

Transcribing The Greats

By Joe Bergamini

I was thoroughly excited when Mover contacted me to contribute to this special issue. I've been a Mover fan since I followed him with GTR and Joe Satriani, and then was blown away to find we shared some work in common, both having played briefly with Happy The Man. So, Mover, it's an honor, my friend! Like so many drummers, I worship John Bonham and Jeff Porcaro, and have spent countless hours listening to them for pure enjoyment, and studying them in detail in the hopes of improving my playing. These two guys are very much worth this careful study.

Over the years I've done a lot of transcribing and have been fortunate enough to have a lot of it published. In 2002, *Modern Drummer* contacted me to write a transcription book for them that featured one chart each from some of the most popular players of the day, which included (in addition to Porcaro and Bonham) Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Smith and others. To say I had to rise to the occasion would be a vast understatement, but I gave it my best shot, and in retrospect, I think I got a lot of it right. Transcribing is funny like that: I can go back to a transcription years later and hear notes I didn't realize were there. I've noticed that with many of the greats, what you are able to hear is based upon your own paradigm of understanding the drums. If Vinnie is playing a polyrhythm that you don't understand, then there's a small chance you're going to be able hear or write it out correctly. So in that respect, I think transcribing is a tremendous learning tool and I recommend it heartily to all serious students.

I do a lot of work subbing on Broadway shows and transcribing skills come in very handy on gigs like this. Most recently I learned the drum book for the hit show *Hamilton*, and the drummer, world-class musician (and close friend) Andres Forero plays lots of great parts that aren't written out. My approach is to transcribe a lot of this material in order to make the orchestra comfortable when I come in to play. And of course you become a better reader by transcribing, so there's a definite professional benefit to spending some time on it.

What I would like to share with you are two transcriptions taken from my book *MD Classic Tracks*: Toto's "Rosanna" and Led Zeppelin's "Out On The Tiles."

John Bonham – "Out On The Tiles"

To me, if you had to choose only one rock drummer to study, it would be John Bonham. I feel that he defines modern rock playing more than any other player. I had the pleasure of doing a full book of Led Zeppelin transcriptions for Alfred Music, but this one comes from *MD Classic Tracks*.

If there is one drumming legend whose playing is most misunderstood, it is probably John Bonham. Did he define modern rock drumming? Yes. Could the man play hard and loud? Yes. But what many rock drummers don't really appreciate is the *swing* that was present in everything he played. Coming from a jazz and R&B background, Bonham's swagger is the element of his playing that is hardest to duplicate. As with so many of the great players, it is crucially important to listen not only to what he chose to play, but how he played it. A great example is the measure of snare

drum 16th-notes he plays to bring the band in after the long vocal fermata in "Whole Lotta Love." There's a ton of New Orleans swagger in that seemingly-simple measure, but if you don't know where he got it, you won't be able to hear—or duplicate—it! So be sure to go back and check out some of Bonham's influences, including classic blues, soul, early rock and New Orleans drummers like Zigaboo Modeliste.

"Out On The Tiles" isn't one of Led Zeppelin's biggest hits, but it contains a classic drum part. First and foremost, check out the ambient, almost jazzy drum sound—often imitated, never duplicated. Next, take a hard listen to the main groove and notice the slight inflections of swing. It would be impossible to put this on paper exactly as it truly sounds. The song also contains many of Bonzo's signature concepts, like the fast, single-foot doubles, kick-snare interplay, exciting fills (sometimes with bass drum underneath) and effortless navigation of the odd-time sections.

Jeff Porcaro – "Rosanna"

Jeff Porcaro was one of the most recorded drummers in history, thanks to the depth of passion and groove that came out of every note he played. He defined the L.A. studio musician—the master of groove; a consummate pro who could play anything. A lot of people don't realize that Jeff had monster chops, but he kept them under wraps much of the time in service of the music. I believe that study of Jeff begins with his first love, his band Toto, so of course I chose a classic Toto track for my book, but his recorded work is so vast and broad that to really understand him, you need to listen to as much of that as possible as well.

