

Paul Wertico bio

Hailed in the press as “One of the most versatile and musical drummers in music today,” Paul Wertico was a member of the Pat Metheny Group from 1983 to 2001. During that time, he won seven Grammy Awards (three for Best Jazz Fusion Performance, three for Best Contemporary Jazz Performance, and one for Best Rock Instrumental Performance), won numerous magazine polls, received several gold records, and played drums & percussion on David Bowie’s hit recording (with the Pat Metheny Group), “This Is Not America.”

In addition to winning awards as a member of the PMG, Wertico has also been voted “Fusion Drummer Of The Year” in *DRUM!* magazine’s Reader’s Poll and he was voted in the “Top Five in the Electric Jazz Category” in *Modern Drummer* magazine’s Reader’s Polls. In 2004, Wertico was also named a *Chicago Tribune* “Chicagoan of the Year.” In 2010, the Cape Breton International Drum Festival honored him with a “Lifetime Achievement Award” for his “Major Contribution To The World Of Drumming & Education,” and that year he was also a recipient of the Montréal Drum Fest’s “Lifetime Achievement Award.” As Musical Director for the crowdsourced TV video series *INVENTING THE FUTURE*, Wertico was nominated for a 2012-2013 Emmy Award in the “Outstanding Achievement In Interactivity” category by The National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences, Midwest Chapter. From 2010 to 2012 he hosted his own weekly radio show, *PAUL WERTICO’s WILD WORLD OF JAZZ*. He’s also the inventor of his signature product, *TUBZ*, manufactured by Pro-Mark, who also made the “Paul Wertico Signature Drum Stick”. In November 2024, Dream Cymbals released two Paul Wertico signature flat ride cymbals, the 20” & 22” Bliss WERTICO RIDE.

Wertico has been featured on the covers of U.S. publications such as *Drum Tracks* magazine, *Modern Drummer* magazine, and *Chicago Jazz Magazine*, as well as on international drum publications such as Italy’s *Percussioni*, Belgium’s *Belgo Beat*, Poland’s *PerQsja*, and South America’s *Bateristas al Sur*.

Wertico has played with countless artists, has performed in all 50 states and in over 60 countries with artists such as Larry Coryell, Eddie Harris, Lee Konitz, Dave Liebman, Sam Rivers, Bob Mintzer, Terry Gibbs, Buddy DeFranco, Roscoe Mitchell, Evan Parker, Jay McShann, Herbie Mann, Randy Brecker, Jerry Goodman, Sheila Jordan, Ramsey Lewis, Charlie Haden, George Coleman, Diane Schuur, Nelson Riddle, Terry Callier, Ken Nordine, Jeff Berlin, Sonny Fortune, Tierney Sutton, Mike Stern, and many others.

He has also played drums and percussion on hundreds of recordings, including Paul Winter’s 1990 Grammy nominated release, *EARTH: VOICES OF A PLANET*, and four of vocalist Kurt Elling’s Grammy nominated releases: *CLOSE YOUR EYES*, *THE MESSENGER*, *THIS TIME IT’S LOVE*, and *MAN IN THE AIR*, as well as being involved in the production of many artists’ recordings, including the Pat Metheny Group and Kurt Elling.

In addition to his professional playing career, Wertico is also extremely active in the field

of education and has been teaching drums privately for over 45 years. In 2002, he joined the faculty of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing, where he is an Associate Professor of Jazz Studies, and he also headed the school's Jazz & Contemporary Music Studies program for five years. Before becoming a full-time faculty member at CCPA, he served on the wind & percussion faculty of Northwestern University for 16 years and also taught several years at the Bloom School of Jazz. Many of his students have gone on to have highly successful musical careers, ranging from being the drummers with legendary artists such as Prince, Wilco, and The Doobie Brothers, to being percussionists in classical ensembles and orchestras such as Third Coast Percussion and the San Francisco Symphony. He's also written numerous educational articles for *Modern Drummer*, *DRUM!*, *Drums & Drumming*, *Drum Tracks*, and *DownBeat* magazines, as well as for Musician.com. He served on the advisory board of *Modern Drummer* and is one of *MD*'s Pro-Panelists, as well as serving on the Education Committee of The Jazz Institute of Chicago (where he conceived two of the JIC's annual events: "Jazz Education Day" and "What Is This Thing Called Jazz?") Wertico also served five terms on the Board of Governors of The Recording Academy Chicago Chapter, as well as serving on numerous Grammy committees.

