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June 2000

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JAPANESE PHENOM

# AKIRA JIMBO



REFLECTIONS WITH  
**SIMON PHILLIPS**

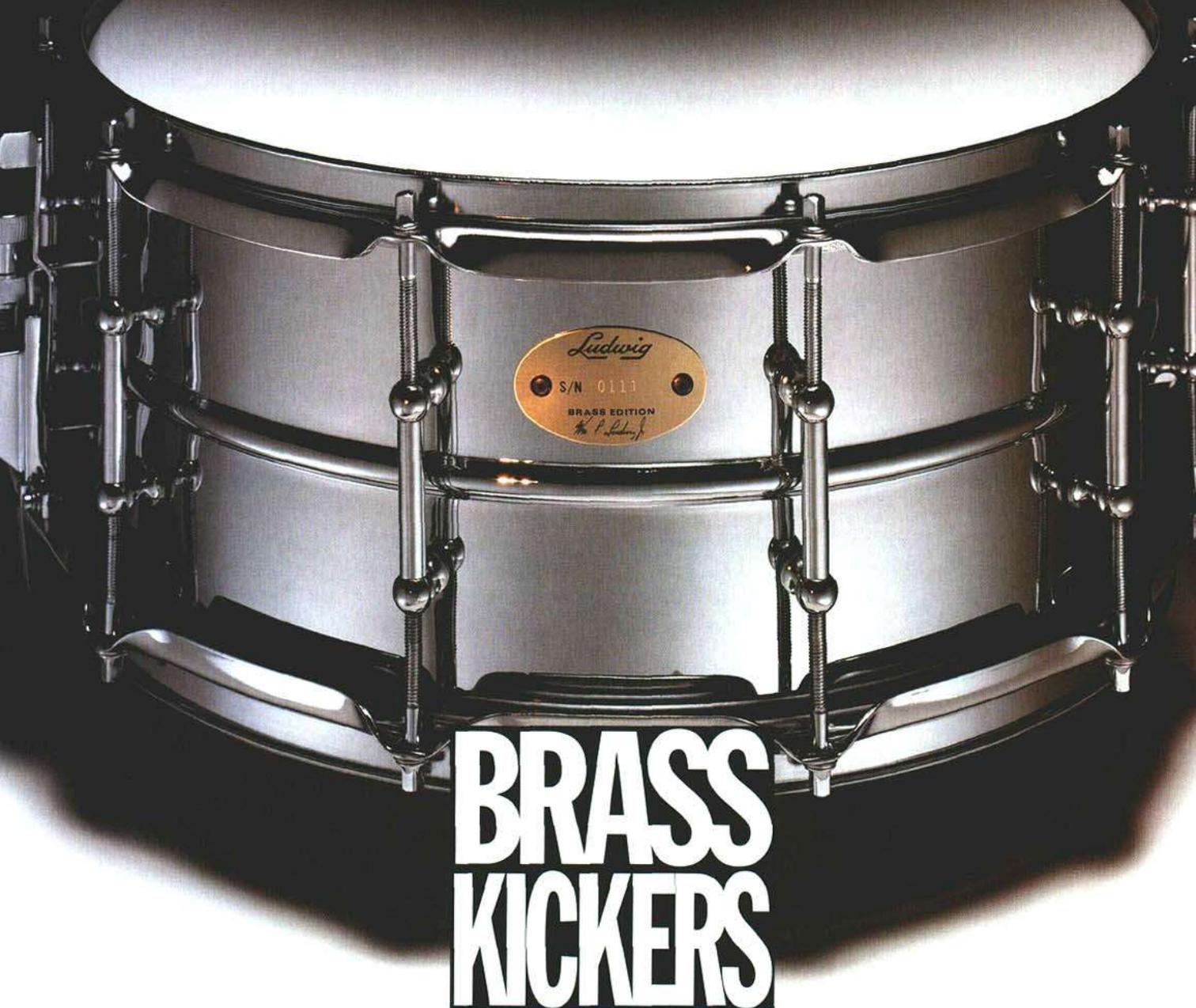
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*-Giovanni Hidalgo*



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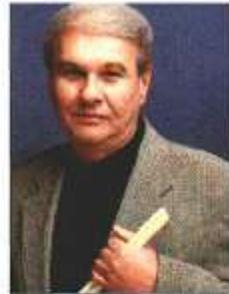
## MD GIVEAWAY

Win Gregg Bissonette's *Submarine* setup including a Mapex kit, Zildjian cymbals, and other great gear from LP, DW, Remo, Vic Firth, XL Specialty Percussion, and Favored Nations Records.

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# On Time

One of the things my wife and I enjoy doing on weekends is going out to hear live music. After so many years working the club circuit, it's nice to be able to spend an evening on the other side of the bandstand. It also gives me an opportunity to check out some of the groups that regularly perform in our area, and quietly observe the local drumming talent.

Unfortunately, though most of the drummers I'm hearing nowadays are quite proficient technically, lately I've noticed a serious lack of concern for good *time* playing among the younger players on the club scene. In fact, I wish I had a nickel for every time I heard a ballad that gradually got slower or faster, or an uptempo tune that either bogged down like a freight train or took off into the stratosphere. Sorry, guys, but there's simply *no* excuse for this. Not only is bad time extremely unprofessional, it also creates a problem for the rest of the band. It can also be more than a simple annoyance for a room full of dancers.

And it's the fastest way to lose your credibility as a good player.

Maybe I'm from the old school, but as a young student I clearly recall my teachers emphasizing the fact that before the flashy solos, the impressive fills, and the cute licks, my primary job was *to keep solid time*. That was my responsibility, first and foremost. Somehow this doesn't seem to be as important a concern among some of the young players I'm hearing.

Let me simply restate what's been said by so many players hundreds of times in this magazine: The fastest chops, the most blazing solos, and the funkier fills in the world will *never* compensate for a drummer who cannot play with a solid groove and good time. Sure, we all know that everyone in the band is also responsible and needs to be conscious of the time. But rest assured, whenever the time wavers one way or the other, the finger will almost always be pointed at *you*.

Over the years, this subject has been

somewhat ignored in drum books. However, two new texts (both of which have been favorably reviewed in *MD*) have recently appeared: *Time And Drumming* by Lome Entress, and *The Solid Time Toolkit* by Ken Meyers, both published by Mel Bay. Both of these excellent books deal with the subject in considerable depth. They also offer a wealth of ideas and exercises that can help every drummer improve in this area. For further immediate thoughts on the subject and some helpful tips, see John Riley's "Time Matters" article in this month's *Jazz Drummers' Workshop*.

I think it's crucial that we never lose sight of why we're up on that bandstand in the first place, and the essential responsibility we have to our fellow musicians and the audience. It's a matter that's just way too important to ignore.

## MODERN DRUMMER

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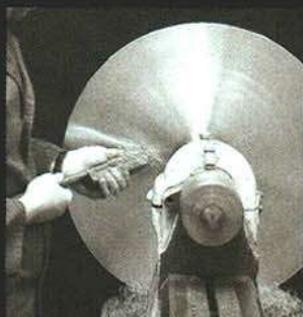
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The future will hold many challenges for us. Only those with the courage to effect change will be the innovators.

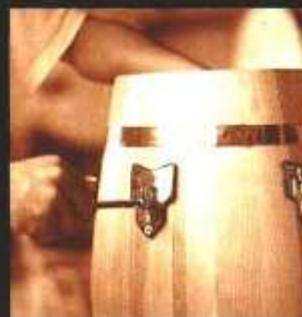
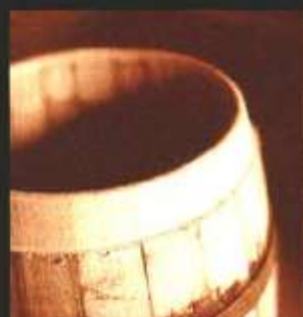


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## MILFORD GRAVES

I'm glad to see that *MD* is exposing its readers to pioneers like Milford Graves. Your March interview with him contained more wisdom in one paragraph than the rest of that issue's drummer-of-the-month features put together. While many *MD* articles devote page space to inane topics like the kind of snare drums used on a drummer's latest hit recording or his latest endorsement deals, the Graves interview got right to the "heart" of things: drumming as an organic, artistic endeavor.

Graves' theory that the pervasive 4/4 beat of pop music could possibly be harmful to our bio-rhythms is well-supported, both medically—as noted in the article—and historically. Jazz musicians have always referred to this kind of playing as "chopping wood."

William Hazlitt once wrote, "Rules and models destroy genius and art." Thankfully, Graves is an exception. His legacy will live on, while the pop icons will fade into obscurity after their "fifteen minutes of fame" is over.

Ron Hefner  
Fort Myers, FL

I enjoyed your piece on the talented and underappreciated Milford Graves. But I was puzzled by his assertion, "When I was coming up, the drummer was not respected." It seems to me that unless Mr. Graves is playing definitional games (a la a certain president), his statement ignores the enormous contributions of drummers the likes of Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, Gene Krupa, Sid Catlett, Jo Jones, Kenny Clarke, Buddy Rich, and Max Roach. By almost any reasonable standard, these gentlemen (and numerous others)—who were chronological and stylistic predecessors of Mr. Graves—*did* indeed garner the respect of

countless fellow musicians, listeners, fans, scholars, and critics.

Michael Hanson  
Director of Jazz Programming  
Wisconsin Public Radio  
Madison, WI

## THE BENEFITS OF SONGWRITING

I commend Ted Bonar for his article "The Benefits Of Songwriting" in your March 2000 issue. In my early teens, puberty took my choir-boy voice, and the drums seemed easier and more fun than my piano lessons. Twenty years later, I had grown tired of

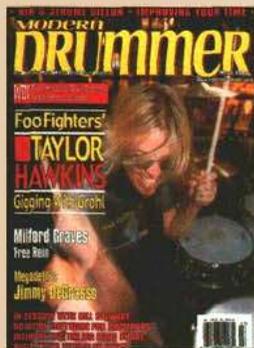
tribute more songs, more singing, and more arranging suggestions.

My drumming has improved as well; I play with more of a team perspective, and songwriting has been a great "cross-training" tool for my ears as well as my drumming muscles. I even believe I'm a little more self-confident in general because of all this.

Thanks again to Mr. Bonar and to *MD* for showing drummers new musical perspectives that can help them shrug off that "non-musical" stigma.

Matthew Payne  
Seattle, WA

## TAYLOR HAWKINS



I just finished your March 2000 cover interview with Taylor Hawkins of The Foo Fighters. Bravo for Taylor and Dave Grohl. I didn't know who Taylor was until it was mentioned he had played for Alanis Morissette. I had seen a live TV special featuring Alanis, and I remember really liking the drummer, who played good licks and looked like he was having a great time.

It must be difficult to change your style of playing to match another drummer's—especially a very good and well-known drummer. I had the experience of cutting a CD with a studio technician who was a *very* good drummer. He could play circles around me technically, but nothing he said or did helped me during the recording sessions. Instead, everything he said served mainly to prove how well *he* played drums. Well, if Dave Grohl could write music, then sit down patiently with Taylor Hawkins and work out the parts together, I commend them both. Taylor's enthusiasm, even through print, was infectious. Good article.

Paul D'Angelo  
via Internet

## MD REVIEWS: PRO AND CON

*MD's Critique* department is among my favorite sections of the magazine, and I feel it deserves a bit of recognition and appreciation. It's one of the few times I'm not bombarded with reviews of only mainstream artists. The articles have proven to be informative and interesting, and I've found myself purchasing several of the albums reviewed. Simply put, *Critique* is a helpful resource for those who wish to learn about musicians they otherwise might not have heard of. Thanks for keeping me informed of what is really going on in music.

Jay DeWitt  
Bel Air, MD

Fran Azzarto brought up a few questions in his March 2000 review of my book *Essential Reading* that I feel I need to answer. One issue was made out of my suggesting that the student read down the page in columns (where notated). Fran asks, "Why would you want a beginning student to learn how to read music in a format that doesn't exist anywhere else?" I *wouldn't* have a beginning student do it. The suggestion was meant for intermediate students—though I see no

simply being "the drummer," so I gathered the right people and the right attitude to help me create my own songs. The few years I spent in choir and the several years of piano lessons gave me enough of an ear to help my songwriting (mostly through singing melodies and plunking out simple chords and melodies on a keyboard). It hasn't been easy, and I have far to go. But my bandmates have encouraged me to con-

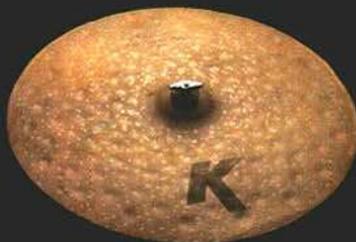
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harm in having a beginning student try it. The purpose is simply to create more rhythmic material from the page. Anyone who has ever read a piece of music that includes multiple endings, DSs, DCs, and/or codas knows you do not always read music horizontally. The idea of levels in *Essential Reading* is to increase the degree of difficulty by practicing the material in various ways.

Fran goes on to say, "Level 3 simply states that you should read the entire book front to back." What the Level 3 practice suggestion *actually* states is, "Read the book front to back. See other suggestions on page 3." How did Fran miss that second sentence? The very next page is dedicated to drumset applications of the rhythms in the book for jazz, ostinato exercises for Latin styles, how to swing the rhythms, rock & funk time applications, and a suggestion for using the rhythms as fills.

Another issue was made over my writing in some stickings and not others. I included stickings where I thought they would be most helpful. In the case of mixed 8ths, 16ths, and 32nds I left it open-ended because they can be played using a variety of stickings. Most of the books I grew up with never included *any* stickings. How is it that when I include some it is a negative thing?

Fran states that once you get past these "oddities" (as he puts it), the rhythms do start to fall into place, and that the CD and individually numbered measures are a nice touch. If most of the oddities are on page 2, wouldn't that make the rest of the book

okay?

I put together a book on rhythm and syncopation that included a CD because I couldn't find one on the market. I included some suggestions to possibly inspire a kid to think outside the box. I never dreamed anyone would get this hung up and confused over two sentences. This is a basic book/CD for snare drum, not nuclear physics.

Everyone is entitled to their opinion. I just don't understand the comments in Fran Azzarto's review, especially given the fact that they are not all accurate. I am available to answer questions via email at frank@frankbriggs.com, or at the forum page on my Web site: www.frankbriggs.com.

Frank Briggs  
via Internet

## PHIL AND DAN

I'd like to respond to Dan Thress' comments regarding Phil Collins in the March 2000 *Readers' Platform*. Mr. Thress belittled Mr. Collins for venturing into the world of big band music. He also suggested that Mr. Collins should donate his songwriting royalties to jazz education instead of paying Quincy Jones a substantial fee for directing his big band.

Phil Collins is a very well-respected drummer who has inspired thousands of other drummers over the years (both in pop and in prog rock). He has also written, sung, and played drums on many pop classics. I don't believe anyone should be

telling Mr. Collins what to do with his royalties.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm totally in support of jazz education. But I think that Phil Collins' big band project is an inspiration and an education for young players, not just an ego trip for Phil. I also admire Phil for *not* resting on his prior accomplishments, but rather setting yet another challenge for himself.

Steve Bennett  
via Internet

After reading my March 2000 *Readers' Platform* letter praising the December '99 Phil Collins interview, I read Dan Thress' criticism of the same interview. Then I read it again. And again. Dan's tirade was baffling, to say the least. I couldn't figure out how he could logically link disco to an attack on what he termed "vanity projects," and then link this with Phil's big band work. Dan seems to be an angry man who, my best guess is, was probably a '60s funk studio drummer who was replaced by a DJ with a drum machine and a sampler. Poor guy.

Dan finishes his flawed thought process with a stab at Phil's decision to hire the best musicians to work with. Dan states that the money would've been better spent by creating a fund for underprivileged jazz students. While I agree that charity is a nice idea, I think Dan needs to be reminded why most musicians play. If he'll shut his eyes really tight, and picture himself playing his favorite music in front of an appreci-

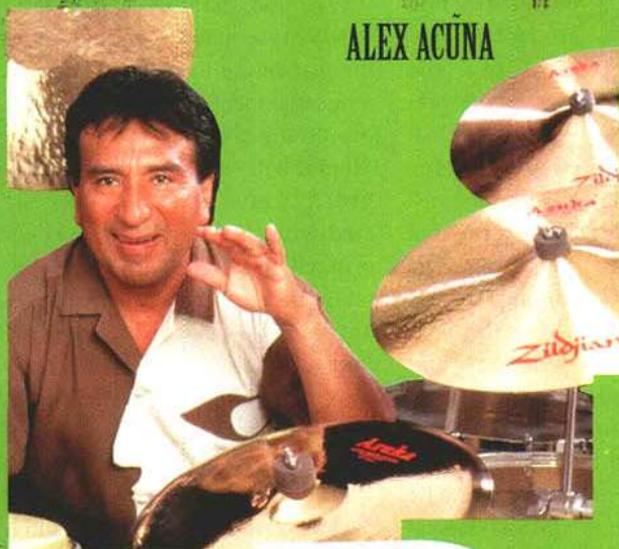


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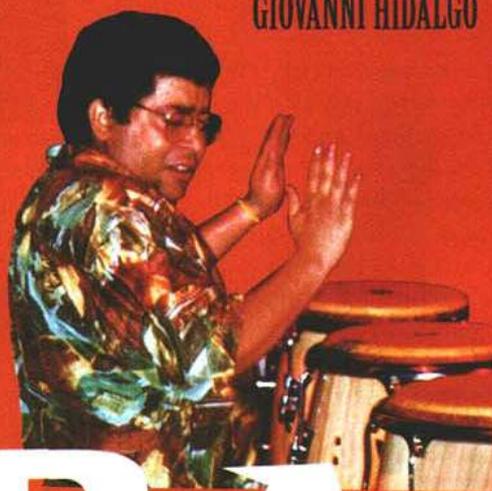
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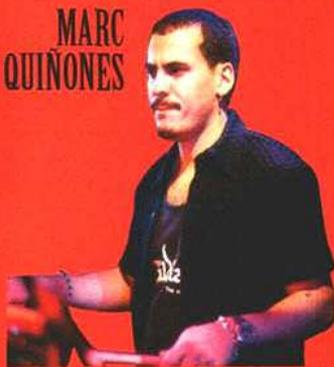


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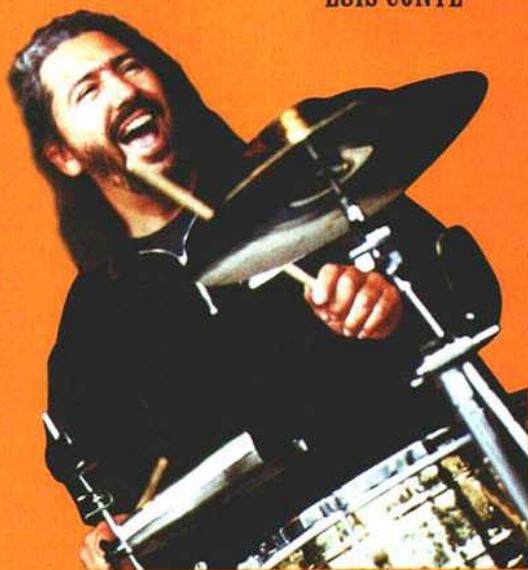
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ciative audience, he just might get a taste of it. Maybe he'll remember that most people are into music because they *want* to be—because they hear a sound in their heads, and the desire to share that sound becomes uncontrollable. It's about emotion, and about feeling something that's worth more than all the money in the world.

I've often asked myself, "What would I be willing to pay to play my favorite song with the original bandmembers? What would be the price for the greatest three minutes of my life?" If I fulfill that dream, the happiness I'd feel would be priceless. Maybe someday Dan will understand. In the meantime, I'm still hoping for that phone call from Simon Phillips, where he tells me he needs an apprentice, and I sell off all I have, shave my head, and live in his tool shed. It would be worth it.

Lowell Parker  
Dallas, TX

## RIMS ON DREAM DRUMS

Your "Dream Drumkits" feature [February 2000 *MD*] needs some clarification. While imitation may be the sincerest form



of flattery, it may be misleading and a misuse of a registered trademark and product design. Six of the twelve kits presented were listed as using the RIMS suspension system. It's important to know that since the RIMS patent has expired, the only authentic RIMS system must have a RIMS trademark logo affixed to the sideplate. Two of the sets—Peavey and Remo—had the real RIMS, since the trademark was obvious. Premier and Slingerland now have their own version of RIMS, which should not and cannot be called RIMS. It may be a RIMS-style system, such as DW's STM or Tama's Star Cast mounting system, but those should not be referred to as RIMS.

I realize that a rose by any other name is usually still a rose, but in this case that does not hold true. The RIMS system that I invented was very specific in its design in

order for it to function properly. I always check out the many different suspension systems at the NAMM show and also at my local drumshops here in Minneapolis. I've found that several of the generic RIMS-style mounts that are currently on the market are incorrectly formed, causing a misalignment when fitted to the drum. If the mount does not fit properly on the drum it will "choke" and be totally ineffective at creating the low-end sustain associated with the sound improvement of the original RIMS system. DW, who is currently licensed to sell the RIMS system, is aware of this and makes every effort to inspect each RIMS mount before it is shipped. Having worked on drum suspension for twenty-six years, I know every aspect of the RIMS product and how and why it works. Believe me, it's not as simple and obvious as one may assume.

Gary L. Gauger  
President, Gauger Percussion  
Minnetonka, MN

## ERRATA

The photo of Jerome Dillon on page 26 of the March 2000 *MD* was inadvertently run without crediting the photographer. The shot was taken by Niels Alpert.

## How To Reach Us

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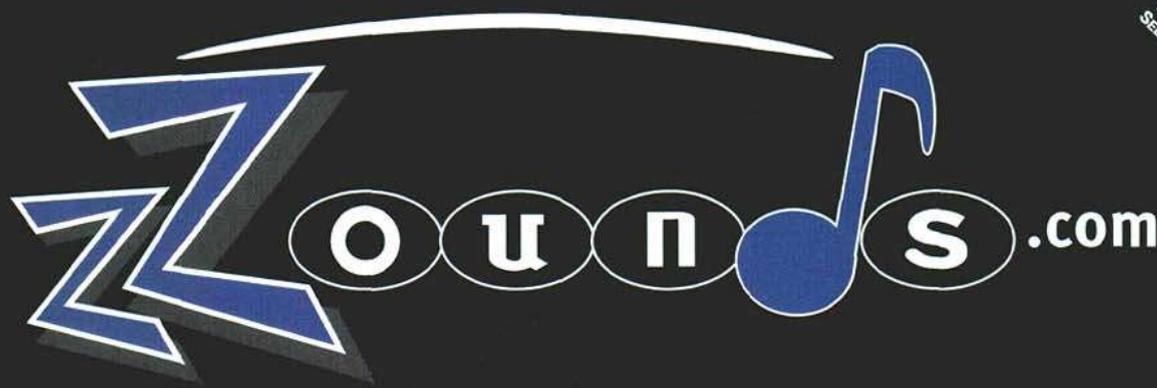
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Masters Mahogany Classic MHX

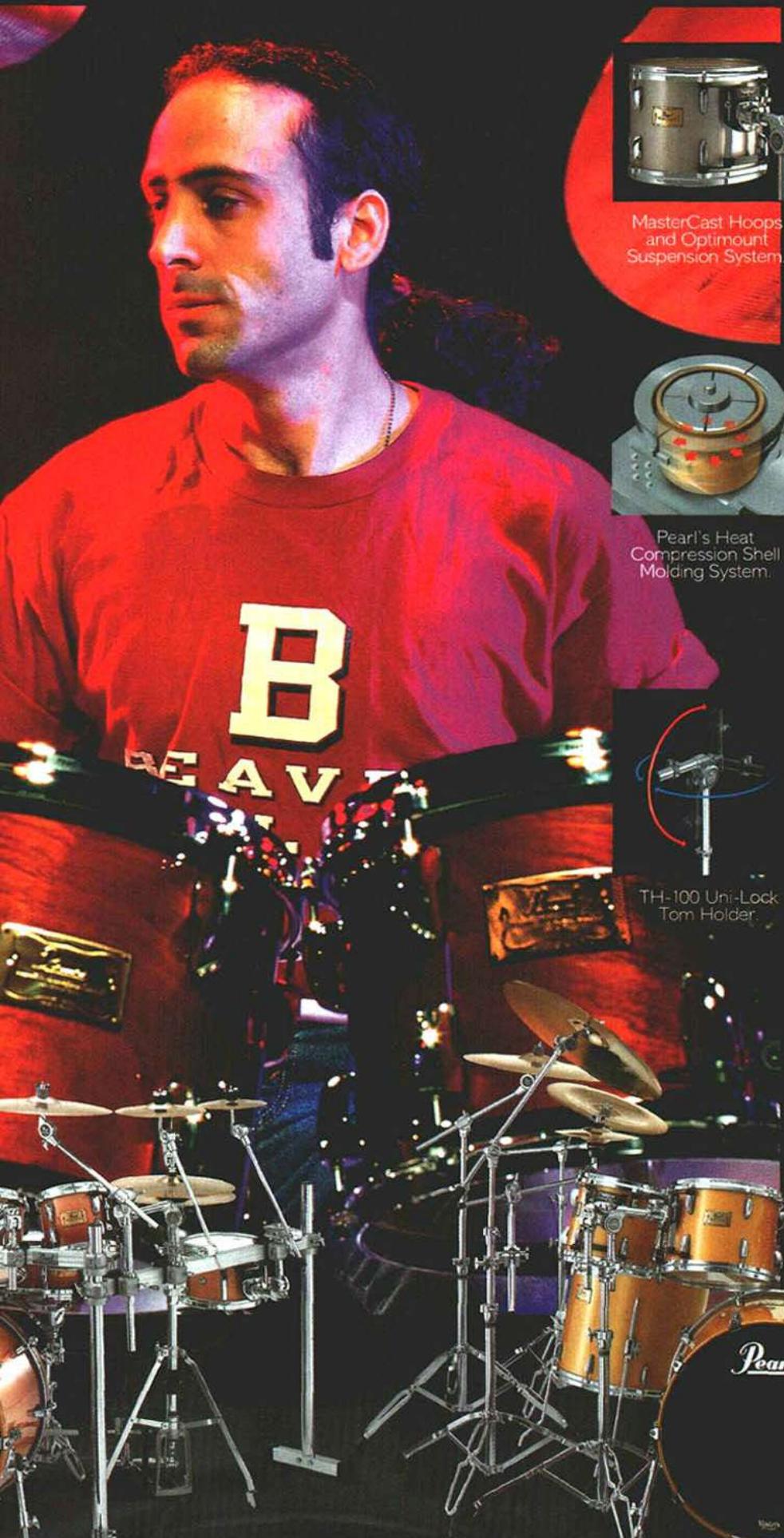
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- A super deep, full-bodied, warm sound reminiscent of prized vintage drums.



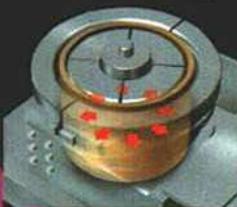
Jonathan Mover  
and Pearl's Masters Series  
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- 4 ply, 5mm Aged Maple.
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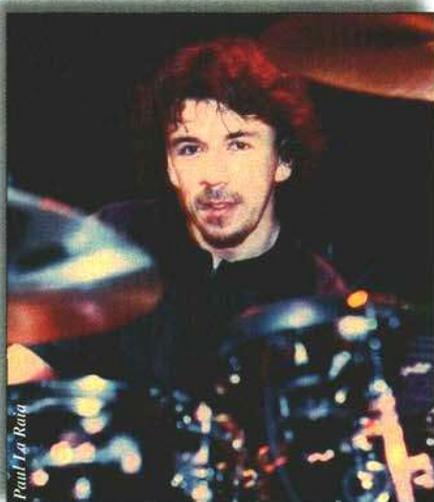
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## Steve Alexander On Internal Miking

**Q** I enjoyed the article about you in the September 1999 issue of *MD*. You sound very meticulous about your setup. Can you elaborate on the May drum-miking system you're using? What led you to use it, which mic's are used on which drums, and what have you learned—pro and con—about the system? I'm considering internal miking for my setup, so your answers will be very helpful. Also, what are you involved with at the present time?

Mike Randolph  
via Internet



where the availability of noise gates might be limited. Since using the May system I've had far less need to gate toms, thus allowing them to ring much more naturally. People often ask me if I'm triggering samples from them (I'm not), because they sound so good live.

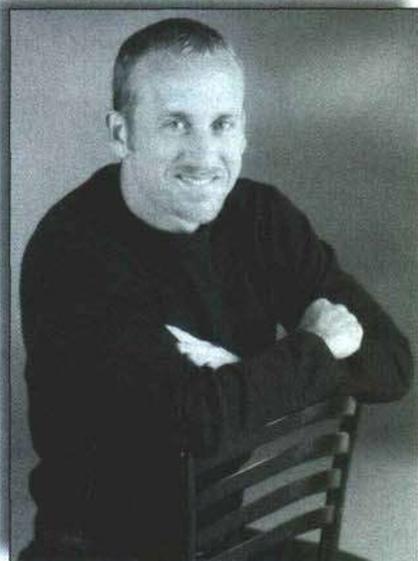
The only drawback I've encountered is

the reluctance of some engineers to adapt to the system, since it can take some getting used to if you're accustomed to doing things the "traditional" way. Otherwise, I'm very happy with it. And so is the crew, since it makes the kit so much quicker to set up.

The mic's I use are as follows: May/Shure Beta 52s in the 22" and 16" kicks, May/Shure XL 57s in the 8", 10", and 12" toms, and May/AKG D112R/Fs in the 14", 15", and 16" toms. The snares are miked externally.

I'm currently working on a new album with Jeff Beck, along with writing and recording for my own record. Both should be released this year. There should also be tour dates later this year in Europe, North and South America, and Japan. You might also like to know that I have a Web site, [www.stevealexander.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.stevealexander.fsnet.co.uk). For anyone who would like to contact me directly, my email address is [sieve@stevealexander.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:sieve@stevealexander.fsnet.co.uk).

## Fill Tips From Russ McKinnon



Simply by following your suggestions I started getting tons of gigs.

However, I found out that while playing all the grooves you mentioned (especially rhumba, merengue, and songo), I had no idea what kind of fills to play! Do "typical" fills that are supposed to be played in those grooves exist? Most of the time I followed the bass player during fills, playing some kinds of "melodic" fills. But I feel I have a lack of adequate and effective breaks. Can you help me?

Sergio Ponti  
Trofarello, Italy

**A** Thanks for your kind words, and your great question. I'm so glad you feel the advice given in the "Becoming A Working Drummer" series helped you get more gigs.

When playing the different grooves I discussed in the article, don't think "typical" when approaching fill ideas. Just try to make the fills feel as stylistically authentic as possible. And remember:

**1. Be Musical.** The fills you play should always be an expression of what you feel is happening in the music at that moment.

**2. Use Your Ears.** Interact with and complement what else is happening around you.

**3. Don't Overplay.** There's no need to feel that you have to show off every time a break occurs.

Now that you are working, take some of your gig money and buy some popular CDs of the musical styles you are learning to play. Listen to great recordings of the masters. Study how the drummer or percussionist treats the ends of phrases and other different sections of the songs. At first you can try to emulate some of these fill ideas. But on the gig the fills should eventually come naturally and not feel forced.

When playing busier styles, especially at fast tempos, occasionally the music just needs a breath of fresh air to ease the tension built up to that point. So don't forget to use space sometimes: Play nothing!

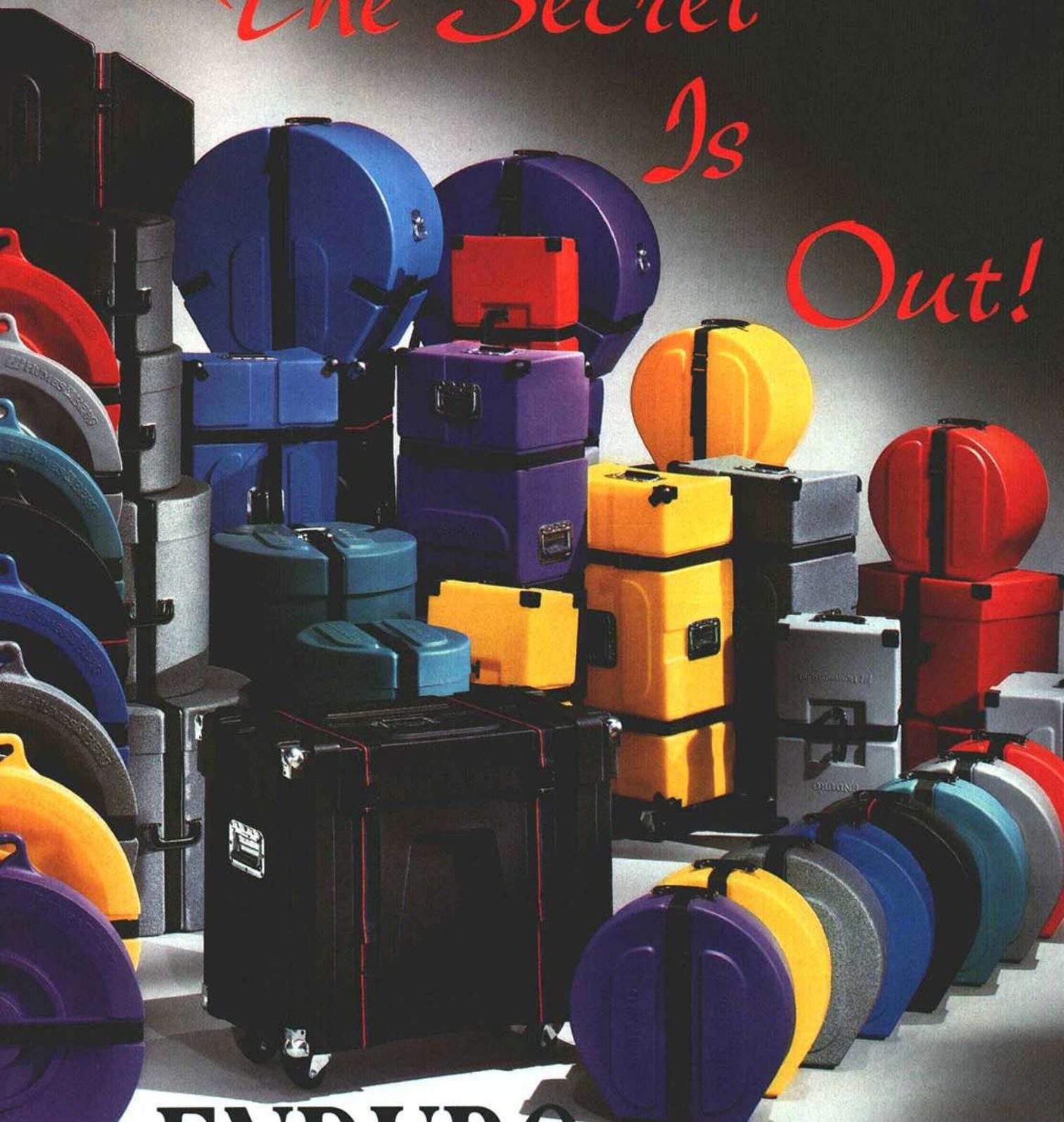
Best of luck to you. Keep up your good work.

**Q** I'm a nineteen-year-old Italian drummer who admires the playing you did with Tower Of Power tremendously. I would also like to thank you for the useful advice you gave in your "Becoming A Working Drummer" series of *MD* articles.

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## Mark Zonder: Electronics Or Not

**Q** I bought Fates Warning's *Still Life* a few weeks back. I'm extremely impressed with your tasteful and intricate playing. It's great to hear metal drumming *without* blazing 32nd-note bass drum rolls all the way through a song. I also like the way you blend your electronic percussion with your acoustic kit. What electronic setup are you using these days?

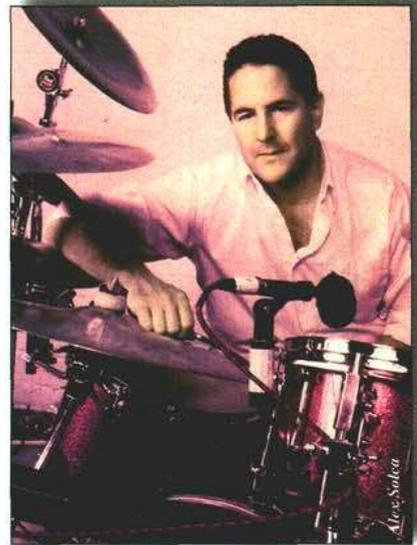
Cameron Brennan  
via Internet

**A** Thanks very much for the compliments. As far as my electronic setup goes, these days I'm actually cutting back a little bit. On our latest album, recorded in mid-February at our new studio, I actually

used *no* electronics. And I scaled my kit back to a four-piece, with a 10" rack tom, a 13" floor tom, and a 20" bass drum. It's exactly the kit I had when I was nine, and it's sort of changed my whole style around.

However, when we go out live I'll need to use electronic gear to cover some of our older material on which it was used for the recordings. That will include an Akai sampler and a sequencer, because everything we do is to a click. My sounds are actually just generic samples and sounds I've found over the years. But I tweak them and fool around with them, so there's nothing really "stock" that I use.

By the way, our new studio is called Frankie's Hideaway. Anyone interested



in contacting me should check out the studio's Web site at [www.frankieshideaway.com](http://www.frankieshideaway.com).

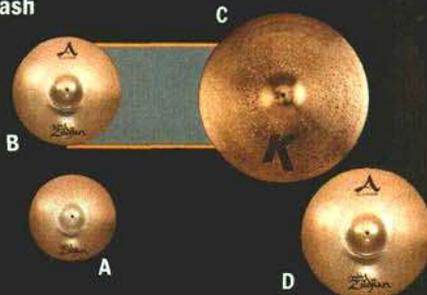
Submit questions for your favorite drummer to Ask A Pro, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Or you may email [rvh@modern-drummer.com](mailto:rvh@modern-drummer.com). We will do our best to pursue every inquiry. However, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to reach every artist or that any given artist will respond. Also, due to *MD's* publication schedule, artists' touring schedules, and other considerations, it sometimes takes several months before an inquiry and reply can be published.



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## Questionable Time

**Q** I'm in a country rock band. The musicians I'm playing with are great guys, but the timing—or lack thereof—between us four musicians has the effect of a cement mixer. I really want to bring this band's level of performance up to that of top bands. Can you offer any ways to rehearse that could highlight groove and timing?

Tommy Desaulniers  
via Internet

**A** One excellent method involves a little bit of technology. You obtain a time-keeping source of some sort (electric metronome, drum machine with click track or programmed percussion "click," etc.). Then you output the signal from that device into a headphone mixer or P.A. mixer. With the headphone mixer (the most desirable method) everybody in the band gets a set of phones. Then you all rehearse a given song together, with the click running to everybody. If you use the P.A. mixer, you can put the sound of the click into the room, and still all practice together. Obviously, the band's volume level needs to be controlled so that the click can be heard.

That's the *best* way. An alternate method that's almost as good requires a bit of trust from the band. That is to give *you* the click in a set of phones, and then rehearse that way, with you playing to the click and the band playing to you. In one sense this is a more productive system, since it not only teaches the rest of the band to lock in the time, it also teaches them to rely on you as the timekeeping source.

There is a third method, which might seem a bit amateurish at first but can provide very positive results. Have the entire band play along to the original recording of a popular song—preferably one that has a good, solid groove. Again, the band has to play softly and the recording has to be pumped so you can hear it. But you can bet that most country recordings today are made either with a click track or with a studio drummer the likes of Eddie Bayers or Paul Leim, who might as well *be* click tracks. If your band can groove along with

the studio players on that recording, you should be well on the way to getting things together.

## Trigger Connection

**Q** I have a five-piece drumkit, with two cymbals and hi-hats. Can I amplify my kit by connecting drum triggers to my four-channel guitar amp? If so, do I just use a male plug straight from the trigger to the amp, or do I need a crossover for different frequencies? Or, instead of triggering, would it be better to buy four or five mic's?

Pete Coleman  
Oak Ridge, TN

**A** If you simply want to amplify the sound of your drums, then microphones are the appropriate tools. You could, in fact, run mic's right into your guitar amp, but be sure to check for matching impedance. Also, most amplifiers require a different signal voltage from that provided by microphones. You may need to use direct boxes or line transformers to get the proper match. If you don't know about this equipment, check with the pro-audio salesman at your local music store.

Triggers are not amplification devices. They simply turn the impact you make on your drums into an electronic signal. That signal must then go into some sort of electronic sound source ("brain" or "sound module") in order to be turned into a sound. It is that sound, created by the sound source, that can then be amplified. Running triggers directly into an amplifier will create no sound, and may damage either the trigger or the amp.

## Avoiding Discouragement

**Q** I just started playing the drums a few months ago. I see people all around me pick up the drums, and within weeks they can pick out stuff from CDs and play it exactly. Meanwhile I'm at home practicing my butt off, but still not able to play "Walk This Way" after two months. How can I make this process go faster for me?

Also, when a drummer in a band has to think of what to play that fits with the other

parts (vocals, guitar, bass), how does he or she figure out all that stuff? Everything sounds so complicated. Do you have any suggestions?

Finally, I'm a big fan of Matt Sorum. Does he have any educational videos out that might inspire me?

Natalie  
via Internet

**A** Don't be discouraged about not being able to "pick out stuff immediately." You have to develop a certain amount of drumming technique and musical vocabulary before you can translate what you hear on a record to what you can do on your drumkit. It's like learning a foreign language. You can listen to it all day long, but until you actually know enough words of that language yourself, you can't begin to understand what you're hearing.

Continue to listen to the music that interests you, and focus on one drumming element at a time. For example, listen to the basic groove created by the bass drum, snare, and hi-hat. Don't be concerned with fills yet. Concentrate on the feel that the drummer creates, and try to identify the beat he or she is using to create that feel. Practice that beat yourself, and then play it along with the recording. This will help you to see if you've got the feel down. (It should also help you develop a good sense of time.)

Apply this practice method to lots of different songs. This will help you to understand how drum patterns can create different feels and musical styles. You'll also begin to understand how drummers select the sounds they use to accompany other parts. That will help you to make your own decisions about sound choices in the parts that you create.

Nobody becomes a great (or even a good) drummer overnight. Everything about drumming takes time. You have to learn the technical skills, the physical independence, and the musical vocabulary. You also have to develop "good ears" so that you can listen to music and evaluate what is really happening—not only with the drums, but with the overall song structure. Music isn't created out of separate instrumental parts that were each created in a

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vacuum. Good music is created by combining all those parts together and shaping them into a new, complete work.

For all of the things mentioned above, the guidance of a good teacher would be invaluable. A teacher is the "shortest cut" to learning the things you want to know. In the meantime, since you're a fan of Matt Sorum, we suggest you check out his instructional drum video, *Drum Licks & Tricks From The Rock & Roll Jungle*. It's on Rittor Music video, distributed by Warner Brothers, and should be available wherever educational music videos are sold.

## FiberSkyn 3 Vs. Renaissance Heads

**Q**In the February '97 issue of *MD* Rick Van Horn gave Remo Fiberskyn 3 heads a glowing review. Rick Mattingly felt equally positive about the Remo Renaissance heads in his August '98 review. Both lines are promoted as "sounding like calfskin." Yet they look to be very different in composition. Just what are the differences, physically and acoustically?

Richard Engling  
Evanston, IL

**A**Fiberskyn 3 heads are designed to sound and look like calfskin heads: with a simulated "hide-like" appearance, and a certain thick, mellow sound. Even though they are available in various weights, all the heads have these characteristics.

Renaissance heads were an outgrowth of Remo's attempt to simulate calfskin timpani heads. During the calfskin era, those heads (and also snare-side heads) were made of what were called "slunk" skins, which were the skins of unborn calves. They were very thin and virtually hairless, so they could be processed into the thin, responsive drumheads necessary for timpani use.

The first Renaissance heads were, in fact, timpani models. They offered excellent response and sensitivity, while still maintaining a certain amount of that calf-like warmth. The savvy folks at Remo knew a good thing when they heard it, so they applied the manufacturing technology to regular drumkit heads, and increased the thicknesses available.

Rick Van Horn adds, "My personal feeling is that Renaissance heads are more of a hybrid or compromise between the mellowness of calf and the attack and crispness

of 'traditional' plastic heads. As such they are suitable for a wide variety of applications. The Fiberskyn 3s go a couple of steps farther back in time, and focus more on the thicker, warmer (and thus perhaps less versatile) vintage calfskin sound."

## Refinishing Tama Superstars

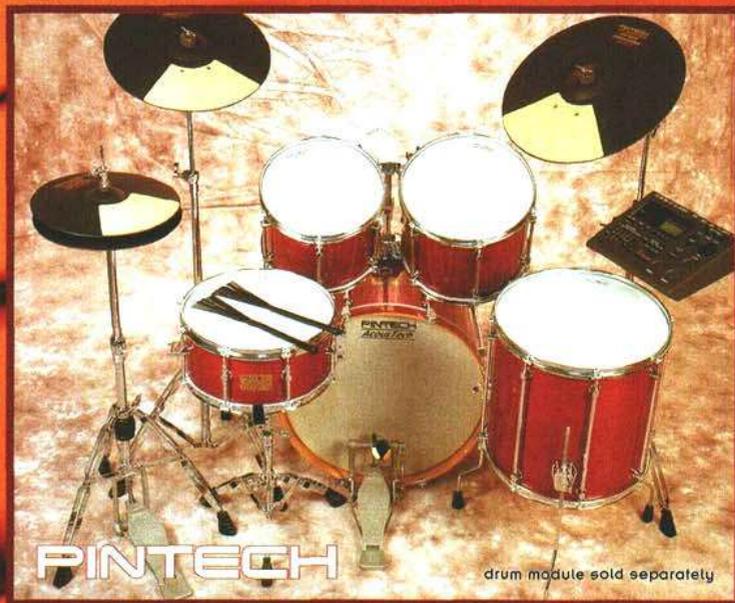
**Q**I recently picked up a mixed set of a few different-color Tama Superstars. What level of quality are these drums? What are the shells constructed of? Finally, I'd like to stain the drums one matching color. Is it a wise idea to strip the original stain off? If so, what products do you recommend to accomplish this? I was thinking of sanding the shells down to the natural wood color. Is this a good idea to try? My concern is that I may ruin the ply of the wood by attempting this. Is there a drum-friendly chemical product to use for this purpose, or should I just consider wrapping the shells?

Kevin B. Ward  
Howell, NJ

**A**Superstars were introduced by Tama as their top-of-the-line series in 1977,

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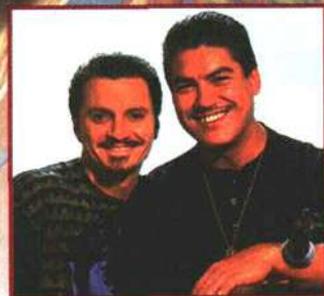


# Santana

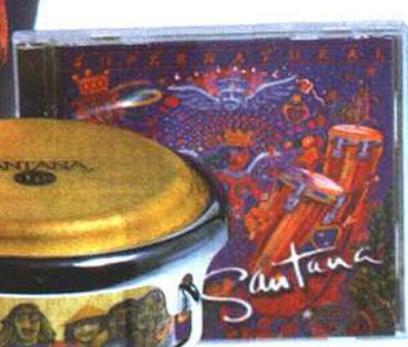
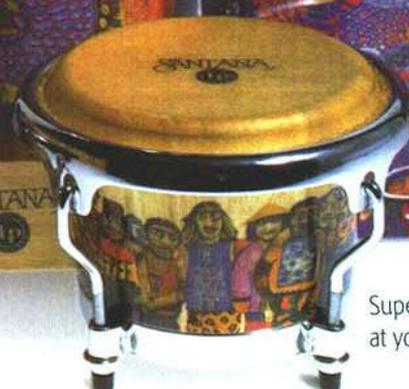
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replacing the Imperialstar series, which had been introduced in 1974. They had very different shells, although they did share the same hardware. Superstars were 6-ply birch drums, while Imperialstars were covered-finish drums made of nine plies of straight-grained select hardwoods, finished on the inner ply with Zola Cote, a protective moisture barrier.

Superstar drums were originally available in natural mahogany, maple, and cherry wine stained finishes. They became available in solid candy apple, piano white, and piano black finishes (along with the natural finishes) in 1985. Black was easily the most popular drum color of the '80s, but the candy apple finish did well also, having been made famous by the mammoth Superstar kit that Neil Peart used until about 1986. The Superstar series was replaced in 1987 by the Granstar series. It also featured birch shells.

If you have natural-finish drums of different colors, it will be very difficult for you to strip, sand, and refinish them to match. The colors used for the natural-wood "looks" were stains, not paints. As such they penetrated the wood itself, and would be almost impossible to remove

without damaging one or more plies of the drumshells. Accordingly, we'd suggest you consider wrapping the drums with a covered finish to achieve uniformity.

## Speed King Mystique

**Q** Ever since I've been playing drums, talking with drummers, and reading *MD*, I've been hearing tales about the Ludwig Speed King pedal. I've never come in contact with one, so I'd like to know: What's so special about the Ludwig Speed King?

Charles Allen  
via Internet

**A** It would depend on who you ask. For over a generation between 1960 and the mid-1980s, the Speed King was one of the most high-tech, efficient, and popular pedals on the market. It was rivaled only toward the end of that period by the Camco/Gretsch Floating Action (same design) pedal, and perhaps the Rogers Swiv-O-Matic.

The Speed King's particular attributes included durability (it had a metal linkage instead of a leather strap), double-spring

action for quickness, and a special leverage created by the way the footboard and the beater were connected. No other pedal before or since has ever had the same action. The Speed King also possessed an annoying—but somehow endearing—idiosyncrasy: a "squeak" created somewhere in its action. (Some say it was the spring, some say the hinge, some say the yoke.... Ludwig never said at all.) Over the years this squeak became as legendary as the pedal itself.

The explosion of pedal design and innovation that followed the introduction of the Drum Workshop DW5000 pedal in the early '80s (and an unfortunate decline in popularity of Ludwig products overall) caused the Speed King to lose prominence in the marketplace. With any sort of consumer product, as time moves on new products replace established ones in the eyes of the buying public. However, the Speed King is still manufactured by Ludwig, and it remains very popular with those who know about it. (By the way, we hear the squeak has been eliminated. But we don't want to spread rumors.)



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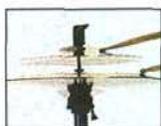
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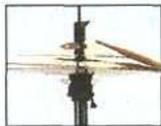
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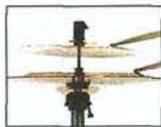
#### Bigger Sounds

Play all three cymbals for increased output. Open them to boost volume with the bigger sounds of more metal in motion.



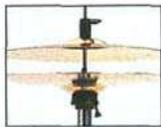
#### More Sounds

Move the top cymbal upward and play between it and the others for accents and effects.



#### Increased Speed

For double-speed action and super crisp, clearly defined sounds with only half the effort, play a top and bottom cymbal combination.\*



#### Also Available: Remote Model

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\*Requires normal hi-hat top cymbal. Not included in Triple Hi-Hat Cymbal Sets.



# Frank Beard

## XXX And Other Monsters



John A. Douglas

**F**rank Beard of ZZ Top has created his share of monsters. See if you recognize one of them in the following scenario. You're barely into your first set with your local bar band when somebody howls, "Play some ZZ Top!" If Frank Beard ever falls from fame, he ought to serve the rest of his time in obscure bars playing the rockin' Texas shuffle he made famous with "Tush."

But Beard is decidedly *not* on the way down, especially after the release of *XXX*, the band's new record that celebrates their thirtieth anniversary. The disc is sparse and to the point, rendering it fully playable live by the ZZ trio and—you know it—by the rest of us!

Even a casual spin of *XXX* confirms that the power the band elicits makes them fore-

runners of Korn-style funk/thrash. "I wish my son could hear you say that," says Frank in a Texas drawl. "But one of the things I'm most proud of is that when one of our records comes on the radio, within a few seconds you say, 'Ah, ZZ Top!' We have our sound."

Frank gives a lot of credit to drum tech John Douglas for helping him stay focused lately. An accomplished player, Douglas apprenticed with Frank, doing the artwork on Beard's famous drumsets. Then he got involved with sounds, persuading Frank to switch to larger-size Tama drums in which they planted triggers. Today Beard's setup includes two Tama Starclassic 17x22 bass drums spread *ten feet apart*. (Relax, he uses remote pedals.) Out front, Frank gives new meaning to "power sizes." His custom,

double-headed 8", 10", and 12" toms are 28" deep! And John has got Frank using smaller Paiste cymbals to cut through stadium PAs.

John also needled Frank about technique, getting him to play a bit more on the new record. You can hear the results in the Mitch Mitchell-inspired triplet fills in "Made Into A Movie." Says Frank, "It's almost a drum solo, it's so loaded down. It's much busier than I learned to play years ago with Freddie King and Lightning Hopkins. Once I played 'Johnny B Goode' with Chuck Berry. You know those stops in the song? I hit the snare to bring the band back in and he scowled at me, 'Don't do that!' I've learned to keep things simple."

