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April '95

## Herlin Riley

with Wynton Marsalis

Slayer's

## Paul Bostaph

Studio Vet

## Gary Mallaber

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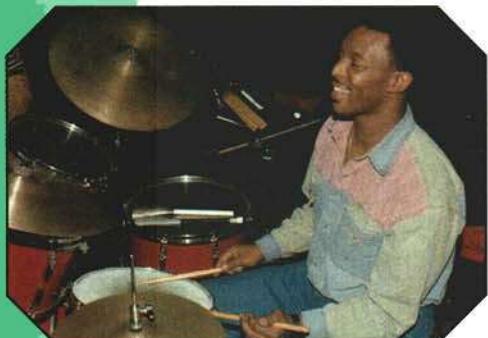


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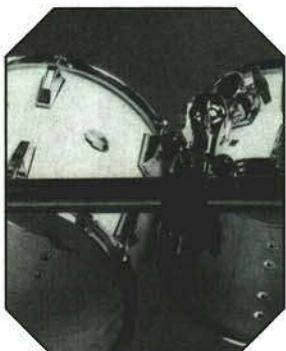


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No, you don't have to be a progressive fuzoid using every ping, pang, crash, bell, and whistle under the sun to need a drum rack. Everyone from headbangers to beboppers have discovered the joy of suspension systems. Here's what's out there.

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# Going For It

Every month I get letters from drummers all over the world. And though they're on a variety of subjects, the most common are from young people who hope to become professional players, but don't know where to start or how to go about it. Unfortunately, there's no sure-fire method to this. About all I can do is offer some practical advice that seems to have worked for others.

First and foremost, be certain you have the required natural ability. It would be foolish to kid yourself into believing you can have a career as a high-profile professional in such a competitive business without a substantial degree of natural talent. Next is the *persistence* one certainly needs. If you're the kind of person who gives up at the first sign of failure or rejection, or who finds it difficult to handle disappointment and frustration, the music business is probably *not* for you.

Then there's the important matter of preparation. There are many things you can do to increase your odds for success: Advanced studies at a college or professional school; in-depth, long-term private study with a reputable, qualified instructor; and intense playing experiences in a variety of musical settings are all valid routes taken by many current professionals.

Versatility is also essential. Being able to perform competently in a diverse area of musical styles will *surely* increase your chances of success. And that means being

willing to perform with different musicians in varied musical styles at every available opportunity.

Beyond this are the non-musical aspects of career development, which involve getting your name out there. You might be the greatest player in the world, but if nobody *knows* about it, chances are you won't get very far. This part of the game might include such things as preparing a resume, having demo tapes and videos available, networking, and anything else you can dream up that might help you to be seen by the right people. In many cases, making it to the pro level could mean moving to a city where more opportunities exist. This isn't always an easy decision. However, if you're a talented player living in a remote area of the country, obviously your chances would not be as great as they would be in New York, Los Angeles, Nashville, or another major city.

Finally, there are the inevitable unknowns, like getting the right breaks, being heard by the right people, and being in the right place at the right time. The truth of the matter is, those players who truly stand out above the rest are usually recognized *somewhere* along the line. And with talent, solid preparation, hard work, and persistence, there's no reason to feel that your chances are any less than anyone else's. Making it to the pro level may not be the easiest thing in the world to achieve, but it's certainly worth going after if you've got all that it takes.

RS

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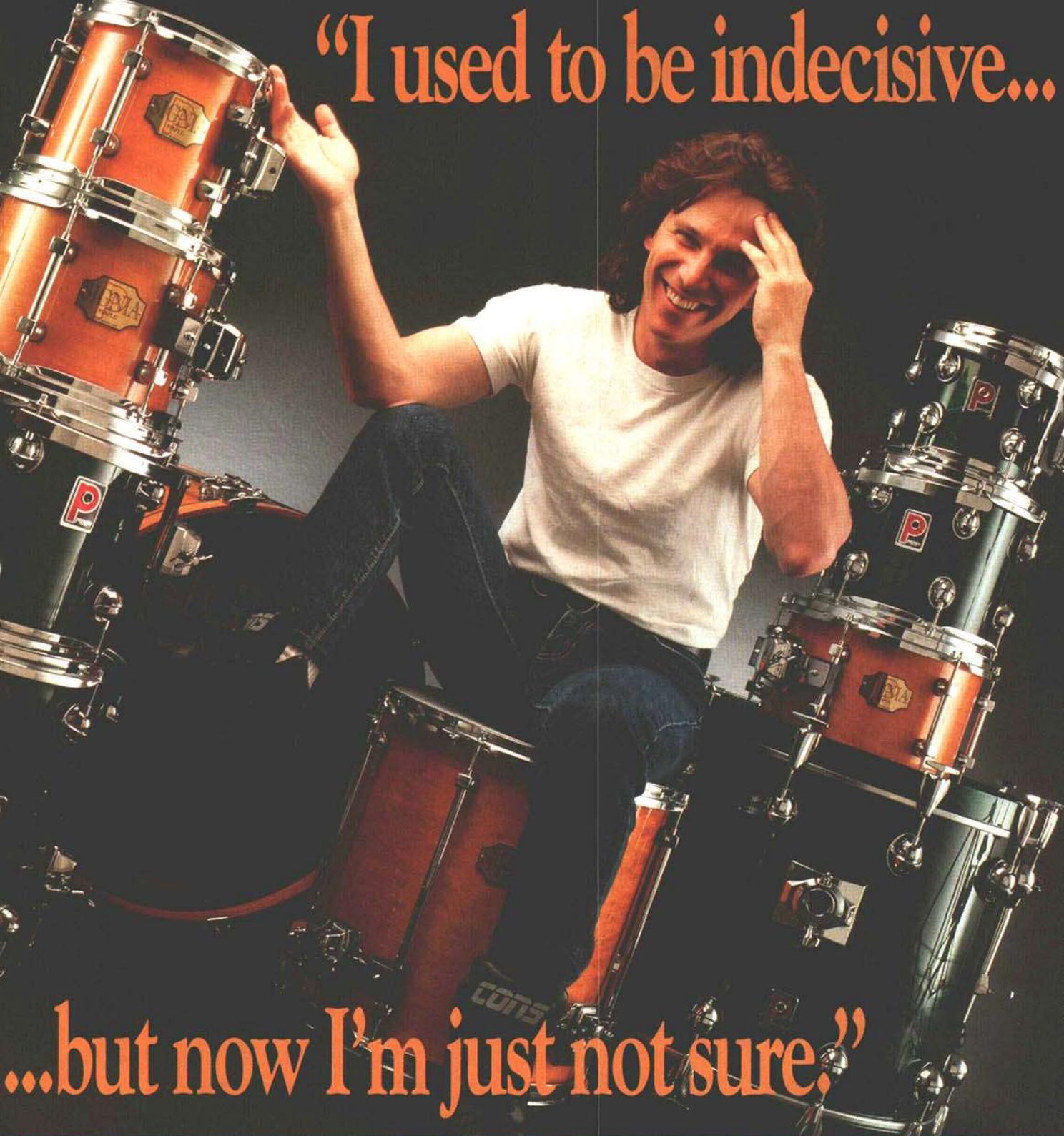
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*Be sure to check out Rod on the new Dixie Dregs release "Full Circle."*

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## RESPONSE To LaFEMINA

*Editor's note: In the January '95 Readers' Platform, Dr. Ralph LaFemina wrote that "The best way [for drummers] to accompany is to solo constantly," because "playing to a simple, repetitive drum-machine-type beat is uninspiring and boring" [ostensibly for other instrumentalists]. He went on to say that "Playing in a band is not supposed to be a limiting, constricting experience, but rather one of wide-open, expansive interaction." His ultimate point was that those who advocated simple drumming and the concept that "less is more" are wrong. We have received a substantial amount of response to Dr. LaFemina's letter; here are some representative examples:*

I can only conclude that Dr. LaFemina is seriously out of touch with musical reality. To advise drummers to "solo constantly" is irresponsible at best and dangerous at worst. There may be a few young, impressionable drummers out there who heed this man's advice. The result? A lost gig.

As a veteran semi-pro drummer I have replaced several drummers in bands. The most frequent complaint I heard was, "Our last drummer was too busy." Dr. LaFemina is obviously not a working musician himself, otherwise he would perhaps realize the sheer stupidity of his statements.

Bob Cianci  
Highland Lakes, NJ

A tip of the hi-hat to Ralph LaFemina. The issue he addressed in his letter was stated very eloquently.

Sal D'Amato  
Foster City, CA

Dr. LaFemina's idea of soloing constantly is in complete contradiction to the term "accompaniment." It displays that your musical statement is always the same: "Look at me!" Unless you can instead say, "Am I making the piece work?" (or at least, "Am I letting someone else get their message across?") your "glory-greedy" approach will limit your marketability. No one wants to play with someone who must

be in the spotlight all the time. It's like trying to have a conversation with someone who just won't shut up.

Christopher Cooke  
Nashville, TN

It's obvious to me that Dr. LaFemina has completely missed the point of how important the Beatles, James Brown, Motown performers, and all the great "pop" artists from the past few decades are. (And I'm just as much a fan of Tony Williams, Jack DeJohnette, and Elvin Jones.) It's like Jimi Hendrix once said: "It's not how complex you get but how much of yourself you put into the music." Part of that is doing what the music calls for. It will tell you whether you need to be simple or complex.

Tom Poitras  
East Windsor, NJ

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Thank you for the "Where Are They Now?" article in your January '95 issue. As someone who started playing in the '60s it was refreshing to see and read about some of the people who were influences on me in my formative years.

Ronny Lee Ricks  
Malakoff, TX

I really enjoyed the "Where Are They Now?" article. Could you please do a follow-up that includes Mitch Mitchell?

Clay Venable  
Knoxville, TN

The "Where Are They Now?" article was excellent! However, I'm not completely satisfied, because a lot of my favorites (Neil Smith of Alice Cooper, Brian Downey of Thin Lizzy, Phil Rudd of AC/DC, and many more) weren't included. How about making this a regular feature?

Patrick Malone  
Gray, TN

What about Jim McCarty of the Yardbirds, John Petersen of the Beau Brummels, John

Badanjek of the Detroit Wheels, Bobby Elliott of the Hollies, Mick Avory of the Kinks, Hugh Grundy of the Zombies....?

Daniel Tyrapk  
Des Plaines, IL

*Editor's note: Response to the "Where Are They Now?" feature was very gratifying. But almost every letter contained a list of names—enough "missing" drummers to fill several such features. As a result, MD is considering a follow-up some time in the future. (They take quite a bit of time and effort to research.) If you have one or more favorite drummers from the '60s or '70s you'd like to see included in a future "Where Are They Now?" piece, drop us a line. (But try to keep the list down, okay? We're running out of drawer space.)*

## CHAD SMITH

I really enjoyed the interview with Chad Smith in your December '94 issue. Mr. Smith is a very talented drummer and it's great to see him get the recognition he deserves. The concept of a tribute to the "fathers of drumming" was very, very cool, and the photography was great—especially the cover.

Donnie Anderson  
Columbus, OH

## BUM RUSH

Your January '95 Critique section included a review of the new Dream Theater album *Awake*. I must say that Matt Peiken's comment that "this is the record Rush wishes it could make today" is completely inappropriate. Rush has always been a band that has never looked back, but rather has always gone forward and continued to seek new challenges. Every new Rush album is different—a fresh exploration of their interests and a photograph of time as it is to them at that moment. This is the principle that has kept Rush around for the past twenty years.

If Dream Theater has decided to include odd time signatures and chops in their

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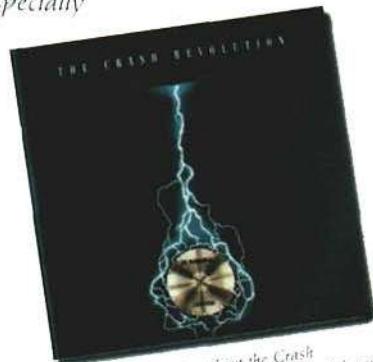
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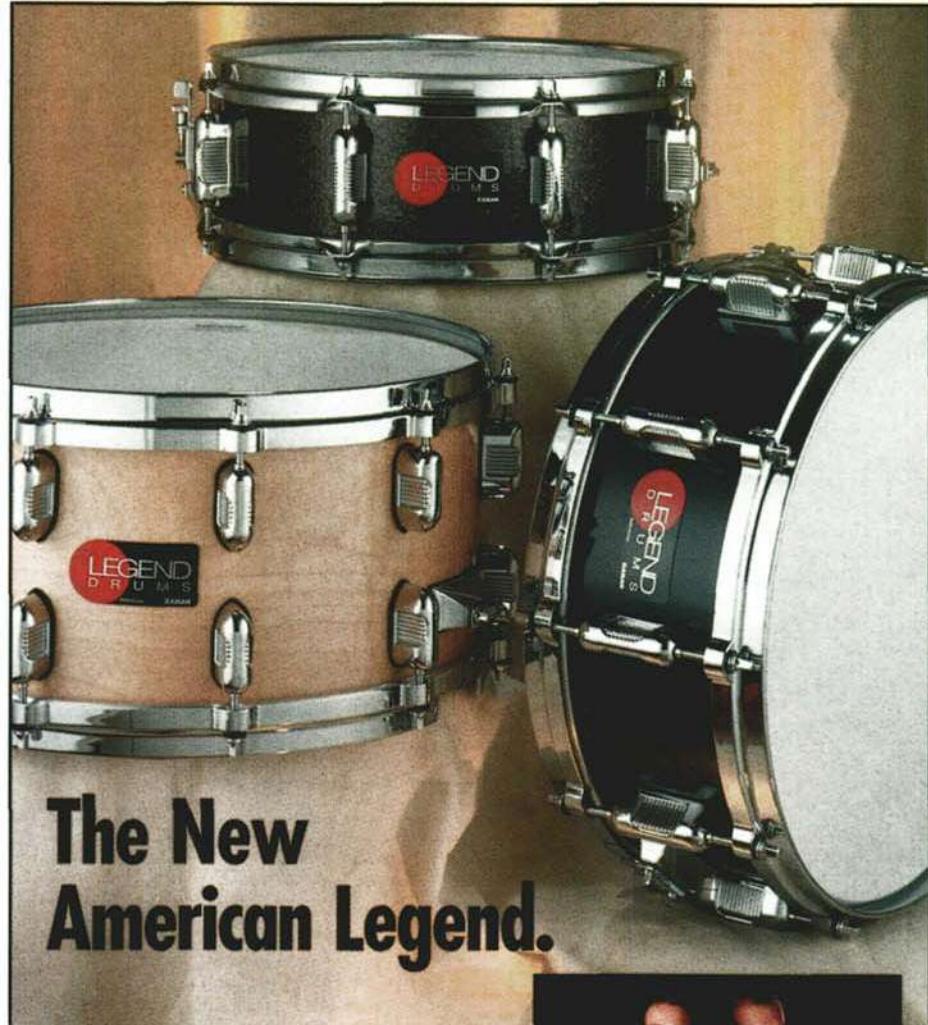
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- *Modern Drummer* (3/94)

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- *Rhythm Magazine U.K.* (11/93)

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- *DRUM! Magazine* (11/93)

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songwriting, I'm sure they were not trying to make a statement that "Rush can't do it now, so here we go." In fact, I'd be willing to bet that the members of Dream Theater would like to avoid being compared to anyone at all, and would rather just be respected for who they are.

Stephan Chaggaris  
Lynnfield, MA



### **REGARDING NUMBNESS**

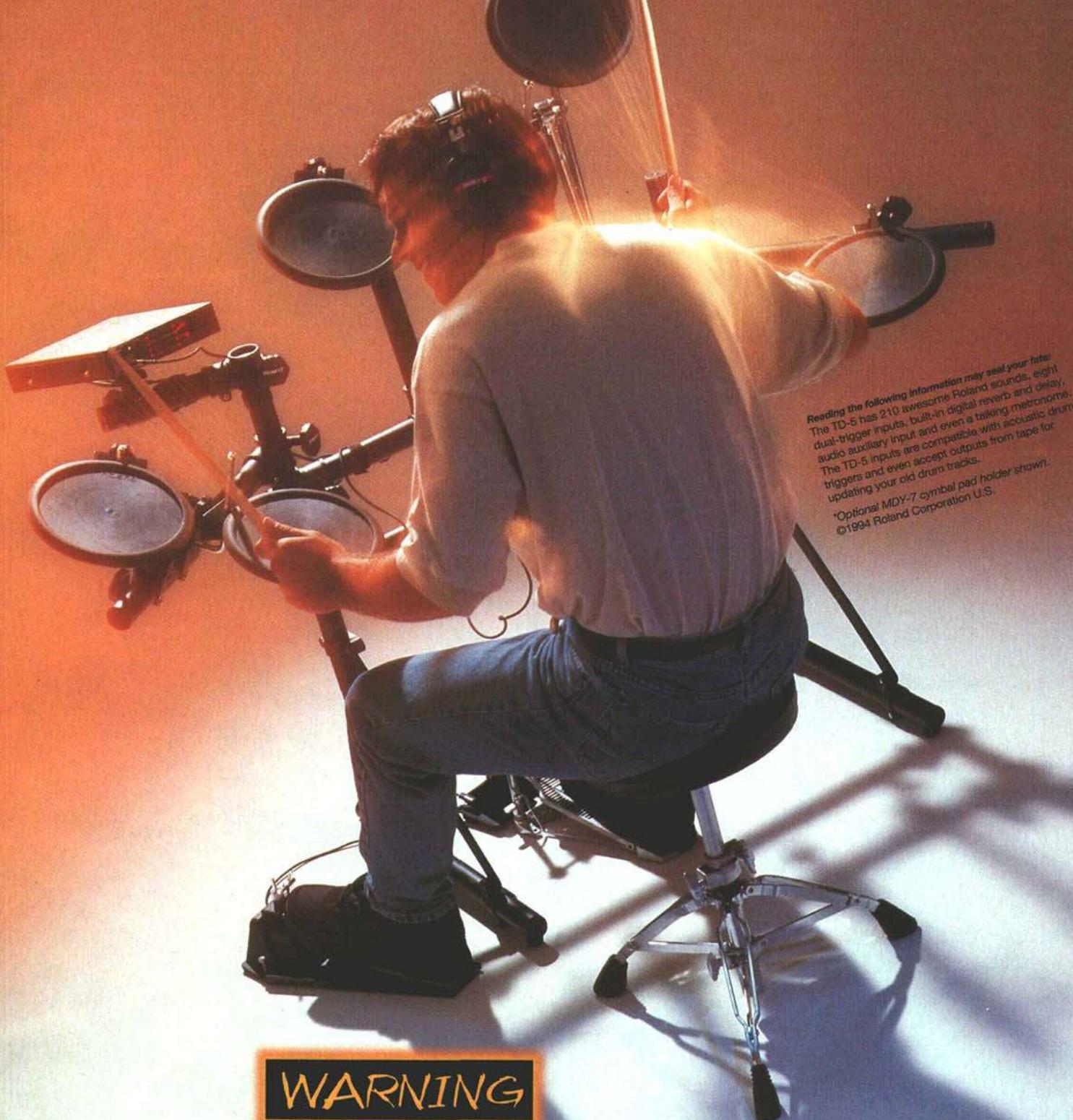
This is written in response to the questions submitted in a recent *It's Questionable* regarding numbness when playing. I suffered from tendonitis for about five years. At one point I feared I would have to give up drumming, since I had difficulty using my right hand in any capacity. I consulted several doctors and received no help of value. I was merely told to "take it easy."

Finally it occurred to me to consult a drummer with refined hand technique who might be able to diagnose the cause of my pain. In just one lesson with a symphonic snare drummer my problem was identified. It seems I was making two mistakes. First, I played with my thumb on top of the stick shaft—putting a slight yet constant pressure on my thumb, which, in turn, aggravated my tendons. The solution was to rotate my palms downward, so that they are parallel to the drumhead, and to allow the stick to "float" between my thumb and index finger. Second, I stifled the stick as it rebounded from the drumhead rather than allowing it to rise to the apex of its rebound. The hands should rise back with the sticks as they bounce away from the heads. The sticks should also drop rather than be pushed downward.

While the above techniques are basic, they are neglected by many drummers. I am happy to write that after a few months of incorporating these points into my playing I had next to no difficulties with tendonitis.

Billy Fox  
Arlington, VA





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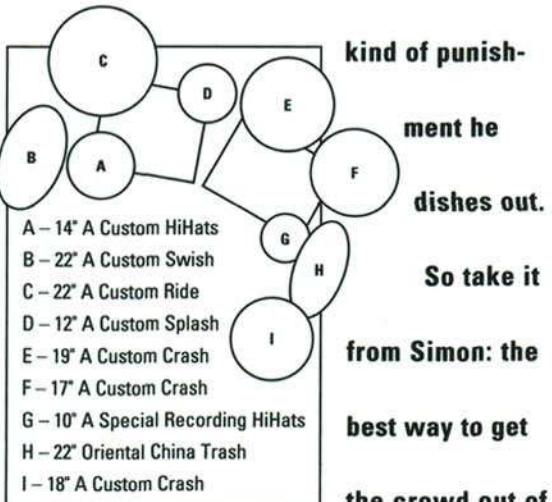
# OUT OF

# THOUT

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IT IS A MOMENT which every drummer lives for: The spotlight shifts to the rear of the stage. The rest of the band takes a breather. And the drummer tears into a burning solo. Few do more with this moment than Simon Phillips.

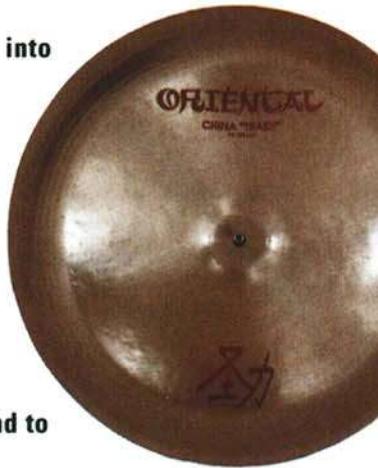
Simon's trademark is his inventiveness. And to help keep his sound fresh, he relies upon Zildjian's Oriental China Trash cymbals. Because in addition to giving him an authentic "trashy" sound, they can stand up to the



their seats is to make them notice what you're doing in yours.

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## Moe Tucker

Standing behind her custom drumset, Moe Tucker played well along with former Velvet Underground bandmates John Cale and Sterling Morrison at Pittsburgh's newly opened Andy Warhol Museum. "It was really fun to be there at Andy's place," Tucker said after the mid-November performance. The show's setting was familiar to the twenty-five-year veterans of rock as they played in front of two of Warhol's films, *The Kiss* and *Eat*.

The Velvet Underground established their presence as perhaps the first "alternative" rock band in the late 1960s, when Warhol recruited them to play along with his silent films as part of his Exploding Plastic Inevitable shows. For this most recent reunion, the trio did not play any old VU tunes, but rather two new instrumental pieces along with the films.

Tucker's setup for the two sold-out shows included a 21" floor tom, which, according to Tucker, "Sylvia [Lou Reed's wife] found for me in a music store on Long Island during the Velvets' glory days." The set also included another large floor tom, two mounted toms, a hi-hat, and two crash cymbals. Tucker left her sticks at home, using mallets and brushes instead. After deciding that a bass drum sound would not fit the music, Tucker instead used a reversed bass drum pedal under the 21" floor tom. The special pedal was her own design, originally made to match her unconventional use of a bass drum.

"With the Velvets I have a bass drum that I turn on the side," Tucker explains. "Years ago, when I decided to use the bass drum

as a tom, I also figure, what the hell, the bottom is just hanging there, I might as well smack that too. So I fooled around with the pedal to make it go up instead of sideways. The bass drum has legs and the pedal fits underneath."

After the Velvets disbanded in the early '70s, Tucker stayed out of music until the early '80s, when she produced her first of five solo albums. Since then, Tucker has put together a band that has toured several times in Europe and once in the United States. Their most recent album, *Dogs Under Stress*, was released in July.

Tucker's albums are available from her directly at P.O. Box 2357, Douglas, Georgia 31533.

• Harriet L. Schwartz



## John Leamy

"America is a fine and wonderful place," says John Leamy, drummer of New York City's Surgery. "A myriad of roadside delights.... In Seattle I witnessed a fight that turned into a fifty-person melee. A friend of mine got his nose bitten off—fortunately I found it. But it had already been half-chewed, so it no longer fit his head."

The seedy stories that pour out of Mr. Leamy infuse Surgery's hard-driving, industrial peel-out rock. Like exhaust fumes and white heat from a pack of Harleys, Surgery's *Shimmer* is a full-bore dive into the seamy underbelly of rock 'n' roll.

"We are not ashamed of our rock roots," says Leamy. "We're trying to retain as much of that flavor as possible. We like the stylistic trappings of that genre, but we

also try to incorporate many other things into our music."

Though Leamy burns a thick ooze of a groove now, he actually grew up playing jazz. "When I was coming up I thought it was important to play as many styles as possible. I played in pit orchestras, shows, symphonic orchestras, chamber music, and big bands. I listened to more fusion and jazz than not, and rock like Crimson and Yes. I'm still a Bruford fanatic. Heavy rock came later, really with Surgery."

Leamy's economic use of flam patterns and marching cadences separate him from your typical headbanger, while his songwriting contributions allow him some melodic input. "I don't find a lot of room for flashier stuff or sophisticated subtleties in Surgery. It's more about power. Every

once in a while, though, I'll get together with some friends and whip out the old Return To Forever charts."

After Surgery's four singles, a compilation album, a full record, and one EP (all on indie label Amrep), many tours, and a brief stint with hard-rock trio Masters Of Reality, Leamy has many sordid, entertaining stories to enliven the Surgery reputation.

"At a Ritz show two years ago, we went on stage after our bass player, who was very drunk, had just finished urinating on the stage manager from a window. We thought management was going to pull the plug on us for sure. That's just the kind of shenanigans this band likes to pull."

• Ken Micallef



## Rodger Carter

Rodger Carter is pleased that after three years, he has won the trust of his "boss," Lita Ford. "For the first couple of years I had to live down Myron Grombacher's reputation," he laughs. "But after proving myself, it's been very cool. There's a lot of freedom now, and on her new record, *Black*, there's a lot of me.

"I think it really grooves," Carter continues. "That's really my bag. I'm not 'Mr. Licks.' My thing is really making those fat grooves. I don't think she's ever done anything like that. Her stuff has been very pounding pop metal stuff. I even got her doing a half-time shuffle.

## Herb Graham, Jr.

Herb Graham, Jr. is one busy guy with an interesting resume. Although in 1991 he opened shows for Nirvana playing with Pop's Cool Love and worked with pop act Louie Louie the year before, Graham's "baby" is B Sharp Jazz Quartet.

"This group gives me the freedom to be as creative as I want and to find my voice in music," Graham says. "Everybody in the band writes, so we can play anything—and there are no boundaries. We've been fortunate enough that the record has been successful. But it's like having a child. You have to nurture it, build it, watch it grow, and go through problems when it gets sick. You have to burp it and the whole deal," he laughs.

"This group has a very strong band sound," Graham continues. "We're not coming from a traditional bag of bebop, though, as

## News...

In addition to his Chicago duties, **Tris Imboden** recently did some subbing with Al Jarreau. He also did some recording with Freddie Ravel.

**Michael Botts** on an album for the Nelsons as well as doing his own CD ROM project.

**Stan Lynch** has parted ways with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers after nineteen years. Most recently, Lynch has been working as a song-

writer and producer with such artists as Don Henley, the Eagles, Leonard Cohen, and the Mavericks.

Tom Petty's *Wild/lowers* has **Steve Ferrone** on drums, along with Lenny Castro and Phil Jones on percussion.

**Ringo Starr** is on one track, "To Find A Friend."

**John Dette** has just joined Atlantic recording group Testament.

**Marko Marcinko** is cur-

"I co-wrote two songs on the album. One is called 'Joe,' which is the half-time shuffle. The other is called 'Fall,' which is a laid-back, kind of grungy groove with a big chorus. The title track is cool too. We brought in the percussionist from the Rippingtons and he did some great conga stuff. And there's a great instrumental called 'Smoking Toad,' where I just went off."

Rodger says the demos for the album were fun because there was no bass player in the group and they had some guests come in to play. "Billy Sheehan played four tunes. Gene Simmons co-wrote a

tune, so I got to record with him. I was a big KISS fan growing up. Then the guys from Cheap Trick came in and sang on some stuff. I was the new guy at that point, just going, 'Wow, this is great!' By the time we did the album, we had Larry Dennison on bass, and that was actually a better vibe because it was more of a band thing. We didn't use a click or anything. We just went for the raw take. We would leave mistakes as long as the whole vibe was there. It really turned out great."

• Robyn Flans



you might expect from the name. Everybody in the band does other gigs. I'm doing a lot of alternative gigs, and I even recently did a thrash metal record with a group called Giant Baby. I also did an urban rap funk thing for the *Red, Hot & Cool* project. Then I just did the Cherub Clan record, which is like a psychedelic version of the Rolling Stones."

According to Graham, each bandmember brings all their other projects and influences to the record. "What's cool about it is the thickness of the group sound and the compositions. If you sit back and listen to the record, after each song you're not going to know what to expect from the next song. I call it alternative-improvisational music. I produced the record and wrote most of the cuts. A lot of drummers don't get that kind of freedom."

• Robyn Flans

rently on tour with Maynard Ferguson.

**Steve Holley** can be heard on Katy Moffatt's *Hearts Gone Wild*.

**Shannon Larkin** is the new drummer in Ugly Kid Joe. He recently recorded the band's upcoming release.

**Jeep MacNichol** on tour with the Samples in support of their fourth album, *Autopilot*.

Tom Sayek on the new release by guitarist Grover

Kemble, *Follow...*, on West End Records.

**Ron Pangborn** has been on the road with Freedy Johnston.

**Hank Guaglianone** working with Sonia Dada.

**Chris Ryan**, who has been with KAT Inc. for the past five years, has left his position and is currently touring Europe with neo-folk artist Leticia, supporting her new disc, *No Songs About Trains*.

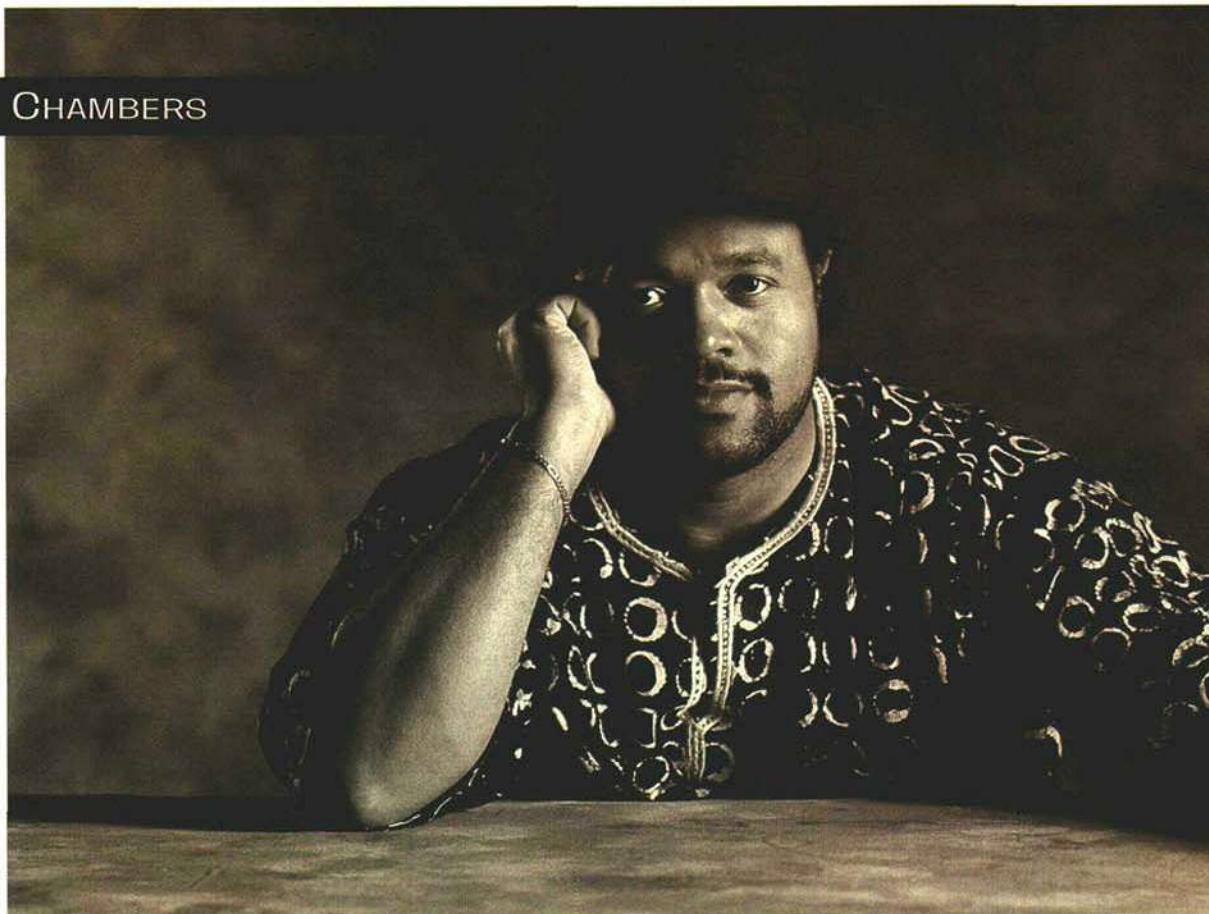


There are a few players that need absolutely no introduction. Their talent transcends the normal boundaries of musical preference.

To watch them perform is an event. Dennis Chambers is one of these rare individuals whose sheer ability behind a drumset seems beyond belief.

## DENNIS CHAMBERS

Photo by John Walker

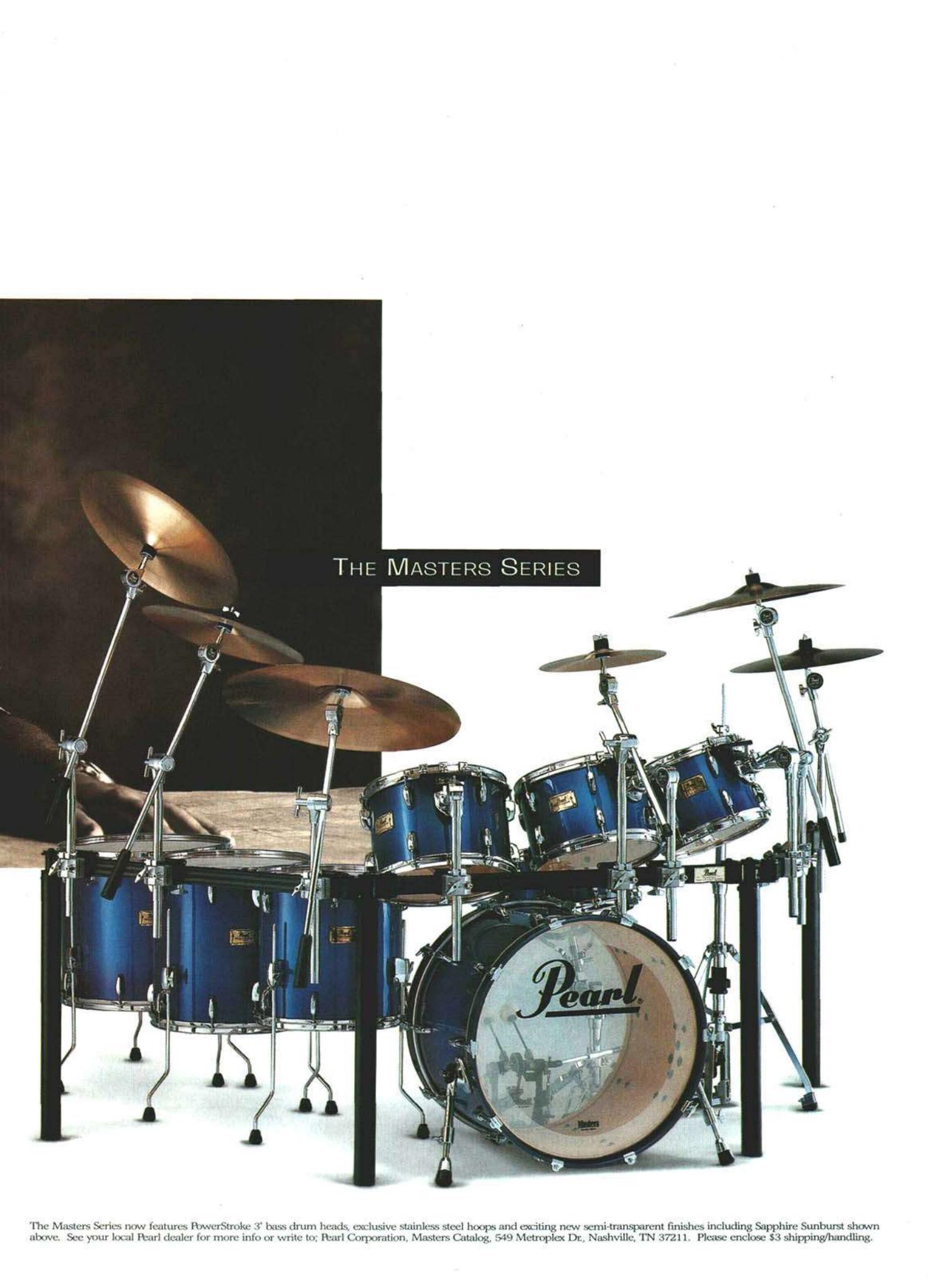


Millions of people will see Dennis perform this year as he tours with Steely Dan. Thousands of drummers will come to see one of the best in the world, a true legend in the making.

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## John Riley

**J**I thoroughly enjoyed your recent performance with the Bob Berg Quartet at the New Haven Green Jazz Festival. I was fortunate to be sitting in the front row, where I could observe your masterful precision and technique, which I found inspiring. I also realized the importance of being trained academically as well as practically.

I am an intermediate student just beginning to study syncopation and jazz patterns and technique. Could you suggest some books I may read in addition to your own *Art Of Bop Drumming* so that I may enhance my weekly lessons?

Additionally, when I saw you perform I thought I saw you do what appeared to be a variation on a rimshot done by placing the tip of your stick on the snare head and then striking its middle with the other stick—thus producing a more subdued sound than that produced when one strikes the rim and snare with the same stick in the "traditional" manner. This was something I've yet to encounter in my music instruction; is it your own creation?

Desiree Rossolini  
Watertown, CT

**A**Thanks for your kind words. I especially enjoy playing with Bob Berg and others of a similar mindset and maturity—where the music incorporates the harmonic richness, depth of feeling, and interaction of the jazz idiom with the energy and power of more contemporary stuff.

Regarding study materials, I feel that becoming a good snare drummer is the first step to good drumset playing—regardless of the idiom. Joe Morello's *Master Studies*, Charley Wilcoxon's *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos*, and the Garwood Whaley/James Mooney book *Rhythmic Patterns Of Contemporary Music* will help you develop the necessary technical and reading skills on the snare drum.

Two drumset books I'm currently checking out are Rick Mattingly's *Creative Timekeeping* and John Ramsay's *Art Blakey's Jazz Messages*. These books provide good material for players of all levels. Of course, I'm always finding new ways of adapting Ted Reed's *Syncopation* and George L. Stone's *Stick Control* for the drumset.

A couple of videos I've found helpful (related to jazz playing) are Peter Erskine's *Everything Is Timekeeping* and

Herlin Riley's *Ragtime And Beyond*. I also feel that getting a historical perspective is very important. Check out Mickey Hart's *Drumming At The Edge Of Magic*, Burt Korall's *Drummin' Men*, Ron Spagnardi's *The Great Jazz Drummers*, and Joe Hunt's *52nd Street Beat*.

While reading drum books and watching videos is helpful for everyone, taking advantage of any and all opportunities to play with people can be even more educational and enlightening. Additionally, by learning tunes at the piano, studying recordings, transcribing ideas you like, and hearing "the cats" playing live, you will become a more complete musician.

The "rimshot" you saw me play is not my own creation. It has been used—exactly as you described it—by drumset players for most of this century. In *The Art Of Bop Drumming* I call this device the "stick on stick" sound, while others refer to it as a "stick shot." Roy Haynes and the late Philly Joe Jones were masters of this device and they, among others, inspired me to incorporate it into my musical vocabulary. Here are a couple of common phrases using the "stick shot" (indicated with an x):

Experiment by 1) holding the left stick more or less firmly on the drumhead, 2) playing on the stick closer to the tip or closer to your left hand, and 3) using the tip or the shoulder of the right stick to strike the left stick. Good luck with this and all your studies!

## Danny Carey

**D**IY I'm a tremendous Tool fan and a big fan of your drumming. I've never seen a drummer nearly as creative or as musical as you are in any other metal band. Also, your beats are always more interesting than the usual fare, using syncopation, tom patterns, and the hi-hat. I'd like to know what heads you use in the studio and/or live and how they're generally tuned. Also, did you come up with the ride pattern where the hi-hat is open on the "ands" and closed on the beat (used in "Sober" and the mid-section of "Bottom") or did you pick it up from some other drummer? Finally, can you give me any tips on coming up with beats that fit the songs so well?

Bill Cumby  
Swarthmore, PA

**A**Thanks for the more than generous compliments. The heads I use in the studio are usually clear *Ambassadors* on top and clear *Diplomats* on the bottom. On very heavy tunes that lean on the toms I'll use the same thing I do live: clear *Emperors* on top and *Ambassadors* on the bottom. The snare and the kick remain the same in both situations. The snare gets a *CS Black Dot* (underside) batter and a *Diplomat* snare-side head. The

kick gets a *Powerstroke 3* front and back with a bit of muffling inside. (All those heads are by Remo.)

As for the "Sober" hi-hat pattern, I guess we can look at that as one of the few good products to come out of the '70s disco era I grew up in.

When conceiving a beat for a song, the most important thing is to let its natural pulse preside over the rhythm. But you take over the emotional controls. You guide the journey that everyone's involved in and interject your touch when your taste tells you it fits. It's the drummer's responsibility to lead songs in this way because his or her tools are the best-designed for the job. Drums and cymbals contain the power to go many places in countless ways. Never limit yourself!



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Rich, from Dave Weckl to Manu Katché, throughout history the 6" *Splash* has been one of Zildjian's most popular models. And now Zildjian has applied its most modern "Custom" manufacturing technology to the crafting of a new sound . . . the 6" A.CUSTOM *Splash*, the latest addition to this award-winning range. So add some new color to your set-up . . . go on, make a splash!

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# The difference is in the shell

As we approach the end of the second millennium A.D., despite a mind-boggling technological explosion, basic drum design has remained unchanged. Traditionally, the tuning mechanism has been affixed to the drum shell. Rigid appendages...usually made of threaded rod...extend from the rim and lock into a series of metal fasteners, which are incorporated in mounting blocks permanently attached to the shell (the shell must be thick to support the head tension without warping or cracking). The action of tightening the threaded rods into the fasteners applies a tensile force to the rim and, by extension, across the drum head. What happens with this kind of set up? ☠ The compressive forces severely dampen shell resonance!

