

Working Drummer's Boot Camp



Photo: emshaephoto.com 2008

Chris Sutherland

WORKSHOP RESOURCE MATERIALS

Biography: Chris Sutherland

Growing up in a musical household, listening to every style imaginable, lets Chris be comfortable in any situation. Pop, rock, country, metal, jazz, progressive rock, zydeco, Broadway musical, and bluegrass, all appear in his resume.

Recently returning from 42 sold out shows in Europe, Chris was the drummer for classic rock legends SAGA on their 30th Anniversary tour. Look for the dvd of the final show in Munich to be released soon!

Chris has performed with Canadian Rock Legend Kim Mitchell since 1999. They are currently touring to support the new CD "Ain't Life Amazing".

In 2006 Chris recorded Doc Walker's self titled cd in Nashville with producer Justin Neibank. They spent early 2007 on the "Locked and Loaded" with Dierks Bentley touring North America. The cd has spawned three top ten hits and two number one videos with "Trying To Get Back To You" and "Driving With The Brakes On".

From 2003 to 2005 Chris was the principal drummer for the Toronto production of the hit musical Mamma Mia. Based on the music of ABBA, it is one of the most popular musicals of all time.

As a freelance musician, Chris has performed and recorded with Deric Ruttan, Sass Jordan, Amanda Falk, Michelle Wright, Jason McCoy, The Wilkinsons, Randy Bachman, Streetheart, Willie Mack, At The Door, Burton Cummings, Amy Sky, Marc Jordan, Daniel Lavoie, and many more.

As a session player Chris has recorded commercials for Coke, Tim Hortons, NFL, NHL, Coors Light, Budweiser, CFL, The Toronto Blue Jays, and hundreds more. He has also recorded television and film work for MTV, Teletoon, YTV, CTV, CBC, and many feature films. He has co written music for producer Ridley Scott's short "Nightfish".

He studied at PIT with instructors Steve Houghton, Joe Porcaro, Casey Scheurell, and Ralph Humphrey. He has also studied privately with Ed Soph, Jim Chapin, and Gregg Bissonette.

Chris Endorses Sonor Drums, Sabian Cymbals, Vater Drumsticks, Cool Claws, Converse Shoes and Chip and Pepper.

BE A MUSIC NERD!

The more music you are open too, the more work you will be able to do. You will need to know the history of what you are doing. It's VERY important. There is something to be learned from each of these artists.

Music on the internet is a valuable source to study these styles.

For each style you wish to study, look to the most famous artists.

Find greatest hits packages, anthologies, and box sets.

Here is a small breakdown of some styles and artists you should have a basic knowledge of.

Early Rock – Little Richard
Jerry Lee Lewis
Chuck Berry
Elvis
Rolling Stones
The Beatles

Jazz – Louis Armstrong
Miles Davis
John Coltrane
Thelonious Monk
Charlie Parker

Classic R and B- Motown Records Greatest Hits
James Brown
Stax Records Greatest Hits
Stevie Wonder
Aretha Franklin
Al Green
Marvin Gaye

Funk – James Brown
The Meters
Tower Of Power
Early Michael Jackson
Curtis Mayfield
Prince

Classic Country - Hank Williams
Patsy Cline
Merle Haggard
Johnny Cash

Hard Rock – Led Zeppelin
Black Sabbath / Ozzy
AC/DC
Iron Maiden
Van Halen

WORKING DRUMMER'S BOOT CAMP SURVIVAL TIPS

- *What Do I Need For...*

Jazz Casuals

1. A strong knowledge of standards
2. Music stand
3. Real Book and Fake Book

Corporates – Weddings and Parties.

1. A strong knowledge of Hits – Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, Eighties, Current pop, Country and R and B. Listen to the radio!
2. You need to be able to set up quickly and quietly.
3. Make sure you have a drum kit that will cover the widest range of music possible.
4. Be able to get into the next song quickly - never lose the crowd.

Cover bands

1. Check the attitude and play music people want to hear, not what you want to hear. You're there to sell beer not art.
2. Write set lists and follow them - move from song to song quickly so you never lose the crowd.
3. Three strikes - if a song is not going over, get rid of it.
4. LEARN THE SONGS!! Unless you want to make a cool arrangement with your band, learn the parts. Those songs were recorded like that for a reason. Respect the parts and the crowd will enjoy them more. I guarantee you'll learn something from them.
5. Play songs at the proper tempos. Don't buy into the old tale that songs need to be faster live, especially with modern music. Great care was taken in the studio to make the song groove and those tempos were chosen for a reason.