Wertico has performed drum clinics and masterclasses at universities, high schools, and music stores in the U.S. and around the world, including Drummers Collective in NYC, Percussion Institute of Technology in LA, North Texas State University, Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, and the University of Miami, as well as Musicians Institute in England, Drummers Institute in Germany, Università della Musica in Italy, Escuela de Música de Buenos Aires in Argentina, and the Rimon School of Jazz in Israel. He's also been a featured clinician/soloist at many international drum festivals including Canada's Cape Breton International Drum Festival and the Montréal Drum Fest, Uruguay's Montevideo Drum Festival, the CrossDrumming International Festival of Percussive Arts in Poland, the Mendoza International Drum Festival in Argentina, the Percussion Camp International Percussion Festival in Greece, and the First International Drummers Week in Venezuela, and as well as the 1994, 1999 & 2002 Percussive Arts Society International Conventions, the 1997 Modern Drummer Drum Festival, and the 2005, 2013, 2014, 2019 & 2023 Chicago Drum Shows. In addition, he's released two instructional videos, *FINE TUNING YOUR PERFORMANCE* and *PAUL WERTICO's DRUM PHILOSOPHY*; the latter, which is also available on DVD, was named "One of the best drum videos of the last 25 years" by *Modern Drummer* magazine.

As a solo recording artist, Wertico's debut CD as a leader, entitled *THE YIN AND THE YOUT*, received great critical acclaim including 4 stars in *DownBeat* magazine and the *Chicago Sun-Times* named it one of the "Ten Best Albums of 1993." Wertico's 1998 CD is a live recording of the Paul Wertico Trio entitled *LIVE IN WARSAW!* It received 4.5 stars in *DownBeat*. His trio's release, *DON'T BE SCARED ANYMORE* (named one of the "Ten Best Albums of 2000" by the *Chicago Tribune*), received reviews such as: "This album is like the soundtrack to the world's coolest vacation" and "Jazz-rock in the truest sense." His 2004 CD, *STEREONUCLEOSIS*, earned rave reviews such as "A brilliant release—Wertico shows a thrilling disregard for stylistic boundaries...*Stereonucleosis* is one of the most intelligent, creative and alluring percussion recordings of the past decade

—Wertico reaffirms his position among the most restlessly inventive drummers working today."; and "Wertico and his players have done something wonderful and rare: they've actually created something not only different, but also truly new." *LA Weekly* even wrote "His recent records, such as 2000's *Don't Be Scared Anymore* and the new *StereoNucleosis*, are stunning examples of the electronic, rhythmic and intellectual directions jazz could be going." Wertico's 2006 trio CD, *ANOTHER SIDE*, was described as "a brilliant collaborative effort between these three uniquely talented musicians."

His 2010 CD, *IMPRESSIONS OF A CITY*, featuring his band, Paul Wertico's Mid-East/Mid-West Alliance, was described in reviews as "One of the most impressively spontaneous albums you'll find on this planet—or any other"; "Haunting and memorable...an engaging musical experiment and one that is highly unique.>"; "This is musical narrative at its finest. A fanfare for the common (and mechanically exploited) 21st century man and woman."; "Sometimes beautiful, other times tense or just plain spooky, *Impressions Of A City* ought to go some way toward correcting the dubious reputation of avant-garde music."; "A wildly unpredictable journey into one man's apparently inexhaustible sonic imagination."; and *DownBeat* magazine listed it as one its "Best CDs of 2010" and wrote "What makes the music work is not only that Wertico is not content to just 'play it straight' as a drummer but that his skills as a conceptualist/leader may even be greater. A heads-up for all budding drummers (check out Wertico's inventive pause of a solo on "My Side Of The Story") who would like to hear and create music that goes beyond just keeping time." This band also released a 2010 live concert DVD, entitled *LIVE FROM SPACE*, which was reviewed by the *Chicago Examiner* as "More than setting tones, moods, and the stage for future, likeminded experimentation, these talented musicians have managed to also push the limits of what jazz can be, while entertaining a wider form of audience."; and *thiszine.org* wrote "For Wertico fans, this DVD is a must have, showcasing innovative, finely tuned jazz talent. For new fans of modern jazz, this would be a staple, and a great place to start before your journey backwards."

