

MODERN DRUMMER™

The International Magazine Exclusively For Drummers



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Larrie Londin

Talking Heads'
**CHRIS
FRANTZ**

**KEITH
COPELAND**

INSIDE GRETSCH

Plus:
**David
Garibaldi**

**Nick Ceroli
On Big Band**

**Repearling
Your Drums**

**Frankie Banali
of Quiet Riot**



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CONTENTS

Cover Photo by Rick Malkin

FEATURES

LARRIE LONDIN

He's proud to be called a "country drummer," and indeed he's one of the best. But Larrie Londin can also be found in other musical situations, as his recent tour with Adrian Belew attests. Here, Larrie discusses his varied career, including some memorable moments with Elvis Presley.

by Robyn Flans 8

PHEEROAN AK LAFF

Pheeroan ak Laff's influences are as varied as the types of music he has mastered. Noted for his light and airy style, Pheeroan can adapt his free-form jazz approach to the genres of funk, swing and third-world music.

by Chip Stern 14

INSIDE GRETSCH

100 Years Of Gretsch/A Visit To The Factory

by Richard Egart 18

CHRIS FRANTZ

As the drummer for Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club, Chris Frantz has the opportunity to perform both serious and light rock music. Chris and his wife, bassist Tina Weymouth, form the nucleus of these bands, both of which are enjoying popularity and success. Find out why in this revealing interview.

by Robin Tolleson 24

KEITH COPELAND

Tradition

by Scott K. Fish 28

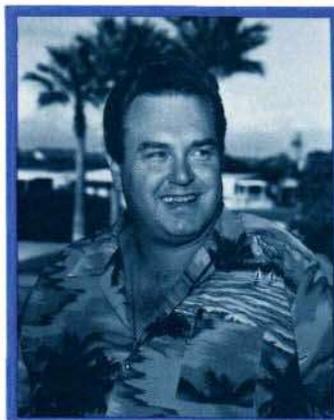


Photo by Rick Malkin



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COLUMNS

EDUCATION

ROCK 'N' JAZZ CLINIC

Percussion Colors—Part 2

by David A. Mason 50

CONCEPTS

Tuning And Muffling

by Roy Burns 56

LISTENER'S GUIDE

by Rod Morgenstein and Butch Trucks 60

THE MUSICAL DRUMMER

Intervals

by Bill Molenhof 72

ROCK PERSPECTIVES

Shifting Gears

by David Garibaldi 74

CLUB SCENE

Drum Machines On Stage

by Rick Van Horn 86

JAZZ DRUMMERS WORKSHOP

Expanding The Paradiddle—Part 3

by Chuck Kerrigan 88

TEACHER'S FORUM

Getting The Most From Clinics

by James E. Murphy 92

DRIVER'S SEAT

An Overview

by Nick Ceroli 98

DRUM SOLOIST

Narada Michael Walden: "All In The Family"

by Dave Giaccone 100

EQUIPMENT

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Pearl Drum Rack/Sota Shells

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr. 32

SHOP TALK

Re-covering Your Drums

by Patrick Foley 102

JUST DRUMS 120

PROFILES

UP AND COMING

Quiet Riot's Frankie Banali

by Robert Santelli 34

ON THE MOVE

Rick Spolar/Lance Stark 58

NEWS

UPDATE

by Robyn Flans 116

INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS ... 118

DEPARTMENTS

EDITOR'S OVERVIEW 2

READER'S PLATFORM 4

ASK A PRO 6

DRUM MARKET 108

IT'S QUESTIONABLE 114

EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

A Reader Profile



Every few years, *Modern Drummer* conducts a reader survey in which a substantial number of questionnaires are mailed to a random selection of subscribers. First off, the information we gather from this survey helps the editors determine whether or not they've been on target with the editorial direction of the magazine. Secondly, the data enables us to present more in-depth information about you to the MD advertisers. We've just completed tabulating the data from our most recent survey, and I thought you might be interested in some of the facts we've learned.

The overwhelming majority of *Modern Drummer* readers are males (97%), and between the ages of 18 and 29. Of those surveyed, 43% classified themselves as semi-professionals, while 24% fell into the professional drummer category. Once again this year, our study revealed that MD appeals to beginning, intermediate and advanced players. The bulk of the respondents reported that they've been drumming anywhere from six to twenty years.

In the area of instrumental specialization, as expected, 95% indicated that drumset was their primary interest, followed by timpani, keyboard percussion and Latin American instruments. We also noted that a rather large percentage of readers have a good working knowledge of another musical instrument. Keyboards led the way in this department, followed by strings (guitar and bass), brass, and woodwind instruments.

It was also interesting to note that the majority of MD readers play more than one type of music. Of those participating in the survey, 70% are into rock drumming, jazz is preferred by 35%, 17% are into commercial drumming, 16% fusion, 13% R&B and 10% new wave. (The percentages add up to more than one hundred because of multiple interests.) Rudimental, show drumming, country & western, studio, classical, Latin American, avant-garde and Gospel were the preferred styles of the remainder, in that precise order.

Our survey also clearly indicated that MD subscribers are extremely serious about the magazine. Our typical reader looks at an issue on an average of 5.16 days, while 95% save every issue for future reference. We were also delighted to learn that 68% found *Modern Drummer* more enjoyable than other music media, including other music-related magazines, radio and TV.

Advertisers might also be interested in the fact that 88% of those who responded have ordered equipment, or requested information from MD ads; 69% indicated that MD helped them decide what equipment to buy, and 27% were helped in deciding where to buy it. Finally, of the total group surveyed, 65% said they looked at all the ads in *Modern Drummer*, and read all those which appealed to them.

So there you have it: another survey—another set of responses which will help advertisers obtain a clearer picture of just who you are, and assist the editorial staff in their effort to keep MD as relevant to your needs as possible. Our sincere thanks to all the MD subscribers who took the time to respond to our rather lengthy questionnaire. We certainly do appreciate it.



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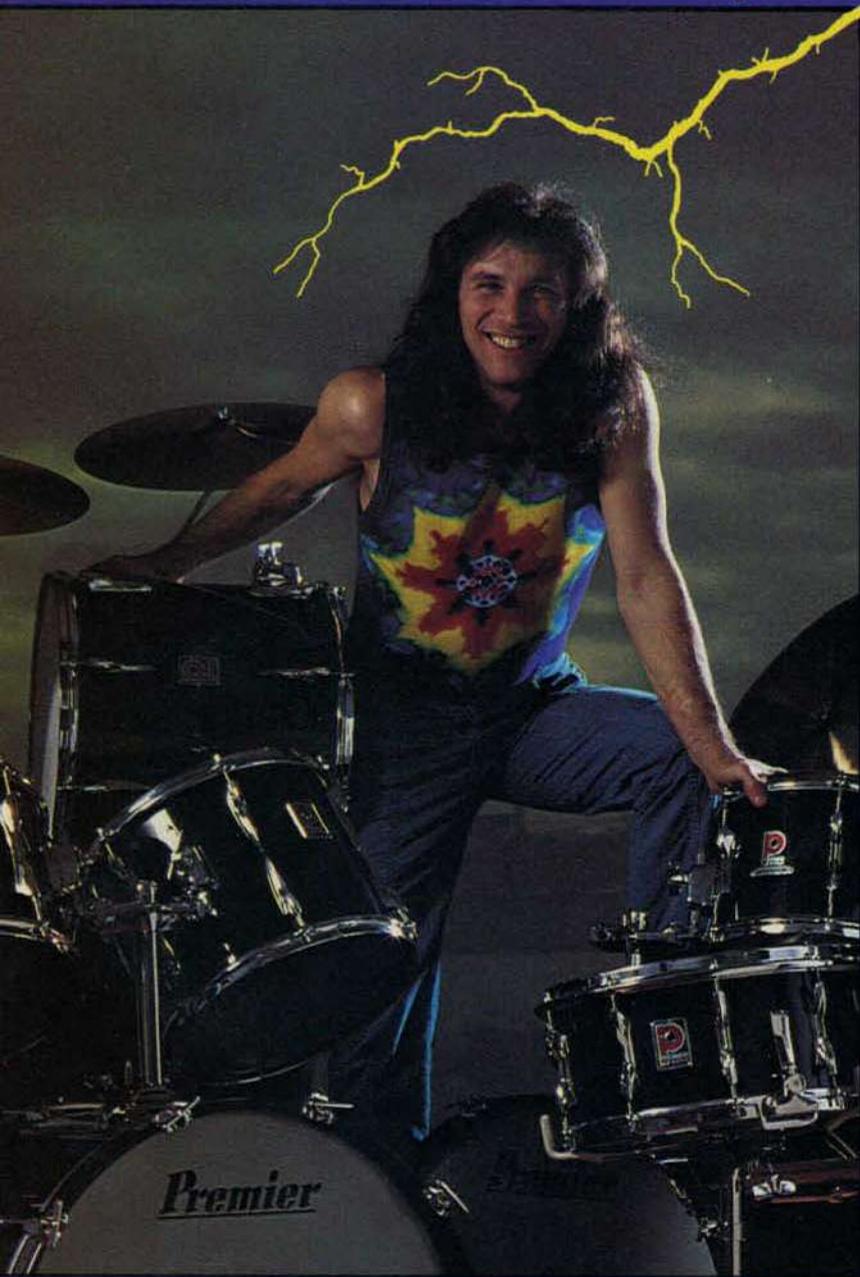
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CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Susan Alexander, Charles M. Bernstein, Scott K. Fish, Robyn Flans, Simon Goodwin, Dave Levine, Robert Santelli, Bob Saydlowski, Jr., Chip Stern, Robin Tolleson, T. Bruce Wittet.

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READER'S PLATFORM

ANDY NEWMARK

I just picked up my February issue of *MD*, and I had to write to tell you how much I enjoyed Rick Mattingly's interview with Andy Newmark! Andy seems to be a very honest, open and interesting person. As I turned each page while the interview continued, I found myself glancing at the bottom of the page just hoping that the interview didn't end. Keep up the good work!

Mike Wagner
Houghton Lake, MI

I've just finished reading the interview with Andy Newmark for the third time, and I would like to commend you on one of the best interviews I've ever read in *MD*. I've been a dedicated reader of *MD* since the beginning, and have been waiting a long time for an interview with Andy. It was well worth the wait. I had the pleasure of meeting Andy recently, and would like to second Rick Mattingly's words, "Newmark the drummer and Newmark the person are both very down to earth, very likable, and very human." Thank you *MD* and Rick Mattingly, and thank you Andy for the inspiration.

John Conard
Mamaroneck, NY

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

Recently I finished reading your February issue. I especially enjoyed your in-depth cover story on Andy Newmark, and I have to say this: I have been playing for five years, and every time I read your magazine I get a fresh sense of perspective about my own abilities as a drummer. I think that most drummers tend to overrate themselves and their playing when they concentrate solely on themselves. That is why we all need to look around us sometimes.

Reading the interviews in *Modern Drummer* makes me realize how far I still am from achieving what I dream of achieving. Thinking about what world-renowned drummers say in your magazine makes me want to keep on practicing, to strive for consistent time, to harmonize my fills, to stay discreet (humble?) and not be arrogantly flashy.

Thanks again for a great publication which is an inspiration to those of us who need to be reminded of how far we have yet to go.

Christian Arnsperger
Bethesda, MD

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS

I realize that you already know all of this, but I feel I must "tell you what I think" as you invited your readers to do back in December of '82.

The column departments are just fabulous. It's like having a live-in drum instruc-

tor. Articles such as "Eliminating Lower Back Pain" and "Warming Up For Drumming" have helped me tremendously. Your selection of featured artists couldn't be more varied. Also, about featured artists—I see you've upped the beginning lead-off pages from four to six pages and have been including written examples of the artists' playing. Excellent! Last but not least, I received my latest issue in a brown protective sleeve. That just shows even more improvement in the magazine.

I just wanted to tell you that I'm noticing all of the improvements. Will this magazine ever stop getting better?

Dan Cerchia
Syracuse, NY

JOHN BONHAM TRIBUTE

I enjoy *Modern Drummer* very much. It's educational, informative, entertaining and interesting. However, I look forward to the day when I open my mailbox and see John Bonham's picture on the cover of a special tribute issue.

I was lucky enough to see John perform with Led Zeppelin during the late '60s into the '70s. I can still remember the first time I heard "Good Times, Bad Times" on the radio. I went wild! From that song on, I was hooked. I remember trying to figure out and duplicate his fills. His drums were alive and vibrant, and his driving rhythms picked you up and carried you along on each song. His style was unique.

The issue I hope to see would be a complete history of the man and his career. How about a promise of a future issue? For me, and the many others who have waited, it would complete his song. Not only does "The Song Remain The Same," it lives forever.

John Dunne
Brooklyn, NY

Editor's note: Look for John on the cover of MD later this year.

PRACTICING WITH RECORDS

Roy Burns' article on practicing with records in the January '84 issue was very reassuring, not just to me but probably to lots of other drummers as well. I've been practicing with records since I was 10 (I'm now 25) and find that it helps improve my timing tremendously. I agree that it's no substitute for playing with other musicians, but it has to be the next best thing. I also agree that you have to listen to a wide variety of music. When I've got the stereo cranked up, I'm drumming along with bands like Asia, Iron Maiden, Thin Lizzy, Kiss, Heart and Triumph, just to name a few. It's very important to play along with all your favorite bands, since each has a drummer with a different style. Also, try putting your own licks into the songs. This

really helps your timing. So next time someone tells you that practicing with records is worthless, crank up your favorite bands and practice, practice, practice! Many famous drummers started out the same way.

Tom Randall
Poughkeepsie, NY

THANKS TO STEVE

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Steve Smith and his band, Vital Information, for giving my band (Wry), and especially me, the privilege of warming up the Vital Information show at Bogart's in Cincinnati. It was a night of drumming I'll long remember.

Jeff Monroe
Cincinnati, OH

HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

Thank you for your interesting, informative, and above all, challenging and encouraging magazine. I am not really an out-and-out drumset player, but a sort of self-taught Latin percussionist. Although my interests have until now been rather specialized (and it has been good to have access through your pages to information on Latin percussion, which is rather watered down in England), your magazine has provoked me into looking into other areas.

It's reassuring to realize that, whatever sort of sound you are creating, the aspirations and problems you have are probably shared with other musicians. I loved the feature on Rufus "Speedy" Jones in last November's issue. His thoughts were really inspiring, even though my own interests are not really with big bands.

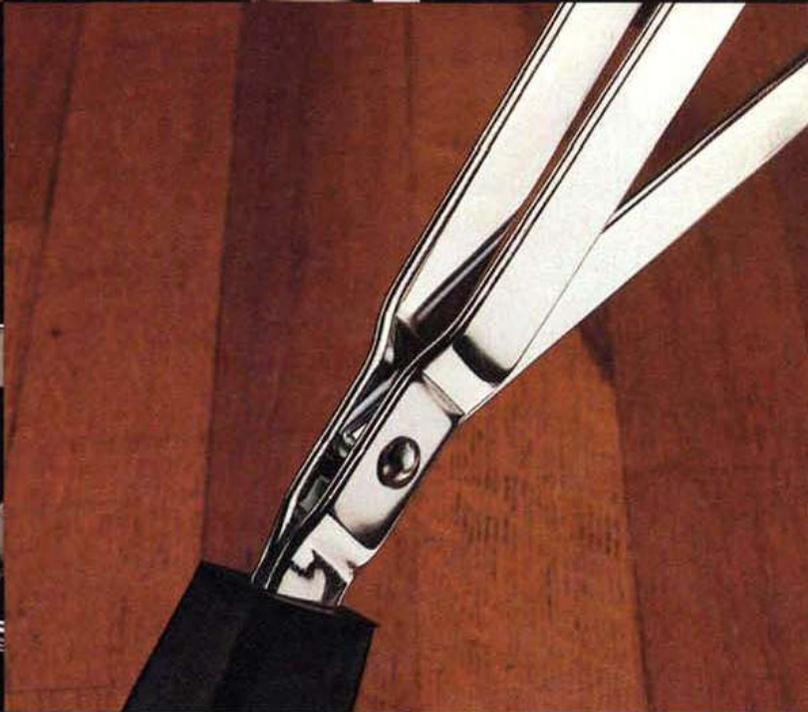
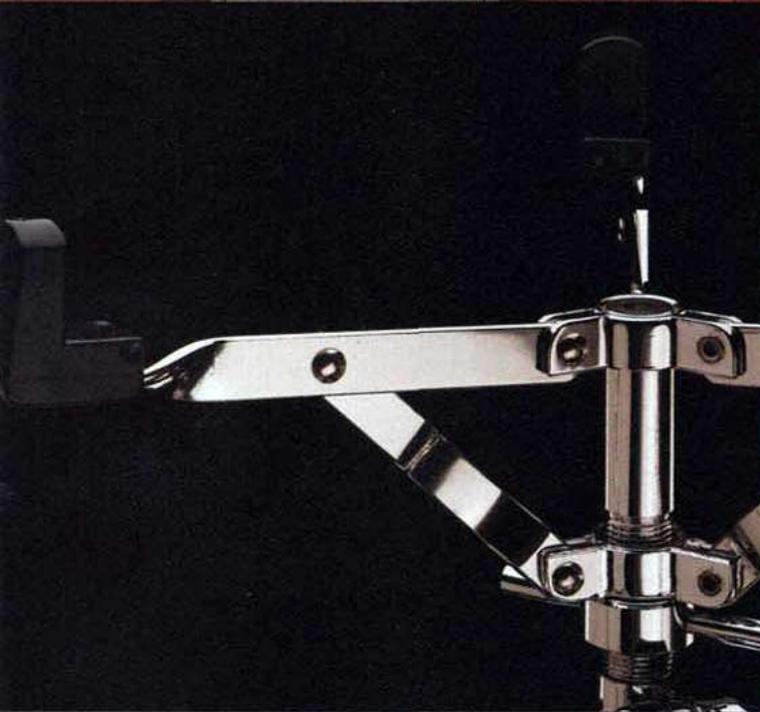
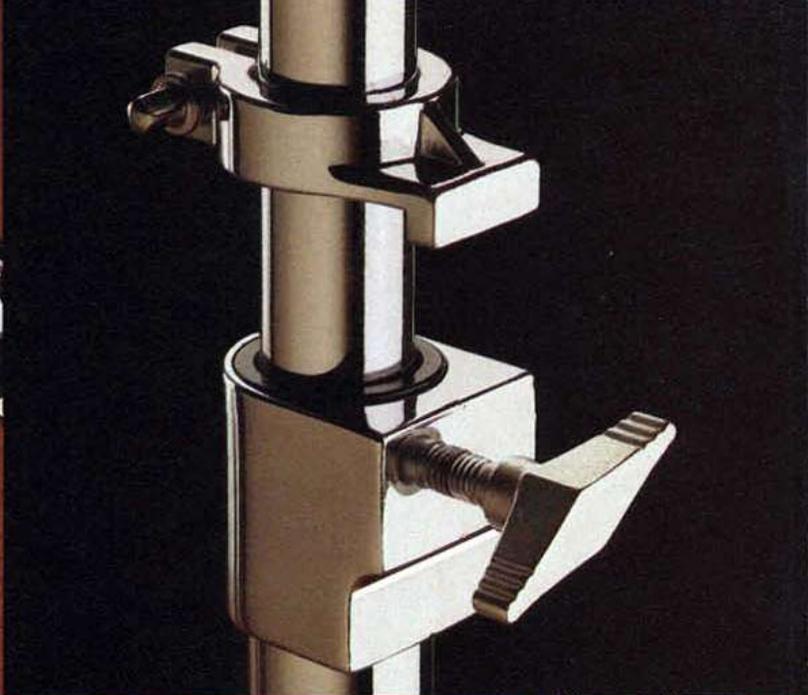
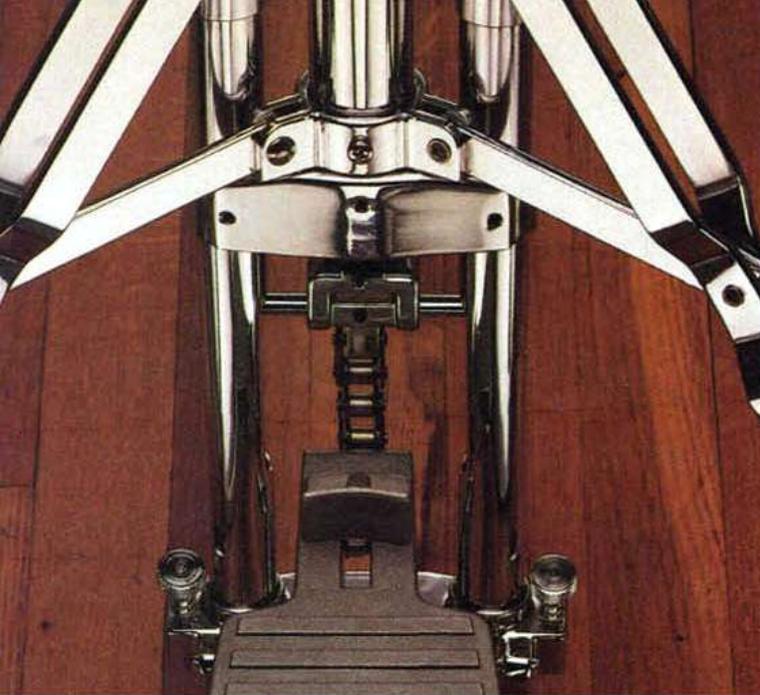
Thanks again, and make sure your magazine keeps reaching this side of the globe.

Philip Manning
Richmond, Surrey, England

NEW MUSIC

Thanks to Michael Bettine for the style analysis of U2's Larry Mullen. New Music drummers have finally been legitimized, and I am proud to be a subscriber to *Modern Drummer*. Good job! Another style analysis candidate is Mark Brzezicki with Big Country. His style is similar to Larry Mullen. Both drummers are New Music rock stylists who let their rhythms "breathe" with the dynamics of the song. Mark Brzezicki has a distinct Scottish folk music flavor. New Music is far from the slick commercial formulas which standardize many great songs. Here, on our air waves, is a truly unique rock drumming style, and Mullen and Brzezicki are two of the best modern drummers.

Tony Garstin
Atlanta, GA



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ASK A PRO

ROD MORGENSTEIN



Photo by Lisa Welles

Q. On the Dregs' *Unsung Heroes* album, is the drum solo on "Cruise Control" overdubbed? It sounds as if you are using various percussion instruments to enhance the flavor of that section.

James Allen
Palo Alto, CA

A. There is one overdub. The solo on the drumset was extemporaneous on each take. Each time we would run the song down, I would do a solo in that same spot. When we listened back to it, it was suggested that it would be neat to double some of the tom fills with RotoToms. So I listened to the tom fills and took some time to learn them exactly, then doubled them up just for a neat effect.

LOUIE BELLSON

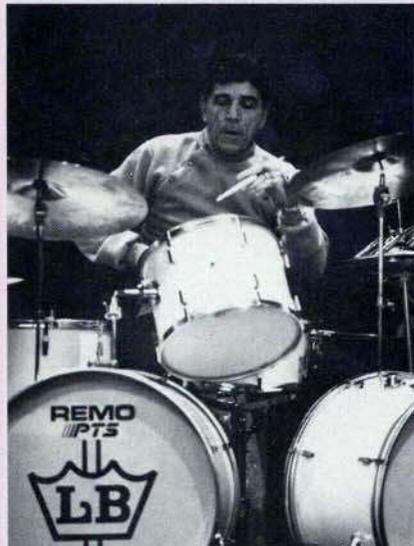


Photo by Rick Martingly

Q. I am currently playing with a jazz trio consisting of bass, electric piano, and percussion. In the past, I have also played with a tuba jazz group at

Q. When the band is writing material, do you ever find a certain song that requires you to practice a rhythm or technique that you are unfamiliar with, before the band rehearses the piece?

James Allen
Palo Alto, CA

A. When I was with the Dregs, we played a variety of styles of music: country, rock, jazz, classical—a mixed bag. To me, certain songs immediately dictate a pattern that you're going to follow. When you hear a rock song, you're not going to be playing a swing beat, so you're already focusing in on the style that you're going to be playing, and you're going to be drawing from whatever resources you have to fit the requirement. Certain songs lend themselves to having a really creative drum part. I like to think of it as a "signature" part. On the *Unsung Heroes* album, there was a song called "Divided We Stand," and on the *Industry Standard* album, we did a song called "Assembly Line" that fit this category. We'd come in and start learning the song, and I'd play a pretty nondescript beat. One of the guys would say "Play something different—something that has a personality of its own." And then I'd work from that basis. Sometimes I'd play something that I thought was okay, and then through the input of others, I'd go in a completely different direction.

Jacksonville State University. My problem in both situations is that with such bassy instruments I get a terrible "hiss" from my snare. I have tried every tuning possible, and have even tried tilting and turning my snare away from the bass, but I still get that hiss. I heard that you have played with tuba jazz groups yourself, and I have heard your work with small ensembles, so any advice you could lend toward this problem would be appreciated

Christopher Moore
Birmingham, AL

A. A snare drum (especially when not too muffled) is going to create a little buzz. It has happened to all of us. I release the snares whenever the occasion permits. When you play near instruments that are electric, you will always have these problems. A little buzz will not be heard out front. You can muffle the top head, change heads, or position your drum in a different area in an attempt to diminish the buzz.

JOHN DENSMORE



Photo by Rick Markin

Q. In the *Ask A Pro* column a few issues back, you said you had some Paiste 605 cymbals. I haven't heard of them. Did you mean Paiste 602 or 505? Can you give me your drum and cymbal setups on the Robby Krieger albums, and elaborate a little on how it felt to work with Robby and Ray again?

John Mathieson
Nashville, TN

A. I meant I use a Paiste 602 ride cymbal, instead of 605. On Robby Krieger's first solo album, Robby Krieger & Friends, I played timbales on one track. On Robby's second album, *Versions*, I played my entire drumset which consists of a 24" Pearl bass drum, Pearl concert toms in 8", 10", 12" and 14" sizes, a Ludwig metal snare 6 1/2" deep, an Asba bass drum pedal, Pearl hi-hat, and Paiste cymbals: 2002 Sound Edge hi-hats, the 602 18" ride, a 2002 18" crash and an 18" Chinese swish which I play upside down. (I got the idea from Billy Cobham. I love the sound upside down.) It felt great to play with Ray [Manzarek] and Robby again because, even though we haven't played that much together in the last several years, we haven't lost that musical communication we got from playing together for six years as the Doors.

CARL PALMER

Q. Was your ability to read music ever utilized in ELP, or was the music you made from feeling? Also, do you read with Asia, and how important do you think reading is to the young drummer today?

Sal Tarantola
Staten Island, NY

A. My ability to read music was utilized in ELP, and my ability to play tuned percussion also helped me a lot with that group. The music was made first of all, as you say, "from feeling." But you have to write some things down, and then the ability to read music helps a lot. In Asia we don't use as much written music because the songs are easier to play.

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Stix

LARRIE LONDIN

by Robyn Flans

Just because Larrie Londin lives in Nashville, doesn't mean he's a country drummer. Oh, he doesn't mind being considered a country drummer, but he minds being looked upon as just a country drummer. It couldn't be further from the truth. Yes, he does play country music, but he also plays so much more! Indeed there are some studio drummers who become identified with one style of music and there are some whose mastery of a multitude of styles paves the way for a varied studio career. For some unknown reason, Larrie has often been looked upon as the former, when, in fact, he is of the latter description.

There really doesn't seem to be a kind of musical project that Larrie hasn't executed. His career began with R&B recordings of the early Motown days. Since then, he has recorded with artists of diverse styles, including country, bluegrass, pop, rock and all possible combinations of those styles. Londin has recorded with such noted artists as Roy Clark, Charlie Rich, Dolly Parton, Merle Haggard, Charley Pride, Hank Williams, Jr., Crystal Gayle, Lester Flan, Burt Reynolds, Nancy Sinatra, Dean Martin, Johnny Mathis, Dan Hill, England Dan and John Ford Coley, the Carpenters, Olivia Newton-John, Dr. Hook, B.B. King, Joe Cocker, Albert Lee, Rosanne Cash and Linda Ronstadt.

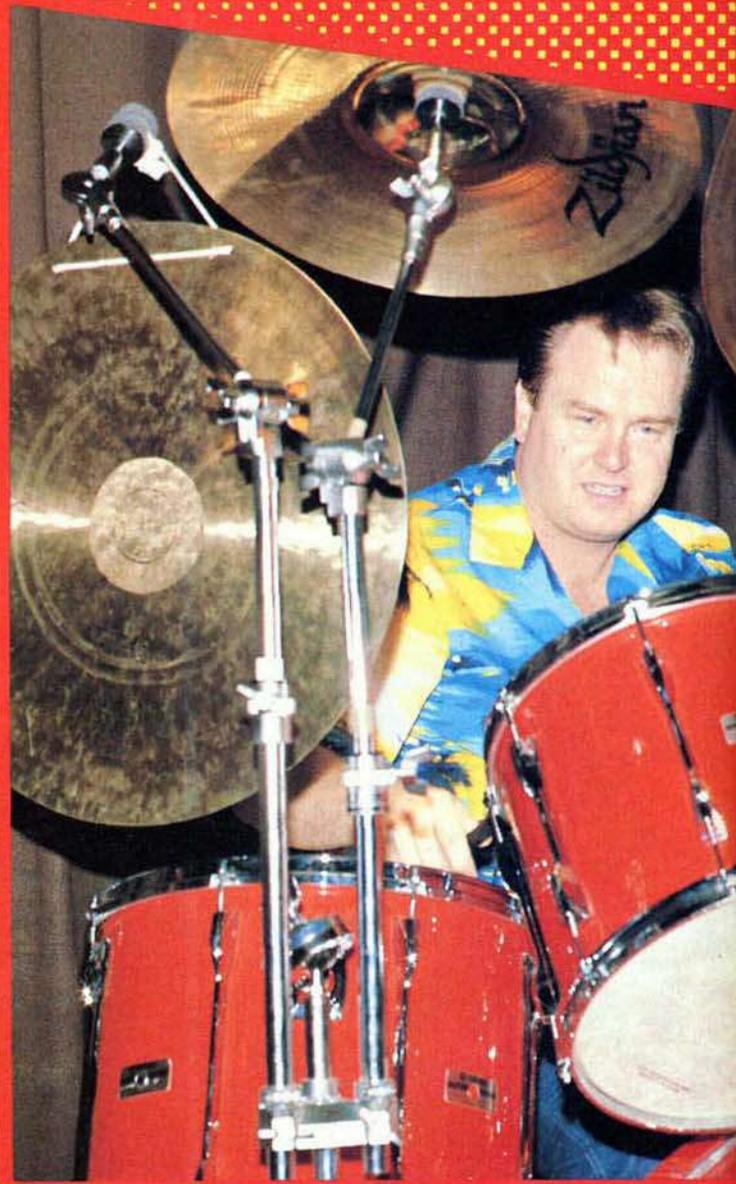
Recently, Larrie managed to still surprise many when he recorded and toured with Adrian Belew, performing jazz fusion at its best. However, all you really have to do to see this drummer's capabilities is be present at one of his clinics. With dynamic solos combining rock, blues, jazz and country elements, he manages to dispel any preconceived ideas of what a Nashville studio player is and is not.

RF: How is it that you do such a variety of recording, yet you are considered a country drummer?

LL: Well, I don't mind being considered a country drummer.

RF: But that's not totally accurate.

LL: If the hit records you appear on are all of the same style, often you will be labeled and that will be all you'll get called for. It bothers me in the sense that I don't like to be labeled



that way. I just want to be known as a drummer. I never looked at playing rock 'n' roll as being different from playing country.

RF: Is there a stigma attached to playing country music?

LL: Of course. There's a stigma attached to someone being labeled a jazz drummer too.

RF: But isn't country taken less seriously than other styles?

LL: Yes. It's taken less seriously and there's less respect, because people think it's very simple to play, and that anybody can play it. It's not easy to keep great time and play as simple as you can play for three minutes. I was told once that it's the art of playing without playing, and I did that a lot with Chet [Atkins].

RF: Can you explain that?

LL: Sometimes it's as important to lay out—not to play—as it is to play on something like a nice country ballad. Maybe you sit there and play a couple of little bell notes or maybe you play little figures on the cymbals without playing steady time. Yet, you're keeping time. You're keeping a whole band of maybe five or seven players in the studio all hitting downbeats together. Your job is to keep the time without playing the time, and make it obvious to everybody there.



Photo by Rick Malkin

When I first did that, it was as much a challenge to me as doing this intricate and involved thing with Adrian Belew is now. That's an art in itself, just like it is for those who go out and play everything they know in four bars.

RF: Do you think that part of the stigma comes from the fact that, at one time, the Grand Ole Opry didn't allow drums?

LL: That's a big part of it. When I first moved to Nashville, there was no such thing as heavy drumming on a session. "Amos Moses," "When You're Hot You're Hot" and songs like that where there are heavy drums started changing things within the country record scene.

RF: How did that change?

LL: I was very fortunate, and I say "I," because through the people in the music business in Nashville, I have been given credit for helping to change things, although I don't always agree with that. There were great drummers doing really heavy things at the time in their own right. Things did seem to change during that period, and I feel like I did have some sort of

input into that, but it was just my style of playing. I play too heavy to sit back there and just play chick-a-boom all the way through a track when there's more to play than that.

RF: What's interesting is that they hired you in the first place, knowing where they were coming from.

LL: It was interesting to *me* that they hired me. They—meaning people like Chet Atkins, who was my biggest supporter, and Jerry Reed, who really took a big liking to my style of playing—gave me a chance to open up. I played things people hadn't played or wouldn't take the chance to play. It's not that they couldn't. It's just that they didn't take the chance. And I, in a sense, didn't know any better. I figured, "Hey, this is the way you make records. They say play drums, so you play drums." I didn't try to play drum licks or fills just for the sake of hearing myself on tape. I played them because I thought it contributed to the part. Chet and these people really encouraged me to be myself, and I was very lucky to be given that chance. It was like anything else—being in the right place at the right time, and being really lucky. That's been my whole life. I wouldn't know how to go out and get a "regular" job. I never planned on being a studio drummer. I never thought I'd be with Jerry Reed or Elvis Presley. It was just a sequence of events and I feel very fortunate to have done those things. I still couldn't be any different than I was. People would ask me to play like Buddy Harman or Hal Blaine, but man, if you want those guys, hire them, because there's nobody who can play like either one of them, or like any of the drummers I know. I can't copy them. I couldn't play like Jim Keltner, although I love Jim Keltner and I'd love to be able to play like him. I'd give anything to be able to play like Johnny Guerin, but I can't. Johnny Guerin is a mold all his own, just like Jim Keltner is a mold all his own, and I hope I am too. Chet was the first one who thought that I really had something different. I started to go back to Miami after one of my gigs fell apart and Chet said, "No Larrie. You ought to stay here. Everything's going to be alright." He made me stay in Nashville and it was the best thing I ever did.

RF: How did he know you?

LL: Through a group I worked with for years called The Headliners. We used to work a lot of golf tournaments and Chet was a big golf fan. I worked with him at the Colonial Country Club in Fort Worth when our group, Boots Randolph and Chet were all there, and they sat in with us. When I moved to Nashville, I was hired by Chet, but I ended up working for Boots Randolph. Then I decided to leave, but Chet made me an offer to stay in town and work his concerts with symphonies. I stayed and worked for Chet most of the time, and then I did odds-and-ends sessions. But basically, I worked a club downtown called the Carousel. Next I had a job with Jerry Reed for a year, with Glen Campbell. But Jerry wanted to retire, so I ended up back at the Carousel. I kept that gig for about two years, because I was so afraid of letting it go. I worked all day doing demo sessions, and I worked at the club all night. It was Chet, though, who really made me stay. He made me feel like I was wanted. There were many other people who really helped that come about, but he was the first. The producers and people I started out with were just as loyal, and they still are today.

RF: What kind of music did the Headliners play?

LL: We were together for about ten years. We were basically a lounge act and a warm-up act for certain people. We worked Vegas, Tahoe, Reno, Bermuda, and the Bahamas. It was a \$2,500- to \$4,000-a-week act, which was unheard of for four people in the '60s. The group was signed to Motown for a number of years on a label called VIP, which was the label for their white acts; we were the first white act they had. I was the lead singer in the group and they were trying to make us like a white Temptations. I never thought about being a drummer at that time because I was putting all my efforts into being a singer. My wife really helped me a lot. She had taken vocal lessons and she taught me how to sing correctly. As the group started recording, we all did bits and pieces at Motown, and it was quite interesting.

RF: What was it like working with Boots and Chet?



Photo by Lissa Wales

LL: When I took the job with Boots, Floyd [Cramer] and Chet, I told them I could read because I wanted the job. It took them about three months to figure out that I couldn't. Some of the guest artists we had would need drummers who could read. We had one particular show with the Goldiggers which was all reading. I knew the show was coming up, so two weeks in advance, I told the conductor to get these people a reading drummer, because I couldn't read. We got to Atlanta and I saw a trap case so I thought they had a drummer with them, but it was just their music. The guy handed out the music and I was trying to get the conductor's attention. He finally stopped and said, "Yes, can I help you?" I said, "I don't read," and his mouth dropped to his knees. I had to play the show and they were very pleased with our ability, but it was nerve-racking for me and I didn't appreciate it.

About four years ago, a drummer by the name of Kenny Malone taught me how to read basic studio drum parts that show what they would like you to play or what would fit the arrangement. Certain things might be written out, but it's not concert or symphony snare drum type parts. I don't read those things. It depends on how intricate it is. I couldn't read a Frank Zappa part or a heavy movie score, but I do a lot of jingles where some of the parts are written out that I don't consider all that heavy. I've seen some heavy music parts from Los Angeles.

RF: You mentioned to me the other day that you taught yourself the rudiments.

LL: Yes. I bought this Frank Arsenault 26 standard rudiments record. I had always idolized Louie Bellson, Joe Morello, and Sonny Payne—the great technicians. I could play some rolls, but I had a lot of bad habits. So I'd sit in a room, play the record, listen

to how it sounded, and then I'd look at the sheet to see what the sticking was. I'd practice eight to twelve hours a day on just one rudiment or sometimes two or three. I did that for years and I still do it because I like to practice. I'm not a great rudiment player by any means, but at least I have 13 or so that I'm capable of playing decently.

RF: Do you still practice?

LL: I usually practice on weekends. I wasn't really able to practice as much as I would have liked during the time I was with Adrian, but I practiced in the hotel room on the bed or something. At home, I have a Regal Tip practice set that I use. Sometimes I'll get records that I like, and I'll sit there and practice with the groove. With somebody like Roger Hawkins, who makes a groove so deep you trip over it, I try to play it, just to see how he's approaching it. Nigel Olsson did an Elton John record once called "Honky Cat." The record felt so great that I'd sit and practice with it for hours just to try to figure out what was making it feel so great. I wanted to find out what he was playing that helped make the record feel so good. So I'll usually practice eight to twelve hours a day doing everything from rudiments, to practicing with a record, to reading out of a drum book that I really like. I love to practice. It's always been a real big outlet for me to keep from getting bored and to keep fresh. I'll find new groove licks that way.

RF: Adrian was a big challenge for you. You had mentioned to me that you felt he had chosen you for the gig because you could get a commercial drum sound. Can you explain to me what you mean by a "commercial" drum sound?

LL: Adrian plays these off-the-wall, guitar-type sounds and rhythms, and odd time signatures. Naturally, I'm not known for any of this. Basically, I am known for playing commercial drums. A lot of drummers do not like being called commercial, but I'm very proud to be considered a good commercial drummer. Commercial drumming, in my eyes, is knowing what to play and where to play it. With Adrian, there were all these strange guitar parts. What he needed was a bass and drums that would play more or less straight ahead and make his music sound commercial. By "commercial" I mean something that is accepted on AM stations.

RF: What makes your drum sound more commercial than Adrian's, who played drums himself on his first album?

LL: The difference is basically the tuning, the muffling, the choice of drumheads, the choice of snare drums, the choice of cymbals, and

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the basic all-around setup of a drumkit in the studio. Live, the idea is that I still play commercial but I just change my sound a little bit to fit the live situation. That means that the drum sounds are a little brighter sounding, they resonate a little more, and the cymbals might be a little heavier.

RF: What do drummers who normally play live have to know about studio tuning?

LL: Well, for instance, I've worked with a lot of bands that have drummers who aren't used to playing in the studio, and they bring in stage kits. Yet, they bring me in to basically play the tracks. The problem is a drummer will come in who doesn't understand what to do when, say, a 12" tom is making the snares rattle. What I generally do in a case like that is detune the tom just a hair—one lug. If that doesn't stop the rattling, then I detune one lug on each side of the snare strainer. That makes the bottom head vibrate less and I have to adjust the rest of the lugs on the drum to make it playable. Loosening those four lugs, one on each side of the snare strainer, helps stop those snares from rattling. But stage drummers will be so used to hearing this rattle that they won't even notice it. When I tune my toms, I put headphones on because that's how I'm normally playing. I start listening to what drums and overtones are bothering me. As I hear that with 'phones on, I start tuning and messing with the drum that's giving me the problem. Therefore I have a tighter, more controlled sound for that situation. Most engineers tell me I have a good, tight drum sound. I can hit something and everything doesn't just roar, which I like.

RF: What about muffling live versus studio?

LL: In the studio, I'll take, say, a 12" tom and put an *Emperor* clear head on the top, and a *Fiberskyn 2* thin on the bottom. I usually put three pieces of duct tape which are about 2 1/2" or 3" long on the top head. I fix it up in a triangular shape. If it sounds a little dead as I hit it, I'll take the bottom piece of tape off and then I'll see how that sounds. The purpose of the duct tape is to match all of the drumheads up so they will sound like they're the same and I won't have one thin-sounding head and one thick-sounding head. Sometimes I'll have one head that's very deep sounding, and I won't put any tape on that at all. That's my muffling, studio-wise. I don't like putting paper, napkins or mufflers inside the drums. For the bass drum, I have a pillow which is held down with a cord inside the drum. It covers maybe four inches of the head. Most engineers like to shove a pillow about halfway up against the head, and then put a rock in there. It really ticks me off when they do that. I don't like stuff put in the shell of my drum. They don't care if it messes up the shell or what it does to the drum. That's fine if they want to do it to their drums. This is not their equipment. On the bass drum, I

have the pressure on the head and everything to where I can play it comfortably. I understand what they're doing and why, but if I can't play it, what good is it?

Then I have this thing made by Spectrasound. People think it's a tire cover, but it's an elastic cover that goes over the front of the bass drum and you stick a mic' through it. It's really great. It keeps the snare drum out of the bass drum mic' and all that stuff. I usually use a *Diplomat* on the bass drum, although lately I've tried some Duraline heads called *Magnums* that record real well, but it's a different feel and you

sort of have to get used to them. The *Diplomat* has always gotten a good sound for me.

On the snare drum, I usually use CS, *Pinstripes* or an *Emperor* clear—something real heavy. Lately I've been trying the *Magnums* again, and they have a different type of sound. I got the idea from Steve Gadd to cut a ring of plastic out of an old drumhead, about an inch to an inch and a half wide, and just lay it on the drum inside the hoop. You can put some tape on it to hold it down if you want, but that usually takes out all the overtones and ring. If I still have too much ring, I detune the two or three lugs furthest from me, and I let the head wrinkle a little bit. I sometimes tighten some lugs close to me just a hair, and that gets a nice, thick studio snare drum sound.

RF: As I was listening to you in the studio today one of the guys mentioned your heavy cross-stick snare sound. It's so pronounced.

LL: That's due to the stuff I use. You can only hit a cross stick so hard because your hand is still on the drum. You're not hitting a regular backbeat. I think the cross-stick sound is a combination of how the drum is tuned, what the rim is that you're using—I use a die-cast rim—and the sticks. I use *Max Sticks* made by D&F. They've got graphite, nylon and a whole slew of stuff in them. These particular sticks tend to have a lot of impact and cracking ability to them, whether you play on the backbeat or a click.

RF: What do you use for live playing?

LL: I basically use the same setup live that I use in the studio with the addition of one other bass drum, one other tom, and a 16" floor tom instead of the 14". My tom setup is 8", 10", 12", 14" and 16" live, and in the studio it's 8", 10", 12" and 14". In the studio, my bass drum



Photo by Lissa Wales

**"FOR THE YOUNG
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CONSCIOUS, THE BIGGEST
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ranges from 20" to 24". Live, the two are 24". The drums are all Yamaha. I use *Emperors* or *Pinstripes* on the bass drum—any of the double-thick heads that Remo has. On toms I use Remo *Emperor* clears on top and *Fiberskyn* thins on the bottom. I don't put any tape on them at all, unless a particular head is giving me some problems. I prefer having them wide open. The snare drum varies. I'll use an *Emperor* white, although recently I've been using the Duraline *Magnums*. They don't last very long playing as hard as I play live, but they sound real good.

RF: What is your cymbal setup?

LL: It varies. They're Zildjians and my studio setup is a 20" thin crash-ride with a good size bell on it, because in country music, I use a lot of bell sounds. I have an 18" paper-thin crash, a 16" K. crash, 13" heavy hi-hats, and an 18" swish cymbal that has about 22 to 26 rivets in it, depending on how many fall out at one time. Live I use 14" *Quick Beat* hi-hats which are pretty heavy. Those are the actual playing set, and then I use 13" *Quick Beats* that are permanently closed, so when I play double bass drums, I have a hi-hat I can play. They have this brilliant finish. Then I have an 18" rock crash right over that, and it's pretty heavy. Next to that, from left to right, I have a low *China Boy*, my 20" brilliant rock ride, and an 18" rock crash, also brilliant, which is just a little lower pitched. On this tour with Adrian, I'm using a Chinese wind gong which is underneath the crash cymbal.

RF: Why do you wear gloves?

LL: Originally that started when I was with Elvis. I was perspiring a lot and I was using 3S marching sticks. I had a tremendously hard time trying to hold onto these lacquered sticks. It came about out of necessity. I was designing a stick for Pearl which became the *Larrie Londin* model. It's 17" long and the butt end is about a 5B, or maybe a little larger, which tapers down to the tip which is a 5A. They were trying different lacquers on it and the lacquer kind of blistered my hand. Once, in the middle of a Dr. Hook session, my

hand was getting really raw and it was hurting like crazy. I was wrapping it with gauze and putting this gunk on my hands which made it impossible to hold a stick. So I bought a golf glove and realized it felt pretty good. Even though my hand was sore, you couldn't even pull the stick out of it. So I got another glove for my other hand. I started playing with them and found out that perspiration made it even better, because the wetter the glove

got, the tighter it got. When disco was happening, and a track might be 17 or 23 minutes long, it could get pretty incredible trying to hold onto a pair of sticks. Maxfli is the glove I use, although they're getting harder to get. The white ones and the other colored ones don't seem to last as long, but the black ones last. Footjoy also has a good glove. It's a little thicker but it also lasts longer. When I first buy them, I can hardly bend my fingers, but if you just put them on and flex your hands a little bit—even wet them a little bit if you have to—they'll stretch out. They fit almost like a surgical glove and you can feel the stick. These gloves won't let anything fly out of your hand.

RF: I must ask about your pedal. The beater is almost all the way back on the pedal. Doesn't it take an awful lot of pressure to move it?

LL: No. The concept of this came from Sonny Payne, who was Count Basie's drummer in the '60s. Sonny Payne was a little tiny black dude who made his drums sound like cannons. The *Headliners* played some gigs with Basie. I watched Sonny and thought, "How can he make that bass drum sound like a cannon—especially a Gretsch?" because they were always very tight, confined sounding drums. He played my drums one night but couldn't play my foot pedals because they were so loose, so I asked him what was wrong. He said, "A pedal as loose as your's just kind of does whatever it wants to do. When you have it tensioned correctly, *you* have to play it. But when the pedal is loose, *it* is playing *you*." His pedal was about four times tighter than any pedal I have ever had—even the pedals I designed myself. Sonny's concept was that the quicker it comes back, the quicker you can get it down again. With a certain amount of tension, depending on the person, you can play intricate patterns with tremendous power. Of course, he was more involved with the live aspect than the studio aspect. In the studio you don't need so much power, so my pedals live and in the studio have basically been different. More recently, though, I started using the same pedal for both situations only because the pedals I originally hand made don't travel well. It's hard to get parts and find a welding place and all that, so the pedal I now have is a Premier 252 and it works really well. It's not as tight as I would like, but it's reasonably tight. You mentioned that the beater is all the way back. I adjust the pedal so the beater is back and then I start moving the beater forward and tightening the spring until I get the tension that is right, but I also want the arch that's right. So if I want power, the beater will come all the way back on my instep, and then I can lay it down and really play it hard. It's just another outlook on how to play a bass drum pedal. Louie Bellson tap dances on his bass drum pedals. It's incredible to watch him play them, and how can you argue with that? But this is right for me and fits what I do very well. People in Nashville have all kinds of names for me—Big Foot, Lead Foot—and it's all because the bass drum in general will be at the same volume every time. I think that comes

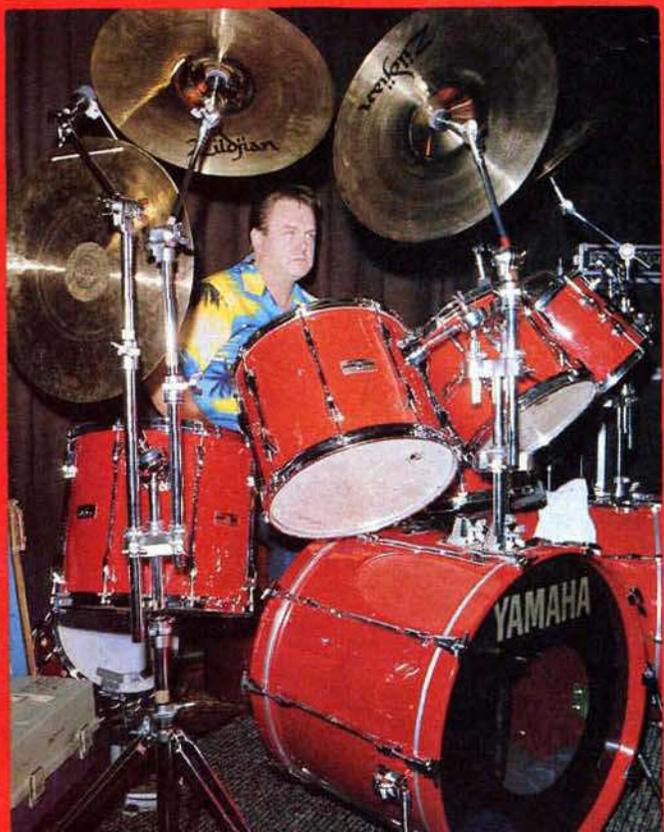


Photo by Rick Matkin

from the fact that the pedal is a little tight. I have to hit it with the same force every time. With a loose pedal, each beat will be different. The beaters, by the way, are solid wood. The rod goes up into the beater, but does not go through. They're made by Chuck Molinari at Spectrasound.

RF: You talk about hitting the drum at the same tension. What are some of the requirements of the studio situation that are not required in the live situation?

LL: I would just label it as studio awareness. You have to be aware of how you're playing your equipment; hitting the drum in one area will make it sound different than hitting it in another, so you have to hit it in the same place with the same pressure every time. You also have to be aware that first and foremost, the most important thing is your time. Most people who play live gigs are not really that concerned with time. If it picks up a little bit or it takes off, so what? I try to be totally aware of the time in both situations. If it wants to take off, whether it's in the studio or live, I allow it to do that unless I'm told not to. Sometimes it's nice for things to kind of move a little bit, but I have a lot of clients and accounts who say we're going to play to a click track, a Linn machine or a metronome. You just get used to doing that. A lot of people take it as a shot against their ability to keep time, but the way I look at it is that it gives me a chance to free up. I look at the click track, or the Linn, or whatever, as another part of my drum part—as an extension of me—and I play around it. Sometimes it gives me so much freedom that I freak out because now all of a sudden, in the holes where I would normally play things, I don't play. Without it I would have to play something to keep everybody together, but that click track is going on and everybody can hear it, so I don't have to play anything. I can be a little tastier, so I don't mind using it. As a matter of fact, live, I use a metronome for all the songs. We get the settings for what we do on record and then we boost it one or two notches, because live there has to be a little more energy involved. I don't follow it on stage, but I use it to count the songs off. In general, when you count the songs off at a certain spot every night, you'll end up at the same place—the same tempo and everything. It won't necessarily be at the same tempo you started out with, but the end result will be the same. So we'll find the happy medium that everybody likes and I'll count the tempo off there. But if it

continued on page 38

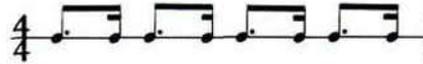
Basic Feels

by Larrie Londin



TRADITIONAL COUNTRY

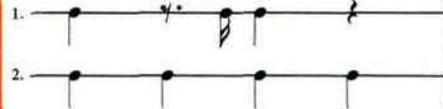
Brush on S.D.



