

University of Michigan Provost's Teaching Innovation Prize

2013 WINNER



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The Drum Diaries: Inspiring and Integrating Exploration and Practice

Innovation Description

The Drum Diaries project fulfills a 30-year wish for a single technological device capable of providing instant access to vast collections of audio and visual music recordings. Digital tablets now offer opportunities to surpass the predominant format typically available to new players of instruments--a method book plus a CD (which often gets lost and thus goes unheard).

Instead, with the Drum Diaries iBook loaded onto an iPad propped on a music stand, a student can quickly switch from reading, seeing and/or hearing to playing along, imitating, or creatively improvising. Music methodology, technique, styles, and history can all be integrated and enriched with video and audio examples, practice tips, and hyperlinks.

A frequent leader of face-to-face percussion clinics and master classes around the world, the instructor also brought considerable experience with online instruction to the creation of the Drum Diaries. His drum lessons at PlayAlongMusic.com, a music education website created by Swedish musicians, are proof of practice in dividing complex musical topics into manageable chunks, as well as in explaining and performing them on camera.

Skype clinics with external students who have been immersed in the Drum Diaries have shown that these students master material much more rapidly and ask more penetrating questions about specific techniques or styles than students who have worked only with printed method books.

Student Comments

Setting a new standard for music education, the iBook format "combines visual, audio, and textual elements into one package; no CD or DVD required."

The advent of streaming video websites introduced new opportunities to see how a given musician plays, but "it was a bit of a scavenger hunt trying to piece together information from disparate sources, and with often questionable quality."

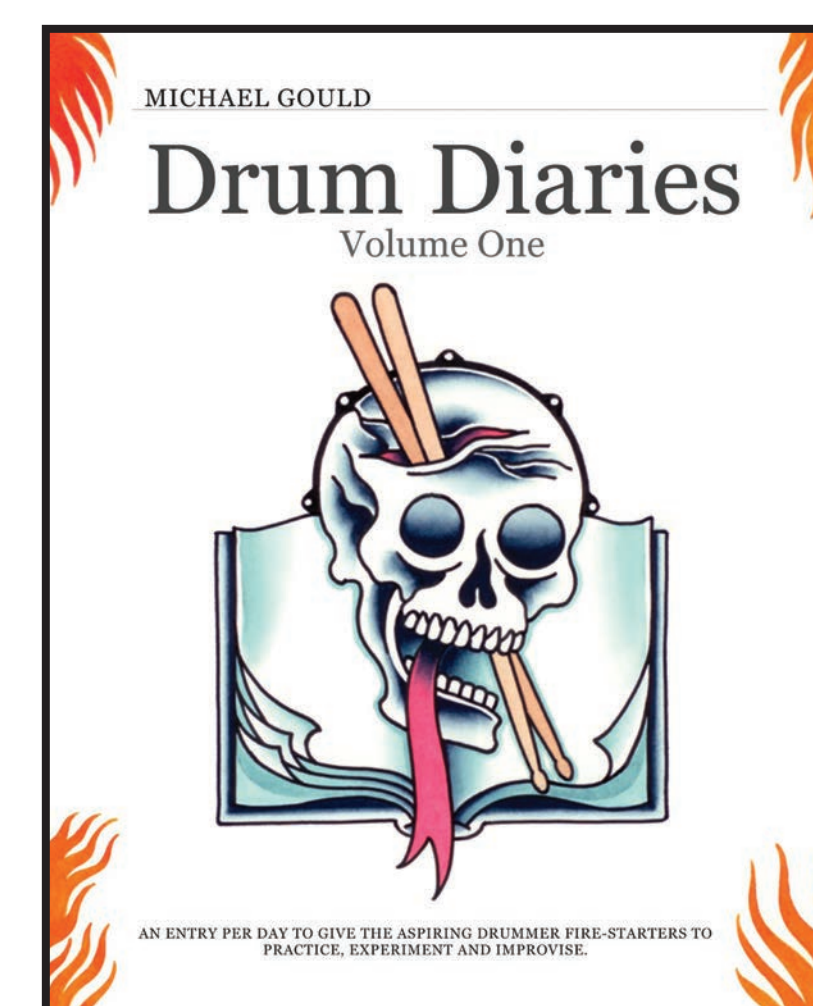
"The audio portion of the ebook is executed with the utmost attention to detail; I cannot find a single mistake in the recordings, and I have been listening hard."

"The complete integration of enriched media content in the iBook format...puts the history of our instrument at our fingertips."

