

MODERN DRUMMER

The World's First International Magazine For Drummers



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'88
READERS
POLL
RESULTS

LIBERTY DEVITTO

Ron Tutt

Carlos Vega

DOKKEN'S

Mick Brown

Gregg Bissonette

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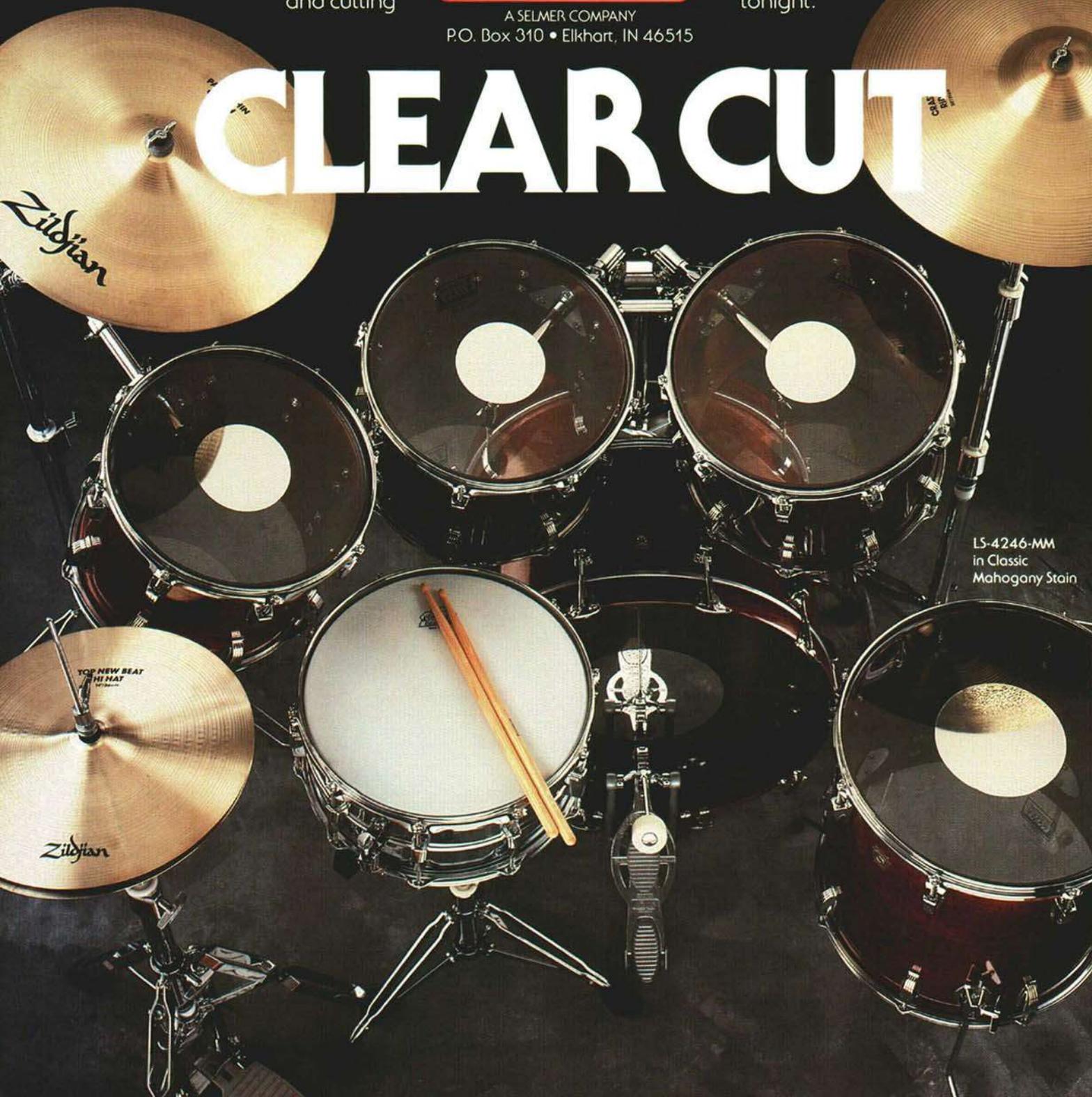
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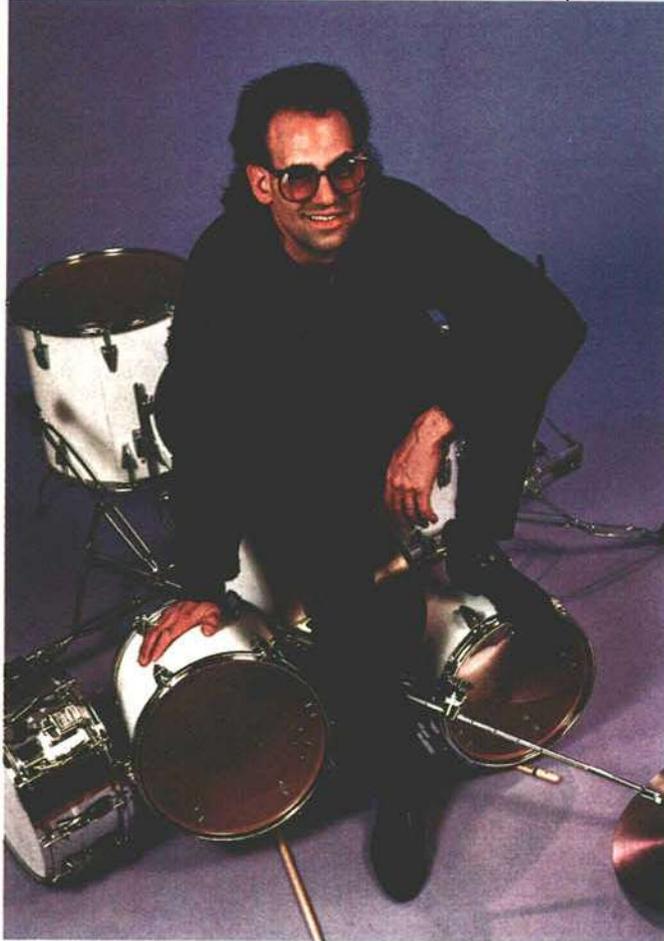
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Photo by Ebet Roberts



LIBERTY DEVITTO

Drumming for Billy Joel has its share of rewards, not the least of which was a recent opportunity to tour the Soviet Union. Liberty DeVitto shares his memories of the trip, and talks about life with and without Billy Joel.
by Rick Van Horn 16

RON TUTT

From Elvis Presley to Neil Diamond to studio work, Ron Tutt has been in demand for a lot of years. He discusses his career, and offers advice to those who seek longevity in the music business.
by Stephanie Bennett 22

CARLOS VEGA

Although he loves the freedom of jazz, Carlos Vega is equally interested in the discipline of studio work, and he has managed to combine both interests into a career that includes work with such artists as Freddie Hubbard, Boz Scaggs, Olivia Newton-John, and James Taylor,
by Robyn Flans 26

MD SOUND SUPPLEMENT: GREGG BISSONETTE DRUM SOLOS

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Last month, I mentioned the importance of staying abreast of the electronic technology that's become available. Burying one's head in the sand in the hopes that this will all go away is to lag behind the direction in which things appear to be headed.

Our business is changing rapidly, and though technology is opening up some new doors, it's closing a few in the process as well. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the number of session players who aren't quite as busy as they once were, having been replaced by synthesizers and drum machines. The notable exceptions are those who made an effort to learn it all, and ultimately became expert at it.

Though involvement through hands-on experience is essential, a more important aspect is being mentally prepared to *apply* oneself to the task at hand. This is relatively new territory for drummers, and it demands a certain degree of dedication. Expect to do some reading and experimenting, and to experience a moderate amount of frustration when things don't go exactly as planned. If you're not one for studying owner's manuals, preferring to jump in and take your chances, you might want to give it a second thought. Learning to accurately program a drum machine, trigger it from *Octapads*, MIDI it through a *DX7*, assign channels, etc., can be tricky business, unless you're fortunate enough to have help from someone who knows precisely what he or she is doing.

There are other things you can do to pick up on important information. One idea might be to browse through at least one keyboard or electronic music publication each month. Naturally,

we cover electronics in *Modern Drummer*, but keyboard players have always been way ahead of everyone in this department. And further, in-depth reading on a complex subject never hurt anyone.

Also, develop a good rapport with someone at your local music shop. Knowledgeable dealers, well-versed in electronics, possess firsthand experience that could have a bearing on your overall understanding. While you're there, scan through the literature, listen in, and don't be ashamed to ask questions—plenty of them!

Be on the lookout for electronic seminars and clinics. An organization in New York recently sponsored a well-attended, two-day expo/seminar on MIDI technology. More of these kinds of things are likely to occur in different areas of the country, and it sure couldn't hurt to attend. The information you can gather at these events might prove invaluable.

Finally, don't ignore what you might have access to right in your own backyard. Again, keyboard players tend to be the hippest people when it comes to electronics, so don't hesitate to pick the brains of your own band's keyboard player. He may be more than willing to help you better understand and apply some of what you'll be learning.

Getting fully involved encompasses a great deal more than simply shelling out bucks for an assortment of unfamiliar gear. It means making a determined effort, and being prepared to study, experiment, and persevere. Like most things in life, those that are really worth doing don't always come easy.

RS

Making The Effort

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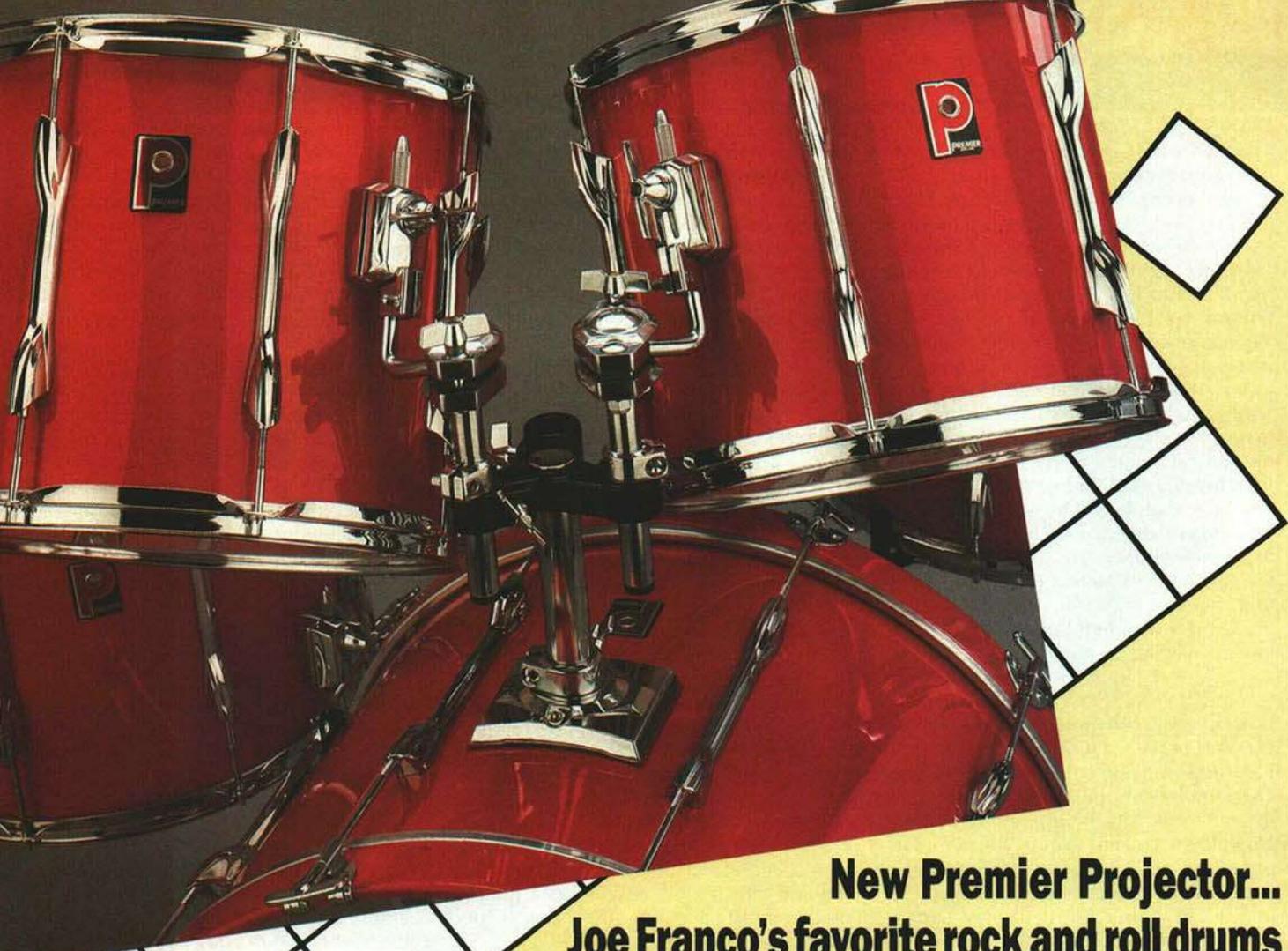
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ISSUE DATE: July 1988



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DANNY GOTTLIEB

Thanks for the terrific interview with one of today's most innovative, versatile, and musical drummers: Danny Gottlieb [April '88 *MD*]. I've had occasion to hear Danny perform live with Pat Metheny, John McLaughlin, and the Mel Lewis big band, and to hear his recorded work on albums by Elements and on his own *Aquamarine* LP. There is no doubt that he is on the cutting edge of drumming today. It was illuminating, therefore, to read about the difficulties that Danny had getting his own record out despite all of his musical credentials. I can only say that I am heartily glad that he was successful, and hope that he will be equally successful in future endeavors. Thanks to *MD* for the excellent story, and also to Danny for the educational "Notes" on his drumming that accompanied it. Together, they made for a wonderful afternoon of reading and playing for me.

Tony Alumarle
Brooklyn NY

DOWNTOWN DOZEN

I am surprised and delighted that *Modern Drummer* ventured over the edge into the realm of "kitsch" drumming in "The Downtown Dozen" [April '88]. I'm surprised, because this genre has little to do with traditional technique and discipline, and I am delighted with how open-minded *MD* approached the subject. There is one discrepancy, however. Why did *MD* focus solely on the artists in Manhattan? Some of the artists are obviously inspired, while others seemed as mere fashion plates. The article gave a false sense of origin and unity, as if Manhattan was the experimental, "underground," electro-thrash-metal mecca of the world.

There are many creative drummers in the States as well as abroad. Would it be possible for *MD* to expand its boundaries a little further and do segments on various experimental "underground" percussionists? Maybe *MD* could bring together an array of "avant-garde" percussionists by appealing to its vast reading audience for leads and information on lesser-known artists. Again, it's great that *MD* is willing to present an area of music that has a sublime influence on the huge, organic, ever-changing monster known as Modern Music.

David Parker
Houston TX

GRACELAND DRUMMERS

I would like to thank *MD* and Jeff Potter for the outstanding article on the Graceland Drummers in the March issue. I found it fascinating to know that percussionists from three different parts of the world could get together and create a masterpiece such as *Graceland*. Isaac Mtshali, Francis Fuster, and Okyerema Asante are definitely three of the top percussionists in the world. My thanks to *MD* for covering their opinions, views, and ways. Once again, *MD* has widened my horizons and helped me to see music in a different perspective. It has helped me and affected my playing as a future percussionist, and I'm sure I speak for many.

Craig Pilo
Pawcatuck CT

MORE AD COMMENTS

I am writing to express concern about something I've noticed in the advertising copy of recent issues of *MD*. I realize the ads are written by the manufacturers who

place them, and not by your staff. However, I would assume you have some control over the final contents of the magazine, including the advertising. Specifically, I'm referring to the Tama ad on page 5 of the March '88 issue, and the Pearl ad on page 115 of the April '88 issue. Both ads feature censored, but nonetheless obvious, vulgarisms and expletives.

While, admittedly, such language is a part of most people's daily lives, I find it to be something of an eyesore in an otherwise respectable and intelligent magazine. In presenting their featured artists, Tama and Pearl appear to have sunk to the level of raw, gutter language in order to gain attention. These are established, successful manufacturers of quality products who needn't resort to such "cheap shots" in order to sell a few more drums.

Other readers will undoubtedly disagree, but I feel such language does have its place. However, the advertising copy of a national magazine seeking to further the interests of drummers as intelligent professionals is not that place.

Eric J. Bickleman
York PA

Well, well. So Tama and Pearl are continuing their ad battles in *MD*. First, it was "Who can make the flashiest ad?" Then came "Who can occupy (waste) more of *MD*'s pages?" Now, it's "How can we make intelligent drummers look like complete morons?"

To the folks at Tama and Pearl: Please do not insult us with your ads containing edited foul language any further. These ads are not worthy of space in *MD*. I find

continued on page 106

We Congratulate All The Winners And Salute All The Finalists Of The 1988 Modern Drummer Readers Poll.

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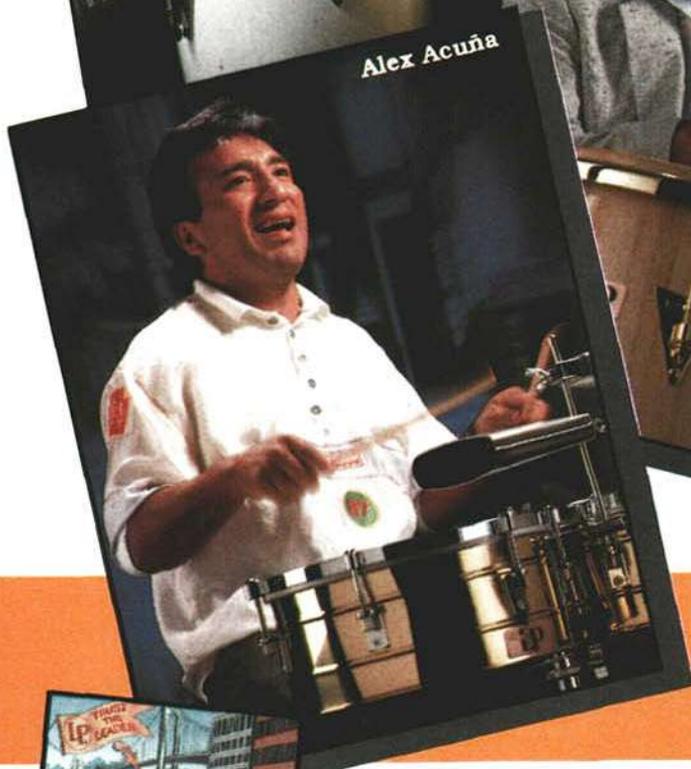
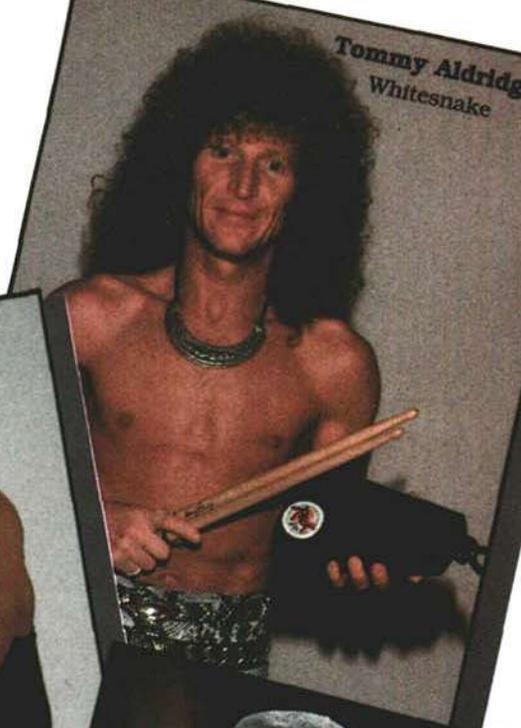
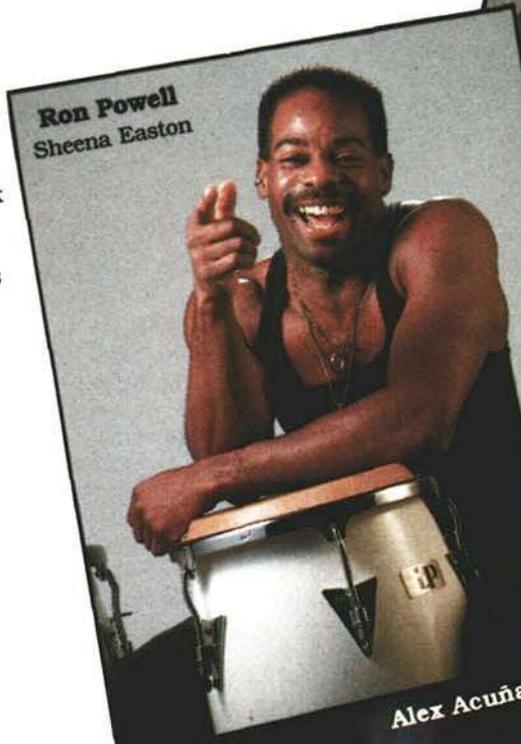
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Photo by Sheila Wilson



When percussionist **Vanessa Brown** was asked to tour with Barry Manilow three years ago, no one knew just how much of an impact she would have, nor the lasting impression and question she'd leave with the audience: "Who is she?"

Vanessa got the job with Manilow when someone spotted her performance at a Marilyn McCoo concert. "I submitted a resume, auditioned, and screamed with

excitement when I got the gig," she remembers. During the show, she plays the violin and does some background singing, in addition to percussion. She also accompanies Manilow during his tap-dance scene by tapping a pair of shoes against a wooden board, which is hidden from the audience. "I try to do something different each night, and I draw from the audience. I just give my all," she says.

A native of southern California and a graduate of U.C.L.A., Vanessa started out at age five playing the piano for her mother, and at age ten practicing the violin for her band teacher. "But in junior high school," she remembers, "I put my foot down and got real bold. I said, No! I'm not playing anything if I can't play drums." As a child, when I listened to music, I only heard the rhythm, so I knew I wanted to play drums. Alvin Hall, an older percussionist,

started taking me on gigs with him. He'd let me play something small that I couldn't mess up on, like a triangle, and then he gradually gave me more to play. I'm a monster reader, and it's all because of the 15 years of classical training I got on the violin. I can read mallet parts with no problem."

There are only a handful of professional female percussionists, and Vanessa is most often compared to Sheila E. They share the same age, same instrument, and the same gusto. "I credit Sheila E for opening the door for female percussionists performing on a large scale," she says. But the similarities end when Vanessa adds her years of classical training and mallet playing to the current songs, and comes up with a style of her own.

In some instances, she says, it's a strike being a female percussionist. "Some people don't think you have the balls

to cut the gig. I had to learn how to 'toot my own horn' and be more assertive when I saw that I was being overlooked for big jobs. You have to go for it all in this business, full force, 24 hours a day.

"When I speak to the kids at school or at music clinics, I tell them to play every job they can. When someone calls you for a gig, don't ask how much it pays, just ask them where it is and what time they want you there. Learn all the styles you can. It's all dealing with how much of that stuff you can input and keep," she tells them.

During her breaks from the road, she plays drumset at her local church. "God is my sustenance," she says. "All of my energy comes from Him." What's next for her? "Right now, I'm comfortable playing behind people. I might be a sideline musician for the rest of my life."

—Edmund and Sheila Wilson



It was quite a thrill for **Ken K. Mary** to go from playing clubs with guitarist Randy Hansen to playing his first gig with Alice Cooper in the fall of 1986. "Five weeks after I joined Alice Cooper's band, I was on MTV in front of 20-million people in a live concert broadcast from Detroit," Ken recalls. "It was also a sold-out show of 20,000 people, so that was the biggest audience I had ever played to at that point. It was quite a little step up," he laughs.

Cooper's management had seen him play L.A.'s Whiskey with Hansen, and suggested

Ken audition. "I learned seven songs from a tape they gave me, and we didn't even end up doing any of them; we basically just jammed on new material. It was really funny, because I had spent a good deal of time learning the tape.

"The audition was scary," he admits. "When I went in, I just did the best job I could, and I kind of knew right away that I was going to get it from the way everybody reacted. The next thing I found out was that they wanted to cancel the rest of the auditions and hire me right away, but they were committed to auditioning these other people, so I had to wait another day to find out."

He says he had to make little physical and emotional adjustment to the size of the venues. "I had been mentally preparing myself for a long time. I had always envisioned myself playing on a large stage in front of a large audience. I had run that over in my mind so many times that, by the time I got there, it was exactly as I had imagined. It was as if I had been there for a tremendous amount of time.

"I've always been a very hard-driving drummer, so it was basically the same as I had been playing," he says of the physical considerations. "Instead of having an audience on the floor, now there was an audience pretty much all around me, so I had to visually project to more people and pay attention a little bit more to the upper rows of coliseums. Musically, they basically just let me go. We rehearsed for five weeks before the tour, and it was pretty much whatever I wanted to play. It was a bit of a challenge, because a lot of the songs are built around more of a stage setting, so a lot of times I'd have to adjust the speed of the song to fit what was happening. The Alice show is very theatrical, and a lot of times there would be certain scenes that would happen on stage almost as if it were a movie. It was as if we were guiding the soundtrack. The drummer has to pay attention to what's happening on the stage and make sure that what he's doing is corresponding. That might entail

starting a song a little bit later, or stopping somewhere, or making little adjustments here and there to fit what's happening."

In the meantime, the tour with Cooper ended at the end of February, at which time Epic Records released the debut album by Fifth Angel, a band of which Ken is a member. "The group is from Seattle," says Ken, "and the five of us have been friends since high school. It's more of a heavy metal band, like an Alice Cooper. It's also very melodic, and the musicianship is very good. The album was out in Europe on Roadrunner/CBS Records and did well, so Concrete Management in New York got a buzz about us. The next thing we knew, we were negotiating a major label deal. We hadn't even played live. We had just put out this record, and it was successful."

Ken can also be heard on three albums with David Chastain on Leviathan Records, and on Bonfire's RCA debut LP.

—Robyn Flans

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Scott Kaufman has been working with Dan Seals since August, 1984, and he says what Seals' music needs most from a drummer is "groove." "The drummer needs to know when not to play," Scott expounds. "That's part of playing groove. It's being the foundation for the band, and it's like guiding the band, but not getting in the way of the band or the vocals. From what I see, that's the most important thing happening in drumming right now—being a good groove person. If you can do that, you're going to work. I see drummers who are real heavy technicians, but if they can't groove, they're not going to work."

Scott says that even though Seals' big crossover hit, "Bop," was recorded with a Linn drum machine, Scott approaches the tune live in much the same manner as

everything else. "When we rehearse, we approach the songs differently in the live situation than from the studio. There are only four of us plus Danny on stage, which is actually very neat, because for as small a band as we are, we have a really versatile setup, which allows us to stay out of each other's way. We can work out parts, and all of them will be heard. We can actually work out a little bit of ear candy for the audience, and not be stepping all over each other like a bigger ensemble, where sometimes things get lost.

"When we first worked 'Bop' up, I just approached it by playing a real solid part, but not playing too much, with a few little tom fills here and there—pretty much like the drum machine. With some of the new electronic equipment I've gotten, I'm going to

approach it even more like that, with some more Linn types of sounds.

"When we play live, we use click tracks," continues Scott, who is currently on the road. "We started doing that about a year ago, because we wanted to see how everything felt playing with it. Danny is very sensitive to tempos, so we decided to see how it would work. I thought it would solidify my playing and help solidify the band, and it has worked really well. I've been really happy doing that. At first it was a little difficult, but now I don't think any of us would want to do it any other way."

Scott says he enjoys the variety of material immensely "That's what I like best of all about it. We do some real hard-core country tunes, some old England Dan & John Ford Coley pop hits, and some really rocked out tunes.

Doing so many different styles really becomes challenging for us."

Scott remarks that it doesn't really bother him that he's not on the records. "I did get to do a percussion overdub on 'One Friend,' but since I've been working with Danny, I've seen how the music business works in Nashville. I know that producers like to use certain players, and let's face it, the players that Kyle Lehning uses are fabulous players, like Larrie Londin and Eddie Bayers. They've got years of experience under their belts. I do intend to do the same thing they're doing one day, and I think that, if I keep working hard, little by little there will come a time when I'll be doing some of the tracks. It's basically up to me. The harder I work, the more I'll get out of it."

—Robyn Flans



At 24, White Lion's **Greg D'Angelo** has begun to furrow a niche for himself in the realm of heavy metal drumming that somewhat belies his youth.

He has worked with a succession of New York area metal bands since his teens (including thrash kings

Anthrax), played on several jingle sessions, and is an accomplished drum teacher of more than five years. Very soon, he will be adding another credential to his resume, as he has just co-authored a book on drum rudiments, which should be available this summer.

White Lion (which he's been a member of for almost three years) engages most of Greg's energies these days, as the group has just completed a leg of the U.S. Kiss tour and a headlining European club/theater tour in support of the current album, *Pride*. How does Greg describe the difference between playing with White Lion and the bulk of the metal bands he's previously worked with? "Musically, the players in this band are really very good, and I have to stay on my toes," he responds.

"There's no slouching in this group, and it just makes playing that much more fun, because you don't have to think about holding back. Plus, there's a lot of mutual respect for each other, which helps the overall picture a lot."

For that matter, what separates Greg's upcoming drum book from the rest of the pack? "Well," he begins, "it's going to basically be a beat book, and it's going to focus on developing your own ear. I've written it with Frank Marino, and we've taken measures and divided them in half. We've put together all these different combinations of beats; it's almost like putting together a puzzle. It's more challenging than most books." He adds that he had utilized different drum books over the years, and felt that there were ideas missing that

he thought were important. So, taking the initiative, he decided, "The hell with it. I'll do it myself. We're really excited about it because we believe in it a lot. We're also hoping to go out and do some clinics to promote it, too," he adds happily.

D'Angelo is also concerned with the way some musicians fail to give credit to heavy metal drummers as legitimately talented players. "I'd like more people to realize that heavy metal drummers can play, too. There's a lot of us out here who really know what we're doing, and I think that, as a throwback to the old school of thinking, we get pushed aside much too quickly. The songs are in simple form, so people tend not to respect us partially because of that. But there's beauty in simplicity."

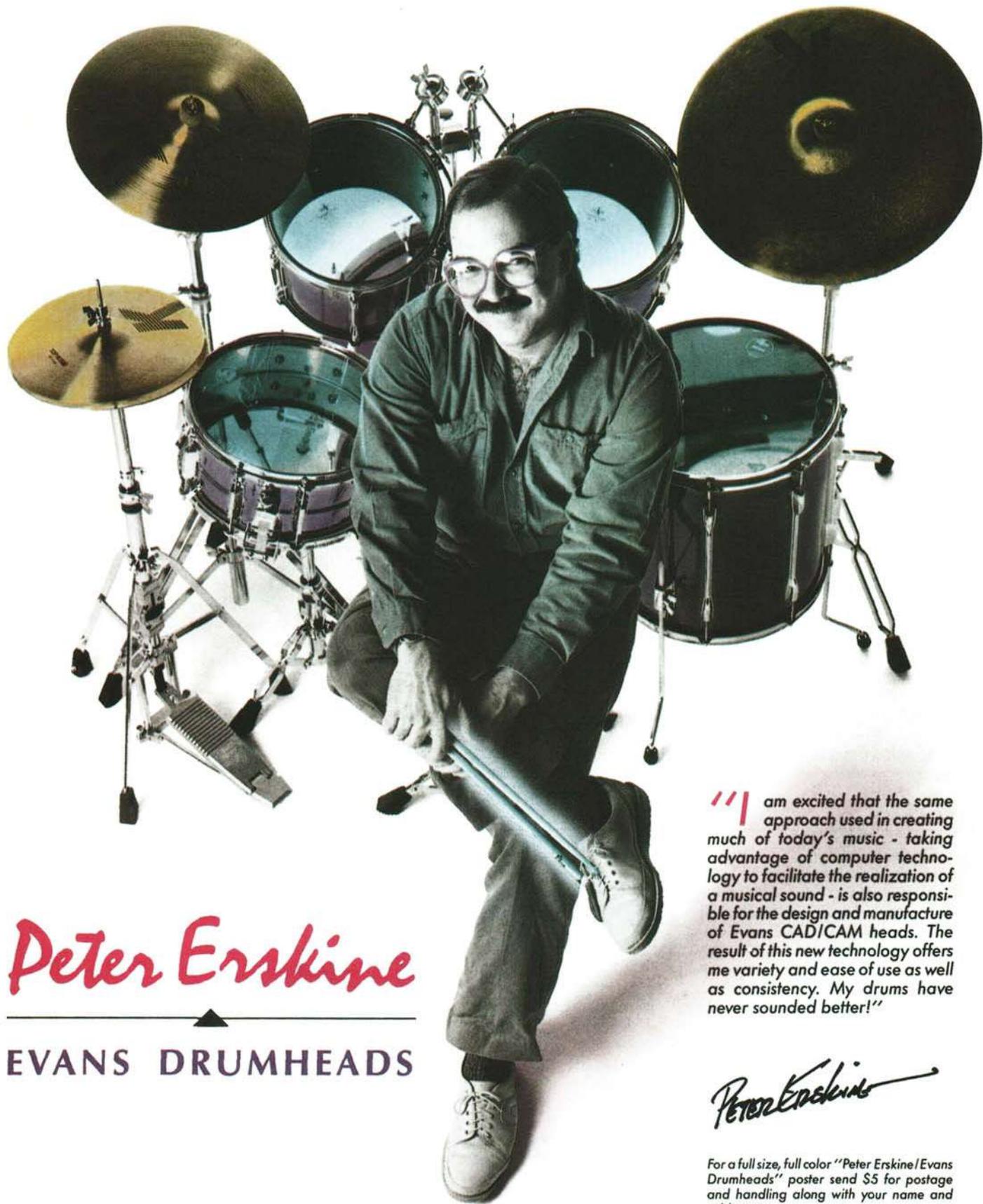
—Teri Saccone

Tony Brock is on Rod Stewart's upcoming LP, and he is currently working with Australian artist Jimmy Barnes. Brock is on Barnes' Geffen release, *Freight Train*, released the end of April. **Michael DiGerónimo** working with Empyre.

Mario Grillo with Machito Orchestra, recently doing dates in Puerto Rico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Argentina. Percussionist **Emedin Rivera** has been touring with violinist Noel Pointer for the past two years, as well as

doing shows with Joan Rivers, an album with Tom Brown, and a series of dates with LaToya Jackson. **Danny Gayol** recently played the San Remo Rock Festival with Robbie Robertson. **Billy Ward** in the studio with Bill Evans.

Congratulations to Billy on his recent marriage to Maura Robinson. **Ron Thompson** recording and playing with Boxcar Willie. According to a Capitol Records press release, the version of "Love



Peter Erskine

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EVANS

JON HISEMAN

Q. Your drumming—especially your technique and ability to play so fluidly in odd times—absolutely amazes me. In Colosseum II, when Don Airey and Gary Moore presented song ideas to you, did you consciously think about the time signatures when coming up with a drum part, or did you work out your parts based on the feel of the song? Do you have any advice in regards to technique and odd times? Also, what are you currently doing, and do you know if there are plans to release any of the Colosseum II albums on CD?

Tripp Davis
Memphis TN

A. My ability to play virtually any odd time signature has developed over the years from a rather strange concept. When I began to play the drums, it never occurred to me to learn "licks." I studied all the usual books—George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control and Accents And Rebounds*, Wilcoxon's *Wrist And Finger Stroke Control*—but the music of the day didn't lend itself to learning a two-beat phrase here or a four-bar "feel" there. Since I was brought up very firmly in the jazz style and always felt the role of the drums to be that of a catalyst prodding and probing the soloist's lines, it seemed natural to learn to react to what was going on around me in as unconscious a way as possible.

These days, faced with the fine recordings being made of drums, it is very easy for a young drummer to build up a playing style based on a series of licks or phrases that he has stolen, copied,

altered, or maybe even created, but which tie him to working within those limits. If, however, you can free yourself from working this way, you are more able to react to what you are hearing. The only purpose of an odd time signature is to put forward a riff in which the melody creates the inherent rhythm. (There is no point in playing in odd time for its own sake.) In my experience, most of these riffs are composed first as a nice "feel," and then it is discovered that they are not in 4/4.

My purpose is always to play these riffs in a seamless fashion, so the listener will not notice that they are odd. It was while I was with Colosseum II that I began to develop the conscious idea of not playing the drums, but playing the band instead, and this concept is vital in playing fluently in odd time signatures. The riff may come from the bass, the keyboards, or the lead instrument. But whoever you are listening to, play the riff without counting or thinking about bar lines. Several times, I have recorded numbers only to analyze the time signature later. In some cases, my interpretation of the bar divisions have been different from the way another player has been counting.

All riffs in any time signature have strong and weak beats that carry them forward. When you start to analyze how you are playing the riff, listen to how the other instruments create the tensions and release in the riff. Then, try to create the same effect yourself. Ultimately, if you



Photo by Rick Malkin

take the drum part alone, the momentum of the original riff should still be retained.

With regard to the last part of your question, I am spending most of my time working with my wife Barbara Thompson's five-piece group, *Paraphernalia*, and with her 18-piece orchestra. There are several albums available on MCA records, and the live double-LP recorded in 1980 features an extended solo in 5/4. I also made a solo album some months ago entitled *About Time Too!* [reviewed in the Dec. '87 MD—Ed.]. It is available from Temple Music, P.O. Box 141, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 5JU, U.K. on receipt of a money order or banker's draft, made payable in British Pounds Sterling for £10.50 for the LP and £7.60 for the cassette. There are no plans of which I am aware to release *Colosseum II* on CD at this time, but a new double live album from Barbara Thompson should be in release by September of 1988. Thank you for your interest in my work.

ALAN GRATZER

Q. I recently saw you in a benefit concert for Woodruff High School, and appreciate what your band did for the school. I would like to know what the percussion sounds are on "In My Dreams." I'd also like to know what size drums and cymbals you are using, what types of heads and how they are miked, and why you use a woodblock for your "rim clicks" instead of the drum.

Bob McCauley
Greenville SC

A. Thanks for coming to the benefit for Woodruff. We felt good about doing a small part to get that high school rebuilt after the fire that destroyed it.

The percussion sounds on "In My Dreams" were quite a project. The whole combination of sounds came from my Linn machine and Steve Foreman's vast amount of percussion instruments that he has accumulated on his travels around

the world. The very low notes that begin each measure are from a "stamp tube." That is a very long, strange-looking hollow tube that you stamp on the ground. We sampled it, and were able to change notes. The loud snare-type sound on the "4" of every other measure was a detuned Linn snare in combination with Linn handclaps. Together, I call it the "Prince" sound because Prince has used it on so many of his records. The shakers and cabasa sounds were originally programmed by me, and then the patterns were re-done with real instruments from Steve's collection.

My drum sizes are 10", 12", and 13" rack toms, and a 16" floor tom. None of them are "power" depths. I find that this way I can get more attack or a more percussive sound out of them, yet still retain the great tonality that one expects from one's toms. My bass drum is a 22" deep-

shelled model, and my snare is a Ludwig Black Beauty.

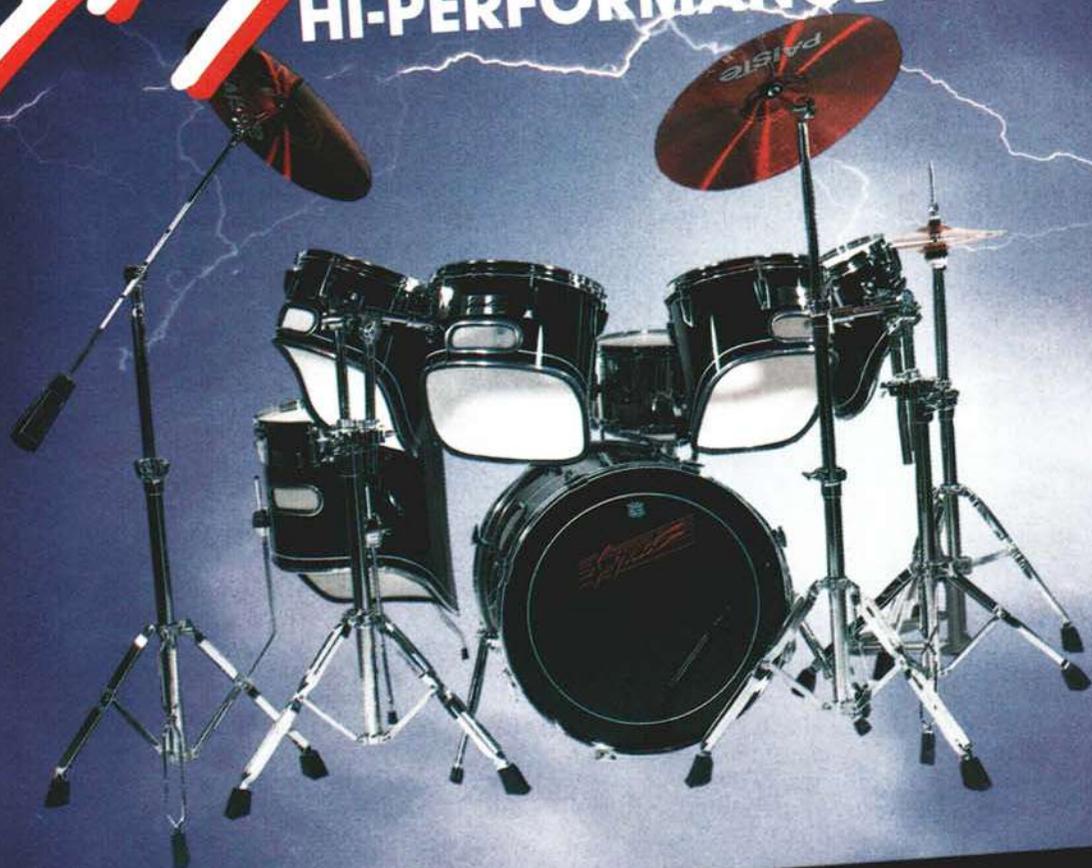
I use coated Ambassador heads on all my drums, and my drum sounds live are all my real sounds, but sampled and triggered through an SP-12. This way, I don't have to worry as much about tuning my drums each night. The samples were done under optimum conditions, so I don't have to worry about the drums sounding bad in some halls. They sound pretty much the same (great) every night!

The reason I use my woodblock for rim clicks (the stick laid across both the drum-head and rim) is because the handle portions of my sticks are taped up about 1/2" thick. This affects the ability to lay the stick flat on the head and across the rim. I could never get any volume or tone out of it that way, so I just use the woodblock for a very similar sound and effect. Thanks for your great questions!



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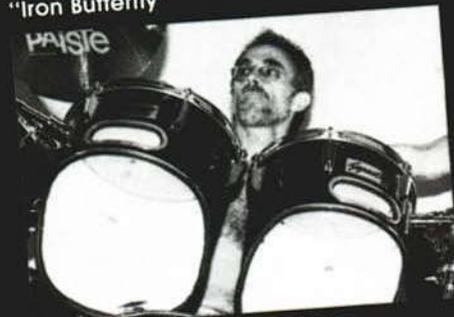
Frank Donaldson
Drummer with: Ramsey Lewis, Stanley Turrentine, Angela Bofill



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Q. I've been teaching drums for several years and would like to publish a method book. The material is well-written, organized, and very effective. What I need to know is how to get my book published, and what options I have. Can you give me any information?

D.B.

Seattle WA

A. MD has presented two features on the subject of getting one's drum book published. The first, "How To Publish Your Own Drum Book," by Tim Brenner, appeared in the April, 1982 issue. It dealt with the option of putting out the book yourself, as opposed to approaching existing music publishers. In April of 1985, "Getting Your Drum Book Published," by William F. Miller, explored the pro-publisher route. Contact MD's Back-issue Department for information on the availability of back issues or xerographic copies of those articles.

Q. I play a five-piece set of Pearl Drum-X electronic drums in conjunction with a five-piece acoustic set. I have three questions in regard to this combination. First, with the Drum-X, I only have drum sounds—no extra percussion. I am looking for some kind of expander that would let me add that dimension to my existing set. Is there one, and where do I find it? Second, how do I go about miking the acoustic drums and cymbals so I can amplify them along with the electronics? Third, where in the world do I find bags or cases (not road/flight cases) to carry the electronic drums?

A.M.

Ardmore OK

A. Your first question poses the greatest difficulty, since Pearl has discontinued its electronic drum lines completely. You may need to consider going to a different sound source altogether, and triggering it from your acoustic drums or some external triggering device other than the Drum-X pads, since they are dedicated to the drum sounds produced by the Drum-X brain. Many low- to mid-price drum machines offer some pretty decent Latin percussion sounds, or you may wish to go as far as a sampler in order to get whatever sounds you desire.

