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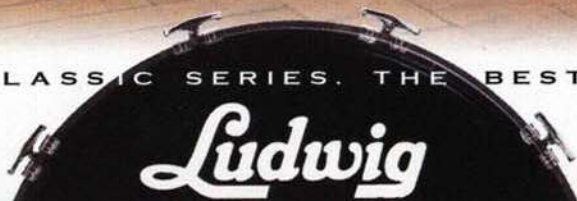
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Phil Collins

Breezy radio fare like "Groovy Kind Of Love" and "Against All Odds" made him a household name. But we never forgot the real story, did we: Phil Collins is simply one of the greatest drummers his generation produced. Now, on the heels of two new solo ventures, Phil pauses to reflect on the drum tracks that have left so many mouths agape.

by William F. Miller

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Josh Freese

Need proof that "alternative" music has arrived? Look no further than Josh Freese. As the first-call drummer for studio and touring artists like Tralby Bonham, Juliana Hetfield, Paul Westerberg, and Suicidal Tendencies, Josh has filled his calendar with gigs where he rips out the hottest punk one minute and tastefully backs a jangly ballad the next.

by Robyn Flans

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THE FOREFATHERS OF FUNK DRUMMING

The signs are everywhere: Hip-hop poets slipping in Ohio Players samples, P-Funk reissues filling record store bins, nightclubbers sporting high-heel sneakers left over from Cameo tours. The groove is the thing, man, and everybody is crazy trying to copy the source. Well, we've got the originals for you; the inventors of the funk.

by Eric Deggans

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By looking at electronic percussion through the eyes of drummers rather than those of computer geeks, Roland has come up with many of the most user-friendly devices on the market.

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Readers Poll '97

Each year, the March issue of *Modern Drummer* contains your ballot to vote for your favorite drummers in MD's annual Readers Poll. You'll find voting information along with the special ballot for the 19th Annual Readers Poll on page 144 of this issue.

As in the past, this year we ask that you kindly use the official ballot only and make one selection in each category. Once again, the MD Poll offers you the opportunity to cast your votes for your favorite artists in the areas of mainstream jazz, electric jazz, pop/mainstream rock, hard rock, progressive rock, studio, big band, funk, and country drumming, along with top all-around drummer and percussionist, and best recorded performance released within the past twelve months. Finally, there's the prestigious MD Hall Of Fame, reserved for any artist, living or

dead, who's made a lasting contribution to the art of drumming.

The results of the Readers Poll appear in the July issue each year and are of significant value to the entire drumming community. The winning players greatly appreciate your support and are always quite honored to be recognized by their peers. As always, each winning artist will receive a specially engraved plaque honoring his or her achievement. And since the Poll is the leading indicator of the popularity of the greatest drummers in the world today, the equipment manufacturing segment of our industry tends to look very closely at the results as well.

A few years ago we initiated a special incentive to encourage MD readers to cast their votes. After the votes were tabulated, three ballots were drawn at random and three lucky readers won a free one-

year subscription to *Modern Drummer*. This year we'll once again be drawing three ballots at random, and three readers will win an MD Flashback T-Shirt and a 6-Panel Cap from the MD Classic Casuals line. The winners will be notified by phone, so be sure to include all necessary contact information on the return side of your ballot. The winning names will be announced with the Readers Poll results in the July issue of MD.

Remember, there are no questions to answer and nothing to write to be eligible to win. All you have to do is fill in your ballot, affix the postage, and drop it in the mail—and be sure to do it *all* prior to the March 1 deadline. We look forward to hearing from you.

MODERN DRUMMER

The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine



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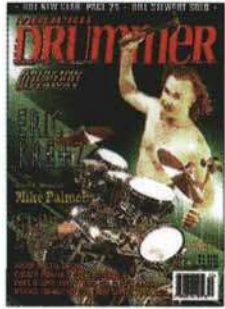
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ERIC KRETZ



I was genuinely surprised by how articulate Eric Kretz of Stone Temple Pilots appeared in your December interview with him (all the more so after viewing the bare-chested, hammer-wielding photo of him on your cover). Eric's dedication to musical creativity as opposed to drumistics was refreshing, and his real-world humanity (empathy for singer Scott Weiland while admitting to being "pissed off about what's happened with the band) made the story all the more revealing. Thanks for turning what could have been a puff piece about yet another Seattle bash band member into a meaningful and enjoyable read.

Frank DeSoto
 Miami, FL

Okay, this time you've gone too far. First it was Stephen Perkins as Krishna, then Lars Ulrich glaring at us from in front of a pseudo-psychedelic spiral. Now your December cover features Eric Kretz in a pose that reinforces the image of drummers as mindless, ape-like bashers with no other goal in life than to swing hammers at drums with the intention of inflicting as much damage as possible. And for good measure, you had to turn the drums themselves into a monster truck, just to reinforce the "macho" image associated with most rock drummers.

Let's not even talk sexism here. Let's just talk about the need to portray drummers as serious, gifted musicians instead of jocks, dudes, or brainless weirdos. Your October cover presented a smiling Carter Beauford in a pose that was pleasant and visually appealing, without turning him into some sort of clown. That photo would lead a reader to take Carter, and the story about him, seriously. The photos of Stephen Perkins [September '96 *MD*], Lars Ulrich [November '96 *MD*],

and Eric Kretz are more likely to make people either grimace or laugh—neither of which are incentives to read the story the photos are attached to.

Please get your cover photos back on track, and present drummers as they should be presented: tastefully, seriously, and with respect.

Helen Winslow
 San Diego, CA

MIKE PALMER

Thanks for recognizing the talents of one of country music's most entertaining drummers, Mike Palmer [December '96 *MD*]. Mike may not play on Garth's albums (most of us are aware of the Nashville hierarchy that prevents that), but it's Mike that brings the music to life every night on the concert trail with Garth. Those of us who play drums in clubs for a living can relate more to Mike's playing situation—and appreciate it—than to the rarified air of the studio. That keeps things in perspective, and makes his story all the more readable. Thanks again.

Dan Domenici
 Cleveland, OH

BULLETIN BORED

I'm forty-two years old and I've been a subscriber to *MD* since its inception. Your magazine has brought me many hours of enjoyment and knowledge, and I thank you for that. However, I took great Offense at your little "flash bulletin" on page 12 of the December '96 issue! I'm not a Smashing Pumpkins or Jimmy Chamberlin fan. But musical tastes aside, referring to "the recently fired Jimmy Chamberlin" was uncalled for. Everyone, fan or not, knows that Jimmy is battling drug addiction, the loss of a high-profile gig, and the death of a former bandmate all at the same time. Neither Jimmy nor we need to be reminded of these circumstances in such a distasteful, uncaring, and flamboyant manner.

I'm surprised there isn't a "Who's been hired/fired" section added yet. As musicians we do not need to be constantly reminded of the volatile employment situations and/or substance-abuse problems that plague our profession. It's hard enough for

us to compete, raise families, pay bills, and deal with the everyday pressures of life. *MD* should not focus on anyone losing their job for any reason.

It seems to me that *MD* is heading towards being a newspaper and paparazzi rather than a magazine. I will always be a subscriber, but I am totally disgusted by little tidbits like this. I'm also tired of reading about players who can't play their way out of a paper bag, but somehow reach the pages of your magazine. How about more focus on the issues that affect the everyday working drummer, and less on the hype that surrounds a select few?

I urge you to uphold the quality you have worked so hard to preserve in the past.

Brian Zsupnik
 Burbank, CA

GOOD TIME HAD BY ALL

My compliments to Luther Rix for his extremely insightful article "A Good Time Had By All" [November '96 *MD*]. It was of great value to someone like me who seems to be searching endlessly for the perfect, almighty tempo. If I had a nickel for every time someone turned around during a gig and yelled "Lay back!" I'd own that new DW kit by now. It's always comforting to be reminded that I'm not alone in the anxiety-ridden realm of bad tempos. I frequently tell myself that if Stewart Copeland could have a rushing problem and still be one of the greatest drummers of our time, then maybe there's still hope for me! Either way, thank you, Luther, and thank you, *MD*. Keep up the good work.

David Ingraham
 Van Nuys, CA

COMMUNITY CLINICIAN

I'd like to share one of the best musical experiences of my life. I have just done my first drum clinic! Now, I'm not writing this as some kind of ego-booster. I'm in the category of

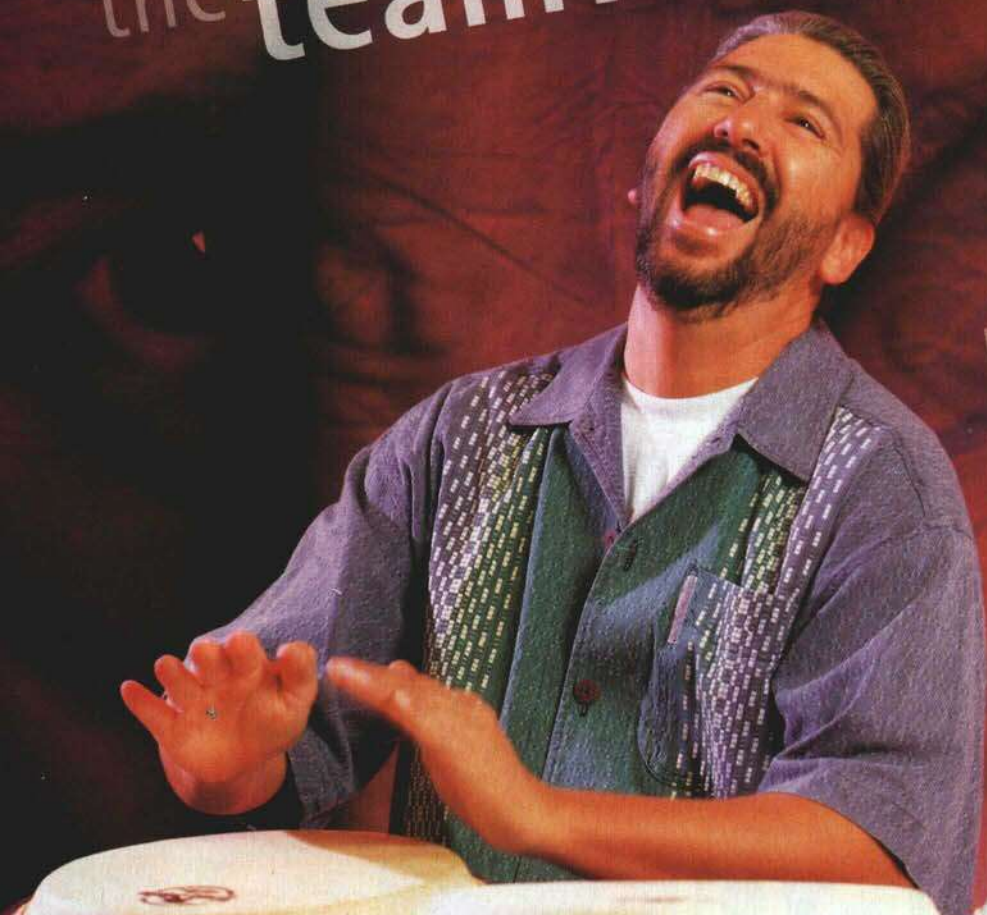
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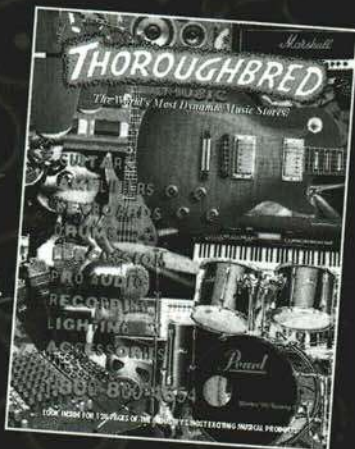
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your typical *MD* reader: I play clubs, I teach, and I'm definitely not on the verge of a major record deal. But while other drummers in my area say that they have no way to expose their talents, I recently realized that local schools are *starved for the arts*. So I did my clinic at the only middle school in my town with a music program. Not only was the response from the music director and the students tremendous, but I learned a great deal as well.

I received support in the way of door prizes from the folks at Trick Percussion and Engineered Percussion (*Axis*), even though I'm not an endorser (thanks, guys), and I was able to boost community interest by getting my clinic advertised in the local paper, on local TV, and on flyers, all at no cost to myself. It was a lot of work, but I served my community, I got more in touch with my instrument (see what doing a clinic does for your chops!), and everyone had a great time. So drummers: The next time you're in a rut, help yourself and our future drummers by staging a clinic in your community.

Mike Anthony
Ogden, UT



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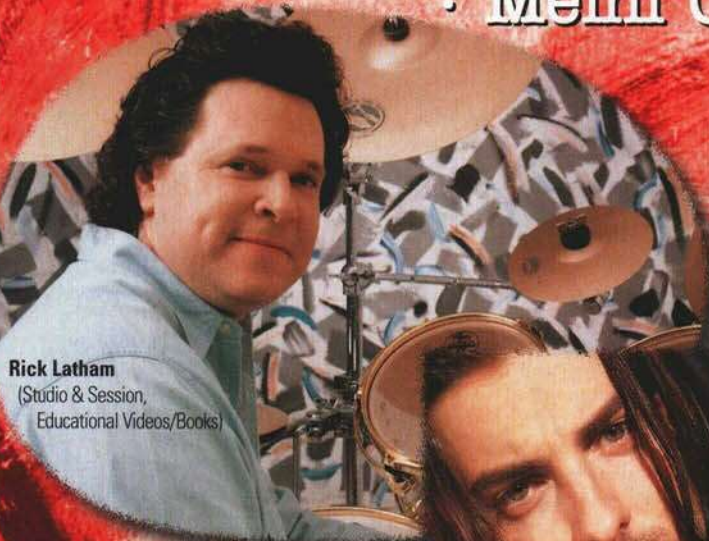
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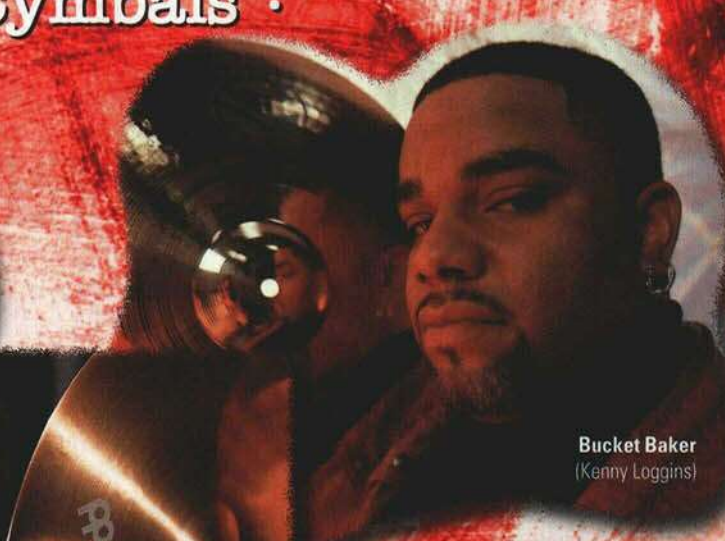
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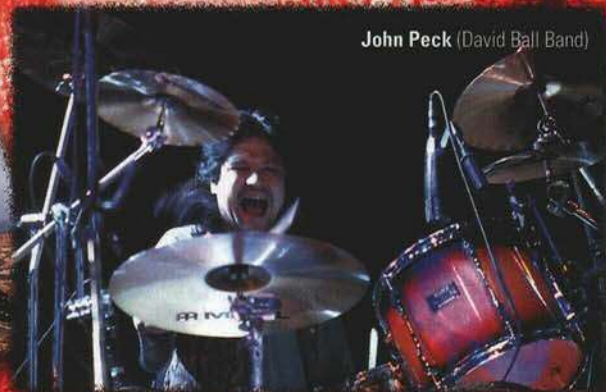
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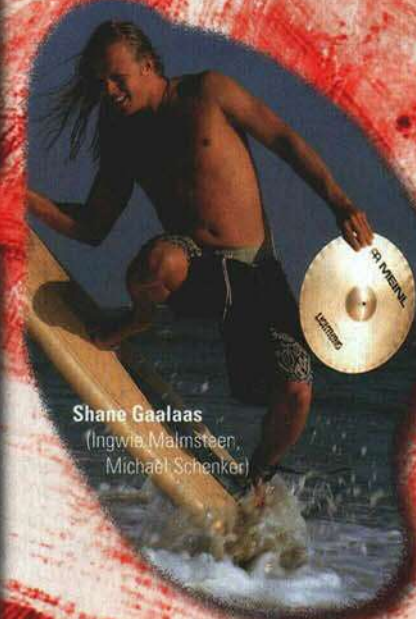
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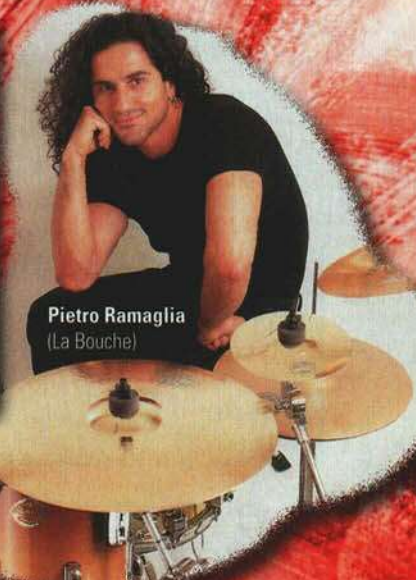
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Walker

Matt FILTERing Through The PUMPKINS

Like hundreds of other drummers, Matt Walker had one nagging thought when he heard about Jimmy Chamberlin's split from the Smashing Pumpkins: He wanted the gig.

Unlike most, however, Walker already had a foot in the door—he'd come to know the Pumpkins this past spring when his band, Filter, opened for them on a European tour. Getting an audition, as it turned out, was the easy part. Figuring out how to approach it was an entirely different dilemma, and Walker consulted everyone short of a psychic about the best way to go about it.

In retrospect, time—or the lack of it—proved to be on Walker's side. Filter was touring when Walker got the call to audition, so the twenty-seven-year-old drummer scrounged for moments to prepare, resorting to hotel room pillows and pots and pans on the tour bus for playing surfaces. Walker auditioned the day he returned home from the tour.

"Some people said I should try to play it like Jimmy, and other people told me to be myself, so I ended up pulling off some sort of hybrid," he says. "I remember being very nervous because I really wanted this gig, but one of the reasons I think I got it was that I injected my own style during the audition. Billy [Corgan, singer-guitarist] told me afterward that most of the other people tried playing Jimmy's parts down to the exact notes, and that's not necessarily the direction they wanted to stay in." So with his bandmates' blessings—and a couple of minor mixed feelings of his own—Walker left industrial-rock upstart Filter to join a band clearly in transition.

While the Pumpkins offered short-term financial rewards, along with a measurably higher career profile, Walker was clearly stepping into a fragile environment. Beyond that, his strengths and instincts as a drummer don't necessarily mesh with Chamberlin's. Even allowing space for his own style, Walker found the Pumpkins' songs—specifically, the faster romps—surprisingly demanding.

"I was already a big Pumpkins fan, and I'd seen Jimmy play the songs twenty or thirty times, so I was pretty familiar with the material," Walker says. "But Jimmy was very individualistic, and a lot of the songs not only revolved around his style, but were *built* around it. His single-stroke rolls are just amazing. But if you think they're fast on record, we do them about one and a half times faster live, and I'm always pressing the outer limits of my capabilities."

Walker, though, brings his own considerable talents to the table. An ardent student of drumming as a youngster, he stepped immediately out of high school into a variety of touring blues and jazz bands. With Filter, his first major band, Matt took music created and recorded with a drum machine and gave the rhythms a life of their own in concert.

Two days after his audition with the Pumpkins, Walker went into the recording studio with Billy Corgan to work on a Pumpkins song for the *Ransom* soundtrack. Walker is also continuing work with Filter, helping to program beats for the group's next record. As for his future with Smashing Pumpkins, Matt says it's in the hands of Corgan, who he said is talking about re-inventing the band—should it continue at all.

Only time will tell, the drummer says, whether he is part of that re-invention.

Matt Peiken

Future Man

Future Man, aka Roy Wooten, recently celebrated the first decade of his Synthaxe Drumitar, an instrument some probably didn't give ten *months*, much less ten years. Bela Fleck & the Flecktones' latest album, a double-live CD called *Live Art* (Warner Bros.), is an honest look at how in touch Future Man is with his electronic hand drum. "No tricks," he laughs. "I'm happy because the CD is live, and it's the stereo mix that I send out. It's how I hear the sounds live in proportion to each other."

Live Art contains revamped and stretched-out Flecktones favorites like "Sinister Minister," "Flying Saucer Dudes," and "Vix 9," as well as several new tunes. The recording didn't present any new problems for Future Man, as he usually takes a live approach in the studio anyway. "Once you go in there and start cutting the drums up, you're getting into a nest of bees. So most of the time I just leave the mistakes in there, like Miles. What you hear is what you get."

These days Future Man is triggering extravagant hand percussion samples from the

Alesis D-5 and alarmingly crisp cymbals ("Mostly K Zildjian, one Sabian") from the Synthaxe. He's now playing the *Zendrum* on stage as well. "He's always working on something new," smiles Future's brother, Flecktone bassist Victor Wooten. But Future Man has more than a little parental pride in the *Zendrum*, a kind of cleaned-up, buff Synthaxe Drumitar. "For me, the *Zendrum* company represents the catching on of the concept. Now I can step back. People have caught the idea and it has taken root. The key thing about it is the sensitivity, the dynamics—it's able to go down and up. That was when I knew they got it, because the sensitivity has to be there. It can't be *almost* there. From there you can walk a million miles."

Robin Tolleson



Dean Dixon

Sensitive

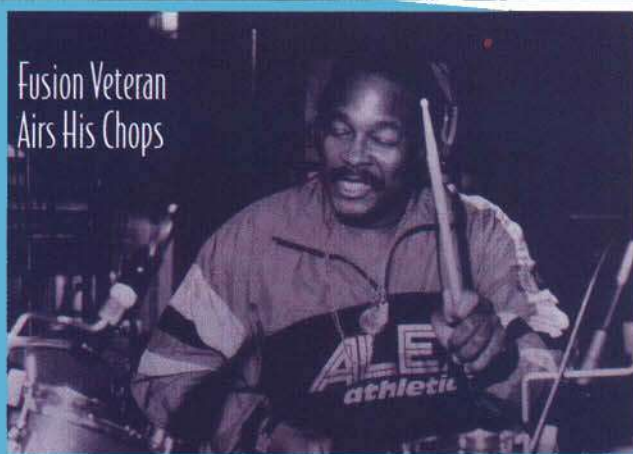
Alphonse Mouzon

Much of the music that forty-eight-year-old Alphonse Mouzon has released since 1991 on his Tenacious label reflects either the fusion he brewed with Larry Coryell in Eleventh House or the soul and R&B he heard while growing up in Charleston, South Carolina. However, his latest effort, *The Night Is Still Young*, harkens to the drummer's days with McCoy Tyner and with the original Weather Report. "I went back to my roots, as far as traditional jazz is concerned," Mouzon says. "I wanted more of the swinging bebop sound that I played in New York. I think I accomplished that."

As CEO and producer, Mouzon uses the studio to construct the best-sounding tracks possible, even in the traditional jazz setting, and the final drum part might be the last thing he plays. "I work with a song in my home studio and get the form together," he explains. "Then I'll go in and put down the reference drums that we scratch later, and then the reference piano and bass, with the engineer in the control room. I might mark the parts with personal cues that we'll erase later. Then I'll bring in musicians to play on top of some things, and I'll take out what I did originally, and just embellish the piano parts. I worked out changes and voicings at home, went back in the studio, and did the piano over with a little Herbie Hancock and a little Wynton Kelly kind of piano thing. I remember during the 'Waltz For Emma' session, [saxman] Ralph Moore said, 'Wow, who's the piano player?' I said, 'I am.' He was surprised," Mouzon laughs proudly. "I'm trying to dispel those drummer jokes."

A self-professed frustrated trumpet player and Miles Davis lover (Mouzon played on Miles' *Dingo* album), Mouzon hired trumpeter Sal Marquez and reedman Ernie Watts to round out the *all-Tonight Show* horn section with Moore on *The Night Is Still Young*. And it marked the drummer's first studio pairing with respected Los Angeles upright bassist Tony

Fusion Veteran Airs His Chops



Dumas. "I wanted there to be no mistake about this record—these are traditional musicians here, and we're playing traditional music. 'Protocol' reminds me of some of the up-tempo music I did with McCoy Tyner. The second part of the album is my contemporary stuff, but it's rougher. I wanted it to have an edge and not be over-produced."

"To keep the drummers' interest," he explains, "I put in 'To Drum Or Not To Drum,' 'Just Another Samba,' and 'Undulation.' On 'To Drum Or Not To Drum,' even though I play Sonor drums, I used the same Ludwig bass drum that I used with Weather Report and McCoy Tyner—it has the same heads on it as well. It has this propelling beat and just sounds amazing." It only takes a few rumbling bars of leadoff cut "Protocol" for the influence of Elvin Jones to emerge from Mouzon's joyous drumming. He laughs, "Oh yeah, you can hear Elvin in there, because he's always been encouraging to me, ever since I went with McCoy. He's like a big brother. Elvin's my idol."

Interested parties can keep in touch with Mouzon's drumming feats on the Web at www.tenaciousrecords.com.

Robin Tolleson

Dane Clark

New With Mellencamp

For the past twelve years, Dane Clark has been Indiana's main studio drummer. Recently, though, when Kenny Aronoff and John Mellencamp parted ways, Dane's priority shifted. He wanted to play live with a band, so when he was offered Mellencamp's drum seat, he gladly accepted the position.

"I'm committed to John, and whenever he has something going on, that takes priority," Dane explains. "I've been doing sessions since right out of college, and I make a good living. **But being in this band is what I want to do now. The band is so good, and there is the visibility factor.** The second gig we did was the VH1 *Barbecue* show, which was pretty cool. The next gig was the David Letterman show, and then we flew to Europe. This is stuff I've never done before."

"It requires a different mindset, too," he continues. "This is about making a show sound better each time, instead of going in and doing what I'm used to doing—running a

track down and then recording it and doing the best performance I can at that moment. This is a *whole* different thing.

"The two main things John needs in the music," says Clark, "are dynamics and real solid time. He's a real stickler on dynamics, which really **make the songs happen. And he needs me to lock in and make it groove all the way through.** The gig also requires subtlety—a 'less is more' approach. Instead of wondering where I can do a fill, I'm thinking about what I can leave *out* to make the song happen. I'm really enjoying this."

Robyn Flans

NEWS

Nir Z has replaced Phil Collins as the drummer in Genesis. He has just finished his tracks for a new Genesis release.

Neil Peart is currently on tour with Rush. Bill Stephenson is on tour with the Descendents, supporting their new album, *Everything Sucks*.

Johnny Haro is working with Star 69.

Sean Shannon recently recorded Pat Travers' *Lookin' Up* disk and is currently on tour with Travers.

Tom Alesi on Beausoleil's new album *L'Amour Ou La Folie*.

Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez was recently in the studio with Michel Camilo.

John Root has been performing with the Forester Sisters.

Aaron Smith is currently on tour with Michael W. Smith.

Jon Knox has left the group Whiteheart to join Carmen. You can hear Jon on the newest Whiteheart release, *Inside*, as well as Adam Again's recent *Perfecta*.

Craig Alan is on the self-titled debut release by the Texas Vampires.

Tony Williams has a new release due out on Miles Copeland's new label, Ark 21. The album, entitled *Wilderness*, features Tony along with Pat Metheny, Herbie Hancock, Stanley Clarke, and a full orchestra.

Congratulations to Lindy and Van Romaine [Steve Morse Band] on their recent marriage.

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As millions of people tune in nightly to The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, the drummers watching get a chance to see one of the most outstanding Jazz drummers of our time... Marvin "Smitty" Smith. It doesn't take a musician to recognize that the sound coming from the drum stage is nothing short of extremely impressive. As the opening Tonight Show Theme comes to an end, Marvin's hands and feet blur as he makes full use of every drum and cymbal in what seems a massive kit. Talent and equipment. When you

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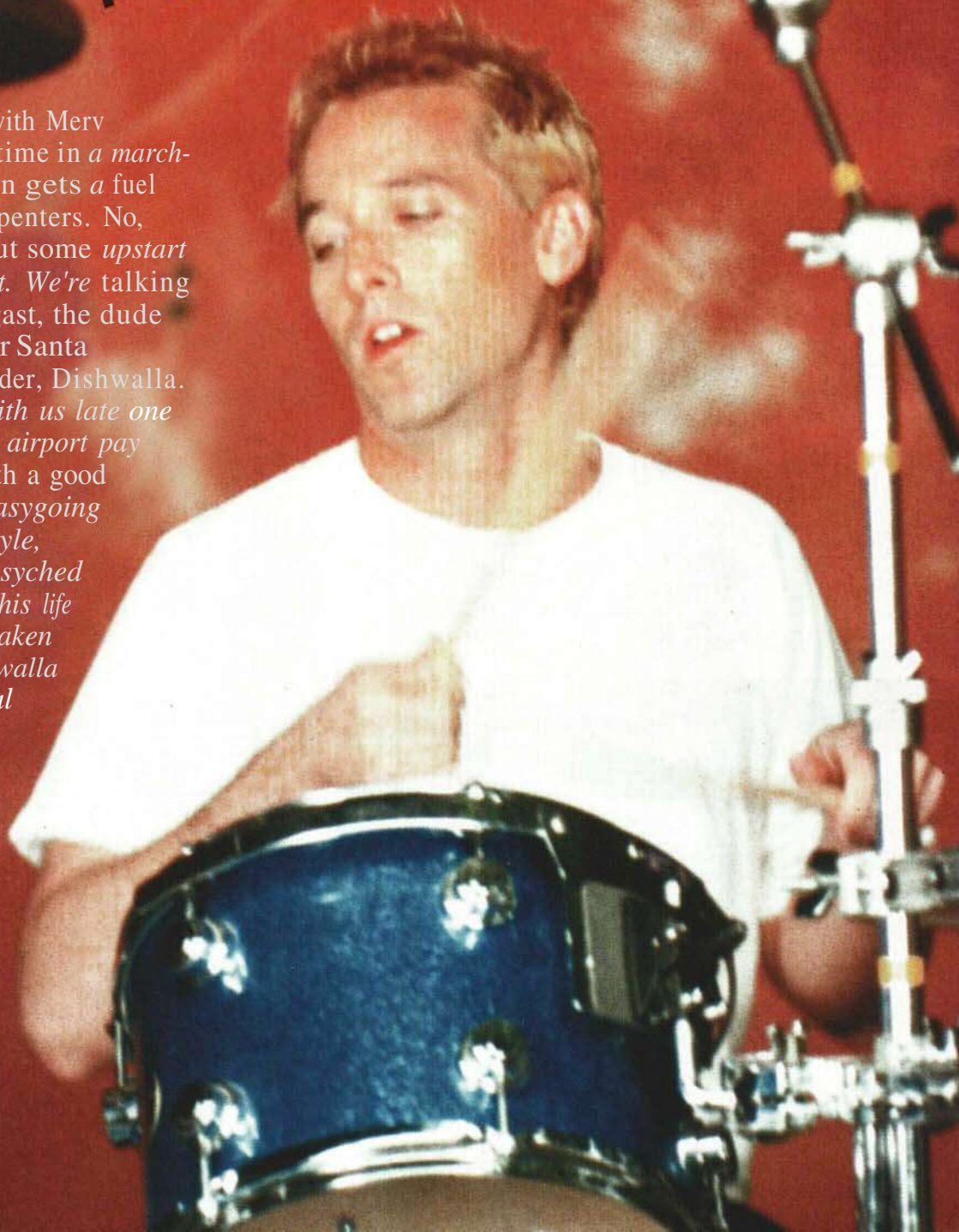
DISHWALLA'S

GEORGE PENDERGAST

by Harriet L. Schwartz

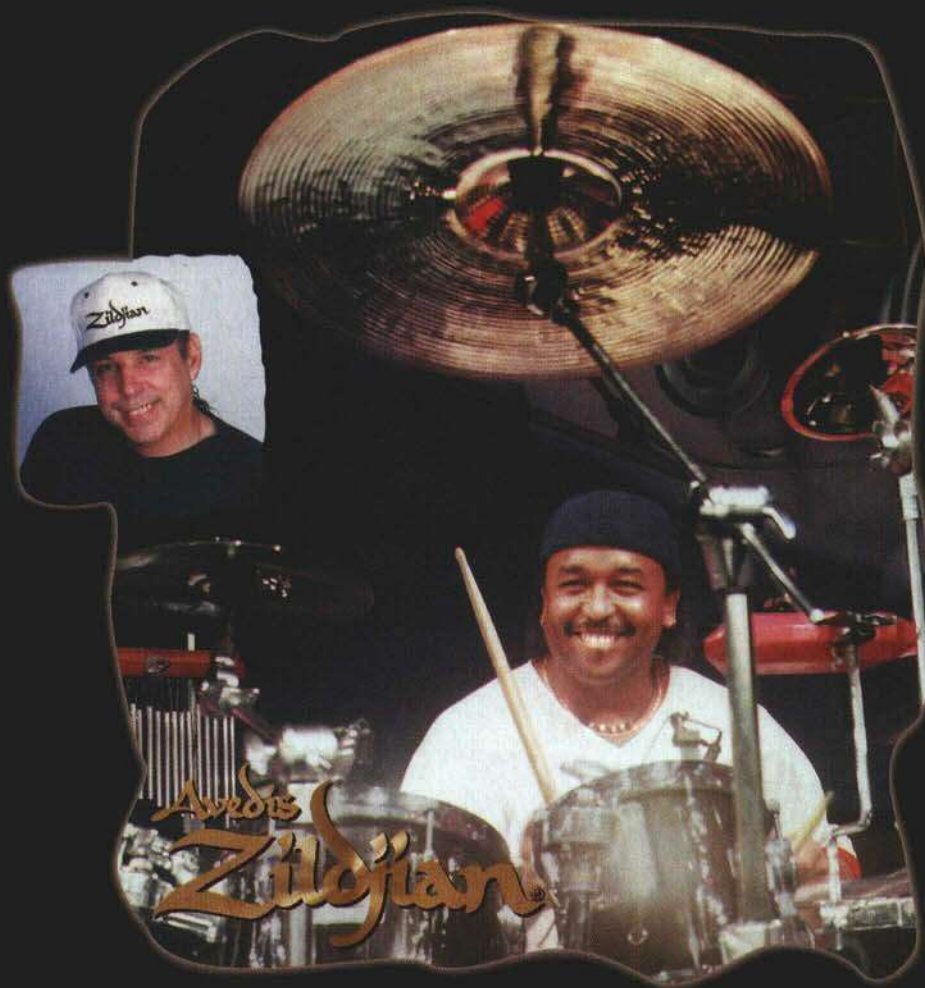
The story begins with Merv Griffin, includes time in a marching band, and then gets a fuel injection from the Carpenters. No, we're not talking about some upstart Broadway percussionist. We're talking about George Pendergast, the dude who keeps the beat for Santa Barbara's new rock wonder, Dishwalla.

Pendergast talked with us late one Sunday night from an airport pay phone in St. Louis. With a good sense of humor and easygoing Southern California style, Pendergast sounded psyched about drumming and his life in general, which has taken quick turns since Dishwalla broke onto the national scene last spring.



"When I first heard Carter, it literally stopped me in my tracks."

Nashville Great Eddie Bayers on Carter Beauford



"I was in the studio between sessions, and a video had just come on. I literally stopped in my tracks. 'Who is that?' I just had to know who it was. It was the Dave Matthews Band. Carter's playing is so unique and individual. He plays with so much intensity, it inspires me to play."

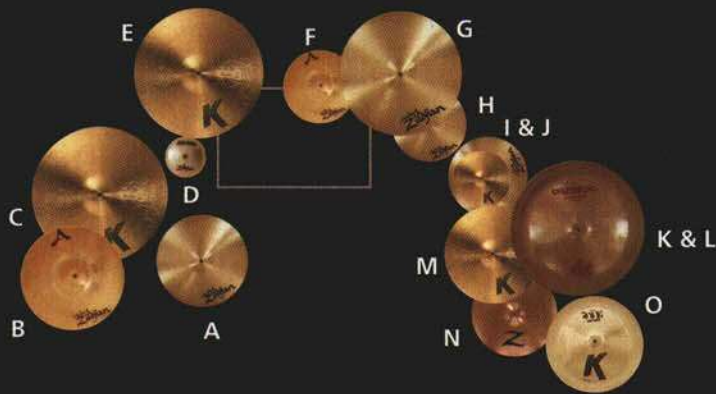
Carter Beauford on Zildjian:

"My cymbals have voices that reflect the unique musical influences that make up this band."

"To me, my A's and Z's represent a rock influence; I use them when I'm jamming around Dave's and Stefan's riffs. When Boyd is doing his bluegrass-cajun thing, I like to lay into my A Custom's. And when Leroi is doing his 'Coltrane' the K's do it for me."

Carter's Set-up:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| A. 14" A New Beat HiHats | F. 10" A Custom Splash | K. 20" Oriental China Trash |
| B. 16" A Custom Crash | G. 18" A Medium Crash | L. 18" Oriental China Trash on top of K |
| C. 20" K Ride Brilliant | H. 10" A Splash Brilliant | M. 14" K Dark Crash Thin Brilliant |
| D. 6" ZIL-BEL | I. 12" A Splash | N. 13" Z Dyno Beat HiHats |
| E. 19" K Dark Crash Thin | J. 8" K Splash Brilliant | O. 14" K Mini China with rivets |



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A Drumset, Please

Pendergast was inspired early by one of the greats. "I was about four years old when I saw Buddy Rich on the Merv Griffin show. I started playing on my mom's bongos and told her I wanted a drumset, and for my fifth birthday...well, I got a drumset." George adds that his mom was not a musician, but just had the bongos sitting around the house. "I guess she was a hippie or something."

The budding drummer was serious early on. He took lessons from the age of five all the way through high school, and went on to play just about every gig he could get his drumsticks on while a high-school student. He also played in jazz and marching bands and in the orchestra for school plays.

Although he is rooted in a range of styles, Pendergast, at twenty-eight, is now a rocker through and through. "I pretty much just hit hard," he says. "I used to try to be 'Finesse Guy.' But now, playing rock shows—especially these radio shows, where you can't hear anything—I have more fun if I just bash it out and don't worry about it. But it's a catch-22, because sometimes I'll watch a band where the drummer's just kind of laying back and grooving, and I'll think, 'Aw, man.' But I'm having fun."

George still draws on the lessons learned in his early years. "There are things you learn in jazz," he says, "like accenting things that other people are doing. If I hadn't done that I probably wouldn't even think about it and I'd just be playing 2 and 4 the whole time. Marching band, on the other hand, was good for learning discipline and practicing."

Pendergast's playing isn't complex in an obvious way. Yet a closer listen reveals plenty of ghost notes and other subtle touches. Again, he credits his diverse training for this part of his style. "I did the whole drum line thing in high school, and that was great for chops. I did a lot of orchestra pit stuff for plays, and that's great for learning how to play with other people. That's one of the best things you can learn because you realize how the littlest thing you do can have a huge impact."

Pendergast says his style has been influenced by a number of notable drummers. "A lot of drummers have been super-influenced by John Bonham and some other drummers from the '60s. He



kept everything very simple and kept it solid for the band. I'm also really into Neil Peart. Most drummers my age have been really influenced by him. He got us all to go for it, doing a fill every two bars, getting us to work on our chops so we could make everything real clean. And I really like Matt Cameron from Soundgarden. I think he's amazing—he just nails everything he goes for. Whether he's laying down a fill or doing odd times or polyrhythms, he's super-solid and tight."

A Breakthrough Cover

While Pendergast and Dishwalla singer/songwriter J.R. Richards first began playing together in high school, rock fame did not come as quickly as they had hoped. "I always thought that as soon as I graduated from high school my band was going to get signed. It was eight or ten years later that it finally happened. At one point I actually boxed my drums up, put them in the closet, and said screw it. I tried selling insurance for a while. It didn't work. I quit selling insurance at twenty-one and decided that I was just going to drum, and whatever was going to happen, would happen."

Still jamming in their home town of Santa Barbara, Richards and Pendergast formed Dishwalla four years ago, adding Rodney Browning on guitar and Scot Alexander on bass.

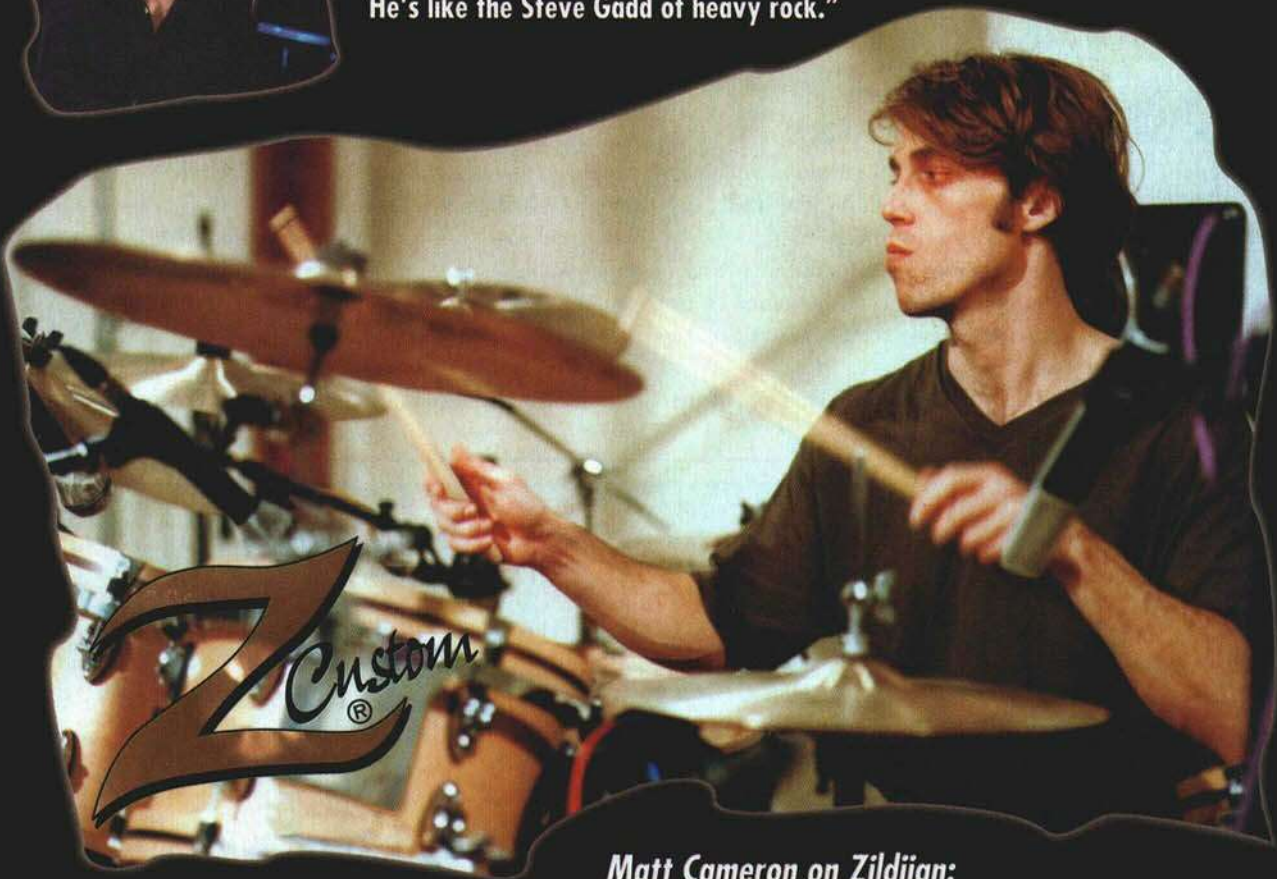


"Matt comes at you from nowhere with incredible odd-time stuff."

White Zombie's John Tempesta on Matt Cameron



"Matt's one of my favorite players. What I love about him is his capacity to play with such force and feeling, he's such a loose player, with the ability to come at you from nowhere with incredible odd-time stuff. He's like the Steve Gadd of heavy rock."



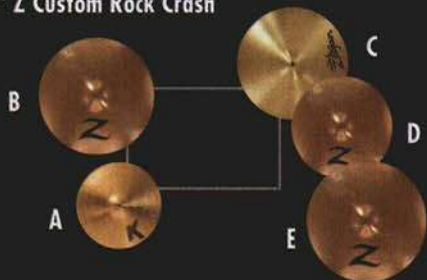
Matt Cameron on Zildjian:

"I want cymbals that have dynamics and volume that will be heard over screaming guitars and pounding bass. Z Custom Crashes really project, they have awesome tone, and sustain just enough... they're so clean sounding, so crisp."

"My A Medium Ride is my favorite. It has a very distinct ping, and it washes nicely with my crashes. My Hats are awesome too, a K top and an A New Beat bottom."

Matt's Soundgarden Set-up:

- A. 15" K HiHat Top
15" A New Beat HiHat Bottom
- B. 19" Z Custom Medium Crash
- C. 21" A Medium Ride
- D. 18" Z Custom Medium Crash
- E. 19" Z Custom Rock Crash



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The band can now thank Karen and Richard Carpenter, because this rockin' four-piece got its big break by covering a Carpenters tune.

"We read about a Carpenters tribute album in the newspaper and we wanted to get involved," Pendergast explains. "We did a tape of 'Close To You' to send to the producer, Matt Wallace. He liked it, but the Cranberries were already doing 'Close To You.' The only two songs left were 'Bless The Beasts And The Children' and 'It's Going To Take Some Time.' So we did 'Time.'"

After the Carpenters cover got them in the door at A&M Records, the Santa Barbara boys didn't take long to take off. They recorded *Pet Your Friends* and eventually broke into *Billboard* and MTV charts with "Counting Blue Cars," the album's second single. Showcasing the band's funky yet rocking instrumentation and intelligent lyrics, it reached Number 1 on the *Billboard* "Heatseeker" list this past summer.

Loops And A Paper Snare

Like Pendergast's drumming background, Dishwalla combines a range of styles, often within songs. In addition, the band gets excellent texture covering a wide dynamic territory.

"Everyone in the band is coming from a totally different background," says Pendergast. "Some of the music that some of us like, the other ones hate—and vice versa. We all tried to make everything we like fit into songs."

Dishwalla's hit "Counting Blue Cars" is a great example of the

band's ability to mix moods and dynamics for strong rhythmic hooks. Pendergast's funky snare beat is a primary element behind Richards' vocal in the quieter verses. Then the whole band turns it up a notch during the chorus, with Pendergast moving more to crash-cymbal exclamation points.

Pendergast again sets the mellow mood in the opening of "Charlie Brown's Parents," the album's most recent single. Starting with a quiet open hi-hat ride, Pendergast then lays heavily into a tom/crash pattern for the much more manic and heavy chorus.

Pendergast talks enthusiastically about other standout tracks on the album. "There's a hidden track called 'Date With Sarah,' where I trigger a loop every two bars and then do a tom thing, with the snares off. I loop again and then turn the snares off and on, going back and forth from the beat to the tom. It's kind of cool.

"Give' is really cool because I wanted to get a super '70s drum sound," George continues. "I grew up listening to the Eagles and the Doobies—and the snare always sounded like paper. So I took the snare and loosened it until it was almost flappy, and then taped paper on it. I took the bottom heads off the toms, which a lot of people do to get this sound, and then taped the top heads. We used only a kick drum mic' and a room mic'. It's not something you listen to and say, 'What a super drum sound,' but a lot of those '70s songs wouldn't have sounded the same without that paper-and-box sound."

While *Pet Your Friends* brings together a range of styles, the band's recording is impressively clean. Live, the band plays tight as well, but also leaves room for jamming improvisation.

