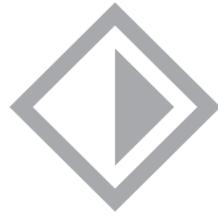




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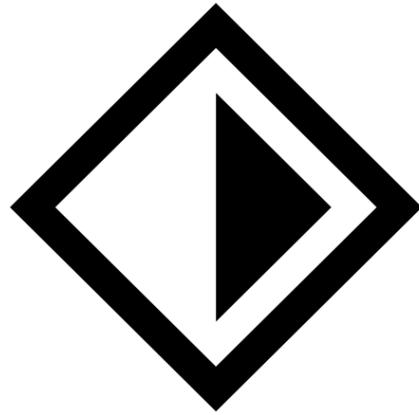
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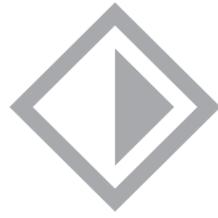
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MASTHEAD

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THE OFF

♦♦♦

Twelve months ago, the brief conversation which sowed the seeds for The Drummer's Journal occurred. It was between a good friend and myself. Having dredged out an assorted collection of drum magazines from under my bed, he selected a copy and read it cover to cover. He then picked up another and did the same.

After a prolonged period of silence he looked up and asked "How many drummers do you think there are in the world?"

"I don't know." I replied. "Hundreds of thousands probably."

"So why do these magazines make it look like there are only 10?"

He was right. One issue after another - all akin, all unwavering. I couldn't respond. I felt embarrassed on behalf of drummers everywhere. I hastily shovelled them back under my bed like they were seedy pornography.

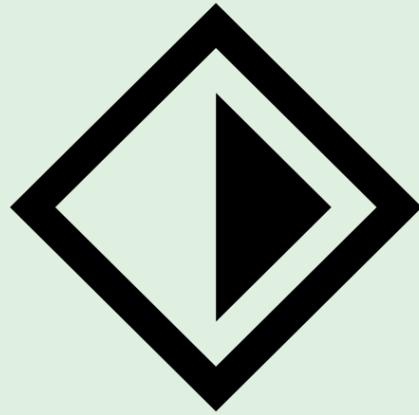
The following day I sat down and thought about why I like playing the drum set. I concluded that it's expressive. It allows for exploration, investigation and inquiry. It can inform and articulate. It can challenge, create, and discover. It can fuel debate. It is divergent and disparate. It is unique.

And so this is exactly what we wanted the magazine to be. All the things, as drummers, we like about what we do.

There are no reviews, buying guides or product tests. The web is already awash with plenty. Instead, there are only people and their opinions and insights as to how and why this instrument shapes their lives.

Independent. Online. Free. Welcome to Volume One, Issue One of The Drummer's Journal.





AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

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LOÏC MAURIN

APESANTEUR [ZERO GRAVITY]

Words by Tom Hoare, photography by Luke Douglas





- IN 1965 FRANCE BECAME THE THIRD COUNTRY IN THE WORLD TO LAUNCH A SATELLITE INTO SPACE
- IT HAS ITS OWN NATIONAL SPACE PROGRAM CALLED CNES
- IT CONTRIBUTES THE MOST MONEY TO THE EUROPEAN SPACE AGENCY
- FRANCE OWN A 28 PER CENT STAKE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

♦♦♦

It is safe to say that the French take space exploration very seriously. This is just as well, because for Loïc Maurin and the band in which he plays, the last few years have been positively stratospheric – though not in the literal sense.

The release of M83's sixth studio album *Hurry Up We're Dreaming* made some of the most obnoxious and borderline fascist music critics roll over to let M83 rub their bellies. Its anthemic, electronic styling was lauded as an album of the decade, never to be bettered. Not exactly a throwaway statement given that the decade in question still has four fifths of its 10 years remaining.

I met Loïc in a small cafe in Paris' third district. It's a typical Parisian scene; the tables sprawl out onto the pavement encircled by people chatting, smoking and drinking. An awning hovers overhead.

Unable to spot Loïc and thinking I was slightly early, I eventually found him sat inside at a table partially obscured by an indentation of the café wall. A trivial observation perhaps, but apart from a few Zildjian promo videos, Loïc had been a hard man to research. Most M83 related media has been squarely focused, quite unsurprisingly, on the band's founder and songwriter Anthony Gonzalez. Yet, Loïc has not been left behind in the metaphorical lunar orbiter whilst Anthony takes the giant leap. Despite a deceptively low profile, his playing speaks volumes.

Loïc Maurin: So, have you guys enjoyed Paris so far?

The Drummer's Journal: It's been great... Have you always lived here?

Yeah, I grew up in the suburbs about 30 miles south of here. It's really suburban. I moved to the centre about seven years ago.

How did you start to develop an interest in music?

It was before school. My mum used to tell me that I really loved to hit stuff...

Were you a violent child?

(Laughs) Yeah I guess! I had this toy drum set and it couldn't have made me happier. I suppose then, I actually started drumming when I was around three.

That's quite early!

It is! Maybe it was just because I was surrounded by the music from the radio. Just really mainstream music.

Mainstream British music?

Mostly. But the radio played lots of American music too. Obviously we have our mainstream French music as well, but I think it might be even more boring than British mainstream music. I'm proud of that!

So from there I guess you got a kit. Did you learn yourself, or was it more formal?

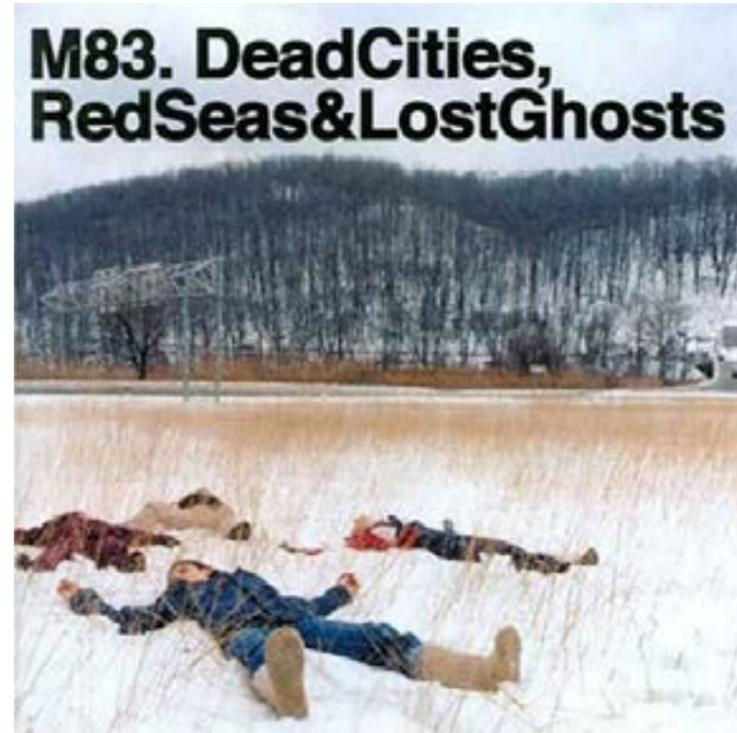
Once I reached the legal age to take drum lessons my mum took me to this drum teacher. I was eight I think. I learnt a lot of rock and a lot of 80s music too because it was 1988. I loved to play along with Wet Wet Wet, Pink Floyd, Status Quo, and stuff like that. Boney M too.

I don't know a lot about the French music scene...

You're not missing out (laughs).

Everyone seems to say that! Is that really true though?

Well, we have a couple of really great artists, well, more than that. Maybe five or six. But they are the only ones I am proud of. That's just my opinion of course.





...

“I TRIED TO TEACH TOO. THAT DIDN'T GO VERY WELL. I WAS A HUGE FAILURE. I HATED IT. AND I COULD TELL THE STUDENTS HATED IT. BUT I DEFINITELY HATED IT MORE.”

...



I think, in all fairness, the French have a good reputation for a lot of electronic music.

Well, yeah I suppose. That started back in the 1970s with Jean Michel Jarre, who was more of a composer. Then we have this big gap of emptiness until Daft Punk and Felix show up. Why that is beats me.

Did you study music at school?

No. It's not in the French culture to inject a lot of music into scholarship. It is definitely more of a British or American way to do things. It doesn't really happen in France at all.

Why do you think that is?

That's a good question. I don't know. Our culture is more into physics, mathematics and languages. When it comes to the Arts we stick to the basics.

I was thinking about this before actually. A friend of mine speaks French very well because he enjoyed it at school and then lived in Lille for a few years. I took the same lessons but I was always terrible. I think my experience of languages is similar to that of the majority of people in the UK. Our grasp of foreign languages isn't great, where as in France it is. Lots of young people in France can speak English fluently.

I would say that the French are known for having the worst English in the world, considering we're so close! But, when you compare the average French person's English to someone from Scandinavia, for example, there is a huge difference. There they start at such a young age.

When did your English start to get good?

I started at the age of 10. I still speak in broken English as you can tell.

Yeah, I thought your English might be better actually...

What, really?

Sorry, it was a joke. A bad one. Your English is at least as good as mine.

Oh, well, thanks. So, I learnt mostly from listening to English records and watching American TV.

We don't have many French records to listen to, or much French TV.

(Laughs) Well, maybe I can give you a few!

Did you enjoy school then?

Not really. I had a lot of friends but gradually people leave or move away. I found that, for me, school was only about meeting people. I hated listening to teachers. The last years of my scholarship were really boring.

So, were you trying to become a drummer?

Yeah. This will sound pretentious, but even though I only became a professional drummer a few years ago, I have always played drums and never considered doing anything else.

When you left school, how long was it from then until you joined M83?

Maybe four years. I was supposed to go to university, but I was missing classes because I was not into it at all. Instead, I tried to find small gigs and I tried to teach too. That didn't go very well. I was a huge failure. I hated it. And I could tell the students hated it. But I definitely hated it more. And they could tell I had no idea what I was doing. Teaching and playing drums is a completely different thing.

Do you read music?

I do yeah. I actually took something like 11 years of lessons, but I was so lazy that probably I could have learned the same amount in about six years! (Laughs) But seriously though, I'm lazy. I'm lazy as fuck.





♦♦♦

“I USED TO PLAY A CERTAIN KIND OF STICK ON A CERTAIN KIND OF KIT, THEN THREE WEEKS INTO REHEARSALS I THOUGHT ‘WHAT THE FUCK AM I DOING WITH THIS STUFF? IT SOUNDS LIKE SHIT.’”

♦♦♦



Did you try session stuff too?

I did local gigs, stuff like that.

And that brought you to M83?

Yeah I suppose it did. I joined a band when I was at the age of 20. It was a local band from where I grew up. The bass player was a producer as well. He was kind of well known, more so as a producer than as a bass player. So Anthony (Gonzales) came to him to produce the Before the Dawn album, which was the first album with live drums. He'd asked if there was anyone available to record live drums, and that's where I stepped in.

Was there any inkling of the longevity that the band would have? Did you ever think, as a 20 year old, that you'd still be doing it another four albums down the line?

Not really. I had no idea what was going on. When I joined we were doing small venues - pubs and stuff like that. But what was interesting was the reception we got in America, even really early on. I still don't really know how that happened. We could go to all the major cities and do quite sizable gigs. But I wouldn't have said eight years ago that I'd be here now. When I joined I'd already heard some of the stuff Anthony had done before as he'd already released two albums. I'd definitely heard the Dead Cities album before I joined. A friend of mine put in on a record player. I didn't really get it. I was just like 'whatever'.

The critical reception toward M83 has been overwhelmingly positive, and consistently so which is quite unusual over so many albums.

I know, right? And the albums are all different.

In what ways?

There has been an evolution from one album to the next. I think we understood how to go straight to where we wanted to go. I mean, there is nothing better than a good chorus in a song. If you listen to Before The Dawn, there are no 'real' songs on there - from a structural perspective at least. Back in the day, Anthony was like 'if I want to stick to this key on this keyboard for 10 minutes that is what I'm going to do' and we'd all just be like 'ok man, it's your album, you do whatever you want to do.'

So did things start to become more band orientated?

I guess in some ways, but in other ways, no. It's still just the project of one guy -Anthony. I've been involved for eight years now, but everything comes from his brain.

I wanted to ask you about your creative input...

It's really, really limited.

So Anthony just says exactly what is going to happen with the drums?

Yeah, and pretty much all those weird drum fills are coming from him. But, to do it this way is part of it. I really like it because those weird fills aren't coming from a drummer's brain. It's too weird. I was like 'ok, you have these weird ideas and I'll turn them into something a drummer can play.' Usually, I'm like 'wow, dude, that idea is fantastic.' I really like the way we are working. He always has crazy ideas about everything including tom fills and stuff like that. I could never have those ideas myself. I'm too drummer. You know what I mean?

A friend of mine used to make tracks in Pro Tools and just randomly program in the drums. He'd make these fills up, and because he was dragging random percussive sounds into random slots, they used to sound insane, like nothing a drummer could actually come up with. I certainly couldn't play them.

Exactly. That weird stuff is part of the M83 sound, they're crucial to the M83 identity. And the more we play the more I see people air drumming along to the songs and they're maybe not even drummers. It's way more musical than what I could have wrote myself.

Do you think you've learnt a lot during your time with the band, I mean, have M83 now shaped the way to play?

Yeah, definitely. Before I joined the band I used to play a certain kind of stick on a certain kind of kit, then three weeks into rehearsals I thought 'what the fuck am I doing with this stuff? It sounds like

shit.' I played with 7A sticks - you know, the really thin ones. Just in terms of the gear I was using I got it all wrong, it was quite fucked up. The same for the cymbals - I realised I needed to have bigger cymbals. I think now I play about three times harder than I used to play before because this kind of music needs a loud drummer. Before, I thought I was loud. I was not loud. Now I think I might be loud. So it shaped my playing, definitely. Especially when playing simple stuff. If you move your arm like this (raises arm high as if holding up a drum stick) it adds to the visuals but it can add to the sound too. But you have to balance everything. That is what I've learned from playing so many live shows.

♦♦♦

“HAVE YOU LISTENED TO ANY OF DAVE WECKL'S SOLO STUFF?”

“ONCE. I HAD TO STOP MYSELF THROWING UP. AWFUL.”

♦♦♦

Do you have stuff in the set you enjoy playing more than others?

My favourite songs to play are Reunion and Steve McQueen. But I also like another song called Year One, One UFO. Most of it is quite easy to play, but I'd never put really advanced level parts in M83 songs. It would make no sense at all.

So the technical aspect is never really something that preoccupied you?

For a while, yes. I tried to work on my technical skills, but as I said before, I'm lazy as fuck. I really like to spend time playing music with other people rather than practising alone. For me music is a social thing. I understood a few years ago that there are a lot of guys like Thomas Lang, who, although they are amazing, don't really have any good gigs. Like, all that fusion rock stuff, I find it fucking horrible.

Have you listened to any of Dave Weckl's solo stuff?

Once. I had to stop myself throwing up. Awful. But, it's just not my kind of music. The only band, in my opinion, who have managed to mix the technical aspects into really melodic and musical stuff was The Mars Volta. It's still quite progressive but with great choruses.

With regards to the electronic elements, is that something you had experimented with before M83 or did you have to learn that specifically?

I had to learn it, yes. I'm still an absolute beginner with it all. Anthony used to take care of a lot of it, but now that we have a bigger production I have a tech who helps me out. So all I have to do is switch to the electric department, which is just a Yamaha DTX. It triggers sounds from a laptop.

... using Ableton?

Yeah, just Ableton. We have an Ableton tech. He just sorts all the Ableton stuff out. I really need that because a lot of it is like having someone speak Chinese to me - I really don't get it. But I think it is important to know how to do it. That is advice to myself really. I need to learn more. But, for other people, it'll really add some skills to your CV. It's totally different from only playing acoustics. I think electronics can help you approach music in a completely different way.

So in terms of the actual sounds, do you have sounds you like and don't like?

I'm pretty much up for anything really, as long as it fits.



GALAXY MESSIER 83

♦♦♦

“ANTHONY WAS LIKE ‘IF I WANT TO STICK TO THIS KEY ON THIS KEYBOARD FOR 10 MINUTES THAT IS WHAT I’M GOING TO DO’ AND WE’D ALL JUST BE LIKE ‘OK MAN, IT’S YOUR ALBUM.’”

♦♦♦

Do you trigger an acoustic kit?

No, not at all. It’s a conscious choice to keep the acoustics acoustic and have the electronics provide sounds on top of those. I mean, once or twice during the set the front of house engineer might adjust the sound of my snare to fit the song better, but I have a really regular set up and it is supposed to sound like live drums. Do you want another coffee?

Lovely.

(Loïc leaves and returns with coffees and after a brief interlude discussing the advantages and disadvantages of extreme caffeine consumption the conversation returns to drums.)

Ok, sorry, we were talking about my drum set?

I think so. Are you endorsed?

Yeah, for drums its DW. They’re awesome. It’s been great because I get stuff, not for free, but so it covers the costs. A lot of drum stuff is fucking expensive, usually too expensive. So DW really helped me out. I get my cymbals from Zildjian who are really supportive. I’m really happy not to have to buy cymbals anymore. I mean, all I did was send out sponsorship requests. I had to because a lot of the big companies now are not coming to you so you have to apply and go through a process which, sometimes, can take a long time. Am I supposed mention all my sponsors now?

You can say what you like!

Ok, well I use Vic Firth sticks and Remo heads too.

So has the recording process changed at all?

So we used to record everything separately. For Before The Dawn

and Saturdays = Youth, I recorded the drums separately from the cymbals. So, just kick, snare and toms, then I’d go back and do cymbals. If you listen to those albums, there are no organic drum sounds, well, not many. For Saturdays = Youth, for example, there was a lot of editing and processing. We wanted a drummer to play the stuff but not to have an organic drum sound. But on the most recent album, Hurry Up We’re Dreaming, there are a lot more organic sounds. The album’s producer, Justin Meldal-Johnsen, was like ‘well, fuck it - lets play it live.’ I’d never done that before, it was very new to me. It was a good call, obviously.

How did you find the studios in Los Angeles?

Dude, I shit my pants big time. They were my first LA sessions. I was terrified! I was stressed at the beginning, but gradually I got better. I mean, I was recording live with Justin. I used to watch him playing live on the TV with Beck when I was 17. It was stressful.

Everybody was talking to me in English and it's a super big studio. But at the end of the day it worked. I'm really proud of what we've done on this album.

The response to that album was pretty intense. For example, the review on Pitchfork, they can be incredibly brutal...

Oh yeah, like, they can be really mean for nothing. Sometimes they don't even make sense. But yeah, they liked it.

But they weren't alone. I honestly tried to find a bad review of it but I couldn't. That has to have helped a lot.

Yes, it helped massively. We had a really good slot at Coachella this year. Not a headline, but pretty close. A big deal for me will be playing Brixton Academy on our upcoming tour. We actually played it back in the day as support for Interpol. They actually invited us to open for them.

And touring is still something you enjoy?

Well, there are a lot of aspects to touring. Sometimes, you can be done with all the people on the bus. Done with the music. When you're in the middle of nowhere, sometimes I'm like 'what the hell am I doing here?' It's like 'I've been on this bus for four weeks and there is still four weeks to go? I've got to play a show tonight that is the same as the last one?' I still enjoy it over-all but once every two or so weeks I have a bit of a freak-out. It's only human. But then you go 'pull your shit together, you're doing the best job in the world.' What I like is that I've seen it grow into this. We're doing the same tours and visiting the same places as when we did it in a crappy van, sleeping in shitty hotels and playing shitty venues.

There is always a chance that might come back in a few years, but I feel like that's behind us now. It is tiring and amazing at the same time. Like now, for example, I'm enjoying my time at home in Paris, but part of me is looking forward to getting back on that bus.

Did Anthony move to the states?

Yes, he's been out there for a few years now.

You've never fancied it?

Maybe! (laughs) I've never moved abroad before.

What about London?

(Looks repulsed) London?! To be honest, it's not my favourite city. You're not from there are you?

No, so bad mouth it all you like.

It's just so big. I really like playing there, but, I think I'd much rather live somewhere on the coast, like Brighton.

Brighton? I've never actually been.

Really?