Miking acoustic drums and cymbals in order to balance them with electronic drums is a major consideration. It seems simple: Just put mic's on the drums and cymbals, run them into the same sound system that is carrying the electronics, and mix them all together. The problem arises when the number of channels necessary to accomplish this exceeds the number available on the main sound board—not at all unlikely if you mike a five-piece kit, several cymbals, and five or more channels of electronic drums as well. Unless your band employs a sizeable (24-channel or larger) soundboard, what will most likely be required is for you to sub-mix your acoustic and electronic drums yourself, using a sufficient number of mic's for the kit and a mixer with enough channels to handle all of those mic's and all of the electronic signals. You'll need to mix all of those lines down to a stereo or even mono master mix, which you will then send to your main P.A. board. This is not an inexpensive proposition, but it does give you the benefit of having complete control over the balance of your acoustic/electronic combination kit.

Several drum bag manufacturers offer excellent bags for electronic drums, and some companies also offer fiber cases. These include Humes & Berg, Beato Musical Products, Impact Industries, Hybrid Cases, and Mechanical Music, among others. Check their ads in MD for their addresses, or ask your local dealer for assistance.

Q. I have been playing drums for about four years now, and I keep playing pop/metal-sounding beats. I want to learn a lot more variety, such as jazz, Latin, or swift solo-type pop rhythms. I haven't taken a lesson in my life, which hasn't helped me when it comes to original beats. I am trying to decide if I

should take lessons, or if these improvements would eventually come to a progressing drummer anyway. I'd like your opinion.

S.H.

Sioux Falls SD

A. It is possible that a dedicated drummer can gain skills in a variety of areas without the help of a teacher—by listening to records, and by emulating notable artists in different fields. But the process will be a long one, and the additional possibility exists that the skills learned in this manner will be somewhat of a "copycat" nature, rather than truly original, creative abilities. A teacher can shorten the process immensely by providing guidance, correction, study materials, encouragement, and the necessary "playing vocabulary" with which you can develop your own style within the various musical areas you wish to explore. The dedication must, of course, still come from you. But the time and effort required to reach your goal will very likely be shortened dramatically with the aid of a qualified teacher.

Q. I'm 20 years old, on the road with a Top-40/rock 'n' roll band, and I have a problem. I've been playing with mostly Top-40 bands since I was 18, but have only been able to develop one style (the one I prefer most): heavy metal. I come from a total "metal" background, and that's what I grew up playing. Can you give me any advice to help me out?

S.D.W.

Everywhere USA

A. It seems your problem is one of choices, some of which may be under your control, and some of which may not. It seems obvious that if you had your choice, you would be in a playing situation where you could perform the music you prefer exclusively. However, it seems just as obvious that you haven't had that opportunity, since you have been working in Top-40 bands for the past two years. Perhaps that is where you've found a more practical or lucrative niche. Having made that choice, you now need to realize that your "background" is working against you. If you're going to be successful at playing Top-40 music, you have to be able—and willing—to play all of the various styles that make up that variety format. There really is only one way to do that, and it involves nothing more than the same process by which you developed your "metal" style: listening. You learned to play "metal" by listening to metal. You can learn to play other styles by listening to those styles, and analyzing what makes them what they are. You can note not only what beats are most commonly played, but what type of sounds are appropriate, how and when fills are used, what types of grooves establish a certain style, etc. Be scientific, and really concentrate on the fundamentals of dance rock, funk, ballads, techno-pop, and all the other styles that are represented in the Top-40 at any given time. You might want to check out Rick Van Horn's Club Scene column in the April, '83 MD, entitled "Analyzing Style." It goes into these elements in greater detail. Contact MD's Back-issue Department for information on the availability of back issues or xerographic copies of those articles.

Q. Can you tell me how I can get in touch with Gil Moore of Triumph?

J.G.

New Haven CT

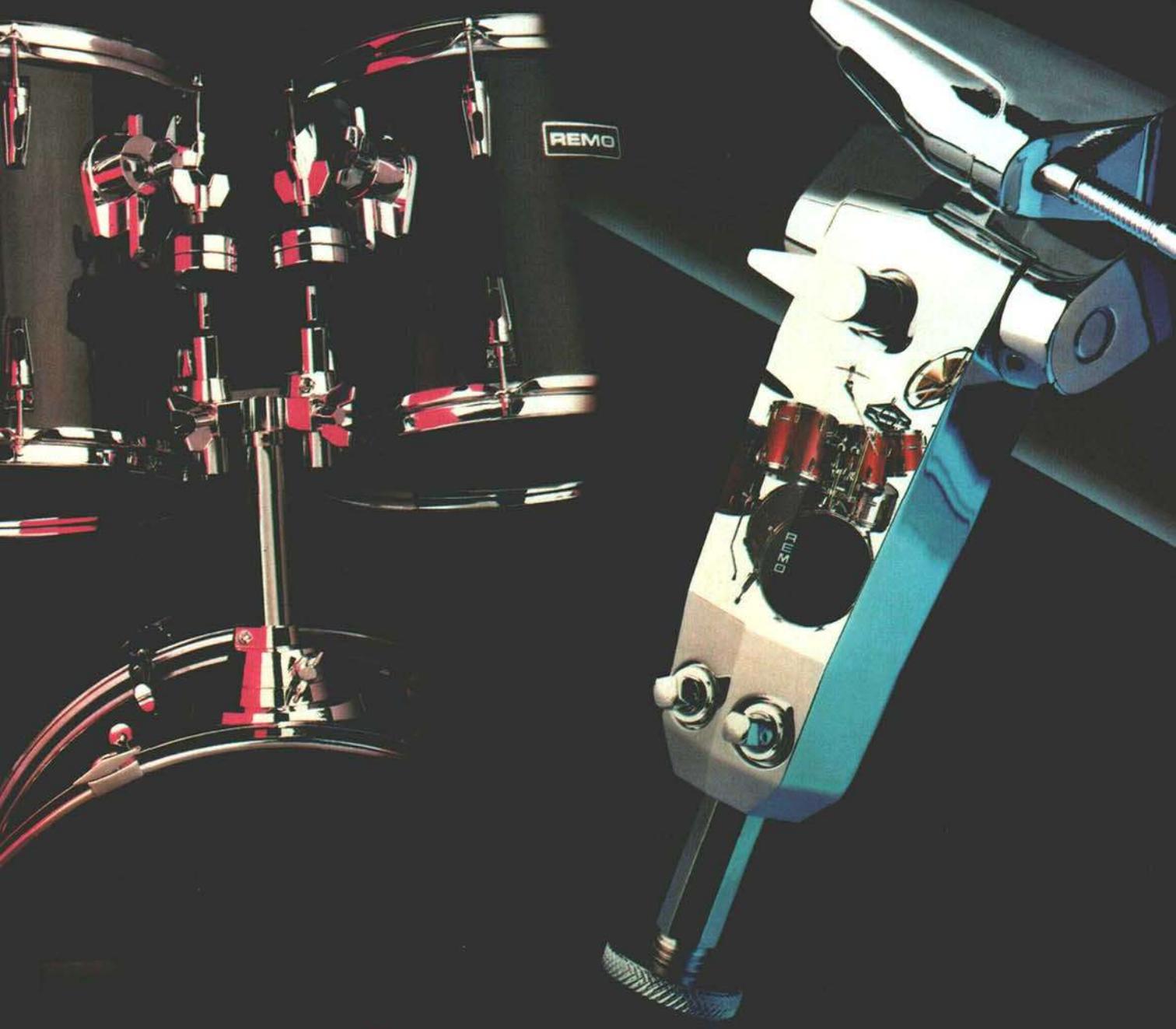
Q. I would like to know how I could get a letter to Rick Allen. I have experimented with several ideas that may be of use to him.

J.L.

Waveland MS

A. Letters to both Rick and Gil may be sent in care of Modern Drummer. As we have often stated before, MD will be happy to forward readers' letters to their favorite artists. We cannot, of course, guarantee that those letters will reach the artists, or that the artists will respond.





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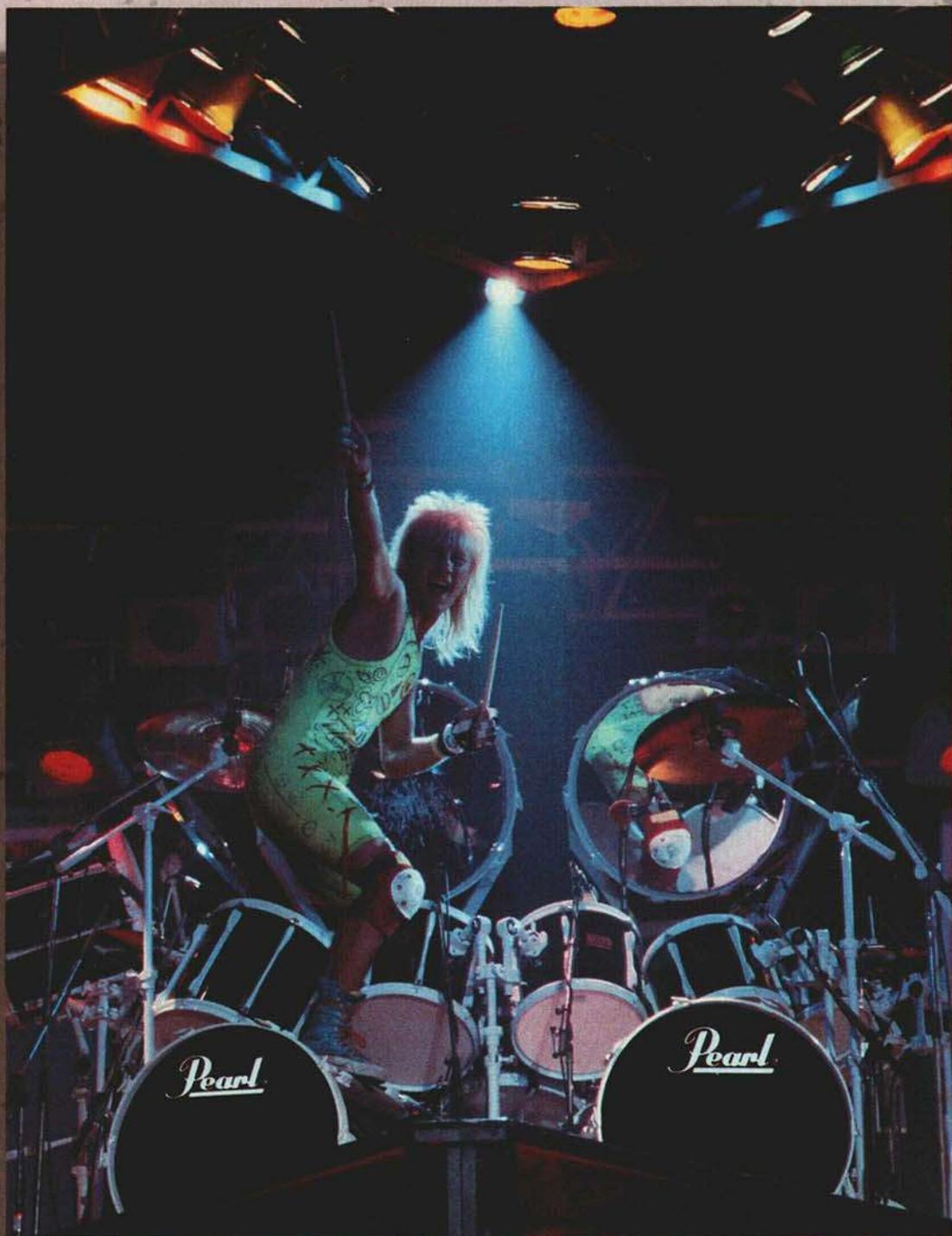


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Liberty

It's Christmastime on Long Island. In the DeVitto home, there is a huge tree surrounded by packages. The packages create tunnels and corridors for the two electric trains running under the tree. Liberty DeVitto loves trains. He also loves being home with his family. And he has a right to enjoy this particular time at home, since he has only been home for a matter of days from a 14-month tour with Billy Joel.

That tour, in support of Billy's 1986 album, The Bridge, took on epic proportions, covering the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan, England, and Russia, then back to Australia and New Zealand. The performances in Russia generated an album of their own, along with an HBO videotaped special and a filmed documentary to be aired this summer by ABC Television. Since Liberty, his wife, Mary, and their daughter, Torrey, are so close, they decided to take this opportunity to travel together. They shared the experiences of the tour as a family, rather than being forced into the lengthy separation that the music business normally creates for a touring artist and his loved ones. (Of course, touring can have its benefits, too. Liberty met Mary in 1984 while on tour with Stevie Nicks in support of her Bella Donna album. They were married soon thereafter, and had their daughter, Torrey, right away. Upon the conclusion of the Bridge tour, they were pleased to discover that Mary is expecting again.)

As exciting as the tour was, the entire family was happy to be home in time for the holidays. And so it was that Liberty had the opportunity—and the graciousness—to invite MD into his home for a conversation about his experiences on the Russian leg of

the Bridge tour, his playing on the album, his current status as a member of Billy Joel's band and as an artist in his own right, and his outlook for the future.

RVH: Fourteen months is a long time!

LD: It didn't seem that long. Billy paces it: two shows on with maybe two days off. He never does more than two shows in a row. In the States, we had our own plane. We'd play a show, then get on the plane again and fly to the next town, so that we could wake up already there. Our time off wasn't involved with traveling.

I was able to take my family with me on this tour, which is what made it the easiest. I see guys on the road going insane, not having their families with them. Family is real important to me.

RVH: The most unique aspect of the *Bridge* tour was the shows in Russia. How did they come about?

LD: Billy had wanted to play Russia since we played in Cuba in 1979. After we came back from there, Billy said, "If I can play in Cuba, why can't I play in Russia?" So when Soviet Premier Gorbachov came up with his Glasnost policy, Billy was told that he could play Russia now, if he wanted to. Billy definitely wanted to do it, but there was a lot of preparation. The political ramifications became really involved. There were so many things that could have cancelled the shows. If there had been another Korean Airlines-type crisis, or if our country did something the Russian government didn't like, it might have changed the whole thing. It was "on" and in the process of happening when the tour started in September of '86, but it wasn't until later on in the tour—when we had finished the U.S. leg in May of

'87—that it was officially announced that we were going. But even from that point on, anything could have happened to change it.

RVH: Did anyone in the band have any reservations about the trip at all? Did Billy just walk in one day and say, "I'm going to Russia. You're in my band, so you're going to Russia, too!"?

LD: No. We were informed that Billy was thinking about going there. We met in Washington with people who had gone there and who knew about Russia. We met with people on the political end of it, and with Soviet officials and diplomats. They came to a show and rated the songs like they rate the Olympics—from one to ten. When we got up to "Goodnight Saigon," they said, "We like the song, but we want to read the words to it." And then we met with people who had worked with Russian promoters. Our management was going back and forth with these people all the time. They kept updating us on what it was going to be like: "Bring food, because they won't have what you like.... The worst accommodations here will be the best there...." It was a big preparation. Finally, we all said, "Okay, we're in. Let's go!"

I was paranoid right from the very beginning just because my name is "Liberty"! I thought, "Oh man! When they ask me my name, I'm going to say 'Liberty' and they're going to say, 'What?!' and get all insulted."

RVH: How did the logistics of the Russian tour compare to any other world tour you've done?

LD: Well, because we went from England to Russia, we used an English trucking company. We brought all the same type of equipment that you'd see at a U.S. show, including

by Rick Van Horn

ACROSS

THE

BRIDGE

DeVitto





staging, sound system, lighting, band gear—everything. It was all driven in four big tractor-trailer trucks. It wasn't that difficult going from England to Moscow. But then, one of the truck drivers from England had an appendix attack and had to go home. The driver who was to fly into Russia from England to replace him was getting hassled at the border. So two of our stage crew had to drive, along with the English crew, from Moscow to Leningrad. Our guitar roadie, Chainsaw, had been a truck driver at one time. He told me that he saw a lot of revealing stuff on that little drive, like women in the fields taking down the wheat with sickles. People were so poor.

The logistics generally weren't difficult. But there was one time when Billy, Mark Rivera, George Simms, Peter Hewlett, and I went to Tbilisi. We were going to a monastery where they sang these old Christian a capella hymns that Billy wanted to record for the documentary. When we

were going to the airport or driving around the area, the roads were very poor. They grow fruit in southern Russia, but they can't get it up to Moscow and places like that because the road system is so bad. The only way they do things like that is to put wheat and fruit on the commercial flights of Aeroflot as luggage!

RVH: Did those road conditions present your trucks with a problem?

LD: No, because from Moscow to Leningrad it wasn't bad.

RVH: Under normal circumstances on a European tour, you have access to help if something breaks down on your kit. You can get spare drumsticks, a drumhead, or something of that nature on a night's notice if you have to, because most of the major companies are represented in Europe. But if you were in Leningrad and needed something....

LD: They don't have anything! They only way they get stuff is when people like me come in, and can give them things. But you're not allowed to give out things. Billy tried to give away a piano, and they wouldn't let him. The philosophy there is that no one can get something that everyone else can't have, too.

There was this one kid who was in a band over there. He sat under the stage the whole show and just watched, amazed. I found out that he had an old set of drums, and his cymbals were all broken. So after the last show of the Russian tour, I took my cymbals off the stands, put them in a cymbal bag, turned to the kid—who couldn't speak English—and said, "Here, you can have these. These are for you." He looked in the bag, and I could tell by the look on his face that he couldn't believe that someone was giving him these cymbals. But as soon as he did that, two guys came and grabbed him by the arms, and just dragged him off with the cymbals. To this day, I don't know what happened to him. Maybe they took the cymbals away from him and locked him up. Maybe they made him leave for his own good because

they knew that if the wrong person saw him there would be trouble. I just don't know.

RVH: Did you get a chance to interact with Russian musicians at all?

LD: We met a group called the Stas Nammen band. They're pretty popular over there. They've sold 45 million records in Russia, and have even toured the States—and they have nothing to show for it. Stas has a little recording studio, and we went there for a barbeque. Then we started to jam with half of his band and some other musicians who were there. We played some old blues and some rock tunes like "Hoochie Koochie Man," and they even played "A Matter Of Trust." It's funny to hear a song you play every night being done in Russian.

After we were finished, this one guitar player started to cry. When we asked him what was wrong, he told us that he was so happy. He'd had a dream to play with American musicians, and he was just thrilled that he had actually been able to do that.

Some of the bigger groups over there, like the Stas Nammen band, have decent equipment. But even then, one member asked me to try to send him a catalog of some brands that they can't get, so he could just see what was available. A piece of equipment that would cost around \$500-\$700 here will cost \$3,000-\$5,000 over there, on the black market. It's almost impossible for Russian musicians to get equipment. So I left drumheads, sticks, and cymbals there. I had brought in a little red set to do a TV show that we wound up not doing—Billy did it by himself—and I wanted to leave it there. But when our equipment came in, the Soviet officials checked every case. If a case went out empty, they would wonder what had happened. So it was harder to get out *without* the stuff than it was to bring stuff *in*.

In some of those cases we brought food. Mark Rivera, the sax player, brought a little two-burner stove. He used that to make sauce and macaroni in his room! It was a heavily Italian band!

RVH: What about the stagehands? Did you find them cooperative and competent?

LD: Well, we brought our own riggers, because you don't want to take a chance on a language barrier when you're hanging thousands of pounds of equipment. The coliseum that we played in was the one built for the 1980 Olympics. It was only eight years old, but it looked like it was 40. The cement was breaking. Our riggers said that when they went up into the roof to start hanging equipment, they found something incredible. In almost any venue that we played anywhere else in the world, the design is symmetrical: If you go up into the rafters and beams on one side of the hall, there are matching beams on the other side. This place had beams where the riggers couldn't understand why they were there! There would be one thick one, and then a real thin one. So it was good that we brought our own people for that kind of thing.

But as far as other people went, they had soldiers putting the stage together, and they wanted to do it. They wanted to know what it was going to be like when it was all finished—all this stuff that was going on. When Brian Rugles, our sound mixer—who also produced the concert album—turned on the sound system for the first time and I hit the bass drum and it came out of all those speakers, those people couldn't believe it.

RVH: After Russia, you returned to Australia for a second time. Billy must be pretty popular there.

LD: He is. All told, we did 12

shows in Sydney, 12 in Melbourne, six in Brisbane, one in Adelaide, two in Perth, and then a few in New Zealand. And, on our return visit, David Bowie, Michael Jackson, Eric Clapton, and Stevie Wonder were all touring there, too. When we played in Sydney in November, we played three nights of a six-night stand, tore down our equipment so that Eric Clapton could play one night, and then set it all back up again for the next three nights. Then as we loaded out, Stevie Wonder was loading in. It's a small world, and we're actually in a small business. There are only so many venues that major acts can play, and we all work the same ones. It's just like being on the same bar circuit in Long Island—only the rooms are a little bigger! [laughs]

RVH: You seem to be the spark plug of Billy's act. The intensity seems to come from you to Billy and then back to the rest of the band. Yet in the Russian concert video, the distance factor on stage seems pretty large. Billy was set up way down in front on stage left, while you were well up on center stage. Does that distance ever bother you?

LD: Not during the shows. But we try to jam during soundchecks. We do different tunes from our regular set, and that's where it becomes difficult, because you need to know what the other musicians are playing. I've never heard half the guys in the band; I don't know if they can play or not! [laughs] That's because I don't have everything coming through my monitor. Mostly, I play to Billy's vocal, so that's the loudest thing. His piano is next, because you go where

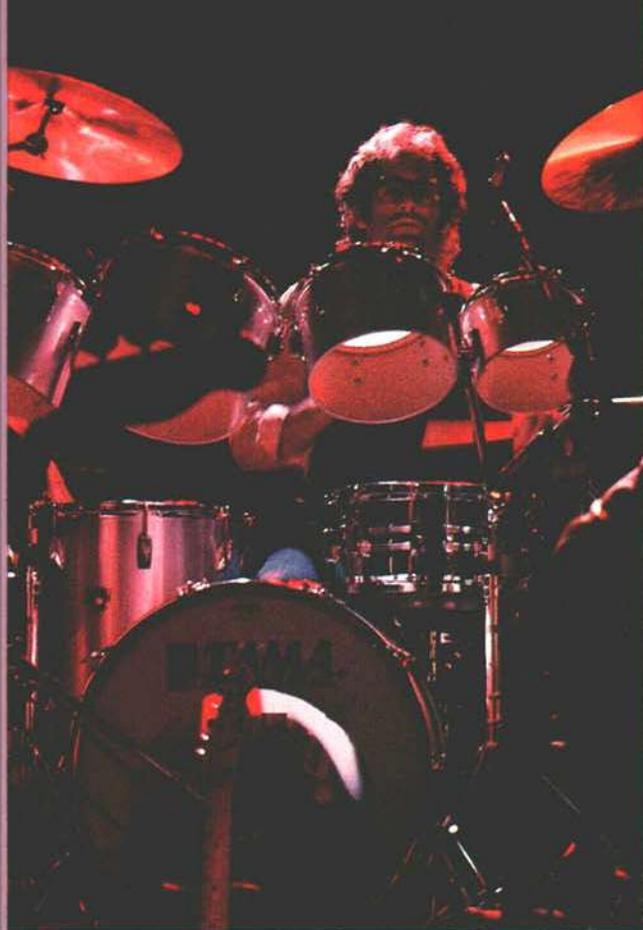


Photo by Stephen A. Weiss

the leader goes. The spotlight's on him, and if we go a different way, he's the one who gets embarrassed. But you have to remember that this band didn't go from a tight little club directly to that big stage. It was a gradual thing that we got used to over the years.

One thing that's real tough for me—and I was surprised the first time it happened—is coming off our stage, and then sitting in on someone else's equipment at a club where there is no monitor except for vocals. To hear a bass drum in that situation is impossible! It's all going out front. I'll sit down to play, hit the cymbal or whack the snare drum to set up the tune, and then, "Wow; where's the bass drum?" I've gotten used to having those speakers all the time.

On my drumkit, there's so much padding to cut down on ring and to isolate the bass drum sound that I *have* to depend on the EQ on the monitor board for it to sound good. When that's gone, suddenly you're getting the *back* of the drum. Whatever the beater hits, that's the sound that you're hearing. It sounds

“Phil Ramone calls me a ‘songwriter’s drummer.’ I like to know what the artist is saying before I play the song.”



terrible! I see people walk in front of a bass drum and say, "That's a great-sounding bass drum!" and I say, "You gotta be kidding me! *That sounds great?*"

RVH: Have you ever had your monitor go out during a show?

LD: Oh yeah! It'll just cut out; everything's gone. All of a sudden, the hi-hat cymbals feel like they've gone from real thin to manhole covers. Everything gets real thick, and the snare drum sounds horrible. All that EQ is gone. On my snare drum we use three mic's: one on top, one on the bottom, and one through the air hole to pick up anything inside. When they mix those all together it sounds like this beautiful drum. But boy, when those mic's are off, you'd think I was slapping a cardboard box.

RVH: We get letters asking, "How does he get that great drum sound?" from people who think that the majority of what they hear in a concert or on a record comes from the drums themselves. But you

actually have to get a "good sound" for the sound system, not necessarily what you consider a good, true, acoustic drum sound to be.

LD: Right. See, I have a *Zero Ring* on my snare drum for the shows, but I like a snare drum better without it. I love the sound that Kenny Aronoff gets on the Mellenkamp albums. That, to me, sounds like a real snare drum. When you buy a snare drum in a store, that's what it sounds like: it rings. But the guys out front can't stand to hear that. One night I took the *Zero Ring* off, and Brian screamed at me. He said, "I'll never let you play with that ring off again!" He just had so much trouble fighting the ring of the drum out in the hall. You know, the changes that occur from the time you set your drums up in your basement when you first start playing to the time you play in places like we do now are just incredible. Most young drummers have no idea of the things you have to deal with.

RVH: Speaking of changes, let's talk about some that your kit has undergone. When you were interviewed in *MD* in 1982, you were playing open-bottomed drums. You told a story about trying some electronic drums while in Australia, and said that if Billy had been any closer, he would have thrown them off the stage. A lot has changed in the music business since then. Now you're playing double-headed drums....

LD: And there are some electronic gadgets being used. Out front, they have a Simmons brain. All the toms go through that so that they can mix the total sound. That's just for enhancement, not for any exotic sounds. We're looking for certain sounds, like the big timpanic booms in the bridge of "Goodnight Saigon." But Brian likes the sound of the normal kit, so that's what we use as much as possible.

RVH: Do you care for electronics yourself?

LD: No. I don't fool with them at all. I had a couple of Simmons pads on the kit this tour to use on "This Is The Time." Phil Ramone [Billy Joel's producer on *The Bridge*] had a set of Simmons in the studio, and

we used a couple of them to record that tune. But I would rather not use them; I don't like them. I like the sound of a natural set of drums, and the more they ring, the better I like them. That's why I've gone back to double-headed drums.

RVH: In your 1982 interview in *MD*, you stated that you don't know anything about jazz; you're a fundamental rock 'n' roll drummer. But many of the tunes on *The Bridge* were not what I'd define as "fundamental" rock 'n' roll; they definitely had very different feels. To me, "fundamental rock" might describe tunes like "A Matter Of Trust" or "Modern Woman." But "Big Man On Mulberry Street" has a swinging big band feel, while "Running On Ice" offers an uptempo reggae feel during the verses, with a machine-gun snare in the intro. When Billy came to you with these two tunes, did he ask you to play the specific parts you played?

LD: When Billy played "Running On Ice" the first time, all he had was that rapid upbeat pattern that makes up the verses—with the accent on the "and" of every beat. What else could the drums play but what I played? And on "Mulberry Street" it was a similar thing: The music had such a laid-back swing to it that it just dictated what the drums should play. I did have fun with that sort of Bernard Purdie-type rolling-triplet feel in the middle, though.

Billy's whole attitude toward that song was interesting. When we first started rehearsing it, it was like a "jazz" song, with this acoustic-bass section in the middle. Billy said, "Listen Lib, you can't *play* jazz; you ain't a jazz drummer. I want you to play it like a rock 'n' roll drummer would play jazz." And that's how it came out.

RVH: There's a lot of extra percussion on "Running On Ice." Was that all you?

LD: Jimmy Bralower came in and programmed a lot of stuff in between the parts that I play. But the machine-gun snare was me, during the song itself. That was a case of tuning the snare very high, try-

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Photo by Shepthen A. Weiss.



Liberty: Off The Record

by Mark Hurley

Liberty DeVitto has an uncanny knack for finding the perfect beat to complement the great songs of Billy Joel. His playing clearly indicates that there's a lot more to drumming on tons of hit recordings than first meets the eye—and ear. The following is an analysis of Liberty's solid rock drumming, which is a coupling of an extremely musical approach with a deep concern for the music—*first and foremost*.

"Allentown": Though he could very easily have played a much more complex pattern, Liberty demonstrates great restraint and discipline by playing only the bare minimum on this tune.

MUSIC KEY

C	X
CS	X
TT	X
S.D.	X
B.D.	X

© 1981

1

"Uptown Girl": This is straight-ahead, no-nonsense rock drumming that clearly captures the mood of the old Four Seasons records—the obvious flavor of this Billy Joel hit.

2

"Big Shot": This beat appears right after the introduction.

3

"Just The Way You Are": Light 16ths, a 2 and 4 bass drum, and one tom-tom provide a perfect slow samba lilt to this popular Billy Joel ballad.

4

"Big Man On Mulberry Street": A simple triplet pattern with a slight accent on the "a" supplies an infectious groove to the verse of this big band/jazz-oriented tune.

5

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RON



TUTT

**Reflections on Elvis,
Neil Diamond,
and a lot of years behind a drumkit...**
and a lot of years behind a drumkit...
Neil Diamond
Reflections on Elvis

As with the majority of people in the field of entertainment, drummers' jobs are usually in a state of flux. Who's hot in '81, who's not in '82. Drummers come and drummers go. Unfortunately this is just the nature of "The Biz." There are some drummers, though, whose work and continued progression in the field make them something of legends in their own time. Ron Tutt is one of these drummers. His eight years of touring and playing with Elvis Presley would've been enough to bring him acknowledgement and fame, but throughout the past six years with Neil Diamond, his work with Delaney And Bonnie, countless record dates, and many other musical experiences, Ron Tutt has done anything but fade into the solid maple woodwork. For the past 25 years Tutt has been one of the few "enduring ones."

Recently Tutt performed with Roy Orbison, Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello, Bonnie Raitt, and a stageful of other "heavies" in a television special produced by Home Box Office called Cinemax Sessions. The show aired the first week in January of this year, and has since produced two video singles that have gained major airplay on VH1 and other television video stations. On another recent occasion in England, Tutt performed with other members of the Presley band in a tribute to the "King of Rock 'n' Roll" ten years after his death. Since his move to the West Coast in 1969, Tutt has been busy in the L.A. studios, and is able to give MD readers an interesting look into some of the trends there. Far from being cocky about his achievements, Tutt's eagerness to help the younger aspiring drummers in the business epitomizes his nature. After an in-depth interview, I was happy to find out a bit more about the man behind the kit.

by Stephanie Bennett

SB: I hesitate to start with your time with Elvis. I'm afraid you must be tired of the questions after all these years.

RT: Elvis was great. He was a very loyal guy, you know. I loved the years I toured with him.

SB: How did you get the job?

RT: Well, there's a lot of background to that story, but to make it short, one of my friends got me the audition. When I flew into the airport, all I had was my kit and the clothes on my back.

SB: And...?

RT: Okay. [laughs] I'll tell you the story. When Floyd Kramer couldn't do the piano work for Elvis, my friend Larry Mahoberac was his second call. And when Elvis did his comeback thing in '69, they contacted Floyd first, but again he couldn't connect with him for some reason, so they called Larry again. He then said to me, "I'm going to do this thing, and I know they're looking for a drummer. So if it comes up, I'll let you know." Sure enough, a couple of weeks after he left, I got a call. It was sort of funny, because I had already given my two-weeks notice to the studio I was working in, and this was my last day. I was literally walking out the door when I got the call to come out and audition.

SB: Obviously the audition went well. But was there an immediate chemistry?

RT: Yeah, I'd say it was pretty immediate. There was a lot of interaction on stage between me and the other players. We just started to groove, and I could tell all the guys were into it.

SB: What do you think clinched it for you?

RT: Well, I was the last drummer that Elvis heard, and it was between me and one other drummer, who was doing all the Motown sessions. He was really good, and I could see that the rest of the band was really into his playing. But I just went up there and focused on Elvis. I really think I got the job because Elvis and I had such great eye communication on stage. He said that I didn't just do my own thing up there when I auditioned; I watched him. And you really had to, because it was like playing for a glorified stripper. With all the moves he made, you had to play according to what he was doing. We had a great rapport from the beginning. That night started it off. I really wasn't even expecting it. I told you I didn't even have a change of clothes. I auditioned on a Saturday night and they said, "Okay, we'll let you know tomorrow." I was scheduled to fly out, but I ended up staying. The next day, when I got the call, they said, "Okay, he picked you. Rehearsal starts tomorrow night. We rehearse two weeks and then open in Vegas."

SB: What a whirlwind!

RT: Yeah, it was a whirlwind alright. It was an amazing thing.

SB: So you began with him in 1969 and continued working with him...

RT: Until he died, in 1977.

SB: I know that you used an incredibly large kit for the Elvis gig. In fact, it's been said that you were one of the innovators of a more creative tom fill, utilizing so many different sizes. Was it Elvis that pushed you this way? I heard that he was really interested in the drums—actually, in everybody's instruments in his band.

RT: Well, he definitely liked the drums I brought in. He liked the

looks of them, and he liked the sound. And I was using a large kit. I had eight toms and two bass drums on stage.

SB: That was pretty much before double bass drums were the rage. What gave you the idea to use them?

RT: With Elvis I needed a lot of power and drive. Up until that time I had never used double bass drums; I really didn't need them. And yes, I guess I was one of the first drummers who was using double bass drums and so many toms. I've had quite a few other drummers tell me this. Actually, it wasn't any big deal. I just thought, "Maybe if I had two bass drums, it would give me more of what I needed."

SB: Did it take you a long time to learn double bass technique?

RT: I just set them up one day and started playing. I never even practiced. When our job started up there in Vegas, I came in with them, and Elvis loved them. I then went from that set, which was made by Premier, to a Sonor set that had double bass drums. Then I went to the Ludwig set.

SB: I remember hearing that Elvis was very demanding about the musicians backing him up, and that he always had a lot to say about what was being played. Is there any truth to that?

RT: He never really made any big demands at all, no. I'd say that he was really rather liberal. If he wanted a certain thing here or there he'd say, "Hey Ronnie, could you do a little more of this thing or that?" But he was never demanding musically to me. If we were pretty much sensitive to what was going on, he gave us a lot of room. That's one of the things I loved most about it. There was an incredible amount of freedom. On the other hand, as far as the drums themselves were concerned, I remember a time when he did have something to say. It was when Ludwig came

out with their *Vistalite* Rainbow set. It was a pretty amazing-looking set of drums. Every two drums graduated in color. They started at one end of the color spectrum and went all the way down, from green to blue, and so on. Well, I had them set up one night for a show, and Elvis just kept turning around, looking back at those drums. I could tell that he was distracted. He just kept looking and looking, and there really wasn't very much of a smile on his face. He knew they were different, and they sounded very different from the blue-sparkle set I had been playing on. After the concert, one of his guys came to my dressing room and said, "Hey Ronnie, Elvis wants to see you in his dressing room." So I went down, and he seemed kind of nervous. He never wanted to infringe, because we had a lot of respect for each other. But I could tell he had something on his mind. He said, "Uh, Ronnie, do you really like those drums you're playing on right now?" I said, "Elvis, I don't think they sounded too good." As soon as I said that he jumped on it and said, "Good, get rid of them!" He was just waiting for me to say anything at all negative about them.

SB: I gather the next night you didn't play on that Rainbow kit?

RT: [laughs] No. My cartage guys traveled all night to get my other drums back to Vegas for the next night.

SB: So you played for eight solid years with Elvis?

RT: Basically. One of the tours was interrupted. My wife's father was going into the hospital just as I left for a tour. It was supposed to be a pretty routine operation, but several days into the

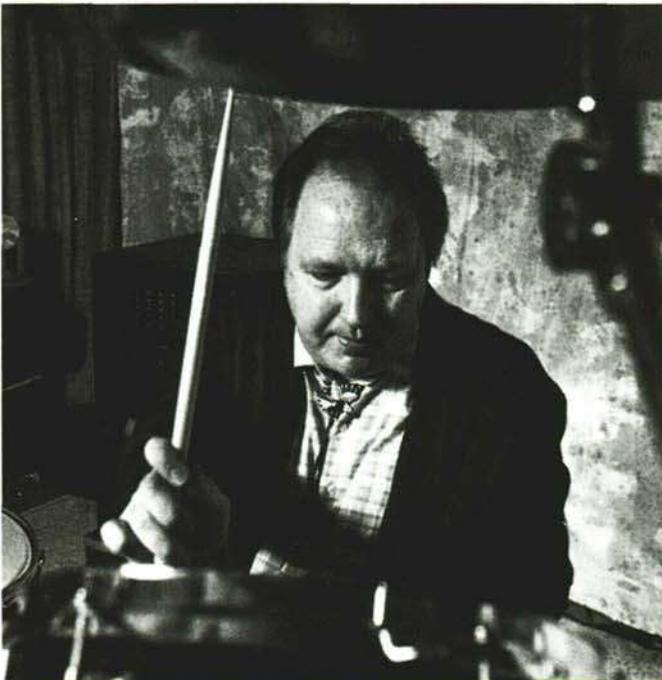
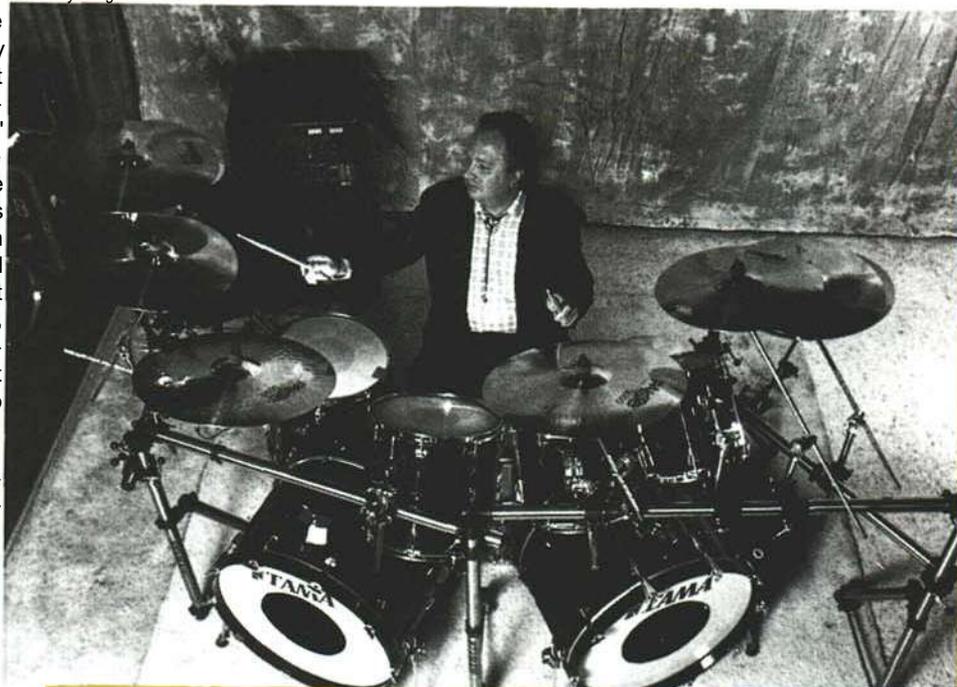


Photo by Jaeger Kotos



tour I was called home to L.A. because he died, and I needed to be with my wife. I remember going to Elvis about it, and he said, "Hey Ronnie, I understand. Family is priority. You gotta go." They called Larrie [Londin] to come out and finish the tour. There was one other time that I didn't go out with Elvis during those years. I was working with Jerry Garcia when the Grateful Dead weren't working and Elvis wasn't working. A ten-day tour was set up, and they didn't notify the band members until the very last minute. I didn't have enough time to work it all out, so they got Larrie again until I could return.

SB: Tell me about what led up to your gig with Elvis. Do you remember your first professional job?

RT: The first time I ever played for money was with a Western swing band. I got paid ten bucks.

SB: How about the first time you made a strong professional statement? Can you reminisce about that a bit?

RT: Sure. The first time was kind of like being thrown to the wolves. I had to do a radio station ID package, which was recorded down in one of the Dallas Theater stages where they had a whole stage full of musicians. There I was, gosh, I'd say 20 years old, and I was thrown right into that. You had to be able to hold a big band together. Of course, we were using headphones and so forth, but it was a very demanding venture.

SB: Sounds a bit scary.

RT: A little scary, but I loved it!

SB: Well, you got through it.

RT: Yeah, it worked, because two years after that I came back to the people I had worked for, and I landed a staff position with that company.

SB: What did the position entail?

RT: Player, singer, production manager...floor sweeper.

SB: What was the next step?

RT: After a few years there, I went to another company in Dallas. Euel Box, who's an arranger here in L.A. and a very good friend of mine,

helped me get the job. He does all the Benji things. I had been doing some gigs with his band, so when an opportunity came up, I went on staff there. About that time I got a call from another friend in Dallas. They were looking for someone in Memphis. So I went down to Memphis,

looked it over, and decided that it was a very good opportunity for me. I moved down there, and thank God I did.

SB: Why?

RT: Well, Dallas was a great background, but kind of limited to a certain kind of music. When I went down to Memphis I got to experience, first hand, music with the great players that are still known as masters of rock and R&B playing—guys like Steve Cropper and Duck Dunn. I got to hear great drummers like Gene Crissman and Al Jackson, and I got to play with Reggie Young and all those musicians who played on the tremendous R&B records. It was like an awakening or a relearning process, because I was taking what I had learned and re-applying it to

that kind of music. It was like getting a heavy dose of soul. It was an extremely good experience. Plus, I even got to play with the Memphis Symphony there, which was great. I played there about five and a half years, then Peppertanner Studio opened up a branch in Dallas. One of my good friends was running it, and I saw an opportunity to upgrade my position both musically and financially, so I asked to be transferred. After a bit of convincing, they transferred me. I helped run the studio there with my friend Larry Mahoberac. After about a year and a half we both got the desire to get out of the jingle business and go to Hollywood. It was shortly after that when the whole job with Elvis broke.

SB: What did you do between the Elvis gig and what you're doing now with Neil Diamond?

RT: A lot. I went to Paris and recorded with Mink DeVille. At the time, Jerry Scheff was there also, and the same people who were talking to Dylan about Jesus also began talking to Jerry and

his wife. Jerry started talking a lot about Christianity, and it seemed to be just the

thing I needed. Then I picked up a book by C.S. Lewis called *Mere Christianity* in '78, and all I can say is that I came back from Paris a changed man.

SB: What do you mean it changed you? Did it affect your playing?

RT: In ways. It really changed

everything. So many answers came to me. I mean, I was the kind of guy who tried all the latest things, but nothing ever really satisfied or filled up what was missing. When I found the Lord, I found the true meaning of life, and I started seeing things differently. I finally saw that my talent was a gift from God.

SB: At that point did you get into the Contemporary Christian music scene at all?

RT: Oh, yeah. That year Mike Deasy, Jerry Scheff, and I put a high-powered rock 'n' roll trio together. We called ourselves The Sanctified Boogie Band, and we played over a year, going in and out of high schools and other places, and bringing a

"HONE YOUR DRUMMING SKILLS BEFORE YOU EVER TRY TO GET INTO THE STUDIOS. YOU DON'T WANT TO BLOW YOUR REPUTATION BY TRYING TO BREAK IN BEFORE YOU'RE REALLY READY."

There are indeed two distinct sides of Carlos Vega. By the time this Cuban-born drummer moved with his family to Miami at age nine, and then a year later to Eagle Rock, California, he was reading the backs of album covers, wishing to become a session drummer. At the same time, however, he was developing a love of jazz that would be as strong and thriving. Usually such diverse interests create opposition, but Carlos never felt a conflict. To him, good music was good music, and he strived to be a good player of it all.

He has managed to do it all, too. At 18, Carlos was already playing in a recording band called Caldera and playing fusion in Karizma. He worked on and off with Willie Bobo and worked briefly with Freddie Hubbard. He began taking demo jobs, and it wasn't long before he was touring with Shaun Cassidy in 1978, Boz Scaggs in 1980, and Olivia Newton-John in 1982. Some of that intense touring gave way to Carlos' entree into the studio world, where he plays a variety of music, from jingles to Whitney Houston's "Saving All My Love For You" (even though J.R. Robinson is credited as having done that song) and Patti LaBelle's "On My Own," to work with Kenny Rogers, Dianne Schuur, and Sarah Vaughan. Recently he enjoyed recording and touring with James Taylor, as he finds he must balance playing in the studios with live work. "I do everything: I mow lawns, I do gardening and landscaping," he laughs at the analogy. "The only thing I don't do is windows."