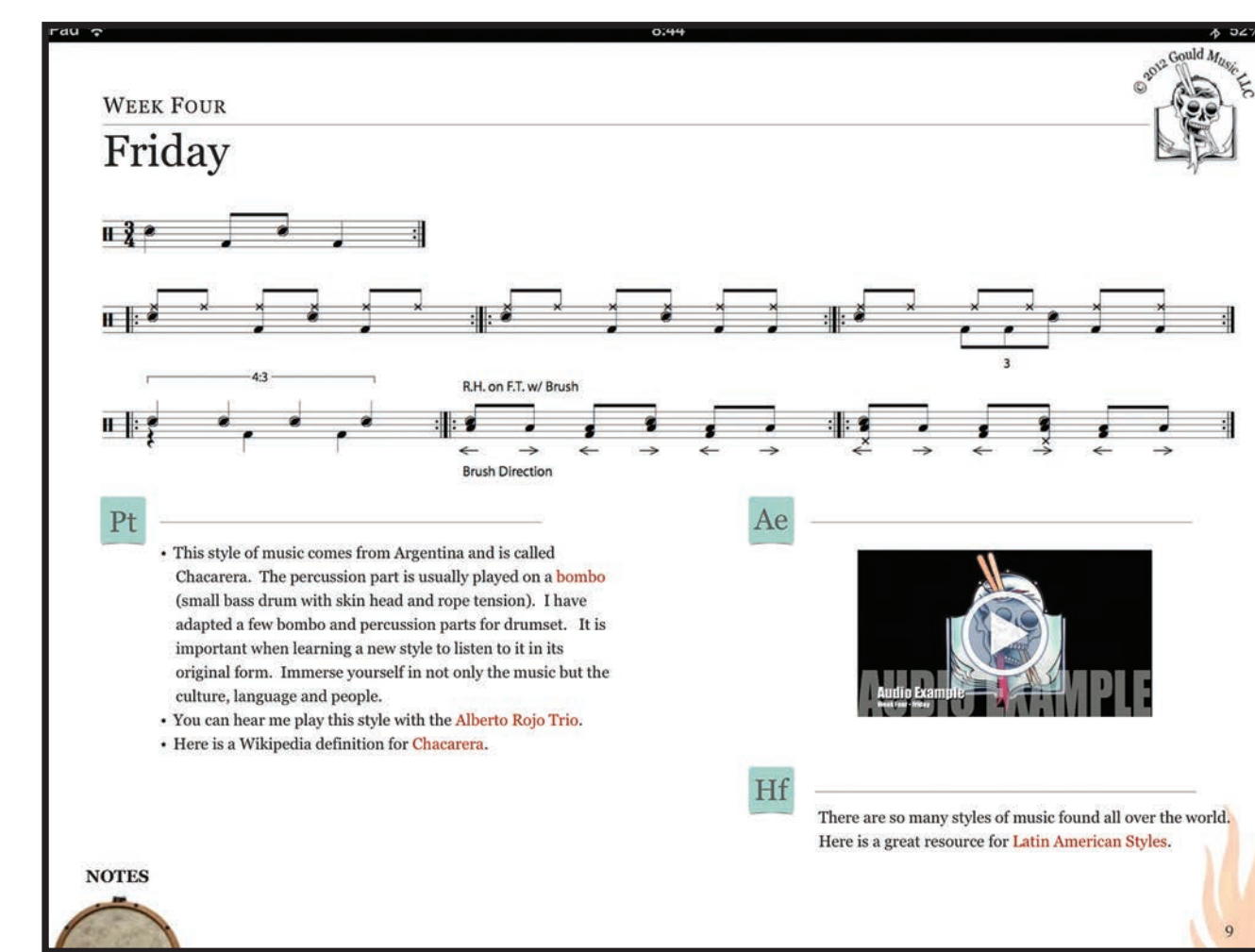
"The curriculum of Drum Diaries provides a new and different challenge each day, with the goal of kick-starting one's own creative process."

"Scheduling each lesson for a particular day of the week is a useful organizational tool for the many musicians... who have trouble figuring how to pace themselves."

Examples of Teaching Innovation



Available through the iTunes and iBooks stores, this method ebook provides a snippet of musical information to "fire-start" daily practice sessions and encourage mastery, exploration, and improvisation.



Each diary entry includes exact notation of material demonstrated in an accompanying audio or video file, along with hyperlinks to historical and technical references.



A learning environment that previously required a stack of albums or CDs, a playback device, and a viewing screen can now be created with just an iPad.