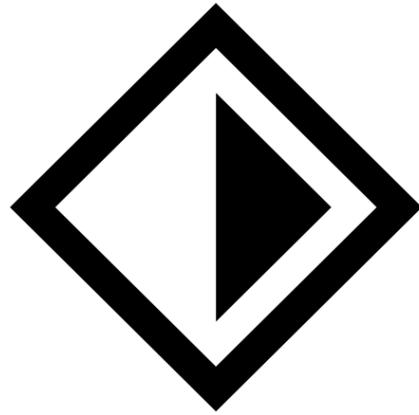
Really.

Oh, well, by the sea it's lovely.

Ok, but it's not exactly French style 'by the sea' though is it?

No, definitely not, but I like it because it's different.





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THE SUM OF THE PARTS

JOHN MAHER

In the small town of Leverburgh, in the west of the Hebridean isle of Harris, sits a small workshop. Inside, a man in his 50s dressed in a blue oil-stained boiler suit is standing over an engine listening to its vital signs. The engine, coughing and jerking violently, gradually relaxes and begins to idle steadily. Hand built by the man who tends it, it bears all the hallmarks of someone who has spent the last 20 years perfecting his trade.

Among the tools, shelving and machines sits an item which seems slightly out of place. In the corner of the workshop, covered in dust and half buried under cardboard boxes, a drum kit is partially visible, though it shows signs of neglect.

The man in the blue boiler suit is John Maher. In 1976, he joined a relatively unknown Mancunian band called Buzzcocks, and spent the next five years earning himself a reputation as one of the UK's best punk drummers. He would be instrumental in the birth and implosion of one of the UKs most infamous musical movements, aspects of which would come to shape his life for the next 31 years. Don't be fooled by the dust.

Words by Tom Hoare

Photography by Kate Darracot & John Maher

“I didn’t think you’d actually turn up,” shouts John from across the workshop. “I’ve kind of got used to dealing with people at arm’s length.” At least I think he said that. About two metres to my right sits a car engine connected to several large batteries making one of the loudest sounds I’ve ever heard. As if suddenly aware of this, he quickly motions to switch it off and the engine becomes silent. “Testing,” he grins.

A black wheelie bin in the corner bears the words ‘JM Racing’ written in white paint. It is the name of the business John now runs, custom building VW engines which he ships around the world. His workshop, in which I had just arrived, is like an Aladdin’s cave for anyone happening to be mechanically minded. Unfortunately, I cannot claim to be so given that my interest in metalwork was shattered by a school technology teacher who told me that my presence in his class simply amounted to “a waste of the school’s resources.”

Keen to dispel my ignorance, however, I walk over to a huge machine situated in the corner and announce that it is a lathe. “Correct,” comes the reply, then a slight pause. “That’ll kill you that will if you start it up with the chuck key in.” Slowly stepping away, I am, from that point onward, less keen to discuss the functions of the myriad of machines and tools which populate the floor space.

The workshop is roughly the size of a double garage, with a small annexe that acts as an office, and another small room which contains a lot of technical looking equipment for testing an engine’s performance. The door to the workshop looks out on to the ferry terminal which consists of a concrete ramp descending into the sea and an old bus which has been converted into a café. Beyond that, in the distance, is the isle of Ensay and then 2,000 miles of unbroken ocean until

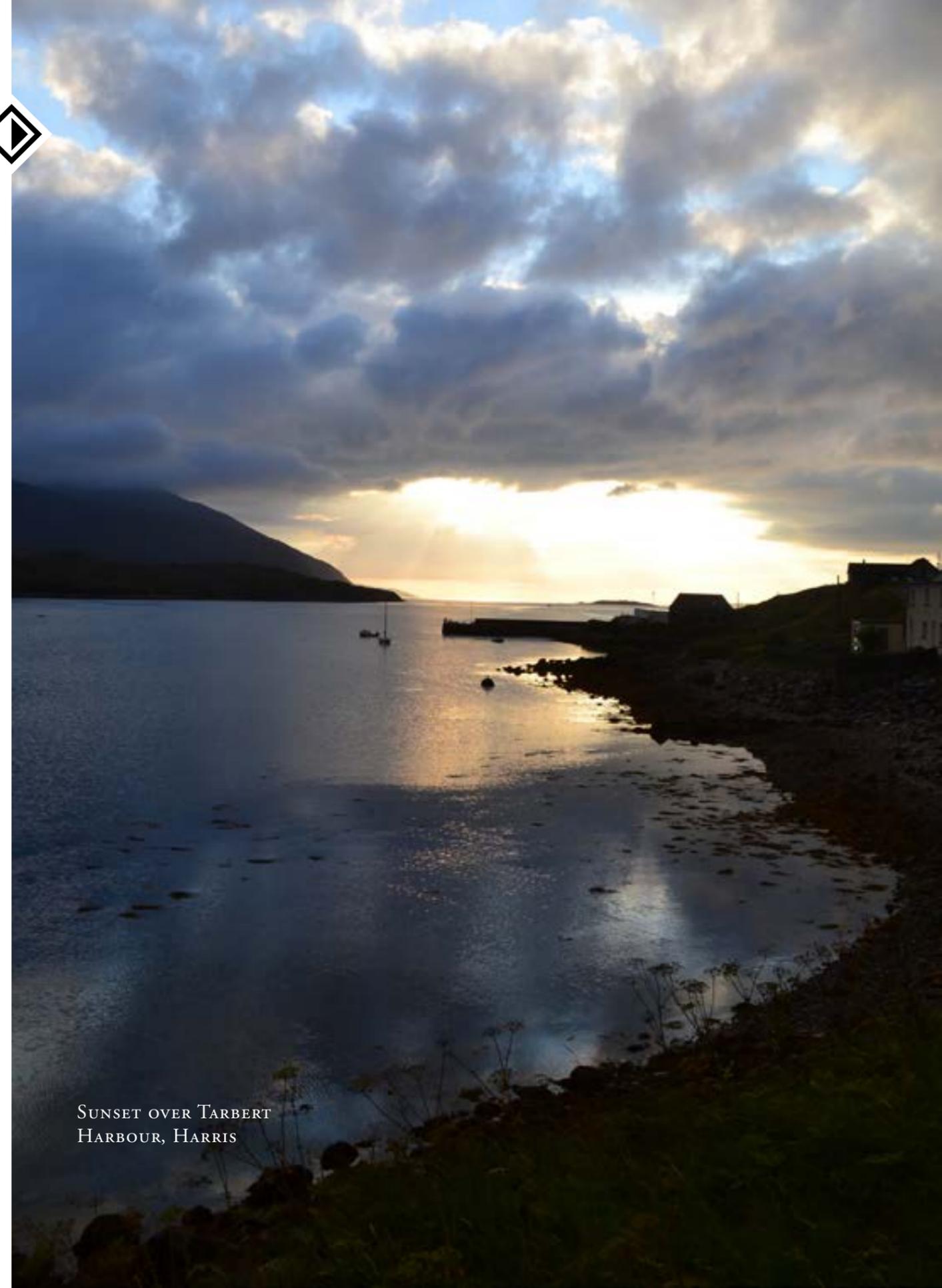
Newfoundland. What John said about dealing with people at arm’s length seems like an understatement.

Despite the warm welcome and some friendly small talk, I couldn’t help being aware of John’s natural suspiciousness as to why someone would make such a substantial journey to talk to him. John had recently re-joined the Buzzcocks for two special shows that saw the band return to its original line-up. The reunion had, in part, drawn some stick from those that felt the performances were let down by Buzzcocks’ guitarist Steve

Diggle being overly drunk and overtly disrespectful to some of the returning members on stage. The reunion, given the rather disagreeable nature of the Buzzcocks’ breakup in 1981, which excommunicated John from his former band mates for a length of time best measured in decades, was something I had been keen to talk about, though I was worried John might interpret this as simply digging for gossip or controversy about Diggle’s

♦♦♦
**“I WENT TO SEE THE
HEADMASTER AND
SAID, ‘I’M LEAVING
SCHOOL TO JOIN A
PUNK ROCK BAND.’**

**HE SAID THAT I WAS
MAKING A VERY BIG
MISTAKE.”**
♦♦♦



SUNSET OVER TARBERT
HARBOUR, HARRIS

performance. The truth is that I wasn't particularly interested in Diggle, more so the mechanics or readdressing something so engrained in his youth after a period of 30 years.

Sitting on two drum stools in what was the only real clear floor space in the workshop, I take out a dictaphone and place it on top of a nearby toolbox. I ask a few generic questions about growing up in Manchester. At first, his responses are quite short and generalised. He sits with both arms and legs crossed which is classic body language for "I don't want to talk about this," and casts occasional, suspicious glances at the device recording our words. To break the ice, I knew John harboured a distaste for prog rock band ELP and talking about bands you dislike can prove to be a humorous conversation. Sure enough, listening to him talk about Carl Palmer's super group was no exception, as he jokingly describes growing up in a somewhat Orwellian world where inescapable exposure to Hammond organs and golden capes are the tools by which the masses are kept in abject misery. After this, he relaxes and begins to talk more openly, and the dictaphone begins to resemble another grey tool on a workbench.

Early Days

For someone who was instrumental in the development of Britain's most recognisable punk bands, a lot of aspects of John's life contradict the increasingly stereotypical images and ideals often associated with late 1970s punk. If you've ever seen an MTV punk documentary you know

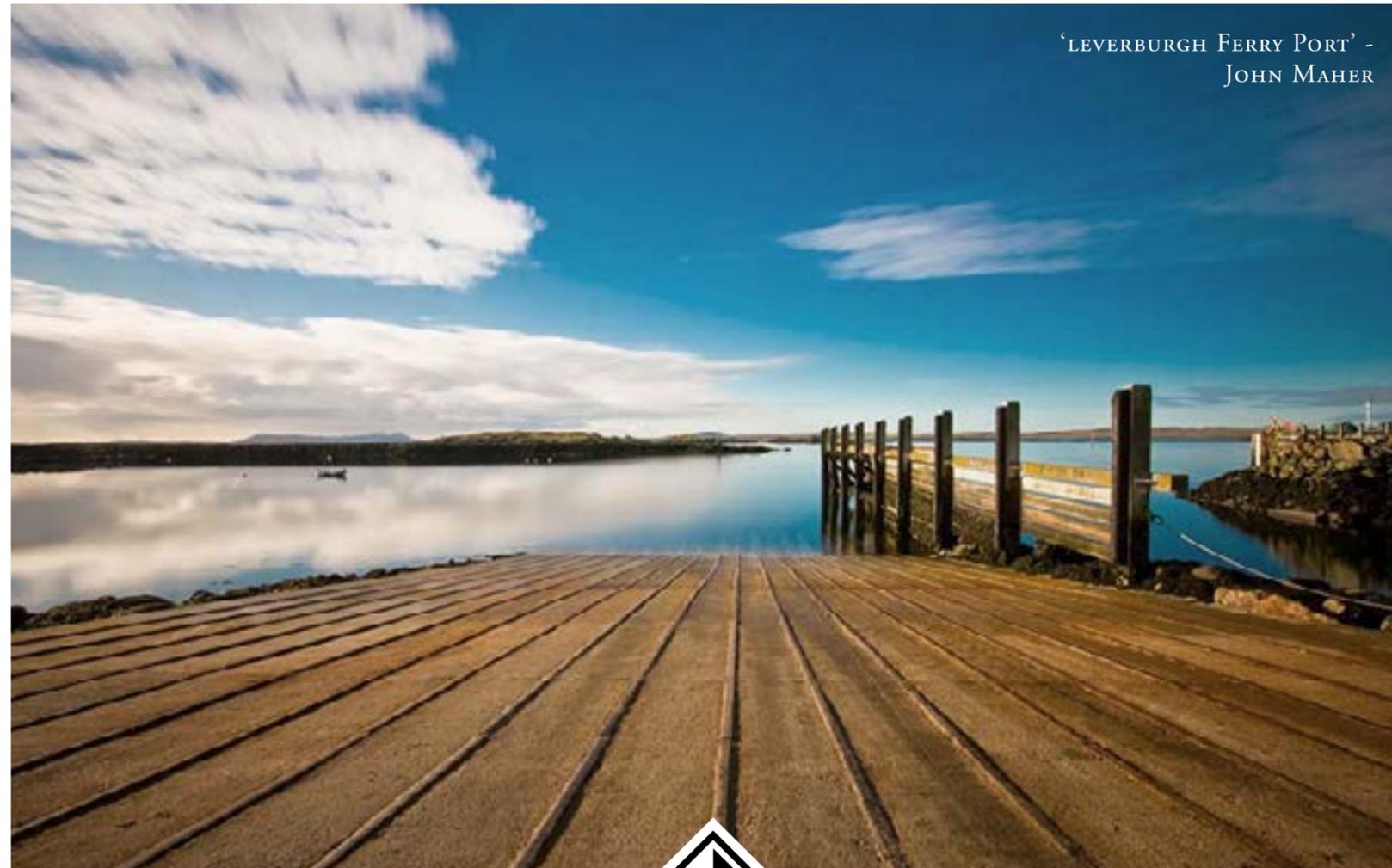
the images I mean. Cue a few shots of striking unions, police brutality and John Lydon telling someone to fuck off and you've got a romantically mediated account of 1970s Britain all rolled into 60 minutes. Whilst such images are by no means irrelevant, the reality is that the punk movement was more diverse than it is often given credit for.

At school John studied classical guitar for his Music O level, and only began playing drums because he noticed, after consulting the musicians wanted ads in the back of Melody Maker, that demand for drummers, as opposed to the demand for guitarists, outstripped

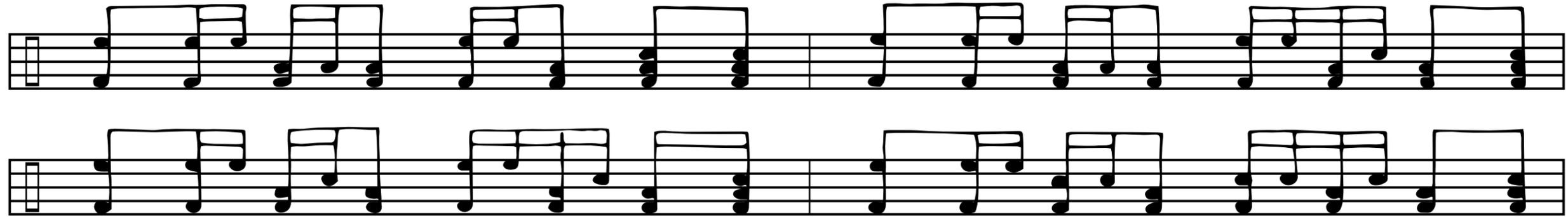
supply. So he mastered the basics by air drumming along to "some cabaret singer on those shitty Saturday night entertainment programs," before renting a drum kit from his local music shop for 10 pounds and responding to an ad he came across in Melody Maker. "That was the first ad I ever contacted," he explains, "and it was the Buzzcocks. I joined in 1976. I remember the day Howard Devoto, Buzzcocks' original singer, came round to see me. The first thing I said to him was, "What sort of music is it?" He replied, "high energy rock." He didn't stay long because I had just come home from school at lunchtime and I was going back to do my

Chemistry O Level. I sat and passed my O Levels and got into sixth form and rehearsed with Buzzcocks.

"In September '76 I started my first year of sixth form, but I had to take the occasional day off because we'd be off down to London doing another gig with the Sex Pistols. I was getting very much into the music side of things and the prospect of studying Maths, Physics and Chemistry at school was becoming less appealing. Ultimately, I stayed in the sixth form until the following April, that would be '77, and that's when I decided 'that's it'. I went to see the headmaster and said 'I'm leaving school to join a punk rock band'. He said that I was making a very big mistake. I had a promising future career as something or other, I can't remember what. After that, Buzzcocks went off on a support slot with The Clash on the White Riot tour and it became my proper job ... kind of."

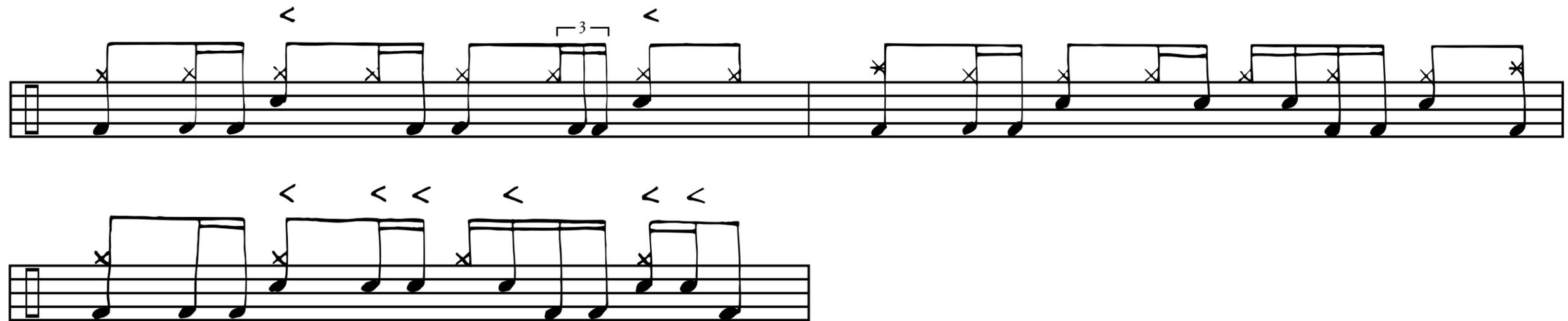


Below is a transcription of John's playing on the song Moving Away From The Pulsebeat. There is a lot more to John's playing than speed and simplicity, and probably partially accounts as to why he came second to Keith Moon in NME's best drummer poll in 1978.



♦♦♦

The next groove is from the song Why Can't I Touch It? followed by the groove which inspired it, adapted from a song by the German band Can, though John couldn't remember the name.





Rose Tinted Spectacles and Their Removal

There is little doubt that John is a talented drummer and I wondered if, having since pursued and been successful in a different field, his time spent in Buzzcocks held any nostalgia. There was a long pause between me asking the question and his response. In the prolonged silence, as he shifted uncomfortably on his seat, I thought, momentarily, that I'd touched a nerve. His reply, however, was the most extensive and unbroken he gave to any question. It was as follows.

“When we split in ‘81, it was quite a shock at the time. I had joined the band at 16, and by the time I was 21 it was finished. That was my first job and it was all I'd known. It was Pete Shelley, the guitarist, leaving that brought about the demise of the band. In hindsight you can see, maybe, 12 months prior to the split, the spark had gone anyway and like a lot of bands there is a natural lifespan. Buzzcocks weren't intended to be a U2 or Rolling Stones. We had a lifespan and it petered out. Nothing special about that.

“I think when the punk thing first hit it was like an explosion of energy onto a scene that had gone quite stagnant. It's like being an MP in opposition. You can make some great speeches and get all the applause and then the next thing you get voted in and you become the man who cops all the criticism. When punk became the hot ticket, getting in the papers and stuff, there were a lot of identikit punk bands appearing on the scene. I don't particularly like criticising people, but take, for example, a band like the Boom Town Rats. They were labelled as a punk band and it just sort of turned into a bit of a joke. You've got a guy on the piano wearing his pyjamas and a trilby hat. That energy which inspired all that stuff to happen seemed to

evaporate quite quickly and then, when the Sex Pistols imploded after Sid Vicious' suicide, it just turned into a farce.

“The notoriety that the Pistols thrived on, you can't maintain that for long because people get bored of it. A good example is John Lydon, or Jonny Rotten as was. When the Pistols were over he went on to form Public Image. When that first Public Image album came out it was such a move away from punk and probably one of the best albums around at the time. It was incredible! He didn't decide to go on and become some parody of himself, even though at times he's done that since. Instead, that album captured that original innovation and energy, without having to wear a bin liner and stick a safety pin through your nose to make it punk. I mean, you couldn't walk down the King's Road in London without tripping over people with pink Mohicans. I remember the post cards – a punk stood next to a

Beefeater, it just became a load of bollocks! One of my favourite punk bands of all time, one of the best live performances I ever saw was Alternative TV fronted by Mark Perry. I always admired him because he edited the first punk fanzine Sniffin' Glue. Alternative TV were completely different and they supported us at The Roundhouse in London once - they were fantastic.

A lot of the people who thought they were getting on the punk bandwagon were too small-minded to appreciate it. That was the really good stuff; not the cut-out-and-keep how to start a punk band like something in the Daily Mirror. It grew tiresome.

