

Reading Music

Learn how to read music! If you think it might be too difficult, stop and think about the school band director who can take a bunch of beginners and teach them the basic skills in just a few short weeks. You can definitely learn how to read !

Reading won't necessarily make you a better player, but it enables you to try music that you don't know... even music you've never heard before. This is good for you, and it's also good for your fellow musicians, because it gives you a common standardized language.

You may find other advantages...

- You'll learn what the standard forms in music look like on paper, and this is another way of visualizing what you do. As you evolve from staring at every note to simply recognizing whole patterns, you become better able to interpret what you see.
- You'll find that there are many different ways to *write* music that *sounds* the same.
- You'll learn what other musicians (especially arrangers) expect from you, by seeing the written parts
- You gain the ability to write music, or at least the power to take notes.
- A new world of "how to" becomes available to you, through studying written music.

There are interesting differences in how drummers must react to written music. Reading is, in a manner of speaking, "following", in that you're "following" the written music. You may also be "following" a conductor. But always remember that your primary role in most music is to *lead* the rhythm. That doesn't mean you have to be loud or oppressive in any way. It simply means that you've got to take responsibility for the biggest part of the cohesiveness of the band.

Every standard keyboard on the planet has the keys in the same order. What do we as drummers have ? Think for a moment about a written part labeled "Snare Drum". The vast majority of the time, the writer has no idea what drum will be used. Your snare drum may be small or large, brass or wood, tight or loose, resonant or muffled, in a live or dead room, etc.. You might use sticks that are wood or synthetic, big or small, soft or hard, etc.. Your playing style will affect the sound, too. And yet, we are expected to convey what the writer meant, in a reasonably consistent manner. Multiply all these variables by the number of items in your drum set, add the same number of variations produced by the other musicians, and you realize that drummers, more than other musicians, must interpret everything and react to the music, moment by moment.