**T. Bruce Wittet**

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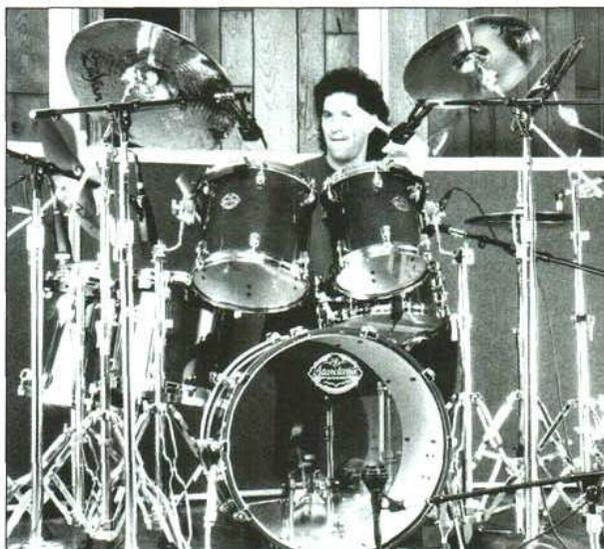


# Joel Rosenblatt

## Making Magic With Spyro Gyra

Joel Rosenblatt doesn't get the attention with Spyro Gyra that he used to when he was with Michel Camilo. But let's be fair: Few drummers *ever* get to stretch out like Rosenblatt did on Camilo's album *On Fire*. Fact is, there's just not room for that kind of playing on Spyro Gyra's latest release, *Got The Magic*. But Rosenblatt still finds space to play some tasty things with the veteran pop-jazz group.

Spyro Gyra affords Rosenblatt stability—enough to furnish a home studio in Yonkers, New York. "People send me audio files," he explains, "and then I record my drums on those files and send them back. Also, I've been doing as many jingles and sessions as I can, of course allowing for Spyro's touring schedule. The band is my priority. When they say something, I jump. That's the tradeoff with security: You lose the ability to 'own' your own schedule.



But you know, the worst day on the road still beats a nine-to-five job."

Tama ads showing Rosenblatt's kit in detail have kept him visible. Actually, one detail *has* changed—a rack tom's been removed, replaced by a lowly tambourine. "You see so many great players who can *kill* a groove with just snare, bass, and hi-hat. These days I'm more into creating grooves than creating tom-tom fills."

Don't get alarmed, Joel still gets to play. "Live, Spyro Gyra is completely different from on record," he insists. "There's way more energy, the tunes open up, and there's more excitement. We're not simply reproducing the record every night. Jay Beckenstein, the leader of the band, encourages us to stretch. A lot of people who come out to see us say, 'I had no idea the band played like this!'"

**T. Bruce Wittet**

# Barry "Frosty" Smith

## Funk Agenda

There are some things you just never want to hear on your voice mail, especially in a thick Texas drawl. "David, this is Frosty. I hear you're lookin' for me."

Yikes. This guy sounds *bad*. Yet the truth of the matter is that I'm not the only person looking for Barry "Frosty" Smith. From the first time he picked up sticks, through stints with such memorable artists as Lee Michaels, Sly & The Family Stone, and Dr. John, Frosty has made quite a name for himself as an innovative funk drummer.

It's a bit of a shocker, then, when he freely admits, "I don't borrow, I flat out steal." Frosty's talking about how he'll draw ideas from certain artists, like recently when he blended some of the technological touches of Cibo Matto and some Afropop flavor from Youssou N'Dour into his own playing. "I steal it," he says, "and then after a while it becomes mine and is unrecognizable as anything else but mine. Like The Chemical Brothers do with their loops,

where you can't recognize a song that you had recorded because of what they've done to it—that's what I do." Smith should know, considering his work with Lee Michaels is some of the most sampled bits of music ever recorded.

Lately Frosty has had the chance to bring all of his influences to the Austin-based group Papa Mali. With a little blues, a little funk, a little 'Nawlins, and even a bit of voodoo, Papa Mali is a dynamic project. While they recorded their smokin' new album (available from Fog City Records) with a full band, the band essentially consists of singer/guitarist Malcom Welbourne, Frosty on drums, and a variety of guest instrumentalists.

Besides the raw drumming and heavy groove playing that Frosty adds to the group, this situation offers the veteran

drummer a chance to experiment with electronics. Smith plays along to loops that the band builds during their live shows. He also incorporates electronic pads that trigger ethnic drum sounds such as congas and tablas, as well as a plethora of esoteric sounds. "It's a challenge to play to the loops, keep the drum groove going nice and strong, *and* play some of these triggered sounds on top," he says. "I'm doing my best to enhance the music."

Those challenges have continued to make the project interesting, though Frosty won't admit to the term "fun." "'Fun' seems to be a description for times when there's no money and not much else going on," he says. "I have a particular agenda, and I follow that."

And Frosty's agenda is clear. "To leave behind a body of work," he explains. "In other words, to not be thought of as talented through association, but rather to let *my* work stand up and hopefully influence somebody else down the line."

**David John Farinella**

A word of advice to the parents of potential drummers: Be nice to your kids and encourage them to play—even if that means having to put up with their punk rock bands. It's that sort of encouragement ALL and Descendents pounder Bill Stevenson received from his dad back when he was in his teens. Bill's pop bought him his first snare drum, and then his first drumset, which ultimately led to the beginning of his current (and only) career as a punk rock drummer.

Twenty-two years later, Stevenson is the same punk kid, jamming in the same bands (ALL and The Descendents differ only in songs and lead vocalists) and writing songs about the same stuff (love, coffee, fishing, and food). Throughout the time warp, Bill's drumming is the only thing that has wisened. A quick, chronological listen through the twenty-plus albums

Stevenson has performed on—including several classic Black Flag releases—proves that Bill had to learn the game in his formative years. Now he's a maestro of rock drumming finesse.

The best evidence of his slick skills can be found on ALL/Descendents' as-yet-untitled records, to be released in May and November, respectively, on big-time indie punk label Epitaph Records. But Stevenson insists that things haven't changed much in his musical camp.

"The new albums are probably not that different from *Everything Sucks* or *Mass Nerder*" he says, comparing them to his bands' previous releases. "We've been headed in a direction where we collaborate more writing-wise. That started on *Everything Sucks*, became even more so on *Mass Nerder*, and will be even more evident on the new records."

Stevenson isn't just a drummer. He's been playing guitar and bass just as long as he's been playing drums. And he sings too. ("I have kind of a 'pretty' voice," Bill says, "which isn't well-suited to what we do.") Such diversity has helped him become a prolific musician. More importantly, Bill's almost single-handedly spearheaded the recent pop-punk movement that bands like Green Day and Blink-182 have been riding on.

Despite the years on the road, difficult record labels, and a sometimes unreceptive punk scene, Stevenson says it's all been worth it. "When I was nineteen I never thought that I'd still be playing punk rock at thirty-six," he says. And for the folks of beginner drummers, even if it means resorting to earplugs and headaches, sometimes it's well worth it too.

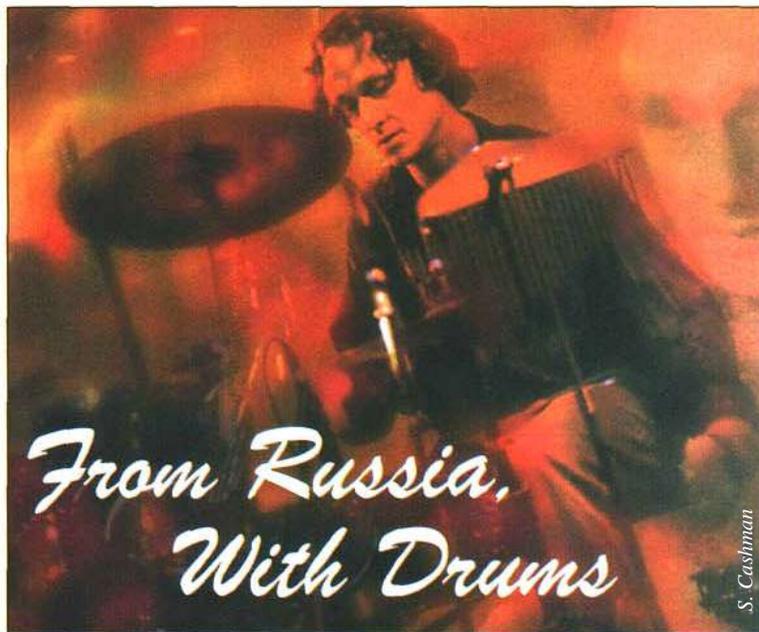
Waleed Rashidi

## Dmitri Tsvetkov

Watching him survey downtown New York with such nonchalance, one might think Inna & The Farlanders' Dmitri Tsvetkov is a native. "This kind of energy isn't new to me," he laughs, explaining his surprisingly cool head. "In Moscow, everything's just as crazy, man—even the cab drivers!"

This stop in the Big Apple is a first for The Farlanders, introducing Tsvetkov's startlingly original roots-based fusion grooves to a very appreciative (if unsuspecting) crowd. With mallets in each hand, the left manning a doumbek, the right working out counter-rhythmic ride patterns on a rattling darbuka, Tsvetkov's drumming proves ideal for The Farlanders' otherworldly blend of odd-meter folk, Siberian space rock, and U2-inflected pop. Dark, fluid, and earthy, it brings to mind a kind of Indo-European Manu Katche. "I love Manu for his colorful intensity," enthuses Dmitri. "The way he puts African rhythms on the drumset brings a totally new meaning to whatever music he plays. That's exactly what I'm trying to do with The Farlanders, only concentrating instead on Russian, Bulgarian, Jewish, and Middle Eastern rhythms and ideas."

The Farlanders' Shanachie debut, *The Dream Of Endless Nights*, features the clean-but-quirky stickwork of Pavel Timofeyev (another mad-skilled Moscovener to watch for), whom Tsvetkov replaced shortly after the disc's release. "Pavel was getting more into jazz-rock, whereas the band wanted to move from fusion to a more ethnic sound. They wanted more "trance" grooves, because that's what the traditional elements of Russian



music are really based on. So I changed the original parts, saving the feeling of Pavel's playing—because I love it—but creating a darker, more mystical mood."

While the West has made a marked impact on Tsvetkov's drumming (Buddy Rich, Jim Chapin, and Tony Williams are up there with a good Brady snare on his holy list), the drummer feels it's his true ties that prevail. "My parents played a lot of jazz in the house when I was young. But I also remember as a kid hearing things like The Pokrovsky Ensemble, and also just seeing people singing in the villages. This is something that always stays in your subconscious, like a code you carry with you your whole life. Whether you choose to follow that path is up to you. But you never really forget your beginnings, your roots."

Seth Cashman

# news

**B**illy Cobham recently completed a DVD with The London Jazz Orchestra. On it you can see and hear Billy perform with the big band, and you can even mute Billy's performance so that you can play along.

**John Pessoni** is on The Urge's third album, due out on Virgin Records in May.

**Peter Erskine** has left The Yellowjackets. **Greg Hutchinson** has been filling in on some recent dates with the band.

**Eric Stock** is on tour with Stroke 9.

**Greg Eklund** is on Everclear's *Songs From An American Movie, Volume I: Learning How To Smile*. The group plans to follow up this album by the end of the year with another release, *Songs From An American Movie, Volume II: Good Time For A Bad Attitude*.

**Guy Hoffman** is on The Violent Femmes' seventh studio album, *Freak Magnet*.

**Jimmy Lovelace** is on jazz pioneer

Claude "Fiddler" Williams' new record, *Swingin' The Blues*.

**Tré Cool** is in pre-production with Green Day for a new album.

**Rodger Carter** is on Wonderland's debut CD, *The End Of Bliss*.

The **Sam Lay Blues Band** recently released *Rush Hour Blues*.

**Elvin Jones** is on Steve Griggs' *Jones For Elvin—Vol. 1*.

**Jeff Cunningham** is on the new Septimus release, *Time Trials*.

A portion of the proceeds from drummer **Matt Butler's** *The Redwood Project* go to The Environmental Protection Information Center.

The Pimps' (from Rockford, Illinois) debut CD, *To A Cool Person, Stay That Way*, is out on Hollywood Records. It features drummer **Dave DeRosso** and percussionist **Todd Cooper**.

**Tim Horner** is on The Jim Cifelli New York Nonet's *So You Say*.

The Suicide Machines have a new CD. **Ryan Vandenberghe** is on drums.

# drum dates

This month's important events in drumming history.

**Chick Webb** died in June of 1939.

**Yogi Morton** died on June 8, 1987.

The first official drum magazine, *Leedy Drum Topics*, was released on June 15, 1923.

**Ringo Starr** and The Beatles release *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band* in June of 1967.

**Ginger Baker** sends drummers to the woodshed after Cream releases *Wheels Of Fire* (featuring his classic drum solo, "Toad") in June of 1968.

**Don Brewer** and Grand Funk Railroad ("We're An American Band") break The Beatles' box office record on June 5, 1971 when they sell out Shea Stadium in seventy-two hours. Opening up the show is Humble Pie with **Jerry Shirley** on drums.

Speaking of The Beatles, Paul McCartney and George Harrison make history once again on June 2, 1973, when two former members of the same group hold down the top two positions on the Top-100. McCartney & Wings, with **Denny Seiwell** on drums, occupy the number-one spot for four weeks with "My Love," until Harrison's "Give Me Love (Give Me Peace On Earth)," with **Ringo Starr** and **Jim Keltner** double drumming, replaces it on June 30, 1973.

## Birthdates

**James Gadson** (June 17, 1939)

**Charlie Watts** (June 2, 1941)

**Bernard Purdie** (June 11, 1941)

**Ian Paice** (June 29, 1948)

**Joey Kramer** (June 21, 1950)

**Bun E. Carlos** (June 12, 1951)

**Peter Erskine** (June 5, 1954)

**Mickey Curry** (June 10, 1956)

**Steve Shelley** (June 23, 1962)

**Eric Kretz** (June 7, 1966)



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Shown above are a variety of the Remo WeatherKing® Drumheads used by today's top players, including (clockwise from upper left): Coated Ambassador®, Renaissance Ambassador®, Clear Diplomat®, Coated PowerStroke™ 3, CS Black Dot®, Ebony® and PinStripe®. Shown at left are Remo Drumhead artists (from left to right): Kenny Aronoff (Smashing Pumpkins), Eddie Bayers (Nashville studio), Simon Phillips (Toto), Vinnie Colaiuta (independent), Marvin "Smitty" Smith (The Tonight Show) and Dave Weckl (independent). Foreground: Walfredo Reyes, Jr. (Steve Winwood).



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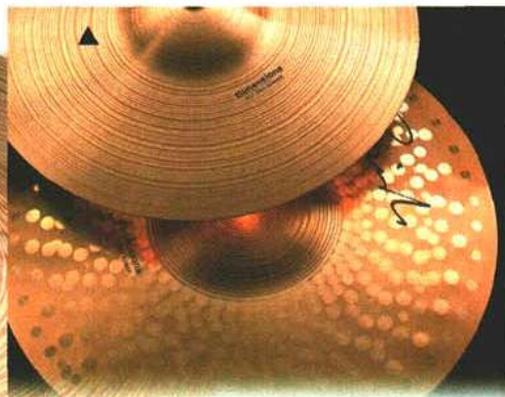
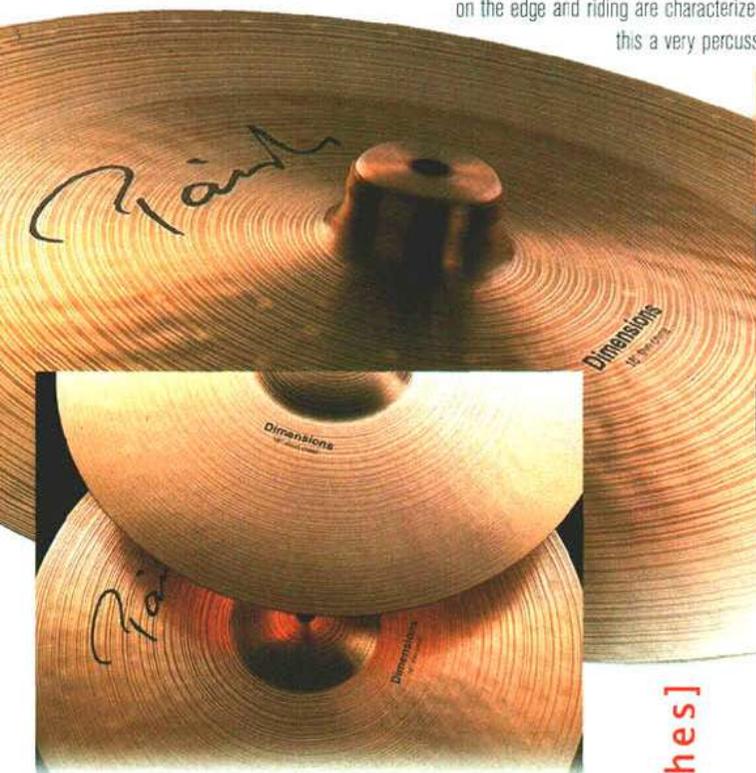
# Paiste Dimensions

In the creation of "Dimensions", the experience and knowledge gained in the development of the Paiste "Signature" and "Traditionals" series were applied to the proprietary Paiste CuSn8 bronze, also known as "2002 Alloy". As a result, "Dimensions" offer an extremely wide range of sound and function. They fully satisfy the top professional needs of contemporary drummers. These brand new cymbals feature unique, very modern sound character that's fresh and unusual – along with great traditional sounds. Moreover, many of the models in Paiste "Dimensions" offer sound character that traditionally would not be associated with Paiste sound. They feature a variety of surface textures, hammering and lathing patterns, as well as elegant, classic logo and model silk screening. The manufacturing methods used include hand hammering, hand lathing, and sand blasting. Due to the wide range of combinations in weight, size, and tailored manufacturing techniques, the application range is extremely wide, covering virtually all music styles from acoustic jazz to extreme rock. Special attention

was paid to creating cymbals with expanded functionality so that all models are extremely flexible: the medium weight cymbals are all very versatile and the lighter and heavier weight cymbals are still usable in situations where you might not normally use them.

## Thin China (16", 18", 20")

Volume: soft to medium. This china offers a full, explosive china sound. Its personality is dark, smoky, and complex. Large crashes on the edge and riding are characterized by a deep, trashy wash. Its attack is immediate while its decay is fairly short, which makes this a very percussive china well suited for fast playing and exotic accents. Also works well for hand playing.



[effects]

## Thin Splash (8", 9", 10", 11")

Volume: soft to medium. A lively, quick splash featuring full, warm, and somewhat dark sound. With its quick attack and short decay, this cymbal reacts fast and is well suited for softer situations. Also works well for hand playing.

## Power Splash (10", 11")

Volume: medium to loud. A clean, lively, powerful splash featuring bright sound with a wide frequency range. It has a fast response with a longer sustain and is well suited for situations demanding a splash with presence.

[crashes]

## Thin Crash (14", 15", 16", 17", 18")

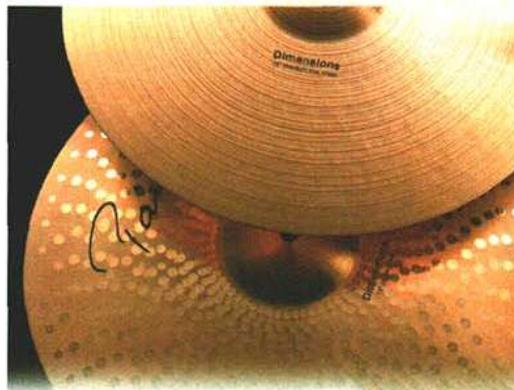
Volume: soft to medium. This is a beautifully full sounding crash with a warm dark body. The frequency mix is tight. It features a fast, soft response, a gentle attack with medium sustain, great for fast playing and pointed accents.

## Short Crash (14", 16")

Volume: soft to medium. This is a quite dark crash cymbal with an over all warm and mellow sound. It is very fast in response and features a rapid cutoff. A very percussive cymbal sound for quick, fast accents. Also works well for hand playing.

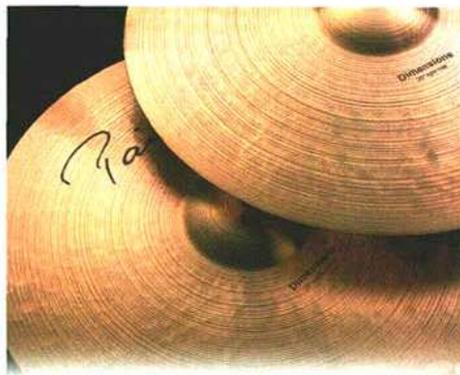
## Medium Thin Crash (15", 16", 17", 18", 20")

Volume: soft to loud. This crash cymbal is bright and full, yet still full of warm and dark sound qualities. It is a medium light cymbal with a very versatile overall character. It features a fast response and a medium sustain. A very flexible cymbal that works well in almost all situations.



## Power Crash (16", 17", 18", 20")

Volume: medium to very loud. A cutting, bright and powerful crash cymbal. It features a full sound spectrum that even includes a slightly darker, complex side. It has great projection with an explosive attack and medium sustain and is well suited where strength and energy are required.



### Light Ride (18", 20")

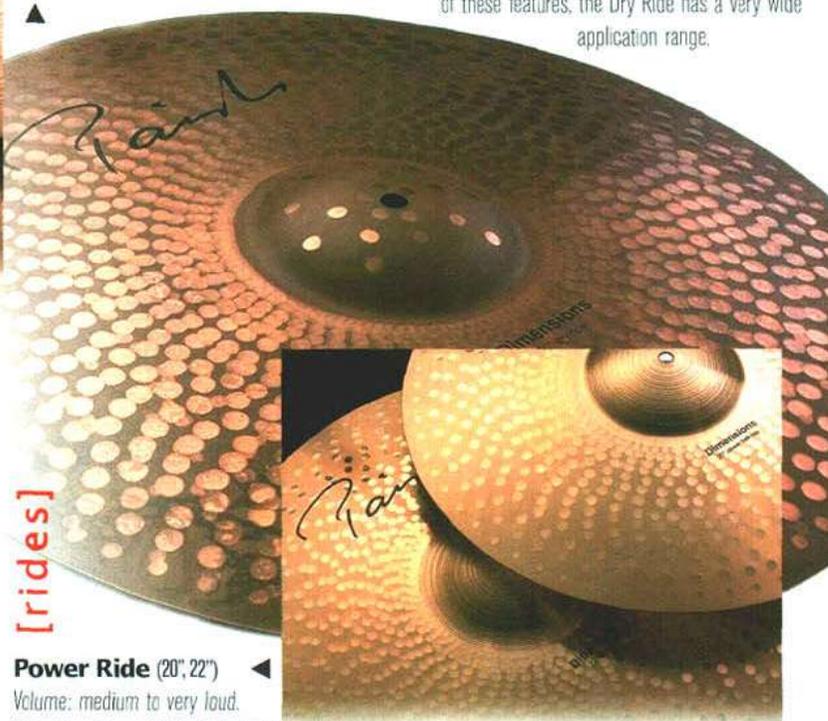
Volume: soft to medium. This ride features a mellow, lively sound and a wide frequency range. It is clearly soft and dark, with a sweet ping that doesn't get lost in its decidedly smoky and washy character. The soft bell is nicely integrated in the overall sound. A medium-light ride with a great buttery feeling.

### Medium Ride (18", 20", 22")

Volume: soft to loud. This ride features lively, full bodied, and bright sound. The clean, articulate ping rides over a warm, somewhat dark cushion. The bell is evenly integrated into the overall sound. Due to its medium weight, great controllability and full frequency range, this makes a well rounded, all purpose ride cymbal.

### Dry Ride (20")

Volume: soft to loud. This ride has a decidedly dry sound that still possesses a wide frequency range and a complex, dark and even smoky body. The stick attack is extremely separated from the overall cymbal sound, as is the bell, resulting in extreme control and stick definition. Due to the combination of these features, the Dry Ride has a very wide application range.



[rides]

### Power Ride (20", 22")

Volume: medium to very loud. This ride offers a full-bodied, bright and powerful sound with great projection. The loud and clean yet sweet ping is well defined over the slightly breathy, somewhat dark ride sound. The pronounced, strong bell is evenly integrated into the overall sound. Its heavy weight and strength makes it an obvious choice for loud situations or for all-purpose use where volume is of the essence.

### Power Bell Ride (20", 22")

Volume: loud to very loud. Features very powerful, cutting, and bright ride sound. An extremely strong ping rides over a full yet compact frequency range. The stick definition is quite "meaty" with lots of mass. The very large bell produces a clear, big and penetrating full bell sound. Excellent for loud to very loud situations, the Power Bell Ride is able to dominate in just about any setting.



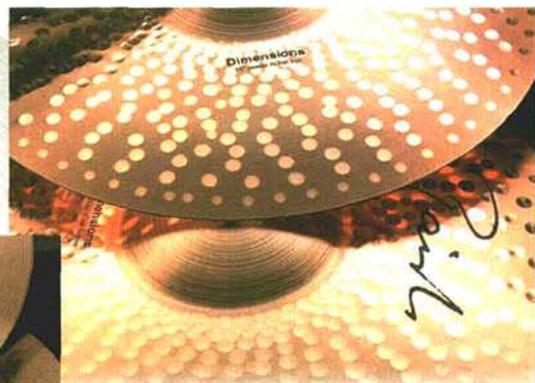
### Thin / Heavy Hi-Hat (13", 14", 15")

Volume: soft to loud. The overall sound is full and bright yet dark and warm. The combination of the thin top and medium heavy bottom produce a wide, rich frequency range. They feature a beautiful definite chick sound, a very direct hi-hat with pronounced stick definition.

[hi-hats]

### Light Hi-Hat (13", 14")

Volume: soft to medium. The frequency mix is delicate with a rather dark sound atmosphere. Its weight is light with a soft, mellow, yet tight and pronounced chick sound. A fast reacting, very complex and sensitive hi-hat that allows defined stick work over a fairly washy open-closed sound.



### Power Hi-Hat (14", 15")

Volume: medium to very loud. Clear, bright, and cutting hi-hat with a heavy feel, but still very playable at moderate volume. Features raw, aggressive sound with great projection. The heavy weight produces a sharp chick sound and strong stick definition.

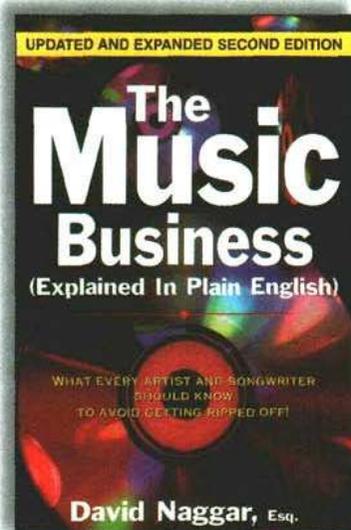
**For Your Information**

Next month's issue of *MD* will include a major feature dedicated to dozens of new drum products for 2000. So instead of focusing on similar items in this issue's *New And Notable*, we're taking a different approach. We want to bring your attention to several books and one video that cover different aspects of the music business, the spirituality of drumming, and ways to improve your career potential. You never know; a little research might earn big results!

## The Music Business (Explained In Plain English)

by David Naggar

Subtitled "What every artist and songwriter should know to avoid getting ripped off," this book offers tips and guidance regarding the legal aspects of the music business. Authored by David Naggar, a veteran entertainment attorney, this updated second edition is nonetheless written to be both informative and understandable to the lay reader. Topics include contracts, royalties, copyrights, record deals with major and independent labels, merchandising, and other business-related elements of being a professional performer. The book is priced at \$12.95, and will be available at all traditional bookstores as well as internet sites like Amazon and Barnes & Noble. It's published by DaJé Publishing, 1824 Beach St., San Francisco, CA 94123.



## Creative Recording II Microphones, Acoustics, Soundproofing & Monitoring

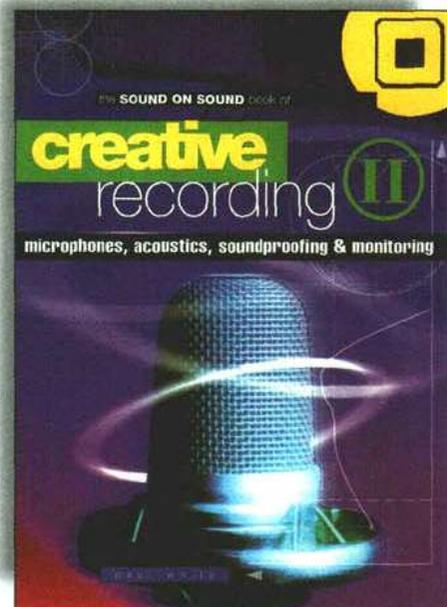
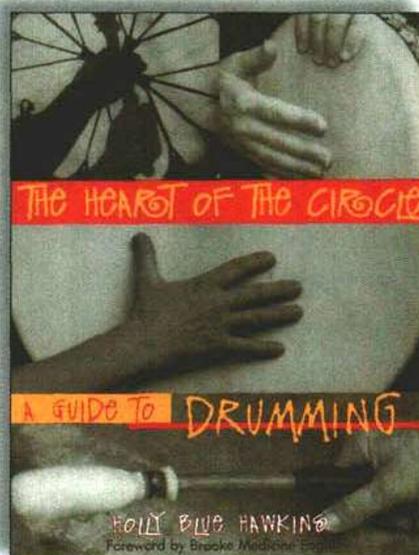
by Paul White

This is the follow-up to *Creative Recording I*, which covered effects and processors. Written in clear, jargon-free English by Paul White (editor of the British recording magazine *Sound On Sound*), Volume II examines different types of mic's used in studio recording, and provides guidance on recording voices and instruments in a number of situations. It also explains the basics of soundproofing, acoustic treatment, and studio monitoring—providing tips and solutions to many common problems. Included are dozens of diagrams and an exhaustive glossary. The book is priced at \$19.95. Published in the UK by Sanctuary Publishing, it's distributed to bookstores in the US by National Book Network, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706, tel: (301) 459-3366, fax: (301) 459-1705.

## The Heart Of The Circle—A Guide To Drumming

by Holly Blue Hawkins

*The Heart Of The Circle* is a different kind of drumming guide. It focuses on drumming as a means of communication, personal fulfillment, group unification, and relaxation—or simply as a fun activity for friends and family. Holly Blue Hawkins is a drum circle facilitator and counselor who invites her readers to connect with the musical side of their spirit, pick up a drum, and begin playing, either alone or in the close-knit setting of a drum circle. The book is priced at \$12.95 and is published by The Crossing Press, PO Box 1048, Freedom, CA 95019, tel: (831) 722-0711, fax: (831) 722-2749, [www.crossingpress.com](http://www.crossingpress.com).

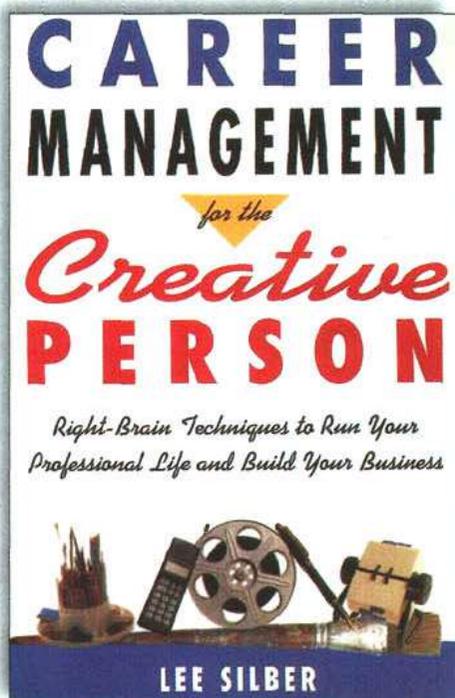


# Career Management For The Creative Person

by Lee Silber

Creative people can often be "organizationally challenged." Yet they still have to function in the working world. Lee Silber's book shows how anyone—no matter how scatterbrained or "artistic"—can develop a head for business and use their talents and creativity to survive and succeed. Topics include setting goals and sticking to them, finding the perfect job, bolstering your talents and playing down your weak points, and managing your time and your success.

The book is not specifically targeted toward drumming, or even toward music. However, Silber is himself a drummer, and his guidance can certainly be applied to all of the "artist-vs-professional" issues that regularly plague creative musicians. The book is priced at \$15. It's published by Three Rivers Press, 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY, tel: (212) 572-2537, fax: (212) 940-7868, [www.randomhouse.com](http://www.randomhouse.com).



# The Musician's Atlas

from Music Resource Group

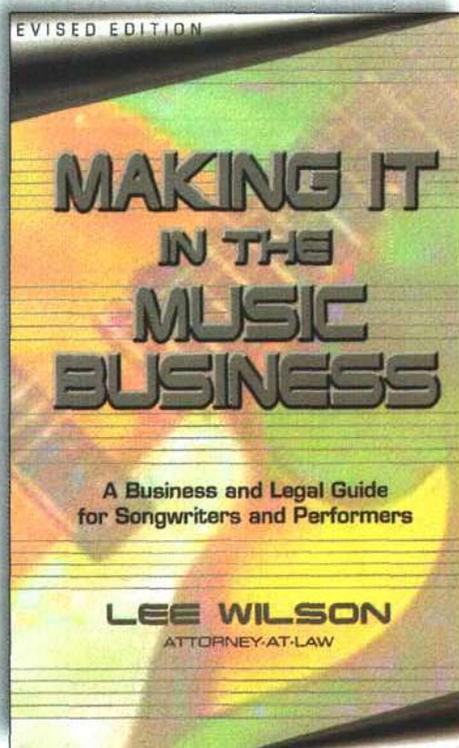
*The Musician's Atlas* bills itself modestly as "the most comprehensive networking resource created for the independent music community." The 352-page directory offers over 15,000 music industry contacts for anyone involved in artist development, performance, promotion, management, production, and other areas of the music business. The latest edition has been overhauled to accommodate new listings and newly qualified entries, including a section detailing radio stations and performance venues found on more than 550 college campuses throughout the US. Returning categories include clubs, radio stations, national and regional press, producers, studios, artist managers, booking agents, promotion companies, associations, conferences, showcases, distributors, and other businesses that support the indie music scene.

The *Atlas* also presents the thoughts of high-profile music-business executives and artists who embrace an independent spirit. Featured are Phish bassist Mike Gordon, Public Enemy leader Chuck D, Devo co-founder Mark Mothersbaugh, singer/songwriter/label owner Jonatha Brooke, Knitting Factory impresario Michael Dorf, and Al Teller, president of Atomic Pop.

The *Atlas* is priced at \$19.95. Those who wish to preview it and/or buy it online can surf to [www.MusiciansAtlas.com](http://www.MusiciansAtlas.com). The book can also be ordered from MRG (Music Resource Group) at (973) 509-9898.

# Making It In The Music Business

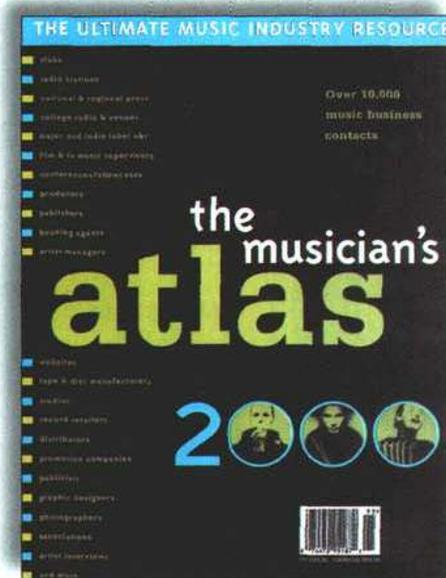
by Lee Wilson



Here's yet another book on how to succeed at the business of music. Attorney Lee Wilson tells songwriters and performers what they need to know to use the legal system to their advantage, protect their work from infringement, and launch a successful music career. The whole idea is to avoid making bad decisions—an all-too-common occurrence with young, eager musicians.

Topics presented include copyright law and protection, contracts, booking agents, managers, publishers, music lawyers, and trademarks and other protection. Wilson illustrates various aspects of the law with helpful scenarios and pop quizzes, making it easy to apply the information to real-world situations. Also included are sample copyright and trademark forms, along with an up-to-date list of resources for the beginning musician.

The book is priced at \$18.95. It's published by Allworth Press, 10 E. 23rd St., Suite 210, New York, NY 10010, tel: (212) 777-8395, fax: (212) 777-8261, [www.allworth.com](http://www.allworth.com).



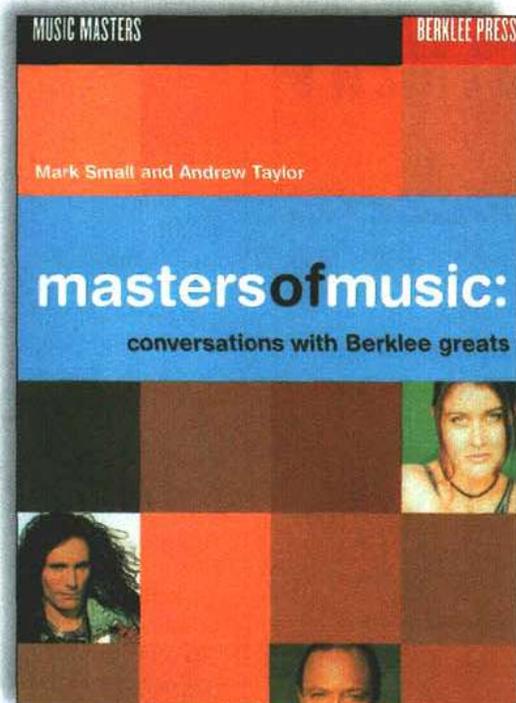
# Masters Of Music Conversations With Berklee Greats

by Mark Small and Andrew Taylor

If you've ever wondered how some of today's top musicians got where they are, here's a book that can provide some answers. Published by the press division of Boston's famed Berklee College of Music, the book contains interviews with thirty-one of music's most influential names. This first-ever collection gives professionals, students, and fans a peer-level view

of what it takes to make it in the music business. Featured music stars include Quincy Jones, Branford Marsalis, Paula Cole, Steve Vai, and drummers Terri Lyne Carrington, John "JR" Robinson, Steve Smith, and Vinnie Colaiuta.

The book is priced at \$24.95. It's available to consumers on the Berklee Press Web site, [www.berkleepress.com](http://www.berkleepress.com), and is distributed to bookstores by Hal Leonard Corporation, (800) 637-2852.



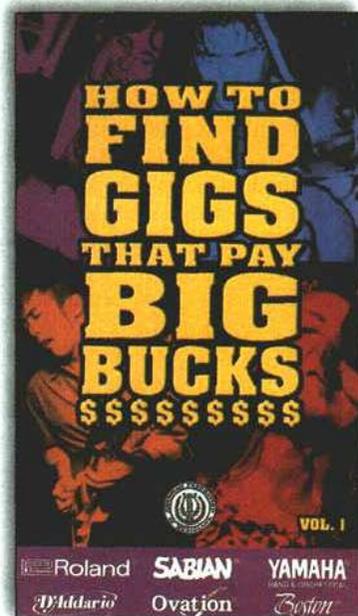
# How To Find Gigs That Pay Big Bucks

from Gigs Video

This 38-minute video features input on the music business from veterans like Bon Jovi guitarist Richie Sambora, *Tonight Show* bandleader Kevin Eubanks, rockers Kevin Cronin, Eric Schenkman, and Joe Satriani, Carnival Cruise-line booker J.B. Buccafusco, Riviera Casino entertainment director Steve Schirripa, concert promoter Glenn Donnelly, and festival promoter

Frank Malfitano. The production is jointly sponsored by the American Federation of Musicians, *Gig* magazine, and several musical-instrument manufacturers, including Roland, Sabian, and Yamaha.

In addition to video clips from the various individuals mentioned above, the Web site on which the video is sold—[www.gigsvideo.com](http://www.gigsvideo.com)—also carries links to advertisements from the sponsoring companies. So ordering the video can also lead to information on lots of products. The video is priced at \$19.95 plus \$4.50 shipping.



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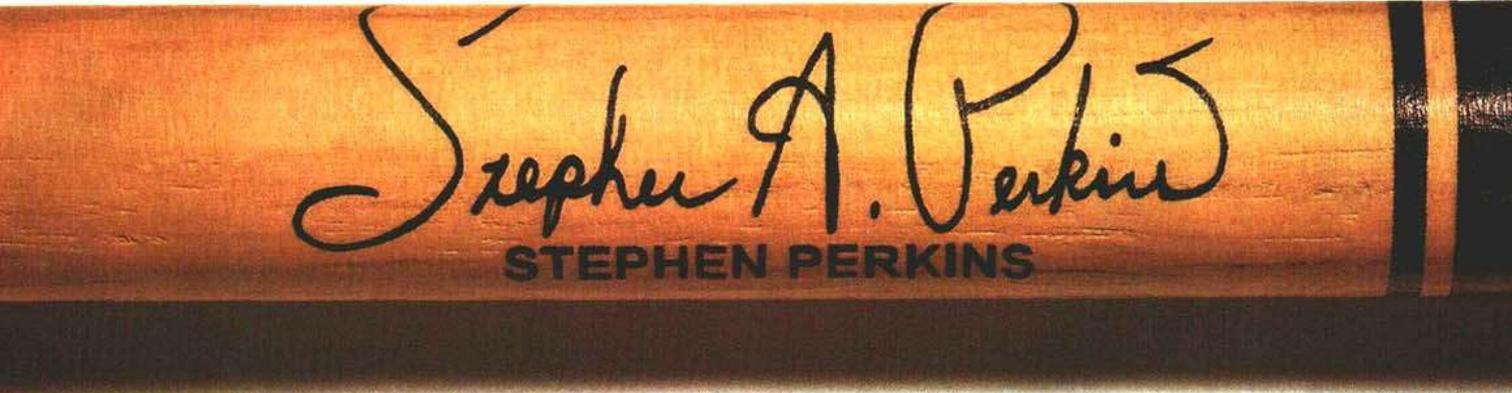
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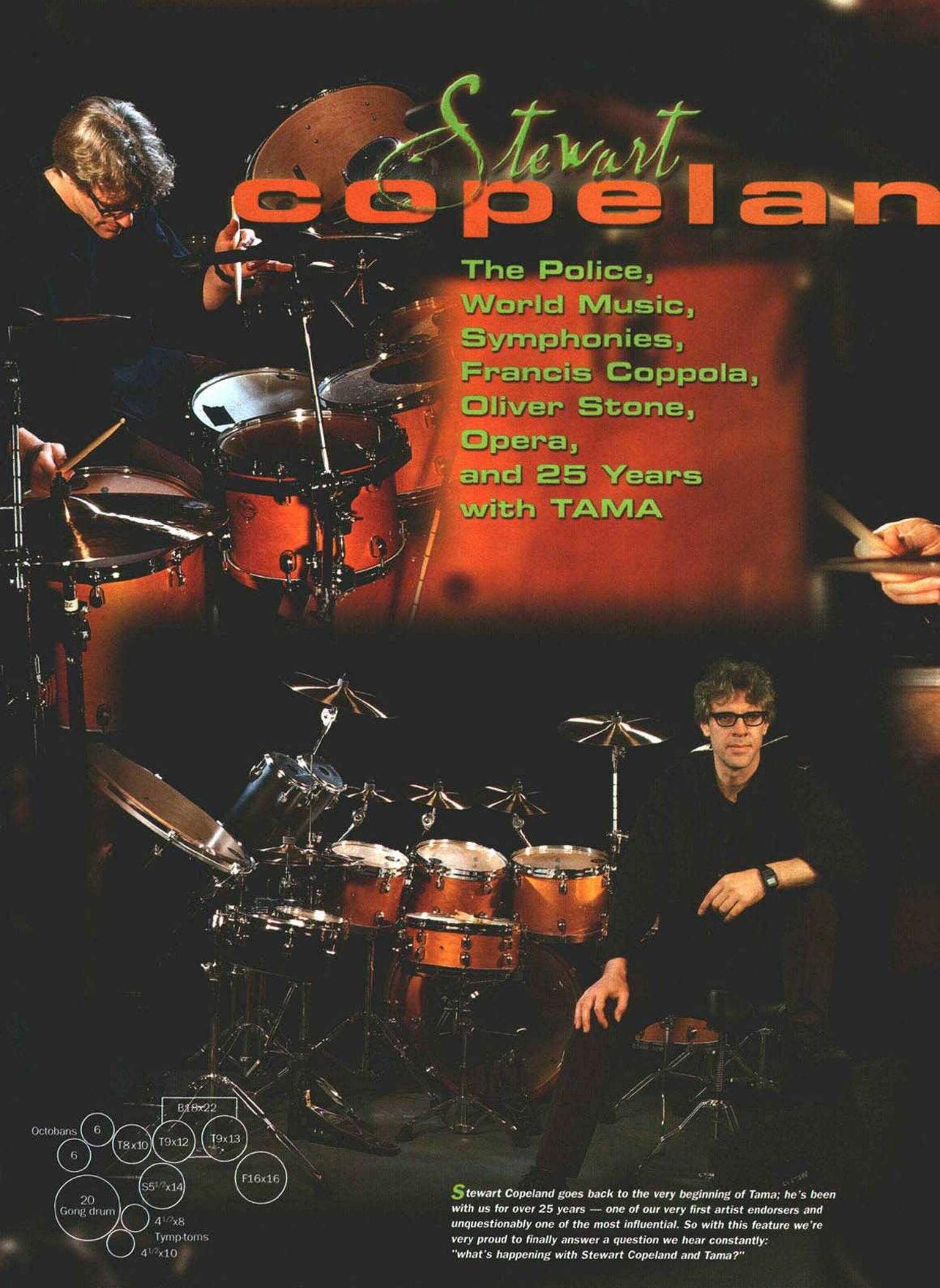
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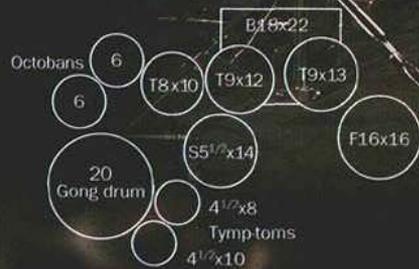
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# Stewart COPELAND

The Police,  
World Music,  
Symphonies,  
Francis Coppola,  
Oliver Stone,  
Opera,  
and 25 Years  
with TAMA



Stewart Copeland goes back to the very beginning of Tama; he's been with us for over 25 years — one of our very first artist endorsers and unquestionably one of the most influential. So with this feature we're very proud to finally answer a question we hear constantly: "what's happening with Stewart Copeland and Tama?"

d

Isn't being the founder and drummer of the Police and winning five Grammys in the process enough? How about being one of the top film and television composers in the business and working with Oliver Stone, Francis Ford Coppola and even film iconoclast John Waters? And composing for and performing with major symphony, ballet, and operatic orchestras? Or being one of the pioneers of introducing World Music to popular music through your performances in exotic locales from Brazil to Easter Island?

What more could you possibly want? Well, if you're a drummer, you want to play more drums. And fortunately for his many drum fans, that's just what Stewart Copeland is setting out to do.

"I seem to have achieved enough success in other areas to be able to indulge in my favorite sport, playing drums. I'm getting my chops back together. But after playing with a loud rock band and having the kind of technique you need for that, I'm into playing quietly now. I've actually got a whole new body of chops that come from playing very quietly — roughs and drags and cool stuff on the snare, little cool subtle things that involve high levels of technique. As a matter of fact, I was brought up on that kind of technique with very strict training, paradiddles and so forth; that's why I play orthodox grip. So I'm actually extremely old school as it turns out.

"One very big change is that I'm using drums in my recordings a lot more — I never even used myself for the last ten years of midi. Now I'm playing drums on my scores as well as recording live instruments in my 'cool new studio.' The Starclassics couldn't have come about at a better time. They've turned out to be the perfect recording drums."

Of course what everyone especially wants to know is when they can hear Stewart play live again. "Well, I've got the Rhythmatist tour next year. I'll be playing with the Oklahoma Ballet on the ballet 'Prey,' which I can't divulge too much about. I'm also twisting Michael Nyman's arm to let me have his band, but that's not set yet. As to the rest, I don't know where... and I don't know when...but you can be sure I'll be out there."



"I like to hang lots of little cymbals so these little arms that you can attach almost anywhere are cool. And I like the stands because you can climb around on them."  
(Pictured: three MCA63 cymbal holders with FastClamp clamping system, one HH905 hi-hat, one HTW89 double tom stand, one HC83B boom cymbal stand.)



"I actually need one more floor tom for coffee and towels." (Pictured: Starclassic maple drums in Honey Gold finish with Iron Cobra HP900P Powerglide bass drum pedal.)



"The Tymptoms and Octobans are for left handed snare substitutions. The Gong bass drum is really an overdub thing, but looks cool set up with the kit." (Also pictured: HH905 Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat.)

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## Chris Brady & Craftsmen Solid-Shell Snare Drums

Australia's drum guru has gone back into the woods.

Story by Rick Van Horn

Photos by Jim Esposito

The man who got drummers excited about snare drums from Australia is at it again. Although best known for the block-construction snares he's made since 1982, Chris Brady has come full circle. He is once again offering the one-piece solid-shell drums that were his first creation, back in 1980. (Those early models were prized by drummers the likes of Jeff Porcaro and Trilok Gurtu.)

The object of making a one-piece drumshell is that such a shell can resonate as one body, without the potential interference of glue seams, plies, or mixed materials. Indigenous Australian hardwoods like jarrah and wandoo are used in an effort to promote reflectivity, sensitivity, and resonance.

Personally, I can't think of a more labor-intensive way to make what is fundamentally a pretty simple instrument. Chris starts by cutting a slice out of a tree trunk. (Half the time he cuts the tree down himself.) Then he uses a chain saw and a sander to shape that slice into a cylindrical shape. Next, he bores out the inside of the cylinder, thus creating a drumshell. (It sounds a lot easier than it is, considering the difficulty of working with woods as hard as jarrah and wandoo.) Bearing edges are hand-cut, after which the shell is polished and given a clear gloss finish. Finally, the shell is drilled and fitted with hardware and heads.

### Details, Details

The 7x13 Wandoo drum we were sent had an identification sticker on the inside of the shell, indicating that it was made in August of 1999, and was serial number SW-001. This is the only time I've ever had the opportunity to review the very first drum of its kind!

The dark wandoo shell is approximately 3/8" thick. The inside of the shell is sanded smooth, but is otherwise left natural, with no coated finish. Bearing edges are cut on a 45° angle to the inside, with virtually no counter-cut to the outside. This provides a very sharp point of contact between the drumhead and the shell. And speaking of heads, the drum came fitted with a Remo Ambassador batter and a clear snare-side head.

The snare throw-off is a fairly large, block-style side-throw model. It had a very fluid action; it didn't "snap" on or off. Instead of a standard snare butt, the opposite side of the drum has the same throw-off without the lever mechanism, providing tension adjustment from both ends of the snares. The snares themselves are a standard 16-strand coiled-wire model.

The 5½x14 Jarrah drum was similar in most construction details to the wandoo model. The major difference (besides the shell material and size) was that it came fitted with a more diminutive snare throw-off and a standard snare butt instead of a second tension mechanism. It also had a Remo Fiberskyn 3 batter rather than a coated Ambassador.

Customized tube-style lugs and the natural grain structure of the hardwood shells give Brady snares a classy, attractive look. The wandoo particularly has a dark, swirling grain that's very distinctive. (It literally stopped pedestrian traffic in MD's office on several occasions.) To Brady's credit, there is no nameplate or logo badge to interfere with the look of the shell. The company identifies itself only by a decal showing a drummer in a classic grenadier-style uniform. The decal is gold on the dark wandoo shell, black on the light jarrah shell. It's understated and very tasteful.





Solid Bradys: 7x13 wandoo (top) and 5½x14 jarrah

## Hits

- dramatic natural wood-grain appearance
- outstanding sensitivity
- jarrah drum offers broad acoustic character

## Misses

- wandoo drum a little mid-rangy with Ambassador head

### Solid Sound

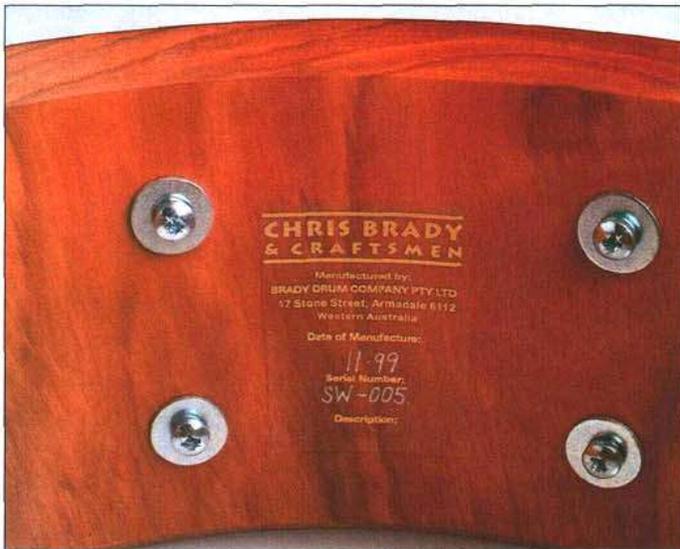
I have experience with Brady block snares; I own two and I've reviewed others. So I can't say I was surprised at the acoustic performance of the solid one-piece snares. But I sure enjoyed it.