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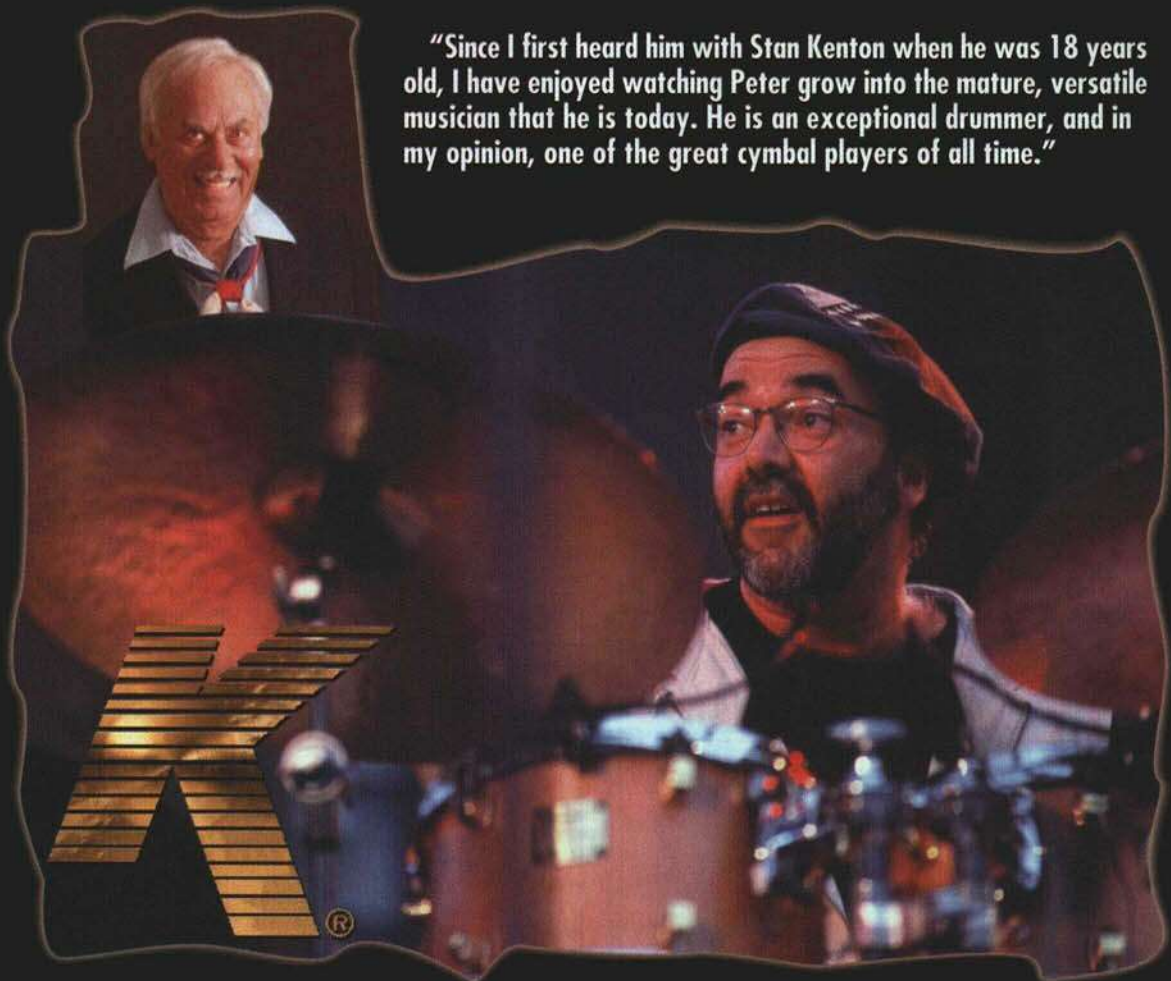
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"Peter is one of the great cymbal players of all time."

Armand Zildjian on Peter Erskine

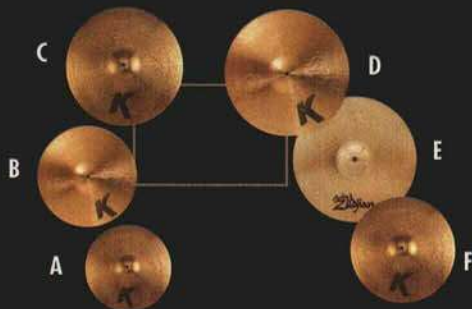


"Since I first heard him with Stan Kenton when he was 18 years old, I have enjoyed watching Peter grow into the mature, versatile musician that he is today. He is an exceptional drummer, and in my opinion, one of the great cymbal players of all time."

Photo: Shigeru Uchiyama

Peter's Set-up:

- A. 14" K Custom Dark HiHats
- B. 16" K Dark Crash Thin
- C. 20" K Custom Medium Ride
- D. 22" K Pre-Aged Dry Light Ride
- E. 22" A Swish Knocker
- F. 17" K Custom Dark Crash



Peter Erskine on Zildjian:

"A Zildjian cymbal to me, is like a Stradivarius. They are exquisite instruments and have multiple facets. I think of my K Pre-Aged Dry Ride just like a violin in a sense, it's not something I'm just going to clang away on."

"Cymbals are the most complex of instruments because of their overtones and frequency response. Between the bell and the edge the range of sounds that can be discovered is incredible. A cymbal cannot be synthesized, it's just too intricate."

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"There's a little bit of form to it," says Pendergast, "because if we don't have a little bit of form, we tend to get chaotic. It's mostly improv, though. We do it in the same parts of the song and for about the same length every night. I don't *think* about improvisation, though. It depends on the show. If I'm really nervous I'll kind of stick to what I know. And if I'm feeling the love or whatever, I'll just go for stuff."

"We did this summer fest in Chicago, and there were 66,000 people there. We did the full, cheesy, 'drop the lyrics out and let the crowd sing' bit, and it was amazing to hear that many people singing. It was gnarly!"

Pendergast packs lightly on tour, using a four-piece DW set and a trigger pad. In the studio, however, he goes for more variation. He used a number of setups for *Pet Your Friends*, including the DW set, a nickel-brass Leedy snare, a 15" Ludwig snare, and for "Give" an old Slingerland set. He borrowed many of these drums from his buddy Andy Kravitz, who he affectionately calls "a gnarly hip-hop drummer."

"For the next album and the next tour, I'm going to add another tom and some gadgets," Pendergast says. "I trigger all the loops when we play live. They're either one-bar or two-bar patterns, so I'm hitting the pads on all the downbeats and playing along with those. I'd like to get more pads and trigger more than one loop in a song."

Dude With A Groove

J.R. Richards believes that Pendergast's ability to use loops while keeping a natural feel is primary in the Dishwalla sound. "Overall, George brings a very looped-groove feel to Dishwalla that we wouldn't otherwise have," Richards says. "He has the unique ability to trigger loops and other percussive sounds from a pad on certain songs and play with them in a very flexible manner. It comes out feeling consistent, like a loop would, but very, very natural. Most of the time he isn't even playing to a loop, but he *still* creates that feel. Yet he has all the fills and spontaneity that you would hope to have in a really great drummer."

"George can play just about anything now," Richards continues, "but he doesn't overplay. He has learned how to do just the right amount to give each song its own identity. His feel is just incredible. He has gotten to the point where he really represents the best of both worlds—solid and tight, but creative and unpredictable in all the right places."

Finally, Pendergast grooves on the fact that he is active in Dishwalla's composition process. "We all write the songs together. I do my drum part, but I'll also say, 'Can you guys do "de-da-de-da-de-da," right there,' and even though I don't know what the notes are, they usually know what I'm talking about. They'll humor me and give it a try, and a couple times it's ended up in songs. I'd like to think what I do is more than just drumming."



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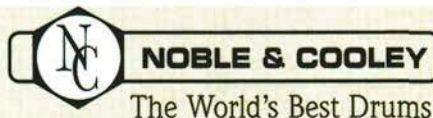
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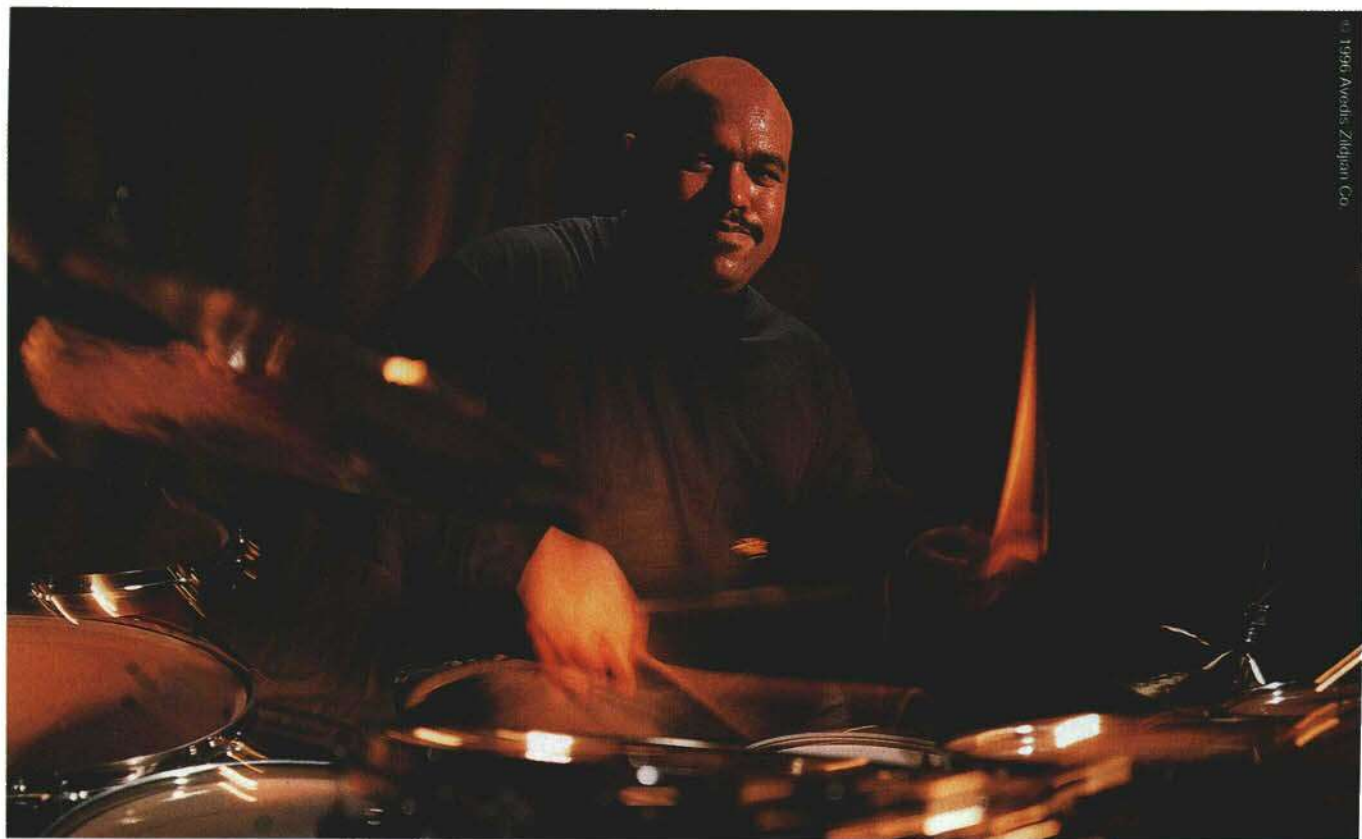
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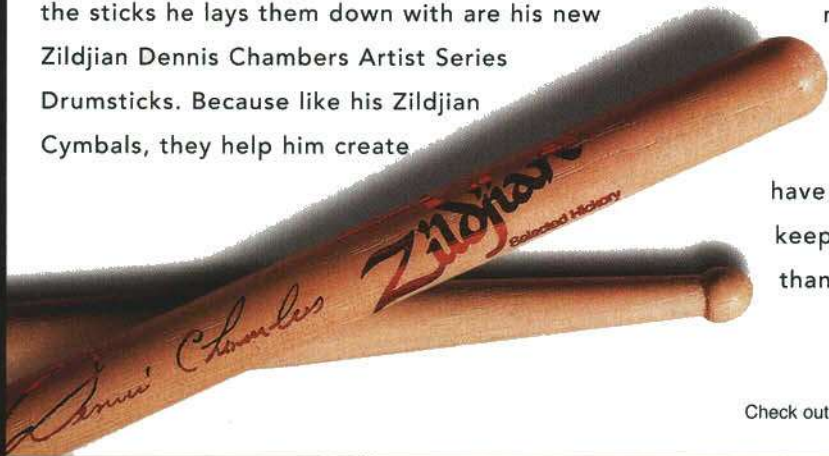
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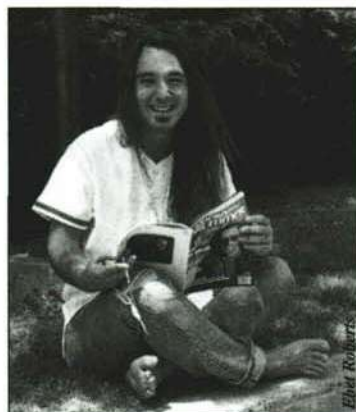


Dave Abbruzzese

Q You are an inspiration to me and to plenty of other drummers worldwide. I've followed you from Pearl Jam to the Jimi Hendrix tribute. Now I hear about your playing with the Green Romance Orchestra. I've looked everywhere for a recording, but I've been unsuccessful at locating it. When and where will it be available?

Eli Rothenberg
via Internet

A Thanks for the inspiring words, Eli. The Green Romance Orchestra was formed in 1995, and we're currently writing and recording songs for our second record in my new studio in Denton, Texas. Our first record is available at the moment through mail-order only. The reason for this is that we felt a need to concentrate first and foremost on the music, and on the reasons that we play music. Mail-order allows us the freedom to enjoy the creative process without the usual pressures of being on a record label. It is also allowing us the rare luxury of seeing our musical ideas through, without compromising for the sake of the powers that be and *their* grand marketing strategies.



We hope to eventually find the right people to assist us with getting the music into a more accessible place, but for now you can write to me or to the Green Romance Orchestra, P.O. Box 99410, Seattle, WA 98199. Also keep your eyes open for an opportunity to get your hands on a free three-song sample disk of the band from my buddies at Pro-Mark. In the meantime, be good, and enjoy all music!

Simon Phillips

Q I enjoyed your playing on your latest release, *Symbiosis*. The more I hear your drumming, the more I like it. I know that you prefer to use your left hand on the hi-hat and ride cymbals. When did you begin to use this style, and was there any exercise/practice method that helped you to master it?

Charles Gauthier
Sudbury, Ontario, Canada

A Thanks for your kind words. The first time I started playing left-handed was in 1975. I was going through a transition from a band breaking up and being out of work. I had to keep myself busy somehow, so I started to swap everything I played right-handed over to left-handed. I had a call to do a session (luckily) and I decided to play it left-handed. (I kept a ride cymbal on the right, though, just in case!) I never looked back. The way I did it was to slow down every rhythm that I played so I could see what was going on. Then I reversed it. I focused on the importance placed on the groove and the relative volumes of each individual part. Remember: Above all it is the groove and the time that counts. Best of luck!

Joe Morello

Q I have a question relating to your article on triplet rolls in the June '96 *MD*. Several years ago I saw the drummer for April Wine perform a triple-stroke roll during his solo. He started slow, then very gradually sped up until it sounded like a very fast, smooth, and even buzz. And the whole time he was raising his wrists the same three-foot height off the drum!

Being mainly a solid rocker myself, the farthest I've gotten is 200 bpm with 8th-note triplets, and it's never smooth enough. How would you suggest I accomplish this goal?

Dan McCoy
Laughlin, NV

A The key to developing the triplet roll is to start out very slowly. The first stroke is made with the forearm and the other two are made with the wrist. Once you have reached around 150 or 160 bpm on the metronome, you should make the first stroke with the forearm and then make two rebounds with the fingers. With conscientious practice, I'm sure you can achieve your goal.

I honestly doubt that the drummer you describe was actually playing a triplet roll from three feet away from the drum—at least not at a fast tempo. Playing at that distance from the drum really doesn't make much sense because you're wasting motion. The drummer more than likely started off with a triplet roll and then went into double strokes as the roll became faster.



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- 30dB Pad switches on channels 1-4 allow high level input sources without high level noise. You need this for quality sound. (Not found on most competitive models.)
- Configuration switch allows power amps to be bridged together for 400 watts in the main speakers or used separately for mains and monitors. (Competitive models require extra cables and patching.)
- LED meters to allow the setting of levels. (Some powered mixers have no meters at all.)

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Ergonomics And Hand Problems

Q A long while back, you published articles about drumset ergonomics, correct posture, drum placement, etc. Are the issues containing these articles available for purchase? Are there any other issues that contain related information?

You have also run articles about warm-up techniques, stretching, and so forth. Since I fear I am starting to develop repetitive stress syndrome in my wrists, I would appreciate the availability of any information you have.

Donald Blum
via Internet

A Rick Van Horn's *Club Scene* column titled "Ergonomics" appeared in the April '88 issue of *MD*. Back issues are not available; contact our office at (201) 239-4140 for information on how to obtain a photocopy of the article. Ron Hefner's *Head Talk* column, "The Twisted Torso," recapped and referred to a good deal of Rick's original column, as well as adding

some new ideas. That column appeared in the October '95 issue.

Past *MD* articles on hand problems and physical conditioning include: "Flexing In The Groove" (a major feature article), by Mark Scholl, January '97; "Healing Your Hands," by Dr. Arlo Gordin, *Health & Science*, Feb. '95; "Fitness Conditioning For Drummers," by Paul T. Wright, *Health & Science*, March 94; "Occupational Hazards: Beating Carpal Tunnel Syndrome," by Dr. Charles Resnick, *Health & Science*, Jan. '93; "Dealing With Carpal Tunnel Syndrome," by Susan Alexander, *Health & Science*, Sep. '90; and "Staying In Shape With The Pros" (a major feature article in two parts), part 1, Oct. '86, part 2, Nov. '86. Contact *MD's* back-issue department regarding availability of the issues listed.

Drum Buzz

Q I have been having a problem with a very annoying buzzing noise coming from my Tama *Rockstar DX* tom-toms and floor toms. I've tried nylon washers, new

hoops, and stuffing the lugs with cotton, and so far I've had no luck in fixing this problem. Any advice or help would be greatly appreciated.

Andy McWilliams
via Internet

A The buzzing you mention may be the result of imperfect alignment between the hoop of a drumhead and the rim of your drum. This can often be caused by the hoop of the head not being true, rather than any problem with your drum. Try replacing the head and see what happens.

On the other hand, if the bearing edge of the drum is not true, then you might get the same problem no matter what head you put on. Check your bearing edges by placing them on a completely flat surface (like a glass tabletop or marble counter) with a bright light inside. If you can see light from under the edges of the drum (on the outside of the shell), there are imperfections in the bearing edges. These can cause just enough gap between the drumhead and the bearing edge to allow the head or the drumhead



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hoop to vibrate at that point, causing a buzz. The solution to this problem is to have the bearing edges re-trued.

A rarer, but not unheard of, source of buzzing might be the plastic covering on the shells. Check the seams and the edges to see if there might be any places where the material seems detached or "bubbled" away from the shell. (You might not be able to see it, but you can often feel it with your fingers; the covering seems to "give" at a certain point on the shell instead of feeling solid.) If you think this is the problem, contact a drum shop with repair services. You may need to have the drums recovered.

A Hole In The Head

Q I have a question about the front (resonating) head on my bass drum. I was playing my bass drum with the factory-supplied (circa 1987 Pearl) front logo head with a hole approximately 10" to 12" in diameter. With this arrangement I could really dig in to my *very* loosely tensioned batter head, because the air moved by the batter head could escape the drum quickly out of the hole in the front head.

Unfortunately, I became dissatisfied with my bass drum sound. It was very focused and powerful, but I wanted something with more boom and sustain. So I replaced the front head with a *Powerstroke 3* head without a hole in it. Well, I got that boominess I was looking for. But the problem I am running into now is that the air inside the bass drum has no way to escape the drum after the stroke. Instead, it stays inside and resists my stroke. That is, the recoil force of the head is *much* higher now, and it pushes the beater away from the head. This results in the beater bouncing on the head until it comes to rest. I can cure this somewhat by hitting the bass drum harder to resist the recoil, but I can't slam the thing on every gig!

If I cut a small hole (5" to 7", like the smallest Remo *DynamO*), will this solve my problem *and* keep the sound I want? I am reluctant to do this without knowing the result beforehand, because heads are not real cheap. None of my drummer friends play a "no hole" bass drum, so I am asking you! Please help!

George Kouris
Redondo Beach, CA

A Our best advice would be for you to try a small hole in the front head (starting with something not larger than 2"-3" in diameter). Place the hole a couple of inches in from the rim at approximately the 5:00 or 7:00 position, *not* at the center of the head. This will allow air to escape without allowing the sound to shoot directly away from the beater and out the front of the drum.

Play the drum, listening carefully to the acoustic response and also "feeling" the head resistance to your pedal stroke. If necessary, increase the size of the hole a very small amount at a time, until you reach a compromise point between drum "boominess" and batter head "give" that you're looking for.

Yamaha YESS System

Q In his July, 1993 review of Yamaha *Maple Custom* drums with the *YESS* suspension mounting system, Rick Van Horn questioned the durability of the system when used with larger toms. I am considering purchasing a set of *Recording Custom* drums with this system and was



Matt Cameron
Snare Emperor Coated/Ambassador Snare
Bass Ambassador Coated/Powerstroke 3 Ebony w/hole
Toms Emperor Coated/Ambassador Clear

Mike Portnoy
CS Coated w/Black Dot/Diplomat Snare
Powerstroke 3 Clear/Powerstroke 3 Ebony
Pinstripe/Ambassador Clear

Jim Sonfeld
Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Snare
Powerstroke 3 Clear/none
Ambassador Coated/Ambassador Clear

wondering if the opinion expressed in that review remains the same, considering the time that has passed. I agree with Rick that the system doesn't look too stable, but I've been assured by many that this is definitely not the case and that the system has proven itself.

Steve Murphy
via Internet

A Rick Van Horn replies: "As I stated at the time of my review back in 1993, my concern for the durability of the *YESS* mounts when used for larger drums was speculative and was based on their appearance, not on any hard evidence. The evidence gained since then would seem to prove my concerns unfounded. In the three years following that review *MD* has never received a complaint about the *YESS* system."

To Dig Or Not To Dig

Q My question is with regard to playing the bass drum. When I play, the neutral position I adopt for the pedal is with the beater actually resting on the drumhead. I

don't know if this is correct or not. It would seem that it is not, since no matter how hard or soft I strike the bass drum, the beater will rumble against the skin from the force of the initial strike. I want to know where the pedal should rest in between beats.

Jamie McWilliam
Scotland

A Many players do let the beater "dig in" to the head and stay there, as you are currently doing. However, most players who do this use a fairly slack batter-head tension, so that the beater is less inclined to "rumble" against the head as you describe. If you are very comfortable with the way you're now playing, you may wish to experiment a bit with your bass drum tuning/head tension to see what can be accomplished.

On the other hand, many drummers—especially those more "traditionally" instructed—will tell you that you should allow the beater to rebound away from the head between beats. Doing this does offer certain advantages over "digging in." Those include: 1) eliminating the possibili-

ty of the "rumble" you described; 2) bringing the most sound "out of the head, since the beater doesn't muffle the impact sound in any way; 3) bringing the beater back to the "ready" position rapidly, thus preparing for the next stroke—which can improve overall pedal quickness.

Medical Resources

Q My daughter is a drummer who has just been diagnosed as having tendonitis of the wrist. She is a freshman in high school and is really upset about this—especially since she just received a new DW drumset but can't play! Do you know of any facilities on the East Coast that specialize in drummers' specific medical problems?

Becky Hudson
via Internet

A We suggest you contact the following medical facilities:

1. The Kathryn & Gilbert Miller Health Care Institute for Performing Artists, 425 W. 59th St., Suite 6A, New York, NY 10019, (212) 523-6200.
2. The Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation

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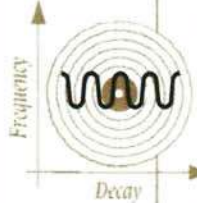
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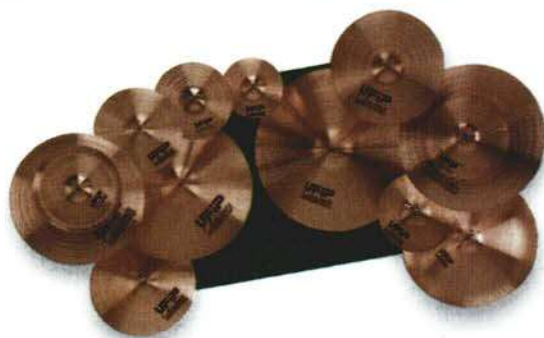


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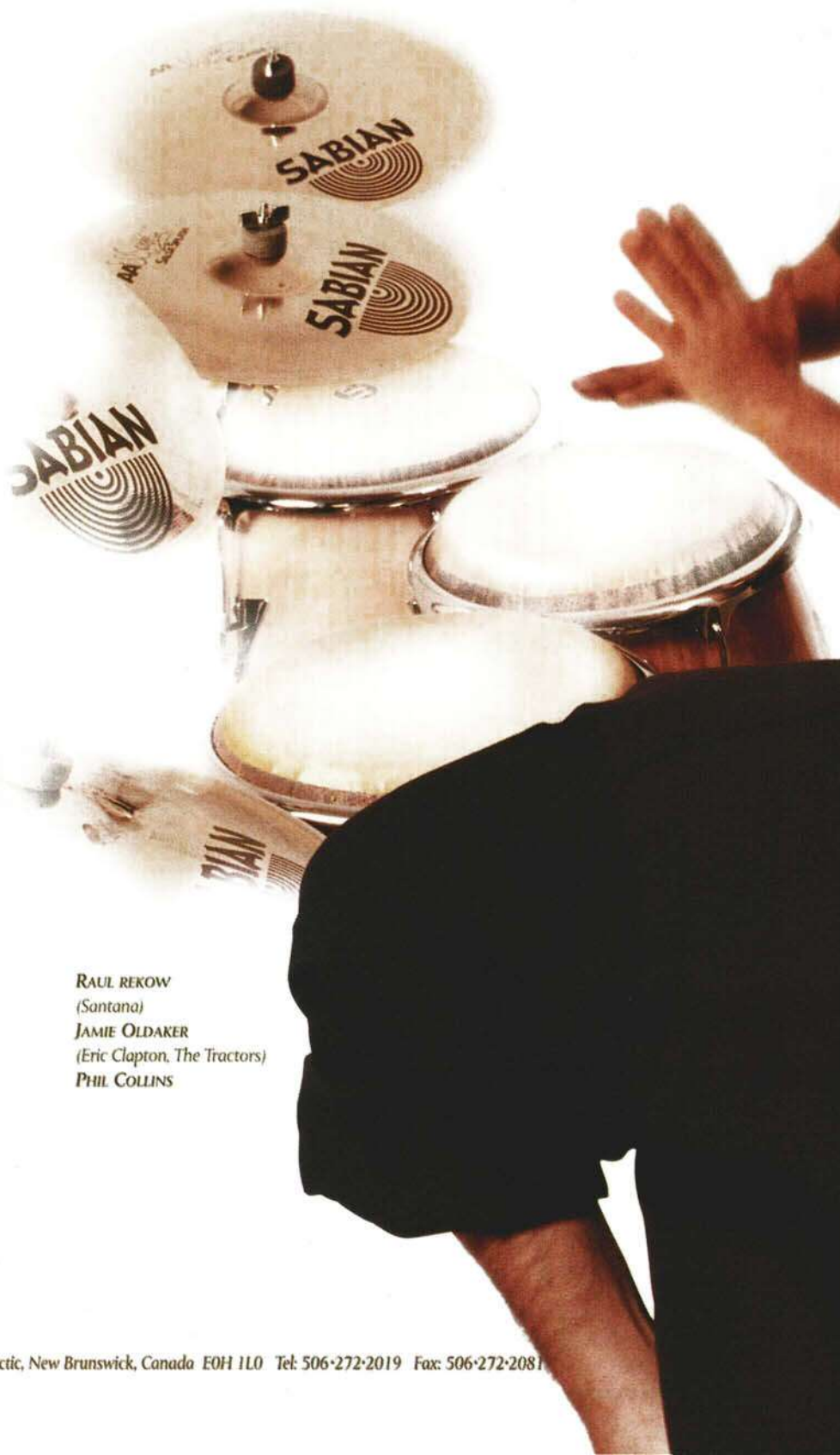
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(Performing Arts Medicine Program), 1199 Pleasant Valley Way, West Orange, NJ 07052, (201) 248-3221, ext. 2748.

There is also an organization dedicated to the dissemination of information pertaining to performance-related injuries and illnesses, the International Foundation for Performing Arts Medicine. You may contact them at 55 W. Lindsley Rd., North Caldwell, NJ 07006, (201) 890-7874.

Hearing Protection Sources

Q Please give me a way to get in touch with the following companies regarding hearing protection and related subjects: Circuits Maximus, Garwood Communications, and Precision Audiotronics. I read about them in your write-up of the 1996 Winter NAMM show.

Vic Edgerton
Costa Mesa, CA

A Circuits Maximus, Inc., 9017-B Mendenhall Ct., Columbia, MD 21045, tel: (410) 381-7970, fax: (410) 381-5025. Garwood Communications, 4 Terry Drive, Suite 10H, Newtown, PA 18940, tel: (215) 860-6866, fax: (215) 968-2430. Precision Audiotronics: P.O. Box 300141, Fern Park, FL 32730-0141, tel: (800) 711-7317, fax: (407) 831-0909.

Buying A New Drumkit

Q I'm in the market for a new drumset. It's a pretty big investment to say the least, so I definitely don't want to mess it up. Have you ever done any articles on buying a new set—like a step-by-step process and what to look for?

Scott Tenley
via Internet

A Yes, we have. Steve Snodgrass's article titled "Choosing Your Second Drumset" appeared in the *Head Talk* department of our August, 1995 issue. It addressed some of the things to keep in mind when moving up to a newer or better kit.



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New Drums From The Old South Pinson Bearing Edge Drums

Somehow it seems appropriate that attractive wood-shelled drums would come from a town called Flowery Branch, Georgia. That's where custom drum builder Kevin Pinson is now producing his *Bearing Edge* drums. Available with 6-, 8-, or 10-ply all-maple shells, the drums feature finishes ranging from polyester transparents to exotic veneers and are fitted with machined solid brass tube lugs (also designed by Pinson). Wood hoops are also available on all drums, with matching solid brass claws.



Silence, Please! Husher Clip-On Practice Pad

Want to practice your drums without impairing your hearing or alienating your neighbors?

Try the *Husher*, a device that combines natural drumheads with sound-proofing material to give the response, feel, and tone of "live" drums with up to 90% less volume.

Hushers are designed to clip directly to a drum or to be used alone. They're available in sizes from 10" to 18", and range in price from \$17.95 to \$24.95.



Let's Get To The Bottom Of Things K & K Dyna B 07 Bass Drum Microphone

After introducing compact microphones dedicated to snare drums, toms, hi-hats, and overhead use, K & K completes their line with the introduction of the *Dyna B 07* bass drum mic'. The dynamic mic' features a small but heavy-duty aluminum body with a reinforced wind-screen for durability, a triple shock-mount system to avoid shock noise, and

an angled XLR connector for positioning flexibility and security. Its dual-frequency membrane provides a frequency range of 20-18,000 Hz, and a titanium magnet enhances low frequency response. The mic' is designed to withstand SPLs exceeding those of the standard measuring range, making it extremely efficient and distortion-free.

Incredible Shrinking Drums Pearl Soprano Snare Drums

As the drum competition gets bigger, drums seem to be getting smaller. Pearl is now offering 4x10 and 4x12



Soprano snare drums, featuring 6-ply (7.5 mm) all-maple shells. Each model features six *RL-05* lugs, a newly redesigned *SR-016* strainer, and Pearl's *I.S.S.* suspension system, which is compatible with all

Pearl tom holders and adapters and facilitates a wide variety of mounting options on racks and stands.

The drums are finished in liquid amber high-gloss see-through lacquer, and are priced at \$325 for the 10" model and \$330 for the 12".



They Have A Birthday...You Get The Presents

Yamaha 30th Anniversary and Beech Custom Drumkits, Stadium Hardware, Field Corps Vest Carrier, and 40" Concert Bass Drum



Yamaha 30th Anniversary drumkit

In celebration of their thirtieth anniversary in the drum business, Yamaha is offering limited edition 30th Anniversary Drumkits. The drums feature *Maple Custom* shells, small-body chrome lugs, 2.3 mm *DynaHoop* steel rims, and *YESS* mounts, along with a special selection of sparkling lacquer finishes and badged display front bass drum heads.

Also from Yamaha is a completely new drumkit series designated *Beech Custom*. The new series features all-beech wood shells, *Tour*-style lugs, steel triple-flange rims, *YESS* mounts, and high-quality lacquer finishes in a new selection of colors.

The beech shells are said to have acoustic qualities falling between birch and maple, and to project a dynamic yet warm tone. The concept of the new series is to offer a quality

high-end set at a lower price than either maple or birch sets. Five-piece kits are expected to have a suggested retail price under \$3,500.

In a flurry of additional activity, Yamaha has also introduced *Stadium* hardware (which can be used in the uneven surfaces of gyms and stadiums) and a fiberglass/aluminum *Field Corps Vest Carrier* in its marching line, and a 40" concert bass drum of beech and mahogany.



Yamaha Beech Custom drumkit

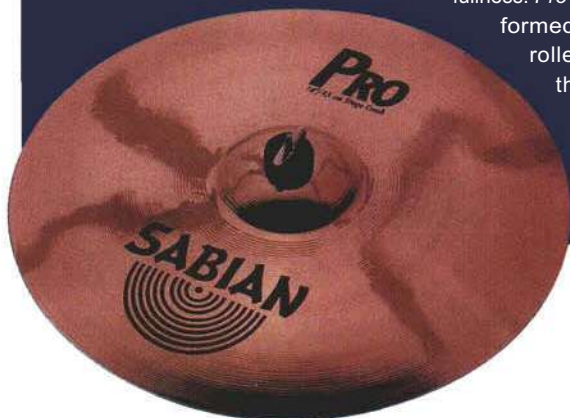
And What's More...

Grover Pro Percussion has added

a 4 3/4x13 piccolo to its *Performance* snare drum series. The maple version will feature an 11-ply shell, with the outer ply of Italian ligna wood available in six stained finishes. The drum will also be available with Grover's *CST* (Composite Shell Technology) shell, in eight high-gloss finishes. Grover has also announced the introduction of *CST* drumsets.

Sabian has added an 18" *Stage Crash* to its *Pro* series. The new model is said to be "ideal for players seeking explosive accent sounds," due to its "cutting power and tonal

fullness. *Pro* cymbals are formed from unrolled bronze, then buffed to a *Brilliant* finish.



Sabian also now offers updated versions of its *Cymbal Selection Guide* and *Cymbal Facts* information booklets, designed for educators and their students. Both publications contain information pertaining to the selection and suitability of Sabian's range of cymbals.

Innova Products offers *Drygrip* antiperspirant for bands in a new package design, including a handy carrying pouch that can be attached easily to drums, hardware, stick bags, etc. A few drops of *Drygrip* are said to keep palms dry for up to two hours, even inside gloves.

Meinl Percussion now offers *Fibrecraft* congas with improved shells. The drums are available in 11", 12", and 13" diameters and in arctic white, jet black, and fire red colors. They're equipped with a classic tuning system with lugs mounted on rubber soundplates, and are fitted with Meinl's *SSR* rims and natural *True Skin* heads.

Where To Find Them

Grover Pro Percussion

22 Prospect St., Unit 7
Woburn, MA 01801
tel: (617)935-6200
fax: (617)935-5522

Husher International, Ltd.

P.O. Box 71
Sayville, NY 11782-0071
lei/lax: (516)471-7275

Innova Products, Inc.

625 Forest Edge Drive
Vernon Hills, IL 60061
tel: (847) 793-8002
fax: (847) 793-8003

K & K Sound Systems

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Pearl Corporation

549 Metroplex Dr.
Nashville, TN 37211
tel: (615)833-4477
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Sabian Ltd.

Meductic NB
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tel: (506) 272-2019
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The Bearing Edge

6309 Chelsea Way
Flowery Branch, GA 30542
tel: (770)967-8263
fax: (770)967-1785
e-mail: bearing@ilinks.net

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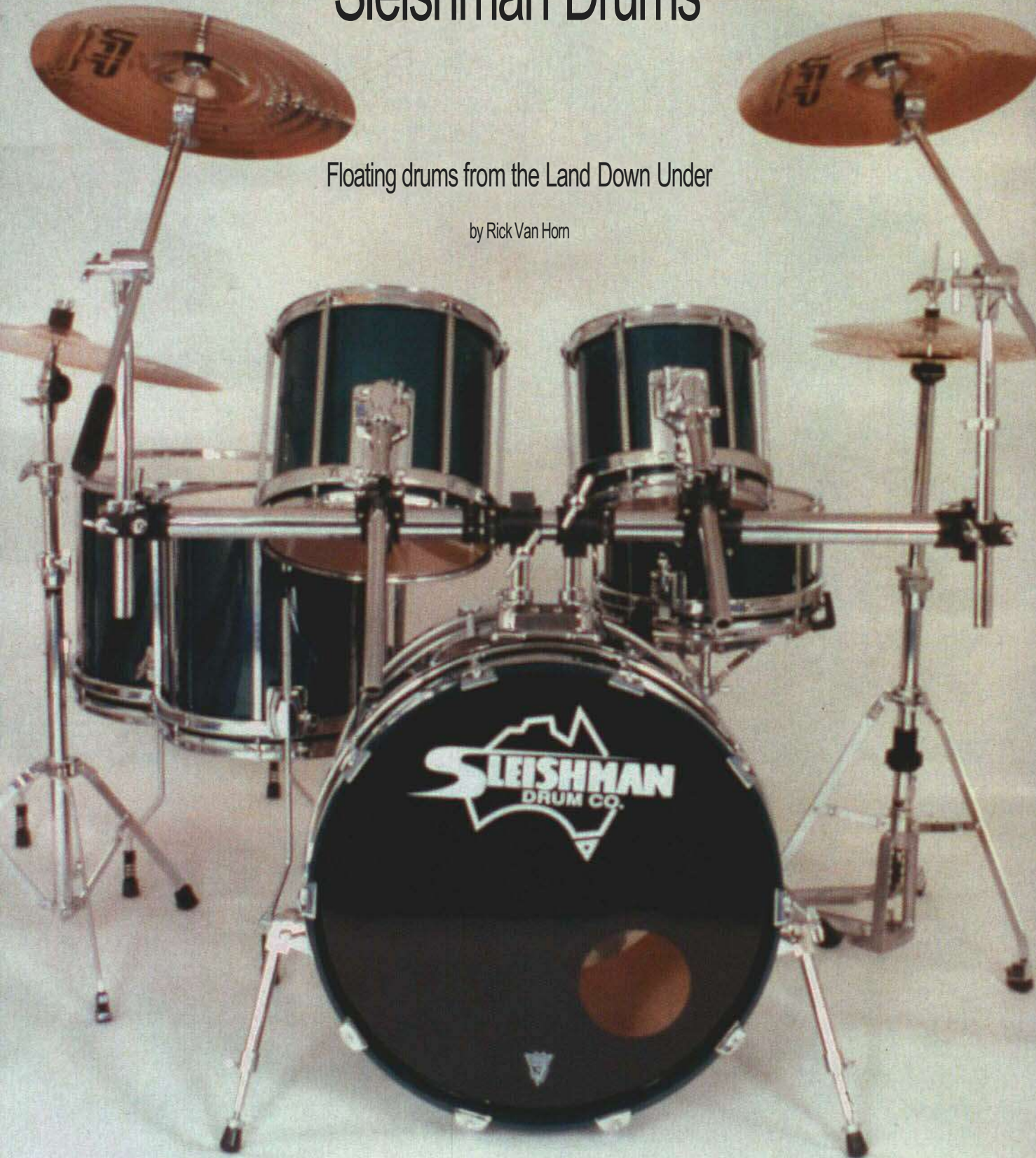
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Sleishman Drums

Floating drums from the Land Down Under

by Rick Van Horn



WHAT'S HOT

- outstanding construction quality and innovative features
- TRS suspension system maximizes acoustic potential of each drum
- tuning system maintains acoustic character at any pitch

WHAT'S NOT

- TRS system makes changing heads tricky
- T-Bar Rack System takes a lot of space

Don Sleishman is quite a character. He's a lifelong drummer, a creative inventor, and a dedicated campaigner for the acoustic principles he holds dear. He's also about the most sincere and humble guy you'd ever want to meet. Don's humility is all the more admirable considering that he is the inventor of what was arguably the first practical double bass drum pedal of the "modern era" (in 1978), and he introduced drums with suspension mounting a number of years before RIMS mounts appeared on the scene.

There are perhaps two major reasons why Don's products didn't succeed for him back in the late '70s. The first is that they were somewhat ahead of their time. The second is that Don's operation is located in Australia—effectively isolating him from the mainstream of the world's percussion markets.

Well, that isolation may be about to end. In the spring of 1996 Don took his latest drumkits to the Frankfurt MusikMesse—where they very quickly impressed everyone who heard them (including me). In the summer of 1996 Don secured a North American distributor. He now stands poised to serve the American and European markets with his line of top-quality custom-made drums. With that in mind, we obtained a kit that consisted of 10x10 and 12x12 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, a 20x22 bass drum, and a matching 6 1/2x13 snare drum. The kit was finished in a very attractive teal blue natural wood stain. A 41/2x13 rosewood piccolo snare was also sent for our review.

Construction

Like many other custom drums currently on the market, Sleishman drums begin with Keller maple shells in 6- to 10-ply models (depending on drum size). But that's where any resemblance to any other brand of drums ends. After Don spends a great deal of time and effort meticulously crafting the bearing edges on each drum, the shells are stained and polished. (Virtually any color is available.) Only then are they ready to be combined with Sleishman's *Total Resonance System (TRS)* to create finished drums. (When *that* is done, a sticker is placed inside each drum giving a serial number and indicating the date the drum was completed.)

The TRS system consists of a steel ring that completely surrounds each drumshell near its bottom—but doesn't touch it at any point. In cross-section, this ring is "C"-shaped. To the top of this "C" are attached square rods that look like a cross between tubular lugs and high-tension lugs. (Snare throw-offs and butt plates are also attached to the ring.) The square rods extend to the top of each drum, where they receive the tension bolts used to tension the

batter head. The tension rods from the bottom head go directly into threaded receivers installed in the ring. As a result of this design, each shell is contained within a "cage" formed by the drumhead rims on the top and bottom and the ring-and-rod assembly along the side. *Absolutely nothing* is attached to or penetrates the drumshell. It is totally free to "float" between the top and bottom drumheads. (Don Sleishman is so fanatical about isolating the shell that he won't even put a logo badge on it; rack-tom logos are attached to their mounting brackets; all other logos are placed on the circular ring around the drum.)

The concept behind the TRS is that the drumheads and the shell are free to vibrate together as one resonating body, with nothing to interfere with or impede their movement. According to Don Sleishman, this results in "the most natural basic tone and definition ever," without "unwanted overtones that have up to now plagued drummers."

Sound

I'm here to tell you, Don's theory *works*. Fitted with clear Remo *Emperor* batter heads and clear *Ambassador* bottom heads, the toms produced pure, distinct, fundamental tones, with virtually no annoying overtones. And they had sustain for *days*. The drums weren't small to begin with, but they sounded even bigger than



they were! A switch to white coated *Ambassadors* gave the drums added attack; swapping over to *Fiberskyn 3* heads gave them added warmth and tonality.

The bass drum, big as it was, sounded very deep and punchy with its *Powerstroke 3* batter and resonant heads. (Each has a built-in muffling ring, and the front head has a 5" hole.) It would be great to stick a mic' in for recording or live performance. But I was a little surprised that the drum didn't have a bit more resonance—especially since there was nothing *in* it. So I replaced the front head with a clear *Ambassador* with no hole, to see if I could get a little more "boom" out of the drum. *Oh yeah!* With this more resonant head arrangement the drum offered sustain, depth, attack—everything you'd want from a kick drum. I played around with a small down pillow and with felt strips on the front head to vary the muffling, and the drum went right with me. If you'll pardon the pun, what this drum offers is "headroom."

The snare drum that matched the kit was a 6 1/2x13 model that, like its tom-tom siblings, offered much more sound than its size would indicate. With its fairly small diameter but moderately deep shell, it could perform equally well tuned down in fatback range or cranked up to gunshot territory. It had plenty of crisp, snappy attack, yet it retained the woody sound that maple snare drums are known for. It seemed the perfect complement to the "bigness" of the rest of the kit.

The extra snare that Don provided for review consisted of a 4 1/2x13 piccolo featuring a shell made by Australian Drum Manufacturers (ADM). Constructed of solid blocks of Honduran rosewood, this beauty produced the sort of high-pitched yet full-bodied sound that block-construction drums are famous for. In addition, its shallow depth allowed it to have superb snare response and crispness. From whisper-soft to glass-shattering-loud, this baby retained all of its musicality and performance characteristics. Every editor in our office christened it a "gem."

The TRS Design

Now comes the fun part. Sleishman's *TRS* design is, in a way, a throwback to the days of single-tension drums, when each individual tension rod hooked onto both the top and bottom rims of a drum—thus tensioning both heads at one time. Over the years that design came to be thought of as "old fashioned." The ability to tension top and bottom heads independently of each other was considered more sophisticated and high-tech, and thus more desirable. However, when separate tension became common, one significant fact was lost: When you tension both heads of a drum together, you maintain a certain acoustic relationship between them. Sleishman's *TRS* system takes advantage of that fact.

Here's how it works. You start by tuning the bottom head of a given Sleishman drum, in the normal fashion. You get it to the pitch you want, making sure it is "in tune with itself." Then you turn the drum over and...surprise! The top head is already in tune—or very close to it. You may wish to make some minor adjustments, of course. But

once everything is tweaked, you wind up with one of the biggest, ballsiest drum sounds you're likely to hear—*ever*.

And then you discover the other miraculous thing about the *TRS* system. If you should want to raise or lower the pitch of a given drum, you need only work with a single top tension lug. You can crank that puppy up till it screams, or loosen it till it rattles. The drum will change in pitch, but the *relationship between the heads* will remain the same. That simply cannot be said of any drum with a separate-tension tuning system. What it means is that Sleishman drums have no "sweet spots." Once you get a drum to sound the way you want it at a given pitch, it will retain that character at any other pitch.

I must say that changing drumheads becomes a challenge with the *TRS* system. It almost *has* to be done off of the kit, since the "cage" around each shell comes apart when one or the other drum rim is removed. I managed to change the front bass drum head while the drum was set up, but I did have to physically lift and maneuver the drum in order to get it centered again within its surrounding ring—a condition that is critical to proper performance. Roadies take note: Quick on-stage head changes will be pretty much impossible.

Special Features

Not content with mounting his shells in a revolutionary fashion, Don Sleishman has fitted his drums with some additional features that further enhance their acoustic capabilities. One of those is floor-tom feet that are actually created from oversized springs. The shells are already isolated from the legs (since the leg brackets are attached to the ring around each drum's shell), but the spring feet isolate the drums from the floor, preventing any sound from being "tapped off."

I must admit that I found the feet a little funny to work with when I was first setting up the drums; they made the drums wobble as I handled them. However, once I had the drums at the level I wanted them, there was no such wobble when I *played* them—just lots and lots of sound.

Don Sleishman also believes in isolation when it comes to mounting the snare drum. His instructions with the kit state that the snare should be mounted so that the circular ring is supported on the tips of the snare basket—as opposed to having the basket clamped tightly on the bottom rim of the drum in the traditional fashion. I tried each snare drum both ways, and the isolation method did give each drum more life and sustain.



I mentioned that the snare throw-offs were mounted to the circular ring on each drum. In addition, the throw-offs and the butts are fitted with small metal plates that both secure and put pressure on the nylon strap (or braided cord, depending on the drum) that holds the snares. These plates alter the angle of the strap (or cord) to lift the snares on a more vertical plane, giving them exceptional response and a very clean drop-off when released.

