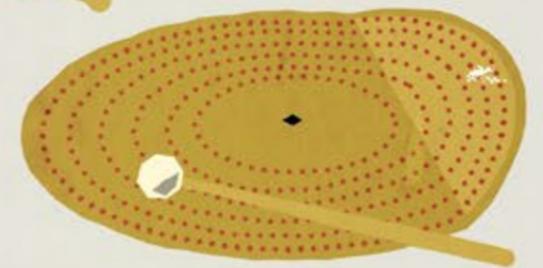
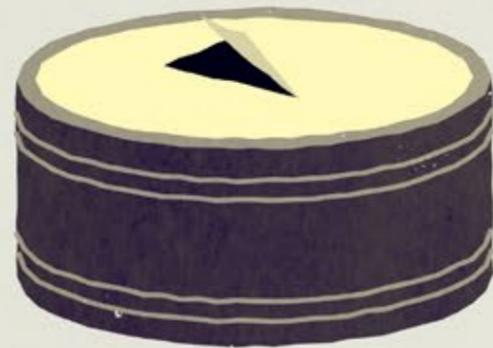


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MASTHEAD

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THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

VOLUME TWO, ISSUE SEVEN

At one point, Lucky Charms were certainly my favourite breakfast cereal. Thanks to the winning combination of marshmallows, primary colours and a demonic leprechaun, they were single-handedly responsible for almost every dental filling ever administered to a child during the 1990s. Eventually, they disappeared from UK shelves, rumoured to have been banned. Now, so I'm told, you have to order them directly from the States. On Amazon.

Perhaps they just weren't all that lucky, which is just as well as I've never been very superstitious. So for this issue, we certainly didn't feel the need to rest on our laurels and let "lucky number seven" make itself. In fact, the opposite was true. I felt nervous about it; worried we might not be able to better what we'd created previously.

Seven. In some respects it's not exactly a landmark achievement. It could easily feel like a bit of an in-between, treading the middle ground until we're further

down the path towards double digits. I'm not sure I've ever been too excited about viewing a film which was in its seventh instalment. I don't really remember my seventh birthday being a particularly momentous occasion. The seventh album – it's rarely the band's defining masterpiece. Unless you're Rush, though perhaps that's another conversation for another time.

That said, in some circles the number does bear much significance. The week has seven days; the musical scale has seven notes. James Bond was 007. *Se7en*, starring Brad Pitt and Morgan Freeman was pretty good. Then there's the big picture sort of stuff - God built the earth in seven days, Harry Potter has seven books and so forth.

Making each issue entirely from scratch isn't the most efficient or emotionally stable way of doing things but it's certainly the most involved. Each one feels like it has to be better than the last and that's exactly what makes it a challenge to create and, hopefully, enjoyable to read.

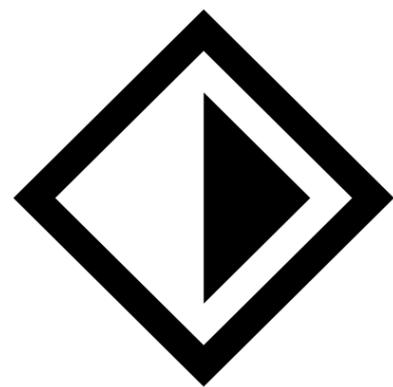
When this issue was just a number, before it had any interviewees, artwork, photos and contributors, it was as intimidating knowing what lay ahead as much as what lay behind. It was touch and go as to whether we'd be spending any time with Jojo Mayer. We almost never made it to Bernard Purdie's house. Meeting Dave Lombardo happened more so by chance than it did though pre-determination. Perhaps there was an element of luck after all.

Still, I think for the future a little more planning wouldn't hurt. Nor would the occasional imported bowl of sugary, marshmallow goodness.

Welcome to Volume Two, Issue Seven of The Drummer's Journal.

