Paul Samuels grew up in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. His father, a violinist with the Cleveland Orchestra, and his mother, who designs and creates visual art, was supportive of Samuels’ interest in playing music. As a teenager, his father took him to concerts featuring McCoy Tyner, Tony Williams, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Sarah Vaughn. These jazz innovators inspired the young Samuels to become a performing artist and drummer.

He began his professional music career at age 14. Samuels studied with percussionist Robert Matson of the Cleveland Orchestra, and drummer Bob McKee. He played drums throughout the Cleveland area and was influenced by such local musicians as Lawrence “Jacktown” Jackson, Greg Bandy, Lamar Gaines, Bill DeArango, Jamey Haddad, Val Kent, Skip Hadden, Carl “Ace” Carter, and the late Neal Creque.

When it comes to music Samuels says, “it is important to keep one foot in the past and one foot in the future.” In 1975 he decided to check out the New York music scene. While he learned from the up-and-coming musicians of his generation, it was drummer Billy Hart who influenced his musical direction. He developed his skills and earned his respect as a fine accompanist.

In the mid 80s, Samuels recorded three albums with Greg Osby, and his compositions, “Excuse Not” and “Eyewitness,” appear on Osby’s Mindgames and Season of Renewal recordings (JMT label). Samuels said Osby encouraged him to keep an open mind and to move forward with his music.

Samuels has recorded, performed, and or toured internationally with a variety of musicians: James Moody, David Fathead Newman, Lonnie Plaxico, Hank Crawford, Pat “The Kid” Martino, Jack McDuff, and the now deceased popular rhythm and blues artist Gerald Levert. While respected by his peers and performing for more than three decades, Samuels says he is “still a work in progress.”

In addition to performing, he teaches in the Jazz Studies Program at Oberlin College. Samuels’ debut CD, Speak, features longtime collaborators Greg Osby on saxophone, Dan Wall on organ, and Jamey Haddad on percussion. Samuels endorses Bosphorus Cymbals.