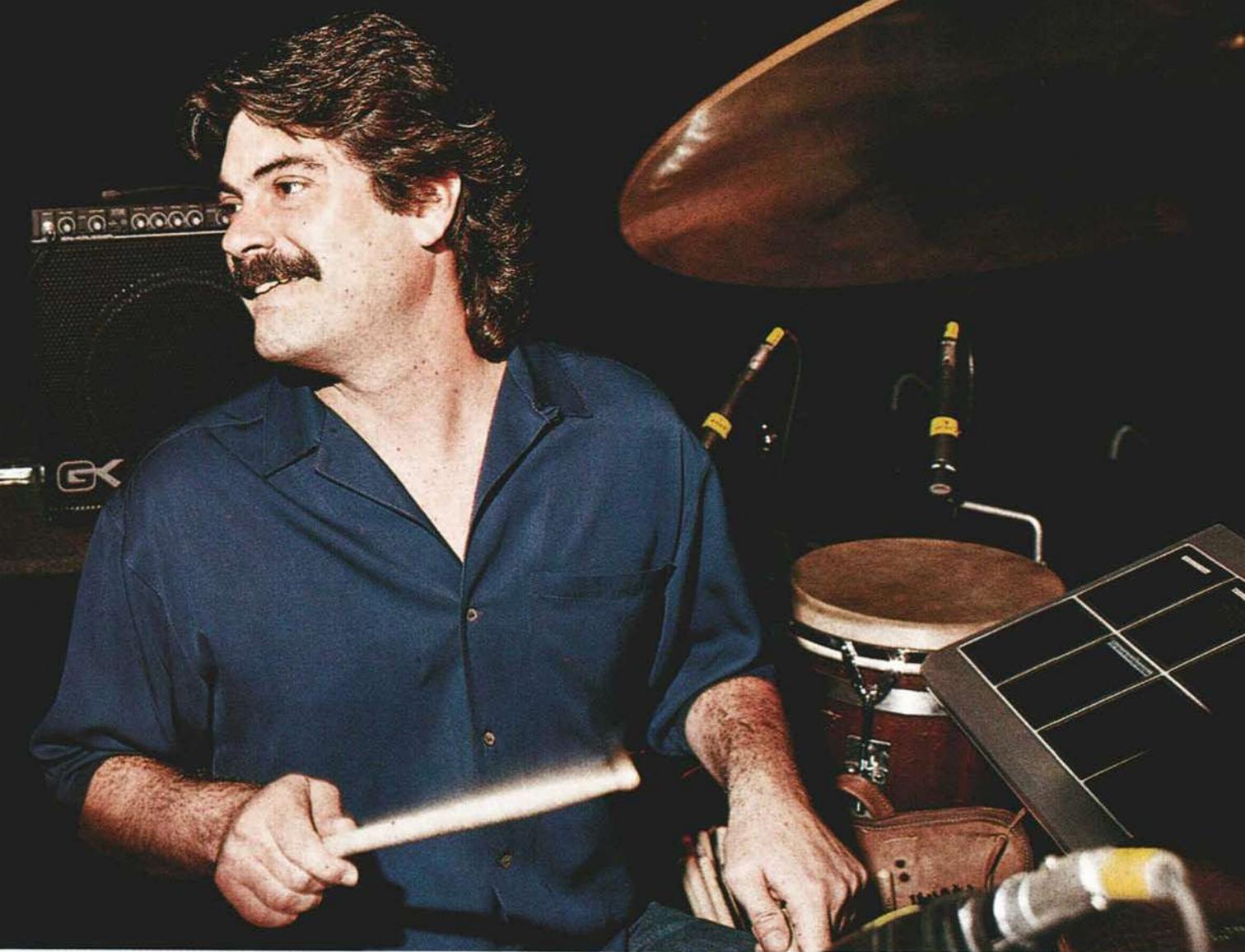
Carlos Vega speaks with immense passion. There is a commitment and love of playing that somehow transcends the normal political concerns of the studio drummer. But then he would rather not be considered a session musician. He simply wants to be known as a musician. It is obvious that the one motivating factor in Carlos Vega's life is his love of music—pure and simple.



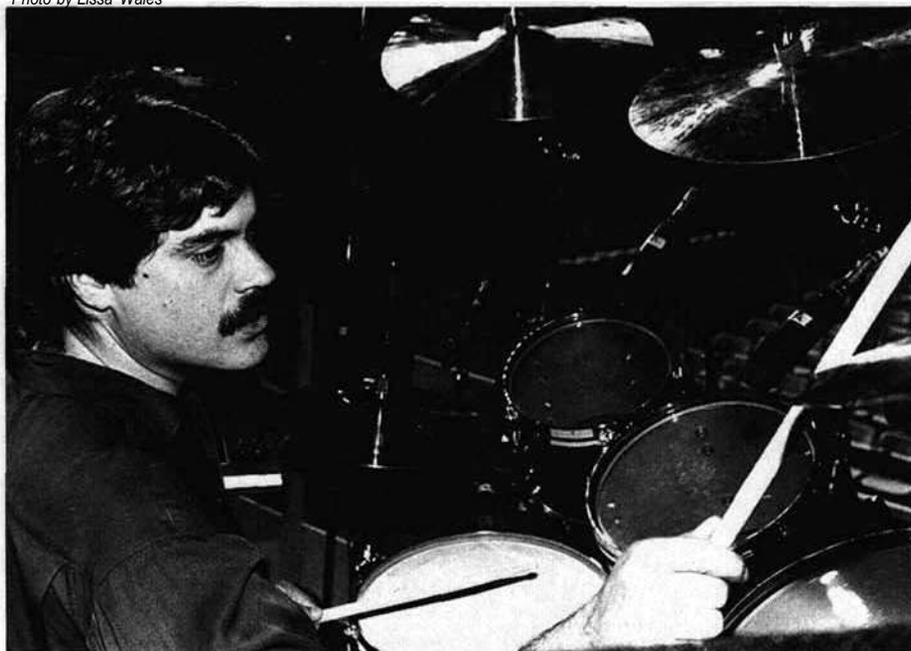
Photo by Lissa Wales

by Robyn Flans

CARLOS



WIEGA



CV: I was always interested in the drums. In Cuba we would get together in the street. We'd get a two-by-four and nail one of those big iron frying pans upside down to it, and then sit on the stick and play on the pan with spoons. I learned a lot of basic Latin rhythms not even knowing what they were. Then we came to the United States, and the Beatles were happening. That kind of turned me on to the whole thing. We didn't have the money for a drumset—the idea of a drumset was kind of crazy for my mom and dad anyway—so I took band instruments and put together little setups. Finally, when I got to junior high school, I nagged enough to where they finally got me a little set of drums. I was 13, and I just played in my bedroom to the two or three records I had.

RF: What records were they?

CV: A Rare Earth album and Lee Michaels Live. Frosty did this big drum solo, and I would try to play it. I just played in my room for the longest time. I already had the basic rock 'n' roll drum beats together, and I was just looking for somebody to play with. Whenever there were any bands in the neighborhood to play with, I'd be over there. I finally got to Eagle Rock High, which had a real good program. John Rinaldo was an excellent teacher. That's where I learned to read. It was like big-band-style stuff.

RF: Did you want to do more than teach yourself? Did you want some sort of formal training?

CV: At first I didn't; I was just a stubborn little kid. But by the time I got into the stage band, they were already winning these festivals all around the country. The

teacher was just into swinging. He didn't care about chops or solos—well, he did with instrumental solos—but he never gave me any big drum solos or anything. He really harped on time.

RF: How did he teach you time? Everybody talks about your time.

CV: I've had some real good teachers of time. He used to stand in front of the band with a 26 marching drumstick, bang out quarter notes on this podium, and yell, "Hey, you're rushing! You're dragging!" He was like a human metronome, and he used to drive us crazy. Willie Bobo was also a big help, because he used to really harp on that too. But time is just something that comes with age. It's nothing you can learn as a kid.

RF: But you worked on it.

“DRUMMING ISN'T ABOUT TAKING A LICK AND LEARNING IT TO THE POINT WHERE IT'S SO FAST THAT IT BLOWS PEOPLE'S MINDS.”

CV: I was very conscious of it, yes. And the guys that I liked—Keltner, Gordon, Jeff Porcaro—always had that great...it's funny to think of it as time...just that great feel. It might even be rushing, but you would never know it, because it just feels so good all the way through it. But yeah, John Rinaldo was really hard on us about that, and by the time I left high school, we were pretty mature little players, with intonation and tuning, the concept of time and swing, and all that.

RF: You said he wasn't really as interested in chops as he was in making it swing. Is that something you can put into words?

CV: It was about playing together, being conscious of each other, playing clean, just working on the phrasing of the thing. He used to work on the sax phrasing. There are certain ways of playing certain lines; the saxophones can lay it back a little bit to make it gel and feel great. We won a lot of festivals because of that. All these other kids were trying to play off-time charts and stuff, and you can't even play in 4/4 yet when you're in high school. We used to just come out and play these charts that swung in 4/4, like Basie style, and it was great training for me.

RF: You said there were a lot of people who worked on time with you. Who helped you from that point?

CV: From there, I started doing demos and stuff. There was a place called El Dorado on Vine Street in Hollywood, across the street from Capitol Records, and they used to do a lot of demos there. Somebody recommended me for some demo work there. It paid \$25.00 a tune, and one thing lead to another. Pretty soon I was working up there all the time for different writers doing demo work. That was before they used clicks, so it was pretty raw. If you rushed, it was on tape. It made you crazy.

RF: Did that happen to you?

CV: Oh yeah. I used to rush terribly.

RF: So how did you learn to pull back?

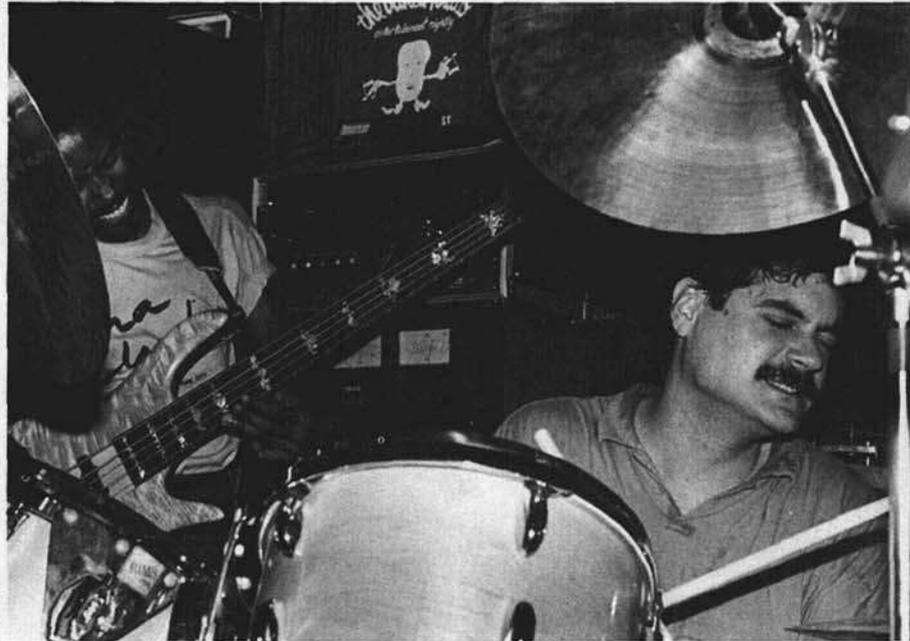
CV: I don't know. It's something that just happened. I studied with Ralph Humphrey when I was in high school, and he taught me a great deal about time and feel. He was very helpful. My time didn't get to where I considered it to be good until I got into my late 20's. It just takes X amount of hours of playing the instrument. I tried to play jazz and fusion stuff, and I never really studied technique with my hands until I was 22 or 23, when I went to Murray Spivack. It wasn't until then that I really started getting my time together, because I started practicing control of my hands. I got more chops and more technique, and then I learned to relax on my instrument. I worked with Spivack for about two or three years, and then with Dick

Wilson. He's really crazy about technique, release, tension, and all those things that are so essential. He talks about playing the drums in terms of walking like a panther through the forest. You can't be all uptight. You should be relaxed, so that when you strike, you throw your weight. It's not uptight or rigid. It should be real relaxed. It's the same idea as what Murray Spivack teaches: like when a pitcher throws a baseball, he winds up and throws it at the last minute. Everything is

loose until that last minute when the wrist snaps; that's where you get all your power from. You're holding the stick tight, but you're loose. If you want to do fast double strokes, you've got to squeeze harder than you would if you were doing it at a slower tempo. So it's just all the little pressure changes that take place in the hand as you're playing various tempos. There's a whole idea of the fulcrum, like a teeter-totter. There's a certain place in the hand where the fulcrum is. It's not between the first finger and the thumb, but between the first and second fingers and the thumb. It's a little thing you create in your hand. The tension/release idea is just basically knowing what your hand is doing—being aware of the changes in your hand as you do changes. How you're going to have to squeeze a little harder to get that same stroke out at another tempo. Those are really technical things, but they really helped me to understand what I was doing. I still practice and I still go through the different Murray exercises.

RF: What do you do when you practice?
CV: I usually warm up on the pad with the hands, and then sometimes I'll put on a record. Lately I've been setting up a drum machine pattern and jamming to that.

RF: Did this begin because you realized that you needed to work on things when you began doing demos?
CV: Yes. I had such a raw, self-taught technique. After I went to Murray, things started clicking; my time started coming because I was relaxed on my instrument, and my technique was getting to the point where I didn't have to tense up and rush. In my mid-20's, everything just started coming together with my hands. I



Nathan East and Carlos Vega

began to relax on my instrument and develop more chops, as you might say—although I don't consider myself a chop guy. I never really worked on that, but I have enough to express myself, which is my main goal anyway. Drumming isn't about taking a lick and learning it to the point where it's so fast that it blows people's minds. That's not what attracted me to music.

RF: What were your first demo sessions like?
CV: They were crazy—crazy, weird artists and strange songs.

RF: What was it like being in the studio at last?
CV: I had always wanted to be a studio

musician. To me, it was such a high compliment to your musicianship to have different people call you to play on their records, and want *you*. I started to look at the backs of records and see names like Russ Kunkel and Lee Sklar. That's really neat, because I'm working with Lee now with James Taylor. He was one of my first heroes. He plays on everything and now I'm working with him!

RF: So what was it like actually being in the studio?
CV: It was interesting because there were all these paranoid people worrying about ringing tom-toms. There was a time when you had to muffle everything and tape the toms up, the snare had to be real thuddy, and everybody was freaked out about this and that. There was no click, and we just had to work it out. It was real good experience in there. And I was playing with different bands around town—fusion stuff.

RF: What year are we talking about?
CV: Right after I left high school, in '74, I went on the road with Jimmy Allen & The Brass Works. He was a Tom Jones kind of singer, and we played lounges in the Sheratons all across Pennsylvania. We would spend two weeks in each Sheraton. I recommend that kind of gig for any young musician, because when you're in high school, you play in band class and you jam after school, but when you have to do six sets a night, five nights a week, it really does something to your playing. I recommend getting a Top-40 gig—anything where you're playing every night. You just need hours behind the drums at that point. It was really good for me, even though I hated it. Sometimes I'd turn my drumset left-handed because I got so bored.

The demo work started in about '75



Photo by Lissa Wales

continued on page 96

GREGG BISSETTE



Transcribed by
Glenn
Deutsch
with
Gregg
Bissonette

This month's *Sound Supplement* features excerpts of Gregg's playing on the Brandon Fields album *The Other Side Of The Story* (Nova 8602, recorded May 1985). The first example you will hear on the record is Gregg's solo from the tune "The Brain Dance."

KEY:

(DOUBLE-BEDAL)
 (R.T. = rim tap)
 (R.S. = rim shot)
 > = accent
 o - open
 + - closed
 (indicated)
 x - Hi-hat with foot
 + - step
 o - tap

f p mf p mf p crescendo
 f p f p mf
 (R.T.)

SONETTE

DRUM SOLOS

crescendo

f sfz f

p < mf p

mf f p f

mp mf sfz sfz sfz sfz

f

mf f p < f

mf

mf f

5:2 (42) 5:2 (43) 5:2 (44)

mf

SSONETTE

The musical score consists of four staves. The first two staves are in 4/4 time and feature complex rhythmic patterns with accents and dynamic markings like *mp*, *f*, and *p*. The third and fourth staves are in 8/8 time and show a steady eighth-note pattern with various accents and dynamic markings.

Of particular interest in this solo are the "over the bar line" phrases and the polyrhythms. For example, in bars 42 through 44 there are a series of fives that are played over two beats. This rhythm is indicated by a ratio in brackets placed above the notes (5:2). This marking means that five notes are being played evenly in the time normally given to two quarter notes (or four 8th notes). To learn this rhythm, play two groups of five 16th notes (quintuplets). Then play every other 16th note, and you'll have an 8th-note quintuplet.

The diagram shows a sequence of notes on a staff. It starts with two groups of five 16th notes, each marked with a bracket and the number '5'. This is followed by an 8th-note quintuplet, marked with a bracket and the ratio '5:2'. Arrows indicate the flow of the rhythm.

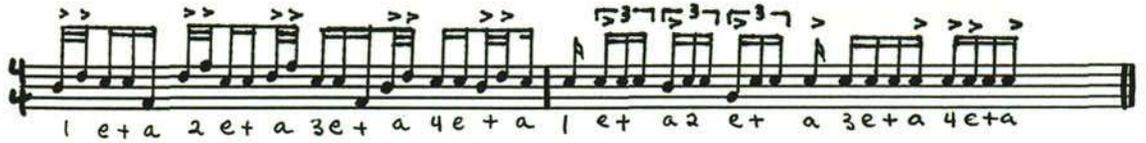
The same principle applies to the 7:2 in bar 46.

The diagram shows a sequence of notes on a staff. It starts with two groups of seven 16th notes, each marked with a bracket and the number '7'. This is followed by a 7:2 polyrhythm, marked with a bracket and the ratio '7:2'. Arrows indicate the flow of the rhythm.

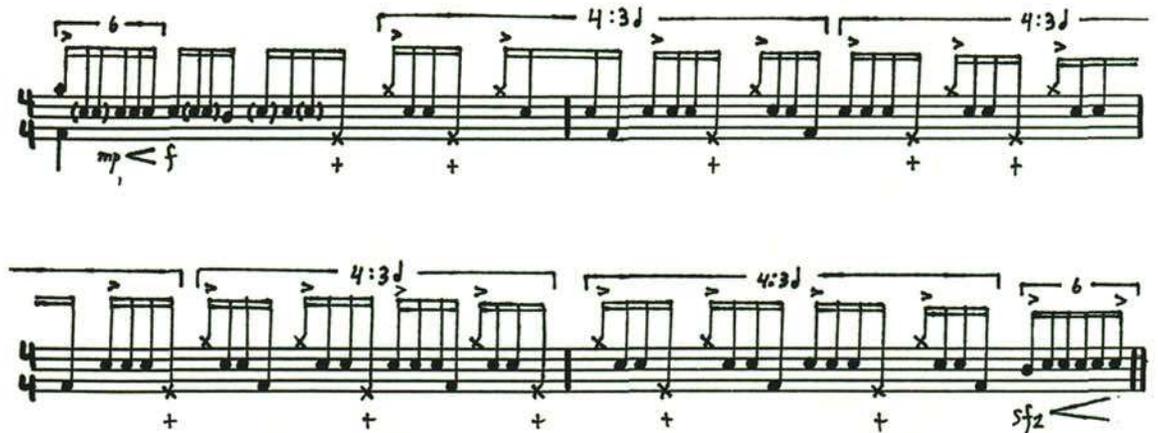
In bars 49 through 52, Gregg plays an interesting pattern of 16th and 32nd notes, which are phrased in groups of seven 16th notes.

The musical score shows a sequence of notes on a staff. The notes are grouped into four sets of seven 16th notes, each marked with a bracket and the number '7'. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with rhythmic notation: 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a 1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a.

GREGG B



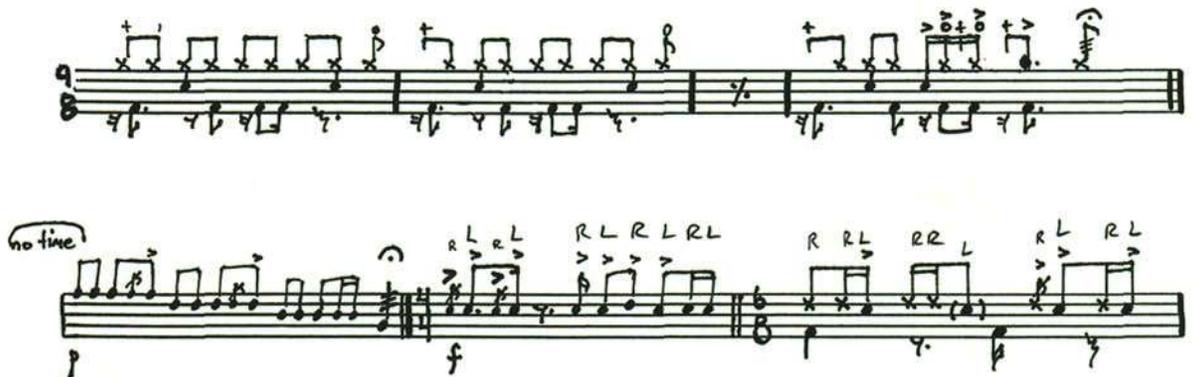
The second recorded example on the record is probably the hardest part of the solo. It is the subdivided polyrhythmic pattern from bars 59-62, which also happens to cross over the bar line in a couple of places. On the record, we have isolated the drum track, slowed it down, and removed all studio effects (such as reverb) so that you can hear what Gregg played more clearly.



The 4:3 ratio shows that four quarter notes are being played in the time normally given to three quarter notes. Then, each quarter note is subdivided into four 16th notes. To learn this one, try getting the sticking down first, ignoring the brackets. Play them as regular 16th notes to get comfortable with them. Here is 4:3 written two different ways.



The next recorded example is the intro to "The Brain Dance." That is followed by the isolated drum part, slowed down and without reverb.



SSONETTE

The final example on the record is a section from the song "Aggressive Tranquility." This excerpt is a song-type groove and drum break. Again, you will first hear the part played in context, and then you will hear the isolated drum track slowed down and without reverb.

Special thanks to Alan Hirshberg, who engineered this *Sound Supplement*.

©Copyright 1985 by Brandon Fields. Used by permission. If you have trouble finding *The Other Side Of The Story*, contact Nova Records, 1061 Broxton Ave., Los Angeles CA 90024, (213) 208-3996.



MD '88 READERS POLL RESULTS

HALL OF FAME

1988 JOE MORELLO

1987: Billy Cobham
1986: Tony Williams
1985: Louie Bellson
1984: Steve Gadd
1983: Neil Peart
1982: Keith Moon
1981: John Bonham
1980: Buddy Rich
1979: Gene Krupa



Photo by Rick Mattingly

HONOR ROLL

Named below are those drummers whose talent, musical achievements, and lasting popularity placed them first in MD's Readers Poll in the categories indicated for five or more years. We will include these artists, along with those added in the future, in each year's Readers Poll Results as our way of honoring these very special performers.

AIRTO

Latin American and Latin/Brazilian Percussion

GARY BURTON

Mallet Percussion

VIC FIRTH

Classical Percussion

STEVE GADD

All Around Drummer; Studio Drummer

DAVID GARIBALDI

R&B/Funk Drummer

NEIL PEART

Rock Drummer; Multi-Percussionist

BUDDY RICH

Big Band Drummer

ALL AROUND

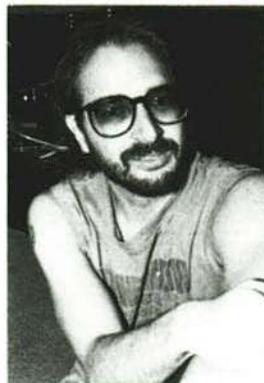


Photo by Rick Matkin

STEVE SMITH

2. Omar Hakim
3. Vinnie Colaiuta
4. Rod Morgenstein
5. Anton Fig

STUDIO

BIG BAND

J. R. ROBINSON

2. Vinnie Colaiuta
3. Anton Fig
4. Simon Phillips
5. Dave Weckl

ED SHAUGHNESSY

2. Louie Bellson
3. Mel Lewis
4. Peter Erskine
5. Butch Miles



Photo by Rick Malkin

HARD ROCK/ METAL

PROGRESSIVE ROCK



TOMMY ALDRIDGE

2. Gregg Bissonette
3. Rick Allen
Lars Ulrich
5. Tommy Lee
Nicko McBrain
Alex Van Halen

ROD MORGENSTEIN

2. Terry Bozzio
3. Bill Bruford
Alan White
5. Steve Smith

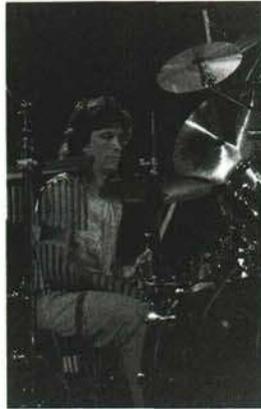


Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

POP/MAINSTREAM ROCK

PHIL COLLINS

2. Kenny Aronoff
Larry Mullen, Jr.
4. Manu Katche
5. J. R. Robinson



Photo by Rick Malkin

COUNTRY



LARRIE LONDIN

- 2. Mark Herndon
- 3. Jack Gavin
- 4. Joe Smyth
- 5. Eddie Bayers

ELECTRIC JAZZ



Photo by Jaeger Katos

DAVE WECKL

- 2. Steve Smith
- 3. Bill Bruford
- Danny Gottlieb
- 5. Billy Cobham

MAINSTREAM JAZZ



Photo by Tom Copi

JEFF WATTS

- 2. Tony Williams
- 3. Jack DeJohnette
- Elvin Jones
- 5. Art Blakey
- Peter Erskine

FUNK



Photo by Suzi Drafjin

STEVE JORDAN

- 2. Dave Weckl
- 3. Tony Thompson
- 4. Harvey Mason
- 5. Omar Hakim

MULTI-PERCUSSIONIST



STEWART COPELAND

- 2. Sheila E.
- Ed Mann
- 4. Alex Acuna
- 5. Ralph MacDonald
- Emil Richards

CLASSICAL PERCUSSIONIST

ANTHONY J. CIRONE

2. AlPoysen
3. EdMann
4. Arthur Press
5. Chris Lamb



Photo by Greg Toland

MALLET PERCUSSIONIST

In order to present the results of our Readers Poll, the votes were tabulated and the top five names in each category listed here. In the event that a tie occurred at any position other than fifth place, all names at that position were presented and the subsequent position eliminated. When a tie occurred at fifth place, all winning names were presented.

ED MANN

2. Dave Samuels
3. Leigh Howard Stevens
4. Mike Mainieri
5. Lionel Hampton



Photo by Sergio Albronic

LATIN/ BRAZILIAN

ALEX ACUNA

2. Manolo Badrena
3. Cafe
4. Mino Cinelu
Tito Puente
Nana Vasconcelos

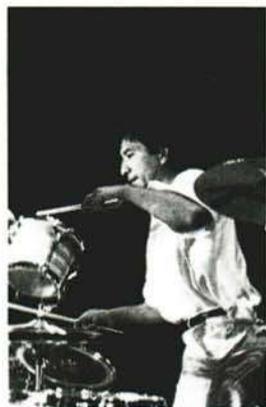


Photo by Rick Mattingly

RECORDED PERFORMANCE



NEIL PEART RUSH HOLD YOUR FIRE

2. Dave Weckl—The Chick Corea Elektric Band: *Light Years*
3. Rick Allen—Def Leppard: *Hysteria*
4. Aynsley Dunbar—Whitesnake: *Whitesnake*
- Larry Mullen, Jr.—U2: *The Joshua Tree*
- Alan White—Yes: *Big Generator*



UP & COMING DRUMMER

MANU, KATCHE (Peter Gabriel; Sting)

2. Robert Sweet (Stryper)
3. Troy Luccketta (Tesla)
4. Joel Rosenblatt (Michel Camillo)
Lars Ulrich (Metallica)



Photo by Jaeger Kotas



GRANSTAR FINISHES



Cherry
Rose



Nile
Blue



Silky
Yellow



Gun
Metallic Grey



Pure
White



Jet
Black



Firestorm
Red



GRANSTAR

GRANSTAR

C U S T O M

Serving as percussionist for one of the world's largest touring acts can be a demanding experience. Just ask Gary Wallace.

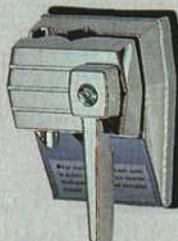
After establishing himself as one of England's top drummer/percussionists with such artists as Nik Kershaw, Style Council and Power Station, Gary was drafted for on road duty with Pink Floyd; a notch for sure, in anyone's stick.

With credits to his name such as these, it's easy to understand why Gary depends on Tama Granstar. Here's Why:



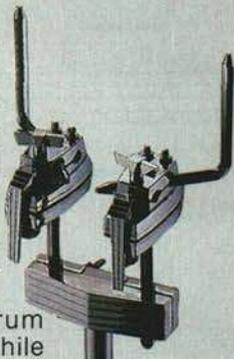
Granstar Custom offers a 9mm shell, precision crafted of cross laminated select birch for superior strength, tone and projection. Both interior and exterior are hand finished in one of six custom colors.

Granstar shells are composed of the same elements as Granstar Custom with the exception of finish. Each Granstar shell is covered in a special laminate material (available in seven contemporary shades) to protect it from damage and offer a more "controlled" sound for those who desire it.



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GRANSTAR CUSTOM FINISHES



Lipstick Red



Heather Metallic



Cherry Wine



Piano Black



Candy Apple Red



Piano White

In Pursuit Of Odd

MUSIC KEY



This month, we will look at another method of creating odd time signatures. This method is a bit more challenging and demanding of your creativity than in previous articles. Begin with a beat in 4/4 and, just as we did in the first two parts of this article, add on 8th notes to create new time signatures. However, this time, come up with your own snare/bass combinations for the additions. I have written out some patterns to give you some ideas, but don't just copy mine; come up with your own!

is equal to:

By adding an 8th note, it becomes:

is equal to:

By adding an 8th note, it becomes:

by Rod Morgenstein



Photo by Rick Malkin

Time: Part 3

is equal to:

By adding an 8th note, it becomes:

is equal to:

By adding an 8th note, it becomes:



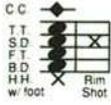
Transcribed by Kelly Paletta

Photo by Bob Shramis



Art Blakey: 'Exhibit A'

MUSIC KEY



This month's *Drum Soloist* features Art Blakey performing on the Art Blakey/Max Roach compilation album, *Percussion Discussion* (Chess Records C8C2-92511). Notice how Blakey ties together short, repeated rhythmic phrases. Also, his use of accents and rimshots add to the musicality of the solo. (The last two rimshots indicated are actually stick shots, which are played by holding the left stick against the drum head and striking it with the right.) All 8th notes in this piece are played with a swing feel.



16 BITS



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2. And digital signal processor
3. And sampler
4. With a RAM cartridge for additional, portable preset storage.
5. And over 100 factory presets, with room for 100 more of your own.
6. It's an 8 second/16 bit/15kHz sampler, expandable to 32 seconds.
7. Its sample memory can be broken into 4 segments, with separate recording, editing and triggering of each segment
8. And the samples can be triggered by audio inputs, trigger jacks, or MIDI
9. And the samples can be processed internally with reverb and/or effects during playback.
10. The ADR 68K has comprehensive MIDI implementation, with program changes, sample triggering, and preset send/receive.
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12. The two inputs, four outputs, MIDI jacks, and four pedal/trigger jacks are all programmable in software.
13. AKG is committed to software development, creating not only new sounds, but also new features on an ongoing basis.
14. The ADR 68K's 68000 processor is a full-fledged computer
15. With a large display in plain English (160 character LCD)
16. With a unique, context sensitive HELP feature that tells you about any parameter just when you need to know.



77 Selleck Street,
Stamford, CT 06902

Getting A Drum Sound

by Craig Krampf

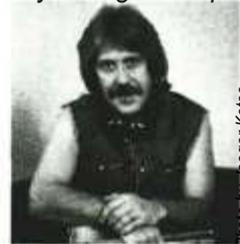


Photo by Beeger Kotos

Certain studios and individual engineers have their own special methods and techniques for getting a good drum sound. Always remember that getting a good drum sound is a team effort between the engineer, the producer, and you. Once again this month, we'll look at the subject through the eyes and ears of professional recording engineer Niko Bolas. Hopefully, his words will give you a clearer picture of just what an engineer must go through to get a drum sound everyone will be happy with. It should also give you some insight on what to expect when you enter the studio.

Last month, Niko listened to the drumkit and observed the drummer's natural balance. Now it's time to work out the details of miking every part of the set, in an effort to get what he's heard on the floor to the other side of the glass.

Room Mic's

"I like to start with the placement of one of the room mic's—the mic' that will give me the sound of the entire kit, along with the amount of ambience we'll need for the track. I move my head around in front of the set until I hear the proportion of what I want to hear, and I place the mic' where I think the "sweet spot" is. That's the spot where all the necessary crack, ambience, and relationship of kit balance sounds the best.

"My favorite mic' for that job these days is *The Tube* by AKG. It's one of the most accurate I've ever used. If I need a little more bottom end, I hang it upside down so the top of the capsule is listening to the floor. Then it's time to open that mic' up in the control room and see how the kit sounds."

Overheads

"Microphones will color the sound of an instrument much like an equalizer will, so if the drummer has bright-sounding cymbals, or if he bashes them a lot, I'll use darker microphones. Recently I've been using *KM84's* as overheads because they seem to be indestructible. I usually place them two to three feet over the drummer's shoulders and adjust the stereo image with placement. I turn off the room mic' and I'll have the drummer play quarter notes on the snare drum with the same intensity he'll use when playing. This way I can hear the decay of the room in the overheads and arrive at a bal-

ance of left and right.

"I'll have him play his cymbals to make sure they don't peak out, or are too bright. I also have him play a figure across the toms to make sure they're even in the balance and overall panning."

Snare Drum Miking

"As far as the snare drum goes, I listen to the top snare mic', which is usually an *SM57*. I listen to each one in the studio because they're all different. I try to pick out the brightest one and the one with the most punch. Once again, the drummer should be playing quarter notes that are consistent. Then I'll bring up the bottom snare mic', which is normally a *Sennheiser 441*. I use just a little of the bottom mic' to bring out the snares. If we're using an inner snare mic' (usually an *ECM 50*), I'll listen to that alone, and then bring up all the snare mic's to get a proper balance."

Unless one of the snare mic's is on a separate track for some sort of special effect, you normally have only one track allotted for the snare drum. As with every step in the recording process, balances are important. I've worked for a few engineers who had different ideas about the balances of snare mic's than I did. For my taste, too much bottom mic' will take away from that all important "crack" of a great backbeat. Once again, you can suggest and hopefully come up with something everyone will be happy with.

Also, some engineers don't use a bottom or inner snare mic', so there are times I've asked to try it, especially on my 6 1/2" metal snare drum.

Tom-Toms

"If a studio has them, I love the old *Tel-efunken 251's*," Niko explained. "They're some of the best mic's in the business. If you want a fat, slightly compressed sound, they're great tube microphones. The laws of physics say that the larger the capsule, the bigger the sound wave it will be able to reproduce. A tiny mic' just can't pick up large frequencies that well. If I can't find any great old tubes, I use *Sennheiser 421's*. They're accurate, punchy, and never fold up.

"The distance and angle off the head is a matter of experimentation. Fatness, punch, clarity, and ambience can all be altered with distance and angle. Once

again, the drummer should play a repetitive pattern on the individual toms, and then play across all the toms to check balances and stereo placement. You shouldn't have to add a lot of EQ if it's a good-sounding, well-tuned set. With the toms, I usually just add a little top for clarity and stick attack. If you have to add a lot of mid-range for punch, you should probably go back and tune the drums. After setting up the tom mic's, it's then time to go back and open up the overheads to check for blend, balance, and phasing."

Bass Drum And Hi-Hat

"The first thing I do is solo the bass drum mic', which again is usually a *Sennheiser 421*. Packing is one of the most important points in getting a good bass drum sound. A packing blanket of cloth works best, and a sandbag that keeps the blanket against the back head with even pressure should be used. The drummer has to get off when he hits the bass drum, and it's *got* to feel good to him. The drum should have an action and punch he's used to or he's not going to play well.

"I get my level, add EQ, and then open all the mic's to check the levels, phasing, and overall kit balance. Sometimes when you hit the bass, you can set off the toms, particularly if you're not using a mounting system like the *RIMS*. Too much ring can diminish the attack and power of the bass drum and produce a lot of overtones that will be mud in the track. Of course, you can use gates if it's really a problem. A gate is an outboard piece of gear that allows a mic' to be open when a drum is played, and closed when that drum is not being struck. The length of the decay can be adjusted.

"As far as the hi-hat goes, well, many mic's will work here: *SM56's*, *SM57's*, *AKG 451's*, *AKG 452's*, or *ECM 33's*. Once again, I listen solo and then with everything to get a balance."

Hopefully, getting a drum sound will be an easy and pleasant experience for you. Just be sure to maintain your sense of humor and patience if you're forced to hit your drums for hours on end. Oftentimes, that's exactly what it takes to get the results everyone is after.

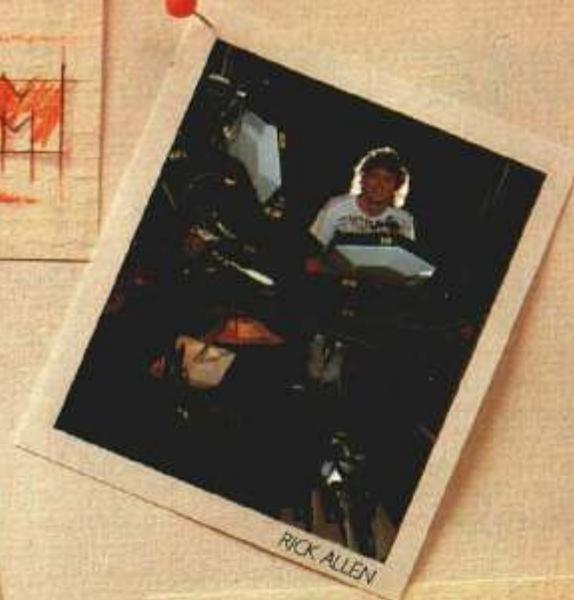


SDS1000M

Simmons Design Brief

To develop a five piece electronic drum set with a wide variety of killer sounds, and access to a whole lot more from samplers and drum machines via MIDI. This kit has got to be easy to program, built to take life on the road, and most importantly, it's got to feel good to play. Pay special attention to the snare drum sensitivity and dynamics.

RICK ALLEN ON THE SDS1000M
"MIDI is the heart of my new drum system. In the studio and on the road with Def Leppard I'm using Simmons' drum interface MTM, to access all kinds of great percussion sounds, including those on the SDS1000M.



RICK ALLEN

The new SDS1000M is the perfect way to get into electronic percussion. You have great sounds in the unit—plus a MIDI interface to hook up with an infinite range of new percussive effects."

SDS9

Simmons Design Brief

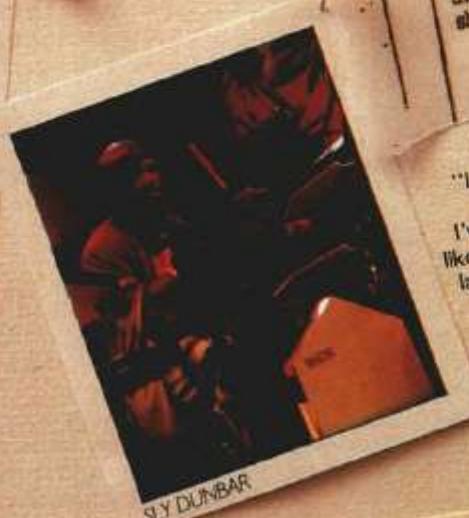
Give drummers an instrument that satisfies the basic requirements for an electronic drum set—great sounds, a high degree of sensitivity, subtle dynamic control, playable rim-shot—and then pack it full with unique features, to create an instrument capable of taking the percussive arts to new levels of innovation.



BILL BRUFORD

BILL BRUFORD ON THE SDS9

"I've been using a MIDI system with Earthworks for some time. Based around MTM and SDS9, I can trigger percussion and tuned sounds from pads. The SDS9 offers the drummer both digital and analog sounds along with the most comprehensive MIDI specification I have yet to find on a drum kit. For me it's the original bridge between the worlds of untuned and tuned sounds."



SLY DUNBAR

Simmons Design Brief

Create an inexpensive, 3 pad system, that offers a whole battery of studio processed drum sounds and latin percussion to electronic and acoustic drummers alike. From just 3 pads, the drummer should have access to a case full of percussion.

SLY DUNBAR ON THE MTX9

"I think it's great 'cause while playing it helps the drummer add extra color. I've been looking forward to something like this for a long time to save carrying a large kit around. So I think all drummers should check it out—it's great."

SDS1000M

PUTTING THE MUSICIAN IN CONTROL OF THE MACHINE

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Adapting To The Gig

As a semi-pro drummer, I have been working the various clubs, pubs, and function rooms in my home town for the past 17 years. During that time, I have worked with many different musicians. Some have faded from memory, but others continue to work steadily, turning up at gig after gig, year after year. These "old troopers" continue to be in demand, not because they are the hottest players in town, but because they consistently arrive on time and wear the right clothes. They don't smoke, drink, or swear on stage, and they play the music to the best of their abilities. In short, they have a professional attitude.

As soon as you accept payment for a gig, you are theoretically a professional. In reality, however, professionalism is a far more complex issue. For example, there are many highly paid musicians who are thoroughly unprofessional in their attitude and behavior. Many aspects of professionalism have already been discussed in the pages of *Modern Drummer*, but I would like to concentrate on just one: the ability to fit into any musical situation, no matter how diverse or bizarre, and perform to the best of your ability.

Every job that you accept has a set of requirements that you are obligated to adhere to. Some are quite obvious or common, like starting at 8:00 and wearing a tuxedo at a formal dance. Others, however, can be more demanding. An experienced musician will find out all the details and conditions of a job before accepting it. If any conditions are unacceptable, then the job should be politely turned down. A friend of mine once refused a Christmas party at a nudist club because he was expected to play in his underwear or in the nude.

I recently turned down a job backing a talent quest, because one of the conditions was that any of the "acts" could use the band's equipment if necessary. Rather than put myself in the embarrassing situation of preventing some young hopeful from possibly damaging my kit, I simply informed them I was "unavailable" to do the job.

At present, I play with a Latin-American, Continental-style band. We have a steady job at a local German club where we play polkas and waltzes, as well as Latin-American dance music and more contemporary pop songs. I thoroughly enjoy the variety this band offers, and did not hesitate to join when asked, despite

the fact that one of the conditions did not appeal to me: During German festivals such as Oktoberfest, the band is required to wear traditional Bavarian costumes. Now, I look pretty silly in leather shorts, suspenders, an alpine hat laden with badges and feathers, and long socks. But I wear them because it's part of the job, and I regard myself as a professional.

A while ago I filled in with a country & western band. Since we played cowboy songs, I was required to wear a cowboy hat, western shirt, and jeans. I had a great time, looked the part, and *played* the parts.

When filling in with other bands, musicians are faced with another set of requirements: those dictated by the style of music that each band chooses to play. This is where many gifted but inexperienced players fall down. They accept jobs in a certain musical style, then proceeded to "cut loose" and exercise their chops—completely disregarding the limitations placed upon them by the music. For example: A creative, loose, Elvin Jones style of drumming would be totally inappropriate for a country & western ballad or an old-time waltz. Similarly, to play a mainstream jazz job with heavy, rigid bass drum patterns and a pile-driving backbeat would also be out of character. Swing, trad jazz, bebop, rock 'n' roll, country & western—these are just some of the styles of music that a musician will encounter during a career. There are certain ways to play each style, and these can be learned by listening to suitable records, reading the many articles covering different styles in *Modern Drummer*, and by watching other drummers. You can learn something from every musician. Even the worst drummer in the world has one good lick that he plays well. Steal it!

