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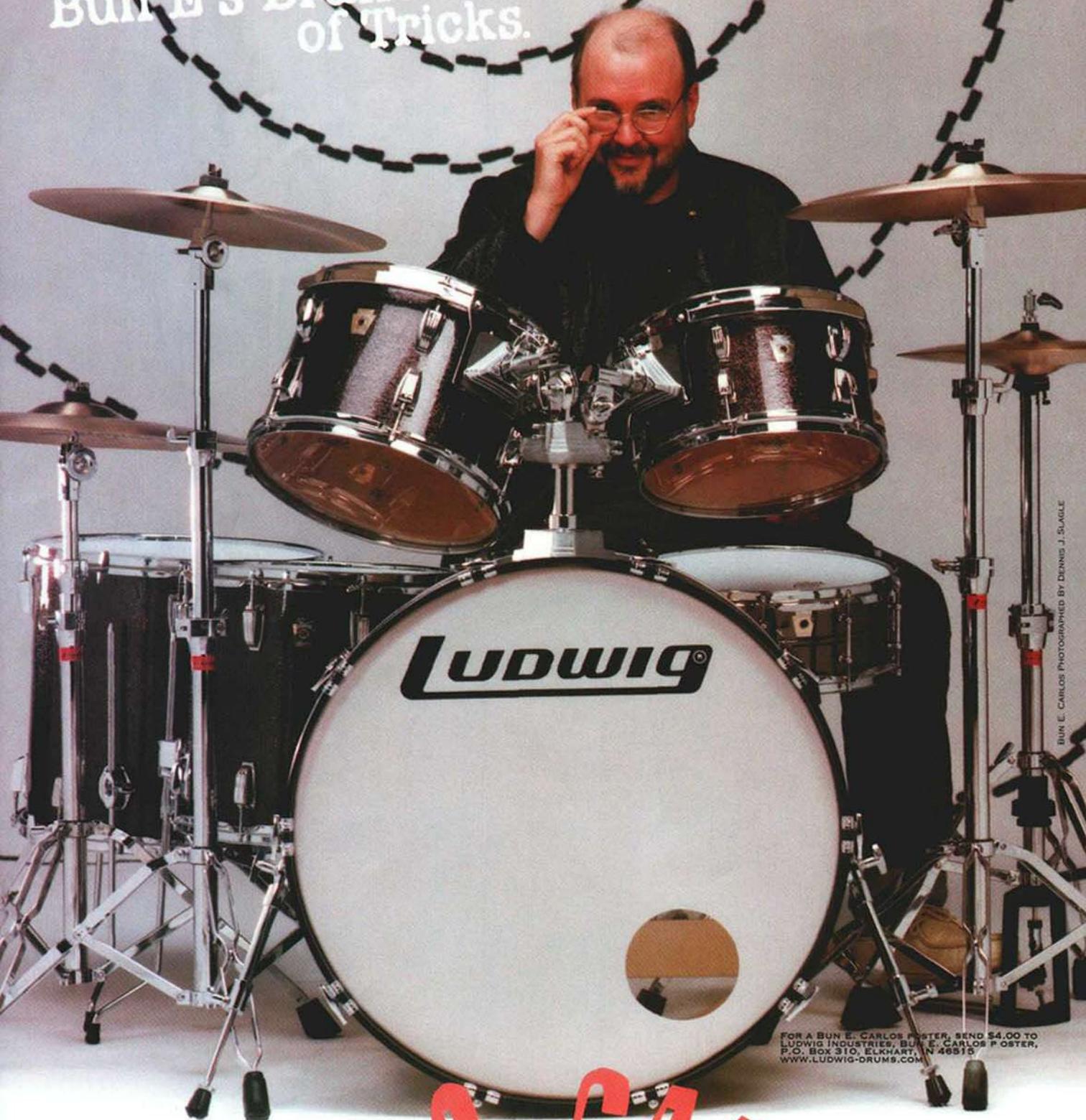
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contents



CLYDE STUBBLEFIELD & JOHN "JABO" STARKS

With a new video and a record in the works, the funkiest of James Brown's drummers have some tales to tell and secrets to uncover.

by Ken Micallef

48

DARREN JESSEE

Ben Folds Five got hot their *own* way. Drummer Darren Jessee is no different.

by David John Farinella

66

STEVE ALEXANDER

Jeff Beck's latest beatmaster is a *killer*.

by T. Bruce Wittet

78

'70s DRUMMING GREATS TODAY

Bad Co.'s Simon Kirke, Don Brewer of Grand Funk, Cheap Trick's Bun E. Carlos, and Phil Ehart of Kansas: Don't count 'em out just yet!

by Adam Budofsky

93

INSIDE ORANGE COUNTY DRUM & PERCUSSION

Hangin' with the drum-makers for No Doubt, 311, and hipsters far and wide.

by Rick Van Horn

104

UPDATE

Free Master Abbey Rader

Cake's Todd Roper

Bootsy Collins' Frankie "Kash" Waddy

Alex Cline

JD Charlton of Virgos Merlot

14

IN THE STUDIO

MORGAN ROSE OF SEVENDUST

A front-row seat to the recording of Sevendust's slamming new album!

by Matt Peiken

20

FROM THE PAST

JERRY "J.I." ALLISON

Buddy Holly's purveyor of paradiddles is finally getting his due.

by Harry Cangany

140

education

- 116 **STRICTLY TECHNIQUE**
Musical Accents, Part 1
by Ted Bonar and Ed Breckenfeld
- 120 **ROCK 'N' JAZZ CLINIC**
Cross-Stepping, Part 1
Getting The Most From Your Left Foot
by Rich Rychel
- 122 **JAZZ DRUMMERS' WORKSHOP**
Basic Training, Part 2
by John Riley
- 130 **BASICS**
From The Garage To The Gig
by Harriett L. Schwartz
- 136 **THE MUSICAL DRUMMER**
The Importance Of Music Theory
For Drummers
by Ted Bonar
- 146 **DRIVER'S SEAT**
Swingin' In A Modern Age, Part 3
by Daniel Glass
- 150 **THE JOBBING DRUMMER**
Hauling A Drumset
by Pat O'Connell
- 152 **HEALTH & SCIENCE**
Eddie Tuduri
From Patient To Provider
by Robyn Flans

departments

- 6 **AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW**
The Whole Big Mosaic
by Rich Watson
- 8 **READERS' PLATFORM**
- 26 **ASK A PRO**
Steve Ferrone, Steve Smith, and Carl Palmer
- 28 **IT'S QUESTIONABLE**
- 126 **CRITIQUE**

- 143 **ON THE MOVE**
- 158 **INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS**
Including Taking The Stage
- 164 **DRUM MARKET**
Including Vintage Showcase
- 168 **INSIDE TRACK** NEW DEPARTMENT
Matt Chamberlain
by T. Bruce Wittet

equipment

- 34 **NEW AND NOTABLE**
- 38 **PRODUCT CLOSE-UP**
Mapex Orion Classic Comfort Size Kit
by Rick Mattingly
- 40 Sabian Signature And Specialty Ride Cymbals
by Chap Ostrander
- 42 Quick Looks: Master Grip Drumsticks,
GK Music Drumphones II,
And Visu-Lite Electronic Cymbals
- 43 Evans EQ4 Bass Drum Heads, Retro Screen,
And Power Center Batter
by Rick Mattingly

144

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The Whole Big Mosaic

We don't set out to ruffle our readers' feathers, but sometimes we do it anyway. And when we do, we usually hear about it through their heated letters to the magazine.

Recently *MD* received two letters decrying an April '99 feature on Joe Chambers, which one reader perceived to be "very pro drag." During the course of the interview, Joe talked mostly about music, but he also painted a fascinating social backdrop to its evolution during the '40s, '50s, and '60s. Issues he touched upon included racism, urban decay, the straggle for civil rights (apparently none of which piqued the reader's outrage)—and musicians' use of drugs. Despite the hot-button topics, his responses were candid and coolly objective; he wasn't editorializing, just describing the reality of the times. The angry reader had protested the lack of "any advice or regrets" about the drug use, perhaps missing Joe's admission of having been "too spaced out" to pursue an offered Blue Note recording date—hardly an argument for drug-abuse advocacy. In any case, the two short paragraphs about drugs in a 4,000-word article did not define Joe's story; rather, they were a small fragment of his brief documentation of an era—like a single square in a mosaic.

Through printing the "Play It Straight" ads, a couple of anti-drag articles (most notably Zoro's "Dancing With Destruction" in the February 1997 issue), and numerous celebrated drummers' tales of substance-abuse casualties, *MD*'s stand on the subject is

pretty clear. Censoring or "sanitizing" Joe's response, in effect presenting a historical mosaic with a couple of the less-shiny pieces missing, would be a disservice to our readers, whom we respect for their ability to read *all* the words *in context*.

This mosaic metaphor can be extended to the entire array of articles you find in *Modern Drummer*, which features drummers who sometimes say, do, and play things some readers don't agree with. If there's one thing that the diversity of *MD*'s coverage should suggest, it's that drummers are not a bland, homogeneous species—thank goodness! We have plenty of bumps and sharp edges that make the celebration of our craft all the richer, and prevent its practitioners from being readily distilled into a comfortable, two-dimensional "norm." As the French would say, *Vive la difference!*

So when you occasionally read about drummers who ruffle your feathers—for *whatever* reason—perceive their views for what they really are: small pieces in a much larger, multi-colored, multi-textured mosaic. And consider that sometimes it's our craft's extremes that help us focus on and really define our *own* musical values. The overall "meaning" of the mosaic of drumming is open to much interpretation. But on the whole, *MD* readers are an intelligent group quite capable of putting all the pieces together.

Rich

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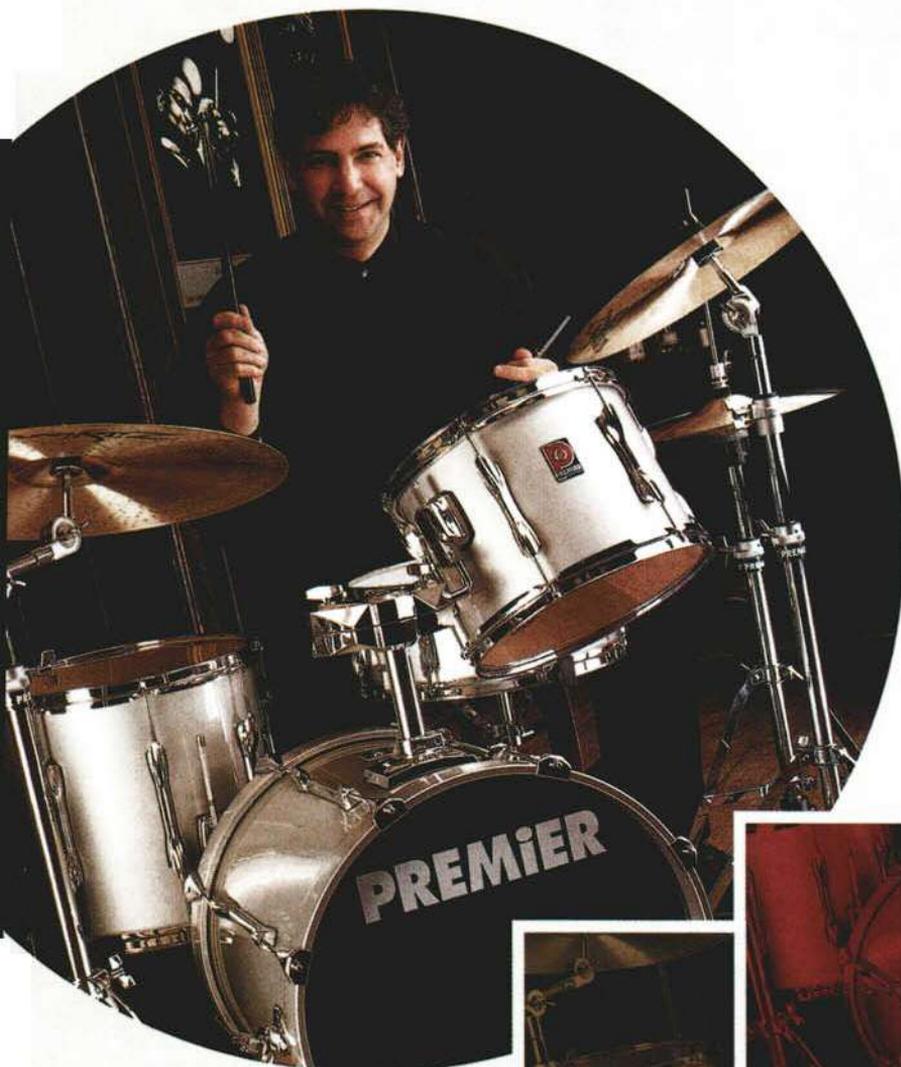
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VIRGIL DONATI

I want to congratulate you for showing your commitment to integrity by featuring Virgil Donati on your June '99 cover. Virgil's dedication to his chosen art form and the excellence he displays *deserves* recognition by the world's premier drum magazine. Good work, guys!

Brett Garsed
 via Internet

Thanks for profiling Virgil Donati. This is the issue I have been waiting years for! After having heard Virgil's playing on the Australian *Jesus Christ Superstar* album, I was hooked! His performance is solid, completely in the pocket, and adds new coloring to an old favorite musical of mine. His playing on this album proved to me that sometimes you *can* "reinvent the wheel"—and improve upon it. I only wish I could see him perform it live! Thanks again!

Katharine Goffe
 via Internet

While there's no denying Virgil Donati's mastery of the technical aspects of the drumset, his obsessive single-mindedness about woodshedding has apparently not only cost him solid gigs in the US, but the joys of a well-rounded life, as well. I can't imagine rudely insulting any of my equipment sponsors by refusing to accept a dinner invitation, or forsaking the joy of finding a soulmate and having a family. Appealing to an audience of drummers alone is hardly the way to make a good living either, something I realized after writing *Great Rock Drummers Of The Sixties*.

One day, Virgil may wake up and realize that while he's capable of playing quadru-

ple paradiddles inside out and upside down on two bass drums, he's missed many other things life has to offer.

Bob Cianci
 via Internet

CLEM BURKE

As a kid growing up in Bayonne, New Jersey I was friends with Clem Burke. Sharing a common interest in drumming, we marched together in local parades, talked about our favorite bands, listened to rock 'n' roll, and bashed around on Clem's white Rogers drumset. When I moved out of town at the end of 8th grade, we corresponded for a couple of years before losing touch with one another. Later on, when Blondie became a well-known band, I'd tell my friends, "I know that guy; we used to hang out together!"

While cleaning out an old closet recently, I came across a number of Clem's letters. Amid mundane talk about the old neighborhood, Clem made references to his budding career—a new drumkit, gigs at the local high school, a "battle of the bands," and so on.

Your interview with Clem [June '99 *MD*] was most enjoyable. It gave a new perspective to those old letters. Clem's insights speak of the maturity he has gained during thirty years in the music business. Yet they show that he is still the same easygoing, free-spirited individual that I knew when we were both much younger.

Peace, Clem...and best of luck with the Blondie reunion and your ongoing career.

Fred Oltarzewski
 Toms River, NJ

IN DEFENSE OF TOMMY

In regards to Richard Lombardo's June '99 *Readers' Platform* letter concerning Tommy Lee's inclusion in the *Update* section of the March issue, I must state the obvious: This magazine is not titled *Husband Of The Month*, *Nice Guy*, or *Modern Family-Man Drummer*. I doubt that anyone considers Mr. Lee to be a role model in respect to his personal life. But no one can deny his impact and influence on a generation of drummers as a result of his *drumming*.

That's what this magazine is about.

I'm sure that spousal abuse has, regrettably, taken place in other famous drummers' households. But I don't think *Modern Drummer* magazine should exclude someone from its pages because of issues totally unrelated to the world of drumming.

Strother Bullins
 Nashville, TN

In response to Richard Lombardo's acerbic letter regarding Tommy Lee, all I can say is that Tommy *absolutely* has a right to coverage in *Modern Drummer*. Besides performing the most spectacular drum solo in rock 'n' roll history, Tommy Lee's fame has transcended the drum world. Since Buddy Rich, who else can lay claim to that fact?

Everyone has made stupid mistakes in their personal lives. "Let he who hath not sinned...." remember? If Pamela can forgive him and remarry him—they are back together at this time—why should *Modern Drummer* treat him as a pariah?

Shame on you Richard!

Menachem Goldman
 New York, NY

GIVE THE WRITERS SOME

I'd like to commend Bill Miller on his June *An Editor's Overview* piece about not giving up playing drums due to one negative experience. I've been playing for over twenty years, and it was positive affirmations like this, given to me during my early days of learning, that have kept me beating the skins to this day.

I started playing at the age of twelve. Like the young drummers Bill mentioned, who were intimidated by Virgil Donati's playing, I, too, was blown away by drummers like Peter Criss, Neil Peart, Tommy Aldridge, and Clive Burr. I thought I'd *never* be as talented as they were. I became discouraged, and I almost gave up. But instead, I realized that I should take inspiration from these great players. They became role models for me, promoting a desire to bring my abilities up to their level.

The bottom line is, if you take what today's incredible drummers have to offer, and learn all you can, one day you'll be the one inspiring others to become great drum-

John "Jabo" Starks

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mers. Thanks, Bill, for stating this positive message so well.

Craig Farmer
San Antonio, TX

Many thanks to you and Rod Morgenstein for a terrific *Rock 'N' Jazz Clinic* segment in your June '99 issue. I am a long-time subscriber to *MD*, and I've appreciated Rod's many contributions over the years. His articles are concise, well thought out, and creative. Rod has a knack for developing simple ideas into challenging exercises that we can apply to our everyday playing. Thanks again for another fine example of Rod's work.

Don Miles
Indianapolis, IN

Russ McKinnon's "Becoming A Working Drummer" article in your June issue really spoke to me. I often get discouraged seeing "chops monsters" getting high-paying gigs while knowing little or nothing about taste or authenticity. It felt good to hear someone sing the praises of drummers who work hard at playing in the correct style, all the while believing that "less is more."

I teach at a local middle school, and this is something I try to drive into my students' heads—often with questionable results. My students often get so caught up in training their hands to play fast that I often wonder if I should just teach them how to build up their chops and give up my crusade. Russ's article has given me confidence that my methods are justified.

I hope the future installments of Russ's series will be as eye-opening and encouraging to us "pocket players." But even if they aren't, my hat is off to *MD* for getting this one to print.

Jack Ringca
Jacksonville, FL

I'd like to thank Ron Hefner for his "Legitimate Or Illegitimate" *Teachers' Forum* piece in your June issue. For years I've used traditional grip for jazz gigs and matched for rock gigs, letting the feel of the music dictate my sticking technique. Maybe Ron's article will help put to rest the argument of traditional versus matched. There is no *right* grip—only the one that's right for the job.

Robert Botsford
Naples, FL

Congrats to John Ramsay for his efforts in writing *The Drummer's Complete Vocabulary As Taught By Alan Dawson*. The excerpt that appeared in your June issue prompted me to buy the book. It's something I've awaited for years. As a young student I studied from Ted Reed's *Syncopation* book. But I often felt frustrated because I had heard of Alan Dawson's unique methods of teaching from that book, yet I had no access to those methods. Now I can use Mr. Ramsay's book to pass on Alan's knowledge to my students. Thanks, Mr. Ramsay!

Thanks, also, to *MD* for passing this information on to other drummers. You are providing an invaluable service for percussion performers and teachers who still care about their instruments!

Keith Krotzer
no address given



KUDOS TO HQ PERCUSSION

In the fifteen years that I've been reading *MD*, I've found many great products advertised. One of these was *Sound-Off Drum Silencers*, made and sold by HQ Percussion in St. Louis, Missouri. I recently sent their support desk an email explaining how, during a move, I lost some parts to the *Sound-Off* set I bought several years ago. I wanted to replace the parts—hopefully without buying an entire new set of pads.

I received a reply the very next day from Rob Birenbaum, owner of HQ Percussion. He said that the parts were in the mail, at no charge! The parts weren't costly; they're really just some rubber bands designed to hold the bass drum pad against the batter head. But I was still pleasantly surprised at the gesture. It's refreshing to see a company offer this level of support to a customer simply on the basis of an email. I guess this is just one more example of how far the bond of drumming reaches. I wanted to take this opportunity to tell all *MD* readers about this outstanding company and the way they do business.

Kent Swepston
McPherson, KS



Dynamic Duo

Dennis Chambers



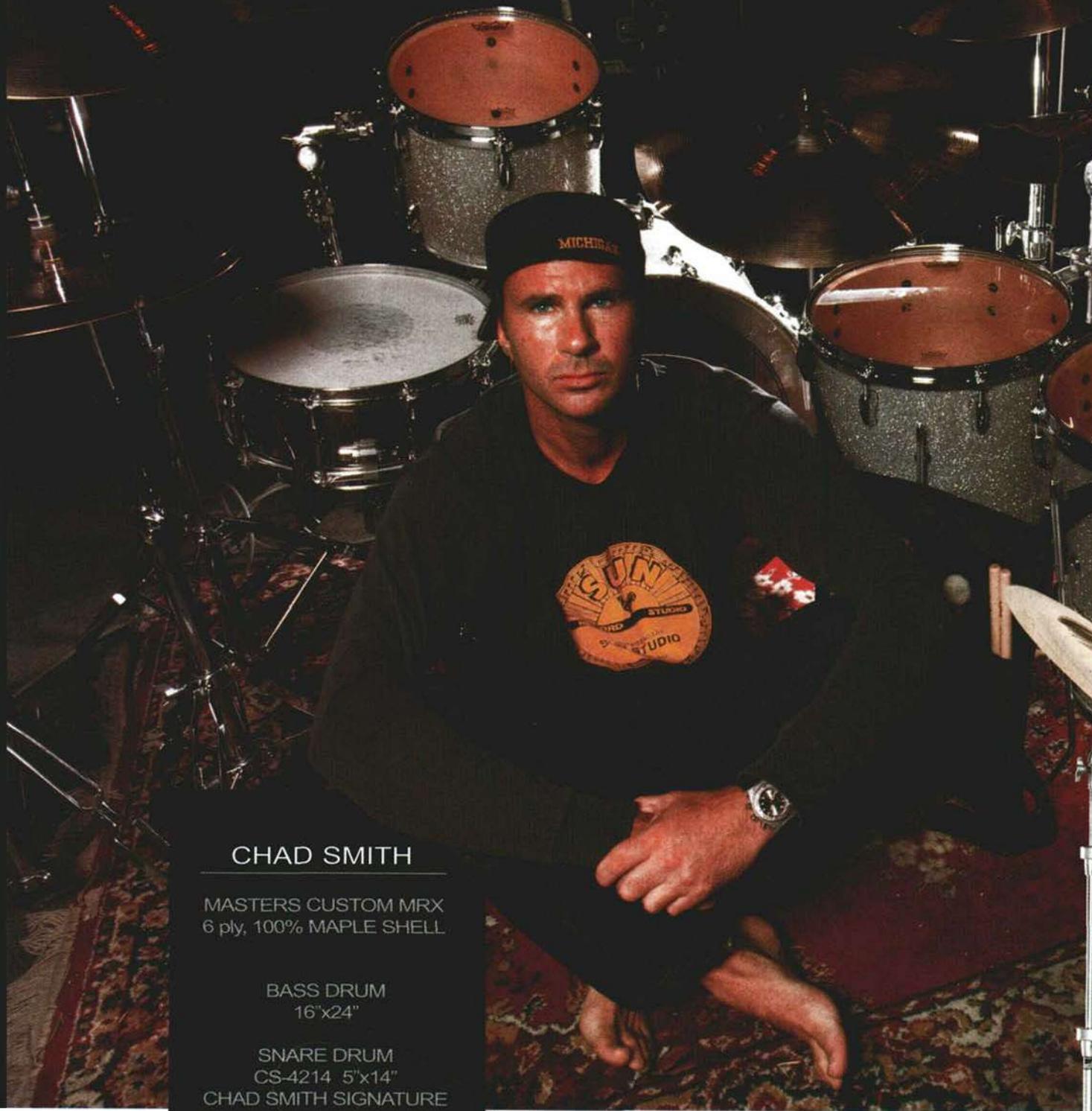
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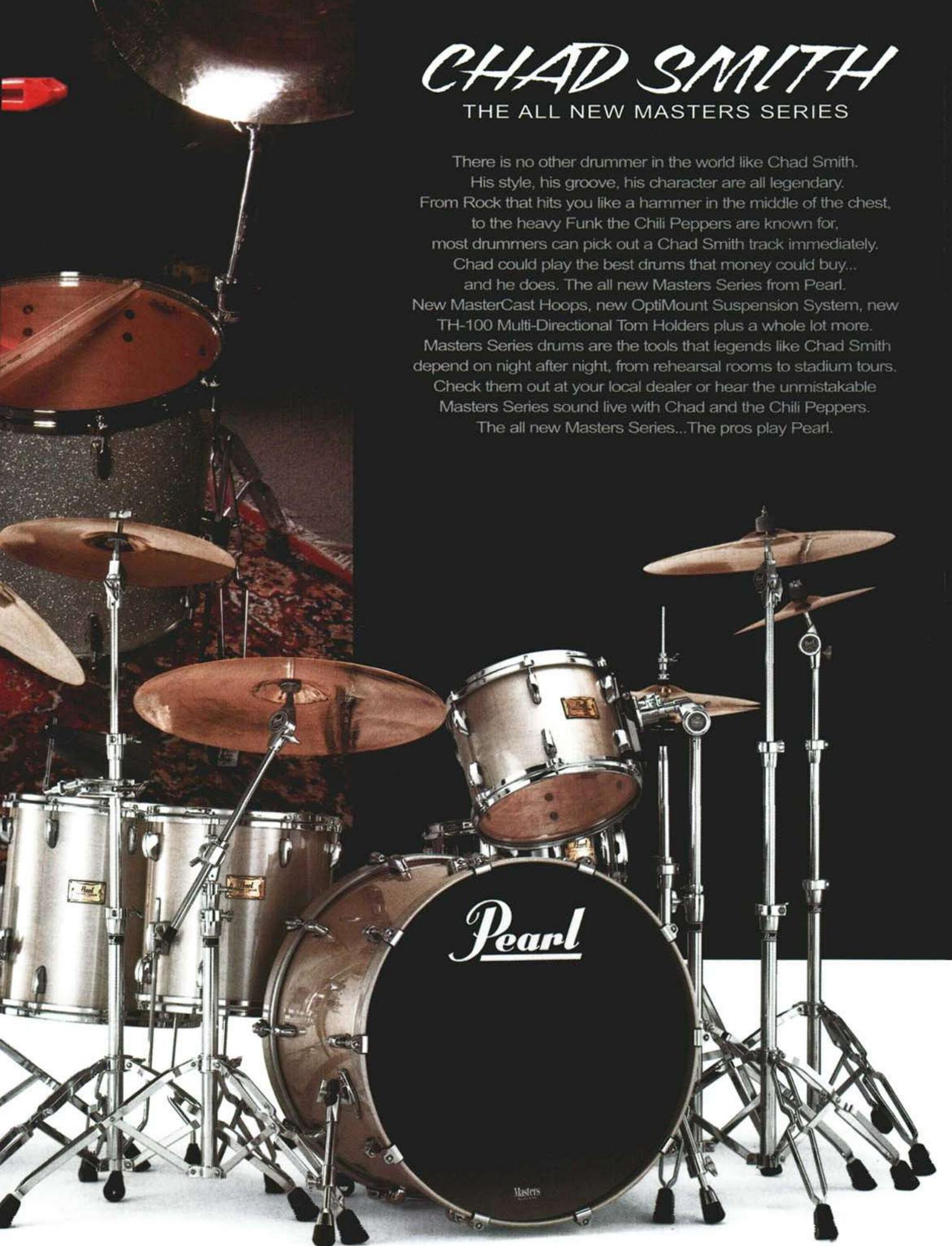
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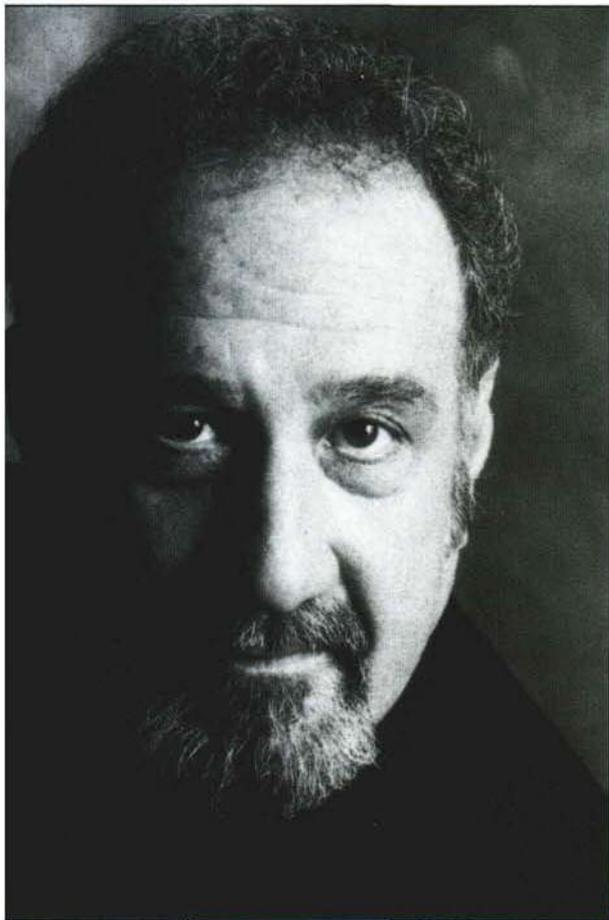
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The all new Masters Series...The pros play Pearl.





Abbey Rader

FreeMaster

"Duos give you a chance to purify yourself. They're wide open. In a duo you react."

"I've been very blessed," says Abbey Rader, recalling over forty years of work with many of the giants of jazz. That activity was largely during a fifteen-year period during which Rader lived in Europe. Now living in Florida, much of the drummer's current activity involves duets with saxophonist Dave Liebman, violinist Billy Bang, saxophonist/guitarist Keshavan Maslak, and shakuhachi (bamboo flute) player Philip Gelb. "Duos give you a chance to purify yourself. They're wide open. In a trio you are part of a rhythm section and have to contend with the bass and rhythmic ideas. In a duo you react."

A perfect example of such reaction is *Inner Voices* with Liebman, on Rader's own ABRAY label. The music is dynamic and breathing, like two old friends having a conversation. Rader adds another voice to the mix by often playing hand drums. The result is a surprising rhythmic flow within the improvisational framework. "I met an oud [an Arabian lute] player

named Joe Zeytoonian," Abbey explains, "and he started taking me under his wing. My goal was to try to incorporate the traditional rhythms into the drumset and to also play them with hand drums. Hand drumming really makes you feel grounded. It gives you that connection to the Earth somehow."

On *Mystic Journey* (ABRAY), with Gelb, Rader's sensitive drumming dances around the sound of the shakuhachi, frequently evoking a meditative state. In contrast, *Suburban Utopic* (ABRAY), with Maslak, is often stark and startling. And *The Ferryman's Journey* (Rivers Of Time) by the trio Riversticks (Rader, Michael Moses on percussion, Richard Brookens on sax/flute) is a rhythmic and sonic treat, with Rader and Moses immersing themselves deeply in hand drums, drumset, and percussion.

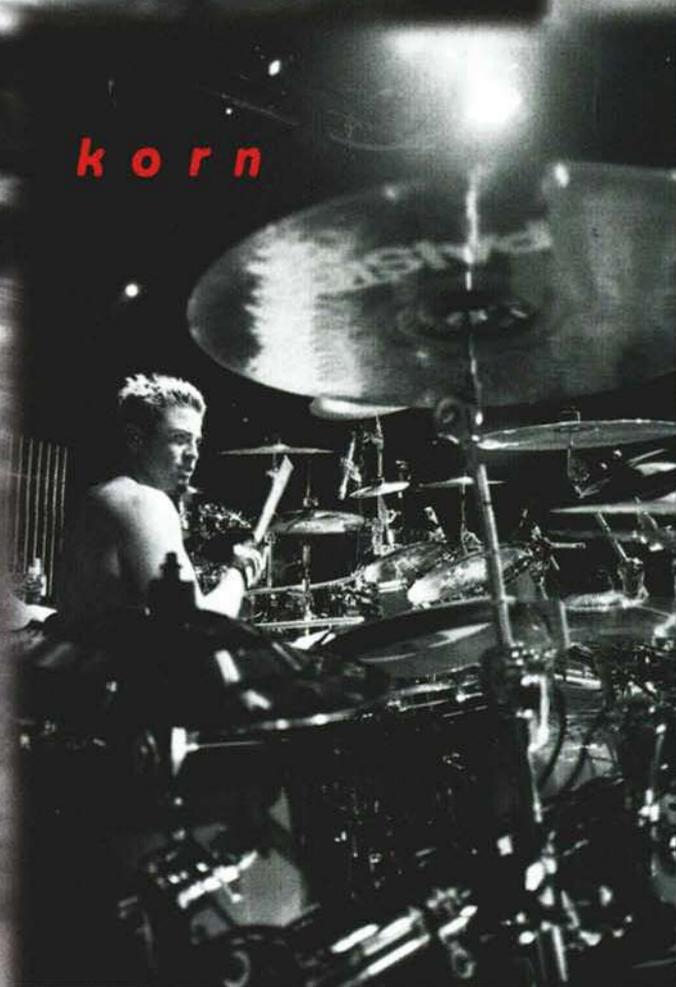
Keep up with Abbey's many activities at www.abbeyrader.com.

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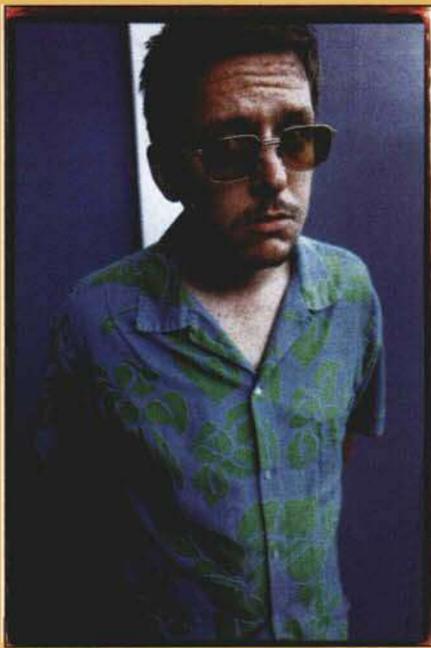


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Todd Roper

A Big Piece Of Cake

Hailing from Oakland, California, Todd Roper, the drummer for Cake, is quick to cite piano lessons at an early age and excellent public school music programs in his hometown of Sacramento as his reasons for playing now. "By the sixth

grade I'd been studying piano for six and a half years," he says. "I was even courted by the instructor to play in the jazz band."

After a year of playing piano in that band, Roper switched to the trapset, which he'd been patiently waiting to do. In fact, Todd and his best friend were already busy practicing on the old plastic wedge-shaped practice pad. "We'd stand in line with the other drummers in the band and play these drum exercises out of a book, and soon I'd be the only one left playing because I was able to thread the charts. Those years of piano lessons also gave me an ability to listen while I played. It was bad-ass training."

In high school, Todd was in as many music classes as his schedule allowed. One of these was the jazz combo class. Greg Brown, the original guitarist in Cake, was also in the group. "We spent most of our time vamping on these strange tunes our director, Ike

Paggett, would show us," Todd says. "They were his tunes. Looking back on it, once I discovered The Meters, I realized where he was coming from. Since that group often did gigs in public, backing up the school show choir, we were expected to act like professionals. Paggett taught us to show up early, to bring a pencil, and most importantly, not to noodle. And then he gave Greg and me our first paying gig." Ten years later, Todd and Greg presented their old high school teacher with Cake's gold and platinum albums in thanks for the discipline and ethics he taught them.

Todd's musical training and experience has benefited Cake as well. "With our band," the drummer says, "it always was and will be about the songs. That's our starting point. Then I want to frame the song with good time and feel, making sure not to get in the way of things unless I'm supposed to be making a statement. Also, the sparse nature of our sound affords me a lot of room to sauce things up a bit without sounding too busy. Without that wall of guitar sawing away from side to side, I can propel the song along with 16th notes on the hi-hat, which some people say is my 'bread and butter.' In concert, I'll play much more than what's on the albums because sonically it makes sense."

Cake has been touring all over the country supporting their hit album, *Prolonging The Magic* (Capricorn). Most recently the band performed on *The Late Show With David Letterman*, where Letterman himself kindly referred to Roper as "Buddy Rich Jr."—a fact not lost on most of America, the drummer hopes.

Frederick Bay

Frankie "Kash" Waddy

Keepin' It Together

Frankie "Kash" Waddy formed his permanent musical relationships early on in the late '60s. Shortly after he left James Brown's band, he was discovered playing with a band called The House Guests. "George [Clinton] saw us, and we became Funkadelic," Waddy recalls. "The transition from James Brown to Funkadelic was amazing, because James Brown had the regimented thing happening and George's thing was, 'What 'ya got? Bring it to the table.'"

Waddy has been working with Clinton on and off for the past twenty years, and currently George Clinton & The P-Funk All-Stars does about two hundred fifty dates a year. When he's not working in that situation, Frankie is most likely playing with a Funkadelic offshoot, Bootsy's Rubber Band.

"I have to be very solid in both situations, but the difference is that The Rubber Band is more structured," Kash explains. "It pretty much flows the same every night. We might add something or take something out, but the structure remains stable. It works well for that group, and it's turned us into a well-oiled machine.

"I'm the musical director and bandleader for Bootsy," Waddy continues, "so the responsibility is great. I'm always expected to be 'on' and as correct as possible. No matter what's going on around us or inside the group, I'm the one who must have it together. And then the show with George Clinton & The P-Funk All-Stars might be different every night. I dig the fact that I get to flex both ways."

A recent Bootsy's Rubber Band CD was released in Europe, and Clinton & The P-Funk All-Stars have been readying a Funkadelic record for summer release. And in his off time, Waddy has been working on his own drum 'n' bass project.

Robyn Flans



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Making Sparks With Alex Cline

"It's been one of the busiest weeks in a long time," says Los Angeles native Alex Cline. "Gigs with Bobby Bradford, Vinny Golia, and my brother's band, Destroy All Nels Cline. Upcoming in the recording department, I've got a project with guitarists Raoul Bjorkenheim [of Finland] and Henry Kaiser [of Berkeley, California], with Michael Manring on keyboards and bassist Mike Keneally. I've got another with Henry, guitarist GE Stinson, and koto player Miya Masaoka. There's the new Cline-Gauthier-Stinson album. And I'm doing a recording by bassist Michael Elizondo, with Nels, Michael, two keyboardists, and a deejay!"

Of particular interest is the recently released third album from The Alex Cline Ensemble, *Sparks Fly Upward* (Cryptogramophone). The compositions, all written by the drummer, feature an orches-

tral approach. Female voice and violin supply much of the melody, while Cline's drumming is more integrated into the music than featured up front. "What interests me is whatever it takes to make the music happen. It's the context, not the playing. I'm not a prolific composer, but I felt a need to do my own music."

Another recent release is *Lineage* (9 Winds) by saxophonist Vinny Golia. After working with Golia for the past twenty-two years, Cline says he's *still* challenged. "It's a relationship that has brought out qualities that have enhanced both of us. On *Lineage* we had no rehearsal. We just talked about



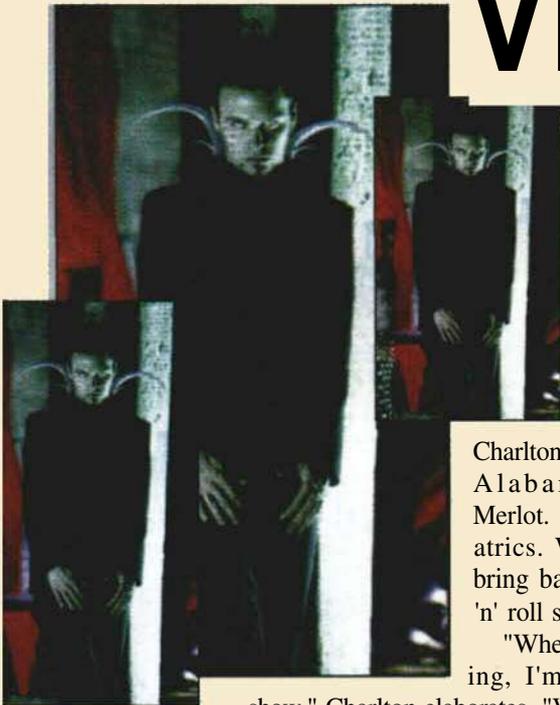
the 'heads' and then went in and did takes." Cline is also featured prominently on three of the five CDs in *Empire* (Screwgun), a retrospective box set of saxophonist Tim Berne's work.

Michael Bettine

Virgos Merlot's

JD Charlton

Dreams Come True



"You really have to see our band live to get us," says JD

Charlton of Birmingham, Alabama's Virgos Merlot. "We do the theatrics. We're trying to bring back the big rock 'n' roll show.

"Whenever I'm playing, I'm going for the show," Charlton elaborates. "Whether it's stick flipping or jumping up or whatever. What I try to do is get as much attention as possible. Drummers are the unknown musicians, but during my band's performances I get the chance to say, Here I am!"

Staking his claim among three guitarists, vocals, and bass,

Charlton employs an acoustic setup on his right side and electronic drums on his left, slamming his way through what he calls Virgos Merlot's "heavy melodic rock 'n' roll." Playing with three driving rock guitars at once could present a challenge for a drummer, but Charlton says that everyone in Virgos plays on the same accents, and that gives the band its unifying sound.

JD says that the band's debut album, *Signs Of A Vacant Soul*, gave him room to vary his style. "'Beautiful Lie' has this long intro where I let it groove with a lounge backbeat," he says. "This lets me show that I'm more versatile than just a rock drummer. I also like the first track, 'The Cycle,' which has a pretty intricate beat between the bass and snare."

Growing up, Charlton was not the first drummer in his family. His older brother got there earlier. Charlton says he often got in trouble for playing his brother's set—until he got better than him. Years later, touring in support of his band's Atlantic album, Charlton says he's reached a goal. "I'm a huge Bonham fan," JD explains. "His playing is like my approach, and Zeppelin was the 'first band I was introduced to. Now I'm on the same label as they were. My dreams are falling into place."

Harriet Schwartz

Dave Weckl had a busy winter writing, recording, and producing his band's latest CD, *Synergy*, which has just been released on Stretch/Concord. Dave is currently on a world tour in support of the disc. He's also squeezing in some session work, a clinic here and there, and a few live gigs around LA with David Garfield, Alan Pasqua, and Lee Ritenour. Check out Dave's Web site, www.daveweckl.com, for details.

In between Vital Information duties—touring, compiling a live album, and recording a new studio record—**Steve Smith** has been producing quite a few projects on which he's also playing. *The Stranger's Hand* features Smith along with Jerry Goodman, Howard Levy, and Oteil Burbridge. *Cause And Effect* teams him with Larry Coryell and Tom Coster. *Show Me What You Can Do* is with Frank Gambale and Stuart Hamm. And *Vital Tech Tones* features Scott Henderson and Victor Wooton. Steve also produced a live-to-2-track record with Buddy's Buddies, a small group featuring Anthony Jackson, Steve Marcus, Lee Musiker, and Andy Fusco. And what's *more*, Steve can be seen in the big band video *A Salute To Buddy Rich Featuring Phil Collins, With Steve Smith And Dennis Chambers*, which was taped at the Manhattan Center in New York. For other Smith

info, check out his Web site at www.vitalinformation.com.

Kenny Aronoff is on Eddie Money's new release, *Ready Eddie*. (And check out Kenny's site at www.kennyaronoff.com.)

Josh Freese is on the upcoming Chris Cornell record as well as projects from Mike Ness and Paul Westerberg. Josh has also recently been in the studio with Poe and The Vandals.

Doane Perry has been very busy lately recording the Emerson, Lake & Palmer tribute record and Martin Barre's solo LP, *The Meeting*, as well as working with new artist Rachel Hart. Doane also managed to slip in a Kitaro tour before starting the Jethro Tull world tour.

Alex Gonzales co-produced as well as played on the new *Manu Unplugged* album, with **Luis Conte** on percussion. Mana has recorded a song for a Santana album that should be out shortly. (The band is currently co-headlining a US tour with that band.)

Tommy Lee has quit Motley Crue to pursue a solo career. (**Randy Castillo** is currently on tour with the band.)

Earl Palmer can be heard on Fats Domino's Rounder Records release *Fats Is Back*.

Congratulations to **Zoro** and wife Rene on the birth of their son, Jarrod Christopher Russo.

This month's important events in drumming history.

Buddy Rich was born on September 30, 1917 in New York City.

This month, in 1962, Booker T. & The MG's drummer **Al Jackson** hit the Top-5 with the phat groovin' "Green Onions."

In September of 1967 Jimi Hendrix released his first LP, *Are You Experienced?* with **Mitch Mitchell** on drums. (Sadly, Hendrix's death came three years later on September 18, 1970.)

The drum world lost a giant on September 25, 1980, the day Led Zeppelin drummer **John Bonham** passed away.

Birthdates:

Elvin Jones (September 9, 1927)

Don Brewer (September 3, 1948)

Neil Peart (September 12, 1952)

Ginger Fish (September 28, 1965)



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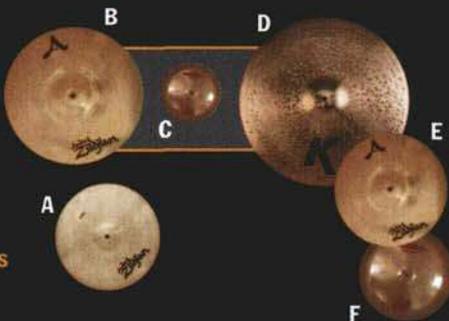
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MORGAN ROSE

Of Sevendust

by Matt Peiken

Morgan Rose cups headphones over his ears and braces himself to endure the drummer's version of water torture. A click track pounds out 16th-note bongo strokes at 202 beats per minute, like the relentless hammering of a windup toy monkey. Morgan slaps off a four-count with his sticks, then jumps into a funk-ed-up rock beat. Guitarist John Connelly begins the opening strains of a song with the working title "Licking Cream." Four bars in, guitarist Clint Lowery and bassist Vinny Hornsby join in, and the tune hits full rolling motion.

It's 4:30 P.M.—the unofficial start of work today at Long View Farm Studios, one of those middle-of-nowhere retreats so in vogue these days. Here musicians can eat, sleep, and chill—and through it all, make a record. Morgan loved the vibe when he came up to visit his wife, Rayna, who recorded at Long View last winter with Coal Chamber. The Rolling Stones made *Tattoo You* here. Now Morgan and the rest of Sevendust are looking to stamp their own legend on the place.

Morgan's coming off a late night, having gone—against his better judgment—to Marilyn Manson's after-show party. He'd probably still be in bed if he didn't have to cut a track today. Without headphones, all you can hear outside the control room is Morgan's drumming. He seems oblivious to both the click and his lack of sleep, hitting hard while laying down tom accents, ghost strokes, and off-beat snare smacks in a groove that breathes despite that incessant monkey.

Sevendust came out of nowhere in 1997 to sell a quarter-million copies of its self-titled debut. There are a lot of expectations for the follow-up—from within and outside the band. Morgan, as much because of his personality as his responsibility as a bandleader, drapes a lot of that pressure across his shoulders.

"I think I played like crap on the first record," Morgan says. "It was a real scared, real safe record, and I didn't add much to it because I was more concerned about having a smooth process instead of really enhancing the songs and doing more as a drummer."

Long View Farm Studios, about an hour west of Boston, is tucked inside two ranch houses overlooking a still pond and rolling green pasture. To weave your way to one studio, you have to pass through the horse stables, say hi to a few tame nags, and inhale the aroma of hay and wooden beams dampened by cold air. The recreation room upstairs is plastered with gold records and newspaper clippings celebrating the presence and work of The Stones, J. Geils, Creed—a hodgepodge of rock.

Morgan's kit, a sea-blue Tama *Starclassic*, is perched at the back of a stage first intended as a hayloft. A dozen or so snares lay off to the side, most of them Tamas, along with a couple from Morgan's days as a Mapex endorser. He's using a brass piccolo today.

For Sevendust's debut, Morgan cut all his drum tracks in two days. This time around, he'll finish a song in an



Liz Linder



Wynn



Heredia



Dresel



Pelton



Zoro



Matthews III



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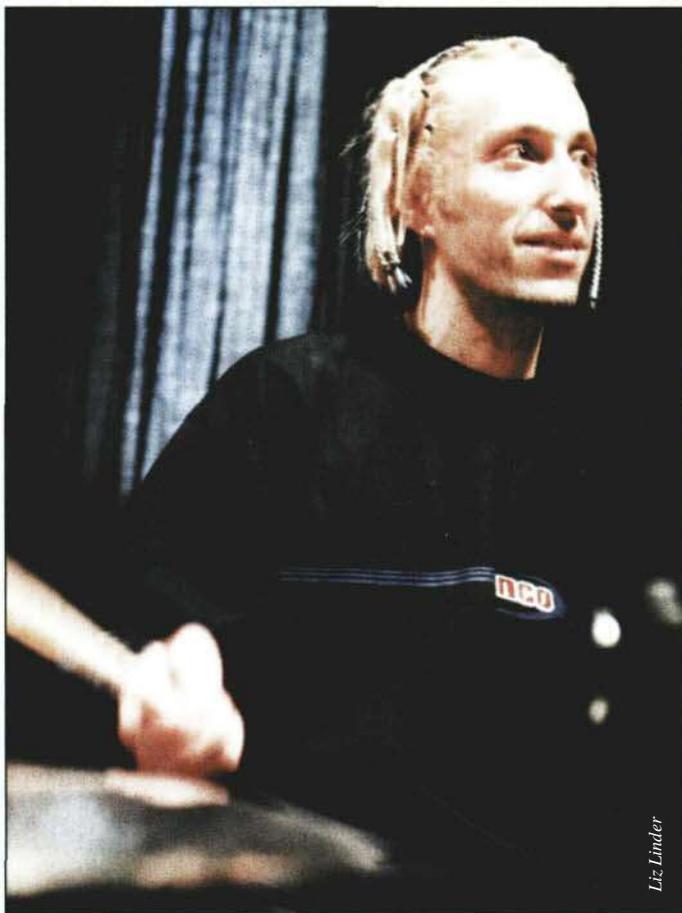
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Liz Linder

hour or two, then wait three or four days before he's needed again on the kit. Much of the reason is *Pro Tools*. After the band cuts rhythm tracks, producer Toby Wright meticulously uses the technology to clean any noise from the tape. Also, for this record, Sevendust completes tracking and editing for each song before starting with another.

There's an upside and a downside to this process, which Morgan calls "tedious." The inactivity drives him crazy. He can only dabble on the *PlayStation* or sit by the pond for so long. Sometimes, he's just getting warmed up and would like to move on to other songs. But that's not the way they're working this time around. At the same time, Morgan has no choice but to build anticipation for each song. Morgan's been approaching each track like he's performing a show, and he hears the results.

"When we did the first record, we didn't know about the adrenaline rush and how to drive a song," Morgan says. "So the songs are like half the tempo of how we play them live. And that damn click was ruling the way I was playing. I was freaked out about holding up the band. But if one guy was off, it totally messed me up. So I'd turn off everyone else in my phones and just play to the click, from memory, and that ain't right. People who saw us live would come up to me and say, 'Dude, you blow away your record!' That always made me mad—like I'd shortchanged the band. This time, we decided to jack it up: nothing under 192 bpm. We have so much more time now—too much time in some ways—and I'm just trying to kick some ass."

Sevendust performed more than four hundred shows since April 1997, when they first hit the road, and took just three weeks off before writing the new record. Morgan conceived some of the

tunes in his head, then hummed the rhythms and melodies to Clint and John.

"I'm never sure if they ever sound better than they do coming out of my mouth," says Morgan, who scratched and ruptured his right ear drum just before recording Sevendust's debut. He lost 70 percent of his hearing in that ear.

Sessions for the new disc started horribly. During pre-production, Morgan couldn't concentrate long enough to finish a track, and each take played on his psyche. "I was thinking of my wife, my dog, my baby that's on the way, if my bills were getting paid back home...," he says. "It was really frustrating. We'd play a song that I wrote, and that we had played a bunch of times back home—and now I'd forgotten how to play drums."

