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## Bang on the drums all day

Jim marches to the beat of his own drum, even if that beat's a little off rhythm.

BY JIM WALKER

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The Go-Gos, of course, got the beat. For me, it's not so easy. I'm a terrible dancer and I struggle to clap in time with others in situations that require clapping in time with others.

While some people are perfectly happy not being good at things, I tend to analyze why I suck and then write about it at length in the introduction to an adventure story for INTake.

Hey, that's what I'm doing right now!

Anyway, the thing I'm no good at this week is drumming. And I think I've figured out why.

Like dancing, drumming requires -- or at least asks -- that the drummer let go of the part of the mind that spends too much time over thinking everything. Instead, it's about physically connecting with the beat.

Drummers, like dancers, can't be concerned with how they look while they drum. And they can't worry, the whole time, about screwing up. They have to take risks. They can't be timid.

From what I've observed, drummers have to let go and ride the wild wave of music.

While I still have work to do in the letting go department, I felt a little of this sensation while participating in a high-energy drum circle at Bongo Boy Music School in Castleton.

### LITTLE DRUMMER BOY

When I first talked with Brian Fields -- an instructor who led the circle the night I visited -- he seemed like a pretty regular guy. But, a few minutes later -- with drum in hand and the beat pounding around him -- Fields transformed into a musical wild man.

He danced and clapped and pointed while conducting our circle of drummers, which was comprised of people of all ages and backgrounds.

On this night, drummers ranged from tiny kids to retired folks. Some were regulars, others -- like me -- were non-drummers or new drummers who had never tried something like this.

A couple of young boys hopped up and pounded on upright drums in the middle of the circle. Others switched from one percussion instrument to another, maybe moving from slapping a big conga to rattling a colorful shaker.

Some members of the circle stuck with the deep thump led by bass drums scattered around the circle. Others went their own ways, creating sounds that rose above the din of 30-plus people pounding.



**Beat-nik: Bongo Boy Music, Inc. Owner/Operator Ed Gaus gets into the groove tapping out a rhythm on a bass drum during one of the store's weekly drum circles, which are said to be therapeutic. -- Tom Klubens / For INTake**

### JOIN THE CIRCLE

- **Where:** Bongo Boy Music School, 8481 Bash St. Suite 1100.
- **When:** 7:15 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays.
- **Cost:** Free.
- **Info:** (317) 595-9076; [bongoboymusic.com](http://bongoboymusic.com). A variety of instruments donated by the Remo drum company are available for people to try. Or drummers are welcome to bring their own. People interested in a hand-drum lesson prior to the circle can work with instructor Helger Oomkes from 6 to 7 p.m. for \$10.

As I sat stiff in my metal folding chair tapping the top of the African-style djembe drum I chose, I tried to imagine what it would be like to be as free as Fields and some of the other drummers around me who used their whole bodies to make their own versions of the beat.

### **IN THE MIX**

As the hour progressed, we followed Fields' lead, speeding up and slowing down the beat. We switched off from one section of the circle to another like a choir. And then Fields began pointing to individual drummers in the circle to play little solos while some people clapped along with the driving bass beat.

While I was gradually getting more and more comfortable, I was feeling way too shy for a solo.

So, after noticing that Fields would make eye contact with the next soloist to let him or her know it was their turn, I attempted to blur my eyes and stare off at some drum on the floor -- thus avoiding his attention.

That didn't work.

So, when he raised his eyebrows to see if I could do it, I pointed to the two other people sitting next to me, asking if we could be a trio.

He nodded and then pointed to the three of us. With Immanuel-Keston Jones -- who is great at playing the glass drum he made himself -- and relative newcomer Mary Schnellbacher playing along, too, I enjoyed sharing a little part of the spotlight. But I still felt relieved to be back in the massive mix a few moments later.

As the hour came to a close, I noticed that my hands were hurting a little. As time had passed, I had become more forceful, freer with my pounding.

I was feeling really good as the rhythm rattled through my hands and into my body. Drum circles are considered mentally therapeutic and physically healthy. I was feeling that.

Yeah, I got the beat.

And I'll be back for more.