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November '96

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**METALLICA'S
Lars
Ulrich**

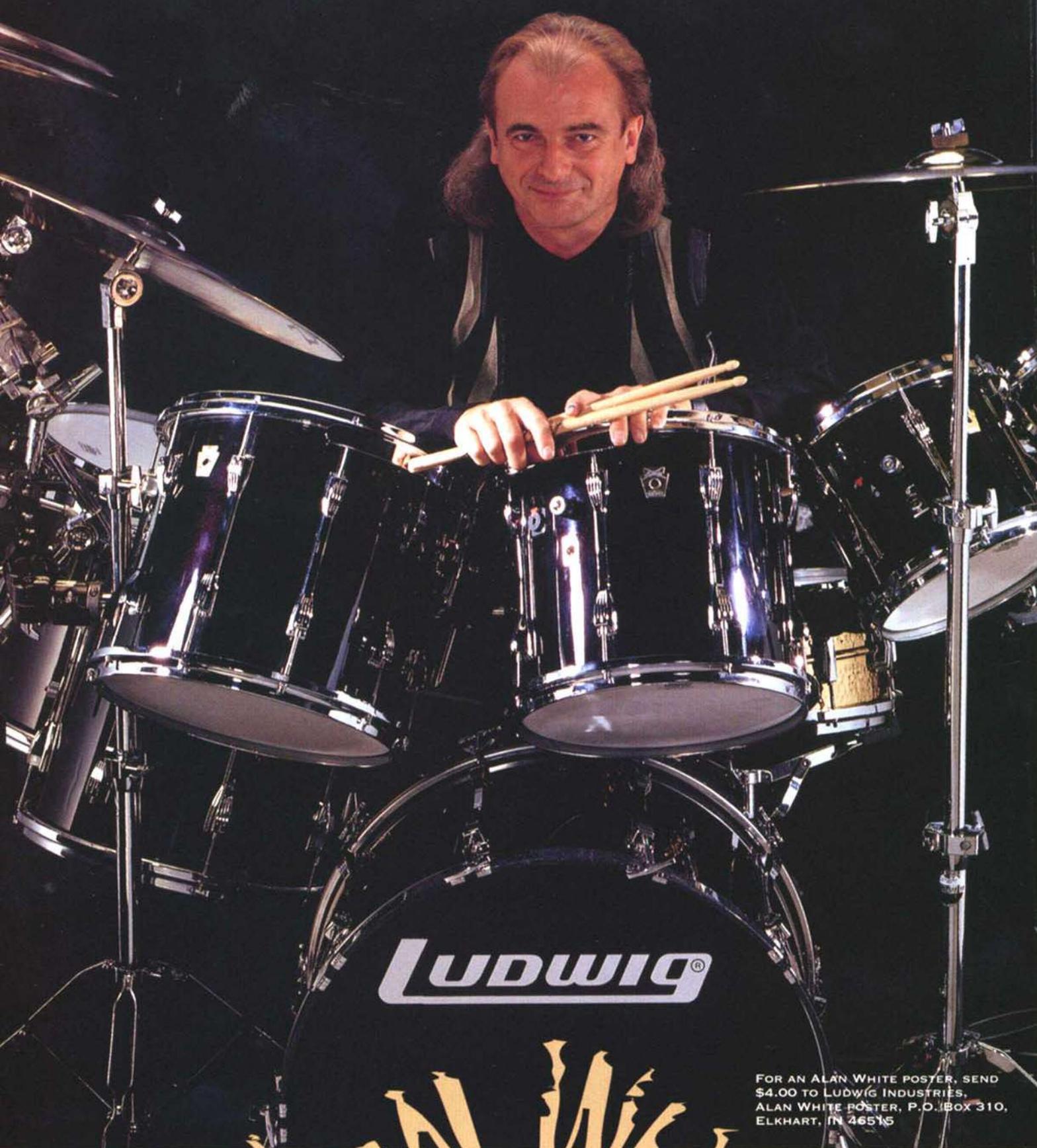
Brad Wilk
Of Rage Against The Machine

*Tribal Tech's
Kirk Covington*

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Lars Ulrich

"Hey, man, did you hear that Lars' second bass drum got ripped off on the way to the studio, so he just decided to bag the whole blazin' thing?"

"Yeah, and the new album, *Load*, is like this massive groove thing!"

"Awesome! But what's up with the hair?"

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Kirk Covington

Tribal Tech was already the hottest contemporary fusion band on the scene, but a new jamming-based aesthetic is taking these sonic explorers into even farther galaxies. And you thought Kirk Covington was throwing some stuff at you before!

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Amazingly, Rage Against The Machine's long-awaited second album, *Evil Empire*, is even heavier than the band's self-titled barnstormer. Despite the heaviness, though, Brad Wilk says he's managed to infuse more delicacy into the thunder.

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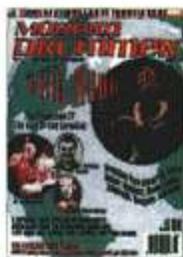
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Editor's note: Never in the history of Modern Drummer have letters in two successive issues generated such a response as did Neil Peart's (August '96) and Ned Ingberman's (July '96). Here is a sampling of that response.

RESPONSE TO NEIL



Regarding Neil Peart's letter about the volume of mail he receives (and the internet as the root cause of this): I sympathize with Mr. Peart to an extent. The volume of mail must have reached the point where

it was impossible for him to deal with. I'm sure this annoyed him, and tough times can call for tough talk. However, a letter stating that he would have to be more selective in who he personally replied to would have been better received and understood by all those with any interest in Mr. Peart's work.

The business Mr. Peart is in is that of entertainment, and therefore is one whose ultimate success depends on the customer purchasing the product/service made available. Most people would hate to do something to alienate even one "customer," "client," or "friend" (how Mr. Peart regards us consumers is his choice) unless it means sacrificing principles. I know that Mr. Peart is a very principled man, and for that he is respected by many. He would not have had to sacrifice any principles if he had simply stated that he wished to be more selective in his mail—and he would have kept the loyalty and respect of all whose lives he touches.

M.E. Lythgoe
Sunderland, England

Although I can respect Neil Peart's decision in handling his fan mail predicament (it obviously causes more grief than satisfaction now), I don't believe Neil is justified in blaming a few people on the internet who, he says, "ruined it for everyone." Having received responses to *Ask A Pro* questions

in the past, I never knew it was supposed to be a "little secret." Naturally, I mentioned my elated surprise to some friends—as I'm sure many others did. The internet may very well be responsible for spreading the word more rapidly, but it was really inevitable that the word would get around. Perhaps the internet itself might offer a better solution that would allow Neil and his fans to continue to communicate.

Chris Muller
Winter Park, FL

Neil's letter proves that his class goes beyond just drumming and into everything he does in life. He does it well, he does it more than expected, and he holds himself to a higher standard. I wish I could say I had written Neil and that he'd answered with one of his personal postcards—but I can't. (My loss!) So from all of us out here who will never get one of those postcards (I'd have framed mine): Neil, just keep drumming. That's *more* than enough to inspire me.

Ken Seemann
Dallas, TX

With all due respect, Neil Peart should have written his letter, but not sent it. The letter seemed self-congratulatory and unnecessarily negative. Neil did not have to publish the reasons for his decision [to discontinue responding personally to fan mail] in this manner. Basically, he blamed his computer-literate fans for a perceived problem that, ultimately, was inevitable. These people had no idea that they were betraying an unspoken trust he may have placed in them. Their reactions were normal. Neil did not have to publicly castigate them in response.

Dr. Samuel A. Scott
via Internet

Neil's personal letter in the August '96 issue astounded me. It wasn't the fact that Neil couldn't/wouldn't respond to the fan mail he received via *Modern Drummer*, or his lack of respect for his fans. The fact that Neil, of all people, criticized the internet as a "World Wide GossipNet" was downright embarrassing. The internet is a

medium for people of all backgrounds to gain useful, pertinent information. It is this very fact that allowed word of Neil's practices to spread. Why is Neil such an elitist?

Craig Deutsch
via Internet

We do not live in a heliocentric universe with Neil Peart at its center. Is Neil suggesting that the internet is a bad place simply because it has increased the volume of his fan mail? I should hope not. What will he be suggesting next—that we do away with traffic lights because they made him late to cash his royalty checks?

Travis Fogel
via Internet

RESPONSE TO NED

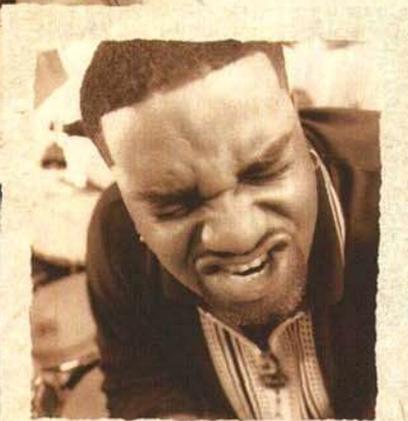
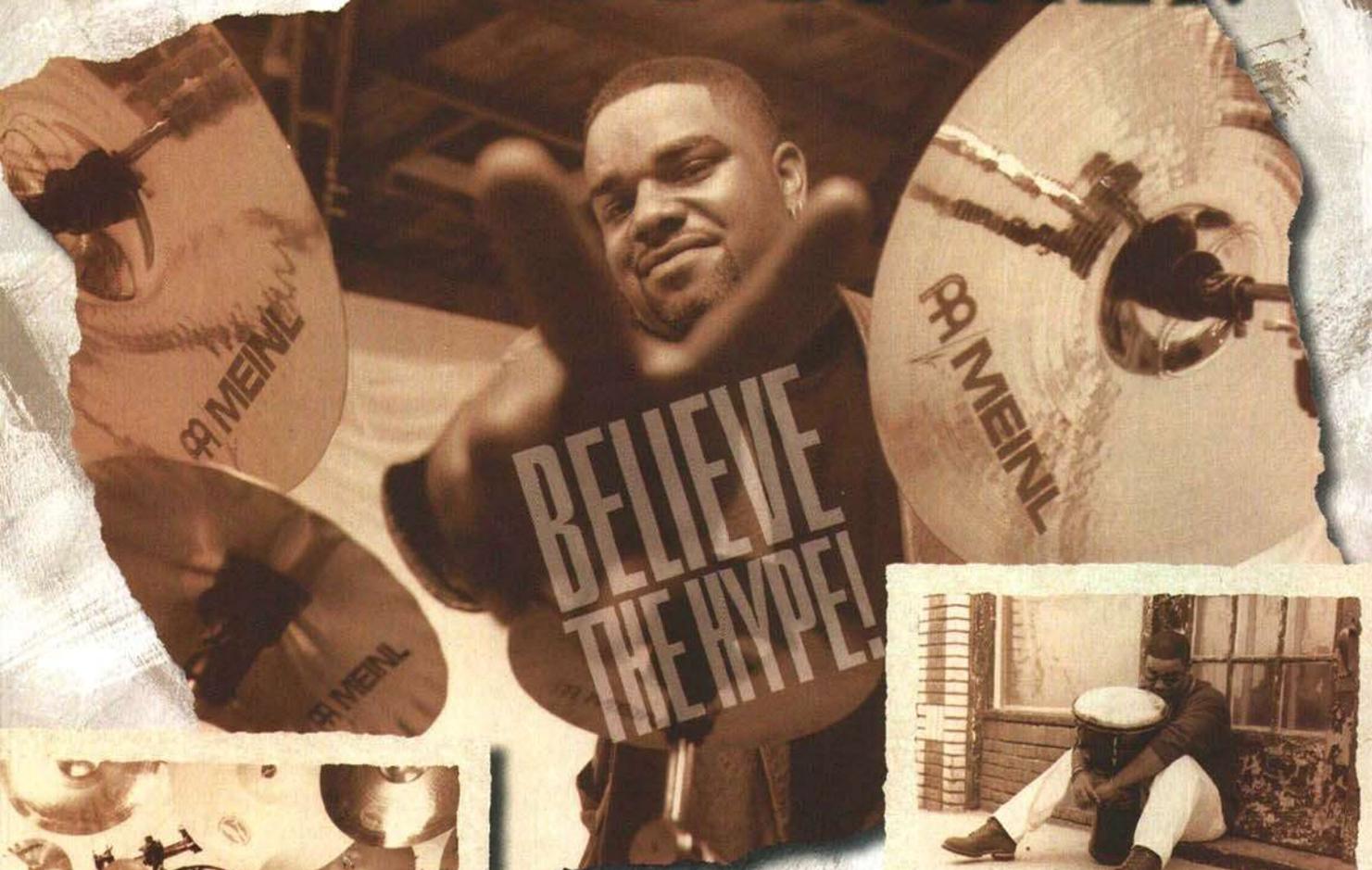


Ned Ingberman speaks of his company's commitment to upholding the traditions of the past that made America great, like quality, value, friendliness, and hope. He questions whether some

of today's music may be promoting opposite values, such as violence, hatred, intolerance, and despair. He goes on to encourage those who feel the same to stop buying destructive and demeaning music, to express their views to the music media, and to expose children to positive music. Finally, he states that musicians should take responsibility for their music and should create more positive material.

I feel, however, that Mr. Ingberman has overlooked one important point. Music is shaped by the people who *listen* to it, not the other way around. We enjoy, purchase, and ultimately popularize music that we find agreeable. If our kids listen to music that is destructive, that should be a signal to us that they're *feeling* destructive. It isn't that a musician or record company is attempting to *make* them feel that way. If one of my kids starts listening to death metal, I'm going to question whether she is feeling destructive, or if she is merely

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entertained by the style.

Children need to express themselves. Many are frustrated, and playing rock music with a negative message is cathartic for them. The ability to express themselves musically is a real alternative to fighting or being self-destructive. To me, self-expression is a very important value to teach our children, and is one of the things that makes America (and most other countries) great.

My suggestions for those troubled by what their kids listen to are:

1. Listen to how your children react to music. Are they aware of the difference between fantasy and reality?
2. Edit your own listening, reading, and viewing to reflect your personal views. Turn off the radio when you don't like what's playing. (Don't complain to the station; they're not responsible for you listening.) Let your kids know that they can do the same.
3. Don't force your kids to feel the way you do. Let them express themselves, and step in only when you sense a problem.

This isn't neglect; it's allowing kids to learn for themselves, knowing that their parents are there if they need help.

To me, music is the ultimate educator for everyone, and trying to blot out any genre—even one with a negative message—is a crime. I encourage readers—especially proponents of such music—to continue this discussion through this and other publications. It's important for young people to hear all sides.

Roy Sydiaha

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada

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There is a delicate line one must walk in dealing with issues regarding speech. On the broadest level, I feel that an artist has no responsibility whatsoever to write lyrics with a positive message. (The constitution agrees with me.) However, on a personal level, I am distraught over some of the lyrics I hear coming from my stereo. I believe that expressing one's frustrations in a hostile manner leads only to more hostility.

Mr. Ingberman gives several suggestions on how to improve what he considers to be a bad situation. I have a few more.

1. Respect an individual's right to make a statement in any way he chooses—violent or peaceful, hateful or loving.
2. Know what you're talking about. Listen to or read lyrics before you deem a band morally depraved. Then write to the artists and ask them—in a non-hostile manner—what they are trying to communicate, where it came from, and why they chose to express it in the way they did. (You might be surprised at how intelligent and thoughtful artists can be when asked about their lyrics.)
3. Parents should teach their children that rock songs are like infomercials. The views expressed in them are those of the artist and no one else. Hence you should not take what you hear as fact, advice, instruction, or anything other than opinion.

I applaud Mr. Ingberman for his desire to improve society. However, I think the best way to do this is to focus on yourself and your family, not on artists and their lyrics. If you live your life with strong values—and you impart those values to your children—you will have done more to change the world than any songwriter could ever hope to.

Gavin Farrell
via Internet

Mr. Ingberman: You are correct that music is a universal language. But how can it continue to be when people such as yourself try to stifle the creativity of others? The fact that you disagree with the content of certain musical genres doesn't give you the right to try to abolish them. Some of the values you referred to "that make our country great" include fairness, open-mindedness, and free speech—none of which you seem to support in your letter. How would you feel if someone tried to do away with the vintage drums you sell because they thought those drums to be outdated and inferior in craftsmanship to modern instruments—and that the people selling vintage drums are nothing but junk dealers no better than stereotypical used-car salesmen?

You might also want to consider how many of the people involved in the music that you consider "evil" might purchase drums from you—and thus support you. You should return the favor by keeping your tongue in check the next time you feel like turning music you don't like into a scapegoat for the inability of parents to teach their children to think and act responsibly for themselves. If your child is more

responsive to someone they heard on a CD or saw on TV than they are to you, then maybe it is you as a parent who is failing society—and your child. Whatever your likes or dislikes are, I encourage you to keep an open mind. If you can't even do that, please allow the rest of us to do so.

Shamphorn
via Internet

As a twenty-five-year-old professional musician with a degree in English literature and history, I feel compelled to address Ned Ingberman's utterly wrong-headed thinking in his appeal for "traditional values" in music.

The "values that made this country great" are not "service, quality, value, and friendliness," but *freedoms*—especially that of self-expression. The founding fathers placed this freedom in the first amendment to the constitution, knowing that censorship and suppression stem from ignorance and fear.

Western musicians and composers from the Romantic Period to the present have increasingly pursued self-expression as their highest goal. This is what we admire about

musicians like Gene Krupa. The fact that what musicians of my generation think, feel, and express differs from what Gene Krupa did can only be good. Who needs a Krupa clone? And if modern musicians express anger, despair, and outrage over a society that we did not create (but that Mr. Krupa's generation, to some extent, did), what of that? The expression of negative emotions in art is perfectly valid.

Finally, let's put the responsibility for our children's behavior solely where it belongs: on us as parents. The idea that everyone else is somehow responsible for our parental failures is the sort of foolishness that led to lawsuits against bands like Judas Priest over the suicide of a few teenage burn-outs. Suppressing "bad" music and sheltering children in ignorance doesn't solve the problem. Educating them to think critically for themselves does. And while I will agree that musicians should exercise some discretion in how they express themselves, it is not, and should not be, their responsibility to teach values.

Phil Hodges
via Internet



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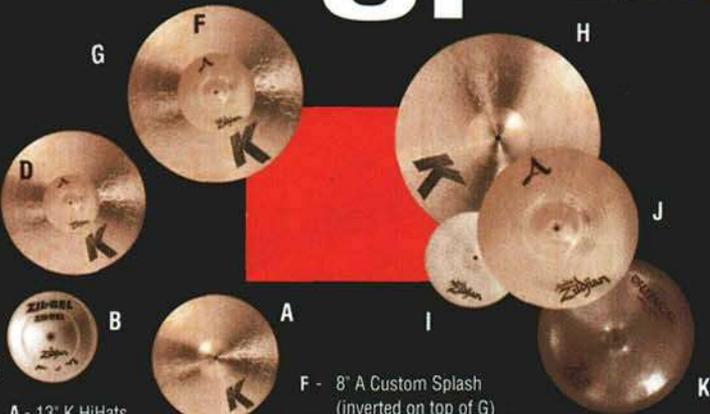
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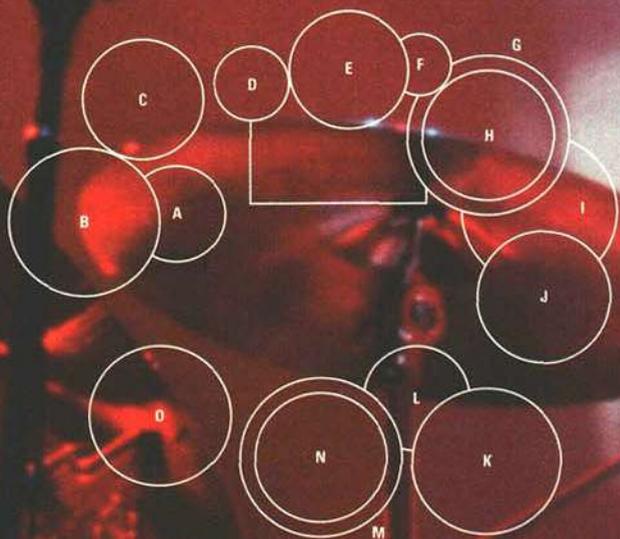
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P E A R T

TALKING CYMBALS

ART IS THE TELLING OF STORIES, and drumming is one of the earliest forms of that art. Just as spoken languages have adapted and changed over time, so too has the language of the drums. For the contemporary drummer, the drums themselves are the nouns and verbs, the voices of character and action, while cymbals are the punctuation marks, the modifiers, the shades of narrative and meaning, of mood and texture.

For this particular drummer (okay, this very particular drummer), the Avedis Zildjian "A" cymbals have been my "punctuation marks" of choice since the time I could first afford a choice. My 22" ride, for example, has been with me since I joined Rush, and has appeared on every record and every concert I've done for over twenty years. I couldn't imagine playing without its strong clear bell and articulate bow. For many drummers, the ride cymbal is an artful part of the story- it represents the running dialog, the linked phrases, and the accented syllables of rhythmic speech.

The 16" crash is just the sort of quick punctuation I like- effective without being intrusive- and it represents the comma, the semi-colon, the dash. The 18" crash makes an exclamation mark, or the definitive full-stop at the end of a sentence, while the 20" crash is a warm swell, like the cresting of a wave. The 8" and 10" splashes offer their subtle comments and accents, and the China Boy ranges from a soft whoosh to an attention-getting smash. The 13" hi-hats seem almost able to speak, and they sure can dance.

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JASON COOPER

There are auditions...and then there are auditions. Just ask the Cure's new drummer, Jason Cooper. "The band put an ad in the *Melody Maker* and *NME* that just said 'Very famous band requires drummer. No metal-heads.' After I responded they sent a questionnaire to find out things like my musical influences. Next they called me down to a rehearsal room in London. The band wasn't there, but they had a video camera and a PA set up. They played me two new tracks and then asked me to play along to them, which they recorded. I also did a drum solo. The next time, I met the band and we played two older songs together. Then I was called down to a mansion in Bath, where I stayed for a while, rehearsing and recording new material."

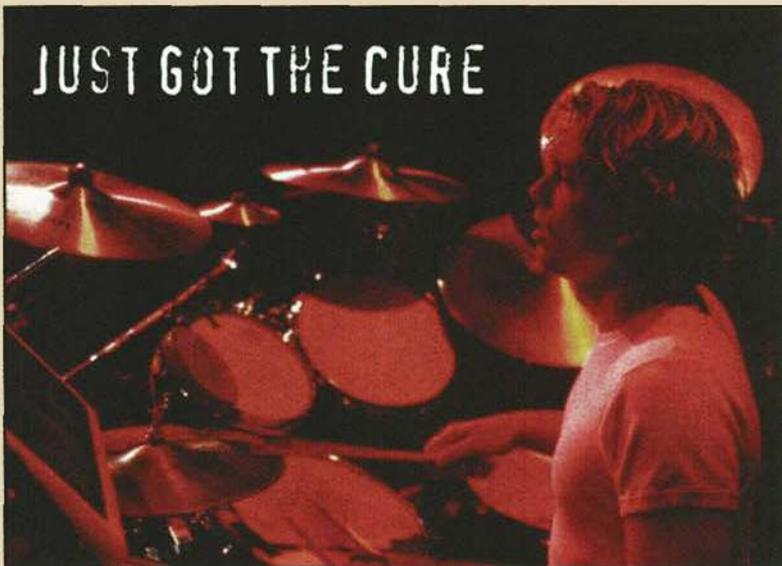
At this point the band had narrowed its choices to about seven drummers. Though several of them, including Cooper, would end up on the Cure's latest album, *Wild Mood Swings*, the group wanted a permanent bandmember. "The final choice was a question of personalities," Jason explains. "We've literally been living in the same house for almost two years, and you've got to be able to get on well in that situation."

Replacing a drummer as idiosyncratic as Boris Williams is obviously no easy task. "There is some fantastic drumming on all the records," Jason agrees. "Plus a band that's played together as long as the Cure have has a certain feel, and you can't dictate that feel. You've got to weave in and out, as it were, and pull things together. Any change is bound to feel strange, though. Hopefully my being here is going to make it refreshing."

Refreshing, and apparently successful: The first single off *Wild Mood Swings*, "The 13th," was an instant hit, and the band is headlining an arena tour across the States. It seems Jason's long audition was worth it.

Adam Budofsky

JUST GOT THE CURE



GOLDFINGER'S DARRIN PFEIFFER

"Dangerous" Darrin Pfeiffer got his title on stage with Goldfinger one night—and it stuck. "There was a deejay in L.A. called Dangerous Darrin, and it kinda fits because I'm hyperactive," Pfeiffer confesses, adding that he was raised on Ritalin. "If it weren't for Ritalin, I wouldn't be a drummer."

Darrin certainly wouldn't be *Goldfinger's* drummer if he couldn't have played a variety of styles including pop, reggae, ska, and metal. "They also needed someone who would phrase well," Darrin says. "I take a lot of pride in phrasing. When a new song is brought in, I'll sit down in my room and think about how many bass drum notes should go in each bar. Should I change them around for the second verse? Should I play 8th notes? I'm not trying to come off like a tech-head, but I love phrasing, putting the songs together, rehearsing them, and nailing them."

The band's first single, "Here In Your Bedroom," is a good example of Pfeiffer's solid chops. "Stewart Copeland is one of my biggest influences," the drummer says, "along with Dave Lombardo. The song started with a ska beginning, so I kept the 8th-note thing going and did a lot of rimshot work. It's a lot of fun to play."

Goldfinger's live show is very physical, and Darrin makes sure to keep in shape. "We bring weights and barbells on the road with us, and I have a jump rope in my backpack. I do push-ups almost every morning and I skateboard almost every day, which helps keep my legs and cardio-vascular system in shape. I walk a lot. I don't sit in a hotel room and watch TV, unless there's a hockey game on. Then I might be glued to the set."

Goldfinger plans to be on the road until Christmas.

Robyn Flans

NEWS

James Kottak is now playing with the Scorpions.

Johnny Friday is doing live dates with David Benoit.

Raymond Massey is on tour with Tanya Tucker.

Mike Fasano is on three tracks on Gilby Clarke's recent project.

Hanna Fox is on the road with Babe The Blue Ox.

John Root recently performed with country artist Becky Hobbs for the troops stationed in Sarajevo. They also performed dates on a USO/Department Of Defense tour in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.

Scott Mundy is on Katja's Dream's second independent release. He can also be heard on a recent record by the Tigers Of Instantaneous Death. Congratulations to Scott and his wife Michelle on the birth of their son Mark Arik.

Percussionist **Jackie Bertone** is on projects by Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys, Lorrie Morgan, Wilson & Wilson, Sawyer Brown, and Timothy B. Schmidt.

Marcello Palomino is on the road with Manhole.

Chuck Fields is currently on tour with Paul Brandt (opening for Travis Tritt and Marty Stuart).

Carl Palmer is on tour with Emerson, Lake & Palmer as the complete ELP catalog is currently being released on Rhino Records.

Ignacio Berroa was recently on

tour with the Caribbean Jazz Project. He has also been doing several clinics in the States.

Drummer **Dean Lopes** recently confirmed a deal with *Entertainment Tonight*, who will use his custom-produced music tracks as well as cuts from his solo albums, *Big Band Theory* and *Get Up*.

Chuck Biscuits has recently joined Social Distortion. He's on the band's latest, *White Light, White Heat, White Trash*.

Ricky Lawson has been touring with Steely Dan.

BERNIE DRESEL STRUTTIN' WITH BRIAN SETZER

While there is a "Ghost Radio" on the new Brian Setzer Orchestra album, don't expect to hear Phantoms. "Slim Jim" is gone, and the drum chair in guitarist Brian Setzer's seventeen-piece rock big band is filled by thirty-four-year-old studio pro Bernie Dresel. On *Guitar Slinger*, the orchestra's second release, Dresel reflects influences ranging from Big Sid Catlett to...well...Slim Jim. In between he plays a backbeat with a furious amount of swing, and his tom playing on "(Every Time I Hear) That Mellow Saxophone" reminds the listener of a cross between Gene Krupa and Steve Gadd.

Brian Setzer says of Dresel, "He's about the best drummer I've ever heard. We had another guy in the band, but when Bernie joined, that was it. We've been together now for four years."

Dresel, prior to playing with Setzer, had co-led contemporary jazz groups, played percussion on television soundtracks (*Star Trek*, *Deep Space Nine*, and *Voyager*), sat in live on vibes with Hootie & The Blowfish, played country with Dolly Parton, and recorded with avant-garde percussionist Brad Dutz. Listening to *Guitar Slinger*, you'll hear a variety of Dresel's drumset influences.

Of Setzer, Bernie says cheerfully, "It is so much fun playing with Brian. He's so talented yet humble. He's the first one to compliment me on my playing after a gig. I knew that while most big bands want a drummer who swings, Brian needed someone who also understands rock 'n' roll."

Fans of Brian Setzer can catch Bernie Dresel on the Setzer/Bryan Adams "Duet" special currently running on VH-1. For Dresel this gig will make him better known than just being a Los Angeles studio pro, and besides, "The music starts out simple, but I have the freedom to expand it as far as the band will let me."

Adam Ward Seligman

Al Webster Journeyman From The North

Al Webster is glad that he's been able to juggle all of his projects up in Canada. In addition to recording his first studio LP with Long John Baldry (Webster has been working live with him for years), most of his summer was spent on tour with Colin James, whose album was recorded by Mickey Curry while Al was in Europe with Baldry. "It's great to reproduce Mickey's parts," Al enthuses. "I just practice along with the tapes to capture the feel. I get familiar and comfortable with the music, though parts change a lot when you're in rehearsal, so I go for feel. Colin gives me a little bit of freedom, but he likes it to be pretty close to the album."

The two gigs differ quite a bit. "I use a smaller kit with Baldry," Webster says. "To prepare myself for that gig, I really have to listen to authentic blues artists like Muddy Waters. Colin's stuff is a little more modern in its approach. It's more guitar-oriented, so it requires a lot more aggressive

drumming. He needs consistency, and the gig covers a wide range of styles, like blues, rock, and even a little reggae. Baldry is the frontman/singer, so I really have to be more sensitive to that, with more dynamics."

Al can also be heard on a new album by Johnny Ferreira & the Swing Machine. "It's '40s and '50s swing music," Webster explains, "sort of a tribute to that era. It's basically Colin's band with a female singer. I also co-wrote one of the songs on this record—which is a first for me, though people have always encouraged me to write lyrics. This album is great because it's just a real fun party band. It appeals to a wide range of people. Even my mom comes out and dances to the band."

Robyn Flans



ARONOFF LEAVES MELLENCAMP

In the end, after sixteen years together crafting wildly diverse albums of heartland-inspired rock 'n' roll, it came down to a scheduling conflict.

That's the reason drummer Kenny Aronoff is citing for the end of his longtime tenure in rocker John Mellencamp's backing band. Kenny specifically points to a growing number of high-profile studio and live concert appearances that made it impossible for him to join the tour supporting the Indiana-based rocker's fourteenth album, *Mr. Happy Go Lucky*.

Aronoff's powerhouse playing has been a key element of the singer's sound since his sinewy grooves on albums like 1983's *Uh-Huh* and 1985's *Scarecrow* helped push those albums onto the pop charts. He has since been replaced by Deane Clark.

Don't fret for Aronoff, however. He's already snagged a three-month gig in Melissa Etheridge's backing band, along with studio work supporting Joe Cocker, Jon Bon Jovi (on new solo stuff), John Fogerty, and Corey Hart. He's also planning to present drum clinics in Holland and Africa.

Eric Deggans



VINNIE PAUL



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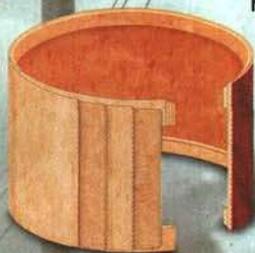
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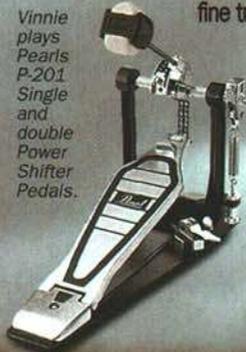


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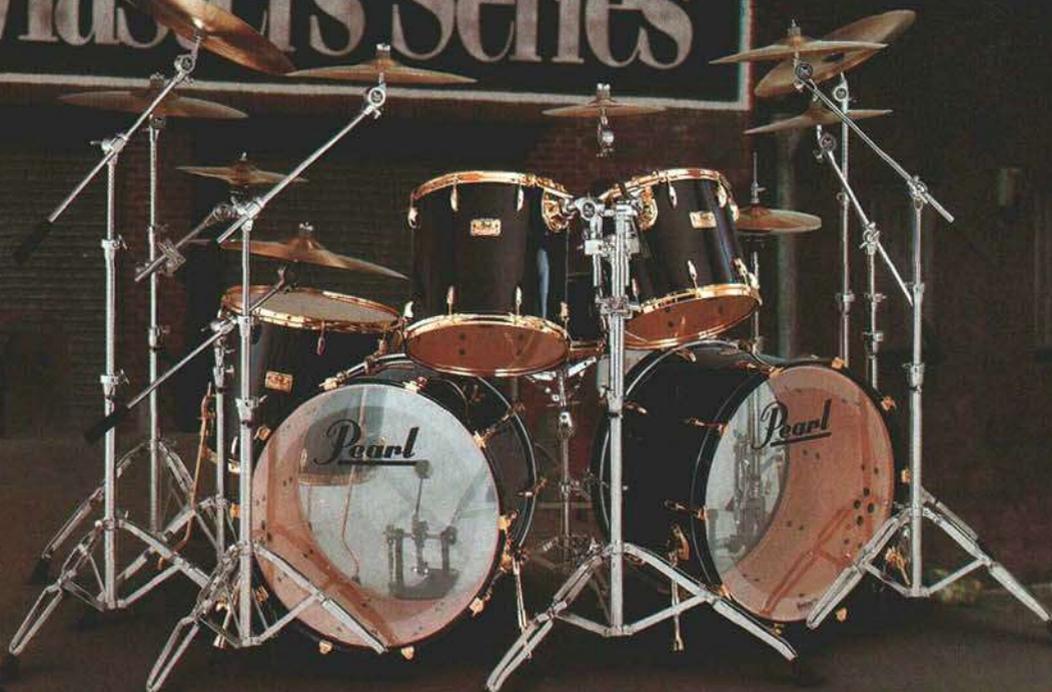
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The Masters Series



Mike Portnoy

Q I'm a fourteen-year-old progressive drummer starting a band, and I look to you for some inspiration and flair. Can you tell me what drum setup you used to record *Awake*? Also, I'm working hard on double-kick rolls (with my feet) and single-stroke rolls and variations (with my hands). Do you have any tips on increasing speed? Finally, how do you go about creating a drum solo? A lot of people have tried to teach me, but when I try it, it sounds poor.

Karl
Western Australia

A Thanks for your letter and the long-distance compliments! You can find a complete description of my *Awake* drumkit in the *Ask A Pro* section of the July '95 *Modern Drummer*. (Get out that back-issue coupon!) However, I have recently

retired that kit and have switched back to Tama drums, playing their fantastic new Starclassics. The new setup is almost identical to the *Awake* setup, but it can always change depending on my mood!



Lissa Wales

The two most important keys in developing speed and accuracy are: 1) Play to a metronome, and 2) Start slow and build up the tempo gradually. (You have to learn to walk before you can run.)

To me, a drum solo is an opportunity to pull out all the stops and just let all the chops hang out. I do try to have a basic blueprint in form—but I always improvise within that blueprint. I also try to use a lot of dynamics throughout the solo—going up and down constantly from moments of total chaos to moments when you could hear a pin drop. In addition, I try to use my solo spot to show a bit of my personality. For instance, because I am a huge boxing fan, my solo always begins with Michael Buffer announcing, "Let's get ready to rumble." I've also played a lot of sampled riffs of bands I dig, from Pantera and Slayer to Public Enemy.

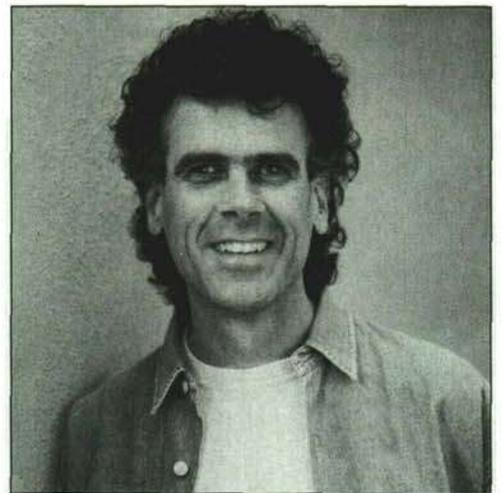
David Garibaldi

Q I'm a seventeen-year-old drummer who has been playing since the age of four. I've enjoyed your playing since day one; it's very inspirational. Can you tell me how you go about subdividing odd-note rhythms and groupings into your grooves and fills? Also, can you recommend any good books that provide an in-depth look at polyrhythms and odd groupings?

Rob Zlatkoff
via Internet

A Thanks for the compliments. With regard to your question about subdividing odd-note rhythms and groupings into grooves and fills, I think there are no better materials for developing these concepts than Gary Chaffee's *Patterns* books, volumes 1 and 2. These books have helped me tremendously in putting

together a concept of my own. The best thing about them is that they are loaded with concepts that you can apply to your way of playing. Of course, you must use your imagination to



make all of it work, but it's well worth the effort. I'm not a killer odd-time player like some others—I never wanted to be. But I still *like* odd times and rhythmic concepts. Gary's books have enabled me not only to play 4/4 in an "odd" way, but also to have some rhythmic concepts that can work in many different ways.

I first met Gary in Boston in 1973. At that time he showed me some handouts for the classes he was teaching at Berklee College of Music. Those handouts ultimately became his books. My point in telling you this is to show you that I've spent years trying to refine the things I get from Gary's materials. I look at all of this as a "work in progress." I still work out of the books from time to time, and believe it or not I enjoy them as much (if not more) today than I did fifteen years ago. And I continue to get a tremendous amount out of them. Give them a try; I think you'll be pleased with the results.



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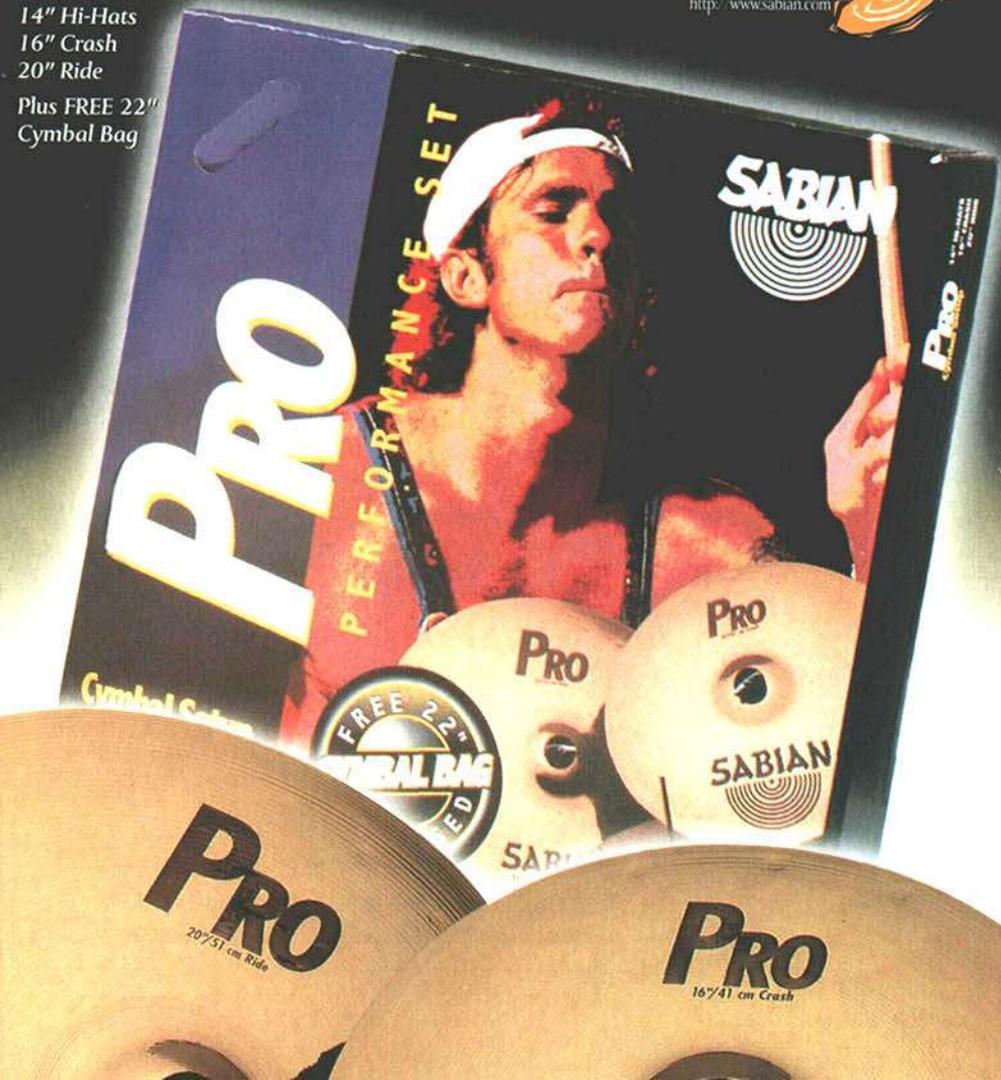
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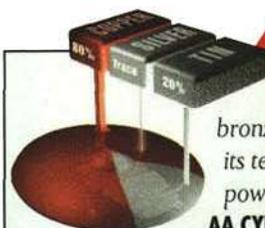


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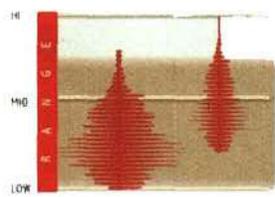
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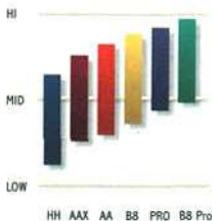
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Vocal Mic' Bleed

Q I play a totally electronic kit, with the exception of my hi-hat. I use a Shure SM57 to mike the hi-hat. I'm also a vocalist with my group, so I use a Crown CM-311 headset mic'. My problem is that my headset mic' is picking up my hi-hats. In fact, the hi-hat sound is often louder in the headset than in the hi-hat mic'. We use effects processors on our voices, so try to imagine hi-hats with delay or reverb! The result is not pretty. Is there a way I can cut down on the hi-hat sound leaking into my headset mic'?

Toby D'Erma
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

A Isolation is always the best solution to any mic'-bleed problem, but isolating the hi-hat from your headset mic' poses a unique challenge. You obviously can't put a physical barrier (like a baffle) between the hi-hat and your headset, since you then would be unable to *play* the hi-hat. The

only remaining option is to improve the isolation of the headset mic' itself. Try using a foam windscreen over the mic' element (and if it already has one, try using a larger one). Windscreens tend to reduce bleed slightly—especially in the higher frequencies, such as your hi-hat produces.

Endorsement Deals

Q My first record is coming out this summer, and I was curious about how one might go about finding endorsement deals. I've run into a number of drummers at clubs in the U.S. who are no great superstars either, yet they have developed relationships with companies. I just don't know where to start. If you have any ideas or know of someone who could give me some advice, it would be great.

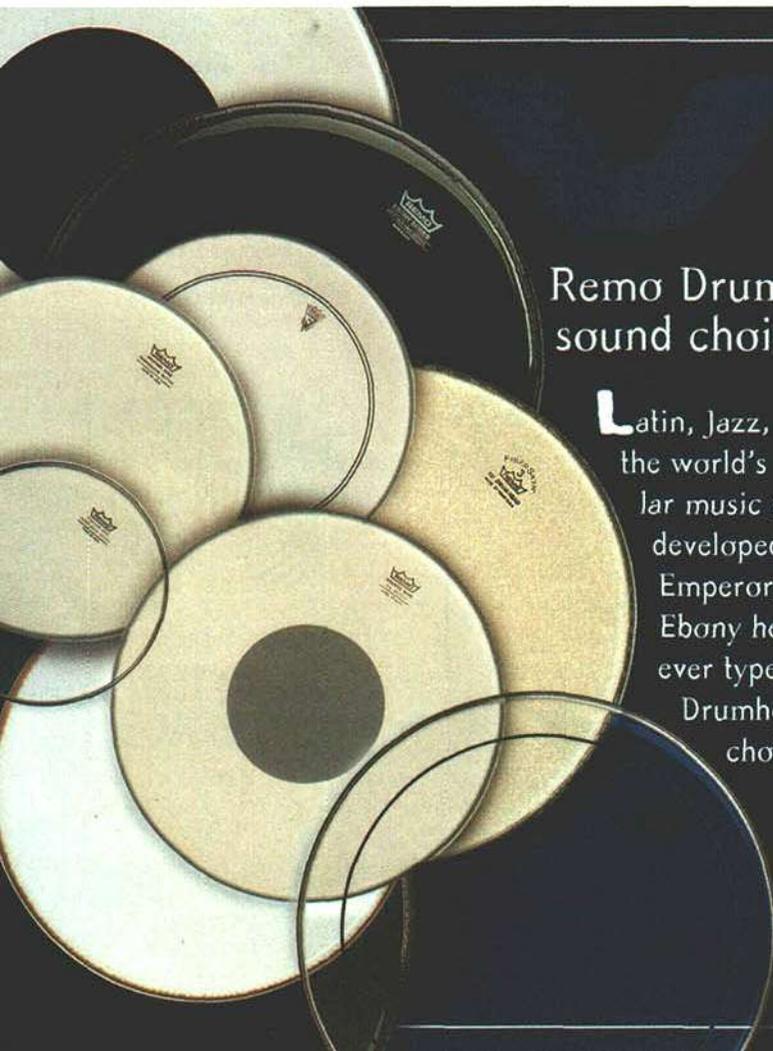
Ken Anderson
via Internet

A The key word in your question is "relationships." Percussion-equipment com-

panies seek to develop lasting, mutually beneficial relationships with their endorsers. Your object is to gain equipment and promotion. Their object is to *sell* equipment *via* promotion of your name. Thus you need to have something to offer to manufacturers in return for their support. It's a matter of convincing them of your current promotional value, and also of your potential for growth in the future. (If that sounds like trying to sell them on an investment, that's exactly what it is. They're investing in you.)

The fact that you have a record doesn't immediately make you marketable. Is the record successful? Do drum consumers already know your name? Are they likely to care what brand of equipment you play? If that isn't the case now, is your record enjoying enough success to indicate that such interest in you will exist in the near future? These are the questions you should ask yourself *before* you approach a manufacturer for an endorsement.

If and when you do approach a company



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for an endorsement deal, be sure that your approach is sincere. Don't just use a shotgun approach, saturating the market with promo packages to every manufacturer. The drum industry is relatively small, and those who are in it talk to each other more than you might imagine. Decide which companies you genuinely wish to support, based on your own personal preference. That way you can tell drummers that you endorse a given brand because you *believe* in it, not just because that particular company was willing to give you some free gear.

Put together a professional promotional package, including a brief bio, a photo, copies of your recordings, and a cover letter addressed to the artist relations manager of the company. (Call the company first to get that person's name.) You can get the address for virtually any manufacturer either from their ads in *MD* or from a dealer who sells their products. Send your package first, then call in a week or two to follow up. Be polite, and be patient. Virtually every major percussion manufacturer is besieged by endorsement inquiries. They need time to sort out the viable candidates from among the many wanna-bes. If

they see value and potential in a relationship with you, they will get back to you.

Ludwig Stainless Steel Drums

Q In 1982 I purchased a Ludwig six-piece drumkit made out of stainless steel. The kit contained a 14x24 bass drum, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, 13x13 and 14x14 rack toms, and a 5x14 snare drum. (Regrettably, the 16x18 floor tom was destroyed in a fire in 1992.)

I'd like to know in what years Ludwig made these drums, and whether or not they still make them. I'm hoping that someday I might be able to replace the lost floor tom.

Richard Seguin
Mattawa, Ontario, Canada

A Ludwig's Charles Heuck responds: "The stainless steel drums you refer to were produced by Ludwig from 1974 until mid-1980. We originally offered stainless steel shells in our marching series; they were later added to our outfit line. Due to increasing cost from the supplier of the materials necessary to produce the shells, they were discontinued in mid-1980. Anyone owning stainless steel drums and

in need of an additional piece will have to look far and wide, since there are relatively few such drums available. The only assistance we can suggest is to contact as many dealers as possible, and to periodically check the *Drum Market* classified section in *Modern Drummer*. You might also wish to place a 'wanted' ad in that same section."

Bass Drum Pedal Plates

Q What's the purpose of that bulky black plate attached to the bottom of bass drum pedals? Is it necessary? I keep mine on, but I'd love to remove it if it's not necessary to the well-being of the pedal. I do play pretty hard.

Chris Kirshbaum
West Hollywood, CA

A The plate on the bottom of many bass drum pedals is a reinforcement device, designed to give the pedal greater overall stability and durability in the face of heavy use. Whether or not it is "necessary" in any given case is dependent on two factors. The first is whether or not the pedal can function without it. (Some pedals no longer



Dave Weckl
Dave Weckl

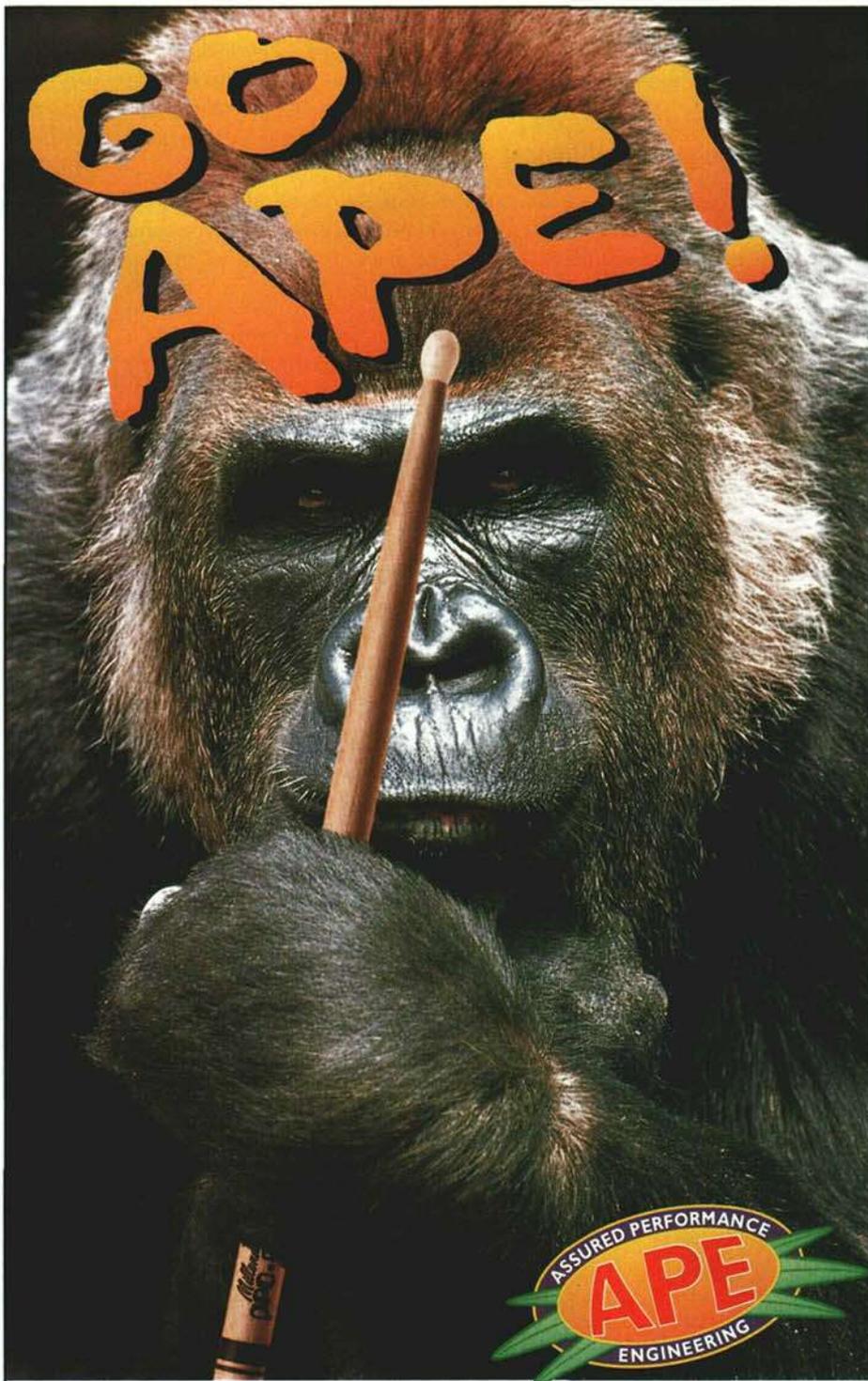
Snare Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare
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have the U-shaped support rod that used to connect all heel sections to all yoke sections. Many now bolt these parts directly to the reinforcement plate.) The second factor is how hard you play, and whether or not the pedal will function as well for you without the reinforcement plate as with it. Assuming that your pedal can be used without the reinforcement plate, it should be a simple matter to try it with the plate removed. If it plays well and doesn't seem to "give" under the impact of your foot, you should be able to do without the plate. But watch carefully for evidence of extra wear and tear.

