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AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

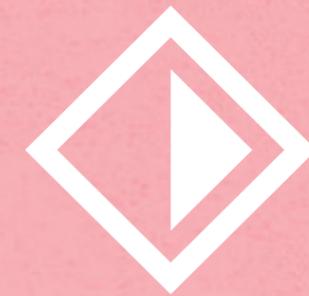
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ISSUE FOURTEEN, AUTUMN 2016

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# MASTHEAD

ISSUE FOURTEEN, AUTUMN 2016

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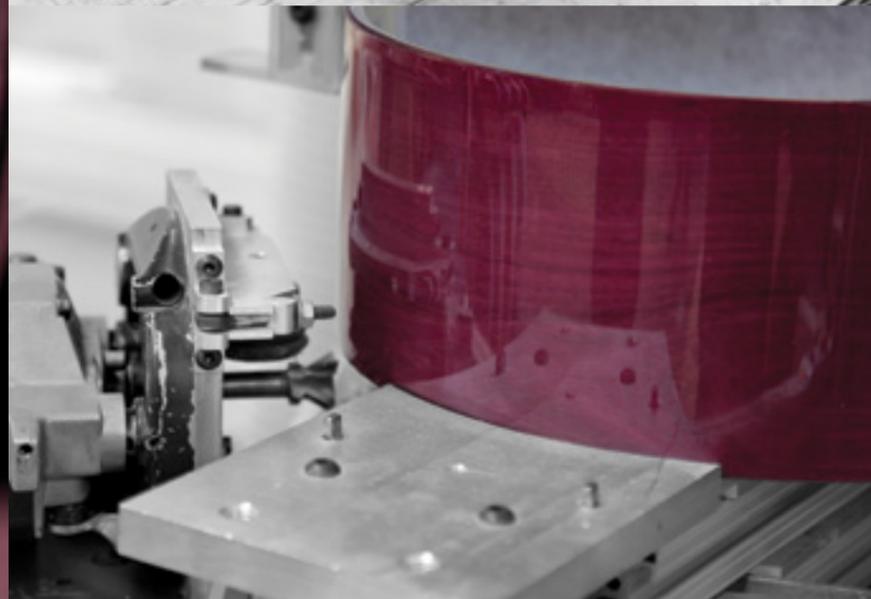
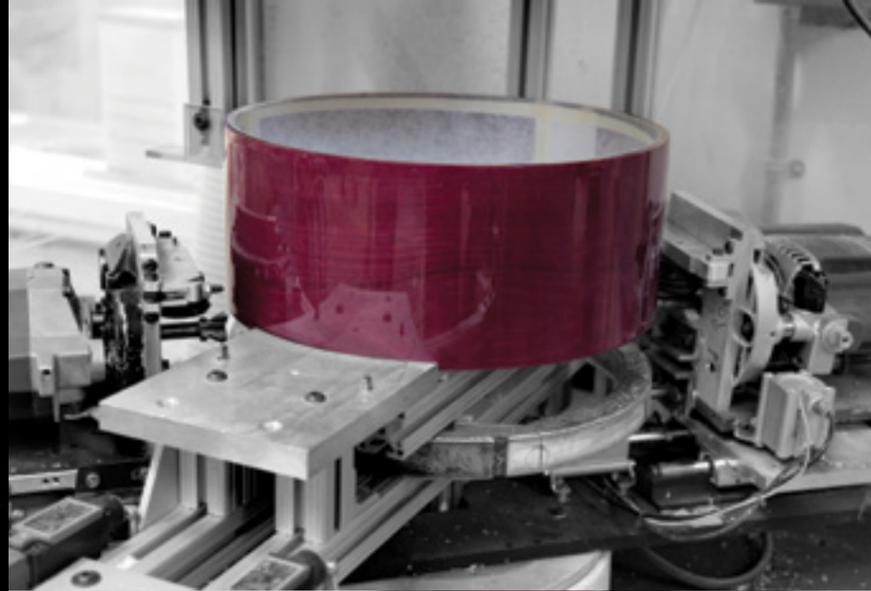
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# OLD DOG

VOLUME THREE, *ISSUE FOURTEEN*

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This issue did not fail to deliver some memorable experiences. A particular highlight was opening a festival dressing room door to find a large, hairy Welshman wearing nothing except thigh-high leather stiletto boots and fishnet tights, carefully applying black and white makeup to his face.

“If you’re looking for Peter Criss, he’s gone for a slash,” he stated, quite matter-of-factly, without so much as looking away from the dressing room mirror. I nodded and quietly shuffled backwards out of the door.

It wasn’t the actual Peter Criss - the long-time KISS drummer - I was looking for, but another Welshman named Matt whose job it is to impersonate him. “You met Gene then?” Matt joked when I finally caught up with him. “At least he had his makeup on, eh?”

For the three days, I’d been walking around a festival where the line up was comprised strictly of the country’s best tribute bands, speaking to their respective drummers. It was difficult to have a boring conversation, so we included a few on page 46. Plus the dog had a great time.

On paper, some things seem like they shouldn’t work. If you invited me to spend a Friday night watching four fifty-something men, clad in studded leather, impersonating KISS in a field in the pouring rain, I’d likely decline such an offer. But it was absolutely great.

Some of the other people in this issue can probably relate to being told that, on paper, their ideas may not work. Greg Saunier of Deerhoof (page 18) played strange, experimental and improvisational rock music in San Francisco for six years before people began paying attention. Jose Mendeles (page 28) started a drum shop in Portland that trades exclusively in vintage percussion with little more than a clipboard. Bob Hall, of Catfish and the Bottlemen (page 10), has led an indie revival when most of the press had written indie music off as having died a painful death.

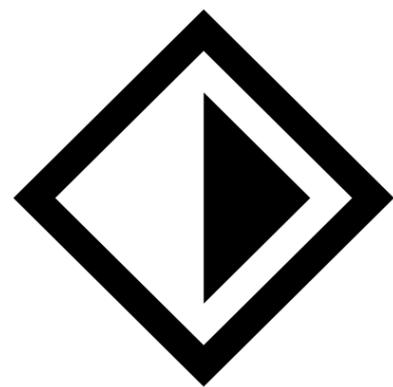
Perhaps the best example is Art Blakey (page 55), who rallied against the emergence of white, highbrow, elitist jazz in 1950s America, and brought it back to its roots.

Welcome to Issue 14 of The Drummer’s Journal.

Tom.



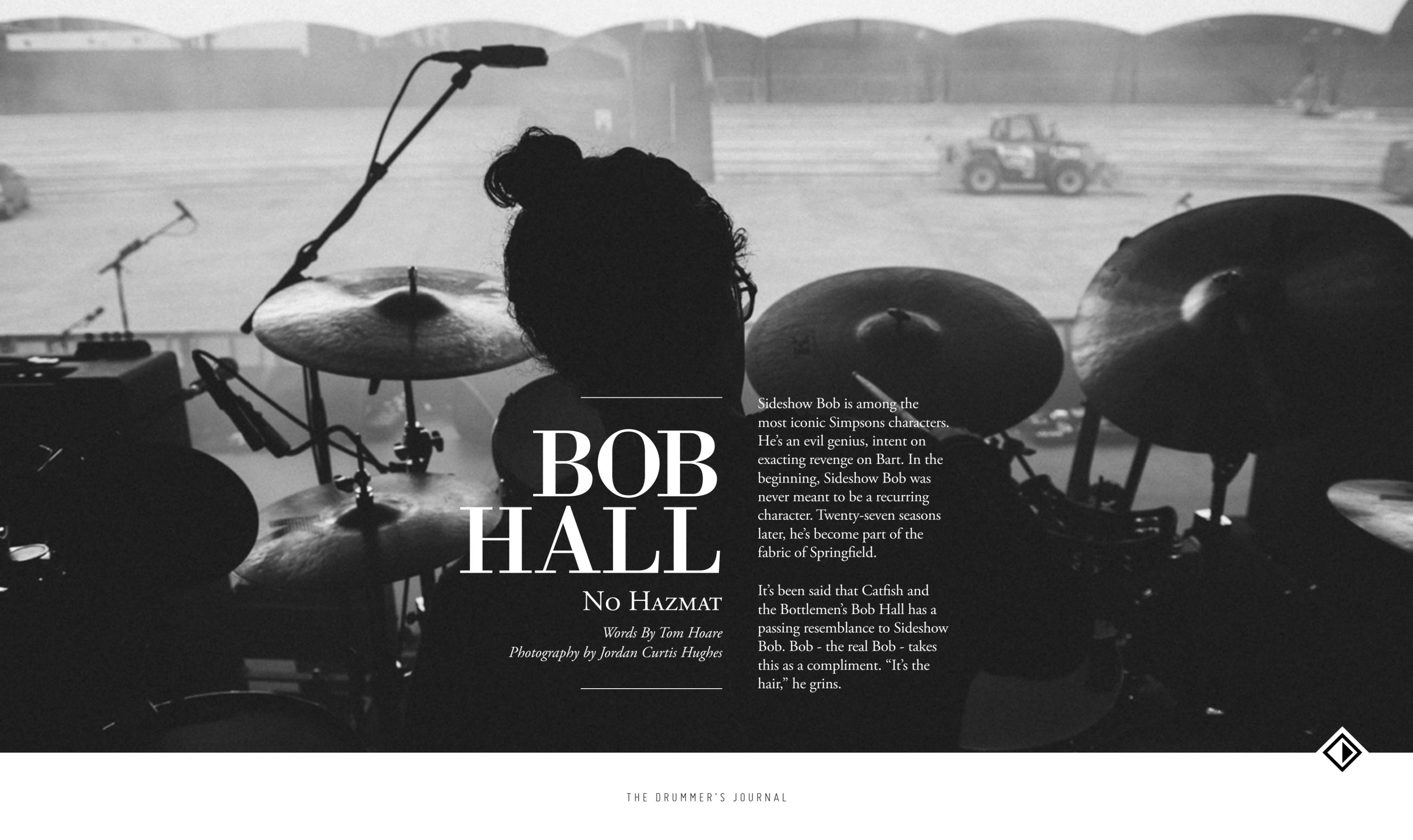




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# BOB HALL

NO HAZMAT

*Words By Tom Hoare*

*Photography by Jordan Curtis Hughes*

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Sideshow Bob is among the most iconic Simpsons characters. He's an evil genius, intent on exacting revenge on Bart. In the beginning, Sideshow Bob was never meant to be a recurring character. Twenty-seven seasons later, he's become part of the fabric of Springfield.

It's been said that Catfish and the Bottlemen's Bob Hall has a passing resemblance to Sideshow Bob. Bob - the real Bob - takes this as a compliment. "It's the hair," he grins.



**W**hen Catfish and the Bottlemen released their debut album in 2014, some wrote them off as an indie band who were too late to the party. It's true they made no secret about drawing influence from a time when the likes of Arctic Monkeys and Franz Ferdinand were regular fixtures in the charts. This doesn't really seem like that long ago, but the intervening years were enough for every teenage band with skinny jeans and guitars to wander into the wilderness and never return.

According to Google Trends, 'indie landfill' was a term that first appeared in 2006, with its usage peaking in 2009. It was employed mostly by the press to lament the eye-watering excess of bands whose careers, when plotted onto a graph, looked like you'd asked your average four-year-old to draw Mount Everest.

By 2010, it would seem all the national newspapers had got together and collectively decided this was the year that indie music could officially be declared dead. There was little complaint. The Hoosiers volunteered to be placed into a rocket and shot into space. Balance had been restored to the force. The music industry and the music-purchasing public could move on.

You can probably see now why Catfish and the Bottlemen – four early twenty-somethings who play catchy, guitar-driven rock music - were, initially, not met with open arms. Some criticised them for doing little more than flogging a dead horse. In reality, Catfish and the Bottlemen were what the British indie scene really needed, a band with the foundations to actually create something worthwhile, as opposed to salvaging scraps from the dump.

In May 2016, Catfish's second album, *The Ride*, debuted at number one in the UK.

♦♦♦

**The Drummer's Journal: I've only just realised that, although you're from Wales, you don't have a Welsh accent...**

Bob Hall: Both my parents are from Sheffield. I think that's the whole nature-nurture thing right there. I grew up in North Wales, a little town called Llandudno. I just don't sound like I did.

**Was it the kind of place where everyone knows everything about everyone?**

Yeah, this is why it is strange to come back sometimes. You think, "I've not been home in a while," but when you get back very little has ever changed, which is nice. But yeah, there is also a lot of everyone knows each other's business.

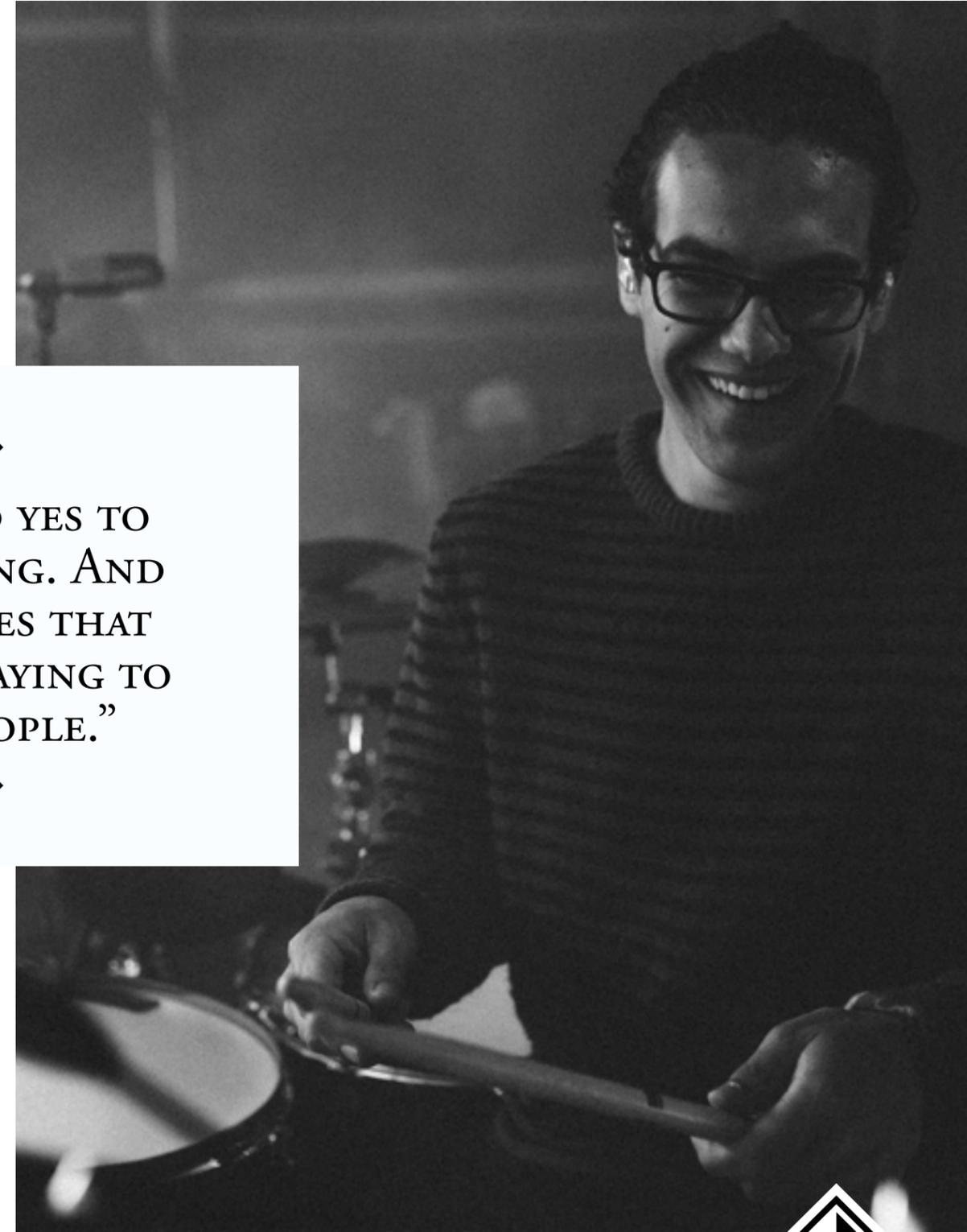
**Does it have a music venue?**

There was one but I'm not sure I'd call it a venue. In some ways, that was a good thing because, when we were starting out with the band, it forced us to travel to venues elsewhere. It made travelling not a big deal. We'd play in the pubs in different coastal towns every week, then we'd try to save enough money to do a two-week tour. With small venues when you've taken in travelling expenses and hotels, you're not going to make any money.