Stick Click on S.D. Rim



Bass Drum variations



MODERN COUNTRY

Hi-Hat



S.D.



Bass Drum



OR

Hi-Hat



S.D.

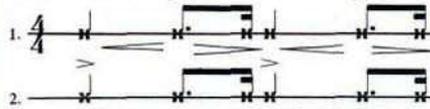


Bass Drum



JAZZ

Cymbal variations



B.D. (soft)
H.H. (soft)



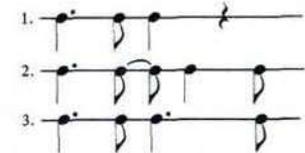
'50S ROCK/NEW ORLEANS

R.H. on Snare

L.H. on S.D. or Hi-Hat



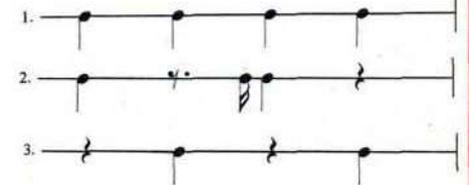
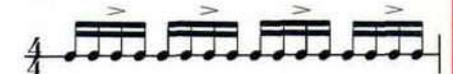
Bass Drum variations



BLUEGRASS TRAIN FEEL

Snare

(Both Hands)



BLUEGRASS SWING TRAIN FEEL

R.H. on Snare

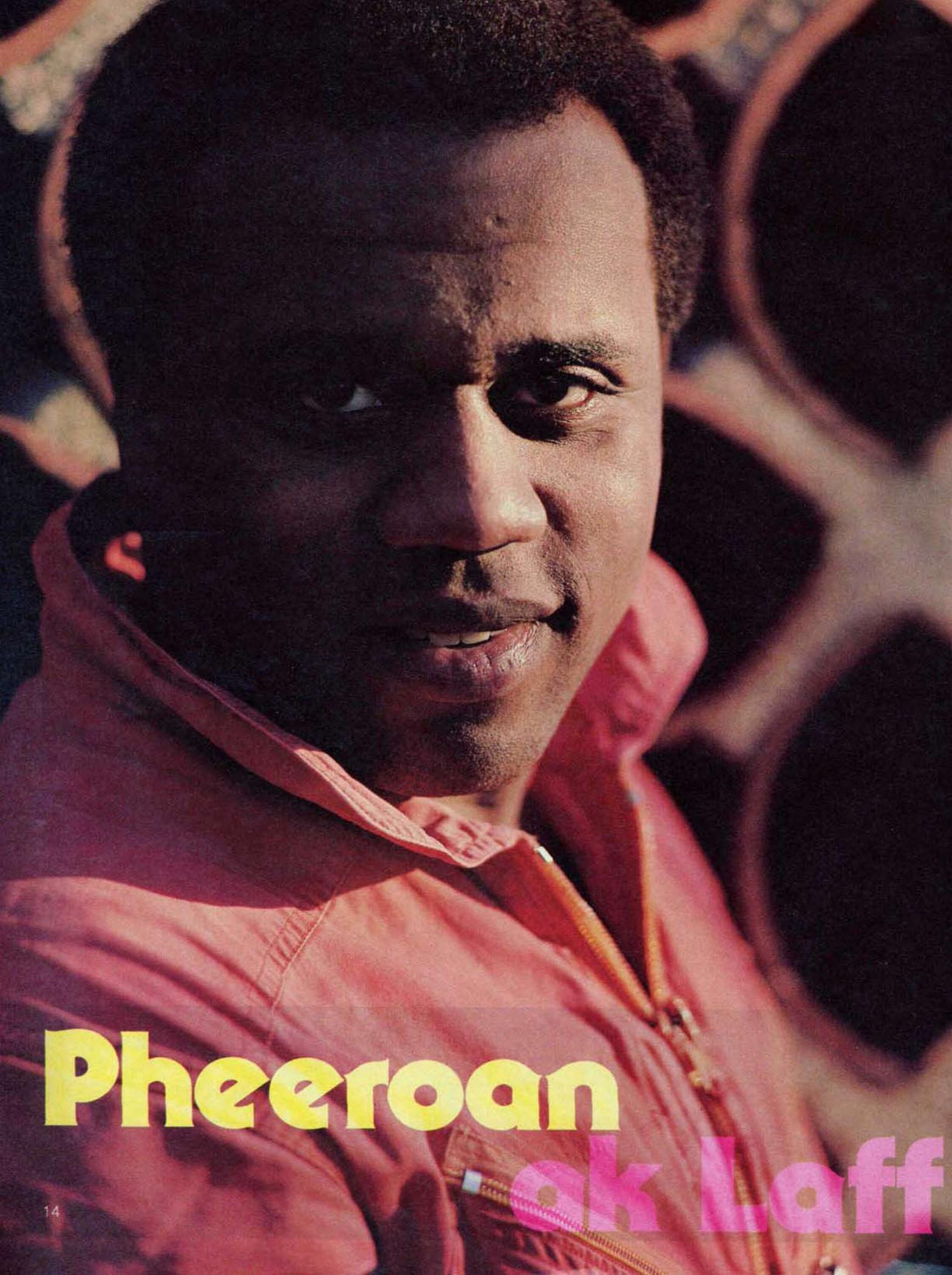


L.H. on Snare



Bass Drum





Pheeroan

ak Laff

In America, the 1960s were a time when the jazz age made a sincere, although tentative, attempt to establish relations with the up-and-coming members of the R&B and rock generations. Evolutionary pressures in jazz made it seem as if the music had renounced the swing and bebop eras, leading to a style with the rather unfortunate label, free jazz.

It was a time of such transitional bebop figures as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy and Wayne Shorter, as well as such barricade-burners as Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra and Albert Ayler. Drumming-wise, trap players were at the forefront of this musical advance. Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones and Art Blakey continued to refine their revolutionary developments in swing and independence from the '40s and '50s. (Kenny Clarke was out there as well, but less visible due to his residency in Europe). Meanwhile, players like Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones, Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, Tony Williams and Jack DeJohnette negotiated the terrain between swing time and no time, while Sunny Murray, Milford Graves, Andrew Cyrille, Beaver Harris and Clifford Jarvis pushed beyond into a realm of free pulse time and explosive new colorations.

But in addition to all this, the 1960s were also the time of Motown and the Beatles; of James Brown and Stax-Volt; of Jimi Hendrix and jazz-rock fusion; of drummers like Benny Benjamin, Clyde Stubblefield, Al Jackson and Bernard Purdie; of Keith Moon, Ginger Baker, and Dino Danelli (followed shortly thereafter by the likes of Al Mouzon, Billy Cobham and Lenny White). Stylistic distinctions became more and more meaningless (even as commercial categories prevailed). For a musician coming of age during this time, the number of potential role models was staggering, and the possibilities of new musical combinations were limitless.

Drummer Pheeroan ak Laff is a child of the '60s—a free spirit with an approach to the trap kit that's impressionistic, yet grooves hard. Since arriving on the New York scene in the late '70s, ak Laff has invariably popped up on recordings and at concerts with new music figures like Oliver Lake, Leo Smith, Anthony Davis, Michael Gregory (Jackson), Bakida Carroll, Jay Hoggard, James Newton, George Lewis, Amina Claudine Myers, Muhal Richard Abrams and Julius Hemphill. Why? Because ak Laff is a great method actor and quick-change artist. He is not simply a drummer, but a choreographer—a painter in sounds. Where some drummers in a free (well, let's say open-ended) musical setting flail away aimlessly to create the illusion of energy and emotional involvement, ak Laff is no hydraulic banger. His drumming floats, breathes and hesitates ever so slightly, punctuating the pulse as much with silence as with rolls. He has a real soft touch, very much in the Jo Jones tradition, although he's not a swinger like that. No, it's more like a parody of swing. The bass drum is used to punctuate the strong pulse, in odd syncopations that never tie a soloist down, but still retain a sense of the one, while his airy, innovative cymbal work provides a sense of color, contrast and motion that is unparalleled.

But the main thing that contributes to his popularity among bandleaders is his total musical sensitivity. Sitting up behind his rosewood set of Sonors and assorted Paistes in a sleeveless blue jumpsuit, ak Laff "plays the music like he wrote it," Julius Hemphill points out admiringly. Hemphill goes on to add that "he can play in any time signature you throw at him, without getting flustered or losing the feel of the composition."

Certainly it is this complete involvement in the creative process that animates ak Laff's best work. With Henry Threadgill's Sextet, he and fellow drummer John Betsch combine to form a graceful, jubilantly swinging percussion section that is the modernist's equivalent of a New Orleans parade band. Rarely, if ever, have two drummers complemented each other so well. Oftentimes they sound more dynamically controlled and contained than one drummer. In pianist Anthony Davis' shifting neoclassical/third world ensembles, ak Laff makes the composer's fragmented polyrhythmic cycles cohere as if they were dance tunes (and I don't mean ballet, either). And with Oliver Lake's *Jump Up*, ak Laff synthesizes the expansive looseness of a jazz approach with the earthy, in-the-pocket punch of funk and reggae. Yet whatever the setting, ak Laff's signature sound remains the same: loose, *tonal and* responsive to every little pause and agitation.

In conversation, ak Laff is very much like his music: amiable, open, pointed, thoughtful (without being self-serious) and, upon occasion, purposefully vague ... as when I inquired what the name ak Laff meant. "It's from a West African tribe called the Wolof, which is a Muslim-influenced section of what was once known as Senegambia," ak Laff offers, but demurs, when pressed for details. "I'm not really prepared to explain what it means, because I haven't attained that level yet. I have a lot more practice and growing to do before it'll really make sense. But I can tell you this: Everybody in my family is an ak Laff."

Born January 27, 1955, Pheeroan ak Laff grew up in Detroit, Michigan, at the peak of that town's musical and economic boom. "My pop worked at Chrysler," Pheeroan recalls, "but because he'd been to college, he didn't have to always work heavy on the line; he got to push a pencil sometimes as well, and I can see now how that contributed to the healthiness of our family. There's so much tension and pressure in an urban community because of that drain on your energies. And it was a very, very close-knit family, even though my two brothers, three sisters and I used to fight all the time, but now that we're all separated, we miss each other.

"I didn't even realize I was a drummer until around 1976, because music was probably the last thing I expected to be involved in, but it was a very musical family; everybody played an instrument, and my parents put a high premium on it because my brother Eric is a very gifted classical pianist. So I rat-a-tat-tatted through junior high school, and it was something I always had a knack for, but when I got to senior high school I decided I wanted to play trumpet. Why did I want to play trumpet? I have no idea," he laughs, "but it's probably because I was so impressed by the Clifford Brown/Max Roach band, which was one of my father's favorite groups. I progressed really fast, and later on, after the teacher realized I was Eric's brother, I got to the drums too."

But like so many young men, Pheeroan was sidetracked from drumming by his love of sports. "When I got to high school, I figured that football was more important than the band, because the personalities involved in the music scene bored me; everybody involved in teaching was like a wimp or a weirdo. And I'd gone from the beginner's drum class to the A band in one semester, but football was the main goal in my life. I started off playing middle linebacker, which I loved, and then ended up at flanker. That shaped a lot of my attitudes about things—that aggressiveness which makes up a linebacker's personality, and the fact that you had to be versatile and open to change in that position, because you had to move in a lot of directions to cover the run or the pass."

by Chip Stern

groovin free



Pheeroan did, however, continue his snare drum studies and kept up with his music through the school bands and orchestras. "Oddly enough, I wasn't bored with it, because there were a few pieces we'd do that required the snare drum to play a major part. We did some Neal Hefti and Duke Ellington things too; with the dance band, we'd assemble a great big marching bass drum and field drums into a kit and do our imitation of whatever we thought trap drums were. But in orchestral music, I loved what the snare drum did and what the cymbals did. I could see that the power in symphonic music really came from the percussion section."

Given Detroit's volatile R&B environment, it was only a matter of time before Pheeroan was drawn into the dance aspects of the drums—particularly the backbeat of Motown. "To this day," Pheeroan asserts, "I like to hang on that rim all the time, probably more than I should, because that's the first thing that really struck

me about the traps. You know the way those funk drummers will crack that backbeat off of the rim? When I got to hang around my neighborhood with these R&B cats, what turned me on was all this new stuff they were doing on the snare. These guys'd be hitting the rim and the center at the same time and getting this great big *thwack*. There were these cats who had a successful band called Al Hudson and the Partners. From hearing them I got excited enough to want to pursue drumming more seriously.

"By the time I was finishing up high school, my father finally decided to get me a drumset, after my Uncle Harry and I got on his case enough. My Uncle Harry knew John Lee Hooker, and he told my father he could get me a gig with him," he laughs. "I'd never heard of John Lee Hooker or the term 'gig,' but I knew that was for me.

"So I got a four-piece Ludwig set which I had for years and years. Finally, when I got to visit Africa with Oliver Lake, I wanted to save myself some air freight home, so I sold it to some friends I was playing with over there because it's so hard to get equipment. I feel good that the drums have a nice home. I can go back and play 'em whenever I'm in Ghana. Anyway, I saved up my money for a while and finally could afford my first Zildjian. I went to the drum shop to pick it out, and took a real long time doing it, because I'd read in the drum magazines that you were supposed to take a long time. The guy behind the counter told me, 'The pros just come in here, play it for a second and know what they want.' And I thought, 'I don't care. I want a good cymbal.' And you know, that turned out to be one of the greatest cymbals I ever had. The A. Zildjian Rock rides had just come out, and I loved them. I especially loved that big, bright bell and the tight balanced sound. The sound of that cymbal stayed with me for a long time, and I think that I still search for that sound today in my selection of Paiste cymbals."

Drums and cymbals in hand, Pheeroan set about channeling his interests and inspirations into a concept. "My influences ranged from my church-going family, the emphasis put on unity and community development, the riots in '67, and Angela Davis. All that played a big part in my mind in high school and contributed to a very strong political stance when I was 15. Today I can see how that point of view influenced my musical directions as far as the spiritual liberation aspect of music is concerned. It's like John Coltrane was a liberator, James Brown was a liberator, and Jimi Hendrix was a liberator. Everyone who took a particular stance during that period was important in inspiring people and making them aware of their condition.

"But again, getting back to my inspirations, my biggest inspiration comes from the sea—water and waves—particularly the Atlantic. I was fortunate to be on the coast of Liberia, on the Gulf of Guinea. I recorded those sounds, watched some people pray there, and got so much from that. I get a lot of inspiration from water; I'm an Aquarian and there's a lot of water in my chart. I imagine that the rushing, surging, cresting feel that people get from my drumming and cymbal work has a great deal to do with that."

But Pheeroan ak Laff at 15 was more caught up in the sensual aspects of R&B balladeer Roberta Flack and the inescapable influence of the Motown sound. "I was irrepressibly in love with Roberta Flack, so I put on my little suit, fixed myself up and took the bus to Baker's Keyboard Lounge, hoping they'd think I was an adult so that I could get in. Seeing music like that was a major part

"SOMETIMES WE CAN BE MORE SELF-INDULGENT THAN ANYTHING ELSE, AND THINK THAT'S HIP, BUT BEING SELF-INDULGENT ISN'T ALWAYS BEING CREATIVE."



of wanting to be a musician.

"Then there was Motown, of course, and the whole local blossoming of talent that distinguished Detroit in that period. It was very exciting, and so many of the musicians who came out of Detroit at that time were very versatile. That was one of the strengths of that musical environment. So I never made any qualitative distinction between musical styles. I could see the value in everything. That was one of the beautiful things about Motown. They incorporated everything in their sound. They had the orchestras and the strings, as well as the vibes and flutes. They were one of the first to bring the conga drums into the mainstream. They had that tambourine doubling the hi-hat beat. It all made for a popular sound that could be digested by anybody.

"Other than that, I don't think Detroit was peculiar for its approach to R&B. Any differences you'd hear between Detroit and other urban centers would be real subtle. Detroit and Chicago are pretty similar in their approaches, which involve the blues and the church to a great extent. You know, they're really one and the same in a lot of instances. The big difference I noticed about most musicians who played in Detroit was that they were very influenced by the music itself, by the craft, and by the ability to do a lot of the great things that were happening in jazz, R&B, and rock, too. Oddly enough, there was a very strong black rock scene happening in Detroit all during that period when I was growing up, but that's always been squashed."

Coming of age during this time, Pheeroan was caught up in many areas of self-expression besides music, all of which shared a certain element of striving and spirit. "That common denominator in all of the representations of life has always been very important to me. I was always aware of some *otherness*. How do all of these things fit together? Why do certain things reach me in one way, and some things in another? And how is it that I can accept all of them? I can always find something.

"Like I could hear similarities between Coltrane and Hendrix; I became aware of them around the same time. I was aware of the kind of experience their music created in me, so I knew that it must have created a similar experience in the artists.

"Now I understand many of those feelings as the artistic process—the creative process I should say, as opposed to artistic, which I had been involved in all along. One thing I should point out is that I've acted ever since I was very young—much longer than I've played music. So my interaction with an audience is something I understand as a creative process, just like the painter and the canvas.

"All the while I was being so impressed by all these musicians

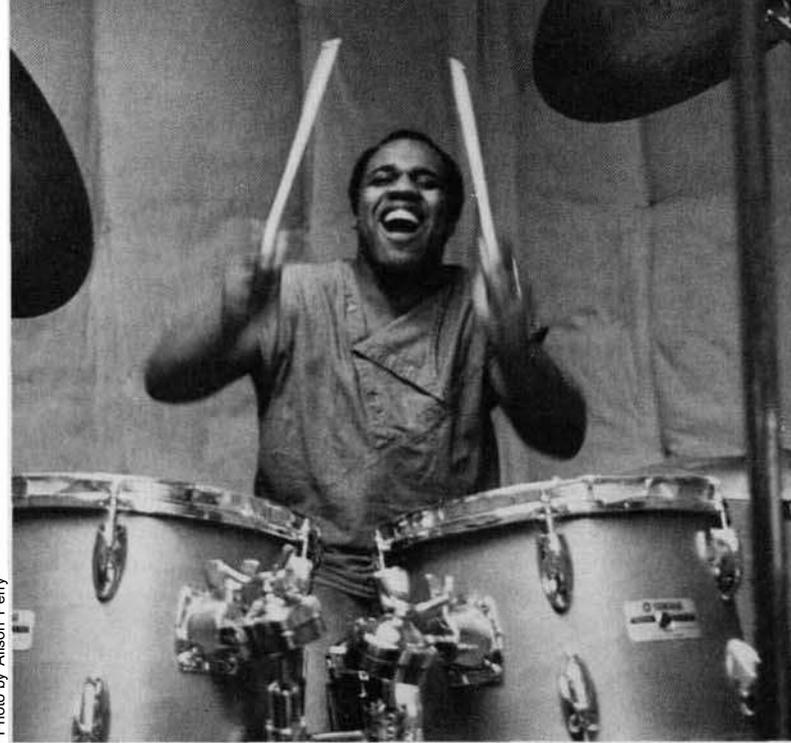


Photo by Alison Perry

and art forms, I wasn't aware that I was involved in the creative process by the nature of my personality. Once I understood that it was something I'd been doing all my life, I realized I was a musician. It's so funny, because I could always function as a communicator, more so than as a musician. In many ways there are a lot of things I don't want to be associated with according to the strict definition of a musician. Like where musicians decide to study what has been done before, and to apply that information in commercial ways that will bring other people to them. It's like this ongoing process where you only exist in relation to somebody else's concepts, and somebody else's definitions of what the refined state of that process is.

"I'm a rule-breaking kind of person. That's an outlook I've had for a real long time, which is what brought me into music that hardly anybody listened to," he laughed. "So you have rule-breaking musicians and rule-breaking audiences. How many people are going to break the rules tonight? Twelve? Then that's how many people we'll play for. I mean I have a lot of fun playing certain kinds of music that people call commercial, and I love entertainment from the actor's point of view, but I love the creative

continued on page 64

(L to R) Billy Hart, Don Alias, Pheeroan ak Laff, Bob Moses

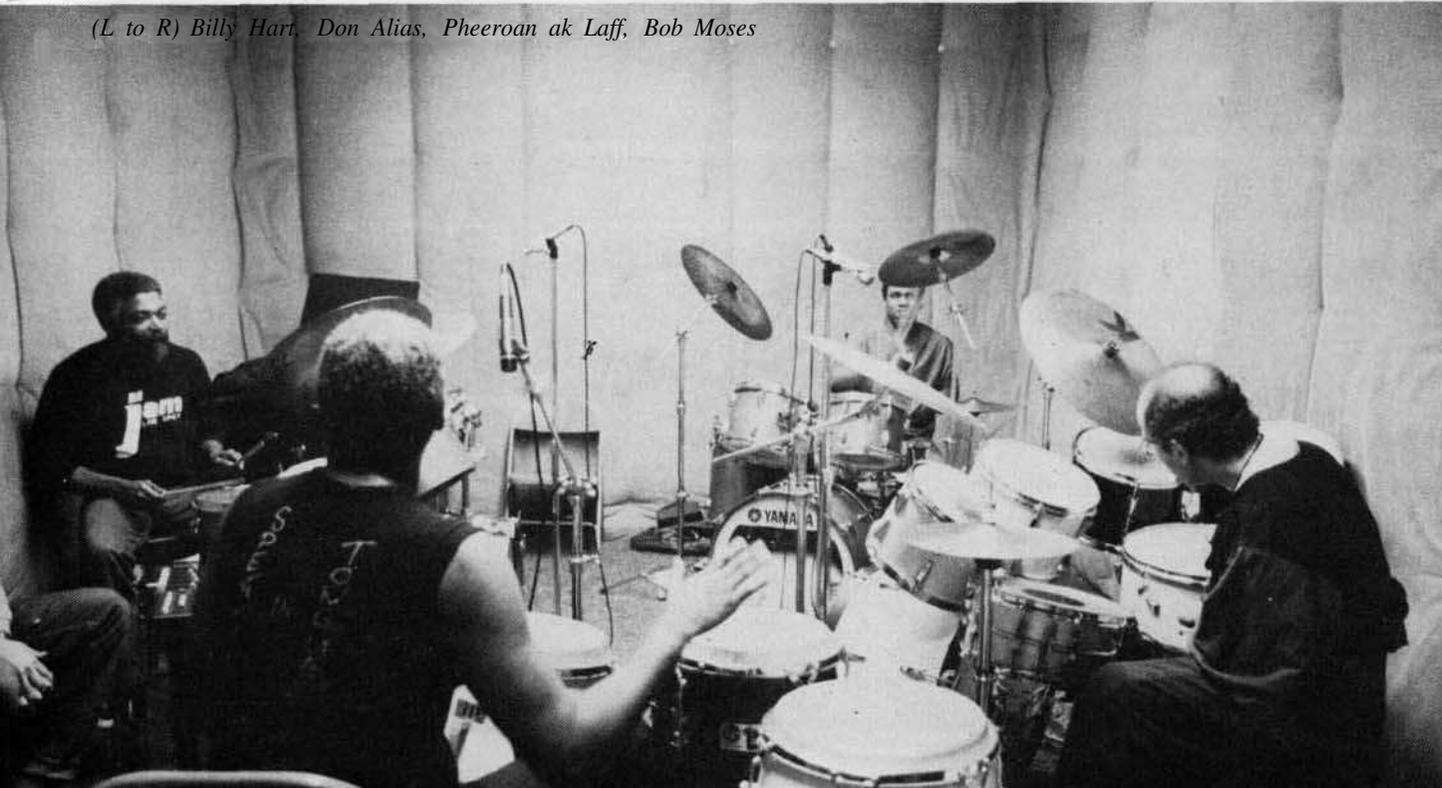


Photo by Alison Perry

Inside Gretsch

100 Years of Gretsch

There's a certain mystique about Gretsch. Mention the name to a group of drummers and you'll start hearing about such things as "round badge" kits from the '50s; Gretsch/Gladstone drums; Gretsch Drum Nights at Birdland; jazz drummers such as Max, Art, Philly, Tony, etc.; various distinctive colors and finishes; K. Zildjian cymbals; and most of all, *that sound*. You would be

surprised by the number of drummers who, although they endorse other brands, have confided to *MD* that their favorite set is "this Gretsch kit that I've had since ..."

Why are drummers so sentimental about these old drums? Surely, with all of the technological advances of the last ten years, drums must be better than ever. A lot of people don't seem to think so, how-

ever. In the same way that guitar players talk about Fender equipment that was made before CBS bought the company, drummers seek out Gretsch drums made before Baldwin took over. But did the drums actually change? Were the same people still making them? Why did their address keep changing? And now that Gretsch is no longer owned by Baldwin, what's going to happen? To put all of this in perspective, we're going to take a look at the 100-year history of Gretsch. The story involves both drums and people, starting with the man who put his family name on the drum.

Friedrich Gretsch was born in Mannheim, Germany, in 1856, the son of a middle-class grocer. At the age of 16, not wishing to be drafted into the military, he immigrated to America, and settled in Brooklyn with his uncle, who had a prosperous wine business. But rather than work for his uncle, he took a job with the Albert Houdlett & Son company, who made drums and banjos.

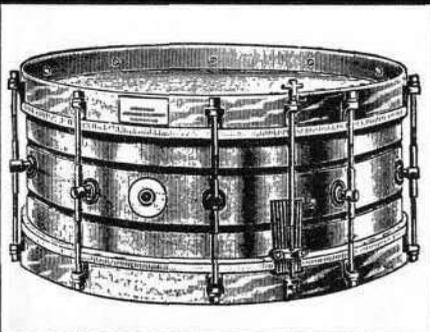
Following the example of his father and uncle, who had their own businesses, Friedrich opened his own shop in 1883, at the age of 27. He was soon turning out drums, banjos, tambourines and toy drums for various wholesalers. The firm only employed a dozen workers, and was located in a small wooden shanty on South 4th Street, in Brooklyn. At the time he began his company, he had a three-year-old son, Fred Gretsch, Sr.

By 1895, the business was doing well, and 15-year-old Fred was attending Wright's Business College, so Friedrich decided to pay a visit to his native Germany. But after arriving in his homeland, Friedrich suddenly died. His teenaged son—who was still wearing knickers—



Photo Courtesy of Manny's, NYC

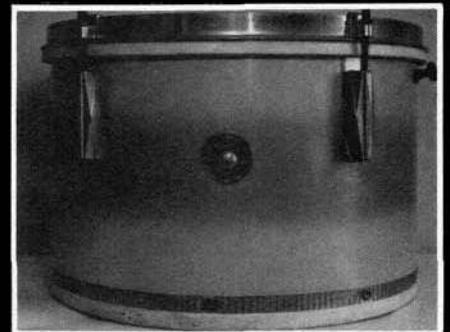
Jo Jones (center) and Phil Grunt (right) at the Gretsch factory in Brooklyn. (The snare drum to the upper right of Grant is a Gretsch/Gladstone.)



A Gretsch separate-tension snare drum from 1906, as pictured in an early catalog.



An early sock cymbal as built by Gretsch in the 20s.



A 1930s Gretsch tom, with the old-style lugs.

took over the Gretsch company.

Despite his young age, Fred showed remarkable business sense. Within five years, he had moved the company from the small shanty he inherited from his father to a three-story plant at 104 Middleton St., and he'd expanded the business to include mandolin making, and the importing of a full line of accessories and string instruments. As energetic as he was enterprising, Fred did not confine himself only to working at his desk in the plant. He also went on the road to sell, and could even be found up on the roof of the building tanning hides. (In those days, Gretsch bought skins from a New York slaughterhouse, and made their own drum and banjo heads.) Fred also brought his younger brothers, Walter and Louis, into the company after they finished school around the turn of the century. Walter stayed until 1921, and then opened a wholesaling firm. Louis only stayed a year, and then went into real estate.



Duke Kramer

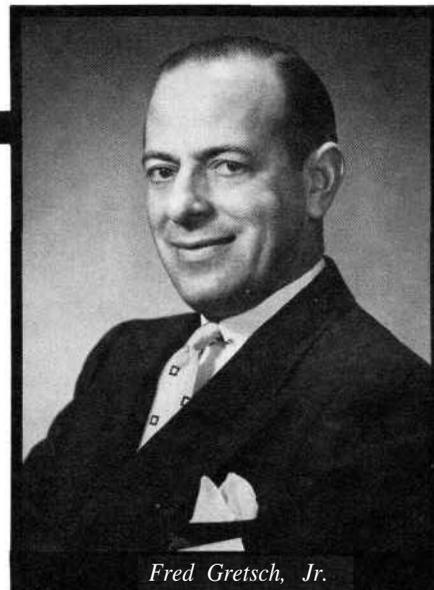


Fred Gretsch, Sr.

In 1916 the business moved to a ten-story building at 60 Broadway, in Brooklyn, and that is where the company remained until the early '70s. That building, with the Gretsch name at the top, still stands today, and can be seen as one crosses the Williamsburg Bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn.

In 1928, Gretsch opened a branch in Chicago, which was headed by Phil Nash. According to Duke Kramer, who joined Gretsch in 1935, and took over the Chicago office in 1948, "Gretsch was broken up into two distinct units. One was the factory and the eastern sales office in Brooklyn; the other was the western sales office in Chicago, which handled everything from Ohio to the West Coast. New York had the factory operation, sales on the eastern seaboard, and exports. We each had an independent sales force, and our own payrolls, inventories and accounting. Our only involvement with the New York office was that we bought the factory merchandise from them, like a regular customer, and we sent Fred Gretsch a monthly statement."

It should be noted that, in those days, Gretsch's main concern was *not* the manufacture of instruments under their own

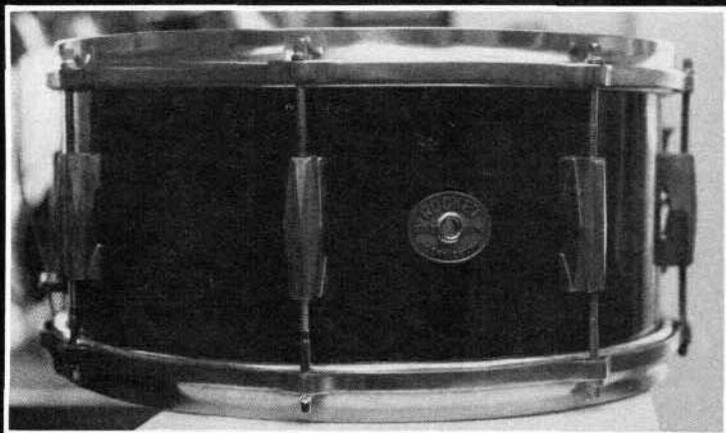


Fred Gretsch, Jr.

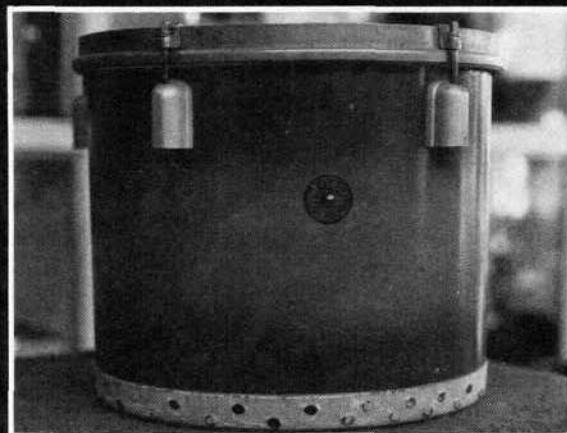
name. The drums that they made (as well as the banjos and guitars) were primarily for other distributors, who would put their names on them. Gretsch was more a merchandiser than a major-line company.

One of the people Gretsch made drums for was Billy Gladstone, who was known as much for his inventions as for his incredible drum technique. Back when all drumheads were calfskin, the biggest problem drummers had was keeping the heads tuned during a performance, because temperature and humidity changes in a room would immediately affect the heads. Gladstone devised a three-way tuning key: One section of the key tuned the top head; another section tuned the bottom head; the third section tuned both heads together. And what was really nice was that all of these tunings could be done with the drum mounted on a stand. Gretsch built these drums for Gladstone, and after Gladstone later began making drums himself, he still used Gretsch shells.

Fred Gretsch, Sr., remained president of Gretsch until 1942, when he retired to become president of Lincoln Savings Bank, and a director of Manufacturer's Trust Co. After Fred, Sr., retired, he appointed



"Rocket" snare drum, built by Gretsch.



World War II Gretsch tom, with wooden lugs.

his son, Fred Gretsch, Jr., president of the company. Fred, Jr., had started working at the factory when he was ten years old, coming in on Saturdays to pack phonograph needles. He became treasurer of Gretsch in 1931. (Like his father, he was interested in finance, and served as a vice president of the Lincoln Savings Bank, and a director of the Suffolk County Trust Co.) Shortly after becoming president in '42, however, he left the company to serve in the navy during World War II. His brother, William Walter Gretsch, had been running the Chicago Gretsch office, so he moved back to New York and became president of Gretsch. When Fred, Jr., returned to the company after the war, William remained president, but soon became ill and subsequently died in 1948, at which time Fred, Jr., assumed the presidency again.

During World War II, the Gretsch company had been somewhat inactive. In addition to Fred, Jr., other key personnel had also left for military service, including Duke Kramer. Because of government regulations and the shortages of materials, drums had to be made with wooden hoops and lugs. For a while, Gretsch even stopped making musical instruments, and the plant was used for the manufacture of war products.

After everyone returned from the war, Fred, Jr., called a meeting, which Duke Kramer remembers well. "We all met in New York to decide where the company was headed. We all decided that we wanted to develop Gretsch as a major line. After the meeting we split up into two-man teams. We covered every major nightclub in New York that we could find, and asked the drummers what they wanted in a drum. We were going to attack drums first, and guitars later. From that survey, we found that there was a need for smaller drums, because the New York drummers were al-



Louie Bellson with one of his first Gretsch double bass drum setups.

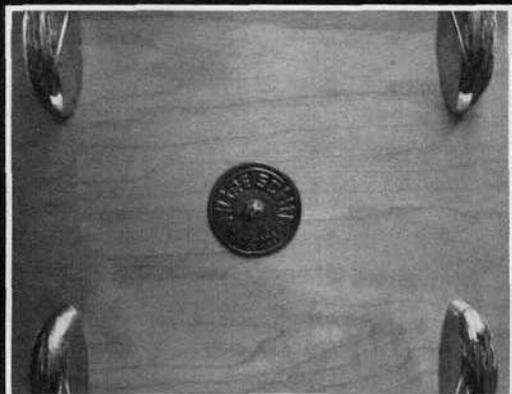
ways carrying drums around from gig to gig, and to recording sessions, and the large drums didn't fit into cabs. Plus, because of the way hardware was designed, it took them forever to set up and break down. These drummers wanted something that they could set up quickly, and that they could cart around easily. So from that, and working with Davey Tough, we developed the 20" bass drum, the shell-mounted tom-tom holder and cymbal arm, and the disappearing spurs. All of those things came out of that meeting, and they were all firsts. The hardware was all developed in conjunction with the Walberg Company, in Massachusetts."

One of the people at that meeting was a new employee named Phil Grant, who had just come out of the navy. Grant had been a drummer with the Pittsburgh Symphony, and with the famous Edwin Franko Goldman band. Phil was also an avid jazz fan who frequented the New York nightclubs, where he got to know the drummers personally. After the two-man teams had completed their survey, Phil Grant continued the direct contact with the

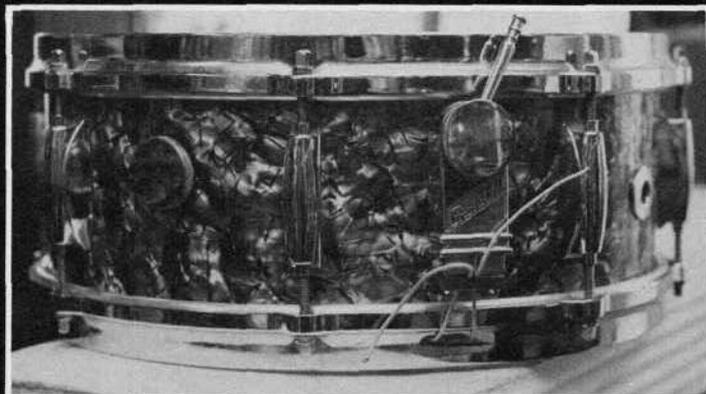
drummers, which was important, as Fred Gretsch, Jr., was not particularly knowledgeable about drums. Louie Bellson remembers going to the Gretsch factory in those days. "Fred was a very nice man, but he was not a musician. He was a businessman—a very smart one and a very good one. Whenever I went to Brooklyn, I would always stop in to see Fred. He would always ask, 'How's everything going? Do you have any problems?' If he didn't understand something, he would always turn to Phil Grant and say, 'Well Phil, this is your department. If you think this is right, go ahead and do it.'"

Phil joined the company as a salesman, and went on the road to sell and promote Gretsch drums. During a trip to Buffalo, he presented a clinic at East High School. One of the students at that school was particularly impressed—a young drummer named Mel Lewis. "Phil put on a fantastic clinic," Mel recalls. "He had a set of Gretsch *Broadkasters*, a Gretsch/Gladstone snare drum, bass drums, cymbals and timpani. He was a superb percussionist and he demonstrated all of the instruments well. In those days, Gretsch was really an ugly drum. They were mostly nickel plate and the rims still didn't have a flange on top. But when I heard the sound I said 'Wow!' And I liked the way he explained the shell. So a couple of weeks later I ordered a set of Gretsch drums in gold sparkle, and I took those drums on the road after I got out of school."

Mel Lewis wasn't the only drummer to be impressed by Phil Grant. In 1947, Louie Bellson showed Phil an idea he had for a double bass drum kit—an idea that had already been turned down by other drum companies. "Phil looked at my design and said, 'That's pretty wild, but I don't see why it can't work,'" Bellson remembers. "So they built the first one for me. I was criticized at first by a lot of people, but



Originally, toms did not have vent holes and the badge wax lacked on.



An early '60s snare drum, with Micro-Sensitive strainer.



Gretsch saw the possibilities and I always respected them for that."

Phil Grant recalled another idea, that came from a drummer named Jimmie Pratt. "A lot of drummers used a piece of felt across the bass drum head to muffle the sound, but there was no way to regulate it. So the Jimmie Pratt tone control was developed, which allowed you to control the amount of tension on the felt." Another drummer with an idea was Chico Hamilton, who wanted tom-toms with no bottom heads. So Gretsch made single-headed toms for him back in the '50s, long before rock drummers started removing their bottom heads.

In addition to the innovations suggested by the drummers, the Gretsch company itself was constantly refining and improving the way drums were made, starting with the shell itself. Originally, Gretsch made shells the way most other companies did. They bought three-ply wood, and molded it into a circle. Shells of that type required reinforcement rings at the top and bottom to keep the shell in round. But then, while Fred Gretsch, Sr., was president, Gretsch began laminating the wood themselves, as they molded the shell. By joining the plies in three different places, the shell no longer required the reinforcement rings. Those shells were made right there in the Brooklyn factory. Then, in the early '50s, they changed to the six-ply shell, which is still being used today. Despite the increase in plies, the shell did not get noticeably thicker, as the plies themselves were thinner. But the shells could now be joined in six different places instead of just three, and that added to the overall strength. Duke Kramer feels that the absence of reinforcement rings in the drums was what gave Gretsch its distinctive sound—"That Great Gretsch Sound."

Gretsch started using die-cast hoops on their 14" snare drums prior to World War

BIG MAN ON DRUMS

MEL LEWIS

Great, hard-swinging drummer with Stan Kenton... just named one of this year's new drum stars in Down Beat Jazz Critics Poll... owns and plays Gretsch Broadcasters.

Explosive drive, strong pushing style make fine backing for big bands... excellent small group drummer, too... favors more complex figures in steady, swinging style. Hear him on recent recording of Max Bennett's West Coast group.

Uses Gretsch Broadcasters for all work... calls them "finest drums I ever owned—sound real great, look terrific"... own set is Birdland model in Cadillac Green nitron with 24 kt. gold plating.

Many top drummers play Gretsch Broadcasters... try them yourself at your music dealer's—sets and models for all styles... see them in color in FREE Gretsch Drum catalog—write for copy.

GRETSCH The FRED. GRETSCH Mfg. Co., Dept. DB 956
60 Broadway, Brooklyn 11, N.Y.

A Gretsch ad from the '50s.

II, and after the war, they started using those hoops on the standard tom-tom sizes. The shell-mount tom holders that were developed after the war were also die-cast. Another simple but practical idea was their patented snap-in drumkey holder, which remains a popular feature of Gretsch drums today.

Also in the '50s, Gretsch was the first company to stop using nickel plating, going to chrome exclusively. Most companies offered a choice of the two, but according to Grant, "We said that the only way to make a drum was with chrome plating. It gave a little dignity to the drums, and was also a good selling point."

One of Gretsch's most famous products over the years has been their *Floating Action* bass drum pedal. Interestingly enough, that was not originally a Gretsch product. Briefly, it started out as the Martin Fleetfoot pedal, and was then sold to Camco. Gretsch liked the pedal and made a deal whereby Camco made the same

pedal for Gretsch, with Gretsch's name on it. Nevertheless, drummers would argue about which was the better pedal.

As mentioned earlier, Gretsch was also in the business of importing instruments, and one of the companies they imported was Zildjian cymbals from Istanbul. Originally, Gretsch owned the trademarks *K. Zildjian*, *A. Zildjian*, and *Zildjian*. In order to keep a trademark, a company has to demonstrate continuous use of a product with that name on it. The Gretsch company soon gave up the *A. Zildjian* trademark, because of confusion with the Avedis Zildjian cymbals made in America. Later they lost the *Zildjian* trademark also. But until the '70s, when the Avedis Zildjian company finally made a deal with Baldwin (who then owned Gretsch) to get the *K. Zildjian* trademark back, the Gretsch company was the exclusive supplier of *K. Zildjian* cymbals.

The cymbals were warehoused in the Brooklyn factory, and drummers could go there personally to pick out cymbals. But a lot of drummers preferred to let Phil Grant choose their cymbals for them. As Mel Lewis remembers: "Phil knew *K. Zildjians*. He picked out a few for me that I still have to this day. He always knew where the good ones were. I'd start to look through a pile of cymbals and Phil would say, 'I think you'll find what you like right on top,' or 'There isn't a good one in the lot; don't even bother with this pile.' When Art Blakey was working at Birdland, Phil might walk in with a 20 or 22 under his arm and say, 'Here Art, I think you'll like this one.' It would be a typical Art Blakey-type cymbal."

Phil Grant recognized the importance of having respected drummers associated with the company, and as jazz was becoming the prominent music of the '50s, Phil sought out all of the prominent players.

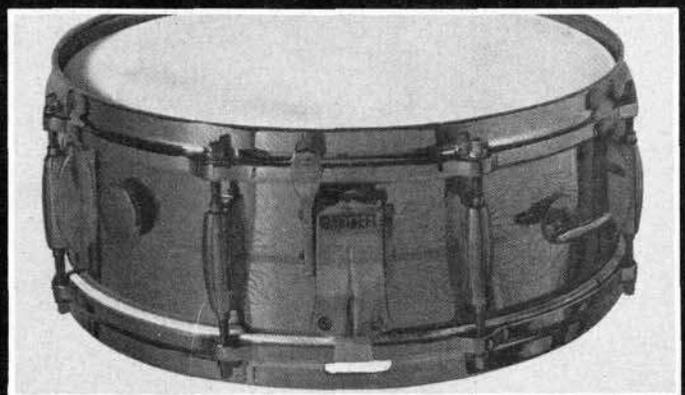
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Mid- '60s concert snare with original Lightning Throwoff.



The Lightning Throwoff was redesigned in the early '70s.



Gretsch called their engraved, gold-plated snare drum "the most beautiful drum in the world."

A Visit To The Gretsch Factory

It's funny how things can change. Not too many years ago, products that were made in America were considered to be the absolute best, while "Made in Japan" was considered a joke. And yet, today, many people seem to hold the opposite view. For all of the reasons given as to why American products have lost their former position, the reason that seems to be quoted the most often is that the American workers have lost their personal pride in the products they produce. That's probably true in some cases, but it's not true everywhere, as a visit to the Gretsch factory will attest.

DeQueen, Arkansas, is made up of a variety of industries, ranging from rubber, to paper, to a major chicken-processing plant. Because of all this industry, the labor market is strong. And Gretsch, because of the nature of its product, attracts the best. As plant manager Ben Johnson explained, "Our people are very proud of the product, and we have 500 applications on file of people who want to work here. We have no trouble getting the best of the crop when we want it. This is the finest labor market I've come across in a long time." As our tour of the factory progressed, the pride and skill of the workers was very much in evidence, and I was reminded of a comment Charlie Roy had made: "You'll be able to judge my commitment to quality control when you meet the people who actually build the drums. All I can do is let them hear my thoughts. They are the ones who have to emulate those thoughts."

We began our tour of the factory at the loading dock, which, of course, is actually the final step in the total process. But the very

beginning of the process is reflected here also, in the form of a label that is attached to each box.

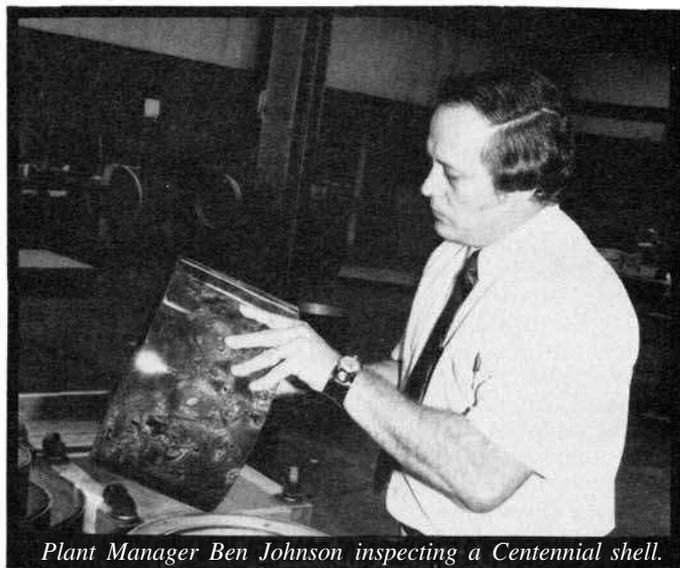
"This is our control tag," Ben explained. "It carries the model number and color, the serial number, the order number, and the customer's name. The drum is tagged once it comes out of finishing, and the tag stays right with it all the way to the customer. That's how we control our orders, so we can find out where a customer's drum is in the process and come fairly close to delivery dates. We have three loading docks, and every order is rechecked prior to shipping."

I asked Ben how much time elapsed between the time the tag was written, and the box appeared on the loading dock. "Normally we complete the entire manufacturing process in about four weeks. With the equipment we have and with the way the layout is now, I don't feel we have any capacity problem here—none whatsoever."

The next stop was the machine shop, where Gretsch has the facilities to develop their own fixtures, patterns, and hardware, as well as research and development of prototypes. "We can do everything but make castings," Ben boasted. "And I have the talented people to do it—pattern makers, machinists. So we feel we have a lot of



The Gretsch main office in Gallatin, Tennessee.



Plant Manager Ben Johnson inspecting a Centennial shell.

The round badge, which was used until 1971.

The octagon-shape badge was first used in 1971.

Around 1979, the wording on the badge was changed slightly.

In 1980, due to the popularity of multiple-tom outfits, the badge was changed to a squarer shape, which would look the same no matter which way a tom was mounted.





(left to right) National Sales Manager Wayne Summers, International Sales Manager Randy Houck, Operations Manager Walt Jordan, President Charlie Roy, and Marketing Manager Karl Dustman.

flexibility."

Passing into the woodworking shop, the first thing we encountered was a huge stack of raw drumshells. These shells are manufactured at a separate facility, which Gretsch was reluctant to have photographed, as the shells are, after all, the core of the Gretsch sound. The people at Gretsch are no more willing to talk about the exact process by which their shells are made than the people at Zildjian are willing to reveal how they blend their metals. But this much can be said: The shells are still being made by the same process and people that have been used since Gretsch changed from the three-ply to the six-ply shell. And the shells are *definitely* made in America.

The shells are manufactured in 13 different diameters, and, except for large bass drums, a number of drums are cut from a single shell. A 14" diameter shell which is 32" long could produce two 14 x 14 floor toms, or up to six 5 x 14 snare drums. The cuts are planned carefully, to avoid waste.



The shells are divided according to the visual beauty of the grain. The better looking shells are used for the natural-wood lacquer finishes; the shells of poorer visual quality are used for the drums with pearl finishes. Gretsch emphasized that this is *only* a visual separation, based on the grain pattern. Coverings are not used to hide defects in the wood. If a structural defect turns up, the shell is destroyed.

continued on page 50

In early '81, a redesigned octagon appeared.

By late '81, the square badge had returned, and is still being used today.



This is the special Centennial badge, which only appears on 100 drumsets. Each badge was numbered and personally signed by Gretsch president Charlie Roy.

CHRIS

Mr. Frantz had good reason to be feeling positive as we sat down to talk in the lounge of San Francisco's Miyako Hotel. Talking Heads, armed with a new record titled *Speaking In Tongues*, had just broken West Coast attendance records previously held by Barry Manilow. Frantz's other band, *Tom Tom Club*, which he heads with his bassist wife Tina Weymouth, has just followed up a successful debut LP with a fast-rising collection of dance tracks called *Close To The Bone*.

Soon after we began talking, I realized that this was not going to be one of the more technical interviews MD has published. Don't stop reading on because of that. It's just that Frantz, jumping from art school into rock 'n' roll, has a different perspective than many. He traveled constantly while growing up, which helped him develop an appreciation of many kinds of music, as evidenced in the sophisticated but raw rhythms of *Talking Heads*, as well as the infectious Caribbean dance-party atmosphere of *Tom Tom Club*.

Frantz's approach to his instrument is simple and direct. He can rarely be accused of overplaying, yet he creates excitement with his enthusiastic groove weaving, intense concentration and well-timed kicks. During the *Talking Heads* 1983 summer tour, Frantz locked up with percussionist Steve Scales. More often than not, Scales played the fills while Frantz kept the beat chugging along.

Talking Heads began recording with Sire Records in 1977, two years after they began building a sizeable underground following around New York City, playing sociopolitical favorites like "Psycho Killer" and "Don't Worry About The Government." Hits like "Take Me To The River," "Life During Wartime" and "Once In A Lifetime" established a strong commercial base for the band, and the two records they did with producer Brian Eno met with critical acclaim. They released a double, live compilation of the group's history in 1981, *The Name Of This Band Is Talking Heads*, which contains recordings from the group as a quartet in its infancy as well as in its present expanded form. (There were nine members on stage for their 1983 tour.) *Speaking In Tongues* got the group across to an even larger audience, with two big hits, "Swamp" and "Burning Down The House," pushing it quickly into the Top 20.

Tom Tom Club, begun in 1981 as a "release and a relief from *Talking Heads*' seriousness," according to Frantz, recorded an LP that year near Chris and Tina's home in the Bahamas. Soon they were looking at two disco smashes in "Genius Of Love" and "Wordy Rappinghood." With a second album in the pop and disco charts, they find themselves being taken quite seriously as a band. They're not taking themselves too seriously though, releasing buoyant and nonsensical singles like "The Man With The Four-Way Hips."

CF: I was born on an army base in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, which is right across the border from Tennessee. That's where Jimi Hendrix was a paratrooper, and that's what my father was with—the airborne and the cavalry. We moved around a lot because he was in the army. We lived mostly in the South, although we lived in Boston too. I ended up going to high school in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which is where I started playing musical instruments. Actually, I started trumpet in the fourth grade, but I didn't have enough blowing power for that so they switched me to trombone. It had a bigger mouthpiece and they thought that would be easier. That didn't really work either, so the elementary school bandleader suggested I take up the drums. I said, "Fine." I didn't really care what I played. I just wanted to play something. So I tried that, and I moved to the top of the class—learned all my rudiments and all that. They gave me a little drum pad and a pair of sticks.

