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ANTON FIER

THE DRUMMERS OF WEST GERMANY

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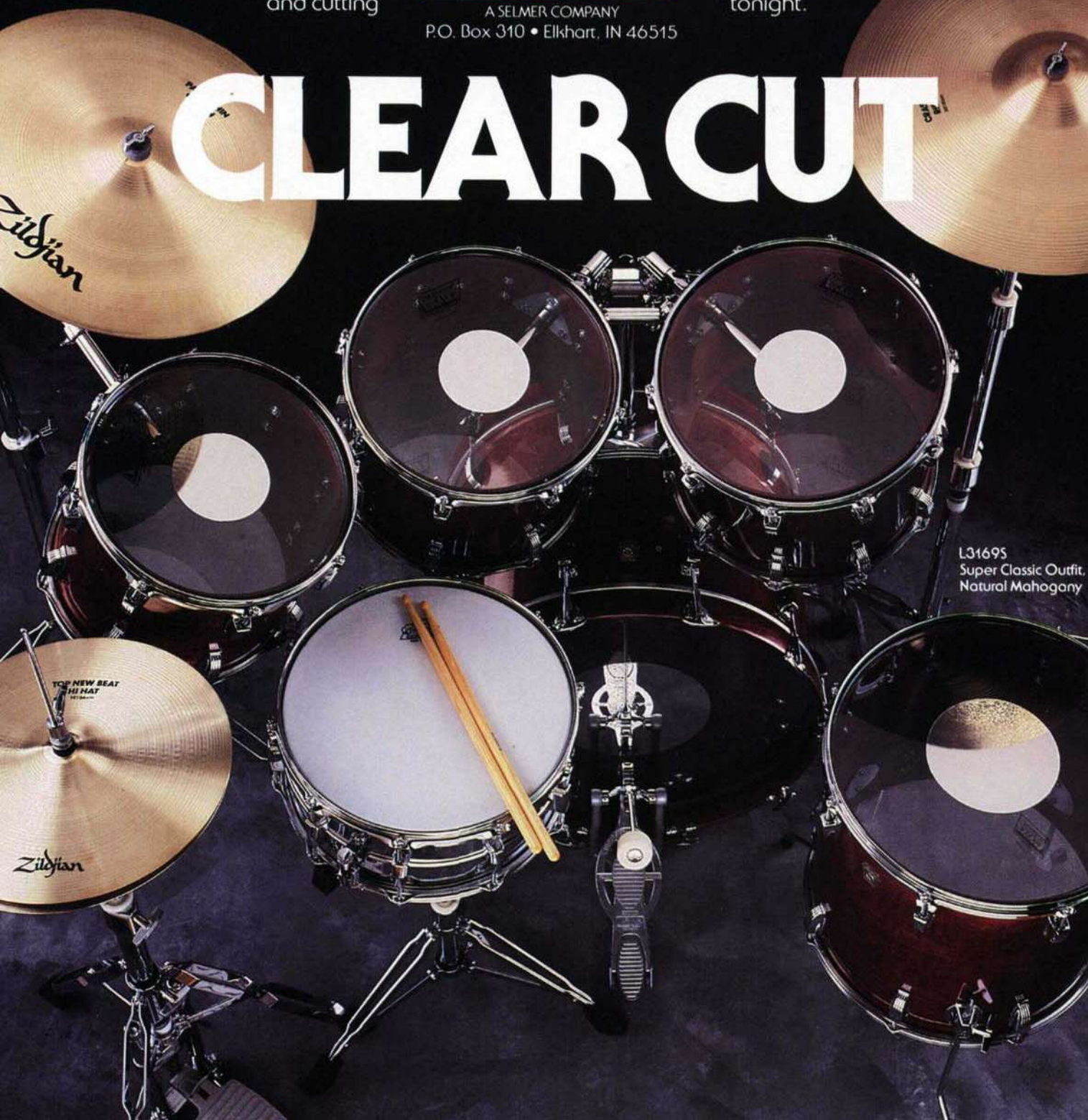
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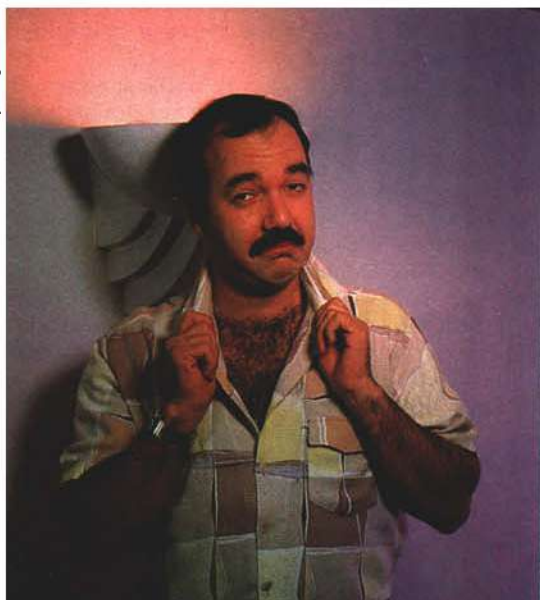


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Features

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Photo by Jaeger Kotos



PETER ERSKINE

The past couple of years have been productive for Peter Erskine, who has recorded with Bass Desires, John Abercrombie, Weather Report, and Steps Ahead, in addition to making a solo album. Peter discusses his role in these different situations, and explains how he is using the new technology.

by Rick Mattingly 16

ANTON FIER

His work with the Feelies and the Lounge Lizards established Anton Fier as one of the top drummers of the New York underground. But now, his group the Golden Palominos, along with his work on albums by Herbie Hancock, Mick Jagger, and Laurie Anderson, is enabling Fier to move uptown and be heard by a larger audience.

by Deborah Frost and Albert Bouchard 22

THE DRUMMERS OF WEST GERMANY

Although they might not get the same exposure as their American and British counterparts, German musicians are sharing the same concerns and quietly developing their own unique sound. *MD* talks to **Charly Antolini** of JazzPower, **Manni Von Bohr** of Hammerhead, and **Michael Eurich** of Warlock.

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DRUM FESTIVAL '87

Highlights of the first *Modern Drummer* Drum Festival, featuring **Dave Weckl**, **Kenny Aronoff**, **Rod Morgenstein**, **Alan Dawson**, and **Steve Gadd**.

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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW



Drum Festival '87

As this issue went to press, we were informed of the unfortunate death of Buddy Rich. A tribute to Buddy will appear in the August issue of MD.

Earlier this year, *MD* had the pleasure of presenting its very first Drum Festival, and I'm extremely pleased to say that the event was a resounding success. More than 1,000 people were in attendance to witness some incredible performances by five outstanding artists. And the diversity of each artist's clinic kept the appreciative audience spellbound throughout most of the seven-hour program.

Dave Weckl got things off to a rousing start with a wonderful display of technique, followed by an explanation of his complex acoustic and electronic setup. Kenny Aronoff kept the momentum going with his own special brand of drumming, emphasizing the solid beats that have made him one of the finest drummers in rock. A solo finale left no doubt about Kenny's ability to solo when called upon.

Rod Morgenstein, *MD*'s 1986 Readers Poll winner in the *Rock Drummer* category, was up next. Rod's super, high-energy performance with bassist Jerry Peek gave the audience a wealth of ideas on working with a bass player and handling odd time signatures. Rod's clinic was wrapped up with some very impressive double bass drum work. Alan Dawson, one of the great jazz drummers of all time, built his clinic around a musical approach to the drumset, along with a fine display of brushwork. As usual, Alan's style and finesse were a pleasure to see and hear.

The day-long event was topped off with the ever-remarkable Steve Gadd & the Gadd Gang, which included pianist Richard Tee, bassist Eddie Gomez, Cornell Dupree on guitar, and Ronnie Cuber on sax. As expected, Steve was in fine form throughout a nicely balanced set of tunes. And the

message Steve imparted through his drumming, rather than words, came through loud and clear: Set and maintain a solid groove, make every note count, put the music above everything else, mix it all together, and watch the band practically lift right off the stage.

By mid-afternoon, the backstage areas had become a virtual *Who's Who* of drumming: Joe Franco, Sandy Gennaro, Danny Gottlieb, Michael Shrieve, Anton Fig, Joe Morello, Peter Magadini, Dom Famularo, Max Weinberg, Gary Chester, and Jim Chapin, among others, were there to renew old friendships and start new ones. Anyone who's ever doubted the existence of that very special comradery among drummers would have been especially convinced of it at Festival '87. Be sure to see our special six-page photo spread starting on page 30.

My thanks to the wonderful people at Zildjian, Tama, Premier, Ludwig, and Yamaha for sponsoring our five artists. It's their continued interest in the education of serious young drummers that enables us to stage these kinds of events. We couldn't do it without them. My thanks also to every member of my staff who worked so hard to make the day a success, with special credit to Managing Editor Rick Van Horn, who coordinated every imaginable detail of the entire event—a great job, indeed!

Can we look forward to more *MD* Drum Festivals? Well, based on the overwhelming success of our first attempt, I'd be apt to say yes, certainly. So stay tuned to future issues of *MD* for further information on Drum Festival '88. You won't want to miss it!

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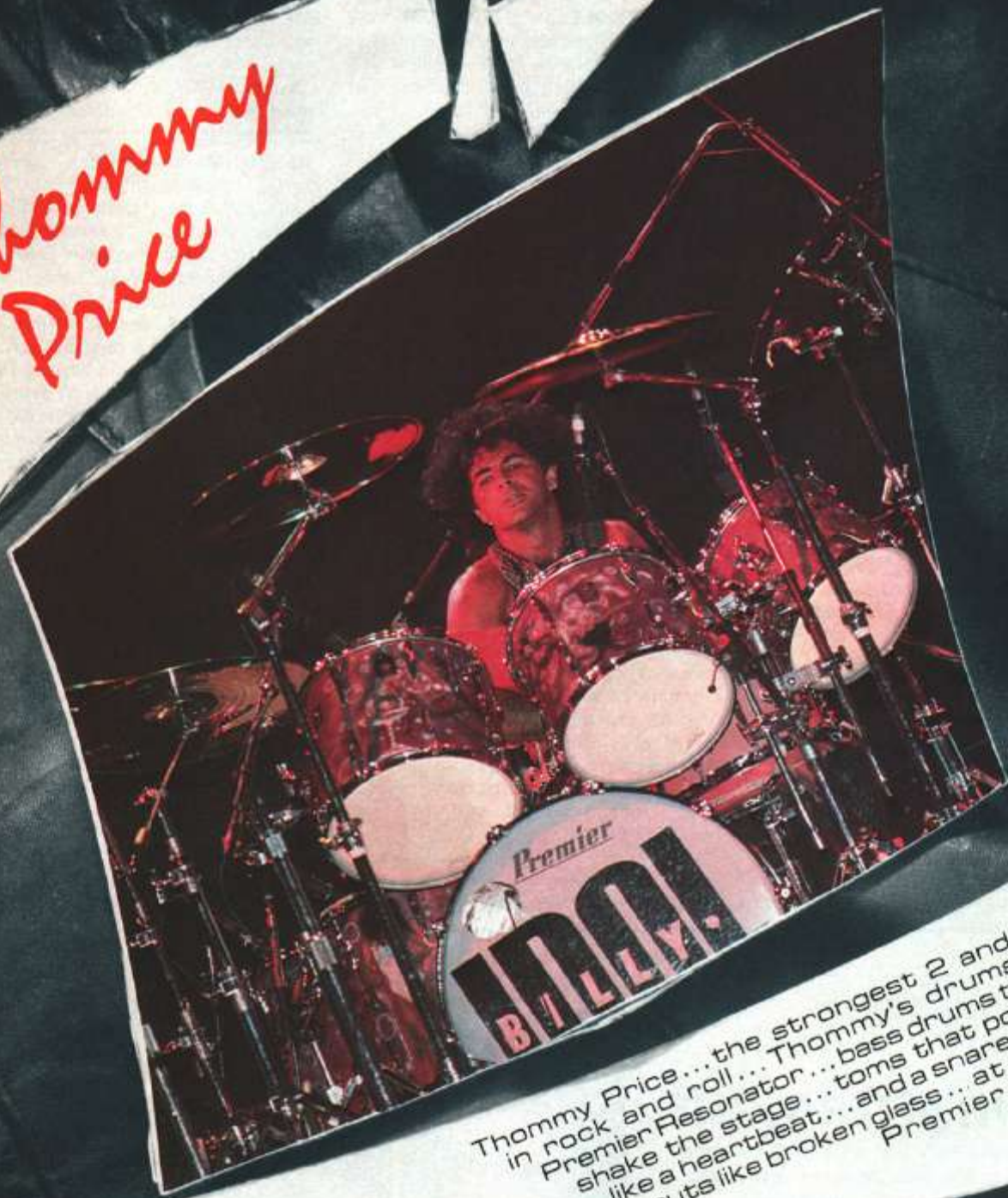
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ISSUE DATE: July 1987

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PREMIER

GRAEME EDGE

Like his poetry, your interview with Graeme Edge [March '87 MD] touched me mentally, physically—whole heart, body, and soul. Graeme put the past, present, and future in their proper perspective—especially when he described how he uses acoustic drums with electronics as his accompaniment. He is one great person, one great artist, and one great drummer! The interview was one of the best I've read since starting to read *Modern Drummer*.

Rob Greway
Pennsauken, NJ

MUFFLING TIP

Regarding a letter from D.B. of Elmhurst, IL, in *It's Questionable* in your February issue, I also have double-headed power toms and had the same problem. Someone suggested that I take some used heads and cut a ring out of them to place on top of my new heads. The width of the ring determines the amount of deadening effect; a ring approximately one inch wide worked forme. The "old head ring" stays in place, but is not actually attached to the drums, so they sound excellent. This method of muffling is common on snare drums, but it worked great for me on the toms, too. It looks better and is cheaper than duct tape.

Karen Bernheim
Lowell, OR

PANAMA FRANCIS

I just can't believe it! In your March issue, Chip Deffaa gave us an informative article on the great Panama Francis. But how could he leave out the fact that Panama Francis (along with Rufus "Speedy"

Jones) provided the tremendous beat behind the two-drummer-powered Alan Freed Big Beat Band? This was the band that backed all the acts at Alan Freed's live shows at the Brooklyn Paramount and Times Square Paramount theaters, way back when rock 'n' roll began. I can remember always making sure I got in line early enough to seat myself in a spot where I could get a good shot at seeing the drummers in the band—even more so than the starring acts. Panama Francis truly deserves to receive credit for his participation in these history-making events.

Russ Feldman
Union, NJ

DRUM TRIVIA

I must tell you what a great idea the "Drum Trivia" article in the March, 1987 issue was. Not only was it fun, but it was also informative and interesting as well—a great learning tool. Good job!

Sean O'Brien
Kankakee, IL

HURLEY AND DAWSON

In all due respect to Mark Hurley, I believe that his article, "Creative Triplets For The Advanced Player: Part 1 (which appeared in the February issue of *Modern Drummer*) deserves some comment. It has been my experience that this concept, as well as many others relating to the concept, was developed by Alan Dawson, along with his exceptionally creative use of Ted Reed's book, *Syncopation For The Modern Drummer*.

Peter Magadini
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Editor's note: Mr. Hurley replies: "It was

my great pleasure to study with Alan Dawson while at Berklee some years ago. While the work that appeared in the article was my own, intended to be presented in a clear, concise, and useful manner to the readers of MD, I freely and respectfully acknowledge Alan's influence."

RESPONSE TO JUDKINS

I was thumbing through your January issue, and Brian Judkins' letter regarding Debbi Peterson of the Bangles caught my eye. Brian stated that anyone who believes that playing "air drums" helps in learning the instrument doesn't garner his respect. Well, some of us have had no other option. I hadn't been in a financial position to afford a drumkit until recently, and 90% of the practicing I've done has been on "air drums." Just by sitting in a chair and playing on my thighs, a tabletop, or whatever happens to be handy—including the air—I have worked out patterns in my head. Later, when I've had the opportunity to try them out on a kit, I've been able to play them. They weren't necessarily perfect, but after a bit of practice, they came out just fine.

As for Mr. Judkins' statement about not concentrating: There can come a time when the conscious mind becomes too busy. I've found that, if I concentrate on something but just can't get it, clearing my mind and just letting my subconscious flow helps things work themselves out 75% of the time. If I go back to the other 25% two or three days later, I'll get those licked, too. So maybe not thinking about it is better for Debbi Peterson. She's obviously successful; I have heard no atrocious

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NIGHT AFTER NIGHT

The reasons why the regular drummers on three of the four national late night TV talk shows use Yamaha Drums exclusively should be obvious by now.



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For **Walfredo Reyes**, each year gets busier and busier. In '86, besides live dates with David Lindley, Walfredo worked on the Motown Reviews for TV, recorded with Jackson Browne, did two albums with Clare Fischer, and worked with Ben Vereen, as well as doing a tour with Larry Carlton when Rick Marotta

was on the road with Stevie Nicks.

This year, when he isn't traveling with Lindley, he's been playing live and recording with Nell Carter and the Landers Sisters, playing with Sergio Mendez, recording with Leonard Cohen or Jeff Richman (on percussion, as Casey Scheuerell plays drums), or recording the TV series *Hard Copy*.

"I play in so many different situations," he says. "Sometimes I play percussion, and people don't even know that I play drums. Other times, like when I play with Clare Fischer, it is completely different. He's a very musical guy, but his music is very soft. Then when I play with Lindley, I become an animal and people think I'm the loudest drummer in the world. It's a lot of fun. I love

the variety and always have.

"I was born in Cuba and lived in Puerto Rico until I was 13. My father was a very innovative Latin drummer, and Alex Acuna was the young drummer in Puerto Rico. I was learning Latin stuff and rock 'n' roll, and then we moved to Las Vegas where I began to work with dancers on shows. By the time I was 18, I was working my first big-paying jobs with Debbie Reynolds and Juliet Prowse. At the same time, I was playing my taste in music, like rock 'n' roll, and I was learning all the other styles.

"I've learned so much from Lindley. People think he's just a rock 'n' roll guitarist, but he can play all kinds of things. For Lindley, the main connection is reggae, rock 'n' roll, and good time. Growing up in

Puerto Rico helped the reggae, and believe it or not, working with Ben Vereen helped. Although he was known for his Broadway music, he is very much a reggae fan. While I was with him, we went to Miami and the islands a lot. His heart is definitely into that. When I jammed with David Lindley the night we met, I really wasn't familiar with his music, but we just jammed reggae. He's really into a lot of third-world rhythms. The situation with him is incredible. He packs the audiences and sells out everywhere, yet he doesn't even have a record deal. The problem is that he gets a lot of bootleg albums out, so he's trying to record a good bootleg that he can sell at the concerts."

—*Robyn Flans*

Steve Ferrera is the drummer on the new Suzanne Vega album, *Solitude Standing*, and will be touring Japan, Australia, and all over the U.S. as part of her band. Steve explains how he got the gig. "I had worked in a couple of bands in the past with Suzanne's keyboard player, and he told me they were going to be holding auditions. I kept getting called back, until finally the last audition was between four other drummers and myself. That was it."

Ferrera describes why this gig is especially enjoyable for him. "In addition to my rock 'n' roll background, my training has been in classical percussion. I have an undergraduate degree from the New England Conservatory of Music and a master's degree from Juilliard in percussion and composition.

On this gig, in addition to playing straight drums on all the tunes, I also get to play mallets and have a lot of creative input. On the new album, I do some marimba things, as well as a lot of hand percussion and electronics. I don't go in and just play time on the drums. When I got the gig, Suzanne gave me free rein to bring in a lot of my own ideas, the electronics, and the percussion. It was the same way with the album. They spent a lot of time letting me get the sounds I wanted, and when it came time to mix the drums, they wanted me there."

In addition to doing jingles and film score work, Steve has toured with Melissa Manchester, Sheena Easton, Christine McVie, and Sylvain Silvain. Perhaps his most unusual experience was the three years

he spent playing the role of a drummer on the soap opera *All My Children*. Steve explains how he got that role. "When I first moved to New York, some friends of mine already had a band here. One night they had a gig on Bleeker Street, and their drummer was sick, so they asked me to sub. When the gig was over, a woman came up to me and said she was a casting director looking for someone to play the part of a drummer on a TV show. She asked if I would be interested in coming in and reading for the part. I thought my friends were playing a joke on me, but she gave me her business card and it said "ABC TV" on it. I read a couple of different times and did two screen tests. About three months after they had first seen me, they told me I had the part. For three years,

I played a drummer in a band called the Valley Dukes. I was the resident rock 'n' roller in Pine Valley. When the contract



came up at the end of three years, they wanted me to re-sign, but I decided against it because I wanted to pursue different things."

—*Susan Hannum*

Alan Gratzer spent a good deal of '86 in the studio with REO Speedwagon, recording *Life As We Know It*. "We were in the studio for eight months," Alan recalls. "We got nit-picking pretty well, but I think the end product was real good. Nit-picking means we were always trying to think

of something we could try on each record. There was a lot of coming up with new ideas, trying different things, getting input from other people, and experimenting. The Drum Doctors out here in L.A. gave me a lot of ideas and helped me with some drums and tuning. We had the freedom to try a lot

of different things, and I think the experimentation took up more time than anything else.

"We got some great drum sounds on this album. We used smaller drums. Before, I was thinking that bigger drums make bigger sounds, but sometimes it doesn't quite work that way. You can lose some of the

point, especially in the toms. I ended up going down a couple of inches on every tom to get a more compact percussive sound, so it didn't turn out to be all bottom. A lot of times when the track gets filled up, the first things to go are the tom-toms, because they're in such a low register that they get

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ALEX ACUÑA

he musical path Alex Acuña traveled from the Andes Mountains of his native Peru to the slick L.A. recording studios

is varied, with many well calculated turns in the road.

His first stop on this musical safari was Puerto Rico where Alex learned his Afro-Caribbean roots that would serve him well in every musical situation.

Even when playing drums in world class halls, Alex is thinking of what he learned jamming on the beach in Condado, Puerto Rico. So intense was his Caribbean musical experience that in Alex's words,

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mixed up with the bass. The smaller ones are a higher register, so they have more definition to them, and you can pick them out a little better. I used a smaller snare drum this time, too—even a piccolo snare on a couple of tunes. For a nice gated reverb sound, which we ended up using, the smaller snares give a better crack and react better to the gated sound."

For REO, the creative process begins at rehearsal. "Everybody brings songs in

and we play them. After we've pared it down to the nine or ten songs we're going to put on the album, I take my Linn machine and basically program the hi-hat and the kick pattern that I've been doing in rehearsal. From there, we take that into the studio and everyone plays along to the Linn. I usually put my drums on last. Sometimes, I will keep the Linn kick on and play everything else except my right foot, which may seem strange. I have a DW electronic pedal

right next to the bass drum, which is just something I use so my foot feels like it's hitting the bass drum. By that point, I know the bass drum pattern so well that I can play along. It gives me a lot of freedom to use my hands, but I don't do that all the time—only if the song calls for it."

Currently, the band is in the midst of a year-long worldwide tour. "I have three children and a wife who has her own career, so it's not the easiest thing in the world. But when

we go out on the road, we go out for five weeks, tops, and then we come home for ten days to two weeks. I hear about these bands who go out for two months at a time, come home for a couple of days, and leave again. We've been touring for so many years that we've learned what works and what doesn't. There are other things besides REO in my life that are important, like my family."

—Robyn Flans

You may not recognize the name yet, but **Martin Fera** has been attaining a vast amount of exposure via the band he is a member of—L.A.'s The Heaters—and the unusual but very fortunate circumstances that the band has encountered recently. The Heaters are presently the backup band for Bruce Willis' (of television's *Moonlighting*) musical alter-ego Bruno (as in Bruno and The Heaters).

Since The Heaters are working with Willis, Fera has had the opportunity to play in various projects such as the LP *Bruno And The Heaters* (spawning the hit single "Respect Yourself"), a new Seagram's Wine Cooler TV commercial, a Pointer Sisters' network special, an appearance on the American Music Awards, and an HBO concert special that began intermittent airing earlier this year. All these breaks are invaluable for a relatively young, but very



polished, band.

Previous to getting involved with this group, Fera was a staple of the hard rock scene in Los Angeles. "That was my informal training," he says, "and I also had, at the same time, training through a formal musical education. I studied with Joe Porcaro and Ralph Humphrey."

Fera got the gig with The

Heaters about a year ago, when his persistence and patience eventually paid off. "I'm a friend of Steve Thoma, who's the leader of the band. We had been in a band together in L.A. about five years ago. He had just come off the road with Glenn Frey last year, and brought Glenn's band into an L.A. club. I was hanging out there, making a pest of myself, until they gave me a chance to sit in. After that, I got the gig. One night, I was just sitting in with them, and the next week, it was a steady gig. It's been one job after another ever since."

The Heaters have plans to emerge not only as a backup band, but as a legitimate group playing their own material. "We do have our own material, but we've been so busy working for other people that we really haven't had a lot of time to write and get the original thing going. Basically, we've been planning and play-

ing gigs just to stay alive—you know, just to pay the rent. When we get our own songs out, it will be along the same lines of what we're playing now: soulful rock with a contemporary edge on it."

Back in Los Angeles, The Heaters have become a household name, having received a lot of publicity from their association with big names such as Willis. But hearing them live on their own, they've got lots of energy and the right kind of chemistry that will eventually attract audiences to the band itself. But considering all the media attention and newfound fame, Marty Fera doesn't sound too affected by it all when he says, "I'm just a working drummer who's happy to be playing and really glad to be part of this band. And I'm having a hell of a good time, too."

—Teri Saccone

Ian Paice has been on the road with Deep Purple. **Graeme Edge** is recording with the Moody Blues, as well as doing concert dates. **Don Hefington** is cutting with the Song Dogs. **Larrie Londin** recently did some recording with the Almost Brothers, as well as some dates and recording with the Everly Brothers. **Lynn Coulter** played on a Subaru commercial, as well as singing and playing on a Dodge commercial. **Jim Keltner** did some recent work with George

Harrison. **Ringo Starr** recorded an album in Memphis with Chips Moman at the helm. **Alan Childs** is on tour with David Bowie. **Maxwell Schauf** just completed a tour with Lonnie Mack. **Tom DeFaria** is currently with the new lineup of Blood, Sweat & Tears featuring David Clayton Thomas, and has recently been awarded an apprenticeship grant by the National Endowment for the Arts. The Lincoln Conspiracy's debut album, *Like A Zombie*, will soon be

released with **Dave Bruno** featured on drums. Dave has also been busy playing club dates with The Rock and recording with Jason and Abel Kane. **Denny Carmassi** is on the new Heart LP, as well as Anne Wilson's "Best Man In The World." Denny can also be heard on a Whitesnake track, Russell Hitchcock's solo project, and on Sammy Hagar's single in Sly Stallone's latest movie. Congratulations to **Billy Carmassi** on his marriage to Lisa; they've now relocated

to the Bay Area. **Bill Bruford** recently recorded with the New Amsterdam Percussion Group and marimbist Keiko Abe. Bill is currently touring with his new group, Earthworks. **Bart McLaughlin** has been doing shows with the Mamas & Papas, Gary U.S. Bonds, and Lou Christie. **Marc Droubay** is in the midst of a world tour with Survivor. The tour started last January in Japan and is currently on tour in the States, with Europe to follow.

—Robyn Flans

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PAUL LEIM

Q. First of all, let me say how much I enjoy your playing. I hear your work on a lot of contemporary Christian music albums, and I think you're the greatest. The Lord has really blessed you with a talent. My questions are: What make and sizes of drums, heads, and cymbals did you use on the Imperials' *Let The Wind Blow* album, and also on Russ Taff's *Medals*? Do you trigger any electronic drums through your acoustic drums, and if so, what kind? And where did you receive your drum training?

Jerry Byrd
Beaumont, TX

A. The *Let The Wind Blow* album was cut about three years ago at Santa Barbara Sound, in Santa Barbara, California, with Brown Bannister producing. At that time, I was using Ludwig drums: 10", 12", 14", and 16" acoustic power toms—all mounted on stands—a 4x24 bass drum, and a 61/2" brass snare drum. I was using clear Ambassador drumheads, top and bottom. The cymbals were all Zildjians: a 16" thin crash on the right, a 17" medium crash on the left, a 20" crash-ride, 14" New Beat hi-hats, and a 16" China Boy Low.

On that album, I was using the acoustic bass and snare to trigger Simmons bass and snare sounds from an SDS5, mixed together with my own acoustic sounds. The toms were all triggering Simmons drums as well. I've since switched to triggering samples. There was also some Linn programming on the album.

For Russ Taff's album, I had changed to Yamaha drums. The bass drum was a 16x24, the snare was an 8" wood model, and the toms were again 10", 12", 14", and 16" power toms. On this set, the 16" tom was a true floor tom. The cymbals and heads were the same as listed before. I was also triggering an SDS5 and an SDS7, along with doing extensive programming. We pulled quite a few of the stops out on that album. We used a lot of programmed sounds, like backwards cymbals, phased sounds, etc. We were given our heads, and we really went for what we wanted to go for. Sometimes you feel like you really hit your creative stride on a project, and I remember feeling that at the time that recording was made.

I never had any formal training. I took some private tutoring at S.M.U. for a few months to work on my read-

ing. To pursue the career I wanted to pursue, and to be able to cover as many bases and last as many years as I intended to last, I knew I'd need to have reading down to a science. So I studied briefly with Paul Guerrero, who was the big band instructor at S.M.U. when I was in Dallas. He used to come out to the club I played at every night, and we made a deal: He'd teach me how to read if I'd teach him how to play rock 'n' roll. It worked out well for both of us.

CASEY SCHEUERELL



Photo by Lissa Wales

Q. Upon seeing your clinic at PASIC last November, I was fascinated by the technique, prowess, and finesse you demonstrated on your instrument. Could you please explain further how you modified your Drum Workshop double bass drum pedal, and how you developed such control with your feet?

Brad Harner
Bloomington, IN

A. All I did with the pedal was to have a second universal joint put into the axle between the left pedal and the secondary beater, so that I can get around the hi-hat. The second bass drum pedal is on the left side of the hi-hat pedal, as opposed to being on the right side as most people use it. I also had DW extend the axle just a bit to facilitate this position. DW now makes this double-jointed axle available as an optional item.

As far as developing foot-control technique goes, I play mostly from the ankle, with the heel up, when playing fast. At slower tempos, I play more from the leg. I basically alternate left and right; my feet do as my hands would do when it comes to "sticking" patterns. I developed the technique I have just by playing a lot of double bass drums on my gigs with Jean-Luc Ponty and Gino Vanelli. I did it by doing it.

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Q. I'm a 15-year-old hard rock/heavy metal drummer who's been playing now for about three or four years. Lately, when I practice on chops, I get a cramp between my left thumb and forefinger. Is this common among drummers? I'm right-handed and use 5B sticks.

R.A.
Middleburg, FL

A. The problem is not uncommon among drummers, and is the result of too much tension in the hand while playing. There are several reasons why this occurs, any one of which you might try to work on. Initially, it sounds as if you're trying to play "too hard" with sticks that might be a bit small for the job. This causes you to grip the sticks very tightly, often resulting in the cramping you describe. Try working with 2B sticks, or even something a bit larger if you need additional power. They'll feel a bit awkward at first, but you should find that the stick can do more of the work for you, producing greater volume with less effort on your part. This should, in turn, allow you to relax your hands a bit more.

Another way to promote relaxation is through breathing. When drummers are working very hard, they often have a tendency to hold their breath, or to stop breathing regularly. This denies the muscles the oxygen they need to operate, and cramping is often a result. While practicing, concentrate on breathing regularly, fully, and in a relaxed manner. This should improve your overall state of relaxation, while giving you additional stamina as well.

If these suggestions do not work, seek the assistance of a good teacher, who can examine your grip and make suggestions as to any modifications that might be necessary. A few technique exercises might also help you to overcome any deficiencies that you are currently trying to compensate for with sheer effort. That effort may not be necessary, and in fact, may be detrimental.

Q. Could you please tell me the laws—if any—pertaining to underage musicians playing in bars in the U.S.? I am underage and have had no problems up here in Canada. But I have been told that it is a lot stricter in the States.

D.E.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

A. Regulations regarding underage performers will vary from state to state and, sometimes, from city to city. They fall under the statutes of both Alcohol Control and Child Labor laws, and should be checked out thoroughly before you make any attempt to seek employment in any given area. In some places, the legal drinking age is also the minimum age for anyone to work in a bar; in others, there is a minimum age for entertainers that is lower than the drinking age, provided that those underage entertainers remain in a restricted area within the club designated for the purpose and do not consume any alcoholic beverages. Your best bet would be to contact the establishment in question well in advance to see if someone there knows the local laws. If not, you could check with the municipal or state government offices in the area to get advice. By no means should you try to "fake" your way into employment. By so doing, you are putting yourself, your band members, and the club's management all at risk of legal problems—none of which any of you need.

Q. I have a Pearl snare drum that I bought back in 1985. It's a model ET814X 8x14, with an all-maple shell. The problem is that the drum is fitted with Pearl's S-017 Parallel-Action strainer, which has since been discontinued. I'd like to know how I can receive parts and information for this strainer, and also snares. Will Pearl ever begin making this strainer again?

R.L.
Los Angeles, CA

A. According to Pearl's Al Duffy, the company only recently discontinued making the S-017 strainer, and should have both snares and strainer parts in stock for some time yet. Pearl makes it a policy to keep parts on hand as long as possible. Ask your dealer to contact Pearl for you; it may be possible to special-order the parts and snares you need.

Q. I purchased a Slingerland Black Gold five-piece outfit about two years ago. I want to add on to it, but cannot find anyone who can help me with the parts I need (stands, drums, etc.). Can you help me?

T.P.
Meno Falls, WI

A. It may be very difficult to obtain any items in the Black Gold series, since it was a limited edition to begin with, and Slingerland's output was severely reduced just prior to its buy-out by the Gretsch company last year. You might start by contacting the new Slingerland company at 1 Gretsch Plaza, Ridgeland, South Carolina, 29936 (803) 726-8144, to see if any of the items you need might exist in leftover inventory. Failing that, you'll need to appeal to larger dealers and specialty shops that deal in used or hard-to-get drum merchandise. You might also consider placing a classified ad in MD's Drum Market and/or the papers in the large cities nearest to you. It's definitely going to take some detective work on your part to track down the equipment you desire.

Q. I would like to know how to obtain the Buddy Rich video, *Mr. Drums: Buddy Rich And His Band Live On King Street In San Francisco*, which is mentioned in your June, '86 issue.

E.S.
Hickory, NC

A. The video is offered as part of Sony's "Video LP" series, and should be available in local video stores. If not, ask your video dealer to order it from the Sony catalog.

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Peter Erskine

by Rick Mattingly

*P*ETER Erskine is laughing. "Steve Khan just called," he tells me. "He's joining Weather Update, and the band is meeting in Vienna next week to rehearse for the European tour. Steve wanted to know if he and I could get together sometime this week to run through a few things so that he'll be prepared for the first rehearsal. I told him, 'No way, pal! You'll have to join this band the same way the rest of us did.' "

Several months later, I remind Peter of that incident, and ask him if one could, perhaps, accuse him of being. . . well, cold-hearted towards a fellow musician? Peter chuckles at the memory, looking slightly sheepish for a moment. But then he laughs it off. "Nah, it wasn't coldhearted. That was just my way of telling Steve that he was great enough to go in there and play without preparing anything. If you just plop yourself into a situation, the chemical reaction will be more interesting than if you prepare the ingredients beforehand and then let them set for a while."

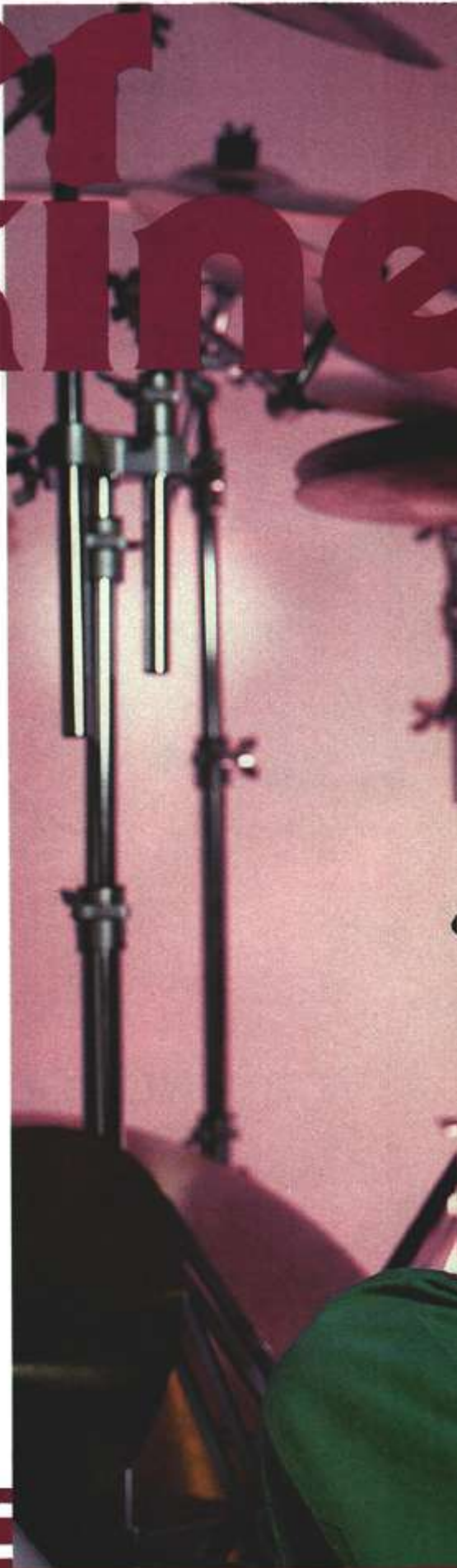




Photo by Jaeger Katos

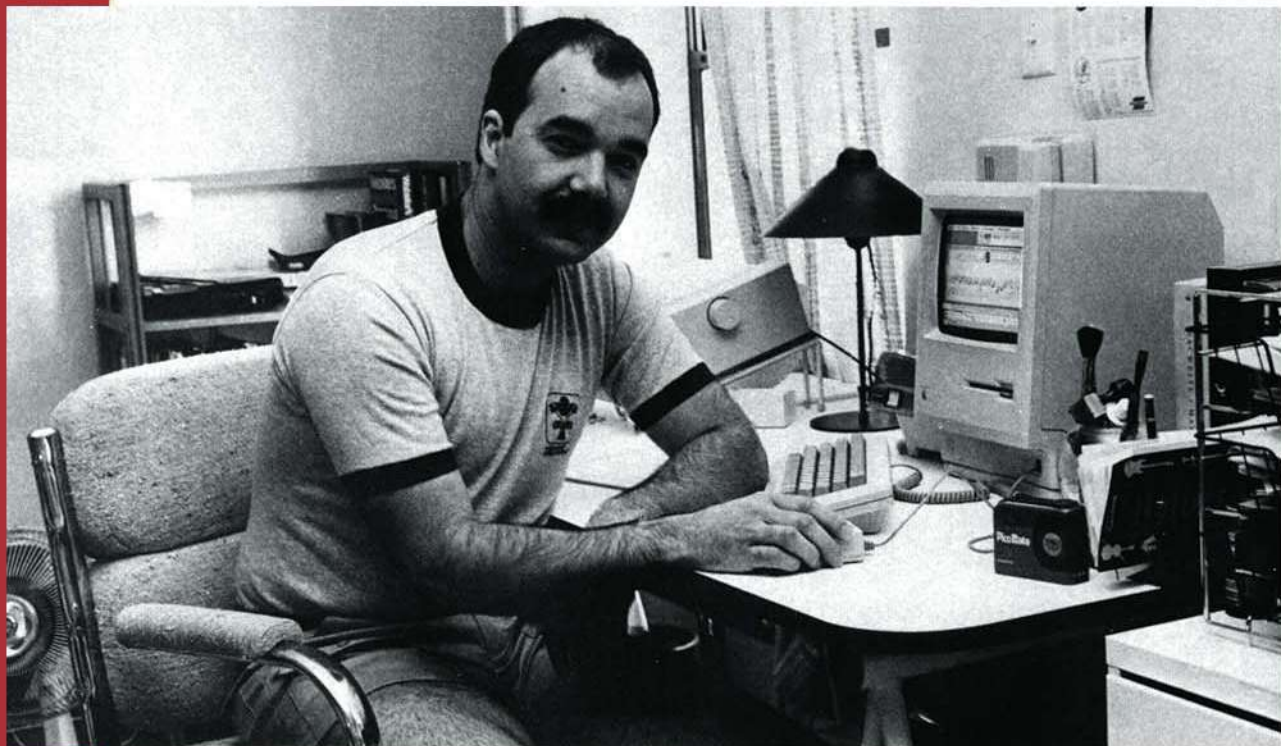


Photo by Rick Mattingly

Peter should know. In 1981, after living in California for several years, he "plopped" himself into New York City in the hopes of making a living playing jazz. Granted, he came to town with some impressive credentials—Stan Kenton, Maynard Ferguson, Weather Report—but that doesn't guarantee anything in a town like New York, where there are plenty of musicians with equally impressive credits who are not working regularly. But within a relatively short period of time, Peter was turning up with increasing frequency in various New York jazz clubs, and he was invited to replace Steve Gadd in the group Steps Ahead.

For a couple of years, that group was Peter's main focus. But as the members got more involved in technology and less involved in mainstream jazz, the group's identity seemed to suffer (like when they got involved in doing the music for a Jane Fonda exercise record). Personnel started changing, and the group was having trouble completing its third album. Erskine, meanwhile, was on a creative roll. In 1986 alone, he performed and recorded with John Abercrombie and the group Bass Desires, wrote a drum book, and composed the incidental music for a production of Richard II. Then, as things with Steps Ahead seemed to be falling apart, he was invited to record with Weather Report and to rejoin the group for the subsequent tour.

As it turned out, that was probably the last Weather Report album, as Wayne Shorter left the group after the record came out. For the tour, the

group was renamed Weather Update, but whether that marks the beginning of something new or merely the end of an era remains to be seen.

For Peter Erskine, however, it was the beginning of a transition period that represented a number of things coming full circle for him. When he'd first joined Weather Report, he was the protege under the wings of Joe Zawinul, Wayne Shorter, and Jaco Pastorius. Moving to New York could be viewed as leaving the nest, and with Steps Ahead, he learned to fly on his own. When he returned to Weather Report, his input was on such a high level that Zawinul invited Peter to coproduce the album.

