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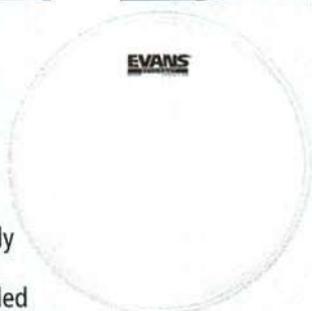
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Fat and punchy

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Dry

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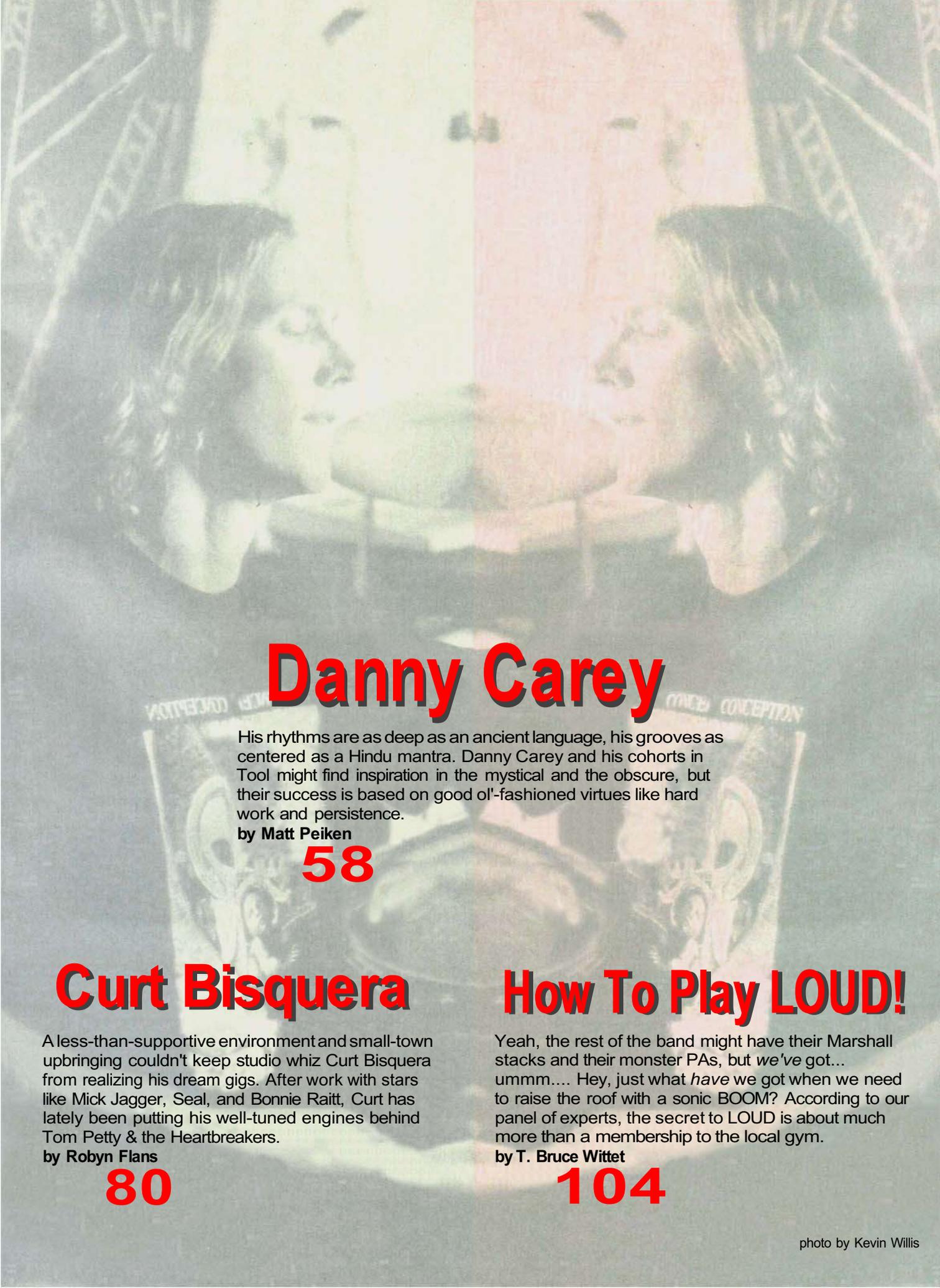


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Danny Carey

His rhythms are as deep as an ancient language, his grooves as centered as a Hindu mantra. Danny Carey and his cohorts in Tool might find inspiration in the mystical and the obscure, but their success is based on good ol'-fashioned virtues like hard work and persistence.

by **Matt Peiken**

58

Curt Bisquera

A less-than-supportive environment and small-town upbringing couldn't keep studio whiz Curt Bisquera from realizing his dream gigs. After work with stars like Mick Jagger, Seal, and Bonnie Raitt, Curt has lately been putting his well-tuned engines behind Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers.

by **Robyn Flans**

80

How To Play LOUD!

Yeah, the rest of the band might have their Marshall stacks and their monster PAs, but we've got... ummm.... Hey, just what *have* we got when we need to raise the roof with a sonic BOOM? According to our panel of experts, the secret to LOUD is about much more than a membership to the local gym.

by **T. Bruce Wittet**

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The Working Drummer

Along with producing the regular twelve issues of *Modern Drummer* and six issues of *Drum Business*, we at *Modern Drummer* were extremely productive last year in our Book Division. Over the past twelve months we released Harry Cangany's *The Great American Drums And The Companies That Made Them*, Mark Parsons' *The Studio Drummer's Survival Guide*, and our most recent publication, *The Working Drummer* by MD managing editor Rick Van Horn.

Between 1980 and 1992, Rick authored MD's very popular *Club Scene* column, based on his nearly twenty-five years of experience in the field. *Club Scene* offered a wealth of valuable advice for the full-time or weekend clubdate drummer at every professional level. Of course, we're always welcoming new readers to *Modern Drummer*, many of whom had never seen Rick's column. So

we decided to go back and select the very best of *Club Scene* and compile it into book form. Rick had the arduous task of weeding through years of articles to find the cream of the crop, and the result of that effort is an information-packed, 144-page text that deals with nearly every imaginable aspect of clubdate drumming.

The Working Drummer is divided into four distinct sections: "Playing The Gig," "Dealing With Equipment," "Taking Care Of Business," and "Taking Care Of Yourself." From equipment maintenance, customer relations, room acoustics, singing, listening, and lighting to rehearsal tips, tuning, building a riser, and putting a demo tape together, *The Working Drummer* literally covers the entire spectrum of topics a clubdate drummer needs to be familiar with.

Why an entire book targeted only to clubdate players? First, our surveys have shown that a significant number of MD

readers are quite active in clubdate work. The other reason is perhaps best expressed in Rick's introduction to the book: "A large number of professional drummers make a living in the most grueling and demanding of musical occupations, the club scene. No studio musician, no recording artist, not even a drummer on the toughest concert tour is expected to play high-quality music in a multitude of styles for five hours a night, five or six nights a week. Musically, the demands made on club drummers are extensive."

Whether you're just starting out as a clubdate player or you've been doing it for years—if you've ever stepped onto a nightclub bandstand, you should read *The Working Drummer*. Information on ordering a copy can be found on page 117 of this issue.

MODERN DRUMMER

The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine



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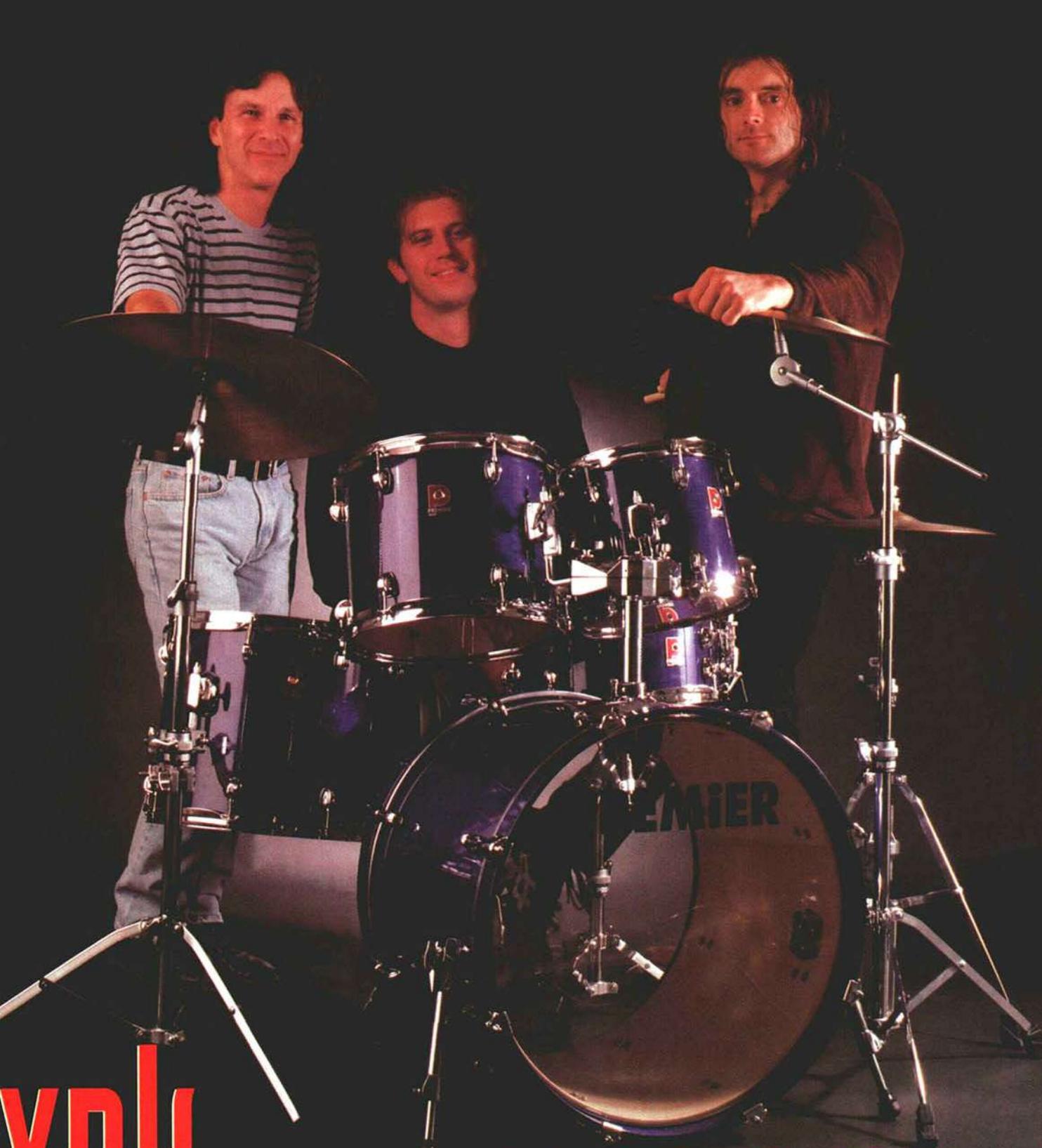
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LARS ULRICH



I just read the Lars Ulrich interview in your November '96 issue, and I felt that I should write to say how impressed I was with Lars' opinions and philosophies regarding drums and music.

For the longest time I've believed that drummers shouldn't be consigned to the role of metronome. This only makes the music suffer, because the other musicians have to "get by" with simplicity when the music may require a skill that isn't present. Phil Collins once said that a good drummer can make the band, and Lars clearly seconded that notion. To hear a drum philosophy that I believe in stated by such a talented musician as Lars is pretty awesome.

I'd also like to comment on how articulate and intelligent Lars came off in the interview. It's regrettably common to run into other drummers who are only into being on MTV instead of making quality music. Wisdom in the rock world is all too rare, and I want to thank Lars for representing drummers (albeit only to other drummers) in a very professional manner.

Ryan Henry
Anaheim, CA

THE REINVENTION OF NEIL PEART

My compliments on another excellent issue. I picked up my mail after a gig at 3:00 A.M. and ended up glued to every page. I would have put Neil Peart on the cover, though. (No offense to Lars Ulrich.) Neil is just an excellent role model. Not merely an exceptional drummer, his total musicianship is extraordinary.

In regard to the *Readers' Platform* criticism about Neil's response to his mail

dilemma, I think the comments are overblown. I'm sure Neil is doing all he can to respond to his fans, and he just wanted to inform the general drumming population that he may not be able to get to *everyone* no matter how much he would like to.

Kevin Thomas
via Internet

CARTER BEAUFORD



Hats off to your October cover story on Carter Beauford! You've appeased many of us by interviewing one of the most dynamic drummers on the percussion scene.

But I'd like to relate an experience that says a lot about Carter's character that your readers didn't get in the article.

I first saw the Dave Matthews Band in the spring of 1995. I had the luck of meeting Carter outside the venue a few hours before the show. He was the friendliest and most interesting person I'd met in a long time. He stayed for over an hour, talking drums. When it came time for him to go, he told me that he'd give me his sticks after the show if I could make it to the front of the stage. I did, and he did, and it was one of the greatest moments of my life. After the show we met outside again, and Carter greeted me with a bear hug and endless smiles. He offered to get me a free ticket to a show a week later if I could make it. I did make it, and when we met he hugged me again and gave me the ticket.

Aside from being a drum inspiration, Carter made me feel special and appreciated. He certainly deserves all the attention he gets for his playing abilities, but in my mind he deserves even more respect for his generous personality and his interest in those who enjoy and support his musical endeavors. Carter is one of a kind, both behind and away from his drumkit.

Taylor Lee
Greenville, NC

JIM SONEFELD

Your magazine is usually a great forum for a diverse array of drummers and products. But I have a complaint about the October issue.

Just because Hootie & the Blowfish are a very popular band (though I can't fathom why), I don't think it was necessary for you to profile their drummer. Like the rest of the band, he is a very un-creative, basic, get-the-job-done musician—yet he talks like he's the next Dave Weckl. I don't think it's a good move on your part to profile a drummer just because his band is popular. You need to stick to innovative drummers who are on the cutting edge of music. I'm sure Jim Sonefeld will always be more popular than I ever will be, but there are tons of drummers that I have seen in clubs all over the Bay Area that are a hundred times more creative than he is.

Just to clarify my point, I don't care for the Dave Matthews Band, either—but I enjoyed the story on Carter Beauford. He's a cutting-edge, interesting drummer—completely the opposite of Jim Sonefeld.

Again, I compliment your magazine on most of the information you provide. And I thank you for letting us drummers express our opinions.

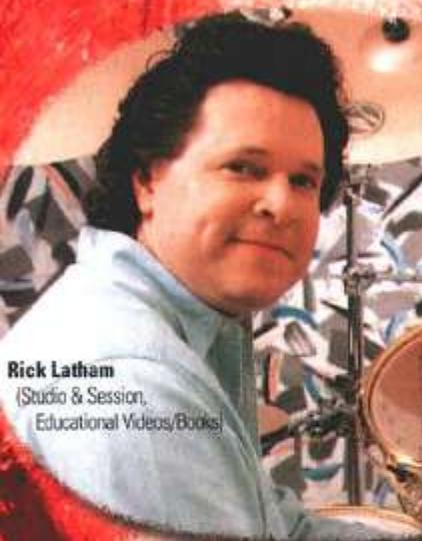
Mike Murphy
Petaluma, CA

I've been a subscriber for years, and I've never really been disappointed until I received the October issue. When I saw that Jim Sonefeld was included in the issue, I couldn't believe my eyes. Never have I learned less from an article. I realize that you may be under some pressure to include some coverage of "popular" artists, but to read about someone who basically says he can't even tune his drums was really disheartening. It's sad to see someone fake his way into a magazine when there are so many players out there with real abilities—who have paid some dues and have something valid to share with others. I guess the days of standards are gone forever. What a shame.

R. Cardillo
Bayonne, NJ

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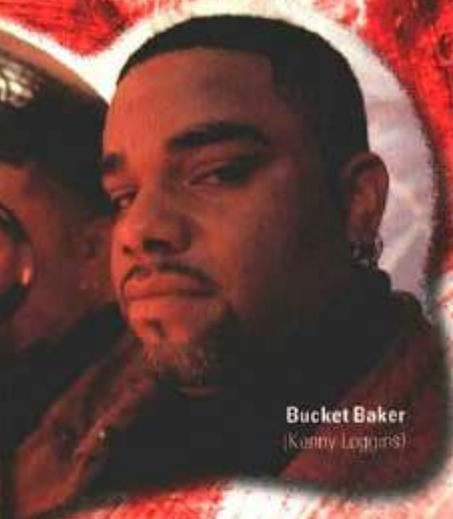
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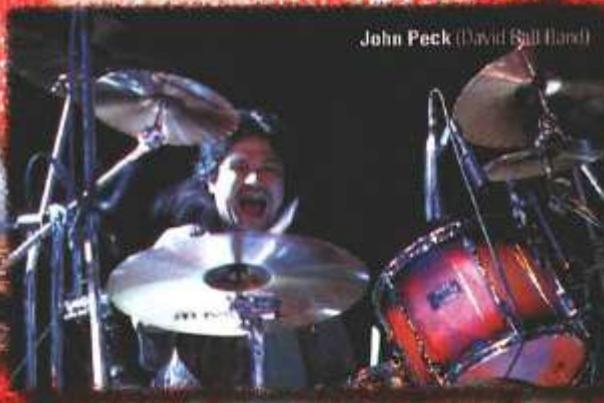
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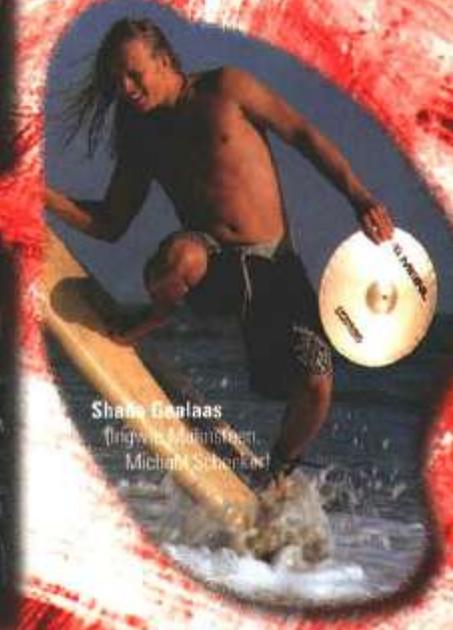
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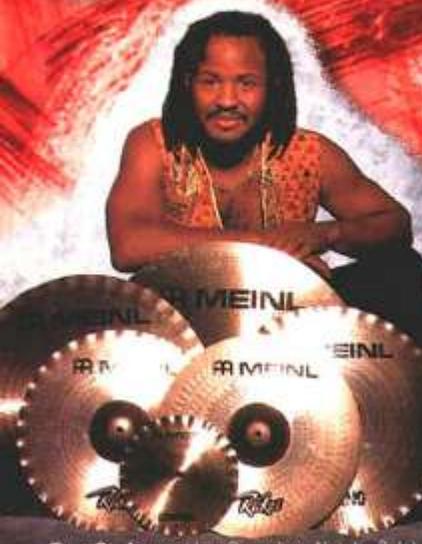
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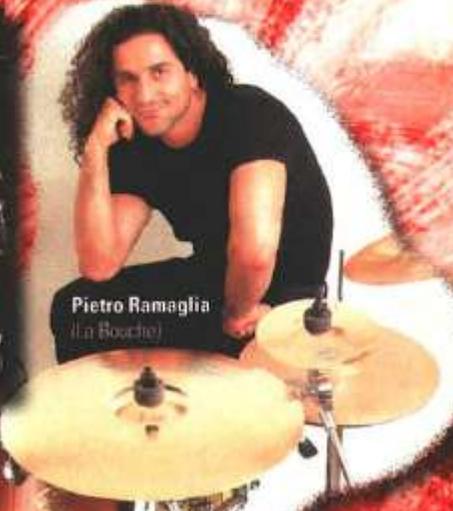
Shane Goulaas
(Ingway, Jamiroquai,
Michael Schenker)



Tony St. James (Jazz Crusaders, Natalie Cole)



K.W. Turnbull
(Chris Le Duz)



Pietro Ramaglia
(La Boche)

MEINL
ROLAND MEINL

You're going to get a lot of "how could you?" letters regarding your story on Jim Sonefeld. But I, for one, congratulate you on featuring a drummer who's become successful without blazing chops or outlandish gimmickry. Hootie & the Blowfish are a band of "regular guys" who worked hard in their home area, caught the ear of the general public, and are now enjoying great success based on the fact that people just like what they do. What's wrong with that? And if Jim Sonefeld isn't the hottest thing since sliced bread on the drums, does that make his contribution to the band's accomplishments any less valid? (Does anyone remember a guy called Ringo?)

There are a thousand times more drummers in this world who resemble Jim Sonefeld in their playing situation and level of ability than there are drummers who resemble Mike Portnoy, Dave Weckl, or Dennis Chambers. It's reassuring for them to read a story about "one of their own" who really did make it. It means that maybe they can, too. Go Jim, go Hootie, and go *Modern Drummer*.

Peter Wilson
Los Angeles, CA

impressed with Bill's accurate and comprehensive description of what these cymbals represent, and the process that took place to get them produced.

An unsung hero in the "treasure hunt" to make these cymbals available was trombonist and Vanguard Jazz Orchestra spokesperson John Mosca, who personally packed Mel's 21" ride, 19" crash, and hi-hats and sent them to Istanbul (no small task). I had the job of picking up the cymbals at the Istanbul booth at the January 1995 NAMM show in California and bringing them back to VJO drummer John Riley at the Vanguard. Of course I was freaking out all the way back to New York, hoping that nothing would happen to the cymbals—and trying to make sure that I wouldn't forget them in a taxi.

There are a few important aspects of this project for me. First of all, there is my personal connection with Mel. Joe Morello introduced me to Mel when I was a kid, and Mel's friendship, musicality, and specifically his cymbal sound completely influenced my musical development. Second, I feel that anything done to connect the great legacy of jazz drummers to upcoming generations of drummers is an important project, and Mel's cymbal sound was a part of that legacy. And third, as a family friend I was happy that royalties on the sale of the cymbals would be paid to Mel's family. It's wonderful when the family of a musician who has made a great contribution to the music world can receive additional compensation after that musi-

cian's passing. Such things don't happen often enough in our business.

For those interested in hearing Mel's original cymbals, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra still plays every Monday night at the Village Vanguard in New York City. Whoever is playing drums (John Riley, Dennis Mackrel, Danny D'Imperio, Darrell Pelligrini, or myself) will be using a combination of Mel's cymbals and whatever cymbals the drummer endorses. You can also hear Mel's historic *A Zildjian Swish Knocker* with twenty copper rivets—a mainstay in Mel's cymbal collection.

Of special note for *MD* readers: The University of Missouri, Kansas City has recently decided to organize a "Mel Lewis Library," which will house over four hundred private tapes from Mel's collection, along with photos, contracts, and correspondence. I have heard some of the tapes, and they are amazing. They include such treats as Miles Davis sitting in with the Vanguard band. It's hoped that these items will be available for study purposes.

Danny Gottlieb
New York, NY

MEL LEWIS CYMBALS

As a fan, student, and personal friend of the late Mel Lewis, I was thrilled to read William F. Miller's *Product Close-Up* of the Istanbul *Mel Lewis Signature Series* cymbals in your October issue. I was

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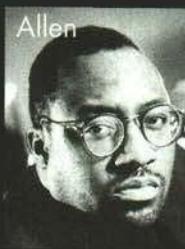
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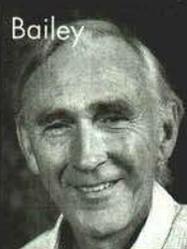
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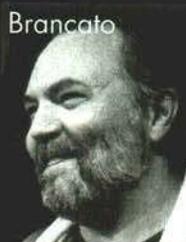


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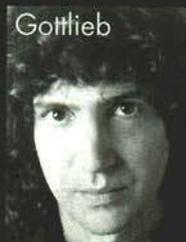


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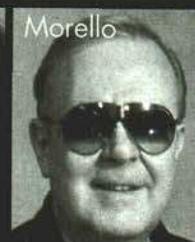
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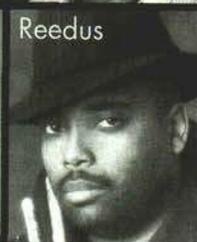
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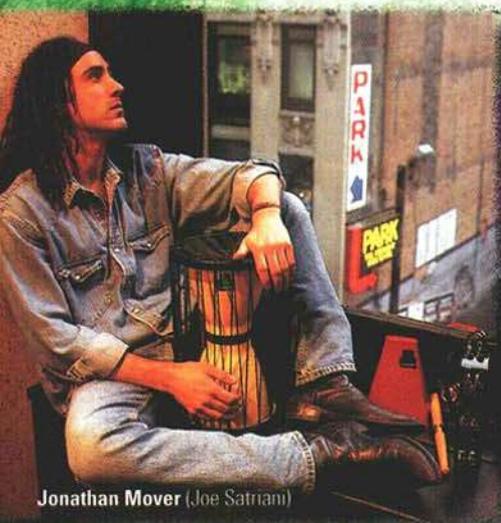
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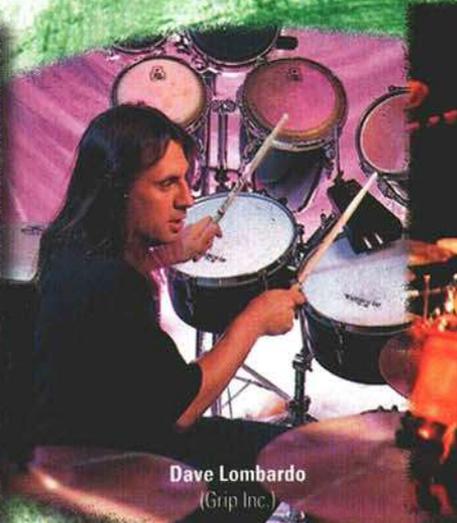
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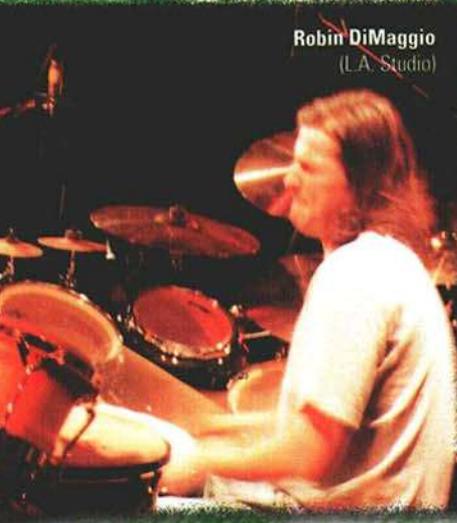
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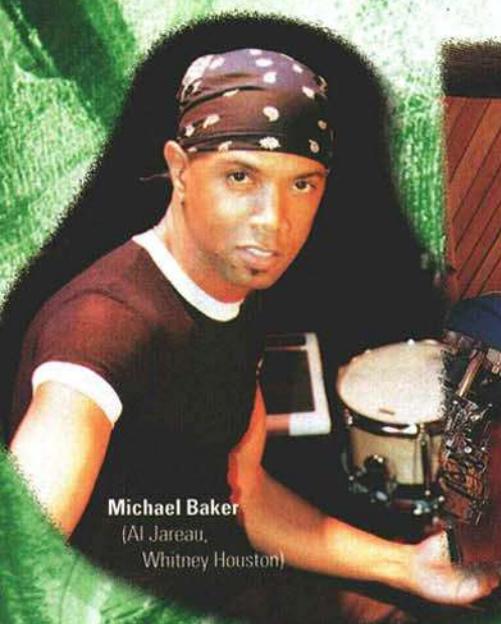
Jonathan Mover (Joe Satriani)



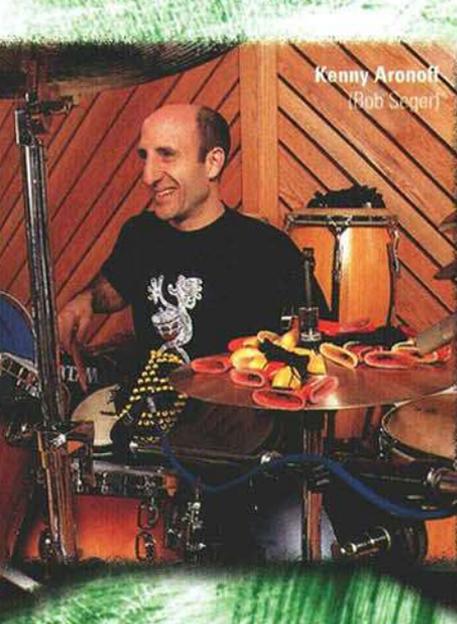
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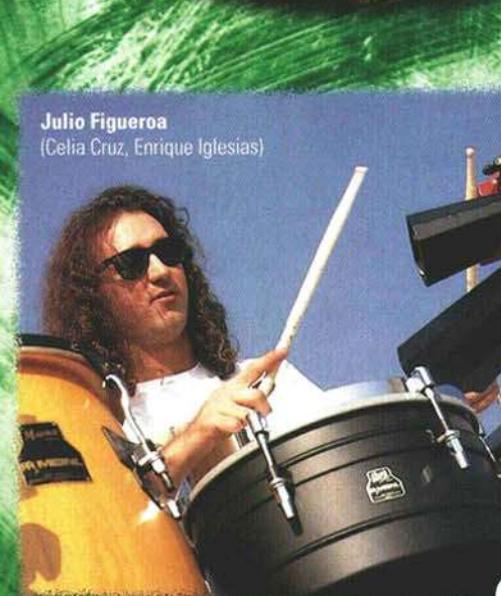
Michael Baker
(Al Jareau,
Whitney Houston)



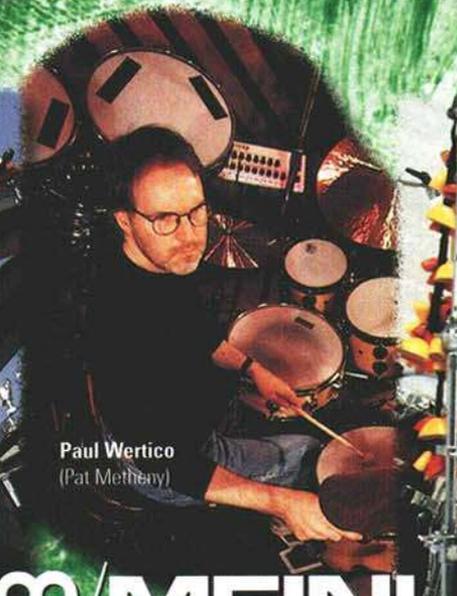
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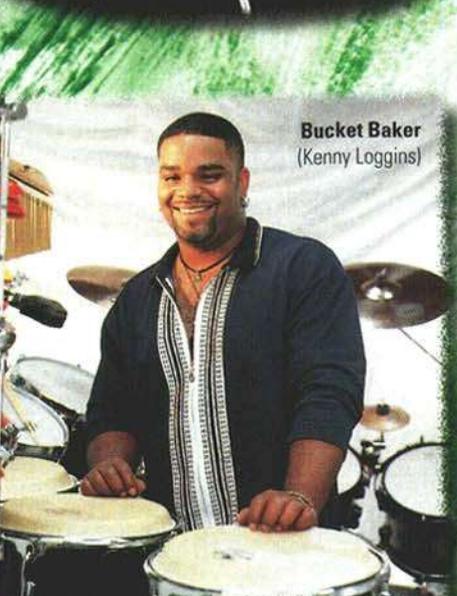
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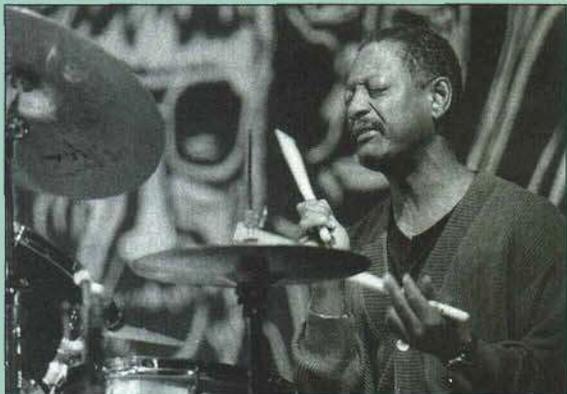
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ROLAND MEINL

Victor Lewis Man In Motion

When Victor Lewis blew through the Pacific Northwest recently, he put his fust-forward schedule on pause just long enough to catch a breath. This first-call session jazz drummer, bandleader, and composer had just come off a mid-summer European tour with Cedar Walton's group, as well as a stint at New York City's Blue Note accompanying both Walton and Art Farmer. Yet here he was, back on the road again. "I'm running so hard right now, it's crazy," Lewis admits. "Sometimes, between gigs, I'll call my manager from a pay phone just to check where I'm at. you know—maybe just ask her what day it is!"

On stage this summer at Jazz Port Townsend with trombone legend J.J. Johnson, a full-house audience could hear Lewis express this running-in-place excitement from behind the drumkit. In one quick and quirky drum and 'bone duct known as "Sweet Georgia Gillespie," Lewis was all bebop brushes and street sass, trading furious fours with Johnson all the way to a standing ovation.

Valued for his taste, his touch, and his style, this Omaha native first became known for his work with Woody Shaw, David Sanborn. Oliver Lake (in the '70s). Stan Getz. Carla Bley. and Dexter Gordon (in the '80s), Lewis then co-led the group Horizon with Bobby Watson in the early '90s. while meeting his own calendar-load of studio and club engagements.



Steve Robin

Victor entered jazz as a sideman. later taking on the role of leader. He is now gaining recognition as a serious composer. "I'm more into playing music than I am into playing drums," he says. "I tend to play chord progressions rather than drum fills. I've always been writing, and these days I'm getting the opportunity to record under my own name." Victor and friends holed up in the recording studio recently, emerging with three new CDs under Lewis's own name. One features his own group (with Canadian Seamus Blake on sax), another presents Lewis's work with various "piano-less" trios, and the third is an all-star project that finds Lewis in the familiar company of Kenny Barron, Bobby Watson. David Kink, Curtis Lundy. and Jerry Bergonzi.

"We did them all in seven weeks." Victor says. "Just locked the door, turned off the phone, and boom—we ended up completing three records at once." With all three due for release shortly, chances are good that 1996 will be remembered as a landmark in what is already a remarkable career.

Bill Kiley

Tim "Herb" Alexander In His Prime, Out Of Primus

Why, if you had it all—your face on the covers of international music magazines, your musicianship on platinum CDs strewn from Bangor to Bangkok—would you pack it in?

That's the sixty-four-thousand-dollar question posed to Tim "Herb" Alexander, who recently walked away from Primus:



Ebet Roberts

"I wasn't feeling the music anymore, and I wasn't happy. Just the thought of making another record seemed like work, not fun."

Tim also felt relegated to the background: "Being 'the drummer,' you're not the frontman. There are some situations, like Metallica, where the drummer is allowed to play a bigger role. Lars is the voice of that band. It wasn't that way with Primus. I don't really know what my position is in the world, you know, besides being 'the drummer,' but I have lots of interests. And that's the one thing I think about—will people be open to me not doing the techno-rock thing I was doing with Primus, that goofy rock thing? I don't know what people want to see."

With freedom comes the dilemma of choice: "Now that all the doors are open for me, I just don't know what moves me the most." So Tim has been taking it easy, playing a little with the musicians from the Laundry project he had recorded with a couple of years ago. Also, the movie *Chalk* has been released, featuring Tim's incidental music and a little acting as well. And, yes, Tim has recorded tracks for a drum record: "I did a tune with Mike Bordin. I put all kinds of music to it. My friend Maynard from Tool did some screaming. It's a real crazy song—lots of feels and moods."

Not totally unlike Primus, Tim? Surely you miss it! "Oh, I already do. I worked really hard to help put the group where it is, but we all just felt like it couldn't go any further. It's really hard for me now because I don't know what I'm going to do. I even talked to Steve Smith about it. He went through the same thing when he left Journey. They were a successful band, and all of a sudden it was over. The last few months I've just not been interested in playing drums. That's kind of scary."

Although he is in demand as a clinician, Tim only has a couple of clinics penciled on his calendar: "I won't be doing too many clinics. And if people are interested in seeing a clinic of mine, they should come out soon, while I'm still interested in doing them. I want people to get a lot out of a clinic and enjoy it."

T. Bruce Wittet

Better Than Ezra's Travis McNabb

Could you imagine this phone call? "Hello, Travis? This is Kevin and Tom, we'd like you to join us in Better Than Ezra. Do you remember the song 'Conjunction Junction'?" It would kinda make you think twice about joining the band, wouldn't it? Not for Travis McNabb, though,

whose first gig with his new band

came while they were recording that song for the *School House Rocks* compilation album that was released last year.

Shortly after they worked together on that project the trio began pre-production on Ezra's major label debut, *Friction, Baby*, back in McNabb's hometown of New Orleans. For McNabb, not only was joining the power-pop trio a "hometown boy makes good" story, it was also an opportunity for him to join a band he had watched while playing with the Georgia-based Vigilantes Of Love. All in all, he says, it's worked out beautifully. "Everything went pretty well with the way we worked together, as far as putting material together, playing together, and having things gel."

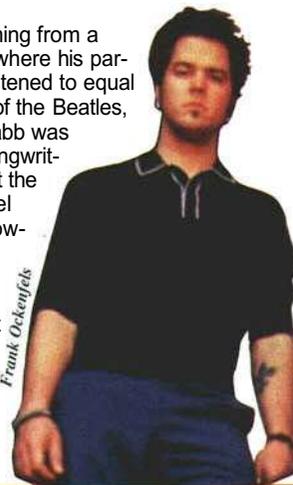
After a month of pre-production, when the band completed arrangements that singer/guitarist/writer Kevin Griffin brought into the sessions, they went into the studio and tracked the vast majority of the album live. While the bulk of the album was a snap, the tune "Hung

What's Your Function?

Coming from a home where his parents listened to equal doses of the Beatles,

the Rolling Stones, and Bob Dylan, McNabb was versed in the power of pop and strong songwriting. Of course, throw in the lessons about the power of drumming and making things feel good rhythmically, which he absorbed growing up in New Orleans, and you've got yourself a drummer whose strengths are perfect for this band. "It's sort of a tricky balance. I'm always trying to find the right spot between how much technique to use and how much to just power a rock band." One listen through *Friction, Baby*, and you'll know he's found it.

David John Farinella



Frank Ockenfels

Jay Dee Daugherty Home Again

At forty-four, Jay Dee Daugherty has played a lot of sessions and held a lot of regular gigs. His credits include albums and tours with Willie Nile, Tom Verlaine, the Indigo Girls, the Waterboys, and Australian rockers the Church. But he's probably best known as "Patti Smith's drummer," a description he doesn't mind a bit.

"We're really used to each other," Daugherty says with a chuckle. "She never had a drummer before me, and I really cut my teeth professionally by sort of molding myself to the way that she works. For better or worse, there are all of those years of knowing each other and being able to read each other. I know she feels comfortable with me playing drums."

A native of Santa Barbara, California, Daugherty started playing drums to records by the Rolling Stones. His first group was punk-rockers the Mumps, who were led by Lance Loud of TV's infamous Loud family. Dick Cavett flew that band to New York to perform on his show in the early '70s, and Daugherty stayed. Eventually he linked up with poet and songwriter Smith and guitarist Lenny Kaye. He went on to play on all of Smith's albums, including the influential efforts *Horses* (1975) and *Easter* (1978).

Smith retired from live performances after *Wave* (1979), and though she made one album in the '80s (*Dream Of Life*, which Daugherty also played on), she didn't return to the stage in earnest until last year. Inspired by the deaths of her husband, her brother, and her friend, photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, Smith also started sessions for her cathartic new album, *Cone Again* (Arista), with Daugherty once again on drums. "I was really happy because I didn't think I'd ever be getting that call from her again," he says.

Smith's new songs range from straightforward rockers like "Summer Cannibals," which is in the mold of '70s tunes like "Dancing Barefoot" and "Because The Night," to quieter and more introspective folk-rock songs such as "About A Boy," which gives Daugherty the opportunity to do some textured tom-tom work with mallets before building to a thunderous climax. "I don't think I've achieved leaps and bounds as far as technique," he says, "but hopefully you learn how to play a little smarter, increase your vocabulary, and be a little bit more sensitive."

Daugherty says Smith is planning short tours of a week or two in length, with breaks in between so that she can spend time with her family. He's doing session work in the downtime, as well as working with guitarist Kaye to compile an album of Smith's live material from the '70s. "This is it for me—there's really nobody else I'd rather be playing with," Daugherty says. "There are certainly tons of better drummers in the world, but I think I really am the best person for this particular job."

Jim DeRogatis



Doug Clapp

NEWS

Lee Harsen is on TV's *Papa Wheelie*, has recorded an album by Serena Robinson, and has been doing live dates with Lee Oskar and Keiko Matsui.

Eddie Bayers has been recording recently with Brian Wilson, George Strait, Clay Walker, the Beach Boys, Neil Cody, John Michael Montgomery, Dolly Parton, Jeff Carson, Skip Ewing, and Emilio.

Tony Coleman has been doing dates with B.B. King.

David Peters is touring with Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown.

Mark Kingsmill is now back on tour with the Hoodoo Gurus after a fall from his drum riser caused them to postpone some of their dates.

Bobby Alt is on Crumb's debut album, *Romance Is A Slowdance* (on Qwest Records).

Bill Stevenson is on tour with the Descendents.

Micky Dolenz is on *Justus*, the first album entirely written, produced, and performed by the four original Monkees in almost thirty years.

RUSS McKinnon recently returned from a European clinic tour with percussionist **Brad Dutz**.

Joey Castillo is on Danzig's new album, *Blackacidevil*.

Ricky Sebastian has been performing with Harry Belafonte. He recently filmed a PBS special with Belafonte and recorded a new studio album for Sony. Ricky is also on recent releases by Prime Crime, Michael Pope, and Charles Fambrough.

Jonathan Moffett will be drumming for Michael Jackson on his *HISTory* tour.

Will Denton is currently working with Steven Curtis Chapman on his *Signs Of Life* tour.

Congratulations to Celia and **Andy Peake** on the birth of their daughter, Margaret Emlen.

Congratulations to Sadhna and **Gregg Bissonette** on their recent marriage.

MARVIN SMITH

Masters Series Drums and PowerShifter Pedals.

As millions of people tune in nightly to The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, the drummers watching get a chance to see one of the most outstanding Jazz drummers of our time... Marvin "Smitty" Smith. It doesn't take a musician to recognize that the sound coming from the drum stage is nothing short of extremely impressive. As the opening Tonight Show Theme comes to an end, Marvin's hands and feet blur as he makes full use of every drum and cymbal in what seems a massive kit. Talent and equipment. When you

Photos by Neil Zlozower and John Walker

Marvin "Smitty" Smith can be seen nightly on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno using Pearl's Masters Custom Gold Series drums in Purple Mist, PowerShifter Bass Drum Pedals and Pearl's Drum Rack System.

THE SMITTY

boil it all down, cut through all the hype, the keys to success seem this simple. With "Smitty", there's an abundance of talent. With Masters Series drums and PowerShifter pedals, you have the same exact tools that so many professional drummers base their careers upon.

The difference in sound can be heard in every Masters Series drum simply because Pearl's approach to manufacturing a shell is so different. We call it our Heat Compression Shell Molding System, or HC/sms for short. Hand selected Maple plies are bonded by our patented adhesive and cured under extreme heat while being compressed by continuous internal cylindrical force. Sounds complicated,

because it is. The end result is a drum shell like no other... a Masters Series shell.

The next time you get to see a great player like "Smitty" perform, maybe the terms talent and equipment might come to mind.

Masters Series drums. The equipment of choice for some of the most talented drummers of our time.



Charlie Grover OF SPONGE

by Ken Micallef

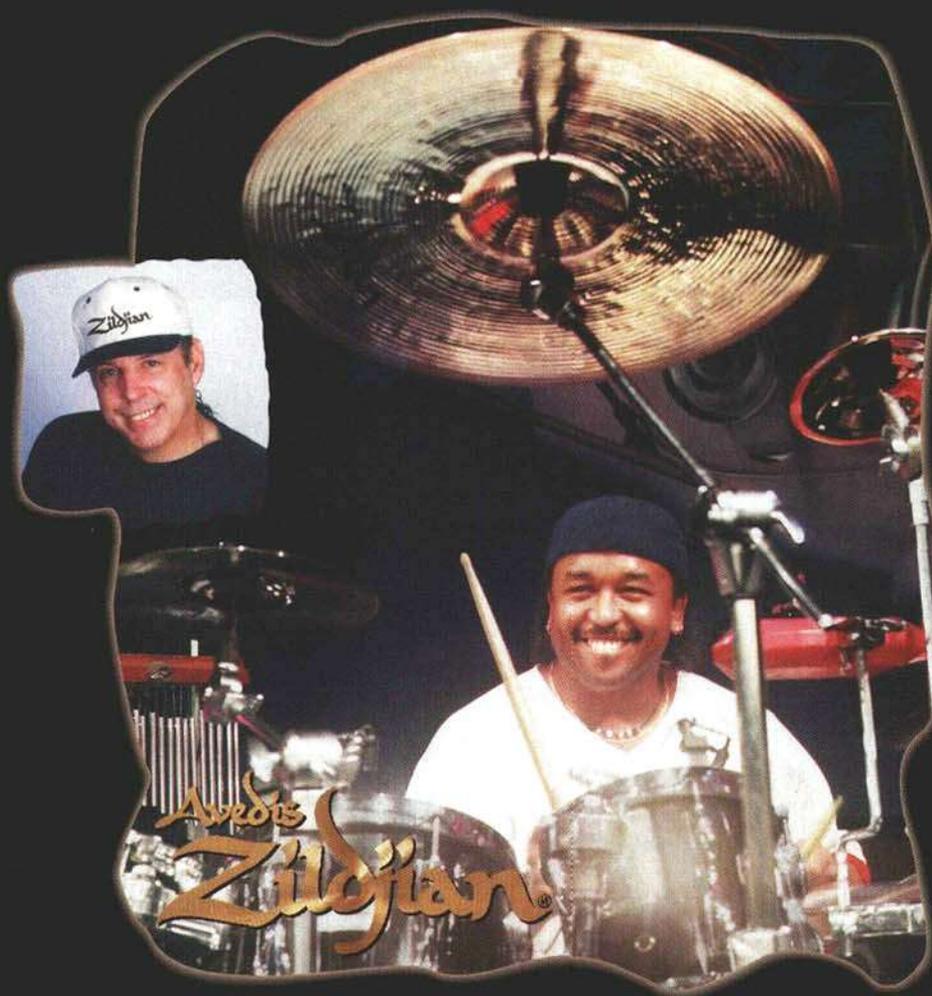
photos by Paul LaRaia

When Charlie Grover turned twenty-seven in December of 1994, fate delivered a walloping punch to his psyche. Like many drummers, this Detroit native had rummaged from band to band, looking for that elusive bit of chemistry and songwriting spark that would propel him to a major label record deal and a bright, music-making future. But after years of Elk's Clubs and rock 'n' roll dives, Grover was forced to reconsider his big dreams.

With his drums sitting in a friend's rehearsal space and his hopes dim, Grover smooth-talked his way into a salesman's job at the local Chrysler used car dealership. Soon he was a wheeler-dealer of the highest order, though his boss doubted his claim of "five years' experience." And his drums still nagged at him every time he passed his buddy's house. Then karma kicked in.

"When I first heard Carter, it literally stopped me in my tracks."

Nashville Great Eddie Bayers on Carter Beauford



"I was in the studio between sessions, and a video had just come on. I literally stopped in my tracks. 'Who is that?' I just had to know who it was. It was the Dave Matthews Band. Carter's playing is so unique and individual. He plays with so much intensity, it inspires me to play."

Carter Beauford on Zildjian:

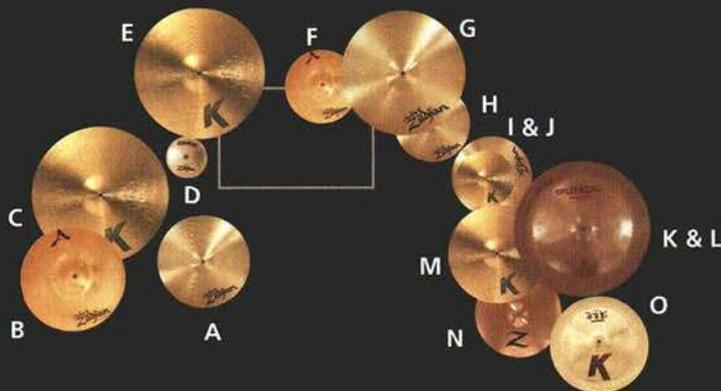
"My cymbals have voices that reflect the unique musical influences that make up this band."

"To me, my A's and Z's represent a rock influence; I use them when I'm jamming around Dave's and Stefan's riffs. When Boyd is doing his bluegrass-cajun thing, I like to lay into my A Custom's. And when Leroi is doing his 'Coltrane' the K's do it for me."

Carter's Set-up:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| A. 14" A New Beat HiHats | F. 10" A Custom Splash | K. 20" Oriental China Trash |
| B. 16" A Custom Crash | G. 18" A Medium Crash | L. 18" Oriental China Trash on top of K |
| C. 20" K Ride Brilliant | H. 10" A Splash Brilliant | M. 14" K Dark Crash Thin Brilliant |
| D. 6" ZIL-BEL | I. 12" A Splash | N. 13" Z Dyno Beat HiHats |
| E. 19" K Dark Crash Thin | J. 8" K Splash Brilliant | O. 14" K Mini China with rivets |

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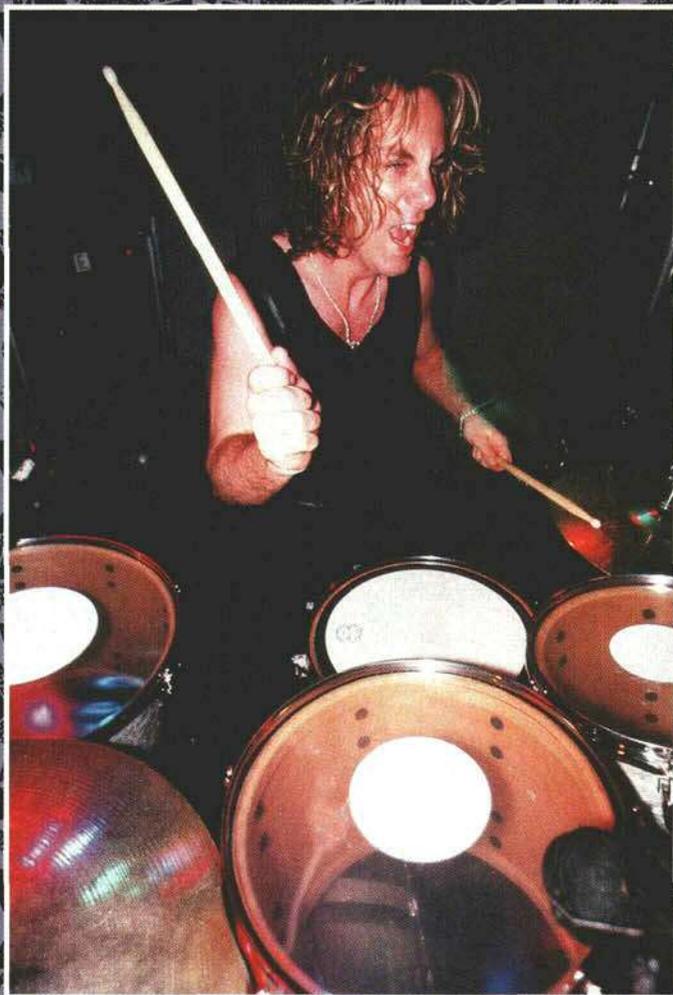
"It was the night before New Year's Eve," recalls Grover. "The boss was leaving. We were all sitting around and joking. 'Hey, Paul,' I said. 'Remember how you always wanted to know how long I've been in the car business? Well, I've only been in the business four months now!' We were buddy-buddy now, and my sales record was good, so I figured I could level with him. But he got angry. The next day I was fired. That same morning a friend of mine called me and told me that Sponge needed a drummer. I'd made all the contacts right before I got fired. It sounds unbelievable, but it's the honest-to-God truth. I got fired from my job and secured the Sponge audition that same day. So I slapped on the headphones, really worked on the tunes, and then made the audition. They called me four days later and told me I had the gig. It was so ironic."

With Wax Ecstatic, Sponge builds on the success of last year's platinum-selling *Rotting Piñata*. Drenched in the grit and grease of the Motor City, Grover, Vinnie Dombrowski (vocals), Joey Mazzola and Mike Cross (guitars), and Tim Cross (bass) broaden their sound and punch up their possibilities. From the beat-happy glam of "My Purity" to the 12/8 swagger of "The Drag Queens Of Memphis" to the hook-filled lingers "I Am Anastasia" and "Silence Is Their Drug," Sponge soak it all up, then spit it all out.