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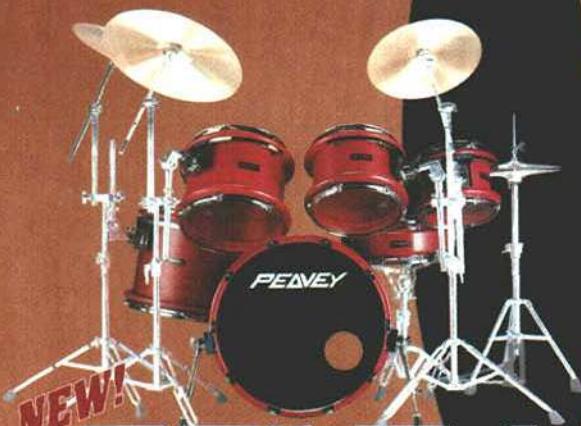
Moreover, The Radial Bridge System™ provides a bearing surface for the head and serves as the tension and contact point for all tuning and mounting hardware...thereby eliminating tensile and compressional forces from the shell, allowing the shell to be what it was meant to be... ☺ a true resonating element!

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## Reno Drums



I began my professional career in 1943. The drumkit in the photo above was the first kit I owned where everything matched. It's called a Reno set, and it was made in Brittingham, England. The drums have no lugs. There were two internal rings with an internal drive screw. A wrench was inserted through a keyway in the side of the drum to turn a drive screw and push the rings out under the reinforcing hoops of the drum, thus tensioning both the top and bottom heads at the same time. (Note also that the kit made an early attempt at rack-mounting.) I used

these drums for five years before trading them in. I'd love to have some information on their background.

Bruce Brown  
Beachwood, NJ

**A** Even our crack drum historian, Harry Cangany, had to call for reinforcements on this one. He sent the photo to his friend Bobby Elliott (of the Hollies) in England, who forwarded the following information.

"Reno was the stage name of Jim Somerville, a 1930s bandleader in the United Kingdom. During World War II he bought as much stock as he could from dealers (and paid as little as possible) and stored the instruments all over England. At the war's end, he virtually controlled the British instrument market for the following few years.

"Reno had a music store in Manchester, where his drums were displayed in the window. He also had a factory in South Manchester for about three years (1948-51).

The drums were made from thin plywood and had aluminum hoops screwed on. Tension rods were inside each drum, and were described as heavy. The drums were used for at least one week by the Sid Phillips band. (Sid, apparently, was the father of Simon Phillips.)

"The rack across the bass drum supported the small tom, but a crutch-like leg was needed to help with the floor tom. (It was too heavy to go unsupported.) Tuning was accomplished by using a wrench (as described above) or on some models by turning a knob on each drum's side. This, in turn, would move a metal ring inside the drum to effect drumhead tension. Problem was, the metal ring inside each drum would vibrate if the heads were loose."

## Repairing A Cracked Cymbal

**A** Although I'm just a small-time drummer, I play as much as I can. Knowing that cymbals cost a lot, I want to preserve mine as much as possible.



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Unfortunately, I have an 18" Zildjian crash/ride cymbal that has developed a 2"-long crack below the bell. Is there a way to patch it or somehow prolong the life of my cymbal?

Jerrod S. Smelker  
Pewamo, MI

**A** We've received this question dozens of times over the past several years, and we wish we had a miraculous solution to the problem. Unfortunately, a cymbal is a brittle, one-piece object with an integral physical structure. There are no parts to replace or repair, and the qualities that give it its sound can be destroyed by attempts to "patch" cracks in it.

It is *sometimes* possible to prevent a crack from increasing by a technique known as "stop-drilling." If you can accurately locate the ends of the crack, you can drill 1/8" holes at those points to relieve the stress that is promoting the crack. Unfortunately, the real ends of a crack can be microscopically small and therefore extremely difficult to find. Beyond that, stop-drilling is a compromise measure at best; you are not actually "fixing" the crack, and the cymbal's sound is still going to be affected by it.

Owing to the cost of cymbals today, it's often hard for drummers to accept the fact that they should more likely be categorized as "expendable" items (like sticks and heads) than as "permanent" items (like drums). However, a cracked or broken cymbal is a lot like a cracked or broken mirror: It's never going to be what it was, and should probably be replaced.

## Cymbal Stand Clips

**A** For years I used Zildjian *Cymbal Clips* on the tops of my cymbal stands. These were little devices with a small, swiveling bar that formed a "T" atop a cymbal stand in place of a wing nut. All you had to do was flip up the swivel and lift off the cymbal, then flip the swivel back again for transport so you didn't lose your felt washer or plate. The clip never came off the stand.

I recently bought a second set of drums,

and I'd like to replace the wing nuts on the cymbal stands with the *Cymbal Clips*. Unfortunately, Zildjian no longer offers them. Is there another manufacturer offering something similar?

Russ Hayes  
Mary D, PA

**A** There is a device designed to serve essentially the same purpose, although it is totally different in design. It's called the *Cymbal Crown*, and it's a molded-plastic unit meant to replace the metal plate, felt washer, and wing nut on a cymbal stand.



As you can see from the photo above, the *Cymbal Crown* screws right onto your cymbal stand. The base of the unit incorporates a molded-rubber cushion for the cymbal, while the central shaft employs a mushroom-shaped head that's split to be flexible. You just place the cymbal over the head and push down gently to put the cymbal on a stand, then pinch the head with your fingers to allow the cymbal to be removed. The *Cymbal Crown* remains attached to the stand.

*Cymbal Crowns* are available in black, white, red, and blue, with black removable cushions. Felts can be added or substituted to suit your needs. They're priced at \$8.95 and carry a one-year warranty against breakage. If you can't find them at your local drumshop, contact the distributor: Big Bang, 9420 Reseda Blvd., Suite 350, Northridge, CA 91324, (800) 547-6401.

## Working For A Drum Company

**A** I'm currently employed with an overnight delivery service. I'm very interested in changing careers and would love the chance to work for any of

the major drum companies. My passion is for music—especially drumming. I have a B.A. in business administration but have never used it to my advantage. I would appreciate any help you could give me in this matter.

Keith Perkins  
Dallas, TX

**A** Applying for a job at a drum company is essentially the same as applying to any other business. Depending on the area of work you're looking for, the fact that you are a drummer may or may not have any bearing on your qualifications for that work. For example, if you wished to get into the actual manufacturing area, skills in woodworking would be more immediately applicable than drumming skills. Jobs in sales and marketing would benefit more from a degree in business administration (such as yours) than from the ability to play a smooth paradiddle. On the other hand, most drum companies do look favorably on drummers who are *also* qualified in other areas, recognizing that their enthusiasm for the instrument would probably increase their enthusiasm for a job making or selling that instrument.

Your best bet is to prepare a standard resume package, complete with your degree, work experience, basic bio information, and a cover letter indicating your desire to parlay your interest in drumming into a career in drum manufacturing. Specify those areas of the business that you'd like to get into (manufacturing, sales & marketing, artist relations, advertising, promotion, etc.) and indicate how you feel you are qualified to work in those areas. Use the advertisements in *Modern Drummer* as a source of address information, and direct your resume package to the "Personnel Manager" at each company you contact. This is a generic title that should get your package to the person responsible for screening job applicants. If the company is interested, they'll get back to you shortly. (It would also be a good idea to follow up with a phone call a week or so later, just to "check on the arrival of your package" and further demonstrate your interest in that company.)



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- tim alexander

When

I play, I try to focus on what I can do to make the most out of the music," stresses Tim Alexander. "That's why I always push myself to go for the most musical solution."

Tim's idealism has earned him a place as one of progressive rock's most respected drummers (as evidenced by his recent win in *Modern Drummer's Readers' Poll* as Best Progressive Drummer). One listen to Tim's work with PRIMUS or his alter ego band, LAUNDRY, confirms him as a true role model for the 90's and beyond.

Tim's attitude towards his drums is no different than his attitude towards his music.

Maybe this explains why all of us at Starclassic were so pleased to learn that Tim had chosen Starclassic for his creative endeavors.

"Drums represent me and how I want the listener to perceive me.

"These drums do what they're supposed to do...they look great, they sound great and on top of it all, they're simple."



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### Rhythm Tech Alpha Series Oak Congas



Rhythm Tech—well-known for accessories such as *Index Tension lugs*, *Active Snare Systems*, *Balance Bass Drum Beaters*, and *Pete Engelhart* percussive sculptures—has decided to take a shot at the serious hand drum market with their *Alpha* series oak congas.

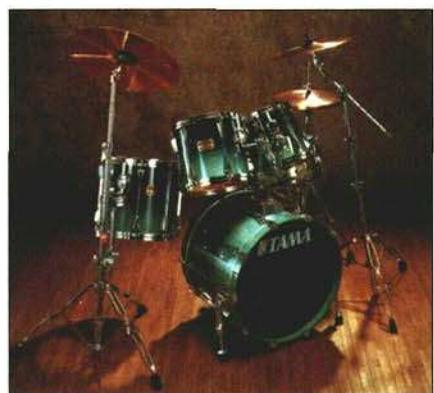
The new congas are available in a natural finish only, and with double chrome-plated hardware (including a unique crescent-shaped mounting bracket). Mounting bolts through the side plates are placed so that no two holes are in line along the same grain of wood. This is said to balance

the stress of the shell, theoretically keeping the congas in tune longer. Low-profile, oversized rims are utilized so that the head does not come in contact with the sides of the shell—allowing the head to vibrate more freely and thus resulting in a louder, fuller tone.

With the intention of keeping the integrity of the shell intact by drilling the fewest holes possible, Rhythm Tech has chosen not to include handles on their congas. Instead they suggest that they be transported in a case or padded bag. *Alpha* congas are available in quinto (11"), conga (11 3/4"), and tumba (12 1/2") models.

Rhythm Tech has also introduced timbales and bongos in their new hand-percussion line, along with their new *Solo* single-row tambourine. **Rhythm Tech, 29 Beechwood Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801, tel: (800) 726-2279, fax: (914) 636-6947.**

### Tama Artstar Custom Drums



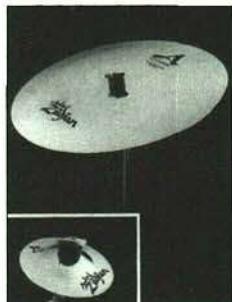
In celebration of the tenth year of *Artstar* drum production, Tama has introduced their new *Artstar Custom* series. The new models feature the same 7mm, 9-ply maple shells as on previous *Artstar* kits, but now include die-cast hoops on all toms, a stronger spur

system with memory markers, new tom mounts with matching memory locks, and tension rods rather than T-rods on bass drums for lighter weight and more accurate tuning. Finishes for the new models include Green Fade and Lavender Shade. A five-piece kit carries a retail list price of \$3,762.99. **Tama c/o Hoshino (U.S.A.) Inc., 1726 Winchester Road, Bensalem, PA 19020, tel: (215) 638-8670, fax: (215) 245-8583.**

### New Zildjian Splashes And Flat Top Ride



Zildjian has introduced three new cymbal models: two splash cymbals and a flat top ride cymbal. The 12" *Z Custom* splash is said to produce a "very cutting, loud, and piercing splash sound." The new 6" *A Custom* splash and 20" *Flat Top* ride are said to be characterized by "shimmering, brilliant, crisp, and clear sounds." In addition, the *Flat Top* ride (designed with input from Steve Houghton) features increased stick definition and minimal overtone buildup. **Avedis Zildjian Company, 22 Longwater Dr., Norwell, MA 02061.**



### New DW finishes And Tri-Bearing Pedal System

DW has recently added several options to their selection of drum colors and finishes. These include gray, red, purple, and royal blue diamond *FinishPly* coverings, and black cherry, ebony, tobacco, azure, emerald, and lavender stain lacquers. Stain/lacquer and diamond *FinishPly* finishes are available on all *Collector's Series* snare drums, toms, and bass drums; diamond *FinishPly* colors are also available on *Edge* brass/maple snare drums.

DW has also made their *Delta Tri-Bearing System* available on all single and double bass drum pedals. The system features ball-bearing action at all three of a pedal's moving parts—hinge, rocker, and hex shaft—and is designed to make pedal action "smoother, more durable, and more responsive." The system is available as standard equipment on all DW 5002 double pedals (\$563), 5000 single pedals (\$237), and 5070 single-post single pedals (\$237). Retro-fit kits retail at \$49. **Drum Workshop, Inc., 101 Bernoulli Circle, Oxnard, CA 93030, tel: (805) 485-6999, fax: (805) 485-1334.**

## Attack Thin Skin Drumhead

The Attack *Thin Skin* drumhead consists of two layers: a medium-thin ply of Dynaflex on top and an extra-thin ply underneath. This combination is said to create an "extremely strong" head producing a "fat, wet sound with plenty of attack" and "maximum durability with resonant tones and studio warmth." In addition, the heads are guaranteed not to fail at the hoop. **Universal Percussion, 2773 E. Midlothian Blvd., Struthers, OH 44471, tel: (800) 282-0110, (216) 755-6423, fax: (216) 755-6400.**

## Udu Udongo II

The new *Udongo II* from Udu Drum is an all-clay, double-chambered, side-by-side configuration of the original *Udongo* drum, but with a larger left chamber for deeper low end and broader playing surface on the right side. The new design is said to produce a wider tonal range, and to be adaptable to all playing techniques. **Udu Drum, Rt. 67 Box 126, Freehold, NY 12431, tel: (800) UDU-DRUM, fax: (518) 634-2488.**

## Mechanical Music Slug Bass Drum Beater

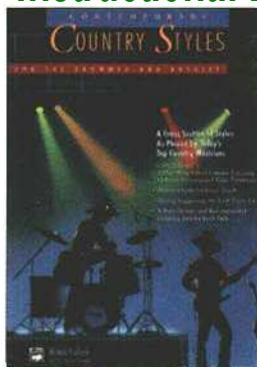
Mechanical Music now offers the *Slug* bass drum beater. It features a dual-sided impact head with an internal mechanism that continually aligns the beater head for maximum impact during play. The beater fits all standard pedals, and a titanium-shaft version is available. **Mechanical Music Corp., 3319 North Ridge Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60004, tel: (708) 398-5444, fax: (708) 398-5441.**

## HQ Percussion Products RealFeel Timetable Practice Pad



The RealFeel *Timetable* Practice Pad from HQ Percussion products features both gum rubber and neoprene playing surfaces and can be played on a flat surface, mounted on a cymbal stand, or held comfortably between the legs. The device includes two stick holders (one on top for use during play, the other during transport), a carrying handle, and space to mount a metronome with *Velcro*. **HQ Percussion Products, P.O. Box 430065, St. Louis, MO 63143, (800) 467-3335.**

## Country Drum/Bass Instructional Book



Alfred Publishing has recently released *Contemporary Country Styles For The Drummer And Bassist* instructional book. Written by Nashville drummer Brian Fullen (with bassist Roy Vogt), the book's play-along format covers sixteen essential country styles, and includes written charts, background information, breakdowns of key elements, and a selected discography. It retails at \$22.95 (book and CD) or \$19.95 (book and cassette). **Alfred Publications, P.O. Box 10003, Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003.**

## Sabian Chinese And Mini Chinese Pro Cymbals



New to Sabian's *Pro* series are *Chinese* and *Mini Chinese* cymbals. Both are said to produce sounds that are "bright, raw, and edgy." The 14" *Mini* is "comparatively dry and biting," while the 18" model gives a "more Oriental sound, with a high, cutting pitch." **Sabian Ltd., Meductic, NB, Canada EOH 1LO, tel: (506) 272-2019, fax: (506) 272-2081.**

## Goetz Snare Drum



The Goetz custom snare drum is made with unique drumshells fashioned of solid-wood circles in a "radial stack" design. Each drum features a hand-rubbed finish; the buyer's choice of bearing edge, thickness, and height; nickel-plated brass tube lugs; chrome die-cast hoops; heavy-duty throwoff and butt plate; and Rhythm Tech *Index Tension* lugs standard. Shells may be chosen from among thirty-four types of tropical hardwoods. Price depends on size and wood type; a 6x14 bubinga drum is priced at \$995. The drums are available through **Midwest Custom Drum, Rt. 1, Box 53, Arlington, IL 61312, (815) 643-2514.**

## Remo Fiberskyn 3 Drumheads

Remo's new *Fiberskyn 3* drumheads are said to "replicate the warmth, timbre, and articulation of traditional calfskin heads" while retaining the durability and performance aspects of modern plastic heads. The heads are available for drumsets, concert percussion, congas, bongos, djembes, and most Remo world percussion instruments. By varying the thickness of the material used, Remo can produce *Fiberskyn 3* heads that can emulate the pitch and timbre of mule skin, goat skin, fish skin, and other membranes used in ethnic instruments—along with the historic sound of calf skin on drumsets. **Remo, Inc., 12804 Raymer St., North Hollywood, CA 91605, tel: (818) 983-2600, fax: (818) 764-1433.**

## S&S Sidewinder Electronic Hi-Hat And Spitfire DX Drum Trigger Module



S&S Industries' new *Sidewinder* electronic hi-hat features a legless design for compact performance—along with a stabilizing footplate and *Velcro* to hold it onto any carpet. The unit's heavy-duty sensor switch provides "even response and maximum reliability," and the pedal can be adjusted for spring tension and hi-hat foot travel. The *Sidewinder* works with the Alesis D4, Yamaha TMX, and S&S *Spitfire DX* sound modules.



Four individual inputs allow for complete pan and level control over each sample. The unit carries a full two-year warranty, and at present is available only in a package with S&S *Squadron* series drumkits. **S&S Industries, 23 Great Oaks Blvd., Suite A, San Jose, CA 95119, tel: (408) 629-6434, fax: (408) 629-7364.**

## Noble & Cooley Classic 8 Snare And Discreet Bass Drum Leg System

Noble & Cooley now offers a solid-shell snare drum called the *Classic 8*. The drum is a 4 1/2x14 "power piccolo" that features eight dual-posted, solid brass lugs, as well as a solid brass strainer and butt end. The drum's edges have been reshaped to 33° and the snare beds have a new radius design in order to achieve a "fatter, more powerful sound."

Noble & Cooley has also retooled their entire *Classic* snare drum line in terms of how the shells are turned. Where the shells had previously been sanded to dimension, they are now turned on a lathe to ensure "perfect concentricity and trueness"—as well as consistency between drums.

Noble & Cooley has also improved its paint system. Ultraviolet cure paints now eliminate the need for dangerous chemical catalysts. There's been a total elimination of thinners, which stabilizes the system so that there is no shrinkage, ensuring long-lasting color.

Finally, the company has introduced their new *Discreet* bass drum leg system, which mounts to existing lugs, eliminating the need for drilling and adding heavy traditional legs to the shell. Removing this weight and vibrational damping is said to improve shell resonance. **Noble & Cooley, P.O. Box 131, Water Street, Granville, MA 01034, tel: (413) 357-6321, fax: (413) 357-6314.**

## Bison Titanium Bass Drum Beater

Bison's Titanium Bass Drum Beater is claimed to "improve bass drum playing ability" due to the springing quality with which the specially processed metal shaft reacts to impact on the bass drum. The beater's different weight and inertia factor is said to result in "freeing up of motion with enlivening action" while alleviating impact stress—both on the foot and on pedal parts. The beater features interchangeable heads and retails at \$49.95. **Bison Drum Company, 109 N. Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090, (708) 459-1255.**

## New Gibraltar Drum Rack And Hardware

Gibraltar's new *GPR-525* drum rack represents a "total revision" of the company's previous *Power Rack* design. It features a T-leg design in place of the previous A-frame style, offers four multi clamps, memory locks, and T-clamps, and is of all-metal construction. It retails at \$299.50.



The company's new *JZ* series hardware includes hi-hat, cymbal, snare, and boom stands made with low-mass, lightweight, all-steel construction. The stands feature super lock adjustment mechanisms and variable

spread, single-braced legs for reduced weight. They retail between \$89.95 and \$109.50.

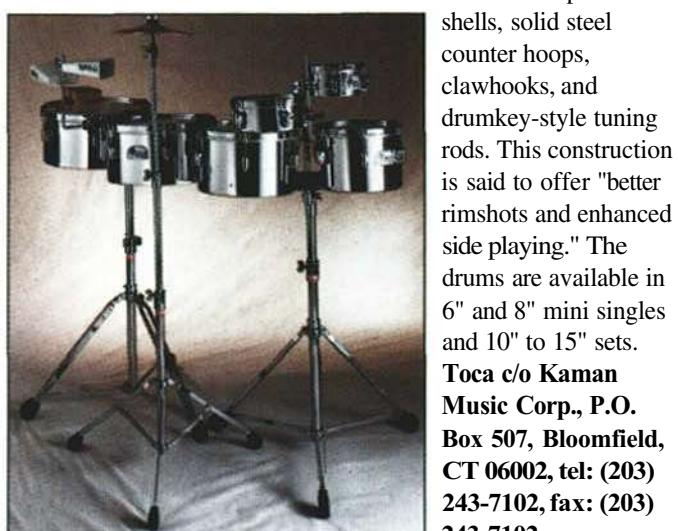
Also new in hardware are Gibraltar's *Advanced Tripod System* (*A.T.S.*) stands. The line includes a hi-hat (with a rotatable leg base and the ability to lean toward the player), a drum throne, and an L-rod-style double-tom stand with a multi-clamp receptacle for a cymbal boom. **Gibraltar Hardware c/o Kaman Music Corp., P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002, tel: (203) 243-7102, fax: (203) 243-7102.**

## Ring Arrestor

The *Ring Arrestor* is a flexible leather drum muffler that attaches easily to any drum to eliminate unwanted ring without the loss of the natural resonance and tone. Due to the manner by which the *Ring Arrestor* attaches, it allows the head to "breathe" with absolutely no choking. Said to be simple to use, adjustable, and durable, the device has a retail list price of \$5.95. For more information contact David Robinson at **Beat Of A Different Drummer, 980 Montgomery Road #102, Altamonte Springs, FL 32714, (407) 774-4447.**

## Toca Classic Timbale

Toca *Classic* timbales feature brass and chromed 7"-deep steel



shells, solid steel counter hoops, clawhooks, and drumkey-style tuning rods. This construction is said to offer "better rimshots and enhanced side playing." The drums are available in 6" and 8" mini singles and 10" to 15" sets.

**Toca c/o Kaman Music Corp., P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002, tel: (203) 243-7102, fax: (203) 243-7102.**



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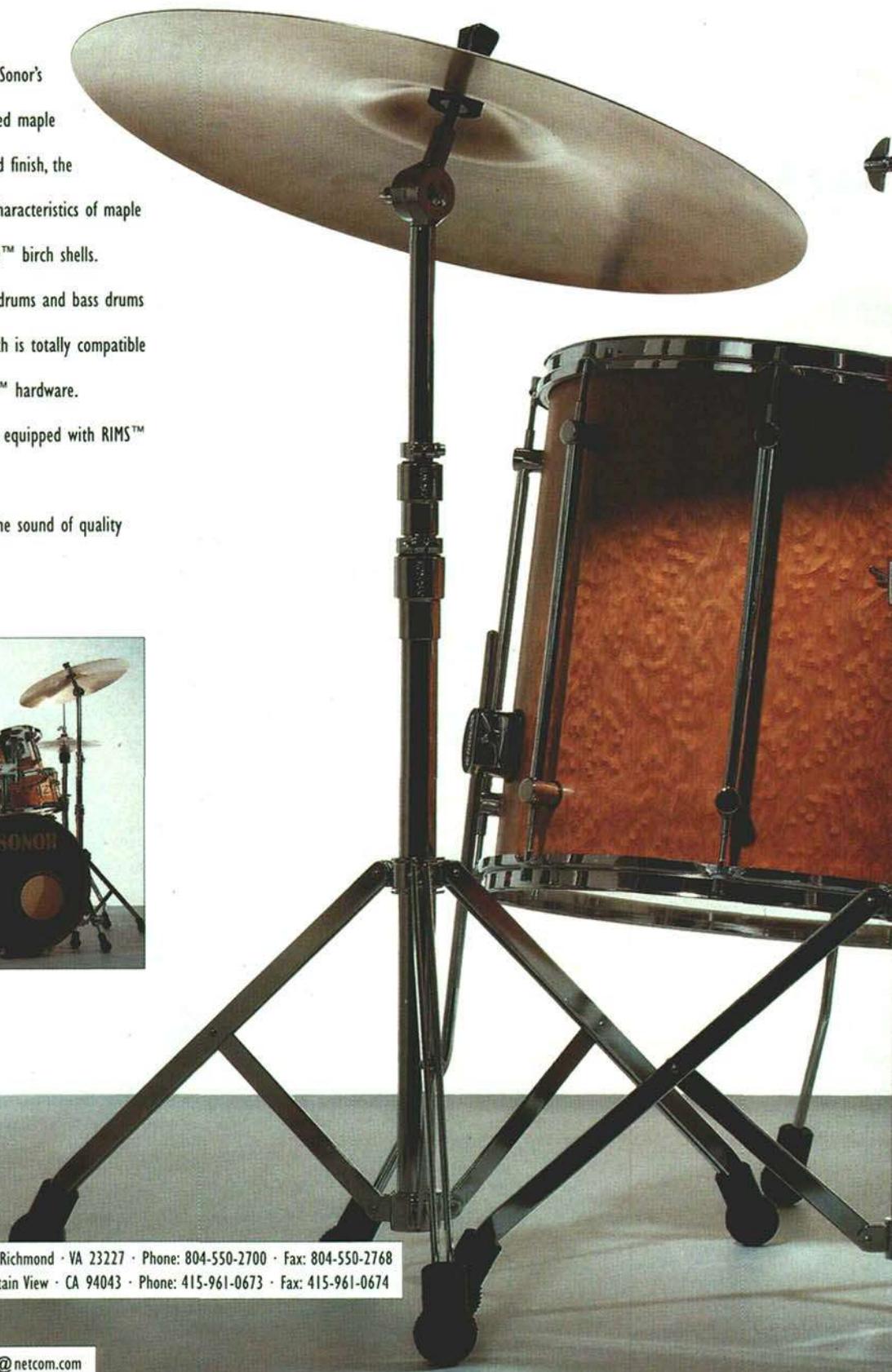
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# Meinl Livesound Floatune Congas

by Heinz Kronberger

Meinl's *Floatune* congas represent a sub-series within their *Livesound* percussion line. Compared to other congas, the *Floatune* models feature differently shaped shells, different sizes, different heads, and an especially different tuning system. For this review I tested a complete set of four instruments: a 10" nino, an 11" quinto, a 12" conga, and a 13" tumba—all of which featured fiberglass shells.

## Sound

The most important influence on the sound of these drums was their shape, which forms and defines the tone. The belly (the point at which the diameter is greatest) is much higher on these drums than on other, similar instruments. Also, the opening at the bottom of the shell is a bit larger than on most drums. The result of this design is that the bass tones and lower middle tones are

enhanced within the total projection of the drum, while the medium frequencies are somewhat diminished. Open tones sound very warm, slaps sound quick and dry, and the bass response is very powerful and rich. And due to the hard fiberglass shell (which has the drum's color baked in as part of the shell's construction) the higher tones really sing. Quite honestly, there isn't much happening between the middle and the high frequencies, so each of the drums really offers more of a bass character.

The sustain of the sound was short, owing to the type of heads: very thick and soft cow or buffalo hide. These heads offered a pleasant feeling to the hands when played on, but eliminated a lot of higher frequencies.

## Hardware

Meinl didn't skimp on the hardware design for these congas. All the metal parts seemed a cut above the standard, with 9mm tuning locks and an 18mm clamping ring. The strength of the





The floatune metal "strap" system viewed from below

clamping ring is important, because the *Floatune* design connects it with the reinforced bottom of the drum by means of metal "straps" running along the shell. These straps are isolated from the shell by rubber seals, so there is actually no tuning hardware

in contact with the shells at all (hence the "Float-tune" concept and name). Not only does this design have an obvious acoustic advantage, it also gave the drums a nice look as well. The chromed vertical straps give a certain elegance to the instruments that separates them from the look of other congas.

### Conclusions And Prices

The manufacturing quality of Meinl's *Livesound* congas seems far above the average. They're strong, they're designed for the touring musician, and they provide a good feeling when played. Their sound is unique, with a lot of power (especially in the lower middle and bass ranges). If you like this sound in a conga drum, Meinl's *Livesound Floatune* congas may be your perfect partners for stage and studio.

Suggested retail prices for the congas reviewed here are: 10" nino—\$430, 11" quinto—\$455, 12" conga—\$520, and 13" tumba—\$565. In the U.S., Meinl percussion products are distributed by Hoshino, USA, Inc. (P.O. Box 886 Bensalem, PA 19020) and Chesbro (P.O. Box 2009, Idaho Falls, ID 83401). You can also contact the company's U.S. representative at Meinl Musikinstrumente, P.O. Box 800711, Santa Clarita, CA 91380, (805)259-6155.

*Heinz Kronberger is a professional drummer in Germany. He is also drum and percussion editor for Fachblatt, Germany's premier music magazine.*

## Meinl Lightning Crashes

by Heinz Kronberger

### A new design gives these cymbals both a new look and new performance.

If you've seen Meinl's recent ads for their new *Lightning* series of crash cymbals, you'll know that they're promoting these cymbals as "revolutionary...the alternative you've waited a long time for." I was present in Germany recently when British session and touring drummer Russell Gilbrook gave the inaugural presentation of the new line, and I was impressed then. After testing them myself, I'm even more impressed.

For this review I received a complete set of the models currently available: 14", 15", 16", and 18" medium crashes and 16" and 18" heavy crashes. The cymbals are produced from the same alloy used to make Meinl's *Raker* series: high-quality Weiland bronze. The alloy is cast and rolled by a German metal-fabricating company and then shaped by Meinl into various cymbal models (a process that, they feel, promotes durability and consistency



in sound).

The obvious difference between *Lightning* crashes and other models is their specially designed "waved" edge (similar to the edge of Meinl's *Sound Wave* hi-hats). This edge has a surprising influence on the performance of the cymbal, promoting explosive sound with an extraordinarily short decay.

To graphically illustrate the difference between the design theory between *Lightning* crashes and other, more "traditional" crash cymbals, imagine the "sound curve" of a cymbal plotted on paper according to its frequency characteristics. The curve of a classic crash cymbal shows a quick increase and a relatively long, gradual, and even decay. The *Lightning* crash's curve is much steeper at the beginning, indicating a faster development of the sound. The peak level is maintained only briefly, then the curve shows an extremely quick drop-off (illustrating the quick decay).

Well, the theory sounds like something many drummers have dreamed of for years. But has the dream become reality? What about the *Lightning* crashes' real performance in everyday use?

When I first compared the four medium-weight *Lightnings* to comparable "traditional" crashes, the difference could be heard immediately. The *Lightning* crashes reacted instantly, and did, indeed, have a noticeably shorter decay. The overall sound of the 16" and 18" sizes was better than that of the 14" and 15" models.

The smaller cymbals produced a sound quality in between that of a splash and a thin crash and seemed to be missing a bit of body and warmth in their basic tone. The larger models, on the other hand, complement each other with a warm and full sound.

Even a bit better were the two heavy *Lightning* crashes. To me, their sound pattern represented the ideal crash cymbal. They really did strike like lightning and then disappeared almost as quickly. Their basic tone was deep and full—a really *complete* sound.

Meinl's *Lightning* crashes have only just been introduced to the market, but they've actually been under development for several years. The result of that development is something genuinely new that combines and enhances all the qualities of an outstanding crash cymbal. Their tone is full and warm (primarily in the larger sizes), they develop a full sound range, and they have an extremely short decay. They're manufactured beautifully and have a unique "look" (with a practical reason behind it). And the nice thing is that the new line's innovations don't come with a higher price tag. Prices for the *Lightning* crashes are as follows: 14"—\$107.15—\$135, 16"—\$155, and 18"—\$193.

My only suggestion would be for Meinl to also offer 17", 19", and 20" sizes soon; I'm sure many drummers would appreciate them. For more information, contact Meinl Musikanstrumente, P.O. Box 800711, Santa Clarita, CA 91380, (805) 259-6155.

## DrumPhones

by Rick Van Horn

Here's a nifty new practice accessory that might very well help you improve your playing and preserve your hearing at the same time. Gordy Knudtsen (drummer for the Steve Miller Band and director of the percussion program at Music Tech in Minneapolis) wanted to practice on his drums while listening to music at the same time—and not go deaf doing it. He found a set of highly effective hearing protection headphones—similar to those you see airport mechanics wearing—and had them fitted with Walkman-style earphones. Thus, *DrumPhones* were born.

I like the fact that these headphones were designed from the perspective of hearing protection *first*, and audio transmission *second*. Most of the high-quality, closed-ear stereo headphones I've ever tried to practice with were incapable of really blocking out the live drum sound effectively. (They weren't designed for that purpose, after all.) As a result, I had to turn the music volume up pretty high in order to hear the music over the drums. This defeated the entire purpose of reducing the overall volume (drums and music) coming into my ears.

*DrumPhones*, on the other hand, effectively reduce the overall

level of outside sound by approximately 20 db—a significant amount. They also dramatically reduce high-mid to high frequencies (meaning snare and cymbals) while seeming to "enhance" low-end (toms and bass drum). For practice purposes this is excellent, since a constant barrage of cymbals and high-end snare crack can cause unprotected ears to shut down very quickly—thus making you want to turn the music up. I was able to keep the volume at a moderate, very comfortable level and still feel like I was "in" the music while drumming. (The hearing-protection function of the phones was also great for just practicing on the drums without any music.)



*DrumPhones* are shipped with a 10' stereo extension cord, a 1/4" adapter, and a 1/8" mono adapter. The mono adapter lets you plug the *DrumPhones* into most electronic metronomes to get a "click track" that can be heard in both ears. I tried this with a Seiko unit and could hear the click quite clearly over the drums.

Some people might feel that the *DrumPhones* fit unusually tightly on their head (as compared to normal stereo earphones). This is due to the stiff plastic headband, and it's actually an advantage. If the earphones weren't held tightly against the side of the head, they wouldn't be as effective in reducing incoming sound. Admittedly this firm fit might take a little getting used to, but it's what makes the headphones work so well. (After a few minutes of wearing the *DrumPhones* I found that I didn't even notice them.)

Okay, hearing protection and wearing comfort are good. What about sound quality? Well, I'll be the first one to say that these

are *not* audiophile headphones. They are really just your garden-variety *Walkman-style* open earphones built into the hearing-protection ear coverings. As a result, you can expect an acceptable—if not remarkable—level of sound quality. They will distort at extremely high volume levels—but the whole idea is that you shouldn't have to *run* them at those levels. I found their fidelity more than sufficient for practice purposes. And it is the inexpensive nature of the earphones that helps keep the cost of *DrumPhones* at a refreshingly realistic figure.

And what is that figure? It's \$59.95, plus \$5 for shipping costs. As far as I'm concerned, \$65 for the ability to play comfortably with my favorite music and keep what's left of my hearing is a bargain! For more information on *DrumPhones* contact GK Music, Inc., P.O. Box 7540, Minneapolis, MN 55407, (800) 747-5545.

## Pro-1 Canister Drum Throne

by Rick Van Horn

This is my entire review in a nutshell: "The *Pro-1 Canister Drum Throne* from JP-2 Creations offers drummers a comfortable seat that doubles as a durable case for small items." From there on it's all details.

The throne is created from a real six-ply birch 14" drumshell by Keller. The shell portion is 18" tall and is topped by a 3"-thick seat, for an overall standard height of 21". (Custom heights are available.) The outside of the shell is covered in gray *Ozite* carpet covering, much like that used on any number of brands of speaker cabinets.

The seat/lid of the case is padded with 2" of heavy-duty foam; it's quite firm and comfortable and offers plenty of support, and is held securely to the shell by three latches. A carrying handle identical to that used on many amplifiers is attached to the side of the shell. Top-quality screws, fasteners, metal glides, and rubber feet are used to complete the construction. (All of those items, by the way, are standard hardware that can be replaced at any store; there's nothing that's a special size that can only be obtained by special order from the manufacturer.)

The interior storage space has a maximum height of 17 1/4" and isn't huge, so you're not going to carry any of today's sizable hardware inside it. (The case weighs 13 lbs. when empty, so you wouldn't want to overload it with heavy gear anyway.) But it would be a nifty place in which to carry your stick bag (or extra sticks), cables, percussion "toys," or even a microphone. Or you could leave it empty and use it to hide your jacket, wallet, and



keys in while on the gig.

The gray *Ozite* covering gives the throne a clean, unobtrusive—and quite neutral—look that would go with any drum finish. I can also vouch for the durability of the material; I've been in bands that used many pieces of equipment covered in the same stuff.

A seat/case isn't right for everybody, of course. But if your playing situation could benefit from a sturdy throne that doubles as a useful storage space, you should check out the *Pro-1*. It carries a list price of \$250, and can be ordered from JP-2 Creations, 3356 Merrell Rd., Dallas, TX 75229, (214) 358-4615.



# Dauz Kit Trigger Pad Set

by Rich Watson

**This unassuming pad kit might well serve all your needs for years to come.**

Henry Ford's Model T was widely joked to be available in "any color you want, as long as it's black." That phrase symbolized the no-frills, populist approach to manufacturing and marketing that forever revolutionized business in America and, indeed, the world. Since 1984 trigger pad pioneer Dan Dauz has offered products that, while notably unglamorous, set performance and affordability standards for the industry. His refined pad design and new rack and unique mounting system, collectively named simply *The Dauz Kit* (how's that for anti-hype!), carry forward the same utilitarian aesthetic—as well as functionality, quality, and value that are just plain beautiful.

## Basics

The *Dauz Kit* consists of three *DZ-6* 6" pads, three *DZ-8* 8" pads, one *DZ-11* 11" pad, one *DZ-6K* 6" pad with kick pad holder, one *DZ-RAK* rack system, eight 15' 1/4"-to-1/4" cords, a nifty ratchet drum key, a hex T-wrench (for rack clamps), a pair of Dauz drumsticks, and a Dauz "Play with yourself quietly!" T-shirt.

The pads feature a gum-rubber playing surface that is bonded onto a steel insert. Piezo transducers—one on the *DZ-6*, three on the *DZ-8*, and four on the *DZ-11*—are silicone-glued to this insert. The *DZ-6K* kick pad's single piezo is set back from the insert with a small L-shaped mount to protect it from the intense, direct impact of the bass drum beater, and the pad is insulated with foam to further reduce its acoustic resonance. The *DZ-8* and *DZ-11* have a styrene-based neoprene rim and middle section. The plastic lower bodies on all the pads are fitted with a standard 1/4" output jack and a primary mounting clamp comprised of a thick rubber washer and opposing steel washer with a plastic cap. Except for the charcoal gray playing surface and chromed key rods that tighten the clamp mechanism, all pad parts are (what else?) basic black.

## Sensitivity

All the *DZ* pads produce strong, clean signals. Their dynamic range, while smooth, is not especially broad, but I was able to compensate by "sagging" the middle of the dynamic curve on my *drumKAT*. Acoustic drums are more sensitive in the center than at the edges, and some triggers mimic this effect. To me, this mod-



Designer Dan Dauz on his namesake pad set

est gain in "authenticity" seems misguided, since most trigger interfaces can be programmed to produce different sounds by playing harder or lighter, but not by playing on different spots on a single head. Dauz pads, whether the single-piezo *DZ-6* or the multi-piezo *DZ-8* and *DZ-11*, are equally sensitive across the entire playing surface.

The sensitivity of the pads was so good that I decided to see if they could handle a really soft buzz roll. To attempt this, I had to override my *drumKAT*'s auto-train feature and manually reduce its input threshold. This done, the pads tracked the roll admirably. But, as my *drumKAT* could have told me, an unfortunate side-effect of this tweaking was that exceptionally vigorous playing on the 11" pad caused it to double trigger. This, I suspect, resulted not from any internal impact vibration, but from the slight wobble of the pad on the mount. (More on this later.)

I must emphasize that I know of no piezo trigger that can accu-

rately track a *pianissimo buzz* roll without being subject to interaction problems when really pounded. The *DZ* pads came impressively close, suggesting that, overall, their sensitivity is among the best of piezo-driven pads on the market.

### Size Matters

The *Dauz Kit's* recommended layout is as follows: 6" pads for cymbals, hi-hat, and kick, 8" pads for toms, and the 11" pad for snare. The *DZ-6s* will likely require more careful aim from players used to acoustic cymbals, but the *DZ-6K* is just large enough to accommodate a double kick pedal. The *DZ-8* provides a good-sized tom target without being too large to position around acoustic drums. The 11" snare pad—quite large by trigger pad standards—provides plenty of comfortable playing area.

### Feel

This latest generation of *Dauz* pads features a softer-gum rubber playing surface than on previous models. The softer rubber yields slightly more to stick impact, although rebound is still livelier than on pads constructed of standard plastic drumheads over foam rubber. While this fast rebound doesn't permit the sensation of "laying into" a loosely tuned drumhead, it is ideal for more subtle stick response and bounce strokes.

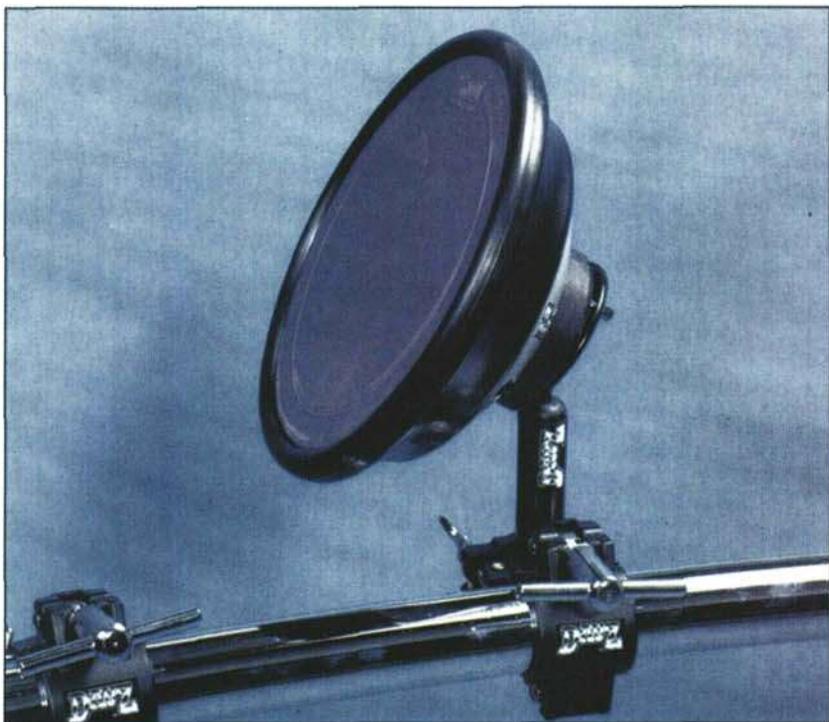
The hard rubber rim on the 8" and 11" models does not produce a separate trigger signal. (*Dauz* makes a 10" two-zone pad, but it is not included in the *Dauz Kit*.) What it does provide is a tactile facsimile of the steel rim of an acoustic drum by being higher and harder than the "head" surface. It also provides another, more subtle aural facsimile, by producing a higher-pitched and slightly louder sound.