And now, as we sit in Peter's New York apartment to do this interview, we are surrounded by packing boxes, which

**"AFTER A WHILE,
YOU ARRIVE AT A
WAY OF PLAYING.
YOU CAN TRY TO
IMPROVE THAT, BUT
YOU CAN'T CHANGE
WHO YOU ARE."**

represent another full circle in Peter's life: He's moving back to California. The reason is personal rather than musical; Peter is about to become a father, and he feels that California is a better place to raise a family than the streets of New York.

As far as I'm concerned, it's New York's loss and California's gain, because Peter has a vitality and energy that rub off on the people around him. I've spent a lot of time with Peter over the past few years, and somehow I always come away feeling inspired. In fact, on a couple of occasions when I've felt somewhat burned out, I've purposely sought out Peter's company, knowing that his positive energy would stimulate me. And it's not just some kind of Pollyanna happy attitude; Peter questions, analyzes, challenges—he thinks.

That's evident in this interview. With all of the changes going on in his life, Peter is in a reflective mood. So we exam-

ine some things from the past, but mostly we look ahead to what these things will mean for the future, because Peter is—as always—moving ahead.

RM: You seem to enjoy living dangerously. When Weather Update toured America last summer, you used the new Yamaha electronic drums, which you had just gotten the day before the tour started. If something had gone wrong, you would have been stuck.

PE: Yeah, I had never played a totally electronic kit in a band before. I'd used a couple of pads here and there, along with a regular drumkit. But my initial interest in electronics had to do with triggering sounds from the acoustic drums. I enjoyed being able to kick in an electronic sound at a certain point that could make a floor tom sound like the end of the world. If you've got a good sound system, something like that can be real effective if you use it judiciously. So I had a Simmons SDS5, which was perfect for that. It had a fat, beefy, analog sound.

I first heard the Yamaha system when some of the Yamaha people brought one to S.I.R. in New York. They invited a bunch of drummers to come in, play it, and make suggestions. One of the guys had a note pad, and he was taking down all of the comments.

RM: As I recall, he actually had a portable computer.

PE: Oh, yeah. That shows you how times are changing.

Anyway, as soon as I heard those sounds, I realized that I didn't want to have to hear a drum when all I wanted was a clave. So, all of a sudden, triggering sounds from acoustic drums didn't seem to be the answer anymore.

Also, around that same time I was dealing with the problems and frustrations of miking, because whenever you're miking acoustic instruments, you run into problems with mic's being out of phase with each other and with leakage. In other words, you can throw a microphone in front of a snare drum and get a great snare drum sound, but if you've got another mic' on your tom-tom, then that mic' picks up a little snare drum, and the snare drum mic' picks up a little tom-tom. By the time you add a whole kit's worth of microphones, that great snare drum sound has changed.

In a room where you're not using a P.A. system, the natural acoustic sound is the best. But when you're going through a P.A., the drums have to sound good coming through the speakers. So the instrument has changed. It's not purely an acoustic instrument anymore; the microphone is the interface, and you're now dealing with electronics.

So if you're dealing with electronics anyway, you are going to get a better sound by using pure electronics than by using a combination of acoustics and electronics. You can get a pure tom-tom sound without getting cymbal wash or leakage from other drums. And you can still retain the nature of live performance. It's not like you're using a machine instead of a person. I'm still playing. And with the Yamaha system, I can access hundreds of sounds quickly. If I want a perfectly miked clave sound, I can get it by hitting a pad. I don't have to put down my sticks to pick up a pair of claves, and I don't hear a tom sound like I would if I were triggering the clave sound from an acoustic drum. And then

I can hit a button and get a cowbell sound, or a steel drum, or whatever I want. I would need a table 20 feet long to hold all of those instruments, and then I'd be going crazy trying to reach them all. So for someone interested in percussion sounds for live work, this is the answer.

RM: Did you have to adjust your technique in any way?

PE: A little. Playing on the pads is different than playing on an acoustic drum. The dynamic range is a little bit different. Also, when you hit the pad, the sound doesn't come from the point of contact but from wherever your speaker is placed. That's a big difference.

What I liked was that it made me think carefully about orchestration. Sometimes, when I'm playing a beat, I get it to lay a certain way by filling it out on other parts of the kit—like maybe some little tom-tom notes. But a lot of electronic sounds take up more sonic room than acoustic sounds. So if I've got a big electronic tom sound instead of a nice, centered little 13" tom, I've got to be more careful with where I place that note because it's taking up so much room. I find that it imposes a good discipline on me. I'm playing much clearer and more concisely, and thus using the sounds to greater effect.

RM: I started out by accusing you of living dangerously by taking a setup on the road that you weren't used to. But I can also see a positive side to that, in terms of giving yourself a new challenge to keep yourself on your toes. I'm reminded of Elvin once saying that he sometimes switches his cymbals around so he'll have to think about where a particular sound is, and because it helps keep him from just doing the same things out of habit.

PE: That's a very good point. That's why I change actual cymbals some-

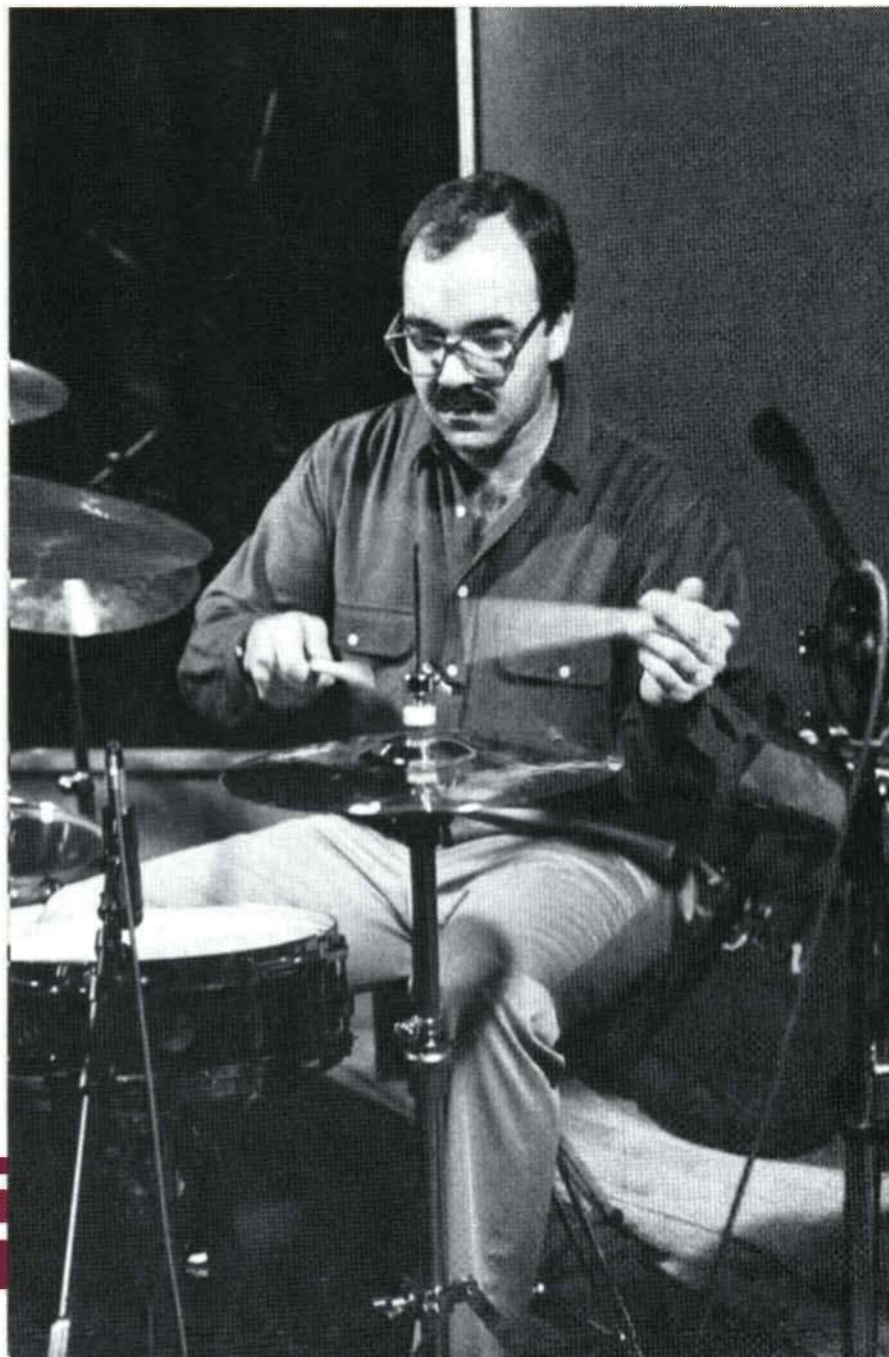


Photo by Rick Mattingly

times. Recently I was recording with Makoto Ozone, and my cartage guy brought the wrong floor tom. I had my little 18" bass drum, a real crisp snare, a small tom with an *Ambassador* that was cranked way up there, and this huge floor tom with a clear *Emperor* tuned real low. There was this huge spread between the small tom and the floor tom, but the bass drum and floor tom together sounded like timpani. It changed the way I played a little bit, because certain things that I would have done on a smaller floor tom wouldn't have worked on this one. But it was a fun challenge. Gary Burton was producing, and he came over and said, "You know, that was interesting. When you first played the individual toms, they sounded so different. But the way you used them made the kit sound like a complete whole."

Electronic drums can have the same effect. Using them changes the way you play so that you don't rely on the same things. Some drummers have a sound that works for them, and it's always the same. But sometimes when they're playing with different people, they should be coming up with different stuff. Unfortunately, they kind of sound the same on every record. Maybe that's what they're hired to do, but I like changing the venue, so to speak.

RM: In the interview we did four years ago, you were telling me about going to the NAMM show. Before you went, you were really excited about seeing some of the new electronic instruments, but when you actually got there, the thing that still grabbed you the most was the sound of really great acoustic instruments. What's changed? Have electronics improved a lot since then, or have you decided that something has to be sacrificed to meet the current needs?

PE: No, they're two different things. My greatest

Photo by Nancy Miller

pleasure still comes from sitting down behind a four-piece acoustic kit. Physically, it's a very intimate setup. No wires—I can play by candlelight if I have to. [laughs] And on the Weather Update tour, in addition to the complete electronic kit, I had an 8 x 14 acoustic snare drum, a 22 x 16 acoustic bass drum, and real cymbals. I still need a real snare drum, hi-hat, and cymbals, and I like to have a real bass drum. With those instruments, I have a complete dynamic range for the nuances I want. I can't imagine sitting down at a complete electronic kit without a couple of real drums and cymbals.

Maybe, deep down, I'm just a bebopner at heart.

At the same time, electronics certainly have improved. They've permeated society and are here to stay. There's going to be a lot of great music played on electronic instruments, as well as a lot of stinko music—just like there's good music and crappy music played on acoustic instruments. I think that people are getting a little weary of listening to stuff that's overly sequenced. You see less and less drum machines at recording sessions

and more and more drummers. So everything does go in cycles. Acoustic instruments are still the greatest to play. But electronics are the door to the future—to endless possibilities.

If you want to concentrate on acoustic drumset and use your energy to develop that to its greatest potential, that's terrific. But other people realize that the world's a big place, and they want to get into some other stuff. Emil Richards, for example, has one of the most extensive percussion collections in the world, and he's using electronics to preserve that collection. He's sampling his instruments, and that's going to save them from the wear and tear of being moved around to various studios and being used on soundtracks and recordings. In a lot of cases, a digitally sampled version of an instrument will suffice.

So getting back to your question about what has changed in the last few years, electronics have definitely improved—specifically in the area of percussion. They're on the same par

now with keyboard instruments, and you couldn't say that four years ago. Most of the stuff that was out then isn't even available anymore, but they were the necessary building blocks. In the manual for *Total Music* software, which is what I use on my Macintosh, there's a great quote: "Pioneers are the guys with the arrows in their backs." So we owe many thanks to the people who put a lot on the line and envisioned those first electronic drums. But better instruments have now come along. That's the way electronics is, whether it's computers or instruments.

RM: One thing that bothers some people about electronics is that a lot of current music seems to be just sounds rather than composition.

PE: Well, what is composition? What is music? What makes a piece of art interesting? Artists tend to feel that, if it produces some kind of reaction, then it's good. If people don't react,

"ALL OF THE ELECTRONIC STUFF IS THE HOBBY. THE DRUMSET IS MY CRAFT—MY LIFE'S WORK."



Peter and John Abercrombie

that's awful. Of course, most of us would like it to be a good reaction, because our egos are involved. So anyway, it comes down to personal aesthetics. For the person who came up with those sounds, it may be very meaningful, and there may be a lot of people who enjoy it. A lot of people really dig Barry Manilow. Personally, I don't turn to him for any kind of inspiration; in fact, I avoid him. That's just my taste. It's like, "A hundred thousand Barry Manilow fans can't be wrong." As far as I'm concerned, they can, but as far as they're concerned, they're not. So what's the answer?

RM: The reason I asked the question was because I feel that a good composition should not have to depend on a particular set of sounds. For example, think of the Weather Report tune "Birdland." I love the original recording of that, and the way that Joe Zawinul combined synthesizer and acoustic piano was truly inspired. But the tune also works with the Manhattan Transfer singing all of the parts. So the composition works by itself.

PE: That's a valid point. Joe is a masterful composer. Because of his musical knowledge and his hipness or whatever, he creates music that has a great sense of structure. Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* was transcribed for piano, and it sounds good. The composition stands up. But it sounds better with an orchestra, because that is what it was conceived for. The orchestration is important. There's a reason that the violins are playing a certain section rather than 14 bassoons.

RM: Okay, that's a valid point, too. I guess what I object to is just pushing button after button to get a variety of sounds and calling that creativity. Finding the right sound can be creative, and yet . . .

PE: Yeah. A synthesizer comes with a lot of programs built in, and you can just sit there like a monkey pushing all of the buttons. "Wow, listen to this! It's a spaceship taking off!" A synth may only have a couple of really usable sounds. Some musicians get involved in programming their own sounds. Some don't. Some say that they don't want to be programmers; they want to be musicians. So they pick a synth that has usable sounds.

When you were talking about the person pushing button after button, the first image that came into my mind was the situation we've arrived at—particularly in this country—where someone will sit in front of a TV with a cable and remote control, and just switch channels endlessly. It becomes a mishmash of programs and commercials—a wasteland. Maybe there's some kind of parallel there, like a person with a synth who has all of these sounds, but who never truly gets involved with what each sound will do. My Yamaha electronic system can produce all sorts of sounds, but when I used it on my solo album, I was only dealing with three different kit sounds. It's like with an acoustic setup. You tune your drums a certain way and you pick a certain set of cymbals, and then you make the most of those sounds.

This brings up something that we talked about after you heard the last Steps Ahead record. You said that you couldn't tell who was playing what. Michael Mainieri has always been my favorite vibes player because of his touch on



Photo by Rick Mattingly

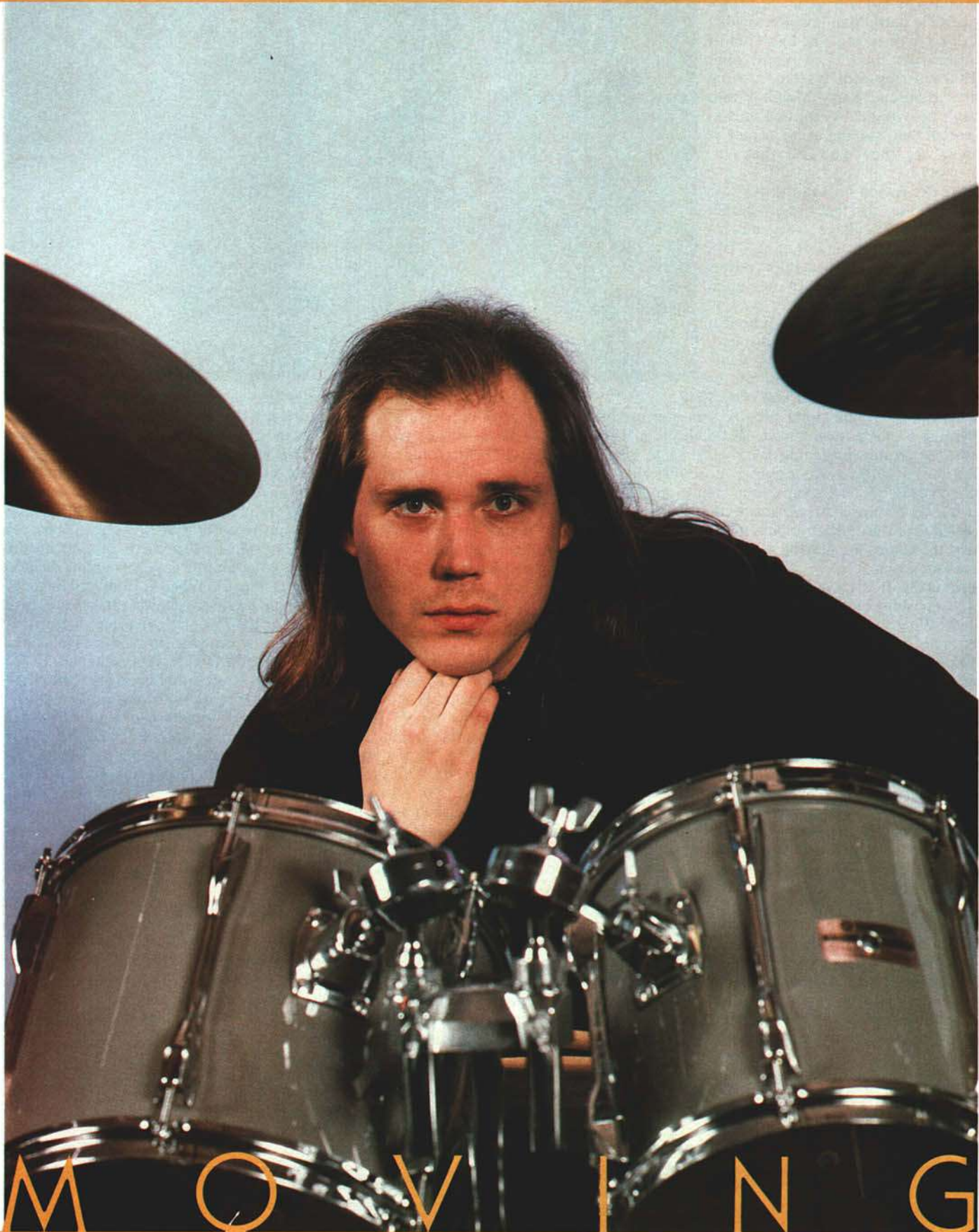
the instrument. His sound on the vibes gave Steps a uniqueness. But now he just sounds like *aDX7*. Yes, it's still his phrasing and ideas, but I think you can lose a certain amount of the player's identity if there's too much MIDI-thru going on. I don't think a lot of people would be interested in hearing Horowitz play an electric piano.

Going back to that television analogy, the typical vision of modern man is someone eating dinner and watching a report of this many people dying, and then boom: switch over to *Wheel Of Fortune*. The end result is that nothing really means anything. Maybe that's true of a lot of our music: Nothing means anything. What kind of involvement or dedication do people have to their instruments? What kind of discipline is involved? I always think of a craftsman who has dedicated his life to, say, working with wood. He doesn't have the TV or radio on when he's working, and he's concentrating completely on what he's doing. He makes something that he's very proud of, because it represents all that he can be.

I think that's why a lot of us got into music—that sense of accomplishment and pride. And it's exciting to work with other musicians and feel, "Wow, we did it!" It's that comradeship of being in an ensemble, looking at each other, smiling, and saying, "That really sounded good." It's even better than, "Look what I did." You get the added benefit of, "Look what we did." All the buttons in the world aren't going to do that for you. Sure, you can sit in your basement with sequencers and drum machines, and multi-track yourself all over the place. But the real joy of music making is those moments of spontaneity, of interaction, of chance taking—not programming a drum machine to play this and sequencing something to go with that. Big deal. Bruce Springsteen and his band can play for four hours and keep thousands of people excited, because they have energy. Who's going to want to sit around and watch someone push buttons for four hours?

There's always going to be good art and bad art. Whether you restrict people to a pencil or give them a Macintosh, some people will have something valid to put on the paper and some won't. But if someone uses the computer to print junk, you can't indict the computer for that. And you can't indict synthesizers for bad music. I think people are going to accomplish great things with electronics. We're just scratching the surface with this stuff, and there's a whole lot more that people are going to be able to do. It represents a pretty big upheaval in terms of technology, and it's already had a big effect. But you've got to remember that, when phonograph records first came out, a lot of people thought that was the end of live performance. It wasn't. It actually created more demand for

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MOVING

FIER

by
Deborah Frost
and
Albert Bouchard

No doubt there are those who think Anton Fier is a figment of Anton Fig's imagination. But if Fier hasn't gotten around to getting the "FIG, NOT FIER" and "FIER, NOT FIG" T-shirts he wanted to give the Letterman drummer and himself last Christmas, it's understandable. Anton Fier hasn't had much time for shopping lately.

A Cleveland native of Yugoslavian descent, Fier has been a mainstay of the New York underground since joining the local favorites the Feelies in 1978 and local heroes the Lounge Lizards shortly after. But it wasn't until he put together the Golden Palominos—a live band with a revolving cast of characters—and produced his own records that he began to break out of the insular downtown scene. In between working on the three Palominos albums on independent Celluloid Records—1983's self-titled debut, followed by *Visions Of Excess* and *Blast Of Silence*/axed my baby for a nickel—Fier has put in appearances on several major-label albums. He toured and recorded with Herbie Hancock. His many sessions as a drummer and percussionist include work on Mick Jagger's, Laurie Anderson's, Yoko Ono's, and Los Lobos' recent records. His first major label production, Los Angeles based artist Victoria Williams, will be released by Geffen Records this spring. When we met in his sparsely furnished Chinatown apartment, he was producing Longhouse, a band containing seven female voices led by New York singer/writer Lisa Herman, for Warner Bros. When Fier wasn't in the studio with Longhouse, he was rehearsing the Palominos for an upcoming tour of major American cities. Soon, everyone should know exactly who he is.

MD: When and how did you discover rock?

AF: My mother and father always listened to music—especially my mother. She listened to a lot of schlock, like Andy Williams and stuff. But the first time I ever heard Lee Morgan was when she bought a Lee Morgan record. She had Miles Davis records, like *Kind Of Blue* and stuff like that, but nothing too avant—no Coltrane records. Music was a big part of my growing up. My mother was really into the Beatles. Every Saturday, I would go shopping with her. We would buy groceries, and we would also stop at the local record shop and buy records. She bought me the first Beatles record. When I would listen to it, she would listen to it also. I got into the Rolling Stones just through being into the Beatles. I'd kind of look around, look at magazines and newspapers, and see these names of all these other groups. I used to get a small allowance, and I'd buy like one album a week. Beatles records didn't come out every week, so there were other records to buy.

MD: How old were you when you got your first drumset?

AF: When I was six, my mother and father decided I should learn to play an instrument. I really wanted to play drums. My mother worked during the day, and my father worked at night. He'd pick me up at school and take me to a bar. There was always music there—jukeboxes and bands playing. I was always really attracted to the drums. I'd go to the stage and stand next to the drummer. The sound of a snare drum was the most incredible thing I ever heard. They wanted me to study piano, but I was really, really bad at it. I'm glad I studied it, because I know more about music now. I absorbed some stuff, but I didn't work at it because I wasn't good. I don't have that good an ear for harmony. Rhythm is basically what I hear. So finally when I was 11, I was at a party. There was a band playing. They had a break. I sat behind the drums and started to play a beat. The guy whose band it was thought it was cute so he started to play along, and I was able to keep a beat for the most part through a song. I could do that, so I guess my mother felt, well, maybe this was right. We didn't have a lot of money. So for

Christmas one year, I got a snare drum. Then on my birthday six months later, I got a bass drum, then a hi-hat, and then a cymbal and a tom-tom. It took a really long time, and it was really cheap stuff. I went out and got a paper route and then a job so that I could buy a real set of drums.

MD: Did you take lessons?

AF: With a local guy—nobody famous. In retrospect, he was not a very good drummer. But I learned how to read, and I learned the rudiments. He didn't drive me very hard, because he wasn't that great a musician himself. I could have found a better teacher, but he taught me a lot. I practiced two or three hours a night, which was strictly enforced. I had to practice whether I wanted to or not.

MD: Did you have idols or drummers that you emulated?

AF: Ringo was definitely my first idol as a drummer. I thought Charlie Watts was great. When I listened to music then, I was very into the drums, but I was also listening to the sound of the whole thing. I would listen to jazz records to hear really great drummers like Buddy Rich or Gene Krupa. The rock stuff was more about the song—the combination of all these elements creating this new thing that I'd never heard before and that was really exciting.

MD: You formed your first group, the Punks, at about age 13?

AF: Actually, I was 14. It was just some kids at school who had similar musical tastes. All through high school, we would get together and play.

MD: In 1971, what possessed 14-year-olds to call themselves "punks"? You must have been into Iggy and the Mc5.

AF: I was always, especially when I was younger, checking out the most extreme kinds of things. When I first got into jazz, I wanted to hear the most wild, free jazz. With rock, after listening to years of the Beatles and things like Yes, I thought, "Well, this is getting a little too wimpy." Even though I listened to everything that came out, I was always attracted to the real hardcore stuff. I was always into really primitive stuff, like the blues. There was something about the rawness of it.

MD: Was the radio in Cleveland really great then?

AF: There was a station that has become WMMS now, which is the biggest rock station in America. They started out very progressive and had a lot of very influential people who went on to other territories. They were the first to play Velvet Underground records. They were the first station to break Bowie.

College radio also had very free-form programming. Case Western Reserve always had a really great radio station. They'd play Traffic and Blue Cheer—all the more obscure stuff at the time. I wanted to hear everything that was being made because hearing a really great record was my thrill out of life.

MD: Were you an outsider in your school?

AF: I did well in school, grade-wise, so I was never given a hard time by my teachers. I was always listening to music, so I was kind of respected as a musician. But I was definitely not considered normal.

MD: Did you have any other ambitions when you were a kid? Did you really think you could grow up and play music?

AF: It never really occurred to me to do anything else. In my last year of high school, I didn't pay much attention, because I was getting somewhere as a musician, and becoming more and more clear-sighted about what I wanted to do and how I was going to get there.

MD: How did you think you'd get there?

AF: I just thought I was good enough. There's not a whole lot of competition in Cleveland. And if you're just kind of mediocre, you get by by being told you're great. So I never doubted myself. I

U P T O W N



Photo by Monica Dee

thought I knew what I was doing. I thought that, if I worked hard at something and really believed in it, someday it would pay off.

MD: One is always hearing about the "legendary" bands you played with in Cleveland, only the "legendary" bands keep changing. Some people refer to the late rock writer Peter Laughner's band and some to others. Who were these bands, and how legendary were they?

AF: One band deserves legendary status, the Electric Eels. It was really loud and as powerful as the Stooges or Mc5, but very out performance-wise. When I first heard the Sex Pistols, I wasn't that impressed, because I had worked with the Electric Eels.

MD: What other playing experience did you have?

AF: I joined this blues band that played every Friday and Saturday night at a college bar to a full house. I did that for about a year. That was my first real professional thing. These were all older guys—kind of the strongholds of the Cleveland music scene. This band still exists—Mr. Stress Blues Band. They've been together for close to 20 years. Mr. Stress still has the original keyboard player. A lot of the musicians who came out of Cleveland have played with him at one time. It was just playing every blues standard in the book, and it was good. It was my first experience playing to a packed room of 300 people and having everybody into it.

MD: Did you do any recording in Cleveland?

AF: The first time I ever went into a recording studio was in '75. We made records. We would save our money from our day jobs, and book time in a studio and press them up ourselves. There are a couple of Electric Eels records. There was a band called the Styrene Band, which put out a few records. I recorded with Peter Laughner. Another band called X Blank X made a few records. We took ourselves seriously. We wanted to document what we were doing.

MD: What were those early recording experiences like?

AF: Absolutely terrifying. The first time you hear yourself back through those speakers, you hear exactly what you are. All of your faults are very apparent. And you've never heard it that way before. You're sitting behind the drums, playing, and it feels good. You just go by the feeling. You think you're great. Then you hear it back.

MD: What do you think some of your faults were?

AF: Everything from bad time to overuse of fills. Figuring out how to really lock into a groove was the main quest of my life. Now I know what people are talking about when they say the time is good or it feels behind or it feels ahead. Every drummer goes through it. Every musician does. I didn't have any different problem. You think you're playing a groove, and you realize by the time you get to the end of the song that you're playing twice as fast as you did when you started. That's just enthusiasm. When people start playing drums, they play fills everywhere, because it's fun to make a lot of noise. But it's not music.

MD: Did you graduate from high school?

AF: Barely. During the last year of school, I was not living at home. After my father died, my mother married a guy I really didn't get along with. We antagonized each other so much that I went to live either with an aunt or at a friend's house.

MD: Did you support yourself by playing?

AF: I worked in a record store. I started when I was 14 and did that for ten years. Even when I moved here, I was working in record stores or for distributors. In Cleveland, I started out in a record store at \$1.75 an hour. I became the manager and buyer by the time I left town. The only job I ever wanted other than being a musician was working in a record store, so I would be able to hear every record that came out of all categories. Getting paid to stand in a place listening to music was like the ultimate dream.

MD: After your mother died when you were 20, you moved to New York City. Would you have made the move if you hadn't been on your own?

AF: The first time I came to New York was the day after I graduated from high school. Two of my friends and I drove up for a weekend. I knew I wanted to live here then. It was just a matter of figuring out how to do it. I went back to Cleveland and saved my money. I would come up to see bands and meet people. When I was the manager of this record store, I was making pretty good money. I would fly up to see Miles Davis at the Bottom Line or Television at CBGB's. A couple of my friends had moved up here, so when I came, I had a place to stay. It's very scary to leave a place where you've lived your whole life and go to a place as brutal as New

York.

MD: Did you feel at that point that Cleveland was a dead end?

AF: To be a musician in Cleveland, you either have to be in a wedding band or a cover band. If you play original music, you can't do it for a living. You do it for a hobby. Cleveland is definitely a dead end. It was and it is.

MD: Obviously, you didn't get right off the bus from Cleveland and go straight to a recording session with Mick Jagger.

AF: No. I made sure I had a job when I came here. I worked at New Music Distribution Service—the Carla Bley thing. It started out as a part-time, \$75-a-week job. I had a room in a welfare hotel uptown that was \$45 a week. I lived there for six months. I knew it was the right room, because when the guy showed me the room, there was a poster of Jimi Hendrix on the wall above the bed. As soon as I moved here, I joined a band that was already established on the CBGB's-Max's circuit, the Feelies.

MD: How did you hook up with them?

AF: They had an ad in the *Voice*. I'd known about them, because I did follow the New York music scene from Cleveland. I immediately called them up, rented a van, took my drums out there, and said, "I'm going to get this gig."

MD: Was that the first audition you went to?

AF: Yeah, and I got it. The first time I played out with them, I got paid 300 bucks. I thought, "Wow, this is great." When I first moved here, bands were getting 100% of the door and making money. When the Mudd Club opened, a band could make three thousand dollars—six hundred dollars apiece—to play a 45-minute set. After the club owners realized how much bands were making, they cut back and started giving percentages of the door. You can't make any money in clubs, really.

MD: You quit your other job?

AF: No. The job wasn't that hard. If I played a gig the night before, I could come in at 1:00 in the afternoon. It was steady income, and it was still dealing with music. I actually kept that job for about a year, until the Feelies got their record deal. Then I quit, because I had to make an album.

MD: *Crazy Rhythms* was on an import label, wasn't it?

AF: It was on Stiff, which did have American distribution. We were Stiff's first American signing. I don't think they knew what they were getting into. They knew the Feelies were this hot New York band. They didn't realize when they signed us what they were getting musically, because it was never a band that could have a hit, and they expected singles. Stiff's whole thing was that they had lots of hit singles in England. We just weren't the band. When they realized what they had, they treated us really badly.

MD: Did you feel that you wanted to produce them?

AF: No. At that point, I had no idea.

MD: How about your playing at the time? It sounds pretty primitive compared to what you're doing now.

AF: A lot of times, I was told to play exactly what was there. They had very definite ideas about what they wanted. I wasn't the player then that I am now. I agree that the drums are not very good on that record.

MD: On the Feelies album, your time is a little shaky. How did it improve?

AF: When I came up here, I started taking lessons from Barry Altschul. I didn't take lessons from Sammy Ulano, but I used to see him up at Alex Music all the time and I'd learn stuff from him. I ended up studying with one of his students. Also, I read *Modern Drummer* from the first issue, and in interviews with various drummers, it said that you've got to work with a metronome. It was tough. But after I left the Feelies and after the Lounge Lizards, I found myself working in this record store and I wasn't getting

called for that many gigs. I started to think, "Well, if I were a better player, I'd be getting more calls." I decided I wasn't going to work this job anymore. I decided to practice eight hours a day. Luckily, I had a girlfriend who let me stay in her house and not pay rent for about a year while I got it together. I had a great opportunity, as well as a place where I still store my equipment. It's this little basement on Mott Street, which I shared with some other people, with 24-hour access for \$50 a month. I would get enough gigs to come up with \$50. I would go there and practice eight hours a day. I bought a metronome I could use with headphones and just started working.

MD: How did you fit into the Lounge Lizards' "fake jazz" concept?

AF: I thought it was a real interesting combination of Mingus-type '50s jazz, which I really like, Grade B detective movie soundtracks, which I really like, and also a free music element—a noise element—which I was always into. There's a Dutch drummer named Han Bennink, who's always been one of my favorite guys. I saw this as an opportunity to learn how to play jazz a little better or just study that kind of playing because I'd never done it before. I thought the music was interesting, and I had friends in the band.

"WHEN PEOPLE START PLAYING DRUMS, THEY PLAY FILLS EVERYWHERE, BECAUSE IT'S FUN TO MAKE A LOT OF NOISE. BUT IT'S NOT MUSIC."

MD: When did you decide to do your own project?

AF: After the Lounge Lizards. Actually, there's an important thing—my friendship with Bill Laswell, who I met while I was playing with the Lounge Lizards. He's been the most important help to me in my life—getting me gigs, putting me on records. He's shown me how to do things. I do them from a different perspective, but meeting him was definitely the key to whatever success I have at this point. After the Lounge Lizards, I knew I wanted to work with the guitarist, Arto Lindsay, some more. I knew I wanted to work with Bill Laswell. I had met the bass player, Jamaladeen Tacuma, from a couple of recording sessions we both got called on. I wanted to work with him. David Thomas, who was the lead singer in Pere Ubu, did a solo album and called me to do the drums. I put together one track on the record entirely myself. This was my first shot at writing a song and producing a track. I decided after that this was fun and this was easy. That's why I decided I wanted to get my own record deal. I went to a couple of independent labels, and said that I wanted to make a band with these particular people and that we'd like to make a record. There was enough interest for me to put this together and do some gigs. Then eventually, I got this small deal for the first album. Bill Laswell was dealing with Celluloid, and he ended up getting that deal.

MD: What's interesting is that your records aren't showpieces for the drummer.

AF: They're not drum records. I will make a drum record when I feel that I know how to do that. But these records are about songs

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The Drummers Of West Germany

by Simon Goodwin

THERE is a strong tradition of musical excellence in Germany. Today, the country is in the forefront when it comes to developing new ideas. There is clearly a link between these two facts, but it is also Germany's links with the English-speaking world that have helped to make it a thriving center for musical activity. The NATO presence in Germany for the past 40 years has meant that German musicians have been exposed to the influence of American jazz and rock. English is the language of these musical forms, and Germans often tend to be able linguists who use English as a second language. If it sounds rather condescending to suggest that the German music scene is dependent on the English-speaking connection, it isn't supposed to. There are many fine and original musicians in Germany who have used influences from their own country, as well as others, to produce something of their own. Germans have led the way in certain areas of technological development in music.

German technology has made important contributions to the world of music

through the manufacturing industry. In the drums and percussion department alone, there are many companies producing instruments that are used and respected worldwide. Sonor, for years a manufacturer of top-quality drums, is now also making a full range of electronic equipment for the drummer: amplifiers, microphones, monitor systems, and electronic drums. All of Paiste's gongs and some cymbals are made in Germany. There is the Meinl company, who is now producing congas and bongos in addition to its established cymbal ranges, and Dynacord, the electronic percussion company that has broken new ground with the *Rhythm Stick* among other products. Also, not so well known but likely to make its mark, a relatively new company, Trojan, is making coopered drumshells.

German musicians might complain about the lack of work opportunities, and Germany, like everywhere else, has suffered to some extent with recessions and changes in spending patterns, but for many years, it was one of the healthiest places in the world for live music. Many

European bands and individual musicians who were to go on to make their mark in a big way—from the Beatles onwards—spent some time playing bread-and-butter gigs in Germany. The NATO bases certainly helped in this respect, but the civilian clubs in Germany have always seemed to have a far more enterprising attitude to live music than can be found in neighboring European countries, England included.

If a foreign-based magazine were to run a feature about "The Drummers Of America," and interviewed, say, Buddy Rich, Steve Smith, and Tommy Lee, it might be thought that they had only scratched the surface, and it might be debatable whether they had chosen a cross-section of people at the top of the profession who were truly representative of what is happening generally. So it might be with "The Drummers Of West Germany"; however, I hope that, within the space allowed, we have three interesting people, who not only give insights into the music business in their country, but can touch their fellow drummers everywhere.



Charly Antolini

Charly Antolini is Swiss born, but he has been living and working in Germany for 25 years. He made his name with the big bands of Erwin Lehn, Max Greger, Kurt Edelhagen, Paul Kuhn, and Horst Jankowski; he also toured with American leaders Lionel Hampton ('80) and Benny Goodman ('81 and '82). Since 1976, Charly has been working regularly as a leader in his own right, and it is in this direction that he channels a lot of his energy while still working with the big bands as a free-lancer. Charly Antolini and JazzPower have had a series of successful records on the Stuttgart-based Jeton Rec label. Knockout ('79) a direct-to-disc cut, sold out all 60,000 copies within four months—probably a record for a non-American jazz album. There have been notable follow-ups:—Crash, Countdown, Menue, and Finale, among others. The current lineup of JazzPower includes three Americans: Rich Laughlin (trumpet), Ric Keller (reeds), and Jon Welch (trombone), with Claus Reichstaller (trumpet), Peter Cischeck (bass), and Max Neissendorfer (piano).

Charly says that he doesn't set out to copy Buddy Rich, although he is often compared to him. He does have a razor-sharp, rudimentally based technique; audiences seem to delight in his dry humor from the stage and tend to cheer on his solos as if they were sporting events. Also, Charly Antolini is uncompromising in his views and a very straight speaker.

SG: Being a drummer/leader in the jazz field must have a lot of rewards and a lot of headaches. Would you tell us something about it?

CA: I have been leading my own band for ten years, and during that time, it has been a quartet, quintet, or just a trio. But since January '86, I have had this band with four horns and a rhythm section. I have previously made albums with up to five horns on them, but up until now, I have avoided the financial problems of going on tour with a seven-piece band. When you go out with a quartet, it is relatively easy. But now everything gets expensive. Jazz musicians don't

get as much money as rock musicians do, which is too bad. I'm playing jazz, which is an art form: small big band stuff, mainstream, Latin. Germany is a good place to play, but it's not so easy when you are a European bandleader.

SG: Why isn't it so easy for a European bandleader?

CA: Because all the Americans come to Europe. Five years ago, I went to California. Then I was the exotic guy, but over here, there is more interest in American jazz musicians. First you need to have a name, and then you must have the opportunity to get the gigs. I've been in the business 30 years. I've played commercial stuff, and I've played with big bands that are a mixture of commercial and jazz, but these days, I try to stay with jazz. I play with the radio big band in Hamburg, sometimes as the normal drummer, sometimes as a featured soloist. When I am there as a soloist, I get paid more.

SG: Do you ever have problems being double-booked between the radio band and your own band?

CA: Oh yes. Before doing this tour, I had 14 days with the N.D.R. They gave me the dates very late, and I already had some dates booked with my own band. The problem is that playing for a radio station for 14 days is good money. No jazz club in Germany would be able to pay as much. So I had to speak with the musicians and agree to change the dates. I am often able to book them back for a later time. It is difficult, because all my musicians are free-lance; they do gigs with other bands, too.

SG: Do you handle all the business and bookings for your band?

CA: I organize 75% of our work myself: the transport, the hotels, the contracts—everything. It's a lot of work. And on top of that, I need time for playing, time for practicing, and time for relaxing.

SG: How did you start playing?

CA: I was born and grew up in Switzerland. In that country, they have fantastic instructors of rudimental technique. There is a drumming folklore based in Basle. It is like the Scottish drumming. It's different

in style, but it comes from a strong tradition of technical drummers. I started playing when I was nine years old. By the time I was 16, I had all this rudimental technique, but I couldn't play the drumkit. When you play the kit, you use your feet and you have different sounds going on simultaneously, but I was used to only having the one sound: the snare drum. Independence on the kit is different. When I first started playing drumkit, I was 17 years old, and I was terrible!

I had nobody to watch; there was nobody to show me anything. It was 11 years after World War II, and Switzerland was a neutral country. We didn't have any Americans there. A few came as tourists, but there were very few musicians going there to play. The first live jazz I heard was a concert by Illinois Jacquet in 1954, with Ossie Johnson on drums. In the same year, I saw The Chet Baker Quartet, but there was nobody to show me how to play drumkit. I learned everything myself—*everything*. The only positive thing for me at that time was that I had the rudimental technique, and that is the best grounding for playing drums. Now the young kids start playing rock grooves, but what is a roll? A roll is nothing! It's not important. But today they can go anywhere and see so many drummers. There are so many people they can "steal" ideas from. In my time, there was nothing.

SG: How did you develop kit playing?

CA: I joined an amateur Dixieland band in '55, but we were terrible. We were all young kids of 17 or 18. Then in '56, I got my first professional job in Paris. I stayed there for nearly a year, and then I joined a well-known Swiss Dixieland band. We toured for two years in Germany, and I met a lot of other professional jazz players, like Lennie Hastings, who used to be in The Alex Welsh Band, and that man was a fantastic drummer in his way. I was playing for three months on the Reperbahn in Hamburg. There was a jazz club there, and we played every night.

Then one day I said to myself, "I'm not

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Photo by J. Poltkamp

Manni Von Bohr

"If you are writing about German drummers, you must interview Manni Von Bohr. He is The Pope of drumming in Germany." This was a particularly strong recommendation, coming as it did from an executive who is high up in the German music industry, but whose company has nothing to do with either Sonor or Sabian, the two firms whose products Manni endorses.

