

EXCLUSIVE!!

Rob Litten of DrumstheWord.com shares the secrets of his online success!

Interviewed By Neil Paddock of HowtoProgramDrums.com



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Part 1 – In the beginning...

NP: Q: Who and what got you started with drumming?

RL: A: Years ago I was watching a documentary on [Led Zeppelin](#) with my Dad, and I'd been playing trumpet for a few years at that point and I enjoyed it, I enjoyed playing the instrument, my Dad was a guitarist, I knew playing instruments was in my blood, but I wasn't really falling in love with trumpet and that fell by the wayside and I was watching this documentary with my Dad, watching the drummer [John Bonham](#) at the back not realising who he was, thought it was absolutely amazing, went out that night into the garage to get my old snooker cue and cut it in half and so I had two pairs of drumsticks because I'd been tapping along in the car to the music and at home anyway without realising that I'd learnt how to play a drumbeat with my hands – I'd be listening to a song on the radio and I worked out that the high pitched tick-tick-tick was the hi-hat and my right hand was going to do that and then this bap-bap-bap was the back beat and my left hand was going to play that and so it was like a really natural progression for me just to go "Of course, I'll be a drummer." That's obvious to me now.

So that's how I got started – I was about eleven years old - It was [Led Zeppelin](#), John Bonham.

NP: I'm sure he's started off quite a few drummers' careers over the years!

RL: Yeah, he was quite popular!

Both: (Laughs)

NP: Yeah!

NP: Q: Main influences of yours? Have you got other people other than John [Bonham] who have influenced you profoundly?

RL: Yeah - when I first started, I think every drummer when they first start playing, the band they are into at the time when they first start have huge influences on their playing style and I was lucky enough to be into some really cool drummers when I first started - so I was into [Chad Smith](#), (Chilli Peppers), [Dave Grohl](#), (Nirvana & [Foo Fighters](#)).

I was into Radiohead, I was into all kinds of different bands but I knew the drummers as well so I was into the drumming as well as the music, and they were my early influences, those band guys but now it's the professionals that really amaze me

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– the [Vinnie Colaiutas](#), the [Benny Grebs](#), the [Gavin Harrison](#)s, these guys are just Gods to me!

If I was to say biggest...I can't say influence anymore, 'cos I don't think drummers really influence me any more *per se*, do you know what I mean, when you first start you are really into a band - that's all you listen to and it would influence you, but nowadays I just like listen to a lot of different music and listen to lots of different drummers, but my drumming idol hero has to be Vinnie Colauita. Best drummer of all time in my opinion, better than [Buddy Rich](#).

Buddy Rich was amazing, but Vinnie Colauita has a mind that for me is... I just can't comprehend how he comes up with the parts he comes up with, it's incredible!

He's a studio session guy. He's most famous for playing with Sting. Just type [Vinnie Colauita](#) into YouTube and watch a few of his videos and you will see what I mean. Just [an] incredible drummer.

RL: Q: Who's your drumming influences Neil?

NP: A: I would have to say that John Bonham has got to be my all time favourite, just the power, and particularly like some of those early tapes, it might have been the same one you saw, there's a clip of them on a program, I forget what it was. It was all black and white, and [Bonham is just laying into this kit](#)...

RL: I know, I know exactly what you are talking about, it's like a "Top of the Pops" isn't it?

NP: It's quite extraordinary, they all seem to be a on a different level, but I guess then and probably even now, nobody seems to get up and play like that, it's quite amazing!

Q: Have you seen the film by the way the film with [Jason](#) playing with them? [Celebration Day](#)?

RL: A: It was on BBC I-Player the other day and I tried to watch it, but there was an error so I couldn't so I still haven't seen it, but I'll be checking that out at some point - I'd love to see [what Jason did](#) and what he did and how he interpreted his Dad's parts, that would be very interesting.

NP: From what I've seen he's very... He's on the money!

RL: Yeah!

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NP: Good stuff. I guess the other people that I spent a lot of time listening to and have a lot of admiration for are people like [Phil Collins](#) from Genesis, and [Stewart Copeland](#) from The Police, and [Keith Moon](#), would be another one, Keith was a complete one off! It's quite amazing. So I guess they would be my big four really. And you mentioned guys that were playing probably early nineties and I wasn't quite into that so much, I tended to listen to my brother's records so it was all early seventies, you know [\[Black\] Sabbath](#), [\[Led\] Zeppelin](#), and then later on [Van Halen](#), people like that. So I kind of came the Heavy Rock route really, and then mellowed with a bit of [Genesis](#) and stuff like that. All good!

