

We recently had a great chat with John Favicchia, drummer extraordinaire and author of *Elements: A Comprehensive Guide to Improving Your Drumset Vocabulary!* In addition to his role as a private drum teacher, John spends a lot of time recording and has worked with such greats as Steve Khan, Tony Levin, Chieli Minucci, Lonnie Plaxico, John Benitez, just to name a few. John maintains a very busy schedule presenting clinics and touring throughout the nation and around the world, so we are very appreciative of the time he took to share his thoughts with us:

How did you approach the composition of *Elements*?

It began when drum students were coming to me for lessons and had amazing hand and foot technique, but lacked the ability to completely utilize their skills on a full drumset. Their technique was at a very high level on a single surface (for example, on a pad or snare drum), but they were not applying all the knowledge they had on that one surface to the drumset. Elements is also a way of thinking. If you think about all of your drumming as elements, you will be able to bridge the gap between all of your playing styles, solos, fills, and grooves.

Do you have a formal writing process, or does it change depending on the project or your mood?

I don't have a formal process. I write as I go. I have been teaching my Elements concept to my private students for many years. It was not until I started to do Drum Clinics in 2005 that I started to put my concept formally down on paper. Then, once I signed my book deal I really got focused.

How did you come up with the title?

It just came to me. All the permutations of all the different rates just seemed like the foundation of all rhythms. I just started to call them the Elements.

When did you first start playing drums?

I started playing drums at the age of 13. I was self-taught at first and developed my own style by listening to many different types of music. As my playing developed, I realized I needed help achieving a higher level so I began studying drums with many private instructors. When I was 18 I decided that I would become a full-time musician. At that point I started an intense practice schedule which included many hours of private drum instruction from the top teachers in the country as well as getting my A.S. degree in Jazz-Commercial Music from Five Towns College. Some of my teachers were Jim Chapin, Dom Famularo, Al Miller, and Joe Bonadio. At the same time, I was a Drum Instructor at the Long Island Drum Center and doing as many gigs that I could fit into my very busy schedule.

There is a bit more to tell regarding my start. Several of my great uncles were well-known trumpet players who played with legends like Benny Goodman, but the downside of their traveling musical lifestyles had my father worried and at first he discouraged me to pursue a career in music. So, in junior high, I saved enough money to buy a used set from a friend and I wheeled it home in a shopping cart. Once my father saw how much I wanted to play, he finally came around to accept my career choice.

You have played with some pretty major artists - did any of them surprise you by being quite different than you might have imagined?

I have definitely had some surprises when playing with as many artists as I have. The first time I toured Europe was when I was 26 years old with Laco Deczi . Laco is very famous over in Europe and he was the first artist to tour Dave Weckl in Europe. So I took this very seriously but Laco was so much more relaxed! Laco said not to worry at all and that I should just go out every night and have fun. His attitude was so relaxed that it surprised me, but it helped the whole band to be quite amazing at the end of our 2 month tour... these days most of the players I work with take things very seriously. When I first started to work with Chieli Minucci, I was very impressed with his work ethic. He was also one of the most professional musicians I had ever worked with. Everything is done at the highest level and always on time! When I call him for a gig he checks in a week in advance to ask for the set list and any new charts for the upcoming gig. I cannot say enough good things about Chieli!

Most of the time it seems to me that we are all working on the same goals and we have the same feelings on what we do. When I talk with all the artists I work with as well as all my musician friends we are all going through the same stuff. We all want to improve no matter how high our level may be already. We all want to keep touring. We all want to spend time at home. We all want the next level in our career. If we did two tours this year we want three the next! We all want things to look forward to and we want to keep pushing the limits in everything we do.

You have played on some pretty major tours – tell us about your favorite touring experience.

Yes, I have been very fortunate to have done band tours. I have played in Europe more times than I can count. I love it there! I have also toured across the United States and Canada many times. I have had the pleasure of traveling to places such as Brazil and Africa, where I spent time listening and learning from their musicians and drummers. Recently, I have been doing Drum Clinic Tours and I really love it!

Do you also teach lessons?

Yes, I teach private lesson in my home studio as well as Skype lessons. I really enjoy it. I keep a healthy amount of students in my schedule when I am in town. I also do days of private lessons when I am on Clinic tours. It is always great to see drummers one on one instead of only in a clinic setting.

Do you have any tips for aspiring drummers?

The only tips I can tell young drummers is use the time they have when they are young to practice hard. Once you get older and you have bills to pay and are out gigging you will have a lot less time to practice. I also always mention that being a great player is only the beginning. There are a lot of other things to think about when you want to be a full-time player. Networking and doing bookings takes up time. You must have your business chops together as well. There are a lot of amazing drummers out there so it is important to have all your skills together.

What brand of drums do you play? Best drumsticks? Tell us about your setup.

I am a [Yamaha](#) drummer. There is no way around it for me. I have tried and endorsed other kits but always come back to Yamaha. The sound of their drums is in my head and that is that! I have three kits and I love them all. They all have their different uses for me.

I recently got two Birch Custom Absolute kits. I am using one kit for studio and the other for all my live gigs. I really love them. They have a real nice tone plus a great blend between the toms and bass drum. The bass drum has a very big sound and an articulate attack.

I endorse and love [SABIAN](#) Cymbals. In February 2005 I was lucky enough to go up to SABIAN in Boston and hand pick my cymbal set up. What an awesome experience. These guys at SABIAN are not only great people but they make some AMAZING cymbals.

I endorse [Vic Firth](#) DRUM STICKS. I play the SD9 Drivers, SD 10"s and the 5B Models. They are great feeling sticks. The SD9 Driver has an Acorn type tip that makes the ride Cymbal sound great while the 5B has a thicker shank for a more meaty sound and feel.

I endorse [REMO](#) Drum Heads. They are a very consistent drum head and they have a great sound and feel. I use many of their models depending if I am in the studio or live. Generally I use Clear Ambassadors on the tops and bottoms of my toms, and the Coated Ambassador on the snare and a Power Stroke 3 on the bass drum.

I have been playing [LP Percussion](#) for as long as I can remember and it is great to now be one of their endorsees. I love the tone and feel of all their bells and they help me express myself in all the styles of music I play! I recently added the Conga and Bongo Compacts to my kit. Awesome stuff!!!

I recently started to use and now endorse [HansenFütz](#) Practice Pedals. I use them to practice my foot technique as well as extra pedals on my set.

As far as practice pads go, I endorse [HQ Percussion](#) RealFeel Practice Pads. I have been using them for as long as I can remember. Simply the best.

I also endorse [Samson Mics](#). I use the Drum 8 pack at all my clinics. Great Mics!!!

In the studio and for my live drum clinics I use [SUPER PHONES](#) High end studio head phones .They are the best! The isolation allows me to hear exactly what my drums sound like on tape while I am recording as well as get a great monitor mix for my drum clinics.

Recently I was turned onto the [Beatnik Rhythm Analyzer](#). This is an amazing tool to gauge how accurate you are. I have been part of the Beatnik team for a while now and I must say it is a great product and a great team of guys to work with.

I also endorse [Axis Pedals](#). I had been looking for a lighter, faster pedal for some time. When I was at my friend Derek Roddy's studio I noticed how great these pedals felt. I had to get one!! Thanks to Derek for hooking me up with Axis. Great pedals!!!

You can visit John at www.johnfav.com.