

# rhythm for your soul

Drumming de-stresses, lifts depression, and cures disorders. The new therapy? asks **CAROLYN QUEK.**

When musician Louis Francis Albert first taught drumming at the Pertapis Children's Home four years ago, little did he expect the impact.

"We saw the children become more open, disciplined – interacting more with one another," says Louis, who has performed with stars like Anita Sarawak and was in the now defunct local band Culture Vulture.

"I thought I had come up with a new kind of therapy until I heard that it was already established in the US, where it is used to treat patients with manic depression and multiple personality disorders."

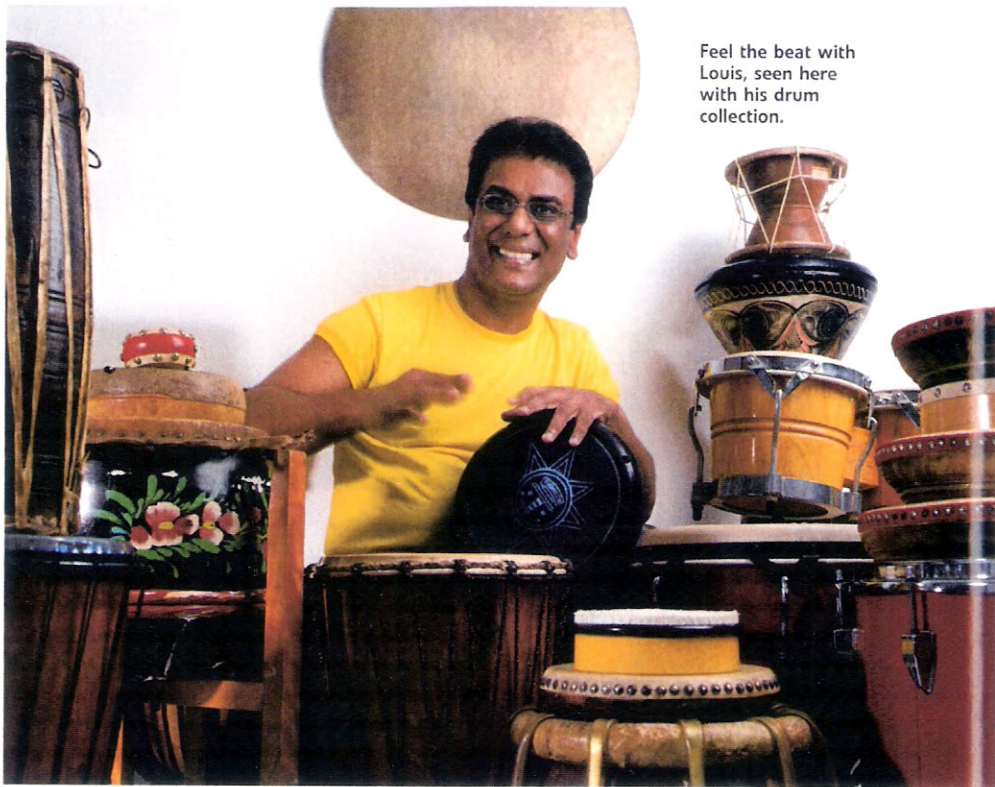
Louis, 56, is referring to "drum therapy", which uses the rhythms and sounds of drumbeats to promote healing and wellness. This chance encounter left Louis curious. He later joined a drum therapy course.

Today, he has made drum therapy his occupation and is the first drum facilitator in Singapore. He has worked with the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH), the Singapore School for the Deaf and corporate organisations.

## drumming for wellness

So, how does it work? Drumming triggers the alpha brainwaves associated with feelings of well-being, says Louis.

"Every time you hit the drums, you trigger these brainwaves. The more you hit, the better you feel. Hitting the drum places you squarely in the here and now. And, as some of our stress is created from feelings of fear or worry, you cannot be stressed while in the present moment."



Feel the beat with Louis, seen here with his drum collection.

Drums, Louis explains, have also been found to improve the well-being of those with mental disorders. As drumming requires concentration and coordination, it can help improve the attention span of autistic children as well as the short-term memory of those suffering from Alzheimer's.

Louis himself has seen first-hand the results of his therapy on the mentally impaired at the SAMH. "I saw them blossom in confidence, enough to perform in public, a first for the mentally ill in Singapore."

## an asian twist

During his sessions, Louis incorporates Western or African

instruments such as the bongo or djembe with Asian instruments such as the Chinese gong and Malay kompang.

There is never a "typical" drumming session. Louis customises drumming exercises based on the needs of the group, and may use percussion beats to tell a story or to accompany movements.

He prefers conducting sessions for groups rather than individuals. Each session is from one to two hours, depending on the group size (fees upon request).

To find out how drumming can help you, log on to Louis' website [www.culturevulture.per.sg](http://www.culturevulture.per.sg).

**TRIED & TESTED** I went through a 30-minute session where I had to mimic the rhythm Louis created on his djembe on my bongo. It started out easy enough, and I was able to echo the simple rhythms he created. However, as he gradually built up the tempo with more complicated beats, I found myself concentrating harder to catch up. It was challenging yet exciting and the entire session was light-hearted and relaxed, especially when we both broke into laughter at my failed attempts. Indeed, what better way to de-stress and perk up your spirits than to make music with energetic drumbeats?