How To Become A Drum Tech

QI would very much like to become a drum tech. I enjoy playing drums, tuning them, setting them up, and tearing them down. I have experience in this area, and I'd like to stay with it professionally. How should I go about it? Should I contact a record label and ask them what it takes? I am motivated, and this is my goal. Can you help me?

Eric Breilinski
5916 Lannoo
Detroit, MI 48236
(313)884-1189

AThere are several avenues that can lead you to a drum-tech position. One such avenue is to hook up with an individual drummer—perhaps even at the club or local level—and "grow" with that individual as his or her career improves. A second method is to go to work for one of the many cartage / teching services that exist in the major music centers (like L.A., Nashville, New York—and very likely Detroit). Jobs with these services can often lead to positions with specific clients of those services. Finally, you can advertise your availability in music trade publications. Most major cities have "music newspapers" of one form or another, and virtually all of these include classified advertising. You might also consider an ad in *MD's Drum Market*. Finally, we've included your full contact information here, in case an aspiring drummer out there can use the services of an obviously sincere aspiring drum tech.



When it comes to picking cymbals there are really only two kinds: the kind you like and the kind you don't.



At UFIP, even though we're dedicated to making the best cymbals, we realize that when it comes to picking the best cymbals good and bad aren't absolutes. They're just personal preferences based on what's right for the way you play. Which is why no matter how many cymbals you try we think you'll find that there really are only two different kinds: The kind you like and the kind you don't.

Play what you like.



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UFIP
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Choice Custom Drums



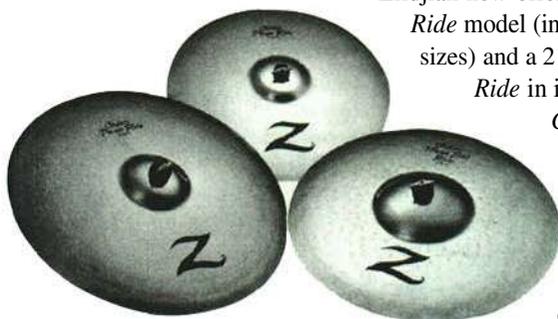
Choice Custom drums are constructed from 100% maple shells in 6- or 8-ply configurations. (Snare drums are available in 6-, 8-, and 10-ply, and

also in stave, stacked block, and solid-shell construction.) Drums are available in virtually any diameter and depth, and are built on a per-order basis. All bearing edges are finish-sanded with 400-grit paper, checked on flat granite, and oil sealed.

Choice Custom lugs are machined from solid-brass bar stock and attached directly to the shells. No rubber or plastic insulators are used; the manufacturer feels that these inhibit shell resonance. Drums are shipped with the customer's selection of heads, and come fitted with *Zogs* tension-rod washers.

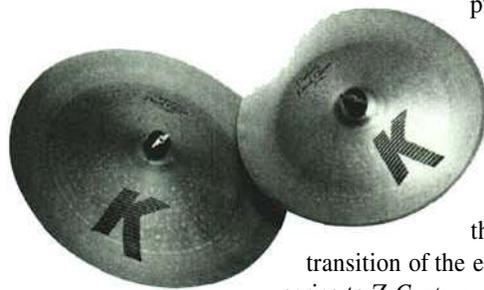
Choice Custom drums are said to be available in "any color under the sun," and come standard with hand-rubbed oil finishes. Lacquer finishes are available on request. The illustrated drumkit would retail at approximately \$1,950; the 8x10 snare drum also shown is priced at \$300. **Choice Custom Drum Co., 4612 Oakmont Blvd., Austin, TX 78731, (512) 371-0522.**

Zildjian Expands Z Custom, K Custom, And Edge Lines



Zildjian now offers a *Power Ride* model (in 20" and 22" sizes) and a 21" *Mega Bell Ride* in its heavy Z Custom series. The *Power Ride* models are said to have "an excellent

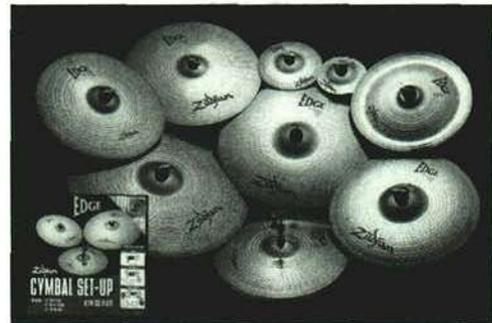
bright ping sound, exceptional stick definition with minimal overtone build-up, and a strong, clear bell sound." The *Mega Bell Ride* is claimed to produce "an awesome, loud, penetrating bell sound" designed to be popular with any players who like to use the bell to



punctuate their rhythms. The new cymbals replace the original Z series *Heavy Power Ride* and *Mega Bell Ride*, thus completing the transition of the entire range from Z series to Z Custom.

Zildjian has also added 17" and 19" *Dark Chinas* to its K Custom line. The addition of China-type cymbals completes the K Custom series, which previously included only rides, crashes, and hi-hats.

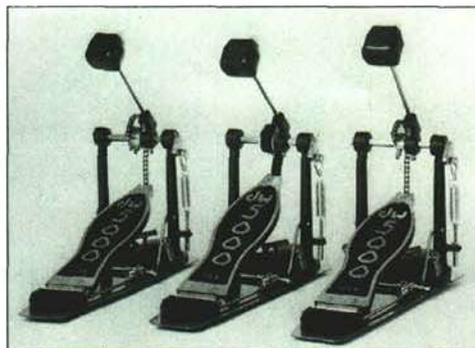
Finally, Zildjian has introduced several new models to its *Edge* range of "value-priced" cymbals. These include 6" and 8" *Flash Splashes*, 16" and 18"



Razor Rock Crashes, 15" and 17" *Razor Thin Crashes*, a 14" *Total China*, a 20" *Solid Rock Ride*, and 14" *Max Rock Hats*. Also new is a pre-packed cymbal setup of the most popular *Edge* models (20" *Solid Ride*, 16" *Razor Crash*, and 14" *Max Hats*), which will be available this fall with a special offer of a free 10" splash inside the box. **Avedis Zildjian Co., 22 Longwater Dr., Norwell, MA 02061, tel: (617) 871-2200, fax: (617) 871-3984.**

DW Upgrades Standard Series Pedals And Introduces New Midrange Models

Drum Workshop, Inc. has announced that its *Standard* model 5000A and 5002A *Accelerator*, 5000T and 5000T *Turbo*, and 5000AN and 5002AN nylon strap & cam single and double bass drum pedals are now equipped with a heavy-duty, ribbed aluminum pedal plate for greater strength and stability in all playing situations.



5000CXP, 5000NXP, 5000AXP pedals

All *Standard* series

pedals have also been upgraded to include DW's *Delta* ball-bearing rocker with infinite stroke adjustment at no additional charge.

Also new from DW are *P-Series* single bass drum pedals. Based on DW's "original" *5000CX* single pedals, the *P-Series* features the support of a new, economical steel pedal plate and the "smooth, fluid feel" of a triangular rocker hook—along with a heavy-duty extruded aluminum hinge, internal spring damper, and *101* two-way beater. *P-Series* pedals are available in a full choice of DW's *Accelerator* (*5000AXP*), *Turbo* (*5000CXP*), or nylon strap (*5000NXP*) drive systems. Each carries a suggested list price of \$175, and is upgradable to DW's *Standard* or *Delta* versions by means of available upgrade kits. **Drum Workshop, Inc., 101 Bernoulli Circle, Oxnard, CA 93030, tel: (805) 485-6999, fax: (805) 485-1334.**

New LP Claw, Bongos And Stands, And Mbiras

LP Music Group's newly improved *Claw* clamp-on mic', cymbal, and percussion holders feature a redesigned clamping mechanism that allows a full 360° grip of the holding rod to permit virtually any angle and placement combination. The *Claw's* jaw also

opens wider to allow attachment to bass drum hoops, most conga and

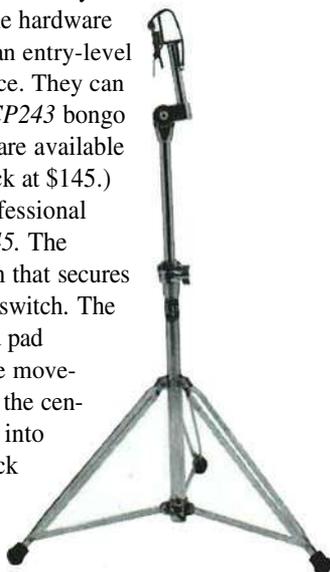
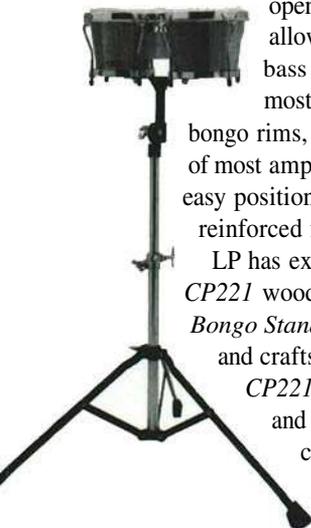
bongo rims, and the front lip of most amplifiers. The edges are rounded for easy positioning, and stress-prone areas have been reinforced for greater strength.

LP has expanded its affordable CP line with *CP221* wood bongos and the *CP243 Deluxe Bongo Stand*. Said to be comparable in "voice" and craftsmanship to higher-priced drums, *CP221* bongos feature a natural wood finish

and traditional-style chrome hardware at an entry-level price. They can

be hand-held or mounted on the *CP243* bongo stand. (The bongos and the stand are available together as an educational pre-pack at \$145.)

LP has also introduced two professional bongo stands: the *LP330* and *M245*. The *LP330* features a cam-lock system that secures the bongo drum with the flip of a switch. The drums sit on a broad, rubber-lined pad (designed to eliminate side-to-side movement). A nylon strap crosses over the center block of the bongos and hooks into a mounting slot on the stand to lock the drums down. The strap can be released quickly if the performer



The result is a warm, metallic voice said to "add beautifully mysterious tones to all types of music." Mbiras are available in

natural, cherry, black, teal, and orange finishes at a suggested price of \$70. **LP Music Group, 160 Belmont Ave., Garfield, NJ 07026, tel: (201) 478-6903, fax: (201) 772-3568, Web: <http://www.lpmusic.com>.**

UFIP Bionic Cymbals

UFIP's *Bionic* ride, crash, and hi-hat cymbals are claimed to combine

"power and clarity" with "warmth and musicality." *Bionics* are noticeably

heavier than general-purpose cymbals in order to achieve a brighter, drier, more penetrating sound. However, UFIP

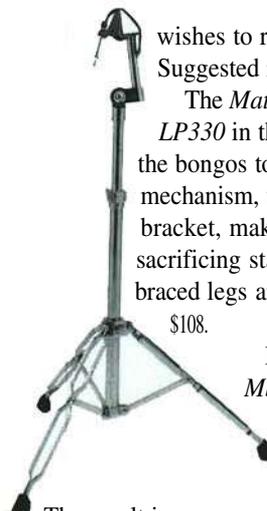
claims that their proprietary

bronze alloy and exclusive manufacturing processes (such as pre-aging, deep hammering, and hand buffing) gives the cymbals "a well-balanced, somewhat focused, and warmer overall sound." The same processes give *Bionics* a unique appearance, with an exaggerated thickness, taper, and profile that suits them to loud, hard studio and live playing situations. UFIP cymbals are distributed by **Drum Workshop, Inc., 101 Bernoulli Circle, Oxnard, CA 93030, tel: (805) 485-6999, fax: (805) 485-1334.**

wishes to remove the bongos for hand playing. Suggested retail price is \$160.

The *Matador M245* stand is similar to the *LP330* in that it employs a durable strap to secure the bongos to the stand. Tightened with a wing-nut mechanism, the strap holds the bongos on a tilting bracket, making set-up and tear-down easier without sacrificing stability. The stand itself features double-braced legs and is fully height-adjustable. It lists for \$108.

LP has also introduced the *World Beat Mbiras*. This African thumb piano is part of the kalimba family of instruments, with tuned metal keys that vibrate freely against a wooden resonator.



The result is a warm, metallic voice said to "add beautifully mysterious tones to all types of music." Mbiras are available in



Ludwig Rocker Series Jazz Outfit

In response to a trend towards smaller drum sizes in the professional drumkit market, Ludwig has now made such sizes available on their affordable *Rocker* series outfits. The new *Rocker Jazz* outfit

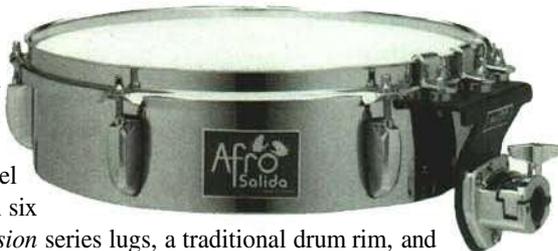


(model *LR1405RC*) features a 16x20 bass drum, a 14x14 floor tom, and 8x10 and 10x12 rack toms. A 5x14 metal-shell snare drum and 600 series single-braced *Classic* hardware are also included. *Rocker* shells are manufactured from nine-ply cross-laminated hardwoods and are fitted with tubular lugs. Finishes available include black, blue, white, red, and wine. **Ludwig Industries, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, IN 46515, tel: (219) 522-1675, fax: (219) 295-5405.**

Afro Salida Flat Timbale

The *Salida STE-*

3131 flat timbale features a 3x13 chrome-plated steel shell with six



Pearl *Session* series lugs, a traditional drum rim, and Pearl's exclusive *I.S.S. (Integrated Suspension System)*. The suspension system is compatible with Pearl tom holders for precise positioning and flexible use with racks and stands. The timbale is suggested both for drumset use and for percussion setups where full-size timbales are too large or not required. The *Salida STE-3131* is an **Afro Percussion** product, made and distributed by **Pearl Corporation, 549 Metroplex Dr., Nashville, TN 37211, tel: (615) 833-4477, fax: (615) 833-6242.**

Remo Marching Pinstripe Drumhead

Remo has introduced a marching version of its *Pinstripe* drumhead. The 2-ply, 7-mil head features an improved adhesive complemented by a crimped flesh hoop, and is said to retain the tonal quality of the original drumkit head while providing added tunability and durability required for marching applications.

Available in 6", 8", 10", 12", and 14" diameters, suggested retail prices for the heads are \$18.50, \$19.50, \$20.50, \$22.50, \$23.00, and \$24.00 respectively. For more information contact **Remo, Inc.** at their new address: **28101 Industry Dr., Valencia, CA 91355, tel: (805) 294-5600, fax: (805) 294-5700.**

Sonor Piccolo Snare Drums

Sonor has added two piccolo snare drums to its affordable *Force Custom* series. The *FBP144* brass piccolo features a 4x14 heavy brass shell with eight lugs, 2-millimeter hoops, a 20-strand snare with a quick-release throw-off, springless double lugs, and a resonant white-coated head "for superior brush response." Said to be "an extremely versatile, durable, and reliable drum with extra sensitivity and a cutting sound," the *FBP144* brass piccolo is priced at \$275. (Sonor suggests that this affordable price makes it an excellent choice as either a primary or secondary snare.)

Also new is a 4x14 *FCD144* maple/mahogany/maple piccolo, in natural maple, emerald green, and antique maple lacquer finishes. The drum has the same features as the brass piccolo, but is said to offer a "warmer, darker sound while maintaining a high pitch." It has a suggested retail price of \$260. **Sonor/HSS, P.O. Box 15035, Richmond, VA 23227-0435, tel: (804) 550-2700, fax: (804) 550-2670.**

Bradical Bass Beater



The Bradical bass drum beater features a patented design that frees up valuable space between the drummer and the bass drum, thus allowing a more customized

arrangement of drums. For example, the company suggests that large tom-toms could be positioned lower and closer to the player, for better hand speed and comfort.

The key to the pedal's unique design is an extended footboard and baseplate, which is twice the length of traditional pedals. Despite this extra length, the pedal is said to be "easier to play, faster, and more powerful" than conventionally designed pedals. The entire beater assembly is fully adjustable on its monopost frame, providing footboard angles from practically zero to 45°. Besides having several tension-oriented adjustments, the Bradical pedal also accepts a wide variety of springs. All parts are crafted and assembled in the U.S. and are easily replaceable. Suggested retail price is \$369. **Bradical Drum Hardware, 16111 Chastain Rd., Odessa, FL 33556, tel: (813) 920-5669, fax: (813) 920-6966, Web: <http://www.bradical.com>.**





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Bison Snare Drum



by Rick Mattingly

An unusual rim design takes this snare drum in a whole new direction.

The Bison Drum Company has been getting rave reviews for its custom snare drums for over fifteen years. The company has also introduced innovative instruments such as the *Volcano* snare drum (which has a slightly conical shell) and a titanium bass drum beater.

Now the company has introduced what may prove to be its most significant product yet: *NGU* (New Guaranteed Unbreakable) magnesium alloy rims. The manufacturer claims that they are the strongest rims on the market, and that they create a brighter sound and better projection than anything else currently available—even die-cast rims.

One advantage of heavy die-cast rims is that if a tension lug loosens up, the head stays in reasonable tune with itself. To see how the Bison rim responded to such a situation, I unscrewed one of the tension lugs *completely*. I was genuinely astounded at the

result. The overall pitch of the head dropped just a bit, but the head remained in perfect tune with itself. (There was absolutely no difference in pitch at each of the tension points around the head.) So I completely loosened another lug adjacent to the first one. This time, the pitch dropped considerably more—but the head *still* remained in perfect tune with itself. It wasn't until I loosened a third adjacent lug that the head started to ripple.

After tightening the three lugs back up, I went around the rim loosening every second lug (so that, when I was finished, the rim was tensioned with only five of the drum's ten lugs). Again, the overall pitch dropped slightly, but the head was in perfect tune with itself and was still very tight.

This is one impressive rim!

Tuning a drum with such rims is a breeze. I didn't have to spend the usual amount of time checking and re-checking the pitch at each tension point, nor did I have to make constant small adjustments or use a torque wrench. In fact, once all of the lugs were tightened with reasonable consistency by feel, it was virtually impossible for the head *not* to be in tune with itself. (This all vali-

WHAT'S HOT

- **NGU rim keeps drum absolutely in tune with itself**
- **drum and rims combine for a sound that is rich and full, with plenty of crack and body**

WHAT'S NOT

- **NGU rims look somewhat "industrial"**
- **NGU rims are only available on selected Bison models, and may not fit any other brand of drum**

dates the manufacturer's claims about brighter sound and better projection, since those are by-products of perfectly tuned heads.)

Drummers who use a lot of rimshots when playing loud backbeats often do experience the problem of lugs loosening up around the impact point, due to the rim flexing from the force of the blow. Whether or not the pitch drops slightly isn't usually much of a problem. Of greater concern is the fact that a drum loses some of its volume when one of its heads goes out of tune (because the head loses its resonance). A rim such as the *NGU* could definitely be desirable in such situations.

And speaking of rimshots, the thickness of the Bison rim makes for some great ones—fat and beefy. The thick, flat surface seemed to prevent drumsticks from splintering as much at the impact point as sticks are prone to do with conventional triple-flanged steel rims and even most die-cast rims I've used. Of course, there's no denying that the rims look a little "industrial" as compared to conventional chrome-plated rims. As a result, they will likely not be

to everyone's aesthetic taste.

The *NGU* rims come with a lifetime guarantee against cracking. At this point they're not available on all Bison drums—only on ten-lug, 14" *Symphonic* and *Rock* snare drum models. However, the company will soon introduce eight-lug models for snare drums, as well as full drumkits that incorporate *NGU* rims on tomtoms. Another negative aspect is that, because these rims are so thick, they may not fit other brands of drums. So if you want them, you'll have to get a Bison drum.

However, judging by the 5x14 *Rock* model we received for review, you could do a lot worse than play a Bison snare drum. The shell was made of 10-ply maple, with a smooth, precision bearing edge. The sound was rich and full, with plenty of ring when played wide open and plenty of crack and body when played with a *Zero Ring* on the top head. (The drum came equipped with a Remo *Ambassador* batter and a Remo *Diplomat* snare head.)

The tension casings were made of aircraft aluminum, and each was attached to the shell with a single screw. The strainer was a standard vertical-drop design found on many drums, and the snares were a typical 20-strand spiral design. Snare sensitivity was good to the very edge of the head, and the drum sounded good over a wide tuning range.

A 5x14 Bison *Rock* snare drum with *NGU* rims has a suggested list price of \$690. For any finish other than natural maple, add \$50. (The drum shown in the photo has a black stain finish. Bison does not offer plastic coverings.) For more information, contact the Bison Drum Co., 109 N. Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090, (847)459-1255.

Vic Firth Accessories

by Rick Mattingly

Whether you play drumkit, percussion, or both, Vic Firth has some exciting new tools for your trade.

Vic Firth has been busy lately, creating a slew of new signature drumsticks, a wide variety of specialty sticks and beaters for the burgeoning world percussion market, a unique bass drum beater system, and even a couple of hearing-protection devices. Let's take a look at all these new goodies.

Drumset Items

Charlie Watts Signature Sticks

Thirty-plus years after the Rolling Stones scored their first hits, Charlie Watts has finally gotten his name on a drumstick. For a long time, Watts used the old Ludwig *Joe Morello* model sticks,

which were essentially *IAs*. In a recent *Update* interview, Charlie commented that the Firth stick bearing his name was modeled after the *Morello* stick, but it's not a copy by any means. The two models do share a similar profile with an elongated, football-shaped bead. But the Firth model is considerably fatter throughout its length, making it more suitable for Stones-type backbeats. It's very similar to a Firth *5B* in terms of size and sound, the primary difference being the bead shape.

Now, about that signature itself. Rolling Stones guitarist Ron Wood told *Musician* magazine a few years back that Watts had a habit of signing autographs "Charlie Boy," since that's what his family always called him. Judging by the scrawl on the Firth stick, Watts still signs his name that way. List price is \$10.50 per pair.

Samba Drive Sticks

Part of Firth's *World Classic* series, Duduka Da Fonseca's *Samba Drive* is very close to the Watts stick, except that the *Samba Drive* is just a bit longer and has a narrower bead that produces articulate cymbal sounds. Because it is made from maple instead of hickory, the stick is relatively light, which makes it

ideal for fast samba patterns. List price is \$10.50 per pair.

Chad's Fire Sticks

"Chad" is Chad Wackerman, and as you might expect from one whose drumming combines power and finesse, Wackerman's signature stick is hefty enough to stand up to some pretty hard hitting, but not so large as to rule out lighter playing as well. It is almost identical to a Firth 5B, but is a bit longer and has a more oval-shaped bead that adds a bit of definition to ride-cymbal playing. The sticks are made from honey hickory and list for \$10.50 per pair.

Double Feature Sticks

Also part of the *World Classic* series, the *Double Feature* was designed by Sheila E to work as both a drumset stick and a timbale stick. It's about the same diameter as a Firth 7A, but is about an inch longer and has a more rounded butt end, which makes it more suitable for timbale playing. List price is \$10.50 per pair.

Bozzio Phase 1 & 2 Sticks

Terry Bozzio's *Phase 1* drumsticks are similar to Firth 5As except that they feature much less taper, a thicker neck, and a fat, helmet-shaped bead. That bead produces a very full sound on drums, brings out a wide range of overtones on a cymbal, and will obviously stand up to hard playing. List price is \$10.50.

The *Phase 2* sticks are identical, except that the butt end is slightly tapered to accommodate a beveled felt sleeve, making this a "two in one" model that can be flipped over for alternate tone colors. Such a stick could easily find favor with symphonic and multiple-percussion performers who must often make impossibly fast stick and mallet changes to accommodate a variety of instruments within a setup. List price is \$23.95.



Top to bottom: Charlie Watts, Samba Drive, Chad's Fire, Double Feature, and Bozzio Phase 1 & 2 sticks, and the Bozzio Sound Enhancer System.

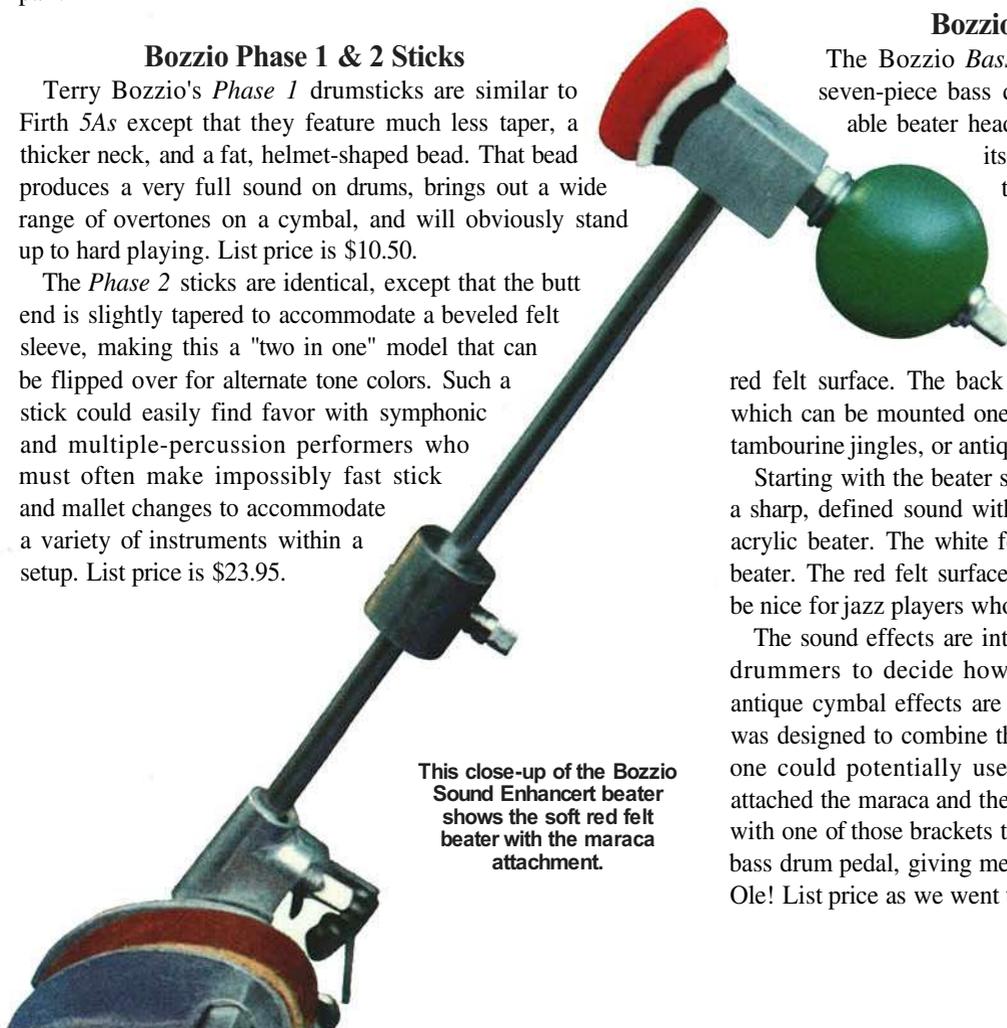
Bozzio Sound Enhancer

The Bozzio *Bass Drum Sound Enhancer System* is a seven-piece bass drum beater system with interchangeable beater heads and sound effects. The beater shaft itself is metal and has an adjustable counterweight to personalize the overall balance and feel of the bass drum pedal's action. The front of the beater has a velcro strip to accommodate three different heads: a hard PVC surface, a firm white felt surface, and a soft red felt surface. The back of the beater has a threaded hole into which can be mounted one of three "sound kits": a small maraca, tambourine jingles, or antique cymbals.

Starting with the beater surfaces, the hard PVC surface produces a sharp, defined sound with plenty of attack, similar to a wood or acrylic beater. The white felt surface is similar to a standard felt beater. The red felt surface has the least impact sound and would be nice for jazz players who like to "feather" the bass drum.

The sound effects are interesting, but it will be up to individual drummers to decide how applicable maraca, tambourine, or antique cymbal effects are to their situations. Although the beater was designed to combine these sounds with that of the bass drum, one could potentially use them in other ways. For example, I attached the maraca and the PVC beater to the shaft and used them with one of those brackets that allows you to play a cowbell with a bass drum pedal, giving me a combination of cowbell and maraca. Ole! List price as we went to press was slated to be around \$59.95.

This close-up of the Bozzio Sound Enhancer beater shows the soft red felt beater with the maraca attachment.



World Percussion Sticks And Beaters

Alex Acuna Models

A "pair" of Alex's *Bombo Leguero* beaters actually consists of one mallet and one stick. The mallet resembles an oversized timpani mallet with a very fat shaft and a felt beater-ball; the stick is comparable in size to the mallet shaft but is slightly tapered on each end and doesn't have a felt ball. (Some might regard it as more of a small club than as a stick.) The combination was specifically designed for the Argentinean bombo drum, which is traditionally played by striking the rim with a stick held in the left hand while the right hand plays on the drumhead with a mallet. List price is \$20.95.

The *Mazeta* resembles a Firth 5A drumstick but with a large, round, felt bead. The stick is based on an English tenor drum mallet and is well-suited for tom-tom solos, as well as for cymbal rolls. List price is \$19.95.

Los Timbalitos are traditional Cuban mallets said to be ideal for piccolo timbales, bongos, African marimbas, and steel drums. They are only 9" long and have round, hammer-like heads covered in tape. List price is \$29.95.

The *Zurdo* beater is designed specifically for the Brazilian drum of the same name (often spelled "surdo"). It resembles a small bass drum beater with a felt head. List price is \$16.50.

Bash-Man Models

"Bash-Man" is studio percussionist Bashiri Johnson, who must play a lot of timbales, since he has three different models of timbale sticks. Two of them address a problem that often occurs when traditional drumkit drummers use thin drumsticks or traditional timbale sticks: The player often ends up squeezing more than normal and putting extra tension on the hands. But the *Tapered* and *"Bubble"* *Timbale Sticks* feature enhanced gripping areas that could allow players to relax their hands a little bit without feeling that the sticks are going to fly away.

The *"Bubble"* *Timbale Stick* gets its name from a "knot" or "bubble" placed right where the thumb and first finger would generally hold the stick to provide extra control. List price is

\$10.95.

The *Tapered Timbale Stick* is exactly what it sounds like, with a thicker butt-end that feels a little more solid in the hand. One could also flip the sticks over and have a fatter-than-usual playing end for those extra loud volumes. List price is \$8.95.

Timbale/Percussion Mallets are essentially timbale sticks with small felt balls, which resemble small timpani mallets. They work well for a variety of percussion instruments and could be useful for a multi-percussion setup that mixed various drums with instruments such as cowbells and woodblocks (and for which one wished to use mallets instead of bare hands). List price is \$21.95.

Two-Timer

Dutch percussionist Martin Verdonk helped design this double-ended timbale stick, which is made from hickory and has a nylon tip at one end. The wood end, obviously, produces a traditional timbale sound, while the nylon end delivers a slightly brighter sound and is also useful for timbale players who use ride cymbals in their setups. List price is \$9.95.

Bams

As their name suggests, *Bams* are made from bamboo, and are cut so that the ends form ten "bristles." They rattle quite a bit when struck against a drumhead, adding an interesting color to a snare drum or tom-tom sound. They look extremely fragile, but since bamboo has more flex than wood I was able to use them with a reasonable amount of aggression without breaking any of the bristles. List price is \$14.50.



Center, top to bottom: Bombo Leguero, Mazeta, Los Timbalitos, Zurdo, "Bubble" Timbale Stick, Tapered Timbale Stick, Timbale Percussion Mallet. Far left: Two-Timer. Far right: Bams.

Isolation Headphones

One of the first prominent drummers to announce publicly that he suffered from tinnitus (constant ringing in the ears) as a result of prolonged exposure to loud music was Rod Morgenstein. For several years, while practicing and doing clinics, he has been wearing the type of headphones that people use on firing ranges. However, more recently Rod has been working with Vic Firth to design headphones more applicable to drummers' needs. That joint effort has resulted in two models of *Drummer's Isolation Headphones*.

Model *dB22* phones (in blue) are designed simply to keep sound out. Unlike the headphones you might wear when listening to CDs or in the studio, these have padded foam cushions that completely surround the ear. And unlike the majority of firing-range headphones I've tried (I suffer from mild tinnitus and am doing my best to prevent it from getting worse), these are comfortable even when worn for long periods of time.

The model number refers specifically to the noise reduction rating of 22 decibels. It is not unusual for on-stage volume to exceed 100 decibels, which can cause hearing damage. (And it's not just rock musicians who need to be concerned. According to a recent article in *Percussive Notes*, it is common for the on-stage volume at a symphony orchestra concert to be around 90 decibels.) A reduction of 22 decibels is significant and can literally save one's ears from damage.

I tried the *dB22* headphones in several situations, including rehearsing with a rock band, practicing on a high-tension parade drum in a small room, and even mowing the lawn. (A typical lawn-mower puts out 90 or more decibels; if you've already got tinnitus, that's enough to aggravate it.)

For starters, the *dB22* phones kept out more sound and were more comfortable than the foam earplugs I've been using for the past few years. What was especially nice (in terms of the musical applications) was that the drums sounded more natural. With the earplugs, the sound was always extremely muffled, with most of the high end missing. But with the Firth headphones, the muffling effect seemed to be spread a little better over the entire frequency range. When people spoke to me, I could understand them better when wearing the Firth headphones than with the plugs. Suggested retail price of the *dB22* model is \$29.95.

The *dB24s* model (in dark red) reduces noise by 24 decibels and also serves as a stereo headset that can be used in the studio or as a live monitoring system. Combining the two features makes sense for a lot of musicians, but especially for drummers. Obviously, drums are loud themselves, and when you're sitting in the middle

WHAT'S HOT

- both models offer significant noise reduction over an even frequency spectrum
- both are comfortable to wear for long periods
- *dB24s* model offers high-fidelity headphone sound quality

of a kit it can be difficult to hear the rest of the band (even with regular headphones or monitors). So you crank the monitor volume up in order to hear the music over your drums—which just gives you that many more decibels assaulting your ears. However, with the *dB24s* headphones you don't need to have the band's sound turned up nearly as high, because the phones keep a lot of the sound from the drums out of your ears. I found this to be true both with a live band and while playing along to recordings at home.

In terms of fidelity, the sound of the *dB24s* headphones is so



good that you can also use them simply to listen to music. I received the pair I reviewed the same day I received Peter Erskine's new ECM album, *As It Is*, which features an acoustic trio that explores a wide dynamic range. Every nuance was crystal clear, and it was nice having general background noise (my kids, the TV, dogs barking outside, etc.) virtually eliminated.

On top of everything mentioned so far, the *dB24s* headphones offer another advantage particularly for studio players. Engineers have told me that some hard-hitting drummers have to turn their headphone volume up so loud that the sound of everything from guitars to the click track bleeds out of the phones and into the drumset mic's. The Firth *dB24s* headphones not only keep a lot of the volume from the drums out of your ears, they also keep whatever is coming through them inside the headphones. They carry a list price of \$185.

Engineered Percussion Axis X Bass Drum And Hi-Hat Pedals

by Chap Ostrander

The *Axis X* bass drum and hi-hat pedals from Engineered Percussion represent an "affordable" line of equipment from an American company that hand-machines and hand-assembles its products. The goal in the development of the *X* line was to find ways to lower costs without sacrificing the quality, ruggedness, or performance of the original *Axis* line of pedals (now designated as the *A* line).

At first glance, the most noticeable change is that the base plate of the bass pedal and the upper and lower tubes of the hi-hat are not anodized, but brushed aluminum. This has no effect on their durability, but it is one way of cutting costs. The footboards of both pedals have an "X" cut into them below the "Axis" name. Also, the footplates of both pedals are wider than those on the *A* line pedals. (Note: This wider plate is also available as an option for the *A* pedals.)

The Bass Drum Pedal

The *X* bass pedal is the essence of simplicity, with smooth, silent action. The pedal comes with the *Axis* delrin beater ball, but you can use whatever beater you prefer. Spring tensioning is accomplished by turning a wing nut underneath the spring to set the desired tension, then tightening a matching wing nut above it to lock the tension in. The axle at the connection of the footboard to the heel plate is made of hardened steel and has been carefully machined to remain centered for smooth performance and stability. There are also "wells" at each end of the axle to hold in the lubrication. The machining is of such quality that there is virtually no play in the movement of the footboard. This means that the system that transfers the power from your foot to the bass drum is very efficient and doesn't waste energy.

The *X* bass pedal lacks the *Variable Drive Lever* found on the *A* line pedal. This has been replaced by a direct connection from the end of the footboard to the top of the beater mount, as on most other pedals. You can still adjust beater height, stroke, and spring tension. The pedal utilizes two ball bearing joints, one on the main axle and one at the top of the footboard-to-beater linkage. (The *A* line pedal has ball bearings at five joints.)

Two rubber points mounted on the front of the base plate support the bottom of the bass drum hoop. A "T" bar tightened by a

thumbscrew attaches the pedal to the hoop. A spring underneath the "T" bar keeps it in a raised position, so that it is easy to secure it to the hoop. This is important, because once the *Velcro* material under the base plate begins to grab your rug, you don't want to wrestle with trying to hold the "T" bar above the hoop while moving the pedal into position and lifting the bass drum at the same time. The space under the "T" bar has plenty of room for hoops as thick as those found on Yamaha drums, which are thicker than most others.

More good news about the *Axis X* pedal: An electronic pickup module will soon be available for those who want to use the pedal to trigger sound sources. You'll also have the

option of upgrading the pedal with more ball bearing joints, if you wish. And a kit will be coming out to convert the single pedal to a double configuration. (Considering the feel and action of the single pedal, this should be a fine setup.)

The Hi-Hat Pedal

The *Axis X* hi-hat utilizes what Engineered Percussion calls a "vortex" leg design. The legs are single-braced, and they open to the side as the top of the assembly is lowered. The bottom of the leg assembly rotates so that the legs can be positioned to allow for other pedals. A thumbscrew at the top of the leg assembly controls the height and location of the legs. A sliding adjustment on the brace of one of the legs allows the entire stand to be tilted. (The footboard and linkage have been designed so that the pedal section remains flat on the floor if the stand is tilted.)

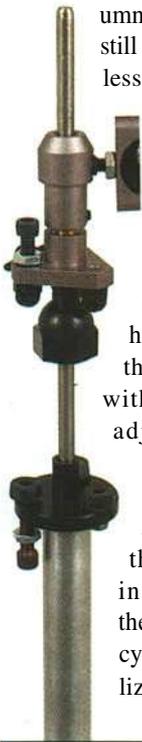
A thumbscrew at the front of the footboard support locks it in position. This results in a pedal that folds easily and compactly, but stays solidly in place once it's set up. The clamping collar used to secure the upper leg assembly (and also the height adjustment for the top tube) makes contact with the tube

at three points, 120° apart. It doesn't bind on the tubing, yet it creates a surprisingly firm hold on the adjustment with very little effort.

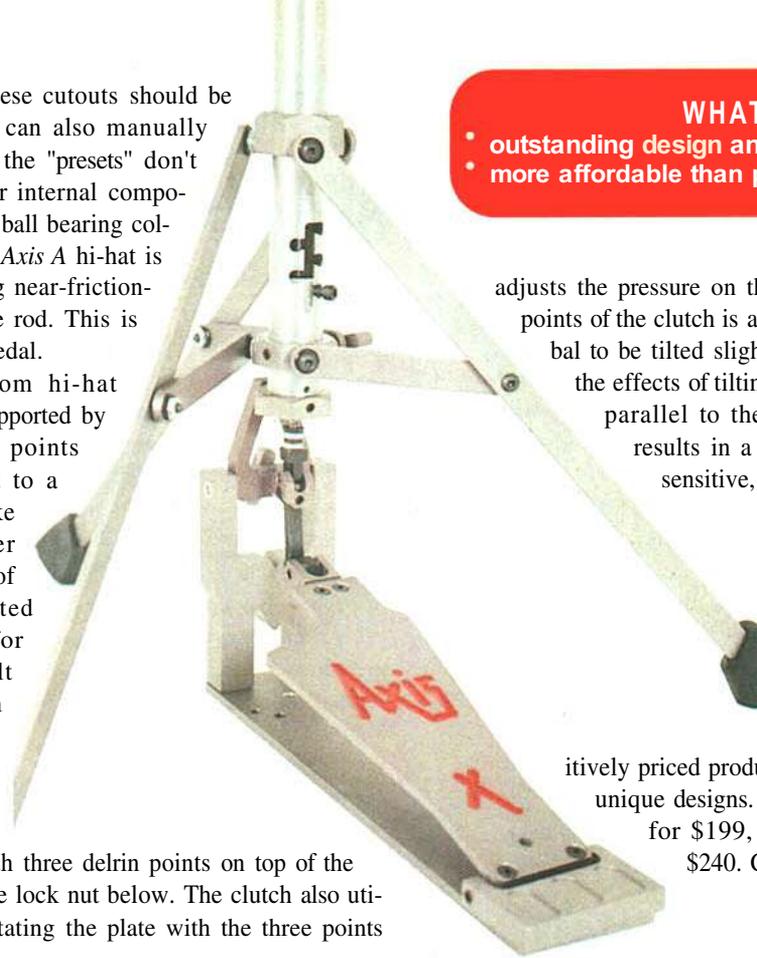
Spring-tension adjustments are made via a set of six cutouts in the lower tube section. (They look like a gated shift pattern on a sports car.) By moving a lever from the bottom slot (for less spring tension) to the top slot (for greater tension), you can choose from a full range of



pedal response. Although these cutouts should be fine for most players, you can also manually adjust the internal spring if the "presets" don't suit you. As far as the other internal components go, the linear ball bearing column utilized in the *Axis A* hi-hat is still there, providing near-frictionless support for the rod. This is one smooth pedal.



The bottom hi-hat cymbal is supported by three rubber points (as opposed to a felt washer, like on most other hi-hats). One of the points is fitted with a screw for adjusting the tilt of the bottom cymbal. The *Axis* clutch is the same one included with their *A* hi-hat, with three delrin points on top of the cymbal and a large lock nut below. The clutch also utilizes no felts. Rotating the plate with the three points



WHAT'S HOT

- outstanding design and construction quality
- more affordable than previous *Axis* pedals

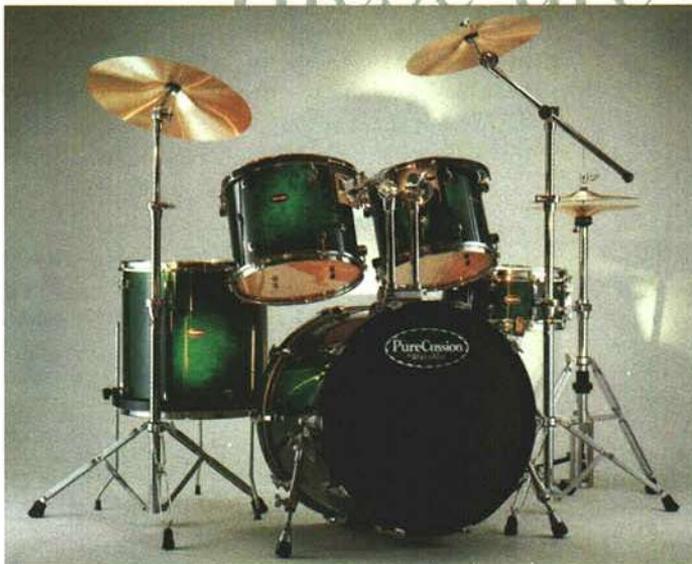
adjusts the pressure on the top cymbal. One of the three points of the clutch is also adjustable, allowing the cymbal to be tilted slightly. This could be used to offset the effects of tilting the stand, keeping the cymbals parallel to the floor. All of this technology results in a hi-hat that is light, strong, very sensitive, very adjustable, and very stable.

Conclusions And Prices

As far as I'm concerned, Engineered Percussion has done it again. The *Axis X* line of pedals demonstrates their continuing commitment to drummers by offering competitively priced products that deliver great quality and unique designs. The *Axis X* bass drum pedal lists for \$199, and the *Axis X* hi-hat lists for \$240. Check these pedals out.



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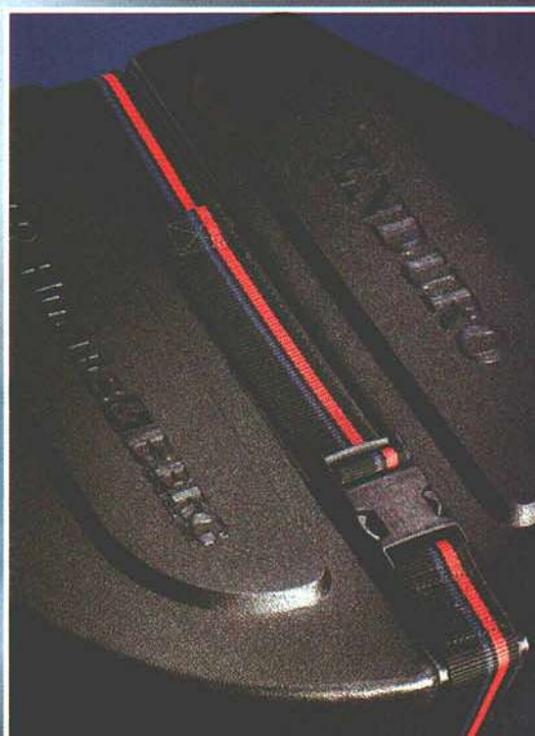
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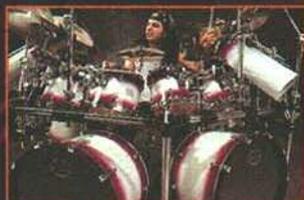
There's No Place Like Home...

TAMA STARCLASSIC
the Air-Ride Snare System™

and MIKE PORTNOY

I've played on Tama drums for nearly all of my playing life. The first drum set I ever bought was a Tama set...an Imperialstar, as a matter of fact. And I played Tama's from that time on, all through my developing career, all the way up to and including Dream Theater's Images and Words album and tour.

So Tama drums were always home base for me.



But like anything else—personally, artistically, whatever—you get the urge to experience what else is out there. So I decided it was time to check out other drums and see if there was anything I was missing. And for the last two years, that's what I did. I played on all kinds of sets. Some of them were OK and some were quite good...but none of them felt like "home."



Right about the time I came to that conclusion, Tama came out with the Starclassic line (talk about perfect timing). I put these drums to the test for awhile before I made up my mind that it was time to return to Tama. And the fact is, these really are the *ultimate drums*...they've got the attack that I love, but without sounding too dead. Great tone and resonance, but without being too boomy. The perfect medium. Best of all, the Starclassics feel like home...and, like an old friend once said, "there's no place like home."

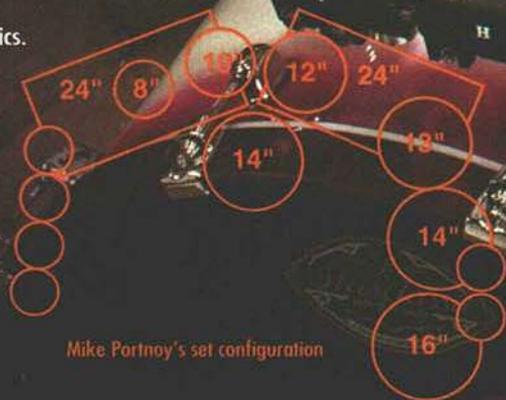


Mike Portnoy on Tama's Air-Ride Snare System

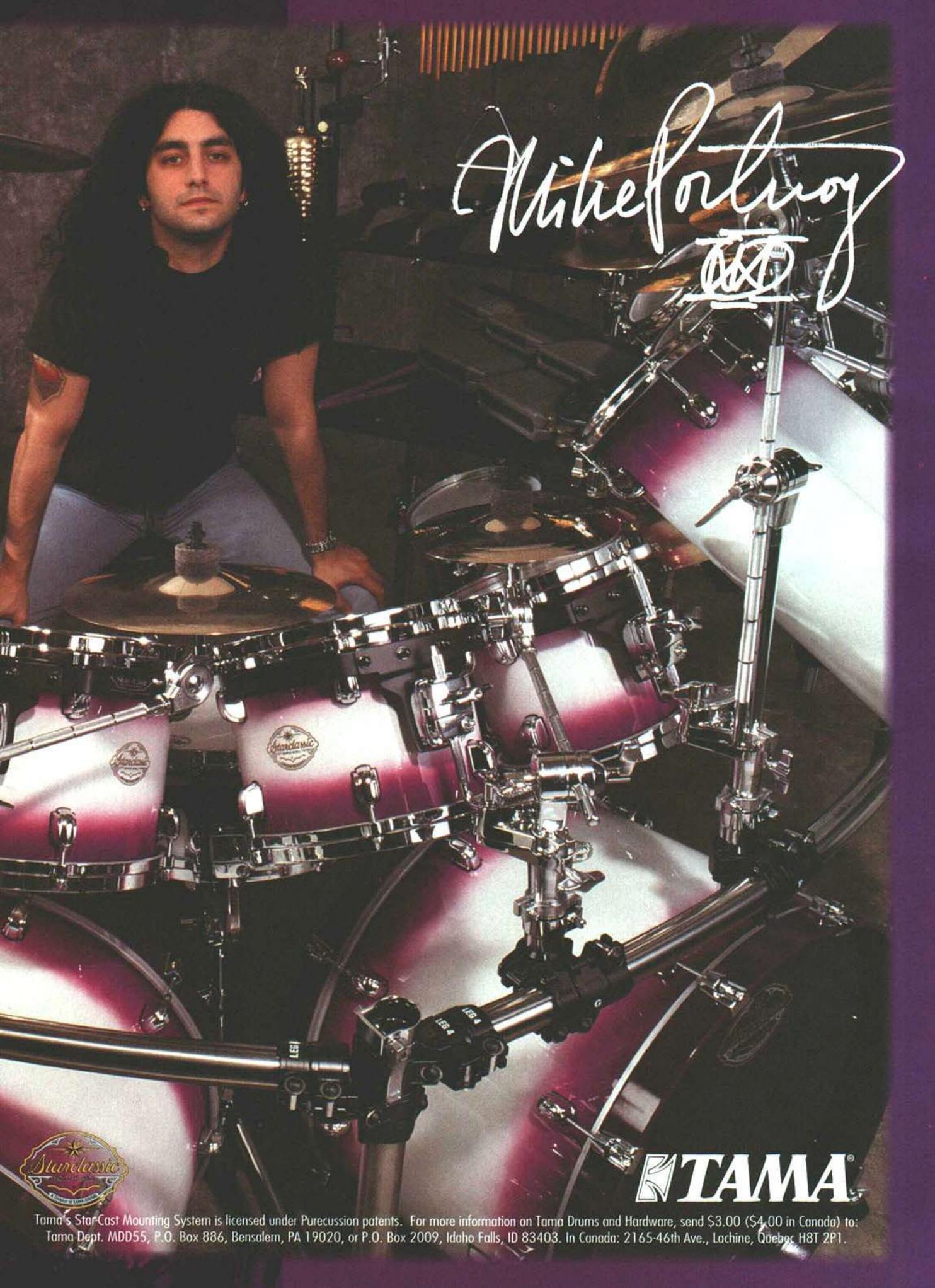
"Hitting a snare drum on a regular stand can feel like you're hitting a piece of metal...there's no give and take. But with the Air-Ride, you get the same natural bounce, feel and response you get from your toms. The snare drum feels like the rest of the set instead of a separate entity...the Air-Ride just makes perfect sense."