In Germany, he is well known as a clinician and for his writing on drum-related matters in the musician's magazine *Fachblatt*, but Manni Von Bohr is, first and foremost, a performer. After having fleeting success with his first professional band, *Message*, in the late '60s, he went on to join the very popular German band *Birth Control*. Being a member of *Birth Control* brought him to Cologne, where he became involved in the studio scene. Manni's studio credits have included commercial hit records like those by *Gina X Performance*—for whom he appears under the pseudonym of "Laslo Czigany." ("The producer reckoned that I look like a nineteenth-century Hungarian composer of that name!") He has also done some much more creative jazz/rock with flautist *Lenny MacDowell* and a group called *Headband*. In a slightly more unusual vein, Manni has been playing regularly with a three piece called *Alex Oriental Experience*, the lineup of which consists of bass, drums, and a Turkish instrument called a *Saz*. The *Saz* is a double-stringed instrument of the guitar family that has been adapted to take pickups and be played standing up in a rock context.

Manni prefers not to consider himself a studio musician. He goes out on the road with these bands, whenever his schedule permits. He has also recently joined a "hard rock" band called *Hammerhead*, which is being re-formed by English bassist and guitarist *Ian Bishop* and *Ian Miles*.

Their previous drummer was American double bass drum ace *Joe Franco*.

When I called Manni and asked if I could interview him for *Modern Drummer*, he immediately invited me to stay at his house in the country near Cologne, with himself, his wife, and his young son. By the time we sat down with a tape recorder to actually do the interview, we had spent about half a day together. I had come to realize that Manni is a musical philosopher whose involvement in drums and drumming goes very deep indeed. Rather than getting him to talk about himself, it seemed more constructive if we could find out about the man through his ideas.

SG: Let's discuss your philosophy of drumming. What do you consider the role of the drummer to be?

MVB: At its most basic level, the function of the drummer is to keep the beat. It is most important for the drummer to know where the beat is. However, it is also important for the other musicians in the band to feel that beat naturally, in addition to hearing it from the drummer. If the drummer has good timing but the other musicians don't, the music won't be tight. If the other musicians have no timing, they can't follow the drummer's time. Drummers shouldn't have to play "four on the floor" necessarily, but they must develop the groove. It is the drummer's job to make sure that the groove moves. I like to play in bands where I have the freedom to play spaces and play around the beat—not having to play "one" all the time. You can play the "and" behind the "one" or something in between, without losing the beat.

Drummers have to give energy to the music, to the people they play with, and to the audience. That's what makes people enthusiastic about drummers. At a basic level, this can be seen when drummers do solos at concerts. It is the power, the technique, and above all the energy that every-

one in the audience relates to. Drummers, more than any other musicians, have to look after their bodies and be sure that their bodies are able to produce the energy. This isn't directly related to practice and technique, although that is important. It has more to do with consistency. People don't want to play with drummers who are always changing their energy levels, so that they have good and bad days all the time. There should always be a good mid-level, so that, even on bad days, that mid-level will be maintained.

SG: What steps do you take to maintain your energy level? Is it a matter of physical fitness?

MVB: It really started for me 12 years ago when I became involved in *Transcendental Meditation*. I was trying to find something that would keep my mind clear and my body clean. In Germany, these days we are having a lot of trouble with pollution. The air is dirty, the water is dirty, the forests are dying—bad things like that. I think that, in this situation, it is very important to live properly. With the meditation, things changed: My playing changed, and my whole way of living changed. I don't eat meat, sugar, or white bread. Since I started to live like this, I have had much more natural energy. I feel looser—not heavy the way you do after you've eaten a meal with meat. I feel fresh and clear-minded; I'm aware of my energy flow and my breathing. When you feel like this, it is easier to feel that there is a direct line of communication between the brain and the body. This is my way of transferring ideas through to the drumkit and being inspired when I play.

Every morning, I meditate and do yoga. Yoga loosens the muscles and helps circulation, so that you can feel your body. It is important for drummers to be aware of their bodies. I don't drink alcohol or

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Photo by G. W. Klenitz

Michael Eurich

The members of Warlock are the rising stars of the heavy metal scene in Germany, and they are beginning to establish themselves on an international level. Their first album, Burning The Witches (Mausoleum '84), sold 25,000 copies. At the time it was recorded, drummer Michael Eurich was not yet 17 years old. With two further albums on Phonogram, Hellbound ('85) and True As Steel ('86), the band's fortunes have continued to rise. Warlock's lead singer is Doro Pesch, who with her Madonna-ish looks and her own special style of hard-rock singing is a natural focal point in the band. However, Doro is the first to insist that Warlock isn't her with a backing band: It is a cooperative; they are all equals.

Seeing Warlock playing support to W.A.S.P. on an '86 European tour, it became clear that Michael Eurich, for all his tender years, is much more than a straight "basher." He employs a good technique combined with good taste to ensure that Doro's singing isn't the only original and interesting thing about the band's performance. His serious and mature approach to his drumming is helped by various influences; one of these is Michael's drum tech, Rudy Kaeding. Rudy is also something of a teacher and a "coach" to Michael. It was helpful having Rudy sitting in on our interview, because he was able to bring his own views to bear, as well as helping with any linguistic difficulties.

SG: How did you first become involved with the other members of Warlock?

ME: Back in 1982, there must have been about 80 bands rehearsing in my hometown of Dusseldorf. There was one large building full of rehearsal rooms, where everybody would go at one time or another. This was how I met Doro and Peter [Szigeti—guitarist]; we got on well together and our musical ideas seemed to fit, so we formed a band that became Warlock.

SG: It sounds simple, put like that.

ME: We had a lot of work to do to reach our present situation. It has taken us four years of hard work. Our first album was released in 1984, but before that, we had to do all the things that struggling bands have to do.

SG: How and when did you actually start playing drums?

ME: It was when I was 13 years old. A friend invited me to a youth club. Among the things they had there for the kids to play around with was a drumkit. I tried it and loved it immediately. I became determined to continue with it.

SG: Who would you choose as being your main musical influences?

ME: All the great rock drummers: John Bonham, perhaps—people like that—but if I had to choose an all-time favorite, it would be Tommy Aldridge.

SG: How do you find playing in the studio, as opposed to live playing?

ME: I much prefer playing live; the emotion you get from the audience and from the other band members, and just from the situation of playing a concert, inspires you to play well. In the studio, it's sterile. First of all, I find that I can't relate properly to the sort of heavy drum sound that I like when I am hearing it through a headset. Secondly, having to sit alone in a drum booth and get on the line with a click track, you can't produce the same sort of feeling that you could if you were playing live.

SG: But you have to do it. What is your secret for overcoming these negative feelings?

ME: Well, you never get anything down in one take, do you? Even if things are going well, you do three or four takes of a song, just to see which one comes out the best. So after we have done a few takes of a song and I am feeling that I need some stimulation to get me sharp again, I will listen to some music by somebody else: Ronnie James Dio, Tommy Aldridge perhaps. I'll play a bit on my own, and then I'll feel

ready to do some more takes. You see, the drum tracks go down first, with the bass and perhaps a rhythm guitar, but never the whole band. I like to be able to react musically to the whole thing, not just a small section of it.

SG: How do you go about learning the new material for albums?

ME: Whoever has written a song will play it to us, and the band members decide what their particular parts are going to be. In my own case, I work very closely with Rudy. He is a drummer who has more experience than I do, and he has some very good ideas that I can combine with my own. I also have a teacher named Rainer Mackenthun, who is a very good studio player. I can go to him with ideas, and he will suggest small improvements.

Rudy: Rainer and I can give him our secrets, but when it actually comes out, it is Michael's feeling. He works extremely hard; every minute of the day, almost, is drumming! The development between the current album and the one before represents a year of hard work for him.

SG: I imagine that all your material is recorded for albums before you get the chance to play it live?

ME: Yes. That's the way the business works. The songs are written for an album, then the album is released, and then we go on tour to promote that album to the people. There isn't the time to play songs on gigs before recording them. If you have a contract to do five albums in five years, you find that each year only contains enough months in which to write and rehearse the material, record an album, and do a tour. And when we do a tour, we have to promote the album that is in the shops now; there isn't a lot of point in promoting the next one. The time gap before it appears will be so great that people will have forgotten.

SG: How long does it take you to record an album?

continued on page 93

MD DRUM FESTIVAL '87

Photos by Rick Malkin



Ron Spagnardi greeting the crowd



Kenny Aronoff, Danny Gottlieb, Rod Morgenstein, Dave Weckl



The MD staff: (backrow) Susan Hannum, Rick Mattingly, Dave Creamer, Tracy Kearney, Ellen Corsi, Bill Miller, Evelyn Urry, Sharon Leary, Tara Shah, Crystal Van Horn; (front row) Kevin Kearns, Isabel Spagnardi, Ron Spagnardi, Rick Van Horn



Max Weinberg with Ron Spagnardi



Ron Spagnardi with Anton Fig



Joe Morello, Rod Morgenstein, Dave Weckl, Danny Gottlieb, Kenny Aronoff, Alan Dawson

DAVE WECKL



Dave and Rick Van Horn



Rick Mattingly, Armand Zildjian, and Lennie DiMuzio drawing for door prizes



Carla Azar and friend

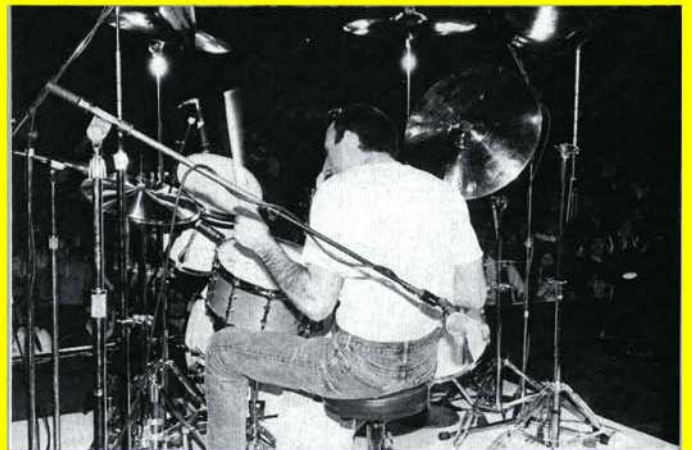
KENNY ARONOFF



Anton Fig, Max Weinberg, and Kenny



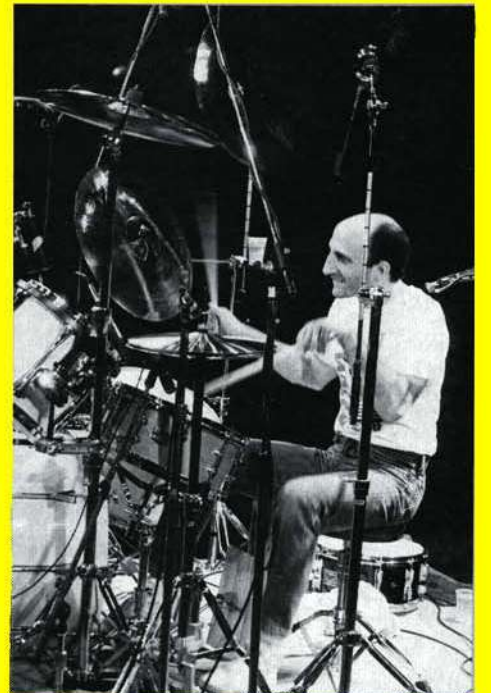
Kenny with Tama's Joe Hibbs



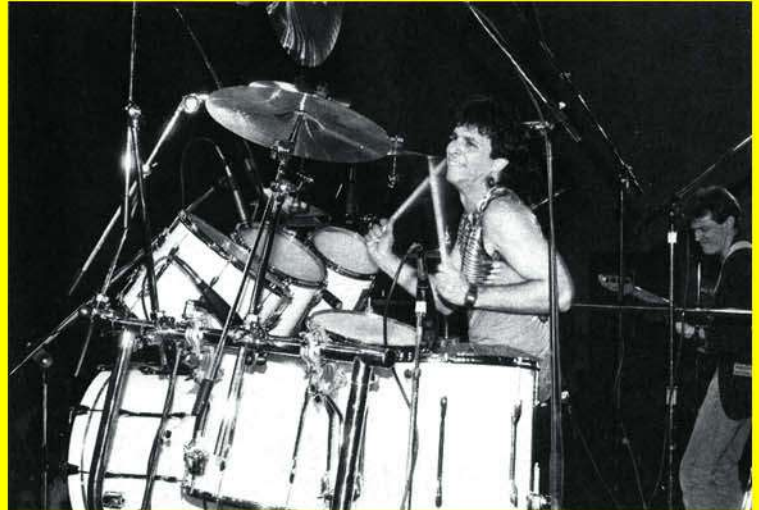
Ron Spagnardi, Kenny, and Rick Mattingly



Kenny and Armand Zildjian



ROD MORGENSTEIN



Rod and bassist Jerry Peek



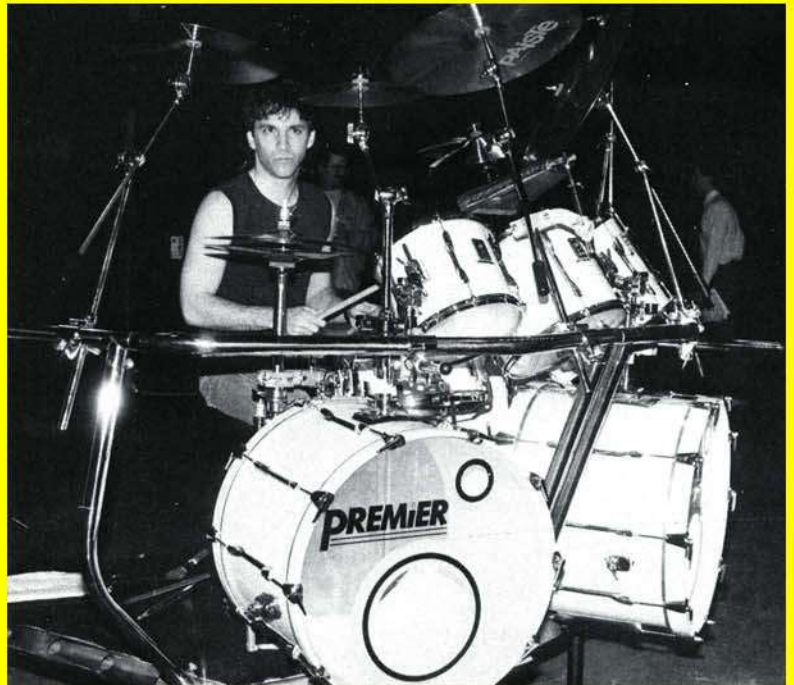
Rod with Jonathan Mover



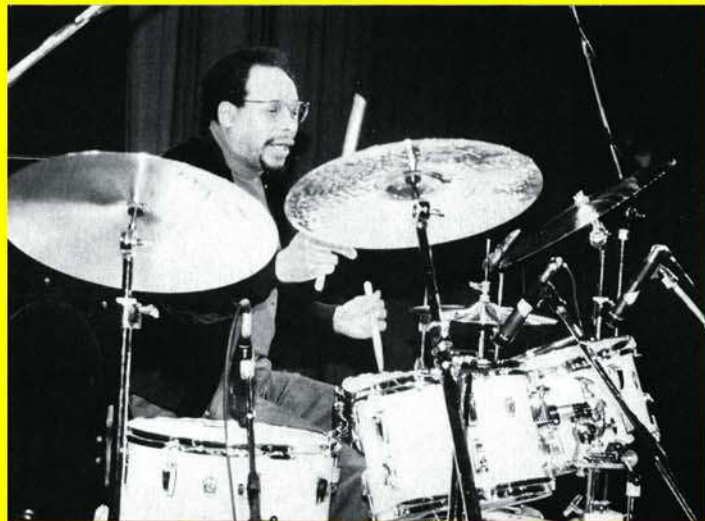
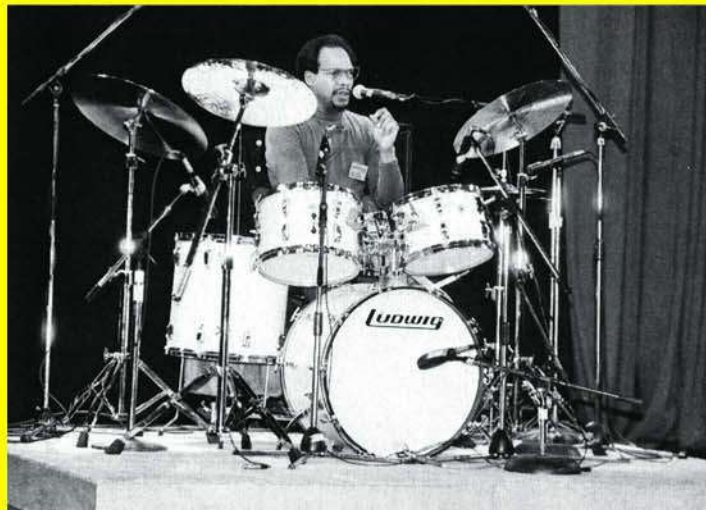
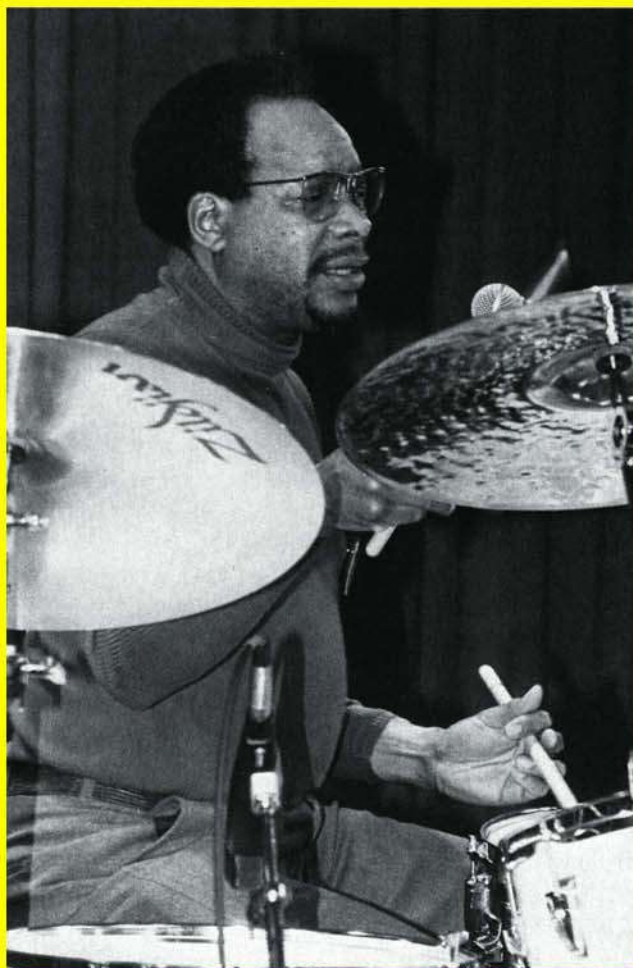
Premier's Tom Meyers and Rod



Joe Franco giving out door prizes



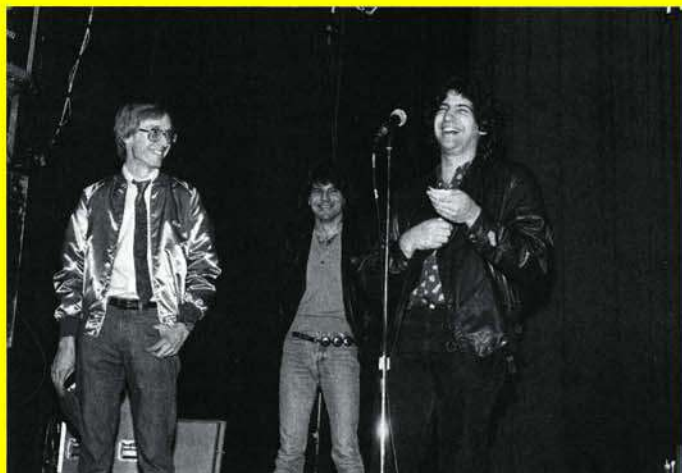
ALAN DAWSON



Ron Spagnardi, Rick Van Horn, and Bill Ludwig III



Joe Morello with Alan



Rick Mattingly, Sandy Gennaro, and Danny Gottlieb giving out door prizes

STEVE GADD



Steve Ettelson, Anton Fig, and Rick Van Horn awarding door prizes



Jim Chapin and Joe Morello



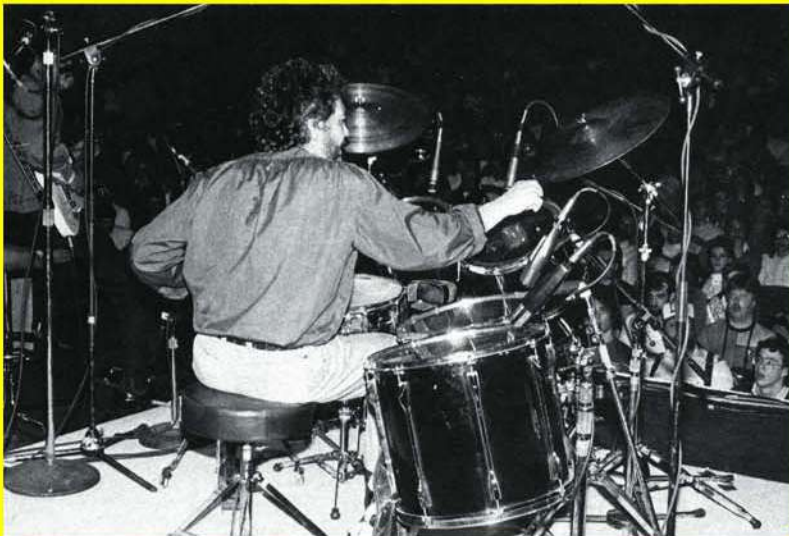
The Gadd Gang: Eddie Gomez, Ronnie Cuber, Steve Gadd, Cornell Dupree, Richard Tee



Peter Magadini, Michael Shrieve, and Kenny Aronoff



Special prizes were awarded to Karl Stearns and Jim Black; each traveled over 3000 miles to attend the Festival



Richard Tee and Dave Weckl



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by Kenny Aronoff

Less Is More



MUSIC KEY

H.H.	X	R.C.	C.C.
T.T.	X		
S.D.	X		
F.T.	X		
B.D.	X		
H.H.	X		
W/ Feet	X		
		Add'l	Toms

For the past several years, I've been making records mostly with John Cougar Mellencamp. My approach has basically been "less is more." With this concept in mind, I try to first establish a basic beat, then play it with a lot of feeling, and finally be as creative as possible with it. There should be no wasted or unnecessary beats detracting from the basic groove or feel of the song.

I didn't understand the concept of "less is more" before I started working with John Cougar Mellencamp, because I was playing mostly fusion and jazz music. My approach then was still to establish a basic beat and make it feel good, but I also focused on improvising wherever and whenever possible. I realized this was not the acceptable approach when I started doing sessions geared for the radio or large record sales. My parts had to be streamlined and right to the point, with no excess notes getting in the way of the focus of the song.

When we're putting songs together for the John Cougar Mellencamp albums, there is always at least one obvious beat that seems perfect for the song. The trick is to vary that obvious beat slightly to make the song more interesting. I try to add creative ideas to the song by dropping and adding notes, putting accents and fills in obvious and unobvious places, and turning beats around, but always focusing on the original beat and feel of the song. If you change the beat too much, then you start changing the song.

Sometimes, instead of establishing the basic beat right away, I'll simplify it first and gradually add to it. It's sort of a reverse process. Instead of taking the basic beat and trying to build from there, I'll break the beat down and build to the basic beat. This is well demonstrated in the song "Minutes To Memories" from the *Scarecrow* album. The basic beat finally appears in the first chorus of the song.

The song starts with a slight variation of the basic beat, leaving the hi-hat off on 2 and 4. As simple as that may seem, it creates a slightly different feel. When you play basic beats, every note has to be considered very important, because it truly is.

First Verse

The first two verses can be broken into three sections: A, B, and C. Section A is a simplified version of the basic beat. Each section adds more notes to the beat, until you reach the first chorus, which is the basic beat of the song. This building from section to section

creates momentum and energy in the song.

Section A of the first verse contains no hi-hat, with both hands playing a cross-stick flam figure on beats 2 and 4. (The left hand plays the grace note, a normal cross-stick [i.e., bossa nova position], except that the tip end of the stick is closest to the rim instead of the butt end. The right hand is the primary note, playing a normal rimshot.)

Section B doesn't have any hi-hat, and both hands play cross-stick flam figures. The difference between Sections A and B is that Section B has a regular backbeat on the fourth beat of every fourth bar:

Section C has no hi-hat, and just a regular backbeat is played:

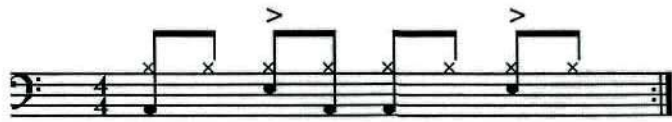
Second Verse

In the second verse, I still use the building effect that I used in the first verse, but I start a bit more intensely. I want the entire second verse to feel greater than the first verse. This helps keep the song moving forward and interesting.

Section A of the second verse is very similar to Section B of the first verse, with the only difference being that the snare drum part repeats every other bar instead of every four bars:

Section B of the second verse is the same beat as the intro of the song:

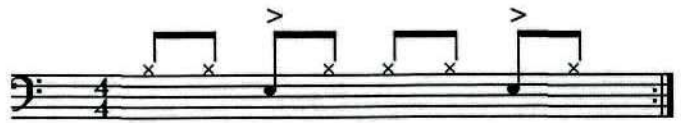
Section C of the second verse is the basic beat of the song, except that it is played on hi-hat instead of ride cymbal:



Third Verse

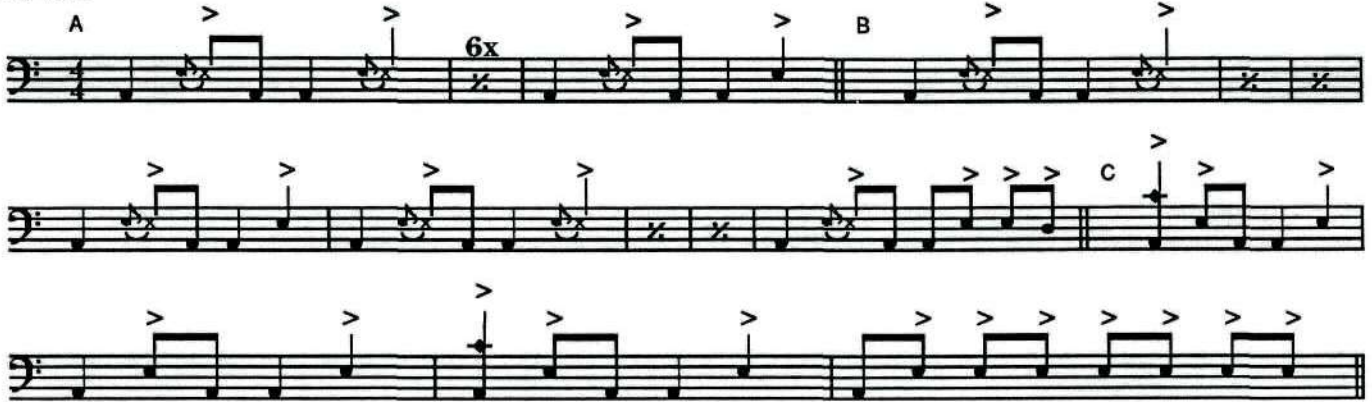
The third verse—a half verse—is completely different from the

first and second verses, because only the vocals, guitar, mandolin, and drums are playing. I break the beat down to just snare and hi-hat, leaving the hi-hat out on beats 2 and 4. It's a nice contrast at this point in the song, because it gives the song a breath of air and sets up the ending perfectly.

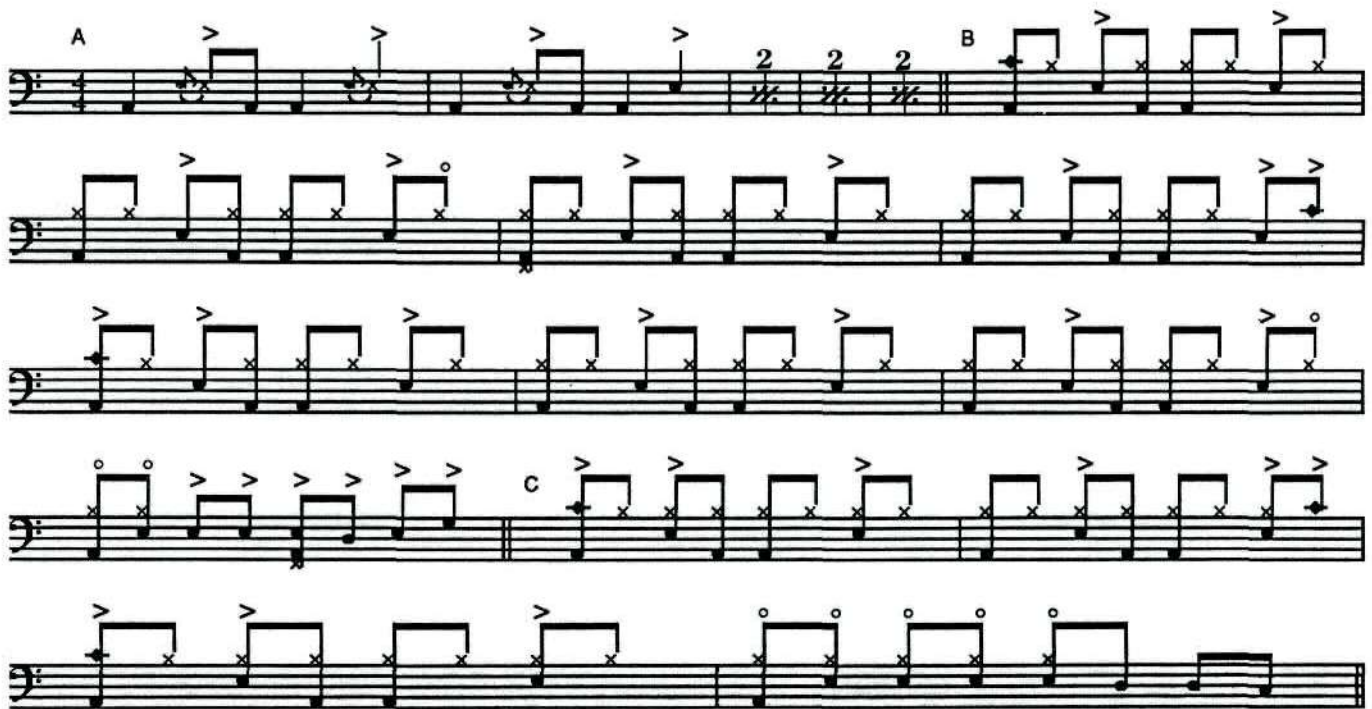


Now that you have seen how the basic beat has been broken up for the different sections of the song, let's take a look at both the first and second verses completely written out. Check out how these sections work together, and build the intensity up to the chorus. Listening to this song will let you hear exactly what is happening.

First Verse



Second Verse



"Less is more" is a great guideline to get one's focus on establishing the basic beat and groove of a song. There are obviously many different approaches to playing music. Every song has two identifying characteristics that make it easy to remember: the *melody*, or hook line, and the *basic beat*. People sing melodies and tap their feet. It's that simple and basic. That's why "simple" and "basic" are key words to me when I play music. If you establish the beat of the song, make it feel good, and are creative with it without detracting from the song, you're doing a great job, and you are going to continue to get work as a drummer.



by Robert Bowman and Ross Johnson



Johnny Bernero

You're Right, She's Gone," "Mystery Train," "I Forgot To Remember To Forget," "Just Because," and "Tryin' To Get To You." A seventh unreleased track, "When It Rains, It Really Pours," was issued by RCA in 1985 on Presley's 50th anniversary album, *Elvis: A Golden Celebration*.

Bernero laid down an unobtrusive back-beat on all seven songs using a brush on the ride cymbal and a stick on the snare drum on several tracks, and just brushes on the snare with no cymbal work on others. He used a rimshot occasionally to accent 2 and 4. Tom-toms were not used on any of the sessions. This sparseness of sound was required since Sam Phillips didn't want to hear a lot of loud drum and cymbal work on Sun recordings. In response, Bernero found ways to satisfy Phillips while providing a strong foundation for Presley's songs.

He usually played 2 and 4 on the snare drum and four beats on the bass drum, accenting the 1 and 3 to make those beats more forceful. He learned this from his high school band director, who provided him with a solid background in big band drumming where all four beats were played on the bass drum. To add some variety to individual tracks, Bernero would often vary patterns on the same song to break up what he calls "the monotony of the same old beat." But this "same old beat" became Bernero's trademark in the studio. It was a country shuffle beat, with a strong emphasis on 1 and 3. It's heard to great effect on "You're Right, I'm Left, She's Gone," and "I Forgot To Remember To Forget." It's interesting to note that, while Bernero was quite adept at playing this country beat, he found it rather boring. He enjoyed listening to country music, but found playing it dry and dull. He enjoyed playing jazz much more than country, and to this day, considers himself primarily a swing drummer.

Presley asked Bernero to tour with him, but John had to refuse the offer since he was a family man with four small children. He was also working as a session drummer for other artists at Sun Records and play-

ing local club dates with his own jazz group, the Atomics. Consequently, he turned Presley down, and missed out on the chance to tour and record full-time. After Bernero declined, Presley offered the job to *Louisiana Hayride* regular D.J. Fontana. Bernero claims to feel no regret at having declined Presley's offer. He's satisfied with the direction his life has taken.

Incidentally, according to Sun session drummer J.M. Van Eaton, the first drummer to ever play *live* with Elvis' band was Memphian Jimmy Lott. Apparently, Lott did some live dates with Presley, Black, and Moore around the Memphis area. It's not known whether Lott was given the same offer that Bernero and Fontana received. However, it's certain that he never recorded with Elvis.

In the studio with Elvis, Bernero was pretty much free to play whatever he thought would fit the song. Aside from Sam Phillips' request that he not play too loudly, he cannot remember being told what to play by either Phillips or the other musicians. Given the freedom to play whatever he wanted to, Bernero chose restraint and tastefulness. He played what he thought would be appropriate for each song and nothing more. He had plenty of technique, but didn't care to show it off during the sessions. Presley's early sessions benefited greatly from the drummer's laid-back style. He played simple arrangements and let Presley's vocal gymnastics shine through on each track.

Recording conditions at Sam Phillips' studio were quite primitive in the mid-'50s. Phillips recorded everything in mono and relied heavily on tape-loop echo to create a crude brand of slapback echo. This heavy slapback characterized almost all Sun recordings and became known as the "Sun Sound," which has since become legendary in the music industry. It's used heavily on the songs Bernero cut with Presley, giving the tracks an echoey, otherworldly feel that sounded like nothing else being recorded at the time.

The recording console Phillips used had only five inputs, which made it impossible to use more than five mic's to record the

Johnny Bernero is one of the unsung heroes of rock drumming. His claim to fame is his performance on several of Elvis Presley's earliest recordings for Sun Records. For years, D.J. Fontana was credited with playing on those first Presley tracks. Fontana himself corrected this mistake in two interviews, one with Robyn Flans in *Modern Drummer*, and another with Max Weinberg in his book *The Big Beat*. Why didn't Bernero attempt to set the record straight in the years since those original Presley sessions? "I couldn't care less, really. It didn't bother me at all." Nevertheless, he was, indeed, the *first* drummer ever to record with Presley.

In the fall of 1954, Sam Phillips, owner of Sun Records, asked Bernero to record with a new artist, 19-year-old Elvis Aron Presley. Phillips had already cut several records with Presley by that time. They had featured Presley on acoustic guitar and vocals, Bill Black on standup bass, and Scotty Moore on electric guitar. Phillips wanted to cut some material using drums for a fuller band track. Bernero was a session drummer for Sun at the time, cutting up-tempo, country material. Phillips brought Bernero in to record with Presley and his small group to help flesh out the sound.

Bernero recorded seven songs with Presley. Four were released on Sun 45s and 78s in 1955. In November of '55, Phillips sold Presley's recording contract and all released and unreleased masters to RCA. Subsequently, two other tracks featuring Bernero showed up on Presley's first RCA album in March 1956. Bernero played on "You're A Heartbreaker," "I'm Left,

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vocals and instruments in the studio. Overdubbing was unheard of. But these factors contributed to the spontaneous, raw sound of records on the Sun label. Many were first or second takes complete with dropped beats and bum notes. Phillips chose tracks for their feel, rather than their technical perfection. Consequently, if a take had the feel he wanted, he'd release it even if there were several mistakes.

Usually, one microphone was used to record the whole drumset. The mic' was placed over the snare drum, which explains the dominance of the snare over other drums and cymbals on most Sun records. Bernero remembers playing cymbals and bass drum on the recordings he made with Presley. However, they're barely audible on record. When they can be heard, it's because Phillips liked what Bernero was playing and opened up the overhead snare mic' to catch the cymbal work. Occasionally, Phillips would place a separate microphone on the bass drum. Bernero specifically remembers Phillips doing this on "Tryin' To Get To You," as he particularly liked the bass drum pattern Bernero used.

Bernero used a set of Premier drums on the Presley sessions and has continued to do so throughout most of his career. He also played Gretsch drums for a brief period. He used only snare, bass drum, mounted tom, and cymbals on the Sun sessions. He recalls using a floor tom only once in the studio, on Warren Smith's "Ubangi Stomp," which called for a heavy, pounding tom fill. He used the mounted tom very infrequently on other Sun sessions, and not at all on the Presley sessions. Neither the engineers nor the musicians at Sun were "drum happy," as Bernero recalls. The engineers also had a difficult time recording tom-toms. They couldn't handle their frequencies very well on the primitive recording equipment they used. This may have partially contributed to the lack of tom-toms on Sun recordings as a whole. Bernero did use all four drums when he played live jobs, but in the studio, he played mainly on the snare and bass.

Bernero favored calfskin heads, although he later switched to plastic when

calfskin became harder to get. He never liked using plastic heads as he couldn't get any friction out of them for brushwork, an important component of his style. He placed an unfolded handkerchief over the snare drum head to cut down on the ring. To dampen his bass drum, he glued a circular cardboard logo cutout onto the front bass drum head. On the batter head, he glued a powder puff where his bass drum beater hit. He took most of the felt off the beater, and tuned the batter head low and loose. The result was a bass drum sound that was very deep but not too boomy.

He didn't muffle his toms at all. He used Zildjian cymbals: 22" and 20" ride cymbals with 15" hi-hats. He made the 22" ride a sizzle cymbal by putting two rivets into it, and also put five rivets into his top hi-hat cymbal to increase projection.

In addition to recording with Presley, Bernero also worked as a session drummer on numerous other Sun recordings during the mid-'50s. He also held down a number of steady club gigs at night. He led his own group for years, known variously as the Atomics, the Johnny Bernero Quartet, and the Johnny Bernero Trio. He favored jazz with his own band, but would play country music and pop hits if it was necessary.

Eventually, Bernero got into the insurance business, drumming on the side throughout most of the '60s. It wasn't until only a few years ago that he got out of the business entirely. He still jams with old friends for enjoyment, but has no desire to play club gigs or recording sessions again.

Bernero might justifiably be bitter at having missed out on the chance to play full-time with the most successful popular singer ever. Had he accepted Presley's original offer to tour, his life might have been radically different from what it is. However, he insists he has no regrets about his musical career, and is happy with the way things turned out. He remains unimpressed with the fact that he was the *first* drummer ever to record with Elvis. He refers to Presley simply as a "pleasant person." The same could be said of Johnny Bernero, one of the unsung heroes of rock 'n' roll.



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Peter Bunetta



Photo by Dawn Bunetta

I knew how Peter Bunetta played just by speaking with him. I was sure that the abundance of life, energy, warmth, sincerity, and sensitivity I detected in the person would come across in his live playing. When I finally saw him work with Billy & the Beaters, I wasn't surprised that I was right. I knew all of that would pervade his playing, just as it has the productions he has worked on for the past six years, such as Steve Goodman, Patti Labelle, the Temptations, and Robbie Dupree—just to mention a few. But then Bunetta has had the distinct advantage of having worked on both sides of the glass, so to speak.

As a player, his recording experience began in a band called *Crackin'*, where he held one of the drum chairs while the other alternated between Lester Abrams and Leslie Smith. From his native New Jersey, Bunetta moved with the band first to Woodstock and then to San Francisco in 1975. *Crackin'* made three albums during a period that Bunetta recalls as some of the greatest times he ever had. Eventually, however, they had to own up to the reality that the records just weren't selling. "We had great arrangements and great spirit, but we didn't have the songs," explains Bunetta.

Bunetta and most of the other band members migrated to L.A. to do session

work. A never-released Rick Springfield album provided great experience, as did an album with Tina Turner called *Rough*. Her producer, Bob Monaco, hired Peter next for Airtio's album *Touching Me, Touching You*. Some work with Steve Goodman and John Prine followed, but as Bunetta recalls, "The calls weren't really coming in. At that point, my partner Rick Chudacoff [bassist from the *Crackin'* days] and I just looked at each other. We weren't anywhere near the 'A' guys. We had the type of personalities where we were really band guys who could see a project through and be a part of it—as opposed to going in for three hours and leaving it. At that time, a friend we had known from Woodstock, Robbie Dupree, came out to stay with us. Rick and I wrote a tune called 'Steal Away.' We borrowed some money, went into a studio with Robbie, and cut 'Steal Away' as our first production. My brother Al took the tape to Elektra Records, and they put it out. We were sitting in this little apartment, and all of a sudden the song came out of the box. Now we had this hit record and two other tunes, but no album. We had to go in immediately and make an album. That album / Robbie Dupree / was our first record."

RF: At first, you were the band on your productions.

PB: We were the band for most of our records up until "New Attitude" [Patti Labelle], where we got involved in using technology. We got more comfortable in the studio. We also became more adept at translating ideas to other people. We worked on communication—the language that goes on between a producer and a musician—and on trying to get the spirit.

RF: Can you expound on that communication you just mentioned?

PB: From being in the drum chair and knowing what it's like being the drummer, I know what I want a producer to say to me—how I want him or her to make me feel when I walk in. The "comfort zone" is important; it establishes a player's center—how he or she is feeling. Hopefully, the player's ready to go, and the producer is right there with that energy and enthusiasm about what he or she is doing. The musician can pick up on it and get in on that wave that's happening. If the producer doesn't have it, the player won't get excited.

RF: When you were playing sessions, did you find that it wasn't like that for the most part?