**Did the pubs not just want you to play covers, though?**

They'd say things like, "We need two 45 minute sets, top 40 sort of stuff." So we said, "We'll play three 45 minute sets but it's all going to be our own tunes." And it got to a point where people would come up at the end of the set and be like, "What was that song?" That helped us figure out the songs people liked. We'd take the ten most popular songs, take them on tour and play them in venues.

♦♦♦  
 "WE SAID YES TO EVERYTHING. AND SOMETIMES THAT MEANT PLAYING TO FIVE PEOPLE."  
 ♦♦♦





**You must have had some of those graveyard gigs...**

Oh, yeah. That's what people never see really. We get a lot of "You just came out of nowhere!" But really, there were six years prior to us getting recognised when we were gigging four nights a week. We said yes to everything. And sometimes that meant playing to five people. But you can't let doing a gig like that put you off. It makes you better in the long run.

**Tell me about joining the band...**

There was one studio a bit of a drive away from the town. All the local bands and musicians would go through there. I was there a lot, drumming with pretty much anyone who needed a drummer. Catfish were rehearsing there too and someone said they needed a drummer. When we arranged our first rehearsal, Van [McCann, vocals] was like, "I'll pick you up." I've got this vivid memory of having my kit out in the garden ready to go. When he turned up, he said, "It's taken me 30 seconds to get here." He lived round the corner from my house. Literally round the corner. We'd lived that close to one another for 18 years and never once crossed paths. I don't understand how that's even possible.

**Were you still in school at this point?**

Yeah. It was hectic touring-wise. We had rehearsals every day after school, and then on Friday we'd be away all weekend gigging and I'd arrive back at school on Monday morning as early as I could make registration. I was late quite a lot. I still maintain that wasn't my fault. I'm actually quite a punctual guy [laughs].

**How did Catfish get out of being just another band on the circuit and take that next step?**

We did showcases as much as possible. Some of it was probably being in the right place at the right time. The best thing you can do is get a van and get out there. And you have to be ok with not getting paid for anything. Personally, I really liked the feeling of going on stage and almost having a point to prove. Maybe that sort of mentality helps too.

**You entered the Young Drummer of the Year contest back in the day, right?**

I was nowhere near the standard of the kids who enter now, though. I went back last year to watch. There was this ten-year-old on first - which is nerve wracking enough - and he walks out, sits behind the kit and just stares into the crowd for what felt like 30 seconds. After about ten seconds, I was like, "This is actually part of the solo, this is amazing!" Then someone came out and tapped him on the shoulder, and I realised that he was just waiting for the go ahead. But still, I was impressed.

**Where did you place in the competition?**

This sounds like I'm covering my tracks but they only announce a winner. But I probably came last. When I joined Catfish, I realised I had no stage presence whatsoever. I'd never move. I cared about every note being played, whereas now I think I've struck more of a balance.

**Things with the band have progressed quickly over the last two years especially. Do you feel that would have been possible without a label being involved?**

In terms of marketing, when I saw a Catfish poster in a Tube station, I realised that's bigger than we would have done ourselves. We know a lot of bands that do that stuff themselves but it's a lot of work. It's hard to tell really. For us, though, the label has been important for sure.

**Do you ever have off days?**

I do have a bit of a mental game. At the minute, I'm not on tour and we're playing shows on weekends. Glastonbury is the most obvious example. I was just sat at home for five days doing pretty much nothing, and then went to Glastonbury and played to a lot of people, and then went back home again. It's sort of jarring. On tour there's a sort of maintained high, you're buzzing to play every night. Then after a while things settle in and stuff becomes routine. Sometimes I'll be playing a show and catch







myself thinking about what I'm going to eat after it, then I'll suddenly realise I don't know where we are in the song. I've had a few of those. Now I try to be there 100% mentally at every gig. I know it probably sounds ridiculous but, for me, it's quite a big thing.

**Are you not a fan of downtime then?**

We had a couple of months off over Christmas and it was a time when I was starting to try and figure my life out. I was at the point where I could move away from home, so I did it. I think if I hadn't had that to occupy myself with, it might have been a bit different. I felt like I needed to go back on tour to feel normality again. It's become the norm for me really. It's weird not to do it.

♦ ♦ ♦

**“THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS GET A VAN AND GET OUT THERE. AND YOU HAVE TO BE OK WITH NOT GETTING PAID FOR ANYTHING.”**

♦ ♦ ♦

**I was speaking to your drum tech, Joe, and he was talking about when you went on The David Letterman Show...**

He never really lets me live this one down. It was before I had a drum tech. But I remember it was very intense time-wise, I think we had about 20 minutes to set up, and if you're me, that means you set your high tom up upside down. I wasn't that proud of myself when I realised. I'm not sure people really noticed, though. It was our TV debut as well. I did feel like a bit of a prat.

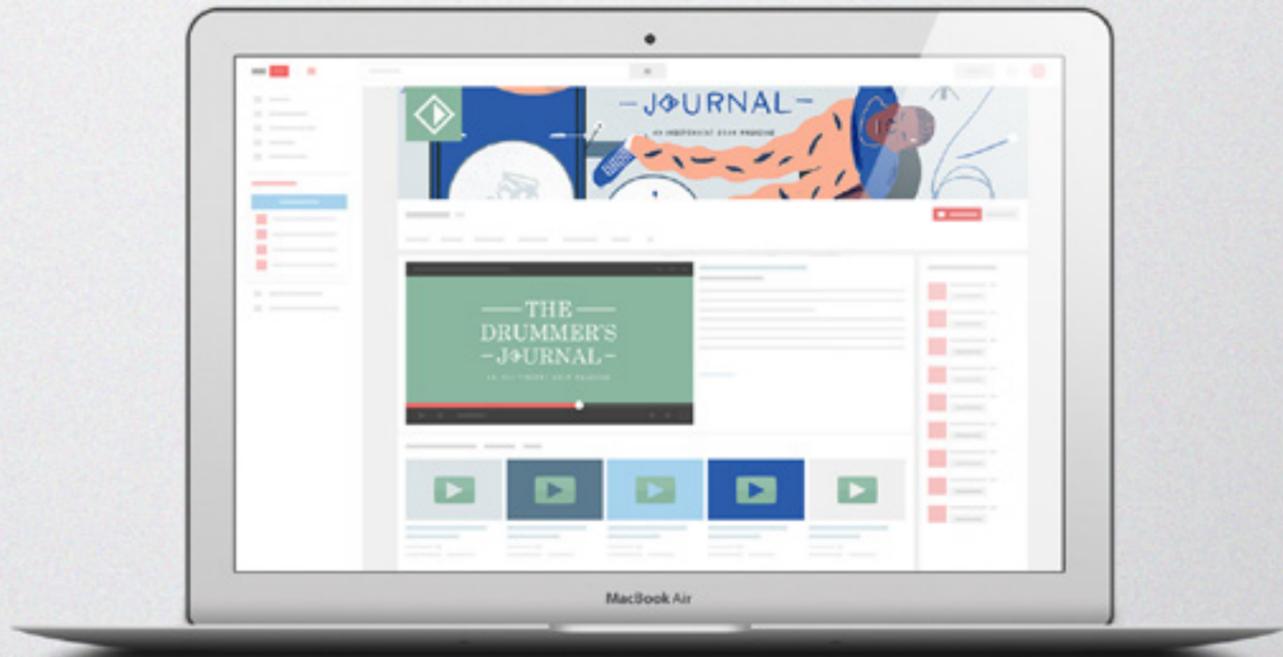
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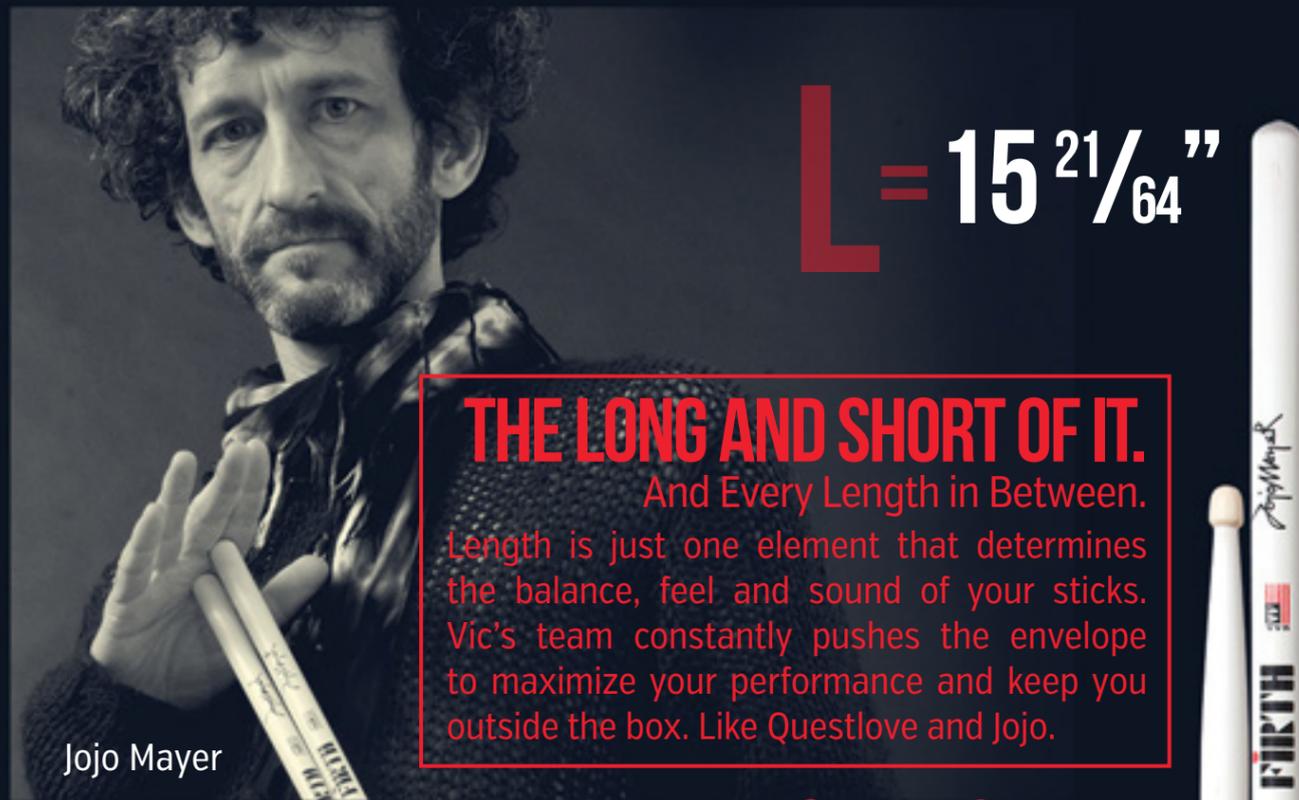
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PHOTO BY BOB HALL



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# GREG SAUNIER

## MAXIMILISM

*Words by Tom Hoare & Photography by Ellius Grace*

I'm ashamed to say that I once stuck my finger into the bulb socket of a table lamp. I was pretty young, though that's not much of an excuse. I remember the electric shock feeling like a nail had

been driven through my finger. What I don't remember are the milliseconds between being sat on the edge of my bed, holding the lamp, and then being face down on the floor, feeling very idiotic.

Those jarring, reflex reactions I made whilst receiving that minor electric shock are the best way I can describe what Greg Saunier looks like when he plays drums. He's an amalgamation of

flailing, convulsive motions, like if you were to fast-forward footage of someone running around, randomly swinging an axe. There is no economy of motion, just a full-bodied, percussive assault.



At in an ice-cream parlour in Brooklyn, Greg nods his head and agrees. “You know at the end of Return Of The Jedi where Luke is wailing on Darth with his lightsaber? That’s kinda like how I play drums.”

In 1994, Greg formed a band called Deerhoof. “It took eight years before we made any money,” Greg recalls. “In fact, prior to that, we were losing it left, right and centre.”

It’s not a huge stretch to imagine why the first few years were a bit rocky. They play experimental and eclectic music which doesn’t exactly lend itself to being abridged into a two-minute radio edit.

As a band, Deerhoof are unconventional. They’re like the musical equivalent of a grassroots agricultural cooperative: no corporate interference and an output based on a reciprocal understanding that the produce has been cultivated with enough due care and attention to make it better than the stuff you get in the supermarket. They haven’t won any GRAMMY Awards or had a slew of number one singles, but are often credited with making some of the best records of the last 20 years.

Greg is a classically trained musician. He studied composition at Oberlin College. He is one of those people you can watch play drums and think, “This guy has stuff to say.” And it’s true. He sits onstage behind a tiny kit, yet somehow manages to get more mileage out of it than my Dad was able to get out of his old Vauxhall Cavalier.

It’s a hot summer’s day outside, but we’re sat right

in the back of the shop where it’s almost dark. Greg is talking about his healthy eating regimen whilst drinking a huge peanut butter milkshake. He’s tall, pale and scrawny, with a high-pitched laugh that’s slightly manic. It bursts out of him when you least expect it, sometimes because of a thought he’s yet to verbalise, or because he’s noticed something you haven’t, such as an odd painting on the wall or a spider on your shoulder. He’s hyper-attentive. His eyes are constantly flitting and darting about like they’re mapping his surroundings. It’s somewhat disconcerting at first.

### Part I: Earthquake Footage

“I never really had a Plan B,” he smiles. “People thought I was crazy to devote my life to music. You’re guaranteed nothing.”