Charlie Grover, still reeling from his unlikely initiation, handles Sponge's diversity with working-class tenacity and on-the-job skill. Grover is a rock 'n' roller of the old school, but he's also at home playing jazz and country. Weaned on Waylon Jennings, Bob Seger, and Grand Funk Railroad, Grover bet on his dreams, and with a bit of luck and a lot of hard work, he's succeeded. A no-frills player whose beat falls dead-center in the groove, Grover attributes his musicality to early years spent playing with his dad's band, and later years honing songs in his home studio. But one question remains: Would you buy a used car from this man?

KM: I understand that after releasing *Rotting Piñata*, Sponge toyed with various "concept album" ideas, but ultimately abandoned them.

CG: It began with those ideas, but doing a second concept album just wasn't gonna fly. Vinnie had this wild notion of drag queens, then we realized we'd be pigeonholed in some really weird glam thing. None of us wants to dress up like a drag queen anyway. That connection stemmed from a show we did in Memphis last summer. We were playing for a nice crowd, with a lot of musicians—but we just weren't getting the response we're



"I'd been in situations before where I was thinking to myself, 'Charlie, can you freaking relax?'"

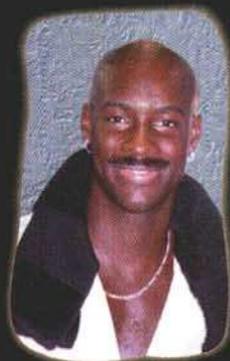
accustomed to. We came off stage and Vinnie said, "I feel like a drag queen in Memphis." Hence, the title "The Drag Queens Of Memphis." Then Vinnie wrote "Death Of A Drag Queen."

KM: This sounds like a band with big ideas.

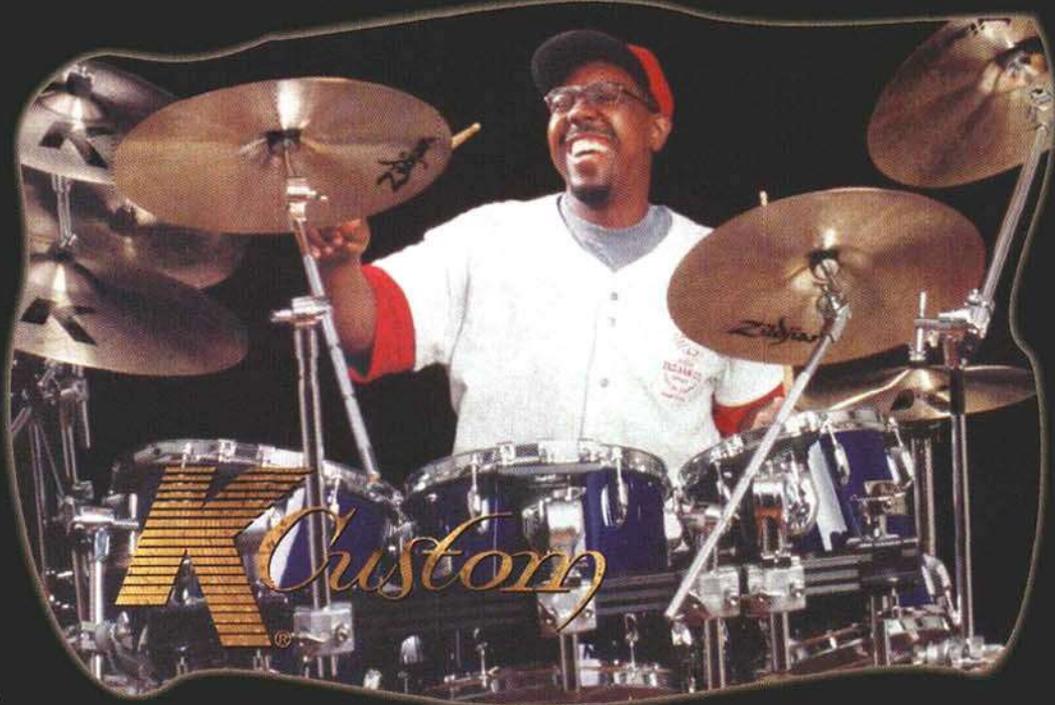
CG: Absolutely. The recording of this album was interesting for me. I had a totally new perspective. I'd put a studio in my basement after touring for a year and a half with my previous band. That gave me more of a simplistic, minimalistic outlook on drumming in a recording environment—as opposed to overplaying, which is usually what I do in a live situation. But I came with a different approach to this record that seemed to work. Maybe it's more of a mature outlook. We produced the album ourselves, and after working on my own stuff, I knew how I wanted things to sound. I'd been in

"Smitty is always pushing the envelope. And he does it with intense passion and a love for drumming."

Sonny Emory on Marvin "Smitty" Smith



"Smitty is an incredible player and person. Those qualities have to go hand-in-hand. That makes Smitty all the more inviting to the listener. Smitty is always pushing the envelope, seeking new experiences. And he does it with intense passion and love for drumming."



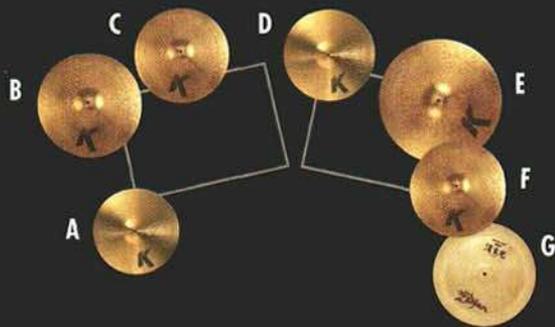
Smitty's Tonight Show Set-up:

- A. 13" K/Z HiHats
- B. 17" K Custom Dark Crash
- C. 15" K Custom Dark Crash
- D. 14" K Dark Crash Thin
- E. 20" K Custom Medium Ride
- F. 16" K Custom Dark Crash
- G. 16" A China High with 6 rivets

Marvin "Smitty" Smith on Zildjian:

"I rely on my musical sensibility to select cymbals. All Zildjian's cymbal ranges blend well together, but I prefer the K's and new K Customs. I really like their melodic tone row. The bell on the K Custom Medium Ride has great tone, it really cuts and at the same time has 'body'. The K Custom Dark Crashes have a sound that's unique to Zildjian."

"The K/Z HiHats are, in my opinion, one of Zildjian's best creations ever. The crisp sound, real definition, and overall wash create a warm but powerful sound."



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situations before where I was thinking to myself, "Charlie, can you freaking *relax?*" Other bandmembers want me to play less sometimes. I really came to grips with that on this record. Next time I'm gonna blow it out, man!

KM: I always think that when a drummer is confident enough to play the song simply, he must believe in the song. You have a rock-solid approach, and your beat is dead-center. What contributed to that approach?

CG: As much as anything it came from doing drum clinics at a friend's store in Rochester. I took "Molly" [from *Rotting Piñata*] and "Wax Ecstatic," mixed the drums out, and used the tracks to play along with. Then I used some of my own songs to solo over.

KM: How do your songs differ from Sponge songs?

CG: That's tough. It's not Sponge, it's not Vinnie singing. It's me. I've learned things from these guys, just as I've learned from anybody I've ever played with. My dad's a guitar player who plays country and rock. From the age of nine to sixteen I played in my dad's band in Elk's Clubs, VFW Halls, Moose Lodges—everywhere. We did Chuck Berry, Ventures, old rock stuff, and old R&B. "Wipeout" was my big number. We also played some Waylon Jennings, Elvis, and Joe South material that crossed over into country.

I was playing with thirty-year-old guys, and they weren't lenient

with me. That's where I got my basics for everything. If I sped up during a song, they'd definitely turn around and give me dirty looks. I *had* to have good, solid time.

KM: What was the hardest thing for you to grasp as a young drummer?

CG: Actually, the drumming came pretty naturally to me. But I'd have to sit in a corner and read a comic book during the breaks. I'd be playing Friday and Saturday nights, and all the guys are yucking it up and drinking beers, and here's little Charlie on his own.

I come from a musical family. My grandfather played guitar, and my uncle Bob still plays. We used to have jam sessions between my dad's and my uncle's bands. After that I began playing with some guys up the street who rehearsed in an old abandoned building. I would hear them on the way to my paper route. I finally got the balls to knock on the door. There they were: guys in their mid-twenties playing Johnny Winter and Grand Funk Railroad. I was twelve and still playing with my dad. They blew my mind. Through them I met other guys to play with, and I became too cool for my dad's band. They turned me on to Grand Funk, and I'm still a huge Grand Funk and Don Brewer fan.

I just saw a video of Grand Funk live in Japan, in 1974. Don Brewer was phenomenal. He was a great drummer—and a huge influence on me. As far as other influences go, my dad got me a Buddy Rich record when I was seven, and I got to see Buddy Rich when I was nine. That made me want to work on playing those phenomenal snare drum rolls. He was the king of that.

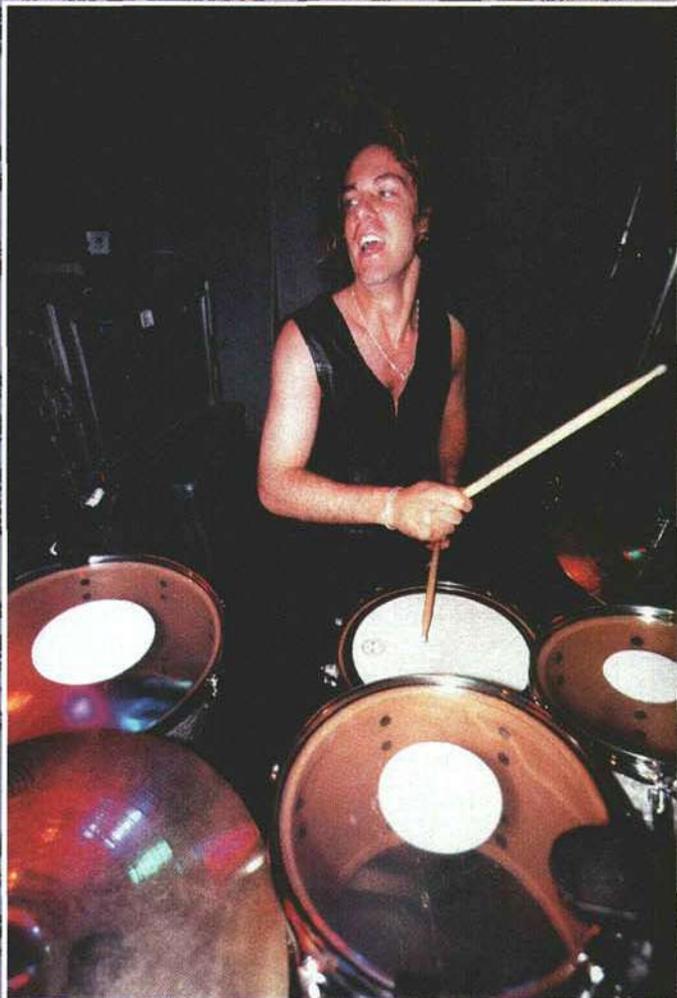
I was in the Pontiac High School Band throughout high school—the jazz band and the marching band. We used to have this contest where you had to do a long double-stroke roll. Each drummer was in a separate room, so nobody knew who was playing. The band would judge who would be first-chair drummer. We had to go from really slow to really fast, opening the roll up and then closing it. Without sounding like a bonehead, I was always first chair. We played some Miles, like "In A Silent Way." But after I became too cool for my dad's band, I eventually became too cool for the high school band. I totally rebelled after that.

KM: Are there things you learned back then that you're still using today?

CG: Rudiments. I used to practice them all the time. They apply to everything. Rudiments helped me out a lot. But I also played along with a lot of records. I played with anything that came on the radio. I wouldn't even know a song, but I would just start playing with it. The Stones, the Beatles, Grand Funk, the Who, everything. That's how I learned how to play in time.

KM: Who was the first drummer you saw who really excited you?

CG: Ronnie Tutt with Elvis Presley on the *Aloha From Hawaii* TV special. I knew that eight-track tape back and forth. I was totally blown away by Ronnie Tutt's huge double bass drum setup. He started "CC Rider" with those double bass drums, "dadoo-dadoo-dadoo-dadoo." I thought he was so cool. I used to play with that all the time. I knew Bob Seger's Silver Bullet Band live album all the way through too.

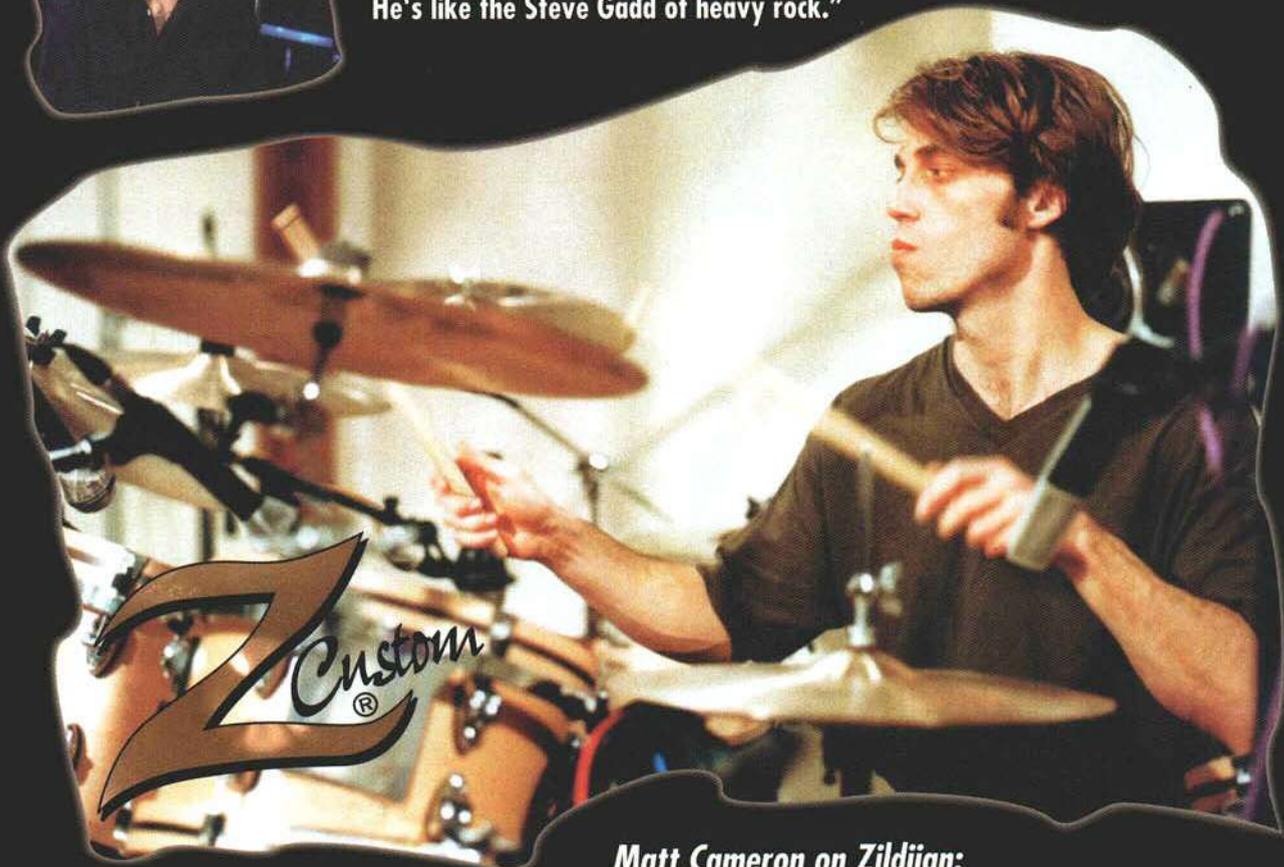


"Matt comes at you from nowhere with incredible odd-time stuff."

White Zombie's John Tempesta on Matt Cameron



"Matt's one of my favorite players. What I love about him is his capacity to play with such force and feeling, he's such a loose player, with the ability to come at you from nowhere with incredible odd-time stuff. He's like the Steve Gadd of heavy rock."



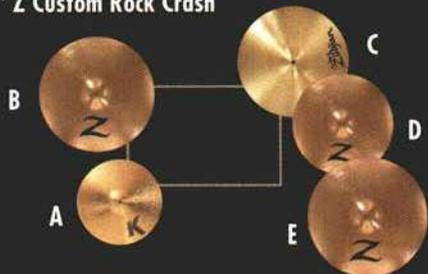
Matt Cameron on Zildjian:

"I want cymbals that have dynamics and volume that will be heard over screaming guitars and pounding bass. Z Custom Crashes really project, they have awesome tone, and sustain just enough... they're so clean sounding, so crisp."

"My A Medium Ride is my favorite. It has a very distinct ping, and it washes nicely with my crashes. My Hats are awesome too, a K top and an A New Beat bottom."

Matt's Soundgarden Set-up:

- A. 15" K HiHat Top
- 15" A New Beat HiHat Bottom
- B. 19" Z Custom Medium Crash
- C. 21" A Medium Ride
- D. 18" Z Custom Medium Crash
- E. 19" Z Custom Rock Crash



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KM: Are you a heavy hitter?

CG: I'd say so. [Producer] Tim Patalan dug the fact that I was hitting hard. But it has posed a problem in other situations. Tonight, for example, I'm not even miking my cymbals because they'll bleed over into the vocal mic's.

KM: You joined Sponge in December of 1994. Why did the band fire Jimmy Palouzi, their first drummer?

CG: They were unhappy with his drumming. It's as simple as that. His time wasn't solid. I heard about the opening from a manager that I knew, then I got in touch with their soundman.

There was a big cattle call, with over thirty drummers who came out from New York and L.A. Luckily Vinnie and I knew each other from past bands. As far as the audition went, I was prepared. I had bought *Rotting Piñata* as soon as it came out, and I dug the album a lot. So when Sponge fired their drummer, I already knew the entire record. When we ran through the songs, everything just jelled. We did "Molly," "Giants," "Plowed." Afterward I called Vinnie and said, "I don't care who comes down. If you think someone is better than me, just give me a second chance." But Vinnie wanted me in. I just played the songs, which is what the band wanted. I played what was on the record. I didn't interject anything...till I was in the band!

KM: Who are the drummers you currently admire?

CG: I really like Carter Beauford with the Dave Matthews Band. And I like Matt Cameron. We'll be touring with Soundgarden in Europe. Like me, Matt is a drummer who has been playing guitar a long time. Dave Grohl is another one. I really respect him for the

Foo Fighters. More drummers need to do that. Don Henley is another great drummer-leader. I like drummers' drummers—guys like Dennis Chambers, Gregg Bissonette, and Chad Smith—but I also like drummers who are complete musicians. That reminds me...just because other musicians may know chords and theory, they think they have something over a drummer. I really hate that. I play guitar and I know theory. Every drummer should know that just so they're never in a position where they feel inadequate. Without a great drummer you have no band. Jimi Hendrix referred to Mitch Mitchell as his bar of gold.

KM: Are there any rituals you go through pre-gig?

CG: No, but I do practice on guitar. It keeps my chops up mentally and drum-wise. I play the drums every day, so I'm warm all the time. I do occasionally feel like I should practice, but other times it feels great to hit the stage cold. It gives you a different feeling.

KM: Is it hard to find a unique sound or style, given that rock 'n' roll is almost a formula now?

CG: Of course I'm always looking for that "signature sound," like what Bonham played on the beginning of "Rock And Roll" or "Good Times, Bad Times," or Don Brewer's fill on Grand Funk's "We're An American Band." Or what Denny Carmassi did with Montrose on "Rock Candy." I'd like to write something like that.

KM: I noticed that on the end of "Anastasia" and in the intro to "Death Of A Drag Queen" there are effects on the drums. There's a lot of echo on "Anastasia" during the snare drum march, and a beatbox rhythm on "Drag Queen."

CG: Our producer added that wacky effect on the end of "Anastasia." It worked great. I do enjoy that kind of stuff.

KM: You also play the ride cymbal in unusual places, where it's more customary to play a hi-hat. In "Got To Be A Bore" the ride cymbal is more old-school-sounding. It makes for a looser sound.

CG: Vinnie conveyed to me what the song was about and how he wanted it to breathe there. Tim Patalan and Vinnie wanted that sound. On "Silence Is Their Drug" I'm just playing the hi-hat, the bass drum, and the snare; I don't move. It was a challenge to do that without a crash anywhere in the song. I played everything intensely. To do that for a couple takes, keeping the bass drum going, was very demanding. When we do that song live, I do a little drum solo at first. It seems like nobody wants to do drum solos anymore. It's so taboo. I'd like to see them come back—but not ten-minute drum solos. As long as it's entertaining, people like that stuff.

KM: Are you open to the other bandmembers' ideas?

CG: Definitely. That's another great thing about having a home studio. Between preproduction and recording the album with Sponge, I was getting familiar with my own recording equipment and how to use it. A keyboardist friend of mine named Matt Sefranick came and played my tunes. He was very giving and musical; he played just what the music needed—which didn't always require a lot of chops. I copped a lot of that attitude from him when I went to record with Sponge. We had a great vibe in the studio. That's what you want when you're working with other people. Of course, you want *them* to understand *you*. But if the band has a direction and knows where they want to go, *you* should give *them* what they want. It really came to light with *Wax Ecstatic*. It was great.



Pictured: Black/Silver textured finish. Trick Drums are manufactured in the U.S.A.

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"Peter is one of the great cymbal players of all time."

Armand Zildjian on Peter Erskine



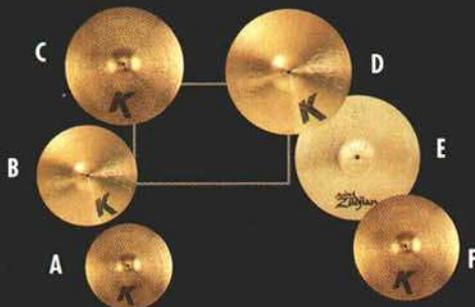
"Since I first heard him with Stan Kenton when he was 18 years old, I have enjoyed watching Peter grow into the mature, versatile musician that he is today. He is an exceptional drummer, and in my opinion, one of the great cymbal players of all time."



Photo: Shigeru Uchiyama

Peter's Set-up:

- A. 14" K Custom Dark HiHats
- B. 16" K Dark Crash Thin
- C. 20" K Custom Medium Ride
- D. 22" K Pre-Aged Dry Light Ride
- E. 22" A Swish Knocker
- F. 17" K Custom Dark Crash



Peter Erskine on Zildjian:

"A Zildjian cymbal to me, is like a Stradivarius. They are exquisite instruments and have multiple facets. I think of my K Pre-Aged Dry Ride just like a violin in a sense, it's not something I'm just going to clang away on."

"Cymbals are the most complex of instruments because of their overtones and frequency response. Between the bell and the edge the range of sounds that can be discovered is incredible. A cymbal cannot be synthesized, it's just too intricate."

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Paul Leim

Q Having heard you play on numerous recordings, I've learned quite a bit from your creativity. You always give a song just what it needs. Thanks for the inspiration.

I'm interested in working and touring with a contemporary Christian artist or band. I live in the L.A. area, but the vast majority of CCM artists are now in Nashville. If I were to move to Nashville, what steps would you recommend I take from the time I hit town (or even before)? How would I find out where auditions are held? How do I go about getting to know the right people? I have experience in many different styles and I have a quality demo, but I'm unclear about what to do next. I'd appreciate your insight.

Archie Brown
Santa Clarita, CA

A Everyone I know who has been successful in finding their place in this business has a different story leading to that success. There are, however, a couple of constants. First: incredible, undeniable, developed natural talent. Second: a willingness to work hard...to do whatever it takes for however long it takes in order to succeed. I get calls every week from drummers looking for work. I truly wish from my heart that I had the perfect gig for every one of them.

Players here do keep track of what the others are doing in their respective fields—touring, demos, studio, etc. The lines between these areas are vague, but real. Several road players go to "sit-in nights" at various clubs in town when they come off the road. They play a tune or two and keep track of each other and of what gigs are opening up that way.

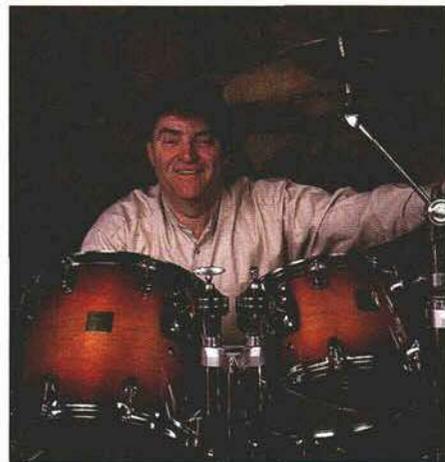
You didn't mention your age or educational level, but Belmont University (near Music Row in Nashville) has a good music curriculum. Several players, writers, and producers who have been very successful in Nashville came out of that program. I have to add, these people were all very talented in their own right, and the so-called "networking" they utilized through Belmont probably did as much for them as the knowledge they acquired there.

There is a professional industry publication called *Performance Guide*. It's pricey, but it contains a lot of information regarding

how to reach managers of artists. It's published out of Ft. Worth, Texas, and the office number is (817)338-9444.

The best personal advice I can give you is to play, play, play—any time and any place you can. Be heard, and be great. Find a special something in yourself that's similar to what you hear in the players you admire. Work on being the best at that.

Finally, pray for direction and guidance, and then be willing to listen and follow through. I've started over completely three different times in three different cities during my career (Dallas for seven years, L.A. for twelve years, and now Nashville for eight years). It's not easy, but sometimes it's necessary. I wish you the best of luck.



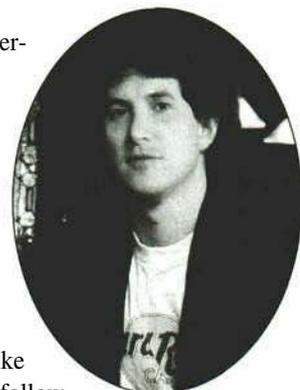
Joel Rosenblatt

Q Your total fluidity in improvisation across a wide range of styles is a great thrill and source of inspiration for me. Of special interest is your use of flams in soloing and fills. It adds a tasty touch to those songs that require something extra from the drummer at the denouement. Not coming from a drum corps background myself, I could use some advice on how to incorporate flams as part of my solo repertoire. Are there any specific exercises you've used that you could share?

Darren Costello
Denton, TX

A Thanks for taking the time to write! We all really appreciate when one of our contemporaries notices what we do. It's interesting that you mention lack of a drum corps background, because I don't really have one either, except for two years in high school. I developed my flam concept by listening to jazz drummers like Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and Jack DeJohnette. Those kinds of flam applications are generally looser than drum corps-type flams. I've also found them to be an excellent way to give the appearance of stretching the time. Flams, as you know, have a primary (accented) note and a preceding grace note. Usually one plays the accented note in time, while the grace note before it creates the "flam" effect. What I like to do is make the *grace note* in time and have the accented note follow it—creating the illusion of playing behind the beat. No matter how wide I make that gap (depending on how "fat" I want the flam), I never lose track of where the time is, because my inner clock is (hopefully) locked to the grace note.

Experiment with different orchestrations: tom/snare, bass/snare, cymbal/cymbal, etc. Be creative! I hope this information can help you in developing your own concept. Then I'll be writing to you to ask, "How'd you do that?"



Carl Palmer

Q I discovered ELP in 1986 (when I was eleven years old), and you have been my favorite drummer ever since. You inspired me to play the drums, and the first text out of which I worked was *Carl Palmer Applied Rhythms*. At the age of twenty I'm now practicing vigorously every day, and I've never been more serious about anything in my life. I'd like to ask you the following questions about your early development, before you joined ELP.

1. How many hours a day did you practice in solitude?
2. How much time did you spend rehearsing with a band?
3. How often did you play gigs?
4. Were your teachers a main factor in your progress (say, from age fifteen to nineteen)?
5. What percentage of your practice time did you spend playing rudiments?
6. Do you think you could have done more in your early years to further develop your skills?
7. How many drum texts did you work out of?
8. What made you become serious about drumming?
9. What kinds of obstacles, if any, did you encounter that affected your practicing or your progress?
10. Were you ever dissatisfied with yourself? If so, how?

Eddie Vesely
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

A Thanks very much for your compliments. You sound very keen to play the drums, which I can relate to. Here are the answers to your questions.

1. I practiced by myself an average of three hours per day.
2. We would rehearse when we had a new idea or when it was time to make a new recording. There was no set schedule.
3. I didn't do a lot of "local gigging." I actually started rather quickly playing with major touring acts. We would play every year somewhere in the world.
4. My teachers were very important to me, and I always had the very best. Bruce Gaylor was one I got on with very well. He was from the U.S. I wish he'd call me now.
5. I'd practice rudiments at least 50% of the time. I love them.
6. One can *always* do more. I'm still trying to further my skills. In fact, I'm going to practice today. (But don't tell anyone; it doesn't sound hip to say you still practice when you're forty-six.)
7. I'd work out of as many as four or five books at one time.
8. When I was about eleven my dad and I went to see *The Gene Krupa Story*. That made me think, and I got crazy about playing the drums.
9. I think playing the drums is a lot of fun, and I had no big problems. But if you *do* have problems, I've always found that hard work takes care of most things. Play drums with your heart and your body first, and then think about what you've done later.
10. I'm *always* dissatisfied with myself in one way or another—but it's not a problem to me. I just keep trying to get better.



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Where Can I Write...

Q Where can I write to obtain autographs from my favorite drummers? I've tried writing to Max Weinberg and Anton Fig in care of their respective TV networks, but I've received no reply. We don't get many drum clinics in Delaware, so writing to the artists I'm interested in is my only option. Can you help?

Tim Brejwa
Newark, DE

A As a matter of fact, we can. *MD* will be happy to forward your mail to any artist with whom we have contact. (That's not every drummer in the business, but most of them.) Just address your letter directly to the artist in question, c/o Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. We guarantee that your letter will be mailed to the artist. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that any given artist will respond.

The Ultimate Surf Drummer

Q Please settle an argument I'm having with a buddy of mine. We're both 40-year-old drummers who started playing in high school—at the same time that we started surfing. We both got involved in surf music, and we both have played the ultimate surf/drum song, "Wipeout," countless times. I maintain that the song was originally recorded by Sandy Nelson, while my friend is equally confident that it was performed by one of the instrumental surf groups of the '60s with Hal Blaine "ghosting" on the drums. Which of us is correct?

Tom Andrews
Santa Monica, CA

A Actually, neither of you is correct. "Wipeout," perhaps the most recognizable instrumental drum feature of all time, was recorded in December of 1962 by a group of teenagers who called themselves the Surfaris. The eldest member of the

group (perhaps all of eighteen) was drummer Ron Wilson. He came up with the famous tom-tom solo in "Wipeout" on the spur of the moment in the studio, based on his experience creating cadences for his high-school marching band.

"Wipeout" was originally released as the B-side to a vocal tune called "Surfer Joe." However, by June of 1963 it had become a number-one hit. And Ron Wilson's tom-tom solo became so ingrained in the public's consciousness that it set a standard—for better or worse—against which people measured a "good drummer" for decades. Ron passed away a few years ago.

Making A Demo Tape

Q I'm trying to put together a proper demo tape. I once saw an article on this subject in *MD*. Could you tell me in what issue that article ran?

Brent Hathaway
Southgate, MI

Remo Drumheads: the professional standard of drum sound and performance.

LA, New York, Nashville—whenever the red light goes on in the world's top studios the world's top drummers rely on the sound and feel of Remo Drumheads. In fact, the vast majority of all professional drummers depend on the solid-gold performance of Remo heads for every recorded or live drumming situation. So whether you've got a room full of platinum records or you're just playing along with your favorite hits, when you play Remo Drumheads you're playing the heads that continue to define the term "studio quality".



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A Rick Van Horn addressed this topic in a *Club Scene* column entitled "Selling Yourself On Tape" in the October '87 issue of *MD*. Contact our back-issue department at (201) 239-4140 to see if copies of that issue are still available. If not, you may order a photocopy of the article for a nominal service charge. The article is also contained in Rick's new book, *The Working Drummer*, published by Modern Drummer Publications and distributed by Hal Leonard.

Miking Percussion

Q I'd like some information on miking techniques for congas and/or other percussion in order to incorporate it into my band's live act. Any suggestions?

Tony Guzzi
via Internet

A Most sound engineers divide the general heading of "percussion" into two distinct categories: drum-like instruments (congas, bongos, timbales, djembes, and other such instruments struck with the hands or with

beaters) and non-drum-like instruments (cymbals, bells, shakers, claves, chimes, etc.) The most fundamental differences between the two (from an engineering standpoint) are the sound pressure levels (SPLs) they generate and the frequency ranges involved.

Due to the high SPLs of drum-like instruments, most sound technicians mike them in much the same way as they would the drums on a drumkit—and with the same mic' selection. Generally, this calls for dynamic microphones, but some condenser mic's specifically intended for drumkit use can also serve. The mic's are most often positioned so as to mike the top head of the instrument, generally pointing down at the head at a 45° angle about an inch in from a rim. Mic's can either be placed on their own stands or clamped to the instrument (by means of their own built-in clamping mechanisms or through the use of an LP *Claw*, Ac-cetera *Mic-Eze*, or other such accessory).

Smaller percussion devices—especially cymbals, bells, and other metal percussion—are generally miked with condenser

microphones, which are more sensitive to higher frequencies. The mic's are usually placed in some sort of overhead position above the entire percussion "station" in order to capture the ambience of all the instruments being played. However, if a particularly delicate or low-volume instrument is to be played, a separate mic' is often dedicated to it. If the instrument is mounted in a fixed manner, the mic' may be positioned close to it. If the instrument is hand-held, the mic' may be positioned in such a way that the percussionist can bring the instrument close to it.

The key to using percussion successfully in a live situation is balancing the levels of the different instruments, which can vary tremendously. (A percussionist can pound the daylights out of a conga drum, but a wind chime is only going to get so loud, no matter how hard it's played.) A respectable amount of time dedicated to percussion during your soundcheck is essential.



John "JR" Robinson

John "JR" Robinson

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Kenny Aronoff

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Eddie Bayers

Eddie Bayers

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The Long Hello Kansas City Drumworks

It may have taken ten years, but custom drum manufacturer Kansas City Drumworks has finally entered the mainstream international drum market. KCD offers drums and kits in two distinct shell constructions: *Series 6* drums feature 6-ply toms and 10-ply bass drums for a full-bodied sound with pronounced low-end presence. *Series W* drums use 10-ply shells for both toms and bass drums for a more focused sound and extended tuning range. Both series are built with 100% maple Keller shells.

The most prominent feature of KCD drums is their tube lugs. These lugs are hand-machined from solid brass, triple chrome plated, and hand assembled in Kansas City, Missouri. The lugs have no hollow areas, springs, or inserts. They mount to the drumshell at only two



points, providing minimum lug-to-shell contact and maximum resonance. Kansas City Drumworks does not use gaskets to isolate the lug from the shell, but instead lets the shell and lug resonate as one musical body. All toms and floor toms are factory-equipped with the PureCussion RIMS mounting system.

Kansas City Drumworks drums are said to be priced competitively with those of other North American drum manufacturers. They are available in a wide range of hand-polished lacquers, oil finishes, and traditional coverings. Sunbursts, fades, and custom paint jobs are available at additional charge.

Nine Lives Can Sure Come In Handy Sometimes E-mu To Distribute KAT Products

After dying a tragic and much-mourned death in 1996, KAT is now being given a second (or is it third?) lease on life by Limn Systems, which has now become the exclusive distributor of KAT electronic percussion products. In addition to some select accessories, E-mu will be handling KAT percussion controllers (including the *drumKAT*, *malletKAT*, and *trapKAT*).

A little history: The availability of KAT products became restricted in 1996, when the original company ceased operations. Soon after, KAT products became available on a limited basis through Alternate Mode, Inc. — a company run by

Mario DeCiutiis, an influential figure behind KAT products. Now E-mu has stepped in. According to DeCiutiis, the partnership with E-mu will afford KAT products a much wider base of distribution, and thus greater availability to the consumer. E-mu is also a major manufacturer of sampling and sampling playback technology, which combines well with KAT controllers and makes the association a natural pairing. E-mu systems plans to take "the next logical steps" in drum pad/user products as this relationship grows.

They Don't Make 'Em Like THAT Anymore Magstar Vintage Snare Drum And New Lug

If the charm of vintage drum gear has caught your fancy, Magstar wants to talk to you. The company is now offering 1940s-style *Vintage* series snare drums in a limited edition. And we're talking *real* limited: Only fifty drums will be built. Each will feature a steam-bent 5½x14 maple shell with solid maple reinforcement rings, tube lugs, hand-rubbed orange shellac on the shell interior, a basic side-movement snare throw-off to reflect those used in the '30s and '40s, a polished white pearl covering, and a choice of either chrome or brass-plated steel counterhoops. Bearing edges will be cut according to the preference of the player, and some "newer" technical embellishments will be combined with the vintage aspects of each drum to maximize its "user readiness." And for that human touch, each drum will be signed and dated by designer Rob Kampa. Prices will range from \$529 to \$599 depending on options.



Magstar *Vintage* snare

Not ones to get stuck in the past, Magstar also offers a new cast-bronze lug that "enhances the resonance of drumshells constructed from any configuration of plies, segments, or steam-bent single boards." The lug is said to be heavy-duty yet streamlined, and extremely corrosion-resistant. The lugs will be featured on all Magstar *Artist* series snares and kits. The pictured drum is a 7x13 cherry segment-shell model with a hand-rubbed orange shellac finish and gold-plated hardware. It's priced at \$799.



Magstar *Artist* snare

Hey, Take It Outside! Vic Firth Marching Marimba and Vibe Mallets

Any good corps member knows that playing outside isn't always a picnic. Vic Firth's new *Corpsmaster* series marching keyboard mallet models were specifically designed to withstand the demanding playing and environmental requirements of outdoor performance. Five new models feature extra-heavy heads for improved sound quality (more fundamental pitch) and increased projection. Heads are wrapped with a synthetic-blend yarn said to be less affected by moisture than traditional wool yarn, providing extra durability and weather resistance.

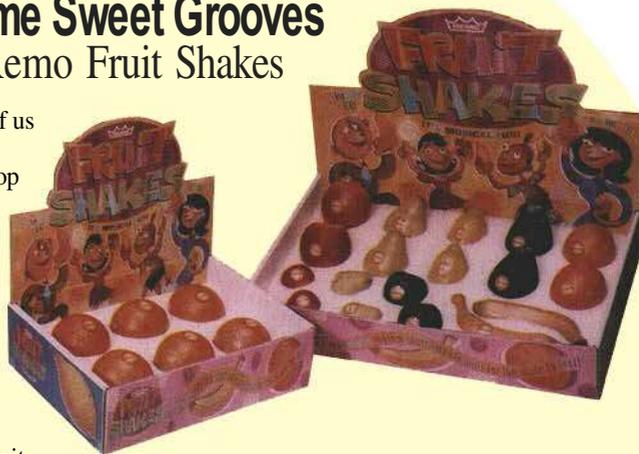
Marimba mallets are made with birch shafts; vibemallets feature rattan shafts. All shafts are extra long for increased reach. The models are priced as follows: *M70* medium marimba (grey cord) and *M71* hard marimba (black cord)—\$38; *M72* very hard marimba (unwound)—\$26; *M75* medium vibe (grey cord) and *M76* hard vibe (black cord)—\$49.

Some Sweet Grooves Remo Fruit Shakes

For those of us whose moms would yell, "Stop playing with your food!" at dinner time, Remo has provided the perfect outlet. Billed as a "fresh new sound" (one assumes a fresh new *smell* as well), Remo *Fruit Shakes* are plastic fruit-

shaped shakers. Included in the line are bananas, lemons, oranges, plums, avocados, pears, figs, and two sizes of apples. For professional players the *Fruit Shakes* offer a novel alternative to traditional shakers and maracas. For beginners—especially young children—the variety of looks, sounds, and textures inherent in the *Fruit Shakes* should make them popular items. Their durability, ease of play, and low cost should also make them useful in music therapy applications.

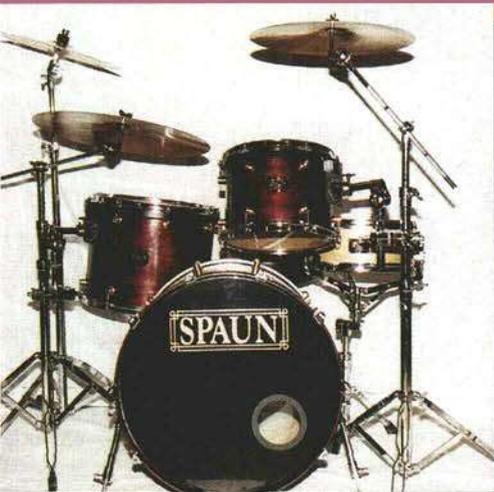
Individual *Fruit Shake* items list for \$6; various package assortments are also available.



Another New Face On The Block Spaun Drum Company

It might be getting kinda crowded on the sales floor in drum shops, but drum designer Brian Spaun feels there's room for at least one more brand. According to Spaun, his company's main goal is to "provide drummers with a premium quality drum, unique in features, at an affordable price." As for specifics, Spaun drums feature 8-ply, 100% maple shells. Each bearing edge is precision-cut and hand-sanded and polished to ensure consistent head alignment. Lugs are machined from solid brass—both for aesthetic appeal and to add increased resonance to the drums. Hand-rubbed satin

finishes and *Attack* drumheads from Cannon Percussion complete the package. A four-piece drumkit as illustrated in the photo has a retail price of \$2,365.

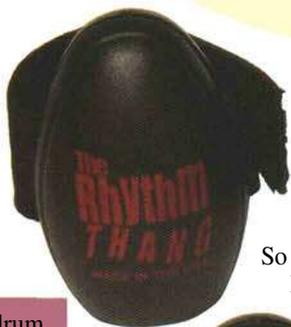


Shake That Thang The Rhythm Thang and The Rhythm Bag

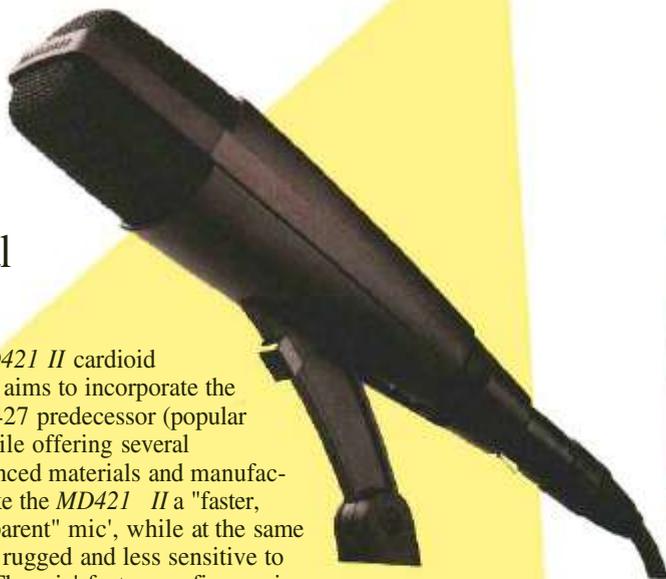
So you say you don't make enough noise with your hands already? How about attaching a bright-sounding plastic shaker "egg" to the backs of two fingers while playing congas or drum-set? The *Rhythm Thang* from Take Your Pick, Inc. lets you do just that by means of an adjustable elastic strap. Small and comfortable, the tiny shaker provides high-pitched percussive contrast to the rhythms being played with the hands. It lists for \$5.99.

Want to *really* concentrate on your shaking? Grab the *Rhythm Bag*, a soft, easy-to-hold, hand-sized rectangular bag filled with six plastic shaker eggs. One side of the bag is made of a smooth, black leather-like fabric; the other side is a suede-like material available in a variety of colors. Due to this design, the tone of the shaker changes from soft

(when the eggs strike the leather side) to brighter and sharper (when the eggs strike the suede side). The *Rhythm Bag* is priced at \$24.99.



Son Of 421 Sennheiser MD421 II Microphone and Universal Headset



Sennheiser's new *MD421 II* cardioid dynamic microphone aims to incorporate the characteristics of its 427 predecessor (popular for use on drums) while offering several improvements. Advanced materials and manufacturing techniques make the *MD421 II* a "faster, more open and transparent" mic', while at the same time making it "more rugged and less sensitive to dust and humidity." The mic' features a five-position bass roll-off switch that is fitted to the housing to make the mic' shorter and more stylish than its predecessor. With a frequency response from 30 Hz to 17 kHz, the ability to withstand SPL's up to 175 dB without distortion, as well as "superb directionality, feedback suppression, and noise rejection," the *MD421 II* should lend itself well to both live and studio drum-miking applications.

Sennheiser also offers the *NB2* adjustable headset with form-fitting boom assembly. The headset converts any Sennheiser lavalier microphone to a headworn version for use by drummers and other performers.

Easy Cleanin' Cymbal Buddy

The *Cymbal Buddy*, from Gray-West, is a complete, two-part cymbal care package said to be unlike any other cleaning system on the market. Mighty strong words for something called "Buddy." Let's see how it stacks up.

The *Cymbal Buddy Belt* supports a cymbal with either side up during cleaning. Adjustable for any cymbal from 6" to 24" in diameter, it's claimed to be light, rugged, and easy to use, and to hold cymbals firmly (out of contact with the table or floor) without sliding around while the cymbals are being cleaned. The *Cymbal Buddy Belt* includes everything else needed to clean and polish cymbals, including a bottle of cleaning cream, cloths, gloves, and a carrying bag. The *Belt* is priced at \$16. The *Kit* sells for \$15.95.

The two together are available for \$28.95.

And What's More...

Afro Percussion (a division of Pearl drums) calls their new *APS-37* "the ultimate cowbell holder." It mounts directly to any tom arm, cymbal stand, or other piece of hardware via a built-in, hinge-style adapter. Its three-way adjustment allows the user to position a cowbell or other percussion item at virtually any angle. The holder features a knurled mounting post and an oversized T-handle tensioning knob.

Pearl is now making its *300* and *500* series cymbals available in *Stage Ready Performance Packs* for ease of selection by less-experienced drummers. Each cymbal series now comes in the *Preferred 3 Pack* (14" hi-hats, 16" crash, and 20" ride) or the *Preferred 2 Pack* (14" hi-hats and an 18" crash-ride).

King Kong Kases offers *Snare Vault* cases in models designed to hold from three to six drums. Cases can also be custom-configured to meet a customer's specifications. All cases have ATA-style 3/8" laminated wood construction plus heavy-duty casters, with a choice of five exterior colors. Prices range from \$295 to \$595.

Garwood Communications

has added the *System 3* to its line of wireless in-ear monitoring equipment. The *System 3* is similar to the company's *PRSI* system, with the addition of a local monitoring section that makes it possible for an engineer to monitor the output from the transmitter to the user's earpieces. Comprised of a IU transmitter unit, a belt-pack receiver, and Garwood's *IEMII* earpieces, the system offers full stereo transmission on a single UHF frequency.

Bison Drum Co.'s *Titanium Lightning* bass drum beater is now packaged with interchangeable felt and wooden beater tops at no increase in price (\$49.95). Also new from Bison is a gold-and-black oval badge that fits over the breather hole of each Bison drum. The company feels that the new badge design, featuring two bison butting their heads against a drum with the sun setting over a mountain range in the background, symbolizes the quality and craftsmanship put into every Bison Drum Co. product. Anyone owning a Bison drum without the badge may obtain one by contacting the company.

Making Contact

Bison Drum Co.
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E-mu Systems
1600 Green Hills Rd., Suite 101
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fax: (408) 438-8612
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Garwood Communications
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Gray-West
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Kansas City Drumworks
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Kansas City, MO 64108
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King Kong Kases
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Magstar Drums
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Pearl Corporation
549 Metroplex Dr.
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fax: (615) 833-6242

Remo, inc.
28101 Industry Dr.
Valencia, CA 91355
tel: (805) 294-5600
fax: (805) 294-5700

Sennheiser
P.O. Box 987
Old Lyme, CT 06371
tel: (860) 434-9190
fax: (860) 434-1759
Web: www.sennheiserusa.com

Spann Drum Co.
711 E. Myrtle
Glendora, CA 91741
(818) 914-9699

Take Your Pick, Inc.
7745 Alabama Ave., Suite 7
Canoga Park, CA 91303
tel: (800) RHYTHM-6
fax: (818) 710-8049

Vic Firth, Inc.
65 Commerce Way
Dedham, MA 02026
tel: (617) 326-3455
fax: (617) 326-1273
Web: www.vicfirth.com

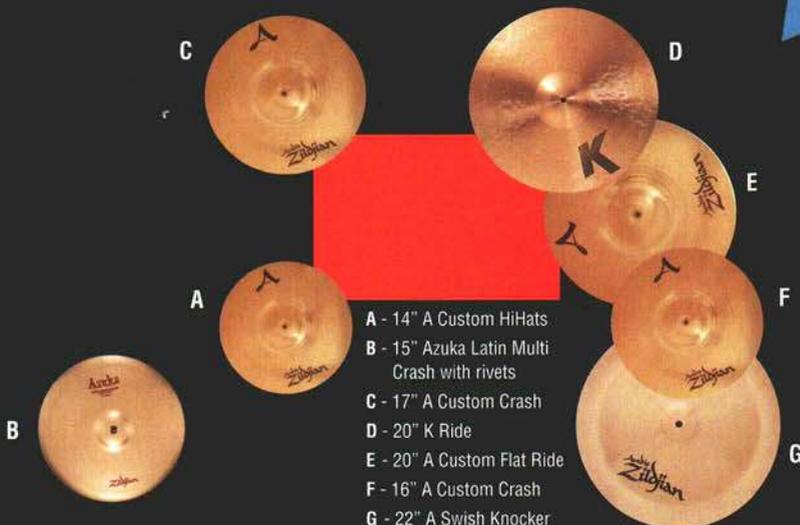
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- B - 15" Azuka Latin Multi Crash with rivets
- C - 17" A Custom Crash
- D - 20" K Ride
- E - 20" A Custom Flat Ride
- F - 16" A Custom Crash
- G - 22" A Swish Knocker

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Pearl Signature Snare Drums

by Adam Budofsky

Pearl's new Signature snares might not magically make you play like their namesakes, but they definitely will expand your sonic palette.

By mixing and matching features found on their other snare models, adding a few unique touches, and tailoring each drum to its "signature" player's requirements, Pearl has come up with a new quartet of drums sure to perk up a few ears. The thing to remember with any "signature" instrument is that because they are designed with specific players' (often unique) needs in mind, they are by definition rarely general-purpose items. To some extent this applies to Pearl's new snares, though often a good amount of variation is achievable. Let's take a closer look.

Dennis Chambers Signature Snare Drum

In terms of variation, one might say that Dennis's drum is the least "signature" in nature of the four, since variety is this drum's *raison d'être*. (That's "reason for existence" for those less pretentious than me.)

The feature most responsible is the inclusion of two of Pearl's new "Multi-Trace" SR-020 side-throw snare mechanisms, which tension 24-strand snare wires. The system employs four notches that the throwoff switch clicks into—one notch sets

WHAT'S HOT

- "Multi-Trace" throwoff on Dennis Chambers model offers variable and repeatable tension adjustment
- Hakim and Chambers models offer unique timbres and beautiful appearances—especially on gold-plated models
- solid construction and good sensitivity on all models
- good price-to-quality ratio, especially Chad Smith model

WHAT'S NOT

- throwoff on Hakim and Smith models a little awkward

you in the "off" position, while the other three raise or lower the snares incrementally into the "on" position. This allows the user to consistently achieve three positions of relative snare tightness, pre-set by fine-tuning the standard throwoff knob. By including one "Multi-Trace" on each side of the drum, the variety of settings is



increased to nine, though achieving several clearly different sounds at first is sort of like figuring out how to switch into the right speed on a new ten-speed (nine-speed?) bicycle. That comparison was actually made by Pearl product specialist Gene Okamoto, who suggests first setting one lever to the "middle" position, then adjusting the other to a good range of tensions. You can then go back and change the first lever to theoretically get even more variations.

In practice, the system worked remarkably well. Once I set the tension knobs where I wanted them, I was able to go from a nice sloppy snare sound to a relatively tight and crisp response at the flick of a switch. And not having to hunt and peck to get back to either of these settings—and a few in between—was a satisfying feeling. Another nice aspect of the system is that by setting either lever to the "off" position, the snares are disengaged, alleviating the need to "start from scratch" each time you want to quickly go from a specific "on" setting to "off" and back again.