“But my opinion has changed on it over the years. The split wasn't a friendly thing. There was a lot of animosity. I never spoke to Pete for years and years after that, you kind of hold these grudges, but then as time passes by it becomes water under the bridge and your opinion

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“**THAT ENERGY WHICH
INSPIRED ALL THAT STUFF TO
HAPPEN SEEMED TO EVAPORATE
QUITE QUICKLY**”
♦ ♦ ♦

changes. Looking back at it now, I see it as something I was involved in, and I'm proud of the part I played in it. It doesn't make me wish that everyday could be like 1976 again; I'm not that stupid. I don't look at it through rose tinted spectacles. Most of it was just like normal life,

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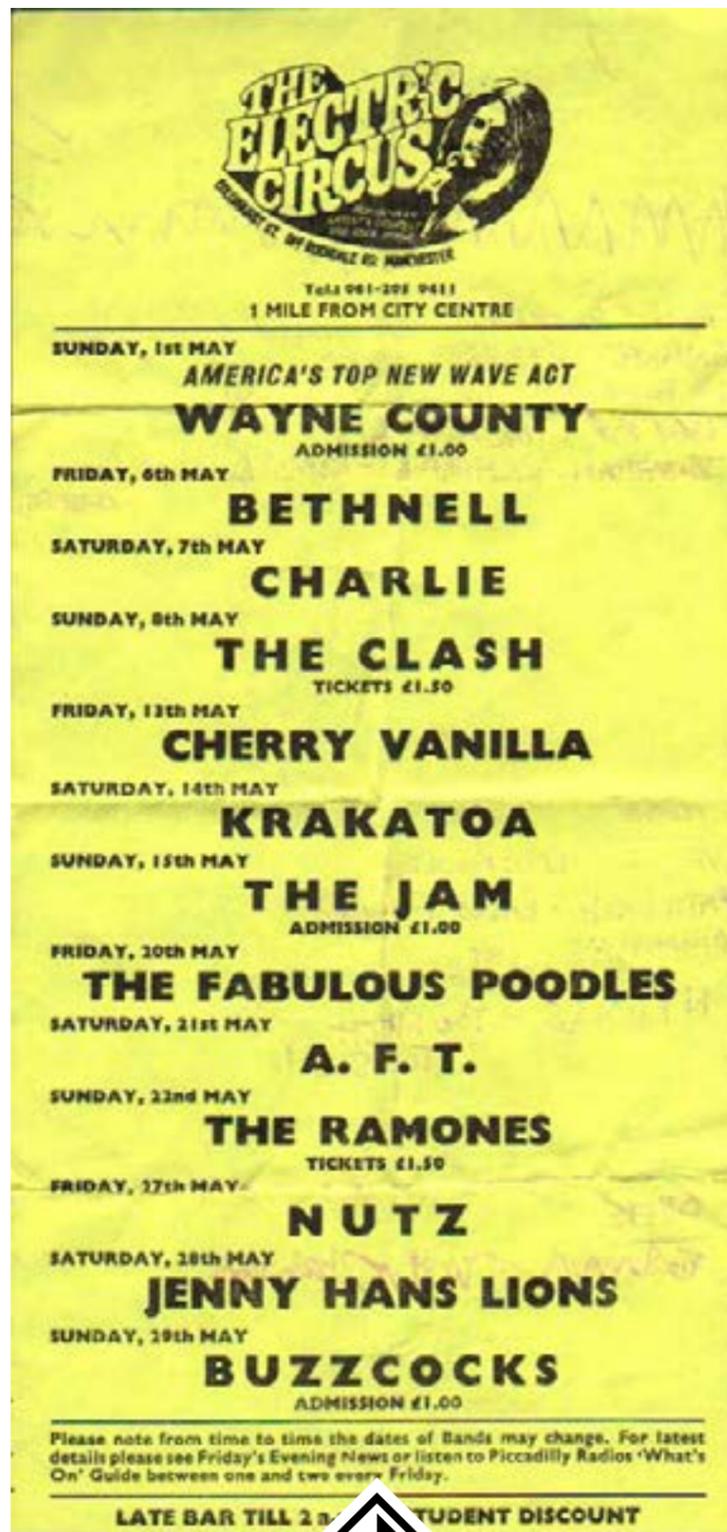
**“I REMEMBER THE
POST CARDS – A
PUNK STOOD NEXT
TO A BEEFEATER,
IT JUST BECAME A
LOAD OF BOLLOCKS”**

♦♦♦

some of it was crap, some of it was great. At the end of the day I was just some school kid who ended up in a punk band who honestly had no clue. I wasn't on some campaign to change the world, I was a drummer in a band, a little unit, a gang of people. We'd travel around in a transit van and do a gig, we'd turn up and it was all happening, and I had no political or ulterior motives behind it at all.”

After the split, John spent a couple of years doing session work in mostly in Manchester and Liverpool. He then sold his kit, and never touched the drums for a “long, long, long time afterwards.” I ask why he didn't continue working as a session musician, especially as that type of work can be hard to come by and he seemed to be making a living from it.

“Some of the session type stuff I was doing was all very rigidly structured, cold and very clinical to me. It didn't leave much room for creativity because you're reduced to a person providing a specific part. I suppose I don't like it because my introduction to music was being dropped in at the deep end, spontaneity, creating your own stuff. I just felt like an ingredient in the mix. Particularly when you're performing live, if you're not into it I think it comes across in your playing. It's not fair on me because I'm not enjoying it. It's certainly not fair to the others in the band, but most of all it's unfair to the audience. So when I get to that stage with music I opt out.”



Reunion

In 1992, prior to the recent Back to Front Buzzcocks reunion, was the last time John had spoken to or seen his former band mates. I wondered how his relationship with music had changed during that 20-year period, having focused his attention on JM Racing. I ask him if he ever stopped considering himself a drummer, to which he responds by asking, “Can you ride a bike?”

“I can, yes.”

“Have you ever stopped considering yourself a cyclist?”

“Well, I suppose not, no”

With his point made, I ask if he ever missed being in a band. Again, he responds with a question.

“Do you mean do I miss being in any band, or do I miss being in Buzzcocks?”

“Er ...”

“The Buzzcocks thing I see as, certainly with the reunion shows, a greatest hits package. It's a jukebox from the past but with the people on stage.”

“So it's a nostalgia thing again?”

“It is yeah. I would say the vast majority of people who were at those shows were there to hear the tunes they know. I know the band in its current format have recorded albums and there is a loyal following for that. The truth is, however, and this is the whole reason the Back to

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**“THAT WAS THE
REALLY GOOD
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HOW TO START A
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Front shows came about, that in order to fill venues the size of Manchester Apollo and Brixton Academy the Buzzcocks needed to put on something a little bit extra compared to what the line up now does. So getting back Howard Devoto, Steve Garvey and myself and doing those old tunes was what allowed Buzzcocks to perform in front of crowds that size in those two venues. Say I wanted to go and play drums tonight with somebody, I'd be more interested in playing stuff like what's coming out of the stereo now (drum and bass) otherwise I might as well join a covers band and do weddings."

I ask him how he feels the gigs went. "My opinion of the gigs now is different to when they actually happened, and that's because of the bleeding Internet. I don't want to drag down on Steve Diggle, but to be fair, he fucked up big time in a few places because he was pissed. Internet wise, I got a little bit of an insight into what might have been going on in his head. There was a video interview with Steve prior to the Back to Front shows, so it was clear to me, after seeing that, that Steve had a resentment against the old boys coming back because he's out working away doing new material.

He's not simply a greatest hits jukebox - it's his career. I don't think he liked the fact that it was the old boys greatest hits jukebox that

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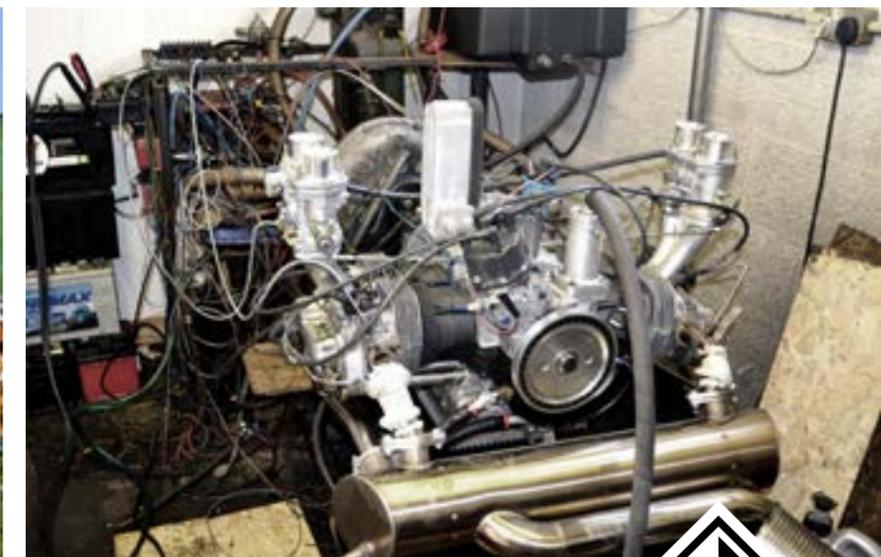
**"I WASN'T ON SOME
CAMPAIGN TO CHANGE THE
WORLD, I WAS A DRUMMER
IN A BAND, A LITTLE UNIT,
A GANG OF PEOPLE."**

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brought the big crowd in and he dealt with it in the way that he did. I wish I had known more about what was going on in his head before the event because its something we could have had a talk about, but it's done now."

I ask if he enjoyed the reunions, and he says that he did very much. For a while, we talk about the five months practice he did to get back into shape for the gigs. It becomes apparent that John took preparing quite seriously, another reflection of how, like the engines he builds, he wants to do justice to the things with which he is involved. This is perhaps why, given that the reunion marked John's first public performance behind the drum set in nearly 20 years, he seemed slightly put out by Diggle's behaviour. I realise that I was perhaps wrong to dismiss it as unimportant, as to John, it clearly was important. "If you've been following Buzzcocks from day one, and a lot of people at the shows were that type of person then the Back to Front thing is a big deal. What saddens me is people talking about it on the Internet, saying, "I wasn't there and I'm really glad I didn't go now." Well if you weren't there and you can't make up your own opinion, are you prepared to let other people make up you opinion for you?"

At this point, a van pulls into the yard in front of the workshop. It's the postman delivering the post. As John goes out to collect it, I am reminded where we are. When he returns, I ask him what it



was about Harris that had made him move here, and he says there was no real reason he could think of.

“Was it just having lived in the city for a long time?”

“I don’t know really. Lets say I hadn’t joined Buzzcocks, and accepted that job as an insurance clerk in the Methodist Insurance Company, who knows whether I would have ended up here.”

We went on to talk about John’s more recent interest in photography, many of which are landscapes of Harris. He said he enjoyed photography because he can take his camera and tripod out in the evening and come back with shots he is quite happy with. He points out that a lot of his interests; the drumming, photography and mechanics have been self-taught. “I can learn from books, I can learn from the Internet. Lots of people like to be taught by somebody, I don’t particularly like that - I like teaching myself. I didn’t do metal work at my school, it was a Catholic grammar

school. I suppose it comes down to the fact that if I get sufficiently fired up that I want to do something, I’ll go and do it. With the drums, I’ll hold my hands up quite clearly; I could never step in for Carl Palmer. There are an awful lot of bands that I’d be completely wrong for. I couldn’t, technically and physically, do a lot of the stuff that these other drummers do. But, there are certain types of music, Buzzcocks being one of them, that I was ideally suited too. Maybe that’s because Buzzcocks shaped me and I had a bit of input back. If I get enthusiastic I really get into it. If I’m not enthusiastic about something I can’t pretend.”

I think John is most likely right about what he said about Buzzcocks shaping him, though not in an obvious or clichéd sense. Punk’s image, politics and reputation, with which the tabloid press would become effectuated, held little or no meaning for John. Instead, I got the sense that for him, Buzzcocks was about doing something he enjoyed and being able to do it, for the most part, on his own terms. Looking around John’s workshop suggests that these traits

have endured. When we first met, he apologised for the clutter but insisted he couldn’t have it any other way.

John also talked about his interest in drag racing. At one point, he not only built the engines but also raced the cars. He says he stopped racing because he didn’t need to see his name on a results board to know he’d made a good engine. In many ways it reaffirms how surprisingly egoless John is as a person. A lot of people who experience success become embroiled with the task of maintaining it, and the failure to do so becomes an affront to the ego. There is absolutely no reason why he couldn’t continue making a living by playing drums today. He doesn’t however, because he has no ego to feed. As a drummer and a person, he is comfortable not continuously competing to better his previous achievements.

The drum kit in the corner now doesn’t seem so out of place. I get the feeling that, if it didn’t need to be there, it probably wouldn’t be.



LUSKENTYRE BEACH, HARRIS,
LOOKING WEST







AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

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DROPPING NAMES

DON LOMBARDI

Words by Julia Kaye

Though you might not realise it, Don Lombardi has influenced the way you play drums. He has done this, in all likelihood, without you ever having heard him play. If you were to Google his name, you'd learn that a man also called Don Lombardi is CEO of a company concerned with Pediatric Innovation. You won't find any videos of him performing a 10-minute improvisational solo, or see any ads selling his latest instructional DVD or book. It's also quite likely that, should you feel inclined to check the liner notes of your favourite albums, he will not be mentioned. Yet, had he chosen a different career path, it is likely that the drum set at which you often sit would be slightly more primitive in its design.

In 1972, Don started a company called Drum Workshop (DW) and would go on to design and patent drums and hardware that would change not only the industry, but the way people could physically play the instrument. More recently, he founded a separate company called Drum Channel. It's an online tuition service that boasts a faculty so formidable it makes the members of The Dirty Mac look like bumbling amateurs.

The Drummer's Journal: So, how've you been?

Don Lombardi: Good, I've got lots going on, though these are challenging times. Everybody seems frightened about the economy and additionally I'm trying to figure out the Internet as we go! I think people are also starting to realise that quality online resources can't always be free.

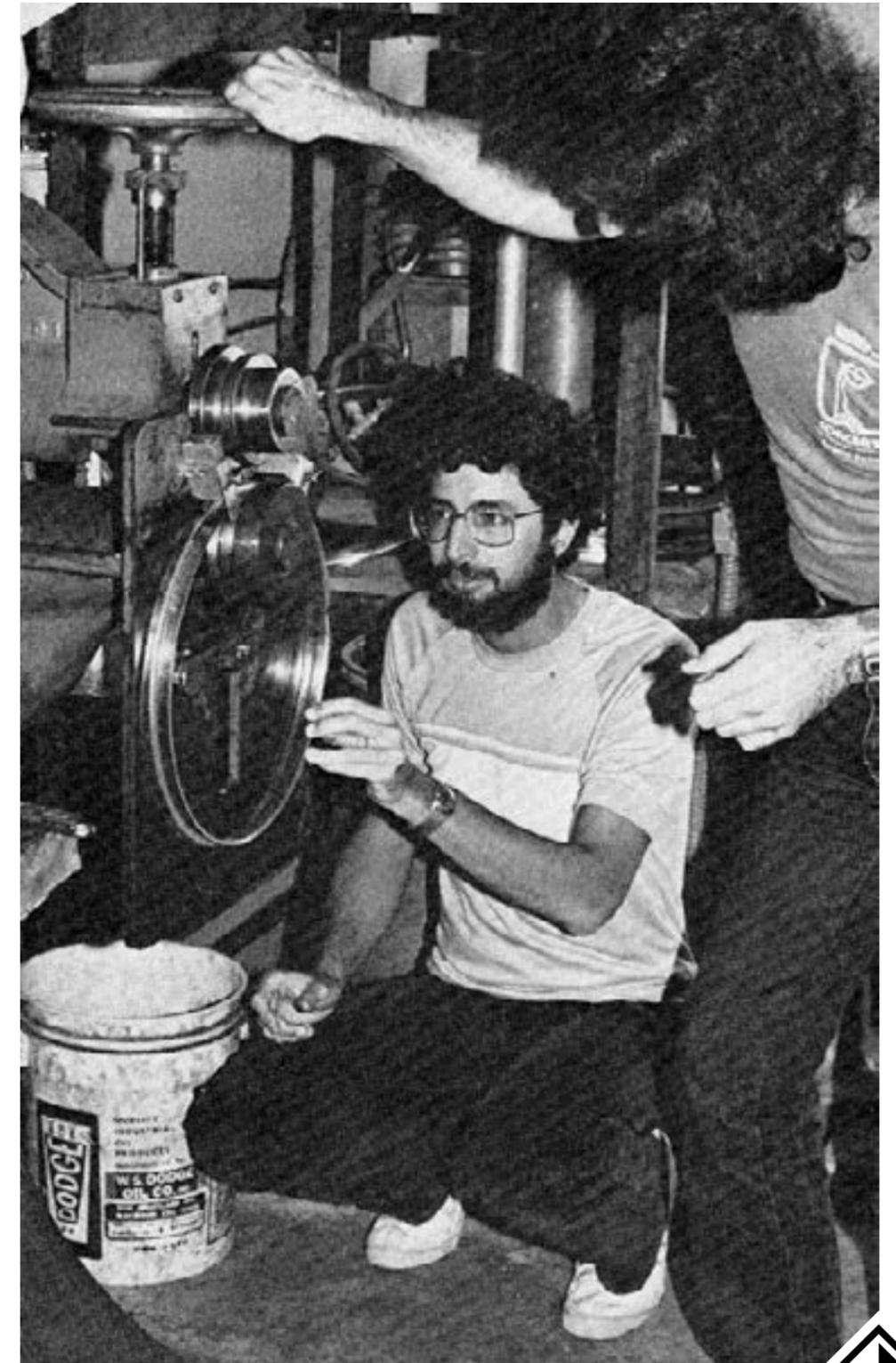
Have you been pleased with the reception Drum Channel has received so far?

I mean, like DW at the beginning, it's a huge success because everybody loves it. I've done little or no marketing really and getting the word out there has just been through word of mouth. With Drum Channel, because I still do all the R&D for DW too, splitting myself between the two was the initial idea but I've been spending a disproportionate amount of my time in getting Drum Channel up and running.

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**“I STARTED PLAYING LESS
AND LESS AND THEN
VIRTUALLY NOT AT ALL. I
WAS WORKING A SEVEN-
DAY WEEK DOING EIGHT
TO 10 HOURS A DAY
TRYING TO RUN THE
BUSINESS WITHOUT ANY
OUTSIDE FUNDING.”**

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No major issues then?

There are some structural issues. When you deal with web developers you have to tell them what you want and you hope you get it in two or three months. Also, the struggle is getting 10 to 25 year olds to pay for anything online. Don't get me wrong, I'm extremely happy with the response we've had. So it's exciting and encouraging but there's still trouble, financially, to get the amount of people that we need signed up to make it a successful model. But we've got some real fun stuff on the drawing boards.

♦ ♦ ♦

“THEIR GOAL WAS TO DOMINATE THE AMERICAN DRUM INDUSTRY BACK IN THE LATE 1970S AND EARLY ‘80S. THEY SAW IT AS A VERY LABOUR INTENSIVE INDUSTRY. THEY WERE LOOKING AT LUDWIG, SLINGERLAND AND ROGERS PAYING SEVEN, EIGHT OR NINE DOLLARS AN HOUR WHEN THEY WERE PAYING 60 OR 70 CENTS AN HOUR IN TAIWAN.”

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One of the first things I noticed was just how much stuff you've actually done career wise. You've been a product designer, a CEO, an entrepreneur, a professional drummer and an educator, all umbrella terms I suppose, but which one describes you best?

I think this is true of many drummers; if I had to fill out a resume and state what I do I would say I play drums. I mean, in recent years, that hasn't been my career path; that's not where I'm getting my pay-cheque. I started playing when I was nine. When I was 11 we found a good local pro drummer who was teacher. I bought a hi-hat and became entrenched in playing jazz ride cymbal patterns on it. I didn't even care about getting the rest of the set.

In the early days I studied with Nick Ceroli, then with Freddie Gruber. After that I studied with Colin Bailey, mostly on Joe Morello's technique.



