



Become a YouTube drum superstar

PROFILES:



Vadrum

Who? Italian cover king with an eye for the unusual
Biggest YouTube hit: Super Mario Brothers drum cover
Since first appearing on YouTube: "I've had the chance to sign some endorsement contracts, perform in international festivals and record for international artists."



Steve Moore

Who? The greatest showman YouTube has ever seen
Biggest YouTube hit: Drummer At The Wrong Gig
Since first appearing on YouTube: "I suddenly had new opportunities and springboards and connections. Everyone I considered my drum heroes started emailing me."

YouTube is a good way for drummers to get noticed. Four of the medium's biggest stars tell you how to make your mark online

1 Be a video geek

Vadrum: "Definitely one of the reasons that first led me, and still leads me, to make drum videos is because I love every single aspect that concerns the production of a video – the birth and development of an idea, the drum arrangement, the setting up of the kit and mics, the audio soundcheck, positioning of cameras, the video editing process, the audio mixing process, the creation of the graphics. Plus all the next steps like the publishing on the internet, the updating process of my websites."

2 Don't be self-indulgent

Cobus: "I always give myself absolute artistic freedom, but I've found I progress more towards control and 'less is more' than the self-indulgent approach I had when I started years ago. I think it's healthy and hopefully is a sign of me maturing musically, but I'm quite stoked to go absolutely nuts again in the next series. I think it's important to realise that the videos are drum covers, not original recordings. So it's okay to have a ton of fun, sometimes holding back, but also sometimes totally letting go."

"I think it's important to realise that the videos are drum covers, not original recordings, so it's okay to have a ton of fun"

3 Come up with a snappy title

Steve: "My video was recorded by a fan and it had been online nearly two years but some different person took the video and re-uploaded it with the title 'This Drummer's At The Wrong Gig'. That's when it went nuts. I've emailed two or three times the person that uploaded it and named it that to try and thank them, but they've never returned the email. You'd think after millions of hits they'd return an email!"

4 Go for quality

Vadrum: "My first videos were created with very little equipment: a typical '90s video camera and the audio was recorded with a cheap microphone connected to a Minidisc recorder. Video after video, I always tried to improve the audio quality, using multiple microphones and starting to record in multi-tracking system with a multiple channel soundcard connected to software like Cubase. Regarding the video quality, I soon began to record in multi-angle mode, first recording more than one take from different angles, then using various cameras at the same time. All the video editing and montage has been done on a computer, with standard video production software."

5 Edit your clips

Ben: "Once you get your head round linking all the equipment up it's a doddle. The way I record is pretty simple in comparison to other drummers I know. I use GarageBand which comes free with all Macs. I simply record the drums using my mics which are plugged into my mixer and then via USB record in GarageBand. The editing software I use is Final

Cut Pro, which isn't too hard use, but for all my text and titles I use After Effects which I'm still coming to terms with."

6 Use social media

Cobus: "To get a name as unpronounceable as Cobus Potgieter out there, you have to use any and all means necessary. Kidding aside, my generation represents a bunch of kids very comfortable with social media anyways. I don't think enough people realise the incredible potential of online media. It's such a great platform, people watch and subscribe to content they feel a connection to - sincerity and quality will always make it to the top."

7 Get creative

Vadrum: "When I first decided to cover unusual songs, my intention was just to have fun and express my creativity in a different way, arranging drum parts for something that usually doesn't have drums recorded or is not intended to be played by a drummer."

8 Be original

Ben: "When choosing a track to cover there are many things to consider. A song like 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', for example, is probably one of the most covered songs on YouTube. If you create a mediocre cover, then it's just going to get lost on the net with not many views as it's been done before."

9 Splash out on some gear

Cobus: "I use a Samson 8Kit plus two Q8's on snares as my mic line-up, a Samson L2400 for some pre and

"I was suddenly talking to people like Carmine Appice and Mike Portnoy and they respected what I was doing and liked it"

some monitor mixing, and a PreSonus Firestudio Tube interface for multi-track recording. As for cameras, I use whichever cameras I can borrow from my friends."

10 Perfect your act

Steve: "I practised a lot but I didn't spend hours and hours in front of a mirror. I spent more time trying to make the music feel decent while doing all that fancy stuff. I haven't invented a thing, I'm just stealing from everybody else. I try really hard to not take credit for inventing some new movement. I'm just doing the same stuff Gene Krupa was doing, I just do it a little differently."

11 Stay current

Ben: "The point where my YouTube channel changed was when I posted my Muse 'United States Of Eurasia' cover in July 2009. I chose Muse's song as it was brand new. I literally learned the song in a day for like eight hours, then I hit the record button, edited it and posted on YouTube. The response was incredible. In its first month it reached 7,000 plays, which I was amazed at considering all my other covers were at the 2,000 plays mark after two years."

12 Be yourself

Cobus: "It was never, and it still isn't, a question of trying to set myself apart. There is no complicated marketing plan behind the drum covers. I'm a firm believer that nothing sets you apart as much as indulging ▶



Vadrum's Super Mario Bros cover has had over 15 million views

in your individuality - nobody has your style and nobody has your creativity."

13 Take feedback

Vadrum: "I always pay attention to the advice and critiques of my followers (including a lot of drummers), trying to always be myself, doing what I love for my new and old friends, not just for getting views."

14 Think production

Ben: "Production-wise, try and use more than one camera, make the angles interesting and unique, not just straight-on as it looks boring. Even if you own one camera, record yourself several times from different angles and then bring it all together in the edit. If at all possible try and invest in some mics, they will make your drums sing and it's a lot more pleasing to listen to."

15 Be professional

Cobus: "I think there are two big reasons why my videos have attracted as much attention as they have - the kit was miked and mixed, making it sound way better than the millions of other 'point and shoot' drum cover videos online. I was also arrogant enough to mess with the original tracks, and play my own parts sometimes."

16 Enjoy the rewards

Steve: "I'm the biggest drum geek you'll ever meet. It's one thing to get millions of hits, because you could just run a shopping cart into a basket of eggs and it goes viral, it doesn't really put you in a good light, it just means a lot of people thought it was funny. But to then have so many people get behind me, that's what was breathtaking. I was suddenly talking to people like Carmine Appice, Mike Portnoy and on and on and they actually respected what I was doing and liked it. I still can't wrap my head around that." ■



Cobus Potgieter

Who? South African drum

coverer extraordinaire

Biggest YouTube Hit:

Avenged Sevenfold

'Afterlife' cover

Since first appearing

on YouTube: "I have

received multiple

endorsement offers,

travelled internationally a

few times for sessions and

appearances, as well as just

getting to meet incredible

people in the industry and

supporters who are just

as passionate about music

as I am."



Name: Ben Powell

Who? UK sticksman known

for spot-on covers

Biggest YouTube Hit:

Muse 'Resistance' cover

Since first appearing

on YouTube: "Loads of

opportunities have arisen.

More recently I've been

approached by MusicRadar.

com to create online

drumming tutorials."