

20-Month-Old Drummer -- Yes, 20-Month-Old -- Records With Legendary Bassist Ralphe Armstrong

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BLOOMFIELD HILLS, Mich., March 6 -- Julian Pavone is undoubtedly the only drummer who plays with a pacifier in his mouth.

But then Julian is only 20 months old -- no, that's not a typo -- so we can forgive him.

Perhaps the youngest recorded drummer in the world -- it appears to be a safe guess -- Julian keeps the rhythm of songs, executes drum rolls and will play for as long as 30 minutes.

You're skeptical? We understand. So listen to what Ralphe Armstrong, the legendary jazz bassist who has "jammed" with Julian, has to say:

"It's spooky. The kid's a genius. When I play with him, I feel he is the reincarnation of a Buddy Rich or Tony Williams with whom I played. It frightens me he is so good.

"When we look at each other, we communicate about the music. And he has phrasing, mathematical phrasing. It seems the harder the arrangements, the better he plays.

"At times, he almost made me cry."

Armstrong has played with the world's greatest artists, such as Jean Lucponty, violinist; Soul Singer Aretha Franklin; Al Martino, vocalist; Carlos Santana, guitarist; Frank Zappa, guitarist; Herbie Hancock, pianist; BB King, Blues legend; and many other music greats.

Or listen to William Winfield III, drum coordinator for the Cleveland Cavaliers, the professional basketball team:

"When I heard about him from Bernadino Pavone (Julian's father), I told him I had to see for myself. Well, I hit the drums when Julian came to try out, he would repeat what I did. He executed syncopated rhythms and did technical stuff that, of course, he does not know consciously he is doing. I can't imagine what he'll be like in two years."

Winfield, who is founder of the United Drumline, a nonprofit organization which helps young people in their teens learn drum basics, signed Julian as a Drumline member and Julian will join Drumline to play at Cavaliers games. (Julian already has played at one Cavaliers game.)

Now, Armstrong's and Winfield's comments would be strong endorsements if they were for an adult who has studied music and drums for years. But, again, they are talking about a 20-month-old boy.

True, at 31 inches tall, Julian's feet cannot reach the bass drums or the high hat pedals. He might also hit his little hands on the drums or cymbals and complain of a "boo-boo."

But none of this takes away from the quality of his playing as he is hardly visible behind a full set of drums and cymbals. Oh yes, he sits in a high chair.

Julian has recorded a CD on the Peacock Records, Inc. label with Armstrong, Winfield and Dante Falgiani, on guitar, playing along. The CD, recorded at the Glass House Studio in Ferndale, Michigan, is called "Go Baby." The CD was co-produced by John Falgiani, Jr.

Julian's mother, Lisa, a medical doctor, explains that her husband put Julian on his lap with earphones and drumsticks in his hands when he was about three months old.

"He'd hold the sticks and hit the drums and the noise did not bother him," said Lisa Pavone.

As Julian got older, she explained, he played from a high chair and now "he plays a half hour at a time at the drums and as much as two hours a day," she said. "He'll ask to play the drums. He just enjoys it."

More information on Julian is available at <http://www.littledrummerbaby.com> .

Data source: Bernadino Pavone

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