It's good to be back home...Back to the Basics.



Mike Portnoy's set configuration



Mike Portnoy



TAMA

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METALLICA'S

Lars

Ulrich

Less Notes, More Attitude

by Matt Peiken

Photos by Mark Leialoha/Terri Berg Photographic



Star-Cast
Mounting System

Licensed under Purecussion Patents
Japan

You know something's amiss when fans won't mosh at a Metallica show. Especially at Slim's, a club in the band's hometown. That it's a fan-club-only roast adds another wrinkle to the mystery.

But for all of James Hetfield's arm-waving encouragement to get a circle going, fans here seem content to simply clap, cheer, and take in the music without also taking an elbow to the temple.

Perhaps it's the rare, intimate vantage. More likely, it's the pace and

the underlying feel of "King Nothing," a tune off the new record, *Load*, that's acting like a mild sedative. One thing's for sure: This ain't the same band—at least creatively—that wrote "Whiplash," "Blackened," and other, more mosh-minded ditties in the 1980s, when



Metallica helped invent and shape the course of speed metal.

In many ways, it's as if *Load* was in fact made by a different band. The tunes are markedly slower, the rhythms less frantic, the beats decidedly more in the pocket. Fans got a sense of that



direction five years ago with Metallica's self-titled, fifth record—and embraced it by making it nine times platinum in the United States alone. Today the album is still on *Billboard's* Top 200. Still, the remnants of Metallica's slash-and-burn days surface today only in concert, when the band digs through the vault to mix new material with Metalli-classics.

Drummer Lars Ulrich has taken the intensity of his own performance down a couple notches, cleansing himself of the fills, blast beats, and double kick parts that so defined his drumming in the band's formative years. Ulrich says it's all for the sake of groove—itself a relatively new word in the Metallica vernacular. Still, he makes no apologies for it. Indeed, if Metallica no longer fits someone's definition of metal, he says, it's their problem, not the band's.

"We're not on a mission to bring music to the masses. It's never been about going out and giving people what they want," he says. "It may sound very harsh and selfish in print, but the essence of Metallica, what makes us so pure and honest, is that we do what we want to. We do Metallica because *we* enjoy doing it and we make music that *we* like. Don't misunderstand—we love our fans to death—and if they like where we're going and want to ride with us, they're invited to ride with us. But if we're not doing it for them anymore, if people think Metallica sucks now or whatever, I have

no problem with that. They can go somewhere else because there are plenty of bands out there to choose from."

It's a couple of weeks after the San Francisco club shows. Ulrich is sitting in a hotel restaurant in downtown Chicago, squeezing in a salad between his six-mile run and a live radio appearance later that night on "Rock Line." It's a day off early along the Lollapalooza tour, yet another point of contention for people who believe Metallica has "gone alternative."

Hesitant to predict Metallica's future creative destinations, Ulrich grudgingly accepts the theory that wherever the band goes musically, he's the one in the driver's seat.

"There's probably a hint of truth in that. You're probably right," he says, acknowledging a suggestion that the approach he takes with his drum parts ultimately dictates the course his bandmates take in the music—more so than for drummers in most bands.

"And I would think that's a good thing in some ways, because I always want to grow and change and evolve, which means Metallica is growing and evolving, too," he says. "That's probably one of the things I'm most proud of, that we're never afraid to try new things. The drums are maybe taking more of a back seat now, but I hope I'm doing something to lift these songs to levels of groove and vibe and attitude that we've never gone to before."

"There isn't one place on Load where I'm riding the double kicks. And you know why? It's for no other

MP: After seeing you years ago in small clubs like [former San Francisco venue] the Stone, it was great catching you again at that level at Slim's.

LU: We like doing those shows, too, but

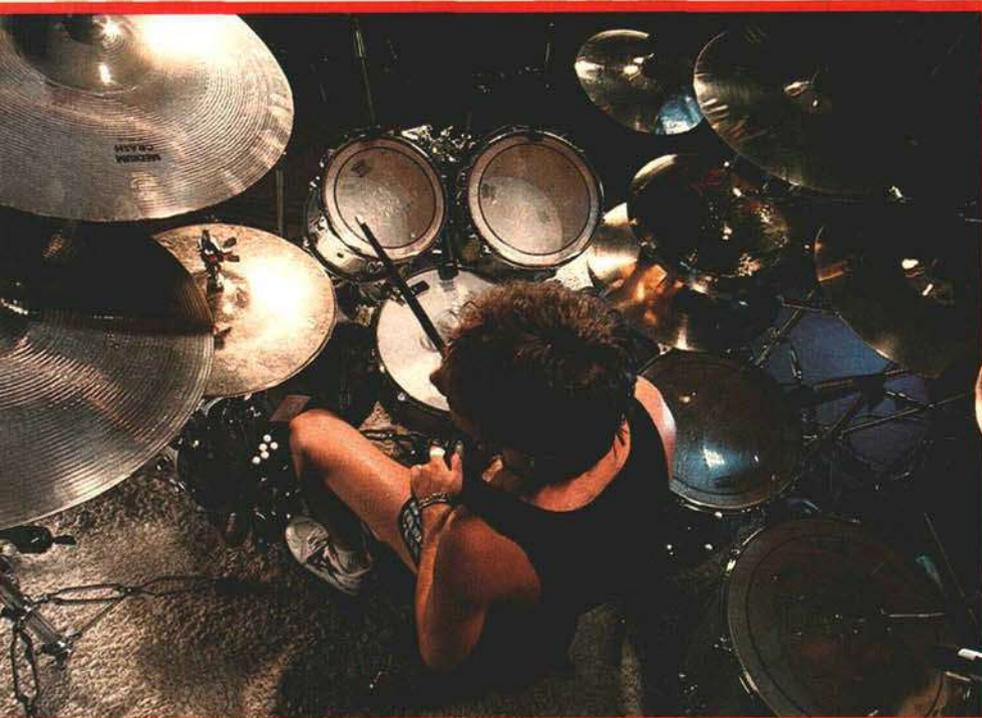
after doing four or five of them in the past two weeks, it's so good to be back doing big shows. There's just a certain challenge or pressure there, and the level of focus that comes with playing for

40,000 people is just greater. But the one thing I've always tried to do is make that same connection with the audience and feed off the energy, which comes a lot easier in smaller shows. I think I started coming close to that on some of the touring we did for the black album.

MP: It seemed like you, as a band, went out of your way for that interaction on the last tour, especially in the arenas. You had the audience all around you, and you had two kits set up that moved around to different places on stage.

LU: Well, we saw ourselves getting bigger and potentially losing the connection, the closeness with the audience that Metallica always thrived on. So we had to reinvent what you could do in an arena and make it as intimate and fun for the audience as possible. Also, I've always wanted to break out of that stereotype of having the drummer in the background, and instead be more a part of what's happening at the front of the stage and have the drums be part of that energy field.

MP: And that exposed you more, not only as a personality, but as a drummer.



Growing Up Lars

Lars Ulrich grew up on the tennis courts of Denmark, following in the steps of his father, uncle, and grandfather on a path leading to the international pro circuit. His father also played clarinet and flute and owned a jazz club in Copenhagen during the '50s. The late sax legend Dexter Gordon was Lars' godfather.

At times, as a kid, Ulrich's friends got more use out of his tennis rackets than Lars did, using them as guitars, along with broom shafts and cardboard boxes, as they locked themselves in the Ulrichs' basement and pretended to be bands like Deep Purple, Status Quo, and Black Sabbath. Lars was always the one who ended up behind the boxes, with paint-stirring sticks in his hands as drumsticks.

"We'd crank the heat up full blast so we would sweat as much as we could," Lars recalls. "It made us feel like we were rocking our asses off."

At twelve, he got on his knees and begged his grandmother for a drumkit. He got one for his next birthday, but still viewed music as a hobby, squeezed into the moments between school and tennis. He came to America with his family in 1980, mainly to take his budding tennis career to the next level.

But as his tennis aspirations began to double-fault, the new wave of British heavy metal consumed his attention. At one point, he and a friend followed Motorhead around California, driving right behind their tour bus. Ulrich soon left tennis at the net altogether and, in the summer of 1981, took off for England for no other reason than to meet the members of Motorhead, Saxon,

Diamond Head, and other bands that so captivated him.

In England, Lars lived with the members of Diamond Head for a month and got to watch the recording sessions for Motorhead's *Iron Fist* album. The experience inspired him so much that he returned to America for his senior year of high school, vowing to start a band of his own. The first person he called was James Hetfield, whom he'd met and jammed with during the previous school year.

"My inability to really play the drums was overshadowed by my drive and energy and my wanting to do this," says Ulrich, who made enough money delivering the *Los Angeles Times* to add a second kick drum to the four-piece Camco set he'd bought just months earlier. After school, he and Hetfield would get drunk, play covers of the British metal bands, and, eventually, write songs.

All that is worth noting today, Ulrich says, if for no other reason than that the things that pushed him away from tennis fifteen years ago are the same things that keep him in music today.

"When James and I first started jamming together, in my wildest dreams I couldn't have imagined the level of success we've attained. We were just a couple of punk kids wanting to rock out, and it's really that way now," he says. "At the end of the day, the music is what gets us off. We're still rocking out, only now there are 20,000 people rocking out with us every night—and we don't need to turn the heat on to sweat."

Matt Peiken

reason than I got bored with it. I've done everything I can do with double bass 16th notes."

Not that you were hiding before, but you couldn't just blend in anymore. The eyes were definitely on you—and at every angle. And the solo part, having dueling drums with James [Hetfield, singer/guitarist], was kind of a unique idea.

LU: When you play as many shows as we do, you need something every night that fires you up. It can be so easy to just get into a comfortable groove and get lethargic. But having that variety in the show and that kind of attention thrown on me definitely kept me on my toes.

As far as the solo goes, I definitely tried to take it away from the typical heavy metal drum solo. Let's face it, I don't consider myself a great soloist, and I'm not particularly interested in being a drummer who can play great by himself. But in doing three-hour shows every night, we needed to have the solo in the set more or less because James needed some breaks for his throat.

So Kirk [Hammett, lead guitarist] took his solo and Jason [Newsted, bassist] had his solo, so I reluctantly put together my own solo. I wasn't really scared about it, but I think the age of the Ian Paice and the John Bonham solos of the '70s would be seen as a little self-indulgent in the '90s. So faced with the choice of trying to fool everyone into thinking I'm this blazing soloist or having some juggling cats up there, I thought it would be fun to bring humor into the drum solo and show the audience a different side of us as well.

MP: I think your self-assessment about your soloing abilities is going to surprise some readers, especially those who voted you onto the *Modern Drummer* Honor Roll.

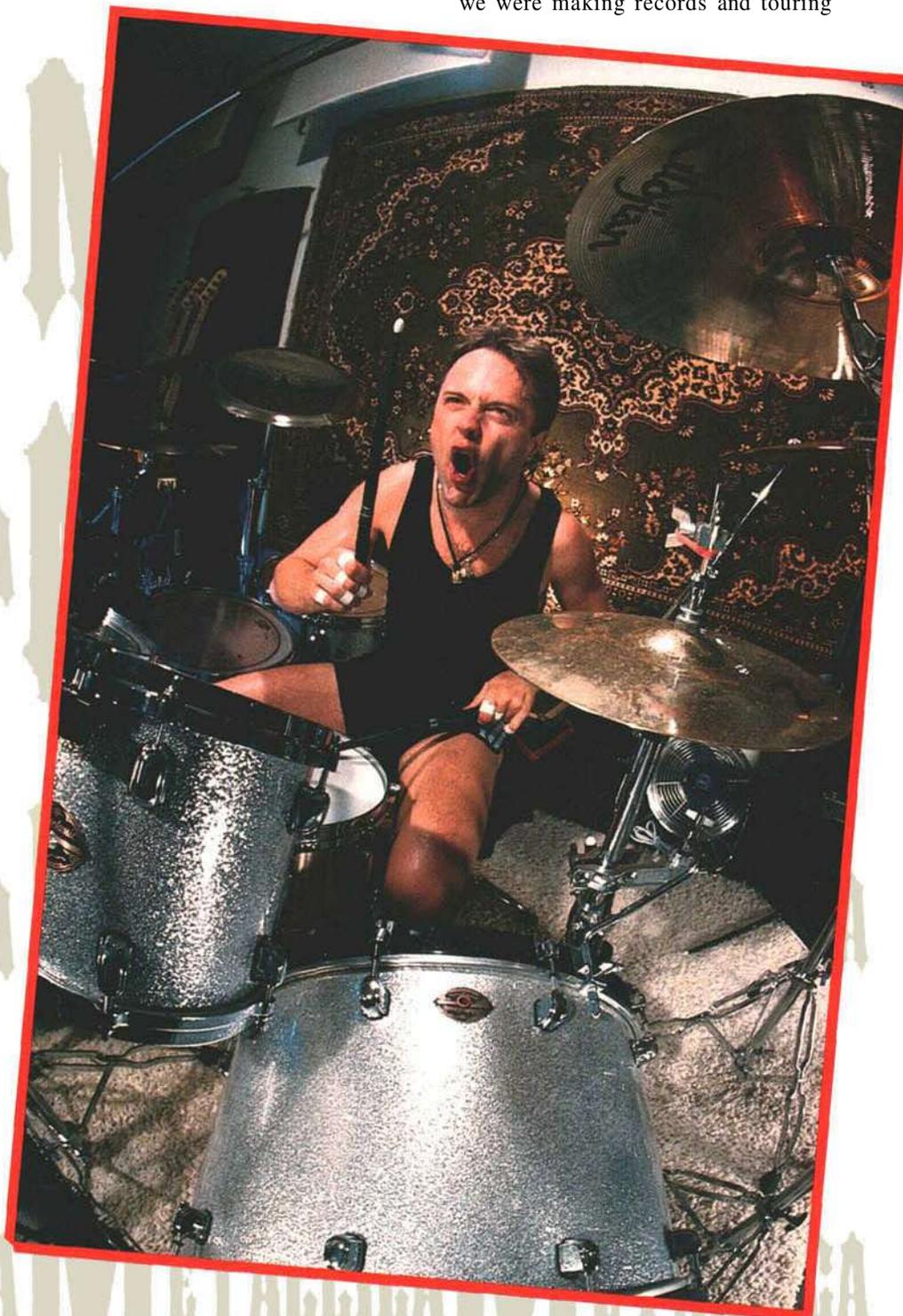
LU: I'm thankful and grateful to people who are fans of my playing. But anyone who really listens to Metallica and is a true fan probably likes my drumming because of what I've done within a song, not because I'm this great technical wizard or great soloist. Admittedly, there were times I played a lot more busy than I do now, but soloing and killer fills just aren't my main interest on the instrument. My whole thing is about setting up something that works within

the group, more so now than ever.

For a while, around the time of the *Master Of Puppets* and *...And Justice For All* albums, I was really trying to push the role of the drums within the songs as far to the front as possible in terms of coloring and texturing. A lot of those songs were written around drum

patterns I created, especially on the *Justice* record, where I felt the need to be more than the timekeeper. And I think you need to go back to the very beginnings of Metallica to really understand where I'm coming from now and why.

Looking back on the history of my playing and my relationship with the kit, we were making records and touring



before we could even tie our own shoelaces. And after *Ride The Lightning*, when we moved back from L.A. to San Francisco, I think we felt a little inadequate as musicians. The thing I skipped over a little too easily when I started drumming was just the basic rudiments, and I felt a little limited in the fill area. So at the same time Kirk was taking lessons from Joe Satriani, I went back and took lessons from Satriani's drummer. And for a couple of years, I just went through a lot of that stuff and tried to fill in the blanks and expand my horizons.

The records we made right around this time were *Puppets* and *Justice*, and when I listen to those records now, I feel a sense of trying to be as inventive and creative as I could—even pushy—with a lot of the fills I played. There's a lot of aggressive playing on those records, and as happy as we were with them at that time, the magnitude of what we were trying to do didn't really hit us until we started touring for *Justice*.

We were playing hundreds of gigs and playing these ten-minute songs that were so progressive and so full of these odd time signatures and really difficult parts. We'd

come back to the dressing room afterward and start talking about it, and we came to the conclusion that, frankly, we just weren't having fun playing them. Songs like "...And Justice For All" and "Frayed Ends Of Sanity" became nothing more than exercises in trying to get from one point to the other without screwing up.

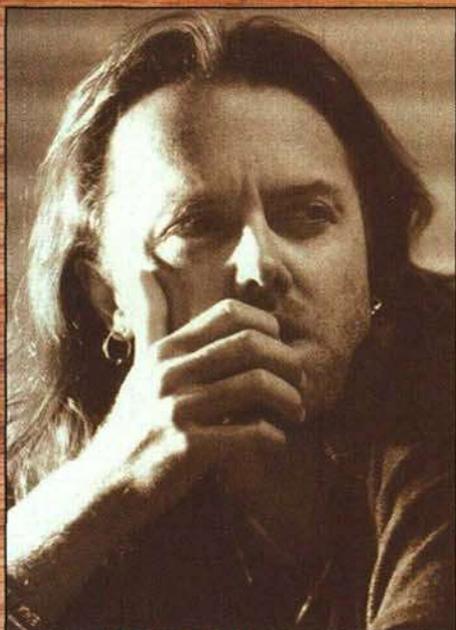
When we got away from the touring and had time to examine what we were doing, we came to the conclusion that playing all this weird-ass, challenging stuff had nothing to do with playing music from the heart and soul. The progressive side of Metallica, and my playing and the role of the drums—I felt we'd taken that as far as we could and that it was really time for a sharp turn. So when we came back together and started writing music for the black album, I was keen, at least from the drumming end, to do whatever I could to make it soulful.

MP: You just mentioned the aspect of fun, which is something I hadn't thought about before within the realm of Metallica. But I can easily see where playing the newer material would be more fun from a simple, rocking-out level.

LU: Exactly. In the summer of '90, when we were writing the black album, I was on this huge AC/DC kick. I'd been a big fan of theirs ever since the '70s, but I'd never drawn inspiration from them before. But around that time, I listened to the old AC/DC records practically every day, and I rediscovered Phil Rudd. He became my main source of inspiration for the changes I made in my playing.

Everybody thinks that what Phil Rudd did is so easy, but it took me a while to really understand what made him so special in that band. He was the master at just laying behind the beat—not too much to where it drags, but just right on the edge to where it makes the beat sound fatter. People always talk about the swing in AC/DC's music and what Angus Young does with the guitar, but I'll tell you—and this is no disrespect to the other drummers they had after Phil left—the music just didn't have the same swing to it when Phil wasn't in the band.

I wanted to try and bring my drumming to that level. As I said before, I felt I'd already proven myself from another musical point of view. But also, in listening



Lars Ulrich—Metallica

Going Against the Grain

HERE WAS MY PROBLEM:

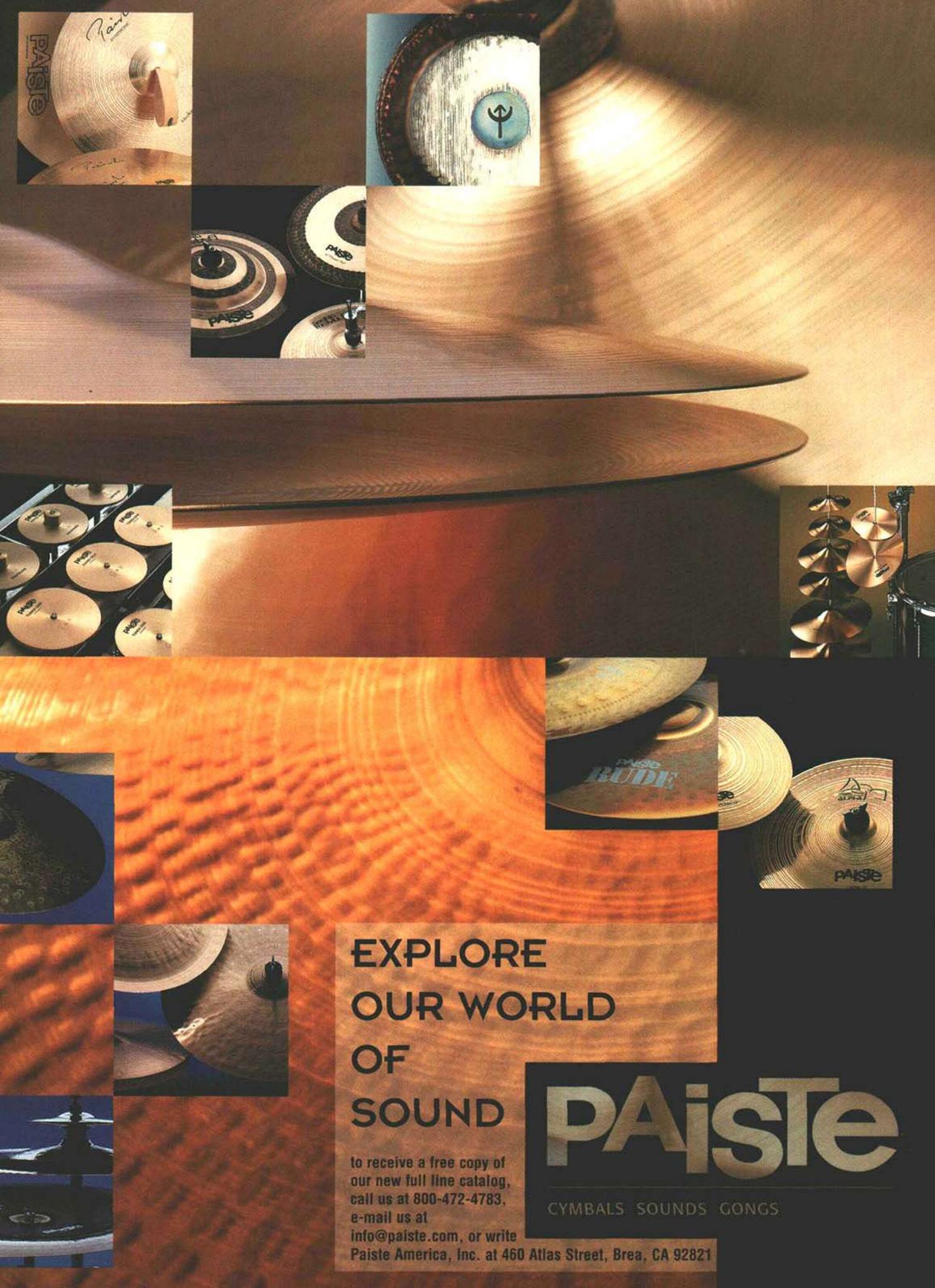
I had broken so many wood sticks over the years that it not only affected my gig, but also seriously contributed to the demise of the world's tree population!!!

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CYMBALS SOUNDS GONGS

back to *Justice*, I felt it came off as a cold record. So I just wanted to have more fun with the drums and have the instrument be more of the backbone of the music, set up the guitars more, and just put more swing, groove, and attitude into the beats.

"Enter Sandman" was a big stepping stone for me as far as that goes because it was the first song we wrote for the black album and it was the first time I'd ever really done that four-on-the-floor sort of playing. And I felt really good about it.

MP: Was it difficult for you to settle into that role? I mean, in some ways, it sounds like the drummer from Metallica's early records and the drummer on the last two are different people.

LU: It wasn't difficult at all. In fact, it was the biggest relief. If anything, I think it took the rest of the guys a little bit of getting used to that style of drumming coming from me. But they didn't know I went through most of the '80s feeling pretty inadequate about my playing, always looking over my shoulder at the Charlie Benantes of the world and hearing what they were doing. I felt I had to keep up with them; I had to play faster and play

more notes and do these lightning fills—just keep pushing myself in the whole competition thing.

After a couple years of that, and feeling I really couldn't take it any further, I just had to take a step forward in my confidence level and not worry about trying to be the best heavy metal drummer in the world, but just be myself. I wanted to be comfortable with the music again, and that meant actually playing for the music.

MP: Did Bob Rock [producer of the black album and *Load*] have a lot to do with shaping your new direction? I know he certainly had a profound effect on your sound.

LU: By the time I met Bob Rock, the band had already been playing that kind of groove-oriented stuff for about two months. But it wasn't sitting in our bones yet, so if anything, he just made me feel more confident about going in this direction with my playing. The big reason we brought Bob in was because I was desperate to do something about the drum sound—in fact not just the drums, but everything. We just wanted it to sound fat.

We heard the results he got on the Motley Crue record *Dr. Feelgood*, espe-

cially the title track, where the drums were just so huge. But initially, we just asked him to come in and mix the record because our attitude was like, "Nobody comes in and produces us; nobody tells us what to do." But as the songs started taking shape, we realized we could probably use somebody else's input, and I was also confident we had our best records in front of us. And no matter what you think of the bands he's worked with—Crue, Bon Jovi, the Cult—Bob made their best records. So we thought maybe the best record we could make would be with Bob Rock.

We spent a lot of time on the sounds too. Let it not be a secret—and my friends at Tama do know about this—but I played Gretsch drums for the black album, and I used the same Gretsch kick drums for *Load*. Ross, the Drum Doctor, owns a pair of Gretsch drumkits that are just amazing, but we still spent about ten days just trying to get drum sounds down for the black album.

I have an incredible relationship with Tama that's going on thirteen years, which goes way beyond playing a Gretsch floor tom or kick drum in the studio. I can probably guarantee that until the day I die, I'll never play anybody else's drums but Tama's in a live situation. But in a studio environment, where every little nuance is important, you do what you have to do. I'm sure Joe Hibbs at Tama isn't doing backflips over it, but they certainly tolerate it because our relationship is too deep and solid for something like that to get in the way.

But we didn't just monkey around with the kit. We basically rebuilt the whole room and experimented by moving things around, painting the walls, and literally trying every mic' that's ever been invented—all in an effort to get a kick-your-ass drum sound. We filled things out with different samples to thicken the sound. And one of the most amazing things we did was not only miking every drum and cymbal individually, but putting it all to tape individually.

Say there were three mic's on the snare drum. Most times you get a mix of the three when you're recording and put it down on one channel. What we did was send the three mic's to three different channels, so we had the ability to fine-tune the sound all the way up to the mixing stage. It

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was the same thing with the toms, and I think that gave us the luxury of going wherever we wanted at different places within each song. We had complete control of the sound all the way through the mix, and that was the key thing.

Still, the black album was very difficult to make because there were a lot of conflicts and clashes. As a band, we fought the idea of having this fifth voice all the way. We approached *Load* from the same angles, but it came a lot easier in the sense that we'd already worked with Bob before and our relationship was much more comfortable. We'd also played three years and four hundred shows in more of that four-on-the-floor groove-oriented style, so we were a lot more confident about doing that on the musical end.

MP: In your shows now, are you actually more comfortable playing songs like "Sad But True" than you are the faster double kick-based tunes like "Whiplash" or "Blackened"?

LU: I'm not any more or less comfortable playing one style or the other. I still love the old songs like "Battery" and "Damaged Inc.," and I love playing them. When I play the old records and listen to a song like "Blackened," my jaw drops more than anything because I'm amazed we could pull it off so well. When we play some of those songs now, we actually pull back the tempo a bit because in the big stadiums and arenas, it just sounds like such a blur if you play it too fast.

There's only one song I think we've never played live, though, and that's "Dyers Eve" [on *...And Justice For All*]. To me, that song is the ultimate example of writing a song to make it as complex and fast as humanly possible. It's not so much the double bass parts that are so intimidating for me, it's the starts and stops. The song hits a brick wall like seven hundred times.

The way we used to record drums back then was really silly. We wouldn't go for full takes. We'd start the song, and when I'd screw up or when I felt the energy level wasn't 100%, we'd stop, back the tape up, continue and punch in where we needed to. It was absolutely insane. When I told Bob Rock how we used to do it, he burst out laughing.

The thing is, I'm just in a different head space now as far as creating music. And

it's not just me, it's the whole band. I think that's what being an artist is all about, being open to change and experimenting and trying new directions. Looking back on what we've done through six records, that's one of the things I'm most proud about—that we didn't get stuck in one situation or one frame of mind. That traps a lot of bands, and it happened to a lot of the metal bands of the '80s. They got it in their heads that they were going to be a certain kind of band. But people grow and change. We all get older, and if you're not flexible, your band can suffocate and die.

MP: Did you know going into the *Load* sessions what kind of musical direction you were headed?

LU: I had no idea of how the record would shape up until we'd written about a half dozen songs. We never sit around a table beforehand and discuss what kind of songs we want to write or where we're going with the next record. That just doesn't exist in our world. The only thing we might talk about, after too much time off, is that it's actually time to get back together and go to work again.

In the fall of '94—after seeing every

hockey game there was, after scuba diving every reef in the Caribbean, after James had killed everything in the Western Hemisphere—there were no excuses anymore for us not to go back and start on the next record. So we all gathered at my house one day, and listened to ideas we'd separately put on tape. Then James and I sat down like we'd done before each of the first five records, took the ideas that turned us on the most, and made them into songs.

Now that I look back on it, there are more of Kirk's initial ideas that made it onto this record than any other record we've done. Most of his ideas were a little more based in blues riffs and progressions, and as we went along, it became clear to me that our heart and soul was a little less in the metal kinds of riffs and more in the Jimmy Page-Ritchie Blackmore sort of '70s-style greasy guitar riffs.

MP: Did you practice at all on your own in between records, particularly between *Justice* and the black album, when you changed styles?

LU: I have a kit set up in the studio in my house, and I'd fiddle around sometimes. But I'm not one of these guys who has the

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physical need to play drums all the time. As I get older, I find that my main motivation is playing drums within a group setup—with James Hetfield and within songwriting. In some instances, it almost becomes a secondary thing for me, where it comes into the picture after I've already put together the structure for a song.

In the past, we'd write entire songs around drum parts I'd come up with. In some ways, they would almost be like the guitar riff, and I think that's also one of the reasons our songs went on forever. Because the drums played such a prominent role, we spent that much longer trying to get our musical ideas across. Now we're trying to get the same message across in three or four minutes, and we've gone outside of hard rock and into different styles of music to draw inspiration.

MP: I think you used your double kick only once on the new record.

LU: You're probably talking about the chorus on "Hero For A Day," and that actually isn't even double bass. It's just fast notes on one kick drum. There isn't one place on *Load* where I'm riding the double kicks. And you know why? It's for

no other reason than I got bored with it.

I know that sounds a little too black-and-white, but I felt I'd done everything I could do with double bass 16th notes. If there's something in the future that calls for that, I'll definitely play it. But I just didn't think there was any place on the new record that really needed that, and I would have just been forcing it in there, just for the sake of having some double bass on the record.

In the past, people have always expected a certain amount of the lightning-fast double bass parts from me, and I accommodated them—not to satisfy the fans so much, but because that's what I wanted to play and I felt it belonged in the music. And that also sort of goes back to the competition thing I was talking about. You have the Slayers and the Anthraxes and Megadeths of the world out there, and we had to always be as heavy as we could.

Kids always come up to me and ask how they can play as fast as me, and I tell them I had the same questions about drumming ten years ago—"How do I play as fast as I can?" But after a while, it becomes more of an athletic exercise than a musical exercise. There came a point where I became really

bored and disillusioned with what a lot of the speed metal bands were doing—"Who can play the fastest guitar solos?" "Who's the fastest drummer?" And to tell you the truth, anybody who's got enough time in the day can sit in their practice room and practice something until they physically can't play any faster. But what does that have to do with feeling? What does that have to do with musical emotion?

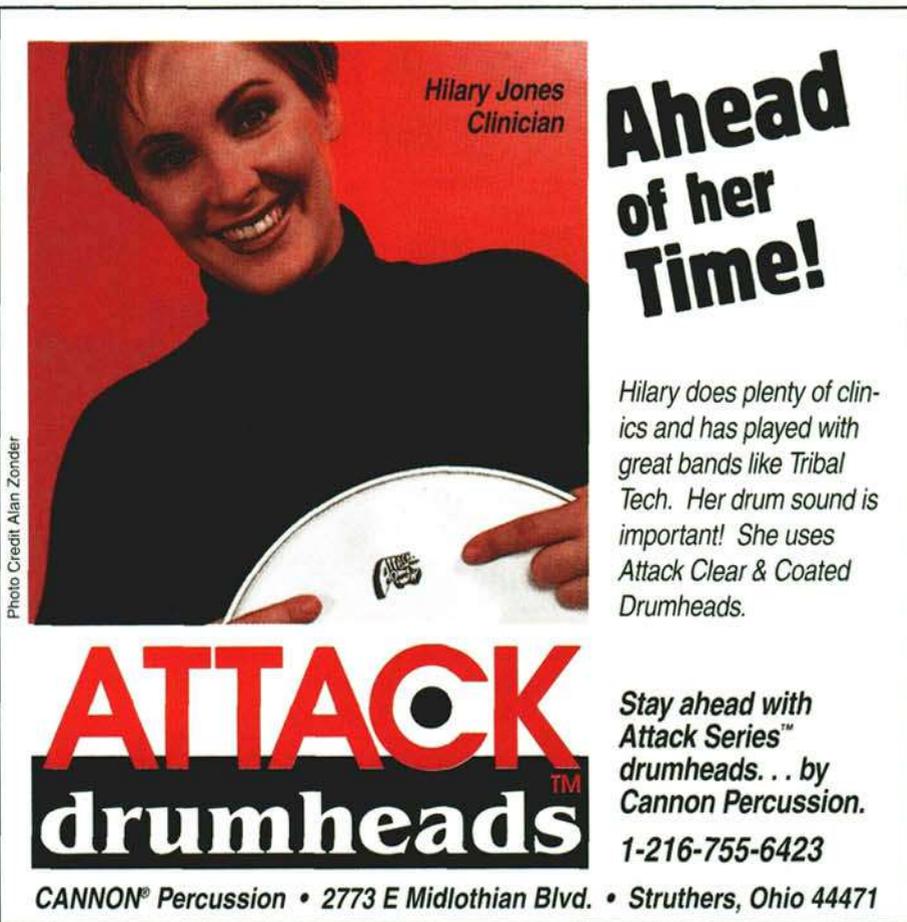
One of the reasons metal became so huge was that, at least from a musician's point of view, there was no other musical forum where sheer ability was so important. Everybody in metal would always talk about who's the fastest this or that. And outside of maybe certain forms of improvisational jazz, no other style of music put such an emphasis on musical ability. Then along comes Curt Cobain—can't play his guitar, doesn't give a shit what he looks like. But he wrote from his heart and really moved people. Suddenly people didn't care how fast you could play; they just wanted to hear good, honest songs.

So a light went on in the heads of thousands of guitarists who were trying to be the next Eddie Van Halen or Yngwie Malmsteen—they didn't *have* to go in this direction; they could just be themselves. And as a whole, what happened to Metallica was we became more interested in bringing soul and emotion into the music instead of doing music for sport.

MP: Yes, but the black album also came out before grunge got popular, so some people might say you were on the crest of that wave. But I've also heard stories that in the five years between the black album and *Load*, the grunge movement affected or intimidated Metallica in terms of what direction you thought you should go in musically, almost in response to the trend.

LU: I don't think that's true. I'm hard-pressed, off the top of my head, to think of any one thing we've done that's been directly affected by grunge. You know, it's hilarious that some reviewers are calling *Load* an alternative record. Maybe it's because we have shorter hair. But the hair, the makeup on the *Rolling Stone* cover—I think we did those things to mess with people's minds more than anything else.

Very little of that stuff is deliberate on our parts. But I don't like to be pigeonholed, and I really like that people never really know what's going on with



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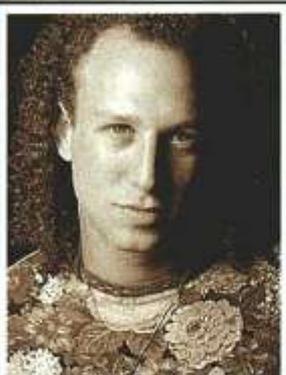
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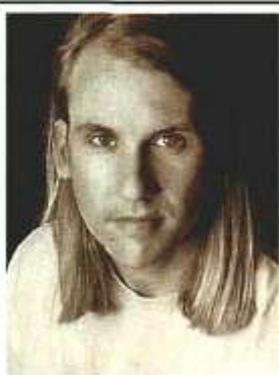
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Metallica. We set the tone for that going all the way back to *Ride The Lightning*, which was a lot different than *Kill 'Em All*. There's a certain side of me that likes messing with people's expectations of what Metallica should be.

And there was a time, just about when the album came out, that I kind of enjoyed the fact we were freaking people out so much about how we looked. But how we look doesn't have anything to do with the music. I just wanted to cut my hair because I got tired of having long hair—there's nothing more to it than that. It just so happens that the other guys felt that way, too. But the way I look, the way I dress, it's for me only. And at the end of the day, I don't have makeup on—it's just me, same as always.

MP: Has Jason affected your drumming much over the nine or so years he's been in the band?

LU: He's starting to. But you have to understand that for ten or twelve years the only thing I had in my monitor was James Hetfield. The only thing coming into my headphones when we were recording was James. The drums and the rhythm guitar

were always the backbone of this band, unlike most bands where the drums and bass are supposed to be the backbone. With us, the bass was almost an afterthought; we fit it in wherever there was space left in the mix. You take a record like *Justice*: There wasn't very much space left.

Load was the first record where we cut the drums and then the bass, so we actually had the rhythmic foundation on tape before we cut the guitars. It gave us that solid foundation we'd never quite had before. It's also the first time I felt that Jason and I were really starting to lock in at the level a drummer and bass player should, in the traditional sense of rhythm players. There's more of a connection and vibe going between us. There's more eye contact now and we're both more aware of what each other is doing.

When we first met Jason and brought him into the band, his ears would always go to James and his eyes would go to James' left hand. What we tried to do was get him to forget about James' left hand and focus more on my right hand. It was very hard to get him to do that, especially coming from his speed metal background, where the two

guitars and bass are almost as one, whereas in the traditional hard rock that I was brought up on the drums and bass were more hooked up. But in the last couple of years, I think Jason's really come more into my camp and it's made an incredible difference in how the rhythm tracks hold together.

MP: You mentioned your right hand, and I think your riding takes on much more importance in the music now than it did in the '80s—not just the notes you're playing, but how you're playing them. A slightly open hi-hat or having the tip of your stick on the ride cymbal makes a big difference now in terms of the dynamics of your songs.

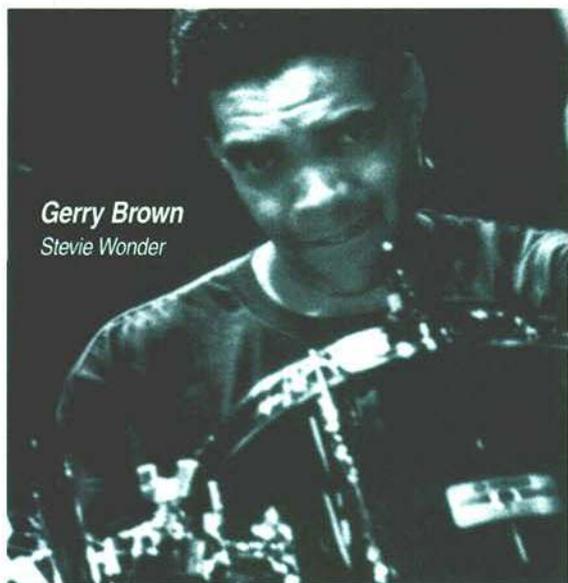
LU: You can go back to Phil Rudd for that. Playing dynamically on the hi-hat, even when you're just cruising in the verse of a song, can really make a song breathe and give it life. A lot of the L.A. guys during the '80s used to hit the hi-hat the same way and at the same volume for the entire song. But if you listen to Phil Rudd, he really pushes and pulls the songs a lot just by how he plays the hi-hat.

I'll still beat the shit out of a China or crash cymbal with these straight-ahead quarter notes. But I've learned that if you're just bashing away like that on the hi-hat, you're losing a lot of the potential to make the song swing. The only song in the past couple of years where I've intentionally played that kind of heavy-handed feel on the hi-hat is "Until It Sleeps."

MP: Speaking of that song, you're playing these loose rolls throughout, almost like you're dragging your sticks across the head.

LU: I was going for as lazy a feel as possible. But what's special about that song is it's the only one we've ever written that came out of a jam in the recording studio. We were recording some other song—tape ready to roll, cans on, Bob and Randy in the control room—and we were just warming up on something and I just started going into this pattern with the snare rolls. James started playing off that and Bob piped in through the headsets and asked what we were doing. It turned out to be the last song we wrote and recorded for the record, and it came from doing one of the last drum tracks.

This is kind of interesting, now that I think about it: If you go back to the last four albums, the opening track on each has always been the first song we wrote for the



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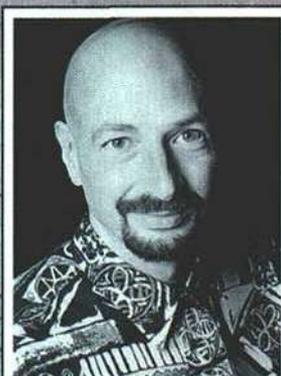
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album. But that didn't happen this time. I guess it's just another example of how things are changing for us and we're going against the formula.

Take a song like "Mama Said," which is obviously a departure for us. We recorded the song just like we always do—normal sticks, normal dynamics. But when Bob and I sat down to edit the best drum takes together before they started laying down the guitar parts, we looked at each other and said this just wasn't right for the song. The drums were too loud, too bombastic.

And this happened to be around the time that "Wonderwall," the Oasis song, was making it big, and the drummer in the video plays these sticks—I don't even know what they're called—but they're not quite brushes and they're not quite sticks, but they're made of wood or bamboo and there are like ten thin pieces wrapped together at the top. The thing about them is you can still play them like sticks, and do these longer rolls with them, but still not have them take over the song. So Bob suggested we set up a 26" kick drum, a snare drum, one tom, a floor

tom, and two cymbals, and I played like three takes of the song with those sticks, and it was such an amazing difference.

MP: I know you're using the Easton *Ahead* sticks now. When did you go to them and what do you think of them?

LU: In the summer of '94, when we did a really quick U.S. tour, we were playing outdoors the whole tour in places like Buffalo, and it gets pretty cold by 9 P.M. on a May night in Buffalo. In the first song, when it was really chilly, I'd literally break four or five sticks, and I just couldn't deal with that anymore.

So I thought back to '92 on the Guns 'N Roses tour, when Matt Sorum had me try the Easton sticks a couple of times. About two minutes into the song, I'd have to put them down because I couldn't quite play or get the feel with them, so I'd go back to the old, reliable Calato Regal Tips. But after the '94 tour, I had a little time to play with them in my studio and I got used to the feel, and now I wouldn't play with anything else. Calato was with me for ten years, and they were really cool, but I had to make the move out of sheer necessity. I still break a stick once in a while, maybe ten or so in the last year and a half, but you can't beat the dependability.

I even recorded with them, but the one thing that's noticeably different with them is how they sound when you're hitting a cymbal. You can certainly make the case that it's not the same as striking a cymbal with a wood stick. I think there were one or two songs in the studio where I actually had a wood stick in my right hand and an Easton stick in my left hand, just to get a little more of a natural sound.

MP: Where do you see yourself going with your playing the next few years?

LU: When we're jamming it seems the thing I'm most interested in now is playing these retarded, backwards drum patterns, a little like Mike Bordin of Faith No More would do. I like the idea of getting into these tribal patterns and just sitting on them for five minutes, playing the same thing over and over. The more sideways I can make something, the more fun it is, and I can see bringing those sorts of rhythms and patterns into what we do in the future. On the new record, on "Bleeding Me" or "The Outlaw Torn," where the choruses get busy toward the end, I put some things in there I've never done before. I might explore

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those kinds of things a little more.

But one thing I've learned is not to speculate on the future of this band. In the past, I've said things like, "We'll never make a video." All I know is I'm very comfortable where we are right now musically. This is probably the most comfortable I've ever been about music. The beauty of this band now is we have ourselves in a position to be able to take the music wherever we want to.

MP: What about away from the drums? I know you've always had your hand deep into the business side of Metallica, and I was just wondering if that's ever taken you away too much from the creative side of the band.

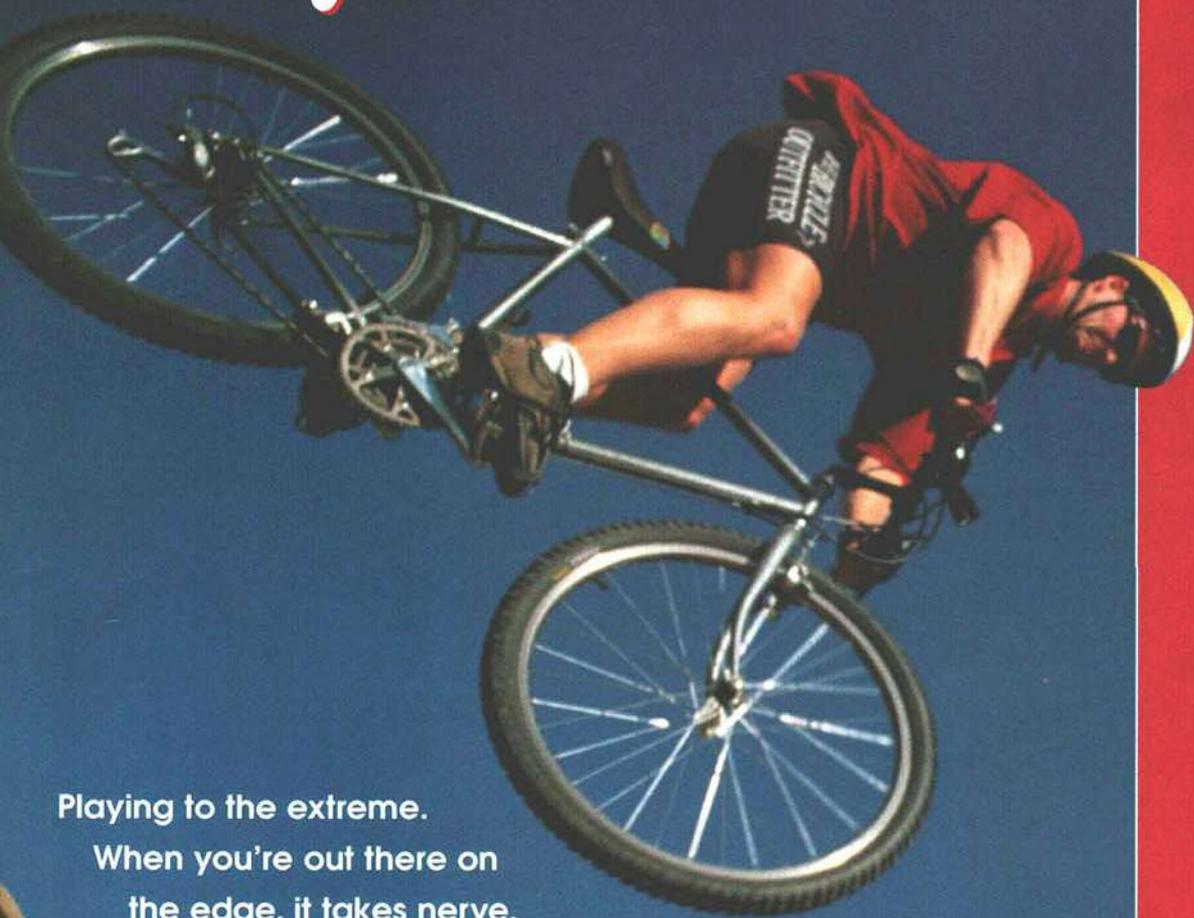
LU: It can, sure. I've always taken on the business end of things for us, and for a couple of years, I tried to play that down or pretend it doesn't exist. But who am I bullshitting? We've sold over forty million records and we employ hundreds of people. And being the way I am, there's no way I *can't* be involved from that end; I definitely enjoy the business side of the band. But what I *can* do is set it up in a way that the business and the music never interfere with each other, and I think we've done that really well.

One thing we don't do so well is take direction. We don't like to be told what to do, so we've always run things much more ourselves and are more involved in the everyday business of this band than maybe a lot of other bands in our position. And I think that's resulted in this feeling among our fans that there's this direct line between us and them.

Another important thing is that the people who do work for us have been with us a long time. Our record company, our management, our tour manager, most of our crew—they've all been with Metallica for ten or twelve years. It's corny, but we're very much like a family. Things have grown, the numbers are bigger, there are more people around us, and there's more money involved. But we weren't an overnight success story. We didn't have our lives turned upside-down like Curt Cobain or Eddie Vedder or Axl Rose did. One of the reasons we're still going strong today is it's been this steady progression and we've always had our feet firmly planted on the ground. I guarantee you, the heart and soul of Metallica hasn't changed one iota in fifteen years.



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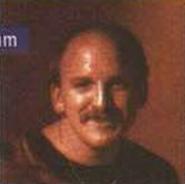
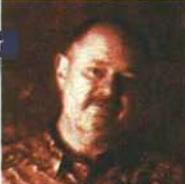
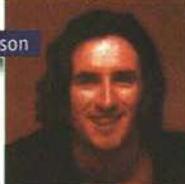
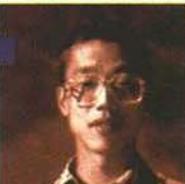
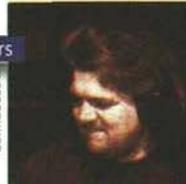
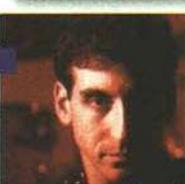
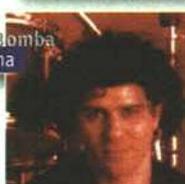
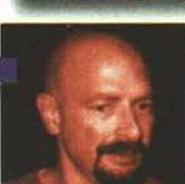
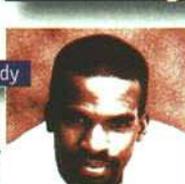
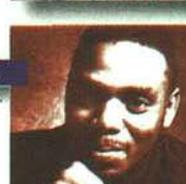
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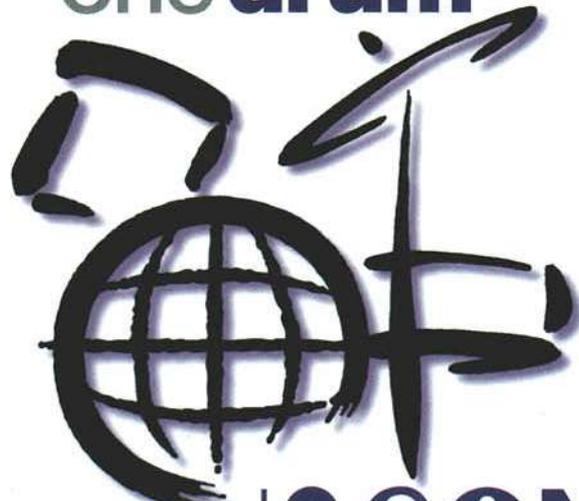
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Tribal Jamming

The first thing that registers upon seeing Kirk Covington behind the kit with Tribal Tech is his sheer, imposing size. The guy's huge. Like a man-mountain. And he looks biker-mean as he pounds his kit, in the words of one infamous review, "with the poise of a prison lifer on a conjugal visit." (That dis in a Baltimore daily still draws laughs from Covington and the Tribal Tech gang.)