### Shhhhhh!

Speaking of sound, *Dauz*'s "Play With Yourself Quietly!" slogan holds obvious significance for drummers who dwell in apartments or co-habitate with beings who (if you can believe it!) think drums are "noisy" and can't understand the need to practice until 3:00 A.M. The acoustic sound that a trigger pad makes is also an issue when the pads are used along with miked acoustic drums in the studio and can bleed onto acoustic tracks. In such cases, quieter is definitely better. (I've never met an engineer or producer who said, "Can you give me some more of that *tack, tack, tack* sound?") Among individual trigger pads (vs. integrated pad/interface units), *Dauz* pads are the quietest I've played.

### Pad Mounting Hardware And Rack

New to *Dauz* is its *DZ-RAK* chromed steel rack and pad mounting hardware. The rack is made of 1 1/2" chrome steel tubing with standard plastic coupling T-rings that are tightened by hex nuts and large T-bolts. Four memory-lock rings help prevent slippage, and large rubber feet improve stability.



Pad angle adjustment is largely facilitated by a 6"-long "stem" with a ball that fits between the pad's indented rubber washer and steel washer with a complementary-sized hole. The resulting ball-and-socket assembly is mounted directly on the rack tubing with a plastic clamp ring, or onto a 7/8"-diameter, 15"-long pad extender arm with a geared angle adjustment. The five arms supplied with the test unit were straight, but new models are curved for greater positioning flexibility. This combination—plastic clamps that can rotate on the rack tubing or geared pad arms, and ball-and-socket pad holders each of which can rotate independently—provides nearly unlimited pad positioning options.

The rack itself is very sturdy and stable. As mentioned earlier, playing hard near the edge of the 11" pad caused it to shimmy a bit, which is probably inevitable with a center-shock-mounted pad. I actually find that this slight movement enhances the pad's authentic drum-like feel: "real" snare drums give a bit when you belt them; electronic ones should too.

### Kick Pad Holder

*Dauz*'s new kick pad holder bucks the current trend of low-profile miniature kick triggers that utilize a reversed-beater pedal. Instead, the *DZ-6K* employs a 6" *Dauz* trigger pad in the acoustic-drum-standard vertical position. Unlike the *DZ-8* and *DZ-11* (with their "socketed" rubber/steel washer pair), the *DZ-6K* possesses two flat rubber washers that clamp upon a flat, 3/4"-wide iron "rail." This rail is welded to the top and bottom of a vertical arch made of 7/8" square hollow steel stock. The bottom of this arch is, in turn, hinged to a second arch that forms the horizontal base of the holder when in use, or folds flat and parallel to the other for storage. A diagonal brace attaches with wing nuts to one side of both arches to fix the *DZ-6K* in the open, playing position. When

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collapsed the unit measures a conveniently packable 18 1/4" x 7" x 3". Industrial Velcro on the bottom of the entire base holds the DZ-6K very securely in place on a carpet or rug. However, it has no spurs or rubber on the base and will positively skate across a hard, bare floor. A length of steel rod welded to the front of the toe-clamp flange provides a more secure pedal grip.

When the pad is in or near the highest position on the rail (which matched my pedal's beater length), the 1/4" plug doesn't fit under the arch. To avoid this problem, I removed the pad and replaced it, rotated by 180°, so the plug and cable would project downward at a "five o'clock" position.

I was immediately impressed by the ingenious design of the DZ-6K—and then disappointed by a number of cosmetic flaws that gave it a rather home-made look. Because it stood out next to the clean (if inelegant) appearance of the other components, and because it had arrived several days after the rest of the kit, I suspected that the test unit was actually a hot-off-the-bench prototype. Dan Dauz later confirmed this, assuring me that refinements were already in progress, and that the DZ-6K available to the public would receive the same attention to detail as his other products.

### Quality/Durability

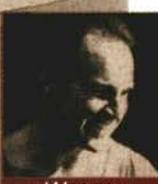
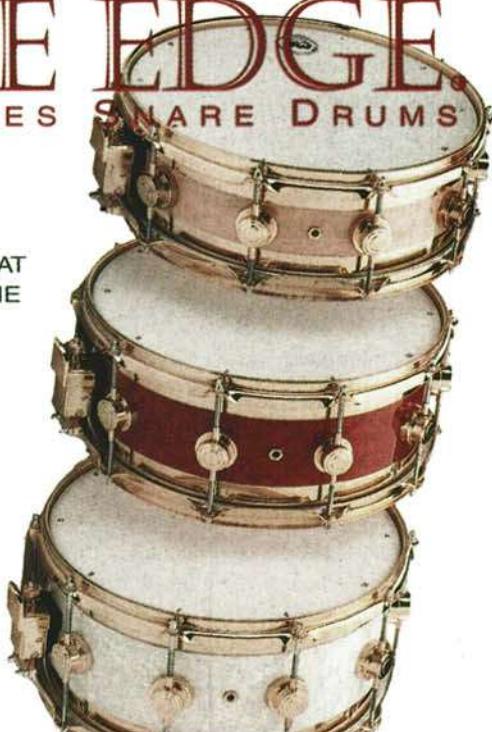
Reliability, as you've read in other articles about electronic percussion, is even more critical to electronic drums than to acoustic ones, because no broken drumhead—or most any other malfunc-

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tioning acoustic drum part—is as "dead" as a dead trigger pad. Because of the simplicity of their design, the inherent strength and/or resiliency of their composite materials, and the apparent quality of their workmanship, Dauz pads and stands appear to be very roadworthy.

Moreover, I can speak with the authority of experience about Dauz's reliability: I have punished my own Dauz pads for more than six years, and only had to repair one because I'd tried to mount it to a rack with the wrong length key rod. Even my initial concerns about the workmanship of the *DZ-6K* were tempered by this fine record.

### Conclusions

What Dauz pads lack in flash, they make up for in features that really matter. Their natural feel and quiet acoustic response make them an ideal "practice pad" set. Over the years their excellent sensitivity, consistent triggering characteristics, and rugged reliability have earned them the reputation as a workhorse of the trigger pad world—and have consequently made them the choice of many professional drummers. The *Dauz Kit*'s new mounting system offers exceptional positioning flexibility, whether as an independent electronic kit or integrated into an acoustic drumset. Its reasonable price makes it nearly irresistible. The kit lists for \$1,495. For more information contact Dauz at 338 West 130th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90061, (310) 366-7301.



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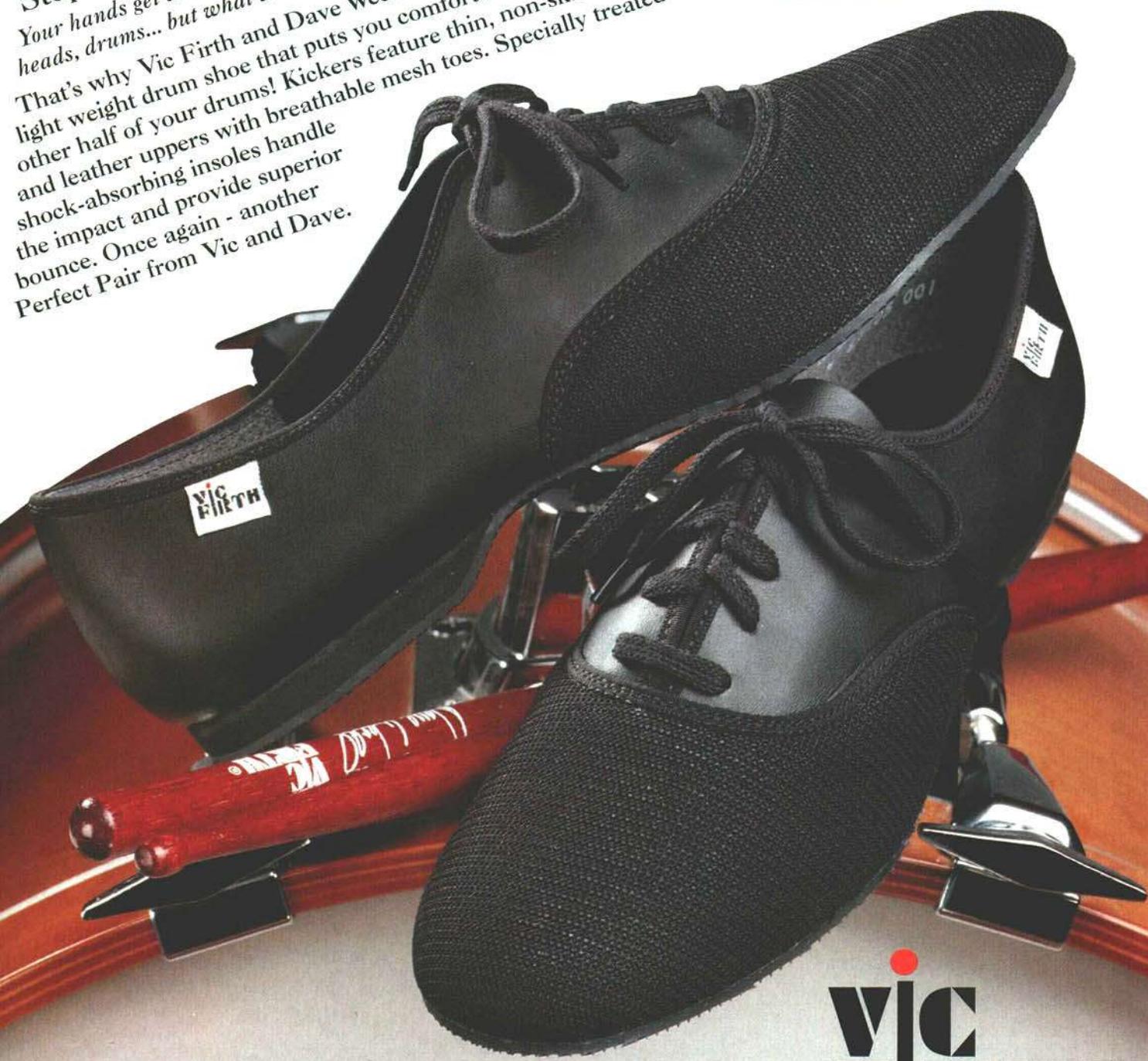
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At a recent Village Vanguard performance with the Wynton Marsalis septet, master soup-stirer Herlin Riley began the night with a tasty intro of olfactory delight (on an easy-going Ellington number). After maestro Marsalis's call of "you got it Homes," Herlin played a simple three-note baiao on the bass drum (the shrimps and sausage, if you will), to which he added a funky cowbell rhythm (cayenne, tabasco). Next, rim clicks were put over top for taste (garlic, oregano) and a mild cymbal bell for aroma (red bell peppers). After a brief Marsalis trumpet melody (the call to the supper table) Herlin poured the rhythm into the snare drum, leading the whole band to join in the feast.

With the albums *Majesty Of The Blues*, *Soul Gestures In Southern Blue*, and *Citi*

*Movement* Wynton Marsalis deeply explored the boisterous, swinging world of New Orleans jazz. In Herlin Riley he found not only a drummer drenched in the musical history

*Gershwin For Lovers* revealed Herlin's straight-ahead side, rousing time feel, and rough-edged brush work reminiscent of Elvin Jones. Herlin's earlier work with influential composer and pianist Ahmad

Jamal showed his talent for listening to be as big as his evocative swing groove.

A true southern gentlemen, Herlin Riley's family life and love of music keep him centered, which is important considering his hectic recording and touring schedule. Herlin's upcoming releases include *Peanuts* with Marsalis as well as *Live At The Village Vanguard*, which features recordings by both Marsalis and Junko Onishi.

With the Marsalis group about to take a long break from performing, Herlin has been pegged for a few different recording sessions. But he hopes to use this downtime to focus on a solo release he's had on the back burner, a pro-

ject that will undoubtedly reveal a smorgasboard of musical treats. As busy as he is, Herlin wants to make time for his kids, and hopefully march in some New Orleans street parades. And hey, don't forget the food.

# Herlin Riley

## WYNTON'S SECRET INGREDIENT

By Ken Micallef

Photos by Ebet Roberts

of New Orleans, but one who could swing hard in any idiom, with any musician. Playing in a trio with Japanese pianist Junko Onishi and bassist Reginald Veal, Herlin worked over standards and Onishi's elaborate originals. Marcus Roberts' *Deep In The Shed* and



**KM:** You always look very relaxed, whether on stage or off. Does that come from growing up in New Orleans?

**HR:** Some of it has to do with family life, but a lot of it has to do with growing up in New Orleans, where I got a chance to work with and hear a lot of different kinds of music. And to me, life has so much variety; you shouldn't pigeonhole yourself.

**KM:** So you've played many kinds of music besides jazz.

**HR:** I have, but as far as drumming goes, the most difficult music in the world to play is jazz. You have to swing on every beat. The motion of swing is always forward as opposed to

other music such as rock or funk. They have breath in them; they have air around the beats—you don't have to push forward all the time. Reggae and funk are like a pendulum, so you have a pocket, like *ooh ah, ooh ah* [imitates medium-tempo funk beat]. Most grooves have air around them to help them swing. They're pretty much going forward and straight ahead all by themselves, but you have to play each beat with a certain consistency.

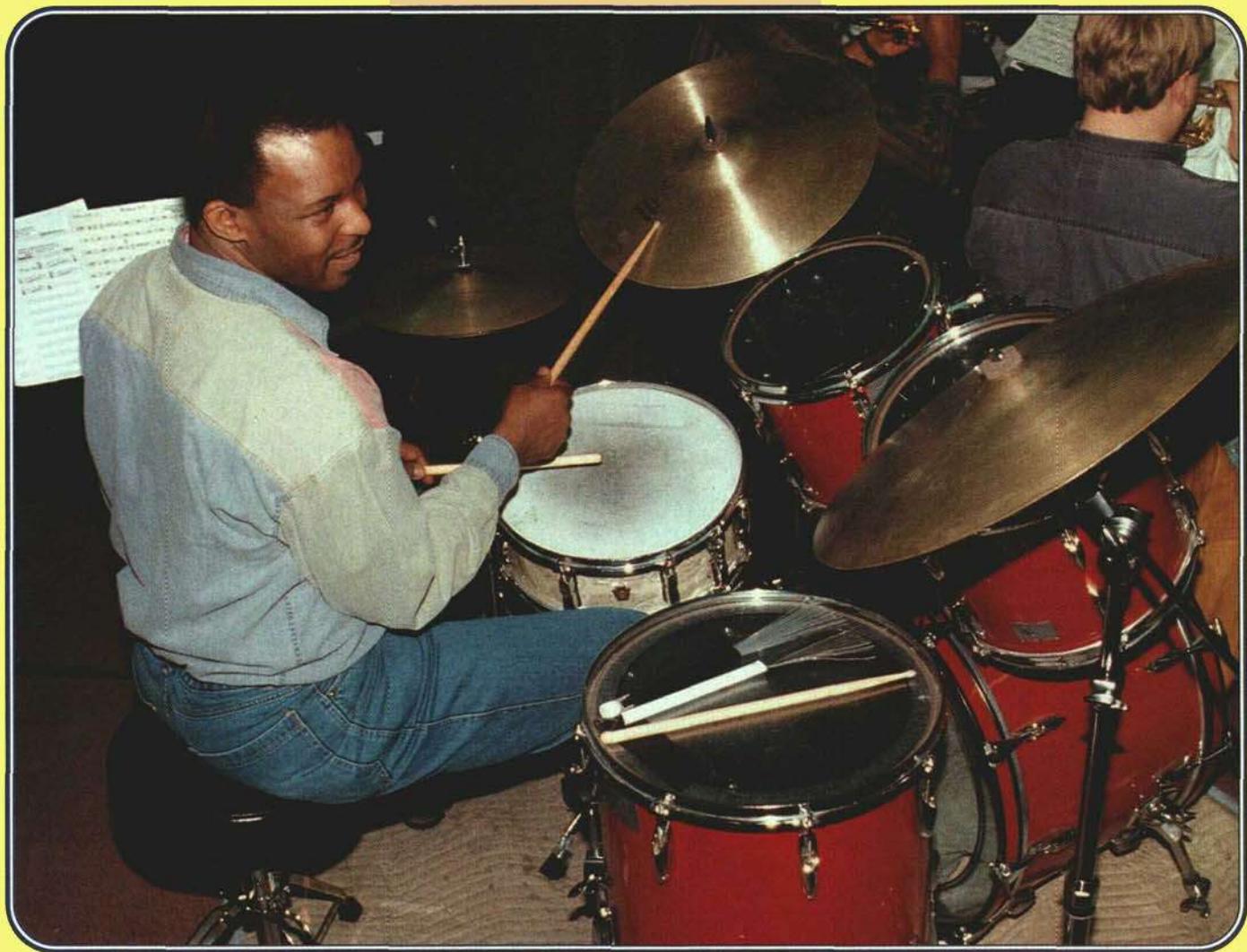
**KM:** If I had heard you for the first time the other night with Junko Onishi, I wouldn't have thought of you as a New Orleans drummer. Is that owing to your flexibility or because people have a misconception of what New

Orleans drumming is all about?

**HR:** Both. I've always been able to play other kinds of music. I did have a life before Wynton! [laughs] The music I've played was different from what I'm playing with him.

We did a recording called *Majesty Of The Blues*. I think that's the one that pigeonholed me as a "New Orleans Master," probably because of the cut "Oh But On The Third Day." I do this New Orleans street parade solo as an introduction.

**KM:** With Junko you played a solo that began like Sonny Murray—kind of abstract—and you played "Elvinish" triplets with the toms and bass drum. It was a freer solo than you



might've played with Wynton. Did that reflect the Japanese folk song nature of the tune?

**HR:** She actually wanted the music to be free at that point. She played a free solo, then bassist Reginald Veal played a free solo, and I did the same thing. It was specifically for that piece of music. And when you play with fewer people, when there are fewer minds coming together on the bandstand, there's more freedom. My role is different working in Wynton's septet, because basically I'm there to support the front line and to support the other soloists. My role as a soloist is a bit stifled, though I do get an opportunity to play and I have the freedom to play what I like. But it's still in a supportive role. In a trio setting there's that time when you're supporting, but there are more times when you're interacting. My voice as a drummer comes forth during those times.

**KM:** Billy Hart has said that too many of the younger jazz drummers are afraid to really kick the bass drum, that they see that as sounding too rock. But you definitely make the bass drum speak. Is that part of the New Orleans tradition?

**HR:** Playing the bass drum is definitely part of New Orleans heritage. Growing up there, I got to feel that and understand that. They have parades and social functions for every occasion, and there's usually a brass band that comes in and plays with musicians who strap on their snare and bass drums. The bass drum is so prevalent in that style. The accent is always on the second four: one-two-three-four, one-two-three-four. That's basically what the New Orleans groove is. Growing up there, I heard that sound all the time.

**KM:** So that "second four" is internalized now?

**HR:** Yes. I don't think about New Orleans or anything else when I play, I'm just playing what I hear. Whatever comes up, that's what comes out. It is internalized because that's been my influence all these years.

**KM:** The old Dixieland drummers,



## Bass And Snare Drum: The Dixieland One-Two Punch

by Herlin Riley

In New Orleans music the role of the snare drum is more than just playing backbeats, though that is part of it. On a technical level the snare drum is also used for drags and press rolls. Inside the press rolls, accents can give you a backbeat or an offbeat. The snare drummer can respond to the soloist or he can just play time.

The bass drum is played on the fourth beat of the second measure, and inside of that there can be polyrhythms and syncopations as well. The bass drum and snare drum have a conversation. That's true whether played by one drummer on a trap set or by several drummers in a marching band.

The bass drum can follow the tuba or play syncopation with the tuba. Inside of the music there is a lot of freedom for individuality. It may sound like it's based off of the marching cadence of a fife & drum band, but it was actually developed from New Orleans parade music. You have the sound of a marching band, but it's funky and loose, not structured or rigid.

The snare and bass drum play an important part in the spiritual and social activities of New Orleans. When a band plays for a funeral, on the way to the cemetery the music is very solemn and slow. The snare drum is played as a tom-tom, with the snares turned off—it's a dirge. Sometimes they'll play hymns, like "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" or "Nearer My God To Thee." It's mournful. But once the mourners leave the gravesite, the music gets upbeat and happy.

Music is also played for social and pleasure clubs, with different groups getting permits to march through the streets. When that happens, people turn their stoves off, turn their televisions off, turn everything off, and the bass drum calls them from blocks away! People fill the streets, and it turns into a moving street party. It's a big Second Line with everybody dancing. I had a broken leg with a cast on once, and I still marched in a six-hour parade. The tradition is alive and well thanks to the drums.

such as Baby Dodds or Sid Catlett, were very funky when they played with Louis Armstrong.

**HR:** The art to that kind of playing is the dialog between the snare drum and bass drum. When that happens it can make for all kinds of funky rhythms. One of the later masters of that was Joseph "Zigaboo" Modeliste of the Meters. His style of playing was so funky, the way he used the bass and snare together. That was the ultimate in funk to me, without always having to play a backbeat.

**KM:** So hearing those separate applications of the snare and bass drum gave you a different view towards the drumset.

**HR:** It's given me my view. I don't know if that's necessarily different. It's made me think about things in a more traditional fashion.

**KM:** In the solo you took with Junko you played things that were traditional but a little avant-garde, such as that conga-sounding move on the tom-tom [as on "Duway Dialogue" from Marsalis's *Citi Movement*], playing on the side of the floor tom, pulling out castanets....

**HR:** The conga move is a vibration thing where you slide your finger across the top of the head. When you

## Herlin's Prime Cuts

**Ahmad Jamal:** *Digital Works* (Atlantic)

**Marcus Roberts:** *Deep In The Shed* (BMG), *Gershwin For Lovers* (Columbia)

**Harry Connick, Jr.:** debut recording (Columbia)

**Wynton Marsalis:** *Majesty Of The Blues*, *CM Movement*, *Tune In Tomorrow*, *Peanuts* (Columbia)

**Junko Onishi:** *Live At The Village Vanguard* (Blue Note)

music, too. You have so many instruments at your disposal as a drummer, from the cymbals to the drums to the rims to the stands...bells...tambourines.... I just try to find out where to insert the sounds musically, where it can bring a certain spice to the music.

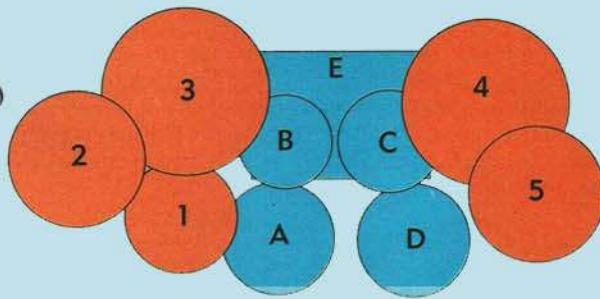
**KM:** You play other percussion instruments, too.

**HR:** Whistles, washboard, wood-blocks.... Drummers like Baby Dodds and especially Sonny Greer, who worked with Duke Ellington's band,

slide your finger across a surface most times there is a friction created there. Your finger vibrates. All you do is put your thumb behind the first finger joint, and slide it across as well. That shortens the vibrations, which gives you a tone as opposed to a series of staccato strikes against the drums. The thumb makes the finger strike the drum that much faster.

As far as getting the conga sound or playing the side of the floor tom, I think a drummer has a few roles, one of which is to keep time. But then you can also be a painter and color the

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- 5.** 16" A Custom crash



used all kinds of instruments and sounds to color and add nuance to the music. That's a part of the art form that needs to be kept alive. I didn't do it initially with that in mind, it was just something I was hearing. I got a chance to use those things playing in different situations. I slowly incorporated them into my own playing, and I use them more frequently now.

**KM:** Do you mount your percussion or put it on a table?

**HR:** I just rig it all together. I use three

different-sized cowbells and some castanets and other percussion that I try to play organically. I try to let the music dictate what to play.

**KM:** And the washboard?

**HR:** It's just a plain old washboard you buy at Woolworths. I play it with the loop-end of a triangle beater. I also use a Brazilian three-toned whistle.

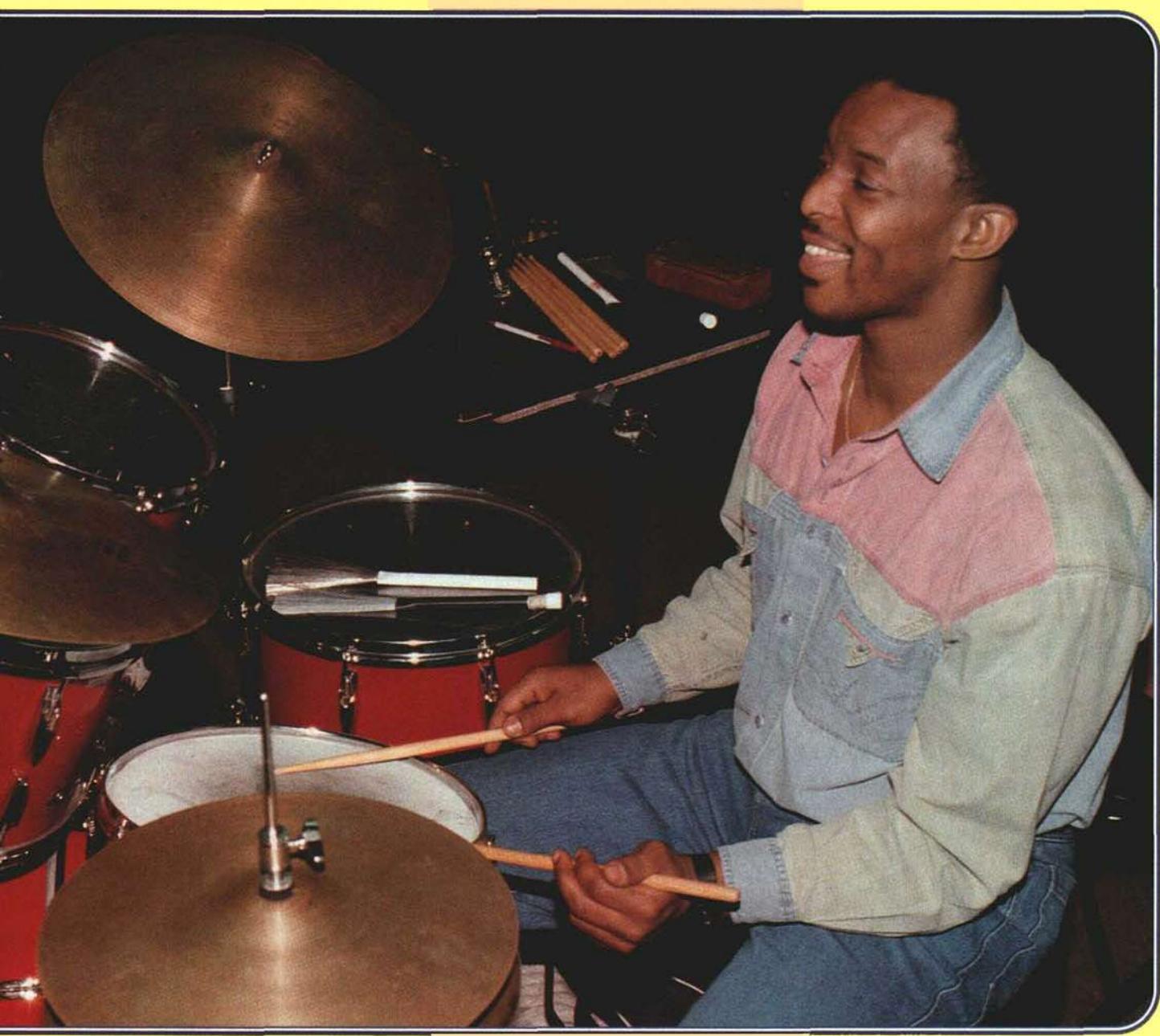
**KM:** With Wynton Marsalis you'll carry an entire song on a tambourine.

**HR:** Playing the tambourine came out of playing in the church. My mother

played piano and my grandfather played the drums. When I couldn't play the drums I'd just grab the tambourine. I never studied any tambourine technique—I never studied the drums. Over the years I developed the strength to play tambourine for long periods of time. I like doing that; it's just another way of playing the groove.

**KM:** So there's more to playing the tambourine than people realize.

**HR:** There really is. I'm playing a pretty big tambourine too, 10" or 12".



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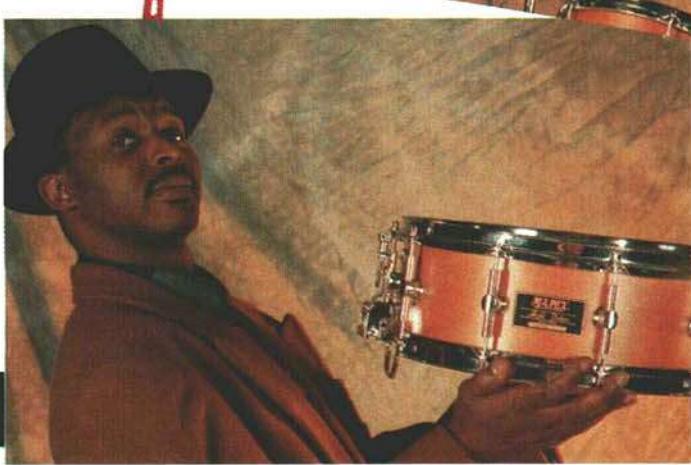
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**KM:** You've said that New Orleans drumming is largely about press rolls. Are there different ways to play a press roll?

**HR:** It's actually just one roll, but there are variations in New Orleans music. You can have the left hand playing drags while the right hand plays time [imitates right hand playing quarter notes while left hand fills around the beat with drags], or you can put accents inside the press rolls.

**KM:** You've said that "press rolls are like frying eggs, that's the sound my grandfather used to get." Are other things peculiar to New Orleans drumming?

**HR:** Basically the bass drum on the second four, that's the most prevalent.

**KM:** How did that evolve?

**HR:** During slavery in New Orleans, there was a place called Congo Square. That's where hundreds of slaves went on Sunday afternoon. It was the only place in America that allowed drumming, rhythm, and dance to flourish in the black community from the late 1700s to the early 1800s.

During the revolutionary war the bands would play a lot of marches. I think the black musicians would hear the bands and then rearrange the marches with a different groove to it. From the influence of the African drumming, they would match those two worlds together. They syncopated the rhythms. That's where that sound came from.

I notice the Cubans will do a similar

"Drummers like Baby Dodds and especially Sonny Greer, who worked with Duke Ellington's band, used all kinds of instruments and sounds to color and add nuance to the music. That's a part of the art form that needs to be kept alive."

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tiling in Central Park now. They'll start playing the song rhythms and then form a circle and dance. As the dancing goes on the rhythm is constantly being perpetuated. The spirit comes through that and hits people. I imagine it was the same thing but with much more intensity during the years of Congo Square. They were so stifled, Sunday was their only day of release.

**KM:** When you play you're always in control, but very relaxed.

**HR:** Maybe it has to do with confidence. I've learned through life to change what I can change and to roll with the flow on what I can't change. I try not to let things upset me; I try to keep everything in check, keep everything under control.

**KM:** You play like you have nothing to prove to anyone. Some drummers are great technicians but they don't always play for the music.

**HR:** Musicians should come together to make music, not necessarily to stroke their own egos. When I'm playing I want the overall musical concept to be successful. In the event that someone digs what I'm doing personally, that's gravy. I do want to be appreciated. But I'd rather be appreciated as a drummer who helped create some music and some great sounds than as a massive technician. I didn't grow up wanting to master drum technique, I always tried to play music.

**KM:** Are there a lot of young, up-and-coming jazz drummers in New Orleans?

**HR:** There's Troy Davis [who works with trumpeter Terence Blanchard] of course; Shannon Powell, who plays with Harry Connick; Jason Marsalis; Brian Blade [Joshua Redman, Kenny Garrett] is from Shreveport, but he lived in New Orleans a long time; and some younger guys like Jewa Ferdinand, who is fifteen. He's gonna be great. He goes to school at New Orleans Center for Creative Arts with Jason. And my daughter goes there too. Those are the swing-oriented players, but New Orleans is a small melting pot. As a result of that there's all kinds of music happening. One night you might hear a guy playing bebop, just swinging and slamming, the next night he'll be playing in an R&B or reggae band.

**KM:** It seems that Wynton gets all his players from New Orleans.

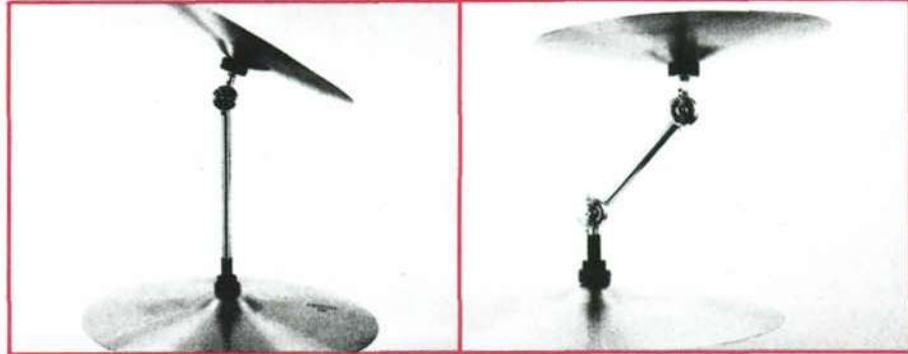
**HR:** That's not a true assessment. It just so happens that what he was hearing musically came from there. But he searches the

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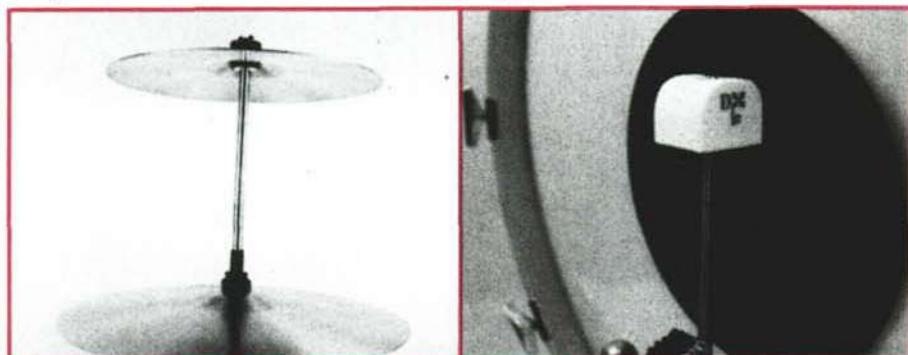
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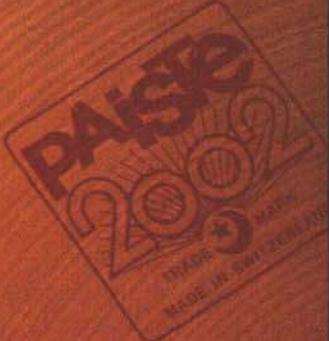


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world over for good musicians, whether he hires them to work in his band or just to encourage them. The music did get a more New Orleans feeling when Reginald Veal and I came to the band.

**KM:** How did you begin playing with Wynton?

**HR:** He heard me with Ahmad at Fat Tuesdays. He was just starting to blossom as a leader then. About a year later he heard me at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival playing with his father [Ellis Marsalis] and Reginald Veal. Wynton sat in and liked the feeling of the band. He kept that in mind and called me when Tain [Jeff Watts] left his band in February of 1988. I went to New York and rehearsed with Wynton. He played the piano and I played the drums set up in his apartment.

**KM:** What's your favorite Wynton Marsalis album that you play on?

**HR:** I like *Tune In Tomorrow* for the variety of music that's there. *Citi Movement* too.

**KM:** Hearing you play with Marsalis live is a different experience from the records. It comes to life.

**HR:** In the studio the spirit of the music is often drained after doing five takes of the same song. It's not as fresh. You don't get the full impact of the band through the records.

**KM:** Wynton must be very informative to work with.

**HR:** He's been my best boss. He's very knowledgeable; I've learned a lot from him about music and other things. He's well-read, a real egghead. He can talk about any subject. Musically speaking, he's helped me tremendously in understanding the nuances involved in the music. People confuse nuance with technique. "That's velocity," he explains, "being able to get all over your instrument. But nuance is when you are able to bring something to the music." That's a concept I understood but had never thought about in those terms.

I will say that Wynton is a perfectionist. He's unforgiving about the music. The music must always be at a certain level.

**KM:** Is the drumming we hear on record pure Herlin Riley or is there a Marsalis influence?

**HR:** It's both. He'll point me in the direction as to the sounds he wants to hear. I

always make up my own grooves. He might ask for little changes, "Play a little less on the cymbals" or "Play with more space" or whatever, just to direct me to what he's hearing subliminally. When he hears the right part, he can lock onto it.

We were rehearsing for this premiere piece at Lincoln Center called "Blood On The Fields." I came up with this one groove for the music right before we were to take a break. I sketched it out, but when I came back I didn't play it exactly as I had before. And he knew it wasn't right. I finally figured out what I was doing wrong, but the point is, when he heard the beat, he knew it was right for the music. He didn't know exactly what I played the second time, but he knew it wasn't the same beat.

**KM:** Does he rehearse the band heavily for the records?

**HR:** We usually play the music on the gig for a while, and then eventually record it for some future release date.

**KM:** Are there live recordings set to be released?

**HR:** We've recorded a couple albums worth of material at the Village Vanguard. They sound good, there's some real loose-

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ness and spirit there.

**KM:** With Junko Onishi you played a very abstract solo, but on [pianist] Marcus Roberts' *Gershwin For Lovers*, your solos are very straight-ahead. Your brush work sounds a lot like Elvin Jones, in fact.

**HR:** There are two ways to solo. You can do it either by playing inside the form itself, or you can play themes, painting an abstract picture thematically.

**KM:** In your instructional video you play "Poinciana," which was popularized by Ahmad Jamal, who you also worked with. Your time feel is very spacious, like Vernell Fournier's playing on the original track.

**HR:** Vernell Fournier is from New Orleans, too. Jamal's version of "Poinciana" was definitely coming out of die New Orleans street parade bands.

That's where Vernell's inspiration comes from as well.

Musically speaking, Ahmad Jamal was my favorite gig. I played with him from '82 to '87. We did three records together, my favorite being *Digital Works*. The drummer that preceded me was Peyton Crosley; he had to leave the gig early 'cause his wife had a baby. A friend of mine called me at 8:00 in the morning and said that Ahmad wanted me to play. I had just come off the road with a 1920s musical called *One More Time*. Ahmad asked me to get on a 1:00 P.M. flight to go to Phoenix. We did a sound check and that was it. We didn't rehearse; I was all nervous. But it was so easy to work with him 'cause he is a master at conducting while he plays. He'll play the whole tune—the head, me bridge, and all the interludes—two or three times as solo piano. Then he cues in the bass, then the drums. By that time I'll know the tune.

While he's playing he'll conduct dynamics as well as the form of the tune. It's so loose, he'll play a section of a tune indefinitely and then he'll give a cue that shifts you to another part of the tune. That's so musical, such a hip and spontaneous way of playing. His gig was wonderful for me, a real breeze.

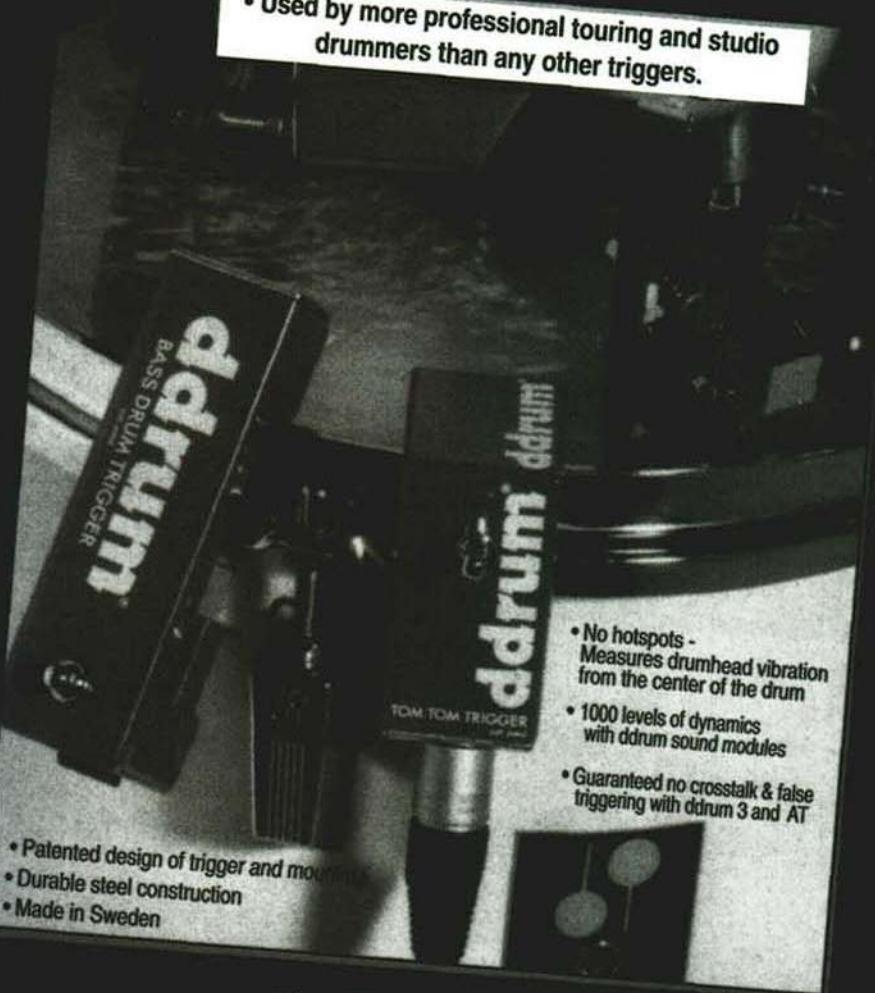
Ahmad Jamal is a master of subtlety. I've tried to incorporate mat sensibility into my playing. Working in a trio makes a drummer develop a certain sensitivity. And he's also very strong rhythmically. Sometimes I'd be playing a straight 4/4 rhythm and he would play a 6/4 or 6/8 rhythm against that. It would color the music in a different way.

**KM:** Was your grandfather, Frank Lasty, your earliest drumming influence?

**HR:** Yes. I really studied his and my uncle's playing when I was a kid. My grandfather was a very upright man. He wouldn't allow any drinking, smoking, or cursing in his house. He influenced me basically as a man. Drumming was second nature to him. He always stressed keeping time. Sometimes, being a kid, I would get behind me drums in church and experiment. He would give me this ugly look and say, "Don't be doing all that wild stuff. Just play time." Afterwards around the dinner table he'd say, "Time is a beautiful thing. Be sure you're always playing time; mat makes the music groove." And he showed me the New Orleans parade

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grooves.

