

We Don't Need No Stinkin' Drums

Contributed by Larry Lawless
Tuesday, 18 July 2006

We start out this morning with one of Doug's tunes, "Pourpres Minus Rouges". This wild and crazy piece opens with a one measure flurry of mallets, then silence into each instrument entering very quietly one at a time. There are absolutely no drums on this piece, showing we can groove without them. Pourpres is mostly in 12/8 time and is just a standard rock blues form and progression in Bb, but the parts are written so the beat is extremely obscured, requiring great concentration and inner time to perform. We had expecteded this one to give us a lot of trouble (except Doug and David who had performed it before), but we manage to stay on schedule after many takes and a few over dub solos. The title demonstrates Doug's love for the French language, so much so that he is working on a degree in French, and has served a couple of times as a missionary in Lyons, France. It translates "purples minus reds" which, of course, on the color wheel, gives youblues.

A quick lunch at the dining hall (I'm getting very fond of the teriyaki bowls at the Wok 'n Roll), then back to our recital hall dungeon for another round of takes. First on the list is David's second tune, "Insomnia". Despite the title (an affliction David has suffered from since childhood) this is another light samba. An opening reflective vibe solo leads into the rhythm section, with Rich on drums, Bart on conga, and me on bass setting up the samba. Then Doug comes in comping on marimba, and Dave plays down the very catchy melody. Bart gets a chance to wail on congas, and after the return of the head, we all go into a 6/16 groove that leads to a drum/conga solo, then Dave gets to show off his improvisational skills in a tasty vibe solo. After a few rehearsal runs and some false starts, we get this one down in record time, just under 2 hours.

Next up is "Attack of the 10 Octave Marimba", one of mine. The story behind this one is from Bart's DrummerCafe forum board. Sometimes we get young players on the board who don't have as much experience and knowledge as they think they do, and sometimes say inaccurate things. Usually the "older" players will gently try to educate them, but sometimes, they just resist instruction. One particular youngster insisted that his teacher had a 10 octave marimba at his house. Since the entire range of human hearing is 10 octaves, we tried to suggest that perhaps he was mistaken, but the fellow insisted he was right, which led me to post that it sounded like a '60's "B" horror movie, "I Was a 10 Octave Marimba". Bart did some clever Photoshop work and posted this picture with the caption " 'Attack of the 10 Octave Marimba' now in theaters near you". I took this joke as inspiration for a percussion composition, with a campy, 60's movie concept of jazz melody, but over an insistent bass marimba line in 7/4. We open with a free, improvisational soundscape of scary and weird sound effects, leading into a log drum representing the plodding monster marimba coming to get you. In the recording process we use an idea of John Piper's and interweave wax paper through the marimba bars to create the "Bazimba". After one recording take with it all the way through, we decide to use this effect on an overdub only on the opening section. The last thing on the recording is a hidden talent of Bart's to do a "Goofy" (as in the Disney character) yell.

For the first (but not the last) time, we run a little over schedule, but are still done by about 7:30 at night. Kevin has been amazed at how well we have been able to stay on schedule. Dinner at a sushi bar, then to home and hotel for rest.