RT: Those huge marching sticks?

CF: Yeah, they were big sticks. So one thing led to another. I got pretty good at all those things—seven-stroke rolls, paradiddles—all the stuff that I can't do anymore or I've forgotten how to do. Not really, but I just don't really practice it. And then *The Beatles* made their appearance on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. I guess it was 1964. I was in the sixth grade, and that's when, like all the other boys in the neighborhood, I wished that I was one of *The Beatles*. So I got involved with little neighborhood combos and things. I remember one group that had two guitars, organ, one trombone and myself. That was my first band, and we called ourselves something like *The Lost Chords*. I got involved with more and more semi-successful bands, but nothing that you would call a serious band—nobody who would ever really make a record.



Then I gave it up and went to college. At the same time I was interested in music, I was also interested in the visual arts. I really believed that musicians, at least professional musicians and the kind who make records, were a different breed than I was. I thought that they were some special kind of people who had to come from Liverpool, Memphis, Nashville or something. During the psychedelic era, they had to live in San Francisco. I just thought I was never going to be taken seriously as a drummer, so I went into painting very deeply. I spent four years at Rhode Island School of Design, which is where I hooked up with David Byrne and Tina Weymouth. One day I just couldn't stand not playing the

talking

FRANTZ



Photo by Fred Carneau

drums anymore. By then it had been three years since I'd stopped, so I had to teach myself all over again. I could remember in my mind, but my body just couldn't do it at all. David and I formed this little group just to entertain our friends. Actually it wasn't such a little group. It had about eight people. The group was called the Artistics. Our biggest gig was playing at the St. Valentine's Day Masquerade Ball for the rest of the students. I think we were paid \$200.

RT: Divided by eight?

CF: Yeah. That was where we first performed "Psycho Killer," which was written up there. Tina and I were romantically linked at that time, but she wasn't with us

in a band or anything. However, when we all got out of school and moved to New York City, we already knew that the art world was pretty much a closed club, at least until you were about 40 years old. Then they would call you a "serious young artist." At the time, we were 24 and we thought, "Well, 40 is a pretty long time to wait before they call you 'serious.'" On the other hand, in rock 'n' roll, if you're over 40 you're not taken seriously. So we thought we'd try to make a dent in popular music. We figured we better have a pretty good angle in order to do it, because there were so many people out there already—so many people who were, at least at that time, a lot better at it than we were, such as

The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, or even the New York Dolls. David and I lived right by CBGB's. The first night we went there, The Ramones and Blondie were playing. This was before CBGB's had gotten a reputation, and neither of the bands had a reputation either. I remember walking up to Debbie Harry and asking her if she would sing with our group. She looked at me and David Byrne like, "You guys must be joking. You don't look rock 'n' roll." Meanwhile, Chris Stein, her partner at that time, was dressed up like Alice Cooper, with makeup and lizard-skin boots. This was before they were called Blondie. So we couldn't get anybody around New York interested in us. One day Tina just went out, bought a bass guitar, learned how to play it, and became our bass player. Then we were a trio. We went to CBGB's and got our first gig, opening for The Ramones. It must have been pretty hilarious, but a lot of people liked it. I have some cassettes from back then that really sound funny. It's kind of like the Twilight Zone or something. One thing led to another and here we are today.

RT: Bigger than Barry Manilow.

CF: So big that we're busting out of our trousers.

RT: Did Talking Heads actually sit down and try to figure out an angle?

CF: There were a lot of things we didn't like about pop music. We knew that we liked the medium of popular music, but we knew there were a lot of things that personally, for us, were in bad taste. Not that good taste ever had anything to do with good art, but there was just too much unoriginality. One thing that was instilled in us in art school was that originality and giving a piece of yourself to your work are much more important than technique or costumes. So while we wore white shirts and black trousers, and David and Tina stood there like little statues, everybody else wore these glitter costumes and jumped around. Most guitar players acted like they were having seizures while doing their solos. All that had just gotten to be a drag for us. We felt there was room in the world for a band that was coming from a different angle. We weren't really sure what we wanted to do, but we knew what we didn't want to do. We didn't want to be like Elton. We didn't want to be like Alice. Lou Reed was cool and David Bowie was cool. But they were better at it already than we were, so we didn't want to try to beat

tom - toms

by Robin Tolleson

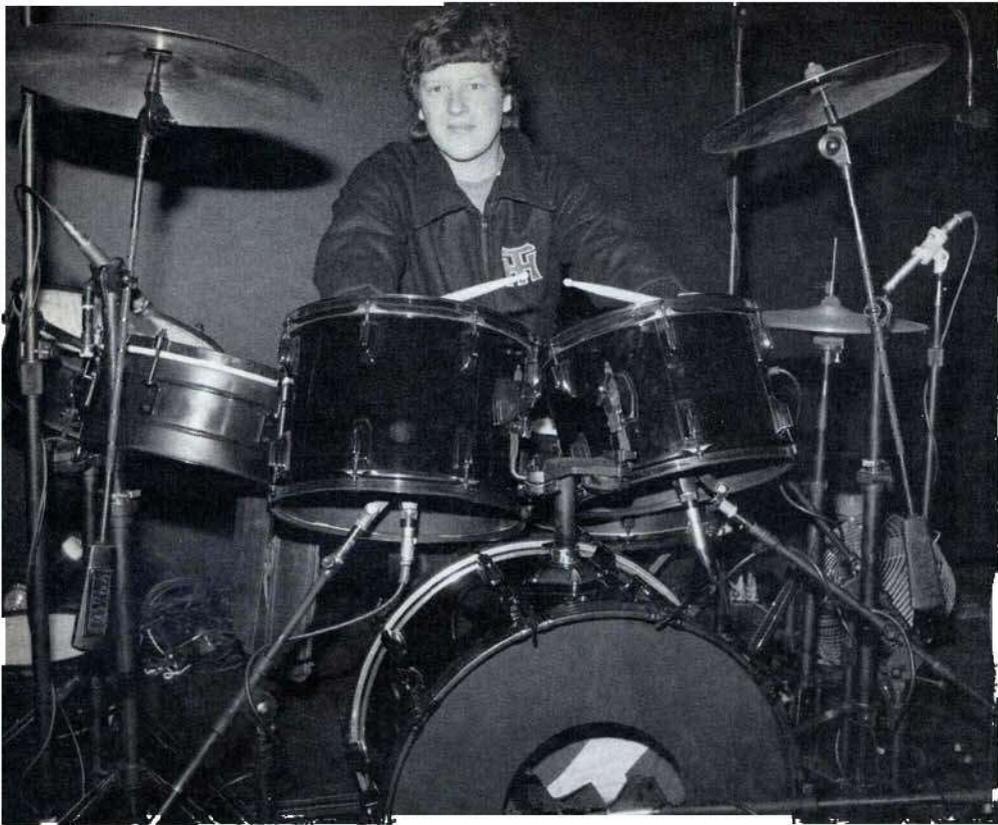


Photo by Fred Carneau

them at their own game. We certainly didn't want to try to beat Mick Jagger and Keith Richards at their own game. So we tried to stake out our own turf.

RT: Were the three of you always clear about wanting to say something to people with your music and your lyrics?

CF: We wanted people to understand that everything really came from the heart—well, the heart and the mind. It was personal and it was for real. It wasn't like we were up there just trying to get girls or free drinks. We were in it for the good reasons, [smiles] Basically that's what our intentions were.

RT: Have you ever been the type to hold down a 9-to-5 job?

CF: Well, we had to have 9-to-5 jobs in those days. I worked in this furniture store on 57th Street during the day, unloading

sofas, chairs, cups and saucers and things off trucks. At night I played at CBGB's. It was a funny, schizoid life. In fact, David and Tina worked on the same street too. David made stats for an advertising agency and Tina sold shoes at this very fancy department store. Then at night we went to CBGB's and played, or hung out and watched other people play.

RT: How long was it before people really started to take notice of Talking Heads?

CF: We were very lucky in that respect, because I think we had done about three or four performances when our pictures appeared on the cover of the *Village Voice*. At least for a week we had lots of prestige and we commanded a lot of respect from our peers. A week later somebody else was on the cover. There was a guy named James Walcott, who now writes for *Es-*

Photo by Fred Carneau

quire, *Harpers* and serious magazines like that. At the time he was one of the people who hung out at CBGB's every night. He wrote an article about the whole scene down there, and he sort of picked us out as an example of why it was interesting. Because of that article we started getting calls from little clubs in Boston, Toronto, Philadelphia and places like that, asking us to come there and play. We did, and were real lucky. In fact, we had to but the brakes on. A couple of record companies wanted to sign us up very early, and we took the advice of a few people we had met. We didn't have any management or anything. In fact, we didn't get any management until after our first record was already released. But we waited about two years, until we couldn't stand it anymore. Then we made a record deal with Sire Records, who was certainly not the biggest record company but clearly the one that had the best understanding of what we were about. We started playing in 1975 and made a record deal in 1977.

RT: What was the first record you made?

CF: It was a single, which was independent although Sire put it out. It was a one-shot thing. We said we wanted to put a single out first and they said they'd put it out for us, no strings attached. So they did. It was five- or ten-thousand copies. The A side was called "Love Goes To A Building On Fire," and the B side was "I Wish You Wouldn't Say That." It's now on a Warner Brothers compilation album, called *Attack of the Killer Bs*.

RT: How did the band put songs together in the early days?

CF: It would take forever. We would rehearse in a loft, and David would come in with a lyrical concept. We would just jam around this concept over and over, until we finally worked out an arrangement. Since none of us really wrote music or read it except Tina—Tina could do it because she had played flute and classical guitar—we would, like most bands at that age, practice and practice until we had enough material to do an entire show. There were a lot of loose ends and arrangements that weren't too tight. We've gotten a lot better at that since then.

RT: Has there ever been a problem in the band with too many ideas floating around from the different members?

CF: I believe that could become a problem. I think towards the end of working with Eno that became a problem, because he



"ONE THING THAT WAS INSTILLED IN US IN ART SCHOOL WAS THAT ORIGINALITY AND GIVING A PIECE OF YOURSELF TO YOUR WORK ARE MUCH MORE IMPORTANT THAN TECHNIQUE OR COSTUMES."

would have ideas and David would have ideas, and so would we, but naturally his and David's would take precedence over ours. There were some disagreeable moments where we felt shunted, or whatever you want to call it. But that's all water under the bridge now. I think the making of this new album, *Speaking In Tongues*, was the easiest, most agreeable experience of making a record that I've ever had with Talking Heads. And I think it's because we all know how the others work by now. Also, we didn't have the extra aggravation of Eno always trying to make something weird or saying, "That's too ordinary. We have to do it this way to make it weirder."

RT: Did Eno have suggestions for your drum parts too?

CF: Not usually, no. In fact that's why I was so surprised when *Remain In Light* came out and there was this big brouhaha about how the drumming and rhythms were all African and stuff like that. I found that out after the album had been recorded, mixed, and released, and I got a press kit. David and Brian had put together this press kit about all the influences, and there was even a list of books you were supposed to read to understand the record.

RT: Any that you had read?

CF: Nothing that I had read, and nothing that anybody had ever told me about during the performance of the record. That really threw me for a loop, and that was when things started getting a little bit tense. First of all, sure there are African rhythms and sensibilities in American pop music all the time, but I kind of resented not being informed that I was playing Afri-

can rhythms until after the fact. At any rate, that's water under the bridge.

RT: I noticed that, on the new Talking Heads album, the credits read "Lyrics by David Byrne, Music by Talking Heads." That's the first time the whole band has been credited with writing the music.

CF: Yeah, it's always been that way, but it's the first time it's been put in those terms. And it's about time too. [laughs] It just got to the point where I think David no longer felt like he had to put his name on every single thing. I get along great with David—we all do—but he's one of those people who maybe didn't get enough credit for doing things during his childhood or in high school. So he went a little bit over the top to the point where he had to put his name on everything. It got to the point where everybody believed that David Byrne did everything in Talking Heads, and I think even he began to understand that maybe that wasn't really fair. Also, with the success of the Tom Tom Club and with Jerry Harrison's own album—which may not have been financially successful but made it clear that he could play—I think David had to give us a little bit more of a share of the limelight.

RT: Talking Heads began getting funkier on the *Fear of Music* album.

CF: That was where we did "I Zimbra," which Eno had absolutely nothing to do with. He produced that album, which meant he recorded it and mixed it, but he had zero to do with the songwriting.

RT: Did you consciously decide to get funkier and more danceable?

CF: I think we always tried to be and always hoped to be like that. It's just that we



Photo by Lynn Goldsmith

learned how to be more convincing over the years. We always liked the soul bands, and black bands were always a big influence, as well as a lot of white bands. But from a rhythmic point of view, everybody from Booker T & The MGs on up to K.C. & The Sunshine Band were big inspirations.

RT: I was reading the book called *The Name Of This Book Is Talking Heads*, and it mentioned the African influence of Manu Dibango.

CF: Oh yeah. His first hit record was "Soul Makossa." Now everybody's copping his licks—Quincy Jones and everybody. He's an African saxophone player and has a

continued on page 94



Photo by Bill Sosin/Photo Reserve

KEITH C

by Scott K. Fish

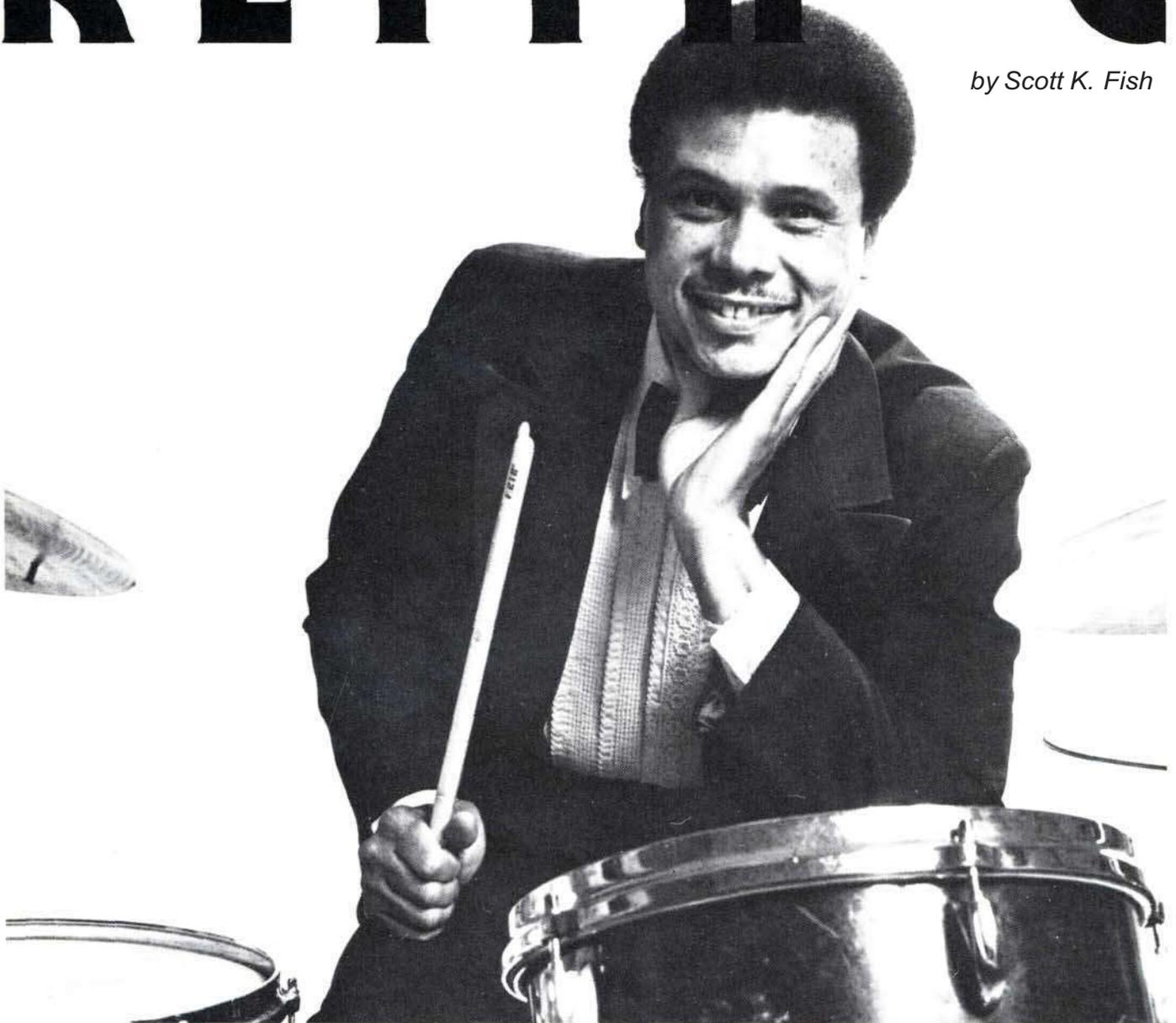


Photo by Charles Stewart

After meeting and interviewing Keith Copeland, there's one word that seems to represent his overall approach to drums: tradition. My dictionary has three definitions for that word. Two of them apply here: "The passing down of a culture from generation to generation, especially oral," or, "Any time-honored set of practices, beliefs, etc." The jazz culture was passed on to Keith, at least in part, by his father, trumpeter Ray Copeland, who's had an impressive career in jazz since the late '40s that includes gigs and recordings with musicians like Thelonious Monk, Johnny Richards, Oscar Pettiford, Lionel Hampton and Randy Weston.

Keith has also been a mainstay for several years with Billy Taylor, who, in addition to being an all-around superior musi-

dan, has contributed greatly to the jazz culture through radio and TV appearances, lectures and writing. Much credit can also be given to Keith for acquiring this tradition and passing it on to others through his own hard work and perseverance.

One of the most impressive aspects of Keith Copeland is that, unlike many of his contemporaries, Keith is carrying on the mainstream tradition not by default, but by choice. At one time in his life he was at the apex of the rock world as the drummer in Stevie Wonder's first Wonderlove band. And prior to that he'd earned himself a reputation around the Boston area as a funk drummer to be reckoned with.

At 37, Keith has more professional experience in all aspects of drumming than most people will attain in a lifetime. When

Alan Dawson retired from Berklee after 18 years of teaching, Keith Cope/and was hired for the position based on Dawson's personal recommendation. Although he's been away from Berklee for a long time, Keith continues to teach—sometimes at Eastman and other times at Long Island University in Brooklyn. He also devotes part of his busy schedule to a select group of private students.

He hasn't recorded extensively, but the recordings he's done are very impressive, particularly Return Of The Griffin with Johnny Griffin, In Motion with The Heath Brothers, The Bassist by Sam Jones, Electronic Sonata For Souls Loved By Nature by George Russell, Once In Every Life by Johnny Hartman and Where've You Been? with Billy Taylor. Keith's drumming is exceedingly clean. He has the ca-

TRAD

OPELAND

capacity to play busy, yet subtly, and no matter what tempo or style of song, he's always coaxing the best out of his fellow musicians.

SF: You're probably best known for your current work with Billy Taylor. What else are you doing to keep busy?

KC: I work regularly with two or three different groups. One of them is with Phil Markowitz on piano, Eddie Gomez on bass and Joe Locke on vibes. We did a recording in Rochester that's just been released. Another band I work with is led by guitarist Rory Stuart. We did a live recording at Seventh Avenue South which is now out on the Cadence Label. That group includes Armen Donelian on piano and Calvin Hill on bass. Now that Rory has this record out, maybe there will be some more chances for us to play.

I also work with Lynn Welshman and his group—two trumpets, two trombones, three reeds and three rhythm. It's a unique band with straight-ahead jazz arrangements and a few fusion-type arrangements. The horn players include studio musicians like Lew Soloff, Joe Shepley, Gerry Niewood, Pete Yellin, Lou Hoff, Jim Pugh and Dave Taylor. The rhythm section is Albert Dailey, Calvin Hill and myself. I do some big band playing with Frank Foster's Loud Minority, and his *smaller* big band, Living Color. Billy Hart is the first-call player for that band. When he's not around, Frank usually calls me.

SF: How extensive is your teaching practice?

KC: I've been going to Eastman every summer to be part of an intensive Jazz Performance Workshop, which usually runs about six days. This was my fifth year there. Before I moved back to New York City, I taught eight full-time semesters at Berklee College. I was teaching 20 to 30 hours a week. When I accepted the job I wanted to teach part-time drumset, specializing in Latin percussion techniques/or drumset. I also taught classical snare drumming.

SF: I was under the impression that you had an extensive teaching practice in New York City.

KC: No. I'm never around long enough. I see about ten students once every six to eight weeks. If they're at the level I like them to be at, I give them a two-hour lesson. They have time to really work on the material. I tell them not to call me until they have it together. I have a limited amount of time to practice and I'm *not* in the business of teaching. I'm in the business of trying to play as well as I can. So they have as much time as they need to

work on the material. I tape the lesson at a couple of tempos—the tempo they need to start working on and the tempo I expect them to have it at when they come back. If they have any questions, they can call me. I'll analyze it so that they can get it together without having to come back.

SF: Can you spot a winner in a student?

KC: Yes. But when you're dealing with most university situations it doesn't matter what you spot. Mainly because of financial reasons, a university is going to *advise* you not to tell people that they should take up another instrument. That might keep the university from getting the four years' tuition. But I don't like to do that. Kids are giving up their money, fantasizing about being great drummers. I've had kids say to me, "I just got these drums six months ago. I'd like to play like Billy Cobham next year." And they usually come in with 18-piece drumsets. I tell them, "We'll see. But first we're going to deal with the snare, one cymbal, the bass drum and the hi-hat. I'll put you through a few things and see how you feel six months from now."

I'll try to wipe them out so badly that they'll want to stop playing voluntarily, rather than tell them that they have unrealistic goals. They're fantasizing about playing like Cobham in one year. They need to have a little more perspective on it. If they aspire to be performers of the caliber of their idols, then I tell them this: "If you want to come out here and compete, let me tell you what the competition's like. You might become very proficient in playing locally—making club dates and becoming a very great teacher. You might be able to recognize talent in another person and give that person things that I'm giving you. But as difficult as it is to play mainly mainstream jazz, and because the availability of those kinds of full-time jobs is so limited, you have to be very good to lock in to one. If you're talking about being in a straight-ahead rock or fusion situation, there might be more jobs available. I can teach you the techniques, but I'm *not* going to tell you that you're going to be able to play like your idol if you study with me for two years or 20 years. I know what that takes. It has to be from the *heart*. If you don't have heart, it's going to be very hard for me to teach it to you. I can explain what it's about, and how it's supposed to happen, but I can't just transmit that into your body. It has to be there." I'm honest with kids.

SF: What characteristics do winners have?

KC: They've got to have good time and good feeling. There's got to be something in their playing that makes me feel that

they've got something valid and natural that I can improve upon to make it even more extra special. It *doesn't* mean that they've got to have a high degree of drumset technique, snare drum technique or coordination. They've got to make my heart feel good when I hear them play, just in the way they play time—just in their concentration towards the instrument. If a student starts playing at one tempo and has sped up by the end of four bars, I'm going to say, "What you need, I can't give you. I can recommend working with a metronome. Maybe that will help; maybe not." If the tempo goes from here to there in four measures, the problem is usually beyond a metronome.

SF: Can someone develop the ability to keep good time?

KC: Yes, but you've got to have something to develop from that feels good. Suppose I ask you to play a tune and sing the tune while you're playing it. Then I ask you to sing the tune and trade fours with yourself. If you speed up a *little bit*—well, when I was young I sped up a little bit too. But I learned to concentrate more to be really aware of meter at all times when I'm playing. So if the problem is relative, you can work with it. If I were a vocal teacher and a student couldn't hold any kind of pitch, I would tell that person to do something else!

SF: What about that famous story of Papa Jo Jones throwing a cymbal at Charlie Parker because he felt Parker was playing so bad? Doesn't that contradict the theory of either you've got it or you don't?

KC: I can't say what was going through Papa Jo's mind, but I think he did that because he recognized some talent in Charlie Parker, and wanted to scare him enough to really make him get it together. That's what happened to me when I was coming up.

The worst, most traumatic experiences I had were when I was trying to play with people who I love and revere today. They virtually scared me to death to make me practice. When I was 17, I sat in with a group that pianist Barry Harris was leading at Minton's Playhouse. It was George Coleman on tenor, Charles McPherson on alto, Peck Morrison on bass and Barry. Lenny McBrowne was the regular drummer. I thought I was playing pretty well, but I wasn't playing any bass drum or bottom. I was just using my bass drum to drop bombs and answer what my left hand was doing, in the style of Philly Joe Jones with Miles. But Barry wanted to hear some bottom! While I was playing behind the horn soloists, Barry kept looking at me real

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strange and I was feeling real bad. When Barry started soloing, he began having a conversation with me about my inadequacies in using my bass drum. He was soloing and talking to me at the *same time!* I'd never seen anybody do that before. So I went home and worked on it. The next time I had it more together. The way he looked at me and the way he was talking are still alive in my mind.

SF: Have you noticed problems that recur frequently in people who are studying drumset?

KC: The biggest problem is coordination. They have to learn how to think four or five different ways about the drumset at one time, and still pay attention to all the other things going on around them while they're playing. They have to develop *ears*. They have to know how to play something that's going to fit the moment and still keep thinking about meter. Sometimes drummers react to something they hear and the time will fall apart, because they're concentrating more on what they want to react to than the time.

On top of that, if it's a reading situation, they have to think about interpreting the chart the right way. Nine times out of ten, writers are not going to write what the drummer should play. They're going to *write something*, but the drummer is going to have to figure out what the composer *really* wants to hear. That's splitting your head up in a lot of places! That's what I really stress in my teaching more than anything else.

After they get that together, we talk about building chops to develop the ability to play musical drum solos, and how to listen to and phrase around the melody. But first we deal with how to keep good time and how to make the band feel good. That's most important. If you do that well,

you don't even have to solo and you'll still be very much recognized for your ability.

SF: Do you know the lyrics to many songs?

KC: About three or four. But I know the melodies. When I studied with Alan Dawson, one of the things he stressed was how to develop musical drum solos by singing the melody. He makes you sing the melody, play time and play fours. I've tried to continue that tradition. When I solo, almost 99% of the time I'm trying to play off the song form and in some way relate to the melody. My goal is to make the audience hear the melody when I'm soloing—to make the band members feel my solo as opposed to counting measures through my solo. I want them to know where I am in the tune so we'll come out together. When that happens, it's a beautiful thing to hear.

With Billy Taylor we don't always play for the most knowledgeable jazz audiences. We sometimes play for people who've never heard jazz before in their lives. If we're playing someplace where I know they don't get a lot of jazz, and after the concert someone says, "Wow, I heard the melody in your solo," then I know I'm getting close. I'm not worried about playing in New York since I can get to those people. People in New York have heard everything! As long as I do what I do well, they're going to appreciate it.

SF: Do you recommend attending a college or university to someone who wants to become a professional musician?

KC: Definitely. You should get some formal musical training either in the classical area, or at some of the special schools like Miami, Berklee, New England Conservatory, the University of Indiana or Eastman, which is probably the highest example of everything I've seen. Study as much classical *and* jazz as the schools offer.

If possible, go where there's a lot of mu-

sic going on professionally outside of the school. The bandstand is where you get the chance to find out if you've learned anything. You can get the college degree, but if you're thinking about playing mainstream jazz in all its various forms, then you have to get your final degree from the New York bandstands—the most intense bandstands you'll have to deal with anywhere in the world. If you can sound good on a New York bandstand, you can sound good on *anybody's* bandstand. If you're not playing good in New York, nobody will stay too long. They'll go down the street to the next club to see who's sounding good. If you can keep the room happening and full, then something's happening. If it gets empty real fast, then you're not ready to receive your final degree.

SF: You've just written your own drum book, which is being published by Carl Fisher. Why does the world need another drum book?

KC: Most of the drum books I see deal with *beats*, but they don't tell you the thought process that went into devising these beats. And if they're beats transcribed from records, they don't tell you how those drummers achieved the sounds on the records. I want to get to the root of the problem by telling students how to create a certain beat to fit a certain situation at that moment, and how to use improvisation no matter what kind of music they're playing.

All of the great players I've heard on records, in mainstream jazz or rock, created something on the spur of the moment. They didn't look in a book and memorize a beat when they made those records. But you still see a lot of books coming out with beats—especially in the rock idiom. What about the creative process?

My book stresses building a foundation



Keith Copeland uses a Gretsch kit consisting of a 14 x 18 bass drum, a 5 1/2 x 14 snare, an 8 x 12 mounted tom and a 14 x 14 floor tom. His Sabian cymbal setup includes 14" HH hi-hats, an 18" AA medium crash/ride, a 20" AA medium ride with rivets, and a 20" HH dark ride. His sticks are made by Vic Firth.

in coordination, and how to use it creatively to fit any and all situations that you'll run into as a pro drummer/performer. I've been working these things out and getting results since 1970; it's a culmination of my professional experience. Then I drew from my analysis of all my favorite drummers, their work, and how they solved creative problems. My book is a compilation of all those records, amplified through my teaching at Berklee for eight semesters.

I had to be able to teach in a rather limited time span of a half hour, and get a maximum amount of information to the students. It was difficult, but I learned how to do it. Half the problem with teaching is trying to figure out what psychological handicap each person has to overcome to be a good drummer, *if* the person has an inherently good time feel. You need time to know the person before you can figure out the problem.

I think my book will help people to think more creatively. I cover all aspects of music, even Latin American, and the notation is very simple. The descriptions for the coordination and technical exercises are brief but very clear. Once you execute the exercises, you will then be able to listen to other drummers and understand what you're hearing them play. Then you can understand what creative process was used.

SF: Let's consider somebody who wants to study the great jazz drummers, but whose only listening/playing experience has been in rock. Can you name some key drummers you'd recommend and also some key albums?

KC: A person interested in bebop, post-bop, hard bop, mainstream—all those titles having to do with the swing idiom—would have to listen to people like Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers. All of those records are good. There are some special ones, like the early records with Clifford Brown on trumpet. The first Jazz Messengers record I heard was a two-record set recorded in 1955 called *Live At The Cafe Bohemia*. That's good for starters. There were a couple of Blakey albums recorded live at Birdland. Then, in the '60s, there was an excellent album called *Moanin'*, and one with Curtis Fuller, Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter called *Mosaic*. There were two other live records in a series by Art: *At The Jazz Corner Of The World* and *Meet You At The Jazz Corner Of The World*. Those were very, very fine records that sound fresh to this day. Even the albums that Art's recorded recently with Wynton Marsalis are great, like *Live At The Keystone Korner*.

SF: What about Art Blakey/Thelonious Monk collaborations?

KC: They are some of the most incredible recordings in the world. The interaction between Art and Monk was so special.

"ALL OF THE GREAT PLAYERS CREATED SOMETHING ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT. THEY DIDN'T LOOK IN A BOOK AND MEMORIZE A BEAT."



That reached, almost, the level of Coltrane and Elvin. I think Art Blakey did the best with Monk out of all the drummers. But, I also enjoy listening to Monk with Frankie Dunlop. Frankie did as great as anybody after Art. I really enjoyed the way Ben Riley played with Monk. Billy Higgins sounded wonderful with Monk on a record called *Thelonious Monk Live At The Jazz Workshop*. A serious listener should listen to *all* of Duke Ellington's records. Horace Silver has never made a bad record. And Cannonball Adderley made some really fine records. He made a record called *Somethin' Else*, which is a classic!

Any of the records that Max Roach made with Clifford Brown are unbelievable. All of the Miles Davis records from the '50s are priceless. I would definitely recommend a series of albums Miles recorded with his quintet for Prestige that were originally issued as *Cookin'*, *Workin'*, *Relaxin'* and *Steamin'*. In a later quintet with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams and George Coleman, Miles made a record called *Four And More*. That's some of the best work that I've ever heard Tony Williams do.

These are records that wouldn't do anybody any harm if they really wanted to quickly get into what was happening at

that time period. From there they'd have to do some research. If you get to *that* music, then you can understand what came after that. Don't just start listening to music that was recorded after 1970. Listen to all the Charlie Parker and Lester Young music. That's *very* important. That music came before the music we were just talking about. Then you can get a better grasp of what John Coltrane did. And if you study all of Coltrane's recorded work, then you'll get quite a history of the evolution of the music.

SF: What artists would you recommend for study to someone who is interested in the history of big band drumming?

KC: You can't go wrong with Count Basie. One record I really liked was *Live At The Sands* with Count Basie and Frank Sinatra. Sonny Payne is the drummer and the arrangements are by Quincy Jones. That's one of the greatest records of a combined big band/vocalist performance.

I have to mention Duke Ellington again. Then there were the bands led by Maynard Ferguson in the late '50s. Some of Stan Kenton's things were very, very unique, as were the records by Johnny Richards, who did a lot of arrangements for Kenton. Woody Herman has consistently had good groups of musicians. Later on we get to the

continued on page 104

PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Pearl Drum Rack/Sota Shells

PEARL DRUM RACK



If a clutter of stand bases on your kit is visually unappealing to you, then Pearl has a way to clear the floor with their new *Drum Rack*, a collapsible, open-ended square frame made of aluminum. The *Rack* allows tom-tom mount arms, cymbal posts, and even microphones to be attached to its large bars, eliminating 80% of your kit's floor stands. (Snare stands, hi-hats, and floor toms stay on the floor.)

In order to accomplish this, special *BT-1* mounting brackets have been fabricated. Pearl's *BT-1* is the standard split-clamp bracket used on their tom-toms. The *BT-1*s have been mated with wide, C-clamp style fittings and will grip onto any of the *Rack*'s bars at any location. Brackets designated *PC-1* will accept 7/8" diameter tubing—like

Pearl's tom-tom arms, cymbal holders, and the top sections of their 800 and 900 cymbal stands. *PC-2* brackets will accept a lightweight pipe, due to their slimmer openings.

The *Rack* has six steel joints which connect a front bar, two side bars, and four legs. These joints allow the legs, as well as the side bars, to fold up compactly and still remain attached as a single unit. Once set up, the legs are locked in place using large T-bolts. All the ends have square rubber caps. Since drum setups can flare in or out, the side bars can swivel, allowing you to change the angles and the amount of space on both sides to accommodate individual setups. However, no matter how it is positioned, you can only enter and exit the

setup from the rear (or by ducking underneath the bar, if possible).

Model *DR-1* is the smaller of the two available *Racks*, measuring 27" high, by 53" wide, by 46 1/2" deep. (The *DR-2* is 65" wide for use with double bass drums.) The *DR-1* comes supplied with only four of the *PC-1* bracket clamps. Pearl should include more of these as a "starter," since almost everyone considering the *Rack* is likely to have more than two toms and two cymbals to mount up (or three toms and one cymbal, etc.). However, the *PC-1* clamps can be purchased separately at \$20.00 each. The lighter-weight *PC-2*s list at \$15.00, and if used with Pearl's *MH-80* mic' holders, drumkit miking can be done without the usual flurry of mic' stand bases everywhere.

My own kit includes three mounted toms, two *RotoToms*, and six cymbals. With a little creativity, I managed to fit everything on the *Rack* quite comfortably, using some Pearl *AX-20* and *AX-30* adaptors to connect pipes to other pipes, instead of going for all *PC-1* clamps. The *Rack* shook just a tiny bit under hard playing, but overall, it was balanced pretty well.

Due to its imposing size, the *Rack* might be difficult to use in a lounge setting (or any other place where you're cramped for space), but in concert or large club situations, it offers a sleek, modern appearance while allowing more exact positioning of drums and cymbals.

The *DR-1* retails at \$475.00; the *DR-2* at \$500.00.

SOTA SNARE DRUMS



SOTA (State-Of-The-Art) Percussion is making snare drum shells available in three varieties of wood: American walnut, African padauk, and Brazilian rosewood.

SOTA's shells are composed of dozens of pieces of solid wood, arranged so that all grains run in the same direction. The shell is 5/8" thick, with a diameter slightly undersized at 13 7/8". During construction,

the shell is glued and pressed under 1,800 pounds of continuous pressure.

Positioned vertically in the shell are 32 hardwood reinforcement dowels, making it very difficult for the drum body to go out of round. With all these specs, SOTA is able to produce a large bearing edge on both sides, having a 45° concave inner angle and a 22° outer angle.

The walnut shell's overall sound is flat with a minimum of overtones. Padauk is the warmest sounding, with maximum overtones. Rosewood is the brightest, with a full range of overtones. SOTA makes each variety available in 5", 6 1/2", and 8" depths, and will mount any choice of hardware for you, or just supply the basic shell itself.

I played an 8" padauk drum which was fitted with Tama hardware, *Diplomat* heads, and die-cast rims. After using the die-cast hoops, I experimented with

pressed hoops, and found the sound of the rimshot more pleasing to my own ears. The drumshell resonated clearly. SOTA compares it to a marimba bar, and I agree. The tonal quality was just amazing. I found the drum to have great volume and sensitivity throughout the dynamic range. The padauk (as well as the undrilled 5" rosewood body I saw) had a masterful appearance with a patchwork effect.

I was very impressed with the painstaking work that the people at SOTA have undertaken to come out with such an instrument. This is truly "state-of-the-art." I cannot think of any other custom shell that surpasses it.

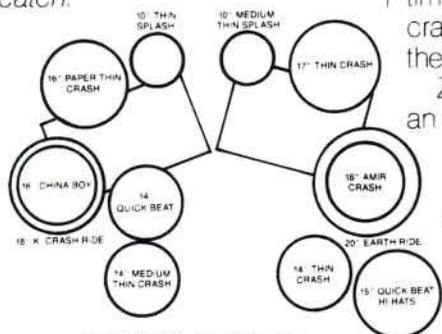
SOTA shells in walnut range from \$275 to \$350 unmounted, padauk from \$425 to \$500, and rosewood from \$625 to \$700. For more info: SOTA Percussion, PO Box 528064, Chicago, IL 60652. (312) 737-0439.



JONATHAN MOFFETT

THE ONE-HANDED CYMBAL CATCH

Late one evening during a marathon practice session at his home in New Orleans, Jonathan Moffett came up with a special technique to do a cymbal crash within the rhythm pattern without affecting the overall flow or timing of the rhythm. By hitting and catching the cymbal with the same hand, he found that his other hand and feet could continue the rhythm beneath the cymbal catch.



Jonathan's Live Set-Up

"You hit the side of the cymbal midway up the stick, slide it off the edge, then you catch the cymbal with the same hand for a controlled 'choke' effect. I can control the amount of cymbal decay after the first hit by timing the closing of my hand. This gives me anything from a knife-edge sound to a hi-hat effect. Doing the catch with both hands lets me double the effect.

"I've found this technique to be especially effective for soloing and easily applicable to odd time accent situations.

When you do it between alternating hands, it can be mixed into the rhythm for some very colorful drum/cymbal combinations.

"With the Jacksons, I'll use it to accent certain moments before the vocal chorus. Or when Michael makes a move and stops real quick, I'll accent that with a catch. You've got to do it fast and drop back into the rhythm without breaking time. My Thin and Paper Thin crashes work well here because they're easy to control."

Zildjian cymbals have played an important part in the ongoing development of Jonathan's exciting approach to the drum set.

"Zildjian helps me make those special statements in

my music—they're always exploring new sounds. From my early growing years 'til now, A Zildjians have helped me find my sound. The A Zildjian Brilliants are my personal favorites. They have a bright, sparkling sound that works great live or in the studio where your equipment is under the most intense scrutiny.

"When I hear a dark passage in the music, I call upon my K Zildjians. My new Amirs give me that cutting edge when I need it. I incorporate a representative of each Zildjian cymbal into my various set-ups to give me that spectrum of colors in sound that I use to paint my pictures in music."

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Jonathan Moffett is currently on tour with
Michael Jackson & The Jacksons

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For starters, Frankie Banali looks like a heavy metal rock drummer. His long, shaggy and curly black hair coupled with a face of innocence turned sour seems just right for one who pounds the beat for an outfit such as Quiet Riot. At the time of this interview, Banali claimed he could count the number of times on one hand he had spoken at length with a journalist. Yet Banali carried himself with a surprising confidence and an ability to answer each and every question asked him. Much of that is due to his incessant eagerness and infinite energy, which are two characteristics, by the way, that fit perfectly with his drum style.

As Banali tells it, he's been playing drums and been in and out of bands for a lot longer than most people think. The fact that Quiet Riot has made a dent, and a big one at that, in the contemporary music scene is, as his friends say, a testament to his persistency and dogged determination to make a living playing drums. "I'm the type of drummer who thinks drums a/l the time and feels that, without my input, the group would fall apart," says Banali. "That way I'm constantly striving to be the best I can whenever and wherever I play."

I caught up with Frankie Banali between dates with Black Sabbath, just as Metal Health, the band's best-selling debut album, was settling in at the top of the charts. Quiet Riot was on a roll and everyone in the band, especially Banali, was thoroughly enjoying their newfound suc-

cess.

RS: I think the huge success of Quiet Riot and, especially, the album *Metal Health* took a lot of people by surprise.

FB: That's very true. I don't think anyone expected us to do as well as we did with *Metal Health*. We knew the record was real good, but we didn't know how many people out in the real world would agree with us.

RS: A lot of people who bought the record have no idea that Quiet Riot, in one form or another, has been around for some time.

FB: Yeah, the original band started out in 1975, but even beyond that Rudy Sarzo, the bass player, and myself have been working together for 12 years. We met in 1972 when I was in a three-piece band back East called Ginger. At the time, we were doing a lot of opening slots for headliners like the Faces and David Bowie. The last gig Ginger did was in late '72. I didn't know Rudy at the time, but he was out in the audience for that show. About a week later I was in a bar and Rudy came up to me and introduced himself. He thought I was Ginger's bass player and began telling me how much he liked the drummer. I just sat there and let him make a fool of himself for about a half hour, and then I told him who I was. Well, he just turned and walked away. That's how it started with the two of us.

RS: The old Slade song, "Cum On Feel The Noize," was Quiet Riot's breakthrough single. Whose idea was it to record the song?

FB: When we were recording *Metal Health*, our producer, Spencer Proffer, wanted what he called a "safety" track. The thing with "Cum On Feel The Noize" was that it was a hit for Slade everywhere but in the United States. Spencer thought the song would fit in real good with our originals, so we recorded it. We didn't even rehearse the song because the band wasn't too crazy about doing it. So we didn't take it too seriously, which is probably why it sounds so fresh. We sat down and ran through it once. Between Spencer and myself, we worked out the arrangement and fine tuned it. Then the band cut it. It was that simple.

RS: Do you do a lot of the song arrangements for Quiet Riot?

FB: Yeah. See, what happens is Kevin DuBrow, our lead singer, and Carlos Cavazo,

Quiet Riot's

our guitarist, will get together and write a tune. Then they'll play it for me, and we'll just sit around and bounce ideas off each other. I'll tell them things like, "Put this part over here" or "Take that riff out" or whatever. They leave all that up to me. They trust me with my job, and I trust them when it comes to writing the songs in the first place.

RS: I'm sure you must have a lot to say about what drum parts go with what song.

FB: Yeah, I do, but my main concern is not playing drums. My main concern is playing songs. I'm really a song-oriented musician. I'll find the right feel for the song and take out all the drum fills that shouldn't be there. I take out the things that most drummers would definitely like to put in and keep in. My job is to find a tempo that is comfortable for me and for the rest of the band. Once I find the pocket, I stay there.

RS: Quiet Riot's sound is very aggressive, very bold, straightforward and quite heavy. Your drum style, it seems, can be described in pretty much the same terms.

FB: It could. You're right. I'm finished with trying to prove to myself and everyone else that I can do this and that on the drums. I'm beyond that sort of thing. I don't ever expect to be voted the winner of any drum awards or drum polls because I'm a band player. I don't like to stick out.

RS: As a heavy metal drummer, what is your most pressing responsibility?

FB: To hold down the fort. My role is to keep the group in the pocket at all times, no matter what's happening around me. For example, if Kevin or Carlos does something really crazy, I can't jump on the bandwagon and go along with him. If I did, the song would become a free-for-all, which I'm not really interested in being a part of.

RS: Heavy metal drummers, on the whole, have a reputation for being very loud players. Would that include you?

FB: On stage I have to play pretty loud because of the nature of the music and all the activity that's going on in front of me. The rest of the band has got to hear me, so they never have to wonder where the bottom is. I want to make sure that, if Rudy, Carlos or Kevin wants to go out on the edge, he won't have to worry about not being able to come back down. I haven't got any illusions about being up front or in the spotlight because that's not the drummer's role. Sure, I have to give our fans some-

Frankie Banali

thing to watch as well as listen to, but I have to do it in a controlled way. The big thing for me is to believe that no matter how good I think our band is, if I didn't have my drumming together and I wasn't happening, then Quiet Riot wouldn't be happening either. Once I stop functioning properly, then so will the band. I like to put that kind of pressure on myself. I like the challenge of playing a big part in the function of the band. The band knows that if I'm together, they're together. And that's all I really have to know.

RS: Let's talk a little about your background. Where were you brought up?

FB: In New York—Queens to be more exact.

RS: You were living in Los Angeles, however, when you joined Quiet Riot, right?

FB: Yeah. I was going back and forth between New York, Florida and California doing the usual drummer routine. At one time, I actually was in five bands at once. This was in Los Angeles, and I did it out of desperation because I really had no other choice. I played with one band because it provided me with a place to live. I played with another band because the guys in the group fed me. I played with yet another band because it paid 20 dollars a week, which kept me in drumsticks. I played with the other two bands because they were better than the other three. [laughs].

RS: When was it that you began playing with Rudy Sarzo, your bass player?

FB: Back in the mid-'70s we were in a lot of bands together. We jumped on the progressive rock scene. We listened to and played a lot of Yes, Genesis and King Crimson. We were in about eight or nine bands that never played anything in four, so much so that when I went back to playing in four, I almost had to relearn it. But these bands we were in never played anywhere; all we did, it seemed, was rehearse and rehearse some more. I think we did one real gig. Finally Rudy split to join a band that was playing the Midwest. This was about 1976. A little later I got a phone call from him. He said the band was having problems with their drummer, so I joined the group for about a year. It was nothing more than a bar band. When the group split up, I decided to go back to L.A. One week later Rudy showed up, but then I left again. I went to Germany, of all places, to do some recording. While I was there Rudy joined Quiet Riot, and when I came back

he wanted me to join the group. But I didn't want to.

RS: Why was that?

FB: Well, they were a great looking band, but they did pop-oriented songs. Now the story really gets confusing because Rudy and Randy Rhoades, the guitarist, left to join Ozzy Osbourne. Kevin then took over and formed a band called DuBrow with me on drums. We hired and fired guitar and bass players like they were going out of style, because we were looking for someone who could play like Rudy and someone who could fill Randy's shoes. Well, we finally found Carlos, and a few months later, Rudy was back with us. And that's the true story of how Quiet Riot became Quiet Riot.

RS: During my research for this interview I saw where you once referred to yourself as a "musical whore" in those early days. Did you say that sarcastically, or did you really have such a low respect for yourself?

FB: What I meant by that remark was that working in DuBrow before Quiet Riot got rolling didn't bring in any money, which made it impossible to live. So I kind of viewed the group DuBrow as my wife, and all the other projects and bands I was in as my mistresses.

RS: Are you a schooled musician? Did you take drum lessons as a kid?

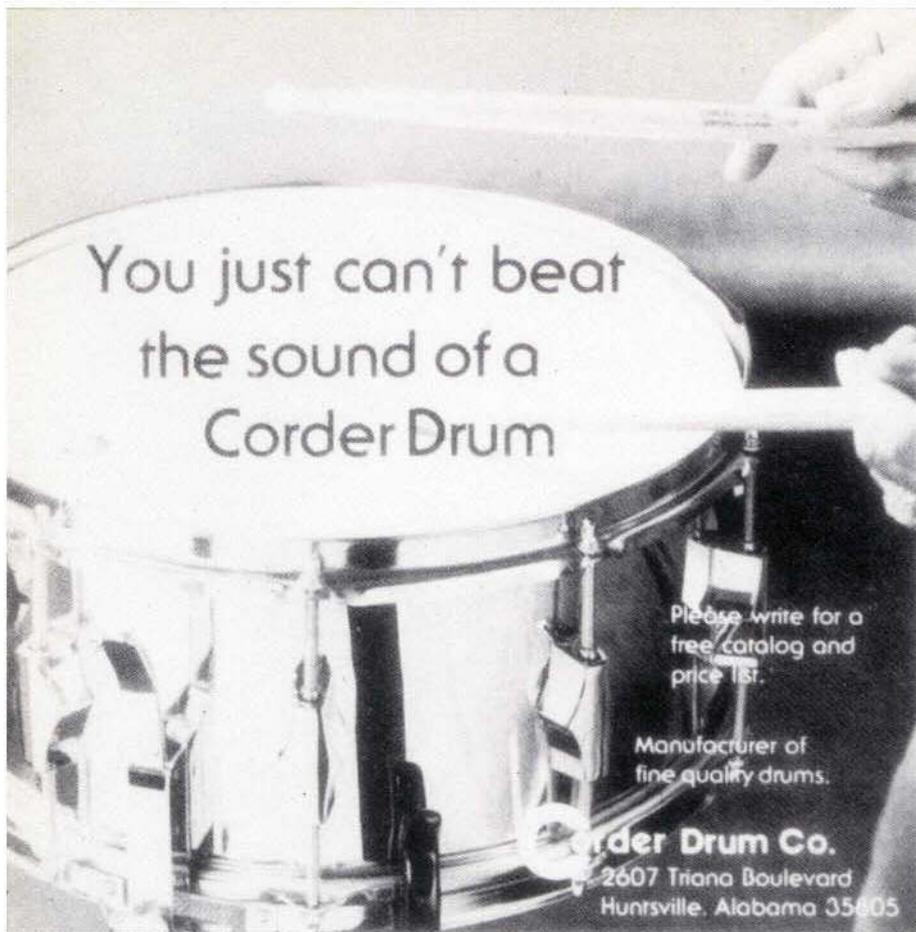
FB: I took formal lessons when I was 14 years old in a little music store on Long Island called Debelles. I took lessons for about a year so I could feel my way through the rudiments. But I realized that, once I had gotten past that, I was becoming a copy of what my teacher was. Well, I didn't want to be a copy of a drum teacher because I didn't want to be a teacher. Then I did the usual thing: I listened to the Beatles and put together a couple of basement bands. We did Beatles songs, things by the Dave Clark Five, and by the Stones. From there I graduated to a band that did Italian weddings and bar mitzvahs. We played polkas and "O Sole Mio." Believe it or not, that was a good experience for me.

RS: Who do you consider your main influences as far as drummers go?

FB: John Bonham of Led Zeppelin was definitely one very big influence. So were Carmine Appice, especially when he played with the Vanilla Fudge and Cactus, and the really important people in jazz like the great Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. I should also mention Michael Giles, Bill Bruford, Tony Williams and Billy Cobham too. These days, though, I don't listen to that many rock 'n' roll drummers because I'm afraid of picking up some of their things. But one drummer I think is totally amazing is Simon Phillips. It's



Photo by Robert Santelli



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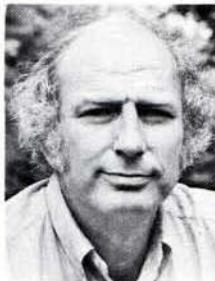
and performing in the percussion ensemble* is to separate you from your talent, time, and money. They immerse you in the study of mallet instruments, tympani, theory, and arranging simply because they do not have the know-how to completely involve you in the thing you really want—the drum set. The result is the mediocrity of so-called "Total Percussion".

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*Vaudeville has not died. It has been resurrected in the percussion ensemble.



great to see a drummer who is that good. See, I'm still a fan and I'm still constantly learning as far as playing the drums go. One thing I do is check out a lot of the bands we play with. I get to watch a lot of drummers in really great bands without having to pay the ticket price. And I wind up learning something every night.

RS: Quiet Riot has certainly done more than its share of touring this year and last. Up until recently, however, the group has been mostly an opening act. I know that last year Quiet Riot opened for ZZ Top, Loverboy, Iron Maiden and Black Sabbath among others. Does it frustrate you that, when you open for a major band such as say, ZZ Top, most of the kids in the audience came to hear them rather than you?