He had played the drums with Louis Armstrong when they were both in the juvenile delinquent home together. Louis Armstrong was there for firing a gun on New Year's Eve. My grandfather was there for fighting. His playing was the New Orleans style. He played that style in church, never professionally or outside the church. Walter Lasty, my uncle, played drums with Fats Domino and Little Richard. Another uncle, Melvin Lasty, played trumpet with King Curtis, Willie Bobo, and Aretha Franklin. So I played trumpet for eight years, too. That helped me to think in terms of melody as opposed to always rhythm.

**KM:** You probably didn't listen to Zutty Singleton or Sid Catlett on records since you were surrounded by that music.

**HR:** I didn't really bother with a lot of records. When I listen to music I don't listen to what a drummer's doing specifically. I'm listening to get a feel and understanding for that period and style. I'm not trying to duplicate their signatures and what they've done.

**KM:** How did Elvin Jones influence you?

**HR:** Anybody who wants to learn how to swing has to listen to Elvin Jones. I think he articulated the swing feeling better than any drummer who ever lived. His time will waver, he's human. But the feeling and intention behind what he's playing is so deep.

And for having independence between the limbs, Tony Williams is a major influence. His technique is so clean and crisp. I emulate him in that aspect of my playing.

**KM:** Short of going to New Orleans, how could a drummer learn the traditional style of jazz drumming now?

**HR:** Listen to drummers like Baby Dodds with Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven bands, Paul Barbarin, Cye Frazier, and bands led by Louis Cottrell, Jimmy Noone, Bunk Johnson, and Kid Ory.

**KM:** Let's change direction a bit and talk about your drums. Mapex is an unusual choice for a jazz drummer.

**HR:** I played their drums during the New Orleans Drum Summit, which they sponsored. I liked them, so afterwards I agreed to endorse them. They custom-made an 18" bass drum for me, a size they don't usually manufacture.

**KM:** Your drums are tuned for a tight sound, rather than a high-pitched ringing sound.

**HR:** I agree. I like smaller drums because you can do more with the tuning and they speak more clearly. I try to tune my drums to have a quality like a conga drum. I don't like the boomy sound, I want them to speak with definition and then get out of the way. I use clear *Ambassadors* on the bottom, Evans *Uno 1000s* on the top—they're equivalent to the *Weather King*—and I keep the bottom tom heads looser to give a little more resonance.

**KM:** Do you tune your drums differently on a New Orleans gig than with Wynton or Marcus Roberts?

**HR:** Playing in a traditional jazz situation the snare drum is tuned looser on the snares, a bit more rattle. That makes the press roll that much crisper and cleaner, not as tight and staccato sounding. Also, I would use a bigger bass drum in New Orleans music. In fact, when I did the *One More Time* musical I had a big 26" bass drum. Those two drums are prevalent in that music.

**KM:** Your cymbals sound heavy.

**HR:** I like a dark-sounding cymbal with enough wash and air that it gives a cushion for the band, but also has a lot of attack where you can hear the stick definition. Cymbals are a very personal thing.

**KM:** Now that Wynton has broken up the septet, what's next?

**HR:** We're just taking a break, probably to re-form in a different format. I'll be involved with the Music of Louis Armstrong project at Lincoln Center and some other recording dates with Wynton, as well as work with a Japanese pianist, Yutaka Shina.

I'd like to do my own record while I'm off, get some of my own ideas out. Over the years, I've stifled my own ideas working with other bands because I haven't had the time to invest in my own music. I don't know what it will sound like. I'm not just coming from the New Orleans perspective. I'll try to incorporate all my musical influences. It'll be like a tasty soup with shrimps, sausage, maybe some chicken, all kinds of ingredients. It'll be like a good New Orleans gumbo.



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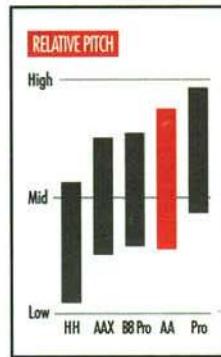
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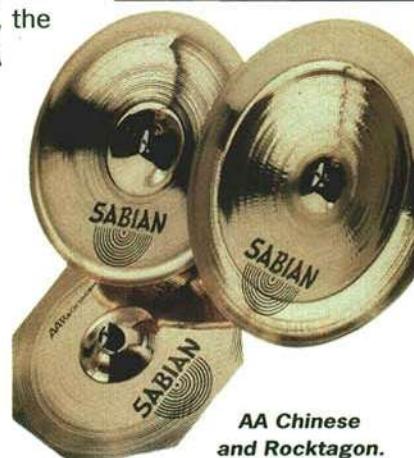
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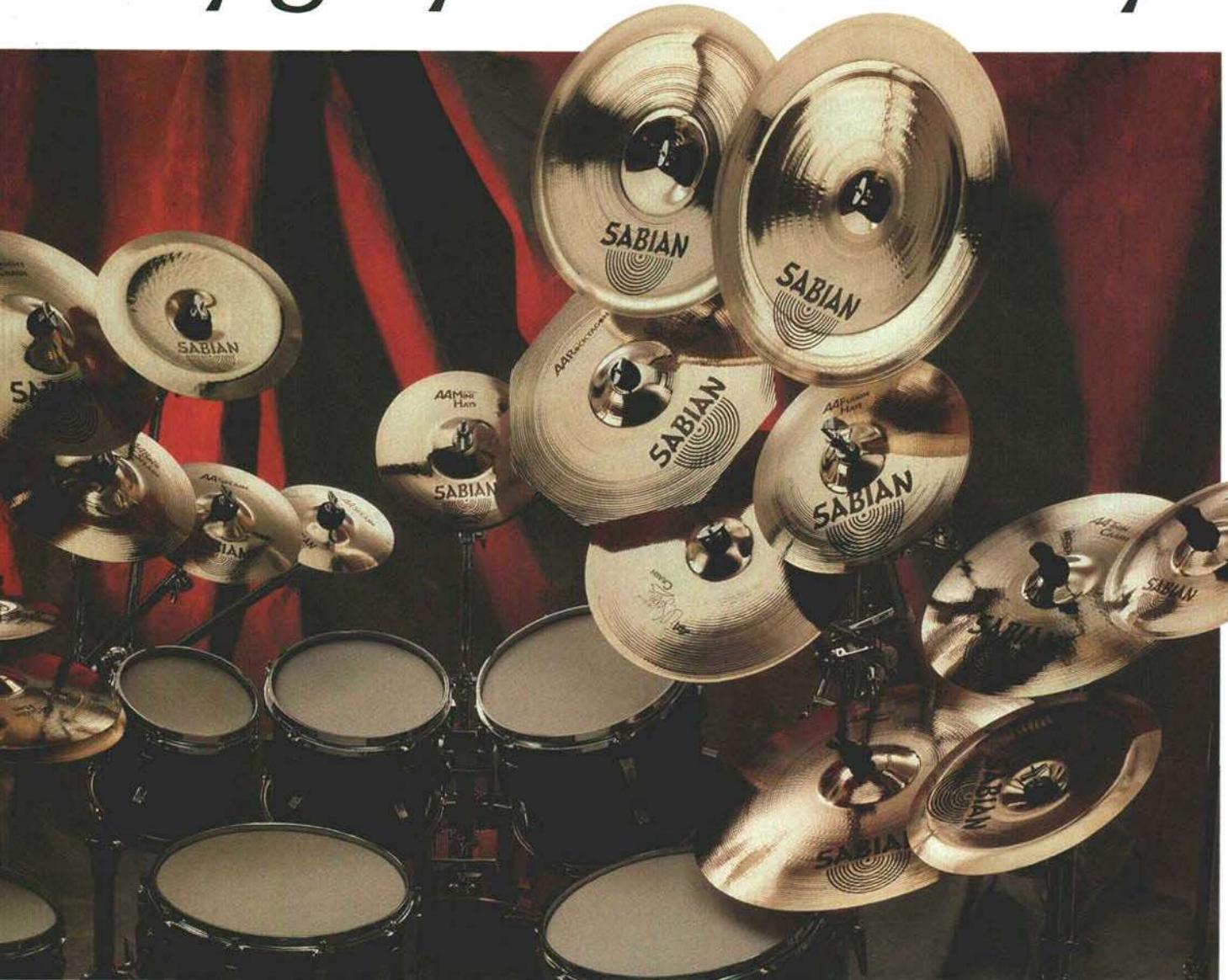
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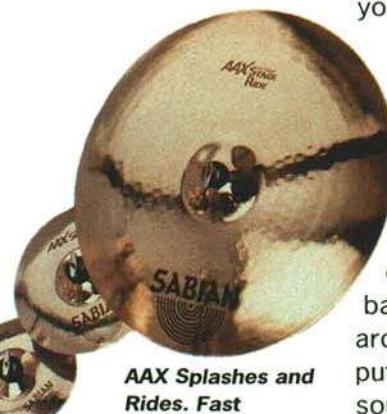
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# Paul Bostaph

## Playing In Dave's Shadow?

Nobody had to tell Paul Bostaph about the challenge he'd volunteered for. He already had a view from the mosh pit.

"Slayer was the only band I'd pay to see," says Bostaph, who caught the band three times on their *Seasons Of The Abyss* tour.

"What I've always liked about their music is that it delivers," he says. "If you like metal or aggressive music—and as a drummer, I always wanted to hear some dude just go balls-out, play lots of double-bass in good, fast songs, and do lots of drum fills—Slayer has always set the standard. I always felt Dave Lombardo was the driving element of Slayer's music. So when I joined the band, I didn't come in so

much to replace Dave as I did to pay tribute to him."

It wasn't as if Bostaph didn't come in with his own credentials. He'd recorded two albums and an EP during six years with Bay Area thrash band Forbidden. But Bostaph considers *Divine Intervention*, his Slayer debut, as more than a career turning point. It's a tangible reward for his emotional, physical, and spiritual investment in music.

"At first, when I left Forbidden, I told myself I wasn't going to play heavy metal anymore, at least in a full-time band," he says. "I'd been doing metal for fifteen years and it just seemed like there were other styles I wanted to get into. And I don't think I would have

joined a band that was still fighting to get somewhere. With Slayer, though, I found an opportunity to come into my own, musically as well as professionally."

On the surface, Bostaph and Slayer don't seem an easy fit. Seated below a few centerfold posters in the band's Anaheim, California rehearsal space, Bostaph speaks with intelligence, introspection, modesty, and an almost Zen-like philosophy about drumming, music, and his role in the world's first death-metal band. And don't let the photos fool you—the guy is a regular sweetheart.



**By Matt Peiken**

**Photos by Aldo Mauro**



**MP:** You came up through the San Francisco thrash scene. Did you bounce around from band to band or did you mainly play with Forbidden?

**PB:** I was with Forbidden for about six years. Before that, the band used to be called Forbidden Evil, but we dropped the "Evil" because it was just too...evil. I was actually the drum roadie for the band at first, but it worked out that my cousin left the band, so I just kind of moved over to the drums. And it was a good thing for me because I'd been playing

with all these different guys—friends and other musicians I'd met—and I kept quitting because they all seemed flaky. I'd get together with guys and have fun, just jamming. Nobody was serious enough, but I didn't get frustrated because I knew what I wanted to do and that it would come eventually.

**MP:** Why did you leave Forbidden when things were looking up for the band?

**PB:** It wasn't that I felt things were dead in the water. I believed in the band and still do. We were being courted by some

major labels and we were showcasing. But I was butting heads with the other creative source in the band and I just got tired of some of the political stuff. We both had the band's best interests at heart, but we had different ideas.

**MP:** Are you very driven with your ideas? I mean, is it hard for you to be in a band and simply play the drums?

**PB:** Yeah, and I try as hard as I can not to just be the drummer in Slayer. I don't like being told what to do. I have a solid idea of what I want, but I'm slowly

learning to let things take their course. I think of all the things I might have done wrong before and try my best not to repeat them. I think I was too judgmental and stubborn about my ideas at times, where nowadays I think that any idea is an idea to be listened to. And I get that from [guitarist] Kerry King.

**MP:** When you quit Forbidden, what did you have in mind for your immediate future?

**PB:** I'd been jamming with a couple other guys on the side off-and-on for about two years, and they were go-getters—they'd play anywhere. With Forbidden, we always had to be prepared for a gig. I played parties with these other guys; one time they called me on a Friday night and we played in some guy's kitchen. And I liked that spontaneity. To me, it doesn't matter where or when you play. I started playing the drums for fun, and that's still why I play. That's the important thing to stay close to as you go on through this business.

**MP:** But the Slayer gig happened very quickly for you.

**PB:** John Tempesta [of White Zombie] is a good friend of mine, and he actually called to tell me about the gig. I wasn't home, so he left a message to call him back. I didn't know what it was about. Anyway, a couple of days later, I called all the guys in Forbidden to tell them about my final decision to leave the band, and then I saw John's name on my board. So I called him, mainly because I needed somebody to talk to at that point. Then John told me that a friend of his heard that Slayer might be looking for a drummer. And I was like, "Hello?!" John said he didn't know for sure and that he'd try to find something out for me.

I'd heard those kinds of rumors before, so I really didn't think anything was going to come of it. But my drum tech at the time, Cole Gill, got in touch with me and said that Slayer's manager had called and asked about me. Now I didn't think it was just a rumor! My name had been brought up to the band before, but I guess they listened to a Forbidden record and didn't know if I'd fit into the framework of Slayer. They had tried some other guy out for a few weeks, but they weren't happy with him for whatever reason, so they decided to go back and

evaluate more people. That's when they called me.

I had twelve days to learn nine songs, and then I came down here and auditioned. I wasn't sure I had the gig because I didn't play flawlessly by any stretch of the imagination. I play much better now than I did then because I know the style now. At the audition, though, I only had to stop on one song, "Angel Of Death," because I didn't know how long the lead section was. But we went back and I nailed it the second time.

The whole thing was set up as a three-day audition, and the way it was put to me was that if I didn't make it after the first day, I wouldn't have to worry about the other two! But my attitude the second I took the audition was that the gig was mine. I wouldn't have taken the audition to begin with if I didn't think I'd be able to cut it.

**MP:** The music seems to be a lot different stylistically—faster, with a lot more double-bass work—than Forbidden, which seemed to have more texture to it. Did you feel you had to step your play-

**Paul's Kit**

**Drumset:** Tama Artstar II (1993) in chrome laminant (custom) finish

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- B. 8x8 tom
- C. 10x10 tom
- D. 12 x 12 tom
- E. 13 x 13 tom
- F. 14x14 tom
- G. 16 x 16 floor tom
- H. 14 x 20 gong drum
- I. 18 x 22 bass drum

**Hardware:** All Tama, including a Leverglide hi-hat stand, Iron Cobra bass drum pedals (with DW beaters), and Still series stands. Skid-Ex slip retardant used on pedals to prevent feet from slipping.

**Heads:** Remo coated Emperor on snare batter (with square piece of white cloth duct taped to head for muffling), clear Emperors on tops of toms with clear Ambassadors underneath, clear Emperors on bass drums with Falam Slam pads to protect from beater impact (small pillows used in bass drum for muffling)

**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 1. 19" 3000 Power Crash
- 2. 8" Paiste bell
- 3. 22" 2002 Novo China
- 4. 15" hi-hats (2002 Sound Edge on top, Paiste Sound Edge bottom)
- 5. 20" 2002 crash
- 6. 19" 3000 Power Crash
- 7. 15" hi-hats mounted on X-Hat (same hi-hat combo as above)
- 8. 22" Paiste heavy China
- 9. 20" 3000 Power Crash
- 10. 22" Paiste Dry-Heavy Ride
- 11. 20" Paiste heavy China
- 12. 20" Sound Formula Full Ride (with rivets)
- 13. 38" gong

**Sticks:** Vic Firth American Classic Rock Crusher model, Stick Handler drumstick tape, Beato drum gloves

**Microphones:** Shure

**"To learn to play with Slayer's approach is to learn the extreme, and to go to any extreme is good for a musician."**

ing up to another level to meet Slayer's demand for sheer speed?

**PB:** There may not be a lot of similarities between the bands, but I felt Dave and I kind of had the same approach. I'm not as over-the-top as Dave, but I do like to play that way. So where I did have to step up my playing a bit, it was actually a welcome change and challenge. To learn to play with Slayer's approach is to learn the extreme, and to go to any extreme is good for a musician. As far as trap-kit drumming goes, I would consider thrash metal one extreme, whereas fusion would be another.

**MP:** How was the immediate fit between you and Slayer?

**PB:** I think it worked fine, but that's what I expected. I was a fan of the band long before they ever heard of me. It's a funny

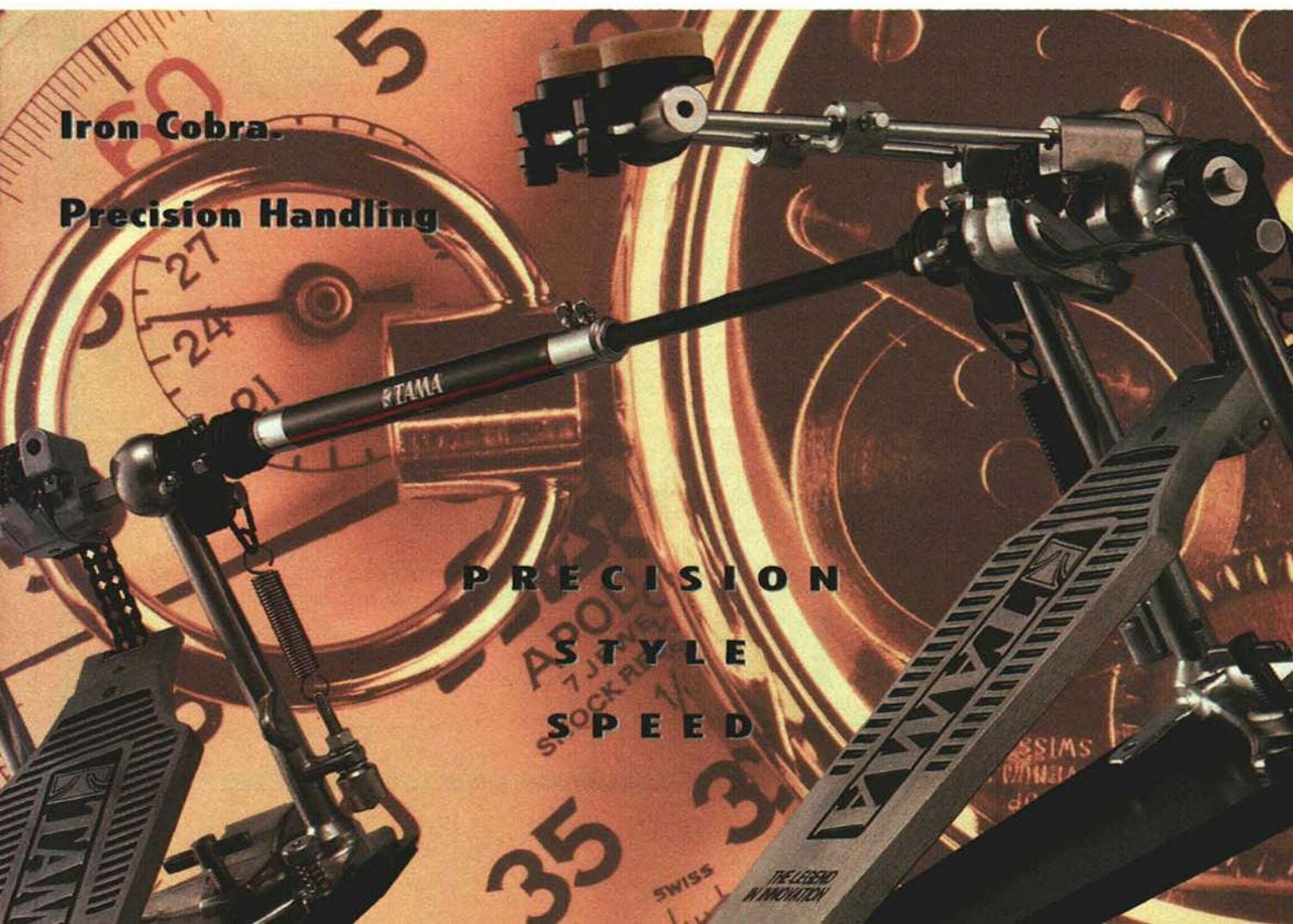
thing; I remember hearing *South Of Heaven* for the first time when I did the first U.S. tour with Forbidden. We were out on the road with Sacred Reich, and Greg Hall [Sacred Reich's drummer] and I would get into the music and think about different things each of us would do here or there. It was the kind of thing that, as drummers, we could really get into. And we'd talk like, "Yeah, if I wasn't in my band, I'd like to play with Slayer."

**MP:** Once you got in, were you expected to reproduce Lombardo's parts as he played them, or did the band give you room to express your own style?

**PB:** A lot of people have told me I have big shoes to fill. But here's the way I look at it: I was a big Iron Maiden fan when I was younger, and when Clive Burr quit the

band, I thought that the guy they brought in definitely had his work cut out for him. Nicko McBrain eventually came in and brought a totally different style to the band and did things his way. But I remember thinking from a fan's perspective that if I were in the same position, I'd try to do what the previous guy played because that's what the fans are into.

To me, a song is a song. If I try to do something that's different from what's already recorded and established, I feel it's not the same song anymore. So my approach coming in was that I was going to play those songs the way they're supposed to be played. Besides, Dave's a great drummer, so for me to not play his parts would be disrespectful. If I can't play his parts, I'm not playing the same song.



**MP:** Even though you came up through the thrash scene and did a lot of double-bass work, was it a challenge to meet the physical demands that came with reproducing Dave's parts?

**PB:** I knew when I got the gig that my double-bass had to get better. I felt I always had the potential to play in that style, but I just never pushed it before. And with some of the stuff Dave played, it can definitely feel like I'm running a marathon! But I'm constantly trying to push myself to another level.

Even before I joined the band, I put a lot of hours in playing by myself. I did a lot of repetitions and would basically just throw myself into my playing. You really can't play balls-out or know how much you can really do until you continually test yourself and push at your own boundaries. It's a constant effort and discipline involved in pushing yourself to that degree, and you can actually push yourself beyond a certain limit. There's a fine line between power and speed, and you eventually have to find the middle of that and then work it from there.

I also spent some time working on my pedal technique, experimenting on where to place my foot on the pedal to find out what would be the most efficient for me. I discovered a better sense to the balance point on my pedals, which is something I already had an idea about, but never focused on or paid deliberate attention to. I wear these lightweight wrestling shoes, which helps. But it wasn't like I sat behind the drums for eight hours at a time working on these things. Playing this kind of music, I only have about two or two and a half hours in me, and then I'm spent.

**MP:** How does your Slayer kit differ from the one you used with Forbidden?

**PB:** I used to use these D'Amico 20x22 custom kicks with Forbidden, and they just kicked ass. I also had a black lacquer Tama Superstar kit. I eventually trimmed that down to three rack toms and two floor toms. But I knew I had to play on a bigger kit for this gig because the songs call for it. I need more melodic choices for drum fills because there are so many fills in the music and I didn't want to limit my sounds, particularly on the higher end of the scale. So

adding smaller toms really opened up a lot of possibilities and actually made the fills more dramatic. I have more cymbals, too, and bigger ones.

Big as my kit is, Dave's was much bigger. Not only were there two more toms, but they were larger. He had 15" and 16" toms mounted next to each other over the kick drum, so that takes up a lot of space. I auditioned on his kit and that thing was massive! You could hear a definite difference in the sound, and we were a little worried about that because I still wanted the band to retain its sound. But I just couldn't go with the same setup and be comfortable.

**MP:** Even though you were with Slayer almost two years before you did the record, did you still feel you had something to prove on record?

**PB:** Oh, yeah. First of all, I knew that anybody who knew about Slayer before this record would see a new name and have their doubts. Dave is heralded as a great drummer—and rightly so—whereas I'm a virtual nobody. And when you do something like this, there's always a risk of people thinking you're just jumping on the

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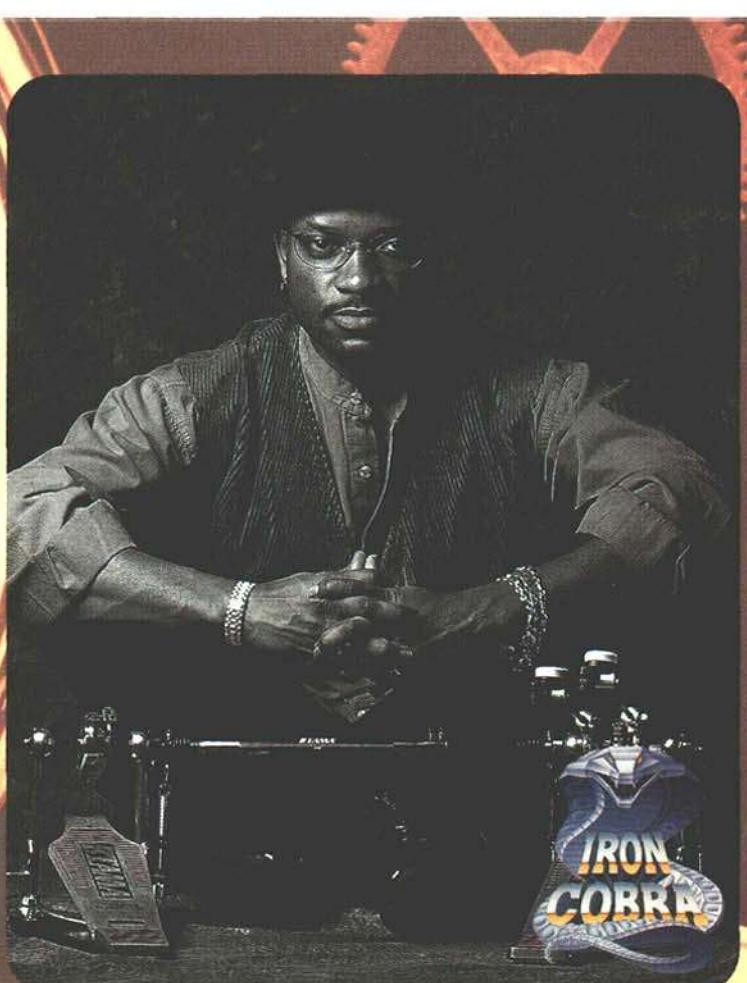
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bandwagon. But I don't want anybody thinking that way, so I feel an obligation to work that much harder to prove that I do belong here.

I put a lot of pressure on myself—immense pressure. And what that did was bring out the perfectionist in me. I hear all my mistakes and I won't let any of them slide, even if nobody else notices, because that will make me lazy. But I was almost too much of a perfectionist in the studio this time.

The first song we recorded was "Fictional Reality," and it took me seventeen takes to get it right. There was nothing technically wrong with any of them, but I just didn't feel the energy was there. I came up with set drum fills, executed them, and made them tight. But the key is not just to play tight, but to ride the energy.

I also spent a whole day recording "Divine Intervention," and when it was all said and done, I went back and listened to all the takes and it turned out that I had nailed it on the fifth take. But I didn't have anybody there telling me I got it right. To me, I still hadn't nailed it. If I had to do it all over again, I would have recorded all the songs two or three times before going back for re-takes. And Kerry probably would have liked that better because he had to play the same song over and over again. But the beauty of playing a song as many times as I wanted to was that I got to experiment.

I left a lot of loose ends in the music before we went into the studio because I felt that if I planned everything out, I'd be limiting the potential for coming up with something better. When I started thinking too much, I would just lose all the energy. But the parts and fills that came out of me—things I never would have planned to do before we started rolling tape—were the ones that had the feel I was looking for. A good example of that is the fill at the end of "Ditto-head," which was done completely on the fly.

**MP:** Tell me about the writing input you had for this record.

**PB:** Coming in, I knew I was the new member and that these guys had already established their sound. So I pretty much sat back and tried to learn what the Slayer formula was—the way these guys think. I came from a band with a different way of doing things. With *Forbidden*, we'd write

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from a guitar riff. But with Slayer, Jeff [Hanneman, guitarist] and Kerry will bring a song in, sometimes completed, and I don't usually have any input until the song is almost done.

**MP:** Listening to *Divine Intervention*, it seems that there's a bit of Dave Lombardo's shadow over your performance, and also with the music. Do you think you'll put across more of your own personality with the next record?

**PB:** I feel I've stamped my identity on this record to a degree. But the framework of this band has been so strongly established that if I change it too much, the fans would really know it. One thing you have to realize is that no matter who the drummer is, the songwriting in Slayer isn't going to change, and I don't expect it to. I feel my ultimate responsibility, no matter what band I'm playing in, is to be true to the situation and the music.

Let's say I wanted to play in a salsa or Latin band; I couldn't approach that by trying to do things my way or by trying to just play in my style. You have to listen to the music and ask yourself how you can enhance what the other musicians are doing. You don't want to go in like a train wreck and establish yourself that way.

It was important to me, though, to be involved from the very beginning with the creation of the new record. There were times when Kerry and I would just come to the rehearsal room and jam, and some of the things we came up with made it onto the record. And there's a plethora of killer ideas that we came up with by just jamming.

You also have to realize that there's just not a lot of space within the parameters of this music. There's not much room for long phrasings; it's all pretty quick. But there are some songs, like "Divine Intervention," "213," and "Serenity In Murder," that are a little slower and give me a little room to play with things. But also, when I get that opportunity, it's got to be something really special. You don't want to force anything and you also have to think about where the song is going. The bottom line is that you have to play for the song.

**MP:** Did you always approach music so unselfishly?

**PB:** I think part of it comes from growing up in a big family. I was the fourth of seven kids, so I had to learn right away to

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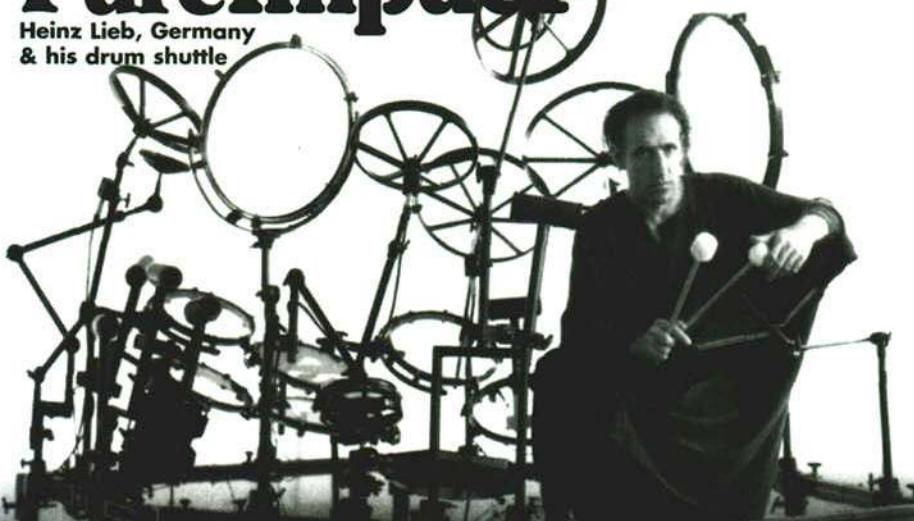
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go with the flow and work within a group. I also played a lot of team sports growing up. So I guess the best way I could put it is that I'm part of a team here. And if I think only of myself, who's going to want to play with me?

I'd much rather step into a musical situation and say, "Okay, let's go, let's make some music." I don't want to waste my time worrying about ego. My job, as a professional, is to involve myself in the situation and contribute in any way I can. I want to be myself, have a good time with who I'm playing with, and enjoy the music.

**MP:** Your drum tech, Yogi, told me there was a bit of a battle about the drum sounds and muffling in the studio. He said your drums initially sounded very live, but that the other guys wanted them deadened.

**PB:** Yeah, they wanted more muffling. I know that doesn't sound good from a drummer's perspective, but you have to consider how fast this music is going, too. The bigger the drums sound, the more space they take up. The resonance tends to make things more muddy and less defined, whereas a bigger drum is fine on slower songs because the sound fills up space.

Personally, I hate drums that sound too live. I don't like drums that are too loud; I like them meaty. I don't like a drum that's too bouncy, where I get too much rebound off the head, because the drum is doing all the work. I don't want the drum to hit me, I want to hit the drum. But I still want to hear the drum's voice, and that's what finding the sweet spot on a drum is all about. The size stick you use and how hard you hit also play into that.

I was using a much lighter stick when I joined Slayer and I've since moved up three sizes. I did it in stages, first with the Vic Firth *American Classic Rock*, then with the *American Classic Metal*, and now I'm using the *American Classic Rock Crusher*. It was a bitch to get used to because it's so big that I felt some of my feel was gone. But I did get used to it and I think that doing it in stages really helped.

**MP:** But why did you even bother going to a bigger stick if you were already comfortable with what you were using?

**PB:** The extra weight allows you to hit harder, and they also handle the bigger crashes better. I use three 20" crashes, two 19" crashes, two 22" China cymbals, an 18" China, and 15" hi-hats. It took me a

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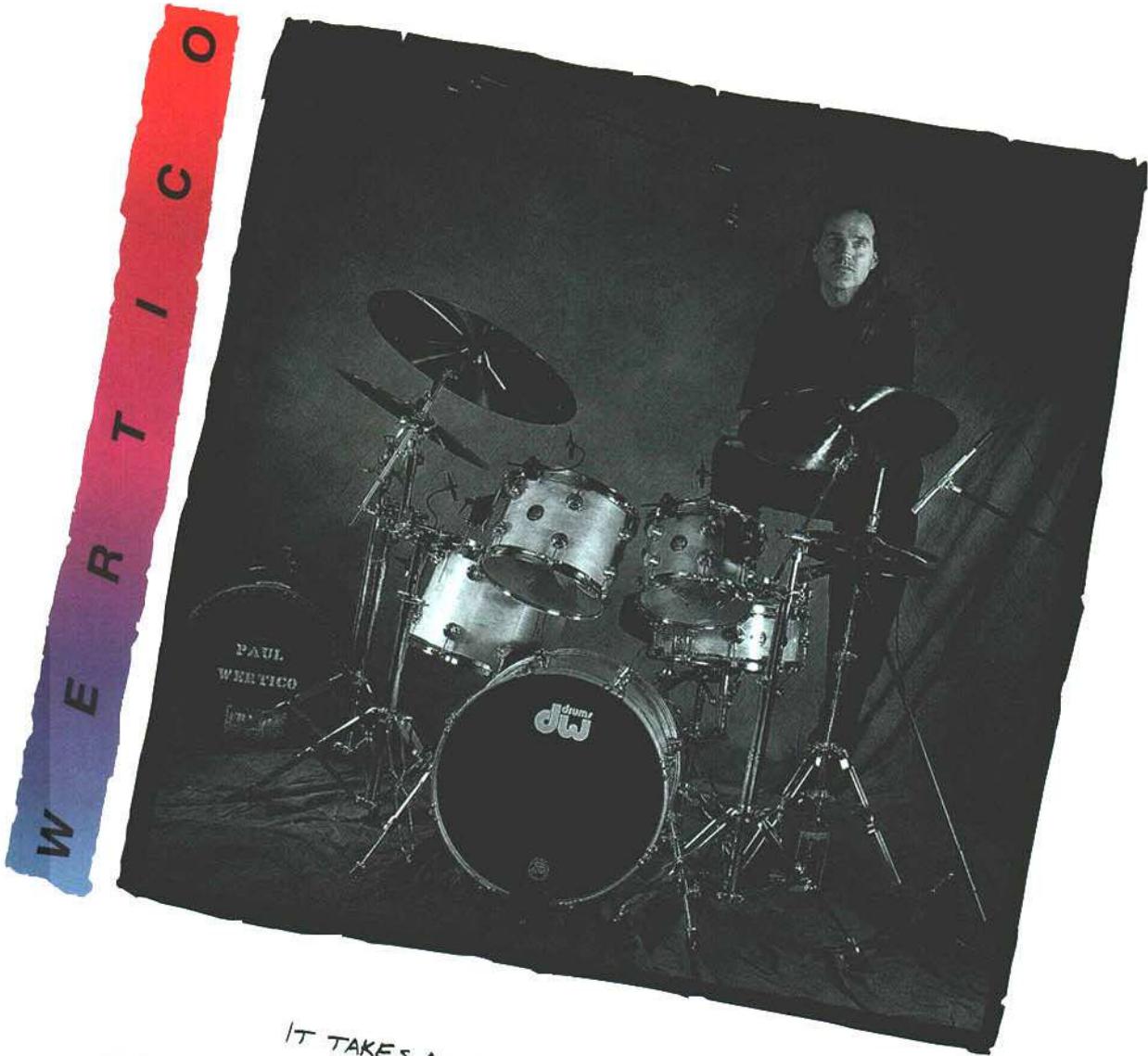
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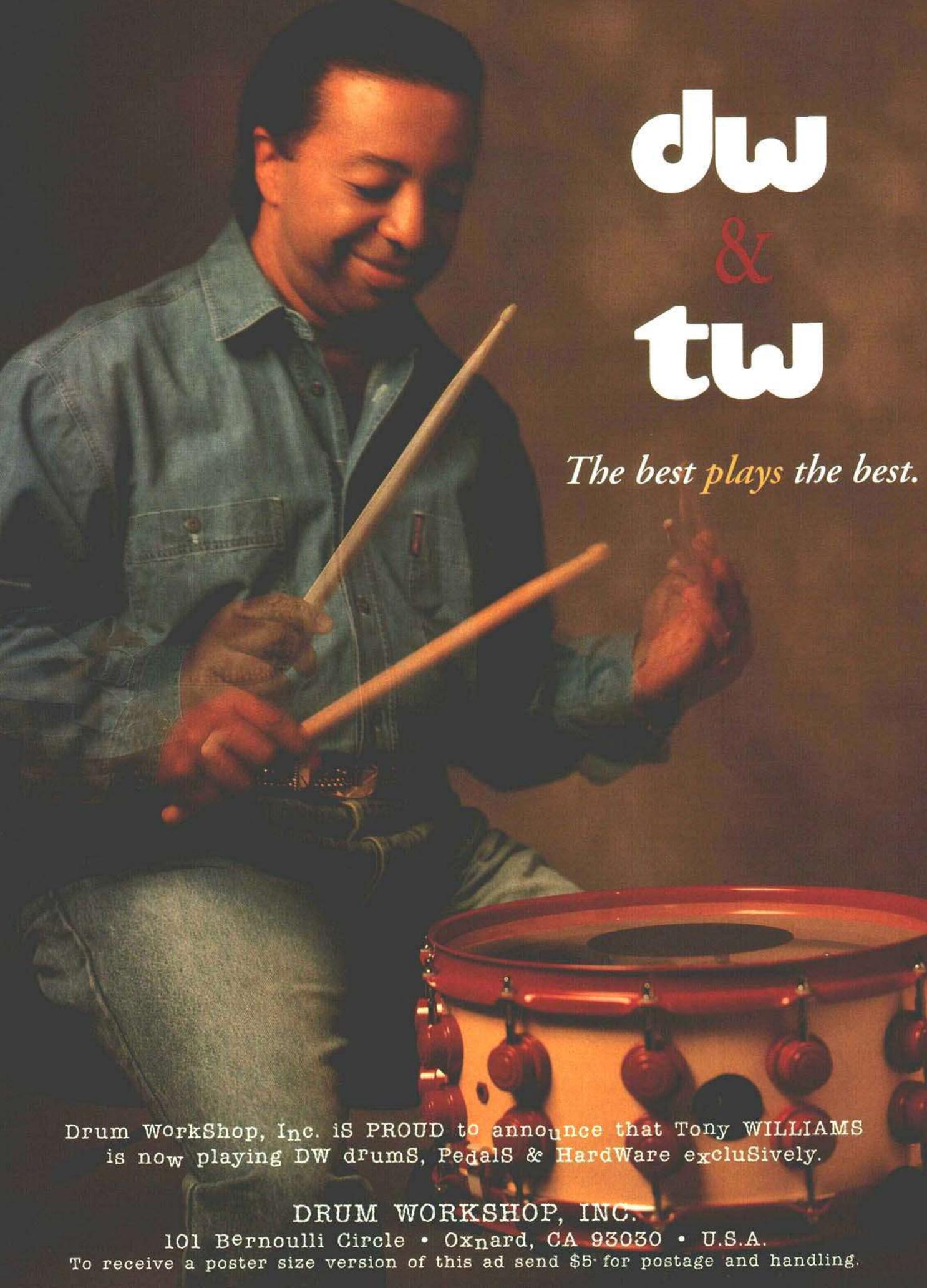
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**MP:** You mentioned earlier that you were really into sports as a kid. When did music become a priority?

**PB:** I was always into *listening* to music, but I always tuned into what the guitar player was doing. I didn't take up the drums until I was fifteen, my freshman year of high school. Until then, I was really into soccer and I was kind of oblivious to playing an instrument. One of my best friends was about to play drums in a band with these guitar players we had met. I thought that was pretty cool.

I eventually taught myself how to play drums. I got a pair of drumsticks and started air-drumming to AC/DC, then the Beach Boys, the Beatles—just easy, song-oriented stuff. I finally saved up \$55 and got this old stars-and-stripes Stewart kit. I pulled the stripes off it so it was just one color, and then just started playing it on my own.

Well, somebody told a guitar player that I played drums and he came up to me in the hallway, patted me on the back, and told me I was playing drums in his band. So I was in a band the first week I started playing drums, and I've been in bands ever since.

**MP:** Did you practice a lot on your own or take lessons?

**PB:** I played to records all the time. It was mainly just my favorite records, and a few of them were challenging. But there were some records I wouldn't touch, like Rush. It wasn't that it was just challenging, but also because I didn't want to end up sounding like Neil Peart. I remember reading a Bill Bruford interview a long time ago where he advised aspiring drummers to just do their own thing, that if they saw or heard something other drummers were doing, they should do something entirely different. I never heard Bruford play drums before, but what he said made sense, and it's something that has stayed with me my entire career.

**MP:** What was your first serious band?

**PB:** That was Forbidden. Up until then I was always trying to get in a band that would play the clubs, but nobody seemed to want to leave the garage. I was ready to play some shows and I just got tired of waiting for everybody else. I wanted to play on a stage, with monitors, and a P.A., in front of people—I didn't care where. I saw my cousin doing it and he was younger than me. He and his buddies were go-getters, and I think to get your career going you really have to take the initiative.

I don't think I ever saw this as a career, though, until I joined Forbidden. Up until then, I'd wanted to become a professional

soccer player, and I actually turned down some pretty good opportunities. I could have played semi-pro soccer in San Francisco, and I also got an offer to play for Humboldt State University. But at that point, I didn't want to go to college because I felt it would have taken me away from music.

There was a time when I was serious about both soccer and music, but there really weren't any thriving professional soccer leagues that I realistically thought I could do full-time. Music just always seemed to be there for me, and besides, I had some pretty serious injuries in soccer. I figured I could just as well live without that.

Once I realized music was the way I was headed, I decided I wouldn't go to college. The way I look at it, there are two kinds of education: the kind you get in school and the kind you get on the street. I figured that as far as music goes, my best education wouldn't come out of a book, it would come by playing in the clubs. And I have no regrets about skipping college. Ever since I started playing the drums, that's about all I've ever done for a living. It's been fifteen years now and I still get goose bumps when I play. No matter what style of music it is, I know I'll want to play drums for the rest of my life.