What these drums offer that many others do not is unparalleled sensitivity and response at virtually any volume level or tuning range. The dense, hard shells reflect sound the way metal shells do. But they also add their own warm, woody character. And there is also a richness and depth to the sound that only wood can provide.

The wandoo drum had some idiosyncrasies, owing perhaps to its size. Due to its 7" depth, it always had a deep underlying tone, even if the head was cranked up for a high-pitched crack. The drum's 13" diameter, on the other hand, kept the overall tonality a little toward the high side, even if the head was tuned down into "fatback" range. This combination of factors made the drum a little tricky to tune with the supplied Ambassador-weight head. Unless I tensioned and muffled that head just right, the drum tended to sound a little mid-rangy and very ringy.

A swap to a self-muffled Remo PowerStroke 3 batter gave the drum a lot more definition and crack, without sacrificing any of the underlying power and depth. A 7"-deep drum provides a lot of room for sound to bounce around in, and the P3 head seemed to add just the touch of control that was needed. With it, I could achieve a wide range of tuning, all the while maintaining the drum's other outstanding performance characteristics.

The 5½x14 jarrah drum was my favorite of the two Brady drums (although it was a tough choice). Its more standard dimen-



This interior view of the jarrah shell shows the nature of the solid-wood shell. Also shown is Brady's identification decal, giving the month and year of manufacture and a serial number.



Attractive tube lugs, a contemporary snare throw-off, and beautifully figured grain distinguish the wandoo drum.

sions helped to give it a broader, less pointed sound than its wandoo cousin. The Fiberskyn 3 batter head complemented this characteristic perfectly, helping the drum to create a warm, rich tone. Yet there was still that patented Brady sensitivity. I absolutely *loved* the sound of this drum when I played it with brushes; it responded to everything from a whispery "swish" across the head to a sharp snap of the wrist.

But this baby wasn't meant only for lounge gigs. When I played it hard with sticks, that full-bodied tone blended with the snare sensitivity to shout out with authority. I can see this drum in any performance situation, but especially on a studio date. It was simply a joy to play.

### Gotta Get 'Em

Okay, they're expensive. I can't argue with that. But they also offer unequaled acoustic performance and dramatic appearance. And there aren't going to be very many of them in the entire world. Given that exclusivity and uniqueness, I'd have to say that with these beauties, you'll definitely get what you pay for.

Chris Brady & Craftsmen drums are available from selected dealers or direct from the factory. The solid, one-piece drums are only offered by special order. Such an order will generate a dialog between the customer and Chris Brady himself, who will be personally involved in the creation of each drum. Check out the Brady Web site, [www.bradydrums.com](http://www.bradydrums.com), for a dealer listing (along with some interesting history on the company and its products).

### Solid Evidence

7x13 wandoo snare, natural gloss finish:	\$2,000
5½x14 jarrah snare, natural gloss finish:	\$2,000

# LP Aspire Congas And Bongos

## Playability and affordability in one package

by Mark Parsons

### Hits

- excellent construction quality and sound at affordable price
- wood congas offer good bass tones
- fiberglass congas are extremely light in weight
- bongos feature curved rims for playing comfort

### Misses

- fiberglass drums are missing some low frequencies
- wood drums are quite heavy

### Aspire Congas

Latin Percussion's Aspire line features entry-level congas and bongos aimed at the student or beginning player. LP's outwardly similar Cosmic Percussion (CP) Combo Congas previously filled this niche, but the new models are more than just re-badged CP drums. Besides now being associated with the highly respected LP brand name, the Aspires boast some very real improvements over their predecessors. We'll discuss these changes in a minute, but first let's get an overview of what's offered in this new product line.

Instead of the traditional sizes of 11", 11¾", and 12½" (for quinto, conga, and tumba, respectively), Aspire congas come in 10", 11", and 12" sizes, all 28" tall. They are available in wood or fiberglass, with three finishes available for wood and two for 'glass. On top of this, there are two different stand options (basket stand and double stand), and the drums are available singly or as packages. The package option offers two drums (10" & 11" or 11" & 12") plus either the double stand or a pair of baskets. I'll leave the math to you, but it's clear there is enough variety here to meet almost anyone's needs. Now for a closer look at what makes them tick.

### Construction, Fit, And Finish

Let's start with the wood congas. They're made from Siam oak (alternately known as Asian oak or Thai oak). The shells are made from staves, which are pinned and glued together in two layers, or plies. (As a point of reference, some budget congas only have one ply, while LP uses three plies on their higher-end drums.)

The side plates are of the LP "heart" design, and the rims are improved over the CP design by virtue of a rounder curve for more playing comfort. The above parts, as well as the metal ring on the bottom of the shell and the stand bracket (if applicable) are all in black powdercoat, giving the drums a nicely finished look. The tension hooks—five on the 10" and 11" drums and six on the 12"—are chrome plated.

The heads are made from water buffalo hide, as are all of LP's conga heads. They feature another improvement over their predecessor in that they're tucked instead of sewn. I used to have a CP conga with a sewn head. It would never really tune up right or hold its tuning. I'm happy to report that with the Aspires this problem has gone away. Removing the heads revealed the shell edges to be smooth, rounded, and well finished, with no dips, chips, or other potentially sound-deadening flaws.

The oak Aspires are available in "dark wood," "red wood," and "natural" finishes. The first two are semi-transparent stains that let the grain show, covered with a clear glossy lacquer. Our review wood congas were in the natural finish, which is a clear glossy lacquer applied over the sanded but unstained oak. The quality of the finish was very good. My overall impression was that these drums are as well made as they are attractive.

The fiberglass congas sport essentially the same features, hardware, and heads as the wood models. They do add a 1" metal reinforcing band around the waist of the drum (finished in the same black powdercoat as the sideplates and rims). The big difference, of course,

is the shell material. LP states that the fiberglass used in their drums has a lot of matting in it, resulting in a stronger shell. I'm not an expert on fiberglass, but the shells seemed well made, with no evidence of cracks, voids, or other structural defects. The fiberglass Aspires



are available in either a red or a black glossy finish. Our review drums were red, and as with the wood congas the finish was well done.

### Stand Options

The basket stand available for the Aspire congas is a clever—if somewhat utilitarian—design. Instead of a different stand for each of the three drum sizes, there is one model that can be assembled in three different ways, depending on which drum it's intended to hold. The top of the stand is comprised of three angular "C"-shaped pieces of metal that bolt together to form a six-sided ring. Depending on which set of bolt holes you choose to use (inner for quinto, middle for conga, outer for tumba), you can assemble the stand to fit any of the Aspires. Ditto for the legs. They're not telescopic in the typical sense, but they do have multiple bolt holes so they can be assembled to hold the congas at various heights. The result is a stable, three-legged basket stand (complete with rubber bumpers to protect the shell), finished in black enamel. No, you can't quickly adjust the height, and no, they don't collapse for transport. But they're functional, and two or more will nest together when it's time to pack up.

The double stand, on the other hand, will be instantly familiar to



drummers. It's basically a short, two-section cymbal stand, complete with chrome plating, rubber feet, and a memory lock. The difference is that instead of a tilter on top, there's a small square platform with two captive bolts on either side, along with a pair of rubber-coated "Y"-shaped bumpers to cradle the shell. Each conga shell is fitted with a small bracket with two horizontal ears. The bracket slips over the bolts on the stand, you tighten down a couple of wingnuts, and *presto*—instant hanging conga. This is a *double* conga stand; you need two drums for it to balance. But all the Aspire congas have the mounting bolts for this bracket, so if you start with only one drum it's simple to upgrade to a double stand later.

I really like the double stand. It's quickly adjustable, is stable in use, folds up in a snap, and is a bit more elegant onstage than the industrial-looking basket stands. For one or three drums, the basket stand is pretty much your only option. (And don't get me wrong—they work just fine.) But for those considering a pair of congas, I'd recommend the double stand. The price is about the same, either way.

### In Use

Our review congas consisted of 10", 11", and 12" wood drums and 10" and 11" fiberglass models. The first thing I did (after giving the heads a day to acclimate) was put the 10" and 11" congas of both types on stands, and then tune both pairs to the same pitches for comparison purposes. Before I played a single note, one difference was immediately apparent: The fiberglass drums were lighter, even with the extra weight of the steel belly band around their middle. Analysis with a highly scientific instrument (my bathroom scale) revealed that while the 11" 'glass conga weighed 14 pounds, the oak drum of the same size weighed in at 22 pounds, for an increase of over 50%.

Next it was time to listen to the drums, again starting with the wood models. They tuned up easily, and I had no problem getting each drum into a range where it would produce pleasing, musical-sounding tones. The oak Aspires sounded very nice, producing ringing open tones over a fairly broad tuning range. There was a lot of pop on slaps, especially on the 10" drum. Bass tones were also good—maybe not as deep as a full-sized tumba with a 30" shell, but not bad for 10" and 11" drums with only 28" of depth. The 12" Aspire was also very nice, having a similar timbre to its smaller brethren. Played together, the three drums had a warm, woody "family" character about them, so they integrated well as a trio.

The fiberglass congas had a similar top end, but they lacked some of the rounder wooden tones of the oak congas, and had less low-end response. Slaps were similar, and open tones were in the same ballpark (albeit with slightly less singing quality). But in an A/B comparison of typical "palm strike in middle of head" bass tones, the results were different. The oak drum yielded the usual sustained bass undertone. With the fiberglass conga you heard the hand striking the head, followed by a much more subdued bass tone. Perhaps a thinner bottom end is a natural result of having such a light shell? The trade-off may be acceptable to you, depending on your situation. But you should audition both types of congas first to make sure.

## Conclusions And Prices

With the Aspires, LP set out to build congas for the student/beginner market. They've succeeded at this—in spades. But they've done even more.

Full disclosure here: I'm not a full time *conguero*. I'm a drumset player who wants to get his feet wet in Afro-Cuban percussion without spending a grand or more on a pair of congas. For those in a similar situation (and I think there are a number of us), the Aspires are a perfect choice. They're well-made, they look and sound good, they record well, and I wouldn't be embarrassed (my own playing aside!) to use them on any stage at any time.

My only reservations have to do with the aforementioned bass response of the fiberglass models. Unless you really need the light weight, or you plan to play in a downpour (in which case you'd have to swap to synthetic heads anyway), I'd recommend the oak models. But either way, the Aspires are quite a value. The list price is reasonable, and the street price on a pair of Aspires with a stand is a steal.

## Aspire Bongos

Aspire bongos share most of the features of the congas: They have shells of either Siam oak or fiberglass, and they are available in the same finishes. The hardware is finished in the same black powdercoat, and the four tension hooks (which are identical to the conga hooks except for length) are also chromed. The main differences in construction are that the oak shells are single-ply instead of 2-ply, and the heads are made of rawhide instead of water buffalo hide (and are consequently much thinner). Both of these changes make perfect sense when constructing bongos.

The macho drum is 6 7/8" in diameter, while the hembra is 8". Depth on both drums is 6 7/8". As with the Aspire congas, these sizes are slightly smaller than traditional sizes (usually 7 1/4" and 8 5/8" in diameter). But, like their taller cousins, the bongos work very well at their given size.

The hardware is in the traditional Cuban style: A welded steel ring on the bottom of the shell has four "ears" through which the tension hooks pass. The only non-traditional aspect here (and a definite improvement, in my opinion) is that the rim is curved to make things more comfortable for your hands.

After experiencing the significant weight difference between the oak and fiberglass congas, I expected the same thing to apply to the bongos. This was not the case—both pairs of bongos weighed the same (about 9 pounds per pair). While heavier bongos do exist, these are no lightweight toys. The sturdy construction and welded steel hardware give them a very substantial feel.

Sonically, these drums are also substantial. Tuned tightly (as they almost always are), the machos had a nice, bright, cracking tone. The hembras had a good open tone that was predominantly mids and highs. Bass tones weren't earth-shaking, but were about what you might expect from an 8" bongo. Possibly because there wasn't the difference in the weight of the shells (as there was with the congas), there wasn't a marked discrepancy between the sound



of the oak bongos and the fiberglass ones. The wood drums had a slightly rounder timbre, but the difference was slight.

My overall take on the LP Aspire bongos is much the same as with the Aspire congas. Yes, these are great for beginner/student players, but they're also a good match for the experienced drummer who's interested in getting into hand drumming without breaking the bank.

## Aspirations

### LP Aspire congas

<b>Shell construction:</b>	2-ply oak staves or fiberglass
<b>Available finishes:</b>	In oak: natural, dark wood stain, red stain In fiberglass: red, black
<b>Heads:</b>	Water buffalo, tucked
<b>Sizes:</b>	10", 11", 12" (all 28" tall)
<b>Hardware:</b>	Black powdercoated steel w/chrome tension hooks
<b>Rims:</b>	EZ Curve
<b>Number of lugs:</b>	<b>10" &amp; 11": 5, 12": 6</b>
<b>Prices:</b>	10" conga: \$170 11" conga: \$175 12" conga: \$180 Basket stand: \$50 Double stand: \$95 10" & 11" pair with either type of stand: \$399 11" & 12" pair with either type of stand: \$409

### LP Aspire bongos

<b>Shell construction:</b>	Oak staves or fiberglass
<b>Available finishes:</b>	In oak: natural, dark wood stain, red stain In fiberglass: red, black
<b>Heads:</b>	Rawhide, tucked
<b>Sizes:</b>	6 7/8" & 8" (both 6 7/8" tall)
<b>Hardware:</b>	Black powdercoated steel w/chrome tension hooks
<b>Rims:</b>	EZ Curve
<b>Number of lugs:</b>	4
<b>Price:</b>	\$99 per pair

# Sabian PRO Sonix Cymbals

These cymbals are like the Rockies: high and wide!

by Chap Ostrander

## Hits

- entire line offers a combination of pronounced high end and full-bodied response
- all bells have clarity and cut
- affordable pricing

Sabian's PRO line has been very popular since its inception. That's largely because it offers bright, focused sounds at a very reasonable price—making it especially appealing to young drummers playing amplified music on a budget. Because they're made of B8 uni-rolled bronze (an alloy of 92% copper and 8% tin), PRO cymbals emphasize high-frequency brilliance, producing lots of cut and penetration. With a line that's already proved successful, Sabian could easily have decided to rest on their cymbalistic laurels and just sell away....

## From PROS To Poetry

Well, that's not Sabian's style. They wanted to see if they could make a good thing even better, so they started "tinkering" with the PRO design. They discovered that they could expand the capabilities of the PRO line through the use of large-peen hammering that's hand-guided in a linear pattern from the bell to the edge of each cymbal. The theory is that the sound "shoots" down the path created by the hammering, effectively widening the overtone output. The result is what Sabian calls "Extended Bandwidth Response."

The theory continues to state that because the bandwidth is wider, it is more controllable in the studio, giving you more flexibility in shaping your sound. Sabian gave these new wider-bandwidth models a brilliant finish to further tailor their sound, and dubbed them the PRO Sonix series.

Enough about theory. Let's see how they sound.

## Rides (Medium)

**Available Sizes: 20", 21", 22"**

**Size Tested: 20"**

The PRO Sonix ride has a high fundamental pitch for plenty of cut, but with a complex undercurrent. I compared it to my old Sabian 20" AA medium ride, and found the PRO Sonix to have a more clearly defined high voice. Another interesting discovery in my side-to-side comparison occurred when I struck each cymbal once, as if playing a single ride beat, and then dampened the cymbal using two fingers. My AA ride stopped vibrating almost at once, while the PRO Sonix took several seconds to stop. My impression was that there was lots going on inside it; that radial hammering pattern was definitely hard at work.

Stick response is lively and active on the PRO Sonix ride. Even very quick ride patterns come through with great clarity.

And just where did Sabian go for the metal in these cymbals anyway—The Land of Killer Bells? *Every* cymbal that I tested had amazing bell clarity and cut—and I mean from the ride right down to the splashes. Stunning!

## Crashes (Thin)

**Available Sizes: 14", 15", 16", 17", 18", 19"**

**Size Tested: 16", 18"**

The crashes that I tested were both quick and powerful when I struck them with sticks. As you'd expect there was loads of high



end, but both crashes also had a wide range of frequencies happening underneath. They also responded beautifully to mallets. They didn't seem to have a ceiling; the sound continued to expand as I kept playing.

Stick response was excellent on both cymbals. In fact, either one could be considered as an alternate ride source (in the right setting, of course). There was some buildup when I played ride patterns, but it didn't reach overwhelming levels, and the patterns came through clearly. I found it impressive that the cymbals could respond to slight changes in playing and subtle nuances, yet at the same time hold their own in any musical setting.

### Chinese (Thin)

**Available Sizes: 16", 18"**

**Size Tested: 18"**

The PRO Sonix China cymbal has an unusual profile. The flanged area starts farther in than on most China types, making the "lip" larger than I've seen before. Conversely, the bell is fairly small. Are these criticisms? Absolutely not! This is a delicious China with a unique blend of trashiness, high-end voicing, and fire throughout.

Whether or not the cymbal is inverted, the wider lip gives you more to work with in terms of playing area. I tried playing it right-side-up (does anyone still do that anymore?) and found that I could ride on the lip or on the shoulder area beneath the bell. The sound of the shoulder was a bit more "gongy" than the lip. (Whether that's good or bad depends on the sound you're looking for.) With the cymbal inverted, I got more stick-to-cymbal contact. I could find reasons to use it either way.

Stick response for ride patterns was fine. And when struck with mallets, the PRO Sonix China turned out heat like an oven, giving back whatever I put into it. From the slightest stroke to a prolonged roll, it stayed right with me.

### Hi-Hats (Medium-Heavy Top/Heavy Bottom)

**Available Sizes: 13", 14"**

**Size Tested: 14"**

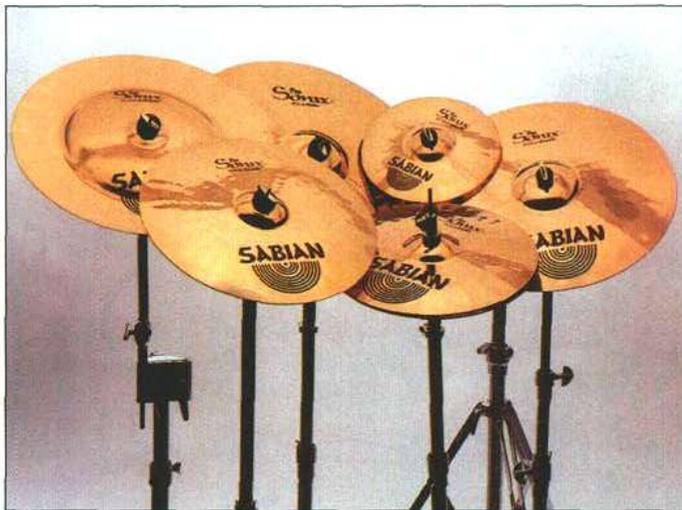
Simply put, I loved these hi-hats. The "chick" sound was strong and sharp, providing lots of foot control. Articulation of sticking patterns from 8th to 16th notes was clean and clear. The hats responded well whether I had my foot down tight, loose, or anything in between. Accents using the pedal came through with clarity. The bottom cymbal had a distinct bell-like sound to it, while the top was almost glassy. The set worked great in conjunction with the ride cymbal. These hats would cut through any big band. Or any rock band. Or any metal band. You get the picture.

### Splashes (Extra-Thin)

**Available Sizes: 8", 10", 12"**

**Size Tested: 10"**

To keep up with the times and popularity of modern cymbal demands, most cymbals (even in the thin and extra-thin ranges) are thicker and heavier than I remember thin cymbals to be. This doesn't mean there's anything wrong with them. Drummers from Stewart Copeland to Manu Katche to Carter Beauford have popularized the use of splashes in full-bodied form, rather than the vaudevillian sound of hitting and choking the splash immediately.



Splashes are used now more for accents and color, exploding with little flashes of brilliance. This is definitely the forte of the PRO Sonix splash. It has a bright singing quality, with loads of projection. The uni-rolled alloy gives it lots of cut, while the Sonix tempering fills it out.

### Super Sonix

Sabian tells me that PRO Sonix cymbals were immediate best-sellers upon their introduction. Having played them, I don't doubt it. Session player Jonathan Mover was involved in their concept and development. Jonathan's gigs range from country to metal, and his cymbals need to serve him equally well in all those situations. The PRO Sonix series meets that requirement. The cymbals keep the penetrating cut of their PRO cousins, but offer a wider frequency range and greater musical sensitivity. So they have the versatility to be used in many settings. And they do it all at a price that's *still* attractively affordable. Grab a chance to hear them.

Cymbal Arithmetic	
8" Splash	\$75
10" Splash	\$91
12" Splash	\$96
13" Hats (pair)	\$204
14" Hats (pair)	\$222
14" Crash	\$111
15" Crash	\$132
16" Crash	\$150
17" Crash	\$159
18" Crash	\$168
19" Crash	\$186
16" Chinese	\$150
18" Chinese	\$168
20" Ride	\$201
21" Ride	\$216
22" Ride	\$231

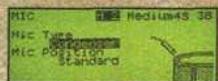


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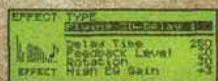
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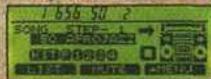
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## JAPANESE SENSATION

# AKIRA JIMBO

### *Breaking Down Barriers*

Story by T. Bruce Wittet

**F**orgive my skepticism, but sometimes when I watch drum clinicians go about their solitary business, I'm thinking, That's all well and good, but can they play with a band?

No question, those were my thoughts the first time I saw Japanese drumming sensation Akira Jimbo. Let's put it this way: Jimbo doesn't need a band. Balancing nimble Afro-Cuban rhythmic excursions with elegant electronic compositions, his feet keep busy on several pedals while his hands dart from acoustic toms to rubber trigger pads. To be honest, it's kind of spooky. These massive chunks of eerie sonic

textures appear out of nowhere, then vaporize. Through it all, however, there's never a doubt about the *status quo*: Akira's drums always sound like real drums, his electronics like electronics.

It's important to note that Jimbo is not chasing pre-recorded sequences or playing along to a DAT. He's creating electronic music on the spot. Better still, as he pulls off these feats of real-time mastery, he is clearly having fun.

But that nagging issue: Can he play with a band? Well, something happened to put that question to rest. The day before our interview, Yamaha held a special "Groove Night" at SIR rehearsal studios in

Photos by Alex Solca

Hollywood—part of the company's winter NAMM (National Association Of Music Merchants) celebrations. A house band played and, one by one, famous drummers sat in—Marotta, Weckl, Erskine, Covington, Carrington, Acuna, and finally the drummer Jimbo reveres most, Steve Gadd.

Then it was Akira's turn. He got up behind the house kit, made an adjustment to his Yamaha signature snare drum, and then counted in Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On." Something magical happened to the time. People in the audience stirred and smiled. Some pointed to Akira's left hand,

the source of a backbeat that sounded more Motown than Motown. When he was done, Akira Jimbo, master of polyrhythms on the extended drumset, had played maybe three fills. No polyrhythms, no electronics. Just groove, pure and simple. And the crowd rose, acknowledging his place among peers.

Get ready for Akira Jimbo. His clinics, MD Festival appearance, and four Warner/DCI videos are making him a potent force in drumming. A native of Tokyo, his command of English might not be perfect, yet he is perfectly clear on the main points, as you will see. We led off with biographical highlights.



**Akira:** I was born in Japan in 1959. I started to play drums when I was seventeen—that's late, I know, but drums were not so popular in Japan. We had a small plot of land. People live in small houses, and there was no room to put drumkits. And neighbors don't like them!

My first instrument was piano, but I didn't like the lessons so I stopped and

switched to guitar. I still play the guitar, but not good; I use it for composing. So drums is my third instrument.

One big reason I started to play them was listening to Steve Gadd. He changed my life. Before I listened to Gadd, I was thinking that the drums were just background instruments. But when I heard Steve, his drums sounded as if they were

the main thing in the music—the foundation of the music. That was my impression. I decided I had to play.

**MD:** I understand you met Steve Gadd a few years ago. What kind of things did you ask him?

**Akira:** I just shook hands and asked him for his autograph. You know, I got so much inspiration from his playing that I had nothing verbal for him.

**MD:** Your sound doesn't have a lot to do with Steve Gadd.

**Akira:** Akira Jimbo is Akira Jimbo. Each guy should be different. I like the playing *concept* of Steve Gadd very much: how to apply rudimental things, for example, though not specific stickings, such as right, left, right, left, right, right, and so on. I copied a lot, but I tried to add my own ideas.

**MD:** Did you have any formal instruction?

**Akira:** Not really. I bought albums if Steve Gadd's name was on them, [laughs] He was playing all different kinds of music: jazz, folk, and Top-40. My favorite one was *Aja*, and maybe *Gauche*, both by Steely Dan. And there was "Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover" by Paul Simon—the famous beat. First I figured out what he was doing, then I tried to use it in other ways. I'd turn it around or just use different parts of it.

I also liked Harvey Mason, David Garibaldi, and Peter Erskine with Weather Report. There were Japanese drummers, too. One was Ponta; he's very famous and plays all styles, from rock to jazz. He's a little older-generation than me, but he's very good.

**MD:** Were your parents sufficiently wealthy to help you buy your first drumset?

**Akira:** Yes. My father was a bass player—not a professional one, he's a banker—and he was understanding of my musical urges. My first setup was simple: just two toms, bass, snare, one ride, and two crashes. When I went to high school, he got me that drumkit, but at that time I wasn't interested. I played, but I was bored, so I stopped. The drums went into storage.

Steve Gadd changed that. I was listening to a radio station that was playing Bob James' first album. He played a famous classical tune, "Night On Bald Mountain," rearranged for jazz. It was so amazing that drums were the main instrument—not in a



*“When we practice, we use our brain—we think. But once we get on stage, we should just feel.”*

*solo* sense—but they were still the main thing.

**MD:** I'm assuming that you started playing matched grip. Can you tell us about your elegance and that graceful way you have adapted your grip to come down on the crash cymbal?

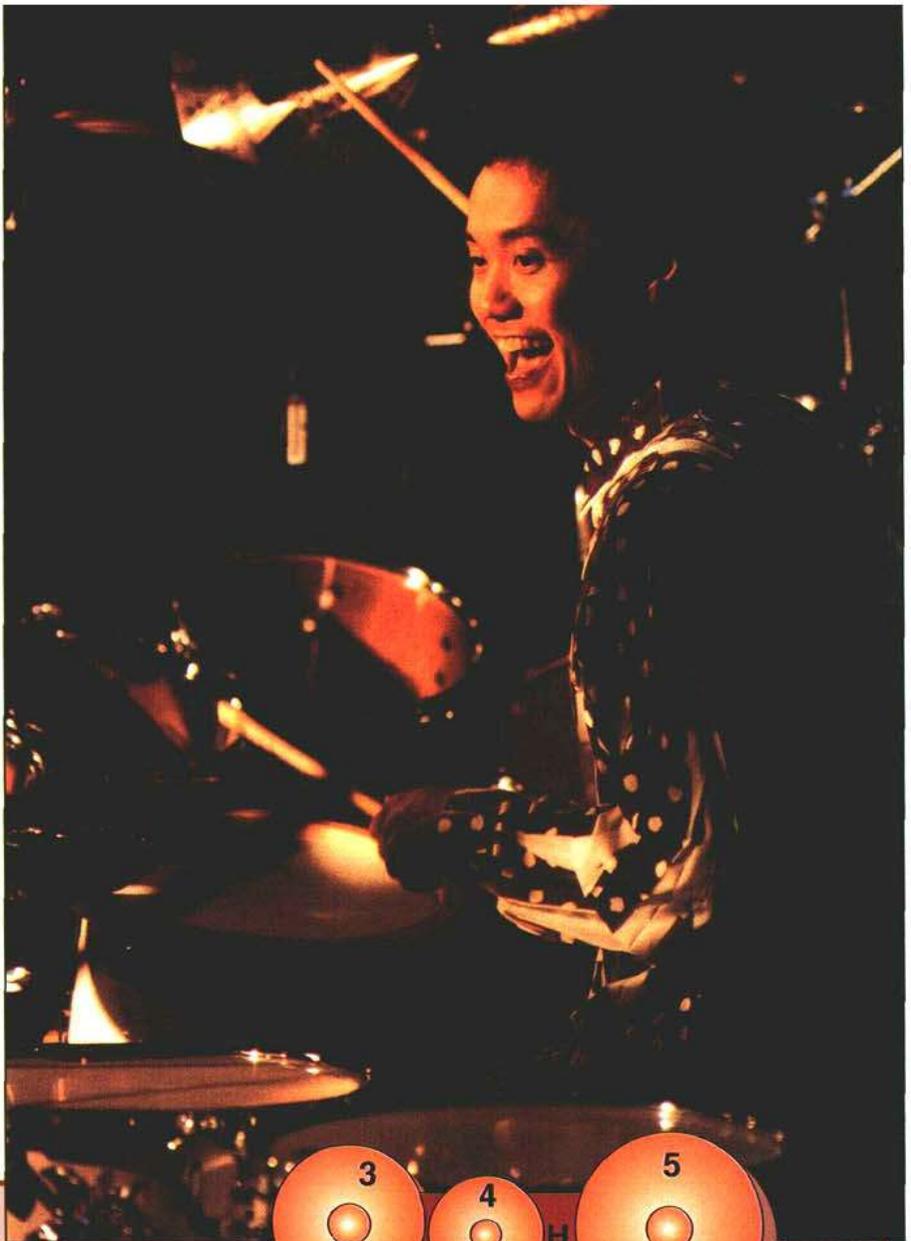
**Akira:** I play like this, from the top of the cymbal. [Akira demonstrates a side-to-side pivot, not the usual up and down motion, with his right hand.] It's less arm, more wrist. It's just a natural thing I came up with. There were no drum teachers in Japan at the time, although there are now. There were no drum schools, and it was difficult to get books. Eventually I got copies of the Gadd video and others.

I never think about my form, but I do try to keep my back straight. I don't like to play hunched over; that's very bad for you. Good posture is most comfortable for me.

Basically, I keep my heel up on the pedal. I don't keep my heel down unless it's a very quiet song. I saw professional drummers who did that, so I tried to emulate it.

**MD:** Are you an artist of some sort? You have a unique sense of *balance*, even in your clothes. In your videos, you change outfits for each segment. It goes right down to your shoes: one red, one blue.

**Akira:** I like clothes! [laughs] Everybody asks about the red and blue shoes. I don't know the answer...but I think it's hip.



## Akira's Equipment

**Drumset:** Yamaha Beech Custom in white sparkle finish

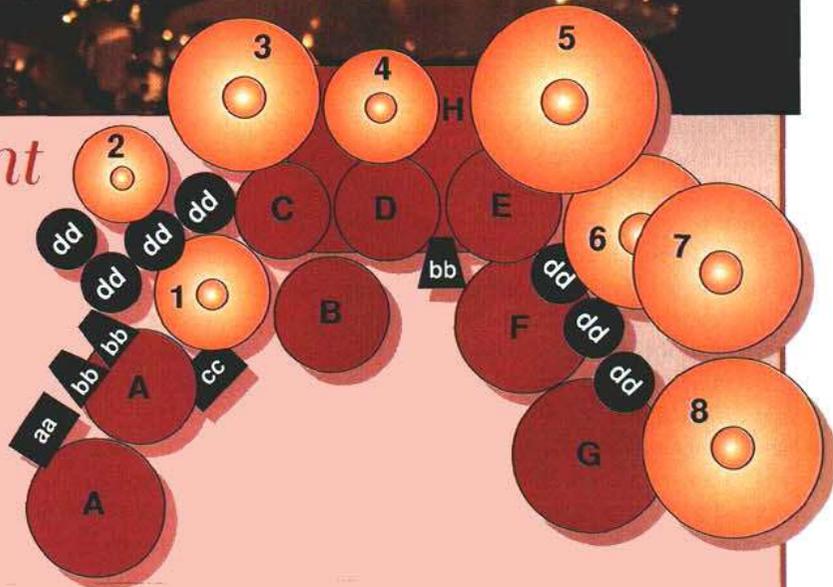
- A. 14" and 13" LP Alex Acuna model timbales
- B. 7x13 Akira Jimbo signature snare (with wood hoops)
- C. 8x8 tom
- D. 9x10 tom
- E. 10x12 tom
- F. 12x14 mounted floor tom
- G. 14x16 mounted floor tom
- H. 18x22 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 13" A Custom hi-hats
- 2. 9" Oriental Trash splash
- 3. 17" A Custom crash
- 4. 12" K splash brilliant
- 5. 20" K Custom Dark ride (or K Constantinople medium)
- 6. 15" Azuka multi-crash
- 7. 18" A China Low brilliant
- 8. 19" A medium-thin crash

**Other:**

- aa. LP Jam Block
- bb. cowbell



cc. Jam Block (played with foot)

dd. Yamaha TP80S pad

**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassador on snare batter, clear Emperors on tops of toms, Powerstroke 3 on bass drum

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Akira Jimbo signature model

**Electronics:** Yamaha DTX drum trigger system



*"I used to get nervous, but not anymore. Now that I've played for many famous drummers, I realize that music is not a competition"*

**MD:** Same with your setup. Whenever I see a drummer with such a balanced layout, I conclude they're artistic. Your toms are evenly spaced left to right.

**Akira:** I like my setup to look good; looks are very important to me. I set up my cymbals high, but it's comfortable. If I set them high, I have to use a *dynamic* motion, whereas if the cymbals are low, I play like this. [Akira gives a casual swipe through the air.] Higher, it looks more graceful, and it's natural for me to have them higher.

**MD:** Can you tell me about your choice of drums?

**Akira:** I had already been playing Yamaha drums for twenty-two years; my first set was Yamaha. Then I joined a university big band. They had drums, but not Yamaha. They were old Gretsch and they sounded very bad. I don't think they were well-treated, and they were in bad shape. I told the band director that we needed new

drums. At that time, Gadd was playing Yamaha's YD9000 series—this was before the Recording Custom series—in natural wood finish. I convinced the school to get the same setup. For my taste, Yamaha always made the best products, sound-wise and quality-wise.

I tune the bass drum very low—as low as possible. It's so low, I can turn the tension rod easily by hand—there's no resistance. I like the depth and there's less decay. I prefer a solid slap sound from the bass drum, one that hits you in the chest.

I tune my snare very high—as high as possible. My signature snare drum has a specific configuration, 7x13, which is a little smaller in diameter but deep. It has a beech shell with maple hoops and six lugs—less hardware for more resonance. It's a very loud drum.

**MD:** Do you find that with only six lugs the tuning slips?

**Akira:** Oh no, six lugs works for 13" snare drums. A 14" snare drum needs at least eight lugs. With the Yamaha wood hoops, I was so amazed at the sound compared to metal. The cross-sticking sound and the regular rimshot sound are so *different*. I don't know the exact reason, but the shell is made of wood, right? If the hoop is made of wood also, that creates—how do I say?—a *synthesis* of vibration, an organic sound. I was surprised, but the wood hoop makes my drum louder than a metal hoop. It creates more ring.

I told Hagi [Yamaha design guru] that I was interested in a 13" snare drum. Hagi built a prototype with six lugs, which was his idea. He made 5 1/2", 6", and 7" models. For me the 7" has a special something.

**MD:** The drum has a really narrow set of snare wires, too.

**Akira:** If I use the regular snare strands—sixteen or twenty strands—the sound

AKIRA JIMBO

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WHAT LEGENDS PLAY

# Akira Jimbo



chokes. The wider strands act as a mute on a small drum—sort of opposite to what you'd think. These are thinner but there's still a lot of snare response.

**MD:** If wood hoops are good for your snare, why don't you use them on your toms?

**Akira:** I tried, but I like metal hoops for toms. The wood hoops make the drum ring a lot. If I were to use only a small tom and a floor tom, I would use wood hoops, but I use many toms. Too much ring means it's getting difficult to tune properly, to distinguish the drums. They overlap.

**MD:** I wouldn't have thought wood hoops create more sustain than metal.

**Akira:** That's *definitely* what happens. For my wood shells, I like beech. My impression is that beech has bottom end and is very punchy. In my opinion, maple has a very "fancy" sound—a lot of overtones and a very characteristic high frequency. Birch is a standard of Yamaha, is very good for recording, and has a specific tone character in the mid-range. The sound goes straight to the audience. Beech has a specific character in the low frequencies.

When I tune toms, I don't have any specific note. I don't tune the first tom to an "A" or something. It depends on the situation. Room acoustics are very important, and drum tuning should be adjusted to them. A drum may sound very good in this room, but if I move to another room, I'll have to adjust it.

**MD:** Do you find that certain tunings conflict with your electronic sounds?

**Akira:** Not really. Drums have a tone that doesn't affect harmony. There's no conflict. Maybe I choose certain intervals, but I don't plan this. Basically, I tune the bottom head a bit tighter to get a controlled sound with less decay. I like a sound that

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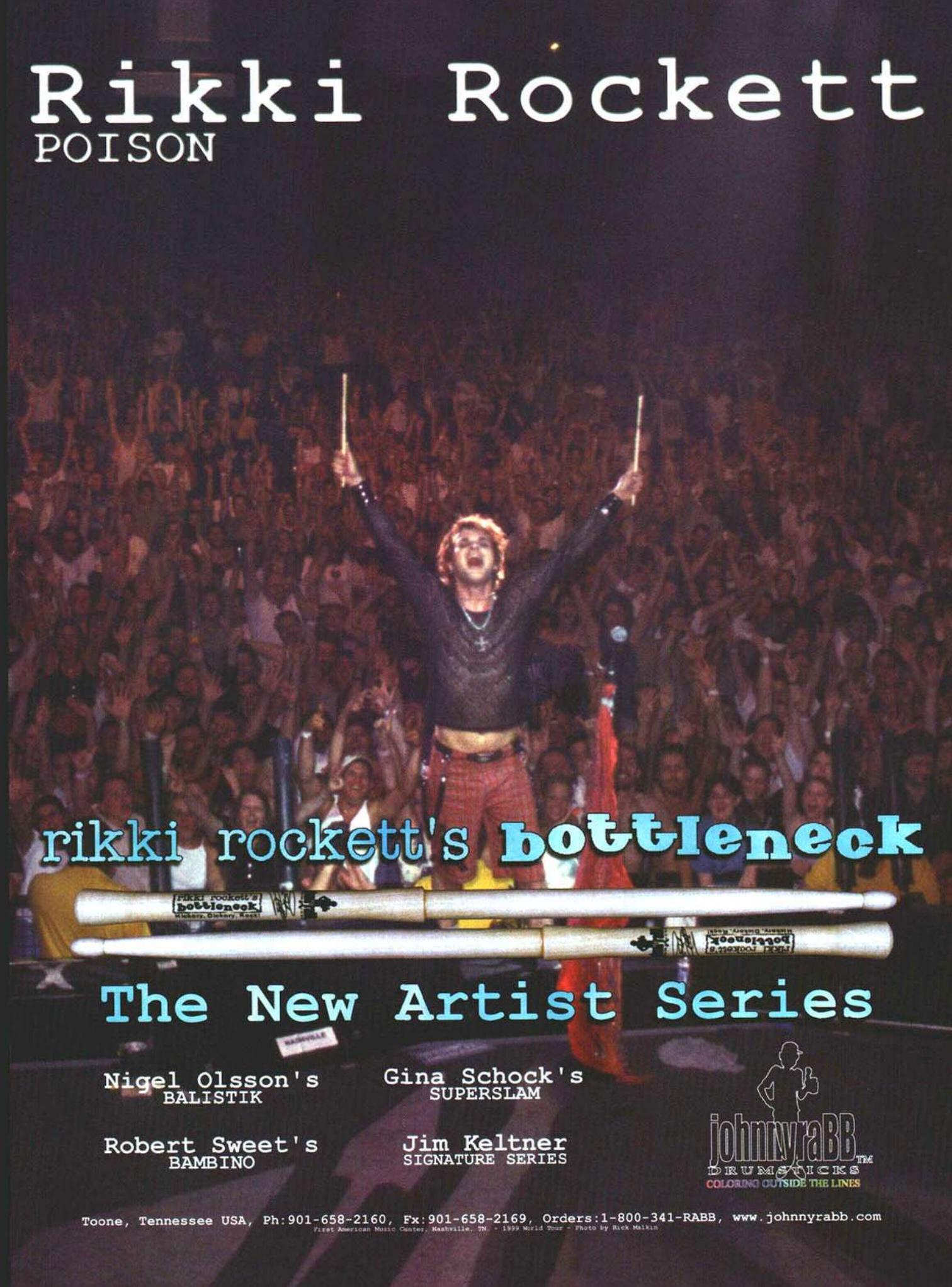
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# Jimbo Gymnastics

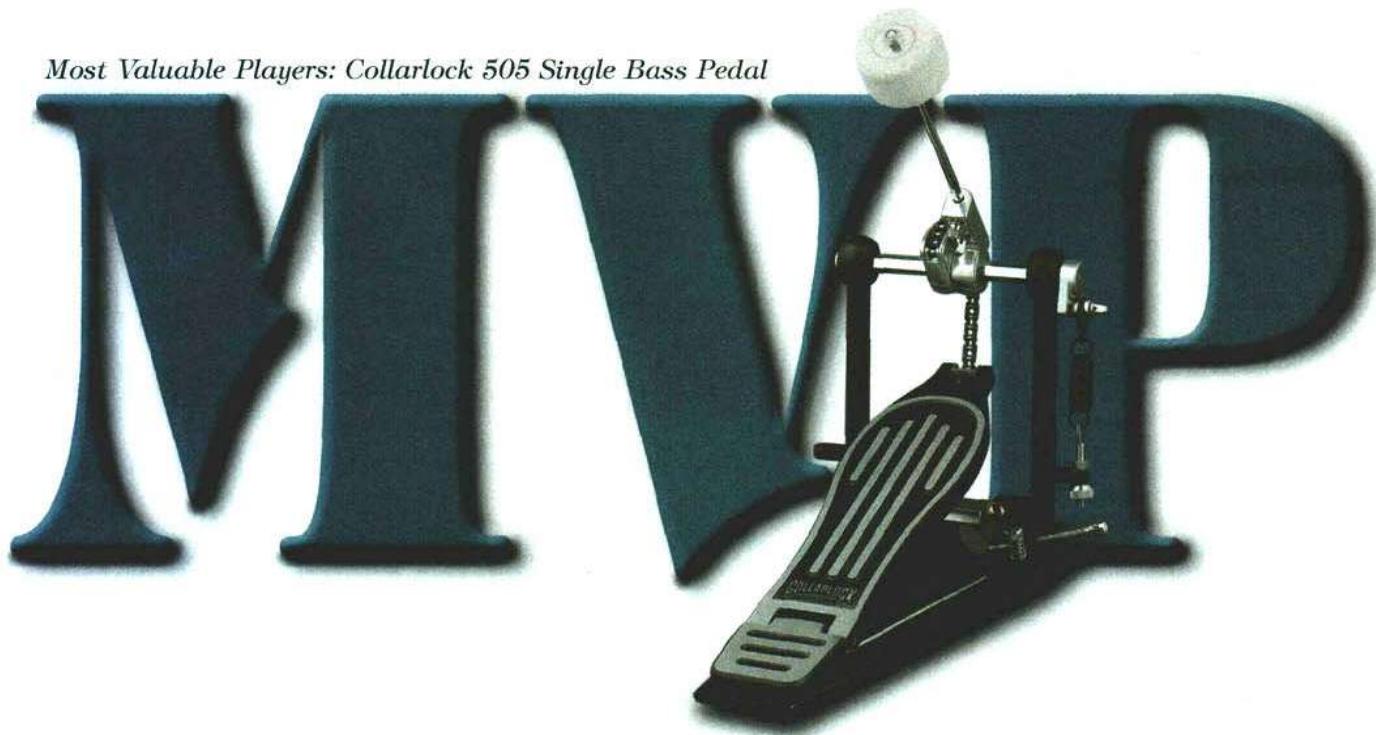
Here are a few albums and videos that feature some amazing playing by Akira Jimbo

Artist	Title
Akira Jimbo	Panama Man (CD)
	Flower (CD)
	Metamorphosis (video)
	Pulse (video)
	Independence (video)
Nettai Tropical Jazz Big Band	Evolution (video)
	Life In Yokohama (CD)
	September (CD)

And here are a few discs that he listens to for inspiration:

Artist	Album	Drummer
Donald Fagen	The Nightfly	Ed Greene, Jeff Porcaro, James Gadson, Steve Jordan
Tower Of Power	Back To Oakland	David Garibaldi
Chick Corea	Friends	Steve Gadd
George Benson	Breezin'	Harvey Mason
Steely Dan	Aja	Steve Gadd, Bernard Purdie, Rick Marotta, Jim Keltner, Ed Greene, Paul Humphrey

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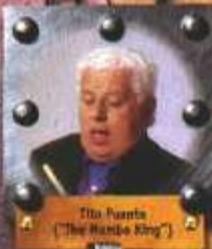
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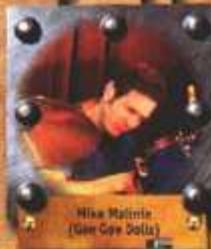
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David Leach  
(Bar Harper)



Tito Puente  
('The Mambo King')



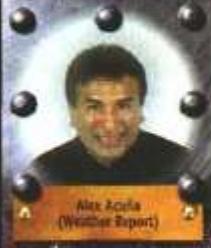
Mike Matlin  
(Garage Dolls)



Giovanni Hidalgo  
(Weather Compere)



Vera Figueredo  
(Solo Artist, Brazil)



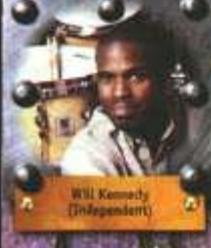
Alex Acuña  
(Weather Report)



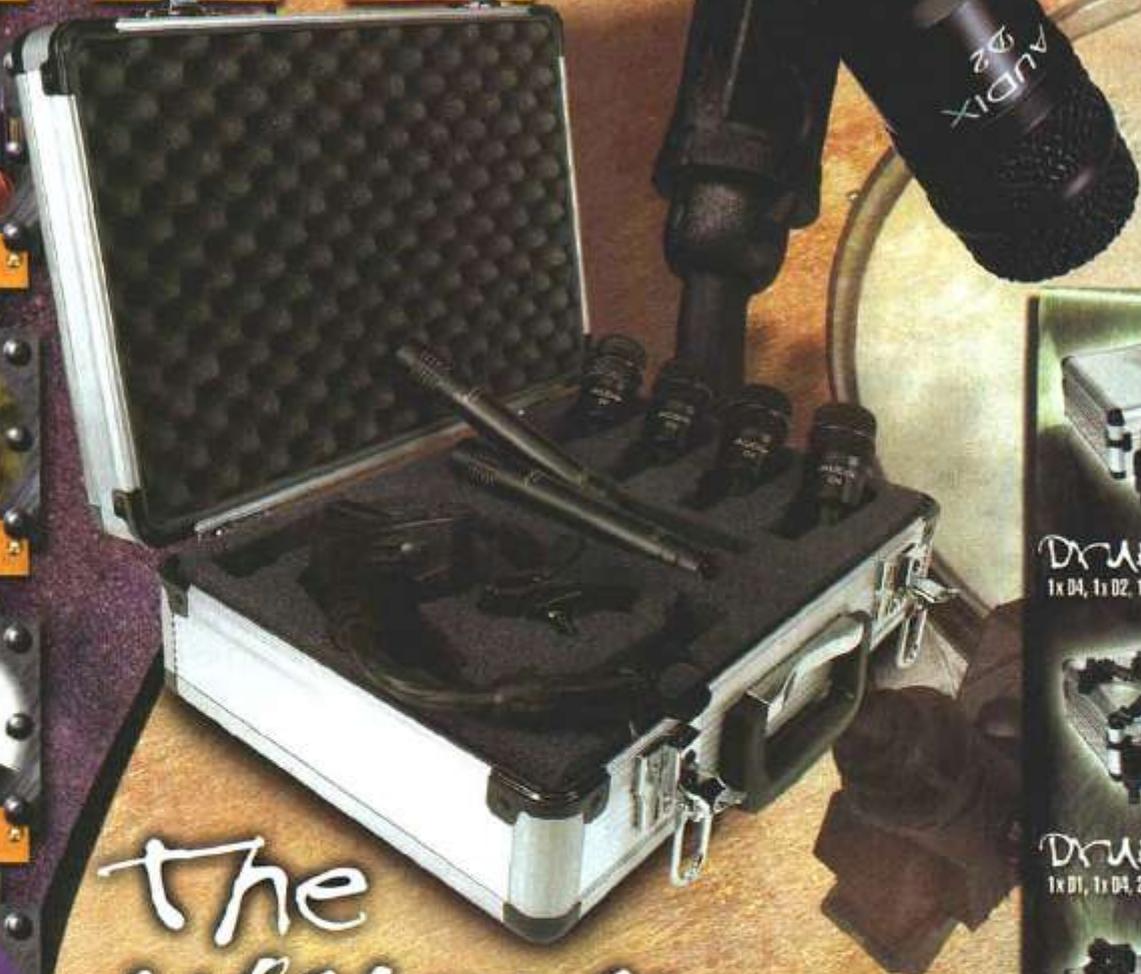
Luis Conte  
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Talking Heads - Jesse Mac,  
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# Akira Jimbo

goes "doong," and stops. If the toms have long decay, the sound lingers and it's not beautiful. It's jumbled, messy.

**MD:** This brings up something I noticed about your tom technique. Many drummers play all these double strokes on snare, but when they go to toms, they revert to single strokes. You don't make such a switch.

**Akira:** I use a lot of doubles on toms—and paradiddles. I use exactly the same technique on snare as on toms. That *might* explain the way I tune toms. As long as a drummer tunes properly, he can use *any*

technique on the toms. I don't change my sticking or my touch between snare and toms.

**MD:** Maybe that's why drummers lose the time when they go to a fill! Last night at SIR we were all remarking about your unique time flow. The way you caught that Motown groove, I was wondering if you ever practiced playing on top of the beat.

**Akira:** No, not really, but I *always* practice with a click track. My practice routine changes all the time, but I always try to keep growing. I set some goal for my play-

ing—always—and I try to achieve it. Once I achieve it, I set another goal in order to develop my versatility.

Recently I started to realize the importance of body balance. I'm getting older, and if I use bad motion, it hurts my body. I work at keeping my back straight and not using my arms too much—more wrist and fingers. I'll play a very simple groove and start at 90 on the metronome. The point is to play the same groove comfortably—no fills at all—at all tempos. Once I feel comfortable, I'll speed up the groove until I get to 160 bpm.

**MD:** Are you meticulous about, as Weckl would put it, the "subdivisions" between the notes?

**Akira:** No, I'm concerned about the *quarter note*. It should be in the pocket. Other subdivisions don't have to be exactly quantized. Drummers all have their own tastes. I don't like 16th notes to be machine-like. I put a little *swing* on them.

**MD:** When playing with sequences, do you feel free to weave in and out, or do you try to nail it with the electronics?

**Akira:** I try to create a "wave" if I'm playing with a sequencer, and I'll use a quarter-note click—not some fast "clack, clack, clack." Each quarter note I play is in the pocket, but the *other* notes I "improvise." Maybe that's not a good word; let's just say I put my *taste* to it.

**MD:** What is it about Cuban music that attracts you so much?

**Akira:** I don't know the reason, but in Japan we have a lot of Latin fanatics. They collect albums and videos, and we can see Cuban bands, unlike in the US. Contemporary Cuban music uses the kit drummer with timbales. Los Van Van and NG La Banda, for example, are great bands. The drummers have a different concept of a drumkit. Basically, they keep the rhythm on the timbale [left] side. The timbales, bass drum, and hi-hat keep the rhythm. Sometimes they don't play the downbeat on the bass drum. It's very hip, and I wanted to understand it, so I listened to many CDs and videos. There are very good Latin musicians in Japan, and I play with them.

**MD:** Do you play any hand percussion?

**Akira:** I'm a stick player. If I play conga, I love it, but the next day my hands hurt! I'm playing drumset in The Latin Jazz Big Band in Japan. It's a nineteen-piece band, a full band, with four percussionists and one



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# Akira Jimbo

drummer. I'm also playing with The Nettare Tropical Jazz Big Band.