Now, I'm not convinced it actually is possible to get nine variations with this system. After all, wouldn't you get the same results by, say, setting lever "1" at "A" and "2" at "C" as you would by setting "1" at "C" and "2" at "A"? Even if your fine-tuning knobs are set

differently, you theoretically should be placing the same amount of tension on the snare wires in either scenario; the only difference is that the wires lay at different points horizontally across the bottom head. Frankly, I wouldn't lose any sleep over this fact; how many situations can you imagine, live or in the studio, where you would really need to get to *nine* slightly different snare settings on call? The availability of even five or six different sounds on command is enough of a bonus to make the whole system valid.

Okay, enough mechanics. In addition to the "Multi-Trace" system, the 6x14 *Dennis Chambers* snare features a coated *Ambassador* batter head (as did each signature drum), a 5 mm, 4-ply maple shell, die-cast hoops, reinforcement rings top and bottom, and a highly polished Opal White exterior finish, which was stunning on the 24k gold-plated version we received. Pearl claims a "warm, full-bodied tone with excellent volume and clarity," and you won't get an argument to any of those claims here. The drum's timbre had a nice, throaty quality to it, especially when tuned on the low end, though it retained its unique tonal quality at various pitches (which, despite its flexibility, truly makes this a "signature" drum). Despite its depth, the drum was plenty sensitive, and it had a good rimclick sound. The rimshot sound was shy

of taking a rhino's head off at fifty paces, but it was still plenty strong for most any situation.

The *Dennis Chambers* snare drum lists at \$649 for the chrome version, \$739 for the gold-plated model.

JR Robinson Signature Snare Drum

The 4x14 *JR Robinson* snare is made from 6-ply maple, and features die-cast rims, Pearl's "minimum contact" *RL-05* tension lugs and *SR-016* side-throw snare mechanism, and a natural maple finish.

Not billed as a piccolo drum, yet obviously built to favor high end, the *JR* model nonetheless works well at medium pitches as well. Of course there is a limit as to how low a 4"-deep drum will go, and the *JR* model simply doesn't have the body that deeper drums can provide, despite Pearl's claim that it offers "a tuning latitude few drums can match."



Still, in its optimal range the drum offered a pretty full and *very* cracking backbeat, and its rimshot most probably *would* fell the aforementioned rhino. Sensitivity, as in all of the signature models, was well above average (Pearl has deepened the snare beds on each signature snare for just this purpose), and the rimclick was more than happening. The throwoff worked admirably, and the 20-strand snares provided plenty of slap. I didn't find myself wanting to add much muffling to this drum, since its tone was pretty controlled to begin with, but the addition of a *Zero Ring* didn't hurt the sound, and even gave the illusion of additional body.

The *JR Robinson* signature snare lists at \$499.

Omar Hakim Signature Snare Drum

In describing the *Omar Hakim* model snare, Pearl uses the term "power piccolo," alluding to the drum's small (13") diameter and medium (5") depth. In fact, drummers looking for a higher-pitched drum that would work especially well in groovin', funky situations should definitely check this model out.

Like the *Dennis Chambers* model, Omar's drum has a sound of its own: dark and dry (as a result of its 6-ply mahogany shell), but with plenty of cut. A taste for higher registers is definitely in order

here, because this is where the drum makes its presence best felt. I had a little trouble finding the right relative tension to provide a sound I was comfortable with, but I was able to get something quite cutting and colorful after some effort. This sound was somewhere in the high-to-mid range, with the snares backed off a little and a small piece of duct tape to mellow it slightly.

The drum seemed very sensitive to tuning differentials as well as to snare tension adjustments. Incidentally, changing snare tension was just a bit awkward with the SR-015 vertical-pull "Gladstone style" strainer, which positions the tension knob under the drum's top hoop and behind the strainer lever. When loosening the tension knob toward sloppy land, the lever had an annoying urge to disengage itself, though it never completely fell to the off position as I bashed the heck out of the drum with merciless rimshots. (This same mechanism is on the *Chad Smith* model, yet it showed no signs of touchiness on that drum.)

Other features of the *Omar Hakim* snare include triple flange steel counterhoops, eight of Pearl's newly redesigned RL-55 "bridge style" low mass lugs, 20 strand snare wires, and a beautiful natural mahogany finish. The drum is available with chrome- or 24k gold-plated hardware, the latter of which, again, made this snare simply gorgeous.



The *Omar Hakim* signature snare drum lists at \$439 in chrome finish, \$549 in gold.

Chad Smith Signature Snare Drum

The only metal drum of Pearl's signature bunch (it features a very cool-looking black nickel chrome-plated steel shell), the *Chad Smith* model is also the closest of the four to an all-purpose snare. Its common 5x14 dimensions make it ideal for high- and low-range tuning, and I was able to get it sounding *real* good when cranked up—plenty of smack, lots of thumping body, and a good dose of very pleasant ring popping off its triple-flanged steel counterhoops. Snare sensitivity was fine, rimclicks nice, and rimshots rocking and ringy enough to cut through the din. The drum features the same vertical-pull strainer as the *Omar* model, as well as the identical twenty-strand snare wires and "bridge-style" lugs. (Chad's drum features ten pegs per side.) This drum might not have the highly

unique personality the other Pearl signature drums boast, but its tuning range and sensitivity leave you plenty of options.

The *Chad Smith* signature snare drum lists at \$359.



Remo Fiberskyn 3 Heads

by Rick Van Horn

The best of the old and the new. What more could you ask for?

I started playing the drums seriously just about the time that plastic drumheads came onto the market, so I really don't have a lot of personal experience with calfskin heads—except for one. It happens that my very first drumkit came with a calfskin batter head on the bass drum. (Why the rest of the kit *didn't* have calf heads remains a mystery.) I got the kit for my ninth birthday—and as you might imagine, that head didn't last long. But I remember quite vividly that before I punched through the head, the drum really sounded great: deep, warm, and full-bodied.

Over the years since, I've experimented with virtually every combination of plastic drumheads available. Over that same period of time, drummers' tastes in drum sound (and head performance) have changed dramatically. The "in" drum sound has gone from big and bold to flat and subdued, from boomy to punchy—and back again. Drummers have wanted drums with attack, drums with fatness, drums with sustain, drums with control, drums with projection.... The list goes on and on. But through it all, virtually every drummer I know has had a secret (and sometimes not so

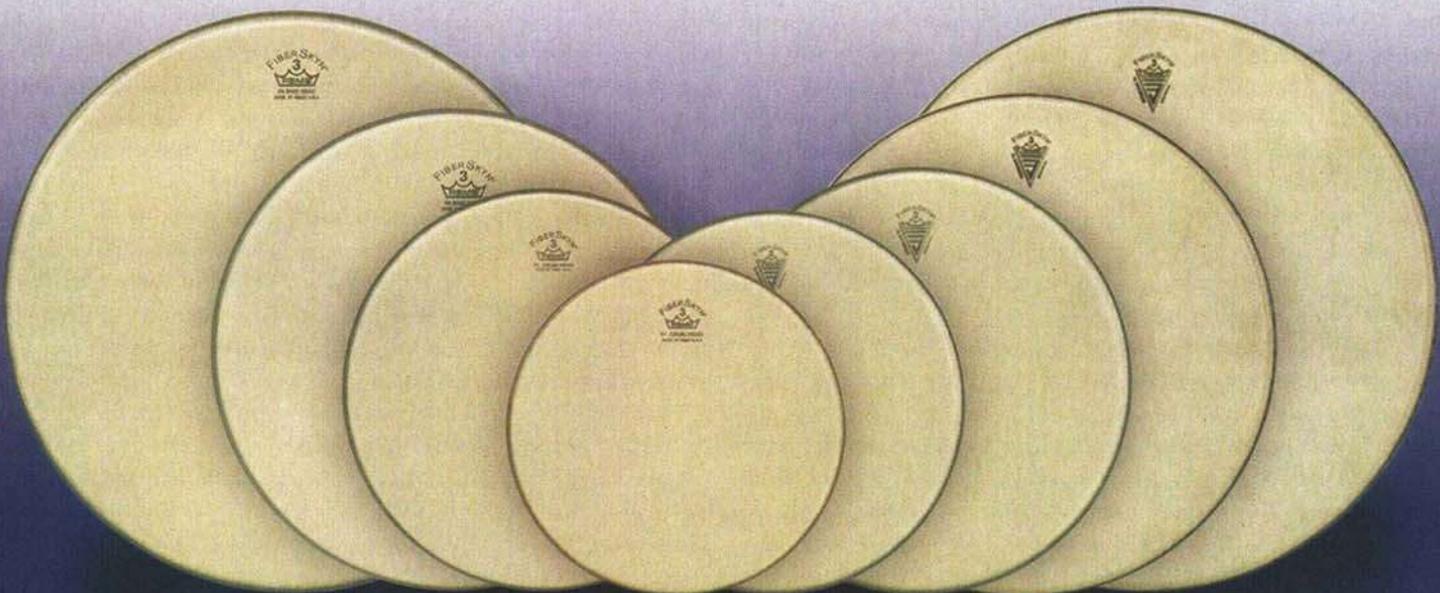
secret) longing for a drum sound that was *natural*. That's a pretty vague term, but I think it refers mainly to a sound with which the drummer can actually feel a visceral connection—something live, organic, and very, very satisfying.

If you check your drumming history, you'll find that that sound is exactly what "old time" drummers used to rave about when they talked about calf heads. There's no denying that calfskin heads offered an acoustic character that plastic has never been able to match. Unfortunately, the non-acoustic properties of calfskin (poor durability, sensitivity to environmental changes, lack of ready supply) make it impractical for contemporary use.

Enter Remo's *Fiberskyn 3* series. These heads start with modern plastic drumhead film (with the durability and liveliness it affords) and add to it a layer of *PolySpun* fibers specifically tailored to produce the acoustic properties that made calfskin so desirable. Now, long-time Remo observers may recall previous *Fiberskyn* heads, which also purported to approximate calf. They didn't. But this

WHAT'S HOT

- overall sound quality is warm, deep, and natural
- variety of weights and muffling available to further "tailor" your sound
- calf-like surface gives excellent brush response on snare heads



time Remo has added additional elements, like a sealant over the fiber layer that adds to both the durability and the playability of the head. The result is, to put it mildly, amazing.

Now, don't go thinking that *Fiberskyn 3* heads are strictly throwbacks, and thus are one-dimensional in design. Even within the context of overall acoustic performance that I've already described, there are several distinct varieties of *Fiberskyn 3* heads. These include extra-thin (*FT*), thin (*FD*), medium (*FA*), and heavy (*FI*) tom heads from 6" to 20", and snare batters from 10" to 15". Bass drum batter heads are available in all weights except the *FT* series, from 18" to 28". In addition, there are *Powerstroke 3* versions of *FD* and *FA* snare batter heads in 13" and 14" sizes, and *Powerstroke 3* versions of *FD* and *FA* bass drum batter heads from 18" to 24". We were sent representative sizes of all these various models.

Sound

The various *Fiberskyn 3* models perform in a fairly predictable manner, according to their weight. For example, while the extra-thin *FT* heads retain the calf-like qualities of warmth and mellow tonality, they still offer the greatest amount of crispness and high-end projection. (These heads are actually intended for orchestral use, due to their extreme sensitivity.) Things get mellower and deeper as the weight increases through the *FD*, *FA*, and *FI* models. I tended to favor the *FA* model on tom-toms. It basically starts with an *Ambassador-weight* plastic film and then adds the fiber layer. This combination offered the best compromise between depth and warmth on one side and projection and clarity on the other. The *FDs* tended to emphasize the attack; the *FIs* got a little *too* deep and round-sounding for my taste. (On the other hand, their thickness would give them added durability along with that added depth, which could make them a great choice for power players.)

No matter which *Fiberskyn 3* batter I tested, the choice of bottom head made a great difference. Remo recommends the use of clear one-ply plastic heads—*Diplomats* or *Ambassadors*—to get the most projection and resonance from your tom-toms. Following that advice, I used clear *Ambassadors* throughout my testing process—and the drums did, indeed, have plenty of carry and sustain. However, I couldn't help but be curious about what my drums might have sounded like in the days when calf was the only option. So I fitted *Fiberskyn 3s* on both the tops and bottoms of the drums, using *FA* batters and *FDs* on the bottoms. Projection was noticeably reduced, but the warmth and roundness of tone was pretty impressive. This combination would work well for a jazz trio or any sort of low-volume live gig. I could also see it performing a dual purpose on *any* sort of amplified gig: providing terrific drum tonality while muting the overring and projection (which should help make miking easier).

I was afraid that the *FT* snare head would be too thin for general-purpose drumset use (although it did offer temptingly great snare sensitivity and stick response). So my preference was the next thinnest head: the *FD*. Starting with *Diplomat-weight* plastic film and then adding the fiber layer, the head wound up being about *Ambassador-weight* in total. As a result, it offered some of the high-end attack and crispness that all-plastic *Ambassador* heads are famous for. But there was *still* that very un-plastic *Fiberskyn 3* warmth. A jazz player might opt for one of the thicker

batters to take advantage of the even more natural, mellow sound they produced. Owing to the rough nature of their fiber surfaces, *all* of the heads offered wonderful brush response.

I tend to like a lively snare batter. But for those who prefer a more controlled sound, the *Powerstroke 3* versions of the *Fiberskyn 3* heads add that element of control. In both the *FD* and *FA* weights, the *Powerstroke 3's* built-in muffling ring effectively eliminated any sustain or overring, leaving just the fundamental tone of the stick impact on the head.

Fondly recalling the sound of my first bass drum with its calfskin head, I was really looking forward to trying the *Fiberskyn 3* bass drum heads—and I wasn't disappointed. The *FD* batters were the brightest of the batch (again within the overall "mellow" context) with the greatest amount of attack. The *FA* offered a little more "middle-of-the-road" response. I leaned toward the *FI* batter in this case, because it offered the greatest amount of depth and warmth.

I tried all three batter heads first on a drum with a clear, single-ply front head. The drum sounded warm, but predictably boomy. Some jazz purists (and, ironically, some heavy rock drummers) might love that boominess. But most contemporary drummers would find it objectionable, and would want to add some sort of muffling.

Well, Remo already thought of that. That's why they offer *FD* and *FA* bass drum batters in *Powerstroke 3* versions. Their built-in muffling rings diminish a great deal of the overring produced by the batter head. When I combined a *Powerstroke FA* head with a solid, un-muffled front head, I got a bass drum that sounded like something from the big band era: lots of body and depth, but a little short on punch and definition. When I switched to a *Powerstroke 3 Ebony* front head with a 5" hole cut in it, the result was a really terrific, full-bodied, deep drum sound—still warm and round, but with plenty of punch and a clear attack. And mind you, I had nothing whatever *in* the drum.

Conclusion

Today's drummers are accustomed to the sound of plastic drumheads. But while there is a wide variety of brands, models, styles, and weights to choose from, plastic heads still have a fundamental similarity, based on their very nature. To me, *Fiberskyn 3* heads represent the first real departure from that nature since plastic heads were created. In a way, it's a shame that they're being compared to calfskin heads in Remo's advertising, because a lot of drummers automatically dismiss calfskin as being from "the old days." There's nothing old-fashioned about these heads. Their technology is on the cutting edge, and their sound is unlike anything we've heard in almost fifty years. I urge drummers who play in *any* musical style to give a listen to the *Fiberskyn 3s*. Playing them is like wrapping yourself up in a favorite blanket: It makes you feel warm, comfortable, and satisfied.

Fiberskyn 3 tom-tom head prices range from \$16 for the 6" size to \$32.50 for the 20"; snare drum heads are priced from \$18 for the 10" model to \$22.50 for the 15"; bass drum batters list from \$41.25 for the 18" size to \$56.25 for the 28". *Powerstroke 3* version snare batters are \$19 (13") and \$19.75 (14"), while *Powerstroke 3* version bass drum batters range from \$41.50 for the 18" model to \$49 for the 24".

UFIP Bionic Cymbals

by Rick Van Horn

A combination of organic and high-tech sounds makes "Bionic" the right name for these Italian beauties.

UFIP's *Bionic* series is actually a *sub-series* of the company's larger *Experience* series—which, to quote their catalog, "is m real-

ity not a series, but a continual expansion in the area of sound creation. Individual sound characters are developed following the specific request of our customers, or when the creative nature of our craftsmen takes the upper hand." In other words, *Experience* cymbals get whipped up a la carte, and if enough players think they're valuable, they get reproduced for the general market. Such, apparently, was the case with the *Bionic* cymbals.

UFIP's spin on these particular cymbals is that they are "noticeably heavier than general-purpose cymbals to achieve a brighter, drier, more penetrating sound." However, in the same breath the company claims that due to the alloy they use, along with various



Bionic rides, crashes, and hi-hat cymbals

manufacturing processes (including pre-aging, deep hammering, and hand buffing), the cymbals also feature "a well-balanced, somewhat focused, and warmer overall sound." The thickness, taper, and profile of the cymbals are supposed to allow them to "thrive in louder, harder studio and live playing situations."

Whew! Those are some lofty claims. But I'm pleased to report that the cymbals more than measure up to them. Our test group included splash, crash, China, ride, and hi-hat models in a variety of sizes and individual weights. The *Bionic* series utilizes what UFIP terms a "two metal finish," which combines the surface finishing of their *Natural* series (a fairly rough, unlathed finish) with a brilliant finish. Splashes, crashes, and Chinas are quite smooth, with extensive lathing on both their top and bottom surfaces. Rides are much rougher, with less lathing and more pronounced hammering on both their surfaces. Hi-hats split the difference, with rough upper surfaces and smoother undersides. All of the cymbals are highly polished.

Sound

Possibly owing to their "heavier than general-purpose cymbals" thickness, all of the splash, crash, and China cymbals in our test group had a penetrating, intense tonality. But they also had a mellow shimmer and a quickness that you usually don't find in cymbals of this weight range. The splashes and smaller crashes (16" and 17") were especially pretty, but even the larger sizes (18", 19", and 20" crashes) exploded with a genuine "crash" as opposed to any platy-sounding "clang." (And *MD* features editor Bill Miller, who is my China-cymbal expert, reports that the 20" China produced an especially nice variety of tones, depending on where it was struck. He even found that it had a very useful bell sound when struck at the edge of the inverted cup.)

The larger cymbals naturally took a little longer to develop and sustained longer than their smaller counterparts. But all of the

WHAT'S HOT

- tonality of splash, crash, and China cymbals splits the difference between "Euro-style" and "cast" cymbals
- crashes combine explosive power and penetration with musicality and shimmer

WHAT'S NOT

- dry nature of ride cymbals and hi-hats is in contrast to character of crashes

crash-type cymbals offered a combination of power and musicality, and a timbre that fell almost exactly between the glassy, high-end shimmer that's characteristic of the best "Euro-style" cymbals, and the ballsier, underlying tone of traditional "cast" cymbals.

Almost exactly the opposite was true of the ride cymbals. With their rougher surfaces, they produced a clear, pingy stick sound—lots of "plink" and plenty of following sustain, but not much in the way of shimmer. Bell sounds were clear and powerful, if a little gong-y. The warmth of the tone varied with the weight of each cymbal; heavier models were higher-pitched and thus a bit more piercing. Other than this variance in pitch, however, I found very little difference in acoustic characteristics between the 20", 21", and 22" rides. They were extremely consistent in their performance. For those who like precision and power from a ride, these would be excellent choices.

Not quite so consistent were the hi-hats we were sent. Their rough top/smooth bottom finishes provided a clean, dry stick sound without much shimmer—somewhat similar to that produced by the ride cymbals. Since the top cymbals were generally as heavy as the bottom ones, the hi-hats did not respond well to delicate playing, nor did they sound particularly good on a typical swing ride pat-



Bionic splashes and Chinas

tern But they produced a very solid "chick" sound when played with the foot—owing largely to holes drilled in the bottom cymbals to prevent airlock They also offered plenty of penetrating power when played closed or partly closed—without sounding unmusical or abrasive I wouldn't use these hi-hats on a jazz gig, but they'd offer a character that was distinctly their own to any other sort of playing I found myself attracted more to the 13" models than the 14" ones, owing to their slightly quicker response

Conclusions And Pricing

I think the UFIP crashes would appeal to virtually any drummer looking for a combination of power, musicality, and character from his or her crash cymbals I wasn't fond of the rides, because I'm not a fan of dry, pingy ride cymbals But for those who *are*, the *Bionic* rides are outstanding examples of the genre I was fond of the 13" hi-hats for use in any sort of high-energy situation, others might prefer the 14" models for their added power and projection They both offer a unique combination of depth and cut

Owing to the multiple-stage finishing process that gives *Bionic* cymbals their acoustic identity, they are the most expensive of all UFIP models Add to that the fact that UFIP cymbals are imported from Italy, and it's not surprising that the *Bionics* are definitely at the high end of the price scale among all cymbal brands

The cymbals we tested represent the entire *Bionic* series They are priced as follows 13" hi-hats—\$444 per pair, 14" hi-hats—\$480 per pair, 16" crash—\$286, 17" crash—\$310, 18" crash—\$334, 19" crash—\$370, 20" crash or ride—\$403, 21" ride—\$431, 22" ride—\$455 The three splashes we were sent were actually brand-new prototypes that had not yet been officially added to the price list So I can only give approximate pricing for them, to wit 10"—\$150, 11"—\$168, 12"—\$185 Likewise, the Chinas are new models, and approximate prices for them are 18"—\$363, 20"—\$440 (The splashes and Chinas should be available later this year) The cymbals are distributed by Drum Workshop, 101 Bernoulli Circle, Oxnard, California 93030, tel (805) 485-6999, fax (805)485-1334

Grover Performance Snare System

by Rick Mattingly

Having reviewed dozens of custom snare drums over the years, I've often wondered why the very thing that makes a snare drum a snare drum—the snares—is often the one element that is overlooked. Various manufacturers will go to great lengths to redesign bearing edges, rims, lugs, tension casings, air vents, strainers, and throwoffs, while using a variety of woods, thicknesses, depths, and diameters to give their drums very particular individual characteristics. But turn most of those drums over and you'll see the same basic spiral snares that everybody else uses and that have been around for decades. Well, Grover Pro Percussion recently introduced some genuinely different snares to throw into the mix.

Grover's *Performance Snare System* features six different versions of snares to accommodate different tastes and playing styles. The

WHAT'S HOT

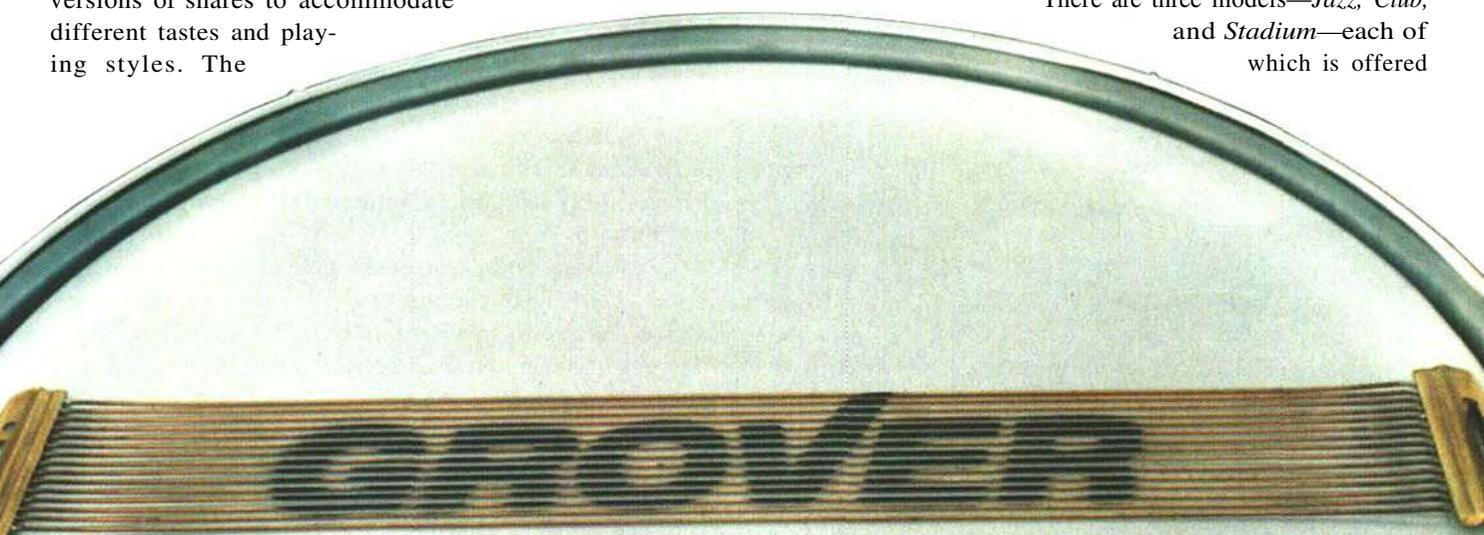
- choice of six models provides excellent tonal selection
- good range of dynamic sensitivity

WHAT'S NOT

- snare cable can be awkward to work with

snares themselves are not the traditional spiral type. Rather, they resemble wound guitar strings, which means that there is actually more surface contact between each snare and the drumhead than with spiral snares. As a result, Grover can use fifteen snares per set and get more surface contact than one would have with a common 20-strand set of spiral snares.

There are three models—*Jazz*, *Club*, and *Stadium*—each of which is offered



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in *Bright* and *Dark* versions. All are offered in 13" and 14" lengths, with other sizes being available through special order. The *Bright* versions of the three models are made from silver strands; the *Dark* versions are made of bronze. The *Jazz* models have the smallest-gauge strands; the *Club* models are medium-gauge; the *Stadium* models are the heaviest.

Grover recommends that the *Jazz* models be used on drums with depths of less than 5½", *Club* models can be used on drums of any depth; *Stadium* models are recommended for drums with depths of over 5". In order to make the best comparison of all the models, however, I had to try them out on the same drum. So I chose my most versatile drum—a '60s 5x14 Ludwig *Supra-Phonic 400*.

One last technical point: The end plates of each snare unit have holes for snare cable as well as slots for nylon or tape-style mounting. Grover snares are supplied with both nylon-coated snare cable and mounting tape, to accommodate different strainers and butt plates and/or different preferences.

With the particular drum I was using, I could use the tape on the butt plate but had to go with the cable for the strainer side. The tape worked great and is textured to prevent slippage. However, I found the cable very difficult to work with because of its stiffness. (Imagine trying to attach snares with a thin piece of wire coat hanger and you'll get the idea.) Seating the snares properly took some time and care. After fooling with it on three of the sets of snares, I gave up and switched to more user-friendly nylon snare cord. The cable is obviously very strong, however, so drummers who break snare cord regularly might find it to be the answer to their prayers despite its awkwardness.

Okay, on to the snares. First, in terms of the difference between the silver *Bright* and bronze *Dark* versions of the three models, the *Bright* snares had a slightly wider range of overtones with more highs; the *Dark* snares gave a slightly drier, more focused sound. I found the *Dark* versions especially good for fat, beefy-sounding backbeats. The difference was subtle, though.

In regard to the *Jazz*, *Club*, and *Stadium* models, basically, the thinner the snares, the more tension they need to perform at their best. The *Jazz* model, therefore, was super-responsive and articulate at soft to medium volumes—but if you really gave the drum a whack it sounded a little choked because the snares were too tight against the bottom head to move with the force of the blow.

The *Club* snares didn't require quite as much tension and therefore could stand up to a much wider range of dynamics. This is definitely the most "general purpose" of the three models. It has nearly as much sensitivity and articulation as the *Jazz* model, but it's able to flex better when struck with force.

The *Stadium* model is well-suited to drummers who play a lot of loud backbeats, since the snares have plenty of give. But they were also reasonably sensitive and articulate at softer dynamics—especially on my 5" drum.

As desirable as articulation can be, buzz rolls sometimes suffer as a result. Accordingly, the *Jazz* model was the least "forgiving" in terms of buzz rolls, compared to the other two models, with the *Club* model having the best balance between articulate single strokes and smooth buzz rolls.

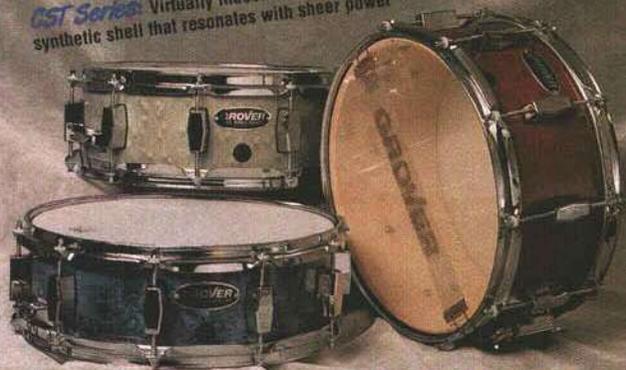
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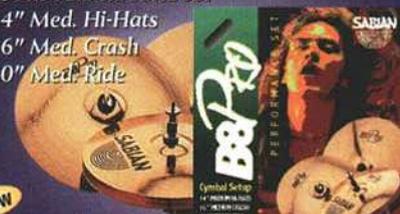
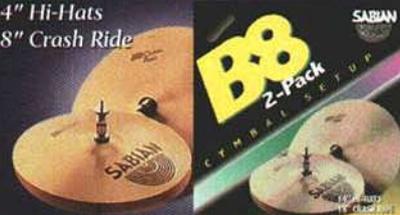
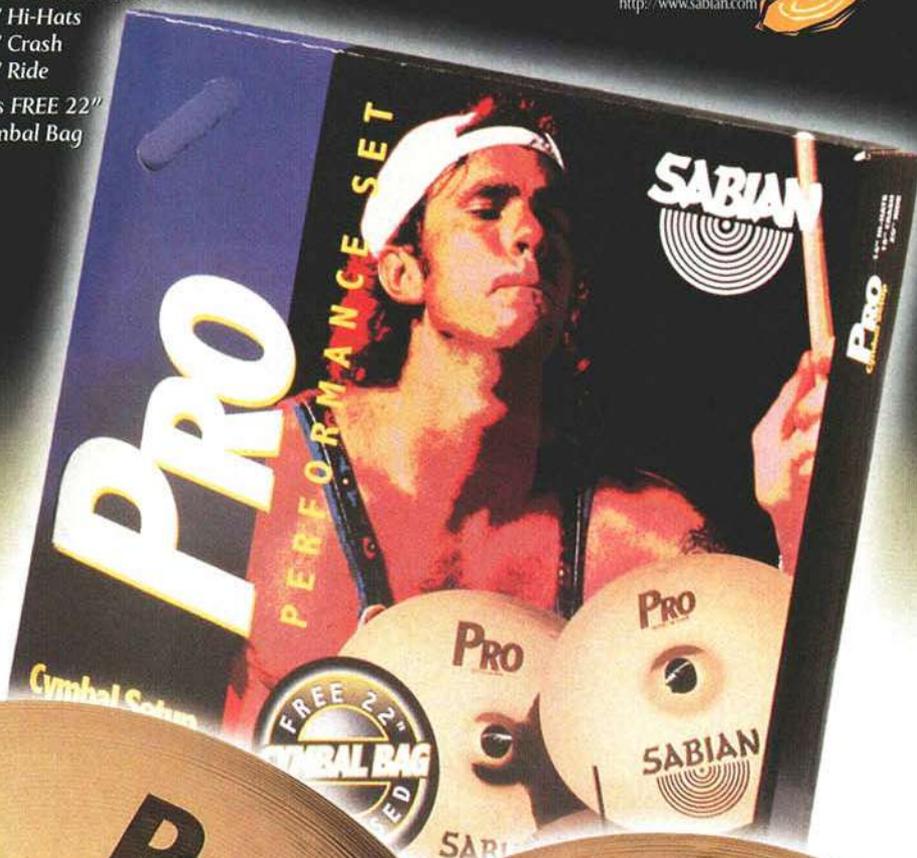
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Yamaha DTX Electronic Percussion System

by Rich Watson

The proliferation of trigger pads from small, obscure manufacturers does not disguise the fact that, seemingly, civilizations have come and gone since the last major electronic percussion product release. Obviously, building a full e-p system (especially the sound module/MIDI interface) requires mondo R&D time. Well, pad-bangers, you can stop biting your nails. Along with a boatload of drum and percussion sounds—and the pads to trigger them with—Yamaha's flagship *DTX Electronic Percussion System* packs in thirty-two-note polyphony and all the basic triggering features, plus a fairly comprehensive sequencer, replete with impressive melodic and harmonic samples and a ton of sophisticated songs and patterns to practice to or use as recording templates. If you're looking for bells and whistles (literally and figuratively) up the wazoo, look no further.

Hardwired

Considering the *DTX's* prodigious functionality, its control panel is remarkably uncluttered and conveniently laid out. A 2 5/8" x 1 7/8" liquid crystal display indicates the active operating mode. Depending on which mode is active, the LCD also displays the kit or pattern number and name, tempo, click/quantization unit, and time signature, as well as all editing parameters and values. A large, two-digit red LED below it provides at-a-glance visibility of the active drumkit number. Two slider-type attenuators control master and auxiliary output volume levels. Two others control the levels of sequence accompaniment and click (in practice mode) or kick, snare, cymbal, and miscellaneous instruments (in live mode). This can be very useful in live performance situations where quick, easy level adjustments are often necessary. Two columns of buttons activate the module's various edit modes, and two more facilitate movement and changes within them. There are also buttons to turn the click on or off, and to access metronome functions. A row of tape-recorder-type transport buttons control sequencer functions, and another bank of buttons can solo or mute either recorded track, or the chords, bass, and/or rhythm parts of a pattern or song. The latter functions help in constructing or editing sequences, and especially in practicing with various accompaniment configurations. A shift button makes some of the buttons perform dual functions. The module's data scroll wheel provides a speedier way to increment/decrement through parameters or values than the +1 and -1 buttons, which are for single-step changes.

In addition to the power switch, an LCD display contrast knob, MIDI In and Out jacks, and a direct current jack (for the dreaded wall wart), the back panel has a miniature auxiliary input for an external sound source, such as a CD player, which can be mixed with the *DTX's* audio output, and a row of tiny input attenuation switches that help match the signals of (presumably other manufacturers') triggers with the *DTX*. There are ten stereo 1/4" jacks for the pad inputs, plus two pair of outputs, headphones, the hi-hat control pedal, and a footswitch (not included), which can be used for such functions as changing kit numbers and song sections, turning the click on or off, or as a rudimentary open-or-closed hi-hat.

Although Yamaha also offers single-zone pads (drum model *TP80* and cymbal model *PCY80*), the deluxe *DS-10* kit configuration sent for review is equipped with six *TP80S* dual zone drum pads and two *PCY80S* dual zone cymbal pads. All of these pads are mounted on the *RS80* rack, the cymbal pads via two *CYAT80* cymbal boom arms, which provide additional positioning flexibility. The system is rounded out with one *HH80* hi-hat controller and one *KP80* kick pad. In addition to triggering sounds, the pads can also be used to start or stop pattern and song playback, and to control external MIDI devices such as other sound modules. All have piezo-type transducers, and each includes a 10' cable.

Do You Hear What I Hear?

The *DTX's* 916 16-bit sounds, which Yamaha calls "voices," include 119 kicks, 250 snares, 176 toms, 105 cymbals, 103 percussion, 115 effects, 14 mallet instruments, 15 brass and strings, and 19 basses. There are 128 additional General MIDI-compatible voices that are defined as keyboard sounds, but which run the

WHAT'S HOT

- slick sequencing and recording functions provide super practice and composition possibilities
- exceptionally broad dynamic range and sensitivity
- realistic pad response—especially cymbal pad

WHAT'S NOT

- limited hi-hat functions; twitchy splash
- kick pad not suited for double pedal
- a few cumbersome programming procedures

gamut from accordion, trombone, and ocarina to bagpipe, strings, and telephone. All the module's sounds were created with Yamaha's Advanced Wave Memory (AWM) technology. Some of the voices in the effects section are actually digitally looped (continuously repeating) beats and patterns. The volume, pitch, pan, reverb send, decay, and harmonic content of each voice can be altered for each kit. Other adjustable parameters include polyphony (how many iterations of a voice can be triggered at once), assignable groups of sounds that will not sound concurrently, and note off enable/disable. Many of the module's basic voices are composed of two waveforms, and can be modified (with a parameter ingeniously called "Modify") by changing the balance between them. This balance is fixed, i.e., unaffected by playing velocity. Similarly, the module doesn't allow the user to adjust velocity-sensitive pitch change, sometimes called "dynamic pitch bend" (although some of the voices incorporate this effect with a set value).

Heard in isolation, a few of the *DTX's* voices exhibit audible

gate closures, a neither pretty nor natural sound that presumably could have been smoothed out before the module left the design bench. Fortunately, the only real-life setting in which these flaws might surface is in the studio, and if played in complete isolation. Many of the *DTX's* sounds—even some of the clipped ones—are quite good. Standouts for me include the jazz toms, timpani, both concert bass drums, a sloshy hi-hat, a mini-China cymbal, some lush keyboard chorus patches, kalimba, didgeridoo, and record static (although I might not find practical applications for all of these sounds within the next few weeks). I was less impressed by some of the Latin percussion sounds, which struck me as a bit cold and one-dimensional, and by the brush sounds and a few of the hi-hats.

The practicality of the *DTX* sound library depends somewhat on the kind of music you play. It would appear that Yamaha is targeting the huge home-studio market with the large number of drum sounds and effects from dance, rap, rave, and industrial music arenas. For my personal taste and musical activity, I would gladly trade such novelty sounds as "Gargoyle" and "BuzzyWak" for



good tabla gulp and gong samples, and some of the processed kicks, snares, and toms for an equal number of more traditional, organic ones. But then, greedy guys like me will almost always say, "I sure coulda used one o' them brass monkey bell sounds." To be fair, by providing such an enormously broad musical palette—from udus, triangles, and taikos, to the three different gun shots, a helicopter, and woman's scream—Yamaha seems to have tossed in something (if not everything) for everyone. And as indicated by the numbers above, the vast majority of sounds are drumkit-oriented. Inclusion of many melodic instruments including several splendid pianos (you expected anything less from *Yamaha*?) opens up writing/recording possibilities and makes practicing to the module's sequences more enjoyable and interesting.

I was initially disappointed by many of the *DTX*'s designated snare drum rimshot voices, which, except for their higher pitch, sound nearly identical to their corresponding (and similarly named) head sounds. In part, this is probably necessitated by the *DTX*'s main and rim triggers' mutually exclusive operation (described in more detail below), to blend, as does a "real" drum, the sounds of the heads, rim, and snares. But while recognizing the intent, I missed these samples' lack of bite, ring, and distinguishing character; they blended in *too* well with their head-borne counterparts. However, by adjusting a few of the above-mentioned voice editing parameters, and in many cases "mismatching" head/rim voices, I came up with some workable combinations.

It's important to keep in mind that *anyone's* evaluation of electronic drum and percussion sounds is very subjective, "ear-of-the-beholder" work: You'll never find two drummers who feel the same way about every sound in *any* sound module. But the *DTX*'s

sheer number and range of voices, plus the degree to which they can be customized to suit individual tastes, earns it a place on every e-p shopper's "must-see" list.

DTX voices can be "stacked" so that up to five voices can be triggered from each pad. This is only true of the head pads; the rim pads can only trigger one sound each. The user can determine if stacked notes are played simultaneously or alternately. These two modes can be modified to truncate the previous note as each successive note is played, or to alternately hold or cut off the previous voice or sound loop. And finally, stacked notes can be played as layers in a velocity cross-fade, that is, fading one sound in as another fades out depending on how hard the pad is struck. The *DTX*'s pre-programmed cross-fade determines the composite notes' velocity curves and their crossover points. This precludes programming certain sound layers to kick in at a particular playing impact level, a technique commonly used on snare drum stacks whereby a voice that plays through the entire dynamic range is augmented by another one or two voices (for example, fatter, or brighter, more metallic snare voices) near the top of the pad's dynamic range. This not only simulates additional harmonics produced by playing hard, it cheats a greater dynamic range out of your electronic kit. I tried to "fool" the *DTX* into allowing this by assigning the same snare drum voice to the bottom two or three layers, and then a different voice to the layer above them. Predictably, this resulted in the ugly phasing of the duplicated sounds surrounding the crossover points. And because the *DTX* does not allow velocity switching, wherein layered sounds switch directly, rather than overlap at a given velocity, I couldn't circumvent this effect.



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3. Photos should be of drums only; no people should be in the shot(s).
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Send your photo(s) to Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Please note that photos cannot be returned, so don't send any originals you can't bear to part with.

In The Modes

Drummers familiar with other sound modules will be comfortable with the DTX's general landscape: Its various functions are assigned to areas of operation called "modes." Since detailed coverage of all of the module's features could fill an *entire Modern Drummer*, a quick and dirty overview of its major functions follows:

Parameters in the Trigger Edit Mode determine how the triggers respond to playing, as well as the voices assigned to each trigger. Voice Edit Mode facilitates modification of instrument sounds and their interaction. Together, these two modes comprise each of the unit's 32 preset and 32 programmable drumkits. Kits and patterns can be linked into any of up to 16 "chains," and programmed and modified kits and chains can be saved in Store Mode. Three Pattern modes (Play, Record, and Job) control the DTX's 660 preset patterns (110 musical styles x 6 sections: Intro, Main A, Main B, Fill AB, Fill BA, and Ending)—mostly one- to four-bar riffs including drums, percussion, bass, and chordal instruments—as well as the 100 areas for user-programmable patterns. Three corresponding Song modes control the DTX's 100 preset and 30 programmable "songs," which comprise longer, more complex song forms with additional harmonic and occasional melodic components. Patterns and songs can be recorded using either real-time or step process, with or without quantization.

Related to these patterns and songs, but found in the Utility Mode's Sequencer sub-mode, is "Groove Check." This nifty little feature analyzes your playing in relation to its own sequenced patterns and songs—all in real time. In its Single mode, Groove Check's analysis is based upon the programmed level of quantiza-

tion, displaying in clock units the degree to which your playing strays from "center-of-the-beat" accuracy. Average mode displays the overall percentage of time you have played faster or slower than the internal clock.

An old joke asks, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" The punch line—"practice"—is the area where the DTX really shines: Its many and varied patterns and songs, along with Groove Check, make it a superb practice tool. A great way this can be used is to record a song into a user area, delete the drum track, and then record your own drumming over it. This facility to play, and later to review and analyze your work in a quasi-studio context, is potentially of far greater educational value than simply playing along with a click and judging it "on-the-fly."

The Utility Mode is split into five sub-modes: System (to set adjustable user-interface functions); MIDI (functions relating to how the DTX communicates with other MIDI devices); EQ (to designate frequencies as low, middle, and high, and to boost or attenuate each); Sequencer (to set various click, tempo, and clock functions); and Multi-timbre (to select voices and fine-tune how the DTX, when used as a tone generator, responds to incoming MIDI data).

Parameters that apply to entire kits, rather than individual notes, include reverb type (emulation of twelve different room sizes), time, and return, as well as transmission of MIDI data to control external devices such as sequencers or tone generators.

Programmability

The folks at Yamaha clearly had their hands full in making the feature-packed DTX user-friendly. The degree to which they suc-

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ceeded depends on which of its capabilities you use. For basic playing functions, you can be up and running almost instantly, and switching from one major mode to another takes just the touch of a button or two. On the other hand, fine-tuning some of its features will take a bit more patience. Like some other brains on the market, the DTX module employs a menu "tree" programming structure, in which specific features branch off from general ones. With so many features to manipulate, though, some areas of the DTX's structure seem more linear, with long series of parameter "pages" on fewer branches. Depending on how your mind works, this approach could result in fewer searches down the wrong branch, or just longer searches down the right one.

Let's take a gander at a couple of potential impediments in the DTX's basic trigger and voice programming process. (It may help to picture its Trigger Edit Mode as where you build your kit, and its Voice Edit Mode as where you get the materials.) In the Voice Edit Mode, both voice numbers and names are displayed. (For example, cymbal voice number thirty-two is RidB Drk [Ride Bell Dark]). However, in the Trigger Edit Mode, only the kit note number (which bears no relation to the voice number) and its corresponding pitch are displayed. To select from among voices already assigned to a kit, you must a) reference the drum voice list in the owner's manual, b) memorize (or write down) voice locations within each kit, c) step through the notes, playing each until the desired sound comes up, or, least practically, d) toggle between the two modes. Especially for users who construct more complex kits or frequently alter their component voices, the extra steps necessary to just locate and identify the right sound without the aid of

a descriptive name could prove annoying.

And while we're on the subject of cataloging, I have another wee bone to pick. Although the DTX's voices are logically grouped (such as all bass drums together, then all snares, etc.) and, to a degree, sub-grouped (such as gated snares together), the order of sounds within those groups seems totally random. With a total of 916 voices to choose from, it would have been helpful to put each group's sounds in *alphabetical order*, so that, say, to find a snare that you remember is called "Cool Dry" you won't also have to remember it is the 249th snare—or step or scroll through the preceding 248. Or am I just being really anal?

Okay, maybe. But I think there's more to my other gripe about creating sound stacks on the DTX: The process by which they are created is pretty lumpy, in part because of the number of steps required to "audition" the component sounds separately and together. For example, say you want to "create" a snare drum out of three or four basic snare drum voices. In the stack mode, up to five voices assigned to a pad are played at once. While this may be the user's ultimate goal, it doesn't provide a clear picture of each voice's contribution to the aggregate sound. To hear the layers in the velocity crossover mode, you have to play within each voice's assigned dynamic range to hear it individually, and then play within the voices' intersecting dynamic range to hear them together. This becomes progressively tricky as more voices are added and the dynamic range of each is decreased. The process is simplified *a little* by switching to the Voice Edit mode, because once you have accessed the desired layer (as described above), you can repeatedly play it solo by tapping the Voice button rather than

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playing on the pad. Once satisfied, you must reenter Trigger Mode to advance to the next note in the stack. In the Alternate Mode you can hear each component voice alternate with up to four other voices—which, again, is probably not the ideal way to assess a particular sound. A "back door" approach would be to listen to the sounds individually in another kit before trying them in combinations in their ultimate destination kit, but this would make for even more jumping hither and yon. The *DTX's* copy input feature is intended to help in this area, allowing input data (including note stacks) to be copied to any input in any kit. But because this feature only copies note numbers (where you build your kit), and not voices (the building materials), you might still have to assign the desired voices (in the Voice Edit mode) to the copy "destination" kit if they are not already the same as those in the "source" kit.

While these are not crippling inconveniences, unless you're satisfied with the *DTX's* pre-programmed kits, some of its parameter modification functions demand a fair amount of button pushing. Fortunately, this condition will abate as you've become familiar with (and have tweaked to your liking) a library of sounds and sound stacks.

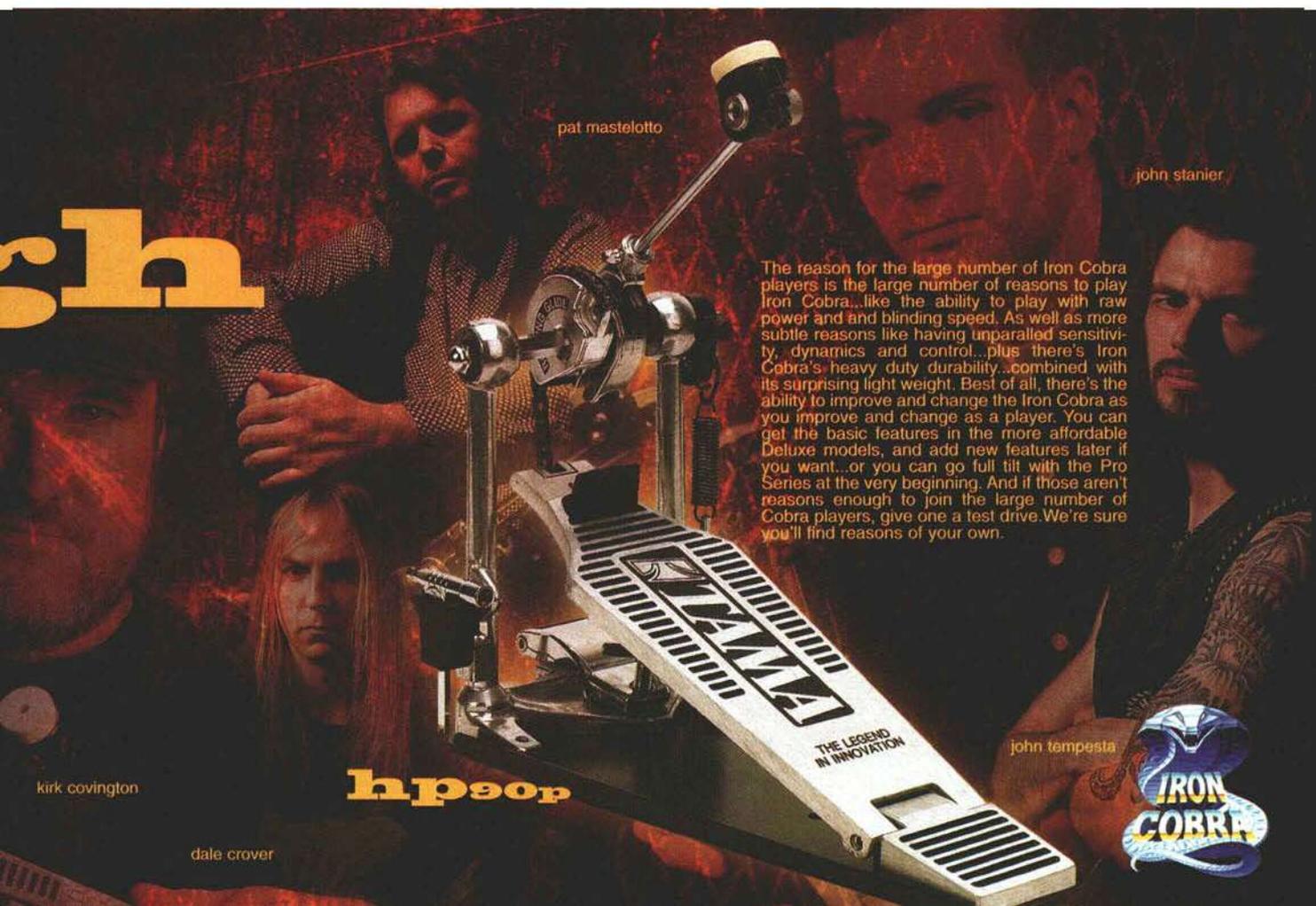
I have focused on a few potential trouble spots, but aside from the areas mentioned, the *DTX* is fairly easy to work with, thanks to Yamaha's apparent awareness of their product's potentially daunting array of features. For example, by turning on the Learn Mode, you can select a trigger input by merely playing on its corresponding pad, regardless of the active edit mode or page. This facilitates quick alteration of the same parameter on several pads in a kit. Note numbers can also be quickly selected by playing on a key-

board that is plugged in to the module's MIDI In jack. Another convenience feature allows you to set the *DTX* to automatically bypass fourteen of the less frequently accessed pages in the Trigger Edit Mode, and another eight in the Voice Edit Mode. The previously mentioned division of the Utility Mode into five sub-modes facilitates stepping through just four to ten pages of each operating area instead of Utility Mode's total forty-two. A feature within the Utility Mode that programs the module to automatically jump to the most recently edited page of each edit mode also expedites the editing process, and the aforementioned data scroll wheel is probably the quickest way to advance through parameters and values other than a direct-access numeric keypad.

Like the *DTX* itself, some parts of the owner's manual are more helpful than others. Most are explicit bordering on redundant, but not always stated in the clearest terms, and some potentially valuable information is left entirely to the discovery of the user. E-ptyros may be challenged if they venture into the module's more advanced features. Otherwise it pretty much flies itself.

Drum And Cymbal Pads

The *TP80S* drum pads and *PCY80S* cymbal pads have a moderately bouncy, acoustic-authentic feel. On each a polarity switch will help adapt them to other sound devices, and a sensitivity control allows them to be adjusted for individual playing style. Although to suit my playing style I adjusted the input gain and minimum velocity slightly in the *DTX* module (and later when I tried them with my *drumKAT*), I never needed to use the sensitivity switches, as the pads' responsiveness and tracking were excel-



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john stanier

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lent right out of the box. They also proved to be nearly cross talk-free, and the one minor false triggering problem I encountered was quickly remedied with one of the module's three signal rejection functions. (These rejection parameters would be most valuable when the module is triggered by acoustic drum triggers, such as the recommended [but not included] Yamaha *DT10* sensors.) According to drummer/author/clinician RUSS Miller, one of several design consultants, the module's exceptional dynamic range and sensitivity are due to technology borrowed from the venerable Yamaha *DTS-70* module.