PB: There were some that weren't; there were some that were. I think one of your jobs, as a session drummer, is to bring energy to a project. If you see that something isn't right, bring energy to it and you can change it. You can be a factor in the attitude and mood of a session. I'm looking at both sides of the fence now, and the advantage I feel I have is that I know how to tell drummers what I'd like to hear and how to give them all the space they need.

Sometimes, when doing demos, we'll use a drum machine—just to outline a song. We'll use it for tempo or maybe for a hi-hat feel. Sometimes, if I want to be specific, I can come up with a bass drum part. There have only been a few times I've done that. One time I did that was on a tune called "Message To The World" from the Temptations record *To Be Continued*. I had Vinnie Colaiuta play exactly what I had on the drum machine on the bass drum, which I was very hesitant to do because I'm one of Vinnie's biggest fans. I think he's brought drumming to a new place. I let Vinnie run with it before I ever approached him. I let him hear the tune and told him to do what he felt. We went at it for about 45 minutes, and then I came to the decision, that, really, my bass drum part worked for the song.

RF: How do you tell a drummer of Vinnie's caliber that what he's been working on for the last 45 minutes isn't really appropriate?

PB: Very straightforward and honest. Vinnie knows me well enough to know that I know what I'm talking about. There's a mutual respect. We've worked together before, and he knows that, when I tell him something, I'm speaking from a musical standpoint—as opposed to ego. I would never claim to be the player he is, yet, he knows *I am* a player, and it's all for the song.

RF: A good producer has to be a psychologist also.

PB: That's one of the biggest factors.

RF: Musicians have very fragile egos.

PB: I do. We all do. I really feel the advantage of my partner and myself having been players. People like to play on our sessions, because they know whatever time we spend together is not going to be labored and it's not going to be a session where we're chasing something—shooting in the dark. We have specific ideas.

RF: Yet you give your players the space to create.

PB: The reason you have them there is for

what they'll bring to a song. I know what Vinnie will bring to a song. He'll give something that will be unexpected, yet right in the pocket. I love that. I would never want to tell him what to play. On that one particular tune, the bass drum part I already had was right, so why change it? He understood that. But the hi-hat stuff and fills he added to it were *great*. The same goes for John Robinson. J.R. is one of the premier players today. A lot of people might not get to hear what he really can play, because on record, he's pretty much right in the pocket. I get to hear him between takes. I'll give him an idea and then leave it to him to bring to the song what he brings. He's also very together equipment-wise, as is Vinnie.

RF: What do you need your drummers to have "equipment-wise"?

PB: I expect a good-sounding drumkit. If it's tuned right and the engineer is good, there's no reason to have to spend hours getting a drum sound. You really need to start with a good-sounding kit. Although today, you can do a few things to help. Sampling has changed a lot of things, and I do have all kinds of drum machine samples. But a drummer should have a good recording kit that's flexible, with a few snare drums. John Robinson, Paul Leim, and Jeff Porcaro also have amazing racks that are now incorporated in their sound.

RF: So what equipment must a drummer have to please you?

PB: That's a tough question, because to me, a drummer just needs a bass drum, a hi-hat, and a snare drum.

RF: But the realities are . . .

PB: The realities are, in the studio, that technology has reared its head. But it's only an ugly head if you let it take over. Using it tastefully and musically is the key. I think every drummer would be smart to investigate and learn how to incorporate technology. J.R.'s rack has extensive triggering devices triggering an *SP-12*, with a Macintosh computer storing all the sounds. I have a Korg *DDD-1*, a Yamaha *RX-11*, and a Roland *808*, because I love the little percussion sounds. I use a Linn *9000* and a *LinnDrum*. But the thing is, if you can't play on a snare drum, hi-hat, and bass drum, those things won't do you any good. So take it one step at a time: If you're playing great drums, you'll get work. If you get work, you'll make some money. And if you spend your money wisely, you'll be able to accumulate whatever you need.

I love technology and I incorporate it. When we did "New Attitude," I used a *DMX*. It was just 1 and 3 on the bass drum and 2 and 4 on the snare, and some hand claps. That was the most tasteful way to use it for that song—which was a turning point for Patti Labelle and a big song for radio. On Matthew Wilder's "Break My Stride," I played along with a Linn machine. The bass and snare were on the

Linn, and I played toms and cymbals. That's what worked for that record. On the Billy & the Beaters gig, I don't use *any* of that stuff live. I play an old Gretsch set with a Joe Montineri custom snare. But Billy's music doesn't warrant electronics.

RF: Are there drummers you're looking forward to working with?

PB: I'm looking forward to working with Jeff Porcaro. When we started using other people, Jeff was spending most of his time with Toto. I'm also looking forward to working with Paul Leim. I used Rick Marotta on one thing. Rick is a good friend. In fact, we played together on two drumsets in a group called the Hollywood Rock 'n' Roll Review a few years ago. I really love his playing. Mickey Curry is another friend I want to work with. I love the way he sounds on record and live. And Jim Keltner—I can't wait until I can use him. I grew up on all the Motown guys, like Benny Benjamin, who was one of the greatest. Now I have the good fortune of producing Smokey Robinson and the Temptations, and I can pick their brains about Benny—who they knew and loved. I get to hear about James Jamerson and about all the rhythm sections. It's an education. I listen to Bernard Purdie and to Gary Chester—who is a great drummer. I listen to the early records Hal Blaine played on.

Dino Danelli changed my life. He was the first drummer I heard on record and saw in person who brought another element to drumming, visually. I had the opportunity to go to some of the Rascals' sessions because my brother worked with them. That was the first time that I felt, "Wow, I want to do this for a living." It validated my feelings about the music business. It was great watching what Dino played. On "How Can I Be Sure," he played a *waltz*! That really set a standard for me.

I loved Earl Palmer on records. He was brilliant at the New Orleans stuff. I really listen to drummers and songs. Drummers must develop their song sense. If Gadd hadn't done what he did on "Fifty Ways To Leave Your Lover," we all know what a different song that would have been. Jeff Porcaro knocked me out on the early Steely Dan records, with his force and strength. And if Rick Marotta hadn't played exactly what he did on Steely Dan's *Kid Charlamagne* album, it wouldn't have been the same. I love the way Kenny Aronoff hits the drums. I love the way Frankie Banali and Bobby Blotzer play the songs they play. I went to see Sting, not only because it was Sting, but because Omar Hakim was playing with him. He floored me. I love this new guy Dave Weckl. I want to work with *all* these cats. I'm like a kid in a candy store. Being in this position, I can use who I want and I don't have to play. On the Temptations record, I played on one tune. On Smokey's record, I



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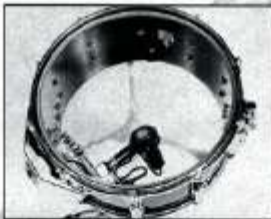
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might play on one tune.

RF: Do you find it difficult to wear both hats in the studio?

PB: No. All the guys I mentioned play so consistently in the studio that it's second nature. A metronome is right in there next to their hearts. When I go back and start playing in the studio again and I haven't had the headphones on in a while, there's that first five minutes of anxiety. But that goes away, and then I'm back into my groove.

RF: But then how do you come out of yourself to produce at the same time?

PB: My partner, Rich Chudacoff, is in the booth. I trust what he hears. As a player, I'm always open to opinions. As producers, Rick and I are always open to musical input from the musicians. If John Robinson says, "This bridge should appear again," or Dan Huff says, "I think we should cut the chorus to six bars," we'll listen. As a drummer, if I'm playing the song and something doesn't feel right, I have that same freedom to say something.

RF: Is there a particular role you find yourself playing most often in your coproduction relationship?

PB: We go back and forth. Rick does all our programming on the Mac. He's also very logical, and his sense of arrangement is very right. We try not to make a meaty, overweight arrangement; it has to be lean.

Everything has to be for the song, and Rick has a great sense of that. I'm really concerned about the feel—as he is—and we keep balancing each other. He'll listen to the guitar part, and I'll be listening to the keyboard part; he'll listen to a drum part, and I'll listen to the guitar part. After a take, we'll compare notes. There's never been a crossing of styles or any conflict, because we both are always listening. On vocals, I'll have phrasing ideas when a vocalist is out there—while Rick will be listening for pitch. I'll be listening to a lyric change, and he'll be listening to a new background part. It's really one of those perfect combinations. We've been together for 13 years, and it's second nature. It's something I cherish. We don't abuse each other, we don't take advantage of each other, and we respect what we have in our whole team. Everybody is involved and everyone expects a certain something from everyone else. If it's not happening, everyone knows how to say it's not happening—which has never happened. There's a tempo and a rhythm to our organization that never lags. There's a sensitivity that spreads around the session—like knowing when to go to dinner rather than to do that next take. You can overwork something.

RF: What advice do you have for drummers trying to get into the studio scene?

PB: I love working with people who have done their homework. There are a lot of things you have to do to get to that place. I started playing when I was nine. I was fortunate, because the guy who rented an

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apartment next to my grandma was a drum teacher. He was one of the most instrumental guys in my life. His name was Joe Paci, and he bought a laundry truck and converted it into a mobile drum studio, which he'd drive to drummers' houses. He had a generator in there for a record player, a heater, and an old silver-sparkle Gretsch set. He introduced me to reading, and the rudiments, and I developed as a player.

I recommend studying to everybody. I recommend reading, because from that comes confidence and little shortcuts. It's like learning how to read a book instead of just looking at the pictures. It's something I eventually slacked off on. I realized I really didn't want to be a session player, because I honestly didn't have all the tools. I can *do* sessions, and I have a great feel, but I'm not the guy who is going to do the film call and all that. I stopped playing for a while and went to school in Boston for film. Then I gravitated back to music and went to Berklee for one semester. I picked some brains there, and then went back to New York to play again. That's when I started the journey again—driving a cab, hanging out at studios, watching. I never did get back into studying again. I went to Chuck Flores for a few lessons when I first came out to L.A., but other things came up and my calling began to become clear.

RF: Is there other homework that has to be done for someone to get into the studios?

PB: Playing. Play in demo situations. Anytime you can, get into the studio, wear headphones, and learn how to play to a click with four other players wearing headphones. Get into that situation whenever you can, whether you're being paid five dollars, five hundred, five thousand, or zero. You'll find out how your drums sound when miked. You'll learn what equipment you need to sound good in the studio. You'll discover the temperament everyone possesses in the studio. You'll find out about the creative process: what happens when a track is off the mark and what is needed when you're trying to put the groove together. The demo scene is the way, because if you get thrown in with the lions too soon, your confidence will suffer.

RF: But with all the machinery, is there really much of a demo scene anymore?

PB: That's a good point. It might be a little harder now, because people are using drum machines. But you'll just have to *look* harder to find demo sessions. They do exist.

Back to advice—we hire people who are real healthy. I don't allow any cocaine in the session. You can do anything you want to do after you leave, but you must come to my session real clear and *stay* real clear. We've never even had a situation where it has come up, because everybody knows how I feel. If you're doing something on my tune where I'm paying you good money, I don't want you to hinder the out-

come of the tune in any way. Tempo is real important, and I don't think you can get in the pocket when you're high. When drummers come into a studio, they're like athletes.


I also suggest playing live. You can get a little too predictable in the studio. All the great guys go out and play, like Jeff, Rick, and J.R. That's a real important element. I'll even go to a club and approach a drummer just for the purpose of having a sub for the Billy & the Beaters gig. I can't do it all the time, and I want to give those guys something that they're used to: somebody with enthusiasm who hits the drum with authority.

RF: A studio drummer is different from a live drummer. How does somebody you see live make it into your studio circle?

PB: By being in the right place at the right time. It's all a crap shoot. A drummer has to be playing in the right club on the right night. I might go to a club one night, and later get a call at home saying the drummer I booked for the next day's demo session can't make it. Maybe I'll call the drummer I just saw. That drummer might come to the date and play great. Until recently, I did use drummers for demo sessions, though I'm using machines now. I still turn people onto live gigs, though. Armand Grimaldi is a drummer I always dug. When Matthew Wilder had success with his first album, we put a band together for him, using Armand on drums. For the second album we used that band. You've got to keep plugging. Who knows what will happen? *You* know if you can play. You've got to be real honest with yourself and go see other drummers to see where you fit in. I know I'll never play like Vinnie, and I could never do what Cobham does, but I also know I have a certain element that is right. You've got to find your own niche. If you give up the dream, then right there, you don't belong in the ring. You have to fight it out. The love of what you do should carry you over. Our production business was very scary at the beginning because we didn't know if we'd get production work, but it has really worked out. I feel very content with all that I'm doing. I think the only thing for me to look to is better records, better songwriting, and continuing to listen to all the players I mentioned.

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Erskine continued from page 21

live performance because it exposed more people to music. So right now, we're just experiencing some growing pains of the information age, I guess.

RM: Do you ever feel that you're spending too much time reading manuals instead of playing?

PE: No, I like it. [laughs] I wish there were more hours in the day. When I see what other drummers are doing, then I want to know about it. Now that I'm moving to Los Angeles, I'm going to have to get my electronics into that state-of-the-art standard that they have out there. All the drummers have racks the size of deep freezers.

It's almost out of control, but someone set the standard, and everyone else has to come up to that to be considered on par. It's kind of competitive overkill.

I think the ultimate question we're getting at here is: Will the mist clear, and will some musicians find a path, pursue it, and find some part of their true musical selves? Or do these instruments represent another aspect of consumer society running amuck?

RM: I know that you are a consumer junkie

PE: You should see my *MasterCard* statement. A few of us are going to start a group called D.A.—Digital Anonymous. We'll have meetings where people will stand up and say, "MIDI has made my life completely unmanageable."

RM: You've got an apartment full of electronics, but I also know that, as much as you enjoy fooling around with that stuff, it doesn't compare with your excitement when you find a great cymbal or when you have a really great experience within a band.

PE: It's true. All of the electronic stuff is the hobby. The drumset is my craft—my life's work. At the same time, the synthesizers and the Macintosh have helped me compose music and write a drum book. I'm actually using this stuff to realize my goals; it's not just sitting in the closet. I'm not much of a keyboard player at all, but

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I've got a bunch of synths, and the *Total Music* software lets me enter stuff on the Mac at my own speed. And with the new Yamaha system, I can now access MIDI through drumpads. Performance-wise as well as compositionally, the horizon is really teeming with possibilities.

RM: Just a couple of years ago, it seemed that technology was working against drummers, when you consider how many drummers lost work because of drum machines. But now it seems that technology has caught up with drummers, and there are some new opportunities opening up. Through MIDI, drummers are getting the chance to show that they have musical ideas that are perfectly valid.

PE: Yeah. The realities have changed for a lot of musicians. I don't think that most people are abandoning everything they've ever cherished just to grab onto the electronic thing. But electronics are potentially capable of great things. It's still in its infant stage, and I think that the excitement and preoccupation with the whole thing just reflects its youth.

I just realized that I'm probably contradicting myself. A little while ago, I said that this stuff is a reflection of consumer society running amuck, and I still stand by what I said in the last interview about how I'd rather hear Elvin hit a drum than hear anybody push a button. At the same time, it depends on who's pushing the button

and what's on the disk. The point is, one doesn't exclude the other. If you can use electronics to do your thing, great.

RM: I certainly enjoyed the way that you used the Yamaha system to get that steel drum sound on your new solo album. I was wishing that the piece had gone on a little longer.

PE: That was just a little thing I wrote one night in a hotel room in Philly. I had only played two shows with the new system, and we had a day off. I took the kit up to my hotel room because I was still trying to learn how to use the system. One of the things you can program into the *PMCI* is Dynamic Note Shift, which means that when you strike the pad harder you get a different note. You can have up to five different notes on each pad. So I got a steel drum sound, and then programmed a pentatonic scale, so that even if I goofed and hit a pad a little too hard, I would still get a note that worked. So I had that programmed into MIDI A, and then on MIDI B, I had sampled conga drums from the Korg *DDD-1*. They were playing in harmony with the steel drum sounds.

That piece started out as an improvisation. At some point in my solo on the Weather Update tour, I would use that sound, and it gradually evolved into a short piece.

RM: The record also contains some music from *Richard II*. Is that the exact music

that you wrote for the play, or is this just based on that?

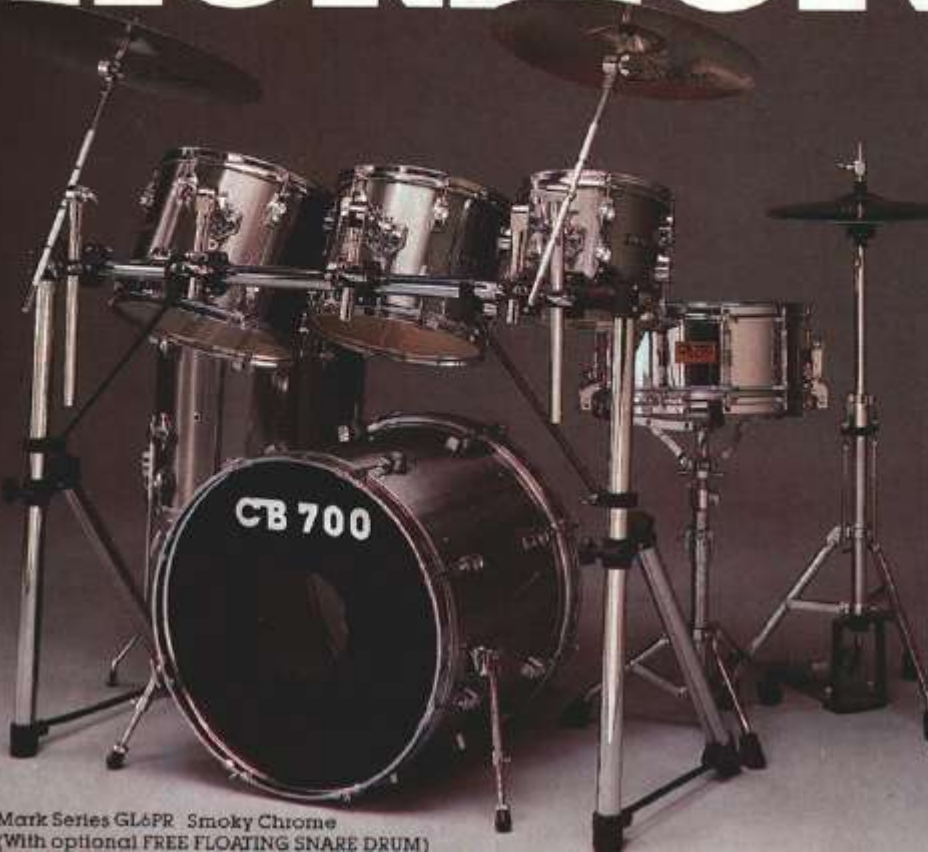
PE: The orchestral sounding stuff was used that way in the production—the French horn pieces. The two jazz pieces were just based on those themes. It wasn't like the score was "Jazz Meets Shakespeare." But I liked a couple of the melodies and thought that they would work well as jazz tunes.

RM: The way this album is mixed, I was suddenly aware of how much you like to hit crash cymbals. I had never really noticed that before, but then I went back and listened to some other records that you're on, and I realized that hitting a lot of cymbal crashes is something that you do pretty consistently.

PE: The main two colors on the cymbal are the dry, short tone that you get with the tip of the stick and the broad spread of a crash. Crashes are a very warm way of marking time or spreading the beat. Also, the neat thing about recording with crashes is that you can use stereo imaging to move the sounds around from right to left. If you get a couple of nice crashes relatively off mic', it's kind of interesting—not just "ting, ting, ting" all of the time.

One thing that I like to do is hit crashes without hitting the bass drum or snare drum. Someone pointed out to me that Shelly Manne used to do that, too. In other words, a lot of drummers always hit a

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drum along with a crash cymbal, which makes it like an exclamation point. But I like to hit cymbals by themselves.

RM: A few years ago, you had your cymbals positioned at rather extreme angles. But now your cymbals are positioned horizontally. Did the angle change gradually or all of a sudden?

PE: It was kind of gradual. The Zildjian people were always telling me that my cymbals would sound better if I leveled them out. If you want a cymbal to sound the way that it really sounds, it should be horizontal and not clamped down. At one time, I thought that having the cymbals at that angle gave me a certain stick to cymbal attitude. I thought that was a good setup for me. It wasn't. That gave me some real problems with my playing. I just wasn't making good contact with the instrument. There was an actual time lag in getting from the drums up to the cymbals and down again. When you're playing drums, if you can play very relaxed and efficiently, then your ideas have a much better chance of coming out.

I once sat in on a guy's set in Chicago, and he had everything very flat. When I played on his drums, I thought, "What a neat idea." But it took a few years for that to sink in. Now I see pictures of myself from a few years ago, and when I see the way those cymbals are tilted, I think, "That's really not good."

RM: With a lot of drummers, even though they may be multifaceted, there's usually a characteristic that comes to mind when the person's name is mentioned. For instance, if someone mentioned Steve Jordan, you might think of ...

PE: Backbeat—the world's greatest.

RM: Danny Gottlieb's name might make someone think of cymbals. With Mel Lewis, I always think of the way he supports. What about Peter Erskine? How would you define yourself?

PE: If I had to think of something that makes me unique—besides the fact that my family might find me endearing—then I think that it would be that I've got a pretty good backbeat and I can also swing, and at the same time, I can play music that's open in terms of form.

I was thinking recently that a lot of the music I play simply involves listening to the other musicians, because I can't go in with any preconceived ideas of how it's going to be. For example, I just did an ECM record with Gary Peacock, who plays bass a little more on top of the beat than what I'm used to. He also plays around the beat a lot; you don't get a lot of downbeats. On the first take, I had trouble following him. I wasn't exactly trusting what he was playing. But as I listened to the playback, I could hear exactly what he was doing. The way he was developing around the motion of the music was ingenious. Then [producer] Manfred Eicher came over to me and said, "Listen. Just listen." When we played it again, I just listened to Gary, without worrying about the beat. The musicians all had enough experience to supply the beat for themselves. So this was one of the first times that I've played something where the time wasn't being played, but it was always there. It turned out to be an extraordinary take. I was thrilled. It's the kind of stuff I've heard Paul Motian play.

As far as drumming goes, I've realized that you can't be everything to everybody. For better or worse, after a while, you arrive at a way of playing. You can try to improve that, but you can't change who you are. You can be influenced by Elvin or Tony or Gadd or Porcaro or Weckl or whoever, but you can't try to be that person. When you hear somebody doing something great, it's natural to say, "I want some of that in my playing," and your ego wants you to be highly regarded in a lot of areas. But you've got to do what you can do.

I think of myself as a jazz drummer. The people in L.A. seem to think of me that way. I've already had a couple of people say, "You're a jazz drummer. Are you sure you want to come out here?" To some hardcore beboppers, I'm not a jazz drummer, I'm a fusion drummer.

Basically, I play the music I play because it's the music I enjoy. I recognize certain obligations to tradition and to taste, but the primary motivating factor for most artists, I think, is to satisfy themselves.

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I'm real happy about a recent batch of recordings that I've done for Denon: my own solo album, *Transition*; an Eliane Elias album with Eddie Gomez; and Bob Berg's recording with Don Grolnick, Will

Lee, and Mike Stern. These three recordings document the different facets of my playing. For example, I love playing with acoustic bass players like Eddie and Marc Johnson, and I also love working with electric bass players like Will Lee, who's my favorite. On these three recordings, I got to play with all three of those guys.

RM: If I had to describe your drumming in one word, the word I'd use would be "protagonist." You don't just sit in the back and react to everyone else. You are also throwing out ideas of your own, and I often get the sense that you are pushing the other musicians to greater heights.

PE: That's a nice compliment. Recently, I

was reading reviews of some albums I've played on, and they were saying things like, "The support was tasteful." I guess that's nice, but After one of the takes on the ECM record I was just talking about, Jan Garbarek came up to me and said, "Very good. You took charge." When I first started playing free music, I was always just responding to what somebody else did. I feel more comfortable now, and if I feel like making a statement, I do. I also try to be supportive.

The nice thing is that I feel like I can do more without the ego being involved. Before, I felt that I had to leave a thumbprint, so I would do something goofy on almost every take just because I thought I was branding it as being me. It was a kind of conceit. The only thing it got branded as was being goofy. It used to drive Mike Mainieri crazy. "Why did you do that?" He had a good point a lot of times. So now maybe I've got a slightly more mature way of interacting.

RM: One record on which I especially got that feeling of you being a protagonist was the *Bass Desires* album. I got a real sense that all of the musicians were contributing equally.

PE: That's what coming to New York did for me. That music demands that kind of involvement or interaction. Also, musicians like Marc Johnson, Bill Frisell, and John Scofield play with the right amount of space that allows that. I do enjoy playing with musicians who leave room for stuff to happen.

RM: Another thing I noticed on that album had to do with the relationship between your ride cymbal and the drums. With a lot of drummers, it seems as if everything is sort of based around the ride cymbal time. In fact, on some of your older recordings, that was the feeling I had. But on more recent stuff, there seems to be more interplay with the whole kit.

PE: I think I feel more comfortable playing drums now, and I don't need to always keep the time going "ding, ding, ding" on the ride cymbal. I did for a long time. When you first start out, it's real important to develop that concept of keeping time on the cymbal. But eventually you can internalize that feeling—that knowledge—so that you can then not play it and the time will still be there.

For example, last night I was recording with Eliane Elias, and when we did the first take, I started playing "ding dinga ding." But that seemed too crowded with what the piano and bass were doing, so the next time we played it, I just played one cymbal note per bar. The time was happening in other parts of the group, so it wasn't necessary for me to play "ding dinga ding." The style of music didn't require me to play that. If it had been Dixieland, I would have had to play that style, or if it had been bebop, there would have been certain stylistic things needed. But a lot of the music

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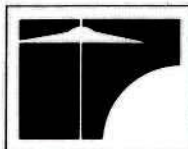
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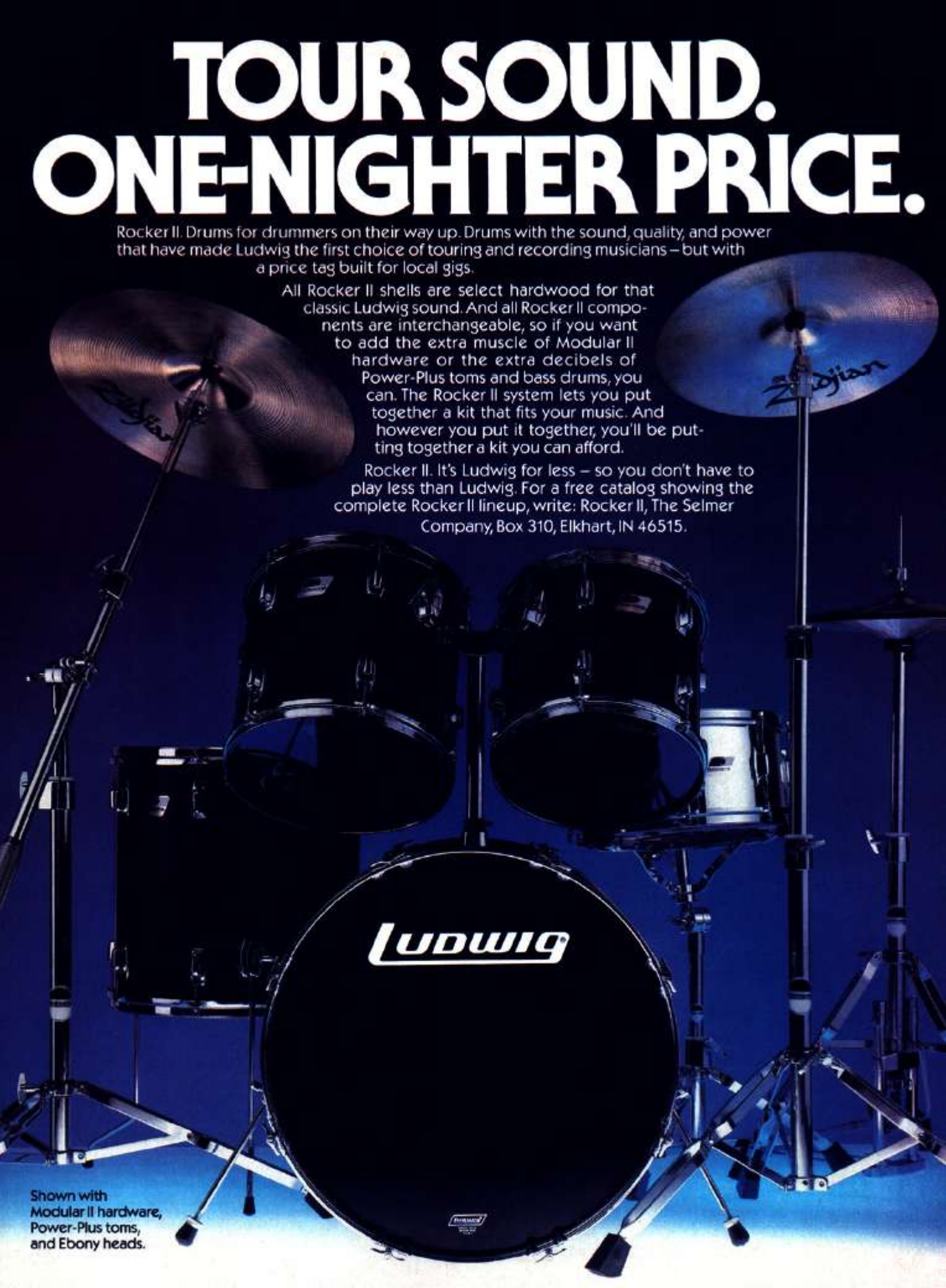


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that I seem to be playing now doesn't require that I do that. But the time is still happening within me and, hopefully, within the other musicians.

RM: On that same album, there's a tune called "Mojo Highway" that has an interesting beat. You seem to be playing a combination of funk, shuffle, and reggae.

PE: That's all music that I like. I think you can tell who a drummer has listened to. Some people put different things together, and it comes out sounding unique. With someone like Dave Weckl, you can tell that he's spent a lot of time listening to backbeat and in-the-pocket stuff. Jeff Watts seems to have an interesting combination

of people he's listened to. Of course, there are also some drummers who have a technical proficiency that reflects more practice hours than musical hours. I'm not saying that it's not musical necessarily, but I just don't hear the years of experience. I may be getting myself into a funny corner here.

RM: Well, since you brought up practicing, I was wondering about a tune on the Weather Report *This Is This* album. On "Update" the tempo is really fast. I don't know you to be someone who sits down and practices regularly, so how do you come up with the chops to play that fast?

PE: I've gotten grilled by kids at clinics

about that. "How did you play so fast on such-and-such a tune?" I used to answer, "Well, fear was a primary motivating factor." I was 18 when I joined Kenton's band, and there were a lot of fast tempos. I just had to do it. Adrenaline took over, and in the process, I got behind a lot of technical 8-balls, because you just do whatever you have to do to make it work. I finally got hip to the idea that playing relaxed makes playing fast tempos much easier.

One thing I'm happy about is that I really like playing rolls now. I stayed away from them for years, because I thought that my roll was the worst. But when I was in Copenhagen with Weather Update, I took a snare drum lesson from Bent Lylloff, from the Royal Academy of Music. He's a great teacher, and he's very encouraging. By combining what he showed me with something Vic Firth told me a while back, I finally feel comfortable playing rolls again.

Joe Zawinul was cute. We played in Copenhagen that evening, and during the set, Joe announced—right in the middle of a tune—"Peter Erskine took a drum lesson today, and now he's going to show you what he learned." So I did a roll.

Practicing is certainly worthwhile if you can apply what you've practiced. For example, the first time I went in to do a recording with a click, I was like, "Wow, what's this?" It really took some getting used to. But look at Dave Weckl. In addition to whatever intrinsic talents he has—which are considerable—he also developed that whole Gary Chester approach, and geared himself towards playing with a click. So from the get go, his recording has been really impressive.

RM: I seem to remember a nice roll on the *Bass Desires* album.

PE: Yeah, on "Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair." But as far as rolls go, remember the PAS convention a couple of years ago when I played a piece for two drumsets and orchestra with Louie Bellson? Louie was remarkably generous, because if he wanted to apply the heat, he could play pretty serious circles around anybody. But there was a meeting ground as far as the musical level. He wasn't trying to turn it into a chopsbuster, which made it very comfortable for me. But the world is going to end with a whimper, not a bang, right? Louie got me with a whimper. At the rehearsal he told me, "At this point I'll play a roll, and you join me." Well, at the concert he played the softest roll I'd ever heard in my life. I glanced out in the audience and saw Jim Coffin from Yamaha, and he was already laughing. I turned to Louie and just shook my head no.

RM: A few minutes ago, when I asked you to analyze yourself, you said that you think you have a good backbeat. I would say that backbeat was what characterized a lot of the Weather Report *This Is This*

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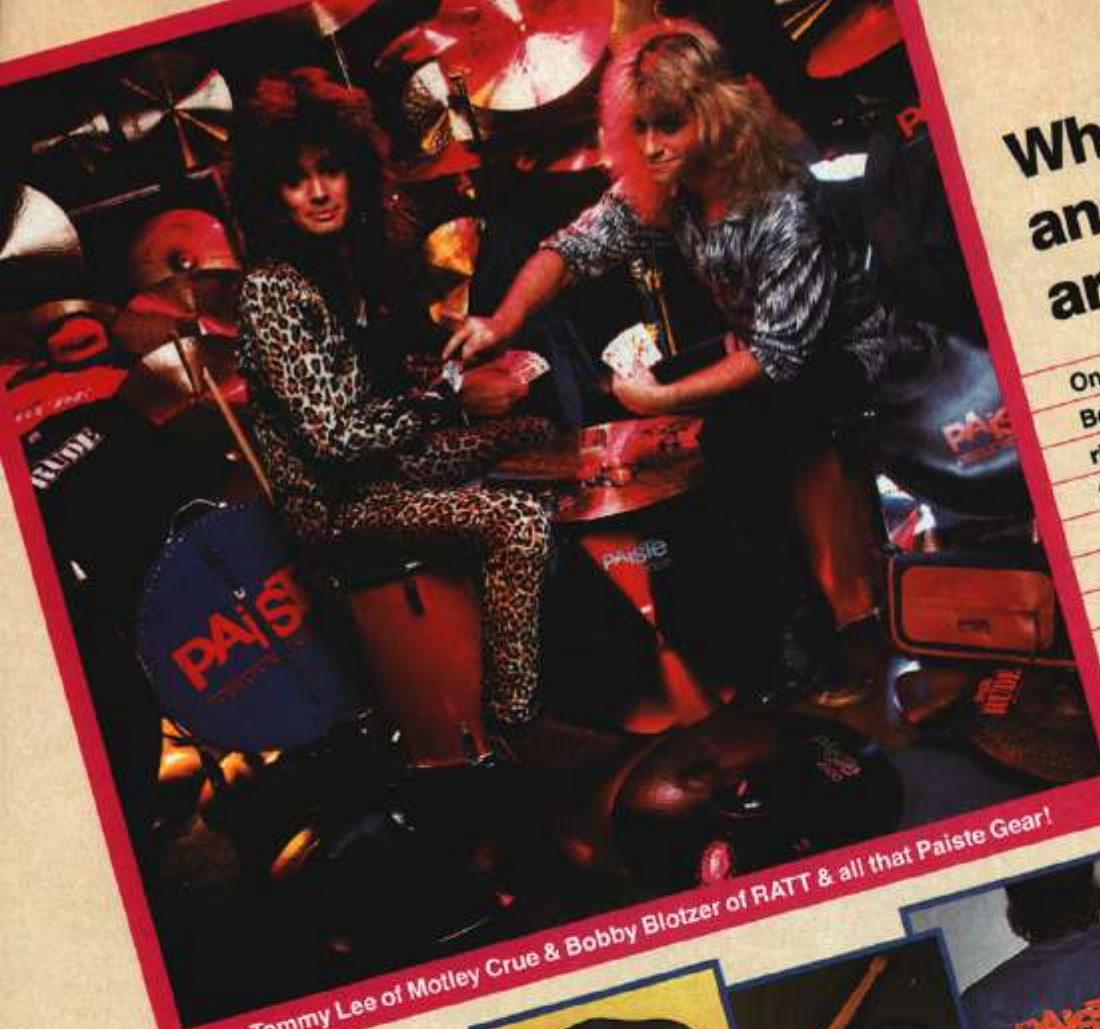


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album—especially the title tune and "The Man With The Copper Fingers." Those were pretty much rock 'n' roll songs.

PE: Kind of. A lot of Joe Zawinul's music is boogie-woogie, really. That's the kind of beat that he likes.

RM: I liked the simple little rock fills that you played in those two tunes. At the end of Santana's guitar solo on "Copper Fingers," you play straight triplets on the snare drum. It was simple, but it was great.

PE: Maybe it was great because it was simple. I was doing a rehearsal the other day, and the bass player said, "That's great, Pete. What are you playing?" I played the beat for him, and he said, "That's all it

was?" I said, "Yes, I dare to be stupid." But with everything else that was going on, that beat fit perfectly.

RM: Buddy Rich was once quoted as saying that the best four-bar break anyone had ever played was something that Shadow Wilson did on a Basie tune called "Queer Street." When I got the chance to interview Buddy a couple of years ago, I asked him what was so great about that fill. His answer was that the fill itself was no big deal, but it was great because it was the perfect thing to play at that time. So I guess that's why I liked your triplets so much. They were the perfect thing to play at that point in the song.

PE: A few years back, I was scared to death to play anything like that in Weather Report. Joe once said, "If I ever hear you play [*sings 16th-note figure*] around the toms, I'll kill you." So I was trying to think of all these ways to play something else. Most of the time, it was something way too busy.

I think I took his comment way too literally. If you feel that something is the right thing to play, you should play it. If someone tells you specifically, "We don't want that," that's one thing. But for most of us who are working for bandleaders or artists, making a musical contribution is what we're there for. So if you feel that what you're doing is musically valid, you've got to trust that. If you believe in something, you can make it irresistible. And a lot of times, even if a producer or somebody says, "I'm not sure that this is good," and you say, "Yes, this *is* good," then people will say, "Okay."

RM: On the slow ballad "I'll Never Forget You," you start out playing short, staccato sounds—tight hi-hat and dry bass drum. As the tune continues, the sounds get fatter. Was that a conscious decision to do that, or do those things just come from instinct?

PE: I remember that interview with Steve Gadd where he said that playing on top of or behind the beat is never a conscious decision. You just try to make the music feel good. That's pretty much the motivating factor for anything I play. I just try to respond to whatever the other musicians are playing. There's no room for a whole lot of preconception.

I was recently talking to someone who asked me, "Did you think a lot about your playing before you did your solo album?" I had to be frank and say, "I didn't give it a thought. I was just worried about getting the tunes prepared, getting the studio we wanted, and hoping everyone would show up. I took it for granted that the playing would be okay." In fact, I think we did get some real good performances, and that's a credit to the comradery and professionalism of the musicians. There's no substitute for experience. It was a good combination of players: guys like John Abercrombie, Marc Johnson, Bob Mintzer, Joe Lovano. Also, Vince Mendoza, who helped write a lot of the music and acted as coproducer, was a tremendous help. The other thing that I'm proud of is that we did it in two days. It's a lot of music—65 minutes—and we did it almost all direct to 2-track. The key thing in a situation like that is to know what you're going after and when it's time to move on. There's always the temptation to do one more take. But you can't be self-indulgent. You've got to get it—boom—and move on. So the album has a very live feeling.

I'm really happy with the drum sound on the album, which is coming out on Denon. It will initially be released on Com-

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RM: Give me some background on the tune "Lions And Tigers And Bears."

PE: Vince Mendoza had sequenced this thing in step time, and he gave me a cassette of it, saying, "This might be good to play along with." So I spent one day listening to the thing through a *Walkman* and learned it. It's kind of a complicated sequence. Then I got the idea to do a drum solo in front. I didn't have a footswitch to start the sequence from the Macintosh, so Vince had to stand in the room with me, and he started it when I gave him a cue. I had to have the tempo locked in mentally

so that, when we kicked in the sequence, it would match what I was playing. It turned out good. That was the second take.

RM: To me, it's interesting to hear this drum solo with a very human feel, and then suddenly this very mechanical sequence comes in over the top of it.

PE: It kind of grabs you and punches you in the nose. In the space of two days, I talked to two people about it. Vince said that the sequence wasn't loud enough; my dad said the drums weren't loud enough.

RM: By the time this appears in print, you'll be living in L.A. Do you have any immediate plans?

PE: I'm going to be writing music for *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream. That music will have a very different tone from the music I did for *Richard II*. I'm really interested in theater, where the music is just one element that is combined with the language, the lighting, the set design—everything. I've been interested for some time now in the study of film scoring, and I'm excited about the possibility of playing on some film scores in L.A.

And I'm definitely going to follow this solo album up with another one, which will pursue the same thing: the combination of electronic and acoustic instruments. Playing electronic drums with an acoustic bass has a different quality, and I thought the combination worked well.


RM: You didn't have the Yamaha electronic drums when you did the first Abercrombie album, but will you start using them with him now? I ask that because he's very involved with guitar synthesizer, so I wondered if the electronic drums might blend well with that.

PE: Maybe. I'm locked into a mind set with John. I've always used the small jazz kit with the 18" bass drum with him, and I like that tonality with John's electronic stuff.

I want to use the electronic stuff more, but I don't know what kind of music I'm going to be playing. I'm going to have to create just out of the necessity of whatever music I'm hearing in my head. I think it's time for that to blossom into something, and the electronics will be part of it. The musicians as yet are unknown.

Before I did my album, I didn't have a firm idea of what I expected my music to sound like. I do now. I have firm ideas about how I like the beat to lay, how I like the sound to resonate, and how I want my drums to sound. I can walk into a booth and say, "I don't like that sound. I want it more like this." It's not going to be the same every time, but I know what it can be and how I like it to be. I know what I want music to do.

RM: What's the difference between the Peter Erskine who moved to New York a few years ago and the Peter Erskine who is now moving back to L.A.?

PE: My first instinct is to say that I've come full circle. I was just thinking this morning about a demo record I made with Eliane Elias, Michael Brecker, and Eddie Gomez when I first moved to New York. It was great. The music really danced. I think I've come back to that. Being in New York and in Steps was transitional for me. I got the jazz thing more together and learned how to record better in a studio. I also got my dynamic spread more controlled, and I got more control of my limbs so that I didn't play with a jerky motion. Everything is more smooth and relaxed. I think I'll leave with kind of the same attitude that I came here with: I feel pretty fresh musically, and I'm looking forward to the music that I'm going to be playing. 

