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FEATURES

ALEX ACUNA

As percussionist and drummer with Weather Report, with his own band, Koinonia, and through a career as the first-call studio percussionist, Alex Acuna has added his talents to an incredible body of music. In this exclusive interview, Alex discusses his unique place in music, and in a special Sidebar, shares his insights on Latin rhythms.

• by Robyn Flans

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ERIC SINGER

A hard rock specialist if ever there was one, Eric Singer has played with some of the heaviest of the heavies: Black Sabbath, Badlands, Gary Moore, and now Alice Cooper. So how come Singer says he could just have easily ended up playing big band music?

• by Teri Saccone

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DRUMMING: How Risky Is It To Your Hearing?

Without the right protection, and over a period of time—some say it could be *quite* risky. In this special report, top drummers chip away at the stigma surrounding hearing problems, and experts in the field explain what you can do to avoid this very real malady.

• by Peter Cohen

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THE DRUMMERS OF NEW ORLEANS

Major record companies might not be flocking to New Orleans these days, but that doesn't keep the Crescent City from still being one of the most potent wellsprings of music on the globe. MD tracked down four of the city's hottest drummers—the Neville Brothers' Willie Green, the Radiators' Frank Bua, and freelancers Herman Ernest and Johnny Vidacovich—to get the insider's view.

• by Robert Santelli

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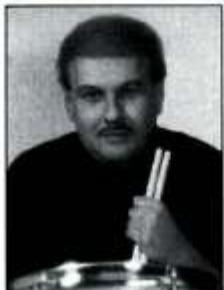
Kevin Haskins

BY TERI SACCONI

EDITOR'S OVERVIEW



An Occupational Hazard



Hearing loss. Auditory nerve damage. Tinnitus. Lately it seems we're hearing more and more about these problems and their relation to drumming and high volume music. Drummers Joey Kramer, Lars Ulrich, Jimmy Copley, and Rod Morgenstein are just a few of many who've reported either some hearing loss, or the onset of tinnitus.

Basically, nerve damage indicates that a portion of one's delicate hearing mechanism has been abused to the point where some degree of hearing loss occurs. Tinnitus is the medical term for a continuous ringing in the ears. It can range from a moderately high-pitched squeal, to a downright roar for those with severe cases.

I used to think that hearing damage induced by high-volume music was a potential danger just for rock drummers performing under incredibly high decibel conditions. I was wrong. Even the typical club band that cranks it up beyond the comfort level late in the evening can be loud enough to cause problems in time. My own case of tinnitus was not so much the result of playing under extremely loud conditions as it was a case of moderately high volume—night after night—over an extended period of time. We now know that too many years in a few *too many* relatively loud situations can be just as much of a threat. Unfortunately, there isn't much you can do about hearing damage *after* it occurs. You simply learn to live with it, which can be somewhat difficult for a musician.

It's not our purpose here to unduly frighten anyone who's ever picked up a drumstick or performed with a band. It's quite true that some of us may be more genetically prone to auditory problems. And we know that drumming and high volume music aren't the *only* things that can cause hearing damage. But there's no denying the fact that whether on the concert stage or club bandstand, surrounded by high-powered sound systems, on an instrument with potentially dangerous frequencies itself, we drummers certainly *do* fall into the high-risk category.

This month we're presenting an article by drummer/author Peter Cohen entitled "Drumming: How Risky Is It To Your Hearing?" In it you'll learn just how hearing damage occurs, and about the warning signs that may indicate you're in the danger zone. You'll also hear from several name players who are experiencing hearing problems, and others—now aware of the risks involved—who are taking the necessary precautions. Finally, we'll examine just what's being done in the area of hearing protection. And we'll look at some of the devices available from companies that are continually at work designing and improving hearing protection for musicians.

We hope you'll take a moment to think about the information offered here. Hearing damage is a potential occupational hazard we all face, and a problem too serious to ignore. But fortunately, it's one of those problems we can do something *about*.

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READERS' PLATFORM



Rod Morgenstein

It's refreshing to find out that not every superstar of drumming got where he is in a cakewalk! I feel a lot closer to Rod Morgenstein knowing that he went through some scuffling before he got his current high-profile gig, despite his awesome talent. I've had one or two humbling experiences such as Rod went through with Zeno; I only hope that I came out of mine with the same positive attitude that Rod maintained throughout his. Rick Mattingly's interview with Rod really revealed a lot of what the rock music business is all about, and left me with an even greater admiration for Rod than I already had. Thanks for the good work.

Bill Wheeler
Schenectady NY

Yea, Rod! A real drummer talks about real problems in the real musical world! Rod is no overnight sensation or hype-star; he's an honest-to-God drum virtuoso who's proven himself in a wide variety of styles. And yet he had to go through the same trials and tribulations that we mere mortals have to face before he could hit the "big time" with Winger. Man, can I relate! I also dug Rod's comments regarding endorsements; they have to work both ways—for the artists and for the companies. I'm not quite to that point yet, but I hope to be someday, and I'm sure going to keep Rod's comments in mind. I wish Rod even greater success with Winger (or whatever project he does), and I say thanks to *MD* for a great interview!

Terry Templeton
Boise ID

Andy Narell

As usual, just when I'm starting to think that *MD* has lost track of non-drumset percussion playing, along comes a great story like Robin Tolleson's interview with

Andy Narell. I've always loved steel drums and admired the musicians who made such lovely music on such unlikely instruments. But I never realized the range of music that could be performed on the pans; I've always figured them for just the calypso kind of thing. On the strength of your story on Andy, I bought his *Little Secrets* album, and was simply blown away! Thanks for the revelation.

Anthony Quilato
Portland OR

The Clone Syndrome

Bravo to Mr. Spagnardi for his *Editor's Overview* in the June *MD* entitled "The Clone Syndrome." Developing a musical identity is almost unheard of these days because of power toms and power heads and super double bass drums, etc. I only hope that individuals will listen to many different drummers and *types of music*, so that their public performances are remembered. Hail to all thinking drummers!

Tim Harte
Springfield IL

might be able to help me with a copy. If so, please contact me at the address shown below. Thanks!

Bob Marken
6319 11th St., ct.e.
Bradenton FL 34203

Exhaustive Practicing

My husband, Carl, is always telling people how much he practices. One day I came home from shopping and caught him "practicing" on the patio. I just had to take a photo and send it to you.



MA. (Mrs. Carl) Palmer
Tenerife, Canary Islands

Seeking Music

I have been enjoying your publication for about five years now. I started playing the drums in junior high school (some 20 years ago), and now I have a son taking drum lessons in high school.

I would very much like to have a copy of a drum/piano duet I performed at a Florida State contest during my senior year in high school, entitled "Sonata For Snare Drum And Piano." It was published by M.M. Cole Publishing Co., and is currently out of print. I've made many calls to my old band director in Florida, as well as to the percussion director of the University of South Florida. Although they were aware of the piece, they had no copies. Perhaps an *MD* reader out there

Note From Norway

I just have to thank you and tell you how much *MD* helps me with my drumming career. I read through it over and over again, learning new things from each issue. I am especially glad for the *Concepts* articles; they are really good. And not only drummers read *MD*; the rest of my band and other students also find your magazine quite interesting. Continue making such a good magazine so that drummers all over the world will be well-informed and stay up-to-date.

Helge Tjelfla
Gimsa, Norway

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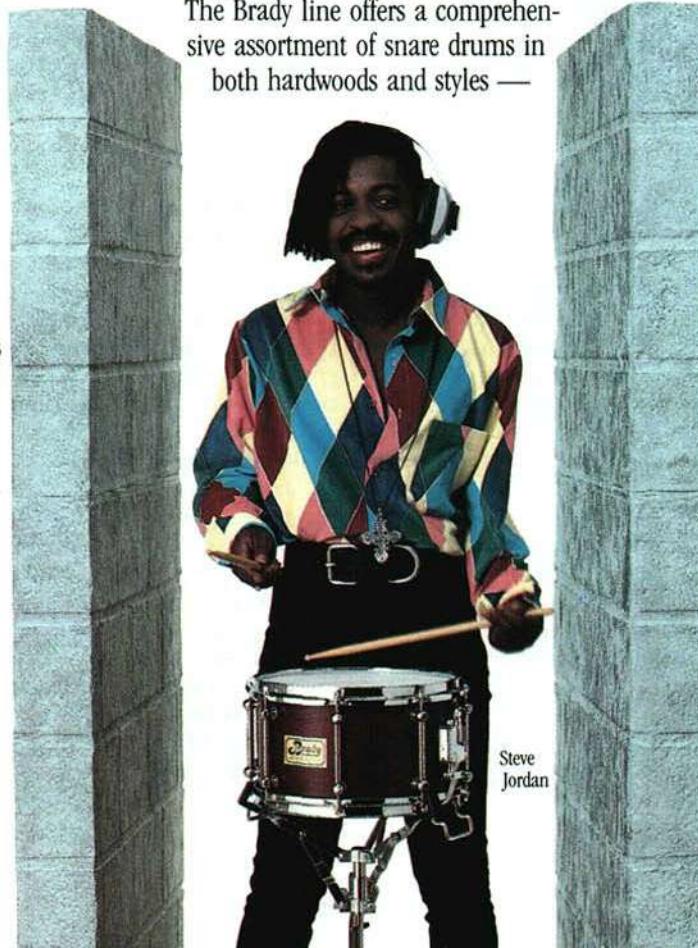
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UPDATE



Lenny White

It seems that over the past few years Lenny White has dropped out of sight. Sure, he's shown up on a few album projects here and there, but more and more it's been in the role of producer than drummer. For many fans of '70s progressive music, Lenny was one of the *heaviest* drummers, and we've all been waiting for him to get back into the limelight. Well, it looks



like Lenny is having a bit of a comeback.

On the "popular" front, Lenny recently played, programmed, and co-produced an album with a group he co-founded with producer/bassist Marcus Miller, the Jamaica Boys. On *J Boys*, their second effort on Reprise Records, Lenny puts on his pop-drummer hat. "Playing the Jamaica Boys material," according to Lenny, "is fun because it's very pop and funk oriented.

Playing this type of music is more challenging for me than playing a jazz record, because in jazz you're constantly improvising. With this, it's kind of like having musical handcuffs on, but in a good sense."

Fans of Lenny's late '70s band might recall that Marcus Miller got his start with

him. "Marcus played with me when he was 16. He's gone on to huge success, and I'm happy for him. We've worked together on and off over the years, including scoring the music for the movie *House Party*. But now we're looking forward to taking this new material out and making it happen live."

Lenny got a chance to put on his playing hat for a new project he put together for Blue Note records called the *Manhattan Project*. For this venture, Lenny lined up some big name players from his past to cover some new musical territory. "I recruited Wayne Shorter, Stanley Clarke, Gil Goldstein, Pete Levin, and Michel Petrucciani," says an enthused Lenny. "We all got together and rehearsed for one day, and then cut the record live the next. Half the record is acoustic, straight-ahead stuff, and the second half is a bit more electronic." A video was shot of the performance as well, which will be released soon.

Lenny also has a drum instruction book about to be published. "I've been putting this book together for about three years now with a good friend of mine, Frank Marino. He's a great teacher and player, as well as a writer. When putting our book together, we looked at a lot of the other drum books out, and just developed a system that covers things that the other books weren't covering. It's a rhythm method book that could be helpful to any musician."

Finally, there's a chance we might be seeing a Lenny White solo album some time in the future. "I really am hoping to do one," says Lenny. "I'm getting back into my instrument, and I want to have a vehicle to express myself. I mean, I have the Jamaica Boys and I did the Manhattan Project, which are pretty diverse musically, but I want to have a vehicle that shows where I am now. I want to have that outlet."

• **William F. Miller**

Walfredo de los Reyes, Sr.

Walfredo de los Reyes, Sr. has enjoyed a steady position playing percussion with Wayne Newton for the past 17 years. While it has kept this renowned Latin player out of circulation, he says he has appreciated the security of the job, as well as the musical freedom he has.

"Wayne has a lot of music, and he doesn't do the same show every night, so it requires a lot of understanding of him and knowing him," Walfredo explains. "The harder tunes might be a lot of reading, mallet playing, and

timpani, besides the Latin percussion. Contrary to what a lot of people think, he does not do one style. He even has a book full of big band tunes. We have to have that book ready and memorize about 25 tunes. And then sometimes we'll rehearse for three hours, and he'll come in at night and won't do anything we rehearsed.

"When it's jazz and funk I go into my Latin percussion with my Cuban ideas—three congas, timbales, *Octapads*, and all the electronic stuff. He and his conductor, Don Vincent, give me freedom to do whatever I want, so for me it has been a fun job. Also, I know the show on drums, so

there have been times when the drummer couldn't make the show and I've sat on the set and played it."

Since his move to San Francisco, Walfredo has been enjoying some musical activities other than the Newton gig. "Before the big earthquake, they put on the History of Afro-Cuban Sound, which featured all the top Latin players like Carlos Santana and Chocolate, and I got to be featured on drums. Then in May, it was my second year doing the jazz festival in Las Vegas. We opened it with a group, and they want me to do it next year in the big concert hall. I usually use my son Danny, who is fabulous on percus-

sion. I would really like to try to get this group going," he says, adding that he's been enjoying doing clinics as well.

In 1957 Reyes played on an album called *Cuban Jazz*, which has been a collector's item, but which is coming out soon on CD. "My son Walfredo, Jr. got the record for me in France when he was over there with Santana, and he said it is very popular there," the senior Reyes happily informs us.

And speaking of Carlos Santana, he and Reyes, Sr. have talked about doing some things together in the future as well.

• **Robyn Flans**

Tommy Goss

Up & coming New York rock drummer Tommy Goss calls his recent tour with Jack



Tommy Goss (left) with Ginger Baker.

Bruce and Ginger Baker "one total learning experience that drummers only dream about." An apt description, considering Goss had the opportunity to play behind Bruce with Baker in the wings, and then watch Baker perform with Bruce during the show's second set.

"There was so much to learn," Goss continues. "Ginger's a master drummer, and for more than two months I got to study him and listen to him and ask all kinds of questions. It was like going to drum college."

Goss got the gig with Bruce and Baker in a roundabout way. Just prior to tour rehearsals, Baker had an appendectomy. Bruce needed a fill-in for Baker while he was in the hospital. Goss got the job. "I had a week to learn all the songs off Bruce's latest solo album (*A Question Of Time*, on Epic), plus all the old Cream classics," Goss recalls. "I kept at it day and night and was able to help the band during rehearsals, which

I felt real good about."

But after the tour's opening night, Bruce didn't feel so good about Baker's drumming behind the songs off *A Question Of Time*. The next day Goss got a call from Bruce. "Jack wanted me to join the tour and play the first set, which consisted of his new stuff, while Baker played the second set, which was basically a Cream set. I jumped at the chance to go on the road with these guys."

It took some time, however, before Goss struck up a relationship with Baker. "The first month was pretty rough," says Goss. "But once Ginger realized I wasn't a threat to him, he really warmed up to me. When I played, I made sure it was very much to the point. Everybody was waiting to hear Ginger play—including me—so I just did my job. I think Ginger appreciated that, because he started to teach me a lot of new things."

Before going on tour with Bruce and Baker, Goss was busy leading his own New York band, the Warm Jets. But that project has taken a back seat to his inclusion in the Bruce-Baker band and a current tour with friend Richard Barone.

"I'm hoping to finish up with Richard and then, hopefully, go with Jack to Europe if a tour comes together," says Goss. "Even if it doesn't, I've got all these great memories and plenty of new things to work out on drums, thanks to Ginger."

• **Robert Santelli**

Billy Carmassi

Billy Carmassi is thrilled to be a member of Tony MacAlpine's band. In August of 1989, MacAlpine's producer, Steve Fontana, called Billy to do three tracks for the new album, *Eyes Of The World*. He had two weeks on his own to learn the initial three tunes, and the work he did with them must have paid off, because they were able to cut all three in a day.

"The way I work on something is I'll listen to it about ten times through, and bring a tape of it with me everywhere I go. Then after listening, I start playing on pads with the intro. I program it into a machine, and then practice it by myself with just the program. I try to memorize it so I can play the drum part without listening to the music. When I got into the studio with them, I knew the stuff backwards and forwards. I really wanted to make a good showing on this because I really respect Tony as a musician, and I was honored that they even asked me to play on this."

After the initial recording session, however, Billy was called the next afternoon to do the remaining five tracks,

for which he only had 45 minutes with each song. "They were on a tight schedule. While they were setting up for a song, I'd go into the tape room and jam and try to learn the song the best I could in an hour. The producer was very, very patient and really gave me as much time as I needed, but it was a real under-the-gun thing."

The challenge about the upcoming live situation is that Billy will have to play selections from MacAlpine's first two instrumental albums as well. "I've been having to learn double-kick stuff, which has been real interesting. When I first heard it, I thought, 'What am I going to do? I've never played double kick.' Deen Castronovo plays on the last record, and he's a killer player, so I was listening to it and thinking, 'How am I going to play this?' I started from the ground up, trying to get the fundamentals down so that I'd have the capacity to do double-bass things. After three months, I'm finally getting to the point where I can listen to it and think, 'Oh, that's what he did, that's what's going on there.' It's been real challenging, though."

• **Robyn Flans**

News...

Alvino Bennett recently back from a tour with Soul II Soul and now back on the road with Sheena Easton.

Michael Blair recording with the Replacements, Joe Henry, Gavin Friday, and producer Hal Willner's Mingus project. Also in the Charles Mingus tribute band is percussionist **Don Alias**.

Joel Taylor on Kenya's CBS/Sony release, as well as **Alex Acuna**. Taylor can be

heard on *Tokyo Nights* by Rob Mullins on Nova, and Brian Bromberg's last record, *Magic Rain*.

Denny Carmassi on the road with Heart.

Zoro on Lenny Kravitz's portion of the John Lennon Tribute, airing on October 9. **Jim Keltner** and **Ringo Starr** will also be featured in a pre-recorded segment.

Caught live was percussionist **Joe Lala** at the China Club on one jam night, and he wants to dispel any rumors

continued on page 66



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Rikki Rockett

I

When I first saw Poison's *Talk Dirty To Me* video, I didn't believe that a drummer could actually do the tricks you do and play at the same time. But the last three times you guys were in this area, I was amazed at how gracefully you pulled the same tricks off. How do you think of them, and do you incorporate them during the first few practices of a new song or wait until you get the drum part down before working out the tricks?

Second, I've been hearing about your "Robodrums," and I'm wondering if any of the drums shown in the June '90 *MD Photo Gallery* were those—or can we expect them on the new tour?

Another thing that puzzles me is that in most pictures you have a double-bass set, but in one I saw (perhaps in the studio for *Open Up...*) you only had one bass drum. Do you play double-bass or just have the second drum on stage for "looks"? And finally, in almost every Poison video you use a different drumkit. Do you own all of these? If so, would you consider giving one to me? Thanks for being such an awesome visual drummer and for making me start doing tricks and not being "just a drummer."

Jack Smith

Sheridan WY

A

Thanks for your support, Jack; it's what makes this business worthwhile! Actually, most of my "tricks" derive from keeping time in the air when my left or right hand isn't busy on the kit. Of course, spinning sticks is an old standard, and I'm certainly not the first to do it, nor the best. I always work out the drum parts first, and then incorporate the tricks—if there is space for them. Sometimes this takes a long time, and also requires the extra pressure of the audience being out there to see if I can actually pull it off.

The "Robodrums" concept took me and a friend of mine named Glenn Brooks three months to design. It's an idea based on servo motors flying the drums and



effects in only when they would be used, via hydraulics. It's about 30% useful and 70% cosmetic. It's a good enough idea that we obtained a patent on it, but it also would have cost about \$250,000 to do it correctly, and there's no telling how reliable it would have been on the road.

The answer to your double-kick question is that I use two kicks for accents during the tunes, and also in my solos. The photo you are referring to is a rehearsal photo, and I was using one bass drum with a double bass drum pedal by Drum Workshop. When playing, I like the symmetry of two kicks, and both are always used.

In reference to your last question: Yes, I do own all those kits. Every month on the road equals about one year of wear and tear on the average kit. So by the time a tour is completed, you have a 9- to 12-year-old kit, in essence. I am fortunate to be supplied with one kit a year by Drum Workshop. Some of the hardware I clean up and re-use from tour to tour. But the drums themselves—even though I believe DW to be the best—eventually give in to constant temperature changes and general road abuse.

Thanks for all the questions, Jack, and thanks to *MD* for a great magazine. Cheers!

Bill Bruford

B

I'm very curious to know what cymbal you used on King Crimson's *Red* that sounded a bit like a kind of "trashy Chinese" cymbal. Also, what was the snare drum you used on Yes's albums?

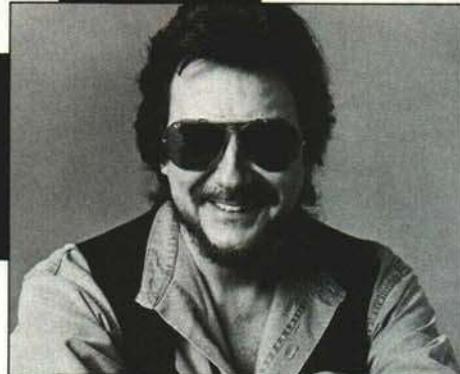
Patrick Sanfacon

Quebec City, Canada

A

The cymbal you refer to was, if memory serves, a badly damaged 18" Zilket that I found in the trash can—left there by the previous group in the rehearsal room. It had a 4" crack, and one side was bent up vertically like the Australian bush hat. It was the best fast-decaying trash cymbal around for six months in 1974—then it died completely.

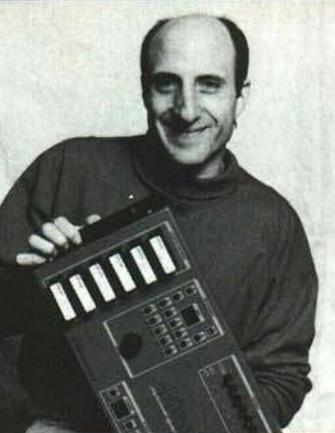
The snare drum on the Yes albums was a regular 5 1/2" chrome Ludwig snare drum with a Remo Ambassador batter. I always recorded it with as many harmonics and overtones flying around as possible. Not quite the thing nowadays, I'm told.



JIM KELTNER



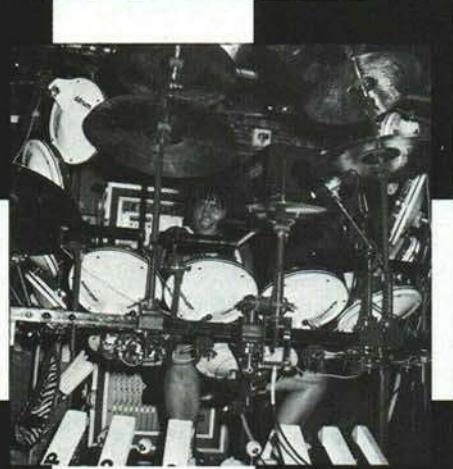
LARRIE LONDIN



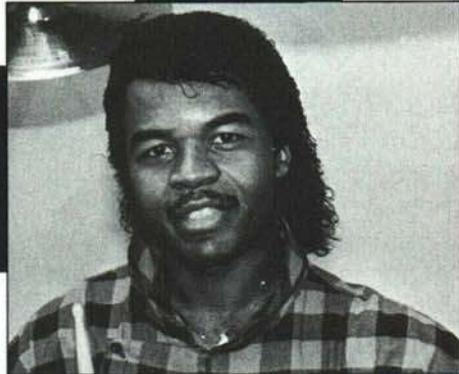
KENNY ARONOFF



IAN HAUGLAND
EUROPE



MARKO SOCCOLI
ROXX
PHOTO BY FRANK WHITE



JONATHAN MOFFETT
MADONNA TOUR

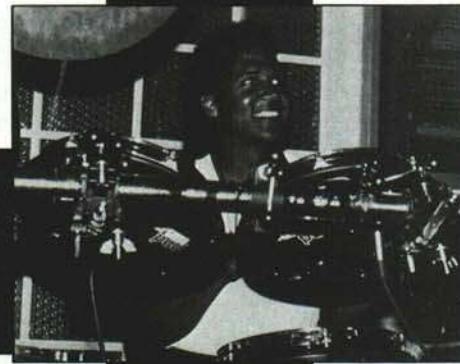


SLY DUNBAR

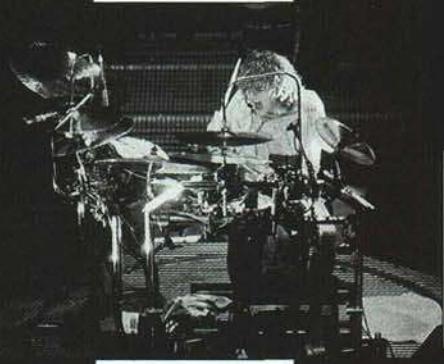
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IT'S QUESTIONABLE



Q I have always been a Ringo Starr fan, and since I now play drums in a group that specializes in '60s rock 'n' roll, I have been thinking about putting together a "Ringo-type" black oyster pearl Ludwig drumkit. I always thought Ringo used a standard four-piece set with 13" and 16" toms and a 22" bass. But after studying lots of photos I'm not so sure. Some seem to show a 22" bass and a 16" floor tom, while in others it looks like he might be using a 20" bass and 14" floor tom.

What are the facts surrounding this raging controversy? Seriously, while this may seem like a trivial pursuit, I would like to be sure to put together a set with the correct size drums—especially with the premium prices that '60s-vintage black oyster pearl Ludwigs seem to bring these days.

Kevin Oppendike
Prophetstown IL

A According to William F. Ludwig, Jr., you are correct when you surmise that Ringo used more than one size of drumkit. He did, in fact, change from time to time between a 20" and a 22" bass drum, and he matched a 14" floor tom to the smaller bass drum and a 16" floor tom to the larger. "You must realize," says Mr. Ludwig, "that Ringo sat very high in order to be seen by his vast audiences. This made the drums look even smaller than they actually were. To put together a vintage Ringo Starr set, you would be correct with either bass drum/floor tom combination."

Q For some time now I have been concerned with the use of wood for drumming, and now that the environment thing is here I guess it finally caught up with me. I saw an ad for fiberglass drums in your magazine once, and I know that Tommy Aldridge uses some type of fiber drum as well. I was wondering if soon there will be a synthetic

replacement for wooden drumsticks. Also, do aluminum drumsticks exist? Some people might think they will be too weak, but if the aluminum were doubled or tripled, it would probably last. Or how about thick fiberglass sticks?

Jess Melendrez
Coronia CA

A Synthetic drumsticks have been on the market since 1982. Most are made of a composite of nylon and graphite, although others are made of acrylic plastic. Notable brands are Aquarian (1140 N. Tustin Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92807), Riff-Rite (c/o PR Percussion, 1507 Mission Street, S. Pasadena, CA 91030), Wam-Rod (c/o Amberstar International Inc., 111 E. Laurel, San Antonio, TX 78212), Max-Sticks (c/o D&F Products, 6735 Hidden Hills Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45230), and Duratech (P.O. Box 846, Thomasville, NC 27361). In addition, Veri-Sonic (3383 Industrial Blvd., Pittsburgh, PA 15102) offers sticks made of aluminum tubes tipped with nylon shoulder-to-bead sections. Fiberglass was used in a brand of synthetic sticks known as Duraline some years ago, but did not prove successful.

Q I own a 1987 Pearl *World* drumkit. I'm interested in knowing more about this kit. I'm thinking of selling it, but I don't know whether this is a good idea. Should I get another kit or stick with the one I've got? Also, can you tell me how I can order a 22" bass drum from the 1987 *World* series, before the lug change?

Ron Utterback
Athens OH

A Pearl's Ken Austin provided the following information: "The Pearl *World* kit is a professional model drumset. The shells are birch and mahogany. We consider them to be the most acoustically intricate of all our professional mod-

els. The composition and ply makeup resonates in such a way as to draw out the best attributes of both woods. The mahogany adds a distinctive warmth similar to maple, while allowing the depth of birch to remain aurally dominant. This is Pearl's plausable alternative to the total-birch or total-maple sound.

"With regard to 'should you sell the kit'—that's up to you. The main criteria would be whether or not you like the sound of the drums, and whether or not the set suits your needs. Concerning buying an additional bass drum 'before the lug change,' we have no plans to change the lugs on the *World* series. You can purchase a 22" *World* bass drum at any authorized Pearl dealer."

Q I have an old 16" Beverly crash cymbal. I like the sound of it very much, but it is cracking. I know that the manufacturer no longer makes cymbals, so can you tell me if Zildjian makes a cymbal that would be similar in sound?

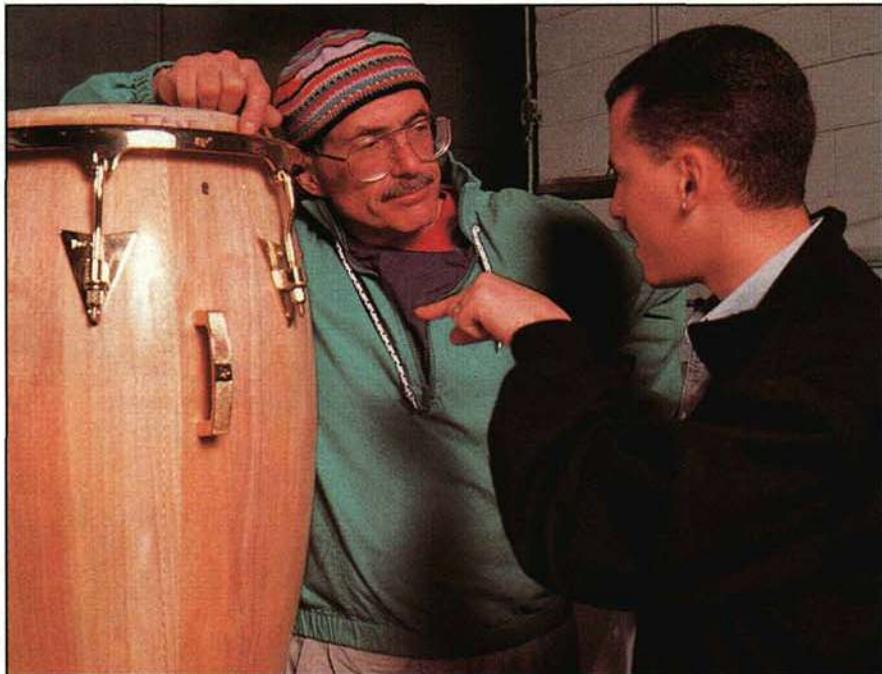
Jon-Paul LeClair
Cato WI

A We asked Zildjian's Lennie DiMuzio about your cymbal, and he gave us the following information: "Beverly cymbals were made in England, and they were in the intermediate price range. Zildjian provides two cymbal series in that category. One is the *Scimitar*, and the other is the *Scimitar Bronze*. In the *Scimitar* line, there is a 16" crash cymbal that has a list price of \$68; a 16" *Scimitar Bronze* crash would list for \$95. These are the only two cymbals that we offer that would be similar to a Beverly cymbal, which is made out of sheet metal."

Q I have noticed that there are not many drum books on the market that have actual songs in them; most are instructional booklets. What is someone

continued on page 76

"I personally stand behind every LP product. That's why I put my name on the label."



Martin Cohen and Marc Quiñones (Spyro Gyra) discussing product development

Making fine percussion products involves many manufacturing processes and lots of little trade secrets that I learned from working in the shop, as well as taking prototypes to clubs for testing, and sending them around the world with touring bands.

COWBELLS

One early lesson I learned in making cowbells was how to prevent premature cracking. It involved the simplest of changes but the solution was far from being immediately apparent. LP cowbells sound the way they do because of our attention to the smallest details. Radii, material hardness, weld length, type and cooling method all make a difference. I work with the finest "ears" in music. The great Marc Quiñones helps to target new sounds as well as maintain the quality of bells that are already in production.

Not content in just making new bells for different applications, LP is developing a new approach to cowbell manufacturing that will greatly extend the life of the sticks used to strike them. This new

approach will also remove many undesirable overtones. The result is the Ridge Rider™ playing surface (Intl. Pat. Pend.)

ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS FOR CLASSIC PERCUSSION

In recent years I have discovered that the wood block I invented over 25 years ago could no longer stand up to the more stressful playing situations in which they were called upon to perform. When it came to the classical Chinese Temple Blocks, this was even more the case. I had my development lab create new designs using an alternative material called Jenigor™. What evolved was the wood block substitute-Jam Block® and the Temple Block replacement-Granite Blocks®. I am confident that these products can withstand even the most vigorous beating.

WOOD DRUM SHELLS

The LP wooden drum shells are among the most reliable in the business. Most of these shells are stressed considerably more than conventional

drums. I take pride in knowing that the assembly methods developed by my company over the last 25 years produces drums that stay glued where others come apart.

The latest addition to the wood line are Bata drums which are based on the comments by people such as Giovanni Hidalgo, John Amira, Daniel Ponce and many more. They meet the needs of a demanding and sizeable group of percussionists perfectly.

As LP continues to grow, the original purpose of producing the finest, most useful and innovative products is never forgotten. I personally stand behind every LP product. That's why I put my name on the label.



Martin Cohen
President
Latin Percussion, Inc.

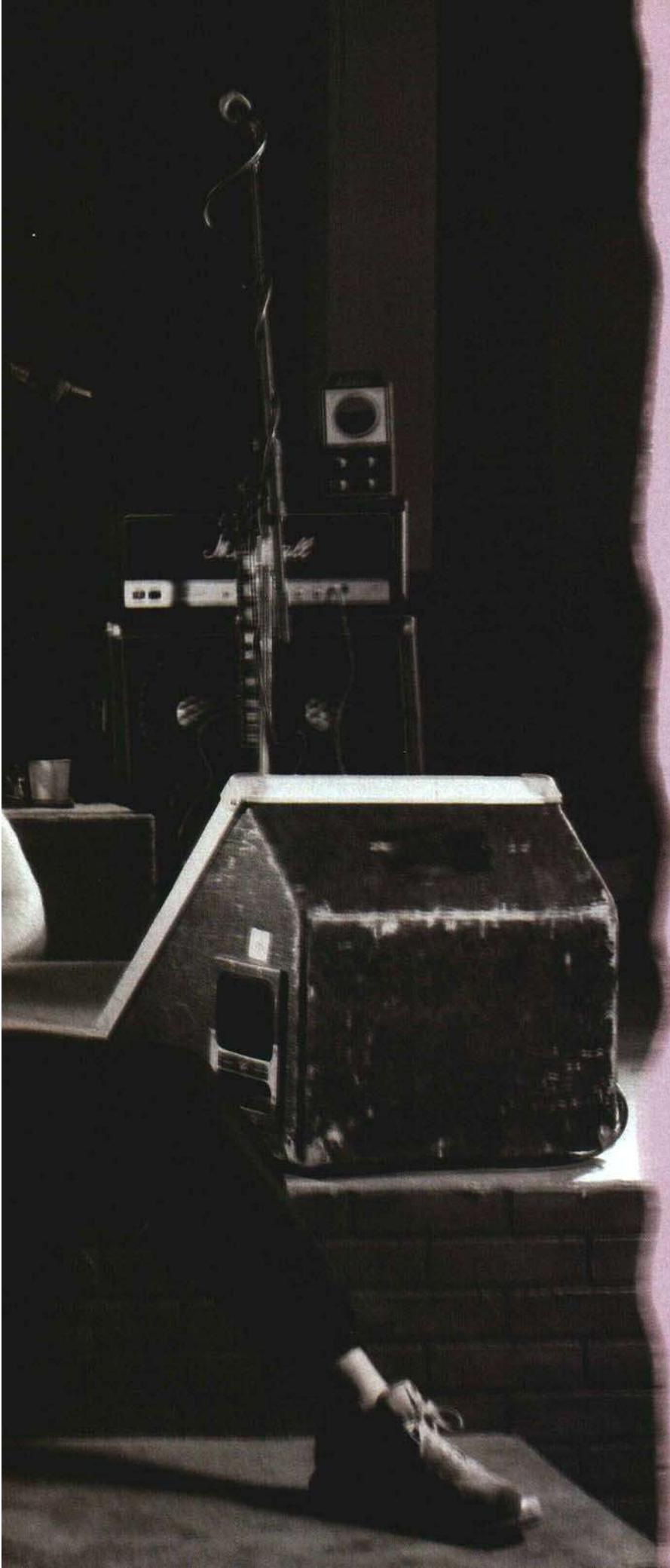


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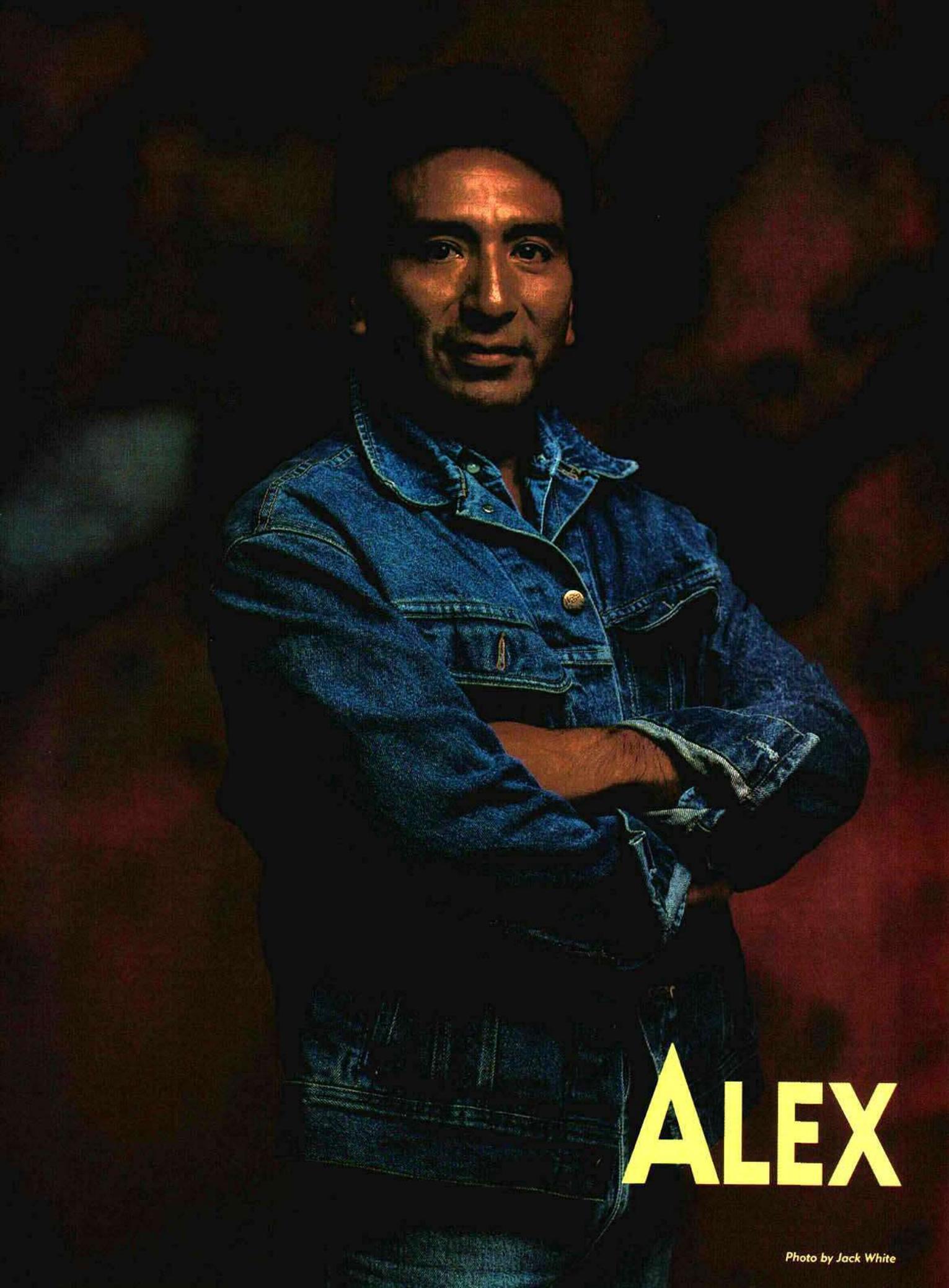
Pearl



"Man, what a night. I think it's the best we've ever played. The show was great, the sound was great, and everybody was talking about the new kit. I mean everybody. Even Matt, and nothing impresses Matt. I knew they sounded great when I bought 'em, but I never expected this. Ya' know, that slogan is starting to make a lot of sense. The best reason to play drums huh...I guess that's what I'm feeling right now, and feeling like this makes it all worth it."

Pearl®

The best reason to play drums.