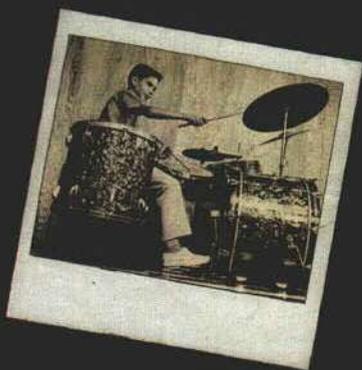
The drum pad's rim section is raised a comfortable ¼" from the main pad surface, and unlike some other products, it is made of the same soft material. While this misses the aural/tactile similarities with acoustic drums and rims, the consistently quiet surfaces can be an advantage for wee-hours practicing and in the studio when used with mic's that would pick up the sound of sticks on metal rims.

The head and rim surfaces on the Yamaha dual-zone pads can't trigger simultaneously; either one signal or the other can be transmitted at any given instant. This of course eliminates head-rim crosstalk and, in so doing, makes the rims suitable for assigning sounds unrelated to those on the head. It also affects the way related sounds (e.g., snare drum head and snare drum rimshot were selected), which, as was previously mentioned, probably influenced Yamaha's approach to the sonic composition of dedicated rimshot voices. Although the input programmed for hi-hat functions doesn't allow stacked voices, the pad's rim can be used very effectively with a "sloshier" or "mushier" closed hi-hat voice than is assigned to the main pad.

Each rim must share most trigger settings such as gain and level and velocity ranges with its corresponding pad. This precludes some voice assignment scenarios that could benefit from discreet control over these parameters. The pad rims can alternately be programmed to respond at a fixed velocity (dynamic), or to mute the sounds assigned to their respective heads.

When the rim zones of these pads is lightly squeezed (or pressed with a drumstick), a membrane switch transmits a different signal to the module, which can be programmed to interpret it as a different note number (making a total of 7 notes per pad: layers 1-5, rim, and "squeeze"!), or to choke whatever sound has been triggered on the same pad or rim. The choke feature works beautifully on such sound pairs as open/damped triangle, open/muted surdo, and of course on cymbals, eliminating the need to occupy an additional pad for the "second" sounds, and providing a familiar, comfortable way to produce these effects. Bravo, Yamaha!

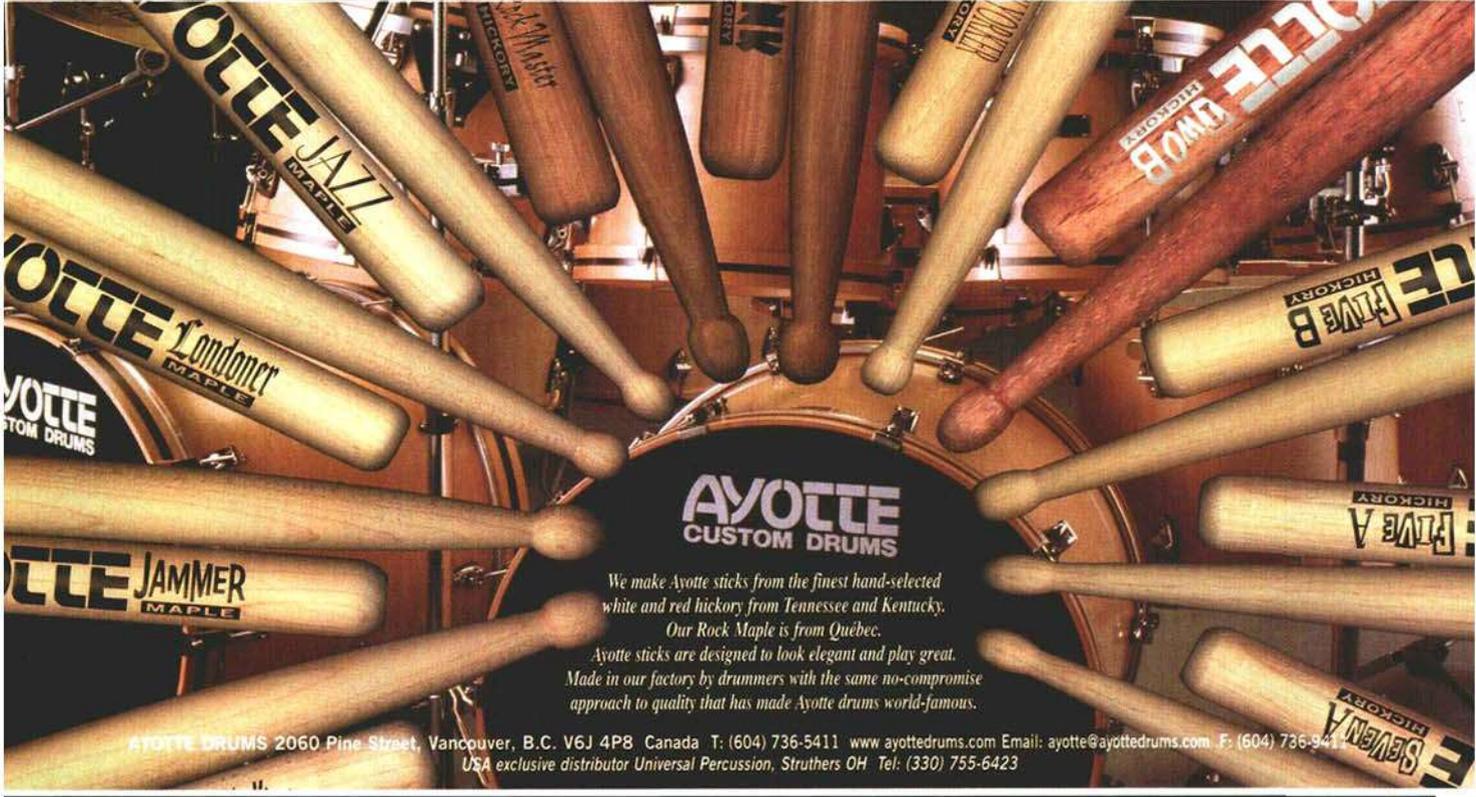
Visually unique, the *PCY80S Dual-zone Cymbal Pad* is shaped like a quarter slice out of a 14" cymbal. This design provides a typical cymbal target area, but eliminates the redundant area and weight of a full circular pad. Mounted on the included straight/boom cymbal holders, the *PCYSOS's* "flap" a bit when struck, just like real cymbals. Another member of the *MD* staff didn't care for this characteristic, saying he prefers a more solid feel. I absolutely loved it, and may "forget" to ship the cymbal pads back to Yamaha. (Just kidding.) However, this split decision suggests that you should check them out. A special "stopper" that fits over each cymbal holder's stem keeps the pad from rotating away from you as you play. Again, nice attention to details, guys 'n' gals.



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Kick Pad

As with the other pads, I tweaked the sensitivity of the *KP80 Kick Pad* to suit my playing style, but even at the default settings it performed very well. Its 7/8"-thick rubber playing surface feels quite natural as electronic kicks go, and its considerable heft and size contributes to its stability—although this may seem like a mixed blessing when it must be fit in a case and carried. Dual retractable spurs and a plastic *Velcro-like* material help anchor it on carpeted surfaces, but the lack of any rubber means it will skate across hard floors unless it's tied to your throne. (The bottom of the hi-hat controller has two sections of serrated rubber, but no *Velcro*.)

Although my own pedal worked fine, the beater offset on the *MD* product room's hoary old Slingerland *Yellowjacket* proved incompatible with the *KP80's* 2½" mounting area. Also, because the *KP80's* beater contact area is only ¼" wide, double kick players will be forced to buy two *KP80s*. And because the *KP80* doesn't possess an output jack for connecting another trigger in series, use of a Y-adaptor would be necessary to avoid the presumably unacceptable alternative of sacrificing another pad input. Double kickers may be further frustrated to find that despite the narrow playing surface, the *KP80's* base is 1½" wide, and so would allow two of them to be placed no closer than 7½" apart. This would preclude the use of a double pedal, and force the player to use two single pedals. Double kick players should consider this potentially sizable extra investment.

Hi-Hat Controller

The bottom of the *HH80 Hi-Hat Controller's* stroke is a bit spongy, simulating the feel of real hi-hat cymbals compressing. Both its spring tension and stroke length are adjustable, but the range of variation is very small, and therefore the change in feel is nearly imperceptible. It is possible to create a hi-hat splash by lightly depressing and then *very* quickly releasing the pedal, but several of us here at *MD* found the splash very tricky to achieve. The sensitivity of both the "normal" pedal and splash pedal is controlled by the same parameter (Foot Control Offset in the Utility/System Mode), and settings that made the splash easier to create (though only slightly easier to control) made the normal pedal sound impossible to achieve without really stomping on the pedal. I found no setting that resulted in a satisfactory compromise. While the *HH80* performs continuous controller MIDI functions such as pitch bend (nicely applied to a timpani sample on one of the kits), its application to the module's hi-hat mode produces an extremely narrow range of variation; the distance between totally open and totally closed is negligible. Yamaha drum product manager Steve Anzivino informed me that the company has already improved the hi-hat controller's pressure sensitivity, and product design consultant Tony Verderosa noted that several other aspects of the module's hi-hat performance will be improved in 1997.

Rack

One of the *MD* staff members wasn't enthralled with some angle/position limitations of the *RS80* rack's pad mounts. For me

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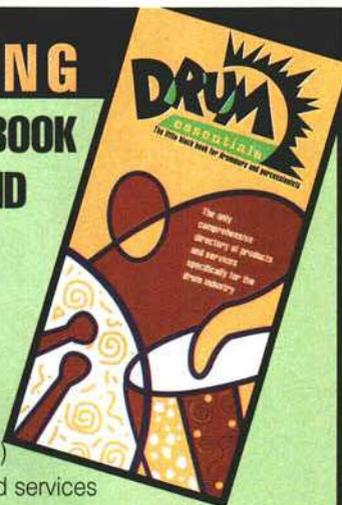
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the rack proved acceptably flexible, and when properly tightened, it held the pads securely and felt perfectly stable.

Quality/Durability

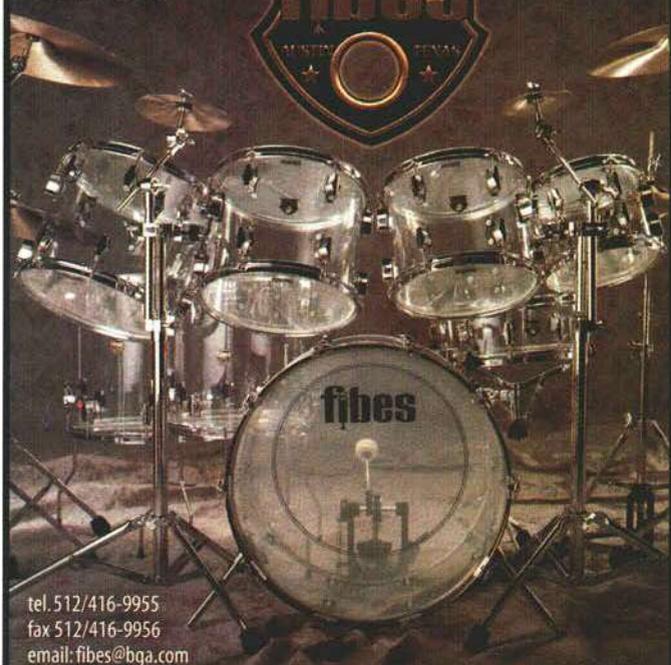
Drummers in the throes of spend-or-not anxiety should be reassured by Yamaha's reputation as one of the biggest and most respected names in musical instruments, and as a producer of reliable, high-quality products. The *DTX* system comes with a one-year warranty.

Conclusions

Including all cables, clamps, and holders, the *DTX* is a very complete package—just add a kick pedal and a throne and you'll be ready to jam. By packing the module with lots of usable kits, patterns, and songs, and by making its basic functions immediately accessible, Yamaha has pretty much written the book on "plug 'n' play." Shedding drummers will dig its play-along features, and aspiring composer/producers will appreciate it as a comprehensive tool with which to create. The drum and cymbal pads are wonderfully sensitive, and they feel great too. The hi-hat's basic functions are adequate, but prospective buyers should road test its suitability for the level of expressiveness they need. The full *DS-10* kit, as reviewed, lists for \$2,660; other configurations are available. The *DTX* sound module alone lists for \$875. For more information, contact Yamaha Corporation of America, Band and Orchestral Division, P.O. Box 899, Grand Rapids, MI 49512-0899, (616) 940-4900, Web: www.yamaha.com.



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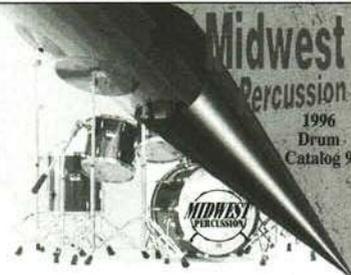


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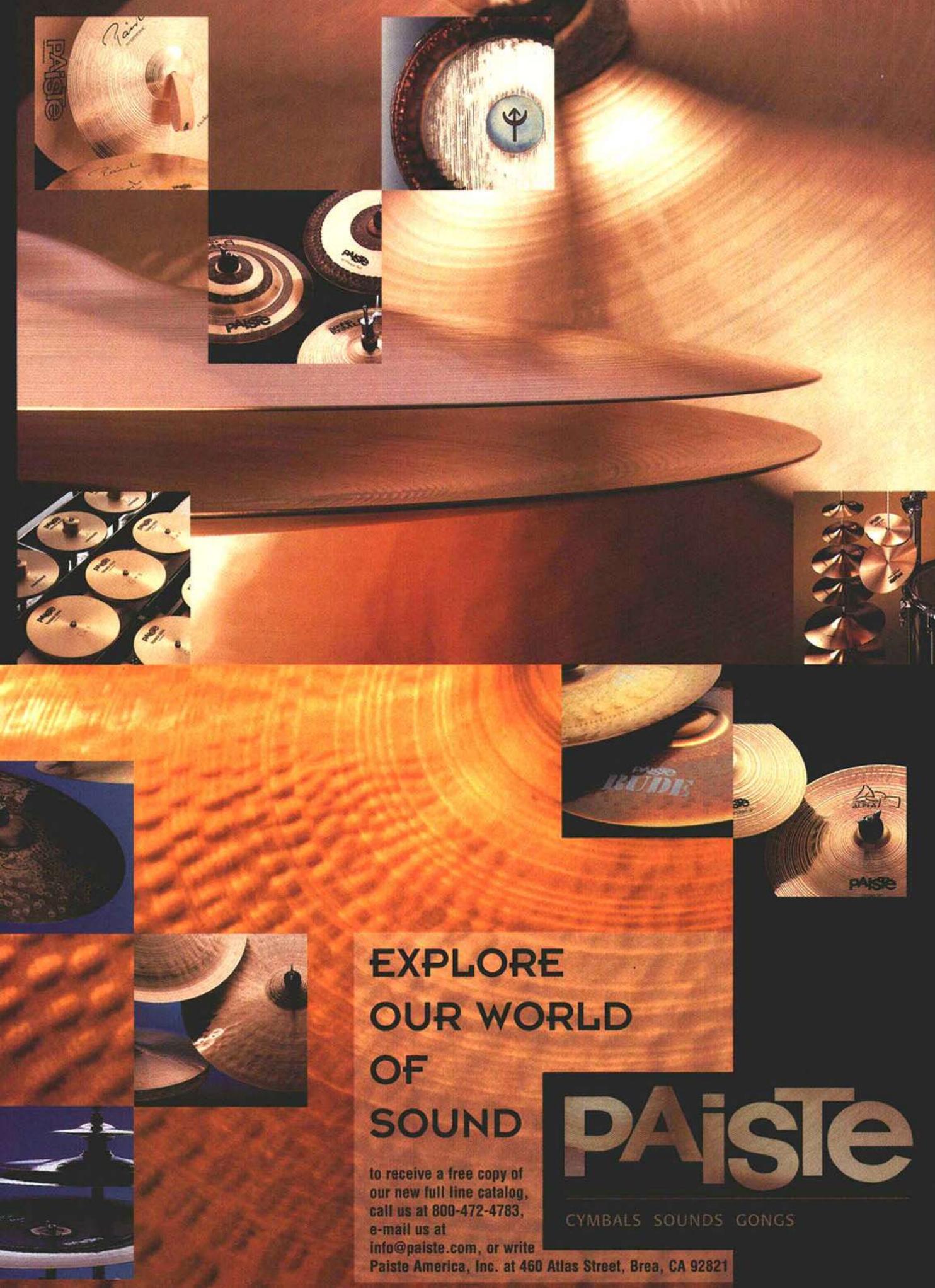


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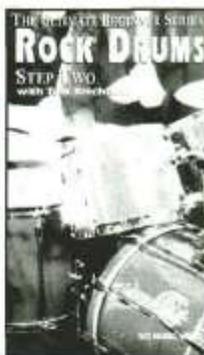


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Danny Carey

Of Fool



by Matt Deiken

Danny Carey lives in a part of Hollywood you don't see on postcards or television. Indeed, it's a chore merely finding his home among the camouflage of seedy storefronts and streetwalkers. Even after entering the dark alley that serves as his driveway, the only clue you're at the right place is the basketball hoop outside—a dead giveaway to anyone who knows about Carey's longtime affection for the game. Don't bother ringing the doorbell (it doesn't work) or peering in the windows (there are none). But if the double-wide industrial swing door isn't padlocked, odds are that Danny's home.

Most musicians in bands with less commercial success would have moved out long ago, if for no other reason than aesthetics. But it's a statement not just about Carey, but about his band, Tool, that he

The Metaphysics Of Drumming

photos by Kevin Willis

still lives and works in the same converted warehouse he moved into shortly after coming to Los Angeles in the mid-'80s

Some of today's most intoxicatingly sick, twisted, heavy, beautiful music is born in Carey's entry room, where Tool has rehearsed ever since the drummer heard Maynard James Keenan yelling at neighbors behind his alley and thought he'd make a good singer.

For clues to the bizarre imagery embedded in Tool's music, check out the giant Enochian magic board behind Carey's kit, or step into the next room, where Carey has layered his cream-colored

walls with slanted crosses, demonic figurines, colorful paintings of geometric shapes, and what he calls "symbolic passageways into a fourth dimension." They, along with a shelf full of books on magic and spiritual awareness, are all products of Carey's enduring fascination with metaphysics.

It only takes an earful of Tool's music, though, to clear any mysteries about Carey's skills as a drummer. *Aenima*, Tool's new record of detuned depravity, is peppered with intricate fills, double-kick blasts, tempo-teasing beats, jazz-influenced ride patterns, and four-limbed polyrhythms—enough to dot an instructional manual.

Carey, who studied music for over three years at the University of Missouri, still finds time to plant himself in front of a music stand and practice patterns from the stained, fragile pages of John Pratt's *Modern Contest Solos For Snare Drum*. Indeed, you don't have to understand Carey's personal and artistic motivations to appreciate what he does behind the kit.

Tool's 1992 debut, the *Opiate* EP, had sold only 13,000 copies by the time the group broke big in 1994 with *Undertow*. *Undertow*'s rise to platinum qualifies as the decade's quietist climb to that plateau, a trip fueled more by club-level touring than any consistent radio support. It's no less stunning, then, that more people grabbed up *Aenima* than they did Nirvana's newly released live collection when the albums simultaneously hit stores this past October.

No longer a secret or a mystery, Danny Carey recently dissolved a few other secrets and mysteries in a conversation about music, magic, myth, and motivation, just before Tool embarked on its first nationwide headlining tour.

MP: One of the things you guys have going for you is that people can't attribute Tool's popularity to any particular trend or wave. I can't remember an album going platinum with as little media attention as *Undertow*.

DC: Yeah, the whole thing sort of snuck up on us, too, because it was such a slow buildup. We didn't feel like we had any surefire singles or hits. The video for "Sober" really helped out, probably because it was so cool. But more than that, I think touring opened things up for us, especially *Lollapalooza*. We just seemed to play to more and more people every time we'd pass through a city.

So I think you're right about that being a plus. We didn't feel like we had to write another "Sober" or do anything other than what our imaginations and creativity led us to. It's really a liberating feeling, and the best thing about success is not having to have a day job and just being able to concentrate on music.

MP: Until Tool's success, were you serious about music in a long-term career sense? I know you were serious about basketball at one point.

DC: Yeah, I always did have a love of basketball. I even had a couple of offers to play at small colleges. But I knew I wasn't good enough to play major-college basketball or go pro. I also didn't have the desire to go that far with it. I still play about two or three times a week. But music was always my main interest. The coach at my school asked me to play, but I didn't want to sacrifice what I had going on with music in bands and at the conservatory just to play ball.

The thing about music was I never really had to work very hard at it. I took lessons and I practiced, but things just sort of happened for me. I'm a person who really just goes with the flow and doesn't try to force anything.



"When you sit behind a kit, there are optimum points of drum, cymbal, and stand placement depending on your physical proportions, and it even has to do with a spiritual plane."



Tool Tracks

Ænima, Tool's new release, is a personal showcase for Danny Carey's style and strengths as a musician—inventive rhythms, a variety of hand-foot combinations, and a knack for composition. The following are breakdowns of Danny's contributions to many of *Ænima's* songs, including transcriptions by Carey himself.

"Stinkfist"—Carey incorporates singular tom strokes into a tribal groove that syncs up with bassline accents. Though he stepped into these waters sporadically on Tool's previous album, *Undertow*, Carey dives in head-first here, lacing the music with another layer of complexity.

"Eulogy"—A low-to-high tom fill sets up a series of connected patterns that culminates with the following beat. This was "chiefly inspired by Maynard's three-against-four vocal pattern throughout the song," Carey says. "Throwing the hi-hat into three just seemed to make it flow a little nicer over the four-bar phrase."

"H"—Carey has made a trademark of hypnotic, tribal grooves that seemingly run independent of the guitar lines. But listen late in the song for the subtle connection.

"Forty Six & 2"—Near the end of the song, a 32nd-note tom run leads into a double-bass blast and, eventually, a few bars of a triplet-based hand-kick quad pattern. (The quad "sticking" is right hand, left hand, right foot, left foot). Carey calls quads a personal "crutch" that, when anything else eludes him, he can rely on to carry out a song's momentum.

"Hooker With A Penis"—Again, another explosive ending, this one warping from bars of 6/16 and 5/8 into straight time.

"Jimmy"—Carey uses the toms for his primary backbeat in the chorus and bridge, going to the snare only for accents.

"Pushit"—The beat toggles between a rolling 6/4 and a double-time 6/8, building to a fifty-second mosh-friendly climax.

"Ænima"—Carey opens the song with a series of time-defying 4/4 beats, moving later into the incessant tom-kick pattern transcribed here. "This beat was just an exercise I used to play around with," Carey says. "The two-against-three in the hands over the bass drum ostinato created the thunderous effect that the song begged for after the light vocal breakdown."

Basic Pattern:

Two-Against-Three Variation:

"Third Eye"—The tune opens with Carey playing over samples and loops, then taking over on kit to lead an extended, free-form musical interlude before closing with an industrial-inspired bash.

Matt Peiken

I think most Americans have a hard work ethic and they just want to achieve things for the sake of money, power, and ego. There's nothing wrong with goals and ambition, but it's the motivation behind those goals that I don't quite understand. I think people would be much happier if they just did what they enjoyed doing. The money will come.

MP: It is a lot easier to say that when you're in a great band, making lots of money. Have you always been so carefree about life?

DC: [laughs] Yeah, I've spent my entire life avoiding jobs and

work. I never bought into that way of life because it didn't seem to make people very happy. What's funny is the rest of my family isn't like me in that way at all.

I grew up in a very typical, middle-class American house. My dad was manager for a large insurance company and my mom was a school teacher. I have one older brother and one younger brother, and we were raised to value education. My dad is really into music, though, and my earliest musical memory was when he took me into the music library at the University of Kansas and played *The Planets* by Gustav Hoist. That just blew my mind. I was only a little kid at the time, but it made such an impression on me that, from then on, I think I was musically aware.

My dad also played saxophone a little bit, but he wasn't at all into playing like I was into drumming, and I think it took my

"One of the great things about Tool is that I feel like I can use a lot of my chops and apply enough of my training to keep me satisfied on a technical level, yet the music also has enough emotional power for me to bury myself in."



parents aback a little when I started getting so into drums. They came from an era of that hardcore work ethic, and they didn't necessarily see music and drumming as the most responsible way to go through life. But they didn't really do anything to discourage me, either. They never had any disrespect for musicians, and they also paid my way through college.

MP: Despite your anti-work ethic, were you very disciplined in the way of practicing or in developing any particular aspects of your playing?

DC: Strangely enough, yes, I've always been disciplined about the drums. When I said music came easy to me, I meant that in terms of opportunities and about certain skills you need as a player. I've always been able to pick things up pretty quickly, but I still needed to practice—and still do—if I want to make anything sound natural and consistent.

I started taking lessons when I was about ten or eleven, just on the snare drum in school band, and then again after I got my first kit when I was thirteen. I was lucky to have some really good teachers who had open minds and were passionate about music without being strict disciplinarians about doing things in certain ways.

I spent years working on my rudiments and doing the drum corps thing. At some point, that got so weird and military-like that I just rejected it. But what drum corps can do for your chops is just amazing. I always appreciated guys like Billy Cobham and Buddy Rich so much because no matter how fast they played, you could always hear every note. That's the kind of articulation that rudiments and corps work can bring to your playing.

Then when I was in college I got a lot of classical training, just doing recitals and things like that for three and a half years. I could have earned a degree if I stuck it out a while longer, but I just wanted to play the drumset a little more, so I bailed on school when an opportunity came to go on the road with a band.

MP: It's funny you bring up Billy Cobham, because I can hear his influence so much in your playing, especially in the tom fills. Even in your busier fills, your strokes are very crisp and clear.

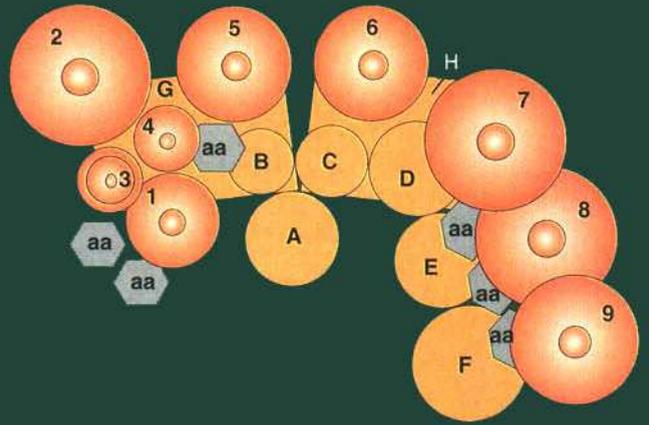
DC: The trick about that is making sure there's space between your notes. Even on the really fast tom fills or quads, I try to leave some air in there by being as precise as I can with the notes. And you know as a drummer when you're being tight with that or not.

When your playing is labored or lazy, like if you're cheating your strokes or you're dragging your doubles, you might get by in a show, but you can definitely hear it on tape. You can tell that by feel, also—how the sticks feel bouncing off the heads and how sharp you are with your control.

MP: You told me earlier that you were really into electronic drums at one point.

DC: Yeah, when I moved out here I was heavily into the electronic thing. The first few gigs I did here with a band were on

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Simmons drums and pads that I built from these cheap transducers and pieces of Plexiglas. It was real minimalist, but it was really cool. It was all sort of a product of the '80s, when the music scene was just so grim for me. All those rock bands did nothing for me, and I was always leaning toward the more techno stuff, anyway, so I got more into Yellow Magic Orchestra and Kraftwerk and other people who were using machines in all those creative ways.

I was playing an electronic kit with real cymbals, and we did the club thing for a while—Madame Wong's, the Troubadour. Then I got more into real drums, and I think that was just a matter of finally finding a quality set that sounded good. Before that, I guess I really didn't have that much respect for the sound of wood drums. I'd just never owned a killer kit before, and I liked what you could do with electronic kits. Learning how to record with acoustic drums was also part of my growth process.

But I really liked the creativity that came with electronic drums, and I was kind of sorry to see the whole machine thing get a



bad name in the '90s. It had everything to do with image and nothing to do with what electronics could or couldn't do in the music. But you could say that about the

music industry as a whole, I suppose.

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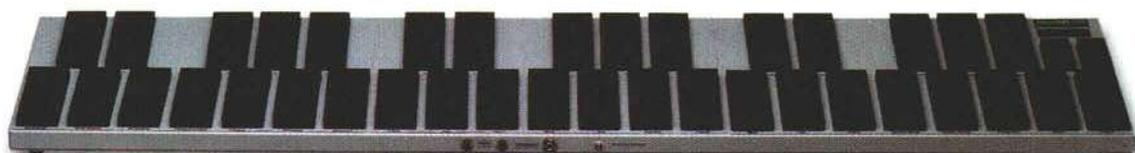


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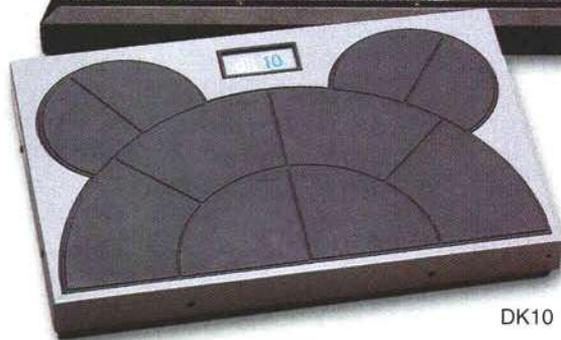
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MP: Something else you're known for is

your strong double bass playing. What got you into it?
DC: I've been playing double bass since I was a kid, but it had nothing to do with or any of those other guys in the glam bands. In fact, if anything, those guys turned me away from acoustic drums to begin with. I was really into the jazz and fusion thing,

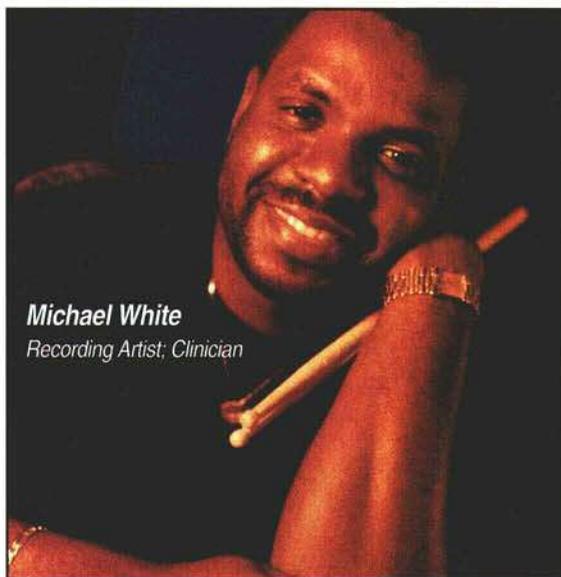
and I got into guys like Cobham and Louie Bellson, especially in high school. That's where my double bass influences came from.

I still love playing jazz when I get the chance, but I don't know if it's something I would like to do on a full-time basis. I really get into jazz when it's real electric, but I'm not of the age yet where jazz thoroughly satisfies me. I like to play things with a little more power to them—while I still have the strength to play it! One of the great things about Tool is that I feel like I can use a lot of my chops and apply enough of my training to keep me satisfied on a technical level, yet the music also has enough emotional power for me to bury myself in.

MP: I think your jazz influences come across most in your knack for pushing and pulling a song. Especially on the new record, it seems like you're feeding directly off a guitar riff or bass run at some points and directly off Maynard at others. And it doesn't sound random. It seems like you're very intentional about your parts.

DC: I think about those things a lot as we put the songs together, and I'll go back to the tapes to pick up nuances in a song and see if anything jumps out at me. But my parts shift a lot, all the way up to the time we put them on the record.

Sometimes I'll try to bring a foundation to what I feel is the pulse, or maybe I'll want to add some texture by playing off something that's more in the background. In fact, there are some parts, like the bridge



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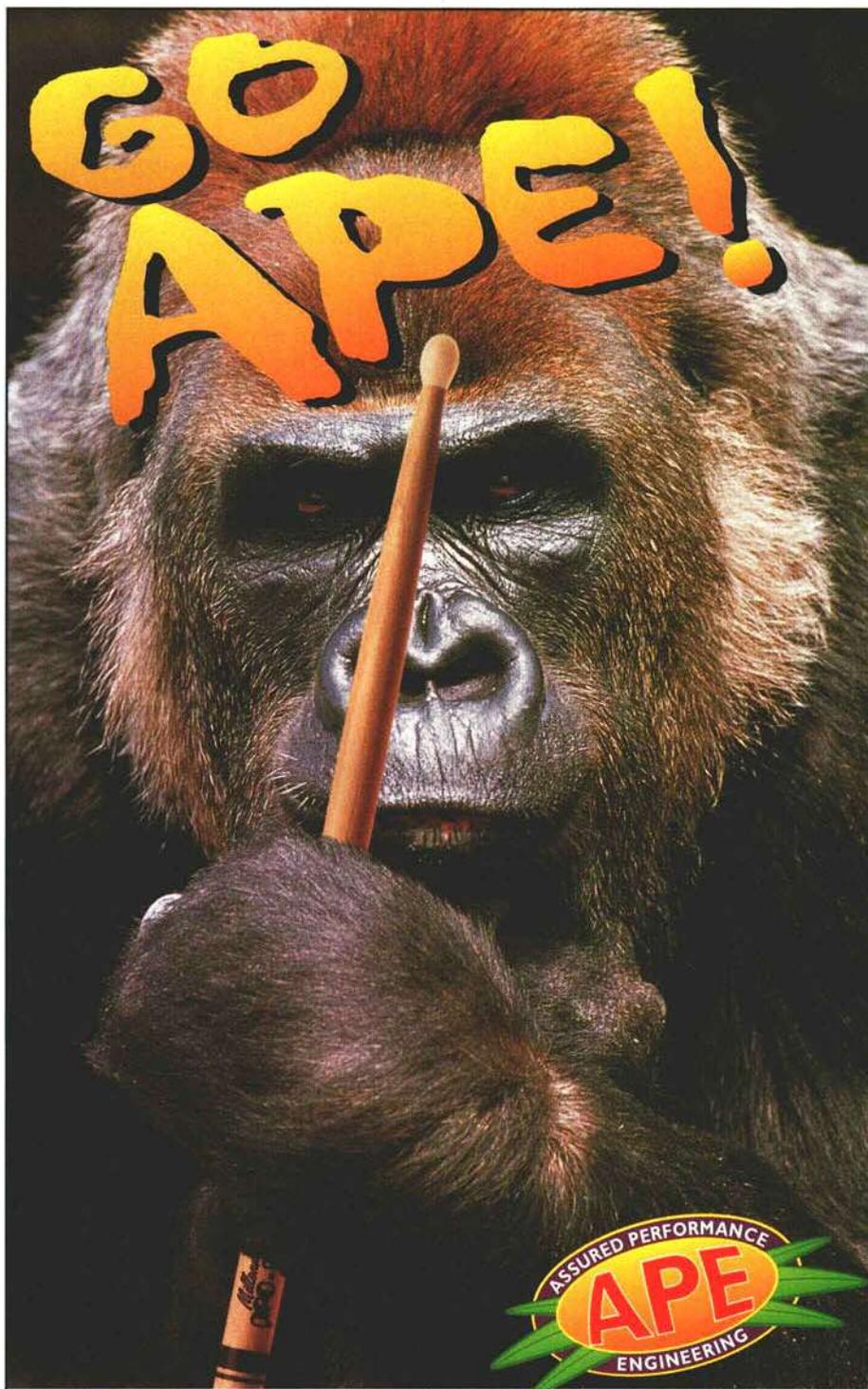


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of "Forty Six & 2," where I'm trying to give as much air as I can to the guitar and bass, which have this really neat, interacting thing going, and I'm just accenting the end of each bar. Then in "Pushit," there's this part near the end of the song that's almost like heavy swing. It starts with guitar, bass, and drums, and then the guitars cut out for a couple of bars and I just slam into it heavier and Maynard is singing on top of it. Then the guitars come back in and the whole thing just rocks.

One of the things I do a lot is listen to where the highs and lows are in the guitar parts, where the riffs or phrases rise and fall, and I'll shape my parts around that. I might keep the ride pattern constant and move my kick and snare hits around to connect with those highs and lows. It can make for a lot bigger, meatier impact.

MP: Some of the songs and segments on *Ænima* seem to stem directly from a given drum part.

DC: Yeah, there are certainly parts of songs that came from something I started up. There's this extended triplet pattern in '*Ænima*' that grew out of a pattern where I'm riding with my right hand, playing two kick drums, and using my left hand to accent on the toms. In that case, the bass and guitar are strictly enhancing what I'm doing. There were a couple of things on *Undertow* that were constructed the same way.

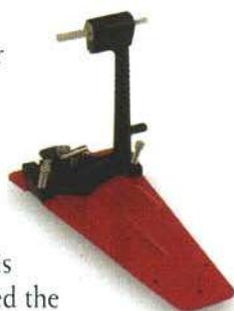
But that's how this band works. Maynard will sometimes come into practice with a little melody or phrase in his head, and we'll just start jamming to that. Adam [Jones, guitar] is good for coming up with riffs that will just mushroom into entire songs during a jam. I've done the same thing with my drum beats sometimes, and it just snowballs from there.

It's real organic and it all pretty much happens right here, just from going nuts in this room. There are very few parts, if any, that are written outside rehearsal. We were never good at writing on the road, which is one of the main reasons it took us so long to come out with this record. We tried, but it was strange and very difficult to come up with a comfortable environment to create in. There are always people around and it's very distracting.

MP: More so than on *Undertow*, the songs on *Ænima* seem to shift a lot in mood, tempo, time signature.... Do you compose

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all these parts intentionally as part of the same song, or do you come up with them at different times and piece them together later on?

DC: It's kind of a combination of both. Take a song like "Eulogy," which has this passage near the end where I'm riding 16ths on the hi-hat and opening it every third stroke, sort of a polyrhythm over what I'm doing with the kick and snare. That's something I might have woodshedded without any idea of putting it into a song. Sometimes I'll have an idea for a strange pattern and try to flesh it out on my own, almost like an exercise.

I can't tell you why I chose that particular pattern to go into "Eulogy"—it probably just came out while we were jamming—but it seemed to create a neat transition at that point in the song. The triplet pattern in "*Friend*" is another part that came out of something I'd developed on my own. And it's that sort of woodshedding that really pays off when you're writing songs, because it gives you some tools to draw from. But most of this record didn't come from anything labored or practiced. It was more just a matter of finding a good groove and having everyone fall into that.

Something I did on this record that I'd never really done before was incorporate electronics into the general beat. On "Third Eye" I had some loops I'd created on my Simmons sampler, and I synced them up with the drum machine and played along with them. I just got into the Simmons thing at the end of doing *Undertow*, and I used them on "Disgustipated," but I've been getting a lot more into the electronics again since then. It's not so much for loops, but just to have access to samples and more sounds.

MP: How did getting a new bass player affect you and your approach to rhythm for this album?

DC: We were about four songs into the writing when Paul [D'Amour] left. He'd had a shift in his musical taste away from the heavy, powerful riffs, and he wanted to do something more experimental. He's a guitarist at heart, anyway, and he's doing more of that in his new band.

Justin Chancellor, our new bass player, is more of a low-end player, where Paul almost played bass like a guitar, which is what helped give us such an interesting

sound; he had that high-end cut. Justin goes more for a low-end punch, which has us sounding kind of fatter on this record. Justin wrote most of the riffs on "Forty Six & 2," which is a really cool song.

It's a little strange for me because Justin feels time a little differently than Paul does. I don't know if that's because Justin's from England or what, but we're still trying to find each other and find common ground when it comes to locking in. By the time this article comes out, things will be a lot different. But at this point, we haven't played together all that much. We wrote these songs, but we've only played four shows together. I guess we have yet to take the true test of locking in.

MP: One of the more interesting things you said about *Undertow* was that you actually tuned your drums to match particular pitches coming from the guitars. Did you do the same thing for *Enima*?

DC: Somewhat. The whole thing behind that is about making things more powerful. It's not that you can really hear the difference if you don't tune to specific pitches, but when you do, it makes the drums sound bigger and fuller. With some kits, I think it would be impossible to do that, and you'd drive yourself crazy trying to make your drums match the tones of the guitars. I mean, it's hard enough just keeping drums in tune. But most of our songs are in D, and I've been lucky enough to have drums that tune easily to the triads in the key of D.

My set was kind of a hodgepodge for this record. The kick drums were actually old Sonor *Phonic Pluses*, 18x24s. I just got a Sonor *Designer Series* kit that I used on some of the record, and I took more time in picking and choosing which drums to use for particular songs. That kind of slows things down a bit, because every time you change drums, you have to move mic's, and it just takes away from the creative harmony. But I was lucky enough to have a great tech working with me, and it went pretty smoothly.

MP: When you're laying down your drum tracks, are you fairly loose and easygoing about the whole thing, or do you focus and concentrate really intently, psyching yourself up?

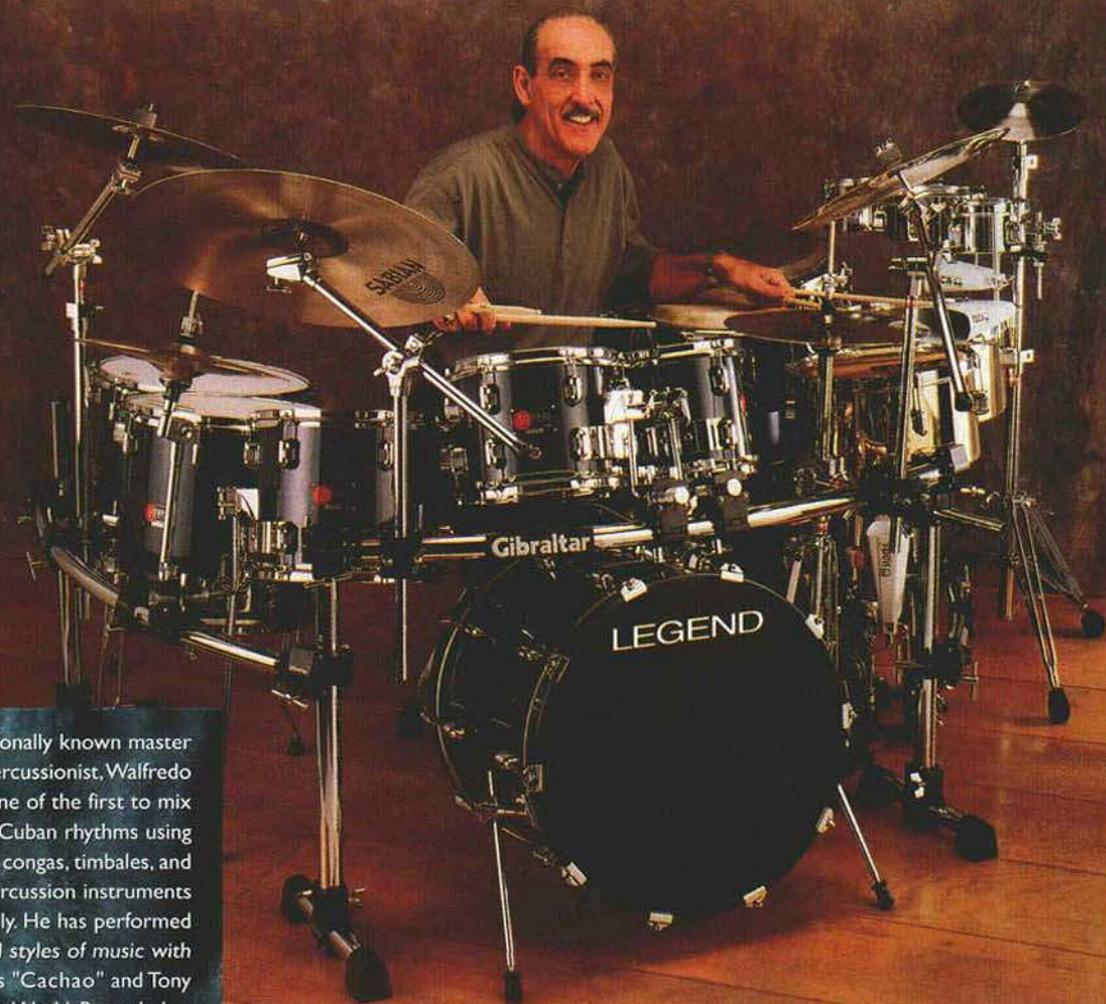
DC: It's not like a psyching-up thing, it's more of a meditation, where I try to remove myself from the room and bring things in that will help bring out as much



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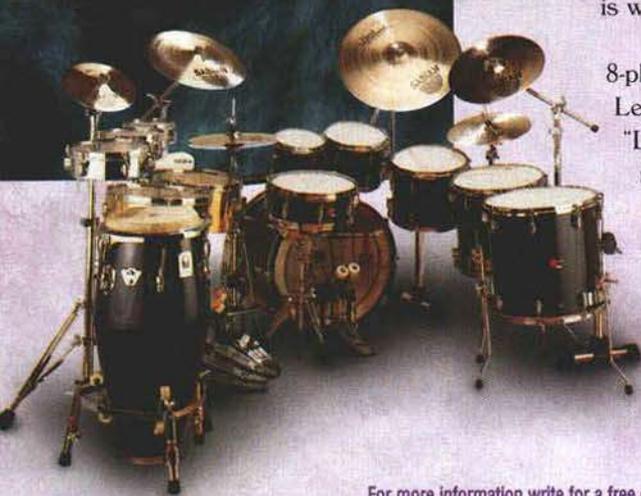


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of my subconscious as possible. That's why we brought in the huge, old Enochian magic board that sits behind my kit, just so we could try to set up the proper mental and spiritual environment to record and create in. So the music ends up being just a postcard, a picture of what happened in that room on that day.

It's not that I need things like that to play music. But we'll do whatever we believe we need to do to put ourselves in the proper frame of mind, whether it's objects or fragrances to strike our subconscious, high-tech computer art—whatever. It's not a crutch; it's a choice.

It only took me four or five days to put down all my drum tracks this time, which was a lot quicker than we expected. And it wouldn't have even taken that long except that I hit pretty hard and I like using thin heads in the studio, so we were changing heads between every two or three takes—and always between songs—and it's just another chore you have to go through. But to get the live, bright sound I like, that's just something I have to do.

MP: I imagine you cut your tracks first, so I'm wondering whether you had any pref-

erence about the order of songs for recording.

DC: Yeah, and it all had to do with stamina. We'd rehearsed a lot in the process of writing over the past few months, but it wasn't like touring, so my chops weren't all that strong. But you have to rise to that level when you're tracking because that's when the drums should sound the best. I've always been of the belief that you have to hit a drum hard to make it sound good, especially in louder sections. That sets the whole shell into vibration instead of just the head, and the sound is just so much more complete and satisfying. But when you hit hard and play the kind of music we do, it can really wear you out, especially when you're not in touring shape, and you can hear the difference between the first take and the third take.

So what I did was get my feet wet with some of the easier songs before going into the songs I knew would be more involved and demanding and take more time to get right. But a lot of it depended on the mood of the day, too, and all of that played a role in what ended up on the record. Like I said, I don't etch my parts in stone, and if you

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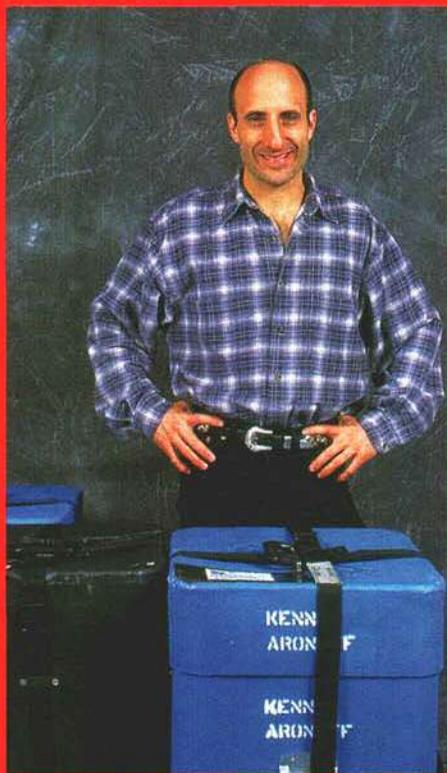


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were to go back to the raw tape to hear the takes of a song like "Forty Six & 2," you could tell there's a lot of spontaneous energy there.

MP: How do you think you've changed or grown as a drummer since cutting *Undertow*?

DC: Some of the changes happened when I got hooked up with Blair Blake, who's another really good drum tech who also happens to be a strong mathematician. He helped me set up my kit in different ways and make it more harmonic, not only with

my physical proportions, but in a mathematical sense as far as setting up my stands in the right ratio of the "golden section" [a geometric equation].

When you sit behind a kit, there are optimum points of drum, cymbal, and stand placement depending on your physical proportions, and it even has to do with a spiritual plane. I'm 6' 5", and people who sit behind my drums always say they can't play them, probably because of how high the drums are. But I think I sit pretty low compared to most people, and Blair helped

me set up the kit not just for my height, but also to take advantage of my energy.

My toms are set up in a harmonic fashion, to where all my energy flows uninterrupted. There's a symmetry to the way my toms are set up, and it's significant that I have five toms, a number that represents masculinity. Then I've got six six-sided drums [Simmons pads], which represents the female side. It just has to do with balance.

I've studied some ancient geometry, and I feel this doesn't make as big a difference musically as it does for me personally. But that's why I try to bring a lot of these ideas into my natural environment, with all the geometric shapes and paintings on the walls and ceiling. It's all about setting my drums up so that I don't get in the way of the music, so I'm just a *channel* for the music.

MP: Tell me about the psychological side of this band. Adam's into scientology, and just by looking around your place, I know you're personally intrigued with magic and certain dark elements. I was just wondering how those influences affect your music.

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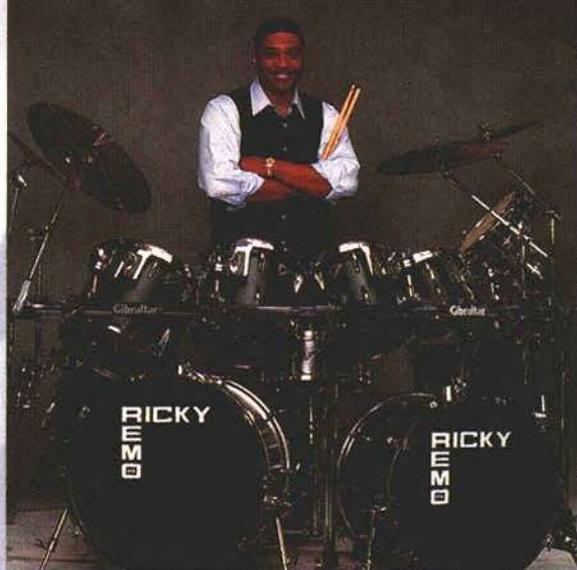
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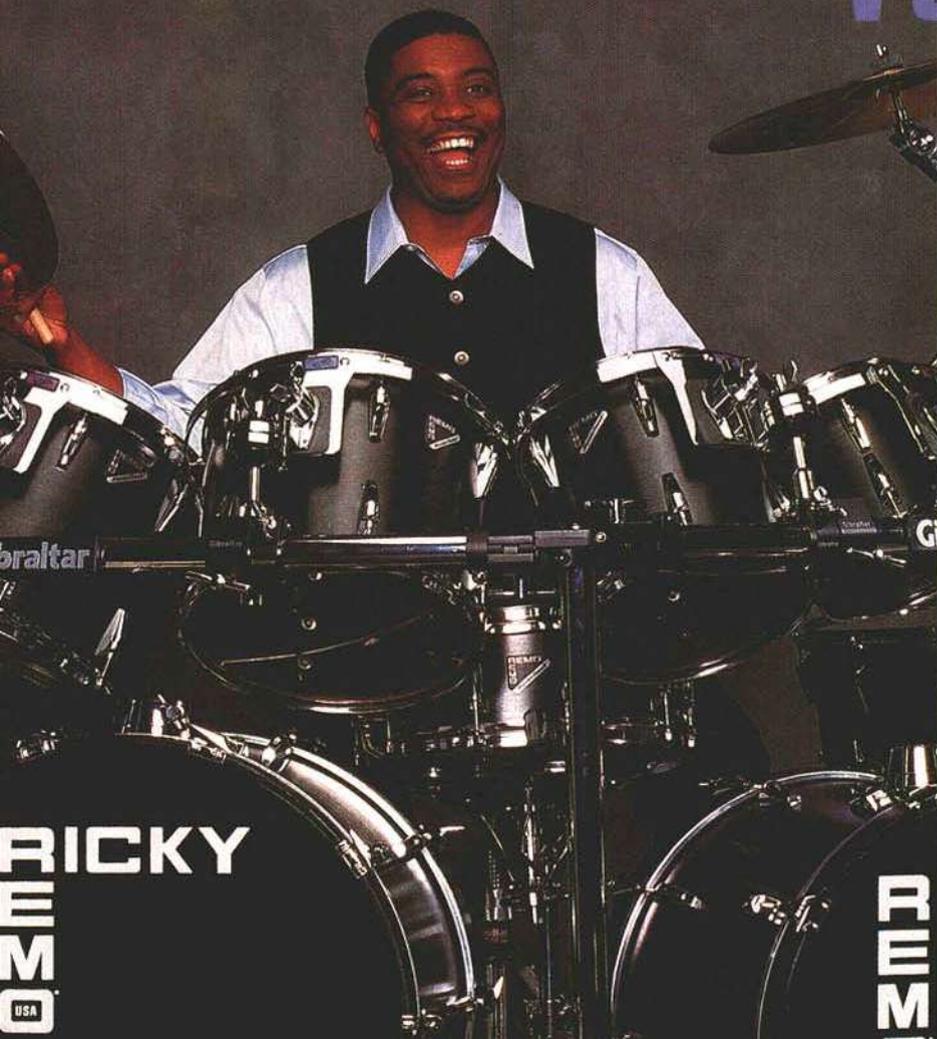
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DC: There's definitely an intensity and power there that has a lot more to do with a mood or scene we're trying to create than just with being sonically heavy. I think we like to dig into people's minds a little more, strike a nerve and make people think. There are bands that are maybe louder and faster and play in a deeper register than we do, but to me, that's almost more comical and stupid than it is heavy. We're just lucky enough that we're four people with similar visions and goals as far as the music is concerned.