Tom





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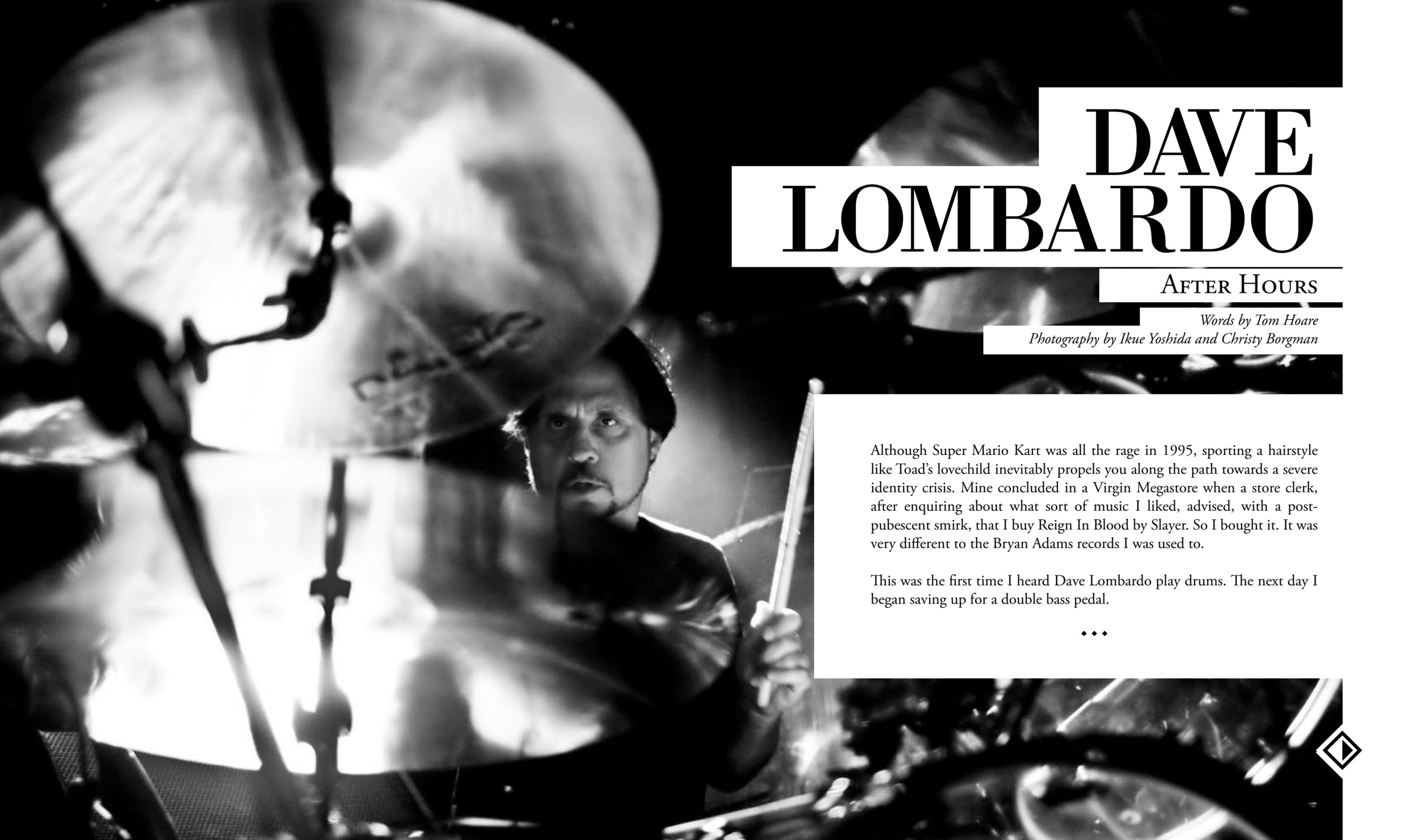
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DAVE LOMBARDO

AFTER HOURS

Words by Tom Hoare

Photography by Ikue Yoshida and Christy Borgman

Although Super Mario Kart was all the rage in 1995, sporting a hairstyle like Toad's lovechild inevitably propels you along the path towards a severe identity crisis. Mine concluded in a Virgin Megastore when a store clerk, after enquiring about what sort of music I liked, advised, with a post-pubescent smirk, that I buy Reign In Blood by Slayer. So I bought it. It was very different to the Bryan Adams records I was used to.

This was the first time I heard Dave Lombardo play drums. The next day I began saving up for a double bass pedal.

♦ ♦ ♦



For many, *Reign In Blood* is the magnum opus of thrash metal. Released in 1986, its artwork alone became genre defining. You don't have to be a metal fan to appreciate that Lombardo, in his own way, is uniquely talented. He's one of the genre's most recognisable names; a huge influence on a generation of drummers who would grow up to become household names in their own right.

