

bought this little kit and, in a way, it really helped me because I worked hard to get it, and that made me value it more than if someone had just given it to me. It may have been from what I called reconstituted matchboxes, really cheap stuff, but to me it was the best thing ever.

"Then I bought a bass drum and built up a little kit that I played in my room on the sixth floor of a block of flats, despite my mum getting letters, often anonymously, asking for me so stop! From there I started playing at school, joined a few bands until when I was 13 and a man asked me if I would play in a local pub. This pub was in Shoreditch and on a Sunday afternoon they would do special shows. When we got there, this chap told me that we were backing the strippers, but I didn't really know what he meant. So, I found it a bit difficult to concentrate as these girls came on and off stage in various stages of undress. When I got home mum asked how rehearsal went and I simply said it was ok. I have never told her what really went on!" Jeff told me.

Jeff continued playing and extending his experience with various bands and playing a wide variety of venues. Everything he did with the drums has been self-taught, he's never had a lesson in his life. He believes that all good drummers have an internal metronome built in that ensures the beat is always spot on. He would visit a club in London called The Marquee Club, and watch groups like Jimi Hendrix, Cream and The Who before they became known.

"Sadly, a lot of places like that have closed down and current venues won't pay much to have new, and potentially up and



coming groups, to play. But when I was about 18, I got into a band that was touring all the American bases in Germany, and we would do around four 45-minute sessions a night, and this lasted for around two weeks. Back home, I picked up an issue of The Melody Maker as it had classified ads at the back, and I needed work. I went for an interview along with about 70 other drummers – but I got the job. It was with a band called Stretch, who had a hit single called "Why Did You Do It?" and we did Top of Pops in 1976. I then joined Judie Tzuke and played drums with her until the early 1980s."

In 1985, Jeff got a phone call from the producer of Status Quo asking if he would be interested in doing a solo album with Rick Parfitt and Status Quo. This would be the start of a 15-year association with the Quo for Jeff and if I listed all the events, then this feature would turn into a book! This group started out as The Paladins, The Spectres, Traffic Jam and finally Status Quo. (Francis Rossi and Alan Lancaster originally got together as schoolboys in 1962 to form a group.) Jeff told me that altogether he has been touring for over 30 years – and probably not finished yet.

While he was still with Status Quo, Jeff set up giving masterclasses in drumming and percussion. This snowballed and soon Jeff was working with schools throughout the UK, and has carried on even after leaving Quo. To date, he has done over 6,000 of these masterclasses and the number's still rising. Performing as he has done for many years and in front of thousands of people, there must have been emotional times – happy, sad, funny and proud. He replied: "I am a happy guy pretty well all the time – one who would greet you cheerfully in the morning, which doesn't always suit some people! The most worrying moment was as we were playing in a bullring in Spain. Very hot day, storms forecast and the wind got up. Around the stage was a lighting gantry and as the rest of the band moved away from the mic line towards me in a line, the wind gusted and took the gantry over their heads to where the mic line was and crashed down. Some good fortune."

Finally, I asked Jeff if there were any changes that he probably would have made. "Possibly leaving Quo a couple of years earlier than perhaps I should have done, but the touring was becoming a bit much," he told me.

There are so many more stories that could be told about Jeff Rich, but I have come to the end of my available space. He is so dedicated, not only to his drumming, but also to the masterclasses that he is still doing. A highly-talented drummer who has made a name for himself and has been with a major player in world music for many years. I am really grateful to have learned a little about the life of Jeff Rich.