MP: Do you see yourself branching into other projects or groups in addition to what you have going with Tool?

DC: I'm actually working on a side project called ZAUM, which deals more in an electronic medium. It's electronic as far as the instruments and the sounds being pumped to the speakers, but it has more of a human interface controlling it all. The term "ZAUM" comes from a group of artists from the early nineteenth century who felt that by doing their art, they were going to spark evolution. And along with

that, new emotions would be created, and ZAUM was going to be their transcendental language of the future.

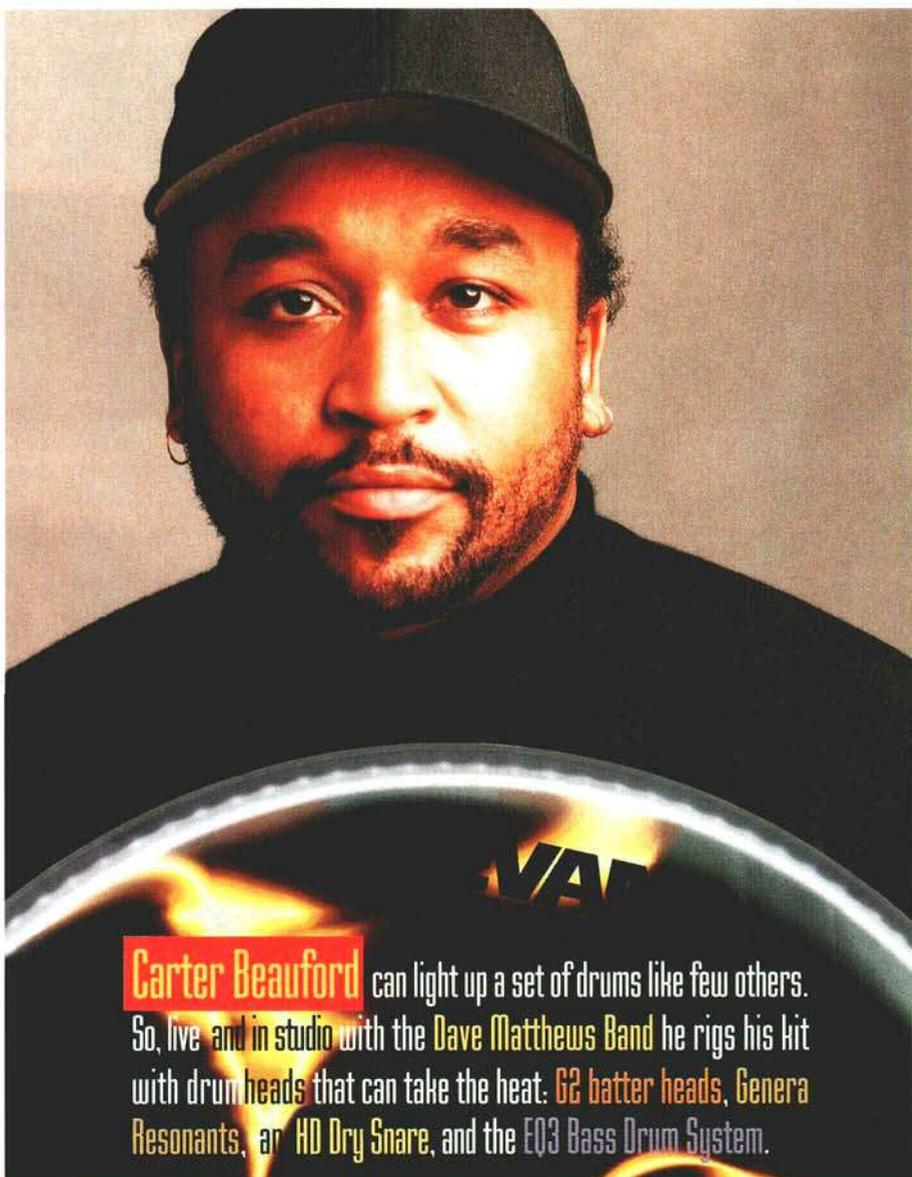
We've done a little recording and played a couple of shows, but it's still in its infancy. We're very improv-based, and it's all about textures and spaces and aural planes. We have tapes and loops running, and we're playing on top of them. Tool is kind of getting more into the electronic thing, too, and you can hear it on the new record. But ZAUM is that way to the extreme, and it really satisfies my need to explore this area of music more.

So much of the electronic music I hear is computer-controlled, and that can be a beautiful thing, too. I've always been a huge fan of Kraftwerk and Skinny Puppy. Some of those programmers are just geniuses. But I like to hear more of a human element triggering the samples and beats, pushing and pulling the tempos a bit.

I'm pretty excited about what we've started with ZAUM, but with the Tool tour coming up, I'm not going to be able to dedicate any time to it for a while. But Tool is a really special thing that's hard to describe. I think we gravitated toward each other because we think a lot alike as far as art and life go. When we first found each other, it was all about personal artistic desire, not about being a certain kind of band, and I think that has a lot to do with our success.

We didn't have any ideals about "making it" or jumping on some sort of fashion game. It's a matter of making art first, and that's never changed. We just make music for ourselves, and I think because of how genuine we are with that, people are able to get more out of it. I think we've grown a lot artistically, in terms of being able to express ourselves, and that's why I'm so proud of the new record.

We're not the kind of band that thinks too far ahead about how many more records we'll make together or things like that, but we think similarly, and we're all in such a zone right now that as long as we just keep growing and developing and inspiring ourselves, we'll continue this beautiful thing we have and see how it evolves.

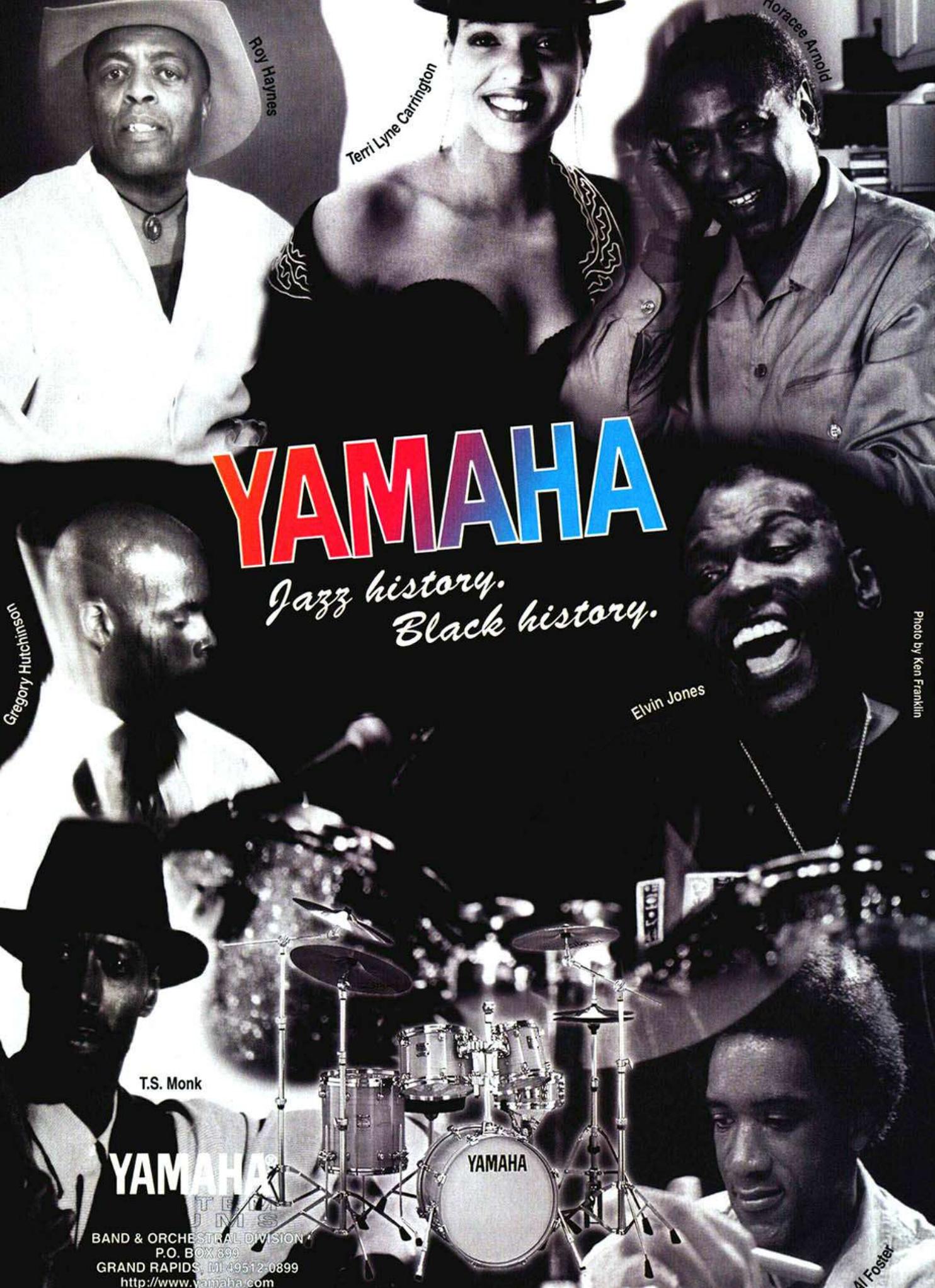


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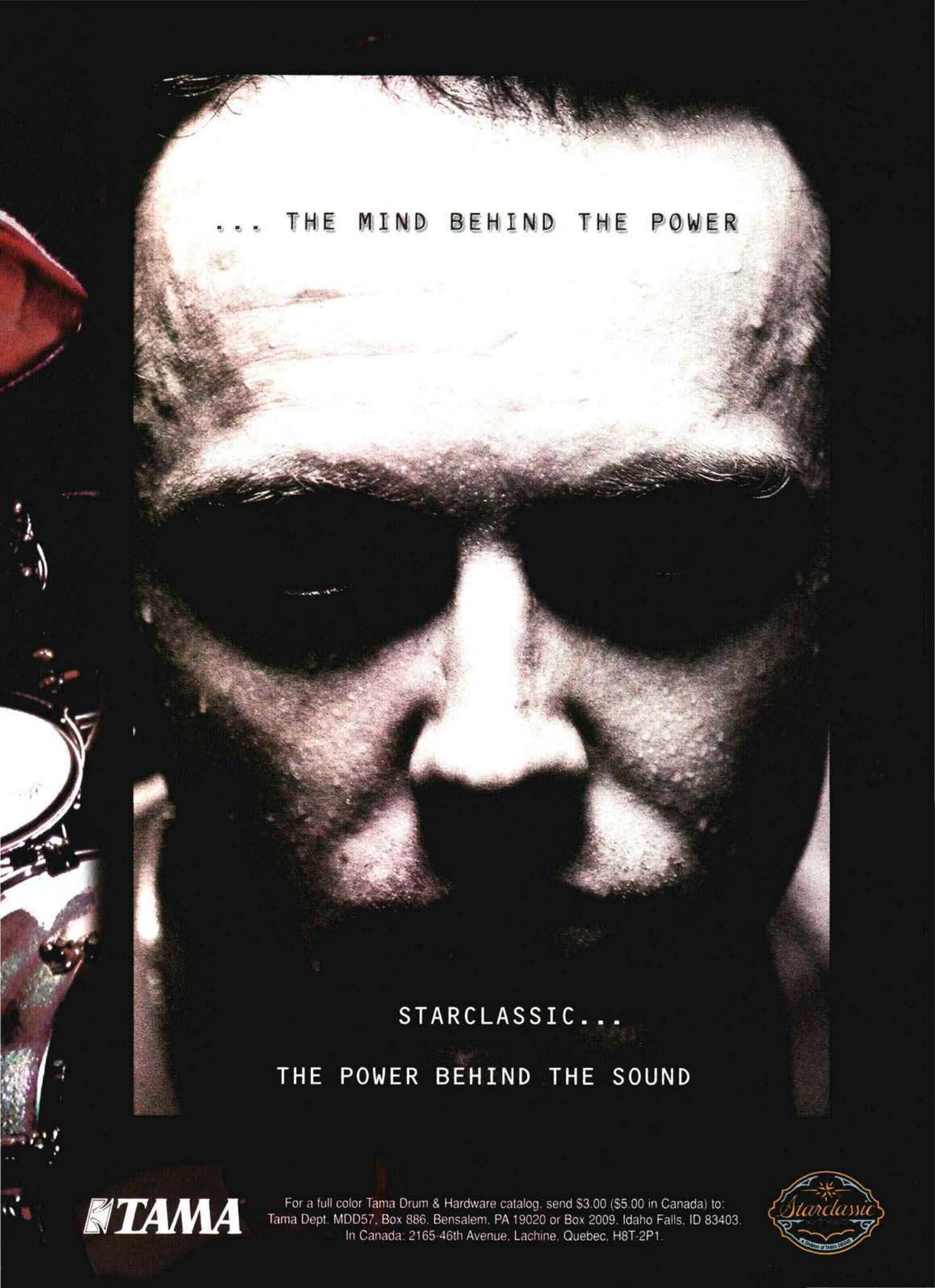
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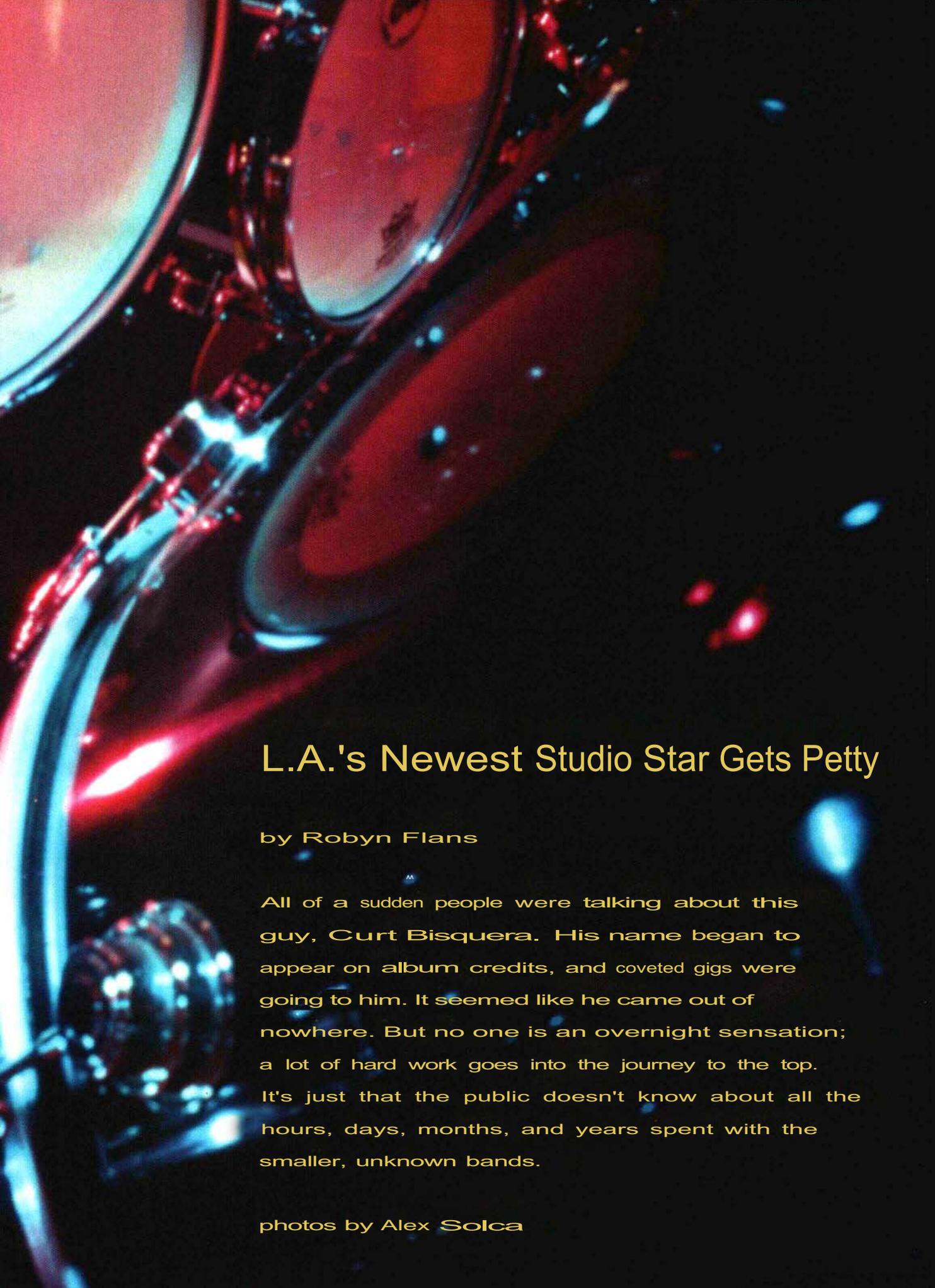
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Curt Bisquerra





L.A.'s Newest Studio Star Gets Petty

by Robyn Flans

All of a sudden people were talking about this guy, Curt Bisquera. His name began to appear on album credits, and coveted gigs were going to him. It seemed like he came out of nowhere. But no one is an overnight sensation; a lot of hard work goes into the journey to the top. It's just that the public doesn't know about all the hours, days, months, and years spent with the smaller, unknown bands.

photos by Alex Solca

Q&A

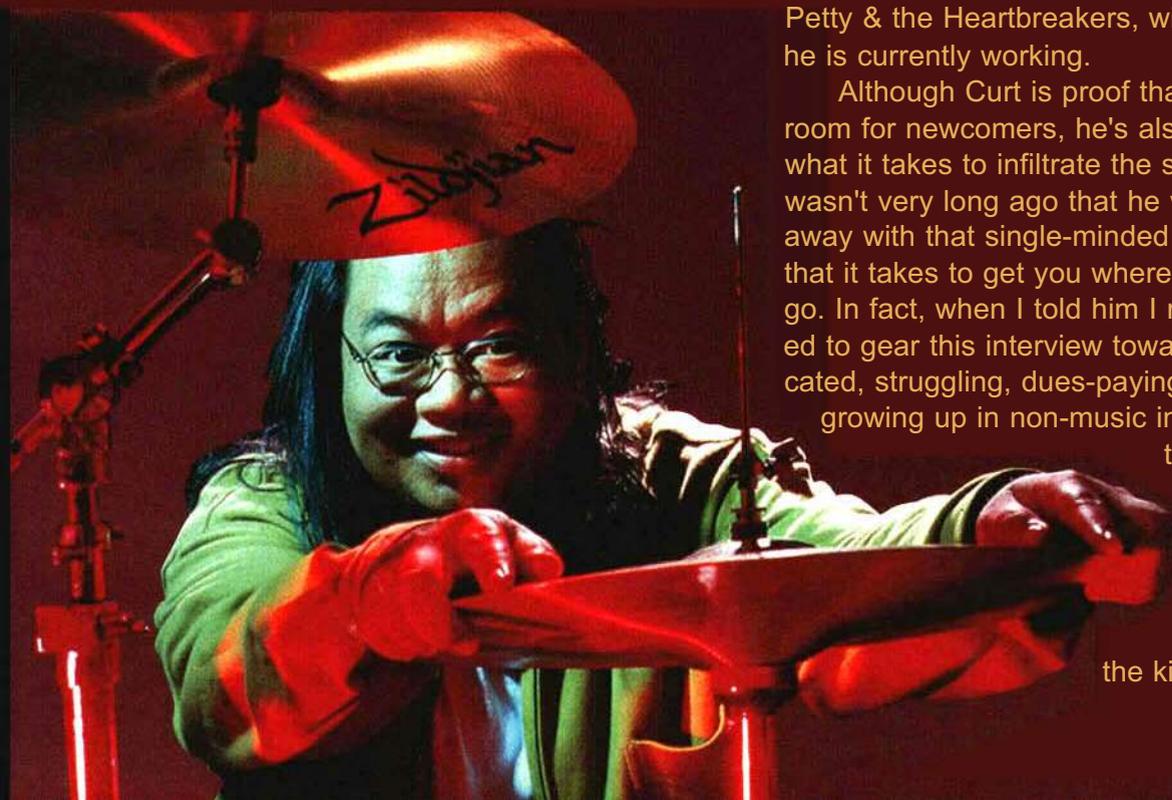
Curt Bisquera was born and raised in Santa Maria, California - hardly a music mecca—and according to him, he was attracted to drums when his mother eight and a half months pregnant, played B3 organ in jazz trio. ("That's why I love low end and why I'm a doset bass player", he quips.) At three, Curt began singing and banging out Petula Clark's "Downtown" on some pots and pans. Finally he got a real drumkit, on which he'd practice to the records his mom and aunts would bring him from the

Columbia Records pressing plant, where they all worked. But while Hendrix, Led Zeppelin, and most of all James Brown were turning him on, his mother forbade him to go into music as a career. They fought tooth and nail.

Needless to say, Curt didn't give up the fight, and has gone on to become quite a success, working live with such artists as Morris Day, Shalamar, Mick Jagger, and Belinda Carlisle. More recently, he's become one of the first-call studio players, having recorded with Jagger, Seal, Bonnie Raitt, Jeff Lorber, Paula Abdul, Terence Trent D'Arby, Johnny Cash, and Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, with whom he is currently working.

Although Curt is proof that there is room for newcomers, he's also an example of what it takes to infiltrate the scene. It wasn't very long ago that he was plugging away with that single-minded dedication that it takes to get you where you want to go. In fact, when I told him I really wanted to gear this interview toward those dedicated, struggling, dues-paying drummers growing up in non-music industry loca-

tions—the kid in Iowa, if you will—Curt looked at me and very seriously said, "I am the kid from Iowa."





RF: You've said that your mother wasn't thrilled with your getting into music. How do you cope with parents who aren't supportive? What do you do and how do you keep harmony in the house and a good feeling between yourself and your parents when you're not supposed to do what it is that you love to do?

CB: Parents need to understand that their children are an extension of themselves. But parents have to allow their children to go through it completely, to the end, whether it's a success or a failure. That way a child can find out for himself if it's the path he needs to follow. Unfortunately, the lifestyle of the musician has always been looked at as a negative thing.

RF: Aren't the odds against you?

CB: I think that's a relative thing. I think if I were to pursue being the best stucco guy in the world, who could stucco all the best buildings and malls in the world, then there would be a price to pay for that, too. You'd still have to hone what you do and put a lot of time into what you really, really want to do. And most likely, if you spend a lot of time doing something and you get really good at it, you'll become a success at it. I know artists who are living out of their cars, but they're successful at what they do because they are expressing themselves—although I don't believe you have to be starving to be an artist.

RF: What would you say to the kids who are going through the daily fights with their parents?

CB: I would say, let your parents into your world; let them check out exactly what you do. Share with them what you feel inside. I feel if we share our feelings and communicate more with honesty, we can get a clearer picture of what it is we're really talking about and need-

ing to express.

RF: What would you say to the parents?

CB: Support. You don't have to agree with it, but if it's a path, your child needs to follow, let them follow it and let them know you're standing beside them, watching, even, though you may not agree. Just let them know you're standing there with a little bit of support and strength, just in case they fall. Still, when I don't work for a few months, my mom is going, "Why aren't you working? I told you you should have gotten a computer job."

RF: You made the statement that you can either be a starving artist or a successful, artist—so how did you make the transition from starving to being successful?

CB: I followed my heart and was honest with myself and the people I was involved with.

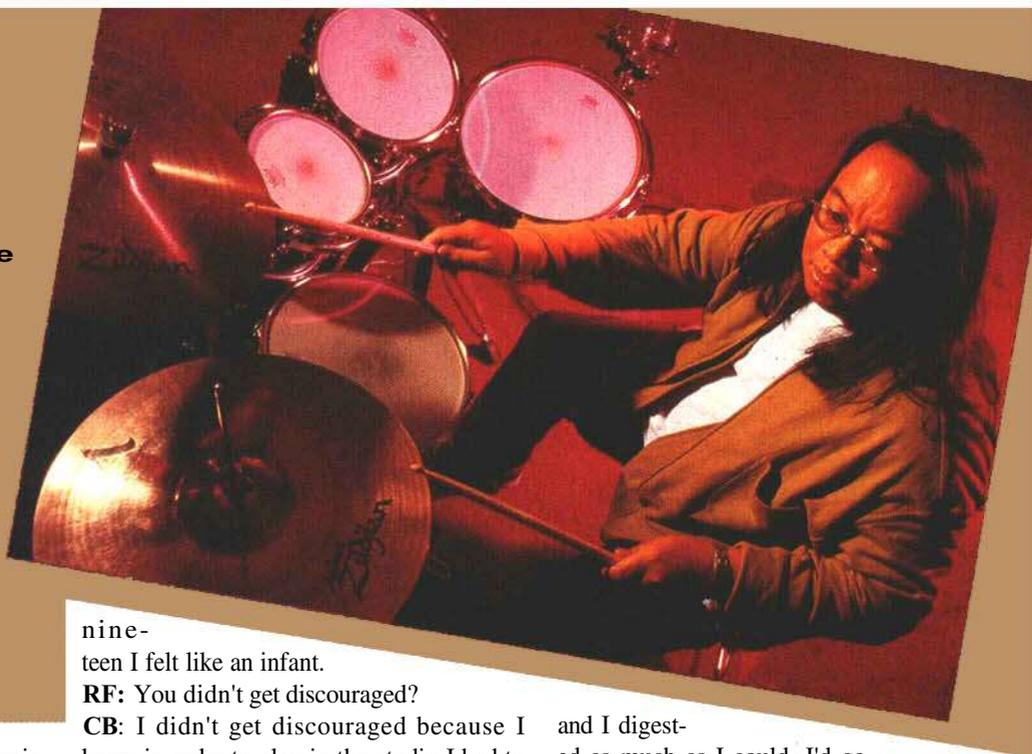
RF: What do you mean by honest?

CB: Being in tune and being there 100%, not just doing something because so-and-so was doing it, or doing something because it would get me somewhere else.

RF: What steps did you actually take from Santa Maria, California, to playing on records?

CB: I was working full-time for Lucky Supermarkets as a bag boy, and then I got promoted, to a stock clerk in produce. I'd do that during the day and at night I'd play Top-40 gigs. I was working around She clock since it was my senior year in high school, too. I hit the peak of the level of music you can pursue in a place like Santa Maria pretty fast; it's a small town, I knew the next step was moving down to LA, I kept seeing this advertisement for PIT with a picture of Joe Porcaro and Ralph Humphrey. PIT is what led me to Los Angeles in '84.

"It's funny: Now that I'm doing this for a living. I'm hired to play like I played when was in sixth grade. I've spent all these years honing my craft and learning how to be this 'professional drummer,' and now it's 'Okay, play like you're in a garage band.'"



RF: And this was your first formal training?

CB: Yes. It was a whole new ball game. Here I was, playing in a Top-40 band, singing at the same time, learning all these songs lick-for-lick, note-for-note, but having to apply that in a whole new concept where it was actually written on paper. At

nine-teen I felt like an infant.

RF: You didn't get discouraged?

CB: I didn't get discouraged because I knew in order to play in the studio I had to read all kinds of music. I only had a year to do it because the courses were only a year long at the time. Lo and behold, I learned to read.

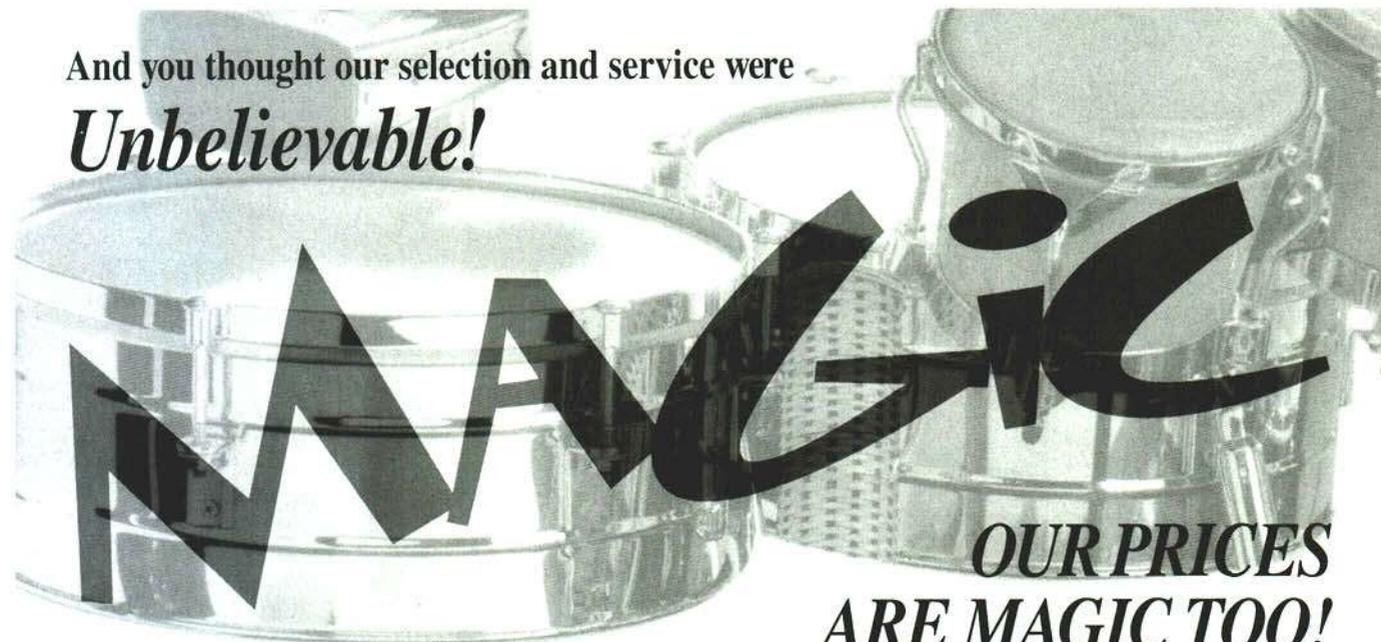
RF: Were you playing at night, making contacts?

CB: I was just crammed full of info at PIT,

and I digested as much as I could. I'd go see bands and see my favorite drummers play in clubs. I was a wrung-out sponge that whole first year down here. I soaked up anything and everything, from street musicians to guys in the studio to guys in concerts—absorbing every aspect there is to drumming.

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RF: What was the break?

CB: The last quarter of school before graduation, I found out through the grapevine that Morris Day was auditioning drummers. He was the lead singer for the group called the Time, which Prince had produced, and at that time the Minneapolis music scene was booming with "Purple Rain" and all that. I was a huge fan of that stuff because it's so funky—I just love funk music. I knew all the tunes that were coming out of Minneapolis. So I went down to SIR for the audition, and I saw a line of drummers. I was so green, I had no idea how to approach it, but I just asked the person in charge if I could audition. And he said, "Sure, what's your name?"

I was the last guy to audition. I borrowed a pair of thrashed sticks from another drummer and I went in there,

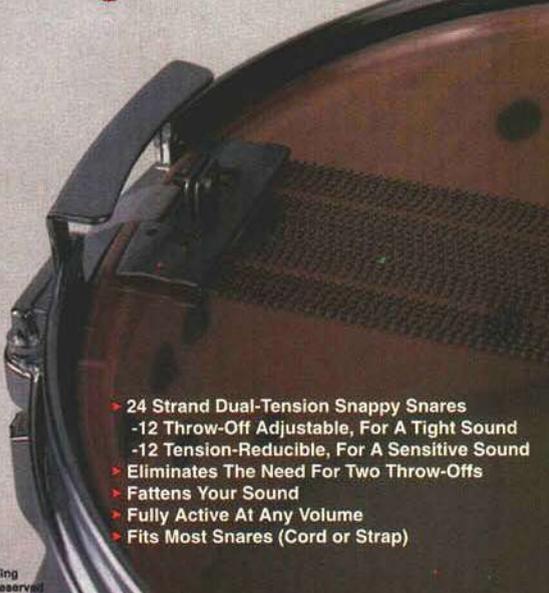
where Morris was sitting with his shades on. He said, "Do you know the song "The Bird"?" I played that to a tee because that's all I'd listened to, and he said, "Oh, cool. Know any other songs?" I said, "Do you do '777-9311'?" He said, "Sure, I wrote that song." That song has a weird, funky drum beat; I think it was one of the original demo beats from the LMI Linn drum machine that David Garibaldi programmed. I guess Prince and Morris used that beat to create the song. We played that song in my Top-40 band in Santa Maria. It's a hard drum beat to play since it's really syncopated, but I played it down for him and he jumped up and started dancing. When the music stopped, he put his sunglasses down and said, "You wanna job?" And that was the beginning of my career—at nineteen—thanks to Morris. And he's a ridiculous drummer himself.

So I ended up graduating PIT a little early because his tour was leaving the month before. All my teachers were saying, "Go for it, this is what it's about." I was so encouraged by all the teachers there. So I played with Morris from '85 all the way up to '89, and in between, when I

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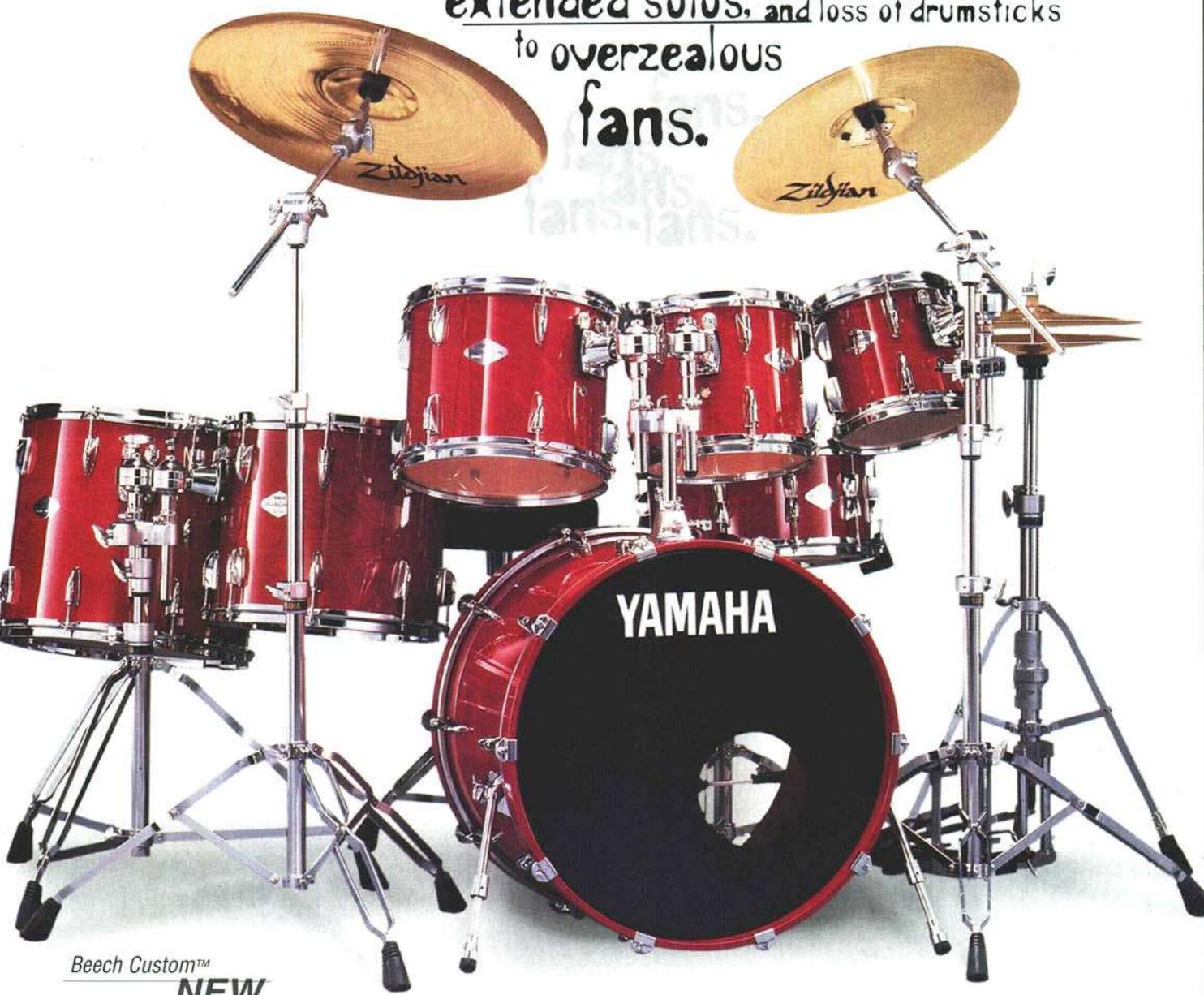


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wasn't touring with Morris, I was working with other R&B groups like Shalamar and Pebbles—all just from my having worked with Morris. That whole Minneapolis explosion was really big at the time, and I was part of that explosion.

Around '89 and '90, my career started shifting over to the studio. One of my first

sessions was with a good friend of mine, Greg Penny. He was producing Marc Anthony Thompson, and Marc Anthony brought me in to play some drums on a couple of songs. Simultaneously, I was introduced to Don Was through my friend Jamie Muhoberac, a keyboard player who is now with Seal. I think Greg and Don

were responsible for spreading my name around town.

RF: The studio is different from the live thing. What do you think prepared you for the studio?

CB: I think all of that live playing and touring really prepared me. The studio is the same type of intensity, but it's in one room, in a controlled environment. The touring, of course, gave me the confidence to play, but there's a whole other type of concentration. When you're on the road, doing a concert, you have to concentrate on the set list, the tempos, all that stuff. In the studio, there's so much to concentrate on—the conductor, the chart, the way the producer wants you to play, the style, authenticity. It's very important for a drummer to play for the artist.

That's what I love about the studio—walking into a new situation every day; it's always fresh. Even if I'm recording with the same artist for a week or two, it's a different song, it's a different thing. When you're on the road, it's generally the same set list.

RF: How is playing live different from playing in the studio? How does your approach alter?

CB: I think that more than anything else, the thing to concentrate on in the studio is the consistency. Live, you can kinda flail because that's part of it. In the studio, there has to be a consistent level throughout. I remember going to the Baked Potato and watching Jeff Porcaro. I looked at his heads where he had hit the drum, and the

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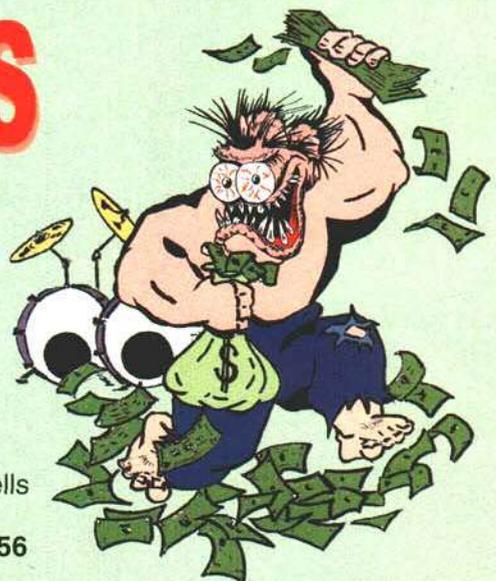
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area was no bigger than a silver dollar—he was so precise. Then I'd go into the studio and watch Keltner, and it's precision, but it's a whole different thing, a fluid thing. You look at his heads and there are marks all over the place, but he yields the same thing. So that was another thing I had to think about—that there were all these different types of drummers and ways to play, but the bottom line is about consistency.

RF: Jeff was important to you.

CB: It seems that from the time I attended PIT to his passing, Jeff always had his eye on me. When he was producing Boz Scaggs and called me to play on the record, he told me that. Now, looking at it, maybe I was one of the many drummers that was able to carry on what he was about. He's my idol. At that point, he took me under his wing and not only shared the drumming with me, but his persona as well. It's a dream come true for a kid to have his idol dig what he does. I was on top of the world the day I played in the studio while he looked on, pointing and laughing that laugh of his. I could have quit drumming there and then and been completely content with what I'd done. But now I'm just one of

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One of Curt's specialties is his ability to fit into any musical situation. Here's a sampling of his resume which gives a pretty good indication of his flexibility,

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Mick Jagger	Wandering Spirit	Rick Rubin
Don Was	Orchestra Was	Don Was
Seal	Seal	Trevor Horn
Elton John	Duets	Greg Penny
Little Richard & Tanya Tucker	Country & Rhythm & Blues	Don Was
Clint Black & the Pointer Sisters	Country & Rhythm & Blues	Don Was
Bonnie Raitt	Luck Of The Draw	Don Was
Aaron Hall	The Truth	Various Producers
Jeff Lorber	Worth Waiting For	Jeff Lorber
Public Image Ltd,	That What Is Not	Dave Jerden
The Indians	The Indians	Dave Jerden
Paula Abdul	Spellbound	Don Was
Terence Trent D'Arby	Symphony Or Damn	Terence Trent D'Arby
Chynna Phillips	Naked And Sacred	Desmond Child
Bélinda Carlisle	X-Mas '95 release	Tina Clark
Billy Joe Walker Jr.	Life Is Good	Billy Joe Walker Jr.
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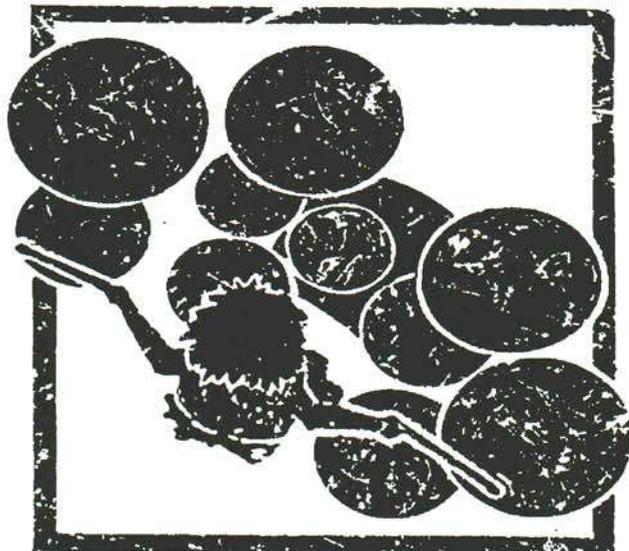
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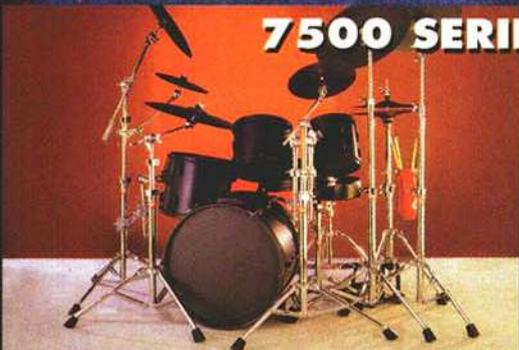
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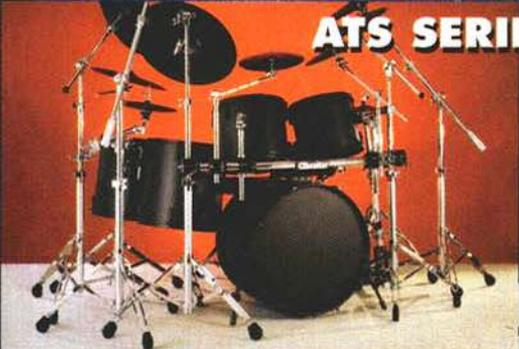
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many drummers carrying the torch for Jeff. **RF:** You just mentioned that there are drummers who play quite differently and are successful in the studio, and yet they have their own sound. How does one develop his own approach, style, and sound?

CB: I think cultivating your own style means absorbing anything and everything that has to do with drumming. It also means cultivating stuff in your life *outside* of drumming, and allowing your attitudes and emotions to come into play.

I remember when Jeff called me to do Boz's record. He said, "We're going to finish early because I have some gardening to do." That's where I think drummers define their style: We're all different people inside. Whether anyone realizes it or not, drumming is the most emotional instrument. It takes so much emotion to pick up a stick and hit these damn things. It's aggression, it's subtlety; it has to be emoted in order to make them sound the way they sound.

As all the producers say, the end result is the sound that comes out of that little speaker of the radio in the car when you're

driving down the road—and the song makes you feel something. There are punk rock songs that will make me cry, or speed metal songs that will make me cry because of the attitude of the music and the feeling from the drums. That is one of the things I admire about drummers who are able to play ballads. It's hard to play so slow and eloquently with all that emotion.

RF: What do engineers want from drummers these days?

CB: Right now the trend is toward great-sounding drums right off the bat. Drums have to come out of the box sounding great, and engineers expect the drummer to know their instrument inside and out. They have to know how to tune the drums and set them up right, so when they're miking the drums, a cymbal or tom-tom isn't in the way—just making it an easy job.

Since I'm doing more and more sessions, I'm finding that I have to build that rapport with the engineer so it's a non-stress situation, so he's able to do his job at his optimum and I'm able to do mine. There are some engineers who are insistent on putting a snare mic' right in the spot where I hit the drum. I'll work with that;

I'll do it, but it's not who I am. It's not how I play. That would be like my going up to the engineer and saying, "Use this mic' even though I know you don't use it." There has to be mutual respect.

That's another thing about being in the studio—you're with different musicians all the time, and you have to be able to get along with all of them. But it's a great way to get a chance to hang out with other players and learn where a violin player's head is at or a saxophone player's head is at. It's a good melting pot of so many things, not just music—and that's what makes the music. The ultimate outcome of all those emotions and attitudes and chemistry is the music.

RF: I assume you change your drum setup quite a bit.

CB: I basically use two different setups. They're DW drums with 10" and 12" rack toms and 14" and 16" floor toms, like Gadd or Vinnie—the typical six-piece setup. Or it's a Ringo Starr four-piece, which I use for the hard rock 'n' roll dates. I do all the rest of the music on the six-piece set.

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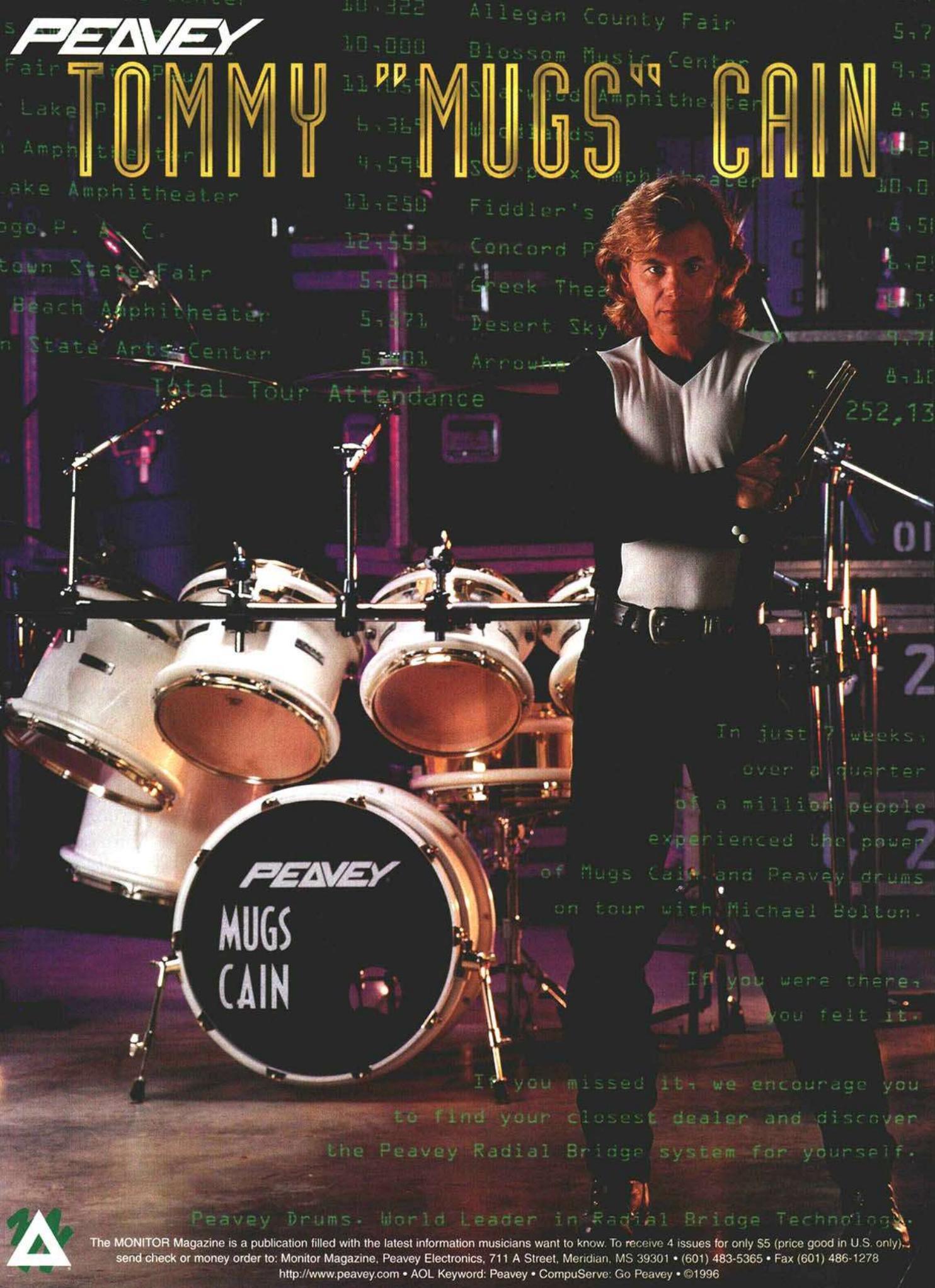
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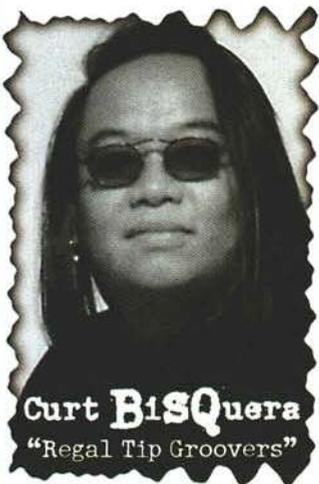
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an 18" crash on the left, a 17" crash on the right, and 15" or even 18" hi-hats. If called for, I might put a China cymbal up, but that's the basic setup.

RF: You said the engineer expects you to know studio tuning. What is the current tuning trend?

CB: They like the drums tuned wide open and ringy, due to the grungy alternative scene. It's a simpler miking technique on their end. They're not using so many mic's. They're going for a less than slick sound, more raw, which I like because then you're getting the true sound of the drums.

RF: How do you achieve that sound?

CB: No tape on the drums, just wide open. I use coated *Ambassadors* on top and clears on the bottom. When they specifically ask for that open sound, you have to hit the drum a certain way to make it really ring, just off center a bit; there's a sweet spot there. And then you probably don't care about consistency so much.

It's funny: Now that I'm doing this for a living, I'm hired to play like I played when I was in sixth grade. It's hilarious. I've spent all these years honing my craft and learning how to be this "professional drum-

mer," and now it's, "Okay, play like you're in a garage band." I like it better this way. There was a period in recording history where it was too slick; you might as well have programmed an *MPC60*.

RF: How did you get on Seal's first record?