Original acts

1. ALWAYS be true to the music. If your act or artist has worked to sound a certain way, make sure you are representing it properly. Get the gear you need.
2. Be as rehearsed as possible.
3. Check the attitude. You work for them.

Recording Acts – Bands

Being in a band means that you are more than just a drummer. You are a member of a team. Your responsibilities will be spread thin, sometimes to the point of wondering if you are even a musician anymore. You will be a business, promotions, press, and star. All of these will pull away from making music.

You will be in meetings regarding business. Be involved in many promotional events like award shows and television.

Being in a band can take up a major part of your life. Commitment is everything,

Recording acts – Artist

The artist and management are the boss. You need to be giving them what they want as a player and following the plan they have set out to market the artist.

You might get lucky to work for an artist that makes you feel a part of things but you may also be ‘The help’.

This is a job. You should treat it with respect and get paid. Play the music like it is on the CD or how the artist and management want it played.

Touring –

1. HEALTH! If you plan on doing any amount of touring, get healthy. Hit the gym, eat well, and cut down or cut out the drinking. Keep yourself as clean and healthy as possible.

2. Make sure you have all the gear you need for every situation.

Proper cases for your gear.

3. Pack your luggage efficiently, take what you need only. Over packing will be a hassle. Most of the time you will be somewhere that you can buy anything you realize you have forgotten.

4. Work together and be flexible. There is no room for whiners, high maintenance people and huge egos when you are all packed in a van or tour bus.

5. ALWAYS stick to the schedule. Don't keep people waiting. Always make lobby call, bus call, flight check ins. Nobody needs the added stress on tour of waiting for someone who is late. NEVER trust the hotel for your wake up call. Put in your wake up call, set the room alarm and your cell phone alarm.

Theatre –

1. READING!

2. Learn how to follow a conductor... even if they conduct on top of the beat.

3. Focus.. no mistakes.

4. The charts are the law at the start of a run.

5. Boredom will be a challenge.

6. Be on time. The show WILL start without you.

7. Theatre is not for everyone. It's not very artistic or creative. The challenge lies in being consistent every show and working towards perfection.

WHAT DO I NEED ON SESSIONS?

Sessions - Jingles, TV, and Radio

1. Be chronically early. If you want this to be a part of your career, live by this. Be early and be ready.
2. Shut up and do the work. It's great to be friends and have fun, but in this part of the business time is money. **WORK HARD!** The more driven and focused you are the easier it will be to work a lot in this field.
3. Make sure your gear is bullet proof... It goes up fast and sounds **PERFECT**. Don't let anything cause delays.
4. Listen carefully, write your charts fast, or be prepared to scan the charts you are given so that when the red light goes on you are nailing it. You only get a few takes. Speed is key.
5. Reading and charting. Learn how to "speed chart"
6. If you get to listen to playbacks, listen carefully. Try and remember any mistakes or shaky parts for the next take. Make sure it is **ALL** grooving.
7. The producer is the boss.. They call **ALL** the shots. If you don't want to work that way, this is not the scene for you.

Sessions – Bands, Albums, Producers

1. All the above things apply.. Be on time, focused, work hard, have great gear.
2. This will be a longer relationship. Work through the songs together and **ALWAYS** listen to the artist's and producer's suggestions. Check the ego and play for the music.
3. When listening to playbacks, listen carefully. Is it **ALL** grooving? What parts aren't working? Don't be afraid to "diplomatically" bust others bad playing. Make sure it goes through the producer though. " Is that acoustic guitar part not working with the hi hat?.. How can we make that lock?" Not.. "That acoustic sucks, get it together dude"
4. Work first, hang later.
5. If you are burning out, ask to take a five minute break to clear your head.. it'll will speed things up in the end if you are frustrated. However, **ALWAYS** be the hardest working person in the room.

Sessions - Tracking for a producer, replacing, tracking last.

1. Sometimes you will be called to track with just a producer. The tracks might be scratch demos with minimal information or they might be finished tracks.
2. Replacing tracks can be hard. The band has possibly been tracking to a shaky time source with the old drum tracks.
3. Be **VERY** aware of the politics of replacing a musician. Keep the opinions to yourself and don't slag anyone or anything. Tension will be high. Do the work and get out.
4. Tracking last can be my favorite way to record. You have all the info to take in and create your part. Staying out of the way and catching every nuance of the song.