Wertico has also played on many co-led recordings including: a 1981 self-titled LP, *SPONTANEOUS COMPOSITION*; a 1984 self-titled LP, *EARWAX CONTROL*, and a 1994 live Earwax Control CD entitled *2 LIVE*; a 1996 drums/percussion duo CD (with Gregg Bendian) entitled *BANG!*; a 1997 double guitars/double drums 3-CD set (with Derek Bailey, Pat Metheny, and Gregg Bendian) entitled *THE SIGN OF 4*; and two piano trio CDs (with Laurence Hobgood & Brian Torff) entitled *UNION* (named one of the "Ten Best Albums of 1997" by both the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*) and *STATE OF THE UNION* (named one of the "Ten Best Albums of 1999" by the *Chicago Tribune*).

Between 2000 and 2007, Wertico was also a member of the legendary Polish progressive rock band, SBB, playing on several of the band's CDs & DVDs including: *GOOD BYE!*, *THE GOLDEN HARP*, *TRIO LIVE TOURNEE 2001*, *NASTROJE*, *ODLOT LIVE 2004*, *NEW CENTURY*, *LIVE IN THEATRE 2005*, *LIVE IN KUŹNIA TRYPTYK BYDGOSKI CZĘŚĆ 3*, *LIVE CUTS: OSTRAVA 2002*, and the 22-CD Box Set: *ANTHOLOGY 1974-2004* (which was awarded a Polish Platinum Record Award). In 2007, Brian Peters and Wertico

released their CD, *AMPERSAND*, which *Drummerszone.com* called "Simply a musical masterpiece" and *Classic Drummer* magazine described as "One of the most ambitious records ever released. Recorded over a period of four years, it documents a completely new approach to combine elements of both Rock and Jazz music while resulting in a very listenable and captivating final product." Also in 2007, Wertico played on *JAZZ IMPRESSIONS*, a live CD with pianist Silvano Monasterios & bassist Mark Egan. *Chicago Jazz Magazine* wrote "From the first note of *Jazz Impressions*, you know you're in for something interesting and different. What these three do with that format, however, is nothing short of breathtaking."

Some of his other solo and co-led releases include a 2012 DVD & CD by David Cain & Paul Wertico entitled *FEAST FOR THE SENSES*; a 2013 CD by Paul Wertico & Frank Catalano entitled *TOPICS OF CONVERSATION*; a 2013 CD by Fabrizio Mocata, Gianmarco Scaglia & Paul Wertico entitled *FREE THE OPERA!*; and several releases by Wertico Cain & Gray: a 2013 DVD & CD entitled *SOUND PORTRAITS* (which won "Best Live Performance Album" in the 13th Annual Independent Music Awards (2014); a 2013 CD entitled *OUT IN SPACE*; a 2014 DVD & CD entitled *ORGANIC ARCHITECTURE*; a 2015 CD & Downloadable Video entitled *REALIZATION* (which was nominated for "Best Live Performance Album" and "Best Long Form Video" in the 15th Annual Independent Music Awards (2016); a 2016 CD entitled *SHORT CUTS – 40 IMPROVISATIONS*; a 2017 CD entitled *AFTERLIVE*; a 2019 CD & downloadable video release entitled *WITHOUT COMPROMISE*; and a 2021 CD entitled *WINDOWS OF TIME*. In addition, The Gianmarco Scaglia & Paul Wertico Quartet released a 2020 CD entitled *DYNAMICS IN MEDITATION*; and The Paul Wertico/John Helliwell Project has two releases: a 2021 CD entitled *THE BARI SESSIONS*, and a 2020 2-CD set entitled *LIVE UNDER ITALIAN SKIES*. The Chicago-based Paul Wertico Trio (featuring guitarist John Moulder & bassist Eric Hochberg) released a 2019 CD (celebrating the trio's 25th anniversary) entitled *FIRST DATE*, and the Italy-based Paul Wertico Trio (featuring pianist Fabrizio Mocata & bassist Gianmarco Scaglia) released a 2022 CD entitled *LETTER FROM ROME*. Paul's latest three CDs are entitled *PAUL WERTICO'S DRUMS WITHOUT BOUNDARIES* (one of *DownBeat* magazine's "Best Albums of 2023"), *MARBINICO* (2024) by Marbin & Paul Wertico, and *TUXEDO MAN* (2025) by David Becker & Paul Wertico.

In the international press, Wertico's drumming has been compared to that of an "Impressionist painter," and he has also been called "an inspired madman," "a restless innovator," "a true legend of jazz drums," "a master of drumming insanity," "a genius of the sticks," and a recent review stated, "Wertico simply oozes musicality."

Last, but not least, Wertico's groundbreaking instructional drum book *TURN THE BEAT AROUND* (A Drummer's Guide to Playing "Backbeats" on 1 & 3) was published by Alfred Music on July 7, 2017.

Visit Wertico's official website at: www.paulwertico.com