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Part 2 – Making the Leap from 9-5 Job to Drummer

NP: Q: I've got another question for you. What made drumming stop being a hobby for you? Where you kind of doing something else for a while and then suddenly got to a point where you could jump in with both feet? How did that all pan out?

RL: A: Well, originally I was going to be a computer programmer - I got a modern computer apprenticeship back in England and I was working up in Basingstoke as a computer programmer. Modern Apprenticeship, modern apprentice. I always wanted to go and study drums, and I heard about these music schools that were being set up and just starting to be set up around the time when I was twenty and *I just took a risk*, after 4 years of doing this job I had had enough of it, it wasn't really for me - I just went off to do this [three year drum course](#) with the intention of going back afterwards and finding a job again, but while I was doing the course I started teaching on the side, and it was an obvious thing to me - Why don't I start teaching private lessons? And I soon realised the money is excellent, you know you charge your own rates, and as long as it's not too expensive, people will happily pay it if they think they are getting quality lessons.

NP: Sure.

RL: So after the course finished I just continued with the teaching, and then to promote my teaching business, I found it was tough to get new pupils and to maintain and so I thought I'd better start expanding, I thought I would create a website, promote my teaching skills by doing free videos on YouTube and uploading these little videos I did years ago and they proved to be really popular and I got a buzz with interacting with people online and getting comments both positive and negative, a lot of negative back then, quite rightly, and I just continued to release the free videos, just like a natural progression, where I had all this material which I had recorded, and uploaded, I was thinking: Why don't I start charging for these as well? And from that point it was obvious to me that when I once I started selling them for pennies at a time when I first started, I thought: Why don't I just keep doing this? This is great! – and then luckily, it started to snowball and now *I am lucky enough to have this pay my bills*.

Whereas two years ago, I would still be relying on the private teaching as a main source of income, I am lucky enough now that the website pays my bills full time.

NP: That's fantastic, well done!

RL: Thank you. I have been very lucky - it's been a wonderful line of... not coincidences, but convenient situations to help me to arrive to where I am right now.

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NP: You are being very modest I think, I was looking at the [site](#) earlier today, and the amount of content is just extraordinary - and I am thinking, just how many Rob's are there to put that all together?

In six years, hang on... about three hundred products, maybe? Trying to work out how many you do in a year and doing the maths – I mean, does the man sleep?

RL: The trick is not to have a social life and to like money a lot!

[Laughs] And then it comes nat[urally!].

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Part 3 – Rob's Proven Online Success Strategies

I'm a bit of a social hermit so if I'm not out playing with my band or seeing my close friends then I'm at the computer.

And at the time a couple of years ago when I was first started the website – where most of the content I had created and most of the articles I wrote, most of the free lessons, I was genuinely concerned about paying bills, so I would be getting up in the morning and writing articles until the afternoon and then I started teaching in the evenings, afternoons, evenings, and the next day, back on the computer in the morning writing more articles, you know, genuinely concerned that the private teaching wasn't paying the way.

So that motivates you - when you have to - because it's the only way you can make money.

NP: As far as drum teaching is concerned, I did it for a while and I enjoyed it, it wasn't going to pay all the bills by any stretch of the imagination, but I did it and it was a lot of fun!

NP: Q: [Drumsthe word](#), you started to build your website up and you were doing your private lessons, in terms of having the vision and putting that vision together, what do you think would be two or three key steps in order to make it happen as opposed to hope it will happen?

RL: Okay, well first of all you have to *find the right niche*. I use the marketing term “niche”, but you know what I mean, *if you are going to supply something you have to be sure that people actually want it*, and that helps. Once you have decided on what it is that you can offer that people want then for me *it was just about releasing as much quality content as possible*. So it's not the amount (although that helps), lots of content, web pages, videos, articles, forum entries, all that kind of stuff really helps, but *it was about making sure that it was really useful*.

So I would write and record videos with the intention of talking about stuff that I'd like other drummers to hear about and being honest with the viewer so I found that releasing quality content, being honest with people, not bullshitting people, because viewers can see if you are a fake – it's those combinations that over time, just will work, it's just inevitable. It really was inevitable that this would snowball eventually as long as I kept doing what I was doing and it was still being appreciated then you can't help but grow in popularity, more people will hear about you, and it just grows.