The bass drum spurs and tom arms supplied with our test kit were generic Pearl-type models. No other stands came with it. However, Sleishman does offer a unique tom-mounting arrangement called a *T-Bar Rack System*. The rack bar clamps into a twin-tube tom mount attached to an oversized plate that is itself attached to the circular ring on the bass drum. (It sounds more complicated than it is.) The toms are mounted on arms clamped to this rack bar. It looks rather massive to be mounted on the bass drum (especially when a couple of cymbal booms are added). But Don assures me that the assembly is more than strong enough to support *three* rack toms and two cymbals. He suggests that if more or larger equipment is to be mounted on the bar, one or more drum-rack legs could be added for additional support. Or the bar could be connected to additional sides of a complete rack system.

My only complaint with the bar system was that because of the bass drum's depth, the bar was 18" away from the back edge of the drum. This made it necessary to extend the toms and cymbals far out on their respective arms in order to get them into a playable position. Aside from the possibility of long-term strain on the system, this created a pretty space-consuming setup. I'd like to see a

curved bar offered as an option, since that would at least bring the outer elements of the setup in a little closer to the player. Of course, the bar system is totally optional; I could just as easily have created our test setup by mounting each tom-tom separately off of a straight cymbal stand on either side of the bass drum.

Prices

After all this raving about the quality and innovation offered by Sleishman drums, it wouldn't be surprising at all if they were extremely expensive. Well, the good news is that they are priced very competitively with the top production models of most major brands (and significantly *lower* than many custom brands). So you definitely get what you pay for—and more. The prices for the drums in our test kit are as follows: 10x10 tom—\$470; 12x12 tom—\$525; 14x14 floor tom—\$672; 16x16 floor tom—\$767; 20x22 bass drum—\$1,249; 6 1/2x13 maple snare—\$456; 4 1/2x13 rosewood snare—\$632. The *T-Bar Rack System* for three rack toms plus two cymbal arms is priced at \$275. (Those prices do not include shipping costs from Australia, which will vary from dealer to dealer based on location. You should probably estimate an additional 10% to be safe.)

If your local dealer has no information on Sleishman drums, have the dealer contact Power Music Group, 3349 Bloor St. West, Suite 24, Toronto, Ontario M8X 1E9, Canada. Or, if you want to go right to the source, write to Don Sleishman at Sleishman Drum Co., Unit 11, 127-129 Newbridge Rd., Chipping Norton, N.S.W. 2170, Australia.

Yamaha Steve Gadd Signature Snare Drums

by Rick Mattingly

In terms of both sound and appearance, black is beautiful.

We've been hearing rumors for several years now that Steve Gadd was working with Yamaha to develop a signature snare drum. The results were unveiled at last summer's NAMM show in Nashville and consisted of six different models: two each with metal, maple, and birch shells, and three different sizes. They were long in coming, but the wait was definitely worth it. Like Gadd's playing, these drums are strongly rooted in tradition, but are well thought-out and have innovative features.

Visually, the drums are striking, with black shells and rims set off by chrome lugs. The four wood-shell drums have high-gloss black lacquer finishes, while the metal drums are covered in black

nickel alloy. Even the drumkeys furnished with these drums are black chrome.

The six models have a lot in common, so I'll start with that. A significant design feature of the *Gadd* drums involves the snare units themselves, which consist of only ten spiral strands of high-carbon steel that are grouped in pairs—as though every third strand had been removed from a fourteen-strand unit. Although the snare unit completely fits within the shell diameter, it is longer than typical snare units—so each snare strand extends further across the snare head. On the four wood-shell models, the snare bed is a bit shorter and deeper than typical Yamaha snare beds.

WHAT'S HOT

- drums are visually striking
- unique snare design produces a balance between fatness and articulation
- 5 1/2x14 brass model offers full-bodied yet dry tone with a hint of a military sound

The unique snare design gives these drums a wonderful balance between having a fat sound and being articulate—two traits that seldom exist in tandem. Snare response was excellent right to the edge of the drum, and the drums sounded good with slightly looser snares for loud playing, with tight snares for softer playing, and in between for a wide range of dynamics.

The snare strainer is a traditional design with a horizontal drop lever and snare-tension screw, and there's a standard, non-tensioning butt-plate on the opposite side. The strainer and butt-plate can accommodate cord or tape-style snare mounts. The *Gadd* snares themselves are mounted with cord, and the end plates on the snare units have recessed canals for the cord so that the snares lay very flat against the head.

The lugs are chrome and are isolated from the shells. Rims are black, triple-flanged steel. Each drum has a single air vent and a logo badge with Gadd's signature, the model number, and an engraved serial number. (The brass-shell model we received for review was No. 0001!)

All six models are shipped with Remo *Diplomat* snare heads. The four wood-shell models come equipped with Remo *Ambassador* batter heads and half-inch ring mutes (black ones, of course). The two metal-shell mod-

els are fitted with Remo *Powerstroke 3* batter heads.

It's no secret that for many years Gadd used a Ludwig *Supra-Phonic 400* snare drum, so it should be no big surprise that the two metal-shell Yamaha models produce the sound most typical of Gadd. The 5 1/2x14 brass model is an absolute delight, with a full-bodied yet dry tone that has just a hint of a military sound. If someone wanted me to play "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," this is the drum I would want to use.

The corresponding 5 1/2x14 steel model is practically identical in most respects, but has a little bit brighter sound. If I had the luxury of owning both, I might use the brass model for recording and the steel one for live gigs. Or I might use the brass drum on gigs where I would play K-style cymbals and use the steel drum along with A-type cymbals. (Of course, contrast is also nice, so I might also try...never mind.) Either one would make a great general-purpose snare that could cover a wide variety of playing styles and situations.

Comparing the two 5x14 wood-shell models side by side, I found the 7-ply maple version to have a richer, fuller sound than the 6-ply birch version. I came to the same conclusion comparing the maple and birch versions of the 5x13 models. Rimshots were brighter on the birch drums, and the over-



all tone wasn't quite as "woody" as on the maple models. They were all quality drums, so preference is just a matter of taste.

Both of the 5x14 models had plenty of guts. They were appropriately dry when the ring-mute was used, and had plenty of ring without it. The 5x13 drums sounded a lot fuller, obviously, than typical 3"- or 4"-deep snare drums. The smaller head diameter favored higher pitches than the 14" models, and without the ring-mutes the drums had a lot of ring and produced penetrating rimshots. With the ring-mutes, the drums were much more controlled, with just a hint of the "hollow" sound that results when deeper depths are matched with smaller diameters.

While each drum has its own character, the differences among

the six models are slight, and in that respect they form a true "family" of drums. I really don't think someone could go wrong with any of them, but I will mention that long after I had played all six of them enough to write this review, I was still working out on the brass model just for the sheer enjoyment of the sound it was producing.

If nothing else, that proves that my tastes are expensive, since the 5 1/2x14 brass model (*SD-455SG*) comes in at the top of the suggested retail price list at \$755; the 5 1/2x14 steel-shell drum (*SD-255SG*) lists for \$690. The 5x14 maple version (*MSD-14SG*) lists for \$720, while its 5x14 birch counterpart (*BSD-14SG*) goes for \$695. The 5x13 maple-shell model (*MSD-13SG*) lists at \$655, while the 5x13 birch version is \$635.

Yamaha Club Jordan Kit

by Rick Mattingly

Drummers: Stand up and be counted...er, heard!

I'm old enough to remember when most drum catalogs featured "cocktail" kits. These consisted of a drum that looked like a tall floor tom that was set up so that the bottom head functioned as a bass drum while the top head served as a snare. The "kit" was played from a standing position. If such kits were ever considered "hip," I'm afraid I'm *not* old enough to remember that.

When Yamaha displayed their new *Club Jordan* kit at the 1996 Summer NAMM show, eyes widened and jaws dropped. But a lot of drummers who checked out the kit were seen smiling. Predictions were made that the kit would find favor with the "unplugged" and alternative crowds (alongside guitarists who use Fender *Jazzmasters*), and with drummers who want to get up front and participate with the guitar players.

The kit was designed by Steve Jordan, who was the original drummer on *Late Night With David Letterman* and who played drums on Keith Richards' solo projects. Jordan used his namesake kit on a recent Tom Jones album he produced. Peter Erskine was one of the first to go public with one; he used it at Zildjian Day in London and with Mike Mainieri at PASIC '96 in Nashville.

Perhaps future generations will view the cocktail kits of the '50s and '60s as having been ahead of their time.

The heart of the *Club Jordan* kit consists of a 15x24 drum that does indeed resemble a tall floor tom and that serves as a bass drum on the bottom and either a tom or snare drum on top. (More about that later.) There is a "percussion board" mounted on the side for those who like to play patterns on the shell of a drum. Also available is a 5x10 tom-tom and 5x8 snare drum,



each of which can be mounted onto the side of the main unit. The main drum also includes an accessory bar that can hold a cowbell, closed hi-hats, and/or a cymbal or two.

All of the drums are made of 7-ply birch/mahogany and feature triple-flanged steel rims. The large drum has the same chrome-plated lugs found on Yamaha *Tour Series* drums; the small snare and tom have one-piece lugs that accept the lugs from the top and bottom heads. The *Club Jordan* kits are available in two finishes: silver sparkle and pink sparkle (which is essentially the same color that was referred to as champagne sparkle on '50s and '60s drumkits).

The bottom of the main drum is fitted with a Remo clear *Pinstripe* head, and there is a mute of urethane foam affixed to the inner circumference of the shell. Included is a bass drum pedal mounting bracket that attaches to two of the unit's three floor-tom style legs. The pedal itself is basically a Yamaha chain-drive *FP735-A* that has been modified to strike upwards.

The bass drum sounds surprisingly good, with a healthy blend of thump and resonance. I took the drum to a recording session and was amazed at how full and deep it sounded when miked. I should mention that I usually play a 20" bass drum, and I've frequently used an 18" bass drum, so coming from that perspective I was quite happy with the sound I got from the *Club Jordan* drum. Those whose point of reference is a 22" or 24" bass drum might feel that this drum lacks depth and bottom end.

Underneath the top head (a Remo *Ambassador*) is a unit that has twenty 3"-long high-carbon steel spiral snares in a fan-shaped arrangement. It is operated by a round knob on the outside of the drum, much like a traditional internal muffler. It does not produce a typical snare drum sound. Given the main drum's size and depth (and the necessity of tuning it low to get a decent bass drum sound), the snare drum sound is best described as "a floor tom sound with buzz." It could be effective in certain situations, but most players would probably prefer the auxiliary 5x8 snare.

The drum doesn't have any kind of separator between the top and bottom heads, so when the snares are engaged, that buzz affects the bass drum sound as well. If the snares are not pressing against the head, it works fine as a low tom, but keep in mind that it has the same pitch as the "bass drum." Playing it live, there was enough difference in timbre between the sharp attack of the sticks on the top head and the muted thump of the bass drum pedal that I wasn't concerned, but when I listened back in the studio, there wasn't much difference in sound between what I played on the top head and what I played on the bottom. It

WHAT'S HOT

- overall "kit" is compact and versatile for "unplugged" or "out front" playing
- the 8" snare drum is bright, cutting, and funky

WHAT'S NOT

- "snare" sound of main drum is really like "a floor tom with buzz"
- accessory bar won't support a ride cymbal securely

worked fine, though, to play brushes on the top head in a jazz style.

The percussion board is mounted to the top rim with three of the tuning lugs, and can be easily detached. It's nice for duplicating vintage rock patterns in which drummers played on the shells of their bass drums or floor toms, or for cascara-type patterns. Because the percussion board hangs freely, it produces a more resonant sound than you typically get when striking the shell of a drum.

The 8" snare drum is a delight. It's bright, it cuts, it's funky. It has a bit of that "coffee can" sound typical of small drums, and the guitarist I recorded with thought it sounded like a bongo with snares. With the snares released it certainly did sound a lot like a bongo, or at least a very high-pitched timbale. It had a coated *Ambassador* batter head and a clear Remo *Diplomat* snare head.

The 10" tom-tom was a nice complement to the kit, and produced clear, high-pitched tones and timbale-like sounds when played with rimshots. It came with a coated *Ambassador* batter and clear *Ambassador* bottom head. The tom and snare are both attached to the main drum via Yamaha's *YESS* system mounts and L-arms.

The accessory bar includes mounting hardware for a cowbell, a cymbal, and a pair of closed hi-hats. I tried mounting all of those at once (see the photo), but the combined weight of a 20" flat ride and a pair of 13" hi-hats made the holder a bit wobbly. Mounting a single 22" ride also resulted in some wobble. For real-life use, I would probably go with either a pair of hi-hat cymbals or a single crash. The only piggyback combination I would try would be something like a 16" (or smaller) crash and an 8" splash. For anything else, I would use one or more free-standing cymbal stands.

Finally, because of the pedal underneath the unit, you can only lower the main drum so far. Still, for those who would rather be seated so they can also use a traditional hi-hat pedal, the kit goes down far enough that someone could sit on, or more likely lean against, a bar-type stool. Personally, I found that playing from a standing position gave a whole different attitude to my playing.

Suggested retail price for the entire *Club Jordan* kit, with all three drums, is \$1,795. The 15x24 main drum is available separately for \$1,095; the 5x10 tom goes for \$320; the 5x8 snare lists at \$390.



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MOD5

Phil Collins

Long before Phil Collins was a pop mega-star, he was a drummer—a great drummer, actually. In fact, a good argument could be made that one of the main reasons he's become so successful is because of his strong drumming and rhythmic foundation. Your ear can be drawn to many things in his music, but *the feel* of the drums is always at the forefront.

At his level of superstardom, it's easy for the media at large to skip over Collins' musical accomplishments and abilities. Articles on him these days focus more on tabloid fodder—a divorce from his second wife, his leaving Genesis—with little regard given to the actual music, much *less* to the drumming. That seems a bit odd for a man who's never strayed far from his first love: drumming.

That passion can be witnessed in two major projects Collins recently completed. First, his new solo release, *Dance Into The Light*, features Phil not only driving his brand of pop music with his usual flare, but also showcasing a newly found African influence. Syncopated drum beats with multiple percussion overdubs explode from several tracks. And the kicker? Collins makes it a point to mention that no drum machines were used on the album.

As for the second drumming endeavor, Phil satisfied a childhood ambition last summer by putting together and performing with an all-star big band. That's right, Phil *swings*. While the musical connection might not seem obvious, apparently Buddy Rich was a big Collins influence. Sitting in the driver's seat of the sixteen-piece ensemble, playing swinging arrangements of not only standards but of his own tunes, Phil was in drumming heaven. (A live disk of the band will be released by Atlantic Records shortly.)

These are just a couple of recent events, though. Phil Collins has had a remarkable *career* as a drummer. He's been laying down impressive, influential, and sometimes even landmark tracks for over twenty-five years. It's hard to deny that he's advanced the instrument with his technique, his deeply felt grooves, and his drum sound explorations.

To remind us (and him) of these facts, and to get his reaction to some of the inspiring moments he's provided, we recently sat down with Collins and played a cross section of his work, drawn from rock, pop, and fusion styles.

Phil, let's talk *drums*.

Drummer To The Core!

by William F. Miller

photos by Ebet Roberts



"The Musical Box"

Genesis: *Nursery Cryme*

(recorded 1971)

It's hard to believe that Phil Collins made his first major-label recording more than twenty-five years ago. *Nursery Cryme*, in fact, was the first album Phil recorded with Genesis. Progressive rock was entering its golden era at that time, and Phil's playing helped shape the direction of the music. Although a little loose around the edges, the drumming here is teeming with energy and youthful spirit. He was twenty-one at the time.

As for the technique, Phil's hands sound good throughout the record. "You think *that's* good?" Phil responds. "I have tapes of me playing with one of my oldest friends, Ronnie Caryl—he's a guitarist I played with *before* Genesis; he's in my band now—and I can't believe some

of the things I was playing. There's a twenty-minute, Buddy Rich-type snare drum solo I played that I'm just astonished at. I was just so focused on drumming at that time. All of my energy went into it. I loved it—still do, really."

While his hands sound good throughout *Nursery Cryme*, the reason for playing "The Musical Box" for Phil is because it's a good early example of one of his most impressive abilities: his single bass drum technique. Later in the song Phil plays a "galloping" feel that features fairly quick doubles on the bass drum, and he keeps it going for a good while. It's the type of pattern he played a lot in those days. (Phil plays an even faster and longer version of it on the prog-rock classic, "The Return Of The Giant Hogweed.")

P.C.'s Big Swing Face: The Phil Collins Big Band

"I know, I know, people who like Genesis or my stuff would never dream that I love big band music. But I do," urges Phil Collins, who was able to realize a lifetime ambition last summer when he performed several shows with his own Swingin' big band. The sixteen-piece group, which featured Phil on drums, Quincy Jones conducting, and Tony Bennett singing, played a few select concerts last July, including a Prince's Trust concert at the Royal Albert Hall in England and a performance at the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland.

But Phil, a big band? "I've wanted to play in a big band ever since I heard Buddy Rich's 'West Side Story' medley," the drummer insists. "Buddy, along with Basie drummer Harold Jones, are two of my all-time favorites. The way they played, with that energy and technique, was a real inspiration for me."

If you go back and listen to Phil's drumming over the years, you might hear a taste of that big band approach. "Absolutely," Phil affirms. "From my point of view, a lot of the drumming I did with Genesis came right out of the big band tradition—maybe not in terms of swing music, but in how I tried to play with a certain edge, how the punches [accents] were arranged, and even the types of fills I played. That big band approach is where I was coming from."

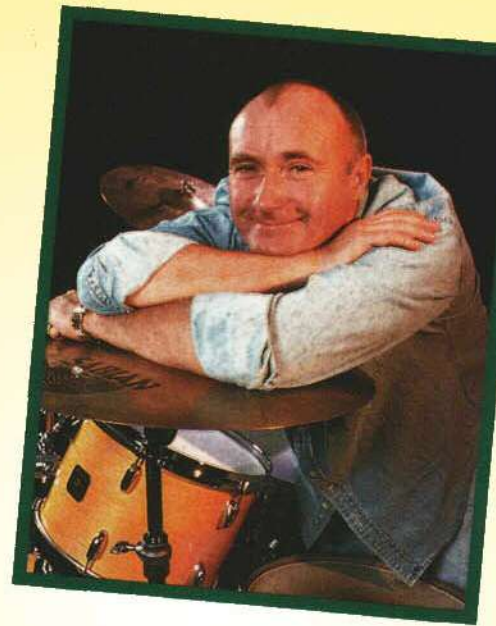
Collins' love of big band has been a bit more apparent in his solo career. "The desire

to have that big band vibe has been in my music from the beginning," he says. "I love horns, and I have them in my band. And speaking of the 'West Side Story' medley, I wrote a tune on my second album called *The West Side*.' I wanted a piece with that big band flavor."

Okay, so big band music has been an inspiration. But what finally made Phil take the plunge and put a band together? "The idea had been in my head for ages," he says. "And I had actually been thinking about it during my last tour for the *Both Sides* record. Hearing Neil Peart's *Burning For Buddy* record also inspired me—especially Kenny Aronoffs performance. So anyway, with all this in mind, I started making plans with my manager."

Unfortunately, a few stumbling blocks came up that threatened to kill the idea. "During the *Both Sides* tour I broke a small bone in my wrist," Phil says, "although I didn't know exactly what I had done at the time. All I know is I had a great deal of pain and I had to finish the tour. I could barely play drums—I could hardly hold a microphone. Some nights the pain was excruciating. I really wasn't sure if I'd be able to play again—ever. That was one of the reasons I stopped plans on the big band."

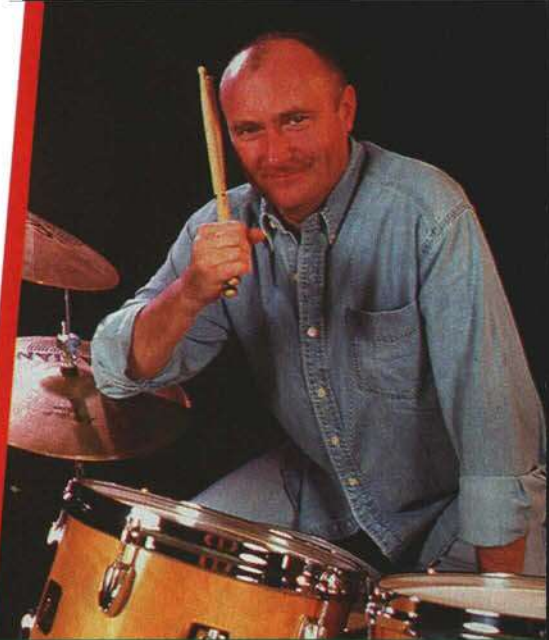
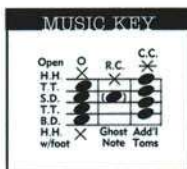
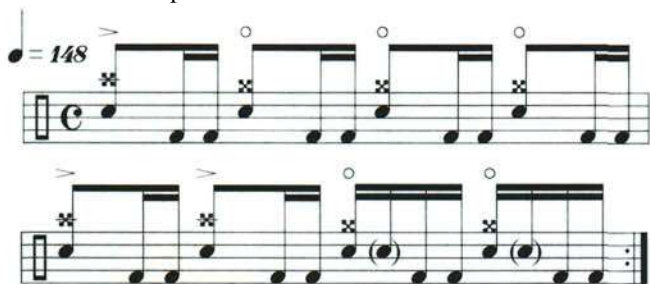
Another reason was personal. "By the end of the *Both Sides* tour," Phil says, shaking his head, "I was exhausted from being dragged through the tabloid press because of a



divorce I was going through." So between the personal stuff, his injured wrist, and simply being worn-out from a long tour, Phil decided to take six months off. "I just needed time to recover and to be able to spend time with the new lady in my life. She's from Switzerland, so I moved there and just forgot about the big band thing."

Moving to Switzerland, you might think, would be the end of Phil's "driver's seat" ambitions. Luckily, Switzerland is what turned it all around. "I ran into an old friend, Claude Nobs, the man who organizes the Montreaux Jazz Festival. He said to me, 'Now that you are living in Switzerland, what would you like to do for the next festival? It's our thirtieth anniversary.' I mentioned the big band idea to Claude, and he thought it would be wonderful."

Here is the basic pattern:



"Yeah, I suppose the first thing that comes to mind when I hear 'The Musical Box' is the bass drum," Phil admits. "I worked on it quite a bit and felt it was important." Early bass drum inspiration? "John Bonham," Phil says without hesitation. "I saw Bonham play with Tim Rose at the Marquee Club before he joined Zeppelin, actually before he joined the Yardbirds, which became Zeppelin. I couldn't believe his bass

Nobs was able to hook Phil up with the highly respected WDR big band of Cologne, Germany. With Phil's regular band—including his four horn players—along with the WDR horns, the group was starting to take shape. The group needed an experienced hand to keep it together, and producer/arranger/musician extraordinaire Quincy Jones became the obvious choice. Why? "I had just sung on Quincy's Q's *Jook Joint* album," Phil explains. "I told him about this big band project being a dream of mine, and he said, 'Count me in.'"

Phil's dream was to play drums with a big band, not sing. He needed to find a vocalist. "I've admired Tony Bennett for a long time," Phil says. "We had met in passing a couple of times, but he didn't really know me." But then, around the time of the big band plans, Phil ran into Tony. Well, sort of. "I was actually about to check out of a hotel in Australia when I got word that Tony was about to check in. So I left him a letter explaining the project. Eventually I heard back from him, and he said yes."

So with most of the pieces in place—Quincy leading, Tony singing, big band arrangements of Collins and Genesis tunes being written by several arrangers including Sammy Nestico, performances being booked—the only question left was Phil's drumming. Would he be able to really kick a big band, and how would his ailing wrist hold up? "The doctors told me I had fractured a small bone," Phil reports, "causing the bone to become dead. They couldn't pin it, and they recommended taking it out. I was right in the middle of working on my new album

and preparing for the big band concerts, so I couldn't take the time to have the bone removed. I decided to leave it alone for a time and see if I could put up with the pain. Luckily, after having a bit of time off it felt a bit better and I could play."

And how did Phil prepare his chops for the big band? "I planned to take a month to get my playing together and to learn the tunes," he says, "but I soon realized that there was just

thing. The other musicians laughed when they saw my charts, but I needed to do something to make it happen. Not only was I learning new arrangements of Genesis and my songs, I had to learn Tony Bennett's songs—the old standards. Let me say this to drummers out there: Learn to read!"

As for the drumming, Phil found that his chops came back quickly. Within about a week of rehearsing he felt he was sounding pretty good with the band, except in one area: "Brushes—I hadn't played with them in years." Phil laughs at the memory of his fumbling brush chops. "Tony's music requires great brush technique, and I was struggling just to get some of the most basic sounds with them. For me, that was the most difficult part. The rest came together fast. In fact, the actual drumming was the most fun I ever had behind a kit!"

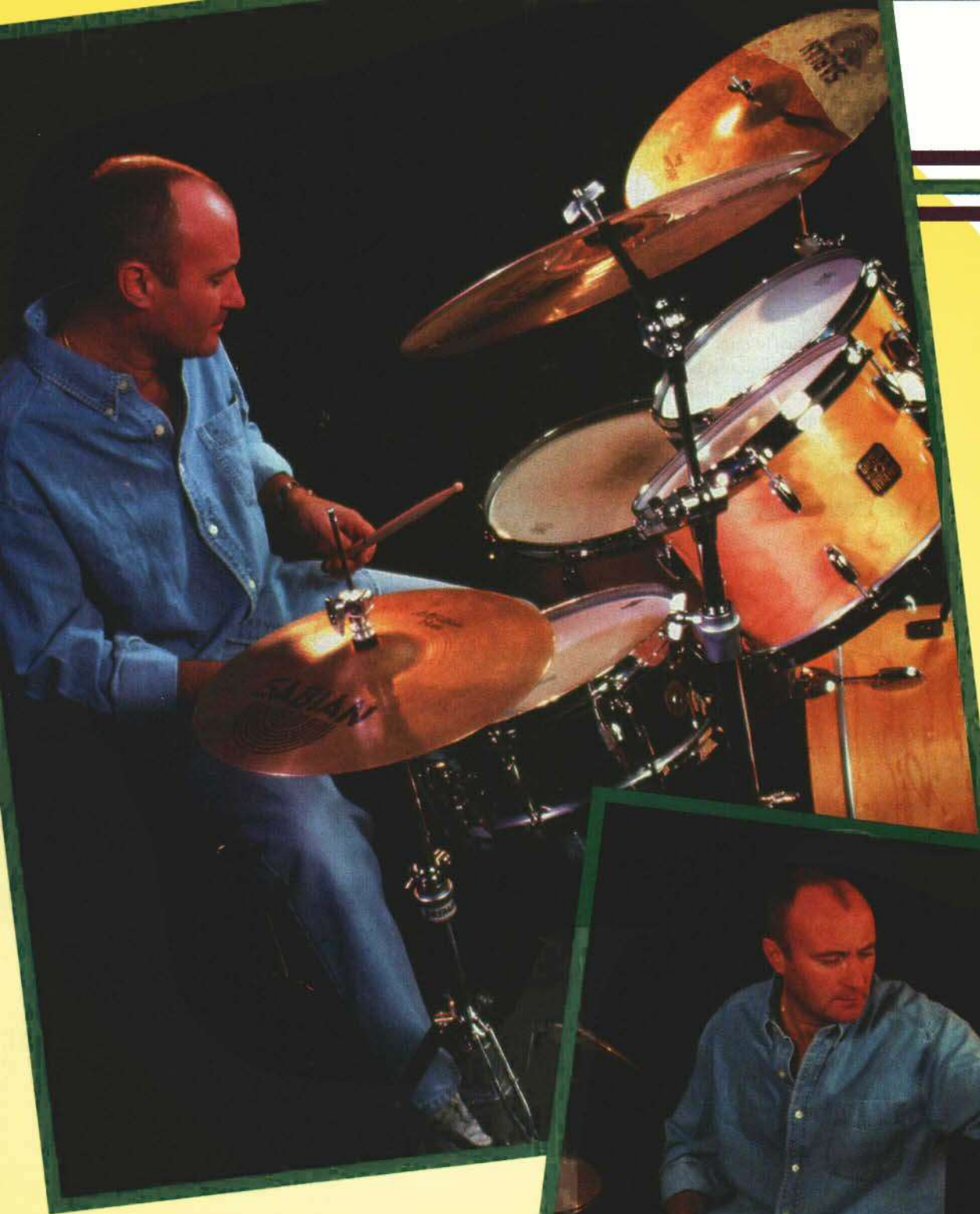
And the final result of the Phil Collins Big Band experience? "Well, it was a lot of pressure, like a mountain I *had* to climb," Phil asserts. "The BBC filmed the whole thing, from the first rehearsal to the concerts. That added to the pressure. I just had a chance to see what they recorded. It was fabulous!"

A live album of Phil & company, featuring a selection of tunes pulled from the band's different performances, will be released this year, something the drummer is thrilled about. "I don't really listen to my solo records after they're finished—I don't put them on for enjoyment. But this big band project—every time I listen to it I think, 'Wow, this is great!' It's something I can listen to all of the time."

William F. Miller

"I had to invent my own notation—absolute hieroglyphics, really—but I understood it. The charts looked like the old *Batman* show: Play sixteen bars, POW! Boom-Boom, dun-de-DUN-dun—that kind of thing. Let me say this to drummers out there: Learn to read!"

too much material to memorize. I needed to chart out the tunes." So what was the problem? "Well, I don't read music," he admits. "So I had to invent my own notation—absolute hieroglyphics, really—but I understood it. The charts looked like the old *Batman* show: Play sixteen bars, POW! Boom-Boom, dun-de-DUN-dun—that kind of



drum playing—the fast doubles especially. That's what I noticed most. He became one of my heroes."

To help Phil pull off *his* amazing bass drum feats, he relies on an old faithful: "I've always used a Ludwig *Speed King* pedal, in spite of all of the so-called 'new and improved' pedals that have come and gone. It's kind of a spartan piece of equipment compared to what's available today, but for me it's almost like an old pair of shoes—just so comfortable."

Does Phil have any suggestions to help drummers get their bass drum chops together? "I play with my heel up, and I position my foot very close to the end of the pedal plate," he offers, "almost right on the hinge. I get a lot of leverage that way. Another thing I do is I cut about an inch off of the beater rod. That helps the leverage and works well with the 20" bass drum I use."

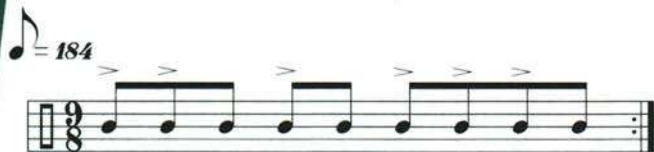
"A lot of the stuff I played with the bass drum was inspired by things I heard other drummers play," Phil says. "Keeping your ears open is probably the most important thing you can do."

"Apocalypse In 9/8"
(from "Supper's Ready")

Genesis: *Foxtrot*
(recorded 1972)

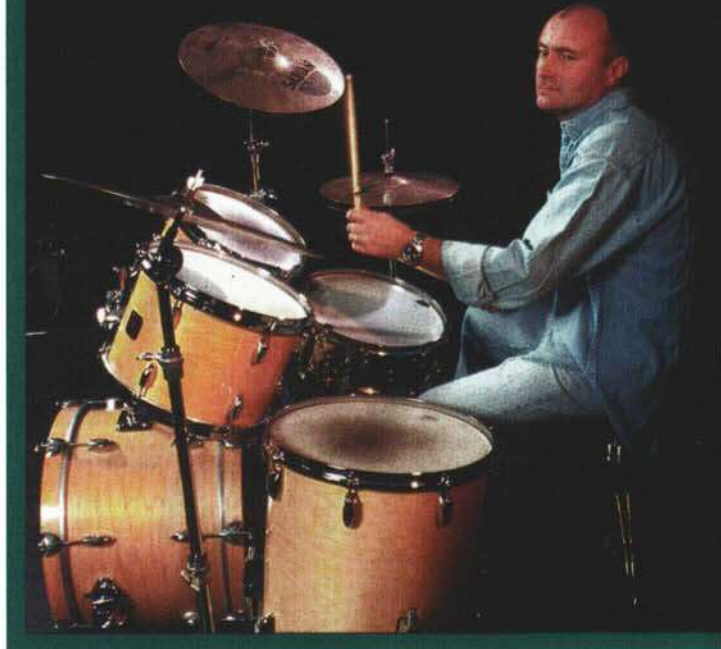
Foxtrot may well be one of the most important records of the progressive/art rock era. By this time Genesis had solidified around five very talented musicians, having toured and recorded one album as a unit already. (Prior to that the band was plagued by personnel changes.) Peter Gabriel, Tony Banks, Mike Rutherford, Steve Hackett, and Phil Collins each brought something unique to the musical table.

As for Phil's contributions, one listen to *Foxtrot* is enough to convince anyone of his abilities behind the kit. The record is full of challenging odd meters; he plays over, around, and through all of them with aplomb. "Supper's Ready," the epic work that contains several sub-sections, has Phil playing in many different styles. But it's near the end of the piece, in the "Apocalypse" section, where Phil shines. The meter is 9/8, with the bass and guitar holding down this repeated accent pattern:



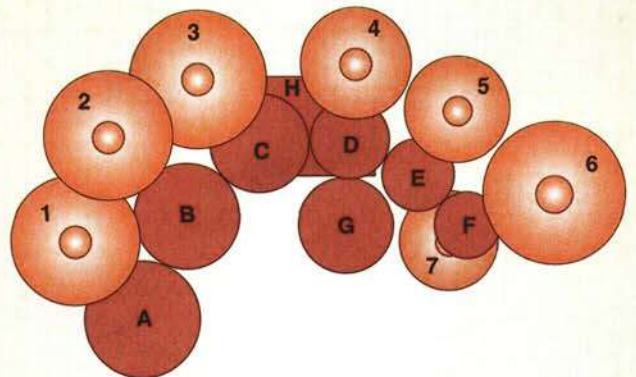
While this is churning underneath, a composed, melodic keyboard part soars on top. This leaves Phil room for some adventurous drum exploration. He practically *solos* over the 9/8, playing off both the repeated riff and the keyboard melody. It's a fine performance even by today's technical standards.

"This is one of my all-time favorite Genesis pieces," Phil says enthusiastically. "I used to love playing this one on the road, because I could go way out with it. I have some tapes of us performing it in concert from around this time that make this version sound simplistic. A great piece of music and great fun to play."



Phil's "Barking Toms" Drumkit

While Phil uses different setups depending on the music, the following is the kit he plays most often.



Drumset: Gretsch, in a black stain finish

- A. 16x18 concert tom
- B. 16x16 concert tom
- C. 12 x 15 concert tom
- D. 8 x 12 concert tom
- E. 6 1/2 x 10 concert tom
- F. 5 1/2 x 8 concert tom
- G. 3 7/8 x 14 Noble & Cooley piccolo snare
- H. 14x20 bass drum

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 20" HH Chinese with rivets
- 2. 20" HH medium crash
- 3. 21" HH *Raw Bell Dry* ride
- 4. 17" HH extra-thin crash
- 5. 16" HH medium-thin crash
- 6. 22" HH Chinese with rivets
- 7. 15" hi-hats

Heads: Remo coated *Ambassadors* on snare and bass drum batters, clear *Diplomats* on 8" and 10" toms, clear *Ambassadors* on 12", 15", 16", and 18" toms

Hardware: Gretsch stands, Ludwig *Speed King* bass drum pedal

Sticks: Pro-Mark *Phil Collins* model

Fans of Phil's drumming always cite his ability to make odd meters feel good. They never sound stiff, rigid, or mathematical, like they can when some drummers play them. How does he do it? "I think it comes from being a singer—at this point in the band I wasn't *the* singer, but I was *a* singer. When I learn a section of music that's in an odd meter, I don't count it. I sing the pattern in my head. You can get more inside the feel of the pattern if you think of it as just music.

"When I would play something like this piece," Phil continues, "I would be singing the riff in my head while I was playing it. That allowed me to stretch out over the top of the meter, to get more of a rotating, circular motion going within the pattern. That's probably why it felt good."

"Los Endos"

**Genesis: *A Trick Of The Tail*
(recorded 1975)**

By this time in his career, Phil's chops were becoming very impressive. He was bringing more of a fusion element into Genesis. In fact, *A Trick Of The Tail* features several pieces with nifty drumming, including the 7/8 of "Dance On A Volcano" and the 13/8 solo section of "Robbery, Assault & Battery" (not to mention the simulated double bass pattern he plays between his floor tom and kick near the end of the tune). Phil also does a pretty good Bonham impersonation on "Squonk," laying down a fat and sloshy groove.

"Los Endos" was a tune composed around a pattern that Phil "borrowed" from rhythm-master Airtio. "I got that beat almost

directly from a Santana album that Airtio played on called *Borboletta*" Phil admits. "I don't think it was one of Santana's most popular records, but I was really inspired by it."

"Los Endos" doesn't quite sound like a tune you'd hear on a Santana record. ("I was *trying* for that feel," Phil jokes.) Yes, there's that salsa-esque bass drum pattern, but it's played at such a hyper-space speed that the feel ends up being much more aggressive. The pattern Phil plays with his hands is blistering. Here's the basic pattern (note the tempo):



This is a backbeat variation of the pattern that Phil slips in at times:



When asked about the sticking of that pattern, Phil taps it out on the table. "Let's see, it's really just based on paradiddles," he says. "I'm left-handed, so I play it backwards, but here it is." A normal (sorry, Phil) right-handed version of the sticking to the basic pattern is RLRR, LLRL, RLRR, LLRL.

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"I don't want to preach, but I really think the rudiments are very important to developing your skills," Phil adds. "Everything comes from that stuff. So many of the patterns I've recorded came from things like paradiddles, flam paradiddles, flam triplets.... The big drum duets I did with Chester [Thompson] were all based around the rudiments, and even the tribal stuff on my new album involves them. They might be boring to sit down and practice, but not when you apply them to the drums."

**"Nuclear Burn"
Brand X: Unorthodox Behavior
(recorded 1975)**

Peter Gabriel left Genesis in 1975 and Phil Collins took over the lead singing chores. Phil played drums on the group's records, but on tour Bill Bruford, and later Chester Thompson, took over the bulk of the drum duties. That caused a little drumming frustration for Phil. Adding to that was the fact that Genesis played set "compositions," offering little chance for improvisation for any of its members. That left a fine drummer itching to play more. Phil's outlet? Brand X.

Collins' side project ended up being one of the most fun and enjoyable fusion bands to come out of the '70s. (Even their albums' liner notes were a hoot.) More to the point, Brand X was the vehicle that let Phil air out all of his considerable technique. Sweeping drum fills, over-the-top tempos, bizarre compositions... and odd meters? The craziest, oh yeah.

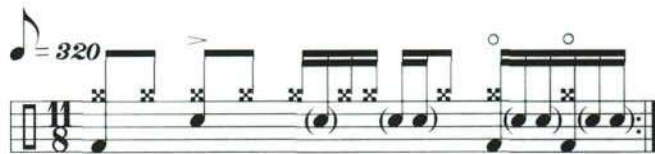
"It's like it's another person playing that stuff," Phil laughs. "I almost can't believe I could play that way." As for the inspira-

tion, Phil is quick to mention, "The Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Inner Mounting Flame*. Billy Cobham played some of the finest drumming I've ever heard on that record. All of us in Brand X were influenced by that group.

"Brand X was where I went to have fun," Phil says. "An analogy would be that it was a place where I could go and take off all of my clothes and live, to do things I couldn't do where I *did* live, which was Genesis. Genesis was at one end of the spectrum and Brand X was at the other. Doing both was a perfect combination for me, at least for a while."

Unorthodox Behavior was the first Brand X album, and it certainly did feature Phil taking off his musical clothes and letting it all hang out. On "Nuclear Burn," which has a few different odd-meter sections, Phil not only plays well, but his drums sound wonderful. According to Phil, "We had a great engineer who was into drums: Dennis McKay. You can hear everything I'm playing on those records." It's true, the clarity of the recorded sound is lovely, and even Phil's softest ghost strokes are audible.

Here is the basic 1 1/8 groove that appears at the beginning and end of "Nuclear Burn." (Note the way Phil smoothly incorporates ghost strokes into the pattern.)



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This is one of the variations he plays near the end of the tune. (Listen to the recording to hear the flurry of bass drum notes Phil plays.)



"Wot Gorilla"

Genesis: *Wind & Wuthering*
(recorded 1976)

"Oh yeah," Phil says, smiling, "'Wot Gorilla,' one of my favorites. I liked it so much that I had an arrangement done of it for my big band project. [See sidebar.] You should hear this tune with horns!"

It's not surprising that Phil likes this tune, as it is a quick little instrumental that's based around a very syncopated drum pattern that features Phil's crisp bass drum technique. He plays it so precisely that it almost sounds machine-like. Here's the basic pattern:



It may look simple, but try it up to tempo. "I can always check how well my pedal is adjusted by playing this pattern. If I can't play it accurately, then I know there's something wrong

with the pedal," Phil laughs.

"But I found that the best way for me to think about this pattern was as a continuous body motion," he continues. "The coordination, for me, involved getting my limbs to kind of move in a smooth motion—thinking almost like you're a well-oiled machine. Of course, it would be very difficult to keep that relentless type of feel if I broke out of it to play a fill. That took some concentration."

"Burning Rope"

Genesis: *...And Then There Were Three*
(recorded 1978)

As the recording of this tune fades, Phil leans back in his chair, thinks a minute, and lets loose: "It's a cruel thing to say, but it's a song like this that made me leave Genesis. Tony Banks will never talk to me again after this is published—this is one of his songs—but to me this song is a period piece. It doesn't make it in the twentieth century. I know there are people who like this music, but I just couldn't get up on stage and play or sing this kind of material anymore."

As for the drumming on "Burning Rope," Phil unleashed his multi-concert-tom setup—eight of them, in fact. In the intro of the tune he plays a 32nd-note fill that goes all the way from his 8" drum down to his 18", incorporating accented crashes within. It's a true round-house fill played incredibly fast.

"Yeah, I had a lot of tom-toms back then," Phil jokes, unimpressed at the sheer speed of his performance. "The fill just keeps going...down, and down, and down. I think I played this

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kind of thing back then because I didn't like some of the material, and I was trying to come up with ways to make it interesting."

...And *Then There Were Three* was the first Genesis studio album where Phil used his trademark single-headed-tom setup, and today, even though he has two fewer drums in his Gretsch kit and experiments with different drums, he still relies on single-headed drums to get his signature sound. "I love the sound of concert toms," Phil admits. "When you lay into them they have a real edge, and I tune them so that they 'bark.' That's it: I like them to sound like seals barking!"

"Intruder"

Peter Gabriel: *Peter Gabriel III* (recorded 1980)

The birth of the Phil Collins "face hugger" (as he called it) drum sound—here's where it happened. We've all heard it by now: that heavily gated, up-front drum sound that dominated the music and eventually the airwaves (on other Collins tunes) around the world. But "Intruder," the opening track on *Peter Gabriel III*, was the beginning.

"It's funny," Phil responds after hearing the tune, "I remember that sound as being further 'out,' more extreme and almost too hot in the mix. I guess we've all become used to it now."

How did it come about? "This was during a time when Peter couldn't afford to keep a band on full-time," Phil explains, "so I offered my services. I had been on the road with Brand X and had just gone through my first divorce. I was free—have drums

will travel!

"So I arrived at the studio and the first thing Peter says is that he doesn't want me to use any cymbals," Phil laughs at the memory. "I said, 'I agree with you in principle, but couldn't I just use a *hi-hat*?' He said no metal on this album. So I didn't use any cymbals."

The recording sessions for "Intruder" ended up being an important event for Phil. It's where he met his longtime engineer/producer, Hugh Padgham. Hugh and Phil have had an amazing amount of success together ever since. "Hugh was just engineering on that, actually," Phil says. "Steve Lillywhite was producing. They set me up in [London recording studio] the Townhouse's stone room, and I played a bit while they fooled around with miking combinations, compressors, noise gates. All of a sudden, I heard this sound...."

That sound—that heavily gated, open-and-closed effect—inspired the drummer. He started playing a pattern that timed perfectly with the opening and closing of the gated reverb. "I just started fooling around with this beat, and the next thing I know Peter is shouting over the intercom, 'Don't stop! Give me that for ten minutes—just that!' So I played the beat, and then afterwards I asked him what he was going to do with it. What did he say? 'I don't know yet!'"

The pattern for the song, while being very simple, has a great feel that works perfectly with the sound of the drums—a great performance to be sure. "It's very simple," Phil states. "I just doubled the bass drum part with a couple of toms. The challenging part was playing it for ten minutes without wavering."

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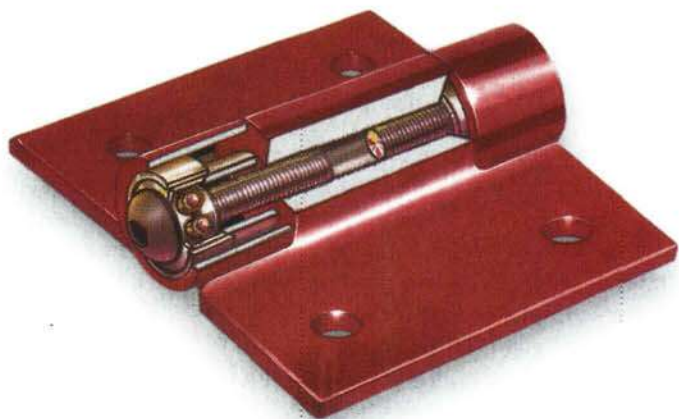
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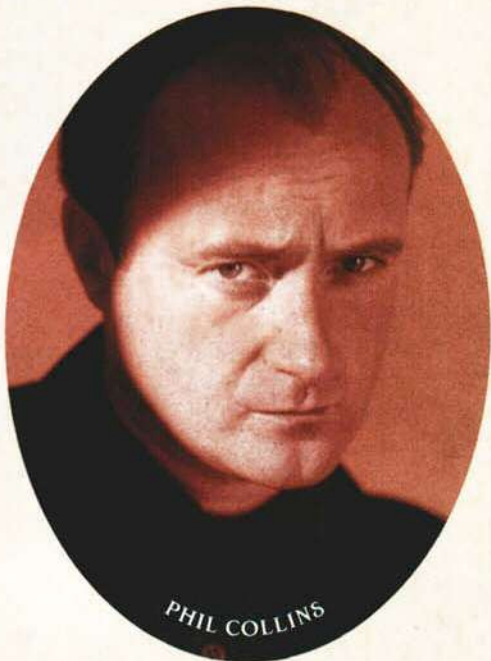
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"In The Air Tonight"

Phil Collins: *Face Value*

(recorded 1981)

Yes, everyone knows the song. But more importantly, everyone knows the *drumfill*. "In The Air Tonight" was the breakout hit single that launched Collins' solo career. It was one of the most popular tunes of the 1980s, and to this day you can see thousands of people air-drumming along to that rhythm at Phil's concerts. It's the hook of the song.

"You're right," Phil acknowledges, "that fill has become the hook, and it's become a bit of a trademark for me." It does seem to turn up in Phil's playing now and again. Why is that? "It's very natural for me," he admits, "that circular motion that happens when I play the fill. I really like it, although it's become a bit of a noose for me—everyone asks me to play it." Here's Phil's fill:



"There is something I'd like to point out about that fill," the drummer offers. "You may not believe this, but I never planned to have a big fill at that point in the song. I just wanted the drums to enter. Well, after I did about five takes of the tune, I started to get a bit more adventurous, and on the sixth take that fill happened to come out. While I liked the fill, it was really the rest of the take that sounded very good, and that's why I kept it. So that whole thing—one of the most important parts of the song, really—happened by accident."

One other point to mention about this song: It demonstrates Phil's ability to comfortably play along with a drum machine, something that was just becoming popular at that time, thanks in large part to Collins. Does he have any tips on playing with machines or clicks? "I didn't find it to be all that difficult," he says. "I think it all goes back to balance and the way your body moves. If you can think of the playing as a repetitive motion and just get into that groove, that motion, you can easily play along to a machine."

