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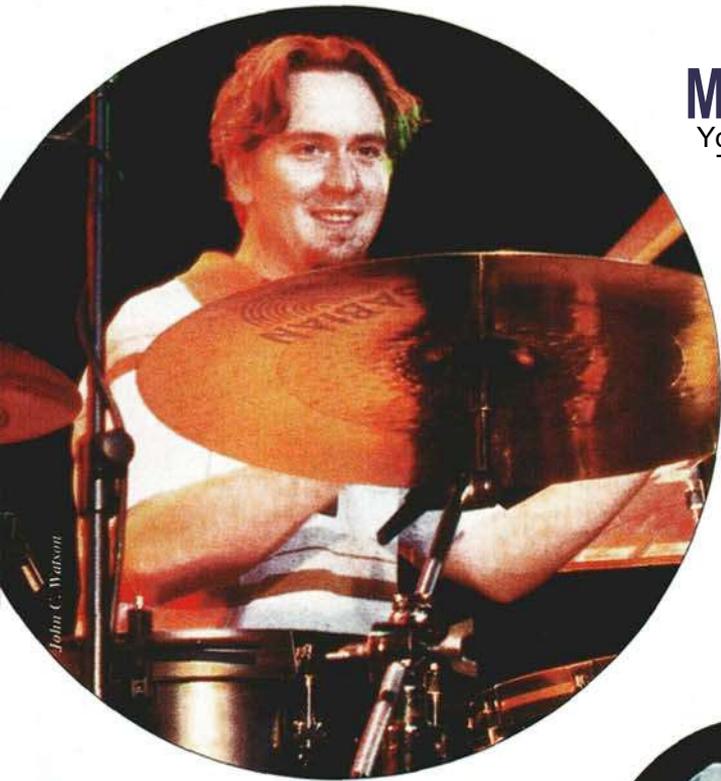
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# Dedication

Last month, in December's *Editor's Overview*, MD publisher Ron Spagnardi announced that after twenty-two years of writing this column, he was opening it up to the other MD editors. Ron wanted us to have a forum to speak our minds about the world of drumming, as he has so eloquently done these many years. This month it's my turn. And while I have many topics I'm looking forward to discussing, I would be remiss if I did not dedicate *this* month's column to the man himself, a person who has been an inspiration to me, Ron Spagnardi.

It seems appropriate that I'm writing this piece for our January 1999 issue: It was fifteen years ago—January of 1984—that I began working for Ron at *Modern Drummer*. He, along with his wife, associate publisher Isabel Spagnardi, made me feel welcome from the very beginning—like I was part of the family.

Back in 1984 the publication was only in its seventh year, yet it was already a tremendous success: Ron's determination and hard work had grown the business from a one-man basement operation to a large publishing concern. Considering his many responsibilities, as a junior editor I never expected to have much interaction with him, but I was wrong. Ron took me under his wing, teaching me a great deal about all aspects of publishing. He wisely had me spend time working in different areas of the company—art, advertising, administration—everything, even down to processing subscriptions! All of this gave me great insight into how all of the elements work together.

As I think back, Ron has taught me the most by example. I've never met anyone more passionate about his work than Ron Spagnardi. He has edited literally thousands of articles and written several hundred. And even after twenty-two years as publisher, he continues to oversee every aspect of the editorial department.

In addition to these and myriad other publishing duties, Ron has somehow found the time to write instructional books. His most recent—*The Modern Snare Drummer*—was written while he was recovering from an illness. The man's home, sick in bed, and he's writing snare drum solos—amazing! (As he said when he showed me the manuscript, "I really do need to get a life!")

One other point I'd like to make about Ron is his prowess as a drummer—the man can *play*. He had a solid pro career developing before his interest in publishing pulled him in a different direction. Ron still has one of the nicest touches on the instrument you'll ever see. And it was particularly fun to watch him get his chops back in shape two years ago, when he was preparing to perform at our tenth annual drum festival. (We had to twist his arm to get him to do it.) He played his tail off.

I think the most important lesson *all* of us here at MD have learned from Ron Spagnardi is dedication: Ron continues to be enthusiastically focused on creating the finest drum magazine possible and providing the most interesting and relevant information to MD's readers. Believe me, that kind of attitude is infectious.

Ron, sincere thanks for the years of inspiration.

*Bill Miller*

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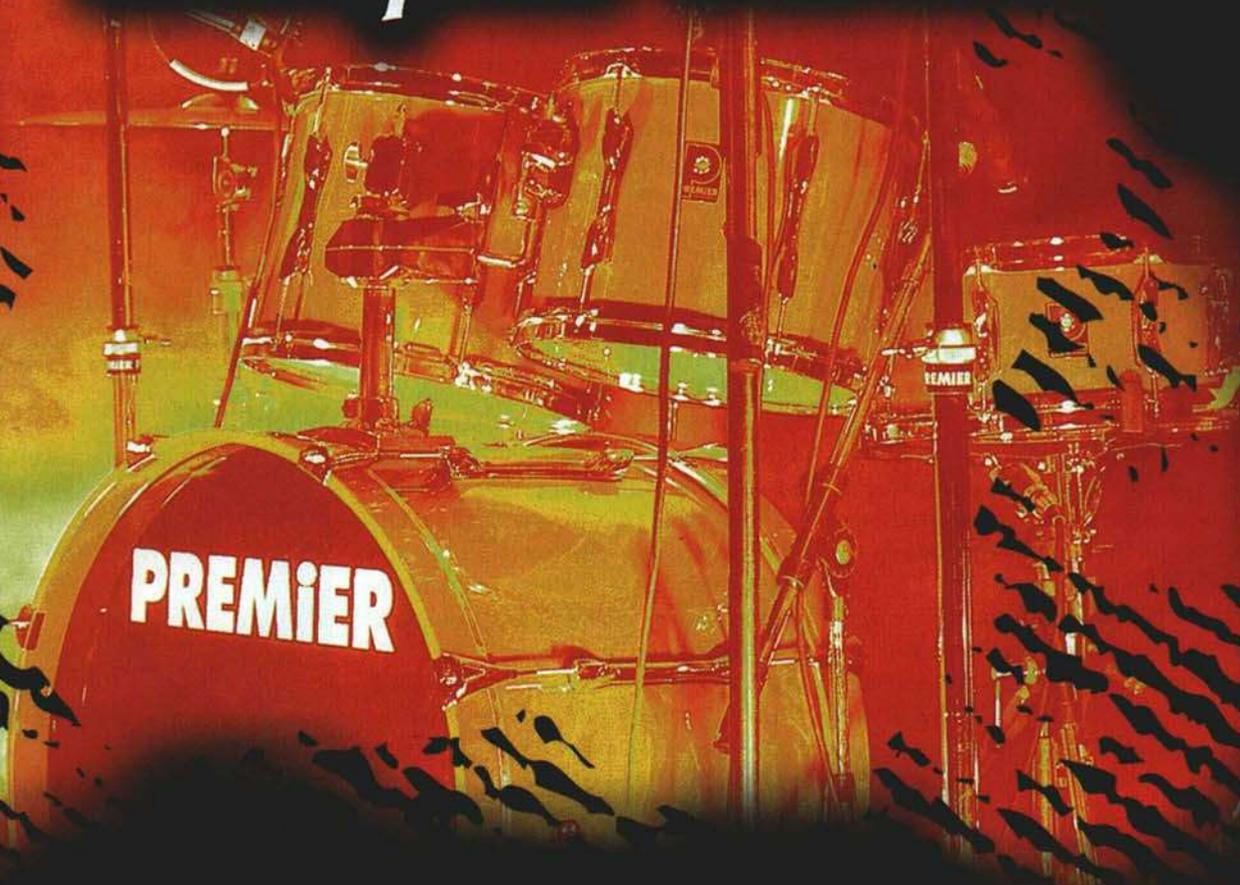
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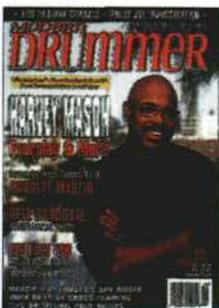
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## HARVEY MASON



I'm not a drummer; I'm a professional writer. I'm also a jazz lover, which is why I picked up your October '98 issue when I saw Harvey Mason on the cover. Robyn Flans did a great job with that article. It showed the human side of Mason, fed the appetites of drummers who want info on techniques and the trade, and yet was readable to me—a layman when it comes to the drumming profession. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

William July  
via Internet

## KENNY AND THE PUMPKINS

I almost couldn't believe my eyes when I saw your report that Kenny Aronoff had landed in the drum chair for Smashing Pumpkins [*Update*, October '98 *MD*]. I'm sure this is happy news for all drummers. I'm overjoyed that a whole new generation of music lovers will get to see and hear one of the best musicians play with one of the most original bands. I've seen the Pumpkins twice, both before and after the "problems," and I can't wait to see them again with Kenny. I have only seen Kenny live in a clinic, but his overall professionalism, talent, and positive attitude can only improve what the Pumpkins do creatively. I hope that their unique and diverse style will provide Kenny with a challenging and nurturing musical environment for a long time!

Larry Kroodsma  
Comstock Park, MI

## GIVE THE MIDWEST A BREAK

You guys do an excellent job of covering the spectrum of styles and personalities related to our instrument! Having said that, I have a complaint to you, the industry, and any of the organizations who throw major drumming events with the very cream of our drumming crop. What is the deal with always having these events out west or out east? I live near Chicago, and I don't recall a "Zildjian Day Chicago" or a "Midwest PAS Convention." And your own MD Festival Weekend is always in New Jersey! In-store clinics are great, but I would really like to see more of these fantastic drumming events in my part of the country.

While I'm complaining: Drums and accessories are way out of line on pricing. Even the beginner stuff is priced so high it would discourage a prospective parent from investing in their kid's hobby. C'mon guys (drum and cymbal companies), ease up on us out here!

Hoppi  
via Internet

## UP THE COUNTRY

So a couple of years ago I'm standing in line at the MD Festival reading the latest issue of *Modern Drummer*. The cover story is a roundtable of Nashville studio drummers discussing their work in country music. I turn to the guy next to me in line and say, "When are they gonna feature one of these guys at the Festival?" Well, this past year my question was answered. Bravo for getting Eddie Bayers and top Nashville session sidekicks to perform at the '98 show. I love the way Eddie, Paul Leim, and many other Nashville guys play.

Brett Barnes  
Las Vegas, NV

## CHARLIE PERRY

I was shocked and deeply saddened upon learning of the passing of my teacher and mentor, Charles Perry. He was a man of great talent and a true innovator of modern drumset technique. His passing leaves an

unfillable void in my life and in the world of drumming.

I had the great fortune of meeting Charlie when I studied music at Five Towns College. During my stay there I also began to study privately with Charlie, and I soon became his teaching assistant at the college. Sometimes I would go to his studio and we would play and talk for several hours. He freely shared his knowledge of drumming and the music business with me, and I found everything he taught me to be invaluable.

On several occasions I met Charlie and his wife Eve at a jazz club called Sonny's Place, where we would get up and jam with some of the best players in the business. Sonny's is no longer around, but the memories of being there with Charlie will stay with me forever.

To sum up what knowing Charlie—as a teacher and as a friend—meant to me would be impossible. I'd just like to say, "Thanks Charlie—for everything. You'll be missed."

John La'Cella  
Baldwin, NY

## MOON-STRUCK



A world of thanks to writer Vincent DeFrancesco and *MD* for the transcription of "Won't Get Fooled Again" in your September '98 issue. Nearly three decades ago, while I was playing out one night, someone approached me and said how much my drumming reminded him of Keith Moon. I soon checked out Keith and The Who, and began a lifelong love of the band, their music, and Keith's drumming. Although I listen to a variety of drummers, Keith has been by far the major influence on my playing. So imagine my delight at seeing a song that I've played along to literally hundreds of times totally written out.

I took Vincent's suggestion and followed the transcription while listening to the

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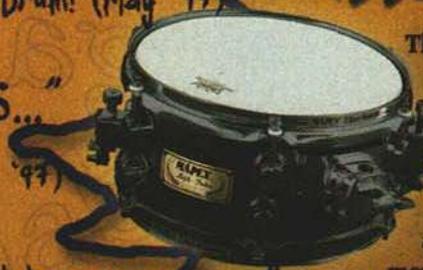
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recording. I was surprised to discover how much I had not heard. Almost twenty years since Keith's passing, I'm still learning from him, and his drumming is still fresh and unique!

Joe Murray  
St. Augustine, FL

## INSPIRING DRUMMERS

In the last three weeks, I have had the pleasure of seeing and hearing five drummers of great importance to me. These experiences have rekindled some feelings that have been diminished in me for some time.

After a life-altering injury sustained about eighteen months ago, my desire to play and my endurance had become less than satisfying. Then I went to hear Joey Baron's Down Home Quartet. I have never in my life been so impressed by someone's enthusiasm for performing. He seemed like he was doing exactly what he wanted to be doing. Not just playing, but playing for us, right there and nowhere else. His joy and excitement was infectious. He had such a big grin plastered on his face throughout

the show, I thought he might have to have it surgically removed! Such happiness can't be faked, and I was deeply moved.

Then I went to hear Gov't Mule. Matt Abts is continuing to impress me every time I hear him. His live performances are electrifying. He is another player who seems to be so glad to be playing for you, I couldn't help but be glad and grateful that I was there.

Two nights ago, I went to see Dream Theater, ELP, and Deep Purple. Mike Portnoy was very impressive. His ability to handle complex arrangements while demonstrating amazing power was overwhelming. Additionally, his double bass chops constitute a veritable onslaught of speed, power, and style.

Next up was Carl Palmer. His technique was so precise that the short hairs on my neck all stood right up! Having been a fan of his for years, I am just as excited about his playing as I ever was. His solo moved me to tears. It was a shimmering example of complete control over his instrument, combined with truly wondrous technique and endless panache.

Then came the reason that I started

dreaming about playing the drums way back in 1968: Ian Paice! When I first heard "Hush" on the radio all those years ago, I was changed forever. I had never heard a style like his. I continued to buy (and wear out) anything he played on. I still listen to *Deep Purple In Rock* a couple of times a month. That album is, to me, one of the most definitive examples of hard rock drumming. His performance the other night was exemplary. In recent years, his recorded performances have not been so "busy," causing me to wonder if it was him slowing down rather than the music dictating a change in style. I'm ashamed I had doubts and ecstatic that my doubts were without merit, because he tore through those older tunes like there was no tomorrow! When he ripped through "Speed King," I just about lost my breath. Sorry, Ian. I won't doubt you again!

So, I've been re-inspired. My stamina will never (due to medical reality) be what it was; but I can play some, and I sure want to! Thanks, guys! Your inspiration is a treasure I promise to keep polished!

Chris Bretz  
Minneapolis, MN

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## REGARDING CRITIQUE

I've been a subscriber to *Modern Drummer* for a year now, and I don't think life would be the same without your reviews! You have saved me from the bad, uncreative stuff and led me to the better music that's out there. Thanks!

Kristin Williams  
via Internet



## DRUMMERS' TERMINOLOGY

I've been drumming for a year, and I constantly hear and read about terms that I don't understand. How about publishing some sort of dictionary for terms such as these?

Marty  
via Internet

*Editor's note: A glossary of drumming terms will be a major element of a forthcoming book by MD associate editor Rich Watson. Tuning and other aspects of general drum knowledge will also be included. The release of Rich's book will be announced in a future issue of MD.*



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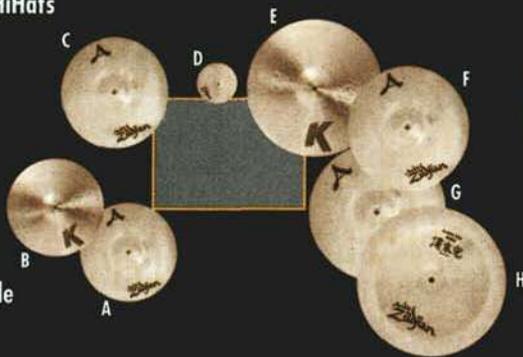
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(drumming legend)



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**REMO** USA

# CARL PALMER

Once the owner of a stainless steel drumset so heavy it collapsed stages, ELP drummer Carl Palmer will clearly do anything to get a unique sound. How about buying a tree found only in Western Australia. Always an innovator, Palmer says he's enthusiastic about a brand-new drumset he's having crafted from a rare eucalyptus tree.

"I've managed to get the Brady drum company of Australia, who make drums using jarrah wood, to make seven shells for me. Once the tree was cut, the drums took about two months to make, and they're being fitted with Gladstone-style lugs in America. Hopefully the drumset will be ready by December."

While loyal to Remo products, Palmer's experiment with Brady drums

is part of his "quest to acquire a different sound. The incredibly dense wood of these drums makes them sound really bright. I'm a great believer in having really good acoustic sounds before the microphones are laid on the drums."

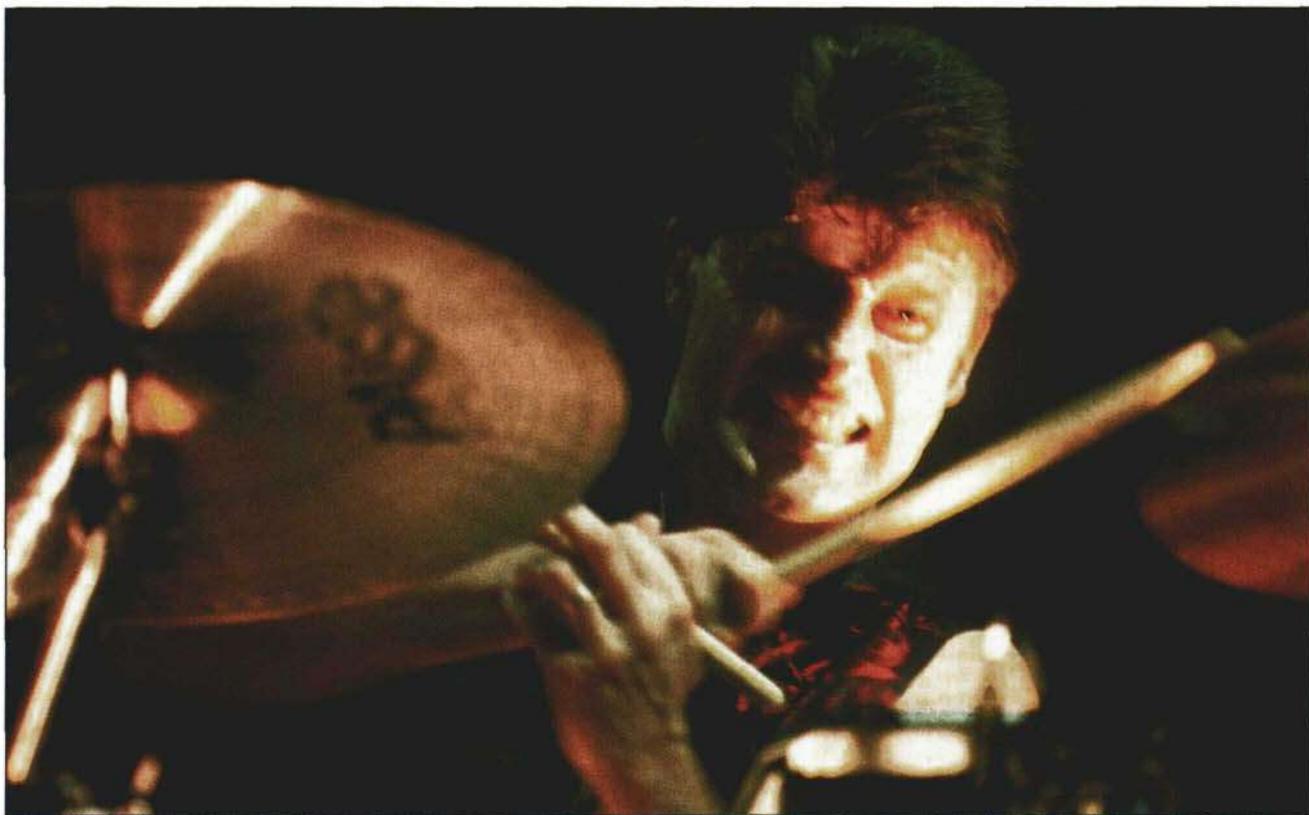
Palmer is also a great believer in sharing information about carpal tunnel syndrome. He speaks from experience, having had carpal tunnel surgery in both wrists. "There are no exercises to get rid of carpal tunnel syndrome. The real subject is having an operation by a highly skilled surgeon to alleviate it. I have not had a problem since the surgery. It doesn't mean the end of your career."

Indeed, Palmer's career with Emerson, Lake & Palmer is moving at

full throttle. After their 1998 American tour with Dream Theater and Deep Purple ended, ELP returned to England to record their next album. According to Carl, the album will include a longer "concept piece" in addition to shorter songs. "Playing the longer pieces is what makes us happy. It's a bigger risk, as radio stations don't tend to play the longer pieces. But we've got to take the risk."

In addition to the new recording, ELP keeps their music catalog active by utilizing the band's Web site ([www.dyn-rec.com/elp](http://www.dyn-rec.com/elp)). In addition to other products, a compact disk of ELP's 1970 concert at the Isle Of Wight is available through the site.

**Robert Poch**



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# Semisonic's Jacob Slichter

## The Different-Dexterous Drummer

If you think that inventive grooves and memorable fills are all that Semisonic's Jacob Slichter has up his trap case, well, think again. While the meaty drumming on Semisonic's Beatley-sounding *Feeling Strangely Fine* (MCA) is a Charlie Watts-meets-Richie Hayward ringer, it's what you *don't* hear that makes Slichter such a different drummer.

The thirty-six-year-old Minneapolis native calls his technique "different-dexterous." Like a pop Kenwood Dennard, Slichter plays keyboard with his right hand while keeping left-hand time between the snare drum and hi-hat. That's a pretty mean feat, but Slichter gets meaner. While playing the multi-limbed stuff above, his *left* foot is switching between the hi-hat pedal and a converted bass drum pedal, which splashes a 16" crash cymbal during his keyboard solos.

"A Dr. Seuss-looking thing," the contraption was thought up by Slichter when he found his hands were getting

full. "I'm not ambidextrous; I can't play a backwards kit. But I might learn."

Before joining Semisonic for 1996's *Great Divide*, Slichter had been tossing style with technique for years. Beginning on cello and piano, Jacob bought a set of drums for \$25 while he was in the fifth grade. Soon he was in the area's hottest black funk band, Instant Kool. From then on, combining styles was his trademark.

"There is a lot in common between Ringo and Al Jackson," Slichter states. "You can sing all their grooves and remember what the beat is. And Ringo's fills are simple but very demonstrative. I can sing his fills to the guys in Semisonic and they'll usually be able to name the song."

"For me, it's about trying to mix the English rock drummers with the American soul drummers—like Ringo, Mick Fleetwood, and Mick Waller [Rod Stewart] with Clyde Stubblefield and Fred White [Earth, Wind & Fire]. I even love the guy who played on all those



Spinners hits. Somebody should build a shrine to those guys. So few people can really appreciate those tasty drummers."

Besides his "Dr. Seuss" pedal, Slichter plays a kit of Barnes shells modified by the Drum Doctor. A 5x14 Noble & Cooley snare complements a 9x14 mounted tom, a 16x16 floor, and a 14x22 bass drum. Cymbals are all A Zildjian.

Minneapolis's "different-dexterous" drummer can currently be found with Semisonic, "fast forwarding through time zones on a US tour."

**Ken Micallef**

## MARK ZONDER FATEFUL SIDE PROJECT

Ever wonder what it would be like if Peter Gabriel had never left Genesis? For a glimpse of what might have been, check out the CD *Chroma Key*; there is something in the blend of Mark Zonder's crystalline drum sounds with ex-Dream Theater Kevin Moore's synth pads that nods to the British prog rock group. Recorded at Bill's Place, Zonder's recording studio/rehearsal complex, *Chroma Key* is the perfect foil for his usual band, Fates Warning.

Still grasping his sticks with a very correct traditional grip, Mark plays live to click tracks in order to anchor some frightening transitions in time and feel. He admits: "I'm definitely not a jam-type drummer. In this kind of music you can't just start changing things on people in the middle of a show." One of these things is a biting snare sound. "A lot of it is how

you hit it and how it's tuned," Mark explains. "I crank it up and the soundman asks me to tune it down to make it fatter. The GMS white ash drum has the crack, but it's a little more defined in the ghost-note area. It's kind of cool because if you're not dead-on, it's real obvious. It's not blurring anything."

Similarly, Zonder says he doesn't want to wash out acoustic piano timbres with the wrong cymbals. "My baby was the classic 20" *Earth* ride," Mark says, "but in *Chroma Key* it's a 20" *K*. I play a pair of 12" hi-hats I've had for years—thick band cymbals. They give me clear 16th notes and 32nd notes and quick opening and closing patterns."

Recently Fates Warning re-emerged with a double live album, a tour, and a live video. "We've turned it into a nice business machine," Mark reflects. "We

do everything ourselves, including management. With our next record, we're going to make a total right turn—though we're just not sure what that turn is yet. And I would love to do a solo record, but I need a partner; I don't have the ego to do a drum solo record."

Zonder's favorite *Chroma Key* song is "Undertow," because "it's got that up-tempo Steely Dan-ish beat. Fates Warning never plays that sort of tune. Our fans would throw things at us. I'm looking forward to people looking at me and going, 'He's not just this rock 'n' roll drummer.' Let the fanatics freak!"

For more information on *Chroma Key*, check the Web site: [www.chromakey.com](http://www.chromakey.com) or contact Fight Evil Records, PO Box 55758, Valencia, CA 91385.

**T. Bruce Wittet**

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# Kim Zick Mrs. Fun Gets In The Groove

**W**e came up with a name to describe our music: 'hardcore electra-acid-jazz.'" So says drummer Kim Zick regarding the music she makes with Connie Grauer, the other half of Mrs. Fun.

Speaking from her home in Milwaukee, Zick says *Groove*, Mrs. Fun's fourth release, is both a return to the duo's early sound and a venture toward new influences. Songs like "Avenue X" and "Repetition Of Life" show Mrs. Fun getting back to its bebop roots, while other songs explore different territory. According to Zick, "'Everybody Wants To Be Somebody Else's Lover' was inspired by some of the electronica music that I had been listening to."

As with previous recordings, Zick co-produced *Groove* with Grauer. Kim took a new role in the songwriting process, though. "Usually Connie would come in

with the music written and I would create drum parts around her music," Zick says. "But on *Groove*, there are three tunes where I came in with a groove first and she worked around that." The songs that Zick initiated include "Everybody Wants To Be Somebody Else's Lover," "Repetition Of Life," and "Nerves."

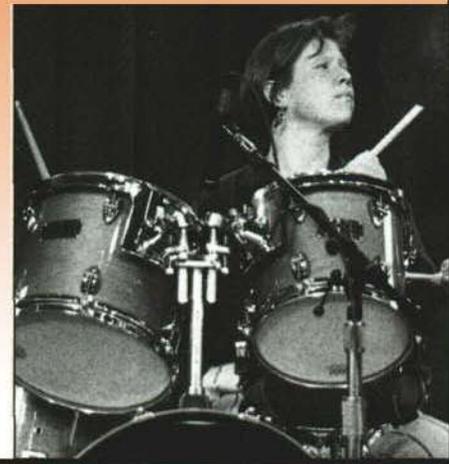
Zick says she developed the groove for "Nerves" after hearing one of Grauer's diary entries. The entry later became the song's lyric. "It's dark and intense," Zick says. "She read it to me and I immediately thought of a Gene Krupa beat."

When she's not behind the kit for Mrs. Fun, Zick keeps busy with an interesting array of other playing opportunities. She played single tracks on k.d. lang's most recent release, *Drag*, and on *One Step Up/Two Steps Back: The Songs Of Bruce Springsteen*. In addition, Zick handled

most of the drumming on Victor DeLorenzo's second solo recording, *Pancake Day*.

To contact Mrs. Fun, visit them at [www.execpc.com/~mrsfun](http://www.execpc.com/~mrsfun) or write Mrs. Fun, PO Box 71211, Milwaukee, WI 53211.

**Harriet L. Schwartz**



## Steve Johns Getting His Turn

**D**rive a few hundred miles out of state, leave those green hills behind, and Vermont Public Radio gets a little faint. But here it is, Monday evening, the signal is fading, and Steve Johns' clean cymbal work is still cutting through the white noise. Tonight on Jazz At The Kennedy Center he is backing Terrence Blanchard. Past nights it's been Wynton Marsalis, Wallace Roney, and Dave Valentin. As usual, pianist Billy Taylor and ex-Elvin Jones bassist Chip Jackson are sounding as if they had rehearsed for weeks.

The New York drummer has lots to celebrate lately. For one thing, Steve's old drums go into the locker to make way for a new Ayotte WoodHoop jazz kit. Then there is the Sabian *Manhattan*, a thin ride he proudly road-tested in The Mingus Big Band. ("I suggested the name—after the Manhattan Project.") Finally, his *Peter Brainin/Steve Johns Ceremony* album has just been released. Steve describes the creative process: "My songwriting seems to have a life of its own apart from the drums, I guess because I play some piano and trumpet. My tunes are not a vehicle for the drums. For example, 'New Hope' is about a quiet little town in Pennsylvania where George Washington crossed the Delaware.

"I want to be a musical drummer," he continues, "like Jack DeJohnette.

It's like he's comping on the piano when he plays drums." To be sure, there is a little Jack in Steve Johns' playing—in particular, the piercing 10" tom punctuations. Then there is the articulate cymbal work. "I'm always trying new cymbals," Johns relates. "I like a smoky sound, but I don't want it washing all over the place. I'm also using a prototype unlathed flat ride that works great under Billy's piano: It's thick and dark and has a lot of attack. When I backed Bobby McFerrin I used a thinner flat ride that didn't get in the way of his voice."

Steve finds calm in big-city living. "I'm actually more scared when I leave New York," he says, "because the city has a very free-thinking atmosphere. There are jazz gigs, and I've done television commercials, like *M&Ms*, *Pepsi*, and *Whiskas* cat food. Also, I did a lot of work with Thomas Chapin, who was big on the avant-garde scene. I feel fortunate playing with Billy Taylor at the Kennedy Center because of his mastery of the piano, and the chance it gives me to play with a variety of artists. I feel like I'm finally getting my turn."

**T. Bruce Wittet**



## NEWS

- **Mike Portnoy** is on Dream Theater's new live double-disc, *Once In A Lifetime*.
- **Dennis Chambers** and percussionist **Victor Williams** are currently on tour in Europe with John McLaughlin.
- **Stephen Emig** is currently touring with African pop artist

Hamid Baroudi.

• **Steve Luongo** has been touring with Who bassist John Entwistle. A live album is in the works for release shortly.

• **Karl Lewis** recently got off the road with Australian band Savage Garden. He is currently on tour with Billie Meyer.

• **Richie Hayward** is on Jonny Lang's new record.

• **Mitch Mitchell** played on two cuts of Junior Brown's newest record, *Long Walk Back*.

• **Nick Vincent** recently did a European tour with Tito & Tarantula. He is on new releases by The Wilsons, Benny Mardones, Raquel Zonte, Judith Owen, Susan Toney, and Jason Moss, and he's on the soundtrack for *Isn't It Romantic*. Nick can also be seen around LA playing in bands Chuck E. Weiss & The Goddam Liars and The Jeff Goldblum Jazz Group.

• **Nick D'Virgilio** has been working with Spock's Beard of late, supporting their current Metal Blade release, *The Kindness Of Strangers*. He can also be heard on the upcoming Tears For Fears release.

• **John McEntire** is on Richard Buckner's *Since* and David Grubbs' *The Thicket*.

• **Brian Reitzel** is touring with Air.



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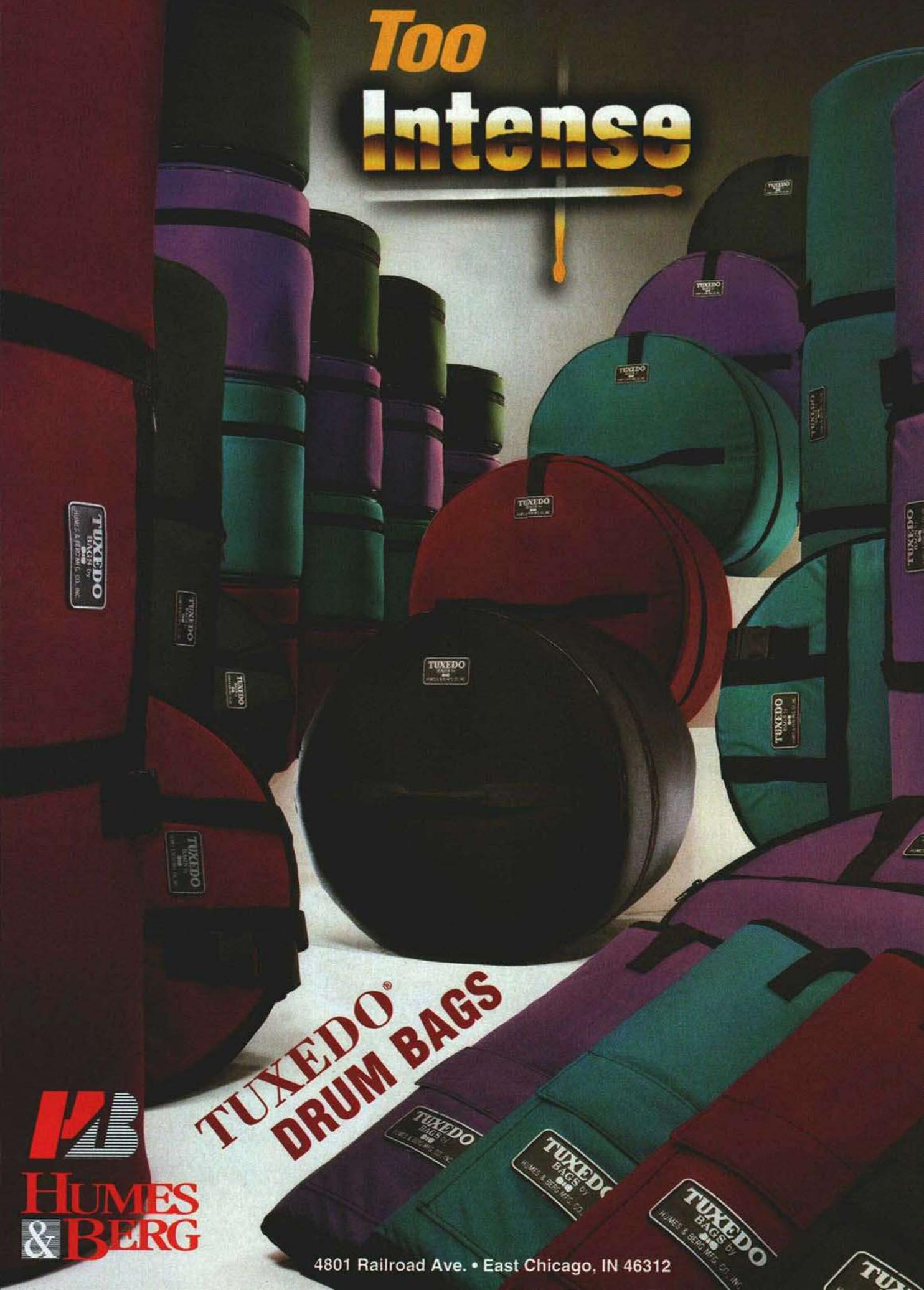
# Vinnie ! Amico of moe.

**M**uch of what makes moe. one of the most interesting of today's album-oriented rock bands is the group's diverse mix of rhythms, and how they are interpreted on drums by twenty-nine-year-old Vinnie Amico. Add to that the drummer's keen sense of musical playfulness, and you can understand how the band called "moe." has been selling out venues from New York's Irving Plaza to San Francisco's Warfield Theatre over the past three years. Amico was the piece of the puzzle they needed for their adventurous Grateful Dead-meets-Rush live show. His excellent feel is also heard on their new release, *Tin Cans And Car Tires* (Sony 550). Amico starts the album off with a massive, jaunty second-line groove on "Stranger Than Fiction," negotiates the dynamic odd times of "Spaz Medicine" with ease, and is right in the middle of the jamming action on "Plane Crash," sparking the band's healthy improvisations.

by Robin Tolleson



# Too Intense



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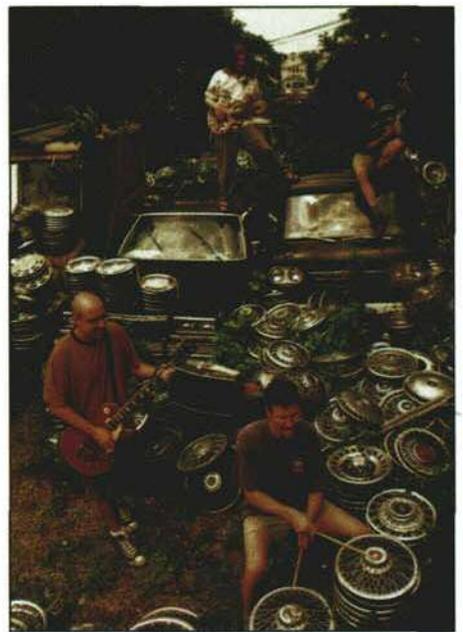
oe. was formed in Utica, New York in 1991 by Al Schnier (guitar, vocals), Chuck Garvey (guitar, vocals), and Rob Derhak (bass, vocals). Vinnie Amico knew of the band while in college in nearby Buffalo, and was a roommate of the group's manager for a time. But he didn't join moe. until November of 1996. Oh, they had asked him to join the group on three other occasions, but they were never able to offer him a decent salary, so he refused. After their fourth drummer left the band, the group turned to Amico one last time. By this time Vinnie and his wife, Debbie, had just bought a house and were expecting their first child, and the band now had a record contract, and so was able to offer a decent salary and health insurance. Amico was working a full-time, career-oriented job at the time, and playing quite a few gigs on the side. (He wasn't sleeping much.) Vinnie and Debbie discussed the offer from moe. at great length and concluded that Vinnie should give it a go. "I decided to try it professionally, and to this day I'm enjoying myself," he says.

**RT:** Do the members of moe. have similar musical tastes?

**VA:** Those guys listen to some stuff that I'd never even heard of, like Camper Van Beethoven, and they were all pretty Zappa-influenced. I was familiar with him, but I wasn't listening to all that much of it at the time. I guess I'm not as open-minded as some other people as far as music goes. I was listening to jazz, classic rock, The Grateful Dead, and reggae—I was a big Bob Marley fan—but my scope was pretty limited to that. I've opened up my musical vocabulary a little since I've been with moe. They're all influenced by The Clash and some of the heavier '80s stuff that I didn't really get all that into.

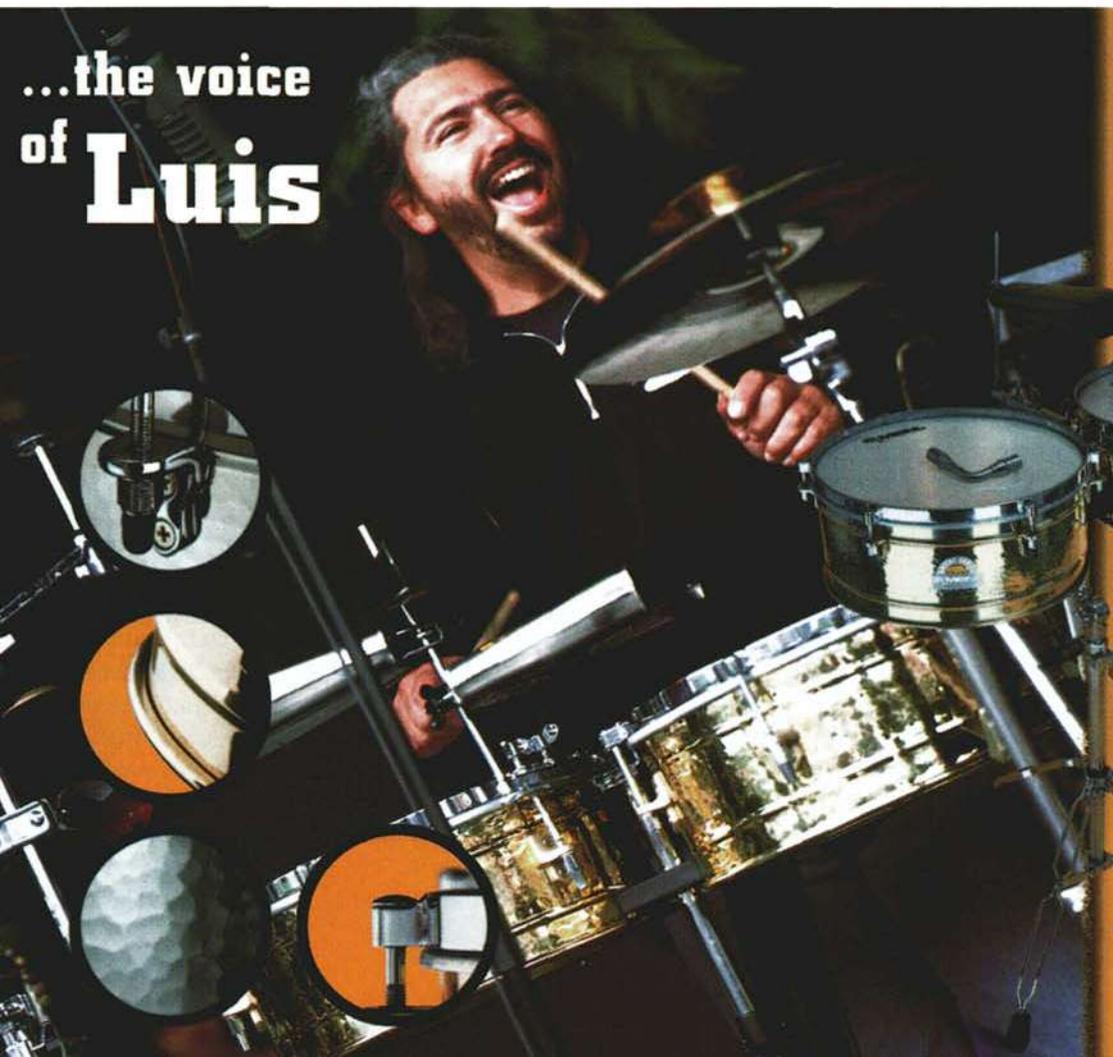
**RT:** What got you into music in the first place?

**VA:** My dad [Sal Amico] was a jazz trumpet player, so I was brought up around it. My parents got a divorce when I was pretty young, but even when I was two or three years old my dad had his jazz friends over to play in the living room. When I was a little kid I'd go out to clubs and watch some of the best jazz musicians in the world playing. So I think it was uncon-



sciously bred into me. There was never a thought that I *wouldn't* be playing an instrument. I started playing the drums when I was nine. I took lessons for two years. When I was done taking lessons I was already playing with people. I started playing in my first bands in clubs when I was in high school. When I got to college,

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one of the first things I did was walk around listening for people playing music, hearing people play guitars in the dorm room. "Hey, I've got drums. Let's go."

**RT:** Did your high school counselor encourage you to play drums as a career?

**VA:** No. I never really thought about playing drums professionally. I didn't study drums in college; I have a degree in economics and psychology. Drums are what I always did as a hobby. It was never in my scheme to be a professional musician. It was always my *dream*, of course, but I figured I'd do what every middle class boy does: Go to college, get a real job, get a family, and so forth. And that's pretty much what I did. It's just that somewhere along the line I became a good drummer. And the dream ended up coming true a couple of years later.

**RT:** What were you listening to in high school?

**VA:** As a freshman and a sophomore I listened mostly to rock. I was a big Rush fan. Every drummer was a big Neil Peart fan. I actually learned a lot of drums by listening to Rush play. If you listen to Neil Peart and get all his chops down, you become pretty good. So I listened to that, and to a lot of Led Zeppelin.

The first band that I joined in high school was playing Grateful Dead and other classic rock tunes. Here I was, a Neil Peart- and John Bonham-influenced guy, playing Grateful Dead tunes, putting monster fills over all the stuff. After a couple years I learned a little bit more about just grooving, and about playing a little freer and more improvisationally—going *with* the music rather than scoping it out first, like Rush and Led Zeppelin and some of those bands had. I guess that's what we do in moe. We play pretty improvisationally, and even though we have parts in songs, the middles are very free. A lot of the segues from tune to tune are free and improvised.

**RT:** That's a great thing about moe. You'll be into some nice pop stuff, and then the tune will open up into some wild jams.

**VA:** I didn't actually get into jazz until a couple of years ago, when I finally felt comfortable enough to do it. Since my dad was a jazz musician, my goal was always to play jazz. But jazz musicians don't really make any money, so it was never a goal for me to be a *professional* jazz musician. I

Ricky Lawson

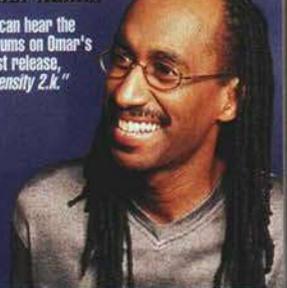


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just wanted to do it to impress my dad. We were getting gigs at restaurants and clubs in Buffalo—just for fun, for the most part. We did it for over a year, and we were finally starting to get the tunes down and get the feel right. I don't know if you ever get it right, but.... We would open the *Real Book* and say, "Hey, let's play this one. One-two-three, go." I went down to see my dad a couple times at jazz jams, and I'd play. My dad was like, "Geez, how'd you learn to do that?" That was a nice compliment to hear from a guy who actually knew how to play jazz.

**RT:** You got a healthy dose of the odd-time thing from listening to Rush.

**VA:** Oh yes. "Spaz Medicine" has an odd meter, and "Again And Again" is in 7/4.

**RT:** You sound very natural when playing odd times.

**VA:** I don't feel that I really know a lot, but I do try to keep where 1 is, especially in the odd-meter stuff. It gets a little confusing sometimes, but for the most part it's fun to play the odd stuff. I don't really count. As long as I know where 1 is, I'll come back in right.

"Some bands play every tune with the same groove, the same beat, every night for a whole tour. There's no freedom to improvise. That would get pretty boring."

One of the Grateful Dead bands I used to play in had a couple songs in odd meters that I enjoyed playing. So that kind of got me into the odd-metered stuff. It taught me how to feel the groove and play it without being all stiff. Some drummers play odd-metered stuff real stiff, counting as they go, and you can tell what they're going to do all the time. If you can play odd-metered stuff in a groove rather than actually having to count, it sounds better and feels better. On *Ten Summoner's Tales* by Sting,

Vinnie Colaiuta plays half of that record in odd meters. But he plays the stuff straight-forward, so you can't even tell it's *in* odd meters. He'll keep quarter notes with his ride hand on the bell, and only change up his snare. It's amazing. That's one of my favorite drum pieces.

**RT:** If you haven't taken any lessons since the fifth grade, how have you gotten better as a drummer?

**VA:** By listening and playing. I rarely sit down and actually rehearse stuff. I listen

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and then mentally play it. Before I even really knew how to play drums I was playing with people. The more you play with other musicians, the better you can get, because you can feel how to play with other people. There are drummers who've taken fifteen years of lessons, have chops like you would not believe, and can play in any kind of meter. But put them in a band with somebody and they can't play. They don't have time, and they don't know how to play with anyone else. And then you take somebody who's never taken a lesson, but started playing with other musicians right from the start, and they can play. It's a big thing to play with other musicians—to keep your ears open, and to listen to many styles of music to get as many influences as you can. That way, when you get in a playing situation you know what to play because you know the style of music.

**RT:** The song "Head" is a fun, "up" tune. Is it a good live song?

**VA:** Oh yeah. We have fun with it. That tune is six or seven minutes on the record, and we go fifteen or twenty in concert. We get into a pretty open thing in the middle.



In fact, we've actually segued into something else a few times.

**RT:** Speaking of jamming, "Plane Crash"

reminds me of some of the Allman Brothers' stuff.

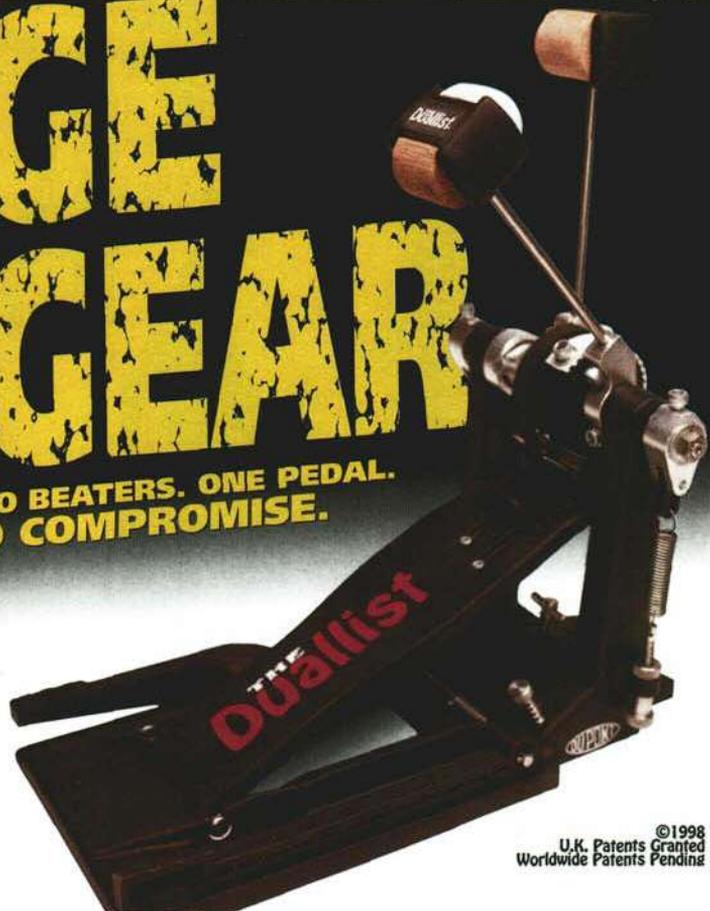
**VA:** That tune is just great fun and I love

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playing it. We do have an Allman Brothers/Santana type of section to get out of the song. It gets pretty strong, and it keeps the energy level up.