FB: No, not at all because it's really a lot of fun going up on a stage not really knowing whether the crowd is going to like you or hate you. Crowds are notorious, especially in the East, for only going to see the headliner. So it becomes a great challenge to the band and to me personally to win them over. Once the lights go out, we just go out on the stage and do the best we can. I have got to say though that, when *Metal Health* was climbing up the charts, it was almost like a lot of the kids in the audience considered us co-headliners if you judge by the kind of response we got. That made us feel really great, believe me.

RS: Can you give me a quick rundown of what makes up your drumkit these days?

FB: Well, I'm using on stage two 16 x 26 bass drums; 16 x 14 and 18 x 18 floor toms; and 11 x 13 and 12 x 14 rack toms. All of those are double-headed drums. As for snare drums, I've been using a 6 1/2 x 14 metal and an 8 x 14 maple, but Pearl just sent me a 6 1/2 x 14 free-floating snare. There's no hardware attached to the shell. It sounds so good that I've stopped using the other snares because I like the new one so much. My hi-hats and crash cymbals are heavies, and I also have a 23" Ludwig machine timpani.

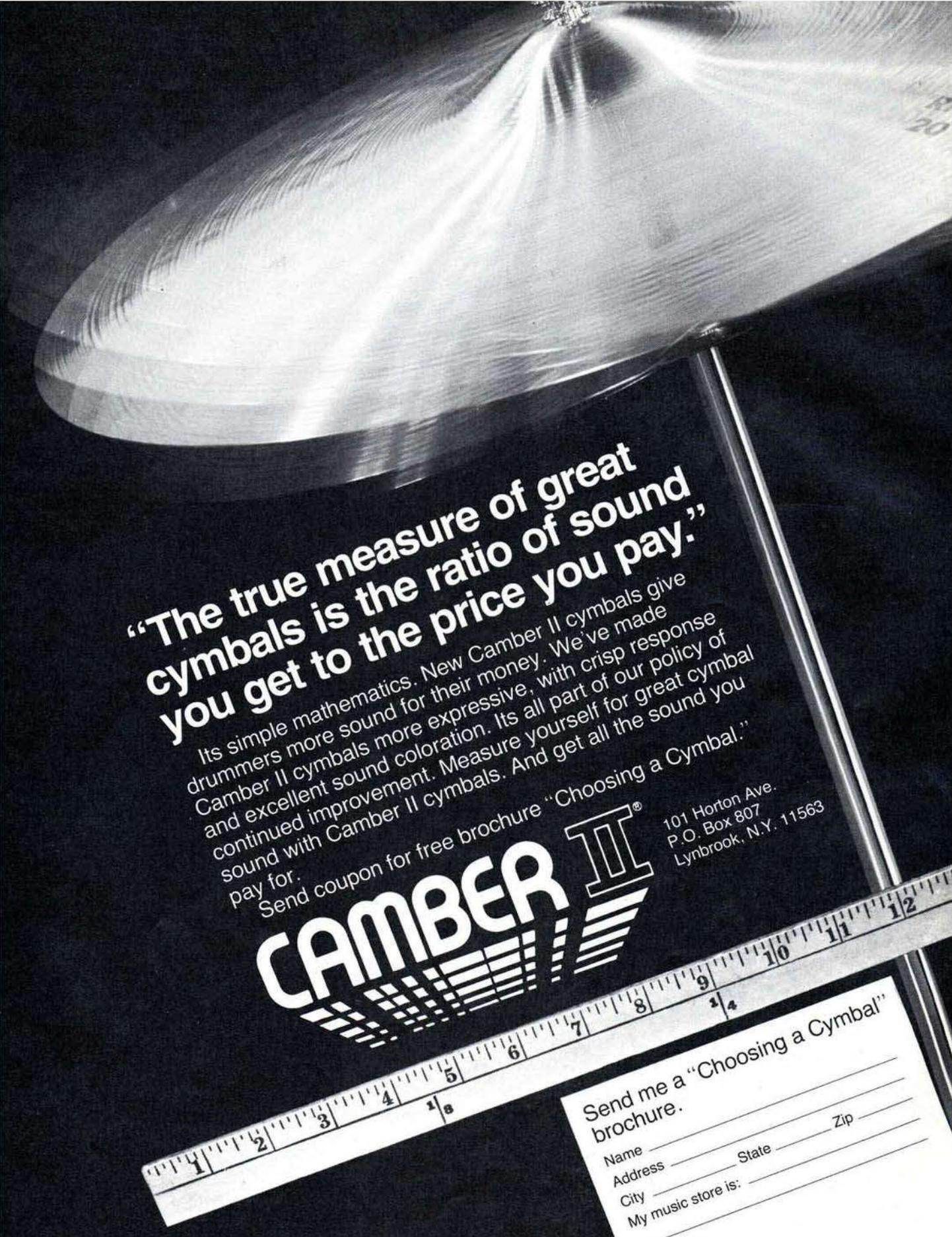
RS: Sounds like quite a setup.

FB: Yeah, my drum riser is kind of like a condominium. I'm thinking of putting in a kitchenette. [laughs]

RS: Being on the road so much and playing as much as you have been, have you encountered any problems with sounding stale or fatigued on occasion?

FB: We figured that last year we played about 220 gigs. But the excitement level is maintained for me because I'm in a band with all my friends, which doesn't happen very often. That's a real advantage. Another thing that keeps me going is that just about all the shows we've been doing are made up of kids who have never seen us play before. That makes us want to work extra hard. And finally there's the fun aspect of it all. Let's face it, playing rock 'n' roll and getting paid for it is a whole lot of fun.





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Londin continued from page 13

moves a little bit from there, it doesn't bother me. For the young drummers who are trying to be studio conscious, though, the biggest thing they can think about is their time. People ask, "How do you get good time?" Nobody can teach you feel, but you can at least learn to keep time. If you have normal drum fills that are second nature to you, play them with a metro-

nome sometime and see where you come out. If you come out behind or ahead of the metronome, work with it until you're playing right with it naturally. Then your time, even without the metronome, will be good. Probably one of the greatest timekeepers of all time is Roger Hawkins. He has impeccable time. And the feel! First he plays with feel, and then just so happens to

play impeccable time. It's frightening sometimes.

RF: The last *Modern Drummer* article on you indicated that you were playing double bass all the time—live and in the studio.

LL: I do on certain dates. There are not many Nashville country dates that call for double bass drums. I have done it for Jerry Reed, a rock group called Jackson Hawke, Dan Hill, Adrian, and a number of artists. I would prefer having a different setup for each artist, but it's really hard to do that because a lot of times they're hiring me because of what I played on another record, or the songs are so similar that I've got to stick with the standards of the record business. So, in a sense, I've conformed to that setup and that's what I do, but with Adrian, it's not that way. As a matter of fact, we're working on a new drum setup now for both of us. We're both going to have a drum setup, and I'll also have timpani, timbales, *RotoToms* and a whole slew of different things.

RF: Watching you with Adrian, it impressed me that you used the double bass drums within the songs instead of just during solo time. Can you explain your approach to and application of the double bass?

LL: I utilize both bass drums for rhythm. It's like having a conga player or a percussion section play with me. I hear this rhythm that's within what we're already playing, and I put my left foot on the left

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bass drum and play this pattern opposite what I'm playing with my right bass drum. It's got to be something that's rhythmic, and that's within the pattern we're already playing. I'm not trying to be a double bass drum flash; I'm trying to find this roll rhythm that will just keep it moving. I'll play a pattern on my right bass drum, and I'll take my left foot, which I would normally use on my hi-hat, move it over to the other bass drum, and play that same thing on the bass drum. All of a sudden these patterns start working together and it sounds like I'm doing double bass drum parts when I'm really not. I'm just playing a pattern. It sounds like I really know what I'm doing double bass drum-wise.

RF: You could have fooled me.

LL: Well, it fools a lot of people—a lot of double bass drum players. Within solos I can do little ruffs and triplets and things like that, but in a song, I think there's more than just playing quarter notes and just one bass drum pattern. I think you can make up a double pattern that will absolutely drive a band off a stage. That's what I attempt to do with Adrian. It sounds like I'm doing more than I'm doing. I can't play them like a Steve Smith or a Louie Bellson. I don't play like that, but even as a drummer, I consider myself a rhythm player. Nothing excites me more than driving a band—just hitting a pocket over and over until I've got everyone on that stage grinning. That's really exciting for me.

When you make the band sound good, you obviously make yourself sound good, no matter what kind of music you're playing. That's what I want to be able to do. It's a great feeling to just kick them all off the stage—just really play so good, time-wise, drive-wise, everything.

RF: How often do you get a chance to really do that in the studio? How often do you record live versus overdubbing?

LL: A lot of times there's a lot of overdubbing. I've gone in where everything was done prior to my being there—where they had another drummer or no drummer—and I'd go in and overdub the whole thing. Then it just gets to technicalities. You hope to God you can make something feel good, but generally it gets so technical that you're just trying to get from one point to the other point without screwing up. In a lot of cases where there are bands and the musicians are there, that same feeling occurs when you're hitting a pocket. A pocket is a pocket, no matter whether it's a bebop swing, an 8th-note thing or whatever. When you hit it and everybody's smiling and getting off, that's the same feeling as on stage. You just don't hear anybody applauding. Nobody walks up and pats you on the back, which is why I went out on the road. Everybody would like to think they don't have an ego, but after a while, I don't care how nice a person you are, or how much your family tells you how good you are, or how big a bank

account you've got, you like to have somebody say, "Man, you really play great." It's more important that you know that you played great, but it's great to have somebody applaud and get all of that feedback instantly.

RF: Is there a fair amount of live recording done in Nashville?

LL: Oh yeah, that's practically all it is. You might have an instance where you're overdubbing, like I've done for a number of people like Jim Reeves, Elvis and people who just keep the vocal and replace the rest of the band. So I've added to those things, and then on some tapes, there have been people who have said, "Well, I don't like the drum sound. Can we replace the drummer and put you on?" There are those kinds of situations, but I would say a good 90% of my stuff is all live playing with musicians. Nashville recording is unlike any recording anywhere. It's really a lot of fun. They don't bring in someone one day and someone else the next day like they do here in L.A. When you go in, you've got a rhythm section, and generally you have a singer.

I did an album recently for Tom Jones and I was so excited that I was going to get to play with him. That was one of the things I always wanted to do, and I mentioned it at a Chicago Zildjian Day clinic. They asked me who, out of all the people I hadn't done, would I like to do, so I mentioned Tom Jones. I got home and got a

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call for a Tom Jones album. I got there and came to find out he wasn't going to be there. It was all tracks. In that situation, it's not any fun and all the other musicians felt the same way. We all wanted to meet Tom Jones. He's so funky and sings so great that it would have been fun. Certain things you have to overdub on and certain things you don't, but at home, most of the stuff is live. Everything there is based on feel. How can you create feel without the people there? They say the records here feel great, but I disagree when the records have been done with a Linn machine. They're just mechanical. They don't go anywhere. They have a groove that's the same from beginning to end and there's no heart. Music started out having a heart and a soul. The minute there is no heart or soul, something is wrong somewhere. Sure, I'll play it just the way they want it, with their machines or without their machines, but it doesn't necessarily make it good.

I did an album with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, which Chet was producing. I was so excited about doing it. It was the last album they ever did together. When I got the album, not only did I not get credit on it, I wasn't even *on* the album. They just used me to keep the band together and then they took the drums off, but I wasn't told that. And I had tried to be real inventive in doing this album too, with all these creative little sounds. I used a practice pad on top of the snare drum to get a very high-

pitched sound and stay out of the way of the register of the guitars. I used that practice pad a lot with Chet Atkins when he played classical or acoustic guitar. Playing regular snare drum you get in the same register, so I used nylon brushes and all these things that would get me in a higher register. A lot of drummers will turn their snare drum over and play on the snare side to create a higher pitched sound.

RF: You were a forerunner with the Simmons and actually one of the first three people in the United States to respond to them. I wondered why, and what kind of reaction you had in the Nashville studio?

LL: I heard them, saw them, and got excited about them. I was in London where the TV music shows are all live. I was watching a show when I heard an incredible drum sound from this group called Money. I saw that the drummer was playing Simmons, and then I saw him in a music store and asked him about the kit. He said it was taken directly from the drumkit to the board and that was the sound I heard when I heard them perform. It took me a year to track them down at a trade show and I made Glynn Thomas [U.S. representative for Simmons] sell me the set he had there. I got them back home and kept them in my basement for about six months, just trying to find out what I could get them to sound like. I worked with them, and kept calling Glynn and bugging him. I used them on a session for Merle

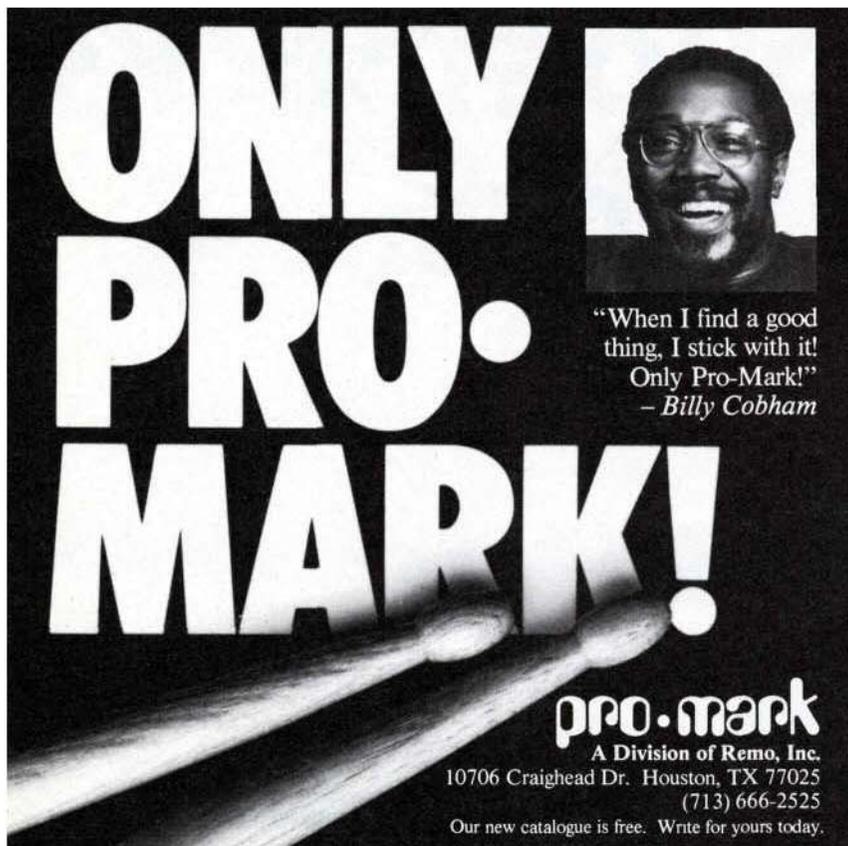
Haggard and the producer was Ray Baker, who is not a drum freak anyway. I think the Simmons were just too much for him and he preferred to have traditional drums, but the record was a smash. I used them on that one date, because I already had them there and the engineer had gotten a sound. He was really into it. I used the bass drum, the toms, the electric cymbal, and the electric hi-hat cymbal. I also used my acoustic snare triggered by a *Clap Trap* pick-up which, in turn, triggered the Simmons snare, so we had two snares that blended together. I used the traditional snare just to get a click.

There are a lot of people in town who do a lot of pop stuff too and I've used the Simmons on all other things. It got to a point where my work was consisting of about 75% Simmons and 25% regular acoustic drums. That's saying a lot. I was the first one to have Syndrums in town too. I find things like a Syndrum or a Pearl *Syncussion*, and I've used electronic stuff on a lot of hit records long before the Simmons or the Syndrums. I use whatever it takes to make a hit record. If it takes playing on a cardboard box, then I'll play on a cardboard box.

RF: With all that you've done, can you think of some sessions that might have been magical?

LL: Yeah, there have been quite a few that have been magical. I don't know if anybody can pin down the reason why something is magical. Probably one of my highlights was a B.B. King album [*Love Me Tender*] I did in Nashville that sadly didn't do as well as we thought it would do. If there is such a thing as something magical, B.B. King is a magical person. He wanted to come to Nashville but he didn't want to work with all these new people. I was told that, once he found out I would be there, he felt better because we had done some clinics and shows at the NAMM show together. He came in very uptight. He was just about to lose his voice from nerves, which is amazing. Here's a legend. There ain't no bigger blues man in the world! If you want to learn to play a shuffle, play it with B.B. King. I'd just sit there and listen to him play and I'd forget to play. He got his guitar out, and of course, we were all asking for the songs he'd already recorded. We all wanted to play "The Thrill Is Gone" just once, and we did. I have it on tape, as a matter of fact. We did this album and he relaxed more and more every day. The tracks just happened. They were first takes. He literally screamed at the end of every track we did, and he said it was the greatest album he had cut since he started recording.

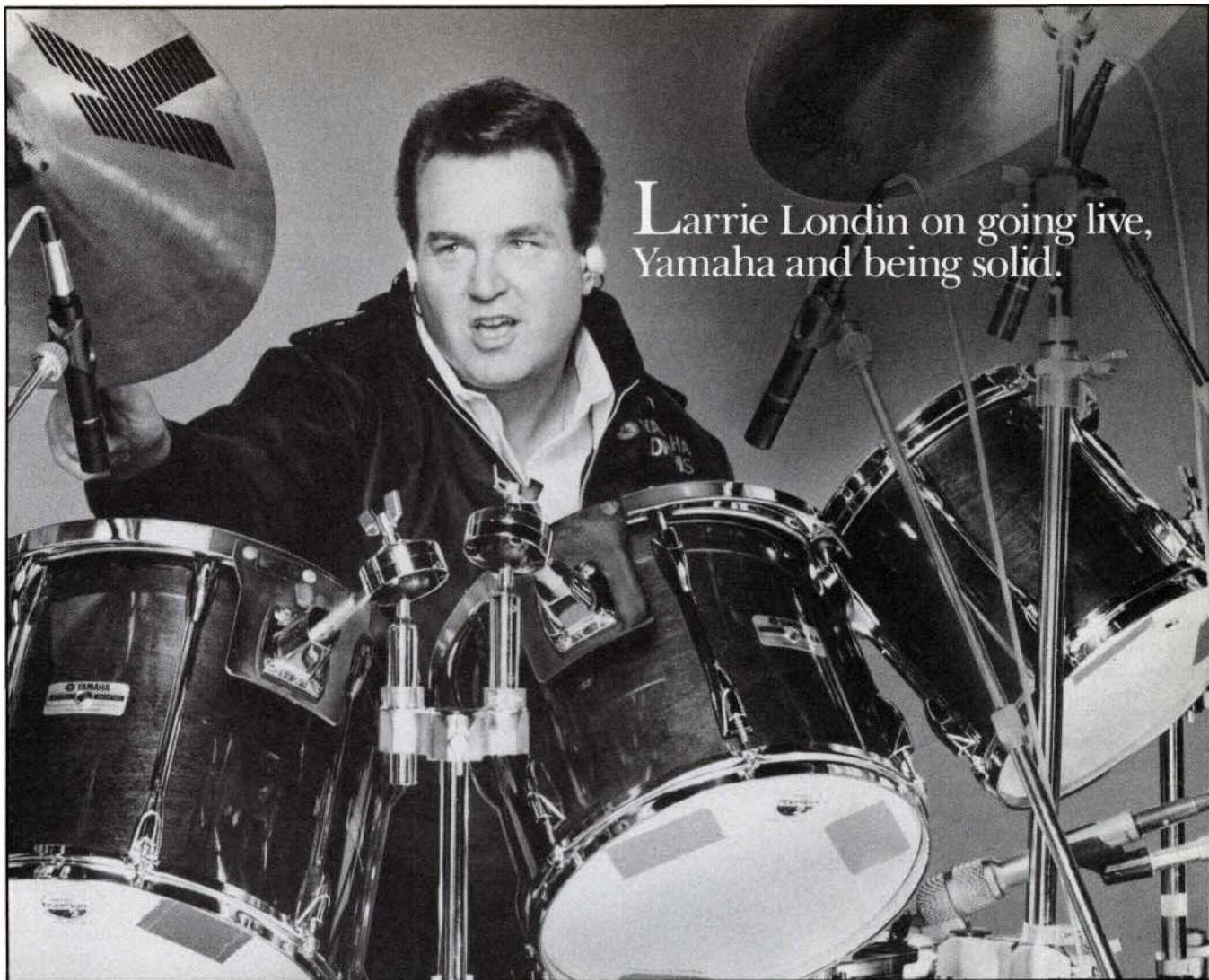
When we did Adrian's album, I think there was only one track on there that wasn't a first take. We did one track three times and I think he kept the first one. There was an album with Les Paul and Chet Atkins called *Lester And Chester*,



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and an album I did with Olivia Newton-John. She was petrified of being in Nashville. Here's Olivia Newton-John afraid of being in Nashville! It felt magical. There were great songs and she's an incredible singer. She sang as great for the rundowns we had as she did on the album. B.J. Thomas is another one. He can sing as great the first time as he can the last time. Dan Hill is another one. There have been a number of wonderful sessions in my life, and I feel real lucky about that. When they're that good, there has to be something a little magical about them. No one can say, "This is a hit," but you know there is something special about it because everybody is not in the control room jumping around for no reason.

RF: What was it like working with Elvis?

LL: Up until recently it was probably the hardest show I'd ever done, physically and mentally. When I played the show, I had to play it cold. We had these rehearsals set up at Graceland, but they ended up not happening. He came down one night and sang two or three bars of different songs. Then he went back up to bed. That was supposed to be our rehearsal for the tour. The next day we found ourselves in Johnson City, Tennessee, and there was supposed to be a rehearsal. He wasn't going to be there anyway, but the rehearsal was called off because of a bomb threat. I kept saying to Felton Jarvis, his producer who was helping out on the road, "When are we re-

hearsing?" And he said "Well, we're going to have to do the show." So I walked out there with no rehearsal other than two weeks of listening to tapes that were voice and drums with Ronnie Tutt. I listened to these tapes and made my own charts. Originally, I was told by other people that Elvis might put me down. I said, "Well, I worked it out with Felton ahead of time. If he puts me down, I have a plane ticket and I will go home." I had enough session work that I didn't really have to worry about that. And as much as I idolized the man, I wasn't about to be put in that position. What I had been told ended up being false, though.

So the show started and I was petrified. I felt as though my world was coming to an end. We did the introduction and started "See See Rider." He came on stage, we got about eight bars into it, and he did this little thing that he used to do, but I didn't know. I was reading my chart. It wasn't on the tape. He stopped the song, looked back at me and said, "What's the matter Larrie?" I said, "I don't know." So he said to start it over and we went back into the top of "See See Rider." He stopped at the same place again. I thought, "What is going on? What is the man stopping the show for?" There were 20,000 people out there screaming and again he asked what was the matter. I said, "Man, I don't know!" He asked what I was doing and I said I was reading my part. He said just to follow

him—not to worry about my part. So I took all of those charts I wrote, just threw them on the floor and kept going. We started the song again, and when we got to that part, he said, "Play toms." He was doing this stuff with his legs and so I just played a bunch of toms. After the song, he came back and said, "Anytime I do something, just play a lot of drums and don't worry about it." So we kept doing more and more of the show. I was still petrified because I didn't know what was coming next. I didn't know the tempos. I didn't know anything! There were times he'd just go into a song without a count-off. Sometimes I was supposed to start a song and I'd say, "Start what?" This went on all night. After the show I told Fenton, "Something is wrong here. This isn't the way a show is supposed to be." And he said, "No man, everything went great. He loves you." Then Elvis talked to us and said, "Hey, I dig what you're doing. When I'm doing things, just play a lot. It doesn't matter if it's on beat or off beat—just play." He was under the impression that he could pick musicians right off the street and they would know his stuff. Basically he was right, but the arrangements weren't the same as the records. He did medleys of things and it was very difficult. But Shane Keister and myself were the only new members, and it worked out fine. Normally I like to use five toms, but he specified that he wanted eight toms, so I set up all the other toms I had, but just didn't play them. I didn't even bother tuning them. He did have a problem with the bass drums when he felt they were real loud and they kept pushing him off the stage. But it was a lot of fun, and it was a big challenge for me at that time to be able to play with the person who was, and is still, considered the King of Rock 'n' Roll. He was one of a kind. I feel real fortunate that circumstances were what they were and I got to play with him. I also got to do the last two concerts with him. Ron Tutt was on the last tour, but someone in his family was sick or died. They called me up and asked if I would work the last few concerts for that tour. We worked it out, and it was Cincinnati and Indianapolis, which were the last two he ever did.

Originally I was supposed to do the '76 tour. Just as an example of what kind of person Elvis really was, before that tour, Ronnie Tutt quit and I had the gig. They offered me a year contract with great money. The tour was coming up and I got a call from Felton Jarvis telling me that Ronnie Tutt had called. He wanted the gig back so Elvis agreed to give it to him. He said, "Elvis will gladly talk to you about it to decide what you want to do. Elvis just felt that Ronnie had put in six years and he owed him another chance." And I said to Felton, "You tell Elvis that if it were me in that same position, I'd want the same amount of respect and the same chances. I



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deeply appreciate the fact that he's doing what he's doing." They made me an offer of going out on the road with double drummers, or they would pay me for a year without even going out. I just left it at, if he needed me, he should call me. I was the first one he called when Ronnie had to leave. That was the kind of person Elvis was. He never did put me down on stage. Anytime Elvis Presley would ever mention your name in front of 20,000 people, it would just bring attention to you. He was just a real prankster and would always play jokes on you. He was never putting anyone down. There are people who would disagree with that, but I never took it as a put-down. He called me his "own little mountain," and every time he said my name, it meant a great deal to me because I idolized him as a kid. I won contests singing like him, so to be a fan and play drums for him was an honor. And on top of it, I got paid for it!

It was a very physically difficult show, because from beginning to end, it was built around drums. A lot of people got to lay out in different spots while he'd do karate stuff with just the drums going on. I had freedom of what I played, but I physically had to be playing from beginning to end. It took a lot out of me, but it was a challenge because he was also a drummer and he got very excited about drummers and people who, as he called it, "take care of business." He really liked people who did that.

RF: Watching you with Adrian, I was thinking that, in the studio situation, you don't have to deal with an hour and a half of frenetic playing. How do you prepare yourself for something like that when you do have to do it?

LL: As you can tell from looking at me, I'm not real prepared. I would like to be in better physical shape to do it. I don't think it would necessarily change my playing if I were in better physical shape, but I think it would give me the stamina to maybe do two-and-a-half hours. I watch younger drummers and drummers who work out a lot, and I don't see that they put out any more than I do or that they give any more. It's just that they don't look as tired afterwards as I do. I'm almost 40. I don't feel like it's any harder, but I am tired at the end of an hour-and-a-half show.

RF: But you're not used to it either.

LL: Well, I watch Louie Bellson and he's 60 years old.

RF: But he goes out on the road all the time. You sit in the studio, you cut three tracks, you listen to the playback, you grab something to eat, and then you go back in.

LL: That's part of it. When I first started doing this tour with Adrian, it was real difficult. We did some outdoor gigs where it was real hot, but I've learned tricks to keep myself cool with a fan or ice towels around my neck. Even smaller drummers have that same problem. When you're in the heat of the sun and it's 90-some degrees

out there and you're playing, it's not intelligent to sit up there without taking care of yourself. My road crew guys towel me down by putting ice towels around my neck. You can make it through a hot gig by keeping the base of your skull cool. Sitting in a place where there are real heavy lights on you in an auditorium or a club gig is not good either. It's not good for the top of your head to have all that heat. I have a fan that blows all that stuff away. And like you said, in the studio, I don't have that problem. I do a three-minute song, maybe three or four times, and then go in and listen to it back. Very seldom am I playing with this amount of energy for an hour and a half. Before I went out with Adrian, I practiced as much as I could to build my stamina up. The rest of it is learning how to breathe and not fall apart that way.

RF: What makes a session negative for you?

LL: A negative session usually starts out for me when there are people who don't know how to tell you what they want. You start out playing a particular pattern. An hour and a half later, or three hours later, you've played every variation of that feel. Now you're back playing the exact same thing you started out playing and they love it. "That's it! That's the thing that will make the record!" Another negative part is people who constantly watch the clock. Negative is an engineer who sits in a control room all night manufacturing sounds and it has nothing to do with what you're doing. It kind of bums you out sometimes when you really want it to be good, but the harder you work, the worse it gets. People who belittle you are another thing. I just won't put up with a lot of these things. It's not that I feel that I'm better than anybody else, but I'll just leave. First of all, I'm a human being. People have said, "Well, if you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen. You're a studio man and you hire out." There's a term that I use in my clinic that's not always very tasteful, but it's very true. A friend of mine, Joe Osborn, once said, "Studio musicians are basically whores. You hire out for three hours to do whatever you're told to do. And in those three hours, you're not being paid for your opinion. You are being paid for being an extension of these people—their puppet. If they could be playing this instrument, they'd be playing it, but since they can't, they're going to make you play it the way they would if they could." It took me a long time to really feel that I could handle that. I love music and I love playing it from my heart. And Joe is not a hard person. He is an incredibly warm, sensitive person who plays his heart out every time he plays. But he's had to play under those circumstances in Los Angeles, New York—all over the world. I realized he's right. But there are people who hire me as a person, not just for my ability to play a number of different rhythms with a number of differ-

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ent arms and legs. They want my total person—my mind, my heart, my soul, everything—and that's one thing a whore won't give. I feel good about that and it's fun to do it with people who really want that. I'll do the negative ones because it's going to pay for my house. You have to do it in certain circumstances as a professional. I think that, for any young musician out there who really wants to work in the studios, it's a good learning experience to do one negative session. Go in and play the gig for the money. You don't have to like it. Just play it. Learn what that feels like, because you don't ever want to do it again if you can help it. I'm very thankful that I'm in a position, as I get older, where I can pick and choose more of my dates. I won't ever work for the people who are like that again.

RF: You mentioned once that you were getting a group together in Nashville.

LL: Well, we're going into the studio. It's David Hungate [bass], Shane Keister [synthesizer], Reggie Young [guitar] and myself. We've got some interest from different small labels and we have some producers in Nashville who are quite interested. It's kind of jazz/rock fusion stuff. It's just a release and an outlet for us. Although right now I don't particularly need that release because I have one, they still do and I'm looking forward to doing it. There was a thing called Larrie Londin Day in Memphis at Strings And Things

where I did a clinic and the band did a mini-concert. We played all these songs we had rehearsed for about two days—which was about all the time we had to get together—and it came off real well.

RF: Could you perhaps give an example of your approach to styles of rock, jazz, bluegrass and country? Are there specific elements inherent in each one of those styles that you can speak of?

LL: The particular approach to jazz is the looseness. Taking a swing pattern, I would approach it like Sonny Payne approached it when he played with Count Basie. He didn't play on the downbeat. He accented the end of the bar which opened it up. This gave it that real relaxed feeling, no matter what tempo it was. My approach to jazz is to make it swing a little more, hopefully.

I approach rock according to what the song is telling me. Sometimes the person who wrote the song was involved with the Chuck Berry kind of feel. I was brought up with Chuck Berry and I can play Johnny B. Goode-type rhythms. That is built around a snare drum, basically, with a nice syncopated bass drum pattern. Some songwriters were brought up listening to the Beatles, so I try to put myself into the Ringo Starr syndrome and actually try to play it like Ringo Starr would play it, which is impossible. For example, I did some stuff not long ago which the fellow insisted was new wave. What I basically played was 1950s rockabilly or '60s rock

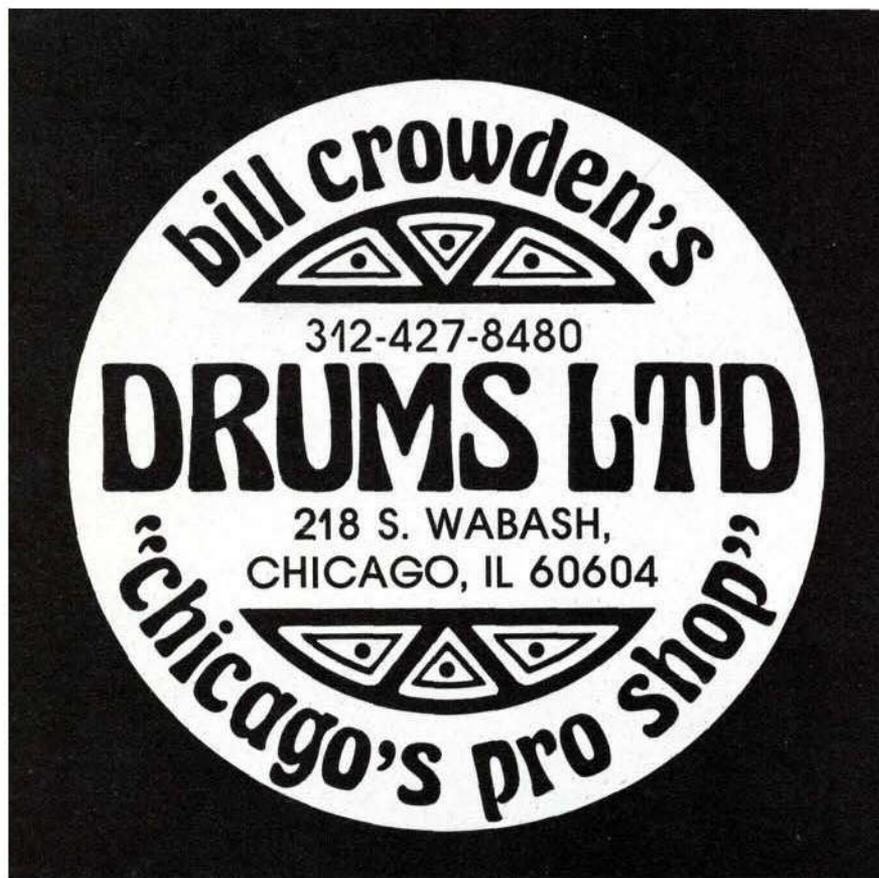
which consisted of 8th-notes on the toms and a specific snare drum pattern. They could consider that new wave now, but it was early rock 'n' roll when I learned it. When I approach the rock I'm doing today, my approach is basically a quarter-note pattern on the bass drum, with a real heavy 2 and 4 on the snare drum. The hi-hat could be anything from a quarter note/two 8th-note pattern, to just straight 8th notes, and as few fills as possible—more like a drum machine would play it.

For today's country music, the approach is the same as for three-year-old pop. That means you play a lot more drum fills where you've got four or five tom-toms and you utilize them extensively. You play a real heavy 2 and 4, and usually half notes or quarter notes on the bass drum with a nice 8th-note pattern or disco pattern on the hi-hat, taking for granted that it is an 8th-note feel. *Traditionally*, you would use a stick and a brush, with a click on the snare and the brush playing a shuffle or an 8th-note pattern on the snare, with the hi-hat playing on 2 and 4, and the bass drum playing a real simple straight-ahead pattern. Currently in the country field though, the snare drum sound is deeper and the tom sounds are lower, like an older pop sound.

There are no drums in bluegrass, *traditionally*. But you basically approach bluegrass as what I call a train feel, which is usually done extremely fast. I play the train feel two different ways, depending on the feel that the person playing the fiddle or banjo is playing.

RF: On the less technical side of things, I know you feel very strongly about the topic of drugs.

LL: Yes. When I was playing with Adrian, someone asked me, "What kind of drugs do you take to play like you play?" And I said, "Well, I don't take any drugs and I have yet to meet a musician who could play with drugs." A lot of them *think* they can play, but with music such as Adrian's with strange time signatures, how could everyone be stoned and come down on downbeats together? Personally I don't take drugs. I did when I was younger, but it wasn't good for me. It hurt my heart, it hurt me physically, and it sure didn't do anything for my playing. I can't even have a glass of wine and play. So many of these people get stoned, and they go out and play thinking that's what everybody who is "happening" is doing. If they would just tape themselves sometime and listen back straight, they'd realize how lousy they sound. Some people take the stand of, "Okay, if you want to take drugs, fine, you do them," but it's not alright when it starts affecting me and my livelihood. I do have a stand on that and that's one thing about Nashville that's so great. That doesn't go on. I've worked dates in other parts of the country where I actually had to cancel the sessions because either *they* wanted me to



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cancel or I had to because I couldn't take the drug scene they were into. Naturally, I couldn't play with them because we were on totally different planes. One time I even bought a bottle of wine and got drunk so I could play the gig. I felt like I was lowering myself to their standards, which was no good. It's best that I just say, "Hey, I don't fit with your routine. I'm not going to put you down for it, but I'd rather not do it."

RF: You're a very sensitive man—musically and personally. Is there room for a sensitive person in what can be a cutthroat business?

LL: Yes. I think you have to learn how to control that sensitivity. I don't mean you must learn how to turn it off and on to suit the situation, but in a sense you have to. Like I said, sometimes I work for people I really shouldn't be working for, but the dollar is good and I'll work for them to do what I need to do for my family. That's when I turn off that sensitivity. I'm not going to give them my heart and soul. I'm not going to let them tear a piece of me away. The American Indians have a belief that, when you take a picture of them, you take a piece of their soul away from them. For years I felt that every time I played, a piece of my soul was being torn apart from me. This sounds too depressing maybe, but I really felt like that was happening, especially when I worked for people like that. So I gave those people less and less of my-

self. With people I know who love the work I do and really care about me, my sensitivity switches on and I open up to them—sometimes too much. I got scared one time when I started thinking along the terms of, "How much do I have left?" I wondered if it was going to run out. I'll hear tracks from years ago, and I'll know that it is my playing, because it is so much a piece of me. And it's sometimes frightening to me. I guess it sounds a little silly, but that's just my feeling. I take my hat off to people like Joe Osborn and those musicians who work in situations out in L.A. and such. I'm glad I don't have to do it. I don't think I *could* do it because I would end up in a nut house, and I may not be the person I am. Even though I'm not everything I would like to be, I reasonably like myself.

RF: You happen to be a very giving man, and when you are constantly giving, sometimes you sit back and wonder what's left for you.

LL: There are times when my wife gets very upset at me and says, "When are you going to start doing things for *you*? You keep doing all these things for other people." Like right now I'm here in L.A. recording because two friends wanted me here. And I'm very happy that I am here, but there are times when my wife lets me know that I'm overdoing it.

RF: What is D.O.G. Percussion?

LL: D.O.G. are my wife's initials. My real

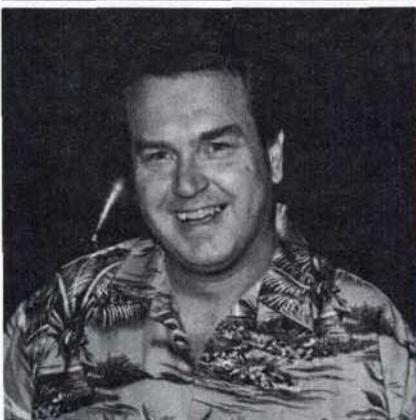
name is Ralph Gallant. Larrie Londin is a stage name and my wife's name is Deborah Otolo Gallant. I was working very hard and naturally not paying too much attention to my family. I came back from Los Angeles one day and she was really teed off at me. "I never get any attention..." The youngest of my two children, who are now 17 and 13, had been in school for about six months, and my wife was extremely bored. She said she wanted to start a drum shop, so I loaned her \$2,000. She's had the business six years and she's run the inventory up to an enormous amount. She's considered to be one of the best in the retail business. She knows as much about cymbals, drums, heads and sticks as most percussionists. She makes all of Kenny Rogers' tambourines—literally, physically makes them from scratch. She runs the business, she orders, she sells, and she knows how to repair foot pedals, cymbal and hi-hat stands and all that. She's a very hard-working and talented lady who works from about 5:30 in the morning to 11:00 at night.

RF: Don't you feel neglected?

LL: Not as long as she's happy. I would feel bad if I were doing all I'm doing and she felt unhappy. She takes care of the family, she takes care of the house and she takes care of me, so how could I feel neglected? She's basically doing this to ensure our future. A couple of friends of ours are studio players and they have to work a certain amount of sessions a week to afford the house and all the stuff they have. She doesn't want to see us end up like that, so we invest our money. This is a business where, as she said, "No matter what, you can always teach in the store, or we would have this to fall back on, or we could just sell it out and have a nice retirement." Well, she's right and I would suggest that everybody try to do something other than just play. If it were up to me, I wouldn't know what to do because playing drums is all I know. I know how to box because I boxed in high school. I was a carpenter and I know how to do that, but that's work and I don't want to do it. So she's trying to make it so we don't have to do that. She's a very intelligent lady. I love my wife and I love my family. Without them, I couldn't do what I'm doing.

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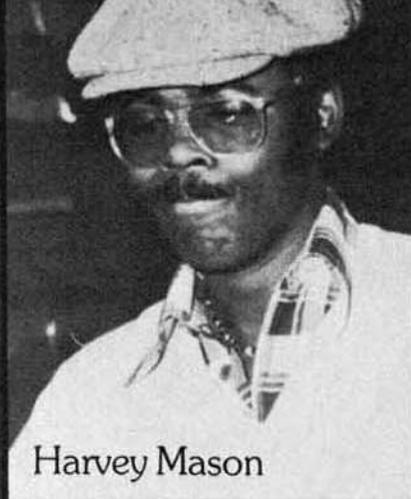


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Percussion Colors—Part 2

Last time we discussed how the use of hand-percussion instruments can add color and spice to the music you create. We outlined a few of the items that make up the percussionist's "pallet," including cowbell, tambourine, and the afuche. This time, we'll add shakers and maracas, claves, and sleighbells to that pallet. Then, we'll examine how all of these instruments can be combined to enhance the texture and appeal of your artistic creation.

Shakers and Maracas

Pushing the time a hair is necessary for shakers and maracas, since their sound comes slightly after the attack. You can use shakers to create a nice layer of energy, or maracas to create more complex patterns. Be very aware of the time, though, as it sounds really strange when a layer of "energy" is dragging along even a little behind the beat. Consistency is an important concern here as well. It sounds like a hole has opened up in the band's sound if you stop before the section changes, so don't pick up or put down these instruments unless you mean to. A half-hearted shaker or maracas player detracts from the stage presence of a band, and the sound just won't do in the studio. On the other hand, a percussionist playing shakers confidently and in sync with a group adds a lot visually and aurally.

When choosing a shaker, pay attention to the various "weights." Depending on the size of the shaker, the material of the shell, and the material inside the shell (sand, BB's, popcorn), you will get different sound densities. At times you'll want a heavy, intense sound, while at other times, you'll want a feather-light whisper. Therefore, consider the mood of the music and its dynamic range before you jump in with a shaker. Maracas also come in various weights and qualities, so check them thoroughly before you buy a pair. Having the top of the maraca fly off the handle and hit someone in the first row may not be the effect you want.

SHAKERS

MARACAS

Claves

Claves are a subtle instrument that add a spicy precision to your rhythm if played well. The trick to getting the right sound out of a pair of claves is cupping the hand holding the one to be struck. By keeping as much of your hand off the clave as you can, you allow the wood to vibrate freely. In addition, the cupped hand creates a resonating chamber for the sound. You'll also get a more musical sound if you *pull* the sound *out* of the clave by drawing back as soon as you strike, rather than trying to pound the sound out of it. I usually check a pair of claves to find how their sound is matched. Usually, one bar is slightly lower or flatter than the other, and this is the one to use as the striker. The bar you hold in your cupped hand is the major sound producer.

Claves were originally used to play the clave ("key") rhythm in Cuban music, but they've been found to be useful for a wide variety of musical situations. They're great for creating tension in "atmosphere" music like film scores, and they're also great for funky off-beat accents. In many contemporary funk tunes, you'll hear claves on only one or two notes in a two-bar space. It propels the music in a sophisticated, "less-is-more" kind of way. If you choose to use them this way, it's likely you'll want to put them on a 16th-note or 8th-note offbeat, but you could as easily put a clave beat on 2, for example. This would require a little forethought so you could leave the snare beat out when you lay down the drum track. But the planning would be well worth the effort in terms of the final mix. It might be just the thing to spark an otherwise mundane rhythm track.

Original Clave rhythm:

Often played in reverse:

Other uses:

Sleigh Bells

Sleigh bells on a stick with a handle can round out your basic percussion colors. You can use them in a spacious rhythm, say, on every other 3, or you can play quarter notes, or 16ths for a steady background "layer." Sleigh bells are great for an out-of-time atmosphere, or a crescendo or fermata builder. They're effective for cooling the dynamics after a very hot section that leads to a breathing space in the music. You can also get some nice effects by using the bells with a shaker to alternate on quarter notes, or more complex rhythms.

Slow

4/4

B = Bells S = Shaker

B 4/4

S 4/4

B 2/4

S 4/4

Applications

Now, knowing how these instruments sound and how to use them, the next question we should consider is, *when* do you use them? This is largely a practical matter, given your particular taste and situation. Some musicians or types of music don't leave much room for percussion sounds, but if you're playing rock, jazz, reggae, big band, Latin, fusion, funk or Brazilian influenced styles, chances are you'll have a use for the extra lift percussion provides. Let's assume you're planning to record a new piece and you'd like to add some new colors. How do you decide what goes where?

Start by considering the mood of the music. How does it open? Where does it go? How does it close? Where are the subtle parts? Where are the intense parts? Do they need a boost, or are they too busy to allow one note more? The groove under the vocal may be just the spot for claves, or the bridge might like a driving quarter-note feel on the cowbell. You can use the percussion to emphasize the change in rhythm from one section to another, or intensify a chorus. Most hooks are best left to the traps, as a matter of clarity, but if you hear it, use it; very often even one well-placed note of a different color or timbre is the perfect accent.

It's possible to use one instrument to set up one mood and another to contrast it. For example, you can play a groove on the traps which is perfectly complemented by the clave playing just the "e" of 2 and 3 every other measure.

Clave

H.H.

4/4

S.D.

B.D.

Hi-Hat: ● Closed
⊙ Open

But when you get to the chorus, you might want to substitute the shaker or the cowbell, depending on the intensity needed and how complicated the drumset part is.

Shaker

H.H.

4/4

S.D.

B.D.

OR

Cowbell

H.H.

4/4

S.D.

B.D.

If you want more texture under the vocals, you could use the afuche to play a steady 16th-note fill. If you want a contrast between hot and cool at the end of a solo, splash the downbeat with the sleighbells and sustain at a low volume until the vocalist's re-entry.

You might consider the virtues of playing one time against another, or cutting or doubling the time. For instance, quarter-note triplets against a 4/4 rhythm can be very effective. With whatever time or color you use, you must also consider the timbre of the instruments you're working with at the moment. For instance, if you're backing a bass solo, you want a relatively high-pitched instrument that cuts but doesn't interfere with the clarity of the low

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end of the bass. You want to add to the solo, not obscure it. So you might use the afuche as a shaker. It cuts and keeps the energy going, but doesn't muddy the bass sound.

Conversely, if you're playing with a sax or flute player who favors the top end of the instrument, you should try to find a timbre which fills in between the band and soloist. This will maximize the overall sound and minimize any conflict of timbres, so everyone can be heard clearly. In the studio, you don't want to get in your own way either, so watch how the timbres blend, and mix the percussion "down" behind the traps. Leave some space in the drum part if you plan to add percussion, so you have some room to work with. You can get great textural effects with a layer or two of "smart" percussion notes. This layering will give your music more forward motion and an "arranged" sound.

You should also consider feel. If the groove is light and swinging, it might be best to find a part with a lot of space in it, rather than use a complicated part that will make the groove "heavier" than you want. The art of playing percussion is the art of finding just the right accents to make the colors stand out and emphasize the spirit of the music. Of course, there's no point in playing something light on a tune where the feel is deliberately ponderous. You can do some studio magic to balance things that wouldn't normally be heard live, but you need to consider the reason for doing that. If it makes musical sense, go for it, and remember the element of surprise—be on the lookout for putting the "right" sound in an unexpected place. This can be a very effective technique, especially in the studio.

An obvious way to get a quick percussion education is to listen to Brazilian, African, Latin, reggae and funk music to get an idea of how percussion instruments are used in these contexts. Knowing a few of the basic formulas derived from these styles will enable you to hear a lot of applications in your own music, and will give you a foundation for extending your percussive imagination further. You will develop an ear for using these instruments effectively, instead of for effect.

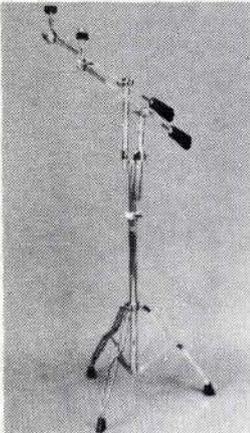


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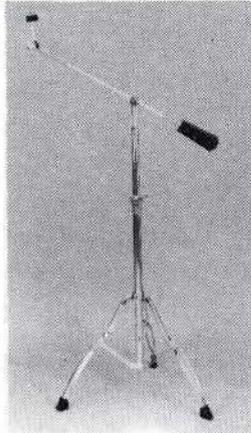
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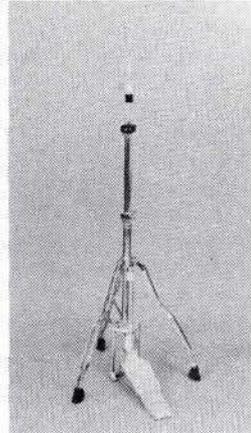
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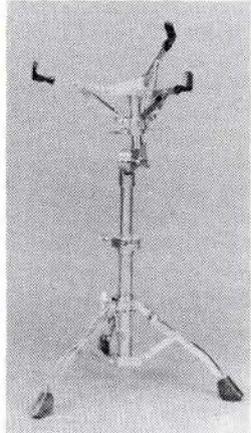
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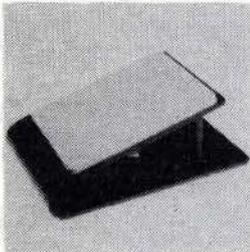
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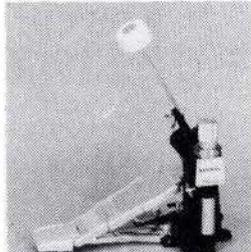
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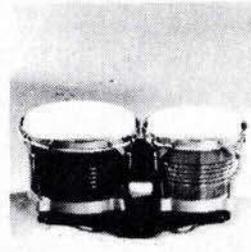
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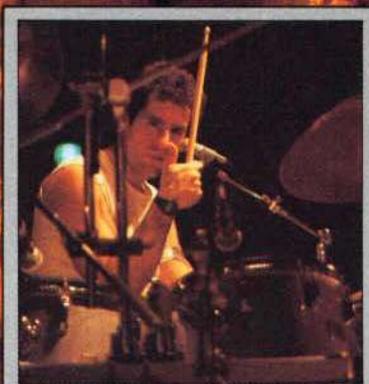
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by Roy Burns

Tuning And Muffling

In order to tune or tension your drums for the best possible sound, start out with no muffling. The exception to this rule would be the bass drum where virtually all drummers use some muffling to achieve either a low, full sound or a dry, "pop" type of effect. Some small-group jazz drummers use an 18" bass drum with little or no muffling. The degree and type of muffling for the bass drum will vary depending upon the musical situation.

Basic Tuning

Tap at each tension screw one inch in from the rim of the drum. Keep adjusting the tension until you have approximately the same pitch all the way around. Test by tapping at each tension screw as you go. When the pitch is about the same all around, the head is in tune with itself. If you are having difficulty tuning tom-toms, it may be necessary to place the drum on a towel to muffle the head that is not being tuned. This makes it easier to hear the pitch on the top head. Then turn it over

and tension the other head. If it is a single-headed drum, it is easier to hear the pitch since there is no vibration from a bottom head. Now you need to decide whether you want the top head looser or tighter than the bottom head. There are several schools of thought on this depending partly on the drumheads and the style of music involved.

Snare Drum Tuning

Most players tune the bottom head tighter and higher in pitch, with the top head looser and lower in pitch. For example, if you are in a rock group, you would most likely have the top head fairly loose to achieve a broad, fat type of sound. The jazz drummer would have the top head somewhere near medium tension—loose enough so that the top head gives when pressed on with the thumb. This will produce a full sound, not especially high and tight sounding. If the top head becomes too tight, it will produce a high-pitched, ringing rimshot sound that very few drum-

mers prefer today.