"Dodo"

Genesis: *Abacab*

(recorded 1981)

If you happened to purchase *Abacab* when it was released in 1981, the first thing you probably would have said was, "Boy, those drums are loud." *Abacab* was one of the first major commercial releases that had drums presented prominently in the mix. By today's standards it seems quite normal; back then, it was new territory for drumming. And the culprits of this musical

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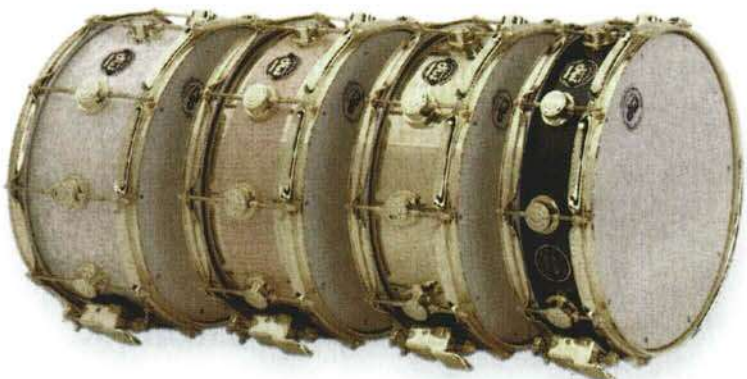


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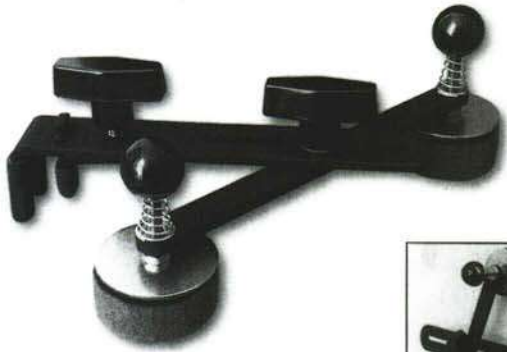


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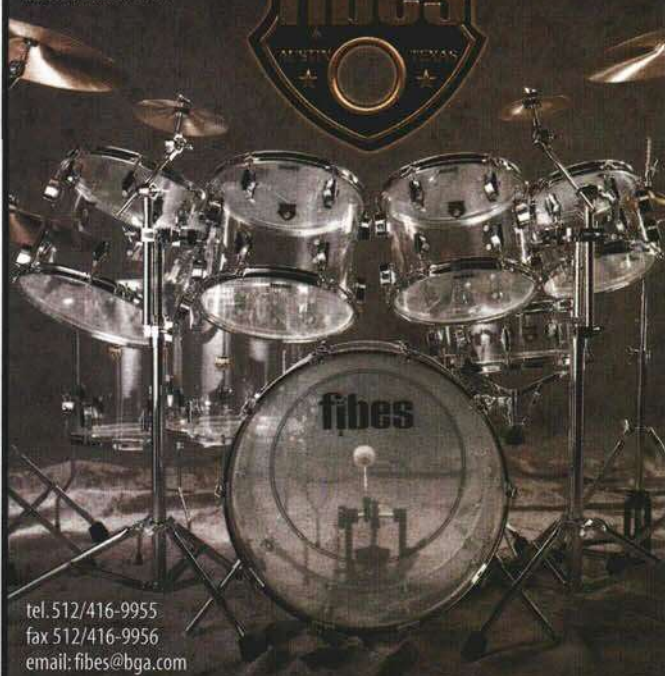
"I brought Hugh in to do this record because we got on well and because things went so well on *Face Value*," Phil says. "The things we were doing with the drum sound were really inspired by what the Beatles had done on things like "I Am The Walrus," with that heavily compressed effect. But the sound we came up with, in many respects, changed the direction of Genesis. The drums occupied so much space that there ended up not being room for the big keyboard/guitar 'wash' that we had before. It gave us a much heavier sound overall."

If you compare Phil's performance here with earlier Genesis records, you'll notice that he did away with a lot of the extraneous bits—no more lightning-fast fills or drum patterns. He found a groove and drove it home. "You can't play all of that stuff when the drums are so up-front," Phil explains. "You have to play more for the song, being careful to play with taste but still getting your own thing in."

The following beat, from "Dodo," shows Phil laying down a very strong rock groove that has a nice, deep pocket, very similar to the approach he had on the rest of the album. Everything he played here is exposed, and yet he played it with confidence.



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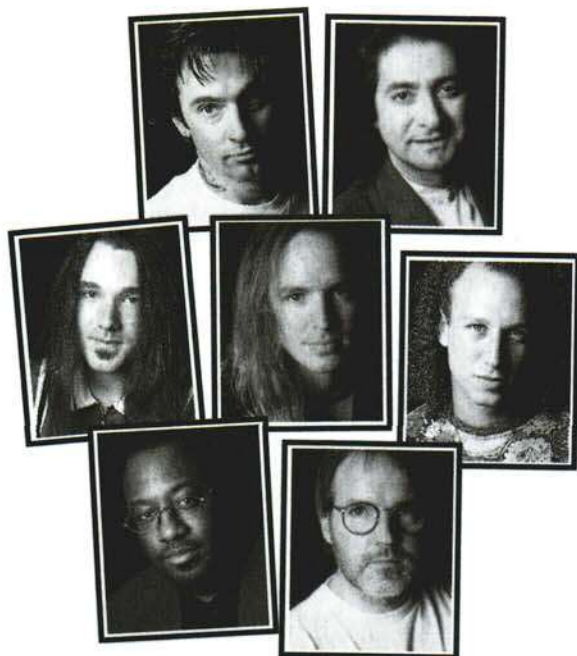
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"I Don't Care Anymore"

Phil Collins: *Hello, I Must Be Going*

(recorded 1982)

"I Don't Care Anymore" could *only* have been written by a drummer. With a melodic tom-tom riff as its central repeating theme, Phil composed a hit tune that brought drums and drummers to the fore. Gene Krupa may have been the first to spotlight the drummer, but in terms of exposing drums to the public at large, Phil Collins has made the biggest impact.

How did the tune come together? "I actually wrote this around a drum pattern I programmed on a drum machine," Phil admits. "But when I actually got down to recording the drums on top of the machine, playing the same pattern that I had programmed, I couldn't get it to happen—the machine and the live drums just didn't sound good together. So I came up with a different part for the drums. When I took out the original drum machine pattern, I was left with the drum part that's on the song, something totally different than what I was expecting. It's funny how these things work sometimes." Here's the basic pattern:



"I do think that being a drummer has affected my songwriting," Phil comments. "I suppose any songwriter might say this,

but for me the groove has to grab me first. And that can be something I think will work either programmed or played, although I always put an idea onto a drum machine to write. Then I start fooling around with melodies or chords. So I guess you could say I'm always starting from a drummer's perspective—looking for an interesting groove."

"Sussudio"

Phil Collins: *No Jacket Required*

(recorded 1985)

What? Phil Collins didn't play drums on "Sussudio"—it was programmed! That's right, there are no live drums on this track. So how *could* a "drummer's drummer" allow himself to be replaced by a drum machine?

Yes, it's an old argument, but there still seems to be an anti-drum machine attitude out there among many players. "I've never really understood that attitude," Phil mentions. "I've never been frustrated or felt threatened by drum machines, and I don't think drummers should be either."

Phil views machines as something he can use to his benefit. "It's a tool," he says. "It helps me write. Sure, I don't like the way some people use them, but there are some musicians and artists who are very creative with them. Sometimes a drum machine can do just the right thing, sometimes not. But either way, it's not something we should be afraid of."



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"I Wish It Would Rain Down"

Phil Collins: ...But Seriously (recorded 1989)

"That's a nice groove," Phil mentions as the track fades out. "Prince's 'Purple Rain' really inspired that one." The musical connection to Prince is a little bit hard to hear, but Phil's definitely right: This track feels great. In fact, *...But Seriously* is a solid showcase for Phil's grooving, R&B style that was becoming more prevalent in his playing around this time. Maybe he's not displaying all of his chops here, but he's playing perfectly for the song.

Here's the basic groove. It looks simple, but listen to how Phil phrases the accents on the hi-hat and how he sits back just a bit on the 2 and 4. It's very tasty.



Phil's drum sound around this time began to change as well, as he stepped back a bit from the heavily gated, larger-than-life sonic boom he had in the early '80s. ("I got tired of critics saying, 'Once again, the heavy-handed drum sound of Phil Collins.'") By this time his sound was a little more generic, still full of power and well-represented in the mix, but serving the music more than just standing out from the overall effect.

And what was the nicest part of Phil's drum sound at this point? No question, the snare sound. "I've fallen in love with those little snare drums," Phil admits. "I have a Noble & Cooley piccolo drum that I use most of the time—it just 'pops.' And I actually got a couple of very small snares from Joe Montineri—one 10" drum and a few 12"s. These small drums record really well. I love that sound."

Besides the changes in sound and approach, a couple of years after this Phil made a switch in his touring band, letting go of his rhythm section, bassist Lee Sklar and, even more surprising, his long-time drummer, Chester Thompson. Why? "It occurred to me that I enjoyed having different guest musicians on my albums—my first three albums were really a 'who's who' of my favorite players. I really liked bringing in new people, just for the inspiration. I play drums on all of my albums, but I wanted something new for my live band."

A highlight of both Genesis and Phil's own shows was the drum duet between Phil and Chester. But after having worked with Chester for over fifteen years, Phil decided to bring in ace tour drummer Ricky Lawson. "I wrote to Chester explaining why I was making the change," Phil says, "and he was beautiful about it. He called and said, 'Man, I'm sad because I love playing with you, but this will push me to do other things.' Chester and I are brothers, and I love him and his playing."

As for the differences between how Ricky and Chester approach the gig, Phil says, "They're both incredible players. Ricky is happy to learn the book and play it exactly the way I want him to. He also has the electronics thing down. Ricky's



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Watching Lawson play with Phil's band, you'll notice that he has a very controlled approach, laying down that seamless groove of his with the perfect sound. But his touch is a bit lighter than Chester's. "Yes," Phil agrees, "Chester is a harder player—like me. We both like to dig in and get a certain attitude from the drums. I miss that at times."

"Lorenzo"

**Phil Collins: *Dance Into The Light*
(recorded 1996)**

Phil's new record is, in a way, a return to a drumming emphasis, partly due to his decision not to use drum machines, but mainly because of a strong "world beat" influence that weaves through some of the songs. Yes, there are the trademark Collins' pop ditties, but there are also some tribal feels here and there that get Phil back to where he belongs, behind the drums.

On "Lorenzo" Phil plays a simple but nice syncopated kit pattern, with percussion parts adding to the African flavor. The instrumental section of the tune sounds like a whole tribe in action. "That is one of my favorite parts of the album," Phil says enthusiastically. "I was going for a Senegalese or South African vibe here, and I originally recorded sort of a dueling talking drum solo at that point in the tune. I ended up replacing it with the drum passage that's on there, but I overdubbed several unison parts to get that big, thick effect. I used all sorts of drums—timbales, conga drums that I played with sticks, concert toms. And the parts are all flamming, not exactly lining up, which is exactly what I was going for. That adds to the power."

It's hard to deny that drums are a major force on this new album, just as they've been in Phil Collins' entire career. Listening back over how his playing has evolved, it's interesting to note that he's had success at both ends of the spectrum: as a burning "drummer's drummer" and as a tasteful groove player.

With all of that experience, does Phil have any suggestions for drummers, maybe a direction or goal he thinks they should

focus on? "I think the answer to that, at least for me, is obvious," he says. "I've always wanted to do everything, to play in any situation I could. That's why I had Genesis and Brand X, why I did sessions with all sorts of people. Even today, if somebody rings me up for a session and I have the time, I'll do it. That's been the most natural thing for me: to want to play everything."

And as for his abilities behind the kit, Mr. Collins is perfectly frank: "It's odd, I

don't really go back and listen to the things I've done. It's been good to hear these old bits, because I think I underestimate myself as a drummer. I'm a pretty good singer, and I'm not a bad songwriter. But you know, drumming's the best thing I do. Sometimes I forget that."



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Josh Freese



*Generation X's
Steve Gadd?*

I can honestly say I've had the distinct pleasure of watching Josh Freese grow up and come into his own. Over ten years ago, Vinnie Colaiuta introduced me to Josh at a NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) show, Vinnie had taken the then eleven-year-old drummer under his wing after seeing him play in the Simmons booth. Josh was an impressive player even at that age, and Simmons began to use him for various clinics around the country, and even for some commercials.

Josh then began studying with noted teacher Roy Burns, who helped the youngster hone his craft. All the while, Josh was "bugging" his favorite drummers. Soon he was being invited by Vinnie to the Baked Potato to see him play...asked by J.R. Robinson to a Barry

Manilow session produced by George Duke...offered lessons by Gregg Bissonette. By age sixteen, Josh was working with Dweezil Zappa and touring with Michael Damian.

Now, at twenty-three, Josh is still blown away by the fact that this once self-proclaimed "drummer groupie" is running into all his idols at the studios where *he's* in the next room recording with such artists as Paul Westerberg, Juliana Hatfield, Suicidal Tendencies, Tracy Bonham, School Of Fish, Infectious Grooves, the Vandals, and Devo. But there's no denying that he has *arrived*. Today, Josh is the guy who gets called when a record needs something a little different—playing solid and on the edge as a result of his schooling, yet with the fire of his youthful eccentricity.

by Robyn Flans

photos by Alex Solca



RF: When we did our last interview, you weren't doing a lot of studio work yet. How did it get rolling?

JF: It's such a snowball effect. I know this is a typical, generic answer, but it's word of mouth.

RF: Do you recall your first major session?

JF: The first time I went in to do an entire album is pretty memorable. It was with Dweezil Zappa. I was—and still am—a huge fan of his father. I had met Dweezil's younger brother, Ahmet, who was singing in Dweezil's band. We started hanging out together, and I spent time over at their house. I ended up playing with Dweezil and Scott Tunis, who is now one of my dear friends. Scott is also a great bass player, and he played with Frank Zappa. When we went in to make the record, we had been playing a lot just as a trio. I was fifteen at the time and I was kind of playing like a chicken with its head cut off. I was really into the over-playing thing.

When we got in the studio, I started really freaking out, thinking about how they had done this a million times. I felt very green and self-conscious. I didn't want to be the one who was going to be going for it on every track and messing up halfway through. I wanted to be the one to get it after the first or second take, so I played it really safe. Then when the record was finished, I listened to it and thought, "Wow, I played really boring." I really didn't get to do my thing because I was playing it safe and didn't want to rock the boat.

To this day, after every record I do, I listen back and learn from it. And my playing has gone through so many phases since I started playing professionally. I feel now that I'm coming of



age, where I feel comfortable where I am.

RF: Can you elaborate on the phases?

JF: When I first started playing drums, at around eight years old, I loved Alex Van Halen because he had the big drumset. I was heavily into rock 'n' roll and was really into that kind of drummer. At eleven or twelve I started reading *Modern Drummer* and began to realize that there is a whole other world of musicians out there.

RF: I'm sure your dad was hipping you to other music as well.



JF: Yes, to a degree. I grew up around a lot of big band and jazz musicians, since my dad directed the band out at Disneyland for so many years. But I found a lot of things out on my own, too. I discovered Steve Gadd and Vinnie Colaiuta on my own, and I got heavily into listening to jazz and fusion stuff when I was in sixth grade. And that was extra-impressive to me,

"Being a studio drummer and getting a lot of calls can be both a compliment and a slag. It's flattering to have that many people want you to play with them, but at the same time, I'm afraid of becoming a generic drummer or a chameleon"

JOSH'S

Minimal

KIT

Drumset: Drum Workshop

- A. 5 1/2 x 14 maple snare (DW/Craviotto)
- B. 9 x 12 tom
- C. 13 x 16 floor tom
- D. 18 x 22 bass drum

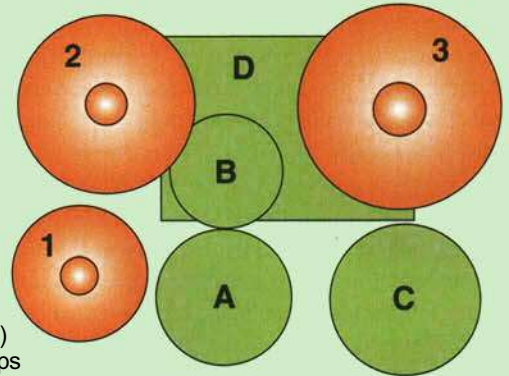
Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14" *New Beat* hi-hats
- 2. 19" *A Custom* crash
- 3. 22" *A Custom* crash/ride

Hardware: DW

Heads: Remo CS. (black or white dot) on snare, coated *Ambassadors* on tops of toms with clear *Ambassadors* underneath, *Powerstroke 3* on kick

Sticks: Regal Tip 5B (wood tip)



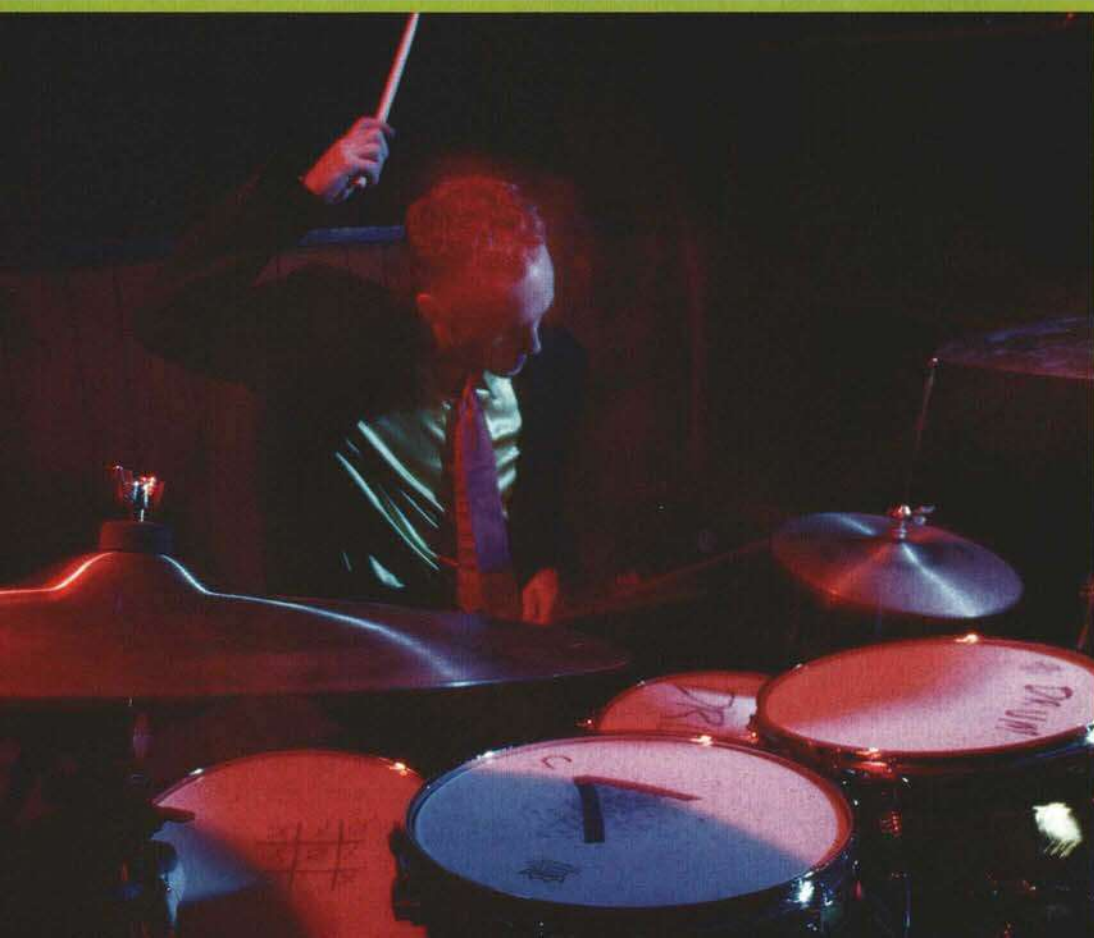
because it was stuff I could never play. It was so challenging and interesting. I went through that phase until I was about sixteen going on seventeen. RF: When you were going through these phases, did you try to play that stuff?

JF: Yes, I did. But there weren't a lot of other fourteen-year-olds I could find who were interested in playing jazz. It was hard to get together and really work on it. I practiced it on my own and when I took lessons. One thing I felt really guilty about was that I'd read about guys who would say,

"I practiced nine hours a day, all summer long." After an hour or two, it was, "Man I'm going to the movies." But whether I was practicing the drums or not, since I was twelve or thirteen I'd breathe, eat, and sleep music, and if I wasn't practicing the drums, I was listening to music or I was at a gig. My dad would drive me up to L.A. from Orange County every weekend to see Vinnie play at different jazz clubs. He'd take me to see Buddy Rich play every summer at Disneyland.

If I had not met Scott Tunis, I might be in a totally different place now. One of the first times I played with Dweezil, I was more nervous about playing with Scott than with Dweezil, because I had seen Scott's name on the back of all of Frank's albums. I had seen endless videotapes of them playing live, and he was a pro who was ten years older than Dweezil and me.

At one point during a rehearsal, Dweezil went to take a phone call. We had been playing this sort of boring rock 'n' roll mumbo jumbo for a while, and I wanted to impress Scott and let him



"I did half of Tracy Bonham's record in two afternoons, tracking live. It's so strange spending so little time on something like that—and then hearing it all over the radio"

know I was "worldly" and into more than just rock music. I said, "Hey, man, let's play some jazz." He looked at me like I was out of my mind; he was appalled. Scott is one of my favorite people in the world, but he is definitely his own guy. He said, "Jazz? Are you kidding me?" And I just shrunk to about an inch. It wasn't that I decided not to like jazz anymore because of that, but he turned me on to a whole new world of punk music, and it really threw me. I figured the last person who would be interested in punk music would be Scott Tunis. I thought it was such a weird, juvenile thing for a Frank Zappa alumnus to like.

At fifteen I had heard some punk, like the Ramones, but there was a whole other world out there. Scott taught me how amazingly passionate that music is. I thought that it was just a bunch of guys up there strumming and bashing out notes, playing out of time and ranting and raving. There is some of that, and that's an art form of its own, whether you like that sort of thing or not. But there was a lot of stuff out there that I wasn't aware of.

RF: Who were you listening to?

JF: Around the same time, I hooked up

with a punk rock band from Southern California called the Vandals, who'd been around since the early '80s. During the day I'd work with Dweezil and Scott, playing these crazy odd-time things—pretty challenging "drummer's drummer" stuff—and at night I would play a gig with the Vandals, which would be completely opposite. It would be tight and fun, but a lot more furious, fast, loose, and daring, and not as confined or mapped out. Once I got welcomed into this family and started listening to this stuff, I realized it's not just played by a bunch of idiots; there are some incredible musicians playing the music. I had friends in high school who were getting into punk for different reasons—like because they weren't being accepted, so they'd listen to punk, dye their hair blue, and do drugs. But for me it was just about fun. I had spent so many years sitting in my basement practicing *Stick Control*.

RF: But didn't that type of formal training help you later?

JF: Yes, that's a great basis to start with. Those are things you work on at an early stage and end up taking from in every little thing you do. Having all that stuff plus all

of the lessons I had taken in my back pocket, but going in a completely different direction, created a new, stranger way of playing for me.

RF: Was there a phase beyond the punk?

JF: By the time I was sixteen and getting into this other music, I got into writing music. I was playing drums every day, but when I wasn't practicing or doing a gig, I was writing music. I started really looking up to drummers who were more musical than guys who could just play chops. I started getting into Stewart Copeland, who actually does have great chops, but he also writes great music and scores films and all this other stuff—which makes you understand music so much more than just being into what you're personally playing. I'm still working on this, but I used to step on everyone's toes when I played because I was so into playing busy.

RF: Did anybody ever tell you that?

JF: People like Scott would, but in a helpful way, not in a finger-pointing way. He knew I was fifteen and he was twenty-nine, and he was helping me. If he let me go on stepping on everyone's toes, I would have ended up ten years later still doing that and not getting the work I'm getting now.

RF: So how would he say it?

JF: He'd say, "Mellow out" or "Stop soloing on the verse." That's a little bit of an exaggeration, but he'd say stuff like that. That old "less is more" theory really is true in certain instances. A couple of the people I'm listening to a lot right now are Steve Jordan and Charlie Drayton, who both play with Keith Richards. They change off on bass and drums. Charlie also plays with Neil Young, he played on the big B-52's record, and he was with the Divinyls. He's fantastic. Stewart Copeland did that in a more commercial fashion, since the Police were such a huge band. He was a classic example of someone who played so right; just a simple flam on a snare drum sounded so good. Obviously, he could do plenty of fancy things, but even when he was playing the simplest of beats, it was just incredible. But both Steve Jordan and Charlie Drayton have become big drum heroes of mine in the last three or four years. In fact, I bought the videotape *Keith Richards Live At The Palladium*, and it's terrific.

Another drummer I need to mention is Alan Myers, the drummer in Devo. On one hand, he was a great rock drummer with

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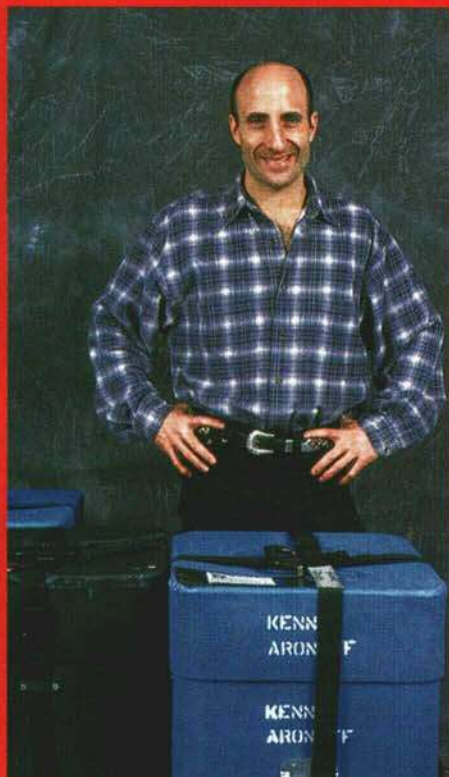


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impeccable time, and on the other hand, he could be the anti-rock drummer. There'd be some groove that Devo would have that would beg for a heavy 2 and 4, but he'd play very unconventional rhythms, and his choices for sound sources wouldn't be the predictable, obvious thing. He would always turn things around and make them sound really strange, where someone else might have played a 2-and-4 groove.

One Devo song a lot of people would know is their cover of "Satisfaction," which had such an amazing drum beat to it.

You could lock me in a room with a drumset for a month to come up with a part for that song, and I would never come up with that, and it's really the hook of the song.

Someone else I have to mention is Nick Vincent. I became aware of him about four years ago. I'm a big fan of Frank Black, who is the singer/songwriter from the Pixies. His first two solo records have Nick on them, and there's some amazing drumming on them. It's this really "on fire" playing, and it blew me away when I saw him because he's actually an older guy.

RF: Can you give us a lesson in punk drumming?

JF: In punk music, if you're playing fast and furious and very energetic, there's not much room to be sloppy. It's definitely not the kind of music you want to lay behind the beat on. Some guys play so fast that they're practically rushing. I think almost metronomically, and I make that tight 8th-note, driving feel almost like a machine, but in a very thunderous way.

RF: You get called for an interesting variety of sessions.

JF: Sometimes I get the call because they know I can play safe if they want, but I don't have that much of a safe background. Some of these other guys who they were calling in weren't playing on Suicidal Tendencies records and Vandals records. For instance, when I got called for the School Of Fish album, they had been working with some drummers I was well aware of. I was really surprised when they called, and I said, "Why are you calling me?" They said, "We want to try something completely different." They were looking for...

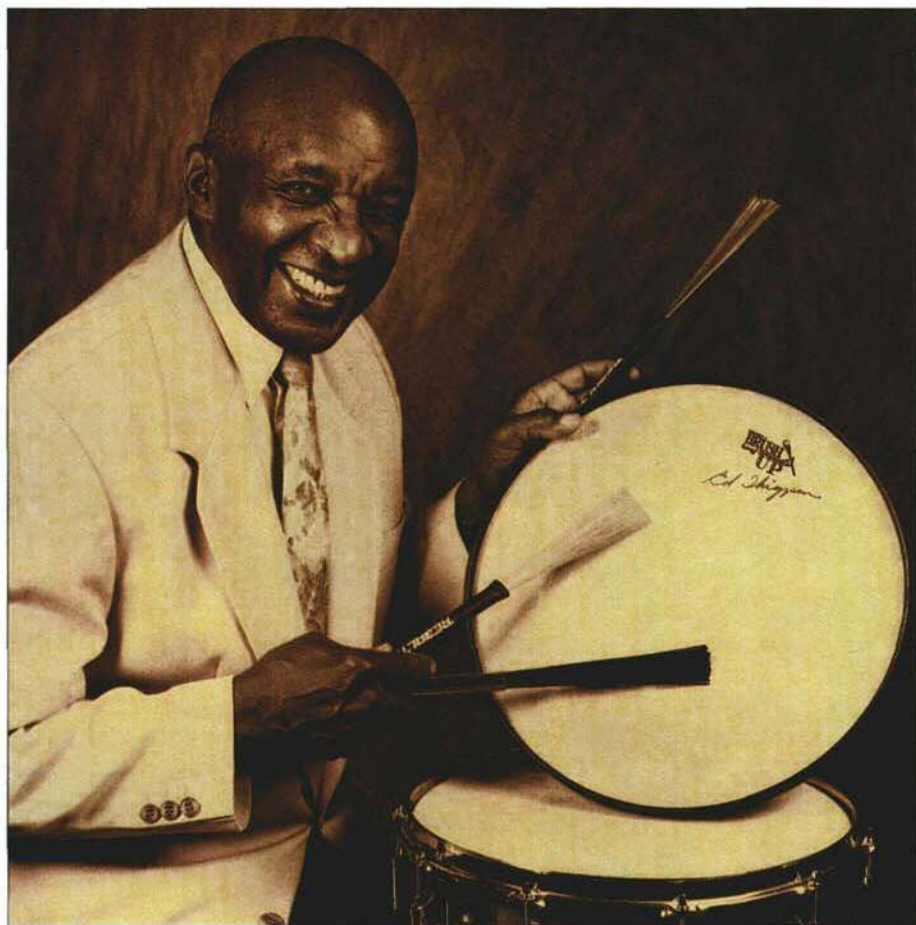
RF: Less polish?

JF: Maybe—although I can play more polished if need be. But I'm right on the fence between polished and not—just teetering. I know a lot of great drummers who probably feel like they wouldn't stoop to playing punk rock music, or even learn about it. At the same time, I know the majority of punk rock drummers out there, and in most cases it's all they can do. I think the reason I got hired for some of these things was they knew that I can tone it down and play safe if they want me to, but at the same time I can go out on a limb and add that frantic personality to the drumming.

One good story—I didn't end up on the record, but I got called to play on John Fogerty's new record.

RF: Who didn't? It's become a bit of a joke because everyone has gone in to give it a try to make them happy.

JF: Exactly. *Modern Drummer* should do a story on the drummers who played with John, whether they ended up on the record or not. When I got called to do it, they said Jeff Porcaro had made the whole record; that's how long this record has been in the works—and it still is. They said there were a couple of tracks they weren't happy with, so right off the bat I went, "Why are you



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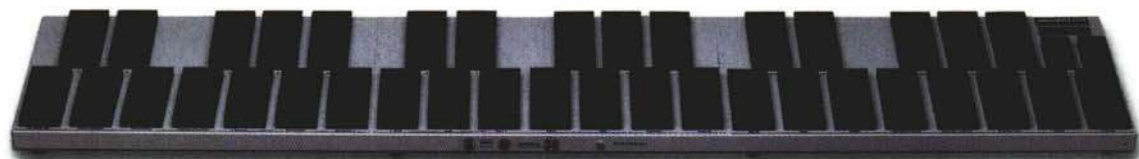
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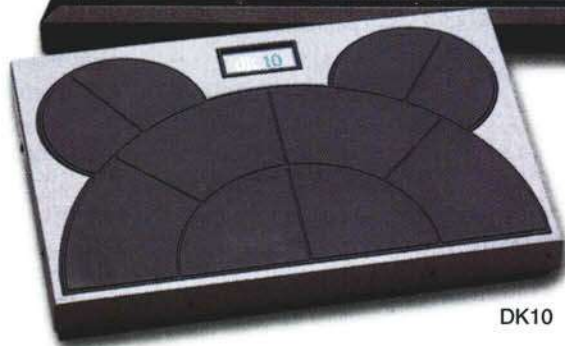
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calling me?" Then to make me even more nervous, they said, "Steve Jordan played on this track, but John's still not happy with it." That's why I don't feel hurt at all about not making it onto the record.

RF: You are in excellent company.

JF: I did one track with them, and then a few days later they called to ask me to do another song. I thought, "Wow, it must have gone well." I ended up tracking a second song with John, which was a great experience. It was at a point when I was making a lot of records and getting a lot of

work and probably thinking I was hot shit, but it was the first session I walked into in a long time where I was shaking.

RF: Did they tell you what was lacking for them on the already recorded tracks?

JF: I asked John's brother and the engineer, "What's he looking for?" They just rolled their eyes and said, "We don't know. It's an unexplainable groove." Both the songs I ended up tracking were straightforward, almost ZZ Top-ish, Creedence Clearwater 2-and-4 stuff that you would think anybody could do in their sleep. It

wasn't crazy, it wasn't physically demanding. But he was looking for a magic he couldn't explain. I was floored when they called me to do a second song. That was the summer of '93. When I was in there, I saw rows of two-inch tape, all of the same song—probably two hundred takes of the same song.

RF: Did you do a lot of takes of each song?

JF: Maybe six or seven.

RF: Is that a drag?


JF: Not necessarily, especially if it's something you're just walking into. There are so many sessions where I don't get a tape the night before, so 70% of the time I'm walking in cold. After two or three takes, you're basically just getting warmed up. Then if you want to save three or four takes so there is a choice later on, it's not a big deal. It's when it goes into the sixteenth and seventeenth take that you're rolling your eyes, but you still have to pull yourself together and play it like it's the first time you played it. If you start bumming out, it's only going to make it worse. You really have to take a deep breath and rise above it, and even if you want to throw a drumstick at the producer or the artist, you just have to do it. And if you pull it together, you realize that on the next take or two you're going to get it, and it's all going to be over with anyway and you can get onto the next song. The sooner I stop pouting about it, the faster it will get done.

RF: When you walked into the Fogerty session, what happened?


JF: John Fogerty really was comfortable to be around. They made it very relaxed for me and said, "Don't worry, you're here because we want you to do it the way *you* would do it. Don't try to play like Steve Jordan or Jeff Porcaro. Play like you, and it's either going to work or not." The cool thing was that John was there; he plugged in the guitar, and the bass player was there. Instead of me sitting with headphones on with a click track, John was two feet from me rocking on his *Telecaster*.

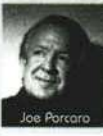
RF: Tell us about recording with Tracy Bonham.

JF: I played on about half the record. This producer team from the East Coast, Sean Slade and Paul Q. Kolderie, called me. I had worked with them on a Juliana Hatfield record, and they were producing this unknown girl from Boston. They sent




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me a tape of four of the seven songs I ended up doing, and I listened to them on a *Walkman* on the plane to Boston. Until you get there, though, you never really know what you're getting into. But you can do your homework to a certain extent. Nine out of ten times it doesn't really call for charting or mapping stuff out. It depends on how good your memory is, too.

That's one of the great learning experiences I got from studying jazz music and playing ten-minute instrumentals with people like Scott Tunis and Dweezil. Good memory is something that is in my back pocket forever. Now learning two-and-a-half-minute pop songs in the studio is very easy.

I had never met Tracy or her bass player, Drew, but they were both very easy to play with. Plus, the producers were very easy to work with; they're very relaxed. I've worked with some producers who drive it into the ground to the point where everybody hates the song and it's lost its fire. It takes only one person to ruin it for everybody, but these guys are so much fun to work with.

I did half of Tracy's record in two after-

F R E E S E F R A M E D

Here are ten disks that Josh feels best represent his drumming. His comments follow the tunes he particularly digs.

Tracy Bonham: *The Burdens Of Being Upright*
 "Mother, Mother": "My attempt at sounding like I weigh 400 lbs!"
 "Navy Bean": "A dozen cups of coffee and thirty cigarettes later."
 "The One": "Some 'Keith Moon' over-the-top stuff."

Suicidal Tendencies: *The Art Of Rebellion*
 "Can't Stop": "Aggressive and urgent."
 "Gotta Kill Captain Stupid": "A good blend of punk rock and metal—fairly manic."
 The Vandals: *Live Fast...Diahrea* (sic)
 "Power Mustache": "Punk rock meets speed metal at 175 m.p.h.—frantic, frantic, frantic!"
 "Kick Me": "More busy punk rock mayhem."

Juliana Hatfield: *Only Everything*
 "What A Life": "Energetic, edgy pop drumming."
 "Universal Heartbeat": "Opens with a four-bar, 'Keith Moon-ish' drum solo.
 Cool dynamics throughout the tune."

Infectious Grooves: *Sarsippius' Ark*
 "Spread The Jam": "One crazy, stupid fill towards the middle that I got lucky on. I couldn't play it again if my life depended on it!"

Paul Westerberg: *Eventually*
 "Love Untold": "Semi-loose, mid-tempo drumming in support of a great song."
 "Angels Walk": "Straightforward, but the dynamics are nice. The first time I've ever played sleigh bells on a track."

School Of Fish: *Human Cannonball*
 "Complicator": "Fast, but controlled and precise."

"Jump Off The World": "You know the phrase 'less is more'?"
 "Stand In The Doorway": "Some cool, reckless stuff."

Wayne Kramer: *The Hard Stuff*
 "Bad Seed": "Great opening part followed by a few minutes of punk rock."
 "Incident On Stock Island": "A spoken word piece with a bunch of free time—experimental stuff."

Magnapop: *Rubbing Doesn't Help*
 "Fire Brand": "A cool song, and the groove doesn't change once. Pretty hypnotic and rocking."
 "Snake": "Dynamic as hell and pretty dam reckless towards the end."

Xtra Large: *Now I Eat Them*
 "Hooker": "Quirky, dynamic, and one of my favorites."
 "Message From Outer Space": "Same as above, but different!"

OTHER RECORDINGS

Artist	Album
Paul Westerberg	14 Songs
Dweezil Zappa	<i>Confessions Of A Deprived Youth</i>
Thermadore	<i>Monkey On Rico</i>
Possum Dixon	<i>Star Maps</i>
Crumb	<i>Romance Is A Slow Dance</i>
The Vandals	<i>Fear Of A Punk Planet</i>
The Vandals	<i>Sweatin' To The Oldies</i>
The Vandals	<i>The Quickening</i>
Dare Devils	"Hate You" single
Mary Lou Lord	<i>Martian Saints</i>

SOUNDTRACKS

Tank Girl, Cable Guy, Freeways, Strange Days

TOURS

Paul Westerberg, Devo, The Vandals, Infectious Grooves, Xtra Large, Thermadore

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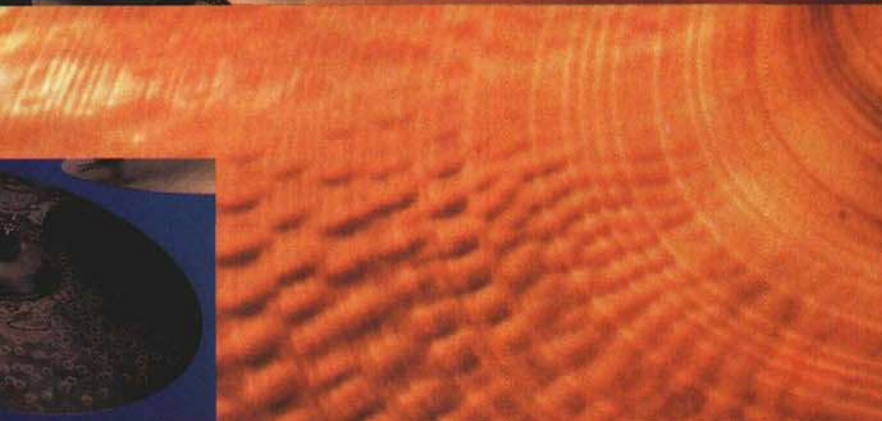
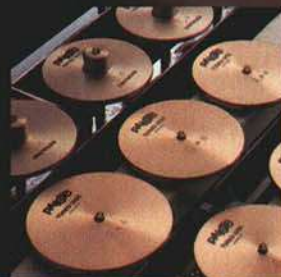
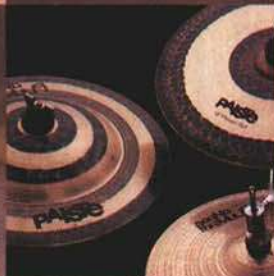
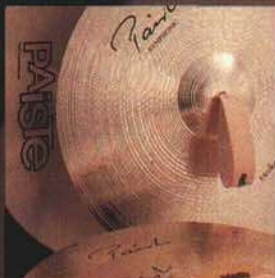
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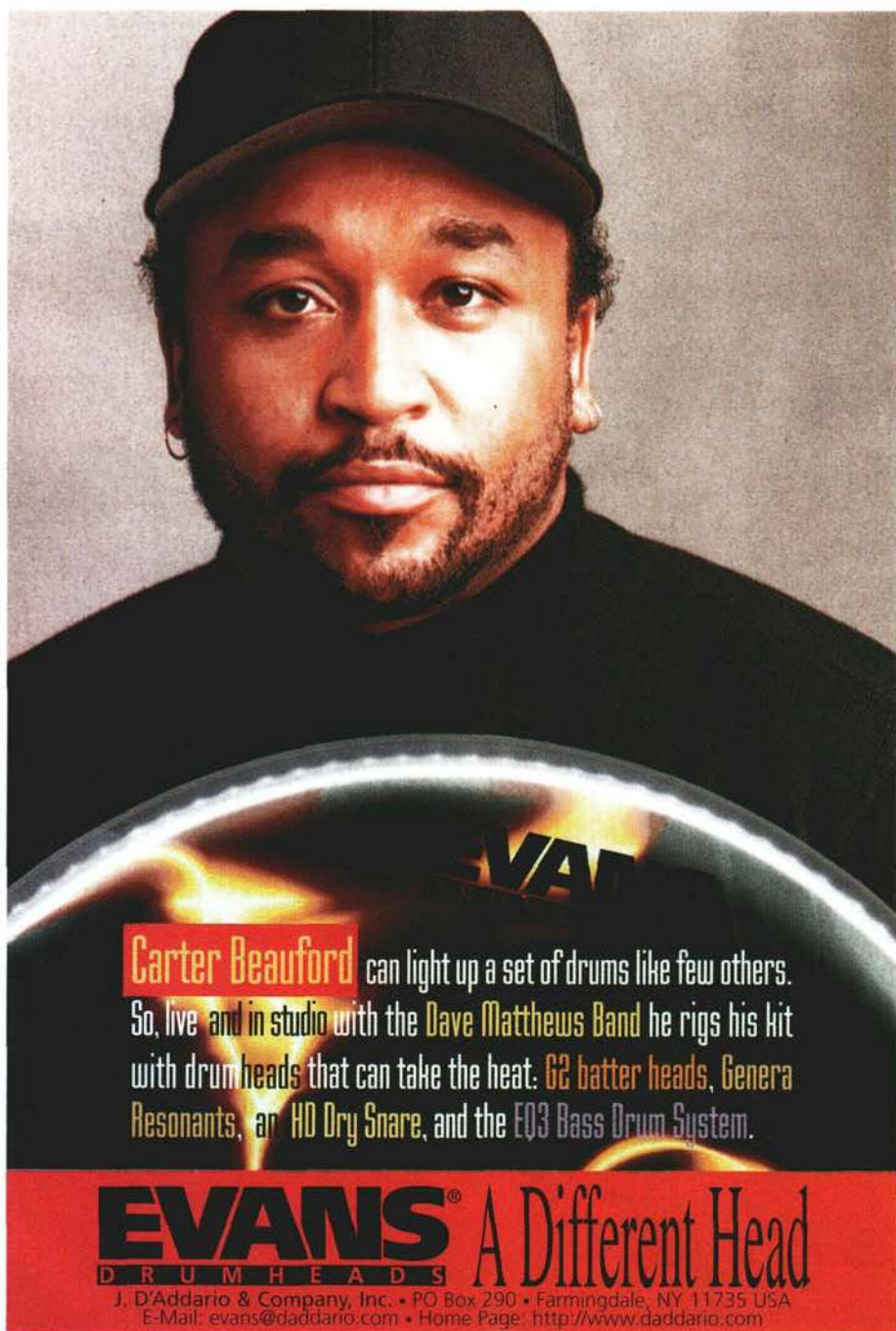
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noons, tracking live. It's so strange spending so little time on something like that—and then hearing it all over the radio. I think a lot of people are trying to get away from slaving over things. Obviously you don't want to half-ass something, but I think that the '80s mentality of taking four days to get a drum sound and then running the track into the ground is going away.

RF: On this Tracy Bonham date, you were working with rented drums?

JF: Yes. I'm pretty easy to please as far as equipment. The studio had a couple of kits, including a great DW kit—which is what I play anyway—and there were ten snares to choose from. Also, the studio had an in-house drum tech who changes heads and runs to the music store to get whatever you need. I basically set up a little four-piece DW kit, and those guys get great drum sounds.

RF: What's your part in it?

JF: I still think I'm a poor drum tuner. I just whack them and fiddle with the drumkey until they feel right and they sound the way I want them to. There are so many people I know who have scientific methods.

I have a funny story about equipment. About four years ago, I had just gotten this beautiful drumset from DW and I was about to go on the road with the Vandals, this small punk rock tour. I realized if I brought that drumset out on the road with me it would get trashed in the back of a van, fall over, get spit on, and have drinks poured on it. I called John Good at DW and asked if he had any defective pieces—a kick and a couple of toms that might have a minor crack in the shell—anything beat up. They had a set that had been a house drumset for a while and the finish was peeling, so he gave it to me. I ended up spending all day taking every piece of hardware off the drum—all the lugs, all the badges, everything—and scraping the finish off so it was just wood and chunky glue underneath. I spent all day strategically torching it and lighting it on fire. The drums still sound great, and I use them on records.

RF: You told me that there's an interesting story concerning the Thermadore record you recently recorded.

JF: The singer and chief songwriter in the band, Robbie Allen, called me up. He had gotten some money together to do some



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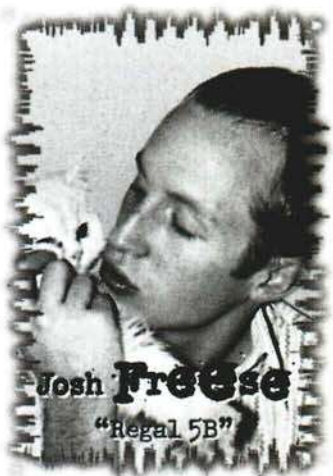
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"high-class" demos at a 24-track studio. He called me up on a Sunday afternoon and said, "What are you doing tonight? Wanna come down and play on a couple of songs? I'm just doing demos." I showed up with drums with the oldest, most beat up heads on them, whatever snare drum was sitting at my house at the time, one cymbal, and

cracked hi-hats. He was finishing up the arrangements of the song when I was setting up, I put on the headphones, we ran through it once or twice, and by the third time he'd say, "Okay, that's a take, let's go on to the next one." I did a bunch of songs like that, and the next thing I know, they had shopped this tape and Atlantic Records loved it and put it out!

RF: What did you think when you heard it?

JF: It sounds okay; the engineer and the guy who mixed it made the best out of what I was using, but I did not come prepared to do a record. We're actually going to be making another one.

RF: What's the weirdest thing you've done in a studio?

JF: This morning I played a music stand instead of a hi-hat. I was doing a Sears jingle and they had an old Pearl kit there and they said to just bring cymbals and a snare drum. It was this strange, percussive, 16th-notey, almost funk pattern. It sounded cool and I started fooling around playing a hi-hat and a music stand. They put a mic' on it, compressed it, and put distortion on it; it sounded like I was playing a hubcap.