**RT:** "Big World" is a nice, dark, funky tune.

**VA:** Oh yeah. We wrote the ending on that tune while in preproduction for the record. We had in mind just a nice groove through the tune, and then a way to get out. We wanted to "moe.-ize" it, because we have weird stuff in some of our tunes. So we came up with that ending. It's actually pretty simple; it's just hard to count. At the ending I'm counting fours all the way across, but counting slow and fast, and then in triplet feel. It goes: four slow one fast, three slow two fast, two slow three fast, one slow four fast, four fast one slow, three fast two slow, two fast three slow, one fast four slow, out. It's counted all in a triplet feel. It took us a while to get that down in rehearsal, but the concept was simple once we figured out what we wanted to do. Then to actually *do* it was another thing: to spring it out live and actually be able to pull it off. Usually two or three of us in the

band at a time will get it right, but one guy'll muff it. Then the whole thing sounds completely screwed up.

**RT:** How much rehearsing do you guys do?

**VA:** Not much. We play a lot of live shows, and we're starting to get more time in soundcheck, so we're starting to work on things there. But especially this year we haven't had time to rehearse much. We usually take two or three weeks before each tour to write tunes and play. Sometimes during soundchecks we'll run over the old stuff that we've been playing for a while. That writing and rehearsal time is important, because we're still interacting with each other onstage, in a playing situation. We're feeling real comfortable with each other's playing, which keeps the stimulus going and keeps us thinking similarly. So when we get back to the old tunes, we remember them. I'm not a big fan of rehearsing. [laughs]

**RT:** What is moe.'s approach in the studio?

**VA:** The concept has always been to get as close to the live sound as we can get, because we're a live act. The first record

was sugar-coated a little. It still sounded pretty much like the live stuff, but there were a lot of doubles and triples on the vocals. On this record we were definitely going for a truly live sound, and we came a lot closer to capturing it. The guitar and drum sounds and the playing itself are more like how we play live, with the exception of the string parts in "Plane Crash" and the horn parts in "Happy Hour Hero."

**RT:** You have a mature attitude about grooving. The chops are great, but the grooves are strong.

**VA:** I don't feel that I'm a very chops-oriented drummer. I never really practice rudiments and stuff. I'm always concentrating on grooving and making sure that the tune has good time—but not *perfect* time, because that's not always the most *musical* time. Let it flow, and make sure that the tune's groovin' and everybody's with it.

**RT:** Who are some other drummers who have influenced you besides Neil Peart, Vinnie Colaiuta, and John Bonham?

**VA:** Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, and some local jazz guys nobody's heard of but

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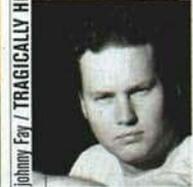


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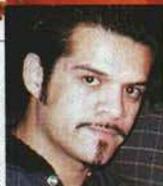


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who are amazing all the same. I learned a lot from The Grateful Dead's drummers. I've got to give those guys a lot of credit: Neither of them is the greatest drummer, but together they have a pretty strong groove.

Carter Beauford is a monster. I saw The Dave Matthews Band last week, and Carter is just *so* good. And then there are all of Santana's drummers. I took a course in Afro-Latin music at the University of Buffalo and learned a bunch of Latin grooves—not just the conga parts but the bell part and the clave part and the guiro part. It's amazing for Carlos Santana to have put the whole Latin feel and groove into rock 'n' roll. I've seen him play four or five times and he always had a different drummer. I saw Graham Lear in '87—a phenomenal drummer. I saw Walfredo Reyes Jr. in '89. It was just him and Armando Peraza on congas, and they covered all the parts. It was amazing. Armando is God according to Santana himself.

I'm also influenced by Chad Smith, and by people like Peter Erskine and Steve Gadd. I've seen Gadd play with Steely Dan and Clapton, and he's a monster. And I've seen Erskine play with Steely Dan.

**RT:** With moe, you've got a great outlet for playing all this music that you like.

**VA:** There are some pop-rock bands out there that play every tune with the same groove, the same beat, every night for a whole tour. There's no freedom to improvise. That would get pretty boring. I make it a point to play each song differently every night. Of course it's *basically* the same, but I'll put a different fill in every spot, that kind of thing. Otherwise I think I'd get bored out of my mind. Especially when we have a repertoire of fifty songs and could do three shows without repeating.

**RT:** Tell me about your equipment.

**VA:** I have a turquoise Yamaha *Maple Custom* kit with 8x10, 10x12, 11x13, and 12x14 power toms. I use a 5 1/2x14 snare and a 22" bass drum, and I'm switching between Evans *G2* coated and clear heads. I had Carter Beauford's drum tech, Henry Luniewski, tune my drums for the record. I never really knew much about tuning drums. I just did it as to how I thought it sounded good. Henry taught me a little bit about tension, and how if the bottom and top heads aren't tuned correctly to each other you can get a lot of weird "wow wow" waves and things. He helped me a

lot. I still tune essentially the same way, but now you just hear a true ring. With the Yamaha drums I can go two months without playing, then take them out of the boxes, and set them up—and they're still in tune. I don't hit very hard; I'm actually a pretty light player. So I don't have a problem during shows with things getting too out of whack.

For cymbals, I play a few Sabians and some Paistes. The Paistes include a 16" *Fast* crash, an 18" *Full* crash, and a 10" splash. My Sabians include 14" regular hi-hats, an 8" splash, a 20" medium ride, and an 18" China, all hand-hammered. On the record, Henry brought a couple of Carter's *K Zildjian* crashes, a 20" *Dark* ride, and a 19" *K Custom Dark* crash, which were sweet. I have LP *Matador* timbales and a couple of bells in back of my hi-hat on the left side. I'm just starting to learn how to play some percussion parts on the kit. I have been trying to put more guaguancos and different bell patterns into the moe. set. It's tough to do, especially when the bass player isn't laying down straight Latin grooves, but I'm working on it. I do try to play the timbales a lot. I try to sound like the band has both a timbale player and a drummer when I play. On the record I do that in a few spots on "Plane Crash," "Big World," and "High & Low." When I saw Walfredo Reyes Jr. cover the timbale parts, the bell parts, *and* the kit parts with Santana, that just amazed me. It's something that I want to get down. Any weapons that you have in your arsenal are very helpful.

**RT:** Speaking of percussion, I heard that moe. did the *Further Tour* last year with Mickey Hart and all those percussionists.

**VA:** Mickey brought all the drummers on the tour up to play with Planet Drum, and I developed a nice relationship with Giovanni Hidalgo. I sat down on the bus one night with him, Zakir Hussain, and Mickey after they were done. Gio and Mickey grabbed a bunch of bells, and Zakir was playing a little hand drum. We played a ten-minute groove that just ripped. If my career ended today, at least I can say I got to play with some of the best drummers in the world all together in one spot. And I knew what to do!





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# YAMAHA DRUMS

## Randy Castillo

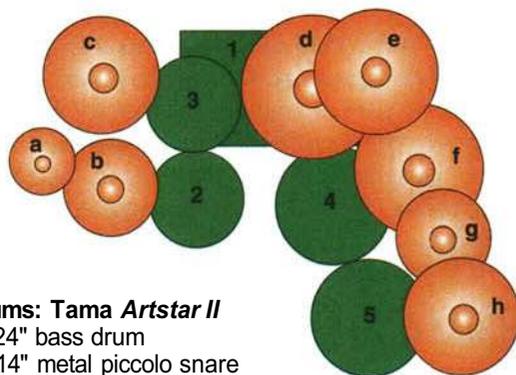
**Q**I'm a great admirer of your work with Ozzy Osbourne, both past and present. I'm especially fond of the drum and cymbal sound you achieved on Ozzy's *No More Tears* album. Could you diagram and describe that setup, including the mic's and processing used for recording?



Michael Mazur

Jarrold Finger  
Jackson, TN

**A**Thanks for the compliments, and for your interest in my work. The diagram of my kit and cymbals is shown at right. The microphone setup included Shure *SM57s* and AKG *451s* (both used on the snare drum and all the toms. The bass drum had a Sennheiser 421 inside and a Neumann 47 in front of it. (There was no front head on the drum.) The hi-hat got a Sennheiser *KM 84*, and there were Neumann *87s* placed in the far corners of the room. We recorded at A&M Studios room A, which is a great room for recording drum tracks.



### Drums: Tama Artstar II

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4. 16x18 floor tom
5. 18x18 floor tom

### Cymbals: Zildjian

- a. 8" splash
- b. 14" *New Beat* hi-hats

- c. 18" medium crash
- d. 22" heavy ride
- e. 19" medium crash
- f. 20" China
- g. 14" *New Beat* hi-hats
- h. 18" medium crash

Duane Barron and John Purdell were the producers, and I think they did a great job getting the drum sound. There were no triggered effects or electronics used—just plain drums! It turned out great.

## Steve Smith

**Q**You've been my major influence since 1979. I'm trying to acquire all of the recordings you've done outside Journey and Vital Information. But you do so much, who can keep track!

Can you list the artist and album titles of your past projects so that I can complete my collection?

Dave Wrenn  
via Internet

**A**Thanks for such enthusiastic support! I couldn't begin to list all the recordings I've done outside Journey and Vital Information; I've lost track, too. But here are some of the artists I've recently recorded with: Country singer Ray Price, pop divas Tena Arena and Lara Fabian, the Japanese pop group SMAP (on their latest release *Oiz Viva Amigos!*), and three Italian singers—Elisa, Zucchero (*Greatest Hits* and *Spirito Di Vino*), and Claudio Baglioni. A recent release on N.Y.C. Records that's a good CD is *Steps Ahead Live In Tokyo '86*.

Three new recordings that I'm very proud of are all on the Tone Center label. I produced, co-composed, and played on these "power trio" projects. They are *Vital Tech Tones* with Scott Henderson and Victor Wooten, *Show Me What You Can Do* with Frank Gambale and Stu Hamm, and *Cause And Effect* with Larry Coryell and Tom Coster. These three, plus the new Vital Info CD *Where We Come From*, have my most "over the top" and "going for broke" playing yet recorded. I hope you can find some of them!



## Dave Weckl

**Q**You've started using an 18" kick drum as a "remote" drum, to the right of your regular 22" kick. What is your pedal setup to play this drum? I realize it's a remote, but is it a stock version, or has it been customized for you? I'm thinking of adding a similar drum to my setup, and I'd like to know how you play yours—both physically and musically.

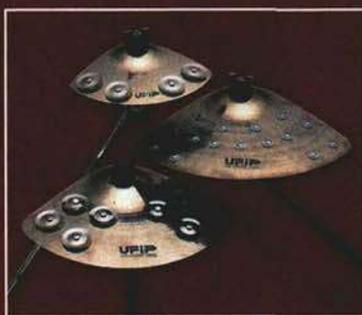
Stacy Werner  
Port Alberni, BC, Canada

**A**The 18" kick in my setup (placed just to the right of the normal kick, in front of the floor toms) is played using a standard double pedal. The right side of the pedal is attached to the drum, while the left (slave) pedal is placed just to the right of my normal pedal for the 22" kick. So all I have to do is move my right foot over to play the 18" drum. Obviously, the "left" beater on that double pedal is the one that hits the drum, so the sound and feel is not optimum, but it works okay for now. Yamaha has

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*Shown are a selection of UFIP Percussion Effects (clockwise from upper left): "Six Tree", "Tibetan" Bells, "Burma" Bells, Bronze Bells, Bronze Discs, 7 and 8" "Icebells", "Tingle Cups" and 18, 16 and 14" "Hands" Cymbals. Inset: piccolo, medio and grande "Ximbau".*

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built me a prototype pedal that works very well for this application, but as of yet it is not in production, and actually is still in Japan. So I'm still using an old Yamaha DFP 865 for this application (as well as for my main foot pedal). The trick is in getting the angle right so there is not too much strain on the action of that "remote" pedal. As a result, the 18" drum must maintain a pretty "straight forward" placement, slightly angled towards the right.

The addition of the 18" drum definitely adds color and dimension to my drum sound. It works especially well when I switch from funk/rock stuff (on the 22" drum, with a small hole for a tight sound) to a more jazz-oriented song (on the 18", with a full front head tuned higher). There are also times—especially in solo situations—when I will play *both* drums (left foot on the 22", right on the 18") for hand and feet combos and grooves. This really changes up the sound of things. Enjoy this system if you decide to check it out, but remember to always try to use it *musically*.



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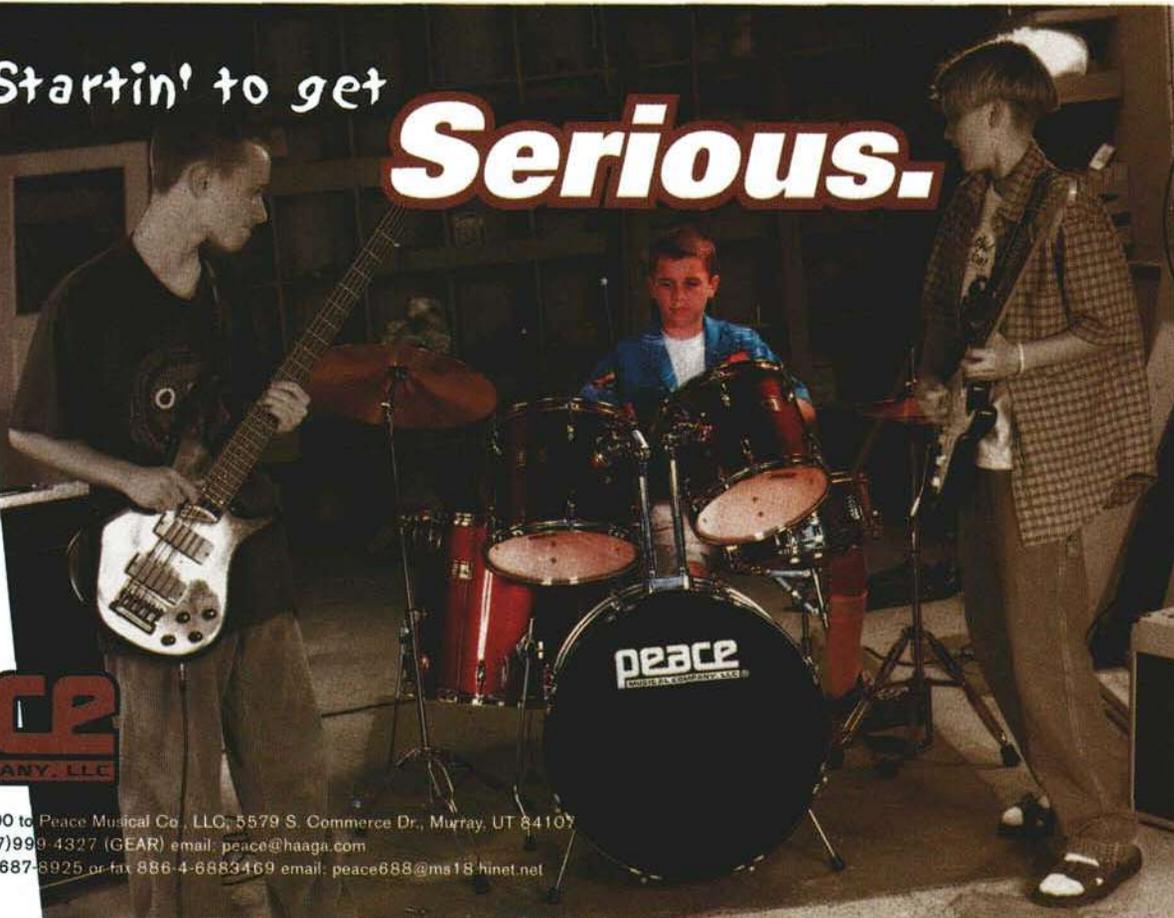
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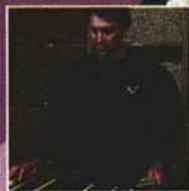
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## Getting Into The Market

**Q** I am a forty-year-old drummer who has worked in bands playing rock stuff forever. Now I want to play in the more commercial market, doing shows, weddings, whatever. But I don't know any of the required tunes. How can I learn enough to begin getting some gigs (any gigs!), or even to get my foot in the door?

Rod  
via Internet

**A** The way to learn the "required tunes" for weddings and shows is the same way you probably learned the "rock stuff you played in your earlier bands. You have to listen to them! Fortunately, as a drummer you just need to get a handle on styles; you don't actually have to learn chord changes or melodies for thousands of different songs. Tune in to the radio stations that play more adult-oriented standards, or "oldies" stations playing music from the '60s, '70s, and '80s. In addition, pick up a few of the "dance music" CD compilations that are available in record stores or from TV promotion offers.

If by "shows" you mean actual theatrical musicals, just pick up the original cast albums to as many of them as you can get. But be aware that playing shows like these will require reading skill. If your skills are rusty, brush up on them. If you don't read, this might not be the area for you to pursue.

If, on the other hand, you mean nightclub acts, it's possible to play such shows without reading (although it's easier if you do read). You'd need to hook up with a single artist or band with whom you could rehearse and develop the material by ear. You most likely wouldn't want to try to freelance with many different entertainers, because in such cases it's usually necessary to read charts to learn the shows on short notice.

As you did to develop your rock skills, you'll develop your pop and wedding-music skills by playing along to as much of that type of music as possible. Fortunately, the basic beats of virtually all pop music are the same as those used in rock (with the exception of Latin-oriented stuff, for which there are tons of book/CD packages and

videos to learn from). So you really won't have to learn a lot of new beats or patterns. The biggest adjustment you'll need to make from playing rock to playing more pop-oriented material is in the area of dynamics. The fact of the matter is, the drumming on Kool & The Gang's "Celebration" isn't that different from AC/DC's "Back In Black." It's just a little faster and a *lot* softer.

Try to find some other musicians to jam with on this material. Do this in a relaxed atmosphere where the object is to learn, not to audition. Once you've become comfortable in the genre, then seek out working bands to actually audition for.

## Phil's Big Band Album

**Q** I have read references in *Modern Drummer* about Phil Collins' big band project, but I have been unable to find a CD of this recording. Does one exist? If so, what is its title and record label? Please let me know how I can purchase a copy of this effort.

GregoryPS  
via Internet

**A** At press time Phil Collins' big band album had not yet been released. According to our latest information, the CD is supposed to be released in the US by Atlantic records "some time before the end of 1998." The title has not been announced.

## Identifying Sabian Cymbals

**Q** I have a used Sabian ride cymbal. Due to excessive cleaning there is no model marking left on it, just the words "Sabian Canada" stamped into it. It's a 20" model that *looks* like an AA (from the color and lathing pattern). It's heavy in weight, and from the profile and bell shape it's probably a medium-heavy or a heavy ride. How can I determine exactly which model it is?

I've had some of my Sabian cymbals since 1985, when I purchased them in South Africa. Some are marked "Sabian B20," while others are marked simply "Sabian." I know that the range of Sabian models expanded in the ensuing years. I'd like more information on my older cym-

bals, and how they compare to the Sabians of today.

Swoycieh  
via Internet

**A** According to Wayne Blanchard, Sabian's manager of marketing communications: "If your ride weighs between 5 lbs. 12 ozs. and 6 lbs. 2 ozs., we would consider it a medium-heavy model. A heavy ride weighs between 6 lbs. 2 ozs. and 6lbs. 8 ozs.

"Cymbals within the model line designated *Sabian B20* were produced in the very early years of the company (1983-86), in Italy. They provided a cost-effective alternative to the more expensive AA and HH series. They were created from the same secret-formula bronze—an alloy of 80% copper and 20% tin—but they were manufactured differently. They were centrifugally formed (molten metal 'spun' into shape in a mold), while AA and HH cymbals were produced in Canada from raw bronze castings that were heated and then multi-rolled, shaped, hammered, and lathed.

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## The Return Of The Drum Detective

*Editor's note: All of the following questions were put to our intrepid drum historian, Harry Cangany.*

**Q** I recently found my grandfather's old snare drum in an attic. He got the drum for his fifteenth birthday, back in 1910, and went on to play in orchestras and vaudeville pit bands. The drum is in good condition (if a little dirty). The top head is ripped, but the bottom head is in good

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shape. The drum measures 4 1/4" deep and 15" across. There are no visible markings of any kind. Any information you can provide would be helpful.

Otto Resch  
Rochester, NY

**A**Sometimes it's hard to tell who built the really old drums, but yours resembles a Lyon & Healy. The double claw hooks and the strainer headpiece are the same as those

on one I have. Lyon & Healy was a large, Chicago-based manufacturer/distributor of musical instruments in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth. They sold their drum manufacturing business to Wilson Brothers after World War I. Wilson later went out of business.

**Q**I purchased this 10x14 wood snare drum at a garage sale. It has wood hoops, calf-skin heads, and a simple snare strainer with no throw-off. The snares themselves are



cord with wire wrapped around them. The drum has a metal ring on the rim to attach a carrying strap. There are no nameplates or other identification.

Can you tell me the brand and age of the

drum? Also, what is the device to the left of the strainer? It looks like a holder for a rod about 1/4" in diameter.

Ray Noelle  
Mt. Vernon, IN

**A**Ray, it's time to get a drum corps together in your neighborhood. Your single-tension mahogany snare drum is a Gretsch—although it could have been labeled a Rogers, because the former made drums for the latter for a long time. The strainer is definitely Gretsch, but the claws were used by both companies before each changed their design.

At one time a decal identifying the manufacturer was probably above the air vent. And that mysterious "device" is a drumkey holder.

**Q**Among my vintage treasures is this beautiful Slingerland *Radio King* set that I'm proud to own and play. Can you tell me the age of this kit? It's complete, right down to the "Krupa" stamped on the heels of the pedals.

Dan Kuiper  
Grand Rapids, MI





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**A**Your *Radio King* set is striking (no pun intended). The beavertail lugs and smaller bass drum size would suggest a late '40s to early '50s time period. In theory, they could be as much as ten years older, but by the early '50s the popular trend was to 22" and 24" bass drums, rather than the earlier 26" and 28" models. The chrome is also more of a "toward the '50s" clue; most *Radio King* sets from the '40s have nickel hardware. (And don't be misled by the "Cloud Badge," which usually indicates older drums. These badges defy chronology. They show up, get supplanted by oval badges, and then show up again.)

Your set uses *Giant Spurs* (hoop mounts). By the early '50s Slingerland typically used a shell-mount spur system similar to the leg brackets on the floor tom—



but with shorter, bent rods for spurs. So...I think I'll stick with the late '40s as my best guess for the genesis of your set.

**Q**I found my kit through the classified ads. It's a Crown, and the seller told me it was a 1972 model. I don't know if it's a good-quality kit or a generic piece of junk.



The shells appear to be 10-ply maple, and the color is gold sparkle. The kit looks much like the current Yamaha *Maple Custom Absolute* kits. Can you give me any more information?

Michael Naperalsky  
Granger, IN

**A**Your Crown set is a late-'60s to early-'70s Japanese import. It uses the "double toms on one rail mount" idea that pre-dated contemporary double tom mounts.

Most import kits of that era were made of mahogany or a blend of some other wood with mahogany. So I'm doubtful that your kit is actually all-maple. On the other hand, I find it interesting that there are eight lugs on each head of the toms, and ten lugs on each head of the bass drum. This was not common with the lower-priced Japanese import kits of that era. So you may have a kit that was a "cut above" the norm.

There is no established market for these kits as yet, but I have seen a few dealers using the term "vintage" in describing similar imports. As long as *you* like them, that's all that's important.



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HH905 Lever Glide (left)  
HH805 Traditional Pull

## A New Bid For Affordability Sonor Force 2001 Drumkit

In a new effort to prove itself viable in the entry-level market, Sonor has introduced the *Force 2001* drumkit. The new series includes "the best features of the *Force Maple* and *Force 3000* series" (bass-drum spurs, long high-tension lugs) with "affordable pricing" (\$1,199 for a five-piece set). The toms and bass drums feature 6-ply mahogany shells for "a warm, traditional sound." Hardware is all double-braced.

The series is offered in *Stage*, *Studio*, and *Fusion* size configurations, in black, wine red, light blue, and dark blue covered finishes. Additional toms are available as add-on items. And in what may be a first for Sonor, all the drums feature traditional square-headed tension rods, so that tuning may be accomplished with a standard drumkey.



## Cold Cuts Ice Age Cryogenic Strengthening

If the term "cryogenics" makes you think of frozen people waiting to be thawed back to life in the distant future, think again. Exposure to ultra-low temperatures has been shown to strengthen and prolong the life of hardware and materials. As a result, the deep-freezing of machine parts, tools, and other items has become a standard process used in industry today—especially for high-performance engines and high-tech manufacturing equipment. As a matter of fact, NASA now requires it for virtually all components headed into space.

The cryogenic process is a one-time freezing procedure that relieves stresses created in materials during their original manufacturing processes. Such stresses are found in metal drums, drum hardware, and cymbals as a result of the manner in which they are shaped. Ice Age Cryogenic Strengthening has found that placing these items in a computer-controlled chamber and freezing them at below -328° Fahrenheit improves every aspect of their performance. Comments from drummers regarding "frozen" cymbals include "longer sustain," "higher pitch," "more cut," and even "stayed clean longer." A snare drum (frozen with the heads on!) was said to have improved dramatically in terms of resonance (while the heads proved more than usually durable). "Frozen" bass drum pedals were said to play smoother.

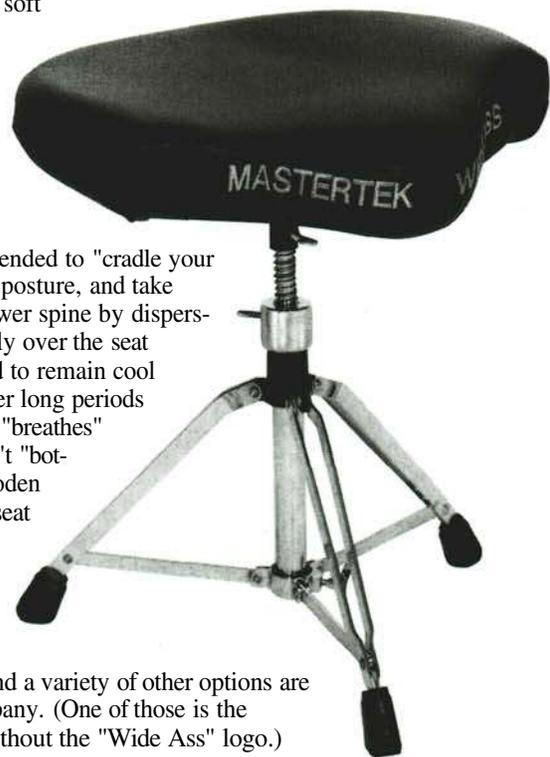
Items that can be cryogenically treated include cymbals, metal drums, drum rims, and hardware. The process is also said to improve electrical conductivity in such items as electronic triggers, cables, and microphones.

## Just Sit Down And Play! Mastertek Wide Ass Seat

Okay, get over the name. At roughly 16 1/2" deep by 19" wide the *Wide Ass Seat* is more like an office chair than a traditional drum seat, and it isn't going to fit into many trap cases or hardware bags. But it could make life a good deal more comfortable for many drummers.

Eschewing the flat plywood base, soft foam, and pot-metal mounting brackets used on some drum seats, the *Wide Ass Seat* is pressure-molded to fit the human anatomy. High-quality absorbent foam is injection-molded to fit the frame, and the seat is then covered (top and sides) with soft leather. The mounting bracket on the bottom of the seat is all steel, and features a 7/8" bracket to fit most drum-stool shafts.

The design of the *Wide Ass Seat* is intended to "cradle your form, improve your posture, and take pressure off your lower spine by dispersing the weight evenly over the seat frame." It's also said to remain cool and comfortable over long periods because the leather "breathes" and the foam doesn't "bottom out" on the wooden base. The standard seat has a retail list price of \$99 plus \$11 shipping. A collapsible backrest is available for \$49 plus \$5 shipping, and a variety of other options are offered by the company. (One of those is the "church" version without the "Wide Ass" logo.)



# Art Meets Economy

## DW Edge/Exotic Snare Drums And Collarlock Hardware



**Background**, left to right: 6x14 *Edge/Exotic* snare with walnut center, 5x13 with cherry center. **Foreground**, left to right: walnut, maple, cherry, oak, and birch shellcenters.

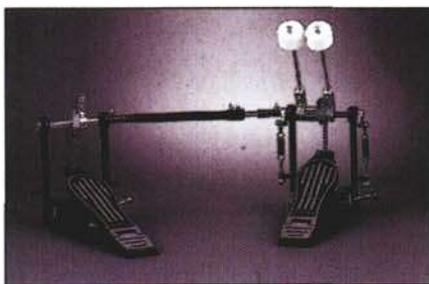
natural brass top and bottom sections. The 5"-, 6"-, and 7"-deep by 13"- and 14"-diameter *Edge/Exotic* models carry a suggested retail price \$200 more than standard satin-oil *Edge* models. Shells are also available as retro-fit items for players who already own an *Edge* drum with the standard 10-ply maple center.

Also new from DW is a full selection of *Collarlock* single and double bass drum pedals, hi-hats, and drum and cymbal stands. The line combines DW's twenty-five years of experience and innovation with specially designed components and overseas production,

in order to offer drummers "exceptional performance at entry-level prices." A single pedal lists for \$119, a double pedal for \$279, a hi-hat for \$119, a snare stand or a straight cymbal stand for \$94, and a cymbal boom stand for \$109.

Want something *really* different? DW now offers their unique *Edge* brass/wood combination snare drums with *Craviotto Exotic* solid-wood shell centers. The woods used for these shell sections add a variety of tonal characteristics while providing the "rich appearance of rare, exotic woods."

The *Edge/Exotics* are available with a choice of satin-oil-finished solid maple, birch, cherry, oak, and walnut center sections, and with either chrome-plated or



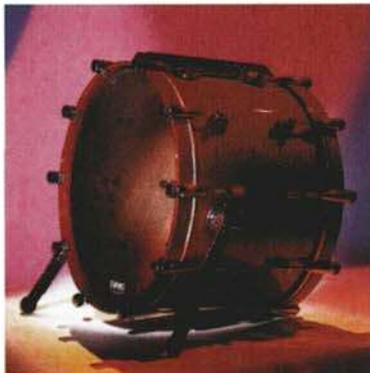
## When Is A Head Not A Head?

### Evans Retro Screen Front Bass Drum Head And EQ4 Batter Head



For those who like the no-front-head bass drum sound, but hate the "incomplete," gaping-hole look of a drum with no front head, Evans offers the *Retro Screen*. It's placed on the front of the bass drum like any normal head. But the material that the screen is made of is a porous mesh that does not resonate. When the batter head is struck, all of the air is pushed out through the entire diameter of the drum (rather than just through a small hole cut in a solid front head). The result is the single-head bass drum sound of the late '60s and early '70s, but with the playing feel of a double-headed drum.

Also new from Evans is the *EQ4* bass drum batter head. These single-ply, 10-mil heads have non-removable muffling rings. And, unlike many bass drum heads that have the same size muffling ring for every diameter of head, the *EQ4's* ring varies in size proportionately to the size of the drumhead. Thus smaller heads won't sound choked, while larger heads will have enough muffling. The heads are available in clear or coated versions, in 18", 20", 22", 24", and 26" sizes.



## Two-For-One Sale

### Fat Cat Snappy Snares

Big Bang Distribution's *Fat Cat Snappy Snares* offer a way to turn any snare drum into a dual-tension model, without actually requiring two separate snare strainers. Each *Fat Cat Snappy Snares* set includes twelve snare strands tensioned by the drum's throw-off in the traditional manner (for a tight snare sound), coupled with twelve additional strands whose tension is independently adjustable by means of a screw on the snare set itself (for a looser, ultra-sensitive snare sound).

*Fat Cat Snappy Snares* can be easily attached (via cord or strap) to all standard-throw-off snare drums. They come in 13" and 14" lengths, at a retail list price of \$24.95.



# And What's More

The *Swif-Kick* from **DRUM BUFF** is another entry in the rapidly growing field of devices to support a floor tom for use as a small bass drum. The collapsible wood/metal cradle folds completely for transport, without any pieces that must be carried separately. It features an adjustable pedal plate so that any bass drum pedal can be used without modification. Drum height is calculated for a strike close to the center of the drum. Adjustable front spurs prevent creeping (on a carpet) and stabilize the unit on uneven floors. The side surfaces of the drum rest on strips of sponge rubber to protect the finish and to maximize resonance. The unit is



available in versions to fit most 16" and 18" toms; custom versions are also available.

**UNIVERSAL PERCUSSION** is now offering *Handz On* bongos and congas. The new line will include *Club Series* economy models (10" quinto and 11" conga, with stands) and *Professional Series* models (11" quinto, 11 3/4" conga, and 12 1/2" tumba, with stands, high-quality heads, and gold-plated hardware). Bongos are available in 7" and 8 1/2" pairs. The drums will be marketed through Universal's Cannon brand name.

Three new Education Packs are available from **VIC FIRTH**. The *Launch Pad* beginner pack includes *Vic Firth's Snare Drum Method-Book 1*, a 4" practice pad, and a pair of *SD? Jr.* sticks (*SD1* Generals scaled-down for smaller hands), and is priced at \$37.50. The *Education Pack 1* (for the elementary student) includes *SD1* sticks, *M5* mallets (for xylophone, vibes, marimba, and temple blocks), *M14* mallets (a xylophone mallet with birch shafts and polycarbonate heads), and a stick bag to keep everything together. It's priced at \$69.96. The *Education Pack 2* (for intermediate students) contains *SD2 Bolero* sticks, *M3* mallets (for marimba, vibes, and suspended cymbals), *MB* mallets (for bells and xylophone), *T3* timpani mallets, and a stick bag. It's priced at \$115.

**PURE SOUND PERCUSSION** now offers *High Performance* snares. Hand-crafted in America, the 10", 12", 13", 14", and 15" 16-strand models are designed to "recreate the classic sound of vintage

snares" and to provide the "elevated performance characteristics demanded by contemporary artists." The snare sets feature several proprietary designs and manufacturing processes, including a unique steel-alloy wire, and special methods for coiling, stretching, heat-treating, and soldering that wire. With natural copper end plates and sound-enhancing "blue cable" mounting strings, the snares are available at \$39.95 per set (\$34.95 for the 10" model).



**GROVER PRO PERCUSSION** is now using CNC (computer numeric control) machinery to machine all bearing edges and snare beds to tolerances of .001". CNC technology measures the density and depth of each shell and machines a custom bearing edge and snare bed accordingly. This is said to result in "optimal drumhead vibration and drumshell resonance, easy tuning, precise drumhead seating, and a consistent attack and decay across a wide dynamic range." The technology also assures perfect placement of all mounting holes.

New from LP are three additions to its *Matador* line of intermediate-priced cowbells. The *M212* (the smallest bell in the line at 4 5/8") yields a bright, high-pitched sound with moderate overtones. Fitted with LP's

wing-screw clamping mechanism, it will fit on any 3/8" mounting rod, and is priced at \$22. The *M207* (\$27.50) is an 8" bell with a deep pitch and moderate overtones. It's also fitted with LP's clamping mechanism. The *M208* is a hand-held version of the *M207*, priced at \$27.



## Making Contact

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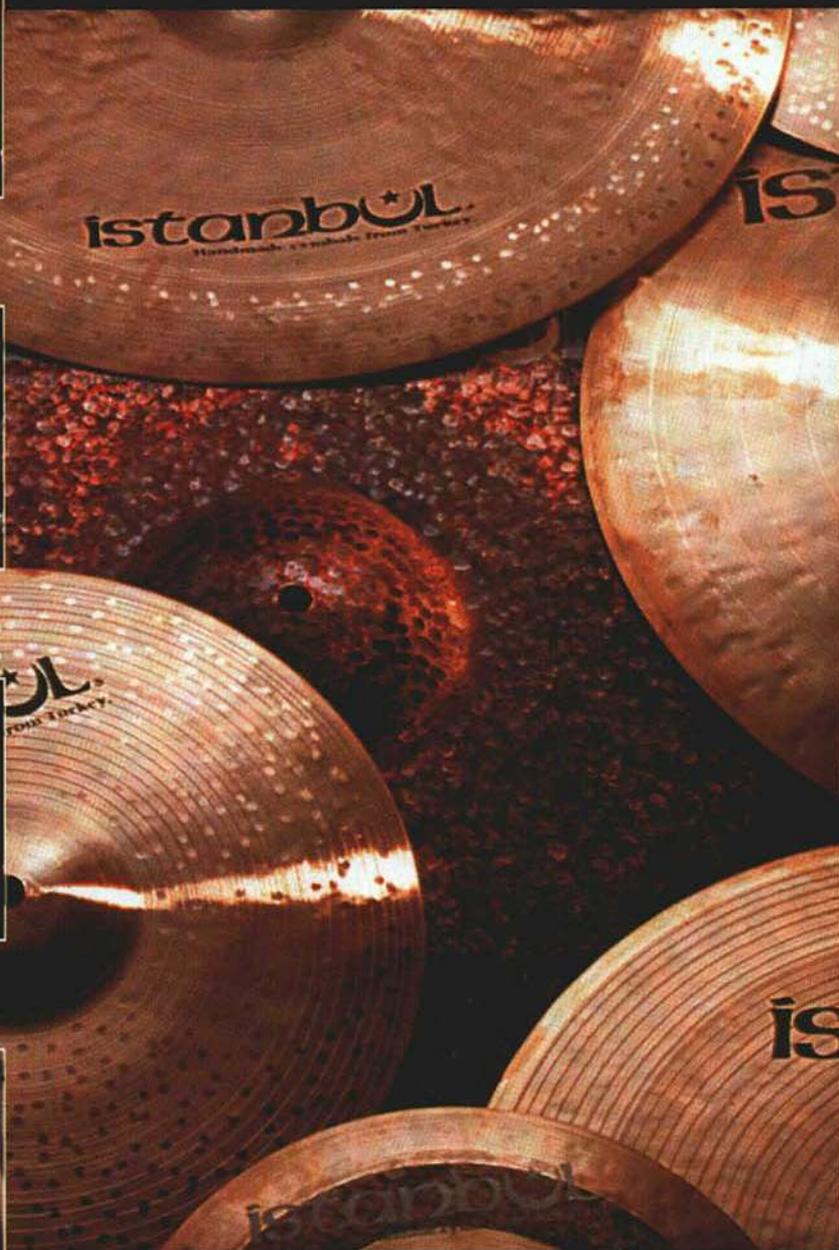
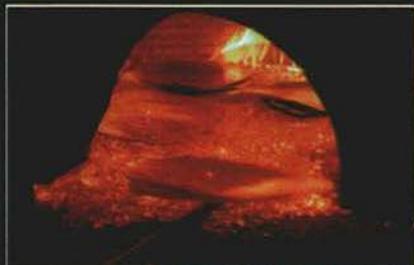
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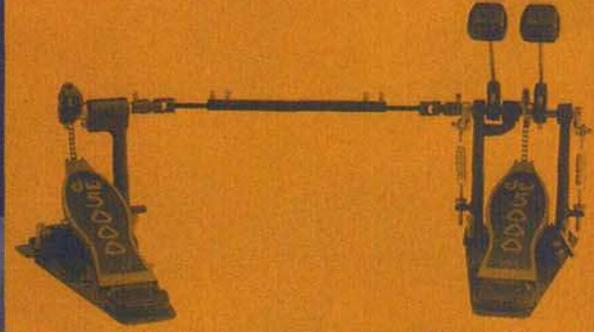
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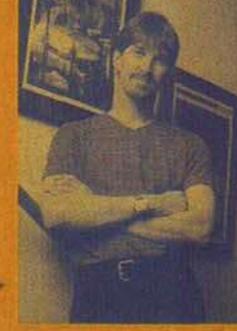


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# ACCESSORIES

# dw

# DW Short Stack Kit And Woofer

by Mark Parsons

## Want to take the high road *and* the low road?

Drum Workshop is a company known almost as much for its innovation as for its quality. In recent years DW has come up with several concepts—some large and some small—that have advanced the state of the art to one degree or another. Some of these include:

*F.A.S.T.* toms, *Edge* brass/maple snares, the *True-Pitch* precision tuning system, and the recent *Woofer* bass drum resonator (to say nothing of their hardware, which is still a benchmark in the industry). Well, if you took all of these concepts and added a few new ones, you'd have DW's latest offspring: the *Short Stack* drumset.

The central idea here is that the ratio of a drum's depth to its diameter affects the tonal balance, thus you can help shape the sonic character of a drum by altering this ratio. Anybody who has ever swapped a 7" snare for a piccolo is well aware of this princi-



### WHAT'S HOT

- *Short Stack toms provide bigger sound than their size would indicate*
- *tom sound records extremely well*
- *Woofers provide extra low end to bass drum sound without losing clarity or attack*

### WHAT'S NOT

- *Short Stack toms can sound "timbale-esque" if tuned high*
- *unmiked tom projection is limited*

ple. The idea also applies to toms (albeit not quite as drastically), and that's exactly where DW has applied it in this case.

The *Short Stack* toms (which provide the namesake for this otherwise conventionally sized kit) are drums of "normal" diameter (8", 10", 12", 13", 14", 15", 16", and 18") on which the depth has been radically reduced. DW has already applied this design concept in a milder form with their *F.A.S.T.* toms. The *Short Stack* toms are along the same line, only more so. (Maybe they should be called *Super Fast* toms?) Regardless of what the premise is called, I found it interesting and was eager to test it.

### The Set

Our review kit consisted of a seven-and-a-half-piece drumset, finished in what DW calls Lexus white. This is a very nice white lacquer finish that has a subtle pearlescent quality to it. It looks great under normal lighting and should absolutely glisten under stage lights.

The bass drum was 14x24. The floor toms (with real legs, no less!) were an interesting pair in that the smaller one, at 13x15, was of "normal" size, while the larger one was of *F.A.S.T.* proportions at 14x18. The snare was a 5x14 *Edge* brass/maple model (finished in chrome and white to match the rest of the kit). The mounted toms were the three smallest sizes of *Short Stack* toms: 5x8, 5 1/2x10, and 6x12. That's seven pieces so far. The extra half-piece I alluded to was the *Woofers*, which was included with our review kit. This is a very shallow bass drum (8x24) designed to be mounted directly *in front* of the primary bass drum in order to provide extra resonance and overtones to the kick sound. More about this later.

The heads were all manufactured by Remo for DW. The toms featured *Clear/Coated* heads on top (basically a clear *Ambassador* with a ring of white coating applied around the outside) and clear *Ambassadors* on the bottom. The bass drum had a *Clear/Coated* batter head, as did the *Woofers* (although it should probably be called the "rear" head instead, since it is never actually struck). The front heads on both 24" drums were black single-ply logo heads without ports. The snare was fitted with a coated *Ambassador* on top (with nifty little numbers near the lugs showing you the proper tuning sequence) and a clear *Ambassador* snare-side head on the bottom.

Construction quality on all of the drums was what we've come to expect from DW: darn near flawless. The kick and floor toms featured DW's usual thin maple shells with small reinforcing rings. The *Short Stack* toms deviated from this in that their 6-ply maple shells had no rings. Neither did the *Woofers*.

Another difference between the *Short Stack* models and traditional DW drums that would be more readily apparent to the casual observer is the lugs. Because of the shallow depth of the *Short Stack* toms, DW uses their new mini lug on them. Looking like a tiny version of the standard DW lug (which traces its own heritage to the round '60s Camco lug), these little guys are 5/8" in diameter (expanding to 1" at their base) and 3/4" tall. In order to keep things integrated DW used the mini lugs on *all* of the drums in our review kit (which was custom-built to showcase the *Short Stack* concept). In the future, the mini lugs will be available only on *Short Stack* toms (but available as a special order on larger drums). Even though all of the drums in our review kit used two rows of lugs, the mini lugs are threaded on both ends, allowing their use as double-ended lugs if need be. (And speaking of threads, the mini lugs were threaded for DW's *True-Pitch* tension rods, which use an extra-fine thread pitch for greater tuning precision.) The smaller lugs were attractive, and they look enough like standard DW lugs that if you added *Short Stack* toms to an existing set they'd blend right in.

Also new on this kit are suspension tom mounts that are diminutive versions of DW's standard *S.T.M.* mount. Again, they look enough like the larger mounts that you can "mix and match" as you wish.

The *Woofers* connects to the bass drum by way of four of the same clamps that are used to hold the legs on the floor toms and/or connect the mounted toms to their stands. There are two clamps each on the *Woofers* and on the bass drum, located at approximately ten o'clock and two o'clock. These are joined by two 18"-long connecting rods, allowing the *Woofers* to be positioned closer to or farther from the bass drum.

### The Sound

On to the important part. Let's touch first on the more conventional aspects of this kit before digging into the *Short Stack* toms and the *Woofers*. The kick drum came equipped with a DW *Bass Drum Pillow* held to the bottom of the shell with hook & loop-type fasteners, with the ends resting lightly against both the batter and front heads. Played in this configuration the drum had a very good "all-around" sound, with the pillow and the unported front head providing a good balance of attack and sustain. Removing the front head (leaving the pillow in place) yielded a drier, focused sound that recorded very well. Replacing the front head (without the pillow) produced a good "open" sound, though at 14" deep the drum didn't have the depth of tone that an 18"-deep drum might. (Keep in mind, however, that this drum was intended to be used in concert with the *Woofers*.)

Even though they had different depth-to-diameter ratios, the floor toms sounded great together. I preferred keeping the 13x15 tom tuned in the middle of its range, while dropping the 14x18 down a bit for a sort of baritone bass effect. This provided good separation between the drums, allowing each its distinctive voice. Both drums sang out with a rich, sustaining tone.

Although the *Edge* brass/maple snare has been around for a few years, this was my first in-depth experience with it. I was quite impressed. This drum had *tons* of cut, but it wasn't a "one-hit wonder" that was only good for loud backbeats. It proved very versatile over a wide tuning range, and had wonderful articulation.

During the review period I was also auditioning a high-end tube microphone (the Lawson *L-47*). At one point I hung the mic' three feet over the snare and said "Listen to this" to an associate in the control room. Then I played a buzz roll. After a minute, he came into the studio, said that it was one of the best recorded snare sounds he'd ever heard, and started raving about the mic'. I agreed that it was a very fine mic', then asked him to listen to the snare *live*. He conceded that the sound he heard standing next to me was the root of what he'd heard in the control room, and that the *Edge* was one of the best snares he'd ever encountered. What I really liked about it was that although it had plenty of ring inherent in its sound, the quality of that ring was such that I was never tempted to throw on a *Zero-Ring* to dampen it, even when recording.

And now for the *Short Stack* toms. From looking at them you might not think they'd be capable of putting out much tone. But you'd be surprised. To my way of thinking, one of the benefits of small toms is that you can lower the tension and get a warm sound from them, but still have a nice, articulate attack (due to the looser top head). This was definitely the case with the *Short Stacks*; they really came into their own in the lower registers. They also sounded good with a "medium" tuning. But because of their shallow depth, if you cranked them up too high they took on a timbale-like character. This might be fine if that's what you're looking for, but it effectively removes them from the category of "tom" and puts them into more of a "percussion/special effect" mode. As an experiment I tuned the 8" and 10" to the *same* pitch and compared the sounds. The smaller drum had a cool, "wet" attack (think of a small *Roto-Tom* tuned low), but it also had a nice, rich fundamental that you'd be hard-pressed to find in a *Roto*. The 10", on the other hand, had more of a midrange ring, which I didn't like as much as the attack/warm sustain of the smaller drum.

Once you get the *Short Stack* toms tuned into their optimum range, *look out*. They put out a very smooth, rich sound that belies their small size. Again, the best description I can think of is to combine the attack of a *Roto* with the sustain of a conventionally sized maple tom. It's a sound that, in my opinion, works very well in a variety of settings—one of which is the studio. These drums were in my studio at the same time as the Sennheiser *Evolution* series mic's (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), so naturally I had to try the *Short Stack* toms on some tracks. I must say, these little toms record *very* well. Without doing anything more than sticking a microphone in the standard close-miking position (2" off head, 1" in from rim, angled toward head), we were able to get a very smooth, focused, "pro" sound almost instantly, using a variety of mic's from Sennheiser, Shure, and AKG. (And, as with the *Edge* snare, these drums elicited a positive response from other musicians.)

The *Short Stack* toms should also work well on stage if you're miking your kit, or in an unmiked setting if high volume is not a primary requirement. Because they don't have tons of projection they might not be your first choice if you're in a metal band, but I can see them working very well in almost any other genre, from rock to funk to country to jazz.

Now what about that *Woofers*? I found it a very interesting proposition. It came set up like the kick drum (same heads and *Bass Drum Pillow*), and that's the way I initially used it. Mounted

about three inches in front of the kick, it added some extra ring to the overall sound—but nothing spectacular. I'm not sure why it was shipped with a muffler installed, which seemed counter-productive to me. Maybe it was originally set up in a big, ambient room? Regardless, we were listening in a moderately sized room (approximately 500 square feet) that had a controlled ambience, so I pulled the front head, removed the pillow, and replaced the head.