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So my best bit of advice would be to find a subject, if it's drumming for example, find something that you are really (not necessarily good at) but *something you can certainly explain very well that people want* and then to focus just purely on just releasing that quality content - a lot of free stuff - just give it away and give it away and give it away, people learn to trust you, and then if you have something to sell, then you can offer them your products, and because they see your quality free content then they trust you and genuinely they will pay for it and hopefully be satisfied, because you don't want to con people, and you want to make sure that what you are selling is really quality as well, because you get refunds.

It's about just consistently releasing quality stuff regularly, and giving it enough time, and if what you are doing is good enough and appreciated, then inevitably it will grow. It's just a matter of time.

NP: That's very good advice, and you have been walking the talk.

Q: Early on, did you start to get feedback pretty quick? You said that you established this niche where you were showing people how to play pop records, not many other people were doing that. People started to ask you questions, about how do I play this, how do I play that, were you getting a lot of feedback early on, a lot of requests to do extra stuff?

RL: Yeah, I still do, most of my YouTube comments and emails from people that find me are requests for songs. When I first started a lot of the feedback was about song requests, now it's about the quality, the content of the video, they comment on that as well which I am really pleased about, but I still get a lot of requests for songs.

I got a lot of negative comments at the beginning as well, I was learning how to record videos, I was experimenting with my presentational styles, I was being silly, I was being goofy, I was being sensible, I was being boring, my videos are too long, they were too short, the light was bad, the sound of the drum kit was awful, and so people would quite rightly and freely tell me this on a regular basis, so I got loads of negative comments, and one sticks out actually, there's a video I did for a song by [Muse](#) called [Uprising](#) – A free video a ten minute thing when my account - I could only upload under ten minutes long to YouTube - so I had to literally time it and I got it just under ten minutes and I uploaded this video and I got the drumbeat wrong, I admit.

I wasn't listening carefully enough and I got part of the beat wrong – only a small mistake really - any drummer would admit it – it was a small mistake, but enough for every man and his dog and every teenager and every kid out there to feel they

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have to tell me on a daily basis "You got it wrong." "You got it wrong." And so that I found, that was hard, that could have ended it for me if I'm honest, because I hadn't released many videos, the one I had released, some of them were popular, as in they were getting views, and others weren't so popular, so it was a real trial of fire at the beginning and to sort of be a little bit tough, to take the negative comments and the negative feedback and hopefully to use it as well.

I was extra careful after that, that video - I made sure that I really listened carefully to each song, because I didn't want to go through another Uprising Muse video again because it was on a daily basis.

But nowadays the only negative comments I get - if you can call it negative, I don't call it negative - is I get compared to [John Lennon](#) a lot and I have to put up with that (laughs) that's the only thing I put up with these days - Everyone says "Do you know you look like John Lennon?"

Yes I Do. Yes.

NP: Oh Right Cool. OK. I hadn't made the connection myself, actually.

RL: Really?

NP: Kind of [Michael Caine](#) in a way because of the glasses. My Dad had a pair like that too. But there you go, [not a lot of people know that](#) - boom! boom!

RL: Ba-doom!

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Part 4 – How to deal with Negative Feedback

NP: Q: You said just now about the negative feedback – I've got a comment on one of my YouTube things at the moment it just says: "This Sucks!" Is it a case of kind of just bouncing back and being as constructive with the feedback as possible?

RL: A: It's about being...because it is really tough on the web, because you just open yourself up to everybody and anyone can comment and say what they think – but you do get those negative comments - it is tough. But what I have found is... try to take the moral high ground.

So if it's a really abusive comment, it's rude and nasty and inaccurate then generally I just delete it. But if they have got a point even though they are making it rudely, then what I'll do is take the higher ground and respond to the comment and tell them, maybe even apologise "You're right, sorry about that" and just try to be helpful, and I have found that if you take that higher ground other viewers see your comment, your response to the original comment, they take your side generally, and hopefully what you are saying is correct, because if somebody's saying that a part of your video is incorrect, you got the drumbeat wrong, then you might have to admit: "Yes, I have listened to that again and I have got it wrong," and then people can be a lot more forgiving, the next person that views might see your comment might say "Well okay, he admits it, fair enough." And I have found that that deflects things, *take those negative comments that have a point, and try to respond to them in a mature way*, then generally that's a positive - you can get a positive from that.

.....