Then, right out of high school, I started playing professionally. Back in those days there was so much studio work in LA. I would never consider myself a studio musician but I did enough studio work, along with travelling and touring with bands, to make a living. I always taught from the time I was 16 onwards. I think because I had good teachers they also taught me how to teach. When my son was born I didn't want to travel anymore, so I built up 40 or 50 students and consolidated them into my own location to save me a lot of driving time. So, this was the start of DW. I would have friends and major drummers come in once a month and do these workshops and educational seminars. Shelly Manne, Ed Shaughnessy, Freddie and some more great drummers in the LA area would come in once a month and do a clinic, which was kind of a new thing in those days. But, I still ended up doing a lot of travelling which taught me my first business lesson: If you have your own location and you're not there making money you still have to pay the rent!

So we started doing sales out of there too. John Good, current DW Vice President, was one of my students and he would come in during the day and I traded him drum lessons for his time to run a little bit of a drum shop, which is something I never envisioned getting into. One of my student's fathers owned Camco and he decided to sell that business and sold me all the tooling dies and moulds. My first invention was an adjustable trap case seat in the '70s. I always thought it'd be a hobby and that I'd continue as a professional musician. But by the 1980s DW had got so big we had to move to a lower cost area so we moved about an hour and a half out of LA. It was getting to difficult to keep burning the candle at both ends, driving back and forth, so I started playing less and less and then virtually not at all. I was working a seven-day week doing eight to 10 hours a day trying to run the business without any outside funding.

It's quite easy to overlook the fact that there is an economy behind drum production. Economies, of course, are famously

fickle, but DW seem to have weathered the storms quite well...

I was once approached in the late 1980s by one of our competitors, one of the biggest drum companies in the world, and they came over at a NAMM show and asked, 'who does your marketing?' I said, 'we just sit around once a month and come up with ad ideas.' I don't think they believed me. They thought I was trying to keep whoever we had doing our marketing a secret. Then I thought, DW doesn't even have a marketing department, it's always been me telling a message. I really don't think you can sell a drummer anything. Fortunately, our competitors look at the business they're in as solely economics.

And how do you see it?

You've got to look at in terms of innovation, and also the fact that our competitors didn't have their finger on the pulse of what the consumer was looking for. Their goal was to dominate the American drum industry back in the late 1970s and early '80s. They saw it as a very labour intensive industry. They were looking at Ludwig, Slingerland and Rogers paying seven, eight or nine dollars an hour when they were paying 60 or 70 cents an hour in Taiwan. They put a lot of investment into it, trying to buy out the market, paying people left and right, doing all kinds of rebate programs with dealers. So over a period of a few years the American companies started struggling and they started being sold off to other larger corporations. Again, that opens up the door to problems. It might give a company more financial strength, but it cuts down your ability to make decisions which are in the best interest of the consumer because the decisions always have to be in the interest of what's the most profitable.

So basically, in the 1980s, when I started with no money and looked for investment, I was told 'You're nuts. Three American drum companies have already gone under, the Japanese companies are dominating, interest rates are at 19 per cent and you want to start a drum company?' We weren't a drum company at the beginning. We made pedals for the first six or seven years, but we



US005204485A

United States Patent [19] **5,204,485**

Lombardi [11] **Patent Number:** **5,204,485**

[45] **Date of Patent:** **Apr. 20, 1993**

[54] **MULTI-AXLE DRUM BEATER AND PEDAL APPARATUS**

[76] **Inventor:** Donald G. Lombardi, 2118 E. Hillcrest Dr., Thousand Oaks, Calif. 91320

[21] **Appl. No.:** 783,864

[22] **Filed:** Oct. 28, 1991

[51] **Int. Cl.:** G10D 11/00

[52] **U.S. Cl.:** 84/422.1

[58] **Field of Search:** 84/422.1-422.4

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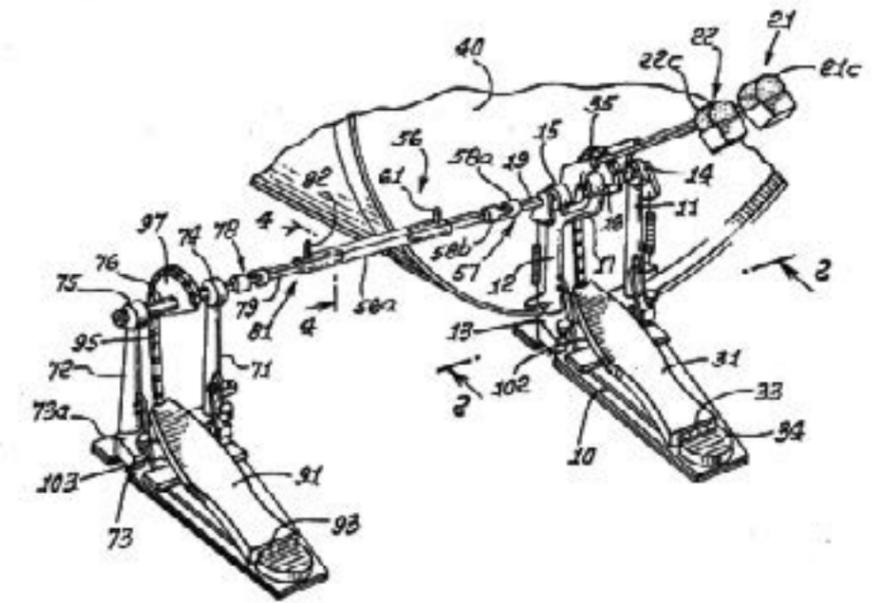
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Primary Examiner—William M. Shoop, Jr.
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Attorney, Agent, or Firm—William W. Haefliger

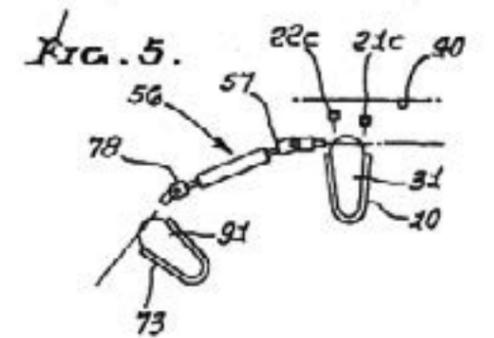
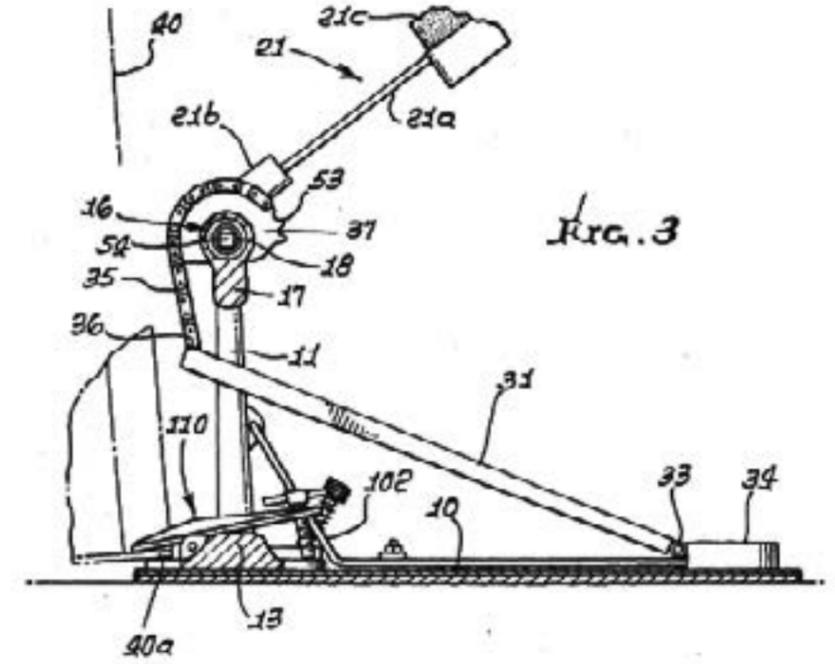
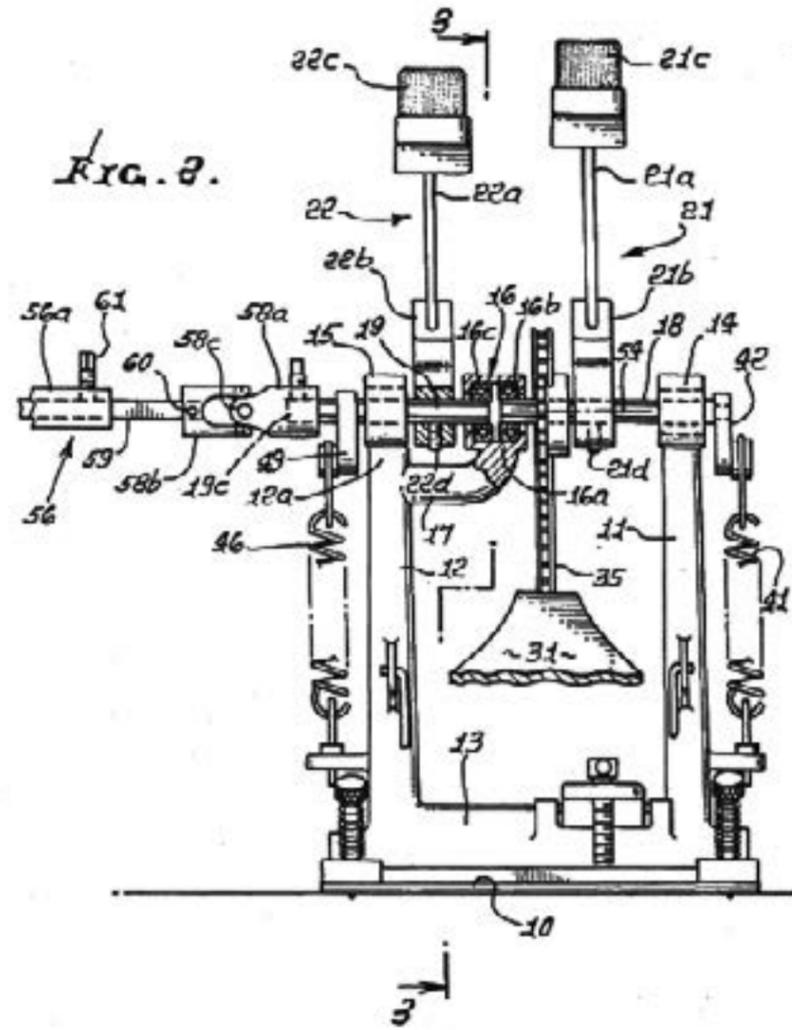
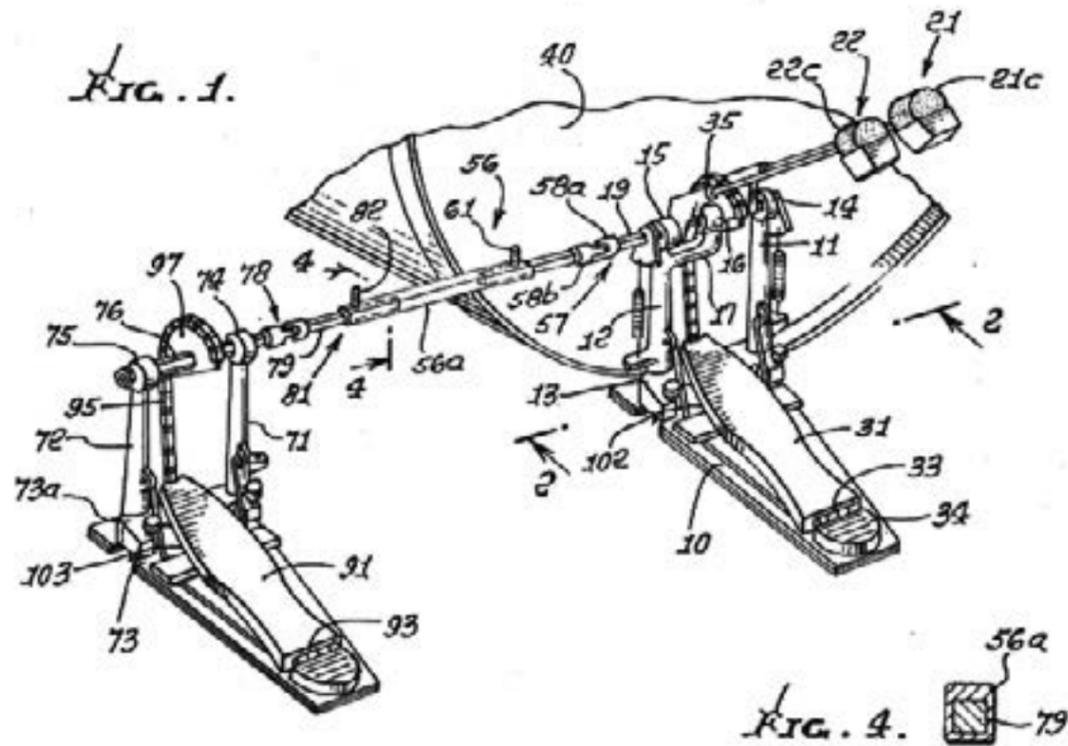
[57] **ABSTRACT**

A drum beating assembly comprising a first frame including first pedestal structure, first, second and third bearings carried by the first pedestal structure, in spaced coaxial relation; a primary axle carried by the first and third bearings, and a primary drum beater carried by the primary axle; a secondary axle carried by the second and third bearings, and a secondary drum beater carried by the secondary axle; the primary and secondary axles being independently rotatable, there being a first pedal operatively connected to the primary axle to rotate the primary axle and primary drum beater in response to pedal pivoting, the secondary axle and secondary drum beater being rotatable by auxiliary structure, adjustably positioned relative to the first frame; and a first base plate integrally supporting the first pedestal structure, the first plate also supporting the first pedal for pivoting relative thereto.

12 Claims, 3 Drawing Sheets



DRUM PEDAL PATENT: THE DON



didn't make any money at all. We borrowed a lot and I was still working nights teaching. The thing that financially made us a real business was when we took what had existed as a double pedal and made improvements on it to make it a viable part of a drummer's drum set. I had a patent that I wasn't able to protect because I didn't have the money, but I knew we had something that was unique and would have an impact on the drummers who played it.

When you have a product which is revolutionary, and you have competitors who are 100 times bigger than you, their tendency is to just copy it. You then have to legally go through the expense of protecting your patent. I didn't have the money to do that so we decided to license them. We licensed Tama, Pearl and Yamaha which allowed them to make a double pedal with the plates under both sides and the universal joints.

Speaking from a manufacturing standpoint, what would be the main differences now in being able to produce products from when you started?

Painfully, there's very little difference. On the hardware side, what is particularly exciting is that in the last couple of years we've been able to invest in some machinery and modelling equipment where we can, within days, fabricate samples and prototypes to see if an idea is feasible or not. In the past this would have taken months. As far as drums go, they are still handmade instruments and John picks out the shells. We have some machinery that automates a lot of the manual processes such as drilling the holes in the shell. With a CNC machine, it's always perfect, no mistakes. But when it comes down to sanding, lacquering, buffering, bearing edges and assembly that's all done by hand and virtually no different to what it was before. The thing we do that sets us apart but creates a huge manufacturing problem is we produce the entire kit at once. Have you toured the factory?

No, I haven't...

Well, we believe that a drum set of four, five, six or 12 pieces is an

instrument and so those drums have to speak on their own but also fit in together with the rest of the drums in that particular set. This is where the idea of timbre matching the shells came in. The problem with this is you then have to put that whole set through production. Other companies will do all 10" drums one day then 12" the next then 14" the next day which is much more efficient. If you're painting one drum set one colour, and you can paint it in 45 minutes but it takes another 45 minutes to clean the gun, clean the room and switch to the next colour of paint, you could have painted 50 drum sets the same colour in the same time frame. It's a much smaller way to produce a kit, which is often why our lead times are painfully long, but there is no way we can get around that.

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“YOU'RE NUTS. THREE AMERICAN DRUM COMPANIES HAVE ALREADY GONE UNDER, THE JAPANESE COMPANIES ARE DOMINATING, INTEREST RATES ARE AT 19 PER CENT AND YOU WANT TO START A DRUM COMPANY?”

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People say that the drum kit is still quite a young instrument. From when you started you've seen the drum set change quite significantly since then. Do you see potential for it to change further?

There will always be change. We've got a couple of bizarre possibilities

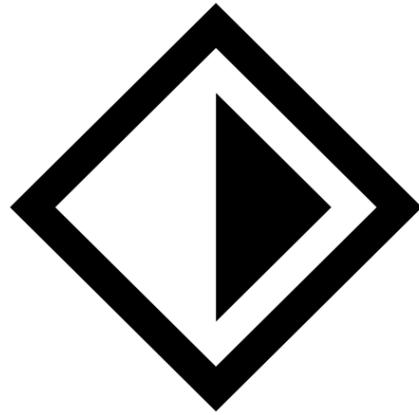
that we're experimenting with. In terms of sound quality, four or five years ago I never thought we could get a lower fundamental than what we are currently getting from a DW drum set until we hit on the eggshell and now it's down nearly two more octaves. The way that you lay up the plies on the shell, the quality of wood, the bearing edges that you put on, again, I'm sure there is going to be developments in those areas.

I guess that brings us back to Drum Channel quite nicely, and the idea of the evolution of technical ability too...

I always wanted to get back into education, and to make it inexpensive and accessible. A subscription to Drum Channel is only a few dollars which is nothing for us here – we're buying Starbucks lattes for more than that. In other parts of the world, however, if you're only making 20 dollars per month then it becomes an issue. We want to keep the price down so every student can have access.

Does the increasing availability of online content mean drumming, as a potential career, is becoming more achievable than it used to be?

Well, it's give and take. It's more difficult to be, quote, 'a drummer' now, and to make a career solely as a drummer. That still happens of course, just not as much. In order to continue to be successful, all the great drummers, particularly the older guys, take steps toward learning how to compose, how to produce, how to write and have a musical career in conjunction with being a great drummer. Certainly it's important to be a great drummer, but to make a living at it, it's important to branch out and be everything that a record company used to be. Whatever income you can get as a professional drummer, you'll get 10 times that if you can get writing royalties. Making a living at drumming is more challenging but becoming a really good drummer is much easier. At the end of the day, there's 80,000 channels on TV and nothing to watch. I'd sooner log on and see what the guys on Drum Channel are doing.



AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

— THE —
DRUMMER'S
— J♦URNAL —



MAXIMUM BREAK

RICHARD COLBURN

“Do you want another beer?” The question catches me slightly off guard; I’d lost track of the conversation. Had I been gritting my teeth? Shit, I hope not. Listening back to my hesitant response through the dictaphone was cringe worthy. “Sure, thanks.”

