

Instructor Spotlight

Creating the next generation of musicians.



Jimmy Bennington
Center Chicago, IL, #334
Instructor for Drums

Jimmy Bennington is from our store in Chicago, IL. He has been with the Guitar Center (Halstead location) since they began offering their Lessons Program in earnest October 2017. He has several students that he looks forward to seeing each week, and is amazed at their development. "And I'm the low guy on the totem pole!" Bennington says as a nod of respect to his fellow instructors. "I admire every one of them."

As part of his 27 year (to date) journey in the music field, Bennington proudly served as drum tech and band manager to legendary drummer Elvin Jones. The late Coltrane drummer took Bennington under his wing during the final decade of his life (see Modern Drummer Magazine). Since then, Bennington has been a performing and recording artist in his own right, appearing as a sideman or a leader, in many parts of the world with some of the best names in Jazz: Julian Priester, Ed Schuller, Perry Robinson, Bert Wilson, and Steve Cohn to name a few. His latest recording, 'Exotic Coda', was featured in Down Beat Magazine's 'Best Albums of the Year'.

Bennington has several recordings due out in 2018 on the CIMP (New York) and SLAM (London) Record labels. He was featured on a recent recording by pianist David Haney, Stix and Stones, alongside drum greats Bernard Purdie and Han Bennink. Bennington was also included in the only book published on the legendary pianist Herbie Nichols, 'A Jazzists Life' by Mark Miller. His 'Oral History' interviews, are published regularly in Cadence Magazine that feature artists Jimmy feels are deserving of greater recognition. "Their stories are often never heard and need to be told."

How did you get into music education?

Early on in my career, I started accepting requests, mostly from other drummers, asking me if they could come by for a lesson. I tried my best to impart the little I knew...I didn't even take any money at first, but they insisted. It just grew into always having a few students on the side as a way to earn money and do something I love at the same time. It's a legacy thing; I've done everything from one on one lessons to group lessons, family lessons, and lecturing at a few fine Universities... I am more excited than ever about my recent position at the Guitar Center. The whole crew is great, from top to bottom, and whatever teaching and learning abilities I possess, I think will come to full flower here.

What would you name the autobiography of your life?

"From the Wrong Side of the Tracks"

Along with yourself, what three musicians are in your all-star band (Living or dead)?

My group, Colour and Sound, has at least six great artists (at one time or another): Fred Jackson Jr. (AACM), Artie Black, Dustin Laurenzi, and Ben Schmidt-Swartz on saxophones, Mike Harmon and Davi Priest on bass. We've been together some years now, and I think they are all great players and composers. I would bring out John Coltrane, Thelonious Monk, and others too numerous to mention, just to listen to and watch play, to be with them, if only for a moment. Three ain't enough!

What is the best instruction tip in your arsenal? For advanced or beginning students.

For a student of music at any level, my biggest advice I think is, "Let's keep it fun...let's keep it magical."

What is your personal motto?

Ever since I first began playing in bands, when my band mates and I would discuss what we were each trying to do in music, I always said that I wanted to play something 'cool' on the drums. I couldn't articulate what I meant by that then, but I now know it to mean something creative, something musical, something lasting...with 27 years in the field at the time of this writing, I still say "I want to play something 'cool' on the drums."

