

# Lot Patrol



## FRED EMORY SMITH

FRED EMORY SMITH STARTED PLAYING THE PIANO AT THE AGE OF FOUR. BY THE AGE OF EIGHT HE STARTED COMPOSING FOR THE PIANO AND COMPETED IN THE NATIONAL YAMAHA PIANO COMPETITION "I CAN COMPOSE, TOO!" WINNING FIRST PLACE WITH THE SONG "FREDDIE'S BLUES" IN 1993. BETWEEN 1994-1997, FRED WAS A MEMBER OF THE PHOENIX BOYS CHOIR UNDER THE DIRECTION OF HARVEY K. SMITH.

DURING HIGH SCHOOL, FRED PERFORMED WITH THE CORONA DEL SOL MARCHING BAND, STEEL BAND AND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE. HE WAS ALSO THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL PERCUSSIONIST FOR THE PHOENIX YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. DURING THIS TIME FRED ENTERED THE "YOUNG MUSICIANS COMPETITION 2002", RECEIVING FIRST PLACE FOR A MARIMBA CONCERTO, EARNING THE "CLOTILDE OTRANTO" AWARD. HE PERFORMED THIS MARIMBA CONCERTO WITH THE PHOENIX SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. HIS DRUM CORPS EXPERIENCE INCLUDED PLAYING SNARE WITH THE ARIZONA ACADEMY IN 2001, SANTA CLARA VANGUARD CADETS IN 2002, AND THE SANTA CLARA VANGUARD IN 2003-2005.

HE NOW ATTENDS THE BERKLEE COLLEGE OF MUSIC, STUDYING FILM SCORING AND MUSIC BUSINESS. HE COMPOSES FOR ORCHESTRA, STRING QUARTETS, CHORAL, JAZZ, ROCK, AND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLES. HE IS ALSO A STUDIO DRUMMER FOR MANY BERKLEE ENSEMBLES. RECENTLY, FRED WROTE AN INDOOR DRUMLINE SHOW THAT HAS BEEN PUBLISHED BY KEY POULAN MUSIC. PAST INSTRUCTORS AND TEACHERS INCLUDE: JIM CASELLA, MURRAY GUSSECK, DUSTIN SCHLETZER, JIM RAGSDALE, JONATHAN STEELE, GLEN CROSBY, ROBERT CHAVIRA, RALPH HARDIMON, LARRY FINN, JACKIE SANTOS, DOM MOJO, J.B. SMITH, JOSH GOTTRY, SCOTT WERNER, CHRIS EVANS, MARK SUNKETT, DWIGHT BREWER, ARMAND QUILLINTINE, BOB KAUFMAN, BOB TAMAGNI, AND DON McDONNELL.

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### What caused such an early interest in the piano?

*My mother started me on the piano when I was four and have been at it ever sense. Although in recent years I have been more focused on percussion and composition than anything else.*

### Practicing/Rehearsing: Is it/was it something that was fun for you so you just kept doing it or was is something you felt driven to do?

*I remember when I was a kid, my mother would make me practice the piano everyday or I wouldn't be able to play outside. I hated it then, but now I thank her for it. But later on, when I started to really pick up music that's all I wanted to do, I had no other ambition that was as strong as this. I really felt a bit of both to your question. Sometimes I feel very inspired to practice other times I have to remind myself that I love doing this. Either way I always take one day out of the week to relax, go see a movie and not think about practicing. I find that it keeps my sanity if I do it this way.*

Was it a goal to always excel in music or was it something that just "happened?"

*Earlier on I think it was more of a hobby, but during jr. high and high school I really started to expand my abilities and wanted to learn more and more. During that time I figured out that this was something that I really wanted to do and I'm still fighting the good fight!*

**VD Contest:** Was the outcome a little slanted because of your experience with Gussek through Vanguard?

*Oh yes!! Murray and I are splitting the winnings. Actually I think there were nine judges that had no idea of who was who. So I think everything was legit.*

There was a lot of controversy when SCV decided to play match grip in 2005. Having been part of it what's your opinion?

*It was about time!!!! I loved it. It was kind of funny being on tour and the only two questions that I got from people was "how do you like the match grip thing?" or my personal favorite "Why did you switch, I think it looks stupid!"*

*I feel that drumming is drumming no matter how you slice it. If it was up to how good it looks than you are missing the point of music entirely! People often ask why I drum the way I do (after they ask me the whole match grip question), and I tell them that I drum how I would drum if I sat in front of the kit. I wouldn't change my approach just because the head of a snare drum is cranked ungodly high. To me that makes no sense.*

So you have the same technique throughout the various stick instruments? Snare, set, etc.? Grip and stroke/stick movement are always constant?

