

# We Are Golden

Contributed by Larry Lawless  
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It seems like we have been in this recital hall forever, but at the same time, I can't believe it's almost over. Today is the last day of recording, after which the post production work starts, heading toward the final product. We have grown into a band of brothers, with the pressure of getting everything just right and the long hours, we have pulled closer together. I am so thankful for this fine group of men.

After staying so close to schedule, we hit obstacles today. "Hevy Revy" is first on the bill, written by Bart Elliott. This is a live working out of a performance sequence that Bart has used in clinics. The piece is almost entirely in alternating measures of 5/4 and 9/8, with an ostinato bass line holding it all together. The title refers to Bart's use of changing feels in the drum grooves that always work over the bass line, as the meter and feel shift around. This was the "heavy revelation". Because of the repetitive nature of the piece, and to allow Bart the freedom to solo over the top (this is basically a vehicle for Bart to show off his groove drumset skills), we decide to do this "studio style" laying down one track at a time. This proves very time consuming, so that we fall behind schedule, but decide to try and press on. The other time constraint involves a conspiracy between Doug's wife Barbara and myself. Today is Doug's birthday, and we are planning a surprise dinner for him at a very nice French restaurant in town, the Brasserie Ten Ten. Reservations are at 8:00.

By 2:00, Hevy is still a work in progress, but we decide to move on. Next up is Doug's second tune, "Homonyme Fils", which translates into "namesake son". This was written for Doug's oldest son, Doug, Jr. It starts with a pensive mood, a very slow vibe solo into a section for 3 marimba players, with melodic lines weaving in and out of each other. As they build to a crescendo, they are interrupted by the opening vibe notes, played strongly. The vibe then begins to set up a new melody, slowly at first, then gradually accelerating (accompanied by marimba) into a "happy little samba". With all these mood shifts, descriptive of a teenage boy, the ensemble problems are very large, so this one requires many takes and false starts. We also let Doug do several solo takes (after all, it's his birthday), so again we are running long on work and short on time.

The final song to record is Rich's "Sharptooth". The funky, jagged melodic fragments of this one are reminiscent of some fierce sea creature, hence the name. Rich's professionalism, as always, helps us to get Sharptooth done in a fairly short amount of time, so we are close to wrapping up by 8:00. We decide that when we get a good take of what we need, we can go on to dinner and come back later to finish Bart's solo and any remaining overdubs. It's hard to imagine the difficulty of doing a recording session with all percussion instruments. Sometimes, we have 3 mallet players going at once, each holding four mallets, hitting a variety of notes with some very difficult rhythms to play precisely together. A slight movement of 1/2 of an inch in striking the marimba and vibe bars means a wrong note and a ruined take. Then there's the rhythmic precision necessary to play figures exactly together, and even the frustration of finally playing a perfect take to learn there was an extraneous noise from a mallet handle scraping a music stand, or a vibe pedal squeaking. So, it is with great relief that Doug comes out of the booth after listening to the playback of the final cut of the final tune and says "We are golden", meaning a good take.

After a wonderful meal with much toasting and fellowship, we send Doug home with his family and head back to the recital hall to try to wrap things up. By now, it is 10:30pm and poor Bart is just too tired to think. The decision is made to let him take the tracks home and record his Hevy Revy solo in Nashville. Time to strike the set, pack up our hundreds of percussion toys we have used in the past 7 days, put soundproofing panels back where they belong, and clear the stage that has been our home all week. At 1:00 Friday morning, we are done, it's a wrap. Tomorrow, most of the group will be catching flights back to loved ones, while for Kevin and I, the work is just beginning.