I wouldn’t go as far as to call Greg crazy. Just slightly unhinged. The most obvious thing about him is that he doesn’t really do things the way the majority of people do things. This isn’t some weird, hipster ploy to reap attention, but more that he spent a long time having no one really pay attention and carried on regardless. His explanation of why he decided to move to San Francisco after graduating college is a good example.

“I was at my parent’s place in Columbia, Maryland,” he begins. “It was the 1989 World Series, and my parents and brother were watching it on TV. I didn’t care about baseball so I was in another room. Suddenly, they start shouting for me to come and

♦♦♦  
 “I USED TO GO TO  
 BED EVERY NIGHT  
 LIKE, ‘I NEED TO  
 QUIT MUSIC.’”  
 ♦♦♦



watch. So I go over, thinking, ‘What can possibly be interesting about the World Series?’ And there is an earthquake happening in San Francisco, during this baseball game, live on TV. All the cameras were shaking. There’s shouting and screaming. Alan Michaels, this famous sportscaster, suddenly became a news reporter. There were helicopters in the sky, people were being evacuated from the city. I couldn’t believe what was happening. Then, more and more footage of the quake began to filter in. It was sunset. The Marina District was on fire. Buildings had collapsed. The whole thing just looked incredible.” He brings his hand down on the table like a gavel. “That’s when I decided I was moving there.”

At first I thought he was pulling my leg. The potential for reoccurring natural disaster is not usually information the average tenant would find reassuring: “I love the kitchen but what was that you mentioned about the potential for huge fissures to suddenly appear in the floor again?”

“At the time, no one knew just how much damage had been done,” Greg continues, “and that people had died. It was devastating for the city.

“I lived there for three years before forming Deerhoof. This meant I had time to do other things. I was an after-school tutor for a while, then I worked at a record distributor packing boxes, then I had a temp job doing data entry.”

I attempt to imagine the 20-year-old Greg - a person who was compelled to move to a new place because of footage of a natural disaster - being satisfied with a job involving data entry.

“Have you seen a movie called Erin Brockovich? Greg asks, “It’s about a woman with no legal training who instigates a lawsuit against an energy company whose plant was contaminating drinking water in California. It was the biggest lawsuit in history.”

“Is that the one with Julia Roberts?”

“Right. My job was to sort through photocopies of documents for that actual case.”

“Which side were you on?”

He chuckles. “The bad guy’s side. It was the worst of the worst. I knew I had to find a way of getting Deerhoof off the ground so I could get the fuck out of there.”

“Did you not have to sign a confidentiality agreement stating you wouldn’t talk about this?”

“Yeah, I did, but the story’s too good to not tell.” Greg’s villainous laugh startles some nearby kids.

## Part II: Losing Money

I ask Greg how he kept the faith during the first eight years when Deerhoof made no money.

“I didn’t really look at it like I was losing money, more so that I was investing it. When you hear rags

◆◆◆

“LIKES AND PLAYS  
ARE JUST CORPORATE  
TERMS USED TO  
DEFINE SUCCESS.  
A CORPORATE GRID  
HAS BEEN CREATED  
FOR YOU AND YOU  
ACT WITHIN IT.”

◆◆◆





♦♦♦

“EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE KID, I WOULD SAY, ‘WHAT’S THE POINT OF BEING A MUSICIAN?’ I COULD NEVER REALLY COME UP WITH AN ANSWER.”

♦♦♦



to riches stories, they're usually people afflicted by poverty and obsessed with exacting revenge on the world to make a load of money. I had a really easy childhood, I was middle class. I was more interested in fame than money, and I was more interested in art than fame."

"What did you want to be known for?"

"As a composer."

"Not as a drummer?"

"The drums are the last thing I usually think about. I get to the end of a song and it's like, 'Ok I need to write some drum parts, what should I do?'"

"What do you do?"

"One of the things I love about the drums is that they're an abstract instrument. They're like a piano in that sense. A piano doesn't have a particularly interesting sound on its own, there are not a lot of sound effects on there, it's just a blank set of notes made to cover a whole range of pitches. And I love thinking about the drum set in the same way. It's just a range of pitches; low sounds to high sounds."

Greg looks at me and correctly assumes that I already don't understand.

"Take a really famous drum beat, like We Will Rock You by Queen. I can play it here on this salt shaker and you know it is We Will Rock You. That is an abstraction. It doesn't matter what the

actual sounds are. When you think of the early trap sets, you see those crazy pictures of people with 30" bass drums and all sorts of other stuff, and that's because they're trying to be a one-man orchestra. I'm the opposite of that. I like the idea of everything totally stripped down."

"Does that mean you're a minimalist?"

"Minimalism has two completely separate meanings in music. I'm a minimalist in terms of equipment because when I started off that's all I could afford. The other meaning of minimalism is something repetitive, with little variation. If you think about when late 60s rock started to appear, the drums became this repetitive motor, with an upbeat on two and four. I don't really play like that. Maximalism is what I'd say I do. I like constantly changing rhythms, speeding up, slowing down, quieter, louder, new ideas in the middle of a song for no reason.

"I have a lifelong obsession with Charlie Watts. I watched an interview with him once, and the interviewer asked why he never hits the snare and hi-hat at the same time. Charlie replied he only discovered he was doing it when he saw himself playing in a Stones music video. Prior to that, he went years without knowing he had this little quirk. That made me realise he's not totally conscious of what he's playing because he's listening that hard to Keith Richards and Mick Jagger. That taught me a lot. He offered me a completely different concept as to what the drums are, even though he might sound almost identical to a lot of other drummers."

### Part III: Salad For One

Much of Deerhoof's quirkiness stems from the fact they're excellent improvisers. Greg is no exception. I'd go as far as to say he's an authority on it. I, however, am not. My only experience has been as an observer, poking my head into a small restaurant at lunchtime where a drummer was playing to a single audience member who seemed more focused on his salad than anything else. There was something partly soul destroying about it, as if neither of them really wanted to be there.

Greg grins. "That's pretty much like every improv show I play. It's not a particularly popular genre. And people are always eating salads."

"Is that not frustrating as a performer, to be ignored?"

"Improv is like tapping someone on the shoulder but with no plan as to what you're going to tell them. It's not about the success or failure of what you're playing, it's more about the practice of it. It's a lot of the same people who play and attend the shows. Quite regularly, the audience is just whoever else is on the bill that night. There's a workshop element to it, where people allow their friends to, musically, try something they wouldn't normally try. Those non-professional, non-result-seeking explorations are really essential to having a musical community that thrives."

"But how does that help a community thrive?"

"Music can't just be about competing for more

followers, likes or plays. That competitive approach shuts down creativity. Likes and plays are just corporate terms used to define success. A corporate grid has been created for you and you act within it. And something like doing small improv shows with your friends is an easy way of getting around all that.

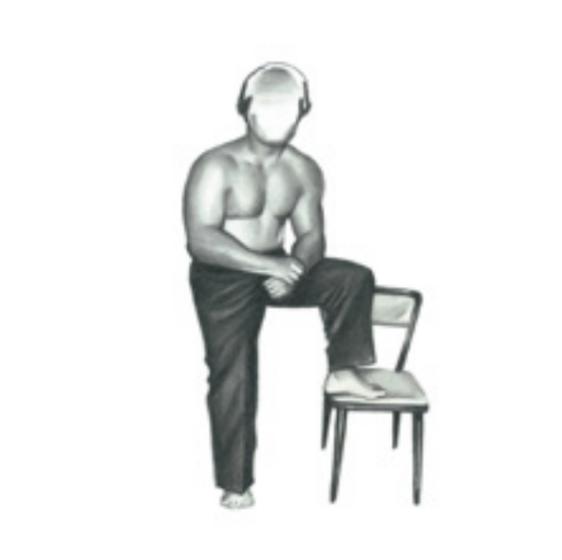
"When you think of things like The Voice, there are a set of rules to follow. One of them is 'do better than the previous person.' Another is 'don't crack on the high note.' It's very limited. There is something impressive about being able to pull off perfection, but it's not for everybody.

"Think of how many famous albums were failures in the early days, stuff that bombed when it first came out. The Velvet Underground. Now it's a classic. Just because someone doesn't like your music it doesn't mean you should change what you're doing just to join up with the Spotify army." He looks at me. "I'd say it's the exact opposite of soul-destroying."

### Part IV: Value

Greg likes thinking about things. I get the impression he thinks about things a lot. Not really so much about normal, mundane things like, "Did I remember to lock the car?" But more big picture sort of stuff, like, "Is my concern for the car's security actually a fear-based indoctrination by capitalist society?"

That's a slight exaggeration. Besides, I don't really know if Greg even has a car. What I mean to say



- DEERHOOF ALBUM ARTWORK,  
LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM
- THE MAN, THE KING, THE GIRL [1997]
  - HOLDYPAWS [1999]
  - REVEILLE [2002]
  - APPLE O' [2003]
  - MILK MAN [2004]
  - THE RUNNERS FOUR [2005]
  - FRIEND OPPORTUNITY [2007]
  - OFFEND MAGGIE [2008]
  - DEERHOOF VS. EVIL [2011]
  - BREAKUP SONG [2012]
  - LA ISLA BONITA [2014]
  - FEVER 121614 [2015]
  - THE MAGIC [2016]



is that he is good at explaining quite complex aspects of his own life in intricate detail, especially when it relates to music.

Music hasn't been some accidental, disposable passion for Greg but an actual, tangible reason for him to rationalise his own existence. That may sound overly dramatic, or like a cheeseball meme on an EDM Tumblr blog, but with Greg, it carries actual weight.

“Ever since I was a little kid, I would say, ‘What’s the point of being a musician?’ I could never really come up with an answer. And it would drive me nuts. My best friend is on city council so he can keep rents under control in their neighbourhood. He’s out there doing good for the community. I’ve another friend who is a doctor. I’ve friends who have written books on really momentous subjects of world importance. What do I do? I’m a rock and roll drummer. All through my career, I felt a kind of guilt about this. It’s only recently, at age 47, that I’ve started to feel differently.”

“What changed?”

“I’m not entirely sure, but in a bureaucratic society, it’s common to determine the value of what someone is doing based on what their income is. Sometimes there’s even more twisted logic: your income is based on how much you hate your job. The more you hate your job the more money you earn. With music, people are like, ‘Why are you whining about Spotify? You’re a musician, don’t you just do it for the joy of it?’ There’s this idea that if you enjoy your job you

shouldn’t get paid. Ironically it doesn’t work out for people like teachers who still have hard jobs and don’t get paid a dime.

“The other thing I could never work out was what is the role of creativity? What is the role of pointless creativity in society? The type that has no tangible benefit, that doesn’t cure disease or build houses or stop any wars. I didn’t put drumbeats into my head. I didn’t decide to give myself the drive to make music. I just had that. And who is to say that because what I do has no tangible benefit on a corporate checklist it’s, therefore, valueless? Would I be better spending my life ignoring that drive to make music, be miserable and force myself to do something else? I think there is something very basic and beautiful when it comes to seeing a human being just do what they do. It is incredibly moving when I see someone doing music for no purpose at all. I’ve started to believe there is some value in that.

“I was the most supported kid. My parents were happy about me playing drums. I was not having to fight the way a lot of people fight when they grow up to assert their right to be an artist or musician. But even then, there was a constant creeping feeling, and it’s a feeling that still exists today, which is it’s hard to make the case why my band has to exist. There are a lot of other bands out there. People will be just fine if we stopped. What’s happened to music’s perceived value now it’s omnipresent?

“You can’t go anywhere without hearing music. Music is no longer the rare jewel it once was. The

prospect of any musician making any income has decreased dramatically to the point where it’s very nearly impossible. Deerhoof is doing it, but I know lots of people who are in exactly the same scenario Deerhoof were in for the first eight years, losing money on everything you do.”

He pauses like he’s gotten ahead of himself. “I’m saying there is a lot out there to discourage people, but there absolutely is a value in not succeeding, never getting any hits, never getting on a major label, not filling arenas and not becoming a Twitter trend, but also not stopping. We’ve been lucky enough to devote a lifetime to music, to progress, to learn from and about each other, and gradually, fitfully, build on our errors and learn what music is. I really feel like I’m in this sweet spot where I’m making enough to survive, but Deerhoof aren’t these darlings under pressure to deliver specific results. In the last couple of years, we’ve gotten over a career hump. We’ve been together long enough where my sense of function in the world of music has started to transform into something I can see, and I’m really proud of that. I don’t question it so much anymore. I used to go to bed every night like, ‘I need to quit music.’ Now I actually want to keep doing it.”

◆◆◆

“THERE IS A VALUE  
IN NOT SUCCEEDING,  
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ALSO NOT STOPPING.”

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*Avedis*

# #THELEGENDARYSOUND

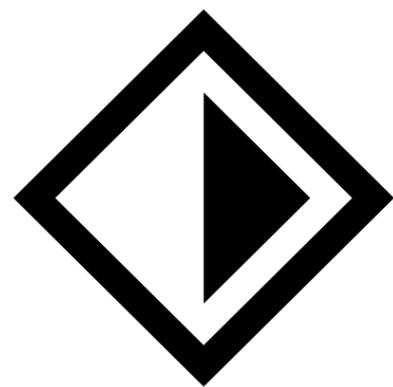
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Joe Saylor

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AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE

tdj

REVIVAL  
DRUM SHOP

# A REVIVAL

INSIDE REVIVAL DRUM SHOP

*Words by Tom Hoare  
Photography by Kate Darracott*

VINTAGE DRUMS AND MORE



**T**ired of life on the road, Jose Mendeles thought he'd start a drum shop. He sold his house in Los Angeles, moved to Portland, and used what money was left to rent the smallest retail space he could find, which he then filled with second-hand drums.

Over the course of five years, this little room morphed into Revival Drum Shop; an eclectic mix of vintage and custom percussion.

When I got the chance to visit, I felt like a kid at a theme park, overwhelmed by what to check out first. For ages, I stood flicking through old Ludwig catalogues from the 1960s. Then I rummaged through a little box of drum keys that were stamped with names I didn't recognise. After that, I stood looking at a nightmarish clown doll that was playing a little drum kit. I was careful not to touch it in case it was cursed.

♦ ♦ ♦

**The Drummer's Journal [gesturing towards the demonic clown]: Are you not scared being in the shop alone with that?**

Jose Mendeles: Thankfully there are always at least two of us here.

**Prior to starting up, did you have any retail experience?**

When I lived in LA, I worked in a record store. When I wasn't touring, I'd also work at Pro Drum Shop. I never went to college, so when it came to wanting to get off the road, the only thing I knew was drums.

**This was 2009, which is one year into a recession. Was it not quite a big risk?**

Financially, it wasn't crazy for me to invest a little bit into the idea. I made sure I never got in too deep. I never wanted to get to the point where I was in debt. I set it up initially where even if only one person bought a pair of sticks, I'd still have money there to pay the bills. Would I be happy about that? No. But you're right, we opened up at the worst time to open a boutique, niche business.