A black and white portrait of a man with short hair, wearing a dark denim jacket over a light-colored shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

ALEX

Photo by Jack White

“
I don't consider myself a conga player, a bongo player, or a timbale player. I consider myself a musician, and with those instruments I have my own voice.
”

Alex Acuna talks with so much color, passion, and humor, in the way he emphasizes thoughts and describes his ideas. In fact, sometimes in the middle of the following interview, he would sing all the instruments when giving an example of a rhythm, or tap out rhythms on the coffee table. Even his conversation was musical. That's why it is no surprise that the instrumentation he adds on a variety of projects—whether on percussion or drums—is so highly acclaimed.

Alejandro Neciosup Acuna grew up just north of Lima, Peru in a town called Pativilca, the eighth of nine musical children. By the time he was 16, he was working 18-hour days in Lima, playing in clubs, on TV and on radio, since he was one of two drummers in the area who knew how to read, thanks to his music teacher father. At 19, Perez Prado hired him to go to the U.S., where Acuna remained until 1965, when he returned to Peru. A year later, he went to Puerto Rico with a band from Peru, staying there until 1974, all the while soaking up the many rhythmic influences like a sponge. He bought Jim Chapin books and enrolled in a conservatory for two years, learning about mallets, timpani, and general technique, while doing sessions and TV shows. In 1975, he went to Las Vegas, where he took a job at the Hilton Hotel playing for the likes of Ann-Margaret, Olivia Newton-John, the Temptations, Donna Fargo, and even Elvis Presley.

It was in Las Vegas that Acuna's lifelong dream came true: He was hired to play with Weather Report, first on percussion, then accompanying Chester Thompson on drumset, and finally as the sole drummer. His landmark work with them includes the albums *Black Market* and *Heavy Weather*. He has enjoyed live stints with Al Jarreau, Lee Ritenour's Friendship, and of course his own Koinonia, but in the past several years, most of his work has been in the way of sessions. While his credits include Paul McCartney, Joni Mitchell, U2, Placido Domingo, and a multitude of other pop recordings and film scores, when I asked that he compile a tape of his favorite work for me to study prior to the interview, his choices somewhat surprised me. Alex chose his work with Weather Report, Chick Corea, Wayne Shorter, Joe Zawinul, Koinonia, Lyle Mays, John Patitucci, the Yellowjackets, and four selections by Justo Almario—not to mention an entire tape devoted to his own compositions, including music from his upcoming solo album. He believes in the value of all the work he does, but for Alex, when there is the passion of improvisation and the element of surprise, it will always be his favorite.

BY ROBYN FLANS

RF: You included four tunes by Justo Almario on your tape, because you said they are most representative of who you are.

AA: My name is Alejandro Neciosup Acuna. I am a Peruvian, Indian, Spanish, Greek, Turkish descendent. I was raised very Latin, and that was the music I always wanted to play, but what I play is a combination of Latin and American. Not too many people have put it together yet; I am putting all that together.

RF: So you utilize all those rhythms and incorporate them into your American playing?

AA: Yes. I have been doing that since I was with Weather Report. There is a song called "The Juggler" that is semi-classical, but the rhythm that I play on it is the marinera.

RF: Speaking of rhythms, you are an expert on so many different Latin and ethnic rhythms. There must be many techniques involved in these rhythms. For instance, how many different hand techniques are there for one rhythm?

AA: It depends on the rhythm. Let's talk about the cajon—"the box." The cajon has

many different techniques. You can use your fingers or nails, you can slap, you can play the bass note of the cajon, or you can make your hands like an echo chamber. You can use the edges, finger to palm. You can also play a rock beat—the bass with the palm and the high sound with the fingers, playing kind of a slap. It used to be played by very special people only because it's painful. You're beating wood.

RF: Tell me about how you care for your hands.

AA: This is my personal approach. I am an old man; I am 45 years old. I always liked sports. My father was very strict with me about playing music. I would say, "Father, I have to go to a game, I have to play soccer. I cannot play the wedding." Sometimes I'd skip soccer, sometimes I'd skip the wedding. My mother always said, "Go on and play soccer. Forget about music. You are too young to be working all the time." I love music, and it was natural to me, but in my heart, I am a frustrated soccer player. Today I am a trainer for the AYSO—American Youth Soccer Organization. That has something to do with my drumming. Running is one of the best things for endurance. I jog periodically. I also like to keep playing sports because I like to eat, so to keep in shape, I must exercise. I do pushups every day, which also keep my hands strong. I don't practice; I don't have the time because I am working all the time.

How you strike the instrument has a lot to do with it too. I

just met the best conga player in the whole world—a young guy from San Juan, Puerto Rico—Giovanni Hidalgo. We did a record together. I touched his hands and they are just like mine, soft. It is the way you strike the instrument. If you hit the instrument and leave your hand there, the vibration will damage your hand, but if you strike it and lift it quickly, staccato, it is better.

RF: Do you ever soak your hands?

AA: No, but I don't play hard either. I don't *play physically* hard, let me put it that way. I do play mentally hard. It might sound spooky—how can you play so hard without hurting your hands? Because it's mental; it's the inner strength. If you project it the right way, you don't have to play physically hard. Relaxation has a lot to do with it. If you tense up, you damage yourself; if you relax, you're loose.

RF: You never swell up?

AA: In the very beginning, like every beginning conga player, I had blisters, and then they become callouses. I never soak or anything like that. I've never been into medicine. I never

even take aspirin for a headache. So I never took care of my hands. I don't consider myself a conga player, a bongo player, or a timbale player. I consider myself a musician, and with those instruments, I have my own voice.

I never separate the two—trap drums or percussion. Sometimes people ask me what I prefer to play, percussion or drums? I have no preference. I would rather play both.

RF: I overheard you on the telephone telling someone, "I want to play Latin everything: Latin rock, Latin funk," etc. I want to talk about the application of Latin to the different idioms. You went into Weather Report, where it was the first time there had been congas, timbales, and bongos in a fusion setting. How did you apply your Latin knowledge to a fusion idiom?

AA: [laughs] The question already has an answer. Whenever I went somewhere and someone said, "Alex, play some rock," it had a little bit of Latin feel because it's natural to me. Maybe certain people who hired me to play that kind of music didn't like me 100% because I wasn't playing a completely American beat, but it was my voice. It was in me, and whenever they gave me a part to play, it was my voice. It is how I feel, how I grew up.

RF: How do you combine the two?

AA: I don't want to name anybody, but there are great Latin percussionists who are not open to receiving other kinds of music. Not that they are being negative—it's just that they don't care

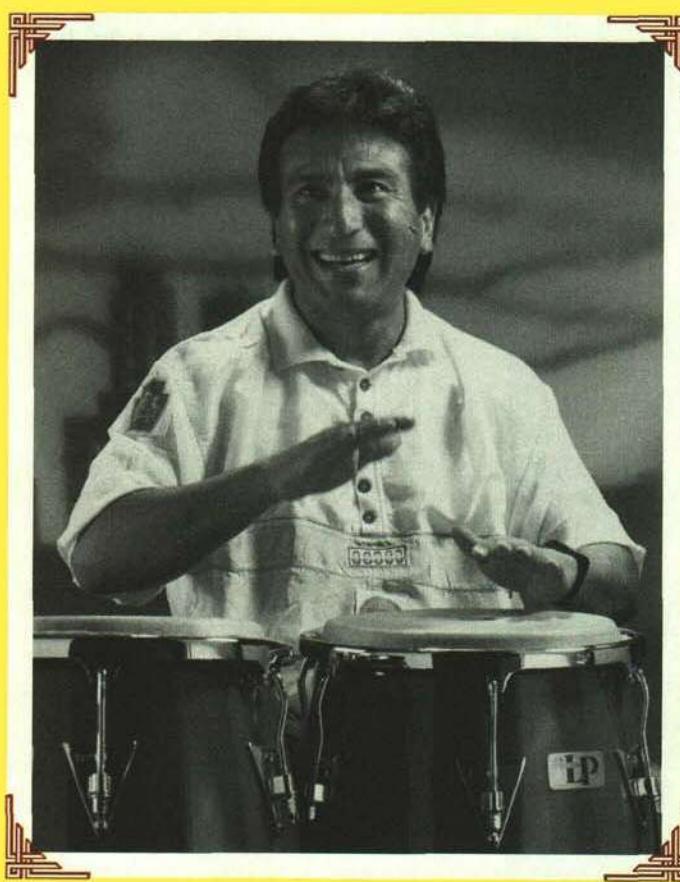


Photo by Martin Cohen

much for other kinds of music, and they only want to play their music. God gave me a gift. The gift is this: If another person comes right now and wants to talk to me, I will accommodate that person instead of saying, "I am busy right now; come back tomorrow," I approach music the same way. I try to put my style of playing inside the music I'm playing, without being a problem for the drummer or the keyboard player or the bass player.

RF: To fit, comfortably and tactfully.

AA: Yes, without being so strong as to interfere with what's being played. Maybe later on everyone will be following me, but I don't begin by taking over. That's how I did everything in my life, and that is a gift.

RF: You said in your last *MD* interview [May '82] that the drummer in Weather Report had to follow whoever made the first move. Most think of one of the drummer's roles as setting the pace.

AA: Weather Report was born in the early '70s, and it lasted until about '82. So in the middle, when I was in the band, it was when the band was really defining, becoming round. In those days, we were playing a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and there was room for everyone to play. It wasn't a dictatorship kind of group. It was a community. Everybody had a voice to say something, and everybody would listen. Because everybody was important to the sound of the band, the band became very strong.

RF: But according to what I read, Joe Zawinul did say to you that he didn't want you to play backbeats.

AA: What he meant was to play around the backbeat. I'd give him a backbeat once in a while, maybe. I'd keep the tempo with something else. The good thing about the drums is that they have many different timbres: You have the cymbals, the toms, the rims, the sides of the drums, even the cymbal stand that you can play on. It doesn't have to be snare, bass drum, and hi-hat only. What Joe meant was don't play the same beat on every tune. He didn't want every tune to sound the same. I was young, and I didn't know how to understand that. Now I know. I played with Joe recently and did his album. It is very simple to understand now because I have matured a lot.

RF: You started out with Weather Report on percussion.

AA: They accepted me because of my personality. I looked different, I talked different, I walked different—so I played different. They were looking for something different—an alien. "We found him: E.T. or AA!" [laughs] They didn't audition me—or maybe they did, but I didn't know it. Joe came to Las Vegas, where I was living at the time. I was the house drummer at the Hilton, and I had just quit because I got tired of playing shows. My family always supported me, and my wife said, "We came here so you could play music. You should play the music you want to play, otherwise we could have stayed in Puerto Rico." So I quit, and then Joe called me one day and said, "Alex, I want you to play in the band." I said, "Who is this?" "This is Joe Zawinul." "You are kidding me. Who is this?" "I want you to play in the band. Are you playing anywhere?" I said, "No, man, I quit my gig. I'm not working." He said, "That's okay, I am going to go there anyway." He came with his road manager to Las Vegas, stayed at Caesar's Palace, called me when he got there, and said, "Alex, I am at Caesar's Palace, come over." I went to

Talking Rhythms With Alex

Alex's video, *Alex Acuna: Drums & Percussion* (*Music Source International*), is chock full of information and includes a book that has many examples written out. We felt that since what Alex calls his "voice" is the fusion of Latin rhythms with an American approach, his talking about Latin rhythms would provide a wealth of information.

RF: One of the rhythms you cover in your video is the bolero. Can you tell me the function of the percussionist and the drummer involved in it?

AA: From what I know, the Cuban bolero is just a simple rhythm, an 8th-note feel. After the bolero, we come to danzon. Tempo-wise, the danzon is very hard to play because you have to be very sensitive to the rhythm and to the melody and harmony. In Cuba, they used to play it on the timpani. This is before the timbales were created. Because the timpani is so big, the percussionist could not carry that from gig to gig, so they invented the timbales, a smaller version of the timpanis. The music is played with strings.

You play what is called a baqueteo. You place your left hand like it is playing a cross stick on the low timbale and the other hand is playing open and closed. It is in 4/4, and you play with two sticks, dampening the sound of the lower drum and playing open and damp. Then you play some sort of licks on both timbales. It is a very Cuban rhythm and one of the oldest. The danzon used to be music for the black society. They would dance danzon because it was very elegant. The melodies are very European.

Then, tempo-wise, comes the cha-cha-cha. The danzon has a part inside the music that is like a vamp, and the cha-cha-cha comes from that little vamp. I have never been to Cuba, but I play the music and I listen to it. But I don't know the history down to the nitty gritty. The cha-cha-cha has the violin and the strings, then the flute and piano, and of course a guiro, a small cowbell, and the congas. The cowbell plays in 4/4, and then with the left hand you play on the 2 and 4 on the timbales. The violins play melodic lines, and then they play rhythm lines when it gets to the bottom of the arrangement. Then the flute player plays a beautiful solo on this black wood flute. All the music is for dancing, so you must play notes and rhythms that won't throw any dancer off. The Cuban music and Latin rhythms are mainly to be played for dancing. The rhythms must be very precise.

Then comes the son montuno, which is another form of Cuban music, and after that is the guaracha, which is what they now call salsa. Inside the guaracha arrangement there is a riff that the band plays, which is what they call the mambo. The mambo is the peak; the hottest thing in the arrangement.

Then Perez Prado, who is the guy who brought me to the United States, said, "I'm going to make arrangements of just the mambo." So he took the hottest part of the

continued on page 90

him and said, "I am not playing anywhere, why did you come?" He said, "I came because if I just see the way you walk and the way you look, I can tell if you can play or not." He looked at me like he was buying a horse or something and said, "Yeah, Alex, you can play," That was a Sunday, Monday there was a rehearsal at 1:00 p.m. at Frank Zappa's Studios in Hollywood. He said, "Alex, what do you need?" I said, "I don't have anything." I gave him a list: congas, timbales, bongos, everything. I only had drums because I had only been playing drums in Las Vegas. I said, "I know how to play the percussion, but I have never played it like that before." I knew how to play it, but maybe I exaggerated because I really wanted to play the drums. They bought me a ticket to rehearse in L.A., the next day was Monday, and

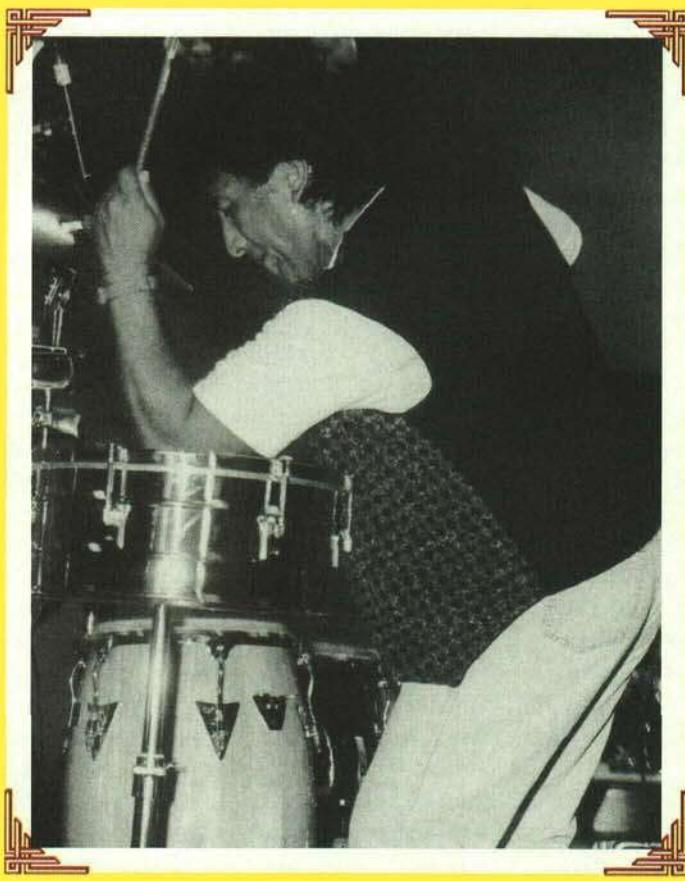


Photo by Lissa Wales

Wednesday they were going on a world tour. I came at about 2:00 on Monday, and they were on the stage already, playing all over the place—Alphonso Johnson on bass, Chester Thompson on drums, and Joe Zawinul. They were playing for about 40 minutes, and Wayne was just writing music. I got there and I didn't know what to do. Everything was set up on stage. I was everything at once—excited, nervous, scared, shy. Boom—all of a sudden I jumped up there and started playing around the instruments. About 15 minutes later, they stopped, and Wayne got up from his chair and came up to me and said, "If I played percussion, I would play the way you play." "Wow, man, really? Thank you, You mean I'm hired?" "Yes." My wife sent my passport, and two days later we went to Europe.

RF: But you didn't initially want to play percussion?

AA: I wanted to play with them, no matter what. Maybe because they were my heroes, especially Wayne and Joe. I didn't know Alphonso and Chester yet. So I learned the music on the tour. They gave me all the tapes, and then when we played live, it didn't make any sense. The music on tape was totally different from the music we were playing. A week later, I understood where they were coming from. They played the same tunes, but every night they played very differently. They had a form, but they tried to approach it differently all the time so they wouldn't get bored.

RF: What was your role as a percussionist?

AA: Just to accompany them, back up soloists, and keep time with the drummer. I was a utility percussion player.

RF: What was Chester's role vs. your role in the ensemble?

AA: His role was definitely the driver of the band. Chester always had a very positive attitude to playing music—young and strong and modern and musical. My role was to fit in with it, and I was still scared.

RF: When did you stop being scared?

AA: Six months later when I got more personal with them—I knew their lives, and I knew they liked me and I liked them. On the road we became friends; we laughed together, we played together, we traveled together, we ate together, and stayed together. My English was very poor in those days, so I was a little inhibited because a lot of what I said, they didn't understand. But it was a challenge for me and I loved every part of it. I think I remember every single moment that I played with Weather Report, every single place and every single note.

RF: When Jaco requested that you go from percussion to drums, how did that change your approach to the music?

AA: When Jaco came to Weather Report, we roomed together, so we talked about music and we used to jog together. We became friends the first day we met, right on the spot. We were roommates, so day and night we were together. Once I took my brushes and played on the chair, and he put his bass against the wall and played

it. He said, "Alex, I didn't know you know all those tunes. You play drums? Why don't we go tomorrow early to rehearsal and just you and I play." We played for three hours, and then Joe Zawinul came and he thought the drummer was Chester. When he realized, he said, "I didn't know you played drums." I had never touched the drums because as I told you, I am not an imposing person and I don't like to show off. Joe said, "Alex, I want you to bring your drumset and your percussion together so that there are two drummers, and you play percussion also."

RF: Didn't that take away from the percussion?

AA: No, it reinforced it because I was playing drums as a percussionist, not as a drummer,

RF: Please tell us about how you approach drums as a percussionist.

AA: When I play drums as a percussionist, my left hand is playing different things. Sometimes it is playing the rim of the tom-toms, just to have a different effect. Maybe I tap on the side of the drums, on the top of the drums, inside of the drums, on the drumhead, maybe I play the drumhead with my elbow, maybe I play the tom-toms like timbales. I try to get the most out of an instrument, which is the mentality of a percussionist. If you give me an ash tray right now, I will try to play it. If you give an ash tray to most drummers, they are going to light up a cigarette.

RF: So you're saying that in Weather Report, you furnished the music with a lot of different sounds when you went to drums.

AA: My drumset was also surrounded by percussion. I had congas, timbales, and bongos on my left side. I had a timpani on my right side next to a gong, chimes, and Chinese cymbals. I would play congas with my left hand and play drums with my right hand. I did that most often on the tour when they fired the drummer and the percussionist. Then I had to cover the sounds.

RF: When you are playing drums, what is it you want from a percussionist?

AA: I would say the percussionist is my bodyguard. If I am playing a Latin funk rhythm, I want the percussionist to know that he has to have the sensitivity to grab the right instruments at the right time and to play with the music the same way I approach it. There are certain percussionists who, when I play with them, I don't have to tell them anything.

RF: Would you like to say who you like to work with?

AA: In any order, Paulinho da Costa, Airto Moreira, Nana Vasconcelos, Efrain Toro, Luis Conte, Manolo Badrena, Don Alias, and Giovanni Hidalgo, who is incredible. I think God gave everything to him: "I'm going to give the congas, timbales, and all the Latin stuff only to him. I'm going to give Alex maybe a little bit of this and a little bit of that." I am probably forgetting others, and they have to excuse me.

RF: When you are the percussionist, what do you hope for from the drummer?

AA: The time. Live there is a feeling that is a combination of happiness, nervousness, and excitement, and that feeling has the tendency to put the individual into a different frame of mind. Musically speaking, it puts people on the edge, so live, the time can fluctuate a little bit, mainly up, but I expect the drummer to be consistent. After the time, I want a great feeling and a sound, and control. The drummer, for me, is like the pilot of a 747. Not that he isn't going to make a mistake—we are all human and we make mistakes—but he must make the least

mistakes in the band. When you go to record as a drummer, the only track that has to be right from the beginning to the end is the drum track. Anybody else can make a mistake. If everybody is going direct to the board, they punch in and out to fix mistakes, but the drummer cannot punch in and out.

RF: What drummers do you like playing with?

AA: In sessions I play very beautifully with Jeff Porcaro. I love his touch and his time, and he has been recording for a very long time. I like John Robinson in the style of music we play together, like with Larry Carlton. I like Bill Maxwell, who plays in Koinonia. Steve Gadd is the best, and William Kennedy is at the top of the list. I like Carlos Vega. There are so many. All the drummers that everybody knows beginning with Louie Bellson



Photo by Lissa Wales

down to the youngest drummer, maybe Walfredo Reyes, Jr. I like all of them because they all have their own voices. I also like all the percussionists I mentioned because they also have their own voices.

RF: We've talked about Weather Report being a creative peak for you, but I'd like to talk about the non-creative session.

AA: That's a hard topic, because I must confess there have been times when I have thought, "Oh man, I don't know if I can play this music," but at the same time I want everybody to feel good. Somebody booked this studio, and there is an engineer and a second engineer and a producer and all the musicians, and I have to give my best no matter what. But I don't really think a non-creative session can happen in my case, because to make everybody feel good and to make me feel good, I have to try to make it creative.

RF: But you made me two beautiful tapes of music that did not include a lot of music you have made, so I want to talk about those things. I want to talk about the Paul McCartney session.

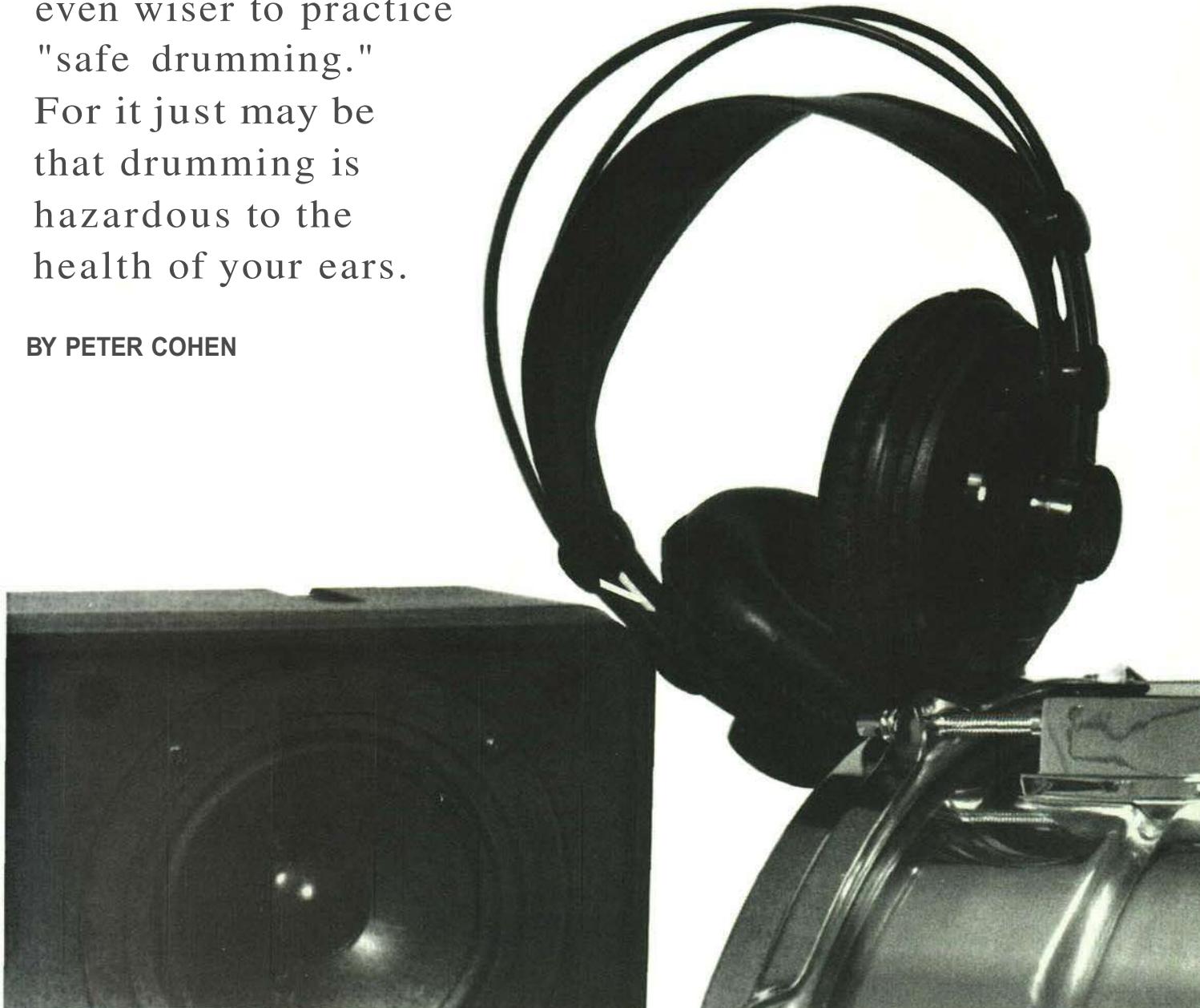
AA: Actually, the album I did with Paul McCartney where I actu-

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DRUMMING: How RISKY Is It To Your HEARING?

In an age when it's wise to practice safe sex, it may be even wiser to practice "safe drumming." For it just may be that drumming is hazardous to the health of your ears.

BY PETER COHEN



It's all in the feeling, we all know that—the *feeling* of the music. We revel in the visceral impact of it—the raw, palpable surge of the sound waves as they sweep us up in their good, good vibrations.

But there may be an underside to this happy indulgence, and many of us are beginning to recognize the symptoms: You just finish the gig, and your ears are filled with a high, piercing ringing. As you get up to leave your throne, you find your balance is wobbly. You feel as though you've just been run over by a herd of wild heffalump. Your nerves are shot. Sleep, you know, will be a long, long time coming.

Players of rock will be more apt to relate to this description, but others should not assume that they're exempt. Increasingly, the evidence is pouring in that the effects of loud music on the ears and the entire nervous system are both dramatic and subtle, blatant and insidious. Just how loud the music needs to be in order to cause damage is a matter of some debate, but even those playing in the symphonic domain may not be entirely immune to risk.

But if the risk is proportionate to volume, it is indeed in rock that the risk is highest; and it is primarily in rock that the victims are coming out of the closet and speaking up. Everybody from Billy Joel's three-year-old daughter to veteran blaster Ted Nugent has gotten into the act recently, giving public warnings about the dangers that come with this territory. And when someone as prestigious as Pete Townshend announces, "...I've shot my hearing; it hurts and it's painful, and it's frustrating when little children talk to you and you can't hear them," then you know there's been a change in the musical climate. As *Rolling Stone* recently put it, another of "rock 'n' roll's dirty little secrets" has been brought into the light.

.Drummers may stand (or sit, as the case may be) at particular risk. First of all, drummers are positioned both closer to and in a more direct line from their mon-

itor speakers than anyone else in the band. The barrage is close-range, and there's no dodging it. They're sitting ducks. Also, it seems universal that when talking about what "gets" to their ears the most, both drummers and other group

son that something's not quite right. He can hear words, but misses the consonants within them. He can detect speech, but strangely, has trouble understanding conversation. No, he realizes, something is definitely not quite right.

Hearing is a fairly direct, mechanical process. As sound waves sweep into the inner ear, they cause the delicate receptor hair cells there to bend over, flat to the basilar membrane upon which they grow. And it is those particular cells that are responsive to the higher frequencies that are most easily deflected. Usually, a good night's sleep will allow these hairs to spring back to normal. Repeated exposure to loud noise, however, will cause them to stiffen and die.

It's this repetition that lies at the root of the musician's risk. It's common for anyone to experience a loss of hearing acuity following exposure to loud noise. This is called a temporary threshold shift—that muffled sensation (usually accompanied by an annoying ringing) that you sometimes get after attending a concert or listening to a

stereo at high volume. For most people, most times (there are always exceptions), this does not represent any serious problem. With time, as the tiny hairs spring back up, your hearing acuity returns, the muffled sensation dissolves, and the ringing goes away. With musicians, however, this exposure is repeated so frequently and with such intensity that eventually the threshold shift becomes permanent. First the higher-end-responsive hair cells—then others down the line—start to just give up; they lie down and never get up again.

Would that this were all. Unfortunately, however, hearing loss does not usually occur as an isolated phenomenon. The ears constitute a direct channel to the entire nervous system, and research has implicated loud noise exposure to a wide range of psychological and physiological symptoms. Among these are high blood

Decibel Scale

The unit used to measure sound intensity is a decibel (dB). The decibel scale begins at 0, approximately the softest sound the healthy human ear can discern. The scale increases logarithmically. With every ten decibels, the level of perceived loudness doubles.



members alike accuse the cymbals and the snare as among the greatest offenders. And although these higher-end parts of the drumkit are *supposed* to penetrate through other sounds—it's what makes them "work"—it is precisely this power that makes these instruments pose the most threat to the human ear. As one respected audiologist told me, "Drummers especially have to beware."

Beware of what? Well, first and most obviously, actual hearing loss. Obvious, but not always noticeable. Indeed, the first stages of noise-induced hearing loss are signalled only by the inability to hear certain upper-frequency sounds—the ticking of a watch, the playing of high-pitched music at low volume, the speaking of certain words in quiet discourse—symptoms that are tempting to ignore or explain away. But it's usually that last symptom that finally alerts a per-

pressure, high blood cholesterol levels, chronic headaches, disturbed sleep patterns, generalized hyper-irritability, gastric acidity, ulcers, and intestinal spasticity. Most commonly, these indirect effects are experienced by musicians as simply that feeling of overall "strungoutness" following a gig. Alex Van Halen has called this sensation "noise drunk." And Joey Kramer describes it as feeling "as if someone's beat me with a baseball bat."

But it's the other effects that occur in the ear itself that cause the most distress for musicians. The least common of these is called *hyperacusis*—the condition in which the victim hears all sounds, even the everyday, ordinary ones, as abnormally, painfully loud. It's as if the ear's volume-control knob is broken, or as if one were living in a movie in which the sound track is turned up all the way, all the time. Strangely enough, hyperacusis can occur in a person with little or no measurable hearing loss. This is distinct from a second condition, called *recruitment*, which is the abnormal perception

of loudness in people who also have hearing loss—perhaps a compensation by the brain for inner-ear damage. Whereas for people with hyperacusis all noises are experienced as uncomfortable, people with recruitment perceive only loud noises that way. Not a treat, in either case.

Tinnitus, however, is the single most common side-symptom to hearing loss. This is that notorious "ringing" in the ears that, to some degree at some time, almost everyone has experienced as a temporary discomfort. Believed to be another result of inner ear insult, however, this can also become a permanent condition—one in which the ringing (or sometimes buzzing) can become maddening. The pitch of it can rise to that of a high scream, and volume levels have been reported as high as 70 dB. (See *Decibel Scale*.) As tinnitus sufferer Joey Kramer reports: "You know the sound of those loud crickets in the summertime? Well, the ringing in my ears is sometimes very close to that."

Although various relaxation methods,

diet, and sometimes medication can be used to mitigate the intensity of tinnitus and these other ailments, they are essentially irreversible conditions. Once the damage in the inner ear is done, it's done. True, there may be some degree of variability among individuals as to how much exposure each can tolerate without developing problems, but this assumption has not been proven. The sensible thing, therefore, might be to ask: "What can I do to prevent the damage from happening in the first place? How can I protect myself?" (See *How Damage Occurs*.)

Earplugs

The answer usually elicits a response from musicians that is less than enthusiastic—particularly from rock musicians. After all, isn't that the whole *point* of rock 'n' roll—to be LOUD? And if a consequence of playing loud is to lose your hearing someday, well, as John Flansburgh of the group They Might Be Giants once observed, that's just "one of

How Damage Occurs

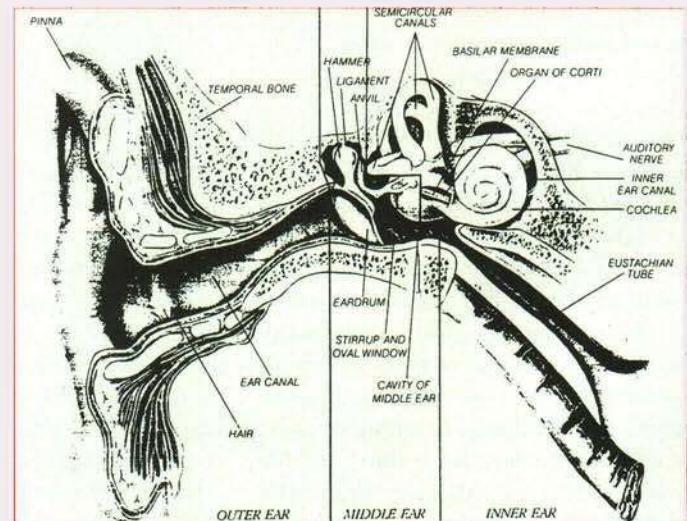
Although the hows and whys of the ear still aren't fully understood, scientists have constructed a fairly accurate model of it.

- The *outer ear* is mostly the part that you see on your head. It is designed to collect sound and pass it to the eardrum via the outer ear canal. This canal is efficient at collecting sounds in the 2000 - 5000 hertz frequency range. This is the frequency range of your hearing that gets damaged first.

- The *middle ear* consists of the eardrum and the ossicles bones (hammer, ligament, anvil). The eardrum is a thin membrane stretched across the ear canal that converts pressure variations (sound waves) to mechanical vibrations. The ossicles bones work as a lever. The eardrum vibrates against this lever, which vibrates against the inner ear at the same frequency, but about 30 times stronger in force.

- The *inner ear* is the section most susceptible to damage. It contains the cochlea, a small organ shaped like a snail's shell. The ossicles bang against the end of the cochlea and set up pressure waves within it. These waves bend tiny hairs within the cochlea (inside a smaller organ called the organ of Corti). These hairs are connected to auditory nerves, which send an electrical signal to the brain.

- The organ of Corti is the part of the system most easily damaged—not the eardrum, as most people think. The tiny hairs within it are resilient, but if pushed *too far*, can be permanently damaged. Damage occurs in progressive stages. First the hair cells die, and the supporting cells become swollen. Once these cells die,



they do not grow back. Further damage causes the entire organ of Corti to collapse. Hair cells disappear totally, and the auditory nerves begin to die.

- Complete degeneration occurs with the total absence of the organ of Corti and the auditory nerve. Simply put, this means a complete loss of hearing and *no* hearing aid will make any difference at all. If it's loud enough to make your ears ring the next morning—you're pushing the limit!

• Spiros A. Psarris

the little sacrifices you make for rock."

Whether or not any music needs to be loud, rockers speak for *all* musicians when they emphasize the critical importance of that subjective item called "feel" when they play. "We need to feel that energy," says Axl Rose. And it seems to be the universal attitude of musicians, whether from direct experience or not, that earplugs inevitably compromise one's ability to do just that—to be able to open oneself up, whole-bodily, to the onrush of sound. Not just the waves of energy being reciprocated on stage among the players, but the energy surging back and forth between the players and the audience. "You have to be able to *feel*" says Lars Ulrich (earplugs wearer). "If you can't feel what's coming back from the audience, that can give you a real distorted sense of how you're playing." And as Neil Peart (non-earplugs wearer) put it last December in his *MD* interview: "I love loud music and always have, and I think there's a certain forcefulness about it that's irreplaceable.... I think you're losing touch with your instrument with earplugs...."

Quite a dilemma, it would seem: To sacrifice that ecstatic "feel," or...to go deaf.

Well, the good news is that, with new advances being made in earplug technology, the trade-offs between "feel" and "protection" are not nearly as great as they used to be. The bad news is: A trade-off of some kind must still be made.

Most musicians who reject earplugs have done so on the basis of their experience with over-the-counter (OTC) varieties. Most commonly, these are the ones made of foam that you squeeze before inserting in your ear, and which then "reinflate" to create a seal inside your ear canal. Others are made from pliable rubber, silicone, or wax. All of these have the advantages that they're cheap, comfortable (especially the foam ones), disposable, and when properly inserted, provide high levels of sound attenuation—often up to the mid-30s. (See *Earplugs, HPDs, and More*.) However, all of them also suffer from precisely the one characteristic that makes earplugs so problematic for musicians.

Earplugs, HPDs, and More

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires that over-the-counter hearing protection devices be labelled as to their Noise Reduction Ratings (NRRs), as expressed in decibels (dB). An NRR is an expression of how many decibels are "attenuated," or blocked out, by the device. Thus, for example, if the environmental noise level as measured at the ear is 92 dB, and NRR of the device worn is 17, then the level of noise actually passing through the ear canal would be 75 dB.

Over-the-counter (OTC) earplugs range in NRR anywhere from 6 dB to the mid-30s, with most in the 25 dB range. Much of their effectiveness depends upon how precisely and conscientiously they are inserted, as there can be considerable variability in the degree to which the ear canal is sealed (and this can change with jaw and facial movement). The standard squeeze-and-let-inflate foam plugs cost about \$1.00 per pair, while the rubber, silicone, and wax varieties can cost up to \$8.00. These are available at most drugstores and shooting supply stores.

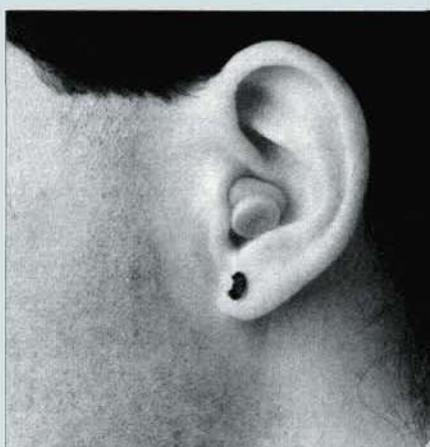
I have found the foam plugs to be very comfortable and to provide very good protection when inserted properly. However, as predicted, the attenuation is very uneven along the frequency spectrum, so that the sacrifice of full, true musical "feeling" is considerable. Nevertheless, these remain my plug-of-choice for maximum volume situations (I play in a touring rock band), and I have learned to compensate for them, even while singing.

The *Sonic II* HPD, made by North Consumer Products and available at many music stores, offers an averaged NRR of 6 dB and costs around \$10. It is made of silicone rubber and employs the "terraced" design found in several other OTC models. For me, wearing this device was almost worse than wearing nothing at all. It produced all of the negative aspects of wearing plugs (uneven attenuation, occlusion effect, etc.), while offering very little overall attenuation. I wonder whether the internal diaphragm actually closes for anything but the most short-duration and impactful of noises, and therefore might be more suited for shooters than for musicians. As advertised, however, you

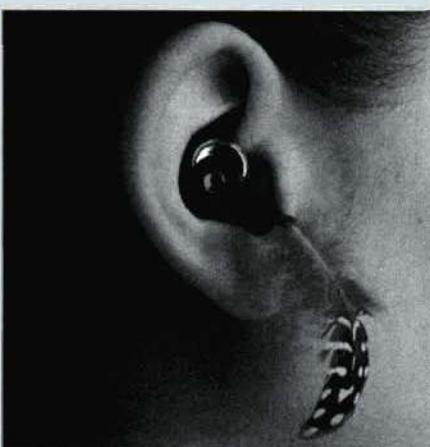
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The Sonic II



The ER-15



The Earshade

It is the very nature of sound that there's a differential in the ease with which it can be blocked along its frequency range. The higher frequencies are the ones most easily obstructed by any barrier placed in the way. As the frequencies get lower, however, they become more and more difficult to shut out from perception—down to where you can actually sense the vibrations on your skin or "in your gut." That is why a wall can easily block out, say, a piccolo in the next room, whereas (much to your chagrin) you can hear (and feel) the throbbing bass beats of your neighbor's stereo from several apartments away.

And that is also why almost all available earplugs—and all the over-the-counter kind—have what is termed "uneven attenuation" values. To put it simply, they shut out more of the higher-frequency sounds than the lower ones. To the wearer, the resulting perception is that "everything sounds 'bass-y.'" All those sharp overtones from cymbal, snare, hi-hat, and guitar are cut out, and what you hear are just the "boomy" residual effects of them, as if you've stuck your head in an

oil drum. (Not to mention that you can't hear any of the verbal communications that may take place during rehearsals or on stage.) True, you have protected yourself from the most harmful of the frequencies, those high ones, but in the process you have shorn the music of its liveliness—some would say, of its very life. You've made yourself safe, but is the price worth it?