A symphonic drummer, who plays few if any rimshots, will have the top head tighter than the jazz or rock drummer. This is to assure an articulate sound at any volume level, including extremely soft. If the head is too loose, it will be less responsive. However, a loose to medium top head will produce more volume than a very tight head.

If you need to change the tuning on your snare drum, try to limit your adjustments to the top head only. The top head doesn't really make the drum sound crisp. This is achieved by a fairly tight bottom head and reasonably tight snares. The top head will change the stylistic sound of the drum in terms of sound character by changing the volume, the pitch and the length of sound.

If the snares buzz too much when striking a tom-tom, try changing the tuning of each drum slightly. Loosen the bottom head of the tom or tighten it slightly. Then loosen the tension screws on the bottom of the snare drum on either side of the snares

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at each end. This will help to reduce the tendency of the bottom snare head to vibrate sympathetically with other sounds. By changing both drums slightly, much sympathetic buzzing can be eliminated by tuning alone. Additional muffling might produce a dead, over-muffled sound.

Tom-Tom Tuning

Some drummers tune the toms similar to the snare drum, that is, with the bottom head tighter and the top head looser. This will produce a nice, fat sound, but you will have to strike the drum fairly hard to get a clean beat. Again, the type of heads being used will influence how tight or loose you tension them. Experiment until you find the sound you want. Heavy heads such as *Pinstripes*, dotted heads or oil-filled heads usually sound best if they are not too tight.

My personal choice for tom-tom tuning is to tune the bottom head slightly lower and looser. This tunes out some of the ring naturally so that less muffling is needed. It also means that you can get a clean attack sound on the toms at virtually any volume level. It is not necessary to strike the drum quite as hard and yet a deep sound can be achieved easily.

Some players tune the two heads to the same pitch or as close as possible. It is not a method that I prefer, but some very successful drummers use this method with good results. If there is a thinner head on the bottom of the toms, it is difficult to match the tuning of the heads. My personal observation is that a richer, fuller sound is achieved if the two tom-tom heads are not tuned to the same pitch. Most drummers I've talked to prefer a thinner head on the bottom of the toms if a heavy or reinforced head is used on top. This seems to prevent the drum from sounding too "tubby." However, this choice is very personal and I have heard any number of head combinations that work. A great deal depends on the player, the style and how hard the musician strikes the drum.

Bass Drum Tuning

If the drum has two heads, most players tune it similarly to the snare drum, that is, with the playing head a little looser than the head facing the audience. You can also adjust the two top tension screws on the playing head. If you loosen these two, you get a flat type of sound which is closer to a rock sound. If you tighten these two tension screws, you get a more mellow type of boom sound.

Ed Shaughnessy uses this method to adjust his bass drum sound on the *Tonight Show*. Ed often has to play a wide variety of styles on any given night. This method of adjusting the bass drum sound and response helps Ed change styles quickly with a minimum of hassle.

Muffling

The best muffling effect is achieved by muffling the drum from the outside. Internal controls are generally not recommended. Most studio players simply remove them. A small piece of felt, tissue or tape will produce better results than internal mufflers. The internal muffler prevents the head from moving naturally, and reduces volume response and tone quality. A small piece of felt or tissue taped to the head near the edge will eliminate the high ringing sound without reducing volume or response.

It is best not to place felt strips under the head of any drum except the bass drum. The bass drum sound presents a real challenge. Without muffling, it is difficult to achieve any definition, especially if the drum is 22" or larger. When placing a felt strip in the bass drum, avoid placing it across the center of the head. It will tend to "buzz" and can be a real problem when miking or recording. Place the felt strips off center for best effect.

If you are playing a single-headed bass drum, make sure that the tension casings do not buzz or rattle. Many players use a pillow or rug inside the drum in order to get a very definite attack sound. In a rock situation, it really does help the drum cut through. In a big band or small jazz group,

a somewhat more mellow and longer sound is more appropriate. This is best achieved with two heads.

Cutting a hole in the front bass drum head is quite popular with many players. This sound is halfway between a double-headed sound and a single-headed sound. Muffling can be achieved with felt strips, foam, or a pillow. When it comes to the bass drum, players have strong personal feelings. Whatever works in the musical situation and whatever pleases you is most important.

Acoustics

Remember that you cannot retune your drums to get them to sound good in a bad room. All you can do is use a little more muffling if the room is too live or use less if the room is too dead. At any rate, there is no substitute for a hall or club with naturally good acoustics. Tuning and muffling are very personal decisions and care should be taken to experiment before reaching any final conclusions. However, don't confuse tuning and muffling. Muffling a bad sound will mute it, but it won't correct it. Only tuning will improve the sound. To repeat, if you are having problems, tune the drum first. Try to get the pitch, resonance and feel you want. Then apply muffling as needed to eliminate unwanted ring and unwanted overtones.

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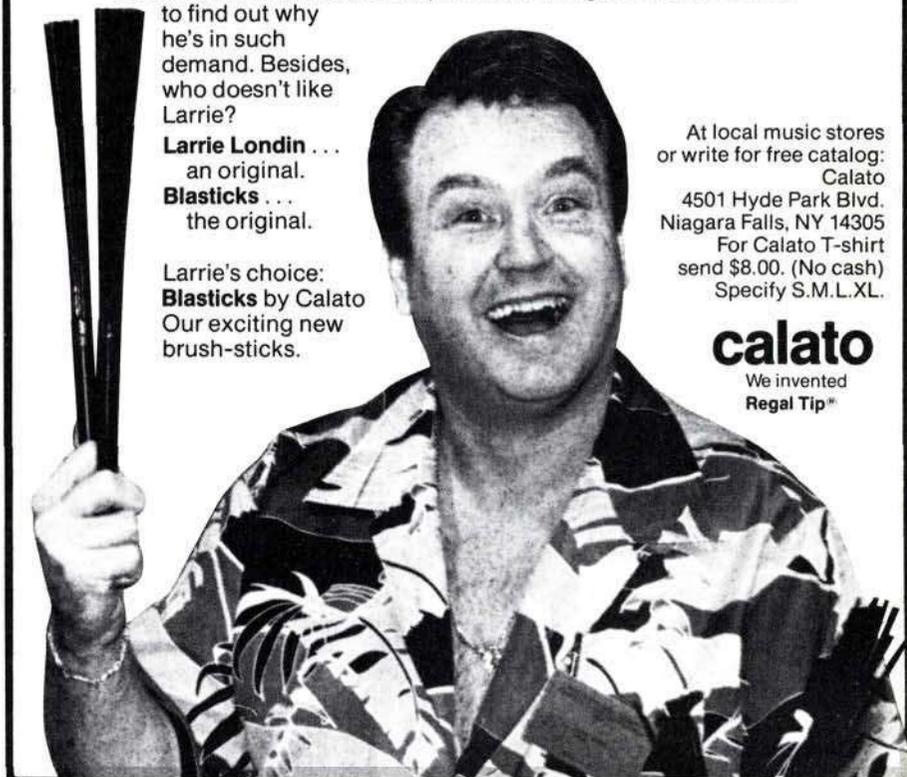
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Rick Spolar

(the Airliner Hotel in Winnipeg.)

I use a custom drumset partly built in Vancouver by Drums Only, a fantastic drum store. I use a Ludwig 16 x 24 kick drum and Pearl power tom-toms. Their sizes are 11 x 13, 12 x 14, 16 x 16, and 16 x 18. They are 8-ply maple and sound excellent. I also use 8" and 10" *RotoToms*. I use two snare drums, one Gretsch 6 x 14 blond maple and a metal 6 x 14 Tama. I switch the snare drums around for the different rooms we play.

I also have combined my acoustic drums with a set of Simmons drums. I prefer to use the two sets together rather than use either one alone. We were in the recording studio and I discovered that using the two sets together worked excellently. I also used the Linn drum machine and really enjoyed it. I found it easy to program and also extremely useful. I can't see drummers being intimidated by the Linn. I loved it and I think it's only as good as the drummer who programs it.

Soon I will be going on tour with the Billboard Heroes to most of the major cities in Canada. Our demo tapes are getting a very good response from record companies and the future is looking great. Hopefully, we will get an American release on our first album; that's what all Canadian recording acts hope for, of course. It's really helped that bands like BTO, Loverboy and Bryan Adams have had such international success. Hopefully, I will soon be back playing Stateside.

For now, my career is going steadily forward. Vancouver is a great place to be at the moment. The music scene is really happening and the management is really good. I find that playing the bar circuit can be very trying and hard to cope with, but in order to reach the top, you have to lay the groundwork.

I believe that, in order to make it as a professional musician, you must have a positive, strong attitude. Most of all, you have to have a lot of self-determination and a strong belief in your goal, no matter how tough it gets. So just hang in there and give it 100 percent.



I was born in Hackensack, New Jersey, on February 12, 1958, into a very musical family. My mother is a professional performer who sings in seven different languages. When I became a teenager, my mom told me that I could earn \$40.00 a night working with her if I learned how to play the drums. So that's why I started—basically for the money. Shortly thereafter I realized how much I loved playing drums. I'm totally self-taught because I went right to work after starting to play. I was working three and a half months after I started playing. But let me stress that that time was spent practicing eight hours a day, and listening to everything. I was no stranger to performing, because I had already worked as an actor and magician. So in addition to working with my mom, I've been working in various local bands and club groups over the last eight years. I'm currently with the Sheppard Brothers Plus, a trio working the hotel and club circuit in my home area of New Jersey.

As far as musical influences go, I've listened to every conceivable variety of pop music and fusion. Specifically speaking about drumming, I've been most influenced by the drummers from the more progressive groups, like ELP, Rush, Genesis, and Jethro Tull, and I've gotten into the use of more total percussion on the kit, such as evidenced in the playing of Billy Cobham, Bill Bruford, Neil Peart and Carl Palmer. But I've also grown to appreciate the drummers who could be equally inventive on a smaller kit, like John Bonham, Michael Derosier or Stewart Copeland. However, my greatest source of information and inspiration has come from watching all the other people play in the local bar bands. You can listen to musicians that have been playing for 20 years, or for six months, and you can learn something from everybody. Taking all the big-name drummers for what they're worth, I've

It was meeting rock 'n' roll stars like the Everly Brothers, Roy Orbison and Bobby Vinton through my concert promoter father that started me on the road to a music career. Like many others, I began playing the drums in high school, and experimented with many different kinds of music. At the age of 28, I look back on the last ten years and realize that this exposure to a variety of music was important in developing a feel for music.

Fresh out of high school in Virginia City in northern Minnesota, I formed a country-rock band called Epic. After placing second in the Minnesota Country Music Competition, I decided to follow the inspiration of John Bonham and Keith Moon, and move into rock 'n' roll. That change was in the form of a band I began called Scarlet.

We toured the Midwest and ended up doing a club in Winnipeg, Manitoba. To make a long story short, I liked the city and especially a band called The Freeze. They offered me a job, I took it, and moved to Canada. Over the next three years, The Freeze toured most of the major cities in Canada—Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Winnipeg, etc. The band then evolved into the Billboard Heroes and that's the project I'm with now. We started off in Winnipeg, and spent a year looking for the right town and the right management. We found both in Vancouver. There we found our present manager, Brian Wadsworth, and his company, Wadsworth Productions.

Vancouver is one of Canada's hottest cities, for music. Bands such as Loverboy, Bryan Adams, Chilliwack and the Headpins are all based here. That list is rapidly growing. Canada has no shortage of great drummers with the likes of Matt Frenette of Loverboy, Neil Peart from Rush and Toronto's Peter Magadini. (Apologies to Peter for breaking his kick drum pedal at

LEARN DRUMS THE WAY STEVE SMITH DID. AT BERKLEE.

Lance Stork

probably actually learned more from the no-names.

My personal taste in music, and what I'd most like to be playing, is progressive, original material. But I realize that right now, for me, the money is in clubs. I come from a rock 'n' roll background, but I've played ethnic music, funk, top-40, and disco, all at different times. I've done some session work as well. One of my personal goals is to do more recording and see it actually reach the vinyl.

I love to work. I could work seven days a week. I play with a lot of enthusiasm, and quite a bit of "flash." It isn't contrived. It's very natural for me. I've always realized that part of being a musician is being an entertainer. It's not just playing the groove. I've seen too many drummers up there looking bored, even if they were playing great. In the club circuit, you're not playing to a bunch of jazz fans who are there just to appreciate the musical value. Your audience is there to be entertained, and they will appreciate everything that you do to enhance that.

I use an elaborate setup, because we do a wide variety of music, and I like to be able to add colors and textures within my playing. My drums are Ludwig clear *Vistalites*, with 6", 8", 10", 12", 13" and 14" rack toms, a 16" floor tom, and a 22" bass drum. I've just added the new Pearl *Free-Floating* snare drum, eight inches deep. I also have a pair of timbales, a set of *Octobans*, and a *Synare 3* drum synthesizer. My cymbals include a 20" Zildjian ride, 14" Zildjian heavy hi-hats with holes that I've drilled in the bottom cymbal, an 18" Zildjian medium crash, a 16" Zildjian medium crash, a 16" Zildjian swish with no rivets, a Ufip 10" splash, a Paiste 10" splash and a Paiste 8" accent cymbal. As additional percussion equipment, I use two gongs (one Paiste 28" and one KMK 20" flat gong), a bell tree, wind chimes, bar chimes, a glockenspiel, semi-melodic cowbells, temple blocks and a *Vibraslap*.

I love what I'm doing now, but I'm looking toward the future. I hope to do some touring with a major act, or become more heavily involved with recording. 



"The three years I spent at Berklee had a major influence on my life.

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—Steve Smith

Steve Smith's band, Vital Information, features Berklee Alumni Tim Landers, Dean Brown, and Mike Stern on tour and on Columbia Records and Tapes.

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LISTENER'S GUIDE

ROD MORGENSTEIN

Q. For readers who'd like to listen to albums that most represent your drumming, which ones would you recommend?

Album	Artist	Label	Catalog #
Free Fall	The Dregs	Capricorn	0189
What If	The Dregs	Capricorn	0203
Night Of The Living Dregs	The Dregs	Capricorn	0216
Dregs Of The Earth	The Dregs	Arista	9528
Unsung Heroes	The Dregs	Arista	9548
Industry Standard	The Drees	Arista	9588



Photo by Lissa Wales

Q. Which records do you listen to most for inspiration?

Album	Artist	Drummer	Label	Catalog #
The Inner Mounting Flame	Mahavishnu Orchestra	Billy Cobham	Columbia	PC-31067
Believe It	Tony Williams Lifetime	Tony Williams	Columbia	PC-33836
We're Only In It For The Money	Mothers of Invention	Jimmy Carl Black & Billy Mundi	Verve	Out Of Print
Pat Metheny Group	Pat Metheny Group	Danny Gottlieb	ECM/Warner	1114
Thrust	Herbie Hancock	Mike Clark	Columbia	PC-32965
The Leprechaun	Chick Corea	Steve Gadd	Polydor	6062
Extrapolation	John McLaughlin	Tony Oxley	Polydor	6074
Electric Ladyland	Jimi Hendrix Experience	Mitch Mitchell	Reprise	6307
Led Zeppelin	Led Zeppelin	John Bonham	Atlantic	19126

BUTCH TRUCKS

Q. For readers who'd like to listen to albums that most represent your drumming, which ones would you recommend?

Album	Artist	Label	Catalog #
The Allman Brothers Band	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	CPN-0196
Idlewild South	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	CPN-0197
Live At The Fillmore East	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	CPN-0131
Eat A Peach	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	CPN-0102
Brothers And Sisters	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	CPN-0111
The Road Goes On Forever	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	0164
Win, Lose Or Draw	Allman Brothers Band	Polydor	0156
Reach For The Sky	Allman Brothers Band	Arista	9535
Brothers Of The Road	Allman Brothers Band	Arista	9564

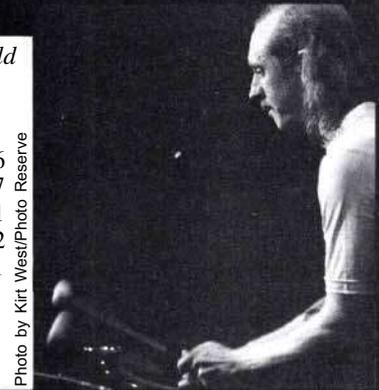


Photo by Kirt West/Photo Reserve

Q. Which records do you listen to most for inspiration?

A. The records I listen to for inspiration, I would put into two categories. The first I listen to mostly for the influence of the drums. They are:

Album	Artist	Drummer	Label	Catalog #
The Inner Mounting Flame	Mahavishnu Orchestra	Billy Cobham	Columbia	PC-31067
Electric Bath	Don Ellis	Steve Bohannon	Columbia	Out Of Print
Bitches Brew	Miles Davis	Mark Stevens Alan Estes Chino Valdez (congas)	Columbia	PG-26
Crossings	Herbie Hancock	Lenny White Jack DeJohnette Charles Alias Billy Hart	Warner Bros.	Out Of Print

The second group I listen to when my emotional batteries need recharging. They are (in order of importance):

Album	Artist/Composer	Label
Daphnis et Chloe	Maurice Ravel	Various Recordings

This is the one record I would have if I could only have one. It's incredibly moving. I prefer the Leonard Bernstein interpretation.

Kind of Blue	Miles Davis w/John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Cannonball Adderley, Jimmy Cobb	Columbia PC 8163
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The mellowest record I've ever heard.

Symphony No. 5 (From The New World)	Antonin Dvorak	Various Recordings
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I conducted this one in high school and know it very well. It never fails to involve me.



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Creating drum patterns on the LinnDrum is much easier than programming other drum machines. That's because most of the LinnDrum's front panel controls are *single function*, not the confusing multi-function arrangement used by others. And LinnDrum is the only

drum machine with separate volume and pan controls for every drum.

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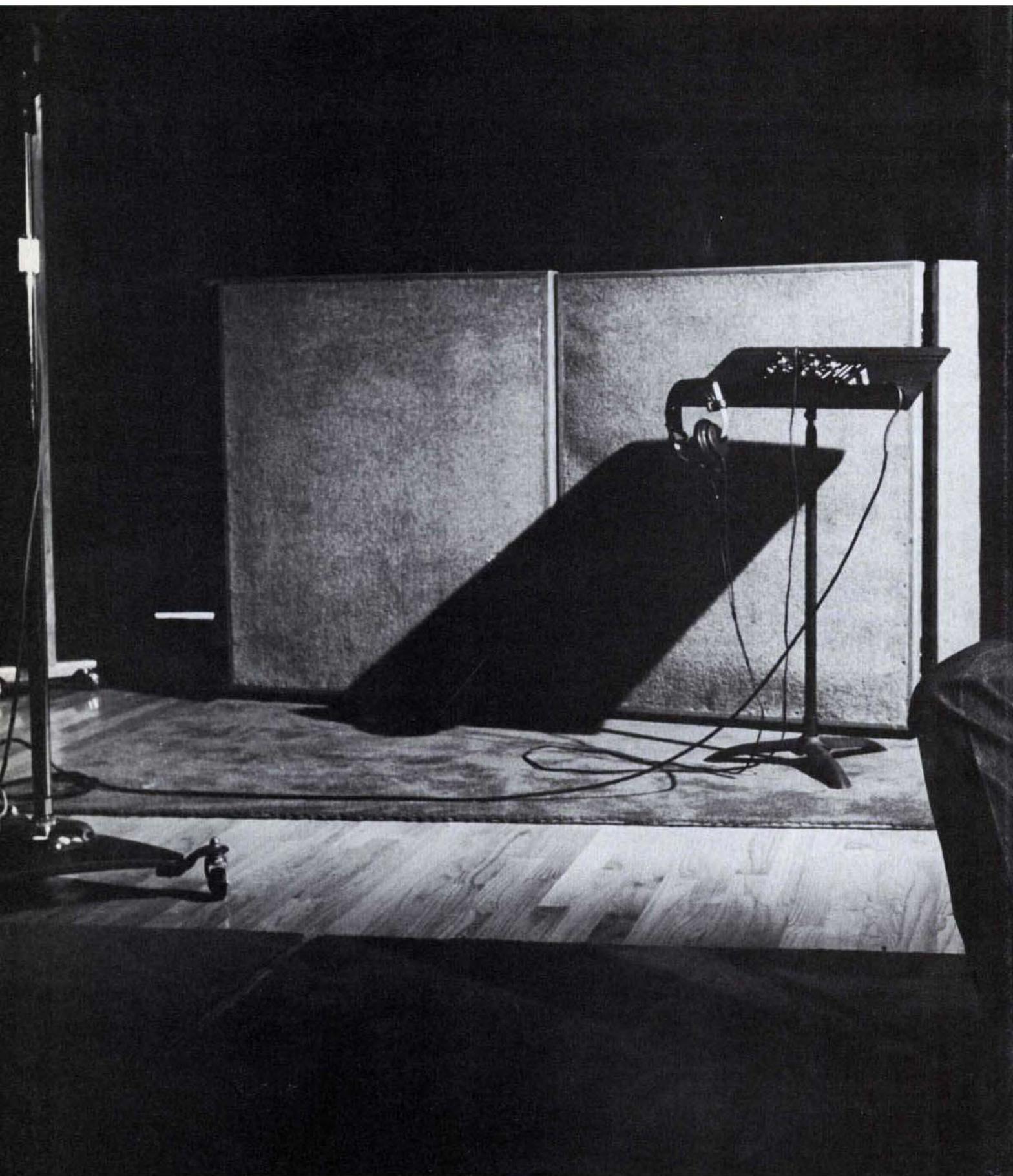
We've said very little here about LinnDrum's operation and features. If you'd like to know more about them, please call or write for a **free brochure and demo record**. We'll also send you the name of your nearest dealer, where you can see and hear for yourself why drummers prefer the LinnDrum to other drum machines.

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Jeff Porcaro





"My first big influence was my dad, who plays everything from symphony percussion to big band and bebop jazz drums. He made me appreciate the incredible variety of percussion around the world—I mean, every civilization has their own sounds. That's what really grabbed my interest.

"I had one big advantage growing up in the projects. We had basements where you could practice, and there was always a drum set down there. Of course, when I started, I couldn't reach the bass drum pedal!

"I'm not a fanatic about my playing—it's just something that feels great to do and lets me express myself while I'm making a living.

"What impressed me first about Paiste was the sound—for example, they've got crash cymbals that you can feel comfortable with—yet the sound isn't the usual sound that you take for granted. It's just slightly different and maybe a taste more musical.

"When you have cymbals that let you get into pitch things, and they're made that consistent, to me it kind of blends with some of the synthesizer technology that the band is getting into.

"Paiste has so many different cymbals, bells, gongs, etc., that you're not limited. I can literally go to one company for anything with the sounds of metals."

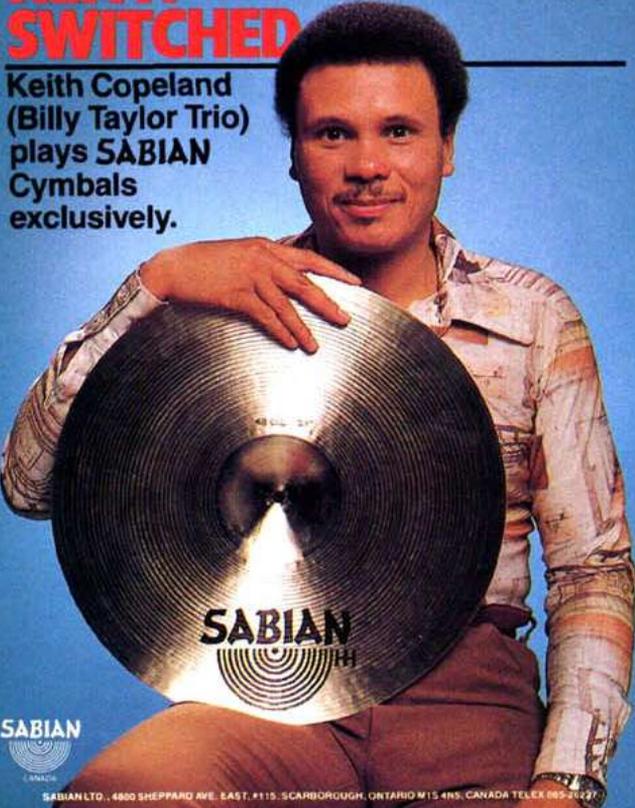
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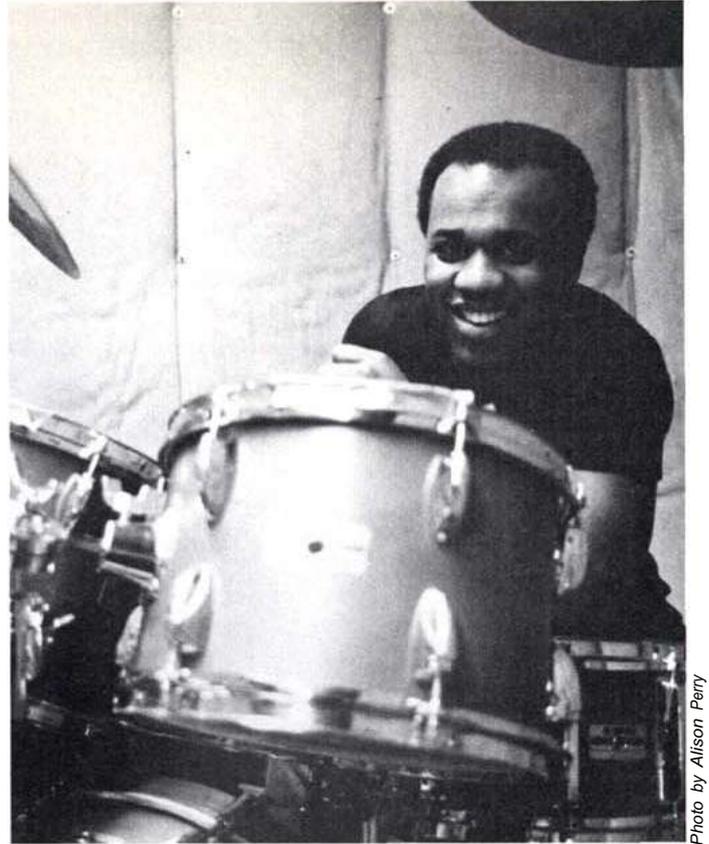


Photo by Alison Perry

ak Luff continued from page 17

process more.

"As a result, I'm real self-inspired and self-taught. To me, music had always meant something you dedicated your life to and developed all these skills in; perhaps that's why I never really studied seriously. I taught myself to read music, but it was just a matter of doing it enough. I had a few lessons when I was 15, but other than that it was just a matter of watching other people who played and thinking of how I could take it somewhere else. That was the most important thing at that time."

But Pheeroan still needed direction—a context in which to apply his sensitivity—and he found it in a local multi-instrumentalist and bandleader by the name of Travis Biggs. "Travis Biggs taught me a lot, and he was a major inspiration as far as telling me that I could do it. I didn't even think of myself as a drummer, but he made me bring my drums to his place and play. He helped me figure out that I had an approach, because I didn't play like anybody else, but I could play well enough to perform on drums successfully."

"My first professional gig was with Travis Biggs as part of a company that traveled all around Michigan. It was a revue—a whole show. We backed up singers in a whole lot of styles. First, there was one singer who sang alone, then five singers who sang like the Fifth Dimension, followed by male duets. Next, there was a man and woman who sang like Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrel, then three singers, and then the group would play. Being aware of all those approaches was very important to my musical development."

"I saw my role as being an accompanying musician. Besides, I was still in high school; I wasn't working regularly so I was satisfied just to hold my own and help the singers get their shit together, and understand what part fit ... *when*. Sometimes the singers would notice something I did and compliment me on it, but that didn't happen very often. So I was playing a part—not necessarily interacting with the singer like you would with another player in the rhythm section. That's taking the thing a step further into the area of specialization, like an Aretha Franklin wanting a particular

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drummer like Bernard Purdie, because she knows how he'll react to the rhythm section and to her. But first, you have to interact with the rhythm section, and getting to that next step can take a while, believe me."

Before leaving Detroit in 1975, Pheeroan did a stint at Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti where he majored in speech and drama and pursued music on the side, all the while cutting an imposing figure in the Black Student Union—the prototypical blippie of the early '70s. "Cat's would look at me and couldn't figure out what I was doing, listening to Jimi Hendrix and wearing weird clothes that looked like Peter Max had drawn all over my body. They didn't know what to do with me; they didn't understand how all of these things met. But all that time I was taking in information, and my formal studies didn't move me, at least the way they were going about it. So I finally decided that I wanted to be a musician, or at least do something where I could have fun and make money too. It was fun to be around all these people who had this great talent because, of course, I never thought I had any. I figured that maybe I could pick something up."

Passing through various R&B bands around Detroit, Pheeroan finally took the plunge and moved east, settling in the New Haven area, where his friend, tenorist Dwight Andrews, was a divinity student at Yale. Eventually they formed an R&B band called Deja Vu with keyboardist Nat Adderley, Jr., singer Phillipa Overstreet and vibist Jay Hoggard—a group ak Laff characterizes as "a great lounge band doing hip covers, which had the potential of being a good original band." As fate would have it, Deja Vu was performing on the Yale campus, doing their funk thing, while a trio led by the innovative trumpeter Leo Smith was on the same bill. "I was the only one in Deja Vu who had all these weird records," Pheeroan explains, "and everyone thought that I was crazy, but that music was important to me even though I was playing R&B. Leo was surprised that I enjoyed it, but not shocked, because he's from the Mississippi delta and he spent a lot of his life playing blues gigs. So he invited me to a concert for solo trumpet with gongs and percussion, and it was beautiful; it really pulled on my romantic sensibility—just the sheer courageousness of him standing up there alone. So we began doing gigs together as a trio and in larger ensembles, playing with dancers and all. Through Leo I met up with all the New York cats and began performing there. And I was able to feel out what I could really do in this arena of playing music that you felt. His courage sort of rubbed off on me and he showed me that I could do it."

"As a result, I came to New York playing that kind of music, not standing in line to imitate others and get studio gigs. I didn't come to New York to out swing the swingers. I came in like me, and I feel very blessed to have had that opportunity. It was funny. On those occasions when Eddie Blackwell couldn't make it, tenorist Bill Barron would call me to do gigs with Barry Harris on piano and Vishnu Wood on bass. And it was like, 'Whoa, how'd I get up here with these bebop cats? Hope you're satisfied.' I wanted to sound as good as what I was hearing them doing, but they were very supportive, even though that wasn't my thing."

Given the privilege of performing in New York during the height of the loft jazz revival (when the so-called avant-garde musicians began to build an audience for the new jazz), Pheeroan ak Laff developed an "impressionistic" style of drumming that was all light and air. Given the intensity of the free blowing ensembles he played in, his delicacy was all the more remarkable. "It's funny," he laughs shyly, "because when I first got to New York, cats would say, 'Well he's the softest playing drummer in town. Listen to him.' I used to play with Q-tips and chopsticks and things for effects. People would hire me and say, 'I like the way you play. You don't have to play loud to play interesting.' Then again, other cats would just sort of look at me funny and say, 'Boy, you sure do play soft,' you know, as in, 'What s'matter ak Laff, dontcha like girls?'"

"But I'd been hearing cats like Sunny Murray, and Rashied Ali with Coltrane, so I was able to hear how all those waves, crests and colors were possible, and how they were cool in context. I'd also been hearing Mr. Connie Kay, who was probably my biggest influ-



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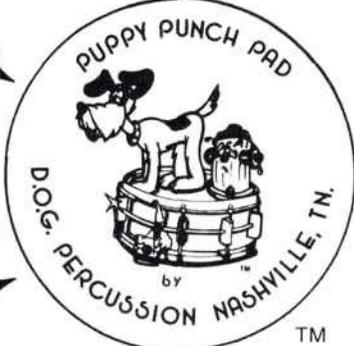
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ence on drums. Maybe that's why people hear a sense of crispness in my playing, even when I'm taking it out. Even though Connie Kay wasn't of that 'impressionistic' school, everything he played was important and it was there. It's funny that a lot of Art Blakey's vocabulary, his way of viewing the world through rhythm, his ways of tuning the bass drum and all had snuck in and influenced me, even though I wasn't conscious of it while growing up. I'm embarrassed to say I didn't even know who Art Blakey was until I began playing around seriously. And you know, after I'd made a few records and began to think, 'Well maybe I *am* a musician,' I heard this drummer on the radio and thought, 'Damn, that sounds like me, but I don't remember playing that composition; I don't remember sounding that good.' But it was the way I played and it turned out to be Art Blakey. It was hilarious; there are so many influences you take in without even knowing it. So when I heard that, I said, 'Okay, I guess it's time to start hitting the drums, playing loud and using more dynamics like Art.' I got into this whole thing where I was twisting up my face into funny contortions. I've never been one to play with the cool, detached approach. The music excites me, and that's something Art always communicated. Man, he was feeling it.

"Anyway, after Sunny Murray and Rashied Ali, I came to Andrew Cyrille, who could do everything they did, plus he had a sense of crispness, swing and precision. That's something critics compliment me on, which is funny because, being self-taught, I was always very self-conscious about not being crisp enough. Maybe I listened so hard to Andrew, because when he played something, he *hit* it. He wasn't just *thinking* of playing a rhythm; he reached out there and *got it*. Andrew could support what Cecil Taylor was doing with all this power and finesse, and still find a place to do his own thing, too.

"Andrew was very supportive of my playing when I first arrived, as was Beaver Harris. That freaked me out, because I'd been listening to them for years, and here they were telling me they enjoyed what I was doing. I was so surprised. Maybe they heard a bit of themselves in me, but more likely it was just my being courageous enough to take on that kind of spot at my age, play that music and bring what I had to it. I was taking on a big challenge."

Part of the challenge implicit in playing "free" music was to retain perspective—not to become so infatuated with the sheer artiness of it that every little belch and twitch became fraught with deep meaning. "Sometimes we can be more self-indulgent than anything else, and think that's hip, but being self-indulgent isn't always being creative. I don't play my instrument just to make money; by the same token, I don't play my instrument merely to do something that's different. I have to feel that there's some encounter there—that I'm involved in a process where there's some exchange and sharing between people.

"You have to play with people. You have to make each other sound good. See, that's something bass players can do that no other instrumentalist can do. A bass player can make anyone sound great or totally foolish. I've played with some bass players who were so into their own trip that they'd never hook up with you. Meanwhile, your thing suffers because you're trying to sync up with them and they won't give you any slack. But on the other hand, I'll never forget the first time I played with Buster Williams. We were making a record and Buster began walking. It was so easy—like he'd put his arm around me and said, 'Let's go strollin', baby.' Or like with Jerry Harris' electric bass and the way we play in Jump Up and Julius Hemphill's Jahband. He's always listening to you and supporting you, so that you could mess up but it would sound as if you were right all the time. Or Dave Holland—I played with him for the first time on Bakida Carroll's *Shadows And Reflections*, and I said 'WOW!' I'd forgotten what it was to play like that. Dave Holland did some stuff that was so fantastic that I found myself just listening to him. I forgot to play!"

One of the reasons all these master bass players and composers of the modern jazz movement warmed up to Pheeroan ak Laff is that he shared their painterly approach to sound. His groove had more to do with space and motion than with the overbearing tick of

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a clock—an airborne, unfettered approach in which the cymbals set the pulse (and the bass drum locks it, when necessary).

"I love cymbals," Pheeroan enthuses, "because they're such conductors of light. Cymbals are really a special invention. Gongs, bells, chimes, glockenspiel—that whole family of instruments has always been special to me. I could play a whole solo on cymbals. In fact, I like the cymbals too much, and it took me a while to realize it. I found I was playing on the cymbals more than I should and that I wasn't giving the bands enough kick, so I began coming down to the bass and snare more. Whenever people think of a strong drum and cymbal approach, Tony Williams comes to mind. But I always come back to Jack DeJohnette, and the way he gets the ongoing cymbal effect and drum drive happening at the same time—pauses and commas, but no real stops and crashes. Now that I'm trying to develop more interesting drum solos, I'm less concerned with that approach and more with punctuation and dynamics, as opposed to just waves and pauses.

"I was always more impressed by the ping of a ride than the overall roar, although eventually I wanted cymbals for crash/ride effects, too. Mostly I always liked Zildjian Pings and Rock Rides for stick patterns, yet I was always impressed by the old-fashioned sound of cymbals—by which I mean, 'ShhhShhhShhh'—because basically you couldn't hear what the drummer was playing. It's like the Elvin Jones rivet sound. To me, those cymbals represent older sounds, whereas the Ping represents a newer sound, like the ECM cymbal sound, which was usually Paiste cymbals. I've been using Paiste for a long time now, and they're a very bright, musical cymbal. I was initially impressed by their recorded sound on those ECM records. DeJohnette would play his set of Paistes so evenly. Also [producer] Manfred Eicher was a big overtone man, so they'd capture this beautifully pitched, open sound. That's where my head was at the time, because I was into picking cymbals for specific pitches. I have this 20" Paiste 2002 crash that rings in E natural, and to this day that's the greatest crash I've ever owned. Guitarists love that pitch, because that's the sound of their top and bottom open strings.

"In choosing cymbals I wanted to have a real nice color for each, particularly for doing things in an 'impressionistic' bag, so I've experimented extensively with the pitches and timbres of the 2002, 602, *Sound Creation* and *Rude* lines. What I use all depends on context, and I want to be able to match the moment. In the trio Air, when every note means so much, I don't want to overpower the bass and saxophone, so I'll use an 18" 602 Medium Flat Ride with two rivets, and some smaller crash sounds. With Air, and with Henry Threadgill's Sextet, how long a cymbal rings is a big consideration. I prefer small crash cymbals. People figure, 'big crash, big sound,' but it doesn't work that way. If you want a powerful crash, you're better off with smaller, lighter cymbals, because they're faster, they cut like glass breaking and then they're gone. Big crashes tend to be lower pitched, which means most of the sound is going to get lost in the low frequencies of the electric guitar and bass, while in acoustic music it'll be too overpowering. But big crashes can be very effective in a controlled environment like the recording studio.

"Right now I'm using a pair of 14" *Rude Sound Edge* hi-hats, which can really cut, but aren't so sensitive. It took me a while to pick out a pair that were warm enough to get a soft 'ching-ching' when I control them with my foot. I'm also using a 21" *Rude* ride/crash, a 16" 2002 China, a 15" 2002 Medium crash, an 18" 2002 Heavy crash, a 22" 2002 China for recording, a 20" *Rude* China and that 20" 2002 crash I told you about. I'm still looking for more sensitive cymbals, with a wider dynamic range, more tonality and greater sonority, so I'm not sure what I'll be using months from now. I'm still listening to a lot of different instruments and experimenting. The problem is, everyone seems to be solving the problem of breakage by making the cymbals too heavy. It's not as if cymbals were something that couldn't be destroyed, but now cats make them so indestructible that you can forget about all the good qualities of sound."

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is usually a product of ear sensitivity relative to a specific situation, and the tuning techniques involved. Here, too, Pheeroan has given things a great deal of thought. "I'm very conscious of tuning on the tom-toms, and generally I'll go for melodic frequencies. But lately I've been getting away from that—just finding the best resonant range for the drum itself. When I play with the Threadgill Sextet or Air, they both require that the drums be tuned to specific pitches. When you tune the drums to other instruments and then play together, everything sounds bigger and more present, because the notes all reinforce each other, so you get more of a sense of ensemble playing. John [Betsch] will tune his drums to the open fourths of the bass violin, which is E-A-D-G, and I'll tune to the open strings of the cello, which are in fifths, so the bass drum is C, then G-D-A. Sometimes the snare drum tunings are optional. It can be difficult to get the drums that tightly pitched, because drums have an optimum tuning range, above or below which they won't sing.

"I've experimented a lot with heads, particularly for snare drums. I've found that, if your top head is too dead, you choke the sound when you overtighten it, although you can get a nice, low, raunchy tuning when you tune those thick, thuddy heads real loose. Right now I'm using a regular coated Remo CS head on my 6 1/2 X 14 metal Sonor. On wooden snare drums I use a regular frosted *Ambassador* and tune it accordingly, with tissue and tape on the outside. In the studio you can make drums too dead, but now that sounds are beginning to open up a bit again, I'll either put a 2" x 3" piece of paper towel under two pieces of gaffer's tape out by the edge, or take masking tape and lightly shove it up around the perimeter of the hoop. See, *Pinstripes* are nice heads, but they're a double layer in the middle and a single layer on the hoop. I go for just the opposite. Often I'll just take a clear *Emperor* and cut away the inside so that it's lively in the middle and muted around the hoop. Lately I've been using clear *Emperors* all around, because the coating tends to damp the head's response. And I've been using clear CS heads on the bottoms so that the resonating heads don't carry the sound. I want to keep that sound in the drum so that it's lively but not ringing.

"My Sonors are 9 x 13, 10 x 14 and 16 x 16, with a 14 x 22 bass drum. And man, those drums are seriously heavy, but I love 'em. They're real solid sounding, and you can tune them way up high like Jack DeJohnette does, or way down low like Bernard Purdie. The first time I played Sonors was on Bernard's kit at a triple bill *Deja Vu* appeared on in New Haven. The heads were so slack I couldn't believe it—a real tight funk sound. But later I heard a playback of our band and the drums sounded so great. That convinced me that Sonors were happening. The best sound I get from them is when I tune the resonating heads relatively tight with a nice tone, and the top heads real loose.

"Now bass drums are funny things, man. Betsch and I just copped a couple of old calf-head bass drums from Charlie Donnelly, who has this great drum shop and all this vintage equipment up in Newington, Connecticut. One is like an 8 x 24, and the other's real small; both have wooden hoops from the days during the war when you couldn't get metal. We use them along with some gongs in Henry's Sextet for orchestral effects, and those calf heads really make the drums sing, like from back in the days when cats used to really stylize on their bass drums. When I play my Sonor bass drum in contemporary situations, I generally have the front head off, or at least cut out. You need to get the muffling as low in the bass drum as possible so that the beater isn't striking in the same general area. That way, the drum has room to breathe and has its full resonance. By the same token, you don't want too many overtones, so it's a delicate balance. And if you want that round sound—that African sound that Blakey was talking about with Art Taylor in his book *Notes & Tones*—you should keep the batter side really loose and the resonating side kind of tight. That way you can really stick that beater in and play more heel than toe, because with a one-head drum, the sound goes right out, so you have to have the head loose enough to vibrate. You have to have a head heavy enough to go way down in tuning without flabbing out and losing

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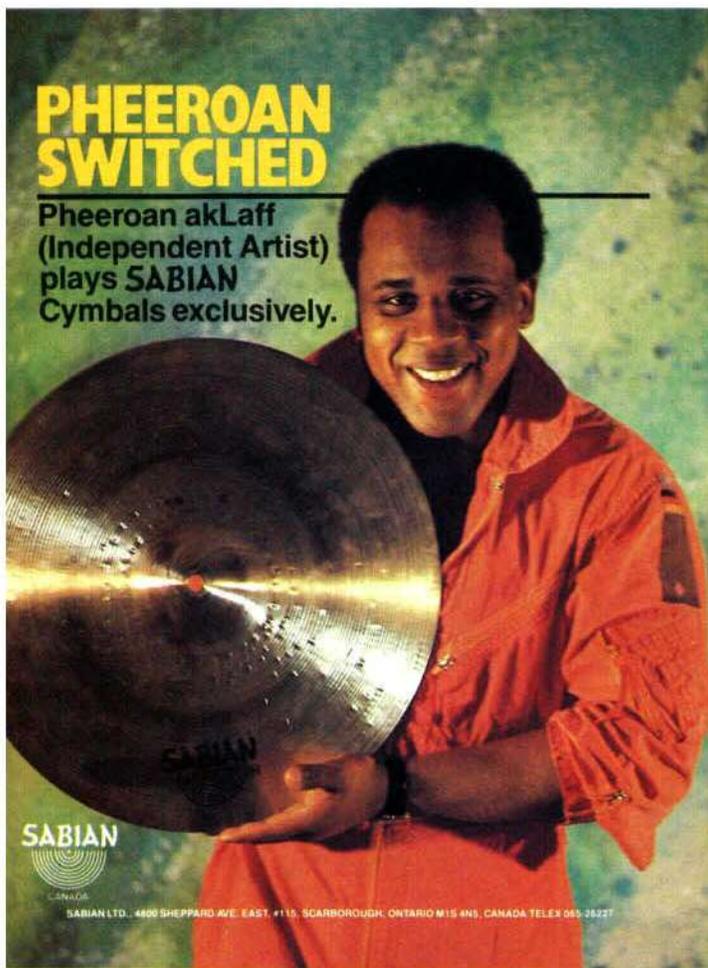
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I've been working towards for a long time," Pheeroan concludes. "This is a period for me to write, sing, produce and play songs—as Jerome Harris puts it, 'little pieces of drama.' Being self-taught, I need help in areas of writing and arranging, and while I can't exactly play piano, I do know how to write from it. The hardest thing for me to achieve in this project was to get back into playing all that silly, simple stuff again, because it works. It really works.

"When I worked on my record with [guitarist] Michael Gregory, he kept saying, 'No fills—no fills. Forget them accents and just play everything straight.' I thought it'd sound dry, but it sounded great. Jay Hoggard laughed when he heard it. He said he didn't know I could play that way. It was just like going back to grade school in a way, but if you listen to the African pop musicians, even though there's a lot going on, everyone's really playing sort of simply. The idea is to focus things for the dancers."

And certainly in most "third world" music, the patterns the drummer plays are really incomplete without the input of the dancers; in a sense, they conclude the drummers' phrase. "Absolutely," Pheeroan enthuses, "and when I conceive of my music, it isn't necessarily just in terms of party dancing. It's in terms of movement in general; it really animates the music and makes it richer—gives it more of a context. So for me, dance means so much more than just some Hoochie-Coochie kind of consciousness, which, unfortunately, people feel guilty about and try to banish. People tend to dance based on their own rhythm and the way they experience life. I mean, there are sacred dancing traditions that have kept us alive for thousands of years. So on *Fits Like A Glove*, I tried to incorporate all sorts of ideas about the dance from the American and African experience, and put them in some sort of song context."

Pheeroan's progress as a vocalist has been a source of some pride to him, and is an ongoing process involving a lot of study. The actual lyric content, however, represents an even greater challenge (and traditionally, this has been the weakest link in the work of progressive jazzmen trying to pursue pop). "There is a craft involved," Pheeroan concurs. "I'm very interested in learning the craft of writing and not just writing about what I feel. You have to be more subtle than that, and I'm not sure I'm at that level yet. I do know that I want there to be some wholesome ideas in this context. I respect the power of words, and when you get into connecting words to flow with rhythm, it has to rhyme with the way we actually speak or it can throw us off. Of all the things I've tried to do in a musical/multi-media type of environment, writing good songs is the toughest nut to crack."

Perhaps, but not half as tough as maintaining his artistic integrity, his sense of curiosity and the respect of his peers as he tries to stretch the limits of what a so-called jazz musician can and cannot do. But here, above all else, Pheeroan ak Laff is sure of his direction—unthreatened by cursory judgments, and secure in his own self-esteem and respect for others. To ak Laff, it's all part of a continuity; it's all his music. "I find that it's a very moving, gratifying experience to write and perform popular songs in the tradition of the Afro/American church—what came to be known as soul music and rock 'n' roll. In a way I'm sort of outside the whole thing, because I never made any separation between artistic approaches; they all seem valid to me. My point of reference has never been jazz or funk or rock, but a neutral place—the human place. I guess I never paid much attention to what people call 'talking shop.' I think many times artists develop attitudes because they've had to function so defensively in this society. But anytime I've heard cats judging someone else's talent or integrity based on their concept of what's hip, it didn't compute. I couldn't use it. They wouldn't say it to your face, so what's the point? It's just a hip thing to run people down within your own subculture. I used to want to lash out against that type of evil, but now I just laugh at it. The point is, it's hard for artists in America, but it's always been hard for artists in Western civilization. And as an artist, I recognize that the most terrible critic I'm going to have to deal with is me. If I can satisfy myself, live up to my potential, and help bring some things of beauty back to the people, then I'll be fulfilled." 

all pitch, which generally means *Pinstripes* or CS heads. Just to keep things reasonably tight, I find the best muffling is an external device like they used on those old-time bass drums, or a bit of paper towel and gaffer's tape in the upper left-hand corner of the batter head, about eleven o'clock high."

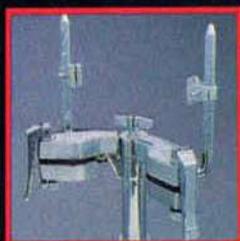
As 1984 reaches the halfway point, Pheeroan ak Laff's drum sound and musical concept have come full circle. Like many of his progressive colleagues on the New York scene, he's attempting to have his cake and eat it too, juggling his attention between free form and funk/reggae inflected commercial aspirations, even splitting the distance occasionally, as his work with John Betsch in the Threadgill Sextet attests. Quite an artistic leap in faith from his first date as a leader, the solo drum album *House Of Spirit Mirth* (Passing Thru Records). "That record was very important for me, because up until then everyone assumed that I was nothing but a 'bloop bleeper.' New Yorkers had heard me in the context of what might be termed avant-garde, although I'd never tried to be 'avant' per se. I just wanted to be me, even if all I was saying was that the drums don't always have to sound like *that*. They can also sound like *this*. I certainly did a 'bloop bleep' song on *House Of Spirit Mirth*, because it was important to me to try to display just exactly where 'bloop bleep' comes from, which I did on the adaptation of the old spiritual 'Freedom.' You know: 'Oh, freedom/Oh, freedom/Oh, freedom over me/Before I'll be a slave I'll be buried in my grave'; then I leave the lyrics and play it on the drums, and then I take off and go all the way out. The whole point was to establish the depth of the context. What people call 'modern' is actually knee deep in the tradition. But I don't want to fixate on one aspect; I want to play it all because it all has artistic and cultural validity."

The main adjustments Pheeroan had to make in trying to develop his pop/R&B idiom were in the areas of restraint, control and lyric content. "You can see clearly now that the pop, funk, calypso and Afro-beat music of *Fits Like A Clove* is something

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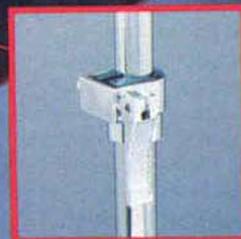


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Intervals

In the first article of this series, we examined the scale and learned how a major scale is formed. We illustrated how the notes are placed on the treble and bass clefs, and where they are found on your keyboard. If you have been able to spend even a little time each day on this, your listening skill has probably improved, and now you are ready to learn more key areas.

Review

You have learned the following scales: C major, F major, G major and a chromatic scale, starting on C (C chromatic). Learn scales with the following ideas in mind:

1. Sound: The *sound* of the scale is the most important aspect.
2. The whole-step/half-step sequence: Major scales are constructed of two whole steps, then one half step, then three whole steps and one half step. A chromatic scale is made up of half steps only.
3. The visual shape: i.e., a C major scale is all white notes on the keyboard; F major has one flat (B); G major has one sharp (F#). All scales make a particular visual shape. B major has two white notes (B and E). G major has two white notes (C and F). This image will help you remember how to create the sound of whatever key area you are working with.

Examining Intervals

Use your imagination a little, and visualize the scales as horizontal lines of music. To build or "stack" the notes vertically, we need to consider intervals. Think of it this way: When you play only one sound on your drumset, you are creating a *line*.



When you play two, three, or four sounds simultaneously, you are creating a *vertical sonority*, similar to a harmonic sound or *chord*.