**Did you have a business plan?**

There was none of that [laughs]. I kept track of things on clipboards, issued hand-written receipts. I do miss those days a bit, I'm not going to lie. We don't spend any money on making

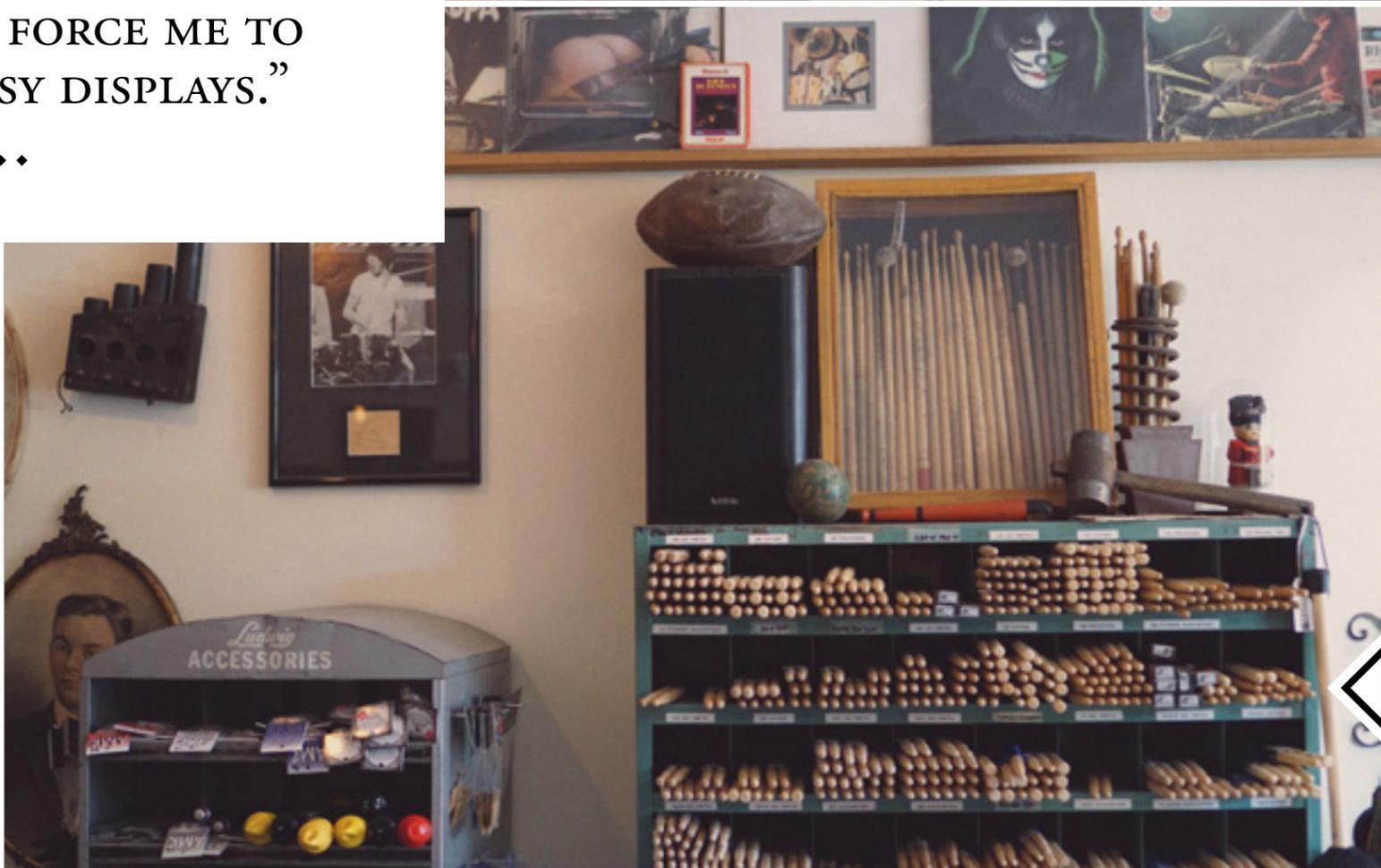


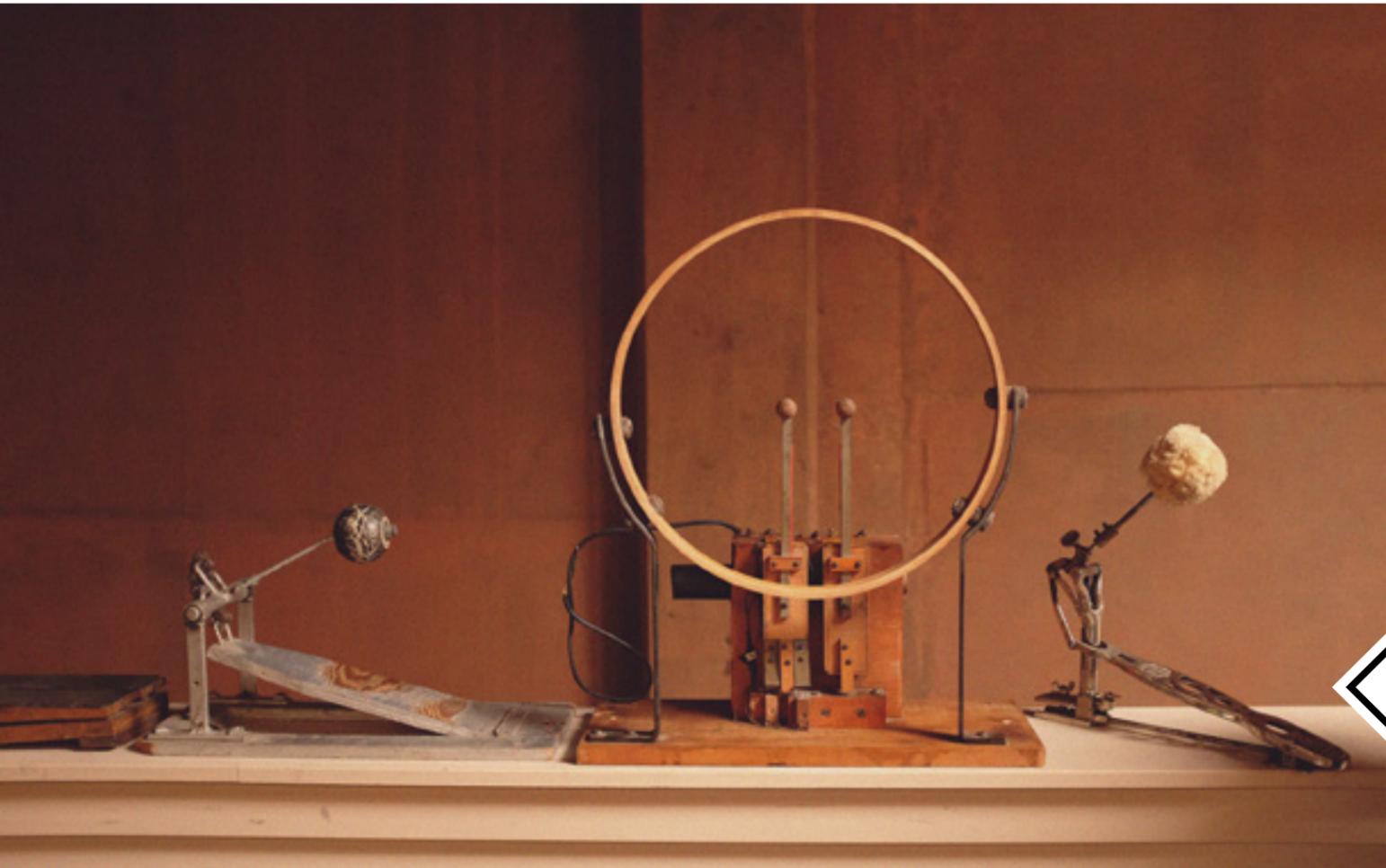
THE TEAM, L-R: JAKE, JOSE AND KERRY





...  
“I KNEW WHAT I WANTED THE SHOP TO FEEL LIKE. I DIDN'T WANT TO SIGN ON TO THESE HUGE CORPORATE COMPANIES THAT WOULD FORCE ME TO PUT IN CHEESY DISPLAYS.”  
...





our name pop up first with Google. We don't have a tech billionaire funding what we do. Our growth has been really slow and steady. I learned early on it's not a sprint.

**You must have had some sort of vision for the shop, though?**

I knew what I wanted the shop to feel like. I didn't want to sign on to these huge corporate companies that would force me to put in cheesy displays or make me stock things I don't like. I'm not saying that I'm Mr. "I know what's going on," but I like to think I have enough history with recording and playing that I had an idea of what might work, and if it didn't, at least we had a ton of integrity and we did it our way. Just like you would with a band. That was the easiest part of this whole thing.

**Are there things you'd do differently?**

I've made a lot of weird manoeuvres, I've lost us money on ego-driven pursuits. In the beginning, I was operating out of fear and scarcity. I was thinking, "It's great but how can I sustain this?" I would put a lot of energy into really caring more than I should what other people were doing. I was taking things way too personally, and it's hard not to when you have your own business.

**Why vintage?**

I knew if I was going to do this, I'd have to stick to what I knew. And I knew vintage, boutique and eclectic. To have a brand new kit in here, or something I don't really know about, I don't think I could fake a passion for it. Just like I can't fake music when I'm doing a session. I'm happy to say, "Look, I think I'm not the right guy for that."

**Why has there been a growth in demand for vintage product?**

I wanted to sell things that aren't just disposable, things that'll last for a very long time. There are more and more people gravitating toward that idea. And that's why people come in. I see these really great companies like C&C Custom Drums grow and explode across the world. Some things we can barely keep in stock. It's great to see the drumming world is listening. It's been so fun, finding these rogue, artisan makers.

**What about people who are just looking for cheap stuff?**

Yeah, of course, there're people where it's solely about price point and how fast they can get it. I'm glad we're here with another option, where you can come in and trust what people will say. Revival is a living, breathing testament that you can do things your own way and I'm really proud of that.



♦ ♦ ♦

“I HAD AN IDEA OF WHAT MIGHT WORK, AND IF IT DIDN'T, AT LEAST WE HAD A TON OF INTEGRITY AND WE DID IT OUR WAY.”

♦ ♦ ♦



**Do you feel like you have any competitors?**

Not really. I knew right off the bat we could never compete with big box stores so I never tried. I love that they're there. It's a totally different experience and there are people that love it. You can walk in and you don't have to talk to anyone. That's totally fine. Trying to compete would be tough; it's why a lot of places struggle. They're just fighting for scraps.

**Have you had any interesting insights into the world of musical instrument retail?**

The way the industry is set up is scary. I don't envy shops that have to do it, but I do respect the shops that are doing it because those guys are really fighting the fight. I haven't been in a big box store in a long time but I hear that it's really different. You can hire people and then let them go because you don't want to pay their health insurance. The whole thing doesn't seem sustainable, but they're still around, and they keep opening more stores. It's just super weird.

**Is fake gear an actual thing?**

Yeah, that's fascinating, right? I went to Istanbul and you can buy fake Zildjian Ks there. They have three stamps instead of one. But actually in terms of encountering it in the US, no, not really.

**Has anyone ever stolen anything?**

Not that I know of. But perhaps people have. We run a pretty tight ship. I mean, we haven't had to tackle anyone. The way I look at it is that, if someone is going to take something, I'm happy to not know. I'm just happy living in a world of delusion [laughs].

**I wasn't insinuating that your customers might be thieves...**

I'm a pretty trusting guy, and the people that come in here, we know maybe 80% of them, and I think they know how devastated I'd be if that actually happened. Maybe they're kind enough to keep it under wraps. But I really want to stress how incredible my crew is. I get a bit emotional about how good they are.

**You have a couple of interesting tattoos...**

Yeah. My sons were like, "You should get some drum tattoos!" This is what we ended up with. I wonder if people look at them and think, "Did you get those when you were drunk one night?!"

♦ ♦ ♦



♦ ♦ ♦  
 "I'VE MADE A LOT OF  
 WEIRD MANOEUVRES,  
 I'VE LOST US MONEY ON  
 EGO-DRIVEN PURSUITS."  
 ♦ ♦ ♦





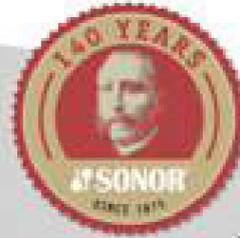
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Benny Greb

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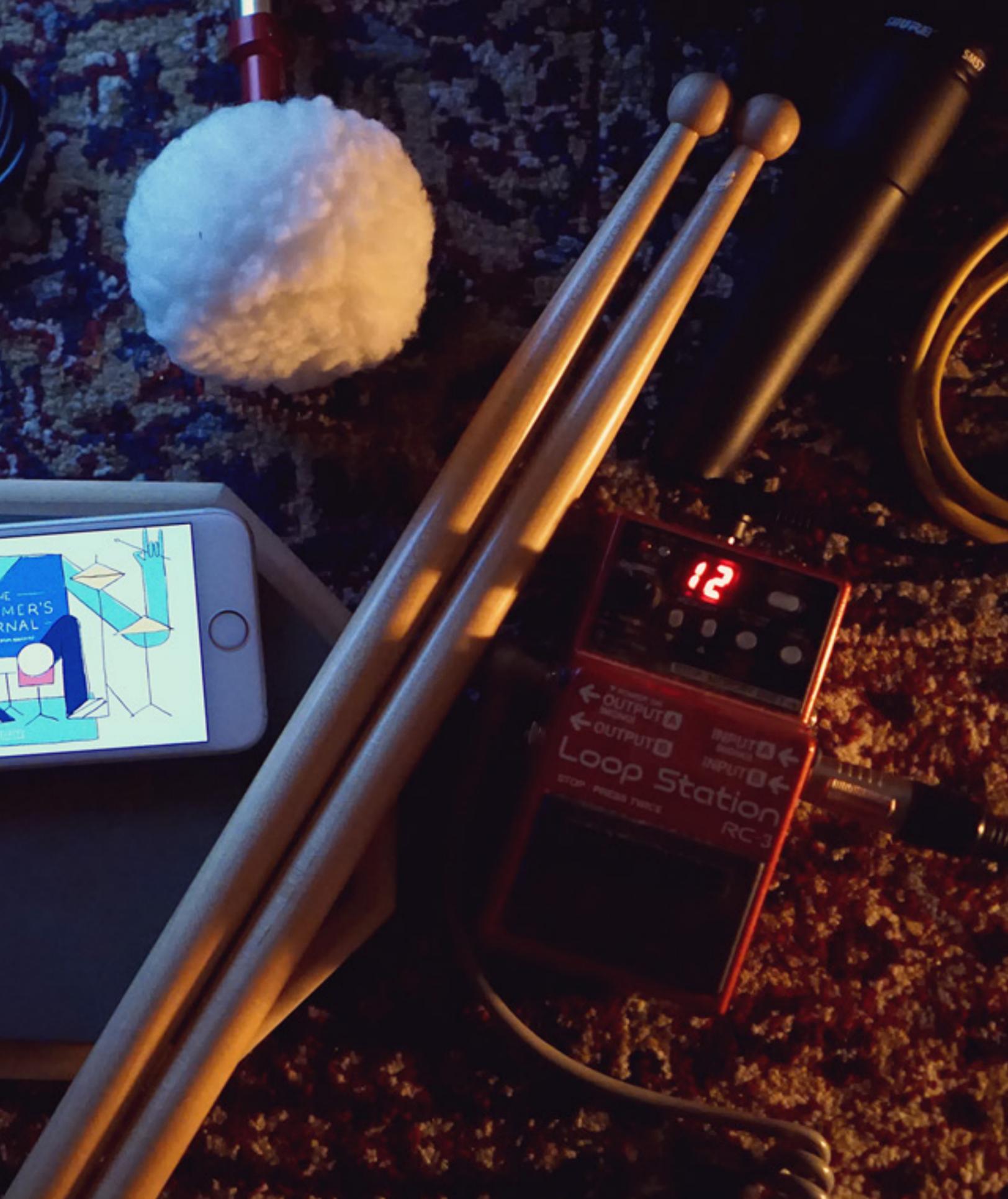
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# PETER ERSKINE

## TIME PRESSURE

*Words by Tom Hoare*



Peter Erskine is staring at me, holding the cardboard cup I'd just handed to him as if he's displaying it to a jury as evidence. "My coffee says Jessica on it," he states, rotating the cup slowly so I can see. He tilts his head. "Who is Jessica?"