Morgan now laughs at the episode, recalling how he asked his drum tech to change pedals, springs, muffles—anything to deflect the responsibility. He credits Toby Wright for helping him out of his funk. "Toby pushed us pretty hard at the beginning," says Morgan. "He'd have us go through a song six or seven times and he'd get in my face a little bit and piss me off." Wright actually made the band play fifty-two songs straight during their first day in pre-production. He also spent one morning referring to Morgan as a certain glam-rock drummer.

"I told him, 'Man, that's gonna damage our relationship,' but I knew he was just trying to get me to play better," Morgan says. "I knew I could, too, and I guess it worked. I put a lot of trust in him."

That trust extends to the very sound of the drumkit, where Morgan leaves the miking and tuning largely to the producer and techs around him. He merely wants them to sound more "alive" than they did on the debut. The miking is fairly standard—a Sennheiser 421 and AKG D112 on his 20" kick, Sennheiser 421s across the toms, and AKG 460s for the overheads. The snare mic's, a Shure 57 and AKG 451, sit at the 8:30 position rather than at the traditional 11:00 to better pick up the ghost strokes.

"People who saw us live would say, 'Dude, you blow away your record!' This always made me mad. This time I'm just trying to kick some ass."

Wright, who has laid tape with Alice In Chains and Korn among others, calls Morgan one of the top five drummers he's worked with. "He's a character, but that just goes into his playing style," Wright says. "He's very good at taking a verbal idea and bringing it back to his kit. He can play anything with feel and swing. He's not just some stiff white kid who sticks to a 2 and 4. He grooves and plays heavy, and he plays with incredible energy. And you can hear it all on tape."

Skin, the fiery female singer from Britain's Skunk Anansie, is



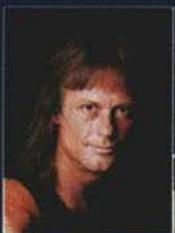
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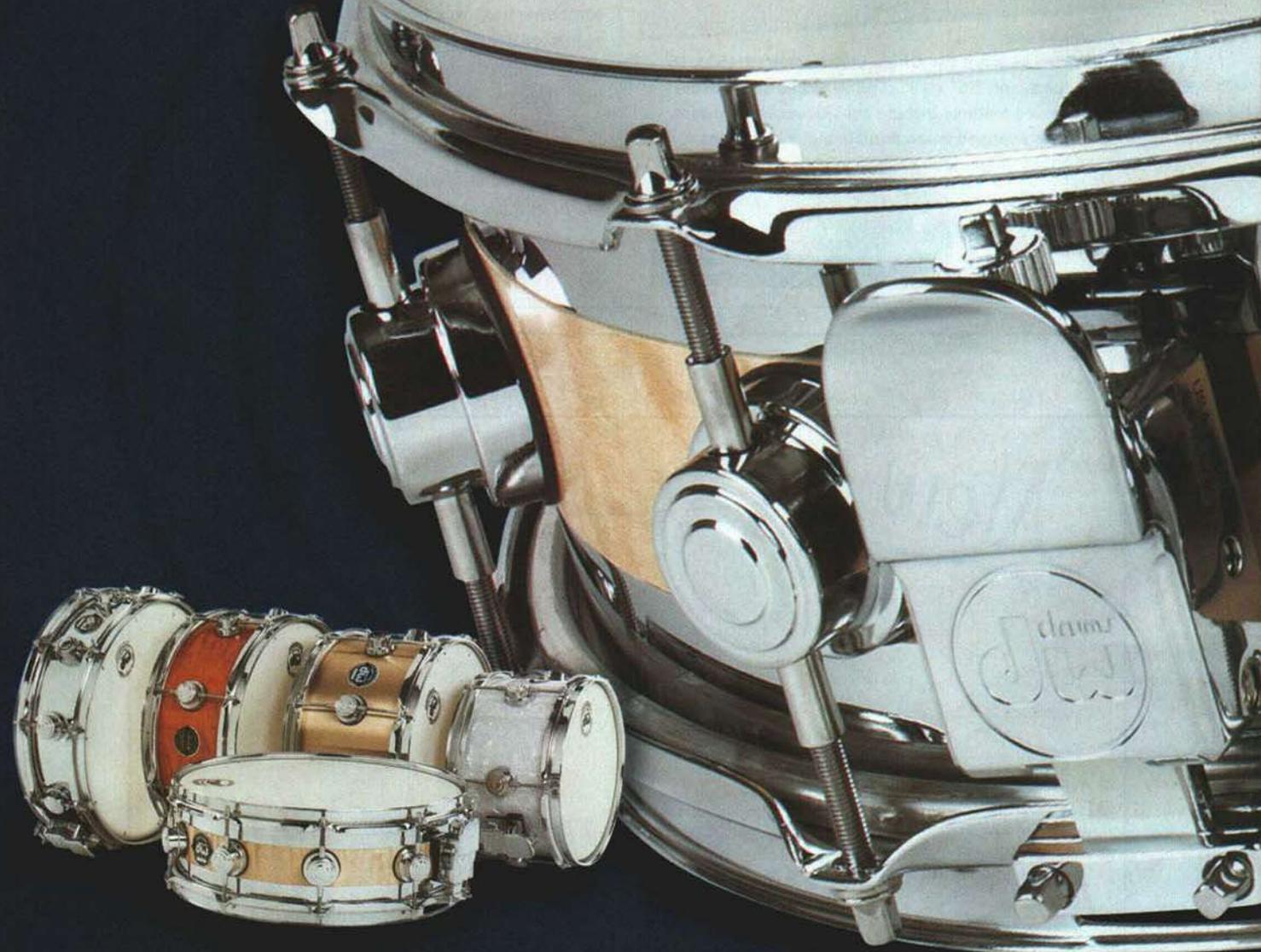


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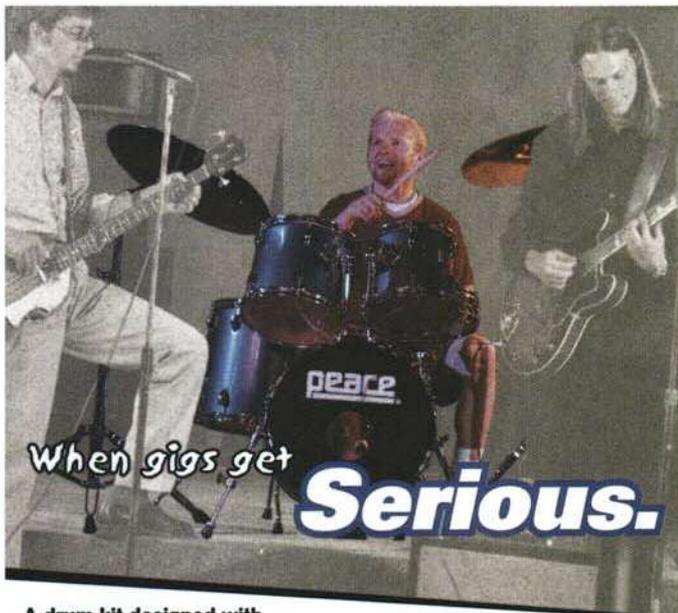


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here for the weekend at the band's request. She and Sevendust singer Lajon listen to some pre-production tapes to pick a song to collaborate on, then decide on "Licking Cream." Sevendust, minus the singers, whip through two back-to-back takes.

Through the headsets, Toby says, "Why don't we roll tape now?" Morgan raises his eyebrows. "Whaddya mean?" he says. "I thought we *were* taping!" Morgan then mutters under his breath. "Damn, I thought that last take was pretty solid."

Sevendust runs through three more takes, then retreats to the control room to listen and pick the keeper among them. They then go back out to cut the track twice more. With each take, Morgan seems to loosen up. By the final cut, he's worked up a sweat.

"Man, that was like playing a show," he says with a smile. Bandmembers compare the best of those two takes against the best they'd elected from the earlier round. There's little argument. The band seems happy about both—then leaves the control room.

"Well," Morgan says with a shrug, "I guess I'm done until sometime next week."

It's still early in the evening. With his work day finished, Morgan starts looking forward to the Prince Naseem Hamed fight that night on HBO. "I'm proud of our first record, just because it was our first. But I want this one to be a record to remember, and I feel like we're on that track," he says. "We're so much more confident now. I still want to try to blow our record away every show, but I hope it's something we have to work hard for every night."



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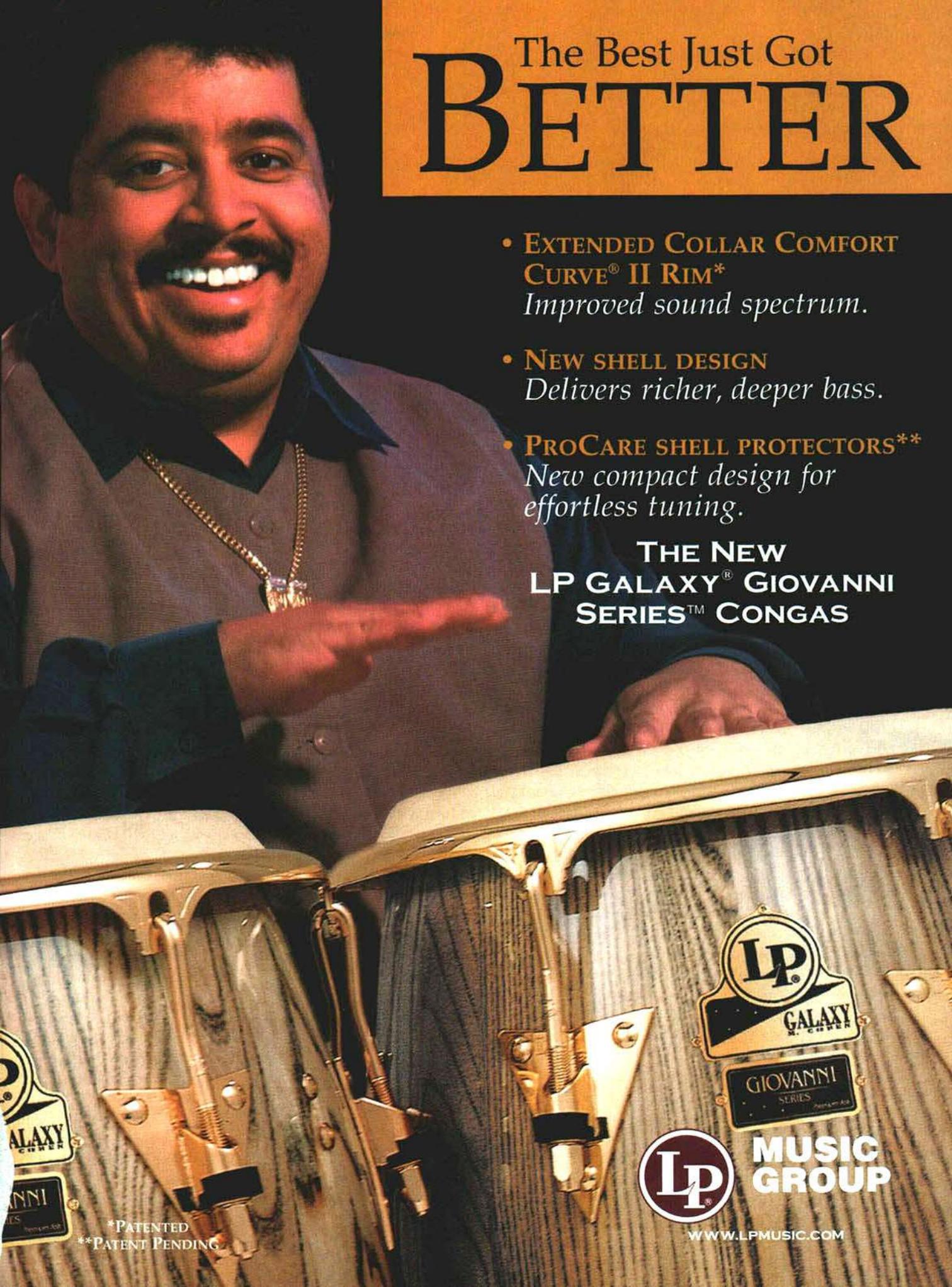
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Steve Ferrone

Q Thanks for some tasty and inspiring playing. I've learned so much from listening to you through the years. Now I have a question about your drum sound on Duran Duran's *Notorious* album. I know it was made over ten years ago, but that sound is really outstanding.

First of all, the drums sound very tight. The snare especially has "gun-shot" power, which I really like. Also, the cymbals are very clear and cutting. Can you tell me what drum and cymbal setup you used on this recording?

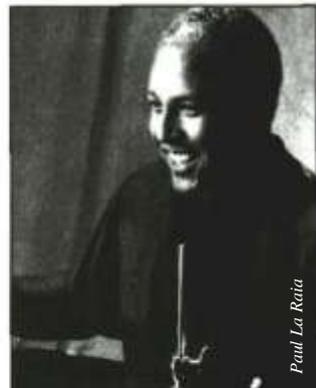
Jesper Lind
Copenhagen, Denmark

A Thanks for your inquiry. Tracking for the *Notorious* album was done at a studio in Chelsea called The Red something or other (hey, it was a long time ago!), and at Abbey Road. The main snare

drum I used was the Pearl brass *Free-Floating* piccolo. It does crack, doesn't it! Also, on a couple of the tracks I used the prototype for Pearl's aluminum-shell snare. That's a drum I treasure.

The cymbals were an assortment of Sabian hi-hats and crashes. I use different cymbals for different tracks, and I don't really keep track of what I use. I do remember, though, that Nick Rhodes had an aversion to ride cymbals at the time, and would not let me use one on any of the tracks. Fortunately, by the time we recorded *Ordinary World* this had changed, and ride cymbals were again back in fashion.

I appreciate your interest in my work. Anyone wanting to get in touch with me can do so at Steveidrum@Yahoo.com.



Paul La Reina

Carl Palmer

Q I've been trying to pin down the exact drum setup you're using, including hardware and cymbals. Would you outline it for me?

Replay
via Internet

A My primary kit is made by Remo, in their *MasterTouch* series. The two bass drums are 16x22, the rack toms are 10x12 and 10x14, the floor toms are 14x16 and 16x16, and the snare is 4 1/2x14.

I have a second drumkit, in all the same sizes, made by Brady. The drums are of jarrah ply, with a wandoo burl veneer finish. (The two woods are extremely compatible from a sound point of view.) All the fittings are done by Lang Percussion in the *Gladstone* style, and are gold-plated.

I use Paiste cymbals from their *Paiste* "signature" series. I also use 50 cm and 32 cm Paiste gongs. All my hardware is Gibraltar, including their rack system. My pedals are by Drum Workshop, and my sticks are Pro-Mark *Carl Palmer* models.

Steve Smith

Q Would you please outline the exact drum setup you used on your latest *Vital Information* CD? Thanks!

Jordan Reifler
via Internet

A The drumset I used on the latest *Vital Info* CD is a maple-finish Sonor *Phonic* set that I got in 1980. The drums are from the kit I used on the Journey records *Captured*, *Escape*, and *Frontiers*. But for the *Vital Info* CD I used a 14x20 bass drum, 8x8, 8x10, and 8x12 rack toms, and 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms. On the Journey records I used two 14x24 bass drums, and I also had an 8x13 rack tom and a 16x18 floor tom.

I use Remo heads. The bass drum was set up with a clear *Ambassador* on the batter side (with a felt strip for muffling), and a *FyberSkin 3 Powerstroke 3* on the front (with no hole cut in it). The toms had clear *Ambassadors* top and bottom.

The snare drums were a 5x14 1928 Ludwig *Black Beauty* with a coated *Diplomat* on top, a 5x14 1940s Slingerland *Radio King* with a *Black Dot* on top, and a 4x14 Sonor bronze piccolo with a coated *Ambassador* on top. All of these drums had either clear *Ambassador* or *Diplomat* snare-side heads.

My Zildjian cymbals varied. I used 14" *K Custom Dark* hi-hats. The rides were a 22" *K Custom* medium, a 20" *Flat Top* with four sizzles, and a 22" *K* that I bought in 1974 when I lived in Boston. (It was about twenty-five years



Rick Malkin

old then!) The crashes were an 18" *K Custom Dark* and an 18" *A Custom* that is very thin. For specialty cymbals I used an 8" *A Custom* splash, and a 12" *Special EFX* China with an 8" *A* splash on top of it. I also used one of my favorite combinations: a set of *China Trash* hats with a 14" on the bottom and a 12" on top. On some of the tunes I used a 19" *K* China, a 22" *Swish Knocker* with lots of sizzles in it, and my two *Zil-Bels*.

I used some "traps," too. I placed a Rhythm Tech *Ching-Ring* on the hi-hat for a few tunes. From LP I used high and low *Jam Blocks*, a remote tambourine, and a *Ridge Rider* cowbell. I play the bell upside down, though, because the ridge stops the stick from rebounding. That makes it too hard to play multiple strokes.

I used my Vic Firth *Steve Smith Signature* sticks on most of the tunes, and *Steve Gadd* sticks on the others. As for the bass drum pedal, I use a *DW 5000* double pedal with nylon straps.

This is also basically the same setup I used on the *Vital Tech Tones* CD with Scott Henderson and Victor Woolen. Thanks for the question. And by the way, check out my new Web site at www.vitalinformation.com.





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Self-Produced CDs

Q My band recently finished third in the Cincinnati high school band challenge. We used the \$500 we won to record a seven-song demo. It sounds good, and we were planning on selling copies to our friends, and using it to help us book gigs around the city. However, the guys who recorded us have offered a deal: 500 CDs on their label, with cover art, wrapped in cellophane, and with UPC stickers to track where we send them across the country. Their price for this is \$1,200. If we sell the CDs at \$10 each we'd eventually gain a profit of \$3,800.

I can see us selling 500 CDs *locally*, because of our popularity with the local high school set. On the other hand, sending our CDs around the country would get our name out, which might be beneficial. But wouldn't the probability of selling all of them go down? Would someone in a little Chicago CD store buy our demo if they have *no* clue who we are?

Even more importantly, is 500 finished CDs for \$1,200 a good deal—especially if we feel we have a good, but not perfect recording? Your help will be appreciated more than you could imagine.

Guapo469@aol.com
via Internet

A The deal sounds good, as long as you're sure you'll be happy with the results. (If the artwork and mastering are poor, then even fifty cents a copy wouldn't be a good deal.) But you're right to be concerned about sending your disc to areas where people won't know who you are. Out-of-area exposure is worthwhile only if you are planning to exploit those areas by playing there. Then you must be prepared to send review copies to newspapers, and demo copies to radio stations. And you *must* put in the phone time required to follow up with the newspapers and radio stations. If you're not prepared to do all this, don't bother putting your CDs in the record stores. Would *you* plunk ten bucks down on some band you haven't heard of?

Build as big a fan base as you can locally. *Then* consider expanding your exposure. It certainly doesn't hurt to try to land some gigs outside your home area. Even if

you haven't serviced radio and press, you can sell some CDs at the gig. (That is, if the crowd digs you.)

If you do plan an away gig, send one or two copies of your CD to local radio and press a couple of weeks before the gig. Invite them to come out. Then *definitely* follow up with them over the phone. Always be as professional as possible on the phone. Don't get discouraged if you have to call back a few times, and be courteous and thankful—even if they say they don't have any plans for your CD. We have a *lot* of experience on the receiving side of phone calls here at *MD*, so we offer this very important suggestion: Get someone other than a bandmember to make the calls. No editor or radio person wants to be put in the position of telling an artist directly that they don't like his or her stuff. Besides, it looks much more professional if you have your "publicist" make the call. (Don't let the title scare you; it's a great job for a girlfriend, spouse, or parent!)

Avoiding Bruised Fingers

Q I use Ahead *Lars Ulrich* sticks, with grip tape. The grip tape greatly increases my control over the stick, but also leaves really painful bruises on my fairly uncallused fingers. I often see drummers wearing tape on their fingers. What kind of tape is that, and where can it be found?

metheadcfh@aol.com
via Internet

A If you're using grip tape on a stick already designed to absorb shock—as Ahead sticks are—and you're still getting bruises, applying tape to your fingers is not the answer. You should examine your technique, to see if you are hitting the drums in such a way that the sticks cannot rebound properly—and thus are transferring more shock into your hands. Also examine the way you're holding the sticks and how much force you're using to grip them. Drummers who play hard and fast often have a tendency to grip their sticks too tightly.

Bruising on your fingers is an indication that your hands are receiving more shock than they should. This can be damaging not only to your fingers, but to your wrists and arms as well. It can result in tendonitis or

carpal tunnel syndrome.

The drummers you see using tape on their fingers are generally trying to avoid blisters due to friction, rather than cushioning their fingers against bruising. But even for that purpose the tape should only be an interim measure to provide protection for already blistered fingers, so they can recover. In order to *solve* the problem of blisters, again the drummer should try to develop a more relaxed grip. Additionally, a larger-diameter stick will often prove helpful, since it's easier to hold and can provide more power with less effort. This might also be a solution you could try to help you solve your bruising problem.

Zildjian Hi-Hats And Rides

Q In a recent *MD* interview Carter Beauford said that he uses Zildjian 13" *K/Z* hi-hats. But he puts the heavier *Z* cymbal on top rather than on the bottom in the usual way. I tried this myself, and I found it to produce a vastly different—and very nice—sound. My questions are: Why do most people put the heavier hi-hat on the bottom? What are the effects of putting the lighter one on the bottom? Finally, are there any theories about why the 13" *K/Z* combo sounds so much better than the 14" combo? (I have both, and it certainly seems that way to me.)

I also have a 21" Zildjian *Rock* ride, which is classed as a heavy cymbal. In a loud club setting no one but me can really hear it, except for the bell. I play pretty hard, so it's not for lack of effort. I'm considering using a 20" Zildjian medium crash as a ride in the clubs. Would the lighter cymbal be heard more?

Max Higgins
via Internet

A Zildjian's product specialist, John King, replies: "The 13" *K/Z* hi-hat combination was created by Zildjian in the late '80s. Drummers particularly appreciated their unique articulation and 'chick' properties. Up to that point in time, hi-hat pairings would generally have a slightly heavier bottom cymbal, to firmly support the top cymbal and help create a good balance between the 'chick' and the 'wash' of the pairing. The very heavy *Z Dyno-Beat* bot-

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tom on the *KIZs* helped to emphasize the 'chick' while adding more brightness to the 'wash' characteristic. In conjunction with the quick response and full dark sound of the 13" *K* top, it created a very focused, dynamically expressive hi-hat sound that was perfect for many of the jazz fusion projects going on at that time.

"The versatility of the *KIZs* allowed them to quickly cross over to rock, big band, Latin, pop, and just about any other musical genre requiring precise articulation from the hi-hats. The 14" *KIZ* combination was added shortly after the successful launch of the 13" size. It addressed the needs of drummers who simply felt more comfortable with the breadth and response of 14" hi-hats, which were the most popular size at that time. As you pointed out, the 14" *KIZ* pairing will not react in quite the same way as the 13" models. Larger cymbals are slower to respond, and are generally lower in pitch.

"If you are looking for the sound characteristics of the 13" *KIZ* in a 14" size, you might want to consider our new 14" *Mastersound* hi-hats. They have a uniquely hammered outer edge on the bottom cym-

bal. This creates many separate 'contact points' to produce a precise high-end 'chick' and add 'sizzle' to the 'wash,' much like the 13" *KIZs*. (The 13" *Mastersounds* have more emphasis on the mid-range overtones and a faster 'chick' compared to the 13" *KIZ* hi-hats.)

"Carter Beauford's use of the *Z Dyno Beat* as a top cymbal helps to exaggerate the attack of the unique sticking patterns for which he is famous. His top cymbal requires more playing effort to make it respond quickly, and the 'wash' is a bit harsher—but it obviously works in his situation. One word of warning, however: Putting the heavier cymbal on top doesn't always work. The tried and trusted technique of having the heavier cymbal on the bottom almost guarantees a defined 'chick' sound. Putting the heavier cymbal on top can create a very mushy and ill-defined 'chick.' Why does it work in some cases and not in others? Only the cymbal gods can answer that one.

"As to your question concerning your 21" *Rock* ride, I have a couple of suggestions. First, you should experiment with various stick models that might bring out

your ride patterns more clearly in a loud environment. A larger bead in either a wood or nylon tip would help increase the projection quality of the *Rock* ride. The weight and balance of the stick will also contribute to how well a cymbal reacts when played.

"If changing sticks does not solve the problem, consider a *heavier* cymbal, rather than the lighter 20" medium crash—unless you're looking for more 'wash' from your ride. The *Z Custom Power* ride and *A Earth* ride are two models that would give you significantly more weight to help carry your ride patterns through any 'wall of sound.' A 20" size will help to focus the stick patterns, and will usually give you a higher pitch to work with (for better projection) than will a larger-sized ride cymbal. A larger cymbal will give you more volume, but not necessarily more clarity of sound."

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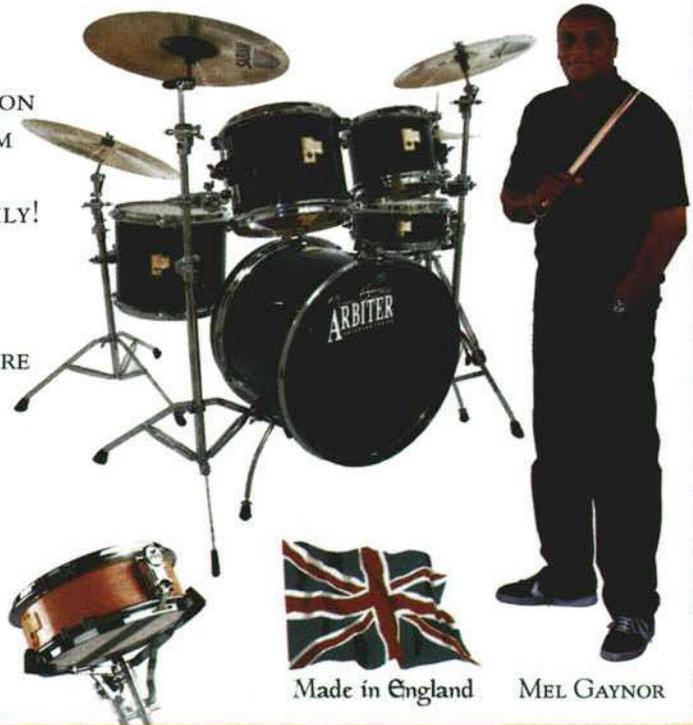
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each lug. The original owner played in a dance band before, during, and after World War II. Unfortunately, the kit sat in a shed less than a mile from the ocean for many years. When I obtained it, the hardware, the chrome, and the original covering were too far gone to save, but I salvaged the drums as best I could. They have remained in the condition you see them now for the past twenty years.

The small drum with the painting on it was with the kit, as were the temple blocks.



The badge on the bass drum reads "Spartan Model Leedy Elkhart Ind. USA." Inside that drum is the number 3607. The snare drum shell is one piece of timber, with hoops laminated in at the top and bottom. The badge on the snare drum reads "Leedy Elkhart Ind. USA."

The larger of the two cymbals came with the kit. It's very heavy, and has no mark-



ings to identify it. The smaller cymbal bears a stamp reading "K Zildjian & Co. Constantinople Made In Turkey."

The kit doesn't really get played; it's more of a collector's item. If there is a way to restore it to its original condition, I would certainly consider it. In the meantime, I would appreciate any information you can provide.

Rod Kesby
Wingham, New South Wales, Australia

AOur crack drum historian, Harry Cangany, provides the following response: "The number '3607' inside the bass drum tells us that it was made in July of 1936. And the type of lugs on the snare drum date it at pre-1938, because Leedy changed their lug design that year. If your drums were originally covered in gold sparkle with the extra red diamonds, that would have made it Leedy's *Full Dress*

model. They would have been beautiful when new.

"The snare appears to be a *Broadway Dual* model. It had a solid maple shell and two sets of snares. The dual snares were a good idea when everybody played brushes, but the idea was outdated even in 1936, when Krupa came out wailin'.

"Inside your little Chinese tom is a spring that rattles when the drum is shaken. That sound was thought to frighten off evil spirits.



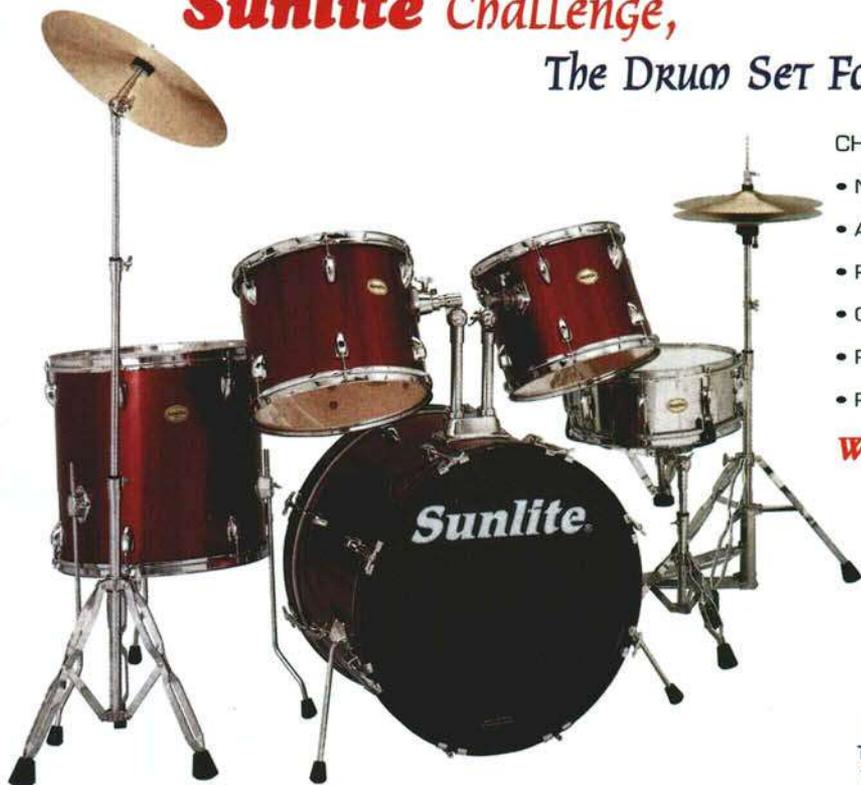
Since your set got through World War II relatively unscathed, I guess somebody must have been shaking that rattle.

"Play your drums in good health, even in the shape they're in. I can't really tell you much about your cymbals, except that any original Turkish *K Zildjian* is a find. Overall, I'd value your set at a couple thousand dollars (US)."



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Talk About Ghosts In The Machine! Paiste Spirit Of 2002 Snare Drums and New Traditionals Cymbals



Paiste's new snare drums are an unusual addition to the crowded world of custom snares. The casting for each bronze snare shell is made with recycled 2002 cymbals. Each shell is said to contain the spirit of the many drummers who have played the worn-out cymbals, hence the name *Spirit Of 2002*.

The drums are hand-crafted in Jeff Ocheltree's New Millennium custom workshop. Ocheltree has made a name for himself by designing and grafting custom snare drums for such noted artists as Billy Cobham and Carter Beauford. Sizes offered are 5x13, 5x14, and 6x14. The drums feature gold-plated die-cast hoops, solid brass lugs, and *Piston Drive* snare strainers by Nickel Drumworks.

Paiste's desire to keep in touch with the "spirits" of older days isn't restricted to their new snare drum. It's a major element

of their *Traditionals* cymbal series. That series has now been augmented with new swish and ride models.

A "swish" is a large Chinese-type cymbal primarily used for ride applications. The model was made famous in the 1960s by drummers such as Mel Lewis. Paiste's 20" and 22" *Traditionals* medium light swish cymbals are described as having "a soft attack with a beautiful, dark cushion to ride on." The stick sound is said to be "dark and sizzling." Playing the edge of the cymbal for accents produces "a warm, delicate breath-like sound."

The 20" medium swish China combines swish and China characteristics for a more exotic sound. It's said to be well-suited for light ride playing, but to produce more aggressive accents when played on the edge.

The 20" medium heavy ride fills the need for a heavier ride cymbal that still retains the authentic character of the *Traditionals*. It's intended for situations requiring stronger articulation and greater volume. Yet it is still said to be "very controllable, with a light, warm, smoky wash."

Flat ride cymbals are not strictly an authentic style of the mid-century,

since they were not invented and patented by Paiste until 1968. Nevertheless, calls for a flat model with the character of the *Traditionals* series prompted Paiste to develop the 18" and 20" light *Flat Ride*. The unique design is claimed to produce "an extremely controlled ride function with minimum build-up, without sacrificing projection." The *Traditionals* character adds "a sizzling ping over a dark, breath-like wash."

Inquiries about drums or cymbals can be made to Paul Presson at Paiste America, Inc.



Paiste *Traditionals* flat and 20" medium heavy rides

Aquarian Is On The March Precision Corps, Articulator, Projector, and Chieftan Marching Drumheads

Aquarian has "stepped off into the marching arena with a new series of drum-corps and pipe-band heads. *Precision Corps* snare batters are said to be "the first *Kevlar* head with a full drum sound, musical tone, and projection on the field. Thin and sensitive, they make the snare sound like a drum instead of a board with snares taped to it." The heads are also said to have an improved feel.

Pre-muffled *Articulator* bass drum heads are claimed to be easy to use and tune.

They can be mounted and played immediately, with no need for added foam or felt.

Projector marching tom heads are "acoustically reinforced" two-ply heads, said to provide outstanding clarity and volume along with durability.

The *Chieftan* snare batter is another single-ply *Kevlar* head. It is designed expressly for pipe band playing, and has "a traditional look and feel, with sensitivity and response." *Kevlar* snare-side heads for corps and pipe bands are also available.



Dress Up Those Drums! Drumspan Drum Covers

Drumkit looking a little ratty? Tired of that '70s butcher-block finish? Or just want to shake up your audience a little? Try a quick change of image with *Drumspan* drum coverings. These pre-sized fabric coverings from K.J. Music are designed to fit most drums, with no need to remove the lugs. The coverings fit over both short and long lugs, and

can literally be installed—or changed—in minutes. Made of a stretchable, durable fabric, the coverings eliminate the need to strip off old finishes and paint or glue on new ones. Existing designs were created by a professional drummer; special orders are welcome. Contact the company for patterns and sizes available.



The KAT Came Back MalletKAT Pro With Alesis Sound

Alternate Mode, Inc. has rereleased the *malletKAT Pro WS*, version 3.5—now with an onboard Alesis sound engine. The new General MIDI-compatible Alesis *QS64* sound engine is 64-voice, with separate onboard effects processing. The 16-megabyte sound set includes stereo grand pianos, string, brass, wind instruments, drums, percussion, special effects, and more. The union of these technologies now enables the percussionist to carry a complete General MIDI sound library built directly into the *malletKAT*. The new *malletKAT* features two audio ins, allowing the user to mix in other sound sources (such as a CD player or other synth modules). A convenient headphone jack is provided in front for easy control, along with stereo 1/4" jacks in the rear.

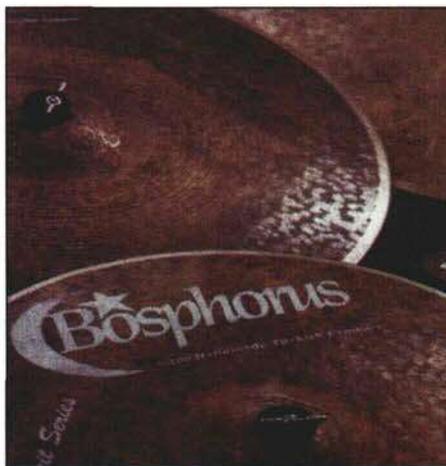
Small Can Be Beautiful DW 6710 Flush Base Cymbal Stand



DW's 6770 *Flush Base* cymbal stand answers the cries of thousands of weekend warriors and one-night-standers. Compact and lightweight, it recreates the practical, performance-proven design so popular with drummers prior to the modern rock era. Yet it offers the durability and construction quality of DW's heavier-duty stands. The 6770 also features the same tilter mechanism found on DW's 9000 series stands, so no sacrifice in functionality need be made to gain portability. As such, it should prove valuable for

a variety of applications, from one-nighters and club dates to rehearsals and studio sessions. It's priced at \$79.

Young And Old Turks Bosphorus Ferit Series Turk and Antique Cymbals



Addressing the need that drummers have for different "tonal color" options, Bosphorus Cymbals has released the *Ferit Turk* and *Ferit Antique* lines.

The unlathed *Turk* line is characterized by its "dry, earthy sound and controlled array of overtones." Heavier models are "raw, with plenty of volume suitable for much of today's music." Lighter models are "exotic, dry, and very easy to control for acoustic music and lightly amplified situations. Eight *Turk* rides, six different hi-hat choices, and five effect cymbals are available.

The *Antique* series features an unlathed bell and a strip of unlathed surface halfway between the bell and the edge. The bottom is completely lathed. Rides are said to have "strong definition and ample but controlled overtones," crashes have "a slightly mellowed tone with quick decay." The line features eight rides and crashes, six hi-hats, and five effect cymbals.



Get A Grip LP Percussion Handle

Do you have a mountable cowbell or block that you'd like to use as a hand-held instrument? Here's the way to do it: Mount it on LP's new *Percussion Handle*. This device can convert any 3/8"-mountable percussion instrument into a

hand-held version. And by allowing players to keep their hands off of the instrument, the overtones remain unmuffled. A cushion of foam on the handle itself offers a firm, comfortable grip. The *Percussion Handle* retails for \$19.95.



Good For What Ails You Medicine Man Custom Drums

From Frazeysburg, Ohio comes this new line of custom drumkits, tailored to your every whim. Medicine Man Custom Drums offers their *Pro Color Series*, in your choice of custom color finish and colored hardware. Drums are available with 5-, 6-, 8-, and 10-ply shells, with bearing edges customized to produce the sound you desire. The company also offers restoration, re-covering, and custom hardware chroming/coating in any color.



Into Thin Air RTOM Drum Atmospheres Practice Devices

Drummers want to practice on the same drums on which they play. But those drums make a lot of...dare we say it?...noise. This may not bother the drummer, but it's not likely to endear him or her to the rest of the family, the landlord, or the neighbors.

Believing that products currently on the market to reduce acoustic drum sound also reduce realistic *drumfeel*, the folks at RTOM have come up with a new solution: their *Drum Atmospheres* series. The series includes *Black Holes*, *Cymbal Spots*, *Moongel Bass Beaters* and *Bass Plates*, and *Poly Hats*.

Black Holes are tunable playing surfaces designed to be placed atop snare drums and toms. They feature an inflatable bladder system that "offers an accurate and cost-effective tensioning method" to achieve a realistic feel, and a mesh drumhead that replicates natural drumhead rebound. Meanwhile, according to the company, no sound is allowed to leave your drum. *Black Holes* are available for 10", 12", 13", 14", and 16" drums.

Cymbal Spots are pads of *Moongel* polymer that "eliminate all the acoustic energy that a cymbal normally radiates, while maintaining accurate stick response." The *Cymbal Spot* has an adhesive side that sticks to the cymbal; the playing surface is

a layer of *Moongel Snare Pad* material. The *Spots* can be removed, washed, and reused repeatedly. Sizes are available for 14", 16", and 20" cymbals.

Because the bass drum is the most difficult percussion instrument to mute, RTOM takes a systems approach to maintain the feel of the drum, yet tame its desire to be heard. A *Bass Plate* affixes securely to the batter head by means of an

adhesive gel, immobilizing the head. The *Moongel Beater* provides noiseless attack, yet proper response. The *Bass Plate* is only 1/8" thick, which the company feels prevents it from throwing off the player's timing the way thick foam pads can do.

The *Poly Hat* is a simple piece of fabric. Yet it all but eliminates the "chick" when operating the hi-hat—without impeding the hi-hat's natural stroke.



And What's More

For all you *Home Improvement* types, **AFRICAN AMERICAN DRUM COMPANY** is now offering a build-your-own-drumset kit. Each kit offers sealed Keller maple shells with pre-cut bearing edges, as well as pre-drilled holes for lugs, bass drum legs, the snare throw-off, and the snare butt. The kit includes rims, heads, tension rods, cast Slingerland-type lugs, and 20-strand snares. All you do is paint and assemble. AADC states that if the work is done correctly, the finished kit will sound as good as any on the market, at a savings of 30-50% over retail prices.



D'AMICO DRUMS have modified their popular *Adjustable Bass Drum Cradle*. Originally designed to support 18" bass drums so that a pedal would strike the

drum at its center, the cradle now can support any drum from 16" to 22" in diameter, and from 10 1/2" to 20 1/2" in depth. Floor toms can easily become bass drums with the *Cradle*, while the sound of traditional larger bass drums can be enhanced. Jim Keltner is now using one for his 22" bass drum. The unit is available from D'Amico for \$199 plus shipping.

Look Ma, no stands! **BOOM THEORY'S A Series** electronic toms can be mounted directly onto an electronic bass drum. The mount (a standard dual L-arm configuration) provides 14" of height-adjustable travel, and actually recesses into the bass drum. Boom Theory tested the mount for false triggering by enlisting some of its hardest-hitting endorsees "to beat the As into submission." Matt Cameron, Michael Shrieve, Chuck Biscuits, and Mark Pickerel all did their best to make the bass drum false trigger—and failed. According to Boom Theory, no loss of sensitivity or dynamics was experienced on the bass drum.

The added mobility and greatly diminished footprint offered by bass drum-



mountable toms now make the Boom Theory *A Series* as easy to set up as any acoustic kit. The system will work on all existing Boom Theory kits, and will be offered as an upgrade to current *Spacemuffins* owners.

BEAR PERCUSSION offers drum heads that combine the strength of a *Kevlar* composite combined with the company's proprietary *Kevlar Sound Envelope* coating technology. The company claims that their heads can be played up to three times longer than existing heads without loss in tonal quality. Studio, concert, and stadium series drumheads are currently available at \$19.95, via the Internet and directly from the company.

Making Contact

African American Drum Company
PO Box 569, Blue Lake, CA 95521
(707) 668-4173
www.aadrum.com

Alternate Mode
53 First Ave.
Chicopee, MA 01020
tel: (413) 594-5190, fax: (413) 592-7987

Aquarian Accessories
1140 N. Tustin Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92807
tel: (800) 473-0231, fax: (714) 632-3905
aquarian98@sprintmail.com

Bear Percussion
9950 Canoga Ave., Suite A-1
Chatsworth, CA 91311
tel: (818) 718-1111, fax: (818) 718-0070
www.bearpercussion.com

Boom Theory
4224 24th Ave. W.
Seattle, WA 98199

tel: (206) 378-1295, fax: (206) 378-1298
Al@Boomtheory.com

Bosphorus
6020 Dawson Blvd., Suite F
Norcross, GA 30093
tel: (770) 662-3002, fax: (770) 447-1036

D'Amico Drums
44170 Old Warm Springs Blvd.
Fremont, CA 94539
tel: (510) 226-8700, fax: (510) 226-7345
damico@damicodrums.com

Drum Workshop
101 Bernoulli Circle
Oxnard, CA 93030
tel: (805) 485-6999, fax: (805) 485-1334
www.dwdrums.com

K.J. Music
P.O. Box 1994
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91729
tel/fax: (909) 989-0246
www.drumspace.com

LP Music Group
160 Belmont Ave.
Garfield, NJ 07026
tel: (973) 478-6903, fax: (973) 772-35158
www.lpmusic.com

Medicine Man Custom Drums
5130 Schoolhouse Rd.
Frazeyburg, OH 43822
(877) 850-6500

Paiste America
460 Atlas St.
Brea, CA 92621
tel: (800) 472-4783, fax: (714) 672-5869
info@paiste.com

RTOM Corp.
30 W. Hamilton Ave.
Englewood, NJ 07631
tel: (201) 569-3603, fax: (201) 816-9720
rtom@bellatlantic.net



Mapex Orion Classic Comfort Size Kit

Maybe size does matter!

by Rick Mattingly

Hits

- toms are resonant, with lots of tone
- *Comfort Size* toms create good melodic blend around kit
- bass drum has good depth and power
- *Black Panther* snare drum offers both power and delicacy

Misses

- kit price does not include bass drum pedal, hi-hat pedal, or snare drum stand

The latest variations on Mapex's top-of-the-line *Orion Classic* series are *Comfort Size* configurations, with five-piece and six-piece setups available. The model gets its name from the fact that rack toms are one inch shallower than typical "power" sizes. In addition to the *Orion Classic Birdseye Maple* kit reviewed here, *Comfort Size* kits are also available in traditional maple *Orion Classic* kits and in the *Saturn Pro* series.

According to Mapex, toms with 1" less depth have a "darker voice and increased resonance and tone." These toms, which came fitted with Remo clear *Ambassador* heads, were indeed full and resonant. (Even at seven plies, the shells are only 6 mm thick, which enhances resonance and tone.) The sizes are an effective solution to the problem of getting tom-toms to sound good individually and also to sound as if they are all part of the same "family." With traditional sizes—8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms—rack and floor toms can have widely contrasting characteristics. "Power size" rack toms blend better with floor toms, but often lack articulation because the small head diameters do not match well with the longer lengths.

The *Comfort Size* toms, however, provide a good balance between the two extremes. The small toms are full and resonant, with good articulation and projection. The large toms are also full and resonant, with plenty of depth and low end. And as you go around the toms from top to bottom, they all sound good together.

All *Orion Classic* drums have low-mass, 24k gold-plated lugs. Tom mounts are Mapex's *I.T.S.* (Isolated Tom-mounting System), which suspends the drum from two of the lugs without interfering with head changing or tuning. Metal logo badges are screwed onto the shell, and each badge has a serial number.

Comfort Size toms may be smaller than usual, but the bass drum is a massive 18x22. It came fitted with a Remo *Powerstroke 3* batter with a *Falam Slam* reinforcement patch, and a black





Powerstroke 3 front head. The drum sounded good right out of the box, with plenty of punch, tone, and low end, and just enough ring for projection. With this drum and these heads, you can leave your pillows and blankets on the bed where they belong.

The bass drum comes equipped with a *TH685* tom mount, which can slide two inches front-to-back for better positioning. A tom holder, however, was not included with our six-piece kit. Instead, it came with two combination cymbal/tom stands for the two small toms and a double tom stand for the large ones. The tom mount is non-intrusive, and is attached to the lugs so that there is nothing screwed into the shell. One could easily remove the mount, but because of the way it is attached, it can't be said to interfere with the drums' resonance. And if you ever need to use a tighter setup, you might appreciate having the mount available. The holders from the floor stands could be used instead of buying a separate holder.

The bass-drum spurs are mounted using the same *I.T.S.* system that suspends the toms, so the only metal parts attached directly to the drum are the lugs. The maple hoops are stained to match the shell, and the tuning lugs are drumkey-operated. The heads of the lugs are recessed in the claws, so they won't snag on anything.

The *Black Panther* snare drum was equipped with die-cast hoops and fitted with coated Remo *Ambassador* batter and snare heads. It had plenty of attack and power, but also had good snare response for delicate playing. Rimshots sounded great with the die-cast hoops, and the hoops also contributed to fast, precise tun-

ing. The drum sounded good over a fairly wide range, from a medium tuning for a fat sound to really cranked for a tighter, more cutting sound.

The *Orion Classic Comfort Size* kit performed wonderfully, with excellent sound and projection. The drums are made well and finished beautifully. It would be nice if a bass drum pedal, hi-hat, and snare stand were included, but even without those items the kit is still competitively priced within the high-end market. Mapex is becoming a genuine contender; check 'em out.

The Comfort Zone

Kit Reviewed: *Orion Classic Comfort Size Birdseye Maple*
Configuration: 8x10, 9x12, 11x14, and 13x16 suspended toms, 18x22 bass drum, 5 1/2x14 *Black Panther Birdseye Maple* snare drum
Shells: six-ply maple with a thin, outer seventh ply of birds-eye maple, lifetime warranty
Shell Finish: transparent violet, grain shows through
Hardware Finish: gold plating, except for *Black Panther* snare drum, which has hoops and lugs in black chrome
Pricing six-piece kit as reviewed \$4,200 Includes two *TS960* cymbal/tom stands and one *TS950* double tom stand Does not include bass drum pedal, hi-hat pedal, or snare drum stand

Sabian Signature And Specialty Ride Cymbals

by Chap Ostrander

Ask any three drummers about the "perfect" ride cymbal, and you'll usually get five opinions. A ride is a very personal acquisition, sometimes achieved by accident, other times through a long process of searching. The ultimate goal is a ride cymbal with *your* sound. In collaboration with some of their leading endorsers, Sabian has come up with rides that the artists themselves have designed, or that best typify an artist's particular style of playing. All are offered in either natural or brilliant finish (with the exception of *Encore* and *B8 Pro* models) for no additional cost.

Jack Dejohnette Encore Flat Ride



The *Dejohnette* has an even sound and good stick response. It's a very sensitive cymbal that would not interfere while playing behind a sax solo, yet would always be present. Its weight and shape help it to have great stick definition with no underlying spread, even during hard riding. The 20" had a lower voice than

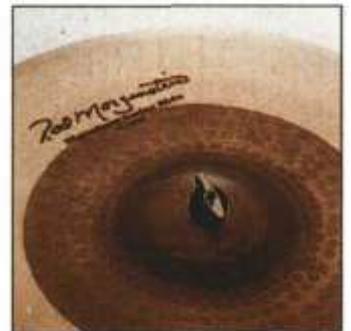
the 22", and was more subdued.

I was concerned by the fact that the 20" seemed to "wave" while I played it. There was a rippling effect on the side opposite where I struck it. This is apparently a feature of flat cymbals, and was less pronounced in the 22" model that I tested.

Encore cymbals appear to be covered in flat gold or bronze paint. Yet no coating has been applied, and the finish is not achieved by a lathing process. So what it *is* exactly, I can't say, and Sabian isn't telling. They worked with Jack to get the sound that he wanted, and this is the way they got it. The finish will wear like any other cymbal, and is not available in brilliant.

Rod Morgenstein Signature Ride

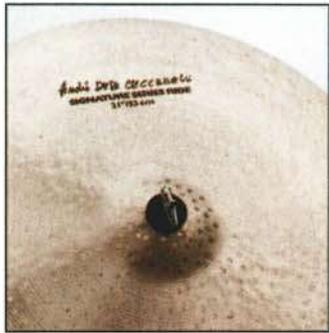
The picture in the catalog shows the bell and 2" below it to be raw, with the rest of the surface (bow and edge) lathed. The sample sent out for review had a brilliant finish, but a raw hammered surface doesn't come out 100% "brilliant," as does a lathed area.



The *Morgenstein* ride has plenty of overtones and spread, and speaks with a clear voice that can be loud without being overpowering. Stick response is great, and the bell sound is penetrating and strong. This cymbal actually has multiple personalities: The lathed section sounds and responds like a regular medium ride,

with plenty of spread and tone underneath the stick sound. When you move up into the unlathed part, the sound becomes purer and less complex, giving you still more sounds to choose from.

Andre Ceccarelli Signature Ride



The *Ceccarelli* model is interesting, dark, and washy. An underlying spread builds up right away, but stays at an even level during riding. It always feels "under control." You can clearly hear the impact of the stick over this wash, with fewer overtones. The most interesting aspect is the cymbal's ability to quickly "speak" accents in the middle of a ride pattern. It's very sensitive. The bell sound is strong and clear, though still lower than the others in our test group.

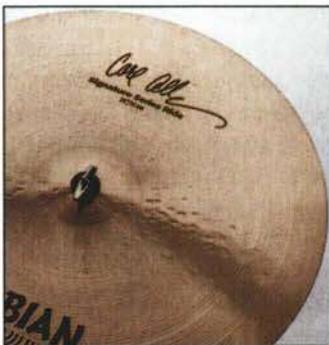
This cymbal has a distinctive look: a low profile, with double hammer marks interspersed over the surface. I don't know how else to say it: *It's pretty*. The stick response seemed to be slightly below that of the medium-weight cymbals, making me work just a bit harder to produce a quick jazz ride pattern. Another varied color for the palette.

Carmine Appice Signature Ride

I loved the sound and response of the *Carmine Appice* cymbal. Since the cymbal is from the *B8 Pro* line, it has the distinctive look and sound of that alloy. The voice of the cymbal is high, cutting, and very clear. This is probably the loudest cymbal of the group, rivaled only by the *Garcia Salsero* ride. The difference is that the sound of the *Carmine* is more refined, with more complex overtones in the spread. Stick definition and articulation are clean.