"No," has been the answer for many musicians, and has left a prevailing negative bias about earplugs throughout this population. This may prove to be a premature judgement, however. The guys in the hearing labs have been hard at work in recent years, and they've begun to come up with at least a few products that warrant attention. No longer merely "earplugs," these new, high-tech devices are known as "hearing protection devices" (HPDs), and they represent some ingenious attempts to solve the "uneven attenuation" problem.

First, among the over-the-counter varieties, several models have become available that feature internal "chambers" inserted within the rubber/silicone body,

or "cushion," of the plug. These chambers contain moveable parts or diaphragms that, when pushed upon by the shockwaves of loud noises, actually close down, obstructing passage through the ear canal. Such an arrangement makes it possible for the wearer to hear conversation and even softer noises somewhat normally, but to be protected as soon as any loud blast of sound tries to get through. It can be imagined how these HPDs might be useful to shooters, and indeed, they are most commonly available in gun shops. One of them, however, has been targeted to the musicians' market as well, and for ten years now has been available in music stores. This is the *Sonic II* hearing protector, made by North Consumer Products.

It is not with the over-the-counter variety of HPDs, however, that the greatest hope for musicians lies, but rather with the custom-fitted kinds. To obtain a custom-fitted HPD, you first need to get an impression of your ear canal made by an audiologist or other hearing health care professional. He or she injects some strange, colored goo into your ear with a large syringe, and leaves it to sit there for a few minutes until it hardens. This individualized impression is then sent off to a specialized laboratory, where the final earmold—usually made out of a polyvinylchloride compound—is made. And it is also at this lab where the selected internal filter is inserted.

These filters—or "sound attenuators"—are the heart of the matter. Remember that the more the high sound frequencies are allowed to pass through the ear canal, the more natural—less "bass-y"—will the resulting mix seem to the listener. Well, a couple of the new filters available now boast the ability to let a proportionately increasing amount of exactly such "highs" through, even while still lowering the overall level of sound volume. And it is these filters that are inserted inside the custom-fitted HPDs.

But there is one filter available that claims to let virtually *all* the highs through—that is, to allow each frequency along the spectrum to pass through in a near-true proportional relationship to each other (providing a "flat attenuation"). The idea is that the sound seems nearly normal, just softer. Enter the *ER*—

Is your hearing at risk?

Here are some warning signs:

- A ringing or buzzing in the ears immediately after exposure to loud music.
- A slight muffling of sounds after exposure.
- A difficulty in understanding speech after exposure; you can hear all the words, but you can't understand all of them.
- Over time and multiple exposures, it becomes more and more difficult to hear conversation in groups of people, when there is background noise, or in rooms with poor acoustics.

Dr. Neville Carmical, who consults at the Kathryn & Gilbert Miller Health Care Institute for Performing Artists in New York, says that the first thing to be noticed in noise-induced hearing loss will be a confusion in discerning the consonants during conversation—the p's, t's, th's, b's, etc. And in music, it will be the overtones, rather than the fundamentals, that will be missed. "It's the subtle shadings, the colorations, that will be noticed [to be gone]."

A Self Test

Prior to exposing yourself to loud music, set the volume on your car radio or other standard audio source, so that you can barely hear the words. Then later, following the exposure, turn on the radio again at that setting, and listen up. Can you still hear and understand the words?

If not, you are probably experiencing a temporary threshold shift. And with enough repetitions over time, this shift can become permanent.

If you experience any of these early warnings, have your hearing checked by a qualified audiologist, or have your ears checked by a physician.

15 attenuator, commonly known as the "musician's plug."

Developed by a laboratory near Chicago called Etymotic Research (etymotic being a "new ancient Greek" coinage meaning "true to the ear") and available for only two years now, this filter has been widely embraced by musicians of all kinds, from symphony players to rockers. Over a thousand pairs of them have been sold so far, a result only of word-of-mouth communication among musicians, producers, and the like. They would seem to be "the answer" to all those who object to wearing earplugs. And they may be—within certain limits.

The first is actually not so much a limit as a caution: For the *ER-15s* to work, as with all custom-fitted earplugs, the ear impression must be taken with great care and accuracy. And not every practitioner has the requisite experience and skill. As Chicago audiologist Mike Santucci told me, "I don't think that just any audiologist can do it. It's just a whole different ball game." In fact, with some people, the injection of that liquid goo deep into the ear canal can produce some pain. "There's a real knack to it," asserts Etymotic partner Ed DeVilbiss.

The most troubling limit to the *ER-15*, however, is the fact that it attenuates only 15 dB of volume. This may be sufficient, if the music you're playing stays within the 100 dB range. But this is rarely the case for rock players, in whose domain it is not uncommon for sound levels to average 120 dB—and to remain there (and even higher) for long periods of time. For players of rock who are unwilling to sacrifice that sacrosanct "feeling," a trade-off must be decided upon. Rebecca Meredith, a Bay Area audiologist who specializes in musicians' problems, explains: "If a musician comes in to see me and he hasn't been wearing any protection at all, I say, 'Well, the *ER-15s* are better than nothing—but they really aren't meant to be worn in situations above 95 dB.' So a lot of musicians will end up getting both kinds of plugs." (The "other kind" Meredith refers to is called the *Earshade*, a custom plug that offers greater protection, even if it does also produce uneven attenuation.)

This opinion is echoed by Santucci:

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What The Drummers Say

Modern Drummer conducted a random survey of prominent drummers to find out what they thought about the hearing risks associated with their profession. Some of them were quite eager to express their views on this subject and to report on their own experiences with hearing damage. Others, however, were very reluctant to talk—even though they were concerned about the issue and wore protection. They were worried that people (especially prospective employers) might make the automatic assumption that they had "hearing problems" and would therefore be less "able" than others competing with them for gigs.

Paul Wertico, for example, emphasized that he wears protection (the *ER-15*, alternating with the *680-Ohm* filter) only as a preventative measure, and that his wearing of earplugs is only one part of a total program of hearing conservation designed for him. Not only does this not compromise his ability in any way, he asserts, but it actually enhances it. (Wertico's audiologist, Mike Santucci, designs individualized programs for musicians and groups. His number, in Chicago, is (312) 988-4822.)

At the other extreme, Joey Kramer, who makes no bones about his raging case of tinnitus, is almost evangelical about getting the word out. "Anything I can do to help guys," he says, "that's what it's all about for me." Kramer, of course, is an earplug wearer. His choice is one of the rubber, terrace-shaped OTC kinds, which, he claims, provides for more high-end pass-through than others he's tried. "I will not go on stage without them."

Similarly, Lars Ulrich would like to at least make the information available to players. "I hate preaching to anybody," he cautions; "I hate telling anybody what to do. But I just wish that somebody had made me aware that you're exposing yourself to a certain degree of possible damage. I just think that people should be aware of the possible dangers, and then make their own decision, based on their own judgment." A sufferer from what sounds (to me) like a case of hyperacusis, Ulrich is currently consulting with Rebecca Meredith at Golden State Audiology (see *Earplugs, HPDs and More*) to come up with a workable form of protection.

Referring to one of rock's more notorious cases of hearing loss, Ulrich says, "Ted Nugent is about 40 years old, and I'm already getting a tough ride at 26. I love what I do, and Metallica music is my life, but, you know, I want to be able to hear my kids play when I'm 35. I know that's not a 'heavy-metal' thing to say, but at this stage it doesn't matter, you know what I mean?"

Neil Peart, on the other hand, (as reported in his December, 1989 interview for *MD*) finds that the information regarding the effects of noise on hearing is "ill understood." Saying that he's "read a lot about it, and most of the information is conflicting," Peart seems to hold wearers of earplugs with something close to contempt. "I think it's a stupid thing. If you're not going to accept [the volume level], why should you bludgeon your audience with it? If you need [earplugs] to get through a performance, then maybe the music is too loud."

Concurring that noise-induced hearing loss is not such a cut-and-dried matter, Carl Palmer emphasizes that "It is not so easy to say when, where, and how" it occurs. A veteran of years of non-protected playing, Palmer reports that he has incurred no hearing loss or tinnitus. (And he gets his hearing thoroughly checked every one-and-a-half years.) Palmer does pay some attention to his monitor positioning when he performs, but insists that "one should not get to a stage where protection is needed."

Similarly, Simon Phillips insists—contrary to conventional medical wisdom—that it is not the loudness of a sound, per se, that can present a danger, but rather the quality of that sound. "Music played through a clean monitor system (no distortion or overdriving of any component) at a level of 100 dB is infinitely more desirable than machinery noise at the same level," he says. "I am convinced this has a lot to do with it." Although he has sustained a slight continued on page 101



Photo by Ebet Roberts

Eric Singer:

When contemplating an intro for this particular piece, I thought I might try to reveal the most outstanding quality about its subject, Eric Singer. My rationale stems from a belief that there's an intrinsic connection between personality and musicianship—an arguable but plausible theory. In Eric's case, my search for that foremost trait was not a prolonged one. Immediately, his exhaustive commitment to integrity—regarding virtually everything that touches his life—sprang to mind.

Case in point is when Modern Drummer approached him for this article. Because I've gotten to know Eric over the years through working for MD, when I asked him to be interviewed, he responded by asking if it was the magazine who really wanted to cover him, and not just an obligation on my part. I assured him that it was MD's readers—who've been asking about this drummer who has played with Paul Stanley, Black Sabbath, Badlands, Gary Moore, and most recently Alice Cooper—who more or less made the decision to cover him. Eric Singer wants to be judged—whether the verdict is good or bad—strictly on his own merits. Period.

Singer is an open and honest conversationalist. He talks freely in this interview about any topic, straight up, no b.s.

But there was one area where he was cautious with his words. Again, this goes back to integrity: When the subject of his abrupt and unexpected firing from Badlands was brought up, he was careful not to appear bitter or caustic about the ordeal in any way. He was quick to point out that he feels he was partially responsible for the dismissal, but he sees no point in dwelling on it too heavily. "It happened, and there was a lot to learn from it—good and bad. But I don't want to come off sounding angry or negative about the band or the whole incident," he explains. "There's so much more I'd rather talk about that's positive lately, like working with Alice."

The "Alice" he speaks of is, of course, the one and only Alice Cooper, with whom Eric has been touring since the early part of this year. Actually, his stint with Alice began a mere few weeks after the split with Badlands—an example of Singer's usual tenacity for hitting the streets and finding a gig when there's one to be found. But Singer's professional resilience is least surprising to himself. Although he seems to go from project to project with ease, his success in the music business is down to his belief in himself, a lot of sweat, and a burning love for drumming and good music.

Confident Rocker

BY TERI SACCONC

TS: You always seem to be working.

ES: When you meet people that you get along with musically and personally, it's a natural progression to then go out and play music with them. So many kids ask, "How did you get to do this gig?" or "How did you end up working with so and so?" I always tell them that we all started the same way: by picking up a pair of sticks or taking lessons and practicing. We don't all end up at the same place, but we all start at the same point. So opportunities are there for everybody, although they don't happen the same way for everyone. There's no formula for success. You have to deal with what works for you. It would be nice if I could advise people that what works for me will work for them, but it's not true.

TS: There have been some dry spells in the last several years, but you always find a band or vice versa. For a primarily hard rock player—not a session player—that's not so easy to do. What do you attribute that to?

were really big at the time, and our first show was at the San Diego Sports Arena. That was a really big charge for me.

TS: Does your own musical taste ever enter your mind when you're deciding whether to audition or accept a job? Have you always liked the music in the bands you've been involved with?

ES: At the time that I worked with them, yes. I've always played in original bands since I was a kid; I've never played in copy bands. The original band scene in places like Cleveland means that you basically end up rehearsing and making tapes. When I moved to LA, it was a very different environment because—and I always tell people who ask me why I did it—in LA, you actually feel like you have the chance to make it. You don't feel that way when you're in a city that doesn't really have any music business environment. Sure, in LA, you have to weed through a lot of the junk in regard to the musicians and the people, but the opportunity is there. The main thing is that you feel like you have a chance out there.

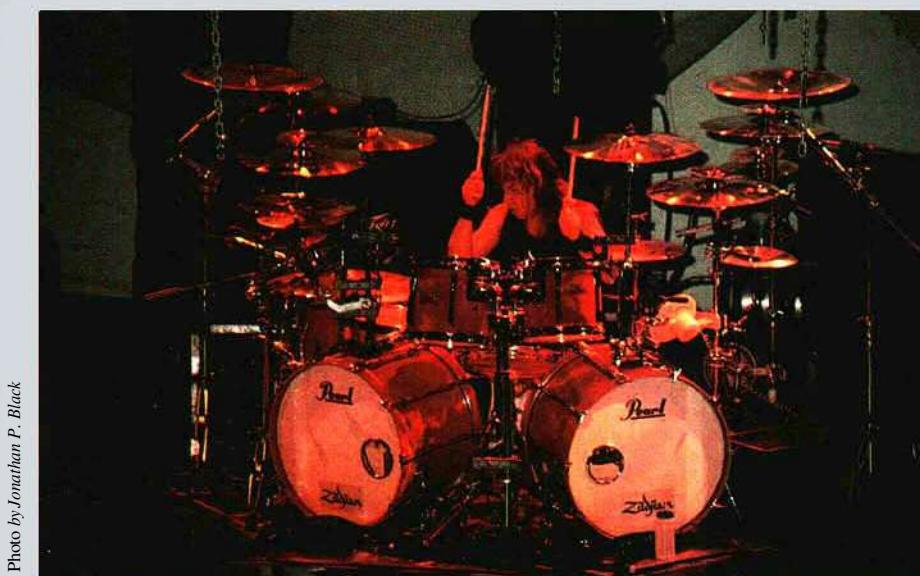


Photo by Jonathan P. Black

ES: When I look back over the six and a half years since I moved to Hollywood, everything's connected—like a big chain—to the previous thing I've done. The starting point was definitely the Carmine Appice Drum-Off that I did. To enter, you had to send in a tape, so I went down to the rehearsal room and just recorded myself playing into a ghetto blaster. Something just made me do it, and it's a good thing I did, because that ended up leading me to something else. Because of that, someone who saw me there asked me to be in a video, *Playboy's Women In Rock*. The bass player who I did that with was real good friends with Lita Ford, and he knew Randy Castillo well and told me that Randy was going to quit Lita's band. He told me that I would be perfect with Lita. His name was Ray Marzano, and he helped me out, took me under his wing. He set up a PA and my drumkit in a storage room he owned, and every day I'd go over there and just blast through the material. I knew the stuff note-for-note. Randy Castillo was nice enough to recommend me for the gig. Then at the audition, Lita said to me, "When I close my eyes when you play, it's like Randy's still here." I got the gig that week, and the next thing I knew, we were opening for Ratt, who

TS: What were you doing prior to moving to the West Coast?

ES: I worked in a factory—King Musical Instruments—for four years, making saxophones and other things. I worked in the parts department of a Ford dealership, too. I also worked with my dad for about ten years, playing in his band.

A year before I went to LA, I got really serious about drums, practicing a couple of hours every day after work. I thought I'd go to P.I.T. to study, but the course I wanted wasn't starting up until five months from the time I went out there. Instead of waiting around, I took lessons from Casey Scheuerell. I only took lessons from him for about three months, but he gave me so much in that time.

TS: Like what?

ES: Self-awareness, for one. He made me aware of what I was doing by making me watch how my hands were positioned when I'd play, so that I would learn to get them even. He also taught me exercises pertaining to Latin rhythms; he's great in that area. I really like Latin rhythms because there's a lot of two- and four-way independence in that kind of drumming. Plus they're great exercises just to practice on your own, even if you don't

.....
*"The whole
idea behind
rock drumming
is to get the most
out of the drums
using the least
effort."*
.....



Photo by Jonathan P. Black

apply them in any musical sense. But like I said, the biggest thing he taught me was awareness, being conscious of things like body motion. For instance, when you're playing a certain groove and it feels good, take the time to think about *why* it feels good. It's not just because you like the rhythm or the beat,

it's also because of the way you move your body. I've found that with different grooves, I move my body differently because I find that certain motions make me groove better. The difference between jazz, big band, and rock 'n' roll is not only a mental difference, but a physical one. I might tend to lean to my left or right to play a groove to free my foot up, or I might lean more into the kit. I adjust my body to what feels comfortable and easiest to play a rhythm. It's important to be aware of what feels right so that you can recapture that when you play it again.

That self-awareness can be applied to a lot of things. For instance, I've noticed for myself that the times I always seem to play the best are when I'm kind of tired, because I'm more relaxed. When I'm more relaxed it's as though I'm already warmed up. It's kind of a weird combination when you're playing rock 'n' roll, because it's so physical and you have to really pound. So you're playing as hard as you can, but in the most relaxed sense that you can. You're combining two extremes. The whole idea behind rock drumming is to get the most out of the drums using the least effort. Casey showed me how to be aware of my hands and how to use my fingers, wrists, and more of the lower part of my arms, as opposed to going for it as though I'm slamming down nails.

TS: Had you been hammering at the kit before that?

ES: I found that sometimes it would get to that point. When I played with Sabbath I felt like I was starting to get too animalistic in that I was playing with the butt ends of the sticks, break-

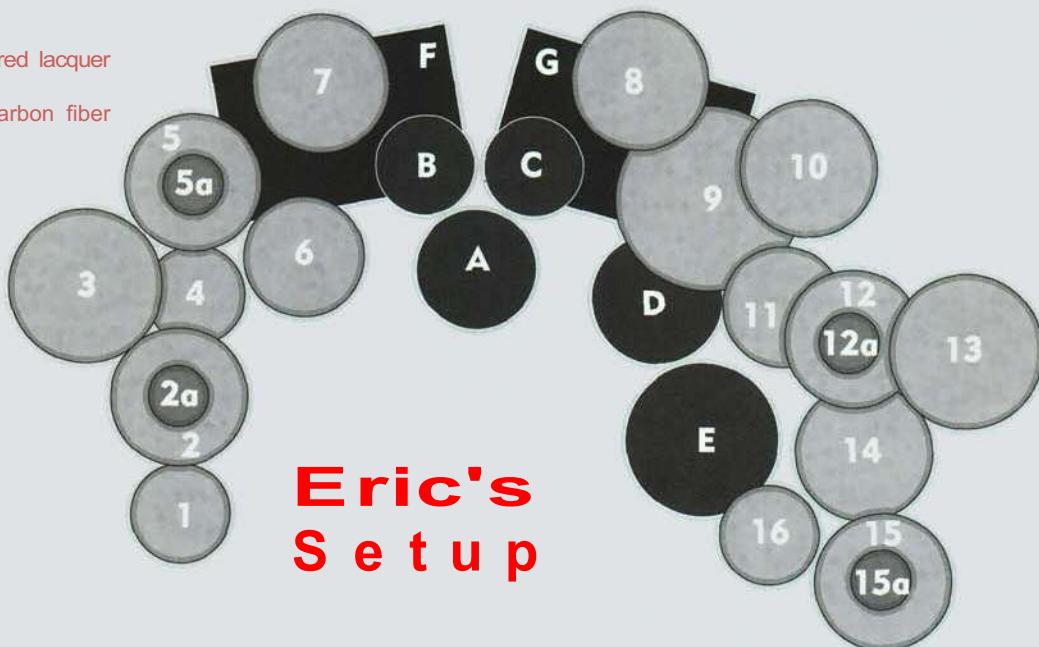
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Drumset: Pearl MLX series in red lacquer finish.

- A. 6 12 x 14 Free Floating carbon fiber snare
- B. 10 x 12 tom
- C. 11 x 13 tom
- D. 16 x 16 floor tom
- E. 16 x 18 floor tom
- F. 16x24 bass drum
- G. 16 x 24 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 12" EFX
- 2. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 2a. 6" EFX
- 3. 20" China Boy high
- 4. 12" Piggy Back
- 5. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 5a. 6" EFX
- 6. 14" Z hi-hats
- 7. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 8. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 9. 22" Z heavy Power Ride
- 10. 18" China
- 11. 13" Z hi-hats (closed)
- 12. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 12a. 6" EFX
- 13. 20" China Boy high
- 14. 18" China Boy low
- 15. 19" Crash Ride brilliant
- 15a. 6" EFX
- 16. 12" EFX



Hardware: All Pearl except for a Sonor Signature series legless hi-hat, and two DW Turbo 5000 bass drum pedals with felt beaters. RIMS mounts are used on the two rack toms.

Heads: Remo coated Emperor on snare batter, Ambassador underneath. Coated

Emperors on tops of toms with coated Diplomats underneath. Bass drums have coated Ambassadors on both sides with felt strips on each head for muffling.

Sticks: Pro-Mark 2B model with wood tips.

The Drummers Of New Orleans

New Orleans: It is a city filled with music. From its famous French Quarter, where there is a club on every corner spouting forth hot, brassy sounds for tourists, to its bayou-rimmed suburbs, where equally hot local bands make you want to dance the night away—always, it seems, there is music in the air. Like the spicy gumbo it is famous for, New Orleans has thrived on a rhythmic diversity and a cultural permissiveness that has made so much of its music routinely rich, subtly sexy, and soul-satisfying. Ever since the early 19th century, when slaves gathered in Congo Square on their one day of rest and created throbbing, exotic rhythms to dance and sing to, the musical pulse of New Orleans has been unlike that of any other American city. Today, its percussive chatter remains a dizzying combination of cultures and music forms—West African, European, Cajun, Mississippi Delta, jazz, rock, funk, zydeco, blues, and rhythm & blues—that, when boiled together, makes for the tastiest musical dish you've ever sampled.

During a week in New Orleans just prior to Mardi Gras, I went searching for some of the city's best drummers—the ones who embody its soul and spirit and set the rhythmic foundation for some of its top-name stars and bands. I found four of them: Willie Green, Frank Bua, Herman Ernest, and Johnny Vidacovich. The following portraits hopefully define the meaning and essence of New Orleans drumming.

Text and Photos by Robert Santelli

Willie Green

In New Orleans, drummers too young to remember the legends—Earl Palmer, James Black, Smokey Johnson, Charles "Hungry" Williams, Joseph "Zigaboo" Modestine—look to Willie Green for inspiration. "He's the cat who's made it," says one local. "He's the one with the best gig in town." That gig is with New Orleans' most noted band, the Neville Brothers.

"I joined the brothers in 1981," smiles Green, "and it is the best gig in town. Playing with them, I've been able to step out, see the world, and become a drummer with confidence. This band is ridin' high now, and when it's ridin' high, so am I."

Green lives in New Orleans in a beautiful turn-of-the-century Victorian house with his wife and child. When he's not on the road touring with the Neville Brothers, Green spends most of his time "making my house my palace." Today, though, Green has come down to Tipitina's, the Crescent City's most popular music club, to talk about New Orleans and the Nevilles, and, of course, Willie Green.

RS: Last year's *Yellow Moon* was a real breakthrough album for the Neville Brothers. There's a significant difference between the role you played on that album and what you do live.



WG: Yeah, on *Yellow Moon* I played more percussion and less drums. The drums that are on the album are real subtle.

RS: Was that your doing?

WG: No, it was the idea of Daniel Lanois, the producer. He wanted to get something different in terms of the drums, and he did. He was the one who decided to smother the bass and the snare in key places and build it up in others. "My Blood" has more percussion than drums. "Fire And Brimstone" has the same thing. It was a different concept for me to record.

RS: Was it a good concept?

WG: Yeah. It changed us. It brought something out of us that we had inside, but we needed someone like Daniel to bring out.

RS: How do you handle the songs live?

WG: Well, I put a beat to "Healing Chant" onstage. "My Blood" still has a lot of percussion where the snare would be. On "Wake Up," the beat goes one way, and the groove goes against it.

RS: Did you feel comfortable recording *Yellow Moon*?

WG: Sometimes it was tough. What you hear on this album is another side of Willie Green. A lot of people thought

Willie Green was just one kind of drummer. This album proved that I'm more versatile. I can play rock, funk, a little jazz, fusion, a little dixieland.

RS: *Yellow Moon* was recorded in New Orleans, wasn't it?

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Frank Bua

The Neville Brothers aren't the only ones who have helped bring respect and attention to New Orleans' contemporary music scene. The Radiators play a blusier, more rock-oriented brand of music than what comes from the Nevilles. But as drummer Frank Bua says, "What we play is New Orleans from top to bottom."

The Radiators began playing frat parties at Tulane University in the late '70s, moved to the city's blues and rock clubs in the early '80s, and now tour the U.S. regularly. With two critically acclaimed albums under their belt, Law Of The Fish and Zig-Zaggin' Through Ghostland (both on Epic), the Radiators mix blaring guitars with potent, pumping rhythms that make the band a perfect representation of New Orleans rock 'n' roll.

Frank Bua has been with the Radiators since the band's inception. A player with the stick power of a rock drummer and the soul licks of an R&B groove-setter, Bua knows all about the New Orleans drum tradition he's helping to carry on.

RS: Dave Malone [guitarist for the Radiators] mentioned earlier that New Orleans drummers don't get the recognition that drummers from L.A. and New York get, but that they're the best in the world. Do you agree with him?

FB: I don't know if you want to compare us to drummers from other places. I don't know if that's fair to do to us—or them. But I'll tell you what: New Orleans drummers have their own style. We're different from drummers from places like LA. or wherever. A lot of it has to do with New Orleans things like Mardi Gras and second-line marches. The drums you hear in these activities aren't your standard marching beats. A lot of it is about trying to get you swaying from side to side. So I think New Orleans drummers have been influenced by that and by Caribbean beats you hear out our back door, and by really good soul music that never left the city. Plus there's been a lot of good drummers from New Orleans who have influenced the younger drummers coming up. The tradition of good drumming just kind of perpetuates itself.

RS: Were you born in New Orleans?

FB: Yeah, I was.

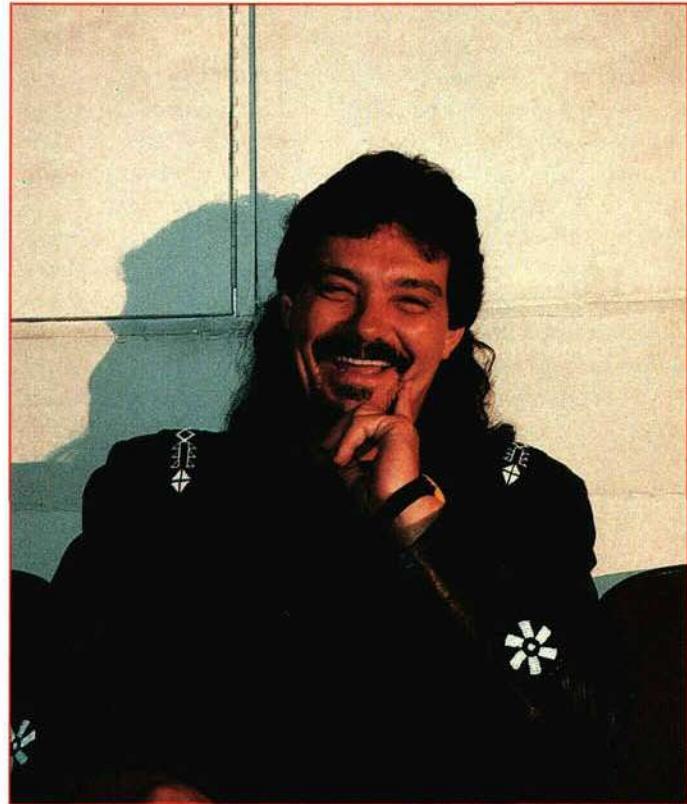
RS: When did you become a drummer?

FB: Well, as far back as I can remember, I always wanted to play. Every time I'd pass a music store, man, I'd check out the drums. There were shiny trumpets and saxophones, but the drums were the things that attracted my attention most. I guess I was about 16 when I got started on them. Then I immediately got in a band. And I've been playing ever since. I've only been in four bands my whole life, but each one has lasted a long time. The band I was in before the Radiators was the Rhapsodizers. We were together for about five years. Before that there was the Dogs, and then the Palace Guard.

RS: What kinds of music did you play as a member of these pre-Radiator groups?

FB: Ed Volker [Radiators keyboard player] wrote all the songs for the last three bands we were in. Several of the songs we do with the Radiators are carry-overs from earlier bands. But, to answer your question, we did a lot of '60s stuff, things by the Stones and a lot of soul stuff, and originals that Ed wrote.

RS: Can you trace your style of drumming within the confines



of these bands?

FB: Basically my style has been pretty much the same. I listen back to some of the old stuff I played on, and I notice that I was a lot wilder. In the early days I'd take a lot more chances and go after things that maybe I don't go after so much anymore. But I feel more at home now. "Ridin' the wave" is the way I always look at it. I look at drumming like surfing. When you surf you can't get behind or in front of the wave, or else you lose the power and energy you get from it. It's the same with drumming. With surfing and drumming you ride the wave and flow with it. A drummer should be a part of the music, like a surfer should be a part of the wave. Neither one of them should be someone who sticks out, if you know what I mean.

RS: What drummers influenced you the most in your formative years?

FB: Well, you can't be a drummer from New Orleans and not have been influenced at least a bit by Earl Palmer and Smokey Johnson. Those guys were the ones holding it all together. At the time I started listening to those guys I didn't even know who I was listening to. But I knew I loved it and that it was affecting me. Another guy that was influential was Zigaboo. He used to be with the Meters. Zig was great. He came along after the first generation of Earl Palmer and Smokey Johnson. And I've got to say that in the '60s I really liked Ringo Starr. He was the perfect drummer for the Beatles. He let the band breathe; he gave the vocals and all those tasty guitar licks plenty of room. He was the one who held it all together.

RS: What are the elements, then, that make up your style? Would you say your style is comprised of a little bit of Earl Palmer, Smokey Johnson, Ringo, and Zigaboo?

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Herman Ernest

Unlike Willie Green and Frank Bua, Herman Ernest isn't a full-time member of any one band. He free-lances instead, picking up tours and recording gigs with both New Orleans and non-New Orleans artists. He's well-connected and well-respected, and those are the biggest reasons why he's rarely out of work.

Ernest epitomizes the New Orleans funk style of drumming. There is a lot of color and detail in his playing, though when a song calls for a simple beat, he has the ability to downshift and cut a groove that's basic, but still tasty.

"When I get behind the drums, I try to play things that give the songs energy," says Ernest. "Sometimes it's a very laid back energy, but sometimes it's an out-front energy. Whatever it is, it's my job to get the music going in the right direction. And I take pride in doin' just that."

RS: You're not the only musician in your family. In fact, I believe you come from a whole line of local musicians and entertainers.

HE: That's right. I've got a whole bunch of first cousins and second cousins that are musicians. We're what you'd call a musical family.

RS: When did you begin to play the drums?

HE: Oh, when I was about 10. That's when my mother took me to one of those backyard barbecues that everybody has on the Fourth of July. They had a little band playing. Well, I watched the drummer and *damn* did he seem cool. That cat could play! I was amazed at how all them limbs were moving and making those great sounds. So from that day on, I wanted to be a drummer and do the same thing. I learned how to play so that by the time I was 18, I was going out on the road with a group called Little Tony & the Hawks. We had a regional hit or two.

RS: Since you were born just outside of New Orleans, you must have been aware of the city's great drumming tradition.

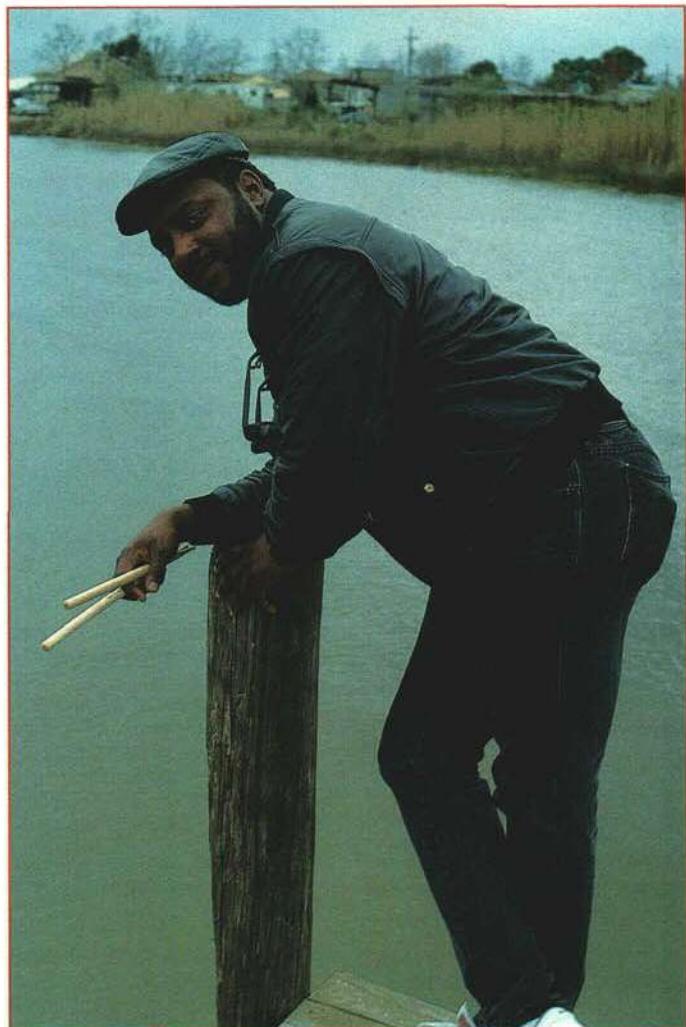
HE: Oh man, yeah. Cats like Smokey Johnson, the late James Black—whew! These cats were hot. Then there was Earl Palmer.

RS: Did these drummers all have something in the way they approached drumming, or in their overall style that linked them in some way?

HE: Oh, yeah. See, New Orleans has this sub-tropical climate. When you get away from the dixieland music, a lot of cats get into this island feel. People hear dixieland, and they think, well, that's New Orleans music. But it's just one part of New Orleans music. It's not the only kind of sound ever to come out of the city. If you're a drummer and you were born and raised here, and you've been listening to music since you were knee-high, you automatically develop a funk style to your drumming. You just can't help it. It gets in your blood and it stays there. It's laid back, but not too laid back. And it's in the pocket. It's not a whole lot of technical stuff happening. It's feel, man. It's feel. Some New Orleans drummers will take that and go farther with it. The funk feel—that's the thing New Orleans drummers can market.

RS: But a lot of them had to leave the city to sell it.

HE: I know. People have asked me so many times why New Orleans isn't like LA or New York. Why aren't there more New Orleans bands makin' it today? This used to be a music capital,



you know. Back when Little Richard was happening, New Orleans was a hot town. But today, none of the big companies have offices down here that I know of. I lived in LA and New York for a while; you've got more of an outlet in those two cities. But there are a lot of musicians, a lot of competition. You've got to be focused if you go there. Some New Orleans drummers have left town and gone elsewhere, and it worked for them. For others it didn't work. Luck has something to do with it, I guess. Now I'd never move away from New Orleans completely. This is the spot for me. This is my home.

RS: Can you make a living by staying in town?

HE: If I choose to, I can. I can work four or five nights a week if I want. But I don't want to, because I've done that already. I played my share of club dates. I'm on a different level now.

RS: Most of your work is in rhythm & blues. Do you consider yourself a rhythm & blues drummer?

HE: I consider myself a rhythm & blues drummer who can adapt—on the spot, if required. I'm not a jazz drummer. I've played jazz, but I never studied jazz drumming. You got cats like Johnny Vidacovich—now there's a New Orleans jazz drummer.

RS: I've always thought that one of your best recorded performances was with Patti LaBelle. The song was "Lady Marmalade," which was a big hit in 1975. What do you remember about that tune and the drums on it?

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Johnny Vidacovich

Who is Johnny Vidacovich? If you have to ask, you're probably not from New Orleans, and you're certainly not attuned to the Crescent City's local music scene. Vidacovich is a drummer's drummer. Ask any New Orleans musician to list the city's top drummers, and most will include Vidacovich. I know; I polled a number of musicians during my visit to New Orleans. All but one named Vidacovich as a drummer I most definitely had to check out.

And so I did. I found Johnny playing with the Nucleus Trio at that legendary New Orleans club Tipitina's on a rainy Sunday afternoon. The previous night Vidacovich had played with jazzman Al Hirt in Kansas City. He took a red-eye special home to New Orleans to play this gig.

It doesn't take long to realize that Vidacovich has plenty of chops, plenty of style, plenty of finesse. He was born and raised in New Orleans and knows the local scene as well as any drummer. "This is a drummer's city," says Vidacovich. "Even the bad drummers are good here."

In addition to playing the many bars, beer joints, and lounges that dot New Orleans, Vidacovich has also recorded with artists such as John Scofield (Flat Out, Gramavision, 1989), Mose Allison (My Back Yard, Blue Note, 1989), Alvin "Red" Tyler (Graciously, Rounder, 1988), James Booker (Classified, Rounder, 1982), and Tony Dagradi (Imagines For A Floating World, Gramavision, 1984; Lunar Eclipse, Gramavision, 1982), and others. "Just trying to make a living, that's all," he says, smiling.

RS: Your reputation as a drummer is as big as anyone's in New Orleans. Yet outside the city a lot of people haven't heard of you.

JV: That's been the story of my life, [laughs] I never did make it as an R&B or funk drummer.

RS: You consider yourself a jazz player?

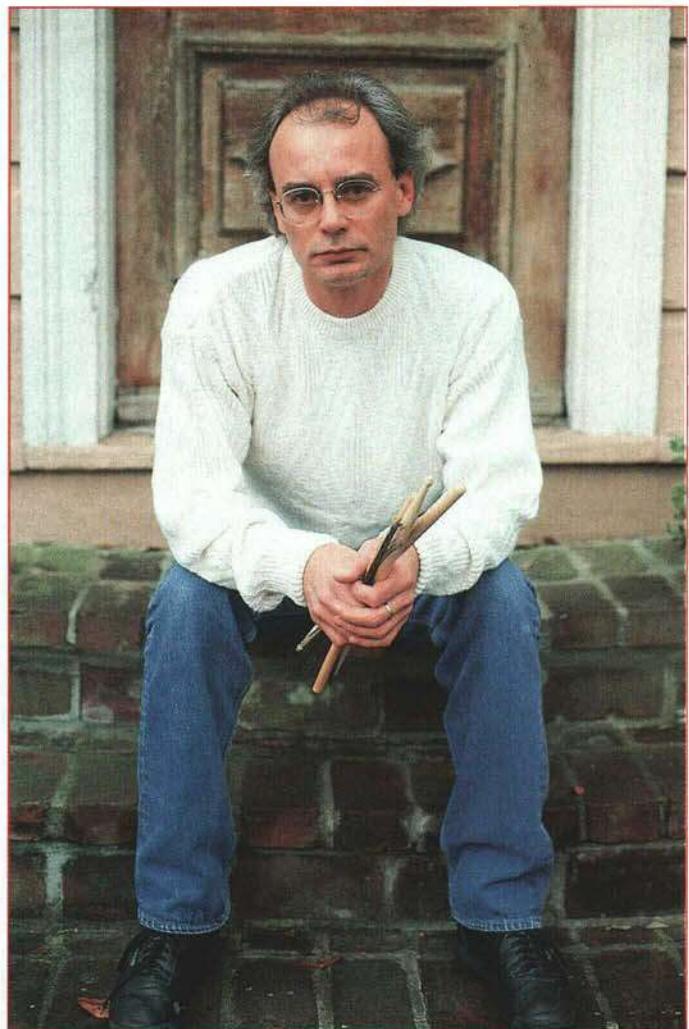
JV: I consider myself a traditional player. I'm a melodic player, a linear player. My rhythm is more linear.

RS: When did you begin to play the drums?

JV: When I was 10 or 11, in school. But I didn't get serious until I was 12. My mother said she'd get me a drumset if I had a teacher. So I found myself a teacher. He was a great teacher, too. He was an English teacher, but he taught drums on the side. He had me playing Charlie Parker stuff on 10" LPs. He'd give me the LP and the chart and say, "Go learn this." At the time I was learning all this jazz, I was totally exposed to rock 'n' roll on the radio. But everybody 'round here played dixieland and funk. The two kinds of music were everywhere, but what would you expect from New Orleans? If you wanted to work around here, you had to know those two kinds of music inside and out. The reason why New Orleans drummers are so good and have such a hot personality behind the drums is because they're exposed to so much tradition.

RS: Speaking of tradition, you had the opportunity to play behind Professor Longhair. What was that like?

JV: Well, it was cool, you know. Fess wanted everything with an edge. Funk with an edge. He didn't want it to lay back into that blue-grey situation. He always wanted me to push it just a little harder. If you listen to *Crawfish Fiesta*, you'll hear a lot of tunes



that are very snap, crackle, and pop, but they're also greasy. There's one tune on that record called "Her Mind Is Gone" that's great. Usually when I listen to something I recorded, I don't like what I hear. But I can listen to that drum track over and over again.