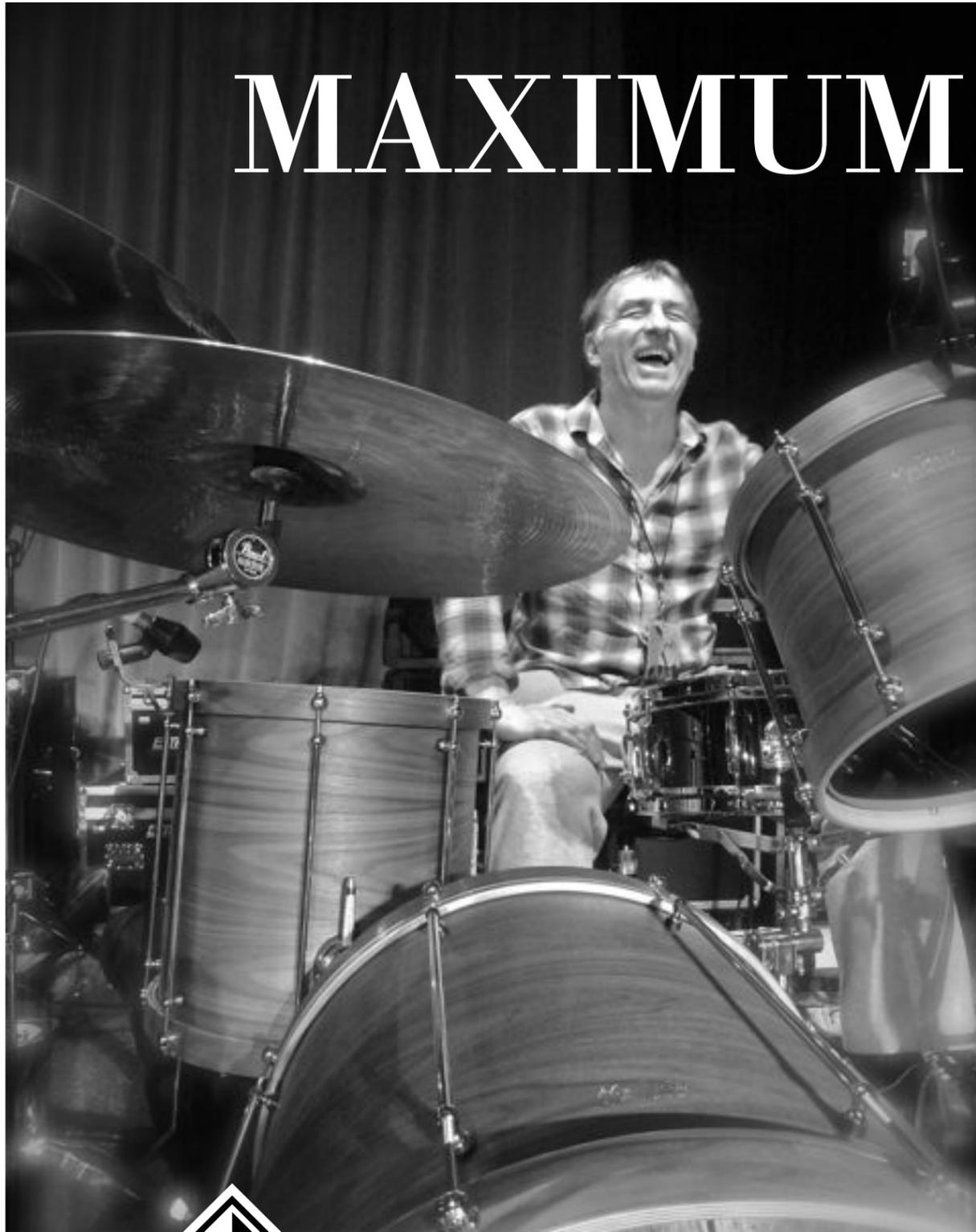
Perhaps I should make something clear. It was not the quality of the conversation which was responsible for my distraction, nor do I make a habit of ignoring interviewees. Given that Richard Colburn has spent the last 16 years playing drums in a band called Belle and Sebastian it is safe to say he is by no means uninteresting. In fact, only five minutes previous, he had been evaluating the finer points of techniques spearheaded by Murray Spivak aided by an invisible drum set and some quite impressive sound effects.

Sat in the corner of a Glaswegian pub nursing a pint of Staropramen, he looks like he has an interesting story or two to tell. His 42 years have contributed nicely to the authenticity of the beard adorning his lower mandible whilst not dispelling the mischievous grin which regularly spreads across his face during passing conversation.

So, I want to stress that it was only when the conversation turned to the events of 1996 that my thoughts momentarily lapsed. Whilst Richard talked about how his introduction to drumming had been recording an album many people now consider to be one of the finest albums ever made, I was reminded of my own first encounter as a young child, staring perplexed as to why the Nintendo shaped present I had expected actually resembled a drum kit. To me, that tiny Kestrel four piece was an imposturous usurper, unwanted and unloved.

By way of contrast, this lead me to assume that 1996 was a good year for Richard Colburn. After all, the album about which he is speaking is Belle and Sebastian’s debut Tiger Milk. It represents the beginning of an enviable drumming career which would come to span several other seminal albums, relentless touring and sell out performances at many of the world’s most iconic venues, all born from the love and appreciation of an instrument that captivated him from the off. Or so I assumed.

Words by Tom Hoare



The Opening Frame

“It’s funny how things work out.” I nod in agreement. “I got my first kit when I was 11, but I never really touched it. My whole family are musical. I’m actually a fourth generation drummer – my dad was a drummer, his dad was a drummer and his uncle was a drummer. My granddad owned the oldest music shop in Scotland. I was the message boy in the shop, but sometimes when you’re force fed something as a kid you want to do the opposite...” He pauses for a second before continuing.

“I remember playing five instruments when I was at school – violin, trumpet, piano, orchestral percussion...” Another pause. “Something else too, I forget, and then I gave them all up at a certain point because it was too much, so I ended up, bizarrely enough, almost becoming a pro snooker player. That was a sort of rebellion against the music – I found I was quite good at that.” He sits back and takes a drink.

I’d never really have considered snooker a form of teenage revolt prior talking to Richard. For a lot of people I suppose the drum set is the rebellion – it easily lends itself to being loud and invasive. Snooker, or at least, any snooker matches I have witnessed, tend not to be wrought with adolescent angst. If ever Steven Hendry had a Slayer badge sewn into his waistcoat he kept it well hidden.

“I guess, for people on the outside looking in, maybe backwards isn’t the word, but my case is the opposite. I was brought up with music so the thing that was unattainable was all around me. It was normal, so I ended up doing other things. It was in my early 20s when I started playing again in a local band in Perth, but I soon got fed up of that too. I wanted to go into the music industry in a different way. I worked in a few bars, did sound engineering at a college in Perth then found out about a music business course at Stow College in Glasgow.

“When I moved through to Glasgow I ended up in a flat with Stuart David, an original member of Belle and Sebastian. He was writing songs with Stuart Murdoch, another original member, and they’d rehearse in the flat. I remember the guy who was due to play drums didn’t turn up. I was just sitting around so they said, ‘Do you want to play?’ And I was like, ‘If I have to.’ So I ended up, somehow, playing drums for them. But I wasn’t really there to do that, I wasn’t bothered actually.” He grins and sits back in his chair.

“So becoming a drummer wasn’t a case of childhood aspiration and personal fulfillment then?” “Far from it,” he answers. “I was probably about 25 before I started playing with any ambition. I was a really late starter, a really, really late starter. It’s kind of funny because my first experience of drumming was recording in a studio. It’s odd because a lot of people play for years and years and then something happens to them. With me it was the opposite, I just started and it was in a studio, so I could hear every nuance and what’s good and bad about yourself and it’s like ‘Jesus! Argh!’” He recoils with a horrified expression before continuing. “The problem is you don’t know how to fix it because you don’t have the experience. I was thinking, ‘What the hell am I doing?!’ I mean Tiger Milk was done

in a week. You can probably hear it’s a bit rushed. There were definitely no inklings of success because I couldn’t really play, it was just kind of thrown together. We had no idea it was going to get released, we weren’t even that bothered, it was more like, ‘My God, we’re maybe going to have a record, there might only be a thousand copies, who cares if anyone buys it, I’ve got my name on something’ – that was the ambition.”

Alterations

It was at this point I noticed that I was now not the only one listening to Richard speak. The small room in which we are sat is a sort of annexe to the main bar area and so the resulting decrease in ambient noise means exchanges are easily overheard. There are only three or four other tables in this room, and ours was positioned in front of a set of French doors which opened onto more outdoor seating. The

other seats had remained pretty much vacant, or so I thought until I noticed that the people who now occupied them were looking eagerly over to our table following the conversation. The occupants seated around a small table through the open doors, having all previously had their backs turned, now all mysteriously faced into the room.

Prior to the interview I had wondered about Richard’s public profile. For a long time the band refused to do interviews. “Dylan did it and it worked for him,” was the explanation. Whilst this policy would change, and many of the band’s members would begin appearing in interviews for a wide variety of fanzines, magazines and newspapers, it dawned on me that, on my way to the pub where we had arranged to meet, I was unsure what he looked like given that the most recent picture I could find of him was probably taken at least 10 years ago.

♦♦♦

“WITH BELLE AND
SEBASTIAN, THE ETHOS
WE’VE HAD IS IF YOU’RE
NEVER IN FASHION
YOU’RE NEVER OUT OF
FASHION.”

♦♦♦



...

“MY LIMBS
AND MY
MUSCLES HAVE
CHANGED,
EVERYTHING
HAS CHANGED
ABOUT ME.”

...



In part, these notions formed one of two reasons I had been interested to hear Richard talk about his development as a drummer. Firstly, his playing would become more polished with each subsequent album, mirroring the development of Belle and Sebastian as a band. Secondly, and inversely, whilst the profile of the band would escalate, Richard would remain in relative anonymity. Belle and Sebastian are often held alongside bands such as Nirvana and the Smashing Pumpkins as having produced some of the best albums of the 1990s. The drummers from these bands need little introduction. In contrast, this was Richard's first drum interview.

I was surprised when he told me this. If you listen to any Belle and Sebastian album, you'll hear how the drums sit under the vocals and melody with a reserved tastefulness that many may argue is one of the most difficult things any drummer can accomplish. I ask him how he was able to do this having, essentially, no previous playing experience.

"One of the key things starting out was that Stuart was such a quiet singer and his vocal timing was quite strange. He used to sing quite a bit away from the microphone and use a vocal dynamic so we all had wedges on stage but it was feed back central. So, I used brushes - for years and years I never used sticks, and I realised after a while that it's one of the best things you could ever do. It's unbelievable. It helps you play dynamically under somebody's vocal. I used to get really annoyed and be like 'I want to use sticks!' But with hindsight, I'm thinking 'thank God I didn't' because I don't hit the drums too hard. I still have a lot of respect for the guys who can leather it though. I couldn't do what they do but I don't think they could do what I do either. So I did two or three albums using brushes, then it got to the point where we caught up with technology and realised 'Fuck! We can use in-ear monitors and stuff! Oh Ok! Sticks? Wow! Ok!' I swear I rehearsed for two whole years with brushes (laughs). Crazy!

"If you listen to a lot of records from the 60s the drums are mixed low down, even though they might not have been played lightly, they've been mixed lightly. So you have this top, mid, bottom and the drums are always lying in the bottom and Stuart was always into that. So I had no option to play like that or I'd drown everybody out, so the louder I play, the less I hear. It's like an automatic response, I have to play at a certain level or I can't hear what is going on around me. I'm still trying to learn how to hit the drums hard! But you're no bigger than the song, as soon as you're bigger than the song then you lose the whole point of it, especially the way Stuart sang which was quite delicate. It was always about the drums trying to sit underneath him and to create a dynamic."

Perceptions

We spend the next 15 or so minutes talking about notions of style, and a few familiar names begin cropping up. These range from technical virtuosos such as Freddie Gruber and Joe Morello, to seminal studio and session guys such as Hal Blaine and Jim Gordon. As we were on the thread of famous drummers, I ask how he feels about his own status as a musician.

"I didn't really think of myself as a drummer as such. I never really rated my own playing so I never thought of myself as a professional. I suppose in the last few years, touring with other bands, I started to that think 'maybe I'm getting away with it.'"

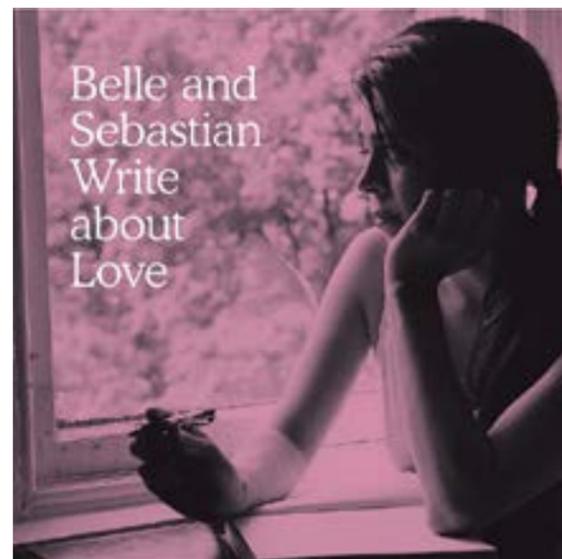
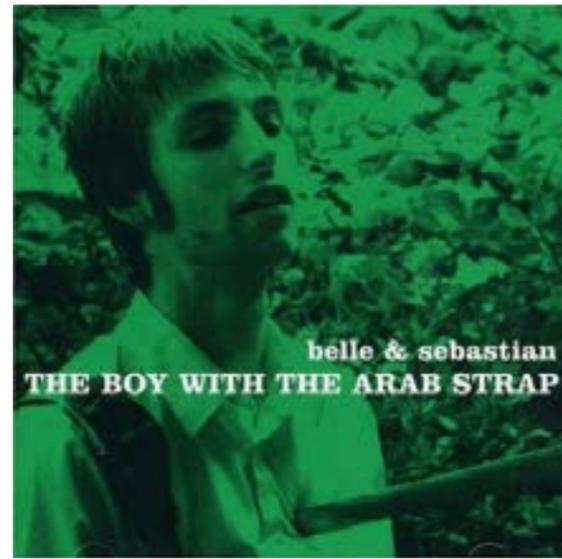
Though he finished this sentence with a trademark grin, the 'other bands' to which he refers are namely Snow Patrol, The Reindeer Section and Tired Pony. All these bands are not exactly low key, and despite refuting my remarks about becoming a session drummer, it becomes clear that the catalogue of records to which he has contributed would make most very envious. I ask if he has any endorsements, and he replies that he only quite recently became endorsed by Highwood Drums and Percussion, Vic Firth sticks and Paiste cymbals. I enquire as to why this was only a recent development.

"With Belle and Sebastian, the ethos we've had is if you're never in fashion you're never out of fashion. The Foo Fighters, Smashing Pumpkins, when they've been at the height of popularity that music has been the music of choice. They were big musical movements like grunge was. We came

in when Brit Pop was big. We were never ever fashionable so we didn't have that profile. When you look back to NME and Melody Maker when they had a best musician of the year poll, all the top musicians came from the bands that sold the most. We never sold a huge amount compared to these bands and we were never as fashionable, so you kind of get left behind a bit."

I set my empty glass down on the table. Noticing this, Richard promptly says "Staropramen?" getting up to go to the bar before I could give him an answer. His own drink remains mostly untouched. I read this as a sign that, like most drummers, he enjoys talking about drums because he takes great interest in what he does. Listening to him talk about himself as a drummer had made it clear that his attitude towards playing has changed significantly since he first began. When he returns, I ask how he thinks his playing today has changed.

◆◆◆
 "YOU'VE GOT TO GET
 BETTER. NO BAND
 WILL LAST FOREVER,
 SO WHAT DO YOU
 DO AFTER THAT?"
 ◆◆◆



...
“YOU CAN'T BE
PETER PAN, YOU
CAN'T ALWAYS BE
AT THAT POINT
IN YOUR LIFE.”
...

From left to right, top to bottom

- [1996] If You're Feeling Sinister
- [1998] The Boy with the Arab Strap
- [2000] Fold your Hands Child, you Walk like a Peasant
- [2002] Storytelling

- Dear Catastrophe Waitress [2003]
- Push Barman to Open Old Wounds [2005]
- The Life Pursuit [2006]
- Belle & Sebastian Write about Love [2010]

“I maybe still kept a little bit of something from the first two albums but I’m a world away in terms of being relaxed, which is the biggest key, and just being comfortable in my surroundings. I know exactly what to expect as the chemistry in the band has been created over 15 years now. In the studio, I mean, for me anyway, now I’m so comfortable with it that you can actually concentrate on the song instead of freaking out about ‘am I playing this right?’ All of a sudden that’s out of the window and it’s just like ‘relax, totally let it go, and be confident with what’s going on’ rather than thinking a million things which is a bad sign. I think then it was about being in a band and being in a gang, whereas now I want to have a career in it, I want to be playing until I die kinda thing, because to do that you’ve got to get better. No band will last forever, so what do you do after that?”

“We started using clicks which is something we never did before. There were always certain songs I

said which would work with a click and songs that wouldn’t. With the most recent album (Belle and Sebastian Write About Love), we pretty much did most things with a click which is very unlike Belle and Sebastian. I was crap at it for years. I don’t know what happened but I managed to get my head around it. I practice a lot with clicks now just on a practice pad. I wish I’d started doing it a lot earlier, though when we started out the band was the antithesis of click tracks so there is no way I would have touched it, but I’m glad in the last wee while I started to use a metronome because you quite quickly get into it and start naturally being able to play along with it.

“Fills and stuff can be quite hard because if you go from a verse to a chorus it’s an exciting part of the song so naturally you speed up, and that’s great, but with a click you learn how to reign it in. A chorus is more exciting than a verse, that’s the way it is, that’s rock and roll from the 1950s onwards, that’s the exciting bit of music, it’s like...big fill!” (Mimes a big six stroke fill complete with duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh sound effect.) “It’s bang, and you’re in. That’s what it should do but with the click it’s different. It’s a bit more difficult because you’re still trying to do that but flatline it as well. There’s that ability to play behind and in front of the beat but sill play the beat, but not so it’s half a beat out, then it’s like ‘oh God!’”

PROMO POSTER: BELLE & SEBASTIAN’S ‘THE BOWLIE WEEKENDER’

cinema		videos	
friday			
11.00pm	gotta love	10pm	the straggle
1.00am	around of a city?	11pm	around the world
3.00am	music	12pm	the video
saturday			
10.00am	50-50 with love	10pm	the straggle
12.00pm	around of a city?	11pm	around the world
2.00pm	music	12pm	the video
4.00pm	50-50 with love	1.00pm	around of a city?
6.00pm	around of a city?	3.00pm	music
8.00pm	50-50 with love	5.00pm	around of a city?
10.00pm	around of a city?	7.00pm	music
12.00am	50-50 with love	9.00pm	around of a city?
1.00am	around of a city?	11.00pm	music
sunday			
10.00am	the unbelievable truth	10pm	around of a city?
12.00pm	around of a city?	11pm	around the world
2.00pm	the young man	12pm	the video
4.00pm	around of a city?	1.00pm	around of a city?
6.00pm	a head de moule	3.00pm	music
8.00pm	around of a city?	5.00pm	around of a city?
10.00pm	around of a city?	7.00pm	music
12.00am	around of a city?	9.00pm	around of a city?
1.00am	around of a city?	11.00pm	music

the bowlie weekender
friday 23rd april - sunday 25th april

enertainment guide

Music will be projected in the pool room.
The video channel can be found on your digital television set.

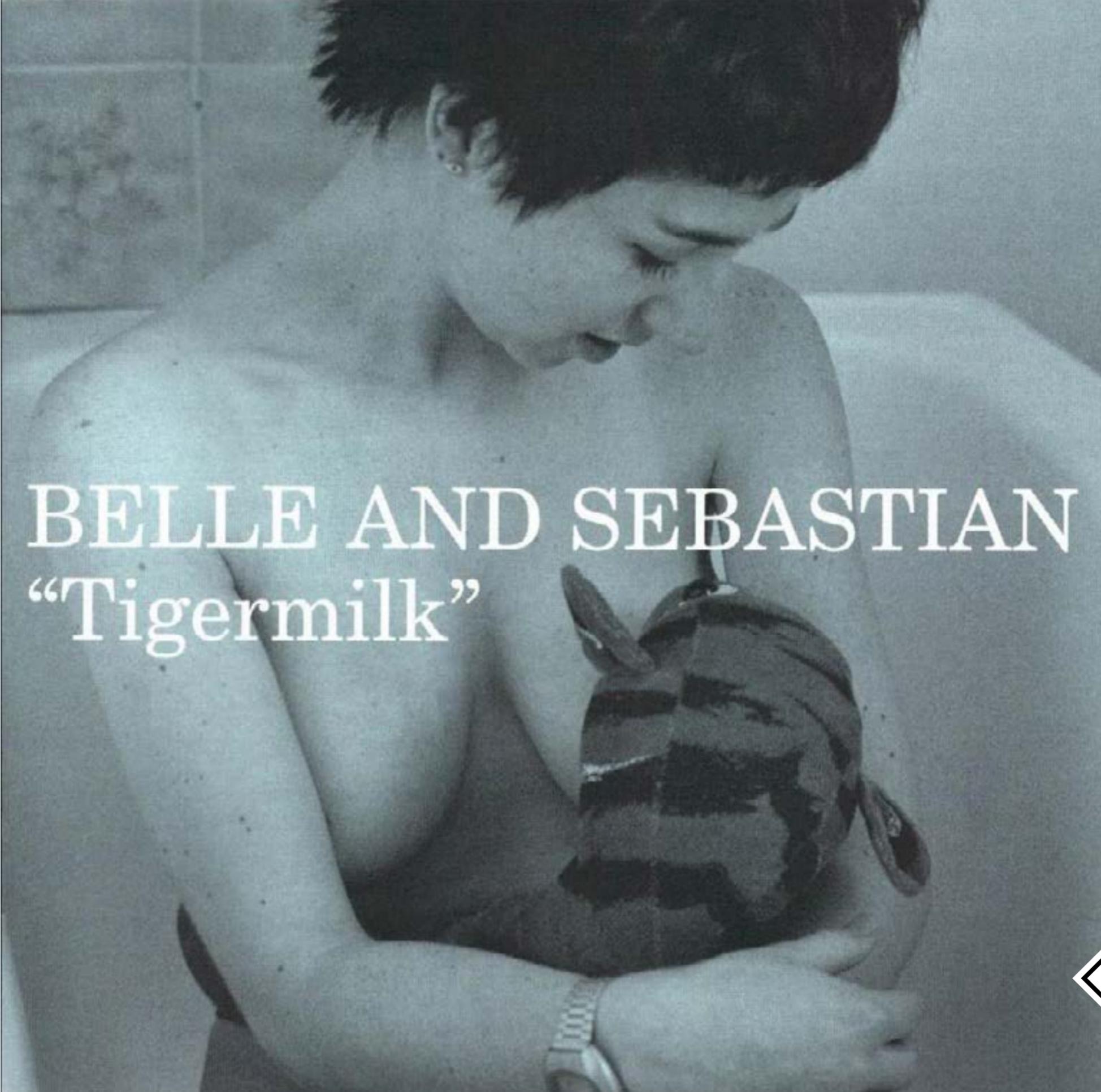
further information
The football league will take place on saturday afternoon.
ADDITIONAL activities will include krazy golf, go-karting, shooting, swimming and tennis. some activities may incur a small charge.

a promotional event, sponsored by lateral productions

Reflections

One of the reasons that undoubtedly gave Belle and Sebastian such a loyal fan base was the emotional responses the lyrics and melodies would evoke in the listener. The first three albums, Tiger Milk, If You’re Feeling Sinister, and The Boy With The Arab Strap in particular possess an almost cultish status in the Belle and Sebastian back catalogue. I was interested to hear, given many people’s strong emotional attachment to these records, Richard’s own feelings on what those records represented for him personally. I had read somewhere that Stuart Murdoch had reportedly said that he felt the songs he would be best known for were behind him, and I wondered if Richard felt the same.