Carl Allen Mini-Bell Ride



The *Carl Allen Mini-Bell* ride is a pleasant surprise. It possesses great stick response and a tight, controlled sound that has very little buildup during constant riding. The stick definition is clean and precise. You get more stick sound and high overtones in the voice. The bell, though small, has a full sound for its size (although you have to have good aim to get it just right). This is a well-mannered cymbal that gives back exactly what you put into it.

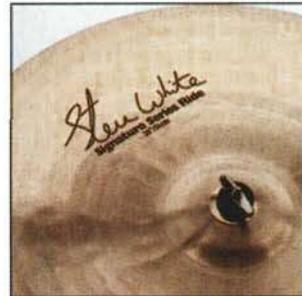
Richie "Gajate" Garcia Salsero Ride

This is a medium-heavy cymbal with a low-profile bell. The lathing around the bell and at the edge give it *some* manners, but not too much. I got a full, bright sound (due to the cymbal's

weight) and great stick response. Because the majority of the surface area is unlathed, a spread builds up—but it stays under control during playing. The bell sound is big and bright, and you can wander into the lathed areas for more tonal effects. Ride patterns are not likely to remain hidden beneath the music, but instead will come out with expression and power.



Steve White Signature Ride



This model is a joy to play. It's a 20" medium ride similar to the kind I grew up with. It has plenty of overtones, a controlled spread, and great stick definition. It also has a full-size bell that is rich and clear. It possesses a big sound that would not overpower music, but add to it. Natural and brilliant finished cymbals were provided for

the review. The brilliant, though having greater shine, had a slightly lower or darker voice than its natural counterpart. This is a by-product of the brilliant process. The difference is minimal, and you can really choose your ride based on how the look of either finish fits in with your current setup.

Alan White Signature Ride

At 22" the *Alan White Signature* ride is a larger version of the *Steve White* cymbal. It is basically louder and higher-pitched, with a full spread and loud bell. Samples of the brilliant and natural finish were sent out, and the same differences applied as with the *Steve White* model. This ride is definitely designed for larger venues and has the ability to fill them.



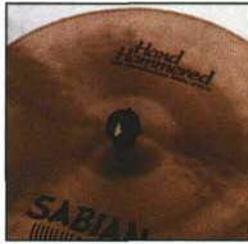
Will Calhoun Ambient Ride



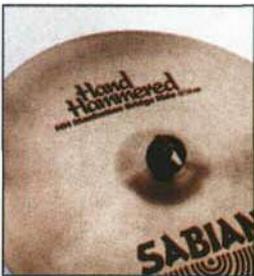
This is the epitome of a raw cymbal. It is not lathed at all, just hammered. Even with a brilliant finish, it still looked rough. That kind of surface doesn't polish up the way a lathed one does. And as it *looks* dark, it also *sounds* dark. You get lots of stick sound, and spread builds up quickly—threatening to rise almost to crash proportions. The overtones that are produced are almost dissociated in nature. Most of our review cymbals have one voice that is their signature. This one puts out many sounds at the same time. The bell sound is clear, but dark. As with most of the thinner cymbals, I found the stick response to be less than that of the medium-weight models. As the other cymbals need to be heard to be appreciated, this one needs to be *experienced*.

HH 18" Manhattan Ride

The *Manhattan* 18" ride sounds to me like a typical jazz cymbal. It's thin, with a low voice and large amounts of spread. Due to its size and weight, this is not a high-volume ride. Playing louder brings the *Manhattan* to near-crash levels. The stick definition is good, and the playing response is fair. This is a warm ride that would fit well in most lower-level settings.



HH Manhattan Bridge Ride



The 16" *Bridge* ride is an extremely well-behaved cymbal. It holds a ride pattern well, but it also produces a nice-sounding crash. Naturally, you wouldn't want to use it for sustained high volumes, but for quieter work it has a consistent sound that does not build up. This is essentially a small ride cymbal that is thin enough to crash if you ask it

to. Stick definition and response are both good.

Conclusions

My original ride cymbal is a 20" Sabian AA medium ride. If I had the opportunity to add another ride to my setup, my personal choices would be the *Rod Morgenstein* for a rock sound and the *Jack DeJohnette* for jazz. The *Alan White* has a great clean sound that would speak well in a rock setting. The *Manhattan Bridge* ride would be marvelous in an intimate setting. The *Steve White* is a good all-purpose cymbal that sounds the closest to my old ride. The *Carl Allen Mini-Bell* is another jazz great. My final list of favorites? Ask me again in a few minutes.

Ticket To Rides

<i>Jack DeJohnette Encore Flat</i> (medium-thin; gold satin finish only)	20": \$330 22": \$390
<i>Rod Morgenstein Signature</i> (medium; tested in brilliant finish)	21": \$321
<i>Andre Ceccarelli Signature</i> (thin; tested in natural finish)	21": \$414
<i>Carmine Appice Signature</i> (medium; B8 alloy, brilliant finish only)	21": \$240
<i>Carl Allen Mini-Bell</i> (medium-thin; tested in natural finish)	20": \$378
<i>Richie "Gajate" Garcia Salsero</i> (medium-heavy; tested in natural finish)	21": \$414
<i>Steve White Signature</i> (medium; tested in natural and brilliant finishes)	20": \$378
<i>Alan White Signature</i> (medium; tested in natural and brilliant finishes)	22": \$447
<i>Will Calhoun Ambient</i> (medium-thin; tested in brilliant finish)	21": \$321
<i>Hand Hammered Manhattan</i> (thin; tested in natural finish)	18": \$294
<i>Hand Hammered Manhattan Bridge</i> (medium-thin, tested in natural finish)	16" \$250

Quick Looks

Master Grip Drumsticks

In most respects, Master Grip sticks are pretty generic, professional-quality drumsticks. They're nicely turned, straight, and well-balanced within each model. Their claim to fame, however, is a textured rubber sheath that covers the grip area. The material is relatively pliant, and the textured surface is just "knobby" enough to promote good grip without becoming abrasive and potentially painful.

The colorful (red or blue) grips are placed toward the butt end of the sticks, favoring those who play with matched grip. But in testing the "jazz-sized" 7A and the general-purpose 5A, I was able to hold the sticks quite comfortably with traditional grip as well. The third model we were sent for testing—the *DM Rock* (perhaps named for company founder Don Mester?)—was a longer, beefier stick that seemed tailored exclusively for matched-grip playing.



Sticks with built-on gripping surfaces are obviously

aimed at drummers who have problems with stick slippage. Master Grip sticks offer a convenient and practical solution to the problem. (Just don't plan on playing cross-stick rimclicks with them.) Besides the sizes I tested there are also 56 and 2B models available. Each model is offered with red or blue grips in wood or nylon tip at \$7.95 plus shipping. The sticks are sold direct, so contact the company at 52296 Central Ave., South Bend, IN 46637, tel: (219) 272-3411, fax: (219) 272-1560, email: mastgrip@aol.com, Web site: members.aol.com/MastGrip.

Rick Van Horn

GK Music DrumPhones II

I liked the original *DrumPhones* when I first tested them back in the April '95 *MD*. Their main advantage is that they are hearing protection devices *first*, and monitor/practice headphones *second*. Well, the new *DrumPhones II* provide the same 20 dB of sonic isolation that their predecessors did—a highly effective defense against outside sound. But the new models also include upgraded earphone speakers for better *inside* sound. There's also a heavy-duty 6' cord—much

Evans EQ4 Bass Drum Heads, Retro Screen, and Power Center Batter

Drumhead innovation moves forward and back at the same time!

by Rick Mattingly

EQ4 Bass Drum Batter Heads

Evans was the pioneer in creating bass drum heads designed to yield a contemporary bass drum sound with a minimum of fuss. Their *EQ* series already has three models. However, since no one bass drum sound fits every situation and/or taste, Evans has continued to introduce variations on the original design, with the *EQ4* being the latest addition.

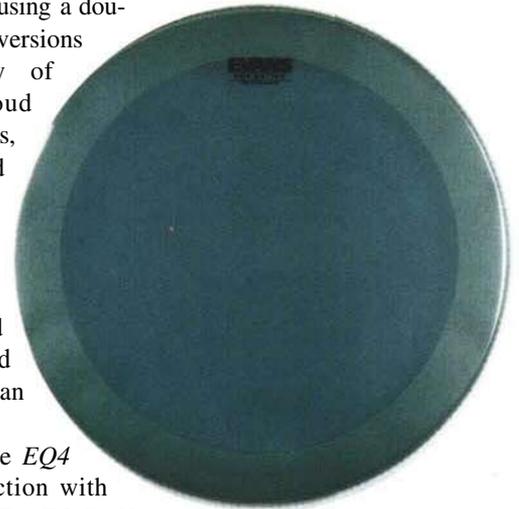
The *EQ4* batter head is available in two models: coated and clear. Both are single-ply, with a non-removable muffle ring. In a nice touch, the width of the ring is proportionate to the size of the head. For example, the 18" size has a much thinner ring than the 26" head. This makes the sound more consistent from size to size than with a "one size fits all" ring.

Evans puts lots of useful descriptive information on the boxes in which they package their heads. However, both the clear and coated *EQ4* heads have the same info: "Punchy attack, big low end, focused sustain, general use, versatile head, rock, fusion, live or studio." So what's the difference? Well, the clear version is a bit more "boomy," enhancing the "big low end." The coated version has more of the "punchy attack," and has a drier sound. I determined this, incidentally, by using both heads in combination with a

standard Evans *Resonant* front head, with nothing inside the drum.

Both heads produced an articulate, focused sound. Jazz drummers might prefer the clear version, which has a bit more ring. The coated heads should find favor with drummers who need a lot of articulation for funk and rock

(especially when using a double pedal). Both versions produce plenty of volume for loud acoustic situations, and the coated head has some extra punch for projection. But the heads also produce a sound that is contained enough that it can be miked easily.



I also tried the *EQ4* heads in conjunction with Evans' *EQ-Pad*. The *EQ-Pad* has been around for a while, but to describe it briefly, it takes a bit of the resonance out of the shell, cutting back on the "boomy" sound. It also has a pad that rests against the bottom of the batter head in such a way that it is pushed away from the head when the beater strikes. This opens up the drum's sound for an instant, then muffles it quickly as the pad returns to its "resting" position against the head. The *EQ-Pad's* claim to fame is that it adds "thud" to the sound, but allows for a "rounder" sound than would be attainable with a stationary internal muffling device. The muffling is effective, but subtle enough that the different personalities of the clear and coated *EQ4* heads are retained.



more durable for on-stage use than the cord on the previous model. These improvements merit a one-year warranty on both the cord and the speakers, yet the unit is still priced at \$69.95 (plus \$5 shipping & handling), with a 14-day money-back guarantee. How can you go wrong?

DrumPhones II can only be purchased directly from the manufacturer. Contact GK Music, PO Box 645, Wayzata, MN 55391, tel: (800) 747-5545, fax: (612) 938-6106, www.gkmusic.com.

Rick Van Horn

Visu-Lite Electronic Cymbals

Visu-Lite cymbal triggers by Electronic Percussion Systems (EPS) have undergone some major changes, starting with their cable hookup. A standard 1/4" jack at the end of a 2' cable has been added to the original spring-lock terminal. Most models have mono jacks; dual-send ride and China models, as well as hi-hats, have stereo jacks. The old bare-wire connection method worked fine, but required a special cable,



From left: 1300 Hi-Hats, 1800B Bell Ride (with dampening pad), 1600 Crash/Ride

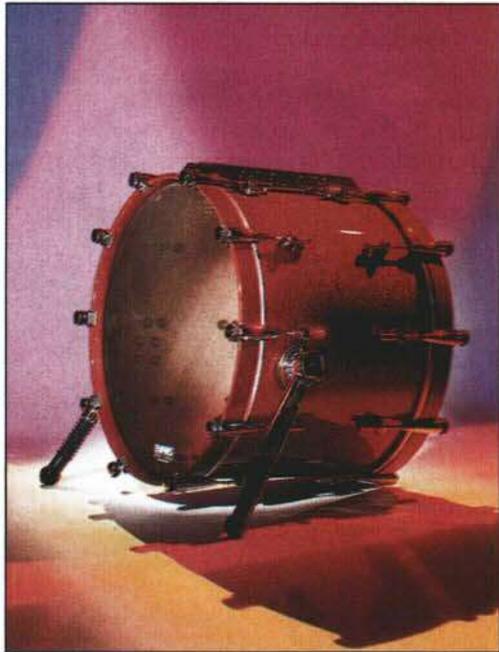
was prone to breakage at the connection, and seemed a bit low-tech. The new jacks eliminate all of these concerns. The spring terminals are still there, and can be used as a backup system.

EPS hi-hats now have foam rubber around the perimeter of the bottom cymbal, softening the clatter produced by the hats' closing. Ride cymbals now come with a thin rubber dampening pad formerly offered as an option at extra cost. The pie-shaped pad provides a quieter and slightly softer playing surface on about a quarter of the cymbal's area. A 2 1/2" x 5" non-removable impact pad has been added to EPS's other models.

Perhaps the most significant change in the *Visu-Lites* is a dramatic

Retro Screen

The *Retro Screen* is a nylon-mesh screen that serves as a substitute for a front bass drum head. It's designed to achieve the sound that was popular in the late '60s to early '70s, when many drummers removed the front head entirely. It provides a lot of acoustic punch, rather than just from a hole cut into the front head. It also eliminates most of the ring, since the sound goes right out the front of the drum rather than bouncing between the



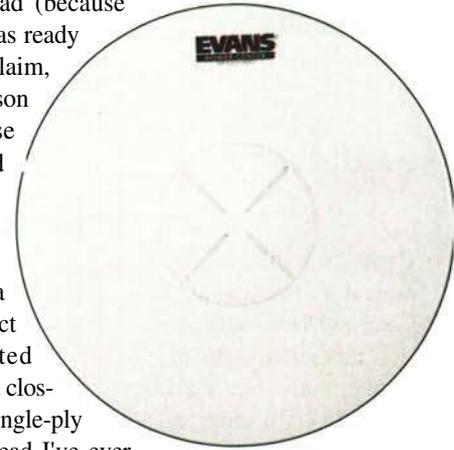
heads. This won't be everyone's cup of tea, but for those who seek such a sound, the *Retro Screen* provides it, while providing a more contemporary look. (Many drummers who did remove their front bass drum heads can attest that some bass drums will go out of round if not reinforced by a rim and hoop at both ends. Using a *Retro Screen* can also help avoid that problem.)

Using the *Retro Screen* in combination with an *EQ-Pad* and an *EQ4* batter provides the driest possible sound. In that combination the coated *EQ4* created amazing punch with little tone. The clear *EQ4* had almost as much punch, but the sound had a bit more body and warmth. Removing the *EQ-Pad* opened up the sound somewhat with both *EQ4* batters, but it was still extremely dry and punchy.

Power Center Batter Head

I've never been a fan of heads with dots in the middle; I've always felt that they cut out the wrong overtones. Give me an *O-ring* when a little bit of muffling is needed. So I was suspicious about Evans' claim that their *Power Center* batter head gave the durability of a double-ply head (because it has a 5" dot) with the sound of a single-ply head (because the dot is perforated). I was ready to accept the durability claim, which I know is one reason that many drummers use dotted heads. But could perforations really make that much difference in the sound?

In a word, yes. There's a hint of the muffling effect you expect from a dotted head, but the sound is a lot closer to a standard, coated single-ply head than to any dotted head I've ever encountered. So for hard hitters who want the extra durability of a dotted head with the more open sound of a single-ply head, the *Power Center* head is what you've been waiting for. Currently it's only available in a 14" model. But a 13" model should be available later this year, as well as models with the perforated dot attached underneath the head.



Head Lines

EQ4 batter heads: 18": \$38; 20": \$40; 22": \$42.50; 24": \$47.50; 26": \$54.
Retro Screens: 18": \$38; 20": \$40; 22": \$42.50; 24": \$47.50; 26": \$54.
14" *Power Center* batter: \$19.75.
EQ-Pad: \$40.

Quick Looks continued

price reduction. The *1800B Bell Ride* costs \$150, the *1300 Hi-Hats* go for \$160, and the *1600 Crash/Ride* lists for \$91. All are available in a choice of twelve fluorescent, opaque, and translucent colors.

Depending on your sound module, dual-send *Visu-Lites* might require a Y-adapter cord to split the stereo signal into two mono signals. The *1300 Hi-Hats* accessed both open and closed sounds with a single stereo cable plugged into a *TD-7* hi-hat input. The *1800B Bell Ride* accessed two sounds in an *Alesis DM Pro* stereo input using the same cable. If you *do* need to use Y-adapters, keep in mind that this will occupy two inputs on your sound module or MIDI controller.

Triggering on the *Bell Ride* and *Crash/Ride* is very good—although without any "help" from the sound module, the main and bell triggers on the *1800B Bell Ride* cross-triggered, even at fairly moderate dynamic levels. However, adjusting the *TD-7s* Cross Talk Group function eliminated it entirely.

The hi-hat isn't as convincing. It's sensitive enough when played with a stick, but creating the pedal sound requires a fairly solid stomp. (A micro-switch on the underside of the top cymbal must be pressed

down onto the bottom cymbal.) Also, the *1300* can only trigger two sounds—one when struck while open, another when played with the foot or struck while closed. The pedal and closed sounds are the same.

Unlike many trigger pads, *Visu-Lites* mount on cymbal stands, and move up and down from the impact of your sticks. Their hard playing surface enhances their likeness to real bronze cymbals. Their weight and inertia are also comparable to real cymbals—more so than some other plastic cymbals I've tried. All this adds up to a good, authentic feel. Additionally, the *1800B* ride's 6" "bell" section provides a big target, unlike some dual-zone trigger pads.

Visu-Lites look and feel great. The *Bell Ride* and *Crash/Ride* models trigger very well. The hi-hat is a bit limited, but for some users, two hi-hat sounds might be enough—especially when considered as a trade-off for the ability to use one's own hi-hat stand. For more information or to order directly from the manufacturer, contact Electronic Percussion Systems, 220 Sixth Avenue South, St. Cloud, MN 56301, (320) 259-1840, www.visu-lite.com.

Rich Watson



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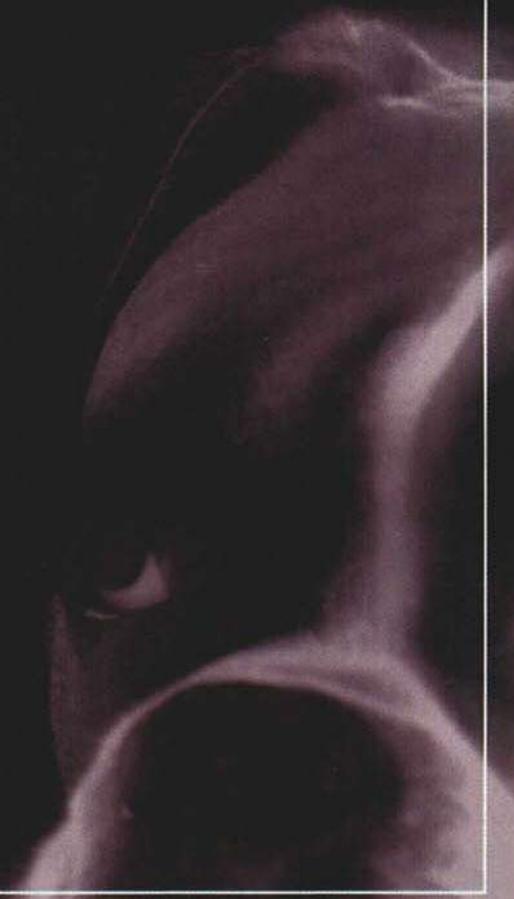
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John "Jabo" Starks



An inspirational chat with the godfathers of funk drumming

story by Ken Micallef

photos by Paul La Raia

Perhaps as much as any work of a twentieth-century entertainer, the music of James Brown has had a profound impact on American culture, both musically and socially. A great influence on everyone from Miles Davis and Sly Stone to the Black Panthers and scads of contemporary drum 'n' bass sampling deejays, James Brown literally founded what we call funk. R&B existed

& Clyde Stubblefield



before the "Godfather Of Soul" injected it with his scalding moves and dizzying dance steps, but with much grit and gusto, he *supercharged* it into the 1960s and beyond.

The songs ring like an American manifesto of freedom and rejuvenation, kind of like a musical Declaration Of Independence. Of course, this was independence of a super-syncoated, mean-eyed, "Give The Drummer Some" style: "I Got The Feelin'," "Licking Stick," "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag, Part 1," "Night Train," "Make It Funky," "Say It Loud (I'm Black And I'm Proud)," and of course "Cold Sweat." And the grooves on these classics *still* chill the spine. You could say that James Brown focused a feeling that was pure sex into an extraordinary tongue-in-groove rhythm section.

But to say that Brown invented the funk single-handedly would make Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield.. .well.. .break out in a cold sweat. As with most innovations, JB's funk wasn't creat-

"We want to share what we know and what's happened to us with other drummers. But when people say we were the innovators, well, we never looked at it that way."

—Jabo

ed in a vacuum. A thorough listen to the JB two-CD set *Soul Pride: The Instrumentals 1960-1969* attests to this. Prior to the arrival of Starks and Stubblefield, witty drummers such as Melvin Parker, Nat Hendricks, and James Brown himself played slippery ruffs and irregular beats that resemble the funk we know. But with Jabo's appearance on "New Breed," the groove became more agitated and assured. The drummer's popping snare drum and fatter bass drum foot lent the music greater authority and drive than on previous tracks. On "Jabo," Starks' steely style is joyous, driving the band with glee.

Clyde shows up on disc two with "In The Middle, Pt. 1," dropping his slamming bass drum and dancing stick figures head-on, like a steam train coasting with a full load of coal. The sound is so relaxed, almost arrogant, and the feel is wet but nail-hard and passionate—and always *so cool*. Clyde's groove exists in the perfect space all drummers seek but hardly ever find. "Soul Pride," "Sudsy," "The Chicken," and the famous, heavily sampled "Funky Drummer" are what modern funk is all about.

Without Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield, the legacy we call funk would be an entirely different animal. The tracks the two greats played on are hard to clarify, but luckily Jabo has the memory of an elephant. His contributions include "Sex Machine," "Papa Don't Take No Mess," "Make It Funky," "Super Bad," "The Payback," "Doin' It To Death," and "Licking Stick." Clyde does it to death on "Mother Popcorn," "Cold Sweat," "Funky Drummer," "Say It Loud (I'm Black And I'm Proud)," "I Got The Feelin'," and "Give It Up Or Turnit A Loose." (Giving credit where it's due, they both point out that drummer Clayton Fillyau is responsible for JB classics "I Got You [I Feel Good]" and "Papa's Got A Brand New Bag.")

Surprise! The funk that this dynamic duo created over thirty years ago has not changed. Watching the pair record an upcoming instructional video for Rittor Music in an upstate New





York studio, the funk slams you in the face like a sharp-heeled tidal wave. Playing with organist John Medeski (of Medeski, Martin & Wood) and guitarist John Scofield, along with James Brown alumni trombonist Fred Wesley and bassist Fred Thomas, the grooves are unbelievably deep. Far from living or playing in the past, Starks and Stubblefield still exude a palatable chemistry, and their styles are as potent as ever. Sixteenth-note grooves, shuffles, gnarly locomotive funk, swing—the pair eat it all for lunch and keep driving the youngsters hard.

Keeping with their personalities, it's fair to say that Starks is the more extroverted of the pair, the one more influenced by jazz, the one with the more driving swing cymbal touch and the hotter snare drum sound, and the one with the bigger, more gregarious smile on his face. Stubblefield, by comparison, says more with less. Using bigger drums, his grooves are deep, soulful, and more simple. At the videotaping, on one song the band drops out and it's just Clyde and the groove. *That's* when you hear it, what Jabo calls that "Holy Ghost" feeling. It's a groove that is so locked in and swinging, rock-hard but greased to maximum effect—the feeling that nothing else exists but that groove. It's that primal feel that all people can feel in their gut (and all drummers cry over with envy).

And when the pair play *together*, it's a regular old church meeting, a grand concourse of laughs, grooves, and grins. Above all else, the two are the best of friends and have kept each other on track for these many years. From soul serenader Bobby Blue Bland to Godfather James Brown to techno rockers Garbage, Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield have made them all give the drummer some. *And then some.*

"Playing the groove is life for us. It's our breathing. It's what we're all about."

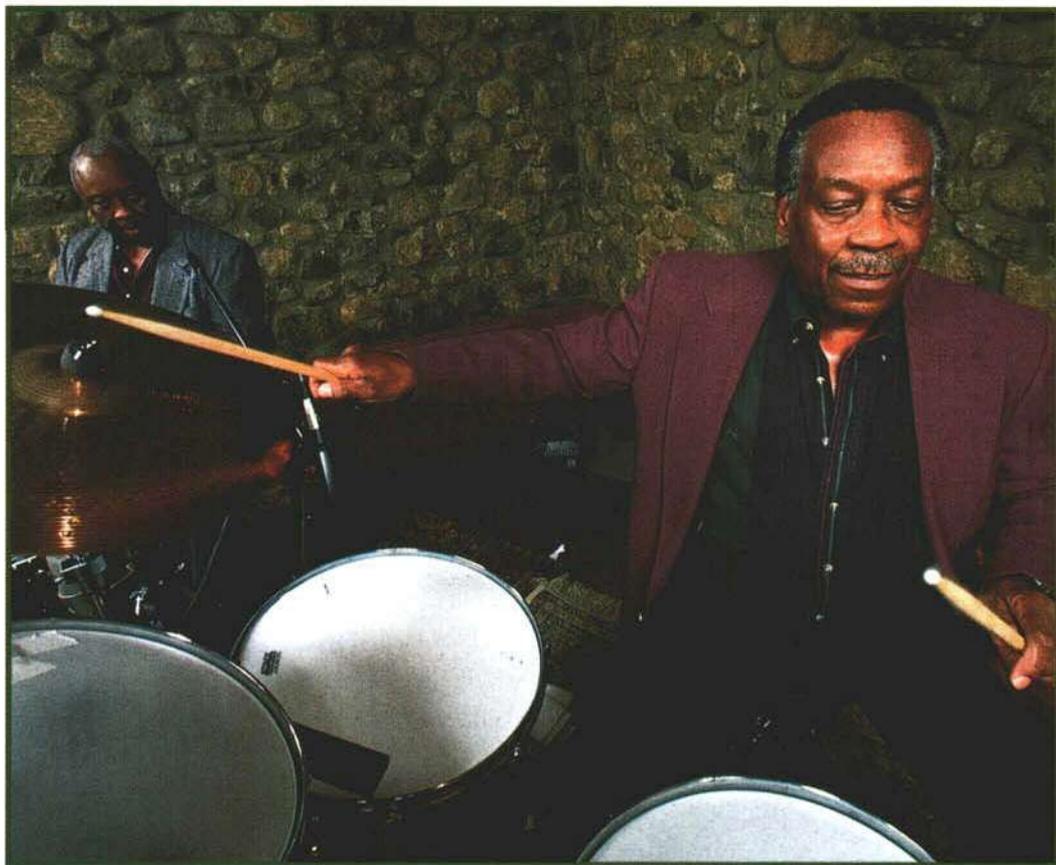
—Clyde

KM: It's been thirty years since the heyday of James Brown & The Fabulous Flames, yet you two are still together and still slamming. What's the secret?

JABO: Friendship. There's a lot of friendship and respect for each other. What we've done is, all the things that most people say would be adversity, we've turned into positive things. We've shared much adversity, but we laugh at it 'cause you still have to understand where you come from and where you are now. It's been a learning process.

CLYDE: And it's been fun to play together and be able to experiment and not have problems doing it. It's like being a mad scientist in a way. You can play what you feel as long as it's done tastefully and within the pocket. We do that pretty well.

It's amazing how Jabo and me work. He plays one type



of beat and I come along and play a different groove against what he's playing. And it works! We can't explain it. But Jabo and I come from sort of the same background. We've heard the same things. He was inspired to play the drums when he went to a parade and heard the drummers, and it was the same for me. That's what got us interested.

JABO: I heard that lead drummer take charge. When he stopped you *knew* he wasn't playing. I couldn't understand it at the time, but I knew I wanted to do that.

CLYDE: Same thing for me. And Jabo has always been my idol as a drummer. I have others now, but coming up, from that marching drum corps to listening to Jabo with Bobby Blue Bland, I knew I wanted to do that. I never had the slightest idea that I would ever meet this man. [laughs] It just came out of the blue! We

were on the same path.

JABO: There is teamwork, but there's also respect and love for each other. After we met, the friendship was there. You play, but you form a bond with each other. That means more than a whole lotta stuff.

KM: When you play together, there's a spiritual quality present. It may sound corny, but....

JABO: Why would you say "corny"? We are blessed to be able to do what we do. We thank God for that gift. He's why you see the two of us here.

You must understand that when Clyde and I play together, it intertwines, it fits. We've played together a long time. We understand each other. When he's playing I complement what he's doing, and vice versa. We don't get in each other's way, we just groove with it, man. And we've got a certain way that we can look at each other, and I know exactly what he wants to do.

CLYDE: It's magic.

KM: When you play there's an element of excellence that you don't see in the average musician.

CLYDE: What I admire about Jabo is his caring and sharing with other musicians. We just have a good time doing our drums, enjoying ourselves, and meeting other people. We don't care about being big stars.

JABO: We want to share what we know and what's happened to us with other drummers. But when people say we were the innovators, well, we never looked at it that way.

I think we were disciplined, and we learned to be that way from all the dues we paid. Now we know that it's not about trying to outplay anybody. I don't try to show how many chops I got. I don't have time for that. I just want to groove with what Clyde is doing. I'm not there to say I'm the world's greatest. I'm there to make the music happen. Besides, the minute you think that you're the best, there's always some other guy who will eat you alive. But I will say this much: When it comes down to being funky and grooving, nobody can beat us at our own game. We jell with each other.

CLYDE: It's funny, every once in a while I'll play with another drummer, but I can't lock in and play with them like I do with Jabo. The other drummers want to solo or

Givin' The Drummers Some

Clyde Stubblefield and Jabo Starks' gut-bucket drumming have moved millions of music fans and thousands of drummers the world over. Not surprisingly, some very important "name" drummers have been inspired by Clyde and Jabo's brand of funk. Here's what just a few of them had to say:

Harvey Mason

"Clyde and Jabo were among my earliest influences. I grew up mesmerized, hypnotized, and addicted to what they performed with James Brown. I listened to every lick, and that was where I learned what groove was really about—that approach was my Bible for playing grooves.

"Those men played major, serious pockets. It was exciting, articulate, precise, and funky! They played what was absolutely necessary to take the music to the highest point possible. You couldn't help but move and feel the music when they played.

"I just want to thank them for all they've done for the music. They are the pioneers of true, serious funk, and my kudos go out to them."

Vinnie Colaiuta

"When I first heard James Brown, I obviously wanted to know who the drummer was, and that's when I became aware of Clyde Stubblefield. He had such an identifiable sound. As I discovered the tracks that I knew to be him, I was able to identify his style—how he played real tight, with a sound that was a sort of carryover from the jazz tuning—tight snare, small bass drum, not sounding like he was hitting real hard but getting an impact out of the attitude he played the drums with, which was a real powerful statement.

"Ironically, I was on a session four days ago where the producer used the 'Funky Drummer' loop for a song that I played on top. He said, 'If I'm ever going to use a drum loop, it's going to be that one.' That groove has been used so often and has crossed over into many different idioms of music.

"Clyde has influenced so many drummers that I've often wondered if he, himself, single-handedly, was the man responsible for inventing boogaloo. It's pretty cool to be involved in the beginnings of something, and let's face it, it's never been done any better."

Ricky Lawson

"They were *the guys* as far as I'm concerned. Growing up in Detroit, we were heavily influenced by the Motown drummers. The other major influence was James Brown, who was one of the first cats to have drum solos in R&B music. They made it popular for drummers to play solos in R&B.

"As a young, aspiring drummer, I saw these guys coming at things a little differently—with 'Cold Sweat,' 'Mother Popcorn,' and 'Get On Up.' Those grooves were just right there! Of course, James Brown, as producer and arranger of the pieces, had a lot to

do with the spirit, but these guys just put a whole other turn on the concept of drumming. It was a real syncopated, kind of New Orleans spirit that they brought into R&B music. They were a big part of my success, because, even today, I play a lot of that stuff."

Butch Vig

"Clyde lives in my hometown of Madison, Wisconsin, so I know him as a friend. He's sort of an institution in the community because he not only plays sessions, but he does a couple of different jam sessions around town. He's a local treasure.

"I think everyone still says he's the most sampled drummer in the world. When we were doing the first Garbage record, we actually had Clyde come in and play a couple of songs. He's absolutely amazing to watch. We had a drumkit set up that wasn't really tuned and didn't sound particularly good, but he got behind it and did a couple of takes and they were amazing.

"When I watch him play I'm in awe of the finesse and the push/pull he does on the snare and the hat. It's the syncopation on the hat and the ghost notes on the snare that are amazing. I remember once asking him, 'Clyde, how do you do that?' And he said, 'I try not to think about it. It just kinda comes out of me.' He really is one of a kind."

Steve Smith

"My introduction to Clyde and Jabo's playing was later in my development. I was playing in a band with [bassist] Neil Stubenhaus, and he gave me a bunch of James Brown records and told me to check them out and learn the parts. We played a few of the tunes in the band we were in. I was really knocked out by how simple the guys were playing, but how great the feel was.

"I've been listening to them quite a bit in the last few years, and one of the things that's most remarkable to me is how light they played. They got a fantastic groove without hitting the drums hard at all. You can tell they're playing very soft, and the tuning of the drums is really interesting, too. They have a really good bass drum sound. It doesn't sound like they have a pillow inside and it sounds double-headed. The snare drum is tuned really high; they get nice rimshots and you can hear the ghost notes.

"In some ways, the beats they played are deceptive. They're played in such a relaxed manner, and as I listen to them now, I can hear how the beats are more complex than they sounded earlier on."

Chad Smith

"Clyde Stubblefield is the funkiest human being walking this planet, Jabo is a close second, with Zigaboo Modeliste third. If you looked in the dictionary under funk, it would say 'See encyclopedia of Clyde and Jabo with James Brown.'"

Robyn Flans

change the patterns. But Jabo locks right in. We know what we should be focusing on—the groove. I lock in my pattern and keep that all the way through. I might go a little out, but I keep that same idea. Then when I drop down, Jabo doesn't play my idea, he plays the idea he was playing up front. It's like switching off, but it's done in a subtle way.

KM: Jabo, you seem to play more with the shank up on the hi-hat, while Clyde seems to have a thicker-sounding rimshot. And Jabo, you play traditional grip but Clyde, you play matched.

CLYDE: He plays his style and I play mine. His snare drum is tighter than mine. Jabo has a beautiful touch—nice and light. I look for a thuggy, fatter sound, but Jabo looks for a sharp sound. You'd think the combination wouldn't work, but somehow it does.

JABO: We play differently. I'm a bit more traditional, more jazz-inspired.

CLYDE: I've never asked you, Jabo, do you dance?

JABO: I used to dance. I was real good!

CLYDE: See, when I'm playing drums, I play with a lot of motion. I think that's

what helps me keep the groove going. Jabo's motion is more inside of him—more subtle—but he still plays with a lot of bounce.

JABO: Speaking of dancing, I think I was one of the first drummers who worked for James Brown who tried to accent his dance moves while keeping the groove. James would do a lot of dancing and a lot of movement. To add to the excitement of what he was doing, I'd make the hits with him. That took a little doing, to accent those moves and keep the groove locked.

CLYDE: From my experience of coming

Doin' It To Death The Grooves Of Stubblefield & Starks

by Jim Payne

Clyde Stubblefield and Jabo Starks—it just doesn't get any funkier than that. These two guys started "Doin' It To Death" in the '60s—and funk has never been the same since.

As funk partners in the heyday of the James Brown band, they set such a high standard for funkification that the rest of us are *still* trying to catch up. They are truly two of the most influential drummers of the last fifty years. Why? Let's look at a few of their patented, innovative grooves.

Clyde

1. "Cold Sweat"

Just The Facts: Released in 1967. Chart position: number 1 R&B. Currently available on reissues *Star Time* (Polydor 849 108-2) and *20 Greatest Hits* (Polydor 314 511 326-2).

This was Clyde's first recording with James Brown, and he definitely hit a home run his first time at bat. The backbeat on 4 of the first measure of the beat is delayed to the "&" of 4, and the usual downbeat on the bass drum on the 1 of the second measure is thrown out the window—a whole new syncopated feel. Clyde's predecessor in the JB band, Clayton Fillyau, had introduced these elements, but Clyde put them together in such a powerful way that this tune became a super-classic. An extended version on side two of the single features James calling, "Can I give the drummer some?!" This became the rallying cry for a whole new era of drummer respect.



MUSIC KEY		
Open	○	R.C. Bell
H.H.	⊗	⊗
S.D.	●	⊗
B.D.	●	
		Rimclick



2. "I Got The Feelin'"

Just The Facts: Released in 1968. Chart position: number 1 R&B. Currently available on *Star Time* and *20 Greatest Hits*.

Clyde's second time at bat for James was a grand slam. Just like the beats of Zig Modeliste, David Garibaldi, or Mike Clark, you may be able to figure it out, but you can never make it sound like that. Again, displaced backbeats in the first measure, no downbeat on the bass drum in the second, and Clyde's three left hands in a row on beat 4 of the second measure. The bridge of this tune features some incredible snare drum independence that sounds like a baseball rolling down a set of stairs.



3. "Mother Popcorn"

Just The Facts: Released in 1969. Peak chart position: number 1 R&B. Currently available on *Star Time* and *20 Greatest Hits*.

This cut features one of Clyde's trademarks: right hand playing quarter notes on the hi-hat, with all the funk underneath—which is much easier said than done. All the ghost notes are still happening, and watch out for the three notes with the left hand with the accent in the middle on beats 2 and 4 in the second measure. How did he do it? Were his chops up? "We'd play around 250 gigs a year, mostly all one-nighters, yes sir!"



into the James Brown organization—Jabo was already there—the big live production that James became known for didn't start until after Jabo and I were there. Before that he had more of a club show, where they played a few songs, stopped and talked, and then played some more. The whole "bang bang" production that he became famous for wasn't there until we got there. Maybe we had something to do with that. We got him going.

JABO: Clyde and I had James' show down to a science. When we were playing we had to watch him, because at any given

moment he would point and that would tell us which one should play—and that could happen anywhere, even in the middle of a song!

CLYDE: He *would* switch us while a song was going on. But the groove would stay strong. That took some doing, but we got it. It's amazing to think back about that. What a show!

KM: These days so much of what's recorded is cut to a click track. Did you ever wonder if you were playing behind or ahead of the beat?

JABO: No, no, no! Let me say something

about that: We're human.

CLYDE: Correct.

JABO: So therefore, don't try to take the human factor out of it. Anything that is mechanical will fail. Sure, musicians and drummers may vary the tempo a little. But if you're locked in with the rest of the rhythm section, who's going to know if you varied it a little bit?

You tell us where you want the time, and we'll play it there. Now we may vary the tempo, but it's going to feel good. There's no way I can play with anything mechanical.



4. "Give It Up Or Turnit A Loose"

Just The Facts: Released in 1970. Currently available on *Sex Machine—James Brown Live In Atlanta* (Polydor 314 517 984-2).

On this track James yells "Clyde" after the solo conga section, and the drummer enters with one of the most gut-wrenching grooves ever played—just sheer power. And in fact it's one of Clyde's favorites. "That groove is so nice," he says, modestly.



Jabo

1. "Turn On Your Lovelight" (Bobby "Blue" Bland)

Just The Facts: Released in 1962. Currently available on the reissue *The Best Of Bobby Bland* (MCA 31219).

Jabo played a long time (1959-65) with Bobby Bland and recorded most of his big hits before being lured away by James Brown. This one is a real classic, where Jabo gets to do his stuff on the voice-and-drums solo section. As drummer Harold Brown of War once said, "That's the most incredible drum break I've ever heard. He played it up there on the bell and it sounded like metal—*tang! tang!* That will really make people get up and git. It puts the hammer on 'em!"

Jabo says the feel on this tune comes from the "holiness" church his grandmother used to take him to. "That's basically where a lot of it comes from for me. That sanctified rhythm influenced my playing."

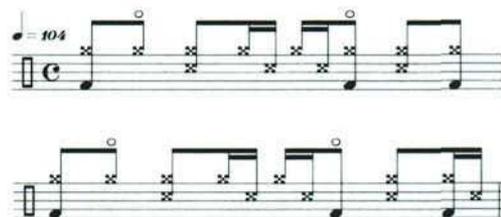


2. "Licking Stick—Licking Stick"

Just The Facts: Released in 1968. Peak chart position: number 2 R&B. Currently available on *Star Time*.

Afro-Cuban and Brazilian influences became a big part of funk. Here's a Latin-influenced track with a pseudo bossa nova rimclick on

the snare, a simple but solid bass drum pattern, and unifying hi-hat openings on the "&s" of beats 1 and 3. Clean, smooth, and very danceable.



3. "Soul Power"

Just The Facts: Released in 1971. Peak chart position: number 3 R&B. Currently available on *Star Time*.

In New Orleans they've got a beat that's not on, but it's not off—it's in between. It's like a walking rhythm." That's how Jabo explains the New Orleans and jazz version of funk that he brought with him to the James Brown band. It's this un-notatable edge of swing, between 16th notes and 16th-note triplets, that makes Jabo's groove so infectious. Jabo powered more hit singles than any other of James Brown's drummers, and he's still being sampled to power hits for hip-hoppers today.



4. "Talkin' Loud And Sayin' Nothing"

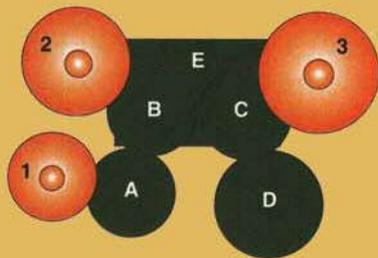
Just The Facts: Released in 1972. Peak chart position: number 1 R&B. Currently available on *Star Time*.

Simplicity, yes—four quarter notes on the bass drum. But feel—a ton. You just can't stay in your seat with this "in between" groove going on.



Jim Payne is an author, teacher, and drummer living in the New York City area. His 275-page book/CD package Give The Drummers Some! tells more about these and twenty-four other drummers of R&B, funk, and soul. Available from Warner Bros., (800) 628-1528 or at www.funkydrummer.com.

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B. 10x14 tom
C. 12x14 tom
D. 16x18 floor tom
E. 16x22 kick

Hardware: Yamaha

Heads: Attack

Cymbals: Meinl Custom Cymbal Shop series
1. 14" hi-hats
2. 18" crash
3. 20" ride

Sticks: Kit Tools 5A model with nylon tip

Microphones: Audix

walking, and I think that's how I got into the rhythm of drums. Keep it natural.

JABO: I was blessed to be able to play time. I will not let a horn player, a guitar player, or a bassist sway me to the point where I'll go off from where I am. We will lock in. As a drummer you are the heart of the group, you pump energy to all the instruments that are there. If you stop pumping, it's going to be dead.

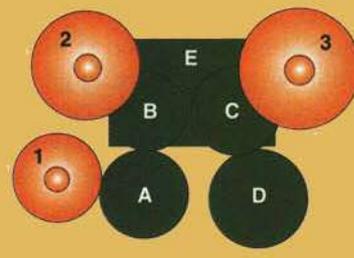
KM: Do some people have good time and others don't?

CLYDE: I think everybody's got the ability to have good time. But if you don't focus in on it, like knowing yourself and what you do with it, you won't play it as well. Playing the groove is life for us. It's our breathing. It's what we're all about.

JABO: Hey man, when you sit down to play, you have to have enough confidence to say, "When you tell me the time you want, I will play it." All you have to do is start walking, walking in time. Then if you don't try to get too fancy with it, it'll feel great.

When I started working with Bobby Blue Bland, I was the youngest person in

Jabo's Kit



Drumset: Yamaha Maple Custom

A. 6 1/2x14 Dixon maple snare
B. 9x13 tom
C. 12x14 tom
D. 16x16 floor tom
E. 16x22 kick

Hardware: Yamaha

Heads: Attack

Cymbals: Meinl Custom Cymbal Stop series

1. 14" hi-hats
2. 18" medium crash
3. 20" ride

Sticks: Kit Tools 7A model with wood tip, Flix sticks, Impact mallets

Microphones: Audix

CLYDE: I consider us to be human metronomes. When I was a kid, going downtown with my mom, I walked in time. You stumble over your own self if you don't, [laughs] I'd hum a song while I was

the band. I was twenty-two. Those older musicians took me under their wing and told me to focus on the time. "If you never play anything else, you hold the time."

KM: The two of you have been doing clin-

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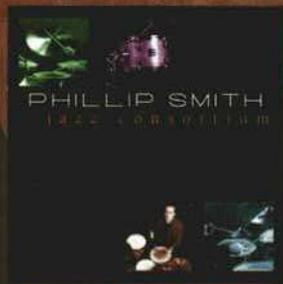


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ics lately. Is playing time something you stress?

CLYDE: Absolutely. It's so important.

JABO: We also talk about drummers being themselves. Be you. Take a little from Clyde, take a little from me, a little from David Garibaldi, a little from Steve Gadd, and mix it all in the same bowl and come up with your own thing. We also focus on learning to play with a rhythm section. If you never lock in, you'll never get called.

CLYDE: You'll also never feel that flow, which is so exciting. And that flow is in all music. Jabo and I have no preferences on what type of music we play—well, we do, but I should say we're *able* to play any type of music. We put our feeling to what's going on, be it reggae, blues, rock 'n' roll, country, or jazz.

KM: It's great that you're out there giving so much of yourselves at your clinics. Is your clinic program structured?

CLYDE: We talk and play individually, then we play together. We field questions. Most of the questions we get are about how we played certain James Brown patterns.

Funky Sides

These are the albums that Clyde and Jabo say best represent their playing.

Artist	Album
James Brown	Soul Pride: The Instrumentals 1960-1969 Funky Goodtime Star Time 20 All-Time Greatest Hits! James Plays New Breed Handful Of Soul The Popcorn Ain't It Funky Sex Machine
Garbage [Clyde]	Garbage
Bobby Blue Bland [Jabo]	Here's The Man! Two Steps From The Blues
	On Video
	Soul Of The Funky Drummers (Rittor Music)

JABO: That's what we did for our video as well. We tried to show younger drummers the simplest way we know how to play tunes and to make them groove. I don't think it's so important for them to play the exact same beats that we played, as long as they go for *the feeling*.

CLYDE: For someone to play the same pattern that we played, well, they're probably not going to get the same feel we got.

You want to play a feeling. Working on the patterns is certainly a good thing to do, but you have to keep the groove in mind.

KM: Watching both of you play, I notice that you don't use the toms all that much.

CLYDE: We don't look at the toms as solo drums, but as seasoning for the groove. We didn't use the toms with James Brown much at all. We focused on snare, hi-hat, and bass drum. We might use the

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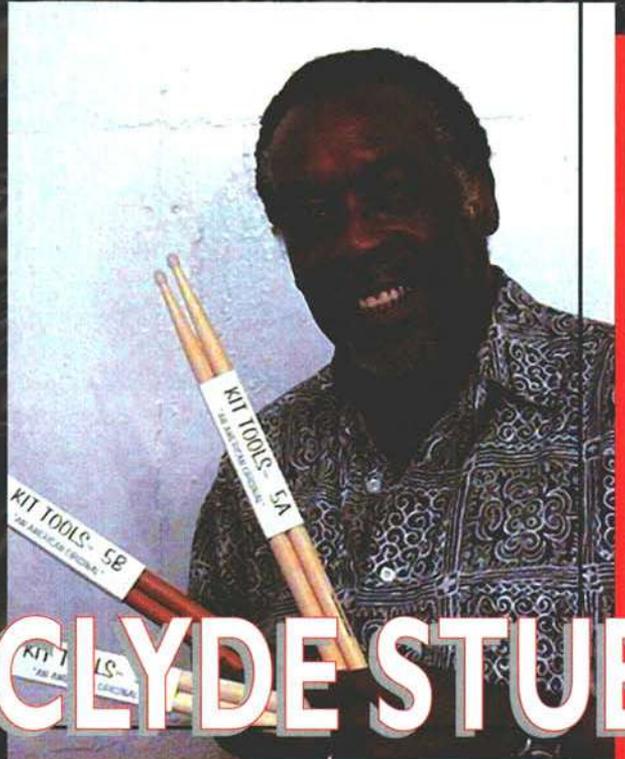
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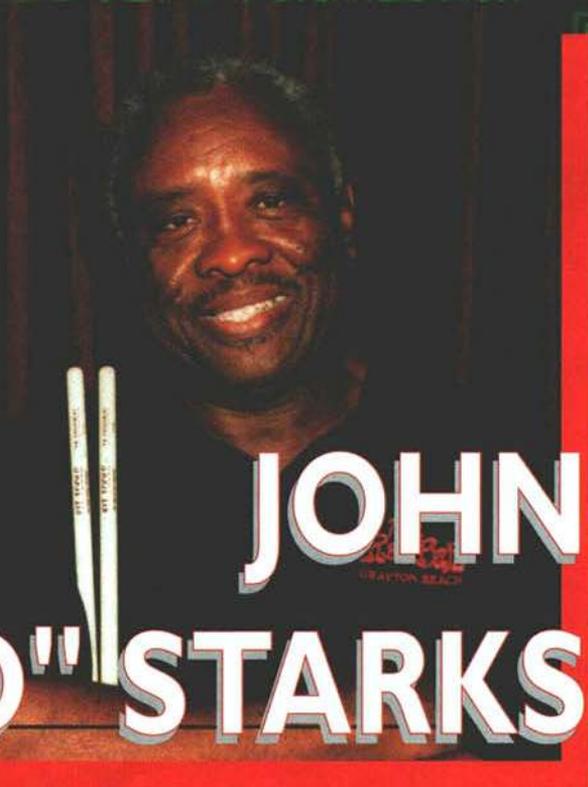
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floor tom a little bit, but we didn't really need it.

KM: Do you two feel that you're better musicians now than you were then?

CLYDE: Yes. I didn't actually know what I was doing back then. I was having a good time, and everybody was bragging about what I was doing, which was okay. But now I understand what they were bragging about! Now I'm trying to take what I was doing then and go further with it.

JABO: Age brings about experience. I think I'm more focused now.

KM: Has your internal clock slowed down?

CLYDE: It can if you let it, but we haven't let ours slow down one bit.

JABO: For what reason? The time is strong, although I know I don't play the way I did when I was twenty. I'm in a different place, but I like it.

KM: Had you both played with John Scofield before?

CLYDE: I had been on the road with him last year for his new CD.

JABO: This was the first time I've played with both John Medeski and Scofield. But the funny thing is, it felt like we had been playing together for years. That was a groove! We were feeding off each other.

CLYDE: When you work with other musicians, you have to be at peace with yourself. You have to respect yourself in order to deserve respect and love from others. If you don't respect yourself, you aren't going to do too much in your life that is beneficial. Respect yourself, and respect others.

KM: Do you hear anything missing among younger players today?

CLYDE: Discipline. A lot of younger drummers don't stay focused on the groove.

JABO: And I'm concerned that the kids are getting the wrong impressions about musicians. Some musicians give a bad message, and some kids go with that negative impression. Let's face it, musicians are human. But not all musicians chase women or do drugs. Sure, enjoy your life. But I never stayed up all night and got into trouble. You don't need all of that to be a good musician.

You can't perform when you're out of your mind with drugs or loaded with liquor. Don't tell me you can. If James Brown knew you were into that stuff, you were fired.