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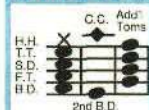


Terry Bozzio:

Transcribed by Rodney Smith

"Caesar's Palace Blues"

MUSIC KEY



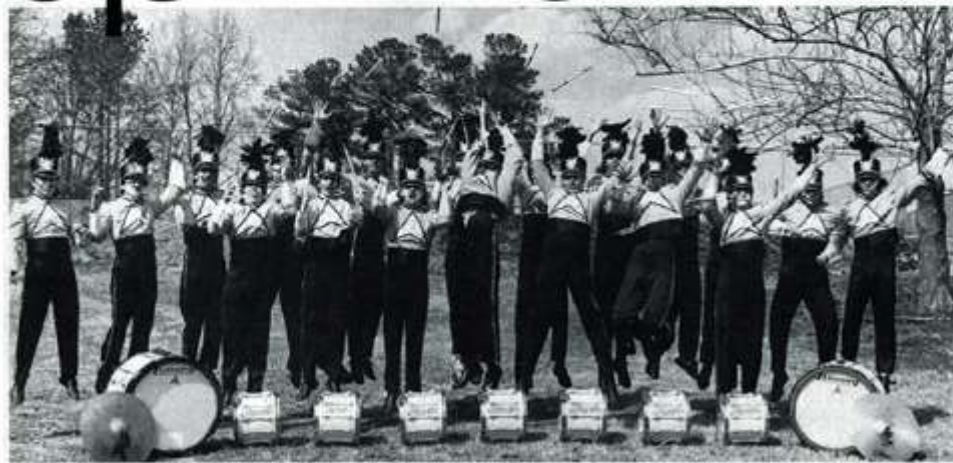
This month's *Drum Soloist* features Terry Bozzio with the band UK, from the album entitled *Danger Money* (Polydor PD-1-6194, recorded 1979). On "Caesar's Palace Blues," Terry plays some extended fills over the first 16 bars of the tune. His powerful style and excellent double-bass technique is shown here, and the 5/4 time signature makes these fills sound even more interesting.

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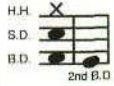
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Grooving With Two Bass

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Part one of "Grooving With Two Bass Drums" dealt with playing 16th-note patterns on the bass drums, while grooving with the hi-hat and snare drum. This study is based on the same principle but with 16th-note triplets on the bass drums instead of 16th notes. Start slowly with these exercises, and be sure that the proper foot is played with the appropriate hand. Remember

that the bass-drum patterns are all based on a right-foot lead.

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A large block of musical notation for bass drum exercises, consisting of 16 staves. Each staff contains a sequence of 16th-note triplets, with a '3' above each triplet. The patterns vary in complexity and grouping across the staves.

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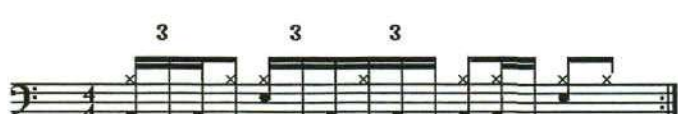
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Pat LaBarbera



(left to right) Joe LaBarbera, Elvin Jones, and Pat LaBarbera

Ask saxophonist Pat LaBarbera—who spent seven years with Buddy Rich and the past 11 with Elvin Jones—to name some of the other drummers he's worked with, and for a moment, he seems bemused. The list is impressive. It includes, among others, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Louie Bellson, Steve Gadd, Roy Haynes, Grady Tate, Gene Krupa, and his brother Joe LaBarbera. The modest LaBarbera, a highly successful musician, pauses. Even he seems amazed at the people he's worked with throughout his career. Drummers, he readily admits, have played a big part in his life and in his music.

KA: How did a student in his last year at Berklee come to play with Buddy Rich's band?

PL: Well, that was in 1967. The funny thing was that, at the same time as I heard about the opening on Buddy's band, I got a call from a friend telling me about an opening with Woody Herman.

KA: What made you decide to go with Buddy?

PL: Buddy's band was *really* hot. At the time, Woody's band was doing a lot of dances and legion hall gigs, so I decided to take the thing with Buddy.

KA: What was it like?

PL: It was an education I couldn't have gotten anywhere else. We did all the major

TV shows, and because of that exposure and Buddy's popularity, he could get people into the clubs that weren't really into jazz, but were there to see him as an entertainer. Then he'd start playing and get them hooked on listening to the band. Other musicians were always coming in to see him, so I got a chance to work with some really great people.

KA: What was Buddy like as a performer?

PL: A perfectionist. It was an exciting, tight band because of Buddy. You could learn a lot from him, just about staying power alone. He and Woody Herman come from a different era. The road doesn't seem to get to them. They just stay out there and keep performing, because to them, the most important thing is the music and getting it right. It's too bad they're a dying breed, because it's a great training ground for musicians.

KA: While your brother Joe was in the army, he sat in Buddy's chair when Buddy was ill. Were you with the band then?

PL: Oh, yes. I remember once when Joe came out of the army to play for Buddy, and my brother John was on the band, too. It was all three of us. On some of the recordings we did, like "Channel One Suite," Joe was the drummer who'd rehearse with the band. Buddy would sit in the audience and listen; all he'd have to do

was listen to a chart once, with or without a drummer, and he'd have *total* recall. He's got a sense about him that's unbelievable.

I saw him sit in with the Basie band once, and he knew all the drum parts. A lot of it is instinct, but he also does it by watching. He knows the most important parts in a big band are the lead trumpet and the drummer. I'd see him watch the lead trumpet or trombone player breathe. He knew that, if the lead trumpet player breathed a certain way, something was going to come up. He could just sense it. There was no drum book. He's just a total musician, and when he's up on that bandstand, he won't cheat you; he gives 100%.

KA: From what you've told me, there were times when he gave more than 100%.

PL: Buddy is of that breed of musicians who give their total being to the music. Elvin Jones is like that, too. Buddy would occasionally have mild heart attacks. He'd be in the hospital, and two days later, he'd be out playing again. Then there was that period when he was having back trouble. We used to have to bring him down from his room at Caesar's Palace, and carry him up to the bandstand. He'd be hunched over and couldn't straighten up. So we'd sit him on his stool, open the curtains, and he'd play a full set despite the fact that he was in terrible pain. And we were doing *three* shows a night!

KA: You mentioned Elvin Jones before. You started playing with him in 1975.

PL: That's right. Actually, his wife heard me in a club, and not too long after that, I got a call from Elvin. My first job was at the Village Vanguard in New York. Elvin told me to come down to the Vanguard and just play. That's how it all started.

KA: It must have been quite a change for you after so many years with Buddy.

PL: Sure, it was a *drastic* change. Buddy always defined the time, but with Elvin, the time was ambiguous. All of a sudden, it was a totally different time conception. With Buddy, I could always count on him to state the time. With Elvin, you couldn't rely on him as a crutch. If I've learned one thing from playing with Elvin, *that's it!* You can't always rely on the drummer to give you the time. That's not his role. It's his role to keep it together, but not to always be there for a weak horn player or a weak bass player. Elvin made me work on my own time. When we first started playing, I was constantly rushing, and of

course, Elvin likes to play with the time off. He stretches bars, and things don't always end where you think they will.

KA: Does he do it intentionally?

PL: He does it instinctively, but he knows what he's doing. He's constantly creating tension in the music. It took me years—literally *years*—to get it right. I listen to tapes now that I did the first three years, and even in some of the later ones, I'm still rushing—still ahead of the beat.

KA: How were you able to get the time right?

PL: I started practicing very slowly and precisely with a metronome. I'd also sit down with a ride cymbal and tap my foot with the metronome. I'd play very slowly and concentrate. I'm still concentrating—still trying to get the time just where I want it.

KA: Do your students use metronomes?

PL: I make all my horn players work with them. At one time, I was against metronomes, because I figured I was playing with the best drummers in the world; why should I need one? But playing with the best drummers doesn't necessarily give you good time. So working with a metronome, trying to swing at a slow, defined speed, is the best thing a horn player can do. I also have my students work with a ride cymbal to see what it takes to hold a bar of time together. It makes them more aware of the time. It's made me more aware of the time. See, with Elvin, the time is always on the ride cymbal. The ride cymbal also serves as a visual aid. When we played concerts with McCoy Tyner, he wouldn't play unless he had a direct view to Elvin's ride cymbal. He knew that, even if there were times when he couldn't hear Elvin, he could always see where the time was. When bass players come in to play with the band now, I'll say, "Don't listen to yourself. Watch Elvin's ride cymbal."

KA: You've mentioned the major difference between Buddy's technique and Elvin's. Are there any similarities?

PL: Well, they both have this energy and drive that's phenomenal. Elvin would say you should always play as though it were your last time. And even if you go out and there are only two people in the audience, you should play like it's a full house. If you're thinking about who is or isn't there, you lose sight of the fact that you're up on the bandstand and not out there. You lose concentration. And with Elvin, it's the music that's important. It was always that way with Buddy, too.

Most people think of Elvin as a very powerful drummer, and he is. Sometimes, if a tune is really going strong, he'll play with the butt end of the stick to get more out of his drums. Yet at the same time, he's a very musical drummer. Sometimes he plays so soft that you can hardly hear him. You have to pay attention and listen. He plays a complete dynamic range of drums.

Photo by Steve Kohls



Pat with Buddy Rich

Unfortunately, that's something missing in rock drumming. It's basically a one-level sound—loud and that's it! But if you listen to any one of Elvin's solos, you can tell there's a tremendous mind at work striving to create something.

Some nights, you'll hear something you never heard before, and you'll wonder where it came from. *He* may even be wondering where it came from. He's just a totally creative improviser. He works on images and colors, and can almost visualize the music. He creates off the tune, and he knows where the bridge is. You know where he is when you hear the melody, and you can almost hear the chord changes. It's funny, because we'll be playing, and if he hears a wrong note from the bass player, he knows it's wrong. I can't even tell, and he knows!

We were rehearsing one day, and I was backstage trying to recall a tune from memory. Elvin came back and started singing it to me. Here I am, someone who deals with notes all the time, and I couldn't hear the bridge. I was learning it from him. He's got a great memory. I think you'll find that the best drummers have that kind of thing. My brother Joe has it. He plays drums, but he also knows harmony. Good drummers have a sense about them that other musicians somehow seem to lack.

KA: What do you think it is that makes drummers such a special breed?

PL: Well, for one thing, I think their instrument is more involved with totalness than, say, a horn player's. I also think a horn player can get very wrapped up in what he has to do, while a drummer has the time and opportunity to let everything soak in.

Whenever I'm in a club or just hanging out, it's usually the drummers who say, "Let's get together and play." Seldom do you hear a saxophone player say to another sax player, "Let's get together and jam." But drummers are like that.

KA: Drummers have obviously had a pro-

found effect on your career. What do you look for when seeking one for your own group?

PL: I like energy and power. I also like the drummer to feel free to create something around me. I like the drummer to be heard. When the drummer puts some power behind it, it encourages me to play, as well.

I've never really understood how people could go see a rock band, where everything is amplified to the point where it's unbearable, and yet they go to a club with acoustic instruments and a little house amplification, and if it's a bit loud, everybody complains. I like Elvin because he plays loud, but he's also a wonderful brush player. I think you need that mixture. I also look for looseness in a drummer.

My brother Joe and I did a drum and tenor tape one time, and I was trying to do a duo album at one point with just sax and drums. I wanted to do something with the drummers I've played with and who have had an influence on me. I talked to Elvin and Buddy and they were both willing to do a tune on it, but it takes so much money to do something like that. And I suppose it's something that just sax players and drummers would be interested in. I love the playing that [John] Coltrane and Elvin did when the band would stop and it would be just the two of them.

I love working with Elvin. We did a thing in Spain called "The Drum Explosion," with Elvin, Roy Haynes, and Joe Chambers. There you have three very distinct personalities, and it could have easily turned into one trying to outplay the other—but it didn't. They turned it into a very musical thing, because to all of them, it's the music that matters. If you're truly an artist, that's the only way it can be. Elvin is such a legend. When we play the Vanguard, you see kids—young kids—lined up down the street and around the block waiting to get in to hear him. And you realize what an influence he is. It's nice to be a part of that—very nice.

MIDI Mode Four, Bass Pedals, And Radioactive Hamsters

Last time, we looked at MIDI mode-three operation to achieve a multi-instrument system. This month, we're going to examine mode four and a few other interesting items.

As previously mentioned, it is quite common with sampling devices to map a given sound over several keys in order to achieve a multiplicity of pitches. This is a very powerful technique, but it suffers from one drawback: What if you have 16 samples and you'd like a one-octave range for each of them? This sort of setup can be very useful in making up a series of drumkits with similar timbres but dissimilar pitches, the appropriate note numbers being specified by the controller's presets. (As an example, the Simmons *TMI* could store, say, 50 presets, differing only in the pitches chosen.) The problem is that 16 samples at 12 pitches each would go beyond the MIDI note number range!

($16 \times 12 = 192$, MIDI max = 128) How can we overcome this problem?

The answer lies in using MIDI mode number four. This, as you may recall, involves sending information on several channels to one voice unit. Since we have 16 channels to work with, note/channel combinations shouldn't be easily exhausted.

As a case in point, let's take a look at our (by now) old friend, Sequential Circuits' *Prophet 2000*. (By the way, if you're wondering why I'm always referring to the 2000, it's because a large, radioactively mutated hamster is holding my *Synclavier* hostage. He claims he won't release it until rodents are represented in the U.S. Senate. I insisted that they already are, but he won't listen. As a result, I've only been able to play with the 2000, although almost any good sampler will suffice.) Sequential has extended mode four beyond its original concept. When set to mode four, the 2000 assigns a sample (i.e., voice) number to its corresponding channel number. Since there are 16 available samples and 16 MIDI channels, this works out well. Whenever a note command is received in channel one, sample one will play. Likewise, channel two triggers sample two, channel three triggers sample three, and so on. The pitch is determined by the sample's root (i.e., normal pitch) key and the received "note on" number. The normal pitch is set to middle C, MIDI note number 60. "Note ons" above 60 produce an increase in pitch, while "note ons" below 60 produce a decrease. The range of available pitches will be determined by the sample playback range, which is a function of sample rate. Typically, this will run between 2 1/2 and 3 1/2 octaves total. All of this, of course, brings new meaning to the term "melodic drumming"! Be aware, though, that many synths don't implement mode four and those that do may not respond in the same fashion as the 2000 / 2002. All machines have their own quirks and specialties, which allow unique setups and applications.

By using mode four, all 16 samples can be accessed over a very wide tuning range. If desired, this unit can be daisy-chained with other units using modes one and three to achieve some bizarre multi-voice effects. For example, let's say that sample two is a tom sound. It will be accessed via channel

two. Now, let's connect the "MIDI Out" of the 2000 to the "MIDI In" of a synthesizer. The synth will be set for mode-three operation (i.e., single channel) and will have its base channel set to two. (The synth will now respond only to channel-two voice messages.)

Let's program the synth to produce a quasi-tubular bell sound. At this point, both the 2000 and the synth will need to be connected to a mixing board. Now for the fun stuff: If you play a fill on the toms, you will hear both the *Prophet 2000*'s tom sounds *and* the synth's bell sounds—simultaneously! One strike of a pad produces two distinct timbres. The relative level of each sound is easily controlled at the mixing board. If the timbres on the two instruments are relatively similar, you will hear only one complex timbre instead of two. This can be a very powerful technique with which to create interesting electronic drum sounds. A good example would be to mix a sampled acoustic snare drum with a classic, white-noise electronic snare. The result sounds rich and complex like a "real" snare, yet it contains a bit more snap. Simple adjustment at the mixing board will emphasize either the acoustic or electronic component. Multi-timbral, mode-four-capable voice units will allow you to get some very rich, natural sounds if you just spend a little time carefully programming the voices. Of course, you can also combine some very *dissimilar* sounds to create whacked-out effects. (What does a large, radioactively mutated hamster sound like when he explodes after eating too many peanut butter and banana sandwiches? I don't know. Let's find out.)

In larger systems, it may be necessary to filter out certain voice messages. For example, you may wish to double only a few sounds while one of your synthesizers only responds in mode one (i.e., OMNI: any channel is accepted. Many of the first breed of MIDI units respond this way). A MIDI filter can be set to strip the incoming MIDI data of everything except messages on a certain channel. In other words, if the data includes messages on channels two through seven, but the filter is set to six, only voice messages transmitted on channel six will appear at the output of the filter. A similar device is the MIDI note separator. Filters and note separators can

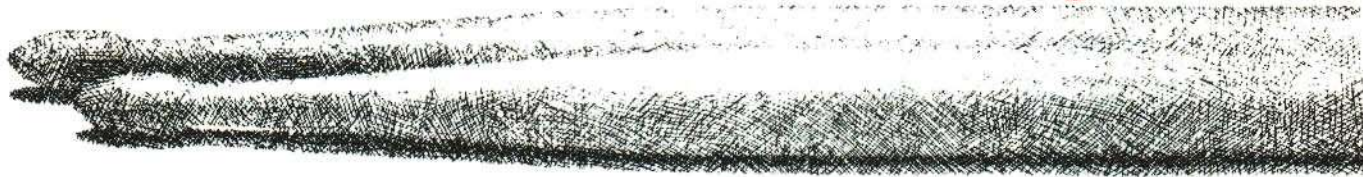
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be used to selectively inhibit MIDI data transfer. They also tend to be inexpensive, usually running around \$200. The MIDI data reassigner, a more powerful item, can not only block data, but can also *change* data. Reassigners are, at present, not very common, and are a bit more expensive (running from several hundred to around one thousand dollars depending on capability). At this point, MIDI systems are getting very personalized (read: complex), and the best way to understand exactly what your system can do is to experiment. A good day of experimenting will usually end up with a few accidents and mistakes that are actually quite useful!

By now, I'm sure you're all wondering about the bass pedal business in the title. How can a drummer use MIDI bass pedals? Well, the obvious way is to use them to control drum sounds via your feet. Most bass pedals cover a one-octave range, so you now have about a dozen pedals to work with instead of just two or three. Now you can do some neat things, like executing a descending-tom roll with your sticks while you execute an ascending-tom roll with your feet. Obviously, this is going to take some getting used to, as most drummers don't use their feet in this manner. Also, bass pedals don't respond the same way that a kick or hi-hat pedal does.

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Fier continued from page 25

and having a band. I just put together records that I would like to listen to. They're not about drums; they're about songs.

MD: How do you go about picking the songs?

AF: I write a lot of them with various members of the band. I pick the covers involved or any outside writers.

MD: What's your role in writing?

AF: I come up with the concept for a song and work with one of the guitarists on the chords. I have a keyboard, and I work out primitive chord changes to different parts. We put that down on a 4 track, build it up a little more, and work with whoever writes the words. I don't write any of the words. I usually hate it so much when I see it on paper. I know a lot of good writers, and I think they're a lot better than I am.

MD: What compels you then to write songs?

AF: I don't know conceptually how it's going to end up, but I have an idea. I start naturally from the rhythm. Then I probably think of the bass' role. I usually choose the people for each track before I have a finalized version. The people who are on each track dictate a lot of how it ends up sounding, even though I tell them sometimes what exactly to play. It's like what part of their character I want preserved on this piece of music.

MD: The singer, Syd Straw, sounds almost as if she's your alter ego. Although you use a cast of characters that includes Jack Bruce, Carla Bley, R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe, and John [Johnny Rotten] Lydon, her voice seems to dominate your records.

AF: Well, Syd is a great singer. I don't want to have only one singer on my records, because I want them to be more varied. That's just personal taste. I'm presenting a little musical picture here. It's a very self-indulgent thing. I make these records for my own pleasure.

MD: One of the most interesting things was Jack Bruce's duet with Syd Straw. One still thinks of his classic vocals with Eric Clapton in Cream. You rarely hear him singing with a woman.

AF: Jack Bruce is an idol of mine. If he's not the best male vocalist in rock music, he's one of the top five. I met him on a session for someone else, and we got along really well. It was an honor for me when he agreed to be on one of my records. I even had him in the band when we did the tour, but I'm not going to do that again.

MD: Did people scream for "Sunshine Of Your Love"?

AF: I found that, live, the "special guest" quality really doesn't work, even if someone is famous and has the ability to sell tickets. When I used Jack, he wouldn't play on the whole set; he would play on something like half. There were great nights, but a lot of very inconsistent nights. And I just decided that, when we go out and play live, we've got to have a group there.

MD: What about working with Carla Bley? Was that a dream of yours ever since you worked for her music company?

AF: She was another one of my idols before I even moved to New York. I sought her out. I got a job in her office when I moved here. First, she is a great, great musician; second, she is a beautiful woman. From a distance, I was madly in love with her.

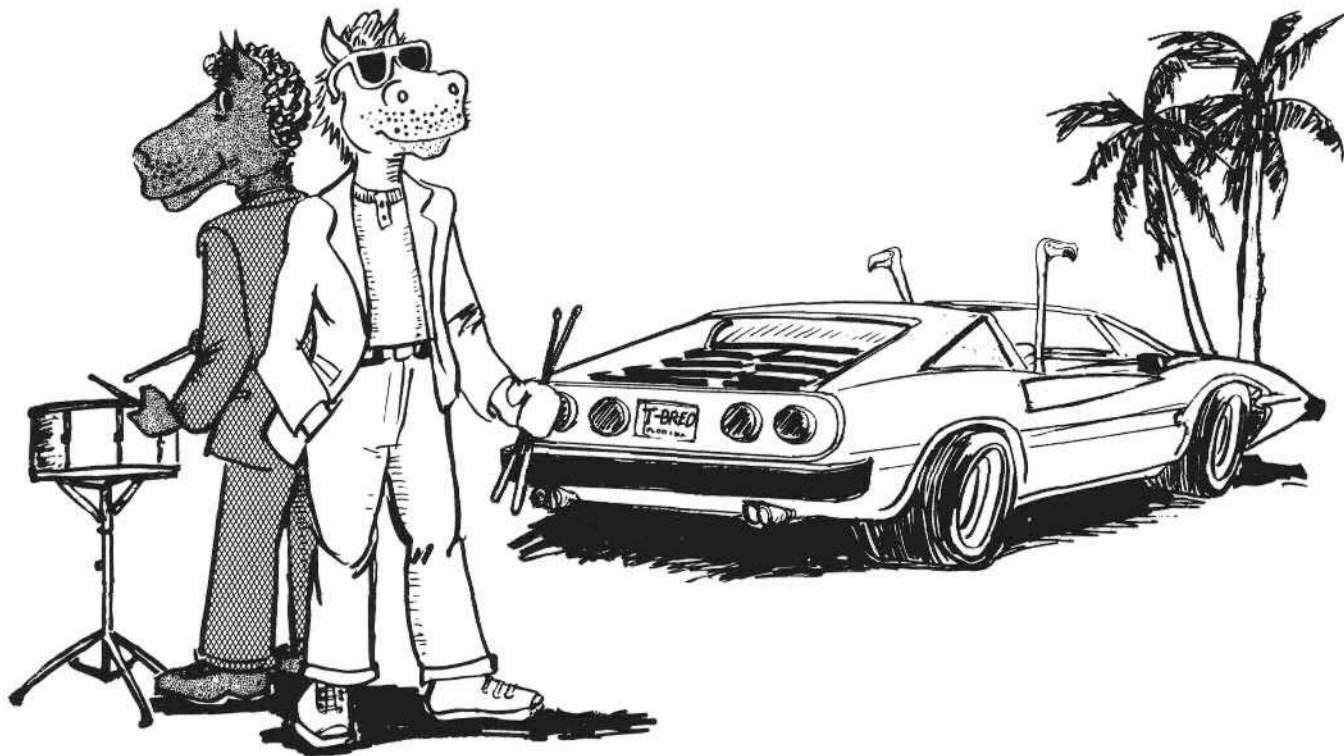
MD: The Palominos seem to be evolving from downtown jazz noise to gentler, more commercial melodies.

AF: I wanted the first Palominos record to be more than it ended up being. It ended up being heavy rhythm tracks with people improvising over it. I formed a partnership with Arto, in which we were going to write songs together. I mistakenly thought that the two of us were going to develop together to the point where he would actually learn how to play the guitar, and I would learn how to produce records and write songs. It didn't work out that way. I wanted it to be more song oriented than it was. At the time, I didn't know how to change it. It was my first shot at making my own record.

MD: When did you start using the drum machine?

AF: On the first Palominos record. I always used it as kind of a click as soon as I had one. In a lot of cases, I would play the drums last. There wasn't a live band at the time, so it wasn't like we had a very fixed idea about what the finished product was going to sound like. I would put down a very simple drum machine pattern for the whole song and then build the track. When everything was there, I

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would go in and play.

MD: How close was the basic drum machine pattern to what you eventually played on the drums?

AF: Usually not very. It's just a click in whatever tempo.

MD: When you put the live drums in, did you punch in?

AF: In some cases. That's another reason I like doing that. I also learned by doing it how the drum part should sound. Okay, we'll do a verse, and we'll punch in at the chorus. Sometimes it's one take. There's no fixed way of making records. It's whatever works. But I definitely want to end up with a finished product that sounds natural. I've gotten pretty good at it. I can play with the click with no problem. I like it. Ideally, the way to make a record is to put all the musicians in the studio, but it doesn't always happen that way. Everybody isn't always in the same town at the same time.

MD: Do you use double bass?

AF: I do have one of the double pedals. I tried playing double kick once. I don't feel comfortable about the position. I'd rather go with the double pedal and a single bass drum. But I've spent a lot of time working on my foot. Working with Herbie, I had to play some really fast stuff with my foot. I spent a summer down in my rehearsal space learning how to play [does figure] on a single bass. I got pretty good at it. With the music I'm working on right now, one bass drum is working for me.

MD: On "Strong Simple Sentences," it sounds as if you're using the drum machine hi-hat.

AF: There's a tambourine that's being triggered by a drum machine hi-hat. There's tambourine we put through an AMS, triggered by the real hi-hat. Some of the bass drum hits were not even. They were in time, but volume-wise, they were not all the same. So from the tape, we triggered another bass drum—an AMS bass drum—so all of them came out equal. I probably shouldn't say that. I should say, "Nah, it's my foot," but let's be honest here.

MD: How about the intro to "Boy (Go)," the college radio favorite on *Visions Of Excess* you wrote with Michael Stipe?

AF: That is a drum machine. When I listen to that record, I consider that a bad musical decision—even having that intro there. Basically, I did that because I had just bought a new *DMX* at the time and I wanted to play around with it.

MD: *Blast Of Silence* is a much more commercial-sounding record.

AF: Well, I'm getting better at what I'm doing. I learned how to produce records. And with each one, I've figured out more and more what I'm doing in terms of drumming. Each year up to this point, I've been getting better and more defined about my own style, and I hope I continue. A lot of times, things that are more out aren't out because the people are more advanced conceptually, but because they can't play in a traditional way. I'm totally into noise, but there has to be a balance. Noise for its own sake is nonsense. If noise is the norm, then it's just as boring as a G chord played all the way through. It's all relative. It's how sound is used in relation to its center that makes things interesting to me.

MD: What kind of drums are you using now?

AF: I have a couple of sets of Yamahas. I have a couple of sets of Sonors that I used to use before. I bought my first set of Yamahas when I was in Japan with Herbie and really like them a lot. I think they're a lot easier to deal with, both in the studio and live. I don't like to spend a lot of time getting a drum sound. I don't believe in spending a few days getting a bass drum sound, which a lot of bands do. I like to set them up, know that they sound good to my ear, and get them recorded the way they sound. I think a few hours is enough.

MD: What type of snare do you have?

AF: Noble & Cooley. I just ordered a Noble & Cooley drumset. I've never seen one. I've seen them advertised. I figured one way I'll get to hear what they sound like is to buy one. It's going to take nine months. They're just a really small company. I really like the snare drum, so I thought that, if they applied the same quality to a drumkit, it would be a great set of drums. The two sets I use most are two Yamaha kits I bought in Japan. You can't get this finish in America. It's like a sunburst. It's called sunset brown. It's really

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beautiful wood. The drums are regular size—just a 22" kick, 10", 12", and 13" rack, and 14" and 16" floors. I have another Yamaha gray finish with deeper size drums all the way around. They're the same dimensions as the other toms and the kick, but two inches deeper. On the two Sonor kits, I have a 24" kick, a 14" rack, and 16" floor. I have another rosewood Sonor kit, which is 22", 12", 13", 14", and 16". I also have an 18" Sonor bass drum. I try to have whatever the gig calls for. I'm really into simplicity these days. Sometimes I only use one rack and one floor. I'll take the Yamahas 90% of the time. Usually, I'll take both kits—the standard sizes and the deep—to see which is working better that day for that particular project.

MD: What kind of cymbals do you use?

AF: Paistes seem to work best for me. I'm really happy with them. For hi-hats, I use 14" 602 heavies. Engineers seem to love them. As for crash cymbals, I just got one of the new 3000 series, when I sent back a cracked 602 16" thin crash. In the *Sound Creation* line, Paiste made a cymbal called a short crash, which is 18" and a pretty good crash cymbal. For ride cymbals, I usually go between a standard 2002 20" medium ride and a few *Sound Creation* rides—a dark ride, a medium ride, a bright ride. I have a 2002 Flatride, which I used to use a lot. I've got a few Chinas—2002s, 602s. I never used any of the *Rude* stuff. I've got a percussion rack with gongs and different Paiste effects. Sound plates—have you ever seen those? They are just these rectangles made out of metal alloy. They're really heavy. You hit them with mallets, and they sound like huge bells.

MD: That's what you played on Jagger's "She's The Boss."

AF: I was holding one. I had it muted and was hitting it with the back plastic end of a marimba mallet, alternately muting it and letting it go. I used those a lot with Herbie, too—the sound plates and all the other effects—and on Yoko's record.

MD: Pedals?

AF: DW bass drum pedal. All the hardware is Yamaha. I tried a

DW hi-hat. It wasn't as quick for me.

MD: Sticks?

AF: I'm not that picky. I don't use a real big, heavy stick. I like the power to come from my hands and arms. I usually use Vic Firth or Pro-Marks—the *Steve Gadd* model.

MD: Matched grip?

AF: Ninety percent of the time.

MD: Drumheads?

AF: I use a coated CS or coated *Ambassador* on the snare. On the Noble & Cooley, I've had a lot of success with a coated CS on the top. On all the toms, I use clear *Emperors* on the top and clear *Ambassadors* on the bottom. I always use a bottom head. On the kick, I use a clear *Emperor*.

MD: Do you mike them from the outside?

AF: I wanted to check out that May system to see what that's all about. It kind of frightens me to have something that big and heavy attached inside a drumshell. I just wonder what it does to the sound itself.

MD: Your electronic drums?

AF: I have a set of Simmons *SDS7s*. I find that I'm not using them anymore. If I want to do that, I'll use an Akai sampler.

MD: What are some of the things you trigger?

AF: Drum sounds, drum samples, effects. When I'm producing a record and we're mixing, if I feel that the snare drum sound doesn't really fit the track and want to replace it with something better, I'll use it. I try to go with the sounds I print in the first place. Sometimes a song develops in a certain way, and you find out that the drums are a little too heavy for the track or the opposite. Thank God for the technology that allows you to cover your mistakes. That's why I really marvel at the drum sound that Bonham got. There was no sampling or triggering. That was the sound coming from that guy's body. Five, ten, or 20 years ago, any great record that had a great drum sound was achieved because the guy knew how to tune his drums and the engineer knew how to mike the



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MD: Who are some of the other people you'd like to work with?

AF: Laura Nyro, Miles Davis. Originally, the reason I moved to New York was because I really wanted to play with Miles Davis. He had this band in '74 and '75. It was the best rock band I've ever heard. It was three guitars, screaming. A lot of people hated it. I always loved Miles. Miles has made more incredible music for one person than just about anybody. It was really my dream when I moved here that someday I'd play with Miles. And there was a point a few years ago where Bill was going to do a track for Miles. Bill called me and we worked on it a little bit, but it never happened. It was never finished, for some reason. I almost got my chance.

MD: Do you think there would have been any other way for you to break into potential sessions with Miles Davis and real ones with people like Herbie Hancock, Laurie Anderson, Yoko Ono, or Mick Jagger without the producer/bassist Bill Laswell?

AF: No, I don't because I was definitely at that time a downtown guy, locked into this scene of improvised gigs and thrown-together bands that were interesting but not that great. Bill gave me a shot. He put me on Laurie Anderson's record. That was the first major thing. Then he got me hooked up with Herbie. No way in a million years would Herbie have called me. First of all, he wouldn't know who I was. If he did know who I was, based on what I had already recorded, he wouldn't have wanted it. Bill realized there was a potential here for me to make it something more interesting in a way he heard that no one else heard. Going with Herbie was a really big break for me.

MD: You played on *Rockit*?

AF: No, the album following that, which I think is a really good record, *Sound System*. I did a lot of work on that with Simmons and percussion. I was in the band that supported *Rockit*. There are not that many musicians on it.

MD: What was it like playing with another drummer on the Herbie Hancock tour?

AF: It was the first time I ever worked with another drummer, but not the first time I've wanted to. I was always a fan of Joe Cocker's band when he had Jim Keltner and Jim Gordon playing drums. And I used to see Stuff in New York with Steve Gadd and Chris Parker. On a lot of old Al Green records, there are two drummers playing pretty much the same beat, but the beat is so fat because these two guys are locked into one groove. I've always been totally into the concept of two drummers when used tastefully. The combination of drum machine parts and Simmons overdubs on Herbie's records, especially *Sound System*, was just too much for one drummer to do. We decided it would be more of a live situation if we had two drummers, all the parts were covered, and they could react to what was going on musically.

MD: Who was the other drummer?

AF: J.T. Lewis. He plays with Lou Reed now. He's a really good drummer. It was a great experience for me. I saw the world. I had been to Europe before, but it was my first taste of what it is like to go into a comfortable situation where you stay in a really good hotel, make a good amount of money, and work with new equipment in a totally professional situation. Everything is taken care of. All you have to do is show up and play. I saw Japan because of Herbie. It was a great, great learning experience for me in a lot of ways. I ultimately thought it was too show biz—the same set raps, every night. Herbie had a hit. He didn't have to tell people, "Hey, get up and clap your hands." We could be playing some serious music here and getting a full house. It wasn't really radical enough for me.

MD: On the Mick Jagger project, were you just called in to do overdubs?

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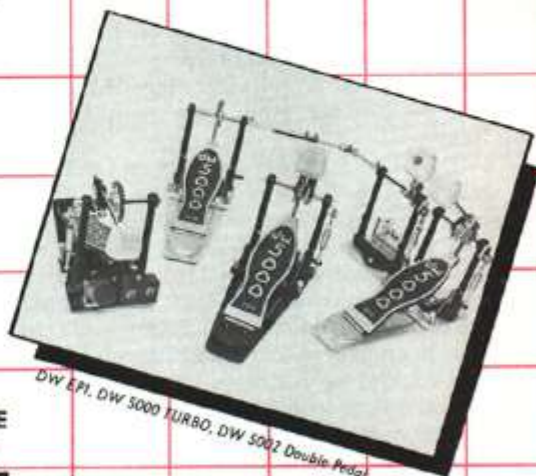
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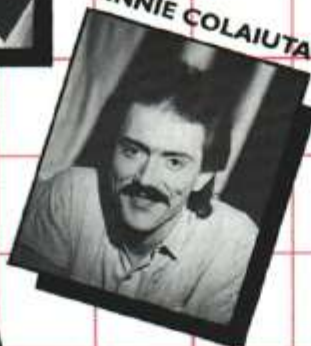


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AF: I did Simmons on one song and percussion on another. Bill was trying to get me a gig playing drums on some of the basics. I had to meet Jagger. Jagger didn't know who I was and basically said that he wanted to use Sly Dunbar. When I did that session, Jagger wasn't in the studio. It was Bill and I.

MD: Did Bill have an idea about what he wanted you to do?

AF: In one song where I played Simmons, he knew in one part that he wanted a buildup on the Simmons toms. But Bill basically turns people loose and edits them while they're working. On Herbie's second album, I had a lot more input. There's a lot of drums and percussion on that record. I did some programming. Also, on Yoko Ono's record, it says on the back that I only played percussion, but I played a lot of Simmons on there. Sly played the beats. He didn't play any fills. All of the Simmons tom fills on the tracks Sly plays are me. I didn't get credit. I was a little bit upset about that.

MD: What tracks did you play on the Los Lobos album, *By The Light Of The Moon*?

AF: The single "Shakin Shakin Shakes" and a ballad on the second side called "The Tears Of God." They cut a lot more tracks than what ended up on that record. I cut like five tracks with them, and only these two showed up on the record. They were bringing in people all the time, just different stuff. On a lot of the tracks I played on, they tried using a drum machine and it didn't feel right. They ended up cutting a lot of the record two or three times. Warner Bros. definitely wanted a hit out of them. That record went pretty much over budget and was way behind schedule. So they were definitely saying, "Look, we've got to get a hit out of this record."

MD: When people hire you, especially on a project like that where the band already has a drummer, what is it you do that they want?

AF: It's my ability to play a song. I'm not really flashy. I hope I'm very solid. I think my time is good and very strong. I support a song very well.

MD: Do you think these sessions on major label albums have given you the credibility outside the downtown scene and helped you write your own ticket? Do you think that convinced Warner Bros. to let you produce a fairly big-budget album like *Longhouse*?

AF: I think ultimately why I'm getting called to produce records now is because of the production job I've done on my own records. I just finished a record for Geffen, with a woman named Victoria Williams. It's her first album, and it's a very different kind of record. She's originally from Louisiana, so there's a big blues influence there. It's easy to say that someone has a totally original voice, but she doesn't sing like anyone. She's kind of undisciplined and underdeveloped, and will be really, really great if she ever starts working on herself. She lives in L.A. and does little acoustic shows. She's had several record deals in the past that have fallen through because she wasn't able to get it together once she got in the studio. I've known her for a few years through a mutual friend, and she asked me to do it. I said great, because I think I understand her stuff. We had a lot of conflicts, because I forced her to listen to her music from a different point of view. I put together a little band for her for a few tracks. We got Van Dyke Parks to do string arrangements on a few tracks and made a really great little record. I don't have any illusion that it'll sell a lot, because it's not commercial. She felt sometimes that I was ruining the charm of her music, but on the last night of mixing, she came to me and said it was a really great record and she was happy. I'm definitely happy with it. The record I'm working on now, *Longhouse*, is much more commercially oriented, which could be a hit record if I do the right stuff.

MD: When you're producing other artists, what is it that you try to bring out of them? How do you see your role?

AF: Victoria's record and the *Longhouse* record are two completely different things. With *Longhouse*, it was a band. Lisa knows pretty much what she wants to hear from this record, and I'm just there to help her try to achieve that. Victoria was trying to

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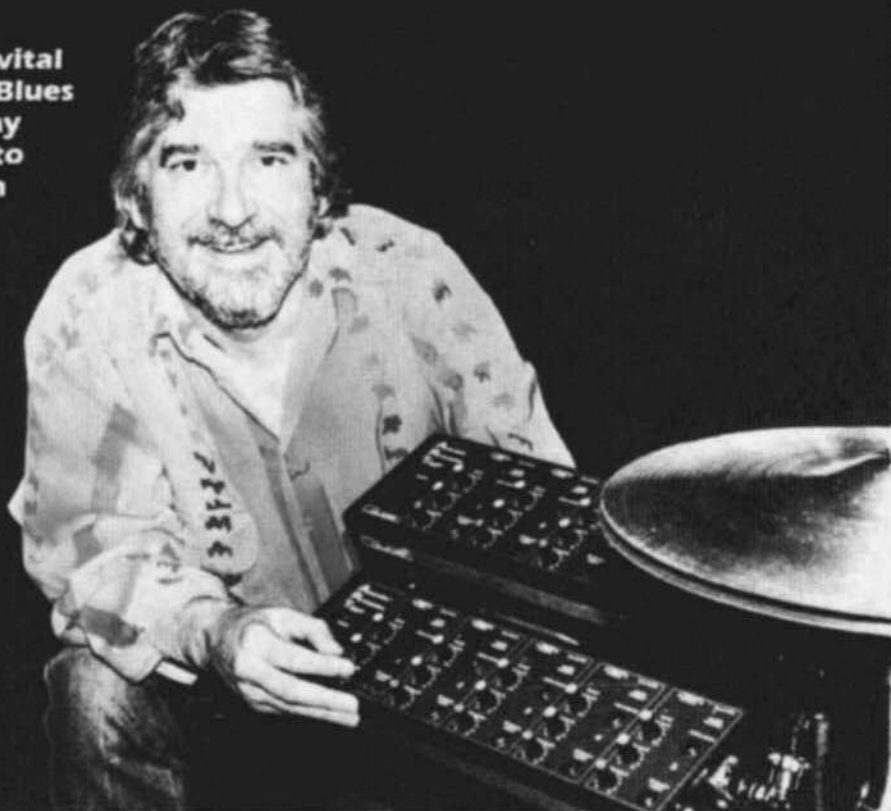
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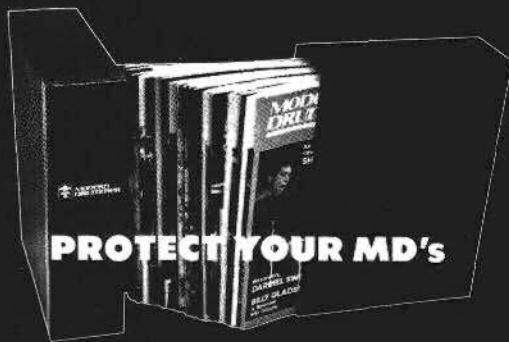
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make something out of nothing. She gave me these demos of just her and an acoustic guitar, and I had to arrange it for her. I had to try to make her see herself in ways she had never thought of before—in ways that people could listen to the record and not know her. I try to build a record around an artist's personality.

MD: Do you think producing is going to take over from drumming?

AF: No, because I get to play on these records. There were tracks on Victoria's record I didn't play on, but I played on some of it. On Lisa's record, there are tracks where I thought someone else would be better. The playback tells whether it's working or not. I'm pretty hard on myself. I know my limitations. I know when I'm playing a track the best I can, and if it's not happening, I'm not the right guy for it. There's one song I'm going to try to hire Gadd for. If I don't think I'm right, I'm not going to hire myself. It makes for a little more work, because after you're done doing a track, you're really pumped up and energized, and listening to something as a producer is a very unphysical thing. It's very analytical. The main problem is that, after the basics are cut, especially on a big-budget record, you've got a couple of months afterwards where you're not playing. That gets to me. I don't feel comfortable when I'm not playing, but I also really enjoy producing records.

MD: What track do you think represents the definitive you on record?