One thing I like doing sometimes is detuning all the heads, maybe with the exception of the kick drum, to the point where they're so completely loose that there is no tone; it sounds like you're hitting paper, very percussive and strange. Used in the right context, that can be neat.

Another weird thing I did recently was with Devo for an episode of *Ellen*, where

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Photo Requirements

1. Photos must be in color, and of high quality. (35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered. Polaroids cannot be accepted.)
2. You may send more than one view of the kit.
3. Photos should be of drums only; no people should be in the shot(s).
4. Drums should be photographed against a neutral background (a sheet, drape, blank wall, etc.). Avoid "busy" backgrounds such as in your basement, garage, or bedroom.
5. Be sure that those attributes of your kit that make it special are clearly visible in the photo(s).

Send your photo(s) to Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Please note that photos cannot be returned, so don't send any originals you can't bear to part with.

Devo played a mutated version of the *Ellen* theme song—really abstract and atonal, Devo-esque. We also performed it on the show. We showed up at the Disney Studios at 8:00 A.M. wearing the yellow Devo plastic jumpsuits, and underneath we all had stuffed bras and matching wigs. Then we had strange makeup. I had this white pancake makeup that made me look almost like a corpse with heavy gray eye shadow and a thin, penciled-in John Waters mustache. We finished at noon, and I needed to get to a two-day session that was beginning with a new artist named Jeremy Toback. I put my street clothes on and looked in the mirror and realized I had all this whacked-out makeup on. The mustache was coming off, but instead of washing it off, I had the makeup department redo it. I hadn't met the artist or the producer, but I figured I'd show up like that. I think they got a little bit worried when I first walked in.

RF: How did the work with Devo come about?

JF: Devo was like the Rolling Stones or the Beatles to me. The first record I got in my life, at Christmas when I was seven or

eight, was a Devo record. I was originally attracted to them because to me they were almost like comic book characters with the flower pots on their heads and the glasses. But I remember getting the record and loving it—it was the first record I practiced drums to. As I started getting older, I bought the earlier records, and they still really hold up. They were total pioneers in art rock. The average person thinks of them as one-hit wonders with "Whip It," but what they don't know is that Devo started off as art students from Ohio who met and made a film called *The Truth About De-Evolution*. They've made other films, and they directed their own videos; the bass player directed Foo Fighters and Soundgarden videos. Mark Mothersbaugh, the singer, has art showings all over the world.

As I got older, of course, I realized they weren't just funny, but that it was a conceptual high art. They broke up about seven years ago, but the guitar player, Bob Casale, produced the first Vandals record I made after I joined them. Bob and I became friends, and then he and Mark



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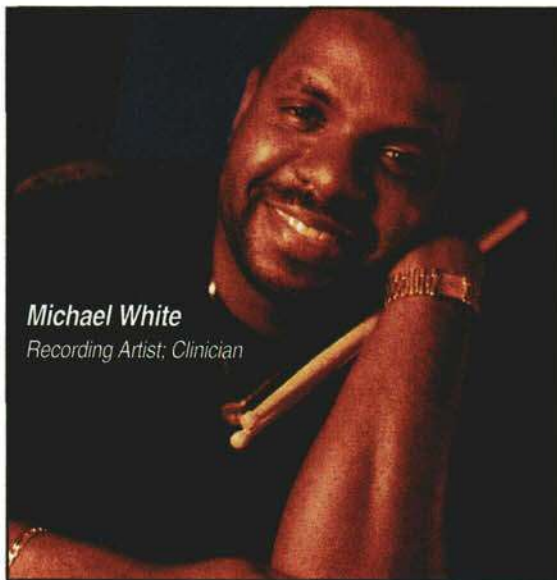
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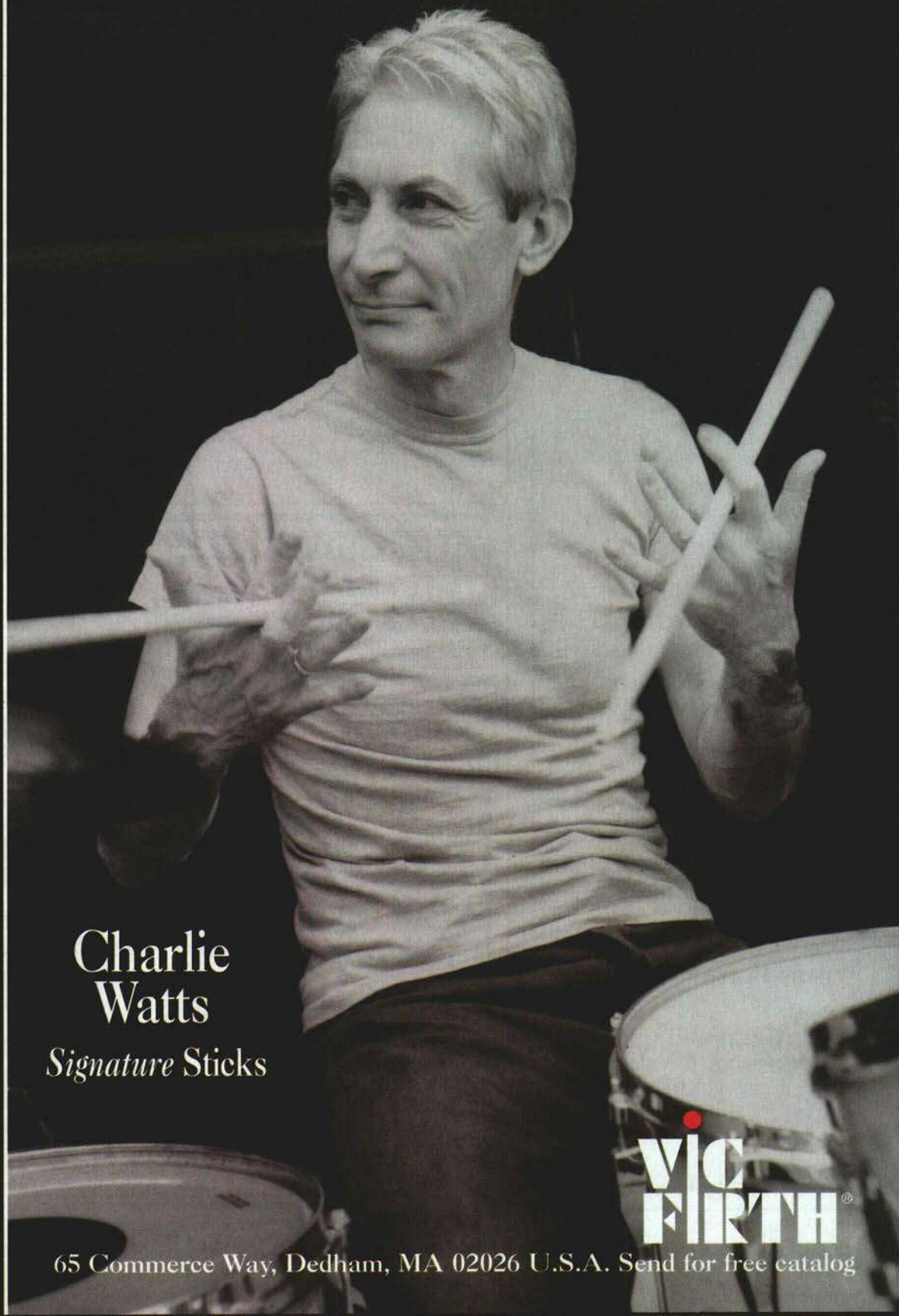
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would hire me every once in a while for things like television shows that they wrote music for. About a year and a half ago, Devo was asked to do a song for a movie called *Tank Girl*, and they called me to do one of their classic songs, "Girl U Want." It was amazing, and I told myself I could die happy after doing that. About a year later, they called and said they had an offer to do a reunion show at Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival. So we did that show, and once again, the guys were going, "This is the only show we're doing." But a few months later they called and said they were asked to do *Lollapalooza* for the last two and a half weeks, in a slot right between the Ramones and Soundgarden. It was phenomenal.

RF: You're currently working with Paul Westerberg.

JF: Paul is one of my biggest heroes, as far as classically great songwriters go. I loved the Replacements, the band he had in the '80s. They started off as a punk rock band, but by the third record, somewhere hidden on the second side there'd be a couple of nice slow songs or mid-tempo songs that

he was afraid of people hearing. By the sixth record there were only two punk rock songs on it and the rest mid-tempo and pop, to the point where now he's a very matured songwriter. I'd have to say I'm on my toes playing with him more than any other person. He can be fairly tough to work for, but I dig that.

RF: How is he tough?

JF: He's very particular about everything, from the way the song sounds, to the groove, to the way you're playing it, to the intensity, to the dynamics. He wants things perfect at all times. He's very demanding, but I respect him so much.

RF: What does the music require of you?

JF: Space—less is more. But at the end of a live set, we'll get into old Replacement songs that are crash—boom—bam, lightning-speed punk rock songs. But for the most part it's ballads and other things.

RF: So this is one gig that really does require both sides of your playing?

JF: Yes. I think it would be tough on a drummer used to only one style or the other.

RF: Were there things you did as you were

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learning the instrument to help you work on time and space?

JF: I still work on those things. It's something you can't teach to somebody. It's good to play along with a metronome when you're practicing rudimentary things, but when it's time to play a drumset, that can get monotonous. If you're going to practice to something like that, it's a lot more fun to use a drum machine and program a shaker and conga part, so it sounds like you're playing with a percussionist that is always right on. I think playing with people helps more, because there are times you need to let songs breathe.

RF: How do you feel about playing with a click?

JF: I'm fine with it. It can be useful when I'm on a session where I've just met the people and I don't know how they play. If it's hard playing with somebody and no click is being used, I'll request one, just to make sure I'm not the one going crazy, and to make sure everyone knows to get locked into the click track. If the bass player is lag-



ging, for instance, I can lock in with the click track and he can go back later and punch in his parts.

I also like playing with it because if you're locking in with it at the end of the take, you know that you're right on. Sometimes if you don't, you have to listen back and really concentrate on everything and question and second-guess. Obviously, when you're working with a band that you're in or you've played with a lot, you know each other, and maybe you don't want to use a click track because you want that band vibe. But if you're going in for one day, trying to cut as many songs as you can, you have to use your time wisely.

RF: You've been doing a lot of studio work of late, but I know that live playing is still very important to you.

JF: I don't get as much studio work as a drummer like Jim Keltner, but I do feel very fortunate to be getting the calls I get. Being a studio drummer and getting a lot of calls can be both a compliment and a slag. It's flattering to have that many people want you to play with

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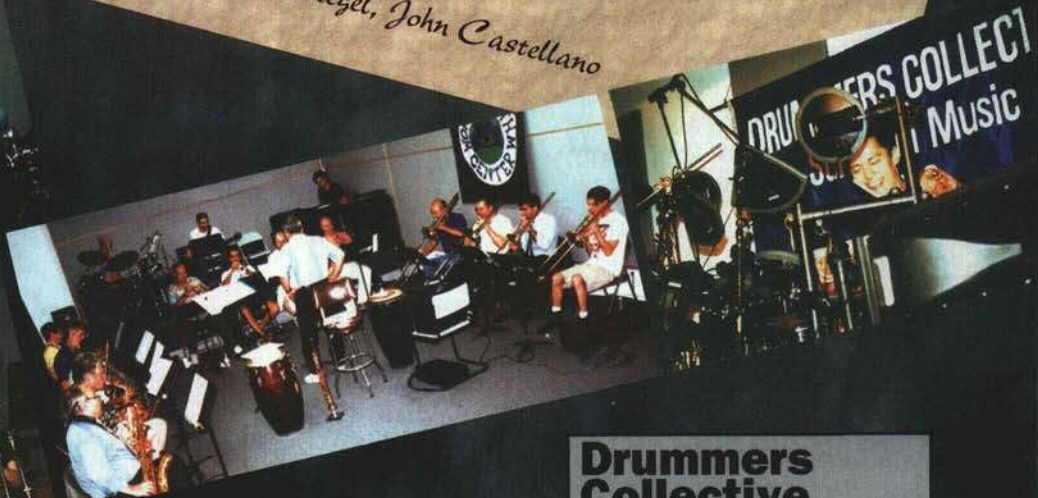
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them. But at the same time, I'm afraid of becoming a generic drummer or a chameleon. They can say, "Hey, play like Ringo on this song and play like Stewart Copeland on the next." And then it's, "Gosh, when do I get to play like Josh Freese?"

It's a great opportunity and it's fun to play with a lot of different people, but at the end of the day, I would like to have my own band and concentrate on that. I've done it before, and it's hard, but I'm still plugging away at that. One thing I have to remember is that even though I get bummed out about not wanting to be a studio musician for the rest of my life, being able to play with people I respect has been incredible. But eventually I would like to make a living making my *own* records and not have to tour a whole lot, so that when I do shows, it's a lot more of an exciting event.

I hope I can make my own records. As much as I love pop music, I love noise, too—sonic pieces of art. I like beautiful songs as well as the ugliest of ugly noises. I think there's a beauty to both, and I want to do both kinds of things. I don't need to be huge and famous; I would rather be popular with a smaller, maybe more eccentric crowd who will allow me to do that.

But I have been very fortunate. God, to make a living playing drums without being in a popular band is amazing. It can be hard to make a living playing music, and I've been having a lot of fun and keeping really busy. I never take that for granted.



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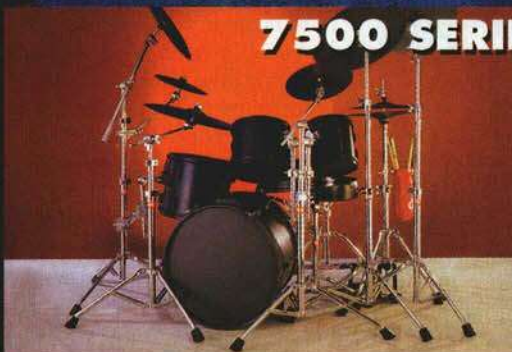
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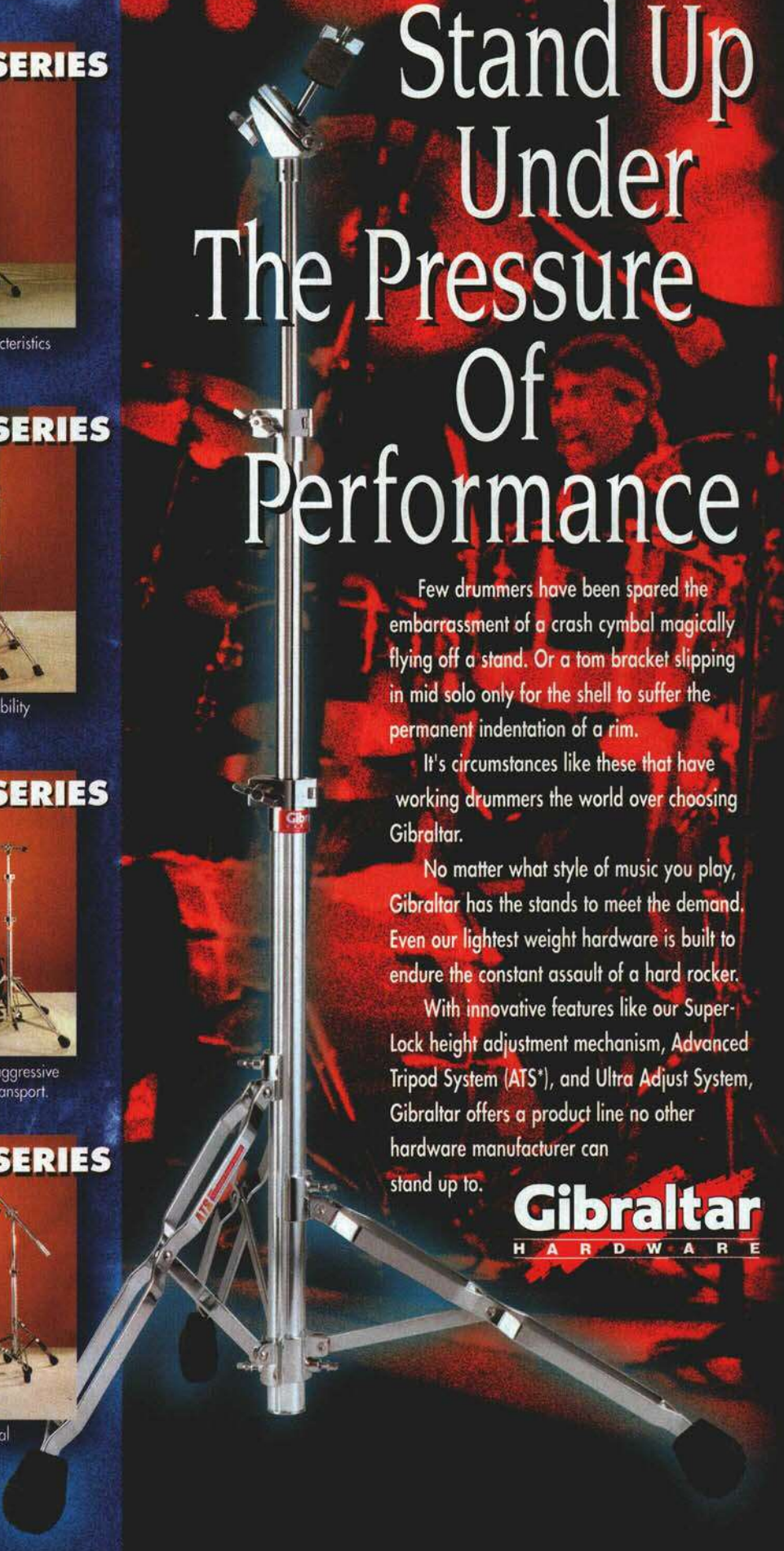
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Vic Stevens

Vic Stevens is an eleven-year veteran of the Atlantic City music scene, where he has been called upon to back artists in a wide variety of musical styles. Fortunately for Vic, performing in the casinos "pays the mortgage" while allowing him the financial freedom to explore other musical projects. These have included recordings with R&B artist Miles Jaye (*Irresistible*), rock/fusion group Bon (*Full Circle Coming Home* and *To The Bone*), eclectic project Gongzilla (*Suffer*), and a solo CD titled *Where To Now?* on LoLo Records. A recording by acoustic jazz trio Threshold is slated for release soon.



With influences from Jack DeJohnette, Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Gadd, and Peter Erskine, and study with Kenwood Dennard, Lenny White, Barry Altschul, Frankie Malabe, and Roberto Petaccia, the thirty-six-year-old Stevens finds music constantly fulfilling. "To me," he says, "being creative is what it's all about—always striving for new goals and ideas." Vic generally records on a Yamaha *Maple Custom* kit with Zildjian, Paiste, and Sabian cymbals; his live playing is done on a Sonor *Signature* series kit with Sabian *Jack DeJohnette* cymbals. Says Vic, "I find it very important to have access to diverse sound sources—just from a creative perspective."

Vic is also a partner in an Atlantic City recording studio, which allows him to see aspects of music and production from both sides of the glass. "Music has made me aware of how much there is to learn," Vic concludes, "and that each day can really be a stepping stone."

Alex Arellano Malca

Alex Arellano Malca switched from piano to drums around the age of fourteen, and never looked back. After a brief series of private lessons, Alex took it upon himself to learn on his own. A few years later he founded Maniak, a heavy metal band that recorded for Peerless Records. Ultimately realizing that there is always more to learn, he attended P.I.T. in Los Angeles, and took drum lessons from L.A. drummers Mark Zonder (Fates Warning) and Mark Craney (Jethro Tull/Jean-Luc Ponty) at the same time.

Alex stressed versatility in his career, recording jingles and I.D. spots for radio stations, performing as the pit drummer for a production of *Once On This Island*, and playing on *Jazz Nights* at the Josephine theater in his home town of



San Antonio, Texas.

Now thirty-one, Alex is currently drumming for Power Of Omens, a progressive rock group that he co-founded. With the influence of such players as Mark Zonder, Mark Craney, Chad Wackerman, Dave Weckl, Terry Bozzio, and Rod Morgenstein, he feels that Power Of Omens is the perfect vessel for expression and constant improvement.

Alex's playing on the group's self-produced cassette amply displays both the blistering technique and innovative musical approach required by his chosen genre.

Alex plays a customized Ludwig drumkit, DW pedals, and cymbals from all the major brands. His goal is specific: to make Power Of Omens a success.

Adam Sivitz

Seventeen-year-old Adam Sivitz currently plays with Puppetshow, an alternative band based in Pittsburgh. Besides gigging regularly around the city, the band produced a recording project called *Paint By Numbers* in 1995. Popular response led to a follow-up project currently in the works. The band also tours in West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, and the Boston area.

Adam has also been involved with the creation of the soundtrack for an original rock opera called *The Shaman*. "The music has a Led Zeppelin feel," says Adam, "and it allows me to play various polyrhythmic feels that I have a lot of fun with."

Adam's drumming has

been shaped by such influences as Neil Peart, Carter Beauford, Dave Abbruzzese, Tim "Herb"



Alexander, Dennis Chambers, Dave Weckl, Will Kennedy, and Rusted Root drummer Jim Donovan. Exerpts of Adam's playing from *Paint*

By Numbers and *The Shaman* reveal him to be a creative performer who combines a solid feel for groove and rhythm with the imaginative use of varied sound sources.

A Pearl *Export* kit is Adam's regular instrument, fitted with Sabian cymbals and augmented by World Beat percussion, bongos, and congas. "Whether playing the kit or hand percussion," says Adam, "I try to make a live performance unique—to give the audience a 'show' rather than the same thing they hear on a recording. My goals are to continue learning and performing, and to someday see a Puppetshow video on MTV. But more importantly, I want to have fun with the instrument!"

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

should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what

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.



MODERN DRUMMER online

The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine

MODERN DRUMMER online

October 1996 (the October August #2)

Carter Beauford
Is Carter Beauford today's most popular drummer? Like creative ideas, innovative techniques, and killer grooves here's a list of drummers signing up for the Crash Forecast. One thing's for sure, here's a name talking about Don Martino's great technique.

Jim "Son" Sonfeld
Over a dozen million record buyers can't be wrong—Boris D. The Boredom's Jim Sonfeld can lay down a groove that connects with people. Here also know how to write a lot more.

Highlights Of MD's Festival Weekend '96
Eric Gravat, Greg Hahn, Tim Alexander, David Owen, Don Lombardi, Sheila E & Peter Michael Egan, Wallace Rayne, Jr., Honda Michael Wilder. Amazing opening acts and incredible jamming. Dates are coming in from the best MD Festival ever.

Eric Gravat
For those who don't know, Gravat was a groundbreaking fusion drummer in the early '70s with Weather Report. His playing inspired a lot of people. (Tony Braxton knows him as his favorite drummer). So why, in the peak of his power, did Gravat drop out?

Critique
MD Grammy How's your chance to win one of three prizes from among a selection of Fabian's most innovative instruments.

September 1996—now available!

Stephen Perkins From his early work with Jane's Addiction to his current band, From For Pines, Perkins' drumming has always been about playing from the heart.

These Kwan Bruce Collective Lead's young drummer lays down the heaviest of grooves, all the while coming up with some fresh sounds and patterns. Simply put, he's hot.

Zack Dwekko He's by the name of a player who's been compared to Woodi and Coltrane. His recent work with Wayne Krantz shows just how many Zacks it is.

Plus interviews with Jason Finley of the Presidents, Frank Vig of Challenge, Dave Matthews, Rick Allen, Charlie Watts, and the Donkey's Addition Young.

And articles on Playing In Poverty by Mike Portner, The Popcorn Drumming Diet by Bobby South, and a Chad Greeny Rock Check Don't take it!

MODERN DRUMMER online

The Power Of Threes

Technically speaking, all drumming is a combination of just three basic techniques—strikes, taps, and flutters. Of these three techniques, controlling and developing the latter technique is, by far, the most challenging. Bruce examines that one "three on a hand" on the most powerful in developing a drummer's general speed, control, and accuracy. The following five exercises apply the "power of three" to building a drummer's chops.

While working on the following exercises, it's important to imagine the exact sequence of notes for each group of three that you're playing. After the initial firing of energy, use constant effort to push and control the movement of the stick. Focus on the different sequences of the hand (see parallel) and then to use the precise amount of energy necessary to do the work. A constant effort to try to feel and use the same amount of energy that is necessary. Using the same energy to do the work is like trying to move a car or a train or even a car on the gas and the other on the brakes—no way to go! To enhance your energy levels and be prepared to back off and make appropriate adjustments. It's also important to keep your monitor relaxed to feel a sense of control with your sticks. When performing the following exercises, there is no other the same volume. With a strong effort, you'll be amazed at the results.

Practice this exercise as an exercise (from slow to fast) without a metronome.

1

As you work through the prescribed tempo range, maintain a consistent pace when you feel comfortable and relaxed.

2

MODERN DRUMMER online

Carter Beauford

Carter Beauford Of The Dave Matthews Band
Mark L. Linn
by William F. Miller

This interview was excerpted from our October 1996 issue.

The week continues to be packed. Get in the fun, learning the session, then Beauford's musical philosophy emerged, then passed it to Tony and Eric. Beauford named the team and gave them the "Shit" up, was that, followed by "Vince, who was left with it. Dave looked at a cheap point, and was Dave in guiding the way.

But who will be the next guy, the player who will inspire me? Beauford's Carter Beauford is a pretty good bet.

Playing Beauford's name (pronounced be-foord) just on that for really isn't too much of a stretch. Check out his playing with the genre-changing Dave Matthews Band—creative ideas combined with tremendous technique, over-the-top feeling associated with pop-rock control, all rolled up in the groove of funk. It's simply an immense contribution that has drummers smiling as they read the words.

Carter's landmark victory in the Up In Crime category of this year's MD Reader Poll, along with an abundance of reader mail, has made an immediate career story from behind-the-scenes (read: music). Further demonstrating his dominance, Drummer.com is listing his gig, and with good reason. Why? Carter's it's because he's expanding the horizons of drumming in a pop context. Drummers have never been able, and should be, to play drums with such a wide range of styles.

The Dave Matthews Band's rise to prominence—and Carter Beauford's—began six years ago in Charlottesville, Virginia. It was a fairly slow climb, as the session—Beauford, along with Dave Matthews on vocals and acoustic guitar, Brad Leland on bass, Boyd Tinsley on violin, and Lenny Moore on sax—battled hard to make their disparate musical backgrounds together funk, pop, bluegrass, jazz, country, and just about all that's in there. Beauford's "moments" with Beauford at an in-between foundation, the Matthews Band gave him a solid, eye-opening quarter that eventually would culminate in a band.

In 1993 the band released a live disc called *Remember Two Things*, and once it began to sell in the thousands, the major label came knocking. RCA signed the band and put them in the studio with veteran producer Steve Lillywhite, at the time to record *Under the Table and Drumming*. That album was released in September of 1994, and on the strength of several singles, including the monster hit "Two Weeks Time," sold more than three million copies. And apparently quite a few of them were million-dollar deals that they saw into the hands of drummers, because the Beauford band exploded at that point.

As you might expect, Carter Beauford didn't just start playing. He's proud to say he's been at it for nearly three years! Carter actually walked up some doors and ended before passing the Matthews Band. In fact, drummer was coming out of the Richmond, Virginia area was years ago about some heavy set who was playing in a fusion band called *Staves*. The gig led to other work for Beauford, including a Washington, D.C.-based session done for the RCT network but just got

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FUNK DRUMMING FOREFATHERS

Turn on any radio station these days, and it won't be long before you hear a classic, old-school funk groove blasting back at you, slamming you over the head with its neck-bobbing appeal.

Whether its the sample of Parliament-Funkadelic that drives Dr. Dre's massive rap hit "Let Me Ride," or the original versions of classic funk hits like "Love Rollercoaster," "Skin Tight," and "Flirt" played to death on specialty radio programs, it's obvious that the timeless appeal of funkified R&B has come back around to popular consciousness.

Still, many of the drummers who made this music live and breathe have gone unnoticed and unheralded, often buried within groups boasting memberships in the double digits. (George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic crew once featured over twenty people.)

Many of the players who created these now-classic rhythms have been lost to the passage of time and changing musical tastes. "Some people thought we were dead," chuckles James "Diamond" Williams, drummer and co-leader of landmark funketeers the Ohio Players. "You would be sur-

prised at the questions people ask you, just because you haven't been in front of them on stage for a while."

As it turns out, the resurgent interest in old-school funk has brought new energy to the careers of several legendary players, back on concert stages and in recording studios as the increased attention turns into better touring opportunities and record deals.

To get to the bottom of the funk yesterday and today, we asked "Diamond" Williams, P-Funk drummer Jerome "Bigfoot" Brailey, the Time sticksman Jellybean Johnson, and Cameo's Larry Blackmen to reflect on their years in the business and techniques for re-creating the legendary grooves that influenced a generation of funk players.

let the

BAD MEN

speak

JEROME
 "BIGFOOT"
 BRAILEY—
 PARLIAMENT—
 FUNKADELIC

Some might say it was a coincidence that George Clinton's Parliament-Funkadelic crew didn't notch a real hit until Jerome Brailey jumped aboard the Mothership in 1975. But one listen to the supple groove powering "Give Up The Funk (Tear The Roof Off The Sucker)" and the sinewy feel that turns "Mothership Connection" into the kind of workout rappers could make a million-selling hit twenty years later, and the answer is clear.

For his part, Brailey says his approach to creating drum parts for the P-Funk mob was simple and straightforward. "I brought a whole other style to them—sorta like Tiki's [Brailey had replaced founding Parliament drummer Raymond "Tiki" Fulwood], but turned up a notch. I had more fills and I played for the tunes, instead of just keeping a beat. I tried to create different rhythms for each change in the song, real *parts* for the songs."

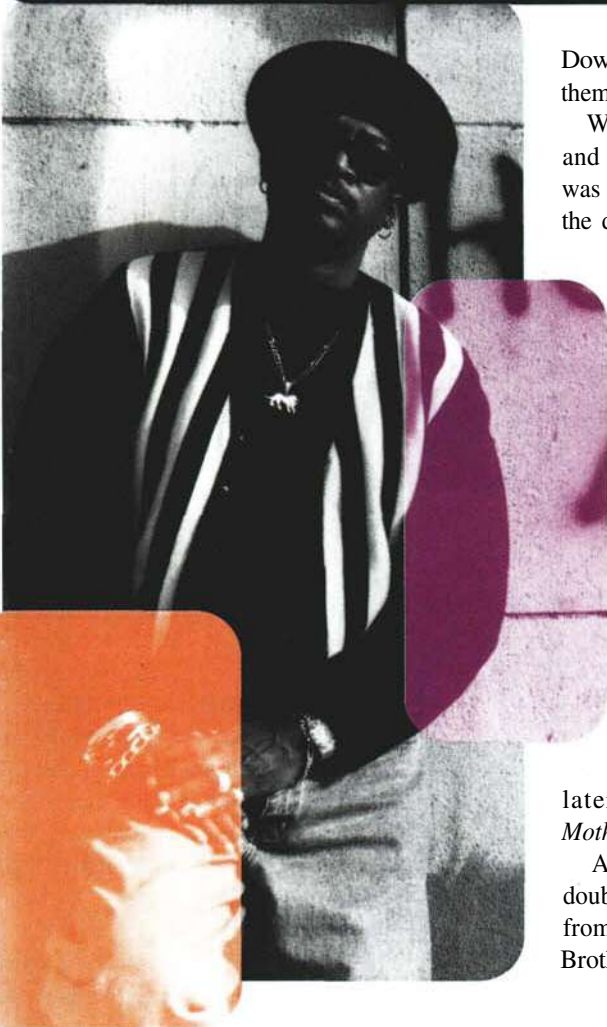
Brailey stepped into the maelstrom of life on the P-Funk Mothership as the band was poised for their biggest success ever. A cult favorite, thanks to classic LPs mixing psychedelic rock and funk like *Cosmic Slop* and *Maggot Brain*, Clinton's stable of funk players (called, at various times, Funkadelic, Parliament, and Bootsy's Rubber Band, among other things) had just crafted a successful single, "Up For The

and 15" toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, 24" bass drums, and a 6 1/2"-deep chrome snare by Slingerland, the kit offered a mighty presence for Parliament's wild, visually-oriented stage shows, while bringing the rock power needed to push the sprawling band.

"For different tunes, I might change the tuning on the kit a little... maybe muffle the bass drums a little to get a nice 'thump,'" he says. "On 'Tear The Roof Off I had a real loose sound with that Slingerland snare drum. Sometimes it was too big for the songs, but it worked well on that one."

Recording with the band for the first time, Brailey admits he held back on his playing for the initial round of songs. "I wanted to play simple, and George would hold me back a lot. I would play something really wack and out there, and he would come over my studio headphones saying,

"A lot of young kids are just starting to learn the funk, but they haven't tasted it yet. That's the kind of people I want to reach—show them what a *real* groove sounds like."



Down Stroke," which established them as a commercial force.

With Tiki drowning in personal and medical problems, Brailey was the perfect man to take over the drum chair, coming off long-standing gigs with the Five Stairsteps and funk/rock popsters the Chambers Brothers. "I had seen Parliament when I was with the Stairsteps," Brailey recalls. "We'd always hung out together, and I knew they wanted to work with me. They actually called me at the hospital while my daughter was being born, to offer me the gig. I never rehearsed—I just flew to Akron, Ohio and played a gig with them. A few weeks later, we were recording *Mothership Connection*."

At first, Brailey used a chrome double bass Ludwig kit left over from his days with the Chambers Brothers. Featuring 12", 13" 14",

"Now, keep it right there... don't move it."

Before long, the group had plunged headlong into Clinton's vision of P-Funk as a multitude of recording projects fed by the same collective of musicians. The same year *Mothership Connection* was released, for example, bassist Bootsy Collins released *Stretching Out In Bootsy's Rubber Band*, Funkadelic released *Hardcore Jollies* and *Tales Of Kidd Funkadelic*, and Parliament released yet another record, *The Clones Of Dr. Funkenstein*.

Particularly after the success of *Mothership Connection*, life with the P-Funk crew became a non-stop ride—careening from live conceit tours to studio work wherever the band felt the impulse—Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles.

The load was especially heavy for P-Funk's core players: Brailey, Collins, guitarist/vocalists Glen Goins and Garry "Doo Wop" Shider, keyboardist Bernie Worrell, guitarist Mike Hampton, and bassist Cordell "Boogie" Masson. These were the guys who always played on Parliament-Funkadelic stuff during that time, with a revolving cast of singers and extra instrumentalists added, depending on who was hanging with the extended family at the time.

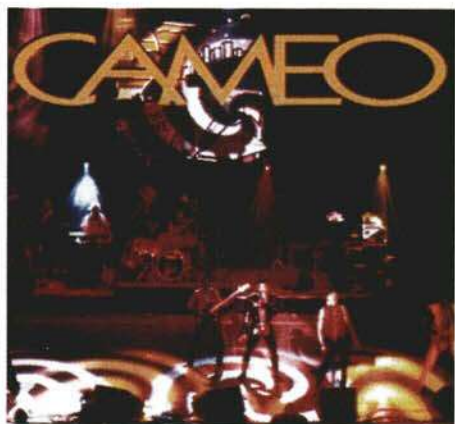
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LARRY BLACKMON CAMEO

As producer, primary songwriter, frontman, and undisputed leader of funk legends Cameo for nearly twenty years, drummer Larry Blackmon has a host of achievements to his credit—not the least impressive of which are million-selling hits such as "Word Up," "She's Strange," and "Flirt."

But ask drummers what they know about Blackmon, and you'll likely hear the same answer time and again: He's a tough taskmaster.

In the years since his decision to step



out from behind the drums in the early '80s to become the band's visual focal point (as well as its behind-the-scenes leader), Blackmon has brought a succession of incredible players in to hold the drum chair for the band's tours—including names like Sonny Emory (now with Earth, Wind & Fire), former *Arsenio Hall Show* drummer Chuck Morris, and touring sticksman extraordinaire Jonathan Moffett (Michael Jackson, Madonna).

In fact, for several years in the mid-'80s, Cameo's drum chair was an important step up for hotshot funk players hoping to establish themselves. Everybody knew that if you could last more than a few gigs with Blackmon breathing down your neck, you were *bad*.

"Any drummer coming through the Cameo organization is going to catch hell. There were times when we would go through drummers like drumsticks," Blackmon says from his Atlanta offices. "Sonny Emory—we were the first act in this category he'd ever toured with. In the beginning, there was a pocket problem. Even Chuck Morris, who is an incredible player, went through a lot of changes. I tell drummers, if

you're not playing in time, then we're going to have a problem. It's good to know all these different rolls and stuff, but if you're playing funk, who cares what roll you just did? I'm just trying to do a show without having to wave my hand behind me to catch the tempo up."

Ask Blackmon to name the best drummer Cameo ever had—besides himself, of course—and his answer comes quickly: "Jonathan Moffett. We felt privileged to have him. He wanted to play with Cameo because of the music. He was expensive... and even while he was here, there were moments. But Johnny was about the best drummer we ever had."

Even if he hadn't wound up leading Cameo, Blackmon would know a lot about the funk. Born and raised in New York City, he grew up a stone's throw from the world-famous Apollo Theater in Harlem, sneaking down to that venue whenever he could to catch shows by luminaries like King Curtis, Sam Cooke, James Brown, and P-Funk master George Clinton's very first group, the Parliaments.

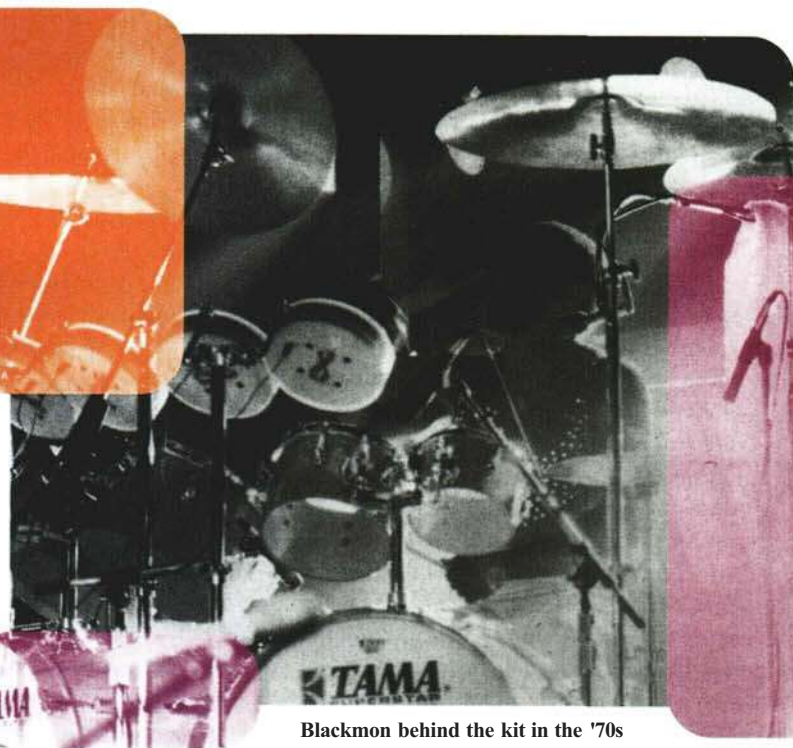
"A lot of younger cats, they forget about living it," Blackmon adds. "Everybody's so quick to want notoriety, but they need to serve the music. I became a professional at a very early age, and my experiences at the Apollo taught me all I needed to know."

Starting off playing in a drum & bugle corps in Harlem while in the seventh grade, Blackmon quickly moved into the school orchestra, where he assembled a makeshift kit from pieces of the orchestra's percussion section. By eighth grade, he had his first real band together, and by his senior year of high school, he'd played on his first recording date—a song called "You And I Have An Understanding" by Black Ivory.

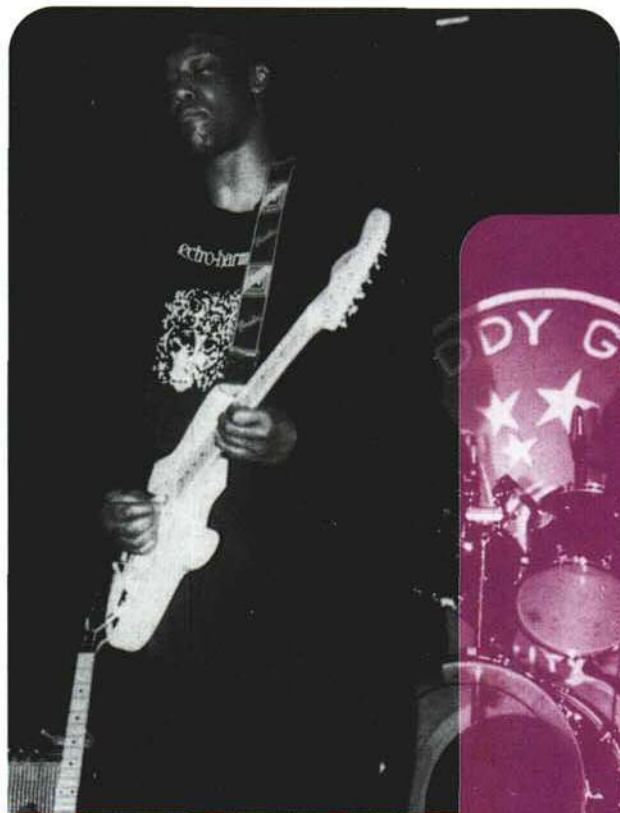
"I've always been known for my pocket," Blackmon says. "I hear a lot of drummers play a lot of things, but I rarely hear drummers keep time. To me, if you're not keeping time you're not playing music. I don't care how great your chops might be—any music you play has got to be in time."

And what's Blackmon's idea of
continued on page 106

"Any drummer coming through the Cameo organization is going to catch hell. There were times when we would go through drummers like drumsticks."



Blackmon behind the kit in the '70s



JELLYBEAN JOHNSON— THE TIME

It might sound strange now, considering that he and lead singer Morris Day are the only remaining original members of legendary Prince-influenced funksters the Time. But drummer Jellybean Johnson almost didn't get the most prestigious gig of his career.

Formed in 1981 when Prince got the idea of melding Minneapolis's two most successful funk bands, Grand Central and Flyte Time, the Time was originally supposed to feature the diminutive guitarist's friend Morris Day on drums and singer Alexander O'Neal as frontman.

Johnson, who was playing drums with Flyte Time then, was supposed to join a fledgling group from Illinois called Champaigne. (They later had a Top-5 R&B hit in England with "How 'Bout Us.")

"They had this big meeting with Prince

and everybody who was supposed to be the Time, and Alex started asking for all kinds of things—basically just showing his big ego," Johnson says. "When they got back from the meeting, Morris was singing and I was playing drums—which was fine with me. The Time had all the elements I really liked—screaming guitars and lots of funk flavor."

Over the next few years, the Time would come to be known as Minneapolis's hottest funk band. Ostensibly the repository for Prince-written tunes that were too funky for his own albums, the band possessed a party-hearty image

In fact, one of the Time's most famous drum spotlights—the percolating, involved interplay between hi-hat and snare drum that colors "777-9311"—wasn't played by a human at all. "I got a lot of fame for '777-9311,' but that was actually a Dave Garibaldi lick programmed into one of those early Linn drum machines," Johnson says. "A lot of people thought I played it, but it's damn near impossible to do that live. In concert, we're more of a power rock band, so I get a facsimile of it going. It would take somebody like Dennis Chambers to play something like that for real."

According to Johnson, the band's lack of notoriety was a calculated decision by Prince, who didn't want anyone else in the industry knowing how he put together sounds or built records.

"Prince didn't want people to know us; he called it giving away his sound," Johnson says. "It wouldn't have been so bad if we hadn't been great players ourselves. All the original Time members could *play*, but the band was making us famous, so we didn't want to mess that up by complaining. After a while we didn't care, we just wanted to make sure that when we played live, people knew we

"Prince didn't want people to know us; he called it giving away his sound. It wouldn't have been so bad if we hadn't been great players. The original Time members could *play*."

and skin-tight musicianship that brought them to the forefront of '80s-era R&B acts.

As in every funk band, the drums played an integral part in the Time's sound, providing the accents and propulsive power that defined the group's hits—from the intricate hi-hat work on "777-9311," to the involved arrangements and complex parts throughout "The Walk."

But Johnson didn't get to play drums on a Time album until the group's third record, 1984's *Ice Cream Castle*. Before then, for 1981's *The Time* and 1982's *What Time Is It?*, the group's expansive sound was created by two people: Morris Day, who sang lead and backing vocals, and Prince, who did everything else.

weren't a joke."

When Johnson first got the Time gig, he was playing an eight-piece, orange Rogers kit with about nine cymbals and a set of *Syndrum* electronic drum pads. Before long, the band's grueling work schedule had trashed that set, so Day purchased a Pearl kit with 10", 12", 13", 14", 16", and 18" power toms, a 24" bass drum, and a 6x14 snare drum.

"Morris has a knack for finding great snare drums," Jellybean adds. "He brought me an 8x14 Premier snare that was amazing. And a shop called Strings And Things in Memphis made another 8x14 drum we used that had a real whipcrack sound."

Johnson now uses Zildjian cymbals almost exclusively, including a 22" ride,

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JAMES "DIAMOND" WILLIAMS— THE OHIO PLAYERS



"My interpretation of funk is not about what you play, but the space you leave open—that's where the funk lies."

When young players ask Ohio Players drummer James "Diamond" Williams how to approach a funk gig, he has a simple answer for them. "My interpretation of funk is not about what you play, but the space you leave open—that's where the funk lies. Even if you're playing a straight part, what you put on the snare to leave that syncopated space open—that's funk.

In other words, it's not what you play, it's what you leave out."

In more than twenty years behind the kit, powering the Midwest band's powerful funk jams, Williams has learned a little about what makes a good groove tick. A drummer since age nine, Williams put time in at Dayton, Ohio's all-city orchestra, and attended Kentucky State University on a music scholarship. After finishing his studies at the University of Dayton, James began his search for a steady, prestigious gig. That search ended when he joined the Ohio Players as a substitute for bandleader Greg Webster, back when the group was called Greg Webster & the Ohio Untouchables.

When he was growing up, Williams' parents couldn't afford to give him a whole kit at once, but they did manage to introduce him to the drumset—one piece at a time. "I think I had a greater appreciation of it because of that. I started with a bass drum, shell tom, and hi-hat. Next Christmas, I might get a floor tom and another cymbal. So when I finally got a kit together, I was ready to play."

Already known as a powerhouse club band, the Untouchables were touring regionally and on the verge of some major success—achievements Williams knew he wanted to be a part of. "Greg Webster was the leader of that band, but he never got back in after I played that gig," Williams says, laughing a little. "That's how hungry I was. Besides, they were the best band in town at the time. The group's name had the connotation of being like Superfly and Shaft, but our goal was to be the best musicians in Ohio."

With three records out already, the band was finishing an association with

Westbound Records that would produce their first real hit, "Funky Worm." Williams found himself struggling to catch up with much older and experienced players. "Adrenaline is a funny thing," he says. "There's such a thing as being too prepared. I had to slow down and not play everything I knew in the first five minutes. You've got to have different levels of dynamics. I wanted my sounds to be almost melodic, playing toms in sync with runs going up and down the scale."

Using a five-piece Ludwig kit, Williams was forced to learn more about drum tuning and muffling. "I was using a metal snare that I would ratchet up real tight," he says. "We put a little padding on the head—just enough to cut the ring, really. Back then, the toms had bottom and ring—something they lost in the mid-'70s. All the heads were pretty loose, and I had about four cymbals."

On the road, Williams' roommate was keyboardist Walter "Junie" Morrison. Junie, who would later join Parliament-Funkadelic, was an early mentor, and he helped the drummer figure out what he would play on his first recording experience with the band, 1974's *Ecstasy*.

"We practiced all the time, five days a week, so it was a constant evolution," he says. "In the studio we'd take maybe two or three hours to get drum sounds, and they wouldn't change much from song to song. You wind up focusing on stuff that won't disturb the groove: Your bass drum has to sync to the bass guitar, and you make sure when you hit the horn accents that you don't lose the people who are dancing."

Over the next three years, the band would enjoy its greatest success, cranking out classic funk jams like "Love Rollercoaster," "Fire," "Sweet Sticky Thing," and "Skin Tight." Their active sound combined kinetic, polyrhythmic horn charts with taught, involved grooves and nasally vocals courtesy of guitarist Leroy "Sugar" Bonner.