Good move. I was instantly rewarded with what I'd been hoping to hear: a big bad *boom*. But not *only* a boom. There was the tighter, controlled sound from the kick drum, *and* the long, low resonance from the *Woofers*. It was a big, complex sound that was somewhat different from that of a "wide open" kick alone. Besides the possibility of "controlled attack/uncontrolled boom," there is the option of using different pitches for each of these sonic components, which is what I ended up doing. My favorite sound was with the kick tuned to a medium pitch (with pillow installed), and both heads of the *Woofers* tuned as low as they could go and still hold a note. This yielded a big, deep overtone that followed (but didn't interfere with) the initial kick sound. It was sort of like playing a dampened kick in an arena...only I was in a smallish well-behaved room!

You can control the quantity of the boom by sliding the *Woofers* back and forth on the connecting rods. Minimum distance was almost touching and maximum was with the heads approximately nine inches apart (which made a significant difference, by the way: cutting the resonance at least in half). I generally kept the two drums a couple of inches apart for what I felt was the best effect.

It may not be for everybody, but if you're looking for some extra "oomph!" from your kick (and access to some pretty unique effects, too), you may wish to check out what a *Woofers* can do for your bottom end.

## Conclusions And Prices

Among the new products that come along, some are valid and some are gimmicks. The *Short Stack* concept is no gimmick. It sounds great, it records great, and the drums are smaller and lighter than similarly constructed drums of conventional size—to say nothing of the fact that they look pretty cool, too! If you find the *F.A.S.T.* concept attractive, you may *really* like the *Short Stack* toms.

Ditto for the *Woofers*, as far as it being a valid concept. It may be more of an accessory than a vital part of the kit. (After all, you *need* toms, but it's hard to argue that you couldn't live without a bass drum resonator.) However, it does make a definite contribution to a "normal" bass drum sound, and those who like to explore new sonic territory may find it interesting and musically rewarding.

List prices on the equipment as reviewed (with lacquer finish) are as follows: The 8x24 *Woofers* sells for \$1,135. The 5x8 *Short Stack* tom is \$580, the 5 1/2x10 is \$620, and the 6x12 retails for \$645. (Larger *Short Stack* toms are priced accordingly.) And not that they have to be used in a kit configured exactly like our review drumset, but if you did choose to do so, prices would be: 13x15 tom—\$1,100; 14x18 tom—\$1,355; 14x24 kick—\$1,835; 5x14 *Edge* snare—\$1,535.

# JP Custom Cases Percussion Equipment Bags

by Rick Van Horn

**If originality is your bag, so are these babies!**

"High-tech" isn't a term you'd normally associate with drum bags. (No moving parts, no computer chips, no aircraft-aluminum construction....) But if you consider innovative design and attention to fine details to be "high-tech," then percussion equipment bags from JP Custom Cases by Nikolai certainly qualify. Let's take a look at three models from their line.

## Pic-01

The *Pic-01* is the most basic bag in our test group, and is representative of the overall line in terms of construction and quality. It's a simple, well-made cylindrical bag of high-durability *Cordura*, with web reinforcing around its entire circumference.

It features thick padding, a single zipper, and both a shoulder strap and a carrying handle. At roughly 4" deep by 15" in diameter (inside dimensions), the bag is intended for piccolo snares. But it would also serve nicely for frame drums, or for hi-hat and small crash cymbals. It's priced at \$80.



Jim Esposito

The *Pic-01* can accommodate piccolo snares, frame drums, or small cymbals.

*Tote*, a bag designed specifically to accommodate fairly tall stands, such as cymbal and hi-hat stands. At 27" long, it differs from a "standard" hardware bag in that it's designed to be accessed mainly from the top, via a twin-zipper "lid." (There's another zipper down the front of the bag, too, so it can be opened while laying on the floor.) In addition, the *Stn-Tote* is fitted with webbed straps specifically designed for securing the bag vertically

to a hand truck or wheeled luggage cart—making it extremely easy to transport.

Inside the *Stn-Tote* are four separate sleeves, allowing you to keep the tripods and upper sections of stands from banging into one another. I was able to easily fit the lower sections of three large cymbal stands and a hi-hat into the four sleeves, while putting the upper sections in the center of the bag itself—and there was still lots more room for other items. A snare stand and/or a bass drum pedal could have fit, but might have proved a little awkward to reach from the top. The *Stn-Tote* is really for longer pieces of equipment.

The bag was fitted with carrying handles (which attach to each other by means of *Velcro* strips) and a shoulder strap. Additional nice details include web reinforcement around the bag, and a *Velcro*-secured flap that protects all the zipper handles from being accidentally snagged and/or opened.

This is the first hardware bag I've ever seen whose designers were not only concerned with what the bag could carry, but also how it would be moved, packed, and unpacked. Nice! It lists for \$146.

## Stick-05

The *Stick-05* is a totally original concept in stick/mallet caddies. Instead of the familiar folding-pouch design that opens and hangs on a drum, the *Stick-05* is a free-standing cylinder, with a padded rubber bottom about 8" in diameter. The top of the bag opens by means of a twin-zipper "lid," and the interior can be accessed further by



The *Stn-Tote* is designed to secure to a hand truck for portability.



Jim Esposito

Sleeves within the *Stn-Tote* separate stand sections.

### WHAT'S HOT

• construction quality is excellent  
• *Stn-Tote* and *Stick-05* both feature numerous innovative design elements

means of another zipper down the side of the bag.

The interior of the bag is roughly 20" deep, and is fitted with four 9 1/2"-deep sleeves at the bottom. This space is more than enough to store dozens of pairs of sticks, mallets, and other such items. (In fact, there was so much space inside the bag that I was able to carry the snare-drum stand that I didn't carry in the *Stn-Tote*.)

There's also a strip of hook & loop fastener material on the circular bottom of the interior, which is intended to secure a practice pad during transport. A matching strip on the upper surface of the bag's "lid" allows you to secure the same pad on top of the bag for practice purposes, using the bag as a stand! (You supply the pad.)

On the outside of the *Stick-05* are four zippered pockets. Each of these is large enough to hold several pairs of sticks. The upper front of each pocket folds down and is secured by a hook & loop strip, providing easy access to the items inside. With this design, it would



The interior of the *Stick-05* is roomy enough for small stands and sticks. Flaps on the outside pockets fold down and secure, giving easy access to the items inside.

be best to store extra supplies of sticks within the bag, and keep those you want to reach in a hurry in the outer pockets. Each of the outer pockets also includes smaller zippered pouches for small tools, drumkeys, etc.

Obviously, the *Stick-05* won't hang on your floor tom, and you would need to have room on your kit to stand it nearby if you wanted immediate access to your sticks. But even if you used a more traditional stick bag on your kit, the *Stick-05* would be a terrific place to keep your

backup sticks, mallets, percussion "toys," or darn near anything else you might need to tote along. (There'd be no excuse for not practicing between gigs, either.) It's a novel—and worthy—approach to an old problem. Retail list price is \$160.

If your dealer doesn't stock JP bags, contact the company directly at JP Custom Cases by Nikolai, 15451 Electronic Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92649, tel: (714) 373-2721, fax: (714) 373-2723.

# Regal Tip Groovers, BG Maples, And 8A Maples



BG Maple



8A Maple



Groovers (in unlacquered or lacquered finish)

by Rick Van Horn

Three new stick models from Regal Tip offer a distinct variety of performance characteristics and sound. Let's take a look at each.

## Groovers

*Groovers*—designed in conjunction with studio great Curt Bisquera—are a nifty model that fall into the category of "small stick, big sound." The shank is only .580" in diameter and 16" long, which is the same size as a 5A. But the taper is a bit less gradual than most Regal Tip models, the neck is a little thicker, and the tip is fairly large and spherical. The result is plenty of impact power on a drum or cymbal. This isn't the stick for quick rudimental patterns that rely on a lot of

rebound. But if you want to sit on a fat groove and lay down a solid backbeat without having to hold a club in your hand, *Groovers* are an excellent choice. As an extra feature, they're the first Regal Tip model to come with or without the company's famous lacquer finish. They list for \$10.95 per pair, in wood tip only.

### BG Maple

A hickory BG stick—designed by (and named for) drumming's renaissance man, Bob Gatzen—has been in Regal's line for some time. It's a fairly long stick (16 3/8"), with a distinctive narrow neck that flares back out a bit to end in a large, barrel-shaped tip. The stick has reach, surprisingly good rebound for its length, and a fat impact sound.

The new *BG Maple* model is a few thousandths of an inch thicker than its hickory counterpart (.590" versus .555"). But because maple is a lighter wood than hickory, the maple stick is actually lighter than the hickory model. So the *BG Maple* stick is extremely comfortable in the hand, and moves a little easier than you'd expect from a stick this long. But the fat impact sound is still there, owing to that big, barrel-shaped tip. I'm fond of the combination of size and light weight that maple sticks afford, and the *BG Maples* take full advantage of this characteristic without any appreciable loss in power. Nice! They're priced at \$10.75 per pair, in wood tip only.

### 8A Maple

This was my favorite stick in our test group. Here again, a hickory 8A has been in Regal Tip's line for some time. It's a very quick stick, with a shaft diameter of .555" (just under that of a 5A), a sleek taper, a thin neck, and a small barrel-shaped tip. In this case, the company decided *not* to change the dimensions for the maple version, so the stick is now not only quick in its response, but lightweight to boot. When I played with these sticks, they fairly *flew* around the kit. They're not the sticks for high volume, but if you're playing anything where tasty cymbal response, instantaneous rebound, and long-term comfort are desirable, the *8A Maple* could be your stick. It's priced at \$10.50 per pair, in wood tip only.

## Correction

Rich Watson's review of Zildjian's *K Constantinople* ride cymbals in the October '98 *Product Close-Up* incorrectly stated that they are hand hammered. In fact, the referenced "unique hammering process" is executed by a machine whose hammering patterns are computer-randomized to *simulate* hand hammering.



**From Our Perspective...**

Dennis is sounding phenomenal these days!

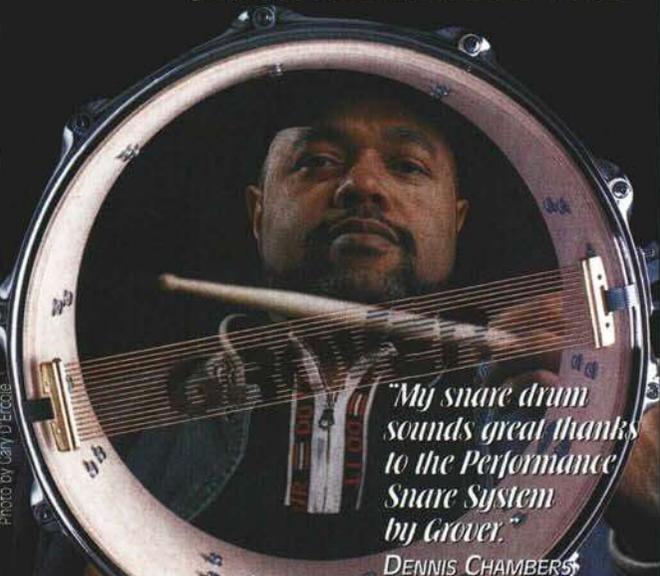


Photo by Cary D'Ercole

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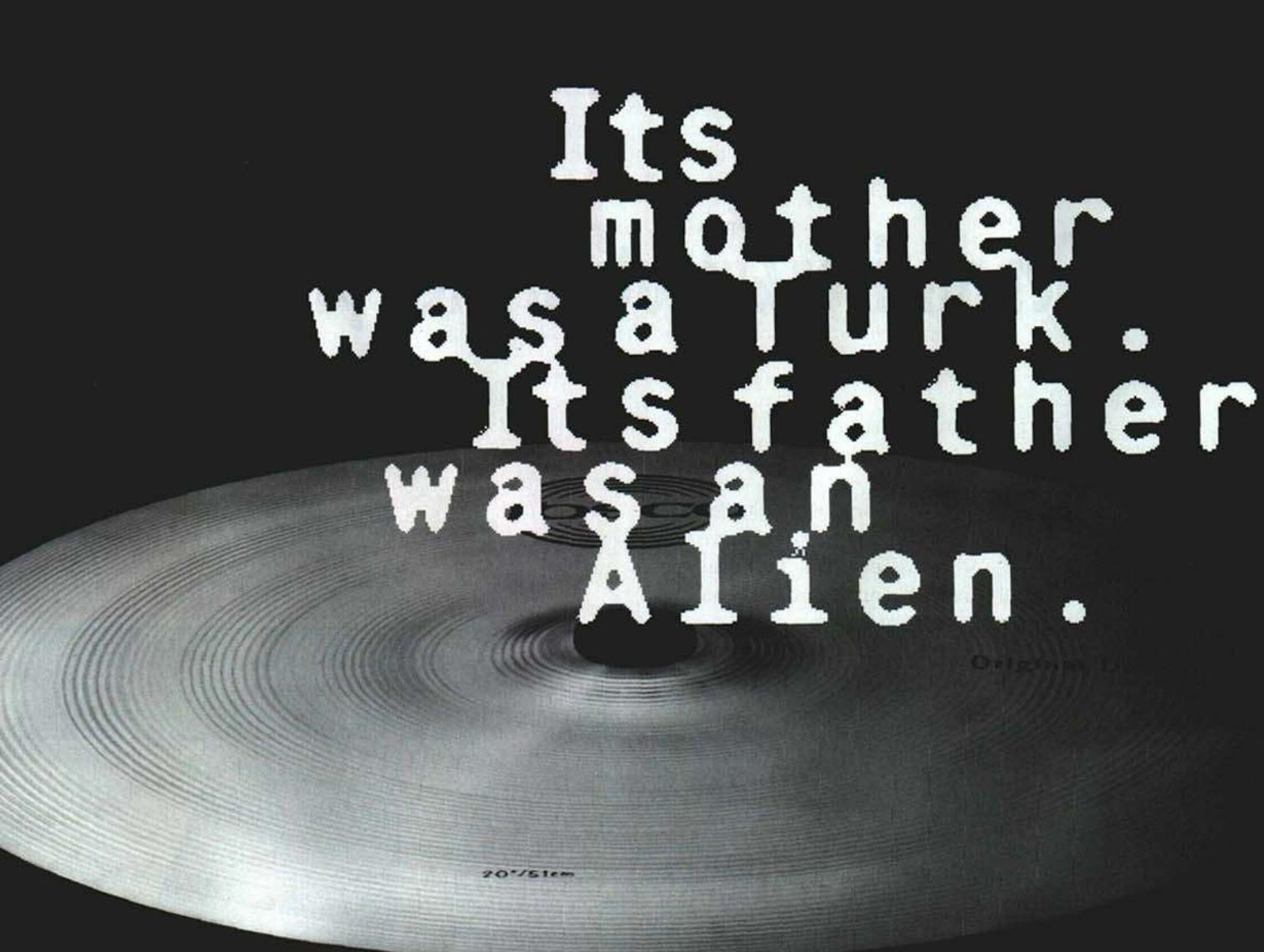
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By Sabian

Easy to pick,  
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Easy to pay for.

# Sennheiser Evolution Microphones

by Mark Parsons

Sennheiser has been making microphones for over half a century, and during that time they've garnered a well-deserved reputation for producing 'world-class products. For years their mic's have been considered "first call" drum microphones in many pro studios. The only downside has been that, as with most professional products, those mic's have always carried a professional price tag.

Enter the *Evolution* series. This is a new line from Sennheiser aimed at the working musician and/or sound engineer. It's designed with an eye toward making affordable microphones that still exhibit the level of quality that Sennheiser has always been known for. The manufacturer claims that although the costs have been cut, the "corners" haven't—the price reduction was achieved by using the latest advances in design and manufacturing technology.

The *Evolution* series consists of ten dynamic microphones. Six of these (having model designations starting with the number 8) are primarily hand-held vocal mic's. The other four—models *e602*, *e604*, *e608*, and *e609*—are instrument mic's.

The *602* and *604* were designed specifically for drumset applications (kick and toms, respectively). The *608* and *609* were made primarily with other instruments in mind, but they are also touted as being useful on drums. So we decided to test all four of the *Evolution* series instrument microphones.

## 602

The *602* is a large-diaphragm dynamic microphone with a cardioid pattern, designed for use on bass drums, bass guitar cabinets, and other instruments having an abundance of low frequencies. This mic' is a thoroughly contemporary model, both in its design and its sound characteristics.

Shaped like a cylinder with a flat area on one side, the *602* is 2 3/8" in diameter and 6" long, including the sturdy metal grill protecting the diaphragm end of the mic'. With its built-in swivel tucked along the bottom and its XLR connector exiting directly from the rear, this mic' is sleek enough that placing it inside a ported head or in any other tight location shouldn't be a problem.

Designed to be "pre-equalized" so it can be used without further corrective EQ, the *602* has an unusual frequency response curve. Looking like a profile drawing of a wide, flat valley between two mountain ranges, the graph shows a large boost in the low end,

## WHAT'S HOT

- overall *Evolution* series offers excellent performance at reasonable prices
- *602* is pre-equalized for outstanding kick drum reproduction
- *609* is like the classic *MD 409*—only better

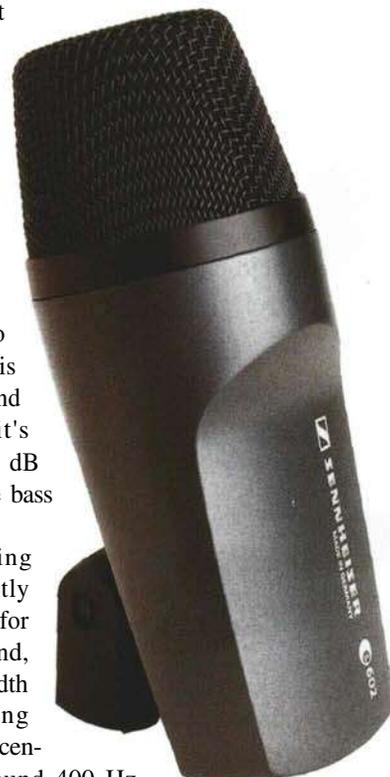
## WHAT'S NOT

- although small size is appealing, *608* has only limited applications to drums

centered at 70 Hz but extending from 20 Hz (!) to almost 150 Hz. The response starts sweeping up again at 1 kHz, and it stays up until around 15 kHz before dropping off sharply. In between these two areas (from 150 Hz to 1 kHz) the response is flat as glass—but (and this is a big "but") it's approximately 10 dB below the level of the bass and treble regions.

When I'm recording kick drums I frequently find myself reaching for the parametric EQ and, using a broad bandwidth (2+ octaves), pulling down the lower mids centered somewhere around 400 Hz. But with the *602* I didn't have to do this because *it's already been done*.

I started out by placing the *602* six inches in front of a kick drum with both heads on (no port). I got a very good sound right away, with no EQ. The sound was a little tighter and drier than you usually get from out front, almost like the mic' was *inside* the drum. But still I found it very useful for anything but a traditional



602

jazz or big band setting (where you *want* some of the ring that was so efficiently removed by the 602's attenuated midrange).

Then I removed the front head and placed the 602 inside, slightly off-center, with the mic' six inches from the batter head and angled toward the beater contact spot. There was a small DW pillow resting lightly against the batter head. Upon playback of the recorded tracks I heard a *very* nice contemporary kick sound, without any EQ or additional processing. The fundamental note (around 60-80 Hz on this particular drum) was very solid, and the beater (felt, no less) had a nice "point" to it up around 5 kHz (without the harshness or phase anomalies of extensive EQ). Overall, the 602 produced a smooth, punchy, "produced" sound that would be perfect for most pop, funk, rock, or country situations.

Is the 602 a less costly version of Sennheiser's "other" kick mic', the renowned 4211 Not at all. Unlike some of the other *Evolution* series mic's (which are updates of previous models), the 602 is a completely new design, with a sound all its own. Actually, the 602 has a sonic character closer to that of the EV *ND-868* or the AKG *D112*—only *more* so. (That is, its sound is even more pre-shaped than that of the 868 or *D112*, which also feature midrange reduction.)

Another interesting difference between the 602 and the above-mentioned mic's is that while the 602 is one of the best kick mic's I've ever heard, it performed poorly on large toms. On a 14" "hanging" floor tom, the 602 pulled out so much of the lower midrange that the woody character and the head ring were severely reduced, leaving a tone that was more like a small bass drum than a tom. (And it wasn't the drum, either. I had the other three *Evolution* series mic's on the drum at the same time, and they produced sounds ranging from good to excellent.)

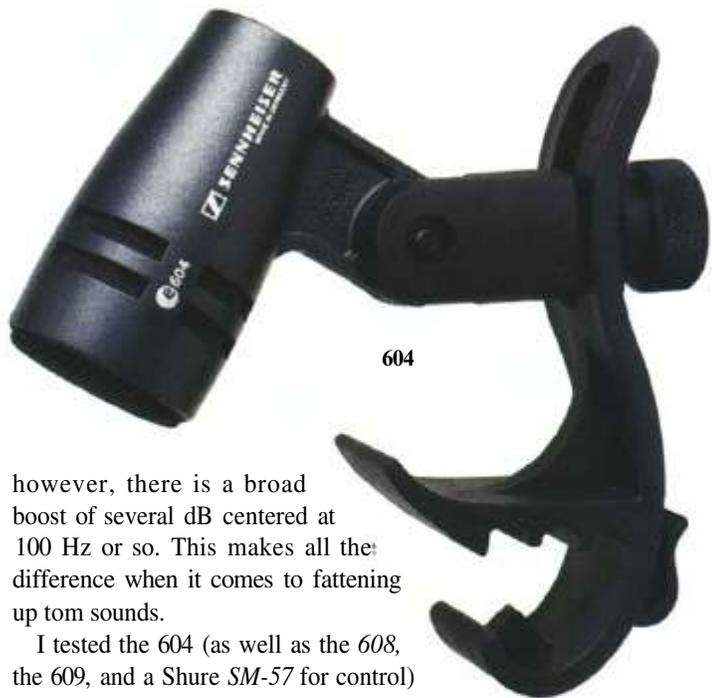
Personally, I don't see this as a significant drawback. You wanna mike your toms? Get some 604s. But if you're looking for a dedicated *kick* mic', especially one that'll give you that big, smooth, produced sound without a lot of fuss, I highly recommend you check out the 602. Suggested retail price is \$319.

## 604

Here's a dirty little secret: The 604 is really a Sennheiser 504 with new cosmetics (and a new model number) so that it fits into the *Evolution* series. (Don't take that as a slam. I love the 504, and a rose by any other name....) I did an in-depth review of the 504 in the Oct. '97 *MD*, so rather than repeat myself I'll just hit the high points and give my latest impressions.

The 604 is a very small, very rugged dynamic mic' (cardioid pattern), which has an integral swivel and comes with a clip that attaches the mic' directly to the hoop of a drum. Although well made, the clip positions the mic' too far toward the center of the drum for my taste, especially on drums smaller than 12". (An optional \$32 adapter is available to solve this problem.) The mic' itself is very light, due to its glass-reinforced composite construction.

Just like the 602, this pony does only one trick—but does it very well. The 604 is born and bred to reproduce toms. The response rises very smoothly (almost a straight line), gaining perhaps 6 dB from 100 Hz to 5 kHz (where it has a slight peak), then levels off again until 15 kHz, then rolls off at 18 kHz. At a distance of 2",



however, there is a broad boost of several dB centered at 100 Hz or so. This makes all the difference when it comes to fattening up tom sounds.

I tested the 604 (as well as the 608, the 609, and a Shure *SM-57* for control) on a 10" tom, a 14" tom, and a 5x14 snare for good measure. On the small tom the 604 produced a beefy tone that made the drum sound bigger than it was. Because the mic' was within 2" of the drum, the proximity curve was in effect, adding strength to the fundamental. (Translation: *whooom!*) A long, shallow dip in the response centered at 500 Hz (only in effect when the mic' is in close proximity to the sound source) smoothed the sound and removed any trace of boxiness that might otherwise have been present. Lots of stick attack on top, too. Overall, the 604 gave the drum the famous "big fat pro sound." Very nice.

On the large tom it was more of the same: big fundamental, lots of articulation, and a very smooth character overall. The 604 also worked surprisingly well on the snare, but the personality traits that make it so good on toms aren't quite as perfect a match for this instrument. The 100 Hz bump gave the drum a *slightly* thick, chesty sound, and the smooth midrange wasn't quite as rude as I might like. But I'm splitting hairs here. Admittedly, I automatically compare every snare sound to the one that's been indelibly carved into my brain for twenty years: that of an *SM-57* that's shoved up close to a hard-hit drum. In that light, the 604 sounds quite a bit like a 57, with the main differences being a slightly thicker bottom, a smoother "presence peak" in the upper mids, and slightly more extension in the high end.

In summation, the 604 is a wonderful tom mic' that can also do double duty on your snare. It's small, light, and tough, and can be attached directly to your drum. List price, including the clip, is \$249.

## 608

If the 604 is small, the 608 is absolutely tiny. When I first saw this little guy I automatically assumed it was a condenser, but it's a dynamic (the world's *smallest* dynamic, according to Sennheiser, and I have no reason to doubt them). The body of the mic' is less than 3/4" in diameter and maybe 1/2" thick. It's connected to a short, thin gooseneck that's attached to six feet of cable, terminat-

ing in an XLR plug. Between the mic' and the gooseneck is a flexible pleated rubber boot, which is supposed to isolate the mic'

from shock and vibrations. Also included is a small clip that affixes to the gooseneck and allows you to attach the mic' to the instrument. Between the clip and the flexible gooseneck, you should be able to position the 608 pretty much anywhere you want.

The 608 was primarily designed to clip to the bell of a saxophone or other horn. This is evidenced not only in its ergonomics, but also in its frequency response. The mic' is weak in the low end (rolling off at approximately 8 dB per octave below 200 Hz) and strong in the upper midrange, while the high-end extension is limited. (It loses 10 dB between 5 kHz and 10 kHz.)

All of this probably sounds great on a sax, where you want mids and don't need lots of booming bass or treble extension, but it's a bit more problematic on drums. On the toms, especially in comparison to the 604 and 609, the 608 sounded kind of lifeless and boxy. It wasn't hopeless—you could get a useable sound out of it, especially with some judicious EQ—but it couldn't keep up with its larger brethren.

On the snare the situation was a little better: The low end wasn't as sorely missed and the midrange emphasis gave the drum some cut. But the depressed response in the highest frequencies robbed the drum of air, leading to a lack of crispness in the upper treble.

Also, the 608 wasn't immune to picking up mechanical noise through the clip and/or gooseneck. I mounted the clip on a tension rod to position the mic' a few inches above the head, and it gave a strange "thunk" to rim

clicks (not in evidence with the other mic's, including the clipped-on 604). Ditto for the lack of isolation provided by the rubber boot—lightly taping the gooseneck produced a loud mechanical noise.

I may be expecting too much from a dynamic mic' of this size, or perhaps it's simply too much of a stretch to design a mic' to work well on both sax and drums (which have very different needs). Either way I'd have to say that unless *miniature* size is the main priority, if you're looking for a small clip-on mic' for toms or snare you'll probably be happier with the 604, which sells for \$50 less than the 608's \$299 list price.

## 609

Once upon a time, Sennheiser made a mic' known as the MD 409. It was a rectangular side-address dynamic mic', and it was popular with engineers for use on guitar amps and toms for two reasons: shape and sound. It could be positioned close to the speaker cabinet or drumhead and still be out of the way, and it sounded great on both sources. A few years ago the 409 was discontinued, much to the lament of its fans (although there is still a strong used market for this mic'). Well, despair no more, for the

spirit of the 409 lives on in the new 609.

Easily the most linear of the *Evolution* series mic's we tested, the 609 is flat within 2 dB from 200 Hz to 15 kHz. Additionally, it shares the same proximity curve as the 604, giving it a similar (although not identical) response in the low end when used within 2" of the sound source. The 609 has a super-cardioid polar pattern, which provides excellent rejection of sounds coming from the rear quarters (135° off axis), though at the expense of a slight loss of isolation from sounds coming from directly behind the mic' (180° off axis). In practical terms, this will keep your hi-hats from bleeding into your snare, or your toms from bleeding into each other.

If I had to sum up my first impression of the 609 in one word, I'd say it was the most *natural* sounding of the *Evolution* series instrument mic's. Not that it was boring. *Au Contraire*. When I started with a good-sounding drum that was well tuned, the 609 yielded a wonderful tone that sounded like the drum was being played before me live. But if the original sound wasn't up to par, the 609 let me know that, too. It didn't mask anything with hype.

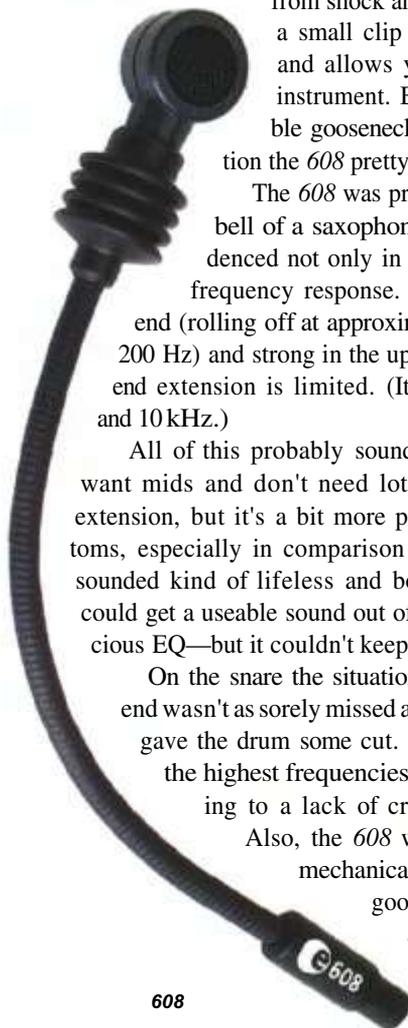
On both the 10" and the 14" toms, the 609 sounded similar to the 604—but without as much lower mid reduction. The high end sounded a tad clearer. Specifically, it didn't have the small upper midrange peak of the 604, and it didn't roll off quite as quickly at the very high end. At the bottom, it wasn't quite as thick-sounding as the 604 (maybe 2 dB less at around 100 Hz). Overall, I found the tom sound of the 609 to be quite good: realistic, yet powerful. (Realistic, due to the very linear mid and treble response, and powerful, due to the boost in the fundamental from the proximity effect.)

The 609 was my favorite of the *Evolution* series for use on the snare. Midrange reduction is a seductive thing; it makes everything sound smooth and easy to listen to. But too much of it can kill a snare, robbing it of any real character. Well, the 609 managed to put out a very high-quality snare sound *without* losing all of the ring, bark, and bite that we love in our drums. It had lots of fundamental tone without sounding as chesty as the 604, it was very clear in the midrange, and the extra high-end extension made more of a difference on the snare than on the toms.

At a list price of \$349, the 609 was the most expensive of our quartet of microphones, but give it a listen and I think you'll understand why.



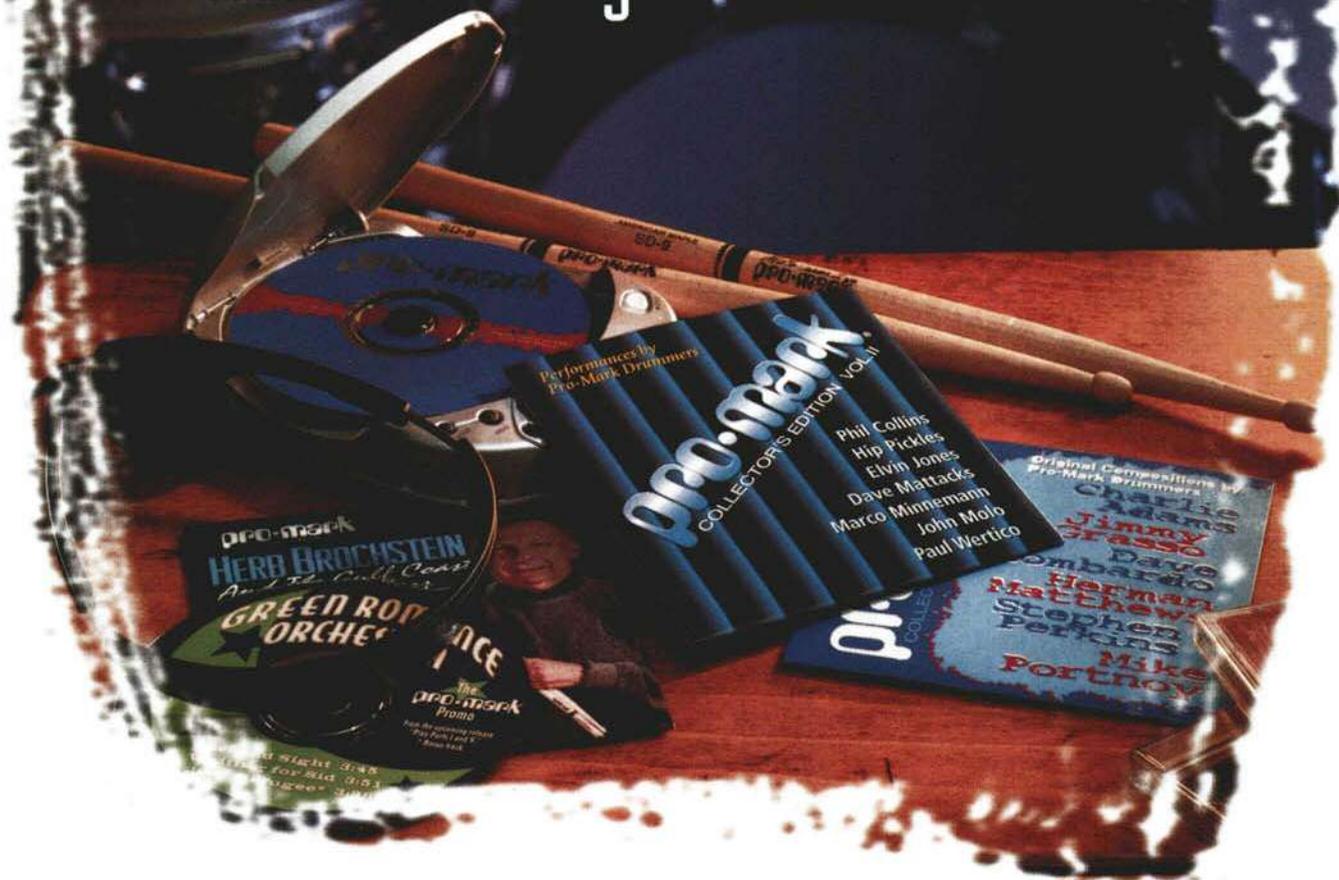
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608



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# Matt Chamberlain



# Leftover Lumps & Loose Grooves

---

Matt Chamberlain takes considerable latitude. Allow him a hole in the conversation and he'll plug it with a witticism. There is something quietly devious—deviant, even—about his demeanor. Possibly the Seattle-based drummer picked up bits of quirky humor in England while recording Tori Amos's recent album, *From The Choirgirl Hotel*. No, it goes further back than that. For example, Matt has a pet project, a group that goes under the name of Critters Buggin. Get this: The current CD, *Bumpa*, opens with a long rant on the dangers of fluoride, excerpted from a taped interview with a rickety old woman who collects alligators. By track six, we settle into a Zeppelinish vamp, complete with electric piano, rather like "No Quarter." The drumming here is elusive as well.

Matt's propensity to focus patiently and provide a less obvious response has served him well with singer-songwriters like Tori Amos, Fiona Apple, Jakob Dylan of The Wallflowers, Adam Cohen, Melissa Etheridge, and Chris Isaac. Sometimes we're hearing the same bright popping snare that endeared Matt during his tenure with Edie Brickell & New Bohemians. In those days, chronicled in an *MD* interview in May of '91, he became a drummer other drummers copied slavishly. In

fact, some of his fans maintain that Matt was Pearl Jam's best drummer, solely on the basis of a live video capturing his brief stay with the group.

You'd think once he reached age thirty, Matt would play it safe. His current passion is sounds that are clattery, like loose plumbers' tools in an old *Econoline* van. To be sure, his rhythms resemble contemporary hip-hop, funk, and rock. But there are those low-fi timbres too—all lumpy and indefinable. At first, you swear you're hearing mutated samples, strung into sequences, but this is only partly the case. The lion's share of it is real drums, set up alongside found objects, and played live by Matt off the floor. No, it doesn't sound right-as-rain, but hell, what else is he supposed to do behind a line like "She's addicted to nicotine patches, she's afraid of the light in the dark?"

Not to worry, that comfortable time feel is still there. You don't become a first-call session drummer without it. But Matt has learned that solid time and a ringy snare are not enough. You rise to the top by finding a part that is somehow tasteful, unobtrusive yet firm—and, believe it or not, unusual.

When Matt's last *MD* interview closed, he was checking out a television opportunity.

by T. Bruce Wittet

Photos by John C. Watson

"You don't need to be locked on perfectly.  
There's a certain beauty to things pushing and pulling."

**TBW:** How did you get the *Saturday Night Live* gig?

**MC:** When I was with Edie we toured and opened up for Bob Dylan. G.E. Smith [former *SNL* musical director] was in Dylan's band at the time. He told me that the *Saturday Night Live* thing might be open. Unfortunately, our band broke up, so this seemed like the perfect opportunity to move to New York City. It was a really good experience to play with the great musicians in that band—and obviously the people on the show were really funny. Musically, it wasn't anything I wanted to be a part of. It wasn't about music: You were halftime entertainment. You were there eating donuts, drinking coffee, and getting paid; you weren't really *playing*.

**TBW:** Was it nerve-wracking?

**MC:** Definitely. You're live. If you screw up, you screw up. That happened a couple of times. After a skit they'd cut to the band, and G.E. would have to count it off: "...three, four!" and you'd try to land on the groove. You were flying by the seat of your pants. Luckily the music in the show wasn't complicated. We had charts for certain skits that were pretty insane, based not necessarily on bars, but on vocal cues from the actors.

I remember Steve Martin did this whole song & dance routine and ran through the entire studio with all these people doing a chorus line with him. He wasn't even in the room with us and we had to play with him.

The show really wasn't what I wanted to do, so I left after one season. Immediately I left New York for Seattle, where it was cheaper to live and I could drive my own car to a club and unload my drums. Trying to get your drums to a gig in New York is a nightmare. I just wanted a place where there were musicians who wanted to jam. In New York, if you wanted to jam, you'd have to rent rehearsal space.

In Seattle I started Critters Buggin, and we've put out three records and an EP. For the majority of Critters stuff, we go in the studio and jam and fill up



fourteen hours of tape. Then we'll listen and find the jams that naturally become songs—that had great moments in them—and then put them into *ProTools*, chop them up, and overdub over that.

The basic format is sax, bass, drums, and a lot of loops, and we have a percussionist now who plays vibes and tabla. We just make stuff up; we don't even know what we're doing. Afterwards, we actually have to learn songs off the records because they weren't songs to begin with. Critters Buggin is really what I do: Everything else I do because it's great to be hired as a studio guy and contribute to people's songs. But when I'm left alone with my drums and some friends, Critters Buggin's music is the kind of music I like to create.

**TBW:** Do you ever get a chance to let loose like that as a studio musician?

**MC:** Oh yeah, constantly. Luckily, people do let me go. Every take I'll try something different. A lot of times the producer will say, "That's great, do it again," and that little different thing will become part of the song. It's a process: If you don't try it, you will have a boring drum track. Nobody's ever told me *not* to do anything.

**TBW:** Sometime after leaving *SNL*, you did the track "Suzanne" for Peter Gabriel's contribution to the Leonard Cohen tribute album, *Tower Of Song*.

**MC:** That was a session where a friend of mine, Dennis Herring, was playing guitar. The track was originally with percussion and shakers. He was telling the producer it needed some drums. He was saying, "I just

happen to have a friend, and he's down the street." That was my one recording with Peter Gabriel—and he wasn't even there! It was just the producer, engineer, and guitar player.

**TBW:** There's an interesting thing happening in the mix on that one.

**MC:** The drums really aren't in the mix much. The whole thing was to have it like a drumset coming through a transistor radio speaker; have this little ghost drumset, instead of drums being the backbone.

**TBW:** Like the old days with the drums mixed in mono.

**MC:** Yeah, I love mono. You have two speakers and drums come out of *both* speakers at the *same* time. Imagine that! My favorite drum sounds are mono.

**TBW:** Speaking about retro, your current kit has got a vintage look, what with the wood hoops. When did you start playing Ayotte?

**MC:** A little over a year ago. They have a unique sound—not a sound that you get out of most drums. I had this vintage set of Ludwig drums and I thought, "Nothing sounds like this today." With older drums it must be the wood or something—maybe it's aging. It's like old acoustic guitars. If the sound has been vibrating through the wood for many years, chances are the wood is more dense through vibration. But among new drums, Ayotte has the most unusual sound to me.

**TBW:** Are you an old drum aficionado?

**MC:** Recently I have been.

**TBW:** Because money permits?

**MC:** That, and I keep running into them. I have a friend who has the most insane old drum collection. I've recorded with a few of them. It's mind-blowing, some of those drums of the '30s and '40s. An old *Radio King* kit with calfskin heads—I've never played anything like that before. It's so different from coated heads on a DW kit.

**TBW:** Some people own fifty or sixty snare drums.

**MC:** Snare drums are pretty much the *Stratocaster* of the drums. You keep buying them. Yesterday I found one at Professional Drum Shop. This guy who had collected all these snares had died. I found this 1920s metal Ludwig & Ludwig snare in perfect condition. It was \$800, mind you, but you can't get that sound anywhere else. There's so many drums to hit on, and they all sound good. There are these old Kent budget drums—Daniel Lanois has some at his studio that sound great. You sit down and it's "Jeezus, *this* is a Kent drumset?"

**TBW:** I played a Kent snare to die for—and besides that, it was blue sparkle....

**MC:** That's another thing: If they look cool, man, you gotta

**"When I first started doing sessions, I thought everything should be perfect, but that's not the case. Sloppiness, mistakes, hitting the rim accidentally instead of your snare—sometimes that all works in your favor."**

have 'em! It'll *sound* good 'cause it *looks* good. Put up a mic' and there you go!

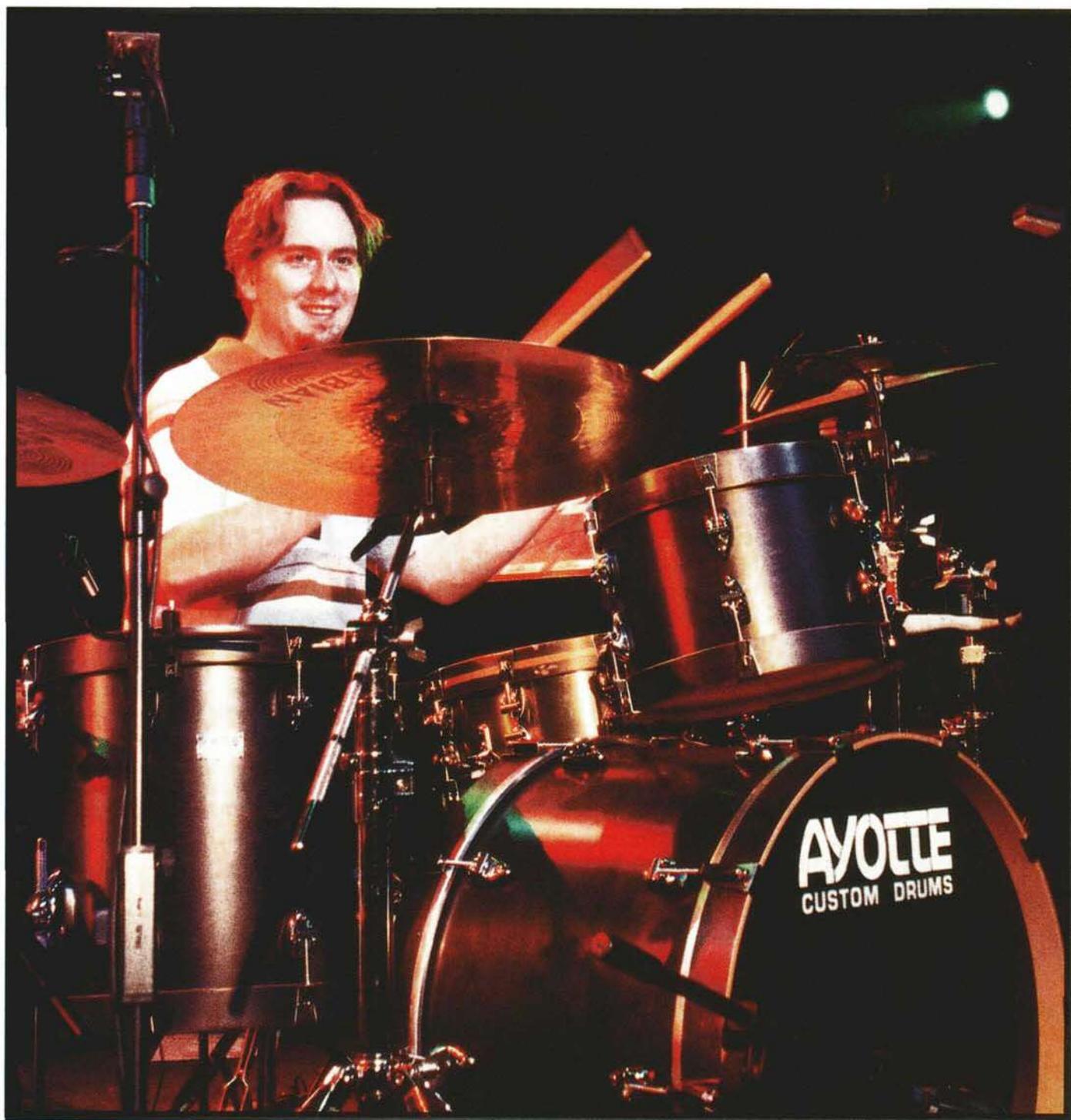
**TBW:** I admit I've bought a few old drums and cymbals solely on the basis of looks.

**MC:** At least it's drums, not crack! I have a thing about gear: I can't stop. It's good, though, because it lets me do what I do.

**TBW:** Do you have a typical setup?

**MC:** Right now, on the Tori Amos tour, I have the 5 1/2x14 Ayotte/Keplinger snare, a 12" tom—the standard depth, not a power tom—and a 14x15 floor tom. The kick drum is not very deep, either—it's 14 1/2" deep. They're the *WoodHoop* ones.

I also have Taos drums, those Native American drums. I have the Taos kick drum right by my floor tom, which I strike with the second beater of a double pedal setup beside my regu-



lar bass drum pedal. I also have a Taos snare drum. They're really raspy old things. I have a doumbek there as well. Off to my left I have a *drumKAT*. I hit a pad and trigger a loop. I have that in the monitors at the same volume as my kit—just a little kick and toms to get the overall feeling.

A friend made me an oil drum with things like springs welded to it; I use that live as well. The springs rattle against the side of the drum and it's like industrial, organic percussion. It's got saw blades welded onto it and all kinds of other noisy things.

For the Tori Amos record, all the loops were created with that kind of stuff, objects that were just lying around. I would make a loop and play drumkit over it. Obviously I can't play all those parts live, so I had to sample the parts I wasn't going to be able to play, and trigger those off the pads.

**TBW:** Do you have any problems with Taos drums on the



road? I'm thinking about climate changes and animal skin heads.

**MC:** We wrap them in a heating blanket, and that helps. But sometimes at festival gigs you get there, set up and go, and they might sound like cardboard boxes—which is sort of cool. Every gig they're going to sound different. Some gigs they're happy, some gigs they're sad. Those things are incredible: You

## Amos Tour Kit

**Drumset:** Ayotte *WoodHoop* in black finish

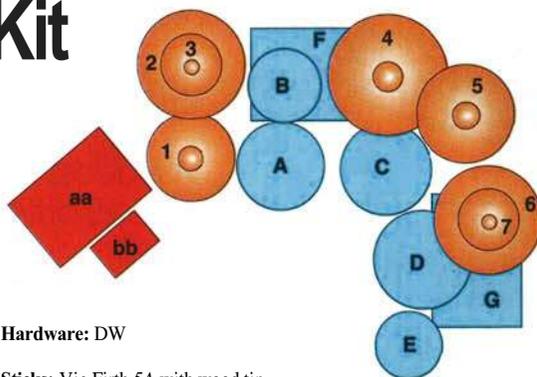
- A. 5 1/2x14 *Keplinger* stainless-steel snare with wood hoops
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 14x15 tom
- D. 16" Taos snare drum
- E. 10" doumbek
- F. 14 1/2x22 bass drum
- G. 21" Taos bass drum (played with remote pedal)

**Cymbals:** Sabian

- 1. 14" *Jack DeJohnette Encore* hi-hats
- 2. 18" *AAX Studio* crash
- 3. 8" saw blade
- 4. 20" *Duo* ride
- 5. 16" *AAX* crash with rivets
- 6. 18" *Jack DeJohnette* crash
- 7. *Will Calhoun Alien Disc*

aa. *drumKAT*

bb. Roland *MS-1* sampler



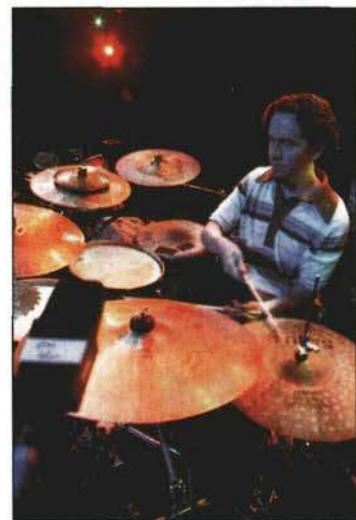
**Hardware:** DW

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5A with wood tip

**Heads:** Remo coated *Ambassadors* on snare and tom batters, clear *Powerstroke 3* on bass drum batter

**Electronics:** besides the equipment listed in the setup, Matt uses a *PoleKAT* dual-zone trigger pad, Roland trigger pads, and a *V-Drum* brain

**Percussion:** Matt has a second setup on stage that consists of an LP djembe, a 10" Ayotte *WoodHoop* snare, a foot-controlled talking drum, a tibetan cymbal, and a huge oil can with springs and saw blades attached

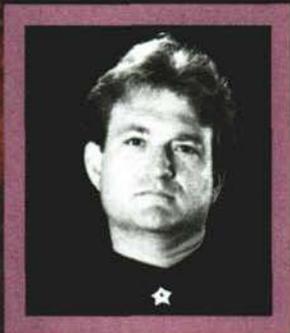


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play them and you want to *bite* somebody!

