



Dad Does Drums

Story and photos by Rick Ackerman

Jay "Pops" Shealy with sons Grey (l) and Josh(r) in their percussion studio. They built it themselves, except for the plumbing and electric which they subbed out. A former music major, now a business manager, Jay's kit includes 11 drums and nine cymbals. When they aren't drumming, the family enjoys motocycling. Each member has his own bike. Mom, wearing a helmet, usually rides behind Jay, "To keep her hair from blowing around," according to Grey.

Behind a tree-shaded ranch house on a quiet residential street in Sumter, S.C. sits an ordinary-looking, two-story garage-like structure. But ordinary ends at the front door: inside you'll find Jay Shealy's percussion studio, replete with three elaborate drum kits, marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, electric keyboard and a wall of guitars. Jay built the studio so he and his sons, Grey and Josh, would have a place that would hold all their instruments, provide a place to teach, and jam together. At 1200 square feet, the studio is completely sound-proofed and even includes a bathroom. The only window is on the second floor, where Jay's wife, Vickie, has her crafts studio. She used to play flute in high school, but doesn't play anymore. Her men would love for her to take up the drums but she says "I'm just glad to get all the instruments out of my house", where they had totally overrun the dining room. "I just don't have the rhythm," she explains.

Jay (affectionately called "Pops" by his sons) has been "infatuated with drums

since the 5th grade", playing in his high school band and majoring in music with the University of South Carolina marching band. Switching his major to business in his junior year didn't dampen his enthusiasm for drumming. When he isn't working at his real job as a chemical products manager for Giant Resource Recovery, Jay serves as the music director for the First Baptist Church, gives a few drum lessons, practices with the church group and enjoys jamming with his boys. He has played in several off-Broadway musicals, but the closest he ever got to playing with "anyone of note", as he puts it, was when Bachman-Turner Overdrive came through Columbia. "I didn't get to play," he says a bit wistfully, "but I got up on stage behind Bobby Bachman's drums."

The Shealy percussion tradition will continue--both boys teach percussion. Grey is a senior music major at USC hoping for a career playing professionally. Josh is also at USC where he majors in civil engineering and aspires to a career building music venues.



Jay Shealy enjoys playing percussion, especially with his two sons. He confesses to being hooked on drumming since the fifth grade. He estimates that between practicing with his church group and jamming with his sons, and the teaching that all three do, their studio is in use at least every other day. He spends a lot of his free time planning the "human Christmas tree" celebration at the Sumter First Baptist Church--an all-year project!



Grey sports a t-shirt given to him by his favorite student. He enjoys teaching and plans to pursue a career in music. "Landing a job playing for a professional company like a show band or orchestra would be awesome," he says.



Completed in August 2007, it took a year to plan and seven months to build the Shealy's percussion studio. Mom Vickie Shealy's crafts studio occupies the entire second floor.



Grey (seen here playing with the USC Palmetto Pans Caribbean Band) began his musical training with piano lessons in the second grade, then he took up guitar. The desire to play in his high school marching band motivated Grey to become a drummer. His current kit consists of 13 drums and nine cymbals.



Josh was inspired by his Dad to learn to play percussion. He started by taking Jay's drums to his room and playing along with the likes of Def Leppard and continued his early training by playing in high school band programs. After a year at Clemson, Josh transferred to USC where he belongs to the USC Marching Band drum line. His current kit consists of eight drums and seven cymbals.