In early 2013, it was announced that Dave Lombardo was no longer a member of Slayer. One of the biggest metal bands on the planet, the details of his departure emerged in a series of tit for tat exchanges that centred around the financial, professional and personal relationships between the band members themselves and their wider management. Ultimately, facts, figures and opinions were poached by the press and twisted into contextually devoid sound bites, which exacerbated the situation further. For many fans, it was likely an unpleasant, if not somewhat bizarre occurrence.

I met Dave in a dingy basement club. We sat in the corner as a cleaner trawled a mop over the floor and the barman polished glasses from behind the bar. Apart from that, the place was empty.

If you were to assume that Dave's aggressive playing might mimic his personality you'd be wrong. He's diligently polite, conscientious and quiet. We talk about his own band, Philm, and work he's done with famous saxophonist and composer, John Zorn. A performance with the latter is the reason his kit is set up on the stage.



PHOTO BY IKUË YOSHIDA

♦♦♦

“I WANTED SLAYER TO RETIRE CORRECTLY. I WANTED TO GO OUT WITH A FAREWELL TOUR. I WANTED TO GET INTO THE ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME, TO BOW OUT RESPECTFULLY. TO GO OUT THE RIGHT WAY WITH DIGNITY.”

♦♦♦



L-R:
DAVE LOMBARDO,
LARS ULRICH,
JAMES HETFIELD,
JEFF HANNEMAN



After a while, the cleaner stops in the middle of the floor, his face dimly lit from the light of his phone. He moves the mop slowly back and forth over the same spot, each pass more lethargic than the last. After ten minutes, all motion bar the swiping of his thumb has stopped and he props up his torso with the mop's handle.

Prior to the interview I hadn't intended to ask Dave anything about Slayer. I was wary of repeatedly covering the same old ground for the sake of tedious formality. But it was only when sat opposite him did I realise the extent to which I associated Dave with the band he had left, in much the same way Ringo is synonymous with The Beatles or Neil Peart with Rush. It wasn't the how or why he was no longer a part of it, but I wondered about the effect the experience had on his identity as a musician, and the subsequent impact it made on his life and career. Inadvertently, I found out.

Dave Lombardo: Is it on – your recorder?

The Drummer's Journal: Yes.

Are you sure? (*Prods dictaphone*) Testing, testing...

I think we're good.

Ok.

When I heard you were doing improvisational material with John Zorn, I thought I might find you sat behind a little jazz four-piece kit or something...

(*Glances over at his hefty-looking kit*) Nah. I'm not sure that'd be me really (*laughs*).

How is it as an experience being able to progress your own projects?

It's been great. I'm releasing a new album with Philm which is pretty exciting. Sometimes it's difficult trying to put everything in place, like getting the right record deal and finding the right people to work for you. Setbacks happen where people don't quite do their job correctly, but you learn as you go along.





♦♦♦

“YOU SHOULD NEVER HOLD YOURSELF BACK FROM LEAVING A TOXIC SITUATION. THAT SHOULD BE TRUE FOR ANYONE WHERE YOU ARE BEING TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF.”

♦♦♦

It must have been about 12 months now since you announced you were leaving Slayer...

Yeah, pretty much.

As a year, how would you summarise it? Has it been a big change?

It'll always be a big change when you're following other people's professional advice and it's ultimately not in your interest but theirs.

You have a very high profile, particularly among drummers, which means whatever you say gets banded around left, right and centre...

Yeah. That's pretty much how it goes. I have to be careful what I say now because the press aren't always that considerate.

Do you feel like there's a mediated version of yourself?

I mean, it's all me. I try to do the best I can and just be honest. The problem is I can only say so much before it provokes a reaction from the other side and that's not what I want. I think things can quite easily be taken out of context, and sometimes writers will have bias and want to portray things in a certain light. I'm burned out, I don't even want to talk about it anymore. Life goes on.

Why is that? Because you've talked about it so much?

Not really that, but whenever I do say something, I tend to get a bit of flak from people who are like, “why are you still talking about that, move on!”

Do you think that might be because people perceive that you're complaining about Slayer?

I think so.

Are you actually complaining?

No. All I do is answer people's questions. I'm not complaining about what happened. Everybody has an opinion. Especially on the internet.

To leave something you've spent a lot of time and effort doing must be quite emotional...

Absolutely. All those years of friendship, hanging out and thinking about how it ended still does make me angry. But I know that's not a good emotion to hold on to, you've just got to let it go. That's always easier said than done though. I mean, Slayer was such a huge part of my life for such a long time. That's not something you can just instantaneously chop right out.

So that's how it made you feel, angry?