You also have to put yourself in the right mood to play in a certain style. Enroute to a country & western date, I play country & western tapes. For a jazz date, I play jazz tapes. This puts me in the right frame of mind for the evening's playing. It takes a long time to develop proficient technique on an instrument. Unfortunately, it often takes far more time to develop the maturity to use this technique within context and with taste.

Many musicians arrogantly form the opinion that any style of music other than their own is somehow of lesser value. These players often turn up for a job, moan and complain all night, foul the

music up, and then stand first in line when the pay envelopes are being handed out.

I recently did a fill-in job with a local jazz band in which the bass player was also subbing for the night. This particular band plays in a 1940s swing style. The music failed to swing, however, since the bass player used the gig as an opportunity to practice his favorite Jaco Pastorius and Stanley Clarke lines. When it was tactfully pointed out to him that what he was playing was inappropriate, the response was an amazing, "I have to play *something* to keep myself interested in this boring music!" Needless to say, the bandleader came down much harder on him, and demanded that he play simple, swinging lines. He *couldn't do* it. Despite all of the technique that this player had, he was not capable of doing the job required. His playing in this situation was like the icing on a cake—minus the cake. He believed the music to be unchallenging, but it was really *more* challenging to him than the jazz/funk lines he was used to playing. In any musical situation, you have to know the rules before you can attempt to break them.

I saw an extreme example of this type of unprofessional musical snobbery a few years ago: A young singer/songwriter with a hit record was touring the country to promote it. His music was in the style of the great swing bands of the '40s, so he was touring with a traditional big band made up of some of the finest jazz and session players in the country. Quite a few of these musicians mugged and clowned on stage behind the singer's back, making a mockery of the entire show. It was a classic case of the dog biting the hand that feeds it. It should be pointed out, however, that the singer was in no way harmed. The audience still loved him, and he had a string of follow-up hits. The backing musicians, on the other hand, lost the gig, along with the respect of all those who witnessed their unprofessional behavior.

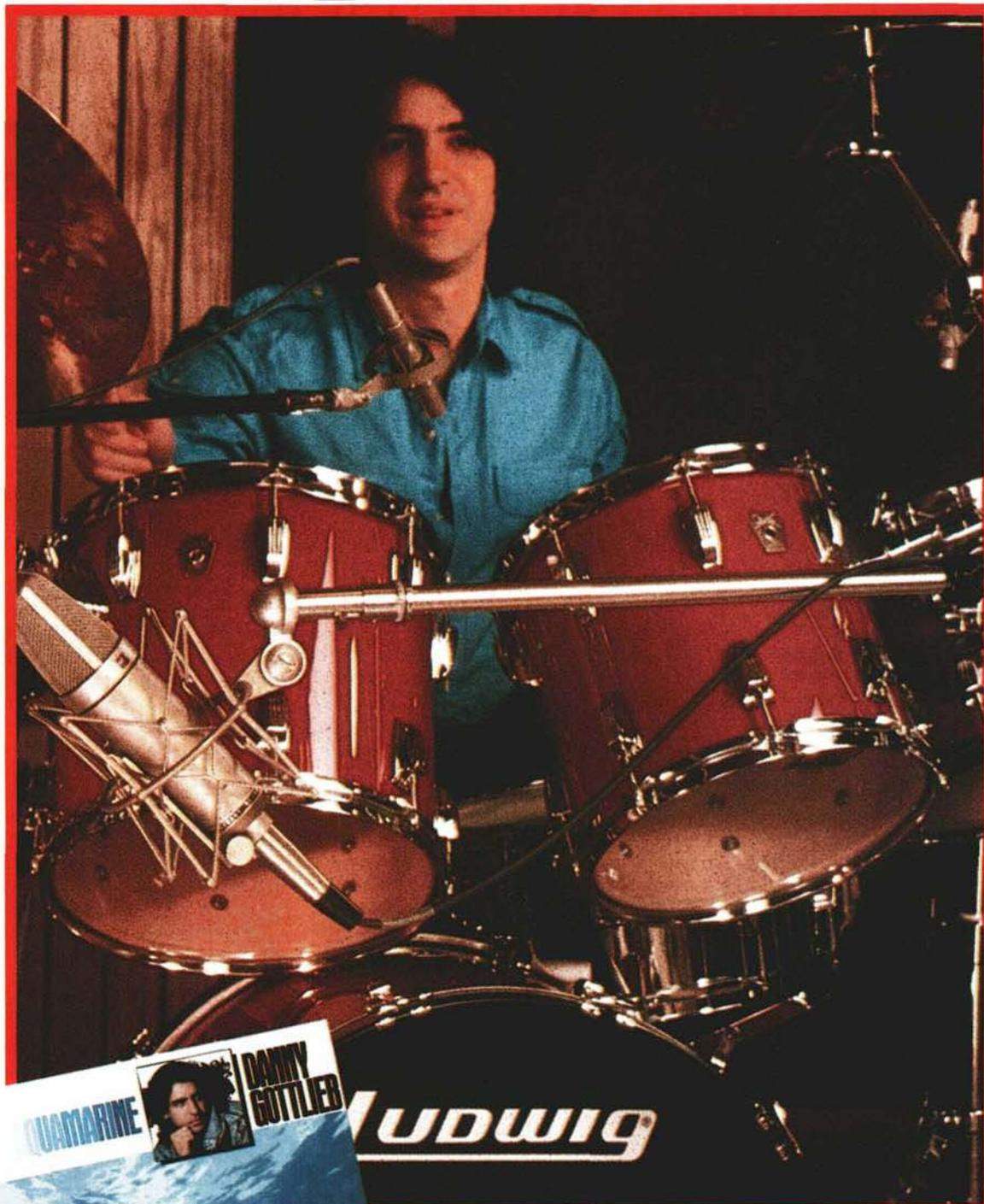
In my experience, very few jobs have absolutely no redeeming features. I always try to concentrate on the *positive* aspects. If the music is simple, *concentrate* on that simplicity and try to make it feel right. Try to get into the spirit of the performance, both musically and visually. If it's a heavy metal gig, wear your striped spandex and studded leather jacket. And if it's a country & western gig, wear your cowboy hat!



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MIDI And The Percussion Teacher

In 1983, a musical innovation was born that might prove to be the most important advancement—not only in percussion but in all of music—of this century. Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) was adopted in 1983 as a standard means of communication between electronic musical instruments. Since then, music and the world of percussion haven't been quite the same.

In its early days, MIDI applied mainly to keyboard instruments. But in only a few short years it has increased dramatically in popularity and usage, and now includes almost any type of electronic gear that is even remotely associated with musical applications.

Today, MIDI is all around us—on records, radio, TV, live concerts, and in the recording studio. MIDI is used, in one form or another, in the creation of almost every style of music that is currently heard. And MIDI has several far-reaching applications in the teaching of percussion—on a private as well as a classroom basis. This article will help explain and examine some of these applications.

First of all, a good, basic MIDI setup for percussion applications should be assembled. The setup should include a drum machine or sampling keyboard, a sequencer or personal computer with sequencing software, compatible MIDI interfaces, MIDI cables, an amplifier or sound source, and some type of tape recorder.

Everyone seems to have an opinion as to which type of MIDI equipment is best, and the instrument manufacturers don't make it any easier on us by coming out with new and better products almost monthly. Try to learn as much as possible about the specifications of electronic equipment before plunking down your hard-earned cash. Read product reviews, talk to friends who own MIDI equipment, and do some research at music stores.

Try to determine in advance what you are going to use your MIDI system for, and then assemble it according to those needs. You don't need to purchase a \$100,000 state-of-the-art digital wonderland, if all you want to do is run a drum machine as a fancy metronome with your private students. On the other hand, if you plan to use your setup with students of varying ages and abilities, as well as for your personal endeavors and live performances, you may need more than the small electronic keyboard your Uncle

Bob gave you for Christmas two years ago, which has some "really neat" drum sounds.

From the basic equipment setup mentioned earlier, you can expand as much as desired (or financially permissible) to an unlimited number of accessories, including a mixer, other MIDI keyboards, effects, multi-track tape decks, electronic drumpads, etc.

Upon their introduction to the fast and exciting world of MIDI, young percussionists (and perhaps the not-so-young) are often bewildered, and perhaps a little intimidated. Percussion teachers should emphasize from the beginning that electronic percussion and MIDI will never replace human players. A teacher's goal in using MIDI percussion should first be to educate, and then to encourage and motivate percussionists. Students will soon realize that the electronic aspect is much more of a friend than an enemy.

I have had much enjoyment and success with the use of MIDI as a compositional tool with my percussion students. I encourage them to compose and arrange music for percussion and/or other instruments; it doesn't matter what style of music they compose in or for what instrumentation. I get pieces varying in length and types of instrumentation, from four marching bass drums to full-blown percussion ensembles that are college-level in difficulty. Many compositions call for the standard percussion instruments that the students are accustomed to playing at school. Most of these instruments are available on a drum machine or can be sampled fairly easily with a sampling keyboard.

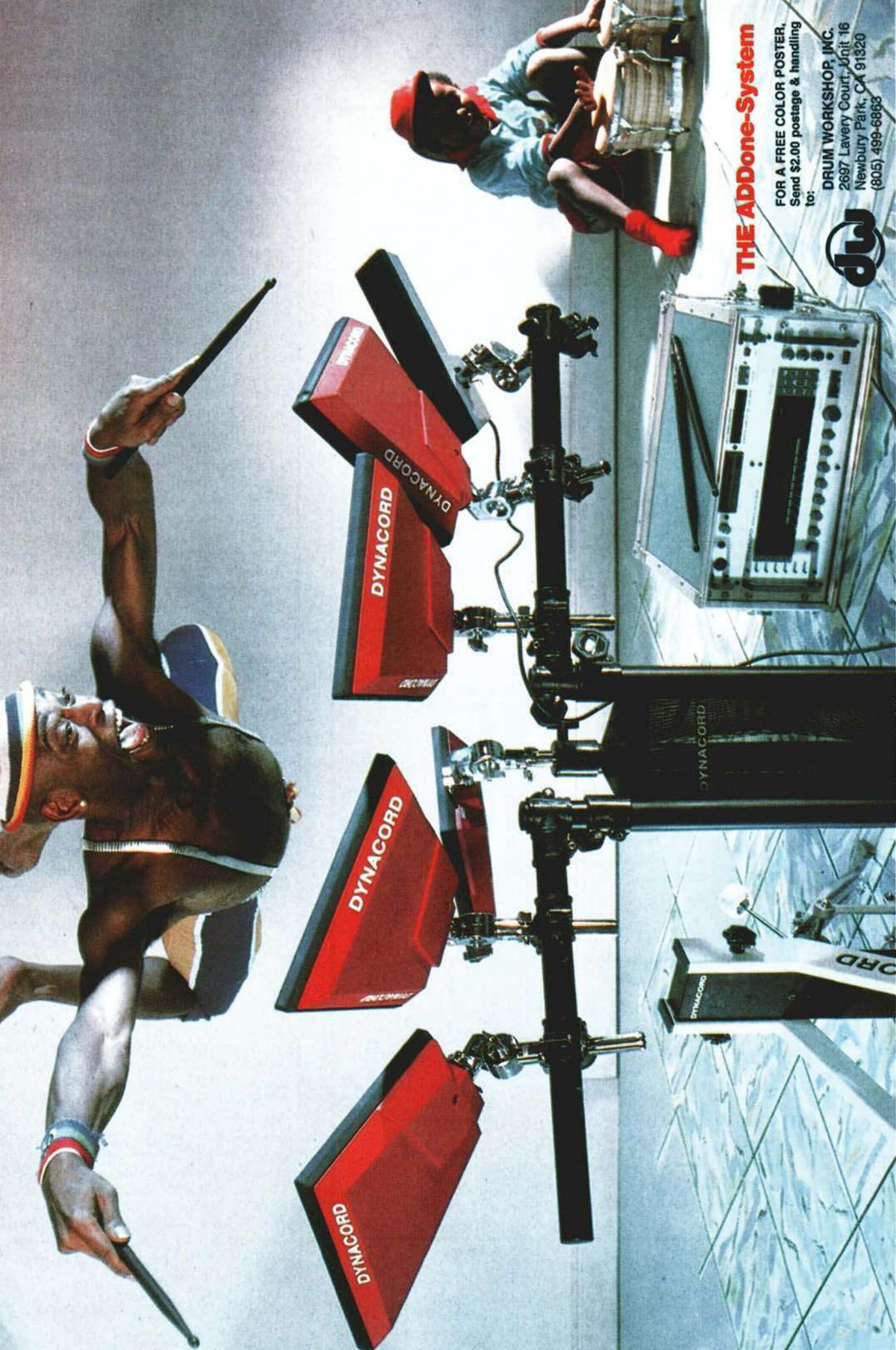
After the specified instruments are assembled on the drum machine and/or sampler, the piece can be put together. It usually takes only an hour or so to sequence a short piece a student has written, using the drum machine/sampler MIDI'd to a sequencer or personal computer running sequencing software. Students knowledgeable in MIDI programming can assist with the input process. The finished composition can be recorded on a tape for the student to keep. One of the most satisfying aspects of using MIDI (from an educational perspective) is watching a student hearing his or her first original piece being played perfectly—on the specified instruments, and at the correct tempo. Before MIDI, the only way a student could hear his or

her original composition was to try to have the piece played at school, or hire professional musicians to record it. And those methods usually met with very limited success.

MIDI also makes it easy to show the budding composer how his or her piece might be improved upon by making a few changes. Sections of the piece can easily be repeated, eliminated, or played in a different order. Tempo can also be changed subtly or drastically at any place in the composition. Instruments can be added (providing the desired instruments reside in the memory of the drum machine or sampling keyboard) or subtracted. Also, MIDI makes it easy to have a part that has been recorded for one instrument played back on a completely different instrument. Changes such as these often involve only a keystroke on the computer or sequencer, and can be made without disturbing the student's original version as long as it is saved in computer memory first. A student may be surprised at how a few suggestions or changes on your part can make a drastic difference in the way a composition is perceived or performed. After both of you are happy with the MIDI version of the composition, save it and make a tape for all of your students to hear. After your students hear the new composition, they will have a good idea of how it should sound, and will probably want to perform it themselves. Try performing some original student pieces on an upcoming band or percussion concert, if possible. You'll find that such pieces are big crowd-pleasers at local concerts, and can really help to promote percussion in your city.

Another teaching application that works well on MIDI is contest etudes and solos. These can be programmed fairly easily via MIDI, and then played back to demonstrate how a "perfect" performance on the specified instrument would sound. A good teacher should personally play the piece for the student first, and then use the MIDI version as a teaching tool. Be sure to stress that although the MIDI version is accurate, it may sound a bit stiff and mechanical. The student will benefit from hearing the "perfect" version as well as the human version.

Many percussion solos contain piano and keyboard accompaniments. MIDI can be used to create a great accompaniment for percussion solos. Have an experienced accompanist play the piano



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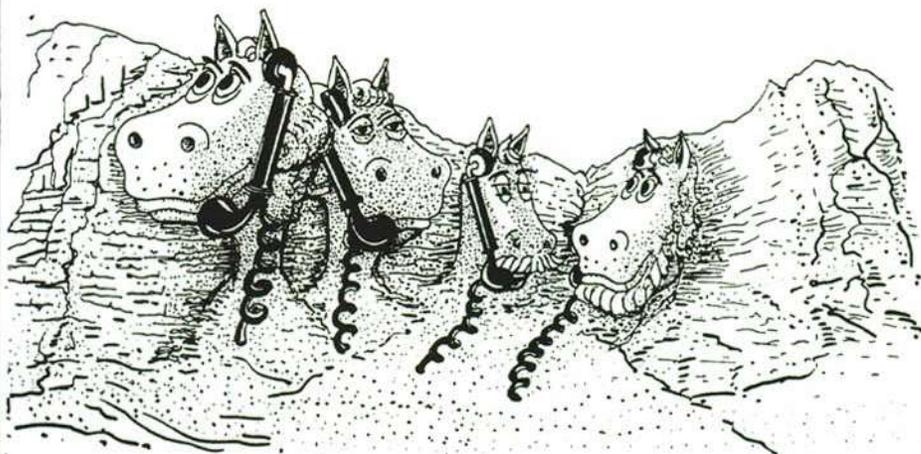
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part for a percussion solo into the sequencer from a MIDI keyboard. Once the keyboard part has been entered, it can be kept and used again and again for years to come. Also, MIDI is a blessing for all the "frustrated" keyboard players of the world (myself included) who cannot play two-handed keyboard parts at the specified tempo. MIDI makes it possible for keyboard parts to be sequenced very slowly, one hand at a time, and at any tempo. Many sequencers also have editing capabilities that will correct wrong notes and bad timing if desired. The MIDI accompaniments can be played back for the student at any tempo, without changing the pitch, key, or dynamic clarity the way a tape would if speeded up or slowed down. Most students will need to practice their solo slowly at first, before working it up to correct speed.

MIDI also gives the percussion teacher an opportunity to use the drum machine as a specific part in a duet, trio, etc. Program the machine to make up for a missing player or players, and use it to perform live with your percussion section. Parts can be programmed to really enhance and liven up what your percussion ensemble or marching percussion unit does. Make sure, however, not to leave capable players sitting on the sideline, while a computer plays their parts. Instead, use MIDI programming to *complement* your performance.

MIDI also offers your percussion ensemble options that were never before possible. Have you ever wanted a guitar or harp player when no one was available? How about using a keyboard or brass part to strengthen the mallet percussion lines, or a violin background with a ballad? Wouldn't it be nice to have accessory percussion instruments to accompany the group, even when no one is available to play those instruments? Would your weak players perform with more confidence if some of their parts were doubled on similar types of instruments by MIDI? All of these effects can be achieved with the proper MIDI setup and a little creativity.

Most teachers will agree that MIDI makes possible many things that were unheard of or impossible before 1983. But we must make sure that in using MIDI, our students are encouraged and motivated to become better players. Don't let the machines make up for *lack* of musicianship; use them to promote better musicianship.

MIDI and electronic percussion technology is still so new that we are just starting to realize its educational potential. The development and future applications of MIDI percussion will depend on how we, as effective teachers, find creative uses for it to build a world of better-performing and better-educated percussionists for the future.



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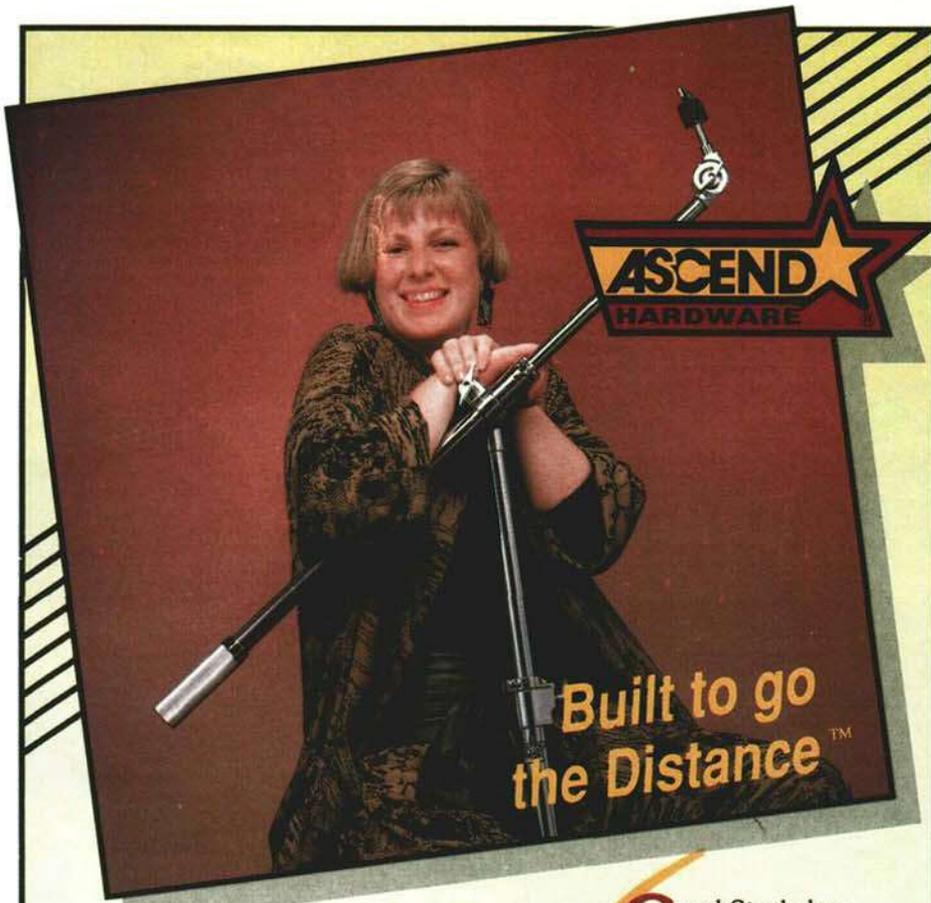
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ing to get a Stewart Copeland-type sound.

RVH: You did something on "Code Of Silence" that was simple, yet very creative and effective: You turned the beat around in the introduction, playing the downbeat on the snare and the backbeat on the bass drum.

LD: That was a case of our having done eight songs already, and starting on the ninth. I asked myself, "What can I do now that's *different*? Ahh—how about playing it backwards?" I remembered Jim Gordon playing "Bell Bottom Blues" backwards on Derek and the Dominoes' Layla album. At the time I first heard that, I thought, "That's not difficult, but what a brilliant idea! Why doesn't anybody ever play backwards? Instead of the snare on 2 and 4, do it the other way around!" Of course, one of the reasons it sounded good on "Code Of Silence" was that we were able to process the snare sound to make it really big.

Usually, the way you can determine what's the beginning of the song, what's the verse, or where the verse is going into the chorus, is that there's a drum fill. This one didn't have a drum fill; it had that backwards thing in the beginning. When the backwards playing stopped, you knew that the verse was there. I like to try things like that instead of always putting in fills.

RVH: You are not on one track on *The Bridge*: "Baby Grand"—the duet with Ray Charles. Why was that?

LD: Ray Charles has a reputation of being very difficult to work with. So when the whole thing was set up to where Ray agreed to do the song with Billy, Billy didn't want to have anything stand in its way—like Ray maybe not liking somebody in the band. So Billy asked us all if we would mind if he went to California by himself, and did the song with Ray's people. We all said, "No, man. Whatever sells the record, go ahead and do it!" It wound up being Vinnie Colaiuta, who played great brushes on the tune.

RVH: More than any other tune on *The Bridge*, "Getting Closer" sounds like a

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band just jamming and having fun together. That song was recorded with Steve Winwood on organ, and sounds very much like a classic Traffic song. Was that intentional?

LD: I have to tell you about that day. The anticipation I felt, while driving into New York to the studio for that session, was incredible. I have a high school yearbook from 1968. I was so into Traffic at that time, that in that yearbook a guy wrote, "Keep your head, keep practicing, and someday you'll play with Stevie Winwood." I brought the book, and showed it to Stevie. I told him things about himself and Traffic that he forgot! I had met him before; he came backstage at one of our shows in England and we just talked briefly. But we never played together.

When that session started, Billy didn't want to get right into doing "Getting Closer." Our band has always done Traffic songs at soundcheck, so Billy started to play "Empty Pages." He was really straining to do a "Stevie Winwood" voice—he's very good at imitations. All of a sudden, Winwood stops the song, and says, "Wait a minute. That's not the right key." And he goes up about *three steps higher*, and just opens his mouth and this *beautiful* voice comes out! And here we all are, just staring at each other and saying, "Oh, WOW!" So we played about *eight hours* of Traffic tunes, and somewhere in that eight hours we also did "Getting Closer."

RVH: In your first interview you mentioned that your influences were '60s drummers like Ringo, Charlie Watts, etc.—who played very simply because technique was not a part of their background. And yet the playing you do on "Angry Young Man" knocks people out. That's an involved arrangement, and is drumistically pretty busy. On the video of the Russian concert, you're working *hard*; there's a lot of playing in that song.

LD: It's not a lot; I do it to make it *look* like it's a lot. The kids in that hall paid anywhere from \$15.00 to \$25.00 to get in. If I don't make it look like it's tough, those kids could sit home and listen to the

record.

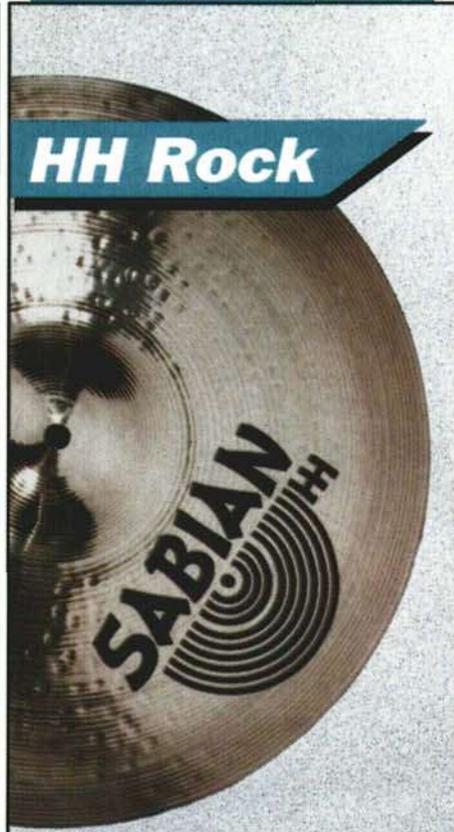
RVH: It's true that showmanship is a big part of it, but I'm talking about the actual drum patterns you play. There are several points in the song where you are playing an energetic tom fill over Billy's vocal. Does Billy actually ask you for that type of playing? Does he need you to kick him in the ass a little bit?

LD: The hardest thing in the world to do is to play with a piano player—especially one who's as busy as Billy is. That's where you really learn 2 and 4; you generally can't play too much more than that when he's playing. But in places like where those tom fills happen in "Angry Young Man," he's not playing the piano. He's just singing and clapping his hands. So there's room right there.

RVH: A lot of lead vocalists demand that the drummer stay back and out of the way, playing just enough to give the song its beat. But many of Billy's arrangements are intricately woven and include prominent drum parts. How do these arrangements come together? How much is Billy, how much is the band working together, how much is the producer, etc.?

LD: Sometimes Billy will come in with just a couple of chords and an idea. We run the thing over and over until it gets to the point of being a song. By then, I've got the drum part together, and we know what direction the song is going to go in—whether it's going to be a Top-40 pop song, something that needs a different chorus, or maybe a great second half of a big production number. Sometimes the work on this song will produce a new drum feel that goes with something Billy wrote years ago, and he'll pull that out. Then he'll go home, and the next day it'll all be finished, with words and everything. So we kind of pull things out of him, and we all work together in that effort.

Billy had the music for "Goodnight Saigon" when we recorded *Class Houses*. He brought it in and we played it over and over again. The reason it didn't get on that album was because it didn't fit with the rest of the music. That was more of a Top-40 pop album, and it was too serious a song. So when it came time to



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1980

First place winners: Tony Williams (pictured) plus Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Neil Peart, Airtio, Ralph MacDonald



1981

First place winners: Steve Gadd (pictured) plus Buddy Rich, Neil Peart, Airtio, Ralph MacDonald



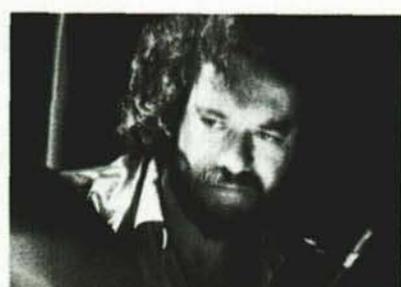
1982

First place winners: Buddy Rich (pictured) plus Steve Gadd, Neil Peart, Airtio, Keith Moon



1983

First place winners: Neil Peart (pictured) plus Buddy Rich, Steve Gadd, Airtio



1984

First place winners: Airtio (pictured) plus Steve Gadd, Buddy Rich, Sly Dunbar, Neil Peart, Rick Allen



1985

First place winners: Louie Bellson (pictured) plus Buddy Rich, Alan Dawson, Steve Gadd, Neil Peart, Sly Dunbar, Omar Hakim, Airtio



1986

First place winners: Omar Hakim (pictured) plus Tony Williams, Ed Shaughnessy, Sly Dunbar, Mel Gaynor, Neil Peart, Anthony Cirone



1987

First place winners: Dave Weckl (pictured) plus Billy Cobham, Steve Smith, Simon Phillips, Louie Bellson, Dave Samuels, Alex Acuna, Anthony Cirone, Gregg Bissonette, Tony Williams

1988?

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do *Nylon Curtain*, we reminded him about the song.

Billy had the lyrics and basic arrangement for "Allentown" for 12 years! When you play the song just on the piano, it could be a nursery rhyme—[sing-song voice] "Well we're living here in Allentown"—ucch! But when you put a drum beat to it, and add the lyrics about the factory going out of business and people wondering what they're going to do, all of a sudden it becomes a good song. That's how things are put together for an album.

RVH: Where and how does a major touring act rehearse for an act like Billy's?

LD: The *Bridge* tour started on paper, like any other tour does. While they were building the lighting truss and the stage, we were in a small soundstage in Queens, New York, with just our basic instruments, a four-speaker P.A. system, and a couple of monitors. That's where we learned the songs. From there, we went to the first venue at which we were scheduled to play, and dress-rehearsed for about three days before the first show. We started out in smaller venues, like Glens Falls, Rochester, and Buffalo in New York. Then we worked up to the Spectrum in Philadelphia, and then into New York City. You never would go right from rehearsals to New York. A tour is just like a Broadway play; you "try it out on the road" before you bring it into the big town.

It's difficult to rehearse in a rehearsal studio like S.I.R. in Manhattan, because you don't have the ambience of the big rooms that you will be playing. But Billy has always felt that if it sounds good at S.I.R., it's going to sound *great* in a coliseum. So you get it as good as you can in the rehearsal hall, and then hope for the best. That's where you really have to work to get your energy together, because an environment like S.I.R. is real padded, and you're not hearing any "bounce-back" from the front system.

RVH: When you are playing a big arena, you have a monitor mix tailored to suit you. But even with a very good monitor

system, the overall ambience—including that "bounce-back" from the house system that you mentioned—often creates an overwhelming din. Do you have to work within that framework, or are your monitor mixers so great that you have terrific clarity and everything just the way you want to hear it?

LD: [laughs] Well, I do have great monitor guys. And there are no effects like echo or reverb on my monitors. We did some outdoor shows in Australia. In those shows, when the sound came out the front system, it just *went* and kept going. Indoors, when it comes off the front system, you can hear it come back. So you can hear the echo on the drums. All of a sudden, the drumkit that sounds "this big" becomes "THIS BIG!" That makes it much easier to play.

RVH: But when you're performing, you're also hearing everything else in the band just as big.

LD: But that makes it easy, 'cause then you can bring your monitors down.

RVH: Is there a delay involved that might cause problems?

LD: No, because you can hear the sound taking off, and then you can adjust to when it's rolling back. It's like the old high-school gym type of sound that every drummer used to love.

RVH: Most rock groups play so loud that their monitors are at tremendous levels. Is it hard to hear clearly when the overall level is so high?

LD: If you walk up on the stage for the first time, then yes—it does seem real loud. I get people going behind my drums and saying, "Oh man, how do you *listen* to this all night?" But when you do it all the time, you learn to deal with it.

RVH: For the record, let's run down the kit you're using now.

LD: The kit I used on the tour was a Tama *Granstar*, with an aquamarine finish. It had white rims, and some people called it the "sissy set." Others thought it was beautiful. It's the set that was shown in the recent Tama ads. They're *strong* drums; that's what I like about them. The rack toms were 10", 12", and 13", and the

JON FARRISS (INXS)

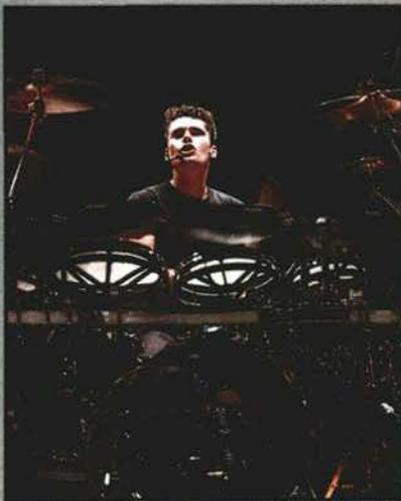
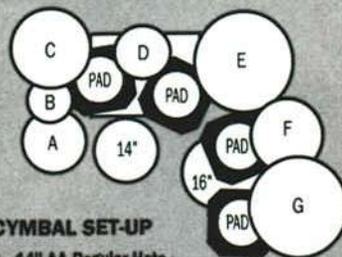


Photo: Ross Halfin

With a string of hit singles and two chart topping albums 'Listen Like Thieves' and 'Kick' cracking the platinum plus mark, INXS has proven yet again that rock bands emanating from Australia possess an unquestionable uniqueness capable of grabbing the attention of music fans the world over.

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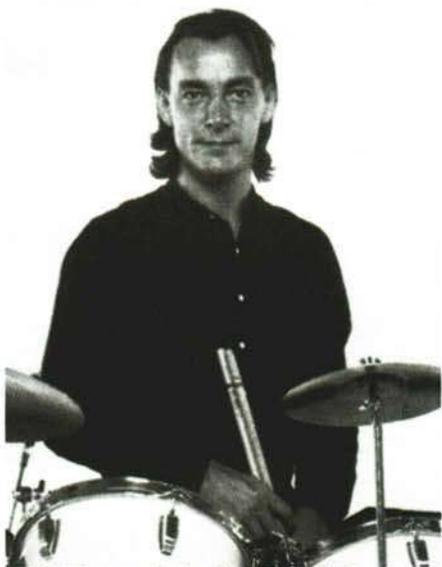
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floor was a 16". The bass drum was a 22" model. To that I added a couple of Simmons pads with tom-tom sounds on them. I also used a Noble & Cooley snare drum. The cymbals were all Zildjians, and I used 15" hi-hats, two 18" crashes, and a 20" ride.

RVH: You're not real "cymbal happy."

LD: Nah. I use the ones I've got quite a bit, and I smack 'em hard. But as for having a lot of different cymbals on the kit, I don't think someone can really tell the difference in the tone between two cymbals by the time they get through the sound system in a coliseum.

Playing a club and playing an arena are two different things. A drummer can have chops, and can play a double-stroke quadruple paradiddle, but it doesn't travel well in a big venue. In a coliseum, 2 and 4—and maybe some triplet fills—travel real well. Between the echo they have on your drums and the natural echo in the hall, the real intricate stuff gets lost. When you get into the lower tom-toms, the sound just bottoms out at a certain point on the P.A. system, and you don't get any lower. That's why bass drums will be processed and tuned more for attack than for fullness and low end.

Different tones of different cymbals are lost in the same way—unless it's an *extreme* difference. Of course, you can tell the difference between a ride cymbal and a China type. But to go from a 16" to an 18", or from an 18" thin to an 18" thick, it's like: "Who's listening that close?" All I'm going for is a basic crash sound—an explosion—from a cymbal in a position that's comfortable and convenient for me to hit.

RVH: Do you keep that same philosophy in the studio?

LD: Sometimes I know when I want a big difference in the sound. I play mostly to lyrics. Phil Ramone calls me a "song-writer's drummer." I like to know what the artist is saying before I play the song. It might make a difference in terms of what fills I play, and it could call for a different tone in a cymbal. In that case, I might want a couple of different cymbals

to choose from in the studio.

RVH: That leads me to a classic "How'd you get that sound?" type of question: The version of "Big Man On Mulberry Street" that appears on the *Bridge* album has an absolutely great, washy, ringy ride cymbal sound. It's perfect for the big-band type of arrangement that characterizes that tune. Was that any particular ride cymbal?

LD: No, it was just a normal, 20" medium ride. But I played it with the butt end of the stick and hit it *real hard*, letting it swing very freely. I normally play with the butt end of the stick all the time, unless the song is a ballad and you want to hear every nice, delicate note on the cymbal. That particular sound came from just slamming the cymbal.

RVH: When it comes to playing live, I take it that you're not particularly concerned with the visual aspect of an imposing kit with a lot of cymbals.

LD: No. For me, it's more impressive to see a guy like Bernard Purdie sit down on a small kit and make people go nuts. Look at Joe Morello. What did he have—four or five pieces? If you've learned to play a single-stroke roll on a small tom, I know, you know, and the *kid in the front row* has got to know that you can do it on a bigger tom, way down 16 drums later. But that's just more of the same. It's when you can do more stuff on little drums, and you have to work with your feet and your hands to make more sounds because you *don't* have that many drums....To me, that's more impressive than seeing a guy doing the same roll on 16 drums.

RVH: Along with the many gold and platinum Billy Joel records on your wall, I saw a photo and a thank-you note from another notable artist. What was that about?

LD: That happened right before the *Bridge* tour started. I got a phone call one day: "Can you come in to the studio?" "What are we doing?" "We can't tell you; it's secret. No wives, no nothing." Finally, I had to get it out of them: Paul McCartney was going to do a thing with

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Phil Ramone. So we went in and did two songs with Paul. I don't know what he intends to do with them, but it was an amazing experience. You know, I've played with Stevie Nicks, John Hiatt, Cyndi Lauper, and a lot of different people. But to be sitting behind the drums, and have the tune start, and all of a sudden hear this *voice*—that I'm so familiar with because I've listened to Beatles records all my life—come through the headphones, and then to look up and *there's the guy singing....* At one point in the session, I had to leave the room and tell myself, "Compose yourself, Lib, 'cause you're gonna blow it." I couldn't believe that I was actually there playing the drums for Paul McCartney.

RVH: Now that the *Bridge* tour is completed, what's coming up?

LD: There will definitely be a new Billy album, which may be in release by the time this reaches print. In the meantime, I'm open if anybody calls for a tour or recording project. Most people think that the musicians in bands like Billy's are not available for other projects, but we are. Our work with Billy goes from tour to album, tour to album. Right now, I'm at a point where if somebody called and said "Let's go," whoosh—I'm gone!

RVH: So you are not on retainer with Billy? Many drummers have that impression, based on the number of years you've worked with him.

LD: Not at all. Billy takes good care of us, when the work is there. But when *he's* not working, *he* doesn't have any income coming in; why should anybody else? When an aircraft company isn't selling jets to somebody, they lay people off. It's the same in music. It's a *business*, it's not just for fun. Being a "pop star" is just like a regular job; every year you've got to go out and work and keep generating the money. And you have to pay *tons* of tax money.

RVH: You said earlier that you are open to calls from other artists. Are there any particular ones that you'd especially like to work with?

LD: Eric Clapton is one. I'd also love to do a tour with Stevie Winwood. I'd like to work with all my old favorites—and I don't mean "old" in terms of age, of course. I would love to do something with Felix Cavaliere [of the Rascals]. He came on stage in Hartford, Connecticut during the *Bridge* tour, and we played "Good Lovin'" and "Come On Up." He was great! He opened his mouth, and through the monitors came the Rascals again!

Another thing that would be fun would be to play some small clubs again. I'm tired of the big stages. I'd like to get back to a situation where you don't hear the drums as an individual thing, but rather where everything sounds like one whole musical package. You hit the snare drum, and it's coming out from the same area as the bass guitar. I want that again. I like that; it's exciting. I wouldn't have to play as hard as I do on a big stage. There isn't that guy in the back row of the coliseum who wants to see a show, too. You don't have to over-exaggerate your playing in a club; you can just play because you love to play.

RVH: There are dozens of Long Island clubs. Have you thought of putting together your own little club band and just doing some gigs for the fun of it?

LD: Yeah, but unless everybody in the band has just done the same thing I've done and is willing to play for fun and not get a whole lot of money, it becomes a problem. If you *can* do that, it's fun, because you can say, "Aw, I don't feel like playing tonight." But you run into club owners who want to book you for a month. If you tell them, "No. I just want to play tonight," they don't want to do that. Then it isn't fun anymore; it's *work*

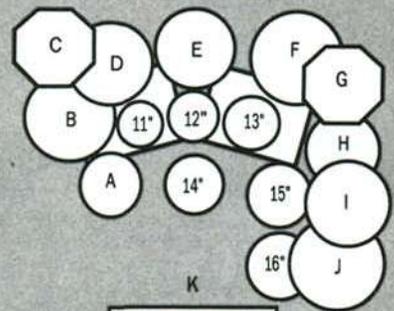
'WILD' MICK BROWN (Dokken)



Photo: Pat Rodgers

With the platinum successes of their albums 'Tooth and Nail', 'Under Lock and Key' and their latest hit 'Back For The Attack', drummer 'Wild' Mick Brown and his bandmates in Dokken, have firmly established themselves as one of rock's most enduring and successful acts.

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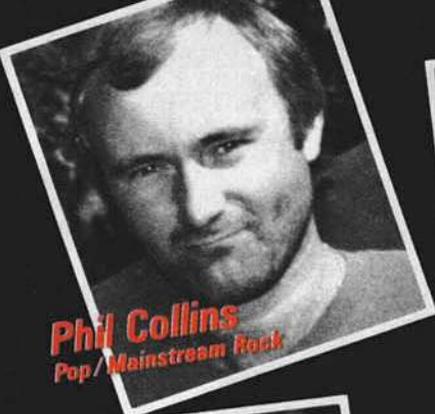
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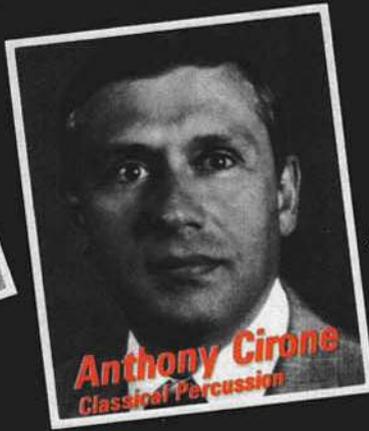
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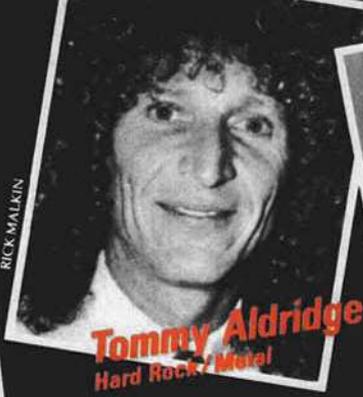
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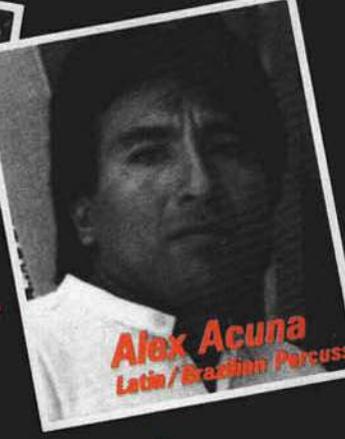
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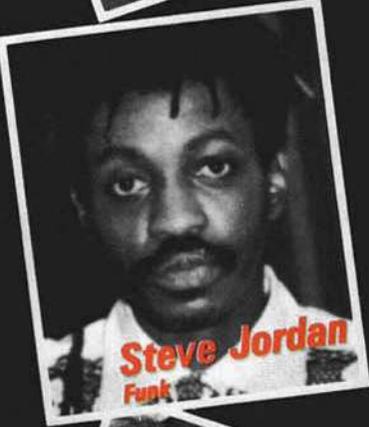
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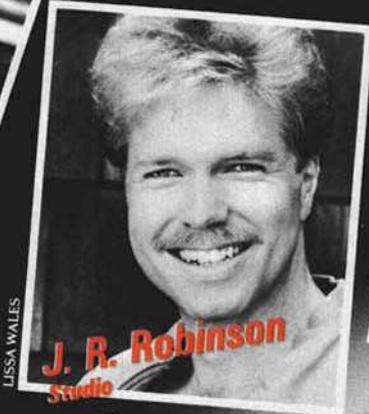


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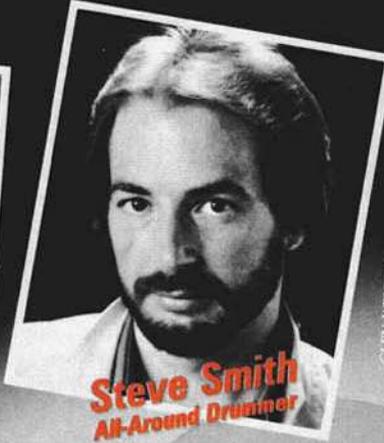
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 - Omar Hakim (All-Around, Funk)
 - Mark Herndon (Country)
 - Tommy Lee (Hard Rock / Metal)
 - Mel Lewis (Big Band)
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 - Lars Ulrich (Hard Rock, Up and Coming)



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again. You *have* to do something at a certain time or do certain kinds of songs. I don't want to do Top-40; I want to do stuff that I really feel like jamming on.

RVH: I understand you have ambitions to make your own record.

