



On my drums

**W**ith a quivering hand, I picked up the drumsticks and beat them on the drums. It sounded like wild noise but my parents Don and Yvonne smiled as I banged away. 'This is so cool,' I exclaimed.

# Drumming it in

Andrew Hewitt, 39, Maroubra, NSW

Hope

It was Christmas 1980 and my parents had bought me a drum kit. I was 10 and loved rock music. But I also had cerebral palsy – a disorder that made my muscles weak. I couldn't walk without crutches and had trouble using my arms.

Mum and Dad thought a drum kit would be great physical therapy for me. I set the kit up in the garage and every day I'd spend hours playing. *This is so frustrating*, I thought as I flailed at the pedals.

After a while, I adapted and found ways to create the sound I wanted. I spent hours

listening to Kiss, AC/DC and Led Zeppelin.

Over the years, I got really good, and my muscles became stronger and easier to control.

Before long, I started to read and learn music. Then I got a job with a band in St Kilda, Vic.

One night after a gig, I stood up to bow to the audience. My awkward movements caused a stir in the crowd and after, I was surrounded by admirers, inspired by my efforts.

The audience's reaction made me feel proud and confident.

*Many people don't realise I*

*have cerebral palsy when I play, I realised. I can use my story to inspire others with disabilities.*

I became an ambassador for disabled musicians and supported many fundraising and disability-awareness organisations. I also started music workshops for the disabled. Seeing the pride and determination on my students' faces was very rewarding.

I play at concerts with famous drummers and have even created my own CDs. I perform all around Australia and have become a motivational speaker.

I've also found love and will be marrying my sweetheart Jennifer Hodder, 38, this year.

Since I first played drums at 10, nothing has stood in my way. And now I'm up there with the best – nothing could be better therapy for me. ■