Indeed, Kirk could probably hurt us all very badly if he had a mind to. Instead, he takes it out on his drums. Granted, you'd expect a man-mountain to whack the drums with the viciousness of a Hells Angel pistol-whipping some punk who knocked over his hog. But what impresses about Covington, besides his power, intensity, and endurance throughout a given set, is his economy of movement and incredibly quick hands that produce precise, explosive statements in the context of some seriously complex fusion music. And for a big man, he brings an astonishing sensitivity to bear with brushes, mallets, and sticks.

Above all, Kirk's playing is imbued with a sense of risk-taking and overall musicality that enhances what keyboardist Scott Kinsey, guitarist Scott Henderson, and bassist Gary Willis are doing alongside him on stage with Tribal Tech, the premier fusion band on the scene today. He's a drummer with keen ears and an arranger's mind. He can cut the most convoluted chart that Henderson and Willis might throw in front of him with confidence and ease, whether it's chops-busting fare like "The Big Wave" from 1992's *Illicit* or "Salt Lick" from 1993's *Face First*. But he loves nothing so much as to dive headfirst into the

unknown on one of Tribal Tech's extended open-ended group improvs like "Riot" and "Aftermath" from *Illicit* (recorded under armed guard during the L.A. riots of April '92 at Cherokee Studios in Hollywood) or the title track from 1995's *Reality Check*. The code word the band uses to initiate such free-wheeling activity on stage is "launch." Often the first torpedo is Kirk.

A native of Texas, Covington combines a background in jazz studies at North Texas State with an adventurous spirit and a genuine hunger for jamming. It has provided him with the harmonic knowledge, swing chops, and rock endurance to play Tribal Tech's demanding music from night to night. It has also put him in good standing on the Los Angeles session scene, and it recently landed him another prestigious gig with guitar god Allan Holdsworth. Kirk appears with Tribal Tech bassist Gary Willis and pianist Gordon Beck on Holdsworth's jazzy *None Too Soon*, already available in Japan and awaiting a Stateside release.

At the time of this interview, Kirk was about to go into the studio to work on Scott Henderson's second solo recording. (Not to be confused with Tribal Tech releases, Henderson's solo projects tend to rock harder and be much bluesier, as was the case on 1994's *Dog Party*.) In addition, Covington was writing material for his own solo debut, to be released in the early part of '97 on the Atlanta-based independent label Leviathan Records. As the man-mountain says of his maiden voyage, "It's gonna be funky, it's gonna have some vocals, but I'm gonna thrash."

by Bill Milkowski

Photos by Alex Selca

BM: What is the current status of Tribal Tech?

KC: Those guys are shopping for a new label. I don't know exactly what went down, but it ain't Mesa/Blue Moon anymore. Anyway, there are seven records between those two guys—three [*Spears*, *Dr. Hee*, *Nomad*] with one rhythm section, one [*Tribal Tech*] with another

They always write nice melodies and deal with song forms that make sense. But what has happened in the last year or so, especially after the *Reality Check* record, was that there just came a natural burnout. It's just a natural progression after all those years—you know, between Henderson and Willis they published seventy tunes on seven records.

So we all came to the natural conclusion—and of course Kinsey and I have pushed for this since 1991—that improvisation is the hippest thing. After a band's been together a long time and after you've played a bunch of tight tunes and explored



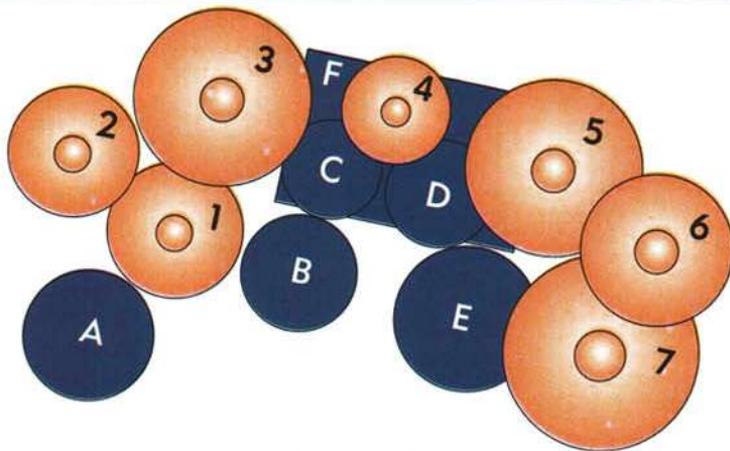
rhythm section, and three [*Illicit*, *Face First*, *Reality Check*] with our rhythm section. You've got a hell of a lot of tunes there.

I've always dug the way both Scott and Gary write. You can't call it fusion in a bad sense. It is fusion-style but it's always been melodic.

all that, you come to realize that jamming together is the ultimate vibe. This just started last fall when we were out on a seven-week tour of the States. We started to jam a couple of times on a good night when we felt good. But of course, if it felt terrible, forget it.

So Tribal Tech has loosened up and we've gotten a great response from the vibe we're putting across. People love it. And I think a lot of it has to do with how happy we look when we're

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you the truth, man, to me it's the most important thing that's happened to the band.

BM: But Carpenter is not replacing Willis in the band?

KC: Oh, not at all. He's just our favorite guy in town. I played some gigs with him and Kinsey at the Musicians Institute, where I teach. Scott's been teaching there forever. So for us to play gigs in town without Willis... it's just not Tribal Tech. Scott books the gig under his name and it's a totally different vibe.

BM: Does this jamming aesthetic that you're embracing now relate back to any other period in your career as a developing musician?

KC: It relates to my entire career. Even back at the beginning of high school when my vocabulary and my abilities were only at a certain level, we always jammed within that level.

doing it. So basically, that's where Tribal Tech is heading, and we all just kind of agree that the next record—once we get a label—is probably going to be pretty experimental. There might be a couple of tunes, but there's going to be a whole lot of jamming.

BM: And meanwhile, you've been jamming a lot around town?

KC: Yeah. Once Willis moved to Colorado Springs, Scott started booking these local jazz gigs at a couple of joints like Lava Lee's on Ventura Boulevard. We'll do some *Real Book* tunes, but it's just a real free band. And we play with this local bass player named Dave Carpenter. The point is, for over a year we've been getting this vibe about jamming because of this gig. And it's definitely translated to our work with Tribal Tech. Now it's real natural going out on the road and wanting to jam. And I'll tell



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Jamming has always been an integral part of my musical makeup. And of course, you have to have parameters. You have to be with guys who are on a pretty similar level. It's like talking. A bunch of people can sit around and communicate if everybody's hip to the same subjects. And the same is true of music.

BM: Classic rock bands from the '60s relied heavily on jamming.

KC: Totally. Probably the best example of that would be the Allman Brothers' "Whipping Post" from *At Fillmore East*. That was definitely a heavy influence on me growing up in Texas. And you'll notice that when they jammed it was often over three-chord tunes. When Jai Johanny [Johanson] and Butch [Trucks] were laying down the groove with their unique double drum thing and Dickie [Betts] and Duane [Allman] were both doing their thing on guitar, they were absolutely jamming within their framework.

BM: Tom Dowd, who produced the Allman Brothers, once called *At Fillmore East* the first fusion album.

KC: It kind of is. And you can go back and relate that to all the originators of that aes-



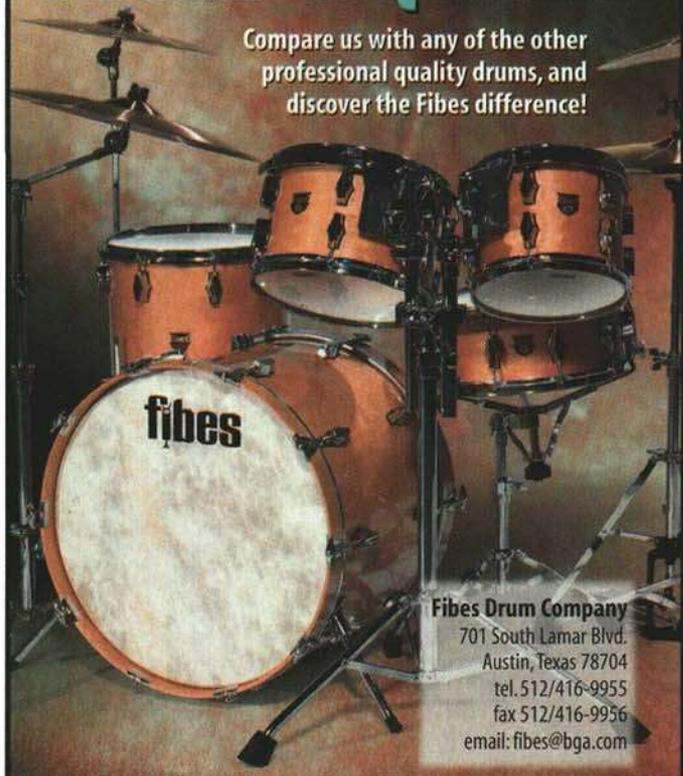
thetic from the late '60s—Zeppelin, Cream, Hendrix, the Allman Brothers. Jamming was a big part of all of it. And of course, those bands were greatly affected by jazz and blues. The Doors... they were kind of a frustrated jazz band in a way. All those bands would just stretch out live.

And it might be simple one-chord stuff, but they would just take it out to a different plane. "Pedal jamming" is what I call it, where you still have a tonal center. The Allman Brothers did that. John Coltrane did that.

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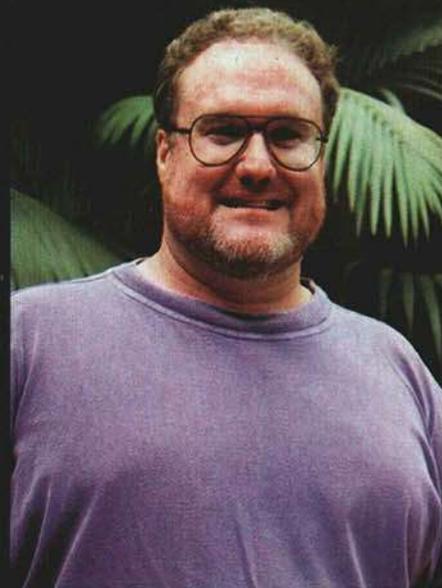


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on the same page can often result in some pretty telepathic moments, where you all just switch gears together without cues and without words.

KC: Exactly. To me, it's actually so deep it's like on a spiritual level. We have done things that have just blown all our minds, and when we hear it back on a tape we can't believe it. We're so deep in this band that we have actually found ourselves getting fairly analytical about our jamming.

We can meld and metamorphose into places that involve every aspect of music—tempo changes, dynamics, certain musicians dropping out and others taking over the melodic role. Henderson and Willis will just go off and write a tune on the spot, a compositional thing that's totally innovative yet entirely improvised. So they definitely have that telepathy thing happening between them, and we also have it as a band. It just lives as something on its own.

BM: The difficult thing is trying to recreate that in the studio.

KC: Right, and we've discussed that heavily. The key to that is getting a comfortable sound. We played a gig last fall at some joint in Seattle and it just happened to be

an incredible sound. We had a really electric crowd and we had some jams that we still remember. That was one of those nights where we jammed a lot, maybe four or five times throughout the night, because it just felt so good. And even though we didn't record it, we just walked away knowing that was the stuff to get on a record now.

So you have to figure out a place and a way to get a perfectly comfortable sound in a studio. Then what you do is play for three or four days. You need a place that economically will let you do that. And you'll have ups and downs; you're gonna have bad days. You might just shut it down and leave, whatever. But then you have this compilation of stuff that you can work with. So the next time out, we're going to roll SMPTE tape and have the stuff available to take home and put on our ADATs and Macintosh computers and use as a template to maybe make into something. And there's not a concern of ruining the "liveness" of it. It's all about making it the best it can be. Some things will live just like they happened—we might not even touch them. All we might do is splice some tape,

which is what Joe Zawinul's been doing for years—slice and dice.

BM: Teo Macero basically cut and pasted studio sessions together to create [the classic Miles Davis fusion album] *Jack Johnson*.

KC: Oh yeah, and back in those days they didn't have home studios, so everything was about production chops—cut and paste the tape with a razor blade and some glue.

We have the tools now to go back and maybe embellish some things, find some great melody and maybe layer it a little, maybe build it up with some chords because it's that good. We can now produce a final result that is a marriage of the total improv and a little bit of post-production stuff—jamming meets technology.

BM: That's the process that Talking Heads used to develop their material.

KC: And it's really been the basis of music throughout the ages. I mean, Bach would sit down and jam at the organ. When we think about Bach now we think about all this academia that followed—people who have analyzed all his stuff to the point where it almost feels like it was stale. But if you read the real history, Bach would go

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to an organ in the church and just jam. He would do his thing and come up with his music. That's the way people have always written, I guess.

At some point you've got to improvise something. You've got to make it up. Now, to be in a modern electric band and have all the tools, that's pretty hip. And with regards to Tribal Tech, I think it's kind of the saving transition for the band, to save us from just putting out another record of tunes, where Scott and Willis feel an obligation to write their certain number of tunes, then we rehearse them, and then we record them. I think it worked well for the three albums I'm on simply because we were a band. We were touring, we would go out and dial the stuff in real good live, and go back and record it while it was hot. I think it worked great for those records, but it came time for a change.

BM: What does it require of a drummer to be in a band that improvises so freely?

KC: It actually takes you to the ultimate level of where you want to be as a pro drummer, as a musical drummer. And that is, you have to pay more attention with your ears—not being selfish, not being

self-centered, not being "chop-istic." You have to think about all the things that you would think about in somebody's tune at an even deeper level, because you have to be there *now*. You can't rely on licks. You have to have a musical thing. And for me personally, it's the perfect vehicle because that's the way I play.

After we rehearse a tune, learn it, and then play it, hopefully it ends up with this great feeling of musicality that makes it feel fresh and natural. I think the level that we're at now on the Tribal Tech tours shows that we're becoming pro jammers. We're so deep into what the possibilities are now. Everybody gains more mutual respect, trust, and patience by jamming so much. The old adage is, "Don't talk, just play." But we've gotten so deep into it that we're actually analyzing our jams now just to make sure we're not falling into old habits. That usually happens on nights when we're not inspired. You can't be inspired a hundred percent of the time, so you tend to fall back on certain things that you know will work.

BM: What works for you?

KC: From a drum point of view I really

enjoy an aggressive groove, a beat-oriented jam. It's a great thing for the band to break into some kind of ostinato lick and let the drummer go crazy. That's a modern way of drum soloing.

A big part of my concept for soloing involves different tools. I'll have a brush in one hand and a mallet in the other, with a couple of sticks under my arm. I have this technique where I can switch off from one to the other real smoothly. It enables me to start grooves and introduce different textures, almost like Elvin Jones kind of stuff. **BM:** So being in that environment really makes you more of an arranger than just a timekeeper.

KC: Oh, absolutely. There's so much musical potential on the drums because you can play colors, you can lay out, you can initiate jams, or you can just dive into a Dennis Chambers kind of "this is the baddest groove forever" kind of patience vibe and let the band extrapolate. It's total music, man.

BM: What are some good examples of drummers who have been good arrangers behind the kit and who really added nuance, color, and texture to a given tune?

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KC: Well, Peter Erskine for sure. I think for the time that Alex Acuna played drums with Weather Report, within that setting, he played very musically on the kit and brought some really unique stuff to their records. Mitch Mitchell with Jimi Hendrix—he had a lot of freedom to stretch and play musically and kind of go

off with Jimi. There are some other rock players, like Keith Moon. And they're all influences on me.

For jazz it would have to be cats like Elvin and Tony, Roy Haynes, Philly Joe, Max Roach—they brought a lot of musicality to the kit. Those cats knew the tunes, the changes, what the soloists were doing. They were innovators.

BM: Was Billy Cobham much of an influence on you?

KC: Incredibly so. I think he was one of the most musical cats in that band [Mahavishnu Orchestra]. Even though they were playing some great, wild, new stuff, the thing that nobody ever really talked about was the way that Cobham played all that odd-time stuff. For example, at the end of a bar of 7/4 he would crash or turn the corner on the "&" of 7, and not really hit 1. Most guys have this really square, up-and-down way of playing odd meters. What I'm talking about is the way Billy swung; he would crash on the & and the cymbal would resonate into the 1. And that would make it swing.

He's still a real heavy influence on me. Where I'm coming from is all about the way musical drummers like Billy played and the way that I jammed as a kid. When you tie that in to the way I came up and where I came from, it totally explains why I play the way I do. And the biggest compliment I get is when people say, "Wow, you're so weird. You're so different." I know for a fact that I don't necessarily sound like a lot of popular drummers. I

don't sound like Dave Weckl or Vinnie Colaiuta. There are a lot of guys that I don't sound like, but there are a lot of guys mixed together that I *do* sound like.

BM: It's very interesting for me to hear you talking about the Allman Brothers and Elvin in the same interview.

KC: Oh man, and that's only the tip of the iceberg! By the time I was eleven or twelve I had only had a drumset for a couple of years, but I was already making those kinds of connections. My parents were giving me the influence of white middle-class big band jazz—Kenton, Ellington, Basie. They were actually big band "Cheek To Cheek" freaks. So I was hearing all that music around the house, and at the same time I was hearing what any kid would hear growing up at that time—all the classic rock guys.

I was in seventh grade in 1968, and I graduated from high school in 1974. An early realization that I had was that there really wasn't any difference between Frank Beard on an early ZZ Top record like *Tres Amigos* and Sonny Payne playing the same tempo with Count Basie. The only differences were stylistic—voice orchestration on the drumset, dynamics, that type of thing. But the way the swing felt at its most basic form was absolutely the same to me.

Another great example for me is the way Elvin phrases, and the word I have for it is "sludge." It's basically that wonderful grey area between really strict 16th or straight 8th notes and a triplet swing feel. Somewhere in between those two is this

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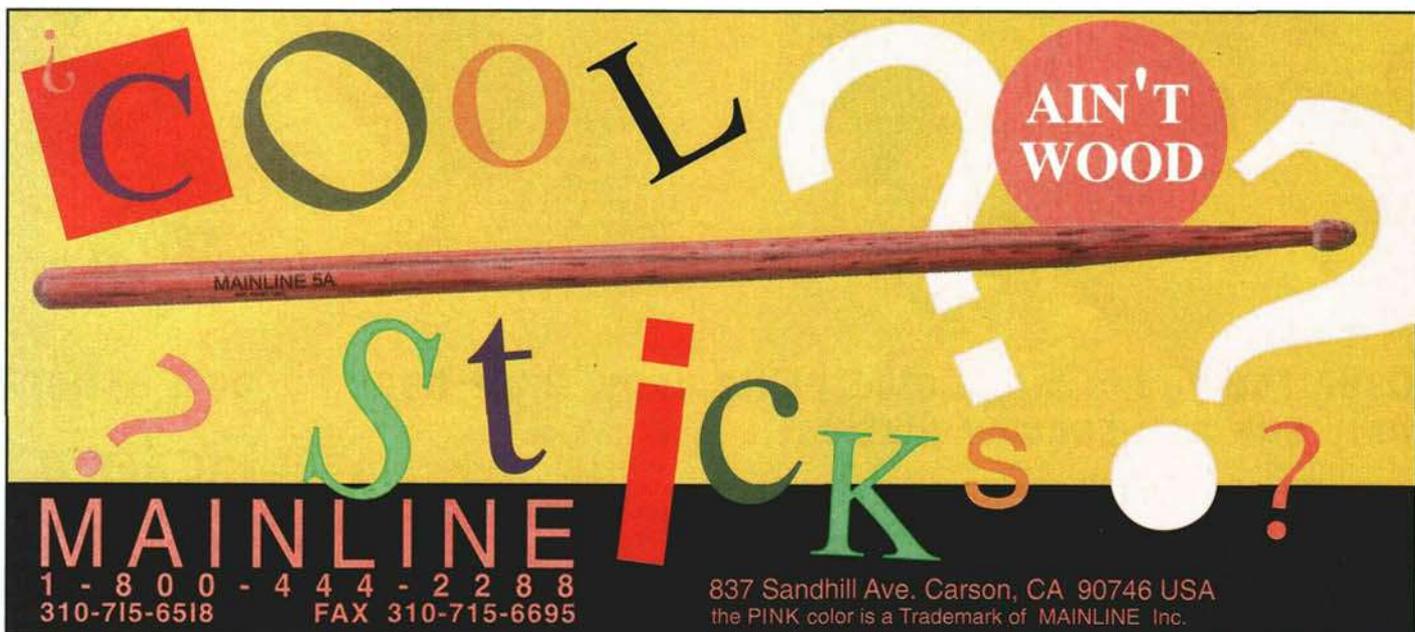


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grey area where Elvin Jones lives and where John Bonham lived. And those two guys.. you can't get too much farther apart stylistically, yet in many ways to me they are exactly the same.

BM: It's really the antithesis of that popular Weckl aesthetic, which is about crisp, precise articulation.

KC: Concerning Weckl, I'm totally pleased with all the really accurate stuff he's done. It's not my style, but I've always dug it. He sort of took the Gadd thing even further out. In drumspeak, it's compound sticking, where you're using a combination of double strokes and single strokes that go beyond rudiments. It's very accurate.

But I will say this, man. I heard Weckl this past January at NAMM with John Patitucci and Mike Stern, and Weckl sounded great. He was very relaxed and his whole accuracy thing sounded much freer and just a whole lot better, because it was real jazzy. They're playing jazz in that band, modern bop style. And I thought Weckl fit in perfectly. It's actually the best I've heard him. He's loosened up a lot and I'm really glad he did. In the past people almost dissed the cat, which I never did. I appreciated what he did, but I was so glad to hear him in a setting where he was more relaxed and really swinging. He's smooth and jazzy and all his licks were cool.

When I play bop like that, I tend to play with smaller sticks on a real dry *K* ride cymbal and a flat ride, and I'll kind of *become jazzy*, because that's the way I came up. You can hear that on Tribal Tech tunes like "Susie's Dingsbums" [from *Reality Check*]. I'll become like *a jazzy* guy on that tune, but I still have my own slant on it.

BM: What aspects of your own playing are you currently working on?

KC: One of the things that I'm working on right now and really enjoying is developing my sense of the pocket, which relates more

to a Dennis Chambers or a Steve Gadd. I'm adding that to my bag of tricks—having a natural kind of vibe and just putting the brakes on and laying down an intense groove.

BM: Looking back, how did your time at North Texas State, a school noted for its big bands, affect your musicality?

KC: Well, what people don't realize about North Texas State is that there's an underground scene there. When I got there in '77, there was this whole thriving small-group scene and there were no rules or regulations about how much you had to do and what you had to achieve in terms of academia. I never really had a strict degree plan. I wanted to go to North Texas State and play in as many school ensembles as possible. I had gotten an associate arts degree from a junior college in West Texas, and that was the last curriculum that I did.

My daily routine at North Texas State was to get up, maybe take something cool like a music appreciation class in the morning, then go play in bands in the afternoon. After that I would play piano in an improv class, then go jam at somebody's house, and then do a gig. That was my perfect school deal. I got an amazing amount of information out of that school, but that whole underground scene was really invaluable to me. It was a totally deep scene and everybody was into it, just hungry to jam.

BM: Did you also study piano there?

KC: Well, I played keyboards in some of the ensembles. I have a lot of background in piano. When I was seven, my grandma tried

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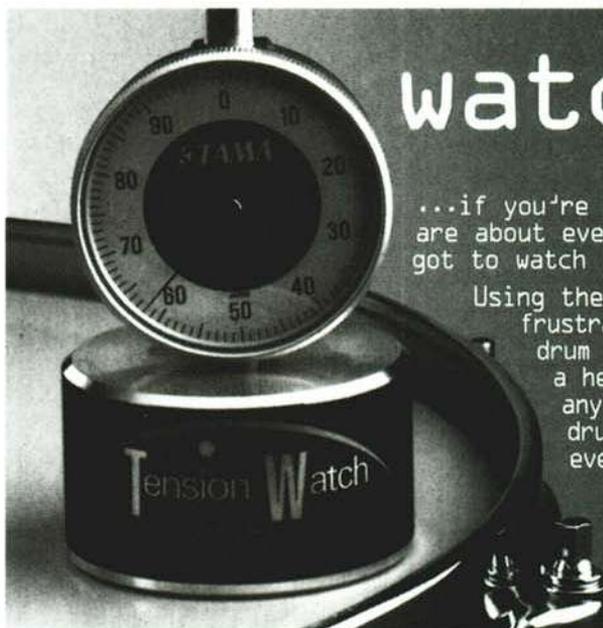
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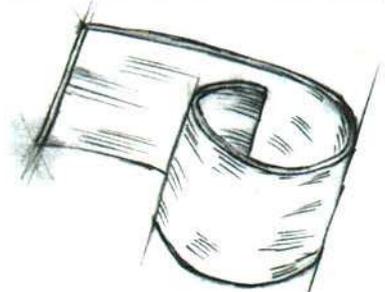
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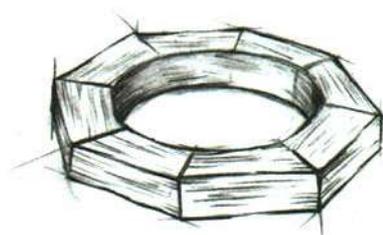
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to get me into piano. I got my first drumset at ten and I kind of blew off the piano at that point until I was a senior in high school. I have been a drummer/piano player/singer ever since. I made the choice a long time ago to focus some attention on piano, and at this point I'm doing so many keyboard things in town it's amazing.

BM: That would account for your arranger's sensibility behind the kit.

KC: It really is true. I know tunes, I know harmony and melody, and I know soloing. I try to impress the importance of learning

another instrument on my drumming students. I tell them to pick up a guitar or play piano just to experience some harmony and melody. You've got to understand phrasing and soloing as a drummer. You don't have to become a proficient keyboard player to understand modern jazz harmony. But once you start understanding it, then you can become a more musical drummer.

There's no doubt about it. I've had an amazing amount of help by virtue of all these keyboard gigs I've done, where I hired other drummers and checked out what they

were doing. I did a gig at Lava Lee's recently where I played keys and left-hand bass, while another guy played drums. So I was on the outside, listening in on my normal realm. And man, I have learned so much about where other cats are coming from. It's so obvious now why it feels good when a drummer has a great feel.

BM: You mentioned that you like to rotate "tools" while you play.

KC: Yeah, I can actually stick a couple of things under my arms in a ready position. And what I'll do is pop something in my mouth while I grab something else and then pop something else down there or throw it in my stick bag. And I'm dropping stuff all night. My set looks like a battlefield when I'm done. There'll be brushes, mallets, and sticks all over the floor. But that's part of the fun of it. I'm just kind of cutting loose. And you can create a lot of different tones that way.

On the one hand, it makes the age-old brushes-to-sticks move absolutely effortless. You don't see a guy back there who has to kind of stop for a second and reach over to grab the brushes. It's seamless, to the point where I can bring in one stick, play the cymbal, and then switch off without missing a beat. One of the things I do is a cymbal swell in the midst of a groove. That's the old thing where I'm playing a one-handed groove and I'm using the other hand to create a completely unrelated cymbal swell.

BM: Both you and Dennis Chambers are very centered behind the kit, without a lot of upper body movement. Yet you're both very explosive.

KC: That is a good assessment. My head moves a lot and I'm always looking around. But from the neck down we're both like a rock. The arms, wrists, and ankles are doing all the work. Part of it is that for the kind of music we play we're able to set up our drumkits economically. In the pop world there are situations where they don't want the drummer to be hidden. Even my wife complains that she can't see me behind all my cymbals. Well, I have to set up economically. I couldn't care less about visuals. That doesn't matter one iota.

BM: How important is tuning to you?

KC: Extremely important. I believe that every size of drum has an ideal pitch range that's not very big. In other words, it sounds good within a certain range, like maybe a major third from top to bottom. Outside of

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that window that drum is not going to sound good. It's either going to sound too tight or too low.

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BM: Do you find that your tuning differs from situation to situation?

KC: I don't believe there's that big of a choice, but through the tuning and head choice I might go for a fatter, darker rock sound by using *Pinstripe* heads and tuning them a little lower, trying to get to the bottom of that window. Or for a jazz thing I might try to get higher notes out of the drums. But for the most part, no, a good tom sound is a good tom sound.

Everybody's using different snare drums—you might use a piccolo, a cracky,

high-pitched snare, or a deep-sounding snare for a certain thing, especially in studio work. You have a bunch of different sounds on a snare drum. That's sort of like choosing a guitar; it's a never-ending quest.

BM: What about the kick drum?

KC: That's a little bit different from toms. You can go all the way from an old-style 18" bass drum with calfskin heads and no muffling to a modern, big kick with a thud and really no decay at all. There are a lot of different ways you can go, depending on the size of the drum, the thickness of the shell—even the type of wood. It's definitely a little more detailed than the toms. I also get unique differences with beaters on my kick pedal. I'll switch beaters, from a soft one for a jazzier ballad kind of sound to a wooden one for a more punchy rock thing.

I'm definitely gonna go for a different sound on the new Tribal Tech record. I want a bigger, fatter sound. I'll probably go with the same kit and toms. I might add a few toms to the family, but I'm gonna go for a fatter, deeper snare sound and I'll probably bring in some thicker, bigger-sounding crash cymbals and a rock ride cymbal with a big bell on it. And the way we engineer,

record, and mix is a very big part of it, because when you start compressing things too much, it suffers. When you hear the record it sounds squashed. I'd like it to sound more live.

BM: How do you envision your career unfolding?

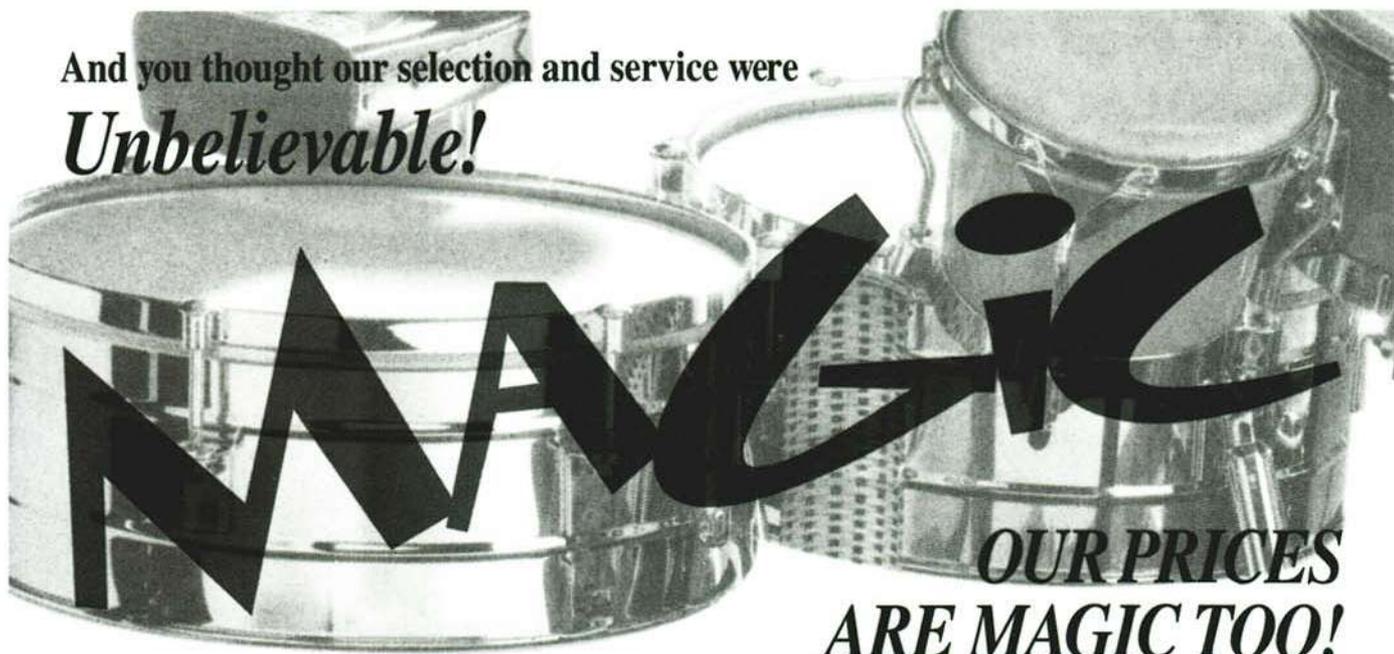
KC: I never envisioned myself as a Peter Gabriel, as an artist. I've always envisioned myself as what I've become, a player. That's the world I wanna be in. I've gotten to play with some of my favorite people and now I'm getting to do my own record. I'm starting to get some notoriety around town, getting some calls for sessions. And I've had really great support from Tama, Zildjian, and Remo, all of whom I'm endorsing. So things are looking good from here.

One thing I'm interested in doing is playing with John Scofield or John McLaughlin. I would love to play in the Zawinul Syndicate some day; I'm such a Weather Report freak and a Joe freak. I also want to continue to write and play. So I think I'm destined to stay right where I am—being a player's kind of musician.



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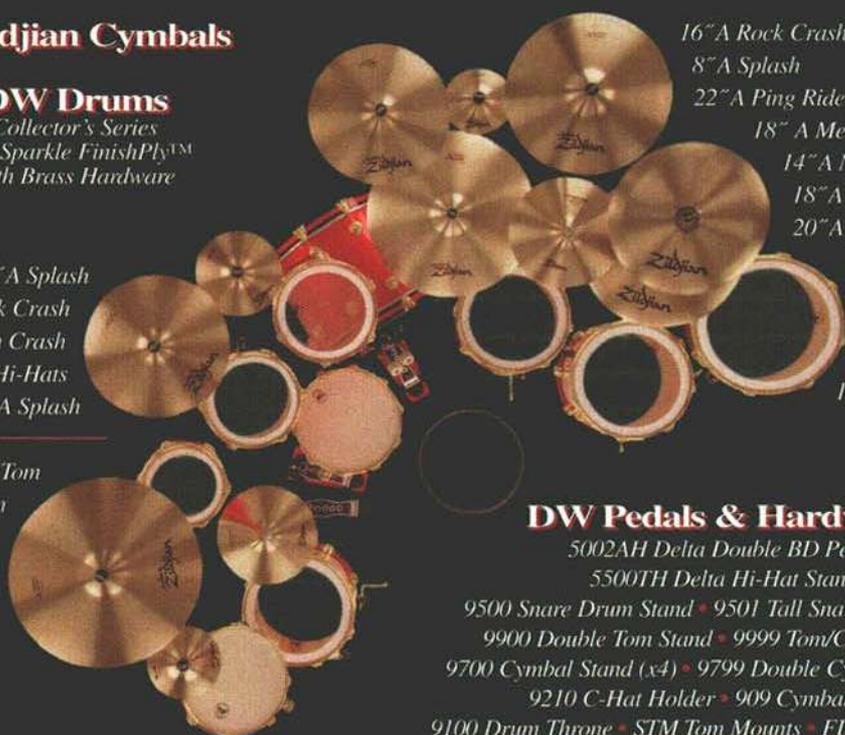
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Rage Against The Machine's

Brad Wilk

It's sixty seconds before show time, and Rage Against The Machine are about to unleash their wrath over the national airwaves. Playing *Saturday Night Live* a week after the Republican party's national primaries (media tycoon Steve Forbes is host), the mood is ripe for some Raging shenanigans. Not since the heyday of Detroit's MC5 has a band combined such fierce musicality with such a potent, revolutionary message. But the *SNL* crew seems oblivious to the possibilities.

"We had covered all our equipment with upside-down American flags," Brad Wilk recalls. "With Forbes as host we felt we had to do it. About forty seconds before we went on, a stagehand saw what we had done and screamed, 'Take down those flags!' We tried to ignore him but with ten seconds to go, he totally freaked out on us, cursing and screaming. He came on stage and ripped all the flags off our amps."

Anyone who saw that performance will remember a manic, angry Rage Against The Machine firing through "Bulls On Parade." The song's lurching, Zeppelin-ish intro, framed by the line "Quit it now," blasted into a full-bore, metal/hip-hop thump. While singer Zack De La Rocha roamed the stage, guitarist Tom Morello stamped his wah-wah pedal, and bassist Tim Bob stared straight ahead into the TV void. Slamming his kit passionately, Brad Wilk looked anxious, his edgy groove and explosive energy seething from behind coal-black eyes. After the performance, though, the band felt cheated.

"We were like, 'This sucks,'" Wilk admits. "We went back to the dressing room to figure out what to play for the second song. As we were deciding what to do, one of the big guys from the show came

down and asked us to leave the building. We told him to shove it, and then we left. They said they didn't want us dressing up their set. But what if those flags had been painted on our equipment? In retrospect, it got more publicity by them doing that than if we had just done our thing."

While some bands claim ties to punk revolutionaries or radical causes, Rage Against The Machine put their money where their music is. The band has led by example, whether berating the powers-that-be in their songs or going naked at Lollapalooza '94 to protest censorship of their first hit single.

With a turbulent childhood filled with emotional upheavals and musical reliance, Brad Wilk was fated for Rage. An early fan of Bonham and Moon, he also delved into jazz, funk—anything that would anchor his emotional balloon. But it wasn't until he met Machine members Morello and De La Rocha through an ad that he found his musical center.

The band's latest, *Evil Empire*, is more scalding tirades and metal-hopping grooves. Leaning over his Pork Pie kit, both flailing and finessing his way through the tumult, Wilk is Rage's dark heart. Whether laying it down in the funk cut ("People Of The Sun"), kicking it punk-rock hard ("Tire Me"), or pummeling a march groove ("Snakecharmer"), Wilk creates a wide road of groove.

MD caught up with Brad Wilk between the U.S. and the U.K., after many attempts to interview him finally resulted in a phone link-up. Resting from laundry chores, Wilk picked up the receiver and the conversation began.

by Ken Micallef

Photos by Jay Blakesberg



The Dark Heart

KM: Why didn't you use any toms on the first Rage album?

BW: Good question. For that first record I replaced the tom in front with a couple of cowbells just for the challenge while we were working on the music. I did it just to see how it would make me play. I thought it was cool. I was into keeping it like that and playing the album that way.

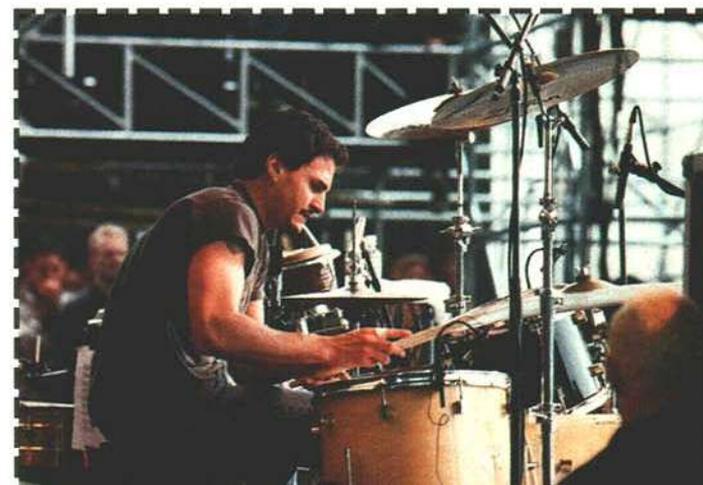
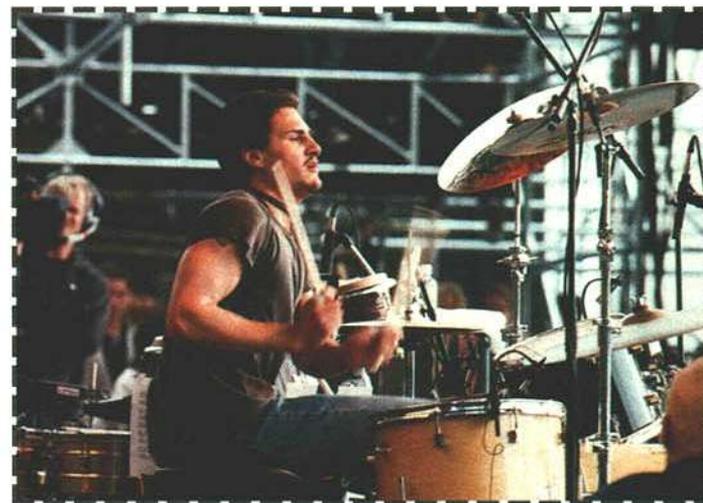
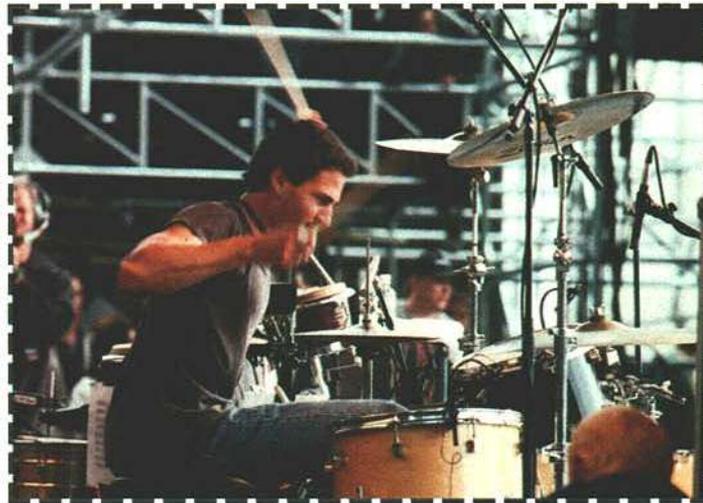
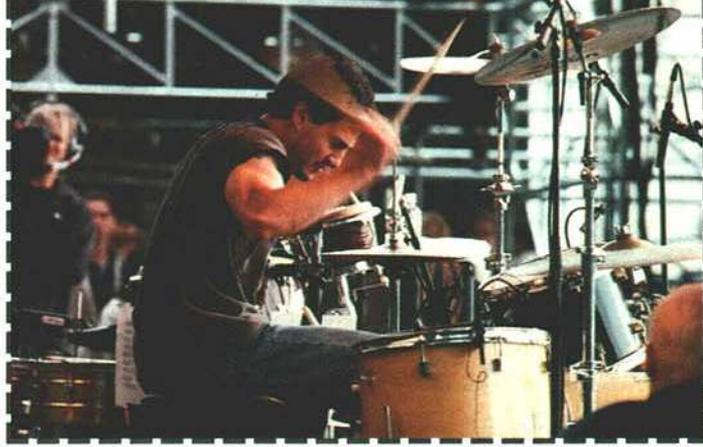
KM: Did you play more ride rhythms on the cowbells instead of the cymbals?

BW: Not necessarily. I tend to use cowbells more now than I did before and in different ways. I really didn't miss that tom very much. It was more about getting into the groove on kick, snare, and hi-hat and seeing where I could go with that. Then I brought the tom back for *Evil Empire*.

KM: Why did it take four years to make *Evil Empire*?

BW: Anyone who has seen us play live knows we can take a longer time between songs than we did between records! People are so used to bands pushing out music because record companies need them to fulfill their contracts and create product. What people *don't* realize is that after that record came out we were on the road for three years straight. That's one reason. In those three years we went through a lot, started having a lot of success, and began traveling all over the world. Basically, we got tired of each other. We came back and the record company pushed us for a record and got us into the rehearsal room sooner than we should have been there. We needed some time off from each other. We took three months and then began the record.

KM: So Rage doesn't write songs on the road.



BW: No. We're the kind of band that jams a lot. It's free-form; whatever happens, happens. But we don't write songs on an acoustic guitar in a hotel room. We write with the four of us in a room with our instruments. There's not a lot of time to play at sound check.

KM: As Rage has played across the U.S., do you feel you're a part of the audience, or does it seem that at times you are against them?

BW: When we first started out there were people coming to our shows who thought we were a white supremacist band. I remember a few times down south, Zach pointed them out and stopped the show to let them know exactly what we are about. But for the most part it's not us against the audience. It's a celebration of frustration and anger—music for everybody.

KM: Rage is a very pro-people band.

BW: At one point I turned my set around and was playing backwards. People might have thought that it was because I didn't want to be a part of the audience, but if you think about it, since I was turned around, I was facing the same direction as most everyone else was. I had a couple of truck mirrors up in front of me so I could see. People just get the wrong idea sometimes.

KM: Why *did* you turn the set around?

BW: I really liked the way it looked. People are used to seeing things a certain way. I like to break out of the mold no matter what it might be. That's what this

band is all about, questioning things. As a band, we're communicating on a level that has less to do with eye contact than it does with emotions running rampant on the stage.

KM: On the first album, with songs like "Take The Power Back" and "Settle For Nothing," there are softer moments where you play delicate cymbal rolls. There's none of that on *Evil Empire*.

BW: It's definitely a dirtier record. I think it's harder. On *Evil Empire* there aren't any pretty moments, but there are more subtle moments within the hard parts. There's more subtlety within the grooves that are less noticeable and more felt than actually heard.

KM: Rage is so hard and yet so funky. Did you feel an immediate connection when you first played with the other guys?

BW: Absolutely. I've never felt that kind of chemistry before. From day one when I jammed with Zach and Tom, I remember Zach being this lightning bolt. We fed off each other really well. When all four of us jammed it felt right. It was nothing that we even talked about. It happened very naturally. There were so many different influences roaming around in the band and it just all came out.

As for me, when I was growing up I didn't limit myself to a particular kind of music. I took to all kinds of music, whether it was punk, funk, or rock. I'm influenced by lots of stuff. The other guys had similar experiences as well, and that's probably why there's this chemistry between us. And I don't take it for granted. I think it's really special.

On our last European tour we were out with Neil Young. We'd been having a few rough days in the band, and Neil came in the dressing room and said what a great band he thought we were. I never thought he would really like what we do, but he was total-

Brad's Rage Kit

Drumset: Pork Pie in "black with flames" finish

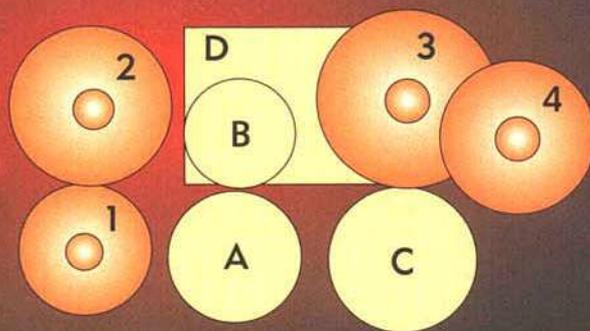
- A. 6 x 14 wood snare
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- C. 16 x 16 floor tom
- D. 16 x 22 bass drum

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" hi-hats
- 2. 18" Z *Custom* crash
- 3. 20" A ride (from the 70s)
- 4. 17" Z *Custom* crash

Hardware: Drum Workshop

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B with wood tip



Fave Influences

Here are a few sides that Wilk goes to when he's in need of a drum buzz. (His comments follow a few of the listings.)

Led Zeppelin: *Physical Graffiti*, John Bonham

"That album comes to mind because of the drum sound. Bonham's way of laying back on the 1 really freaks me. I play both ways—sometimes laid-back and sometimes on top, especially if we play excited rhythms. He's a huge influence."

The Who: *The Kids Are Alright*, Keith Moon

"The whole vibe of this record is intense. Moon was completely on the edge of insanity. He was the most out-there. I love that band."

The Rolling Stones: *Let It Bleed*, Charlie Watts

"Charlie Watts had so much style."

Jimi Hendrix Experience: *Are You Experienced?*, Mitch Mitchell

Black Sabbath: *Masters Of Reality*, Bill Ward

"That's the evilest record of its time. Bill Ward can swing. You could use his beats for a damn hip-hop record. He is totally underrated."

The Pretenders: *The Pretenders*, Martin Chambers

"A great record that I've brought on all our tours."

Rush: *Exit Stage Left*, Neil Peart

"There is a reason for this. When I first started playing drums, I didn't think Peart was this grooving person—it was the thinking behind what he did that was so creative and interesting. It was challenging to figure out. I tried to figure out his drum solo where he's doing all this snare drum stuff. I found out later that he was mixing up paradiddles and different strokes, but I practiced it thinking he was playing all single-stroke rolls. So my reflexes got really quick thanks to that."

Van Halen: *Van Halen*, Alex Van Halen

"He's an underrated drummer as well, and he can swing too."

James Brown: *20 Ail-Time Greatest Hits!*, Clyde Stubblefield

The Stooges: *Fun House*, Scott Ashton

Fear: *The Record/The Tape*, Split Sticks

John Coltrane: *Coltrane Legacy* (video), Elvin Jones

The Beatles: *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band*, Ringo Starr

Bobby "Boris" Pickett: "The Monster Mash," Hal Blaine

"That record jams! Hey, just kidding."

ly into us. He thought our chemistry was really great. Neil Young doesn't need to kiss anyone's ass. He must mean it. So that's nice to hear when you're going through rough personal times. It helped.

KM: Some well-known bands are hard and funky, but they sound very studied. Rage sounds more natural.

BW: It's definitely not planned out. It's just the chemistry between the four of us. If any one of us was gone it would be a far different band.

KM: It's been reported that while you worked on the material for *Evil Empire* in Atlanta, the band nearly broke up. Did you resolve the problems before recording, or did you just work through them?

BW: When we were down in Atlanta we did go through a lot of crap that we didn't really solve there. We came to an understanding that we had some problems and we needed some time to weed through them. But we're always going to have problems in this band. Any time you have four people with four different opinions you're going to have problems. That's what makes this band what it is.

KM: Tension, with talent, often makes for a great band.

BW: We definitely have a lot of that. We wrote twenty songs in Atlanta and I can't even remember them. I remember letting off fireworks in the neighborhood and pushing the refrigerator out on the front lawn—stuff that had nothing to do with the music. It was a time for getting personal stuff out in the open. On the road you tend to bury stuff inside to keep going. That's bound to come out sometime. Instead of seeping out, it exploded out.

KM: Were these differences of a musical or personal nature?

BW: Both, but the music part we could deal with more than the personal. That gave us trouble. We're four different people with different ideas of what sounds good and how we should sound. In order for anything to be good you're going to have to squeeze it out sometimes.

KM: So you just buckled down and made the record?

BW: Yes. Throughout my life, in all my relationships, it's been a full circle of emotions. Sometimes it's really good, sometimes really bad. It goes both ways. I'm used to things not going perfectly. But that's all right; you do what you have to to

"That's what music is all about to me: putting yourself out on that edge, exposing yourself, and not being afraid of completely letting go in front of a lot of people"

work through the rough times.