The presence or absence of these single or multiple attacks is what gives music its texture—thick and concerted, or thin and linear—and should be part of your listening awareness and development. When you play a tune with your group, you should ask yourself the following questions. Is the texture the same throughout (dull) or do you create interesting contrasts? Do you create thin and thick lines, interval combinations, chords, and solo, duo or trio segments? Do you drum with one, two, three, or four limbs? To see exactly what an interval is and how we create texture with notes, let's return to the C major scale:



The step degree or number of the note in the scale sequence tells us the distance above the *root* or *keynote*:

- C to D is a major 2nd
- C to E is a major 3rd
- C to F is a perfect 4th
- C to G is a perfect 5th
- C to A is a major 6th
- C to B is a major 7th
- C to C is a perfect octave (8va)

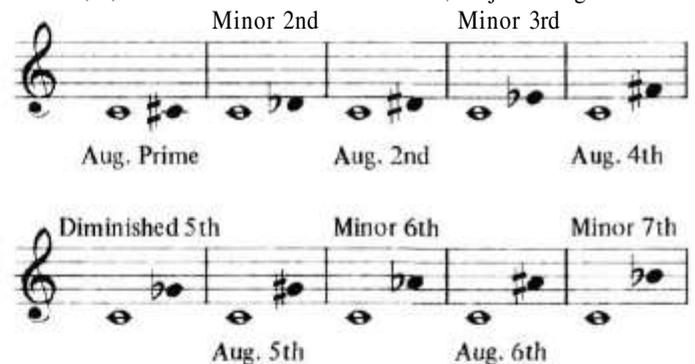
So an interval is the difference in pitch (the vertical distance on the staff) between two notes. We generally measure this musical distance from the lower note to the higher note. If you tried the material in the last article, some of the intervals might look familiar:



Again, try to learn the sound of these intervals. This will improve your drumming technique. It will also improve the way you hear—and relate your playing to—your group.

Up to this point, all of our intervals have been drawn from the major scale. However, you have five other notes (the black keys) to place against that C root. This is where we use the idea of augmenting or diminishing an interval size for those intervals which do not automatically fall in the major scale.

When we refer to an interval as being augmented, it means the interval is raised a half step. A diminished interval is one that has been lowered a half step. To make an interval minor, it must be lowered a half step. In standard musical terms, the intervals of 4, 5 and 8 are referred to as either perfect, diminished or augmented, while 2, 3, 6 and 7 are referred to as minor, major or augmented.

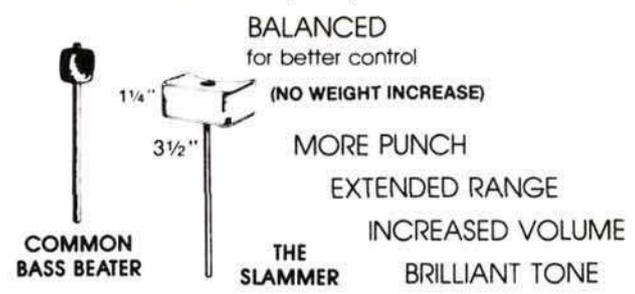


These are the intervals which frequently stand out in the music, arrest our attention, give special color or added dimension and interest, and are important for your listening development. Many times, different harmonic colors in a tune will merit different colors or textures from the drums. The better you can understand and hear these colors, the better you will be as a musician.

The way we combine the notes of the scales is the way *chords* are created. Remember, scales are formed from whole and half *step* combinations. Chords are formed from various *interval* combinations. If this is new to you, it can seem a little overwhelming. Try to work on one aspect at a time. For instance, the easiest interval is the perfect octave C to C, D to D, F# to F#, etc. Next, learn the

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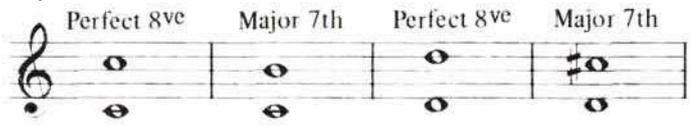
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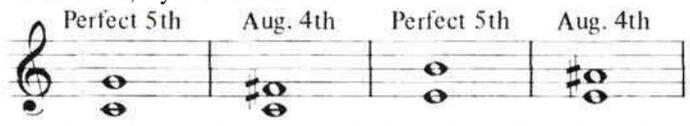
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major 7th interval: C to B, D to C#, F# to E#(F), etc. Notice that the major 7th is a half step lower than the perfect octave. Learn what this *sounds* like. A major 7th will always sound like a major 7th, no matter what key it is played in. The sound of the interval will always have the same character.

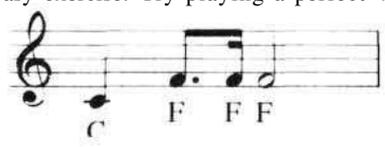


You can learn the tricky intervals by comparing them to an easy one. Compare the perfect 5th (C to G, E to B, G to D, Aⁿ to Eⁿ, etc.) to the augmented 4th (C to F#, E to A#, G to C#, A^b to D, etc.). Remember, try to learn the *sound*.



(Again, notice that the augmented 4th note is a half step lower than the perfect 5th.)

Here's an easy exercise. Try playing a perfect 4th (C to F) as follows:



What tune does that remind you of? Relate the sounds these intervals make to melodies you know, and you will find the intervals easier to remember.

The better you become at hearing what is happening, the greater your musical contribution will be to any ensemble. When you have questions about learning scales or intervals, be sure to ask your music teacher or band director to help you. They will appreciate your initiative and be glad to help you. That's what they're there for!



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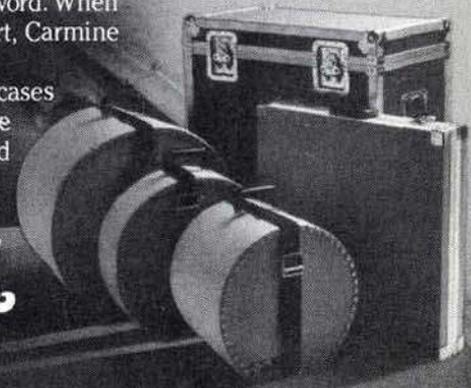


Carmine Appice

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Shifting Gears

The ability to make smooth transitions from one rhythmic idea to another is one that must be continually worked on. This article contains six exercises that will help you to accomplish the "shifting of gears" more easily. The suggested metronome settings begin at very slow tempos to make execution easier. Practicing at slower tempos will allow you to watch each note as it goes by so the necessary adjustments can be made for evenness, two sound levels, etc. In order to make the accented notes stand out, pay close attention to the unaccented notes in both hands, playing them as softly as possible.

To fully grasp the concept of "abnormal" or "irrational" rhythmic groups, I suggest the following books: *Rhythmic Analysis For The Snare Drum*, by Fred Albright, and *Patterns*, Volumes I and II, by Gary Chaffee. Out of all the books I've seen on the subject, those mentioned above *explain* the concept of polymeters/polyrhythms the most thoroughly. Because of the thoroughness of these books, they are a must for the contemporary drumset player's library.

Learning is an exciting adventure. The more depth we build into our playing abilities, the more articulate we can be in our musical endeavors.

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The 1954 Gretsch catalog featured such jazz artists as Louie Bellson, Denzil Best, Art Blakey, Jo Jones, Don Lamond, Mel Lewis, Shelly Manne, Charlie Perry, Max Roach and George Wettling. Mel Lewis recalled what it meant to be a Gretsch endorser: "They gave you drums and cymbals, and you could always stop by the factory if you needed sticks or brushes. But they didn't give you unlimited equipment. In fact, when you got a new drumset you had to turn in your old one. Gretsch never, ever paid anybody to play their drum. They even preferred that you already owned a set of Gretsch before they offered you an advertising deal. Fred wanted to know that you played the drums because you liked them. The only contract you had with Gretsch was that, in return for a set of drums, they were allowed to use your name and picture in their advertising, and that contract could be broken anytime. But all of these drummers wanted to play Gretsch drums.

"We were all close to each other through that company," Lewis continued. "We all loved Gretsch; there was a common feeling there. When one of us played somewhere, Phil Grant would come around to hear us, and he might bring some of the other drummers with him. It was like a fraternity."

That fraternal spirit was manifest in the Gretsch Drum Nights, which, of course, were Phil Grant's idea. "I think that was the best idea I ever came up with," Phil states. "I was a fan of Birdland. I would go there frequently, and most of the drummers were playing Gretsch. I got to know the manager, and one night I suggested that we make a special set of drums that could be used as the house set for anyone who played there. We came up with a set made of solid green shells, and I had all of the metal gold plated. I was able to do that because we had gold-plating facilities for our Gretsch guitars. So that set became quite a showpiece at the club.

"Then one night I suggested having a Gretsch Drum Night, with three of our drummers. The first one broke all attendance records at Birdland, so we continued it for several years." The second one, in 1960, was recorded and released on Roulette Records. It featured Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Charli Persip and Philly Joe Jones, who were all Gretsch artists at that time.

Mel Lewis participated in a couple of Gretsch Drum Nights, and recalled what they were like. "Those were fun. We had a rhythm section and a horn player, and we would each take a turn playing with the group. Then all the drummers would get out in front—we had four drumsets—and we'd work our way through trading choruses, then sixteens, then eights, down to fours, and then swing out together. We always agreed that nobody was going to try to overshadow anybody else. The idea was

to keep the continuity going. It worked out just great, and it was wonderful for Gretsch, because nobody else could boast that many top drummers."

The 1966 Gretsch catalog contained photos of Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Don Lamond, Sonny Payne, Chico Hamilton and Mel Lewis. The featured drumset was the *Progressive Jazz* kit, which was made up of a 5 x 14 snare, 14 x 20 bass, 8 x 12 mounted tom and 14 x 14 floor tom. In many ways, this catalog documents the reason Gretsch lost its position of supremacy in the '60s. In 1964, the Beatles had arrived in America, and started the "rock revolution." Suddenly, a lot of people started playing instruments and forming rock bands, but the drum that became associated with rock was Ludwig, largely because that's what Ringo Starr played. When jazz had become the dominant musical style in the '50s, Gretsch was right there. But when tastes changed suddenly in the '60s, Gretsch quite simply did not keep up with the times. Duke Kramer agrees: "We were always a jazz-oriented company, and when the rock thing came along, we really missed it. Yet, in the long run, not counting all of the dollars we could have made, it was probably the best thing to do, because during that time we developed the wood-finished drums, while everybody else stayed with the plastic and pearl finishes. When drummers eventually started going to wood finishes, Gretsch had a position of dominance."

In 1967, Phil Grant and Duke Kramer made their annual trip to the Frankfurt Music Fair in Germany. When they returned, Fred Gretsch, Jr., met them at the airport and invited them out for dinner. While they were eating, he informed them that he had sold the Gretsch company to Baldwin, who manufactured pianos and organs. The announcement came as a total surprise to both of them. Duke Kramer explained: "Fred was very excited about it because he was 60 years old and didn't have a son to leave the business to, so he wanted to sell it, which was probably a smart thing for him to do. So Baldwin bought it, Fred was put on the board of directors of the Baldwin company, and Phil and I [who were both vice presidents of Gretsch by this time] were given long-term contracts, which Fred saw to. Then it was a matter of trying to fit into a corporate scene, after coming from a small, family-held company."

And what did Baldwin want with Gretsch? Like everyone else, Baldwin wanted to cash in on the music craze that had been going on since 1964. Their intention was to get into a full line of band instruments, so they began buying other companies. They bought such names as Burns guitars (from England) which were renamed Baldwin guitars; they bought Ode banjos; they bought Sho-Bud pedal

steel guitars; they had a line of band instruments under the name Baldwin. But despite all of these things, they still were not getting their combo division off the ground. Buying Gretsch gave them a successful line of drums (and guitars) and an already established merchandising operation.

As Kramer recalls, "The first thing they wanted to do was to close the New York factory, which was probably a good thing because we had outgrown it terribly." The factory operation was moved to Booneville, Arkansas, and despite all of the good reasons for making that move, there was also the negative side, which Phil Grant remembers with sadness. "They moved all of the machinery out, and they took the plant manager, but what they forgot to take with them was the knowledge of the people who had been making Gretsch drums. Some of those people had been there for years, and we had to tell them they didn't have a job anymore. Baldwin offered them severance pay, but they didn't want pay; they wanted their jobs." Baldwin eventually closed the New York sales office altogether, and moved it to Chicago. A couple of years later, the Chicago office was closed too, and everything was moved to Baldwin's main office in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the midst of all these moves, there were two major fires at the Booneville factory (in '72 and '73) which resulted in major setbacks for the company.

Phil Grant never made any of those moves. When the New York office was closed, Phil decided that he'd had enough, and moved to Vermont. Upon his departure, a lot of drummers felt that they had lost their best friend, and several years later it was common to hear them say, "Gretsch was never the same after Phil left."

The people at Baldwin had good intentions, though, and wanted Gretsch to be a success, but there are certain things inherent in a corporate structure which are not always in the best interests of the product itself. Perhaps the biggest single problem during the Baldwin years was that no one actually had the title of president of Gretsch. Duke Kramer was still an official in the company, but as he recalled, "I went through so many titles that I can't remember them all." A lot of different people had the authority to make decisions in different areas, and some of those decisions were based on the piano & organ business, rather than the band instrument business, which involves a different set of criteria. One very visible indication of this situation was the fact that, between 1979 and 1981, the logo badge on the drums changed four times. It was not uncommon for a single drumset to be made up of drums with two different logos, and you can see three different ones on the back of the '81 catalog.

Baldwin sincerely wanted Gretsch to be

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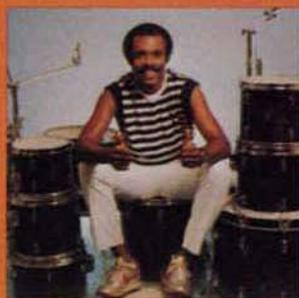
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big, so they were looking for things to add to the company. They decided that a major amplifier line would complement the Gretsch guitars, so in 1979 they purchased the Kustom amplifier company and merged it with Gretsch, forming the Kustom/Gretsch company. Along with the amplifiers, the company had some real estate in Chanute, Kansas, which became the headquarters for Kustom/Gretsch. Kustom also had Charlie Roy, who was put in charge of Gretsch.

Roy described what shape Gretsch was in when he became involved in '79. "The drums were the mainstay of the company, but there were a lot of problems with them. The hardware had not been changed for years. There hadn't even been a new catalog for seven years. The average delivery time was six months. There was a problem with the colors; we might have five different shades of a single color. There were other business problems that had nothing to do with the quality of the drums themselves. There were a lot of things that needed to be straightened out. We had to organize the company from a business standpoint and try to create some semblance of order. We also needed to get the quality of the product up to what it was supposed to be."

Charlie Roy was doing everything he could to improve the drums—such as junking a lot of old hardware—and finally, during a meeting at which the quality was being discussed, the Baldwin people asked Roy if he would like to buy Kustom/Gretsch. His answer was, "Yes, I would."

Roy officially bought Gretsch in the spring of 1982, and moved the corporate offices to Gallatin, Tennessee, which is just outside of Nashville. A year before that, the factory operation had been moved from Booneville to DeQueen, Arkansas. In 15 years, Gretsch had gone full circle from private ownership, to being part of a corporation, back to private ownership. And for the first time in 15 years, Gretsch had an actual president.

It's easy to look back at all of the problems of the Baldwin years, and wonder why a small company would ever want to be part of a large corporation, but there are a few reasons, which Charlie Roy explained. "In order to keep up with improvements and changes in the industry, a drum company must have a lot of tooling, which is very expensive. You could open an amplifier company tomorrow with parts from Radio Shack, but you couldn't open a drum company because of the amount of equipment involved. So one of the advantages of being with a large corporation is that they can give you the necessary backing to purchase equipment. Also, from a business standpoint, they can often provide better distribution, and can offer financing for the dealers. Plus, you can benefit from other people in the corporation who have business experience.

"The advantage of private ownership is that if you see something that needs to be done, you do it. You don't have to wait a month for somebody to check it with 15 other departments. You *do it*. That's a terrific advantage, because it helps you bend to the marketplace quickly. Also, if we were part of a large corporation, and the drum business suddenly went under, the corporation would still go on. But with a small company, everyone is directly affected, so that gives us a sense of urgency, and a sense of pride. That's an intangible asset that I value highly."

Over the past two years, Charlie Roy has proceeded to do it, addressing every problem from how the business is run to how the drums are made. And he's very proud of those drums. "The truth is," he states matter-of-factly, "the best drums Gretsch ever made are the ones we are making now. Everyone who works at the factory is proud of the product, and we are constantly walking through and talking to them, asking, 'What can we do to make this product better?' We also get feedback from our artists; in fact, if we don't get feedback from someone, then there's little reason for that person to be with us. The reason we hired Karl Dustman was so that we would have someone totally dedicated to working with the artists—someone who would always be here if they called in with a question or a comment, although they are also free to call in and talk to me, or to anybody here for that matter. I think the way for a company to stay on top is through the artists, because they set the trends. One of the reasons I wanted the office near Nashville is because that gives us access to a lot of artists. We all catch a lot of acts, and spend time talking to the drummers. New York or L.A. can be so hectic that the drummers don't always have time to sit down and talk, but this is out of the way enough that often they're looking for someone to talk to."

Despite the various improvements that are being made, Gretsch is determined to maintain the tradition of the company. As Charlie Roy explained, "We don't improve things to the point that they end up like the ancient cathedral which is renovated to the point that it loses its warmth and becomes a monument to modern architecture. We like to improve things that aid the function of the drums, without interfering with the sound, because if there's anything Gretsch is known for, it's 'That Great Gretsch Sound.' We'll never change that."

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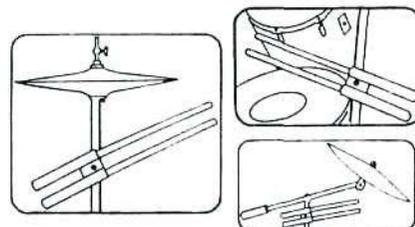
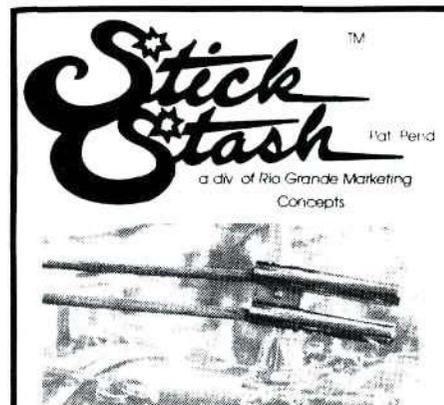
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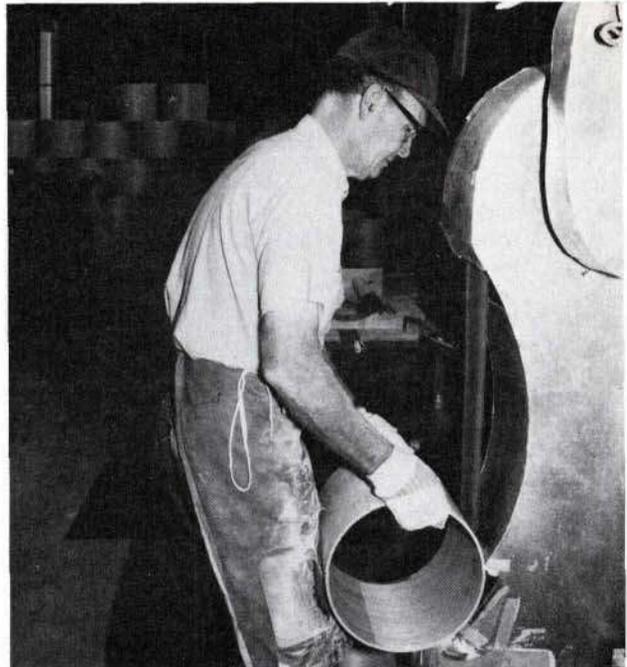
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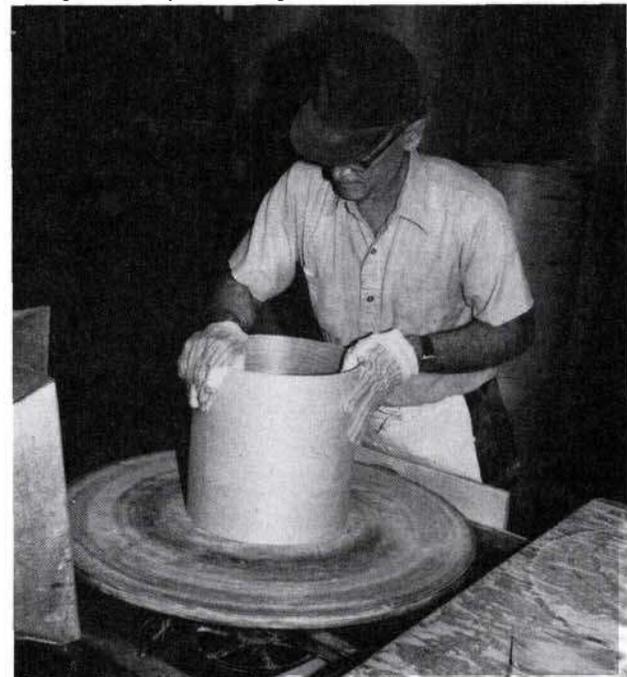
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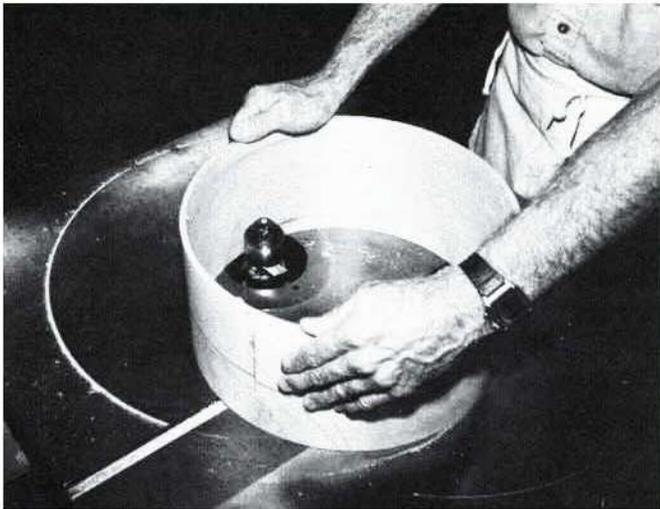
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As we watched shells being cut, trued, beveled and sanded, Ben commented on the touch of the worker. "In woodworking and in musical instruments, there's a lot of feel. If you watch Merle closely while he performs these operations, you'll see that he's not really looking. He's feeling it. That's really what it's all about."

The final sanding is done by hand, with the shell spinning on a turntable. This is the last step before the shell is either finished or covered. This step is especially important for those shells which will be given a natural-wood finish, because, as Ben explained, "There's a fallacy that the finish will hide and cover everything. The truth is, the finish will highlight every mistake we make. If the drum is not properly prepared, we're going to have a product of inferior quality at the end of the line. That's all there is to it. So the woodworking is critical."



"Everybody makes such a big deal out of sanding, and they go out and get digital readout computers to analyze how much sanding should be done. The real trick is the detailed attention that the employee pays to it. Merle can tell how much he's going to have to sand it by the grain structure."

Ben re-emphasized the importance of catching defects early. "Everybody in the system is looking for the defect. We want to stop it before we have all our money in it. We normally don't have a high scrap rate. That's the whole name of the game and everybody in this building is an inspector. That's a part of everyone's job. All employees inspect their own work, as well as the work of whoever is feeding them, and if they see a flaw anywhere on the line as they're walking by, they'll point it out."

After the sanding is completed, the shells are loaded onto a dolly, and taken either to the covering area or the finishing area. We stopped first at the covering area and watched a bass drum shell receiving a pearl covering. "This is a straightforward, simple oper-

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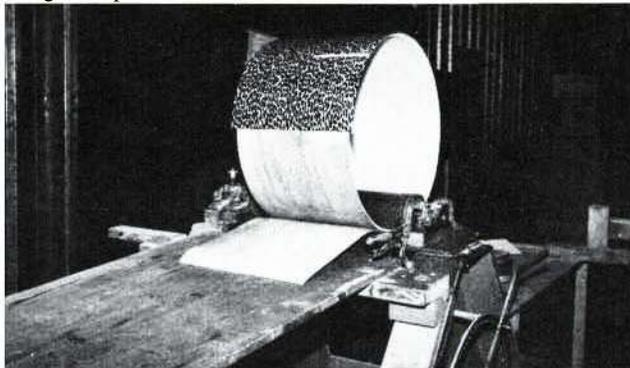
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ation," Ben commented. "I'm sure that everybody does it about the same. Both the shell and the covering material are coated with contact adhesive and allowed to dry. I know that some companies use double-face tape, but we have not found that to be adequate. We start it by hand on the top just enough to hold it, and we put it through the pinch roller."



After the covering has been applied by machine, the overlap on the ends of the shell is trimmed by hand.

To get from the woodworking shop to the finishing department, we walked down a long corridor and through a heavy door, which is always kept closed. Ben explained the reasons for the separation of these departments. "If you're going to have a class finish, you're going to have to keep the dirt out of it, and the woodworking generates a lot of dust. That's why we've isolated the dust and dirt of woodworking. It adds clarity to our finishing. The booths are cleaned and the floors are mopped daily."

The finishing area seemed warmer than the area we had just left, and I commented on that. Ben replied, "We have to control humidity in this room. Right now the humidity is a little high, so we're forcing heat in here. If it's 85° outside and the humidity is too high, we still force heat in here to drive the humidity out. Likewise, we have a static problem in finishing if the humidity gets too low. So at that point we pump moisture back in. We like to maintain about 42% humidity in here. There are days when we can't do that. Mother Nature just does not cooperate at all and equipment can't overcome it. We will not sacrifice the quality of our production just to keep the line going. Therefore, it is possible that we may have to shut down the finishing area completely for a day or two."

The first step in the finishing process is the application of a wash coat, which is merely a colored tint. As Ben explained, "This will show up defects that we have not been able to see in sanding. If there's any glue there, it will jump right out. If there are any cracks, they will show up. We can either block sand them by hand to get the glue off or send them back to woodworking to be started all over again."



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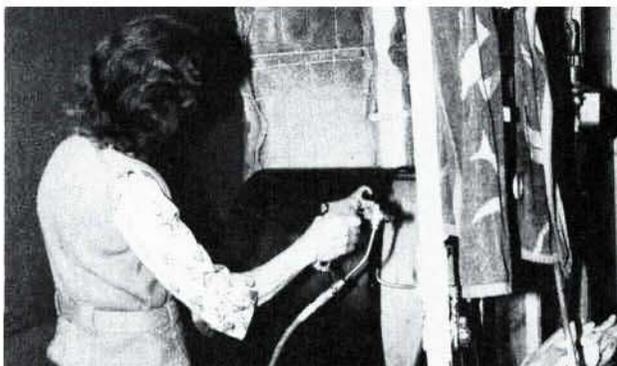
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After being wash coated, the shells are stained. Depending on the grain structure, a shell may be given from one to three coats of stain. Ben described the process: "In staining, it's a real talent to be able to blend these colors and make them match the control chip. We have to know when to stop. Otherwise we're into a rework situation. We let the coating dry and then recheck it. If it's just a shade light, we put on another coat to make it darker. If it happened to be too dark, we would wash it back with alcohol."



Throughout these operations, the skill of the workers was evident, and Ben commented again on their touch. "In our staining operation, our people can actually tell which one of the wood-working operators finished the shell by the feel of the wood and the way it takes stains. The quality isn't different; it just has a different feel."

"Our next operation is sealing. We wash coat; we stain; we seal. That's it on the first day. Then we shoot one coat of lacquer per day. We sand the second coat, put two more coats on, sand the fourth coat, and then apply the final two coats. It takes seven days to put lacquers on because we allow two days' drying after the sixth coat before we go to buffing. That allows the solvents to get out. Most companies are laying two coats a day. We're putting on one coat, letting the solvents dissipate, and it reduces the shrink. Lacquer will shrink into grain. Sometimes, as on guitars, you can see where the lacquer has shrunk into the grain, and it looks like it's checked. That's what we're trying to eliminate."



After the final coat of lacquer has been allowed to dry for two days, the shell is wet sanded. "We use just soap and sandpaper for this process of removing the lacquer buildup."

The next step is the application of the "magic coating"—the silver-colored sealer on the inside of every Gretsch shell. Again, this process is important to the Gretsch sound, so the company was reluctant to discuss the chemical structure of the sealer, or to have the application process photographed. However, I witnessed the process and can verify that the coating is *not* used to cover up inferior wood. Scratch it away and you'll find high-quality maple. I questioned Ben about the reason for putting anything on the inside of a drumshell. "It seals the wood. In finishing, if you only finish one side of the wood, the wood is not stabilized. Moisture will affect the other side and work one side of the surface against



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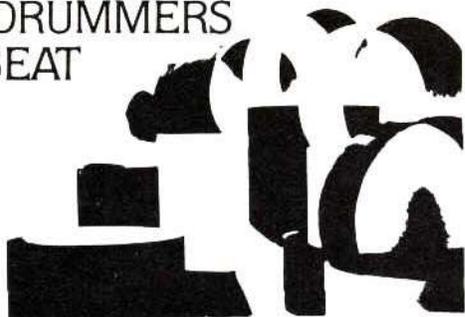
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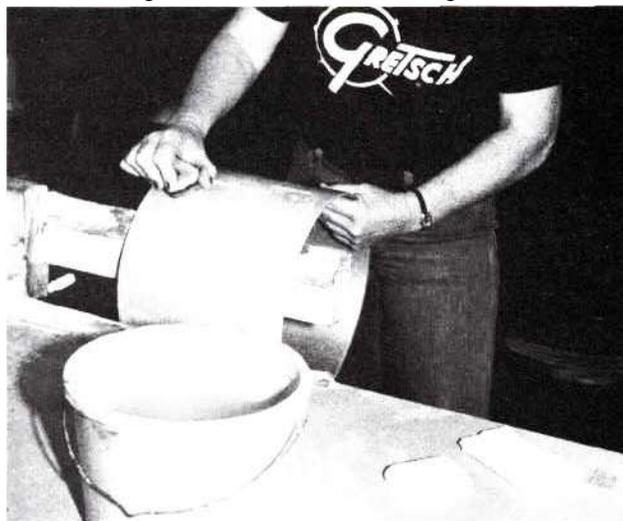
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the other. You want a protective covering so that the moistures are not attacking the interior. As far as the specific covering that we use, all I can say is that it's 'That Great Gretsch Sound.' The sealant that we use gives more of a resonator effect to the shell, so that the shell carries the vibration of sound without absorbing it."

The next step is to buff the shell. Ben explained why the wet sanding which was done after the lacquering operation is important. "That makes it easier on the buffer, because the buffing wheel generates so much heat that you can scorch lacquer. We could go directly from the final lacquer to the buffing wheel, but it heats up the lacquer so much that we would have a lot of rejects. So we put that extra sanding in to cut down on the buffing time.



"We have a wet wheel and a dry wheel. The wet wheel has an abrasive, and that takes the wet sanding even further to smooth out the lacquer. Then it's washed off with naphtha and goes to the dry wheel. There's no compound at all. You can actually see the lacquer moving and you have to know when you're applying too much pressure so you don't scorch or cut through it. Here again, it's the craftsman's feel that makes it controllable. I have not found a machine that could do it without someone directing it.

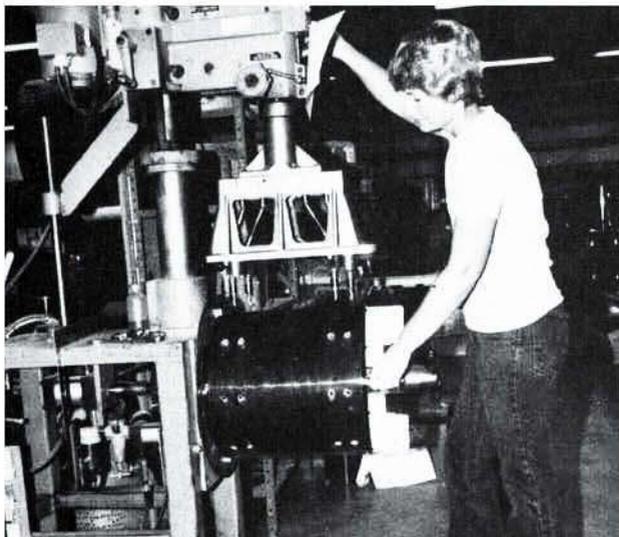


"What we do better than anybody is wood finishing, because we start it out properly and we finish properly. We're woodworkers and finishing people. We just do it better than anybody. Nobody can touch us without rushing the process. We could put them out a lot faster, but not any better."

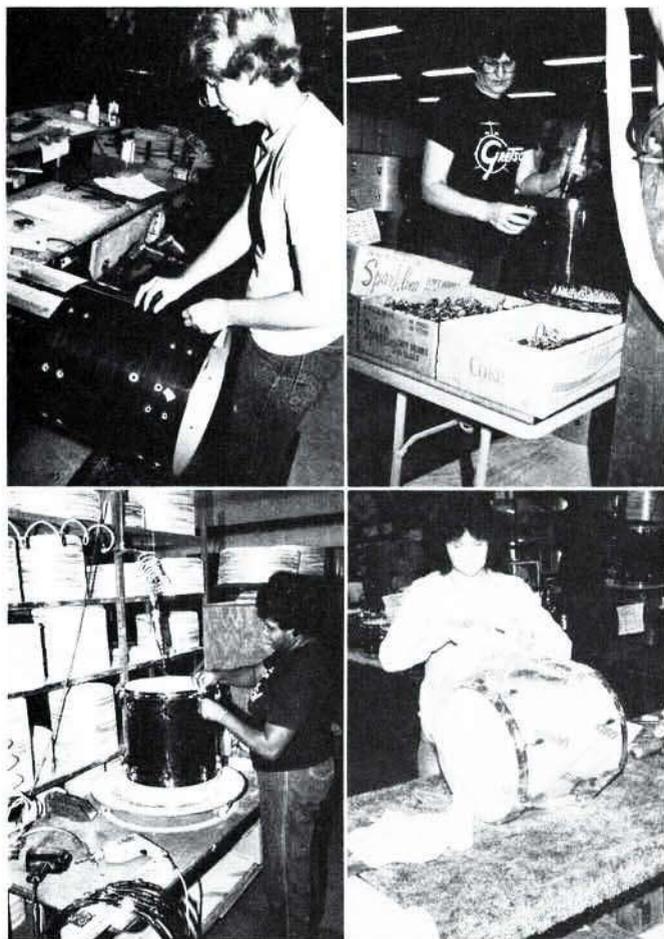
The next step is the drilling, and that is where a shell becomes a specific drum, for a specific customer. "We're really a custom shop," Ben commented. "I believe we have 56 different models depending on the combination of heads and hardware. So once a shell hits that drill, it's really identified. There are always some drummers who want a muffler only on the bottom head, some want it on the batter side, some want both, and some don't want one at

all. It's just impossible to warehouse them all, so that customer is really getting individual treatment on every order that comes through here.

"The drilling is done with a multiple-spindle head that we set up per model. We can either drill single- or double-headed drums. We've chosen to limit our drilling to one lug station at a time, because that results in better alignment."



At this point, the shell moves down an assembly line. The Gretsch nameplate is installed, lugs are mounted along with whatever holders and mufflers are required, heads and rims are added, the finished drum is inspected, given a thorough cleaning, put into a plastic bag, and then into a carton. From there it's only a few steps away to the loading dock, where our tour began.



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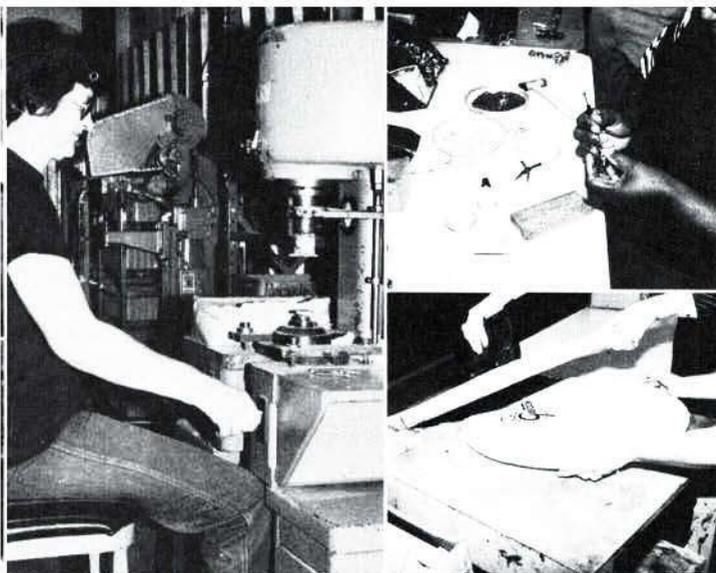
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Before leaving, though, we stopped off to see some of the other jobs that are done at the factory. We saw mufflers being made, snare strainers being assembled, and the Gretsch logo being silk-screened onto bass drum heads.



I remember someone once telling me: "Too many companies make drums like furniture. Furniture is made by machines; musical instruments should be made by people." I spent several hours at the Gretsch factory, but I don't really remember the machines. What I do remember are the people, and the obvious respect they have for the drums they are making. We all know how much drummers love their drums. I venture to say that the people who make Gretsch love the drums just as much.



Drum Machines On Stage

Nothing has generated as much controversy within the drumming profession as the recent advent of drum machines. Initially designed as a studio and composing tool, the machines have become so prevalent in both jingle and album recording that the electronic character of their sound has influenced the overall style of popular music. Drum machines have contributed greatly to the synthesized, techno-pop sound that represents such a large portion of contemporary music. This has resulted in drummers arguing among themselves: the purists decrying the use of the machines on the basis of "artificial" sound and "mechanical" feel; others seeing the machines as a new instrument to be mastered and added to the drummer's arsenal.

What I'm referring to here is the programmable drum machine, as opposed to the electronic drumset. A "kit" such as the Simmons SDS-5 still requires a live drummer to play it. A drum machine requires only the services of a programmer at some point in time, and then the machine can "perform" on its own.

While endless debates could rage on the value of such a tool in the studio environment, how does the popularity of the drum machine affect steady players—the club drummers whose livelihood depends on the appeal of their band's nightly performance? Is the drum machine a threat, an adversary, or an ally?

Recently I've had the opportunity to listen to some club groups who were incorporating drum machines into their live act, *along with* their live drummer. There were some very positive results, and also what I thought were some negative factors that they might not have considered. In this article, I want to try to take as objective a look as possible at the potential of the drum machine on the club stage.

Pros

1. *Freedom for the drummer.* First and foremost, the use of a drum machine frees the drummer to double on other instruments, or perhaps perform out front as a vocalist. One group I saw featured the drummer as a soloist on vibes, and also as a multi-percussionist on heavy production tunes. Such freedom obviously allows a drummer to demonstrate the full range of his or her talents, which, in turn, adds to the overall showmanship of the group, and enhances the variety of the act.

2. *Increased drum sound.* Many of today's records feature heavily tracked

drums, often with added percussion effects. When a live drummer plays along with the drum machine, a very powerful foundation is possible (such as in a heavy metal rock tune). The potential is also there to create extremely intricate drum patterns (such as in a fusion tune), or things that might be physically impossible for a single drummer to achieve (such as drum parts on tunes by groups who perform with two drummers). The live drummer is free to move from the kit to percussion instruments and back again, as the arrangement warrants.

3. *Contemporary sounds.* Many of today's top-40 hits are very electronic in their conceptualization, and the "drums" are often *recorded by* a drum machine, or perhaps on an electronic drumset. In some cases, those drum tracks are later enhanced with live drums as well, and in some cases not. But it's a simple fact that no live drumset is going to be able to approximate the synthetic sounds of the original recording, where electronic drums were used. The use of a drum machine on stage can go a long way towards reproducing your material as closely as possible to the original, thus giving your band a very authentic, contemporary sound. This is simply a recognition of the facts of life—the old theory that "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!" Your job in a club is usually to play familiar music, and most club bands make an effort to duplicate the originals as closely as possible. A drum machine can help you to do that, and it behooves you to recognize that fact and use the proper tool for your job. Of course, you may prefer to obtain a Simmons, or other electronic drum to actually play on, but in so doing you sacrifice the option to perform on other instruments, independently of the "drum track." There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it is something to consider.

4. *Tempo and groove.* There's absolutely no question that the use of a drum machine is going to "lock in" your tempo, and generally nail down the groove for the band. Working with a drum machine will be like playing to a click track, and if nothing else, your tunes will be consistent in tempo from performance to performance. That may, of course, be a mixed blessing. Many groups like to vary the tempo of a given tune from night to night, based on their own energy level, and that of their audience. On the other hand, some groups feel that the original tempo of a song repre-

sents an integral part of its composition, and should stay the same from night to night in the same way that the chords and the lyrics should. Some drummers like to use a metronome on stage to establish tempo. Here you have an opportunity to work with a metronomic device that also offers a real contribution to the overall sound of the group.

Cons

1. *Sounding mechanical.* By their very nature, programmable drum machines are mechanical devices, without life or sensitivity. Part of the attraction of a live band is the spontaneity and energy that a live performance can offer. Otherwise, your audience members might just as well stay at home watching MTV or listening to the same songs on their stereo. There is the danger that a live group, working with a drum machine as the foundation of the rhythm, could fall into that mechanical, artificial quality, making their performance stiff and lifeless. We all recognize that a chronic problem with club groups is a tendency to become somewhat jaded and mechanical in delivery, due simply to constant repetition of the same material. The greatest challenge for any club band is to keep their performance fresh and exciting, for themselves as well as their audience. Playing along with a machine runs the risk of emphasizing the mechanical versus the live element of the group's performance. This is not to say that it cannot be overcome, and in fact—with today's material—in many cases a certain "mechanical" quality is a large part of the original sound. As with anything else, such a mechanical quality has its time and place in your band's performance—as an effect. But if it is allowed to take over the entire night, you will quickly appear very robotic to your audience, and the whole reason for performing live will have been lost.

2. *Time problems.* While a drum machine will certainly "lock in" a tempo, that doesn't guarantee that the live drummer, or the band, can automatically "lock in" to the machine. Especially when a live drummer is playing *along with* the machine, the drummer's time could pull or push against the inflexible tempo the machine sets down. While this might not be noticed if the drummer were playing alone with the band (since they would be following any shifts in tempo), it most certainly will be noticed when the drum machine is also playing, and the result will be a sense

by Rick Van Horn

of rhythmic tension. The audience may not know exactly what it is, but they will sense that *something* is not together. Of course, this effect can be used deliberately and consciously to create such a tension for a given performance purpose, but if it is allowed to happen unconsciously, it can make the song very uncomfortable to listen to or dance to. It will also emphasize the drummer's time problem, since there can be no question as to the one who's being inconsistent.

3. *Tuning.* The sophistication of today's electronic drum machines, in terms of the sounds they are capable of producing, is incredible. And by the time you put a quality drum machine through a decent sound board, with the enhancement of EQs and other outboard effects, you have the potential to create a wide variety of fabulous drum sounds. The risk you run is that the sound of your acoustic kit may suffer by comparison. You can, of course, limit the sounds you use on the drum machine to those electronic effects your drums are incapable of producing, and use only the acoustic drums for "live" drum sounds. But this, again, will restrict the potential for you to get away from your drumset altogether, to play something else. A better idea might be to listen carefully to the drum sound produced by the machine, and then tune your kit to maximize its own resonance and projection, in order to compare favorably. Remember too that if the drum machine is being run through your sound system, and your drums are not, there is no way in the world that the live drums are going to reach the audience's ears sounding as full and solid as the machine. Even if you do not need to *amplify* the live drums, they should be miked up, simply to put them into the sound system—to give them the same *presence* in the overall sound of the band that the drum machine has.

Other Considerations

While neither pros nor cons, here are a few other points to consider before deciding whether or not to incorporate a drum machine into your stage performance.

1. How much can you spend on a machine? Obviously you want to get the best machine you can afford—the one capable of producing the best sounds. Don't run out and grab a cheap device that's going to sound like the cha-cha setting on your aunt's chord organ. If you don't employ a unit that can give you state-of-the-art

sound quality, you eliminate all of the positive reasons for using the machine in the first place. The good machines are expensive, but in this case the entire expense need not be absorbed by the drummer. Since the band as a whole is going to benefit by the use of the machine, perhaps it could be purchased as a group expense.

2. How flexible is the machine? How is it programmed? Can an entire set be programmed in advance, and merely stepped through as each new song is called, or must a new program, including tempo, be set up before each individual tune? What are the machine's limitations in terms of drum patterns? Can it only play a solid, consistent rhythm, or can it be programmed to follow a verse/chorus structure, including drum fills?

3. How do you use the machine, in terms of starting songs? A group I saw using such a machine let it run alone for a few bars, as an introductory vamp, before counting into each song. While this was effective a few times in setting up the "groove" for the audience, it quickly became predictable and a little boring. It also served to underscore the artificial nature of the drumming: Since only the "drums" were being heard, yet the live drummer was not playing, it was obvious that the machine was producing the drum sounds, and the "live" quality of the band was destroyed at the very outset of the song.

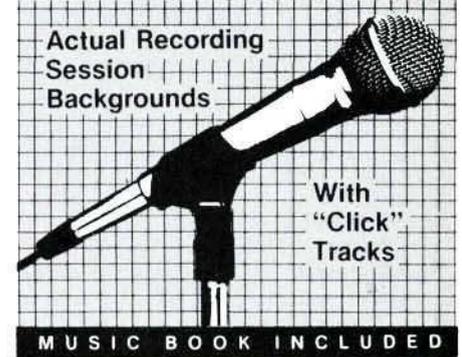
4. Who's going to run the machine? Generally, drum machines must be controlled by a switch on the unit itself, although some offer a remote footswitch. The control of the machine must be planned in advance, so that it does not adversely affect the stage setup of the band, or interfere with the momentum of the performance.

Obviously, a band that chooses to incorporate a drum machine into their act need not use it on every tune of the evening. That would, in fact, be a negative step. But the *tasteful* use of such a machine does offer some very positive opportunities for instrumental versatility within the band, as well as the exploration of new sounds and effects within the group's music. If you employ a little imagination (and some forethought as to how the machine is to be worked into the act without breaking momentum or drawing negative attention to itself), the drum machine does represent a potential means for the ambitious club group to increase their performance capabilities.

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JAZZ DRUMMERS WORKSHOP

by Chuck Kerrigan

Expanding The Paradiddle - Part 3

As was stated in Part 2, this article will examine ways to obtain polyrhythmic patterns by using paradiddles. These exercises should be practiced with a metronome until a natural feel for the rhythms is achieved. Again, keep the muscles relaxed and concentrate.

If we play triplets with a paradiddle sticking, accenting the first note of each paradiddle, while playing the bass drum on all four beats, we obtain a polyrhythm of three against four, as follows:

Playing groups of five with paradiddle sticking, accenting the first note of each paradiddle, while playing the bass drum on all four beats yields a polyrhythm of five against four, as follows:

Using the paradiddle sticking for groups of six, with accents on the first stroke of each paradiddle, gives a polyrhythm of six against four:

To obtain a polyrhythm of seven against four, play groups of seven with paradiddle sticking, with accents on the first note of each paradiddle:

After mastering the exercises above, try the following drumset exercises:

- I. All right-hand accents on floor tom
- All left-hand accents on small tom
- Bass drum on 1-2-3-4
- Hi-hat on 2 and 4

(six against four)

T.T.
S.D.
F.T.

B.D.
H.H.

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

II. Accented notes on bass drum and cymbal

Unaccented notes on snare drum

Hi-hat on 1-2-3-4

(five against four)

Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

H.H.

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

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

(seven against four)

Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

H.H.

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

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

III. Replace accented strokes with accented double strokes

All right-hand strokes on closed hi-hat

All left-hand strokes on snare drum

Bass drum on 1-2-3-4

(three against four)

Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

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

(five against four)

Cym.
S.D.
B.D.

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

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

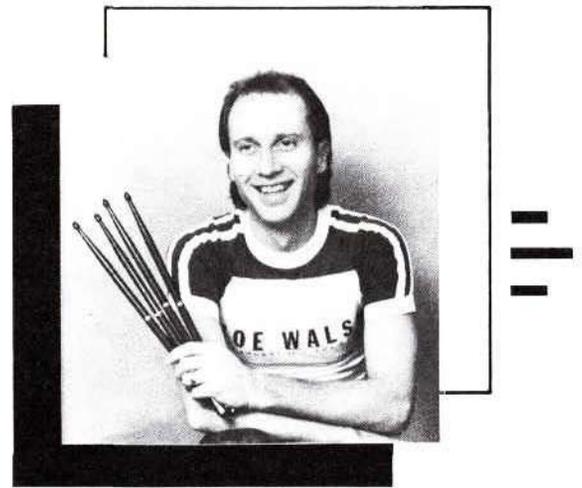
- IV. Replace all accented strokes with accented buzzes on snare
 All unaccented left-hand strokes on small tom
 All unaccented right-hand strokes on floor tom
 Bass drum and hi-hat on 1-2-3-4

(six against four)

(seven against four)



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by James E. Murphy

Getting The Most From Clinics

If you have ever been to a drum or percussion clinic, you may know what it's like to observe a well-known drummer play, discuss techniques and offer career anecdotes. You probably waited with anticipation for weeks before the clinic, and enjoyed every minute of it while you were there. If you haven't been to a clinic, perhaps you have thought about going, but weren't sure where they were, what they were or if you would learn anything.

Drummers go to clinics for the following reasons:

1. The artist is famous, or has a reputation that has caused others to recommend that you attend the clinic;
2. the artist has done something that you want to learn;
3. the artist has something special to offer in the way of personal experience (i.e., studio, concert, multi-percussion, etc.) or life-style and history (i.e., road gigs, working with notable people or on historical records, etc.).

Let's assume that you have been to a

clinic. Did the artist say or do anything interesting? Do you remember specific charts or written material that was covered or presented? Did the clinic have a basic theme or themes (i.e., studio techniques, odd times, polyrhythms, tuning, cymbal or brush work, etc.)? In other words, did you *learn* anything? If the only thing you can remember about the clinics you've attended is the kind of drums or sticks the artist used, or perhaps the performer's clothes or hair style, maybe you didn't get everything out of the clinic that you should have. Let's take a look at a few things you can do to get the most out of a clinic.

How To Find Clinics

First things first. If you've never been to a clinic or it's been a while since you have, you may not know where to find clinics near you. Contact all the drum and music shops in your area for clinic information. Be sure to get the name of the artist, the specific date, time, and location of the clinic, and the ticket price (if any). Some

smaller drum and music stores have only limited space for clinics, and must restrict ticket sales and attendance to a certain number of people. In such cases, ticket sales will be on a first-come, first-served basis, so you will have to act fast. After you've checked with the music shops, you may want to write to a few drum and cymbal companies to see if they have a clinic program. If so, they will generally be happy to send you a schedule of clinics, with times, dates, locations, and artists involved. You should also check in drum, music and trade magazines, since they often publish information on upcoming clinics and events.

Be Prepared

When you go to a clinic, do you intend to retain any of the information presented, or are you going strictly for fun and entertainment? If you plan to make the clinic a learning experience, there are several things you can do to get the most from it.

1. *Take notes.* Always carry a note pad and pen, and jot down anything that may help you or your playing. Maybe the clinician has a certain style of bass drum playing, studio and recording tips, cymbal tips or snare techniques that are worth noting. These notes can later be studied and applied to your own playing style. Other reasons for taking paper and pen might include something as simple as jotting down a name or phone number for yourself, or giving yours to someone else who might ask for it. Sometimes personal or business contacts are made at clinics, which may result in a paying gig somewhere down the road.

Another form of note-taking is done on manuscript (music) paper. The clinician may give musical examples, including short passages, intros or solos which you admire and want to copy down for later study. Always note on the manuscript paper what each example is from, who it's by, and any other pertinent details.

2. *Tape it.* Taping is a great way to study what the artist said and did during the clinic. The tape can be played along with your manuscript notes to help clarify any musical examples that were given. The tape will help keep a clinic fresh in your mind months after it has actually taken place. A clinic on tape can be studied indefinitely, and can be kept as a "refresher course" whenever needed. I must stress, however, that you must obtain the artist's permission to make tapes, and that *no*

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tapes may be made with the intention of sales or promotion, unless you obtain the artist's permission. Such a practice is both unfair to the artist, and illegal.

3. *Ask questions.* At most clinics, there is a time set aside by the artist for questions. When the time comes, be prepared to ask the artist anything you have doubts about, or want clarified. Your questions should be legitimate and well thought-out. Questions may involve what the clinician did or said, unusual techniques or methods demonstrated, the artist's personal opinions, or perhaps specific suggestions regarding your own playing. Ask the artist to demonstrate anything you don't understand clearly. Something explained on the drums is often easier to understand than something explained verbally.