CLYDE: I didn't know about discipline

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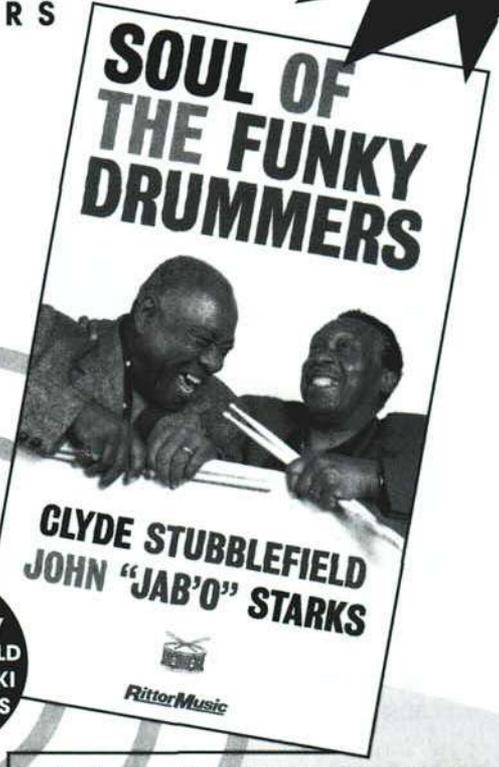


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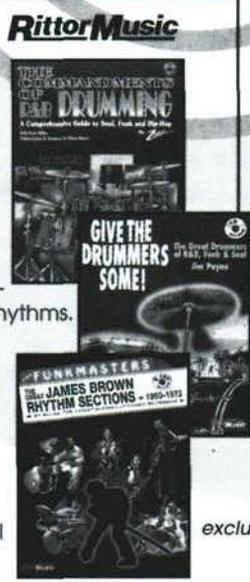
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when I came into his band. I just knew that this was the greatest gig I ever had, and my job was to perform. I had to keep it together.

JABO: When James Brown hired someone, there was an understanding that he was running an organization. You had to adhere to the policies of the organization or

you weren't going to make it. He had a dress code, you had to have a certain respect for one another, you had to be on time—you couldn't be fooling around.

KM: After working with James Brown for a number of years and recording all of those classic grooves, eventually you both left his band to do other things. What came

after James Brown for you?

JABO: Well, when I was with James, there was a point when the whole band left to go with Maceo Parker. I would have gone too, but I had a contract with James. So I couldn't leave. We'd all had enough of it, though. When they left I was the only one who stayed. I lived up to my obligation. Bootsy Collins and those other guys came in, and I stayed for a while. But eventually I left to go with BB King. After that I went back home.

CLYDE: After I left James I went to Detroit and joined up with Motown, which was in 1970. But I couldn't take Detroit; it was too violent. I moved to Madison, Wisconsin. That's where, years later, I met Butch Vig and played on the Garbage CD. But before that, I played with Ben Sidran, Randy Sabine, and the Michael Feldman show on public radio. I also have my own thing in town. And from time to time I get to come out and play with my musical brother, Jabo. We have such a great time, doing clinics and playing gigs.

JABO: I still play five nights a week in Grayton Beach, Florida, with the Red Bar Jazz Band. It's a good group. And the rest of the time I work with Clyde. We've also been doing some work with the older members of James Brown's group. That group is called The Funkmasters. Clyde and I are hoping to record with them soon. So there's a lot going on.

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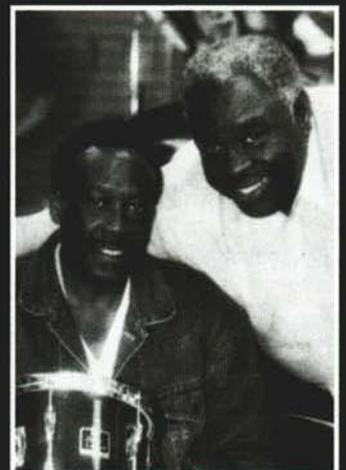
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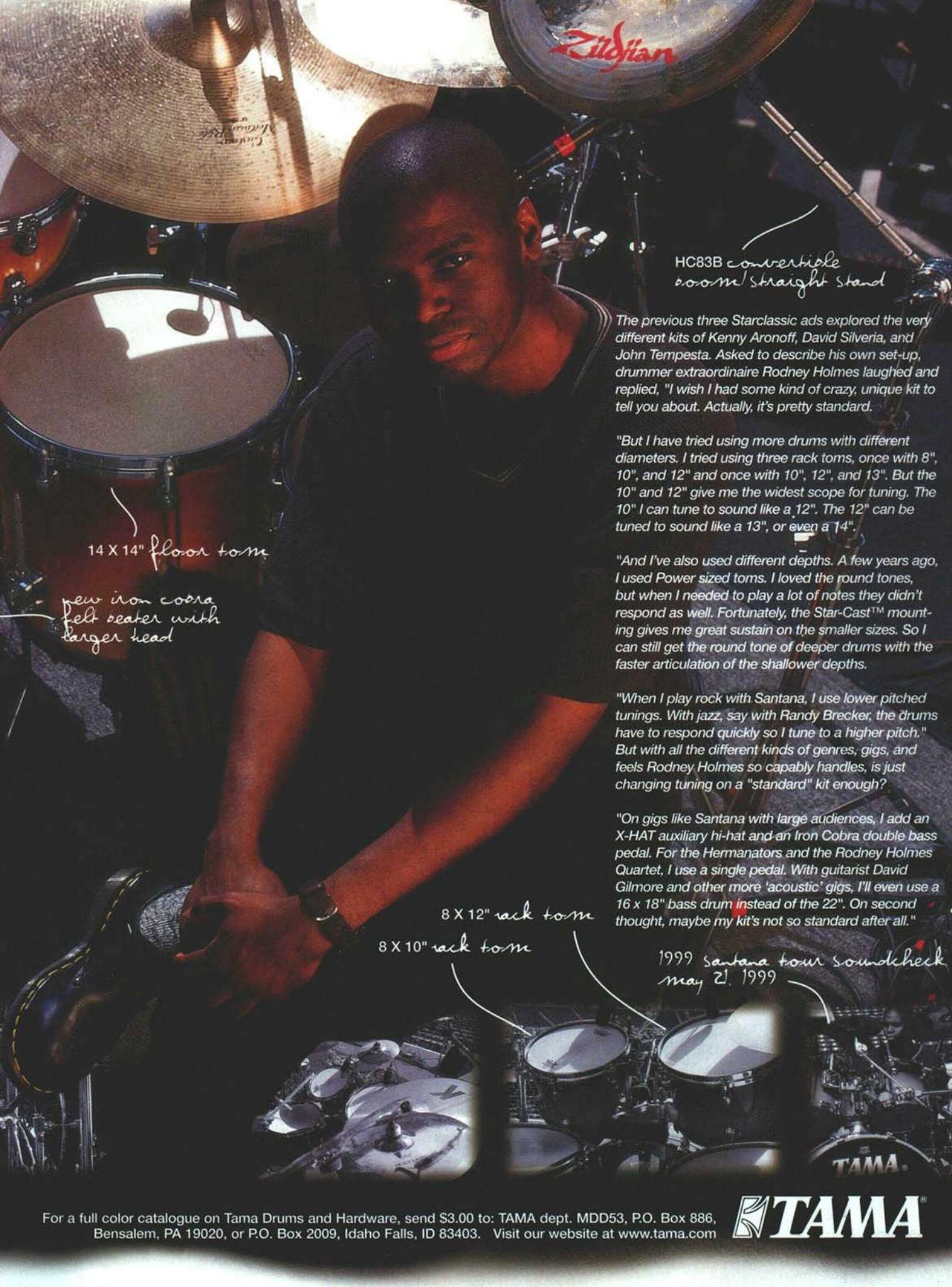
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The previous three Starclassic ads explored the very different kits of Kenny Aronoff, David Silveria, and John Tempesta. Asked to describe his own set-up, drummer extraordinaire Rodney Holmes laughed and replied, "I wish I had some kind of crazy, unique kit to tell you about. Actually, it's pretty standard."

"But I have tried using more drums with different diameters. I tried using three rack toms, once with 8", 10", and 12" and once with 10", 12", and 13". But the 10" and 12" give me the widest scope for tuning. The 10" I can tune to sound like a 12". The 12" can be tuned to sound like a 13", or even a 14".

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"When I play rock with Santana, I use lower pitched tunings. With jazz, say with Randy Brecker, the drums have to respond quickly so I tune to a higher pitch." But with all the different kinds of genres, gigs, and feels Rodney Holmes so capably handles, is just changing tuning on a "standard" kit enough?

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Ben Folds Five's Darren JESSEE A New Kind Of Pop

story by David John Farinella

photos by Paul La Raia

Things you think you'll never hear: "The Cubs win the World Series." "Please welcome President Dan Quale." "My *mom* bought me my first drumkit." Sure, anything's possible, but c'mon, a mom buying a drumkit?

With a short laugh Darren Jessee of Ben Folds Five says that his mom did just that when the rest of his neighborhood friends started picking up guitars. "Mom actually suggested that I get the drums," he says, "because that way I could have a band with my friends and we wouldn't all sit around wanking on the guitar. I just wanted to play, but once I got into the drums, I realized how exciting it was and I took it pretty seriously. It's been that way for a long time."



A long time indeed, since over the past fourteen years Jessee has been doing everything in his power to write, perform, and play with any number of people in his Charlotte, North Carolina hometown and beyond.

After doing stints with a number of local bands, Jessee stumbled upon a piano-wielding madman named Ben Folds and a bassist with a bit of a hyper streak named Robert Sledge. It was 1993 when the trio started to play together (calling themselves *Ben Folds Five*), eventually signing a record deal with Caroline Records. They toiled around the country for years with Folds' piano in tow, always returning to Chapel Hill, NC to record and perfect their sound.

While they were attempting to bend the pop music genre, critics and music fans were trying to figure out what the hell to call them. Because Folds plays a piano, the trio was lumped in with the Billy Joel and Elton John crowd, which was a double-edged sword in Jessee's eyes. "Sure, we're a piano-based band,"

he says. "I know there are things that we have in common with them, and I think Elton John is great. But I think our music is completely different. If you get inside of it you'll hear it."

Things changed for the band, of course, with the smash-hit single "Brick," from their 1997 offering *Whatever And*

Ever, Amen. While Jessee penned the haunting track from a high school memory, the song pushed Ben Folds Five from the shadows to the limelight.

With an uncomfortable pause, Jessee admits he's been having a hard time adjusting to the change, which to him seems like it came on quickly. Besides the pop music fans the band has stirred, a growing number of drummers have embraced Jessee's playing style. "It's funny that you think of the little things you did that introduced you to your future," he reflects. "It's like I was in a band around town with my friends, and then I met Ben and Robert. We started playing together. I never thought I'd be where I am now, and honestly, it's taken me a year or so to get comfortable with it."

"You have to stop and think," Barren says, "because there's all this stuff going on around you. People are setting up your gear and focusing lights on you and doing all this crazy stuff. You're like, 'They're doing this for me? What the heck did I do?' So it's a little weird. I'm trying to get adjusted to the attention and just have a good time with it."

Welcome to Darren Jessee's world, circa 1999. After a two-year tour to support *Whatever And Ever, Amen*, they're back on the road behind their most recent offering, *The Unauthorized Biography Of Reinhold Messner*. The new album is bigger, more symphonic, and better-sounding than their previous release, and that pleases the drummer.

For those not in the know, the trio recorded *Whatever* in Folds' Chapel Hill home with a couple of Tascam DA-88s. Well, guess you could say the sonics were lacking a bit. That's not what they were aiming for this time around. "On this record you can hear everyone, and





you really get a better idea of what the band is," Jessee explains. "I feel like I've been doing things for a while that haven't been recognized just because they were inaudible."

Darren admits that the lack of sonic integrity was a bit frustrating. "I felt like I was a little misunderstood at times by musicians and the music press last year," he says. "But that's okay because I make music for people who want to enjoy pop music and who enjoy the whole thing, not for musicians to pick apart. They can do that if they want—I do that with my favorite records—but for the most part it's a holistic thing."

That philosophy of making music for music fans, Darren believes, is an important aspect of his career. "I think if you're just sitting there concentrating on yourself and your own prowess, the *music* is going to be a smaller and less exciting thing," Jessee says. "Rock is supposed to be fun and entertaining, it's not supposed to be perfect and it's not supposed to be a formula. You have all these bands on modern rock radio now who are just being cranked out one after another, all sounding the same."

Drumset: According to Darren, his is "a pieced-together kit consisting of old Ludwig, Slingerland, Leedy, and WFL drums and parts."

- A. 5x14 snare
- B. 9x13 tom
- C. 16x16 floor tom
- D. 16x18 floor tom
- E. 14x24 kick

Cymbals: Zildjian (vintage Ks)

- 1. 15" hi-hats
- 2. 20" crash-ride
- 3. 22" sizzle ride (with rivets)

Percussion:

- aa. timpani (large)
- bb. timpani (small)
- cc. triangle
- dd. gong

Sticks: Vic Firth

Jessee's drums

It's not just the songs that are troubling, Darren says, it's the rhythm sections of those bands. Truth be told, Jessee's so impassioned about the topic because of the work he and Sledge have put into The Ben Folds Five sound. "Robert and I have gone to great lengths to make what we do sound exciting and different from any other rhythm section you're going to hear," he urges. "We think that's the fun part."

Jessee feels that the so-called "modern" rock bands of today have "dumbed down" the music. "There are lots of things that have been overlooked," he says. "It seems people are more interested in focusing on what bands are getting 'right'—this one's a great band because they do everything correctly. To me, perfection is boring. I'd rather hear someone screaming into an envelope filter and beating on tin cans with a great melody on top. That's a more exciting rhythm section to me than the whole *Pro Tools* correction thing [recording studio technology that allows mistakes to be fixed]. I think that whole approach of creating perfect performances is soul-sucking and just plain wrong."

Rather than striving for perfection in his



"I think if you're just sitting there concentrating on yourself and your own prowess, the music is going to be a smaller and less exciting thing."

playing, Jessee has been aiming for feel. "To be honest, technical ability is boring to me," he admits. "I grew up reading *Modern*

Drummer, listening to all my favorite drummers, and trying to emulate their styles. We've all done it, it's a natural

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process. But at some point you have to stop and come up with your *own* thing so that your music can be exciting and original.

"In general, musicians are rehashing things over and over again. Sure, it's great to see someone who can play the heck out of an instrument, but I've always been a sucker for *songs* and how bands play those songs. I love bands where if any one person in the band wasn't there, you'd be bummed out."

Jessee has taken that lack of polish and shine from his own playing into the Ben Folds Five rhythm section, bucking both pop music convention and that modern rock trend. In fact, because Sledge plays the bass more like a guitar than a traditional bass, "locking in" has never been the ultimate goal. "We play very fast at times," Jessee says. "It's more of a wall of energy than an old-school bass-and-drums groove. But on our new record, at least more than the previous ones, we've made an attempt to play things that feel really good. Before we were only interested in rocking out."

That energetic style was by design, Jessee insists, even though a number of music critics in the past didn't quite get it.



"I remember reading a review in a magazine," he says, "where the writer said we'll be much better when we learn not to try so hard. Hey, that's the *whole point* of what we've been doing. People want to pigeon-hole music. But it doesn't work for us—we're different, and that's the whole point. Sure, we're better musicians than we were

before, so the performances will be better, but we're still trying to go in our own direction."

And as the band has grown in ability, so has Jessee. Yes, his playing and chops have developed, but in a way it's the things *outside* of the band that have made him a more confident player. "I've gotten more com-

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fortable being in a successful band," Darren admits. "That might sound weird, but I'm painfully shy and really uncomfortable with the idea of being a spokesperson for anything. I just wanted to be this quiet drummer who came and did the job. But when you're in a trio it just doesn't work that way. So I've learned to have more fun with it and be a little more confident, cocky, and a little more flamboyant when I play.

"I'm starting to enjoy the entertainment aspect of it. Before I was all about the music and the purity of it, but now I'm completely into making it look bigger than it actually is," he says with a laugh. "I think that's just style and flair. From Papa Jo Jones to Gene Krupa to Keith Moon, there've been plenty of drummers who had lots of flair in the way they delivered the music. I'm interested in that aspect because it's fun to watch, it's exciting, and it really helps make a connection with an audience."

It was that newfound flair for the dramatic that changed the way the band worked in the studio. "The thing about us live is that we end up playing hard and really fast," Darren admits. "We got really good at just freaking out for seventy minutes on stage.

But when we got in the studio for this new album, we *ran* from that approach. We wanted to create something that was pretty." And that they did, producing a much more sophisticated collection of songs.

Just as with their other records, the band spent a lot of time jamming and writing together before going into the studio to record. Those "free playing" hours were very helpful. "We all have short attention spans," Darren says, "so we run through a lot of ideas. We'll just play a lot and kind of get so we're in sync with each other. Our playing tightens up and we come up with lots of ideas this way." On *Reinhold Messner* the song "Regrets" was born out of one session, as was much of "Don't Change Your Plans."

As for the recorded drum parts, Jessee didn't focus on playing any specific fills or patterns. That's not his personal goal. Actually, Darren attempts to keep his playing in the studio as unstructured as possible. "For the most part," he says, "I hate to play the same thing twice, although I can get pretty close when I have to. I know the song's arrangement, and I focus more on keeping the music flowing. The fills that

come out are what feels right at the moment, what works best to keep the flow. I'm just going for it."

That seems to be the philosophy of the whole band. As Jessee explains it, "We don't really talk that much about those things anymore. Someone will just introduce a song or something that we're going to work on and then we all just migrate towards what feels the best. We trust our instincts."

With the success the band has achieved, Jessee could go out and have the endorsement deal most drummers dream of. But for the new record, part of his musical instincts led him to vintage gear. He pieced together a drumkit from parts of old Ludwig, Slingerland, Leedy, and WFL kits. He even experimented a bit, turning an old Leedy 18" floor tom into a kick drum on the tune "Mess." You'll also hear Darren playing timpani and other assorted percussion here and there.

As for cymbals, Jessee tweaked the vintage Zildjian sizzle cymbals that have been a big part of his kit in the past. Hi-hats became crashes, rides were hi-hats. "I mixed everything around just for different

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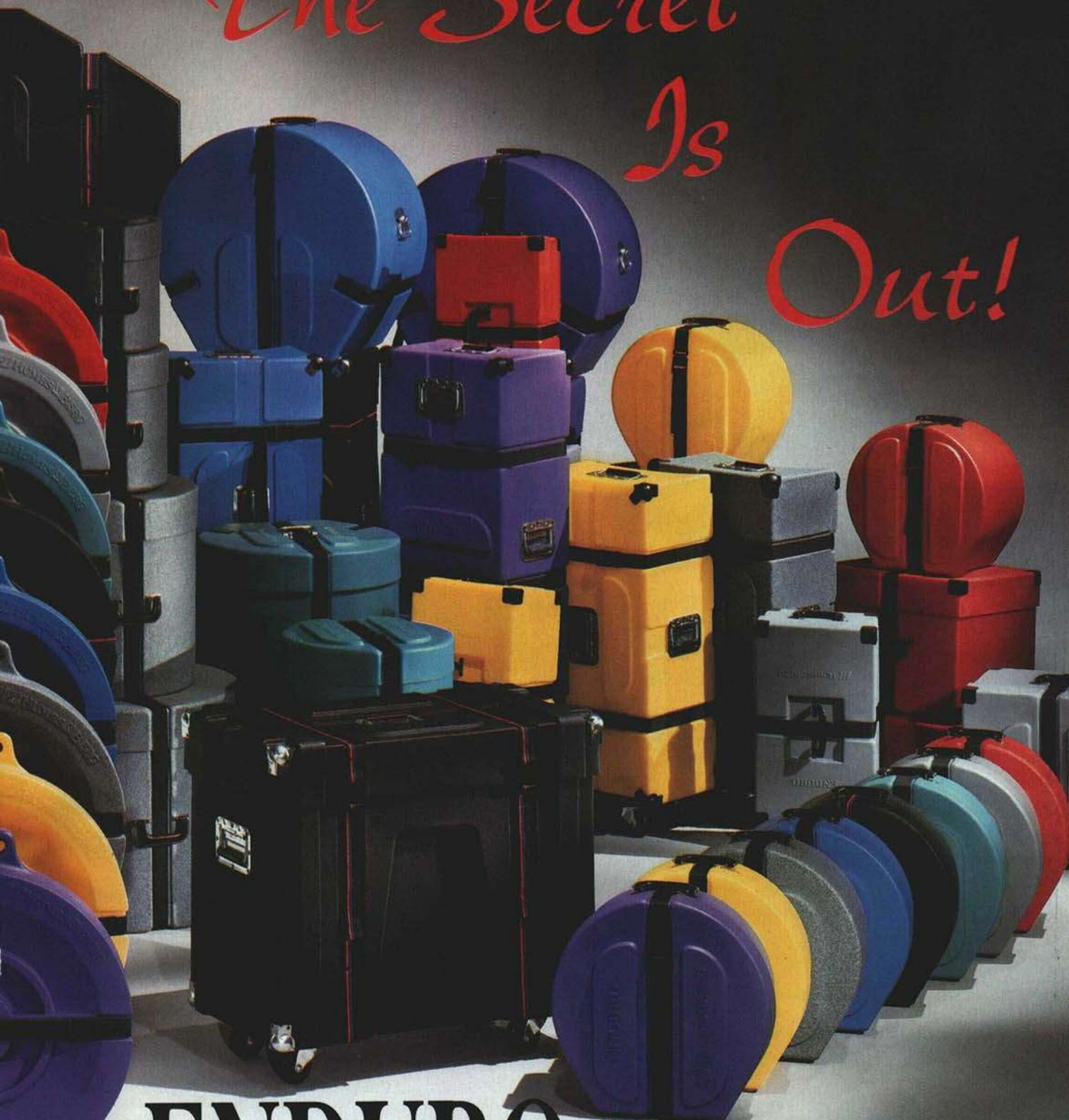
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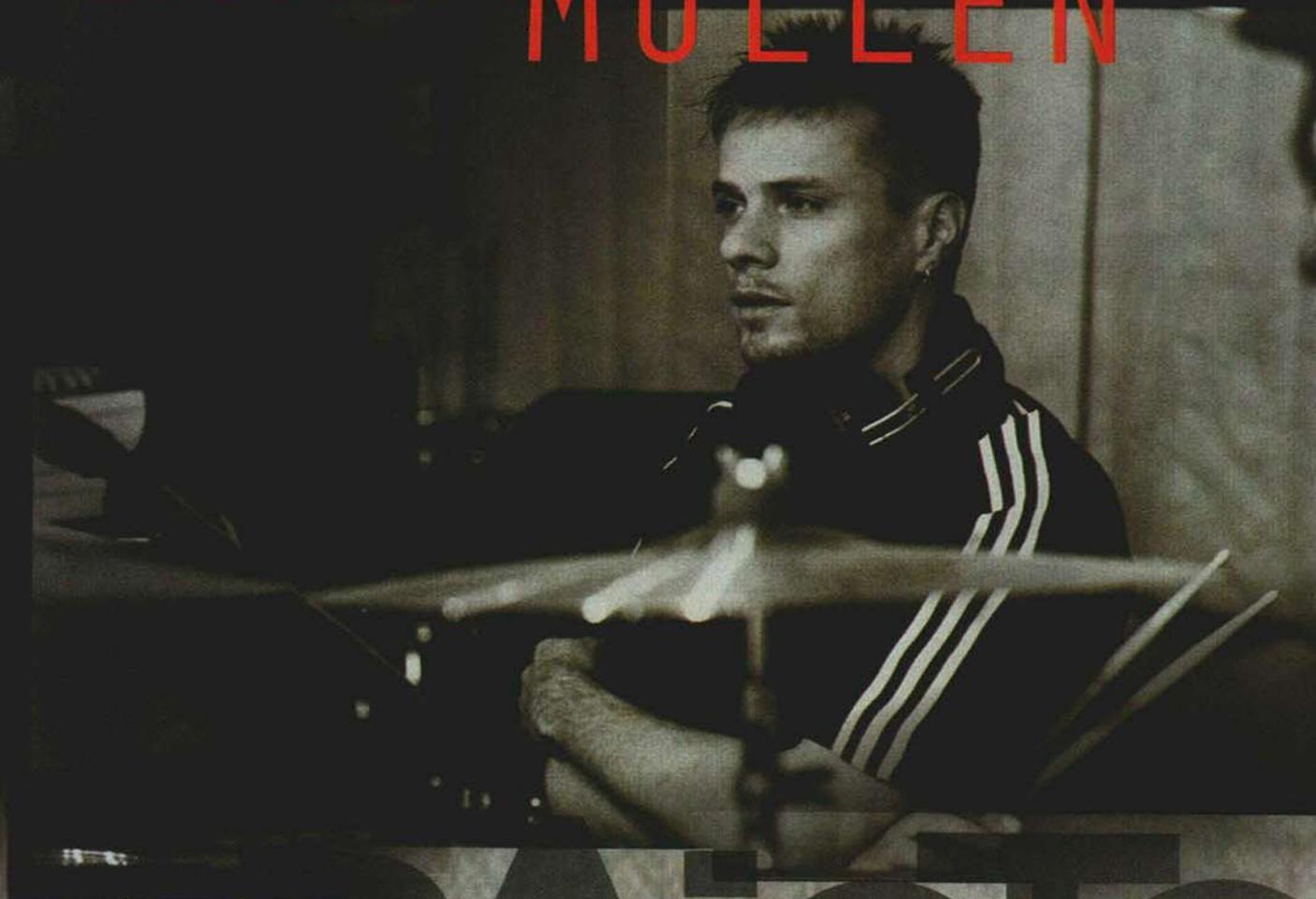


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sounds," he explains. "Whatever worked."

Where almost any other band with the singer's name in the title would mean a non-collaborative relationship, all three members of Ben Folds Five contribute songs. It was Jessee who wrote the music to the hit "Brick." And he contributed "Magic" to the new release, a song that blends both the old and new style of Ben Folds Five. From Folds' piano bits to Jessee's kettle drum bombs and percussion touches, the song is an example of what the drummer was saying about adding layers to their music.

Above and beyond Ben Folds Five, Jessee is looking to record a solo album, where he'll both play and sing. Though he's made a career so far out of playing drums, when he sits down to write a song it's the melodies that are most important. "A lot of the things I write are kind of folksy," Darren explains. "Most are ballads, quiet guitar songs." Yes, he's able to use the "G" word, even though the band obviously doesn't include the instrument. "Guitar is great," he says, "because you can write something on it, transfer the ideas to piano, and all of a sudden it sounds

like a big fancy limousine of a song."

Jessee's influences, for both his drumming and songwriting, are the classics. With a laugh, he explains it all started with FM radio and a record club membership to Columbia House. "I didn't have very discreet tastes when I was twelve or thirteen years old," he says. "I just liked pop music. I think that's how most kids are; they just listen to the radio and like it. I got a little older and started to develop my own taste. But I've never really been interested in music unless the songs were good. That's the one thing I've noticed to be true in all cases. And I really connected with the '60s rock-era drummers—the Mitch Mitchells and Keith Moons—the whole spastic rock-energy thing. Then later on I had a big Stax-influenced couple of years. Al Jackson Jr. was the man for me. From him I learned to keep it simple, to keep it real."

Back at the band's rehearsal space, Jessee is contemplating how the band will perform their new music on the upcoming tour. "A lot of stuff on the record is more orchestrated than it has been," he says. "We're just trying to figure out how to pull it off with the three of us." For his own

part, Darren will be adding a gong and timpani to his kit for the more symphonic touches found on the album.

Even though the band has some things to work out for their live set, Darren is eager to get out on the road again. In fact, the self-described workaholic is ready to *play*. "I hate practicing on my own," he admits. "When you get out on the road and do shows, your playing really comes together. Besides, drums have never really struck me as something you can do by yourself in your bedroom all the time. Don't get me wrong, I like to practice. But there's nothing like getting out there onstage and doing it."

Darren pauses for a second, as if he's thinking back to the last tour for *Whatever And Ever, Amen*. "We got to travel around the world and do things I didn't think I'd ever get to do back when I was bussing tables," he says. "Things have just kept moving along, faster and faster, and now this new record is out and we're about to take off and start the whole thing all over again. Time is flying by."



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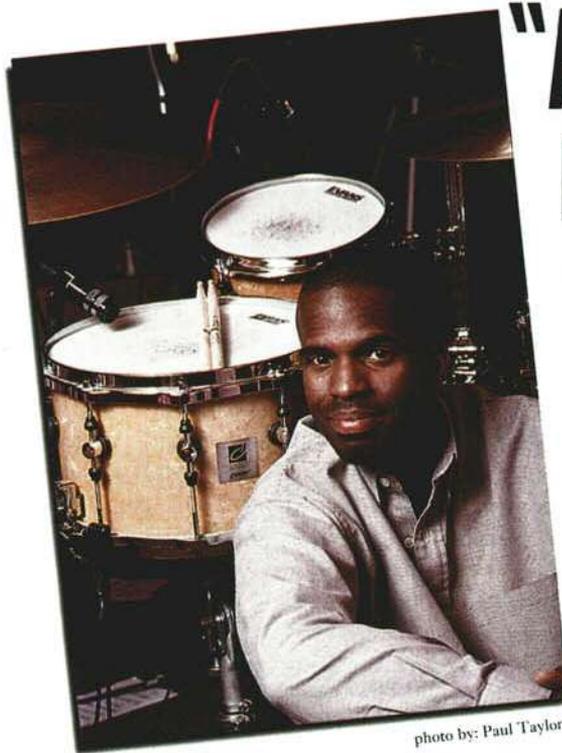
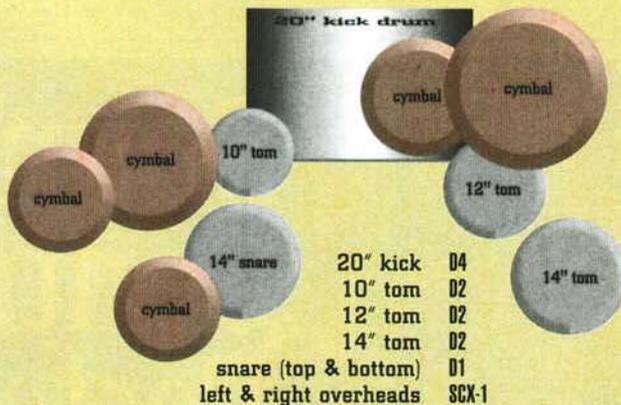


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Steve Alexander

Reaching The Demon Level With Jeff Beck

story by T. Bruce Wittet

photos by Paul La Raia

When Steve Alexander yearns for the green, green grass of home, it ain't Kentucky he's hankering for. It's the lush mountains and glens of Wales—home of male choirs, miners, and writer Dylan Thomas. But *drummers*? No, drumming was not your average profession in the small Welsh town of Steve Alexander's birth, Yfpradgynlaif. (Easy for him to say!) You can bet it was a major leap over those green mountains to downtown London, to Duran Duran, and finally to guitarist Jeff Beck, with whom the thirty-four-year-old drummer currently tours.

You want to talk about a hot seat? In Jeff Beck's lineup, Alexander replaces Terry Bozzio. That ought to give you an idea of his capabilities. But there were times when Alexander wondered if he'd amount to anything. In fact, his journey is largely a story about wrestling with self-doubt. What pushed Alexander past that, though, was a distinct feeling that he could do something significant on his instrument, if only an opportunity came along. Today he's thrilled to be making music on a "demon level."







It wasn't as if drumming was *discouraged* when Alexander was a kid. To the contrary, he notes, "There was a feeling that music and creativity were worthwhile pursuits. My father is a playwright and my mother used to play violin, and there was music in the house all the time. My brother is a musician, but he's in a different world—of strings and wind quintets."

Perhaps it was a performance by The Buddy Rich Orchestra on black & white television that lured Steve away from his studies on piano and violin. "I have a crystal-clear memory of Buddy playing a solo," Steve insists. "I loved that arrogance and confidence that he exuded—and that knowledge that he was the leader."

In his teens, Steve sought a drum tutor in nearby Swansea. "I'd come in and say, 'I don't understand this,'" the drummer recalls, "and he'd transcribe it. I wasn't really into copying people's licks, but I wanted to do something that *sounded* like it. He'd open a new page of vocabulary for me, and he was the first person to encourage me and suggest I had more potential than the average guy."

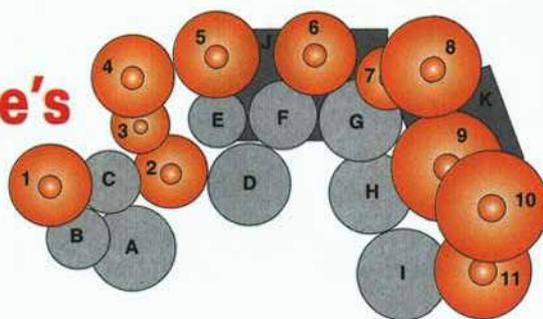
Around 1981, and for two summers running, Alexander attended a two-week jazz camp in Barry, Southern Wales. "That was regarded as the best course in Britain," Steve says. "There

"Even now it amazes me how so few people really know what they're doing. That's handicapping our profession."



was a pianist called Gordon Beck who influenced me—which was quite a coincidence, being that later I'd have a different *Beck* influence! But drummers John Marshall, Nigel Morris, and Tony Oxley taught there. You know, I went to that course hoping I wouldn't be the worst guy. At the end, they picked students to play in a big band concert in London, and I was chosen. I played the second half of the concert, and I remember Gordon Beck introducing me to the crowd: 'Watch out for this guy; he's going to be famous.' That meant a lot to me. You

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- E. 8x10 tom
- F. 10x12 tom
- G. 12x14 tom
- H. 14x14 floor tom
- I. 16x16 floor tom
- J. 18x22 kick (main)
- K. 16x16 kick (secondary, from *Jungle Set*)

Sticks: Zildjian black *Super 5A* model with wood tip

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- 6. 14" *K Custom Dark* hi-hats (mounted on x-hat)
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- 9. 20" *K Custom Dark* ride
- 10. 20" *Oriental Classic* crash
- 11. 17" *K Constantinople Dark* crash

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live in a little village and although you start feeling, 'I'm *not bad* at this,' you wonder if you'll ever make the leap to the world stage."

Just as American musicians migrate to Los Angeles, Brits head to London. Knowing that the place would be competitive, Steve figured he'd hedge his bets by majoring in psychology at London's prestigious University College. The move would buy him time and get him into circulation. "The problem was I knew absolutely no musicians in London," he admits. "I had nothing but my belief and ambition and a bit of self-confidence."

Alexander finished his degree and took a day gig. "I worked in the Natural History Museum for a while," Steve sighs, "performing statistical analyses on the effectiveness of new exhibitions. This wasn't going to work. I knew that I was going to have to be broke and put a lot of time into music. So I quit the job and started a routine of practice and fitness, though without being obsessed. I'd do about six hours of practicing, swim 1,500 meters, and read *Modern Drummer* with my lunch. It's difficult to explain to people, but I've always had a strange *nagging* to pursue drumming. It's not something like, 'Give me a tennis racket and I'll be a champion.' It's just that there was nothing else that I'd ever had this confidence about."

Early influences included drummers who could groove *and* solo. Alexander cites Steve Gadd, Peter Erskine, and especially Billy Cobham, from whom he took the melodic approach to fills and the sheer brunt of attack. Adds Steve, "One of my favorite drummers was Tony Williams, in particular because of the way he played with tone and timbre. Those were the twin elements that attracted me. When I take a solo, *that's* what I try to incorporate. I don't play a rehearsed solo; I prefer flying by the seat of my pants. Often a little 'tune' or pattern will emerge that will evoke a response, and I'll be off down a different road. To me that's more important than setting off mass destruction of the kit!

"I turned a little corner in the South American Jeff Beck tour," Steve continues. "I had previously done a clinic for Zildjian there, and the people had nagged me to play a samba. I was like, 'You're kidding, man! I'm from *Wales*.' One night during the Beck tour, I played one for ten seconds

during a solo as a joke, but it went down so well that it gave me confidence. They said, 'You sound like two guys; you sound like a *peasant!*' I've modified it since then, but I still end my solos with a samba-related element. Also, it gives the lighting and sound guys a clue that I'm about to end."

As the old guys say, it's all about *spacing*. At the respected Drummers Meeting (festival) held in Koblenz, Germany, Steve had the unenviable task of performing while a star-studded roster that included JR Robinson, Sheila E, Peter

Erskine, Adam Nussbaum, and Jonathan Moffett watched from the wings. "I was so psyched up to make an impact, and launched such a violent attack, I almost blew my engines ten minutes into my forty-minute set! It worked, though," Steve recalls, "and I recovered. JR came over and said, 'You're one of the crazies.' It was like, *You're one of us; welcome to the club*. That really stuck in my mind."

And another truism from the veterans: *Nothing goes according to plan*. During a Far Eastern clinic tour, Alexander arrived

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at the appointed venue in Manila. Over 3,500 drumming fans had assembled, awaiting his every move. Unfortunately, the tattered drumset on stage bore little resemblance to the one requested in the rider. At least there were new heads. Problem was, they were still in plastic bags. As the clock ticked, thousands watched as Steve removed old drumheads and mounted fresh ones. "Six toms!" Steve exclaims. "One by one I remember saying to Bob Wiczing [British Zildjian rep and traveling companion], 'This is the most

surreal moment of my life!' And then this woman went up to the mic': Wow you see how a professional drummer tunes his kit!"

At live gigs or clinics, Steve prefers to solo against a musical backdrop. Ideally, as on the new Jeff Beck album, *Who Else*, he uses band figures as a springboard. For example, in "Blast From The East," he has to nail tricky figures, then work around them. "A couple of those are mind-altering fills," he admits. "I heard them back and thought, *That's* going to cause people

some problems!"

"I didn't write the figures out," Steve explains. "My general approach is based more on an *emotive* sense. If you use language as an analogy, the idea comes into my mind and the words come tumbling out. I don't want to think about constructing the letters into words. When I practice, I put myself in an alien environment and force myself to play eight different variations of a style I don't do that often. Also, I try to deliberately lose myself in complex subdivisions and see if I come back smack on the 1."

A few years back, during a record date in Paris, Steve got proof that his hunches were landing on target. "I did a record for Papa Wemba from Zaire with all African musicians. It was one of those times when you start thinking, 'Maybe I *can* feel music.' Papa came and hugged me and said, through a translator, 'How do you understand our music so well?'"

The sequence of events leading to Jeff Beck started with a group called Brother Beyond. The drummer who preceded Alexander in that group was Steve Ferrone, who soon departed for Duran Duran. "I wasn't going into some shoddy musical heritage," Steve says. "In Britain, Brother Beyond had triple-platinum albums. But all people saw were nice-looking guys in suits, and they figured we couldn't play! I was programming the sequencers—but I was *also* playing the kit."

In a twist of fate, Ferrone left Duran Duran in the early '90s, leaving that chair open for Steve. Duran Duran guitarist Warren Cuccurullo had previously worked with Terry Bozzio with Frank Zappa and Missing Persons, and Bozzio was at the time working with Jeff Beck, which explains *that* connection. "There's his ghost flying around," Steve remarks wryly.

Jeff Beck had spoiled himself with some of the finest drummers ever to pick up sticks. Besides Bozzio, Aynsley Dunbar, Cozy Powell, Carmine Appice, Richard Bailey, Simon Phillips, Narada Michael Walden, and Bernard Purdie all held the Beck throne at one time.

"I got a phone call one night," Steve recalls, "while I was watching *Frasier* on TV. I had the machine on and a voice says: 'Steve, pick up the phone now. Jeff Beck's at home and he's waiting for you to call.' I charged up and down the stairs, getting all

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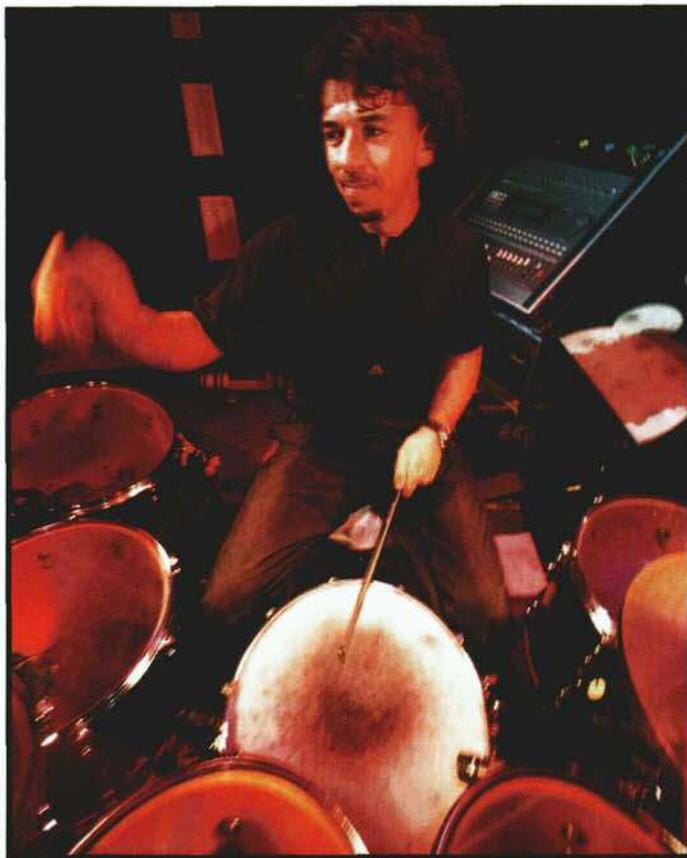
excited—then adopted a professional calmness before I phoned. Sometimes, whatever excitement and uncertainty you feel inside, it pays to show confidence. Jeff invited me to his house and we played together. After five minutes, it felt right, and I thought, If I don't get this, there is no justice!"

Justice was served, and Alexander and Beck have been on the road ever since. Although Steve shares drum duties on *Who Else*—one track has Manu Katche, another has Jan Hammer—Steve's on the bulk of the album. Sometimes it's difficult to discern live licks from loops, though in the song "Hip-Notica" there's no mistaking that snares-off acoustic drum sound. Recorded in one take, the song nods to old organ/guitar groups like The Ventures. "That's interesting," Steve responds to the observation, "because there was an attempt to introduce that retro '60s feel, without making it sound cheesy or old-fashioned."

"Brush With The Blues" betrays Steve's jazz influences, as he complements Jeff Beck's guitar runs with little flourishes with the brushes. "Although I might not strike anyone as a jazz drummer when they

see me play," Steve suggests, "that tradition did influence me—especially to *listen* to other musicians. After the show, people comment on the empathy I show with Jeff's playing. I'm not afraid to turn things upside down, or play unison runs with him. This makes for the element of danger in the performance, which I think the crowd really appreciates."

"THX138" finds Steve playing drums along with a loop. Often this presents drummers with a problem. Many sounds



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Photo by Jon Cohan

and patterns, programmed in studio environments, don't "travel" well to the stage. "Yes," agrees Steve, "I have to be careful how I divide the labor between me and the machine. You *can* 'over-egg the pudding.' There are places where I will stop and let the loop play on for a few seconds and create the feeling of, *When's the drummer going to come back?* In terms of sonic elements, people in clubs want plenty of sub [lows], and if you program too complex a part it will sound horrendous. On THX, I had to be careful about how I EQ'd parts. There will be double bass parts going along with a deep-ish, machine-kick. I had to watch that for the live show because it was killing everything."

Which brings up one of Steve's pet peeves: "People won't mix loops as loud as real drummers. But that's wrong! Sure, I want to sound, say, ten percent heavier than the loop, so that when I come in, I kick it in the ass. But at the same time, *don't* bury the loops in the background."

If you saw Steve Alexander with Jeff Beck on Letterman in the spring, you'll remember his resourcefulness. He played a

Demon Tracks

These are the records that Steve says best represent his playing:

Artist	Album
Jeff Beck	Who Else
Steve Alexander	Isometric
Duran Duran	Medazzaland
Papa Wemba	Voyages

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

Artist	Album	Drummer
Jeff Beck	Wired	Narada Michael Walden, Richard Bailey, Jan Hammer
Billy Cobham	Spectrum	Billy Cobham
Tony Williams	Lifetime	Tony Williams
Goldie	Timeless	programmed
Weather Report	Heavy Weather	Alex Acuna

multi-tom setup that included a regular bass drum, a 16" bass drum, a Sonor mini-tambourine snare (from the company's *Jungle Set*), and several hi-hats. Steve often gets asked about the sounds he triggers from his toms. He answers that he *doesn't* trigger. Instead, he and his drum tech, Ravi Sharman, insist on meticulous

tuning. To get his sound they prefer deeper-depth—though not "square sized"—Sonor *Designer Series* toms. Perhaps equally important is his choice of sticks: "The combination of Will Calhoun's and Tony Williams' comments that I read about sticks made me change my tune. At one time, I used a smaller stick. But I went



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—Simon Phillips

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in Black Nickel Finish

KA145 "Trackmaster"
5 x 14" 10 Lug, 1 mm Engraved Brass Shell
in Black Nickel Finish

Bill Bruford

BB146 Standard
6 x 14" 10 Lug, 3-Ply Maple/3-Ply Birch/3-Ply Maple in
Black Sandblast Finish

BB1055 Piccolo
5 1/2 x 10" 6 Lug, 3-Ply Maple/3-Ply Birch/3-Ply Maple in
Black Sandblast Finish

Simon Phillips

SP125 "The Pageant"
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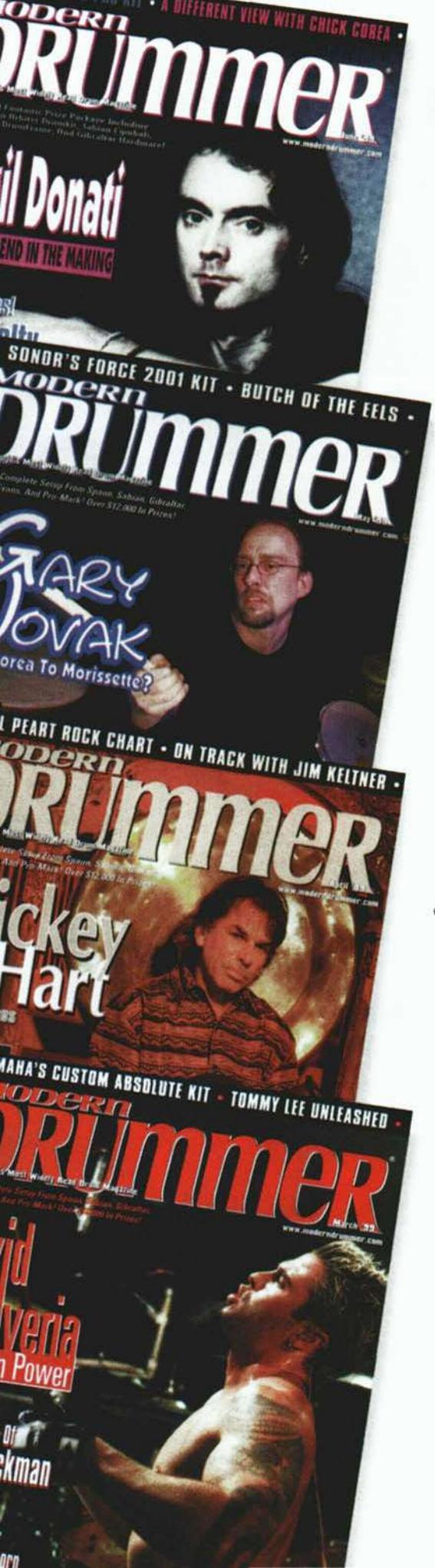
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up to the *Super 5A* and felt comfortable instantly. The cramps in my hands stopped."

Don't expect a drum extravaganza on Steve Alexander's upcoming solo record, *Isometric*, which will appear on London's hip drum 'n' bass label Reinforced Records. The project has evolved from Steve's early confrontations with technology in London. "Even now it amazes me how so few people really know what they're doing. That's handicapping our profession. I truly enjoy programming, and I also spend at least as much time playing keyboards as I do drums. [He plays them live with Jeff Beck on the song "Declan."] A couple of the EPs I've released have been 'record of the month' in dance magazines in Britain. It's not so hardcore as some of the drum 'n' bass. It's a dreamier approach combined with live kit performance. Some people say, 'Oh, I've used live kit on a drum 'n' bass record,' but they've only *used four bars*. Once the tape starts, I play from beginning to end without stopping."

In the tradition of certain Jeff Beck

alumnae, Steve's drumming can be aggressive and flashy. It's all part of keeping up with the leader, who looks to Steve as a foil. That can be draining—"I should be able to turn it up to eleven when required," the drummer says—and Steve is dedicated to staying fit. "I work on a rowing machine, which conditions the back, arms, chest, upper arms, and heart—and it's low-impact on your knees. When I can regularly train on it, I force myself to get to a *demon* level. There are competitions, and I've achieved the fastest time ever on 2,000 meters. Believe me, it's taken me a lot of gagging to get there! Sometimes it seems as if I'm punishing myself for no reason, but every night on the gig I thank myself I do it. The show is physically demanding, and there are no places to hide, no easy numbers. But I'm so excited I'm leaping off my stool. I'm happy to be able to say, 'Right! Let's go!'"



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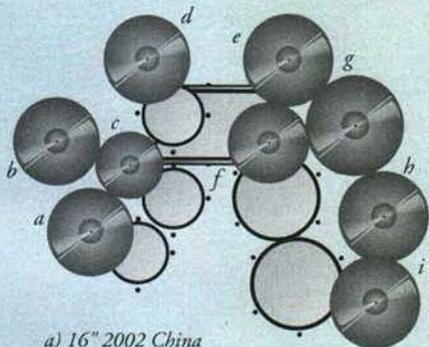
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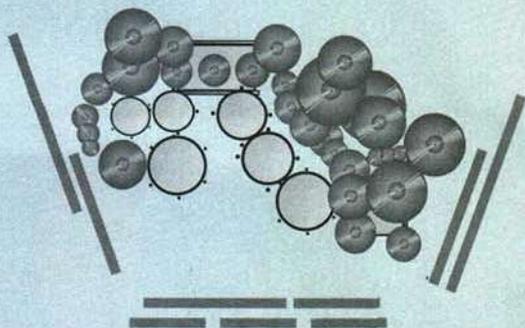
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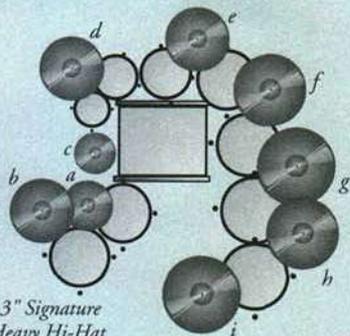
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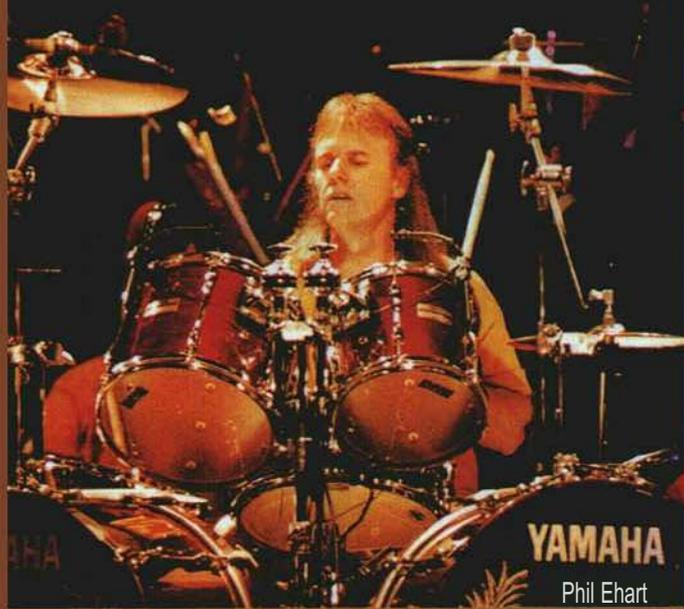
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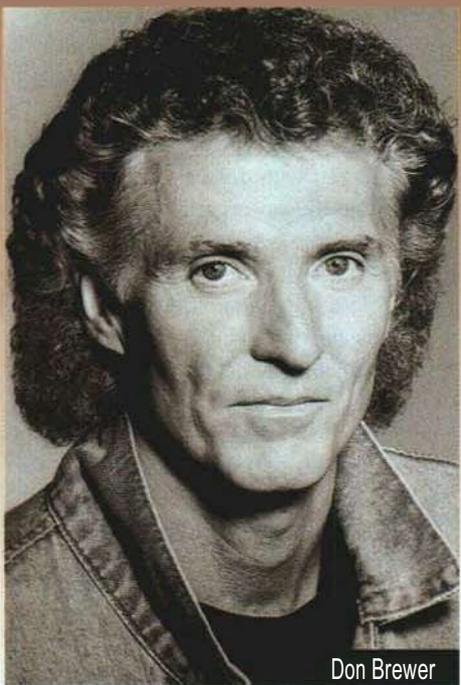
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Simon Kirke



Don Brewer

'70s

Drumming Greats Today

Bad Company, Grand Funk Railroad. Kansas, Cheap Trick. Hearing their names, no one's really gonna blame you for playing word association: 8-track tapes, hopped-up vans, double live records...countless 70s artifacts. And yeah, these guys are among the most notorious of that decade's rock institutions. But artifacts? No way. Just ask the drummers who powered their huge and heavy hits-and who are still out there doing it in 1999.

by Adam Budofsky

Simon Kirke

didn't know what he was getting himself into. Gladly accepting an invitation to play in a unique revue of British Invasion songs, the drummer, who's powered such rock staples as Free's "All Right Now" and Bad Co's "Can't Get Enough," "Feel Like Makin' Love," and "Rock And Roll Fantasy," felt he had the stamina and flexibility to handle the event's thirty-five tunes. "But then the organizers dropped the bomb on me," Simon recalls from his home in New York City. "They said, 'Okay, the first show is at 7:30, the second is at 11:00.' And they were three-hour sets! It was a very enjoyable gig, but believe me, I hurt at the end."

