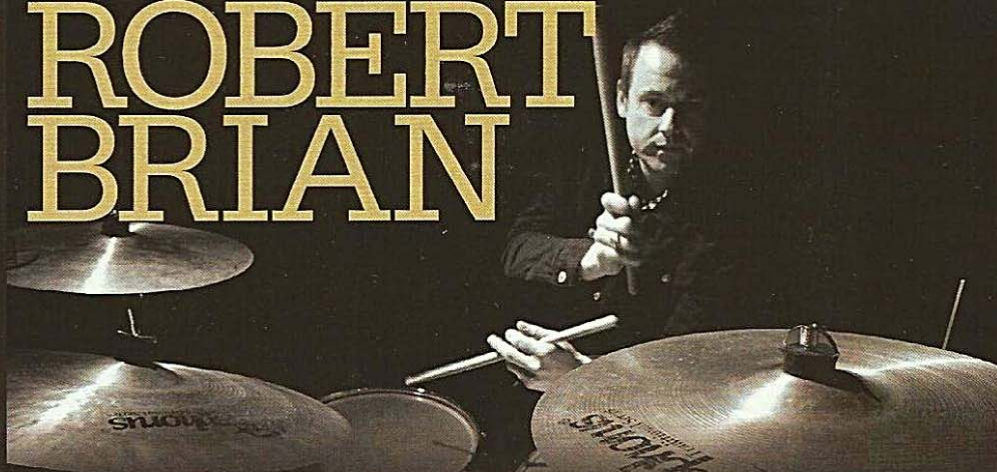


# Q&A with ROBERT BRIAN



Clinician, educator and resident sticksman with Siouxsie Sioux, Drummer catches up with Rob for a little Q&A

## How did you get started in drums?

I started playing the drums at the age of nine. I was influenced to do something in music after watching Gary Numan on *Top Of The Pops*. My father taught me to play and spent time going through the rudiments with me on a Premier practice pad and a bass drum pedal. He would bring home lots of books on different playing styles. I was like a sponge, soaking up all the information that I could on drumming and music. Dad had played drums through the '50s/'60s in various jazz groups and had played with many jazz stars such as Ronnie Scott, Tubby Hayes and Ben Webster. I'd listen to my dad play in the garage, and at that time I was interested in music and had a Woolworth's guitar and keyboard before I chose the drums. Unfortunately, a month or so before I had decided I wanted to learn, my dad went and sold his drum kit. He was *not* amused when I rocked up a month later saying I wanted to play!

## Who has influenced your playing the most?

I guess my dad was a strong influence at the start, as he taught me to play, then it would be Buddy Rich. The hours I spent in front of the TV watching Buddy on VHS tapes over and over again! I still collect lots of rare Buddy DVDs and records and it has become a real hobby collecting old rock/jazz vinyl records.

Then I discovered Ringo Starr, Tony Williams, Dave Weckl, Jack DeJohnette, Joe Morello, Neil Conti, Elvin Jones, Robbie McIntosh, Stewart Copeland, Ian Paice, Manu Katche ... The list is endless, really.

## How would you describe your 'style' of drumming?

I would say my style is kind of a hybrid of rock/jazz/fusion. But to be honest, I hate to pigeonhole myself as I think as a society we already spend a lot of energy organising and putting musical styles/players into boxes and categories. I get work in

all different kinds of musical situations. If I was known as just a jazz drummer I wouldn't have got the gig with Siouxsie Sioux, for instance. Some of my favourite artists, from Miles Davis to Prince, made their name by being able to play different styles of music. I love the idea of that happening with my drumming.

## How did the gig with Siouxsie Sioux come about?

I got a call from a bass player friend of mine, Charlie Jones, who plays with Goldfrapp, and he said he had a tour coming up that he thought I would be perfect for. I went to his house and he played me a few tracks from the *Mantaray* album and I was blown away by the songs/production and the power of Siouxsie's voice. They needed a drummer that could work with clicks/loops as well as play different styles comfortably, so I jumped at the chance of working with such a musical legend and a great band.

## Do you put your own style and feel in with her songs, or do you play what is on record?

Some of the Banshees' biggest songs are very drum led, so I made sure I learnt the parts for songs like 'Happy House' and 'Spellbound' to the letter. I watched YouTube clips of the videos and live performances and then wrote the parts out so I had the authentic beats on paper for the rehearsals.

I talk a lot with Sioux about the parts. Occasionally she will say, "Put a cymbal crash in here" or something, but I generally play the back catalogue as Budgie originally played them. On the newer material I have a bit more freedom and I find that I can express myself a little more. I have recently written some new drum loops for Sioux that she is presently working on for some new material.

Lots of drummers out there do clinics –

## how do you go about making your clinics a little different?

Every drummer has something to offer and my personal mantra with my clinics is to express that both technique and musicality go hand in hand, if understood and used correctly. The exercises I perform are tricky but can be applied musically in any style of music that you play, and they can be used in a solo situation as well as patterns in songs. I'm not a fan of playing clever stuff just for the sake of it. I'm not a fan of the type of exercises where you see guys playing right hand doing 20 beats, left foot doing 12, left hand playing 14 and right foot banging out 7 etc ... Yes, it's amazing but sounds awful; I like to work on making my patterns musical whilst still being a real challenge to learn. The clinic then doesn't become a chop fest, but a learning process where the audience take away work that will develop both their technique and their musical expression on the set.

## You recently produced your own DVD. What was your inspiration around that?

I felt that a lot of the drumming information/experiences I had inside my head were of use to a wider audience. I had found the content in this first DVD not only helped me in my playing but also with my teaching, and my students were getting a lot from the ideas as well. The natural progression with all this information was to record and catalogue it in a volume of work that will be released over the next few years. I am already working on *Technique And Musicality Volume 2*, which will take the ideas into another realm again.

The marketplace is swamped with great drum DVDs and I look at mine as being a work tool that you can keep coming back to. There are chapters on lots of different/important stuff to keep you busy and hopefully inspired, whether a weekend warrior or an experienced player.

## Any tips for staying 'on top' with your playing?

I would say buy my DVD as that will help! Ha ha! I think staying up on your game involves regular practice and listening. I listen to myself a lot and assess which points I'm happy with and those that I'm not. With any of the problems that flag up, I sit down on the kit/pad and iron them out; I don't like bad habits or laziness. I work on rudiments, dynamics, grooves, odd times, displacements, beat editing, song forms ... there is lots of stuff out there to keep you busy.

Also listen to lots of music and to lots of drummers as there is something that can inspire you in any and every music form. It's about enjoying making music and not losing sight of the magic that happens every time we sit behind the drum kit. We have the power to transform the music and the listener into another realm – that's a powerful thing.

Rob Brian uses Bosphorus cymbals, Sonor drums, Aquarian heads and Hardcase cases. Rob's DVD, *Technique And Musicality*, is out now. [www.robertbrian.co.uk](http://www.robertbrian.co.uk)