(Pauses) Yeah. *(Long pause)* Are you a psychiatrist or something?

Don't worry. The first session is free.

(laughs) Ok, that's good to know.

Did you expect your departure to create the amount of furore that it did?

No. When I mentioned what was happening online, particularly what was going on financially and what I was earning compared to the management, everyone was very supportive. The reaction was huge. I was blown away. I'm very grateful for everyone's support, very kind, very awesome. Thanks to the fans. But yeah, it wasn't all positive.

I'm sure you can appreciate that, from a fan's perspective, why a band member leaving might be a big deal...

Absolutely.



♦ ♦ ♦

“WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL THE IDEA OF SOMETHING BAD HAPPENING SEEMS LUDICROUS. YOU NEED TO KNOW WHERE YOU STAND IN RELATION TO EVERYONE ELSE.”

♦ ♦ ♦



Take Mike Portnoy, for example, who left Dream Theater. People still get really affronted by it. He took a lot of flak for that...

Yes. What Mike did took a lot of guts. Especially as he didn't really have a totally permanent gig that he was leaving specifically for. I might be wrong.

What sort of accountability does an artist have to their fans?

Absolutely, there's a strict accountability. I remember when Kiss split up and they got these other musicians in, I turned my back on them. I loved that band for what it was, not what it became. A lot of it has to do with integrity I think. In terms of Slayer, before Jeff Hanneman died - bear in mind he was ill for a long time - Jeff personally approved Gary Holt as a replacement guitarist. The fans especially were supportive about that.

Initially, when you were playing regularly with Slayer, what did you want the legacy of the band to be?

I wanted Slayer to retire correctly. I wanted to go out with a farewell tour. I wanted to get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, to bow out respectfully. To go out the right way with dignity.

Is that a contrast to what Slayer's legacy is now?

From what I read, I mean, there's always two sides, but it seems like the band now is just a name. For me, personally, I'm not sure Slayer exists anymore. I know there's a band called Slayer out there but what Slayer was, what it meant to me, that doesn't exist anymore.

How did you approach moving on?

Generally, I'm a person that picks up the pieces and moves on. I can still play drums so whatever happens I can still perform.

In terms of making the decision to leave, was that difficult or easy in the sense that you just knew it had to happen?

It was very, very, difficult. I was getting different advice from a lot of different people; attorneys, managers and accountants, who all, of course, had vested interests in whatever I decided to do. I know now

you should never hold yourself back from leaving a toxic situation. That should be true for anyone who is in a relationship where you are being taken advantage of, be it a boyfriend or girlfriend, you have to move on.

Have you ever seen Breaking Bad?

Sure. I love it.

There's a scene where the main character says, "there must exist certain words in a certain, specific order that will solve practically any situation." Do you agree?

Are you asking if I think leaving could have been avoided?

...Yes.

With hindsight, I was told by the people I was working with that everything that could have been done, had been done. Whether that is true, I'll likely never know.

For me, there was certainly no other option. The music business is screwy. I live in north LA, where the porn industry is quite prevalent. There's a quote that says, "you could work in porn, but if you really want to get fucked, work in the music industry." I've learnt a lot of lessons.

Any examples?

Something as simple as a verbal agreement with your buddies in the band goes a long way. When things are going well the idea of something bad happening seems ludicrous. You need to know where you stand in relation to everyone else. I learnt not to have your head

in the sand and not to let other people tell you what's going on. Take some responsibility for yourself.

To what extent did you feel your identity as a musician was tied up with Slayer?

When I think of Slayer as me, Jeff, Tom (*Araya*) and Kerry (*King*), I think each of us contributed something unique and that's what

made the band appealing. I certainly felt for a long time that, in terms of my career, Slayer was very important. And it continues to follow me around - if I say the wrong thing in the media, it comes right back to me. Slayer questions I try to shy away from. I'm not the one asking the questions - I'm just stating the facts. I've moved on. I'm working with these amazing musicians. This isn't something I would have been able to do with Slayer, so there have been positives too.

♦♦♦

“I LIVE IN NORTH LA, WHERE THE PORN INDUSTRY IS QUITE PREVALENT. THERE'S A QUOTE THAT SAYS 'YOU COULD WORK IN PORN, BUT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO GET FUCKED, WORK IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY.'”

♦♦♦

You've previously said that metal has a lot of boundaries. What did you mean by that?