CB: I was called in with Jamie Muhoberac to go to England for a month. The producer, Trevor Horn, had never seen a *drumKAT* before, so he embraced that and said to bring one over to England. I would sit up in the studio, just me and the computer, and provide MIDI information. At the end of the day I would hand over a disk to Trevor, and he would sort it out and make sense of it. Most of it is pretty much me playing it, but he embellished it with the machines. I don't mind that because that is the nature of the electronics. I have a little problem if I do it with real drums and then they start manipulating it. Then I say, "Well, why don't I just manipulate it with me? Why don't I become the machine?"

Sometimes on that stuff it's like a dog chasing its tail, because you're trying to achieve something the hard way when you could just tell the drummer, or whatever musician, "Just play that five or six times, and we'll have it." But I think sometimes people like to go about things the hard way so they can say they were part of that, or, "Look how hard it was," even though it really shouldn't be that hard.

RF: What was the Jagger experience like?

CB: The audition process is still terrifying for me. I got a call from his MD [musical director] asking if I wanted to audition. Are you crazy? So I showed up and he was auditioning drummers. I specifically remember Stephen Perkins auditioned before me, and he hit so hard that by the time it was my turn, I had no drums to play. The heads looked like satellite dishes. I started laughing. My hat's off to Stephen because he's an animal, and I mean that in an endearing sense. But I played anyway and I took notice of what the other drummers were doing, going through all the classics.

All the drummers auditioning played all the classic Stones songs and I thought, "What could I play different that would capture Mick's attention?" I knew he was a lover of James Brown, and I'm the biggest James Brown fan on planet Earth. Jagger's basically the white James Brown in my

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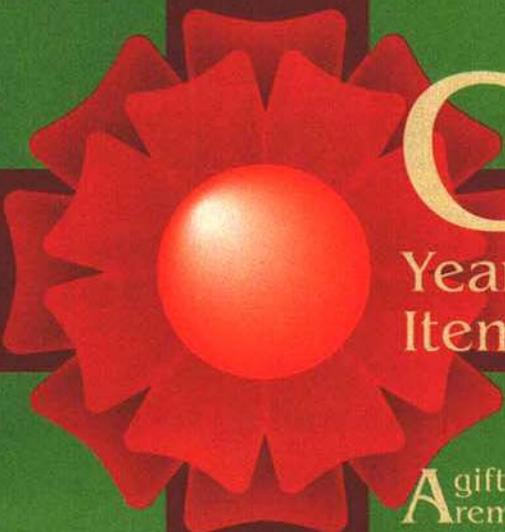


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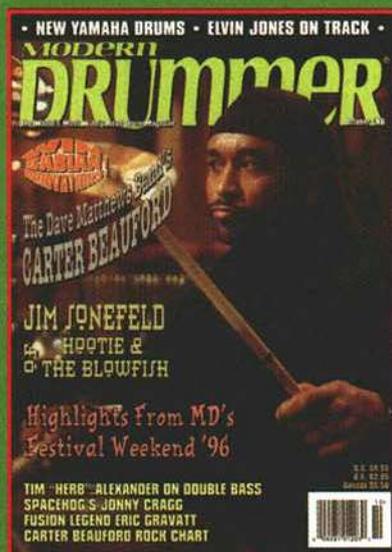
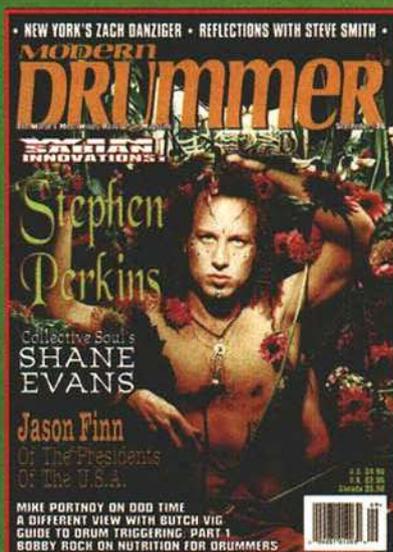


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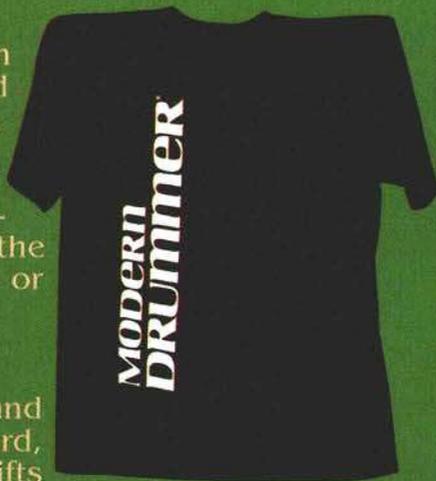


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eyes. He got on the mic' and said, "Curt, what would you like to play?"

RF: Is it normal at an audition to get the choice like that?

CB: Half and half. Either they'll give you the option or they'll present you with a song. So when he asked what I wanted to play, I said, "Let's play 'Cold Sweat.'" His eyes got big and he said, "Count it off." We played "Cold Sweat" for like twenty minutes, and there he was doing his chicken-neck thing and dancing and strutting around. He was like a little kid, way into it, and then he turned around and said, "Would you like a job, then?" "It's an honor and a pleasure. I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy." So we rehearsed for two weeks and recorded the record and did a few shows. That was cool. He's the coolest guy.

RF: You said auditions are terrifying. Have there been any particularly grueling ones?

CB: The Bruce Springsteen audition was tough. I was the only drummer to go back six times in two weeks, and they were acting like I had the gig. I started to think that maybe I should make some plans to go on

the tour, only to get a call saying, "No thank you." I guess it's just what they call a "business decision."

RF: How did you feel when you got that call?

CB: I felt cheap and used.

RF: How does a drummer make sense of going through something like that and getting nothing for his time?

CB: At that point you just have to let it go. I let it go, but obviously I'm human, so I had feelings like, "God, I went through this rigmarole and they're not going to use me?" But at this level, there are a lot of people involved who have ideas of how an artist's career should go. Once I made peace with that, it was okay.

RF: Take us to your nightmare session.

CB: The nightmare session is where the producer doesn't know what he wants, so he has you play the same song over and over and over again, twenty, thirty, fifty times. I start losing count after ten. When it gets to the point where he's sucked all the life out of me, I might as well be R2-D2, a droid. He's sucked out all the energy I have to offer to the track and all the ideas and freshness I could have added. The first or

second take is usually it.

RF: What do you do on the thirteenth take?

CB: I start finding the humor in it all. Everyone knows the story of Jeff Porcaro stabbing the sticks through the heads. Well, I could go there, and I actually *have* a couple of times. But then I realize I'm only lowering my energy and my standards to this level of idiocy. So I have to start looking at the humor in it. At that point I go on autopilot and look forward to getting home, forgetting about it, and tuning out. There are so many humorous situations when that kind of stuff comes down. It becomes relentless and pointless, so you have to laugh.

RF: What goes through your head when you're tracking?

CB: It's beyond that. I always try to think of myself as the listener—"What would I as a listener be doing while this music is on? Dancing in the bathroom with a towel?" I also think about the attitude of the song and what kind of attitude I need to have while I play the song. I'm listening to the music, the lyrics, what the singer is saying, how different chords and har-

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monies in the music make me feel, and I'll go from that. On every take, I try to make it a different thing and think about different aspects.

RF: I understand you've learned a lot from working with vocalists.

CB: Well, the main thing is, the vocalist is the focal point of the song. Every singer is different—they inflect their words differently, they sing a melody differently, they pronounce words differently, and they move differently. As drummers, we have to pay attention to those things because they may want to lay back on a certain section or make a section feel wide open or really rigid. You have to let that ego part of you go and climb into the singer's head to find out exactly where they're coming from while they're singing the song.

When I played on "Proud Mary" on Tina Turner's *What's Love Got To Do With It* soundtrack, she danced and sang right in front of the kit. She said, "Okay, when I start dancing faster, you follow me." That was a task, because here we were, playing this song, which is a fast song anyway, and there she was with those legs, dancing faster and faster. I had to watch where her

hand movements were and her facial expressions and how she was singing.

RF: What about working with bass players?

CB: Bass players are an extension of the drummer, just like we are the extension of bass players. If we're not creating some sort of groove together, neither one of us is doing our job. We have to find that common thread somewhere. If we're not finding it, we're not making happen what needs to happen. There are times when I feel like it just doesn't feel right. Of course, I start to blame myself—and then everyone else—but then I realize, "Hey, wait a minute, it's not about blame, it's just a different scene and I have to adapt myself to it." If it's rushing, I've got to rush; if it's dragging, I've got to drag. You have to find that spot right in the center where you make it happen.

RF: What are the most creative sessions you've been on? Can you think of a track on which what you played was instrumental in creating the tune?

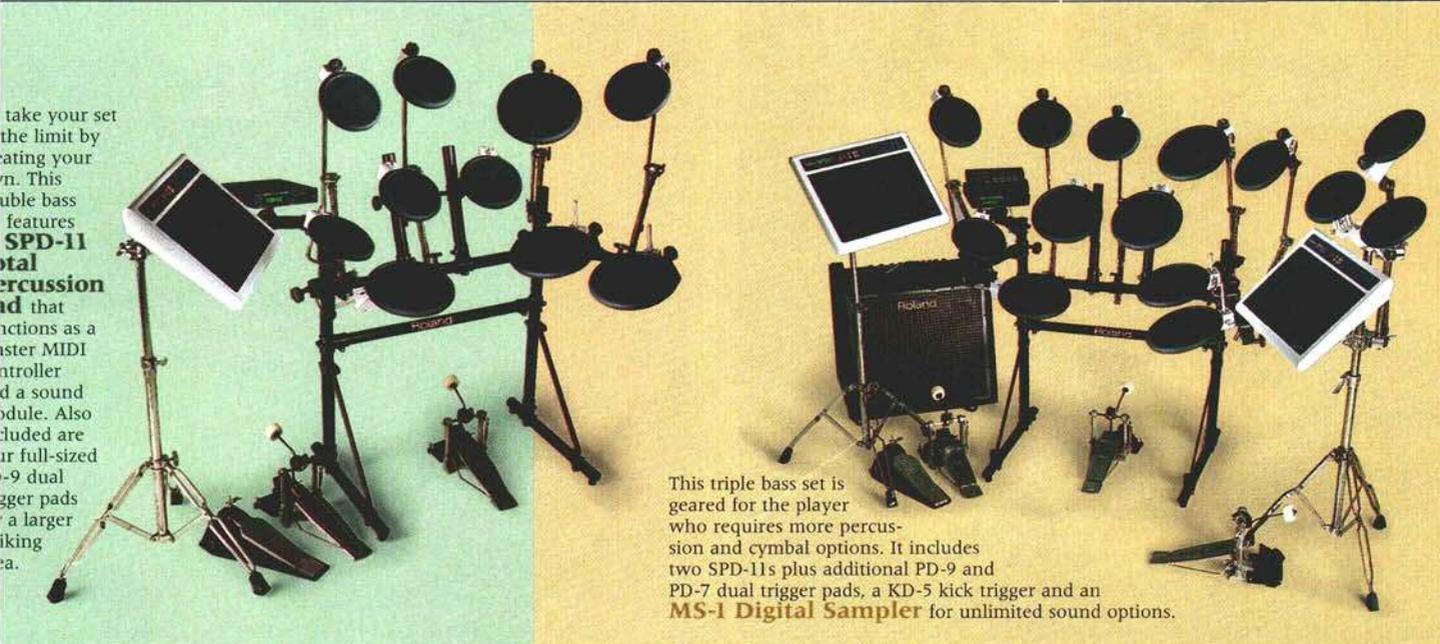
CB: There's a song on the new Tom Petty record called "Angel Dream." Tom wanted drums, but he *didn't* want drums. I'm

always up for the challenge in the studio because I'll find *something* to hit, something to pound on. It just so happened that I was sitting in the control room with Jim Scott, the engineer, and we were trying to figure out what to do. So I said, "Roll the track," and I started hitting my legs and stomach with the track. Jim said, "Get the mic'," and we miked up my legs and stomach, and that ended up being the track. So here's my write-off [pats his stomach].

RF: You mentioned how you like it funky. I get the impression that you feel there's funk in every style of music.

CB: I do. Funk is an abused word. I mean it in the sense that you can listen to any style of music and find the soul. What is it about that music that moves you? *That's* the funk. I just got back from my honeymoon in Italy, and hearing these Neapolitan musicians do their funk—their whole folk thing—was incredible. And there was a backbeat to it that made you move a certain way. That's what I mean about the funk, where it makes your head bob.

RF: How did the Petty gig come about? Are you an actual member of the



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Heartbreakers?

CB: No, I'm technically not a member, but I'm playing drums with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers. I got a call from the producer, Rick Rubin. It's always out of the clear blue sky with Rick. He called and said, "Hey Curt, wanna come play with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers?" "Sure." "Okay, be down here at 1:00." It was like 11:00. I had two hours to get my act together, both mentally and physically.

RF: What did you do?

CB: Jump up and down with excitement, sweat like a pig, get nervous, start puking, panic, and think, "Okay, what are my favorite Tom Petty songs?" I went to a record store and listened to some Petty stuff to see where his head is at. I went through all of that rigmarole and it turned out to be none of that. Inside I was trembling, but Tom was cool and he just wanted me to be myself.

The first sessions were at Sound City in Van Nuys. It was just supposed to be a couple of cues for the movie *She's The One*, which Tom was scoring, and at the time, Steve Ferrone [who was working with Petty at the time] was out of town. So I went down and played, and what I

thought was going to be movie cues ended up being a whole record. One thing Rick Rubin made apparent, though, was that he didn't want any fills. So I said, "Cool, I can do that."

RF: If you go out on the road with him, won't it scare you that you might lose session work?

CB: Yes and no. Yes because I'll miss the studio stuff, but no because I love the road as much as I do the studio, and I feel that at this point in my career I can walk away from the studio work and then jump back in. Plus, if I'm not around to do it, I know there is a whole list of drummers who could cover it, and I'm fine with that. When it's all said and done, it's like one giant family—the whole drumming community of the world. There's room for everybody. There will be a whole plethora of drummers coming up in the next five, ten years who will be doing what I'm doing, so we all have to carve the way for the next guy.

RF: Don't you worry about where that leaves you?

CB: Then I'll know it's time for a change; it will be time for me to do something else—write, produce, play bass, or sing.

There's so much to do in the music industry.

In that first year or two, when I was starting to get studio work, Jim Keltner would ask me, "Curt, you been working?" and I'd say, "No, I haven't been working, and I'm a little frightened about when the next gig will be coming. I've been waiting by the phone." He would laugh and say, "You know, I've been dealing with this for a long time. What I've learned is that when I'm working, I work, and when I'm not working, I don't. When I don't work, I go on vacation, I do things I like to do. And while I'm just enjoying myself, the phone is ringing. You have to learn to trust that."

It took a while, but sure enough, Jim was right. We all need balance. I worked non-stop this year because I was getting married. We took a month off for a honeymoon, and I didn't play drums that whole time. I didn't answer the phone and I didn't check my machine until a few days before we went home. And sure enough, there was a call from Tom Petty to do all the shows. Since I didn't worry about it, I came back totally refreshed and ready to go.



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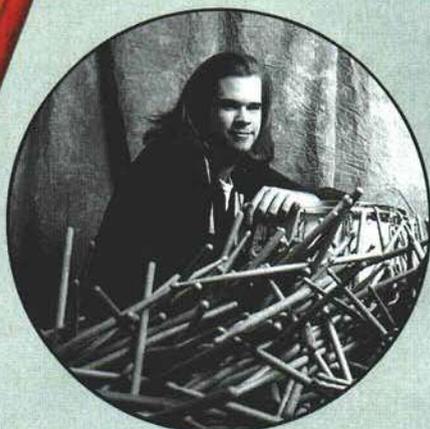
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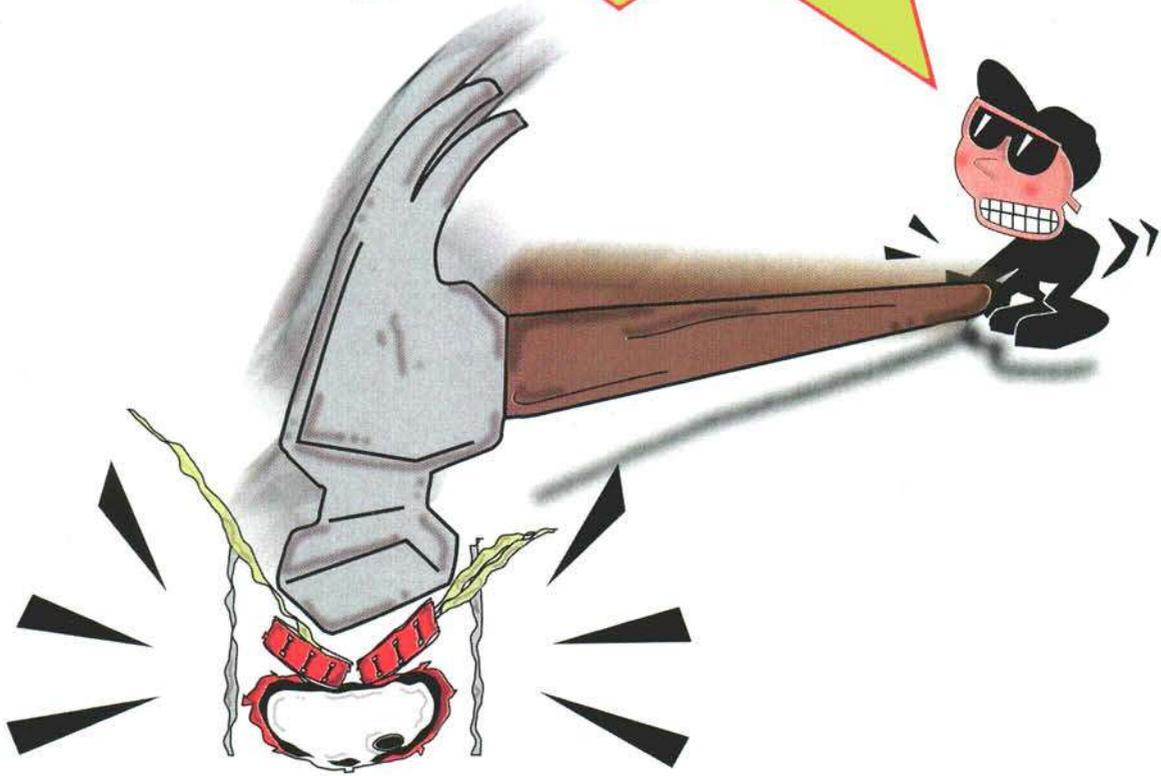


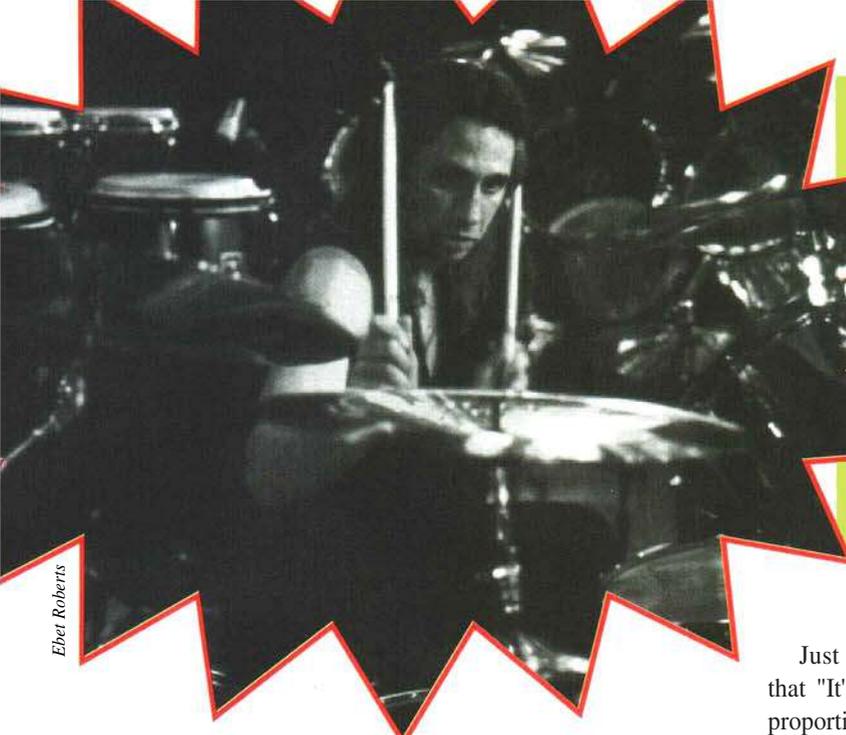
Illustration by Javier Jimenez

by T. Bruce Wittet

Ever since drums were chiseled rudely from tree trunks, there has been a single intent: to project Sound over considerable distances. Through the ages, the specter of thunderous volume has made gods of some drummers just as it has hastened the downfall of others. While Tony Williams has probably had it up to here with jazz critics bemoaning his rock chops, the late John Bonham suffered the criticism gladly, taking perverse delight in being banned from local dance halls. Even teatotaling Bill Bruford has reminisced about the good old days of striking unamplified toms with rimshots.

The ability to generate peak sound levels is as important as the ability to feather the quietest of grace notes. Unfortunately, many drummers looking to get loud make big mistakes of technique, break big bundles of sticks—and worse still, get hurt big-time.

Recently MD established a board of inquiry to look into the phenomenon of "loud? Not unexpectedly, as you will see, our experts frequently cited John Bonham as a benchmark. They also offered personal insights into an age-old dynamic.



Ebet Roberts

"You'd be surprised if you see me live and hear me play fast: I don't play as loud as you might think. I create an illusion. If you just bang the hell out of the drums you lose too much energy."
—Dave Lombardo

The Loud Panel

Our panel of loud drumming experts includes Cozy Powell, whose iron grip has been felt by Robert Plant, Jeff Beck, Rainbow, Brian May, and Black Sabbath; Dave Lombardo, the original power and speed artist in Slayer, who now heads GRIP INC; Matt Sorum, stadium veteran of Guns N' Roses fame, who has formed a neo-punk unit, Neurotic Outsiders; Kenny Aronoff, an unabashed lover of loud, whose obsession has fueled an incredible session and live tally; Mike Portnoy, a dazzling technician who provides both volume and intricacy for Dream Theater; and finally, Anton Fig, who smacks the drums nightly for David Letterman.

What Is "Loud"?

Just what *is* loud? Let's for a moment hide behind the veil that "It's relative." For example, loud assumes totally different proportions when comparing Billy Higgins to Chad Smith. For its part, *Roget's Thesaurus* offers the usual synonyms: "noisiness," "cacophony," "power," and then—you guessed it—"drumming"!

Well, it is a fact that drums are inherently loud, as your next-door neighbors will be pleased to verify. But here's the rub: Two drummers will seek equal volume, but one will tune, hit, and phrase in such a way that will leave the other in the dust.

"So what!" you exclaim impatiently. "What's the big deal about loud?"

The Attraction Of Loud

Admit it. There's something refreshing—even therapeutic—about a rampant bash on the drums. "But," you respond, "it makes no sense to play loud; you've got a PA system—use it!" Or, as Dr. Johnson dryly noted, it is not that a dog can be trained

"When I hit a drum, I want to feel good. I want it to go through my body and make me think, "That felt good." It's how I feel in my soul; it's like I connected."
—Matt Sorum



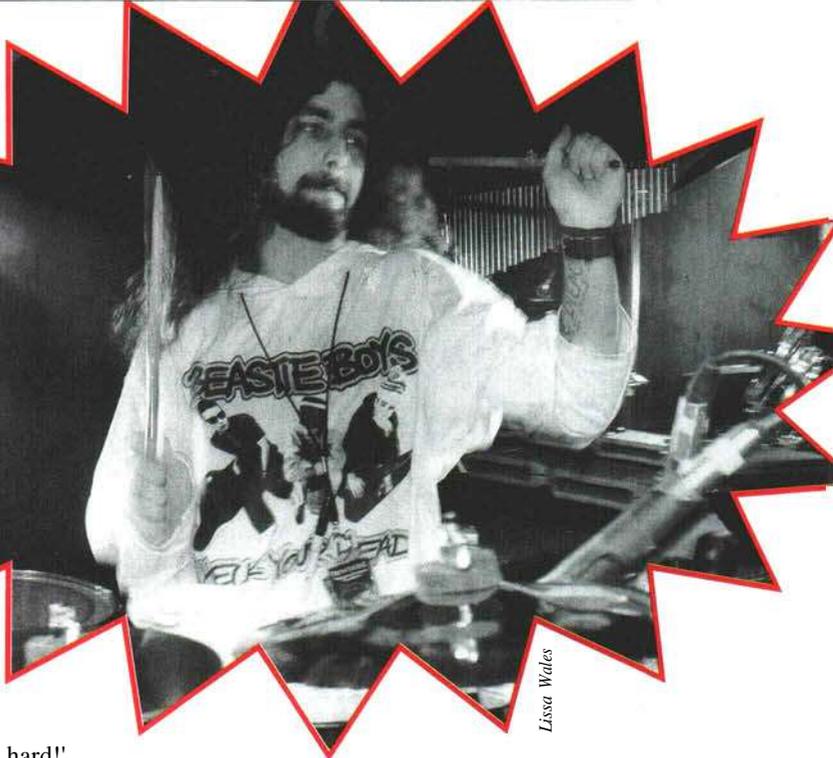
Ebet Roberts

I'm trying to play with the dynamics of Bill Bruford but with the power of Lars Ulrich. I'm trying to find a way to fit somewhere in the middle."

- Mike Portnoy

to walk on its hind legs—the question is "why?"

"Sure," replies Kenny Aronoff, "the question that's asked a lot of times is 'Why do you do it? There are microphones on your drums; you don't have to play so hard!' That's right, you don't. But you don't get the same attitude, the same feel, and the same motivation. You know what it's like? It's the difference between gliding beautifully through the countryside on a ten-speed bike and being in an Indie race car with



Lissa Wales

your life and death in front of you. It's that huge emotion of 'I could almost lose it,' and the excitement that you aren't going to—that you have it under control."

The following quote sounds like it's from Keith Moon, but it's actually Anton Fig describing the rush: "Certain kinds of music require that for me to express myself, I have to hit pretty hard. I love it when you create a wash and it's like you're inside a big bubble of sound. The only way that I can get that is to be playing pretty hard."

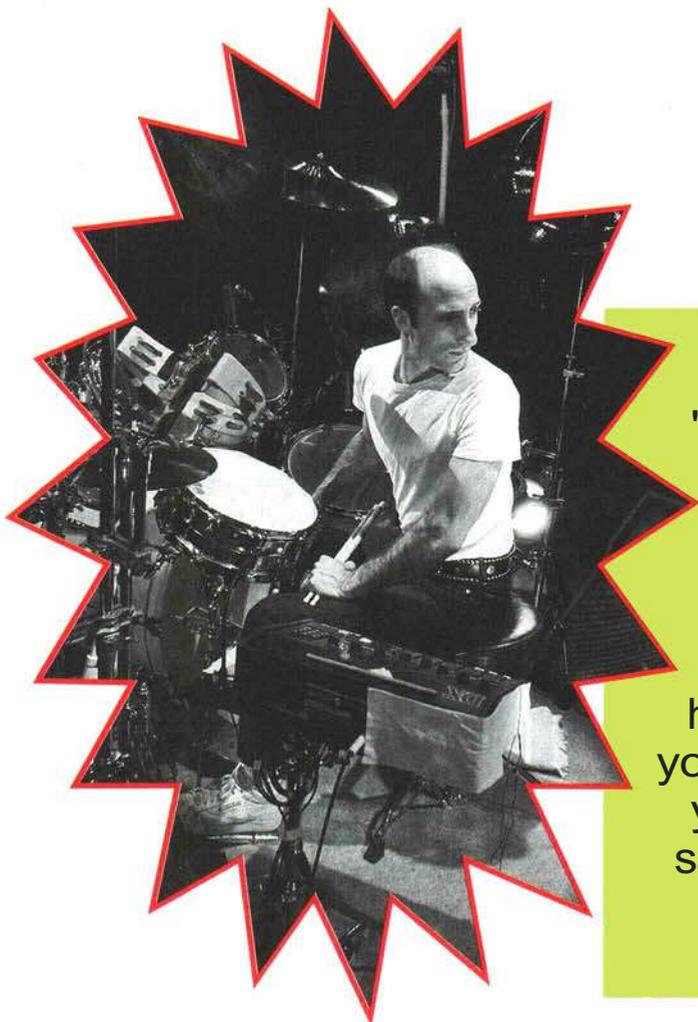
Cozy Powell blames—or credits—the volume buzz on Bonzo: "The first time I heard anyone play with any volume was when I heard John. I thought, 'This is what it's all about.' It was the single most emphatic statement made to me as a drummer. I mean, I don't think kids will ever realize what that kind of physical power is like, because they've never witnessed it."

For Matt Sorum, it's nigh on sacred: "When I hit the drum, I want to feel good. I want it to go through my body and make me think, 'That felt good.' It's how I feel in my soul; it's like I connected."

Even a prog band like Dream Theater drinks from the same waters, reminds Mike Portnoy: "We're a heavy metal band with progressive elements. The first thing a rock band will do is turn the amps to eleven. When we were at Berklee, everybody would be playing Brubeck or these jazz classics, and you'd walk by

"The question that's asked is 'Why do you play so loud? There are microphones on your drums; you don't have to play so hard.' That's right you don't; but then you don't get the same attitude, the same feel."

—Kenny Aronoff



Anton Fig



our room and we were playing Iron Maiden and Rush covers."

Training For Loud

So you want to play loud? You jump behind some big drums and hit them hard till you bleed. You wake up in the back of an ambulance, wondering what you did wrong. Preparation is what you need.

Cozy, with typical zeal, studied boxing because "boxers use the same muscles, the same technique, the same swiveling. I worked out with a bag. I worked out with weights, sitting on a chair swiveling backwards and forwards in an arc with weights in my hands. I deliberately tried to improve my muscles in relation to what I was going to do as a professional drummer."

Although Kenny's home gym rivals your local health club, he cautions against overdoing it: "Rest is very important. I do a little bit of meditating. At night I do yoga before I go to bed to stretch out, because I really beat myself up hard."

And here's one for the road—*not* playing hard can build chops for loud. Anton recalls a grueling gig "when I had to play a whole week in this room that was very live and I had to play very softly, with intensity. Believe me, try to play loud after that, and you'll be able to play very loud!"

Technique

While drummers are hipping to the fact that they ought to be packing earplugs, they continue to traumatize their limbs in a circus of wasted motion. Legions of teachers have patiently plotted the whipping motion that efficiently propels the stick to the drumhead. Call it the Moeller Technique, the Gladstone Method, or whatever; it is a path well known to our panel.

Anton: "You've got to let it all unfold as in the normal action of a golfer. If you're letting all the joints go in the right sequence, you're going to get a lot of volume without hitting particularly hard."

Flick on the TV 'round midnight, however, and you'll see Anton breaking a few drumming tenets: "I play with the butt end of the stick forward in my left hand, because I play mainly rimshots. That helps give a heavier sound. If you relax and you've got a bit of snap, you don't have to put all that much effort into it to get it to be crisp or hard."

Cozy discarded old habits that didn't measure up: "I changed to matched grip. I used traditional grip for a while with Jeff Beck, but you can't possibly get the power that way." Our panel was unanimous on this point.

Hopefully technique is joined by taste on the journey. Matt began editing out extraneous notes: "If you're going to play any sort of rock 'n' roll, I have to bring up John Bonham again. The way he played fills, it wasn't something that went outside of the groove. In *Neurotic Outsiders* I just let a lot of shit ring out and that's it. If you're playing the Forum and you're doing some buzz roll, I guarantee you'll never hear it. That was a lot of the reason my playing became simplified."

Volume, Speed, Control & Time

We have all witnessed drummers thrashing away, just hanging on for dear

life. "It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," observed Shakespeare (honorary panel member).

The drumset is all about control. Kenny: "I had no idea how hard it is to control time and groove when you play hard. When you play with the kind of power I'm playing with, you really are committing yourself to every beat, because with every stroke you could throw yourself off balance, out of time, or out of the groove."

And "it's not just playing fast and playing hard," notes Dave Lombardo. Make it liquid: "There are a lot of transitions to make the roll sound even. Make sure that after you bring people into that psychotic roll, you then bring it back into the drum beat in a smooth way. I've heard a lot of drummers who, when they're rolling and then coming back to the beat, it's a little choppy."

Finally, Mike echoes the words of your school band director: "If you tell a younger drummer to play soft, chances are he's going to slow down the tempo. That's a hard thing to learn when you're starting out. Drummers will slow down to play quiet and speed up to play heavy. You've got to be able to separate the two and have control over both."

The Ergonomics Of Loud

Drummers in the big band era used big drums to compete for a place in frantic shout choruses. In the '50s, such orchestras dwindled and drum diameters shrank. Players like little Davie Tough, who once hid behind a 28" bass drum, became plainly visible behind a 20" drum. Even 18" bass drums became the rage.

Midway through the '60s the advent of stacks of guitar amps prompted drummers like Carmine Appice to revert to yesteryear's larger drums. Today, proper PA systems are prevalent, and theoretically any size drum can sound monstrous.

Remember Ringo Starr on the *Ed Sullivan Show*? Dave Clark? Sitting high, sitting pretty. Here's why, according to Cozy: "In those days drummers were desperate to be noticed. They'd have the kit set low, and they'd be high above it. Well, when you want to play louder, that's the first thing you change, because the only way to get any power from your kit is to sit

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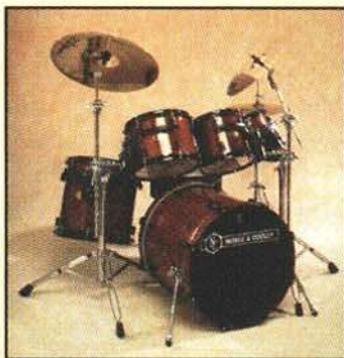
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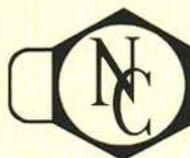
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low. The lower you can sit, the more power you can get from the bass drum, and the more you can actually get *into* the kit. If you notice, John [Bonham] sat very low. I'm not slagging them off, but people like Carl Palmer sit very high so people will notice them taking their shirt off and that sort of thing.

"I'll tell you what I did. I lowered the snare drum so I could hit the drum harder and get the rimshot sound. Then I angled the toms in the same way so that I could hit them harder—again, with a rimshot if necessary. If you've got the kit looking good, but when you hit it the sound goes out the window, then it's useless."

Organize the kit around your physical capacities. Matt: "I play my drums pretty parallel, which I learned early on when I took marching band. I'm not reaching way down for my floor tom. I'm a pretty tall guy and I've had shorter guys sit at my kit and find it really high, but for me everything feels comfortable. I'm not really reaching and playing some weird cymbal cranked up behind me; I'm not doing anything with my arms that isn't natural."

Dave offers an analogy: "You need to be able to flow around the drumset as if it was just one piece of, say, cardboard laying in front of you in a curve. That way you can go from left to right in a smooth manner. It's exactly the same with the cymbals. Some drummers have their cymbals way up high. How are you going to hit that thing and get back down in time? You can't."

Now and then, Mike takes a hard look at his huge setup and pines for a four-piece kit: "The setup that I've always loved is the old John Bonham setup. The only reason I haven't done that is, first of all, it's become so much of a cliché these days. Second, I like having a big kit with the music I'm doing. I mean, my kit is a monster in itself; it's kind of become its own identity. In terms of cymbals I have a 6" splash, a 22" ride, and everything in between. It's the same with the drums. I'm always trying to incorporate everything: 'More is more,' in my case."

Tuning Concepts

Distance makes depth. Veteran sound engineers swear by the precept. On Zeppelin recordings, sometimes only a couple of mic's would be employed on John Bonham's drumset. Maybe his drums sounded kind of boingy at very close range, but a few feet away the trademark sound "blossomed"—so that was exactly where a microphone would be placed.

Most of our Loud Panel grew up in close-miking environments. This probably explains why none routinely employs Bonham's high tensioning. But like Bonham, the Loud Panel discouraged muffling, since it mutes the very harmonics that contribute to a big sound. The loud guys remove most of the laundry from the bass drums and play their drums wide-open.

The consensus of the Loud Panel was toward *moderate* tunings. In fact, cautions Kenny, "If you tune the drums too tight you choke them. I don't tune the drums very high."

"It's really strange the way I tune," Dave owns up. "I just do it by feel—the amount of pressure I use with my fingers—not a drumkey. That's my torque wrench. I'll turn the lugs as tight as my fingers can go, and that's as tight as my drumheads will be. And that, I feel, is my drum sound."

Mike cranks the heads tighter, but doesn't like it when the toms are tuned so high that they sound like they're pinging. "I like the toms to be a little dead so that I can get some thump out of them,

but I like them to be tuned at least so that they have a pitch or a ring to them. Generally I'll try to tension the top and bottom heads around the same."

Matt starts things off with double-ply heads: "I like to hear a note on the toms. I like to keep my drums tuned down for depth, but I wouldn't say they're wobbly. When you've got a nice shell, you're going to get depth anyway."

At the end of the day, notes Cozy, "A drumkit has to have overtones. If you haven't got overtones, the kit's going to sound dead." Right, agrees Dave, but "there's a point where you have to be careful not to get too much of a live sound, because when you're doing those fast rolls they can get lost."

Snare sounds define rock music due to the inherent "cut" of the backbeat. Anton: "A lot of the snare drum sound is from the bottom head; if you tune the top head so it's comfortable and it's not too soft when you hit it, you'll get a really good crack from the snare. If you want to get more of a crack, then you just tighten the bottom head a little."

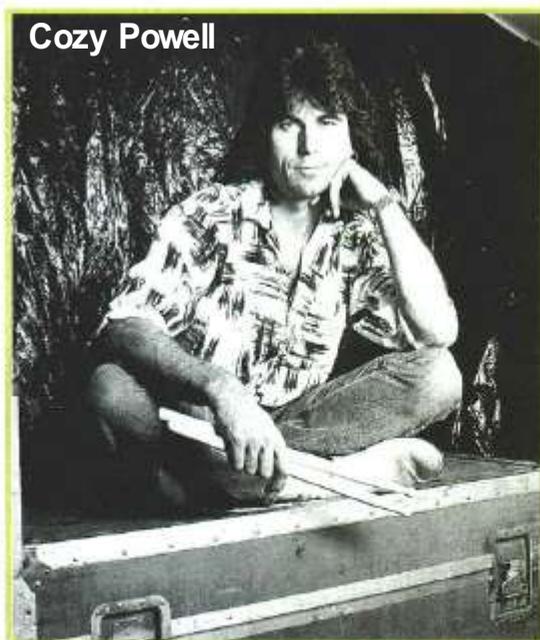
Cozy toys with the equation: "The batter head is pretty tight, but I'd say that the bottom head is slacker—marginally—say, about two turns down. And I find that using a twenty-strand snare gives me a much wider sound, as opposed to something narrower. If you then tighten the snare strands a touch more than you think you want them, and then you hit the drum hard with a rimshot, you're going to get so much more crack from the snare."

And yet another angle from Dave, who does not hit rimshot backbeats, except for accents: "No, I don't crank the snare up; it gives it too much of a twangy sound. I like a *snare drum*."

Kenny keeps the bottom head moderate: "If you tune it too tight you're getting into a marching band thing. I like to have medium tension on the bottom head and on top I might push it a little bit tighter because I need to keep the head from getting too many dents." Kenny has a thing about popping the rim: "I hit rimshots so much that I have to wear gloves. I also wear rubber pads on my legs because I crush my legs every time I hit the snare drum."

Matt is somewhere in the middle: "I'm not super-high. I use a deeper drum. That basically takes it down right there. And

Cozy Powell



Lissa Wales

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what I use is an *Emperor* [two-ply] head, which takes the drum down another couple of steps, because you're getting more of a thud than you would from an *Ambassador* [single-ply]. I keep the bottom head pretty snug—not too high, like you give it a push and it goes in half an inch or so."

Mike's snare sound on Dream Theater records has changed from album to album. "A lot of people have commented to me about the snare sound on *A Change Of Seasons*. That was more of a high, poppy, Stewart Copeland/Bill Bruford sort of snare, which I generally like. For the most part, that's the way I've always tuned my snare: just real high and poppy on top, the bottom a little looser, and the snares really tight. But my taste has been changing and I've been loosening up the snares a little bit."

Cymbals

Cozy's chagrin has been that "people don't realize that heavy drummers take notice of what their cymbals sound like. There's so much more subtlety. It's no good just hitting something hard for the

sake of it; it's got to have a certain sound about it. It's important that your cymbals are complementing you as well as the kit." And it's not about ornamentation; it's about power: "The 20" heavy crashes—when you hit one of those you can feel it three blocks away! It's a serious statement as opposed to being an aftereffect."

Matt: "I'm up against Slash—four Marshall stacks! I just found from my experience of being on the road in front of a loud rock 'n' roll band that the bigger the cymbal the better. I want to hear the decay. I love that old John Bonham *whoosh*. I had a ride custom-made for me—a 24" *Ping*, which is a really big-ass ride. But with *Neurotic Outsiders* I don't play a lot of ride; I ride more like Keith Moon, on the edge of the crash. Dave Grohl does that too. It really gives you that impression, 'Man, this is really smashing!'"

Dave's cymbal preferences ring dead opposite to his deep drum sound: "I like *shrill*. I like to hear a cymbal scream *pssshh!* I don't like to hear cymbals dying out on me; I like sustain. I hardly ever break cymbals and, even as hard as I hit, there's a

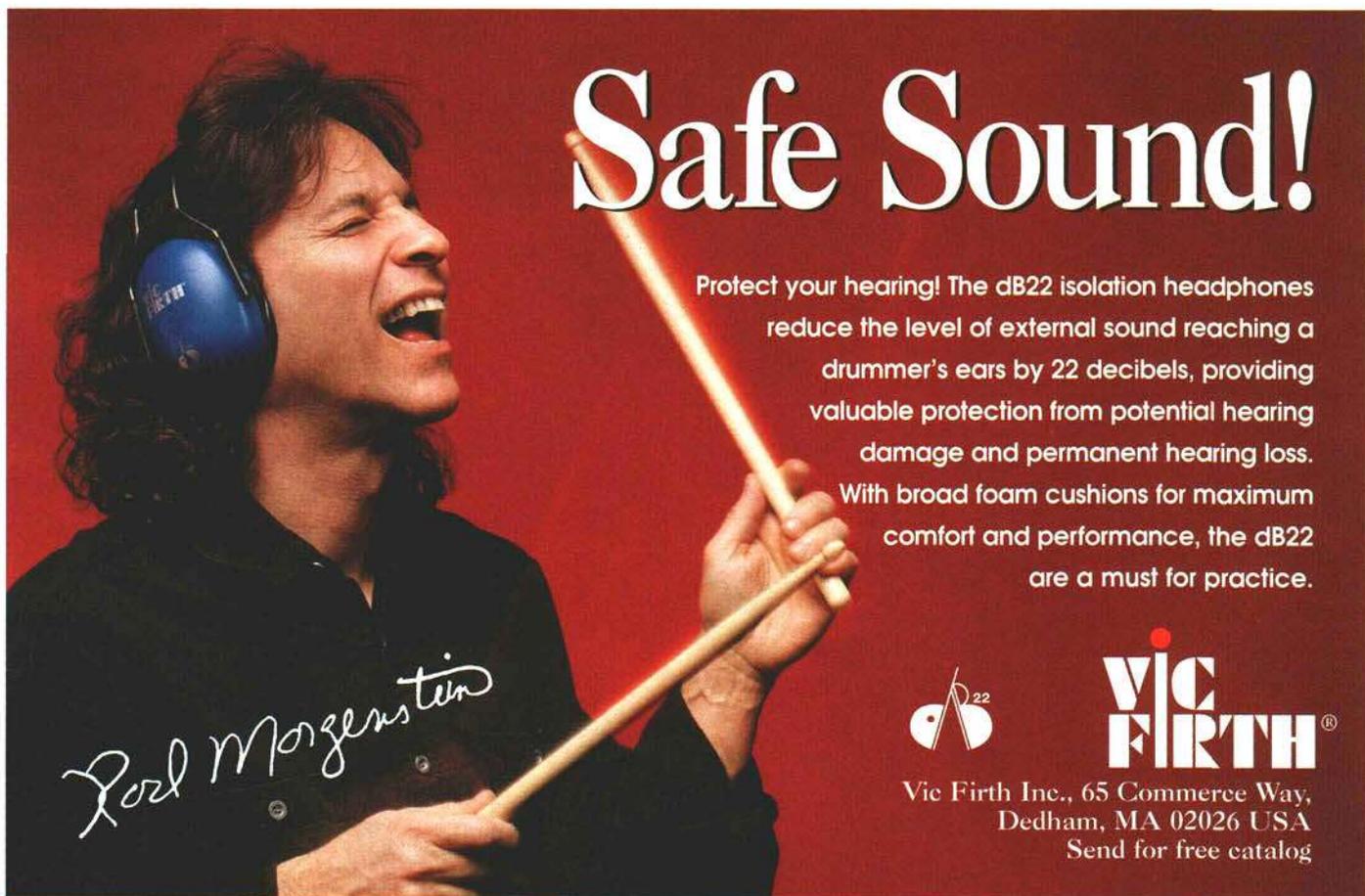
limit: 'Okay, you're going to hit a cymbal now; don't hit it so hard.' It takes years to really develop that."

Ease up or you'll trash your cymbals, agrees Matt: "I think a lot of guys have more problems with the way they play their cymbals than with the way they play their drums. I try to finesse my cymbals more than I finesse my drums. I don't bash my hi-hat. I hit my drums hard. I know guys who really give their cymbals a lot of arm, and it really makes no sense. You can hit a cymbal as hard as you want and it's only going to give you a certain level of volume. No, I don't break them. The only thing I do break are pangs."

Carry A Bigger Stick

All the loud drummers had obvious concerns as to whether their sticks would go the distance. But, equally important, they were concerned with the tone their sticks generated.

Cozy: "You're not going to get a good cymbal sound to project unless you hit it with a heavier stick. You can't possibly do it with a tiny jazz stick. It's never going to



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come out the way you want it to. The 24" ride I've got...you play that with a jazz stick and it'll sound like shit." For precisely this reason Kenny designed his signature stick somewhat like a rock stick, but "with a little more of an oval tip so that I can get a little better ride cymbal sound. It's big but easy to play. I let the sticks do a lot of the work."

Cozy's sticks barely have the bark scraped off: "Yamaha developed a stick that is almost twice as heavy as a normal 5A; after a while I got used to playing with this weight. The first time I picked them up, I thought, 'I'm never going to be able to play with these!'"

Matt chose Easton Ahead synthetic sticks for durability: "I can really lay into the drums and feel confident that I'm not going to be going over to my stick bag to pick up another stick. Actually, I think they're a little brighter. But you know, if you're really slamming, you're not going to worry: 'Hey man, is that a little trebly, is that a little brighter?'"

Threshold: Knowing When To Quit

It's a sunny day at a large, outdoor stage. To the unknowing drummer who notices that the drums just don't sound like they do in a club, the natural tendency is to hit harder to try to create a "room" sound. When this fails to materialize, he hits even harder, and so on. The drummer has broken a rule of loud: *Never exceed your threshold.*

Anton: "On the Dylan tribute, when the songs got really cranking, my volume really came up. What you've got to do is stay just under that point where you're playing too hard for your capabilities and you can't execute anything. Your limbs just stop working because you're tensing up. You've got to try to stay relaxed."

Right! Back off, advises Kenny, especially indoors: "You can overplay a room. You can play so hard that you choke the room! It's almost like you oversaturate it; the sound goes into the walls so hard that it doesn't have a chance to breathe and come back."

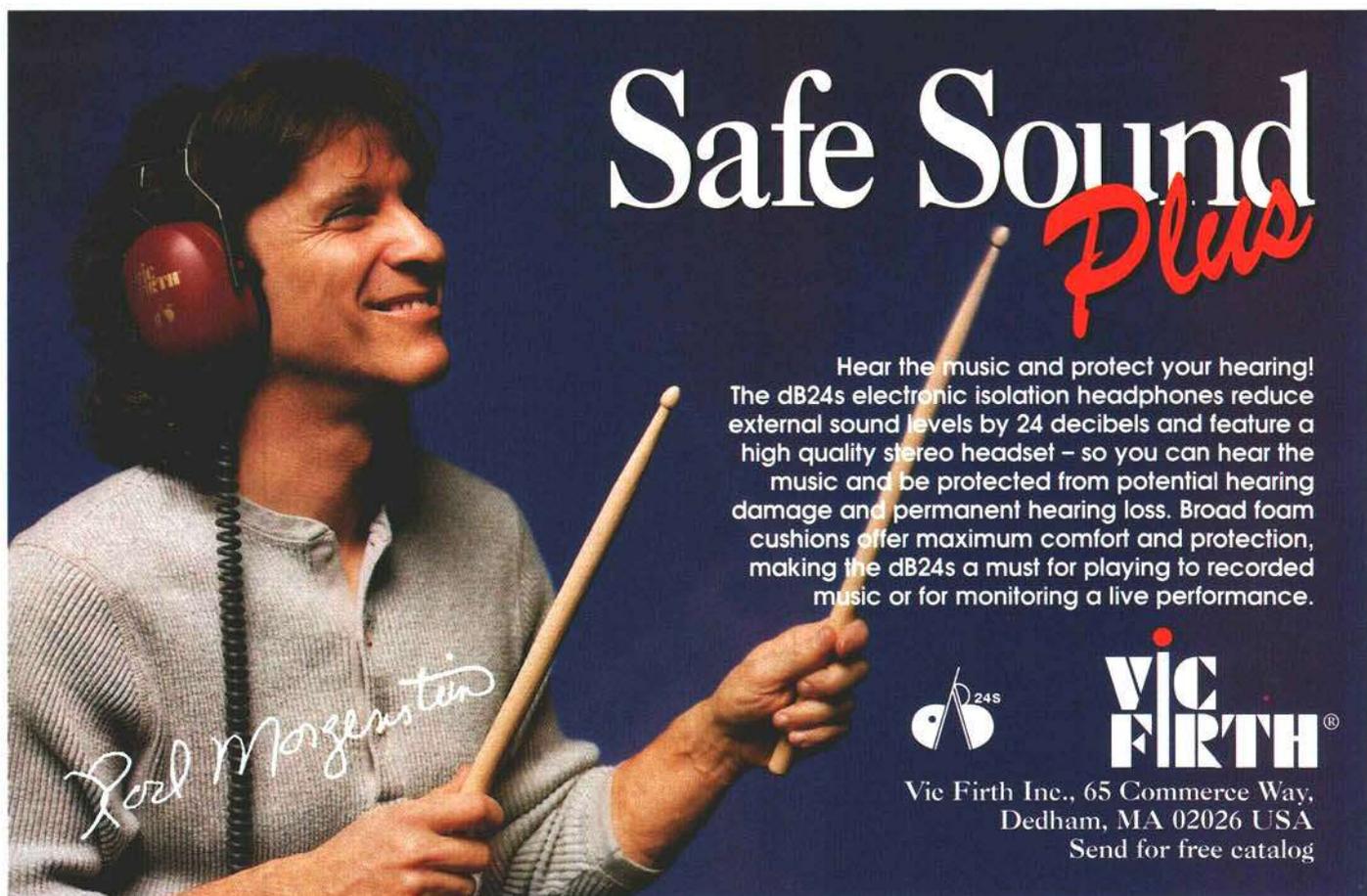
"And another thing," adds Matt, "you

can hit your drums so hard that you're just going to choke the sound. There's a certain way of hitting the drums hard—it's about pulling the sound *out* of the drums. I know guys who hit the drums too hard—it sounds like paper."

The Illusion Of Loud & Dynamics

Multi-track recording affords the engineer/producer the flexibility to drastically alter levels generated off the floor. Just ask Anton: "Some drummers sound like they're really cranking on records. Ginger Baker came on the show with Jack Bruce, and I was amazed at how softly he played. When I was a kid listening to those Cream records, I was convinced that he was thundering away—and maybe he was in those days. All I can tell you is that when I saw him on the show he played just like Ginger Baker, and he played all of those things without slamming."