Cuban rhythms are polyrhythms. Each musician has a different pattern, and they combine them to create one rhythm. I tried to emulate those patterns on a single drumset, so I really need independence. I started to play clave with my left foot on a Jam Block, and that requires a *lot* of independence. At first, it was so different, it took time to get used to.

**MD:** Do you adjust your drumming approach when playing in a big band?

**Akira:** Not really. I always have the same approach: I listen to other players, and that makes my drumming change naturally. If I play with a percussionist, maybe I won't play toms much. Hand percussion and toms are in the same frequency, so if I were to play toms, it would be very busy and they would disturb each other. I stick to hi-hat and bass drum, getting the high end from the hi-hat and the bottom from the bass drum.

**MD:** Tell me about your cymbal setup. I noticed that although your ride cymbal appears to be up very high, you're not reaching for it, are you?

**Akira:** It's high, but it's very close to me. It's *right here*.

**MD:** Did you listen to jazz drummers to get your approach?

**Akira:** Yes, after Steve Gadd I wanted to listen to the history. I went back to Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Max Roach, Art Blakey, and all the great drummers. Tony Williams' cymbal sound was incredible and beautiful and it had a forward motion. It might have been both the sound and what he played.

In my ride work, I need a very distinct bell sound, but I also need a nice wash. Recently I started using a Zildjian K Constantinople medium ride. On my last video I used that and a K Custom Dark ride. I would switch between them. In crashes, I like a quick decay, and for that I like A Customs.

**MD:** You do something that the great jazz drummers used to do a lot: You grab the crash quickly after you hit it.

**Akira:** Choking it, yes. I think maybe I got that from Buddy Rich. I used to play in a big band and listened to many big band drummers. They did a lot of choking.

**MD:** You dance a lot from pedal to pedal.

**Akira:** When I do the clave with my left foot, my heel is on one pedal playing the clave on Jam Block and my toe is on the hi-hat. Many Cuban drummers do that.

**MD:** So you're alternating, heel to toe, every stroke? That doesn't sound like a typical clave beat.

**Akira:** No. I vary it and sometimes put the accent on the hi-hat. It's a different motion. It's not just a rocking motion between two pedals. That's where I need independence! I have no problem, as long as the quarter note is in here. *[Akira points to his head.]*

**MD:** On the liner notes to the song "Mine Of Imagination," from your video *Independence*, you say, "This is quite a self-tormenting program," referring to the way you trigger electronic samples with your bass drum. If you miss a beat with your right foot, it's not just rhythm but *composition* that suffers. Talk about that.

**Akira:** I use a trigger system to start a cycle of notes that I've programmed. I hit a pad, or in this case the bass drum, and get several notes. The next stroke triggers a different sequence of notes. If I play one additional note, the whole thing is destroyed. I have to keep to the proper pat-

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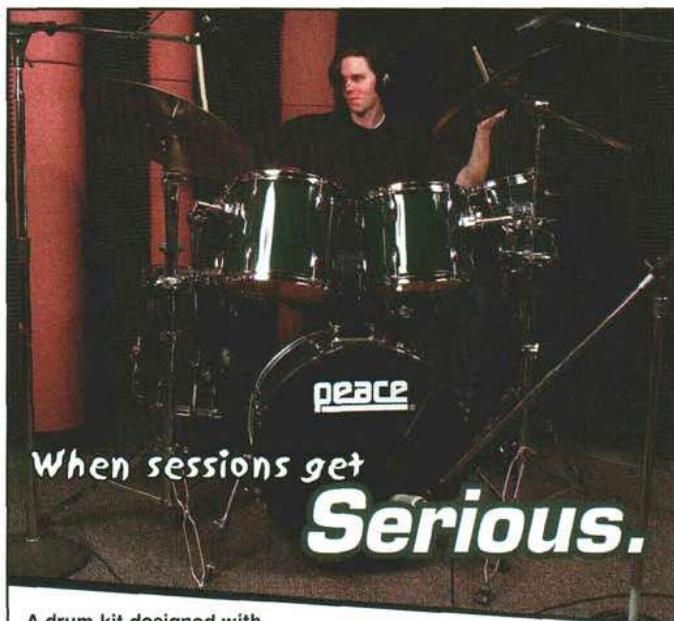
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# Akira Jimbo

tern. And that gets to be tricky when I'm soloing on top of that type of pattern.

**MD:** When preparing these patterns, do you use stock sounds?

**Akira:** I sample my own sounds, which I feel are interesting—but never drum sounds. I love acoustic drums. They're my main instrument. The electronic thing is a kind of toy.

**MD:** And yet your compositions have *substance*.

**Akira:** Thank you, but the first thing is the drum part, every time. I sit at the drums and I create some interesting patterns, then I put some electronic sound on each limb—it could be anything. For example, maybe I would trigger a bass guitar sound with my right foot. Then the bass and the bass drum are locked—good rhythm section! My snare trigger is attached to the rim, so I'm triggering only if I do a rimshot. If I play busy rhythms on the head, the trigger won't pick them up. I have a trigger on the Jam Block, too, so my left foot triggers another sound. Among the pads, I have a pad that makes no sound; it's only for program sound changes. So if I want to change sounds or have something *not* trigger a

sound, I can do that.

**MD:** You must be a meticulous person. Do you map out this information well in advance?

**Akira:** Not really. Everything is here. [Akira points to his head.] I'm not organized enough to write everything down neatly! I *never* do that.

**MD:** With all these prepared patterns, is there any room for improvisation?

**Akira:** Yes. Maybe half of it is improvised, half composition. It's balanced. If it's too much composition, it's not interesting. Too much improvisation, it's not interesting either.

**MD:** What kind of music do you listen to?

**Akira:** I like drum 'n' bass a lot. My concept is to combine the new technology and traditional technology. I also like Afro-Cuban. I know that sounds kind of disconnected, but I'd like to put them together.

**MD:** You seem pretty fit. Do you work out?

**Akira:** No, I don't exercise. Drum exercise, yes, but no physical exercise other than that. But I play drums every day. On the road, it's kind of difficult to practice. But at home I'll do two hours of drum

exercises each day. I don't work on a pad—always drums—in a practice room in my basement.

**MD:** Do you practice composing, too, or does it just come to you?

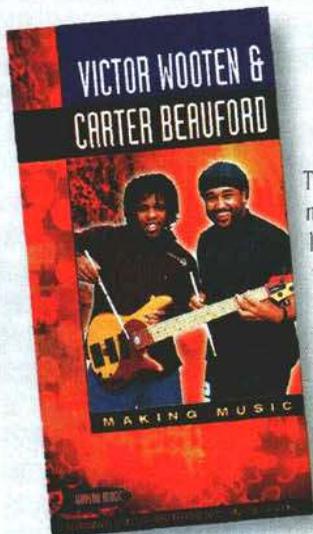
**Akira:** First, when I started to play drums, I didn't think I could compose, thinking drums are rhythm instruments with no harmonic element. When I started my professional career, I joined a band called Casiopea, and they *insisted* that I compose. It wasn't my idea—but it became my duty! Fortunately, I play some guitar and I love bossa nova. It's a very harmonic music, very gentle, and it has some hip chords. I knew those chords. I didn't know them by *name*, but I remembered them by the shape of my finger position. Basically, all my ideas for composing come from drums. Later I'll add melodic and harmonic ideas with guitar.

**MD:** We know about your clinic appearances in America and your Modern Drummer Festival Weekend spot. But in Tokyo are there opportunities to play as you do, integrating electronics and drums?

**Akira:** Oh yeah, I do a drum solo concert live, not in big venues but in small clubs—

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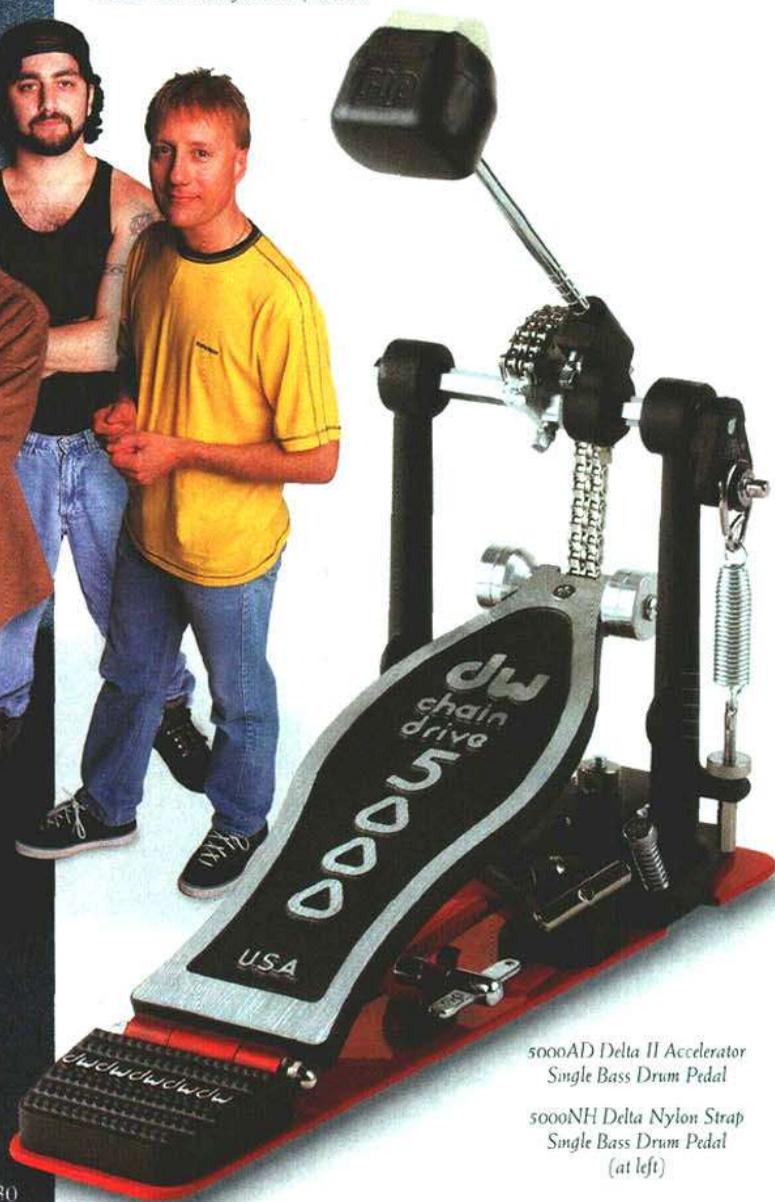
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# Akira Jimbo

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**MD:** Can you make a living playing music in Japan?

**Akira:** It's hard, same as here. There are small clubs and it's kind of slow. The music business invests only in high-return things, so they give the budget to the big artists, not the small ones.

**MD:** So how did you manage to do four videos?

**Akira:** I made my first video in 1992 and it did very well. It sold a lot in Japan and is distributed here by Warner Bros./DCI. They ask me to make another, and another, and another...that's good! I produce the videos.

**MD:** You have input into everything, even camera angles? Do you have a "good side"?

**Akira:** [smiles] Not really, but for drum videos, the front shot means nothing, because the player who buys the video wants to see *everything*. In a front shot, the left and right sides are kind of opposite to the player's experience. So I don't use any front shots: I shoot from behind.

**MD:** Any future plans you want to talk

about?

**Akira:** I have a project called *Chopstix And Drumstix*. It's a percussion ensemble featuring Billy Cobham, Ndugu Chancier, and me. We're shooting a video/DVD that will be out in 2001. I use the trigger system, Ndugu uses mallets, and Billy is playing the drums as a melodic instrument—a very unique style. We create a fully orchestrated style using melody, harmony, and rhythm. It's not a drum ensemble; it's *a full band*.

**MD:** Finally, you have such amazing technique. Do you have any suggestions for younger drummers looking to attain your kind of speed?

**Akira:** I think that beginning drummers use too much arm motion. It results in a choked sound. It's difficult to keep steady time with a big motion. I recommend less arm motion, using instead the wrist and fingers. Also—and this is important—the *bounce* is the key. When we hit a drum, we have a bounce that we have to control. We can *use* that bounce. I hit the drum and release the stick and it's a very natural motion. I believe just in a downstroke—not an upstroke—and we have to gain control

of that natural rebound.

*Everybody* has trouble playing double strokes on the bass drum. It's tough. When I started, that was tough for me, too, *especially* with my heel up. Take your time! I practiced a lot of samba bass drum patterns, starting with a slow tempo and then increasing step by step. Drums are physical instruments and we need patience. There's no magic!

One important thing to say to all drummers is that drums are a fun instrument. Let's have fun. When we practice, we use our brain, we *think*—but once we get on stage, we should just *feel*. It doesn't matter if you have chops or not. Yes, it's good to have chops, but I know many great drummers who don't have chops. If a drummer is having fun, I *feel* something. If he gets nervous, I don't feel good. I used to get nervous, but not anymore. Now that I've played for many famous drummers, I realize that music is not a competition. A great drummer is one who is easy to play with.



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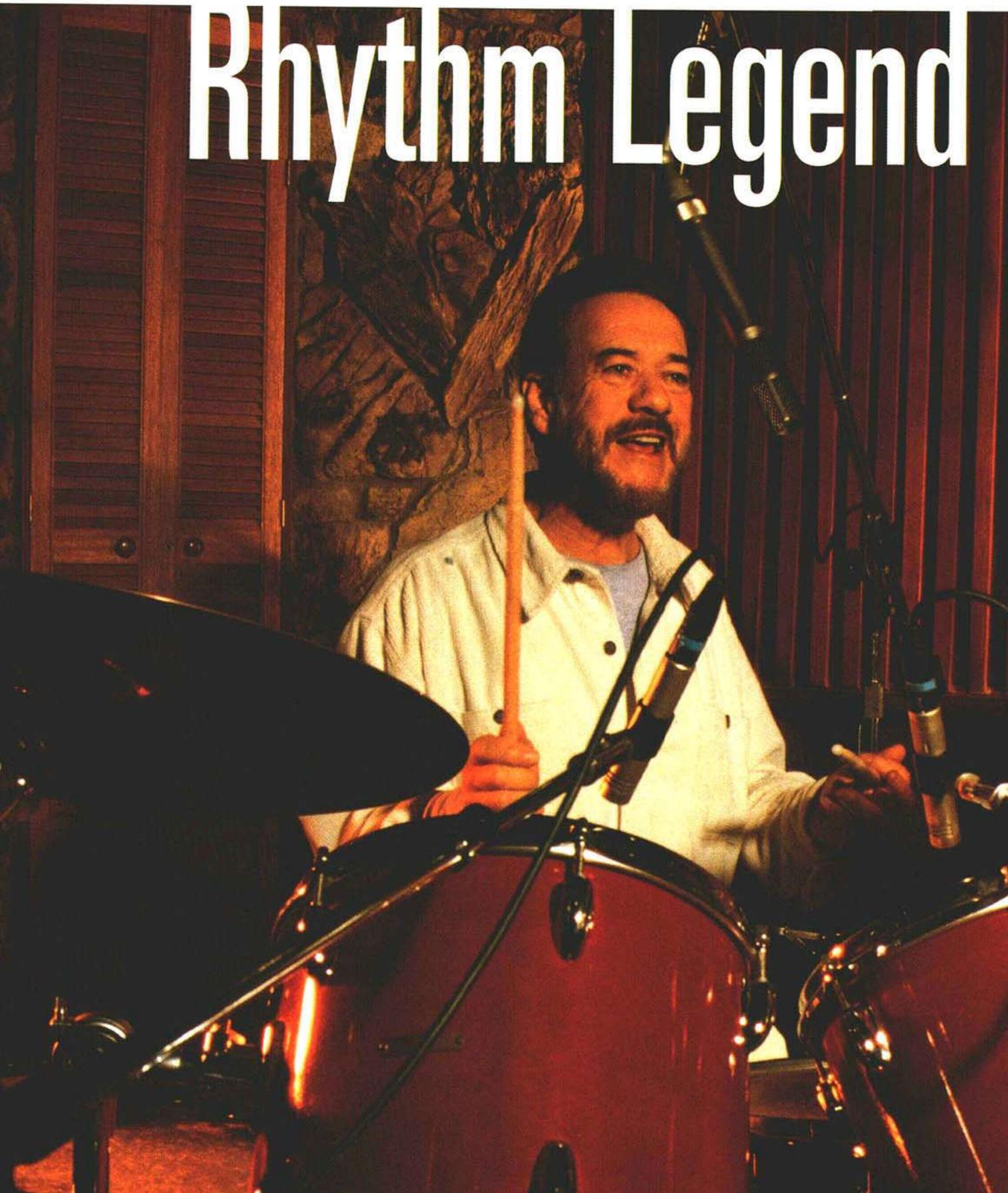
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# Rhythm Legend





# Airto

## Then & Now

story by N. Scott Robinson • photos by Alex Solca

**A**irto Moreira is one of the world's most high-profile percussionists. Over the past three decades he has performed and/or recorded with a stunning list of artists. Miles Davis, Smashing Pumpkins, Carlos Santana, Al DiMeola, James Taylor, Paul Simon, Weather Report, Return To Forever, Cannonball Adderley, Brecker Brothers, Chick Corea, Gil Evans, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock, Keith Jarrett, Mickey Hart, John McLaughlin, Joni Mitchell, Wayne Shorter, McCoy Tyner, Tina Turner, and George Benson are only a few of the major artists whose work has benefited from the creative spark of the master percussionist.

Airto was one of the first "new percussionists" to combine percussion with drumset and also use traditional percussion instruments from Brazil, Cuba, Africa, and China in new ways in jazz and popular music. His impact on percussion in jazz was so huge that he personally influenced *Down Beat* magazine to create a category for percussion in both its jazz critics and readers polls. Airto topped those lists every year between 1974 and 1982. He also topped the *Modern Drummer* readers poll from 1979 to 1986, and won polls in numerous other music magazines.

In the 1980s, Airto began moving away from the kind of work he did with individual instruments such as berimbau and cuica, and back to unifying his creative percussion work with the drumset. He's developed a highly stylistic and personal approach to this drumset/percussion hybrid. In the 1990s, Airto featured this setup with Fourth World, the band he led with his wife, vocalist Flora Purim.

Lately Airto has been producing and performing on recordings that feature remixes and samples of his older work by a younger generation of European DJs and musicians. Contemporary versions of his music are topping charts in England, Spain, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Holland, Scandinavia, Portugal, South Africa, Israel, Greece, France, Japan, and the US with artists such as Deepak Ram, Transglobal Underground, Brice Wassey, and The Belline Brothers.

Airto's achievements in the US and Europe are amazing. But what of his accomplishments in Brazil *before* coming to the States in 1968? Just how did this percussive juggernaut develop? Airto was mainly a drumset player when his recording career started in Brazil in 1964. He performed with top Brazilian musicians such as Sambalanao Trio, Sambrasa Trio, Geraldo Vandre, Milton Nascimento, Hermeto Pascoal, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Astrud Gilberto, Eumir Deodato, Sergio Mendes, and Tania Maria.

Researching Airto's early days in Brazil and the recordings he made there between 1964 and 1968 is fascinating. Those drumset recordings reveal the same fire and passion that would eventually show up just a few years later in his masterful percussion work with some of the most important artists in music history.

**MD:** Did you play percussion before you played drumset?

**Airto:** Yeah, I started playing pandeiro when I was four or five.

**MD:** How did you get involved with drumset, and what kind of training did you have? What did you practice?

**Airto:** Well, I never really practiced that much. I just kept myself playing all the time, so there was no time for practicing, [laughs]

**MD:** You were self-taught on drumset?

**Airto:** Definitely! I went to a dance—a Carnival ball—with my father, mother, and sister. But I was too young, about fourteen, and couldn't stay in the ballroom. I had to stay with the musicians on this little stage on the side of the room. The drummer was late, so the musicians asked me if I knew how to play drums. I said, "Well, I don't know—I never played." But they knew me because they had been sneaking me into Sunday afternoon jam sessions, where I'd sing and play some percussion. So I sat down at the drumset, and they asked me to play three different rhythms, which are the main rhythms for the Carnival. I played

them on the drumset right away because I used to watch the other drummer all the time. Then they asked, "Do you want to play until the drummer comes in?" I said, "Sure." I played the whole night because the guy never showed up. So that's how I got started with drumset!

**MD:** So later on, were you the first to put percussion and drumset together in a practical way?

**Airto:** Yeah, I was the first. In Brazil in the mid-'60s, percussionists were called rhythmists. So you were a rhythmist if you played rhythm with a band on just one percussion instrument. If you played with a symphony orchestra, then you were a per-

ussionist. So I thought of myself as a rhythmist when I played percussion. But when I played drumset, I felt like I was on a different kind of musical level.

At that time I thought I should play more drumset, but I didn't want to stop playing percussion. I had to come up with a way to incorporate drumset and percussion. I was beginning to do it a bit when I worked with Geraldo Vandré and Trio Novo. Vandré was very good at putting things together with a lot of soul—very Brazilian, very authentic stuff. But he didn't mind that we improvised and did other things. So I started working with percussion around the drumset, and I would just pick something up, play, and mix that with a drumset part. This was happening when Quarteto Novo was Vandré's backing band. [*Trio Novo became Quarteto Novo when Hermeto Pascoal joined in 1967.*]

**MD:** What about your work with the Sambalanao Trio?

**Airto:** That was before Vandré, back in 1964. [*Airto's first recording was Sambalanao Trio Vol. 1.*] I began working



a little bit with Vandré at the end of my time with Sambalanão Trio. We did three of our own records and then one with Raul De Souza [on which Airto plays congas and drumset, his first recording with percussion] and one with Lennie Dale.

After Sambalanao Trio came Sambrasa Trio, which featured Humberto Clayber on bass, Hermeto Pascoal on keyboards, flute, and harmonica, and me on drumset. We made one recording for Polydor, *Sambrasa Trio*. Quarteto Novo did one album in 1967, *Quarteto Novo* [the first recording where Airto simultaneously plays drumset and percussion], and one with Geraldo Vandré as the backing band with Trio Maraya in 1968, *Canto Geral*. I left Brazil right after that, in 1968.

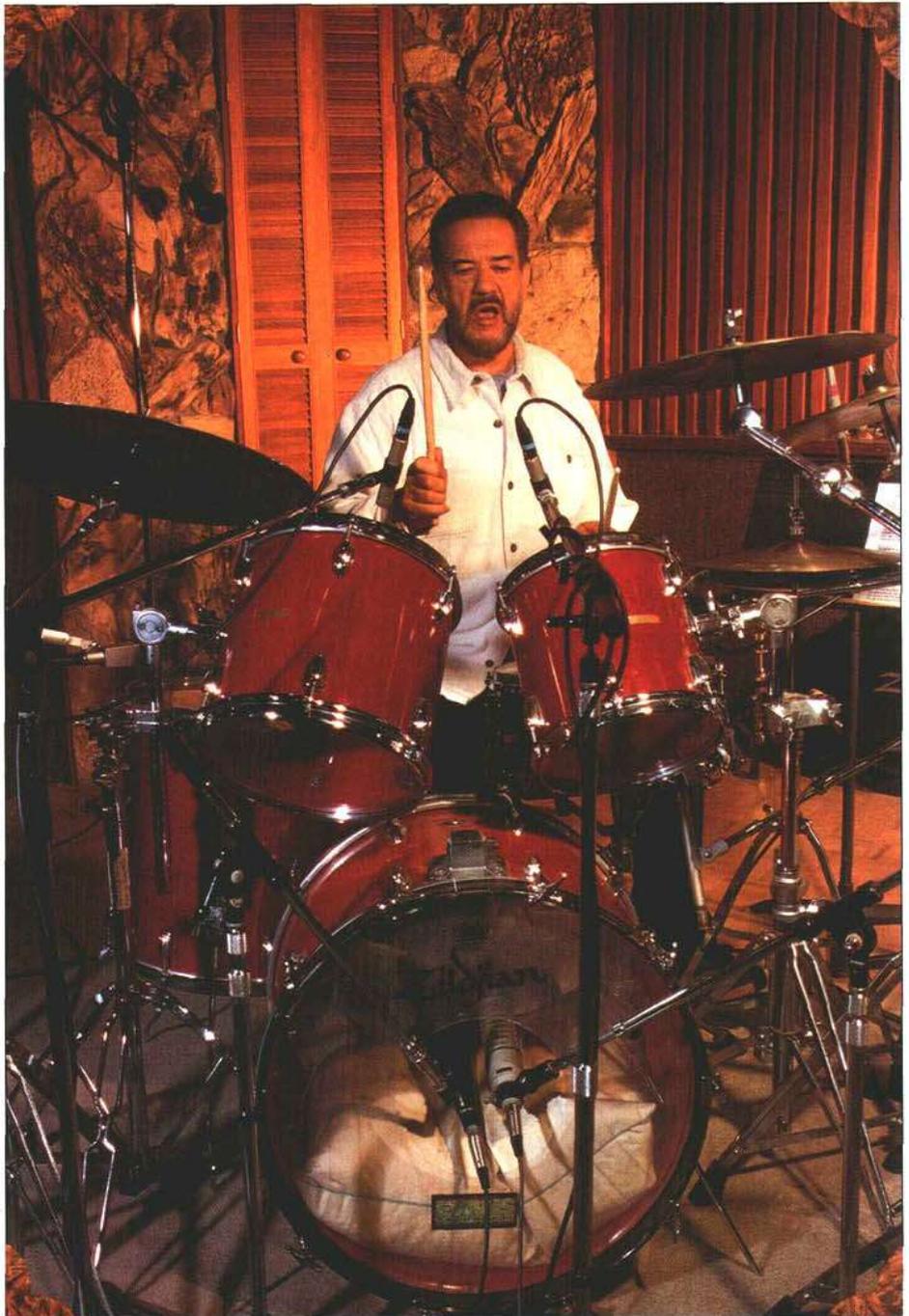
**MD:** In the late '60s, Nana Vasconcelos also mixed percussion with drumset on his early recordings with Agostinho Dos Santos. Did you two ever meet, work together, or influence each other? And what about percussionist Dom Um Romão?

**Airto:** Dom Um—yes. Dom Um is older than I am, even though I am fifty-eight. I'm senior to Nana and Dom Um is senior to me. When I met Nana he was starting with Milton Nascimento in Rio because he had just come from northeast Brazil. I think we met one time at a show in Rio, but only very briefly. The next time I saw Nana, I was playing with Miles Davis and he was playing with Gato Barbieri. We didn't really influence each other.

**MD:** Let's talk about percussion a bit. How did you get involved with berimbau, caixi, and the other instruments?

**Airto:** It was when I was with Geraldo Vandré. I was playing with Quarteto Novo, and I was also working with Vandré. He asked me to put a band together for him. So the band became Quarteto Novo with Hermeto Pascoal on piano and flute, Heraldo Do Monte on guitars, and Theophile De Barros on bass and acoustic guitar, with me on drumset and percussion. There were some arrangements in which I had to play the berimbau, so I learned.

I never went on a journey around Brazil collecting instruments, [laughs] Someone wrote that in a book about me. I had no time to do that; I've got to go play, you know? But I did travel a lot when I was living in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I was based there for three or four years playing with a touring dance band. We used to travel all over



The most important thing to do is listen carefully to the music.  
You listen, you listen some more, and then you play.  
And if you don't hear anything, stay quiet!"

Brazil playing that music, so I'd run across different instruments. Of course, as a percussionist you're always looking for instruments—you can't help it.

**MD:** Where do the songs and the things you sing come from?

**Airto:** I still travel a lot, like everybody

else that really plays for people, and I'm influenced by the performers I see and every kind of sound I hear. I think we are individuals, and we develop certain things through the experience of living on this planet. So we gain certain knowledge and we get different kinds of information. This

continued on page 76

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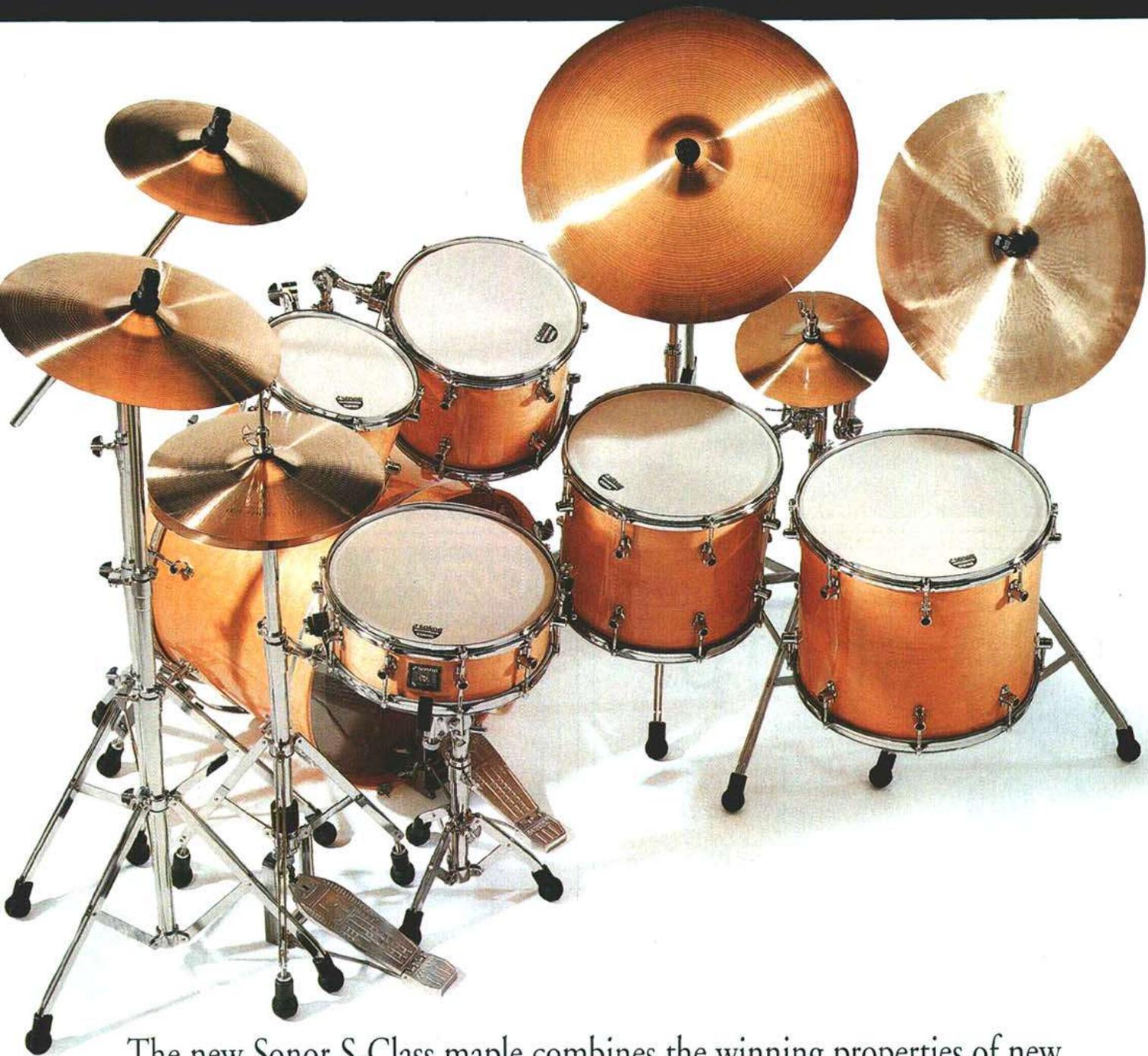
## Airto's Passion Tracks

The following list shows just a few of the important recordings Airto has made in his career. (He has appeared on *overfour hundred* albums.)

Artist	Album
Airto Moreira	Natural Feelings (1970) Seeds On The Ground (1971) Fingers (1972) Free (1972) Virgin Land (1974) Identity (1975) Promises Of The Sun (1976) I'm Fine, How Are You? (1977) Touching You...Touching Me (1979) Misa Espiritual: Airto's Brazilian Mass (1984) Latino: Aqui Se Puede (1986) Samba De Flora (1988) Struck By Lightning (1989) Killer Bees (1989) The Other Side Of This (1992) Revenge Of The Killer Bees (1998) Code: Brasil, Target: Recife (1999) Homeless (2000)
Antonio Carlos Jobim	Tide (1970)
Average White Band	Feel No Fret (1979)
Babatunde Olatunji	Drums Of Passion: The Invocation (1988) Drums Of Passion: The Beat (1989)
Bob James	H(1980)
Bobby Hutcherson	Vibe Wise (1984)
Brecker Brothers	Detente (1980)
Cal Tjader	Amazonas (1975)
Cannonball Adderley	Soul Of The Bible (1972)
Santana	Borboletta (1974)
Chick Corea	Live In New York City (1974) Secret Agent (1978) Tap Step (1979)
Return To Forever	Return To Forever (1972) Light As A Feather (1973)
Donald Byrd	Kofi (1969)
Freddie Hubbard	First Light (1971)
Gato Barbieri	Bolivia (1973)
Gil Evans	Where Flamingos Fly (1971)
Grover Washington Jr.	Inner City Blues (1971)
Herbie Hancock	Dis Is Da Drum (1994)
James Taylor	That's Why I'm Here (1985)
John McLaughlin	My Goal's Beyond (1970)
Joni Mitchell	Don Juan's Reckless Daughter (1977)
Keith Jarrett	Expectations (1972)
McCoy Tyner	13th House (1982)
Mickey Hart	Planet Drum (1991) Mystery Box (1996) Supralingua (1998)
Miles Davis	The Complete Bitches Brew Sessions (1969) Circle In The Round (1970) Miles Davis At Fillmore (1970) Live Evil (1970) Big Fun (1972) Get Up With It (1974)
Paul Simon	Paul Simon (1971) There Goes Rhymin' Simon (1973) Hearts And Bones (1983)
Sergio Mendes	Primal Roots (1972)
Stan Getz	Captain Marvel (1972)
Stanley Clarke	Stanley Clarke (1974)
Wayne Shorter	Super Nova (1969) Native Dancer (1975)
Weather Report	Weather Report (1971)

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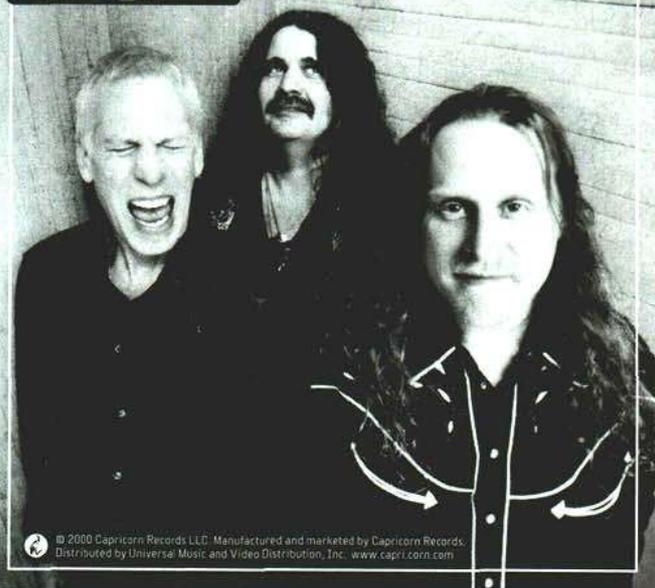
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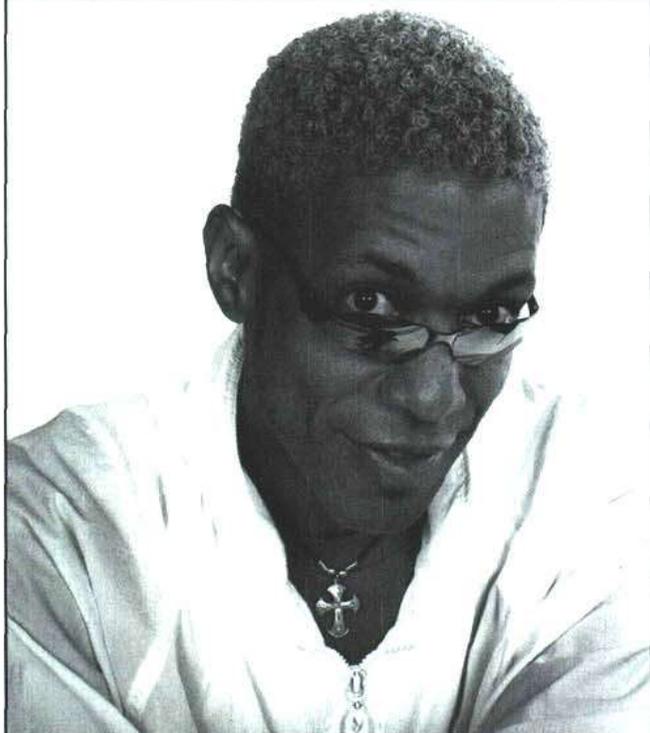


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information is from everywhere.

**MD:** When you came to the US and played with Miles Davis, you worked a lot in jazz and other styles of music as a percussionist. And at that time many of the styles you were playing had never featured percussion.

**Airto:** I think percussion can be an important part of any music, because it can be

then you pick up the instrument that you think will be the right sound for that moment. Keep it simple.

**MD:** So you didn't have any problem when you'd play with a rock or jazz band?

**Airto:** No, but I did like to know who I was going to play with before the gig. That's why I don't do that many sessions anymore, because I'm kind of picky. I ask

play, you're in touch with that energy—that is if you're open to it. And it's impossible to do it if you're thinking about, "I've got to play real good," or "I'm going to play this rhythm right here," or "I'm going to play this and that." You have to just let go, listen, and play—that's the process. By doing that you get in touch with that energy. Then the music becomes much bigger

---

**"To be honest with you, I don't try to change the music anymore with my playing. I try my best to fit with whatever else is being played. I put my energy into the music and try to exchange that energy with the other musicians."**

---

used both for colors and for rhythm. If you're not playing rhythm, then you play colors. But the most important thing to do is listen carefully to the music that's presented. You listen, you listen some more, and *then* you play. If you don't hear anything, then stay quiet. When you hear something, play.

As far as deciding what instrument to play, you listen to what is happening, and

who's playing and what kind of music it is. They have to send me a tape, because I make an effort to bring something to the music and not treat it as just another job. I like to participate in the music.

I think that every time you play you have energy within you—universal energy. That's the energy that keeps everything together. It keeps all the planets in balance, all the galaxies, everything. When you

than the stage. It can be a very healing experience for both the listener and the player.

**MD:** Is there a certain percussion instrument that you prefer?

**Airto:** I don't like to be a specialist on any particular instrument. I play everything okay, but I don't think I play anything really, really well. There are certain things that you have to spend years and years studying

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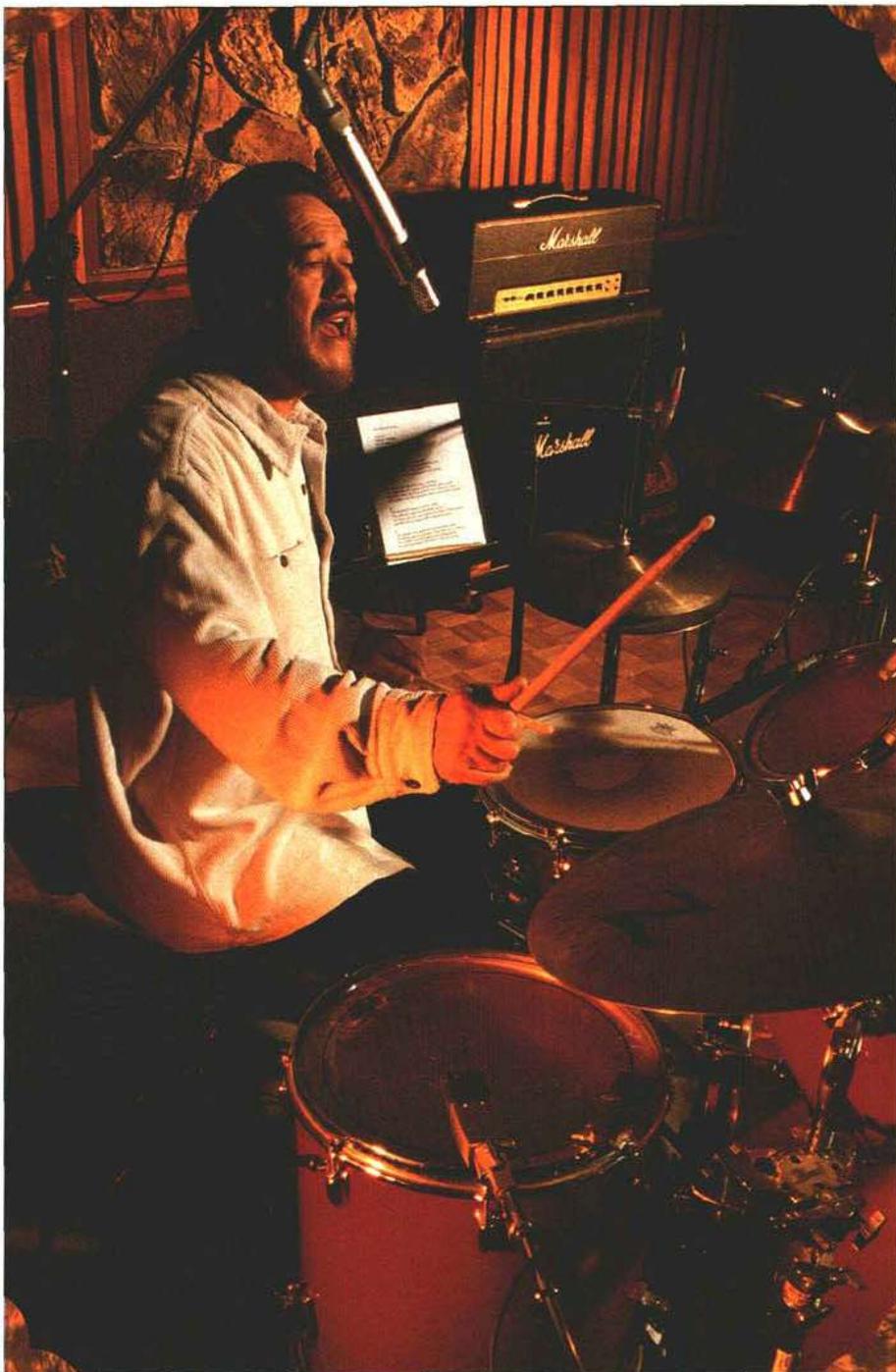
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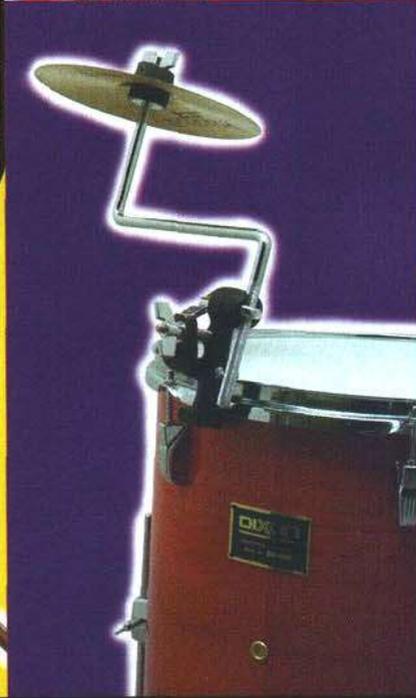
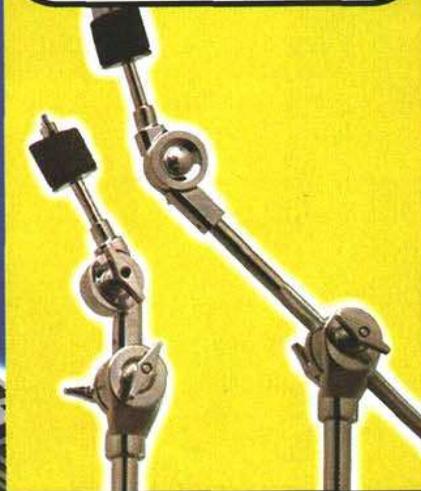
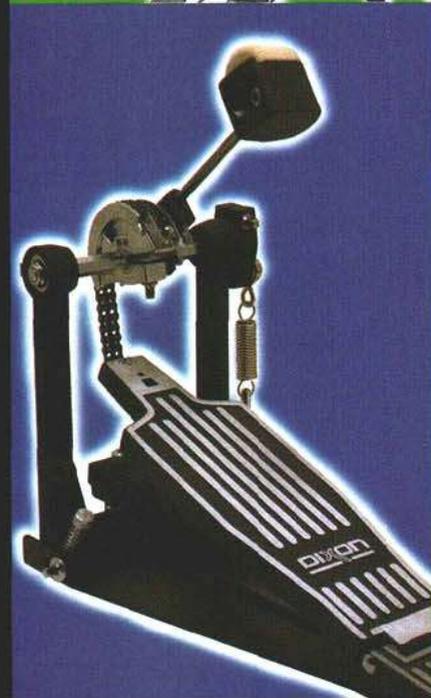
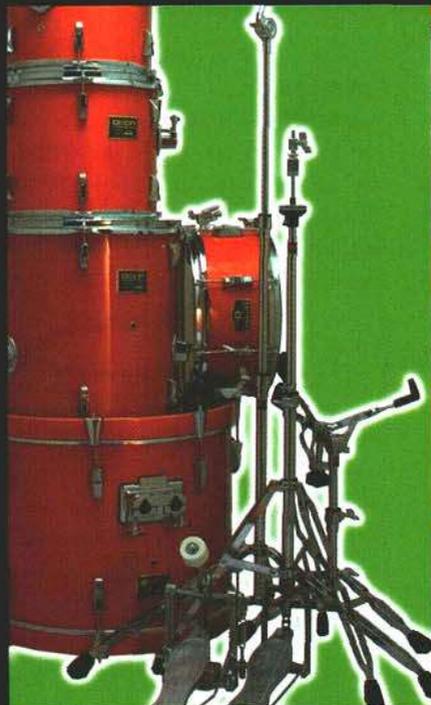
## Brazil Sides

For those interested in checking out some of Airoto's early work, here a few of the recordings that he made in Brazil in the '60s before coming to the US. (Most are still available as import releases.)

Artist	Album
Lennie Dale	Sambalanao Trio
Cesar Camargo Mariano	Octeto De Cesar Camargo Mariano
Quarteto Novo	Quarteto Novo
Sambalanao Trio	Sambalanao Trio Vol. 1
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# Airto

and practicing, but I'm not that kind of musician. I like to play—and I like to practice... sometimes, [laughs] I'm not recommending this to anybody, you understand? I grew up like that; I grew up *playing*.

A long time ago, when I was between the ages of fourteen and twenty-five, I used to really watch other drummers. Then, when I came to the States, I saw Jack DeJohnette playing drumset, and I said, "Oh, my God. What am I doing? Am I really a drummer?" But I was a good drummer, and I realized that I had my own style. Fortunately, I have a style that I created. Otherwise, I would be in trouble these days because everybody is playing really, really good drumset. The new generations of musicians practice a lot, they all read and write music, and they play as much as they can. It's beautiful.

**MD:** You did a lot of very interesting things with berimbau and voice, hand drums, and percussion colors in your early work. Now it seems there's been a shift, where you've really focused on combining the drumset and a percussion table together into one instrument.

**Airto:** I've had percussion tables made for

me by Peter Engelhart since about 1975. He's a sculptor who works with metal and makes his own instruments. Tasked him to make a percussion table that I could position above my bass drum so I'd have a convenient spot to position a lot of my instruments. Then the setup grew. I added a pair of congas, timbales, and some cymbals, and eventually the rest of a drumset along with all of the percussion.

In the early 1990s, Flora and I formed Fourth World. Flora is the singer, I play drums and percussion, Jose Nêto is on guitar, and Gary Meek is on keyboards, saxophones, and flute. There's no bass player. So I thought, Okay, since the band doesn't have a bass player, I want to use a bigger bass drum. I also want to incorporate some tom-toms, a floor tom, and a snare—and I'll play everything. For that I need a bigger table. So this kit has evolved and continues to evolve. Now I have two small tables—one on my right, and one on my left—and I play drumset like that, [laughs] I used this setup on Fourth World's CD, *Last Journey*.

**MD:** What influence have other kinds of music had on you as a percussionist?

**Airto:** They have different kinds of influences. I've been very inspired by popular Indian music—the simpler, more common music. When you get to the classical Indian musicians—a little higher level in society—they are finer musicians and they have studied. But that music is too complicated for me. It's more like "head music" than "body music." I like body music better. It's not that I don't *like* head music, but it makes me start thinking. If I'm thinking, I'm not playing.

Zakir Hussain, for instance, is one of the greatest tabla players in the world, if not *the* greatest. He's incredible. His head is incredible; the way he perceives rhythm is just mind-blowing. When we were touring together with Mickey Hart's Planet Drum group, we'd all play on the bus. Zakir and Vikku Vinayakram used to get into this game where they would start playing a pattern of twenty-three beats. Twenty-three divided by eights, or by fours, or by whatever you want, [laughs] Then they would break it down from twenty-three to twenty-two, twenty-one, twenty, nineteen, eighteen, seventeen, sixteen, going all the way down. And then they would be trading

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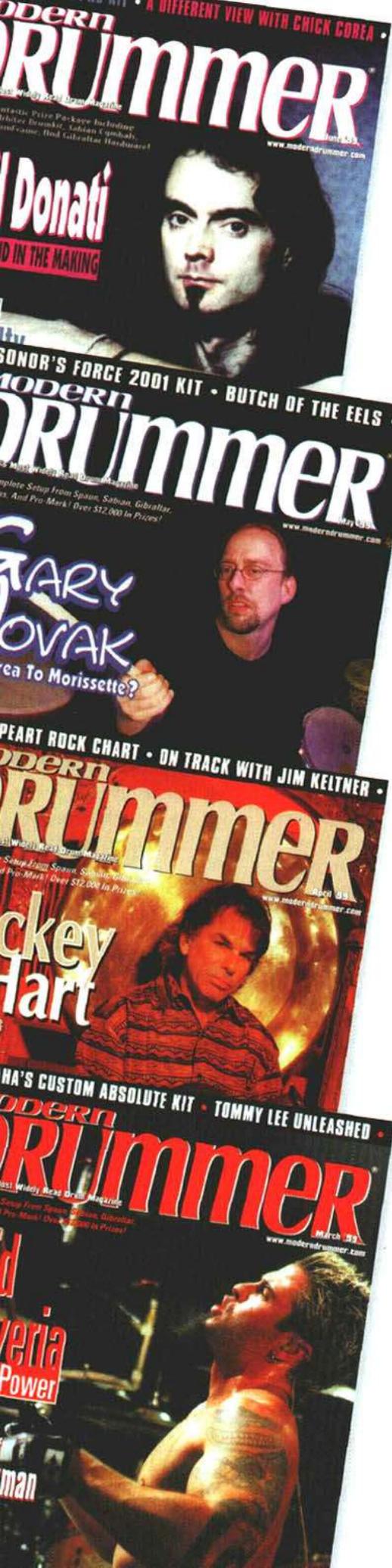
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# Airto

ones! And then they would be trading halves! I swear! And they'd repeat the other guy's phrases. That was some incredible stuff!

**MD:** What about your work with the pan-African group Amampondo?

**Airto:** Amampondo is different. The group has great musicians that understand their heritage; they play for dancing. Three of the guys are descended from African royalty. But they have a great show, and they're very, very strong players. Amampondo plays all kinds of African percussion and

marimbas—all different types of big, huge marimbas from eastern, western, and southern Africa. They dance and sing really well; they're very energetic and have girls who sing, dance, and play percussion too. It's an incredible band.

**MD:** Do you incorporate any of these outside influences into your own playing when you're around these kinds of Indian and African musicians?

**Airto:** No; I think I just add *my* energy to what's happening. To be honest with you, I don't try to change the music anymore with

my playing. I try my best to fit with whatever else is being played. I put my *energy* into it and try to exchange that energy with the other musicians. That's what I love doing now. It's just beautiful when it works.

**MD:** What kind of non-musical influences do you have?

**Airto:** I like people. I like to be influenced by people's energy, by people's feelings. I like the same thing that everybody likes: I like to communicate. When I speak, I like to be heard, and I like to have good conversations about good things.

I've been influenced by my travels all over the globe. That's a big influence. Plus, life is so incredible right now with all the technology. When I was younger I never imagined that there would be such technological advances like the Internet. There are so many exciting things that are happening in the world today.

**MD:** It's interesting how technology has gotten to the point where your rhythms are being sampled and used as the foundation for new music.

**Airto:** Yes, the electronic music made by the younger kids in Europe is fantastic. They sample sounds and rhythms from my music of years ago and build their own songs from it. They are the musicians of the future. It's really exciting to hear that happening.

On my new album, *Homeless*, I took things in that direction. It's a strong rhythmic album, and it features electronics in most of the songs, but it's real playing. We made samples of my playing and layered live parts on top of that. It's definitely influenced by this new generation of musicians coming up today. I'm bringing *my* experience to their new ways.