**TBW:** You're telling me that you are creating all these weird sounds live off the floor in the studio?

**MC:** Basically. Luckily I've been able to work with engineers who have been willing to experiment with various mic' placements, and with minimal miking—one overhead, and one mic' by the kick drum that's compressed to hell.

**TBW:** How prevalent is minimal miking these days?

**MC:** It's getting more prevalent. Those Fiona Apple songs like "Sleep To Dream" are two mic's on the whole kit. There's a bass drum mic' and then this really cheesy American microphone—an announcer's mic' that sounds hideous—and they EQed it and compressed it. After I played the track, I had to listen back to what it sounded like and adjust my playing. Since it was compressed, I had to watch out that I wasn't hitting my cymbals too hard. It almost sounded like it was a sampled low-fi drum loop taken from an old record. But engineers are getting that same sound from a real performance, where you get that *breathing* thing when a *person* actually



plays. You don't get that from a loop.

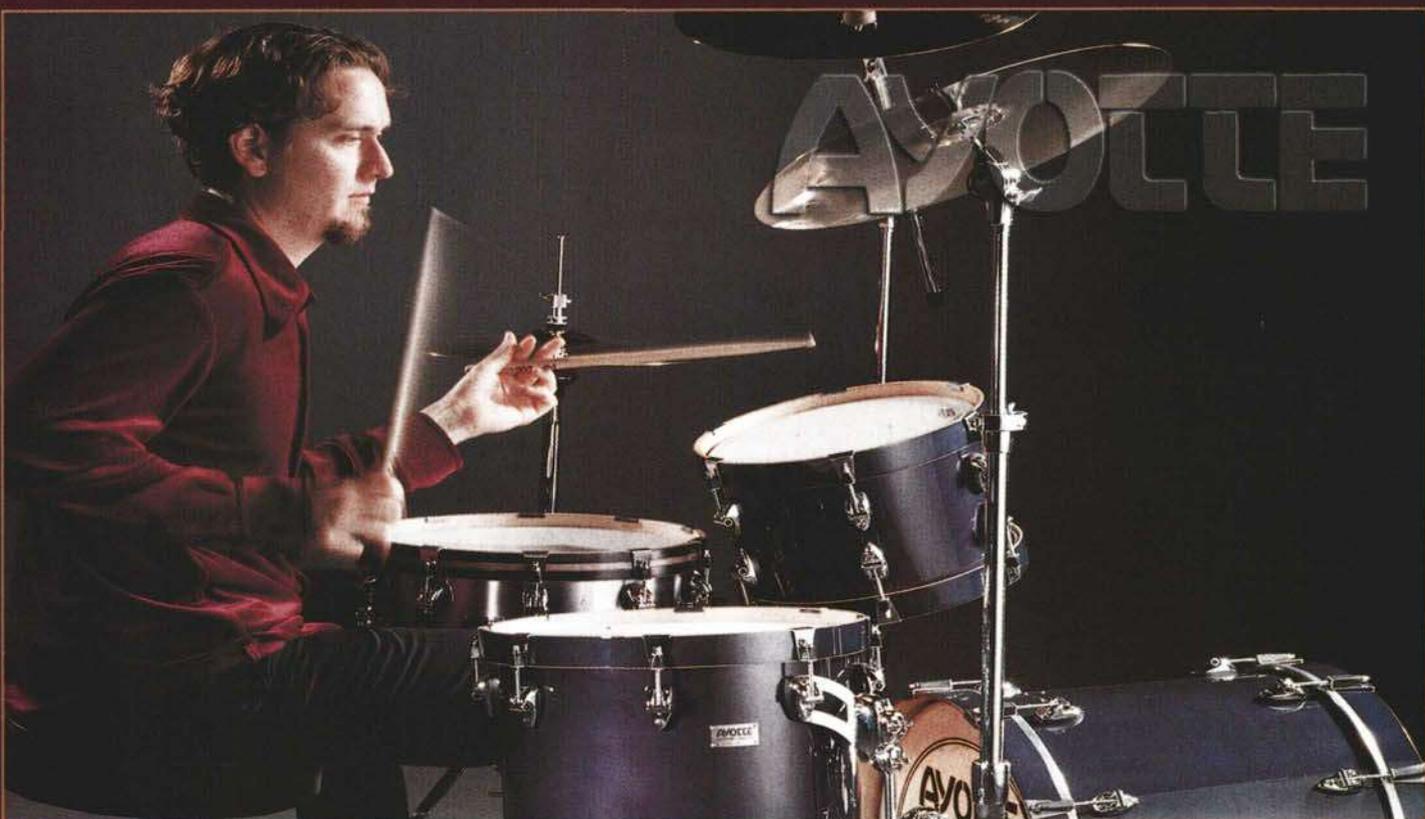
**TBW:** I was convinced the Fiona Apple album was full of sequences.

**MC:** It was all played live. "Sleep To Dream" was all live. I played the drumset, and then we overdubbed a double-headed kick drum for the low end—a wide-open

kick drum. Then I overdubbed some shakers.

**TBW:** That snare drum sounds suspiciously like a sample of middle-period Ringo Starr.

**MC:** No. It was a snare drum—it really doesn't matter which one—that we covered



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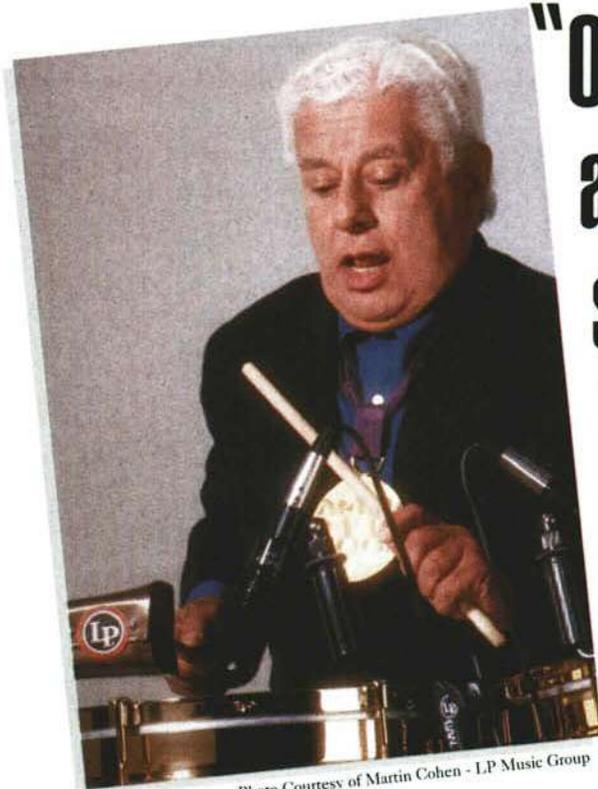
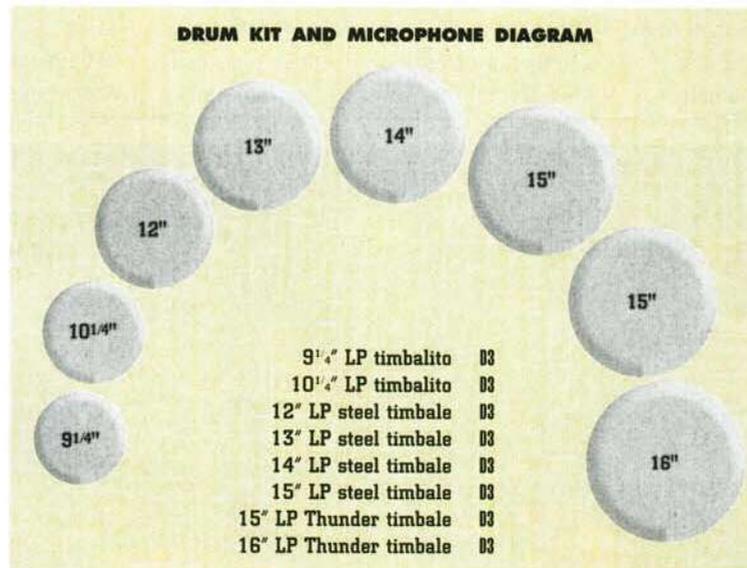


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**TBW:** Still on Fiona Apple: "Sullen Girl." That's a nice entry: *tacet* until a cymbal trill, and then you're playing the backbeat in the middle of the drum, aren't you? You're not catching the rim.

**MC:** Yeah, because we were playing pretty light. That was actually the first time I played with her. We were supposed to get together and see how it worked out, but she said, "I've got a song." So the bass player, Greg, and I learned it and played it a couple of times, and that became the version. I remember thinking like a jazz drummer and not laying into the snare too much, and floating along with the acoustic piano.

**TBW:** You know, as you're speaking, I'm thinking how great the 1990s have been for drummers, compared to the '80s.

**MC:** Oh yes, you can actually play drums and not put gates on everything. You can actually *play drumset*. And you have all the technology to take everything that's been

# Chamber Music

These are the records Matt says best represent his drumming...

Artist	Album
Critters Buggin	Guest Host Bumpa <small>(all available at <a href="http://www.loosegroove.com">www.loosegroove.com</a>)</small>
Tori Amos	From The Choirgirl Hotel
The Wallflowers	Bringing Down The Horse
Fiona Apple	Tidal
Sam Phillips	Omnipop
Peter Gabriel	"Suzanne" from Tower Of Song: Tribute To Leonard Cohen
Eddie Brickell & New Bohemians	Ghost Of A Dog
Chris Isaak	Speak Of The Devil

...and here are the ones he listens to for inspiration:

Artist	Album	Drummer
John Coltrane	Sun Ship	Elvin Jones
The Meters	Rejuvenation	Ziggy Modeliste
Miles Davis	Nefertiti	Tony Williams
Master Musicians Of Jajouka	Apocalypse Across The Sky	various
Led Zeppelin	any	John Bonham

done and mix it all together. You can get drum sounds with one mic' or two mic's, total. In the '80s it was, like, seven mic's on a snare drum.

**TBW:** When I caught you with Tori Amos live, she would go into some arpeggio and the time would jump. You could have held your ground, but you let her go and then

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did a little fill to bring her back.

**MC:** Yeah, I just follow her. I'm not too set on keeping solid time. She never played with a drummer live until I entered the picture. When piano players play by themselves, they're very *legato*, and they speed up and slow down. In order for me to sound like we're together, I have to follow her. I have her cranked up in my monitor and I pretend I'm MIDI'ed to her—like we're one.

**TBW:** Tell me about how you got the gig.

**MC:** My best friend was her producer for the first couple of records. She was talking to him about starting the next record with drums, instead of adding them at the end. That way the groove would be established from the beginning of the record. I went to her house in Florida, set up the drums in the living room with her nine-and-a-half-foot grand piano, and we jammed for a couple of days. She'd play me some new songs and had a little Tascam D88. We'd listen back to stuff—just piano and drums. When we did the record in Cornwall, England, it was like that, too. For the first couple of weeks it was just piano and drums. That was so much fun: You just latch on and go!

**TBW:** How did you decide which tracks were keepable?

**MC:** Just if it felt good. She can't separate piano and voice. She couldn't take the vocals out and redo them later. We would go for takes, and if it wasn't right we would go for a coffee.

**TBW:** So what happens if you made it to

bar 175 and there's a glitch in an otherwise perfect track? It would be nice to be able to fix it.

**MC:** Sure, but you know how it is when you have a great performance. You start and you're in the *zone* and before you know it the song's over. A lot of the songs she'd play once and I didn't know they were recording. I'd learn it along the way and get into it—and they would keep the very first take! There's a song called "Northern Lad" where it's the first time I heard it—I was just following the form.

**TBW:** I'm interested in singer-songwriter dictates like "Don't use cymbals." They are not all fans of drumset or, at least, they have trouble articulating what they want.

**MC:** Some singers are definitely better at it than others. Tori talks in her own language. She'll stick her hands over her head and make antennae finger movements and funny sounds. We'll go out and play, and if it's happening, it'll be obvious; if not, we'll move on.

**TBW:** On "Spark," did you get what she wanted right off the bat?

**MC:** "Spark" was interesting. Tori's sense of a bar of four, or seven, is based on vocals. She'll sing a phrase and add an extra beat because it feels good to her—or drop a beat. She's not aware of it; it just feels good. On that song, I tried to learn it, but she played it differently every time. What I ended up doing was playing a shaker along with her. When she got a performance that she liked, I went back and used that shaker as a click track. Then I played

the drumset. Before doing that, though, I had to transcribe it, because there were all these bars of seven, nine, and so on.

**TBW:** Were there programmed drums on "Cruel"?

**MC:** The majority of that one is a Taos drumset. It was a kick drum and two splash cymbals for hats, and I cross-sticked the Taos snare. We put it into *ProTools* and made a four-bar loop. We overdubbed all kinds of stuff. I also played marimba and tabla. I would play grooves into the computer and see what worked. With that song it was a collage. We wanted a hip-hop feel but with organic sounds.

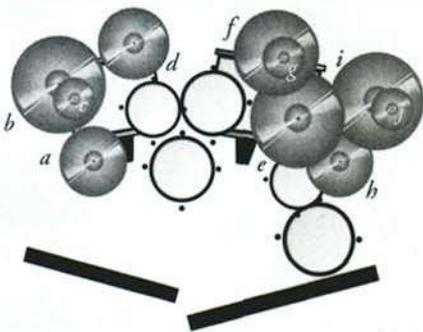
**TBW:** You've really done an about-face in terms of the integration of found objects and percussion, haven't you?

**MC:** It's just *fun*. You start hearing sounds and if you have an extra limb to hit 'em with, stick them up there by the kit.

Chances are they'll sound interesting as part of the groove. It's more unusual using the real thing: My favorite percussionists would never use samples. They would just grab a hubcap and sound great. Like the guy who played with Tom Waits—Steven Hodges, I think—would do that.

**TBW:** Lately I'm noticing a certain trend of putting the drums a little back in the mix.

**MC:** I think it's random. It depends on who is mixing and what kind of music it is. On singer-songwriter stuff, the drums are definitely in a supportive role. Live, with Tori Amos, the drums are loud; we're fully rocking out. It's not what people would



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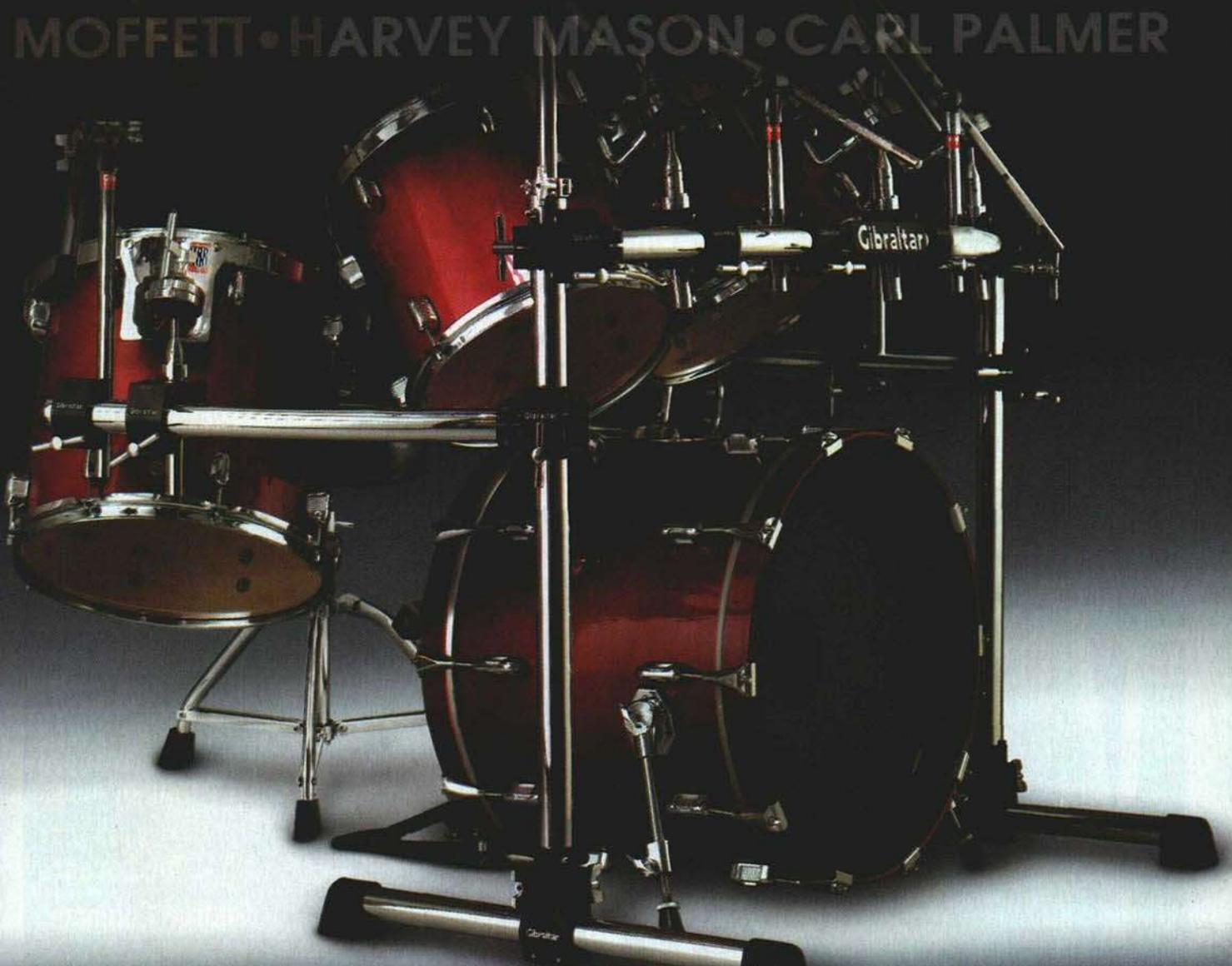
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expect. I'd recommend it to anybody [*puts on carny barker voice*]: *Come on out!*

**TBW:** What became of the Matt Chamberlain people knew before, and that high snare drum sound? I guess there's a shred of that sound on The Wallflowers' record.

**MC:** It's about the song and the songwriter's vision about what kind of sounds they want. Unless you have the opportunity to be in the same town that I live in, and go out and see me play, what you hear me doing on recordings is not necessarily everything I do. With certain styles of music, certain things won't work. Like with The Wallflowers, I couldn't use Taos drums.

**TBW:** I was just curious, because on the Wallflowers CD the snare drum sound is similar to your old sound with Edie Brickell.

**MC:** It's that little piccolo guy I've had forever—a Noble & Cooley. This one is blessed with fatness; it has an extra butt cheek!

**TBW:** "One Headlight" could have been digging coal, four-on-the-floor, but you made it interesting.

**MC:** First we did a looser version. I was hitting crash cymbals and doing fills at the end of verses and choruses—like what you would expect in a basic rock drum part. Then we listened back and it wasn't grooving. So Greg, the bass player, played me a Tom Petty song where Steve Ferrone never hit a crash cymbal and it just grooved its ass off. Sometimes cymbals dissipate your groove energy, *and you can't be dissipating your groove energy!* A cymbal crash can put a comma in the groove, whereas if you're laying it down on hi-hat, bass drum, and snare, it usually sounds great.

**TBW:** What are some other sessions you've done?

**MC:** There's this woman, Sam Phillips, and her record *Omnipop*; that was fun. I just did a Chris Isaac record and a Melissa Etheridge record.

**TBW:** I'll wager those are two diverse approaches.

**MC:** Well, Chris Isaac was interesting because I just played straight-up drumkit. It was more of a Wallflowers kind of thing. I tried to do certain things, but the way he writes it's hard to go into left field. But with Melissa Etheridge, on the other hand,

we freaked out. I played tons of Taos drums on that record and hooked guitar effects pedals up to microphones. After I left, they did crazy stuff. A lot of the tracks are me and Kenny Aronoff, morphed together on tape.

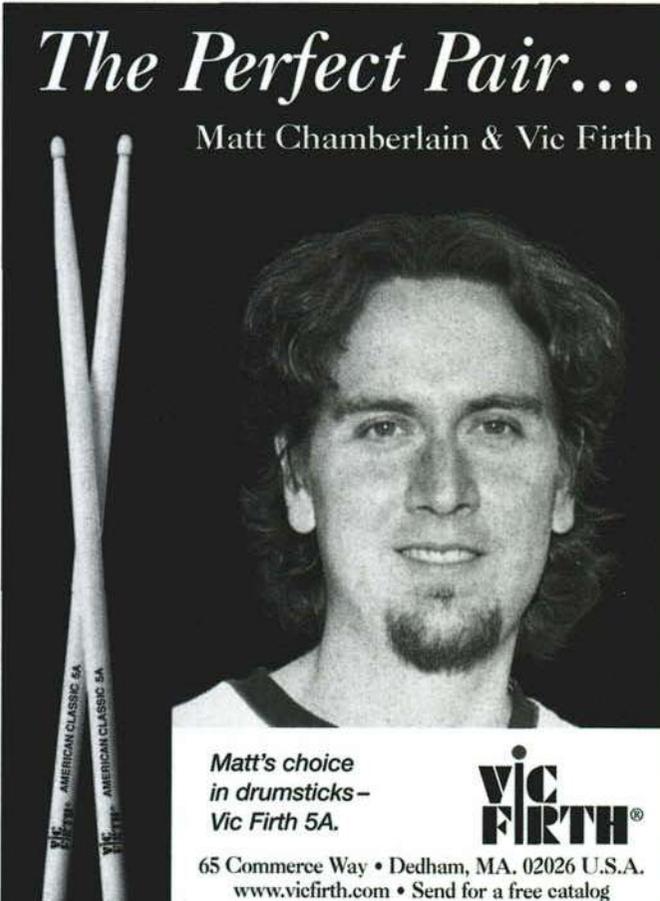
I did Macey Gray, and that was like Aretha Franklin, year 2000, super soul momma stuff. We had a guy who does *MFC 60* stuff—a pop DJ guy—so we took live performances and put them over loops. It's sort of like the Fiona thing: one or two mic's on the kit, through tube preamps, getting old Al Green sounds.

**TBW:** Glynn Johns had a famous three-mic' job, with two Neuman *U87s* and a bass drum mic'.

**MC:** I worked with his son, Ethan Johns, who was engineering a John Brion solo record. There is a kick mic' and an overhead directly above the snare drum, a foot above your head, depending on how much room you want to get into it, and over by the floor tom there's a mic' that's equally distant to the snare drum overhead. Somehow it picks up the entire kit; you would think it would be all floor tom, but it's really nice.

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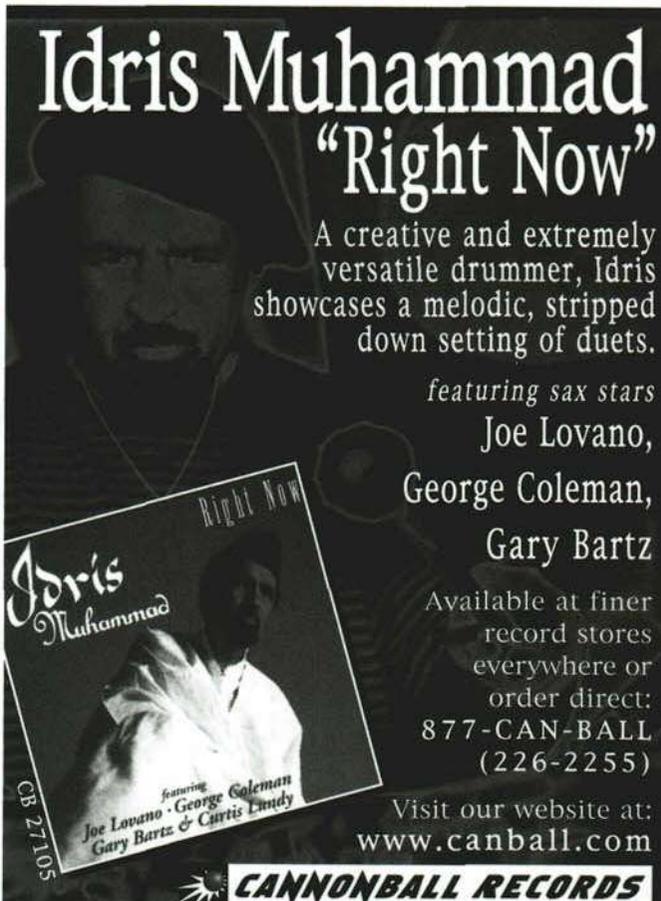
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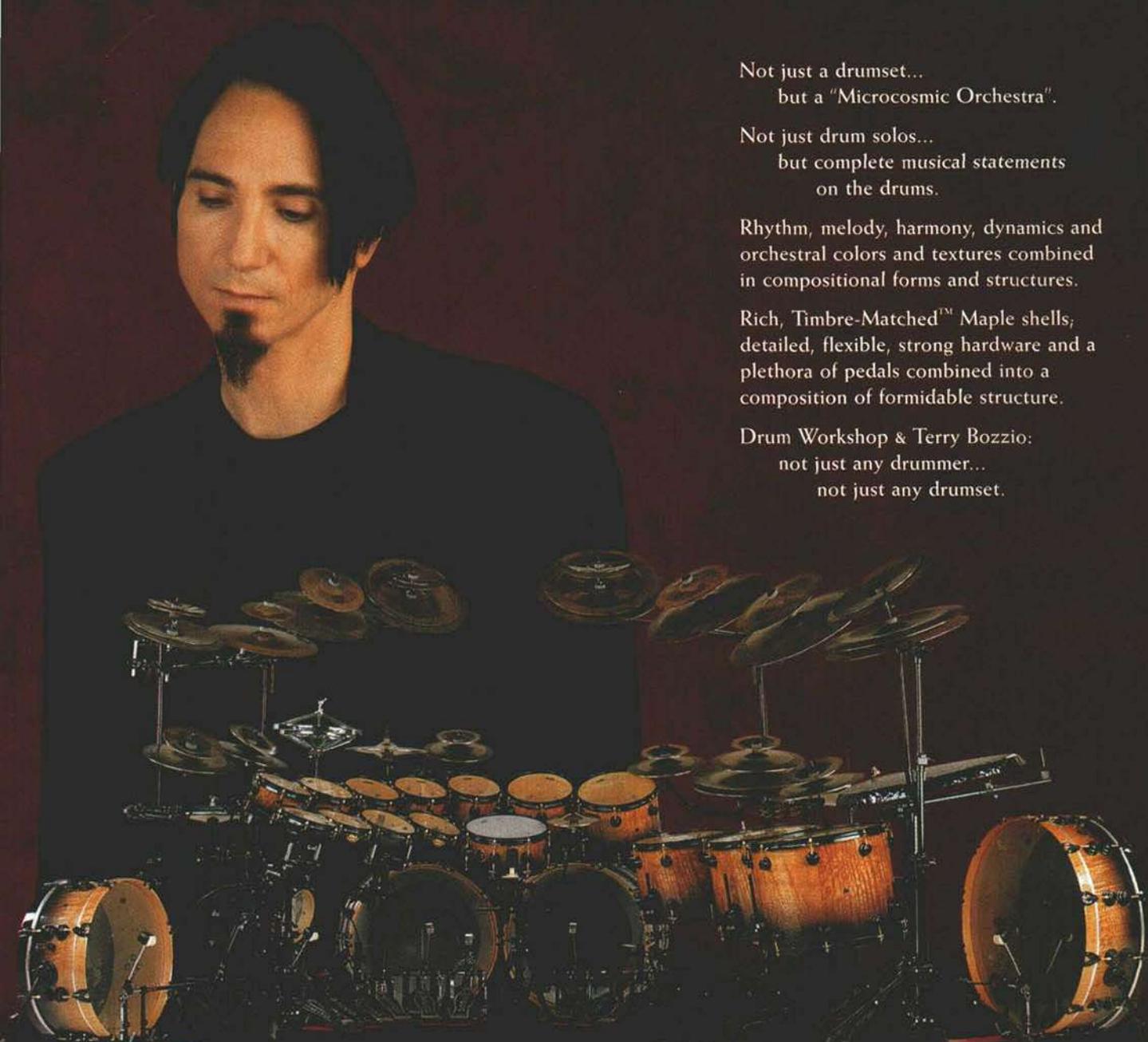
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**TBW:** Drummers tend to rush their fills. Any tips for staying on the click during fills?

**MC:** I try to be conscious of where I'm at during a fill. If I'm going to screw up anywhere, that's where it's going to happen. Thank God for *ProTools*, that's all I have to say! You know when I first started doing sessions, I figured I had to concentrate really hard and be focused. That didn't do it, though. For some reason, if I'm feeling like I'm losing the click or rushing ahead, if I really relax I'll snap right on it.

**TBW:** But that's the hardest thing—to relax when recording!

**MC:** That's definitely a thing to get over. Luckily I've been able to put together a recording studio where I live, so recording is part of playing now. If you record a lot at home and get comfortable with the fact that you can do another take—it's *not* the end of the world—then you'll be okay. Even if you are getting off with the click, that's not the end of the world, either. You may listen back to the take and it will sound fine.

I still have no idea how to gauge if I'm speeding up or slowing down *while* I'm playing. On the Tori tour, some days

you're tired, or you've had a few beers, and the time is definitely different. I have a little metronome that I use to count off songs because I don't trust myself. In the studio, you have the luxury of having a click, so you're always right there in the pocket. Having a metronome live to count off the tune helps, unless you're one of those people who can do it without—but I haven't found that part of myself yet.

**TBW:** We talked about avoiding cymbals, but you are a big fan of cymbals all the same. You have made some changes in your basic cymbal sound.

**MC:** I have Sabian cymbals—these things called *Duo* rides, which I love. I'm a big fan of dark cymbals. Back when I played with Edie, it was brighter cymbals, but always in the back of my head it was darker cymbals. I just didn't know how to get a hold of them. Sometimes you're not in the loop. You grow and learn that you like certain things better than others. I like the old Coltrane records with Elvin, or Tony Williams' sound, or old Motown records where there's thin hi-hats. You go to the ride cymbal and it doesn't go "cling, cling, cling." I love that stuff—at least I love it

now. I also have an 18" *AAX Studio* crash, an 18" sizzle cymbal, and an 18" saw blade—a Skillman saw blade.

**TBW:** Got an endorsement?

**MC:** They're trying to get me the *Workbench*. If I can get a Skillman *Workbench*, then I can set up the cymbal stands on it, sort of like the Pearl rack, you know? And after gigs, I could build some cabinets.

**TBW:** Our parents always told us to diversify.

**MC:** You gotta fall back on something.

**TBW:** You're not using those splash cymbals anymore?

**MC:** I got sick of splash cymbals. They started making me laugh. They were good if you were going to do your Manu Katche-Stewart Copeland thing. I can't go there right now.

**TBW:** Do you bother locking in every note with the bass player?

**MC:** No, I can't. I'd lose my mind. Putting that in perspective, there is this producer who copied these master tapes from Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*. He played us a 16-track master tape, and we were putting up the faders individually.

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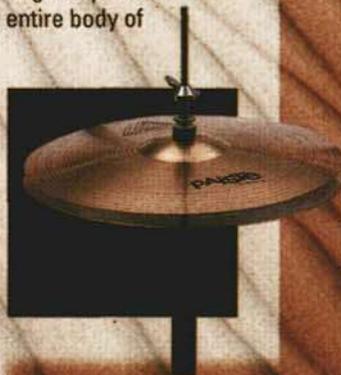
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The individual tracks were sloppy. But then he put *all* the faders up, and it was a serious groove! Hearing that made me more relaxed: You don't *need* to be locked on perfectly. There's a certain beauty to things pushing and pulling. Like Afro-Cuban music: You don't know where the beat begins and ends; it all becomes a big circle. Then you have guys like Jack DeJohnette, who has a very wide concept. Jim Keltner is another. If you see Keltner play, it looks like his stick is going *up* and there's sound coming out. Most drummers you see hit the drum and there's sound, but you see Keltner pulling the sound *out* of the drums. A lot of jazz guys have a different way of placing the groove, as opposed to rock guys, who can be very square.

**TBW:** Does this come naturally to you, this absence of squareness?

**MC:** [laughs] No, I've worked long and hard on it! I try to think like that when I play so I don't box myself in. When I first started doing sessions, I thought everything should be perfect, but it's not the case at all. It's about a *good performance* and all the stuff that goes with good music—sloppiness, mistakes, hitting the rim accidentally instead of your snare. Sometimes that all works out in your favor.

**TBW:** Which nicely brings us again to Critters Buggin'. This is music to do what by?

**MC:** Clean your house, drive your car, and eat your food. I think people who have listened to dance music—Chemical Brothers—would dig on Critters, because it's heavily groove-oriented. It's not electronic, it's *organica*.

**TBW:** What's the distinction here?

**MC:** We're playing real instruments, but we're tweaking out the microphones a little to make it *sound* electronic. On *Host* and *Bumpa*, half was recorded live at a club, with straight-up drum miking, no fancy-shmancy stuff. But the other halves of the records, we put up minimal mic's. We put a lot of compression on a cheesy mic' until it sounded like sucking drums through a hole. It's just bad—and that's good.

**TBW:** There's a variety of snare drum sounds on *Bumpa*.

**MC:** If I use one snare drum too much, I go nuts. There are cool things to hit that sound like snare drums: You know those Remo *Ocean Drums*—the 12" one that has the BBs in it? Put it on a snare stand and, if

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you hit it with a brush, it sounds amazing. I've always heard things in my head like that. A lot of the stuff I like you can't just go buy out of a magazine. I've been getting into Harry Partch, who built his own instruments. They look cool and sound amazing—and it's basically found objects.

The drumset has only been around for seventy years, and it's basically a bunch of found objects anyway. Singer-songwriters love having different sounds to inspire them. A lot of them will come at you with the same chord progressions and the same

tempos. The only thing you can do is change it sonically—play the same beat on something else.

**TBW:** You are still playing traditional grip. Does it give you any problems?

**MC:** It gives me bad gas!

**TBW:** This interview is degenerating very quickly. Freud was right.

**MC:** Yeah, it all comes down to the butt. Where do you go from there?

**TBW:** Seriously, what do you know about traditional grip, and why does it suit you?

**MC:** I took lessons from Murray Spivak,

who was a guru of hand technique. Also, during college I was in a marching drumline, so that was traditional grip as well. That just engrained it even more in my brain.

Murray concentrated on having me be as relaxed as possible. He pointed out that with your right hand, the fulcrum isn't between the first finger and thumb; it's between the middle finger and the thumb. With your left hand, it's almost like you're giving somebody the finger, and putting a stick between your thumb and first and third fingers. The fulcrum is definitely between your thumb and first finger.

Murray knew the exact physics of stick motion. He was really into each stick having the same tonal characteristics, so when you did a single-stroke roll, there was no tonal difference between the sticks.

**TBW:** Did you ever find that traditional grip failed you on louder gigs?

**MC:** When you hit hard, regardless of how you hold the stick, you're going to make a loud noise. I've seen drummers play pretty soft who have miked drums and they sound huge. Go see Matt Cameron: He doesn't beat the shit out of his drums, and he gets a serious sound and serious power.

**TBW:** It kind of goes against the flow of various discussions, like when people say they could never play heel down on the bass drum.

**MC:** Nowadays it's not even a valid argument, if you have microphones. If you have a good soundman, he's just going to crank your kick drum up if you're playing with your heel down.

**TBW:** Do you play any other instruments?

**MC:** I play idiot guitar. You plug in the guitar and freak out. With *ProTools* you can pick up any instrument on the planet and record it. Even if you can't play it, chances are you'll find two bars here and there that sound in tune. String them together and you've got a song. Idiot guitar and idiot music. Idiot drumming is next!

**TBW:** We have enough recorded examples of that already, don't we? Not speaking of you, of course.

**MC:** Listen, I have *plenty* of recorded examples of me playing idiot drums.

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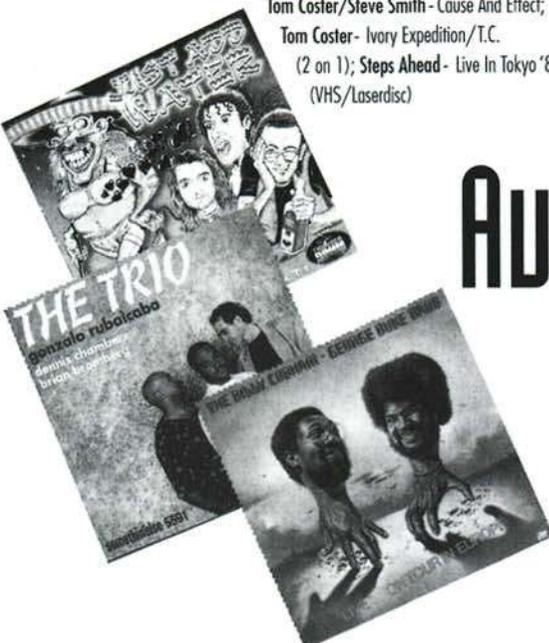
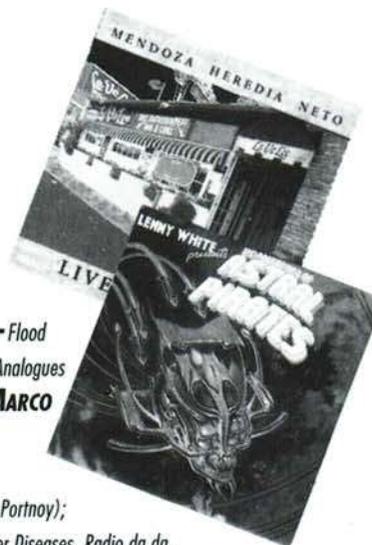
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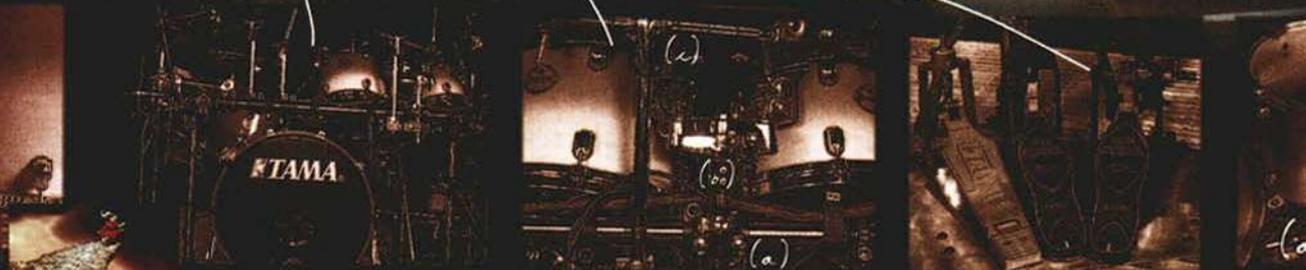
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**TAMA**

# John Guerin



# LA STUDIO GURU



**T**he mementos on John Guerin's office walls tell a story. It's of a young San Diego boy who could barely reach the pedal of his uncle's 32" bass drum when he began his self-taught musical journey. Other mementos include several photos of Guerin with notable musicians, a painting signed by Joni Mitchell, and a ridiculously complicated Frank Zappa chart—all keepsakes of a musician who has spanned two important musical eras.

In addition to Mitchell and Zappa, Guerin has applied his considerable skills to such greats as Frank Sinatra, The Byrds, and Thelonious Monk, and has inspired many musos with his work in his own band, the LA Express. His studio credits are unbelievable. And John has produced such pop artists as O.C. Smith and Keith Carradine, and co-wrote such compositions as "The Hissing Of Summer Lawns" with Joni Mitchell and Michael Franks' "Don't Be Blue."

Admittedly, the work has slowed down some for Guerin. He's mostly doing just the projects he wants to now—a smattering of record dates with artists like Bobby Caldwell and Dianne Schuur, and a trio with pianist Roger Kellaway and bassist Bob Magnusson. But there is no doubt that Guerin's session career outlasted many others' because of his musical open-mindedness and his willingness to explore new and unknown territories.

BY ROBYN FLANS  
PHOTOS BY ALEX SOLCA

**RF:** When did you know you were serious about the drums?

**JG:** It was what I was always going to do, from middle school on. It never occurred to me to do anything else. We always had dances to play for, and I worked with a bunch of college guys. I went to college too, and then Buddy DeFranco came through town when I was about eighteen. He did a clinic there and he called me two weeks later to ask if I wanted to go on the road, and that was it. I left school right before finals.

**RF:** What did your parents say about that?

**JG:** They were very happy for me. They were always supportive, but that's a dumb way to start playing.

**RF:** Why?

**JG:** Being self-taught like that, I had to undo a lot of things that weren't correct. And I had to learn how to read.

**RF:** What did you learn incorrectly by just teaching yourself?

**JG:** You have to be taught things as simple as breathing when you're playing. There's

a certain way to sit so your butt is the fulcrum and it's right in the middle, so that your balance is right. Little things like that can really be big things.

**RF:** How did you learn that you were doing it wrong?

**JG:** By watching and listening. I went to see as many people as I could.

**RF:** Had you corrected yourself by the time you got the gig?

**JG:** No, it was on the gig. I realized I was working against myself. The stick is supposed to do the work for you if you approach it properly, which I wasn't doing.

**RF:** I think training is something a lot of young people wrestle with. What did you get that was good from playing to records, and what do you think you missed?

**JG:** I missed a lot of shortcuts from not being taught properly—just basic things like holding the sticks, sticking routines, rudiments. From that standpoint, I wasn't really prepared for any kind of sophisticated music. If it wasn't jazz or bebop, forget it. I couldn't play a march, I couldn't read music.

## A Tough Session

*John Guerin says one of the most difficult projects he ever worked on was for Clint Eastwood's film tribute to Charlie Parker, Bird. For this project Guerin had to replace the original drum tracks on the great saxophonist's rather rustic recordings.*

**JG:** They got mono tapes of Bird from his wife, performances she had recorded with the microphone right up to Bird's horn. We were hired to redo the backing tracks; you could hear Bird really well, but the rhythm section and the crowd sounds were like white noise. At times it was difficult to even hear the pulse of the music. The engineers were able to electronically get rid of that static noise most of the time. There were some "ghosts," but they were able to cover them up with applause. But that's how dirty the track was.

We spent a lot of time on those tunes, especially those fast jazz tunes. And it wasn't a steady beat all of the time, so we had to move up and down with what the original group had done.

**RF:** There was some controversy about replacing those tracks for the movie.

**JG:** Oh yeah, the purists weren't happy. Well, they should have heard the original tapes!

**RF:** What did you learn from doing this project?

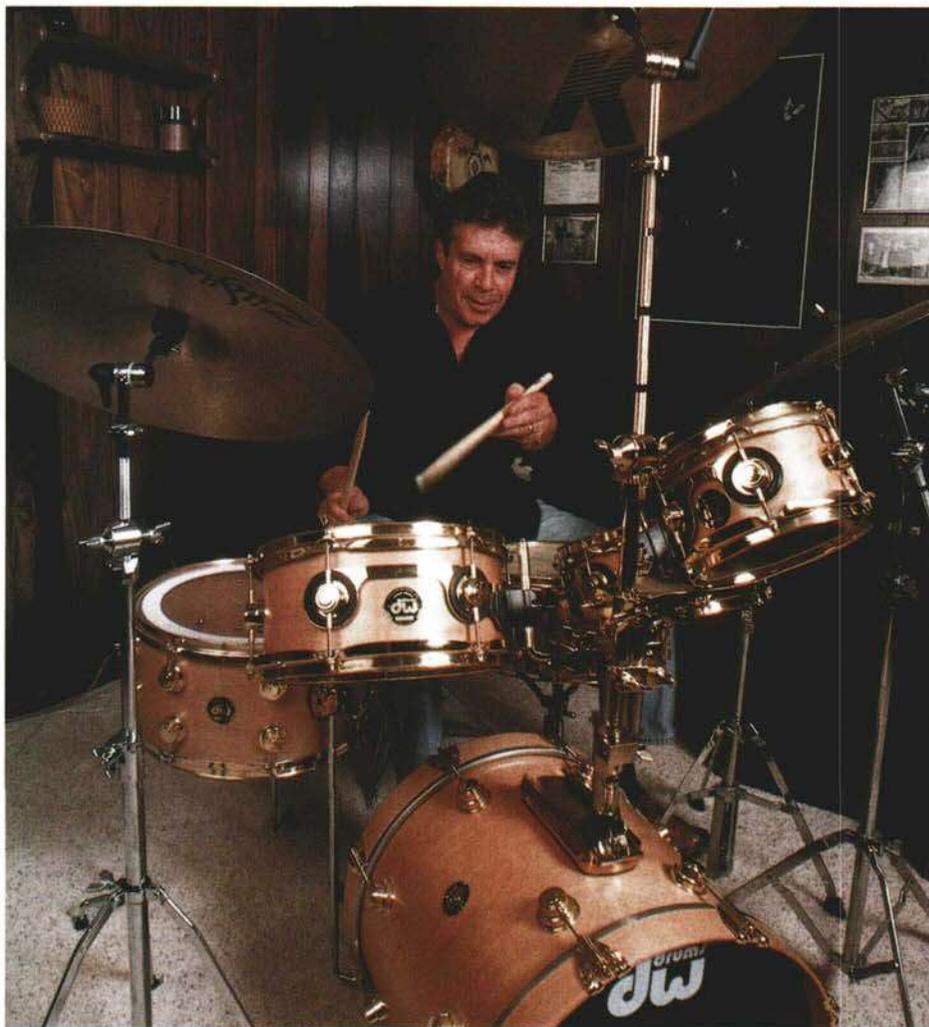
**JG:** I learned to not get so intense about it and just let things flow. We played each tune so many times that I would find myself catching a couple of Bird's licks, and I couldn't do that because the drummer wouldn't have known what he was going to play ahead of time. It had to feel like we were on stage playing right then.

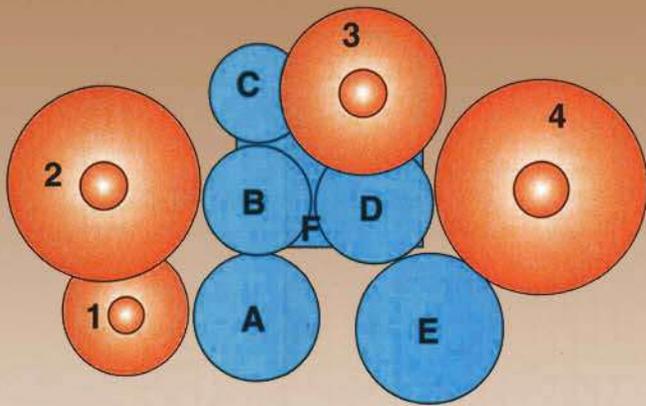
There were some four-bar drum exchanges between Bird and the drums. Every four bars the drums would play a solo, then Bird would play a solo, and back and forth. I think it was Roy Haynes I was replacing.

**RF:** I thought it was Max Roach.

**JG:** There were actually two or three different drummers on the tracks we redid—there was Roy, Max, and Kenny Clarke.

There was one four-bar break where I just couldn't come out with Bird. Here,





## Guerin's Setup

**Drumset:** DW *Short Stack* (for small band work)

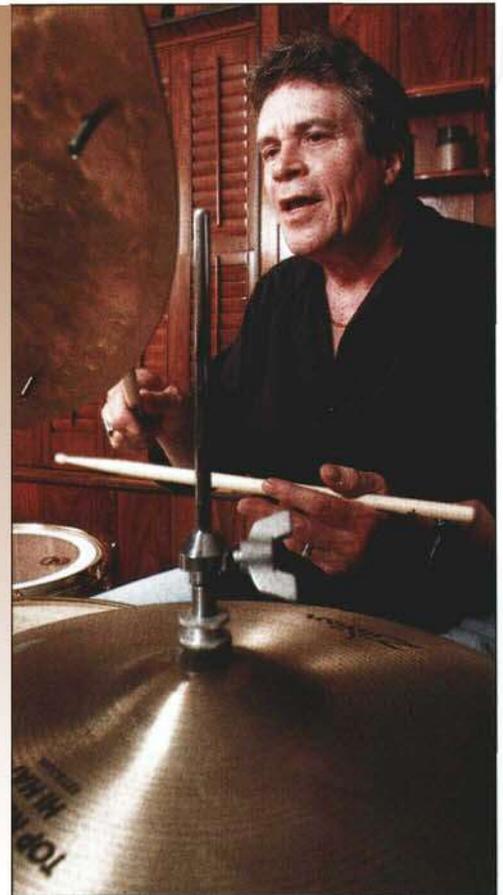
- A. 5 1/2x13 wood snare
- B. 5x8 tom
- C. 5x10 tom
- D. 6x12 tom
- E. 8x15 floor tom
- F. 16x18 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 13" hi-hats (*Dyno beat* bottom on top, *Rock* on bottom)
- 2. 20" *K Custom Dry* ride with rivets
- 3. 17" *K Dark* crash
- 4. 22" *Pre-Aged K* thin ride

**Hardware:** DW, including their 5000 series bass drum and hi-hat pedals

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5A model with nylon tip  
**Heads:** Remo *Fiberskyn 3* on snare, clear *Ambassadors* on everything else



with all of my years of studio experience, I thought I knew how to get out of anything. That's where the intensity came in. I just had to stop and say, "Wait a minute." The time on the original track was bad. So I played a two-bar solo and then played a roll and waited for Bird to come in. That worked, thankfully.

