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THE BLACK PAGE

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Chris De Rosa

"One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied in doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole." - Mahatma Gandhi





Chris your resume is impressive to say the least. How does a player at your level stay working amongst such a stacked pool of talent in a place like New York?

Well I think that there is enough work for all of us. I've had the conversation a few times about the life of a musician being similar to a Buddhist Monk's when it comes to a career in music. I guess if you really want to be a life long career drummer/musician you make the appropriate sacrifices necessary. It's really a ten year overnight success! The key things I'd suggest are to stay fit both mentally and physically, practice regularly on different things, and to follow the golden rule,"Do unto others as you'd have done unto you". It really is a small, small world so you will encounter the same people from time to time. I think if you're honest and sincere about what you do and your art people will recognize and reward that effort.

I've also tried to be a little different in respect to my gear and sound. Having a unique and fresh approach will help you to stand out among all the really wonderfully talented musicians that visit or call New York City home.

What is it about New York that keeps so many musicians rooted there?

The opportunities here in New York are unlike anywhere else in the world. This place is magical! You can walk down the street and bump into anyone from Dennis Chambers to Pat Metheny. Any night of the week you can see a hundred different bands playing Bebop, Reggae, Rock, to Forró, and Brazilian Samba.

You have worked with some industry giants namely Deborah Harry and Chris Stein to name a couple. How do you get past the star struck awe and get to a level playing field in the company of legends?

Honestly people are just people. You can respect or even be in awe of someone but when we play that first quarter note we are all in it together. Deborah is very sweet and incredibly talented. You see why some people have gone to where they've gone in their careers, no ego or airs at all. I was doing a gig with Collider at CBGB's a few years back opening for Joey Ramone just before he past away. We had worked the sold out room as best we could and felt it was a very good show. After we got off we were hanging backstage and (I guess) lookin' a little sweaty because Joey comes up to us and says,"Hey guys can I get you a drink or something?" I was like, "What a sweet guy!" Here Joey Ramone a rock legend that influenced everybody



could even notice let alone care about our state of being. Humility goes a long way in my book.

What acts are you currently working with?

My roster changes a lot with my freelance stuff but I have three really great bands I'm working with regularly these days.

The first is Airosol <http://www.airosol.net/> whom I've had the pleasure of performing with on and off for the last eight years. They write really nice pop tunes and do it for the love (not career) of music.

The second band is The Deepdown <http://www.myspace.com/thedeepdownnyc>. They are a really great blend of Rock/Reggae and Latin styles. They give me a chance to use the tricks in my bag (so to speak). We are currently in the studio working on tunes for an Italian publishing company for use in movies and commercials. The third band is special to me. I played a lot of Reggae and Soca when I was studying down in Miami and really felt a certain simpatico with Caribbean music in general. I miss it now that I live up here in the Northeast (i.e. colder) area where less of that music is performed. I was thinking about how much I missed it and started praying about it for a door to open up. Well shortly after that I received an email from the manager of a twelve piece Gospel Reggae band called The Ultimate Symphony Band. They found me online after doing a search because their original drummer moved back to Jamaica. So it's me and eleven prayerful Jamaicans playing some of the coolest sounds from the Caribbean even more authentically than in my Miami days.

You do quite a bit of work for dance groups. How different is this type of gig compared to a one-off in a band setting?

Dance is a special thing for drummers. If you think about it it's the only gig we can do all by ourselves (besides busking) and we have the freedom to incorporate all of our influences and whatever our imagination can come up with.

What does a Chris DeRosa kit for modern dance gigs look like?

My kit has evolved over time, as more specific sounds were needed. It started as a basic three piece set up and has involved into a very unique blend of hand and traditional drums that I've acquired during my travels. To see some pictures of it go to:

<http://www.chrisderosa.com/pictures/MD4-07.html>

<http://www.chrisderosa.com/equipment.html>.



According to your resume you have been to over 40 countries. What are some of the best places you have visited?

I think I'm at 43 currently. That's a difficult question because each place has its own appeal. I think that Cambodia was special for all the really sweet and sincere people I was able to meet and learn about there past from. Brazil was very special because music lives so proudly there. I always say I ate my way through India and Turkey is so special to me because it's where I proposed to my girlfriend (in Ephes on St. John's Basilica).

What is the weirdest place you have rehearsed in?

I guess that would have to be in my kitchen (between the stove and bathroom door) of my first NYC apartment!

How does one go about receiving the Buddy Rich Jazz Masters scholarship at Berklee?

Studying with Ed Soph as a teenager and going to The Educational Center For The Arts High School. Oh, and I applied for it!

What does a day in the life of a Berklee student look like?

Practice, practice, practice. It was all about how many hours you logged that day. Not the most musical approach but that's one of the reasons I transferred to the University of Miami.

Where do you draw the drive to achieve the lofty goals you have?

I always felt someone has to live in the big loft in Soho or play drums for a living so I figured "Why not me"? I think the love my fiancé Marisol shows me makes me believe that anything together is possible.

What have you yet to accomplish in the world of music?

To be honest I want to get my masters degree in Jazz performance. I also really want to make a unique contribution on my instrument, which will take a lifetime to realize. If I keep growing each day then I think I'm on the right path.

Where did you grow up and what drew you to the percussive arts?



I was born in New Haven, Connecticut (halfway between New York and Boston). When I was about 3 or 4 years old my dad let a friend keep a red sparkle Slingerland kit in our basement playroom. I didn't play it but I remember looking at the way the sun bounced off of it and thinking how cool it looked. Later in middle school some friends and I decided to form a band and drums were my first choice.

Tell me a bit about your position at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

I'm on staff at New York University's Tisch School of The Arts department of Dance. It's a very cool gig! I accompany the modern technique classes and the resident Second Avenue Dance Company. I also partner with two legends in dance to do an Improv course where the students and I interact and develop sound and movement. Besides this I guest lecture on ethnic music, rhythmic training, and how to use and work with a musician. Working with dance has pushed my creativity to a much higher level.

What is the secret to giving a good lecture?

1) Know your material very well. 2) Don't try to go over to much information. 3) Give some room for dialog and discussion. 4) Bring in music (or instrument) samples to really get the point across.

What do you have coming up in the near future?

Well I started working on my masters in January of 2008. One of my professors is John Patitucci so I think I'm in good hands. As for my career I'll be rehearsing a new group mainly as a vehicle for my own compositions. I really want to develop that side of me going forward. Besides that I will continue my normal gig schedule and have also been asked to do an off Broadway show in the spring.

I also want to add that without my loving fiancée Marisol and my faith nothing would be possible. These two are the anchors that keep me on course. Work hard, be fair, and most of all be realistic. Oh, and it can't only be all about music. We need other things to draw from.

Click below to visit Chris DeRosa online

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