When a few of these younger musicians heard *Homeless*, they were like, Oh, my God! They were very excited. They liked it, but I also think they wanted to sample it! You know, they want to sample everything. Every beat, man. [laughs] It's pretty incredible.

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## Airto Online

For a complete discography, bibliography, and videography on Airto Moreira, as well as his concert schedule, check out his Web site at [www.airto.com](http://www.airto.com).



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# TOP

# POP

# Drummers

by Robyn Flans

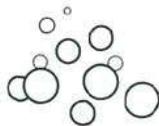
The noise is *deafening*. Kids are screaming, hands are clapping, feet are pounding, and everyone is dancing to the grooves. The singers are belting it out and the instruments are wailing. And at the center of all this craziness is the drummer, who has to stay calm and be a solid foundation for everything else that's happening.

Strong and simple is how the best pop drummers describe their basic role, especially when they're in charge of providing the pulse in those huge arena settings. And the drummers employed by some of the top pop acts today—Cher, 'N Sync, The Backstreet Boys, Jennifer Lopez, and Britney Spears—*know* how to make it

happen in front of those huge crowds.

We tracked down the drummers who work for these high-profile artists to get their thoughts on what it takes to be successful in this genre. They had lots to say on the subject, which goes to show that there's more to playing pop than you might think.

# Cher's Mark Schulman Drumming For The Diva



**M**ark Schulman is proof that you never know how your first big break is going to happen. Growing up in LA, Schulman, serious about music as a career, also worked as a tutor in a program his mother ran at Pierce College. One student he tutored was

Armand Grimaldi, who happened to be a drummer, too. Drums became a topic of conversation, which led to the two getting together and playing. They lost touch after that, but when Grimaldi had to turn down the drum seat with Brenda Russell, he recommended his old tutor for the position.

Schulman started playing drums at age five. He is mostly self-taught, although he took scattered lessons with legendary teacher Freddie Gruber. (Now Mark occasionally teaches classes at LAMA.) At thirteen Mark bought a 4-track recorder with his bar mitzvah money, and by the time he was twenty-one he was engineering. It would turn out to be the prelude to the production company he and his wife, Kelly, have called Jammin Planet, in which they develop new artists and projects.

Along the way Mark has worked with such diverse artists as Jeff Lorber, Bobby Caldwell, Richard Marx, The Pointer Sisters, Foreigner, Simple Minds, David Benoit, and Billy Idol. It's this broad experience that helped Schulman land the gig with Cher in April of '99.

**Mark:** I got called on a Tuesday to audition because a few people recommended me. I auditioned on Friday, and was woken up on Saturday morning by a call from Cher's manager saying I got the gig and that rehearsals would



"The show spans thirty-five years of Cher's career, with a lot of material from the '70s and '80s. From that standpoint it's fun because I get to play a lot of different styles."

start on Monday.

**MD:** What was the audition like?

**Mark:** I was the eighth out of nine guys that day. They had asked me to learn a couple of the older songs and the hit "Believe." By the time I got in there, I could tell that these poor guys—the musicians doing the auditioning—were hammered. We played a couple of tunes and they felt good, and we played about thirty seconds of "Believe," because it sounded really stupid played on acoustic drums. Then they said, "What do you want to

play? We'll jam on something." I said, "It's not about what I want to play, it's what you guys want to play. You must be fried." That kinda loosened things up. Then we jammed on an old Stanley Clarke tune, which felt really good.

Before the audition I was nervous. I called my wife and told her I was nervous and she said, "You don't need this gig. Just go in and have fun." Instead of making the goal to get the gig, which was winding me up, I made the goal to have a good time and support everybody else. I went in with

a really good attitude and tried to make everyone else feel as at-ease as possible. I think that's what made it work.

**MD:** What was the rehearsal schedule?

**Mark:** We rehearsed for six weeks, even though by the end of the first week the band basically knew everything. Then it became a matter of refining the arrangements. We went into production rehearsals with the dancers after three weeks, and then we moved to a larger place, where the dancers could do their whole routine.

Cher joined us in the fourth week, and the last week we moved to Vegas and did full production rehearsals in a big warehouse.

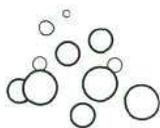
They always book more rehearsal time than is needed, but it's better than not booking enough time. What would have been good is if we had full production rehearsals for two weeks. That's the only thing we actually needed, because the production is pretty amazing.

**MD:** What goes into being a drummer in a big production such as this?

**Mark:** Playing drums is probably one of the easiest parts of it. There's a lot of

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# 'N Sync's Billy Ashbaugh Second Shot At Stardom



**B**illy Ashbaugh never thought it possible that lightning could strike twice in the same place. He had been offered the job with The Backstreet Boys in 1995, but Ashbaugh had committed himself to a recording project in Orlando. So he had to decline the position. Ashbaugh's wife, Jenie, who is also an accomplished drummer, was offered the Backstreet gig. But she was unable to accept, as the two-drummer family had made an agreement that one of them would always remain home with their young daughter. When The Backstreet Boys hit superstardom, Ashbaugh was kicking himself.

But then the phone rang again in '97. It was Backstreet Boys manager Johnny Wright. He had a new group called 'N Sync that he wanted Billy to join. The drummer doubted 'N Sync could repeat The Boys' success. But Ashbaugh was available, so in October of '97 he accompanied 'N Sync to Germany, where they garnered interest from RCA. Some downtime followed during label negotiations, but in June of '98 'N Sync taped a Disney special that would launch them into the stratosphere.

As part of the "inner circle," Billy had the opportunity to play some isolated dates with Britney Spears and Jordan Knight. He also recorded Aaron Carter's first single, "Girl You Shine." Currently he's working on a project with Neil Geraldo.

**MD:** What has changed in 'N Sync's show as the act has moved up to playing larger venues?

**Billy:** The subtleties are a big problem. The acoustics of a lot of the big rooms—and dealing with 20,000 screaming girls—is a challenge. We've started using in-ear monitors, which helps. I wear the foam kind that expands when you put them



"The acoustics of the big rooms—and dealing with 20,000 screaming girls—is a challenge."

in, so it blocks out almost all of the crowd noise. The only crowd noise I'm hearing is what might be bleeding through vocal mic's or my drum mic's.

If I didn't have the in-ear monitors, it would be a huge nightmare. In the beginning, like most drummers, I would count off a song with the sticks. It got so loud, though, that no one could hear me, no matter how hard I hit the sticks together. The noise is incredible. I had to get into the

habit of counting songs off on the hi-hat because everyone has the hi-hat in their ear monitors.

Another great thing about the in-ear system is that it stays consistent from one venue to the next. If the room is real boomy or it's a particularly loud crowd, I'm not affected by that onstage because my earplugs block out all the noise. I think about the groups who had to do this before the in-ear technology, and I don't know how they did it. We're lucky that we have technology on our side.

I also have one of those vibrating devices attached to my throne. It reproduces the low-end vibration of the kick drum and low toms so I feel them through my body. That combined with the in-ears really helps.

**MD:** What does the band need from you as a drummer?

**Billy:** Consistency is the main thing, and, of course, playing the stuff with the best feel that I can. I also have to drive the performance. The bass player, Troy Antunes, has locked really well with me since the very first day. He's a real good groove-oriented player.

They also need someone who can lock with the click. We use a click on every piece of music we play. If you listen to the records, there are a lot of processed drum sounds, loops, and certain percus-

sive sounds that really need to be there, so they end up putting those on tape.

**MD:** So there's very little stretching out that can go on?

**Billy:** It's funny, but when we first put this band together the music director wanted to keep everything similar to the record. But when we opened for Janet Jackson and the music director got to see her band, he heard a lot more stretching. So we've evolved

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# The Backstreet Boys'

## William "Bubba" Bryant

### Positive Force



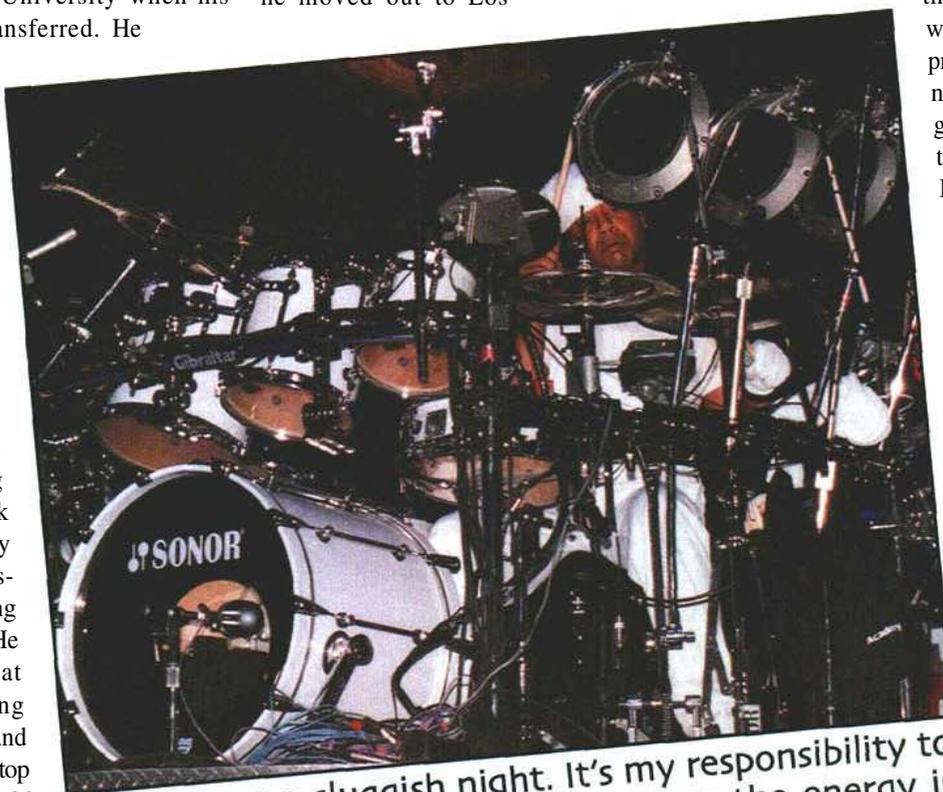
**W**illiam "Bubba" Bryant knows it's worth it to persevere through the hard times. Like most dedicated musicians, he's withstood tough times to be able to play the drums. (He actually first got himself to LA by working at a Kentucky Fried Chicken.) Bryant grew up in Nashville, attended Tennessee State University, and transferred to Eastern Illinois University when his favorite teacher transferred. He wanted a well-rounded musical education, so he learned how to play percussion in both orchestral and marching styles.

Bryant's first big audition in LA was for Esther Phillips. The main reason he landed the job was because he was an expert at reading charts. His big break occurred one day while he was a passenger in a car, riding down Vine Street. He spotted R&B great Ronnie Laws going into a music store and asked the driver to stop the car. As fate would have it, Bryant introduced himself to Laws just as the saxophonist was putting together a new band. He's worked with Laws ever since.

Bryant has also played with such luminaries as Jermaine Jackson, Sheena Easton, Philip Bailey, The Crusaders, Joe Sample, Janet Jackson, Jeffrey Osborne, George Benson, and Brenda Russell. Bryant was Laws' musical director when he got the call to work with The Backstreet Boys.

**MD:** Where did the call from The Backstreet Boys come from?

**William:** For years people have said that the way things happen are from who you know. I didn't really understand that until this job came up. I got the gig because I'm close friends with the person who happens to be their vocal coach—Ronald "Doc" Holliday. We went to college together and he moved out to Los



"I can't have a sluggish night. It's my responsibility to not only kick the boys and make sure the energy is up in the band, but also keep the thousands of people in the audience energized."

Angeles before I did. They were in Nashville rehearsing for the tour, some things went down, and they were without a drummer, so Doc called me.

**MD:** How did you prepare for the gig?

**William:** It was pretty intense, because I had stopped going on the road full-time. I had been writing music for television with the friend I had moved out to LA with, Curt

Farquhar, but I was beginning to do some of it on my own. I was in the studio trying to finish the main title for Chris Elliot's *Get A Life* when I got the call from The Backstreet Boys four days before they were leaving on tour.

I had to learn nineteen songs before going to Europe. It was very intense. I had to do a lot of homework. I listened to the CDs a lot, and I wrote out charts for myself. Luckily all my experiences prepared me for this. Usually the big deals happen suddenly. And I'm pretty proud of myself for pulling it off.

**MD:** What do these guys need from a drummer?

**William:** When I listened to the original band, the main element that I felt was lacking was a certain amount of professionalism. This is not to down the other guys, but I could hear the inexperience. When I came in I was asked to give more feeling to the music, make it groove harder, give it more of a pocket and give them more of a foundation.

This is one of those gigs where you have to play exactly what's on the record. That's difficult because you also have to add something extra to it to make it special. When you've played with the varied artists I've worked with, it helps to be able to pull from all of those

musical experiences to meet the challenge. I felt like I pretty much did that.

**MD:** There's a huge noise factor at a Backstreet concert. How do you deal with that?

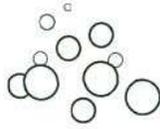
**William:** Luckily the technology has gotten to the point where the problem is solved with in-ear monitors. This job would be very hard without them, because they block out a lot of the noise.

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# Jennifer Lopez'

## Ivan Hampden

### Total Pro



**I**van Hampden is one busy guy. While lately he's been working with Jennifer Lopez, he's also been the drummer for Luther Vandross for the past twelve years. In addition, he works with Roberta Flack and Vanessa Williams, and is part of Phil Perry's East Coast band. It's a lot to juggle, but Ivan thrives on it.

**MD:** Let's talk about what each artist needs from a drummer and how each situation differs.

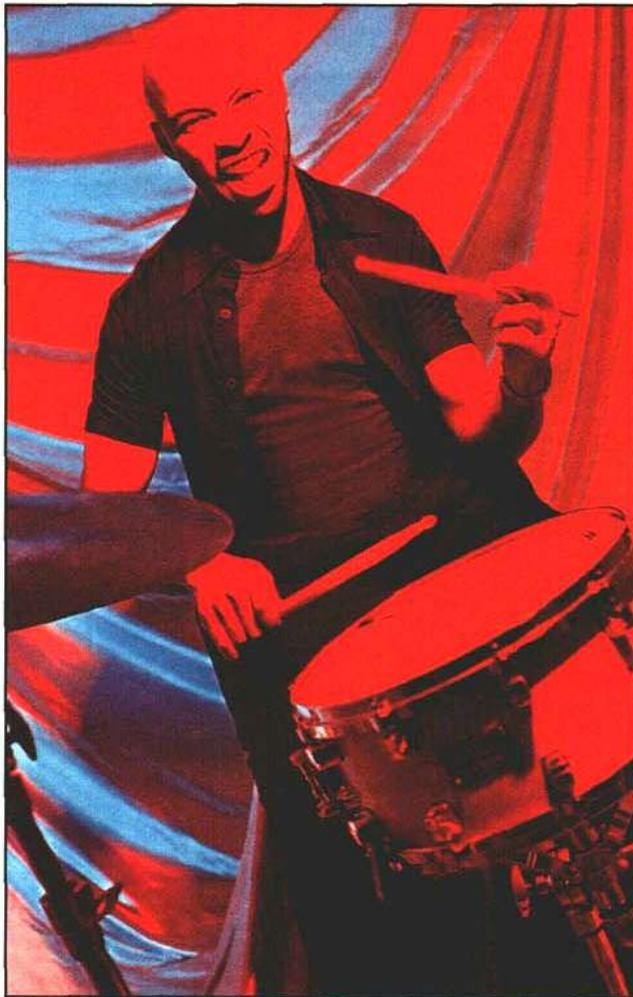
**Ivan:** My basic objective is to make every artist I play with feel secure and give them solid time. Each artist is comfortable when you play what they're used to feeling and hearing. You don't want to see them turning around going, "What was that?"

Luther Vandross is a perfectionist. He knows what's going on in the music. It could be, "What was that you played in bar twenty-five of that song?" Working with him for twelve years has kept me on my toes. There's minimal room for mistakes. He wants the live show to sound like the record every night. The show is very arranged and intricate. And there are tremendous dynamic leaps in the ballads.

Roberta Flack is also the consummate musician. She actually allows a little bit more freedom in the band than Luther. She wants her parts and certain specific things, but she's always looking for that little extra something. She wants to turn her head and go, "Ooh, yeah! Alright!" But again, she's an incredible musician and she knows when it's right and when it's wrong.

Jennifer Lopez's gig is a younger vibe, but she's looking for the same thing—she wants to hear what she's used to hearing

and to be comfortable. The first things we did with her were television promotion gigs, and while it was new, she was getting used to having the band there as a support system. I made sure to play supportively



**"My basic objective is to make every artist I play with feel secure."**

and make it easy for her.

Jennifer's show is a little different musically, as it's almost more of a "show" situation. It's more in the entertainment vein than just a concert. There's lots of dancing and a big production.

**MD:** As a drummer, what do you have to be thinking about? Are you punctuating her dance moves?

**Ivan:** On certain tunes, yes, I'm working with the dancing. She also likes to work with sequences, so I have to lock into them and add to what's there.

**MD:** Is that difficult?

**Ivan:** Yes, it can be hard. That machine is clicking, and then you've got the band playing against it.

**MD:** How do you get good at that?

**Ivan:** Practice with a click. People have these quantized sequences set so stiff and locked up that the human quality—that little bit of flux back and forth—has to be just perfect. You have to be right in the center of the time. You have to know how to listen and lock in. And you've got to keep your ears wide open. Once that machine is in there, it's a little different edge and you've got to stick with it.

**MD:** What prepared you for that?

**Ivan:** I do a lot of programming. I've programmed quite a few of Luther's records as well as played on them. Working with a click and with tracks like that, you get used to hearing the difference between something when it's quantized and when it's not.

A lot of people call drummers nowadays to play on recordings that are all sequenced. You're called to be the live element. They pull the drum machine off and you go in and play, or you play *to* the drum machine. I've done a bunch of sessions like that. With technology the way it is, musicians are incorporating it and you've got to be on top of it. You have to get used to hearing that straight, non-moving time.

**MD:** How does your equipment vary in your playing situations?

**Ivan:** Luther's setup is probably the biggest. I'm a Yamaha endorser, and I use their Maple Custom kit. I usually use a 24" bass drum, 8", 10", and 12" toms on top with 16" and 18" floor toms, and a variety of snare drums. I use Zildjian cymbals, including a 20" China cymbal, a 20" ride, two 16" crashes, and

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# Britney Spears'

## Marvin "Slam-Gs" Hammett

### Learning To Lay It Down

**M**arvin "Slam-Gs" Hammett was surprised when, at the beginning of '99, Britney Spears' musical director, Kevin Antunes, called him to work with one of the hottest rising stars in music. The Rhode Island resident had played with Antunes in a group called TLJ, a band that played music he describes as "experimental fusion." There was no way those chops would work on a pop gig, yet Antunes had faith that Hammett could do it—even more faith than Hammett had in himself.

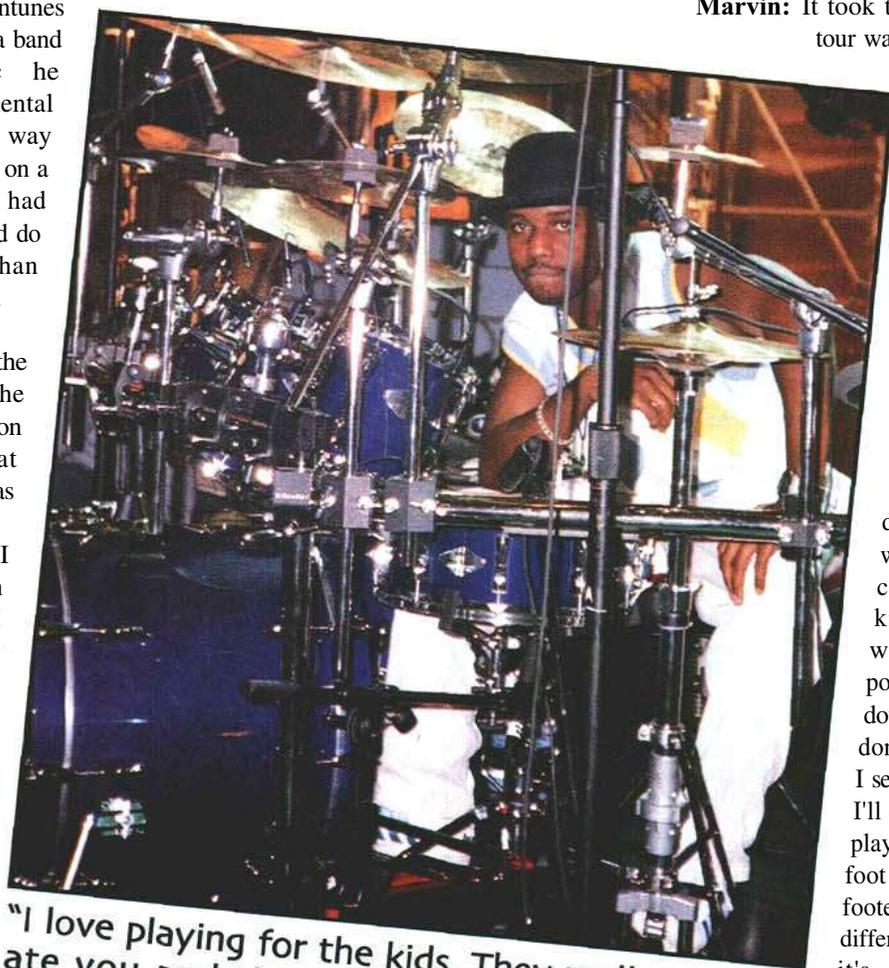
**MD:** Can you address the differences between the Spears gig and your fusion background, and what Britney requires of you as a drummer?

**Marvin:** At the time I was playing with Kevin and his cousin Troy, I was venting. I can't even describe it. We'd start a song and by the middle of it, it wouldn't even be that song anymore. It would be incredible playing, but it was totally improvised.

I grew up in Baltimore, and Dennis Chambers and Larry Bright lived there. I'd go over to their houses all the time. It was wild, because at that time they were my local heroes, but I had no idea they were *world-wide* heroes. My standards of what was good were high. I had to think further than the average drummer because Dennis was a local guy setting incredibly high standards.

I got really good at playing solos. I could

do that before I knew how to actually play a groove. My playing suffered a little bit because even in high school I was playing in jazz bands in nightclubs because I could solo so well. That fools people a little. And I wasn't really comfortable with my play-



*"I love playing for the kids. They really appreciate you and they're very honest about how they feel."*

ing because I was only good at soloing. I knew I had to learn solid pocket playing.

Before Kevin called me for the Britney gig, I was in the middle of totally breaking down my style, which is hard when you keep getting gigs. You automatically fall back on what you know, on what got you

the gigs, and what people like about your playing. But I was trying to figure out a way I could totally break down my style to the bare bones—naked drum playing. And when Kevin called me for the Britney thing, I didn't realize it at the time, but it was the perfect situation for me. It's not to say that a pop gig is less demanding, because for me, it's a little *more* demanding. But it's the perfect venue for me to say, "Strip down all that fast, fancy, crazy stuff, lock in the groove, and make it feel good."

**MD:** Were you comfortable playing this way?

**Marvin:** It took time. The first Britney tour was five months long, and it wasn't until the fourth month that I really got comfortable playing straight and laying back. I always felt I had to prove I could do it. Another thing that helped me was they gave me a solo in the middle of the show, so I knew I had a spot to get it all out.

When I used to go see drummers play, I wouldn't bother to concentrate on anything I knew how to do, only what I didn't. At this point, I'm totally stripped down and I'm acting like I don't know anything when I see another drummer play. I'll even watch to see if he's playing with the ball of his foot or if he's playing flat-footed. It gives me a whole different perspective, even if it's something I think I already know how to do.

Looking at everything like I'm a beginner has given me an energy like I had when I first started drumming. It feels

like a brand new thing. It may sound strange to some people, but I'm excited about playing nothing.

**MD:** Aside from hanging out at Larry Bright's and Dennis Chambers' houses, what other training did you have?

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# Pop Drummers

Mark Schulman continued from page 87

sequenced stuff, so I'm playing with clicks alot.

I had to put together a combination of acoustic and electronic drums. There are a lot of loops and samples that we play along to for the dance stuff, and I had to assimilate a sort of second electronic kit to the left of my acoustic kit to be able to play the dance stuff. We play eighty-five percent of the dance stuff, which is usually a programmed medium. In this case, we set it up so that the band is playing most of the parts. AH of the kick drums and all of the 2s and 4s, whether they be claps or 808 or 909 samples, are played, and I play a real hi-hat too.

The show spans about thirty-five years of Cher's career, with a lot of material from the '70s and '80s. From that standpoint it's fun, because I get to play a lot of different styles, which is my background. The band is so great that it makes it easy and fun.

MD: How do you approach playing all of the different styles?

**Mark:** When I'm playing different things, I try to get into the head space of the music and what was happening at the time it was recorded. I know it was Hal Blaine who recorded "Gypsies, Tramps And Thieves," so I try to envision myself being Hal. I try to play the types of fills he would have played. If it's an '80s rock tune, like "Turn Back Time," I think about that time period and put myself into that style. When I'm playing dance stuff now, I put myself into that.

**MD:** It's probably a good rule of thumb to keep parts simple in pop music.

**Mark:** It's always about the groove and the feel of the music. What you do within the parameters of that dictates some of the uniqueness and flair you can put in, as long as it doesn't get in the way of the groove.

I had a lot of ability as a kid, so I'd always try to play everything I knew. I finally realized—although pretty late considering I was playing weddings and bar mitzvahs at thirteen—that I needed to simplify and listen to the music a lot more. I realized that if the drum track is really simple, it makes everything else easy when

you're playing pop music.

I'm proud of my playing on Simple Minds' *Good News From The Next World* disc because the grooves were really good and I got to play a lot of creative and unique fills. The producer, Keith Forsey, is a drummer, so he encouraged me to be myself. But the groove comes first—that's the magic formula. Lock in and think about the groove. Think about what kind of feeling you're trying to convey, what the song is about, and what the other instruments are playing. From that point on, you can put in your own signature, particularly when you get to do fills. That's the way I approach it—groove first and unique ideas second.

**MD:** What did Richard Marx need from a drummer?

**Mark:** The same thing. Richard had some really fine drummers playing on his records, and he just wanted a re-creation of the record. Foreigner liked the fact that I had a lot of R&B influence. Mick Jones wanted me to re-create the records, but also add some of my own flair. I added a little more funk to the Foreigner music, and I think they liked that. I gave it a few more

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ghost notes here and there and a little bit more of an R&B feel, but still kept an intense rock attitude. That works well in the Cher situation too, because a lot of the new stuff is dance, which has funk implications. And then there's other stuff that's straight rock. So you have to be able to cover all the bases.

**MD:** What goes into playing with Billy Idol?

**Mark:** That's a whole other world. Again, it's about serving the music. His old material is very fast 8th-note music and it's about the pulse—keeping a real even, steady, and hard-hitting pulse. A new song we did recently was very modern and was almost a Nine Inch Nails kind of track. It's funky with loops.

**MD:** What equipment are you using?

**Mark:** I've been with Sabian for twelve years, and I love them. I use 15" hats, a 22" Raw Dry ride, and various AA crashes. My drums are Pearl, and I position the toms in this order: from left to right, 10", 12", 8", 16" floor tom, and 14" floor tom. I also use a 24" bass drum. I use Remo heads, Vic Firth Vinnie's Viper model sticks,

Gibraltar hardware, Shure microphones, and KAT and Kurzweil electronics.

**MD:** What are you using for a monitor system on the Cher gig?

**Mark:** I used in-ear monitors on the last two tours I've done. They're fantastic. Ever since I was a teenager I've been wearing hearing protection because I have bad tinnitus. When I go to sleep at night, I hear noise. If I don't wear hearing protection, it's ten times worse. I love in-ear monitors because I can control my own level.

Speaking of working with a click, Joe Porcaro once gave me some valuable advice: When you play with a click, act like the click is playing with *you*, like it's a percussionist with really good time. Thinking that way reduced a lot of stress for me. So I have the click just loud enough to know it's there and I can either play right on it, in front of it, or behind it. It's my friend.

**MD:** And you're very careful with your ears in terms of how loud you have the levels set in your monitors?

**Mark:** Absolutely. Whenever I sit down at soundcheck to adjust my levels, my drum

tech, Chris Achzet, and the monitor engineer can't believe how low I keep the volume. I hear everything, but not loud—particularly the click.

I engineer and produce and have my own studio, and my hearing is very valuable to me. I have to be able to hear high end and the full spectrum of music. I have to protect that.

**Billy Ashbaugh continued from page 88**

over the last couple of years.

If you listen to the first Disney special, which aired about a year and a half ago, and compare it to the more recent Pay Per View special, you can really hear the difference. My performance is almost totally different. He loosened the reins and let me stretch out a lot more.

**MD:** Where did you learn to be so proficient with a click?

**Billy:** I grew up practicing to a click. One of the first people I ever took lessons from stressed that. I've done it so much that, oddly enough, I feel more comfortable

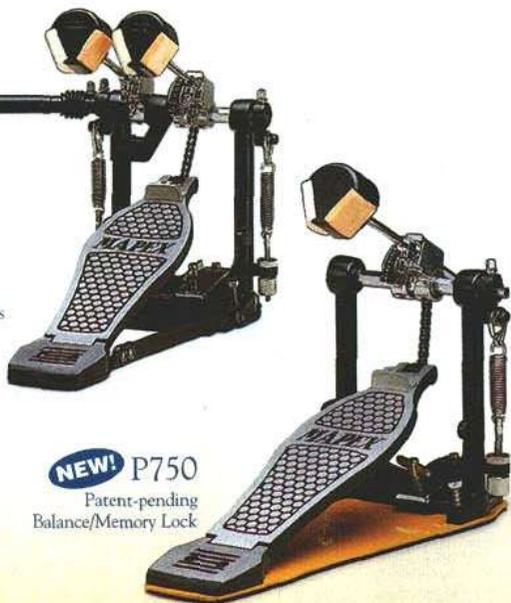


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# Pop Drummers

with it, especially in this situation.

The whole band gets the click in their ears, but not too loud. There used to be a lot of spots in songs where I had to keep time on the hi-hat so everyone knew where the pulse was. Now I don't have to hammer away on the hi-hat. I can let the time relax because everyone in the band is hearing the pulse with me.

One of the trickiest parts about doing this gig is keeping the energy level up really high. But you can't push the click and get ahead of the beat. You can't have flaming, and you can't let the band pull you ahead either. You really have to pull back on the reins to keep it in check. But at the same time you want to play with conviction—and you can't help but feel the energy of the crowd. At first I found myself getting carried away by that energy, but then I listened to the gig tapes and realized I had to watch it.

**MD:** You've gotten to do some recording with 'N Sync.

**Billy:** I did one song on the first album, "Drive Myself Crazy," which was the fourth single off the album. I played on "All I Want Is You This Christmas" from

their Christmas album. I'm also on the track "Good For You" on their new album.

**MD:** It's unusual that bands such as 'N Sync would even consider using their band drummer to record. How did that come about?

**Billy:** When we went out in October of 1997, the musical director was Veit Renn. He was mostly producing and writing songs at that point. But when things started happening so fast with the group, they asked him to actually go out and tour, so he did it for a few months. When we got back, he had some tracks he wanted to submit to 'N Sync, so he quickly pulled me into the studio to record them. Luckily, "Drive Myself Crazy" made the album and got released as a single.

**MD:** What was the recording process on "Drive Myself Crazy"?

**Billy:** When I came in, all the tracks were done, so I was basically playing to the pre-recorded track. I was the only live instrument there. That was a little tricky. The song on the new album, "Good For You," was done at the Hit Factory in New York. We had the guitar player, bass player, and me tracking live together, and it really

came out with a nice feel.

**MD:** What is your touring setup?

**Billy:** I endorse Vic Firth, Remo, Drum Workshop, Paiste, and LP. The Drum Workshop toms are 8", 10", and 12", with a 16" floor tom and a 22" kick. DW is making me three snare drums, but my main snare is a 7x13. They're also making a 7x12 and 5x13. They agreed to let my daughter Najjah draw on the pre-finished shells and then lacquer them—a very custom finish.

This idea came up when Najjah was about two and a half. She took a Sharpie and drew a happy face on my Practi-Pal. Kelly Firth at Vic Firth saw the face, photocopied it and my signature, and made some custom sticks for me with the drawing on it. It's great.

The only downfall to having this gig is having to leave my daughter to go on the road. Believe me, there have been times when I've strongly considered just letting it all go. But then Jenie and I talk about it and we know that sticking it out could create positive long-term effects that could change our lives. ●

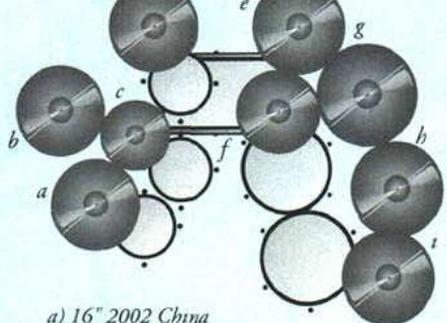
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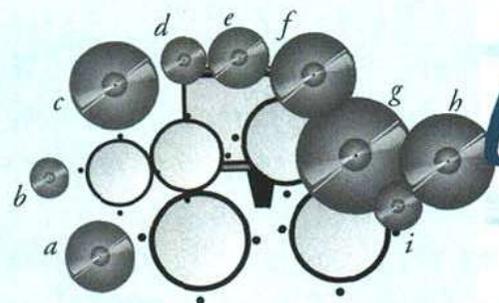
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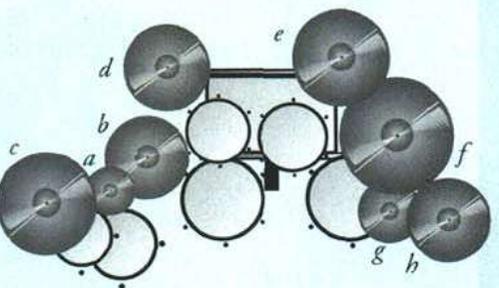
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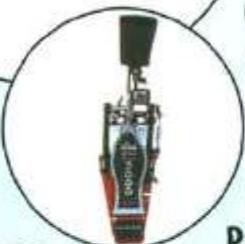
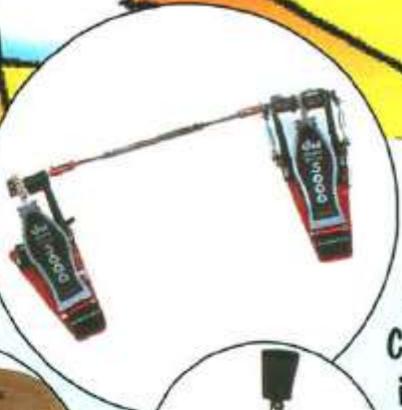
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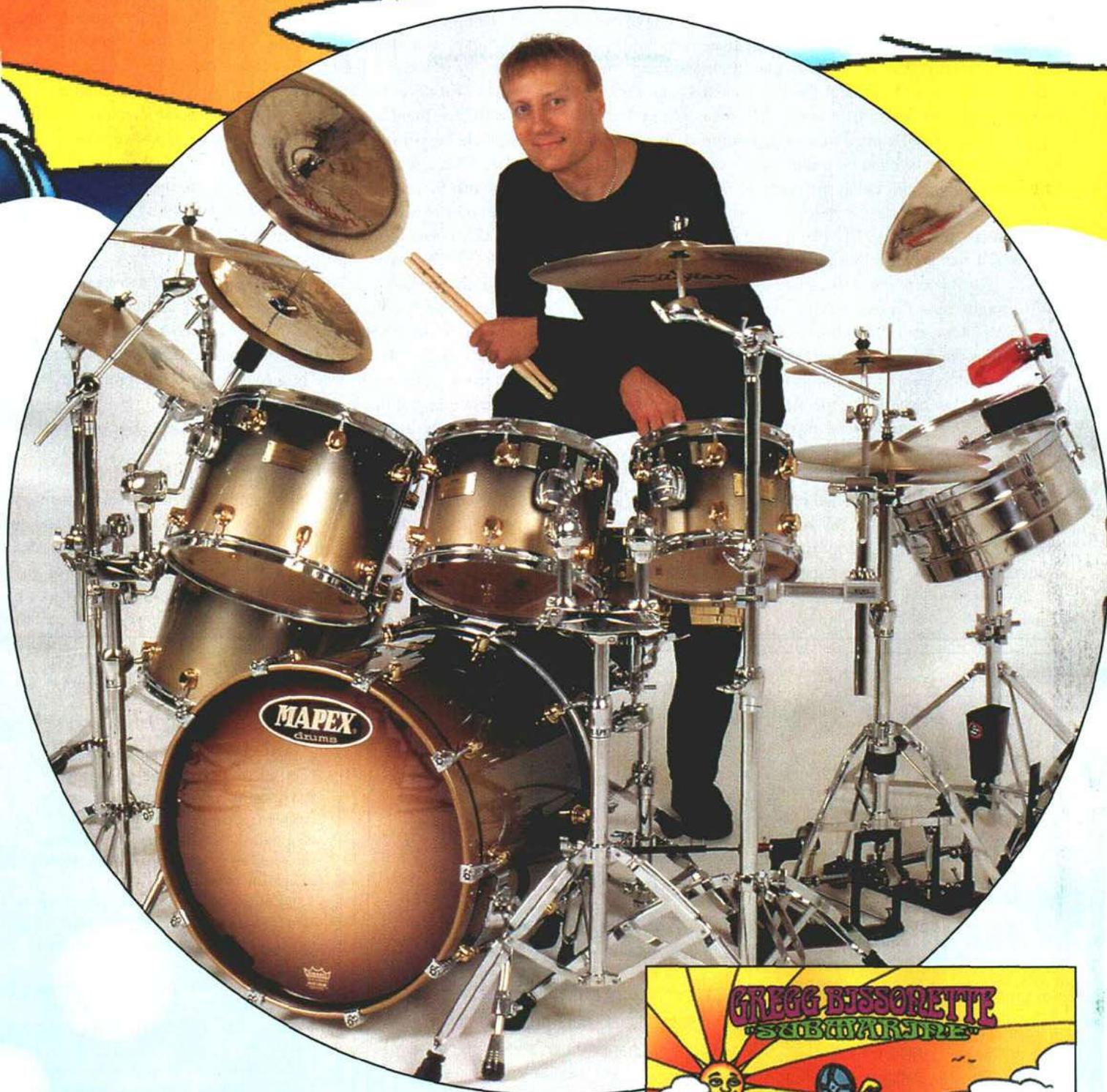
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# to get Into The Submarine!



**MAPEX** Zildjian



*Submarine* features Matt Bissonette on bass and guest guitarists Doug Bossi, Robben Ford, Frank Gambale, Gary Hoey, Richie Kotzen, Michael Landau, Tim Pierce, Joe Satriani, Steve Stevens, and Steve Vai. Gregg's stylistically diverse grooves and solos are brilliantly showcased here with Beatle-influenced pop, rock, jazz, funk, afro-Cuban, blues, and fusion, making *Submarine* a must-have CD.  
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# Pop Drummers

William "Bubba" Bryant continued from page 89

**MD:** It doesn't interfere with the feel element at all?

**William:** It's got its pros and cons. When you have monitors onstage, you can feel the low end, and that gives you a certain amount of energy. The sound guys placed an apparatus under my seat that vibrates so I can feel the low end. It kinda works, but it isn't quite the same as something real. The other thing I don't like is that sometimes there's interference, depending on if it's remote or wireless. That can be annoying. But really, you couldn't do this particular job without the in-ear monitors, so it's something you deal with.

**MD:** Which songs do you like playing the most?

**William:** I have to say that all of the songs are a joy to play. I wouldn't say there is one I like more than any other. I know some people might think I'm not playing much and that I have to stick to a certain pattern, and that's true to a degree. But there's a certain amount of room for me to actually do some playing.

I've played in front of thousands of people many times before, so that's not a new experience for me. But this is probably the first time I'm playing arenas every night to a minimum of 20,000 people.

I remember one night when we were in Europe and I felt a little sluggish. That's when it dawned on me that I can't have a sluggish night. As the drummer it's my responsibility to not only kick the boys and make sure the energy is up in the band, but also keep the thousands of people in the audience energized. And that, to me, is the most exciting part of it. Every night I strive to make that happen.

**MD:** It must be hard to keep the energy up like that all the time.

**William:** It's not easy, and depending on what's happened during the day it can be difficult. But nothing can matter, because the audience pays a lot of money and they don't want to know about what your day was like. All they know is that they deserve to have a great show. Therefore, you just have to do it. And once I thought about it, it wasn't difficult at all. The easy part was going on stage. The hard part is being off stage with all the other stuff you have to deal with.

**MD:** What else is tough about this job?

**William:** Since the songs have to be just like the record, the tempos have to be exact. I'm playing with a click on all of the material, but you don't want to *sound* like you're playing with a click.

**MD:** Can you give some tips on how to do that?

**William:** It takes a lot of repetition. You have to practice it over and over. I still practice with a metronome every day. That's another positive thing about going to school—you learn the importance of practice. Another thing I was told when I was young was to play to records. That helps you in a lot of ways, like broadening your understanding of musical styles.

**MD:** You're also the musical director for The Backstreet Boys. What are your duties?

**William:** Onstage, the duties are making sure the cut-offs are clean. Also, when we rehearse, I'm very specific about making sure the parts are played a certain way. Things have to sound natural and not forced. A lot of times I'll have to come up with arrangement ideas on the spot, and luckily for me I'm working with a group of guys who are very talented and who help with that. But there has to be one person who is directing everybody, who everyone will come to

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# Pop Drummers

for answers.

**MD:** And what are the music director's duties off stage?

**William:** Off stage is where it gets hairy. Any time there's a problem, I hear about it. Any gripe is usually going to come my way.

When I was hired to be MD, I didn't have much time to get the band from the level they were at to that next level of professionalism. I think I accomplished it in a very short period of time.

**MD:** What's been your toughest gig?

**William:** The most demanding job was George Benson. He's George because he's George—there's nobody like him, nobody plays like him. I know a lot of great guitarists, but to this day I have not heard anyone with such a gift as George Benson.

I was in that band for five years, and every year it was like I had just started because the demand was always getting higher and higher. You would think after a while you would get used to it, but he was always pushing the band. It was intense.

**MD:** What do you like about this job?

**William:** First of all, I think it's a blessing to be involved with such a historic situation. These guys are breaking records and making history. I think it's wonderful, too, that they're the kind of act they are—they're clean, there's no cussing, and we're performing for a wide age range. There are five-year-olds who love them and grown women in their thirties. So they're touching a lot of people in a positive way. I'm so tired of the negative stuff—the devil worshipping and dirty lyrics. To me, that's not what music is supposed to be about. I think these guys are doing a great job, and it's all from the heart.

Ivan Hampden continued from page 90

14" hi-hats. I also have electronics, because Luther has all these clap sounds and effects in certain songs. I'm using a drumKAT with a Kurzweil sampler.

With Roberta it's not as elaborate. I usually use a five-piece Yamaha kit—10", 13", and 16" toms and maybe three cymbals—two crashes and a ride. I also play a little percussion on her gig—bongos, woodblock, windchimes, triangle, shaker, and a tambourine.

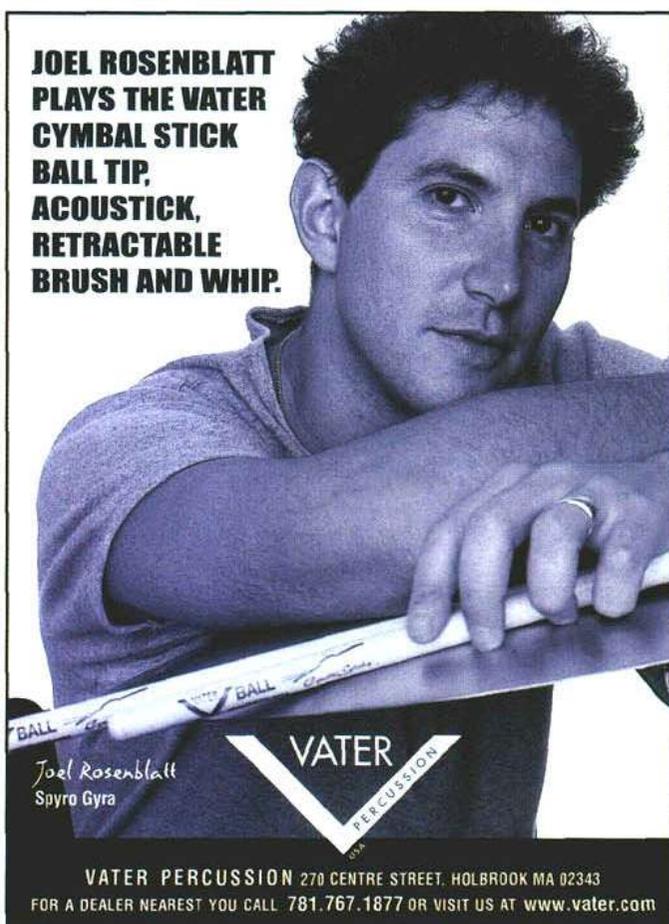
I use an even smaller kit on Jennifer's gig. It's three pieces: 22" bass, 16" floor tom, and a 12" rack tom with the same three cymbals. I also trigger an 808 kick drum or a clap sound.

**MD:** How did you hook up with Jennifer?

**Ivan:** My wife originally got booked on Jennifer's gig to sing background. The band had rehearsed for a couple of days, and then the first night Jennifer went in to work with them I went by to pick up my wife. I was standing in the corner, and I saw that Jennifer had a problem with the drummer. The drummer is an excellent player, but I think it was more about a look that she wanted. Later on that night I was introduced to her, and when I got in the car with my wife she said, "They want you to call tomorrow." I felt so bad because I knew the other drummer.

**MD:** Tell us about your formative training.

**Ivan:** I started out in New York at a place called Jazz Mobile, where guys like Charli Persip taught. I was in high school and had already been playing with a local band as a self-taught drummer. I found myself at Jazz Mobile and was able to get my reading

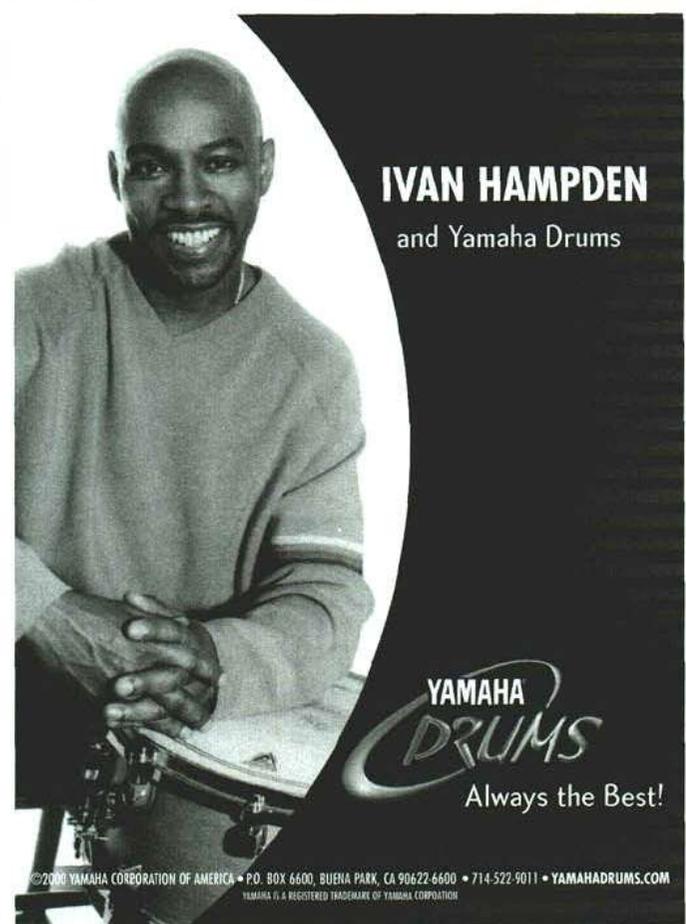


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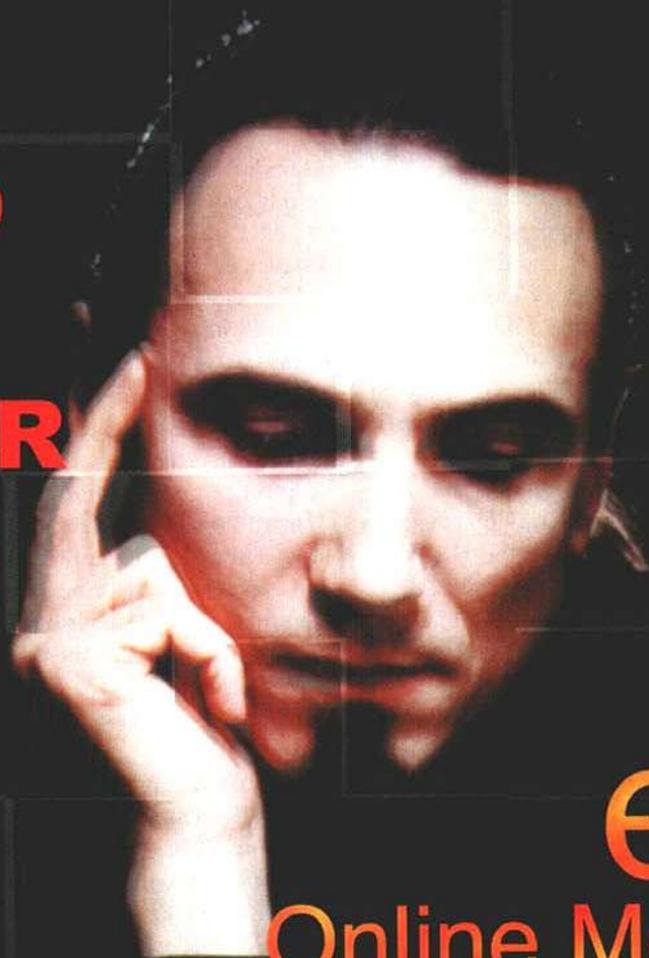
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# Pop Drummers

together and play with other drummers. Persip would write these intense pieces for five drumsets, where he'd have one guy play in seven, one guy play in four, and one guy play in three.

A few years later I ended up at the Dance Theatre of Harlem, where they had an orchestra program, and that expanded my education. I had started out with the jazz training and then moved to the classical thing, performing Stravinski, "Swan Lake," and that kind of stuff. At that time, I was also working with Eartha Kitt, which was a whole school in itself. She did a lot of '20s music and torch songs, and it was very theatrical. I was learning so many different things.

**MD:** Were you thinking about going into jazz?

**Ivan:** Early on I was strung out on Tony Williams and Billy Cobham, but where I was playing and who I was playing with influenced my direction. There wasn't a lot of use for those skills and for playing all those notes.

**MD:** Who was the first artist to really demand the backbeat approach from you?

**Ivan:** When I was a teenager I worked around the clubs in Harlem. There were quite a few blues trios, so I got to play jazz a little bit. But they really wanted backbeat; it was organ and guitar, and the organ player played bass. That was where it really started turning around for me. I began focusing on backbeat and feel, and I've been doing it ever since.

**Marvin "Slam-Gs" Hammett** continued from page 91

**Marvin:** In elementary school I wanted to play drums, but we couldn't afford a set. I didn't get one until the summer before high school. During the wait, the desire was building. Once I got the set I started developing.

I had the opportunity to go to Peabody College, where there was a work/study program. There was an instructor there who I was always asking to teach me how to play set. He'd say, "I'll teach you drumset tomorrow if you practice vibes today." He forced me to try other things, which eventually helped me with my songwriting and understanding of music theory.

Another great experience I had was a circus gig with the Theatre Project Neighborhood Art Circus. That circus would go around to underprivileged communities and perform. It gave me a real appreciation for circus drummers and the job they do. They have four or five television monitors around their drumsets and they're playing these incredible arrangements, catching all the accents from the clowns in one monitor and watching the guy on the tightrope and the guy with the lions, plus reading the charts at the same time.