AF: I don't feel I've become the drummer I want to be yet. I find fault with all the tracks I've cut. I don't think I'm *bad*. I'm okay. I can deal with myself. I think I'm getting better. Hopefully, that will continue all my life. I feel I'm more on top of things. The kit isn't mastering me. But I don't feel like somebody like Gadd, where I'm totally the master of that instrument.

MD: What are your plans beyond the next Palominos record and tour?

AF: I'd like to get back to studying again. Plans are definitely to improve the playing. And there are a million records out there that I want to make.

MD: Any personal goals, like getting married and having a family?

AF: I pretty much improvise my way through life. I don't have any goals outside of wanting to keep working, to keep playing, and to keep making records that I like with my friends. I'm not interested in changing the world. I'm not interested in changing the face of music. I want to have a place in this industry where I can do my stuff; that's all. I don't need a lot of money. I don't live that extravagantly. I spend most of my money on equipment. Someday I'd like to own my own house. That's the biggest goal I have right now. I got married when I was 19, and it only lasted a very short time. I don't think I'll be getting married in the near future. I think it would be unfair to any woman who wasn't a musician to get involved with me. It's not like I'm totally insulated. But right now, I'm still trying to figure out something for myself.

MD: You seem to identify with nonconformists like Dennis Hopper, whose voice you use to open and close *Blast Of Silence*.

AF: Most great things have been done by nonconformists. I don't claim to be one. People who really revolutionized things did so in the face of such adversity. Under normal circumstances, it shouldn't have happened. Their belief was just so strong and their vision was so strong that they steamrolled it through against all odds. You have to harden yourself and not let yourself be humiliated. The only way to learn something is to fail. You just pick yourself up, and if you really believe in what you're doing, it's no problem. It doesn't matter if I fail. I'm not going to quit. I think anyone who's ever achieved something great has had to have that attitude. You're not doing it for money. You're doing it because you need to, like breathing. You need to breathe to survive. I need to drum to keep my sanity. Hopefully, there will always be a gig out there for me.



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Mental Techniques In Drumming: Part 1

by M. Rupert Walden

Have you ever had the experience of being able to play a new pattern easily in practice only to find that, when you tried to apply it in an actual playing situation, it just wouldn't come out, or if it did, it was rigid and didn't flow like it had in practice? I suspect most of us drummers have had a similar experience, and wondered why it happened and what we could do to overcome it. It may be somewhat comforting to know that other performers have the same problem and that there are ways to become more effective. There's a saying in tennis that, "He won the warm-up but lost the match," meaning that a player may look unbeatable during practice but fold under the pressure of competition. What happens to the body and mind during a performance? What things inhibit or release potential and creativity? What can we do to *increase* our chances of playing at our best?

This is an article about dragon slaying—dragons being those mental barriers that stand between you and your optimal performance, such as worry, fear, trying too hard, self-judgment, and excessive muscle tension. Our weapons are drawn from other areas concerned with high-level performance, human physiology, psychology, the martial arts, and sports psychology, and consist of techniques, exercises, knowledge, principles, and perhaps strongest of all, your imagination. All have proven their value and can help us release our own potential as drummers. So choose your weapon, and go forth with a spirit of adventure and an open mind.

Tune into any sports event, be it bowling, boxing, or gymnastics, and you're likely to hear the commentators and participants talk about the crucial role relaxation plays in their sport. In our discipline of drumming, we sometimes need the delicacy of a butterfly, and at other times, we need the power of a runaway Mack truck. The only way to achieve both is through proper balance of relaxation and tension. But it seems that, when we need to relax *most*, we tense up instead. The results sometimes are broken sticks, heads, or cymbals, or just the general feeling that, "I know I can play better than this." Clinician Dom Famularo has said that some of the most asked questions he faces in his travels concern the issue of how to relax while playing. Part of the problem is that we believe the way to be more effective is to try harder—to use more muscle and determination. Another problem is that we haven't learned *how* to relax.

Relaxation is a skill, and like any skill, takes some time and determination to become good at. But why is relaxation so important, and why should we set a priority on learning how to achieve it? Sports physiology tells us that loose and relaxed muscles contract more effectively, heighten our awareness, open the lines of communication between mind and body, enable us to direct and control effort more effectively, and lead to increased speed, power, accuracy, balance, and coordination. Louie Bellson has said that, the faster he plays, the more relaxed he becomes. In an *MD* interview, John Guerin stated, "I'm convinced that your mental edge is most important. When you get a group and get a magic about a groove, it happens when you're not concentrating on counting. It's better to relax and let it happen."

The basic relaxation training method used in sports psychology in the United States is called "progressive relaxation." It was developed by a Harvard physiologist named Edmund Jacobson, who spent years studying the relationship between mental anxiety and muscle tension. One of his basic findings was that a person can learn to become aware of and control very small decreases and increases in muscle tension. Following is an abbreviated version of his procedure. You can practice this exercise while sitting in a chair or lying down. Tense your muscles for five to seven seconds and relax for 20-30 seconds. Pay close attention to the difference between the two feelings.

Exercise: Find a place where you can be undisturbed for ten or 15 minutes. Get in a comfortable position with legs and arms uncrossed. Close your eyes and take a couple of deep breaths, and feel yourself letting go of all worry and tension. Let the tenseness in your body just melt away. Hold both arms out in front of you, and clench your fists tightly. Gradually increase the tension level until your hands and arms are fully tight, hold, and then let your arms drop naturally to your sides and focus on the difference between *tension* and *relaxation*. Repeat this and all following procedures at least once—more if you find an area that's especially tight. Follow a similar pattern with your forehead, face, neck, shoulders, upper and lower back, chest muscles, stomach, pelvic region, upper legs, lower legs, feet, and toes. Now, scan your entire body, and return to any area that remains tense. Experience this state of total relaxation for two or three minutes. Open your eyes, get up, and

stretch.

It's recommended that you practice this exercise at least once a day for seven days. Later, you can shorten the process by combining various muscle groups. You'll discover that you have certain "trouble spots" where you tend to carry stress and tension. These are the places to work on.

Exercise: Many of us don't realize that we go through our day with muscles that are chronically tense. We often use more effort and strength than are needed to perform simple everyday activities. Observe and monitor your tension level as you do such things as eat, watch TV, sit, or drive a car. Do you grab the steering wheel with a death grip? Do you fold your arms and legs tightly when sitting, as if you were in a straight jacket? The goal of this exercise is to extend the range of your awareness and to use *only* that amount of effort necessary to complete the task at hand.

The Rating Scale: This is a technique intended to get you in touch with your tension while playing drums and to give you a greater degree of control. Think of a one to ten scale with level one being total relaxation and level ten being a state of total tension. Begin playing in a way that feels comfortable, and assign that state a number, such as a five. Continue playing, and pay close attention to what this level feels like. Now, consciously lower the level to a two or three—so loose that you're about to lose the sticks and look like a rag doll. Experience this level. Now shift upwards to an eight or nine—so tight that you look and feel like a robot. Now go back to an in between level, where you can perform your best with the least amount of effort. Keep playing at this level, and experience it fully.

This is a very individual process, and you're the final judge as to what works. Some people may report that a four works best for them, whereas others may feel they need to be at an eight or nine level to be at their peak. A good way to get feedback is to practice in front of a mirror, so you can see, as well as feel, what the various tension levels are like.

A variation of this is to focus on the four limbs and your body separately, assigning a tension level to each. You may find imbalances in that one or two limbs tend to be tighter than the others, or maybe the tension is mainly in the shoulders.

Exercise: Relax, with eyes closed. Imagine that your whole body is being projected on a large computer screen. Those body areas that are tense appear as red on the

screen, and the relaxed areas are a soothing blue color. Just observe the current state of your body, without attempting to change anything. Note where the red is, and the blue. Tense your muscles, and see the shift of red expand across the screen. Now let go, and see the blue slowly return. Do this several times. Let go more fully, and observe the blue color flowing over the red as the red simply melts away. Feel your sense of relaxation grow and spread throughout your body as the blue color intensifies. Whenever you find yourself feeling anxious and tense, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and recall the soothing blue light.

Exercise: While in a relaxed state, eyes closed, breathing naturally and deeply, scan your memory for images of drummers who display a quality of relaxation you would like to emulate. They may or may not play a style of drumming or a type of music that you like. The important thing is their approach—their ability to control tension, even at high energy levels. (Remember that relaxation enhances speed, power, and energy; tension drains and restricts energy and decreases power and speed). Think of these people as your teachers—your friends—your advisers. Mentally review the times you have seen them—on T.V., on tape, or in person. But this time, pay closer attention to how, rather than what, they play. Notice their body movements and their expressions. Imprint that image firmly in your mind and imagine that you are absorbing that quality of relaxation, as a sponge soaks up water.

It is probably good to clarify what we mean by relaxation. It is not the total absence of tension, but the proper balance and control of tension. Without some tension, we would be unable to move. Also, we are not talking about a lax state of mind, but one of focus and concentration. Bruce Lee was a great practitioner of relaxation but stressed that it meant relaxation of the muscles, "not of the mind or attention."

Relaxation is sometimes an elusive quality. On some days, it will come easily. At other times, it will be much more difficult to achieve. Perhaps the greatest barrier is the idea that we must "try hard" to become relaxed. But it is not achieved by force, willpower, or trying hard. The secret lies in letting go and allowing it to happen. It comes more and more naturally as we learn to heighten our awareness and to trust the inner wisdom of our bodies. The development of these skills can have a significant impact on our ability to express our drumming potential.

In Part Two of this article, we'll examine more ways to tap your mental powers and improve your drumming, through the use of visualization, mental imagery, focusing, and previewing.

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Antolini continued from page 27

going to be a jazz musician who suffers all his life." I decided to try to get into one of the big broadcasting bands. The first chance I got was in 1962, with Erwin Lehn in Stuttgart. I learned a lot in that band: reading the charts, playing big band music, playing with lots of big names.

SG: Presumably you would advocate a rudimental basis for all styles of drumming?

CA: I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but when it comes to the drumkit and playing jazz, all the biggest musicians come from the United States, and all the big American drummers have learned rudimental technique. I have never had a chance to talk with Buddy Rich, but I have had the chance to talk with Louis Bellson, Steve Gadd, and Billy Cobham. They all know the rudimental stuff. It's so important; it's the *foundation* for everything. If you have the technique, you don't need to use it all the time, but when you *do* use it . . . ! Years ago, I used to play technical stuff all the time, but it's not necessary to do that. I don't only want to be a good drummer; I want to be a good *musician*.

Sometimes when I play a long drum solo, I know that the people are enjoying it because that is what they have come to hear, but often I don't like doing solos. Drum solos are not important. The important thing is to be a musician and to play with the band, not to show off with a lot of technical things. But I know that people come to concerts saying, "We have to hear Charly Antolini," and they expect this powerful playing. When Buddy Rich plays a concert, he must do a drum solo, because that's what people expect of him.

SG: All this attention on soloing can make people forget what a great sensitive accompanist he is.

CA: Drummers who have big names like Buddy, Louie, Art Blakey, and Max Roach have to do this, but you don't find this with people like Billy Higgins or Kenny Clarke. That's a different world. With some people, the drum solo is a trademark that they have to use. That's the case with me, too.

SG: A friend of mine who saw you at a trade show said that you were demonstrat-

ing all sorts of drum setups from a four-piece bebop kit to a 12-piece heavy rock kit, and whichever kit you were playing, you sounded as if you were really at home with that particular style.

CA: The music critics in Europe have had me labeled and stamped "Charly Antolini equals big band swing," but nobody would say, "Charly Antolini—rock drummer" because nobody would believe it. I must be honest: There are drummers who play these things better, but I *can* play them. I'd never say I play them really well, but I know how to handle them. But who is to say what is good and what isn't good, or what is modern and what isn't modern? The rock drummers can't play the way I play. I don't want to criticize young players. I've had lots of people come to me for lessons who have tried to play like me, but I'm probably the only one who goes on stage and actually plays live in this way. Sometimes people say that I sound like Buddy Rich, but I'm not trying to copy anybody. I know some very talented drummers in Germany who sound like Steve Gadd, Harvey Mason, and Art Blakey. That isn't good. You should make your own style.

SG: When people are playing commercial music, they often have to produce an established style.

CA: If I'm playing a tune by a world-famous person like Tina Turner and I'm with a big band, I know very well that a big band isn't going to sound like Tina Turner with her six musicians, so I play it my way. I read the arrangement, sure, but it's my interpretation. I won't try to copy the record. But some commercial bands have to make a real copy of the record, because the people who buy records go to a dance, and if the music doesn't sound the same as they are used to, they say the band is no good. It's crazy—stupid! Tonight we are going to play three tunes by Basie and two tunes from Buddy Rich's repertoire, but we won't sound like Basie or Rich. I do it my way; why should I copy?

Now don't get me wrong here; I have the greatest respect for things that other people do. Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, and guys like that, with their fabulous techniques, are part of jazz history. I think that

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a lot of the young drummers coming up now don't even *know* what these legendary guys are playing. They don't understand it. But I know. They are great players.

I have also had a lot of respect for English drummers. For me, one of the finest ever was Kenny Clare. Another one is Ronnie Verrell. I saw him last year. Then there's Ronnie Stephenson, who these days is playing in a theater in Berlin. I've got a lot of respect for Martin Drew, who plays with Oscar Peterson. He didn't get that gig because he's a nice guy. He's there because Peterson knows he is the right guy.

I think that so many European drummers might have done better if they had been born in America: guys like Pierre Favre, Daniel Humair, Julio de Piscopo, who lives in Rome. In Germany, it isn't only Curt Cress or Charly Antolini; there are other names like Joe Nay, Klaus Weiss, Werner Schrnidt, and a great young talent from Stuttgart, Andi Witte. There's Fredy Studer and Jo Jo Mayer from Switzerland, and Erich Bachtrager from Austria. They are all great players.

SG: Could we come back to you, and talk about how you practice?

CA: To be a good player, you have to practice and keep on practicing. If you don't practice your technique, you lose it. I know some big names who say, "I never practice," but I don't believe them. I try to get in about two hours of practice every day. I practice independence and normal rudimental technique, and I experiment with different sounds.

SG: You like to practice on the drums, rather than on a practice pad or kit?

CA: Yes. You must practice on the drums. The feel of the bass pedal is different, and the feel of the sticks on the heads is different. I find it necessary to practice moving around the kit. These movements are so important. Going back to my early days as a rudimental snare drummer, it was this aspect that I couldn't handle. You can practice technique on one surface in front of you, but playing the *drumkit* requires a lot of movement. Steve Gadd says the same thing on one of his videos; Buddy Rich, Billy Cobham—they all say it's important.

Sometimes I practice, and I don't feel

good. Then I think it is best to stop and forget it. Sometimes when I practice it's boring. It's better not to practice when you feel like that. You should practice when you feel fresh and *want* to practice; then you do something worthwhile.

SG: Can we talk about your equipment?

CA: Why do you need four or five hanging toms, two floor toms, two bass drums, and nine or ten cymbals? You only have two hands and two feet. When I start on the left side, it's Monday, and when I get around to the right side, it's Friday. No, it's not necessary.

I use a Tama *Superstar* kit with a 22" bass drum, 13" and 14" hanging toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, and a 5 1/2" deep metal snare drum. Cymbals are A Zildjian: 14" *New Beat* hi-hats, a 21" medium ride, and 16" and 18" crashes. I also have an original Turkish 22" sizzle cymbal with rivets. I've been playing Zildjian cymbals throughout my professional career, and I haven't changed. I do drum clinics for Tama and Meinl, and then I play Meinl cymbals. Meinl cymbals *are* good, but Zildjian is the sound I want to have when I play drums. My *heart* belongs to Zildjian! And I'd like you to print that.

I'm a professional. I can't say that I won't do clinics for Meinl. The company has been very good to me over the last four years. Every year, I've done 12 to 15 clinics, and I have a contract for six years. When you're a professional, you have to take the good offers when they come. When I play, I always try to play jazz, but it isn't always possible. Sometimes it doesn't work. You get an offer, your flight is paid for, and you get good money, but you play boring music. You do it because you are a *professional*.

SG: You play a variety of different things. Do you use the setup you have just described for everything, or is it only when you are with JazzPower?

CA: I always play these drums when I play live on stage. I have some other drums that I keep for studio work. They can be altered to get a "studio sound," if necessary. When I go into the studio, I try to be flexible. If the producer wants a different sound, I'll do my best to give it to him. When I play jazz, I like a light sound. I like



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a long note from the tom-toms, not a short, dead sound. That is too dry for me. The same thing goes for the bass drum; if the note is too short, I don't hear it.

SG: Do you have any thoughts about electronic percussion?

CA: I am prepared to use it on records, but not live. It wouldn't work with the music I

play. I would need an extra sound system, not to mention a different band! In my band, we all have acoustic instruments. I don't usually use microphones on the drums. Sometimes when we're in a big hall, I'll use a couple of overhead mic's, but nothing up close. I don't like drum machines. They are a lie.

SG: What about the future?

CA: I am going to play drums and play jazz. This is my life. Next year, I will be 50, but I want to make sure that I am still playing at 70. If someone were to come up to me one day and say, "Okay Charly Antolini, give up your drumsticks; there's no more playing for you," I couldn't do it. It is impossible for me to stop. Jazz is my life.

Gadd, Michael Walden, and Simon Phillips, to name but a few. These people give me inspiration, but I don't want to play like them. I want to develop something of my own.

SG: I assume that you are not a great believer in practice kits?

MVB: Practice kits are okay for working on technique alone, but for working on style, it is important to practice on the drums. It's more interesting, it's more inspiring, and you are working with a sound that is part of your style. Les De Merle said that you don't go on stage and play on a practice kit; you play drums. You have to hit the drums in the correct way for the correct sound to come out of them.

This is an important technique in itself. If all you hear is "plop-plop-plop," that's the way you play. You need to be able to feel the drums ringing and sounding.

SG: Talking to you now, and earlier, it has become clear that you attach a great deal of importance to the equipment involved. Some drummers take the view that the playing is everything and the instrument is almost a necessary evil!

MVB: Everything is important: the playing, the inspiration behind the playing, the drums, the way they sound, the way they are set up, the way the drummer is sitting. If you sit too high, you tend to lean forward too much on the pedals. If you sit too low, you move upwards too much and waste energy. But within these extremes, there are possibilities that depend very much on the personality and musical approach of the drummer. If you are sitting high, you are likely to be into fast, technical playing. If you are sitting low, you are probably more groove oriented. You have to be comfortable. That's the main thing. To do this, you have to set the kit up properly. If things are in the wrong position, it can have a bad effect on your playing. For instance, if the toms are too low, you won't have the right angle to strike them efficiently. When a drumstick is moved in a downwards stroke, there is some natural centrifugal force that helps the stick to move in an arc. If a tom-tom is set low and fairly flat, you need to pull the stick inward from that arc just before the tip comes into contact with the head. But if you can keep a straight line from your elbow to the tip of the stick, all the way through the arc of the stroke, you are using that force to help you. This can only happen if the height and angle of the drum being hit allow it to.

It is important to know about your instrument. The clinics I do are for Sonor and Sabian. I have been with Sonor for many years. I work with them sometimes on ideas: hardware, the length of the shells, different woods, thicknesses, things like this. Ever since I started playing drums, I have been interested in how they are built and how this affects the sound. Gretsch drums have thin shells and a light



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Von Bohr continued from page 28
smoke. I live in the countryside, so I have plenty of fresh air. I have to say that I'm not so much into running. Before choosing to go running for an hour, I would choose to spend that time playing on the drumkit. If I have the time, I always do two to four hours of practice every day.

SG: Before we talk about practice, could you explain how meditation changed your playing?

MVB: Before I got into meditation, I always tried to play in a technical way. I would actually think in terms of rudiments—"a triplet here, a paradiddle here"—but then I changed. I didn't think about technique too much. I just listened to the music, and the music inspired me to play the drums. It's different. I find this when I play alone, too. If I'm doing a clinic and I play solo for about 15 minutes, I start to be on a new level of consciousness. I listen to the sound of my drums, and they inspire me to play. I can transform things that form in my imagination directly onto the drums, without having to think about the physical mechanics of playing.

SG: When you are practicing on your own, do you do the same thing, or do you concentrate more on technique?

MVB: I do think that technique is important. There have been times in my life when I've worked on it for up to six hours a day. However, once a certain level of technical ability has been achieved, I think that it is important to work on style, too. It is good to work on developing sounds and to develop an intimate knowledge of the drums, so that you are aware that you are playing an instrument and technique is only the means to an end. I believe that it is important to develop a style of your own, and this is something I'm always working on. I tape everything I do: gigs, clinics, rehearsals with bands, practicing on my own at home. I listen to the tapes I make and analyze everything I hear. The big advantage of having things down on tape is that, if I do something I like, I've got it there for reference. Twenty-one years ago, when I started, I was very inspired by people like Ginger Baker; now it's more Steve

sound. Ludwig drums have thicker shells and a heavier sound. With Sonor, the *Signature* and the *Phonic/Phonic Plus* shells are thick and give a heavy sound, but the *Sonorlite* are thinner and give a lighter sound. Drummers should know how drums are built, so they will be more together with the instrument. If you know that a drum is made of birchwood and is a little bit thinner, then you know *why* the sound is sharper and more open. This is particularly important in a studio situation. You need to be aware of the acoustic properties of an instrument in order to be able to tune it properly. A lot of drummers are very bad at this. Electronic drums are popular, because they have a ready-made sound.

SG: Electronic drums have the sounds many people want, they are easy to amplify, and they don't take up so much room in storage and transit, yet acoustic drums are still used much more. Why do you think this is?

MVB: I've nothing against electronic drums, but I have to say that I look upon electronic and acoustic drums as two different instruments. There are millions of sound possibilities with electronic sounds, but they are usually all in one direction. There are weird sounds that are new and unusual, but when you are looking for something like the acoustic drum sound, then it is very limited. The dynamic range is limited. With an acoustic snare drum,

there are so many sound possibilities: the heads, how you tune them. Each turn of a screw is a different sound. Then there are the touch differences when you play it. You don't get this with an electronic snare drum. It sounds like a machine gun when you play a roll on it. But if you are looking for the particular sounds that an electronic drum can give you, it's fine. I use some electronics, triggered from acoustic drums, or I sometimes have a pad, to one side or the other, if I want to get some strange sounds. I think that, in years to come, we will have two types of drummers—electronic and acoustic.

SG: The common thing is for people to mix them, though, as you have just described. *Most* people who use electronic drums have them in conjunction with acoustic.

MVB: But I'm talking about people who will be just electronic drummers. If you only use electronics, it requires a different style of playing, a different way of hitting, and a different sort of thinking. Skills involving the knowledge of different sizes of drums, different tunings, and different heads will no longer be relevant, but there will be electronic skills instead. I can see that, in the future, there will be drummers who can only play electronics but can't play real drums at all. They won't play rudiments; they won't need a closed roll, because they'll be able to produce that electronically. They'll just be involved in sounds. The technique will be the "hi-

tech" variety, not drumming technique.

Many drummers are mixing these things at the moment, because the electronic instruments are there to be used. Producers and people like that want them. They are useful, but the drummers don't want to miss out on their acoustic instruments either. It's interesting; I enjoy it very much. At the moment, I'm waiting for some new electronic equipment from Sonor. Sonor makes kits and single pads, and is making a new mixing console. Sonor has also developed some small, thin mic's that are specially made for drums. These mic's can go straight into the mixer for an acoustic sound, or they can be switched through to an electronic brain for electronically triggered sounds. You can have one sound or the other, or you can mix them together. This is very useful. You can do things like making the bass drum sound punchier by bringing in a touch of electronics, or you can have an alternative sound, like a timpani from a floor tom.

SG: While we are on the subject of equipment . . .

MVB: [laughs] Okay. Well, I like to play *Sonorlite* drums with the thin birchwood shells. They breathe more, and they have an unbelievable dynamic range. My older kit, which you see here, is finished in yellow lacquer and has standard chrome hardware. I have a newer kit, which is going to become my "road kit," that is finished in white lacquer with all black hard-

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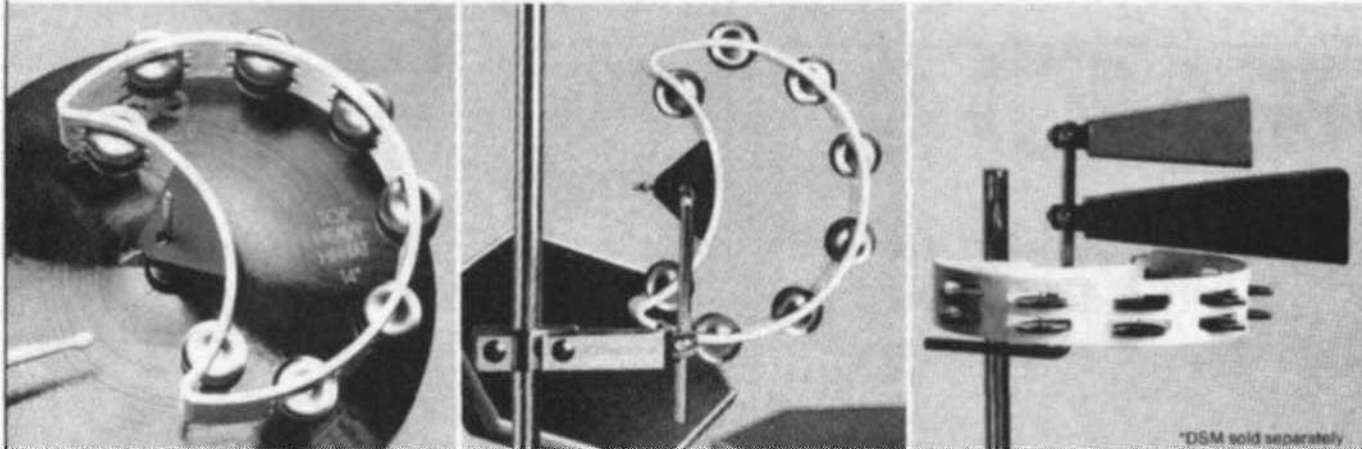
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ware. Starting with the drum on my extreme left, it is a 14" wooden timbale that is 6" deep. I use a clear *Emperor* head on it and have it tuned really high. I find that, at this high tension, the *Emperor* has more tone than an *Ambassador*. Then I use 10", 12", 13", 14", and 16" toms. The 16" is a floor tom, but I have it mounted rather than on legs. I find that, if a drum is directly resting on the floor in three places, the sound is more choked than if it is suspended from one shell mount. On the toms, I either use *Pinstripes* or clear *Emperors* on the batter side, and clear *Ambassadors* or clear *Diplomats* on the bottom. It depends on whether I want a more open or a slightly damped sound. On my right, above the floor tom, I use a 20" concert tom. It has a solid rim and a clear *Ambassador* head. It gives a deep, fundamental sound. At the moment, I have a 22" bass drum on my left foot and a 24" on my right. Sometimes, I have a 20" and a 22" instead. I like to use metal-shell snare drums. At the moment, I have an 8" *Signature* drum with a white *Emperor* head on top, dampened with a small ring, cut from an old drumhead, around the perimeter. I have clear *Ambassador* heads on the batter side on the bass drums and black *Pinstripes* on the front. I try to stick to felt strip mufflers on the bass drums, without laying anything inside them.

SG: It's unusual to have a thinner head for the batter side.

MVB: I like to get more resonance from the batter heads and a short sound, without pillows and stuff in the drums. With this combination of heads and damping, I find that I can get a sound that is warm and punchy, and cuts through.

My cymbals are all Sabian. Starting on the right, above the 20" concert tom, there is a 12" *Leopard* splash, which has a very hard sound. Then there is a 15" AA Chinese cymbal and a 22" ride cymbal. I always use a 22" ride on the right, because for me, it has much more substance than an 18" or a 20". This one is a *Leopard* ride. I often change the crash cymbals that I have in front of me. At the moment, I have 16" and 18" *Leopards*, but I often use thin

or medium HHs: a 16" and a 17". On the left side, I use an 18" flat cymbal. Sabian made me a special heavy, flat cymbal; it's very loud, but it still has that flat sound. Above that, I have an 18" or 20" Chinese, with rivets. There is a 10" splash over the timbale, some crotales, a bell tree, and some wind chimes. I love the sounds of some of these small metal instruments. I sometimes use them to make the audience calm and attentive to my playing.

That is the setup, although I do change things around sometimes. For instance, I might use an electronic pad in place of the timbale. At the moment, I am constructing a rack, to go behind me, which will have all the electronic "outboard" stuff: digital delays and so on. My bass drum pedals are *Signature*. On this kit, the stands are *Signature*, too, but on my "road kit," they are *Phonic Plus*, which are quite sturdy enough. My sticks are Vic Firth *SD1*.

SG: I notice that, with so much equipment, you seem to use a minimum of stands.

MVB: I only use three cymbal stands, but I have two cymbals on each—Sonor's double cymbal stands. I have the crash cymbals mounted on the tom-tom holders on the bass drum. The timbale, the 10" splash, and the metal percussion are all mounted on the one stand.

SG: Nevertheless, it is the sort of large kit that Charly Antolini might disapprove of. Why do you use it?

MVB: Freedom, flexibility, being able to get a variety of different sounds when I want them. I started playing ambidextrously about five years ago, because I saw that there were many more possibilities open to you if you could play like that. I can play with the left hand on a ride cymbal, and have the right hand for the toms or snare. The thing is that I don't play the same things with my left hand on the ride cymbal as I do with my right hand on the ride cymbal. There's no point in doing that. If I can play things one way, there's no point in changing to the other way. When I play left-hand lead, I try to find something new. I come up with some interesting polyrhythms that I would not think of doing while leading with my right.

By having a choice of instruments to use, I can vary the sounds. *Sounds* are very important to me. I like to change things around. I use different cymbals. Sometimes I use smaller rack toms in front of me. It depends on the music I am playing.

SG: Your different sized bass drums would indicate that you want a different sound from each foot, rather than going for a "two hands on one drum" effect.

MVB: If I want to get the same sound on either foot, I can use one of Sonor's double pedals and play the same drum with it. As long as I'm using two drums, I prefer them to sound like two drums. It's better if you want to go for tonal and rhythmic effects, rather than "thunder." Incidentally, I first started using two bass drums while I was still at school in Saarbrücken. The singer in the band I joined had a kit with two bass drums. He couldn't play it, so I used to use it because it was better than mine. I immediately took to the idea because of Ginger Baker: [laughs] I've been doing it ever since. I reckon that all drummers are either one or two bass drum players. You are either hooked on double bass drum playing, or you aren't interested. You seldom find people switching between double and single basses.

I always like to be an individual, but one problem is that the more of an individual you are, the fewer studio dates you get. You can see all the long faces, for instance, when you arrive at a studio with two bass drums, [laughs] Since leaving Birth Control in 1980, I have worked regularly in studios. These days, however, I am more

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interested in working in a band situation in which I am able to explore my own playing more. In the studio, you usually have to play what the producer, the arranger, or the engineer tells you to. Sometimes they might ask for your ideas, but normally you have to play what *they* think is right for the music. It can be okay; I like it in some situations. It depends on the musicians and the producer.

Playing live is what I really like: giving the energy direct to the people. Some music today is so highly produced that it just becomes a front for an image, which is really more important to the people who are making it. I often feel that, with pop productions, the way the people are dressed and the technology they use is more important than the actual music, which is almost a by-product. I think that it is so important to bring music to the people. It is the feeling in the music and the communication. That's why people started playing music all those thousands of years ago. Musicians need to be able to express themselves in a way that enables people to *catch* it, and that comes across best in a live situation. It is better to hear people producing and creating music live than to listen to a well-produced record. I'm sorry to speak against record companies, but I think that they sometimes treat music too much as a "product" to be mar-

keted, and creative expression is forgotten. If a band is producing a recording of its own music and that music is uppermost in the minds of all the band members, that is alright. But music as a clinical exercise in production techniques isn't.

SG: While we're on the subject of communicating with people, you said an interesting thing a while ago about how things like wind chimes have a calming effect on people. Can you expand a bit on that subject?

MVB: Yes, of course. Sounds do affect people beyond the level of "I like that," or "I don't like that." In India, for example, there is a special music for meditation. Indians use special gongs to put people in the right frame of mind: to make them relaxed and quiet. The sound of the gongs affects the breathing, so that you breathe evenly and have a balanced equilibrium. On the other hand, military bands use a lot of snare drum. Why? Because the biting sound of the snare drum makes you aggressive. Perhaps it attacks the nervous system.

Here in Germany, the Bavarians have a lot of military bands, and I think that they tend to be fairly aggressive people. [laughs] Latin American music is full of fun. It makes people want to dance. It's a very interesting point. Each country has its own style of music, and this has something to do with the character of the people. It's

like that old question, "What came first, the chicken or the egg?" You don't know whether the music developed because of the character of the people, or people's characters developed because of the music they listen to.

You find the same thing happening, in a strange way, with drummers. The equipment you use and the way you have it set up and tuned depends a great deal on your character. If you want to sound more aggressive, you have hard sounds, you play hard, and you set up in a way that allows you to play hard. If you are more of a quiet, gentle person and want to sound less aggressive, you try to play softer; you have softer sounds. This is a difficult thing to explain, but the inspiration works in two directions: The sound inspires the drummer, and the drummer inspires the sound.

Eurich continued from page 29

ME: Two to three months. Sometimes it would be nice to have longer, but studio time is expensive, as we all know!

SG: Do you find that songs develop after being performed live a few times?

ME: Yes, that's normal. We sometimes find that a song works particularly well when it's done in a certain way in the studio, but when we do it on stage, it doesn't seem to fit together so well. As we were saying just now, the feeling in a studio can be

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quite different. You can find that the groove of a song can change once you start doing it live. When an album is released, you can't be sure which songs are likely to be hits. Everybody hopes for one, or maybe two, songs that are going to appear in the Top 100. Sometimes it is the unexpected one that catches on.

SG: Do you ever wish that you had actually recorded a song differently?

ME: Oh yes, sometimes, for sure.

SG: Can't that be a bit frustrating?

ME: We accept it; it's the way the business works. Perhaps if we were in the sort of league where we could afford to do an album every three years, followed by a promotional tour, it would be different. But then we wouldn't get the immediacy—which is exciting—so it might not be better.

SG: *True As Steel* has a variety of different drum sounds on different tracks. Can you say something about how you choose these sounds and how you get them?

ME: The choice of sounds is rather subjective. It is people's ideas and Rudy, the producer, and I sorting out what is possible and what works well. When it comes down to getting the sounds, we use some triggered Simmons.

Rudy: It's a popular way for everybody to do it, at the moment. It's a mixture of the normal, acoustic drum sounds and Simmons, with a variety of settings.

SG: Do you use the same system live?

Rudy: Not yet. We want to do this, but at the moment, we can't get suitable triggering units in Germany. We are going to have to order something from the States. We want to link up the whole drumkit to the Simmons, so that we can trigger everything, even the bass drums, all in one. We checked it out with Simmons to see if we could get a secondary miking system for triggering, but what we have seen so far doesn't work as well as we would like. The sensitivity seems to be wrong, so that you can't be sure that the snare drum mic' won't trigger the tom-tom nearest to it, and so on. We are going to have to use a special internal miking system like the May EA. What you hear at the moment is a straight, miked-up, acoustic drum sound. I don't think that you can get a really true

acoustic drum sound with electronics, but we like the idea of electronics for getting "highlights" in addition to the usual acoustic sound, and also for helping to overcome some of the differences in room acoustics that we encounter. We are proud of the drum sound we get now; I don't want to belittle that!

SG: Could you give us a rundown of the equipment?

Rudy: It's a Pearl *Pro GX* kit, with 12", 13", and 14" rack toms, a 16" floor tom, two 22" bass drums, a 6 1/2" deep metal snare drum, and 4 1/2" free-floating drum. The cymbals are Paiste. There is a pair of 14" and a pair of 15" hi-hat cymbals, which are 602 heavies. There is an 18" 505 crash, but the rest of them are 2002s: two 17" and two 18" crashes—one medium and one heavy in each size—a 19" medium crash, two 20" *Novo Chinas*, and a 22" *Heavy Rock* ride.

SG: Michael, have you always used two bass drums?

ME: For the first year that I was playing, I only used one, but that was because I couldn't afford the second one! [laughs]

SG: I noticed that you have them tuned slightly differently from one another.

ME: They sound very similar. We don't try to get them to sound identical, because with a slight gap between them, it really sounds like *two* bass drums. Otherwise, they can sound like one drum being played with a double pedal.

Rudy: It's not really possible to get two drums to sound identical, anyway. You could take the five best drumkits from the best manufacturer, and you would still find that each tom-tom, when put up against the other four of the same size, would sound different. It would be possible to tune them to notes—let's say C, D, E, F, and G—but a particular tom will only work well on one tone. Every drum has its own tone, and you have to find it.

ME: All my tom-toms have clear *Ambassador* heads, top and bottom. The snare drum has a coated *Ambassador* with an extra ring, cut out from another head, around the edge. The bass drum heads are *Pinstripes*. Apart from the ring on the snare drum, there is *no damping* of any sort on any of the drums. It's a "back to

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SG: You have your cymbals suspended from their tilters, rather than on top of them. Why is this?

ME: It has nothing to do with the sound. I suppose you could say it's a visual thing. I just happen to like them like that. But I do like to have the cymbals flat, rather than angled, and it works well to suspend them.

SG: What about the hi-hats? Do you use one pair with a pedal and have one fixed?

ME: No, they are both on normal stands, but most of the time, I play them in a fixed position: touching loosely.

SG: When your show started tonight, you had some strobe lights going right next to you. Doesn't this make it difficult to pick up a tempo, particularly when you are going in cold?

ME: [laughs] No, the lights put me in the frame of mind where I can feel, "This is it. The show has started." The whole thing works well with my adrenaline to make me feel powerful. No matter how I was feeling a few moments before, or no matter what problems I have had, I am going to play well. Tonight, for instance, there was no time for a soundcheck; the monitors weren't as clear as they might have been. But this sort of thing mustn't make any difference. People aren't interested in your difficulties; they only know if you have played well or badly. They don't want to know about problems with lights or monitors—and you can't tell them, either!

SG: What do you do to keep yourself in condition?

ME: Training. It's part of what you have to do to be a drummer. You're working with two hands and two feet, so you have to be in condition. Rudy and I train together regularly, whenever we can. We go jogging, we work with expanders—all the usual things. Also, when we were on tour with Judas Priest, we had an electronic kit in the dressing room. I was often able to practice on this for up to three hours every day before a show.

SG: Do you have a practice routine?

ME: I practice the rudiments. I play them as fast as I can comfortably and accurately, and then I lift the tempo a bit each

day so that my comfortable speed increases.

SG: You obviously think that a rudimental approach to drumming is important.

ME: Many people imagine that a heavy rock drummer only has to play a straight, hard groove, but that's changing. I think that more technical things are coming in now. It would be stupid to say, "I'm a heavy rock drummer, so I don't need to play paradiddles." Why not use paradiddles in heavy rock? Jazz players use rudiments, so why not rock players?

SG: Is there anything special you do to practice bass drum technique?

ME: No matter what I'm practicing with the hands, I always keep the feet going as well. Even if I'm only using a practice pad, I'll still tap my feet. I also like to work on independence between the hands and feet. For instance, I might be practicing a rudiment starting with my right hand, so I'll start with the left foot at the same time. And then when I start with the left hand, I'll start with my right foot.

SG: As a professional rock musician, do you think you might have had more advantages if you had been born in America or England?


ME: I don't think it makes a lot of difference, certainly not since The Scorpions made it big on the international scene. Before that, I think that the English and the Americans didn't perhaps take German rock bands too seriously. But it is nice to be able to show them what a German drummer can do—to be able to say, "There you are. You don't have to be an American to play like that."

SG: Are there any plans for Warlock to play in America?

Rudy: Yes. In '87, we are planning to go over to play a few festivals. The details haven't been finalized yet, but it has been decided that we will go.

SG: What about the future, generally?

ME: The future is going to be good, but everybody has to work, and everybody knows that. We'll get tighter and tighter, so that we'll "catch it" and one day be on top. I know that I'm not the best drummer in the world, but I certainly intend to work until I am. Being famous is 8% good business, 2% good luck, and 90% hard work.



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by Bob Moses

D Sharpe



D Sharpe, an excellent drummer and a beautiful human being, died recently. Though I've always appreciated D, it took his death to get me to express my appreciation in writing. For those of you who didn't know him or his music, I'll give a brief, incomplete description. Best known for playing with the Carla Bley Band, he was a small, thin, dapper man with a beautiful, warm smile and thick glasses. Sometimes he reminded me of one of the older drummers, like Dave Tough, as he often wore '30s-style suits and favored large bass drums. His health was often fragile, but he could play the drums very hard, and also very softly. He played loose, relaxed, and very funky.

D's mind worked like no one else's. I always looked forward to conversations

with him, because his responses were unusual, surprising, and full of wit and wisdom. D was a true original, and there are so few of those. I was always happy when D walked into a club where I was playing. He wasn't too hip, too cool, or too competitive to enjoy hearing another drummer cook and would let his appreciation show. I would play better when he was there. Even now, he's still making me play better.

I think the goal of all serious musicians, whether they are playing bebop, funk, heavy metal, bluegrass, a violin concerto, or whatever, is to kick ass, move the audience, overwhelm them with their virtuosity, sensitivity, musicality, soulfulness, etc. In Boston, where I live now, among a certain clique of excellent musicians, we have an expression for this phenomenon. When a musician is burning, smoking, killing, and dealing for real, we say that he or she be *wielding*!

Recently on a Friday and a Saturday, as musicians in need of money often do, I found myself working in the lounge of some hotel in a situation where the people were there to eat, drink, smoke cigarettes, talk, and do whatever else people do in hotel lounges on weekend evenings, and where the music is supposed to be background "polite" jazz, our function being clearly not to disturb, distract, or in any way engage the audience. Well, we limped and wimped through Friday night, at least trying to be as musical as possible in our roles as purveyors of innocuous background noise.

Saturday afternoon, a friend called and told me D Sharpe had died. When I got to the gig that night, I told Bruce Gertz, the excellent bassist, that D Sharpe was dead. Bruce hadn't heard. He said, "You're kidding." Then he thought about it for a moment and said, "No, you wouldn't kid me about that." No more words were spoken. We started to play. All of a sudden, the music was burning, alive with elemental electric human energy, planets colliding, tidal waves rolling up over the beach, thunder, lightning, a deep, wide groove you could drive a truck through, and all the spirit and life force you could ask for. But what was even more amazing was that we were doing it so softly. Here was this incredible energy careening, exploding,

all over, all within the confines of this small place and low volume. It was definitely a form of alchemy and of love to wield so forcefully in a non-wield situation and in such a way as to not break the fragile bonds of appropriateness. To our amusement, management detected no difference between Friday and Saturday nights. We received our faint praise exactly the same both nights—"Nice music, fellas, nice music"—but we all knew something quite different had occurred that second night. After the set, Bruce and I agreed that we had wielded mightily, and we both admitted to having been thinking about D Sharpe during the playing.