I just mean that metal-heads like their music a certain way. A lot of metal engineers or metal producers use the same drum programs. The problem that creates is there's no character, individuality or personality when it comes to instrumentation. Everything sounds similar and people copy each other. There are so many different styles of music out there, and I think metal musicians shouldn't be so fearful of metal journalists who might drag down on something because it doesn't sound a certain way.



Have we already achieved what's humanly possible with the double pedal?

I think we're not too far off what is physically possible. With a double kick, you need to be able to prove yourself live. You might be able to do it in the studio, but live, that's where you have to deliver. That's where you're going to get judged. And if you're faking it with a play along or backing track, then people will make their own decisions.

Your drum clinics are pretty unconventional...

(Laughs) Thanks. Yeah, I'd say that's pretty accurate.

Do you always do such extensive Q&A sessions at the end?

Of course. I've got a lot of time for the people that come and support me at these things. They're a real privilege to do. You've been to one recently?

It was in Belfast. If I remember correctly, you got several audience members on stage to sing the guitar and bass parts to some Slayer songs...

Sure. I mean, it's way more interesting that way, right?

It was most entertaining.

Well, that's what it's all about.

◆◆◆



TIMELESS EXCELLENCE

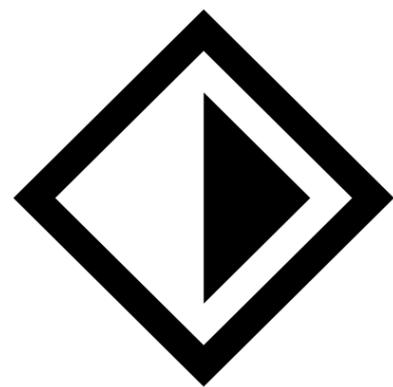
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MEG WHITE

OPINION, ENTITLEMENT AND THE LACK THEREOF

Words by Julia Kaye

Illustrations by Ben Arthur, Katerina Friday & Kirsty Cassels

Metropolis was a film which pioneered science fiction on the silver screen. Released in 1927, it tells the story of a mad scientist who kidnaps a woman named Maria and replaces her with a robotic doppelganger. It's set in a dystopian future where the poor are deliberately kept in abject poverty to serve the wealthy. Joseph Goebbels was apparently a big fan.

Somewhat less extreme, there's a rumour that Meg White died in a car crash in the mid-nineties and Jack White replaced her with a cyborg known lovingly as Megbot. There are some very creative, tongue-in-cheek interpretations of The White Stripes' lyrics claiming to attest to Megbot's existence, accounting for her shy personality and unique approach to playing the drums.

Like all good conspiracy theories, Megbot is an enticing proposition, but ultimately, I'm a non-believer. This is because out of any drummer, ever, Meg White is my favourite. Sometimes saying this feels like a confession. I tend not to get involved in conversations where I have to reveal this because it's apparently akin to espousing political bigotry.

♦ ♦ ♦

What's amazing is that my confession genuinely has the power to offend people. What's even more amazing is how, through this statement, people then assume certain things about me as a musician.

Usually, the first assumption is that I'm a beginner, or just simply not very good. The second is that I've obviously never listened to Led Zeppelin. The third, and the most borderline offensive, is that I probably don't know any better. After all - I'm female, Meg White's female - I appreciate how that's an enticing connection.

The truth is that Meg White deserves your respect. Here's why.

♦ ♦ ♦

In some ways, how we think about drumming has turned a corner. It isn't strictly an instrument that is played exclusively by men in popular music. Though much marketing in the industry is still male-orientated, there have been noticeable improvements. Having a drummer who happens to be female is no longer seen as a novelty and her worth as a musician is no longer pitched against the extent to which she is sexually attractive. I like to think, for the most part, we're getting past these pretty basic associations.

Despite that many people now believe drumming to be an art form in its own right, what still seems very archaic is the way we approach criticism. Criticism, both positive and negative, is important. It takes one-dimensional concepts such as "good" and "bad" and makes them three-dimensional by underpinning opinion with

reason, enquiry and explanation. Unfortunately, as drummers, what we consider to be either good or bad seems to be still very much rooted in a one-dimensional paradigm.

In some respects, I can see why. It's easy to misunderstand the drum set and see it as something anti-social. They're loud and brash and they make your neighbours hate you more than a rail replacement bus service. Really, drums are innately social. The main impetus for most drummers isn't just to play drums but to create music. Other people are usually involved in the composition or appreciation of this.