Anyone who's kept up with Bad Company and Simon Kirke probably wouldn't be too surprised that the fifty-year-old drummer nailed the gig without a hitch. Easily looking ten years younger, Simon is the picture of positive drumming, with a gracious sense of humor unexpected from one who's endured as many drab hotel rooms, endless soundchecks, and stinky dressing rooms as he must have over the past thirty-odd years.

Kirke says as recently as a few years ago, he wasn't quite so peppy. By that time, original singer Paul Rodgers and bassist Bozz Burrell had long since left Bad Company, and Simon was feeling the pressure keeping the band afloat. "So [guitarist] Mick Ralphs and I decided to stop touring and give it all a rest," the drummer explains. "We worked the band a lot but weren't really getting anywhere. And as much as I liked the newer members of the

group, I felt our personal lives were suffering, and I wanted to spend some time with my family. I needed a rest, and I wanted to get healthy.

"I'm sort of gradually coming out of seclusion," Kirke says today. "Though as much as I still love playing drums, I want to wind down on the touring and concentrate more on my family life. I've got four lovely kids, but in the '80s and early '90s, I hardly saw them. I want to try and make up for that."

To be able to stay put and keep involved in music, Kirke says that he has been concentrating on "adding more strings to his bow." In addition to taking freelance drumming gigs in the city, as well as short tours with Ringo's All-Star Band, he's currently scoring a film that will be shown in England. "It's my first effort," Simon boasts, "but I'm pretty pleased with it. I also play keyboards and write songs, so I want to get a songwriting career going. I like to produce as well."

Kirke may soon find himself living the rock 'n' roll lifestyle again—though hopefully a more tolerable version of it. Recently the founders of Bad Company reunited to celebrate the band's twenty-fifth anniversary with a two-disc retrospective. Now the band is touring behind *The "Original" Bad Company Anthology*, which even features several new tunes. "We hadn't played together for thirteen or fourteen years," says Kirke. "But considering all that had gone on in the past, when we got together in the studio last November to record the new songs, we got on pretty well. We've all played with different people over the years, but there was just this ease between us—although Bozz's bass playing is much more comprehensive than it was twenty-five years ago. He'd just started to learn in those days, and now he's a walking encyclopedia."

Despite the good vibes at the sessions, as of this writing Simon isn't quite ready to bet on a long-term reunion. "I'd like it to be," he says, "because I think we've proved that we can get on and that musically there's still a lot to say. But the jury is still out. This American tour will prove whether it will work or not."



Hopefully it will."

Those who make it out to the shows will be treated to some of the most profoundly restrained rock drumming ever played on a five-piece set. "Less is more" might be a cliché, but Simon Kirke proves it's still a deeply valid concept. "I don't want to sound simplistic or trite," Simon explains, "but in Bad Co we just played the songs. Looking back on the tunes that I was presented with for the British Invasion show—we had to listen to the originals for reference—the drums are so busy. Just about every four bars there was a one-bar fill. The two drummers who weren't like this were Ringo and Charlie Watts. Because the Beatles were so song-oriented, Ringo had a big influence on me. I think I learned the value of listening to what the song was doing and *then* adding my thing to it."

Kirke admits that for a time early on he wasn't quite so restrained. "I went through the double bass thing when Ginger Baker was ruling the roost. We all got an extra bass drum and tried to do it. And Keith Moon was doing all his stuff.. but it just didn't suit me. Before I was in Free, just after I got down to London, I answered an advert for a band called Martin's Magic Mixture—a real '60s title if ever I heard one—and they said, 'Can you play a double kit?' 'Of course I can!' I just wanted to be in a group in London. But they had this double kit there, and I'm going, 'Oh, shit.' So I attacked it and did my best. But when it came time to do a roll on the twin bass drums, it was awful. It sounded like an explosion in a bass drum factory. I went up and said, 'Well, I've got my own double kit at home, and I'm trying to get the hang of it...'

Good Company

"My DW drums are terrific," says Simon Kirke. "I've been playing them now for three years. I've had loads of kits over the years, and I still have my original Bad Company kit, which recently came out of mothballs. It's an old Ludwig 26" bass drum, a huge bloody thing. The floor toms are 16x16 and 18x18. The rack is 12x14. But the DWs have a lovely finish, and the weight and solidity and tone remind me of the old Gretsch kits in the late '60s, early '70s. And they have this fabulous hardware and durability that I don't think those old drums had. I also play Paiste cymbals. I've been with them for damn near thirty years, and I have no intention of changing."



"In the end I got back to just playing songs, and that's what I still love to do. I just did a session here in New York with a singer/songwriter, just me and him. No bass, no piano, nothing. He will add other instruments later, but I found that I could still play the songs and have a great time without all that stuff."

According to Kirke, his appreciation for simpler, song-sensitive playing was largely influenced by his first experiences playing drums in front of people. "My school bus driver had a couple of turntables and some 45s," he recalls, "and he'd go to the local village halls and play his records for people to dance to. He heard that I was a drummer and said, 'Why don't you put your drums on the stage and play along with the records?' And I thought, 'You're bloody mad.' But I gave it a shot, and the people loved it. I played for four hours at a time, and we did three or four shows a week. That's a lot of songs. It was a lot of different styles as well, everything from waltzes to The Beatles. I did this for a couple of years, until I was about sixteen. I think that's where I got my sense of time from, and how I sort of honed my style."

Kirke's early drumming heroes included Motown drummers Benny Benjamin and Pistol Allen. "I also learned a lot from Ringo, Charlie, Levon Helm from The Band, and Buddy Rich," Simon adds. "But what Al Jackson of Booker T. & The MG's played meant more to me than any of them. Whenever I go on the road I take my CDs

with me, and before a gig I'll put on anything with him on it. He was so solid and simple, and he just kicked. He never got in the way, and his snare drum popped right through the mix. I never met him, but I did meet [MG's bassist] Donald 'Duck' Dunn several years ago. I said to him, 'You know, I never got a chance to meet Al, but I just wanted to say that I was in awe of him.' He said, 'Son, we *all* were.'"

Simon has clearly passed his knowledge and enthusiasm to his own kids. "I've got my son listening to those people," he says proudly. "He's twenty now and he's in a blues band. He plays well. He actually likes most of the music that I like—Otis Redding, James Brown, all that stuff. He also likes some rap stuff that I'm not mad about, but he *is* a kid."

With Ringo Starr, Kirke gets to play much of the music he worshipped when *he* was a kid. Again, Simon talks about the experience with the enthusiasm of a teenager. "When Ringo approached me in '97 to do an American tour, I said I'd *love* to. It gave me a chance to forget Bad Company for a while, and it worked very well. My style and Ringo's style mesh very well. And Jack Bruce, Peter Frampton, Gary Brooker of Procol Harum—and on this last tour, Todd Rundgren and Tim Capella—they're *all* top-notch guys. Of course the best part is that I get to play with someone who I admired and respected and who was a big influence on me, Ringo."

Don Brewer

is a contented man. Thirty years after Grand Funk Railroad roared out of Flint, Michigan, he can look back on the vindictiveness of a powerful ex-manager, near financial ruin at the hands of the IRS, and even falling out of favor with the masses, and still be proud of his band's stature.

The gory details of Grand Funk's woes were recently recounted on an episode of VH1's *Behind The Music*. Brewer isn't opposed to rehashing them here, yet his enthusiasm regarding the band's current wave of popularity makes it all seem like so many years ago. Two new books, including a collection of fans' stories compiled by Brewer's wife, Sunny Quinn, several Web sites, and an elaborate Grand Funk CD anthology are *almost* enough to make Don Brewer forget all the heartaches.

Right from the start, Grand Funk was known as "the people's band," a tag they've gladly worn since slaying an unsuspecting crowd of over 100,000 at the 1969 Atlanta Pop Festival. Taking the heavy trio approach made popular by Jimi Hendrix and Cream, the band

set themselves apart by spiking the mix with some R&B/Motown soulfulness. They became huge fast, racking up consecutive platinum albums and selling out Shea Stadium even faster than The Beatles. By the end of the '70s they had left a legacy of great heavy pop tunes any band would be proud of: "Closer To Home/I'm Your Captain," "We're An American Band," "Walk Like A Man," "The Loco-Motion," "Some Kind Of Wonderful," "Bad Time." HUGE hits, each totally unique, yet each possessing the power to make you wanna jump in a Mustang convertible, floor the gas pedal, and blast your Kenwood speakers so loud you scare pedestrians.

Then came disco. And click tracks. And the rise of corporate radio programming. Almost as fast as they appeared, Grand Funk were gone. An early '80s reunion provided too little too soon, and Brewer, singer/guitarist Mark Farner, and bassist Mel Schacher learned to live life without The Funk. Brewer went on to

play with Pat Travers and back up Bob Seger on a couple of tours, but Grand Funk, it seemed, was history.

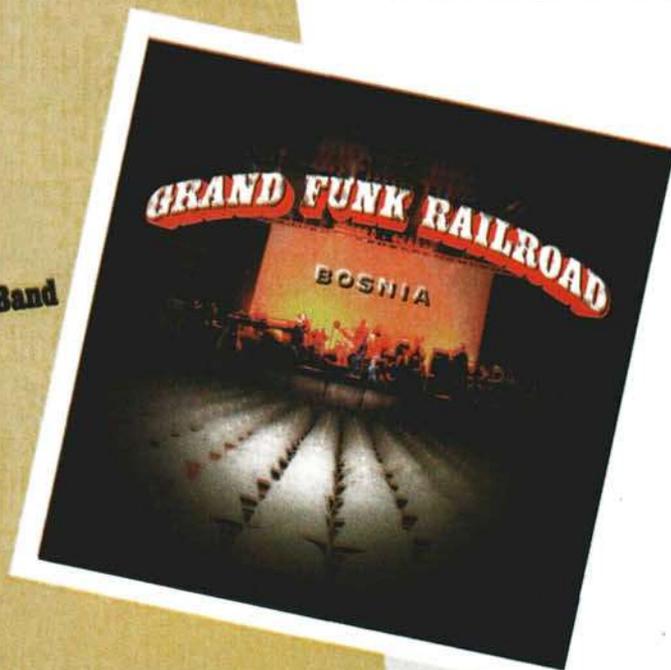
But *then....* Then came the '90s. Hip grunge bands had a huge debt to pay to '70s musical giants like Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. The idea of hearing Grand Funk on the radio didn't seem strange anymore. "All of a sudden," says Brewer, "people are knocking on our door: 'Hey, why don't you guys get back together?'"

The band carefully considered the possibilities. "It took us a few years to get it together," Don explains, "because we wanted to be true to our fans and present Grand Funk in its best light. It took us a while to convince promoters not to just throw us into the local bar, like they were doing with a lot of the classic rock acts. It was amazing how easily it came back to us, though. There is just this chemistry between Mark, Mel, and me that doesn't exist anyplace else for the three of us."

To test the waters, the band did around fifteen shows in 1996. "We wanted to make sure we could be out on the road together. We also were concerned there might not be an audience," Brewer says honestly. "But at the last two shows of that tour, in Chicago and Detroit, we had *huge* crowds. So in '97 we decided to put Grand Funk out there as a headliner. We did about thirty shows in the US and four in Japan."

In '98 the band decided to "go out and *really* crank it," according to Brewer, performing about seventy-five shows—but not before organizing several very special concerts in '97. Brewer explains: "In '96 we talked about something the band wanted to do twenty years earlier, which was to play live onstage with an orchestra. Our manager, David Fishof, knew the United Nations Ambassador from Bosnia, Muhamed Sacirbey, who'd been after him to put together a rock 'n' roll show to bring awareness to the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia." The band loved the idea—especially if they could incorporate the orchestra.

The concept proved so popular that Grand



GRAND FUNK
We're An American Band

Funk ended up doing shows in Detroit, New York, and LA, featuring guest artists Peter Frampton, Slash, Leslie West, Billy Preston, and Alto Reed from Bob Seger's Silver Bullet Band. The performances raised around \$30,000, which contributed to the building of a wing on a children's hospital in Sarajevo. Proceeds from the resulting album, *Bosnia*, continue to go to charity.

It makes sense that Grand Funk would make their comeback with a live document. They always had a special rapport with audiences—even if some critics refused to acknowledge it. "Audiences loved us," Brewer recalls, "but the critics just *slammed* us. We'd read reviews the day after a show and go, 'This guy couldn't have been at the same show *we* were at.' It also didn't help that our old manager, Terry Knight, tried to create this image that he was our mentor and we were these puppets who did whatever he wanted us to. He tried to keep us away from the critics, and they felt snubbed."

The crowds didn't seem to care about critics, though, and the band twice documented their boundless live energy—as well as their audiences'. "We wanted crowd involvement," Don explains. "Early on, we looked at music as more of a performance vehicle. Back then we played shows with tons of bands, and we'd be competing with them. We saw how these

other guys would draw a response from the crowd, and we started doing whatever it took to do the same thing.

"I always felt that musicians are there to entertain," Don elaborates. "To do that, I try to create an energy and push things to the limits. The '70s was a wonderful time because you could do that and the audience was always there with you. Even in the studio, if it felt good, it didn't matter if it went from 80 to 100 bpm over the course of the song. Even fills that weren't perfect were effective, as long as they had a reason to be there."

Live, there was even more freedom to create. "For years, every night I'd take a different approach to my solos," Don says. "I'd open with something specific, then take off in different directions. I guess I'm known for this triplet thing between the right and left hands and the right foot, which I borrowed from the guys who played double bass. I was a single bass player, so I tried to create the same effect."

Brewer was also known for being a showman. "I'd try to arouse the crowd," he recalls, "get them involved in what I was doing. I stole this thing from watching pro wrestling on Saturday morning. These guys would hit their head on something, and blood would fly. I'd make believe that I was hitting my head on my snare drum. My hair would flop down and hit

the drum and I'd hit the bass drum at the same time, which gave the effect that I was cracking my head against the drum. The audience loved it—though I never intended for anybody to think it was real!"

Today you probably won't see Don trying any wrestling moves, though listening to *Bosnia*, it's obvious the man who played drums *and* sang lead on "We're An American Band" hasn't lost any of his balls-to-the-wall rock attitude. But there's no denying, the years *have* passed, and Brewer is well aware that continued success is never guaranteed. "We're still trying to figure out what to do next," he says frankly. "We have three new songs that are on the anthology, and we're always talking about getting back together and doing a whole album at some point. We've got a lot of dreams and wishes. But we're not kids anymore, so after being out there all of last year, this year we're laying back and taking some time off."

You can bet Brewer isn't going to rest too long, though. "Most people only get a chance to go through this once—if they're lucky. To have a second chance and be out there in front of audiences who really want to hear us again—that's just amazing. It gives me chills thinking about it."

Footstompin' Drums

"These days I'm playing Peavey drums," Don Brewer says enthusiastically. "They sound great, and they are so easy to tune. In the studio we just threw up the mic's and didn't have to do a lot of muffling or retuning."

Eagle-eyes might notice Don's setup is a bit different from the old days, when his drums were only rivaled in size by his afro. "I used to like a 15" tenor tom and elongated 16" and 18" floor toms, to create a really deep sound. But Peavey didn't make those sizes, so they sent what they had. They had a 24" bass, which I like,

but they sent 10" and 12" rack toms and 14" and 16" floor toms. It kind of felt weird to me to put those small toms up there—it looked funny. But I started incorporating them into the music, and I really liked it." Fans will notice Don is also sporting a somewhat more manageable haircut these days.

"I'm still with Sabian cymbals," Brewer adds. "They'll be sponsoring some clinics with me this year. I've never done one before, but I'm really interested. I also use Pro-Mark drumsticks; I love those guys forever."



Phil Ehart

and his bandmates in Kansas, despite what some people may think, have never gone away. No, they haven't had hits to rival "Carry On Wayward Son" or "Dust In The Wind" lately. And their particular brand of American progressive rock never really found favor with tastemakers. But aside from a one-year hiatus in the '80s, Kansas has continually logged 100-plus gigs a year and has regularly released new material. "I think we've left the public consciousness a number of times," Ehart says with a chuckle. "But we've been constantly working."

In fact, Phil says that these days the band is at a peak, riding high following the release of *Always Never The Same*, an album of previously recorded material newly performed with The London Symphony Orchestra. "This was a dream," says Ehart excitedly. "We always thought that our music would fit very well with an orchestra."

To ensure the album came across as more than just "Kansas Plus Strings," Phil and his bandmates did a little homework, listening to

previous orchestral rock experiments. "Some worked and some didn't," he says, "so we were very careful with the material that we chose. Larry Baird, who was the conductor with The Moody Blues for five years, did all the arrangements and conducting, and early on we agreed that we didn't want it to sound like Muzak. And working at Abbey Road studios with The London Symphony helped guarantee us a very good sound and a great performance. It was a particular honor to play with The London Symphony."

According to Ehart, who produced the album with guitarist Richard Williams, recording with a sym-

phony orchestra demanded a steep learning curve. "Just the logistics alone are monumental—scheduling time, working with the people at Abbey Road and with Larry Baird on all the arrangements.... We already had the drums, bass, and keyboards on tape, so the orchestra overdubbed on top of that. They'd just put on their headphones, and—one, two, three, go!—in about three or four takes they'd get it. I was especially paying attention to the percussion section, and those guys are just unbelievable. Later we brought the tapes back to the States to put on the vocals, violins, and guitars."

Listening to *Always Never The Same*, you're struck by how adventurous some of Ehart's playing is, given the context. Didn't he worry he'd "loose the orchestra," so to speak? "I *did* have to be cognizant that forty to fifty people were going to be playing to me," he says. "But I wouldn't say that I pulled back. I just had to be that much more conscious of what I was doing." After a pause, Phil adds, "This was a very big undertaking. I'm not sure we'd ever do it again. People have said, 'You know, no other American band has ever recorded an entire album with a symphony,' and now I know why!"

Thrilled with the results of the album, Kansas decided to book gigs around the world backed by local symphony orchestras. Performing the album presented a whole new set of challenges, especially for the drummer. "It was a real learning experience every night," says Phil, "knowing that the band, the conductor, and fifty other musicians would all be following me. Kansas music is rather complicated anyway. If you make one mistake, if you skip one beat, everything changes. And it's not like the orchestra can catch up with you. That hasn't happened yet—and we're keeping our fingers crossed it doesn't!"

That last statement is all the more impressive considering how little preparation time there is for each show. "The orchestras get about two and a half, three hours of rehearsals," Ehart explains. "They learn the parts, and then we come in for soundcheck with them a couple of hours later. They get to



work with the band for a couple of songs, and then we do the show that evening. It's always tension-packed, to say the least."

Ehart is clearly excited about working with top-notch classical musicians. "I make it a point to go back and say hi to the percussionists in the orchestras," he says. "They've all been real nice. I think that the drummer camaraderie is always there. They usually come up after the show and tell me how much they enjoyed all the different time signatures and complex parts. They genuinely seem to have a good time."

If all of this talk of symphonies and tense preparation seems at odds with the romantic "flying by the seat of your pants" rock 'n' roll attitude, Phil Ehart doesn't seem to care. "We've always felt that you couldn't be prepared enough. People are paying money to see you, and record companies are paying you to make albums. Know your instrument well and do the best job you can, because the people expect that. We've always been 'practice, practice, practice.' Of course, the kind of songs that we perform *take* a lot of practice. But we are proud to be a progressive rock band...or a symphonic rock band...or *whatever* you want to call us. We know we are kind of out there by ourselves at times, but we take pride in that."

In a sense, Phil Ehart has always been "out there by himself." The son of an Air Force man, Phil found himself and his family moving every two years to "obscure" places like the Philippines, Japan, and the outback of Montana. "I never had an opportunity to be exposed to a drum teacher," he recalls. "I lived in places where all I could do was turn on the radio and kind of emulate Philippine music or something."

Still, Phil managed to find his way around the drumkit, and by sixteen he was playing professionally. Eventually settling in Topeka, Kansas, he formed Kansas with three other high school buddies, made a demo, sent it to music impresario Don Kirshner, and soon the band was recording for his label. In 1975, their third album, *Leftoverture*, driven by the mammoth riff-rock hit "Cary On Wayward Son," went platinum several times over and vaulted the band to arena headlining status. The following year's *Point Of Know Return* spawned another mega-hit, "Dust In The Wind," and itself went seven times platinum. But after a couple of less successful albums and lineup changes, by the mid-'80s Kansas seemed off the radar screen.

In fact, the widespread shunning of the band by the music industry is almost enough to make fans think "conspiracy theory." Despite Ehart and singer Steve Walsh's killer contributions to ex-Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett's solo album *Please Don't Touch!*, the members of Kansas rarely get asked to guest on other people's records. Major music magazines ignore them. ("Our agent asked *Billboard* why they never cover Kansas and their response was, 'Well, Kansas isn't really the direction that *Billboard* is going in.' We're going, *The direction?* Jeez, *Billboard* goes in every direction!") Even the organizers of Farm Aid—and remember, the name of the band is "Kansas"—politely turned down the band's offer to play for free. Ehart takes it all in stride. "Kansas has never been one of the cool bands. But we're used to that. We have a thick skin and a very good sense of humor. The fans know the difference, and that's what it's really about."

Of course, as manager of Kansas, it's Ehart's job to stay enthusiastic about the band. But he's also realistic about the fickle and style-conscious music business, which in a way thrust the job upon him. Ehart explains: "This was during a time in the '80s when our booking agency, manager, and record company all said, 'Adios! Kansas is not popular anymore, so you should probably just go away.' So I said to the guys in the band, 'Until we find a manager, let *me* do the day-to-day duties and at least keep the machine running.'

Funny thing is, Ehart got pretty good at the job, and Kansas did *not* go away—in fact they regained much of their popularity, and Phil was doing too good a job as manager to leave. "I would not recommend any young drummer to take this route, though," Ehart stresses. "It's a very difficult task, and my family has been very understanding, as has the band. I'm comfortable in the position



now, but taking this job was more or less out of survival. It was a tough time during the '80s for Kansas to keep its head above water. To come back to the position where the band is successful again speaks well for our fan base. We've been very fortunate that we've had songs that still get played every day.

"This year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Kansas," Ehart says proudly. "We don't take that lightly. I hope all the drummers out there reading this article can have a twenty-five-year run with *their* bands."

Symphonic Sounds

Phil Ehart says that one of the best parts of working with symphony orchestras is that he gets to see up-close the instruments his classical brethren use. "Sometimes the orchestras will have real old snare drums and stuff they've had for years and years," he explains. "The percussionists kind of check out my drumset too." Phil says he's proudly played Yamaha drums for twenty years. His current set is

a cherry-wood *Recording Custom* model that includes two 22" bass drums, 10" and 12" rack toms, a 16" suspended floor tom on the left side, and 16" and 18" floor toms with legs on the right. Ehart uses a variety of brass, steel, and wood snares, his main ax being a 5 1/2" cherry-wood model. Phil also uses Zildjian cymbals and Evans G2 heads, which he hits with Vater *Phil Ehart* model sticks.

Bun E. Carlos

is a bundle of glorious contradictions. Looking more like a dog-race bookie than the drummer in one of America's wildest and greatest rock 'n' roll bands, Bun E. adds flair, dynamics, and a rare sense of groove to Cheap Trick's roar. A lefty on a righty's kit, he hardly ever settles for an obvious beat—even though Cheap Trick's songs are textbook pop nuggets with nary a wasted note. And though the band's hipness among the "alternative" aristocracy is unrivaled, Bun E. prefers to pound it out on distinctly vintage-looking gear.

Not that "keeping 'em guessing" has always been the best thing for Cheap Trick. After releasing four flawless albums in the late '70s, the band began to lose the plot in the '80s, jumping from producer to producer—and even outside songwriters—in search of their misplaced muse.

But things have been turning around lately. In 1996 the box set *Sex America Cheap Trick* rekindled widespread interest in the band. The following year they released their second self-titled album, which reflected

newfound confidence, energy, and creativity. Last year Columbia/Legacy re-released the band's first three albums, tagging on demos, live cuts, and fascinating alternate takes. And this spring they marked their twenty-fifth anniversary with *Music For Hangovers*, a selection of live cuts from the band's historic '98 Metro shows in Chicago. Long-time fans at those concerts delighted as, on each of four nights, the band recreated in the original running order the first three classic albums plus the breakout *At Budokan*

live record. This summer will bring a video and interactive DVD of the Metro shows, and the band is already demoing tracks for a new studio album, slated for late '99 release.

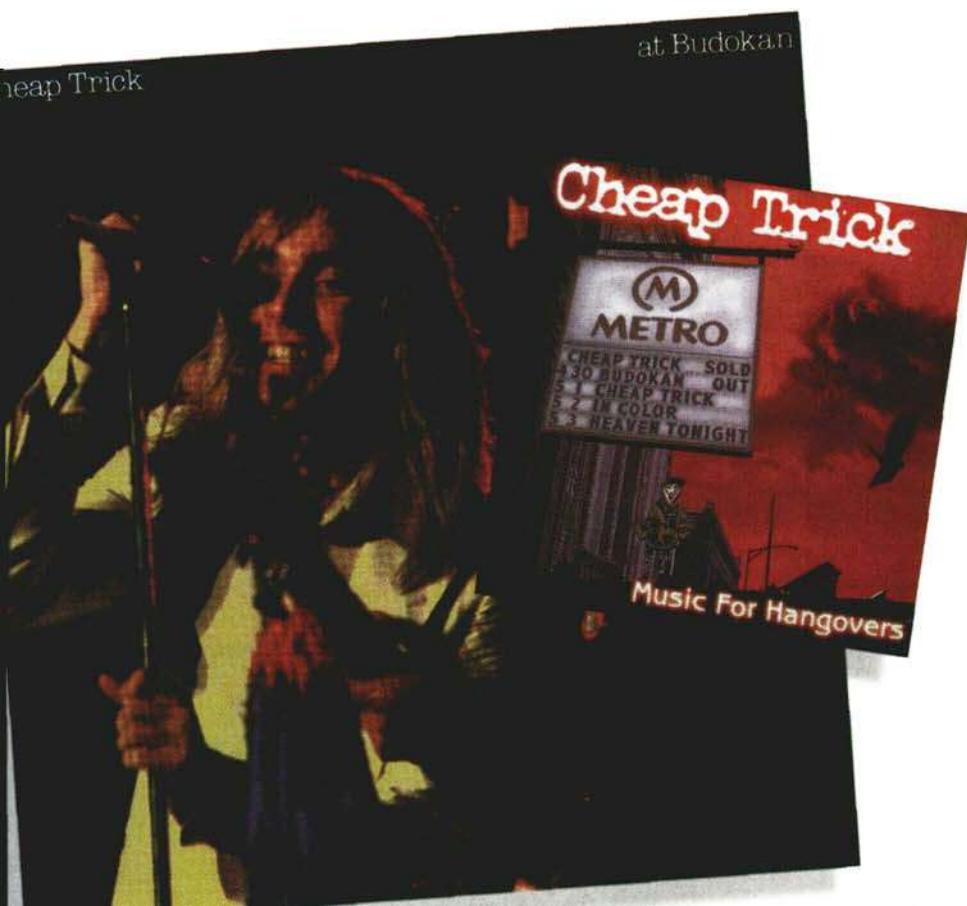
Of course, *real* Cheap Trick fans probably know all this already. The band inspires a ridiculously fervent following that keeps regular updates on all things Trick-ian via the band's Web site and the annual TrickFest, several days of performances, signings, and photo ops with their favorite group. TrickFest3 is being held this August 25, 26, and 27 at the Star Plaza Theater in Merrillville, Indiana.

No stranger to fanaticism—the band's first Japanese tour resulted in teen obsession unseen since the Beatles touched down at JFK in '64—Bun E. says he totally identifies with festival-goers. "We were all serious music fans in the '60s and early '70s, so I can understand why our fans want to hang out and ask questions. I used to sneak into Who and Cream gigs and bug the roadies and look at the gear and stuff."

As unofficial band archivist, Bun E. provides fans ever-hungry for more Cheap Trick material with the "Bun E.'s Jukebox" link on CheapTrick.com. "I've probably got a couple thousand Cheap Trick shows on tape," he explains, "so I cherry-pick stuff and make it available for listening or downloading."

Further surfing leads to Bun E.'s top-10 list on *Rocktropolis* Web magazine. Those who assumed Bun E.'s love of vintage gear reflects a taste for older music may be surprised at some of his picks, like alt.country supergroup Golden Smog and British neo-psychedelicists Spiritualized. "I still go out and look for new music," Carlos insists. "I like Son Volt; their drummer, Mike Heidorn, is very good. And Ken Coomer of Wilco lays it down real good. There's a lot of neat stuff out there."

Still, Carlos & Co. aren't opposed to living in the past for a spell if the circumstances are right—like last year's Metro shows. "Playing the albums in order was



something brand new for us," Bun E. says. "There was always a song or two from each album that we never played, and we had to whip those into shape. But it was real neat, like going back to a good high school reunion. The fans were in pig heaven. I wish I could go and see The Stones do their first or second album."

One of the great things about the Cheap Trick reissues is the inclusion of extra tracks, which often highlight differences in approach to the same songs. Take the faster live version of "You're All Talk" tacked onto *In Color*, for instance—or the demo version included on the reissue of the first album. "Producer Jack Douglas said, 'You need more bass drum in there,'" Bun E. explains, "so I took the beater off a pedal and overdubbed a big ol' bass drum. That version wasn't quite what we were looking for, though, so for the version we did with Tom Wermen on *In Color*, we triple-tracked the drums. They were trying to get us on the radio—which wouldn't really play anything on the first album—so Tom taped his wallet to my snare drum, making it real dead and thumpy. That song's always a killer because I'm left-handed playing a right-handed kit. Doing that double-handed hi-hat thing, I have to cross my left hand underneath all the time. When we do it live, I have to lower my hi-hat stand and set up special just for the one song."

The early version of "I Want You To Want Me" on the debut re-release also sounds quite different from the poppier, Badfinger-like approach of the version that originally appeared on *In Color*. Of particular note is Bun E.'s snare drum riding technique. "That actually came from The Dave Clark Five," says Carlos. "I saw The Beatles, The Stones, The Beach Boys—all these bands in the '60s—but with The Dave Clark Five and Cream and Hendrix, I always

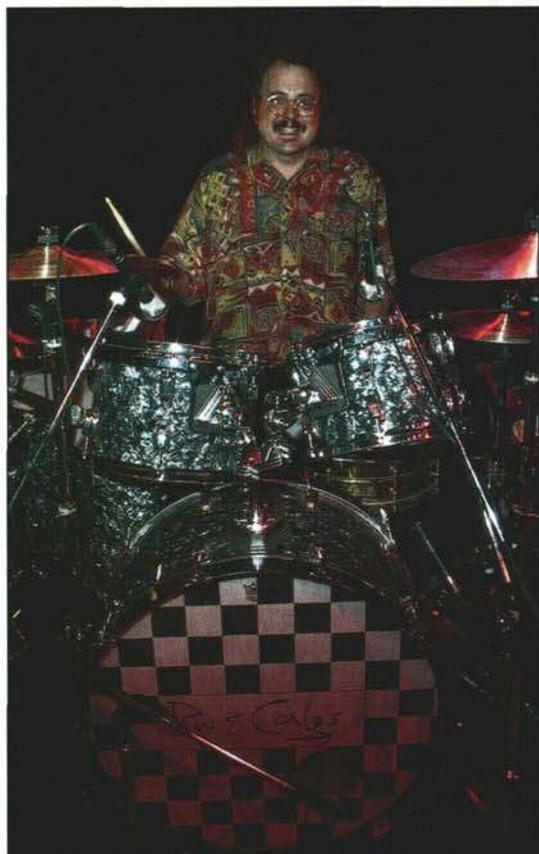
went back for more. I noticed that Dave Clark would ride on the snare drum, and I enjoyed that—and it worked for me too."

Some might be surprised to learn that before Cheap Trick, Bun E., bassist Tom Petersson, and guitarist Rick Nielsen were in a fusion band. "We used to open for The Mahavishnu Orchestra and bands like that," Bun E. recalls. "We cleared dance floors all over the place doing a lot of broken time and stuff. But when we came back to the Midwest we got a gig backing up The Shirelles, which was something completely different for us. And then after that, we did some things with Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Del Shannon, and Freddie Cannon."

Bun E. says those gigs taught him some serious lessons. "Chuck Berry will teach any drummer what *not* to do in about five seconds. He starts the first song and then comes up to the drummer and goes, 'When I put my foot up in the air, that means stop. When I put my foot down, that means the song is over. And don't play no drum licks.' Of course, three songs into the show I did a little 'ba doop' at the end of the song.... 'Lookit: I don't need you up here. I can kick your ass off. Now smile.'

"Doing the fusion thing and then Chuck Berry," Bun E. continues, "it was like, instead of seeing how much we can do, let's start with nothing and then see what needs to be put in here. Now when we listen to stuff from twenty years ago, it still sounds good because it's not all cluttered up with a bunch of goofy things. When we did the *Dream Police* album Tom Werman went, 'Use this *Syndrum*,' and I was like, 'Forget it. Three years from now that effect will sound out of date.'"

Silly sounds notwithstanding, Bun E. says that he's all for some of the leaps music technology has made since the '70s. "Audio is a lot more under control these days," he explains, "with noise gates and EQ and in-ear monitors. I remember one tour back in



the '70s when we had to cut holes in the bottom of all my tom-tom heads and put the mic's in there, because they were feeding back in the PA."

Bun E. says he also doesn't miss some of the more insane crowd behavior common to early Cheap Trick shows. "There hasn't been an M80 on stage in probably ten years," he says. "And no bottles have flown up lately. In the '70s that happened all the time, especially in the Midwest. If you were opening for someone like KISS, you were taking your life in your hands."

"We used to co-headline with AC/DC all the time," Carlos continues, "and we both drew particularly wild fans. I remember their drum roadie reached over to what he thought was a smoke bomb, but it was an M80 and it went off and damaged his inner ear. And one night a five-foot snake went flying over Rick's head and landed under my floor tom. I got up and ran across the stage, and the chair got caught in my suspenders and was dragging behind me. I was thirty feet away by the time the band noticed I wasn't there. No," Bun E. says without much fondness, "stuff like *that* doesn't happen much any more."

Buns Tubs

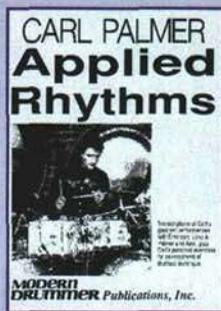
You can't talk to Bun E. Carlos about equipment without mentioning his vintage drum addiction. "Oh, I'm over the top. I have way too many drums." Even his new Ludwig kit echoes days gone by. Bun E. describes it as a lacquered gold-shadow wood set, with a 28" bass drum, 12", 14", and

15" toms, and a classic *Black Beauty* snare drum. His Zildjian cymbals include a new *Sweet Ride* that he plans to put sizzles on, and a bottom hi-hat cymbal that also has rivets in it. "That lets the air out and keeps the sizzle in," Bun E. explains. "I stole that from Mick Fleetwood."



The Modern Drummer

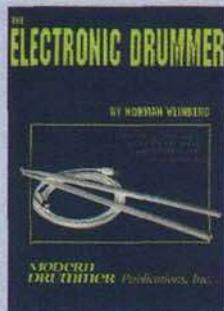
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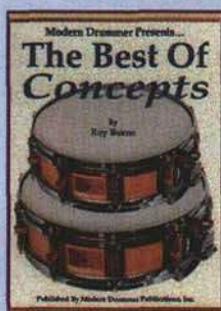
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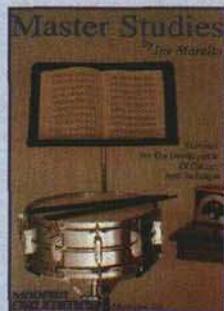
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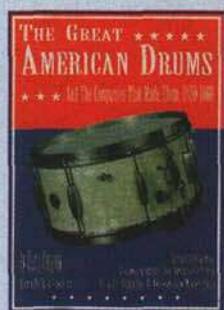
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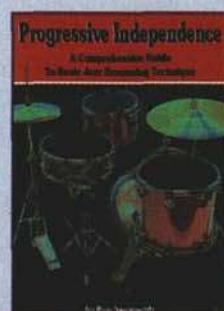
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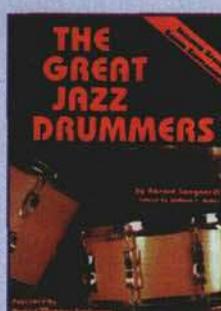
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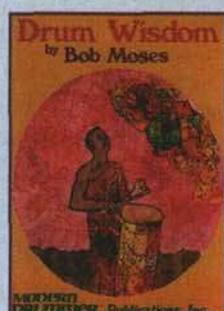
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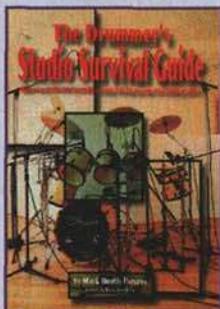
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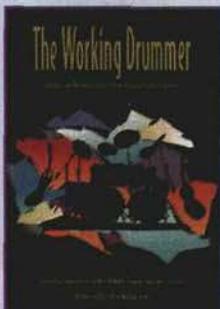
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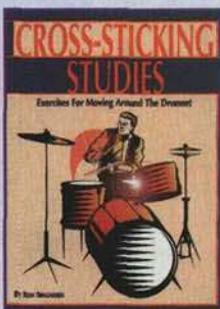
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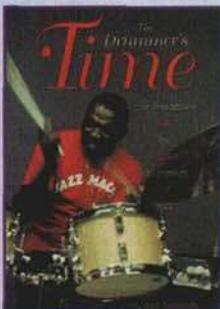
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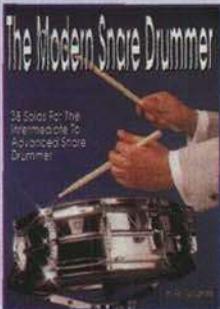
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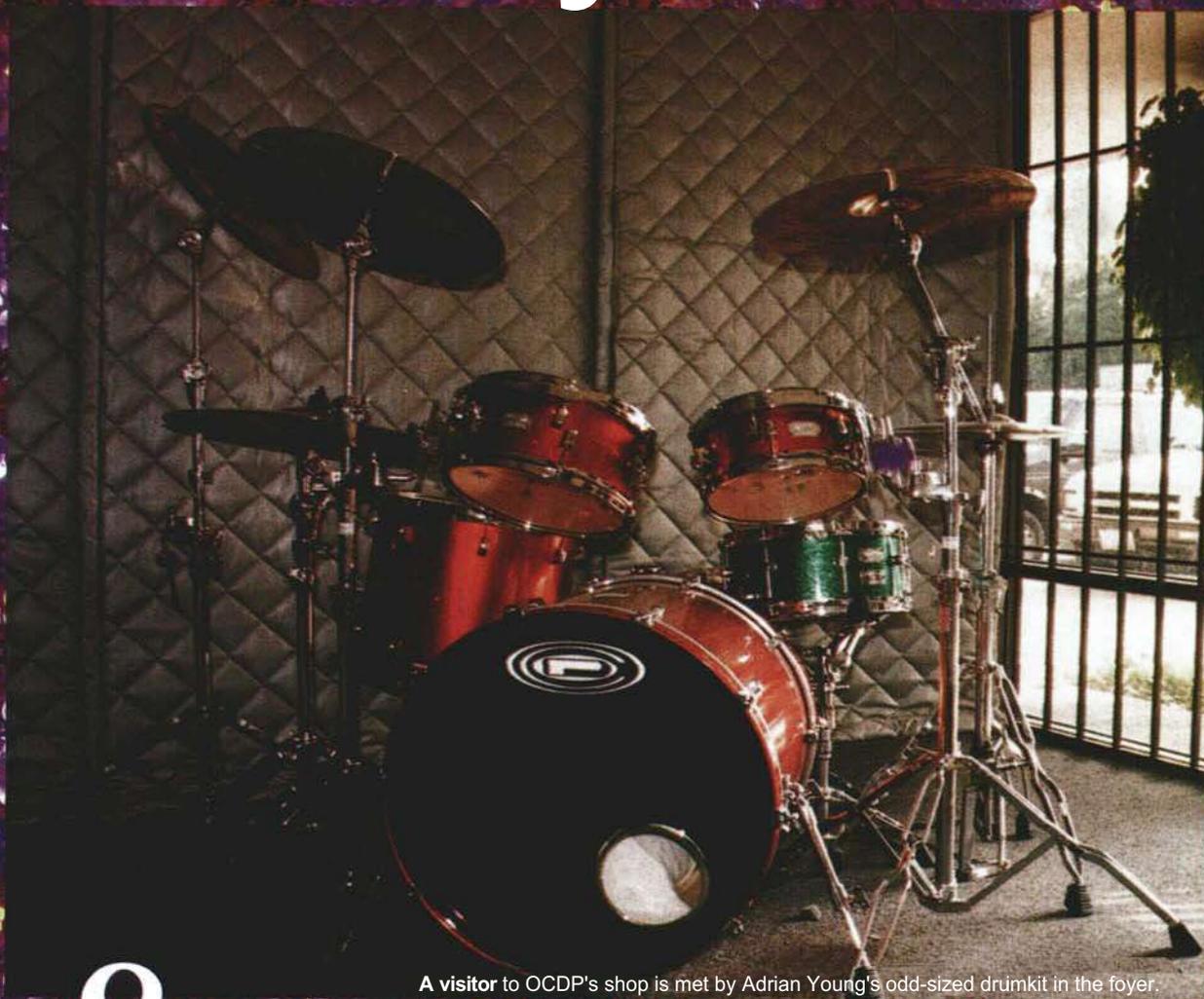
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Inside Orange County Drum



A visitor to OCPD's shop is met by Adrian Young's odd-sized drumkit in the foyer.

& Percussion

by Rick Van Horn

Odd drum sizes and thicknesses...shells riddled with holes...hand-numbing sanding jobs...odd-ball painted finishes and exotic coverings... No wonder there's a buzz about Orange County Drum & Percussion! In less than three years, this Southern California custom-drum company has gone from unknown to star status among drummers nationwide.

Of course, as is usually the case, this "overnight" success has actually taken several years. Daniel Jensen and John Machado (president and vice president of OCDP) started in the retail drum business in the mid-1980s, working for a Southern California drumshop. After a few years, they joined forces to open their own shop. Along with doing retail sales, they also did some drum repair and custom drum-building. Daniel also was active as a drum tech for several recording artists. By

1991 more people were coming in to buy John and Daniel's custom drums than to buy the established brands they were selling. At that point they decided to focus on manufacturing.

But if the company has been in business since 1991, why has it only become so highly visible in the past few years? "Frankly," says John, "it's because a few drummers we've worked with for a long time became pretty high-profile during that time. Their fame has made *us* famous."

"But we've grown together," adds Daniel. "We were working with Chad Sexton of 311 and Adrian Young of No Doubt when they were just local bands doing small clubs here in Orange County. And we've known Taylor Hawkins of Foo Fighters since he was fifteen. He used to work around the corner from our retail drum shop, and he'd come and get all his drum stuff from us."

OCDP certainly made the most of those connections. Aside from the visibility of their drums on videos and concerts by Chad, Adrian, and Taylor, there was the clever *Rice Krispies*-theme ad in *Modern Drummer*. "We got quite a response to that," says John. "But Chad and Adrian are more than just endorsers. They're good friends of ours—and they're both investors in the company. That's a nice statement about how much they believe in what we're doing."

There are several fine drum companies on the market today. What makes OCDP significantly different? Replies John, "We do custom tailoring for the individual, instead of mass-manufacturing for the majority. A lot of companies say, 'This is what we make, and this is how we finish them.' We'll do virtually anything that anybody wants. You tell us what kind of music you're playing, what characteristics you want out of a drum, and what you want it to look like, and we'll produce something to those specs for you. For example, we just finished a kit for an up-and-comer

who wanted a graphic of jelly beans on the outside of his kit. But not just *any* jelly beans—he wanted *Jelly Bellies*. So I bought \$10 worth of *Jelly Bellies*, got my camera out, and took some photographs. We had the photos duplicated into decals that we put on the drums. Then we sprayed the drums with clear lacquer."

"Sometimes even I think we're nuts," laughs Daniel. "Chad Sexton wanted genuine rhinestones imbedded into his black drumset. Now *that's* not exactly standard for most companies. The problem was that you can't find glass rhinestones just anywhere anymore. The only country that still makes them is The Czech Republic! When we picked them up at UPS, the clerk saw one and wondered if they were diamonds. I think he thought we were smuggling!"

"We also did Chad's special badge," says John. "It's a crop circle! The tough part about that was that the only image he had of what he wanted was on a really poor videotape. We took it to a computer guy who cleaned it up. Then we took the computerized

image to our badge maker. He burned a chip for it, and Chad had his badge."

OCDP's rise to prominence has put them into a somewhat strange position. Their "custom" products and services are suddenly in major-market demand. A truly "custom" drum business makes drums to order, while a successful "manufacturer" needs to offer drums that customers can find on a dealer's shelf. How does OCDP fit into this equation?

"We are fundamentally a custom drum company," replies John, "even though we do sell to dealers. Those dealers still have to tell us what they want—or what their customer wants. In other words, you can't just go into a store and buy our model XYZ kit."

Daniel adds, "Sometimes a dealer says, 'Send something that sells well for you, and that you like yourself. We'll take your recommendation.' But we always ask them, 'What's your market? What are you looking for?' Then we try to accommodate them, based on their response.

"Fortunately, enough drum-

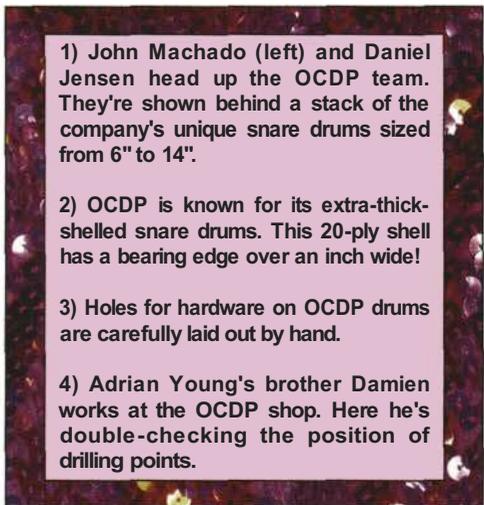
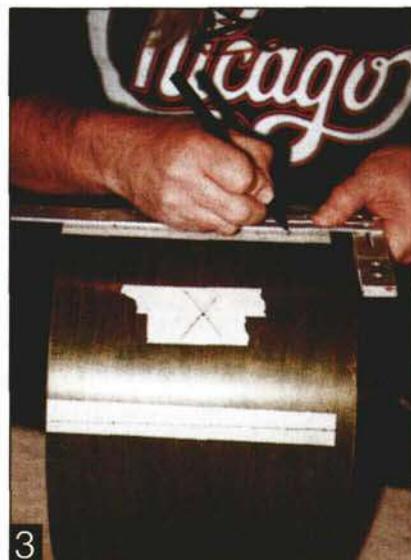
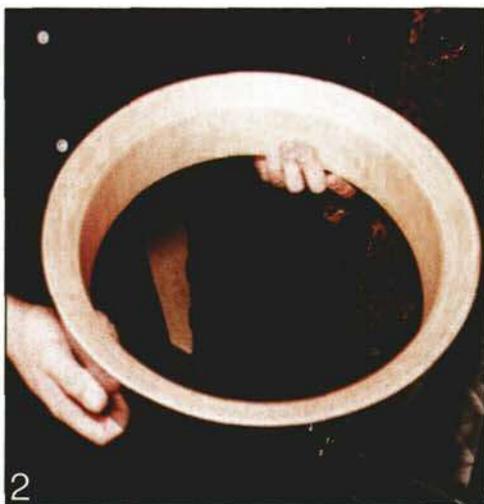
mers have similar tastes that we can make a lot of drums along the same lines. But even then we get customers who want those 'production' drums fine-tuned for them. For example, someone may want a basic drum, but with a special finish. What his description means to me may not necessarily be what he sees. So I'll try to find the color that I think he's seeing, and then I'll send a sample for his approval.

"The most difficult thing about being a custom drum company," Daniel continues, "is that a lot of times customers don't really *know* exactly what they want. A drummer will say, 'I want one of these....' When we ask why, he'll say, 'I'm trying to achieve this....' We sometimes have to tell him, 'Well, that's not how you get it.'"

Adds John, "Some drummers are simply not knowledgeable about drums. They may be great players, but as far as tuning, adjusting, and things like that, a lot of them don't really have any experience. And then we get people who don't understand how to *communicate* what they want. One guy told us he wanted a snare drum that was 'real tight and cracking.' After we built him a 20-ply drum that *was* tight and cracking, we all found out that what he really wanted was a big, warm, fat sound.

"On the other hand," John continues, "some drummers, like Chad Sexton, are *very* knowledgeable. Chad knows what he wants. He comes up with all these ideas, and we sort of make his dreams reality. But you don't have to sell ten million albums to get what you want from us. As I said earlier, we were working with all of our 'big-name endorsers' when they weren't selling *anything*. We work one-on-one not just with drummers who are 'famous rock stars,' but also with regular customers who want something special."

What sort of drummer becomes an OCDP endorser? "That's a funny thing," says Daniel. "We've been approached by Christian and country drummers who admire some of the guys who play our stuff. But once those people get high-profile, it seems like either Pearl or DW snags them. So although, as I said, we'll make anything for anybody, most of our players are in alternative rock. And that's largely because a lot of the bands we deal with have played festivals together. They see our stuff, they like it, they talk about it, and then they give us a call."



1) John Machado (left) and Daniel Jensen head up the OCDP team. They're shown behind a stack of the company's unique snare drums sized from 6" to 14".

2) OCDP is known for its extra-thick-shelled snare drums. This 20-ply shell has a bearing edge over an inch wide!

3) Holes for hardware on OCDP drums are carefully laid out by hand.

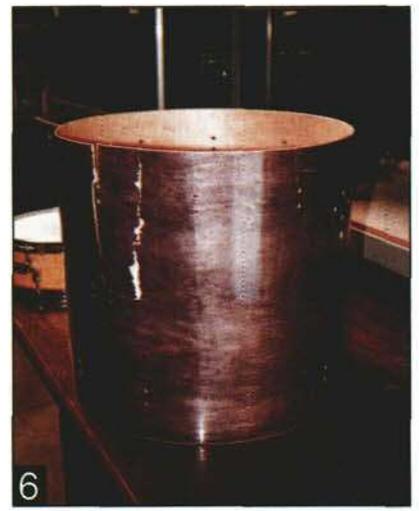
4) Adrian Young's brother Damien works at the OCDP shop. Here he's double-checking the position of drilling points.



5) Vented snare drums, featuring specially drilled and sanded holes in the shells, are an OCDP specialty.

6) Ouch! Limp Bisket drummer John Otto's bass drum, after receiving a smashing blow from Korn's guitarist on the 1998 *Family Values* tour.

7) Exotic covering materials, including high-pressure laminates and genuine chrome and copper sheeting, await installation on OCDP drums.