To make things even more difficult, it was decided to use a different rhythm section about halfway through—they brought in a new piano player and a new bass player. It kept me tense!

**RF:** How long did you work on that project?

**JG:** We worked all day on one particular tune, which is unheard of. The whole project took a couple of weeks. Hey, I would have thought it couldn't be done, but when someone like Clint Eastwood says, "Why can't we do this?" you do it. It turned out pretty good, but I can't listen to the CD of it because I hear too much, but in the movie—with the visual going along—it worked great. I'm proud of that one.

The kids have their tools together today; there is so much information available now. You really can't do what I did anymore, unless you are a stylist and really carve out a niche for yourself where you do only your project. But that is very rare. There aren't a lot of Buddy Riches around anymore. He didn't read. But I didn't know he didn't know how to read, and I didn't think about reading music.

I listened to so many records that I learned by default—different harmonic forms of music, how songs were built, how bebop tunes were built over old songs like George Gershwin melodies—and unconsciously I learned about the harmonies and forms of music. I had a great ear, so learning tunes without music was a snap for me.

**RF:** What prepared you for the studio?

**JG:** Just doing what I did before, just listening to all kinds of different music. My first studio job was in Chicago when I was nineteen with Buddy DeFranco, but that was our band. I finally moved to Los Angeles in 1963 at the age of twenty-three because, though San Diego is not too far away geographically, it was a thousand miles away musically. I joined George

Shearing, which was a real disciplined gig. His music is so precise, and that was perfect for me. Joe Pass was in the band, too, and he wasn't a great reader, so we both learned. George was very patient because of our musicianship.

I was with George for about a year, and that cleaned up my act. By the time I was faced with things in the studios I was ready for just about anything, other than doing a movie that might require all kinds of rudiments. I probably couldn't have read *Mission Impossible*, but I did *Hawaii Five-O* and all the *Mary Tyler Moore* things.

I made records with George at Capitol, then I got with Peggy Lee, who was also with Capitol. Peggy had great writers—Dave Grusin, Billy May, Bill Holman, Johnny Mandel—and those people liked the way I played and hired me for their dates. I did all of Dave Grusin's movies and so forth, and it mushroomed. As for the playing, all of the experience I was getting just honed my skills. I was able to handle most anything. Something new would come along and be a challenge, but that's what made it exciting. I did Frank Zappa one afternoon and Frank Sinatra that same

night!

**RF:** A lot of people shied away from Frank Zappa just because of sheer terror.

**JG:** He laid this on me in the studio. [*Guerin pulls a framed piece of music off the wall, from Zappa's Lumpy Gravy album.*] There's no way I could read that right now. But he loved to do this kind of thing to me. What I would do was interpret as much as I could, which is really what he wanted me to do. If I went into the studio and they handed me a piece of music like this for a film or something, I couldn't

## Guerin Goodies

These are the albums that John says best represent his drumming

Artist	Album
Thelonious Monk	Monk's Blues
Claus Ogertnan	Gate Of Dreams
Oliver Nelson	Black, Brown & Beautiful
Joe Farrell	Farrell's Inferno

...and these are the ones he listens to for inspiration:

Any John Coltrane, pre-electric Miles, and Joe Henderson.

have played it down.

**RF:** Zappa must have been very intense.

**JG:** He was *always* very serious and intense. He had a sense of humor, but in the studio it was another thing. But he was very easy to work with.

**RF:** Did you have to do things a hundred times?

**JG:** No. Actually, Frank was a genius in the editing room. For instance, on the *Hot Rats* album, we let the tape run most of the time. There was no music, he just directed different feelings, or we'd establish a groove and he'd cut it off. Then, a few months later, an album with actual songs would come out. That was the beauty of his editing. He once sent me an album and I said, "Wait a minute, Frank. My name is on here, but I don't remember playing this." He said, "That's because I took your drum track alone and wrote another song to it."

**RF:** You are a major link in the music that combined jazz with rock.

**JG:** It was just the time period I grew up in.

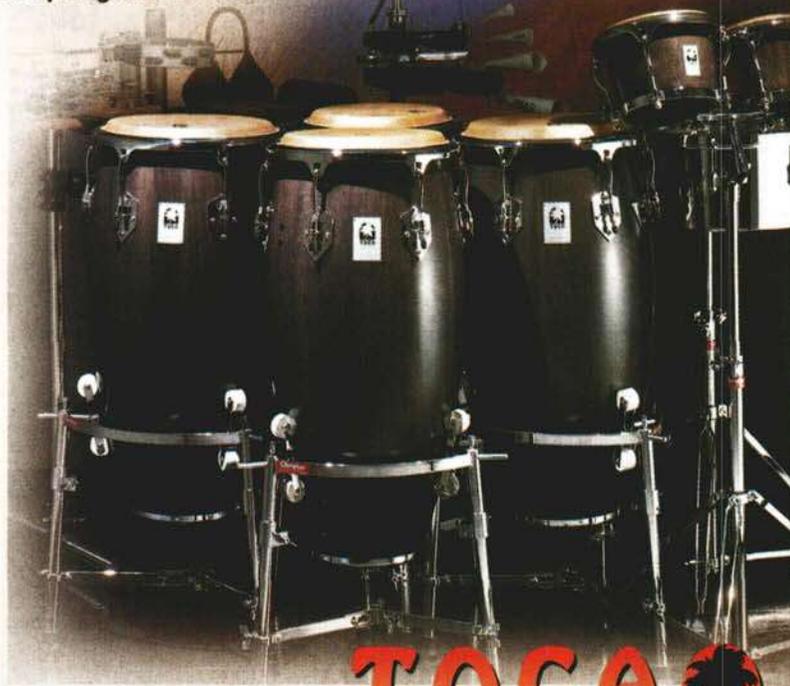
**RF:** Do you recall when that first began hitting your ears?

**JG:** Yes, I do. I had all the background with the swing bands. I had all that pre-bebop thing in my head, and then bebop came along and I embraced that quickly. I remember I was doing a Howard Roberts record date and I thought rock 'n' roll was a piece of cake. I had no idea that there were guys who grew up as intensely with that kind of music as I did with jazz.

I remember early on doing a session with bassist Larry Knechtel, and it was a mixed group of jazz and rock guys. I had never met Larry before, and I told Howard that the bass player was dragging. Howard said, "No, he isn't." I hadn't learned how wide a beat can be, and I hadn't learned how to lay back on the beat like a lot of those players. Larry was interested in what I was

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doing and vice versa, so we wound up getting together at his house and I found out just how good rock 'n' roll and rhythm & blues can feel.

**RF:** And what about ballads? People are mistaken when they say ballads are easy.

**JG:** That is very true. When I did sessions with Sarah Vaughan and Carmen McCrae, I could eat a sandwich between beats, it was so slow. That was another learning experience. In fact, my first job in Los Angeles was with Buddy DeFranco with Carmen as second bill, so I played her set

as well. She was wonderful to me, even though I had heard horror stories about her.

I came up at a great time and got called for what I loved to do and what I did well. The rock thing was another part of the musical experience that came later.

**RF:** But it was an outgrowth of jazz for you. What did you do on the days you got together with Larry Knechtel?

**JG:** We got together once or twice a week for a long time and he just let the tape run. We played mostly his kind of music. It's much easier for a jazz player to go to that

than it is for a rock player to go to jazz. Though you can always spot a jazz musician playing rock who doesn't know anything about it. I began to like playing rock because I was working with good players. Then I got into the Frank Zappa thing, and then different people like James Taylor and some other good singers.

**RF:** Do you think your jazz foundation was what helped build a unique identity for you?

**JG:** I suppose so, probably because I couldn't help insinuate, imply, or outright *do* some jazz on whatever I was playing. That was what was so much fun about it. I played differently on rock records than a true rock 'n' roll player would, but it still worked.

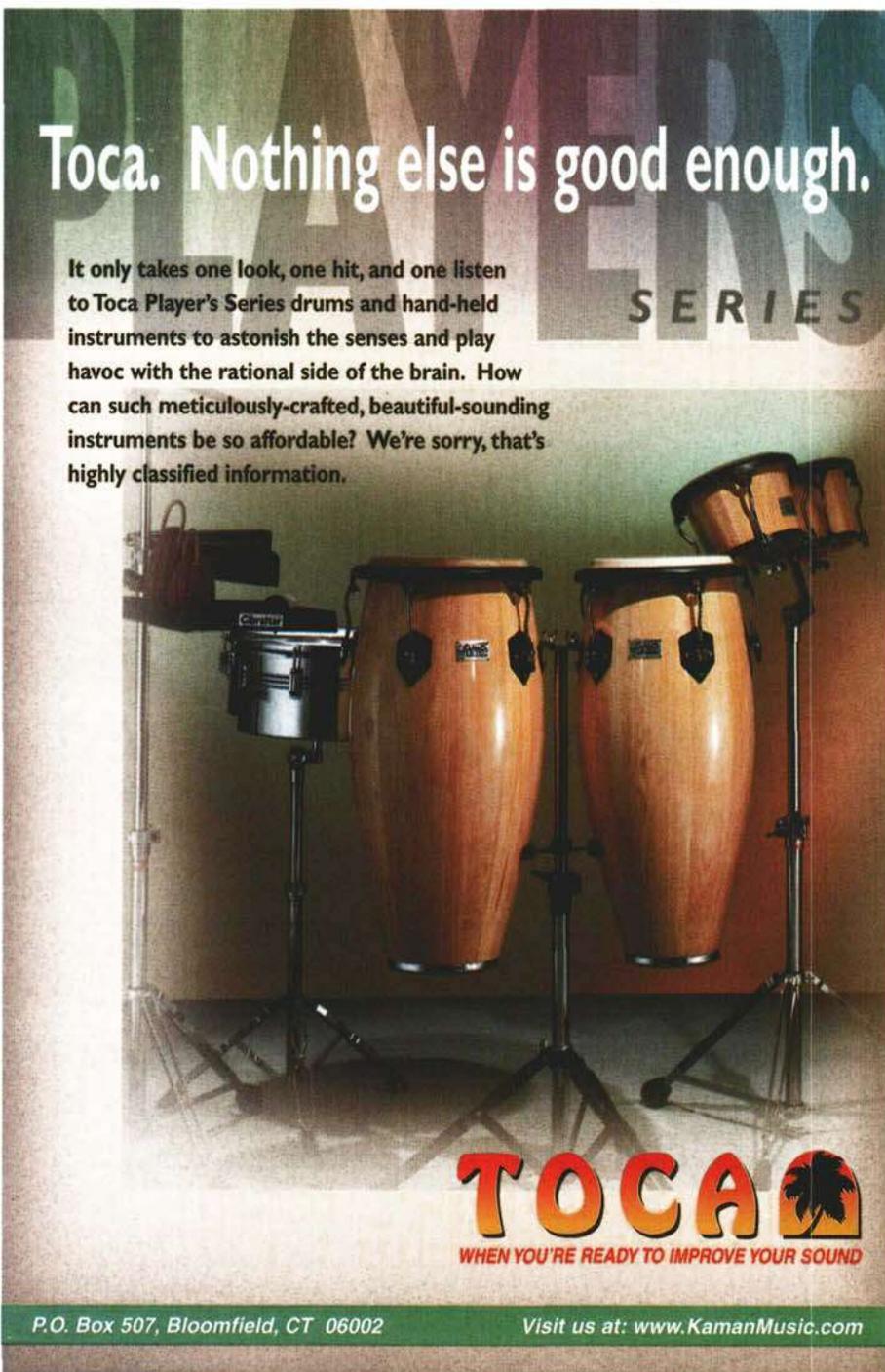
The hardest thing I had to do when I was doing all those records for all those years was to replace a drummer who was a member of an established rock band because the band's drummer didn't have his act together. I would have to go in and sound purposely not as together so I would fit in musically with the rest of the band. That was tough. Then sometimes I'd get paid for an extra session to teach the drummer how to play what I did on their track.

**RF:** Was the TV work intimidating?

**JG:** No. I started out doing records. I never got called for movies and things like that. The movie work was being done by Shelly Manne. Eventually I did get called for certain movies because of Dave Grusin and then Pat Williams. But we'd crank out TV music. We got too good for our own good because we didn't get paid properly for how much output we'd do. The union finally realized it was a problem, so every three minutes of music became an hour's worth of work, but we'd turn out that hour's worth of work in half an hour.

**RF:** Do you recall creating the part to *Hawaii Five-O*? Take us to that session.

**JG:** It's like most things they called me for. The writer would lay out an arrangement for horns and the orchestra, note for note. They never wrote my parts note for note. On *Hawaii Five-O* there were two bars that only said "drum fill," but then there were cues above the grand staff during the melody part and so forth, which showed me what the other part of the orchestra was doing. That part was laid out for me as a road map only. They ended up loving what I did. I did it every year for twelve years, and they would build the ses-



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sions around me.

**RF:** That was an amazing track for TV at the time.

**JG:** *Streets Of San Francisco*, which I did, was also drum-heavy.

**RF:** What has been the biggest nightmare project you've worked on?

**JG:** It was an album I did with Pat Williams called *Threshold* for Capitol. It was a big band album where we, as a rhythm section—guitar, bass, piano, drums, and percussion—were given charts that were notated and everything, but none of the horns were there. I had to play as if a big band was there and fill in all the fills and all the hard dynamics as if there was a whole trumpet section to kick in the butt. Then they came in and did the parts over our rhythm section. Then Pat took the tapes back to New York and put some New York soloists on it, but I never saw hide nor hair of a horn player, so that was really frustrating. It turned out okay, though. He won a Grammy for it.

Early in my career there was a date that Earl Palmer sent me to, which was with a couple of famous rock 'n' roll producers. It was really before I knew what I was doing in that ilk, and I wasn't cutting it. They had

this big black guy who was the valet for these guys, and they sent him in to play the drums. It turned out to be Barry White, who I didn't know and didn't recognize until years later, and he played a real simple figure on the drums. He hit them on one beat to every beat of the bar, just a hard four on the drums. It was the only drumset I owned then and he almost wrecked them, but it was totally right for the song. It was so simple and it worked, but I was afraid for my drumset. That was the only time that happened to me, but it was a great lesson—it was so simple and it worked.

**RF:** You became known "commercially" when you did Joni Mitchell's *Court And Spark*. Was that just another piece-of-cake session for you?

**JG:** No, that wasn't at all. First of all, Joni's music is different from anybody else's. I had thought she was a folk singer, which was not my favorite bag. Joni had never worked with a live band before. The only time I had anything to do with her albums before that was when Henry Louie, her producer/engineer, called me in to overdub finger cymbals on *Ladies Of The Canyon*, and she wasn't even there. On *Court And Spark*, she had tried other musi-

cians, but the musicians she had been working with couldn't grasp her new music. She had moved on to a different place. When we got in there, we took our time. It was all a skeleton. It was just the rhythm section and her.

**RF:** What was it precisely that was difficult to grasp?

**JG:** It was the sensitivity involved. Plus the forms of her songs don't fall into place really quickly. It's something you have to hear over and over to really be able to add what's needed. I could have played along with it right away and gotten through it, but to really *feel* the music, I had to get it in my mind. It wasn't that her melodies were secondary to her lyrics, but her lyrics kind of guide the way, and that was different.

**RF:** Then you went on the road with her, which was a big commitment because you were leaving the studio scene.

**JG:** I've always done that. I left the studios to go with Thelonious Monk for six months. They've just reissued the CD—*Monk's Blues*. Ben Riley is listed as the drummer and I'm listed as the percussionist, but that wasn't the case. Ben was in Monk's quartet, but he wasn't at the recording session. After this album, Monk

asked me to join his band. And then I went with The Byrds. Talk about switching gears! And I learned a lot from working with them. It was the first time I had ever worked big theaters with an actual sound company and realized I didn't have to bat my brains out to reach the fiftieth row. The sound system was doing it for me.

**RF:** Jazz has a whole different budget.

**JG:** Oh yes. We would go out on weekends, and that was the first exposure I had to the star treatment—limos, food in the dressing rooms, my drums taken care of for me, lots of respect for the musicians—which is how it should be. Then I would go out with Thelonious Monk, set up my own drums, and eat where I could—and love it.

**RF:** That *Court And Spark* band was the LA Express, which was on the cutting edge of the fusion of jazz and rock. How did that group come about?

**JG:** We started playing every Tuesday night at the Baked Potato. We wanted to stretch the more rhythmic part of music, having the jazz sensibility with a rock flavor. In fact, Joni first saw us at the Baked Potato. We were almost finished making a record at the time she asked us to do *Court And Spark*, and then she gave us the push to get over the hump.

We did very well with our records. But when we toured with her and did the opening set, they didn't know how to categorize us. They called us jazz because we had instrumental solos, but finally they came up with the word fusion, although I hate to categorize things.

**RF:** When you've started the category, it is the ultimate in creativity.

**JG:** When you hear an artist who is on that plateau of creativity, like a Stan Getz or an Oscar Peterson, you know in about four bars who it is. That's their signature. There are a lot of clones out there, but the main thing I respect is somebody who has his own individual signature. That is all a cumulation of what you've heard before, but you turn it into your own sound.

When I worked with Thelonious Monk, they brought this beautiful nine-foot grand piano into Columbia Studios and they sent a piano tuner along. The way Monk played piano, he could make the finest Bosendorfer sound out of tune. I would be watching the piano tuner through the glass during the playback, and it probably drove him to alcoholism. But if Bill Evans had

sat down at the piano, the tuner would have thought it to be poetry. Monk was a different kind of poetry. The piano is an inanimate object, but it comes from within. Drums are the same way.

**RF:** Can you talk about the fusing of the two genres of music? Which elements of jazz and which elements of rock went into the music that became The LA Express?

**JG:** The reason it was one of the first bands to inspire the word "fusion" was because the harmonic changes in the compositions were on the jazz side of things, which meant that the rhythm feel held down the rock part. That element was the foundation, but I could break away from it any time I wanted to if the composition lent itself to that.

**RF:** Elaborate on what you mean by "the rock foundation."

**JG:** The afterbeats—the 2 and 4. We were all jazz players in that band, but we were looking to make it accessible and to create a different kind of music.

**RF:** What changes did you witness in the studios?

**JG:** When I did a lot of Motown things, in those days there was a different pay scale. You got something like \$104 to do it without the singer, and if a singer was in the isolation booth, you got something like \$80. So Motown would put these singers in the booth who didn't know the songs, who weren't the singer on the track, who could barely sing. Then you'd hear the record and it would be, like, The Supremes. All that silliness changed later on.

Later in my career came the enhanced electronics and the layering of parts. And when electronics started replacing musicians, like when synthesizers first came out, I thought, "Those poor string players are going to be out of work." Now that's affected everybody. All the B- and C-level work we picked up to fill out the week is now being done in some garage by one guy doing the whole thing. I don't have sour grapes about it, but the drag is that a generation has grown up not knowing the difference, not knowing the true expression, and therefore not caring about it. From cartoons all the way up to jingles, it's filled with electronics, and this generation does not know the difference.

**RF:** You must have witnessed incredible sonic changes in the studio, even as basic as the availability of tracks.



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**JG:** Yes, 8-track was the first thing I knew. They had an 8-track at Capitol. It seemed like every six months a new machine would come in. All of a sudden there was a 16-track machine, then there was an echo device that sounded almost as good as the old echo chambers. There were better microphones and different ways of doing things. Then came the 24-track with all the layering, and the harmonizers that changed the pitch of different instruments and fixed things.

**RF:** Did all this technology make it easier or harder in the studios?

**JG:** It gave you a bigger palette for what you could do musically. If you wanted to get experimental, there were a lot more tools at your fingertips.

**RF:** But it also complicated matters, didn't it? More options means things take longer—overdubbing, rather than playing live. Do you feel it becomes more of a *process* then?

**JG:** Yes, but there's nothing wrong with that. And really, the sophistication of the sound equipment made it easier. For instance, Joni did a thing called "Shadows And Light," where she overdubbed something like twenty voices. At that time, I think there was only a 24-track. They were

ping-ponging voices all over the place. Without that machine, she couldn't have done that.

**RF:** What about the sonic changes of the drums through the years?

**JG:** For a long time I was playing pretty heavy jazz-oriented rock. When we went on the road with Joni, it was a brand new thing because her peers couldn't believe she went electric, and some of the jazz people couldn't believe what *we* were doing. We didn't suffer any lack of integrity, believe me—we got to make our music more accessible to the public via Joni and her audience support. We also had a hell of a lot of fun educating kids to know there's more than just one change in a loud rhythm section, and that there are actually dynamics and musicality, but with a taste of both neighborhoods.

My drums back then needed to project. They didn't have that cozy wood sound. In fact I was into the single-headed, big-tom setup for a long time because that's what worked for that music. DW, who I'm with, recently made me a set that has very shallow drums [their *Short Stack* series], which is wonderful for bebop—a quintet, sextet, or trio. Then I have another set that is big-

ger, which I use for the big band work I've been doing a bit of lately. And since I've gotten older, I'm not doing as many diverse things now. I'm doing just what I want to, so I'm back to wood drums and enjoying it. DW makes such great drums.

**RF:** What would you like to be doing musically now?

**JG:** I'd like to be playing more post-bop. I was on the wide stage so much when I was so busy, just doing everything. But now I'd like to focus and become known for that style. Having the label of "studio musician" was a stigma, which was unbeknownst to me for many years.

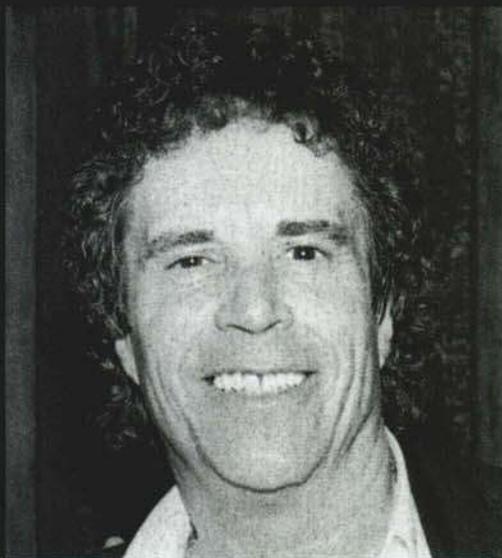
**RF:** Being a studio musician is an incredibly difficult job, and yet it carries with it an almost unsavory implication. It's amazing.

**JG:** It *is* amazing, especially since I used to record with all the jazz players. But studio work has provided me with a great way of life, and I've done almost everything I've wanted to. I've played with most of my heroes in the jazz idiom, so there's very little I'm dying to do. If Miles were still alive, I'd want to do that.



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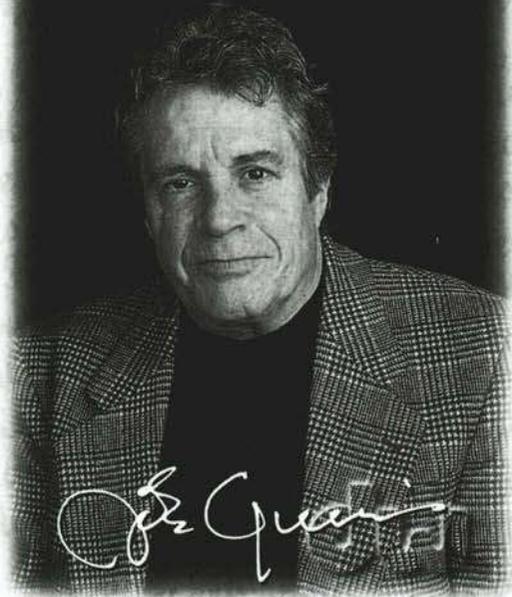
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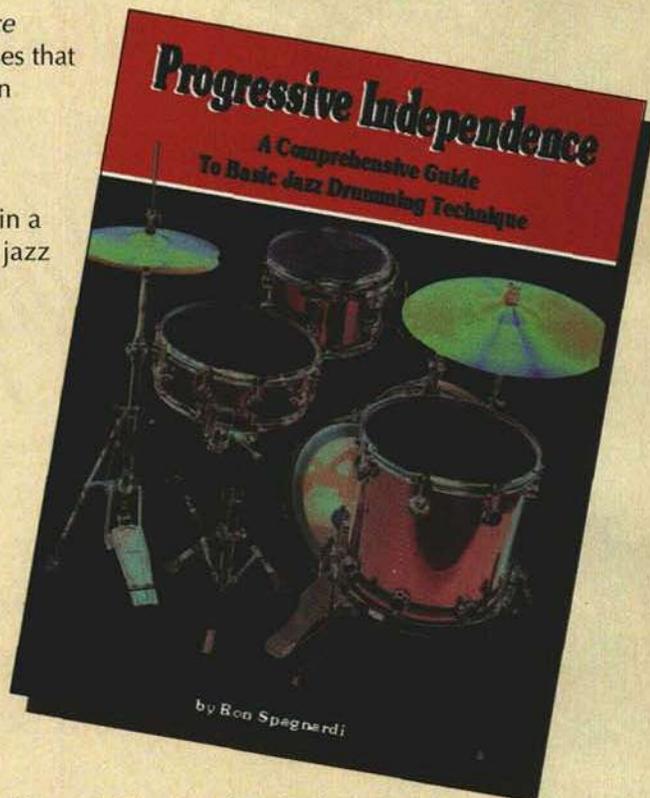
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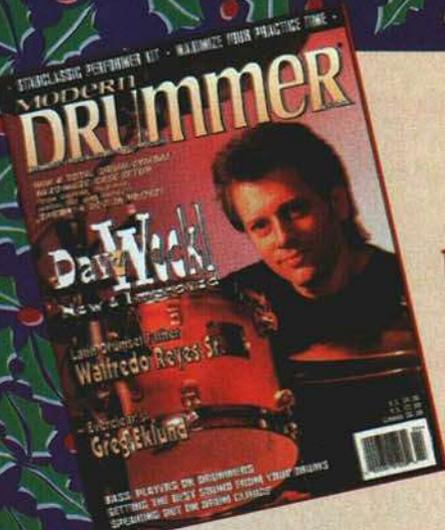
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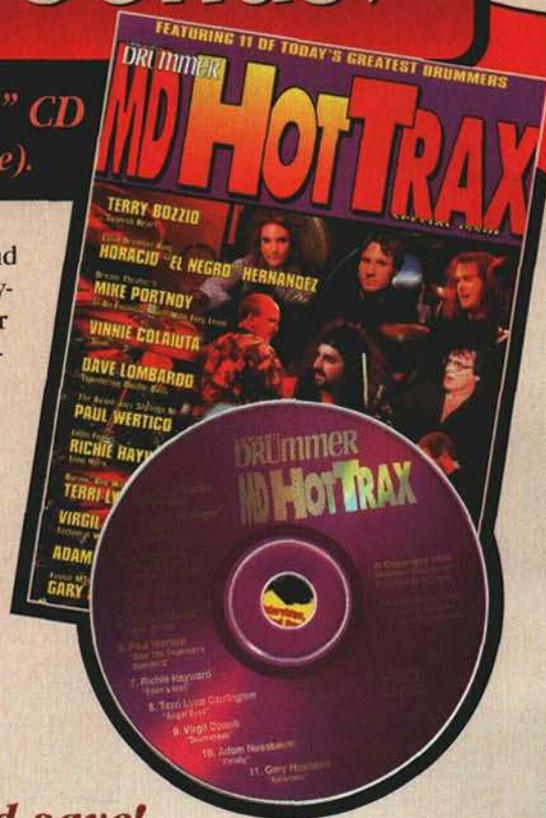
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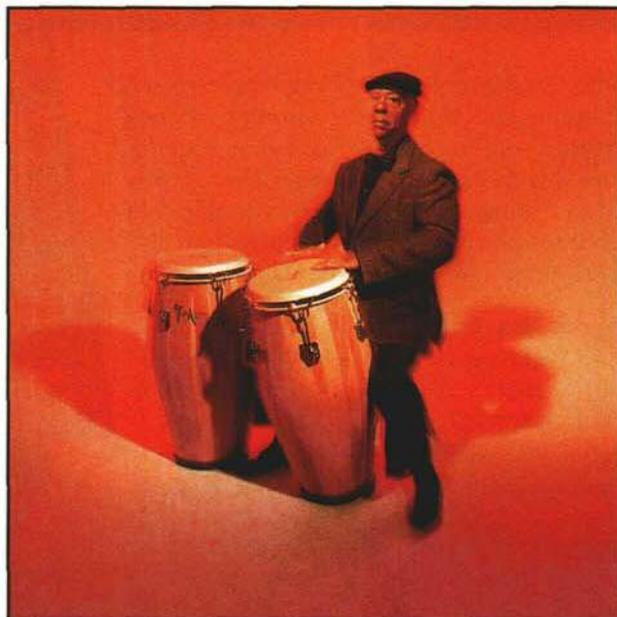
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## The Righteous Rhythm Of

# Armando Peraza



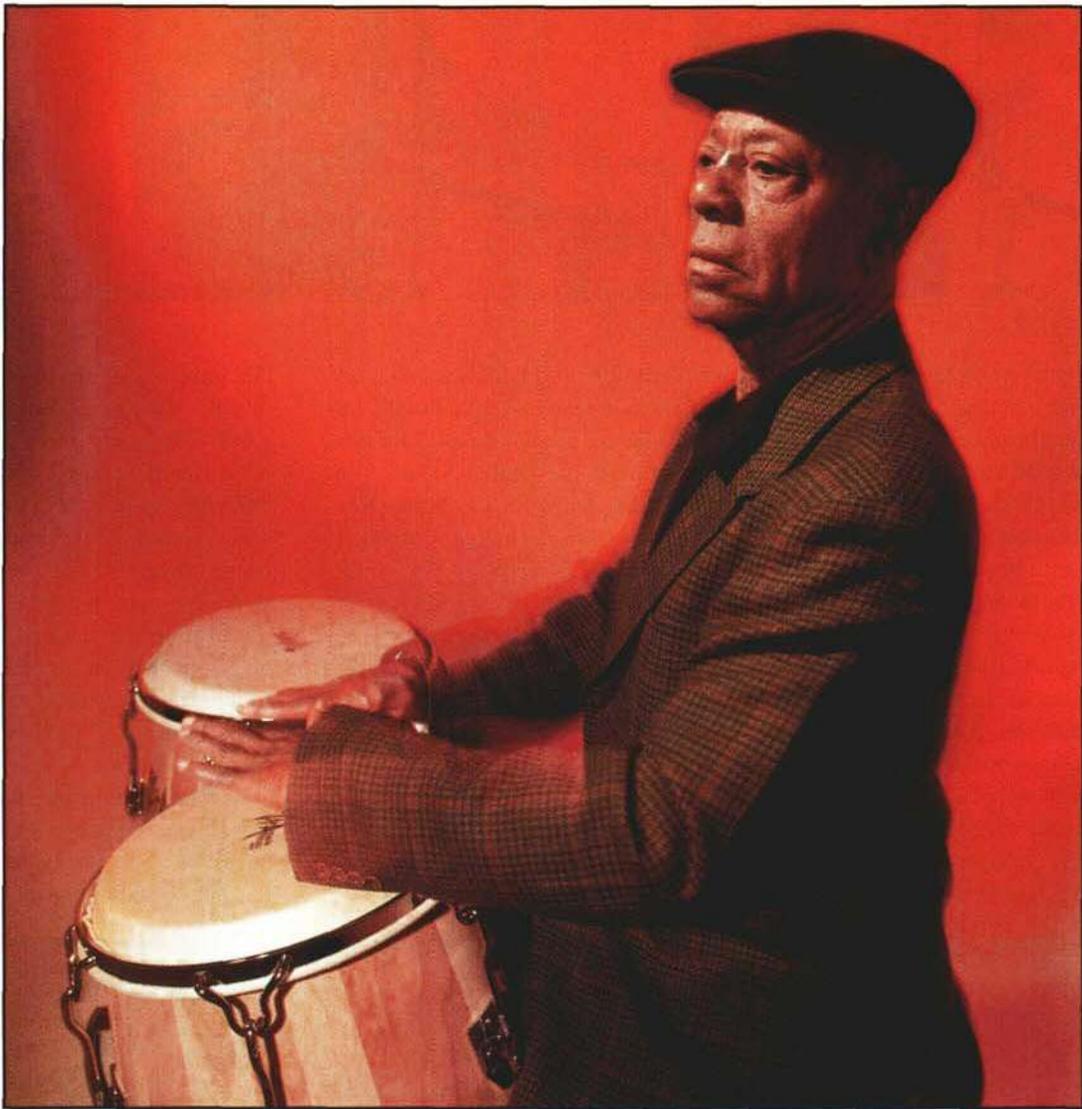
by Robin Tolleson

In a musical sense, Armando Peraza has been at ground zero of some historical mergers. The percussionist's remarkable career will be remembered for several long and fruitful associations—eleven years with pianist George Shearing, seven years with vibist Cal Tjader, and eighteen years with Carlos Santana. Peraza still does occasional gigs with Santana and no doubt would be doing a lot more except for a diabetes condition that keeps him from being able to tour with the band any longer.

An orphan in Cuba at the age of seven, Peraza was living on the streets of Havana at fourteen, supporting himself as vegetable vendor, semi-pro baseball player, and loan shark. At nineteen, desperate for money, he

lied to a Havana bandleader to get a gig on congas. It happened to be one of the best bands in Cuba, and after buying a conga and practicing all afternoon on it, Peraza happened to be pretty good. And so a fifty-five-year career was born. He played with the top bands in Cuba from 1943 to 1949, including Chano Pozo's Conjunto Azul, Perez Prado, Beny More, and a music and dance revue called *Mulattas Del Fuego*, featuring singer Celia Cruz,

After moving to the United States with Mongo Santamaria's Cuban Black Diamonds revue in 1950, Peraza toured for two years with guitarist Slim Gaillard. He was then part of the fusion of jazz and Afro-Cuban music with the George Shearing Latin Jazz Quintet, and

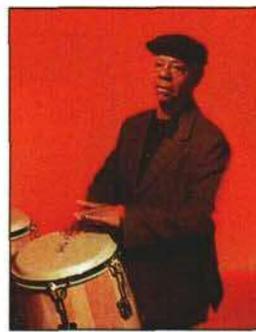
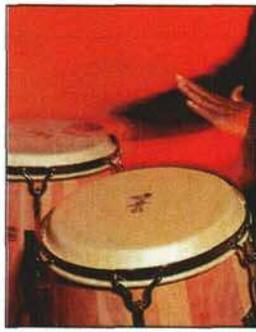
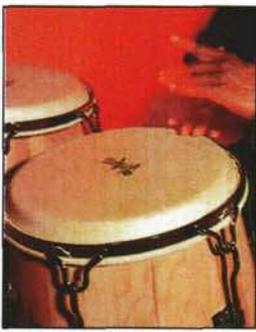


### Photos by Jay Blakesberg

with Tjader. In 1968, Armando recorded his only solo album, *Wild Thing* (Skye Records), featuring Chick Corea, Sadao Watanabe, and other notables. In 1971 he toured with bassist Jaco Pastorius in Florida and performed in the Bay Area with Jerry Garcia and Merl Saunders. The next year he joined Santana's brew of Latin, rock, and jazz elements, and composed and performed with Carlos on band albums and side projects like *Caravanserai*, *Love Devotion Surrender*, *Welcome*, *Illuminations*, *Lotus*, *Amigos*, *Oneness*, *Marathon*, *The Swing Of Delight*, *Zebop*, and his swan song with the band—1991's impressive *Spirits Dancing In The Flesh*. Armando performed all of the percussion parts on that album with Walfredo Reyes Jr., reminiscent of the way

he and Ndugu Chancier recorded the *Amigos* album. Armando recorded (uncredited) on some of Tito Puente's early cha-cha albums, and also recorded with Linda Ronstadt for the soundtrack to the movie *The Mambo Kings*.

Wiry and very strong at the age of seventy-four, Peraza ushers me into his Sunset District house in San Francisco and displays a succession of congas, from a sixty-five-year-old Cuban drum to the early Latin Percussion models to the modern-day *Peraza* model that LP is now touting. He arranges four drums in front of him and becomes an instant groove, rising up off his seat, his hands and fingers a blur of righteous rhythm.



**RT:** I hear that you were a baseball player before you were a percussionist.

**AP:** I was a natural baseball player. You see, I didn't want to be a musician, because the other musicians, they played after-hours. Most of them got sick with tuberculosis. I didn't want to be a musician.

**RT:** You saw a lot of that?

**AP:** I did. You see, I was mostly moving myself into a sport. Baseball was my love; I know baseball as much as anybody you can mention. But physically I was at a disadvantage because the people I was playing with were bigger than me. But baseball is your mind. To be able to play with all these guys you have to have a psychology.

My neighborhood in Havana was incredible in baseball. We produced a lot of good athletes, people who play for different teams in the United States. The shortstop that plays for the Mets [Rey Ordonez] is from my neighborhood. I remember one guy I used to play with,

**"Santana offered something to the world. I opened a lot of things with that group—and that gig made life secure for me."**

this incredible baseball player they used to call "El Loco" Ruiz. His brother Alberto used to have a band called Kubavana. One day I was waiting for a bus, and Alberto said to me, "Armando, I need a conga player." I said, "You need a conga player? I am a conga player." He said, "No man, you play baseball with my brother." I said, "I am the conga player, man." I went and bought a conga for six dollars, and I learned to play with Kubavana, one of the best groups in my country concerning Cuban music.

As I was learning my way to play with these guys, the main thing was to keep good time. Sometimes the riff was coming and I couldn't play it, but I was keep-



ing good time. They saw that I was responsible, that I didn't drink, that I didn't smoke, and they kept me in the band. Then the bongo player wanted to leave the band, and Alberto said, "Armando, we need a bongo player," and I said, "I am the bongo player." So Patato Valdez was brought into the band [on congas] and we made a good combination.

I met Mongo [Santamaria], and he introduced me to playing on the radio. Then I started to replace Mongo in Chano Pozo's group Conjunto Azul, and we got to be very good friends.

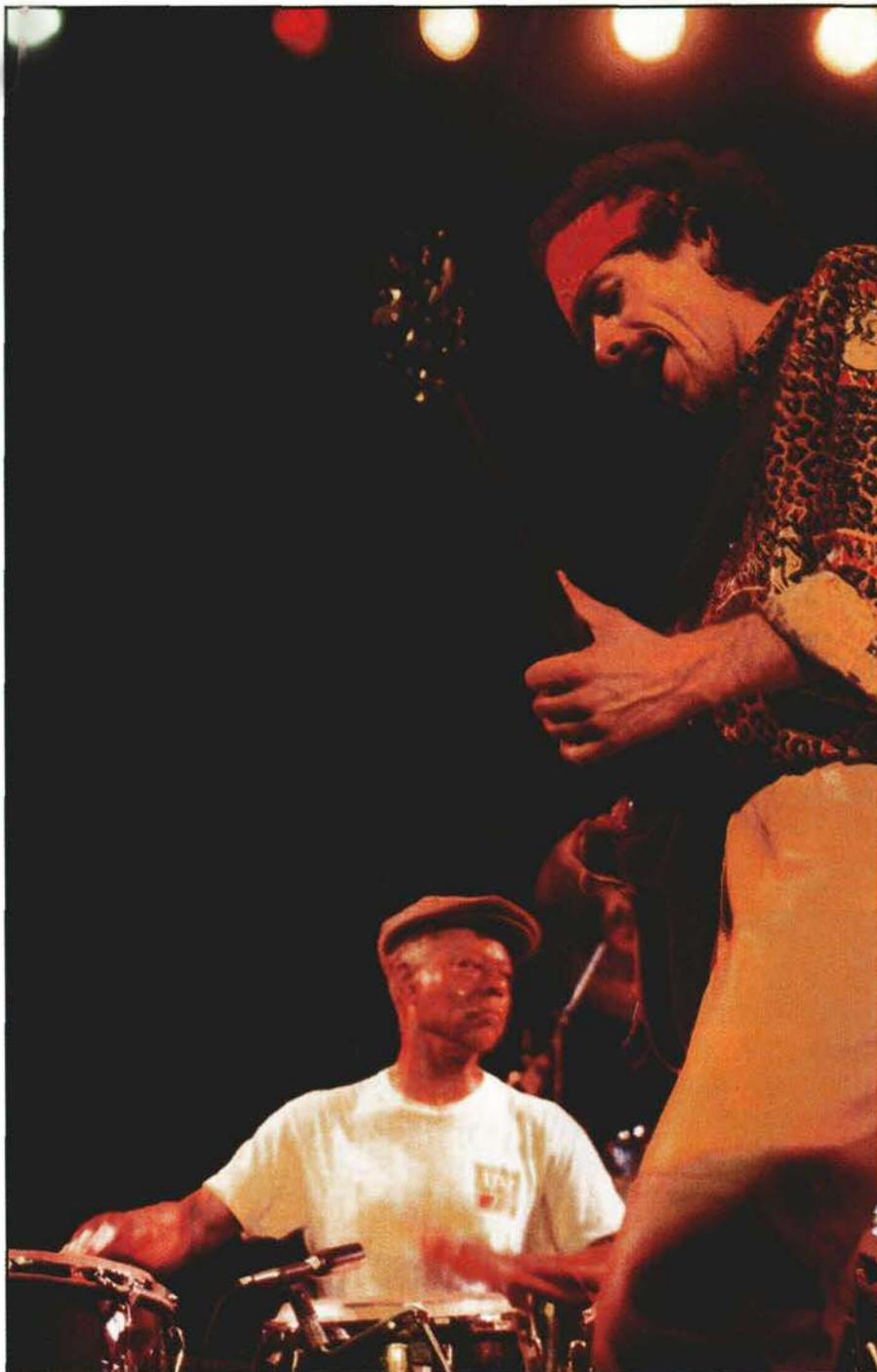
**RT:** Did you first come to the United States with Mongo?

**AP:** Mongo was playing with a review called The Cuban Black Diamonds, and Mongo and I came to New York with that review. We played at a club called the Havana Madrid, at 51 Broadway, and at the Spanish Theatre. We did not all get along together in that revue, and everybody went their different ways.

An artist named Slim Gaillard hired Mongo and me to play with him at the Apollo Theatre. At that time Mongo had to go to Cuba to get his residency papers. I didn't have residency papers myself because at that time I didn't have anybody to sponsor me. I played with Slim Gaillard all over the United States and Canada, and went to San Francisco in 1949. I played with these two guys Manuel Duran and Carlos Durant. At this

**"The main thing with George Shearing and with Santana was we had to move the people. See, you no move the people, you no sell nothing. Am I right?"**

time it was very disappointing—there were two unions, a black union and a white union. I didn't have a chance to play because when they saw the name Armando Peraza, they thought I was



what you call "white Latin." When I wanted to play a job, the union didn't want to give it to me because they thought I was white. But out of all this struggle I had the privilege to play with Cal Tjader. Then they opened Jimbo's Back City, an after-hour club in Japan Town. Slim Gaillard opened the club and then Jimbo hired me to play after hours at his club, and I had the privilege to play with everybody—Ray Charles, Charlie Parker, Chet Baker, Frank Foster. I

played with Art Tatum on Fillmore Street at a place called the Lone Bar. I played with all these guys.

**RT:** Had you been listening to jazz before in Cuba?

**AP:** A little bit, but I was relating to it here more. I was playing with Dizzy Gillespie, but I didn't continue playing with him because I was playing with Slim Gaillard. Afterwards I left that for Chano Pozo's group because he started the integration of this instrument [con-

gas] in jazz. Then I came to San Francisco and created a group called the Afro-Cubans, and we performed at The Cable Car Village across the street from the train station. When that group played, I remember Rita Hayworth used to come over there—Ricardo Montalban, Errol Flynn, Marion Brando. Then I played with a keyboard and xylophone player named Tony Martina who traveled all over California. With him I played with Art Blakey and a lot of other people. In LA I played with Stan Kenton, and in San Francisco I played with Jerry Garcia and Sly & The Family Stone, and I played gospel music with Merl Saunders. I played and recorded with a guy here named Vernon Alley, who featured Jerome Richardson. I made an album with Cal Tjader called *Ritmos Calientes* for the Fantasy label. And then Mongo [Santamaria] and Willie [Bobo] were coming, because Mongo and Willie used to play with Tito Puente.

**RT:** I heard that your first record date in this country was with Machito's band, with Charlie Parker, Chico O'Farrill, and Buddy Rich. What was that like, going right to a



Peraza (left) with the George Shearing Quintet, circa 1957

record date like that?

**AP:** That was incredible. Buddy Rich was a man who believed that he was the best. No bullshit, [laughs] No kidding. The only person that I can say that could play next to Buddy Rich was Papa Jo Jones. Jo played easy, relaxed, and he was also a warrior. He reached out to the people. He was an artist, and Buddy Rich was like a lion—a hungry lion.

I never went to any conservatory to learn music. I was a natural. And then I played with George Shearing for twelve years. I used to whistle to George Shearing's music and that's the way I wrote my compositions. I made an album with George Shearing called *Latin Escapade*. We were one of the exponents of Latin jazz, or Afro-Cuban jazz.

**RT:** That was one of the first Latin jazz

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Armando (center) with Santana in 1974

groups.

**AP:** Then Machito, George Shearing with Candido, and then myself. And then Cal Tjader. San Francisco created great evolutions of music. Sly & The Family Stone, Santana, The Grateful Dead, The Jefferson Airplane. And the new generation—Santana revolutionized the world. He knew it was a fusion too—Afro-fusion—but he created something of his own. And I had the privilege to participate with all these guys. These guys revolutionized the world.

**RT:** You were in at the beginning of Afro-Cuban jazz and Afro-Cuban rock too.

**AP:** That's right, because before Santana I played with Harvey Mandel. This was the beginning of conga drums in rock 'n' roll music.

Eventually I was a pioneer and traveled all over the world. I saw all the racism that

this country had and I had to face it. George Shearing had to face it too, because he had an integrated group. As soon as we reached Pennsylvania they gave us a ticket all the way to California, because they didn't want to see white musicians and black musicians together. We used to go to Chicago, and the white musicians had to go over to the West Side to get the food for us. That was not a great experience in America. But it's like the first blacks in America to play baseball or basketball—it was another evolution. Today it's easy compared to then. I don't regret anything. Because the injustice, the racial problems we faced, is just stupidity. I believe that good is good and bad is bad. You find good people who are white and black. But I'm sorry that we live in this imbalanced society. Today you see the problem; every-

thing is nationality and color. But music is music, and it doesn't have a color. Music is constant.

**RT:** I saw you jamming at the LP booth at the NAMM show in LA last year with Giovanni Hidalgo.

**AP:** Mother nature made me a survivor, and nobody can stop me. But right now, I don't play much. Not because I can't play. I know I can play. I haven't played for a long time because I have diabetes.

Giovanni is the new generation. But to be Giovanni you have to listen to all the people, and then he's Giovanni. On that day you saw us I didn't play what I can play, because I don't have to prove anything. I'm seventy-four years old. You have to face the reality that the new generation is coming, and I've had the chance that I need.

**RT:** After you started learning congas and bongos, did you ever go back and learn any rudiments?

**AP:** No. I created my own style. I made albums with Carlos Santana, *Caravanserai* and *Welcome*, and everybody bought these albums. I played bongo, I played conga, and people gave me great respect. The good musicians who participated with me have great respect for me. Sometimes you find musicians who feel insecure, feel intimidated by me. I was creating this. And this band of the world, Santana, created music between African and European. It's our music. It's part English, part New Orleans—a mixed society. This is America, am I right? The rhythm is coming

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from Africa, but with the immigration into this part of the world, they created a lot of things. We're all Americans. That's all.

Many musicians criticize Santana, but he offered something to the world. I played with Santana for twenty years. I had some problems that I created, but I don't have any regrets with Santana. I opened a lot of things with that group. And that gig made life secure for me, because of all the touring and the records. I don't have to work, I don't have to be on my knees to anybody.

**RT:** What are your thoughts about playing congas?

**AP:** It's about improvising with me. Sometimes when I sit down I can play things—you can put a drum in a different position and get a different sound. I'm an individual. I like to be me, I don't like to be somebody else. I was one of the first to play four or five congas. I have the articulation, and a lot of variation. I can still play.

**RT:** It's amazing how many tones you can get out of one drum, using fingers and different parts of the drum.

**AP:** I created my own style of playing. I didn't learn from watching someone else. But the first thing you have to do if you want to learn to play is you must begin with one drum. Learn to get all of the different sounds from one drum. You have to really learn to get that high slap sound.