*Pretty much, it's all natural. Surfaces may change but finesse stays the same. I have found that technique can be defined with two characteristics: timing and dynamics. Dynamics can encompass a range of motions anywhere from touch (finesse) to volume. I tend to keep things simple and rely on my own ears and feelings to judge how I play (or compose).*

You're a well-versed percussionist and musician, what is your favorite type of music to compose? To perform?

*I love writing for large orchestra. Orchestration is key. I love performing a lot of different styles of music. I love playing jazz music; recently I've been recording for a lot of rock/folk-rock groups. I also love performing orchestral music, mostly romantic/impressionistic and contemporary composers.*

Are there many, if any, similarities between arranging for an indoor percussion ensemble and a large orchestra?

*I believe that orchestration is a battle in which both fight pretty strait forward. Once ideas form into sketches, the next logical steps is to figure out how to make is sound great with the instruments you got. I'm not saying this is the only way to compose; it's just an example. Now putting notes on a stave is very easy to do, but to setting it to instruments with the right octave, tone, color, articulation is where the similarities shine. It is all to common to blow through this process and pretty much anyone can hear when it's not working, so I think that is by far the biggest similarity between the two.*

*I feel a great sense of awareness to instrumentation and fluidity of music when composing. I believe that everyone is responsible for each and every note that an individual performs and I have great respect for performers who demonstrate this ambition. Composing specifically for that particular instrument is a stepping-stone for performers to execute a great sense of musicianship.*

*I think one difference between indoor and orchestra is that, in my experience, I tend to think more visually with indoor than with an orchestra. Synesthesia is an exception, however, I believe that programming is an essential part to both compositional idioms. Many prolific composers never thought much of programmatic music, Brahms for one, but I love it.*

Regardless of what a person's musical goals are, is there an advantage to being multi-facted? Or should a person focus on a particular instrument or field and become great in that area?

*I'm learning that one of the only ways to stay on top of the music industry is to be extremely multi-faceted. I feel it is very important to understand as much as you can, but at the same time, when you are learning different things to not neglect the intricacies of your field of study. Meaning, take the time to learn something well, and not blow off a couple other things just for the sake of being multi-faceted.*

Through the various types of performances, instruments, compositions, etc., Is there anything, concerning technique or principal, that lends it to all music studies or at least what you have been involved in up to this point?

*Passion is by far the most influential emotion, in human nature, that you can bring to the music only if your heart and mind set are ready. Not far behind is the ability of relaxation. It can act as a stress test and a reliever. Relaxation helps me become focused, but more importantly, focused in the moment. To many times I'm worried of what I need to do next that I miss the now. Let the later come later and worry about it later.*

Would another situation where this would apply be, for example, 3rd bass shouldn't have an anxiety attack if he/she misses a note? A musician shouldn't have an overwhelming sense of defeat if they can't accomplish something immediately?

*Absolutely not. When performing you are in a position of entertainment, and as such, will hold a high standard of execution. I was suggesting that once your mind set focuses*

*on what's to come your importance to the now has greatly diminished. One of my favorite phrases that Murray Gusseck frequently uses to describe this exact issue is "passive awareness". I'll let you try and figure that one out.*

**Your "I Compose Too" composition: How has your creation process changed or your approach matured from "Freddie's Blues" to "Relativity" and "Billy Goat's Milk?"**

*I'll tell you something that has stayed the same, I always sing the parts. I feel that I am more of a melodic writer, in a sense that I tend to use my voice as a compositional tool to help guide me through the process.*

*Something that is changing with me is my understanding of all the nuisances for writing in a particular style, instrument, or voice. I feel that this is a necessity for understanding composition.*

**Depending on a person's particular experience and knowledge in music, most drums aren't considered melodic, singing also helps with marching percussion (a cadence, on-field, show music, what have you)?**

*You bet your bottom dollar. Sometimes we need to use our imaginations when dealing with a single pitched instrument but the process is flawless, in my humble opinion. I also use my hands to check myself, just to make sure it feels good to play.*

**Berklee College of Music – Film Scoring and Music Business  
Why Berklee?**

*My piano teacher back home in Arizona had went there and recommending that I look into it. I've heard of Berklee before and liked the fact that it is a contemporary school with lots of diverse fields to get into.*

**What, specifically, is included in film scoring/music business studies?**

*It's a dual major so I'm taking the long way out. Film scoring focuses on the dramatic application of composition to picture. We learn about the whole process of movies and understand their importance, we learn the equipment to synch music to film and learn various techniques of orchestration, and we also learn about music editing.*

*There are three tracks in the music business major at Berklee and I'm on the entrepreneurial track focusing on business start-ups. I feel that it is important to understand how to promote yourself as a musician.*

**After college what do you hope to do?**

*I'm planning on going to graduate school for film scoring or possibly composition. Not exactly sure where yet. I do have a pretty ambitious goal and that is to write for drum corps, I would like to write for both the horns and percussion.*

What would you like to achieve that you haven't so far?