LD: I've been fooling around with songwriting for a couple of years now. As a matter of fact, one of my songs wound up on a Melanie—remember Melanie?—album. I think it was number one in Bahrain or someplace like that.

While we were doing the *Bridge* album, Billy was asked to be the voice of the Artful Dodger in a Disney cartoon version of *Oliver Twist*, where the characters are cats and dogs. They also wanted Billy to write the song that the Dodger sings. But Billy was right in the middle of working on *The Bridge*. So he said, "Forget about it; I don't have time to write this song." Then he turned to me and said, "You write it, Lib!" And so I wrote a song, called "I'm The Greatest." Billy loved it and recorded it, but the Disney folks thought it was too hard for the character and ended up using a song written by someone else. But it encouraged me that Billy—who is one of the greatest songwriters in the world—liked one of the songs that I wrote. So I wrote some more, and I'm going to try to do something with them, sort of like what Clarence [demons] did.

RVH: Would you do it as a front artist?

LD: I don't know. I don't even know about taking it on the road. I have a lot of friends who could help me out the way Clarence got help. I mean, his single was mostly Jackson Browne.

RVH: In your '82 interview, you said that it's tough to get to the top in the music business, but it's even tougher to stay there.

LD: It is real tough. And it's nothing like I thought it was going to be. I used to look at Ringo and say to myself, "This guy's got it made! The money just keeps coming in; the fans love him; he must be the happiest person in the world." It wasn't until I met my wife, Mary, that I became the happiest guy in the world, because I fell in love with that one *special* person. All those other people, man, when the show's over, they *leave*.

RVH: How long, all told, have you been with Billy?

LD: Since the winter of '75, when we recorded *Turnstiles*. We're into our fourth life as a rock 'n' roll band. You usually give a band around four years these days. Either one record will carry them for four years, or they'll have one record out, put a second out at the three-year point, do one more tour, and that's the end of them. We're on our fourth life, at that rate, with no end in sight.

RVH: Billy's been quoted as saying, "There's no point in pretending I'm a teenager anymore. It doesn't mean I

don't love rock 'n' roll, but I love other kinds of music just as much." Do you feel the same way? How do you feel about being labeled a "pop" rather than a "rock" drummer?

LD: Some of my favorite drummers are pop drummers. We've *always* loved different types of music. If Billy didn't love other kinds of music, there would be no "Big Man On Mulberry Street," "Getting Closer," or "Baby Grand." It's not that he can't write rock songs anymore, but now he's taking another step. When you get to a certain age, it seems that you're allowed to do that. Look at Sting's last two albums; what a change from the Police!

RVH: But how does this all affect you?

LD: Well, we're both coming of age at the same time. He knows that we both are, basically, still rock 'n' roll guys inside. So whatever he writes will have a rock 'n' roll edge to it. It might be a jazz song or a samba, but it will come out with a rock edge to it. Hopefully, older jazz guys will listen to our stuff and say, "That's real good, but it's not *jazz*." Then they'll get up and play a jazz tune.

I had Sammy Cahn come up to me after a show in England and pay me one of the greatest compliments I ever got. He said, "Man, I've seen a lot of bands. Basie's band use to really swing with Sonny Payne. But man, you are the greatest." He went on to tell me that Sonny used to have great control of the Basie band, and that what I did was similar to that. To be compared with that kind of talent, I must be doing something right!

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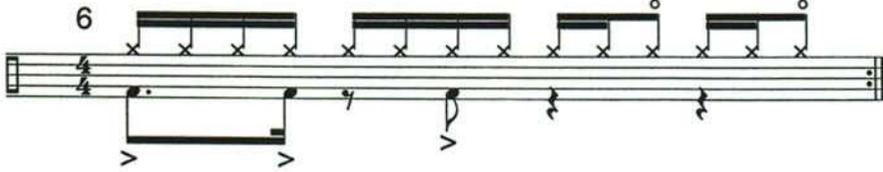
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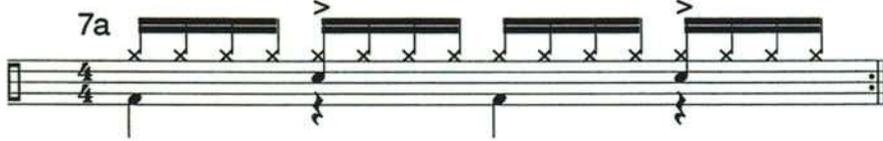
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Liberty: *Off The Record*

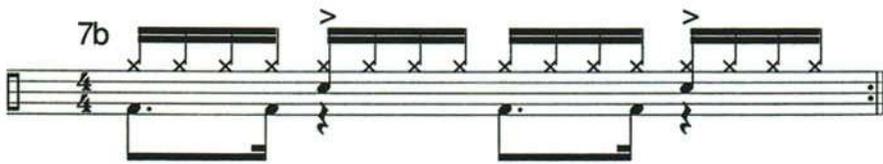
"The Night Is Still Young": Here, Liberty uses a delicate hi-hat pattern and no snare drum, while his bass drum reinforces the figure played by bass and keyboards.



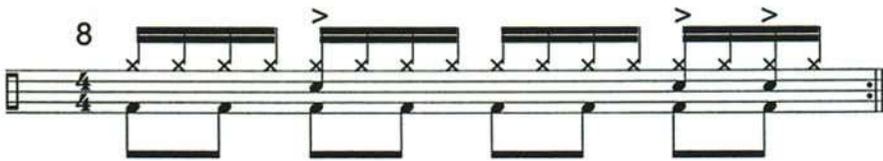
"The Stranger": With so much rhythmic activity in the bass and guitar on this tune, Liberty chooses to stay out of the way by playing a solid yet simple two feel.



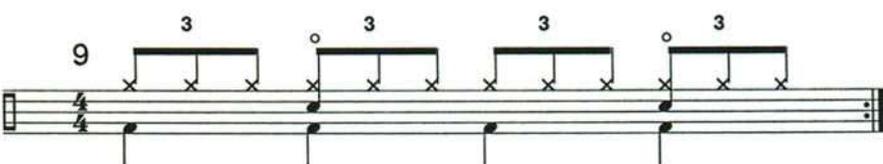
Only when the bass line loosens up on the chorus does Liberty embellish the pattern ever so slightly with this:



"Pressure": Straight 8ths on the bottom, combined with a cracking backbeat, set up a relentless drone, which was probably intentional, and perfectly in keeping with the mood and lyrical content of this piece.



"You're Only Human": This Billy Joel favorite has a brisk shuffle feel. However, Liberty plays every note of the triplet, which gives the tune momentum and a subtle 12/8 feel that works nicely.



"Scenes From An Italian Restaurant": This beat, which includes a somewhat more complex bass drum pattern, occurs in the middle of the tune. The top end is basic and uncomplicated, while the bass drum work lends a carefully structured double-time feel to the music.



"Get It Right The First Time": This Billy Joel song has a bright samba flavor, in which Liberty contributes a Garibaldi-influenced funk pattern that blends superbly with the tune.



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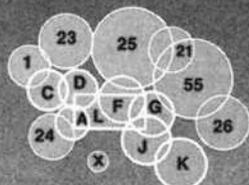
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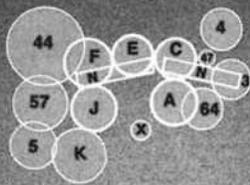
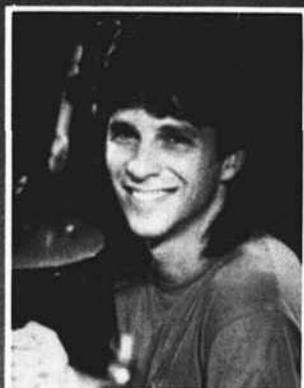


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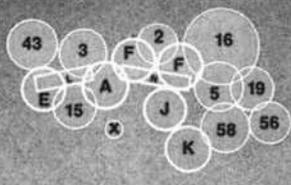


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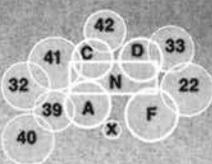
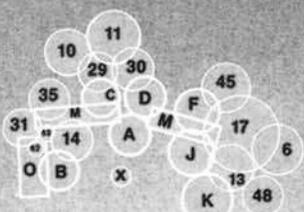
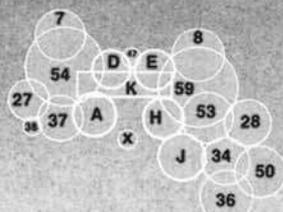
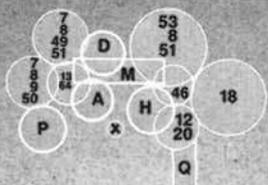
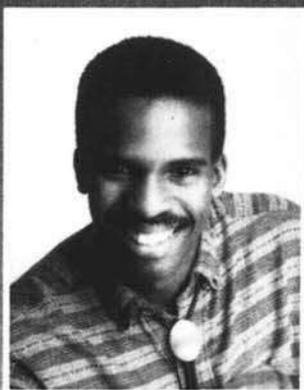
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DRUMS

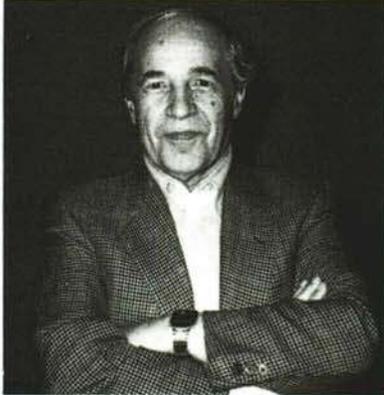
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- I—15" floor tom
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- M—22 bass tom
- N—24 bass tom
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Le Marteau

A Performance Guide for the Xylorimba



On March 15, 1987, Pierre Boulez conducted a performance of his *Le Marteau sans maître* in Los Angeles, as a part of a two-week residency with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The piece was written between 1953 and '55 (revised in 1957). In Boulez's own words, "*Marteau* consists of nine pieces attached to three poems of [French poet] Rene Char, three cycles in fact.... The

cycles are not heard in succession; they interpenetrate each other...." The title *Le Marteau sans maître* is the title of a grouping of poems from Char's Surrealist period (1927-34) and roughly translated means, "The Hammer Without a Master."

The work is for contralto voice and six instrumentalists: flute, viola, guitar, vibraphone, xylorimba, and percussion. The voice is only in four of the nine movements of the work. Boulez explains, "The verbal text serves as a *kern* 1, the center around which the music crystallizes."

The instrumentation, he says, is "distinguished by the use of instruments designed, for the most part, to give a special, even exotic coloring to a given ensemble." All have a medium pitch register in order to accompany a contralto voice, and there is a linkage throughout the ensemble. That is: The flute shares a legato, monodic character with the voice; the viola when bowed is also monodic and legato, but when plucked links to the guitar; the vibraphone has a resonance like that of the guitar, but when dampened links with the xylorimba.

Boulez concludes, "The role of the percussion is marginal compared with the other instruments; it plays a complementary part, filling with indeterminate pitches the void left by the determinate pitches—a kind of architectural time game." "Marginal" in this case does not in any sense mean easy or insignificant, but simply that the percussion instruments are not integrated into the texture in the same way as the other instruments.

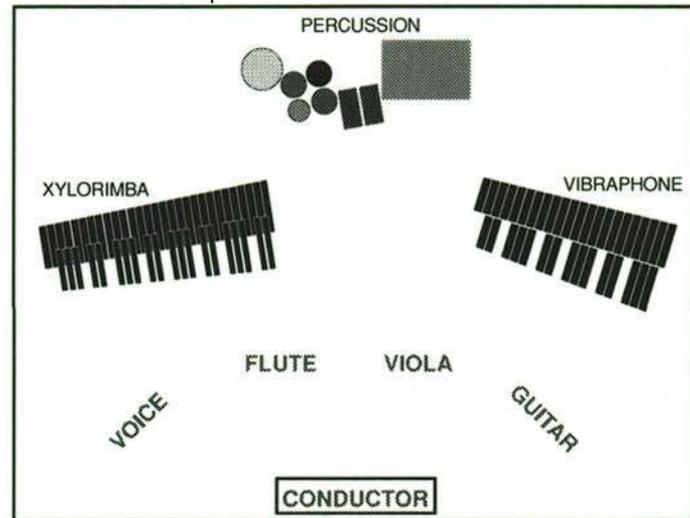
Actually, *Le Marteau sans maître* is widely considered to be one of the most difficult works ever written for percussion. The vibraphone and xylorimba parts in particular present numerous technical and musical problems. It seems likely that other percussionists tackling this immensely exciting, but hugely formidable, piece of music may be able to profit from the experience of those who recently performed it under the composer's direction.

There are, in fact, certain requests and clarifications made by Boulez that do not appear in print, either in the score or printed parts. What follows is from the horse's mouth, so to speak—all things that Boulez either told the performers directly, which became evident in rehearsals, or were decisions reached by individuals and approved by Boulez. However, those decisions that would naturally be left to the individual (specific mallet choices, for instance) should not be regarded as being "engraved in stone." Mallet choices that were right for this ensemble might be wrong in another situation; questions of bal-

ance might be altered by the acoustics of the hall.

General Considerations

1. Boulez's setup of the ensemble:



2. *Tempi*: Since the first performances and recording of *Marteau*, Boulez has revised downward a number of the tempi. A piece that was once characterized even by its admirers as angry, harsh, and angular has moved toward a more lyrical, sonorous version.

A significant change in tempi is seen between the original score and parts and the ones used today, with some of the tempi one-third faster in the earlier version. Thus, the older Universal edition of the score is no longer correct; accurate tempi appear in a pocket score published by Philharmonia, #398.

3. It is important, for other reasons than the above, that any musician involved in a performance of *Le Marteau sans maître* acquire the Philharmonia score. Not only are there a number of small omissions and errors in the parts, but the score gives the beat patterns of all the measures whose manner of beating might be in question. The musicians involved found it important, particularly in the later stages of preparation, to practice with those beat patterns/subdivisions clearly in mind.

4. *Dynamics*: One of the great difficulties for all the players in *Le Marteau sans maître* (and in fact characteristic of much of Boulez's music) is the rapid dynamic changes. A typical example is found in the opening of Movement IV in the vibraphone part.



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It would be easy to believe that these abrupt changes are impossible, unnecessary, or both. But this is not the case. Boulez intends exactly what he has written. With extremely slow practice in the early stages, including perhaps exaggerating the dynamics, and careful attention at all stages of preparation, it is possible to come very close to playing the indicated dynamics.

Sans Maitre

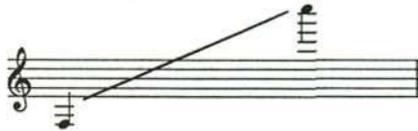
ba, Vibraphone and Percussion Parts

XYLORIMBA



Played by Gregory Goodall

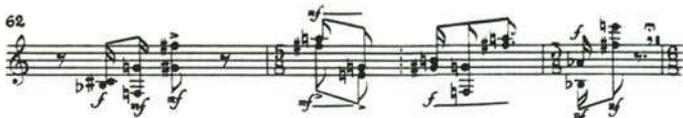
1. The Instrument: Although *Marteau* is written specifically for xylorimba, the range of the piece is (written):



sounding one octave higher. Clearly this is within the range of the standard xylophone. Greg Goodall asked Boulez his reasons for requiring xylorimba. Boulez explained that he was seeking the alto range of the family, then went on to say that at the time *Marteau* was written, xylophones (in Europe at least) had middle C as the bottom pitch. Hence the xylorimba. Boulez made it plain that the acceptable substitute is the xylophone (even if the player should happen to have available a marimba with an extended upper range, like some of the old Deagan instruments), because the tonal quality he desires is the brighter, more strident one of the xylophone.

However, another musician who had played the xylorimba part on xylophone (and heard the March concert) believed strongly that the slightly darker tone of the xylorimba was preferable. Therefore, it seems that if a xylorimba is available, it should be used. If not, the xylophone is a substitute acceptable to Boulez.

2. Notation: One of the first problems to confront Greg was the unusual notation. Movement II, m. 62-64 (original notation):



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When asked, Boulez explained that the separate flags were used in most cases to indicate differing dynamics. Greg

believed that this notation might slow his learning of the piece. Furthermore, he feared that, at a crucial moment in performance, the notation might hamper his instantaneous recognition of a rhythm. His solution was to photocopy his part, white-out the extra flags on the photocopy, redraw any necessary beams or lines, and then photocopy the result.

Movement II, m. 62-64 (as changed by Greg):



3. Mallet Choices: With the exception of one brief passage, Greg used four mallets throughout *Marteau*. At one point in rehearsals, Boulez commented that he was not "married" to any particular mallet for either the xylophone or vibraphone. And it became apparent that his mallet indications are not dogmatic. Therefore, the player should employ whatever mallet works best on a given instrument and within a given ensemble.

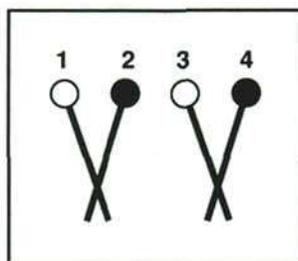
In both the part and the score, at one time or another, Boulez asks the xylorimbist to use three different hardnesses of mallet—baguettes douces (soft), baguettes mi-dures (medium-hard), and baguettes dures (hard). However, after a few rehearsals, as a result of Boulez's instructions and comments, as well as Greg's own perceptions of balancing and blending, he was using only two different types.

For his hard mallets, he chose the Malletech *Bob Becker #34* (blue) mallets. His softer mallets were an older set of Deschler pinks, a mallet with a very hard core and tight yarn wrapping. A genuinely soft mallet was not appropriate because of the necessity of clarity in the upper register of the xylorimba, and because of the need to sometimes play loudly, even in passages that are basically soft. The advantage of a mallet like the older Deschlers is that they sound soft when played softly, but have a good bite on louder notes. Unfortunately, the current Deschler equivalent is extremely different from the older version.

Most of Boulez's mallet indications are clearly given in both the score and the part, but there are a few exceptions/omissions.

Movement IV: No mallet indications are given in the movement, but Boulez made it plain that he wanted hard mallets at the beginning, then a change to softer mallets for m. 48 (change during the fermata), return to hard mallets for m. 67, back to soft mallets for m. 73, and to hard mallets for m. 86 to the end.

Movement VI: The instructions say, "Suivant les dynamiques, employer baguettes douces ou dures." ("Following the dynamics, use hard mallets or soft.") Greg employed a mixed set of four:



with the Deschler mallets as 1 and 3, the Beckers 2 and 4.

Movement VIII: As indicated, begin with hard mallets. In m. 22, where Boulez has indicated medium-hard mallets, Greg again used the Deschler pinks. Whatever mallet is used needs to be one that will play both soft and very loud, for instance in m. 27:

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Form. 53, a change back to hard mallets is indicated. In m. 67, a switch to soft mallets is in the score but not in the part, and the soft mallets are retained throughout the cadenza (m. 86-92). For m. 103, change back to hard mallets; this is in the score, but omitted from the part.

Movement IX: No mallet choice is indicated anywhere. Greg used his "soft" mallets throughout.

In many instances in all movements, the mallet changes must be done quite quickly. In a few instances, it may be necessary to pick up the new mallets in one hand while playing with the other.

4. Stickings: These are governed by individual choices, of course. However, in many cases, the guiding factor in choosing stickings is not convenience but the necessity of playing, for instance, a double-stop with a different dynamic on each note.

In Movement VI, where a mixed set of four mallets is employed, the stickings are wholly dependent upon the indicated dynamic.

5. Balances: Check the Philharmonia score. Some questions of balances are clarified in the score, but omitted from the part.

6. Page turns: Movement II has severe page-turn problems. However, the vibraphonist is free to turn the pages for the xylo-ribmist. This is what we did, and Boulez had no objection to the necessary crossing and recrossing of the stage by the vibraphonist before and after the movement.

Other page-turn problems may be solved by using a photocopied part and opening three pages.

7. Corrections: Apart from several omissions noted above, the most serious error in the xyloimba part is in Movement II, m. 92. The tempo change indicated is not correct; the previous tempo continues. The asterisk in the same measure is also an error; it is correctly repeated in m. 103.

8. Cadenza (m. 86-92): No attempt should be made to balance with the vibraphone, which is playing very loudly while the xyloimba dynamics are all soft.

In m. 91, the tempo should slow slightly.



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The three grace notes before the 3rd beat should be separated from the previous note and played distinctly as a pickup to the Ab.

9. Special problems: In movement IX, a roll that begins in m. 27 must be sustained while playing other notes (in m. 29):



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Greg accomplished this by slightly swiveling his music stand during m. 24 and 25 and playing a right-handed "mandolin" roll on the far side of the instrument. There is time in the fermata preceding m. 27 to get into position.

In a similar situation in m. 106 and 107, he played the roll with mallets 2 and 3 and plucked off the lower note with mallet 1, using a pivot motion.

VIBRAPHONE



Played by Karen Ervin Pershing

1. The Instrument: The part is written for a standard three-octave vibraphone. In choosing an instrument, the primary consideration (apart from its being in tune) should be given to the length of reverberation. Boulez wants an instrument that rings for as long as possible.

Although in one of the available recordings it sounds as if sometimes the vibraphone motor is on, in fact the motor should not be used at any time in the piece.

2. Notation: Unlike all the other parts, the vibraphone part (at least the one that I received) is notated quite normally, without the extra flags appearing on any of the notes. However, in the score the extra flags were shown. When asked about this dis-

crepancy, Boulez laughed and by way of explanation used a German word, which he translated as, "Music for the people." In other words, he said, the vibraphone has a "simplified part."

3. Mallet choices: I used four mallets throughout. The only mallet indication given in the part is for medium-hard mallets in Movement VII. I began by using Malletech *Samuels #18* mallets for all movements except VII, where I used a slightly harder mallet, an older Vic Firth model. Midway through rehearsals, Boulez asked that I adjust my balance downward in VII in order not to overpower the guitar. In consequence, I ended up using *Samuels #18* mallets in that movement as well. The weight of these mallets, I found, made not only for a richer tone than I got with any other mallet available to me, but made dampening slightly easier.

It was only near the end of rehearsals that I noticed, much to my embarrassment, that the score has a mallet indication, "baguettes dures," in the very first measure of the piece—an indication that is missing from the part. By then, however, Boulez had already expressed his liking for both the instrument and mallets I was using. And, as mentioned before, he had said he was not "married" to any particular mallet. So I continued with the *Samuels* mallets, even though they would not normally be considered "baguettes dures."

4. Stickings: This is too personal a matter for me to even make suggestions. However, many of the sticking decisions must be based less on convenience than on the written dynamics. Obviously, when there is a double stop with one note marked for *mf*, the other *p* or *pp*, it must be played with two hands so each note is at the correct dynamic.

5. Balances: In movement I and VII, as mentioned above, Boulez asked for a slightly lowered dynamic so the guitar could be heard. During other movements, with the same indications, the dynamics can be generally louder, with a few exceptions noted below.



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Movement IX: Beginning with m. 103 (as indicated in the score but not in the vibraphone part) there are alternating sections, one marked "exagerer les differentes dynamiques," the other marked "dynamiques plus equilibrees." This is true for all instruments.

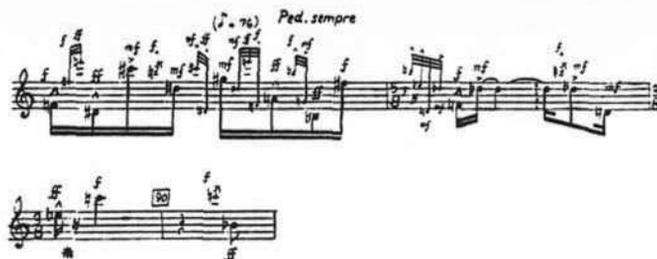
In the first instance, each instrument should play its full dynamic range, regardless of balance; in the second, the dynamics should be more subdued in order to balance with the voice and other instruments.

6. Page turns: Only two problems exist in the vibraphone part (assuming that all parts are arranged in the same manner as the one I received). One is in Movement VII, m. 28, the other in Movement IX, m. 52. Assuming a setup like the one we used, with the percussion fairly close to the vibraphone, the percussionist can do those two page turns for the vibraphonist.

Also, in Movement II, the vibraphonist is free to make much-needed page turns for the xyloimbist. Of course, it depends on whether the vibraphonist is willing to volunteer for extra duty.

7. Corrections: In addition to the omissions noted above, some of the tempi are incorrect, notably Movement VIII, m. 51 (incorrectly numbered in the Philharmonia pocket score as m. 52). In the vibraphone part, the tempo is given as quarter note equals 76. In the score, the tempo is correctly given as quarter note equals 60. The faster tempo is most likely a left-over from Boulez's earlier, faster version. In any case, it makes a considerable difference!

8. The cadenza: Movement VIII, m. 84-90.



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In general, the cadenza should be played very strongly and dramatically. Beginning with the second half of m. 86, the basic pulse of the 16th notes should slow slightly as the number of grace notes attached to each 16th increases. The impression Boulez gave, with voice and gesture, is that the pulse should become progressively (but slightly) slower and heavier until the first beat of m. 88.

Also, Boulez made it a point that the Bb, m. 90, should be extremely loud, forcefully interrupting and overriding the xyloimba, whose dynamics are soft at that point.

Special Note: Although both part and score indicate that the pedal is to be held continuously down from beat 2 of m. 85 through beat 1 of m. 89, Boulez specifically asked for half-pedaling, beginning with the 3rd beat of m. 86. He explained that, at the time *Marteau* was composed, the vibraphones with which he was familiar were nowhere near as long-ringing as the better U.S.-made instruments. How much half-pedaling is required depends upon the particular instrument being used. However, Boulez made it extremely clear that, while the cadenza should be full and resonant, the pitches should not pile up to the point that they are nothing more than a blur of sound. I ended up half-pedaling on approximately every other 16th during the last half of m. 86 and all of m. 87.

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Rhythm Tech

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9. Special problems—Dampenings: In much of *Le Marteau sans maître*, it is the necessity of dampening the notes exactly as written that makes the vibraphone part so immensely challenging. A first casual unthinking glance at an example like the following would lead one to believe that it is not terribly difficult. Movement VIII, m. 6-7:

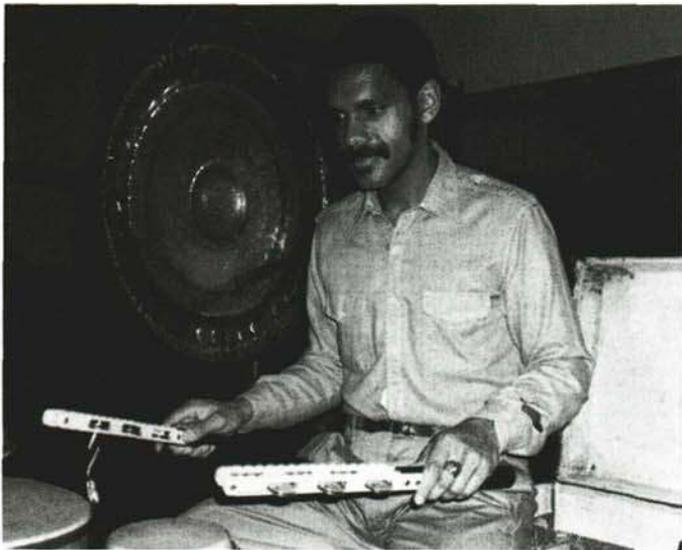


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However, each note must last only for its specified duration. Therefore, the vibraphonist must carefully work out exactly how to mallet damp certain notes while playing others. All of the dampenings are, however, perfectly possible to execute, if carefully worked out. Boulez knew exactly what he was doing!

I did find it impossible in Movement VIII (m. 3-21) to make the dampenings completely clean. That is, even though I dampened the desired bars with a fair amount of pressure, because of the speed involved there was a slight amount of lingering overring. I expressed my frustration to Boulez, and he said, cheerfully, "Don't make yourself crazy." Subsequently, I taped myself and discovered that the overring that had worried me becomes inaudible at the distance of a few feet.

PERCUSSION



Played by Raynor Carroll

1. Instruments: *Tambour sur cadre*: Raynor asked Boulez about this, and he verified that what was meant was a hand drum, placed on a snare-drum stand.

Two pairs of bongos.

One pair of maracas: Raynor actually used one larger maraca for rolls, to get a smoother, swimmier sound, and a smaller, drier pair for rhythmic passages.

Cloche double: Based on what he heard in a recording of *Marteau*, Raynor used two mounted Almglocken, pitched:



Boulez subsequently approved his choice.

Triangle.

Tam-tam aigu: The one Raynor used was approximately 22" in diameter.

Gong grave: A very deep nipple gong, about 30" in diameter. The one Raynor used was an "E," although no pitch is specified.

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Tam-tam tres profound: A very deep tam-tam, approximately 38" in diameter.

Tres grande cymbale suspendue: Very large suspended cymbal.

Deux cymbalettes-chaque manche etant, pourvu de quatre cymbalettes: (Two cymbalettes, one in each hand, with at least two pairs of jingles on each.) In other words, tambourine jingles. Raynor asked Boulez if he meant jingles mounted on a tambourine shell or on a stick. "A stick," was the answer. Raynor used two *Jesticks*, manufactured by Calato.

2. Notation: The percussion part, like the xyloimba part, presents problems of notation. Raynor's solution was to recopy several movements (II, IV, and most of VIM).

3. Stick choices: Movement II calls for very light snare drum sticks on the *tambour sur cadre*, m. 1-54. A change to slightly heavier sticks (plus lourdes) is indicated at m. 55. However, Raynor used 7As throughout the movement, simply playing a little more heavily, because of the return to *tambour sur cadre* in m. 105.

Movement IV: Almglocken played with *batte de fer* (metal). Raynor used a medium-weight triangle beater. A soft xylophone mallet is required at m. 73. A Musser blue rubber was Raynor's choice.

Movement VIII: Almglocken: m. 21. On the edge of the bell with a wood stick. Raynor used rattan—the handle end of a vibraphone or marimba mallet—in order to get a very light sound.

Bongos: m. 51. The part calls for a very thin wood stick. Raynor used rattan handles here as well. At m. 122, even though no stick change is indicated in the part, Boulez requested a change back to the light snare drum stick.

4. Emendations or Corrections: In movement VIII, measures 107, 114, and 116, there should be a slight diminuendo on the three consecutive 1 6ths.

Measure 107:



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Likewise, at m. 114 and 116, begin at the indicated dynamic and diminuendo slightly. This is in neither the score nor the part.

A rimshot on the bongo for the last note of Movement VIII (m. 138) is described in the score but omitted from the part. On Boulez's specific instructions, Raynor used the butt end of the snare drum stick and played absolutely as loudly as possible.

5. Balances: Like the other instruments, in Movement IX between m. 103 and 157, there are shifts from section to section, between exaggerated dynamics (exagerees or sans equilibrees) and those that balance with the ensemble (dynamiques equilibrees). These shifts are indicated in the percussion part.

General dynamics, tam-tams and gong, m. 100-end: The notes with louder dynamics should just cover the flute, so it can barely be heard. According to Boulez, the flute emerges from the tam-tam sound. At 165, the tam-tam sound should be very loud. In rehearsal, Boulez cautioned Raynor to be careful about the largest tam-tam, but also told him that it was all right if Raynor was unable to hear the flute when he had a dynamic of *ff*.

6. Dampening: In movement IV, last measure (m. 105), the triangle should ring until it dies naturally, not dampened at all.

Movement IX: It is crucial that the tam-tams and gong be muted *exactly* where indicated. Raynor found that, with a large heavy beater in each hand and three ringing instruments to be muted, this required some careful choreography.

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Last note (m. 187 and 188): The cymbal should be let to ring, as Boulez put it, "forever."

7. Special problems:

Movement IV, m. 104 and 105:

più ac - ce - la - ran - do (♩ = 168)
étouffes le triangle en posant
la 3^e et 4^e doigts sur la corde droit. étouffes id.
laissez vibrer
mp s. pp mp pp arrêt moyen (arrêt long)

(la batte à l'intérieur de triangle)

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The triangle is held in the hand and the diamond notes are to be muted. The part indicates that the triangle should be played inside the instrument, striking on two different sides ("la batte à l'intérieur de triangle"). Raynor asked Boulez if he was intending two different sounds from the two different interior striking positions. Boulez said no, the sound should be the same; it was notated that way for ease of execution. Therefore, Raynor decided to play all notes on the bottom bar of the triangle, since the sound was better that way.

Movement IX, m. 189: Translated from the French, the instructions read, "With the thumb, rub the cymbal from the edge to the center while turning the cymbal rapidly (as on a tambourine)." At the first two rehearsals, Raynor tried playing from edge to center, but in both cases Boulez asked for more sound. His suggestion was to use rosin, which Raynor tried at home with disastrous results—complete silence.

At subsequent rehearsals and at the performance, Raynor did the thumb roll around the perimeter of the cymbal (which should be on an upright stand, rather than a hook, to keep it from tilting) without turning it. Boulez was delighted with the results.

A Special Note

As a conductor, Pierre Boulez is extraordinary, with flawless control and consistency, immense and intelligent musicianship, precision and excitement, craftsmanship and art. He also has a rehearsal technique that every conductor would do well to emulate and, without qualification, the best ears in the business.

Even to say all this is not to say nearly enough about Boulez. For those who have come in contact with him, what stands out most is his immense humanity, his humor, and his charm. On the podium, he is a musician's dream. He is never bad-tempered, never sarcastic, never rude. He treats the musicians as colleagues rather than inferiors. He expects the best, but he also accepts mistakes in the early stages of rehearsal as being only natural, a part of the learning process. (In one of the early rehearsals for *Marteau*, I played correctly a rhythmic passage that had been causing me some trouble, but concluded with a very loud, very wrong, note. With slightly nervous sarcasm, I inquired, "Would you like it better if I played the right note?" Boulez laughed and said, "Chaqu'un en son temps," then translated: "Everything in its proper season." In other words, "Don't worry. I'm sure it'll be fine.")

His warmth of personality induces comfort and security when there might otherwise be extreme tension. "Coraggio (courage)," he would say to a musician faced with a particularly difficult passage, and he would smile. What a smile! More than a matter of lips curving and teeth showing, it sparkled in his eyes, projecting an inherent warmth that is impossible to fake.

After the performance (which went extremely well, with excellent reviews) all of us involved felt, along with the satisfaction and excitement, a tremendous sense of loss. We all agreed that we had participated in an extraordinary experience, that *Le Marteau sans maître* was an extraordinary piece of music, and Pierre Boulez an extraordinary man.



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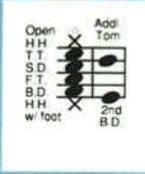
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Live Vs. Studio



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MUSIC KEY



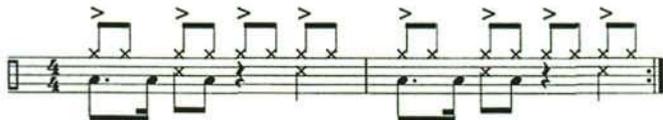
When I rehearse for a John Cougar Mellencamp tour, there are many situations where I will change the original recorded drum parts. Because our live show is usually two and a half hours long, we end up changing the arrangements to many songs or sections of songs in order to make the show exciting and entertaining. Just performing a bunch of songs as they

were recorded on an album doesn't necessarily make for a good show. We look at the entire show as one basic concept, like one big piece of music, where each song becomes an integral part of the whole piece.

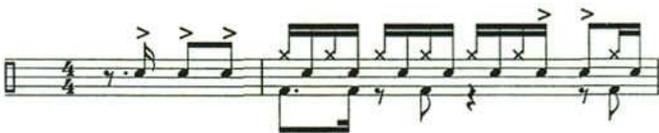
The first thing we do when putting together a show is to make a list of our best songs and rehearse them. Keeping the live show in mind, we add new parts to the songs or change the arrangements. We might add a new intro or breakdown to a song, or even change the basic groove. It just depends on what is needed to create an exciting and entertaining show.

The next step in putting the show together is to come up with a logical and musical order for the songs. While we rehearse this list, we begin to weed out songs that aren't working. We continue to mold the songs with new ideas until all of the songs work together and create one big musical idea—the show!

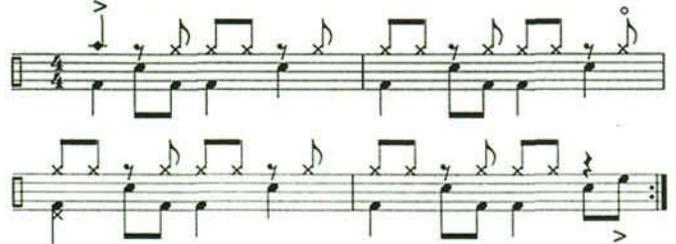
The drums play a big part in our show with regard to transitions from song to song. Many times in the show, I'll end one song and immediately start another groove to set up the next song. For example, in the song "Jack And Diane," I played this beat on the *American Fool* album. (I programmed a Linn drum machine, which uses a tambourine sound, notated on the hi-hat space, handclaps, notated with an "x" on the snare drum space, and a floor tom sound.)



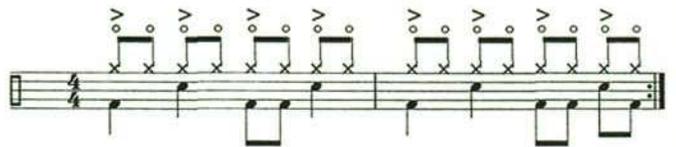
However, on tour I played the following groove to set up the song. Besides being a new arrangement to the song, it also gave the guitar players time to switch their instruments between songs. In this example, all of the snare drum notes that are *not* accented should be played ghosted (very softly).



In the song, "Minutes To Memories," we decided to make it feel more like English rock 'n' roll. The band liked the original version of the song, but realized it just didn't work in the show, so we beefed it up. The original beat went like this:



We changed it to this:



The live version may not be as interesting rhythmically, but the new beat has more force and power.

For "Crumblin' Down," we did the same basic thing. In the show, the drums and acoustic guitar start the song, setting up a solid groove immediately after finishing the song "Thundering Hearts." Once again we changed the groove to a basic rock beat for more power and force. The original beat was this:



The new version was this:



In the song "Play Guitar," I played this groove during the solo section on the album:



When I played the song live, I added a double bass pattern:

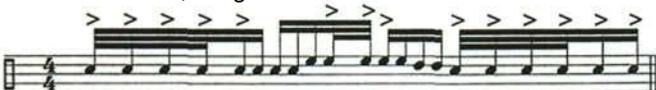




In the live show, I play all of the important fills from the records, and with any other fills I try to play them in the same sections of the songs as I did when I recorded them. However, when it makes sense musically, I'll add more power and excitement to a song by beefing up my fills. I'm very careful about how much I do add to a fill, because I'm a firm believer in the "less is more" approach. If I'm going to play a busier fill, it has to make musical sense. To give you an example of what I might do to beef up a fill, let's look at something that might have been played this way on record:



In a live situation, I might do this:



These are just a few examples of the changes or adjustments I make when I play a recorded song live. Making a record and performing live are obviously two different situations. Projecting the feeling of the music in front of 15- to 20-thousand people requires a few changes from the recorded part. Keep some of these ideas in mind, and remember, you don't have to rewrite the song, just make musical adjustments to what already exists.



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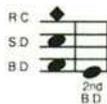
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Rockin' Rudiments

MUSIC KEY



This column has been written as a double bass drum exercise. It really helped me become more aware of the different rudimental stickings that can be used for two bass drums. Here, I've taken three common drumming rudiments—the single ratamacue, the four-stroke ruff, and the flam—and applied them to two bass drums.

I suggest that you practice these exercises with a metronome. Start at a very slow tempo. Also, practice the bass drum parts first before adding the different hand parts.

The Single Ratamacue

In this first section, I've taken the sticking of a single ratamacue, opened up the drag, and made it into groups of sixes.

1

6

R R L R L R L L R L R L

2

6

3

6

4

6

5

6

6

6

7

6

8

6

6

The Four-Stroke Ruff

In this section, I've taken the four-stroke ruff and played it with the sticking of the single drag.

9

3

R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L

10

3

3

3

3

11

3

12

3

13

3

14

15

16

The Flam

In this final section, I've taken the flam and placed it within different beats.

17

R L R L R L R L

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

Once you understand these bass drum exercises, go back and substitute these two cymbal variations.



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Ron Tutt

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SB: I recently saw your name on a Phil Keaggy album called *The Wind And The Wheat*. Have you worked with many other Contemporary Christian artists?

RT: I've done work with Phil, Kelly Willard, the Maranatha Singers, Benny Hester, and others.

SB: Let's move on to your work with Neil Diamond. Was it difficult working into the drum chair with his band after so many years of Dennis St. John doing the gig? You have such different styles.

RT: I'd say it was difficult in a way, probably because I studied harder for that than I did for anything else. I was doing some work with Jerry Garcia out on the East Coast, and every day, when we were traveling, I'd be listening to Neil's songs through a little tape deck. It was a constant thing for about two weeks. In another way it wasn't very difficult, because they really let me play the way I wanted to. The first thing I did with Neil was to rehearse for an upcoming tour. It took quite a bit of extensive rehearsing, because he has quite an extensive library of tunes that he likes to be able to call upon.

The majority of the work I do with him is concert touring. However, we do record some shows for the live records. In fact, one was recently released called *Hot August Night II*. It's the live record-

ing from the Greek Theater concert we did last summer. And we also do studio records. We're presently working on a new movie theme and a single from the movie, too. So, my work with Neil is really quite evolved.

SB: Do you ever have enough time to do other projects?

RT: Oh, yeah. I mean, it's not constant—every day, every week, every month. I never looked at my calendar to count how many days a year I tour, because it fluctuates from year to year. For example, '86 was a very heavy touring season. But in '87 we toured in the spring and in the summer, and took all winter off.

SB: How have you modified your drum sound in the past 15 years?

RT: It's not only the time element involved in how the sounds of drums have changed. The main difference is the type of music you're playing. Elvis' music is obviously different from Neil's, but if Elvis were alive and still playing music, I'm sure his music would've changed a bit. Of course, it's hard to change how you do "Hound Dog." It's funny; the former members of Elvis' band were in England recently, and we were asked to play "Mystery Train." I asked Jerry Scheff, the bass player, "How do we approach this song? Do we play it like we played it live with Elvis, do we play it the way he

recorded it, or do we play it different from either?"

SB: What did you come up with?

RT: We came up with a combination of the way we would've played it and the way we did it with Elvis. We decided on that way because we weren't backing up Elvis, we were backing up Roger Daltry of The Who. Because Jerry was playing an upright bass, we tried to play it more like the original recording, but more with our own kind of drive and energy. So it was a nice combination.

SB: How did it go over?

RT: It was fun. It really went over well.

SB: How about drum sounds in general? Can you attribute most of the changes to the new wave of electronics that has swept in?

RT: Yes, but much of the reason the sound has changed is that the recording techniques have changed. The ability to record drums better—the technological advancement—has made a major difference. If you listen to '60s records, a lot of times the drummers were playing the same beats that they're playing now. Drumsets have improved too, so that's another thing that makes a difference. Drum manufacturers have finely tuned the ability to make a round shell, and they've improved hardware stability. The drum companies are constantly working to make their drums sound better. The Tama *Artstar II* kit I have gone to has a maple shell. This makes the drums a little more resonant—a little sweeter sounding. The *Artstar IIs* are even a little more resonant than the *Artstar I* kit that I had been using. Also, I think that snare sounds have changed. For instance, they went from a bright crisp sound in the '50s and '60s, to the '70s sound, where everything was deep and heavy. Of course, you still find a lot of people who want that deep snare sound, but you'll also find some who are going back to a brighter, higher-pitched sound. The drummer that comes to my mind who has an amazingly high snare sound is Stewart Copeland. He started that real high-pitched snare. It's almost like a reggae snare drum, but he modified it for his style. His drums are also very dead. He doesn't look for that real deep, resonant-type sound. He just wants a "plunk" sound on his drums. Anyway, the point is, as music evolves in certain ways, certain sounds are more accepted.

SB: How do you keep on top of the latest sounds for studio situations?

RT: When I go into the studio I carry a case that holds six snare drums. I had it specially designed, and I've got everything in there from a 10" deep snare to a 5". So, if I play on a big rock ballad that needs a 10" that will go "kwwisshhh," I have it. Or if I want a high-pitched crack, I have the 5". And then there's everything in between.

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CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

SB: I suppose you use a brass snare drum for the crack, no?

RT: Actually, I have a brand new solid-maple Tama 5" snare. It's a real beauty. It's not made with layers; it's solid. That's what I've been using to give me a good "crack" sound. I used it on the recent live HBO special that I did with Roy Orbison.

SB: Let's talk about the kit you're using now. You endorse Tama drums.

RT: That's right. Presently I'm using the black finish *Artstar II*, with 24" double bass drums and four toms—11" and 12" mounted toms, and 14" and 16" floor toms. Also, I use a cast bell-brass 6 1/2" snare.