**MD:** That was probably great experience for your current gig. Britney has a lot going on in her show.

**Marvin:** That's where my jazz experience comes into play, because I'm playing the straight songs, but out of the corner of my eye I'm watching the dancers do their steps. A lot of their moves are really syncopated, and I catch a lot of their accents, which is

**Istanbul** <sup>★</sup>

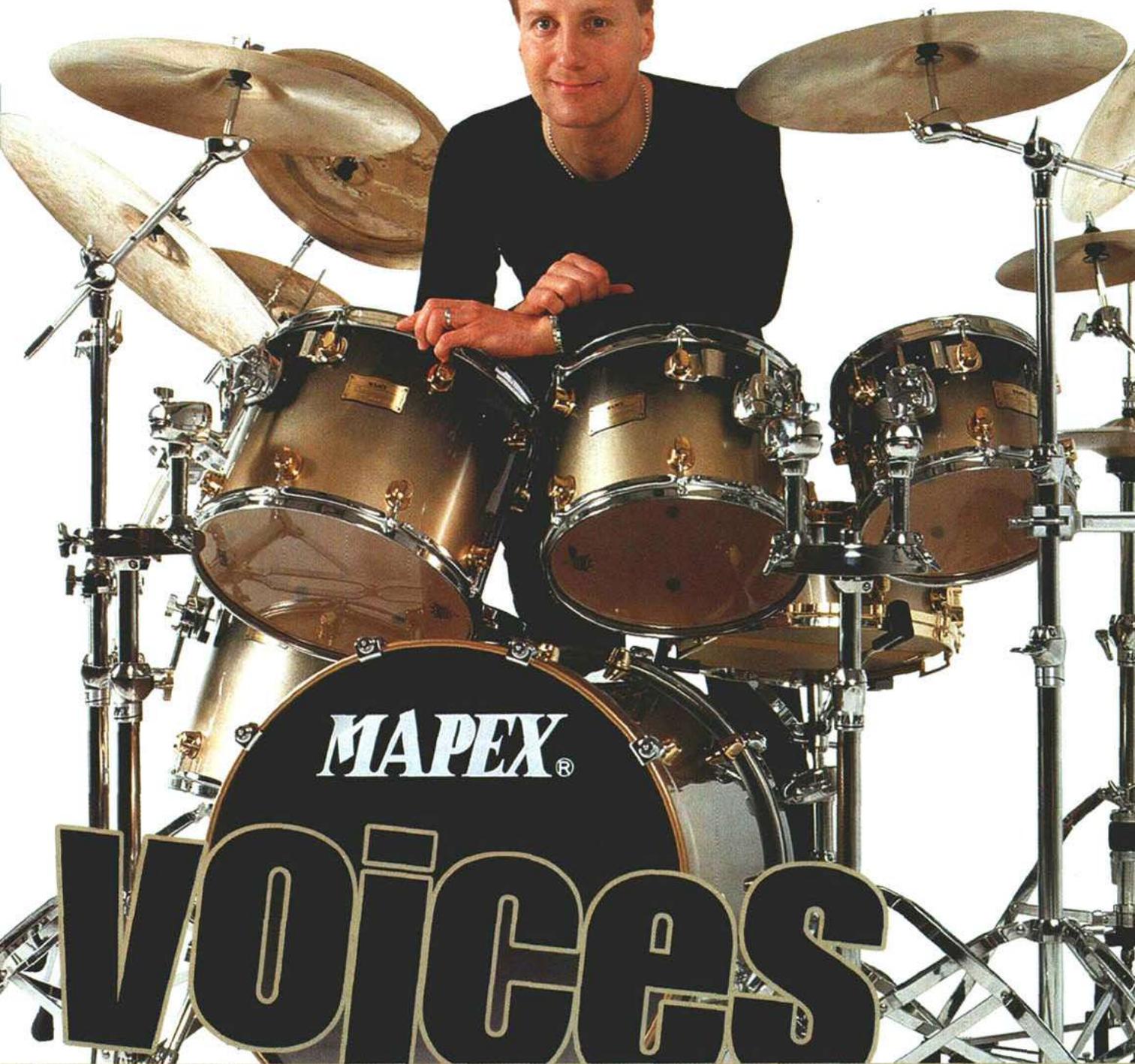
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# Pop Drummers

cool. In that way I'm not playing totally straight all the time. It keeps me on my toes.

**MD:** How is Britney to work for?

**Marvin:** She's very cool. She's not demanding, but she'll let you know what she wants. She'll say, "Can you put accents

here?" or "I have an idea about this."

**MD:** What about your setup?

**Marvin:** I use Zildjian cymbals and Zildjian 5A sticks. I cut a little bit off the bottom of the sticks, but I love the weight. I'm using electronics and I'm in the process of working all that out right now. I

also use that rump shaker that allows you to feel the bass drum through your seat. At first it was hard to get used to, because it makes my butt sweat a lot. But I have to use that and the in-ear monitors because of all the screaming.

I also use Remo heads. I used to play a lot of real fast stuff, so I had my snare drum tuned as tight as possible. When I was playing those single-stroke rolls I wanted every note to be heard. I didn't want any ring. I wanted it to sound like a machine gun. But lately I've been talking to Remo about how to get a deeper tone with a tighter feel.

When I first got a drum endorsement with Yamaha, I asked them if they could make each drum on my set a different color of bubble gum. My drums are set up to the right side of the stage on a high riser, so it's very visible. Kids love that. Also, I can't play without chewing bubble gum because if I don't my tongue sticks out. So I chew bubble gum to keep my tongue under control. I'll blow bubbles, which the kids love, too. So I thought having the drums look like bubble gum was a good idea.

I love playing for the kids. They really appreciate you and they're very honest about how they feel. It's cool.



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which means i trust them with my life and music.  
and when you put it that way,  
it's *not* too much to ask.



**ATTACK**  
drumheads

# Exploring The Swiss Army Triplet Part 2

by Chet Doboie

**A**s we talked about in Part 1 of this two-part series, the Swiss Army triplet comes out of the tradition of Swiss Basel Drumming. The natural application for this rudiment is triplets, but fantastic things can be done by applying it in a 16th-note context. As you'll soon see, in the context of 16ths, this rudiment creates a three-over-four feel. And when accents are added, a very interesting texture is created: a rhythmic counterpoint of flams, accents, and non-accents. And again, this all happens while we're superimposing three over four.

## Movin' The 16th Swiss

This exercise is a brother to exercise 2 from Part 1. (It may be helpful now to refer back to Part 1.) Be certain to understand exactly where the Swiss Army triplets and inverts appear in the context of this exercise, and study the "turn around" figure that occurs in the fourth count of each measure.

## Swiss 16ths With Accents

This accent exercise can be overwhelming at first. I've divided it into three modules (A, B, and C) to facilitate a more comfortable means to digest these patterns. It's advisable to count while performing this material. This will be a key factor in bridging the gap between exercise and performance.

**A**

**B**

R LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR L RRL RRL RRL RRL RRL

R LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR L RRL RRL RRL RRL RRL

R LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR L RRL RRL RRL RRL RRL

**C**

RL RRL RRL RRL RRL RR LR LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR LL

RL RRL RRL RRL RRL RR LR LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR LL

RL RRL RRL RRL RRL RR LR LLR LLR LLR LLR LLR LL

### Swiss Army Groove

Here's a short composition that showcases the "funkiness" and creative possibilities of the Swiss Army triplet. The effectiveness and clarity of this piece is dependent on your control. Simply put, contrast the accents, flams, and taps. After having fun with this piece, experiment with putting your own ideas together.

RRL RRL R LLR LLR L RRL RRL RRL RRL RRL

RRL RRL RRL RRL RRLR LLR L RRLR LLR LLR

L RRL RRL RRLR LLR L RRL RR L RRL RRL R

RL RRL RL R LLR LLR L LLR LLR LLR R L

The Swiss Army triplet has much to offer us in terms of technical development, stimulating new ideas for our personal vocabulary, and opening up new improvisational freedom. I recommend applying this rudiment to multi-surface applications on the drumset and on marching tenors. You'll love what you discover.



# Building Your Double Bass Chops, Part 2

## Triplet Grooves And Fills

by Bobby Rondinelli and Michael Lauren

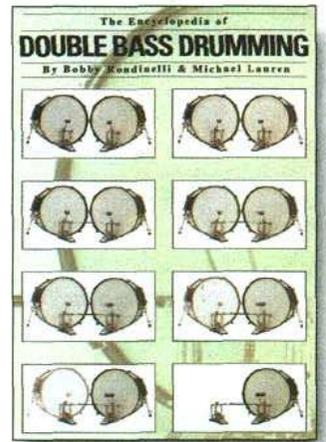
*Editor's note: The following article is excerpted from The Encyclopedia Of Double Bass Drumming, a new book by Bobby Rondinelli and Michael Lauren.*

**MUSIC KEY**

- H.H. —
- S.D. —
- B.D. 1 —
- B.D. 2 —

This second installment from our *Encyclopedia Of Double Bass Drumming* series deals exclusively with triplets. You'll find some fun and challenging patterns below. In the spirit of the progressive approach of the book, the following examples start simply and then get more difficult.

Other ways to play these patterns: The most common way to play triplets is to alternate them (RLR, LRL). You should also experiment with other footings (RRL, LRR, etc.). This can lead to some interesting-sounding patterns. But no matter how you "foot" these beats and fills, your main goal is to keep the triplets sounding wide and even. Don't rush them.



### 8th-Note Triplets

## 16th-Note Triplets

Examples 5, 6, 7, and 8 show various rhythmic patterns using 16th-note triplets. Example 5 features two triplets. Example 6 features two triplets. Example 7 features three triplets. Example 8 features four triplets.

## 32nd-Note Triplets

Examples 9 and 10 show patterns using 32nd-note triplets. Example 9 features one triplet. Example 10 features one triplet.

## Triplets In 12/8 (The Blues)

Examples 11 and 12 show patterns using triplets in 12/8 time. Example 11 features three triplets. Example 12 features three triplets.

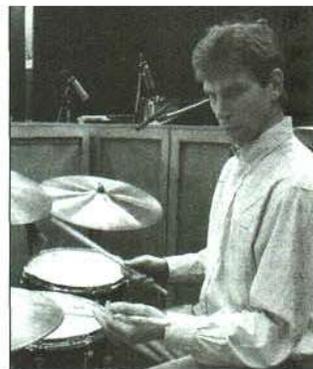
## Triplet Fills

Combine the following fills with the beats from the previous examples. Play them in two-, four-, eight-, and twelve-bar phrases.

Examples 13, 14, 15, and 16 show various triplet fill patterns. Example 13 features four triplets. Example 14 features four triplets. Example 15 features two triplets. Example 16 features two triplets.

*Bobby Rondinelli is a recognized double bass expert who has performed with Rainbow, Black Sabbath, and The Scorpions. He is currently a member of Blue Oyster Cult. Michael Lauren has performed with Paul Anka, Chuck Berry, and Popa Chubby. He is a senior faculty member of Drummers Collective.*





# Time Matters

## Tips To Strengthen Your Groove

by John Riley

**MUSIC KEY**

S.D. 

B.D. 

**W**hile traveling around the world with different bands, I've seen many unusual billboards. With John Scofield in California I saw a Joe's Used Car Lot sign, which proclaimed that Joe was "The walkin' man's best friend." I don't know anything about Joe, but

I do know that a sign seen outside a Holiday Inn in Kansas (while I was on the road with Woody Herman's band) is true. It read: "Improve your time and your time will improve you." Now *that* should be the title of a drum book!

Everyone agrees that grooving is important. But developing good time seems less of a concern—or possibly just more difficult—than becoming technically proficient, becoming a good reader, or learning to play different styles. However, having good chops, being a good reader, and knowing styles is practically useless if you can't execute your ideas in time. The drums are a foundation instrument, and the drummer's role is to provide the pulse that will support a given melody and harmony.

Here are four different approaches that will help you strengthen your time. They're probably unlike anything you've practiced before, so have patience and work slowly to attain the perfect balance and flow.

First, here's something inspired by blending Gary Chester's singing concept with Alan Dawson's approach to developing coordination. While playing the swing pattern with your ride cymbal and 2 and 4 with your hi-hat, play the written comping parts (in center box above) and sing the spaces. Use the syllables written—they're the ones that horn players sing—and be sure to swing what you sing. The result will be that between your snare drum, bass drum, and voice, all the 8th notes will be "played." This exercise will help you feel the spaces between the notes and make your phrases lay better. It will also help correct rushing problems. Start at quarter note = 70.

Second, while listening to a click set at quarter note = 90, play one of the one-measure phrases above (minus the singing) four times. Then immediately double your tempo so that the click is on beats 1 and 3 and half-note = 90, and play the same phrase eight

times. Shift back and forth—sixteen clicks regular time, sixteen clicks double time—until you can make the change in tempo effortlessly. This will help in making transitions.

Third, experiment with putting the click on different beats in the measure. Everyone feels pretty comfortable with the click on the downbeats, but try grooving with the click on the swung upbeat, or on the "&" of 2 and the "&" of 4. Settle in, then try increasing your comping density and adding fills. It's harder than you might think.

Now set the click at 40 and think of that as the "1" of a groove at quarter note = 160. Try trading fours over that click. Double-time it and play at quarter note = 320. Here you get a downbeat every other measure. Try trading. With my old Dr. Beat I can set the beat counter on six, then tacit beats 2 through 6, leaving me a click only on beat 1 of what you can think of as a twelve-bar blues form at quarter note = 320! This is a real test of the steadiness of your pulse. You can even up the ante and trade choruses—play twelve bars of time, then twelve bars of solo, with only a click on the top of each chorus. This will test your stability and help your concentration.

Finally, I like working on my jazz feel by playing over hip-hop or pop tunes that have a shuffle feel. One of my favorites is Steely Dan's "Babylon Sisters" from the *Gaucha* CD.

Take any of the comping ideas above, or some from my book *The Art Of Bop Drumming*, and repeat them many times over the track. Bernard Purdie's shuffle backbeat falls on the 3 of the swing groove. By repeating a simple phrase many times you'll find the best places to phrase your ideas. Use the backbeat on 3 as a landmark to measure your note placement. Refine that placement during each repeat of the phrase. Be sure to play all the "&s" of 2 as close to the backbeat as possible and all the "&s" of 3 as far from the backbeat as you can. Playing all the upbeats as late as you can will make the phrases really swing.

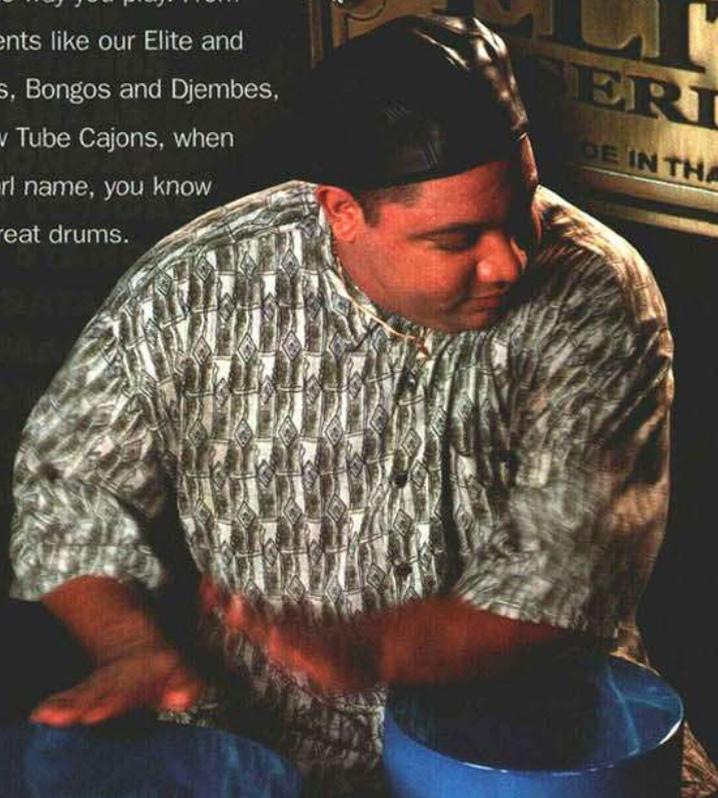
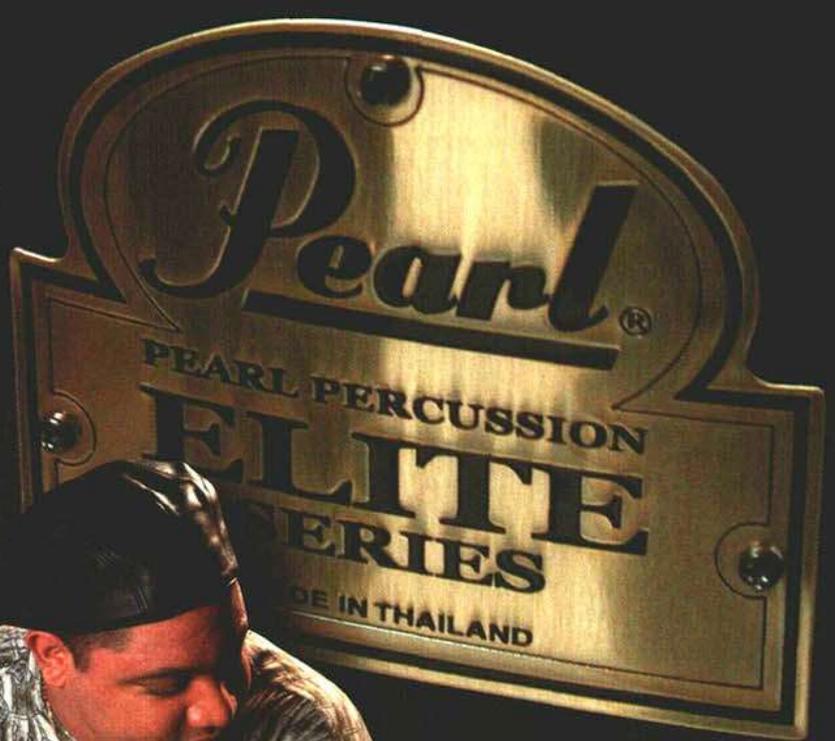
There are no quick or easy fixes when it comes to grooving, but consistent, conscientious work will make a world of difference. Improve your time and your time will improve the caliber of musicians you can work with. Good luck.



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# Linear Starting Points

## Simple Patterns That Build To Complex Grooves

by Neal Busby

**MUSIC KEY**

Open	○	R.C.
H.H.	×	×
T.T.	●	●
S.D.	●	●
F.T.	●	●
S.D.	●	●
	○	Ghost Note

In drumming terms, "linear" means that none of your limbs strike any part of the kit in unison. Sounds easy, doesn't it? But when this type of drumming was introduced to me, it was very confusing. I'd already been drumming for several years, and I thought I'd never played this way before. What I realized was that I *had* been playing linear patterns for some time; I just didn't know it. This may be the case for you, too.

Lately I've come to the conclusion that all complex rhythms can be broken down to a common denominator. Once that is understood, building back up to more involved beats is simple. This is especially true for learning linear patterns. Let's take a very simple pattern and then expand upon it. Start with this:

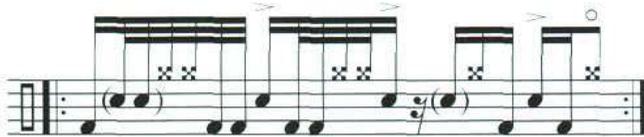
The next step in the process is to examine all of the variations for playing these beats—or at least a *few* of them! To begin, check out the following patterns. Notice how adding tom notes and opening the hi-hat changes the sound and feel of the original pattern. (Using rests increases the variety, too.)

By adding another 16th note on the hi-hat for each kick and snare segment, more patterns pop up:

Now the fun starts. By adding more kick and snare notes to the remaining 16th-note spaces, some very cool syncopations turn up, patterns that may not come to mind if not for our building process.



A neat way to complicate things further is to "double up" parts of the groove by changing certain 16th notes to 32nd notes:

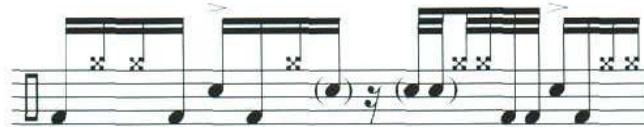
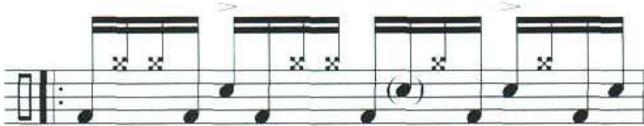


Or create a 16th-note-triplet section within the existing pattern:



When you add all of the variables into the mix (rests, tom notes, hi-hat openings, use of cowbells or alternate sound sources, doubling to 32nd notes, changing parts to triplets, accents, ghost notes), the possibilities are as limitless as your imagination. And some of the examples may sound good played with a swing feel—you never know. But remember to use these patterns sparingly, and *never* lose sight of the groove.

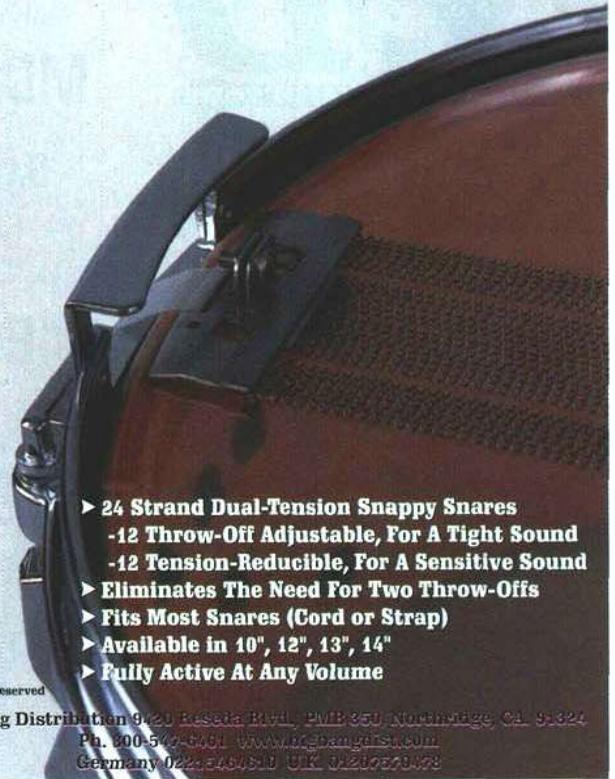
To finish up, here's a special "Frankenstein" four-bar pattern that includes a little bit of everything we've discussed. Have fun with it, and be sure to experiment with your own linear patterns.



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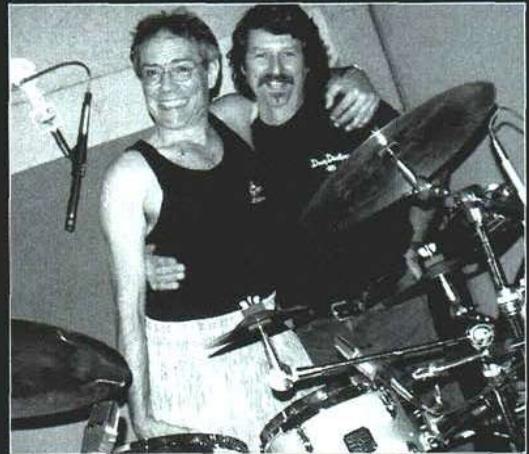


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Vinnie Colaiuta & Ross Garfield (The Drum Doctor) at The Record Plant, Hollywood CA - Photo by Josh Freese

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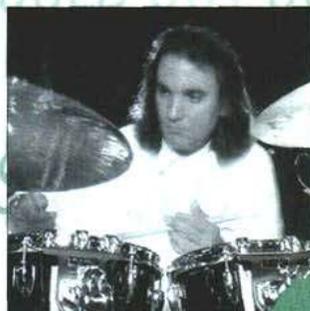
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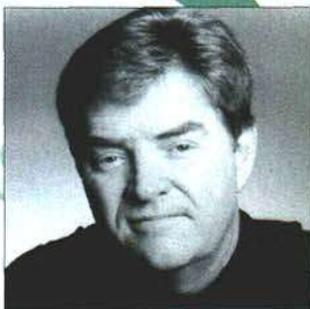
(Courtesy of Pearl Drums, Zildjian Cymbals,  
Regal Tip Drumsticks, Evans Drumheads, and Shure Microphones)

with musical guests including

**John Patitucci and Michael Brecker,**

**featuring percussion star Marc Quiñones**

(Courtesy of LP Music Group and Zildjian Cymbals & Drumsticks)



Nashville studio star

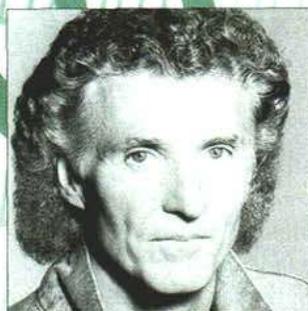
## **PAUL LEIM**

(Courtesy of Yamaha Drums, Paiste Cymbals,  
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WorkingDrummer.com)

Legendary Grand Funk Railroad drummer

## **DON BREWER**

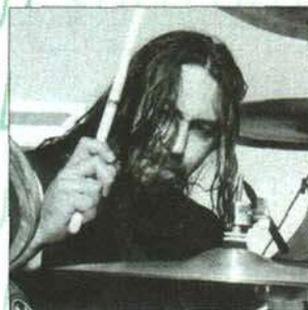
(Courtesy of Peavey Drums, Sabian Cymbals,  
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## RECORDINGS

poor **0** ratingscale **10** classic

## 10 Miles Davis The Complete Columbia Recordings With John Coltrane

Philly Joe Jones, Jimmy Cobb (dr), Miles Davis (trp), John Coltrane (tn sx), Red Garland, Bill Evans (pno), Cannonball Adderley (al sx), Paul Chambers (bs)



A shrine of a box set, this six-CD anthology spanning the 1955-61 Columbia Miles catalog compiles all tracks that teamed the trumpet great with sideman John Coltrane. The cuts are divided between two great rhythm sections, one driven by Philly Joe Jones, the other by Jimmy Cobb. Still breathtaking today, this music set the standard for straight-ahead jazz ensemble playing, and masters Cobb and Jones deserve much of the credit.

The remastered cuts span classic LPs such as *Milestones*, *Kind Of Blue*, and *'Round About Midnight*. Nineteen previously unreleased tracks, mostly alternate takes, are included (although three "tracks" are merely verbal snippets). Outtakes can often be superfluous filler, but with players this great, each take matters.

Both at their peak, Jones and Cobb embody the best of spontaneous energy, good taste, and magnificent feel. From crackling uptempo cookers to smooth subtle understatement (as perfected in Cobb's *Kind Of Blue* tracks), these drummers helped define the sound of a jazz era. (Columbia legacy)

Jeff Potter

## 10 The Who BBC Sessions

Keith Moon (dr), Pete Townshend (gtr, vcl), Roger Daltrey (vcl), John Entwistle (bs, vcl)

Take this, Pro Tools abusers! Classic Who performances are judged by their excitement, not precision. Between '65 and '73, when these radio broadcasts were made, the band was simply the most explosive act ever. Keith Moon was in perpetual motion, baring his body and soul to the music and inventing a drum language that's *still* impossible to fully comprehend. You want proof? Go to the March '66 performance of "Substitute." Listen to the fill Keith plays before the break. Basic, right? Well, when *you* can nail it with this much excitement and personality, give us a call. And, my *god*, the examples never stop: "Disguises," "Pictures Of Lily," "A Quick One." Tell you what: I'll quit hypin' if you just buy this disc. Deal? (MCA)



Adam Budofsky

## 8 Dixie Dregs California Screamin'

Rob Morgenstein (dr), Steve Morse (gtr), Andy West, Dave LaRue (bs), Allen Sloan, Jerry Goodman (vln), T Lavitz (kybd)

Over three recent nights in LA, the original lineup of the legendary fusion group Dixie Dregs got together to rekindle the flames for the first time in sixteen years. The Dregs spawned the talents



of a young Rod Morgenstein, who, after several years as a journeyman pop and progressive drummer, finds himself back where he started. Morgenstein sounds at home in the fusion world, with a little more polish and definition in his approach. On *California Screamin'* Rod orchestrates The Dregs' combination of country, classical, jazz, and rock with maturity, following the arrangements with studio precision. It's a treat to hear this classic material performed live by the original players. Rod rules The Dregs with iron sticks! (Zebra, [www.zebradisc.com](http://www.zebradisc.com))

Mike Haid

## 6 Broken Hope Grotesque Blessing;

Larry DeMumbrum (dr), Brian Griffin (gtr, bs), Jeremy Wagner (gtr), Joe Ptacek (vcl)

Sometimes one-trick ponies do some pretty cool stunts. That's certainly the case with Larry DeMumbrum, whose standout asset is his ability to fly on double bass drums. Those dulled yet piercing bursts of machine gun fire give Broken Hope's metal the perfect rush of brutality. It's especially nasty when DeMumbrum continues his bipedal 16ths with similar snare and tom single strokes. Yes, Broken Hope fits easily into the speed metal mold. But satisfying little perks distinguish the band from the metal-by-numbers that chokes so many stereos these days. In addition to pure adrenaline, the songs are animated by perfectly timed but unexpected meter changes. And let's not forget the



## SIGNIFICANT REISSUES

Several labels have cracked the vaults lately and let the reissues flow.

*The Drum Battle*—Gene Krupa And Buddy Rich At JATP (Verve) is a good example of post-war small-group swing, with the band whooping as Gene Krupa lays it down. When Buddy Rich joins in on the title track, all hell breaks loose. For better Krupa, though, check the recent Legacy Anita O'Day reissue, as well as Mosaic's *Complete Capitol Recordings Of Gene Krupa & Harry James* box set.

Overlooked '50s session player Osie Johnson, veteran of many period dates, is showcased on *Osie's Oasis* (OJC).

Art Blakey records are coming fast, and each is unique. For Blakey as brilliant sideman in leader's garb, try *A Jazz Messenger*, featuring McCoy Tyner and Sonny Stitt on a swinging 1963 hard-bop session (Impulse!). Blue Note's 1958 classic *Drums Around The Corner* includes, besides Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, and Ray Barretto. Musical drum solos, unison timekeeping, and liner notes by Kenny Washington make this a must-buy. And the occasionally dated-sounding *African Beat*, Art Blakey And The Afro-Drum Ensemble shows the master with a full African percussion section (Blue Note).

It's conga heaven these days, again courtesy of Blue Note. Sabu Martinez shines on *Palo Congo* (1957), an incredibly primal recording that sounds more purely Cuban than Afro-Cuban to these ears. That same year, Machito recorded *Kenya*, a wailing yet sophisticated Afro-Cuban big band outing. Some ten years later, Candido recorded *1,000 Finger Man*, a slick, indulgent, but still lusty funk affair.

Finally, Peter Erskine's *Sweet Soul* helped redefine the sensitive, thinking-man's jazz drummer when it was first released in '91, going against the grain of the smooth jazz sound and the Weckl/Colaiuta fusion school. It's available now on CD, licensed through BMG by Erskine's own label for a limited time only. Contributions by Marc Johnson, Joe Lovano, Bob Mintzer, Kenny Werner, John Scofield, and others help make this one well worth revisiting. (Fuzzy Music, [fuzzymusic.com](http://fuzzymusic.com) or [petererskine.com](http://petererskine.com))



Ken Micallef

"singer," whose subterranean growl is so throaty, you'll find him in the liner notes under "esophagus." (Martyr Music Group, www.martyrmusic-group.com)

**Michael Parillo**

## 7 Dave Matthews Band

### Listener Supported

Carter Beauford (dr), Boyd Tinsley (vln), Stefan Lessard (bs), Dave Matthews (gtr, vcl), Lerol Moore (sx), Butch Taylor (kybd)

Pretty much what you would expect from Mssrs. Matthews and Beauford. (Or is it the other way around?) Dave's tunes and Carter's licks are right



up front on this double live disc. Plenty of jamming and extended versions of radio hits are included, and the recording (from an arena date in September of 1999) is pristine. Matthews fans will no doubt flock to this disc and be happy with it; non-fans won't be converted since the jamming is fairly predictable and often pointless. But no one can leave this disc denying Carter Beauford's unique voice and monstrous chops. The man remains a true heavy-weight on the skins. (RCA)

**Ted Bonar**

## 7 Toto Mindfields

Simon Phillips (dr), Lenny Castro (perc), Steve Lukather (gtr, vcl), David Paich, Steve Porcaro (kybd), Michael Porcaro (bs), Bobby Kimball (vcl)

Apparently Toto has no intention of riding off into the sunset. *Mindfields* features a good amount of romantic angst and serious questions about life on



earth...but even more chops. Simon Phillips continues to do a great job replacing the late Jeff Porcaro, amazingly channeling JP's energy into the tight, strong grooves. Simon dances on top of the staccato quarter-note feel of "Cruel," and gives

the slow, tantalizing shuffle of "High Price Of Hate" just the right loose hands. And on the intro of "Caught In The Balance" the drummer makes a complicated part sound solid, leaving out the extraneous beats and building the half-time ska feel to a rock crescendo. On *Mindfields* Phillips is as versatile as he is powerful. (Sony/Legacy)

**Robin Tolleson**

## 6 Fishbone

### And The Family Nextperience Presents The Psychotic Friends Nuttwerx

Chad Smith, JR Robinson, Abe Laboriel Jr., Dion Murdock (dr), Angelo Moore (vcl, dr), Lenny Castro (perc), Norwood Fisher, Flea, Billy Bass Nelson (bs), Spacey T, John Frusciante, Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, Tony Maiden (gtr), Jim Cox, John McNight, Steve Lindsey (kybd), others

Including guest appearances by Donny Osmond, Perry Harrell, and Rick James plays right to the sort of vibe Fishbone aims for on *The Psychotic Friends Nuttwerx*. And any out-of-control musical situation, of course, has to have a five-man drumming roster. Not too flashy, staying in the pocket, and letting percussionist Lenny Castro toss in a little cowbell for good luck, Chad Smith lays down his hallmark groove on The Isleys' "Shakey Ground." "Just Allow" puts Dion Murdock through his paces, knocking out tight 16th fills with quick limbs. Also featuring drummers John Robinson, Abe Laboriel Jr., and singer Angelo Moore, this album is less about showing off drum styles than accentuating Fishbone's mission to cross-pollinate their wild "musical scene." (Hollywood)

**Fran Azzarto and Lisa Crouch**

## 9 Dream Theater

### Scenes From A Memory

Mike Portnoy (dr, perc, vcl), John Petrucci (gtr, vcl), Jordan Rudess (kybd), John Myung (bs), James LaBrie (vcl)

On this new release, Dream Theater gives their fans exactly what they want in the way of extended, melodic, and technically

## FROM THE EDITORS' VAULT

### Dusting Off Drumming's Hidden Gems

## 9 Violent Femmes

### Violent Femmes

Victor De Lorenzo (dr, perc, vcl), Gordon Gano (gtr, vcl), Brian Ritchie (ac bs gtr, vcl, gtr)

Being a college freshman when this 1982 album came out is a case of synchronicity I'll always be thankful for. Most people who discovered The Femmes early on will tell



you the same thing: Their combination of The Velvet Underground and Pete Seeger was hugely shocking, yet instantly familiar. "Add It Up" titillated thousands of teens with its risqué subject matter, but truthfully, the entire album shines. Drummer Victor De Lorenzo plays wonderfully direct brushes throughout, and is largely responsible for the band's unique sound. Sensitive or scary, with heaving dynamics or steady time, Victor was perfect for this music. He was also a pioneer of "unplugged" drumming in a time when MTV couldn't see past Duran Duran, Madonna, and Michael Jackson. A landmark album. (Slash)

**Adam Budofsky**

proficient epics. The music and lyrics flow seamlessly in the form of a theatrical play that's centered around a twisted love triangle revisited in a mysterious past-life experience. (!) The songs are divided into two acts, with several scenes being played out in a very creative format. Portnoy is on fire throughout. Perhaps due to the rigorous schedule he's been keeping with Liquid Tension Experiment, clinics, and DT tours, his chops are *raging* here. On *Scenes* DT solidifies their reign as rulers of cutting-edge progressive metal. And Portnoy's many inspiring talents continue to impress.

(Elektra/EastWest)

**Mike Haid**

## Shades Of Fusion

## 7 Karl Latham's *Dancing Spirits* boasts

some fine jazz fusion players—bassist John Lee, tenorman Bob Malach, and guitarist John Hart, among others. Latham leads the band through all kinds of musical terrain with a playful, musical touch, from the elaborate shadings of "Spirits Rise" to the sparse, funky backbeat of "The Newcomer." Latham likes playing inside *and* out, and his band follows suit nicely. (Edition Musikat, Charlottenstrasse 12, Stuttgart, Germany 4971124 0709)

**6** In case you don't get the message from the opening twenty-three-minute "Coltrane Suite," John Jordan's *Only One* is for lovers of free-spirited, lengthy trio improv. The

bassist directs the action, but guitarist Chris Duarte and drummer **Barry "Frosty" Smith** are equal musical investigators. Smith's echo-drenched drum solo brings to mind the rock shows of the 1970s. He lets fly on the tough, grooving "City Driver," a nod to The Tony Williams Lifetime, and displays strength and smarts on the seven-minute jam "Gil Evans." (Tana Records, John Jordan, 21195 Lamar, #115, Austin, TX 78704)

**8** "Celebrating *The Music Of Weather Report*" is a risky venture; this is hallowed ground after all. Keyboardist/producer Jason Miles arranges eleven of the band's classics, then brings in the likes of Dennis

**Chambers** to play "Elegant People" and "Cucumber Slumber" and **Steve Gadd** on "Young And Fine" and "The Pursuit Of The Woman In The Feathered Hat." **Vinnie Colaiuta**



throws off some nice single-stroke rolls on "Badia," and **Omar Hakim** rips on "Palladium." Victor Bailey, Will Lee, Marcus Miller, The Brecker Brothers, and steel drummer **Andy Narell** help pay tribute to an irreplaceable band.

• (Telarc)

**Robin Tolleson**

## 9 Bob Moses

### Bittersuite In The Ozone

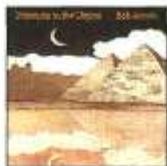
**Bob Moses** (vbs, pno, Moroccan dr, log dr, vcl), **Billy Hart** (dr). Randy Brecker, John Dearth, Mike Lawrence (trp), David Liebman (sx, fl, dr), Daniel Carter (sx, fl), Howard Johnson (tn, bar 8 bs sx), Jeanne Lee (vcl), Eddie Gomez, Jack Gregg (bs), Dave Eyges (cello), Stanley Free (pno)

## 9 Bob Moses/Tisziji Muñoz

### Love Everlasting

**Bob Moses**, **Ben Wittman** (dr), George Garzone, Jerry Bergonzi (sx), John Medeski (pno), Brad Hatfield (kybd), John Lockwood, Wesley Wirth (bs), Tisziji Muñoz (gtr)

These two wonderful free jazz albums have been reissued on the intriguing Amulet Records label, which was founded by drummer Billy Martin (Medeski, Martin & Wood) and is devoted to the art of percussion. Moses, long a free spirit in jazz circles, is positively riveting on *Love Everlasting* (1987), an album-long tribute to the powerful music and spirit of John Coltrane. His ensemble tackles a near impossible task, and Coltrane's music is honored as a result. *Bittersuite In The Ozone* (1973) is a slightly more avant-garde trip, but captures a power and wonder all should experience. (Amulet Records, PO Box 402049, Brooklyn, NY 11240-2049, [www.amuletreconls.com](http://www.amuletreconls.com))



Ted Bonar

## 6 The Dismemberment Plan

### Emergency & I

John Easley (dr), Jason Caddell (gtr, kybd), Eric Axelson (bs, kybd)

This is nervous, anxious stuff. Imagine early Yes, with the unison guitar lines, funny time signatures, and orchestral string patches. Then loosen it up some and add grit to the lyrics, and you've got The Dismemberment Plan. Drummer John



Easley even plays a popping snare. But unlike the Yes of "Roundabout," the Washington-based Plan enjoys a pleasing, accurate mix, wherein you can hear Easley's rimshot inflections, brush swishes, and cymbals decaying forever. This is especially true on "The Jitters," where the slow tempo encourages percussive sophistication. Otherwise, *Emergency And I* is straight-8th-note music at its frantic best—dancing and jagged, with more than passing reference to '80s new wave. Easley's feel is nimble and his time is bouncing, even through jerky passages and dropped beats. (DeSoto)

T. Bruce Wittet

## 7 Steve Korn Here & Now

Steve Korn (dr), Dave Peterson (gtr), Marc Seales (kybd), Jeff Johnson (bs), Huh Davis (sx, dr), Jim Knapp (trp)

On *Here & Now* Steve Korn heads an excellent cast of acoustic players and performs several of his own compositions in a straight-ahead jazz format. (The group also performs tunes from Tony Williams, John Scofield, and Miles Davis.) Korn makes subtle statements on his vintage-sounding Gretsch kit, and when he does express himself, his technique is relatively conservative. His swing time is solid, but he doesn't seem comfortable taking things too far outside. Korn's compositions are melodic and impressive for a first-time project, though. And as history shows, in the long run, writing chops are much more important than playing chops. Korn is certainly headed in the right direction. (Origin Arts, 52061/2 Ballard Ave. NW, #11, Seattle, WA 98107, [www.originarts.com](http://www.originarts.com))

Mike Haid

## 7 Engine Engine

Pete Parada (dr), Ray Alder (vcl), Bernie Versailles (gtr), Joey Vera (bs)

Pete Parada keeps things locked down with solid playing on this side project from Fates Warning vocalist Ray Alder. *Engine* focuses on straightforward cuts with a heavy, dark texture, and Parada continually

plays for the song. In many of the tunes, he adds to or subtracts from a basic groove, structuring it to make it simpler or more complex depending on the song section. He knows how much to play, and when. There are also many nice moments when he weaves hi-hats and cymbal accents into the beats while keeping the bass and snare solid all the way. Parada's drumming shows a good song-oriented concept, with a groove as solid as a brick wall. (Metal Blade)

Martin Patmos

## 7 Critters Buggin' Amoeba

Man Chamberlain (dr), Mike Dillon (perc), Brad Hooser (bs), Skerik (sx, kybd, vcl)

The Seattle-based Critters Buggin' uses musical textures as putty. In the pages of *Modern Drummer*, drummer Matt Chamberlain has owned up to the use of ProTools to digitally cut, paste, and sculpt sound into bizarre shapes. On *Amoeba*, no instrument is what it seems. Guitars dissolve into chimes, cymbals are the wind whistling. There is little of the drum 'n' bass that pervaded past Critters albums, and no recognizable vocals. This is *legato* stuff of film scores. But don't go thinking the Critters have gone New Age. It's just that the band is maturing, leaving space, and engaging in less frivolity. *Amoeba* is a refreshing use of ProTools as a compositional tool, rather than a device for repairing bad playing. Just don't look for a lot of conventional drums and cymbals. (Loosegroove, [www.loosegroove.com](http://www.loosegroove.com))

T. Bruce Wittet

## 8 Morphine The Night

Billy Conway, Jerome Deupree (dr), Mark Sandman (vcl, bs), Dana Colley (sx)

Morphine's final album, recorded prior to the death of bassist/singer Mark Sandman, is an eerily somber and reflective collection of songs that seem to foreshadow the sadness in the band's future. In a rare example of totally in-sync double drumming, Billy Conway and Jerome Deupree match the album's tone with a minimal style anchored in darkness. A great sense of dynamics flavors everything these guys do, particularly on "So Many Ways." Not rooted to one particular pattern, Conway and Deupree ride on a 16th-note groove that is richly tribal. Snare off behind echoing semi-chanted backing vocals completes the mood. "Like A Mirror" continues in the same vein, a sort of industrial-age hypnotic composition that meanders through low



## Kickin' Out The New Hot Releases From Tomorrow's Heroes

9 On the Countdown Quartet's self-titled CD, **Ted Zarras** starts off with a bang on "Countdown's Comin'" and never looks back.

An ambidextrous and accomplished drummer, he plays multiple rhythms without losing a beat. On an album seemingly recorded old-school style with a couple of mic's and plenty of room, *Zarras* mixes up some Latin soul with a little jazz and a generous dose of Dixieland. Energy! Talent! Style! We're not worthy! (Yep Roc)

7 Opening up with a spontaneous triplet fill on the toms and snare, *Time To Discover* finds **Jeff Fowlkes** keeping it nice



and natural for Robert Bradley's Blackwater Surprise. Mixing up the snare and crash accents while accentuating the downbeat, Fowlkes has a great feel for Bradley's tunes—and he's just enough in the pocket to make this album sweet and soulful. (RCA)

6 With a drum sound that is the definition of quirky, Sumack's **Pete McNeal** might be all about the hip-trendy vibe, but it's not fake. On *Now Hear This*, when he's thinking of doing something crazy, McNeal uses samples or maybe record scratching instead of fills, just to keep things light and danceable. This guy is the real deal—a talented drummer who knows how to use the modern tools. (V2)

Lisa Crouch and Fran Azzarto

and throaty vocals punctuated by machine-like drum thumps and a bushel of sparingly used percussive toys. The result is very affecting. A great lesson in learning how to set a mood, *The Night* is all about the right placement of the right sound at the right time. (DreamWorks)

Fran Azzarto and Lisa Crouch

## VIDEOS

### 7 Common Ground Dennis Chambers & Tony Royster Jr., with Billy Cobham

level: beginner to advanced, \$39.95 (with CD)

*Common Ground's* concept is to inspire drummers by featuring one reigning heavyweight champ, one fourteen-year-old with all the potential in the world, and a cameo appearance by a godfather of jazz-rock fusion. Though there is very little actual instruction here, this project is still worthy for its historical perspective. We also get to see its subjects as human beings more than we would from a how-to video. (When asked by producer Bob Gatzen what he does for inspiration, Billy Cobham widens his eyes and deadpans, "I watch cartoons.")

Fans of Cobham and Chambers will appreciate footage of Dennis playing with Mike Stern, John Scofield, John McLaughlin, and P-Funk, as well as Cobham soloing on his clear Fibes drums with The Mahavishnu Orchestra. On the new material, Chambers lays down some nifty kick drum subdivision and outlandish syncopation. And Royster, a likable young man with a good sense of humor, plays his feature sections with great authority and restraint. When Dennis and Tony play together it's interesting to see the elder drummer lay back just a bit, letting Tony have center stage, checking him out.

The included CD features great mixes of the video's eight instrumental tracks and each drummer's solo, plus minus-drums tracks for play-along. (Warner Bros)

Robin Tolleson

## BOOKS

### 7 Power Grooves by Dave Lombardo with Chuck Silverman level: beginner to intermediate, \$14.95 (with CD)

On *Power Grooves* former Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo clearly and progressively explains straight-ahead rock and metal grooves. The concept is very direct: Play loud with conviction! The beats are stan-

dard 8th, 16th, and double bass metal grooves that you've heard a thousand times in this genre. Double bass is Lombardo's forte, so most of the patterns revolve around his playing with Grip Inc. The CD features the basic groove examples in the book, leading up to written examples of Grip Inc. tunes with play-along tracks, first with drums, then with click (no drums). This is a great way for those un-inclined to read drum music to sharpen their reading skills and broaden their scope of grooves and rhythmic patterns. Everything here is usable within the context of rock and metal, so no time will be wasted learning difficult patterns that will only impress your drummer friends. (Hal Leonard)

Mike Haid

### 7 The Forgotten Foot by Doug Tann

level: intermediate to advanced, \$10

If your hi-hat foot lacks pizzazz, this self-published book could be a good wakeup call. London drummer Doug Tann believes that the non-leading (hi-hat) foot is capable of much more than most of us require of it. Presenting some interesting kick drum/left-foot and integrated exercises, he encourages drummers to explore more complex patterns with the left foot, including clave, cascara, guaguanco, mambo, montuno, rumba, son, songo, tumbao, and the Steve Gadd Mozambique clave groove.

Interestingly, Tann downplays independence. Rather, his formula for figuring out difficult phrases is based on the premise that, when playing drums, your limbs are either striking an instrument or resting. Along those lines, he uses 8th- and 16th-note learning methods to dissect rock, funk, second-line, bossa nova, and reggae grooves. So in addition to encouraging a stronger, more active, and musical hi-hat, *The Forgotten Foot* should give you a better understanding of subdivision.

Robin Tolleson

## PLAY-ALONGS

### 7 WojoWorks Session Minus One

Dan Wojciechowski (dr), Greg Beck (perc), Andy Timmons (gtr, bs, vd, perc), Mike Medina, Mike Doane (bs), Chuck Hasley (org)

Dallas-based trapster Dan Wojciechowski offers a well-rounded set of rock and blues "play-alongs" on WojoWorks' *Sessions Minus One*. The CD features some of the best radio-ready tracks from three sessions that the drummer played on, largely the work of guitarist Andy Timmons. It's an excellent musical workout for the hands and the ears. You're belting progressive

Robin Tolleson



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**Triok Gurtu** *African Fantasy*. A blend of African, Indian, and jazz music featuring Angelique Kidjo, Sabine Kabongo from Zap Mama, and Oumou Sangare.

**Frank Gambale** *Coming To Your Senses*. Guitarist Frank Gambale backed by Ric Fierabracci on bass, Hans Zermhuelen on keys, and four fine drummers—Joel Taylor, Enzo Tedesco, Ray Brinker, and Mark Schulman.

**Warren Cuccurullo** *Roadrage*. Live solo project from guitarist Cuccurullo, known for his work with Frank Zappa, Missing Persons, and Duran Duran. Originals and a few Zappa classics, with Wes Wehmiller on bass and Joe Travers on drums.

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power pop on "To Your Knees," strutting with fiery vocalist Maylee Thomas on "Blood Is Thicker Than Water," jetting to keep up with Timmons on the to-the-wall double-time "Groove Or Die," building a dynamic rock anthem on "A Night To Remember," and pumping about five nice grooves on the Stevie Ray-ish "Last One." On the "minus" tracks he varies the click sounds, and there's no rhythmic cue at all on "Groove Or Die," demanding total concentration on the nuances of the music.

There's the feel of working with a good, rehearsed and studio-ready rock band here, rather than the drudgery of having to keep pace with a noisy click and a bunch of sequenced synth horn parts. WojoWorks is good training and a lot of fun. (Wojciechowski refers to his disc as "Volume 1." It would be interesting if his next "minus one" featured several of the tracks he played on the spellbinding world jazz release by pianist Matthew Nicholl and bassist Eliot Wadopian.) (WojoWorks Productions, PO Box 250606, Plano, TX 75025, [WojoWorks.com](http://WojoWorks.com). From Here To There is available from Nicholl/Wadopian Productions, [828] 259-9504.)

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# rodney holmes

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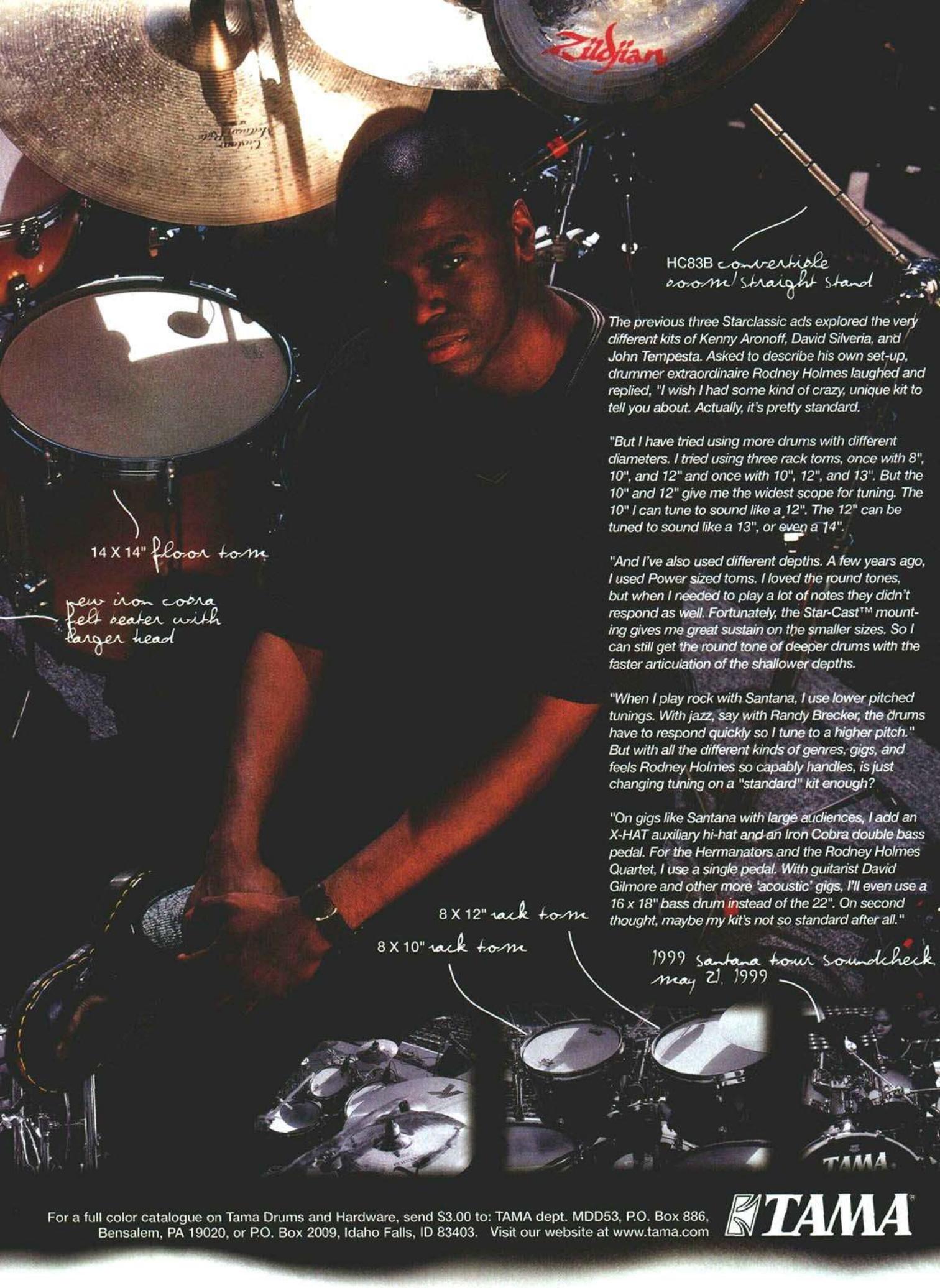
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The previous three Starclassic ads explored the very different kits of Kenny Aronoff, David Silveria, and John Tempesta. Asked to describe his own set-up, drummer extraordinaire Rodney Holmes laughed and replied, "I wish I had some kind of crazy, unique 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?

