? If there are a lot of things you don't want to do then there's no sense in wasting a lot of time in those given areas. But, if you do know what you want, the first thing is to have a plan to get there and there are given strategies in anything about how you're going to do that. If you want to be one of the world's most versatile drummers, then study with every guy you can to learn everything you can about

