



## *Buddy Rich*

(September 30, 1917 – April 2, 1987)

With the exception of [Chick Webb](#), few had the endurance, style, speed and agility that Buddy Rich displayed when he hit those drums. When other drummers gave a band just a beat, Buddy gave it life. His beats were crisp clear hits that when I listened, you could picture those beats not being in a nice suit, but a sharp tuxedo. Buddy took charge and lead, which to me seemed hard being a drummer. He made it look easy by leading with the drums and his band followed. Even though when you heard those sounds playing in unison, there was no doubt who was in charge.



I first saw Buddy on television and then began to check out some of his music. No doubt it had a brightness, roughness, and a swing that if your foot was not padding, it better have a cast on it, even then it should still be trying. Of course Buddy did not start out with his own band, he started out with the great bands of the era ([Tommy Dorsey](#) (1939–1942, 1945, 1954–1955), Rich also played with [Benny Carter](#) (1942), [Harry James](#) (1953–1956–1962, 1964, 1965), [Les Brown](#) and [Charlie Ventura](#)). His flexibility was notable when he done

sessions for the late-career comeback recordings of [Ella Fitzgerald](#) and [Louis Armstrong](#), on which he worked with pianist [Oscar Peterson](#) and his famous trio featuring bassist [Ray Brown](#) and guitarist [Herb Ellis](#).

As with many other musicians whom paid their dues, Buddy's break out can in many solo sessions and the techniques he developed that many musicians use to this very day. One popular style in his solos was to



start out soft and quite, then start a long crescendo building up rhythms and patterns towards and explosive end. This is probably his most famous style and many have made their own mark reproducing it no matter on strings, horns, or drums.



Buddy's drive was the push towards perfection that many feel during a concert or session. This drive was part of Buddy's character. The formula Buddy Rich's drive plus Maynard Ferguson's octave scaling brightness equals excitement and greatness in a sound few will forget. Even though Buddy was not playing in this piece ([Pick Up The Pieces](#)), it demonstrates how his style worked during a cut. Despite his popularity in music, his other popularity was a temper. He could roar with the best of them. I guess you have to be that way when you are trying to get the best out of people. We are naturally a lazy species and if it does not

provide us shelter or warms our bellies, we wonder what is the use. People who push the envelope like Buddy are just trying to show other ways in the shelter and belly routine. Many who do the pushing I believe takes a toll on them. Some can endure it better than others, but the pressure is always there to produce. Without that pressure, many never see their greatness. When they do, many times they come to the realization it was not them. They dedicate the credit towards an associate, friend, love one, college, or predecessor.

*Bill Sommerville*