RS: Why's that?

JV: I can't tell you why, man. I listened to the song and came up with this crazy beat. It's one of those New Orleans snare drum grease things in half time, but moving quickly. Now, that track was done in '78 or '79. But it was right.

RS: Is the sound of your drums one of the primary things you focus on as a player?

JV: Oh, definitely. If I want to play a lick, I don't force that lick. I'll play the sound. The brain playing licks on the drums just don't make it. The drums have to come from a different level, a different consciousness. It's not notes and structures; it's time and rhythm and the harmonic motion that you apply through I don't know what. Listen for the drum's sound, the linear peaks and lows. See how long that cymbal sound lasts before you go bashing away on it. Playing drums comes from downstairs. It don't come from no upstairs. Don't play the drums with your brain. Play the drums with your heart and your soul.

RS: Some New Orleans musicians say your drum style epitomizes the city's gumbo rhythms. Is that true?

continued on page 113



Sound Formula Cymbals are the newest addition to our incredible world of professional level cymbals. Created with the discerning cymbal enthusiast in mind, they are made from our exclusive, patented Paiste Sound Alloy.

As such, Sound Formula Cymbals feature virtually the same body, definition, warmth, and musically pleasing characteristics as the now legendary *Paiste Line* (the "Signature Line") — at an astonishing value.

Introduced at the January 1990 Trade Show in California, Sound Formula Cymbals attracted immediate attention and praise from such virtuous and discriminating players as Jeff Porcaro, Carlos Vega, Jim Keltner, Will Kennedy, Mark Craney, Chad Wacker-

Music is Sound. Sound is Vibration.

man, Greg D'Angelo, Ed Mann, Joe Porcaro, Lenny Castro, Alvino Bennett and others who visited and tested them first hand at our booth. Visit your favorite percussion

Vibration is Life. Life is Freedom.

center and ask for a demonstration. You'll be surprised at the top professional musical quality you will be able to incorporate into your arsenal of percussion instruments. Our

Freedom is Music. Music is a Message!

goal has always been to put the best possible cymbal in your hands. With our new patented Sound Alloy there seems to be no limit to what we can offer. Enjoy it.



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AMAZING SOUNDS

PAiSTE
CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

Paiste Sound Formula Cymbals

by Rick Van Horn

When I took part in the testing process that resulted in MD's review of the *Paiste* Signature Series cymbals in the December '89 issue, I came to the conclusion that Paiste had created a genuinely new sound in cymbals—especially in comparison to their own previous series. However, the company spent eight years developing their new alloy for the *Paiste* line, and that development cost a lot of money. Consequently, the prices of the cymbals were daunting—at least in the U.S. market. However, Paiste is a savvy company, so it isn't surprising that they would come up with a way to capitalize on the innovation of the Signature Series alloy, address their U.S. marketing problem, and recoup some of their investment at the same time. Hence, the introduction of their new *Sound Formula* series.

Promotional literature regarding the *Sound Formula* series states that the success of the Signature Series brought the production capacity of Paiste's Swiss factory to its limit. So the company decided to manufacture a new series of cymbals in their factory in West Germany. (The same factory also produces Paiste's gongs and a few other cymbal products.) The new alloy would be used, but the model range would be more limited, and slightly less-expensive production methods would be employed in order to make the new series more affordable.

Given the pricing problem inherent in selling European-made products in the U.S. market, this manufacturing/marketing strategy makes a lot of sense. My understanding is that the *Sound Formula* series has been targeted exclusively for

Photo by Scott G. Bierstock



the U.S. market, which further limits marketing costs. As a result, Paiste feels that they can offer a high-quality cymbal line at a price level that will appeal to American drummers. Pro drummers, that is—this is still anything but a "budget" line. The cymbals are priced comparably to the top-of-the-line models of the other major brands.

There are 18 models in the *Sound Formula* series. Our test group included 13" and 14" Medium-heavy Hi-hats, a 10" Splash, 16" Thin and *Full* Crashes, an 18" *Full Crash*, and 20" *Full* and *Power* Rides. The series also includes a 12" Splash, a 14" Thin Crash, an 18" *Power Crash*, a 20" *Dry Ride*, 16", 18", and 20" Thin Chinas, and 14" Heavy and *Sound Edge* Hi-hats.

Sound

I'm not sure exactly how the production methods used in the German factory differ from those used in Switzerland, but the cymbals certainly don't suffer from them. Overall, the cymbals I tried sounded great. As a general characteristic, they all had the classic Paiste high-end clarity and shimmer.

There is something particularly nice

about Paiste's thinner splash and crash cymbals; they offer a delicacy and musicality that is most appealing. (I was especially fond of the 10" *Splash* and the 16" *Thin Crash*.) But the *Sound Formula* line also offers plenty of power: The 18" *Full Crash* had lots of body, with an explosive crash sound and a satisfying amount of sustain. And the 16" *Full Crash* was just that: full of overtones and body. It seemed to be a very good all-purpose crash; I used it in both low- and high-volume applications, and it served me well in each.

The *Full Ride* seemed best suited to low- to moderate-volume applications, simply because it, too, was full of overtones and created a terrific "wash" of sound when played very hard. This is a matter of taste and application, though; you may like a cymbal that builds a big roar of sound underneath its initial stick attack. I preferred the very pleasant, shimmery ride sound it produced when played a bit more lightly.

The *Power Ride* was better-suited to heavy playing. It was much thicker, and gave a dryer, more distinct stick attack. It did, however, build up an enormous undertone when played fast and hard. This wasn't so much of a "wash" of

sound (as with the *Full Ride*) as it was a single, droning tone. It wasn't as apparent when I played my ride patterns on the bell alone—as would be quite common in a power-rock situation—but was unavoidable when I played a fast ride pattern on the shoulder of the cymbal.

The Medium-heavy Hi-hats performed beautifully. Their weight gave them plenty of "chick" when played with the foot, and they projected well with a pleasant clarity when played with sticks. As might be expected, the 13" hi-hats were a bit quicker than the 14"; you'd want to base your choice on whether you planned to play a lot of fast, funky patterns or straighter, more "meaty" ride rhythms.

Conclusions

It's good to see that technology and innovation work the same way in the musical instrument business as in other product areas. The flagship items cost a staggering amount, but those that follow become more and more affordable. (I remember the first digital watch I saw around 20 years ago. It cost \$250.00. The same watch today costs \$2.50.) Paiste's new alloy was a quantum leap for them in terms of sound innovation. The *Sound Formula* series is a quantum leap in economics—with no apparent sacrifice in quality. I said earlier that I don't know what makes these German-made cymbals less expensive than their Swiss cousins, but Paiste is definitely doing something right. This is an excellent line, at a reasonable cost. Paiste prices their cymbals according to size, so our test group would be priced as follows: 10" - \$110; 16" - \$165; 18" - \$195; 20" - \$225; 13" hi-hats - \$240; and 14" hi-hats - \$270. (Just for your information, China cymbals and *Sound-Edge* hi-hats are priced differently from other models. See your Paiste dealer or contact the company directly for further information on other models in the *Sound Formula* series.)

Yamaha Rock Tour Custom Kit

■ by Adam Budofsky

With the *Rock Tour Custom* series, Yamaha has introduced a line of drums unquestionably made with the rock player in mind. This is one loud drumkit. According to the company, a combination of birch and Philippine mahogany plies, along with a "special phenolic resin sheath" as the outermost ply, are what give the *Rock Tour Custom* drums their kick. But we'll get more into sound a little later. First let's talk about what this kit is made up of.

One of the nice things about Yamaha's *Rock Tour Custom* kits is that their components can be mixed and matched, depending upon what size drums you want in your own personal setup. The company seemed to be reminding us of this by supplying us with their model *RTC-2182* kit, which includes *Power* rack and floor tom sizes (10x12, 11x13, and 16x16), and an 18x22 bass drum, which the Yamaha catalog lists as a *Turbo* size. A 6 1/2x14 wood snare completed the kit. The deep bass drum and black sparkle finish gave the kit a rather ominous look, leaving little doubt that these drums were meant to be *hit*.

The black sparkle, by the way, is a very

hot-looking finish—and I'm not particularly fond of sparkle colors. Yamaha took a subtle approach, so that you can barely tell that the finish is in fact a sparkle unless you're fairly close to it. Other finishes available include solid black, hot red, stage white, mellow yellow, and cobalt blue.

In addition to the drums, our kit came with cymbal and boom stands, a snare drum stand, a tom-tom mount, a bass drum pedal, and a hi-hat stand. Shall we take a closer look?

The Bass Drum

As I said, the bass drum supplied to us was a *Turbo* model: 18x22 and made from 11 plies of mahogany and birch. It had every right to be loud and punchy-sounding—and it was. Surprisingly, with no muffling, the drum was not out of control—certainly boomy, but hardly unusable. With a little bit of dampening, such as a pillow placed lightly against the batter head, the drum produced a deep thud that drove my band's heaviest numbers with authority. Even at an outdoor gig, this drum particularly spoke out, lessening that fear one gets of your sound floating away with the breeze when playing without the benefit of walls or a ceiling.

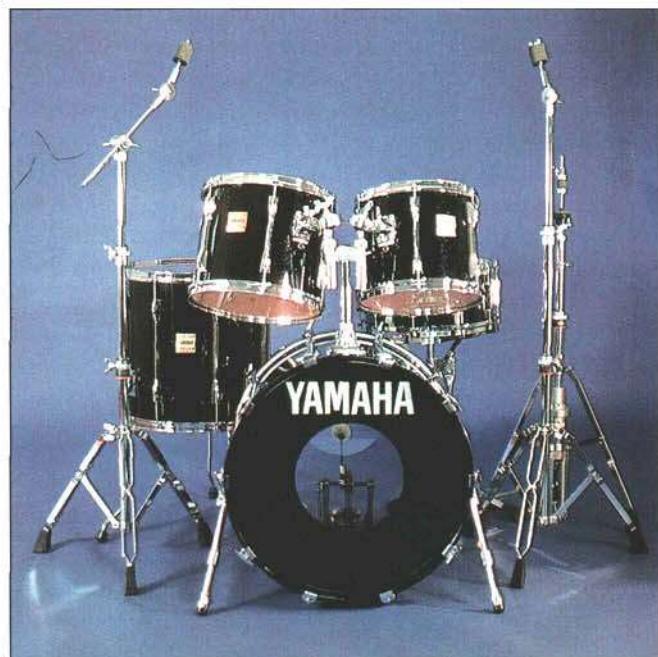


Photo by Scott G. Bienskot

The drum was fitted with wood counter-hoops finished in the same black sparkle as the drumshells, and sported fairly nice 45° bearing edges. The front head was black, with the Yamaha logo stamped above a 10", centrally located hole.

Along with all the other drums, the bass drum featured one-piece, long-line, high-tension lugs. Yamaha's promotional literature states that these lugs "let you tighten the heads as much as you want and keep them that way." Now, personally I don't know too many rock drummers who would torque the heads of power-sized toms and bass drums up particularly tightly. On the contrary, most go for a fat, low tuning. But the option for high tension is there, and the lugs do lend the kit a clean, attractive look.

Between the lugs and the drum's shell (as with each of the kit's drums) were plastic "isolators." This is a very nice touch in terms of avoiding metal-to-shell contact. In fact, Yamaha chose to put similar isolators between the shells and the logos and serial number badges attached to the drums.

One thing that some people might consider bothersome is the design of the bass drum spurs. They are adjustable to only two slots: flush with the shell, and in a standing position. In itself, this might not be too much of a problem. But the position of the spurs is locked via wingnuts, and I got the uneasy feeling that loosening these nuts just a bit too far would cause them to fall off. It seemed apparent that the threads were kept from protruding past the wing nuts for cosmetic reasons, but I'd personally rather have a few threads sticking out than one more thing to worry about during a quick breakdown or setup. Also, a drumkey is required to adjust leg length or pop out the spring-loaded spikes that protrude from the rubber feet—another unnecessary hassle. How about a different idea here? Otherwise, the spurs are very sturdy and hold the drum securely.

Toms and Snare

As with the rest of this kit, the tom-toms were loud and punchy, exactly as Yamaha claims. Fitted with Remo *Pinstripe* heads, they provided a cutting, full tone, but with a good amount of attack. The rack toms are made from eight plies of the mahogany/birch combination; the floor toms (like the bass drums) are made from 11 plies—resulting in a drum that provides quite a shot. All the drums held their tuning quite well, with the 12" tom seeming unusually happy at a fairly low tuning. Riding on the floor tom created a pleasant rumble.

The snare drum that came with our kit was a 6 1/2x14, though an 8x14 is also available. Though its lugs were squared off, as opposed to the rest of the drums' rounded look, it's nice to see a snare drum closely match the rest of a kit in appearance (especially with a finish like these drums had). And with this snare you probably won't feel compelled to automatically find another, better drum. I was able to get a great sound out of it tightened up real high, all the way down to a pretty low note. Without the *Ring Arrestor* Yamaha provided, the drum was a little ringy, but in a good way. The *Arrestor* only cleaned up the sound to a dry slap, but those of you fond of a little ring could get away without using any muffling here.

The drum was fitted with a white coated *Ambassador* batter head, plus Yamaha's *Power Hoops*, which provided for decent cross-sticks and rimshots. But what really stood out for me was the sound this drum gave without the snares on at all. Tuned about medium tight, I got a POP! out of it that really added great color to a few songs—enough even for my normally quiet bandmates to take notice. Also featured on the drum was a short, 20-strand snare, and a simple but very usable snare mechanism—a little rough popping into place, but not too loud. Again, like the other drums in this kit, the snare was no sissy: Snares on or off, it projected very well—even in an outside setting. Yet it was still more sensitive than

many other snare drums included with drumset lines.

Hardware

Since the *Rock Tour Custom* kit is a middle-level drumkit, one wouldn't expect Yamaha to cut corners on things like hardware. Our five-piece package kit might be considered the "baby" of Yamaha's catalog configurations, and as such it was fitted out with the company's 800 Series hardware, rather than the much larger 900 Series *Monster* hardware you may have seen in the *RTC* ads. Those larger stands are standard on some of the larger kits, and are available as separate items, as well. But don't get the idea that what came on our kit is wimpy stuff. Indeed, the mostly double-braced pieces that came with our set show that Yamaha has thought in terms of a kit that is going to take more than a little punishment.

Two cymbal stands came with the kit: one *CS-820* straight stand and one *CS-822* boom. Both were double-braced and triple-tiered and featured ratchet-style tilters and heavy-duty rubber feet. And their weight and sturdy construction kept them quite at bay while having their cymbals bashed at. The boom stand has a nice touch: The boom arm slides out of its holder, enabling it to retract into the stand's extensions for easy storage or for conversion into a normal cymbal stand.

The *SS-810* snare stand provided with our kit was also quite sturdy, due to its double-braced legs, which splayed out nicely. The basket held firm, and height adjustment both up and down was more than reasonable. The *HS-810* hi-hat stand was single-braced but unyielding just the same, and featured a very comfortable feel, good gripping rubber feet, a two-piece pedal without a toe-stop, a ridged footplate, and a memory lock on its post. A dial-type adjustment controlled spring tension, which was able to be changed from fairly tight to moderately loose, with a big span of fine-tuning in between. The general feel of the hi-hat was comfortable and responsive.

The *FP-810* bass drum pedal had a

very responsive and controlled feel. It featured double-chain drive, was single-spring adjustable in tension, had a hard felt beater adjustable in height via a drumkey, and used a ridged footplate, also without a toe-stop. Two spring-loaded spikes aided in support, and the wingnut that controls its clamp was positioned off to the side—a simple but infinitely helpful feature. All in all, a fine, uncomplicated pedal.

One last hardware feature that some people seem to really like and others...well...differ in opinion on is Yamaha's ball-and-socket tom-tom mounts. The one supplied here incorporates a nice idea: The piece that holds the tom arms' down tubes contains a third slot for a cymbal stand to be placed into. When not in use, a plastic plug simply fits in its place. This triangular piece is connected to the bass drum via one down tube that goes into a wingnut-secured holder attached to the bass drum. The ball-and-sockets are also wingnut secured, as are the toms themselves to the tom arms. This setup makes for a lot of wingnuts, and honestly, no matter how tight I secured the whole deal, I never felt that it was as secure as I would have liked. In fact, doing a ride pattern on the 13" tom convinced me of the fact; there was just too much bouncing around for my comfort.

This is not to say that Yamaha's configuration is not well-suited to setting up toms as comfortably as anyone would probably want; the ball-and-socket is a very adaptable setup. And perhaps hanging each tom individually from floor stands might alleviate the problem. But I can't help but think that what we're given here to hold the toms (remember, these ain't sissy drums) could be improved upon.

Conclusions

Yamaha has claimed to make a drumset ideal for the hard rock or metal drummer, and it has succeeded. If you like to play that type of music—or even if you don't—you can't deny the pure fun of

playing a kit that really gives out what you put into it. The sound is great, the looks (at least of the kit we tested) are outstanding, and besides a couple of questionable hardware design choices, I feel that it performed superbly at what it was meant to do: offer the rock drummer a top-quality, mid-priced kit that can pro-

vide a no-nonsense, rock punch.

Yamaha's *Rock Tour Custom* drumkits are available in a variety of setups, and you can mix and match among the components, so prices will obviously vary. The suggested retail price for our test kit is \$2,850. Contact your Yamaha dealer for more details.

The Original Drum Screen

• by Ed Uribe



The Original Drum Screen is a portable, free-standing, sound-separation screen introduced recently by drummer/designer Thom Postema. The *Drum Screen* is made of clear acrylic plastic, and comes in two versions: the *Stage* model, which is 4' high, and the *Studio* model, which is 5' high. Each *Screen* is created from two two-panel sections. Each section is made up of one 2'-wide front panel and one 2'-wide side panel, which are connected by a plastic hinge. The two sections connect via a central bar that is slotted to receive the edges of the two front panels.

The *Drum Screen* is designed to be placed around a drumkit on the front and

two sides. It's self-supporting when opened and features some convenient cut-outs at the bottoms of the panels to accommodate any cables that might need to pass through.

The concept of a "drum screen" is nothing new; I've played behind them in orchestral situations as well as television and film recordings, and a friend of mine plays behind them regularly in Las Vegas/Atlantic City show settings. The main use for the screens in orchestral settings is to keep the drum volume from overpowering the more delicate acoustic instruments, such as strings and woodwinds. (Remember, these settings are acoustic, with no mic's.) In the miked situations—such as the Vegas shows and the TV and film recording sessions—the main function is to help keep the drums from leaking into the other microphones on stage.

The screens I've played behind are much higher and two to three times as thick as *The Original Drum Screen*. My friend who plays the shows tells me the same thing. But of course, those are generally semi-permanent house or studio equipment, and are not designed to be portable. *The Original Drum Screen* is intended to be carried around as part of a drummer's personal equipment, so its size must reflect a compromise between the ideal and the practical. The idea is to provide a means of separating the drums from other instruments on a live stage in a club or small concert situation where microphone proximity is tight and leakage is a problem. Thom Postema also feels that the *Drum Screen* helps contain the drum sound within it, thus concentrating that sound into the mic's and



making for a better overall amplified drum sound.

I agree with Thom as far as the claims mentioned above go. Given the necessary limitations of its size, *The Original Drum Screen* does provide containment and separation of the drum sound. It doesn't do this to the point that a larger, thicker screen would do, but such a screen would be impractical for a working drummer who had to carry and set up his own equipment. *The Original Drum Screen* isn't particularly small (2' x 4' or [5'] x 3" when collapsed) or light (47 pounds). But it is manageable by one person—especially given the convenience of the optional padded canvas carrying case. (This comes at extra cost, but would be a virtual necessity if you were to move the screen regularly, since acrylic plastic scratches easily.)

I have to take issue with a few things that Thom Postema states in his literature regarding the *Drum Screen*. His flyer states that the unit acts as a "portable isolation shield that can provide drummers with the audio dynamics of a studio isolation booth." The *Drum Screen* is a three-sided partition open at the top and

the rear; it is not a totally enclosed room such as a studio drum booth would be. It certainly does keep some drum sound from leaking into other mic's on stage (and other sounds from leaking into the drum mic's, as well). But it simply cannot isolate like a booth. I prefer to think of it as a sound *separator*, rather than an *isolator*.

As far as offering "the audio dynamics of a studio isolation booth" goes, I have to disagree totally. As near as I could determine, the *Drum Screen* does not provide *any* audio characteristics whatsoever. Let me hasten to add that this is not necessarily a disadvantage, since many drum-

mers don't want their drum sounds affected by whatever sound isolation method is necessary for miking purposes. I simply want to point out that putting an acrylic plastic shield in front of the drums cannot negate overall room acoustics in the same way putting the drums into a small, usually padded room can. Those room acoustics (along with the tuning and quality of your drums) are what will give you your drum sound. The fact that the *Drum Screen* will contain this sound and bring it more into your drum mic's is probably its best feature. Just don't plan on its making much difference to what that sound is.

I've mainly concentrated on the qualities of the *Drum Screen* in a miking application, but some players might find it useful as a sound barrier in an acoustic situation—such as a lounge gig or small club where drum volume is a problem. Again, the *Drum Screen* won't actually absorb the sound (and as such won't reduce it), but it can *deflect* the sound back at you, and keep it up on the stage area, rather than allowing it to project out to the audience as much as usual. This might enable you to play at an energy

level comfortable for you, while the audience hears the drums at a level comfortable for them. Such a feature might go a long way towards good relations between drummers and bandleaders, club managers, etc. And since the *Drum Screen* is clear, you'll remain visible to the audience, and whatever contribution you make to your band's performance visually will not be impaired.

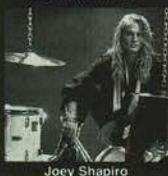
In summation, *The Original Drum Screen* works well as a sound barrier for acoustic performances or as a separator for miking situations. It is collapsible and reasonably portable in its carrying case. If you are in a playing situation that calls for some containment of the drum sound and you need to provide the method yourself (rather than relying on a sound company or studio to provide it for you), then the *Drum Screen* might be worth checking into—especially since there simply isn't anything else like it commercially available. The *Stage* model that I tried carries a suggested list price of \$499.00 in clear acrylic; various color tints carry an extra charge. The *Stage* case sells for \$105.95. The *Studio* model sells for \$530.00, with its case priced at \$120.95. For further information, contact The Original Drum Screen, 4025 Chicago Drive S.W., Grandville, Michigan 49418, (616) 534-8787.



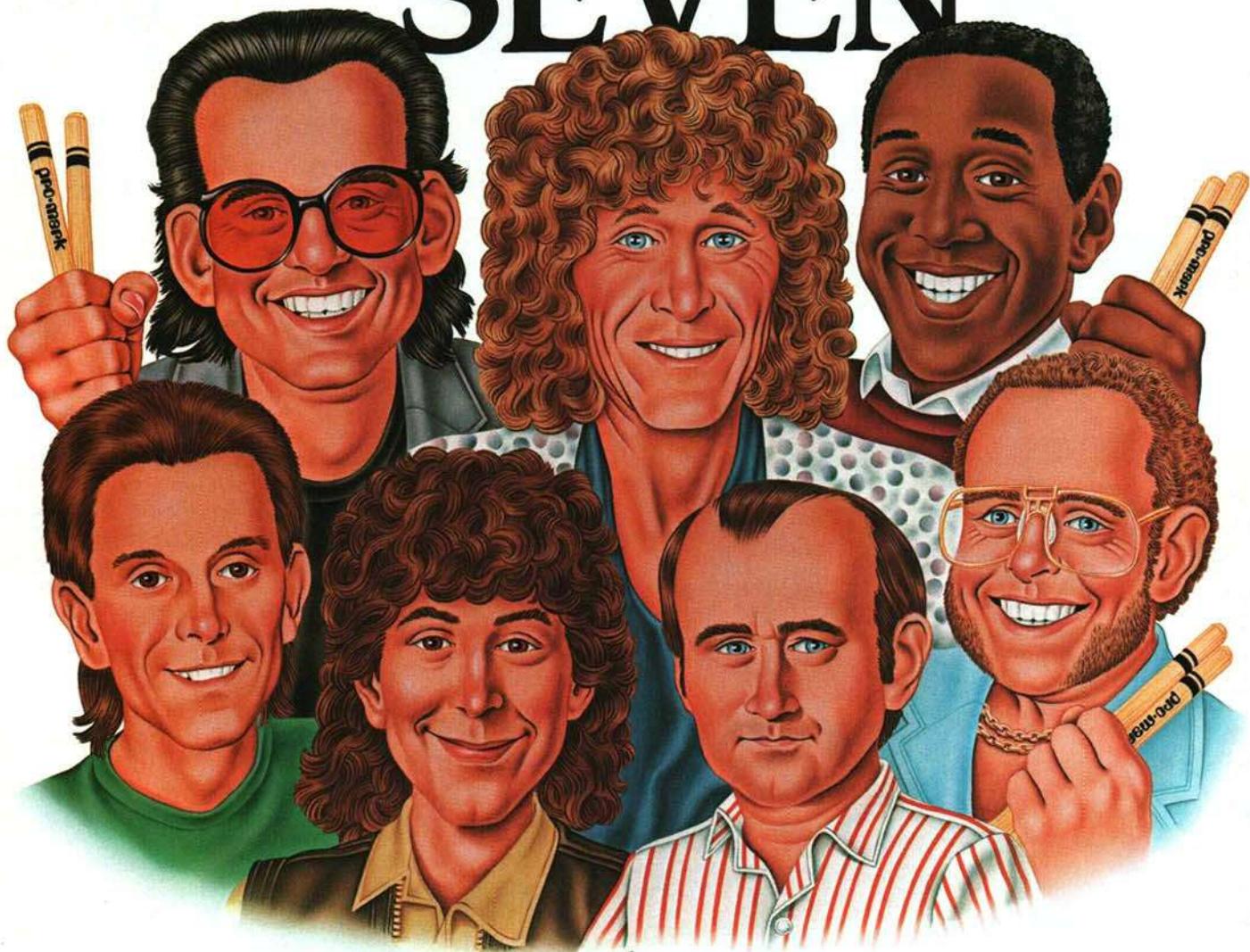
CORRECTION

July's Product Close-Up incorrectly listed the phone number for Holz (makers of Holz Snapperz; as (808) 532-5733. The correct number is (801) 532-5733.

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The Young Monsters, left to right: Bobby Blotzer (Ratt), Nick Menza (Megadeth).



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Audie Desbrow (Great White), Ken Mary (House of Lords), Matt Sorum (Guns N' Roses)

Applying Double Strokes To The Drumset

■ by Bobby Rock



MUSIC KEY

Open	X
S.D.	●
B.D.	●

Although double-stroke rolls may be more closely associated with marching bands and snare drum pieces, there are plenty of contemporary drumset applications for them as well. Let's start with a very basic double-stroke roll—the five-stroke roll. Here's the basic sticking for a five-stroke roll (played as 16th notes):

Before you move on to the other exercises, be sure that you can play the previous five-stroke rolls very cleanly on your snare drum.

One way to apply double strokes to the drumset is by using them within time feels on the hi-hat. The following example demonstrates the five-stroke roll as applied to the end of a bar of 16th notes on the hi-hat. Notice that it's written with the open, 32nd-note interpretation, as opposed to that of a closed press roll. This gives the five-stroke optimum definition and clarity.

Now add the kick and snare to the previous hand pattern, and you have this beat:

Here are some examples utilizing the five-stroke roll in other one-bar 16th-note patterns. It may be easier for you to play the hands alone before adding the bass drum pattern underneath—and that's fine. Just be sure to play the doubles on the hi-hat as cleanly as you can, and be sure to groove!

Now let's expand the concept a little more by using seven-stroke rolls the same way we used five-stroke rolls. Here's a bar of loth notes on the hi-hat with a seven-stroke doubling the last three 16th notes, creating 32nd notes.

Again, let's add the snare and bass to create a simple beat:

Here are a few one-bar examples incorporating the seven-stroke roll.

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Put The Music First

• by Roy Burns

A cliche that I hear drummers use a lot these days is "less is more." By this they mean that the effect of playing simply can sometimes be greater than the effect of playing more notes. The opposite of this idea is represented by the jazz drummer who says, "The drummer should not be *just* a timekeeper." In other words, in certain styles, the drummer should interact with the other musicians—as opposed to keeping a metronomic beat. As you can see, these two overused comments are complete opposites. Which one, then, is true? As a matter of fact, both are true to some degree.

When I was on Lionel Hampton's band some years ago, he just wanted straight time playing with very few fills. I've often thought that Hamp's band was the first big rock 'n' roll band. He loves a strong backbeat.

The other night I heard Elvin Jones play. Elvin has a way of weaving in and out rhythmically, interacting with a soloist in such a way that you sometimes wonder if even *he* knows where he is. But then he comes right in, and you realize that he *always* knows where he is and where *everyone else* is—musically and rhythmically. Now, to hear Elvin sit there and just play straight time would be a real disappointment. So in his particular case, less would just be less. In fact, it would be a lot less.

My first recording session was with the late, great pianist Teddy Wilson. I had never met him until the evening of the recording session. It was to be bass, drums, and piano, and there were no charts to read. So I asked Teddy, "What do you want me to play?" He replied, "How do you mean?" I said, "Would you like sticks, or brushes, or any special

style?" He thought for a moment, gave me a slightly bemused smile, and said, "Just play whatever is appropriate!" At first I felt a little confused. And then I understood. What he wanted was for me to put the music first and just play what seemed to fit. I consider that moment to be one of the best music lessons of my life.

Shortly after this recording session I joined Benny Goodman's band. I was still in my very early 20's, and we were doing a television variety show. I had been on the band about two weeks, when Benny called me over and said, "In this band, all I want you to do is play the drum part. That's why Gene Krupa sounded so good in my band; he just played his part. I don't want the drummer to be a hero. If someone else is not playing well, I don't want you to play louder; it only makes the problem worse. So you play the drum part, I'll play the clarinet part—and we'll get along fine!"

I could hear Teddy Wilson's words echoing in my mind. "Just play whatever is appropriate." If the music requires a simple drum part, then play it simply and with a full heart. If the music requires something more complex, then play as much as is needed.

I guess you could say that my favorite cliche would be "Put the music first." I do not enjoy hearing a drummer "inflict" his style on a band. This is the type of player who says, "This is my style, and this is the way I play." Drummers who think this way are more concerned about themselves than they are about the music. They usually don't go too far in the business, because other musicians don't like to play with them.

Another example of reacting to the music and the situation is recording versus playing live. In the studio, it is

important to remember that people will hear your performance again and again. You must be a little more thoughtful about your playing. Overplaying can be very detrimental to the music.

However, when you are playing live—especially in a nightclub—you get to play several sets. You can try things and take chances. If you goof, there is always the next set, and what the heck: No one is recording you. This is a time to experiment and have fun. This is the most appealing part of playing in nightclubs.

In New York City, there used to be a club called Nick's. I was working there when

it became obvious that Nick's was going to close. The last night was a great party. Many famous musicians who had played there over the years showed up. Everyone was having fun. Also, everyone had a chance to sit in and play. There were some great musical moments.

However, the one I remember most vividly was when Zutty Singleton decided to sit in. Zutty was one of the giants of dixieland drumming. He was also a very warm and humorous man, both personally and in his playing, as well.

There was a pianist named Hank whose last name escapes me. Hank and Zutty decided to play a duet. Zutty made himself comfortable on my drums and launched into a terrific rhythm on the tom-toms. Hank looked up and said, "What are we playing?" Zutty, without even looking up said, "Just get something to fit it!" That completely broke up both

Hank and the audience.

So, the next time you are not sure how to approach the music or the situation, "Just get something to fit it." I can't think of better advice.

"Benny said,
'You play
the drum part,
I'll play the
clarinet
part—and
we'll get
along fine!'"



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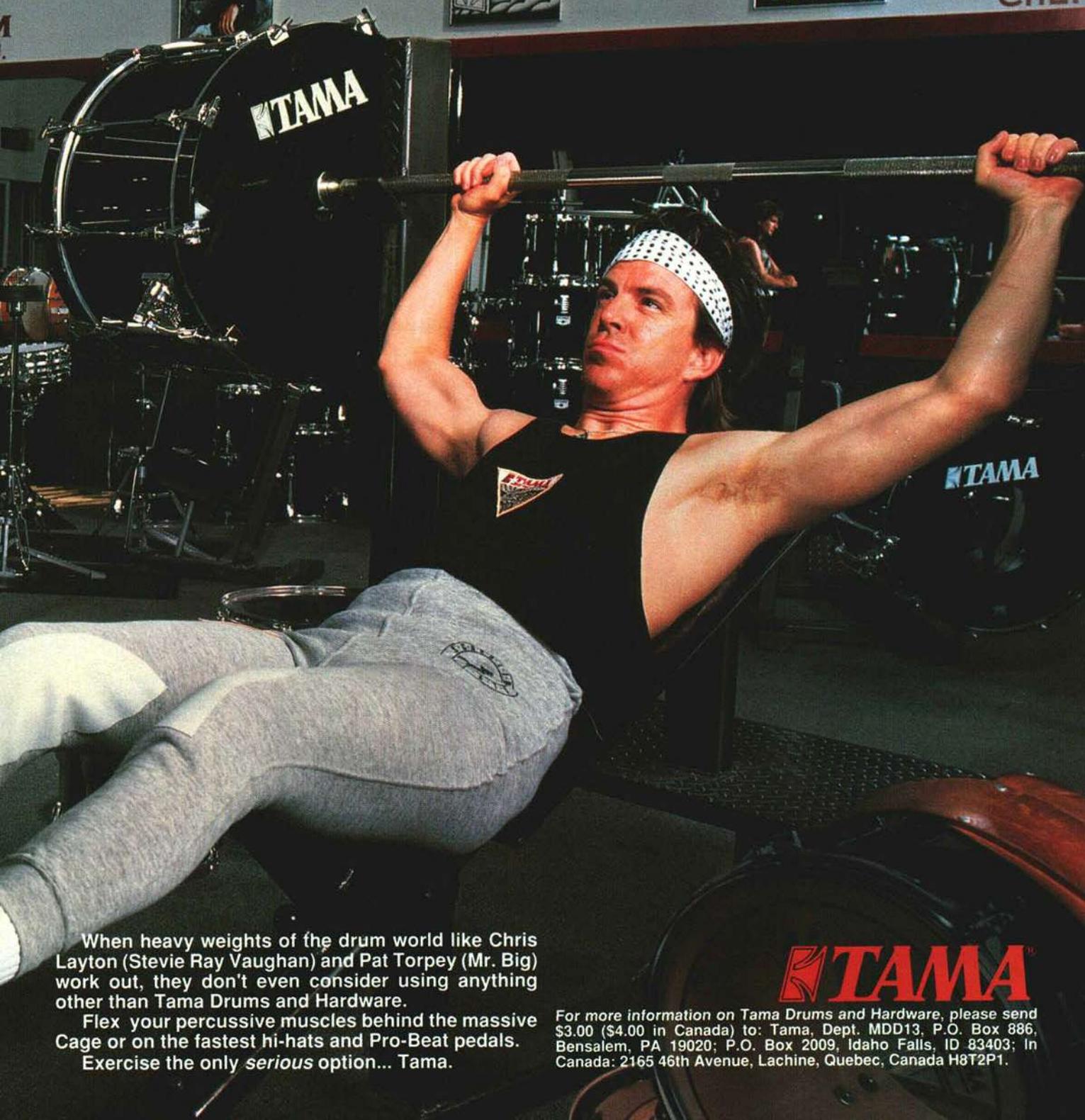
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Rhythmic Rudimental Progressions:

Part 5: Double Paradiddles

• by Joe Morello

Transcribed by Keith Necessary

The purpose of the following exercise is to be able to play double paradiddles using 8th notes, 8th-note triplets, 16th notes, 16th-note triplets, and 32nd notes. You'll probably find it a little tricky at first trying to hear the accented patterns over the quarter note.

Play this exercise with and without accents. Be patient and play relaxed. Don't raise the metronome speed if you feel any sort of tension. Also, experiment with dynamic levels. Play everything from very soft (*ppp*) to very loud (*fff*).

Try playing this exercise with brushes; playing doubles with

brushes is a great exercise for wrists and fingers. Also, try this exercise at the drumset. Play the unaccented notes on the snare drum and the accented notes on the toms or cymbal/bass drum combination, while playing four on the hi-hat with your left foot. By the way, once you are comfortable accenting the first and third notes of the double paradiddle (as notated), go back and accent only the first note.

If you have any questions about this exercise, you can contact Joe through Modern Drummer.

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Photo by Rick Mattingly



Straight In. Straight Out.



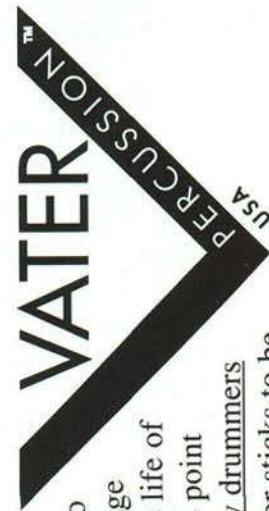
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Shell-Shocked

by John Clarke

When tackling the subject of snare drums ["Snare Drum Options," Oct. '87 *MDJ*], I thought that it was perhaps the most difficult and subjective area of a drumset that I had ever attempted to categorize—in terms of "what drum for what sound." Not so, I am afraid. Looking at what is offered these days in wood shells, the timbres and construction ideas seem endless. For the sake of space alone it has been necessary to restrict my examination of woods to the two main types found in the manufacture of many top-line drums.

Currently, maple seems to lead the field as the most popular material, with birch following very closely. Both have the ideal grain characteristics and tonal qualities drum makers demand. Maple tends to have a rich, mellow quality, while birch produces more "cut" and thus has the ability to project very well. (Maybe that over-simplifies things a little; the written word obviously has limitations when describing sound.)

Most maple-shell construction methods involve either six or eight plies that are formed into a cylinder. Creating this relatively thick shell wall (and having the individual plies join at different places around the cylinder) results in a very strong shell. Consequently, several manufacturers do not add the reinforcing hoops found in thinner shells. Over the past couple of decades, many large drum makers have switched to making shells this way, since besides creating the sounds demanded by many of today's contemporary drummers, it is less labor-intensive than the second (and more traditional) method of constructing a drum shell.

For the most part, those builders who favor birch ply also appear to prefer a

"traditional" thin shell with reinforcing hoops at each end of the cylinder. Taking as few as three plies, joining them with a long tapered scarf joint, and adding reinforcing hoops is claimed to produce a drum with great resonating and tonal properties. Drums made in this fashion have been around for many years, and their popularity continues. Due to the extra work and material involved, this way of making a drum of good quality tends to make them slightly more expensive than other types of construction. (It must be stressed that birch shells with the same six- or eight-ply specifications as those described for maple drums are available, and in fact there are some leading brands using those thicker birch shells.)

When talking specifically about snare drums, there is a third formula to consider: the solid, one-piece shell. So far, I have only seen this offered in maple. Usually involving the steam-bending of flat boards into cylinders and (with the exception of one brand I am aware of) utilizing reinforcing hoops, it is a drum-making method going back to the earlier part of this century. Solid shells were reintroduced in a small way a few years back, and have recently been taken up by some of the leading drum companies. The drums are said to offer great tonal features, having neither plies nor glue to inhibit resonance. Due to the high-quality woods necessary and the amount of work involved in making such drums, solid-shell snares can certainly be considered a major investment.

Although in this article I am unable to cover a multitude of combination-wood drums (such as birch/mahogany, birch/luan, and many more), do not write these off as "inferior" drums. In many cases, fine drums are made from combination plies. Often it is possible to reduce the cost of making a drum by employing woods that are not as expensive, and still turn out a product of high quality.

By now you may begin to appreciate how much the choice of shell is involved in the sound produced by a top-line drumset. To elaborate on this, a compari-

son between various bass drum configurations may be helpful at this point. A 14x22 drum in 8-ply maple should produce a warm, mellow, rich tone, with plenty of bottom-end frequencies. The same type of drum in 8-ply birch will have more "cut" and "edge" to the sound—but still should be relatively good in the low range. However, a 14x22 drum with a *thin* birch shell will be a totally different-sounding drum. It will be loud, musical, and very resonant, but won't give the "heavy" depth of the thicker shells. The same comparison applies to all other drums in the set.

Obviously, drumheads play a major role in *any* drum's sound, but I have based my comparisons on the assumption that the drums would be fitted with heads from within the ranges one would normally expect to find (no *Hydraulic* batter and front heads on the thin-shelled drum, nor *Diplomat* front and back heads on a thick-shelled power bass drum).