**RT:** Is the high slap a product of where you hit the drum or how hard your fingers are?

**AP:** It's about how hard your fingers are and learning how to apply that touch to the drums. See, this kind of thing is like anything—you have to play with it. You know you lose it. [*Peraza obviously still has it, rattling off a magnificent finger roll*] You know where this comes from? From the tabla. See, if you incorporate all these elements, you know.... [*Armando rattles off some more.*] Just tell them you heard it from me. [laughs]

I played on a session once with Mickey Hart, Zakir Hussain, and Giovanni. Zakir is a genius. He's the tip-top of drumming. He has influenced me too, because when I played bongo, the characteristic of bongo is fingers, and when you hear these tabla masters use their fingers—forget it. So through association you learn something. But it was a gift that I had a rhythmic sense

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with my fingers, because the bongo was like that. Then I integrated it to another level.

**RT:** You were with George Shearing for a long time, and did a lot of writing while with him.

**AP:** If there was ever a musician, George Shearing was it. Classical. Harmonically incredible. I'm serious. George Shearing gave me all the opportunities to express myself.

The main thing with George Shearing and with Santana was we had to move the people. See, you no move the people, you no sell nothing. Am I right? You no sell nothing if you no move anybody. This is the reason I played with George Shearing for so many years, because I respected what he did. He pushed me, and he let me express myself and create things. He showed me where this music came from. There's an album I made with George called *Latin Escapade*. It's incredible—Latin, classical, everything.

**RT:** Have you heard the young drummers coming out of Cuba playing the left-foot clave?

**AP:** That's incredible man, that's another thing, another avenue. Sometimes these young players are good at this kind of thing, but they can't make the music happen. For instance, you can play that with Santana, but you better learn to play the grooves and swing too. But it's beautiful what these young drummers are doing.

**RT:** Your solo record, *Wild Thing*, is very good, with Chick Corea, Sadao Watanabe, and others. How did that record come about?

**AP:** You know how long it took us to make that record? Four hours. I didn't sign anything with that company, they just gave me and the musicians some money. It's available here as an import on CD.

**RT:** It almost has a bit of an acid jazz feel to it too.

**AP:** That's right! I probably could have made more records, but I was never a person who was capable of being a leader. That's not me. No, man. Why would I want to be the leader of all those guys and Chick Corea? We're *all* the leader.



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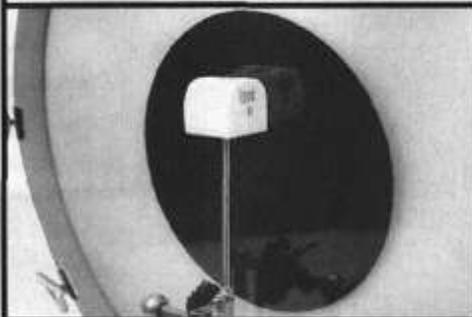
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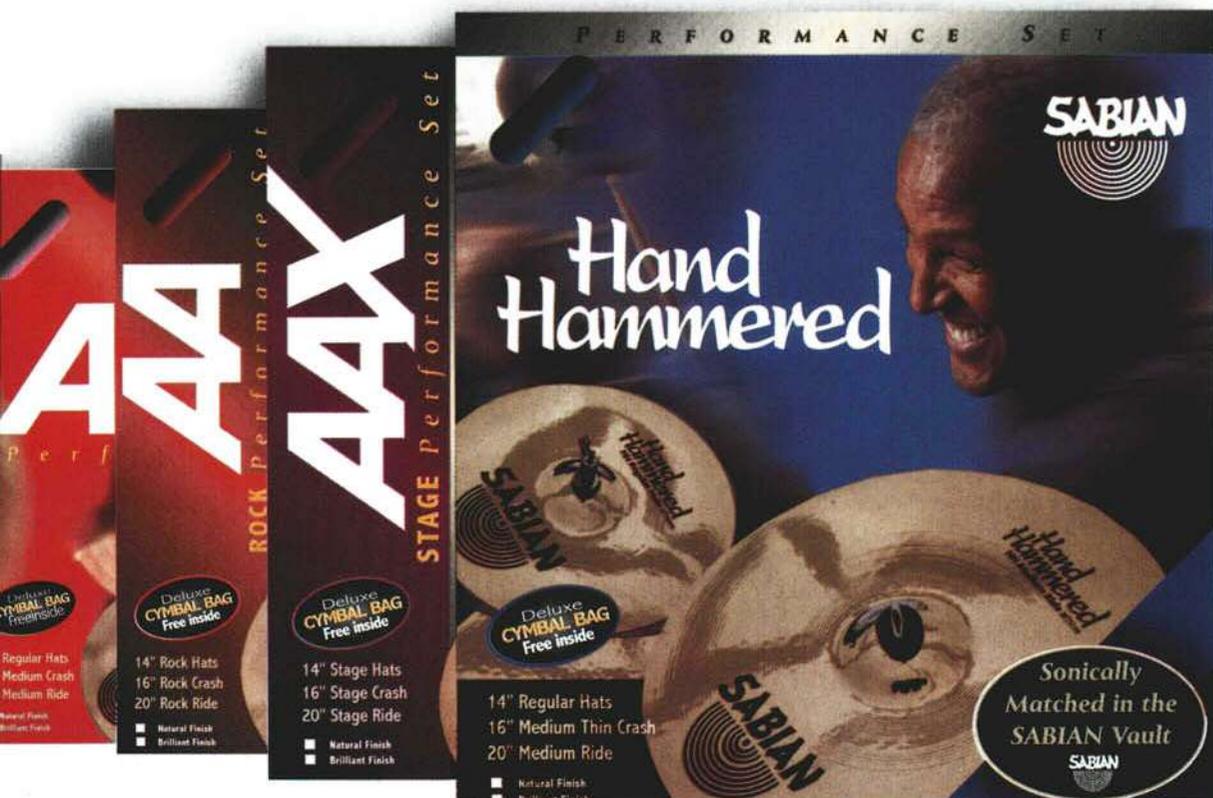


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# The Great Organ Trio Drummers

by Mark Griffith

**T**he one constant in the history of jazz is that it is always evolving, building on itself to create new strains.

In the early 1960s, a popular style called soul jazz was spearheaded by people like Lee Morgan, Herbie Hancock, and Horace Silver, post-boppers who integrated the grooves of R&B into sophisticated jazz performances.

In the late '60s, fusion was introduced by artists like The Tony Williams Lifetime, The Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Weather Report, who appropriated the rhythms and volume of rock and took jazz in bold new directions.

And in the '90s, building upon the rhythmic focus of the '80s rap revolution, Guru, Us3, and a host of others initiated a new take on hip-hop called acid jazz.

The labels assigned to these different styles of music are unimportant. What is of significance is that soul jazz, fusion, and acid jazz were all built upon one common denominator: the *groove* of the great organ groups of the '50s.

In the early '50s organist Wild Bill Davis began fusing rhythm & blues with jazz. *This* is the original fusion, and it is some of the most influential yet unrecognized music ever. Organist Jimmy Smith soon took up the torch, and has since become the most popular purveyor of the Hammond B3 jazz organ. Soon, organ jazz became extremely popular. The groups were small, and the R&B and jazz mix was accessible to the common listener. The organ groups worked around the United States on what

was known as the "chitlin' circuit," where most of the clubs had their own organs. Most large cities had several clubs that featured organ groups, and there weren't many towns that didn't have at least one organ club.

In the organ trios, the organist plays bass lines with his feet, bass notes and chords with his left hand, and the melody (as well as an occasional chord) with his right hand. The second member of these trios is usually a guitarist, who can thankfully play chords and melodies. With the absence of a bassist, the drummer in an organ trio takes on a great responsibility. He is forced to hook up with the organist, who is already splitting his attention between bass lines, chords, and melodies. Therefore, the groove that is traditionally created by a bassist and a drummer is now the sole responsibility of the drummer. A unique situation to be sure.

Young drummers everywhere should hear the famous and influential groove of the great organists and the equally influential organ drummers. As well as influencing soul jazz, jazz fusion, and acid jazz, the "organ groove" inspired thousands of young drummers. A few of those young drummers are now known as the greatest modern drummers in history, such as Mel Lewis, Tony Williams, Steve Gadd, and Vinnie Colaiuta. As students of drumming, we try to dissect the styles of these great drummers. But somehow we forget to investigate *their* influences. With that in mind, let's explore the characteristics that make the organ drummers different, and their strong influence on drummers everywhere.



Tom Coppi

## Chris Columbus

In 1951, when Wild Bill Davis began the first working organ trio, he enlisted a drummer who had already made a name for himself in jazz. Chris Columbus (who was the father of Count Basie's great drummer Sonny Payne) had played with Davis in Louis Jordan's Tympany Five for years. But his drumming in Wild Bill's trio was different. It had the drive and the energy of the larger groups, while keeping the spontaneity and the tight-knit intimacy of a trio.

Columbus was the perfect drummer for Davis's organ trio. His timekeeping had the drive of the bebop drummers and the relaxed feel of the swing drummers. This unique combination began what I will refer to as "the organ drumming pulse." This is what separates organ drummers from other drummers. His soloing was very melodic, and his comping was modern, without the dropping of bombs. Columbus sounded like a combination of Jo Jones, Max Roach, Shadow Wilson, and Art Blakey, although it is important to note that his drumming preceded all of them.

Columbus's groundbreaking organ drumming can be heard on all of the early Wild Bill Davis recordings, including the outstanding *At Birdland*. Chris Columbus is a very important drummer, and the father of organ drumming. His drumming built a necessary bridge between swing and bebop.

## Art Blakey

Jimmy Smith is known as one of the fathers of the jazz organ, and in Jimmy's early days he often recorded with Art Blakey. Blakey was one of the only bebop drummers who was also an organ drumming master.

One of Blakey's trademarks was his strong shuffle playing. This deceptively difficult groove is deeply rooted in the organ trio tradition. The shuffle also permeated Blakey's straight-ahead jazz playing to the point where whenever Blakey played medium-tempo swing, the shuffle feel was present.

Art Blakey's ride cymbal playing took a different shape when he played with an organist. His ride cymbal patterns had a stronger quarter-note feel to them, as opposed to the traditional jazz ride cymbal pattern. Blakey also played a heavy hi-hat on 2

and 4, and feathered the bass drum a little harder when he was playing with an organist, something that has become part of the organ drumming tradition. In fact, in the organ world this accentuation of the 2 and 4 has a name: It's called "the hump."

Blakey and Smith recorded some fabulous drum and organ duets, making it clear that when a great organist and a true organ drummer collaborate, you actually do have a complete band. Their larger group recordings are equally amazing.

## Donald Bailey

In the late '50s and '60s the drummer who played with Jimmy Smith the most was Donald Bailey. Bailey's drumming was lighter than Blakey's. His ride cymbal patterns conformed to the quarter-note-oriented pattern, but his comping style leaned more toward bebop. Bailey's ride cymbal was very high-pitched, and this clarity let everyone know exactly where the time was. Like Blakey, Donald Bailey's bass drum also helped solidify the time; it was played in perfect synchronization with his ride cymbal's quarter-note pulse. Bailey's drumming was always "dead in the middle" of the beat. He was one of the only drummers who could play dead-center time consistently and make it feel good.

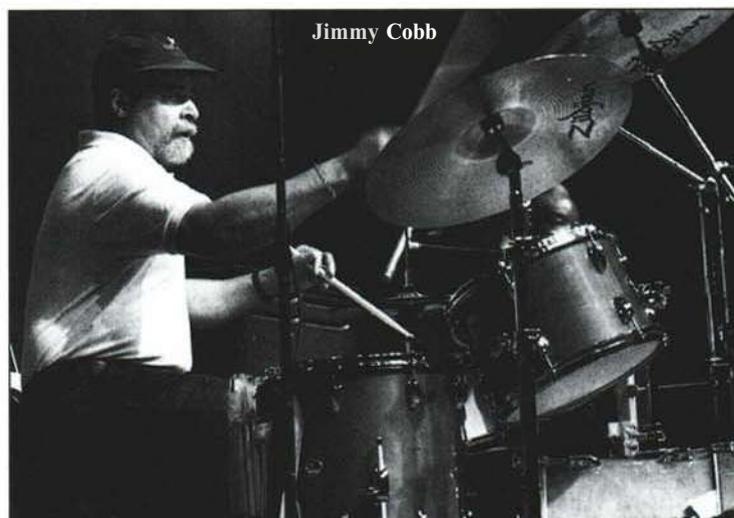
Donald and Jimmy worked and recorded together quite often. Their familiarity with each other's playing and their strong time feel created the signature "freight train quarter-note pulse" that made the early organ groups famous.

Bailey can be heard on most of the Jimmy Smith Blue Note recordings, but *Open House/Plain Talk* is especially good. Both Blakey's and Bailey's drumming can be heard on the Mosaic box set *The Complete February 1957 Sessions*. Bailey is still playing as strong as ever.

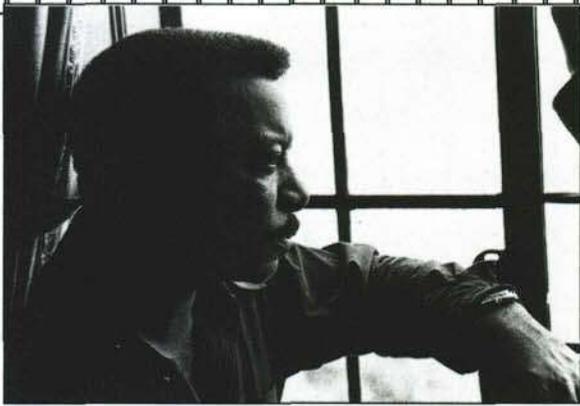
## Ben Dixon

Known mainly for his work with organists Big John Patton and Baby Face Willette, saxophonist Lou Donaldson, and guitarist Grant Green, Ben Dixon is one of the most basic yet essential of the great organ drummers. Dixon's loose and bluesy time feel is very popular among organists young and old. His dark sound blends well with the dark tones of the organ. Dixon's heavy quarter-note feel is wide, but propulsive.

Dixon has a unique comping style: He uses his bass drum a



Lissa Wales



Grady Tate

great deal. Where many bebop drummers comped between their snare and bass drums, and the organ drummers before Dixon were feathering their bass drums, Ben plays syncopated accents with his bass drum alone. He can do this because of the strength of his slinky ride cymbal pulse.

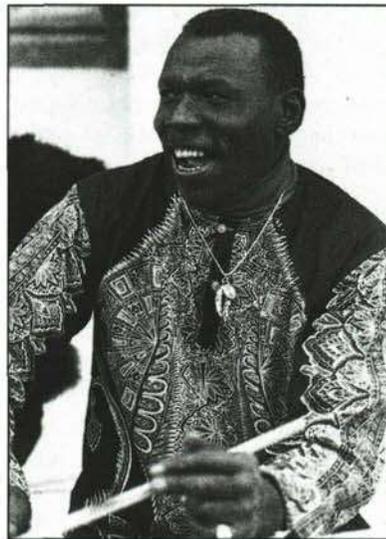
Ben Dixon laid the groundwork for playing strong but loose time with an organist. Dixon's unwavering drumming is known as being steady, grounded, and sure. Check him out on John Patton's wonderful *Along Came John*.

## Joe Dukes

Joe Dukes, a native of Memphis, hit the scene with organist Jack McDuff in the early '60s. McDuff is one of the premier jazz organists, and Dukes was a truly amazing drummer. In fact, he was the drummer from the organ-drumming genre who influenced Tony Williams the most. Dukes' feature with the McDuff band, "Soulful Drums," is a study in drum melodicism and phrasing. His polyrhythmic thunder on "Screamin'" is played with aggressiveness and attitude.

Dukes was one of the first small-group jazz drummers to use big drums and cymbals. Everything about his drumming was big; he demanded attention when he played. He encompassed everything that made an organ drummer—the shuffles, the strong hi-hat, and an undeniable forward motion and drive.

But Dukes' drumming was also very different. He soloed over vamps, played polymetrically over the traditional organ groove, and played in much longer phrases. Dukes also introduced a "new style" of organ drumming. This style is heard when a drummer has internalized the organ pulse to the extent that he is playing off of that pulse. In these instances the drummer is dancing on top of the group's groove, while still contributing to it. This style of drumming came to the forefront of Dukes' drumming later in his career, when he played with organist Lonnie Smith.



Elvin Jones

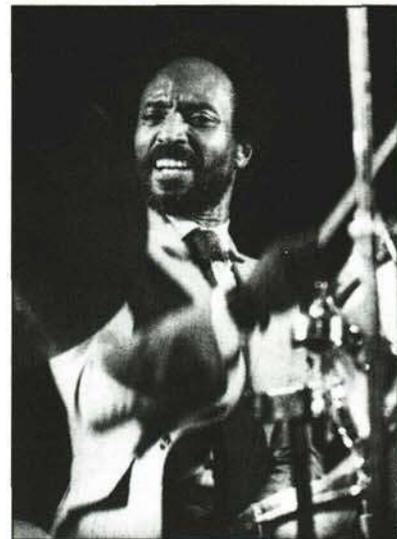
Tom Copi

Joe Dukes had many different sides to his playing. His funk playing could have been taken directly from any of the funkier James Brown recordings, and his medium-tempo playing came directly from the Art Blakey school of swing. Joe's aggressive and spontaneous drumming could be likened to Tony Williams. And all of these sides came out with Lonnie Smith. Words can't describe his drumming on Jack McDuff's *Screamin'* and Lonnie Smith's *Live At The Club Mozambique*. It's some of the most exciting modern drumming ever.

## Billy James

Billy James is possibly the least known of the great organ drummers. James played with organist Don Patterson throughout his career, and the two of them often supported saxophonist Sonny Stitt. Thankfully this outstanding trio is captured on many of Stitt's later recordings for Prestige and Riverside. They provide perfect examples of what was mentioned earlier regarding a "two-man rhythm section."

On any of Stitt's recordings with James and Patterson you have this two-man band supporting a saxophonist, and they don't miss a beat. Check out the recording *Made For Each Other*. James' organ drumming sounds similar to Elvin Jones' more traditional organ drumming, combined with a touch of Blakey. The Blakey influence really shines on the medium-tempo shuffles, where James sounds like the proverbial freight train. In the style of Donald Bailey, Billy James is strong and intense, while pos-



Freddie Waits

sessing a light touch. This is a combination that we can all appreciate as being very difficult.

## Jimmy Cobb

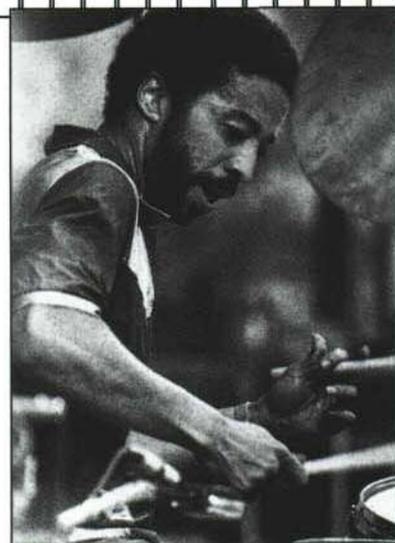
Many guitarists got their start playing with organ groups, and one of them was Wes Montgomery. When Wes made his organ trio recording *Boss Guitar*, he called on drummer Jimmy Cobb. Cobb isn't known as an organ drummer exclusively; still, *Boss Guitar* is an outstanding example of organ drumming.

Upon listening to Cobb's excellent "quarter note heavy" ride cymbal playing on this recording, and comparing it to his many other group outings, you'll discover something quite interesting: There is no difference between his two musical approaches. Jimmy Cobb's supportive drumming shows that the organ approach to drumming is applicable to most jazz styles, and is not an entity unto itself.

Jimmy's drumming is universally referred to as being "comfortable." This comfort is found in Cobb's driving-yet-relaxed ride playing, and his succinct yet inspiring comping skills. Jimmy Cobb may be the best example of a drummer who isn't known as an organ drummer, but has contributed a great deal to the organ style of drumming.



Idris Muhammad



Tony Williams

came to the forefront of the organ drumming tradition. Grady has recorded with most of the great organists, including Wild Bill Davis and Charles Earland. But the recordings made with Jimmy and Wes showed Tate doing the two things he does best—playing with a big band and playing with an organist.

Grady is an excellent big band drummer. While not an expert reader, Tate's incredible listening ability allowed him to react perfectly to the music. Tate is also a masterful brush player. The legato sound of the brushes is perfectly suited for playing with the organ, especially at slower tempos. When Tate recorded Wild Bill Davis's *Flying High*, using mostly brushes, everything was perfect.

Many of the organ masters covered pop tunes. This tradition began on the chillin' circuit, when the organ groups were playing for audiences that included rhythm & blues and pop music fans. This trend required organ drummers to play straight-8th-note grooves as well as swing. Grady Tate's relaxed swing is equaled by his relaxed and outstanding straight-8th playing.

Tate's big band and organ drumming is perfectly suited for the legendary recording *Jimmy & Wes—The Dynamic Duo*, and his flair for playing in small organ groups is featured on Jimmy Smith's *Organ Grinder Swing* and Jack McDuff's top-flight *The Re-entry*.

## Grady Tate

Although he was playing drums in Wild Bill Davis's group in the late '50s, it wasn't until he played on Wes Montgomery's collaborations with Jimmy Smith that Grady Tate

## Elvin Jones

In 1964, the powerful duo of organist Larry Young and Elvin Jones united for a number of legendary recording sessions featuring many different-sized groups. And while Elvin is not usually referred to as an organ drummer, he is outstanding in this capacity.

With an organist, Elvin played much differently from the polyrhythmic excursions he invented in the powerhouse collective



Bernard Purdie

known as The John Coltrane Quartet. For students who are just checking out Elvin's drumming, the playing that he did with Larry Young is an excellent place to start, since it's simpler in concept. When Jones and Young played together, Elvin's time feel was more controlled and the beat wasn't quite as expansive.

Listen to the outstanding duet take of "Monk's Dream" on Larry Young's amazing *Unity* album. While listening to this recording, focus on the rhythm section, as Larry and Elvin back horn soloists Joe Henderson and Woody Shaw; there is a lot to be learned. For a more recent example of Elvin in this context, listen to John McLaughlin's *After The Rain* album.

## Eddie Gladden

Another great organ drummer who played with Larry Young was Eddie Gladden. Gladden's drumming sounds like a stripped-down version of Elvin's brash organ drumming approach. Both Jones and Gladden are featured with Larry Young on the Mosaic box set *The Complete Larry Young On Blue Note*.

Gladden is another drummer who brought the organ approach of drumming to every drumming situation he was in, including his work on Dexter Gordon's amazing recordings *Live At The Keystone Vols. 1-3*. His organ drumming background enhanced and grounded everything he played, and it made him stand out from the other jazz drummers of the late '60s and '70s. Listen to his recent drumming on

Big John Patton's *Blue Planet Man*, featuring John Zorn. Gladden is one of the great "unknown" organ drummers.

## Jimmy Lovelace

Many people forget that when George Benson was first discovered, he was playing guitar in the band of organist Jack McDuff. Naturally, when Benson first recorded under his own name, he recorded with his own organ group. This group first included the great drummer Jimmy Lovelace, who had previously played with Wes Montgomery's quartet.

Jimmy Lovelace's minimal movement behind the drumset must be seen to be believed, as he creates tons of musical forward motion while expending an incredibly small amount of physical motion. Lovelace brings a lighthanded approach, but still gets a big sound. He is also one of the masters of playing the "boogaloo bossa nova" that was popular in the mid-'60s, as well as a master brush player. Listen to Jimmy play "Willow Weep For Me," from George Benson's outstanding *It's Uptown*, on which his brush playing is as propulsive as his stick playing.

## Freddie Waits

Freddie Waits was a unique drummer. Though Waits played with Wild Bill Davis and later with Don Patterson, because of his great body of work outside the genre, he may not be remembered as an organ drummer. But he is one of the few who continued the "new" style of organ drum-

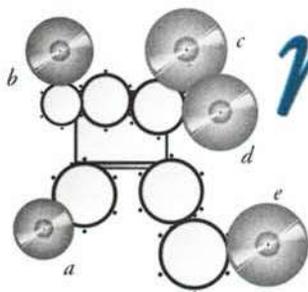
ming of absorbing a freer piano-trio approach. While Joe Dukes and Elvin Jones freed the organ drumming tradition, Waits took this freedom in another direction.

In this newer approach, the drummer plays off the groove and provides less of the foundation, so the other members must provide more bottom. This approach is not what is traditionally called organ drumming. It is, however, a descendent of the traditional organ approach. This "new organ tradition" influenced all of Waits' later non-organ playing. Hear Freddie playing in this new style on Wild Bill Davis's *Live At Count Basie's* and on Don Patterson's *Genius Of The B3*.

## Tony Williams

When Tony Williams left Miles Davis and recorded with his own group, he chose to do it in the organ trio format called *Lifetime*, with Larry Young and John McLaughlin. This choice was no coincidence. Tony had already heard the organ groups of Johnny "Hammond" Smith, Jack McDuff, and Jimmy Smith. In fact, it was while sitting in with these groups that Tony got his first playing experiences—which should give us all the proper inspiration to investigate this important style of drumming.

Tony's propulsive drumming centered around the drive of his ride cymbal. However, in *Lifetime*, Tony's hi-hat "wash" took on his ride cymbal's characteristics, and the interplay between his ride



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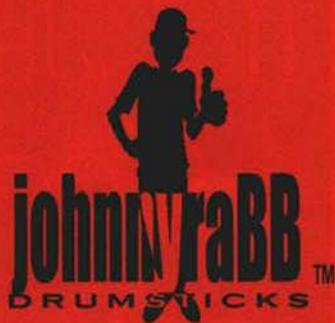
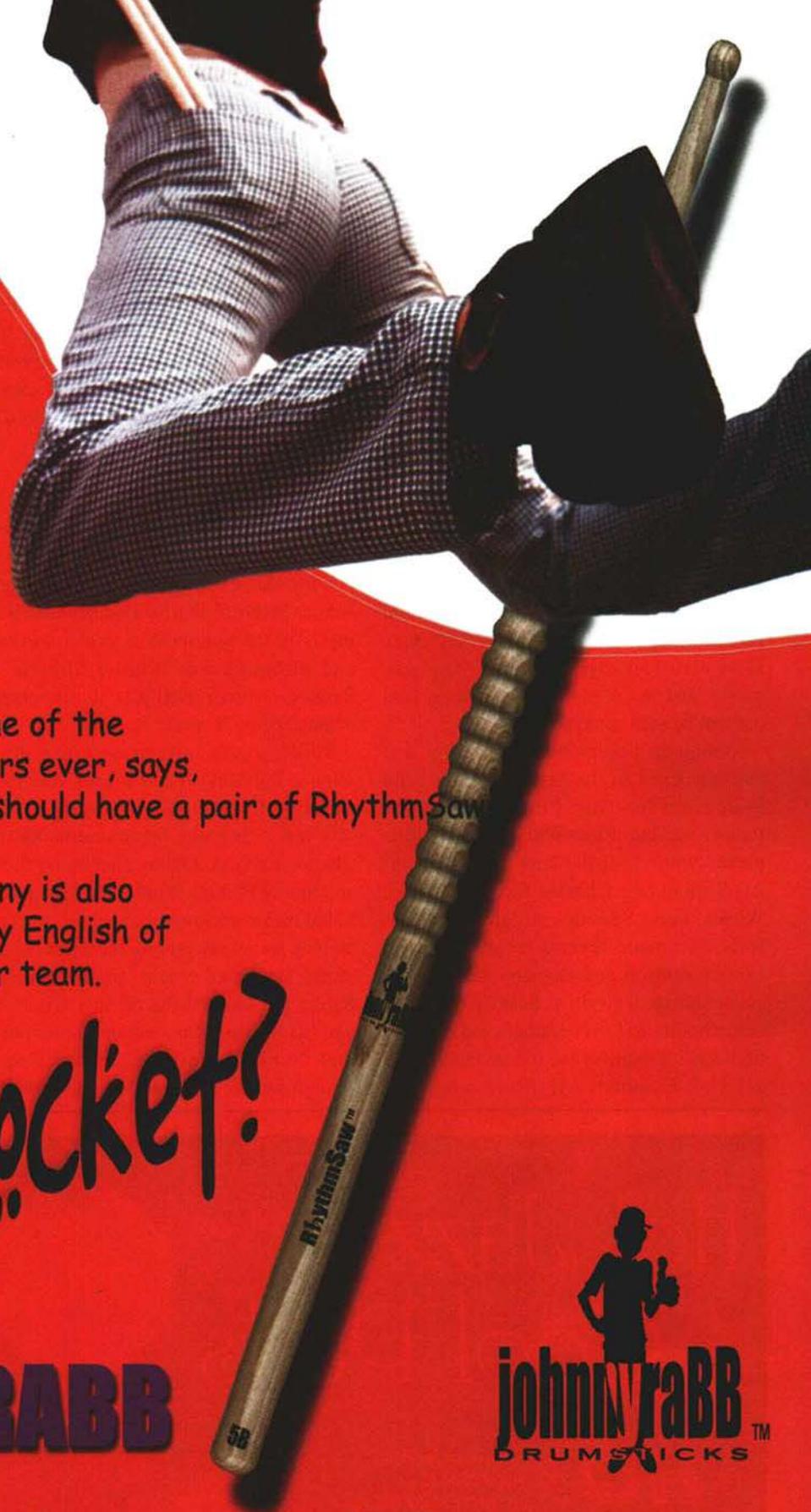
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cymbal and bass drum increased. Tony's playing here was the epitome of the "new" style of organ drumming. His hi-hat and the organist's bass lines formed a strong groove that Tony played off of. This is definitely the style of organ drumming foreshadowed by Freddie Waits, Joe Dukes, and Elvin Jones. Not only was Tony Williams a great jazz and fusion drummer, he was an outstanding organ drummer.

## Idris Muhammad

Idris Muhammad is one of the most important organ drummers ever. Muhammad began his drumming career in New Orleans, and later became one of the house Motown drummers. He brought an authentic approach of rhythm & blues drumming to the tradition of organ drumming, and his New Orleans background provided an authentically funky approach. Idris also had experience playing pop music, and the organists would soon find out that he sure could swing too.

Muhammad combined everything that had happened in the organ tradition, and aside from Joe Dukes there was no one funkier playing drums with organists. Idris played with all of the later "funky organists," including Charles Earland, Ruben Wilson, Lonnie Smith, and Sonny Phillips. Idris also made several recordings with Lou Donaldson and Houston Person, two saxophonists who drew heavily upon the organ tradition. Idris continues today as the first-call for many organ tribute bands such as The Essence All Stars and The

Chartbusters.

Like Jimmy Cobb and Eddie Gladden, Muhammad is a prime example of a drummer who has taken what he has learned from the organ tradition and applied it to the rest of his drumming. His ride cymbal playing has a strong quarter-note pulse, and his time is precise. Organ drumming stresses the essentials of good drumming: time, pulse, and groove, and you can hear Idris Muhammad demonstrating these essentials and more on Charles Earland's classic *Black Talk!* and Lou Donaldson's *Hot Dog* and *The Scorpion*.

## Bernard Purdie

Bernard Purdie has worked with popular organist Johnny Hammond Smith, saxophonist Hank Crawford, and living legend Jimmy McGriff. Purdie's ride cymbal playing is in the quarter-note organ tradition, and although his "Purdie Shuffle" is famous, his traditional jazz shuffle playing is outstanding as well.

Purdie's jazz-influenced organ drumming is lighthanded and sounds very influenced by Donald Bailey. Specifically, his '60s and '70s funky organ drumming with Charles Earland, Johnny Hammond Smith, and Sonny Phillips is unique: His signature hi-hat barks, sticking-oriented grooves, and bouncy sound are among the most popular in the "acid jazz" world, and rightfully so. Purdie has brought the organ's legato feel into his funk playing, and often reminds us that "funky" doesn't necessarily mean "complicated." Listen to Johnny Hammond

Smith's *Soul Talk* and Jimmy McGriff & Hank Crawford's new *Road Tested* for proof.

Purdie is hardly an unsung legend, but his organ background is the key behind his funkier playing with everyone from Steely Dan to Aretha Franklin. The next time you're wondering where Bernard came up with such a snaky groove for a pop hit, remember that he helped write the book on snaky grooves playing in the organ groups of the late '60s and '70s.

## Bobby Ward

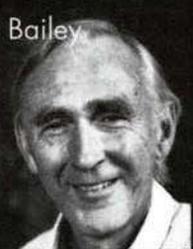
Organist Groove Holmes is an organ trio legend. At the beginning of his career he was associated with a great West Coast organ drummer, Lawrence Marable. Holmes also recorded with drummer Leroy Henderson.

However, at the end of his career, Holmes employed an unknown phenom. Bostonian Bobby Ward's controlled sound, combined with a truly unrelenting drive and stellar technique, is absolutely amazing. His playing is strongly reminiscent of Tony Williams; in fact, Ward and Williams were boyhood acquaintances in Boston, and they had a great deal of influence on each other. Fear not, Ward doesn't sound like a Tony Williams clone, but he does have the same approach to drumming: Williams and Ward are of the same musical mindset.

Bobby can play funky and soulfully, but his uptempo drumming is really happening. Groove Holmes' recording *Broadway* fea-

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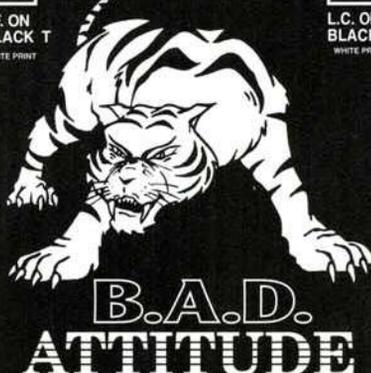
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tures Bobby Ward at his best. You hear the same "Tonyness" when he recorded with saxophonists Bob Mover and Ken McIntyre.

## Cecil Brooks III

Cecil Brooks III's organ drumming can lean towards the new or the old. Either way, he has a long history in the style, and can be heard on recordings by Jack McDuff, Groove Holmes, and Houston Person. Brooks sounds like a combination of Idris Muhammad, Joe Dukes, and Art Blakey. His timekeeping radiates the quarter-note pulse, and his hi-hat never strays from the constant 2 and 4. But when the playing gets looser, as it does on Jack Walrath's *Serious Hang* (with organist Don Pullen), an Elvin and Tony influence sneaks to the surface. Be sure to check out Brooks on Groove Holmes' *Blues All Day Long* and Jack McDuff's *Another Good'un*.

## Today's Organ Trios

The long history of the organ trio has not ended. Today there are several bandleaders employing the tradition. In these bands, many established drummers are joining the lineage of organ drummers. Quite a few of these drummers were already great before they accepted the challenge of playing with the organ; now they are mastering the fine art and reaping the rewards of playing with an organist.

Lonnie Smith has recently made several organ trio recordings with John Abercrombie and Marvin "Smitty" Smith. This Lifetime-influenced organ trio is picking up close to where Williams' group left off. Lonnie Smith's pulse is still as strong as ever, and Smitty's whirlwind drumming has taken on several organ drumming attributes.

John Abercrombie himself has also begun to employ the organ tradition in his own band with organist Dan Wall and drummer Adam Nussbaum. Everyone in this trio is feeding off of the traditional organ groove—without actually playing it. Nussbaum floats above the implied groove that Wall lays down, and with a tumbling style singlehandedly creates a springy cushion from which Abercrombie and Wall launch.

John McLaughlin has also been employing the organ trio concept, with Joey

DeFrancesco and Dennis Chambers. Chambers' ride playing has benefited greatly from the legato feel of the organ, and has become very quarter-note-influenced and far more propulsive than it has previously been in the jazz context. Lifetime alumnus McLaughlin is also carrying on the Lifetime style of playing. Listen to his *The Free Spirits Live In Tokyo* with Chambers, and *After The Rain* with Elvin Jones. Chambers has also played and recorded extensively with organist Barbara Dennerlein.

Larry Goldings is one of a very few young organists, and his trio playing with Peter Bernstein and Bill Stewart on the albums *Light Blue* and *Big Stuff* is outstanding. This longstanding group is keeping the traditional style of the organ trio very fresh, as was seen at the Modern Drummer Festival in 1997. The traditional organ trio may also be a key to Stewart's creative and propulsive drumming. Listen to his organ drumming with Maceo Parker on Parker's *Roots Revisited* and *Mo' Roots* releases for proof.

Organ legend Mel Rhyne is still playing, and he is usually found with drummer Kenny Washington. Kenny is a good traditional organ drummer, sounding like a cross between Donald Bailey and Art Blakey. Also check out drummer Greg Bandy, a fine organ drummer who can be heard with many of the contemporary organ legends, as well as with saxophonist Gary Bartz. Don Williams, Jimmy McGriff's current touring drummer, is also one of the top organ drummers. He may not be as well known as the rest of them, but his powerful drumming ranks with the best.

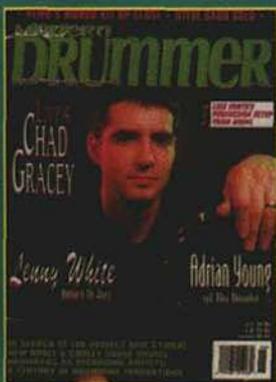
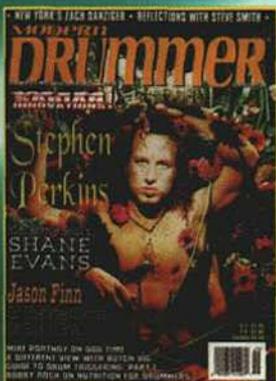
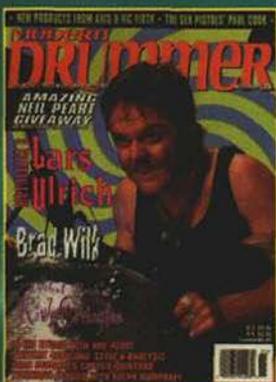
## The Tradition Is Alive And Well

Steve Gadd once said, "There would be more great drummers today if more young drummers got the experience of playing with an organist!" Before you play with an organist, do some listening and find out what organ drumming really sounds and feels like. Then go out and get the experience that many of the pros have gotten. Sit in with an organ group. In the process you may or may not become "an organ drummer," but your playing will certainly be the better for it.



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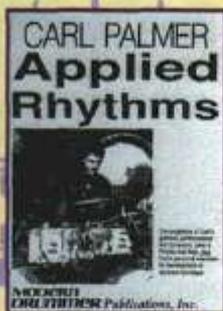
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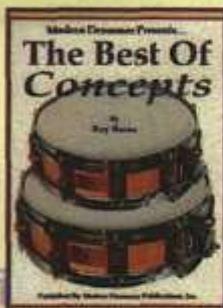
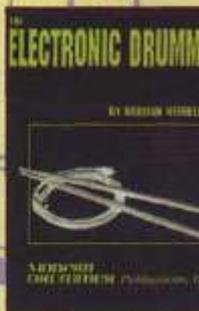
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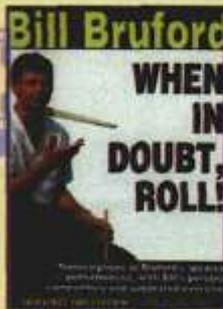
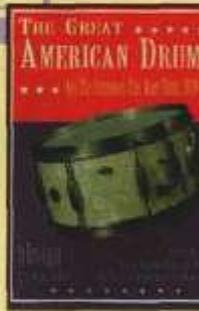
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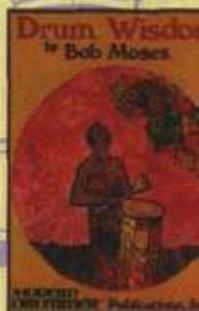
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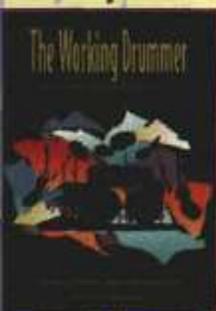
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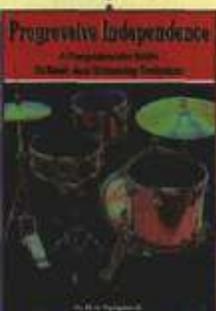
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# Indian Adventures

by Pete Lockett

**MUSIC KEY**

T.T.	
S.D.	
F.T.	
B.D.	
H.H.	
w/foot	

One of the great subtleties of Indian rhythms is the illusory aspect of certain grooves. The performer can actually mislead the listener into mistaking a syncopated cross pattern for the actual basic pulse itself. This can be strikingly effective when you hear a skilled South Indian mridangist performing solo accompanied only by hand bells or a clapping cycle. Quite often, the syncopations can go so far away from the basic pulse that it is difficult to detect a correlation between the two.

Part of the reason these rhythmic skills become so ingrained in the Indian percussionist is because of the way the rhythms are learned in the first place. All rhythmic compositions are recited phonetically while the basic pulse is clapped underneath at the same time. Then the rhythms are played while someone else claps. This deepens the understanding of the cross-rhythmic structure and gives you more freedom to improvise within the contours of the syncopated rhythm. It is an amazingly useful tool for really getting inside rhythms and working on possible ambiguities and then applying that knowledge to your instrument.

We will begin by clapping a basic five-beat cycle called "khandajhapu." The "x" indication located on the first space is the clap, the triangle is a wave. (The waves can be looked at as silent claps played in the air. You could clap instead.) This cycle of claps and waves is our metronome and time-maker.

**1**

Next we will speak a five-beat phonetic unit while we clap.

**2**

Speak: ta ka ta ki ta

Clap:

Now it's time to recite the full composition phonetically. While keeping the basic 5/4 clapping cycle solid, we time-shift the five-beat phonetic unit to create "syncopated meters" over the top. It becomes a "times table" of rhythmic units, developing from the half-note level at the top, through quarter-note triplets, quarter notes, 8th-note triplets, 8th notes, 16th-note triplets, and 16th notes. I've indicated each five-beat unit with a line over the top.

**3**

ta ka ta ki ta

Now we can look at some possible applications of this on the drumkit. First, the clapping cycle will be represented by the feet and the phonetic unit by a sticking pattern.

**4**

R L R L L

Now we will orchestrate this around the kit.

**5**

R L R L L

The whole pattern for kit, with time shifts, will look like this.

**6**

R L R L L

R L R L L

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

R L R L L R L R L L

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

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

Having gotten this far, why not try the same with this seven-beat clapping cycle (called "misra jhapu").

7 ta ki ta ta ka di me

Finally, try orchestrating it on the kit like this and working through the time shifts as in example 3.

8 R L L R L R L

*Pete Lockett is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists currently working in the UK. He has recorded and/or toured with Bjork, Kula Shaker, Bill Bruford, Vanessa-Mae, David Toop, Gary Husband, Eumir Deodato, and Joji Hirota.*



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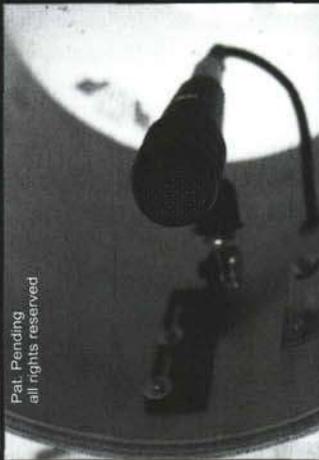
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# Blues Drumming Basics

by Ted Bonar



Just about every bit of rock 'n' roll drumming began with a blues rhythm and a blues beat. At the outset of rock 'n' roll in the early '50s, blues drummers laid the foundation for what would become the prototypical rock drum beat. The heavy downbeat of "1" and "3" on the bass drum combined with a snapping backbeat of "2" and "4" on the snare had been around for years in juke joints, big band dance halls, and gospel churches in one variation or another, but it was the blues drummers who brought this powerful beat to rock 'n' roll.

Blues beats have been a mainstay of all drummers' vocabularies ever since. From the rock of Little Richard, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, The Who, and The Kinks; the jazz of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and Dizzy Gillespie; the R&B of Ray Charles and Al Green; the country of Hank Williams and George Jones; and the folk/rock genius of Bob Dylan, the blues has infused and influenced it all.

Consequently, drummers today must be able to have a basic knowledge of the pure and true blues beats in order to have a complete understanding of what the genre has done for modern music. To be a versatile drummer today, one must be ready at any moment to react to a bandleader's request for a "twelve-bar shuffle" or a "Jimmy Reed groove." Sometimes a drummer will be asked to play a "funk blues" or a "slow 12/8." So just what do these different grooves sound like, and how should a drummer approach them? Let's take a look.

## The Shuffle

This is certainly the most basic and common of all blues beats. (It's usually performed at a tempo range of quarter note = 120-140.) There are many variations on the following beat:



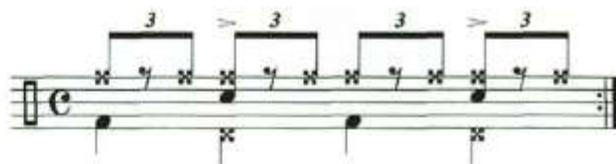
This beat is heard throughout blues, rock, and jazz standards, and is the prototypical beat a drummer would play on such classics as "Hideaway" by Freddie King, or any number of versions of "Sweet Home Chicago." The cymbal and snare play a "double shuffle" by playing identical parts, while the bass drum locks everything down with a four-on-the-floor pattern.

It is easy to fall into a trap of shuffling the bass drum as well as the cymbal and snare, which makes the groove too heavy and plodding. This beat is commonly played with a nice, tight, crisp feel, and too much bass drum can overpower that feel. The bass

drum can shuffle every now and then, but its primary purpose should be to complement the bass guitar (which will commonly "walk" on quarter notes in a shuffle) so that there is a solid foundation for the song.

The accent pattern for the hands is extremely important in order to bring out the backbeat on 2 and 4, and you've got to develop a great left hand to play this beat all night or at high tempos.

In order to develop the feel of this pattern, it can be simplified with one type of "Chicago Shuffle," which de-emphasizes the snare shuffle (although only slightly) in order to emphasize the snare backbeat even further:



This beat is a more powerful, "rock" shuffle. Note that while the snare drum is simplified to a basic backbeat, the bass drum also is simplified to the point of emphasizing the downbeats of 1 and 3. Although this version is commonly played and easier to master, the true basic shuffle (our first example) should be mastered and the left hand developed to fully internalize the special feel of the shuffle groove.

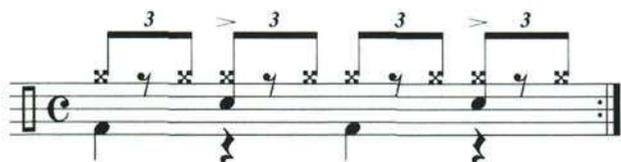
The following pattern is the advanced version, where the shuffle is played exclusively by the snare drum while the ride cymbal and bass drum crank out quarter notes. This groove will feel backwards for standard right-handed drummers, as the left hand is essentially the one doing the "riding."



## Jimmy Reed Groove

One variation of the shuffle—the Jimmy Reed Groove—is similar to the Chicago Groove discussed above. The big differences are the dynamics, tempo (performed at approximately 90 bpm), and the fact that this groove is primarily played on the hi-hat—a seemingly subtle difference, yet one that changes the feel completely.

Jimmy Reed was primarily a singer and harp player noted for his laid-back, relaxed style, epitomized on the blues classic "Bright Lights, Big City." On this song, as with many other Jimmy Reed tunes, the entire feel is extremely laid-back, with a moderate volume and middle-to-slow tempo:



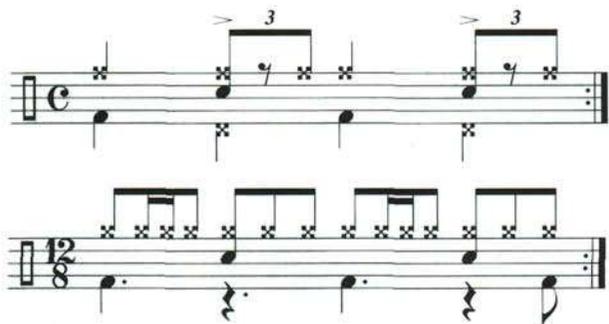
Another Jimmy Reed groove can also be referred to generically as a "12/8 feel." The difference is that rather than playing a shuffle pattern, the hi-hat now plays every partial of the triplet. As such, it is commonly written in a 12/8 time signature:



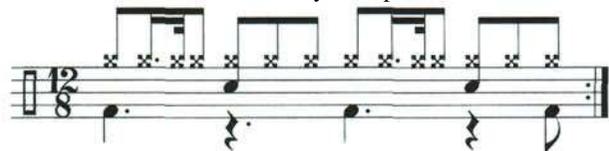
These grooves are not physically difficult to play due to their moderate tempos, but the appropriate feel *is* difficult to master. They are typically played "in back of" the beat—but they shouldn't drag. Being completely relaxed is key, and conquering this relaxed feel should be considered a major accomplishment.

### Slow Blues

Playing a slow blues is not just a physical challenge, it is very definitely a mental one as well! In addition to the Jimmy Reed Grooves above (which can be easily slowed down to be used in ballads), a few different slow grooves are represented below. (These are usually performed at a tempo range of 70-90 bpm.)



Both of the patterns provided here are extremely basic and not difficult to learn. A more advanced cymbal pattern could be:



When should a drummer use the above patterns? Well, there are no hard and fast rules for or against any of these grooves while playing. But the drummer does need to keep his ears wide open and must listen for what the bass player is doing, the phrasing of the vocals, the intensity of a guitar solo, etc., and choose what he feels is the most appropriate approach. Also, it is not uncommon to use many patterns in the same song. Blues drumming, especially slow blues, is extremely conversational, and the drummer must always be prepared to put the perfect groove with the song.