I can tell my ears are turning a bit red. "I don't know," I reply.

"Then why do I have Jessica's coffee?" he asks. The tone is now somewhat accusatory. I feel a bit like a child out of whom a parent is trying to exorcise a confession.

I genuinely didn't know who Jessica was. But I was aware that I had Jessica's coffee shortly after collecting it from the counter. Her name was quite obviously written on it in black marker. The problem was that enough time had passed prior to this realisation to make acknowledging the mistake suitably awkward. Besides, I thought Peter genuinely wouldn't notice.

In hindsight, I was trying a bit hard. Getting someone a hot drink to try and make a good first impression is entirely cringeworthy. But then again, Peter is probably one of the most revered jazz drummers around. I wanted him to like me.

I feel unsure about what is to happen next. I wonder if I've just crossed some sort of beverage related moral boundary with Peter, having known him for all of ten seconds. He takes a sip and grins. "Perfect." Poor Jessica is never mentioned again.



Peter glances at his watch. “We’re running late.” He sets off at an abrupt pace across the hotel foyer and I do a weird half walk, half trot in order to keep up. He does not hang around. This is understandable. He knows so much about time that he could probably go into the watch manufacturing business. I’ve only ever seen him play once, and it was in a small jazz club on a Tuesday night. It was the polar opposite of what, early in his career, he was well-known as: the shirtless drummer for Weather Report with chest hair like a tufted rug.

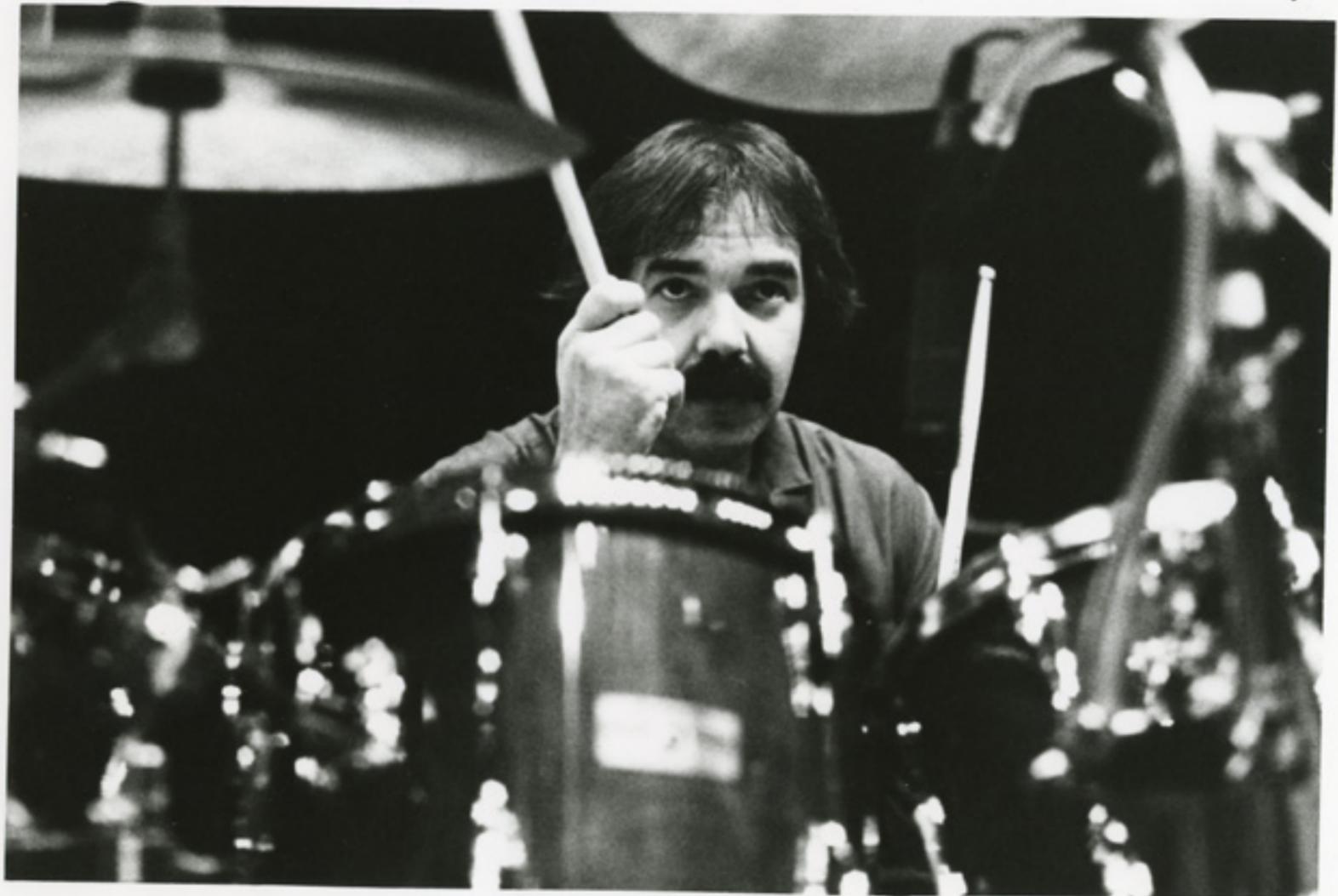
His time in Weather Report in the late 70s and early 80s made Peter a household name. Along with Jaco Pastorius, he comprised what will surely be known as one of music’s all-time great rhythm sections. After numerous GRAMMY Awards, hundreds of album credits and an honorary doctorate from Berklee College of Music, he now teaches at USC Thornton School of Music.

**The Drummer’s Journal: I read that you currently play in an orchestra with Seth Macfarlane from Family Guy?**

Peter Erskine: Yeah. I’m working with him right now. We’ve done two big band albums together. We actually recorded one at Abbey Road in Studio Two, otherwise known as The Beatles Room. I was setting up the drums where John Lennon’s amps had been. I got a few goosebumps from that. It was nice not being in a booth actually.

**You must have sat in a lot of drum booths over the course of your career...**

Being in a booth does change the way you play. It made me understand why drummers made the choices they made on all the classic recordings of the 1950s. When the band are all in one room, all the other instrument mics are also picking you up. The drummer’s job is to supply rhythmic information to the band and keep the thing bubbling along and not to obscure the vocals or all the counterpoints being written in the arrangements. I also learned that drumming really is as simple as playing what you want to hear. You don’t always need to be the loudest.



PETER WITH WEATHER REPORT, SOMEWHERE IN JAPAN

RIGHT: PETER IN SESSION FOR  
SWEET SOUL, 1991

NEXT: WITH JACO PASTORIUS,  
BACK OF A TAXI, DATE UNKNOWN

♦ ♦ ♦

“THERE WAS A SCENE  
SET IN A MEDIEVAL  
GAY DISCOTHEQUE.  
THEY WANTED ME  
TO COME UP WITH A  
DRUM SOUND FOR IT.”

♦ ♦ ♦



**Did you ever watch Family Guy?**

Yeah. I thought it was hilarious, very funny. I like his films too. I actually worked on Ted 2. If I'm honest, it wasn't as good as the first.

**Should you be saying that?!**

It's true. A lot of the humour misfires, for me at least. He went for a couple of jokes, and I'm not a prude, but I was like, "Wow, this is bordering on what I can take..."

**Did you ever watch South Park?**

Yeah. That's some funny shit. But sometimes I'd have trouble understanding what they were saying. But I do a lot of film and TV. I just finished working on a show called Galavant, which takes place in medieval England. I guess it's like Game of Thrones meets Glee. I have to play snappy Broadway-style show tunes. Anyway, there was a scene set in a medieval gay discotheque. They wanted me to come up with a drum sound for it.

**That's a unique request.**

It was certainly a first.

**What do drums in a medieval gay discotheque sound like?**

I took my hi-hats off and switched them out for a couple of splashes. Hey presto, a medieval gay discotheque drum sound.

**You've said, early on in your career, you were worried about what people thought about you...**

That's right. I was. People need acceptance. I think that's only human.

**How did you get over that?**

The one thing I learned was, if I'm playing the drums and you're sitting there thinking, "This sounds terrible," that thought doesn't change what I'm playing. It doesn't change how I sound. Once I realised that, who gives a shit what people think. If the producer and the artist are happy, I'm satisfied with it. That's all I care about. You can't control the way people think.

**Is honest criticism not occasionally important and ultimately helpful?**

Only if it's something constructive. If someone told me, "The drums seem too loud," I'd think, "Ok, fair enough." I'd listen. If I see a drummer listening to me play, I feel empowered by their presence. If I see them turning around and walking out, there's nothing I can do about it. It's about self-control.

**Self-control?**

When I was younger, I realised there are certain things you can't control in life. With music, however, you can achieve any outcome you want. It showed me you can work hard and achieve something. When my kids were young, occasionally they'd flip out. When that happened, there wasn't always a simple solution. I'd often find myself cleaning the kitchen because that was something I could control. I couldn't control my kids, so I'd clean the dishes [laughs]. For me, music functions in the same way.

**You're politically outspoken, and there's a long-established connection between music and political demonstration...**

I've actually got something to say about this, and I'll go on record. But first I need to ask you a question. When you think of Woodstock, what do you think of?

**Jimi Hendrix?**

Ok, what else?

**Hippies?**

Ok, what else?

**Vietnam War protests?**

Right. Imagine that the bands playing that

♦♦♦

“I LEARNED THAT  
DRUMMING REALLY IS AS  
SIMPLE AS PLAYING WHAT  
YOU WANT TO HEAR.”

♦♦♦



♦♦♦

“I ASK MY STUDENTS  
SOMETIMES, ‘WHY DO WE PLAY  
THE DRUMS?’ THEY GIVE ME  
THE BEAUTY PAGEANT ANSWER:  
‘TO EXPRESS OURSELVES.’  
URGH. STOP THAT.”

♦♦♦



day had calfskin drumheads and no amplifiers. We'd still be in Vietnam. The message would have never gotten out there.

**Do you really think that's the case? It sounds nice but is that actually something you would treat as a fact?**

Yeah. Thanks to the plastic drumhead, drummers could play harder, play outdoors, play louder. If we had calfskin heads it would have been very different. The folk movement was very powerful, but it took rock to really get the message out there. It literally electrified people. It was loud. It was a music of protest.

**As a teacher, what do you tell students who are struggling with motivation?**

I ask my students sometimes, “Why do we play the drums?” Especially if they've just played something very uninspired.

**And what do they say?**

They give me the beauty pageant answer: “We play the drums to express ourselves and make the world a better place.” Urgh. Stop that. I'm not interested in that answer. You know the real reason people play the drums? It's to get laid! I'll say, “You'll think you'll get laid playing the drums like that?” As crass as that sounds, what I'm really saying is to play with passion, play with conviction and own the moment.

**How do you teach someone to own the moment?**

Most of the problems I ever ran into musically were usually because I wasn't feeling the music. Whenever the guys in Weather Report got unhappy with me, it was because what I was playing was inauthentic. I was playing it for the wrong reason.

**You mean, to show off?**

Sure. It's about ego. And what is ego? Ego is lack of confidence. You know when someone walks into a room and constantly talks about himself or herself? That's because they're not sure of themselves. I would do the musical equivalent of that. I'd play things that, to me, signified a signature of sorts, like a dog marking its territory. I remember playing drums with Mike Mainieri, and the music was going along nicely, and for some reason I had to go and put in a little extra something. He turned and looked at me and went, “Why did you do that? It was good until you did that.”

**So why did you do it?**

Because I wasn't confident enough to not do it. You see what I mean? When I got older, I just realised, “Peter, keep it bubbling.” That doesn't stop me from interacting with the music or contributing as an equal voice. Ego is different from confidence. I feel confident now. I can walk on stage with a big orchestra and feel fine. It's what I do. But I'd have no business walking out there if I felt like I had to do something to make my mark or stake a claim to the music. My job is to make the shit swing. I know how to do that.

♦♦♦



PREVIOUS: WITH  
STEPS AHEAD, 1985

LEFT: RECORDING  
VOLCANO FOR  
HIRE, 1981





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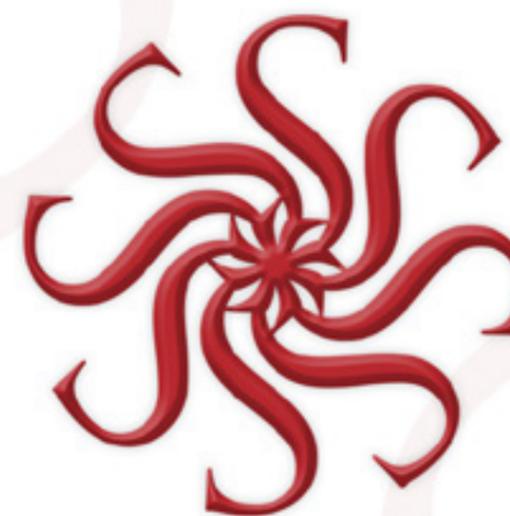
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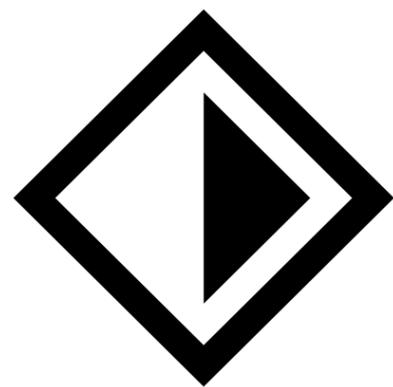
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# THIS IS A TRIBUTE

## THE DRUM SET AND IMPERSONATION

*Words by Tom Hoare*

In a field in rural northern England, a festival crowd is gathering. Backstage, John Lennon, dressed all in white, is preparing to perform, along with Ringo, Paul and George. They seem a bit nervous.