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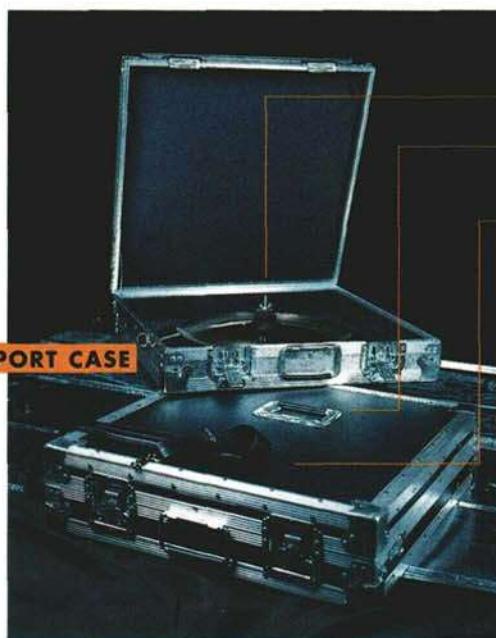
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# Gary Mallaber

## CLASSIC-ROCK HITMAN



The other day I had to run a few errands. Each time I got in the car and turned on my favorite classic-rock station, it seemed that every song had Gary Mallaber on drums. There was Steve Miller's "Swingtown" (heard that one twice) and "Fly Like An Eagle," Van Morrison's "Moondance" and "Into The Mystic," Eddie Money's "Baby Hold On." And that's certainly not where it stops: Mallaber has laid down memorable tracks with the likes of Peter Frampton, Jackson Browne, Joan Armatrading, the Beach Boys, Bob Seger, Poco, Bonnie Raitt, Warren Zevon, Bruce Springsteen—not to mention countless TV shows and films. Gary's tracks seem to jump out of the speakers, and that's his objective: to make each one unique and as exciting as possible.

By Robyn Flans  
Photos by Aldo Mauro





**M**allaber describes himself as a song person, a music fan. His enthusiasm is as evident in conversation as it is on his drum tracks, which are innovative, interesting, and diverse. It's difficult to believe that "Moondance" and "Baby Hold On" could be the same drummer. But what ties those tracks together is the creative vision Gary Mallaber has, something he says came about from his upbringing in Buffalo, New York. Gary recalls how in any given week he could press his face to the window of the Royal Arms club and see John Coltrane or Miles Davis, or venture to the Pine Grill to watch Jimmy McGriff or Howlin' Wolf. At home he tuned into George "Houndog" Lopez on the radio, checked out every piece of R&B in existence, and practiced to records.

Sam Scamacca was the six-year-old Mallaber's first teacher, the one who got him learning on a pad. Second was Jack Shilling, who Gary says took him to the next level through grammar and high schools. Next was John Rowland, who would bring home charts from the Buffalo Philharmonic for the youngster to read. By thirteen, Gary was playing lead snare drum in the high school band by day and drumset on the club circuit by night. Following high school, he attended the University of Buffalo for two years.

After a series of bands came and went, a group called Raven seemed to gel for the nineteen-year-old. Back in the mid '60s that band was beginning to travel in some prestigious circles. After moving to New York City, they frequently played a club called The Scene, which hosted such fledgling groups as Chicago and the Chambers Brothers, as well as Jimi Hendrix and engineer Eddie Kramer, who helped Raven secure a CBS deal.

Soon Raven opened shows for the Rascals, the Byrds, and Procol Harum. They were even chosen to be the first act to open a U.S. appearance by Led Zeppelin at the Boston Tea Party. Then one night, Mallaber's life took a turn....

## GARY'S GALLERY

Gary Mallaber has played on a surprisingly long and varied list of cuts and albums.

Here's a sampling.

**Bruce Springsteen**—*Lucky Town*

**Van Morrison**—*Moondance*,  
*Tupelo Honey*, *St. Dominic's Preview*, *Hard Nose The Highway*,  
*Beautiful Vision*

**Steve Miller Band**—*Journey From Eden*, *Fly Like An Eagle*, *Book Of Dreams*, *Circle Of Love*,  
*Abracadabra*, *Italian X-Rays*,  
*Living In The 20th Century*

**Jackson Browne**—*For Everyman*  
**Los Lobos**—*Kiko*

**Eddie Money**—*Eddie Money*, *Life For The Taking*, *Playing For Keeps*, *No Control*, *Where's The Party*

**Bonnie Raitt**—*Home Plate*

**The Beach Boys**—*Endless Summer*

**John Klemmer**—*Fresh Feathers*

**Poco**—*Legacy*

**Cher**—*Stars*

**Ben Sidran**—*Feel Your Groove*

**Gene Clark**—*Gene Clark*

**Maria Muldaur**—*Sweet Harmony*

**Tom Rush**—*Merrimack County*

**Peter Case**—*Six Pack Of Love*

**Barbra Streisand**—*Emotion*

**Warren Zevon**—*Warren Zevon*

**J.D. Souther**—*J.D. Souther*

**America**—*Homecoming*

**Kim Carnes**—*Barking At Airplanes*

**Tommy Tutone**—*Natural Emotion*

**Rick Vito**—*King Of Hearts*

**Doc Lawrence**—*Doc Lawrence*

**Patti Scialfa**—*Rumble Doll*

**Bob Seger**—*Like A Rock*

*MTV's Catwalk*, *The Heights*

(*"How Do You Talk To An Angel"*),

*Looking For Trouble*, *The Client*,

*Johnny's Girl*, *St. Elmo's Fire*, *The*

*Muppet Movie*, *Bugsy Malone*,

*Caddyshack*, *Rambo (First Blood Part 2)*, *Taps*, *Defiance*, *Flashback*

*soundtracks*

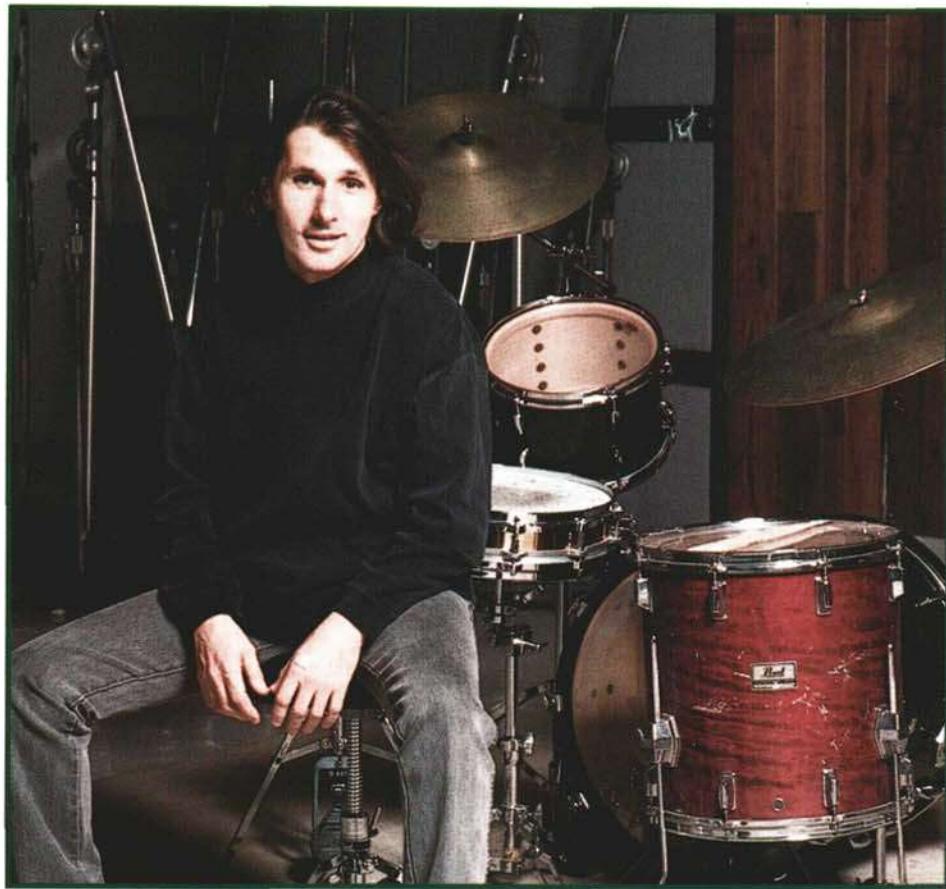
**GM:** Our roadie at the time had just been given a free set of albums. In the stack was one by Van Morrison. I had already known Van from "Here Comes The Night," "Gloria," and "Brown Eyed Girl." The new album was called *Astral Weeks*, which was probably the biggest pivot point in my life. It had a set of songs on it that were *so* special, and I realized he was just an incredible writer and performer.

I decided to track him down, and I found that he was working in a folk club in New York on MacDougal Street. I went to see him play, and twenty people were there. I offered to sit in, and to make a long story short, two months after that, we were making *Moondance*. We started rehearsing up at Van's house in Woodstock, and to my best recollection, a lot of the material was developed in the studio.

**RF:** I'd like to get specific about "Moondance"—where the idea came from, how it was presented, and how you formulated your part for it.

**GM:** Van was the kind of artist who really didn't worry about anything. He went at it more like a jazz recording. I figured out the best way the song should be played within the first three or four minutes of his playing the piece on acoustic guitar. There was almost no other way you could do the tune.

If you listen to the other songs on the album, each one stands up by itself. "These Dreams Of You" is a shuffle, "Crazy Love" is a soul tune. There are a lot of elements in that album—folk intertwined with a little jazz. My best recollection of playing that album was that it was a very gentle record. I didn't have to use my arms or my back and slam the drums. And I got to play vibraphone, which was great. After we finished "Crazy Love," I asked Van if he would mind if I went out and put the vibraphone on. The funny story is that there were no mallets, so I went into the maintenance room and found some screwdrivers with rubber handles, and I used those!



All those songs could only be done one way. "Crazy Love" could only be brushes. It was too smooth for sticks. And to me it just screamed to have vibraphone added. Everything on that album was one or two takes, maybe three. My best recollection was that Van picked the takes based on his vocal, so the decisions weren't based on the backing tracks. I don't recall Van ever overdubbing a vocal, so what you're hearing is true performance. We did sing some harmony parts afterwards and put on some tambourine and organ, but ninety percent is live performance. We didn't go back and fix anything. I remember the city at the time—my drums piled up on top of each other, trying to flag down a cab and talk the driver into letting me take my drums so I could record this album. It was before Christmas and there was a special feeling in the air.

**RF:** What happened after that?

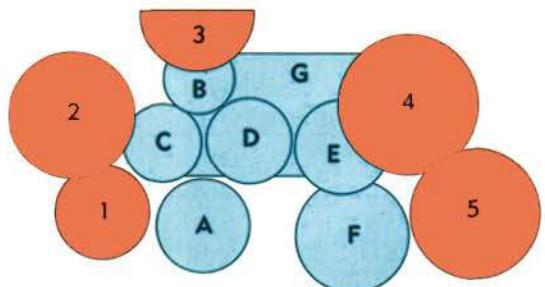
**GM:** I was still with Raven, so I had to

make sure that on the back of Van's album they put that my appearance was courtesy of CBS. Raven was still doing these tours and trying to get to the next level, so I couldn't always be with Van, which is why I wasn't on his next record. I had to fulfill my commitment with Raven.

We went over to England and I wound up seeing John Bonham again in his hometown of Birmingham. George Harrison was seriously thinking about signing Raven to the Apple label, but when we came back to the States, the band played a few concerts and dissolved. We couldn't get to that next level.

Then I went back to do more work with Van on *Tupelo Honey*, playing drums and vibraphone on some cuts. I did *St. Dominic's Preview* the same way, then two more albums, *Hard Nose The Highway* and *Beautiful Vision*. By that time, I was living with Van in his garage studio in Marin County, and in the down time, I would float down to Los Angeles. All my work with Van Morrison counted for something, and I met a pretty awe-

## GARY'S SETUP



### Drumset: Pearl

- A. 5 x 14 (or 3 x 14) snare
- B. 8 x 8 tom
- C. 10 x 10 tom
- D. 10 x 12 tom
- E. 12 x 14 tom
- F. 16 x 16 floor tom
- G. 18 x 22 bass drum

**Hardware:** Pearl and older Rogers stands, Pearl rack

### Cymbals: Sabian and Zildjian

- 1. 14" hi-hats
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- 3. 16" half-crash (Gary's own design)
- 4. 22" ride
- 5. 20" China

**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter, Pinstripes on everything else

**Sticks:** Regal Tip 5A or 5B models



some group of people, like Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, and Linda Ronstadt. Monday night at the Troubadour was a key night, and that's where I met Jesse Ed Davis and Taj Mahal, who I started hanging out with a lot.

After rubbing elbows, the next set of

things started happening. I did some work with Jackson Browne on his second album, *For Everyman*, and I toured with him a little. I still did work with Van and with these other people, and some producers began to call.

In the early '70s I met a producer named Bruce Botnick, and I was asked to come in

and play on an album called *Journey From Eden*. Steve Miller was a session musician on that date. He didn't have a drummer, and he was trying to get things rolling. But I was really trying to get a foothold in Los Angeles, doing some film and TV work with a songwriter named Paul Williams.

Digging in in Los Angeles wasn't easy. Whenever something wasn't going on in town, I would get in my VW squareback and drive back to Buffalo. One year I did that four times just because it was more important to me to play *something* than to be sitting around L.A. waiting for the next thing.

After I had done that initial work with Steve Miller, he asked if I would join his band. But there was just enough stuff going on in L.A. for me where I didn't really want to make that kind of a commitment. As I look back on it, I missed playing on *The Joker* because of that. But then in '74 he asked me to come up to Novato, and I agreed.

I really admire Steve. He's a very brave soul and he took on a lot of adversity out there. He realized at a certain point that he had to do a lot of it himself, which helped make him the person he became. At a certain point he called and said, "I'm formulating some ideas and I want to get you and bassist Lonnie Turner to come up to my house to play." We formed that trio, and to make a long story short, that was the beginning stage of his pivotal album, *Fly Like*

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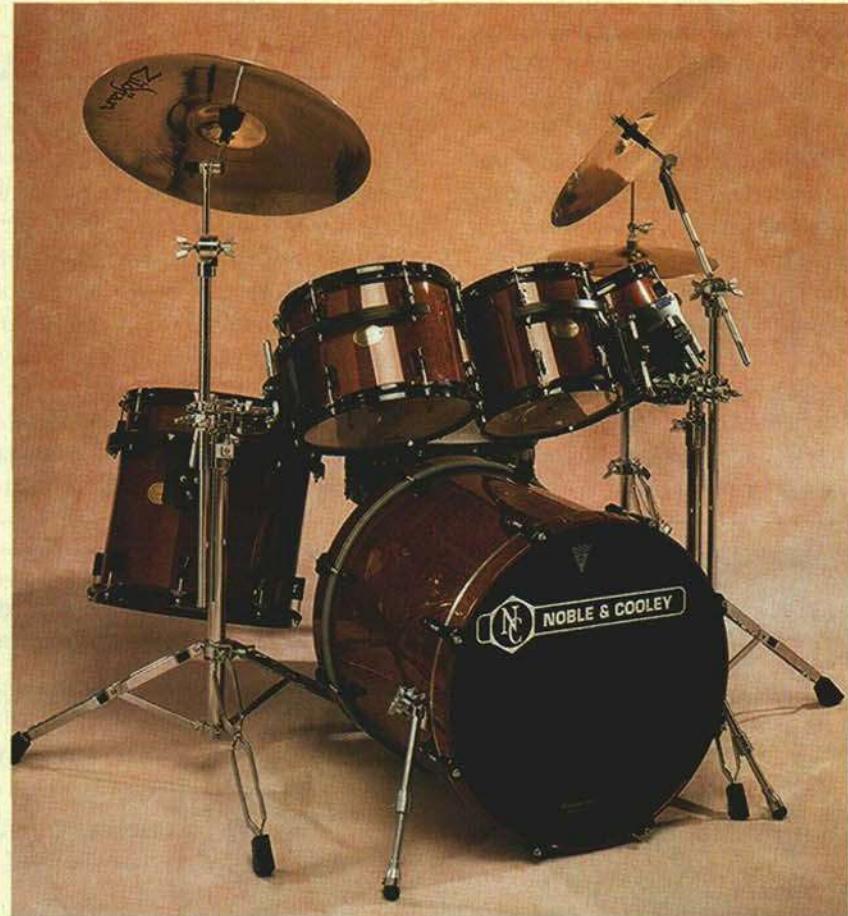
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**RF:** How was that presented to you?

**GM:** We got up to the ranch in Novato, sat around, and got to know each other, and we spent a night looking at some of the ideas. Steve was very organized. He really looks at it as an architect would look at a blueprint. We went into the old CBS Studios in San Francisco for about two weeks. He said we were going to do it as a trio, which was really the right combination for that situation.

We set up the drums and I had all sorts of half cymbals and broken cymbals, snare drums and bass drums, toms with heads on them, toms with no heads. And the vibe in the studio was like being back at the beginning of "Moondance," when the hairs on my arm would stand up. The feeling during that two-week period of time was pretty astounding. Like Van, Steve never worried about the outcome. This is a key factor with the artists I made the biggest records with. They trusted the players, and they let things happen.

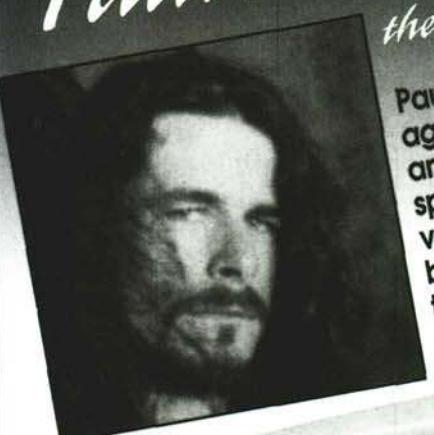
**RF:** Let's talk about representative Steve Miller tracks and what went into the creation of the drum parts.

**"On 'Keep On Rockin' Me' I used a very obnoxious pang cymbal that was cut and split. I was never able to record that cymbal because the engineers in LA. would always ask me to remove it. I got my revenge when 'Rockin' Me' went to Number 1, with that funky-sounding cymbal all over it."**

**GM:** There were three albums that were the biggest—*Fly Like An Eagle*, *Book Of Dreams*, and *Abracadabra*. The first two albums I mentioned were really the pivot point in Steve's career. About eighty percent of both those records were done in one ten-day period in San Francisco. I remember we were in the studio as the trio, and we were playing "Swingtown" in a straight-ahead 8th-note way. Steve had left the room for some reason, and Lonnie and I were fooling around, and I said, "Listen

to this beat, why don't you put a bass line to it?" The inspiration behind the beat is a hybrid of a couple of things: "Down In The Boondocks" by Bobby Bloom, and Hal Blaine's famous Ronettes beat. Steve came back in the room and said, "Keep playing it; don't stop." Luckily he just let all that stuff happen. I always like playing those "cycle" patterns, which is almost what they do today with sampling. But that beat gave "Swingtown" the extra amount of fuel it needed. I really like that part. It's still

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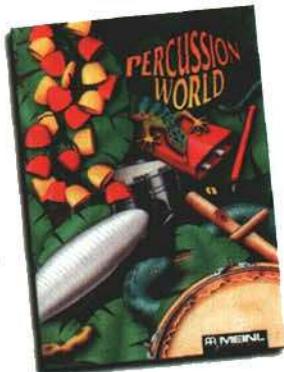
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being played on the radio quite a bit; I think it even became a Ford *Mustang* commercial.

There were two versions of "Take The Money And Run" off of *Fly Like An Eagle*. The original version sounds like the sister song to "The Joker." Steve felt it was too close, so he said, "Let's come up with something else." We didn't do that immediately, but we continued to cut some tracks. "Take The Money And Run" was actually the track to another song.

**RF:** It had an entirely different melody?

**GM:** Yes, we switched gears. On drums, I was stretching for another pattern. As soon as you hear the drums, you know what song it's going to be, which I try to do with my work. The two cymbals on "Take The Money And Run" were split in half so they sounded a bit different. The drumkits for those two Steve Miller albums were all pieces of kits, which I purposely put together.

Of course "Keep On Rockin' Me" was a straight-ahead rock 'n' roll tune. Once again, it was a completely different drum setup, and I implemented a very obnoxious

pang cymbal that was cut and split. It had a chip out of it and it would rattle against the edges, but I liked that cymbal. I was never able to record that cymbal before because most of the engineers in L.A. would ask me to remove it. I really pushed it forward in "Rockin' Me," and I got my revenge when that song went to Number 1, with that funky-sounding cymbal all over it.

There's another song from *Fly Like An Eagle*, "Wild Mountain Honey," which I really like. That became the FM hit at the time—what we called the cosmic love song. It still sounds beautiful on the radio. It's almost like you're levitating, and that's how we set it up. That was a mish mash of all my bells and finger cymbals. I had little tom-toms that had no heads on the bottom, and I played everything with vibraphone mallets. I actually played a lot of my stuff with vibraphone mallets.

Moving on to *Book Of Dreams*, which we were recording simultaneously, there's a song called "Jungle Love" that was a really big hit. I still hear that song a lot today. That was written by Lonnie Turner and Greg Douglas, the second guitar play-

er. On that one I implemented what I call my reverse drum beat. I turned it around musically—not to trick anybody or to see if someone thought I was cool—it just sounded like it needed it. The backbeat is in the opposite place that it should be: I'm playing it with my bass drum. You're not supposed to notice it; it was just one of those fun tunes—a lot of tom-toms, a lot of movement.

Another signature tune would be "Jet Airliner." It got into the Top 10 and played really well in concert. There we were, a rock band in the midst of the disco era. So I said, "Let's play this tune and trick 'em. We'll play it rock 'n' roll on the top and I'll sneak disco 4's on the bottom." If you listen to it today, it still works because it doesn't lean one way or the other.

After a couple of years of touring, we did *Abracadabra*. The single was Number 1 in eighteen countries. I've been told that no other American group has gone Number 1 in that many countries. But during that period of time reggae was becoming very popular. There was a particular way of dancing and a body language going on out

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there that was perfect for the tempo and rhythmic structure of "Abracadabra." I co-produced that record with Steve, and a bunch of my songs ended up on that record.

**RF:** How about discussing some of the important tracks you've recorded with other artists?

**GM:** Well, there's "Two Tickets To Paradise," "Baby Hold On," and "Think I'm In Love" by Eddie Money. Then I wound up playing on *Kiko* by Los Lobos, on a cut called "Wake Up Dolores." I also really like the way I played on "Better Days" from Bruce Springsteen's *Lucky Town*. It was really powerful, it sounded great, and it was mixed by Bob Clearmountain.

**RF:** Let's zero in on "Two Tickets To Paradise." How was that presented to you, how did you come up with your part, and why is that representative of you?

**GM:** Bruce Botnick was the producer, and we were rehearsing in a little studio in Burbank with the main band, which was Eddie and Jimmy Lyon. We also had my partner in crime, Lonnie Turner, because

Bruce hired us fresh off of the Steve Miller stuff. There was also a great keyboard player named Alan Pasqua. Bruce was one of my favorite producers just because of the way he went about doing things. He knew the right amount of time to rehearse something; he wouldn't let something be driven into the ground so far that you couldn't pull it back out.

**RF:** What is the rule? When do you move on?

**GM:** It's instinctive—it's something intangible. You set up a rehearsal with a band for three, maybe four hours. That's about all the time you can spend on assimilating the material. Within that framework, if I were producing, I would work on two songs a day, maybe three. I would have my little cassette recorder, have the guys play the tune, and then work it into some semblance of order. You work it around a little, you play it two or three times, you make a rough demo tape, and then you walk away. No more going back to the tune until it's time to go into the studio.

**RF:** Are there producers you've worked with who you would rather not work with

again?

**GM:** There are certain guys who do drill it into the ground. With Bruce Botnick, the process was to just touch on the material and come up with a part. Bruce asked how we felt about "Two Tickets To Paradise" and I said, "There's a real natural feel to that tune. When we get it, we'll look at each other and know which is the right take." That's exactly what happened.

"Baby Hold On" was a bit different. That was presented to us on a cassette tape, and from my recollection, it came as sort of a mishmash. We had to straighten out a few things on it. The drum beat wasn't there, so I came up with that. Lonnie's part was complementary to mine. Because of what we were playing, the song became something different than what we were given.

**RF:** So how did you come up with it? There's a part in that song with just you and the vocal.

**GM:** We hit upon that in the rehearsal studio, and I remember looking at Bruce and him looking at Lonnie and me because we realized we had something. I like coming

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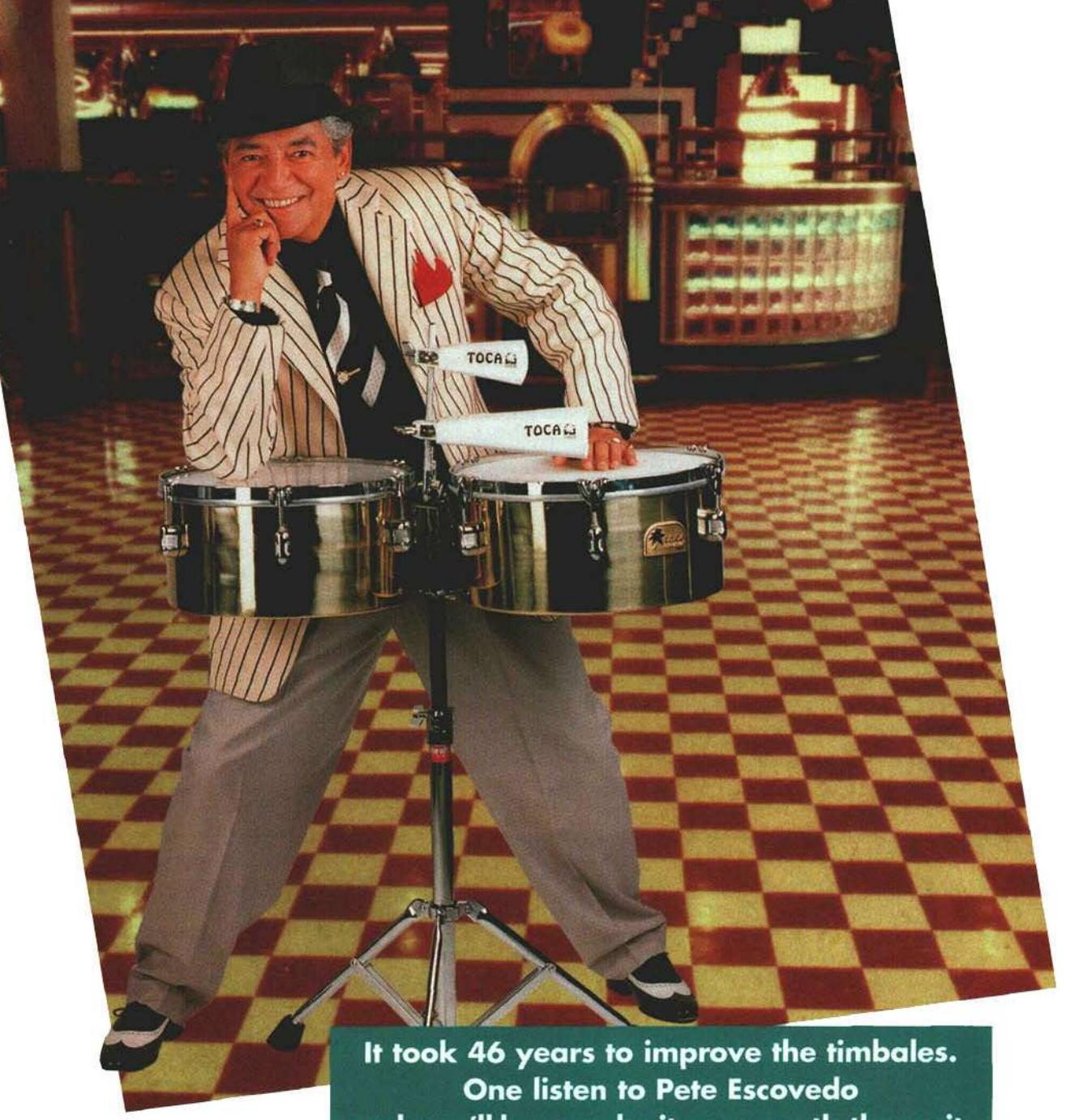
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# TOCA

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up with a drum part that is accessible but that hasn't been done before.

**RF:** I understand you did some recording with Streisand.

**GM:** I tracked two songs on her *Emotions* album, which for me was basically a session situation. I don't even remember the songs' names. We tracked it over at Record One, and I finished my parts without ever hearing the vocal.

**RF:** How was that presented to you?

**GM:** Purely as a chord chart. It was, "Here's the essence of the song, here's the feel," delivered from a cassette tape. It was one of those dates where you get it and you're gone.

**RF:** That must be a hard way to record—no inspiration.

**GM:** Those are hard. There are guys who do that all the time. I can do it, but it comes out differently. I know that, for me, the songs I recorded that were the biggest hits were all done with at least a guide vocal happening while we were recording. All the Van Morrison stuff, Steve Miller stuff, Eddie's stuff, and Bruce's stuff were done that way—we were playing off the rhythm

from the syllables.

**RF:** Another Eddie Money cut with a good part from you is "Think I'm In Love."

**GM:** That's a really high-energy track. I believe Tom Dowd was the producer and Andy Johns engineered. It was one of the tunes where we grabbed it in the studio. There was no pre-rehearsal for that album. We just went in and ran the tune down. When the tune was played once to me, I knew what it needed. It was just rock 'n' roll energy. I really like the cut because it plays really well on the radio. I like the drumming on it and all the parts. It's got that sound Andy Johns is known for.

**RF:** Tell us about making the Springsteen album.

**GM:** First of all, I had never met Bruce. I have known producer Chuck Plotkin since the mid-'70s, although everyone falls in and out of contact with each other. Back when the China Club was happening, I was doing a Tuesday night free-for-all. Everything was sounding really nice, and Chuck happened to come in to see another band. A few weeks later he called to ask if I wanted to play for Bruce. I must admit, I

was pretty much in awe. I was right back to being eighteen again! We started listening to the songs, and before I knew it, I wound up playing on the entire *Lucky Town* album. We started that on a Monday and completed all the parts by Thursday.

**RF:** Why is "Better Days" special to you?

**GM:** First of all it's on an album with Bruce. As a song, it has a lot of spirit. And I think the drums sound really wonderful. Toby Scott engineered and Bob Clearmountain mixed it.

**RF:** When you say something has a great drum sound, how much of that is you, and how much of that is the engineer? What is the variable to getting a good drum sound?

**GM:** You said it correctly when you said the word variable, which really applies. I've got four or five different kits and different ways of setting up my drums. The way I did the Miller stuff, Bruce's stuff, and Van's stuff each involved different ways of setting up the kit.

**RF:** Can you tell us what dictated that?

**GM:** The character of the tune. As it changed, I would change the drums. You've got your snare drum sounds, your

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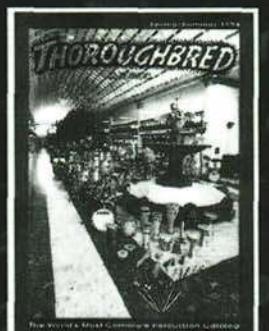
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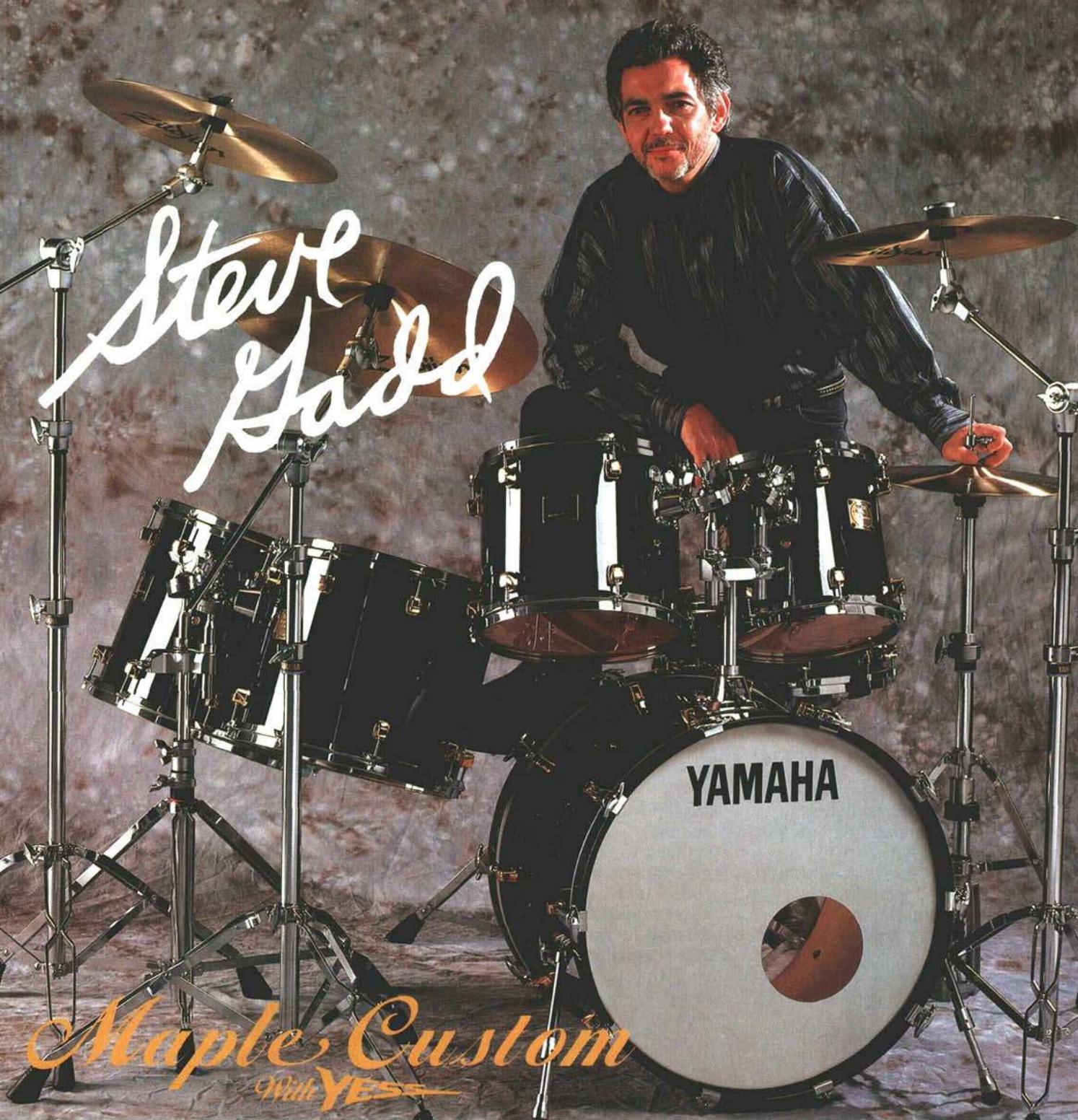
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## Defining the Art of Drumming: Steve Gadd and Yamaha

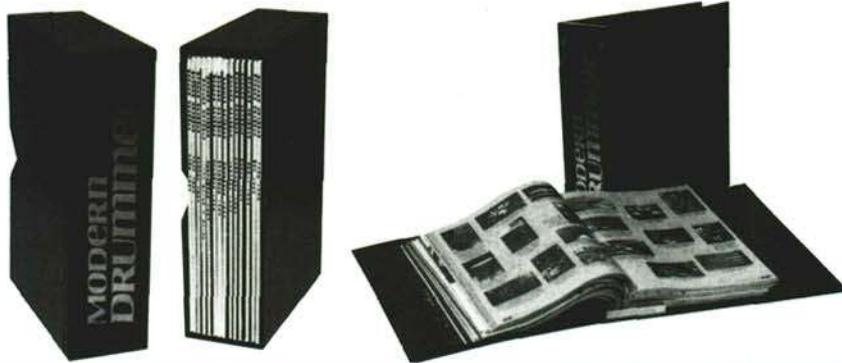
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bass drum sounds, your toms and cymbals. We have complete freedom now in terms of sonics. I think the rap scene freed us up. I remember times in the past when people couldn't accept a snare drum that sounded like a coffee can or a cymbal that was really offensive.

**RF:** Are you saying the drum sound is decided on by you and the engineer working together?

**GM:** If I know the artist and/or producer, it's one thing, but if I don't know them I'll go in the studio with a completely normal setup. I'll have the rest of my gear there so that I have options, though. You just don't know what's going to happen. If you don't know the people, you don't know if you're in synch with their terminology. They may say, "We want something to sound real cool," but their cool and your cool may be yards apart.

In terms of sounds, though, I finally feel really free. Pretty much anything is acceptable today. Along with a snare drum, we can trigger anything we want, including explosions, gun shots, and people slamming doors.

**RF:** How much electronics are you finding in the studios these days?

**GM:** Over ninety percent of it is still acoustic. You can actually take certain drum samples and feed them and trigger up with acoustic sounds you've already recorded. When people ask me to go in and play for them, it's usually pretty natural stuff, with natural drum sounds. I have all the other stuff, but whether or not I use it depends on the artist.

I love how MTV thinks they've discovered something new with their *Unplugged* show. But I think because of that show the attitude has changed a bit in the studios. People are using live drums and real instruments, setting up, and recording. There's more of a "let's go for it" attitude. That has dominated the scene in the last two years. It's come full circle.

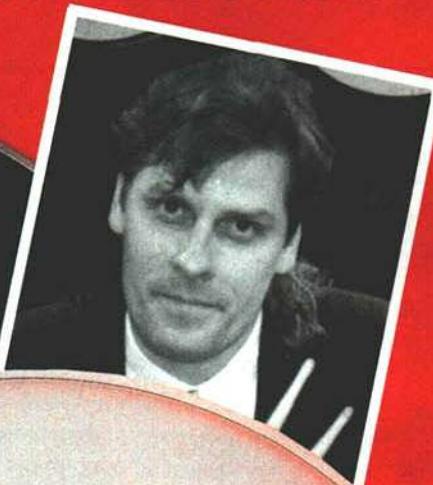
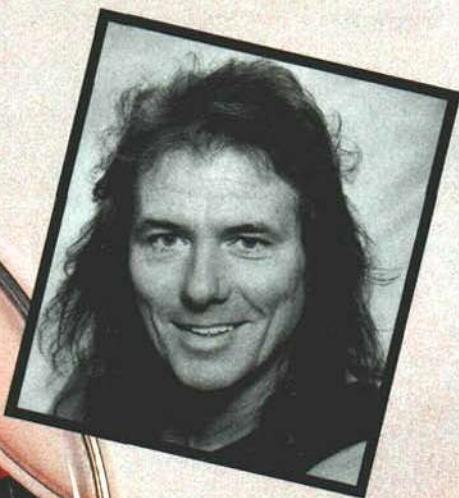
**RF:** What about you? What are your future goals?

**GM:** I've enjoyed all the recording and session work that I've done. But I would love to have one band that I could express my ideas with. That has always been my goal. I'm always searching to be part of a unit.

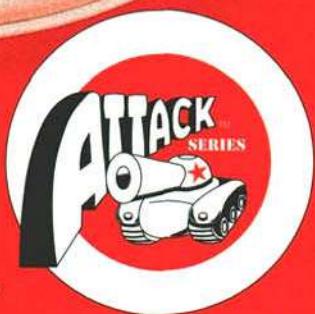
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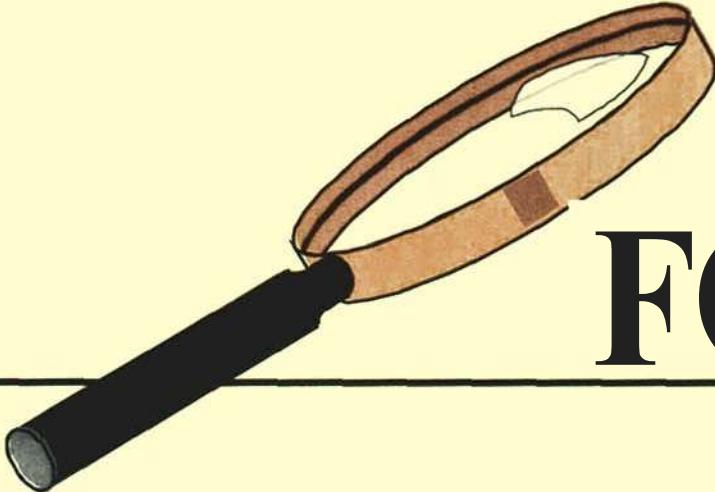
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Pictured right to left (counterclockwise): Charlie Adams - Yanni,  
Mike Terrana - Yngwie Malmsteen and Aynsley Dunbar - Journey.



# FOCUS ON

With their prevalence in today's drum-hardware market, it's hard to believe that drum racks have only been *on* that market a little over ten years. Pearl's *Drum Rack*, originally designed by Paul Jamieson and Jeff Porcaro, appeared in August of 1983, followed a little later that year by the *Collarlock Bar System* from Canada. Within a matter of a few years, rack systems gained tremendous popularity—owing largely to the equally tremendous proliferation of bigger and more complicated drumkits.

Today's rack systems benefit from ten years of "field testing" by artists and consumers alike. As a result, components like clamps and connectors have become sturdier and more sophisticated. Both curved and straight bar sections have been made available, and attention has been paid to the acoustics of the bars themselves. Most importantly, drummers have come to *understand* racks: how they're designed, how they work, and what they have to offer.

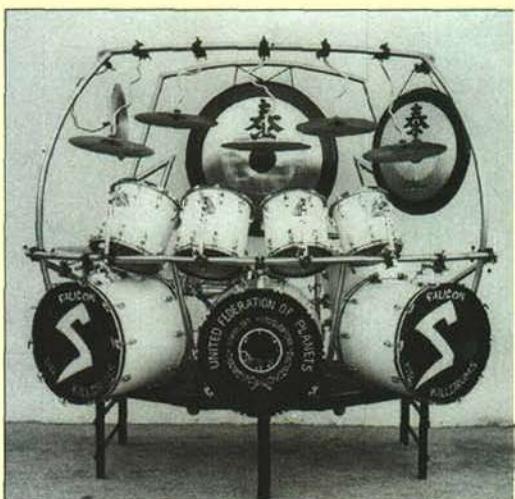
The whole function of a rack system is to simplify a drum-

mer's setup and make things more comfortable. Using one or more horizontal bars to support several drums, cymbal booms, and other items in a complicated setup can save both weight and space by eliminating most (if not all) individual tripods. Of course, if the drumset is compact and minimal to begin with, a rack system can actually be more cumbersome than the individual hardware would be. So a drummer should obviously determine the practicality of—and *need* for—a drum rack in the first place as the initial step in considering which rack to purchase.

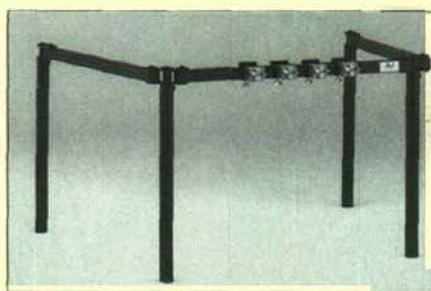
## TYPES OF RACK SYSTEMS

There are essentially three categories of drum racks. They are: "spanner-style" component racks, "free-standing" component racks, and custom riser/rack systems.