"On gigs like Santana with large audiences, I add an X-HAT auxiliary hi-hat and an Iron Cobra double bass pedal. For the Hermanators and the Rodney Holmes Quartet, I use a single pedal. With guitarist David Gilmore and other more 'acoustic' gigs, I'll even use a 16 x 18" bass drum instead of the 22". On second thought, maybe my kit's not so standard after all."

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## Carter McLean



Carter McLean is what sportswriters call a multi-threat. Along with playing some *serious* drumset, he also plays electronic percussion, tabla, and piano. In addition, he's a composer, arranger, and synth and sampler programmer. And the guy's only in his early twenties.

Focusing his musical attention on contemporary jazz, funk, and world music, Carter has performed on a variety of studio projects, including bassist John Patitucci's *Sea Glass*. He's toured as an artist/clinician for Zendrum, and has participated in clinics with Nashville percussionist Tom Roady and Bela Fleck's percussion wizard, Roy "Futureman" Wooten. At the International Association of Jazz Educators conference last year, Carter performed with Kevin Eubanks and Javon Jackson.

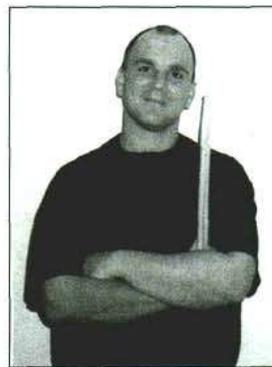
Carter's current project is a hot band called One Flight Up. Their self-titled and self-produced CD features a wide variety of contemporary material, from blazing fusion/funk to tasty ballads, and lots of diversity in between. Through it all Carter takes charge, driving the band with a combination of impressive technique (lots of notes) and musical creativity (all those notes genuinely meaning something). It's an outstanding effort, and can be obtained by calling (800) 688-4212 or surfing to [www.musicbadger.com](http://www.musicbadger.com).

Carter plays and endorses DW drums, Sabian cymbals, Attack heads, and the Zendrum electronic percussion instrument. His current goal is to see greater success for One Flight Up.

## Mark Mauceri

Thirty-nine-year old Mark Mauceri is a busy guy. He plays fifteen to twenty day-time shows per week at Dolly Parton's country theme park, Dollywood. In the evenings he can be found playing jazz with Deja Blues, or doing sessions in the Nashville area. He also performs gigs with country artist Con Hunley, and writes and records with an R&B group called the Smokin O's.

Mark has been keeping this kind of schedule for over twenty years, during which time he says he's learned "many valuable lessons from many great musicians." He cites Billy Cobham, Zigaboo Modeliste, Carlos Vega, and David Garibaldi among his influences, but singles out Nashville studio veteran Kenny Malone as a particular mentor. "I was touring with country singer Paula Frazier ten years ago. When it came time for Paula to record, studio musicians were used—including



Kenny. But we were invited to observe the session. When Kenny saw me watching him, he arranged for me to get a headphone mix identical to his so I could listen in on what he was doing. What a great thing to do for a young drummer trying to learn the ropes!"

Mark's demo CD showcases his ability to groove, along with displaying some tasty chops. Several of the tunes are originals, underscoring Mark's additional skill as a composer. He performs on Yamaha drums, Zildjian cymbals, and T.J.'s congas, along with Ale'sis, Korg, and Roland electronic gear.

## Ken Serio

Rutherford, New Jersey's Ken Serio has been playing drums since the age of eleven. Now thirty-three, he's led a varied drumming life. He has recorded several CDs, including two of his own (*Through The Gate* and *Tomorrow's Another Day*). And he's toured the US and Europe with guitarist Vic Juris, bassist Mark Egan, blues guitarist/vocalist Victoria Warne, and Dem Brooklyn Bums.

Ken's two CDs as a leader, as well as *Live At The Savoy* with Victoria Warne, demonstrate that he is equally at home with rock, blues, pop, and jazz. No matter the style, his playing is always appropriate and solid, and often innovative. Ken attributes much of his style to the influences of Danny Gottlieb, Ian Paice, and teachers Joe Morello and Kenwood Dennard (both of whom Ken has studied with). "One of my biggest heroes was the late Cozy Powell," says Ken. "I did a tribute to him on *Through The Gate*."



Ken's focus at the moment is performing with the Victoria Warne blues band.

"We're a blues/rock band that improvises like a jazz trio," says Ken. Their *Savoy* CD is currently getting airplay around the US and in Europe. Ken also teaches privately and does clinics for Cappella drumsticks.

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

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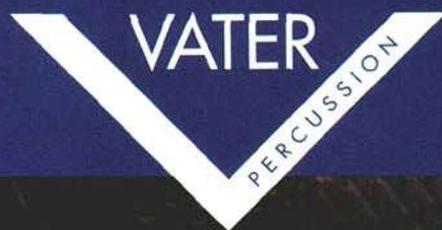
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# Michael Brecker

## Contemporary Sax Star

by Mike Haid

**S**axophonist Michael Brecker has performed on over 660 recordings as a sideman, and 25 as a leader or co-leader. He's won seven Grammy awards, and has performed virtually every style of music with every artist imaginable—from John Lennon and Frank Sinatra to Bruce Springsteen and Frank Zappa.

Brecker grew up playing jazz in Philadelphia, but was also exposed to R&B and rock. Drumming was a hobby at an early age. Michael enjoyed playing along with jazz recordings featuring Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. His favorite was Miles Davis's *Four And More* because of its hurried tempos.

The first drummer to really influence Brecker was fellow Philadelphian Eric Gravatt. Eric took Michael under his wing and taught him how to play jazz. Gravatt also turned Brecker on to a sax player by the name of John Coltrane. "Eric and I played together a lot," says Brecker. "We would play duets and really stretch out. He was an incredible musician who went on to work with Weather Report and McCoy Tyner."

Brecker moved to New York in 1969 at the age of nineteen. Michael's brother Randy was playing trumpet with Horace Silver

---

Even an incomplete list of drummers with whom Michael Brecker has played describes the cream of contemporary jazz and fusion. Just check out these names:

Terry Bozzio  
 Dennis Chambers  
 Billy Cobham  
 Jack DeJohnette  
 Peter Erskine  
 Steve Gadd  
 Eric Gravatt  
 Roy Haynes  
 Rodney Holmes  
 Elvin Jones  
 Harvey Mason  
 Ralph Peterson  
 Bernard Purdie  
 Steve Smith  
 Bill Stewart  
 Jeff "Tain" Watts  
 Dave Weckl  
 Lenny White  
 Tony Williams

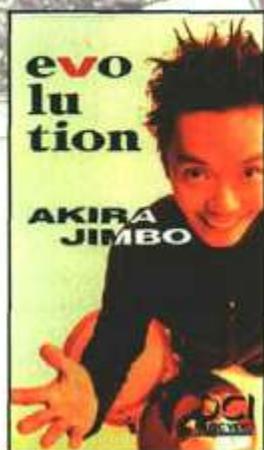


at that time—along with a drummer named Billy Cobham. "I went to see Billy play with Horace, and he blew me away," says Brecker. "He had technique on the drums unlike anything I'd ever heard. As players, we were similar in many ways in that we could play jazz, R&B, and other styles fluently."

Cobham became interested in joining Brecker's eclectic collaboration with brother Randy and trombonist Barry Rogers in the classic jazz fusion group Dreams. "We ended up building the music around Billy, because he would just 'take over' on stage," Brecker recalls. "Billy was a phenomenon. Nobody was playing that way at the time. He could play burning R&B styles with advanced rhythmic ideas that had never been heard before—and create new ideas every night."

Cobham left Dreams to join The Mahavishnu Orchestra, while Brecker joined Horace Silver's band. It wasn't long before Cobham released his classic solo album *Spectrum* and recruited Brecker for his touring band. Brecker played on the next several

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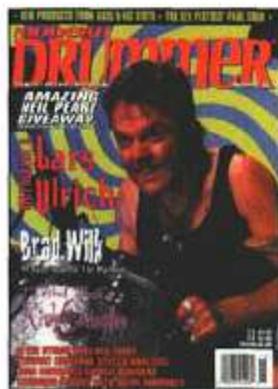
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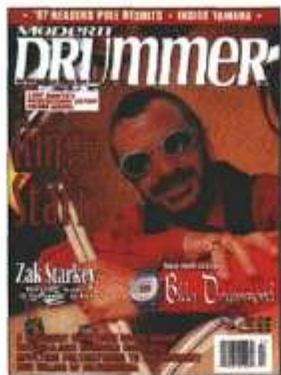
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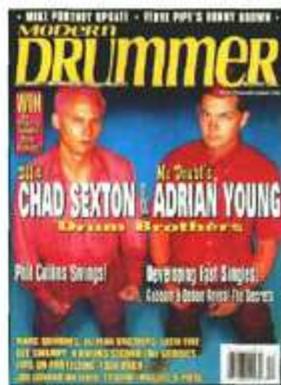
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# Brecker

a question of where the beat was. Steve's time was impeccable and very tasty."

Another great moment with Gadd came with the recording of Chick Corea's classic *Three Quartets* album. Since Corea is also a drummer, Brecker found himself recording several tunes with Chick on drums—including a sax and drums duet. Brecker then took over the drum chair and played in a trio with Chick on piano and Eddie Gomez on bass. Playing Gadd's drums was challenging for him due to his lack of technique. Still, he treasures the recording of that special moment. Brecker recalls Gadd's performances on those sessions as some of the drummer's finest moments.

In 1979 Brecker toured with Corea and Roy Haynes. That was Brecker's only encounter with Haynes, but it was a very memorable one. "Roy was so much fun to play with," Brecker remembers. "He has *serious* swing in his playing."

The first time Brecker went to Japan was with Yoko Ono And The Plastic Ono Band, which included the double drumming of Steve Gadd and Rick Marotta. "Rick was another great player with a solid feel for many styles," says Brecker.

The first recording that Michael ever played on was his brother Randy's album *Score*. It featured groove master Bernard Purdie. "Bernard amazed me with his solid time and funky feel," recalls Brecker. "Another great player I've worked with along those same lines is Steve Ferrone."

Speaking of funky drummers, Dennis Chambers was the choice of The Brecker Brothers when they reunited in 1992. "Dennis is another quick study," says Brecker. "And he plays things that I have *no* idea how he's physically doing it. He's also very interested in other drummers. After gigs he would always hang with the other drummers who were there. They would do little workshops together. He was always interested in what other drummers had to say."

The Brecker Brothers also toured with Lenny White on drums. Michael recalls, "Lenny is a great conceptualist and a true artist. I did a few jazz gigs with Lenny back in the early '70s and he has always been a true jazz drummer."

Another B.B. alum is Rodney Holmes. "What an amazing drummer Rodney is," exclaims Brecker. "He's a deep pocket

player with endless technique and real musicality. The way he superimposes counterrhythms is amazing. It was a real lesson for me to work with Rodney."

Dave Weckl is yet another in the long line of outstanding drummers who've worked with The Brecker Brothers. "Dave is totally a musician's musician," says Michael. "He was not only articulate with his drum sound, he also had a unique way of achieving that sound on stage. He used to bring his own monitor system on stage. He would mix the group into his own monitor to get the sound that he wanted to hear. We would often make board tapes from his mixes because they always sounded better than the house mixes. I'll never forget Dave's first concert with The Brecker Brothers. We were in France doing an outdoor concert, and we had no rehearsal. I distinctly remember that Dave knew our music better than my brother and I did. He just *killed*, and he did so very creatively."

The drummer who replaced Steve Gadd in Steps was Peter Erskine. Brecker also worked with Peter in the Word Of Mouth Band, formed by bassist Jaco Pastorius. "Peter is another natural drummer, yet he's

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also a real student of the drumset," comments Brecker. "He's a consummate musician, a great composer, and a great producer. He has a subtle forward propulsion in his playing, and is very tasty—but he can also become incredibly intense. Above all, he's a lot of fun to play with. The best way to summarize Peter is 'elegant but gutsy.' He works well with soloists, and he can really swing."

Steps was eventually renamed Steps Ahead, with the next drummer in line being Steve Smith. "Steve was a very powerful drummer and a lot of fun to work with," Brecker says. "Steve could really swing and had enormous technique."

Guitarist Pat Metheny toured and recorded in 1981 with an unforgettable lineup that included Brecker and Dewey Redman on saxes, Charlie Haden on bass, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. "Jack has been my favorite drummer from the first time I heard him playing with Charles Lloyd, back when I was in high school," Brecker enthuses. "Jack is an amazing musician on every level, and is one of the most creative individuals I've ever worked with."

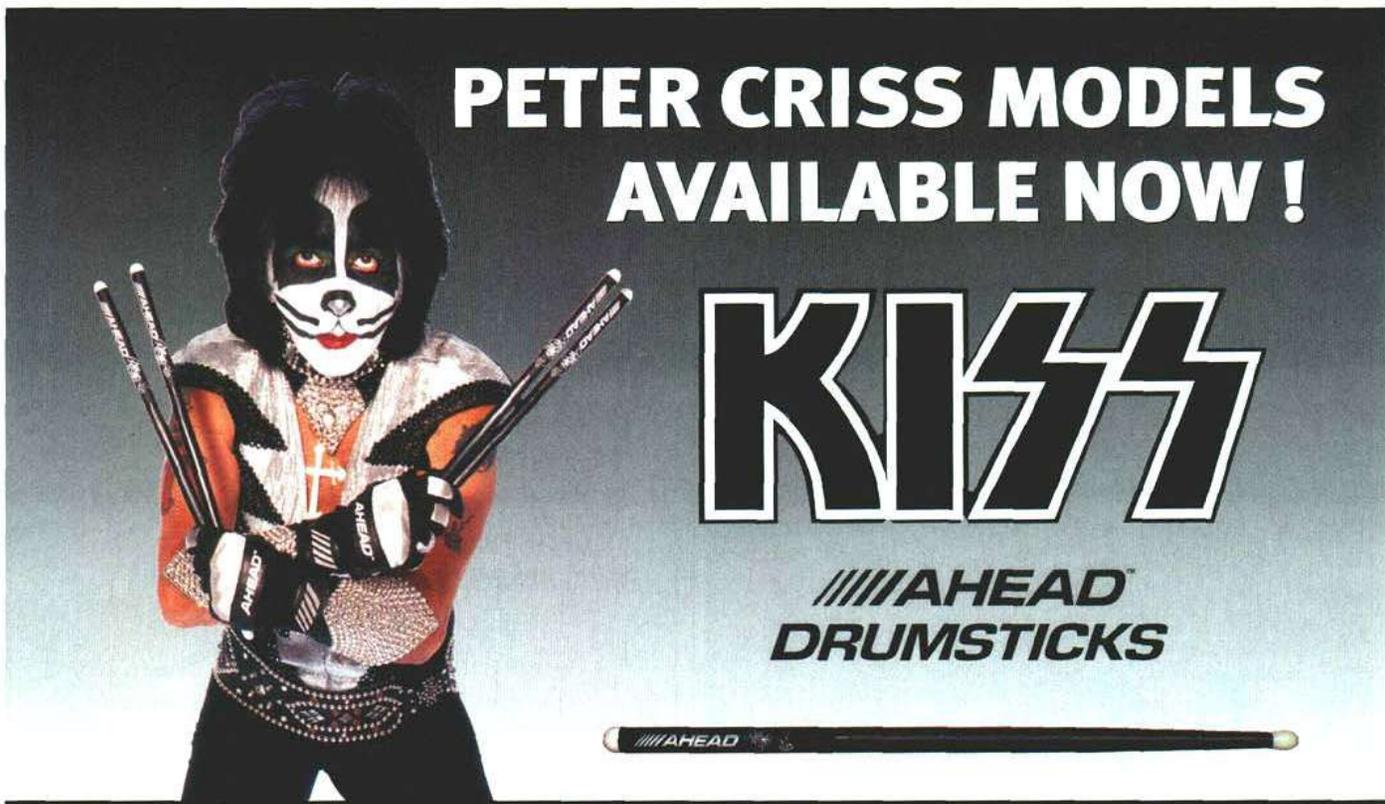
Working with this lineup had a pivotal

effect on Brecker's playing. DeJohnette, Haden, Redman, and Metheny shifted Brecker's approach to improvisation by opening new doors in his creativity. DeJohnette had a way of conducting a musical conversation with a soloist that Brecker had never experienced with any other drummer. "Jack has an amazing ability to communicate," explains Brecker. "His playing is six-dimensional. He has enormous technique, but his playing never *sounds* technical."

Brecker had the pleasure of working with legendary jazz drummer Tony Williams on a tour with Herbie Hancock. "Tony was a drummer's drummer. I haven't met a drummer who hasn't been influenced by his playing," says Brecker. "He basically changed the instrument forever. He tuned the drums differently, he played them differently, and he brought a whole new sensibility to the instrument—right from his earliest recordings with Miles Davis. He also had a totally different approach to soloing that told a story. And the things he did with the cymbals were genius. And, like Jack DeJohnette, Tony was a serious student of the drums, and was very aware of the history of drumming."

When it came time for Michael to record his solo music, his choice of players featured the Pat Metheny rhythm section that had impacted his playing so greatly in 1981. The drum chair was obvious: Jack DeJohnette was the only choice. The following Brecker solo release featured DeJohnette again, along with drummer Adam Nussbaum, who toured with Michael on several of his solo efforts. "Adam has a great feel, and he's a real student of jazz," says Brecker. "His beat is very wide and organic, in the same context as Elvin's drumming."

Brecker's choice for the drum chair on his next solo release, as well as one of three drummers on his current release, is Jeff "Tain" Watts. Jeff is also Brecker's current touring drummer. "Jeff is a total musician and an amazing composer," says Brecker. "He's also a quintessential drummer who defies category. I would watch him intently every night to see what I could learn from him. He has his own unique voice on the drums, and an endless vocabulary in the realm of jazz drumming. He's able to do things as a soloist that I didn't know were possible, without ever sacrific-



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# Brecker

ing the swing. He can maintain a conversation on many levels, and he's constantly feeding and reacting to ideas. He really understands and explores the triplet, and he can make any drum sound good in any given situation. Playing with Jeff has helped me to grow rhythmically as a player, in terms of leaving space and approaching rhythm in ways that I hadn't before, as well as in terms of more angular approaches to improvising."

Brecker chose Ralph Peterson to sub for Jeff Watts on a couple of recent European tours. Peterson is also an excellent trumpet player, so Brecker sometimes took over the drum chair, allowing Peterson to come out front and play trumpet. "I should have had my head examined before I got behind the drumset after Ralph had played," says Brecker. "He's another outstanding player and a true master of jazz drumming."

The music on Brecker's most recent release, *Time Is Of The Essence*, was written specifically for each drummer who appears on the recording (Elvin Jones, Jeff "Tain" Watts, and Bill Stewart). Yet it's all in a jazz context that flows smoothly. The chance for Brecker to record with Elvin

Jones was a dream come true. "Elvin is probably my biggest influence as the jazz voice for drumming," says Brecker. "What he contributed to The John Coltrane Quartet alone was a revelation in jazz drumming. That particular band was so powerful to me on an emotional, spiritual, technical, and intellectual level that it actually propelled me into being a musician. I fell in love with Elvin's playing. His way of playing drums, although rooted in the tradition of jazz drumming, was a completely new voice. It was unique then, and he continues to be unique. Many drummers have tried to imitate what Elvin created, but no one does it like Elvin."

Brecker continues, "When I walked in and saw Elvin sitting behind the drums, I almost fainted. Playing with him was better than I had ever imagined. His beat is so giving, so rich, and so wide. It was like a warm invitation into an open field. He is a very gracious man."

Michael heard drummer Bill Stewart playing with guitarist John Scofield and was immediately blown away. "I loved Bill's sensibility, his dryness, his intelligent approach to the instrument, his drum

sound, and his ability to swing," says Brecker. "He contributed so much to the sound of the band that the music became a lot about Bill's playing. He's become one of my favorite soloists, because he always tells a story. He really *listens* too. He's constantly feeding the soloist interesting ideas without sacrificing the swing."

Brecker concludes, "For me, a drummer needs to be able to swing and have a certain intensity and awareness in terms of musical forms and structure. I look for a drummer who can feed ideas to the soloist, and take ideas that the soloist has created and build on them in a way that's not obvious. The common thread that runs through all of the incredible drummers I've mentioned is their ability to give me what I need, while still expressing their *own* personalities through their instrument."

*There are countless drummers that Michael Brecker has recorded and/or performed with that space did not allow him to mention. Michael would like to thank all of those great players, and he apologizes to anyone he has overlooked.*



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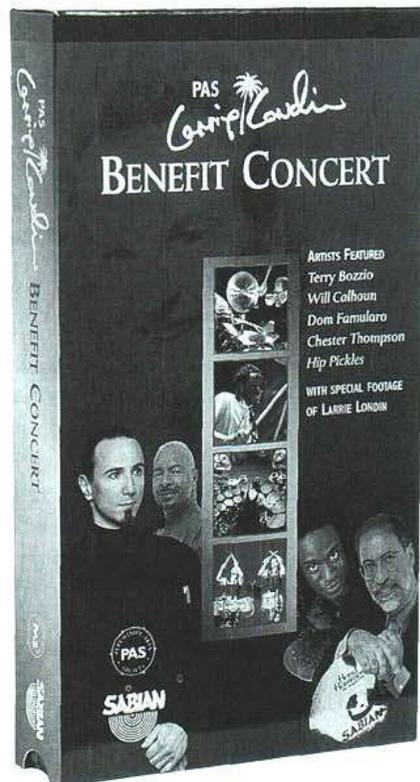
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# Dealing With Small Bandstands

by Larry Kennedy

One of the biggest and most frequent challenges facing working drummers is having to set up on a small bandstand. Here are a few tricks I've learned that make setting up in a tight space easier.

## Get There First

We drummers require more floor space than any of our bandmates, and we often have to set up within certain restrictions. So I always try to set up before any other bandmembers show up with their equipment. Since I generally set up at the rear of the bandstand, this prevents having to work around amps, guitars, mic' stands, and other gear. Setting up first also provides an opportunity to try several different layouts.

Getting an early start is especially important the first time in a new venue. If possible, try to check out the bandstand on a night when another band is there. This gives you a chance to see how the other

drummer sets up. Odds are, what works for him or her will work for you. At least it should give you a starting point. Once you've scouted out the bandstand, you'll also have a much better idea of how much equipment to bring.

## Be Flexible

A little experience (and, hopefully, the scouting mentioned above) will generally give you a pretty good idea of the best place to set up. However, if your first idea doesn't work out, you may have to try another approach before the others arrive.

Though the traditional layout is to set up at the rear of the bandstand, on some stages you may find it more practical to set up differently. On one bandstand where we play, I find it best to set up at about a 45° angle, with my back to a corner. This not only conserves more stage space for my bandmates, but also gives me a better view of the dance floor.

## Hardware Options

Today's drummer has an incredible number of options for setting up in different ways. Boom stands are one of the best tools we have for setting up on smaller bandstands. With booms, we can situate the base of the stand somewhat beneath the drums or other stands, and then easily swing the boom arm out. Another easy way to reduce the amount of floor space your drums take up is not to extend the tripods of your cymbal and snare drum stands all the way out. This can easily save a few inches on either side of your kit, which can sometimes make all the difference. You'll find that most stands—especially the double-braced models—will be more than stable without a full spread.

I often set up a double-braced boom stand for my ride cymbal on the right side of my kit, with a single-braced boom for a crash. If I don't let the double-braced legs out all the way, the single-braced feet slide

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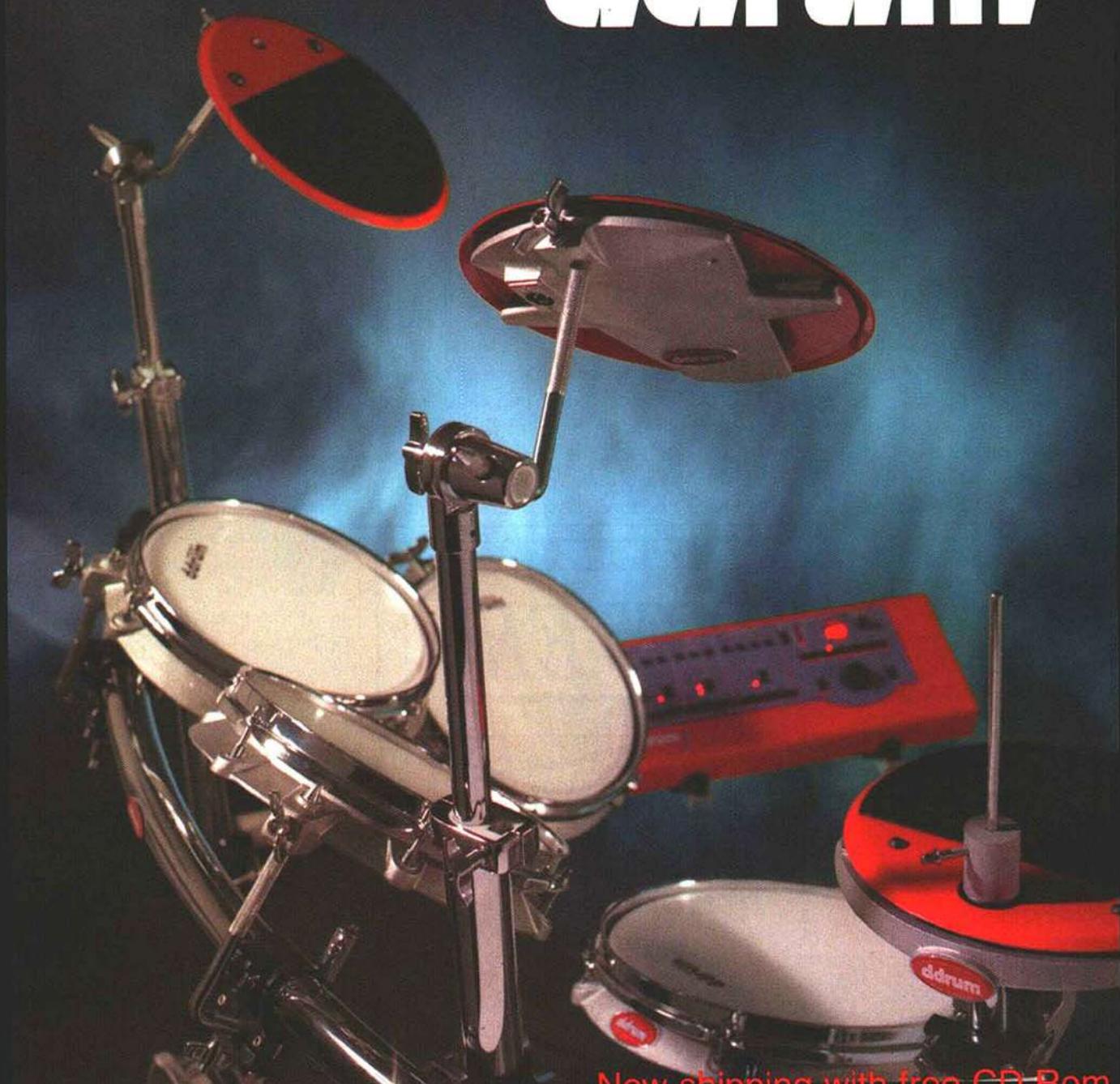
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nicely under the double-braced tripod, thereby cutting the floor space used by these two stands almost in half.

Again, setting up early is the key. Always be sure to leave yourself enough time to experiment with a few of these options before the other guys are in your way.

### Worthwhile Investments

Another great thing about today's drum hardware is that many pieces are interchangeable. For example, some bass drum tom mounts hold any 7/8" arm, so you could mount a 12" or 13" tom in the left hole, and a boom arm in the right, thus eliminating a cymbal stand on the right side of the kit.

Some boom arms fit into the bottom sections of straight cymbal stands, so you can convert them to boom stands. Check to see if your stand manufacturer offers boom arms that can replace the top section of your straight cymbal stands.

You can also purchase one multi-clamp and one boom arm, which will allow you to support an extra cymbal or drum from an existing stand. I've found that the shorter

clamps seem to be more stable than those that reach out further. When clamping cymbals or drums, try to position one leg of the stand directly below that item for maximum stability.

There are a variety of cymbal adapters that allow you to mount a second cymbal

bottom cymbal first, then the adapter, and then the top cymbal. Adapters are easily cross-threaded, so you want to have as little weight on the adapter as possible while you attach it to the stand.

Some manufacturers offer other approaches for mounting multiple items from a single stand. Some allow you to mount two cymbal arms and two tom arms, or one cymbal arm and one tom arm from the up post of the stand.

A rack system can also sometimes be a good idea. Racks can be purchased with long, short, or curved bars for a custom design. The use of a rack fitted with tom arms and cymbal boom arms can eliminate many tripod bases. This, in turn, can dramatically reduce the "footprint" of your kit.

**Today's drummer has an incredible number of options for setting up in different ways."**

from a cymbal or boom stand. Straight adapters work fine for splashes or smaller cymbals, while the double-tilting models allow more flexibility. Remember, adapters work best when the top cymbal is smaller than the bottom. Also, always mount the

### For Those Really Small Bandstands

If you regularly play on *very* small bandstands, you may want to check out some of the new "cocktail" drumkits that are now available. These kits allow you to play standing up, which can be a tremendous savings of floor space when you're really limited.

Other options include shallow, single-headed kits (which shave several inches off the front of your setup) and compact mini-kits (of which there are now quite a few on the market). Several companies also offer products to help you convert a floor tom into a small bass drum using your existing bass drum pedal. And, of course, if you want a high-tech approach, electronic pads mounted on a stand (with an optional pedal trigger mounted onto your bass drum pedal) are a definite option for playing in those unusually small areas.

Hopefully, one or more of these suggestions will help you get through your next gig on that postage-stamp-size bandstand.



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# Simon Phillips On...

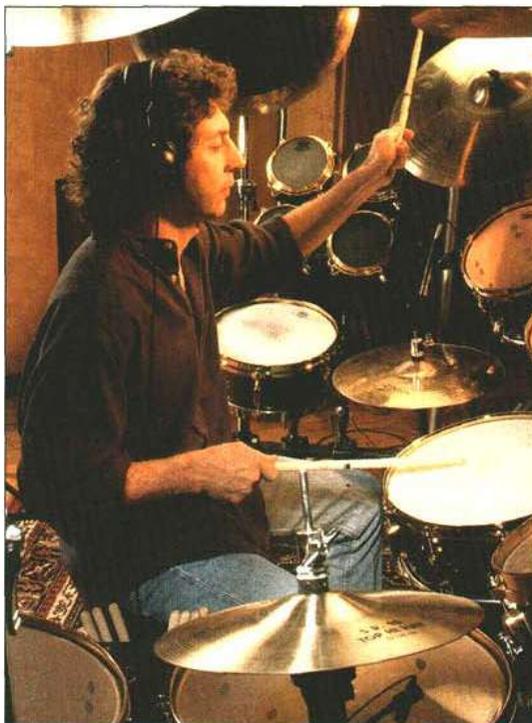
by Robyn Flans

While interviewing Simon Phillips for this piece, I naively asked him, "So, tell me about the album," to which the superstar drummer responded, "Which album?" I must confess I felt a little stupid. Simon has four important albums out right now: Toto's *Mindfields*, which came out in Europe over a year ago but was just released in the States; Phillips' own live album, *Out Of The Blue*; Toto's brand-new live album, *Livefields* (not yet released in the States); and an as-yet unreleased acoustic jazz album with keyboardist Jeff Babko, *Vantage Point*.

That last album has Simon stretching himself in many directions. "I really wanted to try my hand at writing bebop," he says, "which is very different from the kind of music I normally write. In the past I've primarily written for guitar and keyboards, which are both polyphonic instruments, with bass, sax, and drums rounding out the group. When you're writing in the acoustic jazz realm, the grand piano is the only polyphonic instrument—and then there's trumpet, tenor, and bass. It changes the voicings, and it's a whole other way to write."

This bebop direction was also a bit of a challenge for Simon in the playing department. "First of all," he says, "I used a totally different drumkit—a small kit with a single kick drum. But the bigger challenge was learning how to play *quietly* again. The dynamics involved in playing with acoustic instruments is quite interesting. That's the music I grew up playing, although more in a '30s and '40s swing style than bebop. But I knew what it was to

play at that volume level. However, having played rock 'n' roll for so long and making the drums speak above Marshall amps...well...your technique changes. And over the years drums have gotten more robust, louder, and more efficient. So



suddenly change all that is incredible.

"The first thing I did was switch sticks," Simon admits. "My Pro-Mark signature model, which has a round bead, was a little too heavy for the music. But then I tried Will Kennedy's model, which is a little lighter and has a slightly different taper and a finer tip, and it worked great. It had all of the delicacy needed for the music. And Will was very kind one day to pop around and give me a box of them when I ran out."

As for the other projects, the fourteen-

track Toto album, *Mindfields*, was Simon's second studio record with the band, which he's been piloting for the last seven years. With Bobby Kimball back as lead singer, Simon says the band's writing has become a little more "rock 'n' roll."

"I wanted to introduce a little more of a Who vibe to Toto," Simon explains. "We were playing one day, and something that we were working on reminded me of 'Won't Get Fooled Again.' Luke [guitarist Steve Lukather] picked up on it right away, and we started writing 'Caught In The Balance.' There's a section in the middle of the tune that's a tip of the hat to The Who, taking a little bit of the 'Won't Get Fooled Again' concept, using a tape machine, sequencer, and band. It turned out to be really cool."

One of Simon's other favorite tracks on *Mindfields* is the largely instrumental track "Better World." "I tend to write a lot of instrumental music," Simon says, "but I wanted to do something a little different—create a little more of a concept piece, something a little more orchestral. I came up with the whole beginning, and Luke heard it and loved it. I said, 'This piece should be in three parts,' and he came up with the second section, which is more like a Pink Floyd thing with vocals. Then Dave [Paich, keyboards] contributed some things to it as well, so we ended up writing this piece that's about eight minutes long."

With all the varied projects Simon has been involved in, not just recently but throughout his career, he's a perfect candidate to discuss a diverse list of drummers for *Reflections*.

## Buddy Rich

Buddy was probably my main influence when I was starting and growing up. I used to get his records, listen to every note, look at the picture, and set my drumkit up exactly the same as he did. Then I'd play along to the records—or at least *try* to. At eight or nine, I was playing along to "Channel One Suite" and "Norwegian

Wood" and all those things, just trying to get through the charts somehow.

I did meet Buddy once when I was about thirteen. I went to a concert of his in England at a place called Hatfield, a place I used to play with my father. I took a record along, went into the dressing room, and rather sheepishly thrust out the album for him to sign, which he graciously did. He was a huge influence.

## Billy Cobham

Billy was also a very big influence. The funny thing is that when you're young, you have your heroes and it's a little bit like, "He's my hero and everybody else is crap." You don't know any better. But you're suddenly introduced to other players. From Buddy Rich I was introduced to Louie Bellson, Gene Krupa, and Harold Jones. Then it was players like Grady Tate and Bernard Purdie, and eventually I started getting into rock 'n' roll—Danny Seraphine, Bobby Colomby, Ian Paice, and John Bonham.

Then there was a record that came out in England that had a pop version of the theme to *2001* by an artist named Deodato. I bought it and started playing along. At the beginning of the song was this really fast single-stroke roll, and I was going, "What's going on here! Why can't I do this?" I found out it was Billy Cobham. And from there I started looking for more recordings with Billy, and found The Mahavishnu Orchestra.

Billy was basically a jazz player at a time when jazz and rock 'n' roll were merging. He also had tremendous technique and a lot of strength to be able to play forcefully. And the sound that he got was so fresh. It was very open and bright—almost a bebop sound, only played with power. A lot of that was a Tony Williams trait as well, but for me it started with Billy. He played exactly the way I wanted to hear drums. Another huge influence.

## Louie Bellson

I got to see Louie play when I was young. I was lucky that one of the trumpet players in my dad's band got the gig to play with Pearl Bailey at the London Palladium. Pearl was married to Louie Bellson, who was her drummer. I was really excited. I got to sit right behind Louie for the whole set. When you see a real craftsman, a great player in front of you, it's so amazing. His approach was so crisp and clean, and he swung so beautifully.

Louie was pretty much the start of double bass for me. I had never really thought much about double bass, but when I saw Louie, it enlightened me. So the idea was there, but for me double bass didn't really come into its own until rock music. I felt it was very difficult to fit it into jazz, although Louie obviously did it.

I think I most enjoyed Louie playing with Oscar Peterson—that was the pinnacle of playing quietly with acoustic piano and upright bass, swinging, and playing a big kit but not overpowering anybody. Later on I got to meet Louie, and we did a video together. That was very humbling. He's such a wonderful man.

## Tony Williams

It's funny, but I can remember the first time I heard Tony play. I was young, and I didn't understand what he was doing. It was intriguing, but it took me a little while to get into what he was doing. Then, of course, I got *totally* into it, and now I look to Tony for inspiration.

If I'm on the road at gig number thirty and I'm running out of ideas, I'll put on a Tony Williams record. It can be him playing with Miles or Herbie or on his solo stuff, but no matter what, I hear that fresh musical approach he had. It's awe-inspiring.

I was very fortunate to meet him in 1977 when I was playing

with Jack Bruce. And we ended up doing a clinic together in 1985—Zildjian Day In Dallas—and we hung out a lot that night and got on really well. The last time I saw him was at a NAMM show. He said hello to me in a British cockney accent. It was really funny.

## Dennis Chambers

I first heard Dennis in the late '80s. A couple of people had mentioned him to me. I heard him on a Steve Khan record and thought, "Ooh, hang on a minute. Who is this guy?" Then I saw him at a drum clinic in '88 and it was, "Oh, okay. Right!" Then we met up in Poland at a jazz festival. He was playing with Bill Evans and I was playing with Jack Bruce. We hung out a little there. And Dennis and I have done some clinics together, which is pretty frightening.

Dennis is an awesome player. He developed that strong funk feel with P-Funk, but he also has tremendous technique. That combination is what makes his fusion playing so impressive. That's something I feel strongly about. It's very important that no matter how much technique you have, the most important thing is the groove. It must not be interfered with.

The other thing I like about Dennis is his attitude. He's really funny. We have a lot of fun together when we're out doing clinics. That makes it nice, because when you play these drum festivals or clinics where there are other players, it can be a little daunting.

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## Neil Peart

My only contact with Neil has been through working with him on his Buddy Rich tribute record, *Bumin' For Buddy*. But I was very impressed with the way he handled those sessions. It's quite a trick when you've got two drummers coming in every day to record with a big band. With all those egos, it had the potential for disaster. But Neil was really cool in the way he would sit back, let it happen, and suss out the situation. When it was time to say something, he said it. If somebody needed some guidance or help, he did it. I think he handled those sessions wonderfully.

As far as Neil's drumming, I've heard his recorded work with Rush, obviously, which he sounds great on. Unfortunately, I've never actually seen him play live.

## Terry Bozzio

I first heard Terry with Frank Zappa in '76, which was really cool. I liked his looseness, that sort of sloppy hi-hat style, which is quite reminiscent of Tony Williams. But he obviously made it his own thing. And I enjoyed his work on The Brecker Brothers' *Heavy Metal BeBop*.

Having worked with Jeff Beck for a couple of years and having been very involved in one of his records [*There & Back*], I was quite interested to see how Terry would work with Jeff and Tony [Hymas, keyboards]. When I heard the *Guitar Shop* record that they did, I was really knocked out. I thought Terry really con-

tributed to the whole project. I saw the band a couple of times, and Terry sounded wonderful.

Now Terry's taken the drumkit to a whole different area, with an almost classical approach. I've done a few clinics with him, and seeing him do that up close is pretty amazing. He's made a big commitment to playing a certain way and making the drums a valid solo orchestral instrument.

## Jeff Porcaro

I was always amazed at the maturity in Jeff's playing. We were very close in age. When you hear yourself playing, you obviously hear yourself in a very different way from how other people hear you. When I heard Jeff play, his drumming was so much more mature than mine, so much more mature than his years.

We had similar careers—he did a lot of sessions in Los Angeles and I did a lot of sessions in London, both when we were very young. And, ironically, now I'm playing in Toto, a band that he formed and helped to make a success.

Jeff seemed to instinctively know exactly what to play in whatever situation. Of course everybody knows how wonderful his groove was. But a lot of people don't know that he had excellent technique. Steve Lukather has told me how he would turn up at a rehearsal and Jeff would be wailing away on the drumkit. Steve would say to him, "You should take a solo during the show." And



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Jeff would say, "No, no, no, that's not me."

I only met Jeff a couple of times. But, even though he's been gone, I've gotten to know him a lot in these last seven years because Jeff is always talked about. He has a very strong presence.

## Keith Moon

I never got to meet Keith. Talk about anarchy at its highest! He would do stuff that nobody would dare do. He had no fear. He just played and let that energy out.

I love anarchy in playing. Of course, when it came to actually playing with The Who and figuring out how to approach the songs, I obviously had to listen to Keith quite a lot. And Kenney Jones, too. But Keith's approach would always be baffling. He always found his own way to play something.

When I played with the band, I had to figure out how to keep Keith's spirit in the music and still keep things under control. There were a few things that Keith played that I just loved, so much so that I tried to play them note-for-note the way he played them. And I can remember playing those things onstage and seeing Pete [Townshend] and John [Entwistle] turn around and laugh. Keith had so much spirit.

## Ginger Baker

Again, because of playing with Jack Bruce, I got to hear a lot about Ginger. I didn't see Ginger play until 1994, when we did a show together in Cologne, Germany. It was for Jack Bruce's fiftieth birthday. Ginger and I played together.

You put people together like Jack and Ginger or The Who, and there's a lot of history there—feelings and sentiments, which spark things. That's the stuff that made those bands work in the first place, and it's also the reason some bands never get back together. So everybody on the stage feels that. You look over and think, "Wow, I'm playing 'Sunshine Of Your Love' with Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce! In those situations, I obviously bow to him and follow him. He plays, I follow, because he's the cat who created it.

It was very interesting to hear Ginger

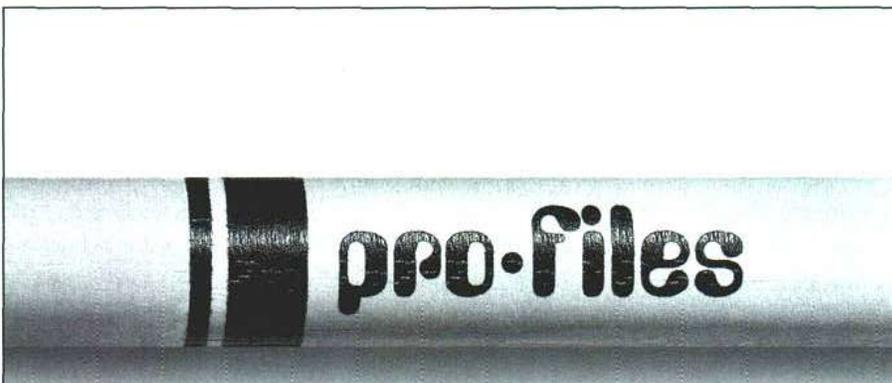
play live. He played lots of different kinds of music that night, from jazz to Cream songs. It was very cool. I learned quite a lot there and thought, "Okay, now when I play a certain type of blues, I'll play the stuff I saw Ginger doing."

## Carter Beauford

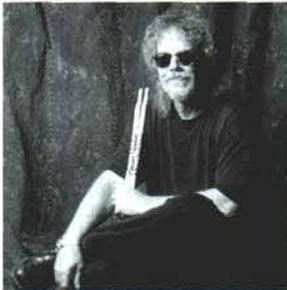
When I first saw The Dave Matthews Band, which was when they were just get-

ting known, I went, "Ooh, interesting band, and this cat can *play*." I rang my friends up at Zildjian the next day to find out about Carter. He has an interesting style. What I've heard, I love. Our paths haven't crossed, and I've only heard him play with Dave Matthews, but I've been quite impressed. Hopefully we'll meet someday.





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# Learning To Play Jazz, Part 2

## Standards, Musicality, And More

by Mike De Simone

In this segment of "Learning To Play Jazz" we'll continue on from last month's discussion, when we covered several basic jazz drumming topics. Besides the blues, knowing the thirty-two-bar song form is an absolute requirement for playing "standards."

A popular standard is a song that is so well known that it becomes part of the standard repertoire. Most standards were first heard in musical theater or movies. Many were written by America's most celebrated composers, including George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington, Jerome Kern, and Irving Berlin.

Another kind of standard is the jazz standard, which is a very well-known composition written by a jazz artist. Some of the important composers of jazz standards are Thelonious Monk, Benny Carter, Tadd Dameron, Wayne Shorter, and Duke Ellington.

Whether you're discussing a popular standard or a jazz standard, the thirty-two-bar, AABA form is the most common. It's been used by every composer from Berlin to The Beatles.

Before a drummer learning to play jazz plunges into the structure of form, it's very important to listen to standards. A very good way to start is to get some recordings by top singers. Three of the

Two drummers who are masters at laying the form out as well as lighting the way for the soloist are Paul Motian and Jimmy Cobb. Motian has had a phenomenal career as a sideman, leader, and composer. If you listen to any of his work, the form is always clear to the listener and the soloist. Paul's solos are also some of the most unusual in all of jazz.

Motian's solos usually start with the germ of the melody and then move into uncharted territory, yet the feeling of the tune is always there. The same elements permeate Jimmy Cobb's work, though Jimmy's style is more in line with the bebop tradition. These two men may not be household names, but both have sustained long and successful careers.

The next step to help you become familiar with form and standards is to get a "real" book (or "fake" book, as it's referred to in some circles). A real book contains the lead sheets (melody and chord changes) to about two hundred jazz standards. Read through the compositions while you listen to the tunes. This is the best way to learn the repertoire. You should work towards becoming familiar with these tunes. Be able to play time and accompany the melody, and eventually you'll get to a point where you'll be able to solo over any of the tunes.

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"Whether you're discussing a popular standard or a jazz standard, the thirty-two-bar, AABA form is the most common. It's been used by every composer from Berlin to The Beatles."

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absolute best are Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and Tony Bennett. Among them they have probably recorded every popular standard ever written.

What you'll hear on these recordings is the great marriage of words and music, wonderful arrangements, and an outstanding interpretation of the composer's and lyricist's intent. A good thing to focus on is the lyric; by learning the lyric you'll be simultaneously learning the melody.

### Song Structure

The best way to analyze the structure of a song is to pick one standard and study it. Let's take a look at "All Of Me," a classic that has been recorded by virtually every jazz musician. It also has the added advantage of having a simple melody and lyric.

The form of "All Of Me" is the thirty-two-bar or AABA song form. The first "A" section consists of an eight-bar melody, which is repeated. The "B" section, or "bridge," is an eight-bar secondary melody that's also marked by a change in the harmony. And the eight-bar "A" section returns with the first melody to end the song. Once the entire form is completed, the soloist will begin "soloing over the form," creating variations on the melody.

### Independence

Syncopation and independence are usually misunderstood by fledgling jazz drummers. A common misconception is that if you swallow Jim Chapin's *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer* whole (a book considered to be the Bible of jazz drumming), you'll have mastered the art of independence.

Chapin's book is a technical study of independence, where different rhythmic variations are played against the jazz-ride beat. The patterns discussed are just that—patterns that shouldn't necessarily be employed in an actual performance. Unfortunately, many drummers never read Jim's masterful introduction to the book, which in essence states that the exercises found in the book should be used to develop a vocabulary that should be played *musically*.

For a first step on gaining independence, I'd recommend using the quarter-note and 8th-note studies found in Peter Erskine's *Drum Concepts And Techniques* (21st Century Publications). *Progressive Steps To Syncopation* by Ted Reed (Alfred Publishing) is another good source for more syncopated studies.

Play the "lang spang/a lang" on the ride (as discussed last month) and play the studies from *Syncopation* in the left hand without changing the ride beat. Then add a light "four on the

floor" on the bass drum and play the hi-hat on 2 and 4. Once that begins to feel good you should move on to John Riley's *The Art Of Bop Drumming* (Manhattan Music) or the Chapin book. Whatever you do, internalize what you're studying. Always sing a melody while playing these studies (and if a book has a CD, listen to the recording first). Remember, books are simply building blocks and are no replacement for *listening* to jazz.

### Tools

Besides sticks, wire brushes and timpani mallets are two pieces of equipment that all jazz drummers carry. The art of brush playing is one of the toughest things to master, but it can be one of the most rewarding. Brushes can be used on everything from ballads to up-tempo tunes, and should be practiced as often as possible.

There are more sets of brushes available today than you can shake a stick at. Wire models (as opposed to plastic) are still the best, and a good brush will have a lot of extension and a wide spread. (The wider the spread, the greater the range of colors it can produce.)

Recordings, live performances, and experimentation are the best way to learn brush playing. Some master brush players to check out are Ed Thigpen, Papa Jo Jones, Billy Higgins, Joe Morello, and that god of thunder, Philly Joe Jones. Philly Joe's brush performance on the classic "Billy Boy" (from Miles Davis's *Milestones*) has to be heard to be believed. If you wish to invest in a video, I'd recommend *The Art Of Brush Playing* by brush master Clayton Cameron (DCI Video).

Timpani mallets give you another range of colors and can be used in various ways. One good use for them is to close out a bal-

lad. Another very effective device is to use a mallet in your left hand and a stick in your right. This device can be heard on Ahmad Jamal's performance of "Poinciana," with the great Vernel Fournier on drums.

Elvin Jones and Max Roach are not only the grand masters of all things percussive, but of mallet playing in particular. When these men play with mallets, the drumset sounds like timpani. You should seek out as much of their work as possible, as well as the performances of William "Sonny" Greer with Duke Ellington.

### Practice Sessions

A friend of mine had a sign hanging in his studio that read "Intelligent Practice Gets Results." That phrase is old, but it's true—especially for jazz drumming. You can't expect to learn every aspect of it overnight. It's a long yet very rewarding process. You should set aside time not only to practice, but to listen to and absorb music.

The most important step that any new jazz drummer can take is to get out and play with other musicians. Some local clubs have jazz jam sessions. Check them out. I'd suggest going a couple of times just to listen. Then consider sitting in. (I'd also advise having at least two tunes under your belt that you can suggest to play.)

There are many other aspects of jazz we haven't covered in this series. (My purpose is to get you to explore the many facets of America's "classical music," not to overwhelm you.) Jazz is truly reflective of the American melting pot, because every culture has thrown their own particular spice into the brew. The journey through this music is fascinating and should not be missed. Good luck.



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# Confessions Of A Rotten Drummer

by Dean Rieck

**W**e were standing in the basement of my parents' house with my disassembled drumkit lying at our feet. I hadn't played my drums in years, but I still felt a wave of panic washing over me. "Do I really want to sell these? My God, I'll never see them again."

Funny, I should have been relieved. That set had helped create some of the most embarrassing moments of my life. Like the first time I played "Bad, Bad, Leroy Brown" with the high school swing band: I played straight 8ths on the ride instead of the shuffle everyone *else* was playing! The bandleader stopped the band, and then proceeded to give a five-minute demonstration of how the song *should* be played while twenty other bandmembers looked on.

And who could forget the school talent show, where I found myself a full beat behind, playing a backbeat on 1 and 3 while everyone else was on 2 and 4. I was so lost I had to stop, then pick up again when I could hear where we were.

Worst of all was the time I was playing a country medley with a wedding band and couldn't find the tempo for "Country Roads." My brain had left my body, and I just couldn't hear the tempo, which led me to play a half-time feel from which I could not escape. Even the drunken members of the wedding party were giving me dirty looks. The entire band had to stop. It was *beyond* embarrassing. So much for being a drummer.

But as the years rolled by, my mind began to wonder about the idea of drumming again. But how? There was no way I could bang on a drumset with neighbors on both sides of me. However, there was nothing stopping me from getting a practice pad, sticks, a couple of books, and a metronome.