And it can work in your favour as well. I have honestly found that some of the comments that I have put, and I am only rating it how many little thumbs up I get [against my] comment[s], very scientific! A lot of these comments – I have responded to a negative comment in a positive way, and people like that – they see that as a positive thing That's my advice, *take those negative comments and try to find a way to make them positive*, you have to swallow your pride a bit sometimes, *even though you know this guy's a complete dick, I am still going to respond to him in a mature way*, then it can be positive.

NP: Yeah, by the same token, you must get quite a lot of positive feedback as well, so I guess you take the rough with the smooth, then let your audience steer you to better quality and I guess they can steer you to more of what they want as well – so hopefully, over time, you are going to have constructive people giving you a positive steer, and that's going to outweigh the odd person here and there who just seems to be in it for having a pop at you.

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RL: Yeah, you do get a lot of [Trolls](#) as they call them on YouTube. People who are out to be negative and they get a kick out of it and you can usually...sometimes what I'll do is...if a comment really gets to me, because it's hurtful, because they have made a good point in a really horrible way, so it's like double whammy - they are being rude to me and also they have got a good point, I will generally go and check out their profile and 95% of the time, the people that are really abusive you can see them commenting on other videos "This Sucks!", "You're a Loser!" and you just go "Okay, it's that kind of person."

I'm not going to get offended by someone that goes out of their way to be negative, just for a kick, but those nasty comments that have a point, they don't hurt me as much as they used to and generally, I do try and take on board what they are saying because *if enough people are complaining about the same thing then they have a point.*

NP: Sure. I guess that's what social proof is all about isn't it?

RL: Yeah.

NP: Give them what they want.

RL: Trial by fire. And it really is.

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Part 5 – A Day in the Life - Maintaining a Successful Web Business

NP: Q: Could you describe to me a typical working day? A day in the life of Rob Litten?

RL: If you are really interested Neil, yes I can!

Both: (Laughs)

RL: My boring little life! Well, these days it's all about the website, so every day is different, I am pleased to say, I am lucky enough to have this great job where I can each day choose to record a video, transcribe a drum chart for example, I might work on the website side of things, do some tweaks, I like to have different projects going on, so the last couple of years in the Januarys after Christmas, when I am most motivated to get back to work I have set myself a project.

Last year it was my [drum fills e-book](#), which took me a lot longer than I thought it would, but I got it finished, and this year, this January I am already planning, I am going to update my [beginner's drum pack](#) so I am going to spend the first few months of 2013 re-recording my beginner pack and my videos and expanding it and making it better than it is even though I realise I teach songs, beats, fills, and all that kind of good stuff, people are still interested in learning the basics from me, so I am going to expand upon that, but a daily basis will be:

1. Transcribing
2. Answering a lot of e-mails
3. Checking updates around the web, and hopefully,
4. Getting a video recorded

And if I am doing a video recording day, the video itself, for example, I'm recording a song, a full song:

- I'll spend the morning *transcribing* the chart, may take me a couple of hours
- I'll then go to the drum room and spend half an hour or an hour *practicing* the hard bits, going over in my head how I might explain different sections, and then:
- Get the camera set up, *record the video*, that'll take an extra hour, maybe two hours, doing re-edits going over parts I messed up on, then go next door

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- *Upload* all the video, and then:
- Go into the video editing suite software, and for another couple of hours I'm then doing the overlays, *the music transcription /notation on the screen*, editing the clips.

For a song lesson:

- I'll upload the full lesson to my website but then I've got to create a preview video for it as well, so then:
- I'll go back and take the best clips from the full lesson to create a mini-preview lesson which I'll upload to YouTube to advertise the video, so that might take an extra hour

So one song usually takes me from say, eight in the morning until six in the evening - the whole process.

So on a song recording day, that's my day, the whole day is spent going through each stage:

1. Transcribing
2. Recording
3. Editing
4. Uploading - and then:
5. Promoting

NP: Q: How many videos do you aim to do in a week? Usually?

RL: A: Yeah, I've been through phases where I'm going to spend the next month recording as many song lessons as I can because I'm falling behind on that side of the business, so I try to aim to get three a week – At one point I got five in one week, but that was five full days (of...) and I found that the lesson was suffering because I was getting stressed – *The prime time of those days is that hour and a half where you are recording the video*, the rest of it either side of it is really meaningless if the video itself isn't any good and I was getting really tired because of the pressure I was putting on myself to get a video done in one day.