I'd suggest that, in fact, the drum set is a subtle instrument because, more often than not, people who aren't drummers don't really pay attention to it. People at concerts aren't singing along, mimicking the sound of the drums. The focus is elsewhere, despite being underpinned by the drummer. If it's not, there's usually something wrong. Or you're at a Motley Crue concert. Or both.

The real problem, however, is this: subtlety - and the appreciation thereof - has become lost. Instead, what we now appreciate is the obvious and we have the way the internet affects our attention spans to thank for this. I'm no exception. I often feel morally affronted if I have to wait five seconds before I can click past a YouTube ad. On average, a one second page load delay causes an 11% loss of traffic. On Spotify, 25% of tracks are skipped within their first five seconds. Impatience is a virtue, apparently. I'm sure an in-depth psychoanalytical study of why people behave the way they do online will likely earn someone a Nobel Prize at some point.





...

“OUT OF ANY DRUMMER, EVER, MEG WHITE IS MY FAVOURITE. I TEND NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN CONVERSATIONS WHERE I HAVE TO REVEAL THIS BECAUSE IT’S APPARENTLY AKIN TO ESPOUSING POLITICAL BIGOTRY.”

...

The same is also true in terms of how we perceive talent in relation to the drum set as what now tends to capture our attention – and approval – is the application of technicality.

In one light, sheer displays of technical mastery are progressive, pushing the boundaries of what we are capable of doing with the instrument. In another, however, it's almost regressive if what we're doing is demonstrating complexity for complexity's sake. It's neither communicative nor meaningful. Instead, it reduces drumming from something that's open to artistic interpretation to something that can be displayed on a scoreboard. This gives rise to the notion that other people are quantifiably better than others based upon a fixed set of criteria that has come to make up modern criticism – speed, power and endurance. Are we not now at saturation point in terms of lauding general technical ability?

Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to drag down on anyone who strays from 4/4. I have a lot of time for Danny Carey, Neil Peart, Mike Portnoy and a whole host of others who have made complexity creative in a number of ways. But if we can appreciate one end of the spectrum, then why not the other?

A lot of people don't rate Meg as a drummer because much of her playing is rooted in simple composition. Because the internet facilitates the expression of meaningless opinions to which the holder has no

accountability, to be "good" now means being impressively complex. Complexity is all too easily seen as intelligence and sophistication, when in fact, such concepts are not necessarily mutually supportive.

Conversely, the idea that something is simple is starting to possess increasingly negative connotations. If something is simple, we assume

it must be easy, unoriginal, and uncreative. A critic once accused Damien Hirst of producing "work so simple that anyone could do it." His response was: "I'm sure they could. But they didn't, did they?"

Simplicity is the basis for which Meg receives most criticism. I sometimes get the impression that people believe there's nothing to learn from Meg unless you're a beginner. This is wrong.

Meg White is one of few people I can listen to that encapsulates what it means to be a drummer. When you strip away all the hype, criticism and stereotyping, you're left with that reason why

you started to play in the first place. This has nothing to do with notions of skill or technique, but the sheer enjoyment of doing something creative and the connection this can establish between you and others.

In a more practical sense, Meg achieved more in ten years with The White Stripes than most other musicians will achieve in a lifetime. Musically speaking, she forged a unique identity that, regardless of people's opinions, was hers and hers alone. This is why I think

few people could step up and play like Meg White. You're perfectly entitled to find this laughable, but she was able to put aside everyone else's conceptualisation of what you need to be as a drummer and instead just be herself. There was no pretending and no posturing. Like many of the drummers we consider to be great – Buddy Rich, Neil Peart, John Bonham, on stage, she was who she was.

Meg White's role in The White Stripes pretty much defines exactly what the drum set as an instrument, at its very best, is capable of: to be part of something wider and more far reaching than which notes are played when. This is why her playing is subtly brilliant. It's not perfect but that's somewhat the point. It's human. Simple it may be, but it's time we got past using this as an accusation because, ultimately, sneering at simplicity itself is one of the most basic, ill informed critiques you can get.

Metropolis doesn't end well. Ultimately ignorance prevails and the masses are kept in poverty simply because they are deemed not to know any better. As for the Megbot, I'd hope our outlook can be more positive.