Your job is to play these grooves with a great feel while complementing the music around you. One of the biggest challenges in playing these simple grooves slowly is getting used to how much space you actually hear. These grooves employ wide-open drum patterns, which tempt a drummer to do two things: 1) speed up, or

2) fill up the space with notes on the drums.

Both of those temptations spell disaster for the blues drummer. The first issue is fairly obvious: If a drummer speeds up a slow blues, it is no longer a slow blues! As easy as that is to say, it is much more difficult to learn how to "hold back" while playing a slow blues. It is also vitally important *not* to fill up all the space with extra notes and fills. While exciting fills and triplet rolls are appropriate at the end of a solo or while interacting with another member of the band, it is easy to overplay on a slow blues, and it's very important to hold back.

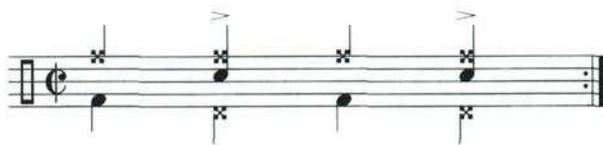
Slow blues requires a special feel and great patience from the drummer, and this can be heard on any number of classic recordings by Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, or B.B. King. B.B. King's classic *Live At The Regal* album and Muddy Waters' *Live At Newport* both feature numerous outstanding slow blues performances.

### Cut Time

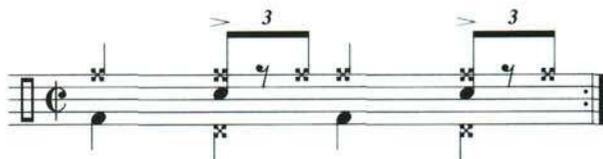
Now it's time to have some *real* fun! This is the ultimate party beat (played at a brisk tempo of around half note = 140 and above), best heard on the classic song "Got My Mojo Working" made famous by the venerable Muddy Waters. Some basic versions of this groove:



This beat is also known as a "train beat," for obvious reasons. The "train beat" should be played with alternate sticking. You can also play cut-time blues on the ride cymbal:



or



Note that the metronome markings in these examples are based on half notes rather than quarter notes. These beats are up-tempo grooves, and must have the "two" feel that is inherent in cut time.

The above two beats are often used during the same song for dynamic effect. The first of the two, for instance, can be used during the intro, the first few verses, and the choruses, and the second example would typically kick in during a guitar solo or extended choruses. This type of conversational drumming helps create the excitement so important to live blues by setting up a killer groove for a song, and putting the music into "overdrive." This puts everyone in the audience on the edge of their seat just a little bit more by the end of a song.

### Funk Blues

One of the most often played grooves is also the one with the most variations. The funk blues beat is really a marriage of a

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straight rock 2 and 4 backbeat and a James Brown-type syncopated groove. This is a basic yet complicated beat: basic because the drummer needs to lay down a backbeat on the snare drum, and complicated because the bass drum must complement virtually any complex rhythm laid down by the bass player. A common funk blues beat would be:



Of course, the bass drum must be able to be played on any number of 16th-note syncopations. Quite often these beats are embellished with "ghosted notes" on the snare drum, which creates a slick, steady groove. The study of ghosted notes is an extensive, advanced exercise that benefits all aspects of drumming. While the application of ghosted notes is too big an issue to tackle here, its importance in this type of groove should be noted and studied.

Most of the examples laid out here are relatively easy to learn physically. However, playing the blues with the proper feel and style is hardly easy to *master*. The blues is a genre of music that has been around literally for hundreds of years in one form or another, and the music has been incredibly well documented since the very beginning of sound recordings earlier this century. Studying the variations of the above patterns by the classic drummers that defined these grooves—Fred Below, S.P. Leary, Odie Payne Jr., Al Jackson Jr., Earl Palmer, and Ray "Killer" Allison, to name a few—is an important process that all young, developing drummers should go through.



# Surgery For Speed!

**"Would You Go Under The Knife If The Doctor Guaranteed You Would Have The Best Chops In The World?"**  
 By Joe Stronsick

How far would you go to get better chops? Well, some drummers are going to extremes, paying big bucks for surgery to get the chops they want!

"Now wait," you might say, "I've heard of getting cosmetic surgery, but surgery to increase drummers speed and endurance, Come On!" It's true but before I explain why drummers are spending big bucks for going under the knife, let me tell you what thousands of drummers are doing as a safer alternative.

It started in 1995. I went to clinics from top drummers like Simon Phillips, Dennis Chambers, and Drum Corp Lines. Wow, can they mesmerize the crowd. Their hands were insane. They told us "to get awesome chops, practice your rudiments on pillows and run your sticks down your forearms and bounce them with your fingers." Well I know I don't have 6 hours a day to beat on my forearms or work on pillows! BUT, I figured if I could put these same exercises into a hand held device that drummers could use while driving or even eating, it would revolutionize practicing! **BOY was I Wrong!** Drummers hated my first 3 designs, and I decided to do something drastic!

### Drummers Test

I got together 278 pro and weekend drummers from around the country. They either bought my Ballistic videos advertised in this magazine, or I teach them personally at clinics. They volunteered to be in my test group. And what happened next was awesome.

First I needed to design a product that let the fingers open and close fully, just like they do when you play behind your set. My first 3 prototypes bombed because they didn't work the fingers. On the 4th prototype, I had it. I put two 6" long (average width of your fingers) 3/8" diameter natural gloss finish Balsam wood together with a black neoprene tubing. So when you bend it, it looks like an A. I put a milled Neoprene foam grip on one of the sticks so it would cradle in your hand to comfortably work your fingers. Next I designed a resistance band that attached to the bottom of the "A" design to let you squeeze the two sticks together with your fingers using the right flexors to

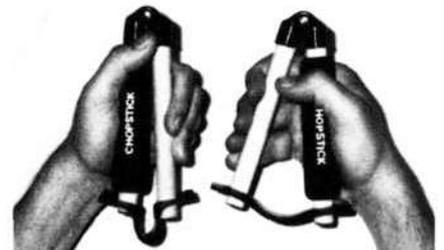
stimulate the slow and fast twitch muscle fibers in your hands. After 7 different tensions, I ended up using an 80 durameter, military grade reflex resistance band that has two settings: 1) Full Grip, Endurance: it pushes out and rebounds back; your fingers get a full range of motion stimulating your slow twitch muscle fibers. 2) Half Grip, Speed: the band pushes into the Chopstick creating a shorter range of motion that works your fast twitch muscles fibers for speed. All 278 drummers who tested this final version accelerated in speed and endurance without spending frustrating hours behind their kits. My goal was complete. I put it on the market in 1997, and during that time thousands are being sold. Here's what they're saying:

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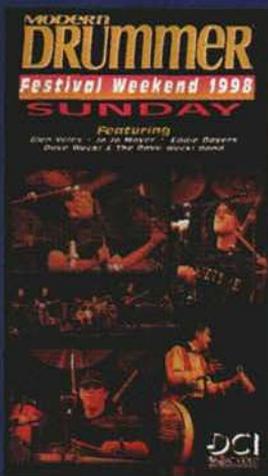
### Back To The Surgery

I receive letters from Drummers who go under the knife to get better chops. They developed Repetitive Strain Injury (tendon problems in the hands) and found it impossible to play. The expensive surgery relieves the pain so they can play again. They now use the Chopstick to get stronger doubles, longer endurance and control with their sticks. They pray you never go under the knife!

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# Making Rudiments Work For You

by John Connell

**M**any drummers do not work on rudiments because they fail to understand how their drumset playing will benefit. They only want to work on things that will make them "better-sounding" musicians. What they do not realize is that rudiments are as essential to a "drumming musician" as scales and chords are to a keyboard player or guitarist, and that the mastery of rudiments will indeed make them "sound better." The tips included in this article will help you use rudiments and rudiment-style exercises to improve both your overall prowess on the kit *and* your net worth with any band you're playing in.

Each drumming rudiment is really just a rhythmic grouping with an assigned sticking pattern. To be quite frank, some sound better than others. Too often, drummers get hung up on specific rudiments they do not like, instead of focusing on the big picture—transferable skills. Here are some ideas to help you get the most out of what rudiments have to offer.

**1) Sit at the kit.** Practice pads are great, and I use mine a lot. But if you want to avoid thinking and sounding like a marching drummer, put your rudiment work in the proper environment: your drumkit.

**2) Work on your balance.** I'm not talking about sitting on your stool. Play an open-ended long roll (LLRR, LLRR, etc.), just nice and steady double bounces. Now look at a clock. Play that roll for five minutes without stopping—and *without* changing your meter. You will learn two things: 1) this is more difficult than it first appears, and 2) the importance of balance between your hands and symmetry in your playing. Try this exercise with any/all of the rudiments to develop a nicer touch. You *will* hear a difference.

**3) Work on your dexterity.** Most of us have a weak limb. All of us would love to be able to play confidently leading with either hand or foot. Rudiments can help us inch ourselves closer to that goal. Once you are comfortable playing a chosen rudiment on your snare drum, start to incorporate the rest of the kit. Try playing each note of the rudiment on a different drum or cymbal. The possible

combinations are endless. At first, keep time with your hi-hat and accent with your kick(s). Then, once you have effectively created a flow or "groove" out of the exercise, lose the consistent time-keeping and start incorporating your feet more. Also, take any rudiment's sticking pattern and break it up between your hands and feet. For example play all "rights" with your feet and all "lefts" with your hands. Have some fun with it! You will be surprised at what you hear.

**4) Improve your time.** Play your rudiments on the drumkit to a metronome, click, or programmed drum loop. Work on each rudiment at various speeds. Do not move on until you have really "locked in" and found the pocket of each tempo.

**5) Develop more passion.** Drums are emotion-evoking instruments. As musicians, we use the drums to create passion in rhythms by adding accents and dynamics. Once you have become comfortable with all of the above-mentioned challenges, go through them again and work on playing them at all different dynamic levels. It's easy to play slow and loud, but try to really crank out a double paradiddle while playing barely above a whisper. And then start using all your drums and all your limbs while continuing to control your dynamics. Suddenly these exercises you first learned in grade school will have taken on a whole new life.

Always remember that one of the beautiful things about playing rudiments is that they are designed to expose your weaknesses. Whether it is an underdeveloped hand, poor time, or lack of dynamic control, it is hard to hide much when playing rudiments on a crisply tuned snare drum. So take a long look in the mirror: Do you really want to be a master player? It's not enough to just answer "yes." You have to do the work. All the great ones have. If you are serious, you will use this humbling fact to motivate yourself to improve. Any chain is only as strong as its weakest link. And any drummer is only as strong as...well, you can fill in the blank. Better yet, just put this article down and go practice. Good luck!

## Fifteen Popular Rudiments

Five-Stroke Roll



Seven-Stroke Roll



Nine-Stroke Roll



Single Paradiddle



Double Paradiddle



Triple Paradiddle



Flam



Flam Tap



Flam Accent



Flam Paradiddle



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Single Drag Tap



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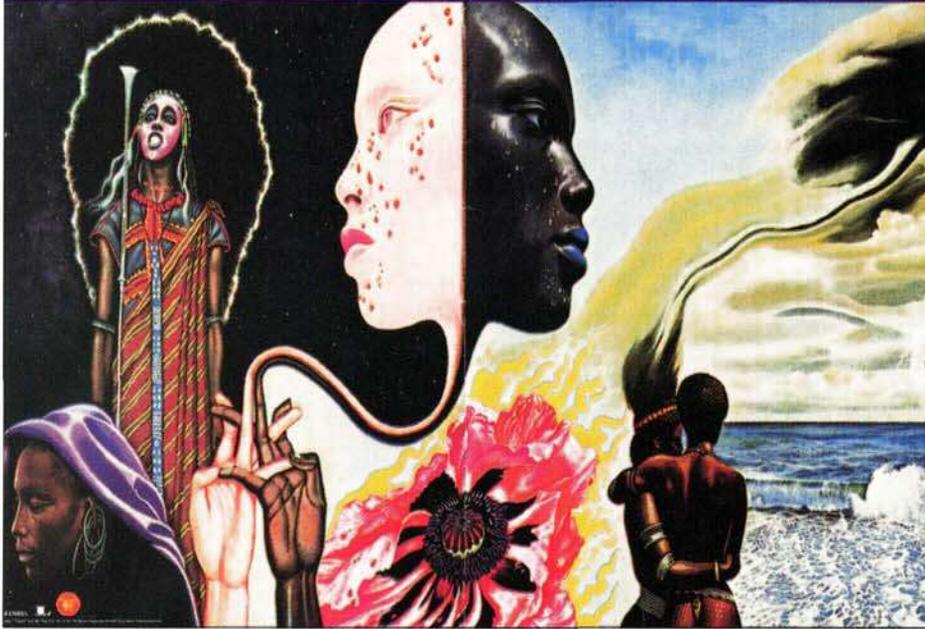
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## RECORDINGS

**Miles Davis****The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions**  
(Columbia/Legacy)

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕

**drummers: Jack DeJohnette, Don Alias, Billy Cobham, Lenny White**

with Miles Davis (trp), Wayne Shorter (sp sx), Chick Corea, Joe Zawinul, Larry Young,

Herbie Hancock (kybd), Dave Holland, Ron Carter, Harvey Brooks (bs),

Bennie Maupin (bs dr), Steve Grossman (sp sx), John McLaughlin (gtr)

With its freeform atmospheres and rambunctious improvising through alien terrains, *Bitches Brew* stands as one of the great audio documents of the late '60s. But when it was released in 1969, it was considered a perplexing album by a modern master gone astray. Often using dual drummers, bassists, and keyboard players on a single track, Miles Davis envisioned a pan-global kaleidoscope of funk, jazz, and third-stream music that encapsulated everything he knew, while simultaneously veering off to some unknown future world. Thirty years later, *Bitches Brew* has more in common with today's jungle, world music, and found sounds than the then-popular funk-jazz that Miles was escaping.

This four-disc set features many unreleased tracks plus detailed listings, so you know exactly when Jack D. is playing alone, or when Cobham and Lenny White are flapping their loose-limbed rhythms in stereo. Pre-Mahavishnu and Return To Forever, Cobham and White were two heavy hired guns fresh off gigs with the Brecker Bros, and Joe Henderson. Here, they help to invent a new language for the drums, one based on the rhythms of rock, but infused with the call & response of jazz. Explosive, electrically charged, yet as light as a mad bumblebee, their drumming opened the doors for the fusion assault that was to come.

Ken Micallef

**Gene Krupa****Gene Krupa In Concert (DBK Jazz)**

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ½

**drummer: Gene Krupa**

with Al Winters (tbn), Andy Mormile (dr), Marcus Belgrave (trp),

Eddie Metz (pno), Don Lewandowski (bs)

On many of the recordings of Gene Krupa, the sound quality is such that it's hard to decipher anything other than the big beats. By 1971, when this recording was made, people did care about the sounds going on tape, and you can hear fairly clearly the subtle things the drummer did to move

SIGNIFICANT  
OTHERS

The title of Heart's new *Greatest Hits* CD (Epic/Legacy) might be a bit misleading, since it focuses on the band's mid-'70s output to the exclusion of their late-period power-balladry.

Hallelujah! Hearing **MIKE DEROSIER**'s solid



attack and funky but powerful footwork on cuts like "Barracuda" and "Crazy On You" reminds how much the drummer had to do with Heart's early coolness.

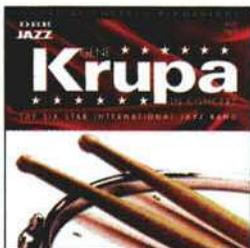
So you've got an interest in Latin but can't get with any of that polite world fuzak? Mexico City's Los De Abajo are a collective of twenty-somethings more interested in rioting in the streets than relaxing with umbrella drinks, as their self-titled debut CD on Luaka Bop proves. Drummer **YOCUPITZIO ARELLANO** and percussionist **GABRIEL ELIAS** powerfully translate the band's mambo/ska/reggae/rock into a language everyone can understand.

Fans of pans will enjoy *Big Bamboo* by Od Tapo Imi steel band, a Wisconsin-based septet that goes for the fun and features the "engine room" work of **CHRIS WILLS**. (O.T.I. Records, (608) 770-1856, [www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7001/](http://www.geocities.com/TheTropics/7001/))

Swingers both old and new owe it to themselves to check out Reprise's *Count Basie Live At The Sands (Before Frank)*. A compilation of tunes from the opening sets of the Count's famous 1966 Vegas run with Sinatra, this collection highlights the dramatics of drummer **SONNY PAYNE**, a true original and markedly different skinsman from previous Basie traps-masters.

**Rating Scale**

- ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ Excellent
- ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ Very Good
- ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ Good
- ⊕ ⊕ Fair
- ⊕ Poor



the music along and establish the swing. That's a big part of what makes this release a little treasure, an eye-opener for the uninitiated about Krupa's true talent.

This is great small-group interaction, and the tunes are played with wisely tempered abandon. Listen to the subtleties in Krupa's rip-roaring solo on "Sweet Georgia Brown." The drummer doesn't let "Perdido" rest on its laurels, either. As opposed to some of the more flashy technicians that followed him, Gene took his audience with him the whole way through a solo, rising and falling together. (DBK Jazz has also released *The Legends Of Jazz Drumming*, which features arrangements of drumming classics like "Drum Boogie," "Big Noise From Winnetka," and "Topsy," performed smartly by drummer Bruce Klauber and band. 102 Gaither Drive, Unit 1, Mount Laurel, NJ 08054)

Robin Tolleson

## Vision Of Disorder Imprint (Roadrunner)

drummer: **Brendon Cohen**

with Matt Baumbach, Mike Kennedy (gtr),  
Tim Williams (vcl), Mike Fleishmann (bs)

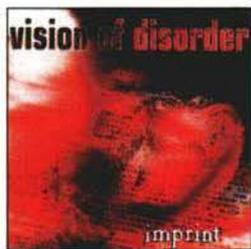
Ozzfest '97 apparently left a sharp imprint on the psyche of New York's Vision Of Disorder. Not that they weren't aggressive enough with their 1996 debut. But in the time since that tour, V.O.D. got heavier, leaner, and more determined to wreak havoc.

This is hardcore with (dis)harmony and a metallic bent. But the crushing riffs and fist-slammng vocals would mean little if drummer Brendon Cohen didn't rise to the occasion. Heavy touring, it seems, has paid big dividends: Cohen's double-kicks are quicker, his rhythms are tighter, and his performance is more musical than before.

You won't find much subtlety here; Cohen plays everything like he means it. So does the band. Still, the drummer has broadened his boundaries within that framework. Take the nice ride-bell touches on the driving "Landslide" and the inventive pattern in the verse of "Jada Bloom." You wouldn't have heard Cohen do such things two years ago. Then again, that's the definition of musical growth.

By no means is Cohen setting any standards here. But he's still a young drummer in a young band, and if *Imprint* is any sign, Vision Of Disorder and its drummer will be the artists others turn to for inspiration at, say, Ozzfest 2000.

Matt Peiken



## Armando Rodriguez-Victor Rendon Latin Jazz Orchestra Havana Blues (Palmetto)

drummer: **Victor Rendon**

percussionists: **John Almendra, Giovanni Hidalgo, Ray Colon,  
Milton Cardona, Joe Gonzalez, John Berdeguer, Ken Ross**

with Andy Gonzales, Mario Rodriguez, Bernie Minoso (bs), Arturo O'Pamll, Igor Atalita (pno), Victor Mendoza (vbs, marimba), others

Victor Rendon plays with the perfect knowledge and skill for this orchestra, which goes from Chico O'Farrill arrangements of Kenny Dorham's "Afrodisia," with the drums heavily integrated into the

## LIGHTING THE FUSE

### Mahavishnu Orchestra The Inner Mounting Flame (Columbia/Legacy)

drummer: **Billy Cobham**

with John McLaughlin (gtr), Jerry Goodman (vln),  
Jan Hammer (pno), Rick Laird (bs)

### Michal Urbaniak Fusion (Columbia/Legacy)

drummer: **Czeslaw Bartkowski**

with Michal Urbaniak (vln), Urzula Dudziak (vcl,  
effects) Adam Makowicz, Wojciech Karolak (kybd)

Through the years fusion has had more than its share of detractors. "Too many notes!" "No soul!" "Where's the downbeat?!" Though their points were often well taken, the early fusion records, of which these reissues are two, were something fresh in the early '70s. Inspired by Miles Davis's explorations and Tony Williams' groundbreaking *Emergency* album, fusion resulted from a lightning intercourse of rock power and jazz improvisation.

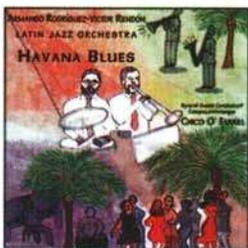
Mahavishnu's 1971 release is one of the best known of the genre, now benefitting from a much needed digital remastering. Billy Cobham made his name here, power-gliding through the album's complicated odd-metered rhythms, intense arrangements, and middle-eastern-tinged melodies—not to mention incredibly ferocious solos. But Mahavishnu could also be gentle, as in the meditative "Dawn" and the pastoral "Lotus On Irish Streams." "Noonward Race" is pure Cobham/McLaughlin power-jamming, the pair ripping through 16th-note mayhem. The 9/8 peril of "Vital Transformation" is pure adrenaline, as is the closing track, "Awakening," where the entire band plays a skyscraper-climbing figure in tumbling unison, leading to Cobham's scattershot solo. You want heavy? *This* is heavy.

Urbaniak, on the other stick, is more folk-fusion by comparison. Heavy on percussion, effects, odd voices, and the itchy, actively funky drumming of Czeslaw Bartkowski, *Fusion's* busy melodies are almost hummable next to Mahavishnu's intense assault. All in 4/4, the drumming is heavy on the notes, but very much in the pocket. Of course, it's all 16th-note, inverted-paradiddle madness, but CB makes it all flow and cook.

*The Inner Mounting Flame* retains the power and fast acetylene burn that made it great, while *Fusion* hints at the sonic excesses that eventually helped sink fusion's boat. But both albums are miles ahead of the insipid jazz-lite that fills popular jazz radio today. Better to go deaf from too much fun than die from a cotton candy overdose.

Ken Micallef





music's accents, to the grand ballroom dance styles of "Tres Palabras," to the bubbling current of Horace Silver's "Where You At," which Rendon starts with percussion. Gradually more of the kit starts appearing—a cymbal bell poking through, then snare, finishing with a brief but very nice drum solo. Rendon is able to work the kit into the mix effectively on "Blue Mambo," set the proper authentic tone on "Huachinango De Veracruz," settle into a nice jazz groove on Chick Corea's "Guajira," and fire off some serious fusion with bassist Rodriguez on "Percussion Excursion." This is a fine orchestra: Latin in much of the rhythmic energy, jazz in form, inflection, and spirit. (*Tortilla Flat Music, PO Box 556, New York, NY 10116-0556, tel: [718] 788-6980, [718] 884-3712*)

**Robin Tolleson**

## Adam Nitti

Balance (Renaissance Man)



**drummers: Kirk Covington, Tom Knight, Dave Weckl**

with Adam Nitti, Victor Wooten (bs), Sam Skelton (sx), Randy Hoexter (kybd), Bill Hart, Jimmy Herring, Shane Theriot (gtr)

*Balance* establishes Adam Nitti as one of today's premier jazz/rock fusion musicians. The bass playing on this release is *isfrightening*, especially the duet featuring Nitti and guest Victor Wooten exchanging licks on "Yin & Yang."



The choice of drummers for Nitti's blend of sophisticated fusion music couldn't have been better. A majority of Nitti's material is reminiscent of Chick Corea's Elektric Band, and what better a drummer to add to the mix than Dave Weckl himself? Weckl chooses to groove hard with minimal chops on "Kingpin," but gets a bit more adventurous on "Balance." Weckl's drum sounds are superior to those of the other two drummers here, and his smoothness is unmatched.

Drummer Tom Knight actually "out-Weckls" Dave at times with his precision combination single/double-stroke technique around the drumkit and his strong sense of funk fusion grooves. Knight shines brightest on the complex "Skitzo" and "Cheeky." And keyboardist Joe Zawinul's current drummer, Kirk Covington, lays down a very slinky swamp groove on "B Squared," firing off some outlandish fills that would make Vinnie Colaiuta turn his head.

This disc is highly recommended for drummers who enjoy challenging electric jazz/rock fusion. (*PO Box 585, Bethlehem, GA 30620, www.adamnitti.com*)

**Mike Haid**

## Dean Baltesson

Into (Iolante Music)



**drummer: Dean Baltesson (also perc, recorders, pno, gtr)**

with Dan Schnee (sx), Ronda Metszies (cello)

*Into* is a lesson in subtlety and delicacy for drums, and is a great example of the power of soft dynamics. Consisting mostly of self-described "genre-less" performances, this album features Dean Baltesson employing sparse instrumentation and arrangements to create very moody, atmospheric music.

*Into* sounds different from most albums partly because it uses a fascinating "low-volume, close-miked" recording technique. This process provides thick, rich textures despite the limited instrumenta-

tion: The brushwork on the second track is unlike any traditional brush solo, as the "loud quietness" of the recording process creates the feeling that you are listening to an extraordinarily large drum (like, as big as a house) played exceptionally softly by enormous metal brushes. Neat.

In delving into the world of atmospherics, *Into* sometimes sees the drums laying out. But as this album is conceived and produced by Mr. Baltesson, the drummer himself this is an important album for drummers for its concepts, colors, and usage of percussion as an equal part in the creation of the melody and accompaniment. There is no bashing here; rather, there is beautiful music to be heard in the subtlety of the context, and the drummer speaks loudly in a soft fashion. (*979 87th Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5H 1N2, Canada*)

**Ted Bonar**



## R.L. Burnside

Come On In (Fat Possum/Epitaph)



**drummers: Cedric Burnside, Joey Waronker, Joe Rameri, Calvin Jackson, John Oreshniok**

with R.L. Burnside: (gtr, vcl), Tom Rothrock, Beal Dabbs (bs, programming), Kenny Brown (gtr), Lester Butler (hrm), Alejandro Rosso (org)

On acclaimed Mississippi bluesman R.L. Burnside's *Come On In*, grandson Cedric Burnside's stick style shouts, "Look Gramps, I'm playing the drums!" In fact, *Come On In* features some of the sloppiest yet funkier drumming we've heard in a long time—so primal it's perfect. Five drummers appear on the album, with offerings ranging from sober drum programming to pickled shuffles.

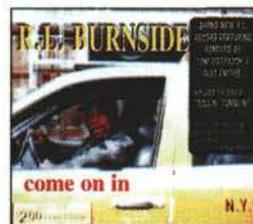
The Bobby Brady of the bunch, the younger Burnside, is what a drummer sounds like when he plays with his gut and not his head.

All hi-hat, kick, and snare, Cedric wails away with the fervor of a recent graduate of "How to be funky in six easy lessons," ripping through the Alec Empire re-mixed "Heat" in hot pursuit of the tempo. His hook-iest track on the disc, "Let My Baby Ride," takes the down & dirty liquor-soaked guitar riffs and frames them in a funk downbeat where everything following the 1 is just for fun.

Following collaborations with members of Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, the 70-plus Burnside is joined on this album by mixmaster Tom Rothrock, who looped and programmed the septuagenarian's sound into a weird collision of Old South and East Village. Joey Waronker (Beck, Smashing Pumpkins) combines with Joe Rameri on "Rollin' Tumblin' Remix" with a basic four-on-the-floor disco groove that sits deeply in the pocket over Burnside's twelve-bar blues.

Although far from flawless, *Come On In* chains up your brain and hauls it away. If you can't groove to this, check your pulse.

**Fran Azzarto and Lisa Crouch**



## Sex Mob

Din Of Inequity (Columbia/Knitting Factory)



**drummer: Kenny Wollesen**

with Steven Bernstein (trp), Briggan Krauss (al sx), Tony Scherr (bs), John Medeski (kybd), Adam Levy, London McDaniels (gtr)

Listening to *Din Of Inequity* is like wandering into a smoky, dimly lit after-hours haunt to find a casual group of musicians

onstage sipping beers and blowing purely for the fun of it. Of course Sex Mob, playing everything from standards and pop tunes to the more esoteric originals of leader Steven Bernstein, is a bona fide band, solid arrangements and all; it simply captures the loose feel of a jam session.

For his part, Kenny Wollesen injects a cross-section of drumming styles into the mix while remaining spontaneous and playful. The jazzy opening track is leavened by his tasty brush swinging, while he relaxes Prince's "Sign O' The Times" with a slow funk beat. Throughout, as Wollesen also flirts with rock, blues, and second-line patterns, ambient miking allows for a clear, open drum sound that adds to the CD's "live" vibe.

Impossible to classify in a few words, Sex Mob creates an "anything-goes" environment where the Eastern-influenced rocker "Head Check 2000" can exist happily alongside the burlesque rave-up "Live And Let Die." It's just a bunch of serious musicians having some kitschy fun.



Michael Parillo

## BOOKS

### The Commandments Of R&B Drumming

by Zoro, with Russ Miller

(Warner Bros.)



level: intermediate to advanced

\$24.95 including CD

*Commandments* fully lives up to its subtitle, *A Comprehensive Guide To Soul, Funk, And Hip-Hop*, with 156 big pages covering every imaginable angle of R&B. Whether describing drum grooves, musical styles, particular albums or tracks, or the traits and significance of artists, Zoro's prose is hip and his presentation clear and organized. *Commandments* provides plenty of useful drumming basics, exercises, and transcriptions for technique development, plus tips to help capture each sub-genre's defining feel and essence. The accompanying CD includes a wide variety of nicely played developmental exercises and grooves (including some from classic recordings) that are highlighted in the text for quick identification, as well as a few original tunes played with and without drums. Each demonstration focuses on a specific feel or rhythmic concept.

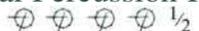
Minor gripes? *Commandments* lacks an index, which would make it more valuable as a reference tool, and spiral binding would better facilitate studying and practicing the drum parts. Zoro may also have bared himself to criticism for appearing shoulder-to-shoulder with pop music icons in many of *Commandments'* photographs. But hey, the guy was *there*—and his pride in being a part of R&B's rich tapestry is supported by his resume, his playing, and his creation of this monumental work.

Rich Watson

### Festival Snare Solos

by Marty Hurley

(Rudimental Percussion Publications)



level: intermediate to advanced

\$15

This book is a collection of eight snare drum solos (three new and five previously published) by former Phantom Regiment Drum &

Bugle Corps instructor Marty Hurley. One of the greatest rudimental snare drummers and instructors around, his expertise in the medium is apparent in each of the pieces.

The three new solos are "Lava Flow" (grade 3+), "Abu's Bash" (grade 4), and "The Tower Of Terror" (grade 5). These solos alone are worth the price of the book (as most of the individually published solos cost \$5 to \$6). The remaining ones (grades 4 to 6+) are icing on the cake and include "Sonny's Solo," "The Clave King," "Crash Landing," "Scud Attack," and "The Mambo King." This last solo, based upon son clave (3-2) and cascara rhythms, is meant to be performed with or without visual effects, thus offering a challenge to rudimental, set, and concert players. This is an extremely exciting piece to perform.

As with all RPP productions, the stickings are clearly marked and the visuals/effects are explained in a "visual key" at the end of each solo. Most of the solos are three to four pages long, and the spiral-bound book allows the pages to open flat on a music stand. While this book is a must-have for any serious rudimental player, *Festival Snare Solos* also makes a terrific learning tool for a drumset player interested in improving his or her snare chops. And some of the rudimental passages—and visuals—would make great fills on a drumset!

Andrea Byrd



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**TED REED**  
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# Effective Subbing, Part 1

## Do You Have What It Takes?

by Billy Cuthrell

A few years ago I received a phone call from a band manager who was handling a local country group. He wanted me to fill in on drums at a festival two days later, and perhaps for a few more shows, until the band's regular drummer was well enough to play again. The manager explained that the band would not be able to get together to rehearse, and asked me to pick up a work tape of their material the next day.

I studied the tape over the following day and a half. The band's repertoire included some cover songs I was familiar with, as well as some originals and more obscure material I had never heard. When I arrived at the gig I went over some notes I had taken with the bass player and guitarist. With the exception of a few minor mistakes, the show went very well, and both the audience and the band were pleased. I completed the other dates with the group, and since then have filled in on a few other occasions. I attribute my success on that sub assignment to some "cramming" of the band's material, and, in more general terms, to preparing myself over the years for a variety of song structures and playing situations.

Unlike playing with a single, steady band, freelancing and subbing are a bit like auditioning at every gig. Whether it's your first or your one-hundredth assignment, being an independent, or "hired gun," can be rewarding or terrifying—rewarding because the variety and newness of the material can help you grow musically; terrifying when the phone doesn't ring for weeks, and when a gig is especially challenging. But in the latter respect, whether a gig is rewarding or terrifying largely depends upon how prepared you are for it.

Getting prepared to work in this niche of the music business can take many paths, but the first step is an honest evaluation of your skills. Being a walking music dictionary and drawing on years of playing experience would certainly make things easier, but it's not critical that you know how to read and arrange music on a grand

scale, or possess "x" amount of chops or knowledge of music theory before tackling a freelance opportunity. You can compensate for lack of experience by doing some focused shedding with the band's reference cassette and conceptually similar albums. An ability to read music is a significant advantage, not only for music the band might provide, but for writing your own sketch charts and reminders of key grooves, licks, and ensemble figures. For preparation in these technical areas, you must find a balance of skills, resources, and methods that work for you.

As important to freelancing and subbing as your technical abilities is familiarity with different styles of music. Interpreting the

show charts to *West Side Story* and performing "West Side Story" with a big band may be two entirely different ball games. You need a solid understanding of the distinguishing features of different musical styles in order to interpret them appropriately on the drums. If you've got tunnel vision, you'll be severely limited in the types of gigs you're qualified to sub for.

Especially for freelance musicians, eclectic listening and playing pays dividends that you may not see immediately, but that will undoubtedly surface later to serve some virtually unrelated drumming challenge. I have had to learn signature phrases that are required to make a song work (for example, the beginning of Steve Miller's "Take The Money And Run"). Learning these patterns has led directly to my devising others that I could apply in other material.

In addition to assessing your knowledge and drumming proficiency in various styles, you must also evaluate your own musical tastes and temperament. I am reminded of an acquaintance who referred to any music that wasn't punk rock or the latest guitar wonder as "crap." He has remained uninterested in, and uninfluenced by, anything else, and he freely declares this stance to other musicians. While he does gig with his regular group, he is never asked to sub or freelance, since everyone knows he has neither the experience nor the inclination to adequately prepare for their gig. But even more subtle, unspoken dis-

**" You need a solid understanding of the distinguishing features of different musical styles in order to interpret them appropriately on the drums. If you've got tunnel vision, you'll be severely limited in the types of gigs you're qualified to sub for. "**

dain for some types of music could torpedo your subbing aspirations. Ask yourself some revealing questions: Can I play even my non-favorite musical styles with conviction and intensity? Am I willing to play Afro-Cuban rhythms one night, and slam home the foundation in a heavy metal group the next? Am I able to grasp song structures quickly and take musical direction from bandleaders? (I've worked with a few bandleaders who could have driven anyone to the brink of insanity.) Honest answers to these kinds of questions can make the difference between success and failure for aspiring freelancers.

If you've decided you are cut out for subbing, how do you begin? In Part 2 we'll discuss the steps necessary to open the door to playing on fill-in dates, including self-promotion and connecting with other musicians. We'll also look at studying work tapes and reference material, charting songs, writing notes and "cheat sheets," and developing your chops for various types of music. Until then, happy subbing!

*Billy Cuthrell is a drummer, a faculty member at the Eastern Carolina Music Academy, and a member of Pro-Mark's Educational Advisory Board. He also owns and teaches drums at Progressive Percussion Drum Studios in North Carolina.*



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# The Drummer's Dictionary

by

Ron Hefner

(with apologies to Ambrose Bierce)



**Acoustics** *n* : relative reflectiveness of a room commonly described as either "live," in which drums sound like aluminum cans, or "dead," in which drums sound like sacks full of oatmeal

**Artistry** *n* : aesthetic value in a drummer's playing that is inversely proportional to income

**Aversion** *n* : drummers' feeling toward day jobs



**Ballad** *n* : interminable song form that allows drummers to exhibit selflessness

**Bass Player** *n* : musician with unusually broad shoulders designed to carry drummers

**Black Hole** *n* : absolute void in the physical universe that, if opened, would be found to contain 17,677,942 cymbal stand wing nuts and 9,764,338 drumkeys



**Chart (drum)** *n* 1 : baffling and misleading musical instructions written by non-drummers with little or no knowledge of the instrument's capabilities or notation standards 2 : exercise in bar counting

**Chiropractor** *n* : type of agent who receives regular cash dues from drummers

**Click** *n* : electronic device used in recording to eliminate any semblance of humanity

**Clone** *n* : drummer sub-species that propagated by the thousands after hearing Steve Gadd

**Cymbal** *n* : high-priced metal disk that, when struck, offends the ears of other musicians



**Devolution** *n* : term used to describe changes in rock drumming history between Mitch Mitchell and Tre Cool.

**Drop** *v* : what most drummers do with a drumstick as soon as a spotlight is on them

**Dynamics** *n* : subtle variations in volume from loud to louder



**Energy** *n* : feeling of strength and enthusiasm necessary for strong drumming (most noticeable during ballads)

**Eon** *n* : average length of a ballad

**Engineer** *n* 1 : person driven insane by the resonance of drums and cymbals 2 : person with an unnatural love of duct tape



**Fidget** *n* : activity performed by drummers during tacet passages

**Fill** *n* : flurry of notes played by a drummer as an attention-getting device

**Fortitude** *n* : characteristic required of drummers at the end of the last set, as when they find out their wedding gig has been extended by two hours

**Futility** *n* : diligent, persistent practice whose ultimate goal is to emulate Buddy Rich's left hand



**Gate** *n* : sophisticated recording device intended to make a \$1,000 snare drum sound like a piece of cardboard

**Girlfriend** *n* : drummer's landlord

**Gratis** *adj* : average pay rate for a jazz gig



**Hell** *n* : drummer's term for self-employment

**Heresy** *n* : refusal to play with a click

**Hi-Hat** *n* : mechanical device designed to mute the sound of two cymbals by trapping air between them



**Imagination** *n* 1 : (archaic) lost element of drumming, once necessary for success 2 : (modern) skill at programming electronic percussion machines

**Indigent** *adj* : fiscal status of a drummer lacking a girlfriend or a day job

**Ingrate** *n* : bandleader who asks a drummer to play less



**Jam Session** *n* : place where drummers go for self-flagellation

**Jazz Drumming** *n* : style of drumming whose concepts are impossible to grasp by

those born after 1950

**Jelly** *n* : substance a drummer's brain turns into when watching a Buddy Rich video



**Kick Drum** *n* : modern term which relegates a musical instrument to the role of a soccer ball

**Knuckle** *n* : part of drummer's anatomy most often attacked by drum hardware

**K Zildjian** *n* : cymbal erroneously believed to make young white drummers sound like Art Blakey



**Labyrinth** *n* : typical route from car to bandstand

**Legend** *n* : drummer's employer

**Logo** *n* : conspicuous emblem on drum equipment deployed as free advertising



**Mail** *n* : fabled place where gig checks are said to reside

**Mezzo Piano** *adj* : loud

**Mile** *n* : average distance between drummer's vehicle and bandstand

**Monitor** *n* : speaker that allows drummer to hear more clearly how bad the other musicians' time is



**Nail** *v* : to strike a drum and/or cymbal with accuracy and emphasis, producing a sound that is at least twice as loud as all other instruments

**New Age Drumming** *n* : style of drumming in which a drummer plays only whole notes

**Nuance** *n* : aspect of drummer's playing obliterated by guitar player's volume



**Outrage** *n* : drummer's emotional response after a cattle-call audition when someone else gets the gig

**Overcompensate** *v* : play normally

**Overplay** *v* : play normally



**Percussionist (Classical)** *n* : drummer who possesses strange, arcane knowledge, such as how to read music

**Percussionist (Ethnic)** *n* : drummer who possesses strange, arcane knowledge, such as how to get a sound out of a conga drum

**Pocket** *n* : inaccessible, mythical place in the space of a quarter note



**Quake** *v* : universal response among drummers upon first hearing Dennis Chambers

**Quest** *n* : futile search for the perfect ride cymbal

**Quota** *n* : desirable number of licks played by a drummer during the course of a set



**Rock Drumming** *n* : style of drumming whose concepts are impossible to grasp by those born before 1950

**Rudiments** *n* : viral strains that infect musical ideas and turn them into mechanical exercises



**Scuff** *n* : unsightly, abnormal wearing that appears regularly on drummers' tom shells, shoe tips, and pant knees

**Scuffle** *v* : make a living

**Singer 1** *n* : person whose main function is to divert attention from the drummer  
**2** : person with a mysteriously complex grasp of tempo

**Singer (Female)** *n* : musician's wife

**Stick** *v* : what a drummer's hi-hat, bass pedal, or snare strainer will do at the most critical possible moment

**Syncopation** *n* : overplaying



**Technique** *n* : ability to demonstrate proficiency on the instrument (most noticeable during ballads)

**Tenure** *n* : (*archaic*) secure job status once afforded competent drummers before the advent of sequencers and drum machines

**Time** *n* : drummer's martyrdom



**Unpaid** *adj* : common characteristic of auditions

**Utility Bill** *n* : minor irritation easily superseded by the need for a new crash cymbal



**Vegetable** *n* : record producer

**Vent** *v* : to express musical frustration (most noticeable during ballads)

**Vibrate** *v* : what drums would do were it not for recording engineers



**Wife** *n* : roadie

**Wisdom** *n* : (*archaic*) quality lost to the drumming community with the passing of Papa Jo Jones

**Wreck** *n* : drumset at end of a Green Day concert



**Xenophobia** *n* : fear of that which is strange or foreign (experienced by jazz drummers upon hearing Dave Grohl)

**X-files** *n* : top-secret documents concerning gigs that pay cash



**Yawn** *n* : drummer's irrepressible, involuntary response to ballads

**Yes** *n* : affirmative response given by working drummers when asked if they can play styles they have no knowledge of

**Youthful** *n* : performance quality monopolized by Roy Haynes



**Zero** *n* : amount of pay remaining from a gig after factoring in mileage, gas, and bar tab

**Zillion** *n* : number of drummers who think they sound like Dave Weckl

**Zombie** *n* : drummer after a six-hour wedding gig



## Paulo Vinicus "Vinnie" Ceravolo



After spending over three years studying classical piano and guitar, Vinnie Ceravolo of Sao Paulo, Brazil found his true calling behind a drumkit. In 1992 he formed a band with his guitarist/brother Marcus. The two were joined shortly by Marcus's wife Lu on keyboards, and Centership was born. Influenced by '70s hard- and prog-rock acts, heavy metal and pop bands of the '80s, and '90s alternative music, the group created their own brand of eclectic rock music. In addition to his talent behind the drums, twenty-five-year-old Vinnie is the main lyricist for Centership, along with being a frequent arranger and an occasional composer.

"Unfortunately," Vinnie states frankly, "the club scene is non-existent in Brazil, so the band seldom plays live." Undaunted, they've found an audience elsewhere: on the Internet. "We've made hundreds of fans that way," says Vinnie. "Fans who visit our site receive a free tape of the band." (Interested parties can check out [www.geocities.com/~centership](http://www.geocities.com/~centership).)

The group's immediate goal is "to reach as many people as possible with our music." With that in mind, they perform their songs in English, and they've sent tapes to record companies in Europe and the US in the hopes of getting a deal. On those tapes (and on their rare live performances) Vinnie plays a Tama *Rockstar* kit, a Pearl *Masters Custom* maple snare drum, and Sabian cymbals.

## Jeremy Truitt

Twenty-seven-year-old Jeremy Truitt began drumming at the age of eleven in South Florida. After leaving high school, he moved to Los Angeles in 1990 to study music at the Percussion Institute of Technology. While there he studied with Joe Porcaro, Toss Panos, and Dave Beyer.

A relocation to Atlanta, Georgia in 1994 proved fortuitous for the young drummer. Gigs with a variety of bands "from reggae to rock," and recording projects with British pop group Shimmerzine and ska/pop artist Clay Henry ultimately led to a job with Derek St. Holmes (Ted Nugent Band) and Chase Chitty (Pat Travers Band). While still playing with those gentlemen, Jeremy has also been playing in the Michelle Penn Band, who were recently named *Musician* magazine's "best unsigned band" for 1998.



The band has been busy touring in support of Michelle's second album.

Jeremy's influences include Mitch Mitchell, Keith Moon ("for his showmanship"), and all reggae and ska drummers. His solid, grooving pop/rock playing is done on a Tama *Starclassic* maple kit, and he's a Paiste cymbal endorser.

## Marlon Browden

"Free, spontaneous, linear grooves, break beat loops, gospel, drum 'n' bass, and jazz-based instrumental playing" is how St. Louis-born Marlon Browden describes his playing style. This amalgam of contemporary styles has made him a busy guy in and around his adopted home of Brooklyn, New York. As a freelancer, the twenty-five-year-old drummer is working constantly, performing and recording with such acts as Wax Poetic, Kurt Rosenwinkle, Los Gauchos, Bloom Daddies, Shedrick Mitchell, and Rob Miller. Marlon also leads his own group, with Jonathan Maron and keyboardist Jamie Saft.

His busy schedule is split between gigs in New York City and dates overseas.

Marlon's playing on Wax Poetic's recent CD *Three* reveals a loose and funky style that elegantly bridges the gap between free jazz and ethnic-based urban styles. This is understandable considering his list of influences: Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams, John Bonham, The Roots, James Brown, Jimi Hendrix, and Bob Marley.

"I do my playing on a round-badge Gretsch kit and old K Zildjian cymbals," says Marlon. "My goal is to record and tour with my



own group, as well as to continue playing with other artists. I'd also like to teach, and to hold drum seminars in the future. I want to continue to live and grow in music. It's important to me to always keep the music real."

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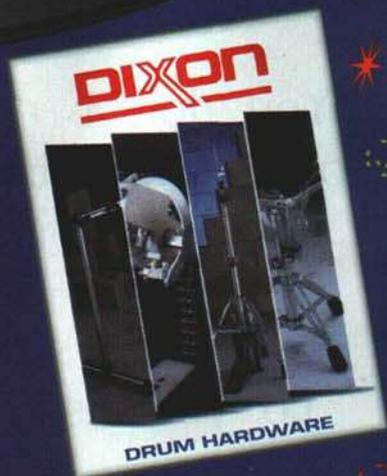
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# Surviving The Valleys Of Your Career

by Jon Berry

Keeping a healthy perspective on your music career is a vital part of navigating the peaks and valleys that inevitably occur. Everyone defines success differently. But no matter what constitutes the "peaks" that make up your career, there's no doubt that the view from the top is exhilarating. From this vantage point it is easy to see your original motivation for playing music and appreciate all the efforts that you've expended to reach this level of success. In effect, it all makes sense from this view.

Let's look at the navigational methods one can use to steer through the ambiguities of the dark days in the valley. Because often, from *here*, things don't make sense, and it is hard to see your way into the clear again.

A key to surviving the hard times is to try to put a positive spin on the situation. Maybe you lost a gig that you'd had for years to another player. Maybe you were "this close" to a record deal when the rug was pulled out from under you, and in the surrounding confusion your band broke up as well. There's no end to the scenarios that can throw your career temporarily on the skids. But the key word is "temporarily."

"You don't need the approval of others to feel authentic as a musician. What you need to do is redefine what success means to you as an individual."

There really are only two options: 1) let the circumstances defeat you, or 2) see the down time as an opportunity. Life is full of choices, and you must decide. I know too many players, not just drummers, who in the face of adversity accept defeat and close up shop. Unfortunately, many never recover, and as a result they give up on one of their life's passions entirely. To me, this is not an acceptable alternative. What is needed here is a fresh perspective: a survival guide.

## Define Success On Your Own Terms

One of the big lies of this status-intensive culture is that if you're not famous or in a happening gig, you're not a successful musician. Unfortunately, it's easy to buy into this lie and accept yourself as a failure. The only way you can avoid this trap is to define success on your own terms. You don't need the approval of others to feel authentic as a musician. What you need to do is redefine what success means to you as an individual.

I'm not saying that the good opinion of other people or musicians is completely unimportant, because it's that approval that has gotten us work in the past and will keep us working in the future. I'm just saying a person's self-worth should not be entirely wrapped up in the approval of others. If it is, you have no room for individuality or creative freedom.

A good way to define success in the face of adversity is to ask yourself this question: Have I learned anything from this? Since learning indicates growth, and growth indicates progress, it's easy to arrive at the conclusion that you're headed in the direction of success. The only failure is to not learn and grow. A true definition of a successful person is one who has transformed adversity into an opportunity to grow (as a person and as a musician). Always remember that you have seen the lush view from the higher points, or else you wouldn't know what it was to be in the dry, barren valley. So have faith that since you once achieved a certain level of success (fleeting though it may have been), you will once again reach the top. The time now is just an opportunity to prepare for your next ascent.

## Self-Evaluation

One of the most important things to do to make the most constructive use of downtime is to undergo a process of honest self-evaluation. If you think that you've "arrived" and there is just no room for improvement in any facet of your musicianship, you might as well pack it up and put the gear in the attic. (Maybe the grandkids can use the old set someday.) Let's face it, if you were as prepared and together as you had thought, you wouldn't be wandering in the desert of your music career. Now, after swallowing that horse pill of humility, you're ready to begin the process.