In the crowd, The Rolling Stones are watching. The members of Green Day, however, are still in a van travelling up the M6 and stuck in traffic. Austin Powers is running around throwing petals in the air.

Tribute festivals can be slightly odd. So we'd come to the Wannasee Festival to see why imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

---

PHOTO BY DAVID LANGLEY



## *The Stones / James Jordan [Charlie Watts]*

James plays in a Rolling Stones tribute called The Stones. He is known as Jimbo to his friends. Jimbo is a pro. He makes his living playing in tribute bands and has done since he left school. He's from Middlesbrough. This means he pronounces "tomorrow" as "tomorra."

### **The Drummer's Journal: What's it like being in a tribute band?**

James: Bloody nightmare, mate.

### **Really?!**

No, not really. Well, it has its ups and downs. I feel like I spend 23 hours on the road and an hour on stage. But when you walk away with the money from it, for something that is almost like a hobby – I'd do that for free.

### **Is it a full-time thing for you?**

Yeah. I was going to become a joiner's apprentice initially, then the covers stuff took over.

### **What sort of gigs are you doing?**

We'll still do anything from Bah Mitzvahs to funerals. Plenty of work out there.

### **People hire Rolling Stones tribute bands for funerals?!**

Yup.

### **Charlie's reputation was that he was pretty laid back, right?**

I think so. He's still quite eccentric, though. He doesn't have a driver's licence but has about 15 cars in his garage. He likes to get suits tailor-made to match the interior of the car and then sit in the driver's seat. As you do.

### **Do you feel like you've achieved what you wanted?**

When you're younger you see yourself as a rock star and a millionaire, but when you get older and you realise that's harder to achieve than you thought. I'm happy just doing what I do.

### **What is it that separates a good tribute band from the not so good ones?**

Authenticity. I'll go out and get the right clothing, get the wigs, or as close as I can without breaking the bank, that's important. One thing I don't like about the industry is when you get people telling you some minor detail wasn't quite right.

### **What's your response to that?**

I just ask them if they enjoyed themselves, and they usually say yes. That's the main thing. You've got to enjoy yourself in life, and that's what we're going to do.

### **What have been some of your best and worst gigs?**

The best one was a Beatles tribute show I played in Belarus and we had about 20,000 people there. We came off stage and there were hundreds of people wanting autographs. I think that's the closest I've ever felt to being famous. But there have been a lot of bad ones over the years. Mostly clubs in the northeast, where there are people in the audience reading newspapers or shouting, "Turn it down!"

### **Do you ever encounter people who seem to genuinely believe they're the person they're tributing?**

I've met a few, yeah. In the Beatles scene, it's the John Lennons that tend to have a bit of work done here and there. Getting their nose done. I remember last week we were doing a festival and there was a U2 tribute, and Bono was there walking around backstage like he was actually Bono. It was a bit much for me, personally. Just calm down. There's some funny people around. I've heard the Michael Jacksons can be a bit odd as well. I suppose that goes without saying though really.



♦♦♦

“IN THE BEATLES SCENE, IT'S  
THE JOHN LENNONS THAT  
TEND TO HAVE A BIT OF WORK  
DONE HERE AND THERE.  
GETTING THEIR NOSE DONE.”

♦♦♦

## *Green Date / Iain Riley AKA No-So Cool*

### *[Tre Cool]*

Iain plays in a Green Day tribute called Green Date. We stand in a muddy field next to a barbed-wire fence, which marked the extent of the distance which we were able to get away from the noise of the main stage. It begins to rain. Iain is concerned about his hair, which has been sculpted into a large quiff to resemble Tre Cool. He is due on stage shortly. I hand him my umbrella.

Iain: Thanks for the brolly. This is such an immense hairdo and if you get a drop of water on it, that's it. Gone. Ruined.

#### **TDJ: I must admit, you have nailed the hairstyle.**

Actually, it's a bit long at the minute. But it's quite difficult to do. He's got several different looks.

#### **Did you go to a hairdresser with a picture of Tre and say, "Make me look like this man?"**

I've done that once and it didn't work well. Now I've learned I need to be more specific. I learned to speak 'hairdresser' and give specific measurements.

#### **Are you Tre full time?**

Unfortunately, no. I've got a day job. But the band is gigging every weekend throughout summer.

#### **Say you had the opportunity to do this full time, is that desirable?**

It would be amazing. Really amazing. But it's a tough situation because it's pretty much a semi-pro position.

#### **What makes it tough, specifically?**

When it comes to the tribute scene, people think it's a bit of a joke.

There is that side of it, bad wigs and all that, but we are seriously committed to producing the best replica of the act we possibly can. The work, the effort, the rehearsal time, the costumes; everything has to be at that top level.

#### **What keeps it from being full-time?**

You cannot gig the way touring artists do, every night of the week, all around the world. Well, some bands do, like the Abba tributes, and they do really well at it. I'd love to do it with Green Date. It'd be brilliant. Why not? It's the thing that keeps you ploughing on. Your life force.

#### **You all use replica equipment too?**

Oh yeah. I went totally anorak on it. I've got all the right kit. There are other Green Day tributes out there, I'd say there's one that's pretty close, but the vocals just aren't right. The performance side of things is so important. If it doesn't look right, doesn't sound right, doesn't feel right, then it's not right.

#### **You've studied it in depth...**

You wouldn't believe it. The amount of time I've spent trying to find out exactly what Tre is playing. Well, it's a lot.

#### **How would you chart the band's growth?**

It's been mad. It started out in a rehearsal room in Mansfield, no bass player, having a jam and seeing if it'd work. Then we got a bass player in and did our first gig in a pub. And from that point, we played everywhere we could. Keep at it and gradually you get bigger gigs, then maybe a festival, and from that you get another few bookings. Before you know it you're playing Glastonbudget and Tribfest, and then you're getting gigs in India, Las Vegas, Italy and Greece. It's been astounding, really. I'm amazed that our little band has got this far. I'm really proud of it. [Pauses] I think I need to get back as we've got to set up. Could I take the umbrella?



♦ ♦ ♦

“PEOPLE THINK IT'S A BIT OF A JOKE, BUT WE ARE COMMITTED TO PRODUCING THE BEST REPLICA OF THE ACT WE POSSIBLY CAN.”

♦ ♦ ♦

## *The Long Tall Beatles / Mike Corner [Ringo Starr]*

Mike and I sit in my car in the festival car park (field) as a tractor pulls out the stuck cars from the mud. I'm sat in the driver's seat. Mike is sat in the passenger seat. It's a bit weird because we're both facing forwards and have to turn our heads 90 degrees in order to have a conversation. Through a coincidental association, Mike knows Jimbo. The tribute scene is a bit like that.

### **TDJ: I was speaking to James from The Stones...**

Mike: Oh, Jimbo? Yeah. I know him. He lives quite close by. I actually drum in a pub band he used to be in.

### **It's a proper community, isn't it?**

It can be, yeah. I think the Beatles bands especially tend to be quite swappable. Beatles bands are a bit like a key party. You put your keys in the bowl, you know [laughs].

### **Were you in an originals band at some point also?**

Yeah. We'd do a lot of gigs as an originals band and get nowhere near the interest you'd get as a covers band.

### **Were you aiming for a career as a drummer?**

Yes. Absolutely. I still aim for that now. But, for me, at this point in my life, drumming isn't earning what I'd like to get by really.

### **You've another job?**

I work in a doctor's surgery, yeah. I do the IT work in there.

### **You've got access everyone's medical records?**

Updating them is part of my job. I've actually got a microbiology degree. I didn't get any work from it.

### **What attracted you to the tribute scene?**

Some friends knew a John Lennon who was looking to put a band together. I got in touch, we all met up and went from there.

### **How has the band progressed?**

Pretty well, yeah. But we've had a bit of a hiccup because our Paul McCartney has moved to Shanghai [laughs].

### **Shanghai... That's quite far away.**

Yeah. He's a teacher and is going to work out there abroad for three years.

### **Paul is quite an integral member too. How do you replace a Paul?**

He is integral. Frontman, piano player, bass player and harmonizer. Plus he's left-handed.

### **Have you got a Paul lined up? A potential Paul?**

Yeah. We've got one in the wings.

### **Do you foresee a conversation in the near future about the prospect of taking it full time?**

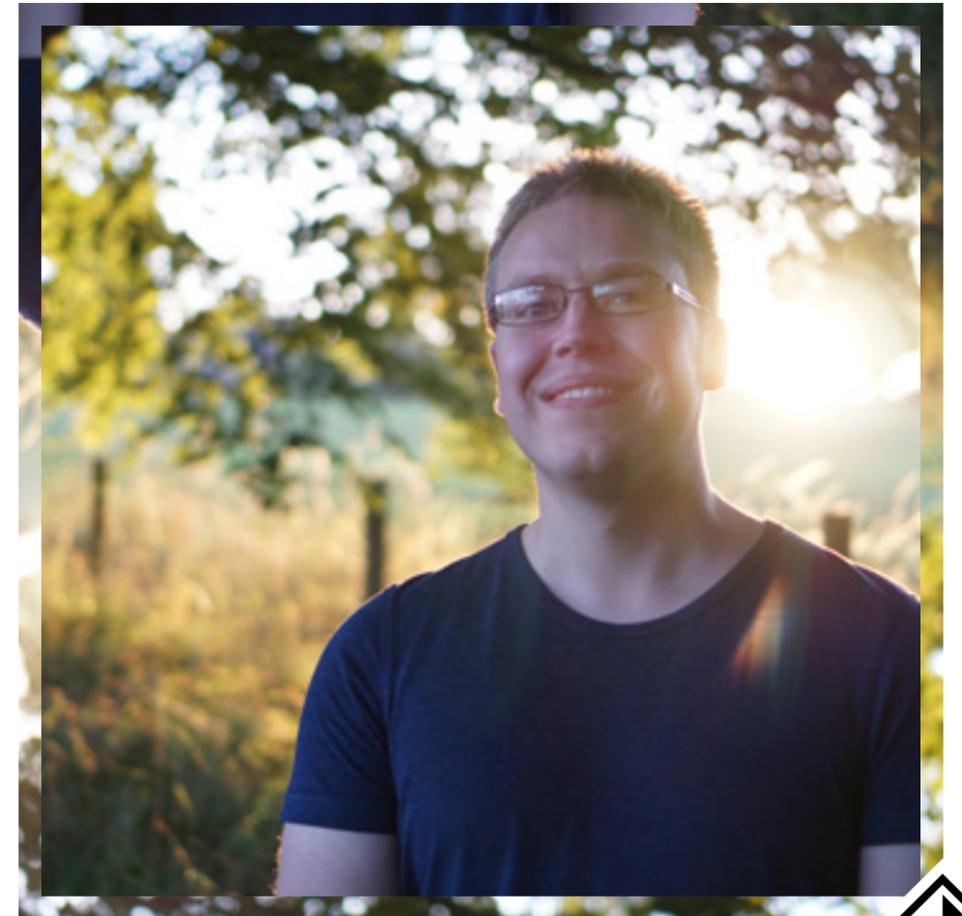
I would like to think so, but it's going to be hard. A couple of people are having children and life sort of takes hold. You feel like you might have missed the train perhaps. But for me, this is the best way at the moment to keep doing good gigs. I'd rather do this with my friends than just be sat at home.

### **When it comes to you being Ringo, how seriously do you take that?**

I think The Beatles were quite a fun band. You look at them over the years, and, granted it wasn't so much fun towards the end, but that's not really what you're trying to channel as a tribute. You want to have a bit of a laugh with your mates. We all try and look the part and we've got the gear, the jackets and the hair, obviously.

### **You've a wig?**

Yes, I do. It's very much a weekend only affair, though [laughs].



♦♦♦

“WE’VE HAD A BIT OF A HICCUP BECAUSE OUR PAUL MCCARTNEY HAS MOVED TO SHANGHAI.”

♦♦♦



LEFT TO RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM. THE LONG TALL BEATLES,  
GREENDATE, DRESSED TO KILL, THE IRON MAIDENS



## *Dressed To Kill / Matt Blackout [Peter Criss]*

Matt is a tribute veteran from South Wales. I feel like, at some point, he might have played in every single venue the UK has to offer. We sit in the cab of his Transit van, which is parked backstage. His band, a KISS tribute called Dressed To Kill, are headlining the main stage later in the evening. Currently, however, some kids keep tapping on the van's windows and then running away. Matt is glad he does not have kids.

### **TDJ: What's demand like for a KISS tribute?**

Matt: It's not bad at all. I play in a Whitesnake tribute as well so I've been doing that more recently. I was doing that last night, in fact, in Tavistock.

### **Tavistock? In Devon? That must be about 400 miles away!**

Yeah, that's about right. I don't mind the travelling really.

### **How did you come to be involved with the Tribute scene?**

You know what, I can't even think what the first tribute I was in would be. Actually, no, I've got it! It was a Van Halen tribute. Didn't last that long really. That's the difficult thing, trying to break into the scene. The demand just wasn't there.

### **You must be commanding a decent fee as the headline act?**

As far as playing drums goes, the money is irrelevant. Don't get me wrong, if someone gives me £500 to do a gig, that's great. But I'm not driving four hours to get to a gig and then four hours home after it because of the money. It's those two hours on stage that make it worth it.

### **As a band to tribute, KISS aren't exactly low maintenance...**

No, very difficult. We've got a very high standard and this is why

whenever I see KISS tributes, I usually think they're not good enough. Any tribute is very difficult to do to the standard where you look at it and think, "That could be the real band." Very difficult indeed.

### **Is that the goal, for people to think they're seeing the real band?**

Definitely. I've got a good story about this actually. Wal-Mart brought out a KISS t-shirt, and the picture they used for it was actually us. It was Dressed To Kill. That made me laugh. They realised though and it got removed from sale.

### **How long does it take to get the makeup on?**

An hour or so.

### **Do you apply your own or does someone do it for you?**

No, we do our own.

### **You must be a dab hand with it now?**

Well, it's been a while since I last put it on [laughs].

### **Did you mention a day job earlier?**

Yeah, I'm a Royal Mail business manager. I look after business accounts.

### **Have any colleagues been to see Dressed To Kill?**

Some of them have, actually. I think they enjoyed it too. But the way I look at it is that I don't really want to be anyone else. I do what I do, this is my thing in my life. I don't have any responsibilities other than enjoying myself. I'm a magistrate as well, so I'm pretty busy usually.

### **Where do tribute bands fit in in the grand scheme of the music industry?**

I know it's a contentious issue, but tribute bands seem to be keeping the local scenes alive. People may not like that and say, "Tributes are killing off original bands!" Which isn't true. The music industry did that. I think people just want to be entertained, and tribute bands are familiar and that's what a lot of people like.