It has been asked, "Why not mix two styles of shell construction and materials, such as an 8-ply maple bass drum and 3-ply birch rack toms?" Although experimentation often produces good ideas, this is one that just does not work well at all. It is similar to choosing cymbals that will go well together and blend in terms of tone and character. If you take a set of cymbals that really sound matched, and put in a new crash cymbal that has been made from different metals and by a totally different method, it will usually stand out from the rest. Often, in fact, it will sound terrible—even though when used with others of its type it would sound great. The same rules apply when it comes to mixing drums of totally differing character. I have noticed, however, that some drum companies are starting to realize the benefits of having 8-ply bass drums and floor toms matched with 6-ply rack toms. This works well, since the wood and construction remain constant, and thus the drums are compatible.

Several other factors have an effect on the overall drum sound, even after the

continued on page 94

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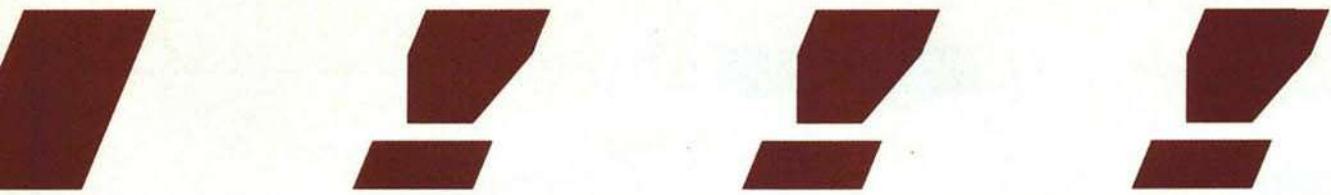
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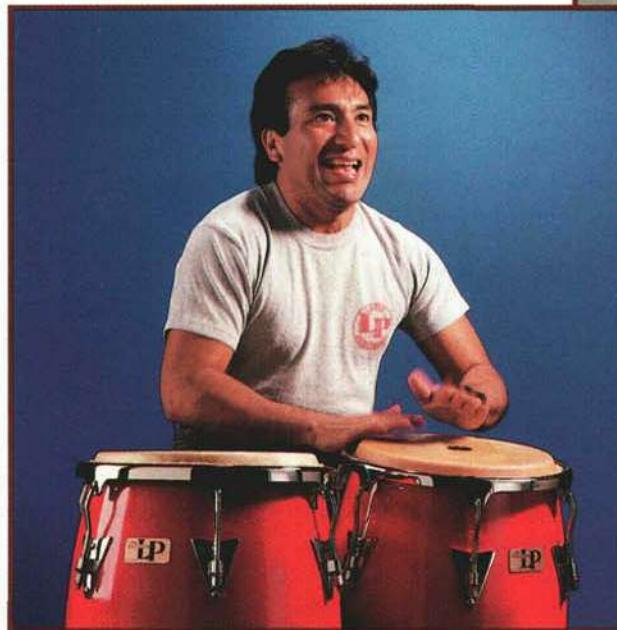
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Photos by Martin Cohen

Surviving The Society Gig

• by Russ Lewellen

There may come a time in your life when the phone will ring, and the voice at the other end will offer you a job with a society band. Will you be prepared musically and mentally to handle it? Perhaps this article will supply a few tips towards making that gig a successful one for you.

The Basics

Let's start from the beginning and take things one step at a time. Professionalism in this field starts from the moment you accept the job. Remember to get precise directions to the venue, and find out the proper dress code for the evening. A tuxedo is standard wear on these gigs, though many bands will also accept a dark suit, white dress shirt, and a black bow tie. Be sure to allow plenty of time to arrive, unload, and set up your drums. For this kind of job, it's always better to take *only* what you'll need and leave your Neil Peart double bass drum outfit at home. Usually a standard 4-piece kit with a ride cymbal and a few small crashes will work best. Stage room is generally limited, and overcrowding the rest of the band with unnecessary gear is a great way to start the night off on the wrong foot.

Many of your fellow band members may know considerably more about the kind of job you'll be doing than you do. So don't be afraid to take advice from the guys who have worked with this band before. A tip or two before the job starts could prevent some embarrassing moments later on in the evening.

Keep in mind that time between tunes

on these types of gigs is generally quite short. The object is always to keep the momentum going by keeping the dancers out on the floor. An experienced leader will usually call out a group of tunes in advance. Before starting the night, it's always wise to look over your parts. The charts may not always be in the best condition. Be on the lookout for pencil changes, additions, and deletions of entire sections. If you're unsure about *anything*, talk it over with the leader ahead of time or briefly discuss it with another band member.

The Music

Most society bands have changed very little over the past decade or so. Almost all of the music is performed with a two-beat feel, which many fondly refer to as the "businessman's bounce." The main thing to remember is that the society band leader will be looking for the *correct beat* and the *right tempo*. Although most of the music is relatively easy to read, you must place a great deal of concentration on keeping good time. Most leaders will overlook a drummer who misses a rest at the end of a 16-bar phrase, but that same leader will quickly lose patience with a drummer who continually rushes or drags the time. The reason is simple: You're not playing for a full house at Madison Square Garden, or for an attentive jazz club crowd; you're playing for dancers. And in the society field, the dancers are not the most important thing—*they're the only thing!*

Most society bands will be made up of seven or eight pieces, which might include two brass, three saxes, and three rhythm players (piano, bass, and drums). Brushes can be used early in the evening, but usually a closed hi-hat and a solid but tasty backbeat are what's called for. Many leaders prefer a solid rim click on the backbeat. A clean-sounding ride cymbal will work on the swing numbers, and if you're adept at gently accenting brass figures while maintaining a strong, danceable beat, by all means do so. But the

basic rule is to keep it simple.

Most of the straight two-beat style dance tunes will be fairly easy to play. You're apt to find a lot of medleys, though some may appear to have been put together with varied musical tastes in mind. Going from "Stardust" right into "Deep In The Heart Of Texas" might satisfy a couple of crowd requests, but they'll drive you up the wall tempo-wise if your concentration isn't totally there.

You can also expect to run into a substantial amount of Latin music at most society affairs. If the traditional Latin beats are a weak part of your playing, don't hesitate to pick up a couple of good records or an instruction book and do a bit of woodshedding in advance, even if it's only a one-nighter you've been asked to play. The time spent will never be wasted, and you never know when that knowledge may come in handy again. Many of the dancers at these affairs will be graduates of a dance school, and they'll most definitely know the difference between a mambo, a rhumba, and a cha-cha. Just because you know a few Latin beats, don't count on their getting you through the entire night with a bunch of Arthur Murray Dance School graduates. Know what you're doing *before* you get there. Learn all your beats, and know them like the back of your hand.

There will also be a lot of ad-lib tunes called, though most of them will generally be of the two-beat variety. And should you be required to do a little solo work, always keep it within the confines of the music being played. That latest Alex Van Halen break you've been working on might be great at next week's rock gig, but it won't work very well here.

Random Thoughts

Intermissions are a good chance to relax and take stock of how things are going. Accept any criticisms you may receive in the spirit in which they're given. Many leaders are sensitive to time on and off the bandstand. So it's best not

PRACTICE CORNER

to wander too far off during breaks, where you'll be difficult to locate when the break is over and it's time to go back on. Also never forget your place. You're a salaried employee, not an invited guest. So stay away from the buffet table unless you're invited.

Many times you may find that your musical ideas will clash with those of the leader. Remember that most successful society band leaders have been doing what they do for many years. Most have *definite* ideas about what they want from a drummer. You may think they're old-fashioned—as they well might be—but if that's what the leader wants, then the bottom line is *don't make waves!*

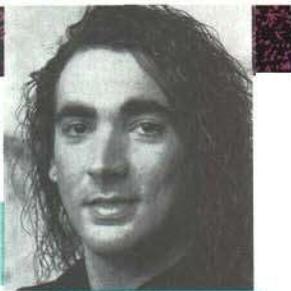
In his excellent article "Adapting To The Gig" (July '88 MD), Robert Coxon said, "Many inexperienced drummers accept jobs in a certain musical style, and then proceed to cut loose and exercise their chops, completely disregarding the limitations placed upon them by the music." Don't be one of them!

Remember that the mark of a true professional is to do the best possible job no matter what the musical circumstances. There are good and bad society bands, just as there are good and bad rock, country, and jazz bands. Doing the best job you can with a positive attitude is the only way to fly. There's a lot of very good money to be made, and a great deal of valuable musical experience to be had in the society band field. All it takes is the ability to do the job like a pro.

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Kevin Haskins

by Teri Saccone

Since forming in 1985, Love And Rockets have followed a diversity of musical directions, from stark acoustic numbers to chugging, churning, near-heavy metal pathos; from far-reaching meanderings that embrace Middle Eastern flavorings and psychedelic broodings to pulse-racing post-punk dance rock.

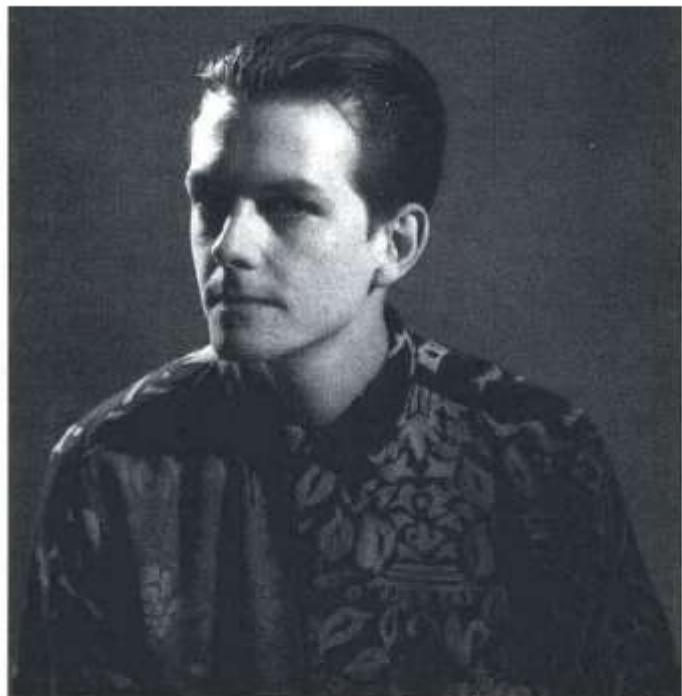
Their first three releases (Seventh Dream Of Teenage Heaven, Express, and Earth Sun Moon) proved the trio to be a most durable, chameleon-like group. And 1989's Love And Rockets netted them a number-one single—a ravishing dance number called "So Alive"—and a Top-10 album.

Members Daniel Ash (guitar/vocals), David J (bass, guitars), and David's younger brother, Kevin Haskins (drums), are also credited as purveyors of the Gothic movement through the post-art rock band Bauhaus, back in the early '80s. They later took that experiment one step beyond in an indefinable, cult-ish entity known as Tones On Tail. All three formations have enjoyed American success, but outside of Bauhaus, the three musicians have had little recognition at home in England.

Suitably harnessing the varied rhythms for these assorted aggregations is drummer Haskins. An electronics aficionado, Haskins capitalizes on his strengths: percussion, structured drum parts, a liberal use of technology, and a pragmatic approach to what Love And Rockets' music demands. Always interesting, Haskins' playing is also always right on the money. He admits he's not a studied, technical-wizard type, but his drumming exemplifies the true Love And Rockets musical persona.

TS: One of the most noticeable aspects of your playing is that you're rooted in both the old and the new. It's apparent that you've got jazz roots, because you play traditional grip and use a rather small kit. On the other hand, you have fully embraced electronics, incorporating many sounds and effects on your drums. Additionally, you play vibes, percussion, guitar synth, and keyboards. What kind of a musical background do you have?

KH: I went to lessons with a local dance band drummer who played the clubs in Northampton [England]. I did that for a year, and I learned the basics: pop beats, jazz beats, bossa novas, that kind of thing. Then I started to get into the real boring stuff: all the paradiddles, the different kind of rolls. At the same time, I started going to art school, which is very demanding on your time, so I kind of stopped having lessons and put drumming more into the background. I was about 16 by then. After the art school involvement went on for a couple of



years, David and Danny started getting various bands together, and I got interested in playing again. Then I started going to a guy called Max Abrahams, who was a big band player during the '30s and '40s. He was about 75 years old at the time, and quite a character. He had this great old drumkit that he had since he first started—all yellow with age. I don't think he changed the skins in 20 years. [laughs]

TS: Did it bother you to have to take lessons on such a dinosaur?

KH: No, I felt kind of honored to be playing that kit. He was a very good teacher too, but very strict. He sort of frightened you into things. I would go down to London for lessons every couple of months, and if I hadn't been keeping up I would dread it. But he was very good.

I found it very hard to discipline myself. I wish I had started playing at a younger age. I started when I was 13, and I think if you start when you're younger, you get into it more. There are so many distractions when you're older.

TS: Both of the drum teachers you mentioned were older and influenced by swing and big band. Obviously, they taught you to play traditional grip, but have you ever tried to play matched grip?

KH: I suppose I used to see what it was like when I was younger, but I can't do that now. Sometimes, when I see drummers who can go 'round the cymbals with both hands, I wish I had learned that way. But having learned the other way, it's very hard to do that with my left hand. I'm sure if I watched old films of Buddy Rich I could see how it's done.

TS: When you did "get interested in playing drums again," how did you eventually get to being a member of Bauhaus?

KH: I had my first band when I was about 14, along with my brother David. We just did cover songs of Status Quo, Free, the Stones, and bands like that. That lasted about three years. Then David and I wanted to do a Dr. Feelgood number, but the lead singer wanted to do "Leaving On A Jet Plane." That's when we split up. Then we formed a punk band called the Submerged Tent, which I think lasted for about three weeks and did about two gigs. Then we formed Jackplug & the Sockets, which turned into the Craze, which eventually turned into Bauhaus.

TS: Have you and your brother always played together?

KH: Yeah, apart from one band that he was in and I wasn't. Dave has always been a big influence on me. I used to listen to his record collection, and he used to take me along to see some great gigs.

TS: Bauhaus is credited with having engineered the whole Gothic rock movement in Britain. Looking back, it seems like Bauhaus was a bit pretentious at times—maybe a little too much style over substance.

KH: Even at the time we had a *lot* of criticism for being pretentious. We couldn't really see it then, but now we can look back and understand completely. It's easy now to see how people could have come to that conclusion. [laughs]

TS: The music was basically a backdrop for the theatrics: very atmospheric, and often dark. Can you give me an example of your contributions to the group as far as creating the sound?

KH: Initially I had no idea of exactly what the band was going to be about. At the first rehearsal, we started out with the track "Bela Lugosi's Dead," and I had to come up with something on the spot. So I thought, "I'll try that bossa nova rhythm I remember learning a few years back." That's what I ended up playing on the recording.

TS: Did Bauhaus give you the opportunity to learn much about drumming, considering that it was your first professional outlet?

KH: It was a good atmosphere to be working in, based largely around the idea that we were using everything as minimally as possible. We were never regarded as being accomplished musicians, so we tried to make up for that by using as much imagination as we could. We were always trying to break new ground with what we were doing, which can be a very healthy way of working.

TS: The follow-up band to Bauhaus—Tones On Tail—wasn't at all Gothic-sounding, yet it didn't resemble Love And Rockets either. How did you become involved in that?

KH: Danny had already begun working on the songs on that when I joined up. The whole thing was rather short-lived—it only lasted for an album—and it was really out-on-a-limb stuff. If you listen to the album, it really could be a compilation of different groups. That's the same idea that's behind Love And Rockets: We've always tried to keep the first track of an album sounding completely different from the last. We've always tried to keep things interesting by using lots of different influences

and styles.

TS: So much of what you play is tied into electronics. When they were introduced, did you quickly take to the technology available to you?

KH: It came to our attention while we were doing Bauhaus, but we tended to shy away from the technology—all of us. I think it was a case of being frightened by it. We just liked the idea of using conventional instruments and getting the most we could out of them. And we didn't necessarily look upon them as "instruments," but rather as things to make noise with.

Then, practically overnight, we changed our minds and brought in a Wasp synthesizer; I don't even know if they make them anymore. We decided to open it all up and not restrict ourselves at all. Then I heard about Simmons drums, and my interest just grew after that.

TS: You just mentioned that the band doesn't necessarily view instruments in a conventional respect. You once said that you liked the idea of getting sounds out of objects and that Buddy Holly was known to use a cardboard box to record. Have you ever used such ordinary objects to record?

KH: Yes, I have—on the *Earth Sun Moon* album for a couple of tracks. I used a cardboard box on "Rainbird." We had been watching a Buddy Holly documentary a couple of nights before we recorded that, and I think his drummer used one on "Peggy Sue." It's surprising how many musical pictures and sounds you can get out of a box, depending on the way you hit it. We liked it so much, we said, "We've got to do that live, too." But after recording with the box for a few hours, it was a mass of pulp. It wouldn't have been very practical to try that live.

TS: *Earth Sun Moon* was a predominantly acoustic album. Is music made with acoustic guitars and acoustic drums restrictive for you, or does it force you to be even more inventive within the constraints?

KH: I remember a few times during those rehearsals just sitting back and scratching my head, thinking about what I was going to contribute. That's a horrible feeling. Sometimes I'd think, "Maybe this doesn't need drums at all." But I always ended up coming around with something. So yes, those kinds of tracks are usually a bit more challenging.

TS: I've noticed that you use tabla drums sporadically.

KH: I do have them on some tracks here and there, but I don't know how to play them properly. I'd love to play them better, because I love the sound of tablas.

TS: You also play keyboards.

KH: Yeah, as an afterthought, [laughs] But I do enjoy it.

TS: Getting back to electronics for a moment: On the last release, your triggered samples created a very industrialized mood. Did you create any of those samples yourself, or did you buy them and just stick them into your library?

KH: Some I created, using a little harmonizer and a microphone. On "Jungle Law" I used a couple of voice effects: some harmonized panting sounds, some growl sounds. Other

KEVIN HASKINS' LISTENERS' GUIDE

For readers who would like to listen to albums that best represent your drumming, which ones would you recommend?

Album Title	Artist	Label/Catalog #
Love And Rockets	Love And Rockets	Beggars Banquet 9715
Express	Love And Rockets	Big Time 6011
Earth Sun Moon	Love And Rockets	Big Time 6058
Swing The Heartache*	Bauhaus	Beggars Banquet 9804
"Pop"	Tones On Tail	Beggars Banquet**

*Live recordings done for BBC Radio One 1978/1983; two-volume set

**Catalog number not available at press time

Which recordings do you listen to most for inspiration?

Album Title	Artist	Drummer	Label/Catalog#
Revolver	The Beatles	Ringo Starr	Capitol C11 G 90452
African Anthem	Mikey Dread	Sly Dunbar, Leroy "Horsemouth"	Dread At The Controls CRU 2001
Psycho Candy	Jesus & Mary Chain	Wallace, Santa Davis Bobby Gillespie	WEA UKBYNT
Andy Warhol's Velvet Underground	Velvet Underground	Maureen Tucker	MGM 2683 006 Select
The Clash	The Clash	Terry Chimes	Epic 36060
This Year's Model	Elvis Costello	Pete Thomas	Columbia 35331

times I've pulled things off of TV commercials—which I'm not supposed to do, I guess. [laughs] I've got a lot of samples, between the things I've created and those our engineer has been collecting for me for five years now. It's really good of him, because I've often spent whole days stealing all his samples. But I've given him a few too.

TS: "Jungle Law" erects a wall of sound that's a really effective backdrop for those heavy, dirge-like guitars.

KH: That whole song happened really quickly from start to finish. Usually when we have something that's worth carrying through with, it just flows. Danny came in with the riff and the words for that, and I remember all of us rushing around getting our ideas together. I thought, "This could do with some heavy effects," and we knew that one was going to work for us.

TS: Some of the songs on the album credit the band as the songwriters. What's your contribution in those instances?

KH: Daniel and David will usually write songs at home on the acoustic guitar, and then bring them along to the rehearsal room and play them. If they come across sounding conventional, I'll try to go against the grain by looking through my book of samples and picking out certain things that might fit. But that's kind of hit and miss, because I've got so many sounds in there that I forget what I actually have. But I've got a vague idea in my mind of what a particular sound will be like. I've got eight triggers to work with, so I'll fill them with eight sounds. It's all a

very quick process.

While I'm doing that, Danny will be learning David's song, or vice-versa. I'll be listening to them while I'm doing the sample setup, and then when that's done we'll just take it from there. Sometimes it doesn't work, but other times it all just slides into place and starts to gel. And then there are times when a song will really stand on its head so that it winds up a completely different song than when it was first brought in.

We always get the material together when we rehearse, not in the studio. We also try to reinforce the idea of making it all work without any overdubs, partly because it will then be workable live. Sometimes when you create elaborate things in the studio, it can become a real headache pulling it off. So we try to make everything work with just the three of us. I don't know if we restrict ourselves doing it that way. Maybe we do.

TS: Since we're on the subject of your live setup, what drums and electronics are you using?

KH: My drums are by Tama: a 5x14 snare, a 12x13 rack tom, 14x16 and 14x18 floor toms, and a 16x20 bass drum. My cymbal setup is pretty minimal, with Zildjian Rock hi-hats, a 20" K Dark Crash, and a Wuhan China cymbal. I don't use a ride cymbal. I use Remo Pinstripe heads on the kick and toms and a CS Black Dot on the snare. My sticks are Footees model C, in wood tip. My hardware is a bit of a mix: I use a Dixon hi-hat stand, a Premier 252 bass drum pedal with a DW nylon beater,

and the balance is all Tamastuff.

For electronics, I'm using an Akai *S900* sampler, a Roland *PM16* MIDI interface, three Roland *PD31* pads, a Hybrid Arts *HDX* hard disk drive, and *C-ducer* triggers taped inside each drum.

TS: You've really become immersed in the electronics aspect.

KH: Oh yeah. When I go back home, I'll get my drum machine and the Akai and I'll experiment. The snare drum on the drum Machine has a MIDI number assigned to it. I'll match that number on the Akai and put in any sound I like. So when the snare drum is played, it triggers that sound. I'll spend hours messing about with stuff like that; that's how I got the sound for "Jungle Law."

TS: Even with all your efforts to avoid the problem, aren't some of your sound effects still too difficult to replicate live?

KH: Yeah, in fact we dropped "Jungle Law" from the set a week ago simply because of that. There's so many samples on each pad for that—three, I think—going off at the same time, that sometimes it just doesn't come off. I'd hit the bass drum and there'd be nothing happening; the machine would be trying to tell me, "I just can't handle this at the moment." Then the next time it would work. It's also very hard to get perfect balance for a song like that in the monitors—yet it's so critical to be able to hear each other in order to play.

TS: Only one track on the latest album—"The Purest Blue"—is designated as a number using a drum machine. Didn't you use one on several cuts?

KH: I actually used the machine for a lot of tracks on the album—basically to save time. It usually takes a long time for us to get a backing track down; we've always had difficulty with that. Some tracks lend themselves to us playing live in the studio as a band, and others don't. I remember a producer telling us a while ago that most of the time the bass drum and Snare should be constant; that's the most important thing to make a track drive along. So for a lot of stuff, we'd put the bass and snare drums down first, and then play the toms and the cymbals over that, giving it all a more human feel. Cymbals on a drum machine never really work, as far as I'm concerned. So that's the way we recently started working. It just saves time.

Sometimes you'll put a backing track down and listen to it three or four times to make sure it's got the feel. Then later on, you'll listen again, and things will start jumping out at you. Maybe there'll be a late beat. Then you can spend lots of time dropping in snare drum beats or whatever, and it's just easier.

TS: Do you play to a click track in the studio?

KH: I find it really hard to play to it. You have to try to almost meditate in order to use a click track; you just have to free your mind of everything and let it take over. I think that, with some practice, anyone can get into it, but it is very hard. When I used one, it started to mesmerize me, and I'd hear it either go ahead or behind me. Other times, I've been able to home in on it and use it to my advantage.

The whole electronic thing has been a godsend to me because it just lends itself to playing simply. I suppose you could say that it may make up, in some respects, for a certain lack of technical playing knowledge. Maybe I wouldn't have become so interested in samples if I had mastered more of the technical side of playing. So that's one way of saying that I'm not doing too badly despite that—at least not up to now—so why worry about it?

TS: The *Love And Rockets* album has been your most successful, and the single ["So Alive"] is probably your most commercial cut. A lot of your material is far different, and sometimes more experimental. Did you decide to go for a hit this time out?

KH: That wasn't the case. Actually, when we started the album we were using a lot of swing influence and some rhythm & blues with a weird edge to it. We did about five tracks like that. Then we recorded another six tracks over a year's time, which included several breaks here and there. Then when we put the album together we found that there was no way we could make those first tracks fit in, as a compilation...a whole. We decided to release them on their own; they should be coming out some time in 1990 on a 10" release called *Swing*. RCA is scheduled to release it on their old Bluebird label that was popular in the '50s. It will be a nice little package.

Anyway, we came to the point around Christmas of '88 where we had to come up with four more songs to replace the originals. "So Alive" and "Jungle Law" came out of that. I think Danny wrote "So Alive" when we had a break from the studio. He first played it for us on electric guitar, and it sounded like an Iggy Pop number—it was so heavy. We just started throwing ideas around and then decided that the other way to take it would be as a dance-oriented thing. It took about one day to do that. The guitar was put more in the background, and the rhythms were pushed forward.

TS: You mentioned that the band doesn't use much overdubbing in the studio, which seems surprising considering some of *Love And Rockets'* material.

KH: We do some overdubbing, but we usually just track what's already there. For instance, Danny might do three or four tracks of the same thing just to get a fat guitar sound. We do the same thing with vocals. But we try and keep it to a minimum—although I'm always the one who's constantly trying to think of countermelodies and percussive ideas after I've done my rhythm tracks. I guess it's kind of a panic thing because it's in the back of your mind that when the day comes to an end, the track you're working on is going to be deemed "finished," and it'll be finished forever. [laughs]



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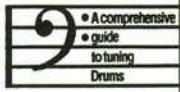
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UPDATE

continued from page 9

that he has given up percussion for acting. He's still doing both.

Wally Ingrain playing percussion live with Tracy Chapman, with **Rock Deadrick** on drums. Ingram is also recording with Timbuk 3 and on Navigator's "Lisa," along with drummer **Derek Organ**, who is touring with Janet Jackson.

Marvin Kanarek recorded the Beach Boys' title track for the new **John Ritter** film, *Problem Child*. He can also be heard on Billy Joe Walker, Jr.'s previous release, *Painted Music*, along with **Rick Marotta** and **Paul Leim**. Kanarek has also been doing sessions for Robyn Brennan, Rocky Burnette, Billy Burnette, John Capak, the Divinyls, and a new band called Boston-Keck.

Randy Castillo in the studio with Ozzy Osbourne.

Tommy Aldridge on tour with Whitesnake.

Roxy Petrucci on Vixen's new *Rev It Up*.

Nick Menza is now with Megadeth and just embarking on a European tour to hit the States in October.

Mark Morris on percussion on the

Allman Brothers' latest, on percussion on Doug Stone's latest, and on drums on Scott Jarrett's record, and he recently played drums for Floyd Cramer at a gala event out at Michael Jackson's ranch.

Gary Chaffee appeared at the Frankfurt Fair in March for Drumada, and he was also featured at the Koblenz Drummers Meeting. Gary also did a month of clinic dates across Europe, a two-week tour of Italy with Mick Goodrick, another two-week tour of Italy in July with bassist Harvey Schwartz, and he will be recording with Mick Goodrick in October.

Dan Tomlinson recently finished up three-month tour with Lyle Lovett, which included appearances on the *Today* show and the *Tonight Show*. Dan is currently recording with Lovett.

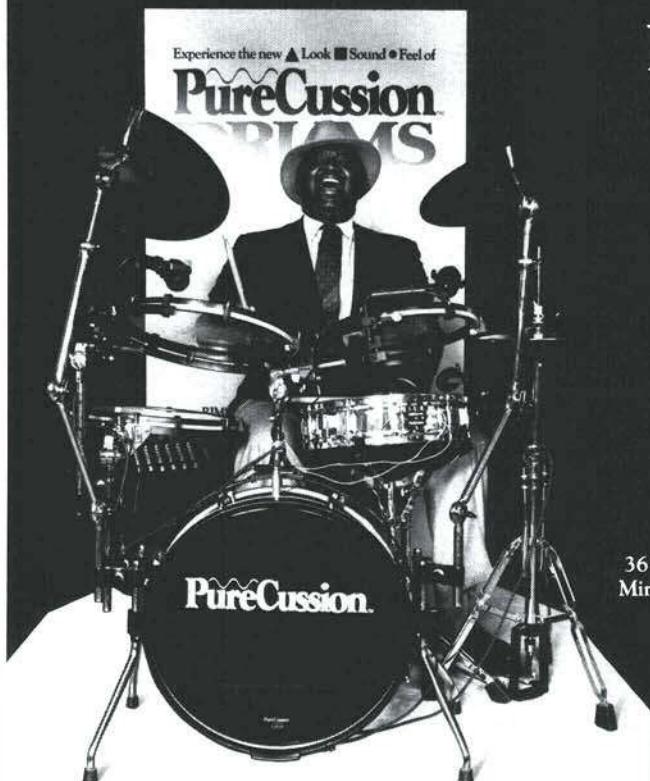
Pete Magadini recently completed recording with his quintet in Montreal. He has also finished shooting *The Polyrhythm Video*, due out soon.

Clint DeGannon is the drummer on the new MTV game show, *Turn It Up*.

Charley Abdon touring Europe, Iceland, and Australia with Tammy Wynette.

Jack White recently in the studio with David Cassidy.

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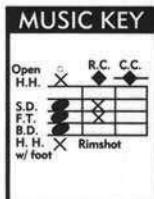
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Philly Joe Jones: "Nica's Dream"

■ Transcribed by Dexter G. Story



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Seating will be general admission, so plan to arrive early for your choice of seats. (New Jersey weather can be fickle, and every Festival has been touched by rain. We suggest you come prepared.) Theater doors will open at 12:30 P.M. Food service will be available throughout the day, beginning at 12:00 Noon, with sandwiches, snacks, and beverages on sale. Still cameras are welcome, but video cameras cannot be permitted.

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SEE YOU THERE!

Setting Goals: A Five-Part Plan

• by Mark Denesha

Many years ago, I was given the pleasure of listening to the immortal Buddy Rich and his group of young musicians. I went home that evening completely awestruck and ready to play my old Rogers kit the very same way as Buddy himself would. Needless to say, I never achieved such a goal. In fact, after many years it became apparent that I never really *had* a clear, concise goal!

Recently, several instructors brought to my attention the art of goal-setting. I spent a few hours creating a five-part plan to reach goals in drumming that I have always wanted to achieve but didn't know how to approach. And it worked beautifully! This plan can be utilized by drummers of all ages and skill levels. Most importantly, *this is your plan!* You will create it and tailor it to your needs. The only way to achieve a goal is to set one. And to ensure that you keep yourself "channeled" toward your long-term goal, *your plan must be in writing.*

The following five-part plan should help you get on track, reach your desired proficiency, and maintain it.

Part 1: Setting The Long-Term Goal

Several important factors should be incorporated into your goal.

- Your goal must be realistic. For instance, if you are a beginning drummer, do not make your goal "to be a famous rock star." That goal can be set and achieved somewhere down the road of success.
- Be challenging. Although your goals must be realistic, if they are not challenging to you, boredom can set in very quickly, resulting in the abandonment of

your efforts.

- Make each goal measurable. This is the degree to which your goal is to be achieved. For example, your goal might be to "just learn four or five basic rudiments." But you must list what degree of proficiency will be obtained. If this is not written into your goal, then you have not given yourself a means of quality control.
- Establish a time limit for achieving your goal. This is a must to provide the incentive and discipline to get there. Further in the plan, you will see how time comes to play an important role.

Part 2: Planning

Now that your goal is posted somewhere (taped to your fridge, dresser mirror, kit, etc.) you have to ask yourself, "How do I get there?" This part should be carefully thought out and *written down!*

- Why: Since we are all individuals and seek different goals, this will be *your* reason. No other person can answer this question for you. My reason is "I extremely enjoy playing my kit all alone as a hobby." Other reasons I have heard range from "I want to make big money" to "I really like playing with my neighborhood garage band."

- Where: For those of you who own drums and live in apartments, I am sure you have experienced the frustration of complaining neighbors. (I have lived through it. In fact, I was often paid quarters by the lady next door just so I *wouldn't* play.) The most effective method of getting over this hurdle is to invite them over to watch you play. Your friendly enthusiasm may become infectious! An alternative is to make arrangements with the neighbors for a mutually agreeable time period that will not disturb them while you practice. (This works well with parents, too.) Another alternative is to make arrangements with your school to utilize their facilities after school hours. (I used to practice in a church cafeteria at night.) If you are fortunate enough to be in a band and already

have a space in which to play, you can come early and get your practice in before the band arrives. Be patient with others around you. There are some who don't appreciate the mystical call of the drums as much as you do!

• When: Each of us will have a time to practice that is more practical and comfortable than others. Examples might be after school, lunch hour, after work (my favorite), or perhaps just on weekends. It's important to maintain your schedule as closely as possible. I have found that while using this method of obtaining goals, I now manage to practice every day of the week. This might not be conducive to your plan, so you should schedule accordingly. A word of caution: *do not over-practice!* Find out what your time limit is by experimenting. If your wrists get stiff and sore after 30 minutes, stop. Cut your next session back by five minutes. Gradually, you will build endurance and flexibility, at which time you can re-establish your practice time. I have burned myself out in the past—resulting in my not playing for weeks on end. With a sensible time schedule, you will achieve your goal while maintaining your enthusiasm!

• How: This issue is also very individualistic. Some of the great drummers are taking formal lessons to this day, while other "monsters" of drumming have been purely self-taught. You will have to make that decision. A year ago I began using the rudiments published in *Modern Drummer* for practice. Although I have never had much formal training, a very kind music teacher showed me how to read the basics years ago. With persistence and discipline I have been able to direct myself back towards the basic rudiments—which I found to be extremely important. This method may suit you, or you may be more inclined towards formal lessons. Observation is always helpful. Watch other drummers as much as possible, and listen to your favorite tapes—paying close attention to the drummer. You will find the answer to "How" in a very short time.

- Short-Term Goals: In general, you will not achieve your long-term goal without these little helpers. These may be a group of things that will add up to your long-term goal when you put them all together. Remember, you can't roll around that monster kit without first learning to do a roll on one drum. Short-term goals can range from calling the music store to arrange for lessons to finding the stick size that suits you. Usually they will all fall into place as you map out the plan. Most of all, *be aggressive* when you pursue them.

Part 3: Action

When your planning stage is complete and you have committed it to memory, *take action!* The majority of action should be hands-on *practice*. This is the portion that will require the most discipline. Other small portions should be dedicated to taking care of your short-range goals, as mentioned earlier. If you find your discipline seems to be fading, do not hesi-

tate to review the first two parts of the plan. They may need to be altered to some degree. Review your written goal carefully at this point. Perhaps it wasn't realistic or challenging enough. Now will be the time to rectify the plan. You will also start to experience a sense of pride in the control that you have of your goal-setting and accomplishments.

Part 4: Monitor

This can be either the most enjoyable phase of the plan or your worst nightmare! This is your quality-control checkpoint. Keep a cassette player running all the time you practice. It is also handy to have a mirror around for a visual check. As you practice, note your posture, facial expressions, and stick control. On occasion, my boy comes in to watch me practice and have a good laugh at my facial distortions. I have managed to control some of them now, thanks to his constructive feedback and the mirror. Listen to those tapes from session to session;

they will provide the purest form of critique. Be honest with yourself while listening. Have a memo book handy to write down your weakness—and don't hesitate to praise yourself as well! Your logs are another important tool to track the progress of your goal achievement.

Part 5: Long-Term Goal Achievement

This is it! Provided you have carefully followed your plan through, this should be a very rewarding time for you. Take this time to reflect on the hard work you've performed in the past. Tell a friend or a parent of your achievement! Go to the music store and buy that cowbell or the new throne you have been looking at for months. You have earned that right. This day is *yours!* But remember, tomorrow is another beginning. So, take out that pencil and get ready to set a new goal!




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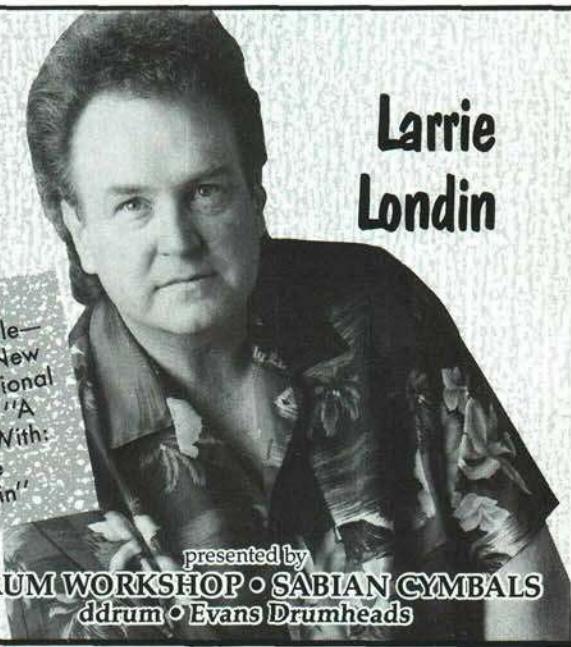
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IT'S QUESTIONABLE

continued from page 14

to do if they want to get books that feature the drum parts played on songs by their favorite groups? I am interested in groups like the Doors, Cream, and KISS but am unable to find anything on these and other groups. Is there a company I can write to? Also, what do other drummers do in this situation?

B.L.

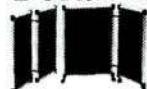
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This has been an ongoing problem for many years, but fortunately the situation has improved recently. Several books are now available with the transcribed drum beats of particular songs by well-known drummers, or all the songs on a well-known album. The *Drum Superstar Series* from Warner Bros. Publications (265 Secaucus Rd., Secaucus, NJ 07096) includes titles like *Drum Beats Of Rush*, *More Rush*, and *Led Zeppelin*, all by Bill Wheeler. Howard Fields is the author of *Heavy Metal Mixed Bag* (a collection of three books that contain charts of 12 songs by Van Halen, Guns N' Roses, Tesla, and Metallica), and books offering the drum charts to Metallica's *Master Of Puppets* and Guns N' Roses' *Appetite For Destruction*. All of Fields' books are available through Cherry Lane Music, P.O. Box 430, Port Chester, NY 10573. As an additional suggestion, watch the classified ads in *MD's Drum Market*. Many drummers offer transcriptions for sale, or offer to transcribe songs of your choice as a paid service.

It has only been recently that there has been enough demand for rock and pop drum transcriptions to justify their release by publishers. Most drummers playing in those styles have tended to be non-readers, who learned most of their material "by ear." It is an encouraging trend to see that a market for written material now exists among rock drummers.

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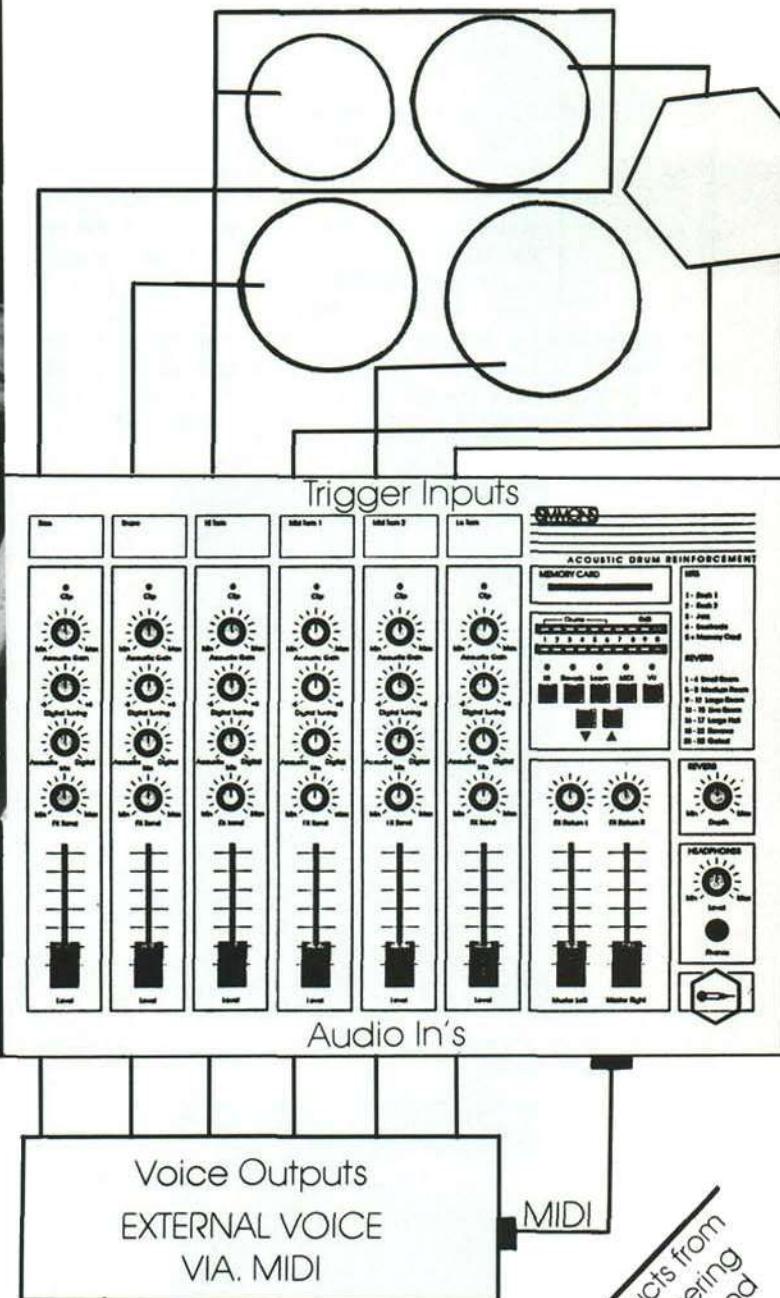
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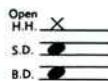
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Fanning The Hi-Hats

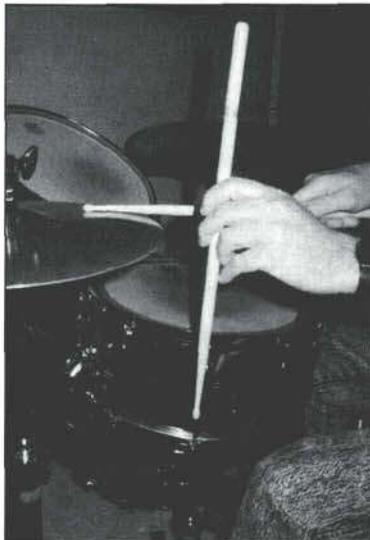
■ by Will Dower

MUSIC KEY



"Fanning" is a method of playing the hi-hats whereby you use a glancing up and down stroke with your left hand and tap the top of the hi-hat cymbal with your right hand. This technique was perfected by the great swing and bebop drummers of the '40s and '50s. Here we'll look at developing fanning using both 16th notes and triplets. Either way, it's a visually exciting way to play the hats.