*I would love to score a feature film. That would be a great achievement.*

Through your music career so far is there anyone or anything that has helped you greatly?

*I'm going to say my family. They have greatly supported me throughout my life. My dad taught me, at a very young age, to follow your dreams and work hard to get them.*

*I love talking with students who are passionate about music because it really stimulates great dialogue and you learn so much from one another. Being supportive is a great way to help achieve friendship in this field (I firmly believe in networking with other musicians, this can completely help your success). Also another thing that helps me is to completely get immersed into the scene, whether it's going to concerts, listening to cds, attending a clinic, or playing with a group of guys. This really gets you inspired.*

Would something as simple as OSU's drum pad club also serve this purpose of networking and possibly inspiring (as in does it necessarily matter who or what it is, so long as you enjoy it? - but also, does it have to be enjoyed [going back to: you sometimes have to remind yourself that you really enjoy doing this])?

*When the going gets tough...well, you know the rest. Practicing can sometimes be a hit or miss depending on who you are. I know I've had days where I thought I couldn't get there it or I just wasn't getting better. That's when this phrase comes to your attention and helps you get re-motivated.*

*Networking is a chance to meet people and hopefully to develop lifelong friendships with them. The drum club would be a great start to communicate with people that have similar interests with you.*

*Networking can be a fickle thing; I would like to think that your attitude should be the first and foremost characteristic of your intentions. Don't worry what things out of your control will happen to you, if anything worry about yourself and what you can control.*

**Past/Present Instructors:** Is there one who stands out? Who influenced you the most?

*My high school choir teacher really helped me find my passion for music. He really inspired me to really listen to what the music is saying and how I can channel that into my own understanding. Josh Gottry, private percussion instructor. He forced me to think of percussion with a more musical approach. I learned a lot about expression and quite honestly a good work ethic.*

Have there been any instructors you didn't particularly care for?

*I do try and get the most out of what anyone is teaching me. I may have differences*

*with others but I do listen and try to understand what they are saying.*

### **Do you feel it's important to "get along" with an instructor?**

*I feel that it is much more important to get inspired from that person. Love of music can create bonds with others that you thought you could never have. With that being said you don't need to try to "get along", the common bond will see through more clearly than you could ever ask for.*

### **For those who might have some friction between themselves and the instructor, how should the situation be handled?**

*Really ask yourself if this is a good environment to be in. What is the sole purpose for both you and your instructor? If the answer is not for the passion of music, than you have so explaining to do. Does he/she inspire you?*

*I understand that in high school, you can't just walk away from your teacher, so try and have a positive outlook. Always leave your ego at the door and try to remember that you don't know it all. I've had instructors that yell, kick, and scream to get you to understand things and the best advice I can give in that situation is to get to the core of what they are trying to say and block everything else out. I would imagine that you would feel much better and come out more knowledgeable than before.*

### **Influence/Ideas for "Billy Goat's Milk"**

#### **How long did it take to compose?**

*I've worked on it here and there for about a total of three weeks.*

#### **Was it written for the sole purpose of the contest?**

*Actually no, I started to write it as the warm-up for the Vanguard drumline's '05 season, but it ended up not working. Then for this contest I started to revise it and polish it up.*

#### **Do you ever write for the sole purpose of (hopefully) being published? Or are things written for a specific performance and then become published?**

*I wrote "Relativity" for Key Poulan publishing company and I'm going to be doing some arrangements of his marching band pieces for indoor marching percussion. But I also do things out of my own pleasure, but that is getting harder and harder to do sense I would like to be a composer for my career.*

#### **Is it difficult or are you concerned with the level of difficulty of a composition (when not being written with a specific ensemble in mind) when you're creating it? Concerned that others may or may not be**

able to play it?

*That was something that I have been trying to figure out for a long time. How do you know something is going to be playable or is this going to be too easy? I do try and accommodate both aspects of this question and help give a variety to the performer for technical practice as well as just some fun, cool stuff to play.*

Is it wise or have you considered writing the same piece at various talent levels, keeping the overall integrity the same, so that those who might not be as advanced can also enjoy?

*You know I haven't thought of revising for different talent levels. I guess I'd have to give it some thought. I'm very busy and I don't think it would be wise considering I'm trying to balance composing and school.*

For "Billy Goat's Milk" there is an optional cymbal part. How do you feel about a cymbal line being on the field? Is it necessary? If so, why is the cymbal part optional? Shouldn't things be written so that every section is important?