Drum Construction

Like many other drum manufacturers, OCDP buys raw drumshells from Keller Wood Products. But all similarities end there. For one thing, OCDP has the advantage of being very close to Keller's Southern California distributor. Says John, "Although buying through a distributor costs us a little bit more per shell than buying direct from Keller, it's better for us, because we can go there and actually pick through the shells. At this point we're the distributor's second-largest buyer on the West Coast after DW."

Speaking of shells, OCDP has gained a lot of attention because of their thick-shelled snare drums. Some have over thirty

plies. What's the company's reasoning for that? Daniel replies, "We started doing the heavy-ply snare shells because they achieve a *Radio King* kind of sound without having to go to a solid, steam-bent shell. The concept works real well, but it has one problem: Keller only offers shells up to ten plies thick."

Obviously, the next question is: How does OCDP create thicker shells? With a smile, John answers, "We cut sections of smaller shells out, and glue them up on the inside of a ten-ply shell of the desired outside diameter. We actually cut, shape, and fit the segments for each drum individually. Then we beat the crap out of the segments with a dead-blow hammer until the outer shell forces them together within it. The hammer's head is filled with shot, so that when you hit something there's no rebound.

All the force goes into the work—and there's a *lot* of force involved. I just got a new hammer—a bigger one." [laughs]

Besides making thick-shelled snare drums, OCDP also specializes in odd sizes—especially smaller-than-usual models. Says Daniel, "We'll do pretty much anything from a 6" to a 16". We've done a *lot* of 8" drums. Drummers mount them on RIMS, stick them over their hi-hat, and use them to play a lot of accent stuff. There are several companies offering small 'secondary' snare drums now, but most of those drums have mounts attached directly to their shells. With the RIMS system, you get a lot more of the drum. It sounds bigger and louder than you'd expect with such a small drum."

Generally, as a drum's diameter gets smaller and its shell gets thicker, its sound



gets higher and clearer. Conversely, as the size gets bigger and the shell gets thinner, the drum produces a wider, rounder, fat-back sound. Does this formula not apply to OCDP drums? "Well," replies Daniel, "there are some ways of striking compromises. For example, we make a 10-ply shell with 10-ply reinforcement hoops. The basic shell structure, at ten plies, gives the drum a deep, meaty sound when it's played at the center. But the hoops and the shell combine to make it twenty plies at the top and bottom edges, so you can still get a 'thick-shell' crack out of it for rimshots. It's not just a fat, whumpy drum. You can actually tune it to get different characteristics out of it."

Does anyone ever ask for multi-ply toms similar to the thick snares? Replies John, "Every so often somebody will say, 'I want 25-ply toms and bass drums.' But why? All that does is raise the pitch of the shells. Besides, who wants to pound in a 20"-deep shell?" [laughs]

Naturally, not every drum made by OCDP features a super-thick shell. Thin-shelled drums have distinct advantages,

too. Says Daniel, "A 6-ply shell resonates a fat low end, and is still very popular. When it comes to thinner shells, we'll add reinforcement hoops for added strength, or for acoustic purposes—or for both."

"Of course, reinforcing hoops wouldn't have helped John Otto's bass drum," Daniel continues, laughing. "John was playing with Limp Bizkit on the 1998 *Family Values* tour. On one of the last shows, Korn's guitar player hit John's bass drum with his guitar—*smash*. The drum got some major cracks all the way through it. That's a good example of what *not* to let somebody do to your drums!"

Layout And Drilling

Once an OCDP drumshell has been created, the next step is to drill it for lugs, mounts, and other hardware. It's a painstaking process done by hand, as OCDP drum builder Steve Munsey explains.

"We put a drumhead and a rim on top of the drum," says Steve, "and tape them so they can't move. Then we mark on the edge of the shell the points at which the tension rods go through the center of each

hole in the rim. Using a T-square, we draw a perfectly straight vertical line down from each of those points. I use a tape measure to determine the position for the lug holes along those lines. Then I center the air vent grommet horizontally between two lugs and vertically between the top and bottom edges of the shell. After the measuring and marking is completed, we do the actual drilling with a hand drill. That's a tricky process, especially on the thicker-shelled drums. For example, with a 20-ply shell, you're talking horizontal distances of almost an inch. On very thick shells it's even more. Those holes have to be straight or we're in trouble."

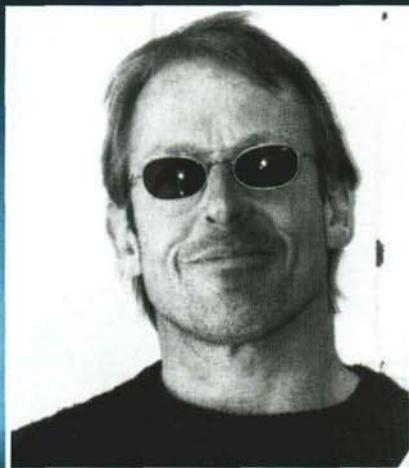
Why doesn't OCDP utilize drill presses set up with templates for each individual drum size and model, the way most major manufacturers do? "That's a good system when you make standard sizes in large quantities," replies Daniel. "But it wouldn't work for us. There are too many variables in all the drums we make. Some of our drums have the lugs staggered; others are matched top and bottom. There are different lug setbacks from the edges, relative to

LOOK WHO'S SHOWING THEIR STRIPES



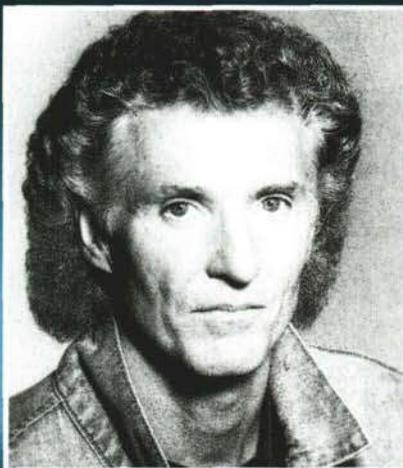
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the different spacing of the lugs. One tube lug calls for a different drill pattern from another tube lug. Somebody may want hardware that matches a Tama kit; someone else will want our own hardware. We couldn't even use a computerized drilling machine to do everything we do."

Bearing Edges

Bearing edges are especially important at OCDP. In fact, John describes the company as being "almost fanatical" about them. "We check our bearing edges on a glass-top table, under a floodlight. And every time we do anything to a drum, we double-check those edges. I hate to say it, but most of the major companies don't seem to *care* about the edges. A lot of artists who endorse major brands bring their drums here for us to edge them. And I'm talking about really top-line, expensive drumsets. When we put some of those drums on our table, we can slip a credit card under the gaps in the edges with no problem."

Daniel adds, "A lot of companies put a knife-edge bearing edge on their drums. But wood—even 'hard maple'—is fairly

soft. It's also a natural substance, and you're never going to achieve complete perfection with it. The fact is that if you make an edge that sharp, and then you put pressure on it, its going to start to crush. As soon as you crank a head down on a super-sharp bearing edge, that edge starts to flatten out. Once it does that, then you can't back the head tension off. The head *always* has to be cranked down in order to seat on the edge, because it has to pull down into all the gaps.

"The point is that if you want a really big, fat, wide-open sound, your edge *has* to be good. Otherwise you're going to start getting weird gaps, with air and sound escaping all over the place."

Installing bearing edges on any drum is a precision operation. But putting an edge on a drum that's 20 or more plies thick is a project all its own. "You can't just slam the shell into the router and cut the edge all the way up," says John. "The shell must go around and around and around. The final routed surface ends up over an inch wide. We have to have special bits to do it. And to sand those edges smooth takes quite

a while."

Is there a particular edge that OCDP considers "optimum," or is this another area that depends on the customer's desires? "Our normal edge is 45°, which is what most companies do," John replies. "But we can also do 30°, and we do rounded edges for people who want that flat, funky, *Radio King* sound. We also determine the counter-cut based on how many plies are going into the drum. One ply of 'flatness' on the edge keeps the drum true, so you don't end up with those dips and weird sounds we mentioned earlier. It also provides a wide range of tuning."

Holey Drums

Another signature element of OCDP snare drums is their multiple—and often very large—vent holes. Venting a drum is important, but why do it to this extreme? John responds, "We used to make custom snare drums that were slotted, like the old Ludwig *Coliseum*. They had two separate shells with a horizontal space in the middle. The whole drum was held together by long, high-tension lugs. Daniel came up

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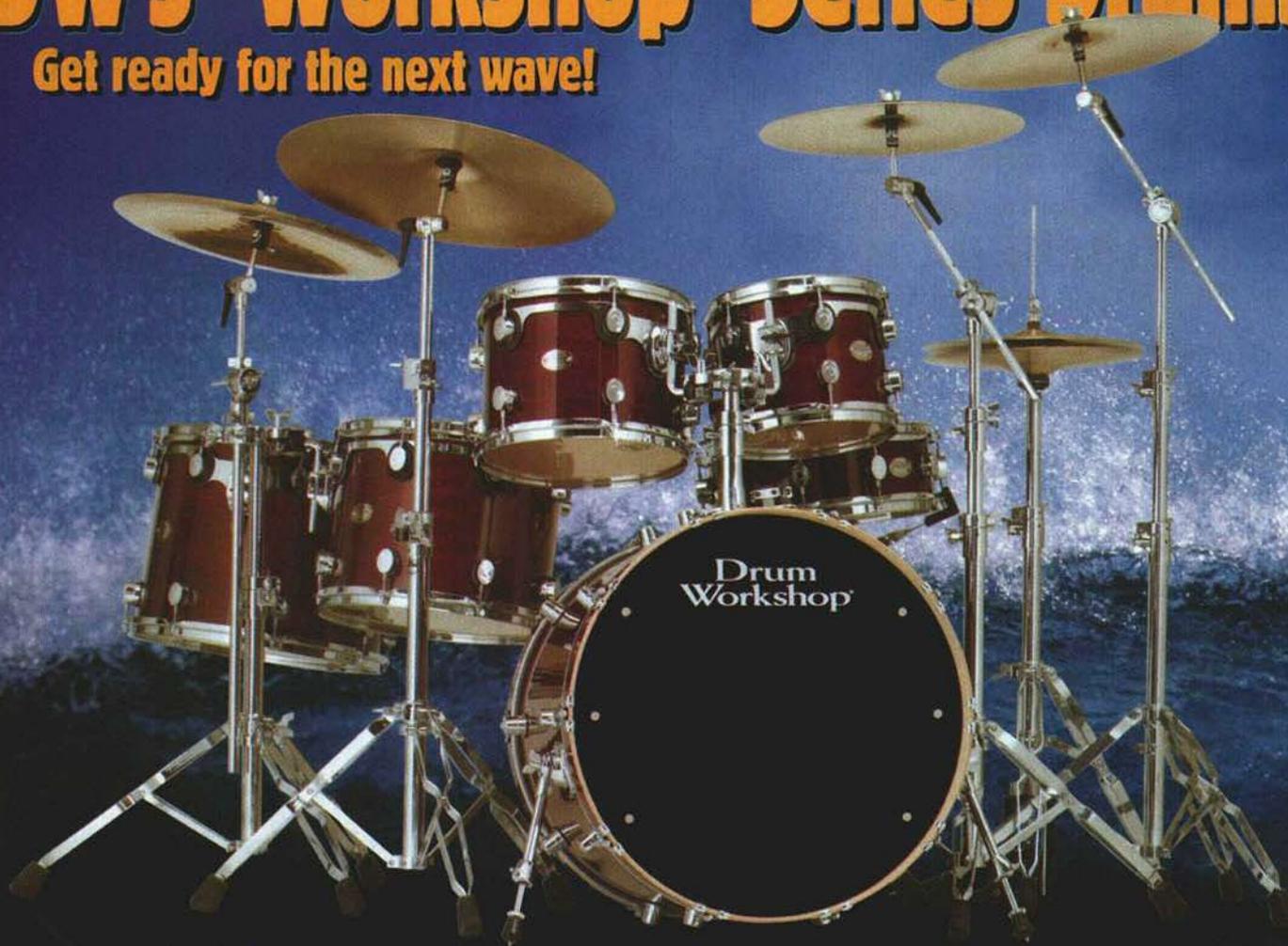
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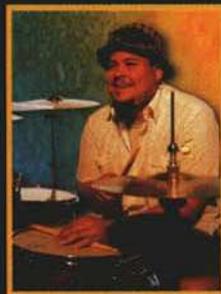
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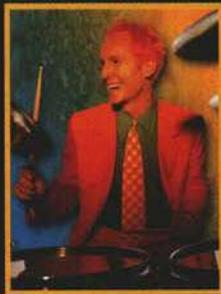
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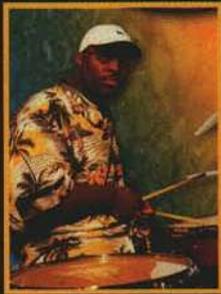
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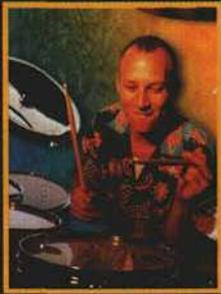
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with the idea of using free-floating snare-drum frames to make snare drums with no shells at all. Chad Sexton has one, and Chuck Biscuits from Social Distortion has one. That design proved to be *extremely* loud and sensitive. But there was no shell resonance; it was all snare sound and no shell sound.

"We liked the effect, but we wanted to warm it up to some degree. We went back to using a shell, but added the idea of drilling holes in it. By varying the size and number of the holes, we vary the amount of shell removed. This, in turn, varies the amount of resonance retained, while still allowing air and sound to escape the drum readily to create some real high volume."

"Venting the snare drum also makes the sensitivity much greater," adds Daniel, "which is great for guys who do a lot of ghost strokes and buzz rolls. You can really hear everything out of the drum. Another benefit is that you don't have to hit it as hard. You get the volume out of it with a lot less effort. Plus, the vent holes give you new miking possibilities for recording. You can put mic's in at different

angles besides just top and bottom. Most of our vented snares use a four-hole design, so the sound blows out from all directions instead of just coming out of the bottom. It explodes *everywhere*. That makes it easier for drummers to hear themselves when they're playing in live situations."

The creation and installation of OCDP's special vent holes pose some construction problems—and once again call for a lot of intricate work. For one thing, the edges of the vent holes are sanded and finished identically to the rest of the drum. "There is no machine that can just pop a hole through the shell and round off all those edges," says Daniel. "So it's all finished by hand. And let me tell you, when you start off with a piece of wood 3/4" to 1" thick, you'll definitely feel that in your wrist after a while. Steve Munsey had an experience where, after sanding a few vent holes on a snare, he couldn't play his gig that night. His hand was just gone. The simple fact is that almost *all* of our building and finishing processes are done by hand. There's just not much machine work we can do."

Painting And Coverings

One of the major appeals of a custom drum builder is its ability to offer unique paint jobs. So it's not surprising that there are a lot of nifty-looking painted drums in OCDP's foyer display. But there's no paint booth in their shop. "California has very strict emission laws," explains John. "So instead of spending a ton of money to install a spray booth in-house, we utilize outside people who are already set up to do the job—primarily custom auto painters. One guy we use is very creative; he does things like reverse sparkles, where the drum changes color as the light goes from one side to the other. He's also able to help us meet some really strange requests. For example, Stan Frazier of Sugar Ray sent us a little piece of paper on which he had smeared some purple ink and sprinkled some glitter. It said, 'I want my drums to look like this.' The first set that Chad Sexton got from us was a transparent emerald-green color. He got that from a piece of thread off a beanie hat! So far we've been able to meet all of these requests."

Daniel adds, "Because the paint is for

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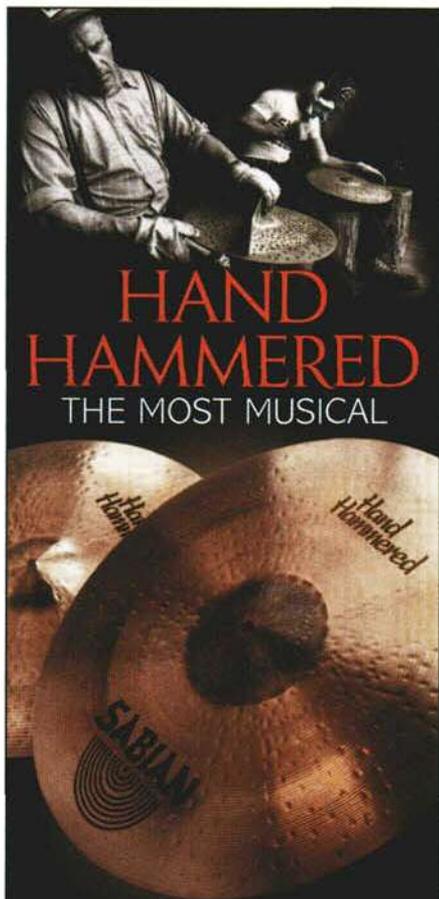
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automotive use, it handles weather really well. That's important for guys who are touring and doing a lot of outdoor stuff. However, if they are *really* concerned with durability, we'll suggest a covered finish using a high-pressure laminate. Laminates can really take a beating and still look good. We have a guy who plays in a surf band. He's playing outside all the time, so his kit is exposed to the sun for hours. It was originally wrapped in a red sparkle plastic covering, which bubbled and made a big mess. We're putting a high-pressure laminate on the kit to solve that problem. You can put a cigarette out on it without fazing it, and you really have to dig something sharp into it to scratch it. And if you *do* trash it, you can redo it pretty cheaply—whereas if you start taking gashes out of your sunburst lacquer kit it's definitely going to need another \$300 paint job.

"We also suggest laminates for drummers who are moving gear in and out a lot and who don't have huge flight cases and techs to take care of everything. Of course, for those drummers who do, we also offer coverings in genuine metal, like real

chrome and copper. There are also oxidized metals you can get that look really far-out, but they are very expensive—more than \$10 a square foot. We don't get a *lot* of call for those—but you never know."

Happiness Is...

As I said at the outset of this feature, Orange County Drum & Percussion's novel approach to drum design has created a major buzz in the drumming community. But underlying all the novelty is a dedication to acoustic performance and quality that has resulted in the satisfaction of major artists and working drummers alike.

"I'm proud to say that the vast majority of our customers—big and small—are extremely happy," says Daniel Jensen. "We get calls all the time from people who've just received their kits, saying, 'Oh my God, I love it. It's great. I was thrilled out of my mind about the whole thing.' The public has liked everything that we've given them—and they've been very good to us, too."



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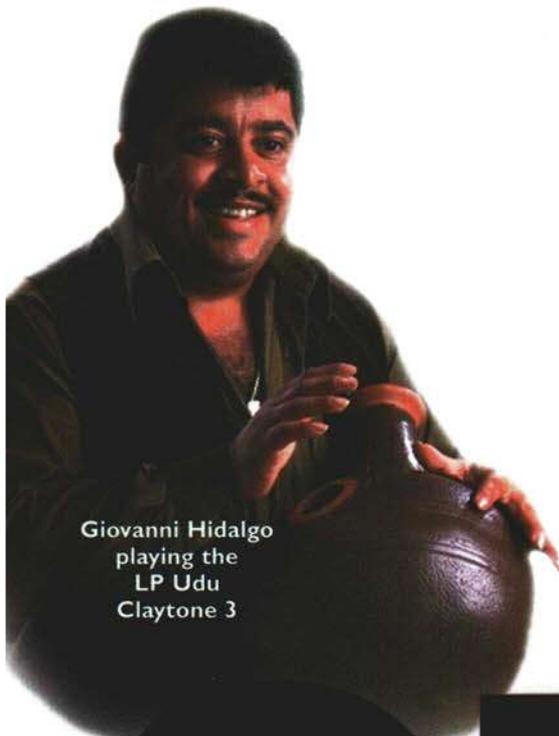
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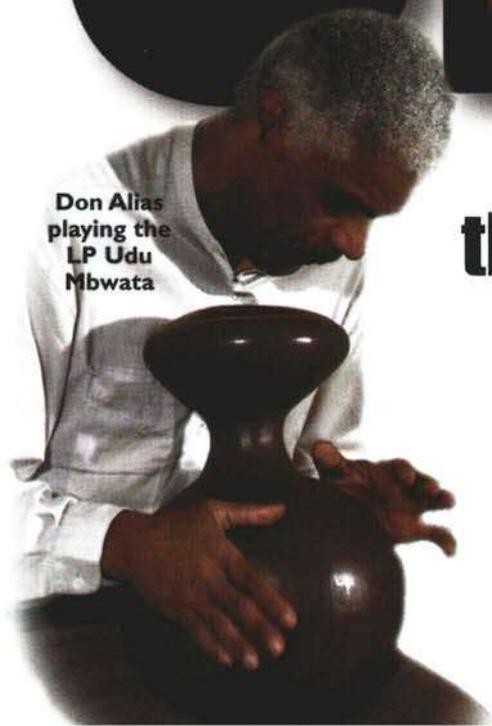
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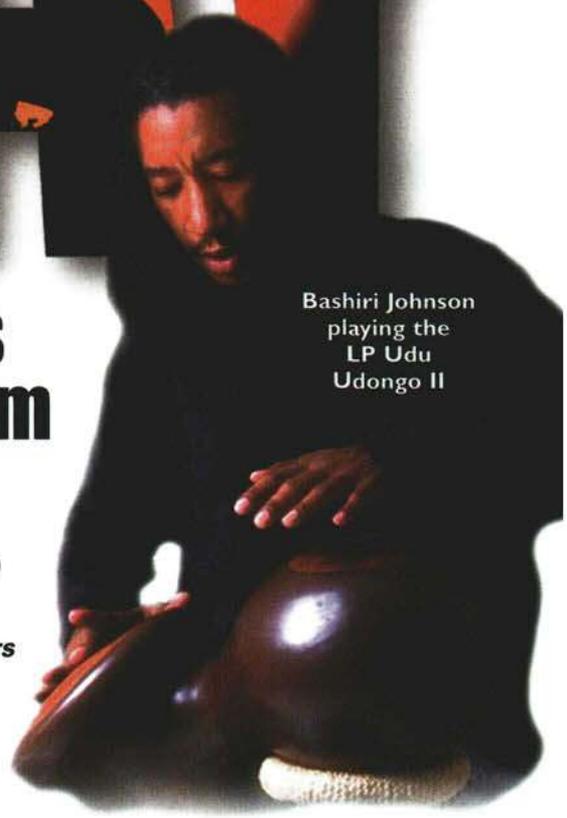
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Musical Accents, Part 1

by Ted Bonar and Ed Breckenfeld

MUSIC KEY

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

Accents are an often-overlooked aspect of drumset playing. When applied to fills, solos, and drum beats, accents make a big difference to your dynamic and musical presentation. Developing your "accent vocabulary" can be just as challenging and fulfilling as working on any type of complicated rhythmic exercise or four-way coordination exercise you can come up with. In fact, working on an arsenal of accents in conjunction with your feet—rather than as "hands only" exercises—can increase your musicality and facility on the drumset tremendously. Simple rhythms can be turned into complicated patterns and musical adventures simply by adding accents and moving them around the drums.

The following exercises are designed to have a musical, melodic effect when played with the five approaches. This five-step process will take you from a hands-only approach (in order to master the necessary stick control), and eventually turn the exercises into four-way coordination drills. Finally, when your coordination is together, you can move the exercises around the drumkit for a fully musical approach to accents.

Step 1

Begin by learning each exercise on the snare drum as written, starting with the first four introductory exercises (A-D) and then moving on to the main forty. (By the way, all of these exercises lend themselves perfectly to be used with a metronome or click track.) For the sake of explaining how to apply the different steps, we'll use exercise 4 as an example.

4



While the exercise is only on snare drum, pay attention to your stick height and level of control and relaxation. You need to make sure your right- and left-hand accents (and non-accents) are of equal height and technique. While on the snare drum, you would generally want your non-accents to be nice and relaxed at about 2" to 4" off the drum, and your accents should also be relaxed and in control, with your stick height about 12" off the drum. Only move to Step 2 after you are comfortable with all forty of the accent patterns.

Step 2

Taking this literally one step at a time, simply add a quarter-note bass drum to the exercises, like this:

4



Once again, be sure you're comfortable playing all forty of the exercises with the quarter-note bass drum before moving to the next step.

Step 3

This is where it will start to be challenging. Add offbeat hi-hats (played with the left foot) to each exercise:

4



Stay in control and stay relaxed at all times. Your goal at this point should be to play all of these consistently and comfortably. (If you're using a metronome, don't forget to monitor your progress! Keep it steady and only increase the speed after you've mastered all forty exercises at a given tempo.)

Steps 4 and 5

These two steps are very similar, yet different—"feeling" enough to warrant two separate steps. (This is really only one step for more-advanced players, but if you're a beginner or an intermediate player, both methods should be practiced.) At this point, you should start to move the accents onto separate drums. Using the same example as before, Step 4 puts all of the accents on the small tom; Step 5 puts your right-hand accents on the floor tom and your left-hand accents on the small tom.

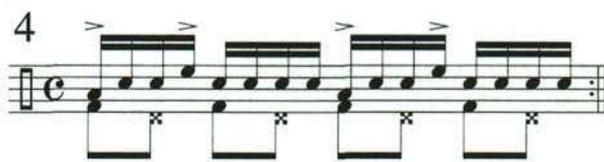
Step 4

4



Step 5

4



The four introductory exercises and the forty main exercises that you'll apply the five steps to begin on the following page. Make sure your hands stay in control and your stick height remains constant throughout these exercises.

After working through the exercises in the prescribed manner, you'll definitely become more fluid around the drumset, your four-way coordination will now encompass the use of accents, and you'll have added an entirely new vocabulary to your drumming arsenal!

A B

C D

1 2

3 4

5 6

7 8

9 10

11 12

13 14

15 16

17 18

19 20

21 22



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Cross-Stepping, Part 1

Getting The Most From Your Left Foot

by Rich Rychel

MUSIC KEY

Open	○	R.C.
H.H.	✗	✗
S.D.	●	
B.D.	●	
H.H. w/foot	✗	Left B.D.

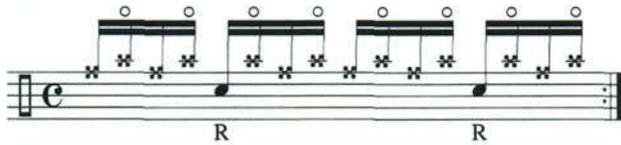
Cross-stepping is the technique of playing the hi-hat and second bass drum pedal together at the same time. The technique is simple; you move your left foot from the hi-hat pedal over to the second bass pedal so that one half of your foot is resting on each. In that position, whenever you use your left foot you effectively play both hi-hat and bass drum simultaneously. This technique will allow you to play hi-hat barks (openings) while you play double pedal patterns. The technique is currently being used by such drummers as Dennis Chambers, Carter Beauford, and Akira Jimbo.

The following pattern uses constant 16th notes in the bass drum in what would be considered "right lead." The right foot always plays on the 1's and "&'s" while the left foot plays on the "e's" and "ah's." As long as you play this pattern, any time you play the hi-hat on a 1 or an "&" it will automatically be open. (For this article all ride notes will be played with the right hand, all open hi-hats with the left, and all snare notes with the left. The few snare notes that need to be played with the right will have an "R" placed above the note.)

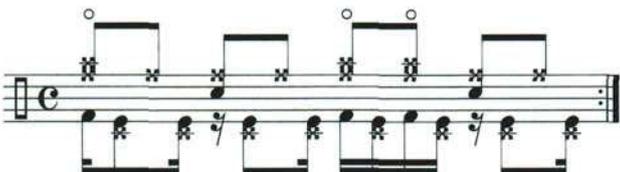
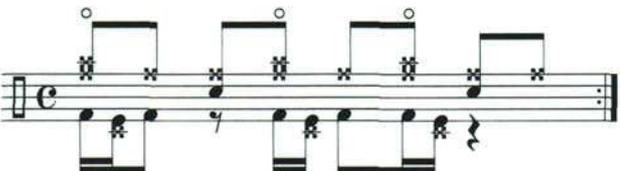
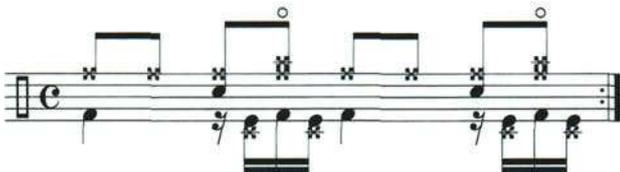
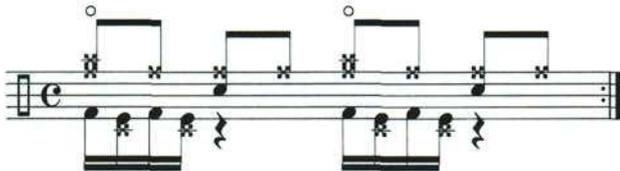
Play the following hand patterns with the above bass drum pattern. Remember, on some of these you'll have to play the snare drum with your right hand.

The next pattern will be referred to as "left lead." Your left foot now plays the 1's and "&'s" while your right foot plays the "e's" and "ah's." This is a common way of playing double bass patterns and will now give you access to hi-hat openings on the "e's" and "ah's."

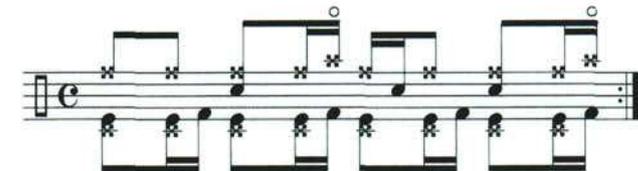
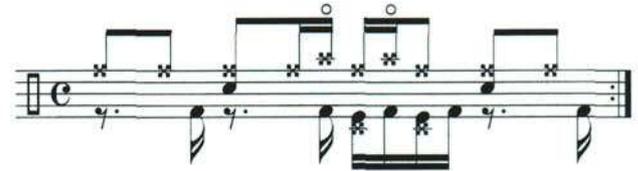
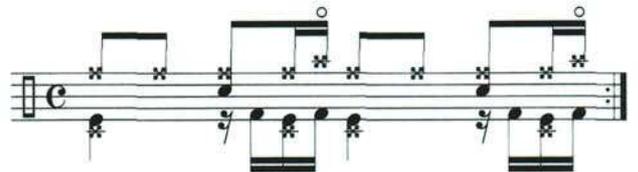
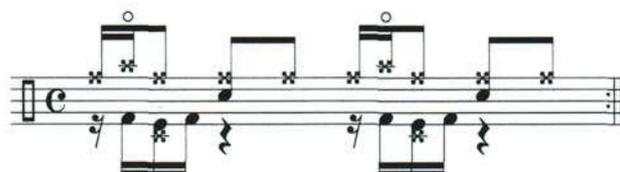
Play the following examples with the above bass drum pattern.



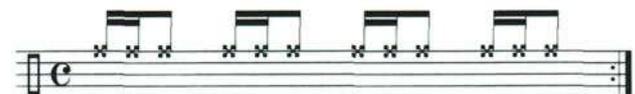
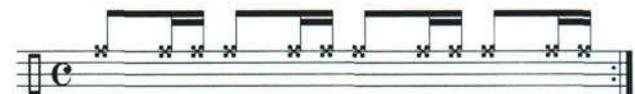
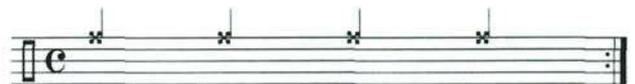
Now it's time to start breaking up our bass drum patterns. These first examples will be in right lead and will therefore have openings on the 1's and "&'s."



Next let's try breaking up the left-lead bass drum pattern. These patterns will have openings on the "e's" and "ah's."



At this point you should have your feet pretty much in control. Now you might want to go back to the previous examples and try playing them with different ride patterns. Some of these will be very challenging and sound complex. Remember that with many of these you'll still need to play the snare with your right hand.



Rich Rychel is a freelance drummer in Denver, Colorado. He is an active educator of drumset and marching percussion, and is a clinician with Sabian and Vic Firth. He currently teaches at the Colorado School of Music in Englewood, Colorado.





Basic Training, Part 2

by John Riley

In my last article [July '99] we discussed fundamental hand-technique issues. To begin this column I'm going to refer to the earlier column and give you several additional ways to practice that page of accented paradiddles. These exercises are control- and speed-builders.

First, every time you have an accented note, convert that accent into an unaccented double stroke.

This...



becomes this:



This...



becomes this:



Second, convert each accent into an unaccented triple stroke.

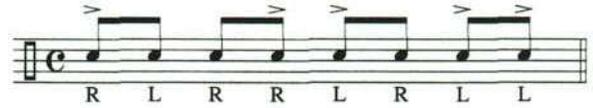
This...



becomes this:



This...



becomes this:



Third, convert each accent into a flam.

This...



becomes this:



This...



becomes this:



You'll find that the issues related to stick heights are the same as with the original accented paradiddles.

Now let's up the ante and play accented paradiddles in triplets. The triplet rate really creates havoc with making the accented notes flow. As with the new approaches introduced earlier and the original concept (Part 1), you must take this material slowly, read ahead, and prepare for each "next move" in order to maintain good form.

If you're really ambitious you can also add double strokes, triple strokes, and flams to the triplet paradiddles. Good luck. Next time we'll return to issues relating to jazz phrasing on the drumset.



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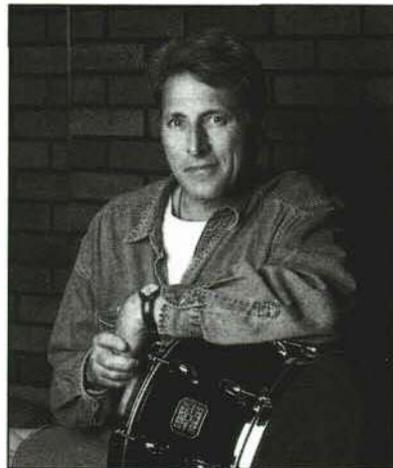


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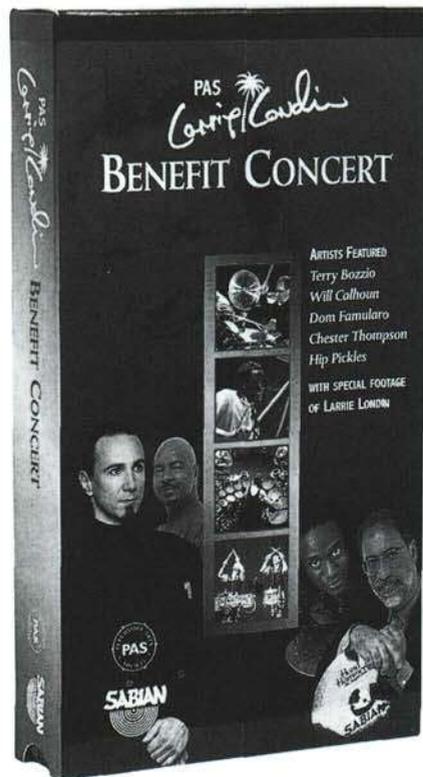
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PROG '99



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Spock's Beard Day For Night

Nick D'Virgilio (dr), Neal Morse (vcl, kybd, gtr), Alan Morse (gtr, vcl), Dave Meros (bs, vcl), Ryo Okumoto (kybd)



Dali's Dilemma Manifesto For Futurism

Jeremy Colson (dr), Matthew Bradley (vcl), Patrick Reyes (gtr), Steve Reyes (bs), Matt Guillory (kybd)



Marco Minnemann The Green Mindbomb



Marco Minnemann's Illegal Aliens Time

Marco Minnemann (dr, kybd, gtr), Artemis (vcl), Peter Wolpi (gtr), Gudze, Frank Conrad (bs)

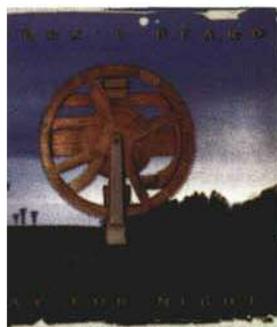
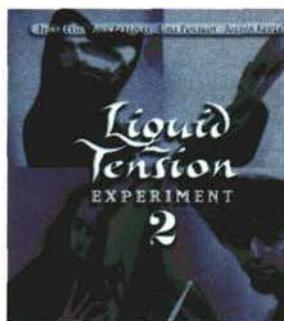
Most sophomore efforts are disappointing. *LTE2* is not. Though similar to the first *Experiment* in its inclusion of odd-meter workouts and dreamy, exotic tracks, the material is much more arranged and orchestrated this time out. Portnoy settles into a defined musical direction with each track, revealing an increased maturity in his playing. And though his chops enhance the tracks instead of disrupting their flow, there are still plenty of them on display. Check out "When The Water Brakes," a seventeen-minute piece that finds Portnoy unloading the kitchen sink. Mike's drum *sound* is also becoming more recognizable with each release, his lively snare in particular. It may not be as dominant as Bill Bruford's trademark ring—but it's close. This experiment is definitely a success. (Magna Carta, 208 E. 51st St., Ste. 1820, New York, NY 10022)

Spock's Beard is the group prog fans keep hoping will break into mainstream rock radio, opening the door for progressive music to reach the masses again. They certainly are the finest melodic prog/pop/rock group in America, and drummer Nick D'Virgilio's funky chops are a big part of their solid sound. On *Day For Night* the drummer once again shows why he was chosen to replace Phil Collins on several tracks on the last Genesis release. The title track reveals his command of time and groove with a large, fat drum sound, but there are moments of complexity for Nick to negotiate as well. His monster licks lash out on the ending of "Gibberish," and the syncopated drum beat of "Crack The Big Sky" allows him to stretch within the groove in a Bruford-esque fashion. Typically Spock, the disc ends with an epic medley that proves D'Virgilio is able to handle almost any musical challenge with solid time, emotion, and dynamics. (Metal Blade Records, 2828 Cochran St., Ste. 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065)

The music of Dali's Dilemma is reminiscent of Dream Theater, with complex arrangements and more advanced vocal harmonies.

Drummer Jeremy Colson handles the compositions on *Manifesto For Futurism* well. "Living In Fear" highlights his ability to handle the most complex rhythms with excellent ideas from all around the kit. The excess of double bass is distracting at times, but the ever-changing arrangements help to keep Colson out of over-double trouble. It's obvious the drummer has chops, but because of the imbalance of his kit in the mix, his technique doesn't always show through. Still, the music on *Manifesto* is excellent overall, and Colson should be proud of his achievements here. (Magna Carta)

Two recent releases featuring Marco Minnemann suggest how excellent drummer-influenced music can be made without being overtly progressive or fusoid. Featuring superior sounds, exceptional songwriting and production, and amazing



SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Downplaying the chops but showing plenty of heart, ex-Screaming Trees drummer **Mark Pickereff's** Dark Fantastic project finds him exploring some moody territory with surprisingly fun recording techniques on its self-titled CD. Hard-panned shakers, elegant



ride cymbals, and ambient-sounding drums all add to the warm, sad vibe. (Up, PO Box 21328, Seattle, WA 98111)

Cesar Rosas of Los Lobos makes his first solo outing on *Soul Disguise*. In the tradition of his parent band, the CD is an eclectic East LA stew mixing rock, blues, Tex-Mex, and R&B. Seasoned drummers **Aaron Ballesteros** and **Victor Bisetti** alternately handle the throne, and both shine with exuberant personality, greezy groove, and a satisfyingly rootsy sound. (Rykco)

Drummer **Scott Metko** has a great time playing *The Revolver Suite*, The Beatles' 1966 album turned upside-down by the nine-piece horn band Bozo Allegro. Arranger/bassist Mark Browning Milner assigns a different rhythmic slant to each track, illustrating the African influence on many popular styles. (Marx Music, PO Box 130666, Roseville, MN 55113)

Containing two CDs' worth of drum solos (at an average of eight minutes apiece), the highlights disc of the prestigious Montreal Drum Fest 1996/97 is a killer. Featured are luminaries **Dennis Chambers**, **Virgil Donati**, **Horacio Hernandez**, **Chad Wackerman**, and **Mike Mangini**, as well as newcomer **Magella Cormier**, who puts on a ten-minute display of incredible technique. (Musician Quebecois, [405] 622-6333)

Trumpeter Darren Barrett has been turning heads as sideman in Jackie McClean's quintet. On his debut as a leader, *First One Up*, neo-bop tunes feature subtly tricky rhythmic arrangements, but drummer **John Lamkin** makes it all feel deceptively straight-ahead, swinging hard and smart behind the soloists. (J Curve)



drumming, *The Green Mindbomb* and *Time* see Minnemann mixing Dave Weckl's technical talents with Terry Bozzio's progressive edge. *Mindbomb* is intended to feature Marco as a player, stylistically dipping into funk, metal, Latin, fusion, progressive, hip-hop, industrial, and even polka. *Time* is a group project geared more towards commercial success. Minnemann's technique on each disc is flawless. His over-the-barline licks and metric modulation in particular will certainly turn heads. But he is *not* an over-indulgent chops monster. His rare sense of musicality makes his material and production skills stand out almost as much as his drumming. This is as good as it gets for drummers into funky fusion and experimental hard-edged rock. (members.aol.com/minnemaii/index.html.[706]692-4162)

— Mike Haid

★ Various The Clash Tribute: *Burning London*

Adrian Young (No Doubt), John Persoia (The Urge), Brett Reed (Rancid), Brad Hargreaves (Third Eye Blind), Joe Sirois (The Mighty Mighty Bosstones), Chad Sexton (311), Topper Headon (Afghan Whigs), Mike "Soupy" Sessa (Cracker), Ben Gillies (Silverchair), Paulinho Da Costa (Indigo Girls) (dr, perc)

Tribute albums can be a dicey deal. Many bands opt for the safe but boring road of blind homage. But the best attempts are often those that strip down a song and rebuild it in a way that lets you hear it as if for the first time. When you start out with a band like The Clash, whose reggae-influenced English punk was varied and versatile, the avenues of interpretation are plentiful. Featuring a star-studded cast of strong musical personalities, including everyone from Cracker to Ice Cube, *Burning London* is largely a success.

The best of the bunch is No Doubt's take on "Hateful," with Adrian Young shaking it up with drastic tempo changes. Adrian takes it at 220 BPM, then splits it in half and charges into a reggae groove before coming back to the initial beat. His quick staccato style is ever-present and dances through this ska-flavored rendition. Mixing it up completely, The Afghan Whigs take a novel approach by looping Topper Headon's original signature groove from "Train In Vain" and overlaying their breathy version of "Lost In The Supermarket." This decade's brash young punks Silverchair storm through "London's Burning," with Ben Gillies' drums pushing the song into a whole new stratosphere of excitement. Fast, nasty, and fun, Gillies slams through to the



★ dada dada

Phil Leavitt (dr), Michael Gurley (gtr), Joie Calio (bs)

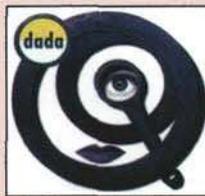
★ Burning Airlines Mission: Control!

Peter Moffett (dr, perc), J. Robbins (vcl, gtr, kybd, perc), Bill Barbot (bs, vcl, kybd, gtr, perc)

★ Botanica Malediction

Ivan Knight (dr), Abby Travis (bs), Paul Wallfisch (vcl, gtr, pno, org, bs), with Daniel Ash, Daniel Glass, Kid Congo Powers, others

An expert practitioner of straightforward drumming that is smart, fun, and easy to listen to, dada's Phil Leavitt uses miscellaneous percussive toys as an integral



part of his style. His choice of beats is mostly 2/4 snare and kick, but his embellishments make the songs sing. Leavitt plays it clean on "This Thing Together," using dowel-sticks when the song comes down, slips a syncopated drum groove on the chorus, and then pulls it all together with a clave and shakers to achieve a solid Latin rhythm that isn't over-zealous. (MCA)

Burning Airlines' Peter Moffett is a "listening" drummer; nothing in a song escapes his notice.

Quick and powerful, with well-honed chops, he can play anything from quick triplets to a sensitive ballad. Moffett is on top of the band throughout *Mission: Control!* On "Scissoring,"

for instance, his use of cymbals is just as important as the guitar harmonics. Using darker cymbals when the sound gets gritty, he syncs them up with odd time signatures and then comes back with a big bombastic rock beat on the choruses. (DeSoto. PO Box 60335, Washington DC, 20039, DeSotorec@aol.com)

Ivan Knight is all about fluidity. Anchoring Botanica's debut album, the drummer creates a moody ebb & tide with his performance. This trio is more instrumental-oriented than the others, employing various guest musicians. And while Knight might be mixed somewhat low among all the activity, he is a real standout player with an excellent sense of dynamics and great stick technique. (Checkered Past, 1456 N. Dayton. Ste. 205, Chicago, IL 60622, www.checkeredpast.com)

— Fran Azzarto and Lisa Marie Crouch



6x3

Six trios—three pop/rock vocal groups, three contemporary instrumental ensembles—highlight the special responsibilities of the drummer in a musical triangle. While there's more space to fill, it can't be wasted on clunkers. Let's check out how the drummers in these bands deal with the challenge.

★ Trio Impossible Trio Impossible

Falk Willis (dr), Johannes Enders (sx), Tony Scherr (bs)

★ Living Daylights 500 Pound Cat

Dale Fanning (dr), Jessica Lurie (sx), Arne Livingston (bs)

★ Trevor Dunn's Trio Convulsant Debutantes & Centipedes

Kenny Wolleson (dr), Trevor Dunn (bs), Adam Levy (gtr)

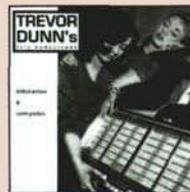
Trio Impossible, a powerful yet loose-limbed jazz combo, combines gracefully swaying ballads with gritty mid-tempo romps. Falk Willis crafts classic swing patterns, adding



bits of second-line syncopation, brief abstract passages, and cascading mallet rolls to the mix. His brush playing is excellent, and his beautifully recorded kit contains a gloriously trashy cymbal that's sure to prick up your ears. And though the standard-issue drum solos are conspicuously absent here, Willis trades some clever licks during Trio Impossible's brisk closing track. (Jazz4Ever, distributed by North Country/Cadence)

Fronted by saxophonist Jessica Lurie, Seattle three-piece Living Daylights draws from funk, fusion, modern jazz, and ethnic music on *500 Pound Cat*, forging high-energy grooves that contrast the dense with the spacious. Arne Livingston's electronically manipulated, often guitar-like basslines form the glue between the group's air-tight layers of sound, while drummer Dale Fanning blazes through bouncy klezmer-tinged rave-ups with his snares off and his sticks flying. Fanning's genre-hopping, precisely nuanced yet devilishly bombastic style makes him a player to watch closely in the coming years. (Liquid City, PO Box 4418, Seattle, WA 98104, [877] LIQ-CTTY)

The aptly named Trio Convulsant creates an atmosphere where nothing stays in one place for very long. They begin by lulling you into tranquillity with peaceful passages influenced by avant-jazz and 20th-century orchestral music. But soon...POW!...all serenity is shattered by hair-raising jolts of shredding metallic crunch. It's a trip to hear downtown New York drummer Kenny Wolleson make sense of the many shockingly abrupt feel shifts, cranking out loud, hi-hat swaying passages on his jazz-tuned kit just after swinging gingerly on his ride cymbal. Strange, yes. But somehow it works—if you like surprises. Just don't try to drift off to sleep with this one on the hi-fi. (Allegro)



— Michael Parillo

end with a straight four pattern on the snare right out of late '70s hard-core. And for a final treat, The Indigo Girls' Emily Saliers and Amy Ray pare down "Clampdown" to breezy harmonies and guitars. Paulinho Da Costa's use of exotic percussion complements this most unique interpretation of Clash material.

All in all, this is one tribute album that doesn't let you down. (Epic)

— Fran Azzarto and Lisa Marie Crouch

★ Paul Motian And The Electric Bebop Band *Flight Of The Blue Jay*

Paul Motian (dr), Chris Potter, Chris Cheek (tn sx), Kurt Rosenwinkel, Brad Schoepach (gtr), Steve Swallow (bs)

★ The Paul Motian Trio *Sound Of Love*

Paul Motian (dr), Joe Lovano (tn sx), Bill Frisell (gtr)

The difference in size between the bands on these two releases provides a great opportunity to compare virtuoso drummer Paul Motian's approaches to various musical situations. *Flight Of The Blue Jay* opens with the title track, a Motian original with a lazy



Ornette Coleman type of theme that frames an energetic free-form drum solo. Paul starts off with a brief abstract groove that opens up to dramatic rolls, flurries of notes around the kit, and punctuating crashes before smoothly coming back down into the theme. The group then proceeds to reinterpret and electrify classic tunes by Monk, Parker, Davis, and others. Motian expertly prods and pokes the soloists through a variety of tempos, from the mellow lazy swing of Monk's "Pannonica" to the bright snap of Bud Powell's "Celia."

On *Sound Of Love*, recorded live at The Village Vanguard, Motian engages a trio on a more even level of interaction. On Monk's classic "Misterioso" he provides pointed chatter against Frisell's unique guitar work and Lovano's twisting lines. "Duke Ellington's Sound Of Love" is a lesson on brushes and the use of space. "Mumbo Jumbo" is filled with disjointed phrases, as Motian creates a gorgeously abstract tapestry of clicks and tangs for accompaniment. And yet another lesson is learned on "Epistrophy," where Paul alternately withholds then



builds intensity.

Two excellent works from a profound and innovative drummer/leader. (Winter 8 Winter, distributed by Allegro Records)

— Martin Patmos

★ 70s Jazz Pioneers

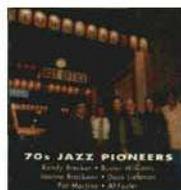
Live! At The Town Hall

Al Foster (dr), Randy Brecker (trp), Buster Williams (bs), Joanne Brackeen (pno), Dave Liebman (sp, tn sx), Pat Martino (gtr)

It was a one-rehearsal blowing session, but you'd never know it. Avoiding the frantic bombast that such sessions can invite, this all-star sextet plays like a band, taking each tune on a satisfying arc. A March '98 New York date that gathered still-vital masters who came to prominence in the '70s, the program accordingly includes '70s standards such as "Red Clay," "500 Miles High," and "Sugar."

Once again, the amazing and original Al Foster proves why he's the drummer soloists love most when that next upshift in energy is needed. (Miles surely agreed.) Listen to his interplay with Liebman's tenor fire. This hard-swinging Drum Sherpa guides each soloist to the peak. (1201 Music, PO Box 3322, Sea Bright, NJ B7760, www.1201music.com)

— Jeff Potter



★ Trans Am *Futureworld*

Sebastian Thomson (ac & elec dr), Philip Manley (gtr, kybd, bs, vcl), Nathan Means (bs, kybd, vcl)

In the future, humanity will warmly embrace the union of the mechanical and the organic. In the future, we'll revert to the glory days of album-oriented-rock, scrapping the need for self-contained "hit" singles in favor of taking winding journeys through entire albums. In the future, that is, according to Trans Am.

The DC trio's vision of days to come—a masterful blend of new wave, rock, hard rock,



and techno—plays best as a whole, with each ensuing track revealing new sounds through shifts in style, texture, and instrumentation. Over *Futureworld's* first half, driving but amiable synth textures that feature electronically treated vocals (Devo fans, take note!) are gradually eclipsed by the dark crunch of neo-metal guitar ferocity. Then we take a real left turn: Programmed beats replace acoustic drums, and Trans Am serves up four fun, coolly minimal dance pieces before returning to an organic feel for the majestic final cut.

Fading in at first with a steady cut-time part, drummer Thomson is later found digging into a slow backbeat with Bonzo-like muscle. Like the famed Zeppelin timekeeper, Thomson plays hard-hitting composed patterns with minimal fills on a huge-sounding, ambient-miked kit. At one point, his dead-on flurry of tom rolls makes a passage in 15 feel straight, while elsewhere his head-scratching syncopation renders a 4/4 groove strangely exotic. (Thrill Jockey)

— Michael Parillo

★ Sally Nyolo *Multiculti*

Paco Sery, Salvador Douezy (dr), Pablo, Daniel Moreno, David Mirandon (perc), Sally Nyolo (vcl, perc), Gildas Becquet (gtr), Jean Baniel Manga (bs), Sylvie Nawasadio (vcl), others

Cameroonian chanteuse Nyolo finds herself blissfully caught between roots and wings on this exceptional solo outing, her second since leaving Zap Mama. Nyolo has always been deeply committed to her heritage, and ushering in Paris-based mercenaries is a move that could dilute such noble intentions. That's far from the case here.