So nowadays, three a week - if it's the free videos, then I'll try to get maybe four done a week, but it depends what I've got going on – three or four videos a week.

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NP: Q: Yeah, and that's typically the ones on YouTube, the free ones are usually about what, 12 minutes in length, something like that?

RL: That's fair, I try not to aim for that length of time, it just happens to be around – if I'm teaching a drumbeat it takes around ten minutes to teach it properly in my style, but if I could make that video as good in two or three minute format I would happily accept that – because people including myself have small attention spans and if something hasn't grabbed them after two minutes then they usually move on, including myself, so ideally I'd like all my videos to be two or three minutes long, but that's unrealistic in terms of what I do.

NP: Sure, I think you've got the balance right, in terms of going through riffs and explaining them, I was watching one of your Ringo Starr ones [\[Come Together\]](#) – You got it about right – ten minutes doesn't seem like ten minutes if you know what I mean, you are covering what needs to be covered and I need a few repetitions – doing a song in two or three minutes, you wouldn't be able to get that benefit of those repetitions – You'd be reliant on your customer just playing the thing, stopping it and re-playing bits over and over again – I think you got it right, that's cool.

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Part 6 – Transcribing for Video

NP: Q: Transcribing – Is that notation specifically? Doing music notation and doing all your charts that you mentioned earlier?

RL: A: Yes, when I went to study Music in Guildford [[ACM](#)] part of the course was to teach you how to read and write music notation and I really enjoyed it – I see it as an art form like Calligraphy, I find music notation so pretty and so satisfying when you take a rhythm you can hear and you can represent it in a visual form, in a way that this language, only musicians can read – I really get a kick out of it, so it's never been an issue for me, I find transcribing a whole song [a] quite therapeutic process, going through each part (stopping...)

Usually I download the song, and I use [VLC player](#) the free media player which you can get on the web because it has a slow down function, so if I get to a really tricky part I'll slow the song down and repeat it several times and try to work out what the drummer is doing and then I use a piece of software, I used to use [Sibelius](#) but now I use both [Sibelius](#) and [Finale](#) depending on what project I'm working on, for example the [Drumeo](#) guys, they use [Finale](#) for all their music notation so if I am writing for them I use [Finale](#) and [Sibelius](#) for my website – I really enjoy transcribing - and one of the things I try to pass onto my private pupils and I certainly do for the website as well, is the usefulness and *the importance of getting to the next level and being able to read music.*

It's like the equivalent of speaking a language but not being able to read and write it - if you can read or write it then you can take a book and you can take other people's ideas and you've got a way of remembering those ideas and learning from those ideas, rather than having to memorise everybody's conversations, because it's a one off, you hear it once and it's gone.

So reading music allows you to take a pattern, a really complicated pattern, and have it there in front of you for all time and *if you can read it, then you can learn it.* And it's such a useful tool when it comes to practice, when it comes to getting better, and also understanding the framework of music, if you can read notation and you understand rhythm, then you know the framework with which you are working within, trying to get better within, you know the limits, the boundaries, you take an idea - you know what you can do with it, you can transpose it, you can change the sub-division, you can do all that good stuff and you know what to do because you can see the big picture, so for me *learning to read music was one of the most useful things I ever did.*

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It allowed me to a) teach, to do what I'm doing now, I wouldn't be able to do that without being able to read or write, but *it's also made me a much better drummer because I can visualise what I'm playing now, as well as hear it.*

NP: Yeah, that certainly makes a lot of sense. I can read drum music a bit.

Q. Do you play piano or anything like that, can you like...if somebody put a piece of music in front of you with a piano on, does that make any sense to you or is it just drums that you're specialising in?

RL: A: I hit things with sticks. I tried guitar, like yourself, I bet you've tried guitar as well and it's just too fiddly!

NP: (Laughs) I do play a bit but I get embarrassed in public. We won't go there! Ok.

RL: Yeah, Do you play piano at all or any other instruments?

NP: I'm a bit of a dabbler to be honest, so I dabble with loads of things, so I don't have your focus that you bring to bear and say: "Right, I'm going to be a drummer." Boom! I've enjoyed drumming and I have played semi-professionally and in church bands and stuff like that. I don't know - I (kind of) like drum machines and messing around with synthesisers and doing a bit of singing and a bit of everything really, so...