Recorded mostly in Chicago, those songs all featured the same five-piece Sonor kit that belonged to the studio, according to Williams. "The engineer was an ex-drummer, and he would spend hours messing around with the drum sounds. He had an idea for a fat snare drum sound where he would loosen the head until it almost had ripples in it. You couldn't play

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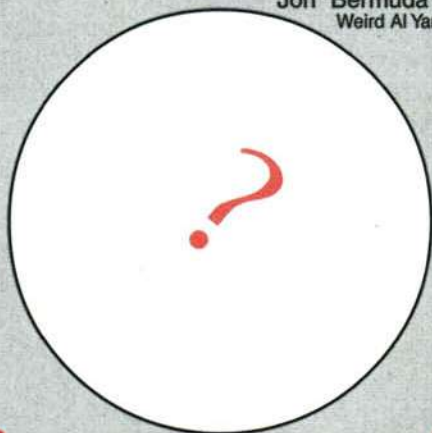


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"We never rehearsed in the studio," the drummer says. "We would just be jamming along and it would end up on tape. On 'Tear The Roof Off,' me and Bootsy just started up a groove. I was thinking of David Bowie's 'Fame,' which had just come out around then, so I played kind of a march. With Funkadelic, I would think more about rock kind of playing, while on Parliament's stuff I would play funky backbeats."

For Brailey, much of what he played with P-Funk was chosen instinctively—the sum of time spent working the chitlin' circuit with the Five Stairsteps and opening for artists like Joe Cocker and the Rolling Stones with the Chambers Brothers. "It's more of a feeling than a technique," Brailey suggests. "The main thing is the time. The foot, the snare, and the hi-hat—you have to lock into that. It's not about how many notes you can put into a bar. You can do all the jazzy stuff in the world, but just make sure you come back to that foot on 1 and the snare on 2. You've got to get that basic rhythm underneath that's really funky."

And even though Brailey often found himself playing with ten, twelve, or fifteen other musicians, he never felt limited or hemmed in by Parliament-Funkadelic's sprawling lineups. "It was a lot of guys...three guitar players, two bass players...the original lineup was eleven of us," Brailey recalls. "I guess I was the only one who could lay down the funk in the studio

and do it live, too. That's what I was there for. I just played my style—everybody did that. That's what was unique about us. Me and Bernie would trade off licks, or I'd do something crazy that the horns would pick up on. Every night it was a different set. Sometimes when we walked on stage, people would laugh, because we looked so wild. But once we got that groove going, they knew we were for real."

Though it sounds like a backbreaking workload—between 1975 and 1978, Parliament-Funkadelic and Bootsy released about thirteen albums—it was a fun ride for Brailey, who enjoyed the group's circus atmosphere of partying and constant creativity. "When we got really rolling, we would work like three hundred days a year—and if you were off for a few days, you'd miss it. We had the whole P-Funk family along, with carloads of girls following us. I would wear these nine-inch platforms all the time—even behind the drums I looked the part. We'd get to a truck stop and wouldn't be able to sit at the tables, because our legs were pushed up so high."

Playing-wise, things were also jelling with P-Funk. "Once I got in tune with what they were doing, I could really put the pocket on things," Brailey says. "On every project I tried something different. On *Hardcore Jollies* I even played some timpani, but they faded out the song before that part. I had a regular 20" crash cymbal, but I would hit it hard to bring out the tones of it. And those pickup phrases I played on stuff like 'One Nation (Under A

Groove)'...that was something I picked up from listening to old Motown records like 'Ain't Too Proud To Beg' and stuff like that."

Jumping from studio to studio, Brailey rarely used the same drumkit twice. But he had to have at least one piece of equipment as a constant on every drumkit he played: a Ludwig *Speed King* bass drum pedal. "I had to have a flexible pedal—something I could tension real loosely," he says. "You'd go into the studio, and they'd have these real tight kick pedals; you'd have to lift your whole foot up to do a double stroke. I'd like it loose, so the response would be quick and easy. And I had to have heavy-duty cymbal stands, because I always remembered one session where I hit the cymbal so hard it flew off the stand."

Still, it was inevitable that the party would come to an end, and for Brailey, it was disputes over songwriting credits and salary payments that wound up convincing him to leave the Mothership in 1978. "[Collins' trademark hit] 'Munchies For Your Love'—I should have gotten writing credit for that," the drummer says. "Me and Shider came up with the groove and the arrangement for that in a hotel room and recorded it the next day. 'If You Got Funk, You Got Style' was something where we were just hooking up a groove and then George recorded it. Next thing we knew, it was on an album."

The last straw came right before a show in Pittsburgh in 1978, when Brailey and Goins refused to go on stage if they didn't

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get paid back money owed. "People would say, 'Oh, I can't pay you, but I'll give you drags instead—which wasn't cool, because I had a family and needed the money. Or George would say, 'I'll give you a car,' and you'd come to find out it was only leased for like three months, and then the company would take it back. We knew the records were selling, and we had to get paid. So George put me on probation and brought in all these different drummers, which made the feel of the live gigs go up and down."

Brailey eventually left—ironically, just as the single "One Nation..." was starting to take off—and formed the band Quasar with Goins, and then a group called Mutiny after Goins died of Hodgkin's disease. But the disco boom was slowly killing the funk groups that had brought

Brailey his bread and butter for so long, and after two albums with CBS Records, Mutiny was history.

The next few years would be transitional ones for Brailey, who spent time in Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Richmond, Virginia. Around 1989, he heard Collins had produced some groundbreaking work with Material bassist/producer Bill Laswell, and that the pair were looking to get him involved.

That connection led to work with Japanese rocker Solar, longtime Laswell guitarist Buckethead, and Eurythmics guru Dave Stewart. "Bootsy told me Stewart had been listening to old Funkadelic records, and he wanted me to get back to the old school with my playing. Every tune I played with him, he would record four tracks: I'd play a simple track, a pass with

some fills, and a few tracks that were free-form. Dave had all kinds of money to spend."

These days, the forty-three-year-old drummer is back living in his native Virginia, doing the occasional studio session and working to capitalize on a new Mutiny record, *Aftershock 2005*, released last year by Rykodisc. Equipment-wise, he splits time between a set of Yamaha *Recording Custom* drums, a Pearl *MLX* kit, and a set of Tama *Rockstar* drums bought years ago.

"Now a lot of young kids are just starting to learn the funk," Brailey says. "They're just starting to discover George, but they haven't even tasted the funk yet. That's the kind of people I want to reach—show them what a *real* groove sounds like." •

Larry Blackmon
continued from page 100

good time? "It's about perception—depth of field. You can hit that 2 and 4 on top of the beat, in the middle, or behind it. When you're working the bottom of the beat, that's when you get to the nastier stage. Especially in today's music, that bottom-end groove has got to be there. You can take it apart all you want; you play the pocket, and you're playing the funk."

Blackmon studied at the prestigious Juilliard School of Music before holding the drum chair in a succession of funk bands, including East Coast, Concrete Wall, and the New York City Players—

which eventually became Cameo.

Starting as an Earth, Wind & Fire-influenced act, Cameo featured a lineup of about eight players, with Blackmon conducting the proceedings from behind a huge, double bass Tama drumkit with mounted toms placed all around, like many rock players of the time.

The drum parts, however, were pure Cameo—direct and to the point, incorporating the rock-steady rhythm of disco, even as its popularity threatened the band's livelihood.

"Back then, I recorded a lot of the stuff live," Blackmon says. "On a tune like

'Shake Your Pants,' for example, I only overdubbed a second hi-hat part. We enjoyed doing basic tracks with everybody playing for feel. Even though my primary concern when recording drums was to get the best sound possible out of them, you really needed everybody playing together for that."

Dubbed the group's de facto producer when the record company failed to send one over for their first major-label recording sessions in 1976, Blackmon quickly learned a few tricks for spicing up the group's drum sounds in the studio. "I might pull out an old equalizer or throw an

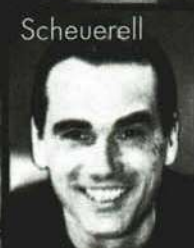
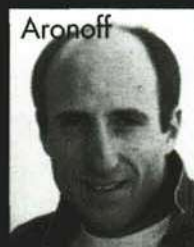
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Aphex Aural Exciter on the track," he says, "whatever we could create that was a little different—maybe in the style of the tune, but with a new twist on it."

Buoyed by R&B hits like "I Just Want To Be" and "Freaky Dancin'," Cameo became a major touring act by 1980, with a concert production featuring more than forty tons of stage gear and sound and lighting equipment. But the enormity of the show became a financial burden that prompted the group to pare down its numbers from eleven members to five in 1982.

At the same time, new wave and synth-rock sounds were making an impact on Blackmon, who brought spacey keyboard sounds, electronic drums, and a freaky, punk-edged attitude to the band's two early-'80s albums, *Alligator Woman* and *She's Strange*. Eventually, the signature bass drum part on "She's Strange" became a hallmark part for aspiring funk drummers to learn. In garage jams around the country, until you could play *that* part, you weren't considered a player.

"That's the first thing that happened: I started using more electronic drums," Blackmon explains. "I recorded 'She's

Strange' with a Simmons SDS-5. Basically, I just wanted to hear what they would sound like in a funk context. We moved on to sequencing drum parts on the *Single Life* record. Eventually I got tired of sequencing drums, so I rigged a kit to trigger the sounds I was hearing on the machines. Then all I needed in the studio was a click track. I figured, why would I want to type all the time, when I could just play? There are some songs where you want that sequencer to keep the drums from getting in the way; on other songs, you need the nuances a live player can produce."

As much as "She's Strange" had an impact on funk drummers, it was the band's breakthrough hit "Word Up" that caught the world's ear in 1986. Powered by a burst of white noise sculpted to sound like a snare drum—with flange and a vocal sample mixed in midway through the tune—the song's drum sounds also pointed to a new direction in R&B drum sequencing, setting a standard imitated by many in the genre.

"That snare sound is almost commonplace now," Blackmon says. "I created that sound at Quadraphonic Studios in New

York, in a stairwell. We stretched studio microphones about twenty feet into the fire staircase—total concrete. I had two or three guys clapping, and we came up with that snare sound."

Perhaps it's because of his many years as a producer and songwriter, but Blackmon finds it tough to talk about Cameo's tunes purely in terms of their drum parts. Ask about how he came up with ultra-funky grooves like "She's Mine" and "Pretty Girls"—two tunes that showcase Blackmon's penchant for programming neck-bobbing drum grooves—and he'll talk in generalities.

Same with "Soul Tightened," an inspired, horn-fed mid-tempo tune from Cameo's 1987 *Machismo* record. A loose, ambling feel powered by Blackmon in a rare (by then) appearance behind an acoustic kit, the song presents a powerful example of what can be accomplished with a little feel and some quality players. Still, Blackmon insists he can't even remember what drums he played on that song.

"I love precision," he says of the song, which revolves around combined drum and horn accents. "If something's going to be



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executed, I really want to know where it's going. While recording that, I wanted to make everybody play everything right on point. I wanted to be right down deep in whatever that is, as far as it could go."

Unfortunately, as rap and new jack swing began to take over the R&B marketplace, Cameo's unique brand of weird funk began to lose its commercial appeal. Later albums, like 1990's *Real Men Wear Black* and 1992's *Emotional Violence*, fell far short of the heights *Word Up* had established in the marketplace.

These days, the band has focused on

touring and have released their first-ever live album on Interscope Records while working hard to find a new record company for their original compositions.

And Blackmon has rare words of praise for the group's latest live drummer, Johnny Blackwell. "His father was a musician who played in our early shows, so he learned how to play drums by listening to Cameo. There will be times when he comes out with something during rehearsals, and I'll say, 'What was *that*?' Before him, we had a guy who could play every flamadiddle in the world, but had no pocket. Johnny's

lasted the longest of any drummer besides Jonathan Moffett—and he'll have the gig for as long as he wants it."

For the first time in a long time, Blackmon's also performing behind the kit during the live show—reprising his old role during a three-song medley of tunes from the band's '70s-era repertoire. "I always tell the guys, 'This is the best part of the show for me,'" Blackmon says. "I don't know about wanting more popularity or more success...this is what I am. I won't settle, and I won't conform. I just want to do a good job." •

Jellybean Johnson
continued from page 101

17" and 19" Rock crashes, an 18" *China Boy*, a 10" splash, and 14" hi-hats—mostly with *Brilliant* finishes. "For me, when I go to the Zildjian factory and bang away, it doesn't do me much good. I have to hear it with the band. You really don't know what a cymbal sounds like until you're fighting the Oberheims [keyboards] and Marshalls [guitar amplifiers]. In earlier years, I broke a lot more cymbals, too. The rock cymbals are so thick, they don't crack as much."

Self-taught since quitting lessons at age

thirteen, Johnson is a right-handed drummer who sits behind a kit set up to accommodate a left-handed player, with the hi-hat and snare placed on the right side of the drumset instead of the left. "That's just how I learned," the drummer says. "Morris is left-handed, and I used to practice a lot with him, so I don't know if that had anything to do with it. It just feels very natural. That's how I taught myself to play."

Inspired by legendary R&B guitarist / drummer Ernie Isley, Johnson picked up the six-string at age fifteen—a move he

says has helped increase his abilities behind the drumkit. "I see so many cats who just don't play together," he says. "The bass player's fighting against the drummer, and the guitar player's lost both of them. The drummer needs to be in control—you need to control the vibe. Playing guitar helps me understand what the other players go through. Besides, if your bass player and drummer aren't happening, it doesn't matter how good everyone else is; it will still sound bad."

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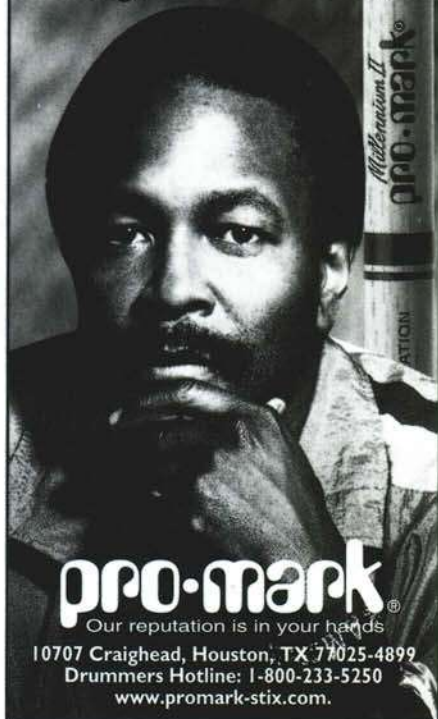
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meant enduring marathon practice sessions from eight to ten hours long. This allowed the band to coordinate its intricate dance steps and onstage buffoonery—Day would often preen in front of a mirror while bandmembers moved together in unison—while getting tighter as a unit.

"I made sure I played my parts and kept them going—even through the accents," Johnson says. "All of our dance steps were formed around certain moves and musical accents. It's essential that you keep the pocket and don't speed up or slow down while hitting those special parts. It's tough enough for the other musicians to play and sing and dance at the same time. I had to keep the beats steady and sinister for them."

Johnson learned these concepts as a fourteen-year-old neophyte in Minneapolis, joining up with Flyte Time barely a year after he had first started playing. Back then, the group was a cover band, playing all of the hits by artists like the Ohio Players and Cameo. Later they moved to originals, led by vocalist Cynthia Johnson, who would later become singer for '80s-era one-hit wonders Lipps, Inc. (Their only success was the single "Funkytown.") Demoralized by her departure in 1978, and watching as former rival Prince heated up the charts with his major-label debut album, they were in the perfect frame of mind when he offered to assemble the Time.

Even then, Johnson would get together with Day to play together—working out drum licks and playing ideas, drummer to drummer. "Morris's drumming style is like a cross between David Garibaldi and Michael Clark," the drummer adds. "I'm more powerful—I liked all the rock guys like Tommy Aldridge and Simon Phillips. It's about having soul and playing from the heart. All the guys I liked played from the heart."

Ironically, many of the Time's most famous members—including Janet Jackson producers James "Jimmy Jam" Harris III and Terry Lewis—were out of the band by the time Prince allowed the group to appear on its own recordings, as well as on many songs from his breakthrough film, *Purple Rain*.

"With Prince," Johnson says, "you just go into the studio and cut stuff—he'll call out the groove and the tempo and just start

rolling tape. I remember we rehearsed 'The Bird' a bunch of times, because we played the song live at the First Avenue [nightclub] and wound up using it for the movie. I broke a stick right before the last chorus, and I wanted them to use another version because of that. But Prince liked the energy of the live thing."

Though their inspired playing and performances in *Purple Rain* brought the group its greatest fame yet, friction between Day and Prince brought an end to the Time for a while, leading Johnson to try his own hand at producing after a short stint with the Prince-created "elegant funk" band, the Family.

Johnson started out twisting knobs for singers Nona Hendryx and Alexander O'Neal, but his production career took off after working with Janet Jackson—playing lead guitar on her single "You Could Be Mine" ("That probably got me in trouble with Prince," he says, laughing). He also co-wrote and produced Jackson's foray into rock/pop, the guitar-fed workout "Black Cat." "She first played the groove for me on piano," Johnson recalls. "But I was always into a lot of heavy metal, and I thought it would be cool if I could make Janet sound like a heavy metal queen. I knew the rest of them thought I was out of my mind, but I got a friend to play the guitars, I put toms and cymbals on it, Terry played bass and some sparse keyboards, and it was there."

As the projects piled up—including work producing New Edition and Mint Condition—Johnson found himself becoming more familiar with using drum machines to create compelling grooves.

"The key is making sure the notes are quantized right," he adds. "On a song like 'Skillet' (from the Time's 1990 album, *Pandemonium*), we programmed it so a sample of James Brown's "Funky Drummer" was doing the ghost notes in the pattern, while another big snare hit the 2 and 4. New Edition's 'Crucial' was done with an E-mu *SP1200*; I would play the actual parts on an *Octapad*, which might take a while, but after I quantized it, it would be right."

Most recently, Johnson has hit the road with a touring version of the Time featuring Day, keyboardist Monte Moir, valet Jerome Benton, and a host of hired players. Pleasantly surprised by the enthusiastic

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reception the group has received during its on-and-off club tour, Johnson hopes to bring their classic funk sound to the ears of young fans who may never have heard their distinctive grooves in the flesh before. "Kids today don't learn to play...they'd rather scratch or rap. When I was a kid, it was an honor to learn an instrument, but now there are too many distractions. Ain't nobody blessed with that kind of talent—to play. I just want to make sure kids learn to respect that."

James Williams
continued from page 102

press rolls on it, but it was a fat, round tone. The snare was an important factor in the groove, along with fat tones on the toms and the bass drum."

Of course, the rising popularity of disco killed off many funk bands, and it took its toll on the Players as well, who spent five hectic years in the mid-'70s shuttling between tours and recording studios. The pressure to keep up with disco forced Williams to play lots of four-on-the-floor patterns with 16th notes held on the hi-hat—

stuff he didn't find particularly challenging. "They wanted a straight beat that didn't have any flow, which a machine could do a lot better than a person could. For a drummer used to playing syncopated stuff and wanting to go in that direction, it was tough. And the group was developing a stigma that we sounded great on albums, but the live performance was a little short. So it seemed like time for a break."

Williams left the group to form a disco band called Shadow, and spent time producing other acts, writing songs, and working club dates—basically, anything to keep money coming in. Then one night in 1987 he ran into Bonner on the club scene and started talking about putting the Players back together as a touring band. Recently the group released its first-ever live album, *Ol' School*, on Intersound Records. Featuring Williams' incendiary stickwork on involved cuts like "I Wanna Be Free" and "Fire," the album puts to rest any doubts about the group's live sound and the drummer's playing abilities.

For that record and current tours, Williams uses a seven-piece Sonor kit, with 10", 12", and 14" mounted toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, and a 20" bass drum. The snare is a 6 1/2x14 Mapex, and the drummer uses an assortment of Paiste and Zildjian cymbals, including a 10" splash, an 18" ride, a 16" heavy crash, a 20" China, and three 16" crashes. Heads are provided by Attack, with 2-ply coated heads on top of the snare and a 1-ply, clear head on the bottom. "My drum sound is totally different these days," James says. "I tend to tune them a little higher, because the heat that comes off the lights will loosen the heads. I crank the snare up a lot, because I need to be able to play press rolls."

In fact, Williams suggests every would-be funk player spend some time learning all their rudiments. "It gives you a certain amount of dexterity. It's important to be able to play with both hands, and rudiments give you the knowledge to make that happen. You want to make the music you're playing look effortless—that's the whole design."

Williams suggests that drummers turn to the recorded works of past players for an idea of how to fuel the funk correctly. "Get a loud stereo and play the funkier drummers you think are happening, and play with them and around them. Figure out *why* they played what they did. That's the best metronome you could possibly have."



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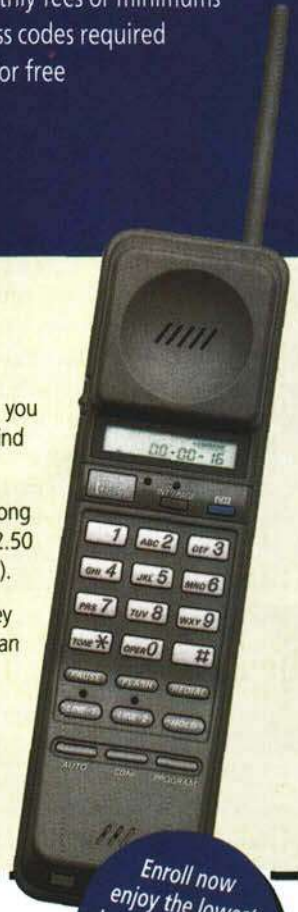


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More Head Games

by Luther Rix

Assume for a moment that you can play smack in the *middle* of the beat, accurately place all the notes, and *still* make it groove. On top of all that, how do you achieve the Utopian goal of keeping rock-solid tempos?

Sometimes people will say that you either have good time or you don't. Don't you believe it. When I started playing drums I was already in music school as a cello major. When I'd try to jam with the jazz players, I'd get some very strange looks. I had no chops, but I'd try all kinds of stuff and not make it. And the time was the first thing to suffer. I had to learn a lot in a hurry, and some of it took longer than it should have. But I was *forced* to think about what I was doing every step of the way.

It's hard starting out late in life, but it does have one advantage. You do *everything* on a very conscious level. It helped me remember my learning processes more than if I'd started as a child. I remember my struggles with time all too well, and they're not over. I've come to believe there are ways of thinking about tempo that are helpful, and other ways that may put you at risk.

Danger Points

One kind of mental alertness you can easily cultivate is to make sure you're mentally *there* at tempo danger points. The first danger point is the count-off itself. A lot of musicians don't really *concentrate* during the count-off. But if you really want to put it where the leader wants it, you should be watching him when he starts snapping his fingers *before* he starts to count. If it's a slow 12/8, I try to feel the triplets in my right hand all through the count. And this still goes if *I'm* counting off. I try to make sure I count the tempo I intend, and make sure that's the tempo I play.

When listening to the count, pay special attention if it's a tempo that's scarier than most, like tempos that are uncomfortably fast or slow—or uncomfortably medium. A lot of us have trouble holding those medium swing tempos between 88 and 100 bpm, which aren't really "up," but not ballads either. It helps to be really *there* right from the beginning.

Going into a new section of a tune is another place where tempos move. As you approach the bridge or the hook, be on the ball and have your "groove awareness" working. The same applies to changes in feel. Any time the groove gets busy, you need to feel the beat as you make the change. If you've been playing an 8th-note feel, and you're changing to a 16th-note feel, have that quarter note



Ehet Roberts

"clicking" in your head throughout the change. The same is true when you're playing a tricky syncopated bass drum pattern and you change to a "four on the floor."

Fills are another danger point since they represent a change in the flow. Triplets are especially dangerous, and quarter-note triplets are even worse. Be aware that busy fills tend to rush, and simple fills tend to drag. But *don't* try to hold back busy fills and push simple ones. Work on it in the practice room. Just go for playing dead-on-the-beat when you're on the gig.

Approach ensemble figures the same as fills. They hold the same perils. And when you get to the end of the tune, don't relax until you've played the ending right in tempo. Don't blow a whole take at a session because you thought you were home free and you relaxed five seconds too soon.

It's around this time when students start asking, "How can I think about all this and still have fun and groove? Don't I ever get to just relax and play?" The answer is tricky. Drummers have to play perfectly, but they also have to be loose and funky. But think about when you learned to drive a car. At first you had to think about every move. You did things over and over, making sure you did them slowly and correctly. After a while, you shift gears at the right time without thinking. You automatically signal before a turn. You can steer, brake, and downshift while eating a doughnut and telling a joke. Your good habits are at a subconscious level and you can just relax and drive. But if you never think about what you're doing, if you don't stay alert, if you don't keep tabs on yourself, your driving gets sloppy and your good habits slip away.

In The Practice Room

I've said that drummers *can* improve their time, but I haven't said much about how. Let me tell you what I do: First, I work on all

the other aspects of my playing. It's hard to concentrate on the time if I'm scuffling with technique or if sightreading is occupying all my attention. Second, I record myself frequently. Then I listen back and find out what I need to work on. Often, just hearing the problem puts me well on the way to the solution. And third, I practice almost everything with a metronome. When I learn something new with the metronome, I know I'm learning it in tempo with the right mental/physical habits. Anything that gives me tempo problems, I practice repeatedly with the metronome. Then I play it without the metronome, record it, and listen back to see how the time was.

It's very important to have the right mental slant when playing with a metronome. It can actually do you harm if you go about it the wrong way. If you let the click be your enemy, you'll fall into some bizarre head games. For example, when you play slow tempos with the click, you tend to rush, and so you develop a habit of holding back on slow tempos. Then you go to the gig and drag all the slow tunes. Another mistake is to *always* practice with the click, which makes you feel like somebody took away your crutch when you have to play without it. Practicing without a metronome makes you keep the time yourself, and reassures you that you really *were* keeping time, and not just kidding yourself.

Also, when you play with the click, make it your friend. This

"If you really want to put it where the leader wants it, you should be watching him when he starts snapping his fingers—*before* he starts to count."

involves more than a shift in attitude. It takes time. When you're practicing those deadly slow jazz tempos, when it seems like an hour between beats, say to yourself, "I love this tempo. Look how much time I've got. Look how relaxed I am, and look how easy it is with my friend the metronome." You don't want to be holding yourself back, fighting the click. You want to literally forget you're playing with it. When that happens, you know you've really gotten into the tempo.

The same applies when practicing a difficult figure, or when trading fours in various tempos. Try to get so *into* the groove that you slam right through those offset quarter-note triplets without a care, with notes falling in their slots around the click as natural as walking.

Finally, with and without the metro-nome, remember to practice different tempos and not get stuck on one too long. Whatever you're working on is going to feel significantly different a couple of notches up or down. So many tempos, so little time!

The goal of all your work on time should be to make your *serious* playing easier, more rewarding, and more successful. On a gig, on a record date, or in the practice room, try to get into a kind of Zen groove awareness. Awake and really there. Relaxed but going with the flow. Constantly aware of the pulse, but not hammering at it doggedly. Under control, but ready to step out and be spontaneous and passionate. Ready to have fun.



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ROLAND

ELECTRONIC PERCUSSION

User-Friendly Innovation

The Roland Corporation, based in Hamamatsu, Japan, is one of the world's largest manufacturers of electronic keyboards, guitar synthesizers, and amplifiers. It's also a respected name in the area of drum machines, and most recently has become a major figure in electronic percussion.

Roland Corporation U.S. is the wholly owned American subsidiary of the Japanese parent company. Located in Los Angeles, California, the American operation handles all U.S. distribution of Roland products, along with assembly and finishing processes on a few products.

The primary spokesman for this story is Steve Fisher, who has been with Roland U.S. for eight years—first as an outside clinician and now as the company's percussion product manager. In this capacity, Steve plays an integral role in the creation and development of Roland percussion gear, and also maintains a busy clinic schedule.

To understand Roland's position in the electronic marketplace today, you have to



Percussion products manager Steve Fisher tests sound patches on a TDE-7K electronic kit.

go back a few years, to a point where electronic drum pad systems were offered by several different companies—including Roland. Owing to the limited technology of the day, none of those pad systems was particularly remarkable. As a result, no single manufacturer held a major position in the market. Various brands and models came and went in the ensuing years, and electronic percussion waxed and waned within the mainstream of the drumming community.

But in the summer of 1993 Roland introduced a prototype of the TDE-7K electronic drumkit. Following its official launch in January of 1994, that kit literally revolutionized the world of electronic percussion. Its impact was so great, in fact, that it may have hastened the demise of at least one major manufacturer, while causing others to scramble in order to generate competitive products. Why was the TDE-7K so much better received than even Roland's previous efforts? Was it just the timing (in terms of the market being ready for it), or was it really

by Rick Van Horn

that much better?

"Before the *TDE-7K* came out," says Steve Fisher, "I always looked at electronic percussion as a musician's alternative. An acoustic piano player can easily benefit from a synthesizer. A guitar player can comfortably switch from an acoustic twelve-string to a *Stratocaster* with a whammy bar. Each electronic instrument was quickly accepted as the counterpart to the primary acoustic instrument. Unfortunately, the first practical electronic percussion instruments were drum machines, which drummers initially saw as a threat. They scared a lot of drummers away from electronics.

"Later, when the early electronic percussion pad kits came out, they weren't really fully developed as total systems, the way a drumkit is fully developed and ready to play. For instance, hi-hat control wasn't realistic. Until our *FD-7* hi-hat controller came out it was very hard to play an electronic hi-hat the way you'd normally manipulate a hi-hat—going smoothly from closed to open, and even doing heel splashes. Also impossible were cymbal chokes: hitting the cymbal pad and then grabbing it to 'choke off that cymbal sound. Those are very natural playing techniques that drummers use but that were never incorporated in the older electronic pieces. Now we can do those things, and they helped make the *TDE-7K* the first *complete* electronic drumset."

"Complete" means more than complete in function; it also means completely self-contained—which is a description that could not be applied to any of the electronic kits of recent memory. Says Steve, "Six or seven years ago the purchasing process electronic drum customers had to go through was a nightmare. 'I'd like to buy these pads and this MIDI interface.' 'Those pads won't work with that MIDI interface, but these other pads will.' 'Okay, then I'll take those pads. Now how about a sound module?' 'Yeah, there is another company to buy that from.' 'Okay, great, now I'm set, right?' 'Well, no. You need cables. You can get them in the pro-audio department....' You had to piece everything together. The *TDE-7K* represents one simple buying decision for the customer. He or she comes in and says, 'I want an electronic drumkit,' and

there it is, in three boxes: hardware, cables, pads, and sound module. They're all made to work with each other. It has simplified the process."

More Than Expected

Ironically, even Roland may not have been aware of quite what they had when they first introduced the *TDE-7K*, because they didn't promote it as a performance instrument. Instead, it was initially touted as something that a drummer could practice on quietly at home. And it served this purpose admirably. However, shortly after its introduction it became extremely popular with drummers performing in clubs and on the wedding and casuals market. It also found a home in churches across the country. "Besides the obvious advantage of total volume control," says Steve, "churches are moving towards more contemporary types of music, which call for a lot of different percussion sounds. But they rarely have timpani, glockenspiel, castanets, triangles, and those sorts of things. With the *TDE-7K* they can even open it up and have two people play on it. They can have someone playing timpani, they can have someone playing castanets, and triangle, and shaker, and snare drum—it's very effective."

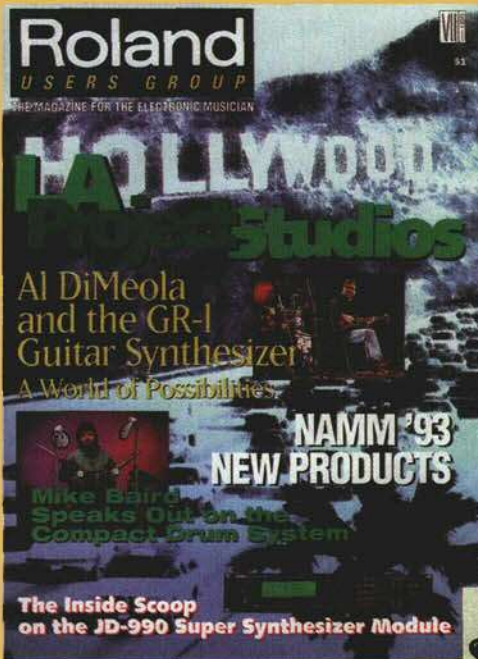
The success of the *TDE-7K* has generated competition from other manufacturers. Does Roland see this as a challenge to their current enviable market position? "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," says Steve, smiling. "Besides, it's good to have competition, as we now do from Alesis, with their *ATK* system, and from Yamaha, with their *DTX*. Several smaller

companies have come and gone over the years, but now these are major electronic companies making a commitment to electronic percussion. It serves to validate the whole product group in the minds of consumers.

"One of the main things that has contributed to Roland's success," Steve continues, "is the fact that we have already been at it for so long. Mr. Takahashi, our founder, is the man who developed the first programmable drum machine. And ever since then Roland has been involved with electronic percussion. Our engineers have just been at it for a long time—and we keep at it."



Musical Instrument Division V.P. and general manager Chris Bristol experiments with one of Roland's *Rhythm Composers*.



Roland's Users Group magazine...

The Thought Process

Creative engineering is something that Roland prides itself on. The company's headquarters in Hamamatsu boasts an engineering staff of over three hundred fifty. According to Steve, "There are application engineers who actually work on designing products, and then there are guys who do pure technology research. Their job is just to explore and expand the boundaries of what might be possible with electronic technology. That's a key area on which Roland's success is based."

But Roland products aren't generated exclusively by those Japanese engineers. "They'll take input from product managers in the U.S., like myself," says Steve. "For many of their products we're their largest market area, so we communicate weekly—sometimes daily. Many of the product managers take frequent trips to Japan for a week or two at a time in order to work with the engineers there. With the TDE-7K we talked many times. We had Japanese engineers over here for the NAMM show, and then we actually went to Japan for some of the developmental processes, like picking sounds and doing patches.

"Visiting the different product teams in Japan is amazing," Steve continues. "When we were working on the drumkit in Japan, I learned that one of Roland's new key-

boards had random panning. I thought that was cool; it produced a neat spatial effect. I could imagine how a shaker part, for example, would sound great that way. So I just wondered aloud whether we could get random panning on the drumkit. One of the engineers went downstairs, then came back about forty-five minutes later, and boom! 'Okay, you have random panning.' It just completely blew me away. So you can see the relationship between us: I know what drummers are looking for; they have the intellectual ability and engineering capability to be able to come up with those things."



NEW PRODUCT



AT-5 Acoustic Trigger System

Is triggering electronic sounds from your acoustic drums a mystery to you? Let Roland show you the way! It's easy to trigger 16-bit, CD-quality sampled drum and percussion sounds from your acoustic drum kit. The AT-5 Acoustic Trigger System includes the incredibly fast and versatile TD-5 Percussion Sound Module, five Roland TSC-10 Acoustic Drum Triggers, five cables and a video to show you how easy and fun it is to trigger from your acoustic instruments.

Welcome to BACK BEAT!

This is the premier issue of Roland's newsletter for the Percussion Connection. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep percussionists aware of Roland's latest developments in electronic percussion products and to exchange new ideas on how to use them in various applications.

We want to help Roland electronic percussion owners achieve the maximum use of their gear. In coming issues, we'll discuss the unique ways you can use your products in the studio—ways that you may never have thought of. You will also see new product information that relates to Roland electronic percussion, such as the new AT-5 Acoustic Trigger System, that will enhance your acoustic drum.

We will have articles profiling some of the Power Users of our drum kits and we will pass some of their own hints and trade secrets on to you. We're always interested in your ideas and opinions. Consider this newsletter a resource that comes along with your Roland electronic percussion products. If you have any questions, information or suggestions, call us at Roland (313) 685-5141 ext. 8770.

Add Sampling to your Electronic Drum Kit...

The world is your waveform! Ever dreamed of owning a 16-bit sampler? Now you can! The MS-1 Digital Sampler brings affordability to sampling. Percussionists and drummers can use the MS-1 to trigger beat loops, drum and percussion sounds, even instrument sounds from your MIDI pad controller or electronic drum kit. And since the MS-1 is battery powered, you can take it anywhere and record virtually any sound you hear using a microphone. Built-in "Flash ROM" retains data even when the power is turned off. Plus, the onboard memory is expandable to over 24 minutes of sampling time by using a PCMCIA Card.

A powerful MS-1 feature called "RPS" (Realtime Phrase Sequencing) allows you to record different sequences from the front panel that can be used as accompaniment for your drum grooves.

Roland Corporation U.S.

PAGE 1

October 1993

Back Beat newsletter...

What about input from the "real world"? Is Roland receptive to suggestions from actual electronic percussion users? "Very much so," replies Steve. "At the many clinics I do I talk to people afterwards—from store owners to salespeople to consumers. I want to soak in as much of their input as possible. We get a lot of feedback from our Roland salesmen out in the field as well. It helps us keep on top of different uses for our products that people have discovered. Then we like to publish those things in our Users Group magazine."

Has user feedback led to any changes or improvements in Roland's new drumkit products since they were initially introduced? "There really hasn't been anything in the way of improvements or re-engineering due to problems," Steve responds. "But we have done some things in the way of expansion. The first was fairly obvious. The headphone jack on the sound module is great when you want to practice, but what happens when you want to play live? What should you play the kit through? I think we solved that problem in 1996 with the introduction of our KC-500 amplifier. It's actually called a keyboard amplifier, but it works great for electronic drum systems. It's got a 15" woofer, a true horn driver, 150 watts of power, and four stereo inputs. It's great as a personal monitor, or you can get two of them and use them as your sound system.

"The next thing people always ask for," continues Steve, "is more sounds. So last year we came up with our little MS-1 digital sampler. It's extremely portable and very inexpensive—and it can fit right on top of the drumkit brain and be MIDI-ed into it. With the MS-1 I can beat a baseball bat against a garbage can and sample it—and then use that for my snare drum. With the MS-1 the world is your sound source. It's especially great for drummers who say,

Catalog Three

Operational Documents

Information on Roland and BOSS products is available to your fax machine 24 hours, 7 days a week, from Roland Corporation U.S.

Roland FAX
218-685-5141
Ext. 271

Support Documentation consists of two series:

TurboStarts and Supplemental Notes. TurboStarts are short 1-2 page documents with the most basic operational, demo tips, facts and figures. Supplemental Notes are typically longer and contain step by step instructions on more complicated or detailed procedures.

Doc #	Model	Page
TurboStarts		
20001	A-20	MIDI Keyboard Controller
20002	A-20	MIDI Keyboard Controller
20005	A-90	Expandable Controller
20001	KS-1	Flamete MIDI Controller
20004	DR-6	Dr. Rhythm Section
20003	GR-100	Guitar Synthesizer
20006	DR-600	Dr. Rhythm
20006	DR-500	Dr. Synthesizer
20007	E-60	Intelligent Synthesizer
20008	G-800	Antique Wabstator
20009	GP-100	Guitar Preamp/Processor
20010	GR-400	Guitar Synthesizer
20011	GR-1	Guitar Synthesizer
20008	GA-700	Guitar Effects Processor
20012	JD-800	Programmable Synthesizer
20013	JD-900	Super 2D Synthesizer
20014	JV-301	Expandable Synthesizer
20016	JV-800	Expandable Synthesizer
20017	JV-800	Expandable Synthesizer
20018	JV-800	Multi-Track Synthesizer
20023	MC-090M	Microprocessor
20016	ME-4	Guitar Multi Effects
20027	ME-4	Guitar Multi Effects
20028	ME-40	Blas Multi Effects
20010	ME-40	Guitar Multi Effects
20017	JV-800	Master Style Drive
20021	ST-70	Human Rhythm Composer
20022	RA-90	Intelligent Style Drive
20023	RD-600	Digital Stage Piano
20024	SC-88	SoundCanvas
20025	SC-88	SoundCanvas
20026	SD-38	SoundCanvas
20027	SPS-11	Trial Percussion Pad
20028	SC-900	Sound Effects Processor
20028	TDR-7K	Compact Drum System



The TDE-7K electronic drumkit.

'None of the TD-7's built-in acoustic sounds actually sound like my own favorite drumkit.' They can simply sample that kit and put it in as patch #1. Besides that, the MS-1 comes with a 74-minute audio CD that you can sample from. It's got everything from dog barks to really cool beat loops. And then there are all the different drum sample CDs that are out there."

A common criticism of electronic drumkit sound patches is inconsistency within a given "kit." For example, the toms might sound great, while the bass drum doesn't seem to match within the same context. How is this sound selection

made for Roland equipment? "I did the majority of the patches for the TD series," says Steve, "along with one of the Japanese engineers. Admittedly, choosing sounds is a subjective thing. But I learned something from doing patches for the R8 Rhythm Composer and some of our other sound modules a few years ago: You always want to be consistent, as far as volume goes. You don't want one patch louder than the other, so you try to keep levels even. Another decision that has to be made is, 'Should it sound like I'm playing it live, or like I'm hearing it from in the control room after being processed?' If I'm playing a kit

live, I'm used to hearing a hi-hat *really loud* on my left-hand side. I'm also used to hearing open toms and bass drums. But if you are hearing those sounds back within the context of a recording, you think 'God, the hi-hat is *really* loud, isn't it? And I'm hearing goofy overtones from the bass drum. Muffle it!' So it's almost two different perspectives. Some drummers want a 'live' sound, but a lot of people have TD-7Ks and TD-5Ks in their home studios for recording purposes.

"The solution," Steve continues, "is to create patches that go both ways so you have a choice. We've always prided ourselves on the programmability of our products. With the TD series, you just plug in the pads, dial up a drumkit, and start playing. Then you can manipulate the pitch of each drum

sound editing would be amazing."

In the past, some electronics manufacturers stressed the almost limitless capabilities of their products—and offered encyclopedia-sized manuals to accompany them. Many drummers were intimidated by this information overload, while others simply found the products to be much more sophisticated than they needed to do their jobs. The guiding principle behind Roland's recent success in electronic percussion, on the other hand, has been simplicity. Says Steve Fisher, "I think what everyone strives for in any kind of technology business is to get it down to the least common denominator for someone to understand. I applaud Roland's engineers for being able to come up with something like the TDE-7K. You plug it in and you just decide what drumkit you want. It can be that simple. But on the other hand, it has depth and potential for those who wish to pursue it. Because of that, it obviously opens itself up to a much broader audience."

Other Innovations

Speaking of a broader audience, Roland hasn't forgotten those drummers who wish to avail themselves of electronics without completely abandoning the security of their acoustic kits. "Through our field testing," says Steve, "we discovered that the TD-5 module is great for triggering acoustic



SPD-11 Total Percussion Pad...

over eight octaves, along with decay and nuance. You've also got a full-blown effects processor with reverb, delay, chorus, flanging, and low-pass filters. Even if the modules only had a quarter of the basic sounds that they do, the different sounds you could come up with just by doing some very basic



and R-70 Human Rhythm Composer are key elements of Roland's electronic percussion line.



Roland electronic pads and drum machines are manufactured and carefully tested on high-tech assembly lines in Japan.

drums. It has a triggering time of three milliseconds, which is one of the fastest, if not *the* fastest module for triggering. A lot of people are starting to incorporate triggers with their acoustic drums to trigger electronic sounds. So we looked at how drummers buy triggering gear. Once again, they are not quite sure which components to buy. Which triggers? What sound module? What about a MIDI interface...and cables? Again there's a lot of confusion. So we created a package called the *AT-5* trigger system, which includes the *TD-5* sound module, five triggers, and all necessary cables. We also include a tutorial video that talks about correct trigger placement on your drums, how to plug everything in, how to adjust the module for different playing styles, and so on. The *AT-5* goes hand-in-hand with what we've been doing with the *TD* kits, in terms of coming up with complete solutions."

The *TDE-7K* wasn't Roland's first groundbreaking electronic percussion product. That honor goes to the original *Octapad*—a compact electronic percussion controller that set a standard for the industry several years ago. Its direct modern-day descendent—the *SPD-11*—represents a major step forward in this product area. "It has 255 sounds built in," explains Steve, "as opposed to the original *Octapad*, which was strictly a controller for outboard sound sources. There is also a full effects processor, but no heavy-duty menus. It's very easy; for any of the programming it uses lights to tell you where you are. And probably the greatest thing about it is that it has four external inputs, so you can plug in any of our *PD-7* or larger *PD-9* pads, a *KD-7*

kick drum trigger, and even an *FD-7* hi-hat, and turn it into a small drumkit. Or it can be set up just for percussion, with added pads for timbales and other sounds."

From the days of the venerable *TR-808*, through the *R-8* and beyond, Roland has been a leader in the area of drum machines. This is due largely to a combination of innovative features, simplicity of design, and a line that offers "something for everybody." "We offer four drum machines," says Steve, "five if you include the *Dr. Beat*, which is for the most part a metronome. So you don't have to buy features that you don't need. If you don't need effects processing we've got one model, if you want processing and more sounds, we've got another model. This approach has really been beneficial, not only for us but for the end user as well.

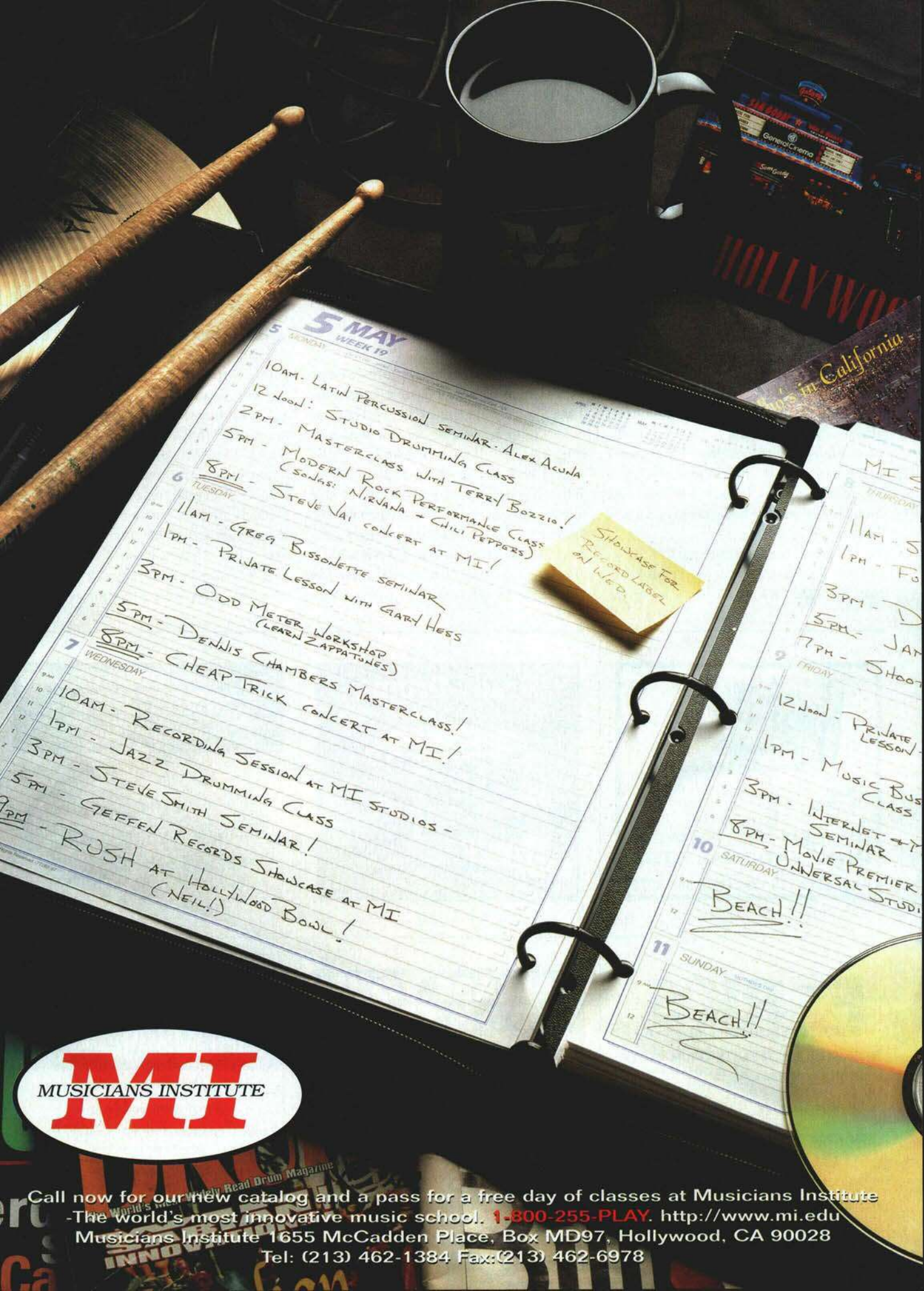
"The *R-8* is the most-recorded drum machine in history," Steve continues. "I can't drive twenty minutes without hearing a jingle or something that uses those sounds. Then there's the *R-70*, which features innovations like positional pads that duplicate the nuances of striking drums and cymbals in different locations, and 'Rhythm Expert' and 'Song Expert' functions that allow the machine to actually create original patterns and songs on its own, within parameters that the user establishes. With those two functions you can literally build a four-minute song—to play along with or to use as the basis of a recording—within three to five minutes. The *R-70* also has a mixer section that can be used when finalizing all the different aspects of a rhythm track. It's a very sophisticated little piece—yet we've still

tried to make it simple to understand and easy to use."