*I made it optional just in case a school did or did not have a cymbal line. I love the idea of a cymbal line. It adds so much to the overall piece, everything from the big impacts to the very light and delicate moments.*

Sheet music and CD's always seem to fall into the same dispute of consumers claiming the product is over priced and the artists stating they're being justly compensated for their music. "Billy Goat's Milk" is \$5, is having a reasonable price so all can enjoy something you worry about?

*I'm definitely not at all worried about five bucks. As for Tapspace, I consider it much more of an honor more than anything else. They have been great to work with and are putting out great stuff from their catalogue.*

## **A breakdown of "Relativity"**

**Clip 1** – Relativity begins as an arrangement very much about the front ensemble. The battery comes in with little clips to spice it up. How do you ensure that when the drumline comes in the pit isn't over powered or that the drums don't take away from what's being created by the pit (from an arrangement standpoint)? Is this especially difficult when applying this physically (in rehearsal, outside of virtual drumline)?

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity\\_clip1.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity_clip1.mp3)

*In this section, I came up with the front ensemble parts long before the battery entered my mind. With the marimbas playing an ostinato and the vibes with the melody, it was very interesting to see how the battery shaped this whole section into a more flowing rhythmic idea than an accompaniment to the pit. During this point in the show when the melody is introduced, it really does take a while for it to sink in and that's where I think the battery comes to help give much more color, shape, and really sense of weight to the music. A constant acceleration of motion is the ultimate goal to this piece.*

*I haven't seen the drill that the high school is doing yet so I'm not sure how they will tie it with the music.*

**Clip 2/Krackus** – Having marched SCV and having played Krackus on more than just a few occasions, the similarity between Relativity and Krackus (in the clips), is that just coincidence or is there more to it than that?

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity\\_clip2.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity_clip2.mp3)

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/krackus\\_audio\\_clip.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/krackus_audio_clip.mp3)

*Well first off let me say, I love Krackus and it was such a blast playing it. But I didn't have that tune in my head when I was writing for Relativity. Although, I did learn a lot from Murray, as well as Jim, from a composition stand point (as well as many other things). I tried really hard to understand where they were coming from and how they did certain things, very well I might add, that enhanced the musicality of a piece or a transition, etc. Those kinds of things I tried to really pay attention to.*

**Clip 3** – Probably the grooviest part of the piece. Again the pit is really carrying it here. What makes it great is the battery unison (1 & a e& a ?). How do you work to find the perfect blend of technicality and musicality? Blending the ideas of the melody and what a drumliner might find to be a "pretty sweet lick?"

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity\\_clip3.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity_clip3.mp3)

*This was a lot of fun to work on. The first thing I did was set my synth to a loop and jammed out for an hour. I sat down, pressed play, and sang whatever rhythm that came to my head. Then I just transferred what I did with my voice and put some sticks in my hands. I think this process fused musicality and the technical aspect very well.*

*When I was at Arizona State for a semester, my private teacher told me how to solo as a musician and not as a drummer. He said, "You need to solo how a trumpet player or a sax player would, no more of this rad-a-tat-tat business." Needless to say this completely changed my life as a performer and as a composer.*

**Clip 4** – Though blended together seamlessly the two segments of this clip are very different comparatively. When you have to opposites



(first half – last half of clip) when do you decide to merge the two together instead of completely making them two separate items (ending at the first half of the clip, then beginning a new part of the show)? With what feels like two very different emotions being conveyed does the title Relativity apply here? What is the ultimate goal of such a dramatic change?

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity\\_clip4.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity_clip4.mp3)

*Starting off I knew that I wanted to have no breaks in this piece. So I tried to find ways to elude to stopping points but really there wouldn't be any. This piece is referenced to Einstein's theory of relativity, and this section is the start of time dilation as (it) enters a black hole. This is a transformation of music through science. The music has not passed the point of no return just yet, so I made one final reference in this new section with the ostinato pattern in the beginning of the piece, played by the marimbas (which happens later on in this section). This show is a process of change and transformation.*

**Clip 5** – See clip 4

Listen: [http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity\\_clip5.mp3](http://lotpatrol.com/lp/interview/fsmith/Relativity_clip5.mp3)

*This particular section is a complete departure from the rest of the show, and this is the very essence of reaching past the black hole. No one knows what's beyond a black hole, so I tried to use my imagination to create a scene for the last segment of the show. I wanted something completely different than what was given in the past; I needed something that stops the madness. It's kind of like being in a hurricane and finally reaching the eye of the storm and all you see is the beautiful sun and sky. It is beauty and mystery, something that no one has seen before.*

**LRLL  
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