If *makossa* is the disco of Cameroon, *bikutsi* is that musically effervescent country's funky stuff, giving stick-boys Sery and Douezy plenty to play with. As usual, Sery lives large on his tracks. On "Bingo Bingo" he can be heard skipping around

FROM THE EDITORS' VAULT

rediscovering drumming's dusty gems

★ Vanilla Fudge *Near The Beginning*

Carmine Appice (dr), Mark Stein (org), Tim Bogert (bs), Vince Martell (gtr)

Carmine Appice set the foundation for heavy drumming, before Bonham, before Paice—before anyone else. Some consider Vanilla Fudge's style ponderous, but there's no denying their influence on a generation of bands that followed.

The Fudge were famous for their covers of hit songs, and this 1969 record contains a doozy: a pile-driving version of the R&B classic "Shotgun." In it, the fills Carmine plays following each bridge create a tension that builds to a climactic release when the band slams back into



the verse. The entire second side of the record is an extended jam called "Break Song," recorded live in concert at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. It features a thunderous solo from Carmine that is loose, flowing, and powerful in a way that hadn't been heard before—and that has been heard damn

few times since. Say what you will about Mr. Appice, he was unquestionably a trailblazer. (The CD rerelease of *Near The Beginning* contains three extra tunes.) (Sundazed, PO Box 85, Coxsackie, NY 12051, www.sundazed.com)

— Rick Van Horn

a 6/8 bell pattern and pygmy-based harmonies with a fusion veteran's finesse. (Nailing "1" here among the unanticipated hi-hat punches and press rolls is a little like trying to find Waldo.) Paco also slams a very convincing "3" on the chorus of the gospel-tinged "Ikaatiridong." Douezy, for his part, is no less impressive. The straight-up *bikutsi rock* of "Semengue" proves fair prey for his two-sound-level magic, like Garibaldi on Yaounde firewater. Then his mutant marching grooves evolve to complement the various tongues employed by Nyolo on the buoyant title track.

While the kit work alone on this album is definitely worth the admission, it's what happens during the drummers' days off that might be the *most* fun. On "Ngoni Ngueng," percolating clay pots, birimbau, and muted, bala-style electric guitars evoke the mystery and mischief of the deep, dark Central African forest. And the multi-layered vocals, now percussive instruments themselves, are at their quirky, alluring best. A must. (World Music Distr., [800] 900-4527)

— Seth Cashman

VIDEOS

Snare Drum Basics by Bob Breithaupt

level: beginner, 35 minutes, \$14.95

In *Snare Drum Basics*, author Bob Breithaupt, whose credentials include being the president of the Percussive Arts Society, breaks his main topics into "chapters." These include grips, basic strokes, the level system, dynamics, stroke combinations for phrasing, rudiments, specialty sounds, enhanced dynamics, and tuning and pitch. Subtopics are conveniently indexed to a time counter that runs continuously in the upper right corner of the screen. Although the focus is on snare drum study, several concepts are also applied on the full kit.

Breithaupt's presentation is tight, and the pace and tone are businesslike. Sharp analogies like "throwing water off the back of your hand" (Moeller technique) provide clear, memorable images that will be especially useful to beginners. However, those younger players might have gained from a little more exposition during the section on enhanced dynamics, where it's mentioned how various timbres are produced by playing different areas of the drumhead. Unfortunately this is neither described nor demonstrated. Also, the chapter on tuning is pretty abbreviated. Despite these concerns, though, *Snare Drum Basics* is heartily recommended. (Hudson Music)

— Rich Watson

BOOKS

Brazilian Coordination For Drumset by Maria Martinez

level: intermediate to advanced, \$14.95 (book with CD)

Ms. Martinez, an instructor at The Percussion Institute Of Technology and a player with top-act credentials, has organized a no-fat, no-filler volume. It's a workbook designed for drummers to roll up their sleeves and quickly dig in. If you're looking for a more comprehensive overview of styles and historical/cultural background, you'll want to seek out other fine Brazilian books. But as a practical workout for essential Brazilian groove coordination, this book is plenty handy.

The author's method is a time-honored standard: Ostinatos for feet (and sometimes one hand) are featured in different styles. The student then plays the following pages of rhythmic figures above the ostinatos. Styles include baião, bossa nova and samba in four, three, and seven, and the "funky samba" feel of partido alto. A demonstration and play-along CD featuring Martinez and band is also economic and clear. The package allows versatile usage for many skill levels, and, at the price, is definitely a bargain. (Hal Leonard)

— Jeff Potter

One Good Stroke: Wrist, Arm, And Finger Techniques For The Contemporary Drummer by Chuck Kerrigan

level: all, \$16.95

Unlike many instructional books on the market that help a drummer develop his or her reading skills, dexterity, or even an overall sense of musicality, *One Good Stroke* zeros in on how to physically "play." The focus here is on the wrist, arm,

and fingers and how they function together with the stick. Kerrigan's 113-page, spiral-bound book addresses a reality that every drummer should at one point in his or her career face up to: Am I getting the most out of my technique?

The book opens with illustrations on what angle the stick is held at by the wrist, arm, and fingers. Each of the three major sections progressively teaches the student how to make the most out of these body parts. Throughout, the reader gets an overall picture of how to control and move the stick towards the drum, working towards creating a "oneness" between the wrist, stick, and drum. The same goes for the arm and fingers. While later lessons ease up on the time requirements, the introductory ones suggest working thirty minutes a day on each, for a full week, before advancing forward. Tedious? Absolutely. Helpful? Definitely!

Unfortunately the introductions fail to address the question of positioning the arm while working on the wrist, and the same for the wrist while working on the arm. It also would have been helpful if the illustrations were on the facing page of the lesson instead of using that valuable space for inspirational quotes. Nonetheless, the results of the time, patience, and good sense of humility required to work through this book will surely benefit the player. After working through *One Good Stroke*, it can only lead to many more! (CK Publications, PO Box 5246, Johnstown, PA 15004)

— Fran Azzarto



Madness Across The Water

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Recommended by Mark Tessier of Audiophile Imports

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From The Garage To The Gig

Pro Tips For The First Time Out

by Harriet L. Schwartz

The lights dim, and the small but enthusiastic crowd waits patiently for the show to start. You raise your sticks, count off the song, and launch into the opening moments of your first gig.

Within seconds you realize you can't hear the singer very well, and you're having trouble feeling "in sync" with your bandmates. But you've practiced hard, and that preparation (along with the adrenaline surging through your body) gets you from song to song—nailing some and stumbling through others. Later, your bandmates say, "Great job," but mention that you should try to slow down next time. You wonder what they mean.

Welcome to the exciting, spontaneous, and sometimes scary world of live performance!

Playing live is among the most exciting aspects of drumming. It can also be a stressful experience for those first making the transition from the practice space to the stage. For advice on easing that transition, we spoke with four young—but veteran—drummers: Jim Donovan of Rusted Root, Hannah Fox of Babe The Blue Ox, Kim Zick of Mrs. Fun, and Todd Sucherman, who has played with a variety of artists including Brian Wilson, Styx,

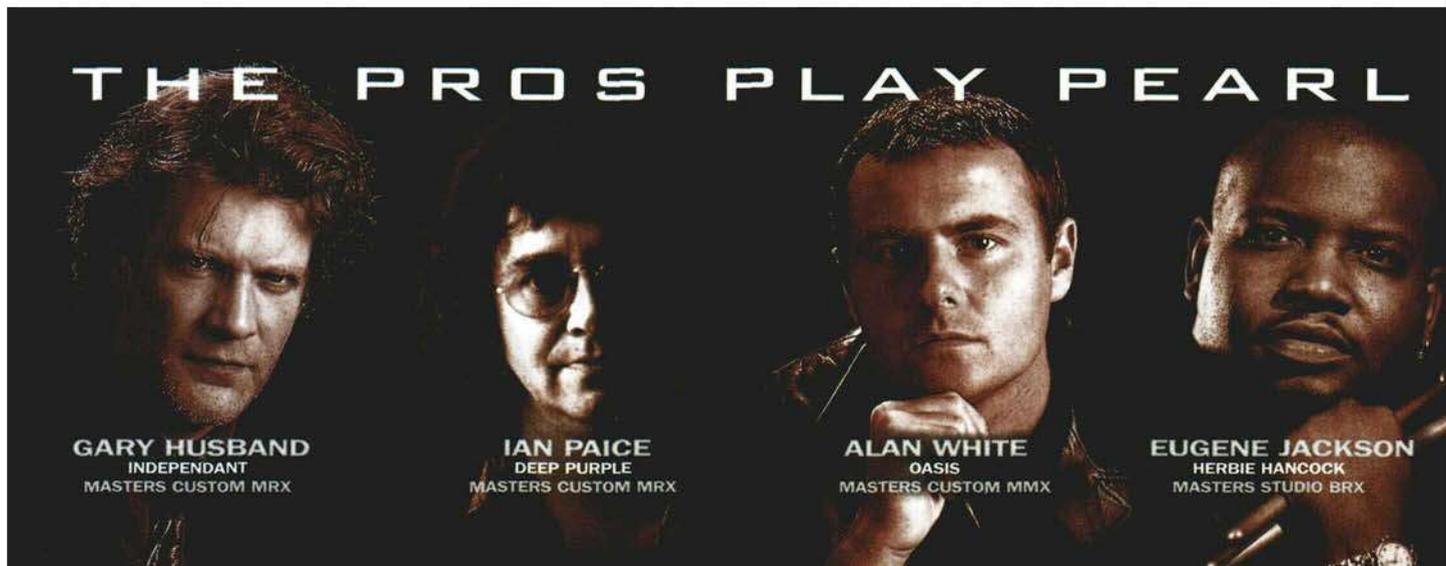
and Eric Marienthal. Each offered valuable steps that every drummer can take toward a more successful live show.

A Spare Snare

Obviously, the first thing every drummer should do to get ready for a show is practice. Nothing compares with knowing the material well. Beyond that, however, is the practical requirement of having and maintaining good equipment. To be really prepared, though, when leaving home to perform, every drummer should take along spare parts.

"I always bring an extra snare head, and maybe even an extra set of all the heads," says Kim Zick. "I travel with spare parts for my bass pedal, and I constantly check the mechanics of all my equipment. Also, make sure to bring a rug to place under your kit. If you get to the club and the stage isn't carpeted, your drums will move around."

"If you have drums you care about, get cases," says Jim Donovan. "If you can't afford hard cases, get padded bags; at least your drums won't get scratched up. Having handles on the cases or bags makes them easier to carry. And definitely get a case for your hardware." Donovan also suggests making sure your transportation is reliable, and getting a membership with AAA or some other auto service. They can provide roadside help



for everything from a dead battery to keys locked in a car.

If you have more than one kit, you may want to think twice about which one to take to the gig. "If you're playing the club circuit," says Todd Sucherman, "you may want to get a kit that you don't care about too much, so you don't get upset if something happens to it. There may be several bands on the bill, forcing you to leave your drums over in a corner of the club, where someone can bump into them or spill a drink on them. No matter *what* kit you take, once it's in the car, go home. If you leave your drums unattended in a parked car, they're much more likely to be stolen."

Hannah Fox adds her golden rule about what to do after the show: "If you aren't the last band of the night, don't break down your stuff on stage."

How To Make Friends And Influence The Sound System

Playing well is obviously the key to a good performance. However, understanding the impact of the sound system—in terms of what you hear and what the audience hears—will also influence the gig. So will your efforts to make allies in the club.

"It's good politics to say hi to whoever is working at the club," Fox says. "Introduce yourself to the guy who owns the bar, to the bartender, and to the sound tech. They will remember you when some great band comes in and they need an opener."

"Be cool to the sound people," Todd Sucherman agrees, "no matter what's happening or what the time constraints are. If you don't, they can ruin your evening in a lot of ways. Sound techs are often a disgruntled lot who'd rather be playing than putting a mic' in your bass drum."

Sound systems will vary from club to club. In a small setting the drums may not be miked at all. Additionally, you may or may not have a monitor (a speaker that allows you to hear some or all of the sound being projected to the audience). If you do have a monitor and it's your first experience with one, you may not

know what to ask for in the way of a monitor mix.

"Soundchecks can be stressful," says Jim Donovan. "If I'm tight on time, I'll ask the monitor tech for the kick drum and a tiny bit of snare and hat. You don't usually need much of the snare and hat because they're fairly loud. For the band sound, I need the bass, the guitar, and the lead vocal."

"I ask for the drums first, and build from there," says Kim

**"It's easy to get caught up
on people looking at you.
The sooner you get over
that, the better."**

—Jim Donovan, Rusted Root

Zick. "I like to have the monitor on my left, near the hi-hat. That helps me focus on the groove with the hi-hat and snare."

Although it's not a good idea for a "beginning" act to be too insistent, you should make a tactful effort to get a soundcheck before you start playing. This gives you the opportunity to make sure you're hearing everything you need. It's much harder to fix problems once the show starts.

In many small club settings, drummers may have limited mixing options. If amplification is necessary, mike at least your kick and snare. Remember, though, that if you are in front of the bass and guitar amps, or if you're hearing those instruments through a monitor that your drums are *not* in, you probably won't be able to hear yourself—particularly your kick drum and toms. Jim

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Donovan suggests having someone play your kit during sound-check so that you can walk around the room and sense how well your drums and cymbals project over the amplified sound.

Along with adjusting the sound you'll hear during the show, you and your bandmates should discuss overall volume. "It sounds like common sense," says Donovan, "but you'd be surprised how many guitar players have their amps cranked to 10

when all they need is 3," he says. "The same goes for you as the drummer: If you're in a tiny room, you don't need to play real hard. If someone says you're playing too loud, don't take it as a personal attack. You probably *are* too loud.

"On the other hand," Donovan continues, "if you're in a tiny club, sometimes your drums won't be miked and you won't have a monitor. You'll have to fight for your space in the sound spectrum. In that situation, you should wear ear protection. It separates your ears from the band, but the amount of hearing damage you can suffer in two nights is amazing. Actually, hearing protection is a good idea in virtually *any* situation."

Get Ready, Get Set

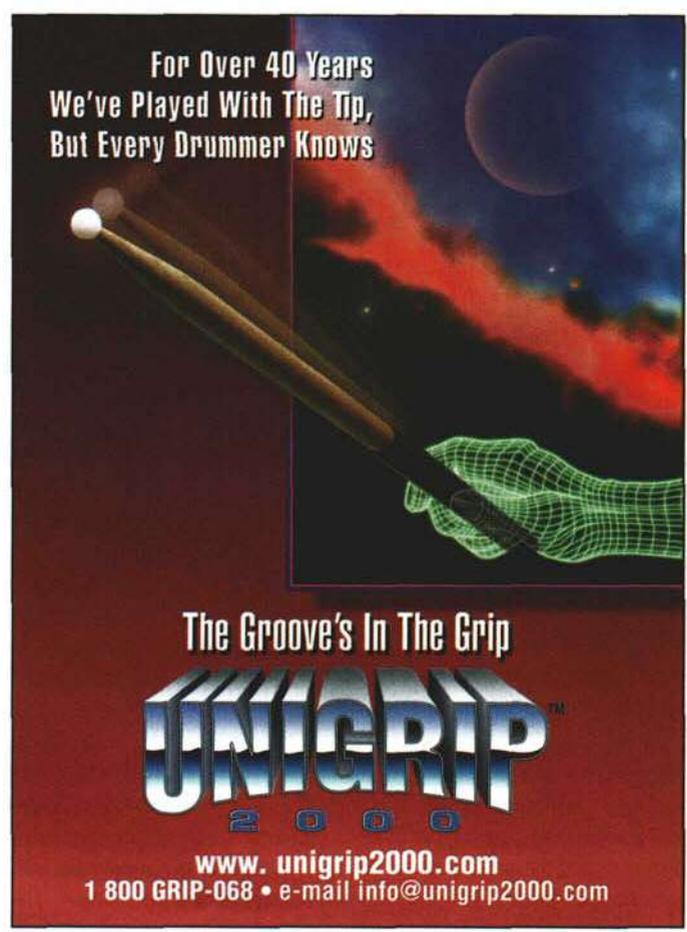
Warming up and stretching prior to playing is always important, but it's especially vital before gigs. "Rookie" drummers typically play faster at the gig than in practice, due to adrenaline and nervousness. Unless muscles are warmed up, they often cramp—making playing through a set difficult and painful, and increasing the chance for injury. Drinking water and eating bananas (and other high potassium foods) prior to a performance also helps prevent muscle cramps.

While some drummers party before their shows, many established drummers say that alcohol inhibits their playing. "It's easy to slug down a few beers before you play," Todd Sucherman says. "But it will adversely affect your playing. What's worse, you won't even know it."

"Always go into your gigs prepared," adds Jim Donovan. "Make sure you've got your chops up and that you're rested. Don't get drunk or high. That's not the way to relax. Take two minutes of deep breathing by yourself in a corner somewhere. Or, if you need to get energized before a show, do some exercises to get the blood moving."

Nervous Energy

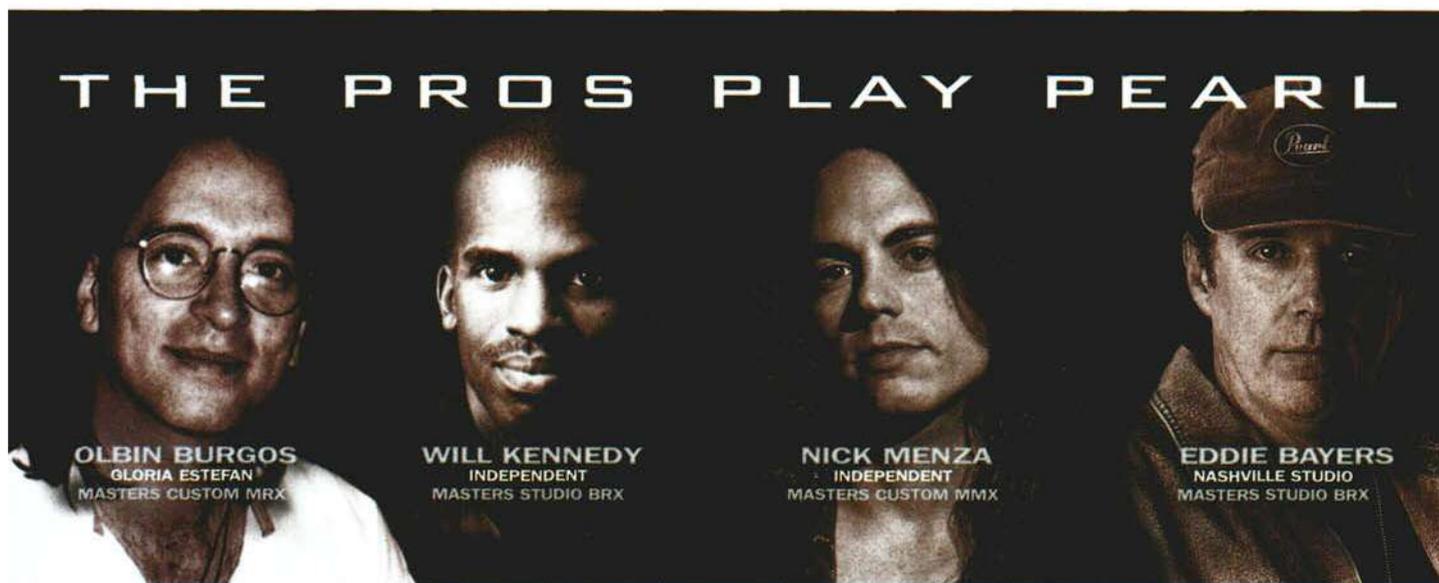
Some drummers say they were nervous for their first few gigs, but have become less so as they've gained experience. Others



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admit to always being at least somewhat nervous before playing live. Most fall somewhere in between, saying that their nervousness dissipated with experience, but that other factors—like playing larger venues or with well-known artists—can bring back some of their jitters.

Says Jim Donovan, "My first gig with Rusted Root was in front of eight hundred people, which was intense for us. I started to wonder what the crowd was thinking, instead of focusing on what *I* was doing. It's easy to get caught up on people looking at you. The sooner you get over that, the better."

Kim Zick adds, "Sometimes I get a little nervous in big venues. When we toured with The Indigo Girls we were playing 5,000-seaters. My biggest crowd ever was 15,000. I find it helpful to actually go out to where the audience will be. You can conquer that space by realizing it's just a space."

Adrenaline 101

Adrenaline gets you energized for the rigors of a show. However, too much adrenaline can affect your sense of time.

"When you're fairly inexperienced and you see your friends in the audience, your adrenaline gets kicked up," says Todd Sucherman. "Later, if you listen to a tape of that performance, you won't believe you could have played that fast. But you did. That's one reason why it's very important for bands that are just starting out to tape practices and gigs, and then listen to those tapes together."

"Dealing with adrenaline is a big deal for me," Jim Donovan says, "because I get excited really quickly. A lot of drummers do. When you're in front of people and they're dancing, the tendency is to push—to keep speeding everything up. The trouble spots to watch are when you're going into and coming out of a fill. Before you hit those spots, maintain time on the hi-hat to keep in the pocket. And before going into a fill, consciously tell yourself to pull back a little bit. That will help you stay in time."

"Another thing that helps me is to make eye contact with the bass player. One of us will lean our body back if the other is

rushing. You want to maintain that intuitive connection in your rhythm section."

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effective communication before and during the show will strengthen everyone's performance.

"It's good to get together before you go on stage," says Jim Donovan. "One thing that we do is play acoustically in a dressing room. I'll use a hand drum or just clap on my knee. This gives us a sense of playing together in a small, tight-knit circle.

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When we go up, we're in tune with each other, and we've already been making music for twenty minutes."

Other practical tips include using a set list so that everyone in the band knows what to expect, and making sure that everyone is ready before you count off a song. Some bands also develop signals that they can use as cues, or to indicate a wish to slow down or speed up. Such signals need to be simple and unmistakable.

Putting On A Show

"Appropriate stage presence depends on what type of music you're playing," Todd Sucherman says. "I've never been one for twirling or throwing sticks in the air. But people at a rock show like to see someone who is playing hard and digging in. However, if being animated gets in the way of playing well, don't do it. And if you're working as a sideman for someone else, don't steal that person's spotlight."

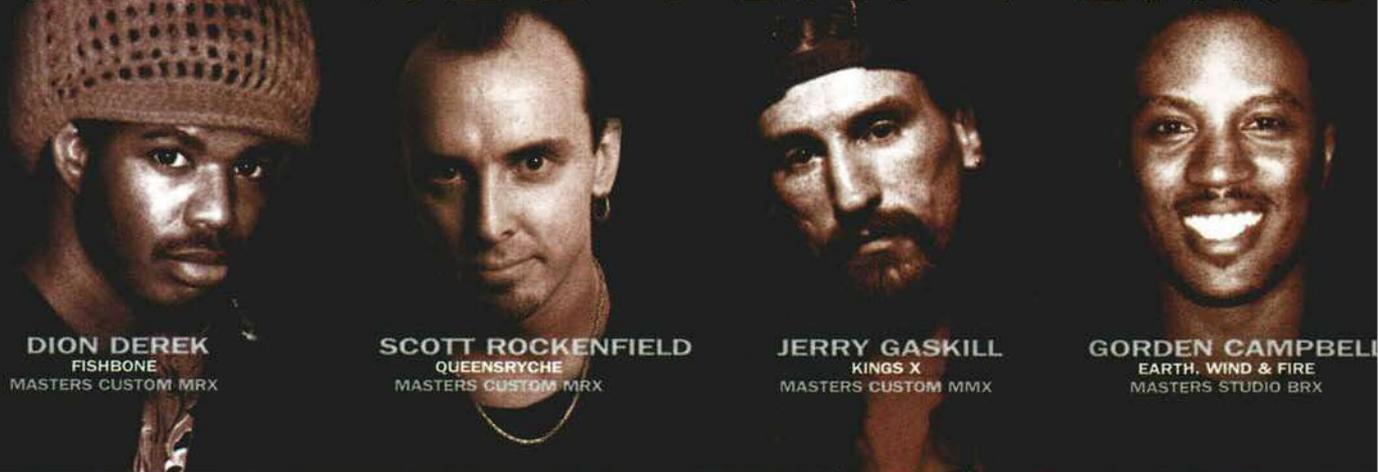
"I get a lot of comments that people like to watch me play," says Kim Zick, "because I have a lot of movement in my drumming. I don't think about trying to put on an act. It comes from loving the music that I play, and from getting into the creative and emotional end of it."

Jim Donovan offers advice for connecting with the audience. "Many drummers look down at their hi-hat or their ride the entire night. You'd never know that they're back there, because they don't really command any presence. On the other hand, if you keep your head up, and focus on the rest of the band and the people you're playing to, that really changes the way people look at you."

Generally, drummers who *appear* to be engaged in the music *are* engaged in the music. They are absorbed in the moment, not in trying to appear animated, aggressive, or any other particular way. They are supremely confident and immersed in the music they are making.

"It all starts in the practice room," Donovan says. "It's knowing your instrument inside and out. Even if you aren't a master of

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your instrument technically, become a master of what you do. Learn how your band's music works. Learn the songs intimately—the lyrics and the melody lines.

"One of the things that I learned from African music is that it's not just about one part. It's how all the parts fit to create the whole. When you start to think of what you play as a cog in the entire piece of music, you play differently. You start to be more present with whatever piece of music you're playing."

Mistakes Happen

Often, the root of a performer's nervousness is the fear of making mistakes. The drummers we spoke to indicated that mistakes are inevitable, and that it's the drummer's *response* to mistakes that truly impacts his or her performance.

Hannah Fox reminds us that the members of the audience usually don't even notice mistakes. "The audience isn't just watching you," she points out. "They're watching the rest of the band, they're flirting—they're into their own thing. So relax and enjoy the fact that it's okay to mess up. When you're on stage is not the time to worry."

Adds Jim Donovan, "Never stop playing, no matter how bad you're doing—or *think* you're doing. If you forget a section of a tune, just keep it simple—play basic time. Just keep going; eventually the song will be over and you'll be on to the next one. You'll have to play that problem song at the next gig, so you'll get another shot at it. If you continue to screw up the same section, get into your practice space, isolate that section, and play it over and over until you can do it flawlessly."

Even playing well can breed its own kind of mistakes. According to Donovan, "If you're having a great night, the tendency sometimes is to overplay. A more mature approach would be to take that energy and sink it into your groove. Think back to a groove that someone played with Stevie Wonder or Sly & The Family Stone. If you can communicate that kind of feeling to your audience, they'll love you forever, because that's where the

magic is."

"A lot of beginning players feel bad about mistakes," Kim Zick concludes. "But you won't learn if you aren't making mistakes. And remember, if someone *else* makes a mistake, cut them some slack. Keep in mind that you're *all* still learning."



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The Importance Of Music Theory For Drummers

by Ted Bonar

As young drummers, we spend hour upon hour learning how to coordinate our left hand and our right foot. We spend months working on playing faster paradiddles and cleaner flam patterns. After we develop a certain amount of facility on our instrument, we start to concentrate on more advanced concepts, such as time, groove, and feel. Some of us branch out and learn other styles: Rock musicians start to learn jazz, jazz musicians get into Latin rhythms, classical players study a more complex repertoire.

All of the above skills are highly important to all drummers. Countless hours can be dedicated to developing stick control or studying different rhythms. The very act of playing percussion instruments is based upon the manipulation of rhythms, using our hands to create the sounds that make musical sense. Drummers, by definition, must have a greater grasp of rhythmical styles than musicians who play melodic

instruments.

But should musicians who play melodic instruments ignore the study of rhythm? Of course not! If you play jazz trumpet or piano, you have to have as much sense of rhythm as any drummer in order to make the music swing. If you play bass, you have to be able to feel the pulse and structure of the song in the same manner as the drummer playing his or her bass drum. Simply put, the study of rhythm *and* the development of control over one's instrument are not limited to drummers. No, all musicians must master these.

That being said, the opposite is true for drummers. In order to become complete musicians, we must have a working knowledge of music theory and structure. In addition to the many hours spent practicing snare rudiments and four-way coordination, we must also study how music is made, and why it works the way it does.

Melody, harmony, phrasing, and struc-

ture are four basic principles present in virtually every kind of music. Nearly the entirety of modern Western music—loosely defined as music written in Europe or America since the seventeenth century or so—is based on the same basic relationships between these four concepts. Modern rock, blues, and jazz all have basic similarities in regards to their use of key signatures, chord progressions, melodic phrasing, and structure. Let's take a quick look at each of these, and explore how the knowledge of these principles can help you as a drummer.

Melody

Melody, as a basic concept, can be defined as the single musical line that catches a listener's ear. In rock, pop, or country music, the melody will most often be sung. In jazz music, the melody will be traded between a host of melody (or "lead") instruments: saxophone, trumpet, piano, guitar, or vocals. In classical music,

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any number of instruments can hold the melody at any given time.

Why should we study melody? Because without it, a song is literally without meaning or purpose. While melody, harmony, and phrasing are closely related, it's pretty safe to say that melody is the leader of these three disciplines.

Think for a moment of Duke Ellington's famous jazz song "Take The 'A' Train." The melody in that song is a good example of the importance of recognizing the lead line. Your job as a drummer is to embellish that line, support its rhythm, and set up its beginning and its end. It would be easy for a jazz drummer to lay low and play a swing pattern, without regard to the melodic structure of a song. But to really *play* the music, we must be aware of the complex dynamics within the melody. Only then can we fully support the lead instrument.

Knowledge of the melody is just as important for rock drummers. As a universal example, think of The Beatles' classic song "I Want To Hold Your Hand." The verse of the song is a good example of how a rock drummer needs to play "simple" behind a strong melody. But the proof that Ringo Starr was paying *attention* to the melody comes in the "B" section, where the melody takes a complete left turn and the tone of the entire song changes from a

power-pop sing-along into a rhumba-like ballad. When this happens, the drumming shifts from a loose hi-hat and basic rock beat to a quieter, tighter hi-hat with a dif-

ferent bass player. These players will follow the set chord changes of a song. The melody will sit over these chord changes and intertwine with the structure of the chords.

"In order to become **complete** musicians, we must have a **working knowledge** of music theory and structure. We can only be truly **effective** when we're aware of what's happening around us **musically**."

There are innumerable chord types and patterns. All are reliant on a "key signature" that gives the music its tonal center (is this song in "A" or "E"?) and set its mood (is it in a major key or a minor key?). This is complicated music theory, but a basic understanding of it is important for drummers. As a beginning concept, it is probably most important for us to be aware of how chord changes work. (Of course, without key signatures, you wouldn't have chords!)

Basic chord changes can be thought of as directions for a drive around the neighborhood. Leave the house, go north, take a

left, drive for eight blocks, take another left, drive for four blocks, and then take the road that curves back around to your starting point. Repeat that process four times...and you have the concept for chord structures and songs.

The world's most often-used chord structure is probably the I-IV-V (or "one-four-five") progression. Basic blues and rock tunes are based upon this progression, and once you become aware of it, you can't get away from it. ("Twist And Shout" and "Louie Louie" are easy examples to think

of)

Harmony

Harmony is the element of a song that most closely supports the melody. It's also the element that sets the parameters for solos and the all-important concept of "tension & release." The harmonic structure of a song is most often played by the rhythm guitarist (playing chords), the piano player,

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of, and there are thousands of others.) This progression works in all basic key signatures, establishes a strong tonal center, and sets up the tension & release.

In a I-IV-V chord progression, the "I" (or "one" chord) is like home base. It is the chord you will most likely begin and end the song with, and it is the tonal center to which the music will most often return. The "IV" (or "four" chord) is a transitional chord change that gives the music some flavor and provides the melody with a basis for direction. The "V" (or "five") is the chord that is most *unlike* the "I" chord, and is the chord that provides tension in the harmonic structure. Because this chord is nearly opposite the "I" (and because of how it's structured within the key signature, which is a little complicated for the purposes of this article), the "V" wants to resolve into the "I." Until that resolution occurs, the listener will feel tension. When the song returns to the "I," the listener will sense release.

How should drumming respond to these chord changes? How does the concept of tension & release work on the drums? Let me tell you this: You are already doing it! When you are laying down a basic beat underneath the melody, you are probably playing under a chord (or chord progression) with very little tension. Eventually, the music changes, and you may feel the need to play a drum fill or make your part a little more complicated. What's happening? You are feeling the tension in the chord progression, and you are augmenting that tension on your drums. The listener is not only hearing the harmonic tension, but is also hearing the rhythmic tension you create when you break the comfortable groove that you've been playing for the past several minutes. Then, upon the "release" of the music (the "V" chord turning back to the "I" chord), you hit a big, walloping crash cymbal and lay back into the basic groove. Tension & release, drum fills and grooves!

The I-IV-V chord structure is a basic example of harmony, and when we study more complicated and longer chord progressions, we then have the improved "ears" necessary to determine when drum fills are appropriate. Deciding when and where to play small, simple fills versus long, complex fills becomes easier when one can better hear the harmonic structure of a song.

Phrasing

Phrasing is a byproduct of the combination of melody and harmony. The beginning of a melody would generally be the beginning of a phrase, and the "release" point in the harmonic structure will generally mark the end of a phrase. It is our job, as a supporting instrument, to recognize and embellish these phrases. Phrasing can be more complicated than that, with certain melodic phrases running over complex chord progressions, but that is the basic idea. Once we're able to recognize phrasing in the structure of a song, we will start to hear phrases during solos, which will enable us to improvise and play musically within a group setting rather than simply "playing through" a song.

Structure

The structure or "arrangement" of a song is closely tied to chord progressions and the ability to recognize tonal centers within the music. For instance, a classic rock form would be Verse-Chorus-Verse-Chorus-Bridge-Verse-Chorus (ABABCAB). The closely related standard jazz structure of Chorus-Chorus-Bridge-Chorus (AABA) is another good example. Each of those "A" or "B" sections of the songs will have its own unique chord progression and melody. The melodies and harmonies of the different sections intertwine and lock together, and the format of these sections creates the song structure. Just as with simple chord progressions, the form of a song can provide the feeling of tension & release. Once again it is our job to give this structure the feeling, shape, and texture it deserves.

The endless possible combinations of melody, harmony, phrasing, and structure are what give us so many songs to play. Drums are a supporting instrument for the musicians who are setting up these ideas. We can only be truly effective when we're aware of what is happening around us musically. So practice your flams, your grooves, and your four-way independence. But in addition, take the time to understand what the other musicians are concentrating on. By studying that which you are supporting (melody, harmony, etc.), you will become a much more complete and tasteful musician.

Next time we'll discuss the benefits of learning secondary instruments.



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Jerry "J.I." Allison

Beat Of The First Rock Band

by Harry Cangany

There lives in Nashville a quiet legend. As a teenager in the small West Texas town of Lubbock, he helped sow the seeds from which the roots of rock 'n' roll grew. He was the first drummer to take a modern rudiment and adapt it to a rock beat. And he plays on today, recognized by *Rolling Stone's Book Of Lists* as the third-best rock 'n' roll drummer of all time.

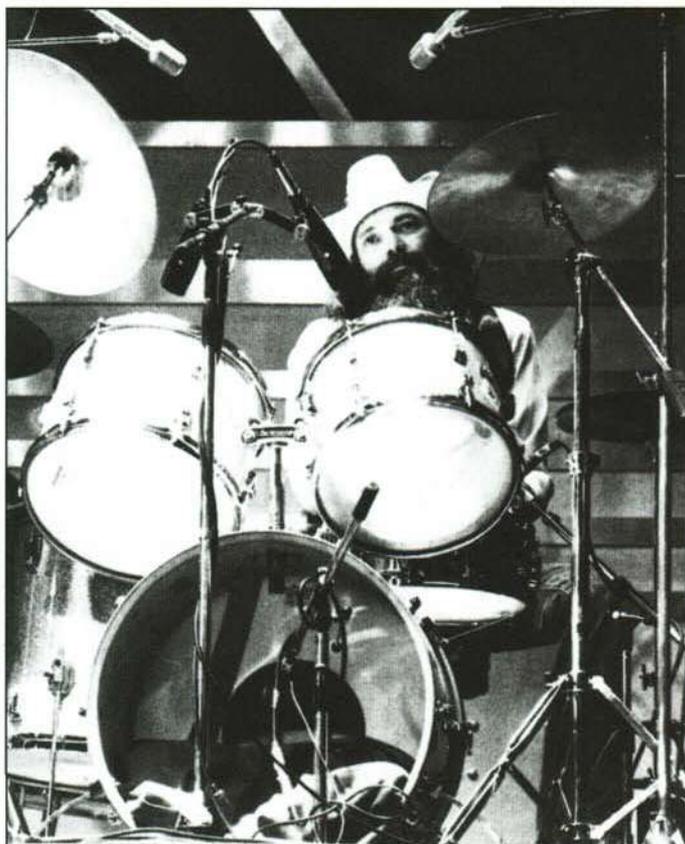
His name is Jerry Allison—"J.I." to his friends—and he was a founding member of The Crickets. Although best known for their singer/guitarist Buddy Holly, The Crickets were not an act comprised of a front man and side musicians (such as Elvis and his backup band, or Bill Haley & The Comets). Holly, Allison, and the other Crickets—Joe B. Mauldin on bass and Niki Sullivan on second guitar—were arguably the first self-contained electric group. They *defined* the American rock band, using a lead, bass, rhythm, and drums instrumentation and a "write your own songs" format that has been emulated by thousands of bands ever since.

In 1956, seventeen-year-old Jerry Allison was living in Lubbock and playing an old Slingerland drumset outfitted with calf heads and with a palm tree painted on the bass drum head. At the time, western bop and swing was the musical fare. But J.I. loved listening to Little Richard's drummers. And when Elvis Presley hit Lubbock, the world changed for J.I. and his best friend, Buddy Holly. They immediately shifted from their western bop to the new sound. J.I. recalls, "We were *born* to play rock 'n' roll."

Born to play and *able* to play, however, are two different things. Buddy and J.I. first had to fund their musical ambitions. J.I. paid some dues (and earned some money) touring with western music performer Hank Thompson. He returned to Lubbock with just enough cash to buy a new Premier 55 model set. It was a white marine pearl kit with a 14x20 bass drum, one 8x12 rack tom, and a 5 1/2x14 snare—again all outfitted with calf heads. J.I. preferred calf to the recently introduced plastic heads, which didn't last long under his relentless pounding.

J.I. graduated from high school on May 30, 1956. The next day he and Buddy saw John Wayne in the classic western *The Searchers*. In that film, Wayne's character answers all challenges sarcastically with an emphatic "That'll be the day!" That expression inspired the two budding musicians, and later that same night they co-wrote what became the first Crickets hit. It was followed rapidly by equally successful songs like "Oh Boy" and "Peggy Sue." The tom-tom pattern that drove "Peggy Sue" to become an early rock anthem was actually rapid-fire paradiddles—the first such use of a rudiment in a rock 'n' roll song.

Less than eighteen months later, on December 1, 1957, The



After coming to fame with The Crickets in the late 1950s, J.I. toured with Waylon Jennings in the early 1980s.

Crickets appeared on the Ed Sullivan show. Clips of the performances show Jerry Allison smiling and playing his heart out, using traditional grip with the sticks backwards. But J.I. remembers that the overall Sullivan show experience wasn't fun. First, veteran drummer Ray McKinley used Jerry's brand-new white marine pearl WFL set—and rearranged things to suit himself. Next, although a high riser had been specially built for Jerry's drums, it had to be scrapped after dress rehearsal because Buddy and Jerry couldn't hear each other. (The New York production people were not happy.) Finally, the quartet was paid only \$1,500 for the appearance. Not bad money in those days, but after union dues and travel expenses were deducted, the "boys in the band" didn't make a big profit.

They did, however, get national attention on the number-one program of its kind. This led to national tours and to shows in

Australia and England on which The Crickets shared billings with Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and a host of other influential early rockers. How influential? Listen to the early work of British bands like The Rolling Stones or The Hollies. Or consider Paul McCartney's statement that, "If there hadn't been The Crickets, there wouldn't have been The Beatles."

The band toured steadily until the autumn of 1958, when Buddy Holly wanted to relax a little. By that time he had become a major figure in the growing field of rock 'n' roll music—an astounding achievement considering that he was still only a few years out of high school. He wanted to move to New York to pursue his work as a songwriter, performer, and producer. Jerry Allison and Joe Mauldin opted to stay near their manager/recording engineer, Norman Petty, who operated the studio in Clovis, New Mexico where the early Crickets hits had been recorded.

Buddy joined a "package" entertainment tour called the "Winter Dance Party" in early 1959. On February 3 of that year, he was killed in a tragic plane crash near Mason City, Iowa that also took the lives of Richie Valens and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson. To roots-rock fans, that date has ever after been known as "the day the music died"—inspiring the 1971 Don McLean hit "American Pie."

The town of Lubbock has only recently come to realize the importance of their musical son, and has established The Buddy Holly Center to honor him. The Center's grand opening will take place on September 3 of this year. In addition to a permanent exhibition dedicated to the life and music of Holly, it will house a Texas Musicians Hall Of Fame and a fine arts program. Jerry Allison will be taking part in the opening ceremonies.

Tragic though the death of Buddy Holly was, it did not end the musical careers of his bandmates. The Crickets went back to work, and have continued to do so—on and off—ever since. During the "off" periods, J.I. played with The Everly Brothers, did LA session work, and held the drum chair on the Roger Miller television show from 1966 to 1967. From 1978 to 1983 he played with Waylon Jennings—a gig touched with a certain macabre irony. Waylon had been a Lubbock deejay in the late '50s. It was Buddy Holly who encouraged him to pursue a recording career. When The Crickets and Holly split, Holly asked Waylon to learn bass and play behind him on the Winter Dance Party tour. Waylon was to have been on Holly's plane, but The Big Bopper got the seat. Waylon and Jerry mused over that fateful switch for many years afterward.

Today, J.I. divides his time between farming and music. He raises beef cattle and hay on a 369-acre spread filled with hills and



Jerry Allison at his home today, holding his very first drum—an 8x13 Gretsch marching snare.



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trees—very unlike the geography of Lubbock. But that West Texas music is still in his soul, which leads him to continue to perform with The Crickets. There have been personnel changes over the years, but Joe Mauldin and singer/songwriter/guitarist Sonny Curtis (who filled in for Holly) have almost always been there. J.I. Allison *has* always been there. Today's lineup also includes Glen D. Hardin on keyboards.

The Crickets play sixty to a hundred eighty dates per year, mixing Holly-era songs, other '50s tunes, and their own post-Holly hits, including "More Than I Can Say" and "I Fought The Law." Sometimes they perform the two singles that J.I. made under the *nom de record* of "Ivan" (his middle name). They were "Real Wild Child" and "Frankie Frankenstein." Try as he might, J.I. can't find existing copies of those records. (Anyone out there have them?)

Even so, Jerry's home is filled with memories: a painting of Buddy Holly, original mementos of the earliest days, a thank-you letter from 1963 signed by each of The Beatles, and several gold records. In his home is also his recording studio, where sits a 1984 75th Anniversary Ludwig drumset and an original black Everly Brothers model Gibson guitar given to Jerry by Don Everly. J.I. has a photo of The Stones' Keith Richards holding a rifle and protecting the guitar. Keith would like to buy that Gibson—but it's not for sale.

And where are the original Crickets-era drumsets? Well, the

white marine pearl Premier kit went to a nephew—who painted it black. The white WFL was sold in Los Angeles. Its replacement, a black diamond Premier, is with another nephew. Today J.I. plays a 1970s Ludwig *Mach 5* kit that was a gift from Johnny Rivers. I hear that Ludwig is working on a new kit to present to him.

If you listen to Jerry Allison's records, you'll yearn an excellent musician who played on drumkits, cardboard boxes, and even his knees. (The recording process was a little more wide-open back then!) If you meet him, you'll find him a happy man who is proud of his work—and adamant that its history be set down correctly. Jerry feels that the 1978 Gary Busey film *The*

Buddy Holly Story is highly fabricated and insulting. But he does credit it with motivating a discovery process that has created new fans for The Crickets' music. And the music is still what's important to Jerry. When asked how he feels when he thinks back on his career, he says simply, "It's been a great life."

Upon its opening in September of this year, the Buddy Holly Center will be exhibiting, among other memorabilia, Buddy's last Fender guitar and Joe B. Mauldin's Fender bass. To honor Jerry Allison's contribution to the legacy of Buddy Holly & The Crickets, Harry Cangany has donated a vintage set of WFL drums, restored to look as close to "1957 new" as possible.



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Gary Setzer

Gary Setzer is a stand-up guy—literally. While leading a high-energy swing group called King Cadillac, Gary plays a stand-up drumkit, which lets

him position himself at the forefront so that audiences can focus on his performance. (As a little incentive, Gary has been known to have flames shoot up from his cymbals while the band is playing.

A professional drummer for over twenty years, Gary's musical career started in the New York City punk scene with a group called the Bloodless Pharaohs. The group shared the stage with such acts as Blondie, The Ramones, and The New York Dolls. At the beginning of the 1980s Gary shifted his attention to classic rock 'n' roll. Along with his brother Brian, he was an original member of the seminal rockabilly trio The Stray Cats. He left that band to form his own rockabilly project, emigrated to Europe, and created a name for himself there. He returned to the US in the early 1990s and formed The Rebel Rockers, a highly regarded East Coast rockabilly outfit.

Gary's current project, King Cadillac, is a seven-piece swing band with "a hint of hard-driving rock 'n' roll behind it." The band has been touring across the US, and is currently working on its first CD release. (Besides his skills as a drummer and lead vocalist, Gary also writes, arranges, and charts all the horn parts.)

King Cadillac's demo CD reveals Gary as a hard-swinging, high-energy player. It's a shame one can't see him perform on the CD; even in the studio he sounds like he's having a ball.

Darla Rae

Henderson, Tennessee's Darla Rae is a busy lady. Specializing in country, rock, and swing drumming, she's currently working with The Lynns, an act built around the twin daughters of country superstar Loretta Lynn. The act occasionally opens for Loretta, but generally headlines its own dates. Their touring schedule has taken Darla across the US, and earlier this year took her to Japan and Australia. A demo taken from a live recording of a performance by The Lynns reveals Darla to be a solid team player, with some tasty chops thrown in here and there for good measure.

The thirty-one-year-old drummer has been playing since the age of six, and cites Gene



Krupa, Lionel Hampton, and Sandy Nelson as influences. Her professional background includes opening for such acts as Aaron Tippin, Sammy Kershaw, Neal McCoy,

Mark Chesnutt, and Lonestar. She does her drumming on a Yamaha *Power Recording Custom* kit with Zildjian cymbals, and endorses *Attack* drumheads and Maxtone lighted tambourines. In addition to her drumming prowess, she also plays keyboards and sings.

"I've met some of the goals I've set for myself," says Darla, "but I'm setting new ones. I'd like to

do some studio work, but my heart is with live audiences. I'd like to continue growing and learning as much as I can, so that I can maintain a career in this business. It's also important to me to earn the respect of my peers."

Al Ferris

At ninety-two, Al Ferris is the oldest drummer to appear in *On The Move*. But don't let his age fool you into thinking he's *stopped* moving. Far from it.

Born in 1906 in Glasgow, Scotland, Al emigrated to Vancouver, Canada in 1918. He worked in the logging camps of the Northwest, where he nurtured a love of rhythm by accompanying accordion and fiddle players.

Al bought his first drumkit in Vancouver, and found immediate employment in the clubs and theaters there. He worked through the "Roaring '20s," when prohibition in the US made Vancouver an entertainment mecca. Al found himself in the company of the bands of Paul Whiteman, Artie Shaw, Count Basie, and Johnny Mercer, working from 10:00 P.M. until 6:00 A.M.

In the mid-1930s Al toured as part of a circus band. In 1939 he joined the Canadian Air Force and played military functions. Upon his release he returned to Vancouver. He ran a supper club until 1948, then moved to a more rural area to establish a fishing camp. But he would still commute to the city to play gigs.

As rock 'n' roll came onto the scene, Al's drumming jobs waned. He eventually stopped playing professionally in order to devote his full attention to the camp. But upon his retirement in 1972, he resumed drumming on a casual basis. Always thirsty for knowledge, Al embraced modern drumming styles and technology. For example, he loves the reggae beat, and plays it with amazing fluidity.

Today, Al Ferris plays with a jazz quartet that's in constant demand—especially due to the swing revival. Al is a living history of the drumset, yet after eighty years of drumming he still possesses the zeal of a first-time player.



If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch

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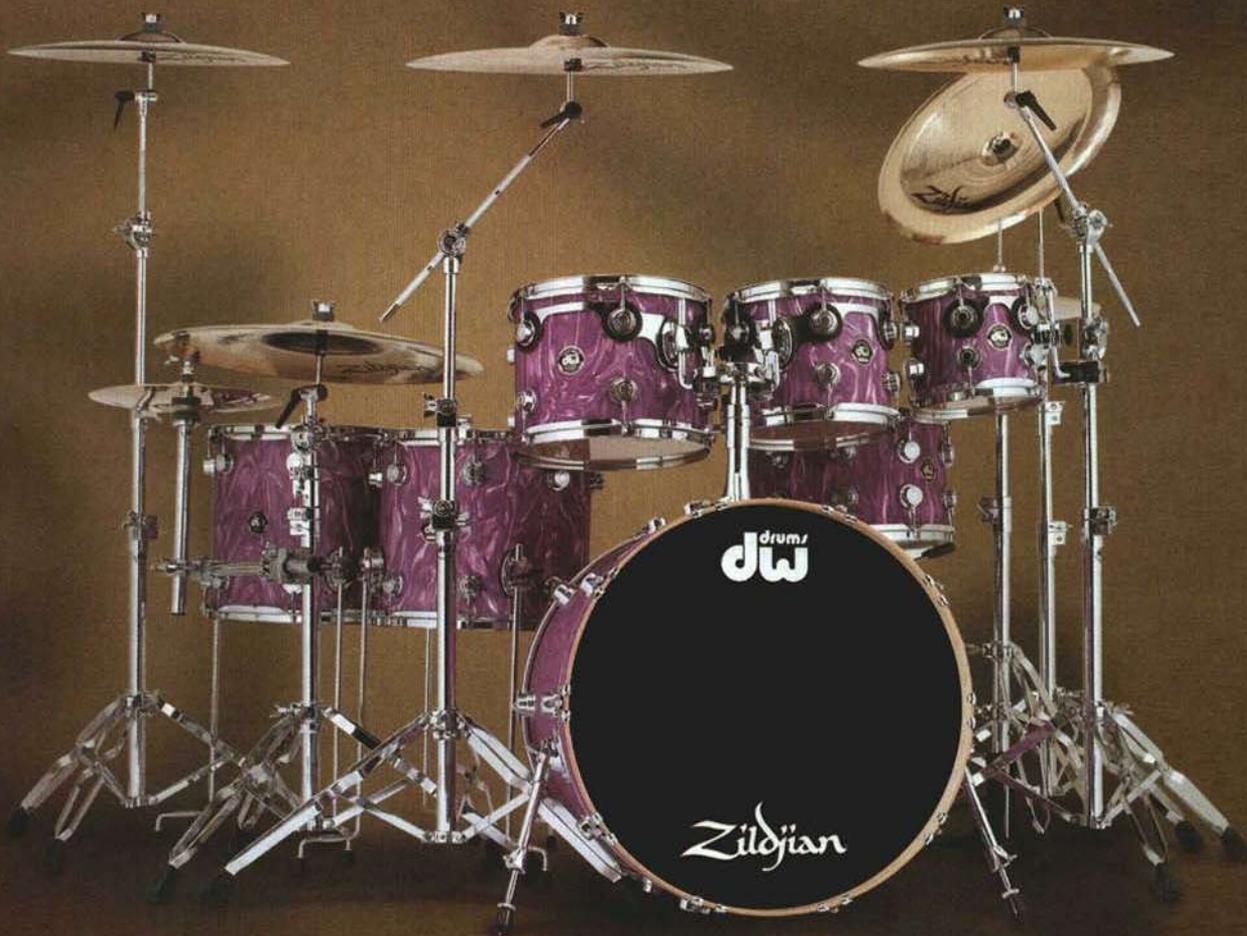
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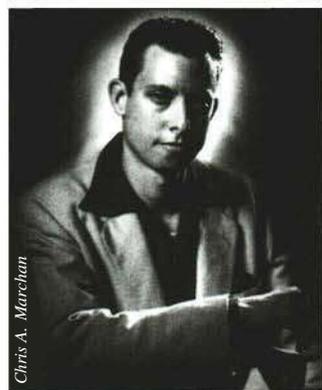
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SWINGIN' IN A MODERN AGE

by Daniel Glass

Making Your Kit Thunder

part 3

In my last article, I focused on some of the classic grooves that helped influence the swing drummers of today. Technique, however, is only one piece of the swing puzzle facing any serious student. Getting that "classic sound" is another.