To be honest, when I first began playing drums at the age of thirteen, half the time I would be playing out of frustration. It was an outlet. I've become used to being in that frame of mind with music. It's a circle.

KM: You've been inspired by everyone from John Bonham to Keith Moon to Elvin Jones.

BW: Those are the top three. I like all kinds of music. I remember when I was nineteen and I saw Elvin Jones on a video of John Coltrane called *Coltrane Legacy*. That changed my life. It was one of the most amazing things I'd ever seen any drummer do. They were playing "My Favorite Things," and my mouth dropped to the floor. I would see these amazing colors coming off his kit and the number three was on top of these colors, exploding off of his kit. Not to get too tripped out or psychedelic, but that is what it was like for me. It was the heaviest experience I've ever had watching a drummer.

KM: You saw colors?

BW: It was the emotion and the feeling and the colors he was portraying. Maybe the mushrooms had something to do with it, too! I don't know.

KM: The number three?

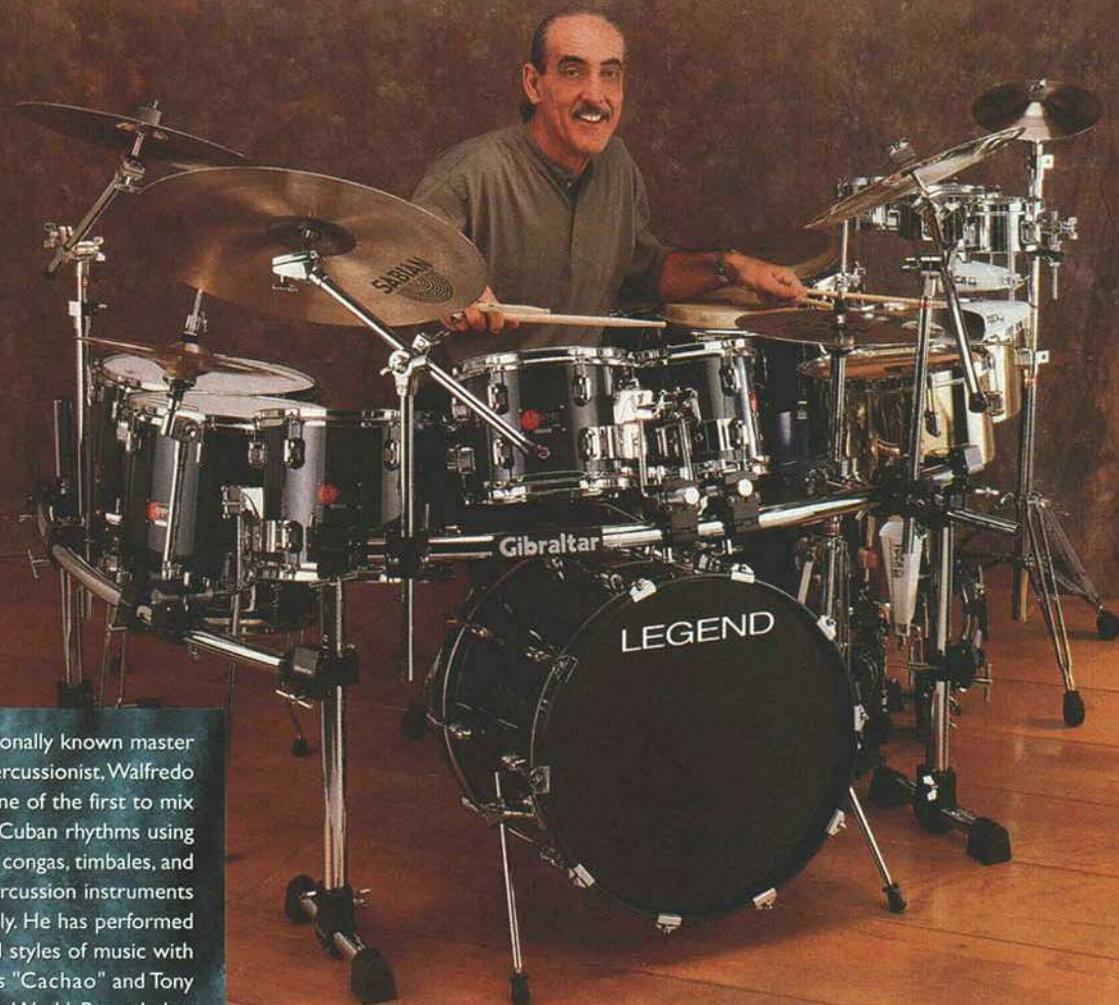
BW: Ever since I was eight or nine I've gravitated to the number three. It's something that has always been a really heavy number for me. It's tattooed on my arm, and I count in threes. Everyone in school was taught two, four, six, eight, ten—I'd count in threes in the way I'd walk, even in the decisions I'd make. It was all based on thinking in threes.



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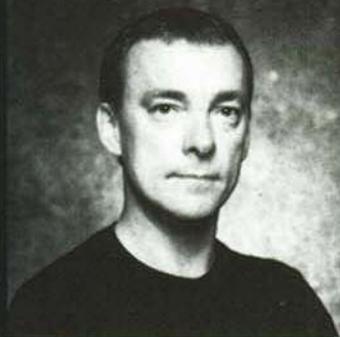
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KM: Do you think in three when you play?
BW: I do. I think it makes my playing swing more. My dad used to play a lot of swing and big band, so I heard a lot of that when I was younger. A lot of the fills I play will be in a triplet feel over four.

KM: But you began playing when you were thirteen?

BW: I got my first CB700 kit when I was fourteen. I played a lot to records, and I took lessons, and I played on a practice pad for a long time. For some reason my parents didn't want to buy me a drumkit; they thought it wouldn't last. I had begun on guitar when I was eleven. I heard Eddie Van Halen, so that's what I wanted. But playing the pad was great. I spent a lot of time on the rudiments, which helped me out in the long run. I took lessons for about two years.

KM: I read that Steve Miller's "Fly Like An Eagle" inspired you early on.

BW: I remember being in a batting cage during little league and hearing that song over the PA. That was the moment I understood instrumentation and where it was coming from. It was no longer foreign to me. I could pick things out and understand what was happening musically.

KM: Gary Mallaber plays great drums on that track—very jazzy and slick, and really grooving.

BW: Definitely. That had something to do with it. After seeing Elvin, I saw Bonham on *The Song Remains The Same*, and he blew me away too. He doesn't look like he sounds. I love that. I look like an idiot when I'm playing, but when I saw him I was cool with it. He doesn't look like he's grooving as much as he is. On record, he completely floored me. I also liked Bill Ward, Mitch Mitchell, Clyde Stubblefield,

a lot of Ringo Starr's shit, and Split Sticks, who played in Fear. Charlie Watts was also amazing.

KM: Are there any musicians in your family?

BW: On my dad's side, my aunt played violin and piano. My dad did everything from being a bookie to a jeweler. It gave me a unique outlook. Money was everything to my dad. I watched it tear him apart. He lost his shirt a couple of times in the stock market. He went bankrupt and we had to pack up the Ford LTD and drive it across the country. It made me appreciate things that didn't cost a lot of money. If I go broke, I'll still be able to live and be happy with my life.

KM: So are you frugal now with all your Rage riches?

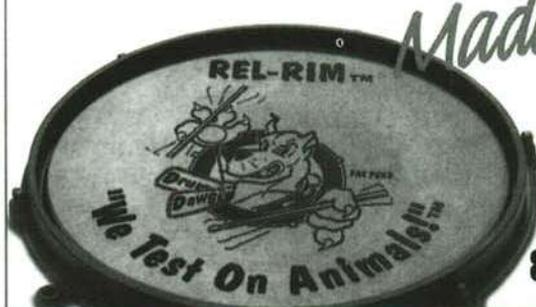
BW: Oh, I'm a millionaire and I spend my money like mad. I'm a full-on pimp! [laughs] I'm kidding. Actually, I don't have as much money as someone in a band that has sold as many records as we have should. It comes in slowly. But my next move is to buy a little house somewhere. My dream is to have a house with a studio where I can create art. That would make me happy.

KM: How did you join Rage?

BW: I've only been in three bands in my life. I played with a lot of people, but I could never get a whole band together, although I was always eager to be in one. I learned a lot when I was younger by playing with people who were better than I was. You can learn a great deal that way.

In high school I played with friends in garage bands while working in a store that sold comforters. I remember stealing thirty comforters to soundproof our garage. I'm not proud of stealing, but I'd do anything at

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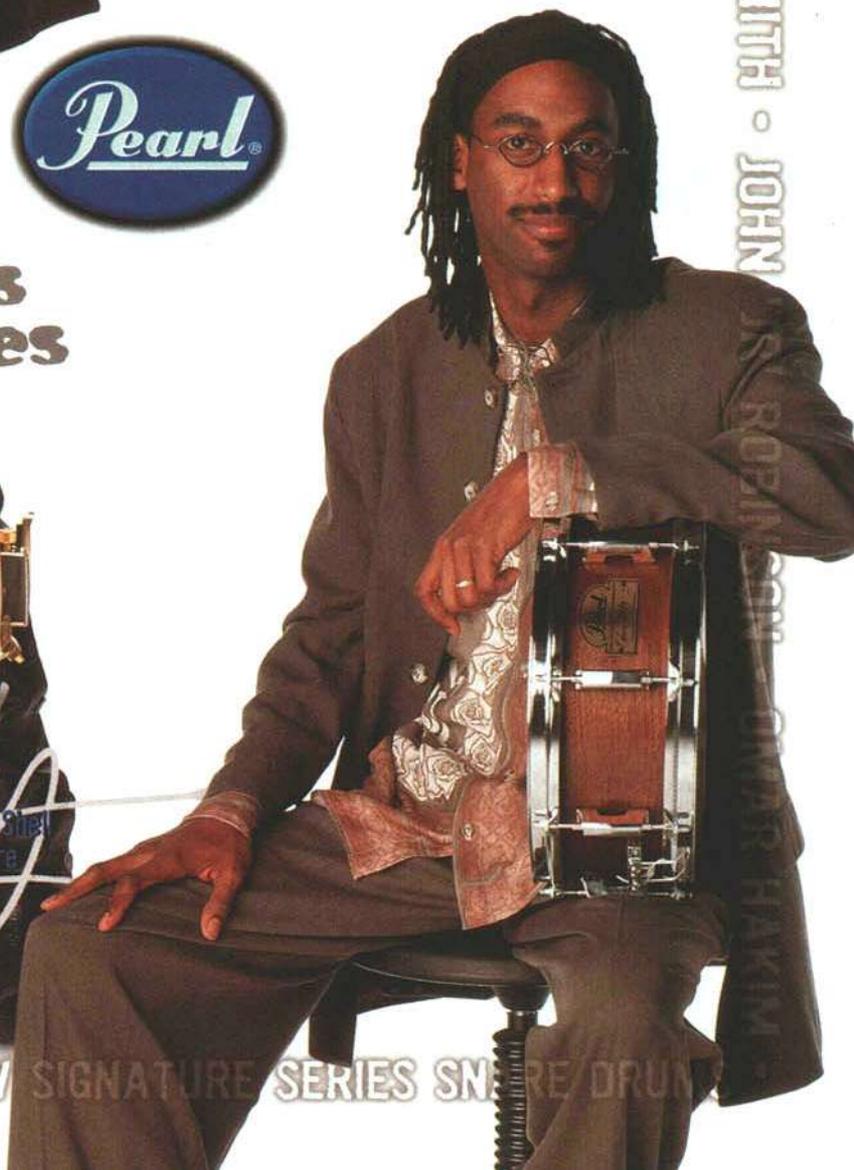
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that point to play. We would play Zeppelin songs for days.

I never felt like I was in a band where I could play all the styles I knew I could play until Rage. I put out advertisements saying I was looking to form a band that would explore many different styles to make a unique type of music. I was lucky enough to find three other people that were into that. Tom responded to my ad in 1991.

We played for three months in a warehouse, recorded, and started playing shows and selling our own tapes. The crazy thing was that from the first show we had record company interest. It happened really quick.

KM: But before Rage you worked odd jobs until you found the right situation.

BW: I delivered pizzas at my friend's pizza place. I did what I had to to make ends meet. Delivering pizzas let me drive around and listen to loud music. That job enabled me to buy cymbals, which were cracking left and right. I used to drill holes in the cymbals to stop the cracks. I had bought a pair of Paiste hi-hats, which were very expensive, and they busted on me real quick. I still have a letter from Paiste saying that I wasn't playing the cymbal right. I'm

going to frame it one of these days. "You're playing wrong."

KM: You play a unique brand of drums called Pork Pie Drums.

BW: I've known Bill Detamore, the maker of Pork Pie drums, for a long time. They're all hand-built. He really takes pride in the work that he does. And I'm not into putting logos on my bass drum head; I put art on it. Tim Alexander used to play Pork Pie.

KM: We're hearing Pork Pie drums on the records?

BW: I play all kinds of drums on the records. The toms are Pork Pie, with an old Slingerland kick.

KM: On *SNL* it looked like you play very hard. At least you telegraph a lot.

BW: I telegraph a lot with my right arm, but if you look at my left arm, most of the power comes from a 12" space between the stick and the drum. That's where the snap comes from. It's different for each hand.

KM: How have you changed as a drummer in the last four years?

BW: Let me avoid the comedy here: On the first record, it was in-your-face, abrasive, and you knew where I was. But you couldn't really hear the subtleties that I was

prior to this band. I wanted to bring that out on *Evil Empire*. It was great that we recorded in such a tiny room. I wanted to capture the subtleties that were going on between 1 and 3. That's what makes the groove, and what distinguishes your groove from someone else's. I think this record captured that much better.

KM: So the inner sleeve photo on *Evil Empire*...

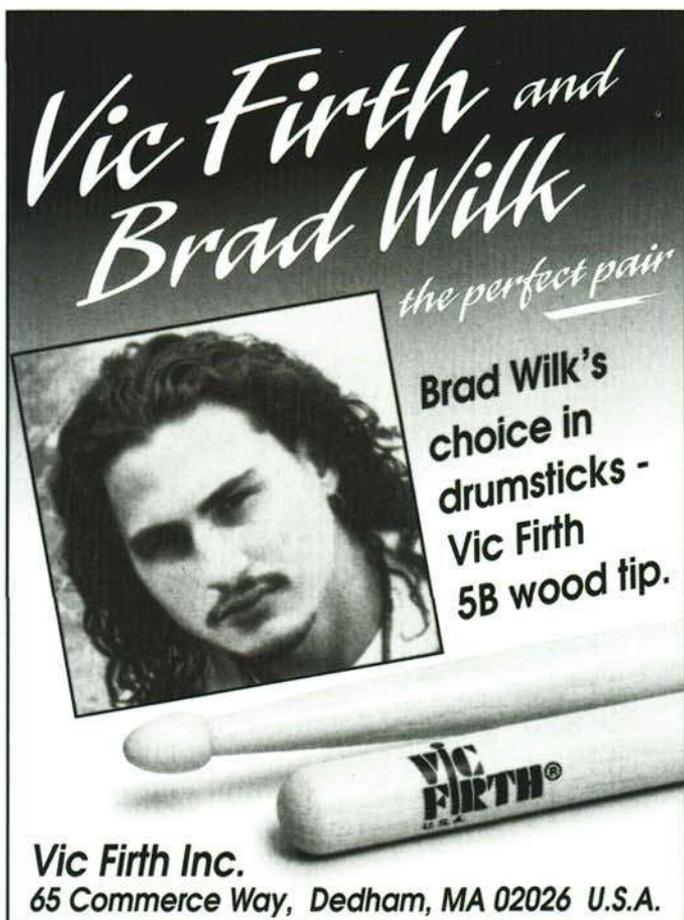
BW: That's where we recorded, in that tiny room at Cole Rehearsal Studio in Hollywood. Down the hallway there was a huge room where the producer sat with the 24-track board and the tape decks. We snaked cables across the ceiling into a tiny, sweaty room where we recorded everything. It was actually cool 'cause that's where we rehearsed for the record.

KM: The recorded sound is much better on *Evil Empire*. The bass drum on the first record was very boomy and low, like a rap record.

BW: I think the whole first record doesn't breathe too well. It was too predictable.

KM: Do you practice a lot now?

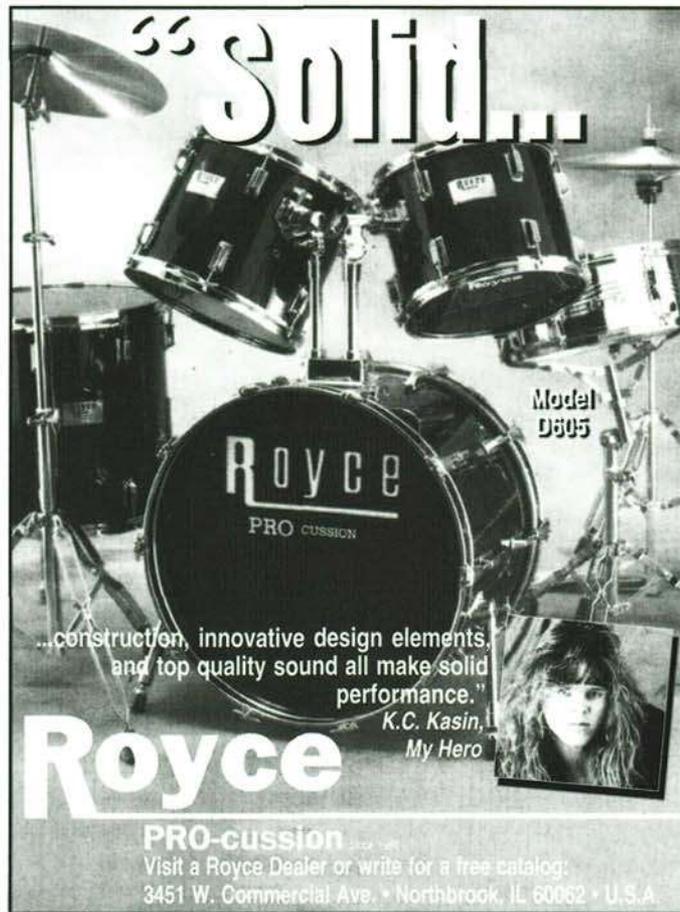
BW: I live in a one-bedroom apartment and we don't even have our own rehearsal room.



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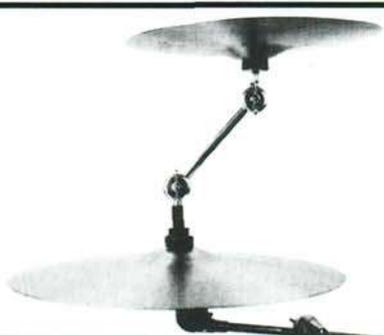
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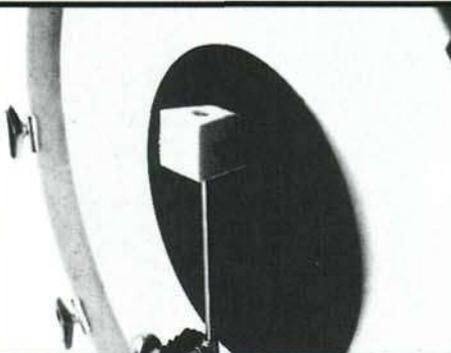
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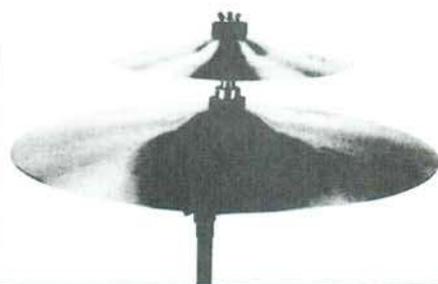
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When I play, it's usually just jamming with other people. I rarely practice alone.

KM: What are you listening to now?

BW: Everything from Black Sabbath to Leonard Cohen, Tom Waits, Nick Drake, Bob Dylan. And a lot of jazz stuff like Gene Krupa, Art Blakey, Charles Mingus, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter.

KM: Is everyone in Rage that open-minded?

BW: Hmm...well, I don't want to comment on that.

KM: In my experience, I think drummers are the most open-minded musicians.

BW: Perhaps. I didn't say that, you did!

KM: Was there a particular song on the album that was hard to realize?

BW: [long pause] Not one really. We always go through a process of trying to make everyone happy. One doesn't stick out that was a real bitch. They were all real bitches—but they were quick bitches! The album only took fourteen days to record.

KM: Since a lot of your songs come out of jamming, you don't necessarily figure out a drum part?

BW: I think jamming is about coming up with drum parts. Often I'll take home

rehearsal jam tapes and find a little spot, "Oh, that's it right there." Or I'll hear something completely different the next day. Ideas are kind of passed all the way around the room on all instruments. Everyone gives ideas to everyone else. Everyone is really talented in that way; there's a lot of ideas going around.

KM: Critics cite Zeppelin and the Chili Peppers as bands you sound like, but a song like "Revolver" sounds more like the MC5. It has that raw anger and danger to it.

BW: Thank you! I love the MC5—and the whole Iggy Pop thing. It's just the abandonment of rules. I will listen to any drummer who is playing on the edge. The MC5 and the Stooges both played on the edge. It wasn't very controlled, and I love that. That's what music is all about to me: putting yourself out on that edge, exposing yourself, and not being afraid of completely letting go in front of a lot of people.

KM: When Rage went buck-naked at Lollapalooza '94, what was going through your mind?

BW: I was thinking about how the wind felt underneath my scrotum, what the people in the front row were thinking, and all the

cameras flashing and what they were going to be thinking as they developed their film. Actually, doing that was no big deal. It didn't freak me out. That's how we all came into the world. It's a liberating thing.

We were trying to convey a message about the PMRC and censorship in general. We were being banned on radio because of language. ["Killing In The Name" contained repeated profanity.] We just wanted to make a point. The first ten minutes they were going nuts, but after ten minutes they were getting pissed. We didn't play the show. We stood for fourteen minutes and left. We did come back and play a free show, though. Censorship of language is ridiculous to me.

KM: What other experiences stand out?

BW: We were in Copenhagen and we were tear-gassed. We were playing in Christiana, which is independent of the country, like a commune, and the police wanted to shut them down. Before the show they gassed our bus while we were in it! I never remember feeling so alive and so desperate to play as after that happened. And that was probably one of the best shows we ever played. It just wakes you up—definitely.



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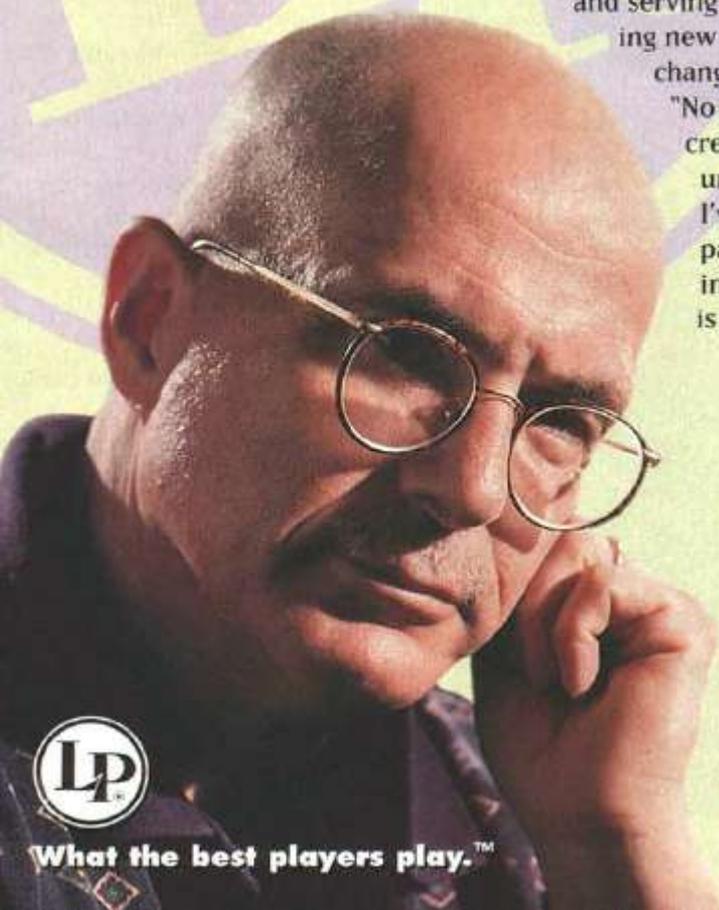
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THE REINVENTION OF NEIL PEART

by William F. Miller



"Yes, that's 'old faithful,'" Neil Peart says proudly, pointing out the Slingerland snare drum he's called his number-one drum for years. It's lined up with about eight other snare drums on the studio floor behind a beautiful new DW kit. Neil's in between takes at Bearsville studios in upstate New York, where he's right in the middle of recording tracks for an educational video.

Although he should be cooling out before the next take, Neil's just bubbling over with excitement about all things drum-like. "Let me show you my new setup," "This is my snare drum arsenal," and "It's traditional grip for me from now on," are just a few of the comments flowing from Neil as we walk around the spacious studio. No doubt about it, a passion for drumming has been reborn in Neil Peart.

Last May I was invited up to Bearsville to see Neil record a video for DCI. The video is loosely based on Peart's recording of the new Rush album at Bearsville a few months earlier. He decided to "show by example" what he does with Rush—how he comes up with parts and how it all boils down to the end result. The title, *A Work In Progress* (Neil jokes that *A Jerk In Progress* might be more appropriate), refers not only to how he creates within Rush, but also to how Neil's own playing is evolving—especially in recent years.

"Why don't you call this article 'The Reinvention Of Neil Peart,'" Neil suggests at one point during our get-together. "I've spent the last couple of years totally revamping my playing style." It's true. Today, you might even be startled to see Neil play if you were at all familiar with his old style. There's more of a flowing, above-the-drums motion coming from him now; his stroke is much more fluid.

Neil has obviously devoted hours of practice to this new direction, and that, along with the guidance of master teacher Freddie Gruber, has smoothed out Neil's once rather jagged style. Gone is the matched-grip, butt-end-



only power chop that Neil employed. He's not boxing anymore—he's dancing on the drums. (To hear just how far Neil has come, keep an ear out for *Burning For Buddy 2*, on which the drummer recorded new tracks with Buddy's big band.)

Don't worry, Rush fans. Sitting in the control room *listening* to Neil re-record his parts from the new Rush album for his video, it still sounds like Neil Peart. The tracks are creative, well-constructed, and played with a gusto we've all learned to expect. But *watching* him do it is another matter. It's almost like you're looking at a different drummer.

Neil's right. He has reinvented himself

WFM: When you first got together with Freddie Gruber, what did he think was wrong with your playing?

NP: He never specifically said—and I think that's an important part of his method: He's very reactive to the individual he's dealing with.

He watched me play for about a minute. I sat down, played some time and a couple of little figures, and he stopped me and said, "Okay." He then proceeded to show me a few things on a pad—different hand movements. But he never said, "Your motion is too stiff and linear. I'm going to fix that. I'm going to lead you down the path of righteousness towards circular motion."

WFM: And you had enough confidence in him to just go with his suggestions?

NP: I did because of his attitude. He said, "You've been doing what you do for a long time, so it obviously works. Don't mess with that. Consider my suggestions as options." So it was always

carefully handled on his part. Plus, Freddie gets so fired up—his enthusiasm is infectious and somehow it inspired trust in me to just surrender and say, "I don't know where we're going but it's a trip worth taking."

The concepts and exercises Freddie showed me took a *long* time to master, but once I learned them I really learned them inside out and could apply them to the next step. And that's something I stressed in the video; it's going to take more work for some of us to accomplish things than it will for others. There *is* such a thing as a natural player. I've noticed some drummers say that they don't practice or that they didn't take lessons, yet they are very good players. Well, how did they get so good? They are naturals.

WFM: I think a lot of people would consider you to be naturally talented.

NP: They'd be *way* wrong! [laughs] It's *always* been hard for me. Anything that I wanted to learn I really had to work at. Drumming has always been a long, slow process for me, but I just stay at it.

WFM: Now that you've had several lessons with Freddie and you've worked on his exercises, how has all of it affected your playing?

NP: For me, I think it all adds up to an enhanced time sense. One of the first exercises Freddie gave me was a simple triplet ride pattern. It's a swing pattern with the snare and the hi-hat playing in unison and then the bass drum interposing beats between them. As simple as that is, the concept behind it is deep. I discovered that *it* is the source of time—it is the pulse.

The analogy that I used in the video is that music shouldn't be thought of as dots on a line, but rather as points on a circle. So by

working on this exercise I began to get this time sense where, even when I'd move from that exercise into rock and funk beats, the pulse would remain. But it took a lot of practice to get to this point.

WFM: It's funny to hear you talk about being so into practicing, because when you and I did our first interview together seven years ago you weren't into it at all. In fact, you seemed a bit burned out on the drums.

NP: Somebody actually gave me that issue of *MD* to autograph recently, and I took a minute to look over some of the things that I was saying back then. It's really interesting because the way that I was feeling was perfectly sincere. I was frustrated with my musical improvement and I said I wasn't willing to sit in the basement for hours every day to develop a faster paradiddle. And that remains true, but at the same time to sit in the basement every day and explore a whole new time sense and a whole new approach to rhythm is much more value-packed for me.

WFM: You've obviously been energized by Freddie, but can you be a bit more specific about what he's worked on with you and how it's affected your playing?

NP: There have been a few things. I'm now sitting a bit further back from the bass drum than I used to, and I'm not burying the beater into the head. My snare drum is now set radically higher than it used to be to accommodate traditional grip playing, which I'm trying to use exclusively.

So some things about my playing have changed radically, but that created a conflict in my mind: Would I really have the discipline to put in the time necessary to make all of these changes happen? When I left New York after my first set of lessons with Freddie I thought, "Well, to do this I have to be disciplined and I have to put in some serious work. Will I really be able to develop this discipline?" But I was reborn in an evangelical sense: Deep down I really wanted to improve. I made sure that I practiced at least an hour on the drumkit every day, and in addition to that I also sat in front of the TV with a practice pad and sticks working on all these little physical motions that Freddie had given me.

WFM: These hand exercises were not specifically designed to enhance your chops, though, were they? It seems to be more of a feel and motion thing.

NP: That's what Freddie, to me, is really the expert on. I recently met Richie Hayward, the drummer in Little Feat. He was working in a rehearsal hall near me when I was preparing for the video, and we got to talking and he mentioned he was trying to find a teacher. He said he really wanted to learn more about technique, and he

asked me about Freddie. I said, "Well, I don't think Freddie is the guy you need because you've already got what he teaches."

WFM: Richie has such an incredible feel.

NP: Oh yeah. He would be better off studying with a technical master, like Joe Morello. I think that's what Richie wants to improve in his playing.

Kenny Aronoff went to Freddie, but there probably wasn't enough of a pay-off for him, because Kenny has that looseness and that great time sense. For other guys, like Dave Weckl, Ian Wallace, Steve Smith—and *me*—I think Freddie's been just revelational.

That was the thing about Steve Smith's drumming that really struck me when he recorded his tracks on the *Burning For Buddy* sessions. If Steve had just become a technical virtuoso, that would not have been nearly as impressive as how musical his playing had become and how well it sat with the music while still being very active and adventurous. *That's* what made me do a double take on Steve's playing.

WFM: Although Freddie doesn't teach technique, per se, he has gotten you to move away from matched grip. And you used to play matched with the butt ends of the sticks!

NP: That's right! But that gave me a way to get the power I needed. I did start with traditional grip thirty years ago and then left it behind in favor of matched. It's been said—even in the pages of your magazine—that matched grip is a physically superior approach. I still believe that's true. However, that's not the whole story. What I've realized is that traditional grip can be a more musical approach to playing the drums. It all has to do with the rotational effect it creates and the way it affects the time.

WFM: But, as you said, you need a lot of power for Rush. Were you concerned that you just couldn't make traditional grip work for the band?

NP: I did have a certain amount of doubt. I put off the band for a year so I would have time to let these things develop and mature

in my playing. And then, coming back to the band, I realized that all of the work on my "new direction" might be completely irrelevant to Rush music.

During the writing of the new record last October we were out in the country, and I still kept up my practicing every day. I had my little PureCussion kit out in the hallway, so if I was working on lyrics and I needed a left-brain break, I could go out in the hall and practice for a while. And sometimes at night, if the other guys were out, I could get in the studio and play on the real drums. I just concentrated on power at that point, knowing that was the ele-



"Just before we were going to start recording the new Rush album, the DCI video guys teamed up on me: 'You're going to be doing this record, so why don't we just bring cameras in and film you at work? That can be a way of teaching by example.' I thought, 'You bastards!' [laughs] They had me."



ment I needed to get together. I felt I had developed a lot more finesse and a lot more fluidity, and simply practicing every day also developed a lot more tools.

I felt I had improved in all sorts of ways, and I could feel it when playing with the other guys. Of course, some things weren't as far along as I would have liked. My left hand still isn't what it needs to be, but it will be a superior instrument one of these years. [laughs] But I was able to make do and get through the tunes

with a strong thumb and that Stewart Copeland sort of open-handed approach to traditional grip. I was able to get a big backbeat and still have the subtleties of finger control and hand control for subtler spots in the music.

WFM: I noticed while watching you play in the studio that you're not beating down on the drums like you used to. You used to have a stiffer approach with a lot of downward motion.

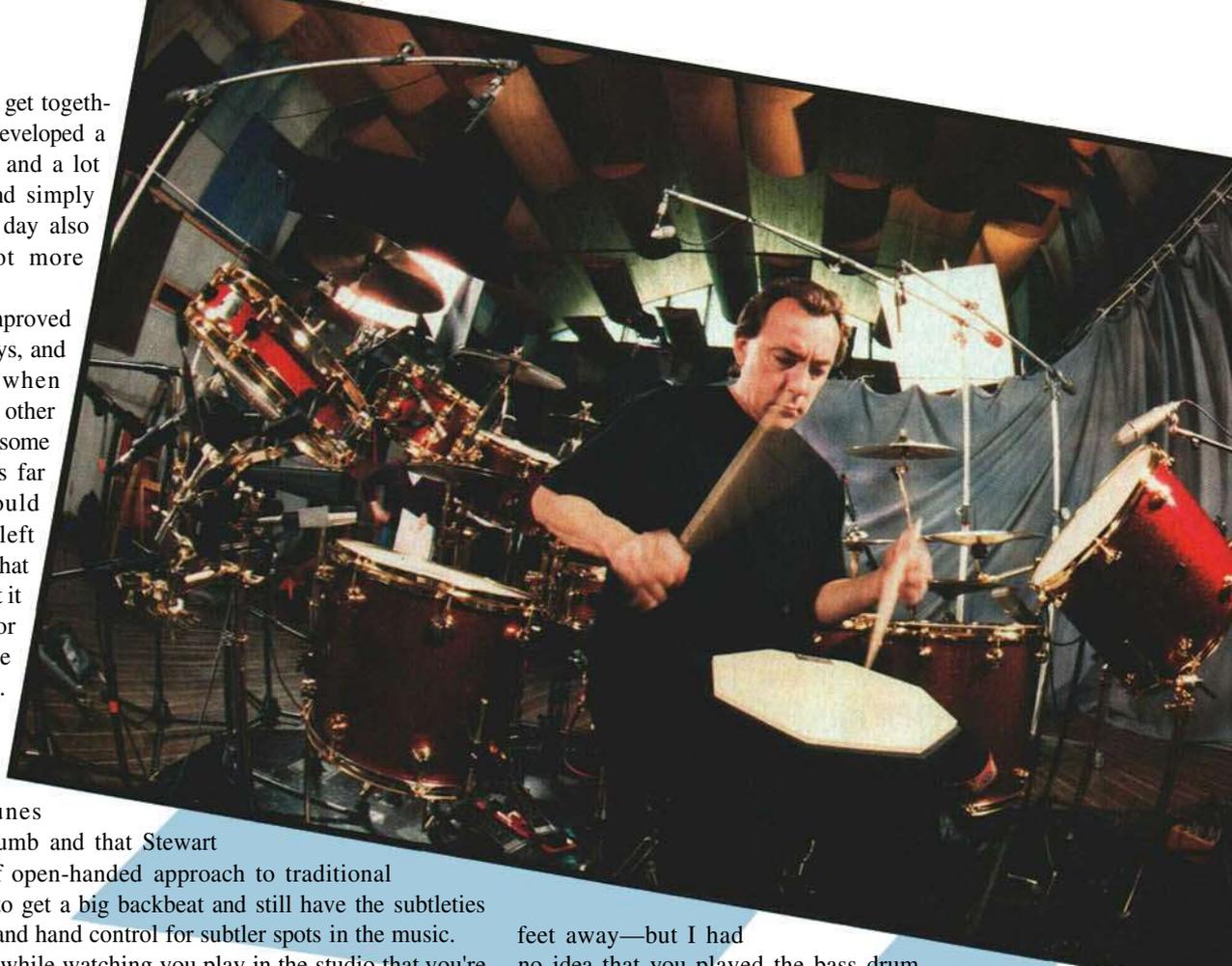
NP: I'm playing above the drums now. An analogy that Freddie has about drummers is that a lot of us play like golfers: We're hitting "through the ball," meaning we tend to aim at the floor and play right through the drums.

You're right—I played that way. Freddie has me concentrating on my movements *above* the drums, so that the bottom of the stroke is actually the bottom of a circle. That's where I'm hitting the drum. That was an important change for me.

Playing with the butt ends of the sticks with matched grip for power became unnecessary, because I learned how to get that sound with a flick of the wrist—Freddie calls that spanking the drum. Just make it the briefest of contact but the most forceful, at the fullest extension of the snap of your wrist—it's like the crack of a whip. I haven't totally mastered it yet, but I'm working on it.

The title of my video, *A Work In Progress*, is very appropriate, not only because it's about the record being made but also because it's about me as a thirty-year veteran who's still completely rebuilding himself. Like I said, my grip's not quite what I want it to be, but I'm happy with where it's taken me and the new approach to the drums. I still have much more to learn from Freddie on footwork and getting the soft-shoe approach—you know, the dancing approach to pedal action—but I'll get there.

WFM: Let's talk about your feet a little bit. In fact, that was something that really stood out about your playing while I was sitting in the room with you while you were recording your tracks. I've seen you play several times in concert—from a few hundred



feet away—but I had no idea that you played the bass drum with that much power.

NP: I like playing hard, although I think my technique suffered a bit, because I set up with my knee almost directly over the pedal so that I could get the whole weight of my leg into the stroke. Freddie suggested I move back just a bit so I could get more of a dancing motion on the pedals, but as I do that I will continue to play hard, when necessary. The power won't go because it's an honest reflection of me.

WFM: You mentioned that another thing you changed is the shoes you wear.

NP: That's one of the things that Freddie was dogmatic about. He said, "Don't wear sneakers while playing drums." And that's something I'd been instinctively drawn towards because I thought, "I want the shoes to stick. I don't want them slipping off the pedals." But Freddie feels that your feet need to be able to move freely and be relaxed, like a dancer on the pedals. So I thought, "Why not try dancing shoes?" I picked up a pair of those suede-soled dancing shoes, and they work great. In fact, one day I went down to practice and I was too lazy to change my shoes so I just started playing with sneakers on, and it was *horrible*. I couldn't play-

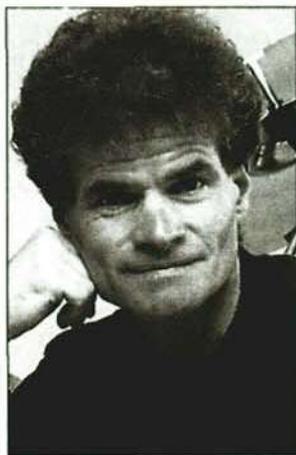
The broader principle here is that instincts aren't always right. What seems right is so often not—the sticky shoes is one example. And I mentioned before that I used to try to get all my drums underneath me so that I could be hitting down on them. I also figured that it would put me less off balance if I could have everything positioned as close to me as physically possible. It seemed right, but it was totally wrong.

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What Freddie had me do was push the drums away so that my bass drum was farther away and my snare and toms were all at arm's length. The easiest way to play has nothing to do with how close the drums are. What's the most fluid way for me to get from the snare to the floor tom or from the snare to the ride? It all has to do with the motion.

WFM: With all of the work you've done and all this improvement to your playing, when you actually did get together with Alex and Geddy to work on new material, was there any kind of a look on their faces that said, "Wow, what's happened here?"

NP: It's a perfect question that has a great answer: They hardly noticed a difference!

WFM: Was that upsetting?

NP: Well...yes! [laughs] Let me tell you how it developed: At first they gave me some demo tapes so I could start sketching out drum parts. When they heard some of my ideas they said, "Yeah, but we don't hear much of a difference in your playing. Do you have new hardware or something?" And when Peter Collins, our co-producer, came in, I told him the story of what I'd been doing for the past year in regard to my drumming. But when he heard me play he said, "Well, it still sounds like you."

Eventually I realized that was the highest of compliments. If I can change everything about the way I play, from the way I hit things, to my hopefully improved time sense, to the drums themselves, even to the drumheads—I went with white *Ambassadors* for the first time just for the most complete change possible—and our co-producer doesn't notice a difference, I *must* have a style of my own. Whatever passes for my "style" is strong enough to transcend all of those changes.

One thing that *was* noticed by the others was the change in the time sense. As we passed tapes back and forth while developing the parts for the new songs, both Geddy and Alex said they had to change their own time sense to sync up with me. Things just felt a bit better, so we all benefited from it.

WFM: I only heard you record a couple of the tunes, and while I could hear a slight difference, it was easier to notice a difference by watching you than by listening.

NP: I'll be very surprised if listeners can put their fingers on it, because it isn't that different. It's still me! It's still my approach to playing—still very active with

a whole lot going on. And yet, something like the first track on the album, "Test For Echo," is a song that I could not have played two years ago. In fact, I mentioned that to Geddy when we were recording it, and he said, "I find that hard to believe." It is just beats, figures, and tom rolls—the usual elements—but I came at them from such a different point of view and applied them with such a different level of facility.

WFM: I want to get your general thoughts on the new album.

NP: The title of the record, *Test For Echo*, is from the title of one of the songs. The lyrics of the song came about from a collaboration between me and a writer named Pye Dubois. He and I have collaborated before, on "Tom Sawyer" and a few other things. He is a very interesting character who works part time in a mental institution and has written lyrics with other artists. He rambles around the city [Toronto] from donut shop to donut shop with a little exercise book that he fills up with ideas and then sends to me. I impose some shape on them and add a few images of my own, and it comes out being something that's better than both of us. He had the title of *Test For Echo*, which I took to mean, "Hello, is anybody out there?"

WFM: I think Rush fans were beginning to wonder if you guys were coming back, due to the length of time between albums.

NP: It was a year and a half between the end of the *Counterparts* tour and the starting of the songwriting for the new one. As I pointed out before, a lot of that was at my instigation, you know, just wanting to have more time to get my drumming together.

WFM: Was there a certain amount of freshness in the band after taking such a long break?

NP: There was a lot of enthusiasm on everyone's part. Alex had been in the same position as me, playing every day—he had put out a solo album. Alex was as totally wedded to his instrument as I was. So the two of us came back with that enthusiasm, and that encouraged Geddy to start practicing again to put his own tools in top shape.

WFM: Did all this individual work result in any new directions on *Test For Echo*?

NP: It's impossible for me to say. I always find I only have a perspective on a record after we make the following one. But one thing I did notice was that we have all kinds of odd meters showing up throughout

the record, although I hardly know what any of them are. [laughs] I know they are odd, but I just learned the music and never counted them out. For the filming of the video I did figure a few out just so I could explain them.

WFM: I got to hear you record the instrumental track for the record, "Limbo."

NP: We always love doing instrumentals, and the few times that they haven't appeared on an album was because we stole sections for other songs. This time we had a lot of really good bits that got cut from various songs or that Geddy and Alex had written but never found a place for. So at the end we had all these great bits and set out to stitch them together into something.

I got the engineer to make me sixteen bars of click and I went in and just started playing—not counting bars or anything—just playing a lot of this new stuff that I hoped to get on the record. I gave that tape to Geddy. While he was assembling the pieces of "Limbo" he took my bits, cut them into four-bar pieces, switched them all around, and pieced them into the song. So I got exactly what I was after—something totally fresh and spontaneous, played that way only once, and in fact, in the context of the song, *never* played that way.

WFM: Let's talk about your video. I understand there's a bit of a history between you and DCI, in terms of their being after you to make an educational video for quite some time.

NP: Yeah, they had been after me for a while to do one, and I kept putting them off, saying, "Look, I'm not a teacher. If there is anything I have to teach people it's best taught by example." So I just kept putting them off.

And then, just before we were going to start recording the new Rush album, the DCI guys—Rob Wallis and Paul Siegel—teamed up on me: "Look, you're going to be doing this recording, so why don't we just bring cameras in and film you at work? That can be a way of teaching by example." And I thought, "You bastards!" [laughs] They had me. As soon as I thought about it in those terms I realized that, yes, that's exactly the kind of teaching that I *am* interested in doing—showing me doing my job and illustrating the whole higher part of it, not just the licks and the chops.

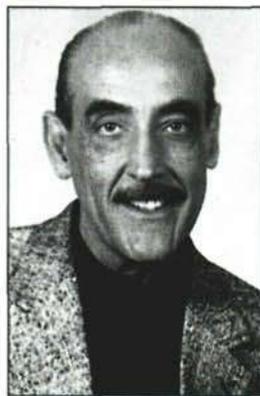
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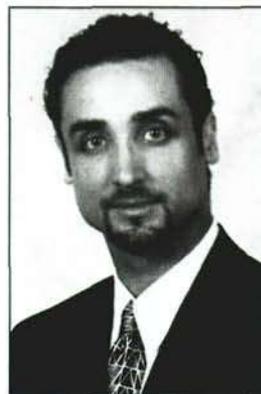


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with a blank sheet of paper of a demo with a drum machine part and having to create something fresh and exciting that will work for the song and the listener. So I realized there was a lot that could be taught by example in that sense. And I could also stress the ongoing apprenticeship that I'm going through—hence the title, *A Work In Progress*. But the video is based, in general, around our new album.

WFM: I only saw you recording complete run-throughs of tunes from the album. Did you actually break things down and play certain parts?

NP: To a small degree. I was really determined to stay away from teaching people to play like me. But I did break down some of the neat little things I've discovered in the last couple of years. Then I said, "Here's one idea that I use twelve different ways, and here are some of the ways I could use them." I basically tried to stress imagination and the *application* of these things.

WFM: What other ideas did you want to cover in the video?

NP: I used to think that other videos had

introduced drummers to the studio environment. So I had planned to just let that be the atmosphere for this and not dwell on it. But I found out that other videos haven't really discussed the studio. I thought that someone like Steve Gadd would have gotten into it—showed drummers how to deal with it, how microphones might be handled by the engineer, and so on. When I found out that hadn't been covered, I thought we should do it. We had the album's engineer interviewed on camera about miking the drums, what he wants from a drummer, and so on.

WFM: That's a nice idea.

NP: Well, I figured I wanted this to be as different from other videos as possible. I also didn't want it to look like it was shot in a tiny little studio with all the lights of a sitcom kitchen shining on it, like some videos I've seen. I wanted it to be, first of all, darker and more dramatic within the needs of being a drum instruction video. You want to be able to see the sticks and the feet and all that, so you need a certain blend of light.

WFM: Speaking of wanting the video to

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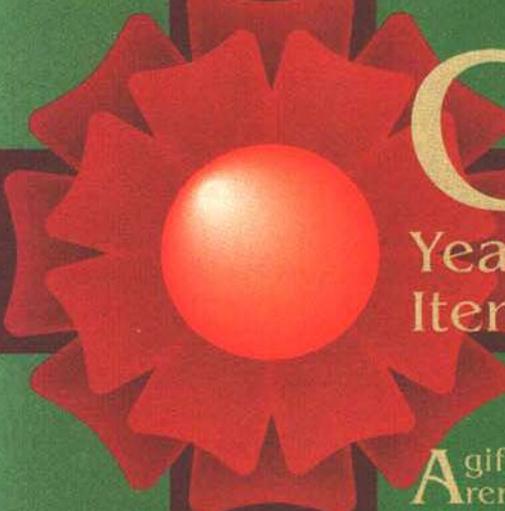
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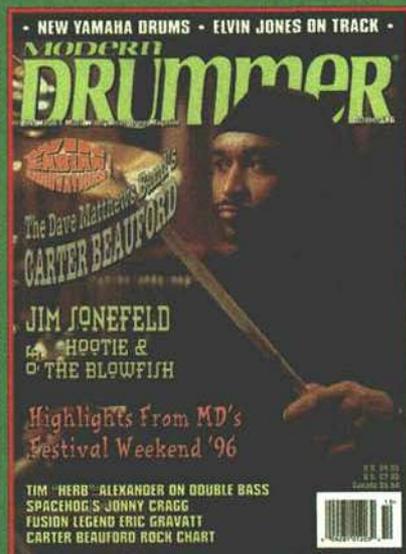
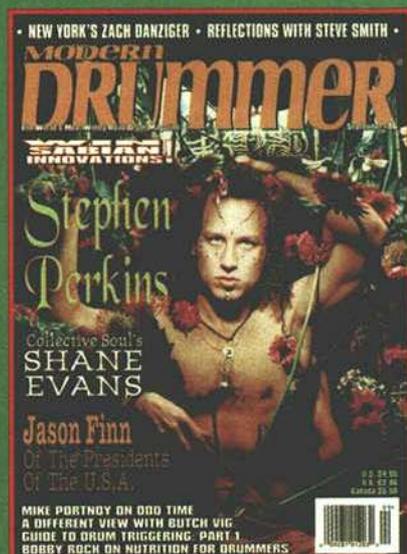


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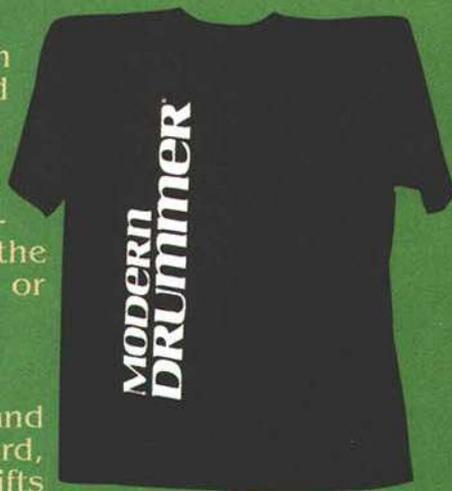
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look a bit different, I liked your idea of filming the spoken sections in different locations.

NP: I wanted to get some other scenes into the video. Do you know the TV show *Connections*? It's on the Learning Channel. I got the impetus from that, where the guy just keeps popping up in different places around the globe and illustrating this really interesting story of how civilization came together. I tried to take it that way. We have shots of me in different outdoor locations.

WFM: When I first interviewed you back in 1989 there was a Rush concert video that had recently been released, and I was very excited to talk to you about it. You sort of brushed me off by saying you felt awkward with the cameras, and that you didn't like the idea of even seeing yourself. Now that you've done your own video...

NP: I still don't like seeing myself! I don't like to hear myself talk, I don't like to look at myself, and I'll probably never watch this video. [laughs]

WFM: But I was wondering what your

thoughts were on just being so revealed by the camera.

NP: Well, it was a tremendous challenge. Rob and Paul had suggested that I talk right to the camera, which is something that I had never done before. If I'd done interviews on camera I'd always been talking to the interviewer, so I thought this might be a big leap for me that would be hard. I told them I would try, but I didn't really know if it would work for me.