Steve says that one inquiry he receives repeatedly has to do with whether the same sounds are used in Roland's various products. "The answer is no," he replies emphatically. "We have custom sounds in every instrument. We don't look at it like, 'This drum machine is different just because it has a few more pads on it,' or 'This kit is bigger than that one.' Each product has a different application, so the selection of sounds is going to be inherently different."

Avoiding Obsolescence

One factor that plagues users of electronic keyboards and other such equipment is the rapidity with which they become obsolete. But Roland's approach to electronic percussion is more conservative. Says Steve, matter-of-factly, "We don't see a need to come out with a *TDE-7K* 'Mark II' when it's still doing very well sales-wise. Of course, we don't ever sit still, and by the time this article reaches print we will have introduced the *V-Drum*, a totally new high-end electronic percussion instrument based on a new technology we call 'Composite Object Sound Modeling.' It's going to be a performance-oriented instrument targeted at the professional player, which even the *TDE-7K* was not. But beyond that, Roland's philosophy has always been to stress expandability instead of replacement. So we offer accessories that people who want to expand on their *TDE-7K* can utilize—like *PD-9* pads, or the *MS-1* sampler I mentioned earlier. Instead of making people buy a whole new



5 MAY
WEEK 19

10AM - LATIN PERCUSSION SEMINAR - ALEX ACUNA
12 noon: STUDIO DRUMMING CLASS
2PM - MASTERCLASS WITH TERRY BOZZIO!
5PM - MODERN ROCK PERFORMANCE CLASS
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8PM - STEVE VAI CONCERT AT MI!
TUESDAY
11AM - GREG BISSONETTE SEMINAR
1PM - PRIVATE LESSON WITH GARY HESS
3PM - ODD METER WORKSHOP
(LEARN ZAPPATONES)
5PM - DENNIS CHAMBERS MASTERCLASS!
8PM - CHEAP TRICK CONCERT AT MI!
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10AM - RECORDING SESSION AT MI STUDIOS -
1PM - JAZZ DRUMMING CLASS
3PM - STEVE SMITH SEMINAR!
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7PM - RUSH AT HOLLYWOOD BOWL!
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instrument in order to get a few more functions or sounds, we've tried to offer new possibilities that can be achieved with what already exists. We want to offer electronic percussion for everyone, from the beginner to the professional. But at the same time, a guy doesn't want to buy a whole new drumkit just because he wants to add a new cymbal.

"When we came up with the *TD-5K* set in 1996, the first question was, is this better than the *TDE-7KI* No. It has a lot of the

same great features, but it doesn't come with as many pads, and the pads are single-trigger models. As a result, it gets someone in the electronic percussion door at a lower entry cost. But it's the perfect example of what I was saying about expandability. When you decide that you want to be able to play rimshots or to choke cymbals, you can buy *PD-7* or *PD-9* dual-trigger pads and plug them right in. The *TD-5* module is already programmed to accept them. So you can start off from a low-cost stand-

point and just build from there."

Chris Bristol, who is the vice president and general manager of the musical instrument division of Roland Corporation (U.S.), adds that "expandability" can also relate to a user's own attitude toward a product. "Unusual things can happen when products are used with a point of view different from that of the original designers," says Chris. "When I was a music dealer and I first became aware of drum machines, they were little boxes that had

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eight or nine different patterns and a button you pushed to play a roll. They were real basic. One day a guy I didn't know came into the store to buy a drum machine. He came in about a month later to buy another drum machine. By the third time I sold him a drum machine, I realized that he had been *Downbeat's* number one jazz drummer for two or three years running. I thought, 'Why is this guy buying drum machines? He's incredible.' When I asked him, he said, 'Well, I learn from them.' This was a whole other application that I had never thought of. So my eyes were opened by a musician showing me different ways to use a tool that I already thought I knew all the obvious uses for."

Consumer Education

No matter how simple Roland makes its products, it still feels an obligation to help its customers feel comfortable with them. So the company has put a great deal of effort into consumer education. To begin with, in addition to the printed manual that comes with each product, Roland also offers *Turbo Start* videos. Twenty to thirty

minutes in length, the videos are "quick, sit down in front of the TV and grab your drum machine" tutorials. "Most dealers carry all these videos," says Steve Fisher, "which is great. We also have full-blown video manuals for the *TD-5K* and the *TDE-7K*. They're really very thorough; they take you from pulling the unit out of the box to getting into some pretty adept programming."

For even more product support, Roland offers *Turbo Starts* on paper, besides those on video. "You can call our product support people, and they'll fax the appropriate sheet to you," says Steve. "Or you can utilize our new automated fax-back service. You can call the service, dial the number of the document you want, and have it automatically faxed to you within minutes. That way you can get immediate help, even if our office is closed. You can get catalogs, product specifications, price lists, or instructions on how to program patches on your *TD-7*. You don't have to wait till Monday morning to call the product support department."

If you *should* need to call Roland's live

product-support people, you'll be connecting with a greatly revamped operation. Says Steve, "We have almost twice as many phone support people as we had just two years ago. And they're all connected to a new computer data base. It's pre-programmed with a multitude of commonly asked questions, with answers that can be immediately faxed to whoever needs the help. The product specialists also have a lot of detailed information accessible at their fingertips, whereas before they might have needed to look at the manual. This way we can help each customer better, while actually getting to more customers in a shorter time.

"The day of any customer-service person being a generalist is pretty much over," Steve continues, "especially if you want to service people who may be employing a computer and/or some special software. Our policy is to try to understand what you own as opposed to saying, 'Go to the software company and deal with that. Go to the computer company with that. That's not our fault.' We want to be able to say, 'You are using which software? Okay, we have a



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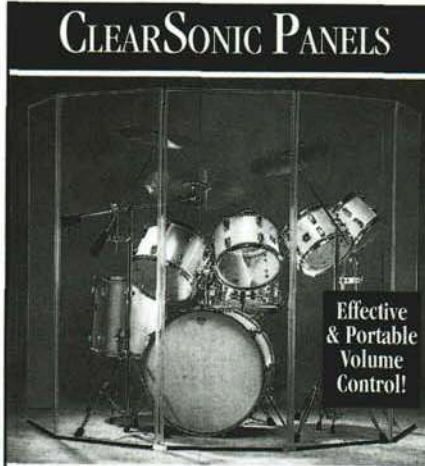
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guy here who is experienced to deal with that."

In addition to the printed version of Roland's *Users Group* magazine, the company now offers a video version as well. And yet another educational item added recently—specifically for a users group of electronic percussionists that Roland has termed the "Electronic Percussion Connection"—is a quarterly newsletter called *Back Beat*. "It's a free publication," says Steve, "that describes our products and their functions, offers tips and tricks, and gives instruction on how to get in-depth programming and how to set different parameters. We even do a special insert for rhythm machine and backing units so you can select which one you think might be right for you. There are also announcements of videos and different accessories that we have."

With a new Web site, *Turbo Start* videos and publications, the fax-back service, magazines and newsletters, video and print manuals, and their restructured service department, Roland has put a high priority on helping consumers get the information that they need in a timely manner. And it would appear that consumers have noticed this effort, since Roland was recognized as the most consumer-oriented electronic percussion manufacturer in *Modern Drummer's* 1995 Consumers Poll.

"At Roland our philosophy is that music is an international language," Chris Bristol concludes. "It knows no bounds. And we all enjoy being involved in this business, because it's always moving in a new direction: How can we make this better? How can we make it more responsive...more realistic...more playable...more useful...more entertaining...more, more, more. That is one of the exciting things about working for Roland: As far as the future goes, the sky's the limit."



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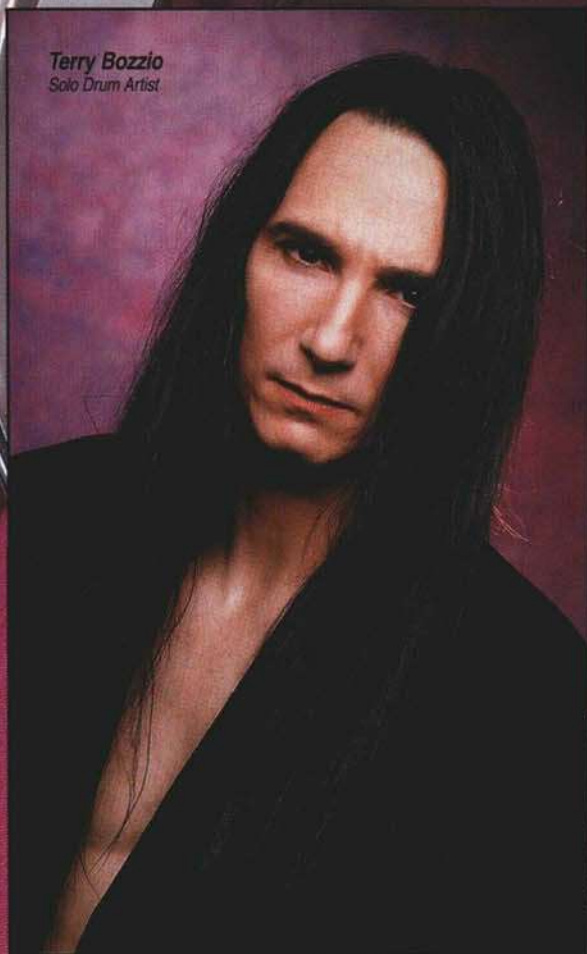


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RECORDINGS

Warren Cuccurullo

Thanks 2 Prank (Imago 72787-23002-2)

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ½

drummers: Vinnie Colaiuta, Jerry Cuccurullo

with Warren Cuccurullo (gtr), Pino Palladino, Mick Beggs (bs), Talvin Singh (tabla)

Currently with Duran Duran, guitarist Warren Cuccurullo earned his guitar-hero stripes with Frank Zappa and Missing Persons (Terry & Dale Bozzio), displaying chops to hang with anyone, and a wry dose of Beck (Jeff, that is) thrown in. Cuccurullo and Colaiuta were band-

mates with Zappa, and the guitarist chooses Vinnie for ten of the eleven tracks he wrote for *Thanks 2 Prank*.

Vinnie must have been licking his chops in anticipation of playing this high-powered instrumental rock. The drummer was definitely given free rein, and reign he does. On "The Spider" he sounds like about eight hands and brains. "Ass Man" evokes... well, let's just say the slow groove sizzles, with plenty of play space between the beats.

"The Galactic Ballerina" hurtles in like a meteor, slightly dark, with a halting, single-stroke roll from the drummer that is worth the price of admission. "Indian Time Zones" is a sparse, powerful first take that sees Colaiuta spit out a frighteningly crisp and efficient solo. All tracks were recorded

totally live, with no overdubs, and the liner notes brag about how many tunes were completed on first or second takes.

If you haven't been really scared by Vinnie's playing in a while, this disc is definitely for you. Sounds like he's got something to prove.

Robin Tolleson

Gov't Mule

Live At Roseland Ballroom (Foundation Records)

⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ⊕ ½

drummer: Matt Abts

with Allen Woody (bs), Warren Haynes (gtr, vcl)

Talk about a kick in the ass! Gov't Mule is simply fearless on stage, improvising their bluesy way through a broad patchwork of styles—classic power-trio rock, soul, jazz, psychedelia... fusion? Hell, these guys are writing a new chapter.

Putting out a live disc by the Mule makes perfect sense. Here the animal thrives. With a revved-up audience urging them on, guitarist Haynes and bassist Woody spread out all their chops on the six extended tracks on *Roseland*, abilities they normally keep in check with their "regular" gig, the Allman Brothers. And while their work here is aces, the heart of this mule is drummer Matt Abts, an adventurous player with chops for days.

Over the course of the trio's hour-long live set (totally captured here), Abts rides hard and easy. Light cymbal work dovetails into double-pedal 16th-note triplets, intricate hi-hat work careens into heavy changing meters. The drumming's a mixed breed of '70s Billy, '60s Ginger, and a smattering of Mitch Mitchell's fire. Make no mistake, Matt goes for it. There's a looseness to the performance here that smacks of integrity. It's a pleasure to hear good players air it out, even if a wheel falls off once in a while. That's real music.

William F. Miller

SIGNIFICANT OTHERS

Hot, vintage **BUDDY RICH** and band with decent-quality live recordings of classics such as "Channel One Suite" make *Buddy Rich And His Orchestra, Europe 77* (Magic) a must-have.

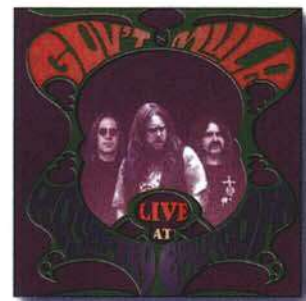
"Remember the old days/Trippin' on your ass?" On *Braille* Cycomotogoat turns reminiscence into groovy contempo-psychedelia, and drummer **TOM COSTAGLIOLA** is right there with funky ghost notes and a two-bar 4/4 - 1 1/8 "Tomorrow Never Knows"-ish workout on the title track. (What Are Records?)

Neatly packaged, with rare extra cuts galore, Epic/Legacy's release of Spirit's first four albums highlights the work of **ED CASSIDY**, who is often cited as the oldest rock drummer (73) still working. What *Spirit, The Family That Plays Together, Clear Spirit*, and (especially) *Twelve Dreams Of Dr. Sardonicus* remind us is that Cass is also a strong player who controlled his jazz tendencies just enough to help make Spirit's early work both groundbreakingly experimental and spot-on pop-friendly.

Sure, its kitsch value might be higher than a highball, but *Jackpot! The Las Vegas Story* (Rhino) also highlights some top-notch drumming from players like **JOE COCUZZO**, **JIMMY VINCENT**, and other (unfortunately uncredited) happenin' swingsters of Vegas's golden age. Make mine dry.

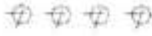
Rating Scale

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



Ginger Baker

Falling Off The Roof (Atlantic)



drummer: **Ginger Baker**
with **Bill Frisell (gtr)**, **Charlie Haden (bs)**

In Cream, Ginger Baker's bombastic yet agile drumming often sounded like a stoned hurricane. In Blind Faith, his quirky touch offset the band's melodic explorations. Never a swinging drummer in the jazz sense, Baker's drumming always sounded like a happy accident of calamity and creativity. Then in the late '70s Baker perused an African direction that flattered his combustible style and gave him somewhere new to explore.

On Baker's second offering with Bill Frisell and Charlie Haden, his myriad influences fall into place. *Falling Off The Roof* shows three unique musicians relating in that cerebral realm of all great jazz trios, that inspiring space where disparate forces (rock mayhem meets jazz intellect here) work to the benefit of the whole. *FOTR* shows Baker combining his African feel and swing direction with the refined musicianship of Frisell and Haden, delivering music that is as refreshing as it is unusual.

When Baker's clunky fours-trading tumbles out in "C.B.C. Mimps," it's well aligned with Frisell's whirling guitar figures. His equally stumbling percussion comments bound humorously alongside Haden's feathery bass solo. "Bemsha Swing" adapts Monk to Baker's boisterous style, imitating a drunken dance of hoboos and wooden puppets. The title track hovers like dogs paddling through pudding, while Frisell's sumptuous tone and Baker's spastic motions wrestle for the lead.

In a freak meeting of jazz perfection and rock misadventure, *Falling Off The Roof* is a freefall into the gangly, riotous world of one of rock's seminal drummers.

Ken Micallef



Mino Cinelu & Kenny Barron

Swamp Sally (Verve)



drummer (plus perc, gtr, syn, vcl): **Mino Cinelu**
with **Kenny Barron (pno, kybd, syn, bs)**

Mino Cinelu is the guiding force behind the elegant, joyous romp *Swamp Sally*, branching out musically and engaging pianist Kenny Barron in some intriguing dialog. Barron has performed and recorded with various sizes and makeups (Getz, Gillespie, etc.), but I don't know of one that has stretched and showcased him better than this one. "Relentless Pursuit" is as intense as its title suggests, and makes use of everything Cinelu has to offer—surprisingly fluid traps, hand drums, guitars, banjos, and triangles—under Barron's acoustic and electric piano.

Cinelu plays a Cajun funk beat with brushes on the title track, and on "Beneath It All" assembles a clattering herd of percussion (with the piano in an eager game of tag). Tracks like the sparse and strong "Mystere"

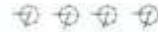


and the whimsical "Simple Thoughts" have a lush charm. Sometimes the instrumentation is similar to Craig Street's less-is-more production with Cassandra Wilson and Javon Jackson. Other times it sounds like Mingo Lewis filling it up under an early Al DiMeola track. Either way, this is as refreshing and adventurous a soundscape as I've heard in some time.

Robin Tolleson

Chavez

Ride The Fader (Matador)



drummer: **James Lo**
with **Matt Sweeney (gtr, vcl)**, **Clay Carver (gtr)**,
Scott Masciarelli (bs)

With its chaotic rhythms and soft-boy melodies, New York noise-niks Chavez's latest blends hardcore bombast with pure pop sounds, hard metal insults with brainy, neo math-rock expertise. And the band has the silliest song titles around. Cracking the vault opened by Helmet and Come, Chavez bring original insight to formulaic hardcore.

On *Ride*, Chavez match pummeling rhythms with challenging compositions while expanding their sound. Drummer James Lo is a titanic force all by himself. Trained at the New England Conservatory of Music, Lo has been known to play bebopping big band one day, Swiss marching drums the next—all the while holding down a day job as a computer chip designer. Here, he's a marvel of rhythmic acuity and calculated frenzy. Like a bionic breeding of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Vinnie Colaiuta, Lo drops downbeat-evading beats under bare cymbal crashes with casual efficiency,

fooling you into believing that a simple 4/4 groove is some demented odd meter.

"Top Pocket Man" combines Lo's crushing assault with some roughhouse guitars. "Tight Around The Jaws" is a harrowing stew of mutating drums and turbulent guitars. "Our Boys" veers from muscular rock to '60s-styled vocal crooning. "Memorize This Face" floats like Sebadoh, until Lo rescues it with a rollicking tom-tom tattoo.

In an unusual left turn, Lo has matched the ferocity of hardcore with the exploratory wit of Terry Bozzio. As a band, Chavez prove they're capable of deep thoughts too. On *Ride The Fader*, brute force meets sappy love pop in a nest of sweetly grinding grooves.

Ken Micallef

Bobby Previte

Too Close To The Pole (Enja ENJ 9306 2)

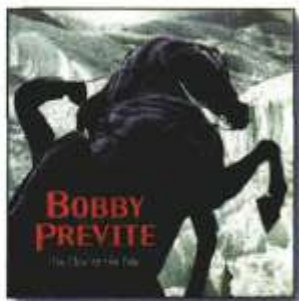


drummer: **Bobby Previte**
with **Lindsey Homer (bs, tin whistle, vcl)**, **Andy Laster (bar sx, dr, fl, vcl)**, **Cuong Vu (trp, vcl)**, **Jamie Saft (kybd, vcl)**, **Curtis Hasselbring (tnb, vcl)**, **Andrew D'Angelo (al sx, bs dr, vcl)**

Too Close To The Pole isn't overtly a "concept" album, but although its tunes are each self-supporting and distinctive, recurring compositional devices, exotic melodies, and in particular, lots of creative, dense, sparkingly recorded drumming bind them into a larger listening experience. Drummer/composer Previte's

tunes provide colorful, translucent vessels into which his band, Weather Clear, Track Fast, pour some fairly "out" soloing.

Previte often shuns playing traditional "beats" in favor of orchestrating busy subdivisions in unusual ways. On the title track he shadows percussive piano seconds with bongos and kick/crash explosions. This motif pops up again, as triplets, in "3 Minute Heels." When this tune's Middle Eastern-flavored half-time 7/4 head (with a tin whistle melody) opens wide for blowing, the horns create haunting, overlapping, angular echoes a la Michael Saul's "A Mitzvah For The Dead"—an effect also heard in the title track. Previte's insistent, rolling triplet conversation between toms and bongos with seemingly random cowbell commas unites song sections' pulse changes.



Interestingly, his own "solo" on kick, snare, and crash cymbal is accompanied by his band members simultaneously (i.e., not overdubbed) playing assorted percussion, hi-hat, and toms. Cool.

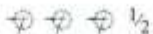
Previte's intimacy with the material is evinced by his sensitive interpretations of mood and intensity shifts. Ironically, this is perhaps best exemplified in the one tune *not* written by him, Tchaikovsky's "The Countess's Bedroom," from the opera *The Queen Of Spades*. Here, in one of few deferrals to space between notes, he rises from silence in its prodding two-note piano ostinato, pensive bari melody, and trumpet/bone response lines, drawing, and drawing from, its contours as the solo becomes harried, and then tortured.

For the most part this is not a sit-back-'n'-groove kind of disc. Each tune evolves and grows beyond its beginnings. The delights are in the journeys, and in Previte's liberal ornamentations of his own compositions, with the drums actively, joyously front-and-center.

Rich Watson

Carcass

Wake Up And Smell The Carcass (Earache)



drummer: Ken Owen

with Mike Amott, Carlo Regadas (gtr), Bill Steer (gtr, vcl), Jeff Walker (bs, vcl)

If death metal gets a place in musical history books, Carcass at least deserves a paragraph for helping to get the gore rolling. On this album of overlooked, unreleased, and forgotten cuts, Carcass holds up a mirror to show us how the music—and the drumming—has grown since its outbreak in this fetid sector of Florida swampland.

It's a reverse retrospective, with five new, unreleased cuts leading into a descent that closes with tracks dating to 1989. Along the way, drummer Ken Owen's maturity shadows the band's evolution from splatter spitters to melody-conscious songwriters.

Like most drummers of this ilk, Owen rooted himself early on in the tempo-defying blast beats and double-kick rolls that established death as the most physically exhaustive yet cliché-ridden style of music in history.

In the '90s, though, Owen's skills tightened measurably, and his precise, attacking-style of drumming that marked 1991's *Tools Of The Trade* EP set the band up perfectly for its mainstream bow. Groove neighbored gore and beat replaced blast. By the time Carcass recorded *Swansong* in 1995, the band sounded more like

Megadeth (guttural vocals notwithstanding) than Death.

With song titles like "Blood Splattered Banner" and "Hepatic Tissue Fermentation," it may be hard to take Carcass as a serious force in music. But if nothing else, *Wake Up And Smell The Carcass* lends sick insight into one of death's vilest bands.

Matt Peiken

LASER DISC

The Beatles

Anthology (Apple PA-96570)



This, finally, is the truth, told by the four men who lived it. Interviewed separately and together (John Lennon's recollections are drawn from conversations throughout the group's career and into the 1970s), the Beatles discuss everything from wartime Liverpool, childhood friendship, American heroes, dismal van tours, poor Pete Best, raunchy Hamburg, the Cavern, Ringo's arrival, and their early records to *Abbey Road*, the symbolic demise of the Apple Boutique, the breakup, and the countercultural revolution they led in the interim. Their insights are keen, funny, and moving. (The sardonic George Harrison is particularly delightful). A tribute to Brian Epstein, on the seventh of eight brilliantly produced laserdiscs, is simply beautiful—and the surviving members' affection for John imbues the entire set with the sorrow of an era lost forever.

There is an abundance of new musical, technical, and historical footage, with numerous chances to figure out those inventive stickings, patterns, and chord changes. (Incidentally, everyone who has ever described the world's most famous drumset has been wrong.) As always, Ringo is the agreeable teammate; but (unlike cheerleading Paul) he doesn't minimize the group's failures or glorify its legacy. Forget that new cymbal and buy *Anthology* instead: It's much more important.

Hal Howland

VIDEOS

Neil Peart

A Work In Progress, Parts One and Two

(DCI Music Video)



\$59.95 (box set)

110 minutes each

Long, enthusiastic, orderly, verbose, bulging with details, speckled with references to philosophers, architects, and politicians (you're surprised?), *A Work In Progress* truly mirrors the aesthetics and sensibilities of its subject.

Long-time fans should be aware that Peart is in an even more exploratory mode than usual these days. So on *A Work In Progress*, rather than describing bar-by-bar what he played on golden Rush oldies, he discusses his current obsessions in broader terms, spurred on by studies with Fred Gruber, whose drumming theories Neil has recently tapped. Roughly put, Peart has been on a quest for Swing, one strength he has been criticized for lacking in the past, but which he sincerely has been working on. (All rock stars should be so humble.)

The results so far: Well, Neil might not be subbing for Richie Hayward any time soon, but his feel *has* improved—and far

more importantly, he's opened all kinds of personal doors of perception. And since Peart is one of the more articulate drummers you're likely to encounter, he eloquently shares the treasures he's found there, and makes us feel like we too can experience such epiphanies. (As if to emphasize all the *thinking* Peart's been doing, he's often filmed in the great outdoors: sitting cross-legged in the woods, rowing on a lake—you get the picture.)

Hopefully Peart's most lasting bit of advice (Neil clones, listen up!) is the tenet of serving the *song*, not the ego. He goes into great detail describing just how he attempts to do that by playing along to and analyzing the actual tracks from Rush's latest album, *Test For Echo*. In the process of watching Neil dissect the songs, we are treated to perhaps the most intensive views of Peart's playing available anywhere, all filmed with typically high DCI production values, and augmented by very helpful booklets detailing pertinent beats, fills, and the like from each song.

Like any project Neil Peart undertakes, *A Work In Progress* is...well...a "work" in every sense. Students of Peart who truly want to share in his spirit of exploration should find its depth and breadth very satisfying—and, in fact, even those less enamored of his work could learn plenty from this professional thinker. Mere "fans," on the other hand, may find its wordiness and lack of bombastics disappointing (though there *is* one cool live clip of a '77 performance of "Xanadu"). Either way, you've got to admire the accomplishment.

Adam Budofsky

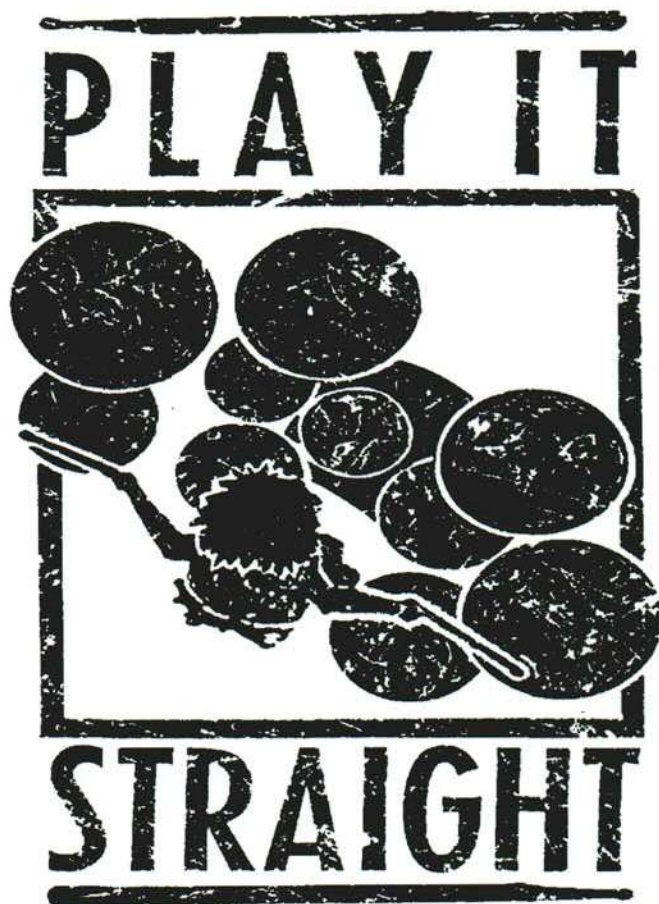


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Odd Flams

by Rod Morgenstein

Practicing flams in odd time is a great way to simultaneously build chops and increase your counting prowess. The ten examples below consist of five exercises in 5/8 and five exercises in 7/8. Each example is written out first as 8th notes and then as 16ths. The 8th-note pattern and its 16th-note counterpart are identical in sound; they differ only in the way they are counted.

Give each 8th note a full count, and on the 16th-note examples in 7/8, count "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 &."

After practicing these exercises on a drum pad or snare drum, experiment on the drumset by playing the accented flam notes on various toms. These exercises are sure to build strength and coordination in your hands *and* your head.

1

LR R RL R R LR R RL R L LR R RL R L LR R RL R L
 LR L LR L L RL R RL R L LR L LR L R RL R RL R L

2

LR R RL L LRL R RL L LR R RL R L LRR RL L LR L R RL L LR R RL R L
 LR L LR L LRL R RL R RL R RL R L LR L LR L LR L R RL R RL R RL R L

3

LR L R RL L LR L R RL L LR L R RL L LR L R RL L LR L R RL L
 LR L R RL R RL R L LR L LR L R RL R RL R L LR L

4

LR R L LR R L LR RL L R LR L R RL LR R L LR R L LR RL L R RL LR L R RL
 LR L R RL R L LR RL R L LR RL R L LR RL R L LR L R RL

5



LR R RL LR R RL L LR RL L LR R RL LR R RL L LR RL L
 LR L LR RL R RL R RL LR L LR L LR RL R RL R RL LR L

6



LRL R RL LR L R RL R L LR RL R L LRL R RL LRL R RL R L LR RL R L

7



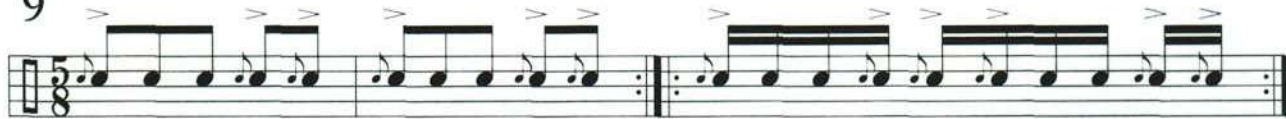
LR R RL L LR RL L LR R RL LR R RL L LR RL L LR R RL
 LR L LR L LR RL R RL R RL LR L LR L LR RL R RL R RL

8



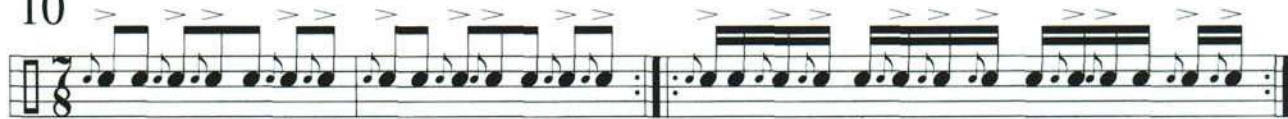
LRR RL L LRR RL RL L LR R RLL LR LR R RL L LR R RL L LR
 LRR RL L LRR RL LR R RL L LRR RL LR R RL L LR R RL
 LRL LR L LRL LR RL R RL R RLR RL LR L LR L LR L LR RL R RL R RL R RL

9



LR L R RL LR RL R L LR RL LR L R RL R RL R L LR RL

10



LR L LR RL R RL LR RL R RLLR L LR RL LRL LR RL R RL LR RL R RLLR L LR RL



The Forgotten Triplet

by Todd Prescott

MUSIC KEY

R.C.	X	
S.D.	●	(●)
B.D.	X	
H.H. w/foot	X	Ghost Note

In all styles of music, triplets play a very important role in creating and stimulating the flow, as well as introducing rhythmic variation. Rock, funk, jazz, and country often employ the triplet as a rhythmic foundation. Shuffles, the country "train," and the boogaloo/hip-hop are a few groove examples that accentuate a triplet pulse.

For the most part, though, only the first and third notes of the triplet are exploited and explored in these types of grooves. In recent years I've labeled the second note of the triplet "the forgotten triplet" because of its apparent lack of use. In this article we're going to see how we can apply "the forgotten triplet" to some common grooves to give them new life. But first, let's become acquainted with what we're going to be dealing with. Here's an exercise to help expose the forgotten triplet.

For some of you the idea of playing the snare drum on the second triplet note may be an old one. Apply the same concept to the bass drum, though, and things start to get really interesting—and and challenging. Here's what it looks like:

Here's an example where the snare and bass drum independently play the forgotten triplet in a shuffle groove:

The same idea can be applied to a half-time funk shuffle:

In a country "train" groove, an exposed forgotten triplet can add a nice swing.

Keep in mind that the forgotten triplet can be added to any triplet/shuffle feel. Try this new twist to an old blues groove:

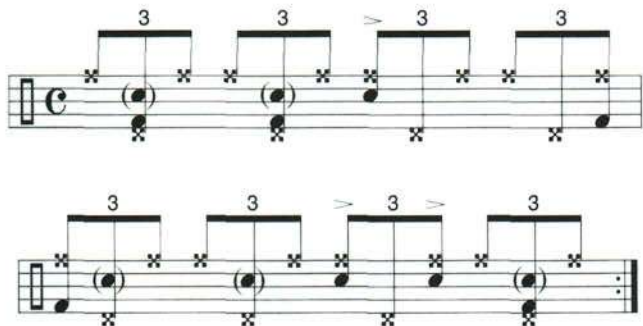
Incorporated into a boogaloo/hip-hop-style groove, it can add a warm flavor.

Exploitation of the forgotten triplet is not restricted to the snare drum and bass drum. Utilizing the hi-hat with the foot can conjure up some very interesting and challenging grooves.

Try this one:

This next one will have you squirming a bit. Take it slow and

make sure the groove has a pocket and feels really good.



To help you come up with more exercises to work on, it would be very helpful to use this concept in conjunction with Ted Reed's masterwork, *Progressive Steps To Syncopation For The Modern Drummer*. You may already be aware of the many interpretations and considerations given to pages 29 through 45 of *Syncopation*, but here's a new way to interpret those pages using the forgotten triplet: Every time you see an off-beat 8th note, play it as if it is the *second* note of the triplet.

For instance, exercise 1 from page 29 looks like this:



Our interpretation of this rhythm would look like this:



By working through *Syncopation* with this in mind, you should be able to come up with a lot of good exercises.

When executed properly and tastefully, the forgotten triplet can add zest and drive to some seemingly tiresome grooves. Remember that feel is paramount—don't sacrifice it for technique!



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If you'd like to appear in this section, 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.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), your influences, your current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.). Feel free to include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it. We'd also like 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. Please note that **no** material can be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.



Buzz Roll Combinations

by Joe Morello

Transcribed by Jim Jacobus

The following exercises are based on the buzz roll used in various sticking combinations. They are reminiscent of the late Buddy Rich and are today employed quite effectively by Louie Bellson and others.

To execute the buzzes, use a slight downward finger pressure with an immediate release with the left hand (traditional grip), and

an upward finger motion with the right hand. You can also play the buzzes as double strokes. The first seven exercises should be considered preparation for those that follow. Start at a slow tempo (50 bpm), and then work these up before moving on to the other examples.

The exercises are as follows:

- Staff 1: L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R
- Staff 2: L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R
- Staff 3: L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R
- Staff 4: L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R
- Staff 5: L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R
- Staff 6: L L L L L L L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R R R R R R R
- Staff 7: L L L L L L L L L L L L L L | R R R R R R R R R R R R R R
- Staff 8: R L R L R L R L L | R L R R L R L L
- Staff 9: R L R L R L R L L | R L R L R L R L L

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

These examples are just to give you ideas. Be creative! For instance, you might try playing the accented notes on different

toms. A buzz pressed into a tom can become an interesting "color" to add to your musical palette. Use your imagination!



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 there."



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Jeff Potter and Rising

RENT

by Rich Watson

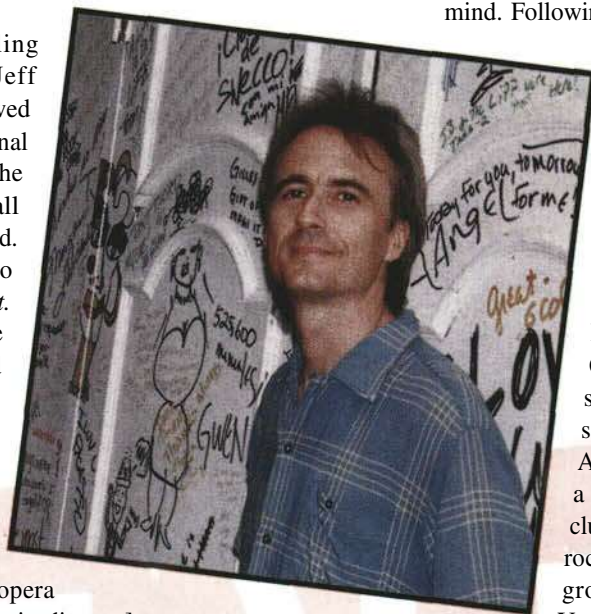
Surrounded by some of the cast members of the hit Broadway musical *Rent*, drummer Jeff Potter had watched last June's 1996 Tony Awards on the big screen TVs of midtown Manhattan's All Star Cafe. Two hours after they'd all cheered their show's winning four Tony's (Broadway's "Oscars"), including Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Score, Jeff turned forty, and said to himself, "I made it under the wire." Partly because his involvement in the show was far deeper than the "hired gun" Broadway standard, and partly because of his long journey to this level of success, Jeff's sense of beating the clock of his own age/accomplishment timetable had come to him the Smith Barney way: He earned it.

Among other things, *Rent* is about struggling through adversity with dignity. And as Jeff describes, the show's phenomenal success followed one of the bleaker periods in his own professional life. "A whole bunch of things fell through," he says. "Contacts, contractors, and connections all seemed to be 'moving on' from places I'd worked. I was seriously questioning what I was going to do next. It was a roller coaster." Then came *Rent*. Tony awards. Pulitzer Prize for drama. Rave reviews in major print media. Hit CD. Signed DeNiro-underwritten movie deal with rumors of Spike Lee directing. Appearances on Letterman, Leno, and at the Democratic National Convention. Roller coaster, indeed. And perhaps the scariest part of the ride is that it nearly didn't happen at all.

"I was asked to do this East Village rock opera workshop," he recalls, "but the original MD [music director] got replaced. The new MD [Tim Weil] called and left a message, saying, 'I heard that you found out about the gig, but I've already got my own guys. Sorry. Next time.' And he just hung up. So I said to my wife, 'I'm not going to just let this go, I'm going to call this weenie up and let him have it.' So I called him and said, 'Look, I know you have your own guys, but I want you to understand that I was booked and I kept my mouth open.' I was telling him off, saying 'This is legitimate theater and they shouldn't do this to musicians.' And then there was this pause, and he said he'd look into it.

I really wasn't expecting anything from my call, but he got back to me and said, 'You know, I followed this through and it seems that the theater was remiss in not making the situation clear to me, so in all fairness it's still your gig.' And I knew then that this was a do-the-right-thing kind of guy, not a political guy. And then the first rehearsal really clicked, and he said to me during the break, 'As it turns out I think you are going to work out better than the guy I had in mind anyway.' And we've been fast friends ever since."

Of course, opportunity is just part of the formula for success. The rest, for Jeff, was a lot of preparation and maintaining an open mind. Following years of high school drum



corps, Beatles- and Allman Brothers-influenced original bands, and a wide variety of club work in his native Warwick, Rhode Island, Jeff advanced from four years of unsatisfyingly "bookish" music (and English) studies at Colby College in Maine to the jazz scene in Boston. There he studied with the late, great Alan Dawson and developed a following in the college and club circuit with a progressive rock-cum-fusion band. As that group began gigging in New York, Jeff joined another

Village club band that mixed elements of classical, pop, and rock, and he eventually decided to take a whole-hearted shot at the New York scene.

"When I made the move to New York I took anything, from casuals to comedy gigs to blues and jazz gigs," he says. "One time I got this call from a friend to go up to the Catskills and play for a Hawaiian show. I thought, 'How bizarre'—but I did it. And over the years I'd run into other musicians who said, 'Oh, I played that gig too.' [laughs] I found that a lot of the working musicians' suc-

cess happened in twisting ways through so many kinds of gigs. They don't say, 'Oh, that ain't hip.' They know it's a tough scene here, and unless you are one of *the* specialists in some style, you need to try to be as versatile as possible if you want to keep gigging. Because of the 'scrapple in the Apple,' you run into all sorts of amazing musicians playing all kinds of gigs. It's very intertwined."

The original *Rent* workshop ran for its planned eleven performances at the New York Theater Workshop (an organization Jeff worships for their support of productions purely for their artistic potential), but had already created a sizable buzz. "At the end of the run we went into the studio for this all-night marathon to lay it down," Jeff remembers, "and then some other producers were talking about backing another production of it off-Broadway. The next year was spent with a lot of rewriting and business things to pull it together for a full off-Broadway production. It was supposed to be about a two-month run, but the papers started running these amazing reviews, and we got extended for a month, and then very quickly, we got the call to move it to Broadway."

Some of the cast members literally jumped for joy. Jeff and couple of the bandmembers weren't so sure. In recent years the Broadway musical scene had grown notoriously stodgy and conservative, relying on time-tested, Disney-compatible themes in its "new" musicals, and resurrecting such venerable but long-in-the-tooth thoroughbreds as *Showboat* and *The King And I* to fill producers' and investors' ever-growing coffers. "A lot of big-time New York business people were telling the producer, 'Don't do it!'" Jeff remembers. Meanwhile, other more reliable gigs beckoned him away.

Though a smash in New York's earthy (some would say rough and grimy) East Village, *Rent's*, themes bode a rocky migration uptown; you just can't Disney-fy notions like homelessness, racial intolerance, violent crime, AIDS, and drug addiction. (And of *Rent's*, three love interests, only one involves "boy meets girl") Characters sing of commitment in the age of low T-cell counts and AZT breaks. And they extoll the nobility of the Bohemian ethos (with brief digressions into bondage and body piercing), while production-number staples such as frolicking Alpine villagers in *lederhosen* give way to a transvestite in a Santa Claus suit and platform shoes. So what stops theatergoers from crying, "blasphemy!" and bolting for the exits?

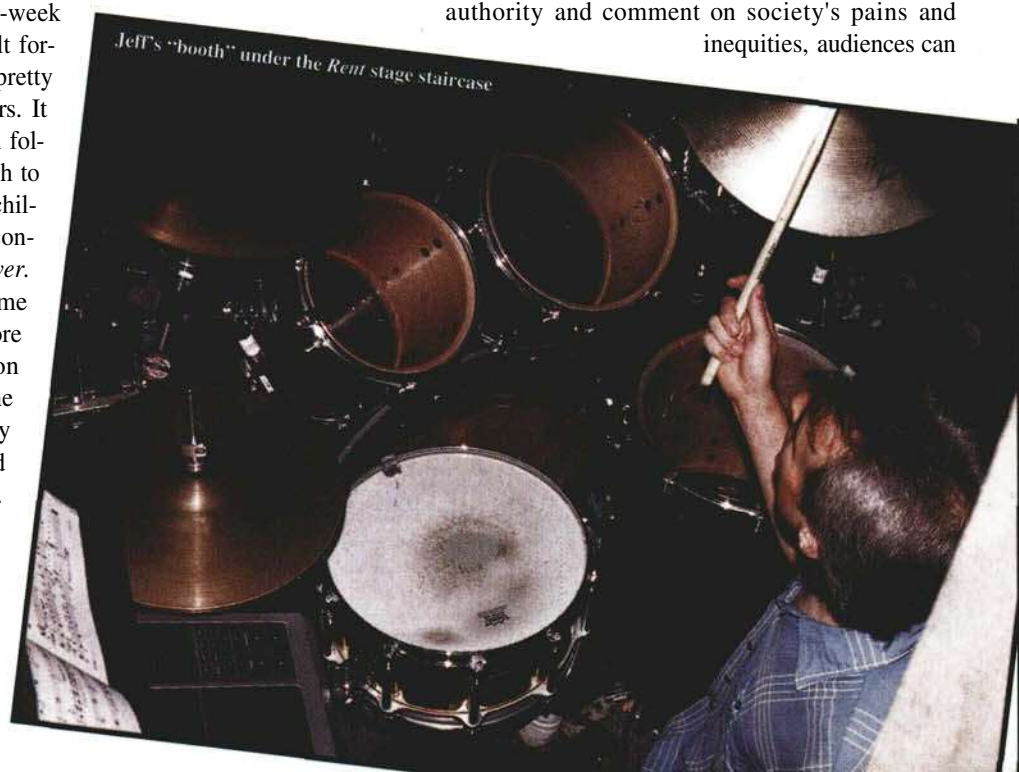
In large part, it's the music—much of it rock, with attitude and edge to spare. And because it is rock's *traditional* province to defy authority and comment on society's pains and inequities, audiences can



The *Rent* band, left to right: Tim Weil, Kenny Brescia, Steve Mack, Daniel A. Weiss, and Jeff Potter

Although Jeff had already acquired a good deal of music reading experience from private teachers in Rhode Island and from Alan Dawson, he began to really bear down on his reading skills to prepare for show work. Those skills were first tested at a children's theater in New Jersey, which, because it employed mostly New York theater people and musical directors, provided valuable contacts for future work.

"I made a connection there with somebody doing a 'bus and truck' tour of *Evita*" he recalls. "It was a grueling schedule—mostly one-nighters over a ten-week tour across the country and back—but I felt fortunate to be hired for pit work, playing a pretty challenging book, and playing good theaters. It also gave me a chance to get familiar with following a conductor and knowing how much to take charge in the pit. Later, one of the children's theater people referred me to the conductor for a major national tour of *Big River*. That was also a good early show for me because it's not really orchestral; it's more centered from a kit." A recommendation from a contractor led to Jeff's becoming the rehearsal drummer for the Radio City Christmas show (with the Rockettes), and later, as a very regular sub at Radio City. These credentials, plus some reviews in Europe, more subbing on Broadway, and other shows and tours, began writing Jeff's name in contractors' books.



handle—and applaud—*Rent's* untraditional message.

This dependence on a strong pop foundation places a sizable responsibility on the band—and perhaps especially on Jeff. Their importance to the show is evident in the album producer's use of them (vs. hired studio players) on the album, and on the cast's live appearances on Letterman and Leno. Jeff points out, "Our composer, Jonathan Larson, was very much aware that contemporary music doesn't just mean a rock beat. It means an interaction of bandmembers that gives the music a 'band quality.' It can't sound stiff, like we're reading it out of a book. If we fail to grasp that, if the groove becomes subservient to the drama, then we're defeating what defines the idiom. Tim turned out to be the *perfect* guy to get that organic, contemporary band quality—for our sake *and* for the singers' sake."

On at least a few of the tunes, Jeff's contribution to the band quality and groove takes the form of some serious slammin' backbeats. "Hitting hard is not about, 'Hey, I want to be macho,'" he insists. "You have to hit the snare a certain way to get a real rock sound that's right for the music." Jeff also credits his Pearl *Masters Custom* kit and 6 1/2" *Free Floating* brass snare. "The snare is amazing, and the bass drum is hands-down *the* best bass drum I've ever owned. It knocked out everybody when I fit it in." A rigorous rehearsal schedule, and then eight shows a week, repaid him with an injured finger that caused him to temporarily switch to matched grip on the hardest tunes, and he continues to bandage the digit with spongy thermal T-shirt material. But he's healing, and has no regrets.

