

DRUM SERGEANT

David Ross

Q. Where are you from and how old are you?

I am 22. I was born in Bellshill, however spent most of my childhood in the kingdom of Fife. Now reside and work in Glasgow city centre.

Q. How did you get into drumming and when?

I think it all stemmed from my parents taking me to a Runrig concert when I was about four and around six months later I began attending drumming lessons at my local pipe band in Fife.

Q. What made you want to play the side drum?

From what I can remember there was a massive drum salute at the actual concert and I used to want to play the drums when I was very little. I have been very lucky to be surrounded by music from a young age.

Q. Who is your tutor and what pipe band do you play with?

I play with Strathclyde Police pipe band under the instruction of leading drummer Eric Ward.

Q. Which bands have you previously played with?

I began with Inverkeithing and District for one year then moved to Burntisland and District where I was for around 10 years. I then moved to Drambuie Kirkliston then Dysart and Dundonald.

Q. How many hours a week do you spend on drumming and how much practice is on your own or with a band? What do you concentrate on, rudiments or scores?

That is actually very difficult to calculate as I do quite a lot of teaching and band practice is twice a week, lasting around two and a half hours a time. Probably a minimum of 15-20 hours a week. When practising for the band most of my attention will be on the band scores, however when preparing for solos I tend to focus on extensive rudiments as this I feel pushes your hands and ups your game.

Q. What are your drumming strong points and what do you most need to improve on?

I think I have a strong rhythmical and musical understanding of what I do and strong rudimental grounding like a grade one player needs to have. I am always trying to better my game.



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Q. What do you want to achieve in drumming? What are your drumming goals?

One of my biggest ambitions is to raise the profile of pipe band drumming in Scotland among young people. Along with my good friend David Henderson we are already trying to make inroads with this through D2 Percussion. Pipe band drumming itself is a highly under-exposed genre of drumming and through the great work that many people are doing I hope that it will get accepted more into the fold. Some personal goals would be to win the World Pipe Band Championships as a band and as a drum corps. In terms of solo progression I would aim to make it into the top 12 at the World Solo Drumming Championships at some point.

Q. What is your favourite pipe tune and do you have a favourite score?

I have a number of favourites and the list grows by the year. I have very fond memories of playing Moving Cloud as a youngster and winning the World Drum Corps Championships at juvenile level.

Q. Have you written any drum scores? And if so, is this something you enjoy and why?

I have written a number of scores in particular for the National Youth Pipe Band of Scotland and for my students. I do get a kick out of writing tunes, however when I was younger I struggled with getting my ideas down. Once I got over that it has become a lot easier.

Q. What make of drum do you play, and what type of head is on it? Do you play a different drum for solo work/competitions?

Currently I play Pearl and with Strathclyde Police pipe band we play white skins (ha ha). For solos I do like the Andante head as it can give you a little more grip for control and the snare response and it works nicely for indoors.

Q. What is the best trip or playing experience you have had with the NYPBoS?

That's a close one as I have been very lucky to be on a number of good ones. However, the 2003 trip to China stands out as a 'once in a lifetime' trip. All the guys that went on that trip will tell you the same. If there was ever a series of gigs that made you feel like a rock star then that would be it!

Q. What is your favourite part of being in the NYPBoS?

The friendship that you make with the guys in the band is second to none. I joined when I was still at a lower level along with a number of other players. When you're playing at a championship and take a step back and look along the top six corps, and give a nod to the guys that came through the ranks with you at the NYPBoS and solo contests, that is what it's all about.

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Q. What are the other band members likely to say about you, or what are you most known for in the band?

Ha ha. Probably for being very passionate for the band and for trying to come up with ideas that are normally a little off-the-wall. I would like to be known as willing to try something very new and to disregard any normal practice.

Q. What is the secret of your success?

Practice and a constant hunger for drumming.

Q. What would be your ideal uniform if you were allowed to choose it for your band?

I suppose it depends on the circumstance of the contest or performance. If the current competing format were ever to introduce an open contest for freestyle then I would like to think that the kilts may be replaced with something more suitable for the occasion. I feel very proud to wear the kilt, however it does worry me that, in terms of rudimentary drumming for live performances, it does hold back the entertainment experience for the audience.

Q. What would you do or say to encourage other youngsters to learn the drums?

What I normally tell my students is that pipe band snare drumming gives you the best grounding and set of tools to play any style or type of drums. There are fantastic kit players who would kill for a set of pipe band hands as we are very strong with rudimental lyrics. I am sure it was Alex Duthart that said although our genre of drumming is indeed very small on the world stage, you will never be caught out.

Q. Do you have any superstitions or any pre-performance rituals?

Hmm not really. Scott Birrell and I used to get an ice cream before every contest, even when it was raining. Ha ha. But I have to watch the figure these days!

Q. Who is your drum idol?

I don't think it can be narrowed down to one person. Guys like Eric Ward, Jim Kilpatrick, Paul Turner and the RUC corps influenced me heavily growing up. But now I would say I am really moved by guys like Paul Jennings, Pete Lockett, Steve Gadd and Bernard Purdie.

Q. What are your interests outside of pipe bands?

I like to run regularly and play golf when I can. I also have a huge passion for world percussion.

Q. What do you want to do for a career?

I would like to pursue my current business with D2 Percussion and try to bring pipe band drumming to as many people as possible.

Q. What other music do you like? What's on your MP3 player?

I like nearly everything. To be honest my iPod is a bit crazy. Listening to anything that gets the creative vibes going is all good.

Q. Who are your heroes?

I would have to say my mum. She is the strongest person I know and has been a massive factor in getting me to where I am today. ●