I sat on my bed every night and practiced. And soon something odd began to happen. I was actually playing *well*. After ten years without touching a drumstick, I seemed to have learned something. I had grown up a lot. I had become more methodical and less impulsive. For the first time in my life, I found myself actually enjoying practice. An hour each day was like heaven. I rented videos and bought more books. I practiced rudiments and worked on my time. After a few months, I invested in a Yamaha DTX electronic kit, which allowed me to practice on a whole

sticks every day pays off.

My grip Was Wrong. There are many grips, but I had one that really held me back. I always skipped over those introductory pages in drum books and developed my own unique version of the matched grip. It felt solid, but it didn't allow for much rebound. Then I saw a Louie Bellson video where he demonstrated how to hold the sticks correctly. At first it felt awkward, but I soon discovered how much more flexible everything became. My rolls smoothed out immediately. Best of all, I discovered how to use my fingers to control the stick, which in turn led to a tremendous increase in speed.

I avoided technique exercises. George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control* and *Accents And Rebounds* are still the very best books, with pages and pages of exercises. It's sometimes hard to see what good they do as you work your way through the first few pages. But over time, you realize that they tone your hand, finger, and wrist muscles to an incredible degree. By the time I finished I was a different drummer.

I didn't study the rudiments. Imagine trying to speak without knowing any words. It just can't be done. But there I was, trying to play complex music without knowing the most basic rudiments. The rudiments are the building blocks of everything, whether you're playing in a marching band or a cutting-edge fusion group. They're the basic words and phrases we use to speak. Without them you can only mumble incoherently. Now that I'm learning them, they show up in my playing all the time. I'm also listening to other drummers now and thinking, "So, *that's* how he plays that. It's just a paradiddle down the toms."

"Even the drunken members of the wedding party were giving me dirty looks. It was *beyond* embarrassing."

set without the noise.

I'll admit it. When I first took up drumming as a kid, I never really got any better. But as an adult, I've been reborn as a drummer. And as I look back, I can see with 20/20 hindsight all the mistakes I made.

I never practiced regularly or methodically. I hated practice. I was impatient to soar around the kit like Neil Peart, but I didn't want to invest the time necessary to learn how to do it. Practice was always boring and frustrating. Results seemed elusive. Now, with as little as half an hour a day of practice, I've made tremendous progress. Just picking up the

I didn't like using a metronome, I hated that damn metronome. The constant clicking was just a frustrating reminder of my own inadequacies. Now I spend at least half my practice time with a click in my ear. And with a little patience, I've found that it can tune up your timekeeping and do all sorts of magical things to every stroke, tap, and rebound. Plus, it's helped me to slow down. I had a tendency to get too excited during fills, which often sent me into a faster tempo.

I hated reading. Most drummers aren't great at reading, at least when compared to other musicians. And if you're a casual player you can certainly get by without it. However, you'll also miss out on a lot of great practice material. One of the things I did was buy an advanced snare drum solo book. My goal is to learn every piece in it, and to be able to play each one at the correct tempo.

I never learned basic subdivisions. Yes, I knew how measures divided up, but

I forgot about it as soon as I got behind a drumset. Now I try to count measures in my head, and think in terms of the overall subdivisions of the music. Fills feel more natural, my time is better, and it's a lot easier to know where I am in the music at any given moment.

I only wanted to play one type of music. Though I still listen to rock, I also like jazz, classical, fusion, country, and just about everything else. There are a lot of great grooves out there, so why get stuck in just one? I've found that when I play along to different types of music, I learn something about every *other* type. I consider it cross-training. I record the songs I want to learn, listen to them over and over to get the feel, and then work out my part, section by section. First I play it like the drummer on the recording. Then I make up my own part.

I avoided soloing. I hated solos—mostly because I didn't have the tools to piece one together properly. When it came time

for me to do one, I just flailed away until I couldn't think of anything else to play. I still don't claim to be any great shakes at soloing, but I *do* practice soloing now, with a metronome. Four bars of time followed by four bars of solo. Then eight and sixteen. I apply the rudiments and keep at it until I find bits that I like. When I find something I like I keep working on it. Over time, I take the bits and pieces and fit them together into something musical.

I used to dream of wowing audiences with my percussive wizardry. Well, I doomed that dream, or anything close to it, with the way I approached the instrument. Now, older and wiser, I've come to terms with my average abilities. I'll never be a great drummer. But with the lessons I've learned, I'll certainly be a much *better* drummer. More importantly, I'll enjoy playing more than ever before. And in the end, that's all that really matters anyway.



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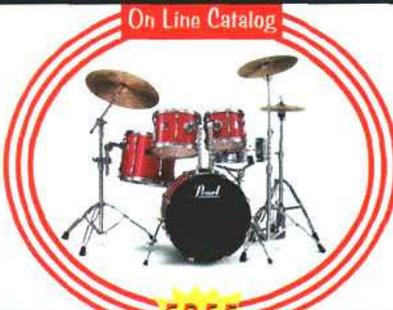
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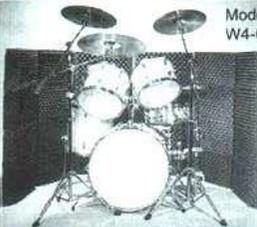
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# Drumming At Foxwoods

Big-Time Entertainment Isn't Just On The Las Vegas Strip

by Rick Van Horn

In past years *Modern Drummer* has presented stories on the drumming scenes in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. These two cities are recognized as entertainment meccas full of job opportunities in casino lounges and showrooms. Interestingly enough, however, the world's largest casino/hotel is in neither of those cities. In fact, it's not in a city at all.

Take I-95 between New York City and Boston, turn off onto Rt. 2 in southeastern Connecticut, and you soon find yourself in rural countryside. After a few miles, you mainly see trees. But just when you think you're leaving civilization completely, you round a bend and see a massive structure seemingly rising out of the forest. After another bend in the road, you realize that the monolith before you is only the smallest wing of an even more gargantuan complex.

Welcome to Foxwoods Resort Casino, located on the Mashantucket Pequot Indian reservation. Wholly owned by the Pequot tribe, the Foxwoods complex comprises three hotels containing more than 1,400 rooms, over a dozen restaurants, thousands of slot machines, and hundreds of gaming tables. More to the point of this story, it also contains a 4,000-seat multi-purpose arena, the 1,500-seat Fox Theater showroom, the Cinedrome nightclub, and two off-casino lounges.

## That's Entertainment!

"We probably present the most entertainment of any casino in the US right



now," says Tom Cantone, vice president of Foxwoods Entertainment Group. "Fifty-two weekends a year, all three days. We also run live entertainment on some weeknights—especially at certain peak seasons. And we run a lot of special events on top of that. This past New Year's eve was a monster for us: We had Barry Manilow in the arena, Brian Setzer in the Ballroom, Taylor Dane in the Theater, and a surprise rock act in the Cinedrome."

Headliners who've performed at Foxwoods run the gamut from Tom Jones to Luciano Pavarotti to The Doobie Brothers to Willie Nelson. The Cinedrome features pop/rock acts like 10,000 Maniacs, Edgar Winter, The Platters, and Davey Jones of The Monkees. The savvy entertainment planners at Foxwoods also use the Cinedrome to exploit current music trends, including a Latin dance night, a country dance night, and a swing dance night.

Entertainment in the lounges features primarily local groups, from as far south as New York City to as far north as Boston. Diversity is the key at this level. For example, the Intermezzo lounge presents an intimate, jazzy atmosphere. The Atrium

lounge, located closer to the casino floor, offers a more varied musical fare ranging from pop acts to C&W groups.

Says Tom Cantone, "We use entertainment as a marketing tool. In my long experience in the casino industry, a slot machine is a slot machine and a gaming table is a gaming table. You have to create personality, and one of the ways you do that is through your entertainment. It's the reason people drive in from local areas—and the transit business that we get is *huge*. Our entertainment helps to give us the personality we want to project—along with a competitive edge. Last summer the press mentioned several times that we offered the most diverse entertainment anywhere in New England. We've even received some national publicity in the past year for some of the bookings that we've had. *USA Today* ran a front-page item when The Quarrymen were here, because it was their first time together in thirty years."

## Serving The Bottom Line

The focus of the high-end entertainment is significantly different from that of the lounge acts, as Tom explains. "Our 'name' entertainment has to attract a gaming customer. That's what pays the bills for everything else. It's a very delicate and sometimes complicated decision-making process. Our major customer is a baby boomer between forty-five and fifty. So it makes sense for us to bring in acts that people in that age group remember from their youth, like The Doobie Brothers,

Chicago, The Steve Miller Band, Yes, and Kansas. I get pitched all the time by agents telling me, 'Well, such-and-such an act will sell out.' I've had sellout situations that meant *nothing* to the bottom line here. On the other hand, I've had acts that *didn't* sell out, but still generated some of the biggest gaming responses we've ever had.

"We once booked a very famous country & western act," Tom continues. "They definitely sold out the theater, but their audience drank more icewater than regular drinks. And when the show was over, everybody got in their cars and went home; they didn't stay for the gaming. So even though the show sold out, it was a dismal night for business overall. On the other hand, when the Doobie Brothers played their first show here, they drew a nice crowd of customers who enjoyed their show and then stayed to play. They were all psyched up by the show, so they filtered through the lounges for more entertainment, and they went into the casinos to enjoy the gaming. That's the kind of effect we're looking for from our acts."

### Offering A Career Boost

Not all of the major acts at Foxwoods fall into the "veteran" category. In fact, Foxwoods can be an important stepping-stone for up-and-coming talent. "We're



Lounges like the intimate Intermezzo offer local groups regular weekend employment. Connecticut drummer Ken Aldrich is shown here with The Drew Anthony Quintet.

Gloria Estefan & The Miami Sound Machine had one song out that was a minor hit. Nobody would book them. I had them open our Copa Club. They didn't have a big name at that point, but they gave a *great* show. And of course they went on to become superstars. You've got to take the risk with performers who are not yet stars—but who you have the sense *might* be."

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"This isn't the place for introspective performers. You have to be able to play great music, and play it very well—and you also have to be able to sell it to the audience."—Paul Harris

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starting to experiment with artists who have small-time record deals," says Tom. "We'll work out a weekend showcase with their label. That way we get to present fresh new talent, and the acts get a top-notch venue in which to perform in front of a lot of people. It works to our mutual benefit."

"Casino entertainment is not just about major names," Tom continues. "It's also about young performers who may break big someday—and who'll remember where they came from. I've known a few of those in my career who've stayed close to me through their rise to stardom. When I was at The Sands in Atlantic City many years ago,

### The Lounge Level

Unsigned local groups can also solicit bookings at Foxwoods, primarily for work in the lounges. Comments Tom, "We probably get fifty or more tape packages a week from people wanting to work here. We book our acts for weekend stays of three nights. Sometimes we book midweek, and occasionally for a full week's engagement. That depends mainly on the season. We'll also book groups for frequent repeat engagements. But we don't book extended stays; we like to break our entertainment schedule up so that our patrons don't see the same acts here all the time."

Working closely with Tom Cantone is Paul Harris, who is executive assistant for entertainment at Foxwoods. Himself a career drummer, Paul is also a member of the Pequot tribe. One of his primary responsibilities is to liaise with the incoming acts, including the local musicians who play the lounges, regarding all the details of working at Foxwoods.

"Gigging hours can vary," says Paul. "We run blocks of entertainment from six until nine and from nine until one. Each group is evaluated by the sound tech who is a member of our entertainment staff. The tech has a criteria sheet that includes the number of people in the room, the quality of the band's material, their attire, stage presence, etc. At the end of each night that sheet is given to a lounge supervisor, who evaluates everything at the end of the week. If the report is favorable, the band comes back. I'd say that 99% of our acts are very professional, and they do come back. They tend to rotate with other groups over a period of a year or more.

"Those bands that return frequently build up a following," Paul continues. "It usually relates to their musical style. There are bands that play the Intermezzo but never the Atrium, because they are jazz-oriented groups that draw a jazz-oriented crowd. Conversely, there are acts that would play the Atrium and never come down to the Intermezzo. That's why we *have* different

# Foxwoods' Dynamic Duo

The two individuals primarily responsible for the success of the entertainment program at Foxwoods Casino Resort are Tom Cantone and Paul Harris. Significantly, both gentlemen have musical backgrounds—which immediately sets them apart from the majority of "executives" in the entertainment industry. As such, they operate on the type of philosophy that working musicians usually only dream of encountering from management. They also personally represent alternate career options available to drummers who might wish to leave the grind of full-time performance, without leaving the excitement and personal fulfillment of the entertainment business.

## Tom Cantone

Tom Cantone is vice president of Foxwoods Entertainment Group. In that capacity he's responsible for staging all the shows, booking the acts, and creating an entertainment program that fits into the casino's overall marketing strategy.

Tom's career began as press relations manager for the Hershey theme parks. This led to a position as corporate manager for that company, where Tom was in charge of entertainment. "We presented everything from rock concerts to ice shows to circuses," says Tom. "That started the appreciation that I have for entertainers."

Tom's "appreciation for entertainers" is also based on a personal background in music. Although he modestly refers to himself as a "hobby musician," Tom is skilled as a piano player, drummer, and songwriter. "Most of my songs are just for me," he says. "But I've also done some commercial jingles for Hershey, the Sands Hotel in Atlantic City, and a couple of other companies."

Tom's connection to music began as a child, when he started playing on toy drums. "When The Beatles came out I asked my dad to buy me the same sort of Ludwig set that Ringo had," says Tom. "I still have that set today. The Beatles were my biggest musical influence. Little did I know that years later—just recently, in



Paul Harris (Standing) and Tom Cantone head the entertainment operation at Foxwoods.

fact—I'd have the opportunity to play with John Lennon's original band, The Quarrymen. I booked them here at Foxwoods into our Cinedrome Theater, and I begged them to let me sit in. That was as close as I'll ever get to playing with John Lennon.

"One of the things I enjoy about being an entertainment director is the relationships I've built up with many performers over the years," Tom continues. "Sometimes this relationship will lead the acts to invite me to play with them. For example, a few years ago I was vice president of entertainment and marketing at The Sands. For several years Clint Holmes was a headliner in our showroom there. One closing night I surprised Clint by dressing up as one of his bandmembers and joining the band on his last song. Clint was performing Huey Lewis's 'Heart Of Rock 'N' Roll,' and he looked up and saw me on a tier above him playing the congas. I was as nervous as can be, but Clint flipped! To end the song, the band wanted me to jump down from the rafters for a big rock 'n' roll finish. So I came flying down to end the song, and Clint gave me a big hug. It was such a thrill

for me."

Tom has never lost sight of that thrill, and he keeps it in mind when it comes to working with the acts that he books at Foxwoods. "Everyone has a dream. When you're a musician you dream of being famous and having your music heard all over the world. If I can help make even a little bit of that dream come true for them, that's a fun part of my job."

With a smile, Tom concludes, "Of course, I always tell the bands, 'If your drummer gets sick tonight, I'm ready!'"

## Paul Harris

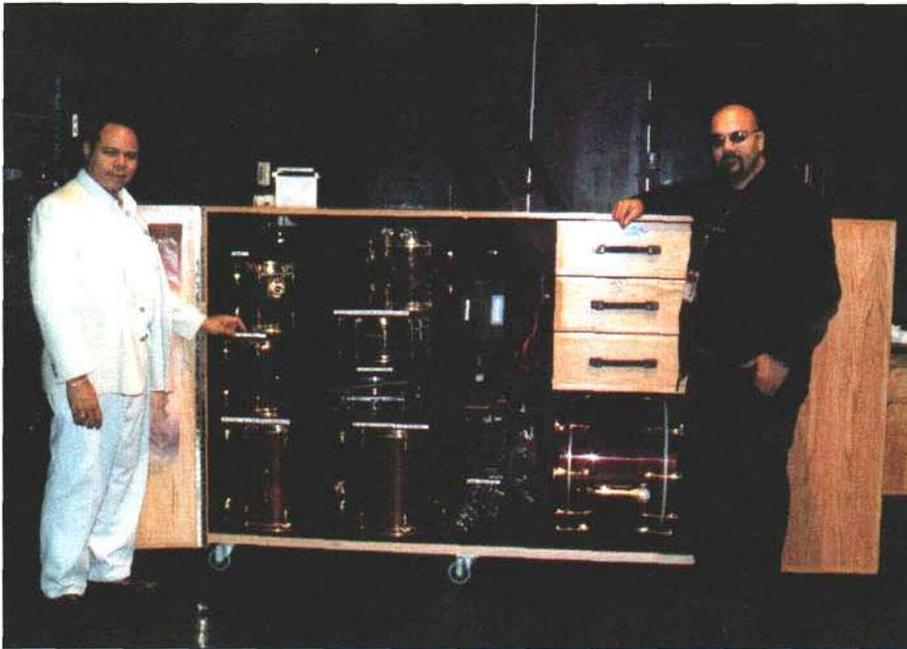
Executive assistant Paul Harris has a very personal—and somewhat ironic—connection to Foxwoods. Long before the casino existed, Paul lived in the area where it now stands on the Mashantucket Pequot Indian reservation. "I remember when there was nothing up here but a cedar swamp and poor people," says Paul. The reason I became a drummer was so I could leave this place and never come back. I went out on the road, playing seven nights a week for almost twenty years. At the age of forty-two I found myself sitting in a

hotel room, realizing that I had missed five Christmas days, many birthdays, and many Thanksgivings. I didn't have anything to show for it except hotel bills, drums, and a schedule for a year in advance. It finally hit me that I didn't want to end my life living out of a suitcase."

Paul was doing studio work in California when he got a letter from the Pequot tribe informing him that they were building a casino and asking him to come back to the reservation and get involved. He returned in 1992, at which point the entire operation was just a bingo hall—a single cement building, surrounded by a dirt parking lot. "The chief of the tribe was working as a ticket-taker at the door," says Paul, laughing. "We figured it would run a lot like a church bingo hall. But from the moment we opened, the doors never closed. We ran twenty-four hours a day. We were taking money out in brown paper bags—it was that crude!"

The tribe asked Paul to put together the fledgling "casino's" first entertainment, and gave him \$1,000 to rent a sound system. "We pushed bingo tables together to make a stage, and mounted a couple of outdoor floodlights on the ceiling for the lighting system," says Paul. "Kenny Rogers was our first 'showroom' act on this incredibly primitive setup—and we sold out! Kenny got \$10,000, and we made \$30,000. We thought, This is great! We can do this forever."

"But it hasn't taken forever," concludes Paul. "In only seven years, that 'crude' operation turned into the world's largest casino/hotel. I've gone from being a freelance road musician to being an executive for one of the finest entertainment programs in the world. And I still get to play from time to time, either sitting in with our groups or doing some outside projects. I was always able to make money with drums—giving lessons, working with a high school drumline, or playing local gigs. But I never thought I'd see this end of things. I count my blessings." ●



**Foxwoods provides drumkits for all its stages—including this custom kit used in the Fox Theater showroom. The kits are maintained by drum tech Mike Arata, shown here (at right) with executive assistant for entertainment Paul Harris.**

lounges: for different music to appeal to different audiences. In general, we're looking for top-quality players who can really 'entertain' in a classic sense. This isn't the place for introspective performers. You have to be able to play great music, and play it very well—and you also have to be able to sell it to the audience."

Because lounge bands at Foxwoods are usually local, they are not provided with rooms. However, life is made easier for drummers by the fact that each performance space is provided with at least one drumkit. "We deal with Pearl, Yamaha, and Ludwig for our equipment," says Paul. "We have some very expensive customized kits that we only use for the major shows, but the kits in the lounges are also high-quality and well-maintained. We have a complete drum storage and maintenance facility, presided over by a full-time drum tech."

Salaries for performers at Foxwoods are based on a number of factors, including the size of the group and whether or not the engagement is a return booking. Lounge

acts average around \$1,200 per three-night stand. Cinedrome acts and showroom stars make a good deal more, while major arena artists might earn \$80,000 to \$100,000 per night. "We pay a lot of money for entertainment," says Paul. "That's why it's so important that we *keep* the audience here after the show to participate in the gaming."

Paul has a particular identification with the drummers in Foxwoods' lounge acts. Before becoming executive assistant for entertainment, he worked at Foxwoods as a musician. "I started out drumming in the house band here," Paul recalls. "Things were a little stricter then. We worked six nights a week, and we could not mingle with the customers; we had to disappear on breaks. Rehearsals were mandatory, from three in the morning until six. The gig required shined shoes, pressed suits, and no smoking or drinking on stage. Those rules still apply, except for the mandatory rehearsals."

When the original bandleader left, Paul was asked to put together a group that

could open the main shows. "I knew all the top local players," he says. "I'd get them together in a room and we'd come up with a songlist. Then we'd go out and play a thirty-minute show—with no rehearsal. It always turned out great, so that helped me make an impression around here."

### **The Management Team**

Tom Cantone and Paul Harris are exceptions in the entertainment industry: management-level individuals who have backgrounds as musicians. How does this affect their perspective when it comes to handling the entertainment at Foxwoods?

"From my standpoint," says Tom, "it involves the ability to judge the marketability of the talent we bring in. Having an appreciation of what it is to perform gives me a better perspective on the quality of someone else's performance abilities. And frankly, when I watch an act perform, I generally focus on the drummer. Not only because I love playing drums, but because the drummer is always the driving force that provides the energy in any act. If the drummer isn't happening, the act isn't going to be happening. A lot of musicians today think that a crowd is supposed to instantaneously respect and admire them as soon as they walk on stage. Wrong. You have to earn it up there. The energy in the room is how I judge how good a performer is.

"We treat all of our musicians very well," Tom continues. "They're like family. We're nice people to work with. It's a business, of course, and we have rules like anyone else. But musicians can see when they get here that we do things right, in a first-class way."

Paul Harris keeps his personal experience in mind when dealing with incoming acts. "I know what it's like to have to pay your bills by performing," he says. "You want to do a good job and be asked to come back again. So I make a point to greet the groups and go over what's expected of them. I try to answer their questions and make them feel comfortable."

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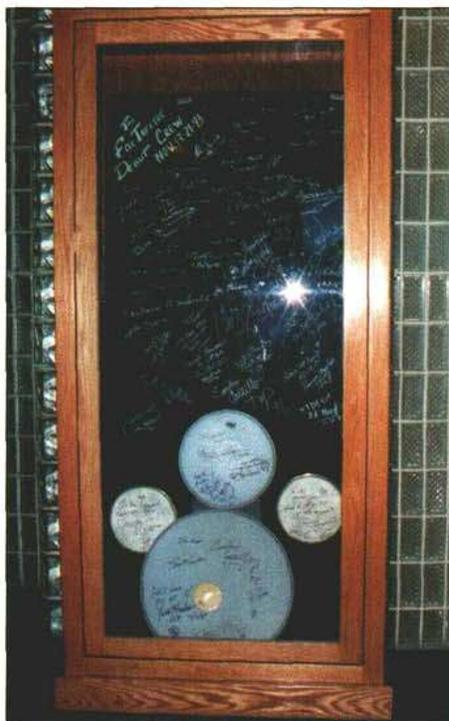
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Signing the stage door is a tradition among performers in Foxwoods' showroom. Several "filled-up" doors have been placed on display in front of the theater. The drumheads shown in this display have been signed by Clayton Cameron (with Tony Bennett) and Herman Matthews (with Tower Of Power), along with several other top musicians.

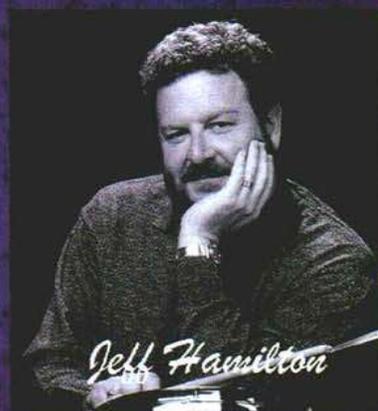
Another of Paul's duties involves the business aspect of performing at Foxwoods. "Musicians may have exceptional entertainment skills," he says, "but hand them a stack of papers to fill out and they're usually lost. There are certain things we must have—security clearances, insurance information, tax data—because we're a casino. So I help the musicians with their paperwork. As a result, the word has spread among the local musical community that there is a guy at Foxwoods who will show them how to take care of things. People ask me why I do this, since I'm at the executive level. I do it because—again—I know what it's like."

### Getting There

If you're interested in performing at Foxwoods—and working for two of the most unusual guys in entertainment management—here's how to start: Send a complete bio package on your group, including photos, demo tape, and contact information, to: Foxwoods Entertainment Group, Rt. 2, PO Box 410, Mashantucket, CT 06339-3199, or call (860) 312-4665.



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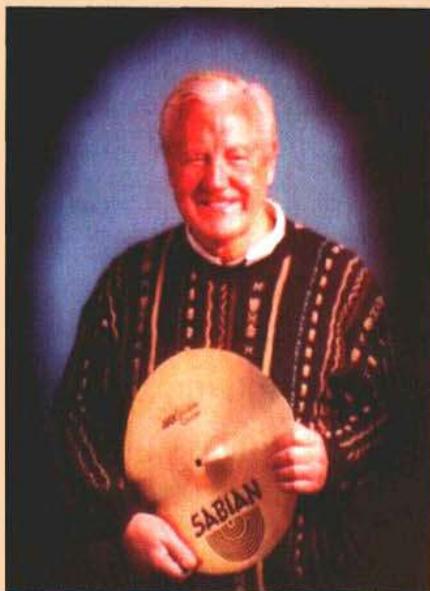
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## In Memoriam

### Al Miller



Al Miller (born Alfred Milmerstadt) of Plainview, New York passed away on January 4, 2000 at the age of seventy-three, as the result of a stroke. Al was known nationally as an educator and author. And within the New York region, he was revered as a teacher and mentor to the entire drumming community.

Al started his music career early. At the age of fourteen he won the title of "New York State Individual Snare Drum Champion." During World War II Al served as percussionist and teacher with the Official Air Force Band at Boiling Field, in Washington, DC. After the war he recorded with Enric Madriguera and toured South America with Madriguera, Xavier Cugat, and Cab Calloway.

Al married in the early 1950s, settled in Long Island, and continued with what he loved: teaching. At his teaching studio in his home he taught literally hundreds of aspiring drummers. Among Al's former students are such renowned names as Liberty DeVitto, Rod Morgenstein, Tom Brechtlein, and Dom Famularo. He also wrote and published six drum books.

Al was also a fine performer who for years led his own eighteen-piece big band. The band played throughout New York State, but was best noted for opening for Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson on "Big Band Night" at the Hofstra Playhouse in 1983.

Buddy Rich was a personal friend of Al, and visited him many times in Plainview. When Buddy died in 1987, Al assisted in setting up the first Buddy Rich Memorial Concert at the Westbury Music Fair in Westbury, New York. There he performed with The Buddy Rich Orchestra, on a roster that also featured Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Gadd, Dave Weckl, Gregg Bissonette, Louie Bellson, Jim Chapin, Dom Famularo, and Joe Morello.

When Al was laid to rest on January 8, Dom Famularo said, "If Al had been a poet, we would have been students of poetry and would now read one of his poems. If Al had been a singer, we would have been voice students and would now sing one of his songs. Al was a drummer, and we were his students—so we will play an excerpt from one of his books." Dom started this percussive tribute with a military march, followed by a press roll—at which point John Favicchia, Mike Abbate, and Frank Bellucci played a page of drum music written by Al. Following the climax of the piece, the playing reduced to a press roll that slowly faded out. It was a very moving memorial for "the greatest teacher on the East Coast!"

We will miss you Al.

**Phil Gress**  
(Al's student since 1973)

### Gus Johnson

Gus Johnson, a drummer who drove some of the biggest names in swing, died Sunday, February 6 in Westminster, Colorado. He was eighty-six.

Johnson's drumming became part of the influential Kansas City sound in 1938, when he joined up with Jay McShann's ensemble, which also included saxophonist Charlie Parker. Johnson was a member of such influential swing orchestras as those of Count Basie, Duke Ellington, and Woody Herman. He also kept the beat for such top-flight vocalists as Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, and Lena Home, as well as saxophonists from Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young to Gerry Mulligan and John Coltrane.

Gus Johnson Jr. was born November 15, 1913 in Tyler, Texas, where he distinguished himself as a child prodigy on piano, bass, and drums. His professional career started in Houston at age nine. After graduating high school, Johnson started working in Kansas City and touring the Midwest in various ensembles, including The Four Rhythm Aces, Lloyd Hunter, and Ernest Redd. His tenure with the McShann band was interrupted by military service during World War II.

After a return engagement with McShann, plus stints with Eddie Vinson, Earl Hines, and Cootie Williams, Johnson played with the Count Basie orchestra in the early 1950s. During the late '50s and '60s, Johnson backed a variety of jazz greats, including Johnny Hodges, Mose Allison, and Buck Clayton. In 1969 he joined Dixieland revivalists The World's Greatest Jazz Band, with whom he remained until 1974. Johnson moved to Colorado in his later years, where he sometimes performed with Peanuts Hucko and Ralph Sutton, and was a regular at Dick Gibson's celebrated annual Colorado jazz parties. Johnson's performances were curtailed in the 1990s as he battled Alzheimer's disease.

**Drew Wheeler**

# Indy Quickies

**Jackie Houlden**, well known within the percussion industry as leader of The Drums Of Black Bottle (the Scottish drum troupe that wowed the *MD* Festival some years back), has been appointed to the position of international sales supervisor for **Sabian Cymbals**. Working from Glasgow, Jackie will be instrumental in managing Sabian's sales activities across the UK and continental Europe.

**Pro-Mark** has been named as exclusive drumstick supplier for National Guitar Workshop's "Dayjams" Summer Camp program. The camps are offered in several cities each summer to kids between the ages of ten and fifteen. Each enrolled youngster is given lessons on guitar, bass, keyboard, drums, or vocals. They are then placed into bands, based on age and level of experience. By the end of the camp, each band has cut a CD, designed the cover art, and performed "in concert." For more information on the program, contact Pro-Mark at (800) 233-5250, [www.promark.stix.com](http://www.promark.stix.com).

**Spaun Drum Company** has moved to a new, larger facility. The company can now be contacted at 425 W. Allen Ave. #101, San Dimas, CA 91773, tel: (909) 971-7761, fax: (909) 971-7441, [www.spaundrums.com](http://www.spaundrums.com).

The winner of Guitar Center's 1999 national drum-off is **Deon Muccular**. A fifteen-year-old from Richmond, California, Deon has been playing for nine years. Citing Dennis Chambers, Tony Williams, Vinnie Colaiuta, and Dave Weckl as influences, Deon bested over 2,000 drummers nationwide, taking home a 1999 Yamaha motorcycle as his prize.

Wide Ass Seats, formerly made by Mastertek, are now produced by **Soundseat**. The new manufacturer promises the same product

and quality. Soundseat, 109 Allen Ln., Salisbury, NC 28146, tel: (704) 636-3560, [www.soundseat.com](http://www.soundseat.com).

# Web Bytes

Zildjian's newly revamped Web site, [www.zildjian.com](http://www.zildjian.com), is packed with artist news and product information, with state-of-the-art graphics and features. The site is intended to keep drummers up-to-date on Zildjian cymbals, sticks, players, programs, and news. According to the company, the site will be updated on an almost daily basis to keep it current and topical at all times.

*Busy Musician* is a free Web-based magazine for working musicians. Now online at [www.busymusician.com](http://www.busymusician.com), it provides musicians

## QUICK BEATS: BUDDY WILLIAMS (ORIGINAL SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, GEORGE BENSON, SESSION GREAT)

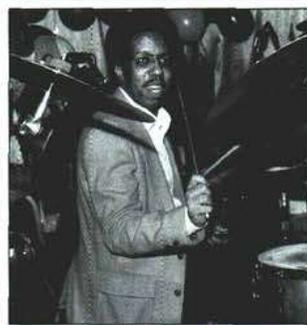
### 1) What's in your CD player at the moment?

Kenny Kirkland, The Artist, and Mint Condition's new record.

### 2) When you were in the *Saturday Night Live* band and backing many of the musical artists that came on, which were most memorable?

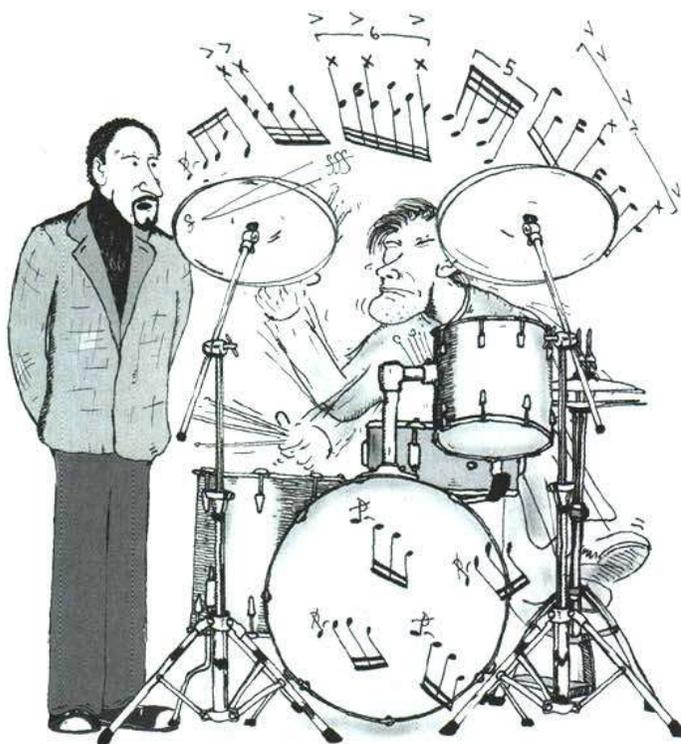
That's hard to say. We had to play for everybody! We backed up stars like Aretha Franklin, Linda Ronstadt, Olivia Newton-John, Steve Martin, Chevy Chase, Eddie Murphy, and John Belushi & Dan Aykroyd.

That band was great. It featured David Sanborn, Marcus Miller, Paul Shaffer, Tom "Bones" Malone, Lou Marini, Howard Johnson, Allen "Mr Fabulous"



Rubin, David Spinozza, and many more. It was one of the best bands ever, and it was a great time in my life.

## DRUM KICKS



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with business tips and professional development advice to help them build successful careers. Included with the magazine is a searchable database of music-related jobs and a discussion list that allows musicians to network via email.

## Endorser News

Medicine Man Custom Drums are now endorsed by **W. Mylious Johnson** (98 Degrees), **Jan Roll** (Mike Albert & The Big E Band), **Jimmie Elliot** (Upper Cut), and **Bob Stocker** (American Grease Variety Show).

**Roy "Futureman" Wooten** (Bela Fleck & The Flecktones) and **J.D. Blair** (Shania Twain) are using cases from Santee Case Co.

New GMS Drums artists include **Scott Neumann** (Broadway's *Swing*) and **Sterling Campbell** (David Bowie).

## QUICK BEATS: J.D. BLAIR (SHANIA TWAIN, VICTOR WOOTEN, TAKE 6, LYLE LOVETT)

### 1) What's your favorite recorded groove?

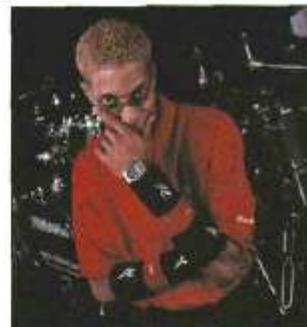
It's a tuffy to pick just one. I guess I'd have to say James Brown's "Talkin' Loud & Sayin' Nothing." The drummer on it is John "Jabo" Starks.

### 2) Who are some of your influences?

Clyde Stubblefield, Jabo Starks, Jerome Brailey, Alan Dawson, Art Blakey, Steve Ferrone, Billy Cobham, Alex Acuna, Peter Erskine, Jim Keltner, Phil Gould, Stewart Copeland, and Steve Jordan.

### 3) What ride cymbal are you using at the moment?

I just did a session where I used a Paiste Visions 22" Power Ride. It slammed. My favorite ride, though, is my 18" Paiste Sizzler. The volume of the gig will always determine which one I use. (I've been checking out the new Paiste Dimensions series rides and hope to use one on my



solo CD.)

### 4) Do you warm up before gigs?

For a Victor Wooten gig, I warm up my hands. For Shania Twain's gig I jog to get my body warmed up. I also do the mental thing and try thinking drums when I'm not able to get to a kit.

## Taking The Stage

### Festivals, Upcoming Drum Clinics, Concerts, and Events

#### Amores Percussion Group

5/22-28 — Performance, Sao Paolo, Brazil. For info contact Web site, personal6.iddeo.es/ret008eo.

#### Ignacio Berroa

5/29 — Atlanta Jazz Festival, Atlanta, GA.  
6/23 — Waterplace Park, Providence, RI  
7/12-13 — Lugano Jazz Festival, Lugano, Switzerland.  
7/22 — Verbier Jazz Festival, Verbier, Switzerland.  
7/29 — Centrum Jazz Festival, Port Townsend, Washington.  
7/31 — Kumbwa Jazz Center, Santa Cruz, CA.  
8/1-6 — Yoshi's, Oakland, CA.  
10/13-14 — Kaplan Penthouse, with guest Joe Lovano, New York, NY.  
10/26 — Kennedy Center, Washington, DC.  
10/27-28 — Hampton Arts Center, Hampton, VA. For all shows contact Janet Williamson, (323) 663-4447.

#### Drums & Sounds 2000

4/22-23 — Drum Festival by Drums Only Germany, Featuring The Dave Weckl Band, Vinnie Colaiuta and Band, Simon Phillips and Band, Will Calhoun with Doug Wimbish, Horacio Hernandez, Curt Bisquera, Abe Laboriel Jr. and special guest Joe Porcaro. Contact (49) 261-83011 or www.drumsonly.de.

#### Ethos Percussion Group

5/2 — Washington Square Church, New York, NY, (718) 661-3334.  
5/12 — Cumberland County College, Vineland, NJ, (609) 691-8600.

#### Georgia Day Of Percussion

4/29 — Georgia Tech University, Atlanta, GA, contact David Starnes (770)509-6081.

#### Evelyn Glennie

4/19 — Concert, Santa Barbara, CA  
4/22-24 — Recital and master class, Herbst Hall, San Francisco, CA. Contact S.F. Box Office, (415) 398-6449.  
4/27-28 — Concert with The Calgary Symphony Orchestra, Calgary, Canada.

#### Hollyhock Percussion Workshop

7/19-24 — Afro-Cuban Percussion featuring Armando Peraza & Trevor Salloum. Co-sponsored by LP Music Group, Cortes Island, Vancouver, BC. Contact Hollyhock, (800) 933-6339 or www.hollyhock.bc.ca/maio.html.

#### Steve Houghton

5/7-8 — Spokane Symphony, with Maureen McGovern, Spokane, WA.  
5/12-13 — with Maureen McGovern, Bartlesville, OK.  
5/16-21 — Musicfest Canada, York University, Toronto, ON.

#### Interactive Music Expo

10/3-4 — Keynote/Conference, Exhibits, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA. For info & registration call (203) 256-5759 or surf to www.imusicxpo.com.

#### KoSA 2000 Drum & Percussion Camp

7/31-8/6 — Castleton State College, Castleton, Vermont. The fifth-edition workshop will feature Steve Smith,

Glen Velez, Dom Famularo, Aldo Mazza, Marco Lienhard, Gordon Gottlieb, George Gaber, Paul Picard, Giovanni Hidalgo, Repercussion, Efrain Toro, Frank Belucci, Walfredo Reyes Jr., Adam Nussbaum, Rick Gratton, Johnny Rabb, Charlie Adams, Rick Van Horn, and Leigh Stevens. KoSA is a hands-on intensive percussion camp that covers a diverse range of styles of drumming, including rock, jazz, Latin, funk, classical percussion, Brazilian, Arabic frame drumming, electronic/MIDI percussion, Afro Caribbean rhythms, Japanese Taiko drumming, solo marimba, timpani, snare drum, and percussion ensemble. For more information, contact Aldo Mazza, (800) 540-9030, or email kosa@istar.ca., Web: www.kosamusic.com.

#### Nashville Percussion Institute/MD Percussion Extravaganza

7/22 — Sixth annual event, featuring an all-star roundtable, percussion session, and closing featured artist. Hosted by *Modern Drummer* senior editor Rick Van Horn. Barnett Theater at NPI, Nashville, TN. Call (615) 340-0085 or surf to www.npi.homepage.com.

#### Oklahoma Days Of Percussion

4/21-22 — Lawton, OK, contact Dr. Jim Lambert, (580) 581-2807.

#### PERCUBA 2000

4/18-22 — International Festival Of Percussion, Havana City, Cuba, contact percuba@mail.com.

#### Pro-Mark Online Chats

www.promark-stix.com  
5/16 — Dave Lombardo  
6/20 — Herman Matthews  
7/20 — Steve Ferrone

#### Puerto Rico International Percussion Festival

4/26-28 — Conservatory, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, contact Jose Alicea, (787)763-1950.

#### Skidmore Jazz Institute

6/24 - 7/8 — Two-week intensive workshop for jazz students of all ages. Guest artist & master classes featuring Ed Shaughnessy. Contact Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, (518) 580-5590 or www.skidmore.edu/administration/osp

#### Stanford Jazz Workshop & Festival

6/24 - 7/5 — 2000 Festival and Camp. Featuring Billy Higgins, Tootie Heath, Ndugu Chancler. Louie Bellson and more. Contact (650) 856-4155 or email info@stanfordjazz.org.

#### Vintage & Custom Drum Show

5/20-21 — Dealers buying, selling, and trading. Exhibits, giveaways, and more. Kane County Fairgrounds, St. Charles, IL. Contact Rob Cook, (517) 463-4757 or email rebeats@rebeats.com.



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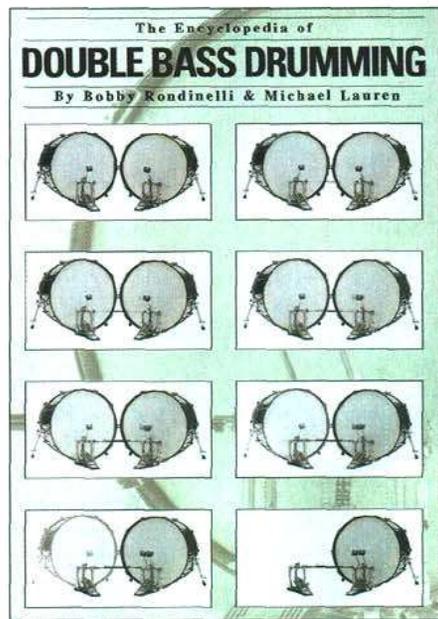
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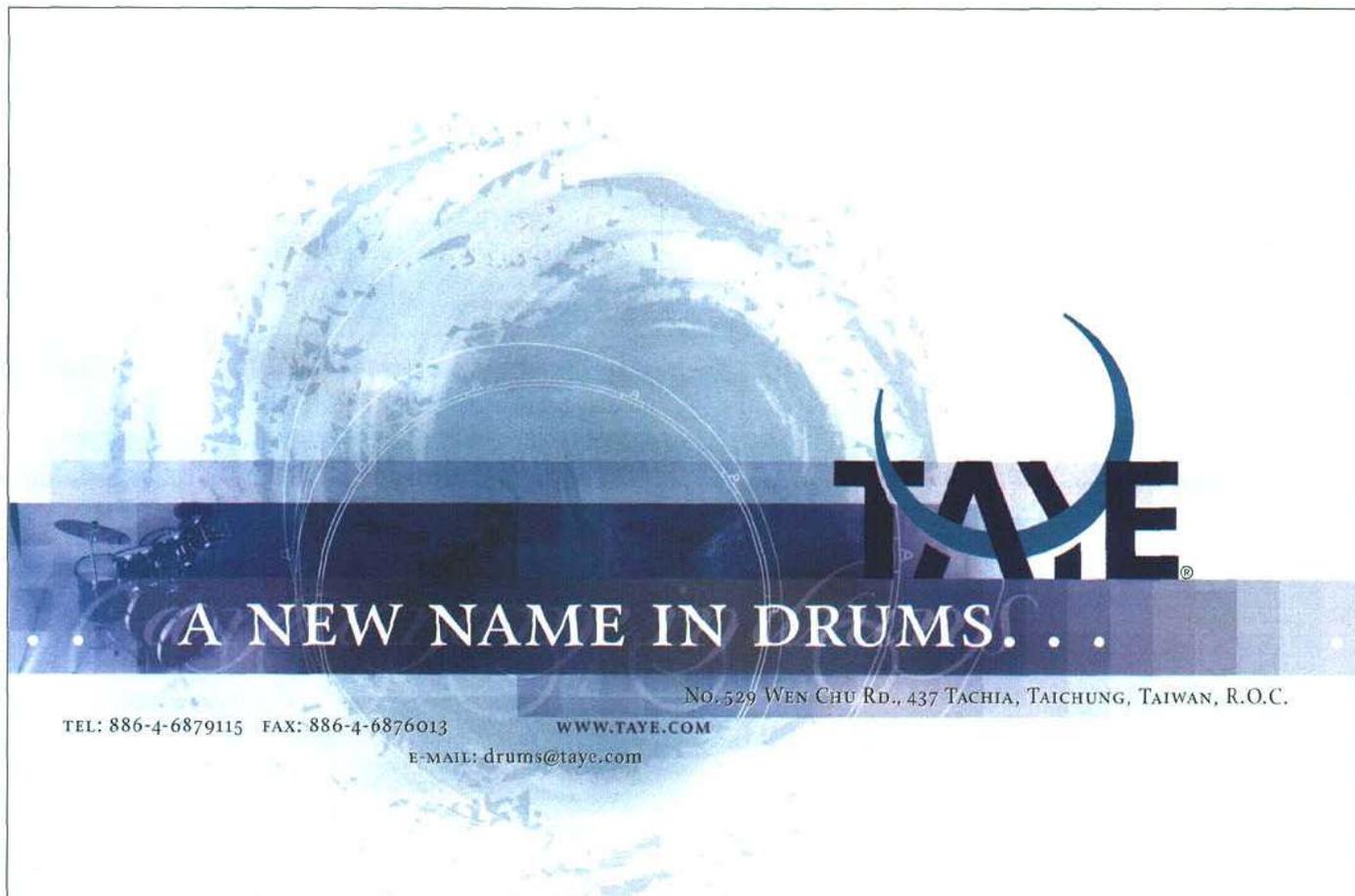
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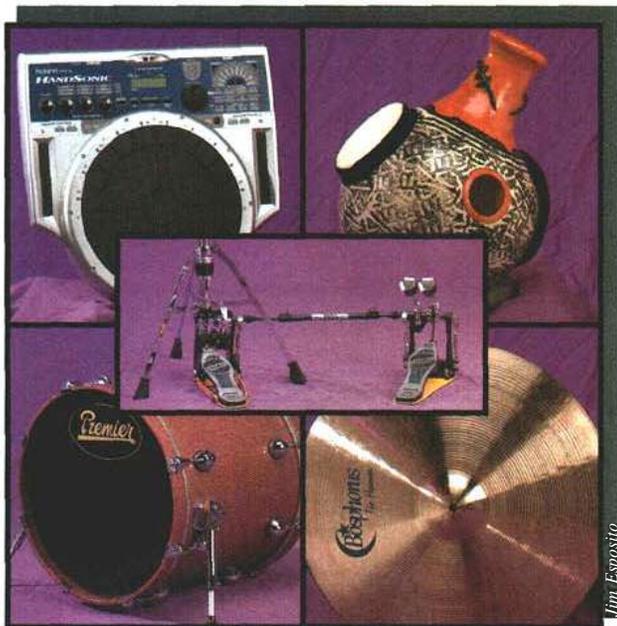
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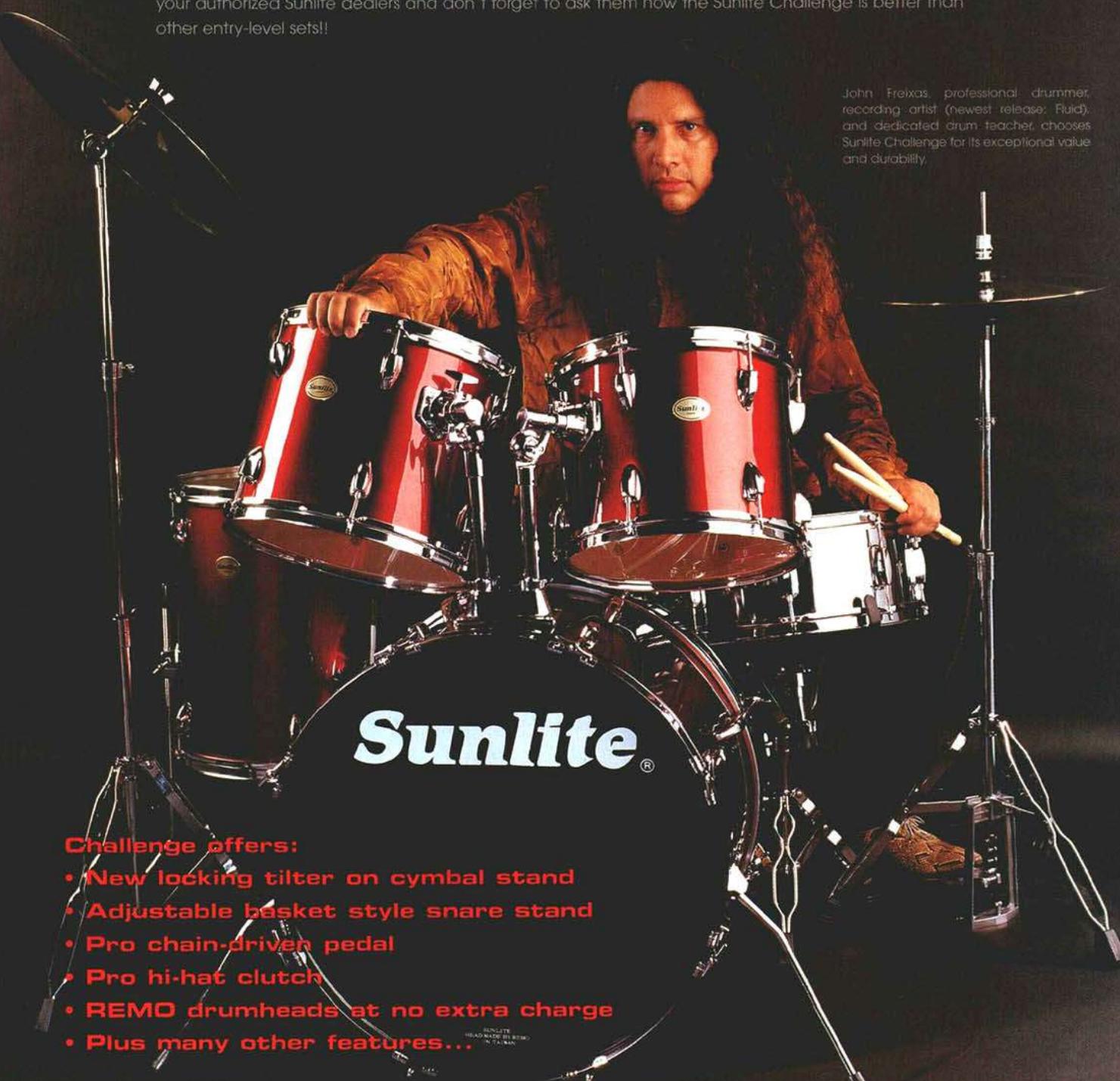
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# drumkit of the month

Eighteen-year-old Aaron Bingham of San Jose, California wanted three things from his drumkit. First, he wanted *big* drums. Second, he wanted a compact setup. Third, he wanted the kit to look unique.

The big drums weren't a problem. Aaron

found a used DW kit, with 14x14, 16x16, and 16x18 toms and a 20x28 bass drum. (Aaron thanks his dad for driving him down to LA and back in one day to pick up the drums.) His snare is a classic 5 1/2x14 Rogers brass Dyna-Sonic. Five Remo RotoToms are usually on the set as well,

but Aaron removed them for the purpose of photo clarity for this article.

Getting a unique look wasn't a problem, either. Aaron's uncle, Mike Bingham, added custom "flames" over the original sparkled lacquer finish to create what Aaron calls "a wild paint job that everybody loves."

Creating a compact setup with such large drums *might* have been a problem. "Because my bass drum is so big," says Aaron, "if it were on the right as usual, I would have to have a gap between my toms. I didn't want that, so I decided to go with the Remote Kick Konzept described by Dave Indigo in the August 1995 *MD*. This setup allows me to keep the big sound within a compact space for fast tom work." The Konzept involves putting a single bass drum to the left, next to the hi-hat (as in a double-bass setup), and playing it by means of a left-handed double pedal.

Aaron's cymbals are Paiste Signature 14" heavy hi-hats, 16" and 18" Power crashes, a 12" splash, and a 21" Dry heavy ride, as well as an 18" Sabian Carmine Appice China. He also uses an LP Ridge Rider cowbell and a high Jam Block. The kit is mounted on a Pearl ICON rack.



## PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. S. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.



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