Before we play any rhythms, let's look at the various positions your hands need to be in to properly execute the fanning technique. The following photo shows the first stroke being played with the right hand and the left hand in a vertical position ready to strike on the upstroke.



The next photo shows the glancing blow to the edge of the hi-hat made by the left hand.



This photo shows the right hand tapping again as in the first photo.



This last photo shows the completion of the left hand downstroke:



Now that you've seen the proper hand positions, let's take a look at some ways to apply the technique rhythmically. In these examples I have notated the sticking as R for right hand, and U for upstrokes or D for downstrokes played by the left hand. (The U and D apply to the left hand *only*.) Practice these slowly at first (quarter note = 60), and play your bass drum to help steady things.

R U R D R U R D R U R D R U R D R U R D

The next example involves bringing the right hand over to the snare drum on beats 2 and 4.

R U R D R U R D R U R D R U R D
x x x x x x x x x x x x

The following example involves a mixture of double and single sticking with the accent played on the snare drum on beat 4.

R R U R R D R R U R R D R U R D
x x x x x x x x x x x x >

The next example is the same as the last one, but a samba style bass drum pattern is used.

R R U R R D R R U R R D R U R D
x x x x x x x x x x x x >

This next example has a little bit of everything in it!

R R U R D R R R R U R D R R
x x x x x x x x x x x x >

Now let's apply the fanning technique to some examples with 8th-note triplets.

R U R D R U R D R U R D
3 3 3 3
x x x x x x x x x x x x

This example involves bringing the right hand over to the snare drum and creating an interesting half-note triplet feel.

R U R D R U R D R U R D
3 3 3 3
x x x x x x x x x x x x

Next we have a mixture of double and single Stickings with the accent played on the snare drum on beat 4.

R R U R R D R R U R D R
3 3 3 3
x x x x x x x x x x x x

Here's an example with the backbeat on 2 and 4 and some extra bass drum kicks. Experiment with open and closed hi-hat as shown.

R R U R D R R U R D R
3 3 3 3
x x x x x x x x x x x x
3 3
---- ----

Be sure to experiment with this concept, and have fun with it!



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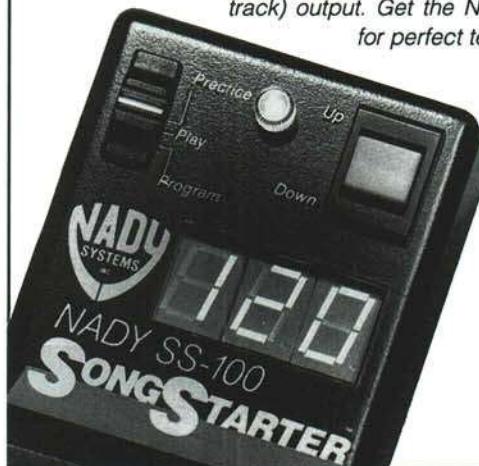
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continued from page 23

ally only played one tune, I played a lot. I used the bata drum, the Udu drums, some talking drum, and some chimes and caxixi. They sent a tape from London for me to overdub to, and then they sent it back to London. I never met Paul McCartney. The producer, Neil Dorfman, told me that Paul had always done

the percussion on his albums; he never let anyone do it, and yet he liked what I did.

I did a few cuts on a U2 album, and when they heard me play they said, "You're a little person and it sounds so loud. How do you do it?" I explained that it's not a physical force, but an *inner* force that you have inside, and the desire not to damage your hands. They loved everything I did. I got their input. They sug-

gested a beat, and I put my beat with that. It's like making a salad.

RF: Did you know about U2 before you went?

AA: I had heard of them, but I didn't really know their music. My kids laughed at me, but at the same time, I laugh when they say they don't know Keith Jarrett, so we teach each other.

I did Los Lobos with Mitchel Froom. I don't remember that record, though. I'm not interested in listening back to what I did in percussion, mainly because it's a bunch of overdubbings, and you play one instrument at a time. You do one track of shaker, then you do one track of conga, then you play one track of timbales.

RF: That's my point; it doesn't sound very creative.

AA: It is creative because you have to know what to play so you don't interfere in the other parts, but it is simpler. Right now I can tell any percussionist that to play percussion on sessions is very simple if you have it down. When I started recording and I didn't have it down like I have it now, it took me a while just to think what to play for that kind of a tune. Right now, I go and I play it, so it is very simple.

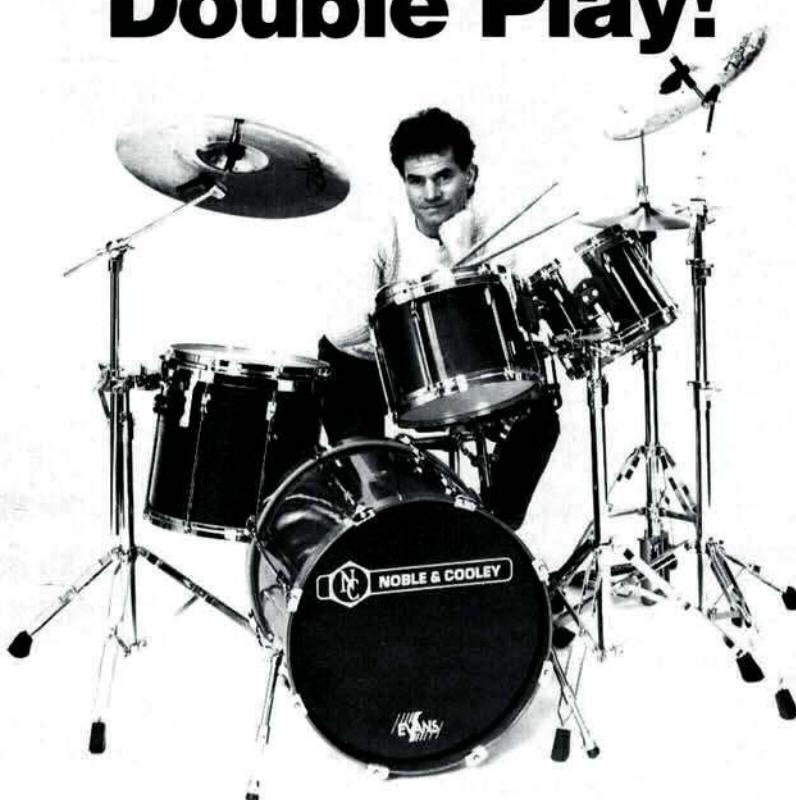
Let's say they want percussion on a pop tune, with a lot of guitars, synthesizers, vocals, big bass, and heavy drums. I will say, "Let me play a lot of stuff from the beginning to the end of the tune, and then we will listen back. Maybe there is a bar or two that feel good, or maybe there is a bar or two where the instrument I pick is the one for the track." Then they will say, "Oh yeah, I like that. What is that sound?" Then we have something to work with.

But it is definitely a craft to be a percussionist. When you get there and they play you the track and you have to figure out what you are going to be playing on that track, it is a craft, particularly when it comes to music that is not too easy for percussion, like rock 'n' roll, and they want you to play a lot of stuff in the tune.

RF: Why is it difficult to play percussion in a rock 'n' roll situation?

AA: It is a little bit against the mentality of the percussionist, particularly the Latin percussionist. Rock drumming is like a march, and then they want you to play some batas or congas. It is just

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against the nature of the music. "No, no, that's too Latin," or, "No, no, that's too African." You have to find something that will fit. Sometimes I will say, "Play the track," and then, "Play it again, please." Then I will go for some overtones that maybe only I can hear. It is very hard to describe these overtones because when I say, "Listen, do you hear that?" they say, "No, no, I cannot hear it." "Well, that's what I'm going to be playing." I will find

the color that blends with that overtone.
RF: What is the most off-the-wall thing you've ever been asked to do on a session?

AA: [laughs] On the positive side of things, when I was recording with the Yellowjackets, at the end of one tune off *The Spin*, I just threw some percussion on the floor—cowbells, some of the shakers, the triangles, and woodblocks. I just swept it from my table and threw it on the

floor. It just seemed that the end of the tune called for that. And they loved it.

Sometimes I get hired for a low-budget recording, and they cannot pay the cartage, so I cannot take my ten Anvil cases. I borrow some things from my neighbors and go through my decoration wall and take everything I have hanging. Then I find out they are doing an album and they say, "But we cannot afford to pay your cartage, just play what you have." But when I'm recording ten tunes, I get tired of playing the same instrument, so I just go around the studio and sometimes I will play on the floor, or on the microphone stands with metal beaters or sticks. They process it with some effects and make it sound great. One day I took one of those big Arrowhead Water bottles with me, and it worked so well that now I carry one with me. I play it as a tom-tom. I put the microphone in the mouth of the bottle and I tap it with my finger or a soft mallet, and I try to get the best tone out of it. It sounds like a great tom-tom, like a surdo. Sometimes I will play just an unmounted Remo head with a stick, just to have a different effect.

RF: What is the negative side of all that?

AA: The negative side is when they want you to do something that you just don't think will be good. When they ask me something that I don't think will sound good, I try to work my way out by saying, "Probably this tune doesn't need percussion," or "Listen to this."

Sometimes the engineer and the producers will bring some instruments and say, "Alex, I want you to play this." Maybe it is very hard to play, so it is very painful. I say, "You really want me to do this?" "Yeah, this is the sound that I want." I say, "So why don't you sample it?" I'm glad that they have respect for whatever I say, because usually they will say, "Okay, if you don't want to do it..." I will say, "I can give you something better than that." That is another gift, to be able to find the right sound for the right tune or the right places in the tune, as well as the right timbre—it can be wood, it can be metal or plastic sounds, drums that you play with sticks, drums you play with hands or beaters.

RF: Your reputation as a percussionist has grown, but what is the ideal situation for you?

An advertisement for Drummars Collective. At the top, a black and white photograph shows four young men, presumably drummers, walking down a busy city street. They are wearing matching dark hooded sweatshirts with 'Drummars Collective' and 'New York City' printed on them. The background shows a city skyline with buildings and a bus labeled 'MCI SHARP'. The text above the photo reads: 'When you're ready to go the distance, make this your first step.' Below the photo, a block of text says: 'There are good reasons why people come from all over the world to study at Drummars Collective. Like the chance to work with some of the best players in the world. Or the freedom to study the way you want—to take one lesson, or immerse yourself in the Collective's morning-to-night world of private lessons, master classes, workshops and special events. Not to mention the excitement of New York's fabulous music scene.' Further down, another text block reads: 'If you're serious about being a better drummer, it isn't how far you've come that matters—it's how far you want to go.' At the bottom left, it says 'Fall semester starts Sept. 10.' and 'For a catalog, send \$1 US, \$2 foreign to: Drummars Collective, 541 Ave. of the Americas, New York NY 10011; (212) 741-0091.' At the bottom right, there is a logo for 'Drummars Collective' with an umbrella icon and 'New York City' underneath.

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AA: The thing that I want to play is music. I like to do the drums and the percussion. On the solo album I just did, I am doing both. I get hired to do a lot of percussion, and it is not just the money, but it is work; it is what I do right now. I am not going on the road, because I want to stay in town with my family, so I take every session that is there. I also like to have days off. I don't think I could do sessions from Monday through Friday, from

9-6, otherwise the music does not grow.

RF: What are jingles like for you?

AA: I have been doing a lot of jingles lately for Miller High Life. I am the drummer and percussionist on that. They have the music written down, and they have the tape of the pre-production, and they say, "Alex, we want this kind of beat, or something like this." To be a studio musician these days is to be what everybody calls "a pro." They are calling you

because you are going to do it; they are not calling you to see if you are going to do it. There is not time or money to waste. They will call me because I play a certain style that they want for their tune; it could be a jingle, it could be for TV, it could be for a movie.

RF: I wanted to ask you what you played on the movie soundtrack of *Gorillas In The Mist*.

AA: African percussion. Big drums—Taiko drums, Brazilian drums, Indian drums that look like barrels, a little bit of marimba. There were about nine percussionists, including Emil Richards, Michael Fisher, Luis Conte, Efrain Toro, myself, Paulinho. It was just percussion. We did it at Paramount, which was one of the best rooms to record movie soundtracks. That was for Maurice Jarre, who used to be a percussionist himself.

RF: When there are nine percussionists in a room, what do you do? How much creativity is there?

AA: There is a lot. Still, when you have things written down, you have to put your own creativity in how you interpret that music. The music isn't just the notes written down; there are the accents and the interpretation. Everybody has their instruments, and we will choose the ones with the best sound to suit the music. It may call for a talking drum, and then everybody will run for their talking drum, and we will see which pitch is the best for the track. At the same time there is an incredible comradery. There are no egos, and everybody is there to make it better. It is a team to make the music sound good.

I also did *Coming To America* with Paulinho, Efrain Toro, Luis Conte, and me on percussion. When the four of us played, we had the same feeling about each other. We knew all of us were bad, but we didn't know we could sound that bad together. I put the four of us back together for my album because we played together that day.

RF: I remember reading about your very first session where you said you had trouble keeping a groove because you were so used to Weather Report. How did you learn the art of recording?

AA: I have to thank my brothers Abraham Laboriel and Bill Maxwell for giving me the opportunity. I can tell you exactly the

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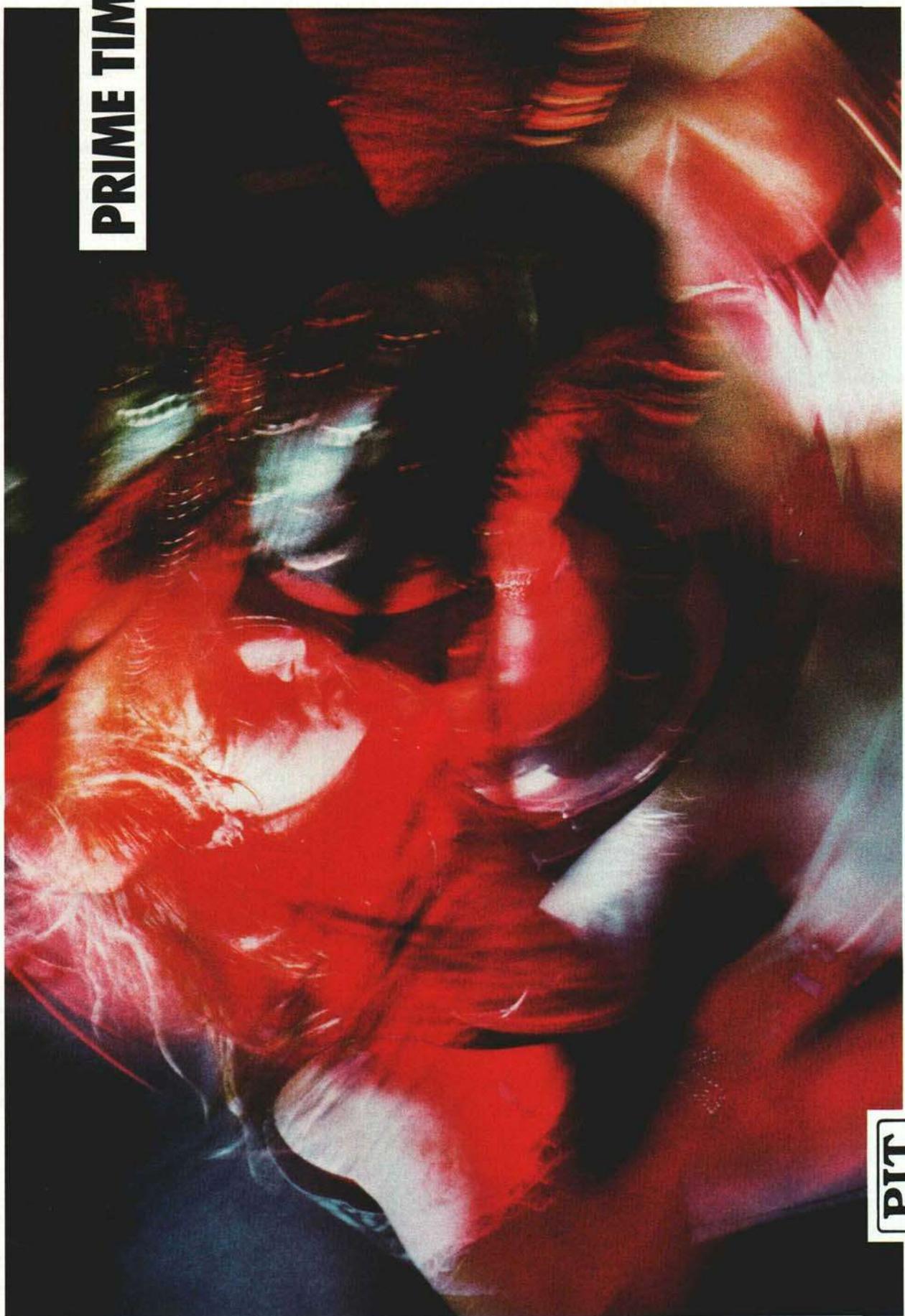
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date and the time my recording began in Los Angeles. First of all, I've been recording since I was 16 years old. But it is one thing to record in Peru, another thing to record in Puerto Rico, another thing to record in Las Vegas, and *another* thing to record in Los Angeles. When I came to Los Angeles—especially having played jazz on the road for six months with Weather Report—it was super chops. I could play drum solos for hours. I took a lot of chances playing in Weather Report. Zawinul would say, "You have to dive every day from the 21st floor and land the best way you can," and every time I would dive with them, I would land like a cat, always on my four feet. So when I came here and started playing sessions with the Los Angeles sound, people would say, "No, I want you to play like so and so. Give me the Harvey Mason sound. Give me the Steve Gadd sound." I would say, "I am sorry, I cannot play that. I play Alex Acuna drums." There are drummers who can play like that, but maybe they don't have their own voice. That was one thing I asked Ernie Watts: "How do you get into the sessions?"

Ernie said, "Alex, you have to put your own voice into it." Abraham always recommended me to do sessions as a drummer. He knew I wasn't 100% capable of it yet, but he recommended me. He told me he would do that so I would learn how to play with a click and learn how to do sessions.

RF: That was incredible that he stuck his neck out like that if you weren't ready to do sessions at the time.

AA: Nobody is ready to do sessions when they first do them. When I say sessions, I mean playing all styles of music. One kind of music I knew how to play. If they were to call me to play with Caldera, a Latin fusion band, I would play my best. But maybe the funk was a little tough. So what I did was I played a lot in my home. I bought albums and practiced the back-beat a lot. Now I think I can sit in anywhere, but it took me 15 years.

RF: I read where you said your first session was a disaster.

AA: It had to be. It was a transition. I don't know if they called somebody to replace me or not. But about two years later, I did a great pop tune with Lee

Ritenour, "Is It You," which everybody thought was Harvey Mason or Steve Gadd.

RF: On the more technical side of things, how will your tuning differ from situation to situation?

AA: Not much. After a while you get used to a certain tuning of your drums. I learned my way of tuning a long time ago from Joe Morello. On the snare, I make sure every lug is tuned similar to the next. I put my finger in the center of the head and tap with my stick on the edge of the snare by the lugs, and I listen for a high-pitched tone. If there are ten lugs, they all have to sound the same in pitch. I do the same thing with the bottom head. I tune the bottom head almost equally to the top head, especially if it's a piccolo or a 5 1/2". When it goes to a bigger snare like a 6 1/2", the top head may be a little lower than the bottom head. I always go for a high-pitched snare. With the toms, I do almost the same thing; I tune the bottom equally to the top head and I like to tune according to the size of the drum. If it's a small tom—8x8 or 8x10—I try to tune it up higher. I like to tune a 10x10 a little bit lower than the 8" and so forth. Sometimes I use a 14" and sometimes I don't, but I use a 16" floor tom, sometimes mounted, sometimes on the floor.

RF: Why did you leave Koinonia?

AA: I had a big change in my personal life. I feel very strongly that I don't want to travel. I started with Weather Report playing clubs and colleges, making \$350 a week. After we made *Heavy Weather*, I started making \$1500 a week. And then I left because I got tired of the whole situation—the traveling, the business. It seemed to me to be the same thing over and over again. Then I went with Al Jarreau for six years. When I started with him it was a quartet, and then they added percussion. Three years later they added a horn section and a guitar, so instead of five, we were ten. But when I started with him, we were playing little theaters and colleges. Then he had a couple of hit records, and I started making \$1000 a week, and it got to \$4000 a week, and then I quit again, for the same reason. It was the repetition of the same hotels, the same airports, the same concerts, the same promoters.... The road is very hard, and so is playing the same music over and

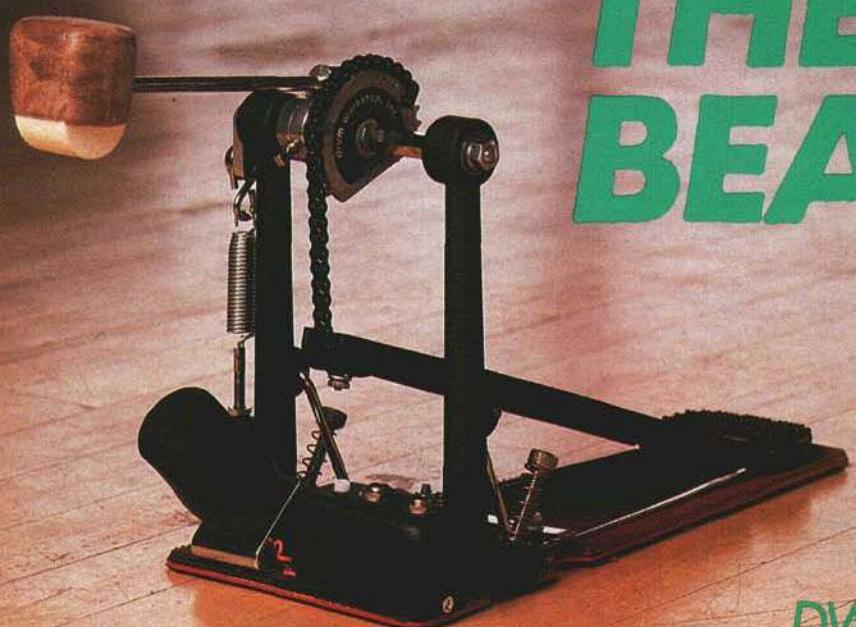
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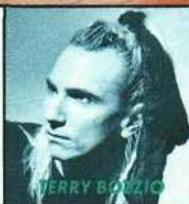


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over again.

RF: But Koinonia was something that was more yours.

AA: Let me be very honest about this; I cannot lie about anything. When I got to Koinonia, we started playing at the Baked Potato just to keep up the chops and the writing. Then we started having offers to do a record and a tour, and as soon as they started asking for us to do a tour, I was the first to put my head down, saying, "Not again." I enjoy being around my house and my family. For me, that is first. I will always say that. Actually, the Lord Jesus Christ is first, my family is second, and my music is third. I know that with Koinonia, we had some kind of a mission—we were bringing people to know the Lord, playing beautiful music from our hearts. But the music started getting boring to me.

RF: Do your priorities change as you get older?

AA: I wouldn't phrase it that way. Priorities are always there. For example, I always wanted to be able to take time off from touring and stay in town with my

family, but I never could afford it before. I worked hard to get where I am, so now I can afford it. If somebody offers me \$10,000 a week to go away, I can say, "No man, that's not enough," because I have worked these 15-20 years in the United States to get where I am so I don't need to make that kind of money out on the road. A lot of people think that fame and money is important. That is not true. They are both very dangerous. If you are not ready for it, it can really screw up your life. I went through that once when I was with Weather Report. I was making good money and playing with the best musicians in the world. I used to be picked up in a limousine, and I stayed in the best hotels in the world.

RF: What happened?

AA: I thought, "Oh man, I'm the greatest, I'm bad," and that's a lie. I had to figure that out, though. Of course now I am older and I stopped many of the worldly behaviors that I used to have, and I look at the reality: They will pick me up in a limousine and they will put me in the Plaza Hotel in New York, I will fly first

class, but then when I come back from that trip, I have to take the garbage out. I cannot tell my wife to call somebody else to do it. Reality is reality.

RF: I don't want to pry, but you said when you left Koinonia, it was when you were going through personal changes.

AA: Exactly, that's when all this hit me. The most important thing that I have learned is I realize that my life cannot depend on one person. When I quit Jarreau, I was making good money just playing with him for six months out of the year. I said, "Should I leave this or should I stay to make the money?" And I realized I shouldn't depend on Jarreau. What happens if Jarreau gets sick or takes time off? What do I do? I cannot depend on a man, I have to depend on the Lord, so I said, "Lord, I want to depend on you, so you give me the work," and he did. You know what happened when I stayed home? I made more money in one month than I would have made on the road. I just had to leave it in His hands.



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TALKING RHYTHMS W/ALEX

continued from page 21

guaracha and made it one song altogether. So now, from the top to the bottom, mambo is MAMBO. It begins at ten and stays at ten. Dancing-wise, music-wise, rhythm-wise—everybody has to have his chops to play mambo.

Now is where the trap drummer is used. A trap drummer who comes to play mambo is a guy who has a bass drum, timbales, maybe a snare on the side, and the cowbell mounted on top of the bass drum, and he plays somewhere between sitting and standing. Yeyito is the nickname of the first drummer I ever heard who went to Mexico with Perez Prado and the singer Beny More. People who know of that kind of music in those days in the '50s will know who Yeyito was. His timbale playing was the most beautiful timbale sound there has been. He was my first inspiration in how to play Latin drums.

RF: What was his function in the mambo?

AA: Keeping the time and having the freedom to play beautiful licks. He would keep the time with the cowbell. His approach to drumming was like playing bongos. He took the language of the bongos and put it on the drums, but kept riding on the cowbell, like a drummer rides on his cymbal. I studied him and learned all the Perez Prado music there was. I knew every arrangement and solo by memory.

RF: Were you attracted to that because it had drums?

AA: I was attracted to that for the energy that the music had—for the sound, everything. The drummer definitely was the main attraction for me, being a drummer myself, but the music left an incredible impression on me because it was so strong. The trumpet players played full high notes. When you hear that music, it sounds like everyone was sweating.

By the time I came to the United States, Latin music was more modern—people like Tito Puente, Tito Rodriguez, and Machito. But even before these guys there were some others. Dizzy Gillespie started playing Latin jazz, and Machito and Chico O'Farrill were using players like Charlie Parker. Dizzy

Gillespie had Chano Pozo, a Cuban conga player, and a drummer by the name of Walfrido de los Reyes, Sr. was also on the scene. He is the next Cuban drummer I heard playing drums in Latin music. Most of us talk about him because there is a chain: Yeyito, Walfrido, Barretto, and then another guy, Monchito Munoz. These are the guys who play bongos, timbales, congas, and drums. So I was an observer of all these guys, and I learned from them. I hung out with them, I became personal friends of them, and they taught me everything they knew about Latin drumming. Then I put my own voice to it.

What I used to do to acquire my own drumming voice was to listen to Tony Williams, Billy Cobham, Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, Joe Morello—all the guys—for the technique and approach of how to play the drums. I also loved Elvin Jones. I started to set up like them, and I would play to Latin tapes where they had no drums, like Eddie Palmieri's music. I put on headphones and played the drums with whatever I learned from the guys in Puerto Rico, like Walfrido and Machito, and I combined the two worlds to develop something in me.

RF: Getting back to rhythms, you mention others in your video.

AA: Sometimes Americans think rumba is what Xavier Cugat used to play. That's wrong. Rumba is hot, fast, up tempos, a lot of percussion, different forms of guaguancó.

RF: Can you tell us a little about guaguancó?

AA: The little story I know about guaguancó is that it is a mixture of the African heritage and the Spanish heritage in Cuba. It is Spanish flamenco singing with African drumming in the back. And within the guaguancó there are many rhythms. You play the palitos, the clave—the 3-2 clave or the 2-3 clave, the rumba clave, or the street clave and many others. That is a very Cuban form of rhythm. Nobody can play it better than the Cubans.

RF: Now what about some of the Peruvian rhythms such as festejo, lando, and marinera?

AA: Festejo and lando came after the marinera. There is another rhythm that I did not put in the video, toro mata, which

is black Afro-Peruvian. The marinera was first, to my knowledge. It is from the north of Peru. My father is from the north, a place that is very popular for music—Chiclayo. There is a singer, they play guitars, cajon, and castanets in a 6/8 rhythm. When they play that rhythm, there has to be three drummers playing that part because it is very hard for one drummer to play it since the hi-hat plays in 4/4. The snare plays a rudiment based on six- and nine-stroke rolls—three groups of six and one group of nine. My father showed that to me, and I tried to play it alone on the drums. It is very hard, but I did learn it after many years. There is also a marinera from Lima, which is just a little bit different, maybe a little hipper. Then from the south of Peru, in Chincha, they play the cajon different ways. They add the congas and the bongos, and the singing is a little bit more African. That's where the lando is from, which is slower than the festejo. They are all 6/8 rhythms, just a little different interpretations. The dance is very African.

RF: What about the huayno?

AA: That is the only pure Peruvian music. The drummer plays one drum. I know the rhythms from the north of Peru from my father's side, and I know this from my mother's side, because my mother is Spanish Indian, and she loved to go to these parties to dance, and she used to take me. I was raised playing the huayno. I'm not going to challenge anybody, but I don't think there is a Peruvian drummer who can feel the huayno the way I can feel it, because I live it. Huayno, still maybe in Peru, is a very disgraceful music and rhythm for a Peruvian hip musician, because it's from the Incas, the low class. But I am very proud because that is my heritage and my music, and it is very hard to play. You feel and smell the earth when you play the huayno.

What I recommend—and I hope some ears will listen and retain this—is to be very open to music; to listen to all kinds of music and to learn and keep growing. Music is one word, but it means so much.

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The purpose of this department is to provide an avenue of communication directly between the consumers of drum and percussion equipment and those who design and manufacture that equipment. The format will involve a single question, to which we invite all the readers of *MD* to respond. A representative selection of responses will be printed in a forthcoming issue. Following those responses, a new question will be presented.

Liaison questions may involve equipment-related controversies, proposals for design improvements, or other specific issues of importance to both consumers and manufacturers. We invite suggestions for these questions from all interested parties.

It is our hope that this department will provide an opportunity for drummers "in the field" to present their opinions and desires to the manufacturing community, while affording manufacturers an open, honest, and direct line to the wants and needs of their customers.

This month's question involves the manufacture of hardware. Several companies have been investigating the possibility of producing drum lugs, hoops, stands, and other hardware out of non-traditional, synthetic materials. Their object is to find ways of making hardware that is as strong as that made today, but easier to manufacture (and thus lower in cost) and lighter in weight. Other manufacturers wish to stay with traditional metal hardware, but state that the chrome plating on such hardware constitutes a large portion of its cost. These companies are considering offering hardware finished in some less-expensive manner.

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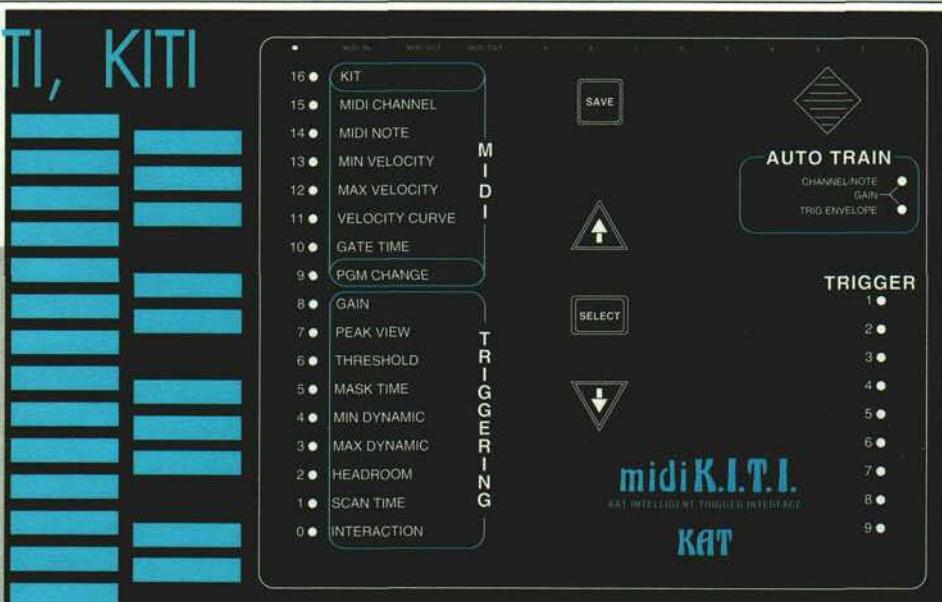
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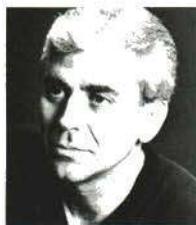
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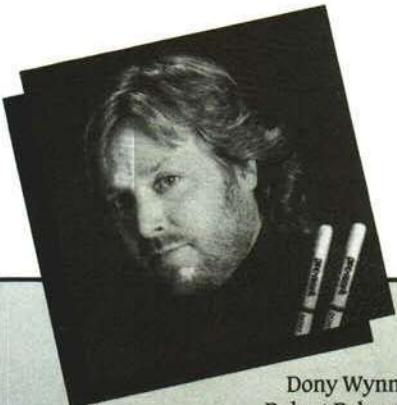
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SHOP TALK

continued from page 56

choices of wood and construction method have been made. Bearing edges—upon which the drumheads make contact with the shell—are often a feature mentioned in brochures and catalogs. Whatever I say from here on will possibly draw disagreement from some quarters, since the angle of the bearing edge, the amount of shell in contact with the head, and the best formula for optimum tonal response is open to debate. Nevertheless, I will venture to state a broad generality: "The sharper the bearing edge, the livelier and brighter the response; the flatter and more rounded the bearing edge, the fatter and fuller the tone."

Counterhoops have long been acknowledged as having an effect on drum sound. By replacing pressed steel types with die-cast ones, a darker, more mellow tone replaces the wide-open range of the pressed-steel hoop. Likewise, the amount of hardware attached to a drumshell has attracted much attention in recent times. There has been a concerted effort by quite a few drum companies (large and small) to promote drums with little or no hardware bolted to the shell. The theory is that the shell is thus able to resonate more freely—and I find it hard to argue with this logic. Kindred thoughts have resulted in isolating material being placed between the fittings and shell, and at least one system being devised to have the drum suspended—avoiding the need

to have a stress-creating fitting bolted to the shell at all.

In the final analysis of such innovations, the only real judge can be your own ears. Which features do you feel make a real difference, and which—while possibly being measurable on an oscilloscope—could not make any real difference to the less-critical human ear (and could be there simply as very astute sales promotion)? Will an 8-ply maple-shell bass drum with 20 normal lugs bolted to its shell sound appreciably different from one employing another approach? It is certainly not my intention to try to argue these options either way. I simply want to point out the availability of such features—some of which I personally feel have merit, and others that my hearing cannot endorse.

To illustrate how strongly some people feel on this subject, there is a top drummer in England who some years back took delivery of a new set finished in silver sparkle. (He had an endorsement deal.) His first action upon getting the drums was to tear off the finish, leaving the shells bare wood. The explanation he gave was, "I will not have drums wrapped in plastic; it kills the resonance." His approach was a little extreme, perhaps, but he felt very strongly that his sound was jeopardized by that silver sparkle finish. (For those readers wondering why he had the drums sent in silver sparkle initially: The drum company in question did not produce other than covered shells.)

At this final stage I feel it only fair to restate that virtually *all* of what I have said only applies to top-line drums. If you own a budget set and it has been well-finished, the greatest improvement you can make will be by fitting it with top-grade heads; there is very little you can do to improve the wood or the way in which the drum has been constructed. But for the drummer who is using a quality set—or is thinking of buying one—I hope this has provided you with a checklist to consider when deciding on that new additional snare drum or completely new set.

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DRUMMING: HOW RISKY IS IT?

continued from page 29

"Most drummers I measure average [in their playing environments] about 116, and peak at about 128. I don't know if a 15 dB attenuation for a two- or three-hour set is enough. But I'd just as soon see them wear a 15 dB plug—if that's all they can tolerate—than nothing at all."

Most drummers still wear nothing at all (in their ears, that is). As we have seen, even if they owned a pair of *ER-15s*, they would still be well-advised to equip themselves with some other, more highly attenuating pair of devices; and this reality does seem a deterrence. (At least for now—new, more "powerful" flat-attenuation filters are under development by Etymotic and others, and should be available soon.) Yet, when weighed against the prospect of losing one's hearing, the drawbacks of wearing protection may deserve a second look—especially when there are a number of steps one can take to ameliorate these drawbacks.

The first and most obvious strategy is to mix and match the protection to the

playing situation—to use the *ER-15s*, for example, while practicing alone or attending other peoples' performances—and saving the heavier ammunition for use during full rehearsals and your own group's performances. This is, in fact, how Paul Wertico handles it. Kenny Aronoff, on the other hand, often does the reverse: He will use plugs only for practicing, taking them out for performances, "because it affects the way I hear the music." That all-important factor of "feeling" again.

Some players wear protection in only one ear—the ear that gets the most direct barrage—while letting the other one go naked. Some even alternate the earplug back and forth between ears, just to give each of them equal relief.

Another recommended ploy is to start wearing the protection *prior* to the performance, rehearsal, session, or whatever. This seems to give one's internal perceptual mechanisms time to adjust to (and compensate for) the altered perceptual mode, so that it feels more natural once you start to play. "I put the plugs in anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes before I go

on stage," reports Joey Kramer. "As soon as I put them in, I go out of my way to engage in conversation with someone. So by the time I get to the stage, they feel pretty normal."

Conversely, it does not work very well to begin a gig, or even a multi-day recording session, without wearing protection, and then try to switch over to it later on, mid-stream. As Kenny Aronoff reports, "It's when I start without plugs, then change to using plugs a couple of days later [in the session], that I have a hard time adjusting."

Another "don't" rule for the wearing of protection is: Don't turn up your monitor in an attempt to compensate. Otherwise, you could end up with an even worse situation than when you started. Lars Ulrich describes what happened to him: "I beefed my monitor up so much, in order to feel what the other guys were playing and feel what I was playing myself—we measured it at 125 dB!—and that started causing a lot of problems with the other guys, so that by the end of the tour we had three out of four guys in Metallica playing with earplugs. My mon-

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From top left:
JOE BRANCATO
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itor was so loud that the other guys couldn't hear themselves. And it just started escalating; everything started getting turned up and turned up. It just got to be really silly."

There is no remedy either for something known as the "occlusion effect," which comes with the wearing of any earplug, but especially one that doesn't extend deep into the ear canal (which would be any device but the *ER-15*). Caused by the mechanics of sound vibration within the mouth cavity, this is the phenomenon wherein one's own voice becomes highly magnified in one's ears—an effect which is often unnerving at first, if you also sing while you play. Although actually a potential help in keeping a vocalist on pitch (which is why performers will often momentarily raise a finger to their ear during a song), the occlusion effect makes it difficult for a backup singer to blend his own voice with any others that might be singing at the same time. The only solution to this challenge is good ol' trial-and-error over a period of time.