4. *Take sticks.* You may need to try some things shown or illustrated during a clinic immediately, while the idea is still fresh in your mind. A pair of sticks for playing patterns on your knee will come in handy. Bass and hi-hat patterns can be tapped out with your feet. Another reason to take sticks is that you may be asked to play or participate in an exercise during a clinic. If you have your sticks, you will be prepared.

5. *Pictures.* Taking pictures can be beneficial for a couple of reasons. First, you will probably want to take pictures of your favorite artist. Second, you can learn from photos. Something you may have missed during the clinic will often come shining through in a good photo. The old adage that "one picture is worth a thousand words" really holds true here. Seating posture, grip, cymbal height, bass drum and hi-hat techniques, and even facial and body expressions can all be observed in a photo.

Take a good camera (35mm or comparable), plenty of film, and perhaps a flash unit. If you want to take truly superb, professional-quality photos, there are several good books on photography available at your local library. You would do well to study a bit first before attempting to take any serious pictures. On the other hand, I have seen some beautiful clinic photos taken with nothing more than a pocket or disk-type camera, so the choice is yours.

The Clinic As A Bargain Place

If the clinic is sponsored by a certain drum or cymbal company in conjunction with the local drum shop, they may be offering special prices on certain items purchased immediately before, during or after the clinic. This is a great time for you to find bargains on items you might need. Make a list of the things you would like to purchase before you get to the clinic, and then shop for bargain prices on them when you get there. This way, you can help yourself financially, while learning something new at the same time. Dealers may be willing to haggle a little on prices, so you should try to strike a bargain with them, if

possible. Approach them first before the clinic, and if the price isn't low enough, wait until the clinic is over and try them again. Often the prices get a little lower as the clinic comes to a close. Don't haggle a dealer to death, however. If the dealer simply won't go any lower, and you think the price is still too high, forget it. Buy the item another time. Also, don't let your search for bargains outweigh your real reason for coming to the clinic in the first place: to see a good clinician.

At clinics you can watch the artists, listen to what they say, study their techniques and methods, evaluate their attitudes and

opinions, and possibly benefit from the personal comments and suggestions they make to you. You can tape them, photograph them, question them and even play along with them on occasion. You can find bargains both in education and in merchandise. Take clinics seriously, but enjoy what is being presented. Also, thank the artists in person, if possible, and mention what you liked or disliked about their presentations. Whether your favorite drummer plays jazz, rock, country, Gospel or pop, think of each clinic as a course in self-improvement that will help you and your drumming.



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band. The type of music they play is called Makossa music. I believe he's from the Cameroons, but I'm not sure. He did some records for Island Records in Jamaica with Sly and Robbie. But his first big hit single in America was called "Soul Makossa," and it was just great. It came out at the same time Kool & The Gang came out with "Jungle Boogie" and that kind of thing. They didn't really call it disco music yet, but it was starting to get there. It was dance music that was irresistible. Yeah, his was the first truly African record I ever bought, and after that I started buying Fela Ransome. Of course, you couldn't get King Sunny Ade then. He wasn't hip yet. But you could get Commander Eboneezer. Fela was the big one you could get, but if you went up to Boston, you could get all these Nigerian compilations. So we would buy a bunch of that and listen to it.

RT: So you did listen to African music.

CF: Yeah, but I didn't try to sit down and play like those people. If I did, forget it. I couldn't play the way they played. I guess I just kind of absorbed it, and somehow it comes out. It's not like a direct copy, but somehow you absorb it and it becomes, in some way, a part of what you do.

RT: Talking Heads' sound has really filled out since the early days, with the addition of the percussionist, synthesists and singers. Do you enjoy the new band?

CF: I do. I like it a lot. I enjoy playing in any configuration. I don't really care. But I do like having a big band—especially for doing big shows. It backs everybody up. Everybody gets a little bit more support from everybody else. It's less like work, and more like a party or something.

RT: How has your role changed with the addition of the percussionist? Do you play any differently now?

CF: Maybe I play a little bit more relaxed. I don't have all the weight of the drumming on my own shoulders, so I can relax a little bit. I think I have more stamina than I ever had before. I don't know why. Maybe it's because I have Steve Scales, who is a superb percussionist. Maybe his being there off to my side is physically supportive, as well as musically supportive.

RT: Speaking of stamina, do you practice a lot?

CF: No. I once read an interview with Ringo where he said he never practiced. I can understand that. I practice a little bit, once in a while, but to me there's nothing more boring than sitting down and practicing drums. It's one thing if you're practicing a song that you're about to perform or something, or you're practicing with other people. But if you're just sitting there by yourself, man, forget it. I mean I'm sure Tony Williams does and Billy Cobham does, but forget it. There's nothing worse than banging away at a drumkit all alone, unless, of course, it's a brand new drumkit and you're all excited about getting it. I got a Simmons kit recently and I practice that

alone. But even then I put on an Oberheim *DMX*. To me drums are really an accompanying instrument. I don't really dig them as a solo instrument that much.

RT: Did you ever get into drummers like Tony Williams or Billy Cobham?

CF: As a matter of fact, I did not. I have a lot of respect for them, but to make a long story short, I just never really liked jazz that much. One of my good friends in New York is Don Cherry, who lives upstairs from us. He's a great jazz horn player and a multi-instrumentalist. He's tried to get me into it for years now. I have gone to the shows, and I've met Ornette Coleman, and sat around. Even Ornette Coleman said to me, "My favorite saxophone player is Junior Walker." I went to see Junior Walker with Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry at the Lone Star Cafe. Jazz is a great art form, but I just don't swing that way. My idea of a great drummer is Ringo Starr. He has charisma. Although most people don't think he has great technique, I always thought he sounded great and was terribly underrated. He was all arms and elbows. I guess that's why people thought he wasn't good. I also like Charlie Watts. I like those root-type drummers. Charlie still plays exactly the same way he always did. He hasn't changed for 20 years.

RT: They'd probably fire him if he changed now.

CF: Yeah, but he likes jazz and blues. The Rolling Stones really still play the blues. I like Narada Michael Walden. I guess I mostly like his production. I like that thing he did with Stacy Lattisaw, "The Attack Of The Name Game." I don't know about his other stuff.

RT: I got to study with Narada a few years ago.

CF: Studying drumming, huh? I've heard that in Africa you have to study for years and years. First of all, you start out by carrying the master's drums around for him. You do that for about two years. Then you learn how to tune them, change the heads and polish them up and stuff. Then maybe after five or six years you get to hit them. Eno told me a pretty funny story about when he was in Africa—Ghana I believe. He was sitting around listening to these master drummers, and one of them changed his pattern as some people were walking by. Eno asked his interpreter, "What did he just do?" And the guy said, "He just asked them to pick him up a few beers." Eno thought he was joking, but sure enough, about a half hour later, the people walked back down the road and stopped to give the guy a few beers. I'd like to be able to do that.

RT: I heard that on the *Speaking In Tongues* album all of the instrumental tracks were recorded before there were any words written at all. Are you used to doing albums that way?

CF: Well, that's the way we've done the Tom Tom Club albums, and that's the way

we did *Remain In Light* and *Speaking In Tongues*. It works pretty well. You know that if you've got a good solid instrumental track, and if the words are good, there aren't going to be any problems. A lot of times the instrumental track will suggest a lyrical theme to you, or at least a way of phrasing the lyrics. David has never been the type to write a song the way Lennon and McCartney would—where it would come out verse-chorus-bridge-verse-chorus-end. It's always been kind of painstaking. It's the same way with Tina and me when we do Tom Tom Club. We just aren't that type of musician or that type of songwriter.

RT: I understand that you and Tina have a little boy. Has he changed your life?

CF: Yes, for the better. All those old corny clichés are true. It really gives you a sense of purpose. And it's a lot of fun too, because when the baby gets a present, it's like you're getting a present. And when you go to the stores, instead of buying stuff for yourself, you want to buy stuff for the baby. He's made a big improvement in my life. It's something that was clearly missing but that I didn't even know was missing until he came along.

RT: How does he like life on the road?

CF: He really likes it a lot. He thinks he's in a big tribe, kind of like *Quest For Fire* or something. He knows everybody and he likes the bus we travel in. It's all padded so he can crawl around all the time. We avoid the mad rush at the airport that way.

RT: I don't mean to get you in any trouble here, but who are your favorite bass players?

CF: Outside of Tina, you mean?

RT: Now you're not in trouble anymore. Go ahead.

CF: Robbie Shakespeare is one. I like the reggae bass players a lot. Family Man. I like Dee Dee Ramone. I guess Paul McCartney was pretty good too.

RT: You played with Busta Jones.

CF: Busta is very good, although I haven't seen Busta for a while. He's a very good bass player, kind of dominant. Busta was one of the first people I ever heard do those pops—those funky disco pops. He's a master at that. There's an amazing bass player in the Bahamas named Kendell Stubb. I'm sure this will be the first that many people have heard of him, although he'll probably be having some records out soon. His bass playing talents have come to the attention of Chris Blackwell. He plays with a Caribbean feel, but not very reggae. It's more like a funk Caribbean thing.

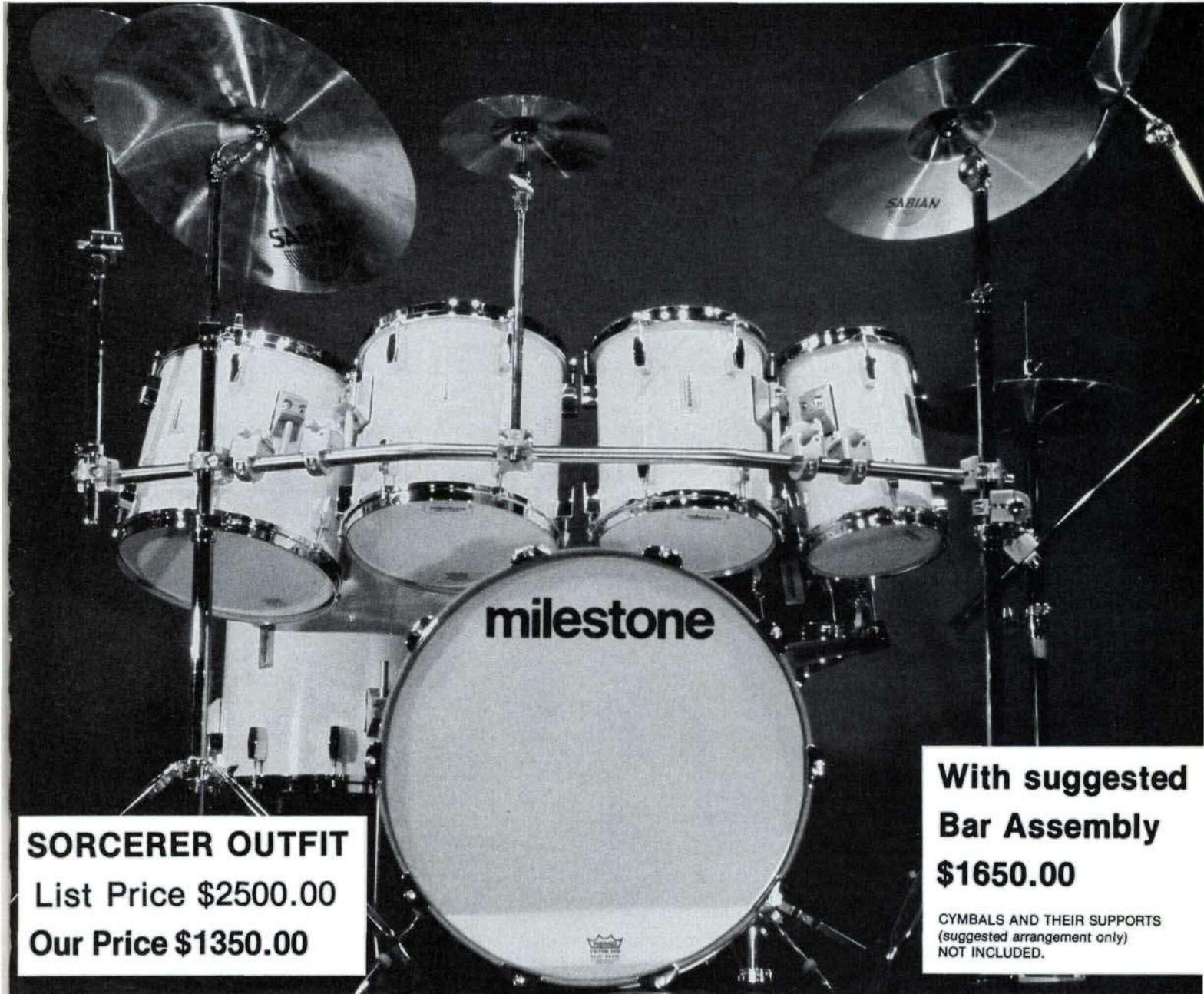
RT: When you and Tina are recording, do you sit down together and work out stuff just between the two of you? Do you try to lock together?

CF: Yeah, we just sit down and fool around until we have something. It's usually a highly repetitive pattern. Afterward, I'll record a drum part with a drum ma-

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chine and Tina will do one part all the way through. Then she'll do a second part all the way through and sometimes she'll even do a third part all the way through. Next, we'll just punch those parts in and out to make changes for the chorus or bridge, and fool around with that until it sounds good. Then, we'll put a little keyboards on it, and either I or Steven Stanley, the guy who mixes and coproduces our records, will do that. That way we have kind of a melody and a rough arrangement. At this point, we start to think about the vocals. That's also when we bring in the guitar players and serious keyboard players. By that time we have a little arrangement and a tune worked out, so they have something they can do their riffs around. That's pretty much how it works.

RT: You said you put down your drums along with a drum machine. Do you save the drum machine part too?

CF: We don't really use the drum machine too much in the finished product, but a lot of times these songs are seven or eight minutes long, and you can imagine speeding up or slowing down a little bit over the course of eight minutes. Also, we like to be able to cut the tape wherever we want for edits, and you have to be right on time for that. So that's why we do that.

RT: Which drum machines do you prefer?

CF: Well, I've used Linn, I've used Roland, and my favorite at the moment is the Oberheim *DMX*. I don't know why. I

wouldn't really recommend it over anything else to anyone. It's just my preference at the moment. It's easier for me to use than a Linn is. It is also less expensive, I believe.

RT: Are you still using Rogers drums?

CF: Well, I still have them. My favorite drumset is a Rogers kit, but I retired that because I didn't want it to get lost or destroyed on the road. I did three tours with that, maybe more. Then I was in Japan and the Tama people offered me an endorsement deal. I was never really big on endorsements and neither was my manager, but I was kind of flattered that they offered. I told them they'd have to use just my name. They could say "Chris Frantz Plays Tama," but they couldn't say "Chris Frantz From Talking Heads." I didn't want Talking Heads to be identified with Tama drums. If they broke apart one night while I was playing them, Talking Heads would be identified with a lousy product. As it happened they worked out great and I'm very happy with them. I'm especially happy with the hardware, which, to me, is outstanding. My deal with them has expired, but I went out and bought another Tama kit anyway. I have an all-black kit. I took the hardware off and had it anodized black, so it has this sort of Darth Vader look to it. It has a snare, two rack toms and a 22" bass drum. I have two timbales instead of floor toms—LP's *Tito Puente* model. I had those anodized black too. The only things that are shiny on the kit are the cymbals. I couldn't anodize them because that would have changed the sound. They're Zildjian cymbals. I don't use a lot of equipment. I use six drums, one hi-hat and two cymbals. That's it. If I used more than that, I'd feel like I was giving the roadies too much work.

RT: How about drumsticks?

CF: I use Regal Tip 55s. I tried out some of those Duraline drumsticks, and they don't break. They're okay. I keep a pair of those in my bag with me at all times in case I need them, or in case, for some weird reason, I want to do some practicing.

RT: Do you use nylon tips or wood?

CF: Nylon. The wood tips just break on me. It's crazy. And I use Johnson & Johnson *Band-Aids* on my blisters.

RT: Do you have an endorsement from them?

CF: I should. I give them a lot of business. I go through about 20 *Band-Aids* a night. I don't know what it is. I used to develop callouses and they'd stay there. But now I think it's because we're staying at these nice hotels that have swimming pools, and I love to go swimming. Every time I do, my callouses disappear and I have to start all over again. Life is tough. [laughs]

RT: The Tom Tom Club is named after your old rehearsal studio. Where is that?

CF: In Nassau. In Nassau they don't have house numbers or building numbers. You have to have a name for the place, like City

Market Food Store or the Post Office. If it's a private home, you have to have a name for it too. We called ours the Tom Tom Club so that our mail would get to the right place. It seemed like a good name for a band. Now there are all these club bands—Culture Club and the Gun Club. There's some other club too. I think Culture Club is a good group though, and a good name for a band.

RT: How did you come up with the name Tom Tom Club?

CF: It sounded to me like something that could be easily understood internationally, and something festive. It reminds me of the kind of place you might go to in Havana or Harlem in the great old days. It just had a good feel, both to me and to Tina.

RT: Tom Tom Club is really a family effort, isn't it?

CF: Yeah. My brother gave us the concept for "The Man With The Four-Way Hips," and we took it from there. Also, two of Tina's sisters sing. Yeah, we try to keep it real easy. You'll notice that, with the other musicians who play on it, we don't really tell them what to play or anything. We sort of expect them to come up with something better than what we would think of, and in general, they always do.

RT: Tom Tom Club has a much lighter lyrical approach than Talking Heads. Is it a sort of release for you from Talking Heads?

CF: I think that it was a release on the first record. It was also a relief from Talking Heads' seriousness. With the second record, since we're already part of Talking Heads, we don't want to be competing with our own selves at our own game, so we're trying to work in another area. To us it's kind of like getting the best of both worlds. We can be silly and serious. Just because Tom Tom Club is light doesn't mean it's not for real and we don't really believe in it. We feel strongly that there's room for happy, vivacious music. So many new wave bands—so-called new wave bands in particular—are so deadly serious and somber, even to the point of being sad and depressing at times, that we just had enough of all that. Some people might think we're not serious enough, but that's their problem. We try to keep it positive.

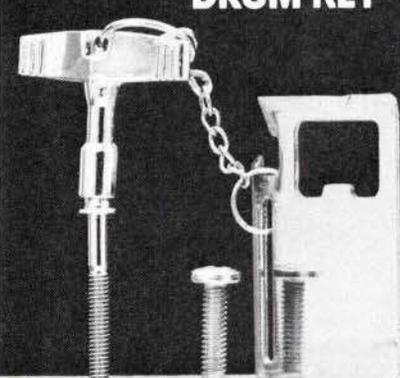
RT: You live now in the Bahamas?

CF: Whenever possible. We have a little apartment right by the water and it's real nice. It's big enough to rehearse in. We did a lot of the rehearsing for *Speaking In Tongues* there, and all the rehearsing for Tom Tom Club. It's right next to the studio where we work.

RT: Has living there given your music a different flavor?

CF: Maybe it's made me love the various Caribbean styles even more. I don't mean just reggae or calypso, but also soca, Junkanoo, spooze, and all the stuff they're playing down there. A lot of the Bahamas' own style of music is called Junkanoo.

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There are a lot of little bands that play. It's not just the ones that play "Yellow Bird" at the hotels. There are also bands that play in after-hours bars and stuff. Most of the band members are real young musicians and it's fun to listen to them. You can also watch drummers who can play for four or five hours without breaking a sweat, and they sound like they're playing really hard. There's a trick to that, I think. It's similar to the way those old Dixieland drummers can play all night, and once in a while they take out their handkerchiefs and mop their brows. They keep cool. It's a matter of building stamina.

RT: Do you write songs at a keyboard?

CF: I have been recently. I started with the first Tom Tom Club album, did a little on *Speaking In Tongues* and quite a bit more on the second Tom Tom Club album. But I still only play with two fingers, which is fine. In the studio you can go back and overdub.

RT: It seems like music has kind of opened up, in a way, to where people who are not virtuosos can get in there.

CF: I think that's the best thing this new wave music has done for recorded music in general. You don't have to be a virtuoso at all. You just have to have a good idea. It's nice if it's performed well, but it doesn't have to be. Compare say, Talking Heads' continued success with a group like Asia who just cancelled their tour halfway through after investing maybe half a million dollars in their stage set and all that. And they didn't do the business. They're all great virtuosos. SO THERE! [laughs] That's only one example. Not that financial success or business success ever had anything to do with what's good and what's bad. It's just that it's nice when somebody, like an architect for example, can get an idea for a song, do an independent record that becomes a smash, and can have an enormous influence on people who have been doing music for years.

RT: What are your goals in music at this point?

CF: You know, I've pretty much achieved the goals that I originally had in mind. We'd like to make our careers last, maybe not forever, but as long as possible. Matthew King Kaufmann of Berserkeley Records once said that the way to achieve continued success is to put the brakes on every time something really big happens. In other words, you should strive for a slow spiral type of success instead of the shooting star type of success, because when you come back down and your career starts to

fade, you will come back down in a slow spiral instead of straight down like a shooting star. And it's really worked that way for us. This way, every time something good happens, you have a little bit of perspective on how to deal with it. You don't freak out because suddenly you have a hit record on your hands. Everybody doesn't start acting mean and nasty towards everyone else because the pressure is too great. I guess some people might think it's good to get up there as fast as possible, but I don't really think so. Not if you're thinking in terms of a career. I guess what we'd like to do now is get more and more involved with film music, so that we could be old and fat and have warts all over us and nobody

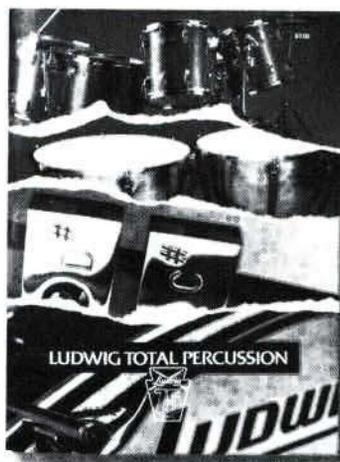
would know. They'd hear our music in films and stuff like that. That's something that I would like to do.

RT: How about your art? Will you get back into that?

CF: Well, I never really left it. Painting is a great thing to do. And of course now we have all this video technology that we can use too. Yeah, I think after I'm about 40 years old I'll probably do a whole series of really fabulous paintings and get them into really good galleries simply because I was the drummer in Talking Heads. Everybody will take me very seriously. Please don't take that out of context. It'll sound really egotistical, but I think it actually might happen that way.



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MD584

by Nick Ceroli

An Overview

What a perfect description for the role of the big band drummer: *Driver's Seat*. What a glamorous job, right? Well, partly right. That's what I used to think when I first started playing, before I learned about all the responsibilities that go with the job. It's true that the big band drummer is in the driver's seat, but it isn't a Sunday drive in the country. It's more like being the pilot of an airplane, with a lot to take care of and no checklist. Fortunately, the worst thing that can happen to *you* is that you lose control of the vehicle (the band) and it falls apart. That beats the hell out of crashing an airplane, but it does bring to mind a favorite expression of band players: the "train wreck." It means the same thing—losing control. The train wreck is not confined just to the drum chair, but it's a big part of the drummer's job to prevent train wrecks from happening. Even if it's not your fault, you are usually blamed. You're in the "hot seat" as well as the driver's seat.

Someone once said that a drummer can make or break a band, and it's true. When you are seated in that glamorous place called the drum chair, there is no one to lean on. Sure, you are part of the rhythm section, but you stand out. You can't hide in the section like a third trumpet player. Actually, that is a big part of the job's attraction: You're it. You're *supposed* to stand out. Therefore, you catch a lot of heat when things don't go right. Accept it. It's part of the job.

A big band drummer is like the captain of a ship who is at the helm *and feels* what the ship is doing. The captain gives the orders and feels what to do. Similarly, a big band drummer controls the "ship" by shading dynamics, and making sure that the time isn't running away or slowing down. The drummer actually has the power to make a band play louder or softer, faster or slower, just by doing so. What a feeling of power that is! This ability takes sensitivity—using the ears as well as the hands.

Playing Time

Let's talk about how to drive this vehicle called a big band. First of all, there are a lot of drummers who don't understand how a big band works. They are driving without a license. To get your license, you have to have certain qualifications. The first qualification required to play with any band, large or small, is the ability to play with "good time." Most bandleaders don't

care about what "chops" you have. You have been hired to play the band—to *keep time*. Bandleaders don't accept drummers because they have clean single-stroke rolls, or because they can play great drum solos. They simply want to know if a drummer has good time. The first time I ever worked with Bill Berry, in L.A., was when he called me for a dance job at a local hall. I accepted the job, but neglected to find out if I was required to wear a suit or just casual clothes. I called him back and asked what the dress was to be. I will always remember his response: "I don't care what you wear. How's your beat?" Bill and other big band leaders know the role of the drummer in a big band. You get the call because you can play time, and you've got ears. That's the bottom line to our job.

Another requirement I touched on earlier is sensitivity. Use your eyes and ears. Look around you. There are probably some players who are sitting pretty far away from you, yet need to hear what you are playing. Be aware of them. This approach applies to playing in any band, but the bigger the band, the more important it is for the players to hear each other, and the more difficult it is to accomplish that. This is especially true for the members of the rhythm section. You have to be able to hear the bass and piano (and/or guitar). I recall a concert I saw at the L.A. Music Center that featured a big band piece. The band was obviously set up "visually." It looked great from a camera's point of view, but there was no camera there. The brass and sax sections were set up in the traditional way: trumpets in the back row, trombones in a row directly in front of them, and the saxes directly in front of the trombones. But the unfortunate rhythm section was spread out in this manner: The bass player was to the right of the band, the drummer was on the opposite side of the band to the left, and the piano was in front of the band. I could hear that it was a nightmare for them. Quite often you will run into situations where things are not done with the players in mind. This is part of being a pro. Your job is to play time, but how can you do your job if the bass player can't hear you? You must remain calm, or as calm as possible. Psychologically, your tendency will be to overplay or overcompensate for the problem, but if you do, it will sound that way to the audience. You have to convince yourself that everything will be okay, and play as if the setup were correct. Also, you should play simple be-

cause of the distance problem. Keep the time nice and strong, and don't get fancy. A basic rule to follow is: The larger the group, the simpler you should play. Otherwise you may have a train wreck on your conscience.

Playing On The Team

A big band is a team, and the two most important members of that team from the drummer's point of view are the lead trumpet player and the bass player. The bass player is there to help you keep time, and the lead trumpet player is there for the phrasing. If either one of these players falls short, use your ears and focus in on the better of the two. If they are both good, you can have a ball. Keep in mind that they feel the same way about you.

The bass player and drummer who work well together are very supportive of each other. The tighter the two of you get, the more freedom you both will have. For example, if you know that the bass player will support you, you can take a chance and try a new drum fill. If you trip and fall, the bass player will be there with the net to catch you. It works in reverse, too. I recall working with Bob Florence and the "Limited Edition" big band, on a night when the band was particularly hot. Joel Di Bartolo, one of the world's great bass players, leaned over to me between tunes and said, "I'm going all the way out on the next tune." The song started with just the rhythm section playing many blowing choruses before the band entered. Joel did indeed go all the way out, and he sounded wonderful. He knew that I would be there with the time (and the net), so he didn't have to be concerned with anything but making music. It was a magic moment—one of the moments we live for when we play jazz. This is why we haul drums up and down stairs and in and out of clubs.

Phrasing

Playing good time in a big band does not necessarily mean playing *metronomic* time. To phrase a big band figure correctly you must bend the time, laying back on certain phrases, or playing on top of the beat on other phrases. (Listen to some old Count Basie records. They'll explain it better than I can.) It has to do with breathing. To get a sound out of a drum, you strike it, but when phrasing with a big band, you have to "breathe" with the band. In other words, you must imitate the wind instruments. For help in phrasing, your team-

mate is the lead trumpet player. When you see a written figure, think of how the lead trumpet player is going to interpret it. First, sing the figure rhythmically. Then, play it while you sing it. The brass section will love you forever if you can do that.

I recall a studio date I did once with a big band. A lot of the players were from the old Count Basie band, so needless to say, they knew about phrasing and swinging. The chart we were playing was a straight-ahead, Basie-type chart, but we were playing to a *click track*! Playing a Basie chart with a click track is a contradiction in terms. It simply doesn't work. To phrase a big band correctly you must bend the time. Ask a jazz player who is over 40 to play some Basie or Ellington (particularly the Basie records with Gus Johnson or Sonny Payne, and the Ellington records with Sam Woodyard). Then you will know what I'm talking about.

Playing good time and bending the time all at once is tricky stuff. Learning what the figure should feel like is a lot of it. If you bend too much, the time drags. If you play too far on top of the beat, the time rushes. There's a fine line you try not to cross. This is the challenge involved.

Now let's talk about one of the most difficult aspects of phrasing and time playing—playing slow tunes or ballads. As an example, "Lil' Darlin'" comes to mind. It's one of the tracks from the Count Basie *Atomic Bomb* album. (This album, by the way, is required listening for any drummer who wants to learn more about big band playing. Sonny Payne is the drummer.) In order to play time on a tune like this one, you *must* phrase with the band. In this case, the whole band is playing a lot of quarter notes together, at a slow tempo. As simple as that may appear, it is tough to get 16 musicians to play quarter notes perfectly together and still make it feel good. This is where you should sing the melody while you play it, and think like a horn player. Don't push the time. Relax and breathe with the band, and phrase!

Relaxing

Nothing sounds better than a band that phrases together and swings all at the same time. Swinging has to do with relaxing. You could conceivably have good time, but if it feels stiff or tense, it isn't going to swing. Here again is the psychological side of playing. I have always believed that a musician plays the way he or she is as a person. If you feel yourself getting uptight while you play, tell yourself to relax. It's a mind-over-matter situation, and it works in everything. No athlete has ever done his or her best when tense or stiff, and the same applies to drummers. Even if you have to talk to yourself, do it! *Make* yourself relax. Sometimes it isn't easy. I can remember my first big band gig on the road, when I was 18 years old. The band was Ralph Marterie's, and Ralph was known as one

of the "tough" bandleaders. I was very nervous when I sat down at the drums. Before I played a note, Ralph came over to me and said, "Okay kid, swing or I'll kill you." Needless to say, I did a lot of talking to myself. It must have worked, because I kept the job until he drove me nuts enough to quit. Nonetheless, I obtained invaluable "experience" from the job.

So much of what we do involves being relaxed and thinking relaxed. Think "loose." Don't think "tight." Listen to drummers who play with a loose feel, like Mel Lewis, Philly Joe Jones, Sam Woodyard or Sonny Payne. When a fast tune is really swinging, jazz players say that the tune is "skating." That's what it feels like when the time is flowing at a fast pace. It feels wonderful.

Stamina And Pace

Another very important requirement for the big band drummer is stamina, or strength. You have to be able to play loud and fast. Here the danger of stiffening up is the problem. You must try to stay relaxed, or it's all over. Instead of making music, you end up just trying to get through the song. This could be a disaster when you're playing a chart that is five minutes long and you can feel the tightness moving in during the second minute. You must learn to pace yourself.

Carl Fontana, the great trombone player, once gave some advice that is valid for drummers as well as trombone players. He said that, no matter how hard he may have to play, he always keeps a "reserve tank." On a scale from one to ten, Carl said, his normal playing range is around four. Then when he is called on to give more, he will push it up to six or maybe seven. That way, he can always deliver more if he needs to. This reserve tank theory is even more important for a drummer, simply because we don't usually have the luxury of stopping, like everyone else in the band. The drums and bass usually keep the time going throughout a song. If it's a very fast tempo, you'd better have a reserve tank, because there is nothing more humiliating than running out of gas on a fast tune. You can't stop, but you don't have any stamina or energy left, and you can feel yourself getting tighter on each beat. Talk yourself into relaxing. If it's too late to do that, go to quarter notes with the cymbal hand. That may buy you some time to refuel your tank. Another important thing to do is to back off on the volume level to save energy. It's an awful position to be in, but anyone who has ever played a fast, big band number will tell you that they've been there.

As you can see, there are several things involved in playing with a big band: playing with a good feel and good time, which hopefully comes out swinging; phrasing with the band; using your ears, and shading the band (using dynamics). Then

there's reading the drum part, and I haven't even started talking about playing fills and setups yet. Finally, after all of that, when you are tired and sweaty, you still have to tear the drums down and put them in the car, while everyone else leaves, carrying their horn cases. But it's all worth it when the other band members are smiling and swinging, and you know that you made it happen because you did it right. They know you made it happen too, and that is your reward. This is why we do it: to be in full control—to be in the driver's seat.

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DRUM SOLOIST

Transcribed by Dave Giacone



Narada Michael Walden "All In The Family"

Narada Michael Walden plays this solo as an introduction to "All In The Family," on John McLaughlin's *Inner Worlds* album (Columbia PC 33908).

Bell of Cym. (X)

Cr. Cym.
T.T.
S.D.
F.T.
B.D.

A musical score for a drum solo, transcribed in bass clef with a 6/8 time signature. The score consists of seven staves of music. The first staff includes a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature of 6/8. The notation uses various rhythmic values including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as accents (>) and slurs. The score is organized into measures by vertical bar lines. The notation is dense, reflecting the complex and rhythmic nature of the original performance.



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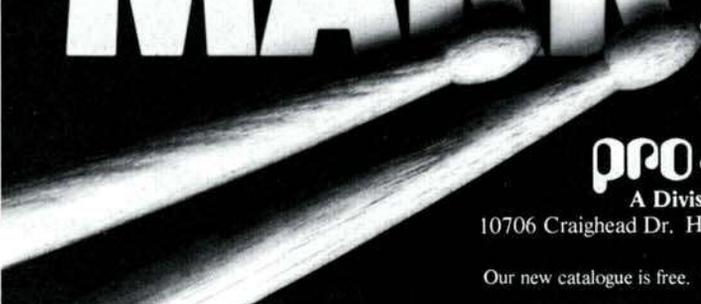
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Re-covering Your Drums

In recent months, I have had numerous inquiries about custom-finish work in response to the "Kamikaze" drums I customized for Pat Benatar's drummer, Myron Grombacher. The interest is appreciated and flattering. However, this type of work is very time-consuming and therefore expensive.

Fortunately, the letters I've received indicate that many drummers could be just as satisfied with a more affordable alternative. It is something that, with a little time and a lot of care, you can do yourself. In this column, I'll outline, as thoroughly and clearly as possible, the steps you can follow to re-cover a set of drums in a stock finish of your choice. If done correctly, your drums really will look new. Just remember that it's the attention to detail that makes a job look professional.

There are at least two suppliers of re-covering material (advertising regularly in *Modern Drummer*) who can furnish you with most of the old standards like red, blue, gold and green sparkle. They also have gloss finishes in several colors—black and white being the most popular—as well as pearl finishes. Although the available materials will not match your old set exactly (due to fading in the color and slight changes in the way they make the plastic), the new colors are pretty close.

Since I stock a few of the more popular colors myself, I can give you an approximate idea of what the covering material will cost. For example, the breakdown for a five-piece set finished in a black gloss is as follows:

8" × 12"	— \$11.50
9" × 13"	— 13.00
16" × 16"	— 27.00
14" × 24"	— 36.00
5½" × 14"	— 10.00
Total	\$97.50

Listed here are materials and supplies you will need for the job:

1. A stiff putty knife, two or three inches wide.
2. A heavy-duty pair of scissors.
3. A flat bastard mill file.
4. An electric drill, bits and small grinding wheel.
5. A bristle brush.
6. One quart Weldwood or 3M contact cement (not latex).
7. One pint of Naptha (or Benzine).
8. The covering material.
9. A friend to act as assistant.

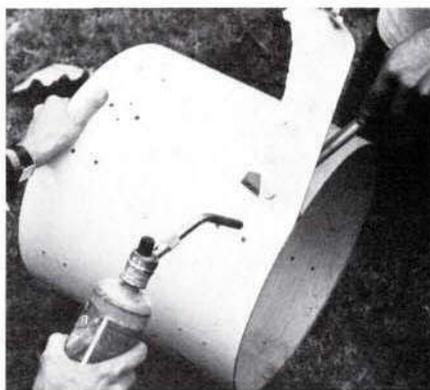
With tools and materials at hand, you're

ready to start.

1. Give the drums a thorough examination to make sure they are round (as opposed to oval) and that the plies of wood are not separating at the edges.

2. Take off all hardware, lugs and mufflers. The best way to remove the grommet from the airhole is to take a small grinding wheel that attaches to an electric drill and grind the inside lip of the grommet just flush with the inside wall of the drum. This enables you to push the grommet through without having to pry or crush it. (Be sure to wear safety goggles when using a grinding wheel.)

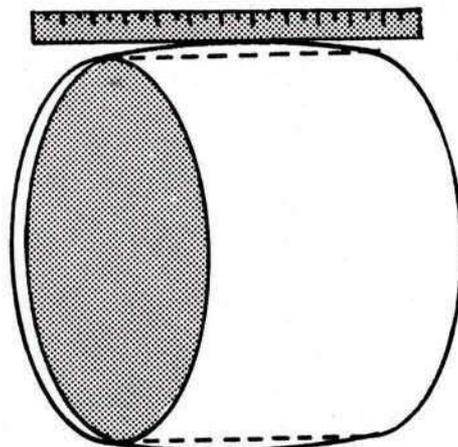
3. Remove the old plastic covering. (This is where the tough stuff starts.) Prying apart the overlap seam with your putty knife will give you some idea of how difficult it will be to remove the plastic. You might get lucky. The covering might just peel back and pull off easily, but don't count on it. In most cases, you'll have to pry it loose a little at a time with a stiff putty knife and applied heat. For this, I use an electric heat gun or propane torch on low flame. Have a friend wave the heat slowly over the seam, heating—but *not burning*—the plastic, while you pry the plastic off with your knife. This part of the process should be done outside and *very carefully*; some of the older drums were covered with extremely flammable nitrate plastic which burns like crazy once started.



(As a precaution, have a wet rag handy just in case you should have to douse a flame.) Take your time and be careful not to use too much force, so you will not tear the outer plies of wood.

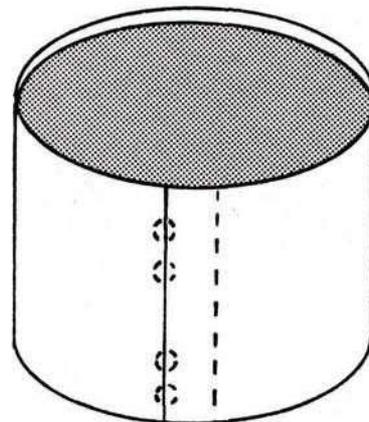
4. With the old plastic off, the shells will need a primary sanding. The objective here is to remove old glue and create a surface receptive to the new bond. You may need

to use lacquer thinner and steel wool to remove excess old contact cement. Drums with a lacquer or painted finish should be sanded thoroughly with medium sandpaper. This will result in a surface that is flat and free of old lacquer. Check the drum for "barreling" by laying a straight-edge along the wall of the shell from top to bottom (Fig. 1). There should not be a noticeable bulge at the center of the shell. If there is, you will have to sand it as flat as possible to avoid running into problems later.

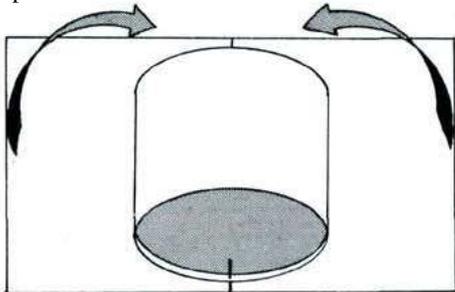


5. Preparation for the actual re-covering (or wrapping) is done now. Keep in mind that there is only a small margin for error in the finished product—about half an inch extra on each side of the drum. So be precise about this step.

Lay out the precut sheet of covering material on a clean table. Place the shell on the plastic and wrap it so that it's perfectly straight and the seam is where it will be covered by a tension lug (Fig. 2). With a felt-tip marker, put a small mark at the top and bottom edges of the drum and plastic.



This will indicate the exact spot at which the material and drum should meet (Fig. 3). It is a good idea to double check; once the glue is applied and contact is made, the plastic *cannot be moved*.

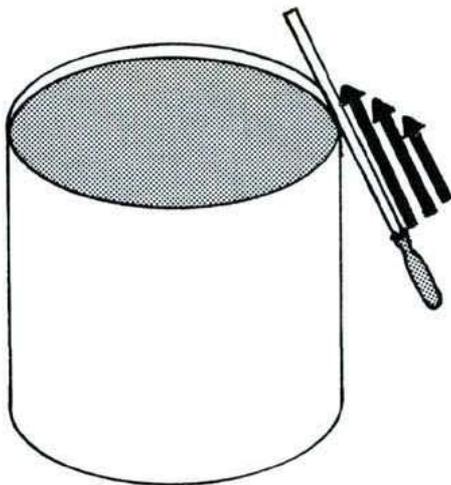


6. On your clean, well-sanded shell, apply the glue, using a clean bristle brush about three inches wide, and one quart of Weldwood or 3M contact cement. (I do not recommend the latex type, as it's unreliable for this job. Also, do this in a well ventilated room, and do not smoke, as contact cement is very flammable.) Brush the glue in one direction only, brushing into your work. Take care to coat the shell completely—you don't want to have to go back and "touch up" spots—and pay special attention to the drum's edges for a good, tight bond. One carefully applied coat should suffice (although mahogany and other porous woods may need a second coat).

7. Apply the glue to the plastic, evenly covering the entire surface with a slightly thinner, consistent coat. If you have a problem with glue drying on your brush, clean it with lacquer thinner, dry it well, and continue. Make sure your guide marks remain visible. Fifteen minutes is generally enough drying time, but check the directions on the container before making contact between the shell and plastic.

8. Set the drum straight down onto the plastic, aligning your guide marks. Again, *be precise*. Remember, you cannot move the plastic at all once contact is made. While a friend holds the drum in place, carefully wrap the plastic tight, making sure you wrap the correct side first so the seam ends up where it should. The plastic should go on smoothly, with no air bubbles trapped underneath. There should be an overlap of about two inches at the seam; to seal this securely, spread glue on the glossy side of the plastic and bond the surfaces together. Rub the entire surface of the drum with a soft cloth to smooth out any air bubbles. A small wallpaper roller (about three inches wide) helps to roll down any small bubbles and further tighten the seal at the edges and seam.

9. With the plastic secure, you will need to smooth out the edges. Start by using scissors to cut the excess plastic around both edges. Then, use a sharp file to trim the edges smooth, with strokes going in *one direction only*, instead of back and forth (Fig. 4). You want to cut through the plastic just to the wood, and no further.



With rough sandpaper, sand around the edges, taking care not to scratch the new finish. Working your way from rough paper (about 150 grit) to medium (180-220 grit) to fine (320-360 grit) will leave you with a smooth, polished bearing edge.

10. To finish up, you will need to drill the holes, and replace the grommet and name tag. While holding a block of wood against the outside of the shell, drill holes for lugs, airholes and leg holders from the inside, using a sharp drill bit. Avoid drilling muffler holes if you don't intend to re-install the mufflers and/or change any hardware. For larger holes (like the tom mount or spurs), follow the outside perimeter of the hole, using a very sharp, smaller diameter bit as a cutting tool. Now, center the name tag around the airhole and attach with a small amount of rubber cement. Glue in the old grommet, or the new one that should have come with the re-covering material.

11. To remove any excess glue from the plastic, apply Naptha or Benzine with a rag. Either will dissolve the glue without harming the new finish. *Do not* substitute lacquer thinner for this. It will eat through the plastic.

In doing this work, I am often asked by my customers to recut and true up the bearing edge in an effort to get the best possible sound from their drums. I'd love to go into this technique, but I'm afraid that doing so would result in an article in itself. As for the subject at hand, remember to work patiently, do one drum at a time, complete each part of the process carefully and you will enjoy new-looking drums for many years to come.

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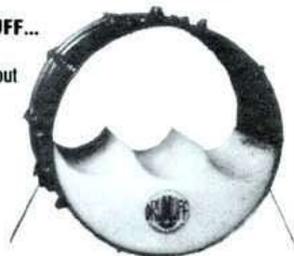
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Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band. They have quite a collection of records that are very important. I heard a fantastic big band in Europe: The Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland big band. The big bands I like today are Frank Foster's Loud Minority and the Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Ta-backin big band.

But the greatest music I've ever heard live—which was also recorded—was the John Coltrane Quartet at Birdland. That was when I was 17 and to this day I've never experienced anything more intense or spiritual than that. I base *everything* on that. I've never seen that type of communication between musicians and I've never seen that audience reaction again.

SF: Could you chronologically trace the jazz drummers who've influenced you and explain what it was about them and/or their playing that influenced you?

KC: The most senior person who influenced me would be a toss-up between Kenny Clarke and Art Blakey. People within four to six years of that age bracket who were influences would be Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, Shelly Manne, Alan Dawson, Jimmy Cobb and Elvin Jones. They all sort of came through at the same period. I wasn't really around when Papa Jo Jones was at his peak. But as I did my research historically, I found out how important he was. I was influenced by people who were influenced by Papa Jo. And in my research I've heard bits and pieces of Big Sid Catlett and Chick Webb, but I wasn't directly influenced by them. It's hard to define specifically what attracted me to them because each one is totally different. They all had such individual styles. I suppose *that's* what attracted me to them—not just in their solo work, but in the way they interpreted the beat.

That's something that is lacking today in a lot of young players, because of the way the tradition of the instrument has changed, and the utilization of the instrument in the pop idiom. It's much more prevalent for younger players to try to sound like whoever is the hottest person in the recording studios. There's not much room left for creativity in that idiom—not as much as there was in the jazz era of the '40s up until now. That's why I liked the drummers I mentioned. They each had something special to say.

SF: Why should young people interested in today's pop music study these master jazz drummers?

KC: If they don't want to play traditional mainstream jazz, they *shouldn't!* What those jazz masters represent is not going to help in the straight-ahead pop/rock idiom. If they tried to utilize some of it in their performances or recordings, I'm sure the producers would tell them that it wouldn't work. That kind of creativity is not usually compatible with what those producers want. If they're really locked in to the hard

rock or pop/rock—I call it formula music—then there's really no need.

One thing I like about drummers in the mainstream jazz tradition is their longevity. They've been here a long time, and they seem to keep getting better. If they're really good, they get a chance to play through their whole lifespan. That's one of the pitfalls of being in the pop/rock idiom. As soon as you go out of style, that's it. Either you go on to the next thing or you're left out. There are not many groups like The Stones who have that magic to remain popular through a couple of generations.

But if they're wise and they invest that superstar money properly, they can be comfortable and go into other things later on. If they choose to study the more creative aspects of the instrument, whether it be fusion/jazz or straight-ahead jazz, then it might be helpful to listen to those jazz masters. If they're doing that and not getting the chance to practice or perform it, then it's going to have a negative influence on what they're doing. If their bread and butter depends on dealing with hard rock or pop/rock, then they should just concentrate on that and listen to the people who do that well.

SF: You spent some time playing with Stevie Wonder. That's a long way from what you're doing today. How did you get that gig and why did you decide to leave?

KC: When I was attending Berklee, I was very much involved in trying to play jazz. But the jobs I was getting called for were mostly rock or top 40. That's when I met Mel Brown and George Moreland. They used to come through quite a bit with Gladys Knight & The Pips and The Temptations. They helped me immensely. I was trying to get that style together by listening to Sly & The Family Stone, Kool & The Gang and all the Motown records I could find.

In 1970, I left Berklee to continue freelancing around the Boston area. I had a chance to check out the whole R&B and soul scene in Boston, and started getting a pretty decent reputation as a funk drummer. Then I had an opportunity to go out on the road with a group from Boston called The Lords. We were doing this gig in Detroit and some of Stevie Wonder's people heard me play. They taped me at the club and played the tape on the phone to Stevie in New York.

Stevie was at Electric Lady Studios. He was recording, by himself, all the tracks to *Music Of My Mind*. He was also trying to put together a band that could promote that music once it was released. Stevie flew me into New York after he heard the tape. I auditioned for Stevie and flew back the same night to do my gig in Detroit. I got the call about three weeks later in D.C. to join the band.

I stayed with Stevie for seven months. I loved the band. One of the main reasons I had never wanted to play that kind of mu-

sic was because I never found a band as creative as that band. The first Wonderlove band was amazing. There were people in that band like Lani Groves, Deniece Williams, Steve Madeio, Trevor Lawrence, Dave Sanborn, Scotty Edwards, Jim Gilstrap . . . just some marvelous people.

I left the band because I wasn't really able to get along with the management people and their attitude towards musicians. After seven months, I wasn't being treated the way I wanted to be treated. Stevie really loved us. I don't think he had enough control, at that time, to be able to hold that kind of band. I was about the fourth person to leave because of general discontent with the way a lot of things were run—scheduling, transportation, hotel accommodations. The band was intense and we needed to get the maximum amount of rest, so that we could perform fully rested. But there just didn't seem to be enough money to take care of us in that way.

I tried to quit three times. Each time I wanted to leave, there was something crucial coming up that would have benefited the band a lot through exposure. Our first tour was in England. We came back and did the David Frost Show. That's when I first met Billy Taylor. The next time I quit was right after we'd done some one-nighters with Joe Cocker and we were doing The Bitter End. Then we got on The Rolling Stones tour. I quit after it was half over because of further disagreements with Stevie's management, Stevie, and the way the Stones treated Stevie. But it had nothing to do with Charlie Watts. I love him. He's marvelous.

SF: So many drummers would love to be in Stevie Wonder's band on tour with The Rolling Stones!

KC: Well that's fine. I didn't want to deal with it anymore. I would love to play with him anytime. But if I'm going to be on the road traveling, I want to be treated like I am now, working for Billy Taylor. If I can't, then I'd rather not travel. It's too much of a drain on you to travel and have to perform at your peak when you're tired because of scheduling. If I can't have a comfortable place to lay my head and get myself together so I can give an inspired performance every time, then I don't need it. That's why I left.

SF: You've played drums in everything from trios to symphony orchestras. How does your approach to drumming differ in each situation?

KC: In a trio there are only two other people. I have to really listen to the style and provide the accompaniment/support that's going to make the leader feel comfortable. In some situations you can play busier than others because the piano player might like a busy drummer. Other pianists might like a less busy accompanist. Then you have to understand the way the bass player is playing. Both of you are supposed

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to support the piano player. You have to interpret the time the way the bass player does. Is it right in the middle of the beat? On top of the beat? A little behind the beat? You're supposed to interpret what makes the bass player feel good. Both of you have to agree on that so you can provide the accompaniment to the next person.

As the groups get larger, the responsibilities change. In a quartet or a quintet, you do all the things you'd do with a trio. Then you have to understand the styles of the horn players and what makes them feel good. Do they like a lot of activity from the drummer? Do they play *off* the drummer? A lot of horn players play off the drummer, just like Elvin and Coltrane. Other horn players don't like that. You don't need to play a lot behind a horn solo, if that doesn't make the player feel comfortable. However, you can still play fairly busy by playing off the piano player's comping, and give some support that way. Or you can try to play off a soloist who likes that exchange, and *still* be aware of how the piano player is comping and of the rhythmic emphasis the bassist is providing. If you're playing a swing feel in 4/4, the bass player may be adding various rhythmic inflections. You really have to be together because you're listening to three or four things at one time, while concentrating on keeping the time and meter, and making it sound like everything is together.

When you get into big bands, the emphasis changes. You might want to get very busy and communicate a lot with the soloists. But your *main* priority should be to hold the band together. In that situation, the most important thing is to lock up with the bass player and provide the dynamic textures that fit. This is where your choice of cymbals is really important. You have to have cymbals that'll make the reed section sound good, the brass section sound good and the soloists sound good. I'm only using three cymbals. I use the same cymbals in all the situations we're discussing. I picked them so they'll be able to play different situations, depending on the way I play them and the type of stick I use. I get a different sound out of a plastic-tip stick than I do with a wood tip. For big band, sometimes I have to use plastic tips so the cymbals will cut through a bit more.

In big band, it's important to lock up with the bass player *and* the lead trumpet player. If the brass section is really together and the drummer and lead trumpeter are really together, the band is going to *pop!* Then if the bass player and drummer are together, that gives support to the

rest of the rhythm section and the reed section.

It's not true that the drummer has to play louder when there are more musicians. Sometimes you have to play *softer*. Sometimes with a symphony orchestra I have to play softer than when I play in a trio, because of the acoustics of the hall. If I play too loud, there'll be too much echo and resonance which will cut the clarity. The orchestra brass is in the back and I'm up front. I have to be very intense and precise, but not too overpowering so that all the elements of the orchestra can be heard.