SB: You use a lot of cymbals.

RT: I've got two sets of Paiste *Sound Edge* hi-hats. All the cymbals are the new 3000 *Reflector* series. I've got 16", 17", 18", and 19" regular crashes, and the same sizes in heavy crashes. Also I use a 20" China-type and a 22" *Power ride* in concert, and a 22" regular weight.

SB: Is there any particular reason you use the 19"?

RT: Definitely—throughout the years I've noticed that the odd-sized cymbals simply sound better. I don't know why, but they just do.

SB: What sticks do you endorse?

RT: Calato Regal Tips. For concerts I use 56s, and in the studio, 5As.

SB: How about the heads?

RT: The heads I endorse are Remo, but I found a special *Ambassador* that I like a lot. It's called the *Ambassador CS*; it's coated, but with the black dot on the inside. I can get a more controlled, slightly more muffled sound with them. I get a nice deep, low tuning.

SB: Do you care much about electronics in your setup?

RT: It's not been my central focus. I've used the E-mu *SP-12* sampling unit for a while. But right now, I'm in the process of totally revamping my use of electronics. I'm really much more into the natural acoustic sounds. You see, I really feel that individuality is all-important. Everyone's got the same samples coming through their sets. I don't like that. To me that's dull. I mean, how far can new sounds come?

SB: We've already established that you started playing professionally over 25 years ago. But when did you actually first pick up the sticks and know that you wanted to play?

RT: I'd say it was in junior high school. I was a tap dancer when I was three years old. In school, I picked up violin first. I didn't like that very much, so after a year I took up the trumpet. I played trumpet through my junior year in high school. I had attained first-chair trumpet throughout junior and senior high, but I just got bored with it. From junior high on, I found myself going back to the drum section of the band room after practices, just to fool around on the drums. I *felt* drums more than I felt the trumpet. I guess it was because of my background as a tap dancer. It was a way to express myself rhythmically. The trumpet was just not doing that for me.

SB: So when did you get your first drumset?

RT: I went to this music store in downtown Dallas the summer before my senior year, and I traded my trumpet for an old drumset they had upstairs.

SB: I can't imagine that the band director was too happy about having his first-chair trumpet player trading in his horn!

RT: He wasn't. I had been asking him for a while if I could switch over to drums, and he'd always say, "Oh no, absolutely not; it's a silly thing to do." I went back my senior year and said, "I'm not a trumpet player anymore; I don't have my trumpet. I traded it in, so if you want me to play in the band..." [laughs]

SB: That's one way to do it!

RT: Yeah, it's one way. But you know, I had that burn, that inner desire to play. So he reluctantly took me, and needless to say, I had a lot of catching up to do. But I applied myself, and it took, like a duck to water. All of a sudden there I was at North Texas State University the next year, competing with kids who had been playing drums all their lives. In fact, there were several NARD rudimental champions in the drum line, and here I was, trying to compete with them. Of course I couldn't make the snare drum line because I just didn't have the solid basis of rudiments, but I was already playing set on gigs.

SB: What year was that?

RT: That was in 1957. At that time they didn't have a full-time drum instructor, so Tommy Gwinn came up from Dallas to North Texas to give lessons. Now, of course, they have a very sophisticated percussion department.

SB: Did you find yourself having to practice constantly to keep up?

RT: Actually, I practiced very little. He'd come up there, and I was the last student he'd have after a long day. He'd say, "Play a little bit for me," and I'd play a little bit, and he'd say, "That's great, let's

go have dinner. You don't need any help." [laughs] He was great. He played with the Dallas Symphony as a timpanist and ran a musical advertising jingle company in Dallas. He was so encouraging to me because he could see that I wasn't going to be the kind of drummer that was all technique; I was more of a feel drummer. So he just felt like the most important things he could help me with were head things. I mean, he did help me with technique, obviously; he had a couple of books he showed me. The point is that he directed me, and I began to direct myself more as a musician, rather than just a drummer. I always tried to be a musician, because I sang too. In fact, I had a scholarship to SMU as a vocalist as well. So I always tried to think of myself as an overall, well-rounded musician.

SB: Do you ever get a chance to sing?

RT: Oh yeah. One of the groups I was working with in college was kind of a jazz/vocal group; I sang and played with them. Later on, when I went out with my first group for so-called fame and fortune—you know, leaving home and all—it was with a vocal and instrumental group. I sang in that band. Then, after I got a job on staff in the studio in Dallas, I was doing as much singing as I was playing. We did station IDs and commercials with all the local groups. I didn't do any singing with Elvis, but when I joined Delaney and Bonnie in about 1970, I was singing with that band. About three or four years ago with Neil, we started to develop a part for me. Now there are three background parts that we sing on the records and live.

SB: Do you find singing and playing simultaneously difficult?

RT: Yes. It's much more demanding for a drummer, particularly if you're very physical. You've got to learn to control your contractions and your breathing. It's a lot easier to just sing, or to just play drums.

SB: Let's talk about your involvement as a session player in L.A. First of all, what aspects of it have you been a part?

RT: All of it. The least rewarding jobs have been the TV and motion picture dates. The record dates are much more enjoyable, because they allow more creativity.

SB: I've heard that the pace and procedure in L.A. studios is very different from what happens at a Nashville or New York session. Do you find this to be true?

RT: I can think of several differences right off the bat. When you play in Nashville, you're usually playing on a kit that's already in the studio, and it's already tuned to the studio sound. In L.A., it's a little harder on drummers, because the artists seem to have different tastes insofar as what they think sounds best. Sometimes hours are taken to get just the right drum sound. In a way this is good, because the extra time is taken for the

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added creative touch. But mostly this is because LA. studios usually have higher budgets with major labels and major artists.

SB: In general, do you find that the engineers in LA. work with you to get your particular sound?

RT: Some of them are pretty dogmatic. I find that I work well with the engineers who have open minds. I try to play real balanced.

SB: Is this what you tell musicians who are eager to land some session work?

RT: What I tell them is, clean your own house as much as you can. Hone your drumming skills before you ever try to get into the studios. You don't want to blow your reputation by trying to break in before you're really ready.

SB: After all these years of constant work, is there a way that you can recommend to keep things fresh in the studio?

RT: Definitely. I just don't *work* all the time. That helps keep things from getting stale. I really don't do much free-lancing at all, because three dates a day can burn you out very quickly. You end up feeling like you're on a merry-go-round. You feel like you need to come up for air. The only danger is, if you detach yourself too much, you end up getting too much fresh air. So you've got to find the right balance so that you don't get too far out of circulation.

SB: How did you start getting all the sessions?

RT: Actually, I had someone start recommending me. I think that's the way most people get in. You've really got to have someone passing your name out.

SB: Are there any names that you pass out on a regular basis?

RT: There are some, but few. In the past I always recommended Russ Kunkel and Jim Keltner for studio dates that I couldn't do, but now I try to pass them on to some of the younger players, the up-and-coming drummers that I really believe hold a lot of promise. A drummer named Keith Edwards is one of them, and Art Noble is another. There are a few others.

SB: Let's talk about some of the drummers who you listened to when you were getting your start.

RT: That's got to be Gene Krupa. He was one of my heroes when I was getting started, and not only because of his solos.

SB: Are there any of your contemporaries who you enjoy listening to?

RT: There are some—different guys in different areas and styles. Gene Crissman will rock your socks off, and, of course, Gadd on the East Coast and Keltner on the West Coast. There are two English drummers who I think are also really good—Nigel Olsson and Roger Pope.

SB: What direction do you see yourself taking in the next ten years?

RT: Well, I'm very comfortable with the way things are going; I'd like to continue

that way. But I'd like to get a little more creative with the electronic stuff. Also, I've given some thought to being a coach—you know, working with some younger players.

SB: Do you mean you'd like to teach drumset?

RT: No, it's more of a head thing. Just like a quarterback needs a coach for encouragement and direction, young musicians need it, too. I've got a couple of guys who call me now for that sort of thing. We talk about how to deal with the music as a business and things like that. Jack Sperling did it for me. He would give me an hour of his time on the telephone when I'd call him. He'd just let me pick

his brain. He's a real great guy. I think I'd like to "be there" for encouragement and advice for the people who need it.

SB: Can you zero in on the single most important thing a drummer needs to become one of "the great ones"?

RT: I would say that you should work on developing the biggest ears you can. Assume the attitude of listening all the time. Zero in on your bass player. The two of you have to live together. If you want to have successful longevity, you must have a heart for all kinds of music. You really must be able to play with versatility. Just be totally aware of everything going on around you.



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A "Serious"

"Just an expensive techno-pop tool, not anything that is relevant to 'serious' percussion." That's how Harvey Warner, principal percussionist for the Nashville Symphony, *would* have described electronic drums a few years ago. At best, it was an instrument that, as far as *classical* music was concerned, was still in its infant stages.

Had Warner not opted to get out of popular music when he was younger, the 32-year-old player might have already felt obliged to own one of the kits. But he'd given up playing Jimi Hendrix and Jeff Beck music as a teenager because he "didn't want to have to dodge beer bottles." And although he'd played several jazz festivals in the Cleveland area with a group that "did a lot of new Miles Davis things," he'd decided the feast-or-famine life of a jazz player wasn't for him, either.

Instead, Warner had opted to become a "legitimate" percussionist—mostly a mallet maestro—who basically thought that even *acoustic* drumset playing was "too mechanical." On his way to his present position as music librarian and percussionist for the Nashville Symphony, the Ohio native had studied under Mike Rosen at Oberlin Conservatory, and with Don Miller and Richard Weiner from the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. He'd earned a master of music degree from Cleveland Institute and a bachelor of arts in music education degree from Kent State University. In addition to his work for the Nashville Symphony, he'd become pit drummer for the annual series of Broadway shows

at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. Warner saw little need for such frivolity as electronic drums.

Then he heard Pearl's *Syncussion-X*. Suddenly, he realized electronic percussion was something all serious percussionists must deal with sooner or later. "I was visiting the Pearl warehouse, which is only about five miles from my home," says Warner. "Even though I just heard someone fooling around on the demonstrator kit that they've got hooked up to a small sound system, I was very impressed with the variety and the quality of sounds that could be obtained with the instrument. That's when I told Pearl I would like to experiment with a new use for the instrument, and I'm happy to say we were quite successful."

In a series of concerts with the Nashville Symphony Chamber Ensemble, Warner performed the Zehn *Concertino For Drumset, Percussion And Chamber Orchestra*, using the *Syncussion-X*. He also did 15 Middle Tennessee school concerts, playing the same selection (plus some familiar movie soundtracks and television themes) and talking to students about electronic percussion. Warner received such favorable critical and audience response to these performances that he has committed himself to the further development of electronic percussion in a classical music setting.

First of all, he has decided to do something about the need for a classical repertoire for electronic percussion. The piece he performed was actually written for acoustic drums and percussion, and was *realized* (the technical term for transfer-

ring written notes on a page into electronic jargon) for electronic percussion.

Warner commissioned five composers to write compositions for electronic percussion, and these pieces were played at the 1987 Percussive Arts Society convention in St. Louis. Apparently, there may be a new wave of classical pieces for electronic percussion on the horizon. Although Warner says the composers he commissioned wrote "strictly for the publicity of having their work performed," David Felder of Stonybrook has actually received a National Endowment Grant to compose a concerto for electronic percussion and orchestra.

The composers Warner commissioned included Kenneth Schermerhorn, conductor of the Nashville and Hong Kong Symphonies; Frank Wiley, director of electronic music at Kent State University; and Bill Hill, principal timpanist with the Denver Symphony. The commissioned composers wrote pieces that sometimes feature combinations of acoustic and electronic instruments and, as a rule, exploit the computer-sequencing and MIDI potential of electronic percussion.

One of the composers, Paul Zehn, even satirized the electronics-is-replacing-humans argument with a humorous musical/dramatic presentation he wrote. Warner himself draws on music history to put the electronics issue into perspective: "I have no problem at all with substituting electronic percussion in a piece that was written for an acoustic instrument. Throughout the entire history of music, there have been times when instruments have been substituted for one another. Bach might substitute a guitar for a part he had written for violin.

"Also, throughout the history of music, there have been instruments that have fallen out of vogue and that, therefore, we never hear today. That's not to say they were 'bad' instruments; they just lost their popularity.

"I don't think electronic drums are at the stage yet where they are going to present any threat to the classically based instrument. What I'm saying is that the instruments *have* progressed to the point where they offer enough possibilities to merit examination, and all serious percussionists need to be aware of what's

Warner: Electronic Percussionist

being developed."

While admitting that the classical music audience is basically conservative, Warner says experience has shown him that the public is ready for serious electronic percussion. In fact, he thinks electronics can be a much-needed missing link in the classical percussionist's effort to connect with an audience. "So far, in a lot of the percussion concertos that have been available, you either have to be very much into contemporary music, or else just very much into drums in order to appreciate the music," says Warner. "I would say that the basic reaction received from the adults I spoke to when I performed the Zehn *Concertino* was wildly enthusiastic. They were fascinated both with the sound *and* look of the instrument.

"I have no problem with playing a piece on electronic percussion for a conservative audience, because they are all bombarded with these sounds—on commercials and soundtracks—before they even come to a concert. Audiences for symphony orchestras are pretty much drying up anyway, because it's not something that people can identify with any more. It's important to remember that Mozart was writing the *pop* music of his day. We've lost that element in classical music, and I think that, with electronic percussion, I can help bring it back."

For Warner, the *artistic* advantage that electronics brings to classical percussion may even exceed the mass appeal factor. As he puts it, "I've always had the idea that drummers have a unique way of hearing music, and I think that maybe electronics is the 'something different' that we need to express the music that we hear. In, say, 50 years, I think electronics will provide the percussionist or drummer with the ultimate means of expression.

"Great drummers and percussionists have to be consummate musicians, and because electronic percussion offers you control of timbre, duration, and pitch, you have more opportunity to find musicianship instead of worrying about technique. Why spend time worrying about all this fast, flashy technique, when you can do all that with a sequencer?"

Another advantage that Warner sees in

electronic percussion is that he finds electronic drums easier and quicker to tune. He used to spend a couple of hours finding the duration and overtones he wanted for one drum when preparing to play a concerto. Based on that experience, Warner points out that the classical percussionist is likely to tune electronic drums differently than other players. For example, he increases all the durations and changes the envelope, so that each pad "sounds a lot more like a real drum and doesn't sound electronic."

Warner adds, however, that he still experiences performance problems when using electronics—some of which the average pop player might take for granted. For instance, there's the problem of the instrument's susceptibility to technical malfunctions, and the problem of adjusting the controls to match room acoustics. There's also the fact that the instrument can sound no better than the sound system it is played through. Then there's the problem of selecting sounds that will blend homogeneously with the sounds of acoustic instruments when performing with ensembles. Warner also believes the dynamic range for electronic percussion is still fairly limited.

When discussing the pros and cons of electronic drums, Warner is speaking of *all* brands. He maintains that any of the systems available today are capable of being used by classical composers and players.

"There could probably be strong arguments for both analog *and* digital systems. [The Pearl unit Warner is using employs an analog system for drum sounds and a digital system for percussion sounds.] With a digital system," says Warner, "you get better quality sounds. With analog, however, you could probably have more control over the sounds by being able to modify them.

"Right now, I've been interfacing the Pearl system with a computer to see how much it can do, and I've found that it can do quite a bit more than it has been given credit for. For instance, you can program it to play four sounds simultaneously. You can program it to play from banks one, two, and three, and also program it on another channel in the computer to play from banks four, five, and six. Then,

on a third channel, you can program it to play off bank B from six, seven, and eight.

"In other words, with the computer, the instrument will play those four voices and switch kits automatically, simultaneously. The *Syncussion-X* also has 16 channels, which allows you to MIDI it with 16 different MIDI devices. It also has an Omni mode, which means it can exchange information back and forth. You can plug the instrument into 16 other electronic instruments so that you can have a string synthesizer, a *DX7*, a sampler, a sequencer, a computer to control the whole thing, and another electronic drumkit! You could MIDI through 16 more pads, and have a setup of 32 pads that one person could play."

Even with such obvious enthusiasm for the potential of electronic percussion, Warner warns that it's still not the ultimate answer for an aspiring percussionist. He maintains that a knowledge of basic music fundamentals is still imperative for a successful musician. "Sure, anybody can get a lot of cool sounds with electronics," says Warner. "The question is, how do you get them to fit with what's going on musically?"



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Portraits In Rhythm: Etude #13

Etude #13 provides us with the most musically complete snare drum solo so far. This short work contains an Introduction, an Exposition section, a Trio, and a Coda. As snare drum players, we rarely find ourselves concerned with such musical components in most of the literature we perform. However, the musical considerations presented in this solo are actually very common to most instrumentalists.

As drummers, we tend to focus on rhythm and dynamics, because they comprise 90% of the music we practice. However, there are other elements of music that will become very important as the student progresses from amateur to professional. For instance, in this solo alone we will need to consider: *fermatas*, a railroad-track sign (pause), *ritard*, seven tempo changes, and some Italian words used to describe a certain character.

The importance of dealing with these musical considerations is not only to have the knowledge of their meaning. It also takes a certain amount of technique to be able to execute them properly. As a student prepares to contend with changes in tempo, dynamics, phrasing, character, etc., the degree of success is many times related to the student's technical as well as mental abilities.

Personally, I do not even attempt to have students study from *Portraits In Rhythm* until they have successfully developed their technical and reading abilities. If I am constantly dealing with incorrect hand positions or use of the wrists and arms, or most correct reading errors or missed dynamics, there is very little time left to deal with the musical considerations of this music.

Now, with this as a background, let us observe and interpret these many musical considerations of Etude #13.

Observations

1. The opening tempo marking is *Maestoso*, which from earlier studies we may remember means "majestically." The metronome marking is quarter note = 52, so already we know the opening will be slow and very dramatic. An Introduction does exactly that: It introduces something. It sets the character of the work, and immediately should get the attention of the audience. In this case, a very slow Introduction leads to a fast Exposition.

2. The *Allegro con brio*, at 144 to the quarter note, is a very common type of snare drum rhythm and tempo. Be aware of the inverted accents in the first measure of the third line. They are played more dramatically than normal accents. Also, remember to move to the edge of the drum for the *piano* section, and then back to the center during the *crescendo* measure.

3. The Exposition ends right before the Waltz section with a *ritard* and a *diminuendo*. Musical elements such as these have a way of separating sections of music so that the listener can be prepared for the new tempo. They are also wonderful opportunities for the musician to display his or her musical sensitivity to the work. To just skim over these elements does a great injustice to the music; use them to create moments of excitement and subtlety in the music.

4. The Largo section also uses the Italian words, *e molto pesante*. In order to properly play this passage, the performer must translate these words. Never skip over words you do not understand, whether they are in English or Italian. Everything the composer puts on the page has some meaning, and will add

clarity to the composer's original intention. I will discuss how I interpret this under the next section.

5. The following *Allegro con brio* begins the Coda. This, of course, is the same music as the Exposition, so try to retain the identical tempo. A Coda usually contains music we have heard before.

6. The final measure of the work is simply a "tag" to add a bit of excitement to the ending of the work. The *Vivo* marking indicates to play this measure faster than the *Allegro*, and with a lot of life.

Interpretations

1. Notice carefully where the *fermata* is located in the first two measures. The *fermata* is located on the last quarter note and not on the roll itself. This makes a difference in interpreting this measure. If the *fermata* were on the roll itself, then the roll would be held at the discretion of the player. However, since the *fermata* is on the quarter note, this now indicates that there will be some silence between the quarter note and the next measure. The entire introduction should not have the feeling of a tempo. It should have the effect of a fanfare, with each measure a separate entity.

2. The two slashes at the end of the first line (railroad tracks) is a sign for the music to come to a stop. The length of time is strictly interpretative and is left up to the discretion of the performer. Usually it is short.

3. The measure before the Waltz section presents a great musical opportunity. All the elements in this measure, *ritard*, *diminuendo*, and the *fermata*, combine to allow the performer to shine. The decisions that will make this measure more effective are: how much to slow down, when to begin slowing down, when to get softer, how long to hold the *fermata*, and how soft to get. Even though the markings are placed under certain notes, they can be interpreted to make the music more effective.

4. The Waltz tempo begins with a traditional snare drum accompaniment figure. I suggest this be played with one hand, and to add more life, play it in the style of the Viennese Waltz. That is where the second beat is actually played early.

Waltz tempo



5. When the Waltz theme begins after the repeat sign, exaggerate the second beat of the first measure by placing a *crescendo* before it and lifting the stick off the drum. This happens again in the fifth measure of the theme.

6. Now we come to the Largo section, where the words *e molto pesante* are added. If you have looked these words up in an Italian or music dictionary, you would know they mean "and very heavy." Now we must decide what to actually do to create this feeling. My suggestion is to exaggerate every note by placing an emphasis on each one. The composer can also get this effect with the use of accents or dashes, but the word "heavy" brings a certain connotation with it that creates a greater feeling in the music.

Maestoso $\text{♩} = 52$

First staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a series of chords with accents and dynamic markings of *ff*.

Allegro con brio $\text{♩} = 144$

Second and third staves of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a fast, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamic markings of *f*.

Fourth staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamic markings of *p*.

Fifth staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamic markings of *f*.

Sixth staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with dynamic markings of *fp = ff*, *rit.*, and *dim. - - - p*.

Waltz tempo

Seventh staff of music, bass clef, 3/4 time signature. Labeled "TRIO" and features a waltz tempo with dynamic markings of *mf*.

Eighth staff of music, bass clef, 3/4 time signature. Features a waltz tempo with first and second endings marked "1." and "2.".

Largo e molto pesante

Ninth staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a slow, heavy tempo with dynamic markings of *f*.

Allegro con brio

Tenth staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a fast tempo with dynamic markings of *f*.

Maestoso

Vivo

Eleventh staff of music, bass clef, 4/4 time signature. Features a series of chords with accents and dynamic markings of *ff*.

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Keith LeBlanc

There's a musical movement afoot, strong in London, Bristol, and Liverpool, and just now gaining momentum in the States. It's a radical new mix of hip-hop, techno-funk, and raw, thrashing punk-noise. Homeboys and trend-watchers are touting it as *The Next Big Thing*. Intense, political, and throbbing with big-beat energy, it's a renegade blend of Grandmaster Flash meets The Clash and Kraftwerk. Call it dance music for the '90s. Or call it by its name—*Tackhead*.

This powerful new force that's been taking the UK by storm over the past few years is an odd conglomeration of British panache and good ol' American funk. Adrian Sherwood, the radical dub master whose scary sonic collages have gained him much notoriety in the UK, is the Cockney upstart behind the *Tackhead* movement. At age 22, the plucky Sherwood founded his own label, *On-U Sound*, as an outlet for his outrageous electro-dub productions. His reggae, dub, and hip-hop albums by Prince Far I, African Head Charge, Dub Syndicate, and Lee "Scratch" Perry soon gained Sherwood the rep of "master mixologist."

In 1983, Sherwood met Keith LeBlanc at the New Music Seminar in New York City. The canny Sherwood had been closely following the music coming out of Sugar Hill Records, that spunky little rap label out of Englewood, New Jersey (headed by Sylvia Robinson, who with

Mickey Baker made some waves in pop music during the '50s as Mickey & Sylvia). LeBlanc was the drummer in the house rhythm section for Sugar Hill. Together with his mates, bassist Doug Wimbish and guitarist Skip McDonald, LeBlanc put up the funk for such rap hits as "The Message," "That's The Joint," "Eighth Wonder," and "White Lines," playing behind the likes of Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five, Melle Mel, Duke Bootee, Soulsonic Force, and countless other acts in the Sugar Hill stable.

Sherwood eventually persuaded LeBlanc, Wimbish, and McDonald to join forces overseas. In London, they formed a production company dedicated to putting out exactly the kind of music they liked, whenever they liked. The resulting sounds took on different group names. *Fats Comet* was the more commercially accessible dance music vehicle. *Maffia* was the backing band behind former Pop Group founder/songwriter/vocalist Mark Stewart. And *Tackhead* was the outlet for raw, thrashing, pulsating power-funk. While *Fats Comet* scored some success on record with "Be My Powerstation" and their witty remake of "Stormy Weather," and Mark Stewart & Maffia stirred up politically conscious renegades with their provocative album, *As The Veneer Of Democracy Starts To Fade*, *Tackhead* remains the main concert attraction, driving crowds to frenzied peaks with their visceral, no-holds-barred performances.

It's a similar situation to *George Clinton's* extended family, where a core group of players appears alternately on record and in concert. Says LeBlanc of this multifaceted production setup, "We're very fortunate. Most bands are knocking themselves out trying to please the six major labels. We're just trying to please ourselves. We're constantly logging ideas. We've cut over 70 things under various names in the past three years, and we've been

able to do that because England is a much more open, independent market than the States, and it's also a lot cheaper to do things there than it is over here. We can sell 5,000 copies of a record and break even. Sell any more, and that just gives us money to do the next one. That's basically how we've been operating from the beginning. We don't have anything to live up to except our own expectations and what we think is good."

Meanwhile, the *Tackhead* boys are secretly hoping that some American major label will notice the massive cult following throughout the UK and select points in the States. Warner Bros. is reportedly interested in the group. But the lads are not likely to water down their in-your-face attack for any major. "We just want to stay creative and keep it together," says LeBlanc.

Because of his thunderous funk drumming with *Tackhead*, various other producers have begun tapping LeBlanc for their own projects, either for live drumming or drum programming. Trevor Horn recently used Keith for two albums, one by a band called *Nasty Rocks*, and another by an all-female group called *The Mint Juleps*. It seems that the word is getting out about this funky white boy.

As Adrian Sherwood put it, "Keith is a great funk drummer, even though he might not look the part. If he were black and bigger and had a bit of hair, he'd be dragged off all over the world by producers. Keith is like a massive cult artist in Europe. He's very respected. But here in America he doesn't get the credit he deserves."

Hopefully, that will all change as *Tackhead* intensifies its attack on the colonies. I spoke with Keith LeBlanc in the rehearsal loft where *Tackhead* spends most of their time whenever they come to New York for a visit.

BM: Let's start with your period at Sugar Hill Records. How did you get the gig?

KL: I was playing with a couple of fusion bands in Connecticut, doing all original music. Then I started doing lounge band gigs all over the country. And I was making a lot of money doing that—or what I thought was a lot of money at the time. Sometimes it wasn't the greatest music to play, but at least I was playing and getting paid for it. But eventually I got really sick of that whole scene. And right around

Photo by Aldo Mauro



by Bill Milkowski

that time I met Doug Wimbish and Skip McDonald. They had a band in Hartford, Connecticut that was quite well-known in the area. They were looking for a drummer, so I did an audition with them. I think I just brought a hi-hat, a snare, and a bass drum to the audition. And I got the gig. It wasn't paying that much money, but I just decided I would go out and starve with these guys for a while because the music was so good. This was around '79.

BM: And that led to your period as the house rhythm section at Sugar Hill?

KL: Yeah. Skip had been working there since '72, and Doug since '75, back when it was called Platinum Studios. In '79 it turned into Sugar Hill Records. Right around the time I hooked up with Doug and Skip, the "Rapper's Delight" record came out and hit real big. They had played on that session, and Sylvia Robinson at Sugar Hill had put out an all-points-bulletin to find them and have them go out and tour with the Sugar Hill Gang in support of the record. They didn't really want to go, because they'd had some bad experiences with Sugar Hill in the past. But I heard the words "recording studio" and "money," and I just said, "Let's go! I'll drive! I'll pay for the gas!" So we all went up there to the Sugar Hill studio. They took us to dinner, and that same night we ended up in the studio cutting more tracks. Sylvia said, "We want you to do one gig, just one gig." But it turned out to be a few years' worth of work—constant sessions. And it was great. You could stay in there all night and record and experiment. And what you didn't get in credit, you got in experience. I mean, we were cutting 15 tracks a day. Where else are you going to get that kind of experience? You might go in early in the morning and cut tracks for Melle Mel or the Crash Crew. Then from noon to 6:00 you might work with Phillipe Wynne or the Funky Four Plus One, take a couple of hours off, come back, and work all night with Jack McDuff. It was a big diversity. At one time they had 21 different artists. Only a few might have

been really popular, but they had all these other people in their stable, and we played with all of them. And we got paid okay for what we were doing. Not great, but I would never trade away the type of basic training we had at Sugar Hill.

BM: How did things work at Sugar Hill on those sessions?

KL: A lot of the stuff was charted. They had this arranger, Clifton "Jiggs" Chase, who used to write everything out, even the drum parts. And it was interesting, because he'd always have me try different things. He'd say, "Let's hear what it sounds like backwards. Okay, turn this measure upside down." He wanted a certain kind of beat, and I had to make him happy. So that was a bit of a challenge, since I wasn't from the Bronx, and I hadn't been listening to a lot of that hip-hop stuff. But when I was a kid, I used to play along with James Brown and Stax records, so I knew about funk. In fact, the first band that I was in that I actually got paid—what I would call a professional gig—was this band called Little Jimmy & The Soul Testaments. All we did was James Brown and a touch of Hendrix. I

was only 13, and they used to have to sneak me into the clubs. So I was playing funk in a live situation in front of people when I was really young. And that experience helped me at Sugar Hill.

BM: It's ironic how many rap records today are scratching old James Brown riffs.

KL: Right. Like "Pump Up The Volume," which was a big hit in England and is currently doing pretty good on the charts over here. I think they should all pay James Brown some money. There's a lot of stealing going on today through sampling, and it's eventually going to lead to some court case. I'd rather make a sample than steal one. If you're selling records, you can't do that. Someone's going to sue you sooner or later. It's easier, I guess, to take a digital disc that someone has put out and get a sample off of it. A lot of people call it creative sampling, but I don't think there's any creative way to steal anything.

BM: You could conceivably put together a kind of Frankenstein drummer, setting up triggers on each drum and triggering a Steve Gadd hi-hat, a Steve Jordan snare, a



Photo by Aldo Mauro

John Bonham bass drum, a Billy Cobham tom-tom, or whatever.

KL: Somebody's going to have to do a lot of rethinking about all this sampling stuff. It's getting crazy. I use samples of things I've programmed, but I'm not really precious about them. I give 'em away. That way you end up not repeating yourself, using the same samples again and again. I try to keep fresh by changing the parameters and trying different things with samplers, so I stay fresh and won't get bored with the instrument. So I guess being able to combine the electronics with the live drums is the trip for me right now.

BM: What is your triggering and sampling setup?

KL: I'm using *C-Tapes*. It's like a little strip you can either tape on the drum or inside the shell. They're triggering an Akai S-900 sampler. And I'm using some Simmons pads to trigger non-drum sounds, like voices and industrial noises. A lot of times I'm triggering tuned percussion, or I might be triggering a drum sound a harmonic up or down, so I can get chord things happening on the tom-toms. It depends on the song. But for me, the way to go is to blend the sampled stuff with the natural acoustic sounds of the drums. It's going to be a long while before samples replace drums. With acoustic drums you have all the harmonics—the whole range. And you don't get that with samples. Even with sophisticated equipment like the Synclavier, you're missing something. It turns the signal to numbers and back to sound again, and you lose a certain quality in that process, a certain amount of harmonics. The sheer impact of the air moving and hitting the microphone—you can't replace that with a sample.

BM: What's your attitude toward drum machines?

KL: I think of them as totally different instruments than the drums. My attitude with them is, "Do something different with them." Most people use them to replace drums. I like stretching them a bit farther than that, doing something that a drummer can't do. And a lot of times I will program something first and then learn how to play it on the kit. I know that must sound mad, to a certain extent, but it's an interesting exercise. I still think drum machines have a long way to go, but as far as being a musical instrument, I think they're really good. And a drum machine is a good learning tool. I mean, today a five-year-old can program a beat into a

machine. And as you get more adept with them, you can program life into machines now.

BM: Let's talk about your introduction to electronics and how you've incorporated them into your playing over the years.

KL: I might have been one of the first drummers hit by drum machines. The first time I saw one was when I was on the road with Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five. Flash, who was a DJ for the group, had this little drum box from an old Hammond organ, and he had triggers on it so he could play it with his hands. Man, I saw him take over a whole auditorium of 20,000 people with just this little drum box. And that was the first I had seen of any of that stuff. I dug what he was doing with it, but it didn't really dawn on me at the time how prevalent it was going to be. Then, the next thing I knew, all the sessions at Sugar Hill started using drum machines.

Actually, I hated the things when they first came out in the late '70s. I felt strange. Here these engineers were, programming the drum parts just because it was easier to get a sound out of a machine than from a whole kit of drums. And it was a new sound. Everyone was pretty intrigued by it. So I naturally felt threatened. But then I realized that I could probably program one of those things much better than any engineer. A friend of mine lent me his to fool around on, and I ended up buying one, a *DMX*. I still have it and I'm going to keep it. It's an antique now. One of these years, it'll be in a museum, but it still does things that the other machines really can't do.

BM: So you were squeezed out of the Sugar Hill scene?

KL: They were using drum machines almost exclusively at one point. They used me for some sessions, but it wasn't like it was when I was putting in 18 hours a day there. And a lot of the producers in New York started using drum machines too. It all took a little getting used to for me, but once I had one I didn't feel threatened anymore. And eventually, people started paying me a lot of money to program the things for them, because I was really good at it. I knew I could do it better than someone who wasn't that familiar with drums, and possibly do it much quicker.

BM: Where did it lead?

KL: I ended up producing a 12" record with a drum machine called "No Sellout." The sessions I had been doing as a drummer were drying up, and I needed to do something. So I tried my hand at producing a record. And from the success of that record I got all kinds of calls to program drum machines for other people. So I really didn't have a chance to touch my drums for about a year and a half because I was in the studio so much, programming things for other people. Once in a

while I'd get to play on something, but most of the time it was just programming.

BM: What was "No Sellout" all about?

KL: I used speeches of Malcolm X and put them in time with a drum beat, basically building a song around excerpts of Malcolm's speeches. And I ended up getting involved in a court case because of it. I had done the record for Tommy Boy Records, and they put it out. But I recorded it at the Sugar Hill studios. Then Sugar Hill went out and bought a Tommy Boy record and mastered off of that, made a tape of it, and then made their own version of "No Sellout" with different edits and a different name. They put out as many copies as they could, then slapped Tommy Boy with an injunction. I had to go to court. I was basically caught in the middle of this struggle between two record companies, and it got a lot of press—a lot of notoriety that I wasn't expecting.

BM: How was it resolved?

KL: Basically, it was settled out of court. Sugar Hill Records got a few points on the record because we couldn't produce a piece of paper that said anything about the studio time that was used. There had been an understanding, a verbal agreement type of thing between the guy who was financing the project, Marshall Chess, and the owner of Sugar Hill Records, Sylvia Robinson. But as soon as we went to court, that went out the window.

BM: Was Malcolm X's widow involved in the suit?

KL: Not directly, but she came to court with me every day. I had initially brought the tapes to her for approval. I mean, this was her *life* I was dealing with. She said she really liked the tape and asked for a couple of little changes in it, which as far as I was concerned were changes for the better. She trusted me and was just trying to make sure the record came out good. And I was trying to see that she got her rightful proportion of the record, which I felt was 50%. I mean, Malcolm's speeches have probably been used all over the world, and a lot of money has never filtered back to the family. And I think that's tragic in a lot of ways.

BM: So that ended your relationship with Sugar Hill?

KL: No, I did some sessions for them after that, believe it or not. I don't have any bad feelings about them at this point. I wish them luck. It's a rough business to make a living in.

BM: So you went through a period of programming steadily for people?

KL: Yes, going back and forth between New Jersey and New York, between the States and Europe. And for that year and a half or so that I was just programming, I felt horrible. Because I would hear these really rock-hard drums coming back on



the tape, and I wouldn't have worked up a bead of sweat to get that sound. It felt unnatural. I'm just really glad now that I've been doing more playing. I like the physical aspect of drumming. It's good exercise for oneself, I think.

BM: Has your attitude toward drums changed since your days at Sugar Hill?

KL: Yeah, I think working with drum machines has changed things a lot for me. I like competing with drum machines, setting up little goals for myself. Doing production has changed my attitude toward drums. I tend to look at it more as a musical part now than just a drum track. And I've matured a great deal as a drummer. At Sugar Hill I had to learn how to lay back. I learned that less is more. I basically learned to sound professional. And since then I've been building on those lessons.

BM: What's the strangest session you've done?

KL: I once had to come in and play drums on an existing track that was out of time to begin with. That's an interesting prospect. I felt like Mr. Fixit on that one. And I've done sessions where they just wanted me to create a click for them on the hi-hat so they could synch a drum machine to it later. Those are the worst sessions, fixing tracks, where somehow the foundation is all mucked up.

BM: What are some of the more memorable sessions?

KL: I think the stuff I've been doing with Adrian Sherwood and Tackhead is the most memorable. Sugar Hill was a good period for me, but I think I've had the most fun doing this really "out" stuff that we've been doing, just because it's what we want to do. I've gotten the most excited in the studio about that stuff. I really believe we were breaking some new ground on those sessions. And finally we feel like we have a bit of control over what happens. Working with Adrian has been really great. His approach is that everything in the studio relates to rhythm somehow. I've found it really interesting how Adrian would measure a track from snare strike to snare strike, and then divide the echo speed by two or three times to get a 3/8 triplet out of it. He is basically playing drums with echo delays. He opened my head up to that possibility.

BM: How did you first meet him, and what was your impression of his work?

KL: The first thing I heard that he did was pretty amazing. He had this reggae track—a drumset recorded with five different bass drums and five different snare drums. Each bass drum was tuned down maybe a third from the next. And each was triggered maybe one millisecond off from the other one. So you got this chord—this huge, massive, dense sound out of the bass drum. And the same thing with the snare drum. I remember walking

by in Unique Recording Studios, and it caught me cold. Somebody there had a tape of it and was playing it. I was pretty amazed, to say the least. Three days later at the New Music Seminar, this guy started talking about millisecond echo delays and putting chords on drums, and it clicked. This was the guy! We started talking and, you know, it just went from there.

BM: One of your side projects apart from Tackhead was your album *Major Malfunction*. What was that all about?

KL: It was a great experiment. It was an album of mostly programmed drums. I used little excerpts of real percussion, but most of it was electronic. It's kind of an underground album. I think it sold 12,000 copies, but I'm really proud of that record. Most drummers, when they do a solo record, want to put a lot of drum solos on it. But I figure a record has to be entertaining. I wouldn't want to just sell records to drummers, so I made a rhythm record, not a drum record. It's a total rhythm record that was made up of all little bits of things, not just drum sounds. Adrian mixed it with me and he did some amazing things on that record. I'm working on a new solo album now, and he's going to mix that one, too. But it's going to be a totally different project. I think it might take two years to get completed, but in the meantime there's always Tackhead.

BM: And what about Fats Comet?

KL: I think we're going to let Fats simmer for a while. We haven't put out a Fats Comet record in some time. That's strictly a studio band—a conceptual thing. Tackhead is more of a raw thing. We do it in front of people, and I think everyone likes Tackhead a little more for that. We have certain characters that we interject into it, and we just go out and mash it up in front of people. In London or Bristol, whenever we play in the discos, people go mad for Tackhead. To tell the truth, we thought this stuff was too heavy to put out. But Gary Clail started playing cassette tapes of our stuff at discos, and it started catching on. Pretty soon there was this little Tackhead movement in London. You walk down the street, you see ten kids in Tackhead hats. We play a big disco and 2,000 people show up. They crowd around Adrian to watch him mix live on the gig, and they dance and go wild. Especially all the football hooligans in London and Liverpool. It's really quite a scene. People respond to that raw Tackhead energy. And hopefully if we get a chance to play more extensively in the States, people will go crazy for Tackhead here, too. So our basic game plan is to continue putting out records on our own label, and maybe at some point some major label might pick us up. It's the right timing, I think. We started putting out records from London

about three years ago, and usually it takes about three years for something from the UK to bust over here. So we've actually gone across the ocean to end up doing something here. Funny how that works, isn't it?

Keith LeBlanc's Equipment

Tackhead's skin-basher recently switched to a Tama *Artstar* II kit with tubular hardware. "Lately, I've been experimenting with two of everything—two snare drums (an 8" Birdseye maple and a 6 1/2" Heavy birch), two floor toms (16 x 18 and 14 x 15), and two bass drums (16 x 24 and 16 x 22). I'm really happy with the sound of these drums. The more they settle in, the better they seem to sound. It's really pleasant to hear a true tone out of the drums for a change. I had an ancient set of Ludwigs that got stolen. That was the best-sounding set I ever had. I redid that set by hand maybe 20 times. It was such a shame to lose that set. After that I was just experimenting with different sets, but I could never quite get a bass drum sound that I liked, until now."

LeBlanc's five toms mounted on the tubular rack are 8 x 8, 10 x 11, 12 x 13, 13 x 14, and 14 x 15. His cymbals are a combination of K Zildjians and Paistes.



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Dokken's "Wild" Mick Brown

Fun: It would seem to be such a basic element of rock drumming, yet it is often disregarded these days when image and virtuosity take precedence in the minds of many musicians. Therefore, it is a great pleasure to present Dokken's "Wild" Mick Brown—solid testimony that having fun while drumming does not necessarily hinder playing well. In fact, Wild Mick's unabashed love for his instrument (illustrated best in the context of a Dokken live show) validates that a player's obvious zeal and enthusiasm can occasionally supersede some of the more esoteric factors normally associated with drumming.

"I do take playing very seriously," the Wild One quips. "But on the other hand, it can be a helluva good time, too. After all, rock 'n' roll is about having a good time, and when I see the crowd having fun and going 'Yeah!' with their arms in the air, that really charges me up. It's a great feeling."

At present, the band is undergoing its broadest popularity, with their latest Back For The Attack LP having bulleted close to the Top Ten in the American charts. The aptly-titled release is a departure from earlier Dokken outings, as it is both more aggressive and heavier than what they've been recognized for.

As you might expect, Brown barnstorms his way through a conversation with the same kind of aplomb that he exudes during a performance; his physical presence is kinetic almost to the point of hyperactivity, and his non-stop speech is punctuated with incessant laughter. In contrast to his ebullient persona, Mick is a surprisingly unassuming, unpretentious sort of guy.

MB: I don't have any interest in the technical side of things at all: I don't know how to work a drum machine, I don't know the sizes of my drums. I only know what I want to sound like, and it's like, "Hey, somebody make that machine work for me, please!" I'm really bad about all that, and I admit that I don't care about what kind of chips you have to have to make this or that work. I just want the sound to be right, and I want it to be the same every night.

TS: It's baffling that you've intentionally

managed to avoid any technological knowledge whatsoever in this "age of electronics," so to speak. It sounds like you're afraid of it.

MB: I just don't really care about that kind of thing. But I have begun to use some triggering, which—believe it or not—is all brand new to me. I'm triggering bass drum and snare, and if one of them isn't working properly, I don't know what to do about it. So I have 12 guys suddenly around me going, "If you do this, it'll work great." Every day they tell me it will trigger perfectly, but every day, it's the same damn thing! [laughs] "Somebody fix this for me!" That's from the lack of knowledge, but I really wouldn't know where to start. I don't know about any kind of electric stuff, and I have trouble making toast, okay?

I mean, I did this drum promotion thing in Japan, and they asked me [in a pseudo Japanese accent] "Ah, Mr. Brown, tell me about your drumset?" "Well, they're round." "What kind of drums?" "Tama." "Specify a little more, please." "Well, they're red." "Can you tell me sizes?" "They're big, small, bigger, smaller." "What about the cymbals?" "They're gold and round, and I hit them with sticks." [laughs] I hate to sound ignorant about it, but....

TS: You are, though, [laughs]

MB: Yeah, I guess I am, but it really doesn't matter to me, as long as I get the right equipment when I'm picking things out. When I pick out a new drumset, I don't know exactly what size I want. I look at what they have, then when I see something that I like, I sit down and smack 'em. I see what they sound like, find out what they're made of, compare them to some of the other lines they have around, and then decide if the sizes are bigger or smaller than what I'd like. I don't worry about whether it's a 13" or a 14", just whether it sounds right.

TS: And you're using the cage type of hardware, right?

MB: Yeah, but I have a new one this year: the "cage of rage," I call it.

[Mick's kit consists of a Tama Granstar Custom drumset: two 22" bass drums, 15" and 16" floor toms, three mounted toms—11", 12", 13"—and a 14" snare.

The aforementioned "cage of rage" is a Tama Power Tower, which is modular and easily changeable. His cymbals are all Sabian Brilliant AAs, and consist of 15" Rock Sizzle hi-hats, 19", 20", and 21" Rock crashes, a 22" heavy ride, 18" and 20" medium crashes, a 22" China, two 18" Rocktagons, and a 48" Taiwan Gong.