“I think I didn’t really understand what was going on at the time. I remember the first time Tiger Milk was played on the radio. It was Mark Radcliffe when he had a show four nights a week on Radio One, and he played it one night. We’d had 1000 copies cut. 500 went to press and the other 500 we just distributed by hand to independent record shops, so I never thought for a second anything would happen. Then, one night we’re all sitting in someone’s flat with the radio on and Radcliffe came out with a huge speech about it. It was nuts. I didn’t realise anyone knew what it was. With If You’re Feeling Sinister, the second album, I think I had more of an idea something might happen as it was more of a band record. The thing that is engaging about the first two records is Stuart’s song writing



BELLE AND SEBASTIAN

“Tigermilk”

because it's all him. It's all his ideas and he's dictating how people play. I think that's what makes them different from the rest, so by the time the third album, *The Boy With The Arab Strap*, was out there was a change in chemistry. The first two records are all him.

“I think the change was also about Stuart not wanting to take all the strain. I think Stuart got to the point where he was like, ‘The spotlight has been on me for two records, and it's got to change,’ and I think there was a couple of people in the band thinking, ‘What are we here? Are we just your backing band? What is this?’ So it was suggested that Stevie and Isobel write songs too, which meant *The Boy with the Arab Strap* became the first record to be influenced by others in the band.”

“I think the first record, or the first two records you put out will always have something you can never get back, because you either improve or go in a different direction so its impossible to do what you can do 10 years ago, for better or for worse. For example, there's one song on *Tigermilk* called *My Wandering Days Are Over*, I have this really bizarre drum fill at the end and it sounds like the drums are falling down the stairs, but somehow it works. I always try to replicate it but I can never do it. I think it's some sort of triplet, bizarre, really bizarre, and I think I just dropped a stick or something and it just worked out.

There's a few moments like that, I think it's what made that record really good. I didn't know what I was doing back then, but like what I was saying about the fill - I still can't do it, I've gotten too far ahead. My limbs and my muscles have changed, everything has changed about me. Back then I had no real ability and no real control, I was just flailing about. Sometimes when I did something I'd be like, ‘What was that?’ But I can't do it anymore! What's more annoying though is when people say, ‘I liked your first record but I think you've lost it.’ Well, of course we've changed! If you're making your first record to last your whole career, it's impossible. You can't be Peter Pan, you can't always be at that point in your life.”



With the interview more or less at a close, Richard's wife, Jolyne, joined us for a drink as Richard talked about his upcoming touring schedule playing drums and percussion for Snow Patrol. Though Jolyne looked mildly displeased to hear of the tour's extensiveness, it is at least a sign that Richard still very much appreciates life as a drummer. When I get home I consider scouring eBay

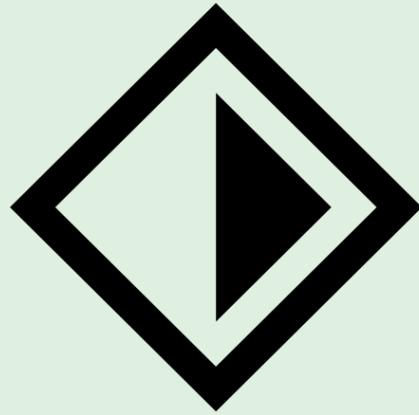
for a Nintendo, but in the end I don't bother. What he said about Peter Pan makes me think I should move on and get over it. Instead, I turn on the TV. The snooker's on. Richard's right – it is often funny how things work out, though I imagine if you're a Belle and Sebastian fan, you can't help thinking things worked out well.

♦♦♦

MY WANDERING DAYS ARE OVER

[@ 4:20, 158BPM]

The musical score consists of five staves of drum notation. The first staff shows a melodic line with four accents (<) over the first four notes. The second staff is labeled "GROOVE 1" and shows a single groove. The third and fourth staves are labeled "GROOVE 1 x 3" and show three repetitions of the groove. The fifth staff is labeled "GROOVE 1 x 7" and shows seven repetitions of the groove. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accents, and triplet markings.



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RETIREMENT

BILL BRUFORD

Words by Tom Hoare and Iain Ballamy



Bill Bruford has retired. His website explicitly states this and kindly directs journalists to consult a reading list before requesting interviews. The reading list is divided into several subheadings, each of which house the relevant books and articles relating to the titular subject. These are: 'Progressive Rock In General,' 'Yes,' 'King Crimson/Robert Fripp,' and 'Genesis.' If you were unsure of the scale of Bill's musical background, a glance at this list will testify to its extensiveness.

So after all this, what, having becoming one of the most respected drummers of all time, do you do with your retirement? Write a book? Alas, the fifth and final subheading is simply entitled 'Bill Bruford' and refers the inquisitive to his biography published in 2009.

I can't quite remember how I discovered he had enrolled as a PhD candidate at the University of Surrey, but in all honesty, I wasn't particularly surprised to hear of it. During the last three years he has adopted a stage of a different sort and has delivered lectures in the UK, the US and Scandinavia, mostly concerning the drum set's relationship with creativity and musicianship. His PhD is based on a similar theme.

Taking heed of the reading list, I sent out an email. What follows is the result.

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The Drummer's Journal: So what has prompted you to probe the depths of your psyche and ask the question most never dare to ask, 'why do drummers do what they do and what have I spent my life doing?'

Bill Bruford: What I always liked to try to do when I was a player was make something of a contribution – no matter how tiny – to the understanding of drumming and drummers, what they do, what we expect or want them to do, what might be possible or acceptable tomorrow. I guess you could call me a 'big-picture' kinda guy, but you'd have to do so in an American accent. After many years I realised I knew nothing about it, so replaced my sticks with a quill pen and now live in a library. Maybe I'll find something under the desk that I can share with my colleagues.

Is that question not a little dangerous? We can't change the past and supposing you are not happy with the answer?

Researchers don't have to be happy. I'm framing a question, which will generate a thesis, with several hypotheses, which I shall try to prove or disprove, and then I'll need a pint.

Are you a religious man?

Well, I'm a lapsed atheist. I tried, honestly, but I'm just no good at it. I tried shopping on Sundays, but I just couldn't get into it. If Sunday is a choice between God and shopping, I know which one frightens me the least.

Do you see the separate phases of your life with a sense of continuum or as separate chapters or even separate lives?

I've always seen our allotted time here on the planet as a straight line but tragically short; over in a flash. So perhaps one of my many faults was to have been in too much of a hurry.

Do you feel a different person now you have stopped being a musician and become a student?

No, much the same old Bruford. My broadband hasn't got





any faster! I rate slow broadband as one of the key agents in the demise of Earthworks. I was unable to buy plane tickets within an acceptable timeframe. My blood pressure is probably lower now. Attending gigs and concerts as a civilian is rough work, though. If the music is any good I want to play. If it isn't I want to leave. Either makes me a terrible evening out.

What've you learned about yourself and others through music?

I'm very admiring of those musicians who are at peace with their contribution, and able to live with it. I became increasingly riddled with self-doubt, and the maggots of inadequacy. [Is that a good name for a neo-punk outfit – the Maggots of Inadequacy?] For some people - Tim Garland, Gwil Simcock, Asaf Sirkis, to name the last three I've seen - the effort becomes effortless, and the music just seems to pour out. Appearances can be deceptive, of course,

and underneath the serenity I suspect, like a duck's legs below the waterline, some are paddling very fast.

If you had your time as a bandleader again, is there anything you would do differently?

No, it was brilliant. You hire the best guys you can bribe to play with you, and get a free music lesson a nightly basis. Without exception everyone who went through my two bands Bruford and Earthworks gave of their best with unstinting generosity. I'm getting weepy. Got a tissue?

Can you articulate how you see the scene and orientation of a musician as having changed or is it still the same as it ever was but just in a different age?

Some levels just the same, some levels all different. The age old

struggle with wood, gut, drumstick, plectrum and mouthpiece remains intact. It's going to take you 10,000 hours before you get reasonably good. But the context in which the outcome of that struggle is 'monetised' - as we used to say here at Lehman Brothers - is frighteningly different. And this social networking thing has got to stop. Luckily younger, wiser people than I don't care about any of this. They have a laudable ability to just get on with it.

Drummer jokes apart, is there an innate feeling of inequality with other musicians or is that a thing of the past?

A band is only as good as its drummer, it's been said. If the drummer's hopeless, you're dead in the water. On the other hand, if he's good, he can get you through a terrible evening. But yes, after decades of having their contribution denigrated, I think the drum community generally - if I could be so bold as to speak for an entire community



- could be forgiven for having developed a small but tangible sense of inferiority. They've over-compensated, of course, by becoming highly proficient and often very successful writers and producers, whether you're at the Phil Collins, Freddie White, Neil Peart end, or the Gary Husband, Jack DeJohnette, the late Paul Motian or Peter Erskine end. So look out...

Are drummers disenfranchised by computer programming and generic popular music genres which deploy an 'ever diminishing selection of beats and tempi?'

Recent research from Bristol University confirms that popular music is getting louder and more repetitive. What drummers used to do and should do is dynamics, but there's not much call for that these days. I expect my research to confirm that drummers live in a world of homogenised rhythm despatched within a diminishing number of metres and within a diminishing range of tempi revolving around the celebrated 120 b.p.m. – the default tempo of much electronic kit when it comes out of the box. These are indeed challenging times for the creative drummer living under the tyranny of the backbeat in a commercial world, as I was telling the students at Kingston University the other day. The discourse tends to revolve around "is your hi-hat sample better than mine?"

So is there a revolution around the corner? When and how might that happen?

We could start by banning the words 'jazz' and 'rock', which

cause a whole lot of trouble.

I have never met another musician who retired. Nobody does that through choice, usually a musician dies at the hotel, on stage, or on the road. Has this almost unprecedented and original act made your contemporaries uncomfortable

in that you have dared to do something that others wouldn't?

I'm not sure anyone is uncomfortable about anything, least of all me. Retiring, of course, implies that you can afford to do so, and I guess that can attract suspicion. I think too many of us are obliged to continue for financial reasons only, which is a shame. The stadia of the world are clogged with geriatric rockers, who tend to prevent the emergence of young blood. The older guys are effectively institutionalised and now know no other life. If they don't get a proper hotel and a wake-up call they don't know what to do. I loved Max Roach's playing. Someone sent me a CD of his latest music shortly before he died, and it was tragic. I didn't want to remember him like that. You could

see daylight between him and the bass player. I never could see the appeal of dying in a hotel room.

So in 70,000 words time when you have finished your PhD on why you did what you have done with your life, what next? A trout farm perhaps?

I thought I might look at psychiatry.

♦ ♦ ♦

**"SO IS THERE A
REVOLUTION AROUND THE
CORNER? WHEN AND HOW
MIGHT THAT HAPPEN?"**

**"WE COULD START BY
BANNING THE WORDS
'JAZZ' AND 'ROCK',
WHICH CAUSE A WHOLE
LOT OF TROUBLE."**

♦ ♦ ♦



AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE



WHERE ARE THE ADS?

Well, we made a decision not to include any in the first issue to show we're not in it just to make a quick buck. We're creating something sustainable, a magazine whose worth isn't measured in sales figures, where each and every issue is better than the last; a magazine, as drummers, we're proud to call our own.

If you want to be involved or affiliated then get in touch.



OUT ON A LIMB

A CONVERSATION WITH EDDIE PREVOST

In north London, a group of people have gathered outside a small, inconspicuous café. Inside, the café is dark and its doors are locked. There are murmurings of last minute cancellation and a tangible air of disappointment descends. “Doors should have opened by now,” someone suggests. “It’s getting late.” But, despite the time, no one leaves and, gradually, the group of people become a small crowd. A light flickers on and a key turns in the lock. “I knew they’d never cancel.” People file through the doors and sit at a series of small coffee tables arranged in a semi circular fashion around an area where a saxophone, a double bass and a drum kit stand unattended. Lights are dimmed and candles are lit. It’s very quiet; the only noticeable noise being the faint drone of the covers band playing in the pub next door. “They should finish at 10,” someone whispers. I look at my watch. 21:55. 21:57. 22:03. Silence. Then, three men, John Butcher, Guillaume Viltard and Eddie Prévost enter and attend their instruments.

Words by Tom Hoare





The next two hours are hard to describe. I can only liken it to trying to decipher the meaning of this sentence had the words been jumbled up and the letters twisted out of shape. This is most likely because it was my first real encounter witnessing a totally improvisational free jazz performance.

Do not interpret my inability to articulate the evening's proceedings as something negative. Eddie, like his fellow players, is an amazingly talented musician. As a drummer and percussionist he's performed with an eye-opening array of musicians from all over the world as well as playing in his own improvisational group AAM. Though he would most likely refute it, Eddie has been at the forefront of taking percussion beyond what is thought conventional and has an ability to make a percussive instrument produce sounds that are nothing short of remarkable. After the gig, we arranged to speak further on the phone. Here's what was said.



The Drummer's Journal: I imagine you've talked about this at length, but what was it about the drum set that initially interested you?

Eddie Prevost: I don't think I've ever really talked about that before actually. I started off playing traditional jazz then modern jazz, and then got into some more experimental stuff. So the drum kit, I guess, is simply a means of expression. It's something very physical that I like doing. It's a vehicle I use to express my musical ideas and I'm very attached to the physicality of it as much as anything else.

Did your interest in jazz go on to shape your interest in free improvisation?

Don't forget that what we now call free improvisation didn't exist when I started playing. There were people doing these kinds of experiments for a long time, but a lot of it was under wraps. It was thought very un-commercial and so very little was available. It's only in recent times that the experimentalism of west coast musicians such as Shelly Mann and Jimmy Giuffre became obtainable.

TITLE PAGE:
TOP, PREVOST,
1984 & BOTTOM,
1979

LEFT:
INCONSPICUOUS
CAFE, LONDON

Was the socio-political climate of the 1960s anyway tied into what you were doing?

It was part a zeitgeist and there was a sense of liberation. I grew up in the early days of the welfare state when education and healthcare was fully available to all. I grew up in a generation who had much more freedom than previous generations. We maybe took it for granted but we were living in a different world from our parents. More money was available and the economy grew because young people had money to spend. I was part of that. But I didn't appreciate it at the time. (Laughs)

How do you perceive the drum kits role in contemporary music making today?

I suppose in the latter part of the 20th century, percussion came to the fore. There were lots of new percussive and symphonic works – Stockhausen for example, which liberated the drums as an instrument. Now they've been partially superseded by electronics and computers; that's what the youngsters go for to be adventurous. You can still be adventurous with a drum kit of course, but these things come in waves, and the current wave is bending towards digital technology.

Do you still see scope for it to develop further as an instrument?

In what sense?

Well, I've heard opinions that make it seem like the drum kit has had its day and there is not a lot more it can offer music in terms of originality, any more than it has done so already, at least.

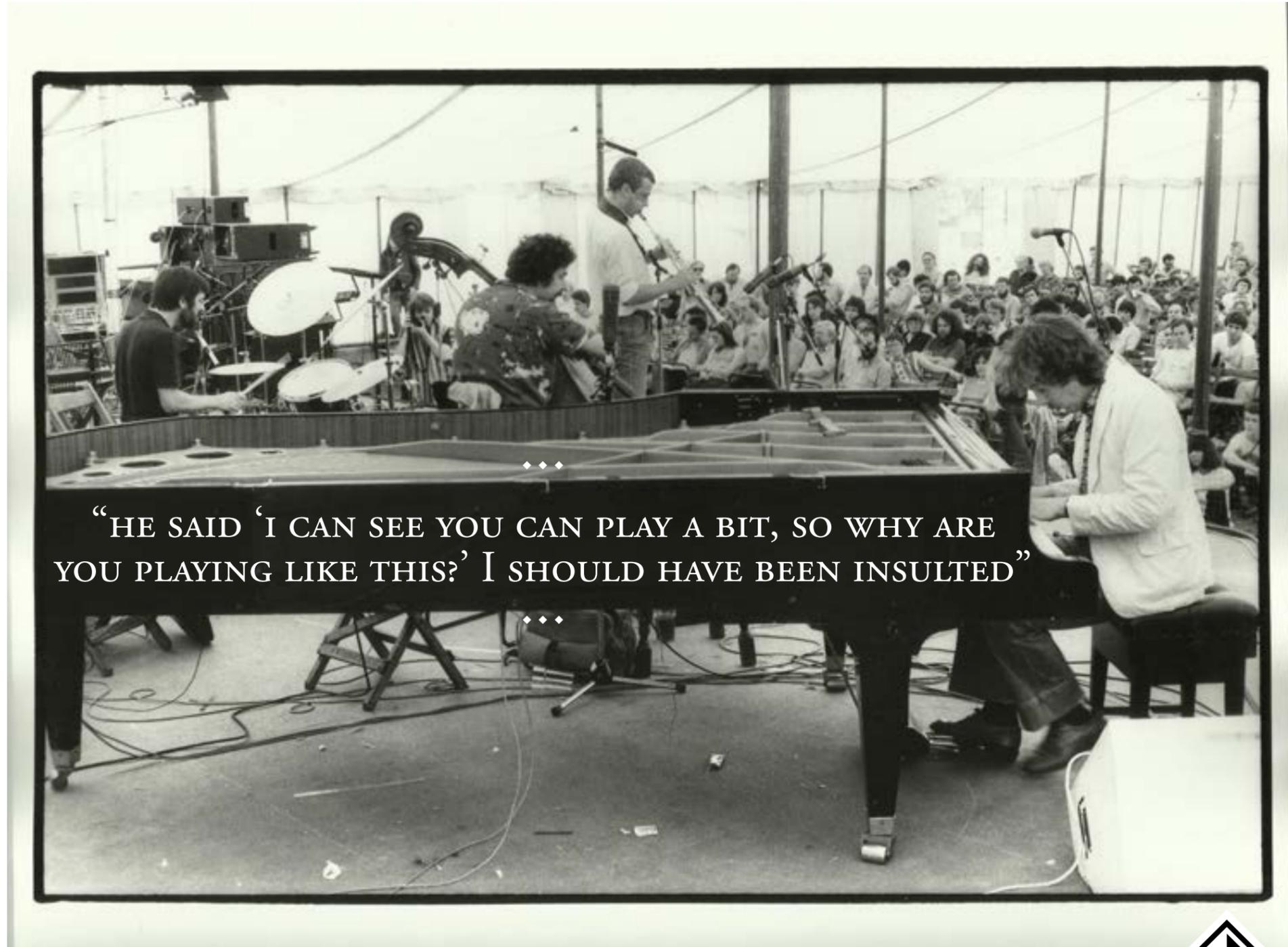
Is that what you think?