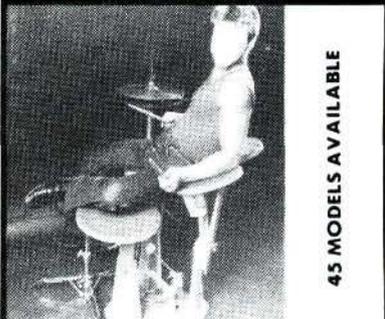
To be a good big band drummer, you need really good ears, and a good working knowledge of reading and interpreting figures—especially with your left hand—without that affecting your time feel. You must also have a really good sense of dynamics, so you can play softly and not lose your intensity. Then, just generally be aware of everything that's happening. One of the soloists might need extra excitement, so you provide it, but not to the point where it throws the rest of the band off when it's time for them to come back in.

The prerequisite to all of this is to listen to the drummers who did it the best: Sonny Payne, Jake Hanna, Mel Lewis, Kenny Clarke, Rufus Jones, Louis Bellson and all the masters who played with big bands. These are all very important people who came out of the big band era. Most of them can play well in *any* situation, but they happen to be experts at big band drumming. Grady Tate is one of the greatest, most versatile drummers. Besides being able to play small group and big band jazz, he can even fit into today's fusion and pop music. And he knows just what to play. Earl Palmer is another one of the old masters. He has that New Orleans tradition in his playing that fits big band, small group, rock and R&B. There are not many of those drummers around.

SF: You have spent a lot of time studying Latin music. Can you tell us about the influence of Latin music in today's music and, here again, mention specific Latin drummers you admire?

KC: The reason I put so much emphasis on learning the Latin idiom is because most drummers in the drumset tradition learn to

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function by themselves. But in the Latin tradition, especially from Cuba, you have to learn how to play in a drum section. That can be difficult for most drumset players to learn to do with *other* drumset players. They tend to get very self-centered and they can't lock in to what somebody else is doing.

In Cuban music you have to deal with a variety of different clave rhythms—the basic pulse underlying everything. The drummers are all playing different parts around that clave. Some of them are playing basic parts while somebody is soloing on top of all the others. You really have to be aware of the meter, and still relate to what's going on around you. That kind of discipline is great. It's wonderful if you can master that and apply it to your drumset playing.

When you get into trying to duplicate those rhythms on drumset by yourself, you can make it sound like two or three people playing at one time. That's what the Cuban drumset masters are able to do. They can manifest a sound like the timbale player, the conga player and the person who's playing bongos and bells! If you're going to get into it, again, listen to the finest recorded Cuban music.

A drummer should listen to the intricacies of the greatest players like Tito Puente, Cal Tjader, Eddie Palmieri and definitely Machito for his use of jazz improvisors in his band. Drummers should follow this up by going to hear players perform this music live. I recommend a group led by Jerry Gonzales called Fort Apache. They're excellent. Listen to them and experience it. See how these players do it. Then start experiencing the complexities of playing drumset in the caliber and expertise of players like Steve Berrios and Ignacio Berroa.

Steve Gadd should be mentioned for his use of Cuban feels in his special style of rock and fusion. When you hear him play, you won't know that a lot of these rhythms come from the Cuban tradition unless you listen to the Cuban tradition. Then you can hear how Steve has incorporated that. And he can *definitely* make it sound like three or four drummers playing at one time.

Another person with an immense amount of knowledge is Don Alias. He's an unbelievable hand drummer from the Cuban tradition who also plays tremendous drumset. And he incorporates a lot of the hand-drum knowledge he has into his drumset playing. A lot of people don't know that Willie Bobo was a very fine drumset player. He had a couple of very fine records. One of the best was *Spanish Crease*, where he played timbales.

The Brazilian influence has had a really strong effect on the rock idiom. In my book I've alluded to how the Brazilian clave rhythms snuck into music, from Motown up to the present-day rock music. Drummers need to check out some of the heavy Brazilian drummers like Airto and

Dom Um Romao. They should also listen to the famous Cuban conga players like Armando Peraza, Mongo Santamaria, Carlos "Patato" Valdez and Candido. Even some of the Bata players are starting to gain recognition. Bata is one of the *most* serious aspects of the Cuban tradition. If you're going to study it, you have to go all the way into it.

Music is really my life. When I'm not playing it, I like to listen to it, study it and practice it. I'm just starting to get involved in composing. The only other occupation I like is traveling to broaden my scope of things. I like the outdoors. I love the sea. My son and I go fishing whenever he's with me.

Except for my belief in the Supreme Be-

ing, I don't think I devote any other part of my soul into anything as much as my instrument. Every time I play, I think of putting all my feelings into it and bringing some happiness, joy and conviction to my playing so that my audience can receive that. My goal is to make my audience react physically when I'm playing and to feel that, somehow, I touched them. In all the great performances I've seen from all the great performers I love, I've seen that happen. I've seen their ability to evoke emotion from their audience. I don't try to do it in a show business or entertainment fashion; I'm not doing it with any tricks or twirling sticks. I'm doing it because of the sincerity and honesty that I'm putting into it.

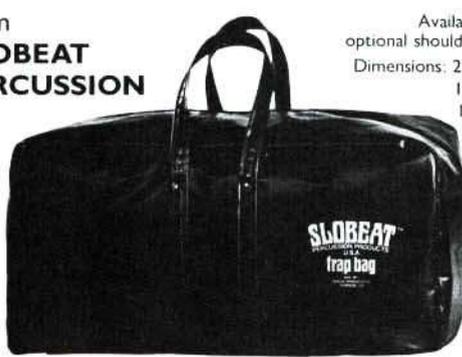


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continued on page 112

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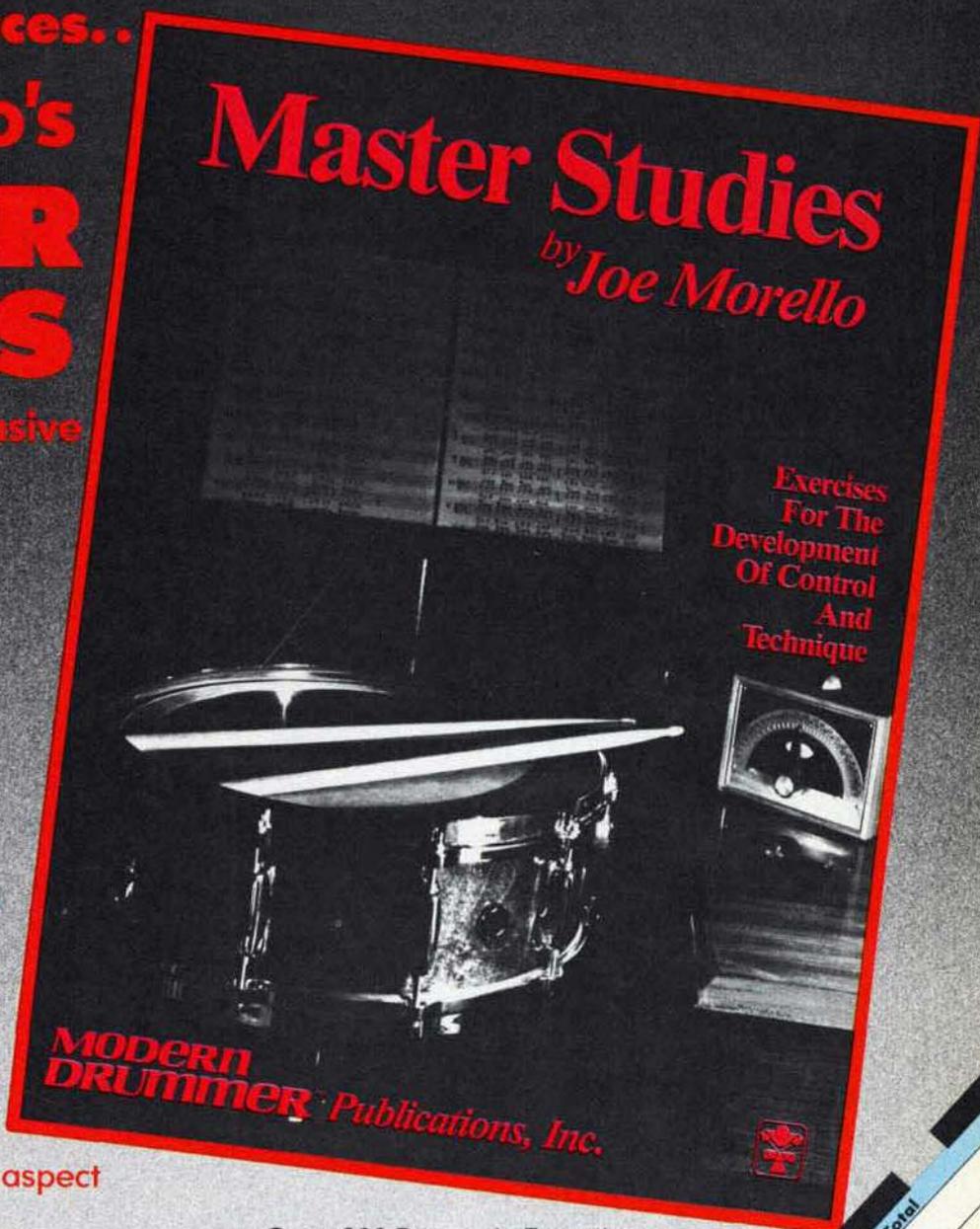
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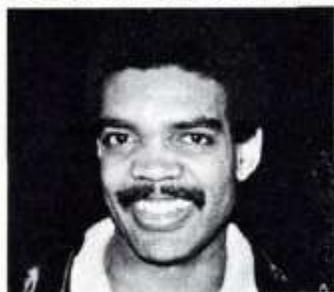
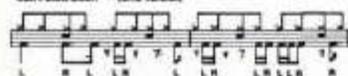


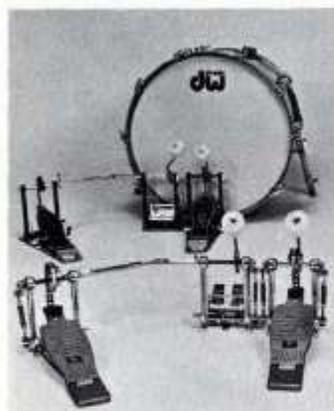
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IT'S QUESTIONABLE

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Q. I just bought a snare drum that appeared to be very old. While taking off the heads (which had "Amrawco" printed on them), I noticed that there was an old piece of paper in the inside of the shell that said: "Manufactured by Wilson Bros. Mfg. Company, Chicago." I was wondering if this was worth something because of its age.

S.B.

Urbana, IL

A. We checked with drum historian Ken Mezines, who gave us the following report: "The Wilson Brothers Manufacturing Company was actually a company whose real name was Wilson & Jacobs, and they were in Chicago, around 1909. They purchased a drum division from a company called Lyon & Healy, who made harps back then as well, and still do. At that time, they also made drums, and at that period in time it was one of the few drum factories in Chicago. I'm not exactly sure when they started using the name Wilson Brothers, but it couldn't have been much before 1909. In regards to the "three-way switch," which is the snare release on the drum, that was a universal part that could be bought by different companies. I have that same switch on another drum by a company called the Twentieth Century Professional Drum Company. I can't tell you who actually manufactured the switch itself. Judging by the picture you included, the claw holding down the hoop looks like an inexpensive one—steel rather than brass. They made several different types. The drum probably didn't cost a heck of a lot even for that day. It could have ranged anywhere from about \$4.00 to \$13.00. In a catalog of the same period, the Duplex Drum Company advertised a drum very similar to this one for about \$13.00. As far as what it's worth now, you have to consider that this is an antique drum. It probably either had a gut, or shellacked cloth snare. Since it can't really be utilized, that puts it into the realm of a collector's piece. In that case, the value all depends on who's buying and how badly they want it on their shelf. We've sold similar drums at anywhere from \$75.00 to \$250.00, depending on the condition. By the way, in order to maintain the maximum antique value, you should not try to restore it with new parts. Don't go out and have the lugs rechromed or attach modern hardware. The best thing you could do is to find some old calfskin heads, and just clean the drum up, but don't change anything from the original means of construction."

Q. I've read with interest your informative articles offering tips for cleaning cymbals. There's one area that you'd probably rather not talk about, but it's a fact of life I've run into whenever I've tried to clean cymbals. How can you avoid the black, grimy deposit that remains on the cymbals and, in turn, is transferred to the cleaning and polishing rag? I've used some of the methods that your articles have described with the exception of soap and water. May I assume that that method will clean them enough to eliminate the grime before polishing, or is the grime a side effect of any polishing?

B.F.

Maplewood, NJ

A. The grime you refer to is produced by the chemical action of polishing agents actually oxidizing the molecules of metal. A small amount of this is necessary to polish the cymbal, but too great an amount will damage the finish and possibly ruin the cymbal, which is why certain metal-polishing agents are not recommended for use on cymbals. Look back over the articles to see which ones are discouraged. The best way to remove the grime is to rub. The more you rub, the more highly polished the cymbal will be. Then use a soap-and-water solution to clean the remaining deposits out of the grooves of the cymbals. This will give a better look, and also a brighter sound.

Q. I've been looking for a particular stick and have been unable to find it. What I want is similar to a Pro-Mark 909 heavy soul stick, only with a small round bead, smaller than the Pro-Mark 707 bead. I've checked with several companies but to no avail. Is there a company that makes a stick like this in oak, or is there a place where I can get it custom-made?

J.C.

Miami, FL

A. We spoke with Mr. Joseph S. Calato, of Calato/Regal Tip, who informed us that the key to finding the sticks you want is to contact the stick manufacturers directly, by mail. Often a retailer is unable to stock every model available from a given manufacturer. It may be that a company has just what you need in their catalog, but your dealer doesn't have enough demand for that model to keep it in stock. If you have obtained all the catalogs and still haven't found anything that suits you, you can write directly to the manufacturer again, explaining your design needs. In some cases, a stick company will see potential in your design, and consider making a prototype. Unfortunately, due to the immense cost of tooling up for a new stick design, custom sticks for individual consumers are just about impossible. If you simply cannot find anything that works, Mr. Calato recommends that you see a good local woodworking shop, who can take your design, select the wood of your choice, and turn out a few pairs on their lathes. In effect, you become the manufacturer of your own stick. This can be costly, so be sure to get estimates in advance.

Q. While looking through the February issue of your magazine, I noticed that Steve Brooking and Jack Grondin of .38 Special appear in both the Ludwig and Tama ads, claiming that they use each product. Someone is not telling the truth—which one?

S.S.

Lubbock, TX

A. Situations like this are not a case of anyone "not telling the truth." Due to the advance-deadline nature of magazine advertising, along with the high cost of changing photographic ad layouts, a company will often run an ad for a fairly long period of time. In some cases, an artist will conclude the endorsement agreement with one company and enter into one with a different company. It is sometimes impossible for the first company to remove that artist's name from their ads before that same artist shows up in the new company's ads. This is not a case of misrepresentation, but merely the realities of the music business, in terms of endorsement contract periods and publishing deadlines that do not conveniently coincide.

Q. I have a problem with my hands sweating during performances. I usually end up gripping the sticks too tightly and with all four fingers, tiring quickly, and losing the ability to do certain rolls. Is there any kind of product that can keep hand perspiration to a minimum, or maybe some kind of natural fitting glove?

W.B.

Macon, GA

A. There is no product we know of to actually reduce the perspiration on your hands. There are wristbands that will help prevent the perspiration from your arms and wrists from running down onto your hands. There is a drummer's glove designed by Beato Musical Products (P.O. Box 725, Wilmington, CA 90748), and we have also heard of drummers using golf gloves and talcum-lined latex surgical gloves. There are several brands of sticks with textured grips to prevent slippage, and many drummers sand the lacquer off the grips of their sticks. A few drummers we've talked to go so far as to use a wood rasp to dramatically roughen the grip area. We've also heard of drummers spraying their hands with aerosol anti-perspirants, but have had no reports as to their effectiveness. 

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UPDATE

Vinny Appice has recently been in England working on Dio's upcoming album, to be released next month. The group will be out on the road shortly thereafter, even though it seems that they just returned from their last rigorous tour. But despite being on tour for six months, Vinny enjoyed it.

"With Black Sabbath, being on the road for three *weeks* seemed like three *years*. After the shows, everyone else would go his separate way while Ronnie [Dio] and I would go to the bar and have fun. Basically, touring with them was businesslike and boring. Plus, we were flying to all the shows, so we'd sleep over and fly to the next town in the afternoon. With Dio, we're on a tour bus and everyone is actually living together all the time, so the excitement never stops. We all get along really well and have a lot of fun. Our motto on tour is 'we never close.' That makes it so much more enjoyable, and we are not

sick of each other, even after all that time. We hung out when we got off the road too. That's why we left Sabbath—to get into this kind of situation."

A Dio show is strenuous, but Vinny hardly ever warms up. "After being on the road for so long, it's not necessary. If we're off for a couple of days, I'll get the sticks and the pad before the show, and practice for a half hour to warm up. If we've been playing every night, my body gets used to playing. I have video tapes of the first gig we did on tour, and of the last one. The first song is real fast, and by the last show, it was so fast that it was unbelievable. On the first show we couldn't have played it that fast. We build up so much. This gig requires a lot of energy from me, a lot of input and a lot of playing. In the live shows, I'm playing with all I've got. That's why I enjoy this band. If I weren't playing to my maximum, I'd be bored."

Jonathan Moffett is on what is probably the hottest tour ever, the Jacksons. Since joining them in 1979, doors have opened up wide for him. He recorded Yarborough & People's hit, "Don't Stop The Music," Diana Ross' "Muscles," did a short Japanese tour with Lionel Richie last year, 1982 and 1983 tours with Cameo, two short Richard Prior tours, a track on Jermaine Jackson's current album, some of Janet Jackson's album, and a Jackson family LP which was released in February. The group left on tour May 1, about which Jonathan says, "It will have to be a huge tour to compete with the last one, which was large. They say this will top that one, which is beyond imagination."

What does the music require of Jonathan as a player? "Precision timing is very important. They're very strict about everything being really locked in time—in the pocket, so to speak. They're into a lot of flash also, which I'm into as well. I really appreciate visuals. I think it's very important in a concert setting because, if people just wanted to hear the music, they'd put on a record and wouldn't bother going to the show."

With everything that happens on stage, however, Jonathan never feels lost in the shuffle. "They've always made me feel as though I were part of the show. I have a good position where I'm very visible and I feel like we work hand in hand. I have to

Despite rumors, **Joe Vitale** was not on tour with Genesis. The mix up probably occurred because he will be working on **Phil Collins'** next solo album. Currently he is on tour with Dan Fogelberg, playing double drums with **Russ Kunkel**. They will be on the road through mid-June. Joe also recorded Fogelberg's last album, and worked on Don Felder's release a few months ago. He hopes to begin his next solo LP this summer and has a few surprises up his sleeve, which he'll be revealing soon. By now, **Bernard Purdie** should have recorded a suite which he wrote with Galt McDermot (of *Hair* fame). This month his new band, Purdie's Evolution, will make its debut in New York. **Steve Gadd** has been his usual busy self, recording an abundance of jingles, the theme song for *The New Show*, and recording with Rickie Lee Jones and Al Jarreau. He also shaved his beard. Get out your razors, clones. **Keith Knudsen** with newly formed Tex Pistols. The Gang of Four has added

drummer **Stephen Goulding**, who replaces the band's drum machine, which replaced former drummer **Hugo Burnham**. **Clem Burke** is in the studio with Chequered Past. **Bill Berry** on U.S. tour with R.E.M., having just completed a tour of England and Europe. **Ralph Cooper** on tour with Air Supply. This month, **Butch Miles** is performing at the Bern Jazz Festival in Switzerland with Woody Herman, the Sarasota Jazz Festival and the Odessa Jazz Party in Texas. **Charles Bernstein** is producing the music and playing the percussion for *Come Messiah*. **Craig Krampf** has recently recorded Debra Galli's recent release on Polygram, Holly Penfield's recent LP, Manuela Torres' album, Barbara Mitchell's first solo album, as well as appearing on videos and television with Kim Carnes. After recording most of Scandal's new album, **Tommy Price** quit the group to join Billy Idol. **Andy Newmark** finished up the Scandal project. **Warren Benbow** on James Blood Ulmer LP, *Odyssey*.

by Robyn Flans

Vinny's drum book, *Rock Steady*, should be out this summer. "The book is basically a technique book. I came up with a bunch of different basic riffs and started writing everything down. I realized you could do so many things with these exercises that I just kept writing and put it all together. At the end, it deals with applying all of it to rock—playing a rock beat and then using it as a fill of some sort. I'm real proud of it. It's my first book and I've also started another one, which is more of a basic rock book. I think people can sit down and play all the hip rock stuff in the beginning, but they won't understand it as much if they don't learn the basics. I've always thought that drummers should take one or two years of lessons so they know what they're playing, but this book is designed for the drummer who wants to play it now."

cue in very tightly with them and the choreography. I kind of bring out the moves they make because I'm on top of the accents that make their moves seem real dramatic. Some of it is staged, but for the most part, it's very improvised. My concentration is really focused in on the guys. Some of the other players in the band get a chance to look out and get into the audience, but I rarely get a chance to do that because I'm concentrating on the guys' moves, and Michael ad libs so much. I like to be on top of that and help really bring things out. It's fun and I like the challenge of it. And Michael does present a really strong challenge," Jonathan laughs.

Berklee College teacher **Dean Anderson** was the percussionist for Mikhail Baryshnikov and the American Ballet Theater recently. **Bill Marshall** has been working with Hank Williams, Jr. **Jon Hiseman** on *Shadowshow* LP with Rod Argent. **Dave Mancini** now with Jeff Tyzik.

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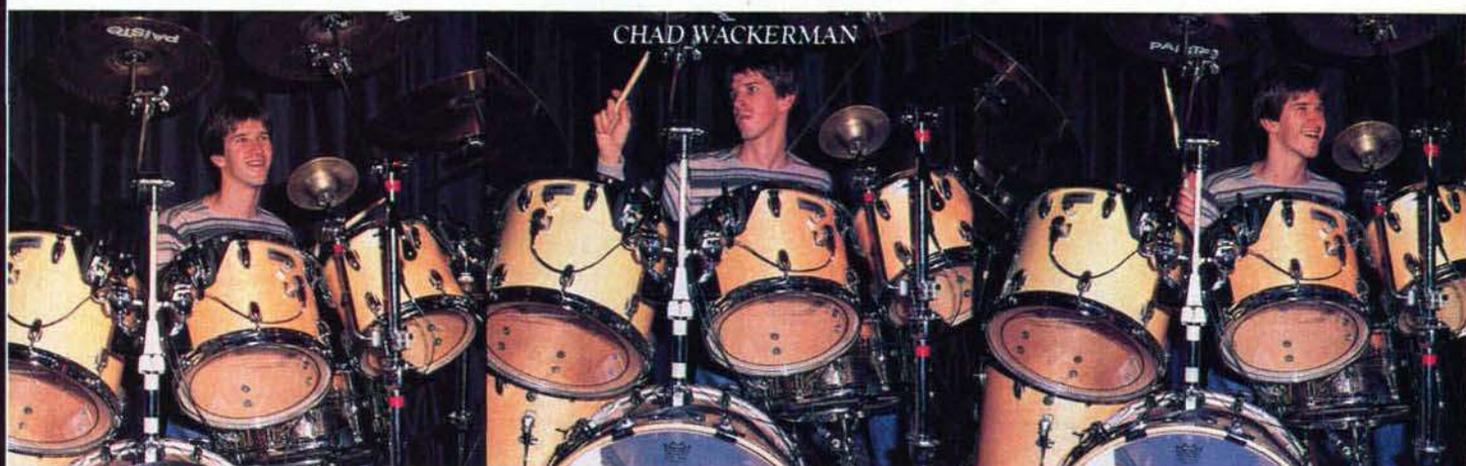
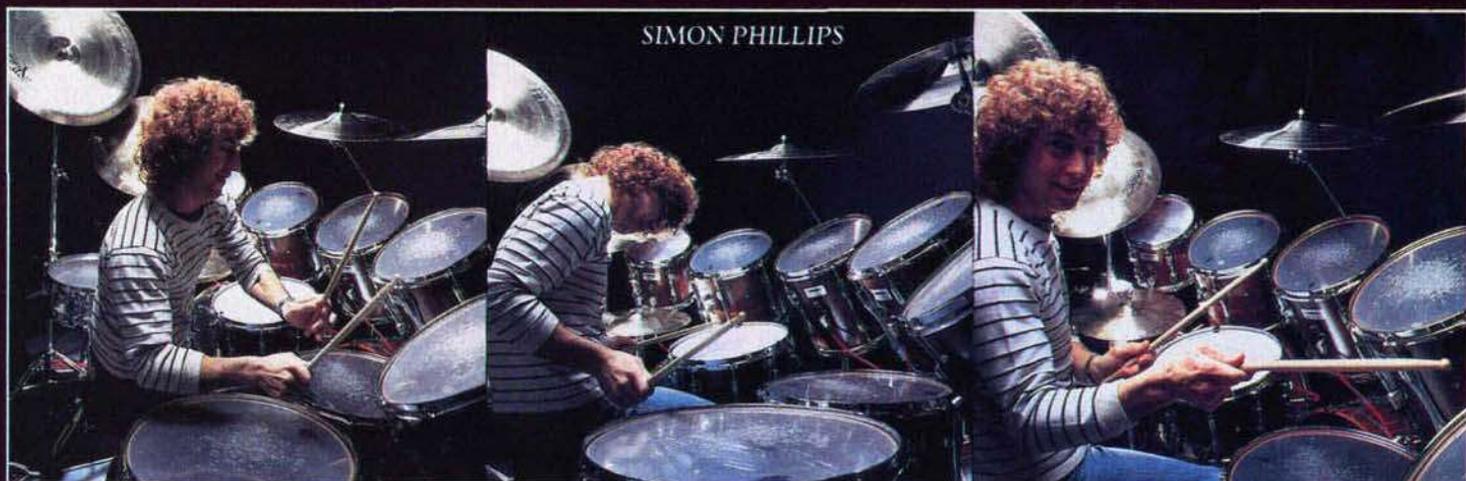
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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

DRUMS LTD. CELEBRATES 20TH ANNIVERSARY; ACQUIRES FRANK'S DRUM SHOP



(L. to R.): Gottlieb, Wackerman, Crowden, Phillips

Bill Crowden's Drums Ltd. celebrated their 20th anniversary recently with the largest Drum Fever clinic ever held. The lineup at this annual event included Simon Phillips, Danny Gottlieb and Chad Wackerman.

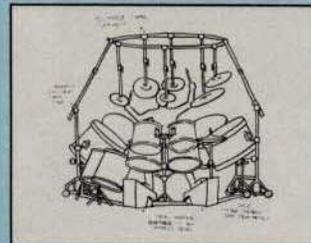
Wackerman, noted for his efforts with Frank Zappa and Alan Holdsworth, gave a demonstration on the Slingerland *May EA* drumset. Gottlieb, known for his work with the Pat Metheny Group and his own group, Elements, demonstrated the many textures available from the Paiste cymbal collection. He also devoted a major portion of his time to snare drum technique, utilizing wrist and finger control. Danny performed on a Ludwig set, demonstrating the *Modular* hardware system and power toms. Phillips, in his first clinic in Chicago, gave a performance that highlighted double bass drum technique, utilizing the new Tama *Artstar* series of drums. Several major percussion companies donated door prizes to the event, including a Paiste *Novo China* cymbal and a Sota custom snare drum shell. Clinic attendance was estimated at 1,200.

A second major event took place in February of this year when Bill Crowden announced that Drums Ltd. had acquired the stock, mailing list, and other assets of Frank's Drum Shop, the well-known Midwest drum center that closed recently.

Frank Gault opened his Drum Shop in 1938, and throughout the years, whether under the helm of Gault or, in more recent decades, Maury Lishon and his family, drummers from around the world were able to buy or rent, have serviced or repaired, or just plain browse all manner of percussion instruments and accessories, under the guidance of Frank's friendly and knowledgeable staff. In 1963, Crowden opened Drums Ltd., a few doors up the street from Frank's, and for two decades the two shops engaged in friendly competition. Now Drums Ltd. is carrying on the Frank's tradition of quality and service by uniting it with their own.

Drums Ltd. is located at 218 South Wabash Avenue (eighth floor), Chicago, IL 60604. (312) 427-8480.

BILLY COBHAM DRUMSET GIVEAWAY WINNER



Ray Palagy's "Dream Drum Set" concept is the embodiment of several unique ideas that earned him the position in the Billy Cobham Drumset Giveaway.

Ray's concept was to place the bass drums on either side of the drummer, mounted on stands that would double as a support system for an overhead circular tier of cymbals. This system would enable the bass drums to be played not only

with the drummer's feet (by means of a special cable-controlled pedal system), but with sticks, mallets, or even the hands as well. The extra floor space gained by positioning the bass drums and cymbals in this manner would permit greater flexibility in tom-tom placement. In theory, the player is afforded complete freedom in drum positioning.

Our congratulations to Ray on his unique winning design.

"GRETSCH DAYS" PROMOTION BEGINS WITH PARAGON MUSIC CLINIC

Gretsch recently announced the creation of an educational clinic program. Gretsch dealers will now have access to in-store clinics, workshops and promotions, utilizing international and regional drum clinicians. As part of Gretsch's intensified educational promotion efforts, a concept of multiple clinics uniting for a dealer event has been implemented under the name "Gretsch Day."

Paragon Music of Tampa, Florida, who recently presented Alex Acuna and Ramon Lopez as a kick-off to their own month-long percussion festival, was the first of a series of sponsors for Gretsch Day promotions, on Sunday, March 25, 1984. Gretsch artists Harvey Mason, Graham Lear and Roy

Burns were on hand for this event with individual clinics and an open forum with all three artists concluding the day's activities. The event was conducted at the West Tampa Convention Center, and attendance included drummers of all ages, drawing from all areas of central and southern Florida, including Orlando and Miami.

The next "Gretsch Day" is currently planned to take place on Sunday, May 20, at Drum Headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. Mason, Burns and Lear will again be the featured clinicians. Dealers requesting information on hosting a Gretsch Day in their area should contact Gretsch Marketing Services, at (615)452-0083.

REMO "HANDS-ON DAY" CLINICS

A series of eight free "Hands-On Day" clinics, featuring Louie Bellson and other percussion artists has been scheduled for cities in eastern Canada and the U.S. beginning May 2, 1984, according to Remo spokesman Rick Drumm.

Joining Bellson will be jazz fusion drummer Ndugu Leon

Chancler, ethnic percussionist Glen Velez, rudimentary drum champion Rob Carson and Remo president Remo Belli in the all-day informational seminars and demonstrations of Remo/Pro-Mark products. Attendees will have "hands-on" opportunities to play the company's pre-tuned drums.

The tour dates and locations are: 5/2, Toronto (Humber College—North Campus); 5/3, Montreal (McGill University); 5/4, Boston (Boston University); 5/5, New York (Studio Instrument Rentals).

Southern clinics include: 5/8, Tampa (University of Southern Florida); 5/10, Miami (Uni-

versity of Miami); 5/11, Atlanta (Georgia State University Percussion Department); 5/12, Nashville (Blair School of Music).

Further details will be available from Remo/Pro-Mark dealers in each city, and from Rick Drumm at (213) 875-3300.

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The Signature Sound.

The construction of the Signature Series drum shell is different than that of conventional drums. The 12-ply shells are formed tension free from selected woods. Tension free means that the single plies form a solid sound

unity, thus allowing the drum head an optimum of vibration. All Signature Series drums are available in two versions, giving the drummer a choice of two Signature Sounds: Heavy or Light. The Heavy version, with a thickness of 12 mms, produces a mellow and dry sound; the Light shells, not to be confused with Sonorlite, have a thickness of 7 mms and sound more responsive and direct. Both shells have extra deep dimensions, ensuring a perfectly balanced sound volume.

The Signature Finish.

Sonor has long been known as a specialist in finding and processing precious woods for drums. The wood selected for the Signature Series exceeded even our own expectations. Because of their structure and quality, we chose African Bubinga and Makassar Ebony from Indonesia. In keeping with the Sonor tradition, drum shells are veneered not only on the outside, but also on the inside. The Signature Series owes its exclusive, unmistakable

appearance to the exotic grain and natural wood character of Bubinga and Ebony.

The Signature Hardware

offers a maximum of stability combined with a functional design. Extra solid double struts, rugged steel chains for bass drum pedals and hi-hat stands, and instantly convertible rubber to metal feet are but a few of the outstanding features we offer.

The Signature Series was developed for the most discerning professionals. Made by perfectionists for perfectionists.

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JUST DRUMS

KIRKWOOD DRUM STICKS



Beato Musical Products, of Los Angeles, CA, is now distributing the new Kirkwood Canadian drumsticks. Made from preselected Canadian maple, all sticks are individually rolled to eliminate warpage. The

sticks are pitch-paired for perfect balance. Several models are available for rock, dance band, drum corps and symphonic work. Contact them at P.O. Box 725, Wilmington, CA 90748, (213)775-1513.

ROLAND INTRODUCES TR-909 DRUM MACHINE



The latest drum machine from Roland is the *TR-909 Rhythm Composer*. Roland's new sound-generation technology delivers nine studio-quality drum sounds on the *TR-909*: bass drum, snare, low tom, mid tom, high tom, hand clap, rim-shot, hi-hat and cymbal. Two different degrees of dynamics can be programmed on the bass, snare, hi-hat and all tom sounds. Additionally, there is an accent which can be assigned to any sound, along with programmable flam and shuffle effects for increased human "feel." These drum sounds can be arranged into 96 user-programmable patterns. The patterns can then be grouped into songs on four tracks of memory, each track having two banks. This gives the *TR-909* a total onboard memory capacity of 1,792 notes. Program data can be dumped onto cassettes

via the *TR-909's* Tape Interface, thus infinitely increasing the system's memory capacity. Roland has also provided a RAM cartridge holder for expansion of the *TR-909's* capabilities in the future. A particular innovation of the *TR-909* is its MIDI interface capabilities, which allow it to be controlled and programmed in real time by any MIDI-equipped instrument. Touch-sensitive instruments can thus be used to obtain infinite dynamics from the *TR-909*. The MIDI Interface also allows the *TR-909* to trigger external MIDI-equipped instruments, making it possible to add a wide range of tonal colors to drum tracks. The Tape Sync function will stripe one track of tape with a synchronization code, enabling the *TR-909* user to simultaneously record multiple sounds on each track of tape—all perfectly synchronized with other tracks and achieved without ping-ponging and the attendant loss of audio quality through generation gap.

The *TR-909* measures 19.44" wide by 4.2" high by 12" deep, and lists at \$1,195.00. Contact Roland Corp US, 7200 Dominion Circle, Los Angeles, CA 90040. (213)685-5141.

JESTICK INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO

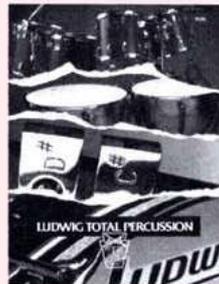
Calato is now offering dealers an instructional video called the "*Jestick Rhythm Course*" demonstrating the use of the *Jestick*, a new hand-percussion instrument combining the clave, tambourine and guiro. The five-minute video takes you through the basic steps needed to know how to play the

instrument. From this instruction the player can then experiment and produce a wide range of sounds and effects. The video is available for loan at no charge to any Calato/Regal Tip retailer or school. For more information, write Calato, 4501 Hyde Park Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14305, or call (716) 285-3546.

ALFRED PUBLISHING RELEASES NEW PERCUSSION CATALOG

Alfred Publishing Company has announced the release of a new percussion catalog, including the publications of Studio 4 Productions and Alfred Publishing. This catalog features the music of Sandy Feldstein, Murray Houllif, Joel Leach, Jay Wanamaker, and many others. It is available free by writing to Alfred Publishing Co. Inc., 14335 Morrison St., P.O. Box 5964, Sherman Oaks, CA 91413.

LUDWIG RELEASES NEW CATALOG



The Ludwig Drum Company has announced the availability of its all new, full color *Total Percussion Catalog*. Designated the 75th Anniversary edition, the 104-page catalog includes a brief history of the company written by William F. Ludwig, Jr., who has served Ludwig in various management capacities since joining the organization in 1937. The new catalog is larger and more colorful than previous editions, and makes use of full color photography throughout. Detail specifications cover every product in the Ludwig and Musser lines. Contents of the catalog are organized into categories: outfits and outfit information; marching percussion; timpani; Musser; concert percussion; special effect percussion; learning equipment; mallets; brushes and sticks; and a miscellaneous category that includes heads, promotional items, cases and covers. Copies of the new catalog are available at \$3.00 each from Ludwig, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, Indiana 46515.

BERNARD PURDIE RELEASES NEW BOOK



Legendary studio drummer Bernard "Pretty" Purdie has recently published his first drum book, entitled *Drummers Textbook Plus* . . . According to Jane Peterer, representative for the publisher: "Twenty-five years of experience are in this book. It is a book for beginners, teachers and professionals as well."

The book contains four sections: Technical, Rudiments, Exercises, and Chart Reading. For further information, contact Swiss Music Line, Inc., P.O. Box 398008, Miami Beach, FL 33139, or call toll free 1-800-338-3232.

LP INTRODUCES GOLDEN EDITION CONGAS



The new *Golden Edition Wood Congas* from LP feature a gracefully shaped shell of thinner construction for a more resonant overall sound. All hardware has a gold-toned finish. The major change in shape is in the "bellies" of the Conga and Tumbadora which are bigger than previous models, yet not so large as to necessitate the playing heads being too far apart. The *Golden Edition Congas*, in Asiatic whitewood, will be available in the following sizes: 11" Quinto, 11 3/4" Conga, and 12 1/2" Tumbadora.

continued on next page

MAY 1984

the next step



The advent of a truly classic instrument is a rare occurrence. The sort of instrument that revolutionises the musician's art and leaves its mark on the music of an era. The SDS 5, the world's first electronic drum kit, was such an instrument. Its successor would have to embody its pioneering spirit while taking full advantage of relevant advances in technology. The SDS 7 is a system fully equipped to shoulder such a responsibility.

The rack can house a maximum of twelve modules. Each has two independent sound sources; the analog section which generates the classic "Simmons sound" and the digital section which is a recording of a real drum, stored in memory.

A variable level of either or both of these sounds

can be routed through a versatile group of filter controls, providing an incredible range from real drums, through the classic "Simmons sound" to outrageous percussive effects.

The "programmer pad" enables one hundred different "drum kits" to be compiled giving a total of twelve hundred user programmable sounds and a choice of sixteen of these pre-programmed "drum kits" can be recalled by striking the appropriate section of the "selector pad".

The newly designed drum pads feature a specially developed, "softened" playing surface, reaching new heights in dynamic control.

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PRO-MARK UNVEILS NEW 737SG STICK



After a market testing program started in 1982, Pro-Mark Sales Manager Joe Hibbs reports, "We have another winner added to our exclusive series of trademarked drumsticks." The Model 73 7SG is crafted of choice American hickory wood, in natural color and finish only, with wood tip. Nylon-tip models are expected later

this year. The stick is 15 3/4" long, with a 17/32" diameter (400mm x 13.5mm). It has a short taper for added strength and comfort with a "small round square" tip or bead. Suggested retail price is \$6.80 per pair. If your local dealer cannot supply you, contact Pro-Mark Corporation, 10706 Craighead Dr., Houston, TX 77025. (713) 666-2525.

NEW SOUNDS FOR MXR DRUM COMPUTER

MXR Innovations, Inc., the manufacturer of the popular *Digital Drum Computer*, has announced two new additions to the Library of Sounds for that unit. The new sound packages are the Timbali (Model 185G) and Ride Cymbal (Model 185H). The Timbali package consists of two Timbali sounds, Timbali 1 and Timbali 2. Each Timbali voice can be substituted in place of any of the three Toms on the *MXR Drum Computer*. The Timbali package retails for \$60.00. The Ride Cymbal package is one voice, consisting of six 32K ROM's, and can be substituted in place of the crash cymbal on the *Drum Computer*. The suggested retail selling price is \$150.00. These two new packages can be easily replaced inside the *Drum Computer*. Detailed instructions for the replacement procedure are provided with the new Drum Library packages.

The library packages are available at selected MXR dealers around the world. For more information, contact: MXR Innovations, Inc., 740 Driving Park Ave., Rochester, NY 14613. (716) 254-2910.

YAMAHA TO DISTRIBUTE CYMBAL SAFE

Yamaha Musical Products will be distributing the *Cymbal Safe*, designed by drummer Jamie Oldaker as a means of protecting cymbals in a rugged and portable format. Made from rigid, impact-resistant ABS plastic, the *Cymbal Safe* holds ten cymbals measuring up to 22".

MAJOR FIRMS TO MARKET LUG-TUNED PTS DRUMSETS



Remo, Inc. recently announced that three major U.S. percussion firms have contracted to market Remo-built drumsets incorporating its patented pretuned technology. Slingerland, Kaman Music Distributors and Chas. Alden Music Co. each will offer individualized versions of a new drumset design which features conventional tuning lugs for additional tensioning of the pretuned drumheads. All three versions utilize Remo's *Acousticon* high-density pressed-fiber shells, *Quadura* laminate covering and Remo hardware.

"The pretuned concept has attained widespread professional acceptance, but many performers have requested lug tuning to get a more personalized sound," according to Remo Belli. "Our decision to offer this design through others, rather than market it ourselves, is consistent with our desire not to compete with the traditional drumset manufacturers who have been our prized customers for many years." Remo, Inc. will continue to market its low-end drumset lines, which feature quick-release latch mechanisms to secure the drumheads.

SIMMONS INTRODUCES SDS-7 AND SDS-8 MODELS



Based on the success of the *SDS-5* model, and taking advantage of advancements in technology since the introduction of that unit, Simmons Electronics, Ltd. recently unveiled two new electronic drumkits, the top-of-the-line *SDS-7*, and the lower-priced *SDS-8*.

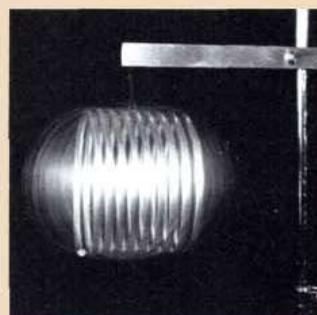
The *SDS-7* rack can house a maximum of 12 modules. Each has two independent sound sources: the analog section, which generates the classic "Simmons sound," and the digital section, which is a recording of a real drum, stored in memory. Various functions can be applied to the incremental controller, allowing an extremely wide variety of sound-processing facilities and thus providing a range of sounds from real drums, through the classic "Simmons sound," to outrageous percussive effects.

The programmer pad enables one hundred different "drumkits" to be compiled. A "drumkit" is a selection of

user-programmed sounds, one from each of the available modules. Therefore, when the rack houses a full complement of modules, 1,200 different sounds can be programmed by the user for instant recall. The player can select and choose between 16 of these preprogrammed "drumkits" by striking the appropriate section of the selector pad. The newly designed hexagonal drumpads feature realistic, "softened" playing surfaces and hidden stand mountings to enhance the visual image.

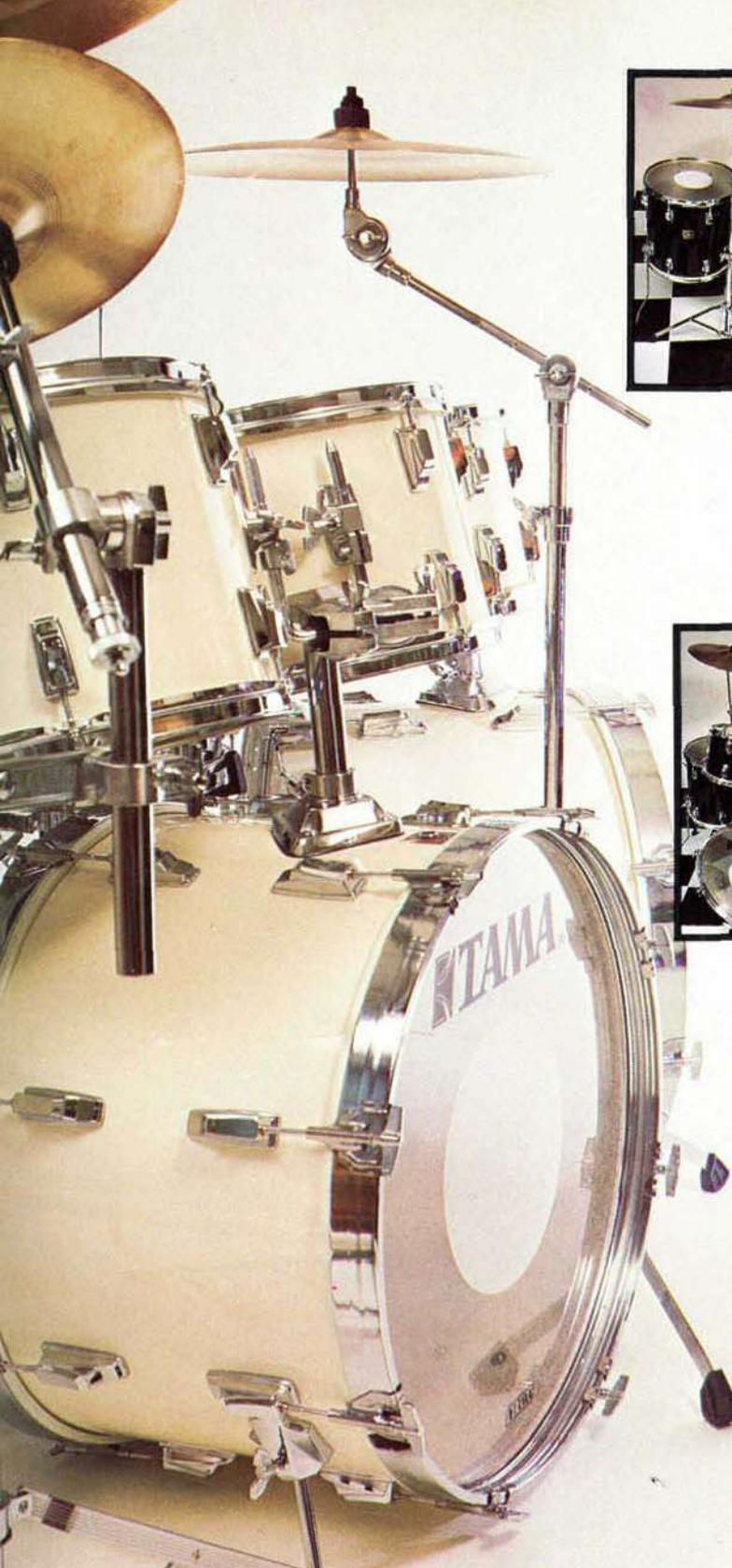
The *SDS-8* is an updated and slightly simpler version of the *SDS-5*, with improvements in technology, the addition of the new softer-playing surface, and both the classic "Simmons sound" and user-programmable controls. The five-channel unit can interface with the *SDS-6* sequencer, and a pair of heavy-duty stands are included in the package, which is priced to appeal to the budget-conscious player.

OM PERCUSSION ANNOUNCES 1984 PRODUCT LINE



OM Percussion has unveiled its 1984 product line. According to President John Stannard: "We've improved our chime trees and chime ladders with

solid oak frames and a special chime-plating process, and added new products." The *Overtone Bell* and *Overtone Crash* project loud, eerie overtones to create unique bell or crash sounds. Made by hand, one at a time, no two will be alike. The *Coil Chime* is a 144" long chime, compressed into a 5" coil that transmits hundreds of overtones. The *OM Cymbal Clamp* mounts up to a 16" cymbal to any stand under the main cymbal, saving space and expense. For more information write OM Percussion, Inc., 627-E Pinellas St., Clearwater, FL 33516. (813) 446-2818.



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(straight cymbal stand)
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SS514AWH Under 375.99
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(boom cymbal stand)
7038AWH Under 220.99
(18" floor tom)
TOTAL SET PRICE
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9-PIECE SET with X-HAT
SS505JBK Under 875.99
SS514JBK Under 375.99
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(boom cymbal stand)
7038JBK Under 220.99 (18" floor tom)
7022JBK Under 320.99 (22" bass drum)
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ADVERTISERS INDEX

Ancris Percussion Products	42	Milestone Percussion	95
Andrea's Post Box Music	96	Modern Drum Shop	84
Aquarian Accessories	44,90	Music Ink	84
Avanti Cymbals	45	Music Minus One	87
Axe Klic-Trac	82	NJ Percussion Center	74
Berklee College Of Music	59	Paiste Cymbals	62/63
Bil-Mol Music Co.	79	Pearl International	54/55,115
Calzone Case Co.	73	Percussion Center	103
Camber Cymbals	37	Percussion Institute	101
Centerstream Publications	99	Percussion World	103
Corder Drum Co.	36	Percussive Arts Society	109
Countryman Associates	92	Precision Drum Co.	97
Creative Drum Shop	52	Premier Drums	3
D & F Products	68	Promark	40,101
Dial-A-Drum	99	Regal Tip	57
Dick Grove School Of Music	64	Remo	48,75
Discount Music and Drum World	65	Resonant Drum Sticks	67
D.O.G. Percussion	65	Rick Latham/Advanced Funk Studies	82
Drum Workshop	112	RIMS	81
Drummers Den	74	Rogers Drums	5
Drummers World	66	Rolls Music Center	80
Drummuff	103	Sabian Cymbals	64,70,113
Drums Ltd.	46	Sam Ash Music Store	80
Duraline	38/39	Samson	52
Fajardo Percussion	66	"Set-The-Pace" Pedal Practice Pads	106
Freeport Music	106	Simmons Electronic Drums	53,121
GC Music	68	Slobeat Percussion Products	107
Gretsch Drums	77,Inside Back Cover	Sonor	47,119
Imperial Creations	106	Stanley Spector School Of Drumming	36
KB Sales Co.	99	Stick Stash	79
Latin Percussion	83,91	Tama	71,123
Linn Electronics	61	Tan Enterprizes	73
L. T. Lug Lock	48	The Drum Shop—Houston	116
Ludwig Industries	Inside Front Cover,43,97	The Woodwind & The Brasswind	103
Manhattan School Of Music	83	Trak Drums	56
Manny's Music Store	105	Valley Drum Shop	103
Dean Markley Drumsticks	7	Vaters Percussion	112
Maxwin Drums	106	Vic Firth Sticks	49
May Ea	117	XL Specialty Percussion Products	67,85
MD Library	111	Yamaha	41
Meinl Cymbals	69	Zildjian Cymbals	33,93, Outside Back Cover

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Zildjian

You can choose from six different types of Avedis Zildjian crash cymbals for an unparalleled variety of tonal ranges and attack/decay characteristics. Each Zildjian crash is painstakingly crafted to the world's most exacting standards — our own.

Ranging from the super-fast, sensitive response of the Paper Thin Crash to the powerful and cutting projection of the Rock Crash, every A. Zildjian cymbal produces a rich "musical" sound with shimmering overtones.

Depending on the particular blend you're looking for, take the time to *listen* to a variety of cymbals. Like Zildjian's Medium Thin Crash, the world's most popular crash cymbal, which provides exceptional pitch flexibility, high end response and sustain. Our popular Medium Crash produces a robust, full-bodied sound with a higher pitch.

K

The legendary reputation of K. Zildjian cymbals comes from their deep, dark sound and dry tonal character. The K. Dark Crash epitomizes this classic sound and works extremely well in tandem with Zildjian A's to widen the dimensions of your overall sound.

amir

The Amir Crash has a crisp, bright, fast-rising sound with a smooth decay and controlled overtones. Both

the 16" and 18" sized Amir Crashes can blend in well with any Zildjian set-up.

IMPULSE

The new Zildjian Impulse line's raw explosive attack and long range projection of the rhythmic pulse is embodied in the Impulse crash. Its focused overtone threshold allows repeated crashes without overtone build-up.

The limitless sounds, tone colors and textures implicit in Zildjian crash cymbals are an important part of developing your individual drum sound. If you really *play* your crash cymbals, you can't help but hear the differences that exist among them. And those differences are what make Zildjian the only serious choice. For a white paper on Zildjian Crash Cymbals, please write to the Avedis Zildjian Company, Longwater Drive, Norwell, Mass 02061.

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