Making the video was one of the biggest challenges I've ever had. It was definitely some of the hardest work I've ever done. To be on camera twelve hours a day, with the last couple of days being all talking, was a challenge. The spoken parts were especially tough, being that focused and that clear so that you're not only addressing the camera but making sense. [laughs] You can't just ramble on and hope to edit it later. There were concepts that had to be on there, so I made really copious preparations and I had eleven lesson chapter heads, one for each of the songs, and I kind of drew one important illustration from each.

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WFM: For the video, where you are playing along to the new Rush tracks, you were not lip-syncing to the drum tracks that are on the record. These were new performances by you on the same tunes. With that in mind, was there a little less pressure on you since the record was completed and these performances were just for the video?
NP: No, for me it was no different from the pressure of recording. One reason I love going to a professional recording studio as opposed to what a lot of groups do—you know, recording in their rehearsal room or in a house—is that I love the sense of heightened importance. I love all the rehearsing and demo-making too, but I never quite rise to the level that I do in the studio. So there is a certain amount of pressure, but it's good pressure. I was most aware of trying to capture a good performance, and the cameras just happened to be there.

WFM: I noticed that when you were listening back to your tracks after a take, you weren't looking at the TV monitors. Your eyes were closed and you were focused on

the playing.

NP: That's a perfect indication. Beyond seeing what the drums looked like and all that, I wasn't too interested in how I looked. But here's an interesting thing that I did notice when we were reviewing some of the edits: I was struck by how easy my playing looked. I had a camera shooting me from behind, and from that view I saw my shoulder and wrist movements—just my overall approach—and it looked pretty smooth. When I'm actually playing it seems so grindingly difficult. And yet I looked at this video and thought, "Who is this guy?"



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Head Games: A "Good Time" Had By All

by Luther Rix

There's a great deal of talk among drummers, and musicians in general, about "time"—what constitutes good time, how to think about it, and how to make it happen. I've thought about and struggled with these issues for many years, trying to figure out how to please leaders, other players, and myself. Gradually, I've developed an approach that works for me.

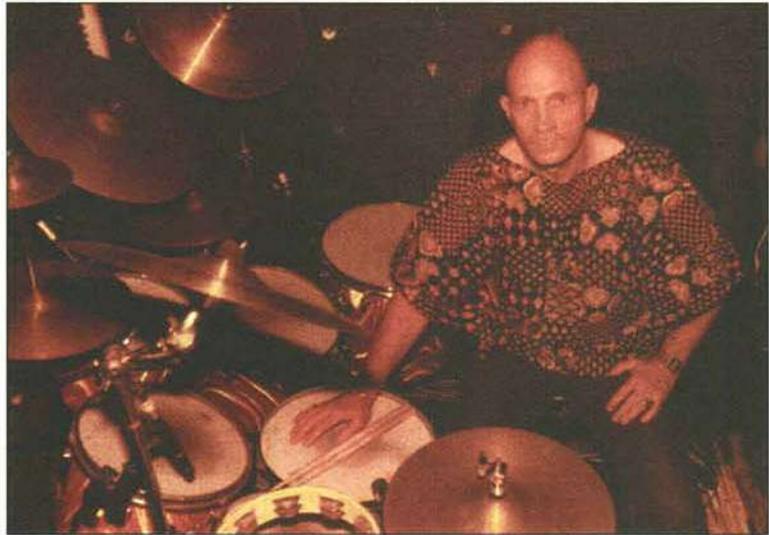
Time Terminology

Most of the talk about time isn't very useful to the guy with the joy (or burden) of laying it down—you, the drummer. There's endless talk about where to put the time. What do people mean when they say "on top," "laid-back," "up on the beat," "edgy," "pushy," or "driving"? Of course, "rushing" and "dragging" are easy to define. They mean speeding up and slowing down, respectively, and they're almost always used negatively. But "driving" or "fat" are almost invariably compliments, even when they imply something *other* than perfect time. Such terms can also be used euphemistically. For example, if someone in the section suggests that you lay back, they could be giving you a helpful hint that you've been rushing.

Obviously, we're into an area of taste here. How people view "feel" depends on factors like the instrument they play, their musical background, the style of music they're playing at the moment, and their perception of *your* concept of time.

Many jazz drummers and bass players value "staying on top," while jazz horn players talk about "laying back." Country and R&B players usually favor a laid-back, "fat" approach, while rock players seem to like it hard and right down the middle. You might also hear the same jazz horn section that plays behind on a Basie tune *rush* in a straight-8th rock groove. Of course, every player is an individual, and the style of music and playing situation can affect their attitude. The leader who wants you to stay "on top" on a swing tune may expect "fatback" on an R&B tune.

Let's take a closer look at what these terms mean to us. Suppose you're doing a recording session and you've just finished a take. You thought everything was fine, but the leader says, "I want the drums more on top. The tempo was fine, just get more on top of it." What do you do? If you play it the same way, the leader won't be happy. But the drummer *defines* the time, so if you play on top, do you try to play in front of *yourself*? How can you play before you



play? And if you really try to do this, aren't you just going to speed up?

Suppose you do try to play a little ahead of the band. Recognizing that most bands don't play perfectly together, which musician do you play ahead of? And since the other players listen to you for the time, if you play ahead they're going to do their best to catch up. You'll then have to play faster to stay ahead, and the tempo will accelerate. The only other choice is to try to have part of the drum-set playing ahead of the rest of the set, and that's a sure way to sound "un-together." All these options qualify as head games.

Here's how I handled the situation: The leader counted off the tune and I just hit it a *little* faster than he counted it. At the end of the take I got a smile and a big thumbs-up. It felt *brighter* to him, and the tempo was solid throughout. That's what gets me off: the feeling that I made myself and the leader happy, and that I did justice to the music.

Different Strokes

There are fine drummers who intentionally put the backbeat behind the band (or even behind the rest of the set) when they're playing certain kinds of pop or funk grooves. But when I listen to them, I don't really hear it as some beats being played behind others; what I hear is solid time—what we call "in the pocket." And if a jazz drummer pushes the band and *stays* on top, and I still hear a smokin' groove that doesn't rush, I can't deny that it's working for him. Whatever works, works.

Some musical styles lend themselves to varying the placement

of notes within the framework of solid time. For example, in a lot of Latin music notes don't always fall exactly in the slot. Things get stretched and compressed, but the *groove* doesn't move. This is especially noticeable in fills and solos. And a lot of jazz drummers have a way of "skating on the time" that works in much the same way. The groove is more "felt" than stated.

Having said all that, let me make it clear that over the past thirty years, drumming has definitely moved in the direction of rock-solid tempos and more accurate beat placement. Everyone now has some kind of recorder with which to listen to himself, hear time problems, and correct them. Drummers today grow up playing along with metronomes or records made with a click track. Half the music we hear is literally computer-perfect. I recently heard Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog," and was reminded anew of how badly the triplet fills rush at the end of every twelve bars. You just don't hear that kind of inaccuracy on recordings anymore.

Some say that if you play *too* accurately, it doesn't sound *human*, or it has no feel. However, when I hear some of my favorite drum cuts, very often I think that what's making them so exciting is their mechanical precision, strength, and accuracy. It's easy to say that there's such a thing as being too perfect, but when you actually hear a near-perfect performance and think "This guy plays like a machine," you usually mean it as a compliment. Of course, this doesn't happen if the drummer is *robotic*. If his playing lacks emotion and imagination, it's *not* perfect.

Musical Bias

Let's get back to "laid back" and "on top" as these terms apply to the rhythm section playing time. Generally, the goal of the section should be to play absolutely together, or "locked in." No one is trying to play *behind* or *ahead* of anyone else. Everyone is trying to play as a unit, using the drummer as the clock. So what does it mean for the section to "lay back"? What it usually means is a conscious determination not to rush. The players have decided that *if they* err, the error is *not* going to be rushing. Their bias is *rushing is evil*—and it's probably a valid judgment. If you're playing country rock, for instance, the last thing you want to do is rush. The tricky part is, you really don't want to drag either. It's important to understand the bias of the musical style.

As a drummer, you have to be very careful about starting with your own biased attitude. A prejudice for either ahead or behind the beat can lead to tempo errors, because you're mentally "leaning" away from the center of the beat. I advise starting with an attitude of going for perfect time, right in the center of the beat, and to take a special mental stance only if there's a problem. If you're having a hard time keeping tempos from dragging, it can be valid to cop an "on top" attitude. But sometimes, just being aware of a problem can solve it with no additional mental adjustment.

Listening To It All

You can get into amazing head games playing alone in a practice room. But as you add players the potential for time conflicts is

only surpassed by the potential for even more head games. Obviously, all players should listen to each other. But as the drummer—the timekeeper—what do you listen for? Well, *everything!* Regarding tempo, you have to listen to the band as a whole, the rhythm section players, and most carefully to *yourself*. When it comes to tempo, you are the most important person in the band. If you and another player are not together, you need to be aware of it, but not pushed around by it. Say you're playing with an eighteen-piece big band, and the horns are really behind. If you're playing good time, you're going to sound like you're playing ahead of them—but you need to *stay* there or overall the time will drag. You get the idea. *You* are generating the time—the time is *your* responsibility. The other players expect it, and they won't be happy unless they get it.

This is not to say you shouldn't trust the other musicians. If you notice conflicts, ask yourself if you're to blame. If the answer is "yes," start paying more attention to nailing it. But don't make adjustments every time there's a problem, because each time you adjust the time, you create little lurches and ups and downs in the time as the band adjusts to follow you. The answer, then, is for you to act, not *react*. You are the "time boss": It's a nasty job, but someone has to do it.

Listen to yourself, and judge your playing constantly. Everyone else is. But don't just ask yourself, "Am I playing metronomically perfect time?" More importantly, ask yourself, "Am I grooving? Am I listening? Am I making this tune work? Am I having *fun*?"

Another thing I try to keep in mind is starting fresh on every tune. Don't bring along old baggage. If the bass player pulled the tempo down when you played a particular tune last night, and you say, "I'm gonna make sure that doesn't happen this time," you're looking for trouble. To make sure he doesn't drag, you play slightly ahead of him, pushing him even more—and now you're rushing. He thinks you're losing it and starts holding back, thus fulfilling your prophecy that he'll drag the time—just like he did last night!

A Delicate Balance

Playing drums is a balancing act: dictating the time, but complementing the ensemble...loose and grooving, but always controlled. This kind of balance is especially true in the area of confidence. Confidence is necessary for a drummer; you can't take charge of the tempo without it. On the other hand, overconfidence can be dangerous. Being confident yet a little apprehensive can work for you. There have been times when I've felt unsure of the time throughout an entire arrangement. Yet because my apprehension had made me listen to myself and play more carefully, I found when I listened to the playback that the take was on the money. The balance point? Be confident, but stay *within yourself*. Don't get distracted and don't try things you can't do. As the athletes say, play *your* game!

"You are generating the time—the time is your responsibility. The other players expect it and won't be happy unless they get it."



Joan Osborne's Charlie Quintana

by David John Farinella

Chances are you've probably heard his name in this type of situation: "...and on drums tonight, Charlie Quintana." Lately it's been Joan Osborne who's been pointing out the man behind the kit, but within the last couple of years it easily could have been front men ranging from the legendary Bob Dylan to Cracker's David Lowery to Ju Ju Hound leader Izzy Stradlin. Quite an eclectic bunch of musicians. Luckily, Quintana cut his teeth playing Chicago covers with his father's card-shark buddies in a Juarez, Mexico bar. (Great training ground, eh?) And that was when he was just ten years old.

Charlie was six when he got his first drumkit—a \$75 number that his mother paid off five bucks at a time. He had been born with a club foot, which limited his physical activities. "I was in a cast forever," says Charlie, "and then I wore braces and orthopedic shoes. I couldn't do sports—I couldn't even wear sneakers. So I got into playing drums—and I went nuts. I was the little drummer boy in the school production...all the corny stuff."

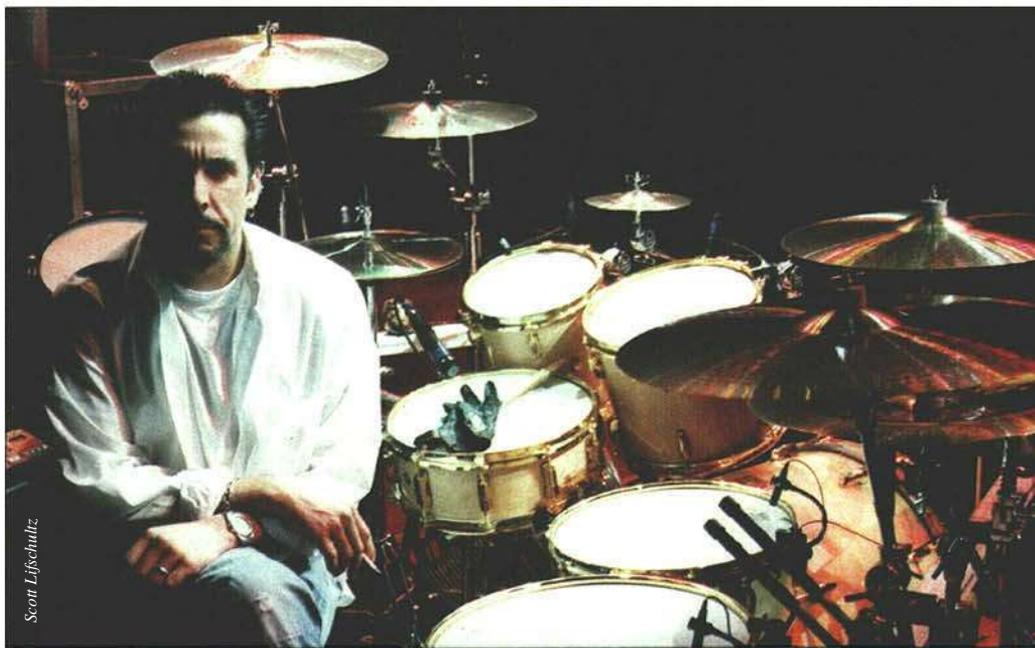
And then Charlie discovered rock 'n' roll. Fast-forwarding to 1979, we see him at sixteen years old, stepping off a plane in Los Angeles wearing a satin jacket and platform boots. A phone call from the Plugz (with whom he had jammed when they were just an upstart punk band in El Paso) brought him to California. They were looking for a drummer, and he got the call. Charlie recalls, "They said, 'Come for a month. We'll rehearse, then we'll do one show at the Whiskey. If you wanna leave we'll send you back; if you wanna stay you're welcome to stay.' I never went back." The Plugz did two albums and opened for virtually every English band that toured through L.A., before transforming themselves into the Cruzados. Two albums (and a bit of touring) with the Cruzados later, Quintana decided it was time to start his own band.

Abandoning his punk upbringings, Charlie launched the Havalinas, an acoustic three-piece group. It was during this time that he learned about different styles and philosophies of drumming. "I broke everything down," he says. "I had a really small kit. I was experimenting with brushes, multi-rods, maracas, and all that kind of stuff. I think I did it at a point in my life when it was really educational. As opposed to doing rock grooves, I got more into the feel of things. If something *needs* to be bashed out, you got it. But a lot of times, dynamics are really important."

In addition to laying the foundation for how Charlie's career would change, an Elektra-released album from the Havalinas would prove to be his emotional and professional benchmark so far. "It's going to be really hard to top that record for myself emotionally," he admits. "It was my little *Mona Lisa*."

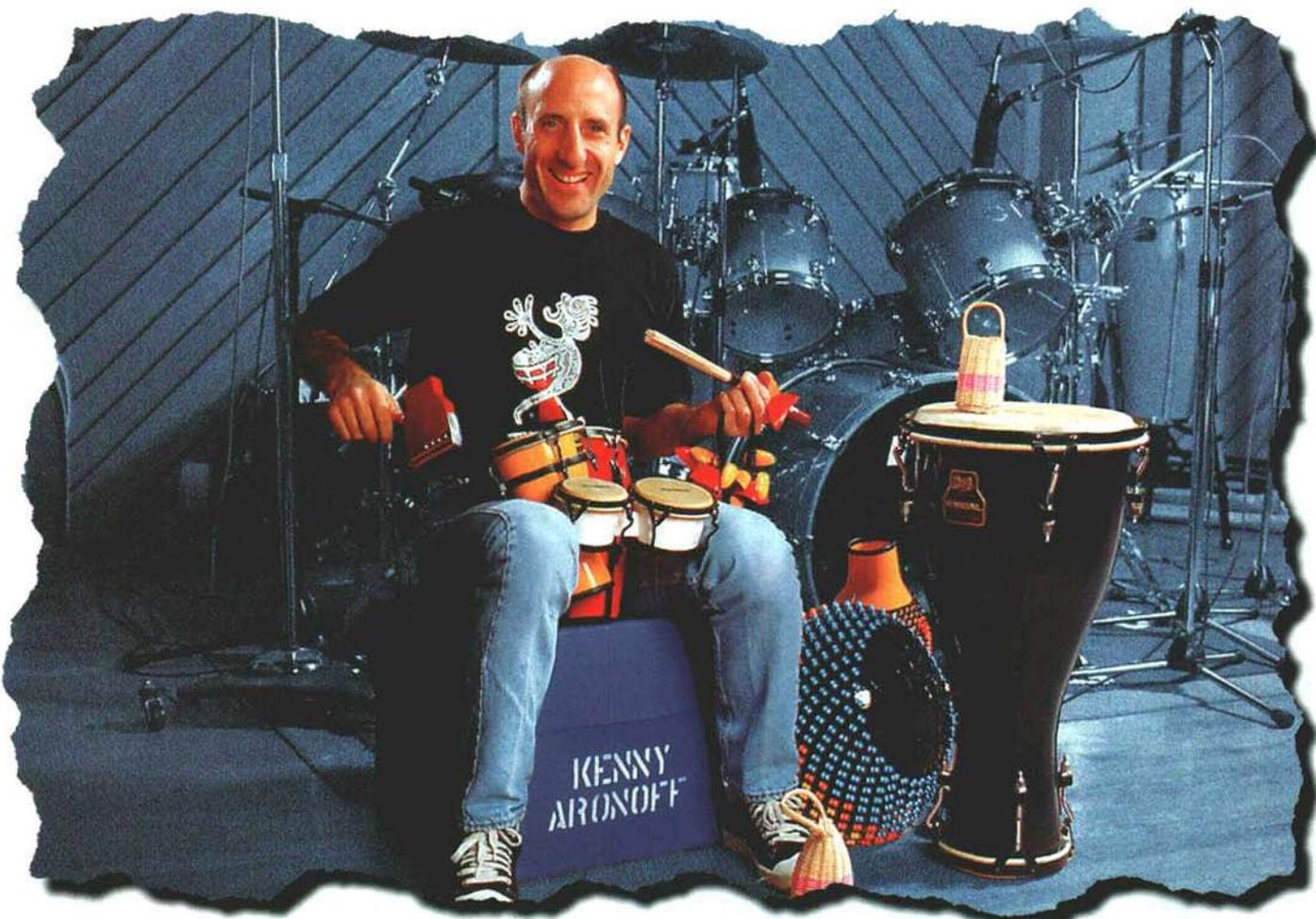
Bob Dylan was a Havalinas fan, often dropping in to their shows. Eventually Bob invited them to tour with him. After the demise of the Havalinas, Quintana jumped on the Dylan tour full-time. The gig pushed him in front of huge numbers of people (including an 85,000-strong Farm Aid crowd). It also ushered in the "Charlie Quintana: drummer for hire" era.

It was not unfamiliar terrain for Quintana. "I was really lucky when I moved to L.A.," says Charlie, "because it seemed like for a while everybody was losing drummers. I sat in with a *lot* of peo-



Scott Lipschutz

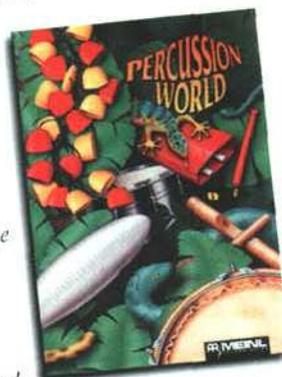
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ple." Some of those early sessions included dates with the Plimsouls and with former Door Ray Manzarek. One day Charlie received an urgent call to come immediately for a Maria McKee session. "I went over," Charlie recalls, "and they played me the track. I was sittin' there thinking that the drum part was way out there. It turned out that it was Jim Keltner—and he had

just left the studio. They didn't like what he was doing. They wanted something simpler—thank God—which I was able to do."

Quintana also played on a French reggae record, of all things, that went double platinum. "I walked into this thing and went, 'Oh my God, this is never going to work,'" he says now with a laugh. Not only were the vibe and technique new to him, Charlie

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also found the sessions to be a learning experience. "I learned that I shouldn't end a fill with a crash," he says. Some of the other lessons he learned then have helped him in his current rock sessions. "Stuff that Joan wants to do now is sort of more rockin', and a lot of cross-stick kind of grooves are coming in."

While Charlie was still playing with Dylan, he joined Izzy Stradlin's Ju Ju Hounds. "It was really weird," he admits. "I'd be rockin' out one week with Izzy, then the next week it'd be 'Lay Lady Lay.' [He sings in an off-kilter imitation of his former boss.] It really threw me for a loop. I finally quit Bob and went with Izzy when I was running too ragged. The thing with Dylan was great, but it was more like a gig. The thing with Izzy was that it was more like a band. And," he adds with a laugh, "it was rock 'n' roll, and that's what I like best."

While the Havalinas' record was Quintana's personal masterpiece, the days spent recording with Stradlin and the Hounds were some of his most memorable. "The sessions with Izzy were really fun," says Charlie, "because it was just, 'Let's go for it. If it's loud, it's cool.'" The band did two studio albums and a live album together. And while the Dylan gig had put him on the French Riviera playing in front of tens of thousands of people, it was a Stradlin show in Japan that Charlie found the most entertaining. "There was this kid right in front of the stage," he explains. "He played air drums through the whole set. Well, that night was the first time in my entire life that I broke a ride cymbal. So I signed the cymbal for him real quick, and after we did the encore I went out and gave it to him. They get pretty frantic in Japan, and I thought this kid was going to keel over and die."

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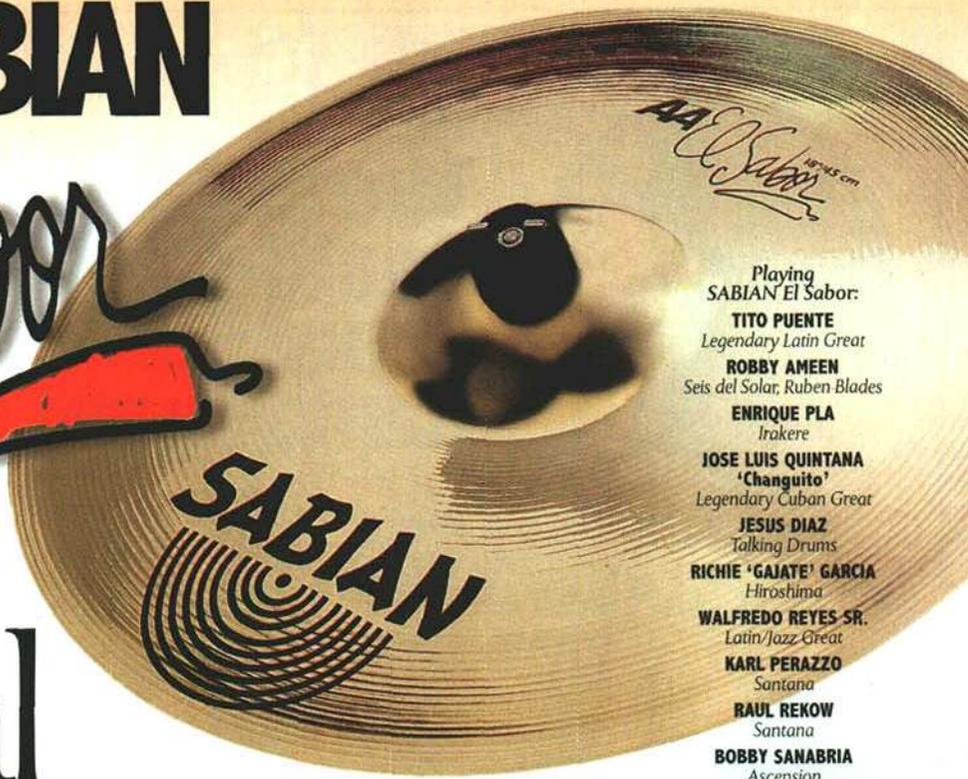
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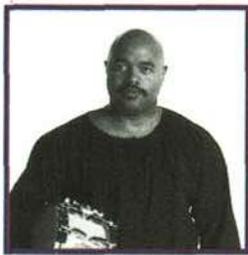
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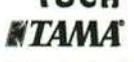
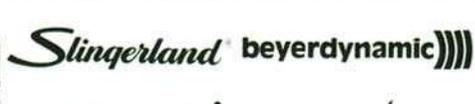
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within a number of different genres for the past twenty years. Through it all his Pearl Masters Series kit has remained relatively straight-ahead, as has his combination of Paiste "Signature" series and Sound Formula cymbals. He only points out what he calls his "get down to business" 20" heavy crash and 18" Paiste China (which, he says, "is all screwed up and sounds great"). He uses Remo Ambassador heads and gloves by Easton.

Where Quintana strays from more conventional drummers is his stick selection. In his left hand he plays a Vic Firth Rock Crusher nylon tip, while in his right he plays a Firth 7A nylon tip. The left-hand stick came about as Charlie was trying to find new ways to get tones out of the snare. "The snare drum can have ten different noises coming out, depending on where you hit it and how you hit it," he explains. "Personally that's my little note-bending thing. If you hit the drum towards the edge you get one thing, if you hit it in the middle you've got a dead thing. In between there's a lot of area." Originally Charlie was playing with both sticks butt end forward—until he started listening to his recordings. "I started noticing that the cymbals would be choked because I was playing an equally fat stick on the right hand," he says. So he turned the right-hand stick around—and found the sought-after sound. "So now I get a nice fat attack on the snare," he says, "and I don't kill my cymbals. The hi-hat and the ride sound delicate, and the crashes aren't all choked."

Not surprisingly, Charlie has found that as his drum experience has grown, his left-hand work has improved. "My own thing is to make things groove, like anybody else," he says of his signature sound. Apparently his "thing" is also to make things a touch more aggressive. Take, for instance, this Joan Osborne tour. "When I came into the picture, her manager talked to me and said, 'Look, we want someone to come in and kick its ass.' That's the kind of approach I take with Joan live." As an example he points to two songs he's added his own twist to. The first is a more aggressive "St. Teresa," and the second is a hip-hop snare part he added to "Ladder." "It just grooves more," he explains. "Naturally some things are a little faster live, but Joan and I really work well together. I'm constantly watching and listening to her. If she goes up, I'm right there with her; if she goes down, I'm

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Reminiscent of his past, Quintana found himself playing in two bands at the same time earlier this year. During a month-long break in the Osborne tour, Charlie scooted into the studio with the boys in Cracker to add his touch to their most recent Virgin release, *The Golden Age*. Of those sessions, Cracker co-leader David Lowery says,

"Charlie's a great, emotional drummer. When he's into it, he gets off on it—and he's amazing."

The Golden Age is an album on which you can hear all of the Charlie Quintana experience, since it careens from country-tinged rock to string-laced emotive ballads. Truth be told, though, Charlie *didn't* play on the two more straight-ahead rock tunes. "I

was back out with Joan already," he explains. "It was really funny, because that's the kind of stuff I used to do in my sleep."

Charlie is back on the road with Joan Osborne, prior to going into the studio to record the follow-up to her major-label smash debut album. The tour is going to run through Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, with a very special stop in Europe. "Hang onto your hat," says Charlie. "You know how Luciano Pavarotti does duets with people? This year it's Joan, Eric Clapton, and Liza Minnelli. So we're going to a stadium in Medina [Pavarotti's hometown] to do a song with his symphony, and then do a duet. We're going to do 'St. Teresa'—just Pavarotti, Joan, the guitar player, and myself."

A couple of hours before he's due on the set to tape an appearance on the *Late Show With David Letterman* (his sixth so far), Quintana gives us a clue why after twenty years he still loves drumming. He's talking about all of the people who play drums on this tour: "I can't even get near the drumkit sometimes," he says with a laugh. "It's like a revolving door. First it's the road manager, then Joan [who he's teaching to play], then the guitar player, then my tech." But when it's jokingly suggested that he might not have to show up for a gig once in a while, Charlie answers, "Hey, I don't mind missing sound check, but the show's a different scene. What the hell would I do? I live for that."



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Sol Gubin

Sol Gubin, a drummer whose career spanned four decades, two coasts, and a wide variety of musical styles, died on May 15, 1996 in Los Angeles. He was sixty-seven.

Sol's career started in the mid-1940s with the bands of Hal McIntyre, Tex Beneke, and Charlie Barnett. From 1954 to 1970 he was a first-call drummer in the New York studios and nightclubs, playing with Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennet, Vic Damone, Lena Home, Stan Kenton, Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Johnny Mathis, Leonard Bernstein, Barbra Streisand, and Patti Page, among dozens of other stars. In addition to his recording work, he also played for television—at one time serving as a staff drummer for two networks at the same time. In the '50s he played in the orchestras on live programs like the *Perry Como Show* and the *Steve Lawrence Show*. He went on to play TV specials for Bob Hope and George Burns, as well as the *Tony Awards*, *Emmy Awards*, and *Academy Awards* shows.

Sol moved to California in 1970, where he played for seven years on the *Carol Burnett Show*. That show brought him to the attention of Jim Keltner, who became a friend and admirer. Jim describes Gubin's playing as "fearless and incredibly musical, with great tonality and originality, and with unbelievable time."

Through the '70s and beyond, Sol remained busy. His playing was heard on TV shows like *M*A*S*H*, *Barney Miller*, and *Bob Newhart*, and in countless movies, including *Annie*, *New York, New York*, and many of Mel Brooks' films. In recent years, he played on the TV epic *War And Remembrance*, recorded albums with Melissa Manchester and Michael Feinstein, and toured with Julie Andrews.

Although Sol had been ill off and on in the months prior to his passing, he was "on the mend" in the spring, and had been fairly active musically. He had been playing intermittently on live dates with Patti Page (which he found ironic, since Patti had been the first singer with whom he'd gone "on the road" so many years earlier). He had also been doing some recording sessions for a new Michael Bolton album. Unfortunately, during a photo outing for that album, Sol contracted an infection that his weakened system could not fight off, and which rapidly developed into pneumonia.

Almost equal to Sol's reputation as an intelligent, intuitive drummer was his reputation as a no-nonsense individual who did not suffer fools gladly. In fact, within the musical community he was known as something of a curmudgeon. (A friend once gave him a book on famous curmudgeons, including Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. The friend said that he hadn't known how to describe Sol until he read that book. With characteristic wit, Sol responded that he was flattered to be in such estimable company!)

Sol's wife, Mrs. Dee Gubin, agrees that her husband "could be an impossible human being sometimes." But she offers a fond tribute to his memory by adding, "Everybody loved him in spite of that. He could win your heart with his music."

Rick Van Horn



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Ron Davis

Until his untimely death in April of this year at the age of fifty-one, New Jersey's Ron Davis served as a kind of living archive of the major jazz drum styles of the twentieth century. From his high-school days with Joey Dee & the Starlighters to his most recent work with Jeanie Bryson, Ron exhibited the freedom and versatility of a musician completely at home with the many facets of jazz and pop percussion.

Ron began his musical education privately at the age of eight, and continued through secondary school. His formal education included attendance at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.

"The thing that always amazed me about Ron was his sensitivity," commented one long-time musician friend. "He could fit



David Gruel

into many different musical situations. He was so adaptable that it seemed like he could do anything."

The diversity of Ron's musical resume is evidence of the depth and breadth of his talents. He worked with Chuck Mangione on three albums: *Quartet*, *Together*, and *Land Of Make-Believe* (all on Mercury Records). Two of these received Grammy nomina-

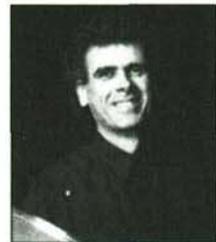
tions. Ron also cut two albums with Doc Severinsen, played frequently with the *Tonight Show* orchestra, and worked with Tony Bennett. In the 1970s he backed Woody Herman, performing live and on Woody's *Thundering Herd* album, which won a 1972 Grammy award for the best big band release of that year. Ron also worked with Gerry Mulligan, Benny Goodman, and Sarah Vaughan.

As a mainstream jazz drummer, Ron played with Jack McDuff, Bill Watrous, Chet Baker, and the Joe Farrell quartet. He also performed on *Gerry Neiwand & Timepiece*, released in the late '70s by A&M records. His last recorded performance was with Jeanie Bryson on *Tonight I Need You So*, released on the TelArc Jazz label.

John Read



A New Look At An Old Idea



by David Garibaldi

MUSIC KEY

HH	X
SD	●
BD	■

So I walk into my practice room on a Saturday morning and put on John Scofield's latest disk, *Groove Elation*, with Idris Muhammad on drums. I play track number four, "Kool," and on it Idris is playing some very serious funk. I'm enjoying it so much that I decide to play along. On go the headphones, I sit down at my drums and start to get into it, and what comes out is the inspiration for this month's article on note permutation.

Much to my surprise, I hadn't thought of this idea in quite some time. This basic premise was actually the subject of an article I penned for the *Rock Perspectives* column in the June/July 1980 issue of *MD*. That was sixteen years ago! The title of that article was "Odd Rock, Part 2." I was thinking how strange it was to be sitting in my practice studio here in 1996 and going through some of the same ideas I did in my practice studio in 1980—a new look at an old idea.

As I played along with the CD I could see how much better I understand what I do today. I thought of the rewards of hard work

and perseverance, and how the only way a funky beat evolves, is if we stay at it. Anyway, the way in which I used the material in that article is a bit different from what I'm doing this time. (Maybe at some point I'll revisit that article, but for now this permutation study is as far as we'll go.)

The exercises in this lesson permutate by 8th notes. Look at example 1 and then continue down the page. Notice that the first 8th note of example 1 moves to the *end* of the bar in example 2. The process is the same for the remainder of the exercises. There are eight 8th notes in a bar of 4/4 time, so that's why there are eight exercises.

I would suggest learning each example individually and then trying to move in and out of the different variations at random. Also try to play these with a slight swing as well as straight 16th notes. Another great way to expand these is to play the hi-hat part on a bell with one hand, and with the other hand play the unaccented snare notes on the hi-hat and the accented notes on the snare. Enjoy... see you next time!

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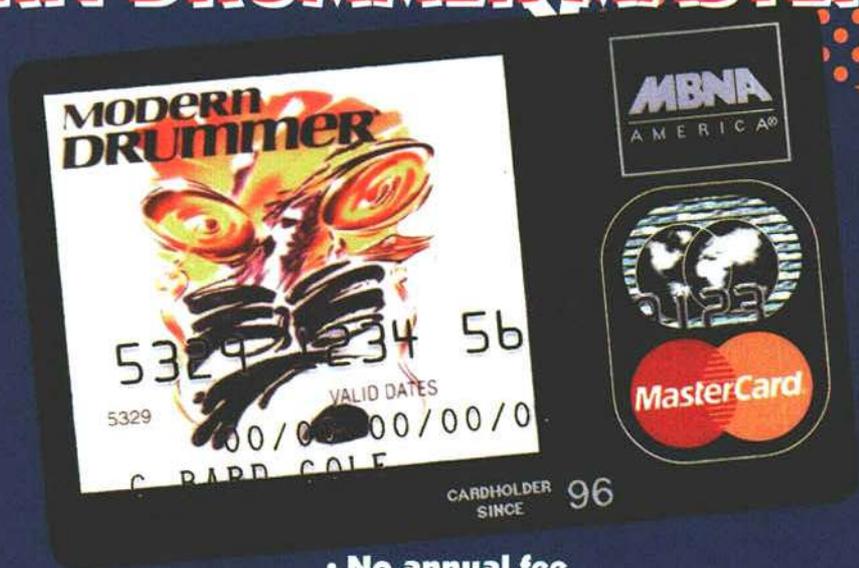
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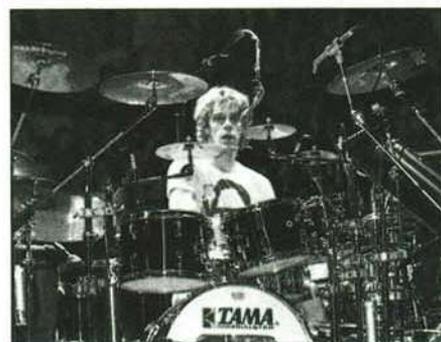
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Stewart Copeland

Style & Analysis, Part 1



Ebet Roberts

by John Xepoleas

MUSIC KEY			
Open	O	R.C. Bell	Splash
H.H.	X	Snare	X
T.T.	X	Tom	X
S.D.	X	Tom	X
B.D.	X	Tom	X
H.H. w/foot	X	Tom	X
	X	Tom	X

Welcome to the first of two lessons based on the playing style of Stewart Copeland, one of the most innovative and influential drummers of our time. In fact, there are several bands performing today that incorporate the types of grooves Copeland made popular with the

Police, including No Doubt, Rancid, Goldfinger, and the Mighty Mighty Bosstones.

All of the material presented in these lessons is derived from an interview that took place with Copeland in his Los Angeles studio. He agreed that one of his trademarks is playing "four on the floor"—in other words, playing the bass drum on counts 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the bar. Police tunes such as "Message In A Bottle" and "Driven To Tears" are good examples of playing the bass drum in this manner. According to Stewart, he likes to play four on the floor because it establishes a strong pulse without the need of a backbeat to hold things together. It frees you up to play different groupings, such as three-over-four, and it keeps your left hand free to hit splash cymbals and various other instruments off to the left side of the kit. Four on the floor also enables you to develop interesting hi-hat figures such as ruffs, drags, and quick triplets.

Stewart's hi-hat work will be the subject of the next lesson, but for now, let's take a look at some things you can work on to develop your feel for four on the floor. Let's begin by playing 8th notes on the hi-hat with your right hand and quarter notes on the bass drum.



Once you are comfortable with the above pattern, you can start to develop all sorts of interesting fill rhythms with your left hand. The following examples have a rhythmic pattern that is based on four over three.



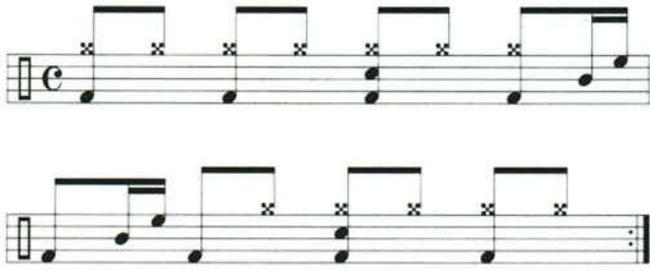
Here are two examples of how you can use the snare drum while playing four on the floor. Start with the stick across the rim of the drum (rimclick).



In addition to the snare drum, you can incorporate toms and other drums while playing four on the floor. (Stewart likes to incorporate *Octobans*, which he positions off to the left side of his kit.)



Here is a classic ska pattern using four on the floor that Stewart borrowed from John Bradbury of the Specials.



The ride cymbal can also be used quite effectively when playing four on the floor. Play 8th notes with your right hand on the bell of the cymbal while playing quarter notes on the bass drum.

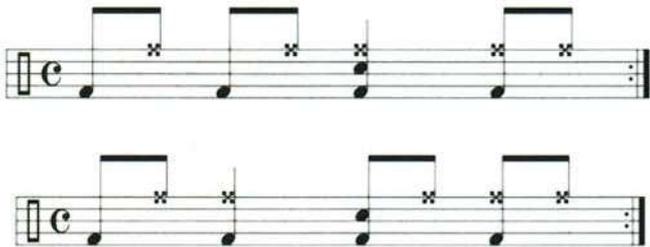


Play the bell of the cymbal on the "&"s of the beats.



When you are comfortable with both of the above patterns, combine them into a two-bar phrase.

Now try leaving some of the cymbal beats out.



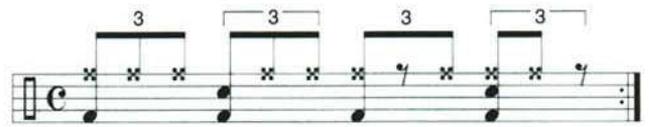
Triplet patterns also sound great played over four on the floor. Start with a simple quarter-note triplet rhythm, then expand on it.



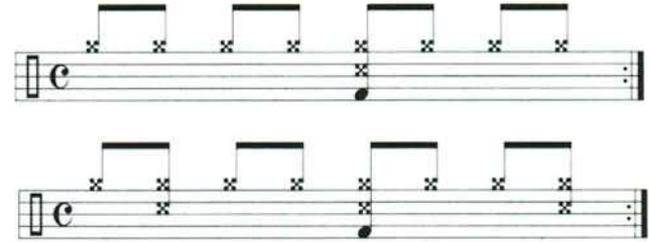
You can create even more interesting rhythms by accenting the triplet pattern.



Here's a tricky little pattern to try.



Now that you've mastered four on the floor, try playing the previous examples with the bass drum on only the third beat of the bar. This will give the patterns a reggae feel.



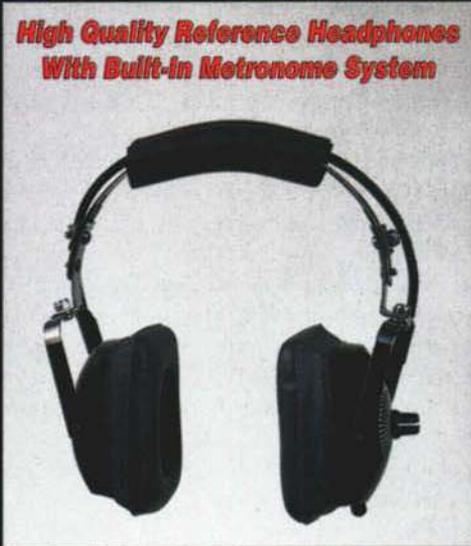
Next month we'll explore Stewart's innovative hi-hat techniques. See you then.



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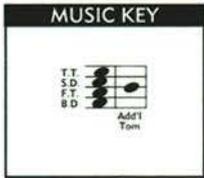
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Groupings, Tempos, And Stickings

A Systematic Method For The Development Of Rhythm And Phrasing



by Ralph Humphrey



I would like to say from the outset that I'm very happy to finally be writing for *Modern Drummer*. My endeavor is to write a series of articles that outline a system for developing your rhythmic concepts, and also to demonstrate ways to put these concepts into practice

at the drumset. These ideas have been cultivated over a number of years through my playing and teaching experiences. I must give special thanks to all my students who have given back so much in the way of applying what they have learned from my approach to rhythm, drumming, and music.

In order for you to derive the most benefit from a rhythmic idea, it is essential to discover the options you have for the development of that idea. But first, it is important to determine what an idea consists of. An idea is a motif, a figure, a sequence, a short phrase, etc. that has some kind of shape and tempo. I like to think that the *components of an idea* are:

1. A *grouping* of a number of notes from two on up.
2. A *tempo* or *pace* that expresses the grouping using one or more note values.
3. An *orchestration* that gives the idea its shape by using *accents* and *timbres* (tonal colors).
4. *Stickings* applied as needed to help give the idea its shape.

Once an idea is established, it can be applied in some sort of metric or non-metric structure of a larger sort, usually a phrase of from one to several measures or seconds long. For purposes of our discussion, I would like to apply the elements as described above to a typical two-measure, 4/4 structure. The system works like this:

1. First, choose a grouping of notes by deciding what the number of notes in the sequence will be. For our first example, let's choose two notes. For now, we will assume that the first note of a group receives the most stress.
2. Next, apply a note value to the group that has been chosen. Let's choose the 8th note.
3. Now decide how the chosen grouping and note value will be expressed (orchestrated) on the drumset, including a possible sticking approach. Here is one possibility:



The example is a simple one. Now let's get a little more adventurous. We will use the same two-measure, 4/4 phrase structure and apply the following system:

1. A grouping of four notes, the first receiving the most stress.
2. An 8th-note triplet note value.

3. An orchestration and sticking of a paradiddle that alternates the hands for each accent around the tom-toms. Here is that example:



Suddenly, we have a more interesting-sounding rhythmic sequence that tends to move across the beat in a syncopated manner. As the rhythmic sequencing becomes more challenging, it will be more difficult to maintain the original beat and phrase structure internally. (Using a click as a guide may be an option until you feel comfortable with the created phrases.)

The next example uses a grouping of five notes, using the 16th-note value. I have chosen a favorite five-note sticking pattern that is, in fact, a five-stroke open roll played smoothly without a change in the note value. Note that because I have limited the example to a two-measure phrase, I cannot carry out the sequence of fives to its logical conclusion. Instead, I've included a grouping of two 16th notes at the end to complete the thirty-two-note cycle.



The five-note grouping has become quite a popular idea and began to find its way into the music of the mid-'60s and early '70s, notably by the Miles Davis Quintet (featuring Tony Williams and Herbie Hancock), Chick Corea, the Mahavishnu Orchestra (featuring John McLaughlin and Billy Cobham), the Don Ellis Big Band, Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Zappa & the Mothers, and others. And, let us not forget that it was around this time that the music of India, featuring Ravi Shankar, Alla Raka, and others, had such a strong influence on that generation of musicians and music lovers.

A key to understanding the system that is being outlined and exemplified here is to determine how many total notes are included in a two-measure phrase. This, of course, is dependent on which note value is being used. For example, there are sixteen 8th notes within the two-measure, 4/4 structure. If one applies a three-note grouping of the 8th-note value, there will be five groups of three 8th notes plus one 8th note to complete the sixteen-note cycle (5x3=15+1=16). Observe:



Now, here is an orchestration of the previous example that incorporates the kick drum:



The following example uses the 8th-note triplet, giving us a total of twenty-four notes within the two-measure, 4/4 phrase structure. By applying a seven-note grouping, the result is three groups of seven 8th-note triplets plus three 8th-note triplets to complete the twenty-four-note cycle ($3 \times 7 = 21 + 3 = 24$). Add a useful

sticking and you have the following:



Now, here is an orchestration of this example:



The following text is the system that you should work through in order to build your own vocabulary of groupings, note values, and stickings. The eventual manner in which the sequences will be applied, or orchestrated, is up to the performer. At first, choose simpler grouping/note-value/sticking sequences. Once you begin to get the idea, start challenging yourself. There is no particular order in which to choose and apply any of the groupings, the note values, or the suggested stickings. Begin each of your examples with two measures of timekeeping, in either a straight-8th-note feel or a triplet-8th-note swing feel.

In future articles I will continue the exploration of this system of rhythmic development, including more complex grouping patterns, ideas for orchestration including hands and feet, different phrase lengths, shifting patterns and/or accents, the use of artificial note values, odd meters and groupings, polypulse, polyrhythm and polymeter, metric modulation, and much more. Good luck!

Groupings—Choose one and apply it to a note value from the list below, in a two-measure, 4/4 phrase structure:

1. Groups of two
2. Groups of three
3. Groups of four
4. Groups of five
5. Groups of six
6. Groups of seven
7. Groups of eight
8. Groups of nine

Note Values—Choose one and apply it to a grouping from the above list, in a two-measure, 4/4 phrase structure:

1. Quarter note
2. Quarter-note triplet
3. 8th note
4. 8th-note triplet
5. 16th note
6. 16th-note triplet
7. 32nd note

Stickings—Choose a sticking and apply it to the selected grouping and note value. It should be said that stickings are primarily and ideally chosen based on how you decide to express the rhythmic idea on the drumset. Like adding new words to your vocabulary, stickings are developed in the same way. They are a means to an end. However, many stickings, including many of the rudiments, have become part of the drummer's standard usage.

The following stickings represent basic single-stroke and compound sticking approaches, which

combine single and double strokes. Assume, for now, that the first note of any grouping receives the most stress. It is likely that the chosen orchestration will emphasize this note. Observe, also, that many of the compound stickings listed below put a single stroke first for more emphasis. (For more on compound stickings, see the book by Gary Chaffee called *Patterns: Sticking Patterns*, published by CPP/Belwin. Gary's systematic approach for compound stickings is very logical and extremely useful.)

1. Two-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RL, RL, etc.) leading with either hand
- b. RR
- c. LL

2. Three-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLR, LRL, etc.) leading with either hand
- b. RLL
- c. LRR
- d. right-hand lead (RLR, RLR, etc.)

3. Four-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRL, RLRL, etc.), leading with either hand
- b. paradiddles (RLRR, LRL, etc.)
- c. paradiddle inversions (e.g. RLLR, LRRL)

4. Five-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRLR, LRLRL, etc.)
- b. RLRL
- c. RLLRL
- d. right-hand lead (RLRLR, RLRLR)
- e. five-stroke (RLRR, LRLL)

5. Six-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRLRL, RLRLRL, etc.)

- b. double paradiddle (RLRLRR, LRLRL)
- c. paradiddle-diddle (RLRLL, RLRL)
- d. six-stroke (RLLRRL, RLLRRL)

6. Seven-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRLRLR, LRLRLRL, etc.)
- b. RLRLRLRL, RLRLRLRL
- c. paradiddle+a three-stroke (RLRRLRL, RLRLRLRL)
- d. paradiddle inversion + a three-stroke (e.g. RLLRLRL, RLLRLRL)
- e. seven-stroke (RLLRRLRL, RLLRRLRL)
- f. three singles + two double strokes (RLRLLRR, LRLRLL)
- g. right-hand lead (RLRLRLR, RLRLRLR)

7. Eight-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRLRLRL, RLRLRLRL, etc.)
- b. triple paradiddle (RLRLRLRR, LRLRLRL)
- c. eight-stroke (RLLRRLRL, LRLLRRL)
- d. eight-stroke with right-hand lead (RLLRRLRL, RLLRRLRL)
- e. paradiddles (RLRRLRL, RLRLRLRL)
- f. para-paradiddle-diddle (RLRLRLRL, RLRLRLRL)

8. Nine-note stickings:

- a. alternate strokes (RLRLRLRLR, LRLRLRLRL, etc.)
- b. RLRLRLRL
- c. nine-stroke (RLLRRLRLR, LRLLRRL)
- d. paradiddle + an inverted five-stroke (RLRLLRRL, RLRLRLRL)
- e. three singles + three double strokes (RLRLRLRL, RLRLRLRL)

Ralph Humphrey is a highly respected performer, educator, and author. He has performed and recorded with Don Ellis, Frank Zappa, Al Jarreau, Wayne Shorter, Manhattan Transfer, and many others. Ralph is also the co-chairman for the drum program at the Los Angeles Music Academy. For further study on odd groupings, odd meters, and orchestration ideas, refer to Ralph's excellent book, Even In The Odds, published by Barnhouse.



The Sex Pistols' Paul Cook

Doin' It Right This Time Around

by Adam Budofsky

"Hope I die before I get old!" When Roger Daltrey spat those Pete Townshend lyrics from the Who's "My Generation" in 1966, it was the most succinct encapsulation of rock's youthful rebellion to date. Of course, it wasn't much later that Townshend began busy-ing himself with rock opera, middle-age navel-gazing, and Broadway.