RL: That's good, I regret not learning a melodic instrument properly because some of the great drummers out there all claim to be able to play a little bit of piano, and understand the melodic side of music, making music, for example, there's a drummer called [Benny Greb](#) who's one of the most gifted drummers, he's also a very prolific musician in other instruments as well, he plays brass and he writes his own scores and does his own music and you can hear that in his drum parts, he's thinking melodically and musically, and as a consequence he's not just thinking rhythmically when he's playing the drums, and you can hear that in his playing, it's really obvious to me that his melodic other instruments that he has learned is having a big influence on his drumming and a really good influence and I regret not learning the guitar properly and sticking with it maybe there's still time to learn a bit of piano because you don't have to fiddle with technique with piano you're just pushing keys, so it's a little bit easier to get into than guitar, but yeah, maybe it's too late, I don't know...

NP: Oh, it's never too late.

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Part 7 – Rob's Website Secrets

NP: Q: Do you ever have anyone helping you with your website stuff? Do you have a tekkie guy? Do you have people going in doing graphics for you and stuff like that? How much of it is Rob Litten putting all that stuff together and do you sub-contract any of it out at all?

RL: A: Well, initially my cousin who lives out in America who's an IT guru, he set me up with my website when I first started doing it - I could only create basic html websites, but I wanted to have a website where I could interact with PayPal and create some sort of download system and have a forum and a blog and I wasn't technical enough to do all of that stuff.

So my cousin set me up with a website using a content management system called [Drupal](#) which the website is still based around, I imagine it will change in the future but right now I am still using Drupal, but if it wasn't for my cousin setting up the website initially, I wouldn't have been able to do it on my own.

All the graphics and all the layout is done by myself. I taught myself how to use [Gimp](#) which is a free art tool photo manipulation software thingy, and it's allowed me to create my graphics, which... that was a big step up for me I think, once I realised the power of graphics, and good looking graphics to give the impression of professionalism to a website, I (sort of) grabbed that by both hands and now I spend, if I'm creating a new page and it needs something, to promote it, a good graphic will do the job usually, so all the graphics are done by myself, is the answer to your question.

NP: Excellent. It's really good stuff. I'm very impressed actually.

RL: Thank you.

NP: I hope you can tell! It's amazing! The quality and the content and everything - it almost goes on forever! Quite extraordinary. And I know from my own experience how long some things take. (Just throwing in) I was trying to set up an RSS feed yesterday, and two hours later, messing around with a thing called [Feedburner](#), I actually asked my son and he knew how to do it and I had a little link on my blog the whole time that anyone could subscribe through - I just didn't realise it was there!

RL: I still don't get RSS feeds, they are a weird thing - I don't know why they are called that, I don't know why they've got that little orange square symbol, but yeah, I hear that people can subscribe to blogs through an RSS feed and I think my website's got one, but I've come across the Feedburner issue as well, trying to understand what

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it does and why people use it, I don't know, why can't they just visit the blog on the website? They have to have an e-mail or something? I don't know!

I'm not very technical either Neil, a lot of this stuff I blag and I experiment a lot, I'm one of these people, you get different types of learners in life, the ones that need to do something to get it, the ones that have to have it explained to them to get it, do you know what I mean, there's doers and there's listeners – *I'm definitely a doer, experiment, get it wrong, and try it again, so I have learnt a lot from my mistakes, technical mistakes through the website, getting the audio for my videos right, learning about formatting videos was a long process, learning experimenting with uploading to YouTube, finding what formats work and what doesn't, it's all just been experimentation over time.* So this stuff is complicated, and I don't really understand it, *I just go for it and see what happens. If it goes wrong change it.*

NP: Q: Okay. Can I ask you what (it's getting a bit sort of tekkie I guess) but what video software do you use?

RL: A: I use [Sony Vegas](#), I have just taught myself how to use Sony Vegas, and I'll stick with it now because I'm used to its interface, I've got the latest version of Studio something, Platinum Studio, whatever it's called, and I'm really happy with it, it does everything I need it to do, but...yes, Sony Vegas is what I use.

NP: Ok, Cool. Alright. We've been struggling with [Camtasia](#). It's okay for some things like screen capture, not that hot when you try to put backing tracks on other things, also use something called [Mixcraft](#) which is better [for audio tracks], but then it hasn't got the screen capture.

RL: You can... My Dad uses Camtasia for his presentations, he does something similar to me he runs an online... he's got his own businesses online where he sells information on project management, he used to be a project manager and his business is based around teaching people how to be project managers, and a lot of that teaching work involves slides, so he uses Camtasia for that, and I am trying to get him into doing lots more videos, he wants to as well, but it's a slow process of learning a new bit of software.