No.

It's just something that you heard?

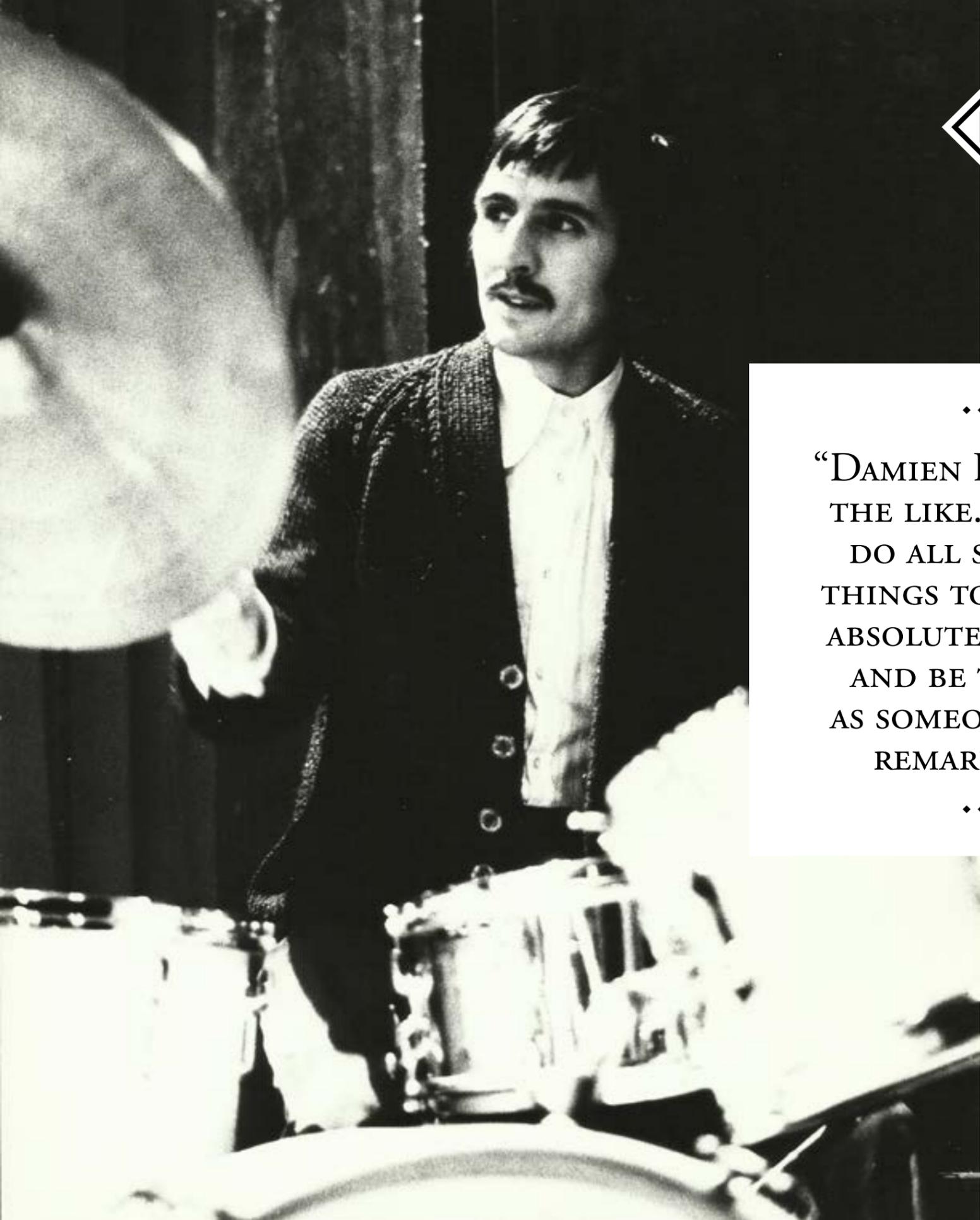
If I did think that was the case, I probably wouldn't have chosen to start a drum magazine. But it is an opinion I've heard people express, yes.

Ok. Well to say it can offer nothing more presupposes that people don't have an imagination. The drum kit hasn't become intrinsically sterile



“HE SAID ‘I CAN SEE YOU CAN PLAY A BIT, SO WHY ARE YOU PLAYING LIKE THIS?’ I SHOULD HAVE BEEN INSULTED”

EDDIE PREVOST QUARTET, 1983



♦♦♦

“DAMIEN HIRST AND
THE LIKE. YOU CAN
DO ALL SORTS OF
THINGS TO MAKE AN
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AND BE TREATED
AS SOMEONE QUITE
REMARKABLE”

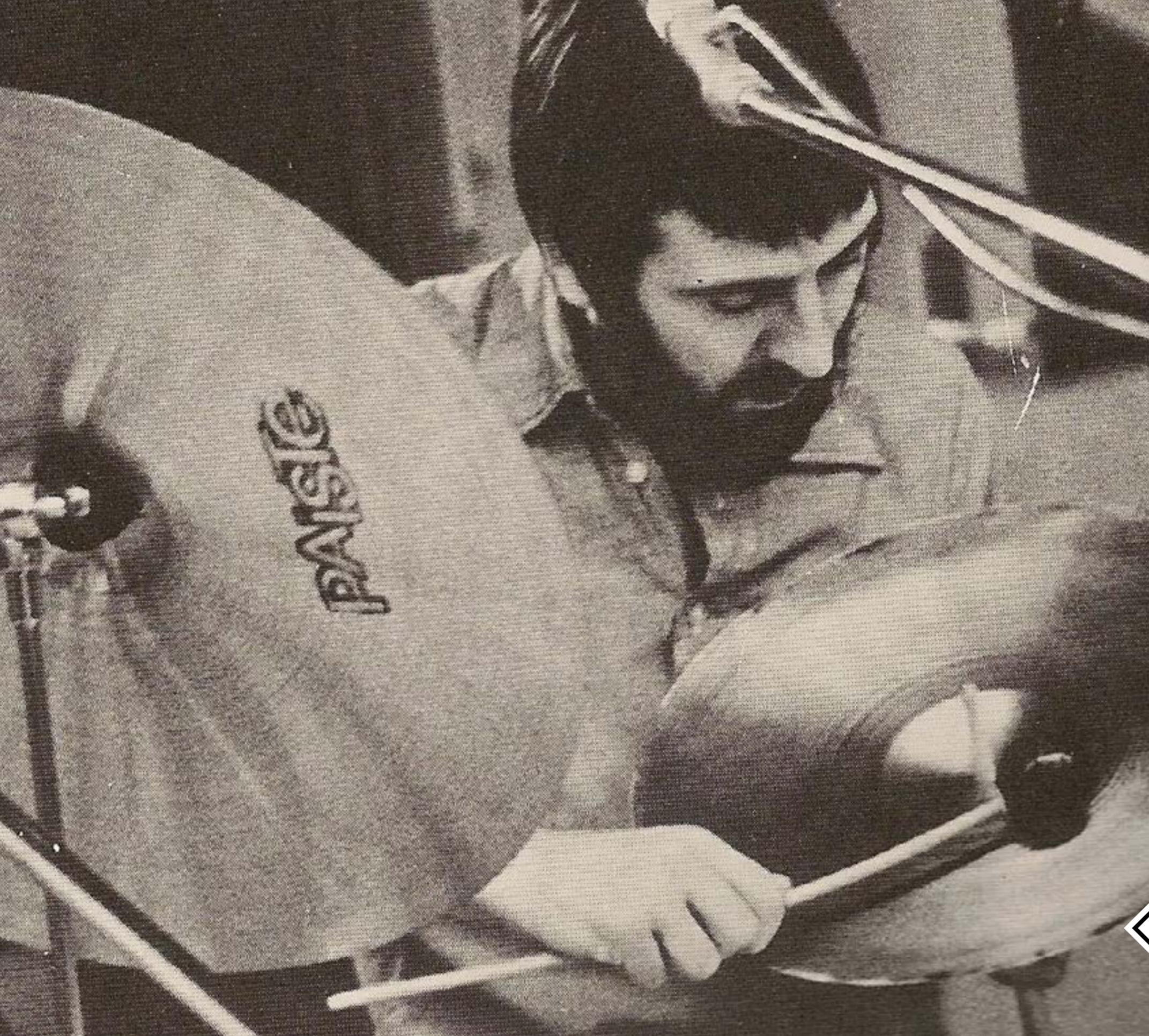
♦♦♦

PREVOST, 1970

or unable to be a vehicle for imagination – imagination can take on any vehicle be it a violin or a spinet. You can be just as adventurous with a spinet as you can with a laptop computer. The vehicle doesn't matter; it's still just down to the imagination and a sense of adventure. I reject the idea that just because lots of stuff has been done it's all finished with because that's clearly nonsense. But I do see why people might say that and it's a very narrow view of creativity. You're getting into the realms of fashion, where somebody seems to have exhausted an enterprise and so they go on and - I hate this word - reinvent themselves. What that really means is that they've run out of imagination and ideas doing one thing so rather than stick with it they just switch material and, superficially, can appear to be doing something new. The idea of being creative is not confined by the means of productivity or the means of expression. The whole idea of creativity should get beyond all those stupid things. You should be able to be creative with a paper and comb.

Do you ever see the drum kit as more than an instrument, in the sense that it can encapsulate certain ideas or trains of thought?

The evolution of the drum kit is fascinating, because it's comprised of the constituent parts from marching bands. The bass drum was carried by one person and the snare drum by another. In the New Orleans period they were brought together and assembled into a traps kit. Pedals were put on the bass drum and a machine called a hi-hat took over the idea of hand held cymbals. It emerged into one instrument, but really it's a series of instruments all put together and one person plays them. So it's a fascinating evolution and it got lodged, in the early days, with being an appropriate rhythmic accompaniment to the jazz of the time. By the time you get to the be-bop era, well earlier than that really, you get yourself into a situation where, rather than just keeping time, the thing has become a vehicle for virtuosity. Originally it was people like Baby Dodds, for example, and then people such as Buddy Rich, Elvin Jones and Maxx Roach. It became a vehicle where people could express more than straight forward rhythm. To the new sensibility they could make music on it. I don't see why that should have changed. With the advent of Rock 'n Roll and industrial pop music, it has got lodged into a specific way of being approached. I despair watching and listening to a lot of current rock. Most of it hasn't moved on in 40 or



♦♦♦

“FOR MY MONEY,
THE TWO THINGS AN
IMPROVISER SHOULD
ATTEND TO IS, FIRSTLY,
THE IDEA OF SEARCHING
FOR NEW MATERIAL,
AND, SECONDLY, THE
COLLABORATIVE OR
DIALOGICAL NATURE OF
THE MUSIC, I.E. WORKING
WITH OTHER PEOPLE.”

♦♦♦

50 years! There's nothing wrong with that, but it'd be a travesty to think of that as anything to do with creativity. They're just treading in the footsteps of those who have already made breakthroughs in rock and jazz drumming in the past. But there is still room for people to be inventive and push the instrument beyond what's expected. In fact, many years ago I did a gig, similar to the one you were at the other night...

Yes, I enjoyed it, thanks.

...and I remember being approached afterwards by a guy, I guess he was a drummer, who said "I can see you can play a bit, so why are you playing like this?" In way, I suppose I should have been insulted but I suspect he'd not seen anybody play the drums the way I do before. It begs some interesting questions about how fixed people are in their responses about what they think should happen with the drum kit. But it applies to all instruments. When a regular saxophone player, who has maybe had their training at one of these music colleges hears John Butcher, if they've not been exposed to those kind of musicians before they will wonder what on earth they are doing. It'll look like they are playing a totally different instrument. And the same applies to the drum kit.

So you think drummers, as musicians, have a pre defined role in terms of what they're expected to do?

Yes, I would say that's the case and there are positive and less positive sides to that. The drum kit has been in people's systems for a number of years now and people come to expect that it should do certain things. It has a history, it has a tradition and people either embrace or reject that. All the great drummers have always pushed the boundaries and the reason you know they've done that is because we've become so identified with the sounds that the drum kit should make. Instead, it should always be evolving. That's the beauty of the kind of the music that we're talking about. That's what appealed to me when I first got interested in jazz. I don't know if you can go back to the point where you first heard jazz and the solos, but it was like 'in the middle, what are they doing there?' There's a song then suddenly all this other stuff happens! That is, of course, the inventive bit. I mean, I'm simplifying it, but that's the bit that intrigued me and will continue to intrigue most creative people.



CLOCKWISE:
PREVOST IN 1982,
1973 & 1991



Do you think that improvisation, as an approach to making music, is sometimes misunderstood or misconceived in any way?

That's a difficult question to answer. To be honest I don't know. I am aware of incomprehension, like what I said about being approached after the concert before. Maybe the thing some people find difficult to process is that if you want this type of music to it be predictable then this isn't the sort of music for you. Hearing myself say it makes it sound a bit simplistic, but I guess that's about it.

Can improvisation facilitate notions of right and wrong, or is it not quite as clear cut as that?

I think, most certainly, you need to think about whether the sounds you are making are appropriate. Whether that can embrace the idea of right and wrong I don't know. We're getting into some rather philosophical areas here. For my money, the two things an improviser should attend to is, firstly, the idea of searching for new material, and, secondly, the collaborative or dialogical nature of the music, i.e. working with other people. If you're improvising and you're not looking to express new material as well as not taking any notice of the other musicians then I suppose what you're doing is wrong (laughs). Do you follow me?

Yes, I think so.

Exactly, if you don't have a philosophy, if you just think 'I can do anything I like' you'll probably find that people will get fed up of working with you. So there is a morality to it. I don't know whether you know this but the first book I wrote was called 'No

Sound is Innocent' and that does suggest a moral dimension to the music.

I wanted to ask you about that actually...

But you do understand I can't paraphrase those ideas over the phone?

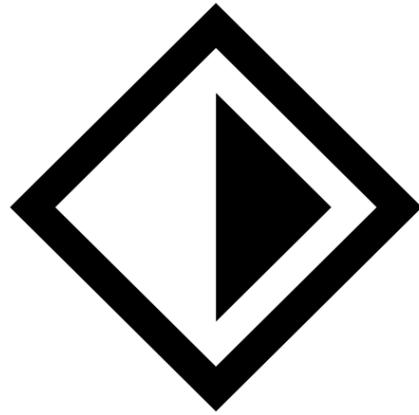
Well, in short then, would you say that the musical, social and philosophical aspects of improvisation are very much entwined?

Certainly for me, yes. But I'm very conscious that there are people who, for whatever reason, don't wish to be, as they'd put it, 'pinned down.' I'm not quite sure what people mean by that. It just seems like they don't want to recognise that there are any consequences to what they do. They just see it as, in inverted commas, "Art" - whatever that means. I don't live in that kind of dimension. I think art and human beings are so inextricably entwined that you cannot divorce artistic expression from its human manifestations. If someone wants to deny that art has anything to do with human beings then they're just living in cuckooland. But such people can do very well for themselves in our commodity driven economy. Damien Hirst and the like. You can do all sorts of things to make an absolute fortune and be treated as someone quite remarkable, but when it comes down to what it might mean to us in a grander sense, there doesn't seem to be many answers. I'd say the same is true of music. I dislike the idea that it doesn't mean anything. It does mean something. Precisely what it means is for each of us to find out. To deny that it has any meaning other than in itself seems to be a negation of

human activity. It's a contentious area, but my experience tells me that this kind of stuff means something and I've been doing this for a long time. I've worked a lot with young people; I've been running a workshop that is now entering its 13th year...

A workshop on improvisation?

Yes. It's always been a fairly small arena because improvisation exists outside of all the conventional habitats for music. For example, there's no room for it in the conservatories or in the market place. As a listener, you have to work at it. It's not really like the instant gratification you'd get from downloading the latest chart hit though there is definitely a growing global community of people who enjoy improvising. This year alone I've done workshops in Budapest, in Sao Paolo and I'm going to Oslo fairly shortly too. There's a thirst for this kind of investigation and this kind of work. I think people find it more meaningful than what the conservatories have to offer. I find that the workshop is like a refuge for people who can't find what they want when they go to music school. The workshop takes place more or less every Friday in London. It's open to anyone and everybody, and the only thing that is asked is that you're open minded and open hearted. It's not a teaching academy, it's simply a very friendly setting for people to come and play and meet other people. All we ask is that attendees contribute three pounds towards the rental of the room. I hope to see you there!