♦ ♦ ♦  
 “WAL-MART BROUGHT  
 OUT A KISS T-SHIRT, AND  
 THE PICTURE THEY USED  
 FOR IT WAS ACTUALLY US.  
 IT WAS DRESSED TO KILL.”  
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## *The Iron Maidens / Linda McDonald* *AKA Nikki McBURRain [Nicko McBrain]*

I spoke to Linda on the phone because she lives several thousand miles away. People say everything's better in America (except cheese and presidential elections) so I wondered if it applied to tribute bands as well. Linda helped establish The Iron Maidens, the US's premier Pat Boone tribute. Just kidding, they're an Iron Maiden tribute really. A very good one.

### **TDJ: How did you first get into Iron Maiden?**

Nikki: I got into a bit of trouble one day at school and got sent home. Because I wasn't allowed out anywhere, I started listening to some of my brother's records. I put on Maiden Japan by Maiden, and it just blew my mind. As soon as I heard Clive Burr, I just thought, "I want to play drums like this guy." Sometimes you have to get into a little bit of trouble to discover good things [laughs].

### **And you've been a metalhead ever since?**

Oh yeah. I mean, I like all kinds of music. But certainly, back then, I needed something more satisfying and aggressive. That was metal.

### **Am I right in saying that The Iron Maidens are the only all-female Iron Maiden tribute?**

There have been some others that have popped up over time. I guess we are the world's first and longest standing. We're 15 years in and still going.

### **Where did that initial idea come from?**

At the time, I was in an original band called Phantom Blue. Personally speaking, at that point in my life I was really burned out with the music scene. Everything was changing.

### **In what sense?**

It was a dark and depressing time for me really. It was hard to find people to keep that band going. I knew it was time to move on. I was about ready to hang it up altogether when I got an offer to go and see an Iron Maiden tribute band which had a female vocalist and bass player. After the show, the two females in the band asked if I wanted to join and create an all female line up. I said yes.

### **How were your first few gigs?**

It was fun, exciting, and refreshing. We had a list of about seven songs for everyone to work on. At the rehearsal studio, I remember there was a small circular window in the door and all these people were peeking through it. I don't think they could believe there was a bunch of girls playing Iron Maiden.

### **Did it hit an upward trajectory straight away?**

It took off out the gate. Our first show, we didn't know what to expect, but there was a line out around the building and down the street. We were shocked.

### **It sounds like a contrast to your experiences with Phantom Blue...**

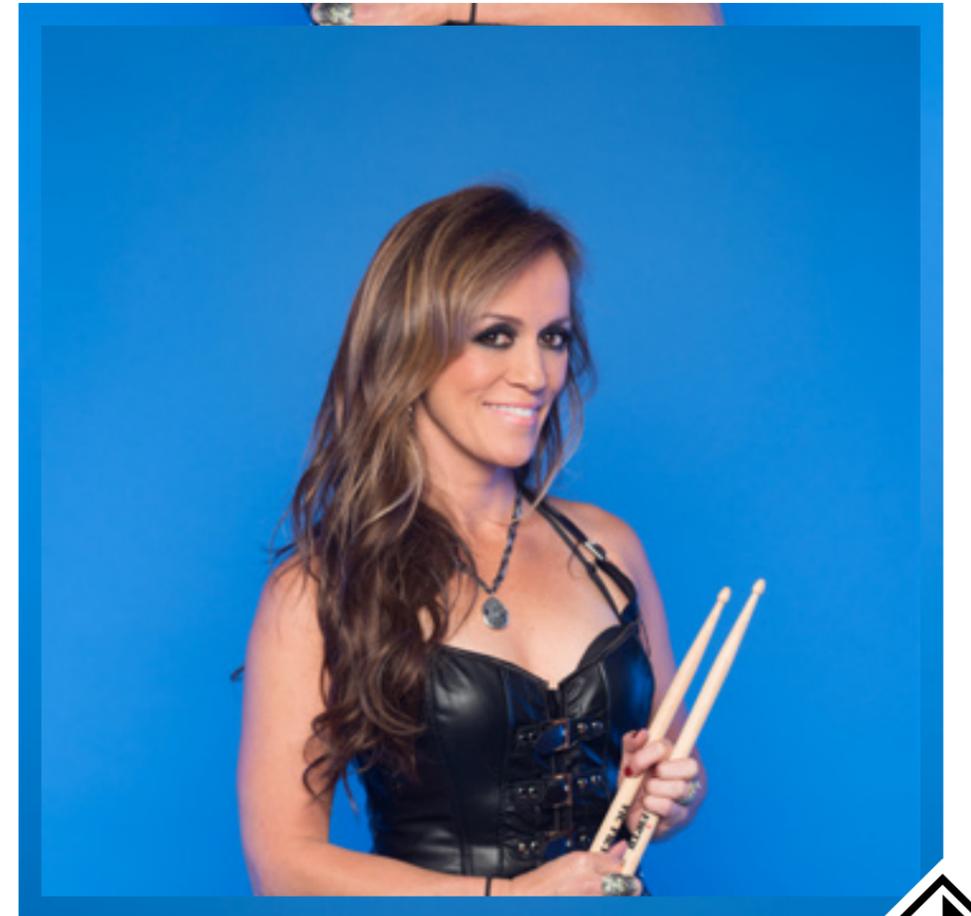
In a way, yes. With Phantom Blue, I constantly felt like I had to prove myself because the material wasn't something the audience was already familiar with. People would always judge, or sit there with their arms crossed. It felt like a struggle, I suppose. It's hard to describe.

### **I thought Phantom Blue had been quite successful?**

We did well in Europe because the record labels there actually did a push and did the MTV thing for us. In the US it was more difficult.

### **Being a tribute band is more than just mimicry, right?**

Yes, absolutely. I mean, we're not trying to make ourselves look like guys. Some tribute bands I see are kind of cheesy. But then there are the ones who really stand out that make you feel something. Maybe it's nostalgia. The first time I saw [Van Halen tribute] The Atomic



Punks, I finally understood what made them a successful tribute band. It made me relive the memories of when I loved that era of Van Halen.

### **Do you have a day job?**

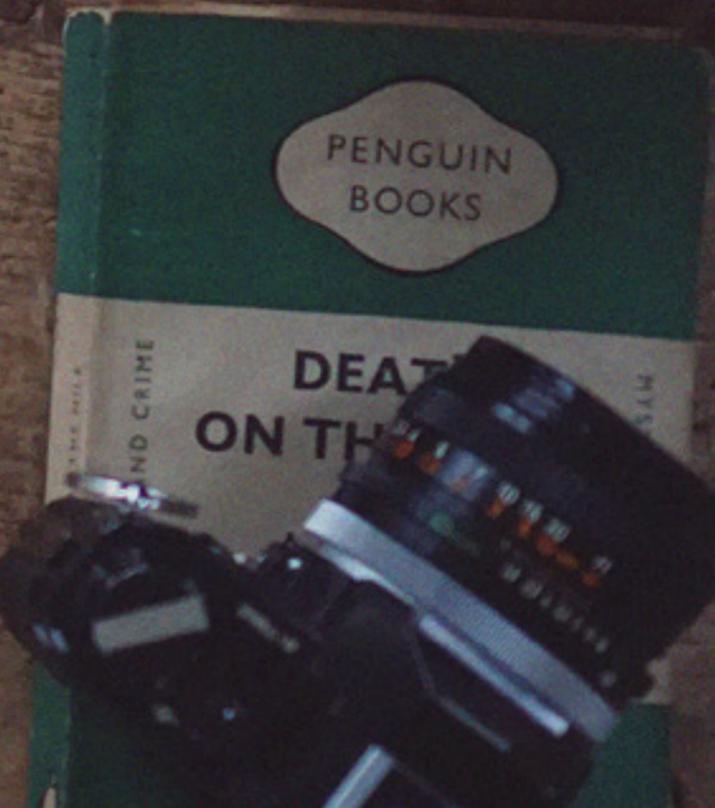
Oh yes. I think we could be booked touring all year long, but that's not what we really want with this. Because we do have lives at home, and we all have jobs. I have a pet sitting business. I didn't want to work for anyone else, so I decided that I was going to surround myself with the two things I love most, dogs and drums.

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# APPRECIATING ART

## ART BLAKEY'S GREATEST TRIUMPH

*Words By Darryl Tracy*

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If you were to only ever listen to one single jazz recording in your lifetime, then *Moanin'* by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers is the record you should choose.

This might seem a little left field. Sure, there are jazz records plenty more famous than this one. But for me, it encapsulates everything I love about jazz music. Recorded in 1958 and composed largely by pianist Bobby Timmons and saxophonist Benny Golson, it's one of the Jazz Messengers' best-loved works.

As a record, *Moanin's* importance goes beyond the actual compositions themselves. It helped define hard bop as a subgenre of jazz in its own right. It presented an audience with an incredibly modern sound, incorporating influences from the blues, R&B and gospel music. Culturally, hard bop was not only a musical statement but also a political one about 1950s America. It was about reclamation.



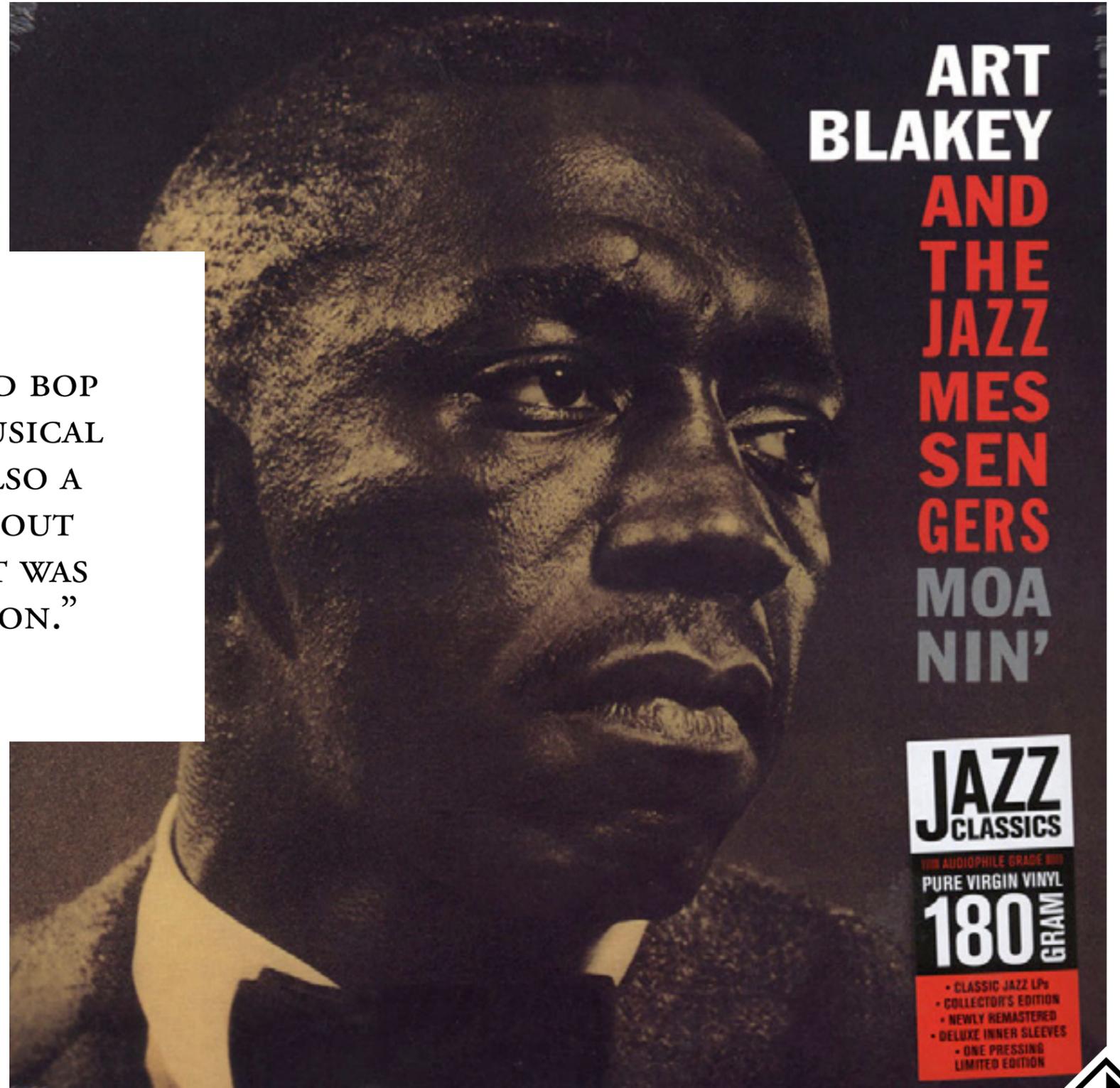
Hard bop was an extension of bebop, which itself was a reaction to the 1930s big band era where the band's role was to play standards to which people could dance. Bebop, which rose to prominence in the 1940s, was characterised by complex chord structures, fast tempos and instrumental virtuosity. It was hard to dance to; that was the point. It was a musicians' music, which required the audience's close attention. Hard bop, however, was equivalent to the members of the jazz community grabbing the reins on what they felt was a runaway horse. Some felt jazz was becoming too European; a music for the conservatoires that was quickly losing touch with its roots.

Hard bop was a musical reversion directing the focus back onto groove and feeling, importantly, by incorporating elements of popular African American music. The 1950s was still a time of racial segregation and huge economic and social inequality. Hard bop was, in part, a statement of identity; an acknowledgement of the history of Afro-American experience in America.

Blakey was more than just a great musician. He cared about jazz music with every ounce of his soul. There's good reason he is now regarded as one of the greatest bandleaders of all time, and it's not unreasonable to suggest that he changed the face of jazz in the US. He devoted his life to bringing it to a larger audience. And Moanin' did just that. It made Blakey an influential figure in both the US and Europe and, commercially, it was one of The Messengers' most successful records.

Although The Messengers bore his name, the focus was rarely on Blakey himself. Instead, The Messengers had a deliberate revolving-door policy so younger, inexperienced players could come in and make a name for themselves. Many of jazz's great players graduated from The Jazz Messengers – Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea and Horace Silver to name but a few - with Blakey routinely taking a back seat to allow his band to shine.

MOANIN' LP  
ARTWORK



♦ ♦ ♦

“CULTURALLY, HARD BOP WAS NOT ONLY A MUSICAL STATEMENT BUT ALSO A POLITICAL ONE ABOUT 1950S AMERICA. IT WAS ABOUT RECLAMATION.”

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**“IT’S NOT  
UNREASONABLE TO  
SUGGEST THAT ART  
BLAKEY CHANGED  
THE FACE OF JAZZ  
IN THE US.”**

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Moanin’ is a rare example of a jazz album that is sublime entirely from start to finish. Each of the six songs are a hit in their own right. The first track, Moanin’, from which the album also became known, is a nine-minute odyssey, which opens with a piano refrain you could hum for days and never tire of. From there, the trumpet and sax flick between smooth leads and face melting solos. The bass wanders around with a bluesy grin, and all the while Blakey’s snare and ride keep your foot tapping along.