Thinking of D, his power, soulfulness, warmth, humor, and originality, our spirits would not accept less from us than total wielding from the heart. And now, though some time has passed, I'm still using thoughts of D Sharpe to remind myself that, in this short life, there is not time for non-wielding. We must give all we have all the time in life, in love, and in music.

Poem for D Sharpe

Hoboken	Zoot suit
D Train	rooty tootin
Honky Tonk	funka dunk
listen	glisten
whisper	simmer and shake
with the rumprolling backbeat	
of planets colliding	
dividing	what money
five wave	coordination
extraordinary	grace and style
elation	destination
Heartland	Spirit world
so it's graduation day honoring	
your honorable doctoring of degrees	
baptized in the moist raptures	
of sublime groovology	

Om ship ship she boom
 ship she boom
 ship she boom

Om ship
 she boom boom ship
 she boom boom ship
 Om

—Rahboat Ntumba Moses

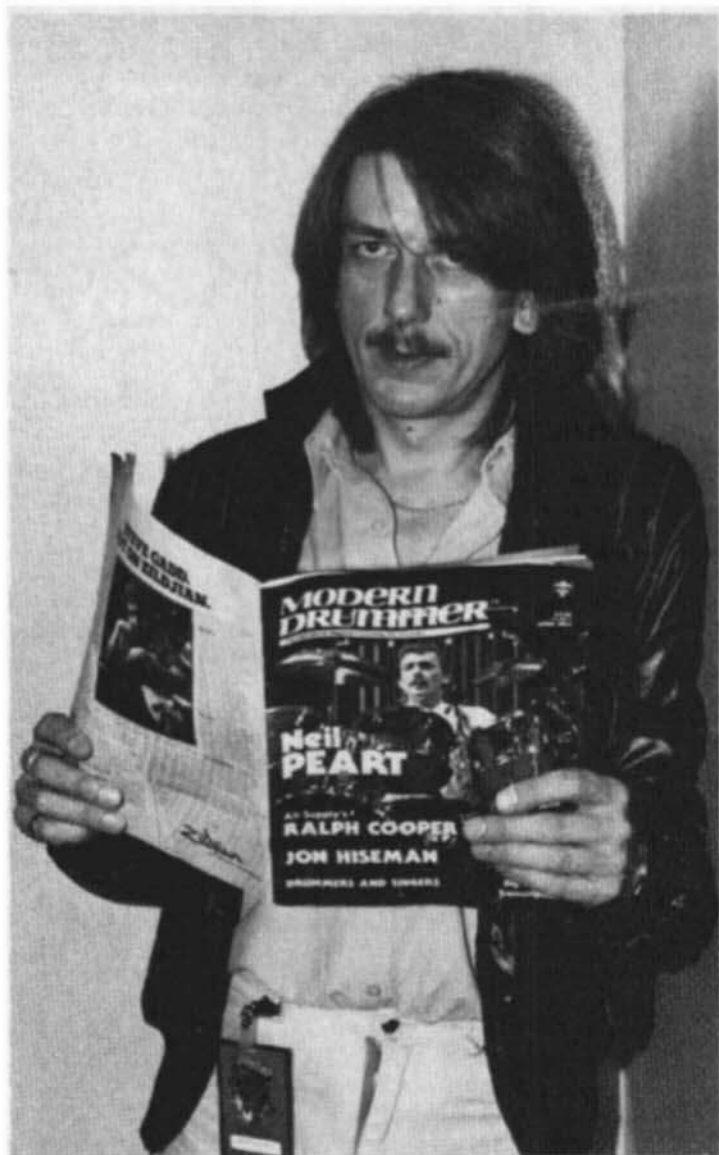


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by Brooke Sheffield Comer



Zak Starkey

Whether you like Zak Starkey right off or not, after you've heard him play, you'll decide that you'd rather be his friend than his bass drum pedal. Ringo's eldest has been pounding for ten years now, and the pedal casualty is high. His heavy foot may keep pedal manufacturers in business, but there's also an unquestionably original style that infuses the energy and velocity of Zak's big bass sound. At age 20, when most drummers are still malleable—being or about to be influenced by mentors—Zak's chops are hard and solid. He displays the confidence and technical expertise of a seasoned session pro—small wonder. Ringo gave his son his first lesson, but growing up in a household where the likes of John Bonham and Keith Moon were frequently entertained gave young Zak more informal tips and techniques by age ten than years of gigging could provide.

Ringo didn't encourage Zak's career, but he's no doubt proud. (The two played together on Arthur Baker & Little Steven's "Sun City," for Artists United Against Apartheid, with such notables as Afrika Bambaataa and Run DMC, "because it was something we believed in," says Zak.) "I'd only played piano a bit until the day my dad took me out to play drums. After the first and only lesson, he told me that, if I wanted to keep at it, I'd have to do it myself, and I did. It's the last thing he expected, but that's how I learned. After two years of my playing on his kit, he gave me a tiny Ludwig set, with a 20" bass drum, 12" and 14" toms, and a little piccolo snare."

Prior to forming his first band at age 12, Zak's influences were hardly eclectic. "I was small-minded in my choice of favorite drummers at the time," he confesses. "From '75 to '76, I only listened to Keith Moon, John Bonham, Billy Cobham, and Clem Burke. I didn't really give anyone else a chance." But despite diverse styles within his coterie of inspiration, Zak created and maintained an original sound of his own. "I've kept my own style, without really changing over the years," he notes. "To get extra power, I make sure my pedals are quite stiff, but basically, I like to keep things simple."

Keith Moon had perhaps the greatest impact on Zak's approach to rhythm. "I started getting into the Who when I was seven," he reminisces, "and I especially liked the way Moonie played drums. He knew absolutely no bounds. He was always trying something new, and there were no limits to what he'd attempt or achieve. That's also my attitude in playing. I don't think you should be held back at all."

Moon's young disciple also has a style of his own. The late master of crash was known for a violent attack on his cymbals while he ignored the hi-hat, "but I stick with the hi-hat a lot," Zak admits. "And I don't have the *perpetual* boundlessness that Moonie had either. I try to keep it together in certain parts, though there are sections where you must go for it and exceed the limit.

"He never sat down and gave me an actual lesson," Zak adds, "but Moonie and I talked quite a bit. I was curious as to how he could hit some of the notes he did. For instance, in 'Glow Girl,' I could never understand how he hit the ride cymbal so fast. He explained that he'd put the cymbal up with a piece of cork on top of it and another cymbal above it, bottom side up, and played the two of them like that—one up, one down."

In addition to insights, Zak got a Premier kit from Moon that he keeps at home for practice. "I use my Pearl set in the studio, along with Zildjian cymbals—the best cymbals in the world. I used to try other brands, and they were constantly breaking. Now, I've been using Zildjians for one year, and I'm still on the original set" (though he can't say the same for his bass pedal). "I'm also fond of Zildjian's tone," he adds. "Zildjian cymbals are warmer-sounding than any other cymbals I've used." Zak also likes the sound of his Pearl drums. "Pearl puts out a good line of almost everything you'd need. I don't have any special tuning techniques, though I like to get the bottom heads on the tomtoms quite tight for extra life in the drums. But basically, I tune by instinct, until everything sounds good. Even when I'm on the road, I tune my own drums," he grins, "and you can tell."

Zak also uses Pearl's electronic kit. He incorporates the pads into his regular set "so I can just use them for accents in certain sections. I've been using *LinnDrums*, too, and the combination of live and computerized sounds works well. A lot of drummers I know were afraid at first that Linn's would put them out of work, but now they've become more a part of the whole community. People have accepted them, realizing that you have to move on and that there's a future for everything. After all, drum machines are computers, and this is the generation of the computer. You have to appreciate the different patterns and regimentation that a Linn can create. I like to use a Linn and overdub live drums. That way, I get the best of both sounds."

Playing nonstop in a series of bands since age 12 gave Zak plenty of opportunity to nail down his technique. "I formed my first band, The Next, with the guitarist next door, a singer and a bassist, all in their late teens and 20's. When we disbanded two years later, the bass player and I formed a pub band. We'd do mostly original rock tunes, and a few covers, like 'Shakin' All Over.' My next endeavor, Mono Pacific, gave me two more years of gigging practice and a chance to perform in Morocco, in a benefit for the Moroccan Cancer fund. Though we've officially broken up, the band still gets together to play in the pub at the end of my road, which is good fun."

Not only was Zak's style shaped by '60s rock-legend houseguests and pub crawls, but also by the turbulent, atonal, London punk scene. "The Damned, The Stranglers, and The Sex Pistols were some of the better acts around," Zak concedes, "and there were some other great bands around that time, though it was so long ago, I can't really remember them that well."

Constant listening and playing helped Zak get his chops down, but session work fostered his flexibility and tolerance for different genres. "I got into session work after I'd done 30 demos with the Spencer Davis group and a terrible album, *Wind In The Willows*. A friend of mine in the record industry had acts in a local studio on a regular basis. Because I was only two

miles away, he'd give me a call if any good projects came in." Zak worked with Samantha Fox (British centerfold celebrity having a go at pop stardom). He also did "some electro-funk that wasn't really my style and a lot of crap. But then, you have to adapt or you aren't going to work, are you?"

If John Entwistle was paying even slight attention to the rhythmic progress of Ringo's son, he must have felt, years ago, the kinship of bass worship that both share. "I've known John quite awhile, and we'd often talked about putting a band together," Zak reveals. "But when he was forming his group [The Rock] after the breakup of the Who, I was busy with Night Fly, a jazz/R&B act. When our British tour lost a lot of money and I wasn't obligated to Night Fly anymore, I took John up on his offer. He'd just lost his drummer, and when he gave me a call, I said yes straightaway."

Zak didn't have to ease off the bass pedal to be compatible with John's heavy hand. "John has quite an original style that I've always liked," Zak notes. "He revolutionized bass playing, for most people, by bringing it to the forefront. I share his musical taste, for the most part. Big bass runs going along with tom fills have always sounded best to me."

While recording a new, as-yet-unnamed LP in Hammer Head—John's home studio in Gloucestershire—the entire room is being used for Zak's drum sound. Ambient mic's are being employed to keep the snare from losing its bottom. "Something about the room was taking that bottom away," Zak explains, "so we tried different tricks. But the answer turned out to be using a much thinner snare. After trying out different heads and snares, we ended up using one that had been lying in a room at the back of the house for 14 years." Because Hammer Head lacks a drum booth, Zak plays behind screens "which works out perfectly, because I hate being shut away from the band, and also because I'm able to get the sound of the room."

He hasn't yet contributed any compositions to his latest group's collaborative LP, but Zak admits that he's ready to try. "Nothing's come into my head so far," he confesses, "though I'd like to have a go at writing. I find it difficult not to rewrite old hits. I could easily rip off the best of Sam & Dave, but that's just not on, is it?"

The new LP, dubbed "big music" by band members, has no doubt grown bigger since Zak put his foot to the beat. But he's reluctant to classify his own sound in the context of the band. "That's the hardest thing in the world to do," he retorts. "It's impossible to describe yourself without sounding contrived or stupid." And those are attitudes that Zak has so far avoided.

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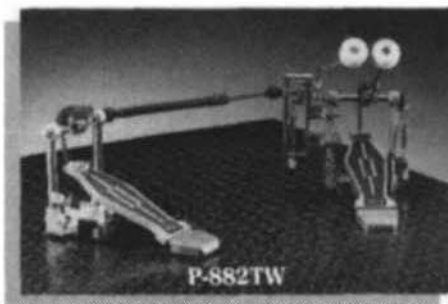
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PETE TOWNSHEND'S DEEP END**Atlantic Video****75 Rockefeller Plaza****New York, NY 10019****Time: 1 hour, 27 minutes****Price: \$32.95 (VHS/Beta)**

This video is a 1985 concert performance of Pete Townshend's band Deep End, featuring drummer Simon Phillips. Townshend's music gives Simon the opportunity to show his talent as a superb rock drummer. Deep End is a 16-piece band, including a horn section and five background vocalists; it's basically a rock 'n' roll big band. Listening and seeing how Simon kicks the band is very educational. He plays very cleanly, and every once in a while, he pulls off some intricate fill. Some stand-out drumming tracks here include "Give Blood," "Face The Face," "After The Fire," and "Little Is Enough." However, most of these tunes contain something of interest drumming-wise.

The production on this video is superior. The sound is very clear, considering the size of the band. The amount of camera angles used is *amazing*, and Simon is visible quite often throughout. Split-screen camera effects, as well as other video techniques, are used to enhance the visual elements. This video is extremely well put together.

Getting back to the drumming, Simon has some very creative ideas displayed here. His kit contains two bass drums, two snare drums, two hi-hats, two ride cymbals, a mounted bass drum, and much more. It's not the amount of equipment that's great; it's how he creatively uses it. If you're "into" Townshend or Phillips at all, or just into great rock drumming, pick this one up.

—William F. Miller

STEP BY STEP (LARRIE LONDIN)

and

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STICKS (LARRIE LONDIN)**Glendover Films****P.O. Box 3848****Fayetteville, AR 72702****Time: Approximately 60 minutes each****Price: \$39.95 each, \$69.95 for both.****(VHS/Beta)**

These two tapes are basically educational videos featuring studio session legend Larrie Londin. And rest assured, anyone who has the least interest in studio drumming will receive substantial information from either one; as a package, they pretty much cover the subject completely.

Step By Step is a straight-ahead lecture from Larrie, with only a moderate amount of actual playing used to demonstrate his points. But those points are incredibly

instructive, as this tape goes into almost every detail of what Larrie does, both in the studio and on stage, and how he does it. Larrie discusses the differences between his stage and studio drumsets, covering aspects of tuning, muffling, head selection, miking, cymbal selection, and other sound-related topics. He mentions his use of the RIMS system, and the ARMS rack system on his studio kit. He also describes—in depth—his large electronics rack and his collection of various snare drums. He goes to great lengths to demonstrate the differences in sound produced by these different instruments, and to explain when and why he might use any given one. If you've ever wondered just how successful studio drummers go about their work, this is the tape for you.

The Other Side Of The Sticks is a taped clinic given by Larrie in front of a live audience. All of the equipment is the same, since the two tapes were made in the same location on successive dates. But this time, Larrie concentrates more on playing than on equipment.

Those who know Larrie as a guru of the country groove may be pleasantly surprised at his technique and chops—although the grooves are amply demonstrated as well. Larrie goes on to discuss his various studio experiences, illustrating the differences between playing Motown in Detroit and C&W in Nashville. He spices up his talk with humorous anecdotes from his early days, touching on problems he encountered with engineers and producers in Nashville who "weren't quite ready" for his R&B-influenced playing style. He also discusses the need for any session drummer to remain flexible and cooperative—qualities that have made him as successful as he is today.

Both of these videos are full of useful, practical information, presented in an easy-to-take, entertaining package. They are highly recommended.

—Rick Van Horn

LOUIE BELLSON AND HIS BIG BAND**View Video****34 E. 23rd Street****New York, NY 10010****Time: 55 minutes****Price: \$39.95 (VHS/Beta)**

This tape is the companion to the *Cobham Meets Bellson* tape reviewed elsewhere in this department; both were recorded at the same 1983 performance in Switzerland. This particular tape offers six excellent tunes from Louie's own set with his band. The band itself seems about equally comprised of top American and European players, including such names as Randy and Michael Brecker, Lew Soloff, and

Howard Johnson as horn soloists, as well as Tim Landers (bass), Dean Brown (guitar), and Gil Goldstein (piano), joining Louie in the rhythm section.

The charts are tasty, and the soloists are excellent. The camera work is acceptable—although I did find the editing a bit jumpy at times, with some unnecessary cutting back and forth between Louie and the other players. Sound quality varies from moment to moment, which I found a bit difficult to understand. Generally speaking, however, the sound quality is good.

As you would expect, Louie is prominently featured throughout—especially on the first and last tunes. His extended solo on the final tune, "Explosion," involves Louie's impeccable chops on a large Pearl kit, and then an interesting switch over to a PTS kit (and back again), using a one-handed pattern played on a hand-held PTS head as the "bridge" between the two.

For big band fans, this tape will have appeal; for Bellson fans, it's a must-see. My only real criticism is not with the performance, but with the presentation of it by the video company. Out of the 55 minutes of the tape, fully six minutes and 20 seconds were "teasers" and commercial spots for other tapes. I realize that a new video company needs to promote its wares, but this seems a bit extreme. At the very least, these spots should have appeared at the *end* of the tape, rather than at the beginning.

—Rick Van Horn

COBHAM MEETS BELLSON**View Video****34 East 23rd Street****New York, NY 10010****Time: 36 minutes****Price: \$29.95 (VHS/Beta)**

Here's the video for all of you who want to see a couple of "masters" get out and play. *Cobham Meets Bellson* doesn't have much to offer musically, but from a standpoint of sheer drumming technique, it's pretty awesome. Basically, Louie and Billy show all of their best stuff, *competing* with each other; it's a lot of fun to watch!

This video is a live concert of Billy and Louie performing a piece that Louie wrote for two drummers and big band. (They recorded this piece on an album entitled *Matterhorn* back in 1979.) Actually, the band didn't need to show up. Louie and Billy "get through" the reading portions with the band, but those sections are only there to set up the drum solo sections. One of these sections has the drummers "trading fours," and then expanding on that into longer sections. Both drummers then

take extended solos. (Cobham's solo is quite long, but his technique is really on.) Billy shows us his power; Louie shows us his finesse.

This tape contains many camera angles to view exactly what is going on. Shots from above the drummers and from below, as well as just about every other angle, are used. The only problem with the tape is with the audio level: During particularly quiet solo sections, it's difficult to hear what's being played. Overall though, this video is a lot of fun for those of you who want to see two legendary technicians just "smokin'."

—William F. Miller

MEL LEWIS AND HIS BIG BAND

View Video

34 East 23rd St.

New York, NY 10010

Time: 38 minutes

Price: \$34.95 (VHS/Beta)

This performance was recorded at a live concert in Jerusalem in 1985, and gives a good overview of the range of styles that Mel Lewis and The Jazz Orchestra can handle. The tape begins with a traditional swing arrangement of the standard "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," played with the laid-back groove that characterizes this band. The next tune is "Ding Dong Ding," which represents the more modern side of the Lewis band. Soloists Billy Drewes, Dick Oatts, and Phil Markowitz are given plenty of blowing room, and Mel keeps things churning along behind them with a variety of drum and cymbal colors. From the modern sound of that chart, the band moves to its most traditional/commercial sound with the next two tunes, "I Get A Kick Over You" and "I Wanna Be Happy," which feature vocalist Lynn Roberts and evoke memories of the big bands of the '40s. The tape concludes with a spirited performance of "Little Pixie," a Thad Jones chart that dates back to the early days of the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Orchestra.

The sound is very good on this tape, and the photography is better than on most music videos I've seen. Ironically, Mel Lewis himself is one of the least photographed members of the band, and yet, in a way, that tends to reflect his function in this group. Mel has always preferred to support the band from underneath, rather than having his band provide a background for him. This attitude has probably kept Mel from being as well known to the general public as some of his flashier contemporaries. But musicians know who he is, as do listeners who appreciate solid swing blended with an unmistakable sense of style and color. —Rick Mattingly

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Readers' Platform continued from page 4

drumming on either of the Bangles albums. Whatever works for you—go with it. Maybe Mr. Judkins' mind isn't as open as he thought it was.

Frank Harden, Jr.

Denver, CO

In counterpoint to Brian Judkins' letter regarding "air drumming," that practice is and always has been an indispensable learning tool to me. As any dorm- or apartment-dweller can attest, it is not always convenient to "step behind the kit and work it out." Those among us with the good fortune to possess an electronic drumset have the clear advantage here. The merits of "air drumming" should not be discounted. You can use heavy sticks to build up the drumming muscles. Consider the fact that, within a stroke, you are not only accelerating the stick into motion, but

also decelerating and stopping that motion. In doing the latter, you are utilizing the energy—ordinarily absorbed by the impact surface—to train an opposing muscle group. Surely this additional training can be nothing but beneficial in the development of control, finesse, and greater speed in playing (due to the rebounds that occur on actual drums).

Mr. Judkins' apparent lack of open-mindedness is also evident in his comments regarding concentration. Drumming, in my opinion, is just as much an attitude as it is a science. A balance must be kept. Some of the best moments in drumming may not have been the results of pure concentration, but rather the product of acute creativity within an exploring mind.

Jeffrey Allen
San Luis Obispo, CA

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The snare drum is a beautiful instrument in the hands of a skilled player. It can provide the thrilling whisper of a closed roll or the heaviest backbeat. It can "bark" with powerful rimshots and "hum" with open double strokes. It can be loud, soft, powerful, subtle, sharp, or deep. In short, the snare drum has more variety, more sound possibilities, and more dynamic range than any other part of the drumset.

At times, the snare drum also seems to have a mind of its own. If you don't believe this, try to play a very soft buzz roll on your snare drum. You may have to adjust the snares to get the drum to cooperate. You may have to retune the head to make sure that it is evenly tensioned. Before you know it, you can spend half an hour before your buzz roll is where you want it.

The snare drum is also a stern taskmaster. For example, play some rapid paradiddles, with no accents, at a low volume level. If your snare drum is tuned at a medium tension—not too loose—it will seem to exaggerate any unevenness in your

paradiddles. The snare drum will make you listen. It's not like a tom-tom, which has no snares and a broader, more forgiving sound. The snare drum gives you back *exactly* what you play. If the snares are not too loose, the drum covers up nothing. You can sort of fake some things on the tom-toms, but not on the snare drum.

The next time you feel bored or tired of practicing, get out your snare drum. Put it on a stand that comes up high enough for you to stand up and play. That's right, *stand up* and play the snare drum. This not only separates the snare drum from the rest of the set, but it is a valuable method of practicing. I have a couple of very talented students in their teens—both extremely good drumset players. I asked each of them to practice the snare drum while standing. This loosened up their shoulders, improved their posture, and tended to free up their arm movements. Both of them remarked on how much it helped them.

When we sit at the drumset, most of us have a tendency to slump the shoulders forward. This is probably a way of balancing our bodies when we place our feet on the pedals. However, this slumping of the shoulders restricts arm movement, and can sometimes cause pain or discomfort in the shoulder area after playing awhile.

When you try the standing method of practice, play something with accents: paradiddles, open rolls—something that can be played fairly high off the head of the drum. Exaggerate the accent motion to lift the sticks a little higher than normal. You will discover a loosening up of the arms and shoulders. Thirty minutes of this can be helpful. Then sit down at the drumset, and you will most likely feel much freer in your arms and shoulders.

One of my students was unable to begin an open roll with his left hand. He always had to start with his right. It was simply something he had never practiced. I asked him to practice "Three Camps," a traditional rudimental solo comprised of open rolls and accents. He practiced "Three Camps" for two weeks, 30 or more minutes a day, while standing. He now has no trouble starting open rolls with his left hand.

I had assigned this lesson to several of my students. They all noticed a little soreness in their arms after a couple of days. But that quickly disappeared, and they were all very enthusiastic about their improvement. They could "feel" the difference. All of them are now playing in a

more relaxed way.

Here's an exercise for the snare drum for those of you who—for one reason or another—do not want to practice rudimental- or classical-type solos. Again, set up the snare drum so you can play it while standing. Now, see how many different sounds you can get out of the drum. You can play with the snares on or off. You can play high-pitched rimshots or low-pitched rimshots. You can play the "click" across the rim. You can find sounds in different areas of the drumhead. You can double up beats as flams or as compound strokes (hands exactly together). You can play with one hand on the rim and the other on the drumhead.

You will quickly discover any number of sounds on your own. You will also become more aware of your hands. Without foot pedals, toms, and cymbals, you will become more aware of each individual sound your hands create on a drum. For example, is your right (or left) hand consistently louder? If you play single strokes at a moderate tempo, are they even? Can you play them from soft to loud to soft again and keep the tempo consistent?

Please note that I am talking about sounds, control, relaxation, and movement. I am not talking about over-tense muscle groups hammering out rimshots or single strokes as fast as humanly possible. I am talking about a form of practice that can help you become more sensitive to how your hands and arms move. I am talking about focusing your attention on the snare drum for a short period of time to discover—or rediscover—the potential beauty of this instrument.

You may also discover, as I have, that virtually anything played on the snare drum can be applied to the drumset. A great many patterns can turn into interesting polyrhythms when played on multiple sound sources. A little experimentation will prove this out—and most likely be fun, as well.

The standing-up method of practice is most valuable on the snare drum. A practice pad used in this way can also be helpful, but there is no substitute for the sound of a well-tuned snare drum. So, if you need something new to practice, set up your snare drum. It will frustrate you, tease you, delight you, make you angry, surprise you, and test you. On the snare drum, "what you play is what you get." The snare drum will make you honest. When you think of it, what other drum can do all of that!

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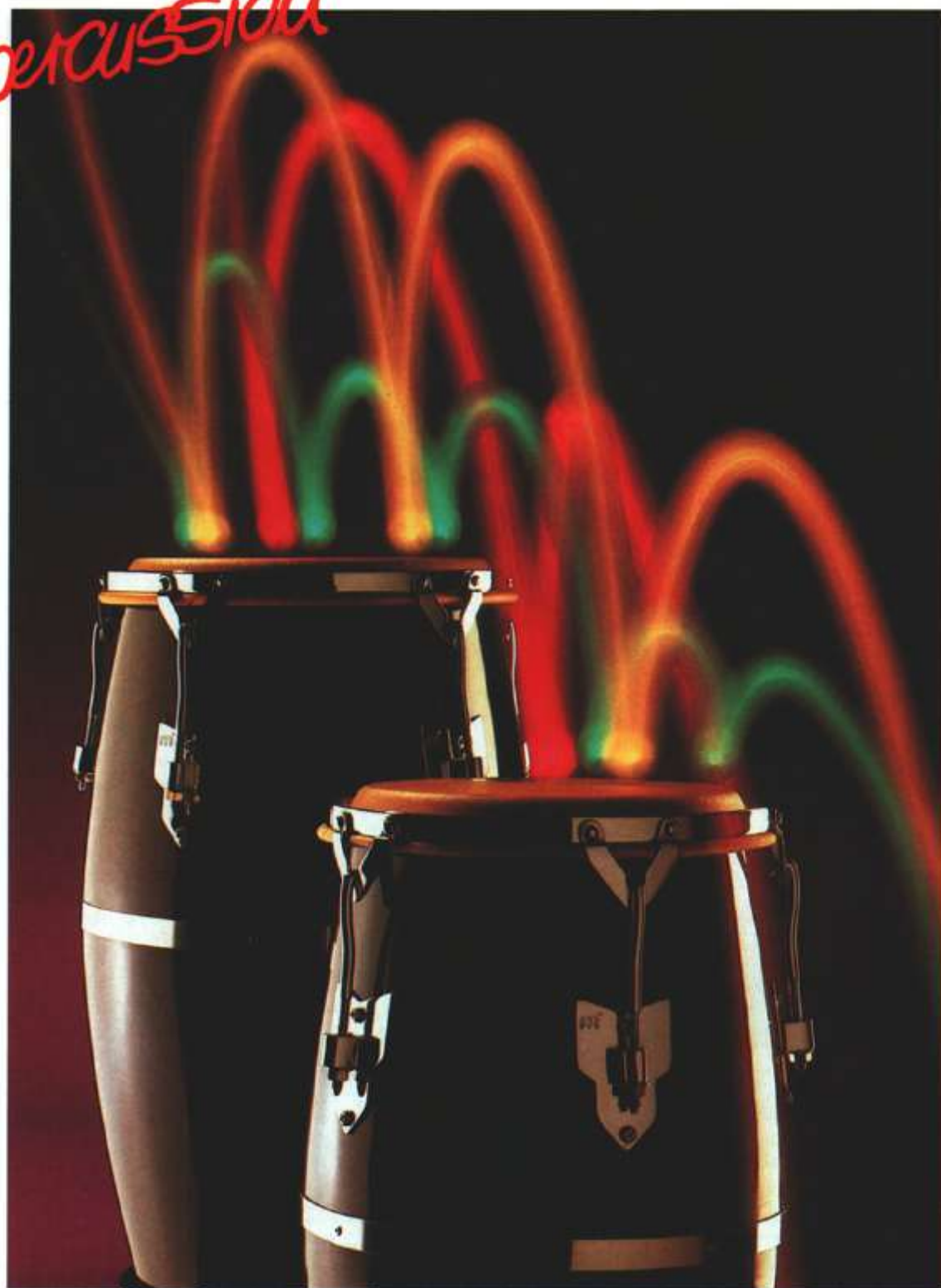
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by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

Kahler Human Clock



Those of you who have ever had to play in conjunction with a sequencer know that careful listening is needed to stay in sync with the machine. Kahler's *Human Clock* is a device that makes drum machines, sequencers, etc., follow the tempo of a live drummer, by converting live tempo to a MIDI-clock output. With the *Human Clock*, instead of the sequencer controlling you, you control it, via MIDI conversations between the *Clock* and the machine.

One way to use the unit is to place a mic' on your bass drum and connect it into the *Clock*. A MIDI cord connects from the *Clock* to the drum machine or sequencer. The *Human Clock* calculates your tempo by reading the "1" counts of the first and second measures you play on the drum. The third time you hit the bass drum, the sequencer will start up. From then on, every time the bass drum is hit, the tempo is recalculated. Your sequencer listens to you, and your tempo changes will affect the *Clock* tempo. You can speed up or slow down; it will follow you. The unit can even follow minute tempo changes or complicated drum patterns. Any instrument that puts out a rhythmic analog pulse will work with the *Human Clock*.

The unit is rack-mountable, and has eight controls. "Level" adjusts the input level, and has a corresponding flashing trigger LED. Care must be taken that only one drum triggers the unit, as false or multiple triggers will cause miscalculation of tempo. "Mask" blocks out extra input signal and allows you to set how long the *Clock* is "deaf" to more incoming trigger signal. "Sensitivity," in this case, controls the amount of tempo change passed from the *Clock* to your machine before it has to recalculate. "Feel" moves your sequenced material on top of or behind the beat. "Advance" gets rid of MIDI delay that is encountered with most drum machines or sequencers. "Smooth" controls how quickly the *Clock* will adjust to your changes in tempo, as well as setting a "window" for the amount of trigger signal accepted by the *Clock*.

In addition to these knob controls, there are two push buttons. "Reset" clears the *Clock* for setting a new measure length and new tempo calculation. "Restart" enables you to begin at the last tempo given to the *Clock*. The rear of the unit has a 5-pin MIDI out jack, footswitch jacks for remote operation of the "Reset" and

"Restart" functions, plus a Mode switch (which tells the *Clock* what kind of instrument it's listening to—either percussion, or sustained instruments like keyboards, guitar, bass, etc.). There are two 1/4" input jacks for mic's, trigger bugs, and so on. Since some songs don't have drum intros, or have intros with only one bass drum note per measure, you'd need a way to set tempo silently in live performance. One idea would be to use a silent electronic pad plugged into Input 2 for tapping the tempo setting, while your main sensor (drum mic', etc.) is in Input 1, feeding tempo information to the *Clock* once the song has begun.

But does it really work? I hooked the *Clock* up to a sequencer and triggered it with Simmons pads. After proper adjustment of the controls, I was able to take my playing beyond simple quarter notes or 8th notes, while the *Clock* "heard" me, and kept the sequenced material in time with what I was playing. At times, it even felt like I was playing with live musicians, because the sequencer was following me, not the reverse.

One thing to beware of is starting songs on say, the 16th note before "1." The *Clock* will read that note as the first note of your measure, and thus, all sequencer material will be one 16th note ahead. But there are creative ways to get around this.

In the studio, the *Human Clock* can sync drum machines and sequencers to existing tracks with no sync tone, or overdub machines to already recorded music, with no worry of tempo deviation between the machine and the music tracks. In fact, it could perhaps make sync tracks obsolete altogether!

Think how much easier Keith Moon's job would have been had he been equipped with the *Human Clock*, instead of having to follow the sequencer in "Baba O'Riley" through headphones blasting his ears off. Any drummer who has to play with sequenced music will benefit by using the *Human Clock*. Previously "robotic"-pulse music can be given a human feel, since your machines are working with you. A drummer's job is to lead the band, right? The *Human Clock* lets you be in control. Retail price is \$650.00.

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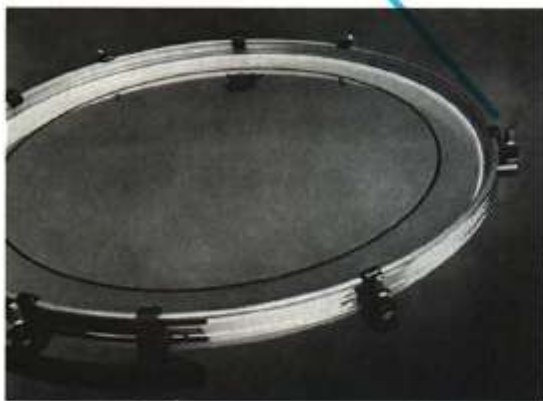
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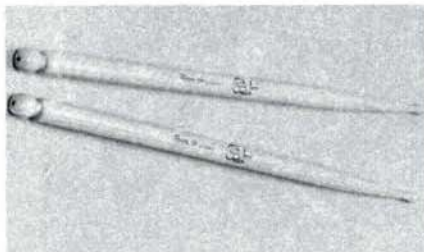
Different

Whether they play rock, jazz, C&W, or classical music; and whether they play a large kit, a small kit, or a marching snare drum, all drummers have one thing in common: Their connection to their drums is a pair of drumsticks. Naturally, since there *are* so many different types of drummers playing so many different types of music on so many different types of drums, you'd expect there to be a great many different types of drumsticks.

Surprisingly, this really isn't the case, if you examine drumstick design closely. What there is on the drumstick market today—generally speaking—is a wide variety of drumstick *sizes* and quite a few different types of *materials*. But the basic, fundamental design of all of those sticks is pretty much the same: a cylindrical rod of wood, tapering at one end, and then fitted with either a shaped wooden or attached nylon tip. Tip shapes vary and taper varies, but 99% of today's drumsticks fit this general description.

However, that remaining 1% offers some very interesting "digressions" from the norm. It seems that several large and small drumstick manufacturers have recently put their energies into some sticks that feature unique characteristics—unusual silhouettes, extremes of size, special performance adaptations, etc. Some are merely variations on the traditional theme; others are radically new designs. All of them make for interesting experimentation. In no particular order, here is my report on some of today's "different drumsticks."

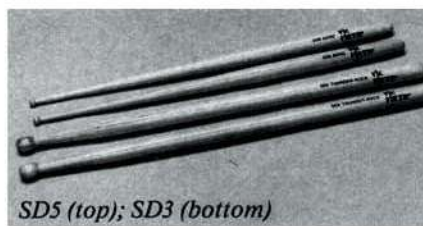
Regal Tip Carmine Appice Model



This stick, from Calato/Regal Tip, is perhaps the *least* "radical" of my test group, yet it offers perhaps the most useful adaptation of design (as compared to its "normal" counterpart in the Regal Tip line). The *Carmine Appice* model is nothing more than a standard Regal Tip 5A stick, with a small groove lathed into the stick about a half an inch back from the butt end. This creates a ball-shaped

"bead" on the butt end of the stick. "What for?" you ask. Anyone who has ever played a Regal Tip stick knows that the stick has a very distinct, gradual taper to a thin neck. This is the secret of the great sound that almost any Regal Tip model produces on a ride cymbal. It's most apparent in a 5A stick (which one cymbal manufacturer said could make "any cymbal sound great"). Unfortunately, the negative side to this feature is the fact that the stick can sometimes sound a bit thin or weak when played hard on a drum. There are just those times when you need a bit more "meat" in a stick in order to get the sound out of a drum. In those cases, a stick with a thicker neck and/or larger bead is desirable. But those sticks don't sound as good on cymbals. The *Carmine Appice* model offers the best of both worlds. When you want a delicate ride cymbal sound or moderate volume level on the drums, you use the nylon tip "front end" of the stick. When you need a bigger backbeat or a fatter tom sound, you reverse the stick and use the full-bodied butt-end tip. And there is a distinct difference in the feel of *this* stick when played butt-end as compared to a standard 5A used the same way. There is more bounce, more control—a greater feeling of using a "tipped" stick—even though the stick is, in fact, reversed in your hand. This may be the best double-duty stick I've ever used. It lists at \$7.30 per pair.

Vic Firth SD5 Echo



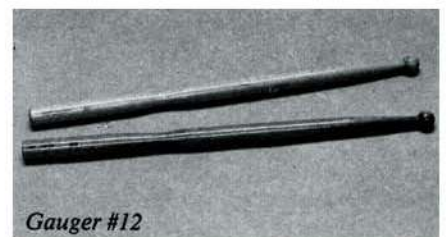
SD5 (top); SD3 (bottom)

Ever have a gig where you just absolutely *had* to play twice or three times softer than you normally would? And when that happens, does even a 5A stick seem too big for the job, while trying to use a 7A or 11A jazz stick feels like trying to play with a pencil in your hand? Then the Vic Firth *SD5 Echo* model might be the answer to your needs.

Vic designed this stick for classical applications, specifically for extremely low-volume snare drum parts such as the one written for "Scheherazade." But he has received favorable comments from

jazz players, who mention that it's a wonderfully comfortable stick for acoustic trio situations. I wanted to test the stick for general-purpose applications, and I, too, was pleasantly surprised by *the feel* of the stick. When you first look at the stick, you're almost afraid to pick it up, because it looks so delicate. But that's what makes it so useful for the situation I described above. The tips are spherical and tiny, the neck is quite thin, and the taper is extremely gradual and long. You could almost say that fully one-half of this stick's 15 1/2" length is *neck*. But the grip area has a diameter that is actually about that of a 5B stick. The butt end then tapers again, for balance. When you hold these sticks in your hands, you just *automatically* play gently; you can't help yourself, because you're so afraid they're going to snap in half at any second. And yet, the sound they produce—especially on cymbals—is wonderful! They don't sound thin or "wimpy," and they give a very nice rebound and feel. The large diameter of the grip area makes them especially appealing to me, since I absolutely *hate* the insecure feeling I get when trying to hold onto extremely thin sticks. This stick once again represents a compromise in design that serves a very useful purpose. One word of caution that Vic gave me when he sent me the sticks: "Rimshots? *Forget it!*" List price is \$7.20 per pair.

Vic First SD3 Thunder Rock And Tom Gauger #12



Gauger #12

Definitely not for the timid, these drumsticks are the "big guns" of my survey group. Actually, it's only the extreme size that sets Vic Firth's *SD3 Thunder Rock* model apart from the norm. At 16 3/4" long and 1 1/16" in diameter, these sticks are massive—yet not overly heavy. The tips are not only acorn-shaped, but they're the *size* of an acorn! The most surprising thing about these sticks to me, however, is that they do not sound "clunky" or "dull" on cymbals. They are *loud* to be sure, but with more definition and clarity than I've found with other large, wood-tipped sticks. I can

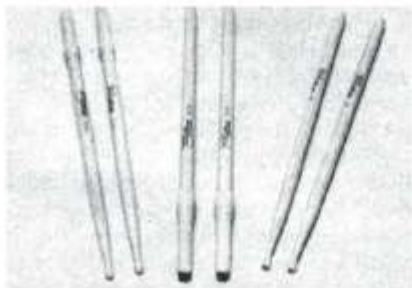
Drumsticks

by Rick Van Horn

heartily recommend these sticks to any drummer who needs volume with finesse (if that makes any sense). They're big, but they're eminently *playable*. They list at \$7.20 per pair.

Tom Gauger's *Model #12* is another stick designed primarily for classical applications—this time for high-volume concert work. It was one of Tom's first designs and came out of the need for a larger stick that would get more sound out of larger drums, such as field drums and toms. The unique feature of these sticks is the reduced shaft diameter about one-third of the way up from the butt end, which gives the sticks sort of an "hourglass" shape. Tom originally did this to give the "fulcrum" of the stick the feel of a smaller stick while maintaining the overall power of a big stick. As a side benefit, a sort of "security grip" area was created. (This is the exact opposite of the *Trueline Grip*. Here, the fingers close on a *smaller* area, while the rest of the hand is secured around the larger diameter of the stick.) The sticks are approximately 16 5/8" long, 1/6" in diameter, and feature a very large, spherical wooden tip. The taper of the neck is shorter than that of the Firth *SD3*, and consequently, the sound on a ride cymbal is quite a bit duller. The butt end of this stick is "squared off," creating a rather sharp edge. (But then, with a stick this heavy and a tip this big, who needs to play it butt-ended?) This is another stick for power players, and perhaps especially those with a stick slipping problem. It's just possible that the unusual stick silhouette might be an answer to that problem. List price is \$7.50 per pair.

Trueline



Trueline offers two variations on the standard drumstick design. The most unusual is what the company calls its *Trueline Grip*, which is available on several models within its otherwise standard line. The *Trueline Grip* is a contoured, enlarged portion of the stick shaped onto the rear quar-

ter. It is designed to fit into the palm of the hand or just behind the fingers (depending on how you hold your sticks), and to provide surer grip and better balance.

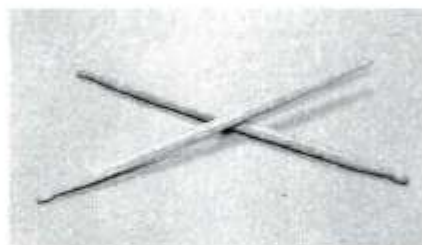
I'd have to give a "yes and no" response on these sticks. When played in a matched grip, the fattened area of the *5A* model certainly does provide a sure grip point. The fact that the sticks are a bit thinner in diameter than the *5A*s I am used to playing (while being just a bit heavier in the front due to a slightly thicker neck) makes that grip important, as the sticks tend to "throw forward" on me a bit. I find this characteristic beneficial when playing heavy tom fills, since there is a "whiplash" effect that really brings the tip of the stick down with power. (In this way, a fairly small stick could produce a substantial amount of sound.) However, I don't like this feeling at all when playing a ride cymbal, because the stick seems to drive the sound *into* the cymbal, instead of rebounding quickly and pulling the sound *out*. (Trueline offers a double-butt-ended stick with the *Trueline Grip* that might be very useful for power players with small hands. It's not a "fat" stick, but it does produce a big drum sound.)