TS: Being in an opening band, you probably don't get the luxury of having a soundcheck.

MB: A soundcheck? What's a soundcheck? No, actually Aerosmith has been giving us some time, but I tell you, with soundchecks I never have a clue as to what's going to happen later at the show. I can go there and set up everything so that it sounds good, and then later when I come back to do the show, it always sounds completely different.

Throughout all of last year, my drum tech soundchecked the whole band, and it got to the point where he did it better than us, because he plays all the instruments. He had our levels in the monitors exactly where we needed them, and it worked out really good. His name is Tom Mayhew, and he's a monster, really great. You know, when we have too much time for a soundcheck, a lot of times, we can ruin a good sound, [laughs] Things always seem to sound better when we don't mess around with it too much.

TS: You let the people you hire deal with the hassles, and you stick to the playing end of it.

MB: Right. If it works better that way, then it's fine with me. Some people get the wrong idea when they read about someone who doesn't have an interest in the technical side of things; they think it's a real negative thing. I'm not afraid to admit that I don't understand something, and I really don't think that having the knowledge of all that stuff means that you're a better drummer. I do what I do well, and as far as the other things go, it's going to get done somehow, usually by the people we hire to do that side of things.

There are a lot of musicians who go to school for years, but I figure, "Hey, that's great, but you can't learn charisma." And

by Teri Saccone

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you can't be taught to enjoy playing, you know? I hate it when people can only sit down and analyze the hell out of music but not enjoy it. There are people who judge everything as being better if it's harder to play—more technical, again—not whether it sounds good.

TS: On the new album, it's indicated on the sleeve that the album was recorded in four studios. Were your drum tracks recorded in just the one that was especially suitable for your drum sound, or did you record your tracks in a few locations?

MB: All the drum tracks were done in one place—One On One—then we moved to different places to do the guitars, bass, and vocals, winding things up here in New York, where it got mixed at Bearsville Studios in Woodstock. The room we picked to do the drum tracks worked really well. The reason we kept bouncing around was because there was no studio available in a big block of time, so we kept moving around, booking time in the places that we really wanted to use. If we had waited, we could have done it all in one place, but it worked out just as well this way.

TS: And your tracks were put down first?

MB: Right.

TS: Dokken has been known for working with big-name producers over the years. Is there a lot of preparation during the pre-production phase of the albums, or do you normally figure things out once you enter the studio?

MB: For this record, we weren't as prepared as we would have liked to have been; it's something we're going to have to watch out for in the future. There was a lot of time spent on the writing, but not as much time spent on the rehearsing. We did go into pre-production and did some rehearsing for it, but so much of it gets built afterwards in the studio, so a lot of it gets created on the spot. The basic song idea is there, and a lot of other parts get added—the overdubs and things.

TS: Do you feel that you become somewhat debilitated as far your playing goes because you don't know what's coming

later—what will be added, how it will eventually sound?

MB: Yeah, I do feel that, in a way. A lot of the writing is done on drum machines, so I need a lot of time to decide what I'm going to do. I don't think it has infringed on the record at all; it's just that, for my own piece of mind, I like to know that I'm playing the right things for the song. I had never played a lot of the songs before putting them down, so I had to learn them quickly in the studio and decide what I was going to do in a hurry.

TS: Do you tend to pick things up very quickly in the studio?

MB: No. [laughs] I usually play every possible thing I can, and after going through different ideas, I decide how I'm going to do each fill and each spot. I pick up the songs themselves—where the changes are—with no problem. But I like to know where the song is going, and it's good to have enough time to really work things out. I'm going to have to make sure that in the future I do get enough time. In the future we're going to take a song into a rehearsal place and learn it, then get a recorded version of that down, instead of having it on drum machines, which is the form you get used to hearing the songs in. When you take off a rhythm machine and put down live drums, it changes the whole feel.

TS: Do you record to a click?

MB: Yeah. I did on this record and I did that on the last one, too [*Under Lock And Key*]. It's something I'm still really not

used to, because I never play to one except when we're in the studio. I love grooving with it when the song's just moving along, but when it comes to playing parts where there's a tempo change or a break, it can really throw you off. It can give it a sterile feel, too. It's good to have the click, because we do a lot of digital stuff and it keeps it all real tight, but.... I guess most people have something they find hard to work with, and that's my pet peeve. So the click can be sterile, of course, but I'm unsteady enough to give it that human feel. Joe Lynn Turner once told me, "You're a 64th behind on your snare hand, Mick. That's what gives it the feel." [laughs] That was enough to make me feel secure about it.

TS: You often refer to the band as a collective "we." I want you to clarify for those who may not realize that Dokken truly functions as an equal unit.

MB: When it comes to deciding what's the best way to go on certain things, we listen to every idea that each of us might have, and then we pick one. We try to keep it as a majority, and sometimes one of us is just outvoted. It works, and that's what we live with. I mean, it never comes down to someone's idea being so bad that it's like, "Oh God, I hate that!"

TS: Do you often contribute suggestions pertaining to other things besides the drums?

MB: Oh yeah, completely! I'll be telling George [Lynch, guitarist] these ideas I



have by making guitar sounds. I don't even think about the fact that he is who he is, or how good he can play. And he doesn't think about it either, 'cause we're friends! And the other guys make suggestions for my instrument, you know? Jeff writes some things on the drum machine that are great, and a lot of times it sounds like something I would play. So if they think of something good, I'll try it. If it's just not happening for me, I'll say so. But basically, we think more about the song and not so much about the individual instruments. But no one is touchy about stepping on another guy's turf, plus everyone's got a real good ear in the band. Another thing is that all four of us write, so we've got a group writing thing happening. I get to do part of the writing on at least 50% of the songs. I do a lot of lyrical stuff, arrangement things, and musical parts. We all kick in wherever necessary. There are no jobs like, "I only do this and you only do that." Whenever someone has a good idea, it's put in. There are no rules.

TS: Do you actually come up with melodies?

MB: Yeah. People automatically think Don and George write all the music. The attention is drawn to them more, which is fine.

TS: Is there a particular track on *Back For The Attack* that you co-wrote and are

especially fond of?

MB: I guess "Lost Behind The Wall" is probably the most musical song I ever wrote. I feel I made the biggest contribution to that one. I guess that "Breaking The Chains" would be another one I did a lot on. But I really don't care about having the world know about it. I'm not out to blow my own horn or anything. Just as long as the check comes to my address, then I'm happy, [laughs] Does anyone really care if I write the songs or not?

TS: Well, not all drummers write songs, and often, the ones who have the ability don't get the opportunity and/or the recognition, so maybe it's important to mention it.

MB: Well, I want people to like the music itself; that's what I *really* care about. I mean, I'd rather have people be interested in my drumming, you know? But I guess drummers in the past haven't always written, as you said. So if that's the reason for mentioning my writing contributions, then fantastic.

TS: Where did your interest in drums stem from?

MB: At a very early age I used to be amazed by the stereo. My parents would throw a record on, and I'd be rocking back and forth in this daze; I'd just get lost in the music. At first, I told them I wanted a saxophone, but I was too small to be taken seriously. Then I wanted to

play the guitar, but that didn't work because my hands were too small. So then I started to beat this little tambourine all the time, and pretty soon I asked for a snare drum and a cymbal, which I played along to "Satisfaction." I used to stand in this closet and play for hours. I guess my parents figured I had some rhythm, because they offered to let me take lessons, which I agreed to.

So I took lessons for two years and learned all my rudiments. When the rock 'n' roll band came along, I thought, "Let's skip the lessons."

TS: You stopped studying when you joined your first band?

MB: Well, I would have kept taking lessons, but I moved from my home at that time in Redwood City, California, which is south of San Francisco. Plus, the teacher I was taking lessons from was Mickey Hart, who closed up his shop to join the Grateful Dead. So he closed down the business and I never saw him again. He was a really good teacher; he and his dad were rudimental champions. So when he left and I moved up to Northern California, there was no one around who could teach really well. At that point, I gave up the lessons and got into the music more, and that was enough for me. I had learned all the important basics.

Luckily, when I moved, my next-door neighbor was a guitar player. We started jamming on Creedence songs and "Sunshine Of Your Love" by Cream. Then we won a talent contest at our school and blew everyone's minds. There were no bands up in this hick town we were in, so we were *it*. It was like, "Are we cool or what?" [laughs] Then in high school, I horned my way into this band who I thought were a bunch of really cool dudes. They played a lot of Allman Brothers, and there were two drummers. They eventually kicked me out—that was the only band I was kicked out of—because I spoke my mind. It got to the point where I was splitting the band up, so they said, "Let's get rid of this troublemaker." So I formed a band with some other guys they had kicked out before, and we got really good.

Not too long after that I ran into George when I was in a Sacramento band. One of the first things I asked him was, "Listen dude, do you wanna be a rock star? You wanna be famous and go to the top, don't you?" And he said, "No." And I said, "No? Then what are you wasting your time for?" And he said, "Well, no one I've ever played with really wanted to do that." So I said, "If you're going to play with me, buddy, that's the way it's going to be!" He was really glad to find someone who took it all seriously. He had a lot of talent, and I saw *that* right away.

From that point, George and I started playing together. We moved down to

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the L.A. scene until we met up with Don [Dokken]. We started playing with Don, and he finally took some of our songs over to Germany. We got a call from him saying, "Let's try to put these songs on plastic." I told George, "Let's not miss this boat, man, come on. These are our songs too." Luckily, it worked out really well. We've been very, very lucky. And my parents cannot believe that I've had that much luck with it.

TS: It takes more than luck to make it these days.

MB: Yeah, I guess, but I think luck has a lot to do with it. I mean, how many musicians are out there who are damn good, but who don't know somebody. Somebody has to believe in your music. We knew we wanted to go far with our music, but we didn't know how to get there. George and I figured we should go to the Hollywood clubs and start meeting the "right people."

TS: Did you do a lot of schmoozing to get a leg up on the business end of things?

MB: No, I'm a bad schmoozer. The business end is really hard for me. I don't understand a lot of it, and I don't like playing bullshit games.

TS: Getting back to my original question before we digressed, can you tell me what stirred an interest in drums for you?

MB: It's the old story: I knew I wanted to be in a band when I saw the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*. At nine years old, I knew that I wanted to do that and only that. I never really considered anything else.

TS: So you grew up when rock 'n' roll really began to explode.

MB: I was born in '56, and the '60s really struck me. Oh *man*, was that cool. That was when there was just one name for pop music: rock 'n' roll. Your parents hated it, the kids loved it. When I saw the Beatles on *Ed Sullivan*, nothing ever struck me so hard in my life. I said to my mom, "What's going on?" And she said, "This is a rock 'n' roll band." I asked her why the girls were screaming, and she told me because they thought the guys in the band were cute. And I said, "I think I want to be a Beatle." I took my first lesson at age nine, and by the time I was ten, I was in a band.

TS: So you've been drumming for the last 21 years. Has the music been entirely financially supportive for you, or have you had to resort to the nine-to-five trip?

MB: When I was a kid, I knew drums were my calling in life. The thought of

having to work at something you hate just to survive really frightened me. I knew I couldn't do 35 years at the phone company like my dad. I admire him for it, but I knew the traditional thing wasn't for me.

On the other hand, I had lots of jobs over the years. Before we began to put records out, I'd get jobs with the goal in mind to make enough money until the gigs we had planned finally came up. I always knew the rock thing was the way to have fun and make money, and I knew it would eventually happen for me.

TS: You had complete support for your career from your parents?

MB: They were always supportive because they knew I was happy, and they really admired the hell out of me. My dad comes from a generation where you had to have security, and I never cared about that. So they were really proud of me, and I'm glad they realized that I knew what I was doing.

TS: You weren't really taking a gamble, because you *knew* it would happen for you.

MB: And I knew I had nothing to lose. I was broke a lot of the time, but I just figured I'd go for it the way I had to do it. Thankfully, it seems to be working out really well.



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and '76. Dave Garfield was a good friend of mine, and we had the band Karizma together, playing the Comeback Inn at the time. We were really into Miles and Tony Williams and all that stuff. We were these 18-year-old fusionaires, beating our brains out. I was studying with Murray Spivack at that time. When Dave got the gig with Freddie Hubbard—an amazing feat for a 20-year-old—he got me on the gig, which I was really thrilled about.

RF: What was that like? I've heard wild things about Hubbard.

CV: It was a trip. Freddie is a wild one. Musically it was great.

RF: I've heard he's very hard to work for.

CV: He is demanding. He was hard. Being young and white and not really having my shit together didn't help, either. If I were to play with him now, it would be different. But it was a real good experience, and it just brought me to another level.

RF: If you're not ready for something like that, that could almost damage you.

CV: I was with him between six months and a year, if that long, when I was 20, and I toured Europe with him. It was a whole new thing, but it was definitely getting out there and doing it, because it wasn't like a first-class gig or anything. Musically, I thought it would be a great thing for me to go through, whether it was pleasant or not. We had one roadie, and I had to set up my own stuff. I lost half

my drumset on the road because it was so disorganized, it got left in a cab. It was a beautiful blond Gretsch set. But I felt losing it was part of paying my dues. At that same time, I started to do some sessions for a guy named Michael Lloyd, who was producing the teenie-bopper acts like Shaun Cassidy and Leif Garrett.

RF: What qualified you to do that?

CV: Somebody recommended me. Playing with people and doing demos really opened up the whole thing. Somebody had heard me on a demo, and then they tried me on a record, and it worked.

RF: It's sad that there is very little demo work anymore.

CV: That's a very good point. That's how I got my experience, listening back to the tapes and thinking, "Oh God, listen to that fill rush" or "Listen to that dragging at the end." That's how I corrected everything. Today, all these artists have drum machines at home with effects and 24-tracks. They can make great-sounding demos. So how does a young kid who wants to learn how to play drums break in? That's really sad. It's almost like a dying breed.

RF: But, on the other hand, drum machines really can aid you in learning time.

CV: Yes, it's almost like a metronome. And that's another thing that really helped me to get my time together—working with the click in the studio.

RF: Did that throw you at first?

CV: No, because I was doing all my exercises with a metronome with Murray Spivack, so I just applied that. As a kid, I would always play to records in my room with headphones on, and I think that really helps to get the studio thing happening, because you're just playing along, which is essentially what you do when you're overdubbing. When I overdub a track, they take the drum machine out, and all of a sudden I'm playing with whatever is left on there. I just play; I don't think about it. If you think about it, you get hung up. Just play like you were dancing or something. That's when you start expressing yourself and playing well. Like Miles Davis said a long time ago: You have to learn all the fundamentals of music, and then you have to forget them and just play. It makes a lot of sense. You have it all, but you forget about it and just play, like the way Jack DeJohnette plays. That guy's got facility, but the way he uses it—my God—the guy is painting this big giant picture the whole time he's playing. I've got that new Mike Brecker record with him on it, and it just blows my mind the way Jack plays. He's such a musician, so creative.

RF: Were there particular people who were turning you on back then, and who you were interested in listening to and playing to?

CV: Back when I was a kid, I used to

really be into John Guerin. He was playing with Tom Scott & The L.A. Express, and it was really exciting to go watch him play. Seeing those kinds of players when you're a kid is such a thrill. I still play there.

RF: Who besides Guerin were you into?

CV: I was really into Tony Williams with the Miles Davis Quintet. As I got more turned on to music, I found out about Elvin Jones. I was also into Bernard Purdie a lot, because I had this record, *King Curtis Live At The Fillmore*, which really turned me on to the way Bernard Purdie plays. Jeff Porcaro was always sort of a mentor. He's three or four years older than I am, and I grew up with his younger brothers. He was with Steely Dan already while we were in high school, so he was sort of an idol. As I got older, I started getting into Steve Gadd. I went to Stan Kenton's camp while I was in high school, and somebody brought in a tape of Hubert Laws with Steve on it, which is when I got turned on to him.

RF: You're sort of a dual musical personality. On one hand you say you aspired to be a session player, and then there's this other completely different thing—a jazz kind of thing. I get the feeling that that's what you want to talk about most, but it's not a fair representation of your work.

CV: I just did James Taylor's new record, and I'm real proud of that. It's really me.

RF: What is *you*? What do you mean?

CV: I felt like I played the songs the way I wanted to play them—the way I heard them and not just the way somebody *told* me to play them. We just sat there and played, with James set up in front of us and listening through the phones. He was singing along with us, and it wasn't like, "Okay, we're going to cut track A now." I feel like now I'm starting to play the way I want to play in the studio.

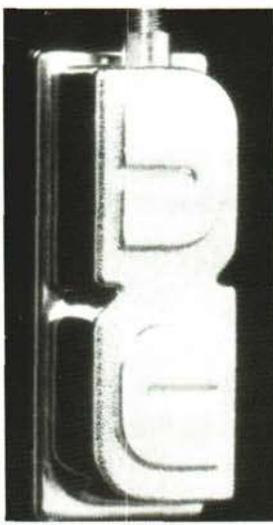
RF: What else have you played on recently?

CV: I just did a wonderful album that I'm very proud of, Sarah Vaughan's *Brazilian Romance*. Sergio Mendez produced it, and it's all Brazilian music, a lot of it written by Dori Caymi. It sounds real clean, and it is beautiful music. It was great fun to do. I also did a wonderful album with Dori Caymi, but I don't know when it will be out. I did an album with Deniece Williams, and an album with Dianne Schuur called *Deals*. It was Abe Laboriel, Lee Ritenour, Dave Grusin, and me on that record. I'm proud of the stuff I've done with Sheena Easton. I played on "Strut" and the *A Private Heaven* album, which Gregg Mathieson produced. I think he's a great producer. Producers either let you play like *you*, or make you play a certain way, maybe so they can say they made you play that way. It's a weird thing, and I can't figure it out. Someone like Gregg or James Taylor hires me for who I am. They're not hiring me to sound like

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someone else. "We couldn't get Steve Gadd, so we got this guy. We couldn't get Jeff Porcaro, so we got Carlos"; it's not that sort of thing. With Gregg, it was a lot of fun. Paul Jackson played guitar, and Lee Sklar and Abe Laboriel both played on some of it. Both those guys are great. Gregg really had the right players for what he wanted, and he just let us play, so we had a great time.

RF: When you say Gregg let you just play, what happened? He presented you with the material, and then what?

CV: They present the music to us, and then there are a couple of details, like their wanting a high-pitched crack, Police kind of snare on one track, or playing it down on another. Then Gregg says, "Yeah, sounds great. Let's cut it." You hear stories of Steely Dan taking two years to do a record, and everybody thinks you've got to do that to make it good. But people are so stupid; it doesn't have to be that way. It *can* be fun. Otherwise, you've got the wrong band. Get somebody else. Becker and Fagen write such great songs that they could have anybody play them and they're still going to be hits, because they are such great songwriters.

RF: I'd like to get into more detail and take one song that you played on, say "On My Own," and trace your involvement with it from the time you get the call for the session through its completion.

CV: The phone rang. It was contractor

Frank DeCaro saying that Burt Bacharach and Carole Bayer-Sager would like me for a session. I had worked with them before, and now they were doing a Patti LaBelle song. We actually cut that one five or six times.

RF: When you actually get the tune in front of you, how do you approach it?

CV: A lot of times there will be a demo, so we have an idea of how they want it done. So I start there. Now that everybody has a drum machine at home, a lot of times they'll write a tune around a particular beat. Sometimes, if you don't play *that* beat, they feel like you're not even playing the song. Sometimes they'll say, "I want it to be just like the demo," and other times they'll say, "I don't want it to be anything like the demo."

When we got called back to re-cut "On My Own," nothing was radically different. But Burt and Carole have a way of working that isn't a formula. Sometimes they change things as they're writing; they don't know exactly what they want until the track is being run down. They'll do their demos with a drum machine. Burt plays bass and a string line, and sings the melody. When we come in, we have to make something up. Burt is very particular about how he wants it to go, and rightfully so. I think the man is absolutely one of the great songwriters of our time. His songs are so melodic and so beautiful, and he always adds a little something

extra. If you try to follow one of his charts, it cracks you up, because there will be a phrase with nine bars, and then the next phrase will be five bars. That's just the way he writes. You can't go into a Burt session and just go "boom-chick, boom-chick."

RF: What's he particular about?

CV: He doesn't like bashing, real thumping kind of stuff. With him it's more of where you leave holes. He's always looking for something like that. I dig working for those two. You never know what to expect. It's always something a little different. Basically we ran it down a few times and got the feel of the song. Sometimes we'd have to listen to the demo again, just because we might be overplaying it and turning it into something it's not. Patti was there singing with us, which was a real treat. Some of the vocals she did were ridiculous, and later on they added Michael McDonald. Burt is the one who will say, "The snare sounds too thin; it sounds too thick."

RF: Tell me about the sound you like to get.

CV: It depends on the music I'm playing. I definitely believe in two different sounds. If I'm playing GRP stuff, I have to change my drumset. If I'm playing what I consider more jazz—lighter, freer, more melodic music—I like to use a 22" kick, a 5 x 14 snare, and a pair of either 10" and 12", 14" and 16", 14" and 15", or 13" and 14" toms. That's the set I use if I'm playing with Karizma. When I'm doing James Taylor, I use slightly bigger drums. I'll use 10", 12", 13", and 16", and the tuning is lower. I use a thicker snare that I can bring up in pitch and get a crack out of it, but still have some tone to it. I use a Japanese snare for a lot of things. It's a Canopus snare. It's a single piece of Zelkoba wood hollowed out; it's not ply. It's amazing; it's unbelievably sensitive.

I don't have a specific drum sound, though. I firmly recommend Gretsch, although I don't officially endorse them through the company. I love their drums. I kept going back to them, so finally I just bought three sets. They're a beautiful instrument. Gretsch drums sing to me when I hit them. You hear the different melodic pitches and you can tune them down, up, and any way you want. If you crank them up, you can sound like Tony Williams; if you tune them real loose, you can sound like Russ Kunkel. I endorse Paiste Cymbals. They approached me, but you have to understand that, at the time, I was already playing Paiste hi-hats and Paiste 602 cymbals. I was at Jeff Porcaro's house one day and I played a 602 ride. I had gotten tired of looking for a beautiful ride cymbal. I had hunted everywhere I had gone on the road, looking for a beautiful K Zildjian. Somebody has got them in a closet somewhere, because I couldn't find them. I'd find K's

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that were either too dark, or something else was wrong. I gave up, and I was at Jeff's studio one day when I started playing this 602, and I said, "Damn, that sounds great." Jeff said, "They're real consistent. You should check them out." I went to the NAMM Show, and Paiste approached me to ask if I wanted to endorse them. And I had already gone out and *bought a 602 cymbal*. I just like to play what I like to play. I'm just not into the PR side of it. Some people profit from that, I guess. I don't. To me, it's more of a thrill when somebody calls me for the way I hit the hi-hat. No one is going to call me because they saw my name endorsing a set of drums. The only thing that has gotten me anything, anywhere, is a love for the drums, and my playing. Anything else is bullshit.

RF: So what else have you done lately?

CV: I do all kinds of different things. I do Christian albums and Mexican artists like Julio Iglesias. I'm real proud of doing Bonnie Raitt's last album. She's so talented. Bill Payne and George Massenburg produced it. It was another situation where they just let us play. Lenny Castro was on it; he's my best friend, and I love playing with him. We work like one big drumset. He's one half and I'm the other. He knows how to play off drummers. Some percussionists just kind of do their thing on top. If you're playing a ride cymbal, they don't care; they're playing a ride cymbal, too. But guys like Lenny are real conscious of that. If you're playing the hi-hat, he'll go upstairs and play the cymbal, and if you're up there, he's going to switch to something else. Luis Conte is also another of my favorites. With Sheena and Bonnie Raitt, Lenny was there live with me. He really knows how to play live; he snuggles up next to you. I like tracking with a rhythm section; that's one of my favorite things.

RF: Do you do a lot of live tracking?

CV: It's starting to come back, surprisingly enough. People are getting ear fatigue with drum machines. That perfect time and perfect execution just wear you out. Every 8th note is just hammering in your head. Some people think they can program it a little different, but who the hell knows how you are going to play a hi-hat all the way through a tune? So how are you going to sit there and program it? You can't program *everything*. It's like that little feel where Larry Carlton bends a guitar string—that reaction that happens between his finger and his string. Or a riff that Abe Laboriel does. You can't program those kinds of things. I think machines are great for working at home, but you don't want to make records like that when there are great players around to be hired. Get some input. To me, it would be so boring to go to the studio and make records alone. I'd rather do construction work than do that shit. I like

playing with people and feeding off of them. Like you were saying—there are two sides to me: There's a session guy and there's another guy who will always be in love with the way Tony Williams plays—the things he did with Miles. I love all music. I work as a session guy, and I play jazz in the clubs at night.

RF: Is it important to you to play live?

CV: Yes, it really is. I get fat sitting around, going, "Where's my 3:00 date? I have an 8:00 A.M. at Universal, and let me call cartage...." You have to get in front of people. We went down to Brazil with James Taylor, and it was a great trip. There's nothing like playing in front of 50,000 people who are singing along

with all of James Taylor's songs and clicking their lighters on the beat. There was a time delay from the people in back of the giant stadium, so to us it looked like runway lights. It was just incredible. Where can you get that kind of thrill sitting in a studio going, "We'll do cue M-11 again"? It's fun, but I'm happiest with a balance of both. I enjoy doing sessions and hearing something I played on the radio. Of course there's a lot of stuff I play on that never gets out, but which I still enjoy playing on.

RF: Why are you proud of some things and not others?

CV: Because sometimes the artist is lame, the songs are lame, and I sound

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lame. Even with Julio Iglesias I have fun, because it's usually a good rhythm section, and we always try to do a good job. Even if you're playing something where you really don't feel it's you, you have to know your name is on it. I pride myself on trying to go for that kind of vibe on takes all the time.

RF: Any one-takers you can think of off the top of your head?

CV: On James' stuff, we had a couple that were one take. I like doing projects. Sessions can be cold sometimes. That's where you can get into the lazy attitude of playing the same drum fill all the time because, if you think about it, you have to. You come in, you have a reputation as a good player, you're expected to do good, but you don't know the song. They expect after hearing it two or three times that you will come up with some incredible part, which is hard, because usually you'll come up with the same thing you played before. That's where sessions are dangerous. When you do projects and your drums stay set up for a month, you really have time to create. That's rare, though, because most of the stuff I do is here in L.A., and most of it is done real fast. I enjoy it, but I really enjoy doing something like James' record. Don Grolnick produced it at the Power Station in New York, and we came to work every day and worked on stuff. We changed things and we tried things. I felt I was part

of the project. I even did percussion on it, because there was stuff I played on the drums where I left holes for tambourine backbeats or shaker things. I didn't play anything like congas, but I played some hand percussion, which I have never done, because no one has ever extended that to me. It's nice to actually feel like part of it.

RF: What about tough sessions?

CV: Like Ricky Lee Jones—oh God, that kind of situation makes you want to stop playing. Sometimes people don't know how to communicate with you, and they expect you to read their minds. I was doing this track, "We Belong Together," on the *Pirates* album, which Gadd ended up playing on. The way Steve played it was so different from the way we approached it, because nobody told us it was a shuffle. We were playing like a slow 3/4, bluesy kind of shuffle, as opposed to a double-time shuffle. Ricky kept saying, "Play it like [Jackson Browne's] 'Doctor My Eyes.'" What the hell did we know about "Doctor My Eyes"? It was Russ Titelman and Lenny Waronker producing, and Abe Laboriel, Buzzy Fieten, me, and Ricky playing. We were supposed to come in and do this tune, and nobody told us what it was. It went around and around, and then it became this insecurity thing. Nobody came in and said, "Look, here's what we need." She was going, "That ain't it, that ain't it," and the minute somebody starts doing that, you just close right up. We hit it for about another hour, and finally they cancelled the session. Abe and I went to Lucy's Mexican Restaurant, and I was going, "Abe, why, why?" He's so beautifully mellow; he just said, "It wasn't meant to be." I was bummed, because I don't like to feel like I can't do the job. I think I could have done it if they had just communicated what the hell they wanted. The way Steve played it at the end, it was like he layed out half the tune, and at the end, he came in with these great fills and just did these accents, and that's all. Lenny Castro played percussion all the way through the beginning. It probably evolved to that after three or four days of doing it, though. Things like

that are tough. I like to feel that I can listen to the track, feel good, and do a good job. Everybody wants to feel that way. Nobody wants to feel like they didn't cut it. If *you* didn't cut it, that's one thing. But if you didn't cut it because they didn't communicate to you, that's another. Why bother calling me? Why pay me? Save the money and wait until you can get Steve. That's who she wanted originally, so why bother trying to get anybody else?

RF: Do situations like that affect your confidence?

CV: In earlier days they did, for sure. But no one said it was going to be easy to do this, and it's the kind of thing where there is a lot of competition. You just have to set your heart on it and go for it. A lot of people are aware that they're hurting feelings by saying things. Like Freddie, for instance. I was 20 years old and he'd say, "Your left hand ain't shit."

RF: Did that destroy you?

CV: At first it did, but then I thought, "You're right. My left hand ain't shit, and I have to work on it, but that's not the way to tell me." Willie Bobo was a lot of fun, though. It was a real good band and we used to really groove. I learned a lot from the man.

RF: Was he tough to work with, too?

CV: He was tough, too, but I cracked him. We were playing some Latin stuff that I had never played. All of a sudden I'm playing with this heavyweight conga player, so I just played filler stuff like a lot of hi-hat, snare, and kick—just groove stuff—and Willie would play the fills on timbales.

RF: What about Karizma?

CV: Karizma is a very special thing for me. Having that has been a real savior—having David and Lenny and different bass players and guitar players that come and go in that band. The nucleus is David, Lenny, and me. We went to Japan on our own, which was really a trip. After touring all these years with Boz Scaggs and Olivia Newton-John and Shaun Cassidy, to go to Japan with your own little band and make decent money and play decent gigs is a real thrill. Having that outlet is really essential. Being able to play what comes off the top of your head is such an important thing if you like jazz and that kind of music. Although I can go on a three-month tour with James Taylor and feel like I never want to play anything else. When I'm playing his music, it's so lovely that I don't think about anything else.

RF: Isn't it fairly tame?

CV: It's not as tame as it used to be. James has done quite a turn-around. I wouldn't do it if I didn't love the music. It's tame, but I play freer with that than with a lot of bands I've toured with, because a lot of bands want it to be like the record every night. James never

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plays it like the record, so we actually have freedom to stretch. You can't always look at it like the big pay-off, the big fancy shit. Sometimes you can get the same feeling with what you don't play with and the holes you leave. I like to divide my life and go out and play with James and totally get into that, and then go out and play with Karizma and totally get into that. I don't try to mix that because, to me, that's unmusical.

RF: You really have done quite a variety of things, even in the studio. How do you feel about doing jingles?

CV: Jingles are alright. The way I look at it is that I enjoy working. It's fun to hear myself on it and make a little money on the side. If it's "Carlos only does this," I think it's very shallow and limiting. I like to do everything. A lot of sessions are boring, but a lot of them are starting to be more fun than they used to be because people are less paranoid. They used to worry about, "Oh my God, your tomtoms are rattling." Those days are really gone. I did a session last year where I had a ball. It was for producer Glyn Johns for a session with Helen Watson, and it was double drums with Richie Hayward. I love Richie's playing, and to play with him was a blast. We gelled immediately. He was there to do the whole project, and I was brought in to do double drums with him. The way Glyn miked it, everything was so you didn't hear every little individual thing. It was just this massive drum thing coming at you.

It's starting to change; it's not that paranoid recording thing anymore. Before, like in '78 or '79, it seemed like it was pulling teeth to get a drum sound. It seems that now they're into gated, live sounds. If you don't put your ear right next to the drum, or you hear it from far away, you hear it differently. That microscopic thing is passing, and they're trying to get some *feel* on tape. They don't want to have perfect shit go by. Like what the Bee Gees used to do, measuring the beat—with a guy like Steve Gadd, mind you. I mean, why bother hiring a great drummer like that? That kind of thing seems to be ending. I don't put any tape on my tom-toms, for instance, at all—nothing. I leave them wide open. If you don't like them, then gate them. That's what they're going to do anyway. Bring them up for the fills and then duck them out of the way, or they're going to be ringing when I hit the bass drum. People are starting to learn how to record. I can have my drumset sounding big and not have to be worried about playing on a bunch of pillows, because that's what it used to be like with muffled drums. You have to have that live sound, and then when you put everything else on top, you're not going to hear all the ringing. But people were recording as if it were going to be a tom-tom solo record. I

think engineers now know how to use the gates and all that stuff, and it can really be fun to record.

RF: So Carlos, what's your goal?

CV: I'd like to continue what I'm doing, because I enjoy it. I'd also like to be involved in a band one day, although I'm not sure what that would be. I like what people like Peter Gabriel do. To me that's the epitome. I'm not going to fool myself into thinking that I'll always be able to play what I want to play, what I think is hip or cool. You have to make sacrifices. But I'd like to be involved with a band and reach a lot of people and have it be musical, where I don't have to sacrifice anything that I wouldn't feel good about.

RF: Do you worry about being on the road so much that you'll lose session work?

CV: I've never been scared to leave town, because I figure the studios are always going to be there, and it's worth it to go on the road. It's not fun to go on the road with somebody you don't like, but if it's good music, how can you not? How can you compare playing down in Brazil for 50,000 people, all singing one of James' songs, to going and doing a studio date? Once I started doing a lot of dates, I stopped getting calls from certain people to go on the road. But then when something really good would come up, I'd do it because I felt it would be a good

experience. I look at the longevity of my career—over 25 years. Some drummers get burned out in the studio because they've booked themselves sessions around the clock, and it's go, go, go. Then they get into that thing where they sound real burnt on everything. I think you have to do what you want to do and what you think is good for you. I think it was great for me to go on the road with James Taylor. It added to my experiences. I did miss out work, but they'll call again.

I think the thing to remember is why you got into music in the first place, because you love it and you love to play. I don't want to become such a business man that I forget. I have to be a business man to a certain point, but I want to remember what's important. If you get caught up in doing every date in town, after ten years you're like a potato. You play the same stupid way you've played all along, and why? Because you were so worried about losing that double scale. Remember why you got into music in the first place. I never thought I'd be doing record dates. I just always loved the drums and went after it and pursued it. It's all good music. I don't want to think of myself as a studio guy. Sometimes I play in the studio, sometimes I play live. And sometimes I play in my little room in the back.



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Teaching Yourself by Roy Burns

The strange thing about playing is that no one can really teach you how to *play*; you learn how to do it *by playing*. In order to do this successfully, however, you have to play a lot.

When I was in my 20's, I worked in a nightclub in New York City called the Metropole, where many great jazz musicians performed. I had the opportunity to play with many of them. I would start to play with a trio at 1:00 in the afternoon. We'd play 45 minutes out of every hour, finishing at 6:45 P.M. I'd go out for dinner, then return at 7:30 to play in a quintet. We played until 3:00 in the morning, alternating with another group. I was playing virtually 12 hours a day, and it was great! The place was uninhibited and wild, so I had the chance to play solos, fast tempos, brushes—you name it.

At a later time, I was playing the *Merv Griffin Show* during the day and at a club at night. I would finish the club gig at 4:00 in the morning, sleep for four hours, be at NBC by 10:00 A.M., finish the show by 3:00 P.M., sleep for four more hours, and

then be back at the club by 8:00 P.M. I had the best of both worlds: I was on staff at NBC and playing jazz at night.

Although I honestly would not want that type of schedule today, it was a great learning experience. I was literally playing day and night. It was okay if one tune wasn't perfect, because I knew I would get another chance at it soon enough. I could make adjustments, try new things, and learn what worked and what didn't. Although I never thought of it at the time, during this period I was *teaching myself*.

Like most of us, early in my career I had a problem with consistency. One night would be good and the next not so good. All of the older musicians from whom I sought advice said, "Relax! You just need to *play* more." That really seemed too simple at the time, but in retrospect, it was great advice. So, I played every chance I got. I played all types of gigs, whether the money was good or not. As long as I could learn, I would play.

The odd thing about playing is that there is no substitute for it. You can't practice playing. You can "practice" with records; you can "practice" solos; and you can "practice" reading. But "*playing*" means playing with other people, under conditions where you have to adjust and listen to everyone—and to yourself as well. One of the drawbacks of today's music business is that young people often play for years with the same group. Playing with a number of different people, especially when you are young, can be of great value. However, the main objective is still to play as much as you can.

Part of teaching yourself is evaluating each night's performance. Go over the concert or gig in your mind: Which tunes worked and which didn't? If the fast tempos gave you problems, then you need

to do two things. First, listen to and watch (if possible) drummers who play the fast tempos really well. Then, practice each day until your skills in that area have improved. If you are having difficulty with slow tempos (which can be tricky), listen to drummers who play the slow tempos with a good feel and good time.

Listening is the primary skill required in teaching yourself. Many drummers "hear" the music, but they are not always *listening*. Listening means *paying attention*. That's the key. It means devoting your full attention to listening, with no other thought to distract you. It means giving yourself up totally to the music, concentrating on it as if you were hypnotized.

One of the unfortunate things about taking lessons is that you may feel you already know what's happening before you've had the chance to play a lot. You may *think* you're really playing well, when in fact you may sound very inexperienced. You may be having a grand time wailing away on the drums, and driving everyone else in the group to distraction. For example, at a recent trade show, a young drummer was playing with a group headed by a very experienced guitar player—who happens to be a friend of mine. I asked him, "How are things going?" He said, "Roy, this drummer is killing me. He's so busy that he's stepping on every phrase I play. Half the time, if he plays a break, we don't know if it will come out in tempo. The guy just doesn't listen!"

Sadly enough, the drummer thought he was great. He was playing fills, crashing cymbals, pumping away with two bass drums, and generally "showing off." He heard no one but himself, and it was obvious that he had done precious little playing. He had good technique, but he had never learned that sometimes "less is more." This is especially true for drummers. When I was in Lionel Hampton's band, Hamp told me, "Roy, if it will sound bad if you *don't* play a fill, by all means play it. But with anything less critical, just play time." It was good advice, and it helped me at the time.

So, the first step toward teaching yourself is to start listening and really paying attention. Evaluate your performance. Discuss the gig with the bass player at the end of the night or at the end of the rehearsal. Play in a manner that will support the music and make those around you feel good. But most of all, listen, listen, and then listen some more.

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it very sad that Lars Ulrich and Tommy Lee are portrayed as vulgar, idiotic, babbling fools, while they display great playing ability and taste in their interviews and records. I found it especially ironic that the Tama ad featuring Lars Ulrich in the March issue was immediately followed by Mr. Ulrich giving a thoughtful, intelligent answer in the *Ask A Pro* department. I also am saddened that Tommy Lee is seen in April's Pearl ad telling a young fan to "!*φ! the rest!" I think I speak for many others when I ask Tama and Pearl to stop this insulting nonsense immediately. Give us some credit.

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BREAKING BARRIERS

I'd like to thank you for a great magazine which has been an inspiration and an education for me. *Modern Drummer* is a precious item in South Africa, not only for me, but for my friends and drum students, as well.

Music is a powerful means of communication and breaks down many barriers—which is something we desperately need in South Africa. Thanks again.

Ian Dixon
Republic of South Africa

COALITION FOR DISABLED MUSICIANS

I am sure you received a large response to the article on Rick Allen of Def Leppard [March, '88 *MD*] from disabled musicians, but did you know where to direct them for concrete help? We are the Coalition For Disabled Musicians, a non-profit organization, and we provide many opportunities for disabled musicians to fulfill their musical aspirations. Please help us spread our message, which emphasizes the "ability" component in the word "disability." We welcome input and participation from all disabled musicians.

Donald W. Jaeger
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ERGONOMICS

After recently reading Rick Van Horn's article, "Ergonomics," in your April issue, I noticed that a small piece of information was overlooked regarding drum thrones. Since comfort is the key issue here, it should be mentioned that not only is the correct seat height important, but just as important is the seat itself. I'm referring to the foam padding used in seats. This was brought to my attention when I decided to re-upholster my drum throne seat from flat to fluffy (if you will). It was explained to me by the upholsterer that the foam padding used by most drum throne manufacturers is too thin. When sat upon, it compresses and feels as hard as a rock, because it has no room to give. This is absolute murder on one's lower back and spine (not to mention other possible areas). So, for around \$30.00, I had the upholsterer beef up the seat as much as possible, using the same type of foam found in more expensive couches and other, similar furniture. The result was fantastic. It's just like floating on a cloud of comfort—which makes a tremendous difference when one is sitting at a gig four to five hours a night, five nights a week.

Shawn Weingart
Canoga Park CA

This letter is simply to thank Rick Van Horn for his article regarding ergonom-

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ics. In the 14 years I've been drumming, I've never settled on a definite setup—which has more than likely hampered my progress. Having no guidelines to experiment by was something that never entered my mind, until I read Rick's article.

Sometimes, it takes somebody bashing you over the head for you to wake up. Many things in Rick's article have been staring me in the face for years. For example, the discussion involving the kick pedal and its placement was something I put to work immediately. I got instant results! My footwork has improved measurably, and my knee no longer hurts after the second set. Now I can focus on other aspects of my playing, without worrying so much about my "1 and 3." Thanks, Rick, for "bashing me over the head."

As professionals in a fragile business, we cannot afford to pass up the little things that might ultimately strengthen our confidence and job security. Although I've been a subscriber for years, I've never read a *Modern Drummer* front to back. As of the April '88 issue, it looks like I've got some catching up to do.

Dave Everhart
Indianapolis IN



Update continued from page 8

"Me Do" that is on the recently released Beatles' *Past Masters Volume 1* is the one that features Ringo on drums. The other version featured free-lance session musician Andy White in that role, with Ringo shaking the tambourine. **Graeme Edge** on new Moody Blues album, released last month. The group plans to tour the U.S. in the summer, then head to Europe, to be back in the States again afterwards. Original Iron Butterfly drummer **Ron Bushy** working with the band once again for some reunion dates. New York drummer and cable TV personality **Chris McGinnis** has been enjoying his cable show *Johnny Lives Dangerously*, on which he drums as well as hosts. In April he appeared at the National Association of Broadcasters convention in Las Vegas, playing both drums and piano, and taping his show on a remote basis. **Chuck Behler** on tour with Megadeth, supporting their new album so far, so good...so what! **Jonathan Moffett** on new Peter Cetera LP. **Neil Peart** on European tour with Rush. Word is they're set to mix a new live LP in between those performances for release later this year. **Daniel Pred** on drums with the Dan Reed Network live and on their Polygram debut. **Fred Coury**, returning from Europe with Cinderella, is about to embark on the U.S. tour with the group.

Their *Long Cold Winter* was released in May. **Robin Horn**, who drums for his father Paul Horn's group, left in early May for a series of concerts in the Soviet Union. The group played 22 shows in as many days, covering seven Soviet cities. **Joe Franco** recently completed two album projects: one with Jack Bruce and Leslie West, and another with guitarist Vinny Moore. Drummer/percussionist **Bobby Sanabria** was featured recently in Helsinki, Finland with the UMO Jazz Orchestra. The concert celebrated the music of legendary Latin jazz composer/arranger Mario Bauza, who was featured conducting the ensemble. Also featured were Rumbavana and La Gloria Mantancera from Cuba, and the Larry Harlow Salsa Orchestra, which featured Master Congero **Frank Malabe**. Congratulations to **Narada Michael Walden** on his Grammy award for Producer Of The Year. **Ralph Peterson, Jr.** has left O.T.B. to form his own group, Volition. The band's first album was recently released on King Records.



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Purecussion Drums



Most drummers are probably aware of the RIMS drum-mounting system. The innovation of RIMS is that they suspend drums via a strip of metal attached to the tension rods with rubber grommets. Many drummers swear by RIMS, for they successfully and noticeably give drums the freedom to resonate much more than standard mounting hardware does.

A couple of years ago, Purecussion, Inc. introduced the RIMS system to Remo's innovative pre-tuned *PTS* drum-heads, creating an intriguing relationship and a genuinely original concept in drum-kit design. The result was a fully portable, shell-less drumkit, dubbed the *RIMS Headset* [reviewed in the April '86 *MD*]. Now Purecussion has undergone changes in its corporate structure, resulting in their new version of the *Headset* now being referred to as "Purecussion drums with RIMS technology." Changes have also been made in the kit itself, the most important being that the *PTS* heads, which are now clear *Pinstripes*, are also tuneable.

Not a company to miss out on a catchy abbreviation, Purecussion has labeled the tuning system "PEGS" (Pitch Equalizing Group Support). PEGS employ a grommet and lever type of assembly that snaps onto a circular rim (not to be confused with a "RIM") placed under the *PTS* head. Tightening the tension rods presses the rim into the head, thus raising the pitch. The PEGS system is adjusted with a common drumkey, and is available as a

retrofit for existing *Headsets*.

