

**INTERVIEW**  
TIM BROWN

**BECOME AN**

# ONLINE SESSION

**DRUMMER**



The record industry may be on the wane but one area is flourishing - online sessions. UK drummer Tim Brown explains how you could get in on the action

WORDS: RICH CHAMBERLAIN

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hile the rapid growth of the internet in the last decade or so may have been widely seen by music industry moneymen as having contributed to the decline of album sales, it has opened up a world of opportunities for us drummers.

Take Leicestershire sticksman Tim Brown. Since turning pro in 2000, Tim has performed with dozens of bands, including those headed-up by the likes of Deep Purple's Don Airey and Midlands

blues maestro Aynsley Lister, but it is in the last few years that he has really carved a niche for himself, and it's all thanks to the internet.

As the music industry's decline has resulted in labels cutting studio budgets, Tim has set himself up as an online session drummer and online drum teacher. From the comfort of his home studio, Tim is now able to receive briefs for session work, lay down drum tracks and send them on to clients, and offer lessons to keen pupils via Skype. With technology improving all the time, these avenues are being explored by drummers all over the planet. Unsure whether it could be for you? Well, to help you decide, take a look at Tim's top tips on setting yourself up as an online session drummer.

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# 01

## BE PROACTIVE

"I got started doing the online things because I wanted to try to be more proactive with my career and to be able to do things for myself. I had been asked many times if I could record drums for people's demos, but due to financial constraints they couldn't afford me and the recording studio time, so I bit the bullet and converted my garage! My only goal has always been to make a living out of playing the drums, and in this day and age that means doing many things to make this a possibility. I may never get rich off this, but I love what I do. I started out by teaching a handful of private pupils in the late '90s and really enjoyed it, then taught privately and started teaching in schools and colleges and now I have added teaching online and doing workshops - it's been a natural progression. I still gig a lot and that keeps me motivated to keep my chops up and keeps me practising."

# 03

## INVEST WISELY

"My studio is by no means a high-budget affair, I have just tried to spend really wisely to get the gear I need rather than what looks great. Software-wise I'm using Logic 9 on my iMac, which I really like. Loads of schools and colleges now use Logic so it has helped me to learn the software. I use a Tascam US-1800 soundcard and a bunch of good mics and preamps... simple! The main thing I concentrate on are my drums. I use Mapex Saturn drums and Paiste cymbals, which I think record beautifully. It's so nice to be in my own environment and be able to try different tunings, snares, cymbals, bass drums and toms to get it right sounds for the track - not usually the case when you are in a studio and the clock's ticking."

# 04 TALK TO YOUR CLIENTS

"I like to try to gain as much information from the client as possible. I try to get my head around what they need. We discuss moods, musicians, vibe; this helps to get it right first time. I spend time referencing the things we discussed and getting the sounds. I write out a very basic chart for the tune - verse, chorus etc, specific fill and notes. I usually record three takes of drums: one basic, one different and one with kitchen sink thrown in. Then I make a comp track of what I consider good. The artist can go with one of my versions, the comp version or mess about making their own version out of my takes."

# 02

## ASK AN EXPERT

"I wanted to make my studio in my garage to make it easy for me to be close to my wife, kids and the fridge! I had a lot of help from my friend James Hester initially to convert it from a garage into a usable room, and then I went about making the room sound as good as possible. I used acoustic tiles and curtains to get it to sound right. The room sounds really dead, which is something I like. The clients can always add a little extra room sound using software plug-ins, but it's much harder to make the sound tighter without gating everything."

# 05 FIND A BALANCE

"I am a bit of a workaholic, I love to be working or thinking about work, so to me it's hard to strike a balance between working and not working. I am known as a bit of a 'gig whore', because I play for so many different bands including original material and touring with Persian Risk and Polly as well as lots of cover bands. I do everything - weddings, functions, pubs, clubs and tours - and I hope to never stop. I still get a buzz out of playing live and playing with good musicians. The online thing really doesn't get in the way of the rest of my business because it's my studio and I can access it when I like." >

## INTERVIEW TIM BROWN

# 06

## EMBRACE TECH

"So much of the technology has become much more accessible and affordable. A decent laptop, mics and a soundcard will get you pretty good results. Most of my students now have basic recording set-ups, and I really recommend that people get into doing this as soon as possible. Let's face it, recording work is not constant and I couldn't rely just on this part of the business, but being able to record drums for band demos, as a practice tool and learning about recording drums makes the initial outlay worthwhile."

# 07

## BE CREATIVE

"Look at it from a creative musical angle rather than earning the big bucks. There will always be players who make good money from recording online, but there are thousands who make a bit here and there and enjoy the process and the creativity. I really like doing online lessons. I have my own Drum Lick of the Week series on YouTube and I love throwing ideas and licks out for free. I also use the studio to do Skype lessons which allow me to reach students who can't get to me, and even to help current students too."

# 08

## MEET PEOPLE

"Work comes in many ways. It seems to come mainly from friends and people I have worked with over the years. It's weird how things turn out, you never know who you know. For instance, that singer you played with 10 years ago now turns out to write jingles for Sky. I am currently recording the drums for a new Persian Risk album in my studio, which came in from vocalist Carl Sentance who I toured with in the Don Airey band. I love working and I will do as much as I can, so if someone says "can you just...", I say yes!

# 09

## TAKE FEEDBACK

"If what you give the client isn't what's wanted, you have to change things - don't take it too hard. A guitar

player doesn't think about the drums in the same way we do, so they might come back and say, 'I don't like that skip in the chorus,' or, 'Can you play that on the toms?' You can learn a lot and it will all help you to be a better musician."

# 10

## GET NETWORKING

"There is always someone who knows someone who knows someone, so it is good to network. Social media sites are also good. I set up a Leicestershire musicians group on Facebook and that's always good to make contacts and get gigs. If there isn't one in your area, get on it."

# 11

## THINK VIBE

"I'd always prefer to play in the same room with other musicians and have the eye contact and interplay, but getting musicians together can be like herding cats. Also, a big room and equipment costs big money. I just try my best to give the recordings the energy and vibe the artist wants."

# 12

## GO FOR IT

"By recording yourself, you will learn more about your playing than you can imagine; the constant listening and refining process is what I believe made Steve Gadd and Vinnie Colaiuta great studio drummers. Take advice from engineers and research before you spend silly money on gear." **R**

Tim is a professional drummer and drum tutor who has recorded, toured and played with Don Airey, Kee Marcello, Aynsley Lister, Vivid, Persian Risk, The Four Tops, Downtothetone and Nickolodeon and worked with members of Deep Purple, Jamiroquai and The Kinks.

He is the co-founder of Drumbreaks events and performs drum masterclasses and clinics across the UK. Check out his website at [www.timbrownndrums.co.uk](http://www.timbrownndrums.co.uk).

Tim plays Mapex Saturn drums: 24", 13", 16", 14"x6½" Black

Panther Machete Snare; Paiste cymbals: 15" Twenty Series hi-hats, 21" Twenty Series Medium Ride, 19" 2002 crash, 18" Alpha Swiss crash thin; Mapex hardware including Falcon pedals, Remo heads, Vic Firth 2BG sticks, Protection Racket cases, KickPort, Baskey drum mat.