The members of the Sex Pistols certainly must be musing about their own, similar contradictions these days. Seventeen years after spearheading rock 'n' roll's first civil

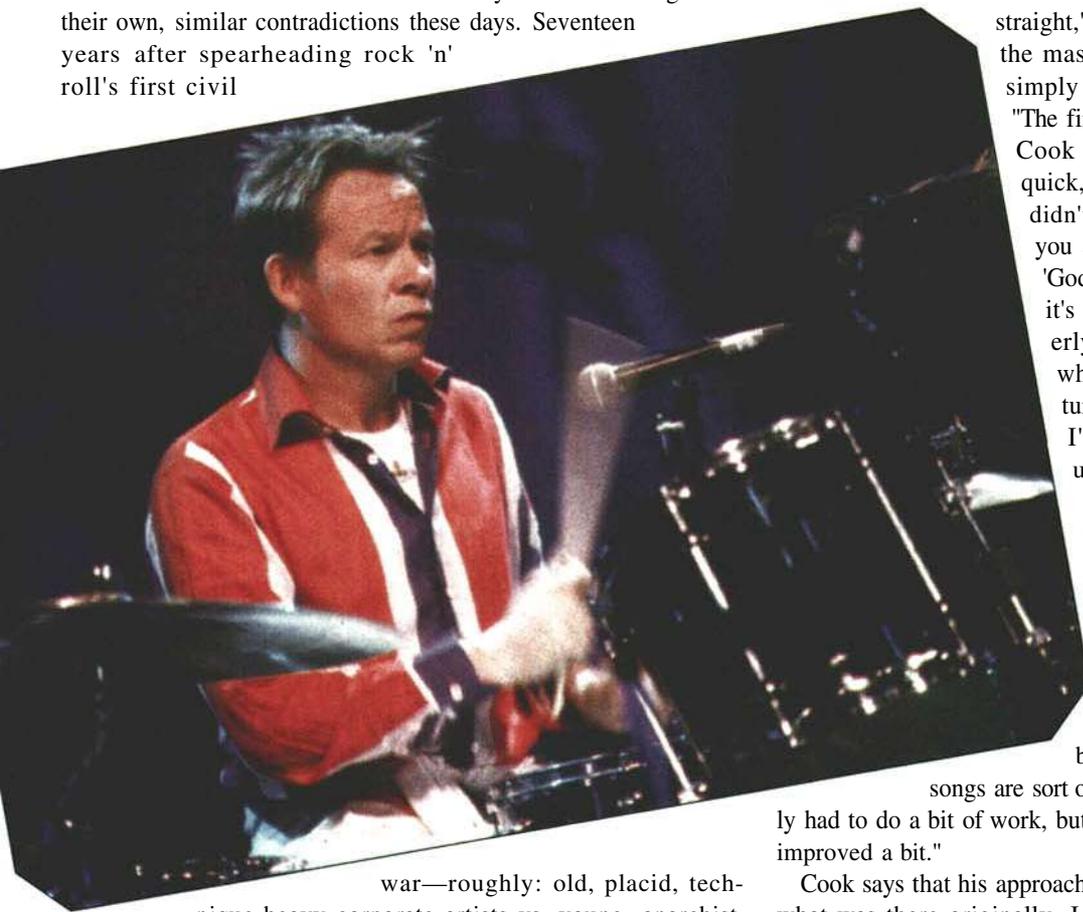
war—roughly: old, placid, technique-heavy corporate artists vs. young, anarchist, do-it-yourself independents—the Pistols have reunited in the face of much cynicism to tour the world.

comprised the bible for rock iconoclasts on both sides of the Atlantic in '77/'78, but were hardly a competition to the Journeys and Fleetwood Macs of the time. Today, however, the influence of bands like the Pistols and the Clash on the mainstream is obvious. Schoolchildren sport the nose rings and spiked hair that the original punks were beaten up for. And neo-punk bands like Green Day line their walls with gold-plated Xeroxes of the *Bollocks* blueprint, selling more records than even the dinosaur bands the first punks so violently railed against.

Pistols drummer Paul Cook hasn't much use for such analysis; he's more concerned with "setting the record straight," and bringing the Pistols' music to the masses in a professional manner that simply wasn't possible in the early days. "The first time around it was very intense," Cook explains. "And it all went by so quick, sort of like living in a dream. We didn't have time to enjoy it really. When you sit back a few years later you think, 'God, what was *that* all about?' So now it's a bit like finishing the job off properly. Before it was just chaos everywhere, and every day was an adventure. But now we're a little wiser, and I'm sure things will be a bit more under our control."

According to Cook, "The Pistols thing may seem like a long time ago to other people [the original line-up hadn't been in a room—much less on a stage—together in over fifteen years], but it's still quite fresh in our minds. I thought it would be a bit tougher than it was, but we slid back in all right. Those songs are sort of with you all the time. We obviously had to do a bit of work, but we've all been playing a while and improved a bit."

Cook says that his approach to the old material was "just to play what was there originally. I didn't want to do new versions of songs. I don't think people want to hear that. I suppose the main concern was just not playing too *much*. That could have been a problem, but I think we sorted that out okay and kept it to the original sound and concept."



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Indeed, those who missed the Pistols explosion the first time around will be treated to classic live sets, and the fifteen tracks comprising the brand-new, tour document, *Filthy Lucre Live*, all date back to the early days. "We've thrown a few new ideas around," Paul says, "but we have just about enough time to get the old set together. It's all been so *intense*. We've had masses of press and stuff to do, which has disrupted rehearsals. We haven't had as much time as we'd like."

Of course, such "intensity" didn't permeate early Pistols activities: "I don't think any of us thought we were going to make a living out of music when we started playing," Paul states.

"We just did it for fun. Things started moving when John [Lydon, aka Johnny Rotten] joined, and I suppose we all had insecurities, thinking that we weren't good enough. As it worked out, things moved fast and I was just swept along with it. After the first few gigs, we realized we were doing something right because we were getting a reaction one way or the other from people."

What happened next would become the stuff of rock legend. In two short years, the Pistols would almost single-handedly recharge rock with an attitude of aggression and revolt that is still strong today. At the time, though, as Paul suggests, such an anti-social

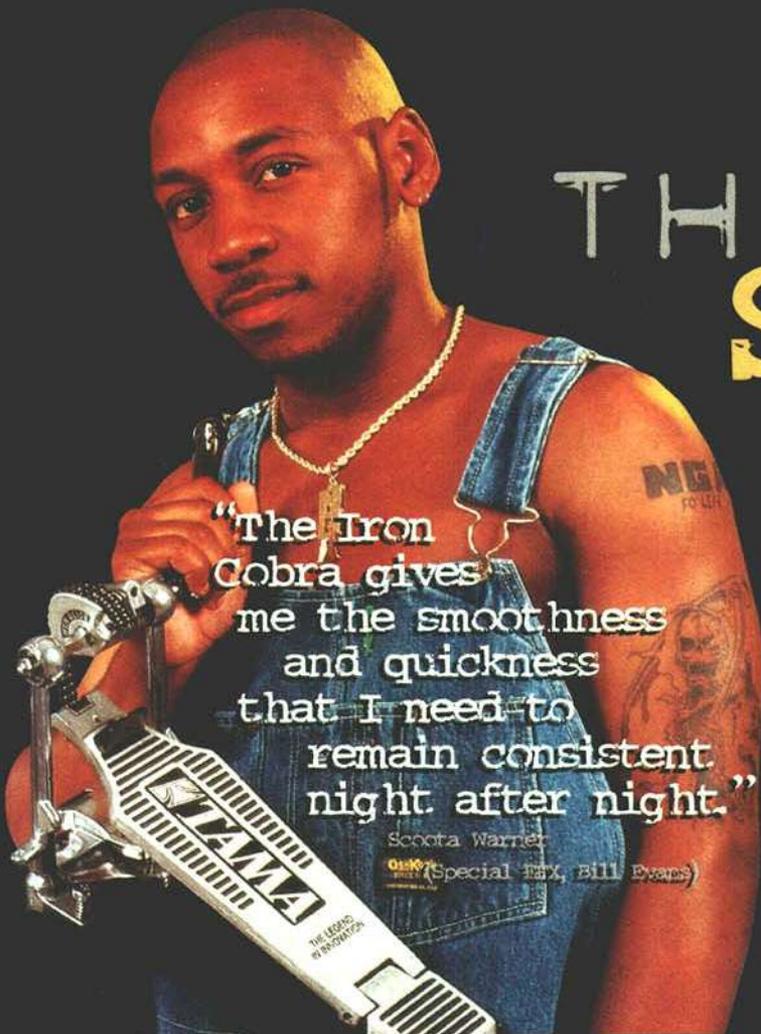
"The best way to do it, however bad you are, is to go on stage and get on with it. There is no experience better than that. That's what we did in the Pistols; that's the way we've always done everything"

attitude wasn't accepted on most fronts. "Oh, God, people *hated* us," Paul reminds. "We had the plug pulled on us a few times. But we liked stirring up a bit of trouble here and there. We used to go to these student halls and set up and play without being invited—just go and say, 'Yeah, we're on the bill.' They'd want to kick us off after a couple of numbers. There always were a few people there that would be interested in what we were doing, though, which we found encouraging. It made it worthwhile; we knew it wasn't all in vain."

The Pistols' ascendance wasn't the result of mere coincidence. England was in a time of great economic, political, and social turmoil, and as Cook

explains, "We tapped into this undercurrent of unrest. I think people were definitely waiting for something to happen by '76, '77, when the glam thing was fizzling out. Rock had gotten so big and overblown. People were looking for something at more of a roots level."

Despite the mood being right for a back-to-basics movement, the Pistols knew that amateurish performances would only get them so far. "We improved really quickly when we started playing a lot," Paul insists. "The best way to do it, however bad you are, is to just go out on stage and get on with it. There is no substitute for



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playing live; there is no experience better than that. That's what we did in the Pistols; that's the way we've always done *everything*."

That do-it-yourself philosophy resulted in Cook's developing a rather idiosyncratic drumming style. When most people think of a quintessential punk drum style, they envision breakneck 8th notes on the hi-hat with a simple and insistent bass drum pattern. Paul's playing in the Pistols, though, often turns the beat around, so to speak. On classic Pistols cuts you can hear him playing steady quarter notes on the hi-hat, with his bass drum doing the real accenting and pushing. "It's weird," Cook ponders, "I don't know where that came from. People sometimes said that I was trying to slow us down, because I'm quite a laid-back character. But I think I was just trying to hold the band back a bit by doing that, and using the bass drum as the pumping thing."

"It was interesting playing the songs back again," Cook adds, "because I didn't realize there were so many bits and pieces to them. They are quite weird in their own way. But it just came naturally; I didn't really have any main influences on the drums. I just listened to lots of different stuff. If anyone was a big influence, Al Jackson would be it. He played on all the Otis Redding and Al Green stuff. And Roxy Music's Paul Thompson was a great drummer too."

Like his heroes, Cook plies his craft on a simple kit, and claims not to concern himself much with brand names and the like. "I think once you get to a certain standard of drum," he figures, "there's not a lot of difference between them. Right now I'm using a Premier kit because I've always had a soft spot for them as the

old English company. I've got a hanging tom, a floor, a snare, a bass, a ride, and two crashes. That will do me. I don't feel the need to go mad with loads of drums and cymbals. It's easier getting them all in the back of a mini!"

When the Sex Pistols began to gain notoriety in England for their contradictory stance, it was decided that original bassist Glen Matlock should be replaced by someone who embodied the "punk spirit" more wholeheartedly. Pistols follower Sid Vicious seemed to fit the bill perfectly. Though the rise, fall, and death of Vicious would become tabloid fodder and eventually the subject of the feature film *Sid And Nancy*, Paul Cook maintains, "When he first joined the band, he was fine. He was really keen to learn the bass, and he was eager to impress. That was actually one of the better times of the band. But as soon as all the publicity got involved in his image, things started to fall apart rather quickly. He started to believe his own myth and just wanted to take everything to an extreme, and the music became secondary."

How did Sid's self-destruction affect Paul's role as drummer? "I couldn't really hear much of what was going on at the gigs anyway," he states. "Things have changed incredibly in the last fifteen years as far as sound is concerned. That's another reason for reforming now; you can actually hear us play the songs properly. I don't think we ever had that chance because there was so much distraction surrounding the band. We never had a proper monitor system or sound guy. We weren't playing the songs as we truly wanted to. We really only got to do that on the album."

Indeed, *Never Mind The Bollocks* still passes today as an extremely passionate and well-executed collection of songs—cer-

"Smooth,
strong,
and
it'll
last
forever."

John Stainer
(Helmet)

"This is
not the
first time
mankind
has been
tempted
by a snake."

Liberty DeVitto (Billy Joel)



tainly not the work of amateurs. "I think it stands the test of time," Paul says proudly. "People tend to get wrapped up in the myth of the Pistols, but I don't think any of the other stuff would have happened if the music wasn't great. It's weird, a lot of people still think we didn't actually play on the album; there was this myth that we couldn't play. People have been rewriting the history of the last fifteen years because we haven't been around to put them right. We are back now to address that."

Also contrary to popular assumptions, Paul Cook has been far from inactive since singer Johnny Rotten left the Pistols during their U.S. tour in early '79, effectively breaking up the band. Cook would eventually take on various recording and touring gigs with people like Joan Jett, Johnny Thunders, and Edwyn Collins. But the ball didn't exactly start rolling very fast right off the bat. "To tell you the truth, I just couldn't wait for it to end after the American tour," Paul recalls. "But when it did end, I didn't really know what to do with myself. I was in a band with [Pistols guitarist] Steve Jones called the Professionals, which didn't last very long. For a while after that I didn't really do anything. We've always been sort of on the outside of the music business, but I think I've come to terms with my career now." Paul chuckles at the thought: "I think I've finally realized I'm a musician—that this is my livelihood."

One of Paul's early "freelance" projects was Johnny Thunders' seminal album *So Alone*. Thunders had been a founder of two groups widely cited as early architects of the punk sound and attitude, the New York Dolls and the Heartbreakers (not to be confused with Tom Petty's later outfit). But *So Alone* is partially

notable for the presence of several generations of rock innovators: In addition to the Pistols' Cook and Jones, Thin Lizzy's Phil Lynott and Small Faces/Humble Pie leader Steve Marriott appear. "It's rather sad listening to that album now," Paul sighs, "because on the track 'Daddy Rolling Stone,' Johnny, Phil, and Steve each does a verse—and, God, they're all dead now. We had a great time making that record, though. I still remember it really well, because it's the only time I met Steve Marriott, which was a gas. We stayed up all night in the studio putting their vocals on it. We didn't even know what song we were going to do, and we did it in a couple of hours. It was just an off-the-cuff sort of thing, and that's what makes it great."

Though the Pistols' manifesto suggested the obliteration of all musical history, they obviously had some strong influences. In fact, the band cut their teeth on early Who and Small Faces numbers. More surprisingly, Cook insists that when he was young, he wasn't really into rock music. "I was brought up on soul, Motown, and Jamaican blue-beat. It was a bit later that I got into rock—all the glam that was big in England, like T-Rex, Roxy Music, Mott the Hoople, and the Faces."

Such open-mindedness on Cook's part would prove to his benefit later on, especially on a recent album by former Orange Juice frontman Edwyn Collins, *Gorgeous George*. The album features many different styles, from vaguely psychedelic groovers, to soft folky numbers, to the Bowie-ish international hit "A Girl Like You."

"About three years ago Edwyn asked me if I fancied playing with him, but I wasn't really familiar with his stuff, so I wasn't sure if I was into it. But I gave it a try and I really got into what he was about. He's a great guy and I like his attitude towards music—he's as cynical as anyone I've ever met. So I carried on working with him."

Paul plays live acoustic drums on most of the album, though ironically the groove to "A Girl Like You" is a loop that he is playing on top of. "I unfortunately can't take credit for that one," Paul says. "But with Edwyn anything goes when you are in the studio. We toured quite a lot the last couple of years off the success of that song."

Paul was touring the States with Collins last fall when he received a phone call asking if he was interested in doing a Pistols reunion. "I was quite happy playing with Edwyn," Cook recalls, "but he had to take a few months off to write material for a new album, so things worked out just right for me."

"I didn't think about the Pistols re-formation too much," Cook adds. "If I did, I might not have done it! I just thought, 'Jump in with both feet as usual and see how it goes.'"

So far so good, it would seem. Tickets for Pistols shows disappeared immediately, and the biggest problem the band seems to have is explaining their return to the press. "They are always a lot more cynical in the U.K.," Cook explains, "but they've got a fascination with us as well. I didn't realize the stir we were going to cause announcing we were going to tour again. Hundreds of reporters came to the press conference, and it hit the main news every hour on the television as well. I must admit, I didn't realize what the Pistols meant to a lot of people. Some people were quite cynical about our return, but that's fair enough. It's up to them to come and see us, and put the monster to bed."

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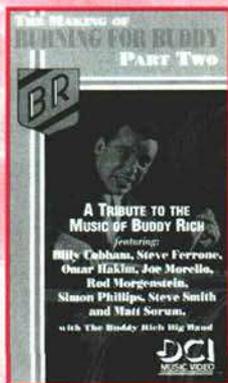
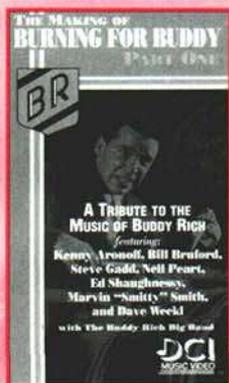
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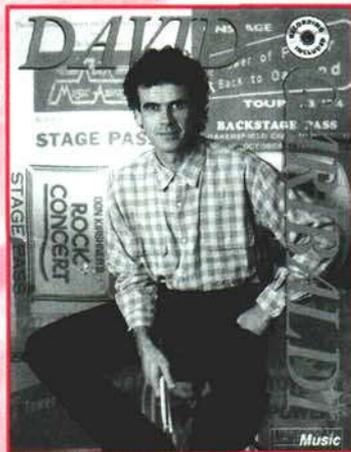
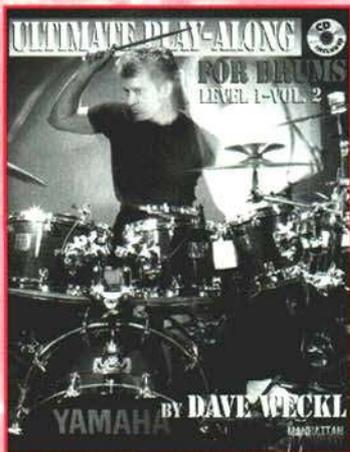
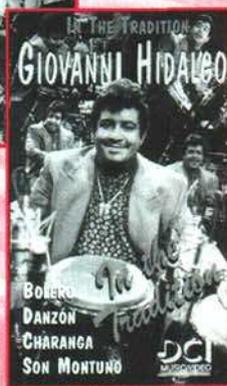
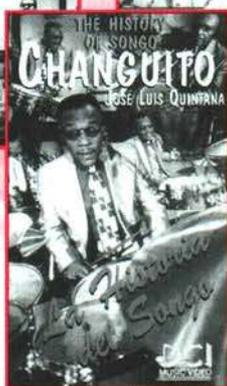
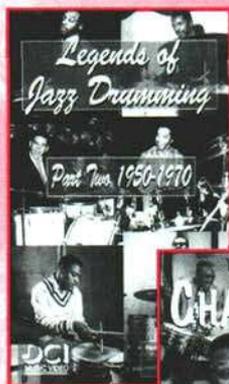


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RECORDINGS

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Supernatural Fairy Tales: The Progressive Rock Era

(Rhino R2 72451)



Prog-rock fans, our time has come! Gone are the days of hanging our heads in shame...of being castigated by every three-chord punk who labeled our music pretentious, antiseptic, anti-rock, and hopelessly Caucasian. Oh, we tried to spread the word. We told of bands like King Crimson, Genesis (pre-'77, please), and Jethro Tull (ditto) who were sincerely pushing the limits of rock 'n' roll, and often coming up with unique and startling modes of expression. We preached of the prog-rock palette being gloriously unlimited, and explained how the stylistic differences between, say, the Stones and the Kinks—unarguably two pillars of rock—were far less pronounced than those between, say, Renaissance and the Strawbs. Yet still our heroes were lumped together and systematically disparaged.

Well, Rhino Records has boldly taken the first step to return art rock to its rightful loft. The five-CD box set *Supernatural Fairy Tales: The Progressive Rock Era* is a deep and mysterious gold mine of progressive rock's leading lights, less popular though equally groundbreaking ensembles, and curious if non-essential combos.

Predictably, the drumming here ranges from the sublime to the mundane. (After all, many of the slings and arrows aimed at '70s prog were pretty accurate, and the drumming often shared responsibility for the artistic anguish.) For the most part, though, what we're served is a great selection of highly varied and charged percussives. Big names like Bill Bruford (Yes's "Perpetual Change" and "Siberian Khatru"), Carl Palmer (ELP's "Knife-Edge" and "Karn Evil 9"), and Phil Collins (Genesis's "The Musical Box" and "Dancing With The Moonlit Knight") are correctly represented, as are lesser-known trailblazers like

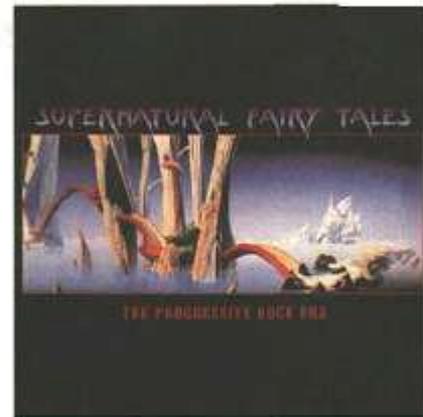
Gong's Pierre Moerlen, Hatfield & the North's Pip Pyle, Can's Jaki Liebeck, Gentle Giant's John Weathers, and Henry Cow's Chris Cutler.

Also strewn about are popular if less ambitious offerings from ELO, the

Moody Blues, and Golden Earring, as well as odd and unpredictable fare from more obscure European art-heads like Amon Duul II, Ange, Ash Ra Temple, Magma, and Wigwam. Licensing restrictions prevented the inclusion of a few art-rock giants, but the breadth of this collection makes such facts less of a concern (and besides, you should go out and buy the full CDs of the great Crimson and Tull material anyway).

One thing is for sure: This ambitious collection isn't likely to result in neo-punks plopping down a few twenties and then a week later adding six more toms to their sets. And that's a shame; the inclusion of cuts by Roxy Music (a big early punk influence), Can (enormously influential on "post-punk"), and Curved Air (Stewart Copeland's pre-Police gig) remind us that the line between prog and "modern rock" often isn't very wide. Oh, well. *Supernatural Fairy Tales* will certainly provide more than enough thrills and a few surprises for the few, the enlightened. Long live prog!

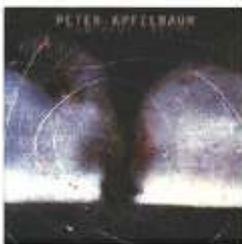
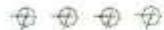
Adam Budofsky



PETER APFELBAUM

Luminous Charms

(Gramavision GCD 79511ADV)



Deszon X. Claiborne: dr
Josh Jones: perc, dr
Peter Apfelbaum: tn sx, kybd
Will Bernard: gtr
Jeff Cressman: tbn, el bs
John Shifflett: ac bs

Much of *Luminous Charms'* charm—and most of its motion—is rhythmic, propelling and back-lighting otherwise dark, angular melodies, menacing ostinatos, and static modal progressions with splintering, polyrhythmic funk. Drummer Deszon Claiborne's linear, polymetric groove over the 7/4 opener, "Phoenix Hill," sets the stage for a diskful of solid, churning syncopations that simultaneously lock in the time and disguise the meter, in general keeping the listener on fascinated edge.

A drums-and-percussion-driven Afro-fusion ostinato and Apfelbaum's bluesy tenor half-

time interlude depict the African-American experience in their respective sections of "Long Road/Motherless Child." Following a soulful Apfelbaum cadenza, the anthemic, vaguely Middle Eastern head of the title track gives way to a hard-funkin' 7/4, with Claiborne and bassist Jeff Cressman hard on the throttle. Will Bernard's solo fretwork favorably reminds of Scott Henderson, granting refreshing lyrical departures from the tenor/bone unisons or octaves under which he is relegated to riff a bit too often. Claiborne's free, thundering solo over the (go ahead, guess)

tenor/bone lead and guitar ostinato in "For The Living" relents to an easy 9/8, whose loping release provides welcome rays of harmonic sunshine through the cut's prevailing angry, storm clouds.

Claiborne wields a lighter hand with serviceable brushes on "Chimes" and on the jagged nanigo "Song Of Corrosion," but his touch never ventures near "delicate." Instead, his advanced rhythmic concept and solid timekeeping throughout *Luminous Charms* provide a study in precise beat displacement and muscular linear funk in odd-meter contexts.

Rich Watson

HEADCRASH Overdose On Tradition

(Discovery 77041)



Nico Berthold: dr, perc, programming
Allen Wright, Shane Cooper: vcl, samples
Herwig Meysner,
Roger Ingenthron: gtr, bs
Ulrich Frank: kybd, samples

Are they funk, hip-hop, or industrial? Apparently Headcrash wants to cover all corners of current American rock to make an impression away from Germany, where the group is from. The effort is largely successful, if overly derivative: Lord knows where this band would be without Suicidal Tendencies and Prong as role models.

Drummer Nico Berthold lends a solid backbeat and groove underneath, laying down straight-ahead attitude and keeping the music click-track clean, occasionally busting out a double kick beat or snare fill. His greatest gift, it seems, is the ability to blend programmed drum sequences into his acoustic tracks. On "Plugged In," for instance, he very effectively merges a machined hi-hat track with his kick and snare patterns. Then, on "Decapitated," he takes sampled congas and places an

interesting rhythm atop a basic 2-and-4.

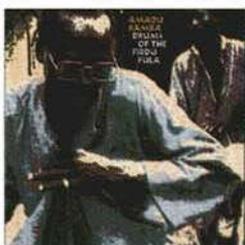
Elsewhere, there are sampled castanets, hand drums, and some annoying episodic segues between songs. Through it all, however, Berthold retains a human touch that generally keeps things from sounding too mechanical.

Despite the American slant, this album is undeniably German—the singing is downright comical in places, and Headcrash uses samples and voice-overs in much the same way other German outfits have been doing since the '80s. And that's probably Headcrash's chief hurdle toward grabbing American ears: When the band decides where in America it wants to go (metaphorically speaking), the music should become more cohesive and provocative.

Matt Peiken

AMADU BAMBA Drums Of The Firdu Fula

(Village Pulse VPU 1004)



Batche "Samba" Baldeh, Bureh Baldeh, Kobba Ann: mbagu dr
Jaiteh Baldeh, Bokary Jawo: vcl
Bokary Dem: chorus vcl
Amadu Bamba: director, chorus vcl

In a search for The Source, producers Carl Holm and Adam Novick trekked to West

African villages, capturing traditional drumming on a DAT recorder powered by a car battery. Their efforts, focusing on styles that had not been previously well-documented, resulted in the small Village Pulse label. Ethnomusicologists will want to examine all six percussion CDs while others may survey various styles in the sampler, *A Land Of Drummers* (due November '96).

The exciting drumming of the Firdu Fala people of Senegal and Gambia features a traditional trio of three higher-to-lower tuned drums, "mbagu," which are played using one hand, one stick, and iron rattles around one wrist. Voices accompany the drums in a call-and-response style.

The joyous sound enlivens social occasions from weddings to wrestling matches. Song forms open with a simple, determined pulse and eventually blossom into heated polyrhythms that deftly alternate between and straddle duple and triple feels. The stick/hand integration of these master players is seamless. These important, quality-sound discs are both very modern and timeless.

Jeff Potter

THE MUSTARD SEEDS

(Entourage EN57101)

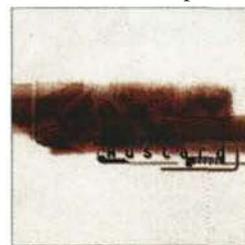


Jorge Palacios, Gregg Bissonette: dr
Matt Bissonette: bs, vcl
George Bernhardt: gtr, vcl
Doug Bossi: gtr, vcl

Jorge Palacios and an uncredited Gregg Bissonette share drumming duties on the

Mustard Seeds' impressive self-titled CD, and each brings his own strengths to bear.

Palacios has great rock chops, apparent in his loose, swinging feel on "Cats And Dogs," which is highlighted by snare after-beats that give the groove life. And "Bulldozer" is a cruncher that the drummer kicks hard, turning the rhythm around at several points with an



amazing playful edge.

Meanwhile, songs like "Ordinary Man" reflect an interesting mix of influences for Bissonette to traverse: the power pop of Atlanta's Producers, the trashy funk of Edgar Winter, and the snarl of the Glenn Hughes / Pat Thrall project. "Quicksand," meanwhile, is more like a Soundgarden track that Gregg drives nicely, and the carefree way he breaks up the beat near the end of "Mr. Green" is a rhythmic hoot.

Bissonette's talents are well-documented by now. Palacios, however, is a relatively new face on the scene, and this CD is a fine introduction to his ability to meld disparate elements, set up hooks with fresh ideas, and provide balance to the musical menu.

Robin Tolleson

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

SCOTT CHURILLA's ice box is fully stocked with everything from Swingin' big band licks to greazy strip beats to double bass blowouts, as he ably replaces Taz Bentley on The Reverend Horton Heat's new *It's Martini Time* (Interscope). **MATT SORUM** is one of the few top drummers today who doesn't let his impeccable taste and swing inhibit his animal instincts; Neurotic Outsiders' self-titled debut (Maverick), featuring the Sex Pistols' Steve Jones, G 'N R's Duff McKagan, and Duran Duran's John Taylor, is his latest platform—and it rocks. **JEEP MACNICHOL** stretches the Samples' mediocre pop tunes with interesting Neil-ish fills and double-pedal chops on *The Outpost* (MCA). **STEVE GADD** and **JOHN GUERIN** invent the pop/funk/studio style on Tom Scott's *New York Connection*, *Tom Cat*, and *...& The LA Express* albums, recently re-released by Epic/Legacy.

RATING SCALE

- ★★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★★ Very Good
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Fair
- ★ Poor

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CHARLES FAMBROUGH

City Tribes

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ½



(Evidence ECD 22149-2)
Ricky Sebastian: dr, perc
Cafe, Marion Simon: perc.
Charles Fambrough: bs, vl
Craig Handy: sx, dr, vl
John Swana: trp, EVI
Bill O'Connell: kybd

Bassist Charles Fambrough, who has released four previous albums as a leader, deftly investigates Latin musics on this excellent contemporary jazz recording. Featuring both original tunes by the band and an Afro-Cuban romp through Wayne Shelter's "Dolores,"

this collection is fun from the get-go.

Drummer Ricky Sebastian brought his percussionist friend Cafe to the date, and with the addition of the fine rhythms of Marion Simon, the three rhythmatisms add a fiery brew to the mixture of New Orleans, Afro-Cuban, salsa, fusion, and swing rhythms—as well as some spirited solos. On the album-opener, co-written by Fambrough and Cafe, the berimbau is featured. On the title track, a percussion intro sets up a delicious mixture. Cafe and Marion play the same instruments, but it's easy to tell them apart: Cafe plays less but says more.

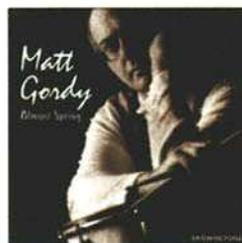
Ricky Sebastian has a light hand on the ride cymbal and adds simple but always tasteful snare accents throughout the sambas. And special guest Dave Valentin floats over his elegant and simple snare playing on "The Hunt." Great fun.

Adam Ward Seligman

MATT GORDY

Almost Spring
 (Brownstone BRCD 957)

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ½



Matt Gordy: dr
Jeff Stout: trp
Les Arbuckle: tn sx
Dan Fox: tbn
Chris Taylor: pno
Todd Baker: bs

Today's most technical drumming rightfully inspires awe, and its rhythmic complexity invites numeric dissection. Unfortunately, it also tends to blind us to prime-number qualities like touch and finesse, which are every bit as satisfying when plied by a drummer as skilled as Matt Gordy. Don't hold against him his long tenure as principal percussionist with the Maracaibo [Venezuela] Symphony, or his broad "legit" experience; Gordy swings hard here, with perhaps only the cleanliness of his stroke betraying his philharmonic side.

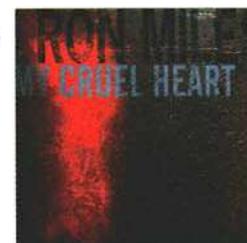
Gordy penned two of the tunes and did most of the arrangements on this, his second album. Except for a short solo on Miles Davis's fast-into-free "Selim" and a few traded fours, he settles effectively into a support role for Stout, Arbuckle, and Taylor, who, like him, speak eloquently without turning cartwheels to impress. Gordy simultaneously caresses and drives the nine swing, samba, waltz, and ballad cuts, always allowing them to breathe. His right-hand chops do peek out on "Selim" and the up-tempo "Come Rain Or Come Shine," but it's his superbly expressive hi-hat and impeccable taste that shine—softly—throughout.

Rich Watson

RON MILES

My Cruel Heart
 (Gramavision GCD 79510)

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕



Rudy Royston: dr
Artie Moore: bs
Ron Miles: trp
Farrel Lowe, Todd Ayers, Eddie Turner, Arnie Swenson, Dave Willy: gtr
Fred Hess: tn sx
Eric Moon: pno
Al "Hammond" Moore: org

With a release that is both far-reaching and close to home, Ron Miles' Denver-based outfit makes musical waves on *My Cruel Heart*. Metal rock guitars create the atmosphere on the album-opening "Finger Palace," with poignant trumpet drifting in an acid-jazz ambience. A similar feeling pervades the title track, driven by drummer Royston on its mission from a "Strawberry Fields Forever" feeling to a heavy crunch. The horn is plaintive on "Howard Beach," as Royston displays impressive funk chops. And he plays "Erase Yourself with a relaxed sense of implied time, as the group augments that freedom with an alluring array of audio candy.

The music is at times austere, like a Mark Isham soundscape, but then turns into a scarcely controlled chaos. Royston proves that he could play with Henry Threadgill or Henry Rollins. The grabber about Miles' material, and the drummer's interpretation of it, is that no part of the process is skipped over lightly—the groove, the arrangement, the tonality, the sounds. It's all here.

Robin Tolleson

VIDEOS

LEGENDS OF JAZZ DRUMMING

Part Two: 1950-1970

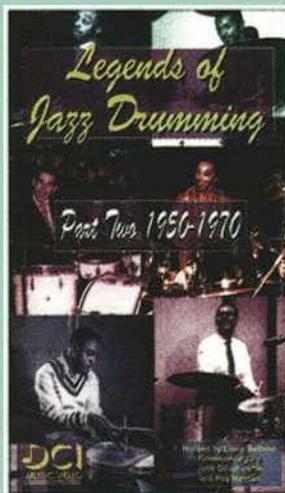
(Warner Bros./DCI)

\$39.95, 65 minutes

Following up Part One of *Legends* (see July '96 *Critique*), DCI once again admirably compiles video clips of the most important and groundbreaking jazz drummers in history. This time out we're teased with precious live clips of the "cool" work of Shelly Manne (though that moniker doesn't suggest the fire that Manne and his cohorts were capable of) all the way through such modernists as Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. In between is great coverage of giants like Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, and Jack DeJohnette, interspersed with commentary by Louie Bellson and Roy Haynes (both of whom anchored Part One), as well as DeJohnette himself, who offers lots of great insight.

DeJohnette is often heard referring to this or that drummer as "unique," and indeed the sustaining thought *Legends* leaves one with is exactly that point: Each of these giants will be remembered long after they're gone for taking their own very personal ideas, mixing them with the deep contributions of their drumming forefathers, and making important artistic comments about the time and place they played in—the very definition of an artist. Infotainment of the highest order.

Adam Budofsky



David Mesbergen

Chandler, Arizona's David Mesbergen credits his years in high school concert band with giving him "the skill of organization in a group sense, which I later found to be a crucial ingredient in playing with working bands." He also pursued private instruction, through which he was exposed to and influenced by the playing of Dennis Chambers, Kenny Aronoff, Philly Joe Jones, David Garibaldi, and Neil Peart.

Now twenty-seven, David has been working for the past several years with an

original group known as Primitive Id. The group plays various clubs in college towns throughout Arizona and New Mexico. They've released one CD



(*Resolutions*, on Simultanea Records), and have a second in the works. A video for "The Other Side Of Hope" from that project reveals David to be a solid and tasteful player in the pop idiom.

"As I write and play for Primitive Id," says David, "I use my influences and my education as resources for creating new and different material. My playing is mostly a solid alternative rock/dance beat, but I continue to practice all styles to keep me versatile and continuously employed." David plays a Premier *Signia* kit mounted on a Gibraltar rack, with Sabian cymbals.

"My goals for the future," says David, "are to continue studying and practicing in order to enhance my playing. I hope to be involved in more studio work, to tour the country with Primitive Id, to continue my teaching, and to reach the quality level of the players featured in *Modern Drummer*."

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for nor credited.) The bio sketch

Steven Froese

Twenty-seven-year-old Steve Froese has been studying and performing on drums and percussion for over seventeen years. Inspired by a Buddy Rich concert in 1977, Steve began studying with several instructors from the University of North Texas in Denton. By the age of seventeen he was commuting from his home town of Sherman, Texas to Dallas to play with various jazz, rock, country, and blues bands. These gigs gave him the opportunity to open for such diverse artists as Maynard Ferguson, Mark Famer, and Bachman Turner Overdrive. While pursuing formal studies at UNT, Steve toured with a popular Dallas-based rock and blues band called Quasi & the Motos, opening for Delbert McClinton, Foghat, Tom Petty, and Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Two albums he recorded with Quasi & the Motos still receive airplay in the Dallas area.

Currently, Steve is in his second season as drummer for the Southern Palace Theater at the Six Flags Over Texas theme park. The theater's show features top

"young country" hits as well as a historical background of country music. In addition, Steve teaches privately, presents clinics at local high schools, and writes educational material for magazines. (His "Truth On Tape" column appeared in *MD's* August '91 issue.)

Steve performs on a Pearl *MLX* series kit with Zildjian and Sabian cymbals. He also incorporates hand and Latin percussion instruments into his music, and uses such electronics as the Alesis *HR16* and *D4* and Trigger Perfect triggers. He looks forward to continuing as a local player, doing session work, and becoming a recording artist.



Kris Branco

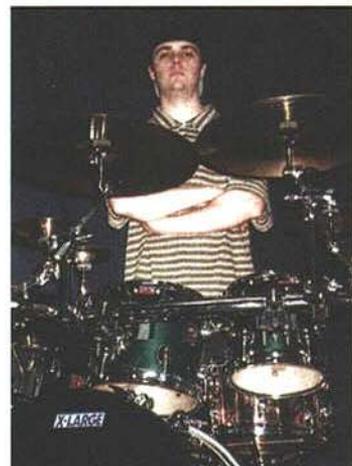
Kris Branco hails from Boston, where he has been active in the music scene for the past six years. His band, Thought Junkie, has received attention locally and nationally, and is now working with producer Tom Waltz (Marky Mark, Extreme). Under Tom's wing the band has produced a CD (*Wisdom*, Sonic Music), two cassettes, and a 7" single, all of which have received airplay on New England radio stations. Not bad for a drummer who's only twenty-two years old.

Citing such influences as Terry Bozzio, Mike D., Matt Cameron, and

Stephen Perkins, Kris has developed an aggressive style of playing that has garnered him some personal attention over and above his work with Thought Junkie. He recently recorded drum tracks and collaborated on the music for a song by A&M recording artists Top Choice Clique.

According to Kris, his philosophy on playing is "to always let your emotions shine through into your playing—be it anger or whatever you're feeling at the time—and to focus yourself into whatever you do." Kris focuses himself

into his performances on a Premier *Genista* kit, with Slingerland and Drum Workshop snare drums, Zildjian, Wuhan, and Rancan cymbals, and a Gibraltar rack.



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

you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please do not send original tapes or photos.



Elvin Jones

Part 2: Coltrane And Beyond

by Mark Griffith

Last month we spoke about Elvin Jones' early recordings, going all the way through some of the freelance work he did in the '60s. This time we'll examine Elvin's vast array of work with John Coltrane, some of his many recordings as a leader, and a great deal of his later work as a sideman.

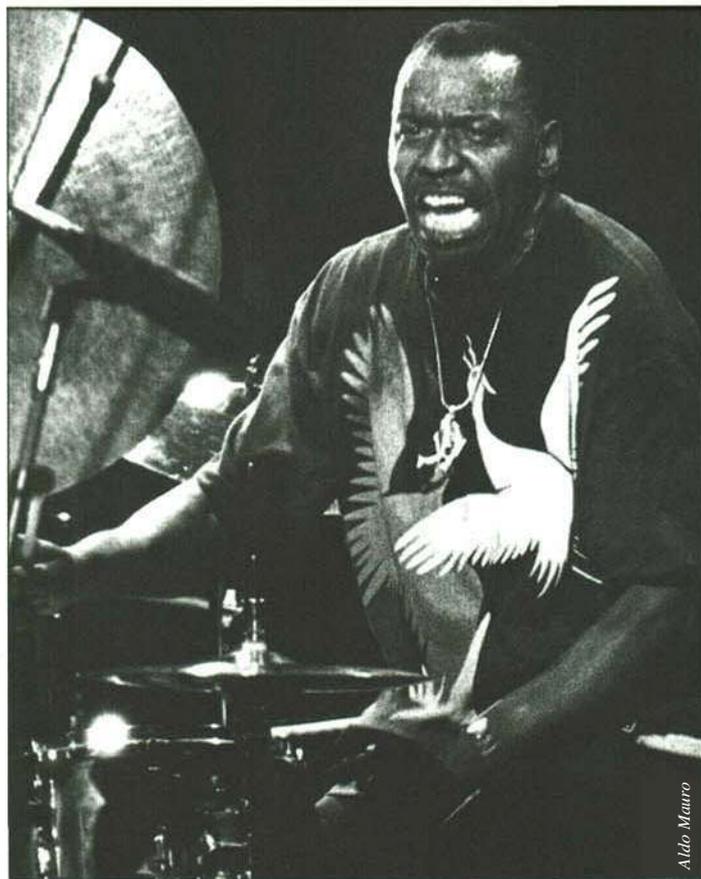
More so than any other two musicians, Elvin Jones and John Coltrane were a perfect pairing of musical talents. However, to really appreciate how perfectly Elvin accompanied Coltrane, one must first hear Coltrane play with *other* great drummers around the same period. The idea is not to directly compare any of the mentioned musicians, but instead to illustrate the effect that Elvin and Coltrane had on each other. Listen to *Giant Steps* (with Arthur Taylor and Lex Humphries playing drums), *Coltrane Jazz* (with Jimmy Cobb), *Bags & Trane* (with Connie Kay), and *The Avant Garde* (with Ed Blackwell). These are all good recordings featuring stellar drummers. But none of those drummers "hooked up with" or pushed Coltrane like Elvin did.

Coltrane and Elvin first recorded together in October of 1960. In four days, Coltrane recorded enough material for four different records that would be released over the next three and a half years: *My Favorite Things*, *Ole*, *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, and *Coltrane's Sound*. Of the four, *Ole* is the most unusual. For one thing, it uses a septet instead of the usual quartet that Coltrane performed and recorded with through 1965. Listen to Elvin's brush playing throughout "Aisha," and notice how he keeps the time moving during this very long, slow number. ("Original Untitled Ballad," from *The Coltrane Legacy*, is another great example of this aspect of Elvin's drumming.)

My Favorite Things is a true classic. On the title track, Elvin changed the concept of playing in 3/4 time forever. In fact this whole record is a masterpiece.

Coltrane Plays The Blues is also very interesting. Check out "Blues To Elvin" and "Blues To Bechet" for ideal examples of Elvin's slow, loping, rolling-triplet time flow. This is signature Elvin Jones. On "Blues To You" (performed without pianist McCoy Tyner), Elvin accompanies Coltrane with mastery. Listen to Elvin's comping and the way he marks the ends of phrases—sometimes even ending phrases for Coltrane. The two also trade fours and exchange choruses on this tune.

Coltrane's Sound is a very different record. While Elvin doesn't solo or trade fours at all on the album, this is a perfect recording of his flawless and varied timekeeping. On "The Night Has 1000



Aldo Mauro

Eyes," part of the song is played with straight jazz time, and part is played with a Latin feel. "Liberia" has the same basic form; however, at the beginning of the song Coltrane plays loose on top of the band's long tones, while Elvin plays his signature long sounds and rolls. "Equinox" has one of the aforementioned slow-rolling triplet feels. "Central Park West" is a medium swing on which Elvin plays brushes throughout. On "Body And Soul," Mr. Jones plays in a two feel while playing with a heavy 1 and 4 on the hi-hat, a la Blakey. In fact, Elvin sounds very Blakey-ish on this entire recording. The record is a perfect study of Elvin's timekeeping skills.

All of the above albums have been compiled in a box set called *John Coltrane: The Heavyweight Champion*. The set also includes a great deal of previously unissued material. From a musical standpoint this is a great purchase; from a drummer's view it is an excellent investment. It is great music—and a prime example of how Elvin Jones sounded in 1960 and '61.



**It took 46 years to improve the timbales.
One listen to Pete Escovedo
and you'll know why it was worth the wait.**

Percussionists are always looking for "that sound." You know the one. You heard it on so and so's album. You heard it at the last concert you attended.

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So if it's "that sound" you're after, you can search for a set of classic oldies, or you can take a lesson from Pete Escovedo and lay into today's classics. Toca Classic Timbales.



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When You're Ready To Improve Your Sound

Let me stress that by listening to any Coltrane recording *only* to check out Elvin Jones, you are doing the music, Coltrane, Elvin, and yourself a great disservice. While the focus of this article is Elvin's drumming, the focus of Elvin's drumming was always on the *music* and on the musicians he was accompanying.

Coltrane recorded often and primarily with his quartet, with Elvin playing drums. All of the major recordings that the two made together are listed at the end of this article. (There are more than twenty of them.) Since it would take volumes to correctly detail them all, I will focus on only a few.

The two studio sessions that captured the most magic on Elvin's behalf were *Crescent* and *A Love Supreme*. The latter is not only a priceless musical work, it's also the ultimate spiritual jazz recording. On both albums you can hear Elvin expanding his ideas, breaking up the time, and becoming far more polyrhythmic. These two recordings are quintessential Elvin Jones, and they simply defy explanation.

You should also check out *Africa Brass*, which is a large-group recording similar in texture to those of Gil Evans. On *John Coltrane & Duke Ellington*, *John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman*, and *Ballads*, Elvin doesn't stretch out as much. Instead, we get to hear the less talked-about—but just as important—side of Mr. Jones: the minimalist side. He teaches a very important drum lesson on these recordings. No matter how much drums anyone can play, the music comes first. Elvin uses restraint more than he uses his toms and cymbals. However, when he does opt to mix it up, he chooses the perfect place in the music to do so. Elvin's listening skills are one of his most important tools, and these three record-

ings are the perfect place to observe them in action.

The John Coltrane Quartet toured for nearly five years. During those five years, many live recordings were made. *Live At Birdland* and *Live At The Vanguard* were the most popular. However, Pablo Records recently released an astounding live double CD called *Afro Blue Impressions*. This recording captures the quartet for one entire performance, plus two cuts from another concert, both in 1963. It reveals *exactly* how this group sounded live, with all the interaction, fire, and sheer beauty of the quartet in action. The performances include many sections where Coltrane and Elvin play extended duets (a common occurrence in the quartet's performances in the late '60s). Also notice the great drum fills (or tags) that Elvin plays at the end of many of the songs. On *Afro Blue Impressions* everyone—including Elvin—solos extensively and plays beautifully. The results are simply stunning.

After leaving the Coltrane group in 1965, Elvin freelanced a great deal. One of his most frequent employers was jazz organist Larry Young, with whom he made the legendary recording *Unity* and another spectacular record, *Into Somethin'*. Elvin also recorded *Talkin' About*, *Street Of Dreams*, and *I Want To Hold Your Hand* with Grant Green and Young. These recordings also featured great musicians like Sam Rivers, Bobby Hutcherson, and Woody Shaw. (All of these recordings are available in the one-of-a-kind box set *The Complete Blue Note Recordings Of Larry Young*.)

Elvin can also be heard reuniting with former employer Sonny Rollins on *East Broadway Run Down*, a much freer recording than their earlier Vanguard sessions. McCoy Tyner called on Elvin for

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his spectacular recording *Extensions*, reuniting Jones with Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, and Alice Coltrane. Jazz pianist Phineas Newborn, Jr. called on Elvin for his all-star trio recording, *Harlem Blues*. Newborn played as much piano as Elvin played drums, resulting in an intense piano-trio recording. And speaking of intensity, Elvin also recorded with Ornette Coleman, resulting in two very bombastic recordings called *Love Call* and *New York Is Now!*

In the late '60s Elvin also began leading his own bands. *Heavy Sounds*, featuring bassist Richard Davis, is a gem. Elvin's sax trio recordings for Blue Note, *The Ultimate Elvin Jones* and *Puttin' It Together*, are wonderful. And on *Elvin Jones Live At The Vanguard*, the same instrumentation shines live. Elvin was also captured as part of an all-star jam session at the Vanguard on *Jazz For A Sunday Afternoon* (on which Elvin is heard with a young but strong Chick Corea). Elvin and Chick are also on the out-of-print (but very worth looking for) LP *Live At Town Hall*. Also worth finding are two of Elvin's solo recordings featuring saxophonist Dave Liebman: *Live At The Lighthouse* and the spectacular *Earth Jones*. Elvin and McCoy Tyner reunite on the recently re-released *Love & Peace*, with tenor legend Pharoah Sanders. Also check out Elvin's recent releases on Enja records: *Going Home*, *In Europe*, *It Don't Mean A Thing*, and the masterful recording *Youngblood*. The latter features a solo drum composition entitled "Ding-A-Ling-A-Ling," as well as duets, trios, and selections with his full group.

In the '80s and '90s, many younger musicians called on Elvin Jones to stoke their fires and provide the drive and fertile support that he has offered the jazz legends throughout the years. Saxophonists Kenny Garrett (*African Exchange Student*), David

Murray (*Special Quartet*), Steve Grossman (*Time To Smile*), Javon Jackson (*Me And Mr. Jones*), and Bennie Wallace (*Big Jim's Tango*) have passed the test. Pianists, such as Elvin's big brother Hank Jones, James Williams, and John Hicks have utilized Elvin's "brush-sweeping skills" on excellent trio recordings called *Upon Reflection: The Music Of Thad Jones*, *Magical Trio 2*, and *Power Trio*, respectively. Each recording proves again that Elvin is a master with the brushes. But the sticks come out in full force with two great guitarists: John McLaughlin on *After The Rain*, and Sonny Sharrock on his electrifyingly aggressive *Ask The Ages*. Also check out bassist Robert Hurst's *One For Namesake* and Wynton Marsalis's *Thick In The South*.

You would never believe half of the "stuff that Elvin Jones plays if you never saw it. Fortunately, you *can* see it, on the new live video *Elvin Jones Jazz Machine*, as well as on the older tape *Different Drummer*. Also, some live John Coltrane Quartet performances were captured on video and are included in the collections *The Coltrane Legacy* and *The World According To John Coltrane*. And for a final surprise, guess who plays the drum-playing, gun-slinging, sharp-shooting bad guy in the cult-classic western movie *Zachariah* (also starring Don Johnson, and complete with drum solos)? Go rent it; it's available.