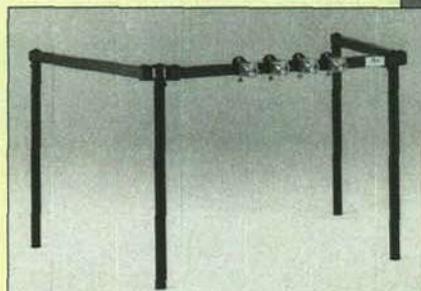
Spanner styles use horizontal bars that attach to the vertical pipes of existing cymbal and drum stands for their support. Clamps are then used on these bars to hold additional drum



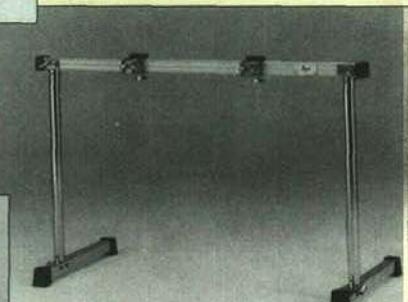
A custom riser/rack system from Falcon Designs



Pearl DR 110



Pearl DR 80



Pearl DR 50

# DRUM RACKS

By Rick Van Horn

and/or cymbal arms. These systems are offered by Gibraltar independently from their other rack series, and utilize smaller tubing. Yamaha also offers equipment designed for this purpose. (Since spanner systems are actually hybrids of individual stands and totally free-standing racks, however, they do not fit within the scope of this feature. Consequently they are not included in our reference chart.)

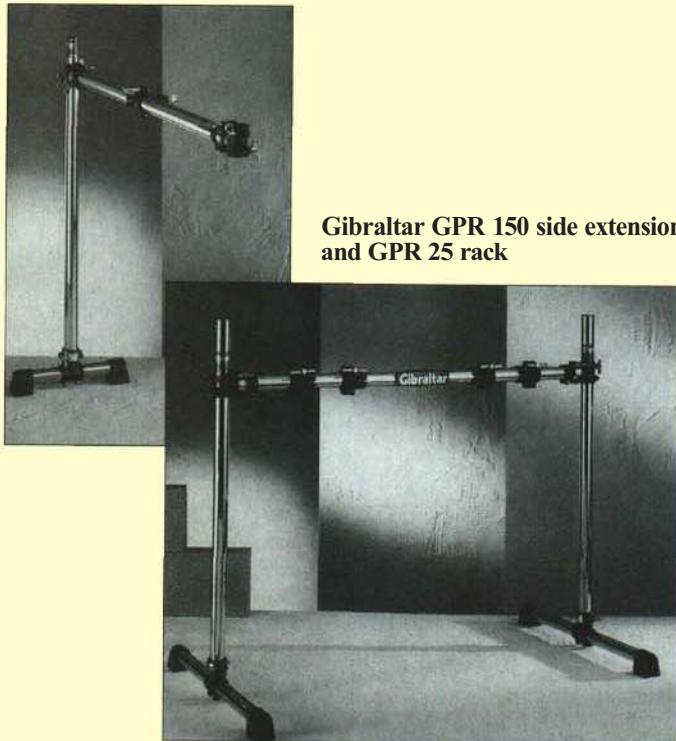
Free-standing racks utilize their own legs to support the horizontal bars. Depending on the number of the horizontal bars (and thus the number of legs required), the legs may be straight pipes or bars, hinged A-frame assemblies that extend a shorter leg out at an angle from the vertical leg, or T- or L-frame assemblies that include crosspieces at the bottom of each vertical leg (along the floor). These are the types of racks that most drummers visualize when the words "drum rack" are mentioned, and these are the racks that are the focus of this feature.

Custom riser/rack systems are complete units that combine some sort of riser or platform with custom-shaped bars or tub-

ing to create a one-of-a-kind construction for a given drumkit. Often these special systems employ heavier-duty materials and more specialized design elements than those used in component racks, in order to maximize both their functionality and their visual appeal. Notable examples of custom riser/rack systems come from Falcon Designs (1115 Old Coachman Rd., Clearwater, FL 34625, [813] 797-2468) and Ryzer-Rax (a division of Concert Staging Systems, 9823 Hilaro Springs Rd., Little Rock, AR 72209, [501] 565-7998). Prices for such units are negotiable based on the complexity of the design, but usually range from \$5,000 to \$11,000 or more. (Ryzer-Rax also offers ready-made riser systems that can be adapted with their *MRS/RAX* modular rack system to create a rack/riser combination at a considerably lower price.)

## COMPONENT RACK DESIGN

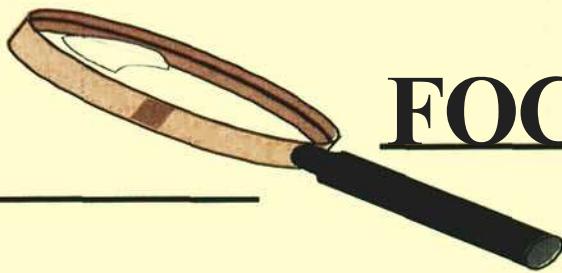
Today's drum racks are differentiated primarily by differences in the design of their horizontal bars. There are basically



Gibraltar GPR 150 side extension and GPR 25 rack



Tama PMD800SS rack and PMD80SS side extension



# FOCUS ON

two such designs: square tubing (represented by Pearl and Ryzer-Rax), or round tubing (Tama, Gibraltar, Cannon, and Yamaha). The advantages or disadvantages of each design depend on how complicated the total drum setup is and how handy the drummer is at assembling component parts.

Square tubing provides an absolute guarantee against slipping, since a clamped item cannot slip around a square corner. This makes the use of additional locking memory collars unnecessary. However, all stand pipes connected to the rack must come off in either a vertical or horizontal manner.

Round tubing provides more positioning flexibility, since a clamp can be positioned at any point around the circumference of the tubing. However, it is possible for heavy items to rotate a clamp out of position. To reduce this risk it's often necessary to reinforce each clamp with one or more locking memory collars—which add weight to the overall rack.

There are two sizes of tubing used by manufacturers that employ the tubular rack design. Yamaha uses 1 1/4" tubing, which requires the use of only their own clamps and tubing segments for expansion. Cannon, Gibraltar, and Tama all use 1 1/2"-diameter tubing. This makes obtaining a spare clamp or tubing section fairly simple, since all three manufacturers offer component parts as retrofit items and you don't necessarily have to be brand-specific. You should, however, be aware that the quality level of these components is not identical from brand to brand. For example: Cannon uses less durable materi-

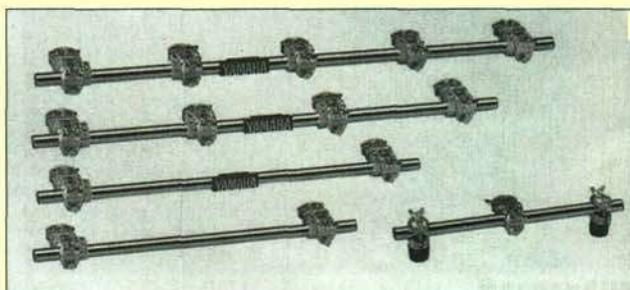
als in many of its fittings in order to keep costs down, Gibraltar offers two different series of clamps and connectors to meet different economic and functional needs, and Tama's tubing is of heavy-duty, stainless steel. Make sure the components you add to your rack are appropriate both to your requirements and your budget.

All of the companies that use round tubing for their racks offer a wide variety of clamps and connectors to permit flexibility in the actual shaping and arrangement of the rack itself. Using these components it's possible to interconnect different tubing sections at a variety of heights to create a rack system tailored to a given drummer's kit configuration and seating level. Yamaha's *Super Rack System* especially stresses the personalization of rack setups by means of its extensive selection of tubing lengths and its universal clamps.

Square-tubed rack systems from Pearl and Ryzer-Rax take a different approach. Their design establishes a single height for all horizontal bars, and relies on the height and angle adjustments of the stand sections clamped to those bars to meet the drummer's positioning needs.

## CONVENIENCE AND PORTABILITY

Arranging a drumkit—especially an elaborate one—on a rack system "from scratch" is an extremely tedious and time-consuming process. So once you have everything positioned on the rack just where you want it, you want to be confident that



**Yamaha Super Rack System components can be used to create personalized rack constructions.**



# DRUM RACKS

everything will be in the same place and the kit will feel the same the next time you re-assemble the rack. With that in mind, all of the round-tube racks employ memory collars to secure the clamps in place during transit, and have notched connection fittings to make sure all the tubes go back together with the same relationship to each other. In this way the various tubes and legs can be separated safely for pack-up. Ryzer-Rax square bars feature internal clamps within the bars that *can't* move, so there's no problem with breaking their rack down for transport.

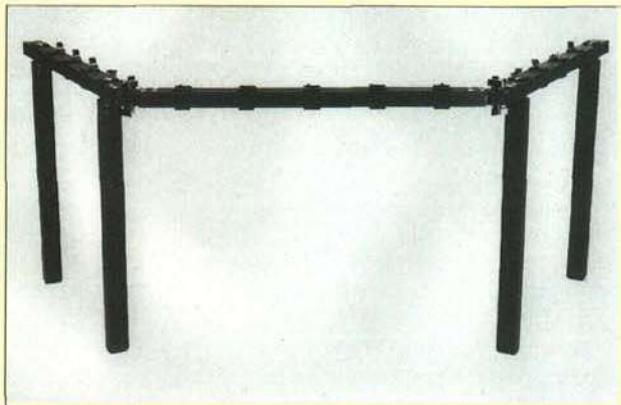
Pearl's three-sided drum racks are designed so that after their legs have been removed, their horizontal sections can fold together—ostensibly with the clamps left in place. In reality, however, this only works if the clamps are placed on the various horizontal bars in such a way that they do not meet face-to-face when the bars are folded together. Otherwise it is still necessary to disconnect at least some of the bars from each other. However, since Pearl's clamps attach securely to their bars with massive wingnuts (and can't rotate on the square bar), it's virtually impossible for them to shift in transit, so your setup is quite secure.

## THE RACK REFERENCE CHART

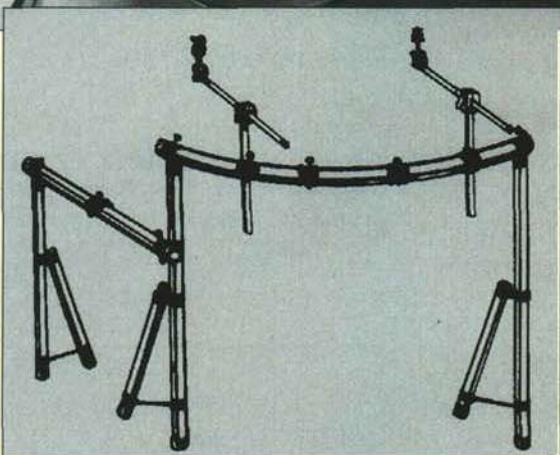
Every manufacturer offers a basic, "starter" free-standing rack system designed to span a bass drum and (usually) hold two toms and two cymbal arms. The next step from there is a stock addition to one side or the other, usually referred to as a

"side extension." From there on it's a matter of adding individual components or component packages to expand the rack as needed. Our reference chart compares these basic free-standing racks and extensions (along with specific component parts) from Cannon, Gibraltar, Pearl, Ryzer-Rax, Tama, and Yamaha. (Drum Workshop currently offers a round-tube rack system based on the original round-tubed Collarlock design. However, at press time they were preparing to introduce a totally new approach to racks. That approach will be examined in a future issue.)

Although Pearl and Ryzer-Rax each offers single-span and side-extension racks as described above, their *primary* rack offerings comprise four vertical legs supporting three horizontal bars—forming a three-sided rack setup. With that in mind, information on those models has also been included in our reference chart.



Ryzer-Rax MRS/RAX



Cannon Mega-Rack System

# MD's Rack Reference Chart

## FREE-STANDING RACK SYSTEMS

Brand & Series	Model	Description	Maximum Crossbar Width	Maximum Crossbar Height	Tubing/Bar Dimension	No. of Clamps	Clamp Fasteners	Leg Style	Price
Cannon Mega Rack	Mega 5000	Drum Rack <sup>1</sup>	46"	36"	1 1/2" Diam	4	Rod/Ball	A-frame	295.00
Cannon Mega Rack	Mega 1000	Side Extension	43"	36"	1 1/2" Diam	1	Rod/Ball	A-frame	129.00
Gibraltar Power Rack	GPR 525	Drum Rack	43 1/2"	38"	1 1/2" Diam	4	Wingnuts	T-frame	299.50
Gibraltar Power Rack	GPR 150	Side Extension	43 1/2"	38"	1 1/2" Diam	1	Wingnuts	T-frame	139.50
Gibraltar Road Series	GRS 400	Drum Rack <sup>3</sup>	48"	32"	1 1/2" Diam	4	Wingnuts	T-frame	450.50
Gibraltar Road Series	GRS 400C	Drum Rack <sup>1</sup>	46"	32"	1 1/2" Diam	4	Wingnuts	T-frame	450.50
Gibraltar Road Series	GRS 100	Side Extension	48"	32"	1 1/2" Diam	1	Wingnuts	T-frame	239.50
Gibraltar Road Series	GRS 100C	Side Extension <sup>1</sup>	46"	32"	1 1/2" Diam	1	Wingnuts	T-frame	239.50
Pearl Deluxe	DR 80	3-Sided Rack	36"	29"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	4	Wingnuts	Straight	259.00
Pearl Deluxe	DR 008	Side Extension	36"	29"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	0	N/A	Straight	69.00
Pearl Pro	DR 50	Drum Rack	46"	29"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	2	Wingnuts	L-frame	250.00
Pearl Pro	DR 110	3-Sided Rack	36"	27 3/4"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	4	Wingnuts	Straight	398.00
Pearl Pro	DR 002	Side Extension	36"	27 3/4"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	0	N/A	Straight	95.00
Pearl Pro	DR 210	3-Sided Rack	36"	29"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	4	Wingnuts	Straight	398.00
Pearl Pro	DR 004	Side Extension	36"	29"	1 1/2"x1 1/2"	0	N/A	Straight	95.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	3-Sided Rack	36"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	15 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	Straight	389.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	3-Sided Rack	36"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	15 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	Straight	412.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	Drum Rack	36"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	5 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	L-frame	285.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	Drum Rack	48"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	6 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	L-frame	429.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	Side Extension	36"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	5 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	L-frame	165.00
Ryzer-Rax	MRS/RAX	Side Extension	48"	26"	1 1/2"x2"	6 <sup>10</sup>	Wingknobs	L-frame	265.00
Tama Power Tower	PMD300FC	Drum Rack <sup>4,13</sup>	40"	30"	1 1/2" Diam	4	Key/Nuts	A-frame	379.00
Tama Power Tower	PMD20FC	Side Extension <sup>4</sup>	40"	30"	1 1/2" Diam	1	Key/Nuts	A-frame	149.00
Tama Power Tower	PMD800SS	Drum Rack <sup>1,6,13</sup>	43"	41"	1 1/2" Diam	2 <sup>7</sup>	Key/Nuts	T-frame	549.00
Tama Power Tower	PMD80SS	Side Extension <sup>1,6,14</sup>	43"	41"	1 1/2" Diam	1 <sup>9</sup>	Key/Nuts	T-frame	329.00
Yamaha Super Rack	SRC4	Drum Rack	45"	40"	1 1/4" Diam	4	Wingnuts	T-frame	615.00
Yamaha Super Rack	See notes	Side Extension	45"	40"	1 1/4" Diam	2	Wingnuts	T-frame	290.00

<sup>1</sup> Includes curved horizontal crossbar

<sup>2</sup> Rod/ball fasteners are clamps fitted with small steel rods with plastic balls at either end in place of wingnuts for fastening the clamps.

<sup>3</sup> Includes center angle adjustment on horizontal crossbar

<sup>4</sup> Uses chrome-plated iron pipe

<sup>5</sup> Clamps attach to tubing with set screws requiring a special allen wrench; clamps hold stand items with wingnuts.

<sup>6</sup> Uses stainless-steel pipe

<sup>7</sup> Cymbal boom arms (included) fit directly into tops of vertical pipe legs, eliminating need for two clamps

<sup>8</sup> Uses rectangular floor-leg sections as crossbars of the T-frame

<sup>9</sup> Cymbal boom arm (included) fits directly into top of vertical pipe leg, eliminating need for one clamp

<sup>10</sup> Uses internal clamps within the horizontal bars

<sup>11</sup> Aluminum finish

<sup>12</sup> Black finish

<sup>13</sup> Includes two cymbal boom arms and two tom-tom L-arms

<sup>14</sup> Includes one cymbal boom arm and one tom-tom L-arm

<sup>15</sup> Yamaha does not offer a side extension unit except as separate components. The extension described is comprised of one RS100-2 crossbar and one RS LEG leg package.

## SQUARE-TUBE SYSTEM COMPONENT PRICES

(representative items only; contact manufacturer for additional items and details)

Item	Pearl Deluxe	Pearl Pro	Ryzer-Rax <sup>1</sup>
18" Anglebar			79.00
24" Anglebar			98.00
36" Sidebar			125.00
36" Crossbar			205.00
48" Sidebar			225.00
48" Crossbar			349.00
Internal clamp			35.00
Hinged Multi-clamp	23.00	28.00	
Upper rack post <sup>2</sup>			25.00

Ryzer-Rax bars feature three to six internal clamps, depending on length. Pearl rack clamps can also be utilized to increase clamping capacity. Used to create overhead rack for suspending cymbals

## ROUND-TUBE SYSTEM COMPONENT PRICES

(representative items only; contact manufacturer for additional items and details)

Item	Cannon Mega Rack	Gibraltar Power Rack	Gibraltar Road Series	Tama Power Tower	Yamaha Super Rack System
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24" Tube		18.95	18.95		25.00 <sup>3</sup>
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25" Tube (curved)				50.00 <sup>1</sup>	
30" Tube		19.50	19.50	45.00 <sup>1</sup>	
33 1/2" Tube					30.00 <sup>3</sup>
36" Tube		19.95	19.95		
40" Tube				50.00 <sup>1</sup>	30.00 <sup>3</sup>
40" Tube <sup>2</sup>				60.00 <sup>1</sup>	
43" Tube (curved)				60.00 <sup>1</sup>	
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45 1/4" Tube					35.00 <sup>3</sup>
50" Tube				55.00 <sup>1</sup>	
51 1/4" Tube					40.00 <sup>3</sup>
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60" Tube				60.00 <sup>1</sup>	
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70" Tube				70.00 <sup>1</sup>	
24" Curved Tube		27.95	27.95		
40" Curved Tube		38.50	38.50		
46" Curved Tube		51.00	51.00		
T-leg clamp			34.50	42.00	
Hinged leg clamp	13.50			42.00	
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Foot clamp					50.00

<sup>1</sup> Stainless steel

<sup>2</sup> With fitting for cymbal boom arm

<sup>3</sup> While all other brands of tubes are 1 1/2" in diameter, Yamaha tubes are 1 1/4" in diameter and foam-filled to reduce vibration



What do Peter Erskine, Gregg Bissonette,  
Stephen Perkins, Kenwood Dennard,  
Steve Smith, and Mike Portnoy have in common?

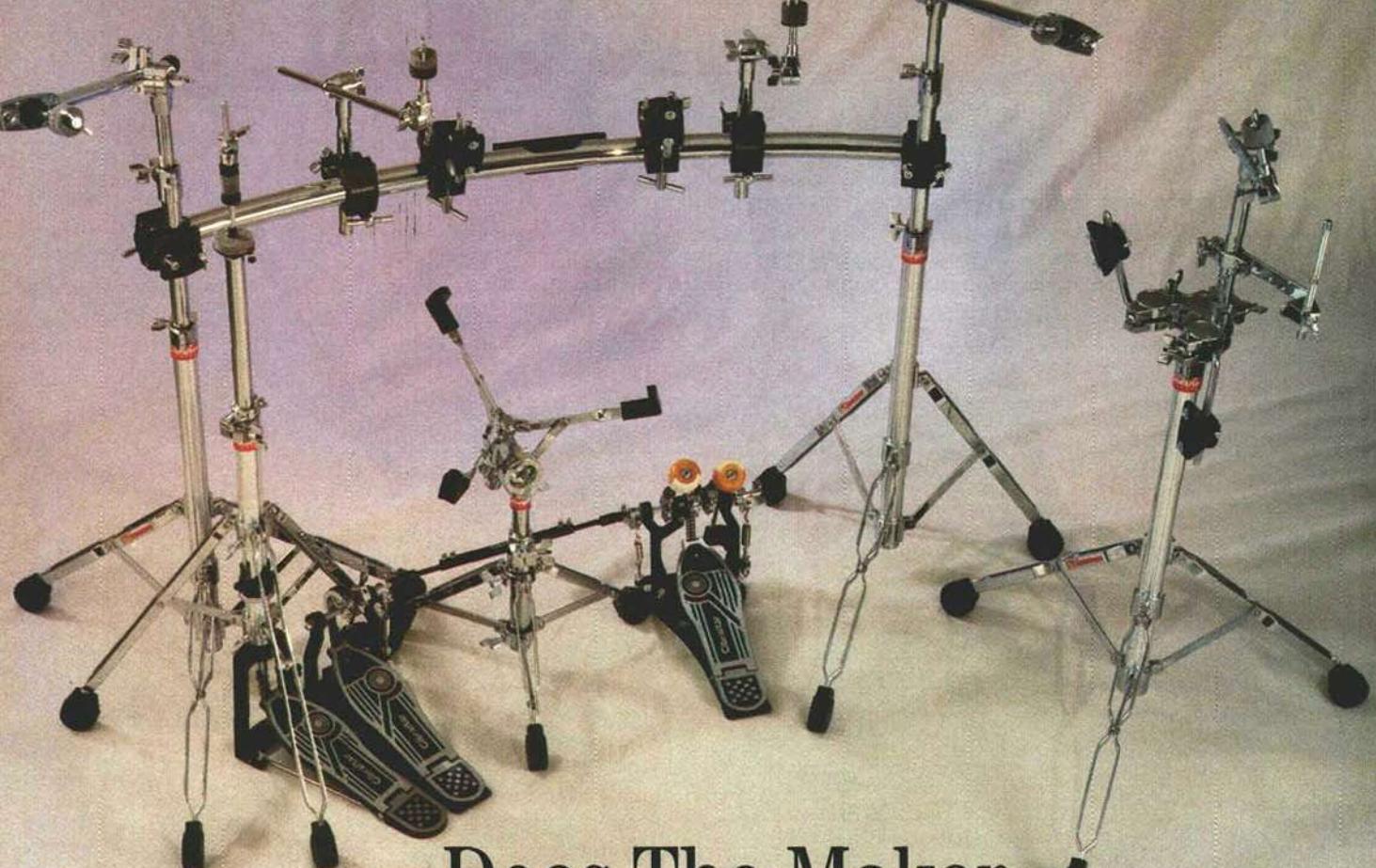
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See page 18 for details



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Perhaps it's this commitment to excellence that has pros like Ricky Lawson sold on Gibraltar. Or it just may be that Gibraltar gives him all the support he needs while touring with Phil Collins.

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\*Advanced Tripod System, Randall L. May U.S. Patent 5,072,910  
Foreign Patent Pending.

# Connie Kay

by Rick Van Horn

Connie Kay, drummer for the legendary Modern Jazz Quartet since 1955, died on November 30, 1994 at the age of sixty-seven. For more than forty years he was known and respected for his personal brand of subtle, musical drumming. His last performance with the MJQ was a "floating jazz festival" in the Caribbean this past October.

Kay (whose real name was Conrad Henry Kirnon) was born in 1927 in Tuckahoe, New York. He studied piano with his mother, but taught himself to play the drums. Among his first gigs were appearances with a young Miles Davis in 1944 and '45. He then joined Lester Young's group in 1949, and also played in small groups led by Stan Getz, Coleman Hawkins, and Charlie Parker.

But it was a gig as a "temporary replacement" that led to Connie Kay's place in musical history. As Connie often related, "I went to see the Modern Jazz Quartet at Birdland. Kenny [Clarke, original MJQ drummer] quit that night. They had a gig the next night, so they called me in the morning and asked me to work on upcoming gigs. I was just filling in until they got somebody steady. But I stayed. I could see the future in the MJQ. I knew they were going to happen."

And happen they did. Over almost the next forty years (with a hiatus between 1974 and 1981) the MJQ became—and remained—one of the most popular groups in the history of jazz. They combined elements of jazz and classical music, and it was Connie's unobtrusive yet authoritative playing within this framework that earned him his reputation among the elite of jazz drummers. Noted for his delicate use of triangles, crotales, miniature timpani, and other percussion instruments along with the traditional drumset, Connie's performances were the epitome of clean, sensitive drumming.

In the years between the MJQ's 1974 breakup and their eventual reuniting in 1981, Kay spent four years with Benny Goodman, worked as the house drummer at Condon's in New York, and per-

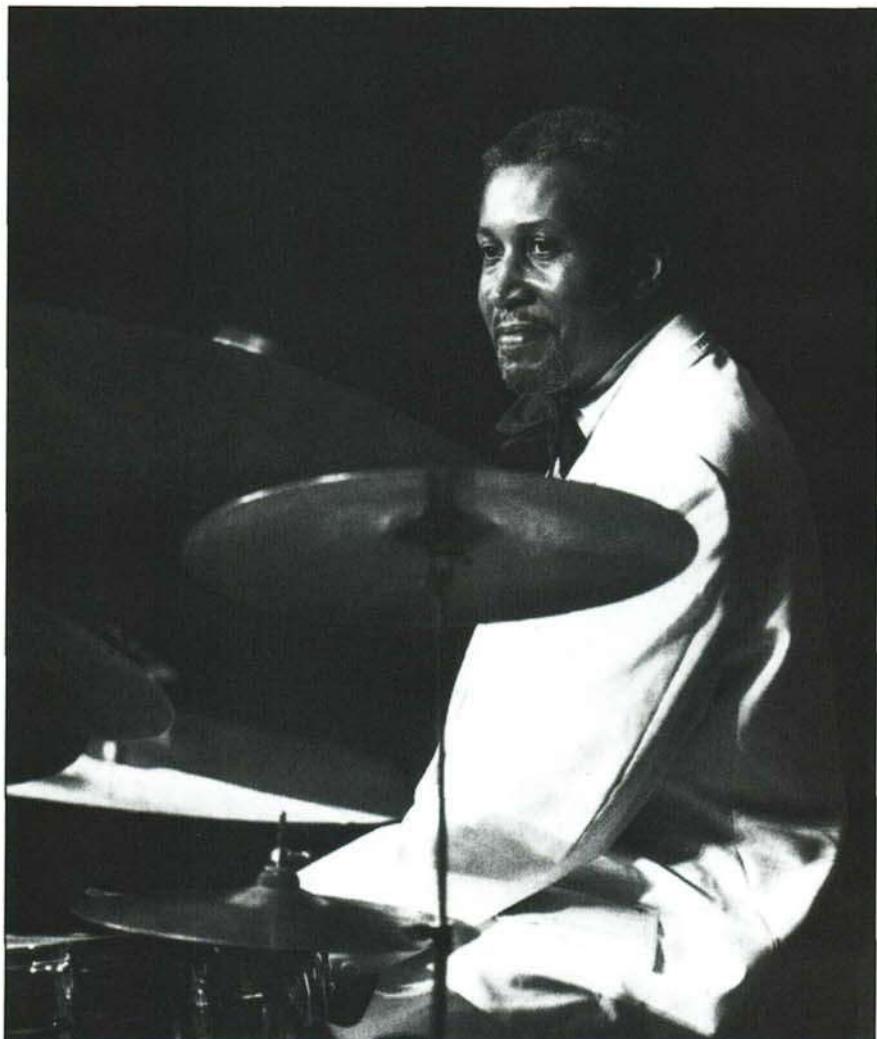


Photo by Tom Copi

formed on a wealth of recordings. Along with the dozens of MJQ albums, he can be heard on recordings with Bobby Timmons, Randy Weston, John Coltrane, Cannonball Adderley, Herbie Hancock, Sonny Stitt, Gerry Mulligan, Sonny Rollins, Red Norvo, and Tommy Flanagan.

Connie Kay brought a sophistication to jazz drumming rarely heard before. His restraint and subtle use of varied tone colors were clear proof that jazz drumming could be penetrating and driving, as well as lyrical and intelligent.



# Solo Structure

by John Riley



## MUSIC KEY



Drum solos can vary in length from one measure to as long as a drummer desires. Short solos can serve as a transition from one section of a tune to another, or to change the feel or mood. Longer solos are used for exchanging ideas (as in "trading" 4's, 8's, or choruses) or to feature the drummer.

Whatever the purpose of the solo, the drum soloist's ideas should be played in a musical fashion with a swinging feel, and they should relate to the music being played. A good solo on any instrument is one that is played in the style of the tune, feels good, and tells a story. There are many ways to develop a solo, including theme and variation, call and response, dynamic contrasts, tension and release, and textural changes.

Long solos consist of four- and eight-bar phrases, which in turn are made up of one-bar ideas. To develop a musical soloing style we will begin by looking at one-bar phrases.

## One-Bar Phrases

The one-bar phrases presented here are not shown because they are "hot licks," or the "hippest" stuff. They are meant to be used to develop the kind of musical logic and melodic phrasing that all the great jazz players employed. When soloing, Max Roach, Kenny Clarke, Philly Joe Jones, and Roy Haynes didn't just play what they had practiced and memorized. These masters played off the melodic motifs of the song and developed ideas that the other soloists presented in their solos. It's taken for granted that they knew the melody and form of the songs, and that they had good time, a swinging feel, and the technique necessary to execute their ideas.

People still listen to these drummers thirty, forty, even fifty years later—not only because they swing so hard, but because they developed their music in a logical way. The key to bringing a sense of musical logic to your soloing is listening as you play, and building each new idea on what was played previously. Don't think about patterns or stickings. Listen to the *music*—your ideas will evolve from that.

To begin, play each one-bar phrase at a comfortable tempo. (Try quarter note = 120.)

Four measures of 4/4 time. The first measure has a single eighth note followed by a sixteenth-note pattern. The second measure has a sixteenth-note pattern. The third measure has a sixteenth-note pattern. The fourth measure has a single eighth note followed by a sixteenth-note pattern. Measures are separated by vertical bar lines. Measures are grouped by double bar lines with repeat dots.

Four measures of 4/4 time. The first measure has a sixteenth-note pattern. The second measure has a sixteenth-note pattern. The third measure has a sixteenth-note pattern. The fourth measure has a single eighth note followed by a sixteenth-note pattern. Measures are separated by vertical bar lines. Measures are grouped by double bar lines with repeat dots.

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### Developing Musical Phrases

#### Step 1—Repetition

Now, trade fours with yourself: play four bars of time followed by one of the one-bar ideas repeated four times (four bars). Do this until the phrases flow together.



#### Step 2—Orchestrating Phrases

Now orchestrate (move) the ideas around the set while trading fours. Here are some of the melodic possibilities:



Music is a language. Your playing communicates with those you are playing with and with the audience. Listen to what you're playing and develop your ideas. Don't ramble—say something memorable when you play.

*Taken from The Art Of Bop Drumming, by John Riley (#MMBK0056CD), Manhattan Music, Inc., a division of Warner Bros. Publications Inc. Used by permission.*



# A Simon Phillips Ostinato

by Rob Leytham



I remember the first time I heard Simon Phillips on a recording. While working on my grandfather's farm one summer, Pete Townshend's song "Let My Love Open The Door" came on the radio. I had to stop what I was doing and listen to the song, not only because it's a great song, but because the drumming commanded my attention. When I learned the drummer was Simon Phillips, I became a big fan. Through the years, his emotional and powerful playing has never failed to inspire me.

This ostinato is inspired by one that I saw Simon perform in a clinic in 1991 and on his DCI instructional video, *Simon Phillips Returns*. First, I have to say that the ostinato presented here is easier than the one Simon played. He incorporates his Octobans, double bass, gong drum, and snare in his ostinato. I simplified it for my students by using just one bass drum, hi-hat, floor tom, and snare. I couldn't simplify the idea much, though. I worked on it periodically for a year before I gave it to any students, and during my practice time the kindest adjective I ever used was "frustrating."

This ostinato is played between the left hand on the hi-hat (playing one note) and the bass drum (playing two notes), while a rhythmic solo is played between the floor tom and snare drum with the right hand. First, learn the ostinato counting it as 16th

notes in 4/4 time (as shown in the example). Where I made my mistake was counting the ostinato as a triplet, then placing the floor tom and snare in different patterns of four. It can be done this way, though—in fact, I have a former student who prefers to play it in this fashion. (He always was an over-achiever!)



After getting the feel of the ostinato, begin placing the snare drum on beats 2 and 4 while trying to keep the pattern of three in the back of your head. When this feels comfortable, start adding the floor tom pattern from the following example, four measures at a time. The first set of four are 8th notes between the floor and the snare. The second group of four incorporates dotted 8th notes followed by a 16th. Finally, the last section of four uses more complicated 16th-note patterns.

Make sure that you keep the ostinato in the background and play the floor tom and snare with aggression and confidence. Learn slowly, count out loud, and, most importantly, try not to get frustrated!



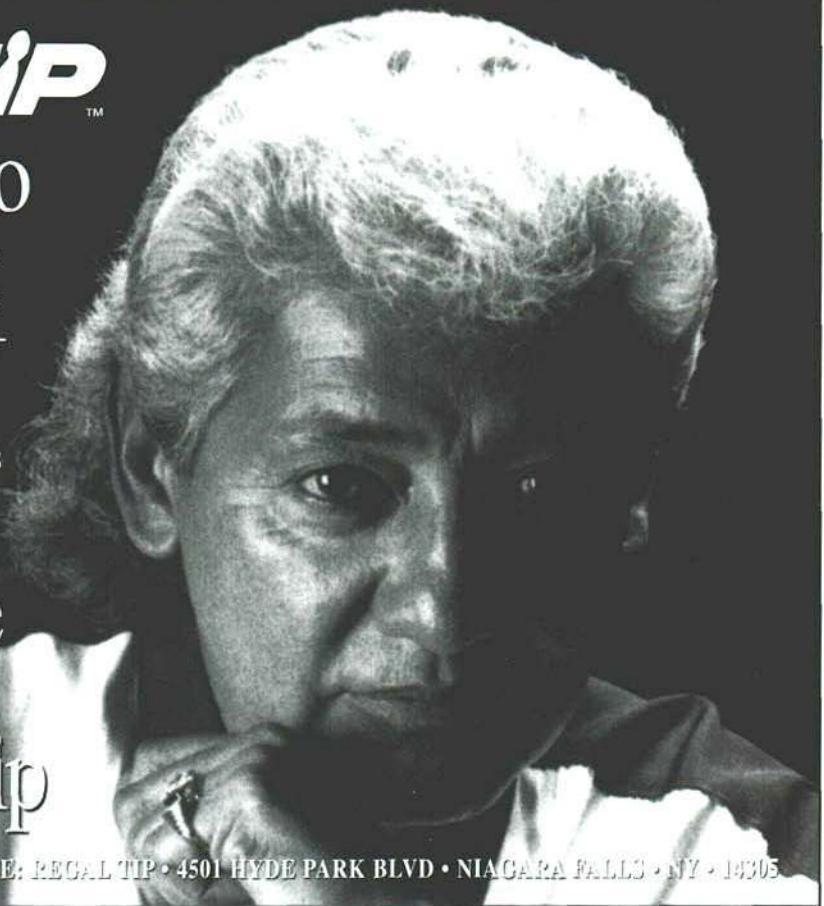
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## Basic Reading: Part 5

by Hal Howland

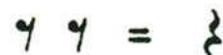
This is the fifth installment of "Basic Reading." Please review Parts 1 through 4 before continuing below.

### 8th-Note Rests

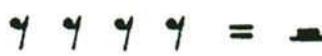
Let's begin this month with 8th-note rests. An 8th-note rest looks like this:



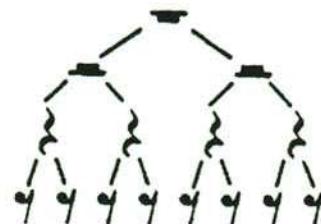
Two 8th rests equal one quarter rest.



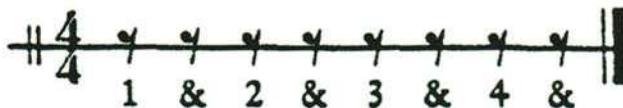
Four 8th rests equal one half rest.



Eight 8th rests equal one whole rest.



In 4/4 time, one 8th rest equals half of a beat.

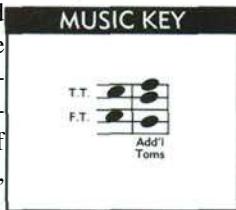


### Basic Beats

Now let's apply what we've learned to some basic drum beats. Read the following patterns slowly, and try to play them at the kit. (Remember to count the rests as well as the notes.)

## Tom-Tom Notation

So far we've read notes assigned only to the snare drum, bass drum, ride cymbal, and hi-hat. Let's add the toms. In drum notation, toms are written on the second and fourth spaces of the staff, as well as on the second, fourth, and fifth lines.



Whereas many continuous beat patterns involve the tom-toms (we'll examine a few later), most drumset tom-tom writing occurs in fills. A fill is a musical figure designed to connect two segments of music (say, an introduction to a verse, a verse to a

bridge, or a chorus to a guitar solo).

Since the most musical, logical, and personal fills often are improvised on the spot, and since few composers and arrangers write idiomatically for the drumset, many written fills are meant simply as suggestions. Played as written they may be too long (thereby interrupting the forward motion of the music), too complex or too simple for the music they decorate, or just too old-fashioned. With experience you will learn whose fills to take seriously. Below are some very long, simple, and old-fashioned fills designed to get you reading the whole drumset. Notice the suggested stickings (R=right hand; L=left hand).

3 bars time

R R LR RL

R R LR RL

R R LR RL

R R LR RL

R RL RRL

R RL RRL

3 bars time

R LR R LR

R RL L RL

R RL L RL

R L R RL

R L R RL

R L R RL

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### Dynamics

Now let's talk about dynamics, or shadings of volume. (Surely you didn't think your neighbors were going to put up with this forever.) Dynamic markings indicate how loudly or softly music should be played.

The symbol *pp* (pianissimo) means very soft.

The symbol *p* (piano) means soft.

The symbol *mp* (mezzo piano) means moderately soft.

The symbol *mf* (mezzo forte) means moderately loud.

The symbol *f* (forte) means loud.

The symbol *ff* (fortissimo) means very loud.

Along with these symbols, you will see markings that look like stretched out less-than or greater-than signs. The term *crescendo*, indicated by the symbol <, means gradually get louder. *Decrescendo*, indicated by the symbol >, means gradually get softer.

Dynamic markings, like all musical symbols, are relative. A rock drummer's *mezzo piano* might be *fortissimo* to the timpanist in a chamber orchestra; conversely, certain soft passages must be "played out" to project into a large space. Know your style, and use good taste.

Next month we'll add to the "road signs" we covered in Part 3. We'll also discuss tempo markings and 16th notes. See you then!

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## RECORDINGS

## LAUNDRY

Blacktongue

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Ian Varriale: Chapman stick

Tom Butler: gtr

Toby Hawkins: vcl

Tim "Herb" Alexander: dr

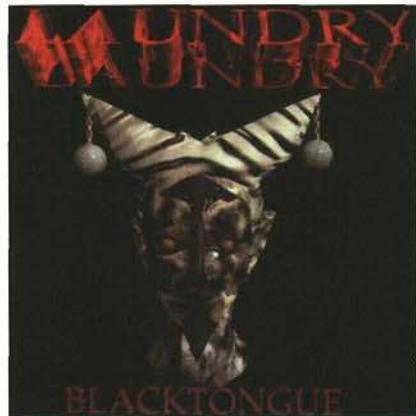
Slowly but surely, Tim Alexander's signature style is raising eyebrows away from the narrow fan core of Primus. It's no coincidence that Herb has taken advantage of his regular band's extended break to record with artists that spotlight a broader range of his talents.

Laundry, Herb's latest project, leans to the odd meters and quirky bass lines that have set Primus apart in modern rock circles. But Laundry also plays a heavier,

more dynamic music somewhat reminiscent of Mahavishnu Orchestra and King Crimson.

Herb obviously relishes the change. You can hear the Neil Peart influence on songs such as "Canvas" and "Skin," but Herb has been around long enough to earn his own trademarks: His crisp double-stroke hi-hat runs, double-bass flourishes, and smooth single-stroke rolls are all over this record. And because Varriale concerns himself with the bottom end, Laundry shows a rhythmic cohesion that Primus rarely achieves or seeks.

Outside of Hawkins' voice, there's a lot



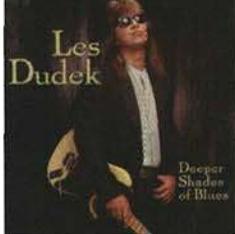
to like about this band, which comes at a time when strong musicianship can find its way to the charts.

• Matt Peiken

## LES DUDEK

## Deeper Shades Of Blue

(GeoSynchronous Records)



Dudek: vcl, gtr

Jeff Porcaro, David Northrup: dr

David Paich: organ, syn

Max McGuire: bs

Dave Cross: syn strings

Dean Germain: organ

Charlie DeChant: al sx

Michael Galloway: hrn

From the first notes of the double-time boogie, "Leavin' My Blues Behind," one sound is completely unmistakable: the ultimate taste, perfect pacing, and sweet-feeling pocket of the late, great Jeff Porcaro. As one of Jeff's final recordings, *Deeper Shades Of Blue* (cut in early '92) is a fitting tribute to his unforgettable talent. (The groove that graced a thousand albums also propelled Dudek's debut back in the late '70s.)

A fiery blues guitarist with a knack for catchy tunes and sophisticated arrangements, Dudek (who worked with the Allman Brothers but is actually more of a progressive blues player) is as mean as ever, his songs a slick combination of blues grit, harmonic daring, and a twinge of funk-fusion.

Hearing Porcaro in this well-oiled situation, we're again sadly reminded how much the music world has lost. Road boogie shuffles ("Your Love"), fat-fried funk ("Assault And Battery"), hard-four rock ("Moulin Rouge"), and a lush 12/8 ballad ("You Make Me Ill") all make a perfect, full-tilt platform for what Porcaro did best: laying down a wide bed and letting the music roll.

To a list that includes *Katy Lied*, *Gaucho* (Steely Dan), *Silk Degrees*, *Down Two Then Left* (Boz Scaggs), the entire Toto catalog, and a host of other recordings that represent the soul of Jeff Porcaro, add *Deeper Shades Of Blue*.

Jeff, we miss you.