Working Connections

Breaking into a scene or a new city.

- Take every gig when you are starting.
- Every gig can lead to something.. the chain of connections
- Be pro. Be on time. Focus. Play at your peak.

Methods of networking

- Hang out at the places you want to be working and introduce yourself.
- Even session players do some live gigs.. find out what clubs and gigs “the right people” are at.
- Play it cool.. don’t be a pest. Don’t ask for gigs right away but let people know you are a player.
- Give people your business card.. Don’t pass out demos unless people ask.
- Perception is everything.. be cool. Busy people don’t have time to put together demos and huge bio packages.
- Don’t be a pest.. again. Don’t ask for gigs. Just let them know you freelance.
- If you are a familiar face, people will get comfortable with you and you will get offered a chance.
- Go to every industry event or place where “the scene” is.
- Observe and learn what the people doing the gigs you want, are doing.
- Don’t be a pest. Just hang and get to know people and let them know you play.

Being a professional working drummer

Be early for every gig, meeting , lobby call, and flight

- It’s responsible. It’s very rude to make people wait for you. Develop the habit of being chronically early.
- Being early gives you the stage or studio space to yourself. Set up is way easier when you have room.
- It relieves stress. You can relax and be ready to play music if you are set up and have a bit of time to chill before you start.
- It gives you time to review the songs, fix gear, or just socialize and relax.
- If there is traffic or a breakdown, you’re not sunk.

Keep the ego in check

- You can learn something from everyone and there is ALWAYS someone better than you.
- Play the music!! Show offs are not musical. If you want to work, play the music.. not the drums. A humble drummer is a busy drummer.
- Always be nice to crew. They are there to make your performance better. If they are bad at the job... be better than them and rise above it. Nobody benefits from bad vibes on a gig.
- Never argue on stage. Keep it to yourself until the break or after the gig. The crowd can tell if the band is arguing. The music deserves better.
- You are there for the music.. not drums.. not to show off... if you are, you won’t be very successful. Music is a living breathing spiritual thing.. nothing kills it faster than ego and bad vibes.

Give the employer what they want.

- If you are on a session, play what makes them happy. Be yourself, but be there to make the artist sound better, not yourself.
- If you give the producer and artist what they want.. you will get hired again.
- On a cover gig or wedding or corporate show, play what the crowd wants to hear. It is not an artistic statement, it is business. You’re there to sell fun not art. Save that for your original project when you are hired for art.

In any situation, listen carefully to the person signing the cheque. If they are not telling you enough info, read the body language and try to give them exactly what you think they want. Never be afraid to ask for input or direction

Drums ETC Magazine Feature

By Gerard Gannon

I first heard about Chris Sutherland while browsing the links on Canadian drummer Mark Kelso's web site. A few months later I was sharing a stage and a backline drum kit with Chris at a music festival in Northern BC, where he was closing the show with his main gig, Doc Walker. To me, Chris's playing was a lesson in communicating clearly with a drum kit. His pocket never wavered, fills were concise and clean, the tone was huge. No question, he has a commanding voice on the instrument. No wonder many of Canada's music elite, including Kim Mitchell, Sass Jordan and Randy Bachman, have hired him.

Chris epitomizes the new breed of tasteful, well-rounded drummers that are making their mark on today's music scene. He relies on a diverse background, a deep love of music, and the heart of a rocker to drive Doc Walker through its set of tight, country-tinged pop/rock songs. For the musicians who share the stage with Chris, there is no question where the time is. The sensitivity and finesse of some of his favorite drummers—Matt Chamberlain, Steve Jordan and Chris McHugh among them—are always present, but it is the absolute clarity and power of each note Chris plays, especially during busier grooves or complex fills, that make him stand out.

The son of a musician father, Chris started playing drums at about 5 years of age. Gradually, the drums took over most of his focus growing up. After sporadic lessons with Brandon teacher, Doug Sullivan, Chris played in the school jazz and concert bands, where he started to develop his reading skills. After meeting the famed drummer, educator and author Steve Houghton at school jazz band festivals and camps, Chris's life took a major step forward. "Steve was the guy," Chris recalls. "He sat down and talked to my parents and convinced them to let me quit high school to go study at Musician's Institute in LA".