The ideal way to achieve the booming thunder heard on "Sing, Sing, Sing" and other swing classics would be to record at Hollywood's fabled Capitol Studios, using a 1937 *Radio King* kit, calfskin heads, old *K Zildjians*, and one Neumann tube mic' suspended overhead. Obviously, this scenario is hardly feasible for most of us. But there are some tricks that can be utilized to approximate the retro sound, regardless of the kit being played.

The Drums

Let's begin with the foundation of your kit: the bass drum. Remember, the idea is to get more of a tone than just a dull "thup." A rounder sound will help you achieve the pulsating feel needed to drive the band. Instead of stuffing the bass drum full of heavy padding, experiment with an external muffler, or try placing a strip of felt flush against the batter head, held in place between the hoop and bearing edge.

Several companies make heads with a concentric felt strip already attached, so that the continuity of your bearing edge is not interrupted. If you want your "four on the floor" to have a lighter, more muted tone, try using an all-felt beater on your pedal, and stick a small piece of moleskin at the point where the beater contacts the batter head.

Tone

To get the maximum tone from your drums, mount them so that there are no "arms" poking into any shell (especially the kick drum). Any sort of obstruction will break the natural flow of air created by your stroke, thereby distorting and/or muting the drum's true sound. Try to find an alternative to mounting the floor tom on legs—this will make a huge difference in the amount of sound you can get out of the drum, especially with a vintage kit. If you don't believe me, check for yourself by hitting the tom nor-

mally, then lifting it off the floor and hitting it again. You'll definitely notice a difference. I use a RIMS floor tom basket, which allows the drum to sit on the floor but still be suspended.

If you're a vintage player, you may have noticed that some old drums seem to have a dull or flat tone, no matter what type of heads or tuning you apply. In many cases, having your bearing edges re-cut will solve the problem easily and fairly cheaply (usually around \$60 per edge). Reshaping the edges can also be used to change the timbre of your toms, which will help you to get more of the "boomy" tone associated with swing.

Head Selection

Another authentic means of replicating the old swing sound is through the use of real calfskin heads. Calfskins produce a rich, sonorous tone and have that great "vintage look."

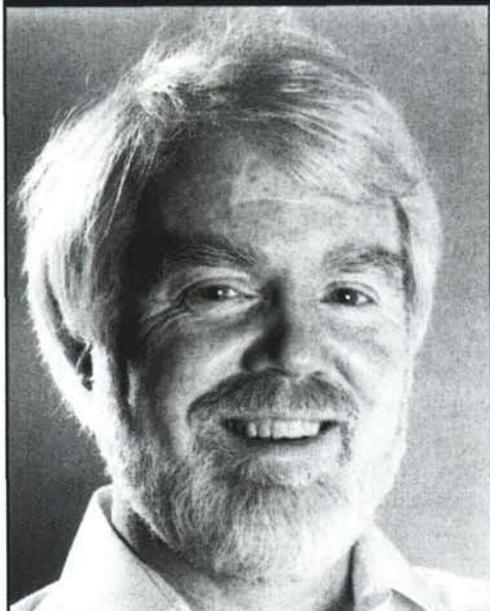
Although many drummers swear by them, trying to use these heads on a regular basis may turn into more of a headache than it's worth, especially if you spend significant time on the road. Climate changes often force constant retuning, and the calfskins may not be able to withstand the punishment dished out in today's high-volume performance situations.

Calfskins also cost more than plastic heads, and regular use could start to take a serious bite out of your pocketbook. Several companies make very good calfskin facsimiles, my favorite being the *American* and *Classic Vintage* series produced by Aquarian Accessories. If you insist on giving the real thing a try, you can order through Rebeats Vintage Drum Products (www.rebeats.com).

Studio Tips

When you're in the studio, experiment with general room mic's in addition to (or instead of) placing a mic' on each drum. This is how drums were recorded pre-1960, and it will provide you with that natural sense of reverb inherent in older recordings. Many of the new swing and rockabilly bands (*Squirrel Nut Zippers* and *Big Sandy* are two good examples) have relied extensively on this

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technique in order to capture an authentic "retro" feeling. But using a combination of miking techniques will give you more ability to control the sound of the final product.

On Royal Crown Revue's version of "Topsy" (from the *Mugzy's Move* disc), we recorded the drums using a combination of techniques. Although each component of the kit can be heard

grooves are not easily accessible, but then again learning how to listen to old recordings can be just as important as imitating them.

In the same way that we work out to get in shape, we must also train and discipline our listening skills. Many classic recordings were made with just one or two mic's, so listen the way you would at a live show, where you're forced to pick out what the

"The best way to truly hone in on the right sound is by listening to recordings of Krupa, Rich, Jo Jones, and the other cats—not just once, but repeatedly."

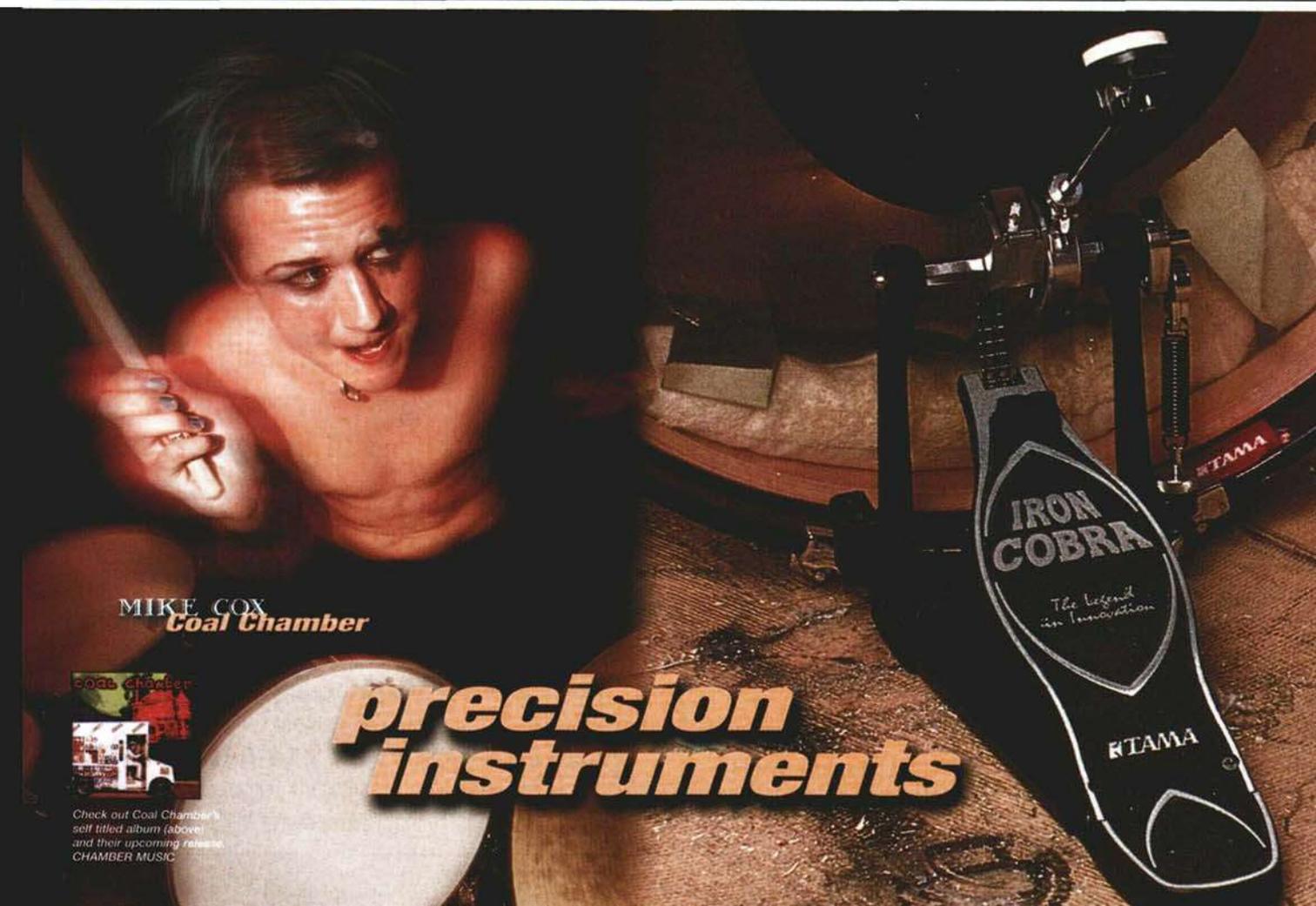
clearly, the final mix relied heavily on the sound of the room, giving the kick and toms a "larger than life" reverb and turning the cymbal crashes into explosions of color.

Learning To Listen

The *best* way to truly hone in on the right sound is by listening to recordings of Krupa, Rich, Jo Jones, and the other cats—not just once, but repeatedly. Many drummers complain that it's too difficult to discern exactly what's being played on records from the '30s and '40s. They say that other than an occasional rimshot or crash, the patterns are lost to the listener. Granted, these

drummer's doing from the audience. It's a more organic approach to listening, but you will definitely start to pick out some of the kick, hi-hat, and tom patterns we've been talking about. Trust me on this one. Remember, the great drummers of the '60s and '70s, from Tony Williams to John Bonham, were raised on "poorly" recorded records, and those guys turned out to be a pretty proficient lot.

We "modems" also have another advantage in our listening journey. The advent of digital technology (CDs) has allowed masterpieces like Benny Goodman's 1937 Carnegie Hall concert or Duke Ellington's 1953 Newport Jazz Festival appearance to be



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more "drum-accessible" than ever. Many wonderful drum transcription books now exist, explaining the styles of swing's most notable players, and newly released video compilations can help unravel other technical mysteries presented by questionable recordings. With a little digging around, you can find more recent recordings of the masters playing their greatest hits. For example, a PBS swing special from 1972 features, among other things, a jam between Duke Ellington and Count Basie, plus a reunion of Benny Goodman's original quartet, all in full fidelity.

Of course, the more I actually play the music, the more I understand what to listen for, what the older cats were playing, and how they made it sound that way. Allow your cumulative understanding as a drummer to fill in what your ears don't immediately pick up. Eventually the old records will become like good friends, and you'll probably find yourself trying to hunt down some 1937 *Radio Kings*. (Good luck!)

In my next article, "Playin' In The Band," I'll offer some suggestions for coping with the different sections of a big (or even little) band.

Daniel Glass spends most of his time pounding out the gospel of swing with Royal Crown Revue. When not on the road with RCR, he lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two cats.



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Hauling A Drumset

by Pat O'Connell

Drummers spend about a quarter of their time packing, hauling, and setting up their equipment. I know we all have different sizes and configurations of sets, but at the very least we all haul a bass drum, toms, a snare drum, cymbals, and hardware. Many drummers must also deal with sound gear as well. With this in mind, here's a method I devised for my own use. The key to the system's success is the use

of components—transporter, cases, and bags—that fit and work together in the most efficient manner possible.

The first and most important part of my system is a handcart. With it, I can navigate hotels and other situations where the stage is quite a distance from the unloading area, without wearing myself out. There are several handcart designs on the market. My personal cart has a long tongue that

folds out and allows me to load much more on it than a standard handtruck. It also comes equipped with a "stair-climber" on the back, which allows me to move up and down flights of stairs fairly smoothly (photo 1).

The next component of my system is a trap case. Rather than employing any ready-made case, I decided to have a fiberboard case custom-made strictly for my hardware. The case I designed fits between the tubing on my handtruck and actually locks in place, creating a stable platform on which I can stack additional gear.

My cymbal case is a holdover from my high school years, and I still believe it's the best design for transporting cymbals. My 20" ride fits into this case, and I also store my hi-hat cymbals in there—with the clutch still attached. This case

fits against the back of the cart.

Next up, I load my bass drum atop the trap case. I use a soft cover to keep the weight down, but a hard case should work just as well.

My drum rug goes on next. What follows depends on the requirements for the job. Many times I feel comfortable just using bass, snare, and cymbals. If that's the case, I put my snare drum on the top of my cart stack (along with my stick bag), and off I go (photo 2). I can get to the gig in only one trip from the car, and I'm able to go up and down stairs or through city streets as needed. If I really need a tomtom, I add it to the top of the load as shown (photo 3).



This system gives me more flexibility over more conditions than any other I've seen. Hopefully what I've arrived at will make loading in and out easier and faster for you as well.



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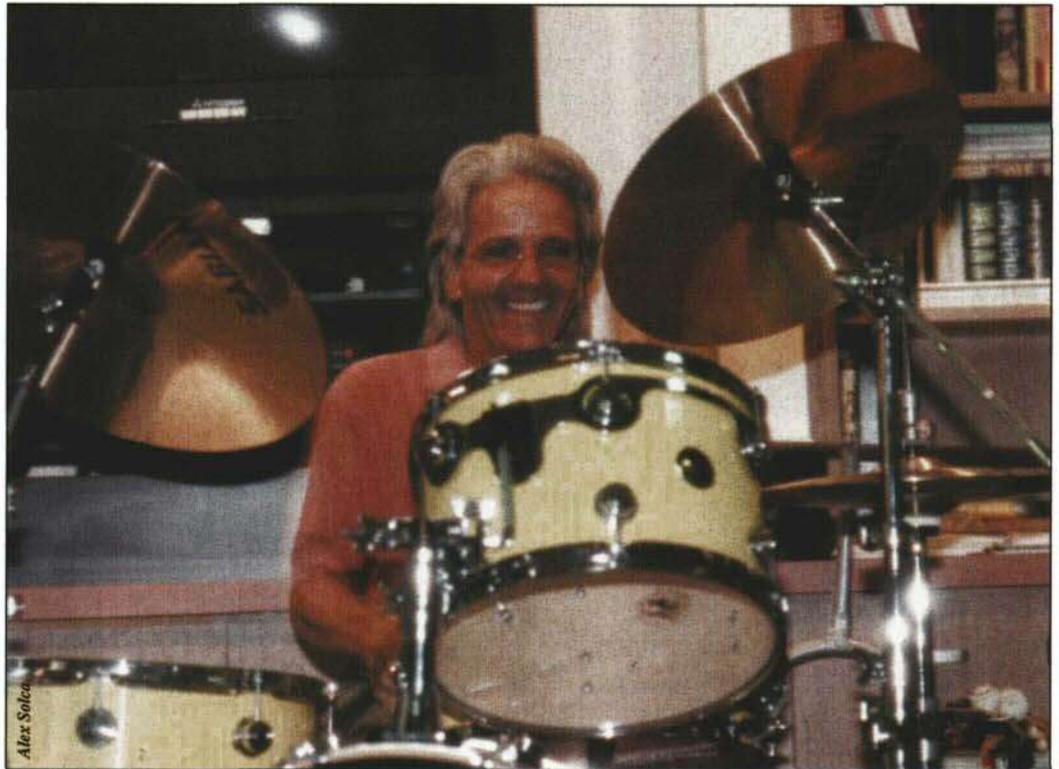
by Robyn Flans

The rec room of the Rehabilitation Institute at Santa Barbara was moving with an energy all its own. It wasn't overly physical; some of the inhabitants were in wheelchairs and could barely move at all. It was a joyfulness and purposefulness, a spiritual energy that ricocheted through the room like a bolt of lightning. Watching the patients interact—some choosing an instrument, others willingly being handed one—it was impossible to miss the power of music. Not just the *sound* of the music, but the healing as a result of making it. The Rehab Rhythm Rockers were up front leading the group, with Eddie Tuduri on drums. This was Eddie's brainchild, born out of his own life-altering experiences.

On September 6, 1997, Tuduri's life forever changed. The day began normally at the beach in Carpinteria, California. Eddie planned a calm day of body surfing, but there was something else in store. A powerful wave forced him to the ocean floor and broke his neck, leaving him paralyzed and unable to signal for help. Had he not been noticed, Eddie would have drowned.

Paralysis for anyone is a tragic state. But for someone who has used his hands and legs to do that which he loves most in life—and make a living as well—paralysis is unfathomable. And yet, these were the circumstances that this drummer, who has played with such artists as Dobie Gray, The Beach Boys, Rick Nelson & The Stone Canyon Band, Del Shannon, Dwight Yoakam, Freddy Fender, Charlie Rich, Johnny Rivers, and Jim Messina, had to face head-on or perish.

After surgery and hospitalization, Eddie was sent to the Rehabilitation Institute at Santa Barbara, California. He immediately began trying to grip a pair of sticks and hit a practice pad. Rather than wait for complaints from the neighboring patients, Eddie coerced them to join in, and his first drum circle was born.



He recruited his roommate, Ted, who was recuperating from a motorcycle accident and was suffering from pancreatic cancer, as well as Edith, who was also recovering from spine surgery. Oskar, the ward technician, joined in, and for Eddie, both solution and purpose were shaped. The attempt at playing gave his extremities a workout, and after seeing how it provided motivation for the other patients, he recognized its true value. They say necessity is the mother of invention. It was Eddie's need that yielded what became known as The Rehab Rhythm Rockers and rhythm therapy.

"Rhythm therapy at the Rehabilitation Institute strives for group and individual participation during our half-hour session twice a week," Eddie explains. "The Institute's patients are those with head or spine trauma, and/or serious acute injuries. Group size can vary from two to six patients, but four to six seems best.

"Rhythm therapy is fun yet demanding work for the patient. It provides an immediate feeling of self-worth, accomplishment, and self-esteem. Rhythm serves as a catalyst for channeling creativity in a social setting, while achieving specified individual and group treatment goals. Patients can find the means to express feelings and

ideas in a rhythmic structure, where they cannot fail. I'm not an expert on the physical-therapy benefits, but patients do use their extremities that have been affected."

Tuduri is adamant that he is in no way a therapist. "As drummers and volunteers, we provide the rhythm, not the therapy," he says. "We are not licensed therapists and do not profess to be. The idea is to enlist therapists and volunteers together for this program."

Still, Tuduri is hopeful that one day professional musicians would be paid for their assistance in such a program. But the necessary funding will take time. Eddie has been a volunteer since his accident, and he hopes others will give of their time and talents as

another beneficial option. "Patients come together as a group, so it facilitates socialization," she says. "And of course, it's always exciting to make music together. We'll set up the class so people have a lot of opportunities for success. We'll start them on instruments we know they won't have trouble playing. Then we'll graduate them to more difficult instruments and more difficult tasks. It's an opportunity for building self-esteem, because they can see their progress. Then they can take what they've learned and carry it over into the larger situation when the band comes to play.

"With regard to the therapy portion of it, I'm aware of what rehabilitation goals the patients need to address," Whaley contin-

"It's important that people get the help that they need. We are the facilitators of the *rhythm* in 'rhythm therapy.'"

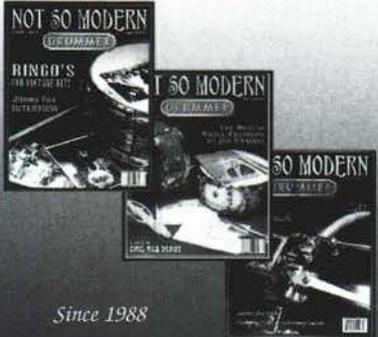
well. "At present, this cannot be about profit," he says. "It has to be about compassion. It's just important that people get the help they need. We are the facilitators of the *rhythm* in 'rhythm therapy.' The therapist is facilitating the *therapy*."

Certified therapeutic recreation specialist Libby Whaley, who is director of therapeutic recreation at the Rehab Institute at Santa Barbara, is qualified to comment on the therapeutic benefits of rhythm therapy. In addition to developing such activities as horticulture therapy, aquatic therapy, and adaptive sports, Whaley has been instrumental in the facility's recognition of rhythm therapy as

well. "Perhaps they need to work on an upper extremity, or on their sitting balance, or on cognitive or visual skills. The program also helps them follow directions and work on their attention skills. Can they stop and start with the appropriate cues? Can they keep with the rhythm and follow direction? A patient might be working on simply doing a basic greeting. That may sound very elementary, but these are important goals for some of the patients."

Eddie Tuduri comments, "The best thing I see happen is not even about drumming. Many of the folks who have had brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, or strokes give up. The short-term

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benefit is to get them to use the drums in the drum circle as a catalyst to reintegrate them socially—or to simply make them laugh or tell stories and come out of their shell. It's about coming back—physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. The drums are a catalyst for that."

Tuduri has countless stories of success. One in particular involved an eight-year-old boy named Mario. "He arrived at the hospital just days after I did," Eddie recalls. "He apparently came home from school one day complaining of headaches, numbness, and blurred vision. His mom rushed him to the hospital, where he was diagnosed as having a brain aneurysm. Emergency surgery saved him, and he came to our Rehab. The little guy had lost almost all function in the right side of his body, and he was in considerable pain. Much to my good fortune, Mario was a drummer, and he fit into our therapy group very well. Not surprisingly, not everyone in our group played the various instruments in time. Mario did—and very well. The pain kept him from being a happy camper all of the time, but the time he spent with us left him in high spirits. The doctors needed Mario to stand up as much as possible to retrain his nerve impulses back to normal activity. We all watched one day as they basically forced him to stand up during one of our therapy sessions. We literally cried with Mario as he was helped out of his wheelchair. I don't know when I've ever felt someone else's pain as deeply as I did that day.

"The following day we witnessed something as close to a miracle as anything I've seen in this life. Mario was sitting next to me in his wheelchair. I was playing drums and he was playing a shaker. When they asked him to stand this time, he adamantly refused. He started screaming as he maintained a death grip on his wheelchair. There was no way he was getting up today! I think the whole room felt relief, because none of us really wanted to witness that torture again, necessary or not. The tech, Caesar, remained



composed throughout this ordeal. He asked me to turn around as he moved Mario into position directly across from me in the room. He told Mario that if he wanted to play with me, he'd have to stand up! I started playing a little pocket groove on the conga, and I just hoped for a good response—along with everyone else in the room. Mario looked at me with a gleam in his eye that I hadn't seen before, and then he stood up and played along. No crying, no hesitation. He just stood up and started playing."

The evidence of positive response to this therapy led to expansion. Tuduri enlisted the help of some more musicians to create The Rehab Rhythm Rockers. With the help of many musical-instrument manufacturers, Eddie was able to furnish each patient with some kind of instrument—including drums, shakers, maracas, congas, bongos, tambourines, cowbells, and percussion eggs—so the patients could join in the music-making. It became a joyous outlet that many of the patients looked forward to.

After a month, Tuduri was released from the hospital. But he

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has continued with Whaley in working with the patients. The Rehab Rhythm Rockers still perform once a month. Eddie is also striving to bring awareness of rhythm therapy as a viable addition to similar facilities, as well as facilities that help mentally challenged and Alzheimer's patients. The Casablanca Alzheimer's Care facility in Oak View, California stumbled upon Tuduri quite by accident. But Marilyn S. Berman, their sales and marketing director, believes it was fate.

"I was asked to look for entertainment for the Alzheimer's facility," says Berman. "After dropping my son off at school one morning, I happened to be listening to National Public Radio. I heard an

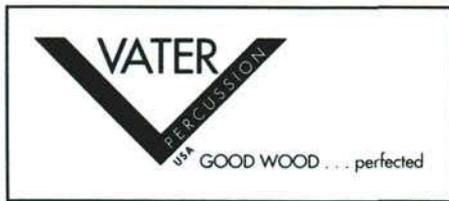
interview with Eddie regarding his work with the Santa Barbara Rehabilitation Institute. I pulled my car off to the side of the road, took down the information, and looked him up immediately.

"Rhythm therapy gives Alzheimer's patients, at various degrees of functioning levels, an opportunity to create music together and to create a feeling of group effort and interaction," Berman continues. "It creates an environment where they can move and even dance." Berman is working to develop similar programs at her facility. "The plan is to break people into groups, depending on their interest and their different levels of ability. Eddie will do specific rhythm activities with them based on their level of functioning.

"Eddie is doing something important, and I'm hopeful that he'll get the funding needed for it," Berman continues. "He's taken a gift and turned it into a life mission in a way that's going to help many people."

"My goal is to get the word out there so that it will foster a volunteer program everywhere," Tuduri says. "I am hoping that eventually there can be a how-to book from the therapist's point of view as well as from the volunteer/drummer's point of view. I'm hoping we can do a video, and that eventually there will be seminars in which I can train other drummers, and the involved therapists can train other therapists so this can be widespread."

Eddie Tuduri is happy to hear any feedback or ideas at etuduri@aol.com.



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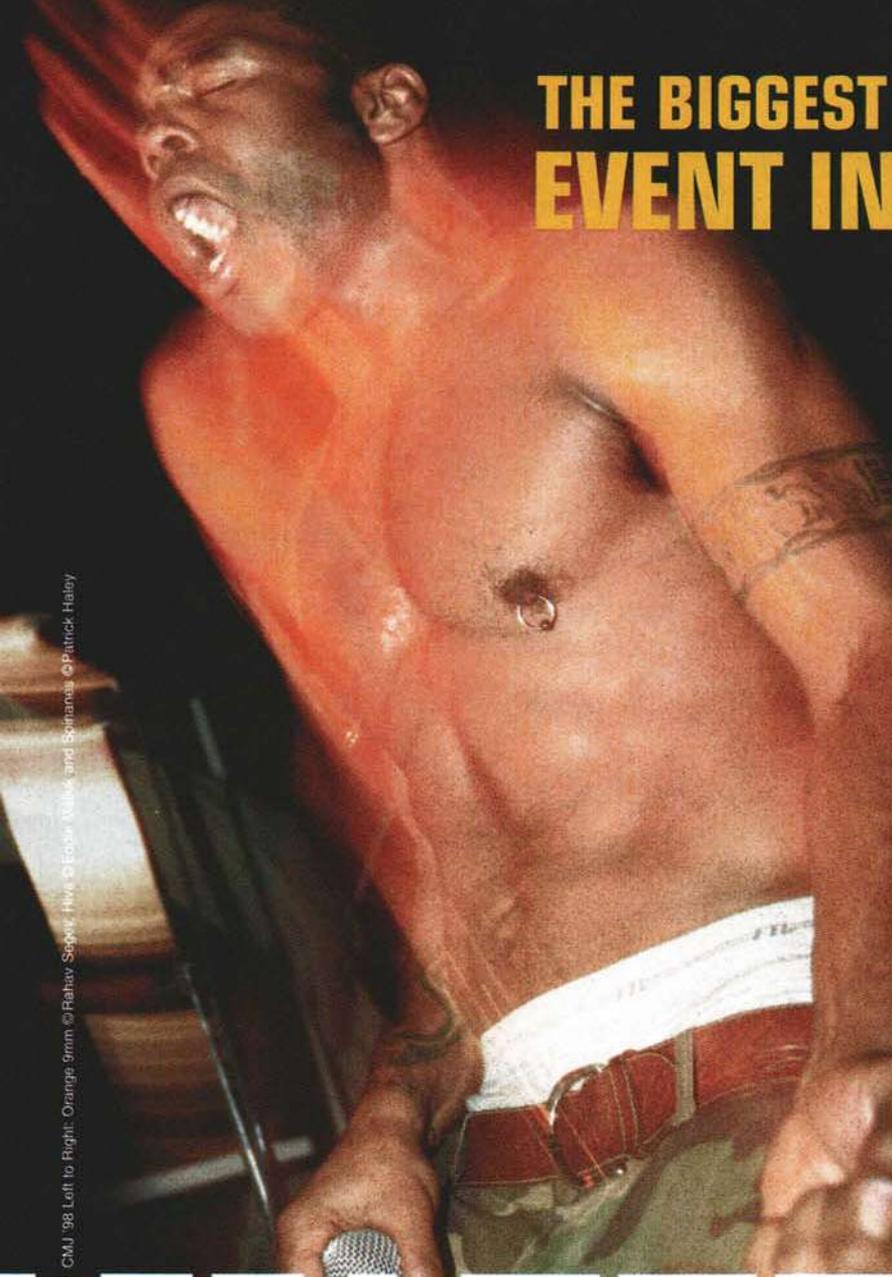
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In Memoriam Alexander "Skip" Spence

Skip Spence, an original member of '60s psychedelic icons Jefferson Airplane, died in April of this year of lung cancer. He was fifty-two.

Born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, Spence moved south to participate in the San Francisco music scene of the '60s. In 1965 he was set to audition as a guitar player with Quicksilver Messenger Service when another local musician, Marty Balin, invited him to play drums in Balin's new band, Jefferson Airplane. Spence had never played drums before, but he was a fast learner. However, he appears only on the Airplane's debut album, *Jefferson Airplane Takes Off*. He left the group in 1966, returned to the guitar, and became a founding member of Moby Grape. While with that group, he casually suggested a new name for some San Francisco compatriots calling themselves Pud. They had greater success with Spence's suggestion: The Doobie Brothers.

Spence fought alcoholism and schizophrenia for most of his life, and at one time was committed to New York's Bellevue Hospital (reportedly after running amok in a recording studio with a fire axe).

Upon his release in 1969, Spence cut a solo album called *Oar*. It was equal parts folk, gospel, country, blues, and psychedelia. Although released on Columbia, it was reportedly one of the lowest-selling items in that company's catalog, but has since become a valued psychedelic collector's item. Sadly, Spence's death came only weeks before the scheduled release of *More Oar*, a CD tribute to Spence including performances by Beck, Robert Plant, Tom Waits, and members of R.E.M.

Darrell Sweet

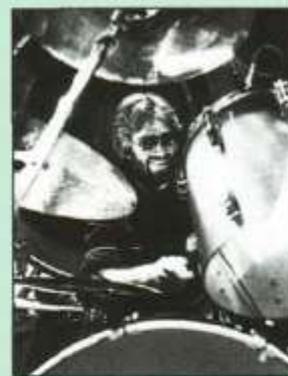
Darrell Sweet, drummer for Scottish rock veterans Nazareth, died on April 30th as the band was embarking on the second leg of a US tour. The band had arrived at the Amphitheater in New Albany, Indiana, when Sweet began feeling ill. Within minutes he went into cardiac arrest. Sweet was rushed to the New Albany

Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He was fifty-one.

Sweet started playing the drums as a child with a Scottish pipe band. The rudimental skills he developed within that style were an element of his playing throughout his career. He joined Nazareth as a teenager in the mid-1960s. In the 1970s, they hit big in the States with "Love Hurts" and "This Flight Tonight" and with albums like *Hair Of The Dog*, *Razamanaz*, and *Expect No Mercy*. When Sweet was profiled in the October 1981 issue of *Modern Drummer* the group had been together for fifteen years, and had established themselves as a major international touring act.

Although sales of Nazareth's recordings waned in the late '80s, the band maintained a strong fan base for their live shows, and continued to tour worldwide through the '90s. Their latest album, *Boogaloo*, was released in North America in January of this year.

Darrell Sweet is survived by his wife, Marion, his son, Michael, and his daughter, Maxine.



Michael Colangelo

Michael Colangelo was killed on April 10 in a tragic automobile accident in New Jersey. The accident also claimed the lives of his mother and aunt. Miraculously, his wife Lynn survived.

Michael was not a "big name" artist. A hard-working drummer, he was happy as long as he was working. In the 1980s Michael played with Mike Riddle & The City Kids. A talented composer, for more than a decade Michael wrote and produced projects with longtime friend Jim Maer. He also gave lessons for over twenty years.

Michael was also a loving husband and the father of two young boys, Joseph and Robert. Contributions and prayers to help his family can be sent to Lynn Colangelo, 212 Oak Neck Road, West blip, NY 11795.

Billy Amendola

MD Announces Staff Promotions And Selects First Reader Advisory Board

The management of *Modern Drummer* recently announced promotions for five key employees of the company.

Associate publisher Isabel Spagnardi, who has been with the company since its inception in 1977, has been named chief operating officer of *MD*. Also in the managerial area, Tracy Kearns, who has twelve years of service with the company, has been named associate publisher.

In the editorial department, Rick Van Horn, who has been with *Modern Drummer* for over fifteen years as managing editor, has been named senior editor. William F. Miller, who has served as features editor for the past nine years and as associate editor for five years prior to that, has been named editorial director. And Adam Budofsky, who has been with *MD* for twelve years as associate editor, has been named managing editor.

"Each of these individuals has contributed a tremendous amount to the success of *Modern Drummer*," states editor/publisher Ron Spagnardi. "We look forward to the continued growth of *MD* under the guidance of these key administrative and editorial personnel."

In related news, *Modern Drummer's* editors recently selected the first fifteen-member Reader Advisory Board, following an over-

whelming response from over one hundred applicants. Final choices were made on the basis of demographics, drumming and educational background, and experience in a wide assortment of musical genres.

Selected to serve on the 1999-2000 Reader Advisory Board are Bob Albright of Laguna Hills, California, Benjamin Arnold of Millersport, Ohio, Josh Cellan of Stoughton, Wisconsin, Roger Cohen of Nanuet, New York, Tom Corea of East Hanover, New Jersey, David Drubin of Miami, Florida, Dana Fitzsimons of Williamsburg, Virginia, Jim King of Wayne, New Jersey, Rick Laus of Carnegie, Pennsylvania, Maury Levine of Birmingham, Alabama, Michael Powers of Wakefield, Massachusetts, Michael Reilly of King Of Prussia, Pennsylvania, Richard Rychel of Denver, Colorado, Shawn Stewart of Kailua, Hawaii, and Andy Weis of Monterey, California.

Modern Drummer extends its congratulations to the members of this year's Board, and offers its sincere thanks to the many readers who applied. MD's second fifteen-member Reader Advisory Board will be selected next year.

Indy Quickies

Kaman Music Corporation, whose companies include Gibraltar Hardware and Toca Percussion, held their annual charity golf tournament on June 28. Proceeds from the tournament will be donated to the Fidelco Guide Dog Foundation and The Hole In The Wall Gang Camp. Fidelco is New England's only nonprofit breeding

and training center of guide dogs for the blind. It was founded by Charles H. Kaman. The Hole In The Wall Gang Camp, founded by Paul Newman, is a nonprofit residential summer camp for children with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses.

In related news, **Kim Graham** has been chosen to head up Kaman's percussion artist relations operations and oversee the distribution of information as it pertains to products and endorsees. Graham has worked for Kaman for thirteen years, and most recently held the position of marketing coordinator.

Roland has relocated their US corporate headquarters to 5100 So. Eastern Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90040-2938, tel: (323) 890-3700, fax: (323) 890-3701. An additional mailing address is PO Box 910921, Los Angeles, CA 90091-0921.

Sam Ash Music, who recently celebrated entry of their seventy-fifth year in the retail musical-instrument business, have signed a contract to acquire the assets of the multi-million-dollar Thoroughbred Music chain. Ash will take over operation of all Thoroughbred locations, including stores in Clearwater, Tampa, Sarasota, and Orlando, Florida, as well as their newest 35,000-square-foot facility in Nashville, Tennessee. The stores will be operated as Sam Ash Music locations.

The first Studio Recording Techniques class at **Los Angeles Music Academy** recently completed their session. Under the tutelage of studio great **John "JR" Robinson**, the students were taught specific techniques relative to their instruments, along with how to interact with the engineer, other musicians, and producer. Publishing and copyrighting was discussed, and much time was

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devoted to hands-on aspects of the recording studio environment. The culmination was a CD of the students' work, which was recorded at LA's Entourage Studios and co-produced by Robinson and LAMA education director (and notable drummer) Mike Shapiro.

Pintech Electronic Percussion has moved. Their current address is 126A McDougall Court, Greenville, SC 29607, tel: (800) 445-0506 or (864) 288-1500, fax: (864) 288-1551, email: play@edrums.com, Web: www.edrums.com.

AMP3.com, reportedly the "fastest growing new MP3 site on the Web," has announced the launch of the "biggest music star search of all time." The site will bestow a recording contract and a \$1 million cash prize to currently unknown artists who have music on AMP3.com.

"There's so much good music out there, and so much of it goes unheard," says AMP3.com president Michael Sharp. "I feel that because of the Internet we need to create new music stars in a new way. I want to discover the music star of tomorrow; that's why I've decided on this contest to reward in a big way the hard work these artists put into their music." For more details on the contest, surf over to www.AMP3.com.

Ian Croft has been named the new international artist relations manager for **Sonor Drums**. He will manage all Sonor artists world-wide. Ian can be reached at Sonor's international artist relations office in England at tel: (44) 01305 261 257, or fax: (44) 01305 263 131.

Chris Brady & Company has set up a new Web site at www.bradydrums.com. Along with the Brady philosophy of drum design, the site covers current product range, including photos of

products and available finishes. A frequently updated "What's New" section keeps drummers apprised of all the latest happenings. There is also quick access to join the Brady mailing list and contact the company and their worldwide representatives and dealers.

The Georgia Music Hall Of Fame has elected **Dinah Gretsch** (Gretsch Drums) as its chairperson. The board oversees a museum promoting the history of music and the activities of musicians from the state of Georgia. In related news, the Gretsch company recently donated to the Hall Of Fame the last Gretsch drumkit that Tony Williams had owned and toured with.

Zildjian recently donated an exclusive set of cymbals to the music program at the Ronald McDonald House of New York. The house serves children with cancer (and their families). The music program is a way for them to release their tension, to learn, and to communicate with each other.

The new address for **L.T. Lug Lock**, makers of the *Beat Bug* and *Gig Rug*, is PO Box 74, Williamsville, NY 14231-0074.

Endorser News

D'Amico Drums artists now include **Brad Hargreaves** (Third Eye Blind), **Jim Bogios** (Sheryl Crow), **Wally Schnalle**, and **Dawn Richardson**.

Cuban percussion star **Fernando Pina** and **Amadito Valdes** are playing Meinl percussion. Nashville studio/touring drummers **Tom Williams**, **Carl Albrecht**, **Mike Childers**, and **Spence Smith** are playing Meinl cymbals.

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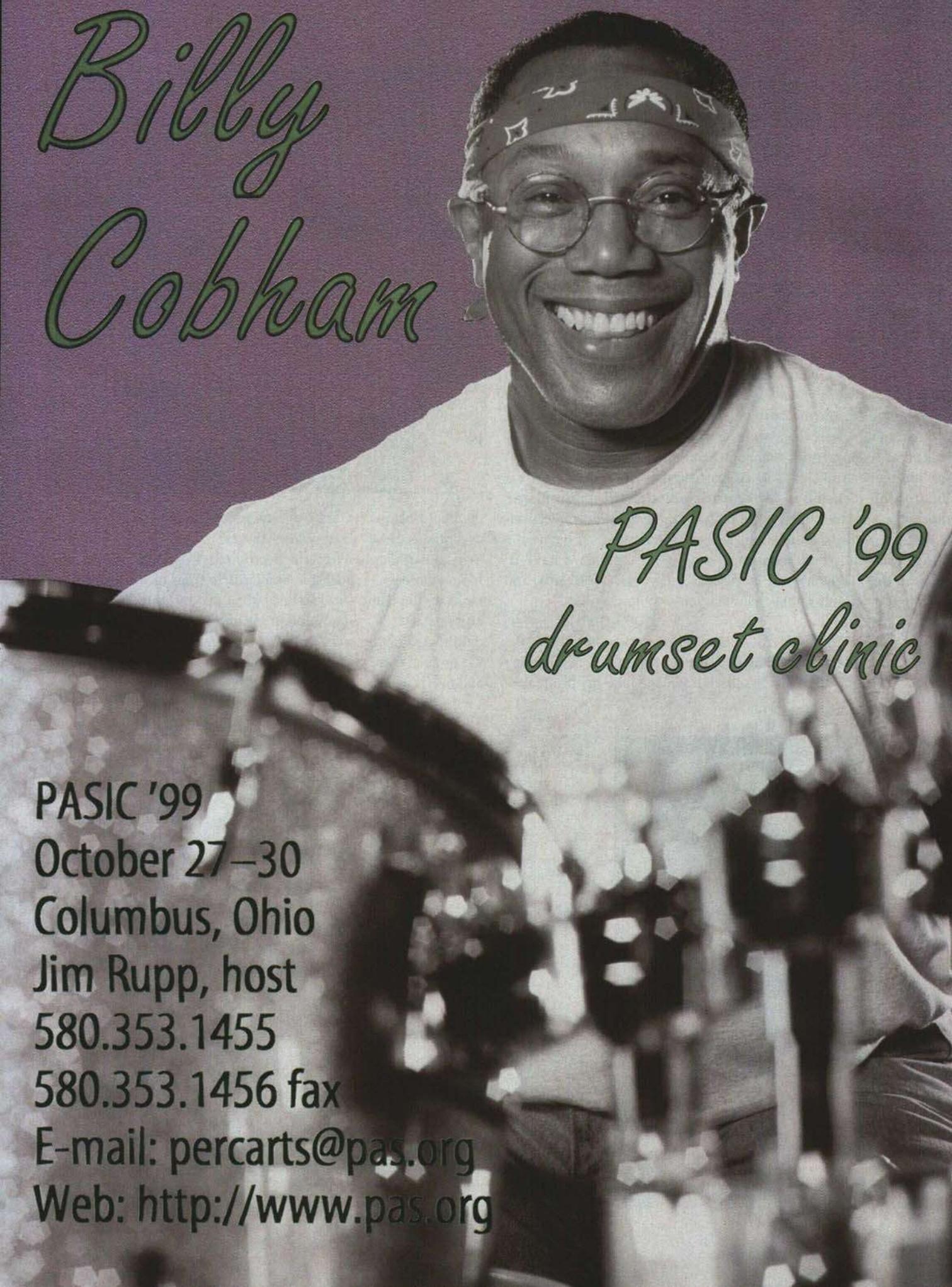
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ADVERTISER INDEX

ADVERTISER	PAGE NUMBER			
AHEAD/Flix Tips/Big Bang Dist	75,113	Gretsch	124	Pintech Electronic Percussion
A.J.'s Pro Percussion	118	Grover Pro Percussion	149	Plastics America
Aquarian	147	Hollywood Custom & Vintage	163	Pork Pie Percussion
Arbiter	30	HQ Percussion Products	62,161	Precision Drum Co
Atlanta Pro Percussion	110	Humes & Berg	73	Premier
Audix	76	Impact	58	Pro-Mark
Ayotte Drums	91	Interstate Musician Supply	62	Regal Tip
Beato	24	Investor	154	Remo
Boom Theory	45	Island Drum	141	Rhythm Tech
Bosphorus Cymbals	56	J&J Custom Drums	156	R.I.M.S.
Cannon Percussion	83,85	Joe Morello Productions	141	RTom
C.K. Productions	161	JohnnyraBB Drumsticks	31	Sabian
Clear-Sonic Mfg.	154	KAT (Alternate Mode)	161	Sam Barnard Drum Covering
CMJ	157	King Kong Kases	160	Sonor
D'Amico	160	KIT Tools	59	Sound Check Music
Dixon	57	K&K Sound Systems	153	Sunlite
Drummers Collective	114	Latin Percussion	25,115	Tama
Drum Center of Lexington	154	Ludwig	Inside Front Cover	Taos Drums
Drum Pad	141	Magstar	161	Toca
DrumPike	142	Mapex	2,70/71	Tony Ractiatti
Drums On Sale	161	MD Drum Instructors Only	155	Tosco Cymbals
Drumspan	160	MD Library	102/103,157	Tribes Drums
Drum Supply	151	MD Subscriptions	90	Turkish Cymbals
Drummers Wanted	141	Meinl Cymbals	9	UniGrip 2000
Drum World	153	MusiCares	124	Vater Percussion
Drums In The Wind	162	Musician's Friend	138	VeriSonic
Evans Products	1	Musicians Institute	88	Waddell's Drum Center
Drum Tech	156	Music Tech	159	Warner Brothers/Note Music
Drum Workshop	21,23,111,132	Noble & Cooley	124	Westheimer
Vic Firth, Inc.	46/47,72	Not So Modern Drummer	153	West LA Music
Fork's Drum Closet	141	Paiste	15,60,74,92	XL Specialty
Gibraltar	139	Pearl Corporation	12/13,130-137,Inside	Yamaha
G K Music	160	Percussion Art's Society	Back Cover	Zildjian



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Drummer: Matt Chamberlain
Studio: Phase I, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada
Artist: Chantal Kreviazuk

Inside Track is a new MD department that takes a quick look at a recent recording session and what the drummer had to do to make it happen. (Inside Track will alternate monthly with Drumkit Of The Month.)

To record Canadian singer Chantal Kreviazuk's second Columbia release, young studio ace Matt Chamberlain holed up for two weeks in a suburban Toronto studio. The afternoon *Modern Drummer* dropped by, he was switching gears, working on a song that producer Jay Joyce was tailoring for television's *Dawson's Creek*.

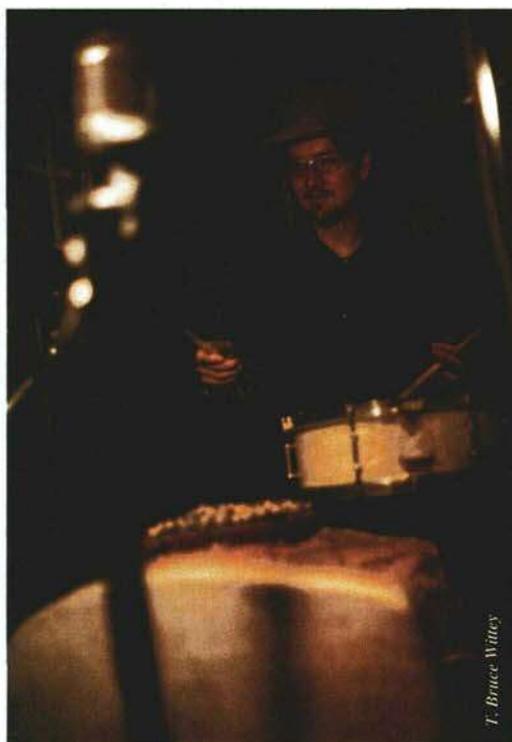
Meanwhile, on the rest of Kreviazuk's album, lyrics and arrangements were in a state of flux. Matt explains his role: "Chantal is looking for something unique—something like I did on the Fiona Apple or Tori Amos records, where the drums are interesting to listen to—where it's not straight-up drumset." Spread around the studio big room was an Ayotte kit, an electronic setup with pads, and various shakers and rattlers. "If we need a drumset sound for the chorus," says Matt, "then we have it. Maybe the electronic kit works for the verse. We'll mix and match. It's definitely not something you'd try to play live."

Inside Scoop: In an anteroom between the open studio and the control room, Matt placed his lumpy Taos bass drum, augmenting it with a snare of the same brand, or a vintage tube-lug drum as in



the photo below. By the way, the mic' you see was the only one used in this closet-sized space. Matt explains: "The engineer, Rick Will, uses this old Western Electric 639A dynamic ribbon mic'. It's a "birdcage" model that he places in front of the kit, where it picks up the entire set. It sounds great just by itself, but when the music starts, it *still* sounds great *and* retains the low end. He didn't need to compress it; it went straight to tape!" Elsewhere on the project, there was plenty of conventional miking—close mic's and overheads.

T. Bruce Wittet



T. Bruce Wittet

Session Gear

Drums: Ayotte WoodHoop/Taos/Roland

- 16x22 bass drum, 9x12 tom, 16x16 floor tom
- various snare drums, including Ayotte, Ayotte/Keplinger, Taos, and vintage
- Taos bass drum (19x21), Taos 14" snare, foot-pedal-controlled talking drum
- electronic drums: Roland V-Drums through Fender Twin Reverb amp (miked), "mutated" with guitar effects pedals

Cymbals: Sabian

- various rides; main model was a 20" Duo. (18" Duo with Taos kit)
- 14" Duo hats (10" splash cymbals used as hi-hats for Taos kit)
- various crash cymbals, depending on song, mainly from HH series
- various "effect" and vintage cymbals

Heads & Sticks

- Remo Ambassadors, coated batter, clear bottoms on snare and toms. Powerstroke 3 on kick.
- Pro-Mark 5A wood- and nylon-tip. Lately Matt has been experimenting with vintage lightweight sticks. "You can play dynamically," he says, "and get really cool drum and cymbal sounds with them."

Tuning & Approach

- Moderate tensioning of drumheads all around. Natural, "organic" approach, avoiding extremes.



Jimmy DeGrasso

talks about

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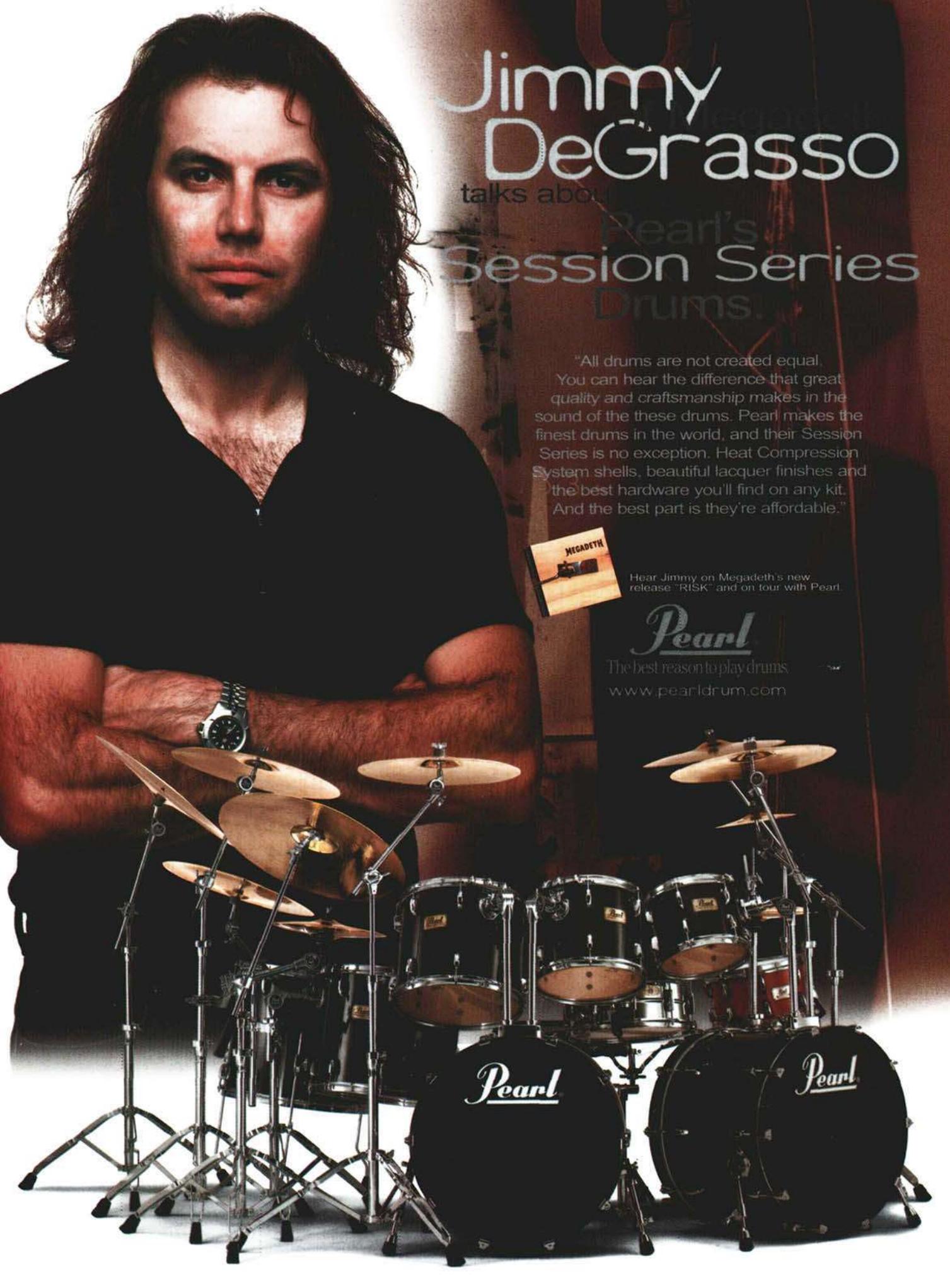


Hear Jimmy on Megadeth's new release "RISK" and on tour with Pearl.

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