(GeoSynchronous Records,  
Box 540962, Merritt Island, FL  
32954-0962)

• Ken Micallef

## JOE MORELLO

## Morello Standard Time

(DMP 506)



Joe Morello: dr

Greg Kogan: pno

Gary Mazzaroppi: bs

Ralph Lalama: sx, fl

The arrangements often make the session, and here some familiar melodies are reworked and spanked along nicely by Joe Morello. "Paper Moon" is played over a dark vamp before the drummer breaks it out into a joyful swing, his ride always augmented by some other rhythmic high jinks—sock cymbals, snare buzz, or kick fills. His brief drum interludes on "In Your Own Sweet Way" are imaginative, the sax/drum duet on "Alone Together" gives him room to flex his skins, and "Doxy" is a nice hi-hat feature. "When You Wish Upon A

Star" and "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" don't offer much more than sap value in arrangement and interpretation, though. And "Bye Bye Blackbird" seems predictable, with Morello not getting much support from his band.

Oddly (or not) enough, on "Take Five" a real uplift occurs from the entire band. Joe plays much of the tune in a tom-tom groove this time, laying down some sweet variations on the 5/4. He solos with great musicality—you can hear him playing the song and improvising off it clear into the next time zone. Morello pushes a band with a sweet ease—with this music, though, he could have been more ferocious.

Morello is also featured on another version of "Take Five" (and "Blue Rondo A La Turk"), on Robert Hohner Percussion Ensemble's *The Gamut* (DMP 505). Malletman Dave Samuels also appears on this versatile ensemble's follow-up-to-1993's *Lift Off*.

• Robin Tolleson

## ANDREW CYRILLE

X Man  
(Soul Note 12126-2)



Andrew Cyrille: dr  
James Newton: fl  
Alix "Tit" Pascal: acoustic gtr  
Anthony Cox: bs

An evening breeze dances on the Caribbean sun's last rays and washes this date with the joy of making music. Andrew Cyrille sparkles on his most cohesive recording in memory. The trio with Newton and Cox born four years ago at an Ed Blackwell benefit concert gains a sensuous pulsation from Pascal's guitar, featured on the four nimblest of eight tunes. (Andrew and Pascal—"Tit" is short for "Petit"—share a Haitian lineage.)

Pascal's "Answer Me" sets the island mood, Andrew's rim work and crystal ride cymbal providing all the encouragement this airy group needs. Cox's "Novo," a Latin 10/4, showcases Andrew's ability to generate quiet energy. (The instrumentation perfectly fits his transparent, high-pitched tuning.) The warm arco introduction to his "Simple Melody" evolves into a bluesy 12/8 cum 3/4 and offers the first of many opportunities to savor Newton's haunting vocalizations. The easy swing of the flutist's "E Squat" floats on froth and a brush solo rich in space and texture. The album's centerpiece, "5:05" (too short at nearly eighteen minute's), has Andrew dusting the landscape with small percussion before reminding us that no one plays every inch of the drumset with more imagi-

nation. His bells, blocks, and singing toms on "Lydia" recall Blackwell himself. Cool endings abound. Yes, mon.

• Hal Howland

311  
Grassroots  
(Capricorn)



Nicholas Hexum: vcl, gtr  
Chad Sexton: dr, perc  
Timothy J. Mahoney: gtr  
P-Nut: bs  
SA: vcl, turntables

Somewhere between the progressive hipness of Col. Hampton's Aquarium Rescue Unit, the funky slickness of Spin Doctors, and the banality of a thousand white-boy rappers, lie 311. When this Nebraskan quintet harmonize over a taut funk groove with hardcore guitar riffs, they create a unique sound and style that draws as much on tectonic funk movement as on unusual, Les McCann-esque jazz voicings. So why muck it up with a lame rapper who's as annoying as a mosquito buzzing around your sweaty skull?

But 311 can play. On "Nutsymptom" they launch a brief yet boiling jam, full of shifting, nail-hard grooves, while "8:16 A.M." begins like George Duke-era Frank Zappa (a musical influence who rears his head often with 311), kicks

into an easy bop bridge, and ends with some 6/8 funk-foolery.

Rhythmically, this is also a strong record. "Applied Science" is Chad Sexton's solo track, sort of a Zigaboo-Chad Smith-Aaron Comess chopsfest. Elsewhere he smacks his sharply pitched kit using clean, fast technique, most noticeably on the hyper "Grassroots" and the humid reggae of "Lose."

A promising debut, but next time dump the rap schtick.

• Ken Micallef

## CECIL BROOKS III

Neck Peckin' Jammie  
(Muse MCD 5504)



1/2



Cecil Brooks III: dr  
Craig Handy: tn sx, sp sx  
Justin Robinson: al sx  
Terell Stafford: trp  
Geoff Keezer: pno  
Christian McBride: bs

Let's give the drummer his due. Leader/composer/drummer Cecil Brooks III (see *MD*'s Oct. '93 *Portraits*) hasn't had the media parade he deserves, but his third CD as a leader should raise his rep in the drumming world. As a sideman he has covered vast turf, from edgy modernists like David Murray and Oliver Lake to the late master of smooth, Billy Eckstine. He can serve it up bluesy with Etta Jones and

Jack McDuff or swing subtly with Kenny Burrell.

As a leader on his own CDs his heart of hearts comes forth: solid, unpretentious, swinging jazz. In tandem with rising-star bassist Christian McBride, Brooks' feel-good factor strikes pay dirt on every cut. A few left turns: Stevie Wonder's "Creepin'" as a bluesy shuffle and an uplifting swingish-reggae take on Wayne Shorter's "One By One."

With each release, Brooks has shown drumming growth; now he has delivered a disc brimming with his own personality. (*Muse Records, 160 West 71st St., New York, NY 10023, [212] 873-2020*)

• Jeff Potter

## FREDERICK TILLIS/ MAX ROACH

A Festival Journey  
(New World 80455-2)



Max Roach: dr  
Frederick Tillis: tn sx, sp sx  
New Orchestra of Boston,  
David Epstein, cond

Most of this recording captures a live performance of *A Festival Journey*, a three-part, hour-long dialog for drumset and symphony orchestra. The piece as performed here cannot be called a concerto because 1) the drumset feature sections are unaccompanied, and 2) when playing within the orchestral texture, the drumset is lost in the mix (as are the strings whenever the brass kicks in). Tillis's boldly colorful score (which recalls the work of William Grant Still and Ulysses Kay) draws from African-American and Asian

## SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

**AL FOSTER** can be heard at his explosive best on *E*, the new release by exceptional pianist/composer Dave Kikoski (Epicure). Also on Epicure, **LEON PARKER** debuts as a leader on *Above And Below*, where the drummer leaves his unique and personal backbeat stamp on some deep standards. **JOEY BARON** adds a lot of personality to Laurie Anderson's sparse and wonderful *Bright Red* album (Warner Bros.), which also features percussionist Cyro Baptista. Despite a few strange track choices and a somewhat misleading John Cage reference (leading one to think twice about the brains behind this box), **The Big Bang** triple CD collection (ellipsis arts...) travels the planet for a nice overview of world percussion sounds.

## RATING SCALE

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕	Excellent
⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊖	Very Good
⊕ ⊕ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖	Good
⊕ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖	Fair
⊖ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖ ⊖	Poor

traditions and their common pentatonic scales.

The collaboration with idol and colleague Max Roach realizes a lifelong dream for the composer. It is less satisfying than Max's own meetings with large ensembles, though, because too often the orchestral writing sounds unrelated to Max's familiar solo work; each seems alternately to interrupt the other.

The apparently free-lance (that is, under-rehearsed and out-of-tune) orchestra features a capable and active percussion section (the timpanist and mallet player have plenty to do), and the piece would offer useful challenges to a good college group.

The recording is fleshed out by three unremarkable solo saxophone improvisations, two based on drum rudiments.

(*New World Records, 701 7th Ave., New York, NY 10036*)

• Hal Howland

## VIDEOS INTERNATIONAL DRUM RUDIMENTS

Performed by Rob Carson  
(Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.)



\$39.95, 69 minutes

The concept of this video is great: a visual demonstration of the Percussive Arts Society's 40 International Drum Rudiments. (Alfred also publishes a corresponding book and cassette tape.) Unfortunately, the video itself leaves much to be desired.

Rob Carson, three-time World Snare Drum Champion, performs the Seven Essential Rudiments (single-stroke roll, multiple-bounce roll, double-stroke roll, five-stroke roll, single paradiddle, flam, drag) followed by the forty rudiments. Each one is played from open (slow) to closed (fast) to open (which last 90 to 120 seconds).

Mr. Carson is asked to do the near impossible: perform all of this in one take. His ner-

vousness is obvious (he stumbles and trips over many words) and the production looks amateurish (with Carson's Remo Legato marching snare drum with a *Falam* head sounding more like a tabletop than a drum). Since this tape is not a "live performance" but rather a technical demonstration, it would have been easier to watch had Mr. Carson just played and then done a separate voice-over, or used another narrator. In addition, some of the rudiment demonstrations last too long, especially when the "open" part drags out and the "closed" part is faster than anyone would play the rudiment in a performance situation.

On the positive side, the counter/numbers on the upper right-hand corner of the screen correspond to the numbers on the box identifying each rudiment, so if you want to fast-forward to a particular one, it is easy to do so. There are also three different camera angles (front, side, and from over his right shoulder), which provide good views of his hands in motion. And Mr. Carson performs a brief solo at the end of the tape.

With a good idea and a bad production, the value of this video is a tossup. People with rudimental experience will probably chuckle and shake their heads while beginners or non-rudimentalists may find it useful. (*Alfred Publishing Co., Inc., P.O. Box 10003, 16380 Roscoe Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003*.)

• Andrea Byrd

## BOOKS CONCENTRATING ON CO-ORDINATION

by Paul Francis  
(Music Makers Books Ltd.)



Intended by its author, British drummer/drum teacher Paul Francis, "for drummers at all levels," this book and CD

enter the increasingly crowded corral of beginning-to-intermediate drum methods whose really big notes and ample white space minimize eye fatigue (and fill up seventy pages), but leave some rhythmic and conceptual stones unturned.

Sections on jazz and Latin drumming are so brief here as to seem glossed over. Similarly, the subject of accents is raised, but their importance to feel and groove is not, and most accents played on the CD are not notated in the book. A couple of short solos display Francis's skill as a player, but, again, they are not analyzed or otherwise correlated with the exercises, laying the burden of their assimilation entirely upon the student. The likely readers (based upon the elementary level of much of the material) would surely benefit from more examples and especially more explanations of techniques and underlying concepts that are anything but self-evident.

Despite these shortcomings, Francis's book adequately introduces the fundamentals of drumset notation, reading, and counting, as well as a handful of rudiments, which are nicely "orchestrated" around the kit. Also, amidst many pedestrian exercises are some pretty hip ones that will not only help develop coordination, but expand students' musical vocabulary as well. With that in mind, teachers who zero in on the book's strengths may very well find it useful for specific applications. (*Contact Music Maker Publications [Holdings] plc, Alexander House, Forehill, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4AF, tel: 0353 665577, fax: 0353 662489 for price and availability information.*)

• Richard Watson

## HARDEST DRUM BOOK EVER WRITTEN

by Joel Rothman  
(J.R. Publications)  
\$5.00



Like most of Rothman's books, this one explores every possible variation of a single idea—in this case, the "disco rock beat." The idea here is to play open hi-hat splashes on the "&" of each beat as well as snare drum backbeats with the left hand. This, according to Rothman, results in two-way coordination with a single limb. When you add the other three limbs on hi-hat pedal, bass drum, and ride cymbal, you have five-way coordination. Using a basic pattern involving the left hand on hi-hat offbeats and snare drum backbeats with the left foot keeping a quarter-note pulse on the hi-hat pedal, the book explores all the ride cymbal and bass drum variations one can play along with it.

So, is this the "hardest drum book ever written"? Hardly, when you consider that Rothman's 16-page book is based solely on System 13 from Gary Chester's *The New Breed*. Is Rothman's book without value? Not necessarily. Younger students attempting to deal with *The New Breed* are sometimes frustrated by the lack of preparatory exercises. For those having trouble jumping right into Chester's reading exercises with System 13, Rothman's book could provide supplementary material with which to develop the necessary coordination. While the disco application might be dated, the technique itself is right in line with some of the ostinato patterns that Terry Bozzio uses. (*Joel Rothman, Flat 1, 12 Oman Road, Belsize Park, London NW3 4PX, [071-431-0873]*)

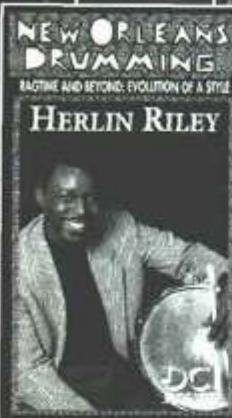
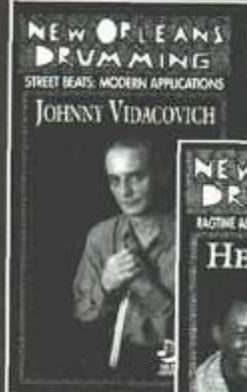
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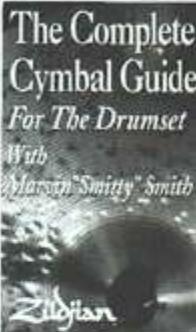
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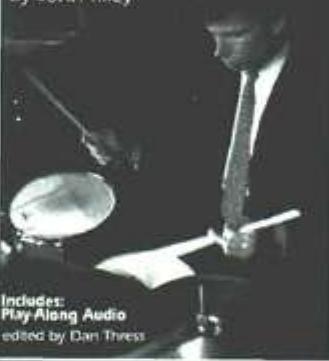
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# The Drummer's Studio Survival Guide: Part 1

## The Ten Commandments Of Recording Drums

by Mark Parsons

Greetings! This column is the first in a series designed to help drummers get the most out of the studio experience. We're not going to try to turn you into a recording engineer (unless you already have a bent in that direction, in which case this might be a good place to start). Rather, we'll try to give you the tools to ensure that when you leave the studio with your hard-earned master tape in hand, your drum tracks accurately represent your original concept of how they should sound.

It's a cliche, but it's true: knowledge *is* power. The more you know about the way things work inside the studio, the less your drum sound will be at the mercy of other people (who are most likely *not* drummers). Toward that end, this series is going to cover most aspects of recording drums—in depth, one step at a time. We'll also be hearing from some well-known drummers, producers, and engineers as to what helps them get killer drum tracks. Additionally, if you have any questions about recording drums, drop us a line c/o *MD* and we'll do our best to dig up some answers.

We're going to start with an overview of the recording process, highlighting points that are important to achieving your fullest potential in a studio environment. (You'll notice that some of them have more to do with attitude than specific pieces of hardware.) Next time we'll get into nuts and bolts. Here, then, are the ten commandments of recording drums. Unlike the originals, they aren't written in stone, but they will provide a starting point.

**1. Thou shalt define thy drum sound.** This is where it all starts. Before you tune your drums, select which cymbals to use,

or do anything else, you should have an answer to the question: "How do I envision my drum sound on the finished tape?"

Drum sound is a personal thing and it contributes greatly to your identity as a drummer, so it's worth some serious consideration. Your personal taste goes a long way in deciding this, of course—as does the style of music you're working within. We generally expect a different drum sound on a hard rock recording than on a big band track, for example, but this convention is changing. I've heard alternative bands using drums that sound like a wide-open jazz kit (and it works!). Anything goes in your quest for your signature sound, as long as you and your band feel it's musically appropriate for the situation. (There's an exception to this rule, which we'll cover in #3.)

**2. Thou shalt communicate thy vision.** Once you get in the studio it's up to you to see that the engineer has a clear idea of how you want your drums to sound. To effectively convey your ideas it's helpful to know certain terms (which we'll cover later in the series). It's usually *not* enough to say, "I want a big, full drum sound." After all, who doesn't?

One way around this is to bring in recorded examples of drum tracks similar to your ideal sound. Here, too, any additional details you can add will only help your cause. (For example: "I like the drums on this CD, but I'd like my snare to be brighter and to have less reverb on

it.") Don't worry that you'll sound exactly like the drummer in your examples; there are so many variables involved that you'll still sound unique. But at least the engineer will have a clue as to what to aim for.

Why not simply request that your drums sound on tape the way they do live? Well, the truth is that they *can't*. Part of the reason for this is that no drum can be said to have *a* specific sound. It depends on your perspective. When *you* hear your kit you're sitting on top of it with your ears approximately 24" from the snare.



Other people usually hear it from out front, several feet away. In the studio it will be "heard" by several mic's, some of them very close to individual drums. Each location perceives a very different sound from the same instrument. There are numerous other acoustic elements introduced in the recording process (to say nothing of the fact that we listen to recordings through speakers), which add up to the fact that there are going to be differences between your acoustic drum sound and your recorded drum sound. It's up to you to make sure that these differences benefit rather than hurt your sound.

**3. Thou shalt remain flexible.** Time for a reality check. If someone else (bandmember, engineer, producer, etc.) suggests a change in your sound, by all means *give it a try*. They may well be right, and even if they aren't you may learn something in the process. When the writer of the song being recorded has an opinion about the drums, I give it more weight, because it's his or her baby. Just as you have to be an advocate for *your* sound, writers have an obligation to try to see that *their* original vision of the song is realized.

When you're paying for studio time to make a tape, you are the client and you call the shots regarding creative decisions. It's when the money flows in the opposite direction that we encounter the exception mentioned earlier. If someone's hiring you to play on their project, you certainly can (and should) make suggestions you think will benefit the music. But in the end *they* have the final say, and a professional will do his or her best to give them what they want.

**4. Thou shalt know thy recording gear.** Equalizers, reverbs, compressors, noise gates, and other processing gear can be your friends—if you understand how they work. They can really save the day when a problem arises, but if they're misused (or overused) they can ruin your drum tracks.

Want your 5" snare to sound like a deep snare? (Or a piccolo?) Want to smooth out some unevenness in your bass-drum dynamics? Want to keep that big reverb on your snare from turning your hi-hats into a muddy wash of noise? This and much more can be accomplished with processors and effects, and that's exactly what we'll be spending the next several articles on. You don't have to be an expert on using this gear—that's the engineer's job. You just have to know enough to suggest, "Why don't we use some frequency-dependent gating to keep that snare bleed outta my kick track?" and he'll do the rest.

**5. Thou shalt choose thy microphones wisely.** The perfectly transparent microphone doesn't exist. If it did you probably wouldn't like its sound! Truthfully, every microphone is a complex equalizer that colors your sound—sometimes slightly and sometimes in more obvious ways. The trick is to use mic's that color the sound in ways beneficial to the job at hand.

Imagine a mic' with extended low-end response, a smooth boost in the bottom octaves, a flat or slightly suppressed lower midrange, a peak in the upper mids, and the very high end rolled off. This would sound terrible on your cymbals, rendering them

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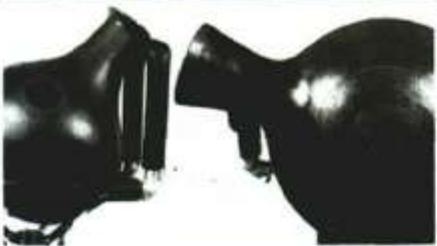
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thick and clanky, but it might be absolutely *killer* on your kick or large toms. The same story applies to *mic placement*: Identical mic's can sound totally different in different locations.

We'll cover all this in detail later, but the point is that mic's make a huge difference, and before you start adding EQ to "fix" a sound it's preferable to try different miking schemes.

**6. Thou shalt select thy room with care.** Drums, mic's, and recording gear are all parts of a "system," with each component affecting your final sound. The room you're recording in is yet another part of that system, and it can make a substantial difference in the end result.

Each room has its own sonic personality, dictated by its size, geometry, construction, surface coverings, and the presence or absence of objects within it. We'll discuss each of these variables in a future article (along with some solutions to "problem rooms"), but first let's set a few guidelines for those who can't wait to get recording.

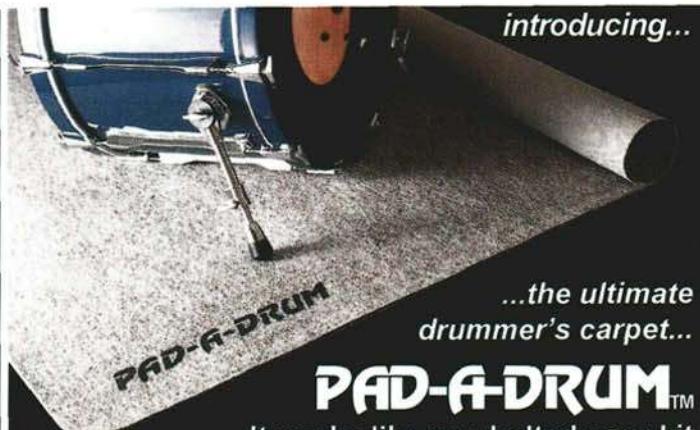
The easiest way to tell if a room will work for recording drums is simply to set up the basics (kick/snare/hats) and *play*. Does it sound good from behind the drums? From out front? From across the room? Only you can decide what's right for your music, but a good room can usually be fairly ambient as long as it has an even distribution of highs, mids, and lows. Hard surfaces (glass, tile, plaster, etc.) reflect high frequencies, while softer materials (carpet, curtains, foam, etc.) absorb them, and both of these types of materials can be added or deleted to balance the room. Large rooms have a longer decay, adding "air" to the sound, while small rooms (especially live ones) have a shorter, "in your face" type of reverberance. Everything else being equal, a room with a higher ceiling usually has a bigger and warmer sound. Rooms having two or more dimensions of equal length will have an artificial boost at the resonant frequency. There are lots of formulae used to determine what will or won't work, but above all else...use your ears!

**7. Thou shalt keep thy drums sounding good.** The drums themselves are another key part of the recording chain. It's axiomatic in the recording industry that a good-sounding track starts with a good-sounding instrument.

We'll be hearing from some experts on this, discussing the subjects of head selection, tuning, muffling, drum prep, etc. In general, you want to keep in mind that there are different priorities in the studio vs. on the stage. In live (especially unmixed) situations, volume and projection are important, and we don't worry too much about small noises in the kit, overly ringy drums, or snare buzz. (Plus a large kit can add visual impact to your live act.)

In the studio, however, *tone production* is paramount, along with all the ancillary things that go into it. Non-musical noises should be eliminated, and since we can't *see* the drumset on a tape there's no reason to use more gear than is necessary for the song at hand. (In fact, there are some very real benefits to keeping the kit minimal.)

**8. Thou shalt play not for thyself but for thy tape.** Analogous to the point made above, there are different priorities when you're playing in the studio. Small "clams" that you can ignore in the heat of a live performance will return to haunt you (over and



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over!) on tape. Things like a missed rimshot or a stick click are much more exposed, so precision is necessary. But more important than any of this is the concept of *playing for the tape*. This means constructing parts that support the song, rather than trying to show off all your chops at once.

I've been convinced through watching and listening to great drummers that one of the keys to a successful recording is solid, supportive playing that makes the music feel good. *Time* and *groove*, right? This doesn't mean you shouldn't pull off some serious chops when the tune calls for it, but rather that their use should be dictated by the music and not your ego.

**9. Thou shall ask many questions.** If you pay for studio time and all you come away with is a tape, you didn't really get your money's worth. One of the best places to learn about recording drums is in the studio, from the person who does it for a living.

Without being a pest, ask engineers what they're doing and why. You'll find that most of them are only too happy to talk about their craft with an interested person. Watch everything that goes on, and *take notes*. (I did this when I started and it helped me enormously.)

One of the best things about this type of knowledge is that it's portable. Somewhere down the road you might have a problem in a different studio and you can suggest something you picked up during a previous session.

**10. Thou shalt keep a positive attitude.** This is *critical*.

Negativity is contagious and only serves to bring down everyone you're working with, making it almost impossible to achieve anything worthwhile. A positive attitude, on the other hand, can really open doors to creativity.

A recent survey of successful entrepreneurs revealed that the quality they looked for most when hiring—over intelligence, business acumen, or a higher education—was *enthusiasm*. I agree. When looking for musicians I'll take a "good" player with an enthusiastic, positive attitude over a "great" player with a poor attitude every time, and so will a lot of other folks. When problems arise, as they occasionally do, be a "problem solver" instead of a complainer, and things will get back in the groove that much quicker. And *smile*. You're doing one of the most enjoyable things in the world: You're making music.

Now that we've set the basic ground rules, we can begin to delve into the real nuts and bolts of drum-related recording techniques. See you next time!

*Mark Parsons divides his time between the drumset and the soundboard in his studio in Santa Maria, California. He got into recording, he says, "because I was tired of my drum sound always getting butchered."*



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# Sonny Greer

"Sonny knew what audiences liked," said Mercer Ellington. "He was one of the few people from whom Duke readily took advice. A great reactor to material, he needed only a skeleton of an idea. With that as a base, he'd contribute a great deal to the glory of a work. Sonny had a great ear and unusual reflexes."

Born in 1903 in Long Branch, New Jersey, Sonny Greer studied drums with vaudeville drummer J. Rosmond Johnson. His first professional job was as a youngster in a pit band in Red Bank, New Jersey. Within a few years, he was working in the pit orchestra at the Plaza Hotel in Asbury Park. While at the Plaza, Greer met Duke Ellington and the two began performing together in Ellington's hometown of Washington, D.C. It was the begin-

Greer with Duke Ellington



photo by Frank

"Back then, if you were a lame player, you'd have a hard time. But if you could play, they'd come to see you. And they'd tell you if you could play!"

—Sonny Greer

ning of an association that ran from 1923 to 1951.

Greer's stay with the Ellington band reached a pinnacle during their years at New York's legendary Cotton Club. A distinctive, musical drummer, Greer was noted for his elaborate drumset, which was so impressive, special mention of it was made in Jim Haskin's book *The Cotton Club*: "Greer and his drums provided the focus of the band's music. He had an incredible battery of percussion equipment. Everything from tom-toms to snare and kettle drums. And once he realized the band was at the club to stay awhile, he brought in the really good stuff. Sonny later recalled: 'When we got into the Cotton Club, presentation became very important. I was a designer for the Leedy company, and the president had a fabulous set of drums made for me with timpani, chimes, vibraphone—everything. Musicians used to come to the Cotton Club just to see it. The value of it was \$3,000, a lot of money at the time.' With such equipment, Greer could make every possible drum sound, and at the Cotton Club he awed the customers, conjuring up tribal warriors, man-eating tigers, and war dancers."

Along with being a great showman, Sonny Greer was acknowledged for his natural ability and excellent musical instincts. He was even known to use timpani heads on his bass drum so the drum could be tuned to a precise pitch. Greer has also been credited as being an important part of the character of the Ellington orchestra during its heyday. Sonny Greer passed away in 1982 at the age of seventy-nine.

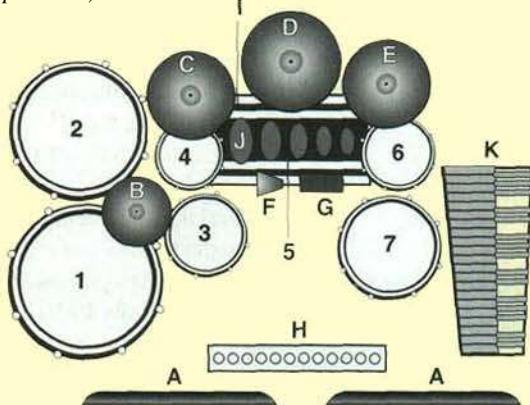
*Text excerpted from The Great Jazz Drummers by Ron Spagnardi, published by Modern Drummer Publications. Kit information reprinted with permission from Hal Leonard Corporation. © 1994 Jon Cohan.*

## Sonny Greer's Kit Circa 1940

"I made a deal back then with the Leedy drum people, in Elkhart, Indiana," Greer once told jazz writer Whitney Balliett. "In return for my posing for publicity shots and giving testimonials, they gave me a drumset that was the most beautiful in the world. Drummers would come up to me and say, 'Sonny, where did you get those drums? You must be a rich man,' and I'd nod. I had two timpani, chimes, three tom-toms, a bass drum, a snare—the initials SG painted on every drum—five or six cymbals, temple blocks, a cowbell, wood blocks, gongs of several sizes, and a vibraphone. The cymbals were from the Zildjian factory. I'd go out to Quincy when we were working in the Boston area, and one of the Zildjians would take me around. He'd tell me to choose cymbals with flat cups and instead of hitting a cymbal to show me how it sounded he'd pinch the edge with his fingers and you could tell just by the ring. I learned how to keep my drums crisp, to tune them so they had an even, clear sound."

In a 1933 article for *Melody Maker*, Greer wrote about his drums and their role in Duke's band. "I always maintain that the bass drum should be felt and not heard. Care should be taken that there is no 'ring' attached to bass drum notes."

*Excerpted from Star Sets, Drum Kits Of The Great Drummers by Jon Cohan (ISBN #0-7935-3489-5, Hal Leonard Corporation).*



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## Greg Caputo

Springfield, Massachusetts' Greg Caputo specializes in versatility within "traditional" drumming styles. With an impressive educational background (Hartford Conservatory of Music and study with Alan Dawson, Jim Chapin, and Joe Morello), Greg has gone on to establish himself as one of the northeast's premier show and big band drummers. He's been the house drummer at New York's El Morocco Club and at the Maisonette Room of the St. Regis Hotel—along with drumming for shows at many leading resort hotels and casinos. He's toured with the Artie Shaw big band and has performed with many bands on the Holland America and Bermuda Star cruise lines. His demo video—a live concert in tribute to the big bands—demonstrates his ability as both a musician and a showman.

"I'm a free-lance drummer, and my playing is my agent," says Greg. "I choose to concentrate on my drumming not for my own gratification, but rather for respect of the art. I feel a responsibility to the past mas-

ters, to my peers, and to the students who trust me to improve their abilities." Greg's attitude has earned him endorsements from Drum Workshop drums, Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, and Aquarian drumheads. He spends

a good deal of his time doing clinics and master classes for school systems, colleges, and music stores.

"My goals are to always continue to learn new styles and techniques," says Greg. "I also want to make educational systems aware that if they think education is expensive, they should try ignorance! And whenever I do a clinic or musical performance, I want people to leave with a happy, positive feeling."

The purpose of this department is to give coverage to drummers whose activities and talent are worthy of recognition, but who are not yet figures on the national music scene. If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably

both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), your influences, your

## Kevin Soltis

Twenty-eight-year-old Kevin Soltis of Buffalo, New York has a realistic attitude regarding what it takes to maintain a professional career. "Like most other 'undiscovered' musicians," he says, "I have to wear several different hats in order to keep busy." Those "hats" see Kevin working with several different groups in both studio and live situations—at least three nights a week. He also maintains a full daytime schedule of drum students, and is the co-author of a drumset method book entitled *Groovezilla* (reviewed in the February '94 issue of *MD*).

Although schooled in all styles of music, Kevin's personal preference leans

to progressive rock, fusion, and alternative rock. "I'm a *big* fan of double-bass and linear drumming," he says. This

statement is dramatically supported by the exciting drumming on Kevin's demo tape, cut with a band called Brainchild. He exercises his musical abilities on a nine-piece, double-bass Pearl *MIX* kit fitted with a combination of three Sabian and eight Zildjian cymbals.

Kevin hopes to expand his live and studio experiences (which have taken him from New York to Seattle and Toronto already) into full-time recording and touring with national bands. In the meantime, he's working on developing his skills as an author and clinician.



## Jack Ciano

"I pride myself on being an eclectic musician," says Jack Ciano. "I have performed in every facet of the music industry, from live shows to studio recording, from country & western music to be bop jazz and everything in between."

Born in the Bronx in 1955 but now based in Biscayne Park, Florida, Jack began playing drums at the age of ten. He played his first professional gig at thirteen, and by 1973 was playing full-time in showbands in the Catskills. In addition to academic study at the University of Miami, he developed his skills on "countless gigs" with pop, rock, and jazz bands, including experiences playing



with such artists as Ira Sullivan and Red Rodney, Gap Mangione, Jaco Pastorius, Dizzy Gillespie, Natalie Cole, Will Lee, Lena Horne, and Jon Secada.

Currently working as a free-lance drummer throughout southern Florida,

Jack plays jazz on a four-piece 1960s Ludwig kit and pop on a five-piece Yam-aha kit. He chooses from Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian cymbals as appropriate for each gig.

In addition to his busy performing schedule, Jack is also a teacher. "My teaching philosophy," he says, "starts with communication, motivation, and education. I like to stress the academics of the drumset and its musical application."

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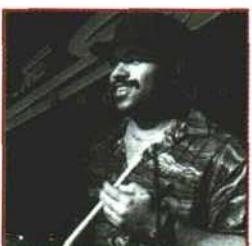


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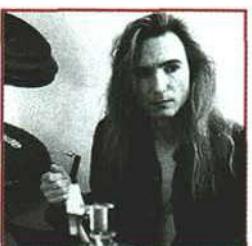
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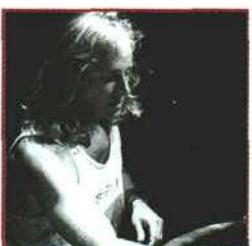
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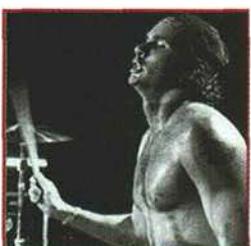
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# How To Inspect A Vintage Drum: Part 2

by Ned Ingberman

Last month we discussed some general guidelines and procedures involved in the inspection of a vintage drum. We also covered the instructions and explanations of Sections 1 through 4 of the Vintage Drum Inspection Check List that we use at the Vintage Drum Center. This month we'll go over the instructions for Sections 5 through 16 of the check list, and present a copy of the check list itself.

## Section 5: Tension Rods (& Washers), Claws, Clips

With the exception of inspecting tension rods for thread damage and bends, the points in this section (included on the check list) are simple to perform and need no explanation.

A practical time to test the *threads* of both rods and lugs and also the straightness of the T-rods is when you're removing the heads to inspect the bearing edges (mentioned last month in Section 3).

Here's how to do these checks: First, before you begin to loosen the rods, tighten each one slightly enough to feel the firm, even grip of the threads. *There should be no binding or slipping.* (Please note: in the case of a small amount of binding, a drop of oil is sometimes all that is needed.)

After slightly tightening the rods, loosen them and observe again for binding/slipping. If there is either problem, do a visual check to see if the rod is bent (if it is, it will wobble as you turn it), and for stripped or nicked threads. (These can sometimes be visually imperceptible.)

If you can't detect anything in your visual inspection, you'll need to go through a process of elimination to determine the cause of the problem. This is done by installing the questionable T-rod in a different lug (one that you know is okay) to see if it still slips or binds. If it does, then you know the problem is the rod. On the other hand, if the rod functions normally, then you know that the lug is the problem.

Because the functioning of the rods and lugs are so interrelated, the thread test for the rods simultaneously accomplishes the same test for the lugs. If not replaced, binding rods or lugs can damage one another.

A word of caution about bent tension rods: They should be replaced or repaired before being used again. We have seen many cracked tube lugs and stripped lug casings due to bent T-rods!

## Section 6: Lug Casings

In this section of the inspection check list the only point needing any explanation is the one on defective threads. Please refer to Section 5 above.

## Section 7: Interior Hardware

Inspect all of the metal hardware mounted to the inside of the drum shell. (See the check list for specific points.) Exclude the interior components of the muffler, which are covered in the next section. We discussed an important point about oversized washers in Section 4: "Shells and Finish (Interior)." Be sure to refer to it.

## Section 8: Mufflers

As you go through the points in this section of the check list, be sure to inspect both *inside and outside components* of the muffler. Test the adjustment knob (or arm, if it's an arm-style muffler) to see if the internal dampening pad *engages and disengages fully from the drumhead*. Also, as you turn the knob, observe for *binding or slipping*, and for any *wobbling motion*. Although most vintage drums have only one muffler, some have two. In that case, be sure to check both.

## Section 9: Nameplate And Grommet

If a nameplate has been removed and reinstalled, evidence of this can usually be found on the inside of the shell. Signs of this are a generally chewed-up appearance (nicked, cut, bent) to the edge of the grommet or the shell surrounding the grommet.

## Section 10: Drumset

An often overlooked inspection point concerning vintage kits is the *compatibility of color* on the exterior finish of the drums. Since most collectors strongly prefer each indi-



Cracked lugs

vidual drum in a set to match reasonably well with the others, this inspection is an important one. Check all of the drums in the set to see if there is any difference in the shade of color from one drum to the other. If the bass rims are the inlay style, include the strip of inlay in your inspection. (Variations in the shade of color are in most cases due to ultraviolet discoloration or manufacturer's production variations.)

Also check that the *interior sealing finish* of the shells is the same color on all the drums (not a mismatch of white, clear lacquer, gray, etc.), and that the drums in the set are all from the *original group* (no drums have been added on later). Serial numbers on the drums should be within a reasonable range if the drums are a matched set; check for this as well.

### Section 11: Snare Drum—Wires

Check for bent or missing strands of wires. Also, if the entire set of wires is completely missing, it will need to be installed in order to test the strainer and butt-end (Section 12). Please note: A check for originality of wires has not been included as part of this check point due to the wide acceptance of non-original wires by collectors.

### Section 12: Snare Strainer And Butt-End

Of all the hardware components on the shell of a snare drum, the snare strainer gets the most use. For this reason it needs to be inspected with extra care.

First, check the functioning of the strainer by tightening and loosening the strainer dial all the way in both directions. As you do this, observe for binding and slipping. Also watch for a wobbling motion of the dial (and its connecting shaft). If the drum has an adjustable style butt-end, test it the same way as the strainer dial. Also be sure the butt holds firmly at the connection point for the wires.

Next, test the strainer to see if the throw-off arm securely locks and completely releases without binding or slipping. Also, check the snare wires to be sure they completely disengage from the bottom head when the throw-off arm is in the "off" position.

Some older model strainners from the 1920s and earlier have inherent design flaws that do not allow the wires to completely disengage. In these cases the problem is not due to dam-

age or natural wear and tear and cannot be remedied, as far as we know, without altering the originality of the strainer.

### Section 13: Mounts, Linkage, Legs

The way to properly test mount and linkage holding power is to set up the drum(s). All mount nuts, thumb screws, and connecting linkage should tighten securely without slipping or binding. Further test their holding power by increasing the bearing pressure on them. Do this by either pushing, pulling, lifting, pressing, twisting, or turning the drum and/or linkage or leg. Which of these stress tests or combination of them you use will be determined by the actual configuration of the mounting system.

### Section 14: Heads

These checks are self-explanatory. However, please note that a check for originality of heads has not been included as part of this check point due to the wide acceptance of non-original heads by collectors.

### Section 15: General Information

We recommend using the following grading system to summarize the overall condition of the drum or drumset:

**Mint.** Looks like brand new; no evidence of any wear.

**Exc/Mint (Excellent to Mint condition).** Looks almost new; shows only slight evidence of usage.

**Exc (Excellent).** Shows light wear but taken very good care of.

**VG/Exc (Very Good to Excellent).** Less than normal wear.

**VG (Very Good).** Shows normal amount of wear for its age.

**Gd/VG (Good to Very Good).** A little more wear than usual.

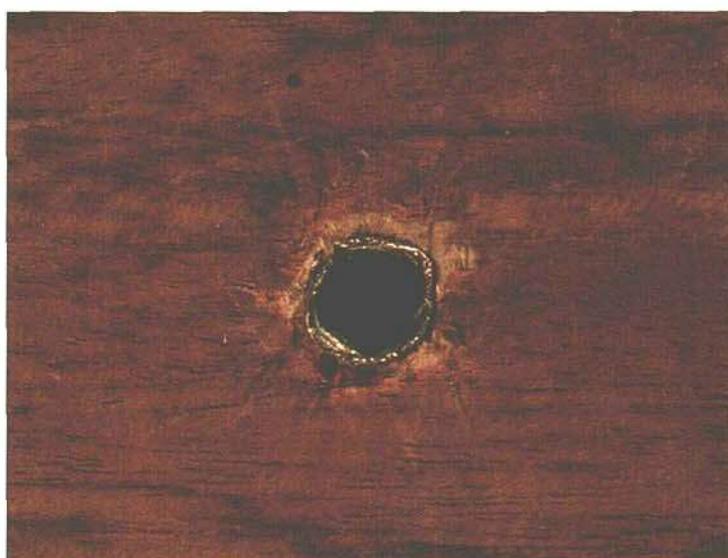
**Good.** Still in decent condition but shows more than normal amount of wear.

**Fair.** Rough condition, but usable.

### Section 16: Comments

Use this section of the inspection sheet to record all pertinent details of your inspection.

*Ned Ingberman is the founder and president of the Vintage Drum Center in Libertyville, Iowa. The information contained in this article was compiled originally for publication in the Vintage Drum Center Catalog/Newsletter, and is used by permission. All rights reserved.*



Evidence of removal and re-installation of nameplate

# Inspection Check List

## How To Use This Check List

Mark the appropriate lines for the drum you are inspecting: snare (SN), small tom (ST), large tom (LT), bass (BD), and where applicable, top (T), bottom (B), interior (INT), and exterior (EXT). Mark with either an O (okay) or an X (not okay).

**Please note:** The previous text is meant to be used in conjunction with this check list. The text contains important clarification and instructions.