The bottom line is that the wearing of

protection, even if it's the *ER-15*, takes some getting used to; there's just no way around it. But consider the alternative. Each individual musician must decide for himself or herself whether the adjustment is worth it. It should be remembered, however, that, as un-ideal as wearing protection may be, the break-in period is a finite one. You can reach a stage of equitable trade-off with it, if you take the time and have the patience. As Joey Kramer puts it: "It's like anything else. If you want to have hearing protection, it's the kind of thing that you have to start with and stick with. It took me a long time to get used to wearing earplugs; and it still isn't by any means my favorite thing to do when I go on stage. However, I am at the point now where I cannot go on stage without them."

Lars Ulrich agrees: "I think a lot of people put in earplugs, play for five minutes, and then take them out because they can't handle it. But I think that people have to give it some time." Forced into a real necessity due to his previously incurred hearing damage, Ulrich describes having to undergo the adjust-

ment process right in the midst of huge concert situations. "I did four or five shows in front of 10,000-15,000 people each night, where I didn't feel that I knew what I was playing or what the other guys were playing. I didn't feel like I was in touch with the situation. And when you're the drummer, and you're supposedly, quote-unquote, pushing things and driving things and so forth, and yet you're not knowing, or not feeling confident about what the hell is going on around you—it's a very, very uncomfortable situation to be in."

But he persevered, telling himself that "in the long run, it would probably be worth it." And after five gigs or so, "I finally started to understand what was going on, what to listen for, and how to compensate. You really have to roll with it for a couple of gigs and hope that you'll get used to it. I'd used earplugs before at rehearsals, when there were just the four of us in a room. But once you're out there in front of 10,000 people, that's a really different situation. But," he concludes proudly, "I at last conquered that."

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best of it," however. There is at least one side effect from the wearing of protection that's quite positive. Anyone familiar with the "wall of sound" sensation during a performance, especially when the hall is reverberant, will recognize how it works: The earplugs act as a kind of refining filter for all the ambient echo. Joey Kramer explains: "No matter how much noise, no matter how much bottom-end rumble, or anything else that might be getting in the way of hearing what you need to hear on stage, the earplugs filter it out and make everything clearer." And says Doane Perry: "If the sound is very boomy, earplugs can help cut out unwanted reverb, delay, and frequencies."

Etymotic's Ed DeVilbiss concurs. In fact, a famous vocalist had recently called him from Los Angeles to testify precisely about this effect, saying: "You know, it's the first time that I've actually heard my drummer. I've been standing up there and hearing all this noise and clatter coming at me for years. But I'd never before heard just how good he was."

Whether earplugs offer extra advantages

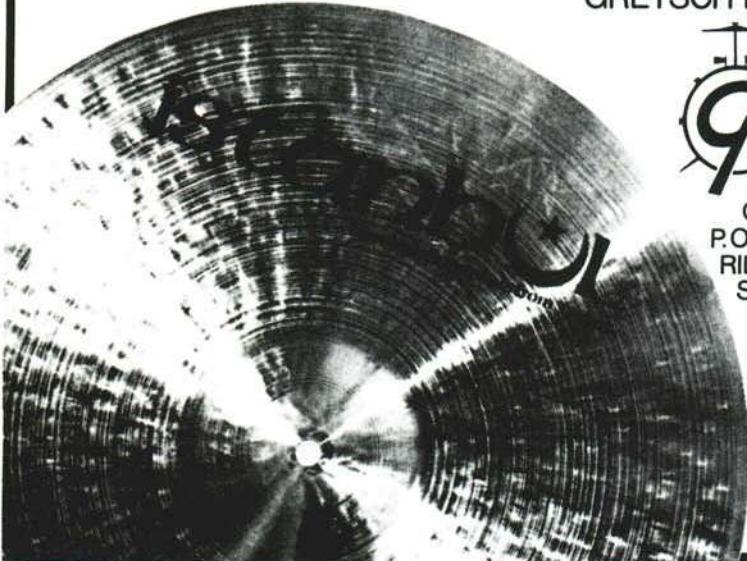
or represent hurdles to overcome, one thing is clear: The infamous "wimp factor" is no more. No longer is it considered a betrayal of the macho spirit of rock to wear protection. And with the likes of Lars Ulrich and Joey Kramer speaking out so strongly for it, this attitude is likely to spread. "I think that anybody who doesn't entertain the idea of protecting their ears is doing nothing but fooling themselves," asserts Kramer. "They're just denying it. Because it's only a matter of time. You only get one pair of ears, and once you've abused them, that's it."

And as Ulrich says: "I think that everybody should make their own decision, but just don't give me this stuff that you're a wimp if you put earplugs in, because I think you're a bigger idiot if you end up walking around not being able to hear what your friends are saying, or not being able to hear the next Metallica album or whatever. I mean, would that really be so hip?"

Spreading this word across the land is a San Francisco-based organization dedicated to the dissemination of hearing information to rock musicians and their

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audiences. Co-founded by Kathy Peck, a bass player who in her punkier days suffered a 40 percent hearing loss in one ear, HEAR (for Hearing Education and Awareness for Rockers) sponsors a hearing screening service at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, runs several support groups for people with hearing disabilities, operates a telephone hotline, and in general acts as a clearing house for all kinds of outreach educational projects. With an advisory board that includes such notables as promoter Bill Graham and Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart, HEAR feels that it can act with much more sensitivity to the needs of music lovers with regard to this issue than, say, the government would, if it were ever spurred to intervene. (This is actually a distinct possibility now, with several hearing-damage lawsuits against rock groups and their promoters in the courts.)

"At HEAR," Peck says, "we're dedicated to education, not regulation. We feel that music should be self-regulating within the industry." And about earplugs, Peck's attitude is unequivocal: "Rock 'n' roll is like any other sport. You wear your protective gear. Think of them as being like sunglasses for your ears."

Whether you choose to wear earplugs or not, it doesn't hurt to learn what the stakes are. After all, if you've been playing unprotected and your hearing is still unscathed, perhaps you've just been lucky, or perhaps you've just got good genes. Or, perhaps it's something else altogether.

"God protects musicians," says Dr. Mead Killion, the developer of the ER-15. "Otherwise, they'd all be deaf."



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EARPLUGS, HPDs, & MORE

continued from page 27

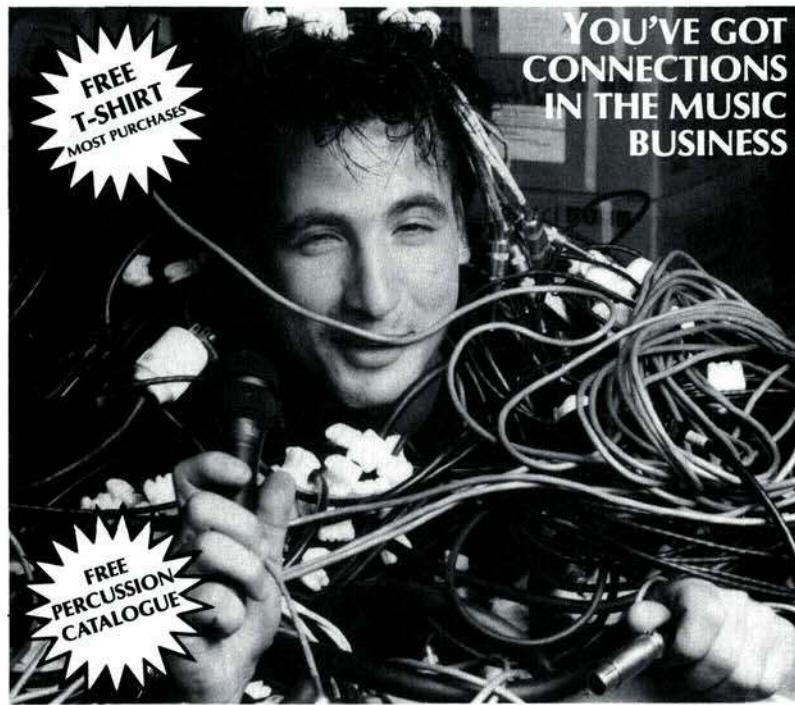
can hear spoken conversation quite well through these devices—which you can't do with the other OTC plugs.

Aside from any other advantage over the OTC plugs, all custom-fit earplugs are easy to insert correctly; there is, in fact, only one way you can put them in. However, despite assurances to the contrary, I have found that the snugness of these plugs is still affected by facial movements. It is possible that my initial ear canal impressions were not done as precisely as possible—an operation requiring some experience and skill on the part of the practitioner. (For example, my audiologist failed to instruct me to move my jaw and facial muscles while the impression goo was "setting up," so that the final product would take these movements into account.)

The largest earmold lab in the country, and the one with the most experience serving musicians, is Westone Laboratories in Colorado Springs. A call to Bonnie Foster there, at 1-800-525-5071, and you will be referred to a practitioner in your local area who can do the job.

Besides the ER-15 "musician's plug," Westone equips their earmolds with two different internal filters ("sound attenuators") that are suitable, if not ideal, for use by musicians—the 680-*Ohm* and the *DefendEar*. The 680-*Ohm* filter attenuates 18 - 20 dB from everything you hear, whereas the *DefendEar* brings all sound that is above 80 dB down to that level. Depending on the practitioner, both of these cost about \$70.

Westone is reluctant to recommend either of these products for musicians, as both of them are flawed by uneven attenuation values along the sound frequency spectrum, which produces that "bass-y" effect described in the main part of this article. Moreover, Westone expects that several new "flat response" filters—like the *ER-15*, but offering more protection—will soon be available; and the company would not want to see musicians get soured on the use of plugs altogether by using less than state-of-the-art ones. Some of these new products will be coming from Etymotic Research, while others are being developed in Europe—but in any case, the first of them should be



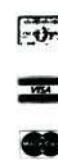
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available as early as this summer. Write to Westone to get on their mailing list, at P.O. Box 15100, Colorado Springs, CO 80935.

In the meantime, I use the *DefendEar* filters for gigs requiring more protection than the *ER-15s* can provide, but less protection than would justify using the foam ones. Sure, they don't provide as true a fidelity as I'd like, but when it comes to my hearing (I already suffer from both high-end loss and moderate tinnitus) I'll take the trade-off.

The *ER-15*, the only currently available device offering a nearly uniform response across the frequency spectrum (thereby providing a natural sound, which preserves much of the music's inherent "feel"), attenuates 15 dB and costs about \$100.

As advertised, this device (inserted in the Westone earmold) has proven to be the most satisfying "plug" I have tried. In addition to providing the most un-muddled of sound perception, it stays put in the ear canal no matter how much I grimace—a product of the earmold's deep insertion (which also eliminates most of the occlusion effect). Alas, the mere 15 dB level of protection does not leave me feeling as secure as I'd like; so for high-

volume gig situations, I reach for my *DefendEars* or foam plugs (which I sometimes use in combination with the *ER-15s* in one ear or the other, in situations where the loudest sound is coming from a certain side). I look forward to the advent of the newer, more protective "flat response" filters coming from Etymotic.

Golden State Audiology, in Sunnyvale, CA—a major supporter of the HEAR effort in San Francisco—offers its own earplug, which it dubs *Earshades*. Although lacking any internal mechanism, this is a true custom-fitted device, offering 31 - 35 dB of attenuation and costing \$36. However, the really unique feature of these earplugs is that they are available in a variety of "limited edition" fashion designs, created by noted designer Kate Drew-Wilkinson. Now you too can flaunt earplugs with jewels, stones, or feathers dangling down from them. Call Golden State at 1-800-635-EARS.

As part of their standard equipment arsenal, some bands carry with them a sound-level meter, just to keep them honest. One model, which is small, light, and reliable, is available from Radio Shack for about \$30.

A great resource for information and inspiration is HEAR (Hearing Education

and Awareness for Rockers) in San Francisco. As they put it: "We provide education and services to music industry personnel, performers, and patrons regarding hearing loss prevention, and enhancement of hearing for the hearing impaired. We seek to de-stigmatize the use of hearing enhancement and protection devices."

For an information packet, send \$5 plus a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: HEAR, P.O. Box 460847, San Francisco, CA 94146, or call them at (415) 431-LOUD. Or you can call the HEAR Hotline for up-to-the-minute news and events, at (415) 773-9590.

A struggling, non-profit organization, HEAR could also use your support. They have therefore developed a membership group called the HEAR Music Industry Council. Write to Kathy Peck at HEAR for details.

Other resources for information include the American Tinnitus Association (P.O. Box 5, Portland, OR 97207), and the American Speech, Language, and Hearing Association (10801 Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852).

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WHAT THE DRUMMERS SAY

continued from page 29

hearing loss in one ear (probably due to his "large swish cymbal" on that side) and does experience temporary bouts of tinnitus following concerts, Phillips does not wear protection. "I'm sure if I had to I could get used to them, but it would give me an insular feeling, which is not the sort of feeling you need when you are entertaining an audience."

Nevertheless, Simon does devote a lot of attention to the preparation of his own monitor system—and when in the studio, to his headphone levels, which has been "probably the major cause of Pete Townsend's hearing problems," according to Simon. "If your system sounds good and individual instrument sounds are good," he concludes, "I'm sure this makes a difference in the matter."

Two other non-wearers with seemingly tough ears are Stan Lynch and Max Weinberg. Although both describe the symptoms of temporary threshold shift following concerts, neither has incurred any significant permanent damage. Both, however, do pay some attention to volume levels while they're playing. Weinberg places "plexi" around his performance area, while Lynch turns down his moni-

tors. "The natural sound of a drumkit being hit by me—I don't bash my brains out anymore—is not the least bit unpleasant or loud," asserts Lynch. "Turn down your monitors," he advises. "Let the PA do the work!"

Somewhere in the middle ground in terms of protection usage are Kenny Aronoff and Rod Morgenstein.

Although he has not yet incurred any significant hearing loss, Aronoff does experience post-gig tinnitus, which varies in intensity directly proportional to the length of time he's been "on vacation" since the last performance. (Time off evidently re-sensitizes the ears to noise.) As described elsewhere in the article, Aronoff wears earplugs for non-live situations ("squish-up" foam ones for practice, tissue paper for studio sessions), while going unprotected for performances. "I'm always trying to use plugs," he says, "because it makes sense that loud noise to your ears is going to eventually create hearing loss." He therefore has been experimenting with using plugs "on and off for about 10 years." However, because "it affects the way I play," he still goes without about 75 percent of the time.

After many years of playing,

Morgenstein first noticed that he had developed a moderate case of continuous tinnitus only last year—"not blaring, but definitely there and loud enough to be annoying"—and this naturally has captured his attention. Although he had already been a user of crumpled-up tissue paper before, he has now adopted the wear of an airport/shooting-range headset for practice, and foam earplugs for performances. "Since hearing loss is permanent," he says, "I am overly concerned with protecting my ears."

Doane Perry reports that he often keeps his head "turned favoring the left ear over the snare." He also cites the use of a click track during lengthy recording sessions as being a source of trouble. Perry has just ordered a pair of custom-molded plugs, and he is most anxious to try them out as soon as he can. "If you want to protect your hearing and are in high-volume situations constantly," he warns, "you *must* have protection!"

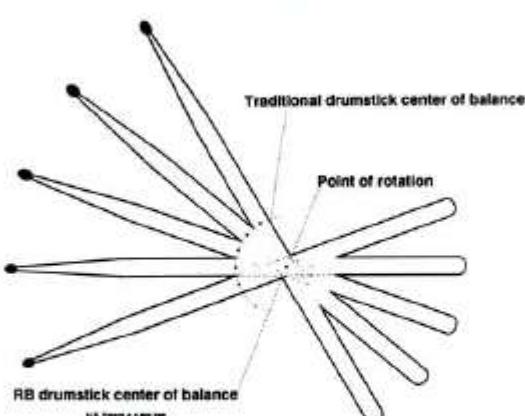
And echoing this sentiment is Gregg Bissonette, who although he has not experienced any hearing problems as yet, recommends the use of protection wholeheartedly. "It's very important to keep what hearing you have," he says. "My only suggestion on this is plugs."

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This two-CD set was recorded live at a concert in Paris last year, after Roach and Gillespie had two rehearsals in which, reportedly, not a note was played. They spent the time reminiscing about music and musicians of the past as well as catching up with each other's recent activities. When it came time to do the concert, they approached it the same way, communicating through their instruments this time, sometimes revisiting old tunes, sometimes improvising new ones.

The instrumentation consists of trumpet and drumset, period. But Max Roach has long been recognized as a drummer who can play by himself and imply melody and harmony as well as stating rhythm, so the addition of

Gillespie just makes it that much nicer. This is a definitive Roach performance, demonstrating his sense of melody and swing, as well as his inventiveness.

In one sense, neither of these men have anything to prove. They helped create the style of music called bebop, which in its day dared to break a lot of rules, and which today is considered the rule itself by many musicians. If they had never done anything else, their names would have lived in musical history. But in another sense, Roach and Gillespie have everything to prove. Whether it's a big band whose original leader has passed away and is being led by someone else under the same name, or it's the Who, we live in an age where a lot of people are happy to simply recall past glories without contributing anything new.

This is not a "reunion" concert where Max and Diz got together to play the old tunes one more time. Yes, here and there one of the classic bop tunes does appear, but the overall feeling of this concert is one of discovery. They both play like the masters they are, but they also play with the joy of exploration, which is what led them to being masters in the first place.

• Rick Mattingly

TONY WILLIAMS—*Native Heart*. Blue Note B4-93170. T. Williams: dr. W. Roney: trp. B. Pierce: tn, sp sx. M. Miller: pno. I. Coleman, B. Hurst: bs. Native Heart / City Of Lights / Extreme Measures / Juicy Fruit / Two Worlds / Crystal Palace / Liberty.

Tony Williams plays hard and loud. This is especially apparent in live performance. If any soloist in his band were to hesitate for even a heartbeat, he would be backed into a corner and bulldozed flat by



the drums' sonic barrage. Maintain peak energy or die! Once listeners bypass the initial sonic shock, they will notice, however, that there is never one blindly bashed beat. Every rhythmic line and flourish is breathtakingly musical, and sensitive despite its volume, and serves as a constant catalyst for the improvisational direction of the entire quintet. At his last Village Vanguard appearance, Tony expressed his thanks to the audience for appreciating "aggressive music for aggressive people." The aggressiveness runs far deeper than sonic power alone; it's in the music's uncompromising commitment.

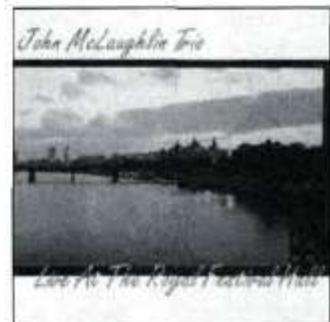
Through his long career, Williams has boldly and successfully explored several formats, and his return to the classic straight-ahead acoustic quintet has proven to be one of his most persistently fruitful endeavors. Having led this modern hard bop quintet for the past five years (with two personnel changes), Tony has molded a unit that becomes increasingly cohesive with each outing. Even during the most intense muscular moments, there is a relaxation between the players that can only come from the growth of a closely knit group over time.

As always, Tony's drumming is dazzling, from his mesmerizing solo, "Liberty," to his sensitive textural work on the title track. Due to the steady growth in Williams'

compositional skills and in the group's blooming ensemble strengths, each of his successive Blue Note discs since 1986 has marked a step forward. *Native Heart* is surely a new peak.

• Jeff Potter

JOHN McLAUGHLIN TRIO—*Live At The Royal Festival Hall*. JMT 834 436-2. J. McLaughlin: acous gtr, gtr synth. K. Eckhardt: bs. Trilok Gurtu: perc. Blue In Green I Just Ideas/Jozy I Florianopolis I Pasha's Love I Mother Tongues I Blues For L.W.



Guitarist John McLaughlin has been associated with many fine drummers over the years, and he can be credited with giving Billy Cobham and Narada Michael Walden the ideal setting—the Mahavishnu Orchestra—in which to utilize their skills. McLaughlin has a new trio that has been receiving a lot of attention, and much of it has centered around drummer/percussionist Trilok Gurtu, who truly has a unique style of playing.

Because McLaughlin's music is often based around Indian rhythms, most of the drummers who have worked with him have incorporated those rhythms into their styles. But where those drummers were primarily jazz players, and the Indian rhythms were applied to the jazz style, Gurtu is an Indian musician who has incorporated jazz

into his playing. Although it might seem that the end result would be similar, it is decidedly not.

For one thing, Gurtu does not play on a standard American-style drumkit. He does use a snare drum, cymbals, and toms, but he sits on the floor when he plays and does not use his feet. So everything is played from the hands, giving his playing an even more linear quality than one is used to hearing. In addition, Gurtu uses various metallic sounds as well as tabla in his setup, so there is a lot of sonic variety in his playing. He is also a master of contrast, both in terms of loud/soft and spacious/busy playing.

The album is notable in many respects, but one of my favorite moments occurs in the final cut, when the three musicians improvise together using the rhythmic syllables upon which Indian drumming is based. It's just one of the unique features of this very original-sounding album.

• Rick Mattingly

STEVE WILLIAMSON-*A Waltz For Grace*. Verve Digital 843 088-2. Mark Mondesir: dr. S. Williamson: sx, perc. L. Plaxico, G. Crosby: bs. J. Joseph: pno. D. Gilmore, H. Gondwe: gtr. A Lincoln: vcl. K. Haynes: perc. *Down (Slang) / Awakening / Visions / A Waltz For Grace / Mandy's Mood / Soon Come / Straight Ahead / Mandela / Groove Thang / Synthesis / Hummingbird / How High The Bird / Words Within Words*.

Grace indeed. From this 25-year-old London-born saxman/composer comes a mature, stunning debut. Although his horn roots are grounded in Trane and the great straight-ahead soloists, there is no rehashing here. Williamson's approach is



strongly rhythmic, harmonically sophisticated, and freshly contemporary. He covers several horns, but it's his rich, personal tenor work that speaks strongest. As a composer, Williamson's surprising, eclectic tunes veer just enough left of center to keep the curve balls coming and a listener's ears cocked.

A third of the tracks were cut in the U.K. with Williamson's peers, and the rest were laid down in New York with American sidemen. One exception is young British drummer Mark Mondesir, who Williamson brought along for both sessions. And the reason is obvious. Like the saxman's compositions, Mondesir's superb drumming sits between the cracks of definition; it's not quite this and it's not quite that. In constructing a groove, Mondesir most often avoids the obvious. An example is the tune "Down (Slang)," dominated by a funkish riff under which he lays down a backbone somewhere between calypso, jazz, funk, and New Orleans marching snare. The groove integrates the whole kit and only depends on a ride cymbal "lead voice" during the brief bridges.

Under the quirky, angular "Hummingbird," which alternates between "4" and "5" phrases, Mondesir plays an unusual groove that makes the oddball whole roll, and during the intense tenor solo on

"Awakening," he also proves to be one of the select few who can unleash a storm of busy playing without getting in the way. This exciting drummer has already earned a name on the British scene. Let's hope we hear more of him on these shores.

• Jeff Potter

RON STEEN-*Aquamarine*. House Records H-1002. Ron Steen: dr. P. Baker, R. Thomas: bs. G. Mitchell, T. Grant, B. Beach: pno. J. Collins: sx. *Blues For R.S. / Supernova/January 11/I Hear A Rhapsody / Locked Out / Aquamarine / The Way You Look Tonight / Song For Ron / When I Fall In Love*.



Ron Steen is a 40-year-old Portland, Oregon native who has backed a number of prominent jazz artists over the years, including Dexter Gordon, Milt Jackson, and Mose Allison. His style is firmly rooted in the bebop tradition, and he lists Elvin Jones, Art Blakey, and Tony Williams as his prime influences.

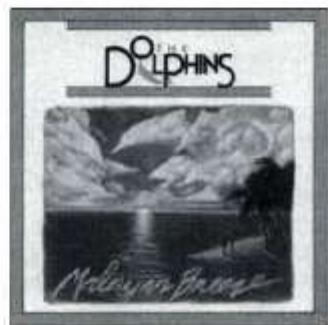
Aquamarine is his first solo effort, and he proves himself to be a solid player who clearly reflects his influences, with his cymbal work in particular calling to mind the way Elvin Jones defines time, and his fills and solos evoking memories of Tony Williams' flurries of notes. But that's not to say that Steen is a mere imitator; while the influences are obvi-

ous, Steen is still his own man, and brings a freshness to the style that is often lacking when musicians merely mimic what has gone before. Steen comes out of the tradition, but is not bound by it.

The music is fairly standard bebop, with a nice blend of tempos and styles, from uptempo swing to ballads to Latin-influenced tunes. Steen displays a nice sense of color, and his brushwork is notable. This album is not necessarily breaking new ground, but bebop fans will recognize Steen as a solid keeper of the flame, for which there will always be a need.

• Richard Egart

THE DOLPHINS-*Malayan Breeze*, dmp CD-474. Dan Brubeck: dr. V Martucci: syn. M. DeMicco: gtr. R. Leon: bs. *Another Vibe / Kahla's Dream / White Wine / Blue Rondo A La Turk / Reflections Of You / Adventures In Seaworld / Malayan Breeze / Psycho 5 / Seven Pounds / Digital Dolphins*.



The Dolphins' debut is a strong start for this solid band from Woodstock, New York. Their shimmering electric jazz is bred from the fusion school but avoids the bombast and overproduction associated with that label. Recorded live to 2-track (with limited overdubs), the ensemble grooves tight but breathes freely. Largely due to main composer and keyboardist Vinnie

Martucci, the tunes have clear direction and a special strength in contrasting textures. The music often exudes a cheerful, sunny quality without ever tapping into sap.

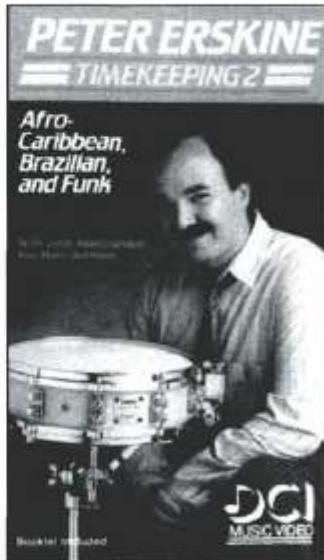
Drummer Dan Brubeck, who has too often been shadowed by the "Son of Dave" syndrome, turns in an outstanding individual performance throughout the disc. Dan has drummed on the scene for two decades and has accrued some impressive credits, yet has not received the full notice he deserves. With the Dolphins, he has found an ideal vehicle for showcasing his many strengths. From jazz to funk to sensitive textural cymbal work and power soloing, Dan sports an overall grand sense for "orchestrating" compositions. This disc should finally bring Brubeck into the spotlight as more than just another sideman.

• Jeff Potter

VIDEOS

**PETER ERSKINE
TIMEKEEPING 2
DCI Music Video
541 Avenue Of The
Americas
New York NY 10011
Time: 67 minutes
Price: \$39.95 (VHS/Beta)**

Imagine that you're sitting in a club, waiting for a performance by the John Abercrombie Trio. A few minutes before the set begins, Peter Erskine sits down at your table and discusses a few of his philosophies of drumming, and then tells you how he is going to approach the first tune. The band takes the stage and plays, and then Peter returns to your table to make a few comments about the music you just heard, and to discuss the next tune. That is the feeling one gets from much of Erskine's second



video, *Timekeeping 2*.

The title is a reference to Peter's first video, *Everything Is Timekeeping*. As with the first tape, this encompasses a lot more than timekeeping patterns, in keeping with Erskine's philosophy that whatever one does on the drums should advance the flow of the music. While the first video covered a lot of basics and dealt primarily with straight-ahead jazz, this one—which is subtitled "Afro-Caribbean, Brazilian, and Funk"—deals more with straight 8th-note and 16th-note styles. But the styles are played from a jazz perspective, as one would expect from Erskine.

A booklet is included that has transcriptions of most of the basic patterns that Peter plays, as well as many of the variations. There is plenty of material here for practice, and being able to hear Erskine's approach to these patterns is invaluable. At times, though, while watching the video and looking at the transcriptions, I couldn't help recalling something Peter wrote in one of his *MD* columns. He was discussing certain jazz drummers, and suggested that if

you were transcribing every note they played, you were probably missing the point. Peter contended that it is often better to simply evoke the same feeling someone else is getting, rather than to attempt to play the exact same patterns. One might apply that philosophy to this material. The transcriptions can certainly aim you in the right direction stylistically, but it's really Peter's feel that makes those patterns come alive, not the patterns themselves.

Besides the performances with Abercrombie and bassist Marc Johnson, there is a lengthy segment in which Erskine performs alone at the drums. The emphasis throughout is on the playing rather than the explanations, and when Peter does talk, most of his comments tend towards the conceptual rather than the specific. But for those who already have a good command of the drumset, it's Erskine's playing that they are going to want to study, and this video provides the perfect means for doing so. Erskine's first video was like a college course in drumming. This one is graduate school.

• Richard Egart

BOOKS

**TOTAL DRUMS
by Ernie do Forno
Publisher: Ernie do Forno
5294 Dundas St. W. #502
Islington, Ontario
Canada M9B 1B2
Price: \$19.95**

Most drum teachers have experienced this at one time or another: After a few weeks of drum lessons, the student's parents show up and ask, "When is my kid going to learn to play a song?" You patiently try to explain that one can't play songs on drums per se, but the beats and rhythms your student is learn-

ing can be applied to any number of songs. The parents grudgingly accept your explanation, but as they walk away, you sense that they wish that their child was learning to play a *real* musical instrument.

A bigger problem, though, is that the student often feels the same way. He can't see exactly how these patterns apply to the music he is listening to, which is probably rock 'n' roll.

Ernie do Forno has taken a big step towards solving this problem with *Total Drums*. The book starts out with very typical introductory material, but once the student has acquired the most basic ability to play bass drum, hi-hat, and snare, the author provides transcribed beats from popular records that use the same patterns the student has just learned. And the transcriptions cover a lot of ground, from a few classic tunes by such artists as Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Led Zeppelin, and Sly & the Family Stone, to a generous selection of patterns by Aerosmith, Skid Row, Motley Crue, Bon Jovi, Def Leppard, and other contemporary bands.

The book is divided into four "levels." Level 1 covers quarter-note patterns; Level 2 deals with 8ths; Level 3 introduces 16ths; Level 4 addresses triplets and shuffles. Each Level starts off with some basic rhythm patterns that resemble the ones used in the Haskell Harr books, except that these have bass drum playing straight four underneath. Once the basic rhythms have been covered, combination patterns are given between different components of the set, as well as timekeeping patterns and fills. This is followed by the transcriptions (with the exception of Level 1).

The book is especially well-

suites for use in private lessons. Each Level concludes with an evaluation, and at the end of the book there is a certificate of completion that the teacher can fill out. Anyone who has ever taught can appreciate how much a simple thing like this can mean to young students, in terms of giving them a feeling of accomplishment.

Again, it's the transcriptions that make this book stand out from other beginning drumset books. Being able to see how these rhythms are used in the "real world" will do a lot to keep a student motivated, and because there are so many tunes to choose from, most students will probably already own recordings of a lot of the songs. If parents can hear their children playing along to records, that might go a long way towards making them feel that their kid is actually learning to play music.

The biggest drawback to this book is its \$19.95 price, which is not competitive with other beginning drumset books. The author says that a cassette is on the way, which will sell for an additional five to eight dollars. I think the cost is going to discourage a lot of people from even checking it out, which would be a shame, because a book like this could really help keep beginning students interested.

• Rick Mattingly

ALFRED'S BEGINNING DRUMSET METHOD by Sandy Feldstein and Dave Black

Publisher: Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
16380 Roscoe Blvd.

P.O. Box 10003

Van Nuys, CA 91410-0003

Price: \$14.95 (book and cassette)

Alfred's Beginning Drumset Method is a 48-page-long book

divided into seven sections. It begins with a section called "Arranging Your Drumset," which covers the overall setup and positioning of the throne, snare drum, tom-toms, and cymbals. The next section ("The Drumset") is comprised of two drumset drawings—a four-piece setup and a five-piece setup—with the names of the component parts. A notation key finishes out the page. The third section, "Getting Ready To Play," addresses matched grip, traditional grip, and striking the snare drum, bass drum, hi-hat, and ride cymbal. Each area is presented with minimal text that is direct and to the point. The next section, titled "Elements Of Music," presents notes and their mathematical relations, measures, bar lines, repeat signs, time signatures, tempo, and an explanation of what a metronome is and how it is used.

The main body of this book is divided into two major sections, "Playing Rock" and "Playing Jazz." Each section begins with basic patterns and develops them into more advanced rhythms by "embellishing" the snare drum and bass drum rhythms. After a few pages of rhythms, one- and two-measure "fills" are presented, which gives the student a balanced view of the "time" and "fill" relationship.

The cassette tape that accompanies the book has good fidelity and separation. Besides demonstrating the rhythms and fills contained in the book, the tape also provides the student with four-bar phrases to develop his or her sense of time between the rhythm pattern and the fill. The tape contains three measures of "time" and one measure of silence on the one-bar fills pages, and two measures of time and two measures of

silence on the two-bar fills page. The student plays along with the time and then plays one of the written fills. If the student slows down or speeds up during the fill, the entry into the next phrase will be out of time, demonstrating to the student the importance of steady time. There are three drum charts in the book—two rock charts and one jazz chart. The tape has two recorded versions of these charts, first with drums, and then without, giving the student the opportunity to hear the drum part and then play along.

There are a few spots in the book where the guidance of a teacher is required. In the jazz section, two versions of cymbal time are given (ride rhythm based on 8th-note triplets and ride rhythm based

on dotted 8th-16th-note notation). One discrepancy to be aware of is that the tape is supposed to demonstrate the triplet concept of time, but plays the dotted 8th-16th form! The subtle difference between these two forms is a very important factor when establishing proper feel. Both forms would have been nice to hear. The book concludes with an appendix, which discusses the tuning of the drums, snares, drum head selection, muffling, and maintenance.

Overall, this is a well-thought-out book and gives a good comprehensive view of rock and jazz styles.

• Glenn Weber



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continued from page 33

ing everything every night. There were nights where I'd go through two or three snare heads. It didn't come down to that I was simply hitting too hard, it was more as though I was getting away from technique. You *can* play hard, but combined with finesse; you just have to be aware how to go about doing it. So I went back to the times I had been studying and focused on the use of my fingers and my hands, because that's really where it's at. Look at Buddy Rich: The guy had amazing power, and he didn't lift his arm to his back and slam it down to get that power. He had all the power in his fingers and wrists. Even if you're not playing jazz, you can still learn so much from jazz drummers: how they get so much from what seems like so little effort.

If you hold your drumstick like you would a hammer, you're going to get a lot more fatigued than if you're relaxed. The whole idea is to try to stay relaxed. There are exercises that you can do to gain strength in your fingers and wrists. Then you learn to use a motion that is similar to cracking a bullwhip: you lift your hand up and then you slap it down quick. If you apply that same technique to a drumset, you get a lot of power with less effort.

TS: And less stress, right?

ES: Yes, less stress on everything. I've also started wearing earplugs on stage because it makes me more relaxed. The two things that I need when I play are earplugs and chewing gum. The gum keeps me salivating so I don't get a dry mouth, and it relaxes my eardrums because I'm constantly chewing. By wearing earplugs, it keeps all that high-end volume controlled. If you hear too much high-end volume in a short time-span, your ears start closing up as a defense mechanism. When that happens, you have to turn the monitors up, and things start getting blurry-sounding, which makes things harder for your ears to decipher. I like to hear things real sharp, like the pick on the guitar attacking the string. I don't want to hear the delay coming through the amp, I want to hear that edge. By using the plugs I hear the front edge of everything, not the delay, which blends it all together. When you put a lot of reverb on a record it makes things sound a lot

smoother than they really are. If you make it real dry you realize how rough the drum track really is. So if you apply that same theory into your listening process live, it's much better to hear things real clean and dry, because it'll help you play more precisely.

I've found over the years that all the little things that I do—to get back to the original idea of relaxation—help me play more efficiently and more comfortably. I use the gum and plugs religiously, and I have my sticks filed a certain way, too.

TS: How?

ES: I have half the stick filed, and I have them made so that they're only half lacquered; there's no sense in having them completely lacquered if I'm just going to file it off. The more slippery the stick gets as I sweat, the tighter the grip gets, and that contributes to getting tense. The tenser you get, the more it can disrupt your flow and your groove. So I like the wood filed because the pores of the wood are open to absorb the sweat more.

TS: You sit very low, too.

ES: I try to keep centered and balanced. You hear every drummer talk about that, and it's so important. How you sit, how close you are to the kit, how high your snare is, how everything is angled—all of that is up to the individual. A lot of people who see my kit say, "I don't know how you can play this. You sit so low, and your toms are high." The gap between my snare drum and my toms is probably ten inches, and the toms and cymbals are pretty flat. Kids probably look at my kit and think I'm patterning myself after Tommy Lee, which I'm not. I was doing it that way long before Tommy Lee was around. If anything, I got that from Tommy Aldridge, who Tommy Lee was highly influenced by. Tommy Aldridge has been sitting that way since Black Oak. I'm partial to Aldridge's playing; he's an amazing live drummer.

TS: Speaking of Aldridge—who is a very flamboyant drummer as far as showmanship goes—you certainly make your presence known as a visual drummer.

ES: The bottom line is that when you close your eyes, it's got to sound good, it has to feel right. On the one hand I guess I'm saying that how you look when you play doesn't matter, because I've seen guys just lay down a great groove without

doing anything fancy, and I just dug the way *they played*. That's the main thing you should be attracted to in the music. I always try to avoid doing anything showy that could take away from the playing. I listen to live tapes, and I know the spots where I'm doing visual stuff, so I know if something's affecting my playing. I try to do things that I feel are right and express what I'm doing. I know there are people who think the visual side is cliched or stupid, but kids like it. It's all part of what kids want to see in a rock 'n' roll show. I appreciate the guy who sits back there without the visuals and just leans in on the meanest backbeat. But some of us are into expressing ourselves differently, and with me, I'm just doing what I feel. I don't do it in a clowning-around way; it's more intense, more focused. With this kind of music—heavy rock—it's got to be a spectacle, at least to some degree.

TS: You toured with Gary Moore for a long period back in '87. He's reputed as being difficult to work with, plus he's known to change drummers at the drop of a hat. What were some of your experiences?

ES: I had been a big fan of Gary's for years, and when I met Jeff Glixman, who was producing the Sabbath album I was on, I told him that I was a big fan of Gary's. Jeff had produced two of his albums, and I told him that if he ever worked for him again, I would really like to jam with the guy. Ironically, I ended up playing for Gary a couple of years later.

Gary is very respected, and even though he's not big in the States, he's huge in Europe and Japan, and playing with him can take you to what other people seem to think is a higher level of musical integrity. When I was up for the Paul Stanley gig, Paul had never heard of me, and he asked [guitarist] Bob Kulick who I was. Bob told him I had worked with Gary, and Paul told me that if I played with Gary Moore, then he figured I had to be good. That shows you how beneficial it is to do certain things. You get more respect instantly from playing with artists like that who are so well-respected by their peers.

Gary is known to go through drummers like water, so I feel good that I survived the tour, [laughs] Gary is a temperamental person when it comes to music,

but I understand why. It's basically because he's a perfectionist, and he's a very emotional player. He's got the most intensity of anyone I've ever played with, and he's so focused that he almost becomes one with the guitar. I think the reason why he has this rep is because he expects the same intensity from other people who work with him. He knows what he wants from himself and the people he works with.

I played with my dad's band for years, and working with him really prepared me for working with a guy like Gary, because my dad is similar in many ways. He'd want things done his way *only*, and his attitude towards musicians was, "This is the way I want things, and if you don't like it, then see ya later." Gary's not unlike that.

I take the attitude that if you're going to work for somebody where it's their gig and you're a hired hand, then you're there to do the best job you can and to do it their way, within reason, to make it work. There are situations where people make totally unbearable and outrageous demands, but Gary is not like that. In rehearsal he might have told me, "Play quarter notes on the ride cymbal and 8th notes on the hi-hat and this kind of pattern with your foot." Then the next day he would change it a little bit. That was because the album we were touring in support of was done with drum machines, and a lot of times there were more things going on than one human drummer could play. You had to be an octopus to play certain parts because you'd have 16th notes on the hi-hat while you had a ride cymbal going. People don't play like that.

So what we'd do is take the strongest elements and break the song down until Gary felt what he wanted to feel underneath him. There were times when we had worked a part out weeks earlier and had been playing it that way for a chunk of the tour, and then all of a sudden he'd decide that he wanted me to do it differently. He would act as if he had wanted it done differently all along, but it didn't bother me. It kept me on my toes, in fact; every night it was like fighting for my life out there, because I had to go out and put so much into it. But I had been warned about the gig beforehand by Chris Tsangarides, who had produced him. He told me, "All you have to do is play 110% every night." Bob Daisley [bass], who recommended me for the gig, was also real helpful to me, because he had worked with Gary for a long time.