Blues March, the album’s fourth track, is a nod to New Orleans marching bands. Golson described it as “Blues, just a little different.” Although funk had yet to be fully established, this track in particular could be singled out as a direct precursor.

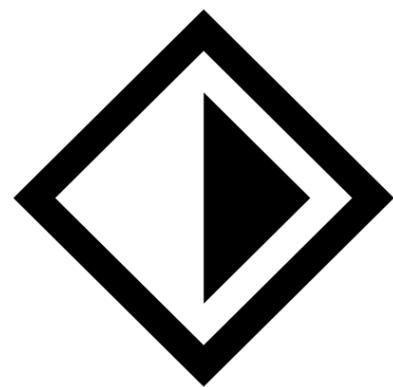
The three-part, seven-minute epic, The Drum Thunder Suite, is a subtle masterclass from Blakey where he solos in three contrasting movements, incorporating several stylistic approaches. Even when he’s at the forefront, there is something still tastefully restrained about Blakey’s playing. Even at his most frenetic, you get the impression it’s just a walk on the beach.

What is particularly endearing about this record is its lack of pretence. The Jazz Messengers were a collective of virtuoso musicians playing music that is a joy to listen to.

Blakey is an example of a person who kept the music he cared for alive when it was faced with dwindling audience interest. His legacy is one which is written into the very fabric of jazz music. Moanin’, quite simply, is the best way to appreciate this. If you were to take 40 minutes out of your day to sit and listen to this record, start to finish, no distractions, I guarantee your day will be all the better for it.

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# CARMINE APPICE

## HEAVY HITTER

*Words by Tom Hoare*

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When Carmine Appice's autobiography arrived at the office, I stood looking at it on the desk as if it was Jumanji. Part of me was terrified, largely because Carmine, renowned rock drummer for the likes of Vanilla Fudge, Ozzy Osbourne and Rod Stewart, has a reputation that precedes him. On the one hand, he's one of the most revered hard rock drummers to have existed, often cited as having inspired waves of iconic drummers. On the other, he's lived a life that, in part, has been fuelled by the worst excesses of rock and roll debauchery.

I rolled the dice. And if we're continuing on the Jumanji theme, I wished very quickly I hadn't. The

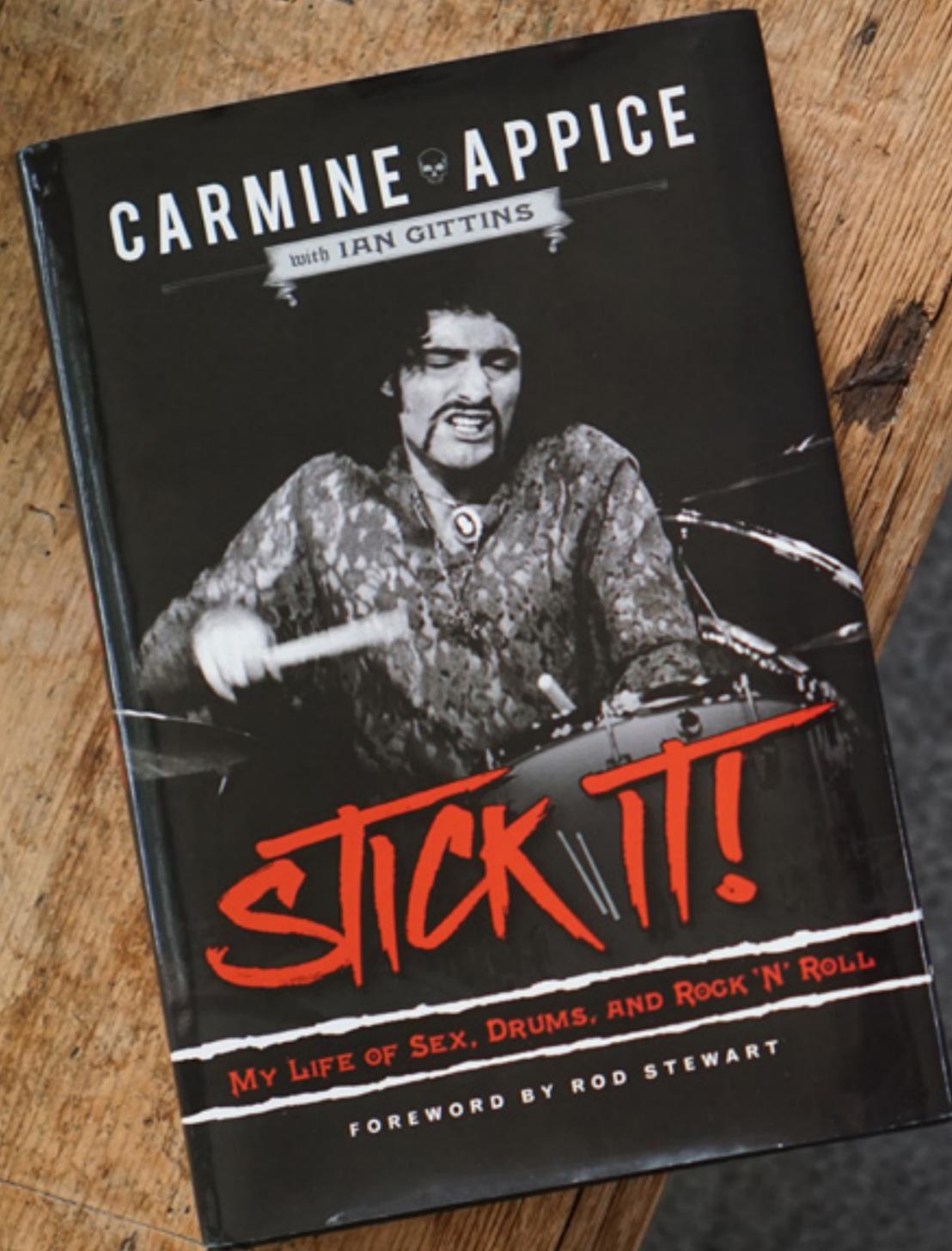
blurb lists some of Carmine's achievements. Many, like the fact he co-wrote one of Rod Stewart's biggest hits (*Do Ya Think I'm Sexy*) deserve genuine commendation. Others, such as his claim to have slept with over 4500 groupies, seem oddly misconceived. The book has a tendency to focus on the latter, making extensive parts of it read like stomach-churning erotica. By the time I reached the pictures in the centrefold, I was dreading what I was going to find.

The 1970s hedonistic, drug-fuelled, sex-crazed rock star aesthetic is one that has seen a lot of mileage. I'm not disputing any of what Carmine has written to be untrue, but in the cold, hard light

of day, it feels antiquated, serving only to paint a contrived portrait of a man who took as much advantage of any given situation as much as he possibly could. The strange thing is, I'm not sure that's actually an accurate representation of what Carmine is actually like.

Carmine never seems to acknowledge or rationalise exactly how this behaviour affected him later in life, beyond a few throwaway sentences which allude to how some of the more questionable encounters ultimately played on his conscience.





CARMINE'S BOOK:  
STICK IT! MY LIFE  
OF SEX, DRUMS AND  
ROCK 'N' ROLL

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 “WHEN GRUNGE  
 CAME IN, IT  
 MADE US LOOK  
 LIKE DINOSAURS.”  
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A string of failed marriages, declining musical popularity and worsening health are subjects the book, to its detriment, glosses over. By doing so, you're left feeling like these were minor hiccups as opposed to the genuine, life-changing experiences they obviously were. Instead, the reader is forced to sit through more bizarre first hand accounts of what the members of Vanilla Fudge found sexually arousing.

When we were asked to interview Carmine about the book, I had more than a few reservations, largely based on the fact I could see no positive outcome for either party. That said, I had so many questions that the opportunity to have some of them answered by Carmine himself was too good to pass up.

So on a Friday evening, I found myself sitting in a windowless basement with Carmine Appice. We had about 20 minutes before he was due on stage, where a local radio personality was to interview him in front of an audience. Our conversations were likely very different.

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**The Drummer's Journal: Can we talk about your autobiography, Stick It?**

Carmine Appice: Sure thing. [My agent] already told me you had questions about it.

**It's been almost 40 years in the making, right?**

Yeah. I just wanted it to be a real truthful story about what it was like being a rock star in the late

60s when society was changing. All the books I've read about what it was like to be a rock star at that time weren't really honest about it.

**Writing the majority of this as a man in your late 60s, how was looking back at your life in detail?**

I realise now that we had no respect for anything and got away with it. We were rock stars, we were young kids. We had the world at our feet. You don't think about the fact you're wrecking a hotel room or being disrespectful to women. It feels like another life.

**A lot of the book is about your relationships with women.**

Yeah.

**Much of it is very graphic, specifically in terms of describing sexual encounters.**

That's right.

**Were you worried about the tone used to describe some of these incidents and how it could be interpreted?**

The tone that was set in the book was real. If people think it's too graphic don't read it. Everything was different then. People looked at things differently. Women were different.

**Women were different how?**

They had different relationships with the musicians. You could get away with stuff. You can't now. That's what people are saying they love about it, that honesty. A lot of other books like mine leave a lot of the graphic stuff out.

**Do you think a lot of them leave it out for a reason, though?**

Yeah, because they're not real. Today, everything has to be politically correct. When was the last time you saw a woman walk around New York or LA with no bra on or a see-through blouse?

**A see-through blouse?**

Exactly, nobody does that today. Back then it was a statement. They wanted to be equal in every way. Sexually. Today, it's politically incorrect.

**Do you see political correctness as a good or bad thing?**

There's too much of it. Look at the politicians. Richard Nixon resigned for less than Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have done. All that stuff about Benghazi is terrible. They're all trying to be politically correct on the one hand and hiding shit with the other.

**In the book, you mention the social role of music in the 60s. Do you still see something similar happening today?**

Music isn't even made by musicians anymore. It's done by machines. On a hit song today, the only thing that changes is the vocal line. The drum machine stays the same. It's the same chords all the way through.

**What about a band like the Beatles, weren't some of their songs based on one melody?**

Yeah, but that's different because they were real musicians. Everything now has no soul in it. Even R&B has no soul anymore.

**Some of your professional relationships ended better than others. Do you bare any grudges still?**

I don't hold grudges. It's just the way it is. A lot of musicians didn't even handle their own business so they got screwed. It was by their own managers most of the time. But I learned not to have grudges. If you want to be successful in this business, the best thing is to let things go. Nobody is going to work with you. But there are a lot of new people coming up and I don't have a clue who they are. I don't even know how they made it.

**Are you referring to new bands coming through?**

Yeah, I don't get how anyone can make it big anymore. I was reading the Village Voice and there was some band who sold out Madison Square Garden for two nights. They were called The Black Keys. I'd never heard of them. It used to be that to sell out two nights at MSG, you needed at least two hit records. They don't have that. So how did they sell out MSG? You tell me.

**They put in a lot of time, probably.**

But they don't have a multi-platinum record. No hit records.

**How do you feel about fans being able to download or stream music?**

Spotify, as far as I'm concerned, is killing the

♦ ♦ ♦

“WHEN I STARTED  
HAVING NOSEBLEEDS,  
THAT'S WHEN THINGS  
GOT REALLY FUCKED UP.  
I SERIOUSLY THOUGHT  
I'D NEVER WORK AGAIN.”

♦ ♦ ♦



business. I don't understand why record companies give things to them. I get the model. I look at Netflix and it's the same model. Except Netflix doesn't put new products on. Imagine if they released new movies on Netflix at the same time they released the movie in theatres.

**I think Netflix might actually do that now. Adam Sandler's movies get released straight onto Netflix.**

When we do a record, I don't do it so someone can play it on Spotify. Two years down the line after the record is released, then put it on there. Don't put it on straight away. These record companies are acting like it's the new radio. It's not the new radio.

**There is a passage in the book where you state that, "My career will never again hit the crazy height of the 60s, 70s or 80s and I'm ok with that." Was that something you felt you had to come to terms with?**

Yeah. I'm not playing six nights at Madison Square Garden anymore. And I'm fine with that. I've played with a lot of great bands over the years. I just came back from Europe with Vanilla Fudge. I'm doing Drum Wars with my brother [Vinny Appice]. Plus I'm still doing shows with Cactus. It's still a lot of fun.

**How did you feel about the 1980s?**

I hated the 80s, the late 80s especially. The musicianship was awful. The songs were awful, the singing was awful. Record companies would sign anyone with blonde hair and makeup.

**Did you not hire people for your band King Cobra based on whether they had blonde hair? That's an entire chapter in the book, isn't it?**

Well, yeah, but I made sure that they played good too. When grunge came in, though, I was happy. It was back to cool rhythm section stuff and time changes. But it made us look like dinosaurs. I went to Japan for most of the 90s and did well over there. And in the early 2000s, things lightened up and classic rock became cool again. And it's been cool ever since.

**In the book, you describe the turn of the millennium as being a bad time for you personally. There's a part where you talk about sitting in a motel room watching the twin towers fall having recently been divorced...**

I had a big house that my wife and kids were in and I was in a one-bedroom apartment living like a teenager. I remember thinking, "I've worked all these years and this is what I get?" And when the towers went down that was really depressing. When I started having nosebleeds, that's when things got really fucked up. I seriously thought I'd never work again. It was a very difficult time. Medically, I got the treatment I needed and I pulled out of it and I'm still here.

**How would you like people to look back on Vanilla Fudge and what would be the highest compliment someone could give?**

I'd like people to say we were innovators - which we were - and that we influenced a lot of bands. I'd also like people to think the same about me as a drummer. Also, it'd be nice if we were to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But

I doubt that'll happen.

**Surely it could still happen?**

It's too late already. It should have happened ages ago. Joan Jet and the Blackhearts are in there now. Rap music is in there now. That's not rock.

**Why do you think having hip-hop in there is unjustified?**

Rap is a take-off of R&B. It's not rock. Rock was originally a take-off from blues, but rap is nothing like rock. It's done with machines. I think I have to go now. Just one more question.

**As you've grown older, has what it means to be successful changed?**

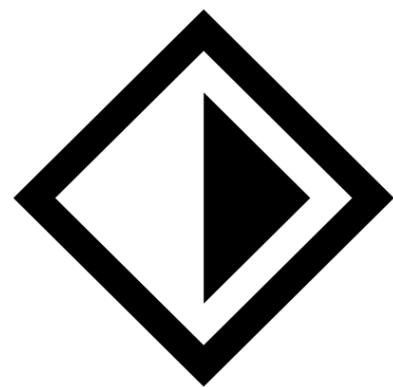
I think successful is a big definition. You don't have to be a rock star to be successful. You can play in wedding bands and be successful. Being successful to me is making a living at what you're doing and not wait on tables. And if you're making a living, you're doing well.

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**“YOU DON'T THINK ABOUT THE FACT YOU'RE WRECKING A HOTEL ROOM OR BEING DISRESPECTFUL TO WOMEN. IT FEELS LIKE ANOTHER LIFE.”**

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