### 1. Two-Minute Overview

	SN	ST	LT	BD
— — — —	fully assembled			
— — — —	visual			

### 2. Rims

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD & METAL
B	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD & METAL
B	—	—	—	—	altered, repaired (holes drilled)
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD
B	—	—	—	—	indentations, delamination, cracks, or other damage
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD-INLAY STRIP
B	—	—	—	—	missing, unoriginal, discolored, cracked, unglued
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD & METAL
B	—	—	—	—	warped, out of round, bent
T	—	—	—	—	WOOD & METAL
B	—	—	—	—	finish chipped, worn, scratched, pitted, etc.
T	—	—	—	—	METAL
B	—	—	—	—	cracks

### 3. Bearing Edges

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
T	—	—	—	—	unevenness (high-low spots)
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	ply/hoop separation, cracks
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	modified, altered, repaired
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	gouges/nicks, other damage
B	—	—	—	—	

### 4. Shells and Finish

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
T	—	—	—	—	out of round/oversize
B	—	—	—	—	shell (heads are tight)
INT	—	—	—	—	scratches, scuffs, gouges, dings, dents, rust, pitting
EXT	—	—	—	—	
INT	—	—	—	—	stains, fading, discoloration
EXT	—	—	—	—	
INT	—	—	—	—	previous repairs, alterations, extra holes
EXT	—	—	—	—	
INT	—	—	—	—	air bubbles, ungluing, chips, and cracks
EXT	—	—	—	—	
INT	—	—	—	—	caved in/bulged out
EXT	—	—	—	—	
INT	—	—	—	—	unoriginal finish
EXT	—	—	—	—	

### 5. Tension Rods (& Washers), Claws, Clips

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
T	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	modified, altered, repaired
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	bent, thread damage, cracks, other damage
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	rust, pitting, scratches, finish chipped/worn
B	—	—	—	—	

### 6. Lug Casings

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
T	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal in whole or part
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	rusted, pitted, scratched, finish chipped or worn
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	modified, altered, repaired
B	—	—	—	—	
T	—	—	—	—	cracked, defective threads, other damage
B	—	—	—	—	

### 7. Interior Hardware—Screws, Washers, Bushings, etc.

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
—	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal
—	—	—	—	—	modified, altered, repaired
—	—	—	—	—	rusted or damaged

**8. Mufflers**

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
<b>INT</b>	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal
<b>EXT</b>	—	—	—	—	

<b>INT</b>	—	—	—	—	modified, altered, repaired
<b>EXT</b>	—	—	—	—	

<b>INT</b>	—	—	—	—	rust, pitting, scratches, chipped/worn finish
<b>EXT</b>	—	—	—	—	

<b>INT</b>	—	—	—	—	damaged, dysfunctional, or inoperable
<b>EXT</b>	—	—	—	—	

**9. Nameplate & Grommet**

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
—	—	—	—	—	missing or unoriginal
—	—	—	—	—	bent, scratched, loose
—	—	—	—	—	evidence of reinstallation

**10. Drumset**

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
—	—	—	—	—	exterior finish on all drums is same shade of color
—	—	—	—	—	interior finish on all drums is same color
—	—	—	—	—	original group — no add ons

**11. Snare Drum—Wires**

—	completely missing
—	strands missing/bent

**12. Snare Drum—Strainer/Butt-End**

— strainer	missing or unoriginal in whole or part
— butt-end	
— strainer	modified, altered, repaired
— butt-end	
— strainer	rust, pitting, scratches, finish chipped/worn
— butt-end	
— strainer	bent, stripped, cracked, other damage
— butt-end	
— strainer	binding/slipping of dial or throw-off arm
— strainer	wires disengage completely

**13. Mounts, Linkage, Legs**

	ST	LT	BD	
— — —	missing or unoriginal in whole or part			
— — —	rusted, pitted, scratched, finish chipped or worn			
— — —	cracked housing, stripped threads, other damage			
— — —	modified, altered, repaired			
— — —	securely hold			

**14. Heads**

	SN	ST	LT	BD	
<b>T</b>	—	—	—	—	missing
<b>B</b>	—	—	—	—	
<b>T</b>	—	—	—	—	stretched, punctured, ripped
<b>B</b>	—	—	—	—	

**15. General Information**

Brand & Model:	Year			
Size: SN	ST	LT	BD	—
Finish of Shell:				
Finish of Hardware:	nickel	chrome		
Cleaning/Polishing needed:	yes	no		
Grading:	Mint	Exc/Mint	Exc	
— VG/Exc	VG	Gd/VG	Gd/Fair	

**16. Comments** (use an additional sheet of paper if necessary)

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# Saturday Night Live's Shawn Pelton

by Eric Deggans

From the moment you first see him, lounging in front of a television monitor in the lobby of NBC-TV's Manhattan studios, it's obvious. Decked out in a black leather jacket, big golden hoop earrings, and '50s-style rockabilly sideburns, with his trademark floppy hat perched high atop his thinning blonde hair—Shawn Pelton sticks out among the gawking out-of-towners lined up for a quick tour of the network's midtown digs.

Here's a *musician*—a New York player.

It's been two years since bandleader G.E. Smith plucked the young drummer from the wilds of New York's free-lance scene to power the ten-piece, bluesy big band for

NBC-TV's *Saturday Night Live*. Pelton has fit in the way any session vet should: offering strong, steady backing while keeping his ego (and bombastic drum fills) in check.

Of course, the Kansas City native has scored his own successes beyond the show, from recording with the Brecker Brothers and Edie Brickell to live gigs with Chaka Khan and New Jersey rock 'n' soulster Southside Johnny. Through it all, a diversity of styles and techniques learned at the feet of instructors like Kenny Aronoff, Alan Dawson, and David Baker have helped Pelton nail the groove with authority—whether it's a traditional jazz date or high-powered modern rock concert.

But it's *Saturday Night Live*—seen by millions of viewers weekly—that's put the thirty-one-year-old percussionist before the largest audience of his growing career. And for Pelton, nailing his current gig doesn't have much to do with blazing technique or complicated polyrhythms.

"It's more about dealing with songs and coming up with great parts," says Pelton, during an *SNL* band rehearsal break, "as opposed to obliterating the set, chop-wise. A lot of the things I'm doing are real song- and music-oriented. It's about finding the right groove."

On this day, the band takes a new face along for the ride: legendary roots rocker Dave Edmunds, who is sitting in with the group as it plays into commercial breaks and warms up the crowd



*Photo by Mark R. Sullivan*

before the telecast. The familiar band stage, with its wooden paneling and high chandeliers, fills about one quarter of the space it seems to cover on television—forcing the sprawling group to fill every nook and cranny with their gear. As Smith slips on his guitar and shuffles through a few charts, Pelton picks up his brushes and guides the band through a gentle blues number, "Sweet Lorraine."

As the practice session progresses, the band slips from country-fried rock to mellow jazz and an instrumental offered by Edmunds. First, a loping blues groove on the brushes. Then, a rollicking rockabilly beat reminiscent of Elvis stickman D.J. Fontana. Next, a sure-footed, swinging jazz rhythm. Guided by sketchy drum charts notating the song's basic framework, Pelton's sure, solid grooves keep the band on target as he switches styles with the ease of a seasoned pro.

Explaining why he tapped Pelton to replace former New Bohemians drummer Matt Chamberlain (who had himself replaced session veteran Chris Parker), G.E. Smith says, "Any band starts with the drummer and the bassist, and Shawn has the ability to play in any style. He's just a monster. When I first met Shawn, I asked what part of Kansas City he was from. He said, 'The good part.' That's when I knew he was cool."

"G.E.'s definitely the leader, and he digs having someone who's stylistically aware of a lot of things," Pelton adds. "You've

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got to be able to do brushes...Broadway stuff...that whole Stax/R&B/Al Jackson thing. And you have to do everything while staying cool under pressure when the camera is on."

How did a relatively unknown drummer get to *SNL* in the first place? For Pelton, the magic call came the day after he had played a free-lance gig with *SNL* bassist Paul Ossola. G.E. Smith was looking for a new drummer, and on Ossola's recommendation, Pelton scored an audition at Manhattan's S.I.R. rehearsal studios. "We did a lot of blues-type stuff, just jumping in and going for it," Pelton recalls. "I was kinda nervous, but I was really hungry and I wanted to do a good job, too. After I left, I felt that I had played the best that I could play for that audition."

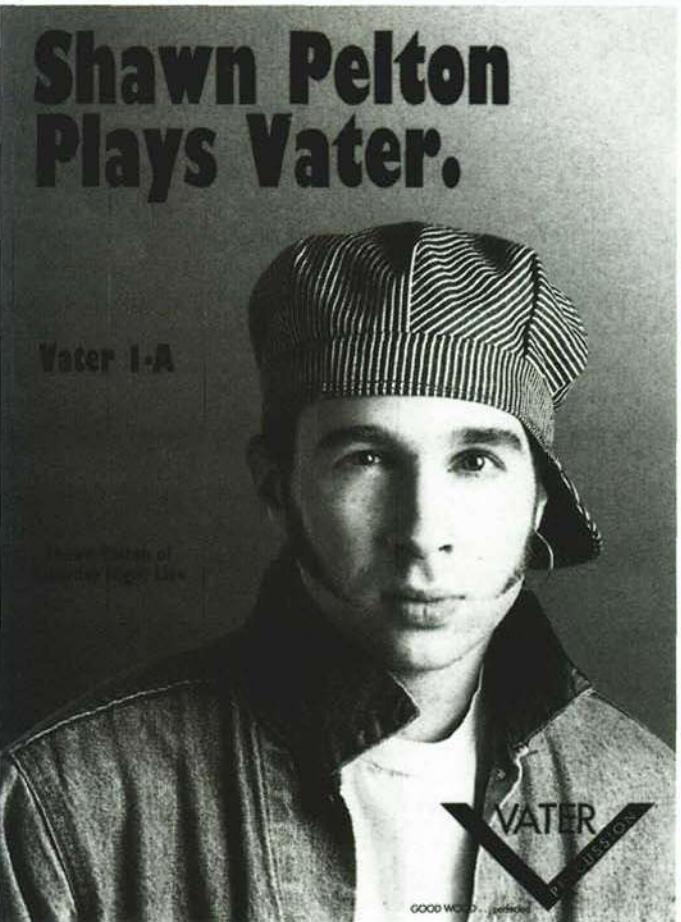
Apparently, Smith agreed. Originally contracted to do just two shows in 1992 ("A trial by fire, I guess," Pelton cracks), the drummer found himself staying on for the rest of the season and beyond. For him, the secret of success has been staying true to the grooves—avoiding the unnecessary flash of endless fills and overly complex parts.

To help in his quest for musicality, Pelton's drumkit for the show is a simple, four-piece Drum Workshop set—featuring a 9x12 mounted tom, 13x16 floor tom, 16x22 bass drum, and 6x14 Edge snare. Cymbal-wise, he holds forth on two crash cymbals and one ride. (The crashes are Zildjian 16" A and K Customs, while the ride is a K Custom and the hi-hats are 14" New Beats.) "For this gig especially, I dig this setup, because this is what it's

all about," Pelton says, gesturing toward his compact instrument. "For other sessions I might have more drums and lots of cymbal color, but this keeps me focused in a cool way."

"He's a very self-sufficient guy—very focused—like a kid with his own toys," chuckles longtime *SNL* musical technician Speedy Rosenthal, who has shepherded equipment for players on the show over the last nineteen years. "He'll tweak his own drumheads up and do a lot of tech work himself. He's into a total approach."

First introduced to the drums in a sixth-grade Kansas City classroom, Shawn Pelton worked hard during high school to prepare himself for the audition to join Indiana University's Music School in Bloomington—then considered among the top programs in the country. During his years there (splitting time between jazz ensemble and gigs with an extracurricular funk band), Pelton got the idea that drumming was something he could make money at—as opposed to just doing the starving jazz artist routine. Then New Jersey rocker John Eddie, in town to record at John Mellencamp's studio, offered Pelton a spot in his touring band and a chance to move east with a ready gig waiting. It was a chance he couldn't pass up—though Eddie's subsequent problems with his record label held up the band's touring plans for five months in 1989. "You talk about paying dues," Pelton laughs, ruefully. "I've definitely done the 'sleeping on the floor with five other guys and eating tuna fish' thing. But I branched out by

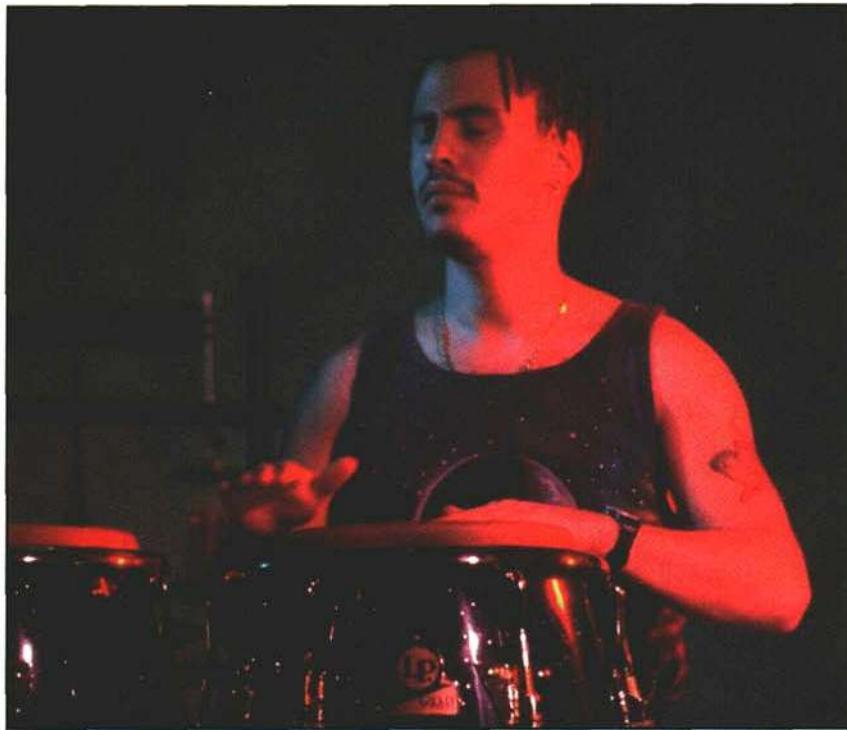
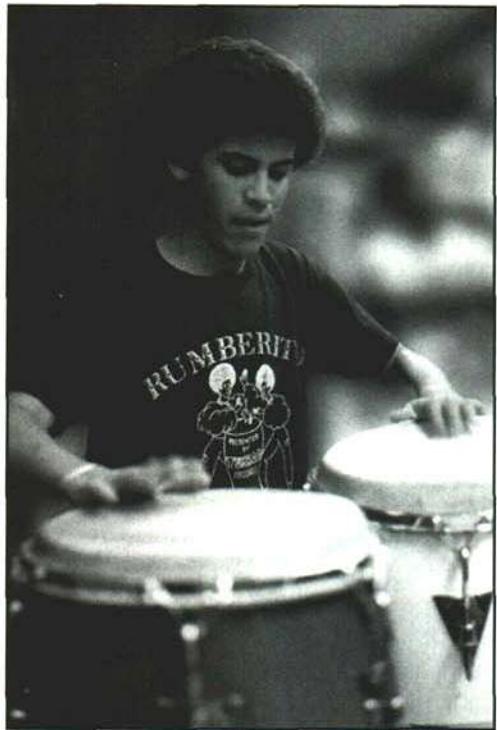


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doing a lot of jazz gigs and trying to free-lance in the city. Ultimately, all the things I learned doing those blues gigs in Jersey paid off when I auditioned for *SNL*."

By the time Eddie's record deal dissolved a few years later, Pelton was already busy in the Big Apple playing studio sessions, jingle dates, demos, blues clubs, and singer/songwriter showcase gigs throughout town. He continues this frenetic pace today, appearing on recent albums by the Brecker Brothers and Edie Brickell. On Brickell's first solo album Pelton found himself slamming the skins for a world-renowned producer: Brickell's husband, pop star Paul Simon.

"I was given no tapes of the tunes before we went in," says Pelton. "We would hash out arrangements for eight hours and then start going for tracks. So the ability to stay fresh and keep track of how the song was evolving was important. Paul was very in touch with finding a sonic stance for each particular tune. There was a song called 'Hard Times' that started like a straight-

**"You talk about paying dues. I've definitely done the 'sleeping on the floor with five other guys and eating tuna fish' thing!"**



ahead rock thing—almost like the Stones—but it didn't have a distinctive stance. So I tried a boogaloo funk thing with a brush and a cross-stick—like a shaker/hi-hat color, only using a brush—and that worked. Kenny Aronoff used to talk about having four or five options for a tune, so if they say, 'We don't like that, do you have anything else?' you've got something else."

Though you'd think a high-profile gig like *Saturday Night Live* would allow him some time to slow down, a glance at Pelton's battered appointment book shows otherwise. It's packed with rehearsals and shows for artists ranging from former Peter Gabriel backing vocalist Joy Askew to G.E. Smith's own High Plains Drifter country band. Of course, many of the gigs he works aren't nearly as glamorous—the curse of all free-lance musicians who need to keep the work coming in. "I still do a lot of silly gigs," he admits. "But if I can keep my head together and stay positive, I'm probably going to learn something. Even at its worst, you're still dealing with people's songs. If you don't stay positive and focused, it's just a negative circle. That has as much to do with survival in this business as anything."

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The issue of survival—especially as it relates to being a free-lance drummer in New York City—is a central topic with Pelton. "The hardships of being a drummer in New York are intense," he says. "Just the issue of moving your gear.... I don't live in a nice place; it's the East Village and people sell crack in the doorway. So I can't leave my stuff in the car. I'd end up getting home from a gig at 4 A.M. and loading my drums up a two-floor walkup: Take a load out, lock the car, walk it up, and come back down again."

Thanks to the income and higher profile resulting from the show, Pelton has since hired friend Martin Yee as his drum tech and snagged endorsements with DW, Zildjian, Vater sticks, and XL Specialty cases, among others. But he remains sympathetic to the free-lancer's plight. "You always hear this stuff about New York drummers having a crazy look in their eye—the stereotype of the New York player," he says. "I'm convinced this is the kind of stuff that makes you that way."

As a jobbing drummer in the city, Pelton often finds himself juggling two or three different projects each week, in addition to his work on the show. Just keeping track of all the material is a challenge. "I'll write people's tunes out in my own little shorthand charts to catalog each person's repertoire," says Pelton. "I've got envelopes from about fifty different bands that will do a showcase, take six months off, and then all of a sudden want to play CBGB's. Having all that stuff organized and ready can be just as important as being able to play well."

As the SNL rehearsal progresses—with

Pelton taking time to discuss the benefits of electronic drums with cast member Mike Myers and commiserate with Seal drummer Abe Laboriel, Jr.—it's obvious the drummer is in his element. Following an 8 P.M. dress rehearsal/taping (for backup, in case something goes wrong during the live show), the band is ready for the 11:30 live broadcast. The group sails through all the rehearsed tunes with few problems, filling in the time between commercial breaks with expert ease.

Was there ever a time when Pelton might have been intimidated by the legacy of the show's drum chair—previously occupied by players like Steve Jordan, Steve Ferrone, Steve Gadd, Billy Cobham, and Dave Weckl? "To handle stress really well and face it positively is something I've tried to develop just as much as my playing," he answers. "You could crack under the weight of that, if you sat around and thought about it. I just wanted to be strong."

Eventually, the show ends and Pelton can leave for home—nearly fifteen hours after he first stepped in Studio 8H. As the drummer strides through Rockefeller Center's lobby (threading past a throng of fans trying to figure out if he's really somebody) you're tempted to ask if he has any sort of vision of where he'd like to go next as a player. His answer is typically pragmatic. "The gigs you get put into have a lot to do with how you develop as a player and the directions you go into. The road of being a free-lancer kind of makes its own choices. All you do is follow along."



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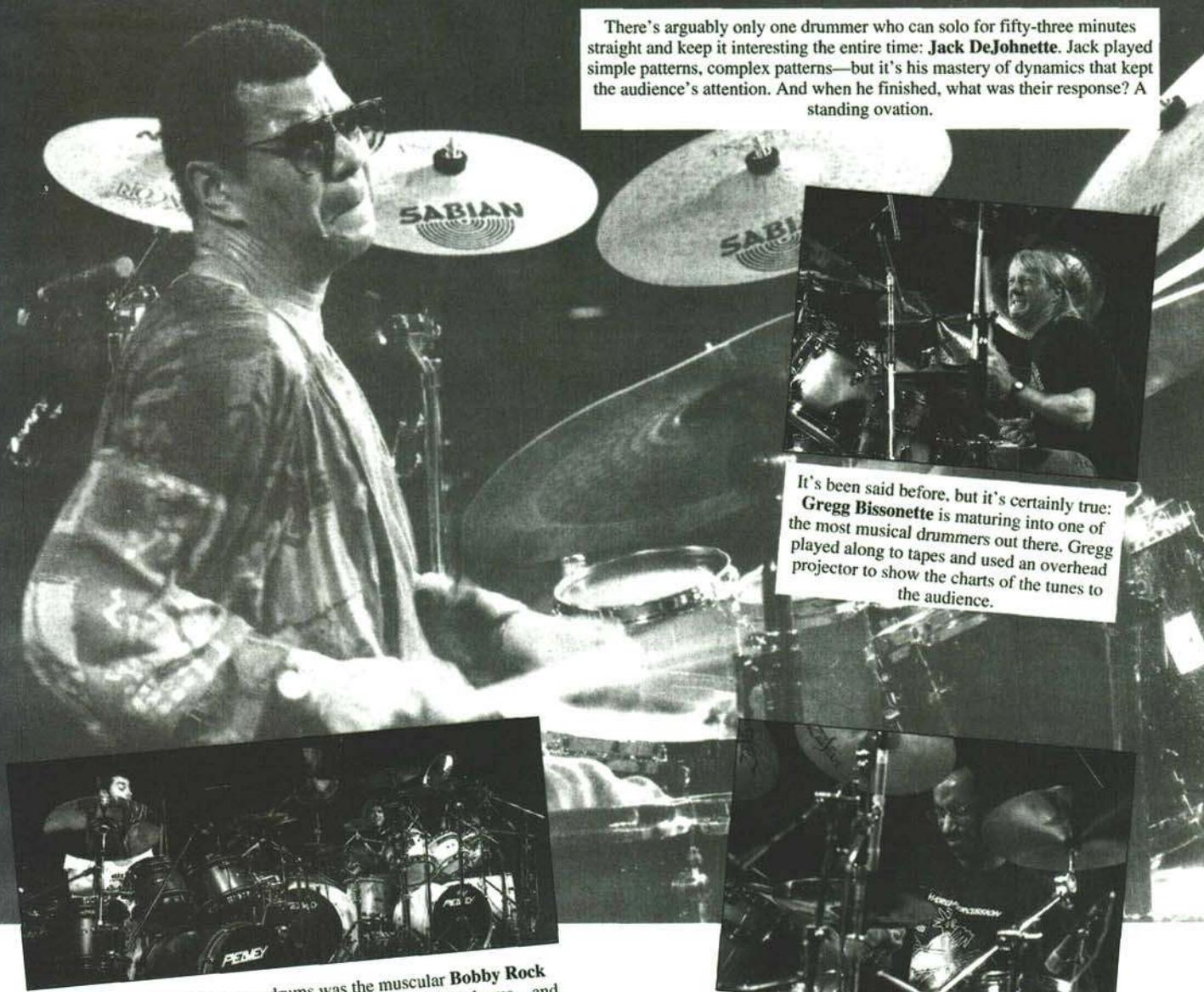
# Highlights Of PASIC '94

## Atlanta, GA, November 16-19

Drumming will never die. Why, you ask? Well, because it must answer some primal urge in all of us. While walking around the exhibit area at the Percussive Arts Society's 1994 International Convention one could plainly see these urges being satisfied—all on the manufacturers' latest gear. A new crop of budding drummers and percussionists (and several not-so-young) were at the three-day show, blissfully flailing away. No, drumming's popularity is definitely not diminishing.

While the exhibit area gave those in attendance—a record

4,500—the chance to check out and *play* the newest equipment, PASIC's educational clinics offered a veritable soup-to-nuts banquet of percussion education. Experts from several fields of percussion covered topics including hand drums, marimba, timpani, tabla, instrument repair, Latin percussion, steel drums, and electronic percussion. Also, PASIC offered the drumset enthusiast several different artists to check out in a clinic situation. Here are some of the highlights:



There's arguably only one drummer who can solo for fifty-three minutes straight and keep it interesting the entire time: **Jack DeJohnette**. Jack played simple patterns, complex patterns—but it's his mastery of dynamics that kept the audience's attention. And when he finished, what was their response? A standing ovation.



It's been said before, but it's certainly true: **Gregg Bissonette** is maturing into one of the most musical drummers out there. Gregg played along to tapes and used an overhead projector to show the charts of the tunes to the audience.



Playing Peavey's unique new drums was the muscular **Bobby Rock** (right), who used a "casuals" setup that included four bass drums—and yes, he played all of them! Bobby discussed several ways he "spices up" grooves. To cap off his clinic, Bobby played a drum duet with up-and-comer Robin DiMaggio.

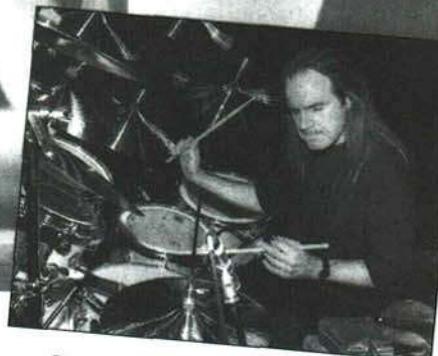


A crowd favorite, **Omar Hakim** was well-received by the large turnout at his clinic. Besides playing to tapes, Omar fielded questions from the audience covering a lot of topics—all very informative.

The most eagerly anticipated event of the convention was the clinic by **Vinnie Colaiuta**, who played to an absolutely packed house. Vinnie gave some inspiring raps on different topics, including not being afraid to "let go" on the drums. He then sat down and just astounded the audience with the depth of his playing, tearing up a variety of different drumming and rhythmic concepts.

The venerable **Ed Shaughnessy** gave a terrific clinic, covering a list of solid drumming topics including ride cymbal technique, brushes, and playing fast tempos. He finished up by playing along with a track he recorded with the Buddy Rich band on Neil Peart's *Burning For Buddy*.

There seems to be some confusion about **Cindy Blackman**. Which drummer is she, the sophisticated jazz solo artist or the slammin' groove-queen with Lenny Kravitz? It appears she's both, and at her clinic she played an extended solo that seemed to draw as much from Tony Williams as it did from Bernard Purdie.



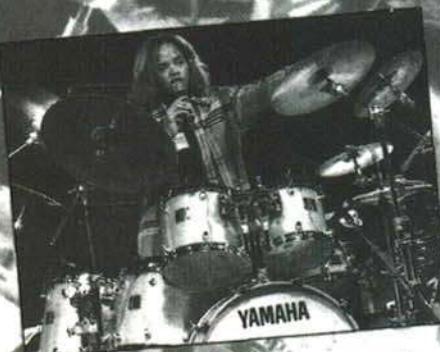
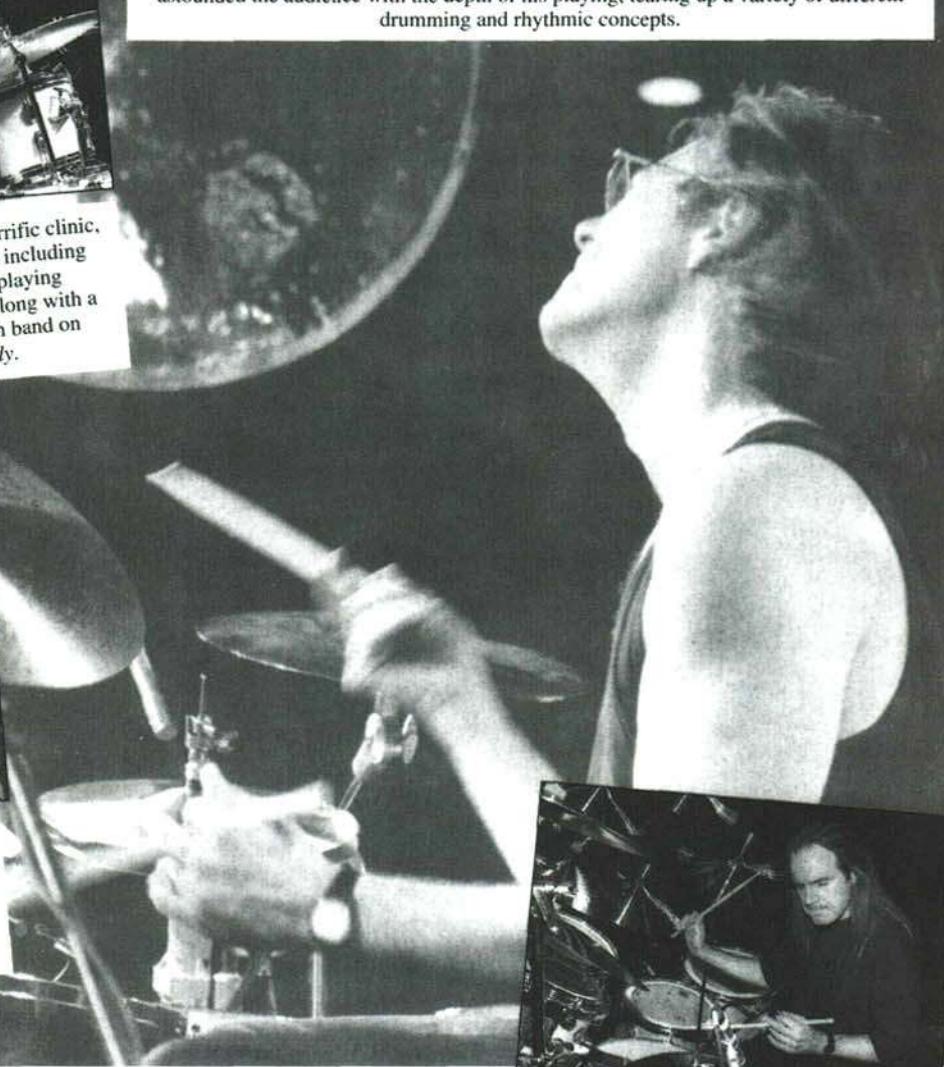
**Paul Wertico**, of Pat Metheny fame, treated the audience to a unique performance. Paul steered clear of the technical aspects and focused on playing in a more "conceptual" way. He used sticks, mallets, knitting needles, and even his bare hands to get his points across.



Other notable drumset clinicians at PASIC '94 included Bob Moses, who discussed playing from a musical perspective, and Chuck Silverman, who raced through a lot of topics, primarily focusing on Afro-Cuban drumset techniques. Also, as in past conventions, *Modern Drummer* was proud to co-sponsor the drumset master classes at PASIC. These classes allowed drummers to observe and work "hands on" with Bob Gullotti, Fred Gruber,

Steve Houghton, and Jim Chapin. Our sincere thanks to these gentlemen for being such enthusiastic supporters of this program.

To satisfy the percussive urges of southwestern percussionists, PASIC '95 will be held at the Civic Plaza and Hyatt Regency Hotel in Phoenix, Arizona, this November 1-4. For further information contact the Percussive Arts Society, P.O. Box 25, Lawton, OK 73502, (405)353-1455.



**Terri Lyne Carrington** showed her ability to swing, playing beautifully with a trio at her clinic. She answered questions, and at the end invited Ndugu Chancler on stage for a duet in seven.



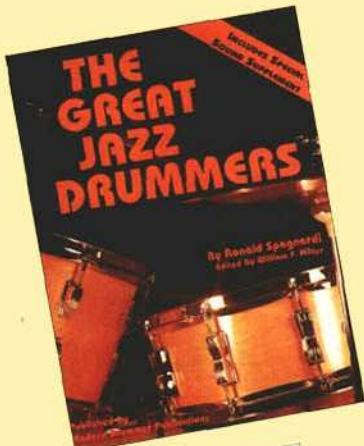
Steve Houghton, and Jim Chapin. Our sincere thanks to these gentlemen for being such enthusiastic supporters of this program.

# The Modern

## The Great Jazz Drummers

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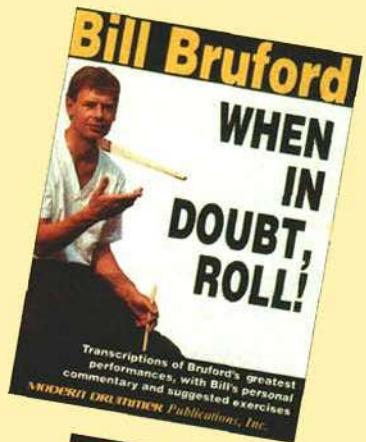
A true collector's item, this text takes a look at nearly a century of drumming. Fascinating reading, this book tells the stories of over 60 legendary drumming greats. Sound Supplement included.



## When In Doubt, Roll!

by Bill Bruford

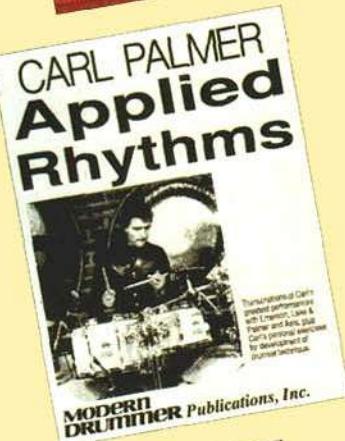
Transcriptions of 18 of Bruford's greatest recorded performances, his personal commentary about each piece, and Bill's exercises to develop facility, flexibility, and creativity at the drumset.



## Applied Rhythms

by Carl Palmer

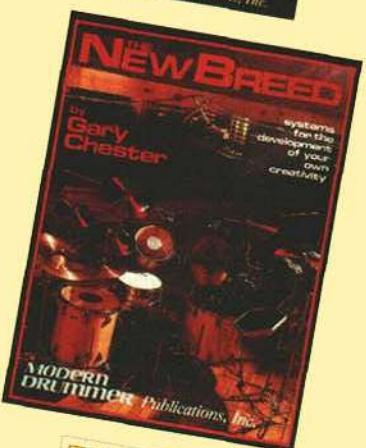
This book contains transcriptions of ten of Carl Palmer's most famous recordings, and also includes Carl's personal exercises for drumset technique.



## The New Breed

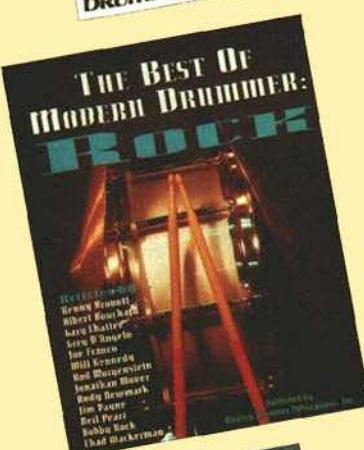
by Gary Chester

This is not just another drum book, but rather a system that will help you develop the skills needed to master today's studio requirements.

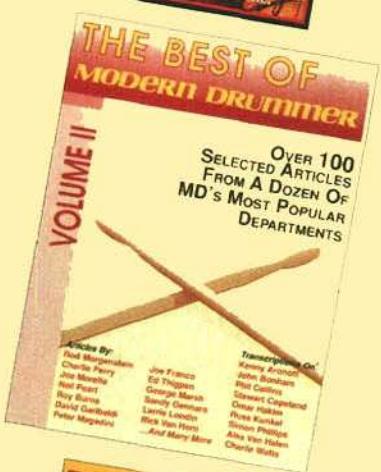


## Best Of MD: Rock

Everything from linear drumming, playing in odd time signatures, and double bass techniques to hot shuffle beats, effective fills, and Neil Peart's advice on creating a drum solo.



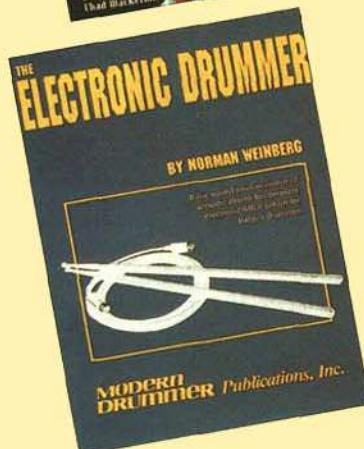
**Best Of MD, Volume 2**  
The Best Of Modern Drummer is jam-packed with advice, concepts, and tons of musical examples. If you've missed any of MD, The Best Of Modern Drummer brings it all back home—in one valuable reference book.



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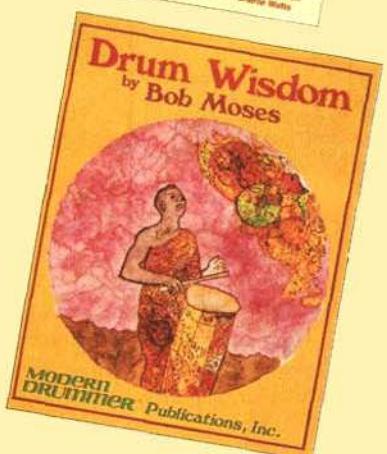
From simple uses of electronics to complex setups, this book will tell you what you need to know in straightforward, "user-friendly" language.



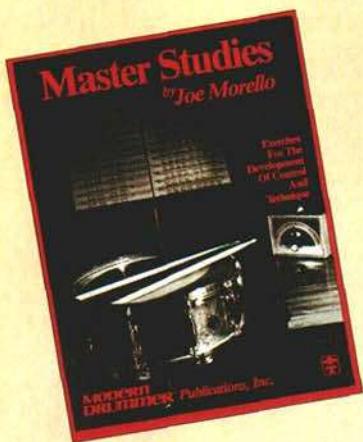
## Drum Wisdom

by Bob Moses

Here is a clear presentation of the unique and refreshing concepts of one of the most exceptional drummers of our time.



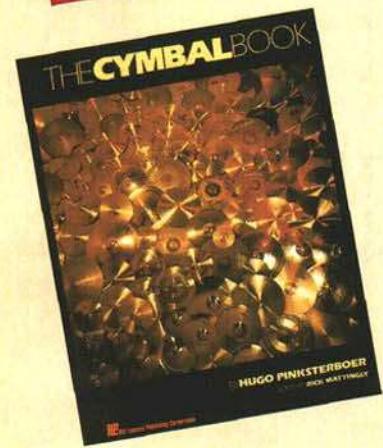
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## Master Studies

by Joe Morello

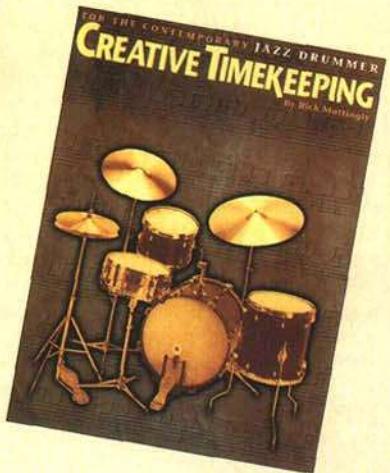
The book on hand development and drumstick control. **Master Studies** focuses on important aspects of drumming technique.



## The Cymbal Book

by Hugo Pinksterboer

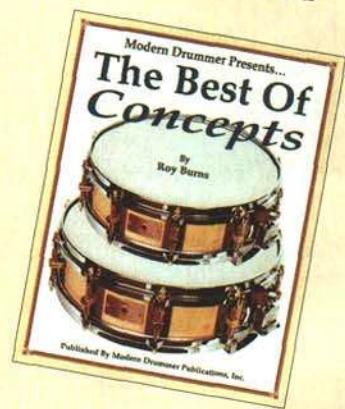
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## The Best Of Concepts

by Roy Burns

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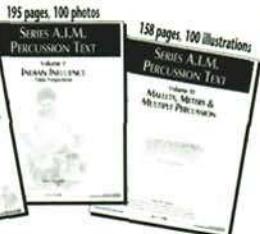
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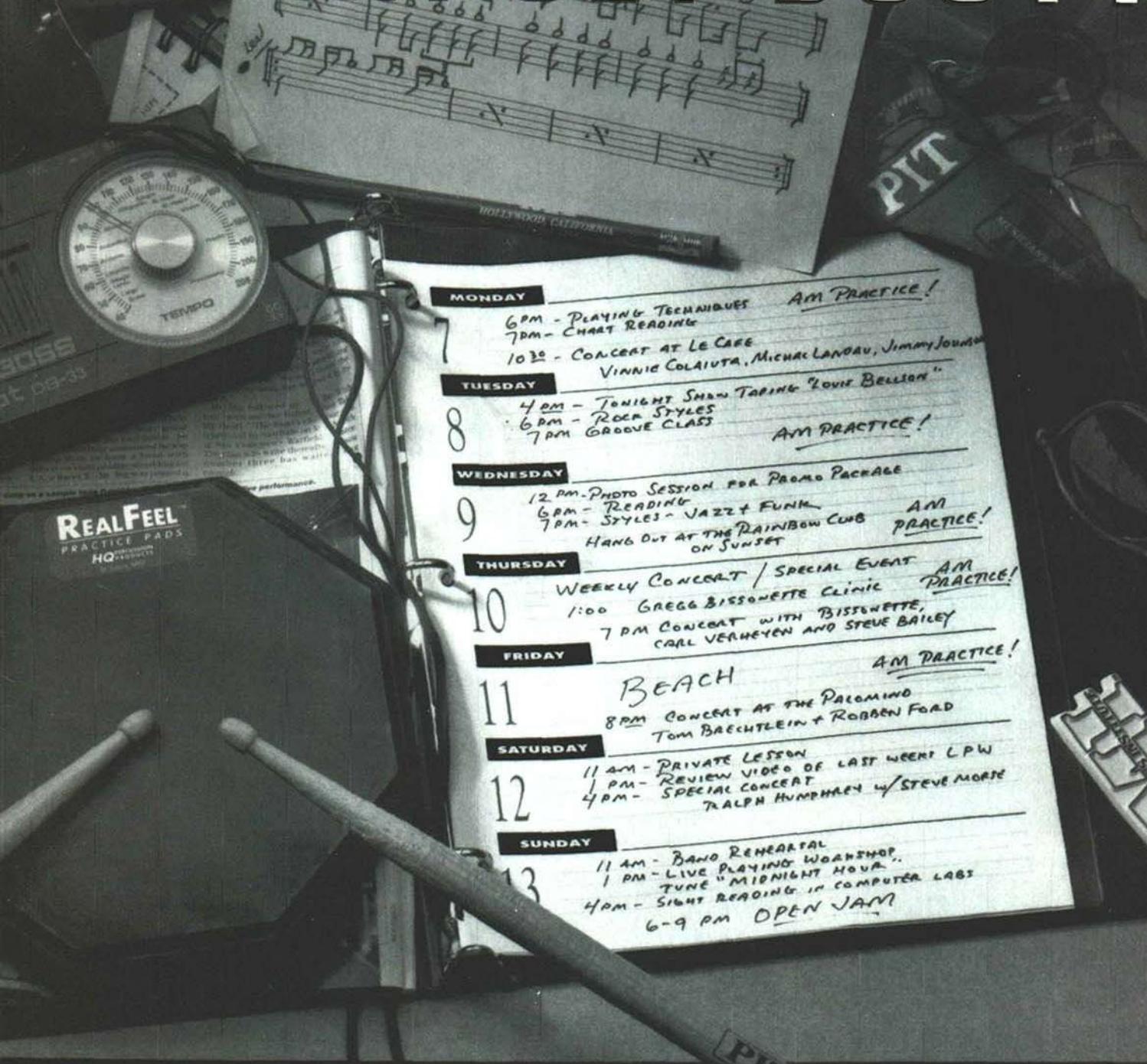
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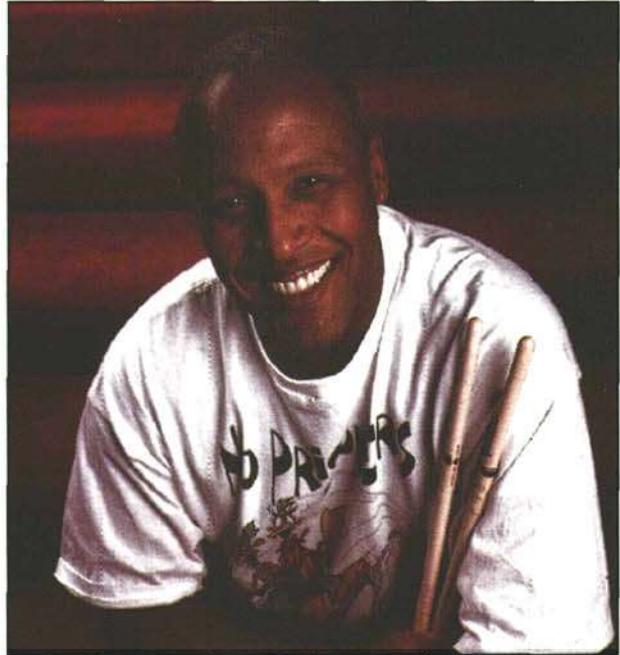
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