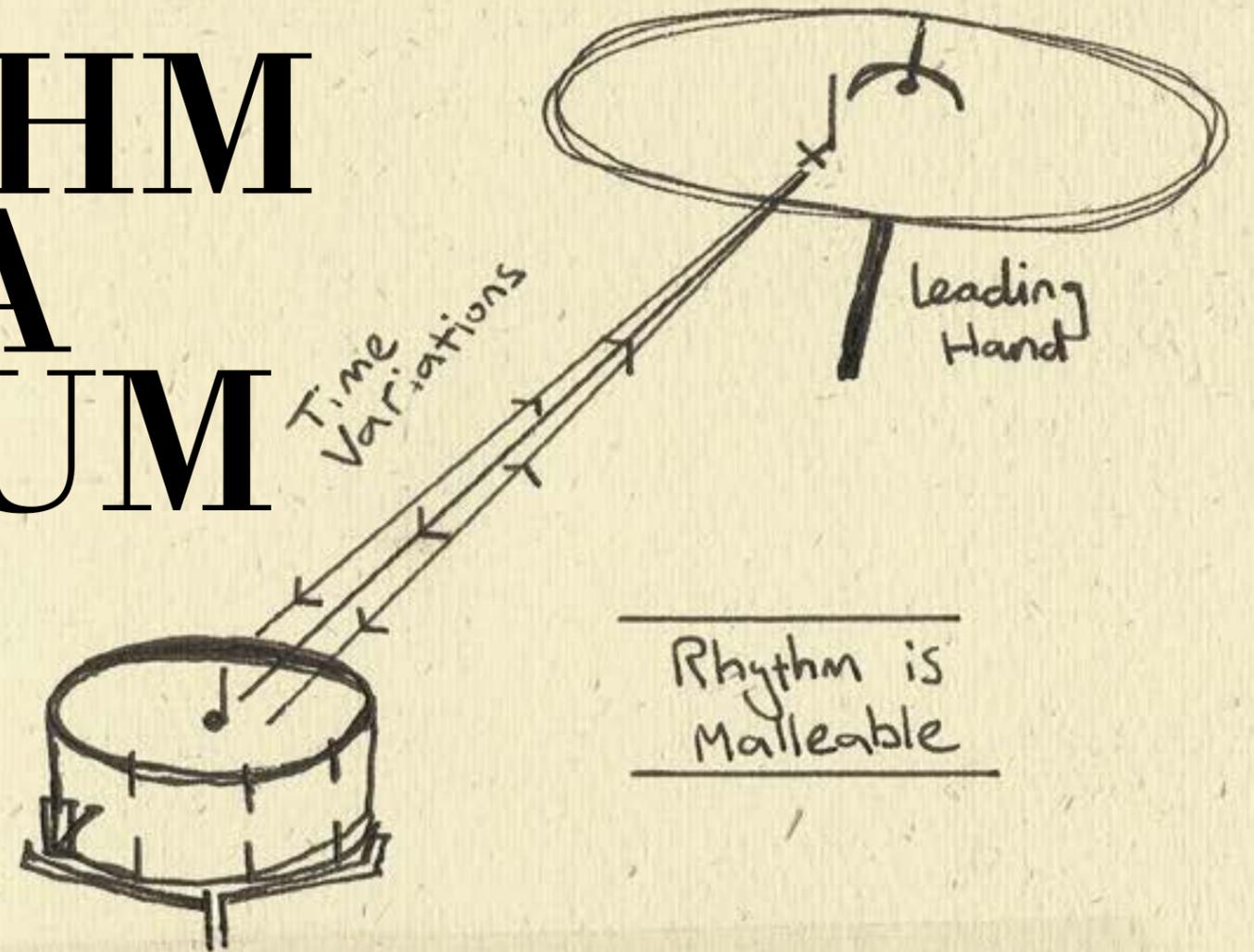
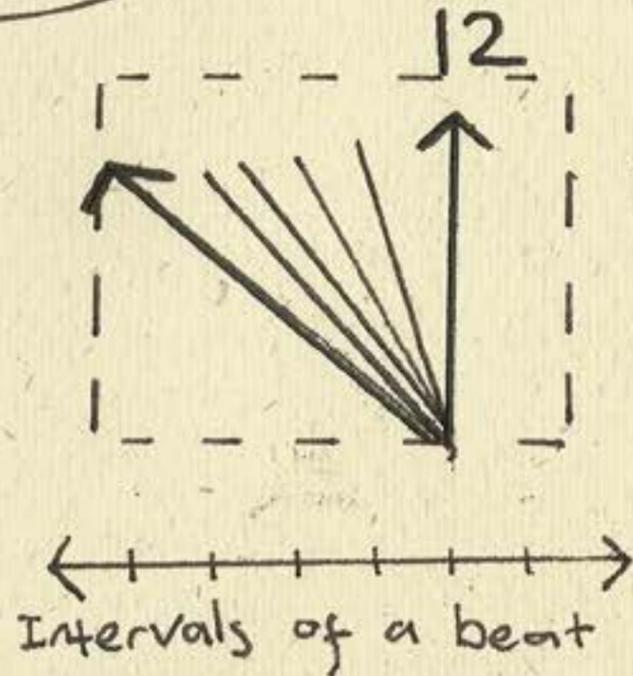
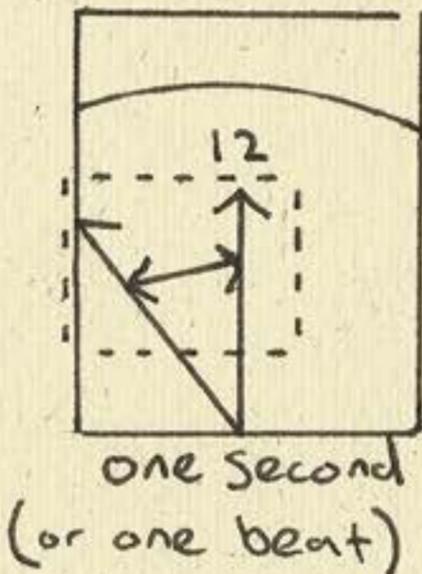
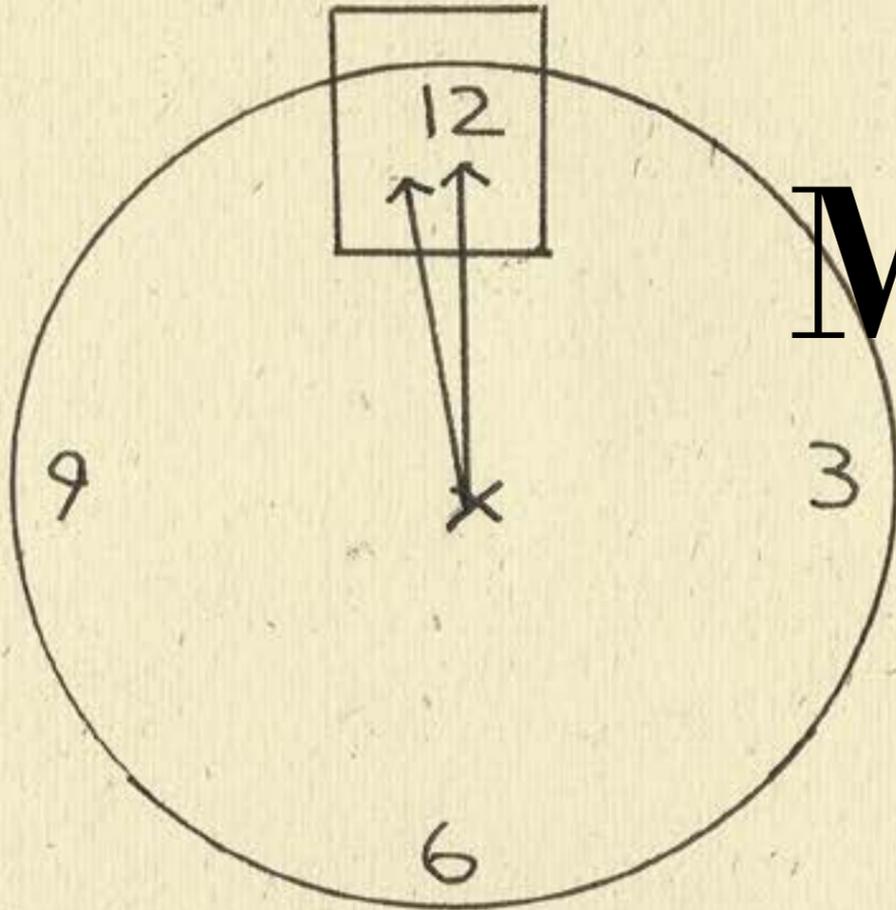
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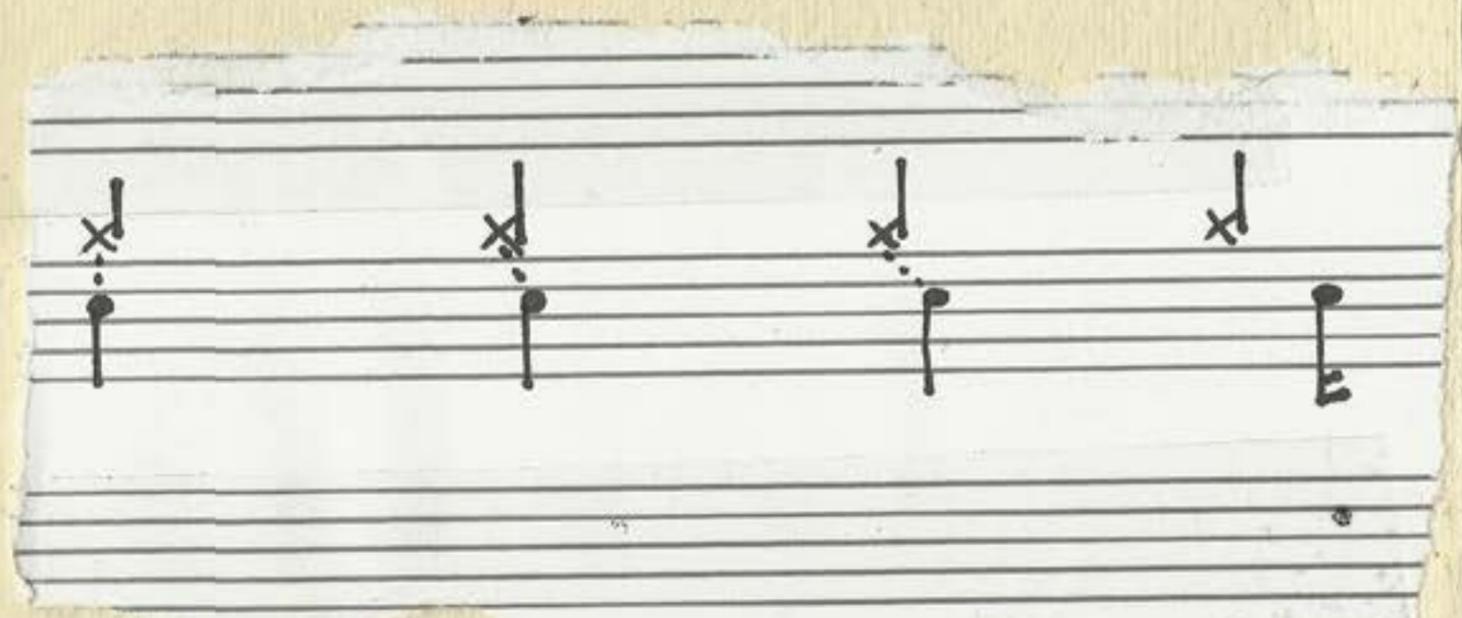


RHYTHM AS A MEDIUM

...
Words by
BEN MARTIN



Rhythm is
Malleable



◆◆◆
“RHYTHM IS THE PROPERTY OF A SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN TIME WHICH PRODUCES ON THE MIND OF THE OBSERVER THE IMPRESSION OF PROPORTION BETWEEN THE DURATION OF SEVERAL EVENTS OR GROUPS OF EVENTS OF WHICH THE SEQUENCE IS COMPOSED”

Sonnenaohein

◆◆◆



ARISTOXENUS' GREEK WRITINGS ON RHYTHM

For drummers, developing a sense of rhythm is important to become a good musician. This seems an obvious statement to make, but I sincerely believe there is more to the word than we give it credit for. Allow me to explain; I feel that rhythm is a descriptive force. As a drummer I give it a home through the playing of the kit and, by developing technically, I enhance my ideas with the technical skill to carry them off in performance. But, it is also through the experiences of practice and performance that I continually develop my 'language' skills in translating emotive thought into music. Here, rhythm is the vessel carrying my ideas.

Historically and philosophically, humanity has always had a preoccupation with scientific experimentation and discovery. In the world of music, drummers especially will seek technical ability (the science bit) as the start and end point for their musical achievement. Perhaps a drummer wanting to develop their own unique style would do well to start feeding the pursuit of technique with creative, experimental and philosophical ideas too. This practice may be to become a better musician or just to enjoy the moment better whilst playing the best instrument in the world.

Through thinking about and discussing rhythm, I have come to think of my role and aim as a musician differently than just keeping time. I think of time as an abstract form which passes differently according to your state of consciousness. Music is something that briefly alters consciousness and rhythm shapes the dynamic flow of music. Drumming controls the momentum of time by sculpting the shape of the musical soundscape as it passes by.

This probably seems convoluted and to the casual observer music is either enjoyable or it is not. The point here is to, firstly, offer ways to enrich your experience and enjoyment of playing the drums and, secondly, to add another layer of quality to your learning process to enhance your technical ability.



ARISTOTLE'S SCHOOL: PAINTED
IN THE 1880S BY GUSTAV ADOLF
SPANGENBERG

◆◆◆

“THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL ERROR MADE ABOUT RHYTHM IS THAT IT IS ‘AN ORDERING OF TIMES’. THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH ABOUT RHYTHM IS THAT IT IS AN ORDERING OF ACCENTS.”

Aristoxenus, Disciple of Aristotle.

◆◆◆

Can a drummer have that much control over what he or she is playing? The point is not to have control in the technical sense but to create a different sort of control over the sensation of playing the drums. It's the idea that you can feed you technical learning with a focus on a philosophical viewpoint. This can help you feel more open to creative expression while you are performing. Using rhythm as a medium is just one concept that could feed this. You could just as easily think about cloud formations or film soundtracks and apply these ideas loosely to your practice regime.

Listen to Naturally Occurring Patterns:

Use the record function on your phone or if you have a field recorder even better. Listen out for rhythmic patterns in your every day environment. It could be anything from rain on the window to cars passing by or people's speech patterns. As soon as you start looking for them there will be no end to them. Record them and listen back. If you have music software or a sampling app use it to create a loop. Just listening to this is good but you could take it further and try to copy it on a practice pad. Don't just copy the rhythmic patterns that you hear but also see if you can get any nuances from the soundscape into your dynamics.

Now expand it onto the kit. Obviously this kind of drumming won't fit snugly into the middle of your band's set, but you might

find that you are more mindful of your place within any given beat giving you the confidence to add that extra bit of dynamics or push and pull the beat around adding another dimension to the rhythmic shape of the music.

Define your Control over Syncopation and on Beats:

Sit and practice syncopation against your leading hand. Playing against a click gives you a clear definition of time to follow. A slow click is good for this as the slower you play the more increments you will notice. At between 60 and 80 bpm try hitting the pulse precisely with your leading hand. Practice playing exactly on the beat and then begin to play slightly before and slightly after the pulse, creating a pushing and pulling effect.

Couple in your bass, snare and hi-hats and try playing perfectly in time with your lead hand. Then, whilst keeping your lead hand on time, practice the pushing and pulling motion again. You can do this one limb at a time, in couples or with all three limbs whilst your lead hand still plays the pulse. There are endless variations here and hopefully you will start to notice textural things happening.

You could also try to practice with your feet on the floor rather than on the pedals. This way you feel the timings more accurately as the sole of your foot hits the floor directly.

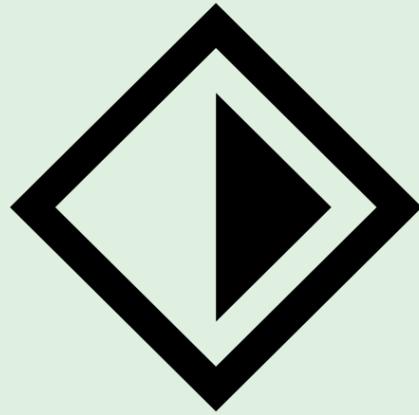
This exercise should highlight that there are many subtle variations which go beyond perfectly quantised eighth and sixteenth note subdivisions.

Use Dynamics Rhythmically:

Think of a couple of dynamic sounds or accents that work for you. Some good ones to consider would be: Rim shots, buzz hits, pedal hat sounds, (tight or sloshy) ghost notes or accents and ride bell sounds. Doing this on paper first will help you to work against the temptation of falling into comfortable patterns.

Write down a well rehearsed rhythmic progression, groove or fill pattern of at least two bars. Now mark out an accent pattern through it. Try assigning different sounds and voices to the accents in the accent pattern you have drawn out. Now you have your original rhythmic progression along with and a longer rhythmic phrase spread over its duration made up from accents and stresses.

I hope these ideas will just be the start point as you start to think about rhythm in a more in depth way. Remember that having good technique doesn't end at getting control over your rudiments and can also be fed by your own creative ideas. Thinking in this way can lead your drumming down endless new creative roots.



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TATSUYA AMANO

クロスフェイス

[CROSSFAITH]

A stairwell in Manchester University Union was never going to be the best place to conduct an interview, but it was by far the quietest. The stairs act as a passage between two bars in which the average decibel level made the dictaphone act like a Geiger counter being exposed to enriched uranium. In the basement, the noise of a band sound checking emanates through the walls. An umbrella blows past the window. Stairwell it is.

*Words by Tom Hoare
Photography by Luke Douglas*





Those walking up and down the stairs look unimpressed at the three people forming the chicane like obstacle that obstructs their path. One of these people is myself. The other two are from Japanese hardcore band Crossfaith. Their drummer, Tatsuya Amano, sat more or less right in the middle of the stairway and causing the most disruption, is quickly developing a reputation as one of the most brutal metalcore drummers on the scene, despite being around 5ft 5” and sporting a head of hair of which Derek Zoolander would be proud. In all seriousness, however, search online for the drum cam to Crossfaith’s ‘Chaos Attractor’ and you’ll see what I mean - he doesn’t exactly hold back. To his left, nearest the stairwell wall sits Rew. Fluent in both Japanese and English, he is the band’s interpreter. Tatsu’s English, like my Japanese, was apparently “not great”.

The interview worked in the following way. I would ask a question, Rew would translate it for Tatsu, Tatsu would respond in Japanese, which Rew would then translate it into English. Most of Rew’s responses below are translations from Tatsu, but as Tatsu would occasionally stay things in English, I’ve decided, for the sake of clarity, to include them both in the transcript.

♦ ♦ ♦

The Drummer’s Journal: Could you ask Tatsuya where in Japan he’s from?

Rew: He’s actually from Osaka - it’s the second biggest city in Japan. There are so many cities in Japan but he moved and grew up in small city in the south. It’s kind of a shithole city.

I didn’t think the Japanese did shithole cities...

Nah, they do.

Oh. Ok. Well at least most places in the UK aren't going to be too much of a shock then. So how did he start playing?

Tatsu says his father's hobby is playing drums. And when he was five years old he watched a live DVD of The Red Hot Chilli Peppers. He was very shocked by Chad Smith. So that is why he started drumming.

So he's better than his dad now?

Yes.

Has he always hit the drums so hard?

(Lengthy conversing in Japanese)

Tatsu: Yes!

Oh, so he speaks a bit on English then?

He only really says "Yes" and "No" in English.

Right. So what type of stuff did he start out learning?

Tatsu: Joey Jordison. Slipknot!

I imagine he went down a treat with the neighbours then?

He says that they used to complain, yes.

So how big is the hardcore scene in Japan?

Compared to the UK, it's fucking small. I mean, mainstream music is just J Pop singers. I'd say that less than five per cent of people in Japan listen to extreme music. But, we are trying to make it bigger.

And is it getting bigger?

It is, exactly. There is a Japanese chart, like the billboard chart, and their latest album, the Zion E.P which isn't yet released here, reached number 27 in Japan which is amazing.

A lot of English or American bands, well, perhaps more so the classic metal or prog rock bands such as Iron Maiden or Dream Theater, go to Japan and do really well there...

They do, yes.





But there isn't, comparatively anyway, as many heavy Japanese bands... Japanese people are quite heavily influenced by Western culture. There is quite a good metal scene, but not a good extreme scene. The metal scene now is about 30 years old. You know, people who just like Ozzy Osbourne.

I saw part of the video tour diary the band recorded on their last tour of the UK earlier in 2012. Did the tour live up to their expectations?

I mean, they are still a kind of an unknown band as they have not yet released the new album here, but he says that they'd like to get bigger as a band. Bigger than they are now.

I've heard that the band enjoy drinking Jägermeister ...

Tatsu: Jägermeister? Yes!

Is he ever too hung-over to play?

Well, have you heard of a festival called "Hit The Deck?"

Hit The Deck? I know it, yeah.

Ok, well they played there last April. They had an early set, around 1pm, and once they'd finished the set they started drinking. Tatsu disappeared for 12 hours, and eventually someone found him passed out by the side of the road.

He has a lovely SJC kit, is that an endorsement?

Yes, it's an endorsement. He is sponsored by SJC drums, Meinl cymbals and Evans drumheads.

Does he tend to break much stuff?

(Laughing) We can't say that!

Ok, before he got his endorsements did he break a lot of stuff?

Yes, he did. Actually, last night he snapped his double pedal. But we fixed it.

Tatsu: (Nodding) Yes!



The cymbals on his kit are massive...

Yes. He says they're mostly 24". Except the hi hats. He's not sure 24" hi hats would be good.

On the latest album, they cover a song called Omen by The Prodigy. Those drums were recorded by Dave Grohl...

Dave Grohl? Really?

Yeah it's true.

Really? It can't be. For The Prodigy? Dave Grohl?

I'm pretty sure he plays on that song, yeah.

I didn't even know that!

Oh, well I was going to ask if that played any part in why they chose to cover that song. It obviously didn't.

Tatsu: (Laughing) Dave Grohl?! Prodigy?! Dave Grohl?!

Yup, Dave Grohl.

Tatsu says he didn't know that. But, he has always liked The Prodigy ever since back in the day. So it was quite an easy cover for him to do.

At this point a guy who must have been at least 6'6" with ample facial tattoos and a bullring piercing, wanders over.

Intimidating Guy: Excuse me, are you guys playing tonight?

I'm not. But these guys are (gestures to Tatsu)

IG: Who are you?

Rew: Crossfaith.

IG: Cool. Are you supporting While She Sleeps?

Rew: Yeah.

IG: Nice one. What time is it now?

Rew: Er, 5.30.

IG: Nice tattoos man. (gesturing at Rew's arms) What language is that?

Rew: Japanese. They're all in Japanese.

IG: Safe. Catch you later.

Intimidating Guy attempts to exit through a locked door marked "staff only" before returning to the bar.

Ok, that was weird. (Rew talks to Tatsu). Tatsu says he also listened to 50s jazz music. And that he likes to play a lot of air drums too. And his dream is to be number the one drummer in the world.

Who does he think he is going to have to displace to earn that title?

...that's kind of hard to explain in Japanese, can you wait a little bit?

(lengthy conversing in Japanese)

Tatsu: Chad Smith. Yes.

Intimidating Guy, leaning round the door into the bar, shouts

IG: Excuse me, have you got an EP or anything?

Rew: Yes, we'll be selling them later tonight.

IG: How much?

Rew: £7

IG: How many songs do you get on it?

Rew: 10.

IG: 10? That's brilliant! Do you know Down? Well I went to see them with Orange Goblin. I bought one of their CDs and it had six tracks on. Six fucking tracks!

Rew: Yeah, ok.

Maybe we should move. Can we get a few photos or something?

Good idea.



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WHITE RUSSIAN

...



INGREDIENTS TO USE:

2.0 PART CREAM
[ADD LAST, AND STIR TO LIKING]

1.0 PART COFFEE LIQUEUR
[ADD SECOND]

1.0 PART VODKA
[ADD FIRST]

SERVE ON THE ROCKS, WITH MINT