Absolutely, agrees Dave: "You'd be surprised if you see me live and hear me play fast: I don't play as loud as you might think. I create an illusion. It may sound dif-



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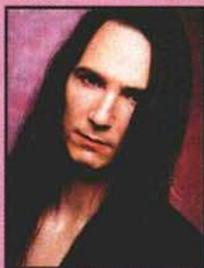
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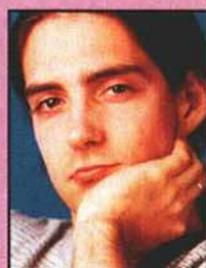
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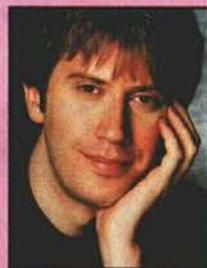
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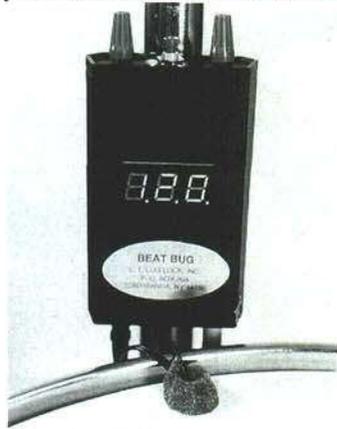
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ferent on recordings because of the compression. If you bang the hell out of the drums, you lose too much energy. You need to find the 'cruise control.' You need to make it so it comes out of you, out of your body, in a smooth way. There's a point where you've got to bring the volume down—then speed up. Then when you're doing those rolls with all the accents, you can give it the power. When you're going to the fast part, you're cruising, you're driving the song."

It's a balancing act for Mike: "I'm trying to play with the dynamics of Bill Bruford but with the power of Lars Ulrich. I'm trying to find a way to fit somewhere in the middle. When I'm playing an all-out heavy double bass pattern, I have to play that with a lot of power; but then there are other moments where we're playing really intricate parts in 9/8 where you really should be dynamic and try to use ghost notes. I'm probably a good example of someone who has to walk the tightrope between the two."

Electronics can enhance the illusion, but Mike, for one, has lost as much to electron-

ics as he has gained, due to inherently slow tracking: "That was my biggest problem with the *Images And Words* album. Ghost notes are such an important part of the drummer's arsenal, and when you have a triggered kit or triggered snare, dynamics suddenly become irrelevant."

The Trauma Ward

Loud is a wonderful thing, but the very thing that makes you rich can make you poor. Loud can hurt!

Anton: "I'm a bit deaf in my right ear, and I wonder if that's from pounding the ride cymbal. You would think that it would be the left ear, from the snare."

Matt: "I've had some fatigue in my hands. Using the Easton sticks has helped; the stick actually gives more than wood. I've had problems—not tendonitis—just overwork from two-and-a-half- or three-hour sets with Guns N' Roses."

Dave is punished for the sin of exuberance: "I'll play a big roll, just going nuts and shaking my head, and then I'll bang my knuckles on the hi-hat stand, or my fingernail will hit a cymbal and split in half

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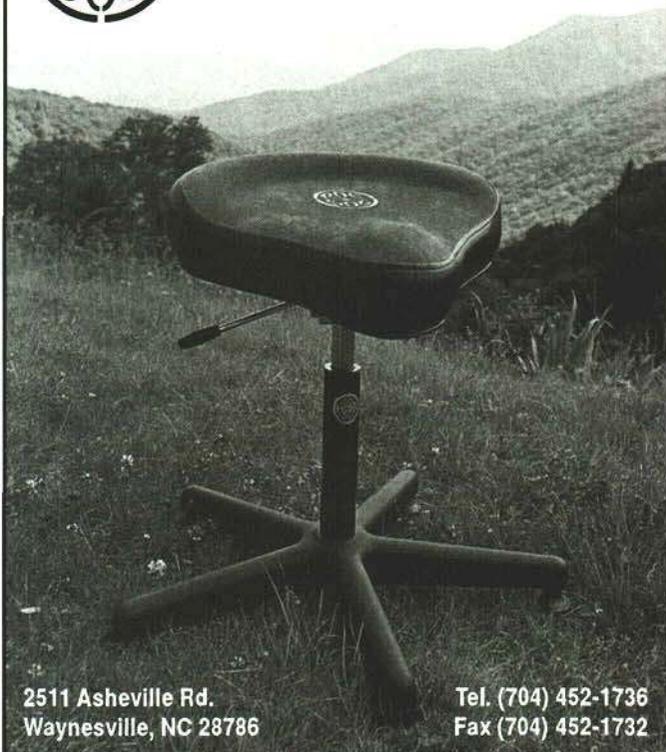
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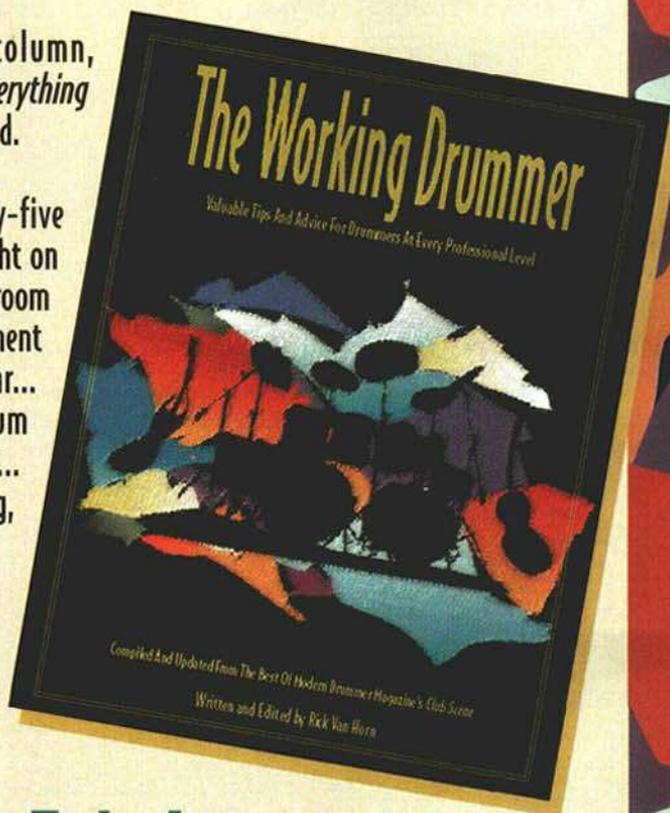
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because I lost my concentration. Sometimes I get so into it, I almost fall off my stool."

Mike: "My biggest problem has always been my back. I think it's because I use a very big kit and my body is constantly twisting left to right, and I can't access my whole kit by sitting straight forward. That's the downside to a big kit, for sure. Also, I sit very high, maybe too high. I'm trying to sit a little bit lower, and I try to stretch and work out before I play."

And, as those neighbors keep reminding us, loud hurts others! Kenny: "On the tour I did last spring with Bob Seger I was wearing ear monitors, but I also had monitors around me because I like to *feel* the sound. I would play so hard that the guys on the stage would play louder. I was louder than all the monitors with just my acoustic sound! And then the other musicians would have to turn up, and the engineer was going nuts grabbing for every knob on the board."

Loud is But One Aspect Of Playing Drums

Loud, quiet—a steady diet of either can get tedious. Our panel members are lovers of loud, no question, but they would like you to know that control, consistency, and pulling rich tone from the drums is a more lethal combination than just sheer volume.

The true beauty of the drumset, as Cozy discovered watching John Bonham demolish one, is its capacity for light and shade. Everyone on our panel can play at *pp* as well as *ff*. Dave wanted the last word: "There's one thing I want people to really understand: that thrash-metal, or whatever you want to call it, is not just a bunch of punks bashing away. There is an art to it."

So what's the deal about loud? Well, it's probably the reason many of us were attracted to the instrument in the first place. The power! The clout!

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Elvin Jones: "Softly As A Morning Sunrise"

Transcribed by Steve Korn

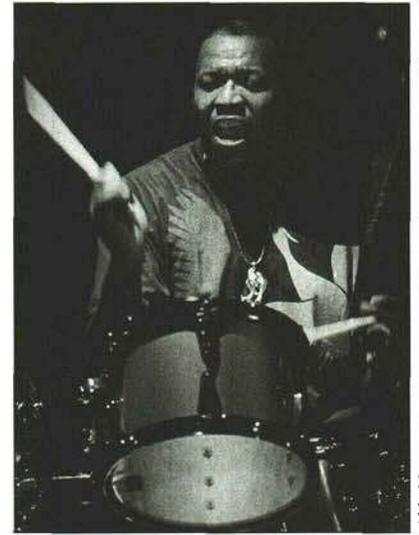
MUSIC KEY

Open	O	Cym
H.H.	X	X
T.T.		
S.D.		
F.T.		
B.D.		
H.H. w/foot	X	X
	O	H.H. Splash

Max Roach once referred to Elvin Jones as the greatest percussionist, ever. That's high praise indeed from Roach, someone who knows a thing or two about jazz drumming.

Recorded on November 3, 1957, "Softly As A Morning Sunrise" is a fine early example of Elvin's unique style. On this track it's easy to hear the beginnings of how Jones would later revolutionize jazz drumming through his use of cross-rhythms, rolling triplets, hi-hat independence, and phrasing across the barline. (This performance appears on Sonny Rollins' *A Night At The Village Vanguard, Volume 2*, Blue Note CDP 7 46518 2.)

The first four sections shown are the "fours" traded between Elvin and Sonny Rollins, leading into the drummer's complete solo over the form of the composition. Elvin plays the solo with brushes, and you'll see legato marks and ties notated to indicate where he "stirs" the brushes on the head. (All 8th notes are to be swung unless otherwise indicated.)



Aldo Manro

3 *bass enters*

4

6 6

6 3 3 *drag* 6

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 3 3

6 6

3 3

3

3

3

3

3

3

3

3

3

3

bass enters





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Djembe Rhythms For Drumset

by Kalani

MUSIC KEY

So, you play drumset and you're wondering just how you can get in on some of this djembe drumming you've been hearing about. Well, in this article I'll try to give you some ideas on how you can apply djembe rhythms to your kit playing.

The West African djembe has become one of the most popular hand drums in this country, as well as throughout the world. If you've ever heard one, you understand why. The djembe originated in the areas of Africa now known as Mali and Guinea, where the instrument was and is most commonly played in ensembles. The ensemble rhythms are characterized by one or two accompanying djembe patterns, three junjun (bass drum) parts, and a bell pattern. The rhythms of each instrument are generally simple by themselves, but when combined, they produce some of the most interesting and driving polyrhythmic music there is.

Groups like "Les Ballets Africains" and the National Ballet of Senegal showcase this music, song, and dance in their traditional forms. These groups tour in the U.S. from time to time, and I highly recommend catching one of their shows if they come to your area. Hearing how these rhythms sound "in context" can be invaluable in helping you apply them to the drumset.

I recently attended a djembe workshop in North Carolina. We were fortunate to have some of the finest instructors in the world for our classes. What I didn't know was that these "Djembefolas" (djembe players) perform for celebrations that last several days! Well, I was playing with one of these masters, Abdoul Dumbia, and after five hours of non-stop playing, he looked over at me and said that where he comes from, five hours of playing would be considered a warm-up. I just smiled at him.

I transcribed eight of the ensemble rhythms for drumset. The four 4/4 and 12/8 examples present different challenges with regard to syncopation and phrasing. The bell part, which for this article is notated on the hi-hat space, can be played on other ride sources besides the hi-hat, including ride cymbal bells and cowbells.

"Dansa" has an offset feel. (It sounds like it should start on 2.)

"Kassa" has a three-against-four polyrhythm between the tom and hi-hat.

"Modeaka" has a straight-ahead feel.

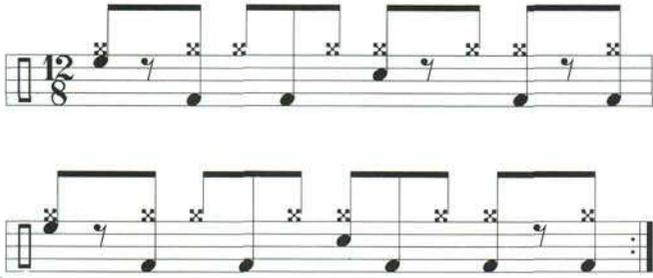
"Maraka" is a funky groove with a three-against-four polyrhythm between the kick and hi-hat.

Now it's time to play "find the clave." (It is in the feel of the following 12/8 examples.) The first, "Jou Ra," has a strong three-against-two polyrhythm between the kick and the dotted quarter-note pulse.

"Marjani" is straight-ahead and contains more three-against-two rhythms in the second half of the second bar.

"Dundunba" is a driving rhythm. While the first bar is fairly light, the second bar outlines more three-against-two polyrhythms in the kick. (The kick note written on beat 1 of the first bar is not usually played, but it may help your phrasing at first. Try the pattern without it, too.)

"Soko" has more of that three-against-two feel, but notice how the relationship of the kick to the hi-hat shifts over an 8th note in the second half of the bar.



I hope you get a chance to play with some "Djembefolas"—and most of all, have fun!

Kalani is an internationally known percussionist and composer. He has released two solo albums and has performed with an impressive list of artists including Yanni, Kenny Loggins, John Mayall, Max Roach, Dr. John, Michael Kamen, and Melissa Manchester.



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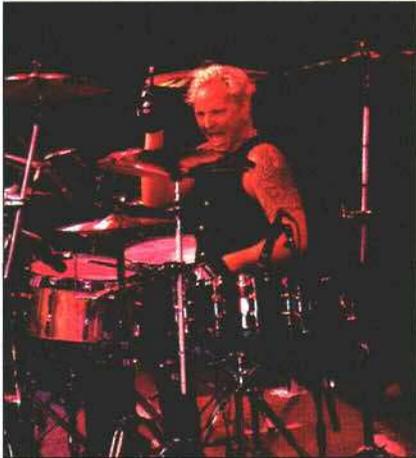
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Matt Sorum: Neurotic Outsiders



Ebet Roberts

MUSIC KEY

Open	○	R.C.	C.C.
H.H.	×		
S.D.	●		
B.D.	●		
H.H. w/foot	×	2nd B.D.	

While Guns N' Roses stays on hiatus, Matt Sorum continues—from one interesting project to the next. *Neurotic Outsiders*, his most recent effort, features Matt along with fellow "Gunner" Duff McKagen and off-and-on Sex Pistol Steve Jones. Their new, self-titled release is a punk-meets-metal power throb. And as for the drumming, to put it simply, Matt plays his tail off. Here are a couple of transcribed beats from the disk.

"Nasty Ho"

Matt is the master of riding on an open hi-hat or crash cymbal. He can bash the hell out of either, keeping things intense without letting the wheels fall off. This is a good example.

♩ = 152

"Always Wrong"

Talk about pumping out the beat! Here Matt lays down a quarter-note pulse that will move stadiums.

♩ = 132

"Better Way"

This track features a simple groove that Matt makes his own by implying a three-against-two polyrhythm between the ride and snare. The following pattern is a basic example of what he expands on in the tune.

♩ = 63

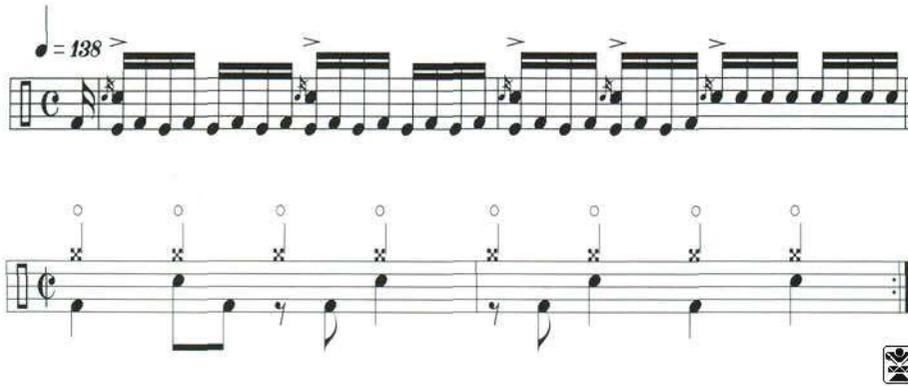
"Feelings Are Good"

Here's another example of Matt laying down a solid groove and keeping the quarter-note pulse strong and relaxed even in an intense tune. His hi-hat accents hold the time while the syncopated snare-kick pattern in the second bar complement the song's riff. Some cool fills by Matt on this one, too.

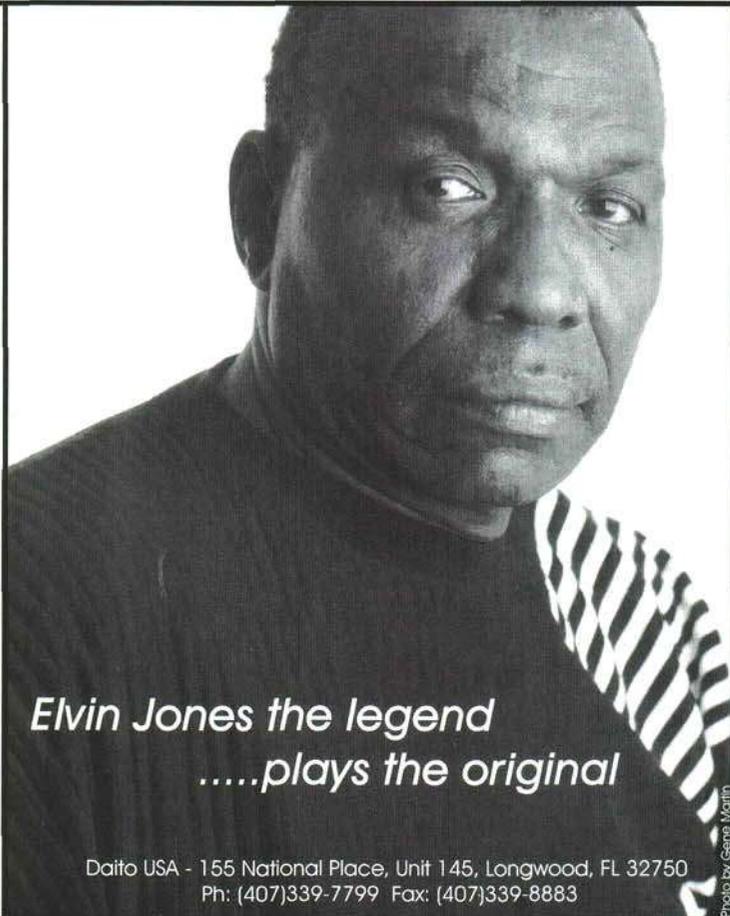
♩ = 126

"Six Feet Under"

Ah, Matt stretches out. He's got some tasty double-kick chops, and here he plays variations of the following 16th-note fill at various points, leading into a driving double-time feel—nice.



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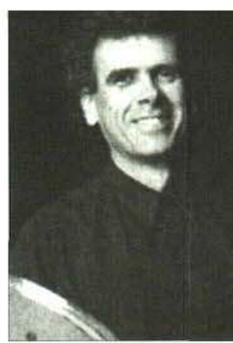
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The Latin-Funk Connection

by David Garibaldi

MUSIC KEY

R.H./H.H.	X
L.H./Bell	●
L.H./S.D.	○
R.H./F.T.	▲
R.F./B.D.	■
L.F./H.H.	X

When I first began to learn and understand some things about Afro-Cuban drumming and its relation to the drumset, one of the things I was told was that I would quickly see what was going on because this particular aspect of Afro-Cuban drumming is just like funk. The more I listened and played, the more my understanding of this concept grew. One important part of this is that many of the rhythms played on the drumset are adaptations of hand drum parts combined with jazz, funk, and Caribbean styles.

There is a rich history of drumset in Cuban music going back many years. One of the pioneers was Walfredo De Los Reyes, Sr. who put out a recording many years ago called *Sabor Cubano* (Rumba Records/Jasrac PCD-2364), which featured Israel Lopez "Cachao" on bass and Los Papines on congas. It's very interesting to see the evolution of Afro-Cuban drumset playing from Walfredo's recordings to groups like Irakere and Los Van Van—and now to some of the latest groups like NG La Banda and El Medico De Salsa.

Upon first hearing *sonogo*, I could see from the construction of the grooves that it was put together much like the East Bay style of funk. The more I listened, the more I saw that it was very wide

open. I realized that, if I learned more about the music, I would be able to get into a whole new area of playing that would make my funk drumming much better.

The East Bay style of drumming is very interesting because it draws upon a lot of different elements—the funk of James Brown, Sly & the Family Stone, New Orleans, plus jazz, rock, Latin, Brazilian, Caribbean, African, Indian, and folkloric drumming types. Funk and Afro-Cuban drumset playing are very close in that the snare drum is used much the same way, with accented and ghosted notes. The snare and kick patterns are way beyond the 2 and 4 concept and use all of the notes between the downbeats to create very unusual time feels. These two styles are closely related because their roots are African and they draw from many of the same influences.

When you start trying to emulate the sound, feel, and rhythms of hand drums on the drumset, you are in an area that is "heaven" for all drumset players! A knowledge of several styles is essential, but from there, your only boundary is your imagination.

The following grooves are in the "East Bay" tradition and were inspired by the recent summer gig I had with Giovanni Hidalgo. (We were members of Mickey Hart's Mystery Box group.) All the exercises are written as 8th notes but are interpreted as 16ths, as in the Afro-Cuban style. The half note is felt as the basic pulse.

Example 1 is cascara with rumba clave and is a guide to how I'm hearing these grooves. (Play the top part on the side of the floor tom and the lower part on any rim.)

Example 2 is the root pattern, and examples 3-17 are its permutations. To understand it visually, look at the first note of example 2. This note moves to the "&" of 1 in example 3, then to beat 2 in example 4, then to the "&" of 2 in example 5, and so on. The kick and snare are not in the "usual" place but are placed like funk and fit with the cascara/clave pattern. (The "sticking" notated on the following patterns is: R = right hand, L = left hand, B = both hands together, and F = foot.)

4

F R L R L R L R R L R B R L

5

L F R L R L R L R R L R F B R

6

R L F R L R L R L R R L R B

7

F R L F R L R L R L R R L R B

8

B R L F R L R L R L R R L R

9

F B R L F R L R L R R L R

10

R B R L F R L R L R R L

11

L R B F R L F R L R L R R

12

R L R B R L F R L R L R L R

13

R R L R F B R L F R L R L R L

14

L R R L R B R L F R L R L R

15

R L R R L R B F R L F R L R L

16

L R L R R L R B R L F R L R

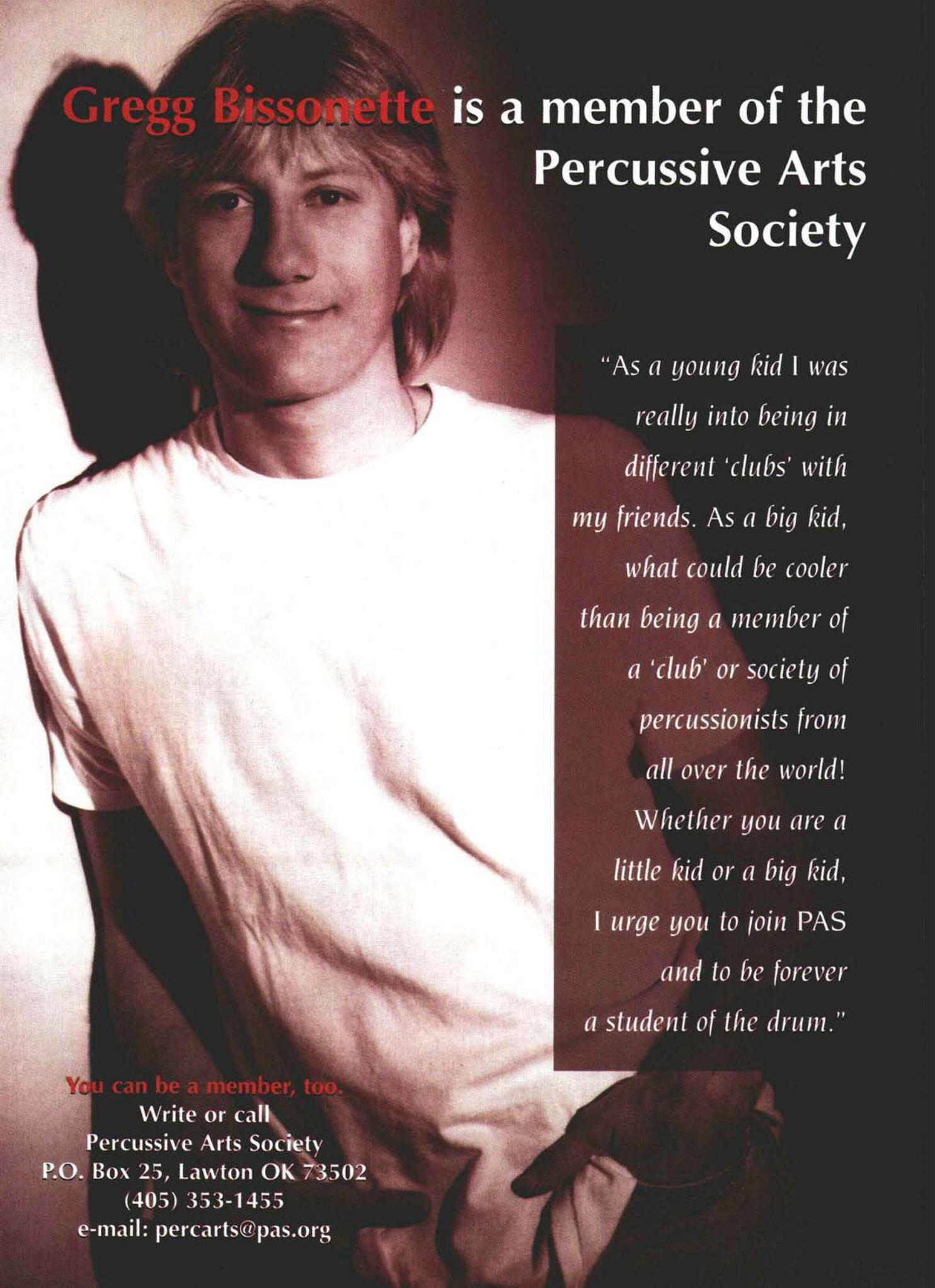
17

R L R L R R L R F B R L F R L

A good way to practice these is to program example 1 on your drum machine and then play the remaining exercises along with it. After you can successfully play the grooves, have a friend play the cascara part (or if you know some percussionists, play with them). I was amazed at how well these grooves fit with clave but were more like funk than they were Afro-Cuban.

For the purpose of explanation, I use certain words to describe these drumming concepts. But the true essence of all of this—what makes all of this work—can't be spoken or notated. That part of the music is discovered by getting into it and doing it yourself. The beauty of this is that it can't be put in a box, because it's continually evolving. See you next time, and enjoy!





Gregg Bissonette is a member of the
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drummer (plus bs, kybd, vcl): **Morgan Ågren**
with Mats Öberg: vcl, syn, hrm, kybd, autoharp



As chanteuse Dilbahar's perfume-commercial intonations lilt over guitar/bass power octaves, drummer Ågren's pounding five-against-four, and an undercurrent of demonic yowlings and growlings on disc opener "Russin Låsk," you begin to suspect these boys are a tad twisted. By the end of the track you rule out *Trends* as a last-minute Christmas gift for your mom—but then you're having too much fun to go shopping anyway.

Also featured on the Grammy Award-winning *Zappa's Universe* CD, Swedes Öberg and Ågren honor the musical individualist/social gadfly here with such Zappa-isms as mercurial styles and meters, diverse and dynamic instrumentation, individual chops, and complex tutti lines. Via Öberg, whose vocal melodies and embellish-

ments remind of Stevie Wonder, the occasionally facile lyrics lack Frank's bawdy, sneering humor, although a facsimile of his cynicism is ripe in most.

Ågren lightens up now and then (as with Gottlieb-cum-Wackerman licks in "Read My Thoughts"), but his metal sensibility dominates. With lots of sloshy hi-hat and brass, he brings fluidity to the material's often disjointed, staccato nature, all the while *naïling* the many syncopations with his kick and snare.

Like roller coasters? "Guardian Witch" includes a thundering 7/4 intro, a leaden rock verse, and a lyrical waltz interlude—and it all works! The harmonies, song form, and infectious hook of "Please Tell Me" skirt power pop-dom—that is, until the tune shifts into some spooky, digitally reversed female vocals over a 7/8 marimba/xylophone/glock ostinato.

In short, *Trends* is some pretty weird shit, and it won't all reveal itself in a single listening. But in general its adventurous production, rich, layered tonal landscapes, and no-prisoners performances offer something for everyone but the faint-hearted.

Rich Watson

Joe Zawinul

My People



(Escapade)

drummers: **Paco Séry, Tal Bergman**

percussionists: **Arto Tunçboyacıyan (and vcl), Alex Acuña, Trilok Gurtu, Rudy Regalado, Michito Sanchez, Souleyman Doumbia**

with Joe Zawinul (kybd, vcl), Salif Keita, Bolot, Thania Sanchez, Burhan Öcal, Richard Bona (vcl), Matthew Garrison (bs), Gary Poulson, Amit Chatterjee, Osmane Kouyake (gtr), Cheik Tidiane Seck (kybd), Bobby Malach (sx), Mike Mossman (trp, tbn), others

One of the most special and endearing talents ex-Miles Davis Sideman Joe Zawinul learned from the master is the selfless manner in which Miles created music greater than the sum of its parts. Add to that forty years of playing important and challenging music, and the Weather Report co-founder's body of work inevitably leads to the point of *My People*, a rich, warm album where a great number of wonderful musicians from around the globe are allowed the time and space to collaborate for the greater good.

Zawinul employs the rock-solid and sublime Ivory Coast native Paco Séry, whose propelling quarter-note drumset grooves hold together the West African rhythms churned out by the massive

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

On Level 42's new *Live At Wembley* (Imago, recorded in 1989) **GARY HUSBAND** beautifully funks up the sequences; he also fits in several roundhouse fills that prove his considerable hand speed.

SCOTT CAPIZZANO blows the fresh batch of tunes on Reacharound's *Who's Tommy Cooper?* (Trauma/Interscope) into a real rockin' place by way of a few happily unexpected twists and turns,

TropiJazz All Stars (RMM) features mercurial playing from percussionist **GIOVANNI HIDALGO**, along with drummer **HORACIO "EL NEGRO" HERNANDEZ** and percussionists **JOHNNY ALMENDRA, RICHIE FLORES, and TITO PUENTE**, live from Manhattan Music Center,

Pan drummer **TRACY THORNTON** has released his eclectic East Coast group's self-titled debut, *Been Caught Stealin'*, performing soca, calypso, reggae, jazz, and funk (self-released),

A few new goodies from King Crimson's Discipline label have recently been foisted upon us: Crimson Stick-man Trey Gunn's solo *The Third Star*, featuring KC's **PAT MASTELOTTO** as well as **BOB MULLER**; *Thrang Thrang Gozinbulx*, a live collection from Robert Fripp's early-'80s band, the League Of Gentlemen, featuring drumming supernova **JOHNNY TOOBAD**; and Crimson's own *Thrakattak*, a splicing together of the best improv sections from the band's winter '95 tour featuring, of course, Mastelotto and **BILL BRUFORD**.

Rating Scale



ensembles on *My People*. Fans of Carter Beauford, Manu Katche, and Stewart Copeland would be wise to check out the superb hi-hat and cymbal work weaving in and out of some very complex horn charts.

Master percussionists Arto Tunçboyacıyan, Alex Acuña, and Trilok Gurtu (among others) add their always special, tasteful, and proud flavors throughout the album, as Zawinul's difficult arrangements are brought to life by the many hand drums, shakers, and tambourines. The hypnotic percussion and bass interplay on the up-tempo "Orient Express" is worth the purchase price alone.

If this album has a weak spot, it is the last two tracks, where Zawinul gives us a reggae groove and an "ambient calypso" that don't quite have the rhythmic complexity or bite to keep up with the vitality and exploration heard on the rest of the album. But this comes after nine outstanding tracks and a joyful musical ride that should be experienced again and again.

Ted Bonar



OVERDOSE Scars (Fierce/Futurist)

drummer: André Marcio

with Baza (vcl, perc), Claudio David (gtr), Sergio Cichovicz (gtr, vcl), Eddie Weber (bs)

Thankfully, modern metal finally seems to be getting past the boring "fastest is best" routine. Recently several speed bands, including some from overseas like Sepultura and Overdose, have figured out that a better way to make your own statement lies in exploration of textures, mood, and lyrics. *Scars*, Overdose's latest, promises variety right from beat one, as "The Front" offers a drum & percussion intro seemingly beamed down from a Brazilian Escuela de Samba on Venus. But before you can jump out of your seat, "My Rage"

assures you you're in the right classroom as it kicks in with a great herky-jerky metal riff, which is later humorously doubled with nonsense vocalizing.

The percussion hook (obviously a nod to their Brazilian roots) carries a lot of interest throughout *Scars*, not only in the continual reprise of the attack-heavy non-kit pounding—are those djembes, *RotoToms*?—but in lots more

tight interplay between vocals and guitar rhythms. All of this non-traditional activity (at least in terms of this genre) doesn't keep drummer André Marcio from making his drumset mark with righteous double bass, strange accents, well-timed restraint, and unusual arrangement ideas. Examples abound; check out the rhythmic change in the chorus of "How To Pray," or the occasional injection of hand drum parts in unexpected sections.

Overdose should be commended for mixing variety and humor into their implacably heavy and angry music. Hell, there's even a sitar-laced song bordering on a ballad. That they've included a different kind of percussion sound alongside André Marcio's swift pounding makes it that much fresher. Very cool.

Adam Budofsky



Doky Brothers Doky Brothers (Blue Note)



drummers: Terri Lyne Carrington, Anders Mogensen, Alex Kiel, Klaus Suonsaari

with Niels Lan Doky (pno), Chris Minh Doky (bs), Ulf Wakenius (gtr), Michael Brecker (tn sx), Randy Brecker (trp), Frank Stangerup (kybd), Curtis Stigers, Deborah Brown (vcl)

The artistry of Terri Lyne Carrington is highly evident in her work with these talented Danish born jazzmen. She shows respect for the beautiful bass work of Chris Minh Doky and the lush, strident chords of Niels Lan Doky while mixing it up nicely with Mr Brecker's tenor on the opening number. Her sauntering jazz funk reading of "Summertime" leaves TLC lots of rhythmic options, and she thrills with tasty syncopated punches, using the whole kit. And she lets the bombs drop on the slow out vamp of "Hope," switching from brushes to sticks for extra punch.

While challenges abound for Carrington, such as the jazz trio version of Jaco Pastonus's "Teen Town," it's a pleasure to hear the three European drummers here as well. Anders Mogensen provides "Fearless Dreamer's" wispy ECM feel, Alex Riel offers the sure, laid-back snap on "Natural Woman" and a William Kennedy-ish groove on "Children's' Song," and Finnish drummer Klaus Suonsaari gets the eggs frying with his brushwork on "My One And Only Love"

Robin Tolleson



Bison Space Evader (Cosmic)



drummer: Doug Cabot

with Ben Averch (gtr, vcl), Mike Averch (gtr), Matt Diken (bs) Oh, you lucky Bostonians. With a rich post-punk history built on the work of creative ragers like Mission Of Burma, Dinosaur Jr., and Buffalo Tom, Beantown's club stages never seem to be without great heavy Massachusetts bands pounding it out for the coeds. This year's model Bison Drummer Doug Cabot and company know the recipe—manic yet somehow controlled energy, start stop rhythms, now roaring/now jangling guitar, impassioned bright-guy-in-workboots lyrics, building dynamics continually pushing the ceiling.

Bison handles it all with lots of confidence and sincerity, and Cabot is largely responsible for setting the pace and charging the emotions on *Space Evader*. Whether mimicking the menacing guitar rhythms on the wonderful leadoff track, "Dead Center," with a pogoing snare/bass onslaught, positively smacking the 12/8 chorus and strange connecting parts of "Manta Ray," beating out the tag of "Killer Gone Free" with an offbeat China, or nudging the pensive beginnings of "Downed" and "FBI Man," Cabot's sound is always big, punchy, and wonderfully liberal with washy hi-hats and crash/rides. The whole band's performance is also refreshingly live-sounding (another Boston specialty), which further accentuates the power and adds credibility to the performances. A great debut.

Adam Budofsky

VARIOUS

Bending Towards The Light...A Jazz Nativity (Milan)



drummers: Tim Horner, Bill Goodwin (one track)

with Tito Puente, Ron Carter, Jon Faddis, Dave Brubeck, Toots Thielemans, Clark Terry, Paquito D'Rivera, The New York Voices, Lionel Hampton, and others, plus solo voices and choir

Crawlin' the walls 'cause of malls? Wanna slap the next soprano castrato who comes a-carolin' at your door? Ready to run screaming when the season's batch of "Swingin' Noel" discs are unleashed? Fear not, for I bring you glad tidings Here's a wonderful holiday disc that could warm the coldest Grinch heart

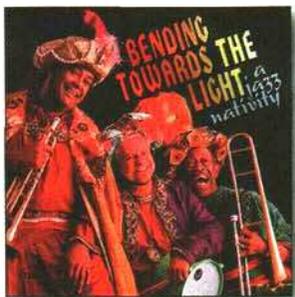
Bending Towards The Light was first performed at New York's St Peter's Lutheran Church The jazz pageant has since become an annual tradition, and its gala tenth anniversary was celebrated at Lincoln Center The music—a mix of originals and interpretations of the traditional—is gorgeous, vibrant, and inspired, with a broad range of styles

A heavenly host of stars are heard, including Tito Puente, Ron Carter, Jon Faddis, Dave Brubeck, Toots Thielemans, Clark Terry, Paquito D'Rivera, The New York Voices, Lionel Hampton, Al Grey, Lew Soloff, Jerry Dodgion, and Candido

It's a pleasure to hear drummer Tim Horner at the helm behind this master ensemble A talent deserving wider recognition, Tim is a solid Sideman who has worked with Gerry Mulligan, and currently mans the seat with the Mana Schneider Orchestra He swings hard and is suitably sensitive as needed

In a morass of Yuletide commercialism, this heartfelt disc touches the true spirit of joy

Jeff Potter



Jonas Hellborg/Shawn Lane/ Apt. Q-SS8 Temporal Analogues Of Paradise (Day Eight)



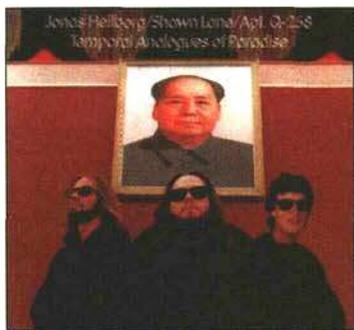
drummer: Apt. Q-258

with Jonas Hellborg (bs), Shawn Lane (gtr)

Remember those jam sessions in your living room when you were first learning to play? Tunes would go on for half an hour, and there would be very few moments to write home about.

Temporal Analogues Of Paradise features some lengthy jamming too, but just about everything here clicks. Ideas are tossed out liberally and elaborated on instantly, though somehow the music stays urgent and nonchalant.

This recording was done live at locations in Sweden,



France, and Germany, then edited together into two long "movements," although there are enough developed musical ideas and twists for eight or ten songs. This trio isn't just blowing a pre-arranged formula, they're listening and reacting, blasting and resting. That's what makes them ascend to the desired heights—and makes forgivable their occasional lapses into slightly heavy-handed macho trio territory.

Apt. Q-258 (Jeff Sipe) has been heard on drums for several years with Aquarium Rescue Unit. Here he senses and seizes his space, the availability of the musical moment. He's in heaven in this kind of atmospheric and bombastic sparring session, mentally doubling the half-time rock grooves, spurring the action with nicely conceived and executed asides. Bassist Hellborg makes his musical ideas easily known, and Apt. Q-258 takes the cue and sets sail out front with the equally game guitarist Lane. And Q-258's later solo is a beauty, from teeth-rattling tom and kick barrages to the faintest of cymbal swells.

Robin Tolleson

Sam Phillips Omnipop (Virgin)



drummers: Jim Keltner, Matt Chamberlain, Josh La Belle, Jon Brion (plus gtr, bs, kybd)
percussionists: Paulinho DaCosta, Don Heffington
with Sam Phillips (vcl, gtr, kybd), Marc Ribot (gtr), Brad Hauser (bs, clr), Patrick Warren (kybd), T Bone Burnett (gtr), others

Sam Phillips has garnered less attention than she deserves for a batch of intelligent, tuneful, and mature psychedelic/pop albums, probably because she's never been easily categorized. (The above description is about as concise as I can get.) On *Omnipop* Phillips continues her high level of aural pop art, bringing in, as usual, a revolving cast of smart and broadminded studio cats to add color and shape to her songs.

The drummer's mission here is to serve a great song—whether that means allowing his imagination to run wild with sound sources and recording techniques, or finding that elusive in-between groove that borders on corny but works perfectly. Anyone familiar with Jim Keltner will know this sort of thing is right up his alley, and ex-Bohemian Matt Chamberlain has been making similar waves in the studio lately, popping up on several releases of various degrees of off-kilter-ness.

The rewards for close listening here are subtle—the brushes [Keltner?] and percussion overdubs on "Entertainmen" [sic]... Chamberlain's breakdown during the solo and over-the-bar fills on "Plastic Is Forever," or his almost claustrophobically simple rim click/tom rhythm on "Your Hands".. Josh La Belle and Don Heffington's nervous percussion behind the horny four-eyes tale of "Faster Pussycat To The Library."

No, there might not be any earth-shatteringly awesome kit work here... just some great *music*, made even better by a group of very sensitive drummers.

Adam Budofsky



VIDEOS

ERIC SINGER All Access To Drumming



(EDMProductions)

level: beginner to intermediate

\$29.95, 80 minutes

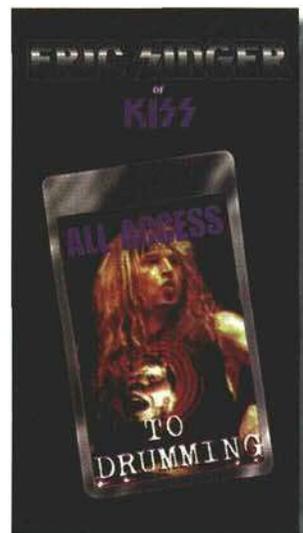
More than just the drummer for KISS (though that is the role you likely know him from), Eric Singer is a classic journeyman hard rocker, plying his trade with acts like Lita Ford, Alice Cooper, Black Sabbath, Badlands, and Gary Moore. It's the experiences he took to and from those gigs—as well as KISS—that make Singer more than qualified to pass on tips and concepts to drummers looking to drive heavy bands.

Many of us have seen "big name" videos that suffered from their subjects' obvious unease with speaking roles and close-up camera angles. Not here; Singer seems to enjoy being in front of the lens, which certainly makes the learning process easier. In a well-paced presentation touched with humor, Singer covers important topics like warming up, practicing, independence, double bass exercises, performing ideas, equipment, triplets, and playing live vs. recording. During the technique segments, he demonstrates how many drum-

ming "tricks" are simple ideas sped up, giving beginners the confidence that, with some practice, they too will be able to display flashy and musically exciting chops. Indeed, beyond-intermediates will dig Singer as he takes these ideas into pretty advanced territory. But Singer never forgets to push the basics, and he also reminds that a lot of the things he shows us are his personal tools; any process that gets a drummer to where he or she wants to go is valid.

Add to the mix some pre-"comeback" live KISS material (sorry, no makeup), good camera angles with inset pedal shots, a short but flexible exercise sheet, and good sound (despite occasional "blips" when the mic's couldn't seem to handle certain strokes), and this makes for a good presentation of a very solid and popular hard rock drummer.

Adam Budofsky



BOOKS

Drummer's Guide To Hip Hop, House, New Jack Swing, Hip House, Soca House

by Bill Elder



(Warner Bros.)

level: intermediate to advanced

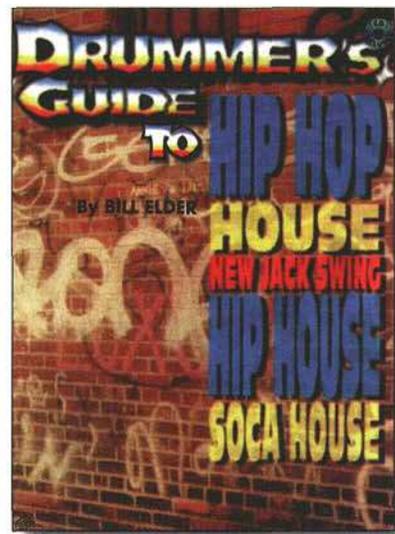
\$21.95 (includes CD)

As drummers make inroads into the hip-hop studio scene, and players start getting calls to add their live percussive insights to rap tracks, it makes it more enticing to have a few of these monster grooves in your back pocket. Bill Elder's book and CD is a blast for the student who may already be playing many of these funk beats without even knowing what they're called. Now you can impress your friends, relatives, bandmates, and perspective employers by "calling" the groove before you lay it down.

Elder takes the mystery out of house (a glorified disco beat), soca (variations on a lazy samba), hip-hop (a cross between a shuffle and a boogaloo), hip house, and new jack swing (a popular groove to rap over because of its supremely laid-back, behind-the-beat feel). There's little chit-chat or extemporaneous written material here, just transcrip-

tions of the nearly one hundred beats. What comes through clearly is the power of one stroke, how a little shift in kick drum placement, a subtle hi-hat embellishment, or a funky ghost note deviation on snare can freshen or completely change the slant of a groove. Elder offers some double bass riffs to rival any 16th-note drum machine patterns. He also explains a technique he borrowed from Dennis Chambers where the hi-hat and second kick pedal are set up so close together that you can play both with your left foot. A nice trick, but happily, in the end, this book isn't just about tricks—it's all about groove.

Robin Tolleson



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Anchoring A Bass Drum

When I was twelve years old I played a show on a wooden theater stage. I didn't know enough to bring a carpet at the time, so my bass drum "walked" all over the floor. I determined that it would never happen again. The next day, I went to a hardware store and purchased a light link chain and two hooks. I attached the hooks to the chain at a length so that I could hook the chain to two of the lower bass drum lug screws and around my throne. The chain is light and portable. It works better than a bucket of bricks or a 2x4 nailed to the stage. Thirty-one years later, I still have the same chain, I've never damaged a lug screw, and my bass drum still stays put.

Alan Gamble
Kingsport, TN

Quick-Change Beater Tonality

I was playing with my band one day, and I could tell that the bass-drum part needed a dryer, punchier sound than my felt beater produced. Instead of buying a new beater, I found a simple yet effective way to get that sound. I took five rubber bands and wrapped them around the felt beater. This gave the bass drum a more powerful sound, and saved me the price of a new beater.

Greg Justis
Petoskey, MI

Securing Mic' Booms

A singing drummer who doesn't use a headset can have a problem getting a microphone directly in front of his or her face without the stand and boom getting in the way and/or tipping over. To solve this problem, start with a standard-style mic' stand, fitted with a typical boom arm. Spin the heavy base off the bottom of the stand, and slip on a ten- to fifteen-pound disk from a free weight set. Then re-attach the regular stand base.

Now that the stand base has been fitted with its additional weight, raise the stand

as high as it will go, and extend the boom all the way. This will get the stand and boom out of your way. Add a gooseneck attachment onto the end of the boom, and mount your mic' holder to the end of the gooseneck. The additional base weight will keep the stand from tipping over, and you'll be able to place the mic' in a convenient position for both singing and playing.

Michael Daley
Tigerton, WI

Securing Cymbals

Here's a method of keeping your cymbals from sliding around and getting scratched in your cymbal bag. Obtain a 5/16" bolt, two large washers, and a 5/16" wing nut. (The length of the bolt depends on how many cymbals you have.) Put a piece of plastic tubing on the neck of the bolt to protect the cymbals. Stack the cymbals, then insert the bolt (with one washer already on it) through the top of the cymbal stack. Put the second washer and the wing nut on the bottom of the bolt. (Tighten the wing nut only enough to secure the cymbals together, not enough to crack them.) Place your cymbals in the bag, and away you go!

Tony Monton
Canyon Country, CA

Durable Snare Holders

Over time, the plastic tape strips that fasten the snares to the bottom of the snare drum will stretch, causing the snares to vibrate unevenly against the drum and contribute to unwanted snare buzz from tom vibrations and other instruments.

To remedy this, I cut two strips 3/4" wide and about 8" long out of an old snare head (I recommend a heavy single-ply head) and used these to replace the tape strips. My snare drum sounded like a new drum! Depending on your drum, the length and width of the strip may vary. Any excess length, however, can always be cut off after the strip has been installed.

By the way, I cut the rest of the old drum-head into similar-sized pieces. It gave me enough spare snare fasteners to last for years!

Eric Gardner
Danvers, MA

Alternative Snares

For a great improvement in snare drum response, remove the typical spiral wire snares from the drum and replace them with lengths of small beaded keychain. The chain may be purchased at any hardware or locksmith store, in either chrome or brass finish. Buy an 18' length and cut it into twelve 18" pieces. Turn the snare drum over and slack off the snare-side head (for the installation process). Lay the strands of keychain across the bottom of the drum, side-by-side as with normal snare strands. Attach the strands first to the butt bracket on one side of the drum, then attach them to the snare strainer on the other side. Adjust each strand to lay flat and evenly across the head. Finally, tension the head and adjust the snares at the strainer to obtain the sound desired.

George Petty
North Babylon, NY

Crawling Into The Job

If you're a working drummer, you know what a pain it is to go back and forth from the car to the club several times in order to bring in all your equipment (especially if you can't find a place to park out front). You can buy an expensive equipment cart—and you'll still probably have to make two trips. Or, for about \$40 you can buy an auto-repair "crawler"—a low, flat sort of scooter that mechanics lay on to roll under a car. I fit my entire six-piece set, in cases, and my trap bag all on the crawler. I keep everything together with bunji cords, and even if I have to go over a curb the cases stay in place. I transport my kit in a station wagon, and the crawler lays right on top of the drums. That way it's the first thing out for loading in, and the last thing in when loading out.

Lenny Rosenthal
Antioch, CA

Note: The tips presented in Drumline are suggestions based on the personal experience of individual drummers, and are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Modern Drummer magazine. Modern Drummer cannot guarantee that any problem will be solved by any Drumline suggestion, and cannot be responsible for any damage to equipment or personal injury resulting from the utilization of any such suggestion. Readers are encouraged to consider each suggestion carefully before attempting to utilize any Drumline tip.



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The best reason to play drums.

Paul Sarni

Paul Sarni has been drumming "almost for a lifetime." His influences begin with his father, Tony Sarni—himself a Boston jazz drummer. Paul was sitting in with his father's trio at the age of seven. Later, he was heavily influenced by Steve Gadd, Jeff Porcaro, Vinnie Colaiuta, Tony Williams, and Buddy Rich. These diverse influences helped Paul develop a style—amply displayed on his demo video—that is equal parts technique, emotion, and versatility.

In his youth, Paul received several awards, including the Louis Armstrong Jazz Award from the National Association of Jazz Educators. A desire to pursue a professional career led Paul to relocate from Boston to Los Angeles. "Moving to L.A. was a huge boost to my playing," he says. "Being around all that talent in such a variety of situations can only improve one's playing."



Paul put the "improvement" he gained in the L.A. environment to good use, landing gigs with Ben Vereen, Frank Gambale, John Patitucci, Tim Landers, and many other such artists. He's also done recordings with Andre & Sandra Crouch, Holy Smoke, the Dave Coate Group, and Andrea DeFilippo. He plays a Pearl kit with 8-ply maple shells, K Zildjian ride and crash cymbals and Paiste hi-hats, and a Roland TDE-7K electronic kit. He's also a Vic Firth drumstick endorser.

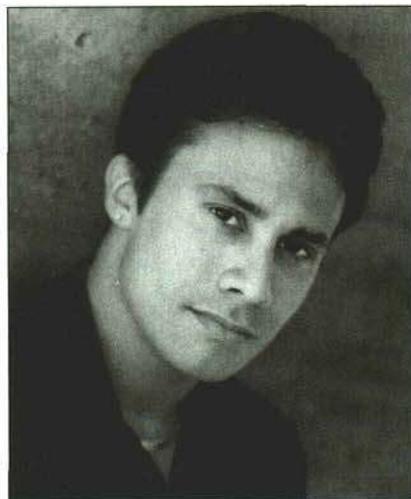
"My goals are simple," says Paul. "They include seeking the Lord, from whom my talent comes, and drumming on the high-quality music I can play."

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. Photos will not be paid for nor credited.) The bio sketch

Shaun Guerin

Thirty-four-year-old Shaun Guerin comes by his considerable talent naturally. For one thing, he's been playing quite a long time—since the age of seven. For another, he grew up in an atmosphere of high-quality drumming: His father is studio legend John Guerin. But that doesn't mean Shaun is a product of the sometimes "processed" studio environment. "Actually," says Shaun, "Ringo was my hero—next to my father. I'm mostly self-taught except for some reading instruction from Joe Porcaro."

Growing up in the '70s, Shaun was influenced by the music of early Genesis, ELP, King Crimson, George Duke, and Frank Zappa—along with recordings on which his father performed. Consequently his style ranges from blues and jazz to odd-meter progressive rock. Over the past five years he's "played a lot of jazz gigs" and has recorded with guitarist Justin Morell. A complete musician, Shaun has also scored a film (*American Tigers*) and has done work for Hanna-Barbera. His impressive demo CD features music almost totally written, performed, and recorded by



himself. That music showcases Shaun's expressive drumming style and fluid technique.