♦ ♦ ♦

**“COMPLEXITY IS ALL
TOO EASILY SEEN AS
INTELLIGENCE AND
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WHEN IN FACT, SUCH
CONCEPTS ARE NOT
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JOJO MAYER

ACTION POTENTIAL

Words by Tom Hoare

Photos by Camilo Fuentealba, unless stated

When I met Jojo, he was in the process of giving himself severe indigestion. In a basement jazz club just off Broadway, he was sat in the corner eating a large burger in manner that would have befitted accompanying narration from Sir David Attenborough. Given the circumstances, however, this is totally understandable. In about two minutes, he was due back on stage to play his second 90 minute set of the evening, along with famed guitarist David Fiuczynski.

♦♦♦



Jojo Mayer is, in some ways, the drumming equivalent of Gary Kasparov – the Russian chess Grandmaster who famously battled IBM’s chess supercomputer, Deep Blue, back in the mid-nineties. They played six games, with Deep Blue eventually winning 3 ½ to 2 ½ . It represented a major victory for IBM: it was the first time a machine had ever defeated a chess Grandmaster.

Deep Blue’s victory ushered in an era where computers became the best chess players on the planet. Convinced IBM had cheated, Kasparov sought to re-humanise chess and in some senses he succeeded. He played two subsequent matches against machines and was able to force a draw in each.

Both Mayer and Kasparov have spent substantial parts of their careers working with machines that execute tasks which, historically, only humans were capable of performing. In Jojo’s case, he is probably best known for taking programmed rhythms and returning them to the acoustic drum set with his band Nerve. Prior to this, he hosted a club night in downtown Manhattan called Prohibited Beatz. It involved live musicians playing music traditionally spun by a DJ. It became somewhat infamous, and eventually closed in light of the NYC Cabaret Laws that made dancing in bars illegal, unless they had a specific license. At first I thought this was a joke but apparently it’s true.

Back in the jazz club, Jojo has about a minute to get back on stage. “I got thrown out of here once,” he states, grimacing through a mouthful of fries.

“Really?”

“Yeah. Luckily, it must have changed hands since then.” Before he has a chance to explain, the venue’s sound engineer arrives and, with an eyebrow-uniting scowl, begins gesturing menacingly to the stage. “On second thoughts, perhaps it hasn’t,” he grins.

A few days later, I met Jojo in a small restaurant near his apartment. Initially, we’d arranged to go to his house, but he’d decided, after having an outlandish party, that the place wasn’t fit to be photographed.

Jojo is the only person I’ve seen who can pull off a three-piece suit with flip-flops. This is unsurprising. He’s outspoken and not afraid of telling you exactly what he thinks. He is also a realist. He has an elaborate vocabulary which, when combined with his appreciation of a good metaphor, sometimes left me nodding in agreement when I actually had no idea what I was agreeing to. This isn’t a criticism, more an acknowledgement that he’s strongly opinionated and intellectually switched on. With Jojo, what you see is pretty much what you get.

♦ ♦ ♦

The Drummer’s Journal: What time did you get home the other night?

Jojo Mayer: About 2pm. I had some business to take care of after.

Business to take care of? That sounds sinister...

Just sorting out money from the gig. Nothing too sinister happens here anymore (*laughs*).

As a kid did you ever want to do anything else, or were you always going to be a drummer?

Not really. My gift wasn’t free climbing or skateboarding or mathematics, but drums. I realised pretty early on there’s not a lot of people who get such an opportunity and I wanted to make the most of it.

Aren’t you interested in magic?

Yeah!



I've got a deck of cards. Can you do a trick?

Seriously?

Yeah.

Wow, you're putting me on the spot here. Ok. I need to shuffle the deck properly first.

Of course.

Ok, I'm going to riffle through the deck really quickly and you need to mentally pick a card and remember it, ok? (*Riffles deck very fast in front of my eyes*) Ok, so are you thinking of a card?

No, sorry I think I blinked.

Seriously? Ok, we'll do it again (*more shuffling and riffling of the deck*). Ok, how about now?

Yeah I've got one. It's the...

DON'T TELL ME! (*Hands deck to me*) Ok, now I need you to find your card in the deck. Just sort through and find it.

Ok (*lots of painfully slow sorting*). It's not here. Where is it? It was the two of clubs...

Ahh. Wait – it's not there?

No it's not here.

(*Jojo lifts up his coffee mug to take a drink, revealing the two of clubs stuck on the bottom. Lots of grinning.*)

Wow. That's genuinely impressive. How did you even get that under there?! And get it out of the deck so quickly?!

It's magic. Anyway, are we not supposed to be talking about drums?

OK, I have some questions here... I think it's safe to say you're strongly opinionated, right?