When playing with traditional grip, I find the fattened area of the stick to be awkward in my left hand. The problem isn't so much the *Trueline Grip* itself, as *where* it is placed on the stick. It isn't in the right place for correct stick balance, as far as I am concerned. With a normal stick, a drummer can place the stick in his or her hand at any point along the stick's length in order to achieve personal comfort and preferred balance. This isn't possible with the *Trueline Grip*. You either get used to the stick, or you don't. In my case, when it comes to traditional grip, I haven't.

Trueline also offers a tip variation on *all* its tipped models: the nylon wood (*NW*) tip. This is a compromise between the sound and feel of nylon and wood tips that is achieved by a surprisingly simple technique: shaving about 1/8" of the tip off of a nylon-tipped stick. This creates a "ball-shaped" nylon tip with a flattened front, revealing a small circle of the wood stick core. This tip is a bit duller on cymbals than a standard nylon tip—certainly closer to a wood-tipped sound—and seems to produce a trifle more solid sound on drumheads. Obviously, the durability of the tip should be superior to wood in terms of not chipping. I find this to be quite a useful stick when I need just a trifle more volume

from my overall kit—say in a third-set situation when the band is smokin' a bit. (Let me stress that I'm referring to Trueline's *standard 5A*—not the *Trueline Grip* model—with the *NW* tip.) Trueline sticks list at \$7.25 for wood tips and \$7.40 for nylon or *NW* tips.

Pro-Mark Quatro And 769 Gerry Brown Model



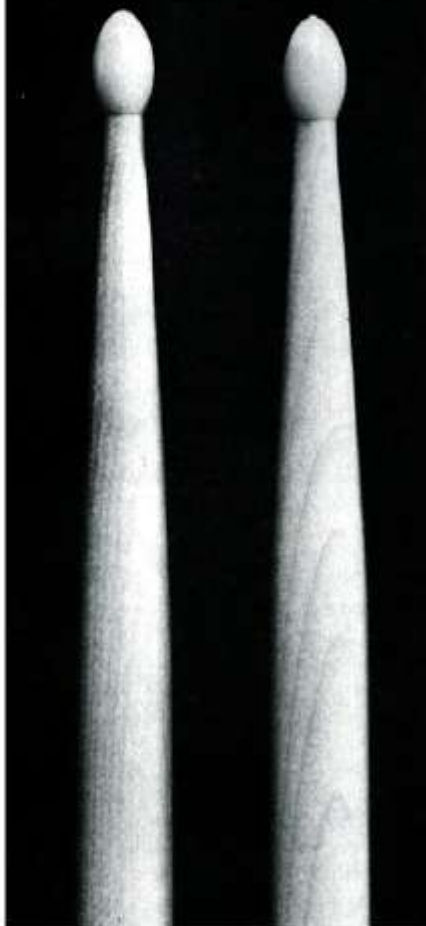
Pro-Mark is noted for having a large variety of stick sizes, shapes, materials, and tip designs. It's a company not afraid to experiment and not reluctant to offer a stick to meet the needs of a limited market. But even with that philosophy, a drumstick company would have to be pretty brave to offer the market a *square* drumstick. But that's just what Pro-Mark has done with its new *Quatro* stick. Offered in *5A* and *5B* wood-tip hickory, these sticks are certainly among the most radical of this survey. And although at first they may appear as a humorous or novelty item, there is some serious thought behind the design.

I once again tried a *5A* model for my test, and the first thing I have to say is these sticks are quite heavy. This is because of the amount of extra wood that is on a square shaft as opposed to a cylindrical one. In other words, the "corners" of the square shaft are built *up* from a standard *5A* diameter, rather than cut *down* from one. This may or may not be a drawback; some people like a heavy stick in a given size. I find it a bit of a problem when trying to do standard playing.

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However, where this added weight proves beneficial—and in fact the real point at which these sticks shine—is when playing cross-stick backbeats. This is, of course, a mainstay of C&W music, but I also use it a lot on ballads in clubs. With so much stick on the drum rim (a 9/16" wide flat edge as opposed to a very minute point on a cylindrical stick), the sound is very strong and cuts through an amplified band extremely well.

Herb Brochstein, President of Pro-Mark, also feels that the square sticks will have an educational use. They should help instructors teach proper wrist positioning and finger control, since a student will virtually *have* to hold the sticks in the proper fashion in order to hold them *at all*. I will admit that, as with the *Trueline Grip* sticks, these sticks seem to lend themselves to matched-grip playing, since the "corners" of the sticks are a bit uncomfortable in a traditional left-hand grip. This isn't an all-purpose stick, but it definitely is a legitimate and useful special-purpose stick. I plan to keep a pair in my stick bag for use in ballads, reggae, and other tunes where a rim click is needed. The sticks list at \$7.25 per pair.

The 769 *Gerry Brown* stick was designed for players like Gerry who incorporate stick twirling into their act. Quite simply, it's a double-tipped oak stick, 19/32" in diameter and 16 1/2" long (about the size of a 5B), with extremely long wood tips. The stick is perfectly balanced for twirling, since each end is the same. It's also great for back-sticking, since there are two tips. Gerry uses the stick in another interesting way: He spans the stick across a hi-hat or a ride cymbal, and plays 16th-note ride patterns by rocking the stick back and forth with his fingers, striking the cymbal with each end of the stick. It looks *and sounds* great! The 769 is another special-purpose stick, but if you do incorporate stick acrobatics into your playing, you certainly

might want to check it out. List price is \$7.95.

Pulse Crescent J



Unquestionably the most radical of all the unusual stick designs in this survey, *Pulse Crescent J* sticks are the result of a significant period of acoustic research, engineering, trial-and-error, and open-minded thinking on the part of their designer, Frank Elliott, President of Percussion Products. You may have seen the ads for the *Crescent J* stick (so named because of the crescent-shaped profile of the unusual tip). Until you've had a pair in your hands, there is just no way of understanding all the elements that Frank combined to create his unique stick. There are so many things that are different about the stick that it's hard to know where to begin to describe it here.

First, there is only one size stick, but it comes in three wood types and, consequently, three weights. (Basswood is light, birch is medium, and red oak is heavy.) The sticks are 13/16" in diameter, which is quite "fat" when compared to the relatively short length of 15 1/4". They have virtually *no* taper, remaining at their full diameter to a point only about 2" from the tip end of the stick. Then they drop quickly to the neck of about 1/16" thickness, from which they flare again to form the "crescent" tip (which might well be likened to the top of an oversized golf tee.)

In the following letter, which I received from Frank Elliott, Frank explains what he feels are some of the unique playing and "feel" characteristics of the sticks. "They do take a little getting used to, but one of the first things most drummers notice is how much less vibration they feel being transmitted back from the drumhead. I liken it to the effect of finding the 'sweet spot' when hitting a ball with a bat or golf club." I certainly found this to be true. There is very little shock or sense of impact when hitting drums or cymbals, simply because there is so much "heft" to the stick. This allows for playing with tremendous power, but also presents the danger of breaking cymbals or heads simply because one cannot really judge the force with which one is striking them.

Frank went on to say, "Because a vibrating membrane 'breaks up' into circular (in addition to 'square') segments, the crescent-shaped impact areas these sticks produce can lie along a concentric

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circle. Certain locations between the center and edge of the drumhead are normally nodes (or 'nulls') after the stick is removed and the head is vibrating. This is a further advantage of the Pulse *Crescents*, since when setting a membrane in motion at a node, the drumhead is theoretically less likely to rebound past its null point, lessening head contact time. One thing's certain: What I call the slap-effect, caused by contact that lies along the longitude of the stick handle, is minimized in my design. This is very important to the highly touted comfort claims I make about these sticks. And the fact that the head of the stick is the same diameter as the handle makes rimshots both easier in practice and less cerebral to accomplish when moving between drumhead center and edge. It also makes cymbal playing less pingy, with the suitable weight sticks [basswood sticks are *not* recommended for use on cymbals since they are less durable and might chip with impact], especially on the cup of the cymbal. I'm hoping that this will promote a tendency toward fewer cracked cymbals, because with these sticks, there is less need to use the shoulder of the sticks on the cymbal bells."

My comments regarding the use of the sticks on heads and cymbals are as follows: The mass of the stick, coupled with the specialized head shape, do, indeed, produce a tremendously powerful, full-sounding drum sound, even at moderate impact. That is, a wider range of frequencies—perhaps a greater amount of the drum's capacity to produce sound—is produced by the Pulse stick versus a traditional-style stick. In situations where this full-bodied sound is desirable, this is a benefit. However, I find it almost impossible to play anything subtle with the sticks. The size and shape of the sticks just don't seem to lend themselves to delicate playing, no matter what grip or technique I employ. (And let me add that the large diameter of the stick makes a traditional left-hand grip almost impossible for me.)

Even when using the recommended birch model, I simply cannot accept the sound of the *Crescent J* stick on a ride cymbal. Mr. Elliott is certainly right when he says the head shape makes a cymbal sound less "pingy." As a matter of fact, the cymbal sound is extremely dull and unpleasant, no matter how hard or soft the cymbal is struck. There is just too much wood and weight behind the stick strike on the cymbal to allow the cymbal to respond to my liking.

A cautionary word is provided by the manufacturer in regard to the unusual heads of the *Crescent J* sticks. "If the stick is dropped at just the wrong angle onto a hard surface, the heads can crack, and that is, admittedly, a drawback to drummers who lose their grip (although I suggest that the *Crescents* are easier to hang onto than other sticks). This is especially true of the lighter weight sticks, but again, they are

intended more for concert (not rock 'n' roll) playing anyway. We are currently developing a nylon-headed stick to be put on the market next year. The nylon heads will probably be removable."

My overall impression of the *Crescent J* sticks is that they would be tremendously effective as concert or field sticks, where the maximum output of a single drum is desired. They might even work as power rock sticks, if it weren't for that negative feature of the poor ride cymbal sound. Most hard rockers work with heavy crashes, and these sticks would certainly produce a *heavy* crash sound. But the tip might be too vulnerable to breakage on hard rock rides and hi-hats, and even the bell of a rock ride might not sound particu-

larly good when struck with these sticks. The power is definitely there, but I can't honestly say I think this is a general-purpose drumset stick. Remember, however, that this is one man's opinion, based on my own hand size, sense of balance, taste in drum and cymbal sounds, etc. With these sticks, as with any that I've covered in this article, the final test is up to you. The sticks list at \$11.95 per pair.

If any of the sticks covered here interest you, it might be worth your while to obtain a pair to try for yourself. None are so expensive that a single pair would be cost-prohibitive. If you have an adventurous soul, there are a heck of a lot of worse things you could spend your money on than a pair of "different drumsticks." **AM**

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YAMAHA BESTOWS MUSIC AWARDS ON INDUSTRY LEADERS

Yamaha International Corporation honored 15 music industry artists, producers, and a university during the company's third edition of the Yamaha Music Awards ceremony, held recently in Anaheim, California. More than 1,000 Yamaha dealers, invited guests, and news media attended the event, which included a special song and dance tribute of Yamaha's centennial celebration.

The awards were presented on the basis of the recipients'

contributions to the worldwide popularization of music, and for their inspiration to, and motivation of, young, aspiring musicians. Recipients included Dick Clark, Chuck Berry, Leonard Bernstein, Elton John, Brian Wilson, Little Richard, Chet Atkins, Stevie Wonder, James Taylor, John Denver, Loretta Lynn, Dave Grusin, Steve Gadd, producer George Martin, and the North Texas State University School of Music.

HEALTH CARE CENTER FOR PERFORMERS OPENS IN HOUSTON

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston has recently opened a new clinic for the treatment of performing artists, in conjunction with Hermann Hospital, also in Houston. The clinic is modeled after a similar medical treatment facility in Cleveland. After an initial triage screening by the clinic staff, the patient is referred to the appropriate specialist on the Hermann Hospital staff for more testing and treatment if necessary.

Dr. Alan Lockwood of the U. of T. Medical School stated, "Artists have been known to

seek medical attention from dozens of physicians before finding the appropriate type of help from a performing artists clinic. I think the reason for this failure is due to a lack of understanding of the extraordinarily high level at which musicians must perform in order to do their work satisfactorily. It's like any other area of medicine. Early diagnosis and treatment lead to the best outcome." For further information, contact the Public Affairs Office of the U. of T. Health Science Center, Houston, at (713) 792-4266.

DICIOCIO, DeROSA DIRECT MCDONALD'S JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Justin DiCiocio, nationally known jazz musician, educator, and director of the Jazz Studies and Percussion Studies programs at New York's LaGuardia High School of the Arts, will once again direct the Tri-state McDonald's High School Jazz Ensemble, which is opening its ninth season. The assistant director is Richard DeRosa, a noted percussionist and instructor of jazz improvisation and percussion at the Manhattan School of Music and at Princeton University.

Chosen through auditions by a panel of professional jazz artists and educators, the Ensemble is comprised of 20 high school students who have dem-

onstrated excellence on drums, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, guitar, and bass. During the past eight years, the band has performed over 150 concerts throughout the New York metropolitan area, playing both standard swing and modern big band arrangements. The program has offered youngsters the opportunity to perform with many jazz greats, such as Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton, Buddy Rich, Wynton Marsalis, and the Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller orchestras at prestigious events and houses such as the Kool Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, and Lincoln Center.

ERSKINE TO TEACH GROVE SCHOOL MASTER CLASS

Full-time percussion students at the Grove School of Music who enroll by the July 6, 1987 semester will be the first to benefit from two quarters of a new "master class series," at no additional tuition costs. The first of these classes will be conducted by Peter Erskine. The introduction of the series, effective with the July start, was announced by drummer Peter Donald, head of the Percussion Department at the Grove

School. Erskine will conduct classes in the Fall quarter of the full-time program, which begins in July. Drumset is the first major emphasis, according to Donald. Related areas of percussion will be highlighted in future classes, including mallets, Latin percussion, and electronics. For further information, contact the Grove School of Music, 12754 Ventura Boulevard, Studio City, California 91604.

MEINL AND D'ADDARIO JOIN FORCES

J. D'Addario & Co., Inc. recently announced that it has entered into an exclusive distribution agreement with Roland Meinl Musikinstrumentes of West Germany for the distribution of Meinl cymbals in the United States. D'Addario, best known for the manufacturing of strings, will be responsible for the marketing, sales, and distribution of Meinl's lines, including *Laser*, *Raker*, *Profile*, and *Dragon*. An extensive

advertising and promotional campaign to consumers will begin shortly.

Meinl West Germany will shortly name its own representative in the U.S. Working in association with D'Addario as sole Meinl distributor, the new Meinl representative will be responsible for the coordination of the distribution program, as well as for special promotions, clinics, and direct customer service.

IN MEMORIAM—CHARLIE TAPPAN

Charlie Tappan, who started his teaching career in 1946 in a studio located on West 46th Street in New York City, passed away in February of this year. Over the many years until his retirement in 1986, his fame as a teacher who turned out great players spread throughout the country by means of the greatest advertising media of all: "word of mouth."

There was another side of Charlie that was known only to the drummers who frequented the two music stores where he worked and taught during his 40-year career. When drummers such as Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, Sonny Igoe, etc., would come into the New York area, they would drop their drum gear on Charlie and tell him to "check everything out and put everything in working condition." For Charlie, this request was a labor of love,

for his life was not just devoted to teaching, but to every aspect of drums and drumming.

Charlie's care in repairing drums, and in selecting cymbals and accessories was known and appreciated by all who had need of his expertise. His creative ability in building drum parts that were not manufactured by drum companies—but were needed by demanding drummers for that "special" height, angle, or size—kept Charlie in perpetual motion between his teaching and his drum repair work.

Charlie will be missed by his students, by the legion of drummers he has helped and advised, and, last but not least, by the Lou Rose Music Store in Edison, New Jersey, where Charlie had his last studio and was in charge of the drum department.

—Henry Adler



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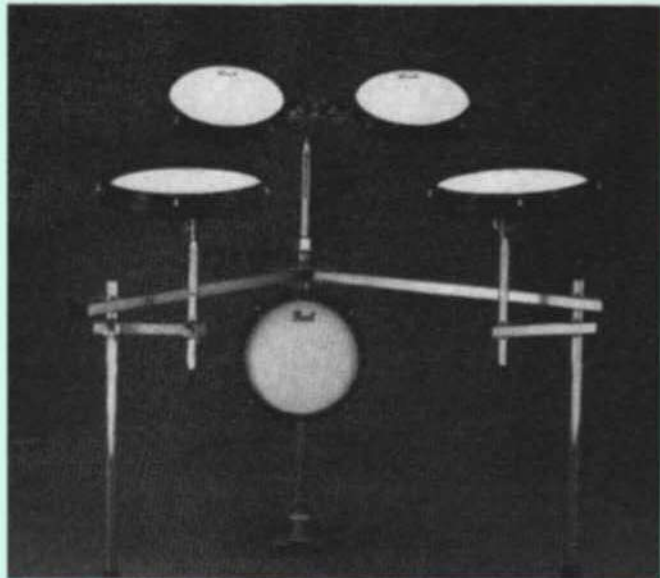
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SONOR

NEW PEARL PRODUCTS



The addition of new *Hi-Tension* lugs, a deep brass *Free Floating System* snare drum, and Pearl's chain-drive foot pedal highlights changes in Pearl International's professional drum series for 1987. The *P-880* foot pedal and Pearl's 6 1/2X14 *Free Floating System* snare drum are now standard for all kits in the maple-shell *Custom* series and the birch-shell *Studio* series.

In addition to the newly designed lugs, Pearl's 1987 professional series is featuring several new finishes. Stainless Steel and Ferrari Red are new covered finishes, while new lacquer finishes include Coral Red, Arctic White, and the grain-

exposed Sequoia Red. Nylon bushings have been added to the bass drum and tom-tom brackets to prevent damage to the hardware and also to prevent rattles that could be picked up by miking.

Pearl has also announced the introduction of the *TK-5*, a new five-piece drum practice-pad set, designed on a rack-mounting system. The kit features tunable pads with rims, and the rack system facilitates convenient setup and breakdown, as well as compact storage. For further information on any Pearl product, contact Pearl International, Inc., P.O. Box 111240, Nashville, TN 37222-1240, or call (615) 833-4477.

RHYTHM MACHINE SOFTWARE

The *Rhythm Machine* by Gateway is a software product that allows you and a computer to generate rhythmic structures and patterns. It is not a sequencer; it is a rhythm program that creates rhythmic patterns resulting from your input of rhythm generators. The *Rhythm Machine* contains the MIDI code necessary to output the rhythms to a MIDI drum machine or keyboard, and you can assign sounds to the patterns. Moreover, the *Rhythm Machine* prints on screen the rhythmic patterns with the information you used to gener-

ate them. You can save, either to a printer or on a disk, the patterns you develop. The program can also "rectify" patterns. That is, if a generated pattern is "odd," you can specify "evenness" and vice versa. The program is available on a floppy disk, for an IBM-PC with a Roland *MPU-401* with an MIF-IPC interface card and a MIDI drum machine. An instructional manual is also supplied. For further information, contact Gateway, Allen C. Conti, 1700 Cleveland Ave., San Jose, CA 95126, (408) 286-5490.

GUNDRUMS HAND-HELD MIDI CONTROLLER

Gundrums is an innovative and totally portable MIDI controller that provides the rudimental triggering. Designed by a professional drummer for drummers, Gundrums feels, shakes, and drums like drumsticks, emulating natural drumstick movements. Unlike other controllers, the two hand-held devices can produce double beats, allowing complex drum rudiments such as paradiddles, five-stroke rolls, and others—at high speed.

Compact in size and weight, Gundrums fits into the palm of each hand and is connected by cords, passed easily through

clothing, to a belt-pack micro-processor (1 1/2 x 2 1/2 x 5 inches, weighing six ounces). This belt-pack can be connected to up to eight different drum machines, using detachable cords. All cords have the highest industry standard connectors for dependability. Gundrums can be used in conjunction with its own foot-controlled, velocity-sensitive MIDI bass drum beater and hi-hat foot pedal to provide full trap set operation. For more detailed specifications and other information, contact P.K.I. Gundrums, 258 N. 4th Street, Grover City, CA 93433, (805)481-2181.

SHURE SM15 HEAD-WORN CONDENSER MIC'



Shure Brothers, Inc. has unveiled the Model *SM15* Head-Worn Condenser Microphone. According to the company, the *SM15* is the first such mic' design to offer both hands-free convenience and performance characteristics similar to those of a hand-held mic'. Shure developed a completely new unidirectional electret condenser cartridge design for the *SM15*. It features a smooth, natural-voice frequency response (50 to 15,000 Hz) specially tailored to produce a fuller overall sound with the "fat" low-end response associated with Shure's vocal microphones. The unit also boasts an extremely high sound pressure level capacity (141dB).

The *SM15* features a newly designed double-braced head-

band with special grip pads that allow the user to twist and turn without fear of losing his or her microphone. Lightweight construction minimizes fatigue, even after long periods of use, and a patented, fully adjustable boom pivot locks in for precise placement of the *SM15* mic' on either the left or right side of the head.

The *SM15's* preamplifier is constructed of high-impact *Armo-Dur*, making it compact, lightweight, and rugged. It can easily be clipped to a belt or waistband or slipped into a pocket, and is powered by either a 9-volt battery or by phantom power. For further information, contact Shure Customer Services, 222 Hartrey Avenue, Evanston, IL 60202-3696, or call (312) 866-2553.

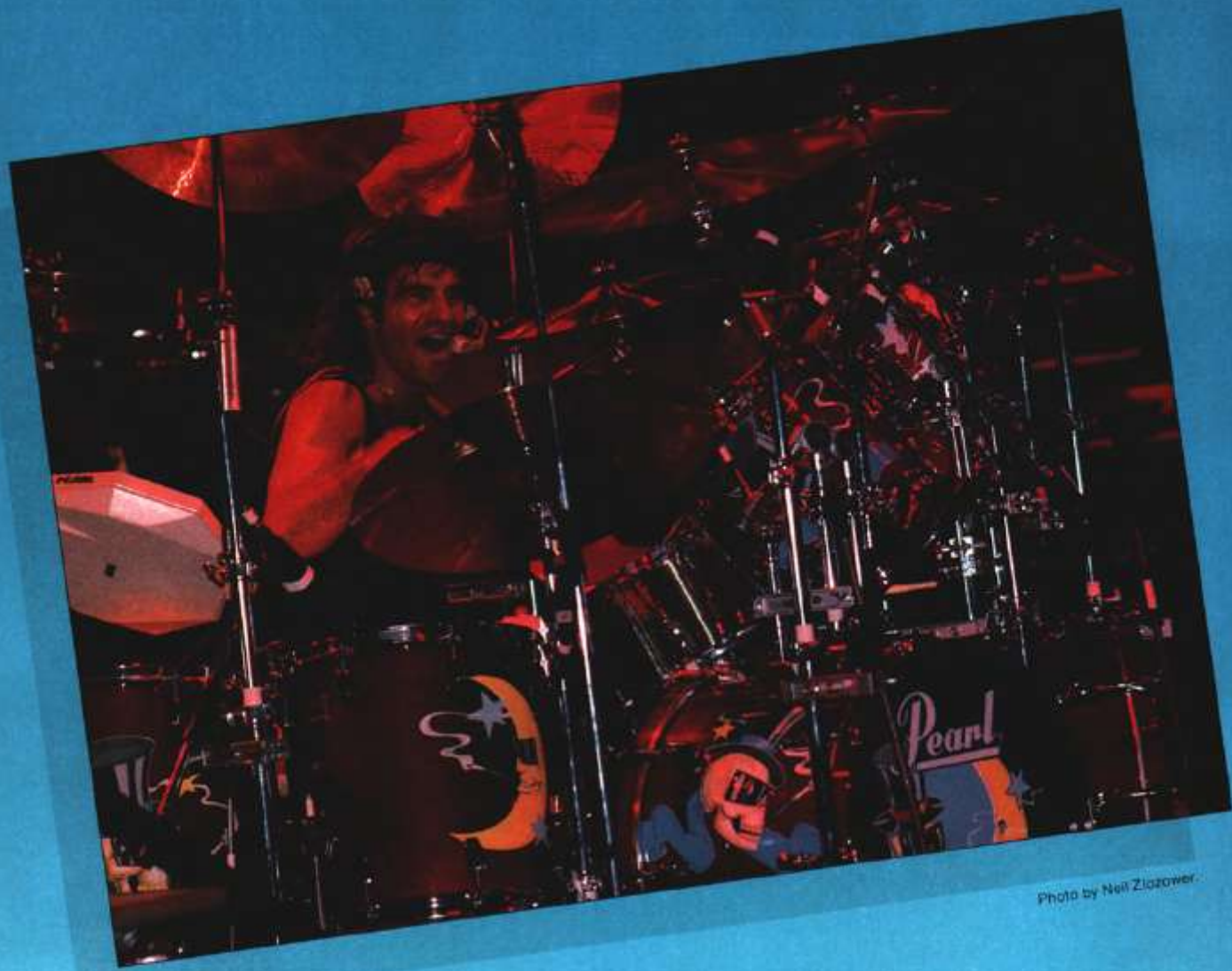


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YAMAHA RX5 DIGITAL RHYTHM PROGRAMMER



The RX5 Digital Rhythm Programmer from Yamaha allows drum programmers to create their own complete percussion ensembles by choosing up to 24 of the unit's 64 sounds. Each sound may be edited for tuning, envelope, gate time, voice level, pitch bend, loop, damp, or reverse to give a level of realism unique among rhythm programmers. In addition, each individual drum stroke can also be edited for pitch, level, attack, decay, and reverse. The 64 voices initially available include standard drum and cymbal sounds, standard and Latin percussion sounds, DX voices (including orchestra, marimba, and clavinet), and

three human voices. Voices may be accessed from internal RAM and ROM and the Waveform Data Cartridge. You can also assign a single voice to 12 keys to create a pitched drum keyboard.

The expanded internal memory holds three percussion sets of 24 rhythm voices each, 100 patterns, 20 songs, and three song chains. Songs and chains can also be named. This data can also be stored in a variety of ways. For other functions, specifications, and details, contact Yamaha International Corporation, Digital Musical Instrument Division, P.O. Box 6600, Buena Park, CA 90622.

COMPO DRUMHEADS

Kaman Music Corporation recently concluded an exclusive U.S. distribution agreement for Compo drumheads. These heads are an innovative series of synthetic drumheads from Asahi Chemical Company of Tokyo, Japan—one of the world's leading chemical companies. The heads are the result of 10 years of extensive research and development, and have been warmly received by percussionists throughout Europe and the Far East. The different combinations of technologically advanced materials and processes used in manufacturing the heads have resulted in drumheads that can be three to eight times more durable than conventional plastic or Mylar drumheads, according to the manufacturer. Because of the materials used, Compo heads can be played aggres-

sively without stretching and will retain tuning accuracy. World-renowned drummer Tony Williams is endorsing the new heads.

Compo heads are offered in three series: *N* for natural sound, *S* for a controlled, studio-type sound, and *C* for a bright attack sound. A full line of bongo, conga, timpani, and banjo heads is also being offered.

A spokesman for Kaman Music recently stated, "Kaman's commitment to CB700 total percussion and our extensive national sales force capabilities, combined with Compo's commitment to quality and technological innovations, forms a partnership that is sure to be successful." For further information, contact Kaman Music Corporation, P.O. Box 507, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

SATURN DRUMS

Saturn Drums builds custom drums. The shell of a Saturn drum is unique: There are no plies, as in a conventional shell, but you can get whatever thickness of shell you desire. There are no holes through the shell to inhibit the sound, yet you will be able to mount your custom-made toms to your own hardware.

According to a spokesman

for the company, "The whole concept of the Saturn Drums design is new and unique. They must be seen and heard. They are not for everyone: players only, please. Also, they won't be inexpensive. But you will enjoy playing them." For more information, contact Saturn Drums, X-IT Corp., 1065 Industrial Highway, Southampton, PA 18966.

NEW BEATO PRODUCTS



Beato Musical Products has recently announced the introduction of several new products in its line. Included are the new Beato Hardware Bag, Beato American Hickory Drumsticks, and Cana-Sonic *Power Series* drumheads.

Beato Hardware Bags are 37 inches in length, and are designed to carry hardware and accessories. The bags are made of *Tolex* inside and out, making them rip-proof, waterproof, flame resistant, and durable. Bags feature half an inch of padding to protect the contents, along with metal feet on the bottoms, double nylon zippers, and a large pocket for carrying accessories. They are available in black with red handles.

Beato's American Hickory drumsticks join the company's current line of Canadian Maple sticks, and are similar in design,

with "grooved" handles to improve grip. All sticks are individually rolled to eliminate warpage and are pitch-paired for balance. Sticks are available in wood or nylon tip models in nine different sizes.

Cana-Sonic *Power Series* heads represent the culmination of years of research, development, and testing. This head has all the basic features of other Cana-Sonic heads, such as durability, resistance to denting, ability to maintain tension, etc., and is made of solid one-piece fiberglass and mylar construction. According to creator Andy Criscuolo, "Now we know that we have the best-constructed drumhead around, with the most explosive sound, either studio or live." For further information on any Beato product, contact the company at P.O. Box 725, Wilmington, CA 90748, (213)532-2671. 

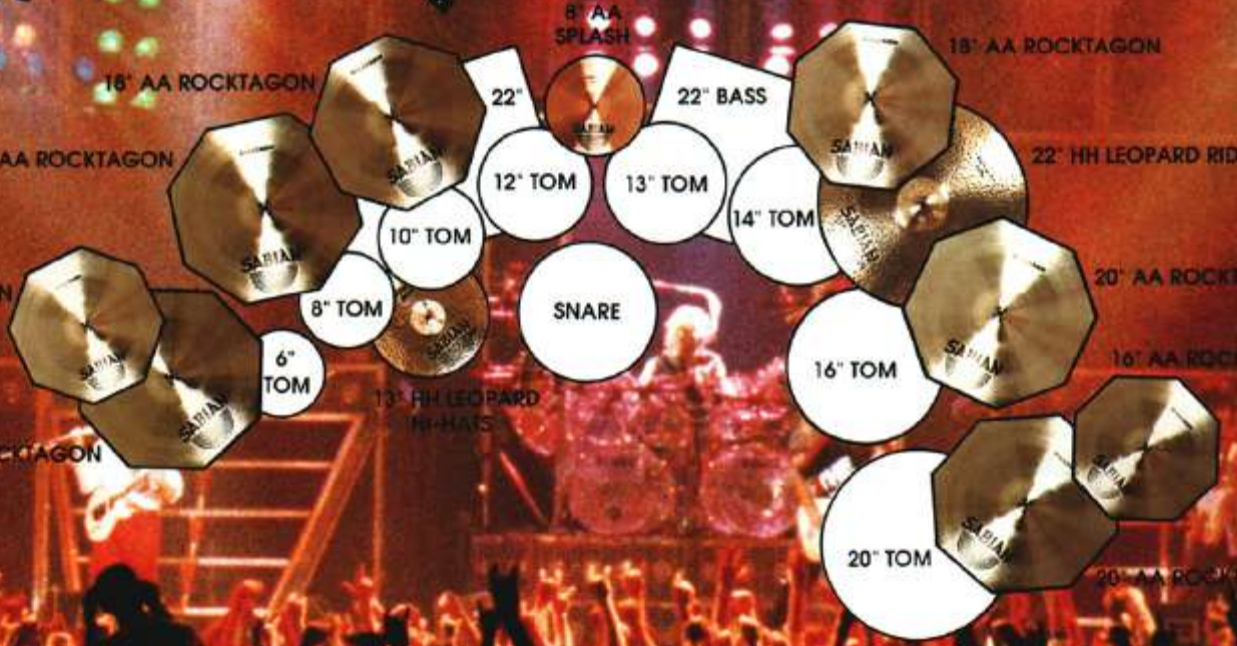
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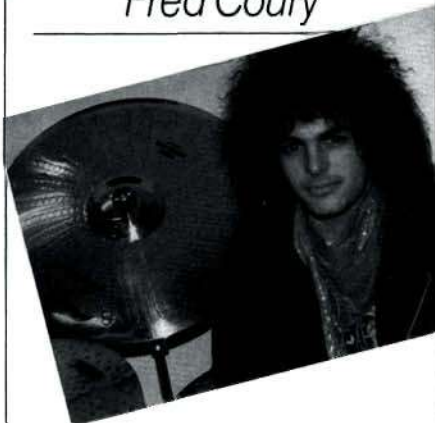
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Profiles in Percussion

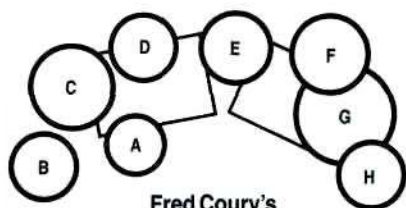
Fred Coury



Fred Coury is responsible for the powerful drumming behind the new heavy rock sensation "Cinderella." Described as the ultimate in "all-American good time party rock," Cinderella's music is propelled by Fred's driving backbeat.

He was born in upstate New York, and by the age of 21 had already worked with Keel and Ozzy Osbourne before joining Cinderella in early 1986.

Fred loves the sound of Zildjian platinum cymbals. "I tried every cymbal and nothing comes close to the durability and sound of Zildjians... why bother with anything but the best?"



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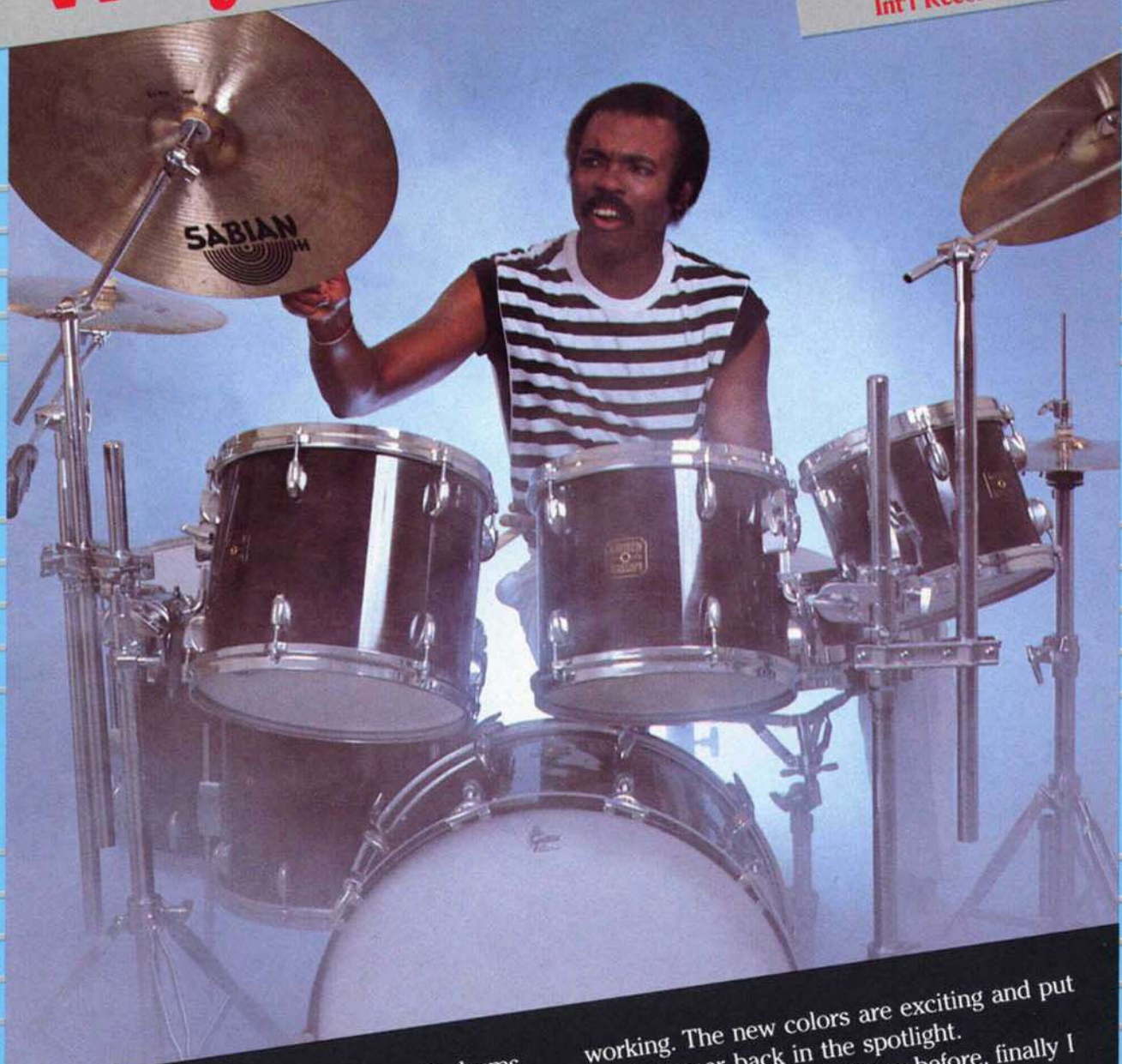
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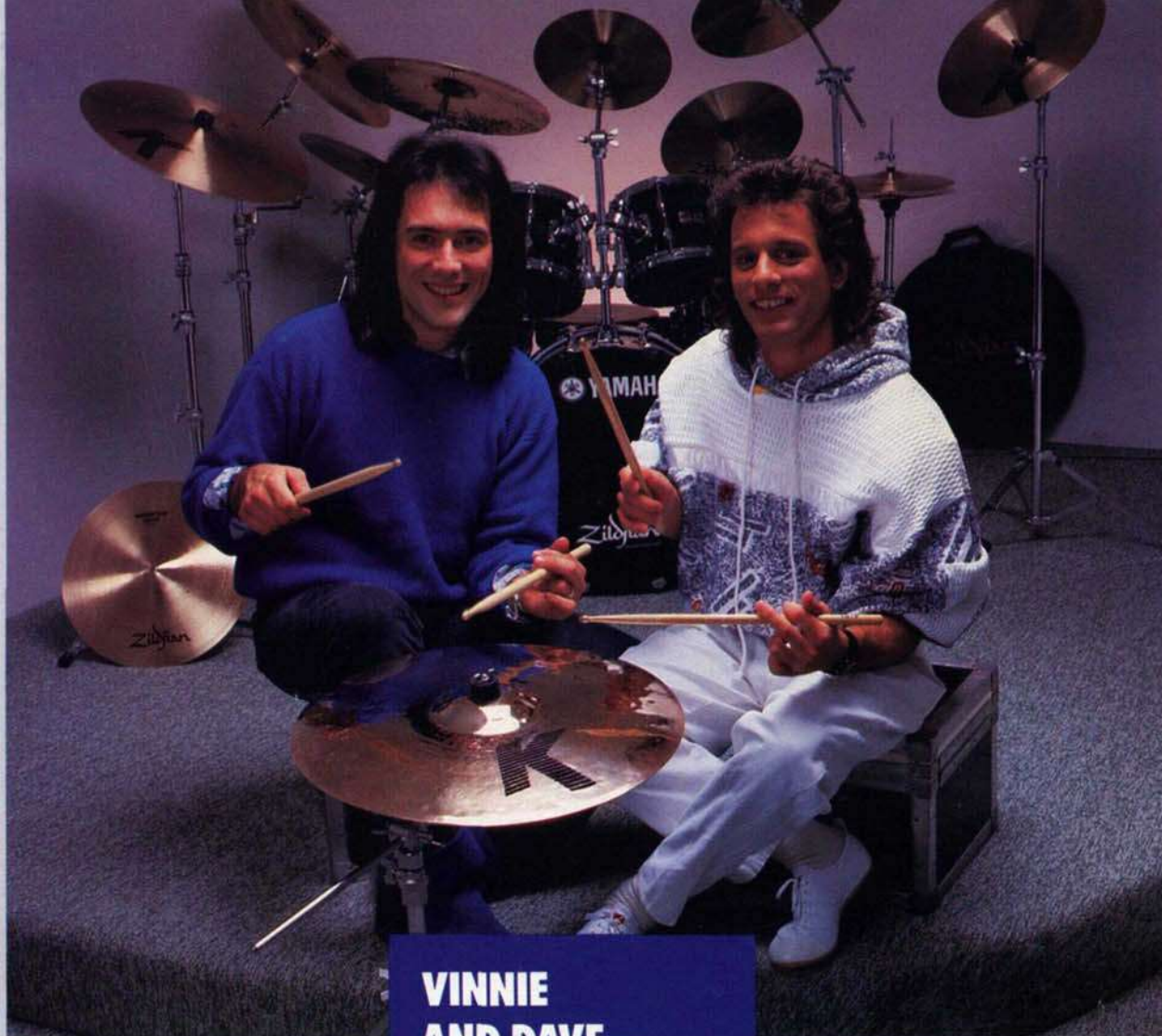
While I know Gretsch shells have always been the finest sounding, the natural wood stain finish is a whole other dimension to instrument wood-

working. The new colors are exciting and put the drummer back in the spotlight. I've tried all kinds of drums before, finally I have something that fills all my desires in sound, appearance and hardware specifications. Gretsch, ... what else is there."



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At Zildjian, we listen to innovative artists like Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl. And turn their ideas into new sounds and new cymbals.

"Zildjian is really tuned in to the needs of the drummer. Their people are out in the field listening and doing research, asking drummers what they want in cymbals," says Vinnie Colaiuta, L.A. studio drummer who's played with Frank Zappa, Joni Mitchell, Gino Vannelli, Tom Scott, Chaka Khan and The Commodores.

Dave Weckl, currently with Chick Corea, explains. "I told Zildjian I wanted the perfect ride cymbal for all occasions. One that had just the right amounts of brilliance and attack, but not too pingy. Sort of a dry definition that would allow me to carry out the emotion of the music."

"So I actually worked in the Zildjian factory, experimenting with new designs. We combined "A" machine hammering and "K" hand hammering, no buffing and buffing. The result is what is now the K Custom."

"The K Custom is a nice, warm, musical ride cymbal with a clean bell sound, yet it's not too clangy. I can turn

around and crash on it without having to worry about too many uncontrolled overtones. It blends perfectly," says Colaiuta.

Zildjian continues to play an instrumental role in shaping the sound of modern music—by working closely with leading-edge drummers like Vinnie and Dave.

"I'm always looking for new sounds and so is Zildjian. In fact, that's how we came up with the idea of mixing a Z bottom and K top in my Hi Hats. The K gives me the quick, thin splash characteristic I like. And the Z provides that certain edge. They really cut through," says Weckl. "Which is important because of all the electronics that I use."

"Zildjian's really hit upon a winning combination in terms of delivering new concepts. They're creating cymbals that have a musical place and make a lasting impression," claims Colaiuta.

"Zildjian is as sensitive to the needs of drummers as the drummers are towards their instruments," concludes Weckl.

If you'd like to learn more about Zildjian A, K or Z cymbals, stop by your Zildjian dealer. And discover the virtue of listening.

Zildjian®
The Only Serious Choice