Where is it that you need to focus? Let's start with the facet that defines most of us: our playing. Listen to any recordings that feature you performing (studio, rehearsal, or garage). First, listen to

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the actual execution. Is your meter solid and steady? Did you try to play something that you didn't quite have down, and in so doing compromised the groove or the statement the band was trying to make? A lot of times this is a hard area to judge, because as a player you're so caught up in making your *own* statement that you sacrifice the integrity of what the *band* is trying to play. Listen to the music as a whole, not just what you have to add to the mix. Sure, you practiced for hours to get that "Wecklish" fill down. But does it really fit in the context of the situation upon which you so forcefully executed it?

I recently caught up with a good friend (also a good drummer), who I hadn't seen in a couple years. I wanted to hear how his playing had progressed, so I asked him to make a tape of recordings from three of his recent projects. I found myself really listening to the music first, and upon subsequent listening focused more on the actual drumming. The drumming was minimalistic and tasteful, and fit perfectly with the songs. I didn't hear any over-the-top fills or complex patterns. Though I know he can easily play all of the tough stuff, his restraint and selection of what to play impressed me. Or more importantly, I was impressed by what he did *not* play. This story illustrates a great point: If you want to work, you have to play for the music, not always for yourself. (And guess what? He's still working.)

If you don't have any recent recordings of your playing, start recording some of your practice sessions. This can be a painful experience at first because the tape doesn't lie, and if what you're trying to play isn't happening, you'll hear it. But this is an excel-

lent tool for identifying problem areas and taking steps to correct the problems.

Let's talk a little bit about personal presentation. You may be the most naturally gifted, bad-ass drummer in the universe. But if even your own family can't stand to be around you, you're probably going to run into some complications on the music scene. One of the main reasons the majority of successful musicians or bands have enjoyed longevity is because they are amiable, good-natured folks. Sure there are exceptions. But as a rule, this is usually the case. I'm not telling you to get therapy, but do work on improving the overall package, not just your aptitude as a drummer.

### Inspiration

There is probably no better way of getting those creative juices flowing than by turning on to some great music. Check out some of the old stuff that you've always listened to for inspiration. Many times the well is deep with these selections, and you may now pick up on things that you had not noticed or understood in the past. This is just more evidence to you that you are improving, since you now are able to recognize nuances that you had previously overlooked simply because you lacked the knowledge or experience to understand those concepts.

Buy a new CD. Even better, treat yourself to as many live performances as possible. Listening to new music gives rise to new ideas and renewed motivation. It's sometimes a good idea to listen to a style of music that you may never have been exposed to. This helps pull you out of your comfort zone (a place that is notorious

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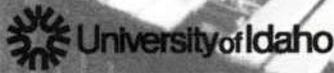
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for circulating the same ideas year after year). For example, if you've been playing exclusively heavy metal or R&B, go to a ska show or buy a jazz CD to help crack you out of your mold.

Live performances are great perspective checks. When you look around and see everyone having a great time, everything starts to make sense again. The reason most of us started playing music was to have a good time, be creative, and hopefully give some of that fun back to an appreciative audience. This experience helps get you back on the path. Most significantly, it brings your motivation back to its original source: pleasure. Music is supposed to be fun. Don't let it become your burden.

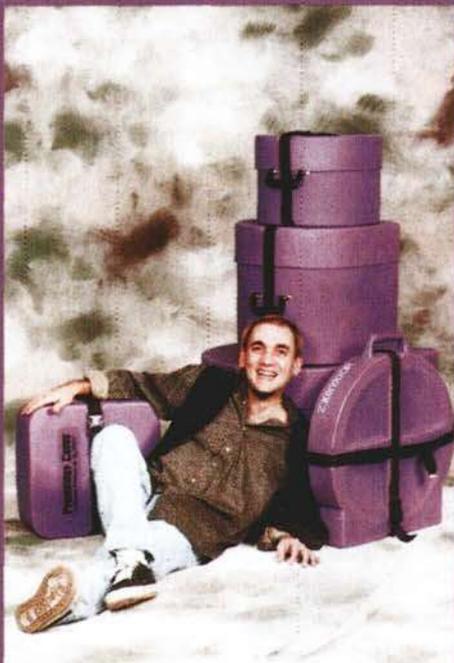
### Oasis In The Desert

If you have an open mind and are willing to be even the least bit flexible, you will soon find your oasis in the middle of the barren desert of your musical career. Take the time to work on your facility as a player. And make mental notes or physical recordings to chart your progress, because these measurable results add validity to your time off. Audition for that ska band that needs a drummer. If you don't get the gig—so what? But if you do, think how far you will be broadening your horizons and abilities as a player. The key is to keep an open mind and to adopt a willingness to step out of the comfort zone. It's not easy, but nothing good ever is.

Finally, don't ever lose your dignity or your faith in yourself. When it all comes out in the wash, you're the one who has a choice to either let the desert break you...or make you better.



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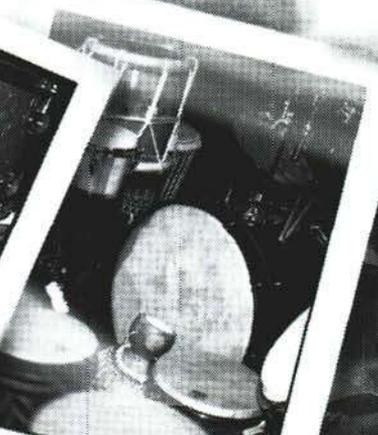
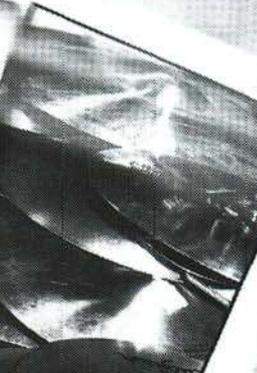
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# Drumming In A High School Band

by Mark Ian Karjaluoto

**S**o you want to drum in a high school band? Good for you! Playing in a high school concert or stage band is an experience that can teach you a great deal. But don't expect the music to be in familiar territory. High school bands cover lots of music ranging from easy to extremely difficult, and in a wide variety of styles. Sometimes you'll be bored out of your mind. Other times you'll be hanging on for your life through uncharted musical waters. Knowing how much I would have benefit-

ed from some insider information, I offer seven tips that will help make your public school music experience more fun.

### Tip #1: Get Better Than The Other Drummers

Easier said than done? Absolutely. But there are a few things you can do to help you land the coolest parts and enhance your musical growth.

First of all, *practice!* If you know an audition is on its way, don't try to learn the entire piece the night before. Do your homework: It will pay off when the direc-

tor calls on you.

Second: Pay attention to what the other drummers do during the audition. If you "lose" the audition, you will have a better idea of what helped the person who "won." You may also uncover a flaw in your own playing or find out something about the band director's preferences in drumming. And if you lose an audition, don't sweat it. High school bands offer lots of opportunities to prove yourself again.

Third: Search out the better players and try to learn from them. And as you learn, you can build some great friendships.

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Fourth: Lobby the band director if you feel the other person isn't good enough. This *doesn't* mean whining. But it *can* include casually reminding the director if a drummer has not shown for the last three practices. You might be able to unseat even older, more experienced players just by showing up at every practice when the other player doesn't. Use your practice opportunities wisely. They can pay massive dividends; more time behind the kit means you can soon play faster, and with better feel and technical accuracy.

Fifth, and most importantly: Don't throw your gains away. Even if you are the section's best drummer, keep practicing to stay on top. If you remain sharp and competitive, you will probably be granted more performance time behind the kit. Consequently, you will become a more skilled and flexible player.

### Tip #2: Share Your Knowledge

It is important to learn from other drummers to correct flaws in your playing. You can only become a better musician through questioning, trial, and error. But as you get

better, less-experienced players will probably turn to *you* for advice and tips. I was so disappointed with the few drummers who were unwilling to answer my questions that I resolved to always share information with less-experienced or curious drummers. The moral of this story: While it's okay to try to be the best, never be stingy with your knowledge. Pass on as much information as possible to inexperienced players. They'll play better quicker, and you'll feel good about helping the next generation of players.

### Tip #3: Beat Boring Practices

Young drummers tend to be either scared stiff when facing challenging music, or bored stiff by all the rest. They are especially susceptible to boredom when sidelined while the director helps other musicians with critical parts; when we're not playing, we get bored.

Even if it seems pointless, at least initially pay attention to the director's instructions to other players. That information might teach you something for future reference. More importantly, it might also per-

tain to your part as well. Your director will no doubt appreciate not having to explain something twice, and you will have given yourself more time to absorb his instructions.

Also consider that boredom causes restlessness and a craving for excitement, which can lead you to start fooling around or, when you are asked to resume playing, doing so too loud or otherwise inappropriately. To avoid this trap, when you are not immediately needed, occupy your downtime by doing your homework or reading a good book. (Unless the director is a complete dictator, no objections will be raised if you engage in some light reading until you're needed.)

### Tip #4: Be Versatile

You will have fewer boring practices if you have a greater ability to play different instruments. Concert band includes instruments many kit players have little knowledge about, including marimba, xylophone, and all kinds of percussion! Learn how to play as many different instruments as possible, so you can have more playing time.

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A fringe benefit is being in higher demand for college bands, community bands, and symphony orchestras if you can play several different instruments. Versatility pays dividends, so learn as much as possible.

### Tip #5: Expect Bad Equipment

Due to often extremely limited funding for band programs, directors must look for the biggest bang for their buck when purchasing school band instruments. So don't expect "state of the art" gear. Also, school drums are pounded day in and day out, sometimes by people who are not even bona fide drummers! Though you can bring some of your own equipment, high school drummers generally must face cheap drums with badly worn heads and second-tier cymbals.

Don't aggravate the problem. Treat the school's drums with respect, remembering that you are not the only one playing them. If you see someone smacking the drums with the butt ends of gong mallets, ask them to stop or bring it to the band director's attention. In this age of cutbacks, it's highly unlikely that a band director will replace an abused instrument, especially if continued bashing is likely. Research the music budget and push for investment in drum equipment upgrades. (I had argued long and hard for a decent ride cymbal, and in my last year in high school, the section was rewarded with a beautiful new Sabian HH ride.)

Though bad equipment in school bands is normal, you can make do with it. Spend time tuning the drums. A half hour here and there can work wonders on any kit. And remember to do this when you are least likely to disrupt band practices.

### Tip #6: Negotiate For Different Parts

I was lucky in high school. As one of the only drummers seriously dedicated to the concert and stage bands, I was allowed to play almost all of the preferred parts. My high school's small size (about 1,000 people) and the limited options to our band program helped, too. (I also like to think I practiced enough to stay ahead of the game.)

However, more competition for parts is something that many of you will have to deal with throughout high school. Most parts in concert band can be split among a

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platoon of percussionists, while stage band parts will only allow one drummer and a percussionist or two. Everyone will want a crack at the kit or at some challenging part, so you must be prepared to accommodate others.

Arrange some type of rap session with the director and the drummers/percussionists to decide who will play which part in a particular piece. By setting up a friendly atmosphere, all of the drummers will feel more inclined to negotiate on the specifics of who plays what. Nothing is worse in the percussion section than having an army of drummers at war with one another. Negotiating over parts in a friendly manner can solve these problems.

### Tip #7: Establish Good Relations With The Band Director

Band directors have the sometimes thankless and often unwieldy job of forging a cohesive, listenable band out of nothing more than raw talent—and sometimes, not even so much of that! Don't make the director's job more difficult than it already is. First, never play when the director is

talking. That only ties up the band further, and generates a lot of acrimony towards you. Second, make sure to play what's on the parts, not what your whims dictate. Some parts have a bit of interpretive license, but you should generally stick to the script. The director is relying on you to hold the band together on many occasions, so work for him or her instead of inflating your ego.

Good relations with a director can provide a massive payback. For example, if you want to learn a new instrument or need some individual help to become a better player, your director will probably bend over backwards to help you out if you have already established a good working relationship.

Drumming in a high school band can be one of the most rewarding experiences for a developing drummer. Where else can you spend several hours a day honing the craft you enjoy, while learning new techniques and broadening your musical horizons? But to make the best of your experience, you have to play it smart. I hope these tips help you in accomplishing that goal.



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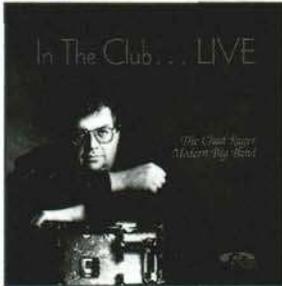
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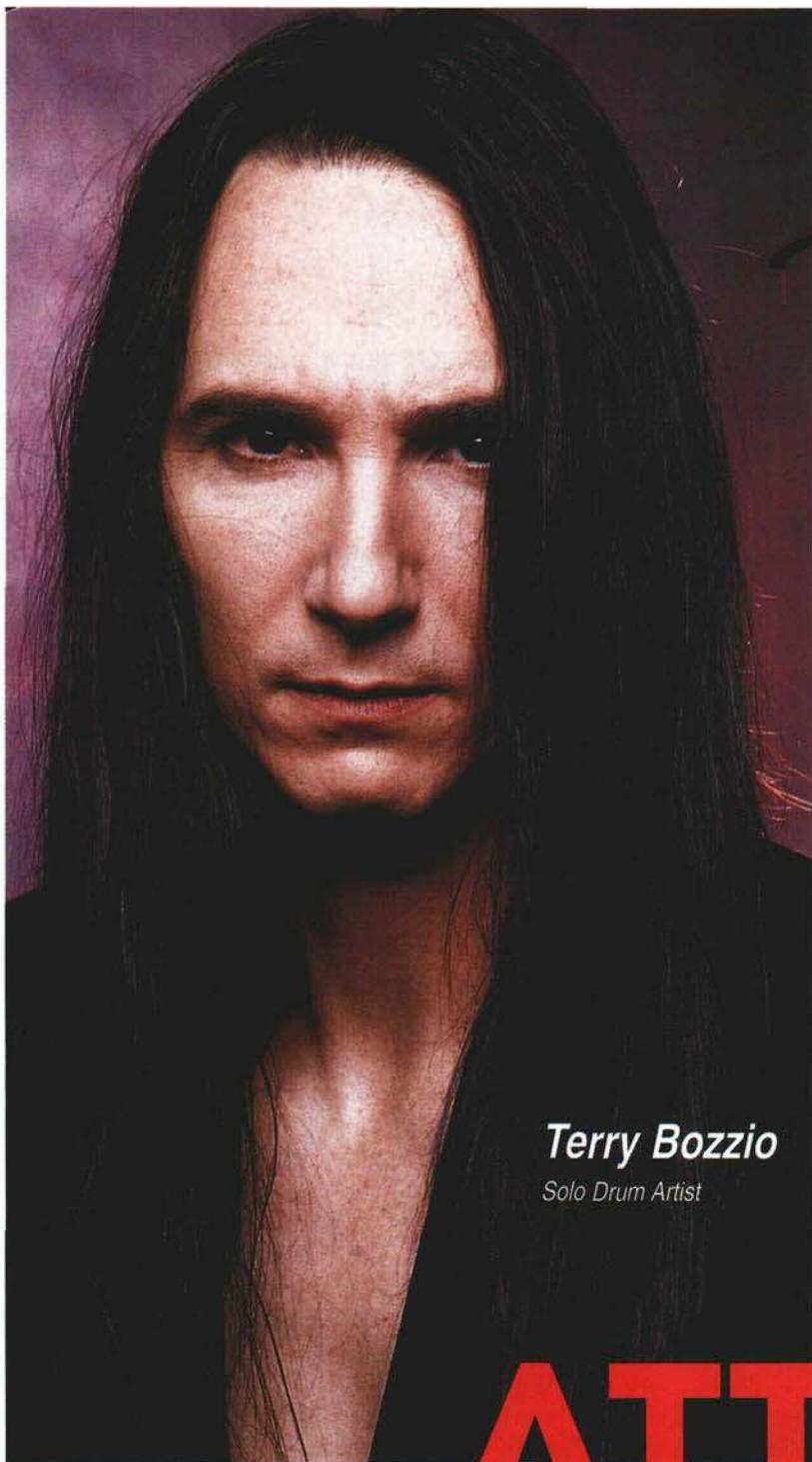
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# Bill Bruford

by Mark Griffith

**B**ill Bruford is a fascinating musician whose career has taken many twists and turns. Since beginning his career in Yes, he has traveled down many different musical roads. The common elements have been restless creativity and forward-thinking musicality. Add virtuosity behind the drumset, and you have a pretty good description of Bruford.

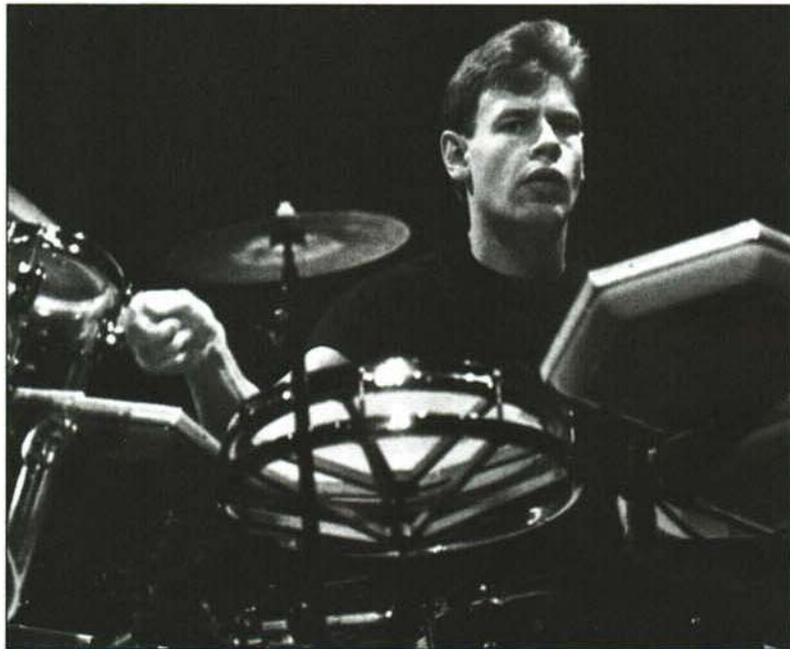
Bruford's legacy has included authoring a book, leading several outstanding bands, and being a member of a couple of *legendary* bands. In this article we'll look at the most important and contrasting highlights of Bill Bruford's unparalleled musical career to date.

The original Yes was a group that defined the English progressive rock style. While Bruford appeared on many of their early releases, including *Yes* and *Time And A Word*, his contributions were most strongly felt on the popular classics *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge*.

On *Fragile* the music is complex and multi-layered. However, Bruford's drumming is unembellished. This is not to say that Bill's playing is simplistic, because it isn't. An important aspect of *Fragile* is that Bill's right hand keeps the music flowing along quite nicely. When many other drummers play this "progressive" style of music, they tend to "over-subdivide" the timeflow. On *Fragile*, Bruford's logical and flowing approach relies on subdividing between the bass and the snare drum while playing a consistent ostinato pattern with his right hand. As a result, the often complex music feels very natural and relaxed. Notice this especially on "Long Distance Runaround."

On repeated listenings of "Roundabout," you can hear that Bruford could have played *much* more. There are several places where the drums could have played in unison with the rest of the band, or drawn attention to the technical aspects of the song. Instead, when the rest of the band is playing complicated and dense music, Bruford keeps relatively simple time, and doesn't clutter the music. As we move on you'll see that this is an important characteristic of Bill Bruford's drumming.

In the first part of "South Side Of The Sky," Bill's groove is greatly affected by his unison snare drum notes and hi-hat barks. In this *less* dense song, Bruford's drumming is *more* complicated—because the music allows it. Bruford's own linear composition, "Five Percent For Nothing," is a preview of how his own band would later sound. For "Heart Of The Sunrise," Bill gives each section of music a very distinct shape and feel, which all grows out of the "Mahavishnu-sounding" intro.



*Close To The Edge* has a more "orchestrated" approach. This is not to imply that Bruford is playing more or less drums, but he does interact more with the music. He actually sounds like a big band drummer—setting up and playing the "hits" throughout the tunes, whereas he previously played through them. However, in the middle section of the outstanding title composition, his resilient hi-hat returns to "smooth out" the complicated musical passages. On "And You And I" Bill shows us that it isn't the drummer's job to always play from the beginning of a song and continue nonstop until the end. He picks the perfect times to add and subtract his drumming. If he was to react to every important note on "Siberian Khatru," he might *still* be playing. Instead, he chooses to construct a drum part that bonds the many layers of the song, instead of adding yet another layer to it. Both *Fragile* and *Close To The Edge* are vital recordings for a drummer's library.

In King Crimson, guitarist/leader Robert Fripp initially relied on Bruford to "mind the fort" while the maniacal percussionist Jamie Muir explored the "outside" world. This approach was documented on Crimson's *Larks' Tongues In Aspic*. The young Bruford is outstanding in this roll, especially on Parts 1 and 2 of the title track. His simple (by "Brufordian" standards) groove becomes an integral component of the composition, while it snakes around the intertwining lines of the song—much like Bill's approach in Yes. Also check out the outstanding tune "Easy Money," which is again relatively simple.

By 1974 the band had been reduced to a trio of Fripp, Bruford,

and bassist John Wetton. *Red* is a striking recording by this particular edition of King Crimson. It's rough around the edges—a record of contrasts. The title composition is one of the best examples ever of melodic and creative instrumental rock music. "Providence" has Bill sounding like a percussion ensemble within a heavy twentieth-century classical-sounding soundscape. "Starless" is also absolutely amazing.

In 1974 King Crimson also recorded the outstanding *Starless And Bible Black*. This recording is more vocal-oriented, and Bruford's drumming leans more toward the groove here than on the more spatial and improvisational *Red*. On "The Great Deceiver" John Wetton's shifting lyrics and Bruford's groove intertwine perfectly. On "Lament" the timekeeping becomes more linear, a concept that Bruford helped pioneer. "The Mincer" is comprised of many legato and somewhat unrelated ideas. Only the drumming unites these sounds into a seamless and thrilling compositional idea. "We'll Let You Know" finds Bruford sounding again like a fine percussion ensemble, which is also how he approaches the beginning of "Starless And Bible Black." Later in this song, Bruford continues by floating in and out of the composition using silence, percussion, and drumset as different textures within the song. The beautiful "Trio" has virtually no drumming, which again shows that what we *don't* play is often as important as what we do.

Besides his playing, Bill's *sound* on *Starless* is unique. His riveted ride cymbal gives his staccato and broken approach a complementary legato sound. His snare sound (especially on the title tune) has a high-pitched, metallic, barking quality that breaks through the musical "chaos" perfectly.

Also in 1974 King Crimson recorded an entire concert in Amsterdam. While this show has been partially released in different forms, it was only recently released in its entirety. This double CD, titled *The Nightwatch*, offers a good look at Crimson's ethereal live work during the '70s.

In the '80s, King Crimson re-formed as a quartet, with Tony Levin on bass and Adrian Belew on guitar. The group recorded three albums: *Discipline*, *Beat*, and *Three Of A Perfect Pair*. This version of Crimson was very different from the earlier one. They relied heavily on Belew's vocals, and were more "groove"-oriented. Bruford employed a perfect mix of eclectic acoustic and electronic sounds. From this trilogy of recordings, check out the unremitting and shifting grooves of "Elephant Talk" and "Three Of A Perfect Pair." The cut "Model Man" is very pop-influenced, while Bruford's drum solo in "No Warning" is one of his best. There are also two live concert videos from this era of Crimson that offer us valuable insight into Bruford's art. The rather darkly filmed *The Noise Live At Frejus* and the amazing *Live In Japan* provide us with the important visuals of Bruford in action. Also check out the live *Bruford And The Beat* video released by DCI Video.

During the break between "Crimsons," in 1977 Bill Bruford formed his own band, and that group (aptly called Bruford) recorded several outstanding records. The first, *Feels Good To Me*, was Bruford's first unbridled outlet for his unique compositional skills. While the recording had its high points, the compositions and the musical relationships hadn't quite jelled. However, the following recordings—*One Of A Kind* and the live *Bruford Tapes*—

## Tracking Them Down

Here's a list of the albums mentioned in this month's column, including label and catalog information. Below the list are several sources you might want to check for hard-to-find releases.

### Yes

*Yes*, Atlantic 82680  
*Time And A Word*, Atlantic 82681  
*Fragile*, Atlantic 82667  
*Close To The Edge*, Atlantic 82666

### King Crimson

*Red*, Virgin EGCD15  
*Larks' Tongues In Aspic*, Virgin EGCD 7  
*Starless And Bible Black*, Virgin EGCD 12  
*The Nightwatch*, Discipline DGM 9707  
*Discipline*, EG EG049  
*Beat*, EG EG051

*Three Of A Perfect Pair*, EG EG055  
*Thrak*, Virgin V212-40313  
*B'Boom*, Discipline DGM 9503

### Bruford

*Feels Good To Me*, EG EGCD 33  
*One Of A Kind*, EG EGCD 40  
*The Bruford Tapes*, EG EGCD 6  
*Gradually Going Tornado*, EG EGCD 44

### U.K.

*U.K.*, EG EGCD 35  
**Bill Bruford and Patrick Moraz**  
*Music For Piano And Drums*, Editions EG EGED 33  
*Flags*, EG Records EGLP 63

### Bill Bruford

*If Summer Had Its Ghosts*, Samson DGM 9705

### Earthworks

*Earthworks*, Editions EG EEGCD 48  
*Dig?*, Editions EG EEGCD 60  
*All Heaven Broke Loose*, Editions EG EEG2103  
*Live, Stamping Ground*, Venture/Caroline CAR1893

### David Torn

*Cloud About Mercury*, ECM 78118-21322  
*Door X*, Windham Hill WD1096

### Bruford and Levin

*Upper Extremities aka B.L.U.E.*, Papa Bear PBDC 3

### Tony Levin

*World Diary*, Papa Bear PBDC 1

### Instructional Video

#### Bill Bruford

*Bruford And The Beat*, DCI Music Video

### Performance Video

#### King Crimson

*The Noise Live At Frejus*, Discipline DGMVC2  
*Three Of A Perfect Pair Live In Japan*, Discipline DGMVC 3

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*When In Doubt, Roll!* Modern Drummer Publication!

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capture a looser and more aggressive band that had obviously benefited from some live work. *One Of A Kind* is just that. It is an astounding example of a *different* kind of fusion.

The early post-Miles Davis fusion of Weather Report and Lifetime had explored the looser song forms and open-ended soloing that was influenced by late-'60s avant-garde jazz. But soon, fusion groups like The Mahavishnu Orchestra and Bruford began to be defined by flurries of notes, odd times, and intricate arrangements. As displayed on *One Of A Kind* and *The Bruford Tapes*, Bruford (the drummer *and* the band) were masters of this later style of fusion. These are *essential* recordings. The final recording of this group is titled *Gradually Going Tornado*.

It was in the beginning of 1978, between the recordings *Feels Good To Me* and *One Of A Kind*, that Bill Bruford, Allan Holdsworth, Eddie Jobson, and John Wetton formed the group U.K. Their music was somewhat of a cross between Yes and King Crimson, but it lacked the freshness and spontaneity that was the core of those two legendary groups. Bill's short stay was documented on the self-titled debut recording. Possibly the most important aspect of U.K. was Holdsworth and Bruford's growing musical relationship, an "intangible" that made *One Of A Kind* such an extraordinary recording. Bruford's departure from U.K. is described in his informative book, *When In Doubt, Roll!* It simply seems like U.K. was not a forward step for a *very* forward-thinking musician. However, the music is definitely worth checking out. (The drum chair was later filled briefly by a young Terry

Bozzio.)

In the mid-'80s, Bill recorded two outstanding duet recordings with Moody Blues keyboardist Patrick Moraz. The first is an entirely acoustic outing simply called *Music For Piano And Drums*. While Bruford had been involved in several bands of outstanding musicians, all of those bands performed very dense and arranged music. This density, along with Bill's inclusion of electronics, often masked Bill's sheer mastery of the acoustic drumset. On *Music For Piano And Drums* we hear two musicians interacting and creating great music. Here, Bruford's drumming seems influenced by Roy Haynes and Ed Blackwell. The bashing "Eastern Sundays" and the tribal "Blue Brains" are unequaled highlights on a record of nothing *but* highlights.

The duo's follow-up recording, *Flags*, is also very good. It does incorporate some electronics, but as always with Bruford, taste prevails over technology. Bruford "covers" Max Roach's "The Drum Also Waltzes," and the duo also plays some standard song forms. Both of these recordings deserve to be on CD, but unfortunately aren't. So head to the closest used-record store and find these two musical gems.

Bill's duet recordings with Patrick Moraz lead us (stylistically, if not chronologically) to Bill's most recent recording, *If Summer Had Its Ghosts*. This is one of the most *musical* drummer-led recordings of recent history. Bruford's compositions are interesting and creative, and bassist Eddie Gomez and guitarist/pianist Ralph Towner are perfect complements to Bill's tasteful drumming. But Bruford is the star of this recording. Check out the title

track, which could be described as "reggae tribal bop." The relaxed groove of "The Ballad Of Vilcabamba" is also amazing. "Thisledown" harks back to the days of the group Bruford, and "Never The Same Way Once" almost sounds like the classic Bill Evans Trio of the '50s. Sure, Bill (in his own words) admits that he'll *never* be Roy Haynes. But with this recording, we have heard Bill Bruford take a giant step in telling us who he *really* is.

Yet another incarnation of King Crimson appeared in the mid-'90s with the studio album *Thrak*. The most recent lineup is heavily detailed by Bruford (and Pat Mastelotto) in MD's November 1995 issue. But I will add a high recommendation for the recording *B'Boom, Official Bootleg Live From Argentina*. There is nothing that sounds quite like this band live.

Bruford's most recent band effort, Earthworks, released four recordings: *Earthworks*, *Dig?*, *All Heaven Broke Loose*, and *Live, Stamping Ground*. Jazz-influenced improvisatory music with strong funk undertones, these releases highlight Bruford's inclusion of electronics in a seamless, creative, and unmatched fashion. But as we've already discovered, this is only part of his genius. The concept, compositions, and performances on all of the Earthworks recordings are stellar. But *Earthworks* and *Live, Stamping Ground* are standout examples of creativity and excitement.

Finally, let's look at the recordings that the relationship between Crimson bassist Tony Levin and Bruford has generated. After playing together in the '80s version of King Crimson, Bill and Tony recorded with David Torn on *Cloud About Mercury*. On this

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recording Bill's timekeeping basically fits into two categories: very abstract and textural, and relatively simple and straight down the middle. His abstract approach consists of non-traditional sticking patterns on unusual sound sources, while the simpler parts consist of occasional backbeats interspersed with linear grooves. Bruford often shifts between these sounds to keep Tom's multi-layered soundscapes moving forward. Listen to "Previous Man" and "Suyafhu Seal" for these tasteful and creative timekeeping ideas.

The most recent example of Bill and Tony recording together is on their own recording *Bruford Levin Upper Extremities* or *B.L.U.E.* (also with David Torn and trumpeter Chris Botti). This is an exciting and highly focused recording. The compositions all seem to be built from the bottom up, which is the basic difference between it and *CloudAbout Mercury*. Bruford and Levin constantly build and release great amounts of tension, which keeps the listener on his or her toes and the music moving forward. Bruford also appears on some of Tony Levin's recording *World Diary*, and on David Tom's *Door X*.

Bill Bruford has pioneered many drumming techniques and styles. He is also a world-class composer and bandleader. His contributions toward the history of drumming are important and undeniable. Inside his great drumming we find creativity, musicality, and the restless spirit of a true artist. Listen, enjoy, and learn.



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# 1998 DCI World Championship Results

by Lauren Vogel Weiss

For the third year in a row, Drum Corps International's Summer Music Games tour brought the World Championships to Orlando, Florida. From the Division III Preliminaries on August 10th through the Division I (Open Class) Finals on August 15, thousands of dedicated drum corps fans endured another hot, sticky summer in the Sunshine State to watch sixty-one corps perform their best at the Citrus Bowl.

The audience was treated not only to entertaining and well-performed shows throughout the week, but to a close competition as well. With 1997's "Top Three" corps battling it out again in 1998, there was no clear front-runner during the summer. The Cadets Of Bergen County had gone undefeated in the regular season through July 23, but placed second the next two nights to the Concord Blue Devils. The entire last month of competition was a race to see who would come out on top. Even DCI's Division I Quarter-Finals saw the top three finishers, with less than a point spread between them, reverse order in the finals.



The Madison (Wisconsin) Scouts' crowd-pleasing program showcased the drumline, including a passage with nine tenors at one time.

In addition to the corps competition, the World Championships also featured an Individual And Ensemble contest, held on Wednesday, August 12 at Walt Disney World's Pleasure Island. The individual percussion awards went to snare drummer Jeff Hassan (Phantom Regiment, 97.8), multi-tenor drummer Todd Ohme (Glassmen, 93.3), keyboard player Vince Oliver (Santa Clara Vanguard, 93.6), timpanist Robin Brannon (Blue Knights, 96.0), and multi-percussionist Bobby Lopez (Santa Clara Vanguard, 95.5). The cymbal ensemble award (96.0) went to the Magic of Orlando. The best percussion ensemble for the second year in a row was from the Santa Clara Vanguard (97.0)—as was the best bass drum ensemble (97.0) for the fifth year in a row.

Corps competition began with Division III (corps with up to sixty members). The Division III title went to the Mandarins from Sacramento, California for their sixth championship (and third

consecutive victory) with a score of 93.8 (9.4 in drums). In the Division II finals (corps averaging eighty members), the winning corps were the East Coast Jazz from Maiden, Massachusetts, and the Spartans from Nashua, New Hampshire, who tied for first place with a score of 97.1. The Spartans placed higher in drums (9.7) than the Jazz (9.5).



The Classmen of Toledo, Ohio were new to the "top six," with a fifth-place finish. Their classical program featured the metallic sounds of cymbals and gongs.

Corps in the Open Class (over eighty members) competed in quarter- and semi-finals, vying for a spot in the vaunted "top twelve"—those who would ultimately go into the final round. Just missing the "cut" in thirteenth place (after a tenth-place finish in 1997) was the hometown corps, Magic of Orlando, who scored an 85.0. However, their "Muddy Water Blues" show proved very popular with audiences, and earned them the third annual "Spirit of Disney" award (\$4,000 cash) for creativity and entertainment. Rounding out the semi-final lineup were the Spirit of Atlanta from Atlanta, Georgia (83.1); the Boston Crusaders from Boston, Massachusetts (81.2); the Kiwanis Kavaliers from Kitchener, Ontario, Canada (78.5); and Les Étoiles from L'Acadie, Quebec, Canada (76.9).

When the results of the finals were announced, twelfth place went to the Colts of Dubuque, Iowa, who scored an 85.3 (8.4 in



The Concord (California) Blue Devils' show—*One Hand, One Heart*—blended the music of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo And Juliet* with Bernstein's *West Side Story*.

drums). Their program, *An A Cappella Celebration*, showcased Glad's hymn "Crown Him With Many Crowns," "Searching For Reza," Wayne Shorter's "Footprints," "Morning" by Vox One, and an original closer of "Vox Finale." Their horn line and drum line proved that this was not really an "a cappella" show. Cymbals also played a prominent role, both marched on a rack (a la "quads") and bowed in the pit.



Dan Scaifiti

**The Santa Clara (California) Vanguard won "Best Percussion Performance" with a near-perfect score of 9.9 (out of 10.0).**

Carolina Crown from Charlotte, North Carolina scored an 85.7 (9.0 in drums) for eleventh place. Their show of *The Music Of Alfred Reed* included "Russian Christmas Music," "Armenian Dances," and "Praise Jerusalem." With one of their better drum books in recent years, the drumline led the corps by placing eighth in drums. The sleigh bells in the pit during their opener almost made one forget the heat and humidity of Florida!

In tenth place with a score of 87.1 (8.6 in drums) were the Bluecoats from Canton, Ohio. Continuing their tradition of a big band presentation, *The Four Seasons Of Jazz* featured Tommy Wolf's "Spring Can Really Hang You Up The Most," "It Might As Well Be Spring" by Richard Rogers, George Gershwin's "Summertime," and their trademark "Autumn Leaves," by Joseph Kosma and Johnny Mercer. The Gershwin piece featured some authentic African rhythms and colors, and the congas in the pit added nice flavor to the arrangements.

The Blue Knights from Denver, Colorado scored an 89.5 (8.9 in drums) to finish ninth. Their *Masters Of The Symphony* program opened with Shostakovich's *Tenth Symphony* (complete with the driving snare drum rhythm in the original), followed by Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony* "Pathetique," the "Largo" movement of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*, and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. One of the most beautiful visual images of the summer came when the cymbal players lifted a lone color guard member (wearing gossamer butterfly wings) on a "petal" of cymbals in the center of the field.

The Phantom Regiment from Rockford, Illinois scored a disappointing 90.4 (9.2 in drums) to finish eighth. Known for introducing "classical" orchestral music to the grassy fields, their 1998 production was *Music From The Eternal City...Rome*. It featured "Roman Carnival Overture" by Berlioz, Puccini's "Un Bel Di" aria, and Respighi's "Pines Of Rome," "Pines Of the Villa Borghese," and "Pines Of The Appian Way." Phantom's majestic

horn line brought out the emotion in the music, while the percussion provided pulse and color.

Dropping one place from 1997, the Grossmen from Newark, Delaware finished in seventh with a score of 91.4 (9.3 in drums). Bringing the music of Pat Metheny to the field, they performed "Third Wind," "Letter From Home," and "First Circle." The drumline often sounded like a drumset, punctuating the jazz music with just the right accents and feel. The opener showcased the battery, while the drum solo in the closer featured the pit.

The Madison Scouts from Madison, Wisconsin pleased the crowd but not the judges, scoring a 91.9 (8.5 in drums) for sixth place. Celebrating their 60th anniversary in 1998, the Scouts presented an all-jazz program featuring the music from *Lupon* (a Japanese cartoon), "Swingin' Pete...Sweet" (an original composition for the corps loosely based on Grieg's *Peer Gynt Suite*), and Paul Hart's "Remembrance." One of the last corps to march a full complement of percussion, the drumline took turns showcasing the snares in the opener (with twelve snares—and no tenors—playing at one time) and later the tenors (with nine at one time).

A new member of the elite "top six" was the Glassmen from Toledo, Ohio, who scored a 92.8 (9.5 in drums) for fifth place. Their *Dreams Of Gold: The Music Of Alexander Borodin* program reminded some fans of the Phantom Regiment of yesteryear. The Glassmen performed "In The Steppes Of Central Asia," the "Notturmo" movement from *String Quartet No. 2 In D Major* (bet-



Dan Scaifiti

**The Cadets of Bergen County, from Bergenfield, New Jersey, won their seventh DCI Championship.**

ter known as "And This Is My Beloved"), "Polovetsian Dances," and the *Symphony No. 2 In B Minor*. The metallic sounds of cymbals and gongs created the proper color palette (both visually and musically) for the musical selections.

In fourth place with a score of 96.2 (9.8 in drums) were the Cavaliers from Rosemont, Illinois. Celebrating their 50th anniversary, the "Green Machine" presented *Traditions For A New Era*. Jay Kennedy's "The Path Between The Mountains" opened the show, followed by two works from Phillip Sparke's "Dance Movements" and a finale of "Machine" by William Bolcom. The Cavies' pit featured several large multiple-percussion setups, along with four concert bass drums. During "Machine," the color guard became percussionists by using varying sizes of China-type cymbals both as visual props and for percussive accents.

The Blue Devils from Concord, California had hoped to become

only the second corps to win three consecutive world titles. (The Garfield Cadets—now the Cadets of Bergen County—did it in 1983, 1984, and 1985). But they had a disappointing Championship week, placing first in quarter-finals, slipping to a tie for second in semi-finals, and winding up in third place overall, with a score of 97.7 (9.4 in drums). The Devils performed one of the summer's most entertaining and challenging shows: *One Hand, One Heart*, which blended the music of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo And Juliet* with Bernstein's *West Side Story*. The battery sounded like an

aggressive drumset player in the Bernstein sections (complete with rimshots for finger snaps), while the keyboards in the pit played the violin parts in the Tchaikovsky sections.

Placing a consistent second throughout Championship week, the Santa Clara Vanguard from Santa Clara, California scored a 97.9 and won "Best Percussion Performance" with a near-perfect score of 9.9 (out of 10.0). Their program, *Copland: The Modernist*, featured the composer's less familiar works: *Grohg* (a ballet revised in 1932), *Hear Ye! Hear Ye!* (another ballet from 1934), "Down A Country Lane"

(1962), and "Dance Panels" (1959). Their twenty-eight-member drumline (seven snares, four tenors, five basses, four cymbals, and eight pit) displayed a wide variety of percussion colors and timbres, from brushes on the snares and tenors to temple blocks and brake drums—and even a "pseudo drumset" of a floor tom, ride cymbal, and hi-hat played by the tenor drummers on the right front sideline. (Those same sedate tenor players broke loose in a few moments of wild, jive dancing before reverting back to their serious musical personae!)

When it was over Saturday night, the Cadets of Bergen County from Bergenfield, New Jersey had won their seventh DCI Championship with a score of 98.4 (9.7 in drums). Their show featured the musical work *Stonehenge*, by Dutch composer Jan van der Roost. With a drill that was constantly changing, the drumline was playing "on the move" through most of the eleven-and-a-half-minute show. The ten-member pit on the front sideline was quite busy, too, with fast and furious keyboard runs as well as orchestra-quality tambourine playing.

"We're trying to be more supportive of the brass this year, because their book is really hard," commented Tom Aungst, percussion arranger for the Cadets. "Instead of playing too much 'stuff' and not letting the music shine, we're trying to be more of a 'team player.' It's a little bit more musical than other years, which is a slightly different approach."

The 1999 DCI World Championships will be held August 16-21 in Madison, Wisconsin. For more information on drum & bugle corps, write Drum Corps International at PO Box 548, Lombard, IL 60148-4527, or call (630) 495-9866. Or check it out online at [www.dci.org](http://www.dci.org).

## MD Giveaway Winners

**Alan Knipe** of Arvada, Colorado is the first-prize winner in the Slingerland/MD Giveaway that appeared in the July and August issues of *MD*. Alan will receive a Slingerland *Legend Series Buddy Rich Signature* drumkit, with hardware. Second prize, a 6 1/2x14 *Radio King* snare drum, goes to **Fuad Saba** of Englewood, Colorado. Third prize winner **William Daniel** of Toledo, Ohio receives a



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The winner of Zildjian's 375th Anniversary Contest (which appeared in the August and September issues of *MD*) is **Arthur J. Hightower** of Rochester, New York. Arthur received an all-expenses-paid trip for two to Zildjian's American Drummers Achievement Awards on September 13 in Boston, including air travel, hotel accommodations, pre-show reception, and Gold Circle Seating for the show.

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**S**askatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada drummer Matt Power's kit is unique not only because he made it himself, but also because it's made entirely of steel. Matt created the kit from stainless and galvanized steel that he acquired from a sheet metal shop where he was working at the time. The set consists of 8" and 12" toms made of 24-gauge stainless steel, 10" and 14" toms made of 18-gauge galvanized steel, and an 18" bass drum made of 20-gauge galvanized steel. A Pearl *Forum* series metal snare drum completes the kit, along with Zildjian, Sabian, and Vader cymbals.

Matt's rack is also homemade, using a combination of electrical conduit, black iron pipe, and Dixon rack clamps. The drums are mounted to the rack with lengths of "redi rod" Matt found around the shop. The hardware on the kit is of varied manufacturers, but the bass drum spurs are actually bolts threaded through holes drilled in the shell.

According to Matt, "The set took about six months to complete. Its sound could

be described as 'loud, bold, and cutting.' The drums do have a slight ring to them, and tuning can sometimes be a challenge, since one drum often has an entirely different sound compared to the next. But this contributes to the uniqueness of the set, which you might say is best suited for 'heavy metal.'"



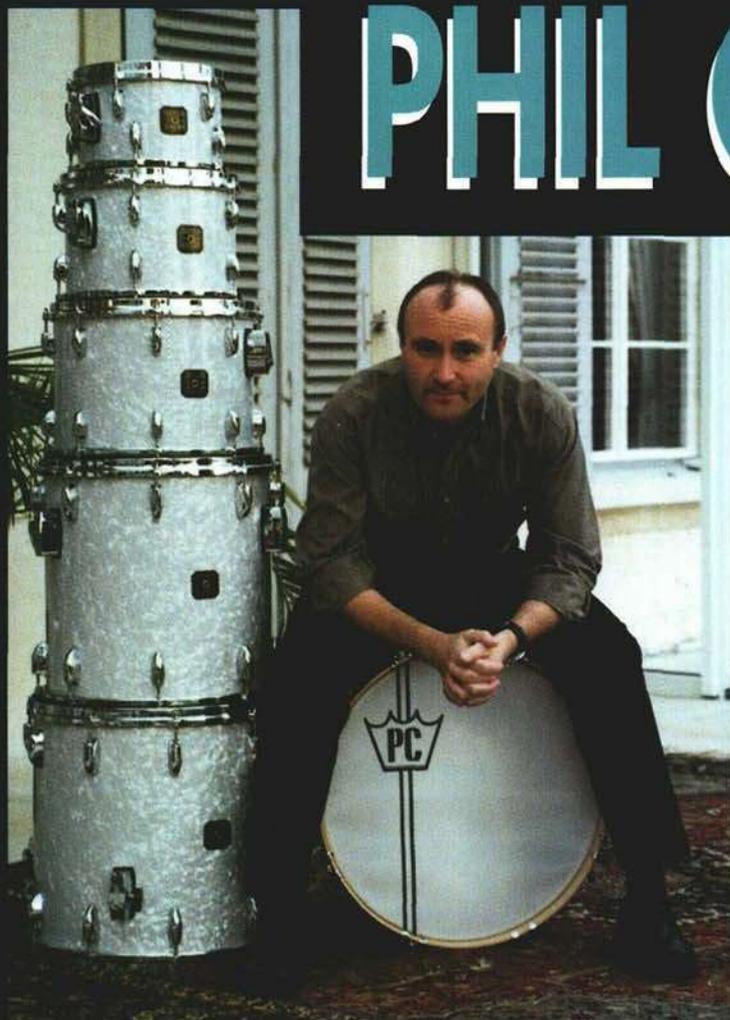
#### PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a

neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.



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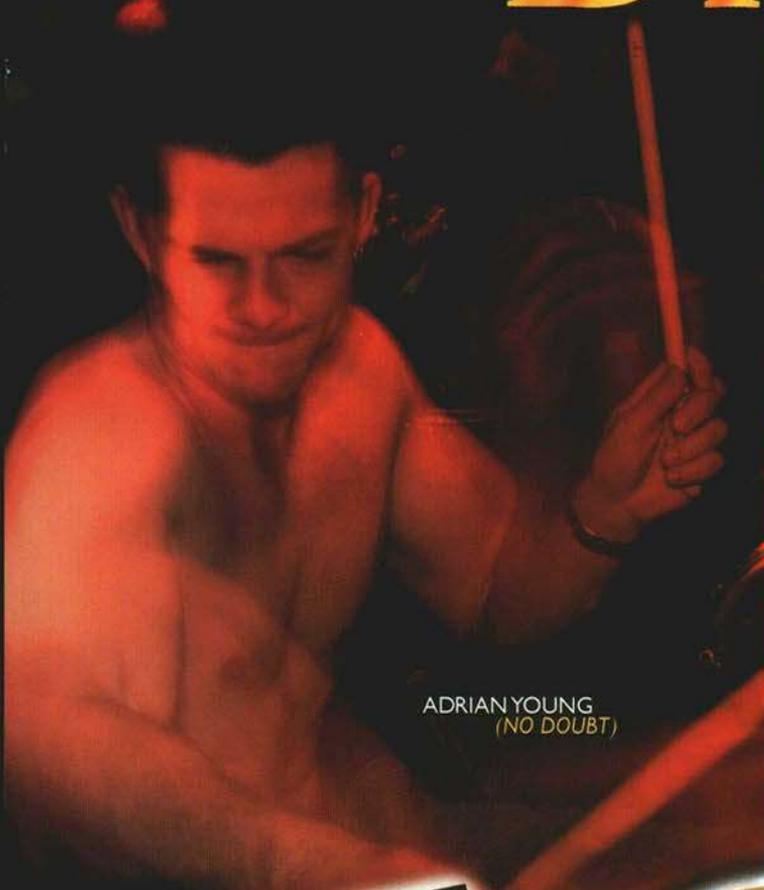
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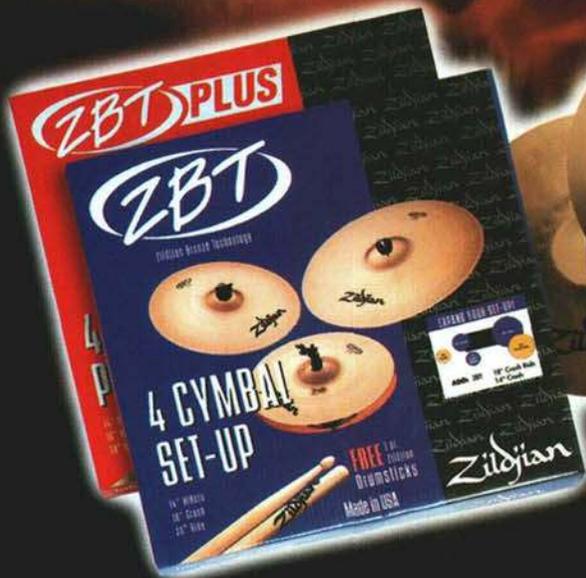
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