But he found Sony Vegas, for example, it uses a similar idea to Camtasia – You've got a timeline, and you've got events which you add along the timeline, and so going over to a new software like Sony Vegas shouldn't be that alien to you, for example, if you wanted to get into videos, I highly recommend it [Sony Vegas], if you are doing the video side of things, get away from the Camtasia, that really is just designed for screen capture, you're better off learning how to use [Sony Vegas] and you can get a

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copy online for fifty quid, you know it's not that expensive when it's for your business I bought my copy for fifty quid, it was one of those better investments if you want to get into video processing then look into perhaps using Sony Vegas over Camtasia, I find it really good.

Part 8 – How to Make Effective Online Videos

NP: If it's something like Camtasia you can hide behind it all the time and just talk over your slides and you don't actually have to be in front of a camera. **Q:** Does Vegas give you more scope because you are there bashing the skins and you can be talking to your viewers and all that, does it give you that extra freedom, do you think?

RL: A: It's not specifically Sony Vegas, it's certainly... I found that my first videos were all Camtasia style things, and have me talking over some screenshots of notation...

The next generation of videos I started, I was still very shy in front of the camera so I had my head cut off, they couldn't see my face and I was just playing the exercises and I was talking over the top of it, so I would record the video, edit it in Sony Vegas with the slides notation and then record my voice with a microphone over the top of that *and luckily I grew some balls* and I started to step out in front of the camera a bit more, and what I found eventually was doing it that way actually saves me time because the whole overlaying your voice over the top of a video takes extra time and you end up being really picky with what you are saying and if you "um" and "ah" you have the choice to go back and re-record it because the video is still there, and you are thinking, "Well I could have done that better." So I was going back and re-recording things, it was just getting silly!

So it wasn't Sony Vegas that got me in front of the camera, *it was just a slow process of slowing getting more confident* and more positive comments and people saying "I can't see what you look like, where's your face?" and yeah... and in the end like I said it worked out better because *it's easier and quicker to record videos if video and voice are at the same time.*

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NP: OK, Great! Alright. **Q:** So tell me about plans for the future, products, what have you got in the pipeline?

RL: A: I'm not that organised, I don't really know to be honest – I am going to continue to do what I do and see how that goes, I am going to:

- Grow the [website](#)
- Do more [song lessons](#), that's definitely the focus of my business, teaching people how to play songs, so I want to create a lot more of those, I've got so many songs that I want to teach, and not enough hours in the day, so that'll be the main focus but then on the side of it perhaps:
- I want to write another [book](#), I say book, it's just an exercise book.
- I want to develop my [beginner pack](#).

My flagship product, the Drumsthe word ["DrumMasters" Video Song Pack](#), which is basically a collection of all the good stuff that I have done over the years in one package, and I want to make that more appealing to people, make it be worth more by adding to it over time so as I create new song lessons and new content I will update the pack occasionally, maybe once every year or two, and just continue to grow that and apart from that I don't really see where else things might go, we'll have to wait and see, but what I'm doing right now, I'm very happy with, and I want to continue to do what I'm doing and just see where that takes me.

It's taken me to some interesting places so far, doing interviews for people like you Neil, that's pretty amazing because as far as I am concerned I'm just... you know I am not a particularly special drummer, really there are far better drummers out there than me what I have been lucky enough to do is be in the right place at the right time, in the right generation with the web, the internet, had the right interest in the right part of drumming and it's all these things added together that's made me... put me in this position and talk to people like you about "my daily life", I mean who really cares? It's amazing to me that I am able to... two years ago I was just doing this to promote my business and now I'm being interviewed by people – it's all very strange! Very weird to me!

But I am enjoying it and I'm looking forward to seeing where things go in the future.

NP: That's good.

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Part 9 – Special Offers at DrumstheWord and The Quiz!

NP: You've got some special offers going on at the moment, haven't you? Special Prices for your audience?

RL: Yeah, I've got the [DrumMasters Pack](#) on sale at the moment, just for the Christmas and New Year period. But I generally don't tend to do a lot of sales stuff, I think it's a bit cheesy, but I thought for Christmas it would be all right to drop the price. So you can get the [DrumMasters Pack](#) now for forty five pounds [£45] which I think is a bargain.

NP: I bet there's a fair old few hours have gone into that!