"Rosanna" is an obvious choice for studying Jeff, because it's one of the most iconic drum grooves in history. I corrected several mistakes in this version from the original book. When I started transcribing this song, I had been watching Jeff's instructional video (which I highly recommend) and the video concert *Toto Live in Paris*. On both of these videos Jeff plays the "Rosanna" groove with all the inner-triplet notes ghosted, so that's how I wrote it out at first, thinking that's how he played it (and that you just couldn't hear all the notes on the recording). On further study, it's clear that Jeff did NOT play all the ghost notes during the Intro (except for the last one of the bar), so I fixed that for this version. I left all the other ones in, based on having seen him play the song on video, but you may hear it differently. This is where transcribing becomes an art and a science.

"Rosanna" is a half-time shuffle, which means the backbeat comes on beat 3 of each measure. The most difficult thing about this groove is the correct placement and volume of the ghost notes on the snare drum. These notes (in parentheses) should be played about a half inch off the surface of the snare, so softly, that they mix in with and resemble the sound of the hi-hat. It will take practice to achieve the correct effect. Listen to the recording of this song and notice the wide difference in volume between the backbeat (one of the loudest things in the mix) and the ghost notes (barely audible). The bass drum plays several variations against this throughout the tune.

"Out On The Tiles"

Transcription: Joe Bergamini

Drummer: John Bonham

Artist: Led Zeppelin

Disc: *Led Zeppelin III*

♩ = 94

f

4

7

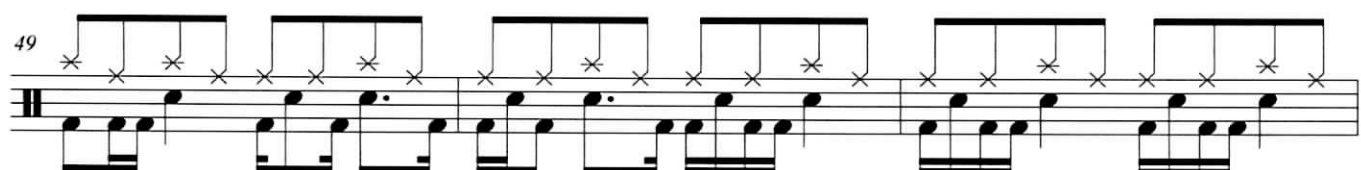
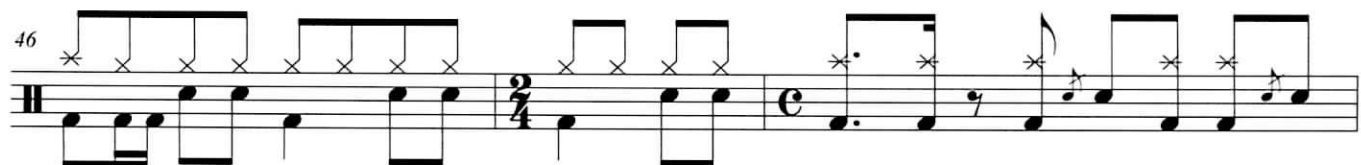
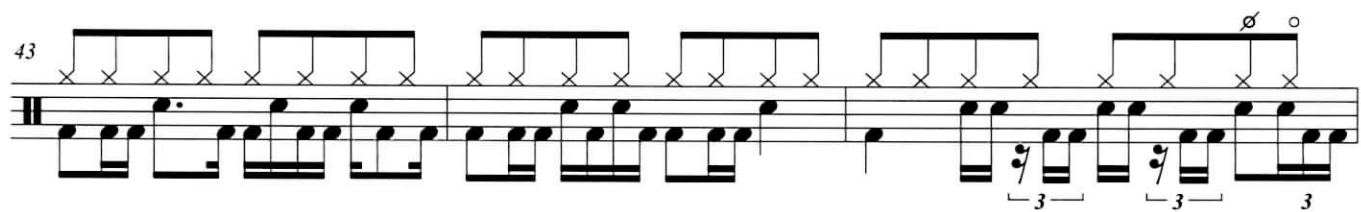
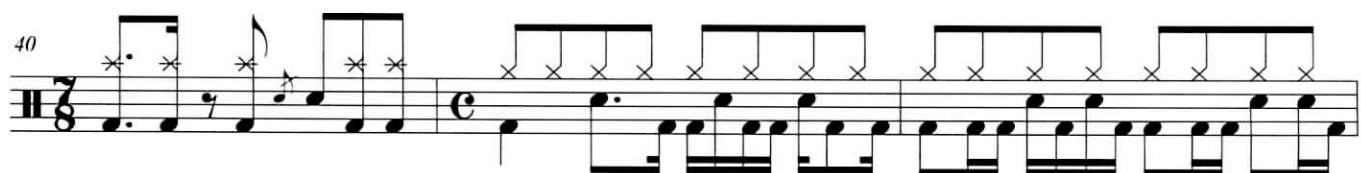
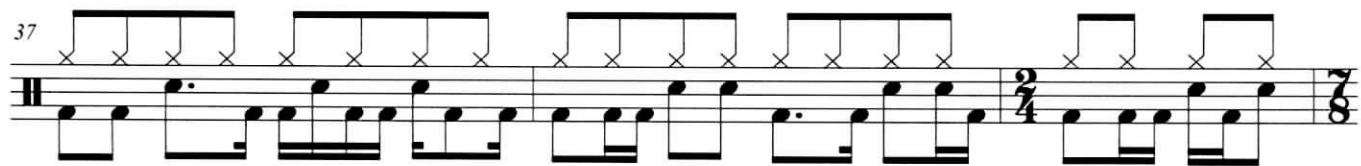
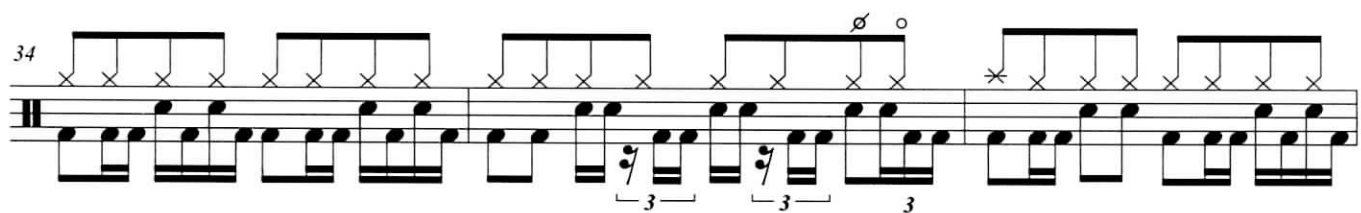
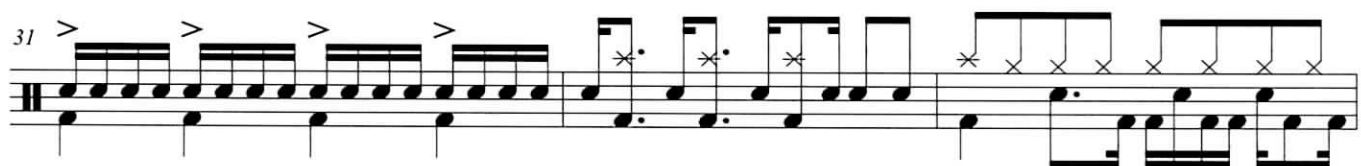
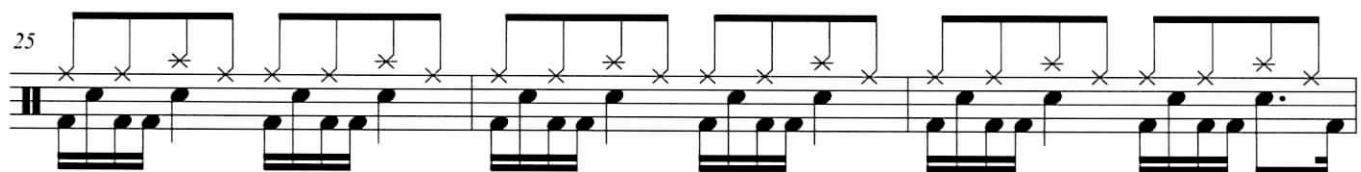
10