Shaun currently lives in Valley Village, California. He plays DW drums and a combination of Paiste, Zildjian, Istanbul, and Sabian cymbals. As for goals, he says, "I would love to be doing records, tours, movie scores.... I just want to be very busy!"

Steve Tobin

Greenville, South Carolina's Steve Tobin is a veteran club, road, and concert drummer, with over twenty-five years of hard-hitting experience behind him. A versatile player who is adept in jazz, country, and pop styles, he actually feels that his forte is hard rock and fusion. (Not surprisingly, he cites Billy Cobham and Terry Bozzio as his strongest influences.)

Demos with a variety of bands—including an exciting live performance with his current rock trio, Dizzy Cadillac, give evidence of Steve's intensity, creativity, and skill. A dynamic soloist, Steve



knows how to excite a crowd with a good balance of drumming technique and bombastic showmanship.

Steve performs his musical assaults on a seven-piece Ludwig double-bass drumkit fitted with a battery of Zildjian cymbals. In addition to his

work with Dizzy Cadillac, Steve is shopping a recording project he's involved in with guitarist Mark Swicgood. He plans to continue on his present course, playing for people wherever possible, while hoping for serious response from a record company.

should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what

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Dancing With Destruction

by Zoro

Maybe I'm living in some sort of fantasy land, but I always thought that the quintessential "musician's dream" was to work hard, achieve your musical goals, and have something to show for all your dedication and sacrifice. But for many players today, it seems that the dream has turned into a nightmare. In that nightmare, the grim reaper beckons them to choose his path of death and destruction by indulging in drugs and/or alcohol.

The impact that drugs have had on the entertainment industry has been profound—and historic. Great musicians of the past, like Stan Getz, Chet Baker, John Coltrane, Billie Holliday, Charlie Parker, Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, and Jimi Hendrix lived lives that were tormented—and often cut short—as a result of their addictions. The more recent drug-related deaths of Kurt Cobain and River Phoenix has done little to dissuade others from joining the party. Since 1992 we've witnessed the deaths of Jonathan Melvoin of Smashing Pumpkins, Shannon Hoon of Blind Melon, Bradley Nowell of Sublime, Dwayne Goettel of Skinny Puppy, Kristen Pfaff of Hole, and Stefanie Sargent of 7 Year Bitch. And the saddest thing is that all these people perished before reaching their full potential as artists. They were all among those who believed that they were invulnerable—that death was for "other people."

Besides the obvious threat of death, it's no secret that many musicians have been fired from really great gigs as a result of their habitual use of drugs or alcohol. The number of players linked to overdose, arrest, admitted use, or recovery is staggering.

Think the problem is not escalating out of control? Think again. The Partnership For A Drug-Free America reports a 68% increase in heroin-related emergency-room episodes from 1988 to 1994. Another new government report shows that the overall drug use among twelve- to seventeen-year-olds has risen almost 80% since 1992. Drug and alcohol abuse has become an epidemic of enormous proportions. And that epidemic knows no class separation; people from all walks of life have been overtaken by it.

"A MUSICIANS LIFE
IS A HARD ONE UNDER
THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
ONLY A FOOL WOULD
ADD TO THAT HARDSHIP
BY FLIRTING WITH DISASTER."

My inspiration for writing this article is a sincere desire to see musicians reach their potential and achieve their goals. *My motivation* to speak out is also very personal: I've had the grievous experience of seeing many close friends die, and of watching others destroy their lives. *My opinions* are based on the observations I've made over the past fifteen years while touring and recording with Lenny Kravitz, Bobby Brown, Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons, New Edition, Vanessa Paradis, Jody Watley, and many others. During that time I couldn't help but notice the strong fascination that musicians have with drugs and drinking. I was amazed at the number of

celebrities who seem to have what every musician wants—fame, fortune, respect—and yet are still unfulfilled and unhappy. There seems to be a void in all of us that cannot be filled with material success alone.

On a personal note, I'd like to state honestly that I have never been drunk or high. I don't say that to make myself out to be a saint; it doesn't make me any better than those who do indulge. To me, it's just a matter of common sense and making the right choices in one's life. My reasons for abstaining are simple. I grew up with such an intense desire to "make it" as a drummer that I couldn't conceive of letting anything negative stand between me and my dreams. I was too busy trying to build something to have any interest in the drug scene, because it looked so obviously destructive. A musician's life is a hard one under the best of circumstances. Only a fool would add to that hardship by flirting with disaster. (Just ask anyone who has successfully kicked a drug habit. Several famous musicians have traveled the long road to recovery, and today they consider themselves lucky just to be alive.)

Entering The Mind Of A User

In the battle to overcome the current drug epidemic, it's important to analyze why people turn to drugs and drinking in the first place. The following points are based on in-depth conversations I've had with a number of substance abusers. Although they wish to remain anonymous, they were quite anxious to help fellow musicians avoid their pitfalls.

1. Acceptance. One of the most common reasons for people of all age groups to get involved with drugs and alcohol is simply to be accepted by the so-called "in

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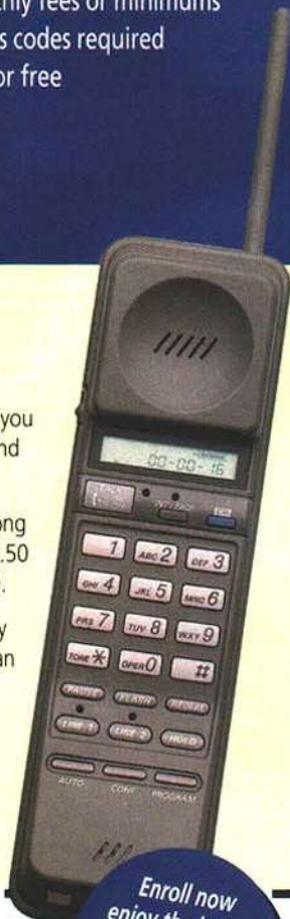
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crowd." The feeling of being left out or considered "square" scares many individuals—especially young ones—into drugs. People are often influenced into bad habits by those assumed to be "cool."

To overcome this problem we must change our way of thinking. Do you *really* want to be like everyone else? For example, isn't it a little embarrassing to go somewhere in a hip new outfit, only to meet five other people wearing the same exact outfit? As drummers, everyone's goal should be to achieve a unique sound

and style. We are individuals, not clones. There is nothing to be gained by being an exact replica of anyone else, and in most cases you'd be put down for it. So why do drugs just because a few other people are doing them?

If you lose friends because you don't join in the "drug scene," those people are not real friends, anyway. Real friends will accept you the way you are. Drugs don't make you a cool person, or fun to be with. They don't suddenly give you a charming personality or make you more talented or

attractive.

When I felt isolated because I seemed to be the only guy *not* partaking in the drug scene, I used to read a passage from a book of motivational quotations to help me build my inner strength. It read: "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path, and leave a trail." This left me with a sense of pride.

2. Curiosity. Another reason why people start to experiment with drugs is our curious nature. Everyone who becomes an addict begins with the idea that they'll just "dabble a bit" while remaining in complete control of their habit. This is a totally erroneous concept. I've been told repeatedly how much time flies by when you "just dabble." Before you know it, twenty years of your life are gone. There is *always* the danger of becoming addicted.

Many people have naturally addictive personalities. I recognized that I had such a personality at an early age, and I guess a certain amount of sheer fear kept me away from drugs as a result. Now, fear is sometimes considered a weakness, and we are often told that we should "overcome" our fears. While that can be good advice in certain aspects of life, we should remember that fear can also be a good thing. It underlies our basic instinct for survival. It's fear that keeps us from running in front of a speeding truck on the freeway. It's when we ignore our basic fear instincts—along with our sense of reason—that trouble begins.

3. Problems, problems, problems. People often resort to drugs as a form of escape from the problems of daily life, or to numb the emotional effects of a major crisis. But it takes no genius to figure out that using drugs is not going to do anything to actually help *solve* your problems. Once you come back to earth from that artificial high, you're faced with the same dilemmas again—and you're no closer to solving them.

People with high-stress jobs claim to do drugs because of the intense pressure they're under. That's a complete cop-out. We must learn to accept that life will always have problems, and we have to deal with them logically as they arise. Most problems can be overcome by optimism, hard work, perseverance, and faith. Doing drugs is one of the most irresponsible things I can think of, and how can you

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solve any problem by being irresponsible? Accept the challenges that life has, so that you may feel the glory of a victory.

4. Low self-esteem. Many people turn to drugs as a way to heal emotional wounds from early childhood. But this is like trying to put a *Band-Aid* on a huge open sore. Lack of proper parenting and positive role models are causes of low self-image. Negative experiences and lack of attention also contribute to emotional dysfunction. Unless you deal with those *real* issues, you will always be haunted by them. And no

amount of drugs can make them go away.

Unfortunately, low self-esteem also leads to the unhealthy need to impress others as a means of self-validation, and to feel worthy of being loved. This involves reckless behavior—including doing drugs—as a way of crying out for attention. People with low self-esteem also tend to use drugs as a form of mental suicide—because they are afraid of the real thing. This is all an attempt to bury deeply rooted emotional pain. But running away from the problem (or blotting it out in a drug-

induced haze) won't solve it either. Ask yourself what you're unhappy with in your life, and seek counseling in those areas. There are a lot of proven strategies that have helped many people to overcome the effects of family dysfunction. It takes courage, and it takes honesty. It doesn't take drugs.

5. The rush. The euphoric feeling of getting high is yet another trap that catches many people. But once you get off that artificial high, it's all over—and you feel ten times worse than before. Instead, get high on something real...something that lasts: an accomplishment, a friendship—anything genuine! I get a natural high every time I play my drums. It feels fantastic to express myself and to make music that others enjoy. There are many healthy alternatives that can make you feel great. But you'll never see them as long as you buy into the false reality of drugs.

6. Boredom. Boredom is something that can happen no matter what you do or where you live. Unfortunately, bored people with too much time on their hands are notorious for getting into trouble. This is one reason it's so important to have some kind of positive plan for your life.

Boredom is a *big* problem for many musicians on the road. You need to have a mission that motivates you out there—an inner driving force that gives you purpose—besides the obvious one of doing the best job you can on each and every gig. You need to find something healthy to occupy all the idle time between shows.

Consider These Facts

1. Your health. It's no secret to anybody that drugs are extremely harmful to your body and your mind. We're living in a world on the brink of environmental disaster. It's hard enough to stay healthy as it is. If you indulge in drugs, sooner or later (most likely sooner) you are going to encounter *needless* medical problems. Why put your body through that? Respect and take care of yourself instead. If you don't, no one else will.

2. Money. If nothing else convinces you to stay away from (or give up) drugs, consider this fact alone: Drugs are not free. We've all heard horror stories about people who have sold all their possessions and then have stolen from loved ones just to support their habit. Desperate users have become

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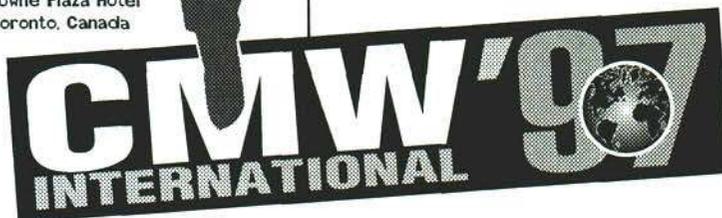


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financially bankrupt and have burned bridges with people who have trusted them.

Money is hard to come by these days, and it shouldn't be wasted. There must be a million *productive* things we can spend our hard-earned money on. What about new drum equipment? Cymbals? Private lessons? CDs? Drum books? Saving up for music school? Invest your money in your dreams and goals, and in developing the talents and abilities you were given. Don't invest in something that yields no dividends.

Kicking The Habit

I'm told that the hardest thing about quitting drugs is going through the "grieving period." It's been compared to losing a great friend who really believes in you. Many users cite the temporary—and false—confidence that drugs provide as a chief reason for their continued use.

It's true that in order to kick drugs, you have to re-learn how to use and rely on your own faculties. But when they come back to you it's very inspiring. Those who have overcome their problem say that eventually you'll get excited about the progress you make in your life.

If you are currently using drugs, I urge you to get help and to make every effort to kick the habit. The Twelve-Step Program has been highly successful among musicians. There are also treatment centers and rehab facilities everywhere. And there are groups like the Musicians Assistance Program (MAP), which was formed in 1992 and has since put several musicians through drug treatment. MAP also instituted an outreach program in 1995 in an attempt to get a handle on the widespread drug problem within the recording industry.

Although the sources I mentioned above can support you, it's still a painful fact that no one can kick your habit for you. You have to do it yourself. We all have within us an incredible amount of human will. But you have to *want* to quit; it has to be sincere.

Here are three common factors agreed upon by ex-users: 1) They wished they had never gotten into drugs. 2) They were sometimes unsure as to *why* they had started, but they eventually came to an understanding through some serious soul-searching. 3) They never regretted quitting.

Misconceptions

To say that you cannot be a successful musician if you have a drug or drinking problem would be a lie. There have been some great musicians who were known addicts throughout their careers. But think of how much further any of them might have gone *without* drugs to impede their progress. Unfortunately, a lot of young people are under the delusion that if they emulate the addicted behavior of their idols, they too will be successful. Their mistake is in emulating the drug addiction rather than the musical skills of the idol in question. I have never met *any* artist who has attributed any of his or her success to drugs or drinking. That behavior does not promote success; only practice, hard work, and persistence can do that.

There is currently a fashionable spin on "junkie chic," preached to us through imagery in the media. Part of the blame goes to the business itself; drug use is so glorified within the realm of the entertainment business that it's no wonder people are duped into it. The degradation seems to be part of the allure; the doom and gloom of being a junkie almost looks glamorous (in a

sick way). Our fascination with "the dark side" deceives many people into thinking that being a junkie is romantic. But consider the massive destruction to one's life, career, family, finances, and health. Consider, too, the mental and emotional devastation caused by the loss of hope, ambition, direction, judgment, and sense of reality. Anything that can be responsible for all this damage is surely not something to greet with open arms. When something is this much more powerful than you are, it's best to stand back and leave it alone.

I am making an unashamed appeal to drummers. We are a fellowship, blessed with the talent to make people happier by virtue of the grooves we deliver. I'm sick and tired of losing brothers and sisters to drugs and alcohol. So I will continue to speak out against this evil. But I can't do it alone. It's time for each of us to do our part and to look after all our fellow musicians. Remember, your destiny is not a matter of chance—it's a matter of choice. So make the right one. Build towards your future with drumming and determination, not with drugs.



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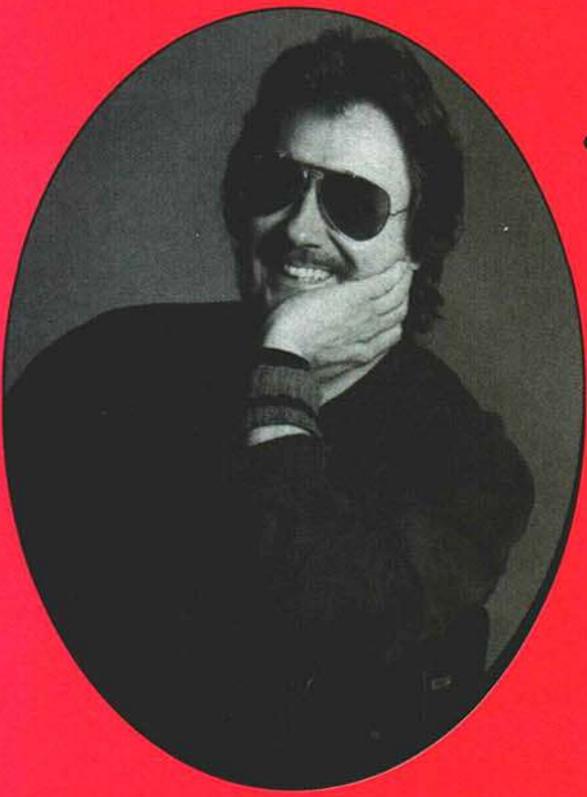
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Remote Kick Konzept Revisited

by John M. Elliott

In the August 1995 *Shop Talk* Dave Indigo suggested an innovative drum setup that he dubbed the Remote Kick Konzept (RKK). Dave's idea was that by using a left-footed double bass drum pedal, placing the kick drum to the left side, and utilizing the "slave pedal" as the primary pedal, a right-handed/footed drummer could position his or her rack toms lower and closer for a more efficient and compact setup.

In this article I'd like to put forth what I think is the next logical step in this concept, which I call RKK-Ambidextrous (or simply RKK-A). I call it RKK-A because the hi-hat is now also relocated, and either a left- or right-handed drummer can play this kit with no loss of technique.

The Problem: Crossed Arms On The Hi-Hat

I've often admired drummers like Billy Cobham and Lenny White, who, in essence, are left-handed drummers playing on traditional right-handed setups. This enables them to play the hi-hat (placed to their left) with their left stick, and to play the snare drum with their right stick—thus requiring no crossing of their arms. In Billy's case, this also allows him to place his hi-hats very low (almost even with his snare drum) and to bring his many rack toms in close to him without interference from his hi-hat.

However, most right-handed players (including myself) play the hi-hat by crossing our right arm over our left to strike the hi-hat with our right stick. Because of the number of toms in my kit, this cross-arm technique stretches me to an uncomfortable position. But I've spent years learning various hi-hat patterns and licks (using *both* sticks) with my hi-hat placed in that left-side position. To place the hi-hat on my right side (where my floor tom is now



would result in the loss of much of the technique I have developed—not to mention having to learn to play the hi-hat with my right foot and the kick with my left. I could get a pair of auxiliary, closed hi-hats and place them to my right, but that would take up precious space on my kit. I wouldn't be able to open and close the hi-hats, either, unless I got an additional one with a remote pedal, which would require even *more* space.

So here was my problem in a nutshell: How could I continue to play my hi-hat patterns with my right stick (including open and closed positions and all the subtle changes in between) without crossing my arms—and without suffering any loss of technique?

The Solution

Enter RKK-A. The idea here is to replace the standard hi-hat entirely with a cable-remote hi-hat, placing the pedal in its traditional place to the drummer's left and the hi-hat cymbals directly in front of the player. (Between two rack toms works extremely well for me. Check out the accompanying photo.) With the hi-hat placed in this fashion, a right-handed drummer can play any and all hi-hat licks—including all of the left-handed patterns—without losing any technique and without crossing his or her arms. (A left-

handed/footed player can achieve this same hi-hat positioning simply by putting the cable-remote pedal to his or her right side.)

This hi-hat placement also opens up the left side of the kit for creative positioning of toms or other equipment. Everything can be placed closer in to the snare drum in equal proximity. As you can see in the photo, my largest rack tom (a 14" power tom) is but two inches from my snare. I *could* place a 20" gong drum there if I wanted to, because the space is now available. I've heard drummers complain that their toms are too far away or positioned awkwardly; I've never heard any complaints about toms being too close. With RKK-A I've been able to bring all of the tom rims to within an inch of the snare. That actually *is* too close for me, and I've backed them up a bit. But it illustrates the flexibility and potential of the RKK-A setup.

The resulting tom arrangement is not *completely* symmetrical, of course—but with the addition of a floor tom on the left, it comes close. Therefore the RKK-A is "ambidextrous" in that it can be played equally well by either a right- or left-handed player. Imagine going to a jam session where right- or left-handedness is not a factor, and where anyone can sit down and play without having to move anything!

Considerations

The RKK-A setup does look a little funny, because it runs counter to our traditional notion of how a set should look and be played. There is also a slight adjustment required in order to play the hi-hat in the center of the kit. But it's not enough of an adjustment to be bothersome. Just set the kit up, close your eyes, and

play. You'll be amazed at how accessible all the elements of your kit are and how effortless the transition is.

I also realize that you may have budgetary concerns. Under "normal" circumstances you'd probably consider buying a traditional, right-handed/footed double kick pedal and a regular hi-hat stand before you'd consider buying the equipment necessary to dabble in something as innovative as RKK-A. Perhaps you could *borrow* the gear from the store for a day or two, or purchase it on some sort of thirty-day approval basis where you could get your money back if the concept doesn't work for you. If these options aren't available, ask the dealer to let you put together an RKK-A setup on their sales floor. Who knows? You may start a new sales trend for them!

In Summary

It would probably be going too far to say that I'll never play on a traditional right-handed setup again. Obviously I'll have to if I go to a jam session and/or play on someone else's kit. But given a choice, my preference is definitely the RKK-A setup. It's logical, and it's easy to play. And though I know I have miles to go before I can play like Billy Cobham or Lenny White, at least I can now play with the same advantages that they do. I don't have to play any hi-hat patterns with a crossover technique, and my eight-piece kit is now more compact and accessible than ever before. I earnestly suggest that you try the RKK-A and give yourself those same advantages.



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XL Specialty Percussion

by Rick Van Horn

Nestled amid the cornfields just outside of Fort Wayne in northeastern Indiana is the community of Huntertown. It's a small town, supported by both agriculture and light industry. As a result, it's populated by industrious people who produce a wide variety of products. So perhaps it's not surprising that Huntertown is the home of XL Specialty Percussion—a company dedicated to the manufacture of a variety of innovative accessories for drummers and percussionists.

Neal Graham, founder and president of XL Specialty Percussion, did not set out to manufacture anything. He started out as a performing drummer. After receiving a degree in music education in the early 1970s, Neal established a teach-

ing studio in Fort Wayne. Later, he added retail sales to the operation, and the studio eventually evolved into the Fort Wayne Percussion Center. "We sort of grew into retail without any real intent or knowledge," says Neal, laughing. "Still, the Percussion Center became a pretty well-known shop, with a lot of major accounts and custom building services."

Some of the Percussion Center's biggest customers in the late '70s came from the Midwest's many drum & bugle corps. "We were asked if there was any way we could adapt timptom carriers—which the corps had just started to use—to carry snare drums," recalls Neal. "So we made a carrier





XL president Neal Graham stands at the computer panel that controls the company's rotational molding machinery.

that was very crude, but served the purpose. The major drum companies didn't see a real need for it, so we ultimately went into the carrier manufacturing business. We continued the retail operation at the Percussion Center concurrently with XL's manufacturing throughout the '80s and into the '90s—at which point I decided to put my entire focus on manufacturing."

To go from selling products made by others to manufacturing products yourself involves a whole new set of parameters. What prepared Neal for this move? "I grew up on a farm," he replies, "in a family of tinkers. I was the type who liked to tear the tractor apart and put it back together. So I had that type of mechanical background. And I felt very strongly that my background as a performer, teacher, and retailer gave me a close connection to the needs of players. When we got into manufacturing, our product development reflected that connection.

"Manufacturers often seem somewhat disconnected from the very customers they're trying to develop products for," Neal continues. "They have an unrealistic vision of what things are really like 'in the trenches.' As a result, you'll see products come and go that just never make it."

XL's carrier manufacturing certainly *did* "make it"—the company quickly grew into one of the larger manufacturers in the marching percussion field. But a few years ago an opportunity for a totally new product line literally came knocking at Neal Graham's door. "A manufacturer in our area had been making molded plastic cases for a major drum company," Neal explains. "When that drum company ceased operations, the case maker came to us and asked us if we were interested in selling what he had been making. In that initial stage there was a combination case for 12", 13", and 16" drums, and a combination case for 22" and 24" drums—and none of them really fit very well. So we began to build our own tooling, and we ultimately developed the *Protector* case line. Since then we have had great reception on the part of retailers, consumers, and professional artists. Our endorser list is like a who's who in the drum business. We are extremely excited about the direction that things are taking at this point."



This white powdered plastic will be turned into durable Protector drum cases.



Each case size requires its own aluminum mold.



After the molds have been mounted on a rotating arm, they are inserted into a massive oven.



What started as a white powder is now a solid purple drum case, ready to be cut into its bottom and top sections.

The edges of every case are carefully trimmed and smoothed by hand.



and other fittings are installed by skilled technicians.

Case Manufacturing

XL's *Protektor* cases are made by a process called "rotational molding." That process takes a powdered plastic, melts it, and molds it into the exact shape of the case. Says Neal, "Rotational molding was first used to create fluid and holding tanks for the recreational vehicle industry, but it's also perfect for products like our cases. In the last few years, vulcanized fiber—which is what people have traditionally used for making drum cases—has increased greatly in cost. We can now produce a superior product for less money than what fiber cases cost."

The very word "plastic" connotes flimsiness to some people. What sort of plastic is used to make *Protektor* cases? "It's a high-density polyethylene," replies Neal. "The fancy slides and toys in McDonalds' outdoor playlands are made using the polyethylene rotational molding process. That equipment is weather-resistant and unbreakable—everything that you'd want a drum case to be."

How do *Protektor* cases differ from other plastic cases on the market? "Yamaha offers cases produced in the same fashion as ours," says Neal. "Ludwig used to offer cases made using an injection molding process. Although that process offers speed and low per-part cost, the tooling is incredibly expensive. So that technology did not lend itself to making cases."

"There are also some major companies who make cases vacuum forming," Neal continues. "That process takes a flat sheet of plastic, heats it up, and sucks it into a form. Now, if you want something to get brittle, the thing to do is to heat it up and then re-form it. This fact contributed to the public's idea that plastic cases would break. In fact, the biggest problem we had in developing the market for our cases was overcoming that misconception. To combat that problem we have always offered a lifetime warranty against cracking. But we could probably count on our fingers and toes the number of cases that we've actually had to replace."

XL has, on occasion, replaced cases simply due to the sheer novelty of the situation. As Neal relates, "A guy once sent us one of our large accessory cases that was flat as a pancake. A truck had driven over it. I called the guy back and said, 'Are you serious about this?' He said, 'Well, we thought we'd try. The hardware it was carrying is in much worse condition than the case, but there's no warranty on the hardware.' [laughs] So we said, 'Well, you win the prize for the year. We'll send you a case.'"

Making The Cases

To create *Protektor* cases, XL technicians put powdered polyethylene plastic into various aluminum molds, which are then clamped onto a large wheel at the end of an even larger mechanical arm. That arm moves into an oven, where it rotates one way while the wheel turns another way—creating an A/B axis rotation that evenly distributes the material within each mold. The powdered plastic becomes molten and coats the inside of each mold, creating the shape of the case.

Several molds can be spun at one time, depending on the size of the cases being made. "We try to run as many small molds as possible around the large ones," says Neal. "The placement of the molds on the rotating wheel is critical to keeping it balanced. If it

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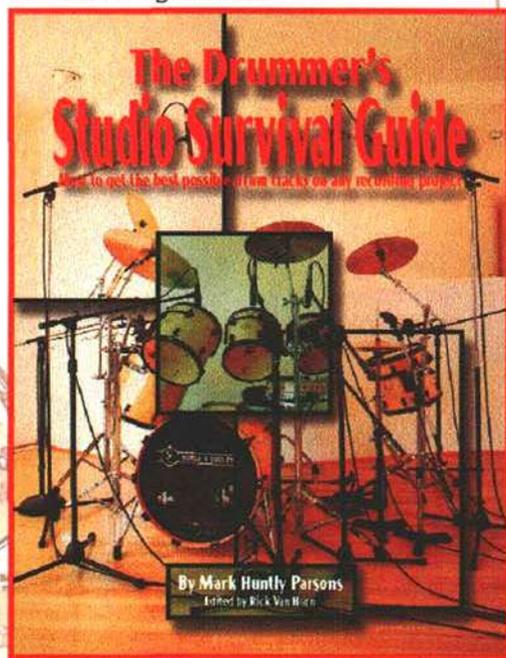
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gets out of whack we could literally break the arm."

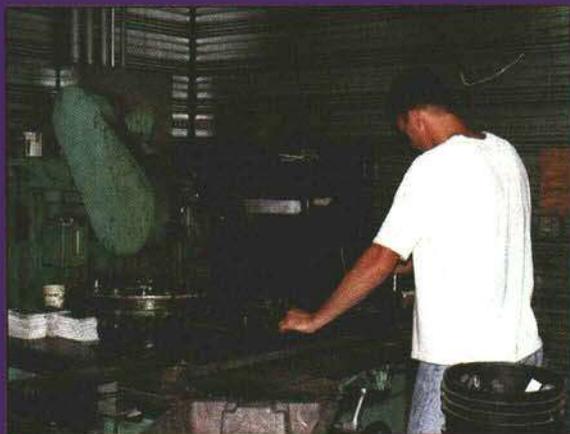
The polyethelene plastic used to create XL's cases looks very much like fine-grain sugar, but it actually consists of granules of at least ten different sizes. "When the molds go into the oven," Neal explains, "the smallest granules melt first, which helps to melt the next largest size, and so on. The mix of different sizes essentially time-releases the plastic as it's coating the inside of the mold."

The wall thicknesses of XL's drum cases run between 80 and 90 thousandths of an inch, depending on the case. Hardware cases are a little thicker—up to 140 thousandths. "Rotational molding allows us to vary the wall thickness," Neal comments, "while vacuum-formed cases are going to be a consistent thickness. If we see a need to beef up a case, we'll make adjustments until we get the right combination of thickness and durability. It's just a matter of adding additional material into the mold as it's running."

The "oven" in which the molds are heated is actually a sophisticated machine on which a computer controls the temperature, the heating time, and the cooling time. A typical run might heat the molds at 540° for twelve and a half minutes. After exiting the oven, the molds are run through several cycles of air and water cooling applied to their outsides. "We have to cool the molds," Neal explains, "because we have to get the cases inside back down from their very high temperatures to 100° so that our technicians can handle them. The cooling process is also what keeps the integrity and shape of the finished molded case. But it has to be done gradually, because if we shock the mold we'll get extreme warpage."

Was there any scientific data that Neal could refer to as a starting point for determining correct temperatures and times for this complicated process? "There was," replies Neal. "But as with most engineering data, when you try it in the real world you find out that the engineer never left his desk to find out whether it worked. So you blow out a few prototypes before you get the exact answer. Besides that, most of the data available came from products made for the RV and agriculture industries. They run most of their parts a quarter to half an inch in thickness, and they don't care how a product looks on the outside because it's going underground or out in a barn somewhere. That's totally different from our requirements. So ours is a unique process in and of itself. We are constantly testing and improving our process, finding the right balance of heat and time—which is a little different for every product."

How long does it take to create a case using the rotational molding process? "Depending on the parts we're running," says Neal, "the loading process normally takes between ten and fifteen minutes. The oven time is anywhere between twelve and fifteen minutes, and the cool-down time is fifteen to twenty minutes. So you are looking at a half-hour to forty-five-minute cycle. On a per-part basis, that's somewhat slow for a machine-made product. But it's not particularly slow compared to the manufacture of other drum-covering products. Soft bags require cutting and sewing, which is labor-intensive and time-consuming. Shaping and assembling a vulcanized fiber case is also labor-intensive. Our process is a little more machinery-intensive, and there is some finishing work that must be done on each case after it leaves the mold. But item for



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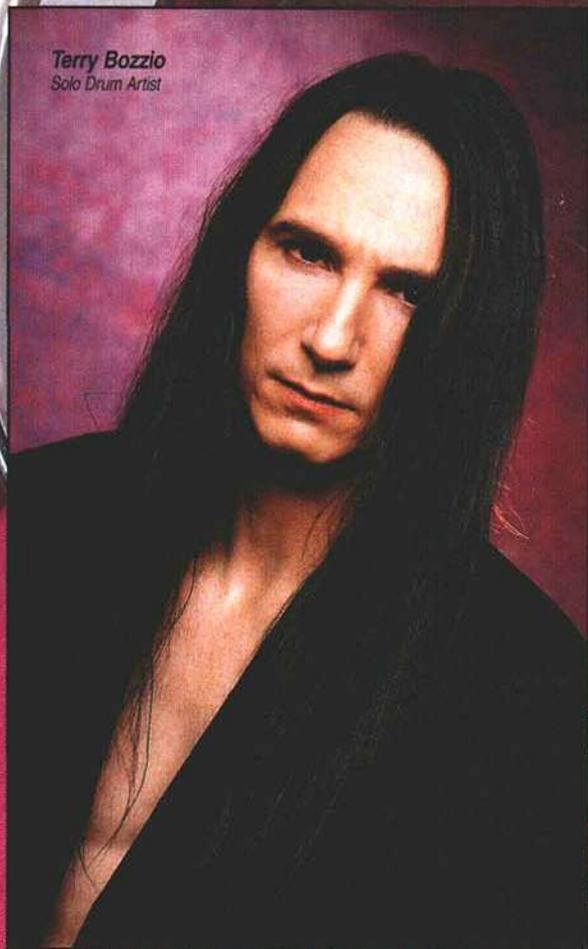
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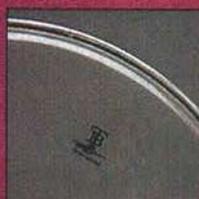
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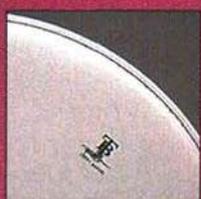


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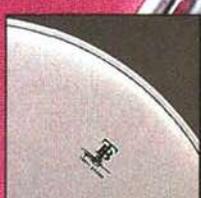
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When a molding run is completed, the cases come out of the molds in one piece. They are then cut apart at a pre-determined "parting line." The two resulting pieces create the body and the lid of the case. "We then trim the edges of our cases to get the final, exact size," says Neal. "And we're very fastidious about getting the edges smooth."

Speaking of smooth, the inner plastic surface of each case is very smooth—but the

outer surface has a "pebbly" texture. What's the reason for this difference? "The outer surface of each case is a reverse image of the inner surface of the mold," replies Neal. "It's a one-step operation that results from the molding process itself. We don't have to finish it, smooth it, or sand it. It's a surface that is deliberately put on; we could just as easily make the exteriors of our cases smooth. In fact, one of our competitors is making their cases that way. But the plastic material is so slick that if you stack your cases together they just slide right off each

other. So we are trying to get as rough a surface as possible. It's also a little bit more scratch-resistant."

After being molded and trimmed, the cases go to the assembly department, where a variety of handles, wheels, straps, and other fittings are installed. Even here, XL employs technology that differs from the norm. "The riveting machine we use is an orbital processor," says Neal. "It very carefully smoothes the rivet over so you don't get the cracked or broken rivets that are typical on a lot of cases. This adds to the overall durability and functionality of the case."

Durability And Application

The durability of *Protektor* cases is one of their major features, and Neal Graham takes great pride in explaining the reason for it. "Because the slow-curing process gives the polyethylene time to set up—and by the very nature of the material itself—the durability of plastic products made by the rotational-molding process is incredible. Impact resistance is among the highest in the industry. And since the process tends to push more plastic into the corners of the molds than onto the sidewalls, you get an extremely durable, resilient corner. Also, because the materials themselves were created originally for the agriculture and RV industries, they're great for temperatures from 60° below zero to 200° above. The technology renders a product that is absolutely perfect for everything we need. It even lends itself to being drilled or reinforced with metal plates or brackets for transportation or lifting. With some of the thinner plastic stuff, as soon as you drill a hole and put a bracket into it, forget about it."

One thing *Protektor* cases are *not* is light. But Neal explains that their weight comes as a result of the density of the material—which is where some of its durability comes from. "It's also waterproof," he adds, "and it's a resilient material, so it inherently absorbs the shock of a drop or whatever else might occur when you're transporting your drums. Carl Allen, for example, still has a set of cases from the early '80s. We think there are nearly a million air miles on those cases."

Most drummers would think of ATA-style cases when it comes to heavy-duty traveling. But Neal suggests that "ATA cases are so bulky that they often take



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more abuse getting on and off an airplane than individually packed drums do. Imagine trying to shove that big case through that little hole and down a ramp onto an airplane. The first thing the handlers are going to do is drop it. But drums packed in our cases get treated more like a piece of luggage. As a result, most of our endorsee's who do a lot of traveling have had great success with low breakage rates and no cracking of the cases."

Neal doesn't want to give the impression that only world-traveling drummers can benefit from the protection afforded by *Protech* cases. "Drums get a lot of wear-and-tear getting in and out of any vehicle," he says, "whether it be an eighteen-wheeler or a pickup truck. Our cases are very popular among drummers on country & western tours out of Nashville, who have to stick everything on a bus. The cases hold up real well and are easy to get in and out of the venue."

Case Models

XL's *Protech* model line is not as extensive as those of some other case or

bag companies. There isn't a case for every size of drum that has ever existed or will ever exist. Why is that? "Traditional fiber cases can be individually made simply by changing how much material is cut, bent, and riveted together," Neil replies. "And one of our plastic-case competitors basically makes lids and bottoms and then fabricates a piece of material in between—which can be adjusted to whatever depth is required. On the other hand, almost every one of the sizes that we offer requires an individual mold. We can trim the height of some cases—our 12"-diameter mold can make 8x12s and 9x12s, for example. And we can sometimes add some height. When companies like DW started promoting 18"-deep bass drums, we didn't have enough depth in our mold to be able to build an 18"-deep bass drum case. So we added some collars on to get that additional size. We try to adapt to the market. We probably have as extensive a line of molded cases as anybody. As we see a need for something new, we invest in the tooling for it. We are also beginning to actually form and manufacture our own molds here, as well—

which will give us the flexibility to do more new-product development at a lower cost."

Recent developments include a new conga case with reinforced tubular corners. The outside dimension is a tumba size, while a cone on the inside is a quinto size. "That way," says Neal, "no matter what the size of the drum is, it's being held firmly either by the outside or the inside of the case. We also mold the shape of the head on the top so that when the case is put together you are essentially holding the conga between the top and the bottom. It's not really knocking around against the side of the case at all; it's being secured in the air space in the middle. We are very excited about the potential of that case."

Combination cases are also a specialty in the *Protech* line. "We have a 6'/8" combination case," says Neal, "and a 10'/12". Obviously the most popular rack-tom sizes are 12" and 13", so that will be the next combination we add. But eventually, we'll do all of them."

continued on next page

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Coloring Process

As opposed to traditional vulcanized fiber cases available only in black, XL offers cases in a variety of colors. This is accomplished by adding coloring agents to the naturally white raw polyethylene before it goes into the molding process. *Protektor* cases are currently available in black, blue, green, yellow, red, purple, and orange as stock colors; custom colors are also available. "The University of Texas A&M has burgundy cases that we made especially to match their uniforms," says Neal. "It's not something that we would want to do on a day-to-day basis, but it is possible. The coloring companies can offer us a rainbow of colors. Over the next couple of years, you may see some new products from us with something in the way of swirl colors. But that's down the road. In fact, when we recently tried mixing colors to get a variegated pattern, we ended up with one of the ugliest brownish-green colors I've ever seen, [laughs]

Foam Lining

Standard *Protektor* cases are not foam-

lined, as many fiber cases are. What led Neal to this design decision? "The reality of foam linings is that they really weren't put in fiber cases for additional cushioning and protection," says Neal. "The kinds of foams that are typically used in a light-weight case really don't have enough resilience to absorb much shock. The primary purpose of the foam was to cover up all the ugly rivets that were in the corners and were tearing up drums. With the rotational molding process we have very few rivets in our cases—and none in the corners. With the polyethylene material that we use, the interior of the case comes out of the mold so slick and smooth that it won't scratch most drum finishes. So we question whether or not internal foam lining is necessary. However, we still install it, if requested. But it's a tricky business, because polyethylene is inherently a release agent, meaning that things don't want to adhere to it. In order to use the foam we actually have to flame-treat the inside of the case itself—using a large flame-thrower. It ain't a pretty sight.

"However," Neal continues, "there is a

lot of development taking place in the rotational-molding industry now. We feel that bringing all of our manufacturing processes in-house will give us the ability to be on the leading edge of that development. And it happens that a certain amount of that development has to do with technology that might allow us to add the additional cushioning that some drummers seem to feel is necessary. Basically, what it involves is that the polyethylene skin on the outside has a secondary coating on the inside, made of an expanded or different material that creates the cushion. The two are bonded together so that the "cushioning" will not rip out. Hopefully, this new technology will be available in the next five or six months. With it we'll be able to do some things that we feel will be significant in the case business."

Other Products And Services

XL Specialty Percussion offers a wide variety of products besides *Protektor* cases. Those include their *XL-Lite* marching carrier line, concert bass drum stands, and some private-label and other ancillary

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products.

"We still do some custom drum finishing that grew out of my years of retailing experience," adds Neal. "And in January of 1995 we introduced our *Super Shell* project, which offers a custom shell already finished and ready for drilling. That project has been so successful that we'll soon be updating our paint booth. We want to mechanize it a little bit more and upgrade it from a custom drum process into a manufacturing process.

"We have the luxury of having main-line products that sustain us on a day-to-day basis," Neal continues, "so we can 'play' with some of these more specialized projects. And like any company, we have had some products that have come and gone. At one point we made what was considered to be one of the premier tambourines in the industry. But we lost the source of the nickel silver that we were using for the jingles, so we ultimately dropped that line. Some years back we had a bass drum pedal that encountered some licensing problems, so we had to drop that product, too. So at this point we are very rapidly becoming

mainly a case company—and a specialist in rotational molding.

"Rotational molding is increasingly being used in various areas of manufacturing," Neal continues. "As a result, we're expecting to diversify outside of the music industry. Naturally we don't want to lose sight of who we are and where we've been in the process of trying to decide where we're going. But there is a tremendous seasonality to our musical-products business. We can't change the music industry's schedules, but we can find other industries to supply that have different schedules—and thereby keep our business on a consistent basis."

Besides his position as president of the company, Neal also wears the hat of a product designer. "It's something that I get a lot of enjoyment out of," he says. "My interest dates back to my experience in the retail area, where we saw what people wanted and what it would take to fulfill their needs. That background is very helpful. Today we have CAD/CAM design programs in our computers here, but I still think that ultimately the best way to create

something is to just try to make it. Of course, anybody who's developing a product learns that for every success there are at least ten attempts that didn't work. We have a "graveyard" of things that were 'close but not quite.'

"A company can be extremely innovative," Neal continues. "It can create new designs and secure a dozen new patents every year. But all the design patents in the world can't replace taking care of customers. So we try to remain as customer-oriented as we possibly can. The way we see it, success is just a matter of recognizing a need and filling it."



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MD/Monolith Giveaway Winner

Tim Pleger of Green Bay, Wisconsin was the winner in the MD/Monolith giveaway that ran in our June, July, and August '96 issues. Tim's winning postcard earned him a \$12,000 package including Monolith drums, Sabian cymbals, Shure microphones, Axis pedals, and Protektor cases. Congratulations from all the sponsoring companies and *Modern Drummer*.

School News



On Saturday, September 21 the **Los Angeles Music Academy** (LAMA) hosted their grand opening party. Guests included members of the music industry, city government, the press, and the first group of students to enroll at the school. Those guests were greeted by school directors Hans-Peter Becker and Tom Aylesbury, who explained LAMA's educational philosophy. A faculty performance showcased the talents of LAMA department heads Ralph Humphrey (drums), Emil Richards and Jerry Steinholtz (percussion), Frank Gambale (guitar), and Dave Carpenter (bass), along with guitar instructor Jeff Richman. Classes began on September 30. LAMA's second quarter will begin March 17, at which time new enrollment may be taken. LAMA, P.O. Box 50434, Pasadena, CA 91115, tel: (800) 960-4715, fax: (818) 568-8850, CompuServe: 104216,1751.

The Atlanta Institute of Music (AIM) has added Brian Stephens to the percussion department's full-time faculty. Along with six years of teaching experience, Brian brings a valuable history of playing and recording experience to his position. He will also become the director of AIM's new Weekend Intensive Program, which the school describes as "an innovative, accelerated learning environment designed to provide a high volume of knowledge and information in a minimum amount of time." Atlanta Institute Of Music, 6145 D Northbelt Pkwy., Norcross, GA 30071, tel/fax: (770) 242-7717.

The **Music Educators National Conference (MENC)**, the world's largest arts organization, recently established its **Music Educators Advisory Council**. The council, which consists of a "who's who" of music, education, and arts philanthropy, has been launched to help focus attention and resources on the importance of music in education. In an effort to bring attention to the importance of music education in young people's lives, Advisory Council member (and Remo, Inc. president) **Remo Belli** recently

made a special visit to the Oakton High School Band in Oakton, Virginia. After listening to demonstrations by the award-winning band's percussion section, Remo was persuaded to do some demos of his own in an impromptu session on a drumkit—showing them the licks that were popular when he played professionally.

Midwest Custom And Vintage Drum Show

The seventh annual Midwest Custom And Vintage Drum Show will be held at the Kane County Fairgrounds (west of Chicago near Aurora, Illinois) on Saturday and Sunday, May 17 and 18, 1997. Exhibits will be open to the public from mid-morning until 5:00 P.M. on Saturday and from mid-morning to late afternoon on Sunday. For further information contact Rob Cook at Rebeats Vintage Drum Products, 219 Prospect, Alma, MI 48801, (517) 463-4757.

Indy Quickies

Sabian has gone global—and multi-lingual—with the translation of their pocket-sized *Cymbal Buyer's Guide* into German, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese versions. In addition to serving foreign markets with the new publications, Sabian will make them available to U.S. dealers with foreign-language speaking customers.

Ace Products, distributors of Camber cymbals and chimes, has a new address: 630 Las Gallinas Ave., Suite 215, San Rafael, CA 94903, tel: (415) 492-9600, fax: (415) 492-5959.

The Georgia Music Hall of Fame was recently established to honor musical personalities who were born in or have some connection with the state of Georgia. Among the exhibits is the **Gretsch Theater**, a recreation of a 1950s theater that shows vintage and contemporary film clips of Georgia artists in all musical genres. The theater is sponsored by **Fred Gretsch Enterprises**, manufacturers of Gretsch drums.

Manufacturing operations for **Evans Drumheads** have been relocated from Dodge City, Kansas to the facilities of **J. D'Addario & Company** in Farmingdale, New York. D'Addario purchased Evans in 1995, and the move brings the Evans operation to the same building that houses D'Addario's engineers and product designers.

Yamaha's artist relations department has been relocated from Hollywood to the company's Grand Rapids, Michigan headquarters. **Randy Sheldon** is Yamaha's new artist relations coordinator.

Endorser News

New Yamaha drum endorsers include **Chris Parker** (New York studio), **John Blackwell** (Cameo), **Tom Knight** (Adam Nitti & Liquid Blue, Terence Ian Smith), and **Craig Pichanick** (Jeff Berlin, Kenny Drew, Jr.). Additionally, Latin jazz vibraphonist and Berklee College of Music instructor **Victor Mendoza** is now a Yamaha artist.

Gerald Heyward (Blackstreet, Coolio) is now playing UFIP

cymbals. **Jimmy DeGrasso** (Alice Cooper, Suicidal Tendencies) is also a new UFIP endorser, as well as an Evans drumhead endorser.

Additional new Evans artists include **Chad Wackerman**, **Van Romaine** (Steve Morse Band), **Pat Mastelotto** (King Crimson), **Brian Doherty** (They Might Be Giants), **Jeff Ausdemore** (Nouveaux), **Dony Wynn** (Brooks & Dunn), **Moyes Lucas** (Larry Carlton), **Olbin Burgos** (Gloria Estefan), **Steven Wolf** (Annie Lennox).

Cindy Blackman (Lenny Kravitz) and **Michael Baker** (Whitney Houston) are also Evans head endorsers. In addition, both are currently playing Meinl percussion.

Jazz vibist **Milt Jackson** is now a Pro-Mark endorser, with a line of vibes mallets that bear his name.

Currently endorsing Aquarian drumheads are **Robin DiMaggio** (L.A. studio), **Charlie Grover** (Sponge), **Clay Meyers** (Texas Tornados), **Joe Porcaro** (L.A. studio), **Dean Butterworth** (MTV's *Singled Out*), **Billy Ward** (freelance), **Pat Magrath** (Killing Culture), **Bobby Borg** (Warrant), **Steve Brewster** (freelance), **Rick Hall** (Sunset Heights), **Charles Conner III** (Geoff Moore & the Distance), **Jason Patterson** (Cry Of Love) and **Monitaka Higuchi** (Mr. Sly).

Tony St. James (Jazz Crusaders) and **Shannon Larkin** (Ugly Kid Joe) have chosen Meinl *Custom Shop* cymbals.

Dennis Chambers is the newest ddrum electronic percussion endorser.

Drummers now playing Slug percussion products include **Johnny Kelly** (Type O Negative), **Mike Terrana** (Tony MacAlpine), and **Mike Wagner** (Invisible Lisa).



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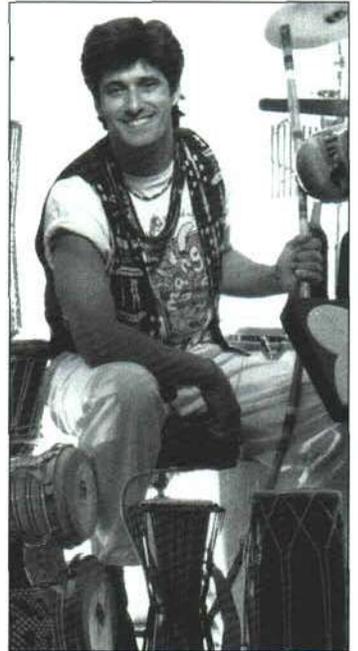
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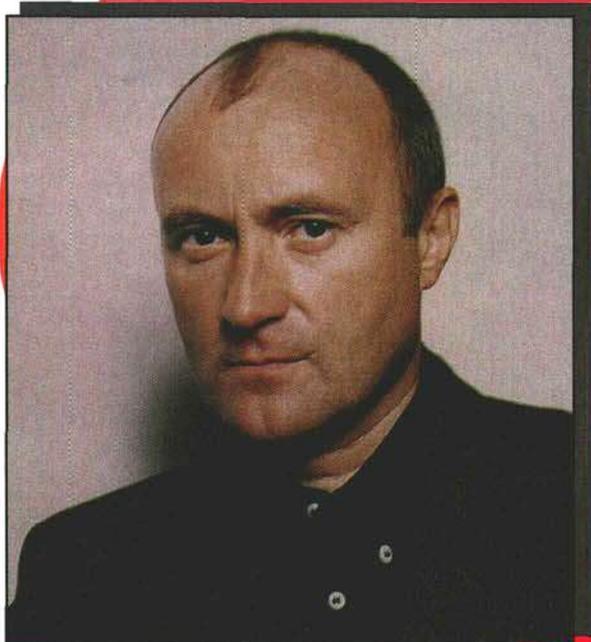
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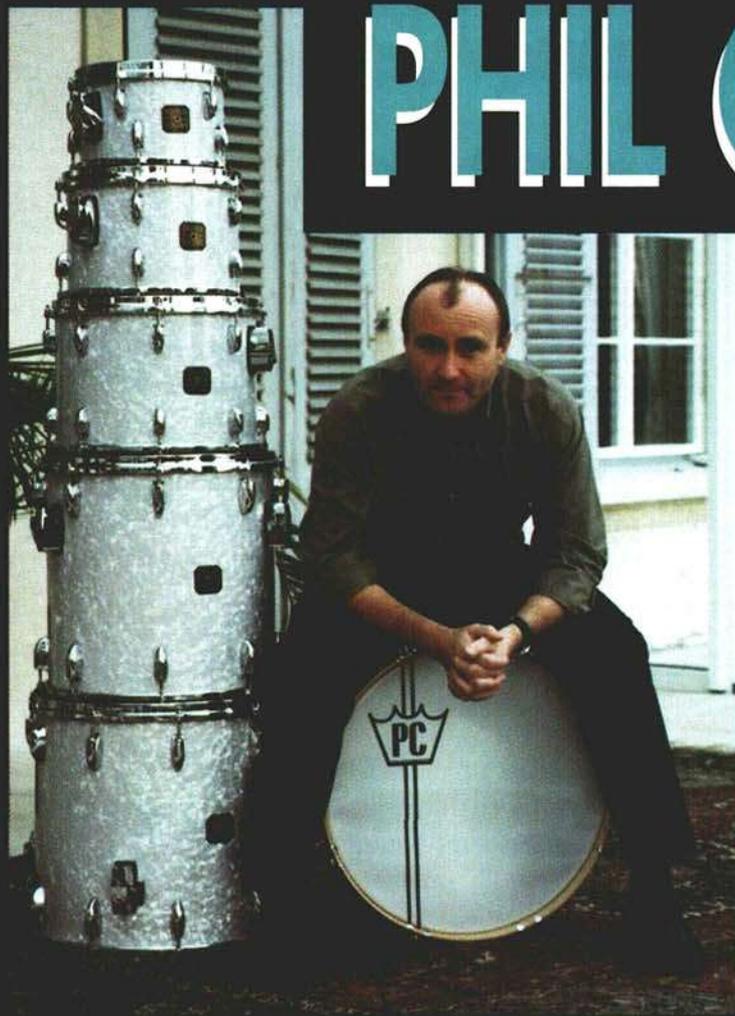
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