With mentor Houghton pushing heavily, Chris dug deep at the PIT division of Musician's Institute with instructors like Casey Scheuerell, Ralph Humphrey and Joe Porcaro. Chris attributes Scheuerell, who was his private instructor, with helping him think of drums more conceptually. "He would teach things like breathing and how to set up more ergonomically," says Chris, "but my favorite thing Casey did was he would say, 'I'm going to put something on the music stand and you play it', and he'd put photographs on the music stand. It was very inspiring."

After the PIT experience, Chris spent a few years back home in Winnipeg digesting what he had learned and, in his words, "just playing music again." Then he headed east with the goal of breaking into the busy Toronto music scene. Chris believes everything he has done can be traced to one or two gigs. He puts it this way: "You can go hang out, hand out business cards—the standard stuff—but, truthfully, it can all come from one gig, even if it seems to mean nothing. I think it's all connection-based, so always, even on those horrible gigs, be super pro, be on time, know the tunes, don't be a jerk." After he did well on a gig subbing for Rick Gratton, Chris believes the path was laid for a five-year stint with the Kim Mitchell band.

Most of his work since then has been in larger venues. When pressed about the secret of playing bigger, louder settings while maintaining subtlety and finesse, Chris acknowledges spending time working at it. After checking out Kenny Aaronoff and Tool's Danny Carey live, Chris's notion of having each note project clearly was confirmed. "Kim Mitchell's band is super loud," Chris admits. "It's a whole different set of chops to pull off the harder prog-rock stuff at that volume. But you're thinking about it and working at it and you start to develop what to do with your hands. Basically, if it's not going to get through the PA to the back of the building, don't play it. If you're going to play a ghost note, it's got to be twice as loud as it would be in a different venue. It's always in my mind to be clean and clear and to project. It's always about having the biggest dynamic range possible. Being able to go from 1 all the way to 10 has a lot more impact than just going from 3 to 7."

Later, Chris met the unique demands of big production theatre when he successfully tackled the ABBA musical, *Mamma Mia*. “That was probably the biggest challenge of my career so far,” says Chris. I had never done theater before. I got conductor video tapes about a week and a half beforehand, but I was really thrown into the fire because it was in the middle of the show’s run. It was basically two and a half hours of non-stop playing, running the click for everyone, and very elaborate charts. When it’s your first day on the job, the charts are the law—it was all there to be played exactly as written. To this day all of the ABBA kick drum patterns are imprinted on my brain.”

Two years playing to a click with *Mamma Mia* helped Chris take his timekeeping to a new level of precision. Chris points out that, “It helped me get to the point where I could hear if I was dragging my backbeat just slightly coming out of a fill and so I could correct little things I was hearing, even on the gig, just by hearing it and being conscious of it.” His metronome of choice is the Tama Rhythm Watch. “It sounds pretty awful but I’m used to it. I’ve gone through about five of them over the years. I take some flak for it in the studio, but I even use it there. On live gigs I usually use it just to count the tunes off, find the tempos, and once things settle in, I turn it off. But, on other nights, monitors can be strange, adrenalin can be strange, you can be tired—you can feel if you’re fighting it. If that happens, I just leave it on all night.”

Chris’s tools of choice are Sonor Drums, Sabian cymbals, and Vater sticks. He goes for big sounds with large cymbals and drums that are earthy and blend well with the music. “I’ve been with Sabian for about five years,” Chris enthuses. “I use different cymbals for different gigs, but I usually use the larger HHX or Vault models.

Outside of Doc Walker, Chris, along with DW guitarist Murray Pulver, is part of a diverse original rock act called Squeek. He also works at songwriting, and tries to squeeze in time to produce and develop other artists.

If we take Chris Sutherland as an example, certainly connections have been important to his success. More than that, it is playing musically and with authority—communicating clearly—on every gig, as well as consistent professionalism, that keeps his phone ringing.

Drums ETC
By Gerard Gannon

Chris’ Influences

Jeff Porcaro
Steve Ferrone
Steve Jordan
Carlos Vega
Chris McHugh
Matt Chamberlain
Abe Laboriel Jr.
Phil Gould
Danny Carey
Tommy Aldridge
Josh Freese
Bill Stewart
Brian Blade
Jack DeJohnette
Kenny Aronoff
Greg Morrow
Phil Rudd

DRUM & CYMBAL SET-UPS

DRUMMERS BOOT CAMP

Drums: Sonor Force 3007 Series or above.

