

**music**  
**is my**

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# religion

Geoff Dugmore is truly passionate about his music and that sincere passion helps maintain his position as one of Britain's busiest session drummers

**S**ecuring his first record deal at 16, Geoff gained valuable experience with The Europeans but when the group sadly split, he was soon offered session work with artists such as Joan Armatrading and The Finn Brothers, thus steadily increasing his reputation. His CV now includes artists such as Tina Turner, Rod Stewart, Debbie Harry and Robbie Williams and his diary is already pretty full until June 2010 with various studio projects and tours with Amy Keys, Heather Nova and French superstar Johnny Hallyday... and he recently played on his 40th number one album!

When *Drummer* caught up with him at his Surrey home, the obvious first question was, 'What does it take to be a session drummer?' Geoff's response instantly conveyed his passion and sense of integrity, two attributes that complement his easygoing nature and playful sense of humour.

"Enthusiasm, energy, being on time, having your shit together and knowing your equipment, so you know which drum, cymbal and head combination will work for a track. You always have to be prepared for any situation, both mentally and physically and be able to get on with people. I always say that it's 60% personality and 40% ability that keep you working. That someone can play should be a given and once an opportunity is given to you, you have to deliver. You mustn't underestimate that aspect of it. It's about listening to the song and interpreting what the voice is doing. If the voice is getting more emotive, then you push with it. Music is all about listening and interpreting what you are hearing and feeling but when you go into the studio to record, it's not about you. It's about the artist's song and you owe them 200% of your ability. They've sweated blood over it, so even if you don't

think it's going to be a hit, you still have to give them all of your experience, energy, enthusiasm and ability, otherwise you are cheating yourself first and foremost and that's not a nice thing to live with."

#### INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM

Geoff went on to explain that generating work requires staying in touch with people but that it has its pitfalls.

"In order to keep working, word of mouth is very important and you have to stay in touch with people but there's a thin line between enthusiasm and desperation in this business. People can sometimes come across as desperate but enthusiasm is infectious.

I hate the word networking as that makes it sound like corporate business but I suppose, to an extent, that's a necessity. You hope that word of mouth and being good and honest about the way you work speaks more about you than anything else and that people will respect that and want the energy that you bring to a session. Somebody once said to that 'success is the capability to withstand failure' and we all have ups and downs in this business but hopefully the desire and will and that passion to want to do it regardless of everything will see you through. We could lose everything tomorrow and never work again for some reason but you would always find some way to be involved in music because that's your life. It's like a marriage."

#### ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?

He continued, pointing out that for any budding session players gaining experience of diverse styles on the job is the only way to really learn.

"Lots of kids want to get into the music business but nobody really talks about certain aspects of it, such as being able to interpret emotion, being on time etc. We all know you need to practise but that's only a small part of it.

Also, there are countless DVDs telling you how to fly around a drum kit at high speed but people rarely tell you how you are going to get work. There is no guaranteed method but a lot of people underestimate the necessity to play gigs at ANY level to gain experience. In my generation, we were all out playing two or three times a week at 16 years old. Becoming familiar with various styles of music will teach you a hell of a lot more in the long term than going down only one avenue; play top 20 stuff in a covers band or play with

**"Music is not a job;  
it's a way of life"**