Elvin Jones is unquestionably one of the most influential drummers of all time. When he hit the scene, the role of the drums and the way that drummers filled that role were forever changed. When reviewing the listed recordings, listen to Elvin's time, touch, sound, and brush work—and to the polyrhythmic pulse that *is* Elvin Jones.

continued on next page

John "JR" Robinson

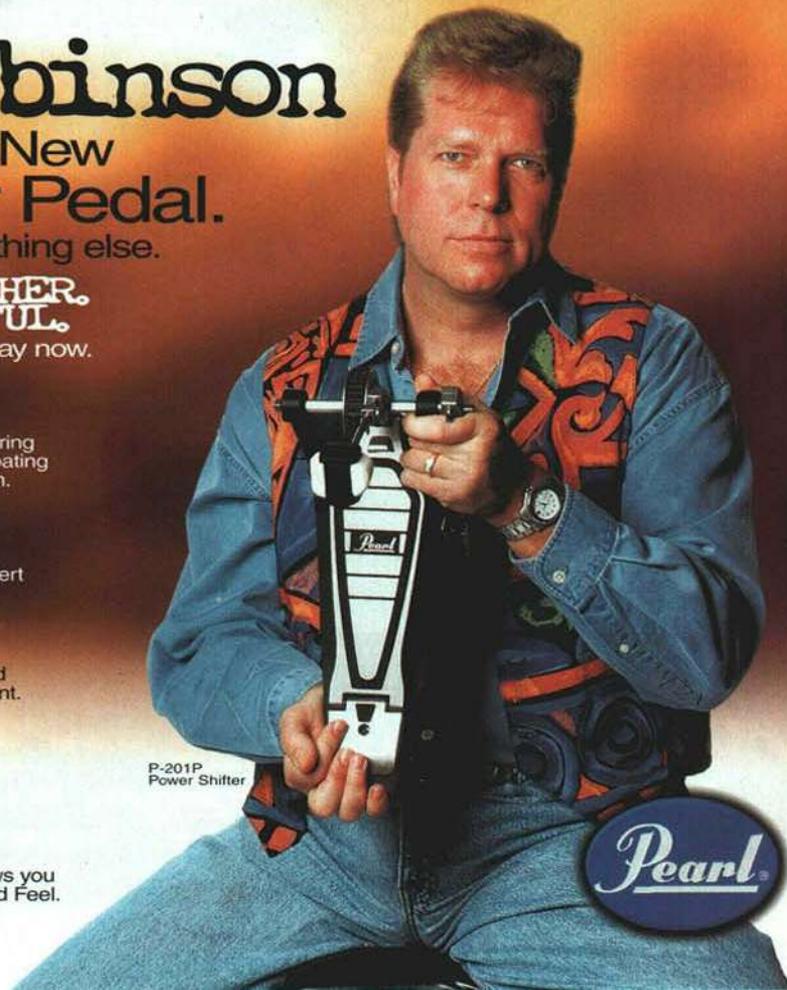
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Tracking Them Down

Here's a list of the albums mentioned in this month's column, including label and catalog information. Following the list are several sources you might want to check for hard-to-find releases.

John Coltrane: *John Coltrane: The Heavyweight Champion*, Atlantic R271984; *My Favorite Things*, Atlantic 1361; *Coltrane Plays The Blues*, Atlantic 1382; *Ole*, Atlantic 1373; *Coltrane's Sound*, Atlantic 1419; *Africa Brass*, Impulse IMPD-2-168; *Coltrane*, Impulse MCA-5883; *John Coltrane & Duke Ellington*, Impulse GRD 166; *Ballads*, Impulse MCAD-5885; *John Coltrane & Johnny Hartman*, Impulse GRD 157; *Crescent*, Impulse MCAD-5889; *A Love Supreme*, Impulse MCAD-5660; *Transition*, Impulse GRD-124; *Sun Ship*, Impulse IMPD167; *OM*, Impulse MCAD 39118; *Live At The Vanguard*, Impulse MCA-29009; *Live At Birdland*, Impulse MCA-29015; *Impressions*, Impulse MCA-29014; *Afro Blue Impressions*, Pablo 2PACD-2620-101-2. **Larry Young:** *The Complete Blue Note Recordings Of Larry Young*, Mosaic MD6-137; *Unity*, Blue Note BST 84221; *Into Somethin'*, Blue Note BST 48187. **Grant Green:** *Street Of Dreams*, Blue Note BST 84253; *I Want To Hold Your Hand*, Blue Note BST 84202; *Talkin' About*, Blue Note BST 84138. **Sonny Rollins:** *East Broadway Run Down*, Impulse MCAD-33120. **McCoy Tyner:** *Extensions*, Blue Note CDP 7243 8 3764624. **Phineas Newborn, Jr.:** *Harlem Blues*, Contemporary OJCCD662-2. **Ornette Coleman:** *Love Call*, Blue Note CDP 7843562; *New York Is Now*, Blue Note CDP 7842872. **Elvin Jones & Richard Davis:** *Heavy Sounds*, Impulse MCAD-33114. **Elvin Jones McCoy Tyner Quintet:** *Love & Peace*, Evidence ECD 220872. **Various Artists:** *Jazz For A Sunday Afternoon*, Blue Note CDP

077778928027. **Elvin Jones:** *The Ultimate Elvin Jones*, Blue Note BST 84305; *Puttin' It Together*, Blue Note CDP 7842822; *Live At The Vanguard*, Enja CD20362; *Live At Town Hall*, PM Records PMR-004; *Live At The Lighthouse*, Blue Note BNLA015-G2; *Earth Jones*, Palo Alto PA8016; *Going Home*, Enja 7095; *In Europe*, Enja 7009; *Youngblood*, Enja 7051; *It Don't Mean A Thing*, Enja 8066. **Kenny Garrett:** *African Exchange Student*, Atlantic 7821562. **David Murray:** *Special Quartet*, Columbia CK 52955. **Steve Grossman:** *Time To Smile*, Dreyfus FDM36566-2. **Javon Jackson:** *Me And Mr. Jones*, Criss Cross CRS 1053. **Bennie Wallace:** *Big Jim's Tango*, Enja 4046-2. **Hank Jones:** *Upon Reflection: The Music Of Thad Jones*, Verve 314514898. **James Williams:** *Magical Trio 2*, Emarcy 834368-2. **John Hicks:** *Power Trio*, RCA 3115-2. **John McLaughlin:** *After The Rain*, Verve 3145274672. **Sonny Sharrock:** *Ask The Ages*, Axiom 422-848 957-2. **Robert Hurst:** *One For Namesake*, Columbia CK 66236. **Wynton Marsalis:** *Thick In The South*, Columbia CK47977. **On Video:** *Elvin Jones Jazz Machine*, VIEW Video 1346; *Different Drummer*, Rhapsody Video 25411; *The Coltrane Legacy*, Video Artists International 69035; *The World According To John Coltrane*, BMG Music Video 80067; *Zachariah*, Playhouse Video/Fox Video 8023.

Tower Records Mail Order, (800) 648-4844; J&R Music World Mail Order, (800) 221-8180; Audiophile Imports, (410) 628-7601; Third St. Jazz and Rock, (800) 486-8745; Rick Ballard Imports, P.O. Box 5063, Dept. DB, Berkeley, CA 94705; Double Time Jazz, P.O. Box 1244, New Albany, IN 47151.



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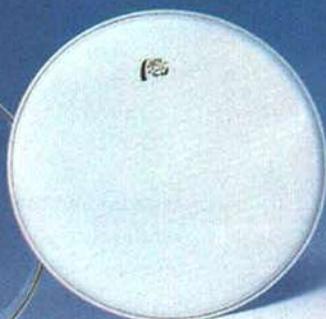
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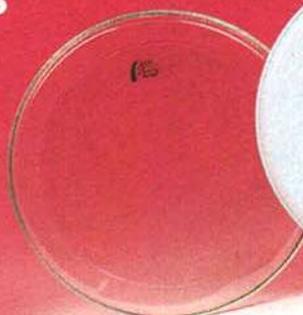
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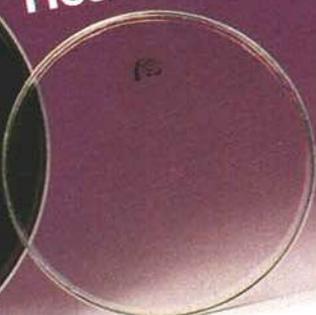


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Drum Triggering

Part 3: Sound Modules

by Mark Parsons

The sound module is the heart of any electronic percussion setup. But for those who are triggering from acoustic drums, the module performs the functions of *two* very different pieces of necessary equipment.

Because you'll be using triggers (rather than a keyboard, a sequencer, or some other MIDI device) to initiate MIDI sounds, the signal from your triggers must first go through a trigger-to-MIDI interface (sometimes called a MIDI translator). The interface takes the spike from the trigger and translates it into a language (MIDI, or Musical Instrument Digital Interface) that the next device in the chain can understand. It has to translate not only *when* you hit each note, but also how hard you hit and the duration of the note. It also has to send information identifying *which* trigger was struck at any given time. (Otherwise you could play various drums and they'd all produce the same sound.)

This information then has to go to something that can receive it and turn it into sound. Any MIDI sound source (such as a synth) can do this, but you're probably not going to be very happy if you hit your floor tom and get a trumpet sound. So it'd be nice to have something with some drum sounds on board. Many synths these days do contain drum sounds of one sort or another, and some of those sounds are very good. But they're usually somewhat limited as to their variety and sheer numbers. After all, they're primarily geared toward keyboard players. Additionally, a decent synth (either keyboard or rack-mounted) is a considerable investment—especially when you consider the fact that you're paying for a lot of features you probably won't be using as a drummer.

It should be noted that there *are* a couple of synth modules containing primarily drum and percussion sounds. These are really aimed at MIDI musicians who wish to generate drum sounds from a sequencer or a keyboard, but if you already have a trigger-to-MIDI interface they present a workable alternative. However, for most of us who are looking for a simple, practical, and relatively inexpensive solution to the whole situation, the best option is probably the dedicated drum module.

Benefits

First let's quickly define what we're talking about. (After all, you can't look up "drum module" in Webster's, and these sorts of terms get bandied about rather loosely.) By *drum module* I mean a stand-alone unit with multiple inputs for triggers (or pads), a built-

in MIDI translator, onboard drum and percussion sounds, and the programming flexibility to configure your "drumsets" the way you want them.

This definition is also a pretty good outline of the advantages of using a drum module. First, you won't have to buy a separate trigger-to-MIDI interface. Second, drum modules typically have inputs for a dozen triggers or pads, which should be more than enough for most situations. Third, they contain a huge variety of sounds (many have over a hundred snare sounds alone), which not only means you're bound to find something you like but pretty much ensures you won't sound like other drummers, even if they have the same module. Fourth, the sounds are tunable for even more variety. (If you find a tom sound you love, for example, you can pitch it up and down and create a whole new set based on it.)

Dedicated drum modules contain provisions for building various sounds into "custom" drumsets (and most have stock configurations as well), which you can easily recall—allowing you to quickly swap kits between songs. They also allow you to tweak triggering parameters to fit your particular playing style, as well as to help you solve most common triggering problems. They're physically small (usually one or even one half of a rack space in size), and they're integrated: You plug your triggers into the inputs, run one or two outputs to your sound system (which we'll cover next month), and that's it for hooking them up. And the bottom line is, they're inexpensive. You can get a decent module that will do all of the above for the price of a mid-level snare drum.

Problems And Solutions

Check this out: "...much of the 'technique' of triggering is dependent on your ability to put the pieces of your own situation together. Experiment with the various aspects of your triggering setup; because of the great numbers of variables involved, what works for someone else won't always work for you. Triggering is more experimentation and research than cold, hard scientific facts. No amount of scientific study or testing can change the fact that the objective is to obtain a clean, clear, consistent signal from something that's giving you extraneous frequencies, strange signal peaks, and many other variables!"

That's an excerpt from a major manufacturer's owner's manual, and truer words were never spoken. An acoustic drumset is a hostile environment in which to get accurate triggering, so bugaboos do arise occasionally. Let's look at some common triggering problems and ways to work through them.

Double triggering. This is caused by the trigger responding to multiple vibrations of the drumhead immediately after the head is

struck. It usually manifests itself by generating one or more quieter notes following very rapidly after the initial spike, sounding almost like a flutter. It's a mechanical problem, and there are mechanical solutions (such as those mentioned in Parts 1 and 2 of this series: damping the head or using shell-mounted triggers). However, most modules have provisions for dealing with double triggering electronically, saving you from changing the feel of your acoustic drum. The nomenclature varies from manufacturer to manufacturer (it may be called "recovery time," "mask time," "retrigger cancel," or "self rejection"), but the principle is the same: The module will reject any signal from a trigger within a brief time span (measured in milliseconds) following the initial spike. In use, you adjust this parameter so that it eliminates double triggering but still accurately tracks rapid sticking (such as double strokes).

False triggering. This condition (also known as "crosstalk") occurs when vibration from one drum activates the trigger on *another* drum, sending a false signal to the module. It's analogous to microphone bleed, and, like bleed, it can be solved by increased isolation. The real mechanical culprit is vibration conducted by hardware, so if the problem arises between two drums mounted on the same stand, try moving one of them to another stand. The worse case is when any part of one drum touches any part of another (hoops, tension casings, mounts, etc.). If this is happening, pad the offending drums with foam.

You can reduce crosstalk at the module by keeping the sensitivity only as high as it needs to be to catch your softest *intended* hits. Any extra sensitivity beyond that will only make things more susceptible to all the little bumps and vibrations that happen within a kit as you're playing. Most modules have a parameter just for this problem (called something like "crosstalk suppression" or "other rejection") that specifically addresses this scenario.

may even consider programming different settings for different songs. It'll be a little work initially, but the payoff is that you'll be able to effortlessly switch between "super sensitive" and "bash and crash"—even if you choose similar-sounding programs.

You may also want to consider using two triggers on one drum (probably the snare). A head-mounted trigger can drive a program set up to be sensitive in the low-to-medium volume range, while a shell-mounted trigger can provide the high-volume dynamics. They can use the same sounds, slightly different sounds, (perhaps more ring on the louder sound), or even *wildly* different sounds.

MIDI time lag. MIDI is not magic. It takes time to recognize and process information, and if you don't watch out, the lag can become noticeable. The real answer is to use fast devices (most current modules are good in this respect) and *not* to chain several of them together. (The lag is cumulative with serially connected processors.) You can mitigate this in a recording situation (if you're using modular digital multitracks) by "slipping" the other tracks back to eliminate the time difference. *ADAT*, for example, offers up to 170 ms of delay on individual tracks. If your drum tracks were 30 ms behind, you could slip all the *other* tracks by this amount. Then everything would line up again.

Current Models

We're going to briefly examine half a dozen drum modules from three manufacturers to give you an idea of what features are currently available. Please keep in mind that the modules shown here are by no means the only ones available. However, I think it's safe to say that between them they account for the majority of drum modules sold in this country.

Alesis D4 and DM5. These popular models are more alike than different, so let's concentrate on their similarities first. Almost identical in construction, both are single-space rack-mount



Lack of dynamic range. The overall dynamic range of any given program *is* somewhat less than the range of the acoustic drum being used to trigger it (which, after all, can go from extremely quiet to extremely loud). However, you can help the situation by matching the dynamic settings of the module to the

devices. The rear panels contain twelve trigger inputs, four outputs (a main stereo pair and an aux stereo pair), MIDI IN and OUT/THRU jacks, and a foot switch jack (for either a hi-hat or program-advance foot switch). The front panels each sport a dozen "soft key" buttons for switching modes of operation or parameters,



music. There'll be a parameter labeled "velocity curve" or "sensitivity curve" (or something similar). That parameter allows you to choose between preset dynamic response curves that are weighted towards the quieter or louder end of the scale. Pick the curve that gives you the most sensitivity *where you need it* for the music you're playing. Then fine-tune by adjusting the sensitivity. You

a data wheel for entering values, a headphone jack with volume control, and a "preview" button for auditioning sounds directly from the module without using a trigger or pad. The big cosmetic difference is that the *DM5* has a larger LCD display, providing more information about trigger ID and levels.

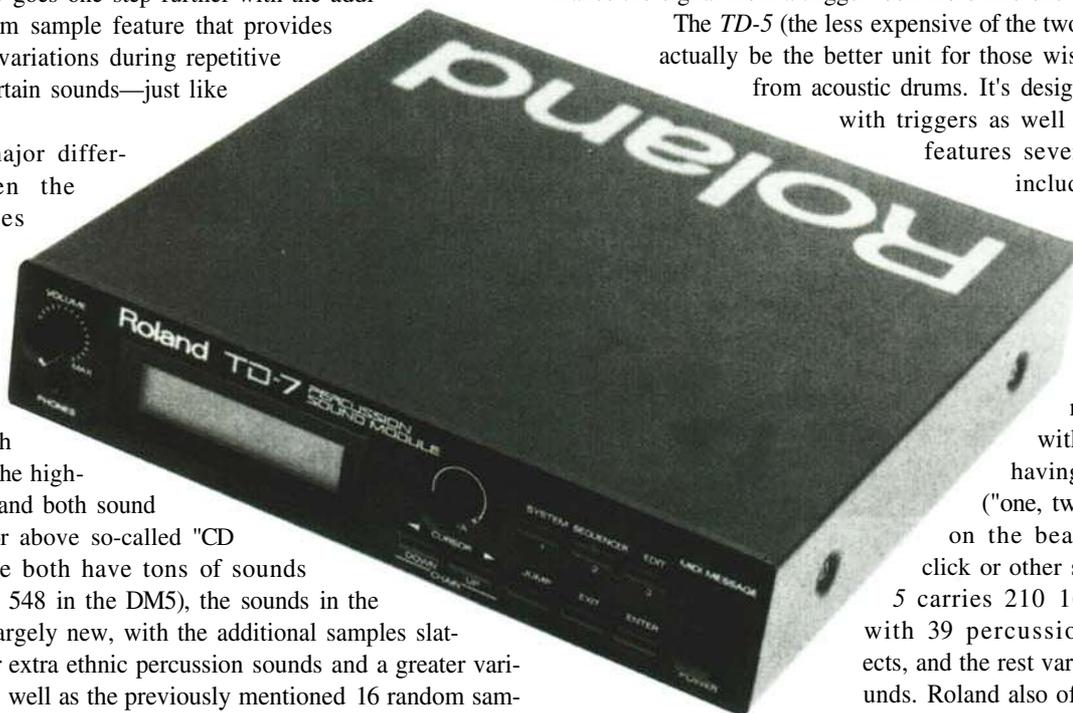
Both machines have the same internal architecture, so if you

learn to operate one you'll be able to use the other. One interesting feature they share is something called "Dynamic Articulation." Noting that the character and pitch of a drum change as you hit it harder, the

folks at Alesis have designed the *D4* and *DM5* to respond realistically: As the machine senses the intensity of the trigger spikes increasing or decreasing, it modulates the timbre and pitch accordingly. The *DM5* goes one step further with the addition of a random sample feature that provides small, random variations during repetitive triggering of certain sounds—just like in real life.

The other major differences between the Alesis modules have to do with the sounds. The *D4* sounds are 16-bit samples, while the *DM5* uses 18-bit ones. Both are sampled at the higher 48 kHz rate and both sound very nice—at or above so-called "CD quality." While both have tons of sounds (500 in the *D4*, 548 in the *DM5*), the sounds in the later *DM5* are largely new, with the additional samples slated primarily for extra ethnic percussion sounds and a greater variety of snares, as well as the previously mentioned 16 random samples—mostly snares, hats, and percussion. The *D4* sells for \$399 while the *DM5* goes for \$499.

Roland *TD-5* and *TD-7*. Because these modules are of a similar size and shape (half a rack space each) and because Roland also sells each of them bundled as part of similar-looking MIDI kits (the *TD-5K* and *TDE-7K*), it would be natural to assume they're



7 is really optimized for their use, rather than for acoustic triggers. It will work by itself with triggers, but you'll get better results if you first run the triggers through Roland's optional *AT-4*, which makes the signal from a trigger look more like one from a pad.

The *TD-5* (the less expensive of the two modules) may actually be the better unit for those wishing to trigger from acoustic drums. It's designed to function with triggers as well as pads, and it features several parameters included specifically to help with the triggering problems already mentioned. It also has a metronome function, with the option of having a voice count ("one, two, three, four") on the beat instead of a click or other sound. The *TD-5* carries 210 16-bit samples, with 39 percussion sounds, 18 effects, and the rest variations of drum-unds. Roland also offers a complete drum triggering system (the *AT-5*) consisting of a *TD-5* module, five drum triggers and the cables necessary to hook them up, and an instructional video. The *TD-5* is \$645, and the *TD-7* lists for \$875.

Yamaha *TMX* and *DTX*. The *TMX* is a single-rack-space unit that is physically configured somewhat like the Alesis units,



variations on the same theme. They're not. They're two entirely separate products, with the *TD-7* being the more sophisticated of the two in most respects. It contains 512 16-bit sounds and has a programmable onboard digital effects processor (reverb, chorus, and delay). It also features a built-in sequencer, as well as a

though it has some different features. It has twelve inputs (and four outputs, in two stereo pairs), but two of the inputs can be used to increment or decrement programs (along with other functions), allowing you to step between programs on the fly without putting down your sticks. Also, the 245 onboard 16-bit sounds cannot only

be tuned, but most can have their timbre changed as well via a parameter called "Modify." And if you're editing a drumset configuration and you want to change the sound of an individual drum, all you have to do is press the "zap" key on the front panel and you're taken directly to the tune and modify parameters. For initially hooking up triggers, the *TMX* has an "Auto Setup" feature: You hit the drum three times and it will set the optimum trigger sensitivity, which can then be manually tweaked if desired.

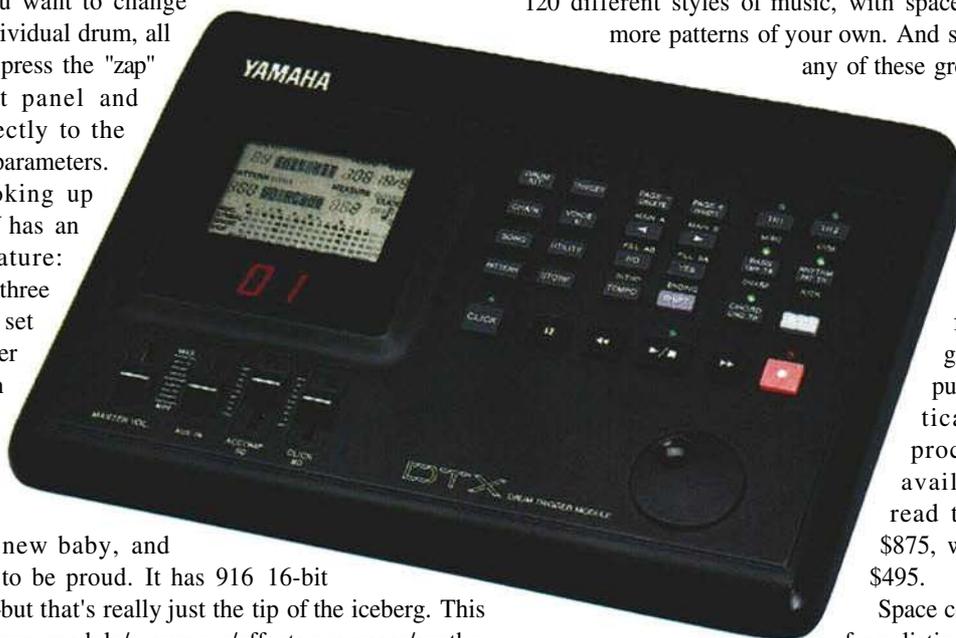
The *DTX* is Yamaha's brand-new baby, and they have a right to be proud. It has 916 16-bit sounds on board—but that's really just the tip of the iceberg. This unit is actually a drum module/sequencer/effects processor/synthesizer/practice tool all in one. Besides the drum sounds, it has 128 general MIDI sounds (keyboard and bass) that you can use with the built-in sequencer to create songs or parts to practice with. You

can also use the sequencer to record your drum parts, either in real time or step-by-step. It comes programmed with drum parts for 120 different styles of music, with space for you to create 100 more patterns of your own. And should you wish to study any of these grooves in detail, you can

mute or solo any portion of the drumset.

The *DTX* is set up to accept signals from acoustic drum triggers (with all necessary parameters). It features ten stereo trigger inputs and four outputs, along with a sophisticated onboard effects processor. It should be available by the time you read this at a list price of \$875, while the *TMX* sells for \$495.

Space considerations prevent us from listing every feature of every model, so for more information on any of these products please contact their respective manufacturers.



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Getting There

The Ins And Outs Of Instrument Cartage

by Rich Watson

"Betcha wished ya played the piccolo, eh?!" Which of us hasn't endured this question a few hundred times over the course of our careers as we hefted our tubs into a station wagon or stacked them curbside and waited for the band van to arrive? And, long after that line seemed the least bit funny, which of us hasn't silently wondered how much easier life would be to toss a horn, or even a guitar and amp, in the back seat of the ol' MG or Mustang?

But if drummers *are* the chosen instrumentalists in terms of burdens to be borne, doing so gracefully (i.e., without suffering a physical, emotional, or financial hernia) demands familiarity with the rules of the road of instrument cartage—and the options that are available to us. If you're without wheels—or your kit or band has outgrown them—check out what cartage professionals and road warrior drummers say about packing and hauling equipment across town and across the country.

To Buy Or Not To Buy

Though for local work he often hauls his gear in his own truck, the Yellowjackets' Will Kennedy admits, "It's definitely nice to have someone take care of getting your stuff to the gig." In Will's case, that "someone" is usually a gig contractor. If, like most drummers, you aren't often offered the option of someone else taking care of your drums, you must first determine whether it is more practical to outsource cartage or to buy or lease a vehicle specifically to haul your gear. To help you make this decision, ask yourself the following interrelated questions:

On average, how many paying gigs do I play in a month? One or two probably doesn't justify the costs of buying and maintaining a vehicle expressly for instrument transport. Conversely, if you use a cartage service four or more times a month, the "outbound" and "return" trip costs probably exceed a monthly payment for a suitable cartage vehicle of your own, which means it's a good time to consider buying.

How many of my gigs are across town, and how many involve long-distance travel? Most cartage services charge by the hour. Trucks, on the other hand, can be rented for an entire day or more. Over time it may be cheaper to buy a vehicle than to pay for even a couple of long-haul rentals

per month.

How comfortable am I relying on the kindness of others—fellow bandmembers, friends, neighbors, in-laws—who have their own vehicles suitable for transporting my gear? This depends on whether you usually work with the same players, the nature of your relationship with them, and their transportation resources.

Your decision may also be influenced by where you live, as well as such ancillary considerations as parking and insurance costs and the likelihood of vehicle theft or vandalism. The question to ask, then, is, *Relatively speaking, is my hometown "vehicle friendly" (Sioux Falls) or not (New York)?*

The biggest obstacle to buying a van or truck is, of course, economic, and if suitable vehicles' sticker prices exceed your means, your cartage choices are somewhat limited. One option is to pool your resources with other bandmembers to buy a vehicle for everyone's equipment. Joint purchases are problematic, though, raising the thorny question of custody or settlement when one or more contributing members depart the band. This can be mitigated by having all parties sign a legal contract, but even this is rarely easy or painless. A less binding alternative is for you to purchase a vehicle with the understanding that other band members will contribute to its payments and maintenance, but even if such an agreement is strictly and fairly adhered to, the burden of payment shifts entirely to you during stretches of unemployment, or if other members later arrange for transportation of their own equipment—or, again, when members leave the band. If all this spooks you from the dotted line of vehicle ownership, your only cartage alternative is to outsource.

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By Cab, By Car Service, By "Man With A Van"

Cabs and car services are generally a viable option only in larger urban areas. For very short trips, cabs are usually cheaper (between five and seven dollars for a three-mile ride, depending on which city you're in) and in some large cities you have an excellent chance of hailing one with no advance notice. On the other hand, they are notoriously hard to find during peak traffic hours and inclement weather. Also, the vast majority of cabs are standard-sized sedans that may not accommodate large kits, and persons with even manageable loads have been known to become "invisible" to some cabbies who don't want to be bothered with the additional labor and delay of loading a set of drums into their cars.

Car services are commonly available with only slightly more notice than cabs. Because you call them in advance and schedule a specific pickup time, they should be more reliable, but punctuality varies among companies. For this reason, estimate travel time conservatively. Also, strive for crystal clarity with the dispatcher on not only the pickup time, but also the type of vehicle (sedan, station wagon, or van), the amount of equipment to be loaded, and the fare. (Depending on where you live, car services may or may not be governed by the local transit authority, and they probably won't be metered, so pre-determining the fare is strongly suggested.) This will help to avert any last-minute "negotiations" with the driver who, upon seeing the load and sensing the time-critical nature of your transportation, might refuse to budge without additional payment. (Call me a cynic, but I speak from infuriating experience.)

"Man-with-a-van" services (and yes, there are many "woman-with-a-van" services, too) make their living moving household furniture, commercial equipment, and musicians' gear, and therefore won't balk at most small to average-sized loads. Most charge by the hour (\$25-35, depending on where you live) based on actual pickup time to empty-van drop-off. Some prorate partial hours, while others charge for a full hour for even going a few minutes over. Household moving services, usually with larger trucks, charge by the hour or by the load, and often include charges for one or two laborers. Man-with-a-van services, which are cheaper, usually only provide a driver, who may or may not charge more to help carry your gear out of your house, apartment, or studio, and into the club. Add-on charges include tolls, paid parking when necessary, and unreasonable delays (like if you're still not ready to load up twenty minutes after you've scheduled its arrival). Some may also charge more for exceptionally long hauls to compensate them for their return travel time. Again, all these details should be stipulated on the phone before-hand.

You can usually find van services advertised in community newspapers, but whenever possible, first seek referrals from other musicians or even friends who've used them for household moves, etc. Unfortunately, there are some movers you'd be better off not trusting with your gig and your equipment.

"Everybody who comes to me has a horror story about past moving experiences," reports New York man-with-a-van company owner/driver Dave Manstream. Most, he says, involve the ways some unscrupulous drivers "pad the bill." Not included in the initial rate quote, these "extras" commonly involve a two-hour minimum, a mileage surcharge even on short trips, or an additional fee for carrying gear up or down stairs. (Dave charges a simple flat rate with no hidden charges, and claims, "We love stairs; stairs are

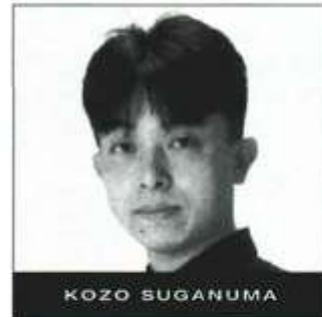
good for our hearts." He laughs, but insists he's serious.) Again, the best way to avoid unpleasant surprises is to shop around and clarify all these terms in advance.

In addition to honesty, another quality to seek in a van driver is carefulness, both in how he drives and how he handles the equipment. He should be conscious of and sensitive to the special handling required for musical instruments. And because a traffic accident on the way to the gig could at least temporarily put you and your band out of business, find out if the driver has insurance not only on his vehicle, but on its contents as well.

While a driver's business ethics and carefulness are important, as show time approaches, his reliability and punctuality are crucial. Hopefully, you will never be referred to someone who is acutely irresponsible. But, as Will Kennedy points out, drivers who make their living hauling musicians' gear may have booked several moves in a single afternoon or evening. "You're just one on their list," Will cautions, and suggests calling the driver the day of the gig to confirm his ETA (*exact* time of arrival). But to be doubly certain, allow extra time for minor scheduling bottlenecks, as well as for heavy traffic and any adverse weather conditions, by not scheduling your arrival ten minutes before sound check.

Professional courtesy demands a few considerations for van drivers, too. First, be *sure* to give the driver your telephone number so he can warn you if he will be late or can't find your residence. Second, just as van drivers' schedules don't follow atomic clocks, neither do musicians'. Dave Manstream asks his clients, "If you're supposed to go on stage at 11:00 P.M. but you don't actually go on

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until 2:00 A.M., be sure to let me know so I don't show up three hours early for the pickup and then have to come back again later." For gigs where performance and finish times are subject to change, he advises arranging to call the driver a half hour before you need to be picked up. And finally, never "double-book" car or van services with the intention of leaving one high-and-dry. If the golden rule doesn't stop you from doing this, remember that someday you may actually have to rely on the one you stand up today. Dave admits he may not rush to pick up someone who has stood him up in the past.

Renting A Van Or Truck

Compared with cabs and car services, renting a vehicle for a day or longer provides peace of mind and greater flexibility in scheduling your band's pack-up and transport to the gig, because you have possession of it well in advance. For the same reason, though, it requires that you take more responsibility for the transportation.

The first decision to be made pertains to the vehicle's size. Even drummers with monster kits can usually get by with a minivan or conventional cargo van, but if you are responsible for transporting all the bandmembers' equipment, bigger wheels may be necessary. How big? New York-based drummer Marco Soccoli, formerly with the glam rock band Roxx, stresses the importance of carefully estimating the volume of your cargo. "Once we were renting this huge [24'] van for all our flight cases," Marco recalls. "A stage manager looked at it and figured out how we could pack it so it would fit into a lot less space." This bit of strategic planning allowed the band to rent a significantly smaller truck—and consequently reduce their cartage overhead. Less obvious, but no less important than the direct cost of the rental, are the vehicle's fuel consumption, parkability, and maneuverability in traffic.

If you're consolidating your band's equipment for the first time and are unsure about how much space your gear will occupy, start by estimating its volume in separate vehicles, then visualize those load configurations side-by-side (or atop each other). Factor in packing efficiencies afforded by a single large space without obstructions such as wheel wells, roof curvature, etc. If you have any doubt about a

proposed vehicle's appropriateness, pack up everything together in a single room and measure it—*well in advance of the gig and the vehicle's rental, of course*—and compare your findings with the vehicle's cargo area dimensions. As ridiculous and laborious as this may sound, it's not nearly as bad as discovering the vehicle is far larger and more expensive than you needed, or, much worse, that it's *too small*, leaving you to scuffle around at the last minute to arrange for transport of the overage. Unless your band's setup changes radically, you'll only have to do this once, and you'll thereafter be prepared to rent the ideal vehicle for your needs.

Truck rental firms such as Ryder, Budget, and U-Haul rent vans and trucks two ways: 1) daily or weekly, returned to the office from which it was rented, or 2) one-way, dropping the van off at the destination city. The former arrangement, suited to shorter trips, involves a daily rate, plus a charge for each mile traveled. The latter, generally more cost-effective for longer trips, involves a travel time allowance of two to four days and a mileage allowance based upon the length of your trip. Additional mileage is assessed from thirty to sixty cents per mile. Other premiums include a physical damage waiver, personal accident and cargo insurance, and rental of furniture pads, dollies, and hand trucks. On page 142 are some examples of base rates for various return and one-way van and truck rentals. (Note that rates vary significantly from one firm to the next, as well as by location and even time of year, so the tables should be used only as a guide.)

Packin' It In

Whether you are loading up a four-piece into your trusty Subaru or your whole band's PA, lights, and multi-media show into a rented semi, you should devote some careful thought to how your gear is packed. This dictum was forever etched on Marco Soccoli's consciousness when at a setup/sound check at New York's Palladium club he discovered, horrified, that a rack of amps and outboard gear for his 28-piece electronic kit had been left at the rehearsal room in New Jersey. Dashing to a music store to borrow power amps for the sound check and dispatching someone to New Jersey to fetch the forgotten rig taught him a lesson: "Always sit down with

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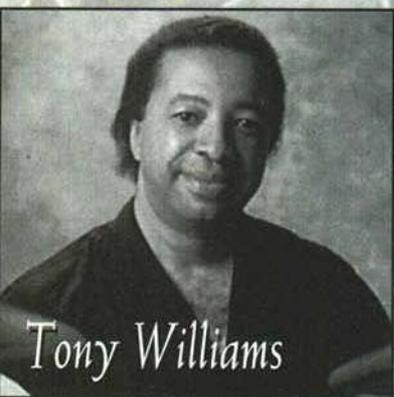
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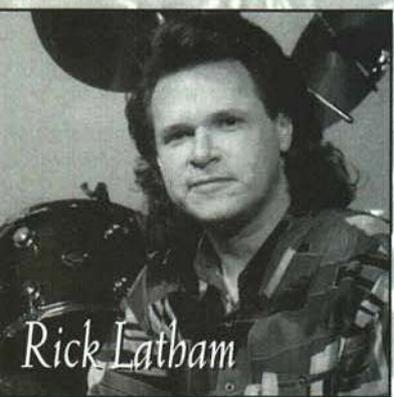


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A production of the Drum Workshop Education Department

the other bandmembers and inventory the gear needed for the gig. Mark each case—even if it's Grandma's box with all the cables and pedals—put a piece of duct tape on it and number it, and write it down on a piece of paper. Then check off each piece as it's loaded into the van." For drums alone, breaking down and packing your kit methodically, the same way every time, also helps. These measures not only simplify the load-up on both ends of the gig, they eliminate a lot of pre-gig anxiety and one of the most common nightmares among drummers: arriving at the gig without an essential piece of equipment.

Another lesson Marco learned, literally in the school of hard knocks, is how to pack the gear in the vehicle. "One time our head roadie couldn't get the regular guys," Marco recalls, "so he hired a couple of yo-yos who put the light gear on the bottom, and all the real heavy stuff on top. When we got to the gig and opened up the truck, the stuff came fallin' out and almost killed the kid as he tried to stop this flight case from hell. Obviously you're not going to stop a 400-pound rack with a 120-pound kid!"

However obvious the "heavy-stuff-on-the-bottom" rule is, it is often ignored with similarly disastrous results: Light pieces are crushed by the heavy ones, and/or when the driver makes a turn, everything falls over. For larger trucks, use what professional movers call the "one quarter rule": Load the truck from floor to ceiling as full and solid as possible *one quarter at a time*. Tie down each quarter with rope. This method provides the most secure load and allows maximum maneuvering room in the cargo area as the loading process progresses.

To protect your gear even in smaller vans, tie down or "pack in" anything prone to shifting, and wrap packing blankets around especially fragile or scratch-prone items. This may seem overly cautious, but it's better to pack as if you *expect* sudden stops or

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even a fender bender than to be surprised by a bent rim, cracked cymbal, or dead amplifier. Electronics, whether for sound reinforcement or MIDI drums and percussion, require special care. "Sampler disk drives are really fragile," warns Marco. "If somebody kicks it and the heads don't line up, it will never load your sounds." Especially for MIDI gear, he highly recommends a floating rack case, despite all the extra money, space, and weight. "When you're relying on a sampler for your meat 'n' potatoes [basic kit] sounds, it's worth it."

To a degree, the type of cases you use can affect the size of vehicle you must buy or rent for cartage, which in turn will significantly affect the thickness of your wallet. You might even consider soft cases if your drums fit snugly in the back of your car. Depending on how far you travel, how much other equipment is in the vehicle, and how securely it's all packed, flight cases may be unnecessarily bulky, although for "common carriers" such as airlines, trains, and even buses, they are recommended. Will Kennedy recalls the time his 10" tom, which had been in a fiber case, was completely destroyed when he retrieved it from airline baggage claim. "Wood chips came *dripping* out of the case; it was like the airplane ran over it!"

Monster trap cases deserve special consideration because, unlike bass drum cases, whose size is irreducible, their contents can often be divided into smaller separate units, such as stands, pedals, cymbals, and snare drum. This might require a couple more trips between the vehicle and the stage, but several smaller pieces can be packed much more efficiently into various nooks and crannies

than the single behemoth that requires a premium space in the center of the cargo area.

And speaking of behemoth cases and industrial-strength sound reinforcement, don't be a macho man! That fleeting moment of glory for carrying the band's bass bins—or even your own trap case—up a couple flights of stairs could haunt you for years, as you're forced to spend precious practice time at the chiropractor or shopping for a truss to match your stage wear.

Many cartage-related choices hinge on affordability. Here are two offsetting factors you may wish to include in the price equation: 1) If playing is your primary source of income, transportation to and from the gig is tax deductible, so be sure to ask for and keep all cartage receipts. For the same reason, whatever means you choose to move your drums, keep a log of mileage to and from the gig, rehearsals, etc. 2) If you belong to the musician's union, check with your local AFM office to determine the cartage allowance you're entitled to.

Just thinking about the mundane and decidedly unartistic subject of instrument cartage can seem like a burden, and because many of the choices and questions it raises seem to be resolved with "simple" common sense, they are sometimes overlooked or taken for granted. What makes the cartage burden lighter and *truly* simple is devising a solid game plan well before the gig. Working smarter, not harder, is the key.



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In Memoriam: Naco

Naco, perhaps Italy's most famous drummer/percussionist, died June 30 in a car accident after performing a solo concert. He was thirty-five.

Naco (real name: Giuseppe Bonaccorso) played both live performances and recording sessions in jazz, rock, and pop. He was a spontaneous drummer, with a style rich in color. A great improviser, he was the favorite drummer and percussionist of the most well-known Italian jazz artists, such as pianist Franco D'Andrea, trumpet player Enrico Rava, and saxophonist Tino Tracanna. In the fusion idiom he played in the supergroup Linea C (along with drummer Walter Calloni).

Naco's last recordings were with the pop artist Ivano Fossati (together with Trilok Gurtu and Tony Levin) and with the #1 rock band in Italy, Elio e le Storie Tese (with Vinnie Colaiuta at the drums).

Mario A. Riggio

Zildjian Day In Tokyo



Left to right: Akira Jimbo, Dave Weckl, and Kozo Suganama

The first Zildjian Day in Asia took place in Tokyo, Japan this past June 16. The event was held in a 1,200-seat hall that quickly sold out, attesting to the popularity of the drummers on the bill. The event was presented in conjunction with Yamaha Drums, who also distribute Zildjian cymbals in Japan.

The show opened with Kozo Suganama

playing a trigger-set consisting of trigger-shoes and trigger-gloves. It was impressive to hear him playing a complete song with this unique setup. Suganama then switched to a double bass drumkit with six toms, lots of snare drums, and a variety of percussion instruments. His playing astonished the audience (and this reporter). Rarely do you see a drummer who is able to play an Indian raga and Frank Zappa's "The Black Page" with equal dexterity—and who is a great entertainer at the same time!

Next up was Japan's drum superstar, Akira Jimbo. After sixteen records with Cassiopeia, eight with Jimsaku, and two very successful solo productions (to say nothing of two excellent DCI videos), this man knows his way around a set of drums. Akira played songs from his personal repertoire, both on acoustic drums and on the Yamaha DTX electronic kit. His grooves, fills, and

technique were absolutely great—as was his overall sound.

Obviously impressed with the playing of those who preceded him, Dave Weckl seemed to start his performance in a nervous mood. However, two fantastic solos and a few blazing tunes played to DAT accompaniment made him the winner of the evening. The influence of Freddie Gruber on Dave's playing was readily apparent: He still sounds 110% perfect, but a lot more *human*.

The day concluded with a "drum battle" between all three players, based on a composition created especially for the occasion by Akira Jimbo. All three displayed their enormous talents, and they all received an equally enormous ovation from the audience.

Heinz Kronberger

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Drummer Rona Borlaug has established a newsletter for and about female drummers. The publication is offered free of charge to any interested parties. Contact the *Female Drummer* newsletter at P.O. Box 361, Sweet Home, OR 97386.

Indy Quickies

Encore Mallets has moved production into a larger facility and expanded its personnel to better serve the percussion market. Dan Lidster (president and owner) has named Eric Grajo as production supervisor and Josh Gottry as sales & marketing coordinator. Encore's main office will remain at its present address (702 Runge Dr., Lewisville, TX 75057), and either facility may be reached by calling (800) 480-1982. Additionally, Encore is on the Internet at 10463.3214@compuserve.com.

Pro-Mark recently sponsored a nationwide contest in conjunction with the introduction of its new *Americorps* line of drum corps sticks and mallets. The contest winners—Everett High School, Everett, Pennsylvania; Ann Arbor Huron High School, Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Edgewood Middle School, San Dimas, California—each won enough *Americorps* merchandise to outfit their entire drum lines.

In related news, Pro-Mark has become a sponsor of Drums Not Guns, a community outreach program for fifth and sixth graders in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area. The program's goal is to help young people diffuse anger and frustration and to build their self-esteem through the power of percussion. Participants will learn team spirit and the importance of community building while they learn (and have fun with) drums. Information on the program may be obtained by accessing its Web site at <http://www.after-science.com/shel/dng.html>, or from Pro-Mark, tel: (800) 233-5250, e-mail: promark@cis.compuserve.com, web: <http://www.promark-stix.com>.

Dr. Randall Eyles is the new executive director of the **Percussive Arts Society**. (Former executive director **Steve Beck**

recently left for a new job in market development for the Pro-Mark Corporation.) Dr. Eyles took the position after retiring as principal percussionist with the United States Air Force Band. He had already been active with the Society for over twenty years as a state chapter president, second vice president, PASIC host, and first vice president.



Dr. Randall Eyles

The Los Angeles Music Academy (LAMA) has created a new percussion department, to be headed by famed studio percussionist **Emil Richards** and Latin and hand-drumming specialist **Jerry Steinholtz**.

Vic Firth, Inc. has established a Web site at <http://www.vicfirth.com>. The site provides product and artist news as well as the complete Vic Firth catalog (cross-referenced by product and artist product preference). Endorser news featuring artist bios, tour schedules, and clinic appearances will be added shortly, along with links to various artists' own sites. Vic Firth may also be reached by e-mail at either vicsticks@aol.com or info@vicfirth.com.

Remo, Inc. recently sponsored a series of marching and world percussion clinics throughout Southeast Asia. Conducted by Remo's marching percussion marketing manager **Carol Carpenter**, along with endorsers **Tad Carpenter** and **Arthur Hull**, the clinic tour included stops in Hong



Tad Carpenter conducts a master class in Singapore.

Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and Taiwan. Carol and Tad presented an overview of tuning and basic playing techniques. Arthur introduced the concept of community-based drumming and Remo's selection of world percussion. Attendees ranged from schoolchildren to

military groups, and from teachers to professional players.

Terry Bozzio has just joined the staff of **Musicians Institute/PIT**. Terry will be at the school each quarter to conduct master classes and to work closely with MI students. All drum and percussion students at PIT will have access to Terry's classes and concerts. Information may be obtained by calling MI at (213) 462-1384, or from the Internet at <http://www.mi.edu>.

In related news, MI is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year.

Endorser News

Gregg Bissonette and **John "J.R." Robinson** are new Shure microphone endorsers.

New Aquarian drumhead endorsers include **James Kottak** (Scorpions), **Ralph Molina** (Neil Young), **Simon Horrocks** (Freddie Jones Band), **John Dette** (Slayer), and **Lance Lee** (Diana Ross). Also, noted L.A. studio drummer and teacher **Joe Porcaro** has been appointed as a product consultant for Aquarian drumheads.



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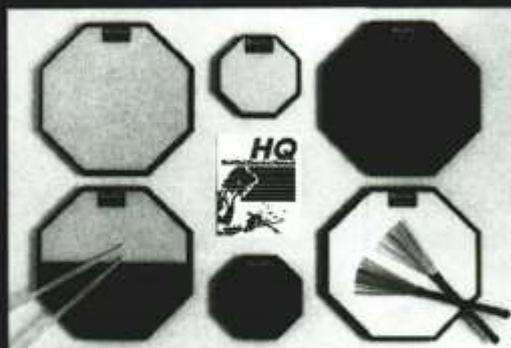
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Drumkit Of The Month



This month's featured kit was made by Dale Flanagan (of Fortune Drums in Willoughby, Ohio) for drummer Roy King, of nearby Maple Heights. The custom-made kit is mounted on an equally custom-made rack designed by Roy himself. "It's based on the 'rails' on older drumkits that follow the curvature of the bass drum," says Roy. "It's a very compact design that eliminates cymbal tripods and keeps the tom-mounting hardware off to one side so that the drums can be clearly seen. I used Tama and Gibraltar rack parts—and I became very friendly with my pipe cutter in order to get the short tube lengths."

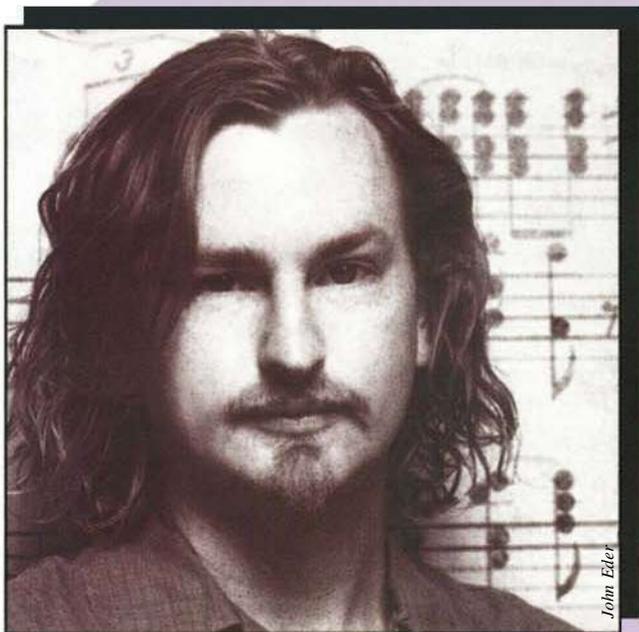
PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.



Next Month

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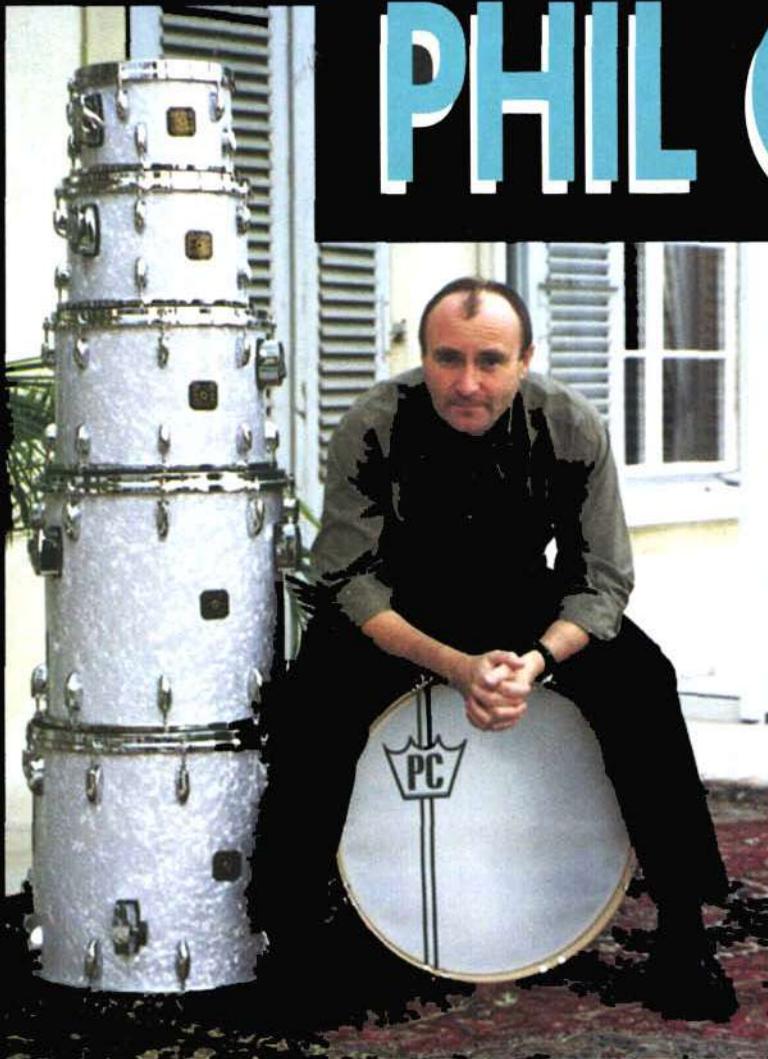
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