13

16

19

22



52

55

58

61

64

L.F. Hi-hat continues simile

67

70

73

76

"Rosanna"

Transcription: Joe Bergamini

Drummer: Jeff Porcaro

Artist: Toto

Disc: *Toto IV*

3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

mf Band enters

4 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

10 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

13 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

16 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

19 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 1 3 3 > 3 3

22 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 > 3 3

The transcription shows a continuous 3/4 groove. The first staff starts with a common time signature 'C' and a *mf* dynamic marking. The second staff begins with a measure rest for 4 measures. The notation consists of eighth notes in groups of three (triplets) with accents (>) on the first note of each triplet. Some measures include a double bar line with repeat dots. The piece concludes with a final triplet in the last staff.

25 *3 3 > 3 3 3 3 > >* *2 3 3 > 3 3*

28 *3 3* *pp*

32

38 *> > 3 > > 3 > > 3 > > 3 > > 3 > > 3 > >* *ff*

42 *> 3 > 3 3 3 3 > 3 3 3 3 > 3 3* *f*

45 *3 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3*

48 *3 3 > 3 3 3 3 > 3 3 > 3 3 > 3 3*

51 *3 3 > 3 3 3 3 > 3 3 > 3 3 > 3 3 > 3 3*

54 *3 > 3 3 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 > 3 >*

58 *mf*

61

64

67

70

73 *p*

77 *p*

83 *ff*

88 *f*

91

94

97

Keyboard Solo

101

104

107

110

113

Guitar Solo

116

119

122

125

p

130

ff

135

138

f

141

144

147

150

153

156

159

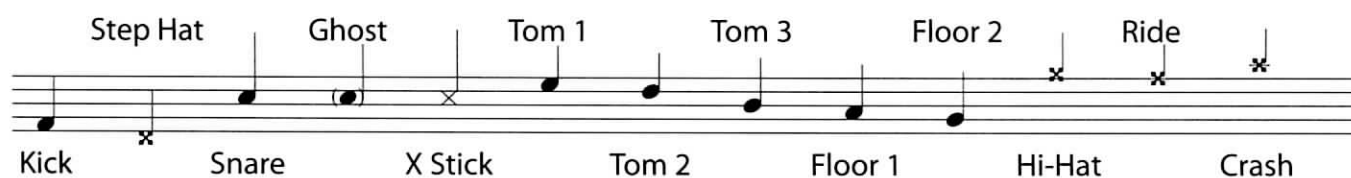
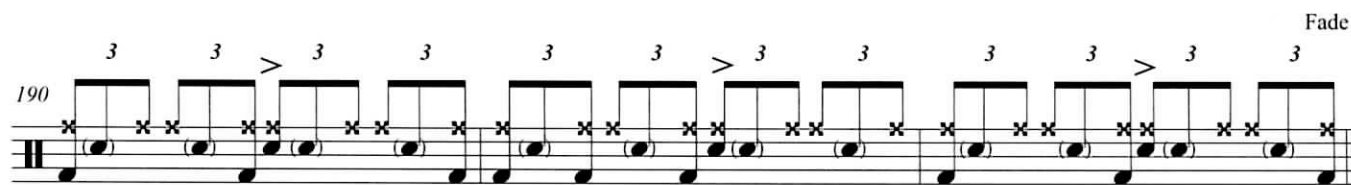
162

Piano Solo
166

169

172

Guitar Solo
175



Joe Bergamini is a drummer, educator, author, editor and consultant based in New Jersey. He has played at over a dozen major Broadway shows, is the Senior Drum Editor for Hudson Music, and directs the Sabian Education Network. He invites all drum teachers to visit sabian.com/joinsen to sign up for the program. He can be reached for all other inquiries at his website: joebergamini.com.

If you are interested in more of Joe's transcriptions, please check out his books *Neil Peart: Taking Center Stage* (Hudson Music), *MD Classic Tracks* (Modern Drummer Publication), and *Drum Techniques of Led Zeppelin* (Alfred).