RL: A few! (Laughs) As you know, when you do this kind of work, you have to put the hours in - in front of the computer.

NP: Yeah. It's something I still need to work on though. I still need to refine my whole process.

RL: It sounds like you are doing really well. I have checked out your [work](#) as well and it is really interesting what you do with your [son](#) as well and I can see that you are going in a direction that going to hopefully take you places as well. Just keep doing what you are doing Neil, and as long as it's being appreciated, things will happen. Inevitably they will. Just keep... I think the key is - I'm not very good at these famous sayings, I always forget them, but there's one that goes something like: *The key to success is not giving up.* It's the people, *the winners in business*, the winners that get things done aren't necessarily particularly specialised, or special or great at what they do, they *are just the ones that never gave up.*

And in business that's certainly the case, if you can keep going, keep doing what you are doing, and not give up then it's going to go somewhere eventually, or at should go somewhere eventually.

NP: All right, thanks for that Rob. That's nice to hear. Clearly there are lots of people who will listen to this recording and be thinking: "Hmmm...I'd quite like to be doing what Rob is doing or a bit more of what Neil's doing or maybe less time at the office," this that and the other, and I guess the Internet has opened up a lot of doorways, potentially, but *it's up to us to take responsibility, as you have clearly done*, and do it like we mean it, basically. It's there, but there's no kind of magic button to press is there? *It's the result of hard work and picking a direction and sticking with it.*

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THE QUIZ:
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NP: One of the things I wanted to mention was a Quiz. If people have stuck with us for this long, why not give them something at the end? Do you have a question?

RL: One question that comes to mind is, off the top of my head right now would be: *There's a famous drum piece that Frank Zappa wrote for his drummer Terry Bozzio. Can you name the song?*

A very drum geeky kind of question. But it's those kind of questions I like because they get people who are looking for the answer on the web to find something new potentially.

I'm sure you know (maybe you don't) there's a famous piece of music wrote for the drummer Terry Bozzio which is considered to be one of the hardest drum pieces to read in all time. And it's got a very funny name because of that. That would be my question.

NP: I have got a Facebook page, [Howtoprogramdrums](http://www.facebook.com/howtoprogramdrums). Whoever comments on Facebook basically will go into a random draw, we'll give them like a week to do it – If they've got the right answer [to your question], whoever gets chosen will get the DrumMasters Pack from me! OK.

.....
THE QUESTION:
.....

There's a famous drum piece that Frank Zappa wrote for his drummer Terry Bozzio. Can you name the song?

.....
THE ANSWER:
.....

Post your answer to Rob's question above as a comment on www.facebook.com/howtoprogramdrums

Correct answers will qualify their authors for a prize draw. The winner of the draw will be announced on the page above, and the winner will receive a FREE copy of Rob Litten's [DrumMasters Pack](#), currently being sold at the special Christmas Price of £45. Conditions: The correct answers must be posted on the above Facebook page to qualify for the draw for the [DrumMasters Pack](#).

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Closing Comments:

NP: Well let's knock it on the head for now, and I just really wanted to say thanks ever so much for taking time out, it's been a pleasure talking to you. Having seen some of your videos I felt like I knew you already, which is weird because we've never spoken before!

That's testament to... you've got that good, easy going manner on your videos, obviously now that we have talked you are not hugely different on the Skype call to how you come across on the videos, which hopefully you will take in a positive way!

And yeah, it's been a real pleasure! Thanks for the insight into how you run your business, obviously I wish you all the very best with what you are doing, with [DrumstheWord](#), with [Drumeo](#) as well, that all looks pretty exciting, they have got some good things going on haven't they? - That you are going to be part of? - So that's brilliant!

RL: Yep.

NP: But, Yeah, It's been really cool, so thanks for hanging out with me!

RL: Absolutely. Thanks a lot Neil. Appreciate it. Stay in touch.

NP: OK Rob. That's brilliant - been a real pleasure. Take care. All the best Sir!

RL: See you mate. Bye!

Author's notes: Transcribed by Neil Paddock from the original [Skype](#) call. Originally recorded as .wmv using [Pamela for Skype](#). Audio converted to .wav format using [Goldwave](#). Wav editing and splitting into separate files done in [Reason 6.5.2](#). Playback - Windows Media Player and [VLC Player](#). Converted from .wav format to .mp3 format using Goldwave. Noise reduction by Goldwave. Compressed using [T-RackS3](#).

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