Rent's physicality is also reflected in Jeff's pre-show dressing room calisthenics. "I swing my arms around and do some stretching to loosen up, and then I do like a dozen push-ups to get blood in my arms and make sure they're warmed up. The first number, 'Rent,' is long and fast and loud. If I don't do the push-ups I start straining by the middle of the tune."

Perhaps mixed for broad intelligibility of its lyrics, the *Rent* CD doesn't convey just how physical and ballsy the show's heavier tunes really are. "People have told me it doesn't capture the full intensity of the live performance," Jeff acknowledges. "Some of the sounds and the punchiness were subdued. Live, the band sound really kicks."

The live band sound Jeff refers to *does* kick, compliments of Tim Weil (keys, MD), Kenny Brescia (guitar), Steve Mack (bass), and Daniel A. Weiss (keys, guitar)—and of course Jeff himself. Jeff has worked on *Rent* with these same four players since its inception. In addition to helping forge the rock-show-critical "band vibe" (exemplified by their pre-show, onstage jamming, a practice unheard of on Broadway that they'd transplanted from the looser East Village environment), Jeff appreciates being the show's inaugural drummer for the artistic license it afforded him. "A show's first drummer can influence the part a little more," he says. "If you come in in the middle of a tour or if you are subbing [for the regular drummer], you're expected to adapt to the established playing style. It can be tricky understanding how much you can take control and how much you have to adapt to what has already been done."

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However, once the parts are established in any show, changes are somewhat limited. "You obviously don't have as much freedom as if you were playing with four guys in a club band," Jeff says. "In pit work you always have to consider how your playing might affect a light cue or somebody on stage who is doing something dramatically that works against your intentions." *Rent* isn't as choreography-oriented as some shows, which, he explains, can be more restrictive. And because this cast's backgrounds include rock bands and other non-theatrical experience, they tend to "go with the flow" of minor variations in fills. Still, there are certain points where the action dictates what he plays. "For instance, there was a place where the director said, 'Just give me a bass drum and then a flam up, super hard,' because that matched the action of one of the characters violently slamming against a door. So that fill was more about the drama on stage than me doing something cool, like [stadium mega-fill sounds that say] 'Hey, look everybody, over here!'"

The drama also affects some of Jeff's more subtle musical choices. For example, he'd initially played "I'll Cover You" as a hard shuffle with heavy backbeats before noticing that the onstage action involves "this very winsome" interaction between the characters. "The groove needed to sound more breezy. So I lightened up, put a muffling ring on the snare, and switched to a pair of dowel sticks. Whereas on *Rent*, everybody on stage is pissed off, and they are all young, and they're throwing things in the fire—it's teenage angst. I said, 'Let me see if I can tap into that.' [laughs] So for that number I took off the muffling on the snare for a kind of glassy 'pang,' wide-open rimshot."

More generally—and more subtly still—Jeff employs a concept of drumset orchestration he learned from Alan Dawson. "Alan said that even when you're bashing out hard stuff, you have to bring out the important lines, like parts of a vocal arrangement, so it's not one wash coming out at you all at once. At different points, certain parts should stand out for certain reasons. So at one point maybe it's the hi-hat driving things with some punctuations on the floor tom, or at another it's just kick and snare. And even when the full drumset is played, the lead parts have to sneak

through. On a mainstream rocker like 'Out Tonight' I'm just bashing away. But on tunes like 'You'll See' there's a lot more [vocalist] expositional information happening, and it's played section-to-section with a lot of different textures. I have to orchestrate each section according to what's going on, but still keep the groove running through it. That kind of inner-dynamic control is essential in theater drumming."


Such musical decisions—and in general serving the drama—are made easier by Jeff and the band's actually performing *on stage*, not in a traditional orchestra pit. Jeff's three-quarter-height "booth" is built under a flight of stairs that is part of *Rent*'s set. "From a pit you tend to play the written parts more literally, because you may not know if what you're playing has a dramatic function up above you. Being onstage, you get a better idea of the drama all around you, which helps you make these kinds of choices."

In addition to enhancing his awareness of audience response and sense of involvement in the show, Jeff explains that (surprisingly) this arrangement allows him to

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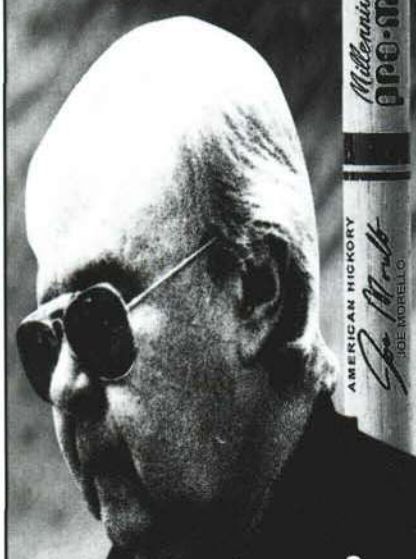

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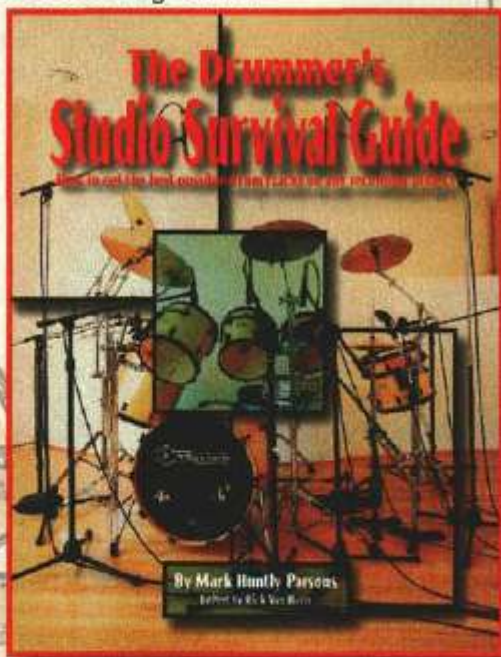
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play with more dynamic freedom than in a pit. "In pits your volume is isolated from the audience. But because things are usually very cramped, with the sound bouncing around a very confined space, the volume gets out of control, and the players end up having to wear ear plugs. Here, when we play loud, at least the sound has somewhere to go."

Jeff augments his acoustic kit with a Roland *Pad-80 Octapad II* and a Boss *DR-660*. For a few sounds he also taps into Tim's *Proteus Orchestral*. *Rent's* incidental percussion parts include bongos, congas, shaker, castanets, *Vibra-slap*, anvil, gong, and agogo bells. (Jeff gets paid for a synthesizer double, but as yet hasn't received a doubling fee for his first musical entrance: four bashes on a real metal trash can lid. "You know," he says, "I'm going to have to bring that up." [laughs]) He also accesses some of the *DR-660's* processed snare, bass drum, and floor tom samples. "On the verses of 'Without You,' for example, I play my bass drum and my hi-hat with my feet, and the snare part on the *Octapad*. On the bridge I switch over to the acoustic snare, then back again. The two sounds weren't that different; we didn't want to make it a jolting change, like, 'Oh, electric...acoustic...electric...acoustic,' because then it's distracting. I even switched to light rimshots on the acoustic for a closer match. The result was more of a textural change."

If there's a downside to playing for a long-running Broadway show—which *Rent* clearly will be—it's inertia. It looks great on your resume and surely helps you land future show work, but it can also lead to complacency. "It's easy to get a little too comfortable," Jeff concedes. "All you do is walk in, you don't set up drums, you play, you leave, good money, you know? And when you get other calls you think, 'Ah, why schlepp my drums out there?' But on the other hand, one of the beauties of the Broadway contract is that after a certain period and everything is locked in, you have quite a bit of freedom to sub-out [hire a substitute player] if you want to. A few weeks ago I took a gig with this great jazz pianist at a cabaret club. I made less money than if I'd played the show that night, but it gave me a break and a chance to tune into the swing feel again. I might also go to Hong Kong at the end of February for a

couple of shows with this review that I play for sometimes."

But because *Rent* is such a blast to play, Jeff hasn't felt compelled to sub-out his part too often. "Sometimes I get offered certain gigs and I realize that I'll get more of a workout of my skills just doing *Rent*. Some shows—especially the heavily conducted ones—can really erode your groove skills. This is one of the few show gigs I've done where I really feel like it's making me stronger and stronger."

Jeff sees the acceptance and growth of rock in musical theater as good news for drummers. "It will create more opportunities for people with that kind of experience—and I think most kit drummers have a band background. The orchestral part of shows is interesting, too, but I really love the band influence: finding the groove, and making the groove work to help make the song successful. With this kind of music coming in more and more, contemporary-style kit players will be able to put their experience into the pit."



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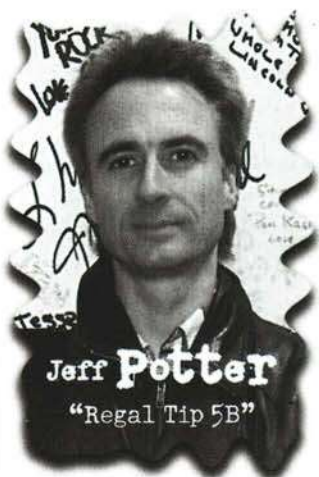


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MODERN DRUMMER'S

The purpose of MD's annual poll is to recognize drummers and percussionists in all fields of music whose musical efforts—recordings, live performances, or educational activities—have been especially notable during the past year. It is in no way meant to suggest that one musician is "better" than another. Rather, it is to call attention to those performers who, through their outstanding musicianship, have been inspirational to us all.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. You must use the official *MD* ballot—no photocopies.
2. Please print or type your selection in the corresponding box. See the category descriptions on the next page for clarification.
3. Make only one selection in each category. (It is not necessary to vote in every category. Leave blank any category for which you do not have a firm opinion.)
4. Affix appropriate postage and mail the entire ballot to *Modern Drummer's*, offices at the address shown on the reverse of the ballot card.
5. Ballots must be postmarked no later than March 1, 1997. Results will be announced in the July '97 issue of *MD*.
6. Return Address/Prize Drawing: Fill in the return address lines on the address side of the ballot to be eligible for *MD's* voter-appreciation drawing. Three ballots will be drawn at random; each winner will receive a Flashback Tee and a 6-Panel Cap from MD's Classic Casuals line.

MD'S HONOR ROLL

Artists who have been selected by the *MD* readership as winners in any one category of the Readers Poll for a total of five years are placed on MD's Honor Roll. This is our way of recognizing the unique talent and lasting popularity of those special artists. Artists placed on the Honor Roll in any given category are subsequently ineligible in that category, although they remain eligible in other categories. (The exception to this is the "Recorded Performance" category, which will remain open to all artists.) Artists who have achieved Honor Roll status (and are now ineligible in the category shown) are listed below.

Alex Acuna: Latin/Brazilian Percussionist
Airto: Latin American and Latin/Brazilian Percussionist
Kenny Aronoff: Pop/Mainstream Rock Drummer
Louie Bellson: Big Band Drummer
Gary Burton: Mallet Percussionist
Dennis Chambers: Funk Drummer and Electric Jazz Drummer
Anthony J. Cirone: Classical Percussionist
Vinnie Colaiuta: Studio Drummer and All-Around Drummer
Phil Collins: Pop/Mainstream Rock Drummer
Vic Firth: Classical Percussionist
Steve Gadd: All-Around Drummer and Studio Drummer
David Garibaldi: R&B and Funk Drummer
Larrie Londin: Country Drummer
Rod Morgenstein: Rock and Progressive Rock Drummer
Neil Peart: Rock Drummer and Multi-Percussionist
Buddy Rich: Big Band Drummer
Ed Shaughnessy: Big Band Drummer
Steve Smith: All-Around Drummer
Lars Ulrich: Hard Rock Drummer
Dave Weckl: Electric Jazz Drummer
Tony Williams: Jazz and Mainstream Jazz Drummer

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READERS POLL BALLOT

CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

HALL OF FAME

Vote for the artist, living or dead, who you feel has made a historic contribution to the art of drumming. Current members of the Hall of Fame are not eligible for this category. Those members are: **Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, John Bonham, Keith Moon, Neil Peart, Steve Gadd, Louie Bellson, Tony Williams, Billy Cobham, Joe Morello, Carl Palmer, Bill Bruford, Art Blakey, Max Roach, Jeff Porcaro, Larrie Londin, Elvin Jones, and Vinnie Colaiuta.**

ALL-AROUND

This category is not intended to indicate the "overall best" drummer. Rather, it is to recognize drummers noted for performing in a variety of musical styles and applications, instead of one specific band or genre.

UP & COMING

This category is reserved for the most promising artist brought to the public's attention within the past twelve months.

STUDIO

This category is for drummers known as multi-session players who record with many artists, or who are involved in projects such as jingles, TV, and film scores. (Do not include recording artists who spend time in the studio, but only as a member of one group.)

ELECTRIC JAZZ

This category is reserved for drummers who perform in contemporary jazz, fusion, or jazz-rock.

MAINSTREAM JAZZ

This category is restricted to drummers in small-group, acoustic jazz.

PERCUSSIONIST

This category is for artists noted for their performance on ethnic, hand, and specialty percussion instruments (as opposed to drumset).

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

Vote for your favorite recording by a drummer as a leader or as a member of a group. Limit your selection to recordings released within the past twelve months. Please include the artist's name, the complete title of the song, and the album from which it came.

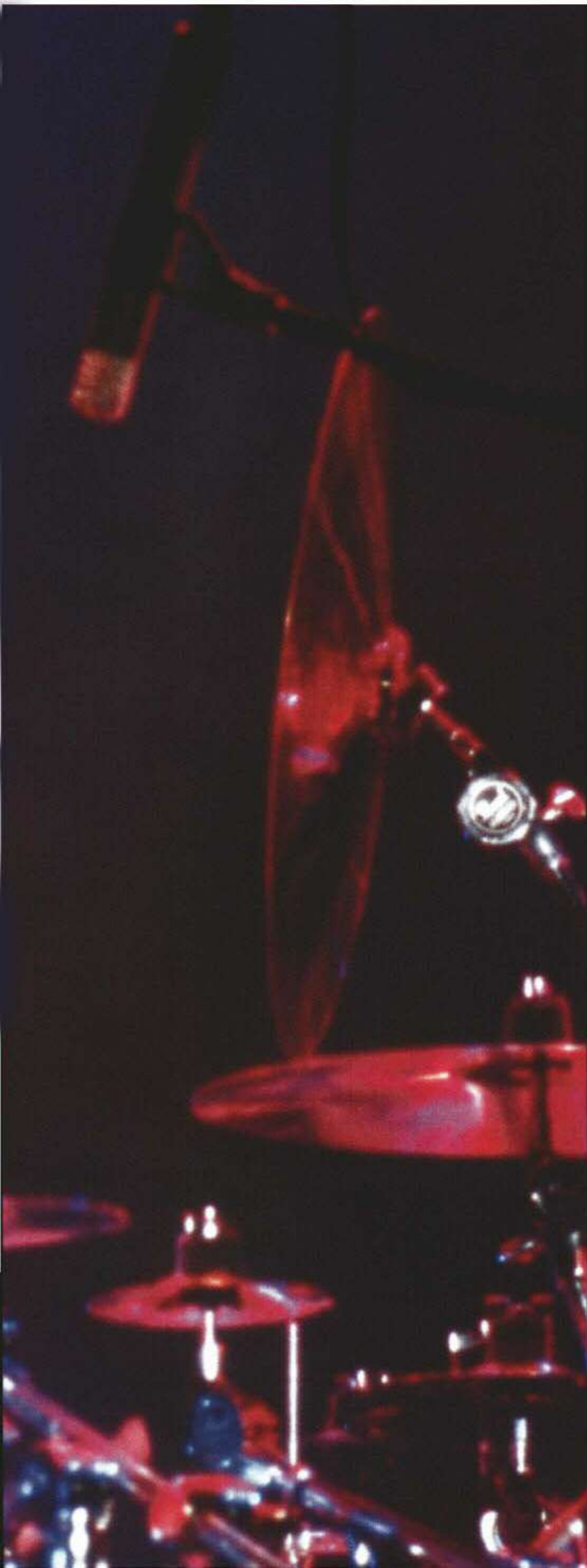
Mano's

Alex

Gonzalez

by Robyn Flans





It has long been said that music is the universal language—and Mana is proof. Whether or not you speak Spanish, the energy and vibe of their music communicates its intentions clearly. Mana was the first Latin rock group to reach 500,000 sales in the U.S., with their 1995 release *Donde Jugaran Los Ninos*. That same year they sold out Radio City Music Hall in New York and three consecutive nights at the Universal Amphitheater in Los Angeles. Their first extended tour of the United States in W6 drew the following praise from the *Boston Globe*: "Mana is one of the best bands on the planet. In any language."

At the core of Mana's success are the musicians, including drummer Alex Gonzalez. However, that success has been anything but "overnight." from 1984 to 1991 the band toured Mexico, sleeping in a van, eating bread and milk, and playing in clubs—sometimes for five people, sometimes for none at all. Eventually, more people began to show up, but success still seemed elusive. In February of 1991 Alex gave notice to Mana's lead singer, Fernando. Fernando asked Alex to hold on until October.

In April, Mana exploded in Mexico. Once they received a gold album (100,000 copies), the record company re-released a 1990 single, "El Sol." They went from small clubs to large discotheques, then to stadiums and bull rings in Mexico and South America. In 1995, *Donde Jugaran Los Ninos* was named "Latin Pop Album of the Year" by *Billboard*. By the following year, the album had sold over a million copies in Mexico alone. In the United States it was certified gold. Their current *Cuando Los Angeles Lloran* received a Grammy nomination in 1996 for "Best Latin Pop Performance—Vocal/Instrumental." Alex is finally living the life he had visualized while growing up—first in Miami, then in Mexico—when he'd lock himself in his bedroom and pretend to play in an arena for thousands of people.

After setting up cardboard boxes like drums at age three, Alex's parents gave him a toy set. When he was five, his kindergarten teacher gave him a Slingerland drumset her father had given her. (Mrs. San Juan must have seen his talent; Alex still recalls how she wrote on a picture that he'd be famous one

day.) That same year, Alex recruited a kid he saw twirling some sticks to teach him—thirty minutes every Wednesday for \$1.10. Those were his last lessons. He played to the Beatles, KISS, and Led Zeppelin until he was eleven. Then he heard the Police's "Don't Stand So Close To Me."

"The day I heard that song, it totally changed my world," Alex says. "The drumming was so interesting. I went out and bought all the Police albums up to that point. I copied every note and every cymbal splash that Stewart Copeland did. Then, at age twelve, I joined my first local cover band in Miami. From then on, I was very heavily influenced by Copeland and the Police. I'm still a huge fan."

When Alex was fifteen, his mother remarried and moved to Mexico. Customs would not allow Alex to bring the Tama kit that had replaced the Slingerland three years earlier, but it was a blessing in disguise. While his stepfather was browsing the newspaper ads for a used drumset, he came across an ad saying: "Local rock band looking for a drummer between the ages of fifteen and twenty-two with more than nine years experience." It turned out to

**"It's
good to play
as well as you
can, but you also
have to entertain
people."**



be Sombrero Verde, which later became Mana, a very Police-influenced band that had started singing rock in Spanish in 1980. Alex auditioned, got the gig, and immediately had to move to Gaudalajara, where he's been living by himself ever since. His parents were very supportive, however. "I owe them a lot," says Alex.

Before he knew it, Alex was preparing to go into the studio for the first time. "I practiced with a metronome for one year," he recalls. "I had read in *Modern Drummer* how difficult it is to follow a click track, and I didn't want to make a fool of myself. I practiced three hours a day, playing different timings and different songs. I remember when Phil Collins put out 'Easy Lover,' I had to copy it exactly. He is such a gifted musician. I saw him with Genesis and on his own. I also heard him with a progressive band called Brand X, and he was unbelievable."

Unfortunately, the first Polygram record was a miserable experience for the band. The hired producer was not supportive of their musical vision, and Alex wasn't even allowed to use his own drums. Some tracks were played with a drum machine. It was a lesson well learned, though. Since 1990's *Falta Amor*, Fernando and Alex have produced Mana's records, which have been a true reflection of the group's excellence.

Alex says veteran drum tech Paul Jamieson has been a big help to him in the studio since Mana's 1992 recording. "The way Jamo tunes the drums, they just jump out at you," he says. "I've learned a lot watching him.

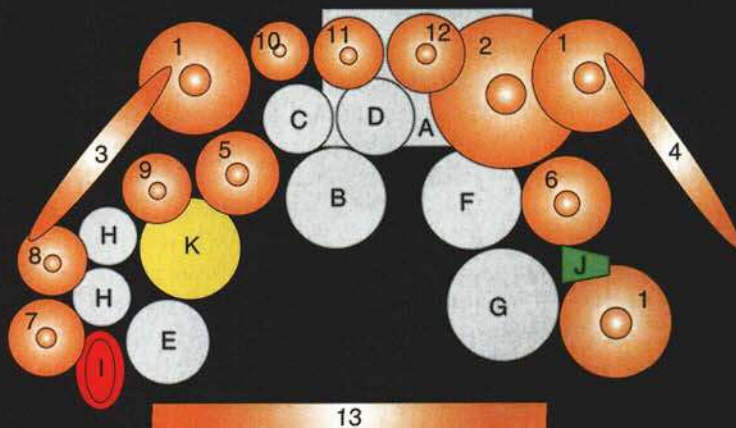
I tune the snare, though, because that's my sound. I tune it very tight, like Manu Katche and Stewart Copeland's dry, cracky snares. My kick drums are 24s, and I think that's where the John Bonham thing comes in, with very punchy and powerful low toms. I'm also a huge cymbal freak, and I've been playing Paiste cymbals since I was eight years old. My first cymbal was a 505 18" crash.

"*Cuando Los Angeles Lloran* has been our most experimental album," Alex continues, "in the sense that we risked a little more. We brought in a lot more rock guitar. There's still a Latin influence on some songs like 'Selva

Negra' or 'El Reloj Cucu.' 'El Borracho (The Drunk)' has a feel that is taken from Brazilian music, so I'm doing a syncopated pattern on the snare and the hi-hats while my bass drum is doing totally the opposite. It was pretty difficult, because I was trying to get this whole vibe going between reggae, Brazilian, and vallenato. All the *Quarter Toms* and timbale stuff are going on at the same time.

"The song 'Siembra El Amor' is a cross between the Beatles' 'Strawberry Fields' and 'Norwegian Wood' and music from India, so I have all this programming of tabla and percussion going on. I wanted to go for the Ringo sound

Alex's Setup



Drumset: Pearl *Masters Custom* maple (custom paint finish by Johnny Douglas)

A. 18x24 kick drum

B. 3 1/2x14 brass free-floating piccolo

C. 8x8 tom-tom

D. 10x10 tom-tom

E. 10x12 tom-tom

F. 14x14 floor tom

G. 16x16 floor tom

H. *Quarter Toms*

Cymbals: Paiste

1. 16" *Sound Formula* power crash

2. 22" *Signature* power ride

3. 18" *Sound Formula* thin China

4. 20" *Sound Formula* thin China

5. 12" *Sound Formula* medium heavy hi-hats

6. 13" *Sound Formula* heavy hi-hats

7. 10" *Rude 2002* splash

8. 8" *Signature* bell

9. 8" *Signature* splash

10. 6" cup chime no. 4

11. 8" *Signature* or *Sound Formula* splash

12. 10" *Signature* or *Sound Formula* splash

13. 34" gong

Misc:

I. LP tambourine

J. LP cowbell

K. Afro Percussion flat timbale

Electronics: Roland *TD-7, R8, TD-5, R70, Octapad*

Sticks: Vic Firth *American Classic Rock* nylon-tip

Mic's: Shure

of that period—the fat, psychedelic drum sound—so I told Jamo to bring a 26" kick, and 14", 16", and 18" toms. We put the drums in a huge concrete room, and we sped up the original time. I had to play the song with no cymbals and no hi-hats, just my feet and hands doing all the breaks twice as fast, without losing time. I miked all the cymbals and the hi-hats, and I put a flanger on the cymbals. I nailed it on the second take, doing the drum track with no bass or anything. On the other songs, we recorded drums and bass first, then guitar, and worked our way up.

"El Reloj Cucu" was a song Fernando wrote in memory of his father, who had passed away. The vibe in the studio was incredible—we had a lot of candles and incense and roses. We're pretty spiritual in that sense. I told Jamo to bring a 22" kick, a snare, and brushes. I surrounded myself with candles, brought all the lights down, and just went off. I've never had experience playing brushes, but I played what sounded and felt right."

Although Mana uses sequencers live, Alex makes sure to program them so the bandmembers are able to improvise. "I believe in technology, but I don't believe in letting it take over what you do," he says. "I try to make it sound as real as possible. With Mana I use a lot of percussion. I just try to think like a percussion player. Luis Conte is one of my best friends, and he's recorded all the albums with us. I tell him what I did on the drum machine on the demo, and then I say, 'Make it better.' After he does whatever he does on the album, I get my *Octapad* kit and try to copy what he did so it can sound like the album. I use the Roland *TD-7* sound module for all the percussion, and I'm triggering my kick with

another Roland sound module, the *TD-5*. Everything else is acoustic. I just have a little bit of the triggered sound to reinforce the lows and add more punch."

Alex also sings live, and, in fact, sang lead on one of their hits, "Me Vale." "Playing and doing background vocals is difficult, so imagine taking the lead," Alex says. "What I do is split myself into two parts. One section of my mind is thinking about what I have to sing, while the other is concentrating on what I'm playing. I use a wireless Shure headset mic' so I can jump up and down and do everything I do without a problem. You also need a good stomach in order to do this, because you have to sing from your stomach. You can't sing from your throat. You also have to concentrate on breathing through the nose, and you *must* have good concentration and good timing. When you're singing, your vocal timing is sometimes contrary to the timing of your playing."

Mana live is an exciting experience. Alex loves the spotlight, and he thrills his audience during his ten-minute solo. "I've always been kind of a show-off," admits Alex. "I think music and entertainment together is important. It's good to play as well as you can, but you also have to entertain people. That's something that just evolved. First I started flipping my sticks around. I saw a friend play, and every time he was going to use the ride cymbal, he'd flip the stick one revolution and play with the tip. Then when he'd finish playing the ride, he'd flip it again, catch it, and use the butt part for the hi-hats. I thought it was interesting, so I stole that from him. Then I saw a lot of the twirling stuff from drummers like Tommy Lee—and Louie Bellson doing all those hi-hat things

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with the sticks. I just took it to my level, and it's become a signature of the way I play. You need to practice a lot on the timing of it, though. My jumping on the drums and all the crazy stuff I do just started evolving on the stage. I had the sense that I needed to do more than just play. You definitely need to have good timing and know where to do it in the song. I'm not perfect; I've dropped sticks. But I have a huge stick caddy right next to me, and I just pull them out so fast that it looks like I don't drop them.

"When it comes to the technical stuff, I've learned basic things, like single-stroke rolls, double-stroke rolls, paradiddles, and flams. I think drum videos are the greatest thing. It's like having your favorite drummer teach you. You can go back to it as much as you need to and he won't lose his patience," Alex laughs. "I've always liked solos, and I think my solos have gotten better because I've matured a lot. I've always looked at a drum solo from both a drummer's point of view and a fan's point of view. I've seen drummers do complicated stuff, which, as a drummer, I've admired and respected. But it would bore people who don't know about drumming. Those people would go get a beer while this guy is busting his butt trying to impress people. A solo has to be entertaining—and at the same time, it has to sound good."

It's no surprise that Alex loses one to two pounds every night. He knows how important it is to be in good physical shape. "When you hit the drums as hard as I do, it's very physical. In some countries, like Bolivia or Ecuador, our rider asks for a paramedic to be behind the stage with oxygen because of the elevation. When I run out of air, my drum tech knows. A lot of people don't play in La Paz because they can't. You have to be in good condition. I don't do drugs, I don't smoke, and I try to get as much exercise as I can. I also get regular check-ups at the doctor. I make sure my heart and blood pressure are fine.

"It's funny how people speculate and make up things. People see me play and say, 'He must do coke, because it's impossible that he can play with that much energy.' But I was always a hyper kid. And I've learned how to rest and eat well while touring. I love to party, but I know my limits. I've never done drugs in my life. I've always been afraid of them. I've seen so

many unbelievable musicians lose their lives to drugs and alcohol. It's a shame that people who are blessed with that much talent just throw their lives down the toilet like that."

Setting examples is important to Mana group members. Many of their songs convey positive messages, and the band has established Selva Negra (Black Forest), a program dedicated to educating the public about the growing environmental problems throughout Latin America.

"When you have the opportunity to play in front of hundreds of thousands of people, it's important to say something," says Alex. "I don't have kids yet, but I'd hate for my kids to come up to me one day and say, 'Hey dad, you had all the press, the TV, and millions of fans listening to you, and you never said anything to try to make this world a better place.'"



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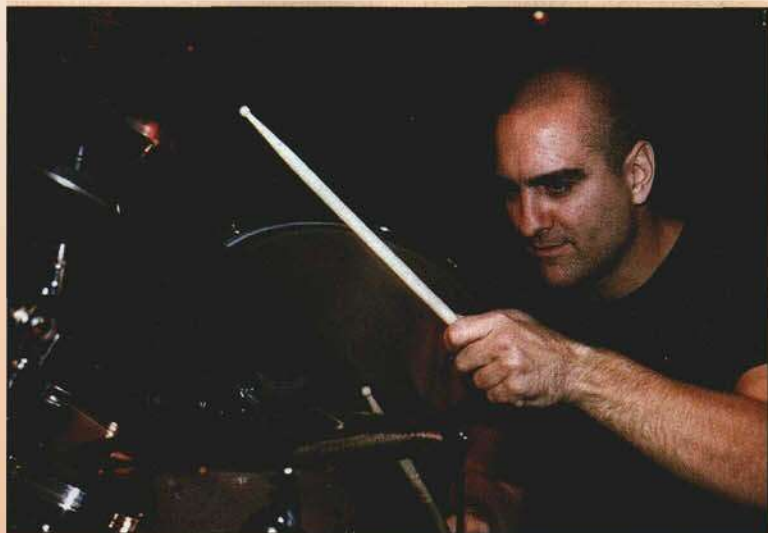
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Florida Drum Expo '96

Thoroughbred Music of Tampa and Clearwater, Florida presented its eighth annual Florida Drum Expo on Sunday, October 13, 1996 at the University of South Florida in Tampa. The performance drew a crowd of nearly 1,000 drumming enthusiasts—who were also treated to a consumer products show put on by the various sponsoring manufacturers. Sunday's show was preceded by clinics held in Thoroughbred stores on Saturday. Here are some of the highlights of the weekend.



Tim "Herb" Alexander performed creatively with his Laundry project mates, and fielded questions regarding his departure from Primus.



The ever-inspirational Dom Famularo emceed the event, opening with a blistering display of technique.



Walfredo Reyes, Sr. (left) and Jr. played individually and together, demonstrating the techniques and musicality involved when Latin percussion and drumset are combined.



Sean Vennett

Australian phenom Virgil Donati arrived at the Expo as a somewhat "unknown quantity." He left behind an audience on its feet and screaming with disbelief at his astounding abilities.



Tony Williams played a non-stop, forty-minute solo that began with a double-stroke roll on the snare drum and culminated with many of the fiery musical patterns that Tony is famous for.



Sean Vennett

Gary Chaffee (left) and jazz legend Elvin Jones presented clinics at Thoroughbred's Tampa store on Saturday.



Sean Vennett

The Sounds Of Steel from Busch Gardens brought a taste of the Caribbean to South Florida.



Sean Vennett

Dennis Chambers brought the day to a close with a combination of brilliant soloing and performances with several dynamic musical tracks.

In addition, electronic percussion clinics were sponsored by Roland (featuring Steve Fisher), Yamaha (featuring Russ Miller), and ddrum. Sponsors for the Expo performances on Sunday included Drum Workshop, LP Music Group, Pearl, Premier, Pro-Mark, Sabian, Toca, Tama/Starclassic, Yamaha, and Zildjian. Additional Expo supporters included Beato, CPP-Belwin, Easton, Engineered Percussion, Evans, Hart Dynamics, HQ Percussion, Istanbul, Ludwig, Midco, Noble & Cooley, Paiste, PureCussion, Regal Tip, Remo, Rhythm Tech, Roc-N-Soc, Sonor, Vater, Vic Firth, XL Specialty Percussion, and *Modern Drummer*.

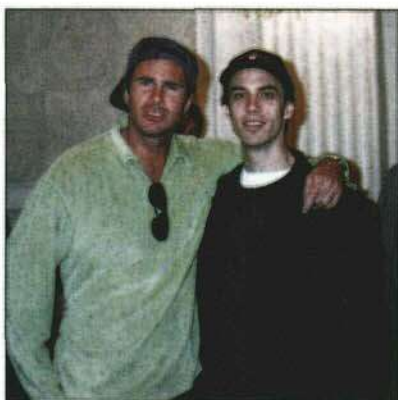
Big Apple Buddies Up With Expo

If the pavement seemed to quake beneath the feet of thousands of New York City marathoners on Sunday, November 3, the epicenter was undoubtedly the New York City Drum Expo and, later that night, the 1996 Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship Concert.

Pro, hobbyist, and up-and-coming drummers of all ages attended the Expo to have a whack at drums made by Ayotte, DW, GMS, Legend, Ludwig, Pearl, Starclassic, and Yamaha, as well as electronic kits made by Roland and Yamaha. Unlike NAMM shows, whose target audience is retailers, the Expo's goal is to involve and excite the general drumming public. "This show has always been pretty consumer-oriented," said Vic Firth vice president Kelly Firth. Alongside fellow drumstick manufacturers Vater and Pro-Mark, Firth sticks and accessories occupied a mercifully quieter, but nonetheless well-trafficked section of the New Yorker Hotel's conference facilities.

Paiste, Sabian, and Zildjian displayed their cymbals, and LP represented the Latin percussion market. Also onhand were Warner Bros./DCI, and New York's own Drummers Collective school. Fifteen-year-old Brooklyn drummer Don Phelps said of the Expo, "It's really cool getting to play on all these different drumsets." It was also really cool getting to rub shoulders with celebrity hangers-out like Chad Smith and Omar Hakim.

In addition to its display of wares, the Expo featured three clinic/performances. First up was Zach Danziger inaugurating some new tunes with his band, Bluth. Later, Yamaha clinician and product consultant Tony Verderosa blasted away some complex, multi-meter tracks off both his current and yet-to-be released CDs. He also demonstrated and fielded audience questions about Yamaha's DTX electronic percussion system. Closing out the Expo was Black Sabbath's Bobby Rondinelli. Performing solo and with his



Chad Smith (left), hangin' (and hammin') with Matt Cameron at the New York City Drum Expo



Billy Cobham

band, Pyramid, Bobby double-kicked long-standing fans and the uninitiated alike into respectful submission.

About nine hundred Expo-ers returned later to pack the adjacent Manhattan Center for the eighth annual Buddy Rich Memorial Scholarship Concert. For a couple of tunes each, some of the brightest stars in the drumming world thundered over classic Rich arrangements with the famed Buddy Rich Big Band (joined by guest bassist Will Lee). Luminary drummers included Dave Garibaldi, Mino Cinelu, Matt Cameron, John "J.R." Robinson, Sonny Emory, and Billy Cobham. Along with Steve Arnold, Cathy Rich—Buddy's daughter and chief organizer of the Memorial Scholarship concerts—emceed the event, and occasionally tossed (sponsor) Beato drum and stick bags into the crowd to keep them pumped up between performers. Billy, Sonny, and Mino closed out the night with an extended impromptu jam.

Sponsored by Sam Ash Music, Scabeba Entertainment, and all the participating manufacturers, the event was perhaps best summed up by Sonny Emory. After his dazzling display of chops and stick-spinning flash—and the volcanic standing ovation that followed—Sonny spoke of how Buddy Rich had inspired him, and how he felt honored to be asked to help keep Buddy's memory alive.

KoSA International Percussion Workshop

The first KoSA International Percussion Workshop was held August 4 through 11, 1996 at Johnson State College in Vermont. With a stated goal of providing "an avenue for percussionists and musicians of all types to meet with the leaders of percussion in the contemporary music scene," the Workshop presented elements of percussion from classical techniques to jazz and rock drumming to the newest hand drumming methods from non-Western cultures.

The Workshop was the brainchild of KoSA artistic director Aldo Mazza, a member of Canadian superstar percussion ensemble Repercussion (which performed at the event). Other performers included drumset artists Will Calhoun, Ignacio Berroa, Horacee Arnold, Dom Famularo, and Jeff Salisbury, and frame drummer Glen Velez.

The KoSA International Percussion Workshop is slated to become an annual event. For information regarding the 1997 Workshop, contact KoSA USA, P.O. Box 332, Hyde Park, VT 05655-0332, (800) 541-8401, or KoSA Canada, P.O. Box 333, Station A, Montreal, PQ H3C 2S1.

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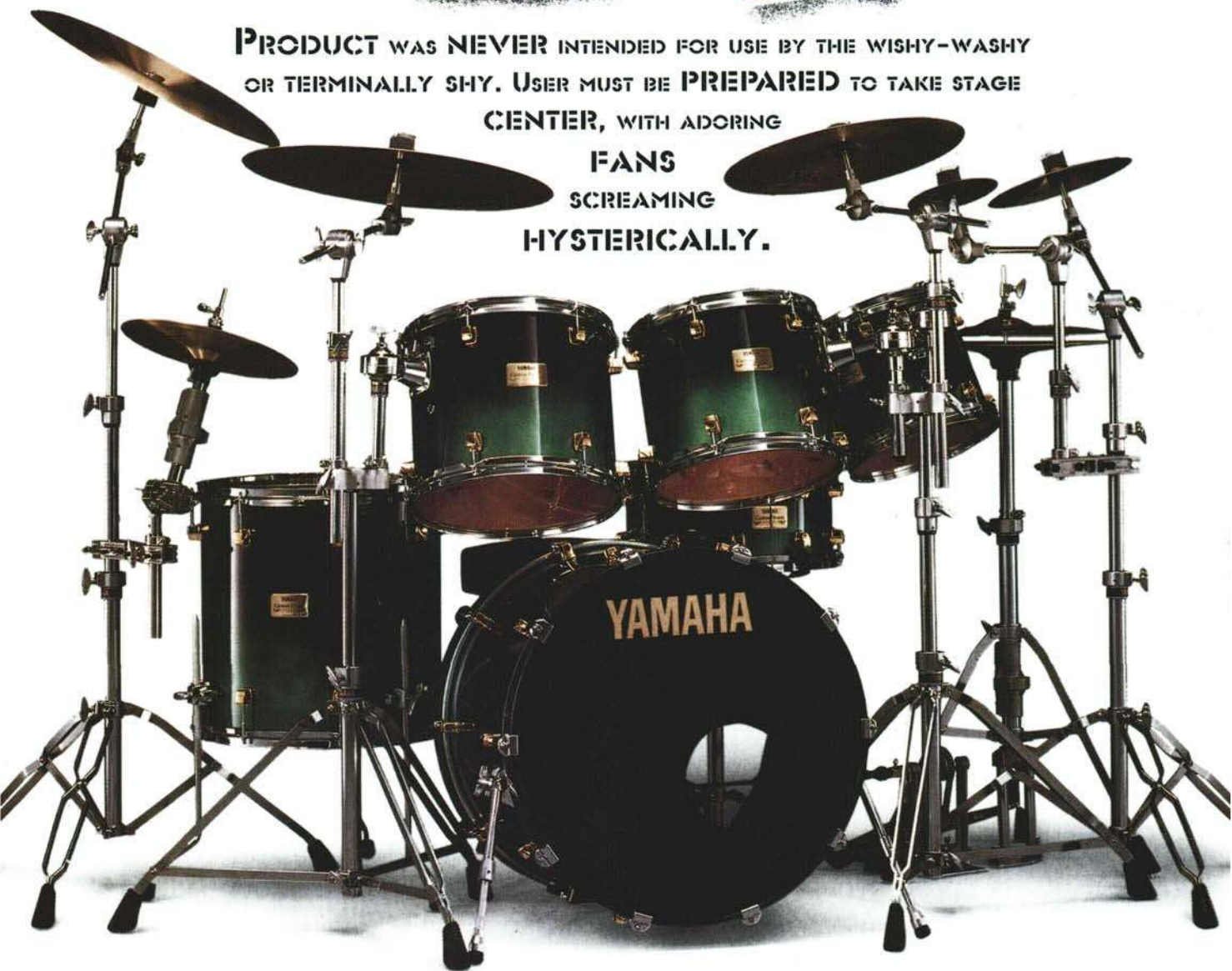
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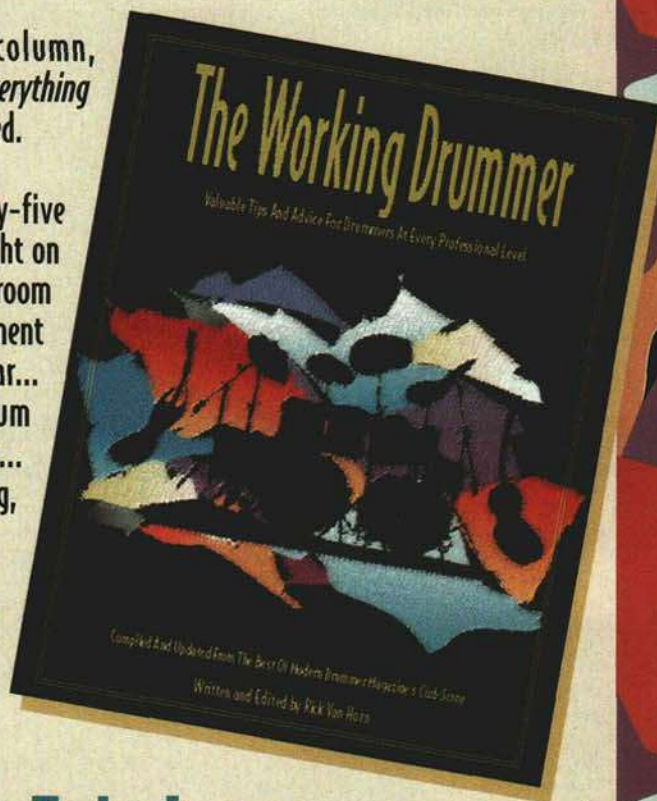
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DRUMKIT OF THE **Month**



Fairfax, Virginia drummer David McDavitt's kit is designed to meet "the unique rhythmic and melodic demands of Japanese taiko, African juju, Celtic, and other world music," while still lending itself to creative rock, jazz, fusion, and funk playing. According to David, "It captures the sterile and balanced aesthetics (both visual and acoustic) of Japanese art and music."

The kit employs Yamaha *Recording Custom* toms (tuned to a pentatonic scale) that alternate in color and pitch, radiating out from a central 12" tom. This provides a symmetrical appearance and aids in playing complex ostinato/tom-melody patterns. The "balanced" configuration of the kit is continued with a central snare (Yamaha brass), "mirrored" *K Zildjian* hi-hats, ride cymbals, crashes, and splashes, and a double bass pedal. The custom-painted bass drum head features a traditional pattern found on Japanese taiko drums; the red Japanese calligraphy represents the "Yamaha" brand name. The microphone hole is incorporated into the design. An LP talking drum and a Japanese bamboo Shakuachi flute complete the kit.

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

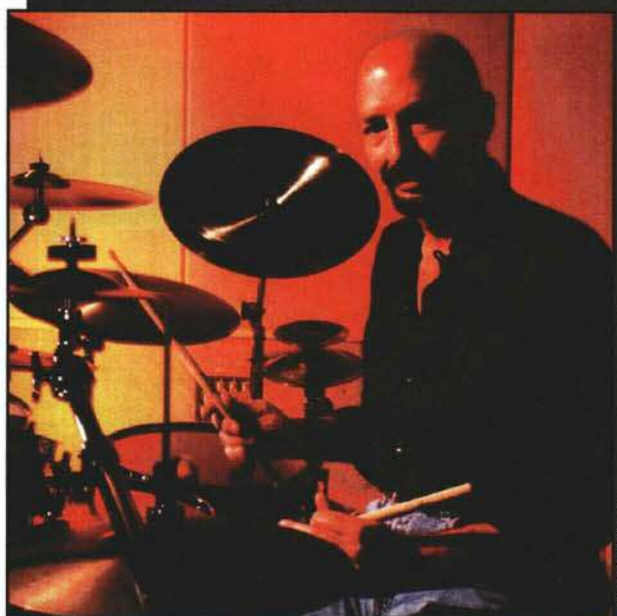
1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.



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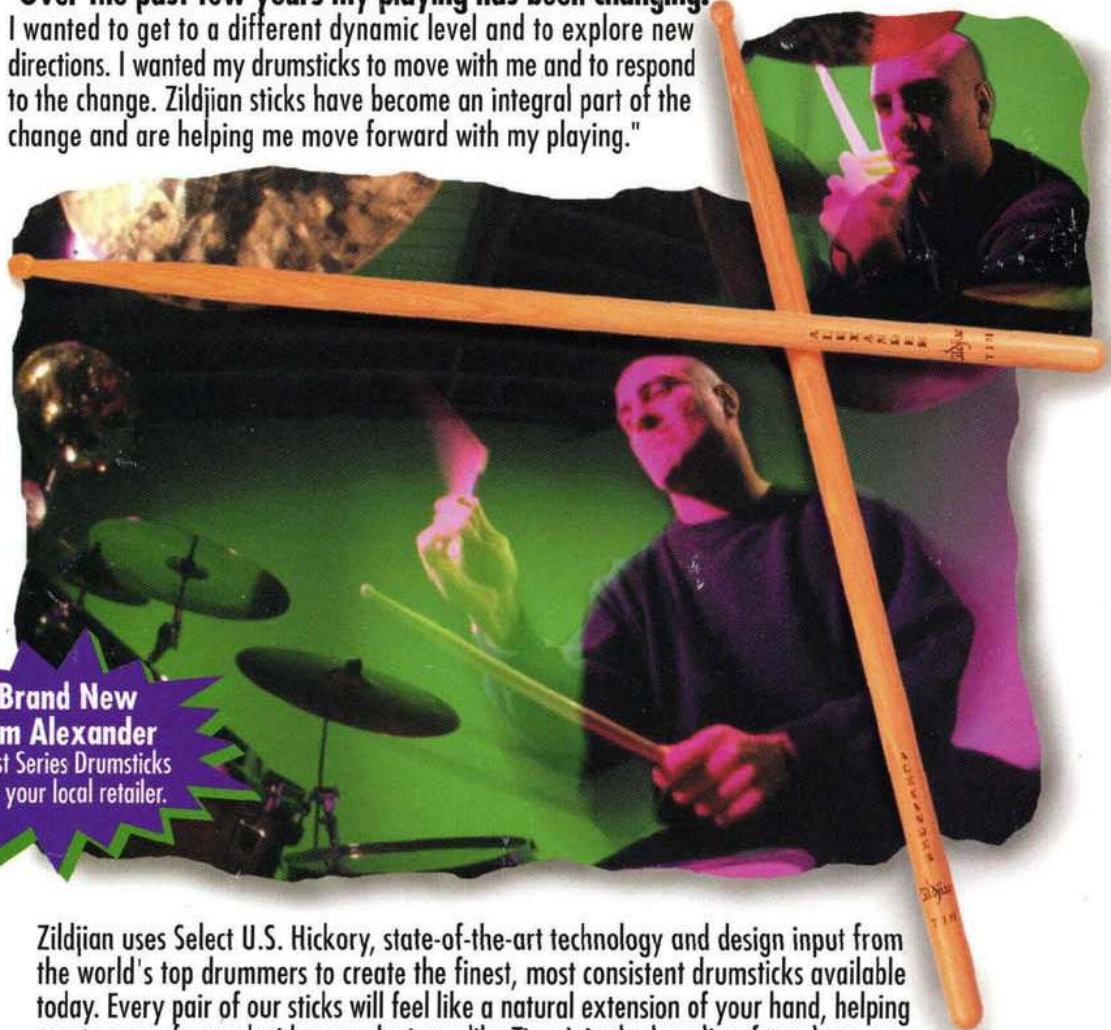
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