I've been lucky in that people have taken me under their wing at times and guided me along. Sometimes you need that. If you have somebody in a band that you can relate to in a musical sense and/or a personal sense, it's real helpful under adverse conditions. Somebody has got to be the buffer.

TS: You've noted that your father was your major influence musically. Can you explain what he did and how you got involved with his music as you were growing up?

ES: My father was a bandleader and a tenor sax player who originally played in a society band, playing what was then called society music. He worked for a well-known bandleader in New York, and he used to work on cross-Atlantic cruises. Everybody traveled on those ships—royalty, movie stars, dignitaries—and my dad would meet everyone because he ran the band. It was basically dance music back then; this was in the '40s and '50s. Then he came back to Cleveland—he was from Austria

originally—and started his own thing playing for wealthy people and for political and business figures and several presidents. His band would play in a specific room five nights a week in one of the big hotels down in the square. But eventually dance bands phased out, so now he does "singles" like weddings, country clubs, and parties.

TS: When did you first start playing with him?

ES: I was about 14 or 15. I started taking lessons when I was 11—which is when I started playing officially—but I didn't relate to him at all because he was such a disciplinarian. He was really good, but I just couldn't handle him. Then I took lessons from Buddy Kummil, who made me really want to play, and he had a fair attitude. He let you know that if you didn't have your lesson ready by the next lesson, it was okay. If you came back and screwed it up the following week, then you had one more chance. He didn't pressure you but he let you know that it had to come from you, plus he had such a great rapport with kids that he made it fun.

When I was in 7th grade, I'd play with my dad's band for concerts they had in the park. I was playing alongside professional musicians. Plus my mother was a singer in musical plays, and I was in the orchestra for shows during the summer. This was when I was around 13, and that's when I joined the union and started working pretty steadily with my dad's band.

But getting back to his influence, my dad was very domineering, very strong-willed. He wanted his ideas interpreted a certain way if you worked for him, which I can really appreciate now. But it was a little rougher for me because I was his son, so there



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were times when he'd kick me out from behind the drums and say, "This is the way I want it played!" and he'd show me, which was embarrassing for me. Eventually he got me disciplined to the point that he didn't want to use any other drummer but me. It was great on the one hand, but on the other I missed out on a lot of the social aspects of high school because I was working every weekend. You need to socialize; it's part of growing up.

TS: I sense some resentment there.

ES: At the time I resented him. I'd be foolish to deny that.

TS: But now you're thanking him?

ES: As much as I hate to admit, it was the right thing for me. He taught me so much about fitting into a band situation. Playing organized music of any kind is helpful in understanding the basics: how to perform your particular role in the band, how to play with other musicians. It doesn't matter if you're playing in an orchestra, a polka band, or a jazz band; it helps toughen you up and makes you prepared for different situations. For me, it also inspired me to work harder at what I wanted to play, which was rock. It's important for kids not to get discouraged just because they're not playing what they're into musically. If it's helping you to learn about band situations and to become a player, the benefits will surface eventually. If I have any style as a player it's *because* of my background, not *in spite* of it. I mean, I wouldn't force my own kids to do what they didn't want, but you don't always choose the deck of cards you're given, and that's the hand I drew, so I dealt with it.

But like I said, in the last few years I've found that all of that has paid off, especially in my approach to playing and my style. I can play with any given artist and still bring my own style to it. I can adapt to different situations but still be myself to some degree.

I remember a conversation I had with Gary Moore about that. I had been more of a behind-the-beat player, and I had gotten more like that due to Sabbath, because their music was more droney, very heavy, and the beat was more behind. Gary was the opposite; he wanted everything on the front edge of the beat. One night after rehearsal Gary told me that I

was lucky because I could adapt. As long as someone makes me conscious of what they want, I can adapt. So I took that as a compliment.

TS: How did you push yourself in front?

ES: If I want to get on top of it more I've found that if I dig into the hi-hat it brings it more on top. You have to know which way you lean to begin with—where you basically place your time. But the way you position yourself and the way you sit has a lot to do with where you place the beat. So if I want to reposition the beat, I place my body differently. If I want to get more on top of it, I'll get in tighter on the kit—on the hi-hat and on the drums. It gives you less distance to move the sticks, so the rebound time is quicker. The physics of getting behind the beat are the opposite: I'd sit back more and turn sideways a little bit to create more space and more motion. The recovery time involved is only down to milliseconds, but it makes a difference. Some guys sit the same all the time and change the stick motion, but this approach works the best for me.

TS: After you left Badlands in January, you picked yourself up, and you got the gig with Alice Cooper within a week.

ES: The basic scenario was that I found myself without a gig, so I worked fast to remedy that and started making calls to some of my contacts. I had heard that Jonathan Mover was planning to leave Alice, so I called the management and hooked up with Al Petrelli, who's the lead guitar player and band director. He said he knew who I was and that he wanted to check me out. The day after the American Music Awards they set up an audition for me in L.A., so I played a couple of songs with them, and Alice said, "I heard what I need to hear." They told me that Alice really dug it and that I had the gig.

TS: What did you learn from the experience of being fired from Badlands?

ES: I learned that no one is ever exempt from being fired. I had thought I was going to be involved in that for a while, and then I found myself fired. The main thing you've got to do in that type of situation is pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and pull yourself together. You have to have a solid belief in your abilities to move on, rather than sitting around sulking or getting depressed. I got on the

phone immediately to make inquiries, which was a good thing for me, because I ended up getting this gig a week later. So it's really important to keep your focus on yourself no matter what happens. Anyone can get fired, whether the reasons are personal or musical. It happens.

TS: Before we talk about the details of working with Alice, I just wanted to ask you about a remark you made in conversation about a month or two ago. You told me that you didn't want to get a reputation as a drummer who gets around too much from one job to the next. You said that you didn't want to be mistaken as a mercenary player.

ES: I'd never want to be thought of as someone who does a gig just for the money, although some people might beg to differ with that. I like to play to keep busy. I got into playing drums because I like to play them, first and foremost. I did the Paul Stanley tour during the interim between doing my Badlands tracks and then going on tour to support the album. We had recorded here in New York, so rather than go back to L.A. after my tracks were completed and sit around and get out of shape, the Paul Stanley gig gave me an opportunity to get out on the road. I hadn't been out on the road for about a year, because we had spent so much time getting Badlands together. So that prepped me for the road, and consequently it kept me working. It was also fun because I had been a KISS fan as a kid.

TS: Just as you were a fan of Alice Cooper.

ES: Yeah, especially at the time that *Billion Dollar Babies* came out. I was really into that period through *Welcome To My Nightmare*. It's kind of neat to play with all these different people, and I've been fortunate in having had the chance to play with some who have influenced me a lot growing up, one way or another. If someone had told me when I was a kid that I would be playing with some of these people someday, I wouldn't have believed it.

TS: I know you don't want to dwell on Badlands too much, but in hindsight, what were some of the more positive aspects about working in that band?

ES: Every other gig I had done had been with established artists with predetermined styles of drumming already pre-

sent. With Badlands, I had to carve my own niche.

TS: Live, you used Chinas as crashes, but not so much for accenting.

ES: I usually use a lot of Chinas because I like the sound of them. I always have a China over my ride cymbal, and I'll use it to reinforce the snare beat as an accent. If you play them together it almost adds a white noise effect, and it gives it an extra little kick. I also like Chinas for their sound; I always use four or five of them in my setup.

TS: You also were doing some interesting combinations between your feet and your hands as far as cymbal stroke combinations, plus you threw in the odd displaced snare drum beat.

ES: The best way I could describe it is almost like taking a big band drumming approach and combining it with a hard rock style. My approach follows phrasing taken off the guitar lines and vocal lines, as opposed to just playing against the bass player. I tend to get my feel off of the guitar, which to me determines the groove and attitude of the song as far as how I will interpret it. I like to approach it like a big band drummer, who would usually follow the horn section with all the kicks and pushes. When a guitarist plays rhythmically, he's doing subtle innuendos within that rhythmic approach. Same thing with the vocal line: The melody can be very rhythmic in the way it's phrased. That's why some of the licks and fills I use can come out sounding different, but they fit in.

I always liked big band drummers, and my dad used to take me to see Louie Bellson, Buddy Rich, and Count Basie's band when I was younger. To be honest with you, if I wasn't a rock drummer, I would have probably liked to be a big band drummer, because I always loved that style. In that kind of music, the drummer always catapulted the whole band, and the drums were always the featured attraction. I try to be the catalyst in a rock situation. The singers and guitarists get all the attention, but I've always felt that the band is only as good as the drummer, and I'm not saying that because I'm a drummer. If the drummer is a powerhouse, the band drives much heavier and more powerfully.

TS: Another characteristic of your setup

that may or may not revert back to big band drumming is the way you have your toms; they aren't on an angle. The way you go around them with your hands looks unusual for a rock drummer.

ES: That's because when I was a kid I had almost a traditional setup of one bass drum, one rack tom, and one floor tom—almost like a Buddy Rich setup. That's why my ride cymbal's so low—because I'm used to playing that way. Then when I switched to double bass drums when I was around 20, I kept basically the same setup, except when you get bigger toms they have to be up higher. But I've always liked things kind of flat.

TS: Plus you can be seen without any obstructions in the way.

ES: When I do things that are visual, they have to be functional too. So when I'm hitting two cymbals at once or hitting the underside of them, I'm not just grazing them, I'm actually hitting them. It's something I got from Buddy Rich and Gene Krupa. I remember Buddy doing that; he also did real cool hi-hat work.

TS: Your playing tends to emphasize some very effective cymbal work.

ES: That goes back to my fanaticism for cymbals. I do tend to play the cymbals a lot, in contrast to drummers who go more for the toms. I tend to play the cymbals for accents, and I like to keep the 2 and 4 thing happening underneath. Even if I'm doing a lot of crashes over the top, I try to maintain a straight beat. That's comfortable for me, plus, because I like to do visual things like cymbal catches, it frees me up.

TS: You have a tendency to hit two crashes simultaneously.

ES: I hit two crashes at a time because it's more powerful than hitting them individually. From listening to board tapes, I discovered that hitting two comes across much better, especially in hard rock music, and even more in a band like Alice's, where there's two guitarists, a bass player, and keyboards; that's a lot to cut through.

TS: You don't tune your drums the way a rock drummer normally would. Also, you've said in the past that you insist on tuning your own drums, all of the time.

ES: I have always tuned my own drums—always have, always will. Everyone has different opinions as far as

what works best for them, but for me, tuning helps me keep in touch with my drums. I feel that I know how to tune them properly, especially for live gigs, and I take pride in going out there and doing it for myself. I know when I tune them that they're right, and if they were ever tuned improperly, I could never blame anyone but me. I would hope that nobody better than a drummer would know how to get what they want sound-wise. If you have a tech that's in touch with the way you want things, that's cool, but for me tuning is just something I like to do myself. The only thing my tech does is to tune my snare up. He puts the head on, but I have it so tight that it's not a problem.

The tuning I use tends to be very open, and I don't use any muffling at all except for a piece of felt on the bass drum, on each head. Then on the snare I have a tiny piece of leather that flaps up and down when you hit it. Everything else is completely wide open all of the time. As you said, I do tune my drums as a jazz drummer would: I tune the bottom heads on all the toms a little higher than the tops to get a little more overtone and cut. I use all white coated heads on top and bottom of everything. It's very different than the way rock drummers tune their drums.

TS: At a show, your enjoyment of playing live is obvious. Plus, your very visual approach doesn't seem choreographed or at all contrived.

ES: The thing is that I don't do the same thing every time I play. From the actual drumming standpoint—not the visual—I try to be consistent as far as feel and attitude go. The visuals have a lot to do with my temper and moodiness. Some days I feel really strong and really good, while other days I'll just feel like fooling around, so I'll goof around and spin sticks and play more elaborately. When I'm more moody and serious, I'll play things straight in regards to the visual.

TS: But you do let your mood influence your manner of playing to a certain degree?

ES: Sometimes; it depends on what my mood is. If you're upset about something personal it can be distracting, but if you learn how to channel that anger it can be therapeutic; you can release the stress

and tension through playing. But it's really important to put those things off to the side and focus on the music. You have to get yourself into a certain head when you go on stage.

I always feel that the solutions and answers to most things are within all of us. The thing you have to learn to do is put the obstacles aside and just open up yourself. I think people should learn to not be so closed-minded to what's really inside of them and to be honest with themselves. Certain experiences can happen that allow you to wake up and realize what you need to do to get more in touch with yourself. That's one of the most important things to me: to always be in touch with my feelings and emotions and my sense of direction. It's an important thing that all three be in tune, because it has a lot to do with how you play. Having all that in tune allows you to play with better feel and attitude. You have to have a healthy mental attitude to play your best.

After Badlands I started thinking, "Am I becoming jaded?" because I felt really out of tune with everything and very mixed up. I felt that I had come to a point where I wasn't in touch with my own feelings and what I needed to do to make myself feel right. Now that I'm out of the band I realize that that situation made me that way. I was unhappy and I didn't know how to deal with those circumstances properly. I let things eat away at me where it really mixed me up inside, and I lost touch with who I was. One thing that I believe is that when you put a band together, you can't adapt to each other, you have to have the same goals and the same approach when you start it. You have to have that same sense of direction laid out beforehand. You can't put a band together and think that you'll work those differences out later, because it just doesn't happen that way. If I have any advice for young kids, it's to always stick to what you want—just stick to your guns. And regardless of whether you're working with a band or for an artist, you've got to have good communication. That's the most important thing. If you get to the point where you can't communicate your ideas or feelings to the people you work with, then that's the first step towards the dissolution of the band. That's true of

anything, too. Communication is key to relationships—friends, a wife, a group. That is so important.

So because the guys in Badlands are different than me and were more laid back as far as communication goes, it was a problem. I mean, I like to feel comfortable with the people I'm working with so that I can go to them and tell them how I feel about certain things and not feel weird or intimidated about that. I didn't have that with them, and I started thinking I was becoming jaded after that experience. But now I realize that I'm just as hungry as I ever was to do what I want to do.

TS: Even for someone as marketable as yourself, you must have gotten a little worried when you were fired.

ES: When I got a call telling me, "You're out of the band," I was pretty surprised, because the first thing I thought was, "I want to try to work things out." It seemed odd to me that after putting two years into a project, they didn't want to try to work the differences out. I felt that when there are problems, the least people can do is to sit you down and tell you straight.

TS: What are your long-range plans with Alice Cooper?

ES: Let's put it this way: As long as they're happy and as long as I'm happy, I'll continue with it. Beyond the tour, I can't say. I'll just have to cross that bridge when I come to it. I've decided that I'm not going to plan out the future, because obviously I've learned that your course of direction can be changed radically without warning. So I think the main thing for me to do is just concentrate on playing the best I can and to just enjoy playing drums. You can't lose sight of that. It's nice to make money and to be in a successful act, but the main thing is to enjoy playing, and I love playing drums. I've never been casual about my career because of that. Playing is the commitment—nothing else.

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REMO

WILLIE GREEN

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WG: Yes, it was. We recorded it in a house. It was interesting because we put the drums in the living room, the keyboards in the dining room, the bass in the foyer. It was neat.

RS: You've made your mark with the Neville Brothers, but what did you do, musically speaking, before you joined the band?

WG: I did some local New Orleans stuff. I played in a bunch of small bands, including the Uptown All-Stars. Ivan Neville was a big part of that group. He was one of the guys who got me into the Neville Brothers band.

RS: The Uptown All-Stars seems to be one of those great working city bands that has a big loyal following, no matter who's playing in the band. What kind of music did the All-Stars play when you were in it?

WG: Funk. We were so ahead of our time we had nowhere to go. We used to back up the Neville Brothers. After the album *Fyo On The Bayou*, A&M brought in studio cats to back them up, and we were dropped.

RS: On the first record you made with the Nevilles, *Nevillization*, you sound far different than you do today. You play with more authority and finesse now. Was this something you strived for?

WG: Definitely. When I listen to that record it's like looking at a picture of myself in high school and saying, "Man, is that what I used to look like?" That's a weird feeling, but I don't mind it, because I always wanted to be a drummer who keeps progressing, keeps growing, keeps adding things. I always say, "If you stop, the world keeps going." And when you play drums, you sound like wherever you stopped. That's bad. I play so much that I sound real full. No one can ever say, "There goes that dry Willie Green beat again." I try to play one beat and make it sound like five.

When you improve and become a better drummer, like I think I have, people expect more out of you. They expect big things. You have to produce. Sometimes that can be scary. There's that pressure to do good all the time. In the old days, when I was younger and not as experienced as I am now, there wasn't that pres-

sure. But now I'm respected for what I do behind the drums. If I fall asleep at the wheel, someone is gonna pass me. I'm aware of that. It's not like it is in New York or California, but we have some young, hungry drummers here in New Orleans. I got to be on my toes to stay ahead of them. And people expect you to stay ahead.

RS: When people think of great New Orleans bands, chances are the Neville Brothers are going to come to mind. That must make you feel pretty good.

WG: It really does. And you know, there's an interesting thing about the band. There's really two generations of musicians in the Nevilles. Tony, the bass player, and I are in our 30's, and the brothers, they're in their 40's and 50's. What I don't know, I can learn from them. And what they're not into, we can show them. If the bass player and drummer in the Neville Brothers were also in their 40's and 50's, it might be a whole different ball game.

RS: How and when did you get started with the drums?

WG: I started when I was in third grade. I used to beat on the desk. This drummer, Larry Mitchell, was the first guy who blew me away. He had these rolls that were just amazing. I picked up a lot of things from him. He had incredible control. I lived in Jefferson Parish in a town called Shrewsbury. It was just five minutes outside of New Orleans. I moved to the city when I was 26.

RS: As a kid growing up in Jefferson Parish, were you exposed to New Orleans jazz like young city drummers were?

WG: Not really. I grew up on funk, rock, and fusion. If, like me, you were just five minutes outside New Orleans, the music you grew up with was different than the music kids my age were listening to in New Orleans. I didn't come up on Dixieland. I wasn't part of that second-line thing.

RS: Was it a whole new musical experience for you when you finally moved into the city?

WG: Oh, yeah. I had to change my drum style. I had to learn a little about Dixieland and second-line stuff. I didn't mind, because I'm the type of drummer who wants to learn everything.

RS: Since we last spoke in an interview

session, you've done a few side projects that bear discussion. You appear on Elvis Costello's *Spike* album. You also play on Bob Dylan's *Oh Mercy* album. Not too shabby.

WG: [laughs] Yeah. I did the song "Chewing Gum" with Elvis Costello. Then after *Yellow Moon* was done, the Bob Dylan project came up. That was a nice session. I call that a "horseshoe session" because it was all recorded in the same room, and we just kept goin' round and round. I was in the middle. Everybody could look at everybody and play. That, too, was recorded in a house in New Orleans.

RS: What was it like recording with Dylan?

WG: Dylan is a very smart man. He was kind of different at the beginning. I hadn't bought any of his albums, so I didn't know all of his music. But it was amazing to have this project. I got lucky because Daniel [Lanois] produced the record, and I'm one of Daniel's favorite drummers. Daniel would put on tracks and say, "Play what you feel." Sometimes we would rehearse a song one way, and then Bob would come in and say it should be another way.

RS: Do you play any other instruments?

WG: No. I don't sing either. All my energy goes into the drums. I don't write songs. I'm a group player. When it comes to learning notes and chords, I'm tone deaf.

RS: Which brings me to my next question. I see that you're wearing a hearing aid. Are you deaf in one ear?

WG: I had something happen to my ear. It happened in Indiana, at the Holiday Star Theatre. I told the soundman to turn up the sax because I couldn't hear it. He did and it still wasn't loud enough. Then he said, "Oh, the mute." Bang! That was it.

RS: The sudden volume blew out your ear?

WG: Fried it. At least 60 to 70 percent. It's something I have to live with.

RS: So you wear a hearing aid.

WG: To understand you. I can take it out, but I would be saying "Huh?" more than anything. Things kind of get muffled and begin to turn to mono.

RS: How has it affected your playing?

WG: It affected it big time. I was off-

time with the bass and vocals, I was off-time with the band for at least a month. I'm still missing what I need to hear.

RS: Is this damage permanent?

WG: Forever. I just have to overcome it, that's all. That's the challenge ahead of me.

FRANK BUA

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FB: [laughs] Well, most of the time I don't think about what I'm going to do. When Ed brings in a new song, a lot of times the foundation is laid the first few times we play it. But after we start to play it more, things start to change in the way I play, because I start to hear or feel things that are supposed to go here and there. I don't think about what I'm going to play; it just comes.

RS: Since New Orleans hasn't yet caught up with the other American music centers, places like L.A., New York, and Nashville, do you think that has kept the New Orleans drum style insulated?

FB: Yeah, sure. New Orleans has a lot of drummers. I think for every drummer you know about, there are ten more that are great, but don't make it. They get involved with a woman and get married, have a family, that sort of thing. One of the reasons why I'm still playing is because I managed to make money doing other things while I was trying to make it. I had a record store for a few years. I have a restaurant today. I started the restaurant when the Rhapsodizers broke up and the Radiators started. In between those two bands I built this building and opened a restaurant, and I still own it. It's still there, and it's still doing good. But a lot of guys have to support themselves and their families, so they can't go full on into the music. So they fall by the wayside. Even some of the drummers down here today, like Johnny Vidacovich—Johnny's a fantastic drummer; he's known around New Orleans. But I bet he's not making great money, because he's not always in the limelight. Yet he's one of the best drummers I know of in New Orleans.

RS: Are you saying that it's practically impossible to make a living as a drummer if you play just the local scene?

FB: It's hard. Guys like Johnny play little gigs all over the city. There are places to

play, and people come out to listen. You can make it, but you really can't make enough to support yourself, let alone a family. You got to have something else on the side. That's the secret.

RS: Or leave. Even Earl Palmer left New Orleans for the West Coast.

FB: Yeah, that's right. The Radiators have been real lucky. The Rhapsodizers never left town; we always had crowds, and we played a good three times a week. But I had a family. I couldn't make it on music alone. I would play all night and then get up for work early the next morning.

RS: Do you think it's been only luck that has allowed the Radiators to branch out beyond the local New Orleans scene? Certainly there must have been something else—like talent, or a sound that people outside the city wanted to hear.

FB: Well, we never gave up. The Radiators have been together more than 12 years now. In the beginning we picked up a lot of fans from the Rhapsodizers. That, plus playing at Tulane University and picking up a lot of college students. I think the thing that finally did it for us was leaving town, getting on the road, and starting to play for other kinds of fans. And because of our connection with the university, a lot of the people up on the East Coast, particularly those who were at Tulane, went home and told their friends about this here band. The Radiators' popularity mushroomed. The more we toured, the stronger we got. That brought the record companies to us. We'd go to New York and play the Lone Star and sell out three nights in a row and have crowds waiting to get in. People would be going crazy. Epic, our record company, sort of tuned into that.

RS: You guys also made a name for yourselves by playing Tipitina's in New Orleans on a regular basis.

FB: Oh yeah, definitely. The Rhapsodizers was the first band that ever played Tip's. Back then it was called the 501 Napoleon Club. Then, as the Radiators, we played there a lot. In fact, it's between us and the Neville Brothers as to who owns the attendance record at Tip's. We'll break the record by a few, and then they'll come and break it by a few more. We go out on the road for a month, and then come home for a week. In that week

we'll probably play two nights at Tip's to make sure we get our fix and to give our own fans their fix, too. It gives you a sense of where your home is, and that's good.

HERMAN ERNEST

continued from page 36

HE: I remember that it had a very funky rhythm with lots of space, so that you got the feeling that you wanted to dance to the song every time you heard it. That was a great tune, one of the biggest hits I played on.

RS: You also played with Dr. John, a true New Orleans legend if there ever was one.

HE: Oh, yeah. What you hear from me when I play with Dr. John is one of my sneaky creations. I call it back-up funk or diesel funk.

RS: Why do you call it that?

HE: Well, when I was a kid comin' up, I would stay with my grandmother in the lower 9th Ward of New Orleans. She lived right near a train yard. Right there at the edge of the street was where they docked some of the engines; they called them units. They never turned those engines off, even when they re-fueled them. They keep them running 24 hours a day unless, of course, they're repairing them. With the engines idling, you hear that "Chaa yaaah yaah yaah yaah." Now, that rhythm is always in my head. I mean it's up there, never to leave. Well, I got a rhythm that I do on the floor tom, snare, and bass drum. It has that same diesel rhythm. I've been with Mac [Rebennack, a.k.a. Dr. John] off and on for like 15 years. He's a cool cat to play with. I used to tour with him a lot. I played on his *Tango Palace* album. I also did the *City Lights* tour that followed the album by the same name. That was a smokin' band. We had David Sanborn on saxophone, Hugh McCracken on guitar—heavy cats, those guys.

RS: You tour pretty regularly with Etta James, don't you?

HE: Yeah, I work with her about 80% of the time. I'll play with Dr. John any time I can. Each time Dr. John comes to play in New Orleans—he lives in New York

most of the time—I'm his bandleader. I put together his band for him. I'm great for hustlin' up a band. I can get some of the best cats in town into a band, and we can sound hot. And recently I've been doing some things with Boz Scaggs. Just working some things out, you know. We hit it off real good.

RS: It seems as if a lot of New Orleans drummers have left town in one capacity or another to further their careers. But not many have come into town to move their careers one step up the ladder.

HE: It's true that drummers aren't swarming into New Orleans, 'cause we've got a pretty tight clique down there. It's a friendly one, but it's like anywhere else, you know. The local cats have all the connections. But a good friend of mine, Harold Brown, the original drummer from the band War, has been in New Orleans for the last couple of years off and on. We're real tight. He considers himself a New Orleans cat now. But he don't sound like a New Orleans drummer. I mean, you got to be here at least ten years to absorb the funk and get into

the groove. You might get a guy from Oregon who is into this mountain trip. Well, he's got to get into the groove, and it's probably going to take him a long time to get it right and keep it right.

JOHNNY VIDACOVICH

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JV: I'm versatile, I know that. I can go from one kind of music to the next and keep it smooth. I can go from rock to jazz to blues to funk, and I can do it easy enough. If that epitomizes what New Orleans music is all about, then that statement might be half true.

RS: Is that why you've stayed in New Orleans rather than move to New York or LA?

JV: You got to understand that one of the reasons why New Orleans isn't always in the big picture when it comes to the record industry is because we're all the way down here in the swamp. Musicians around here are very below sea level, if you know what I mean. They don't push. They're not aggressive.

RS: Is that a good thing?

JV: Well, it's bad and it's good. I'm broke because there's not enough business around here, not enough big-time business. Just being on the local level, it can be tough. It's like, "Hmm, who am I going to go on the road with next?" or, "Hmm, how many recording sessions will I be able to score this year? Two, three, four?" That's why it's bad. Everybody loves the way this city feels. No one wants to do anything to change it.

RS: But, being aware of this—and being broke—you, too, have stayed.

JV: I'm here because I never left when I was young. And the reason why I didn't leave when I was young was because I had it so good here. I always had a gig—everything from putting on a tuxedo and playing "Satin Doll," to going to a bar with a T-shirt on and playing blues in three different keys, which I still love to do. Now I'm too old for that. [Johnny's 40 years old.] And I got lazy. I got caught up in the illusion and the beauty of this city. Everybody plays so well. Everybody sounds so good.



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Summer NAMM '90

It's easy to look at the declining attendance at summer NAMM shows in a cynical way. When companies like Paiste, Sonor, Remo, Premier, Tama, and Calato decide to pass on the convention, you've really got to start wondering how long NAMM is going to last as a bi-annual event. But for those companies who do attend the summer show and who have new and interesting products, the smaller attendance (by manufacturers, at least) can actually be beneficial. With fewer booths to visit, dealers can spend more time with companies they might ordinarily spend less on.

In addition to some of these smaller companies, our photo coverage of course includes the larger manufacturers who did decide to attend, and some of the new products they were displaying. However, several companies of interest are not pictured here, but nonetheless had products worth mentioning. These include: Evans drumheads, who showed new designs within their *Genera* line; Falcon Designs, with a striking custom rack;

dDrum, displaying the new *Padstation*; Fantastix custom-designed and traditional sticks; Gretsch, with a couple of sharp-looking kits on hand; Mike Balter, with new triangle and bass drum beaters; Duratech, with a new 3S model marching stick; American Musicians Products, showing their finger exercising device; KAT, Inc., who created quite a stir with their new *midiK.I.T.I.*; and Jeanius Electronics, who demonstrated their *Russian Dragon* electronic tempo meter.

Also making a showing were Pro-Mark, with their "Magnificent Seven" autograph series sticks; Hybrid Cases; Trick/Ocheltree, who had their cleaning products and some impressive-looking and sounding piccolo snare drums on hand; Humes & Berg drum cases; Max-Stiks synthetic drumsticks; and Winklers Drums, whose Danny Robinson, Steve Missal, and Butch Williams demonstrated their powerful custom-made drums and unique *Phoenix* snare drum.

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Roc-N-Soc—Joseph Rizzo displaying the company's drum throne line, featuring new base designs.



Vater Percussion—Ron and Alan Vater were on hand with their drumstick and mallet line.



Stick Handler—Mary and Bill Walzak were showing their stick wrapping tape, featuring new fluorescent colors.

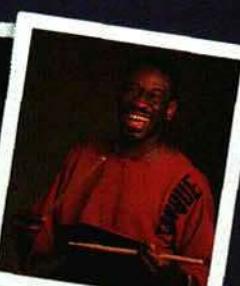
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Paul Real Sales—Paul in front of the new Wuhan Spizz cymbals, which were designed by Roberto Spizzicchino, and are hand-made in China.

Tough Traveler—Miles Newherter and Tom Gwinn and the company's innovative *Drumslinger* drum and hardware bags.



Pearl—New Bordeaux Red finish on their *Prestige Studio* kit, plus a new *Export SX* kit and hand-hammered brass-shell snare drum.



Slingerland The seven-piece *Spirit Plus* from Slingerland.



Ac-cetera—Susan Stamm and *Mic-Eze* microphone holders, featuring a new "rubber-neck" flexible design.



Slingerland—Newburnt orange finish and interesting bass drum spurs were displayed.



Shure—*SM98* tom mic's, an *SM91* bass drum mic', and *Beta 57* and *58* series mic's were displayed on a custom-painted Remo kit.

The Calm Before The Storm.

For those who want a little more from their drums, here's a drum set that has been completely redesigned to bring the storm that lives inside you out into the open.

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Also, all four double-braced stands release with just a quarter turn for easier adjustment. The hi-hat stand adjusts with the bottom cymbal tilter, and its ad-

justable clutch and chain drive linkage provide smooth, easy pedal action.

To hold your snare tightly in place, the snare stand features an adjustable basket, as well as rubber basket tips to protect its shell. And each drum is fitted with American-made Evans CAD/CAM UNO 58 1000 clear batter heads and clear resonator heads. The bass drum features a black Evans resonator head with a white logo.

To find out more, check out your local Slingerland dealer today. Or write HSS, Inc. at P.O. Box 9167, Richmond, VA 23227. Ask about the Spirit, a drum set for those who are more economically inclined.

Then take the Spirit Plus by storm.

Slingerland®



Ludwig—Jim Catalano with Vector marching snare, featuring a clever throwoff design. Also new from the company was a *Rocker* kit with hanging floor toms and a new *Black Beauty* piccolo snare drum.

Sabian's new *B8 Pro* line
was the highlight
at their booth.



Yamaha—Rock Tour Custom kit
with Monster hardware.

Chain Reaction

When it comes to bass drum pedals, there is nothing that compares to the feel of chain drive. The power. The response. The performance. Pearl has taken its approach to chain drive one step further. We've replaced the noisy sprockets on all our pedals with a felt lined guide channel. The result is something you won't find with other pedals. A silky smooth, quite precision action, with just one reaction...ahhhh!

Pearl

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P-780

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P-880

The P-880 professional chain drive pedal offers a raised footboard, independent adjustments of both angle and tension, unmatched speed, quickness, power and quiet dependability. The P-880 is for professional applications, it even comes stock with our top of the line C2X Custom drum kits.



Cannon—Mega V high-quality entry-level drumkit.

Rhythm Tech—In one of the show's most striking booths, the company displayed their artistic cases, along with their tambourines, shakers, and other percussion instruments.



Flitz—Michael T. Higbee demonstrating the company's chemically-based cymbal cleaning cream.



P-880P

For those who like their bass drum pedals supercharged, the famous P-880 is now available with a full steel base plate for added stability. For maximum power and punch the P-880P delivers.

P-950

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RimShot—Lindy Nye and the company's drumstick line.



Zildjian's booth was constantly busy.



Vic Firth—Neil Larrivee, Vic, and Dana Wood were on hand to show off their new signature model sticks.



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MD TRIVIA WINNERS

The following five individuals are the winners of *MD*'s April Trivia Contest: **Nancy Jordahl**, of Port Charlotte, Florida; **Dan Boss**, of Dallas, Texas; **Danny Range**, of Davis, California; **Joe Quarato**, of Chicago, Illinois; and **Todd Bernhardt**, of Washington, DC. Their cards were drawn from among those who knew that out of a group containing Manu Katche, Rick Marotta, Stewart Copeland, Billy Cobham, Manny Elias, and Allan Schwartzberg, **Rick Marotta** is the only drummer not to appear on a Peter Gabriel album. For their correct answer, each of our winners will receive a *Stick Depot*, a pair of *MT-3* timpani mallets, a pair of *Multi-Rods*, 50 pairs of personalized drumsticks, and a *Jumbo Stick Bag* to hold it all in—compliments of

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Steve Houghton has joined the Grove School of Music (GSM) Percussion Program faculty as co-director of the program with Peter Donald. The renowned author/performer/teacher/innovator comes to the school with abundant credentials, and was recently Program Director of the Percussion Institute of Technology (PIT) in Hollywood, CA. In addition to teaching and overseeing drumset curriculum, Steve will concentrate on the tuned percussion curriculum with Dan Greco and Emil Richards.

GSM, currently with over 500 full-time and 300 part-time students, is located at

DCI MUSIC VIDEO CORRECTION

In July's *Industry Happenings*, it was stated that DCI would be distributing a video entitled *Ultimate Percussion* featuring, among others, Steve Gadd, Louie Bellson, and Vic Firth. It is true that the video was shot and produced at NFL Films. However, DCI will not be handling sales or distribution of the video. Although the video will be available for purchase in the near future, a firm decision has not yet been made as to who—the distributor will be. Check future issues of *MD* for further information on the release of *Ultimate Percussion*.



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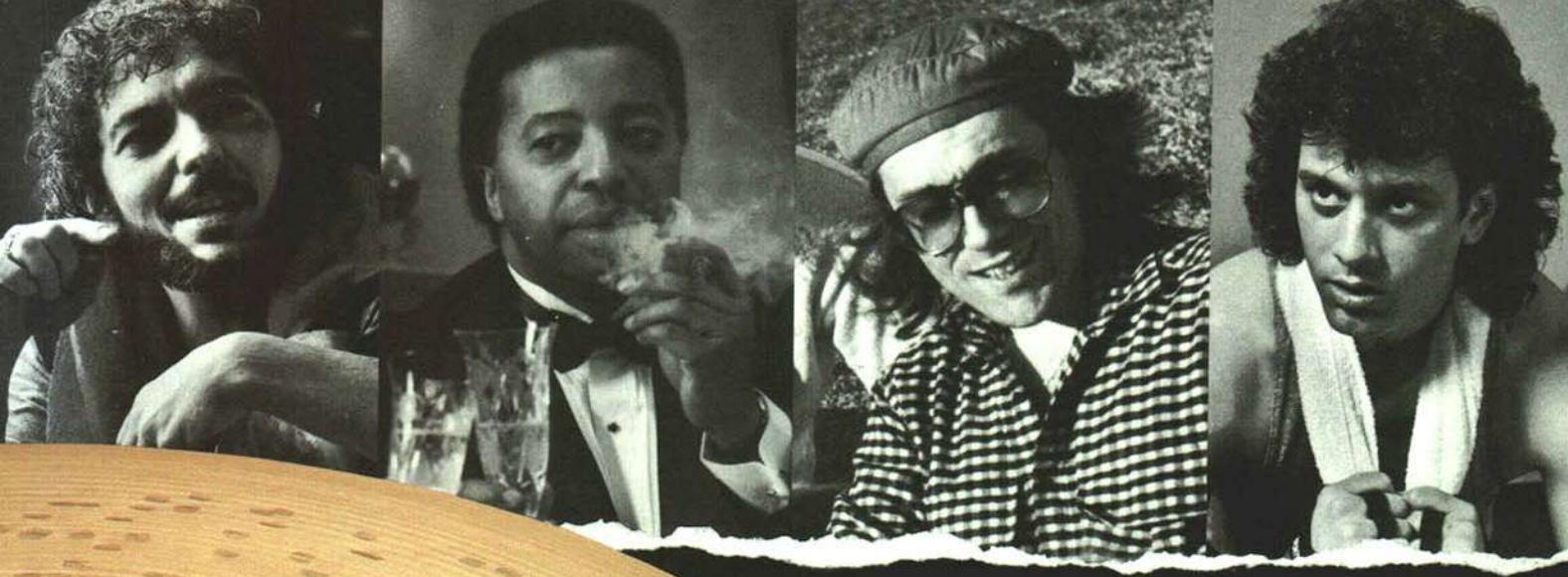
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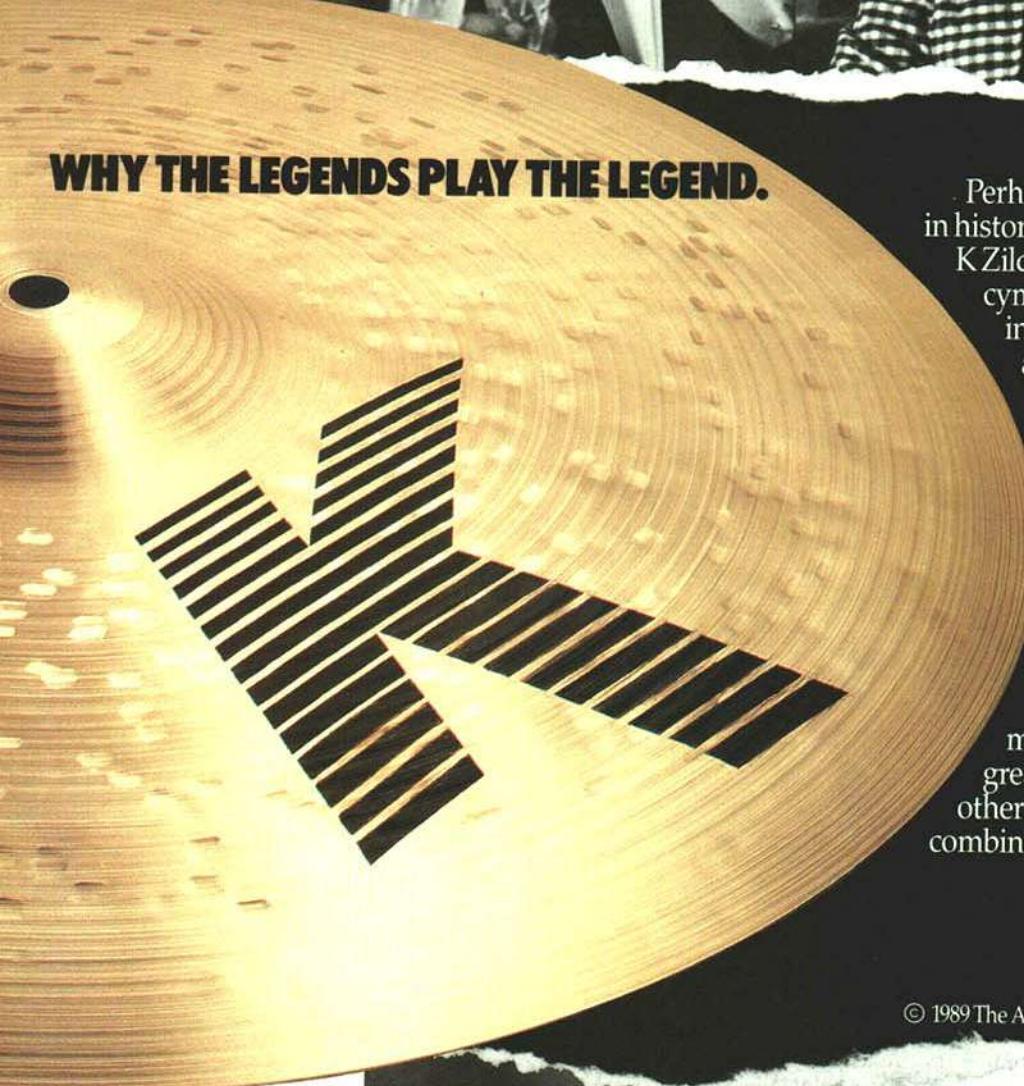
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