Though Remo's pre-tuned heads were obviously designed with an "ideal" pitch for each respective drum size, PEGS add some very helpful adaptability to the Purecussion drums. Having a very "musical" type of sound, the *PTS* heads take good advantage of PEGS when extra toms are added to the kit (10", 12", 14", and 16" sizes are available). By adjusting the tuning on the middle-sized drums, you can find yourself fooling with some very usable melodic phrases. When tuned a bit high, the 10" and 12" toms resemble timbales, and in fact may be ideal as an addition to a regular drumkit for this purpose. Tuned "correctly," the toms somewhat resemble the sound of Remo's *RotoToms*. The heads stay in tune very well, and are a snap to change.

Predictably Purecussion's biggest challenge, the bass drum has the most problems in terms of loss of projection due to the absence of a shell. Though a good tone is possible (especially with the application of some well-placed damping), Purecussion still hasn't been able to achieve a real punch out of its 20" head. Triggering, which the company states in their literature has been very successful with the drums, might be one solution. Actually, these drums may be the perfect answer for those drummers wanting to experiment with electronic sounds, but unwilling to put up with electronic drums' insensitive pads.

Another solution might be to simply avoid the bass drum, and use only the toms along with your regular bass drum and snare. (The Purecussion kit doesn't include a snare drum.) This obviously destroys the "fold 'em up and be on your way" aspect of the drums. But since the included hardware is of the Pearl-type variety, and since the size of the toms allows them to be easily stored in your trap bag, you could still save yourself a lot of shlepping around of tom-toms. And though the Purecussion toms do lack slightly in projection compared to most normal toms, their sound is still quite impressive, especially considering what a little creative miking could do.

Of course, any opinions about the sound of Purecussion drums should be measured against the obvious advantages the set gives you. In a light (about 35 pounds with the set), flexible case, you can fit a respectable-sounding four-piece drumset (and two cymbal holders) that can be broken down or set up nicely in a matter of minutes. If you live in a

New



SABIAN HH Rock Cymbals

For drummers looking for a "different" character from their cymbals while performing in a rock context, Sabian's new HH Rock line may be just the ticket. Sabian has applied the time-tested technique of hand hammering to medium-heavy cymbals in order to create instruments with depth and musical character, along with strength and durability significantly greater than that of previous HH models. The new line includes 16" and 18" crashes along with 20" and 22" rides.

In a sense, a designation like "HH Rock" seems to indicate a certain specialization from this line. HH cymbals are known for having lower pitches than their AA counterparts, unique tonal colors, and not a tremendous amount of volume. On the other hand, "Rock" cymbals traditionally are known for having higher pitches (for greater cut), a lot of projection (usually the result of substantial sustain), and perhaps a bit less sonic variety. Where, then, do the HH Rock cymbals fall? Right in the middle.

I always like to start with the descriptions given by the manufacturer of a product, and see if they actually fit the item. Let's begin with ride cymbals. According to Sabian, the HH Rock ride is "a powerful cymbal with excellent high-end cut and a minimum of spread and build-up. Much drier than other ride cymbals. Clear stick definition and a clear, cutting sound on the bell." I absolutely concur. Testing the cymbals both "in the lab" and on the gig revealed that the rides give a stick sound that is quite loud and penetrating initially, but that dies out very quickly. There is little or no spread, and very few overtones. I would compare the sound to a "ping ride" or "flat ride" in terms of its quickness. However, the sound is much louder and one-dimensional, as opposed to the delicacy that those other cymbals have. This is, after all, a rock cymbal, so what is required is a strong, clear sound, able to stand out amid lots of other sounds

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Sabians

New Zildjian Hi-Hats



Zildjian K/Z Hi-Hats

Matching a top hi-hat cymbal with a bottom cymbal has never been an exact science. Various theories have been expounded over the years regarding relative weights and pitch relationships, but in the end it gets down to whether it sounds good or not. For a company like Zildjian, it's also a matter of finding combinations that are reasonably consistent, which can sometimes be a problem given the fact that cast cymbals can have a fairly wide range of pitch within a given size and model. In other words, it's quite possible to match, say, a K Zildjian top with an A Zildjian bottom and produce a very good sound, but that doesn't guarantee that every K top will work with every A bottom.

Over the past few months, however, the folks at Zildjian have been matching K tops with Z *Dyno-beat* bottoms, and the results have been pleasing (and consistent) enough that K/Z combination hi-hats are now a standard item in the Zildjian catalog. They are offered in both 13" and 14" sizes, but the company stresses that the 13" size is the more popular, and that is what we tested for this review.

Essentially, the K/Z combination takes the idea of the *New Beat* hi-hats—matching a thinner top with a heavier bottom—one step further. In this case, the Z bottom is *very* heavy, and that helps give these hats a very strong "chick" sound when played with the pedal. The heavier bottom cymbal also gives the hi-hats a higher pitch, which helps them to cut through at loud volumes. (The 13" size also plays a part in this.)

The advantage of having a K top is that the K has a lot of dark overtones that help compensate for the extreme brightness of the Z bottom. If the top cymbal were brighter and/or heavier, the "chick" sound would still be good but the hi-hats would tend to sound brittle when played with a stick. But with that K on top, you have plenty of overtones to give a good

stick sound, and you still have plenty of "chick." Again, the 13" size is probably a factor here, as a 14" K top might be a little too dark sounding for general purposes.

Out of curiosity, we compared the K/Z combination with a set of 13" A *New Beats*. When played with a stick, they were very similar in character, but the "chick" sound was much stronger on the K/Z pair. We then tried the A *New Beat* top with the Z bottom, and while the "chick" sound remained strong, the hi-hats sounded a little thin when played with a stick. Basically, all of the overtones were coming from the A *New Beat* top, and it just didn't have as many of them as the K. (The *New Beat* bottom, of course, had more overtones than the Z, and that's why the two A's worked together.)

If there has been any hi-hat combination over the past few years that can be said to have been the "standard," it was probably 14" A Zildjian *New Beats*. But I was so impressed with the K/Z combination that I'll go so far as to predict that they might become the new standard. List price is \$267.00 for the 13" K/Z combination, which is higher than the price for a pair of 13" A *New Beats*, but lower than the price of a pair of 13" K's.

—Rick Mattingly

Zildjian Recording Hi-Hats

Zildjian recently added two new hi-hat models to its A Zildjian line. These hi-hats have been designed specifically for use in the recording studio. These cymbals, called *Special Recording* hi-hats, are available in 10" and 12" sizes. According to Zildjian, the concept behind these cymbals is that a smaller pair of hi-hats produce a very defined stick sound as well as a very clear "chick" sound, which is appropriate for recording purposes.

The S.R. 12 (the 12" pair) lived up to Zildjian's claims. In the studio, these hi-hats have a very quick and clean "chick" sound, and because of the lighter weight of the 12" top cymbal, it is very easy to control with the foot. When played with sticks, the recorded sound of the S.R. 12 is very clear. These cymbals recorded very well, but might not be the right sound for heavier styles of music.

The S.R. 12 could also be used live for drummers working in quieter playing situations. The "chick" sound is not too loud, but the clarity of sound might be just right for trio-type settings. The 12" hats also worked very well when mounted "closed" as a second pair of hi-hats. In this way, the lighter "chick"

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around it. The HH Rock rides are certainly capable of doing that.

I must point out that I tend to see a limit in potential volume from the rides. That is to say, in an *unmiked* situation, they will serve well up to a moderate rock club-band volume. Past that, an even louder ride cymbal, such as an AA 21" or 22" Rock cymbal might be a better choice. But when you consider that the drummer would be miked up in most situations that are louder, the HH Rock might be ideal. The lack of overtones and spread—the "dryness"—will definitely appeal to sound engineers, who can live with a loud initial attack but hate lingering overtones and spread. This means that these cymbals will also serve excellently in studio situations where loud, powerful cymbal sounds are required, but musicality and control are equally essential.

When it comes to the crashes, Sabian says that the cymbals are "bright, powerful crashes with medium-heavy weight for added volume, good projection and resonance. Substantial high-end cut and moderate decay. Double as excellent ride cymbals. Punchy." My test results bear out just about all of this. Again, using the cymbals in an unmiked situation led me to the conclusion that they could only meet moderate rock volume requirements. (Let me stress that I'm talking here about amplified rock music in a medium-sized club. That still gets pretty loud, so I'm *not* saying these cymbals are wimpy, by any means.) I got the feeling that the limitation was based on that "moderate decay," rather than on any problem with initial strike volume. The 16" crashes especially tended to speak out very quickly, and then disappear equally fast. The 18" cymbals, owing to their larger diameter, held out a good deal longer. Once again, I would say that these very factors would be distinct *advantages* for a miked-up drummer, either live or in the studio, so don't get the impression that I'm counting this quickness as a negative feature. Sabian has deliberately built it into the cymbal, and has succeeded admirably in making the cymbal do precisely what they say it should do.

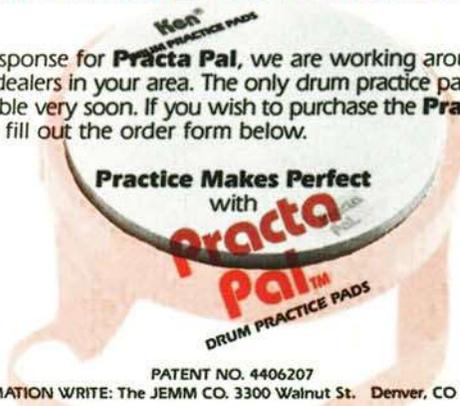
By the way, I did find one interesting, and useful, application for this characteristic quickness in my unmiked playing situation. I discovered that the 18" crash (standard finish) had as much or more power and attack as the AA 18" medium-thin crash I normally use, but the duration/decay of a 16" AA crash. That made it especially useful for punctuating loud

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small apartment, where do you set up your drums? No problem. Just set Pure-ussion drums up in the living room when you want to play, and put them back in the closet when you're done. Maybe you're a teacher, and would like to teach several students at the same time, but you also have a space problem. Or what if you are playing a steady date at a club or show, and are able to leave your regular drums there, but would like to be able to practice or rehearse without constantly breaking down and setting up? These drums become a godsend.

A drumkit this versatile is obviously going to have a few drawbacks, but the Pureussion drums' are surprisingly few. First off, the literature included with the set states, right from the start and with good reason, that you should *carefully* study the stored position of the set before assembling. You may be real anxious to take the thing apart when you get it home, but *do follow their advice*. A lot of thought went into the design of these drums, and you'll find that part "A" really does have to fit into slot "B" in order to properly fit the kit back into the bag (flexible or not). If you do study the way things should fit, you shouldn't have any problems after a little practice. I still can't help but feel, though, that with an extra inch or two added to the depth of the carrying case, a few headaches could be avoided without too much of an extra burden to transportation.

Pureussion also warns to be careful that the tuning rods are not pressing into the heads of the other toms when stored—something I found a bit difficult to ensure. Circular pieces of thin cardboard cut out to fit over the heads would avoid this problem. It would also be nice to have some sort of cloth sleeves included with the kit to slip over the heads, in order to avoid scratching when storing.

In general, the hardware included with the set is more than adequate. During quite a bit of bashing, and with 20" ride and 18" crash cymbals atop the cymbal stands, the set held its ground quite well. The 16" "floor" tom, however, tends to bounce a bit when hit hard—something that may throw off your timing during a long fill. Some sort of stop device and the included bass pedal pad should take care of any creeping problems.

Pureussion uses several double-sided "omni" clamps on this kit. These prove very flexible—perhaps a little too flexible. When adjusting them you have to be aware that loosening one side of the clamp also loosens the other, so one change in positioning results in another change—just one more thing to get used to. This flexibility does create an advantage, though. If you notice in the picture, the way Pureussion suggests setting the drums up has the 12" tom laying quite

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close to the 10" tom's hardware. A few good hits could cause some clanking between the two. I don't see any reason to have to stick to their plan, since breakdown of the set requires taking the two smaller toms out of their clamps, anyway. And depending on where you put your cymbals (swinging the ride stand to a position over the floor tom may feel more natural to you), you may feel the need for a little better weight distribution. The telescoping cymbal holders are made fairly flexible by the inclusion of tillers, along with angle adjustments near their bases. A little experimentation will probably result in a comfortable setup for your playing style.

One slightly annoying thing that I noticed is that the wing nuts used to tighten the RIMS to the tom arms leave small dimples in the tubing. This would bother me more in hardware designed for shelled drums, but the portability factor of the Pureussion drums would naturally necessitate lighter-weight tubing.

In the "nice but possibly useless" category, we find the inclusion of memory clips with the kit. It's a thoughtful inclusion, but you may find yourself having to slide them back to the angle adjustments when folding the kit for storing. You'll just have to remember where your "memory" clips were supposed to be.

The Pureussion drums with RIMS

technology are, in the right circumstances, respectable and ingenious alternatives to standard acoustic drums. It's hard to imagine the next heavy metal sensation appearing on arena stages with these drums, but for small folk, jazz, or even rock situations, these may be just the set you're looking for. And triggering expands the possibilities even further.

Perhaps in the near future we'll see even more improvements, making Pureussion drums an even more attractive alternative to those about to buy acoustic or electronic drums. Since a drummer using this portable kit is still going to have to carry around another bag to hold sticks, cymbals, pedals, and other hardware, maybe a two-case, *complete* drumset could be constructed. Perhaps a heftier, shelled bass drum, maybe 6" deep, could be invented. It would improve on the kit's bass drum sound, and could carry a RIMS-mountable piccolo snare drum inside, along with some other gear. A second lightweight case could easily carry the rest of the gear. For the time being, though, the Pureussion drums are certainly an interesting and viable choice for the drumset player to whom portability is as important as performance.

Pureussion Drums can be ordered in any custom configuration. The set we tested was model T 0242, which includes

10" and 12" toms, 14" floor tom, 20" bass drum, and two cymbal holders. List price is \$625.00.

—Adam Budofsky

Sabian Cymbals continued from page 109

passages where the band was really cranking, without a lot of held-over cymbal noise adding to the general din. I really appreciated that particular cymbal for that reason.

It's always hard to describe in print the acoustic characteristics of a cymbal. I've already spoken about the dryness. To me, that means that there isn't a lot of sibilance, or "hiss," to a cymbal. I usually call that the "shimmer" in a cymbal's sound. The HH Rock cymbals don't have a great deal of that, and the rides are especially devoid of it. If you want that kind of "shimmer," these aren't the cymbals for you. However, if you prefer a cleaner, more distinct, pinpoint stick sound on a cymbal, these cymbals offer that sound to the utmost. In terms of pitch, Sabian is correct when they say that these cymbals are higher in pitch than corresponding standard HH cymbals. That's because a heavier cymbal creates a higher pitch, and these cymbals are heavier than their standard HH counterparts. They also have a higher profile and larger bell, which combine to give them their added volume and power.

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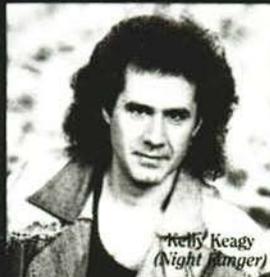
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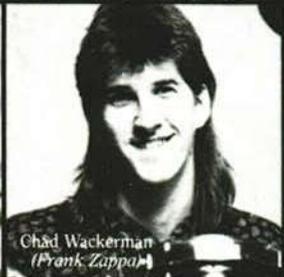
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It's important to note that the finish of the cymbals proved to make quite a difference. Generally speaking, all of the characteristics of "dryness," "quick decay," "controlled sound," etc., were enhanced by the application of Sabian's *Brilliant* finish. Buffing down some of the tonal grooves reduces that "shimmer" I spoke of earlier on *any* cymbal. When that process is applied to HH Rock cymbals—which start out dry—you get a positively arid sound. For my personal taste, I preferred the cymbals with Sabian's standard finish, since they retained just a bit more "shimmer." But a drummer performing on a club or concert stage might appreciate both the added dryness and the exceptional visual appeal afforded by the *Brilliant* finish. Both finishes are offered at the same price, so the choice can—thankfully—be a musical, and not an economic one.

Overall, I would say that Sabian has introduced a specialty line that will appeal to drummers looking for both musicality and power in a cymbal. The HH Rock line offers distinct characteristics tailored to the needs of a substantial portion of the drumming community, and is well worth a listen! The 16" crash lists for \$202.00; the 18" lists for \$238.00. The rides are \$275.00 for the 20" and \$326.00 for the 22".

—Rick Van Horn

Sabian Fusion Hats

The use of smaller, quicker hi-hat cymbals seems to be a trend these days. Whether for recording or live playing, drummers are beginning to appreciate once again the qualities inherent in smaller hi-hats (after a period in which 14" or larger hi-hat cymbals have been the norm). Sabian introduced their 10" *Mini-Hats* a few years ago. Now they have added a series that actually combines existing hi-hat cymbals to create a combination package Sabian has designated *Fusion Hats*.

The *Fusion Hat* package combines a heavy (and I mean *heavy*) *Leopard* series (unlathed and hand-hammered) bottom cymbal with either an AA Rock or HH Medium-Heavy top cymbal, in 13" sizes. For added cut (and to eliminate airlock), the bottom cymbal has a special profile

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and two holes drilled in the bell. Our test group included top cymbals from both the AA and HH lines, in both standard and *Brilliant* finishes.

Generally speaking, any of the possible combinations produced a tremendous "chick" sound when closed with the foot—primarily due to the heavy bottom cymbal and lack of airlock. The top cymbals were a bit heavier than either AA or HH standard hi-hats would be, and this also contributed to the "chick." It also contributed to the very loud, cutting stick sound achieved on the hi-hats when closed. There was a difference in pitch among all of the various top cymbals, as might be expected with cast cymbals, so there was also a difference in closed hi-hat pitch—depending on which combination was employed. But any combination sounded excellent in this regard.

When it came to the quick-choke sound so dominant in funk or fusion music, these cymbals were terrific. They spoke loud and clear when open, then choked *immediately* when closed. You couldn't ask for better response for this purpose. If there was any area in which they weren't superlative, I would have to say it might be in the "traditional" jazz-ride department. That is to say, when I tried to play an old-fashioned open-and-closed swing beat ("spang, spang-a-lang, spang-a-lang," etc.), the top hi-hats generally didn't produce or project what I

would consider the optimum sound. However, let me point out the physics involved here. The cymbals are heavier than jazz hi-hats would likely be, which means they will produce a thicker, more pointed sound. They are also an inch smaller in diameter than most hi-hats commonly used today, which means that they have less metal to produce spread and projection. They cannot reasonably be expected to perform a swing/jazz ride in the same way a pair of 14" medium or thin hi-hats would. That isn't what they are designed for.

Speaking specifically, I expected to prefer the sound of an AA top cymbal over an HH, because I generally prefer cymbals in the AA line due to their higher pitch and brighter sound. However, in this instance, I was surprised. I found the HH top cymbals a bit more responsive, and even a bit more "shimmery" than the AA models. This was the case in either the standard or the *Brilliant* finish, although even more evident between the HH and AA *Brilliant*s. Perhaps this is due to the fact that an AA Rock cymbal is a bit thicker than an HH Medium-Heavy, and thus will be a bit drier. My personal favorite among all the possible combinations was an HH standard-finish top with the heavier of the two *Leopard* bottoms that we had available to try. This combination produced an absolutely *killer* closed or open/choked sound, and a very

acceptable open/closed ride sound.

If you're in the market for a loud, fast hi-hat for any purpose, you should try Sabian's *Fusion Hats*. If you already are happy with your current hi-hat setup, but might be interested in a second set for a remote hi-hat, these might be an excellent complement to your existing cymbals. A *Fusion Hat* combination using an AA Rock top cymbal lists for \$224.00; with an HH top cymbal the price is \$300.00.

—Rick Van Horn

Zildjian Hi-Hats *continued from page 109*

sound isn't a factor, and the smaller size makes them easy to position on the kit.

The S.R. 10 (the 10" pair) are more or less novelty cymbals. When recorded, the sound of these cymbals is clear, but not very full sounding. The 10" size is not big enough to produce a good "chick" sound. The one way I found these hi-hats to work, both live and in the studio, was mounted closed as a second pair of hi-hats. I got an interesting sound out of these hats by mounting them very loosely together; even though they were loose, the small size of the cymbals kept the sound tight. Since these cymbals are so small, they are very easy to position out of the way in a closed position. The list price for the S.R. 10 is \$196.00, and the S.R. 12 lists for \$228.00.

—William F. Miller



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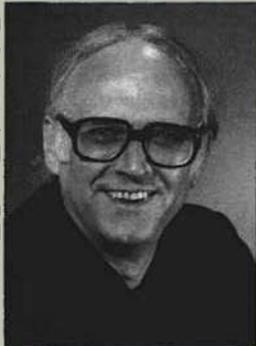
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IN MEMORIAM—AL DUFFY

Both the drumming profession and the percussion instrument industry lost a friend and influence when Al Duffy passed away on February 29th of this year. Al died unexpectedly at his home, apparently the victim of a heart attack.



For a little over nine years, Al had been Director of Educational Percussion and also Director of Research & Development for Pearl International, based in Nashville. During his tenure there, he was responsible for much of Pearl's involvement with marching percussion, symphonic and orchestral percussion, and most recently, expanded Latin percussion. It was Al who coordinated Pearl's efforts in support of school programs and educational activities, as well. Ken Austin, speaking on behalf of Pearl, stated, "Al Duffy was a major force in the industry. He spoke quietly, but generated big ideas. He'll be missed terribly at Pearl and throughout the drumming profession."

Drummers who play any bass drum pedal that incorporates a chain-and-sprocket design owe Al Duffy a personal debt of gratitude, for it was he who first made that concept a reality. While work-

ing as the drum technician at Frank Ippolito's Professional Percussion Center in New York, Al adapted the chain-and-sprocket concept to the popular Camco pedal of the day. That design has gone on to become a standard of the industry, offered in some form by almost every manufacturer.

A drummer of over 50 years' experience, Al Duffy knew about drums, drummers, and drumming, and was the kind of person who would take the time to share his knowledge with you. In that capacity, he was a friend and contributor to *Modern Drummer*, often serving as the source of information for answers posed in the *It's Questionable* column. Al was himself profiled in the December, 1982 issue of *MD*.

News of Al's passing moved quickly around the percussion manufacturing industry, since he was known by virtually everyone within it. Comments and condolences offered to Al's friends and family were many and sincere, and *Modern Drummer* offers its own. Al was a fine player, a fine person, and a good friend, and will be missed by all who knew him.

—Rick Van Horn

LP HONORS ACUNA



Latin Percussion recently presented drummer/percussionist Alex Acuna with a plaque in appreciation of his work as a clinician during LP's 1987 European Drum Clinic Tour.

The four-country tour made 14 stops in England, Holland, Belgium, and Germany, and was marked by an enthusiastic spirit. A feature of the tour was an on-going conga contest. Local contest winners traveled to Munich, Germany, for the finals, at which time Alex and LP President Martin Cohen were on hand to help judge and to present the prizes to the various winners. Cohen feels that the 1987 LP European Clinic Tour was immensely successful; consequently, plans are already under way for a bigger and better tour in the near future.

MD, TAMA, ZILDJIAN SPONSOR DRUM COMPETITION

Drummers from all over the New York metropolitan area gathered at the Limelight Club in Manhattan on Monday, February 22 for the finals of a competition co-sponsored by *Modern Drummer*, Tama Drums, Zildjian Cymbals, and the Limelight. Preliminary entrants submitted two-minute tapes (in the hundreds), which were screened to provide 20 semi-finalists to begin the evening's competition. All 20 of those drummers set up at the same time in two small side rooms of the Limelight, and a panel of preliminary judges (Tama's Joe Hibbs, Zildjian's Bill Morgan, and *MD*'s Rick Van Horn) passed from drummer to drummer, scoring the live two-minute performance of each.

From among the semi-finalists, five finalists were chosen. These drummers had their kits moved to the main stage of the Limelight, where

they performed again in front of the club's audience. For this final round, a panel of celebrity drummers acted as judges. These included Paul Garisto (Iggy Pop), Alan Childs (David Bowie), Jonathan Mover (Joe Satriani), Anton Fig (*Late Night With David Letterman*), and Liberty DeVitto (Billy Joel). The finals were emceed by Tama artist/clinician Dom Famularo.

After five exciting performances, the judges selected the winners. Third place (earning a selection of Zildjian accessories) went to Eddie (Eddie Bee) Bettinelli; second place (and a complete set of Zildjian cymbals) went to Fred Marcin; and the first place winner (receiving the Tama *Artstar* drumkit used by Alan Childs on the Julian Lennon tours) was Fred Klatz. Honorable mention goes to the remaining finalists, Peter Quintalino and Gary Dates.

MUSICMASTERS PARTY FOR MEL LEWIS



Many notable drummers turned out at the Village Vanguard recently to help Musicmasters Records celebrate the signing of Mel Lewis to a six-album deal with the label. The company has recorded the Lewis big band live during its engagement at the Vanguard. Also announced was the launching of a Buddy Rich

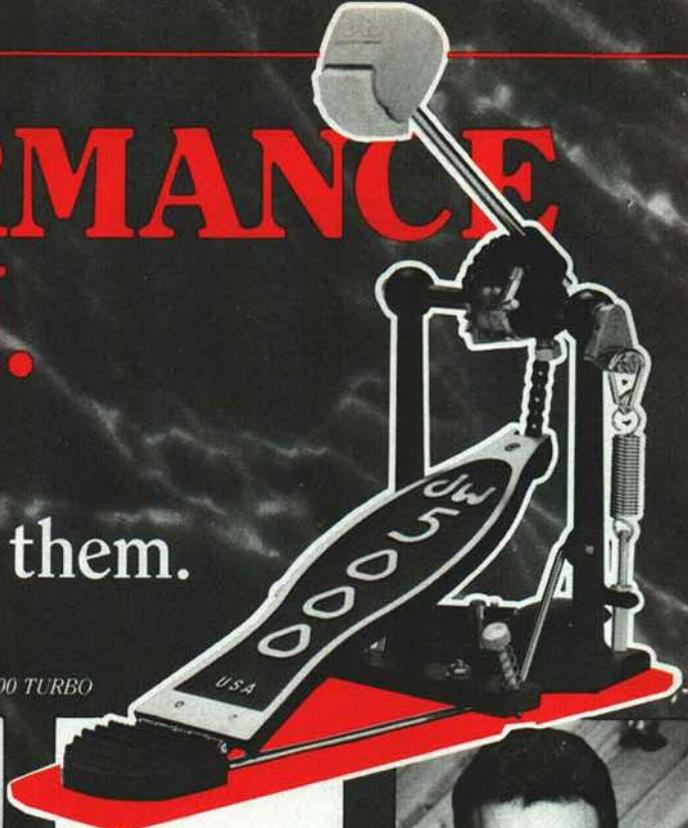
Memorial Scholarship fund at the NYU school of music.

Shown above are (*l. to r.*) Kenny Washington, Roy Haynes, Grady Tate, Joe Morello, Danny Gottlieb, Phil Brown, an unidentified drum student from NYU, Mel, and (down in front) a young student of Joe Morello's.

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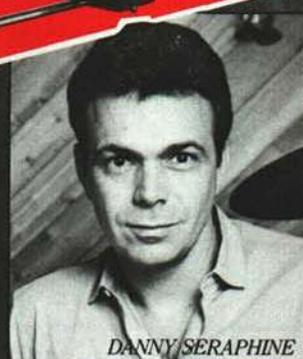
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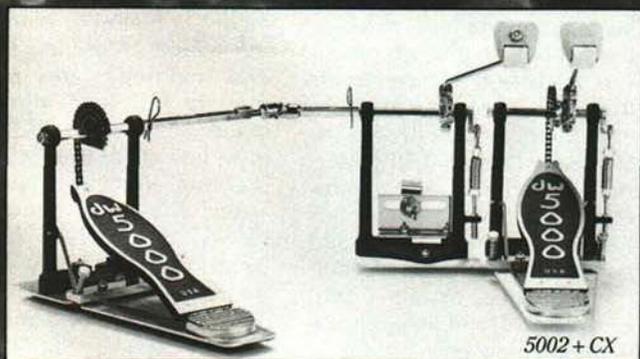
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SIMMONS PORTAKIT



Simmons Electronics recently introduced *The Portakit*, a self-contained MIDI triggering system designed to enable drummers to access the sounds of MIDI-equipped drum machines and samplers without compromising playing technique. The device, slightly larger than an attache case, offers 12 pads, each utilizing the same force-sensing film as Simmons' *SDX* system to provide a wide range of dynamic control, a high

degree of sensitivity, and no crosstalk between playing surfaces. In addition, the sensitivity of each pad can be independently set, and 10 different dynamic curves are held in memory.

The Portakit has 50 Kit Memory patches. In addition to MIDI data and performance response parameters, it is also possible to store a performance effect such as a pitch bend or damping. The device



also features a performance pad, allowing the user to introduce effects in varying degrees by exerting pressure on the pad with the hand.

For recording applications, *The Portakit* features a dynamic, 8-note polyphonic sequencer, with a 5,000-event memory. This enables the drummer to record up to 12 real-time sequences, which can be synchronized with other sequencers and drum machines via MIDI. For live use, *The Portakit* offers a trigger recognition system for firing MIDI devices from acoustic drums. There are six inputs for acoustic drum mic's, and in the trigger-sensing mode

The Portakit samples a soft and hard strike from each drum before automatically computing the optimum signal process to achieve a clean, dynamic MIDI trigger.

All data is displayed via an illuminated LCD. There are MIDI In (with a merge facility) and two MIDI Out sockets, along with pedal inputs for hi-hat, effect mount, patch change, and sequence start/stop. A carrying handle makes the unit easy to transport. Further details can be obtained from Simmons Electronics USA Inc., 23917 Craftsman Road, Calabasas, California 91302, or call 1-800-TEC-DRUM.

MARIMBA ALTA



Custom Music Company is now distributing Marimba Alta instruments, records, cassette tapes, and mallets, marking the first time that North American percussionists have access to these marimbas from southern Mexico. According to Company President Fred Marich, "Marimba Alta instruments are ethnic marimbas that have a unique sound and performance practice all their own. We feel that they will complement, and not compete with, any concert marimba in today's market. Furthermore, many individuals have told us that our Mexican marimbas will provide a practical ethnic alternative to steel drums."

Models available include 5 1/2-, 4 1/2-, and 3-octave instruments, as well as a scale model miniature marimba of 2 1/2 octaves. Marimba Alta is also importing latex rubber mallets in four different grades, as well as the complete line of Sonosur Mexican marimba records and cassettes. These will allow performers to hear and recreate traditional marimba music from southern Mexico.

For further information, write or call Marimba Alta, c/o Custom Music Co., 1414 S. Main Street, Royal Oak, Michigan 48067, 1-800-521-6380. (In Michigan, call 1-313-456-4135.)

DRUM WORKSHOP DUO PAD

Drum Workshop recently introduced its *Duo Pad* Electronic Drumpad. The device is designed to provide drummers with a single compact pad that can be used to dynamically trigger two separate sounds. To accomplish this task efficiently without crosstalk or hot spots, the *Duo Pad* utilizes a trigger

sensing material called "FSR" (Force Sensing Resistor)—a two-ply, plastic material that has primarily been used for switches in the computer and robotics fields in the past. Due to the way FSRs operate, multiple drum triggers can be placed next to or even on top of one another, while main-

taining complete trigger integrity. At the same time, drummers are offered an increased degree of triggering flexibility.

The *Duo Pad* features dual 1/4" output jacks, a sensitivity control, and a universal multi-clamp adapter so that it can be used by itself, in user-defined *Duo Pad* groupings, or in con-

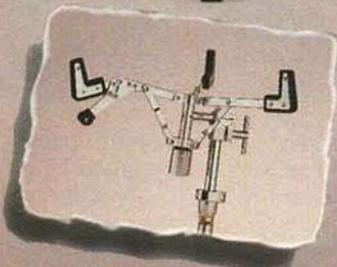
junction with any acoustic drum configuration. The unit will trigger most non-MIDI drum controllers and drum machines as well as many trigger-to-MIDI signal converters. For more details, contact DW at 2697 Lavery Court #16, Newbury Park, California 91320, (805)499-6863.

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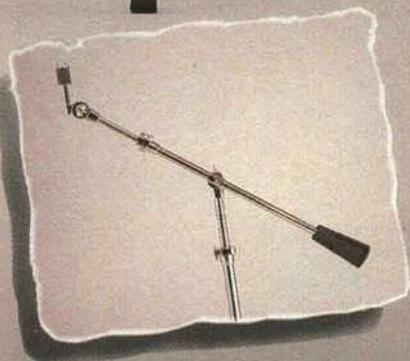
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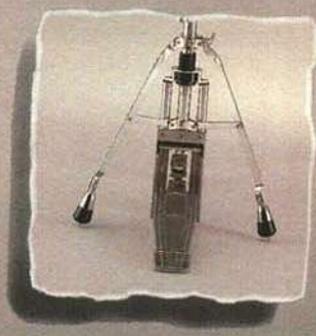
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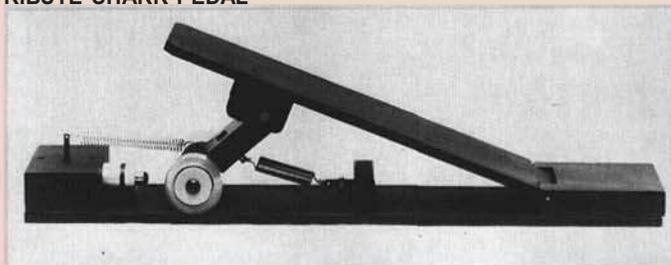
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GROUP CENTER TO DISTRIBUTE SHARK PEDAL

The *Shark* Electronic Bass Drum Pedal is now being distributed by Group Centre Innovations. The current version is the result of modifications and improvements made over the past four years to the original trigger pedals developed for Terry Bozzio by inventor Arndt Anderson.

The *Shark* features a dynamically sensitive triggering system based on a custom pie-

zoelectronic sensor that has been scientifically tuned to eliminate the undesirable trigger characteristics that create false and double triggering. The *Shark's* output is a single, clean, omnidirectional voltage pulse that can be used to trigger electronic sounds from a wide variety of sources. The unit has been designed to be smooth and responsive even under the most abusive play-



ing situations. For more details, contact Group Centre at 23950 Craftsman Road, Cal-

abasas, California 91302, (818)884-2717.

RHYTHM MACHINE SOFTWARE UPDATE

Gateway Music Compositions & Equipment has recently released Version 2.00 of its *Rhythm Machine* software for IBMs or compatibles with MPU-401 or Voyetra 4001 MIDI interface. The *Rhythm Machine* has been completely rewritten in the C language, resulting in faster rhythmic generation, faster performance, more extensive graphics, and other new features. The new 2.00 Version

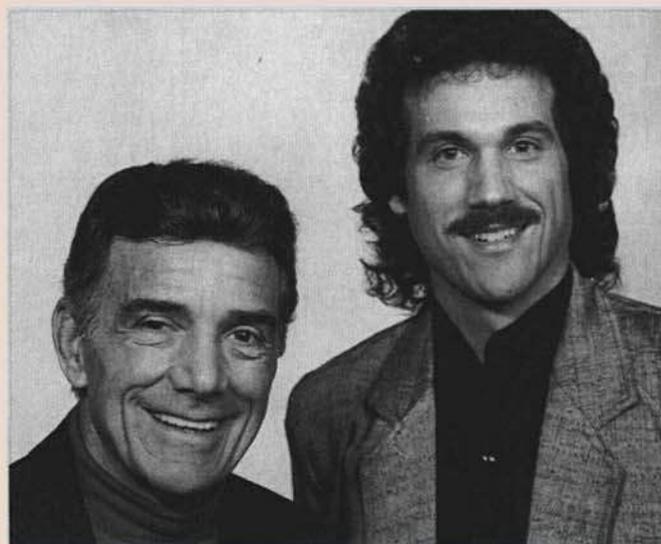
includes four-voice rhythmic pattern generation, editing of any voice, the ability to reassign sounds to any voice, extensive file saving and retrieving, as well as real-time adjustments for speed/tempo and volume/velocity. Additionally, a song module has been introduced that enables patterns that have been generated or retrieved to be linked together into songs that can be saved and retrieved. A buffer

in the song module allows the user to have ready access to patterns, and link them into any order for performance. This order can then be played, changed, or saved as a song. Since the same rhythmic patterns can have different sound assignments, tempos, and velocities, the possibilities become endless.

Many other new features are included in Version 2.00, making the *Rhythm Machine*

compatible with virtually any MIDI drum machine, sampler, or keyboard. It can also play a drum machine on one channel, and "drive" an external sequencer on the same channel or another. The software package includes an on-disk manual, with demo songs and patterns. For further information, contact Gateway, 1700 Cleveland Avenue, San Jose, California 95126, or call (408) 286-5490.

BELLSON/BLACK JAZZ ENSEMBLE SERIES



Barnhouse Publishing Company has announced the release of the "Louie Bellson/Dave Black Jazz Ensemble Series." Established in both the percussion and jazz fields, both Bellson and Black bring to this new series years of experience in writing for jazz bands. The first offering will include three jazz originals

composed and arranged especially for the intermediate jazz band. It will be available in the fall, and may be purchased from your favorite music dealer. For more information concerning these and other jazz band publications, contact Barnhouse Publishing Company, P.O. Box 680, Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577.



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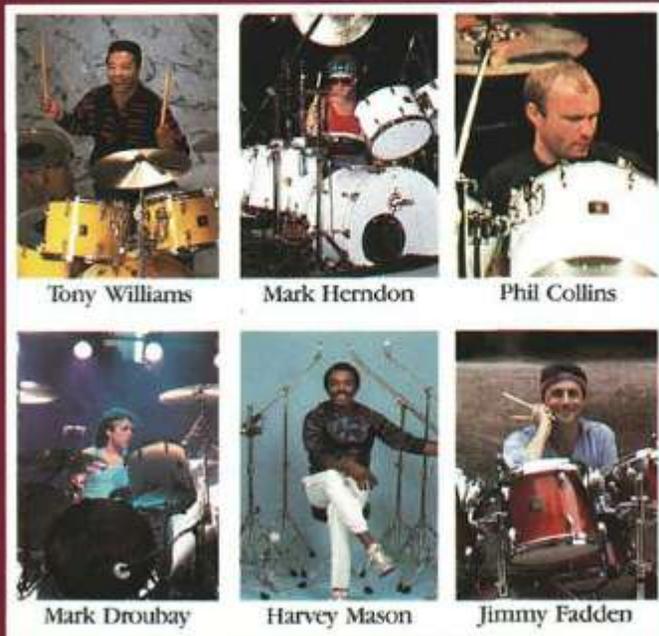
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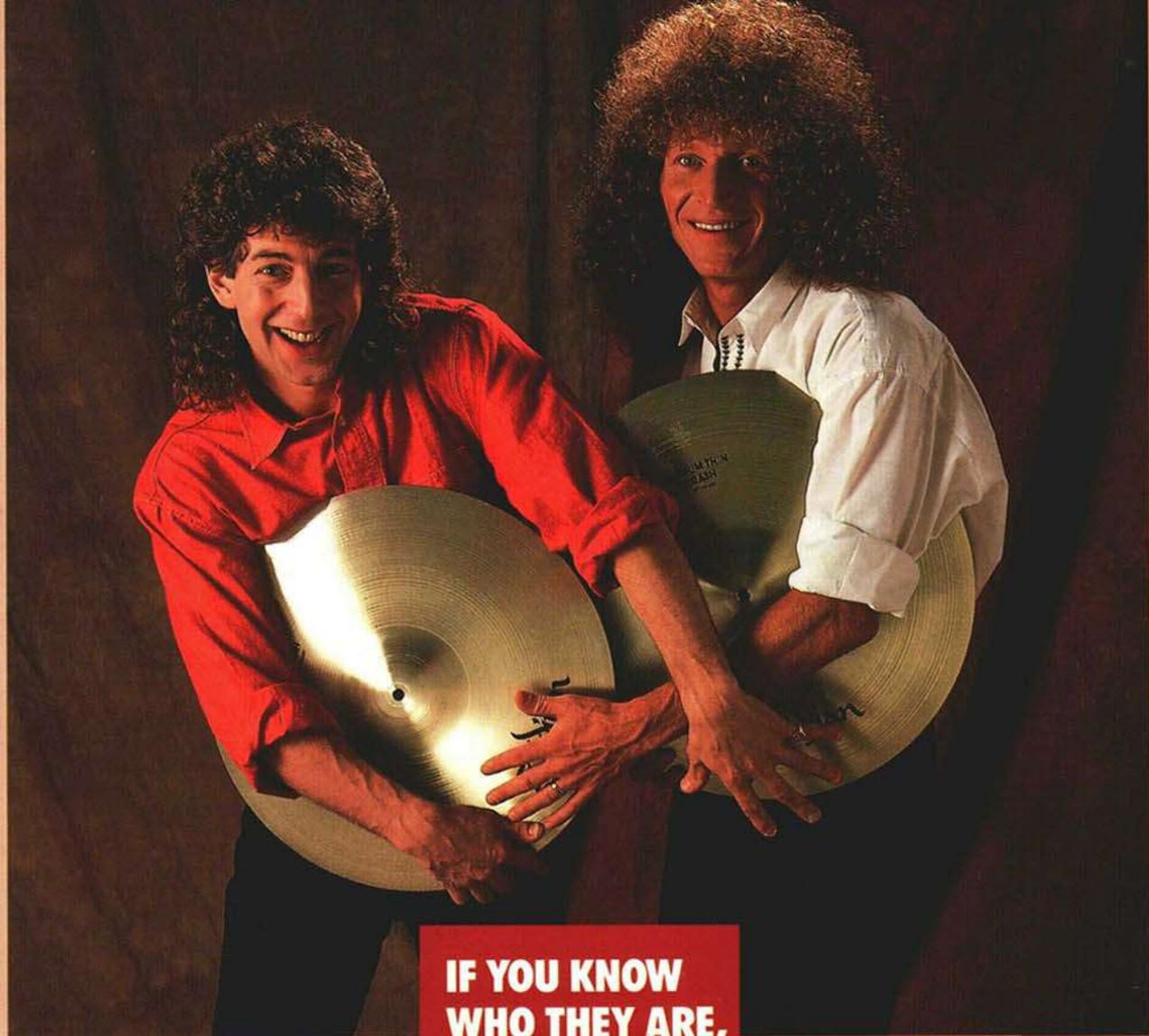
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**IF YOU KNOW
WHO THEY ARE,
WE DON'T
HAVE TO TELL
YOU WHAT
THEY PLAY.**

It's no surprise that the greatest drummers in the world play Zildjian cymbals. They're the professionals who make drumming a fine art. They play Zildjian for the simple reason that it gives them the individual sound and style they're famous for.

Take Tommy Aldridge of Whitesnake, who's also known for his work with Ozzy Osborne. And Simon Phillips, who's played with Jeff Beck, Pete Townsend, and most recently with Mick Jagger. They're two of the most respected drummers in the business who've been playing for as long as they can remember.

Ask Tommy why he chose Zildjian and he'll tell you, "There was never a question. I've played them from the start."

"They're incredibly, unbelievably great sounding cymbals," he says excitedly. "Each one has its own character. They're really unique. And I can tell you, they're extraordinarily durable."

Tommy adds, "I've tried others, but I've stuck with Zildjian. They give me the personality my music has to have. Let's face it, you just can't beat their sound."

Tommy loves A Zildjian cymbals with a brilliant finish. "They look so cool, they're the greatest cymbals for Arena Rock."

Currently performing in the biggest stadiums around the world, Tommy uses the ZMC-1, Zildjian's unique miking system,

so that everyone in the audience can appreciate his cymbal sound. "The ZMC-1 system mics my cymbals individually so I can control the sound and volume of each of the cymbals in my set-up."

"You can recognize a drummer by the sound of his cymbals," says Simon Phillips.

"Growing up in England, all the really hot drummers were using Zildjians. Louie Bellson, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, who's always been an inspiration, all played Zildjians. If you were seriously into your music, there's no question what cymbal you played!"

Simon says he got his first Zildjian cymbal in 1969—a 20" K Ride. "It was something special to play Zildjian. It still is." Now one of his favorites is the Z Light Power Ride. "It gives me a ping I can't find in any other cymbal."

"Zildjian cymbals are the best thing around," says Tommy, who was initially inspired by Joe Morello of The Dave Brubeck Quartet before he became, as he calls himself, "A rock pig on pizza."

Both Tommy and Simon agree that Zildjian's sound is "undeniably unique."

If you'd like to know more about the unique sound of Zildjian cymbals, stop by your Zildjian dealer. It doesn't matter if he knows who you are, or not.

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