24" x 17.5"	Bass Drum (may be 22" x 17.5")
12" x 9"	Tom Tom
16" x 16"	Floor Tom
14" x 5.5"	Snare Drum

Hardware: Sonor 400 Series or above.

HH 474 or 484	Hi Hat Stand
SS 477 or 677	Snare Stand
DT 470 or 670	Drum Throne, round
MBS 473 or 673	Mini Boom Stands
DTH475 or STH	Double tom holder or Single tom holder for Bass Drum
SP473 or 673	Bass Drum Pedal

SABIAN Cymbal Set-up

15" or 14"	HHX Groove Hats
18"	AAX Studio Crash or AAX-Xplosion Crash
18"	Vault Crash or similar
18"	APX Ozone Crash
22"	Jam Master, or any medium-heavy Vault Ride 20" – 22"

LIVE PERFORMANCE – KIM MITCHELL

Sonor S-Classix Series, All-Birch Shell, Grey Slate Finish.

24" x 17.5"	Bass Drum
12" x 9"	Rack Tom
14" x 14"	Floor Tom
16" x 16"	Floor Tom
14" x 5"	Snare Drum – Wood Shell, Sonor S-Classix Series
14" x 5"	Snare Drum – Steel Shell, Sonor Delite Series

Hardware: Sonor 600 Series

- HH 674** Hi Hat Stand
- SS677** Snare Stands
- DT 670** Drum Throne, round
- MBS673** Mini Boom Stands
- GDPR-3** Giant Step Series Double Pedal

SABIAN Cymbal Set-up

- 15" HHX Accelerator Hats
- 18" HHX Stage Crash
- 19" HHX-plosion Crash
- 20" HHX-plosion Crash
- 18" APX Ozone Crash x 2
- 22" Jam Master, Ride
- 12" Chopper

SAMPLE SPEED CHART

Handwritten notes: Rim Clicks in V? Add Tom shot in V

OPEN ROAD

The chart consists of three rows of notation, each with six vertical stems representing different drum parts:

- Row 1:**
 - Stem 1: "Boitar only" with a circled "2" below.
 - Stem 2: "sn" (snare) with a circled "2" below.
 - Stem 3: "light groove" with "P.F." and a circled "2" below.
 - Stem 4: "Rim? NO HAT" with a circled "16" below.
 - Stem 5: "Rill" with "I" and "2" below.
 - Stem 6: "ADD HATS" with "V" above and "P.F." below.
- Row 2:**
 - Stem 1: "open hats" with "SNARE" below.
 - Stem 2: "SHOTS" with "Push" below.
 - Stem 3: "NO HAT" with "I" and a circled "2" below.
 - Stem 4: "UP" with "V" above.
 - Stem 5: "Rill" with "C" below.
 - Stem 6: "shots" with "|||||" above.
- Row 3:**
 - Stem 1: "Boitar" with "2" below.
 - Stem 2: "Push into" with "P" above.
 - Stem 3: "Solo" with "8" below.
 - Stem 4: "Ride" with "C" below.
 - Stem 5: "Ride" with "Build" below.
 - Stem 6: "shots" with "|||||" above and a circled "SHOTS END" below.

Chris would like to thank...

Sonor Drums – www.sonor.com

Sabian Cymbals – www.sabian.com

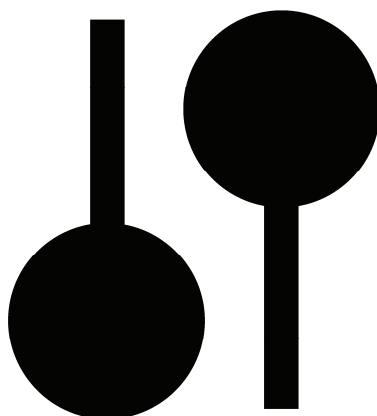
Converse – www.converse.com

Please feel free to contact Chris anytime with questions or comments at drumbootcamp@gmail.com

Visit:

Facebook group : Working Drummer's Boot Camp

www.myspace.com/drummersbootcamp



YOUR FEEDBACK ON THIS EVENT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED AND WILL HELP US TO BRING EVENTS LIKE THIS BACK TO YOUR CITY IN THE FUTURE!

PLEASE SEND FEEDBACK TO:

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