Well, I suppose. I think it's good to speak your mind.

PHOTO BY
JUHA LUOMALA





You've said previously that academia has destroyed jazz. What do you mean by that?

Jazz is an art form that grew out of socio-political strife and the turn of the twentieth century was the first time we'd ever had recording technology to capture that. Ultimately, it became one of the most sophisticated disciplines in music ever. The problem with academia is that the essence of why an art form was originally important gets lost

and it's reduced to a set of rules and structures that all you need to do is imitate. You get taught a skeleton, but not the spirit. I went to music school for one year in Switzerland, and if I could change anything I'd choose not to go because it was a waste of time.

♦♦♦

“I WENT TO MUSIC SCHOOL FOR ONE YEAR IN SWITZERLAND, AND IF I COULD CHANGE ANYTHING ABOUT MY CAREER, I'D CHOOSE NOT TO GO BECAUSE IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME.”

♦♦♦

People say similar things about rock, that it's lost all social relevance...

The problem with rock is that it has become a storefront for bullshit. The essence of rock 'n' roll was dissent of authority and showing the finger to people who disagree with you. Nowadays, there's none of that. It's a very conformist music style now. It's almost reactionary. Take the whole hipster thing - it's mass-consumerism disguised as individualism. It's consumerism disguised as rebelliousness. Rock is the exact same.

So why has this happened?

Before file sharing, the major labels were morally bankrupt. Today, they're financially bankrupt too. Their business models do not involve nurturing creativity. It's easier to dumpster dive in the trash can of the past and the last Michael Jackson record is a good example. Those songs weren't released because they weren't good enough to make it onto a Michael Jackson record in the first place. Today, that doesn't matter. They put them through the grinder regardless, then feed it to people because of corporate greed.



Ok, but they're just selling it. You don't have to buy it. Who is to say what people should or shouldn't like? Does that not border on snobbery?

That's true, but the problem we have right now is that our perception of what is good and bad is warped. The fashion industry, at a premium, sells worn, distressed denim, which is little more than selling fake life experiences. Is that not irrational? If you're a kid in Brazil, having braces on your teeth is a status symbol because it shows that you can afford to go to a dentist. People get braces now when they don't even need them. Similarly, women have caesareans to show that they can afford to go to a hospital to have their baby.

So what can a musician or an artist do to change perceptions?

I know I cannot stop starvation in Africa by playing drums. But I can change people's perceptions about the extent to which it is an issue. It's an artist's responsibility to call out bullshit. Ultimately, if artists are not capable of changing or challenging people's opinions, they shouldn't be artists.

Would you call yourself a pessimist?

No, not at all. I wouldn't be here if I was a pessimist. I'd sit in and watch TV. I wouldn't do interviews. I'm an optimist, that's why I'm here. It's an extremely interesting time for creative people, but you're on your own. Embrace that. Learn everything you possibly can so you can be as good as possible.

If you take something like the drum and bass scene in which you were quite involved, how have you seen that change?

The decline of jazz has taken about a century. The same thing happened in the drum and bass scene except that it took ten years. Drum and bass started something revolutionary but it turned into bullshit very quickly.

♦♦♦

“TAKE THE WHOLE
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♦♦♦
“AN ARTIST’S
DOWNFALL IS WHEN
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SURROUNDS YOU..”
♦♦♦

Photek, for instance, who produced a number of ground-breaking records, ten years later can only produce trash.

Can you not look at it from the perspective of evolution and experimentation? Especially if you're saying that's what art should be doing?

Dark Side of the Moon is a truly great record but that doesn't mean, by default, every Pink Floyd album will be too. As an artist, if you're lucky enough to create something that people like, you have a choice either to believe the hype and start thinking of yourself as a god, or you can say, I appreciate this but I'm not going to let it change me. An artist's downfall is when you start to believe the hype that surrounds you.

Would you say that you feel like a bit of an outsider with regards to what you're saying about mass-consumerism?

Absolutely. I was always an outsider. That's what was dealt to me.

In what respect?

Just small things. When I went to kindergarten I could speak five languages. The reason I came to New York was that in Switzerland people are closed-minded. I have the same musical ambitions now as I did 25 years ago in Switzerland, but there people were like, "you just can't do that." I was fed up being confronted by the limitation of people's ideas of what I should do. Instead, I decided I'd let failure or success determine if my ideas were any good.

Would it annoy you if people thought of you as a drum and bass drummer?

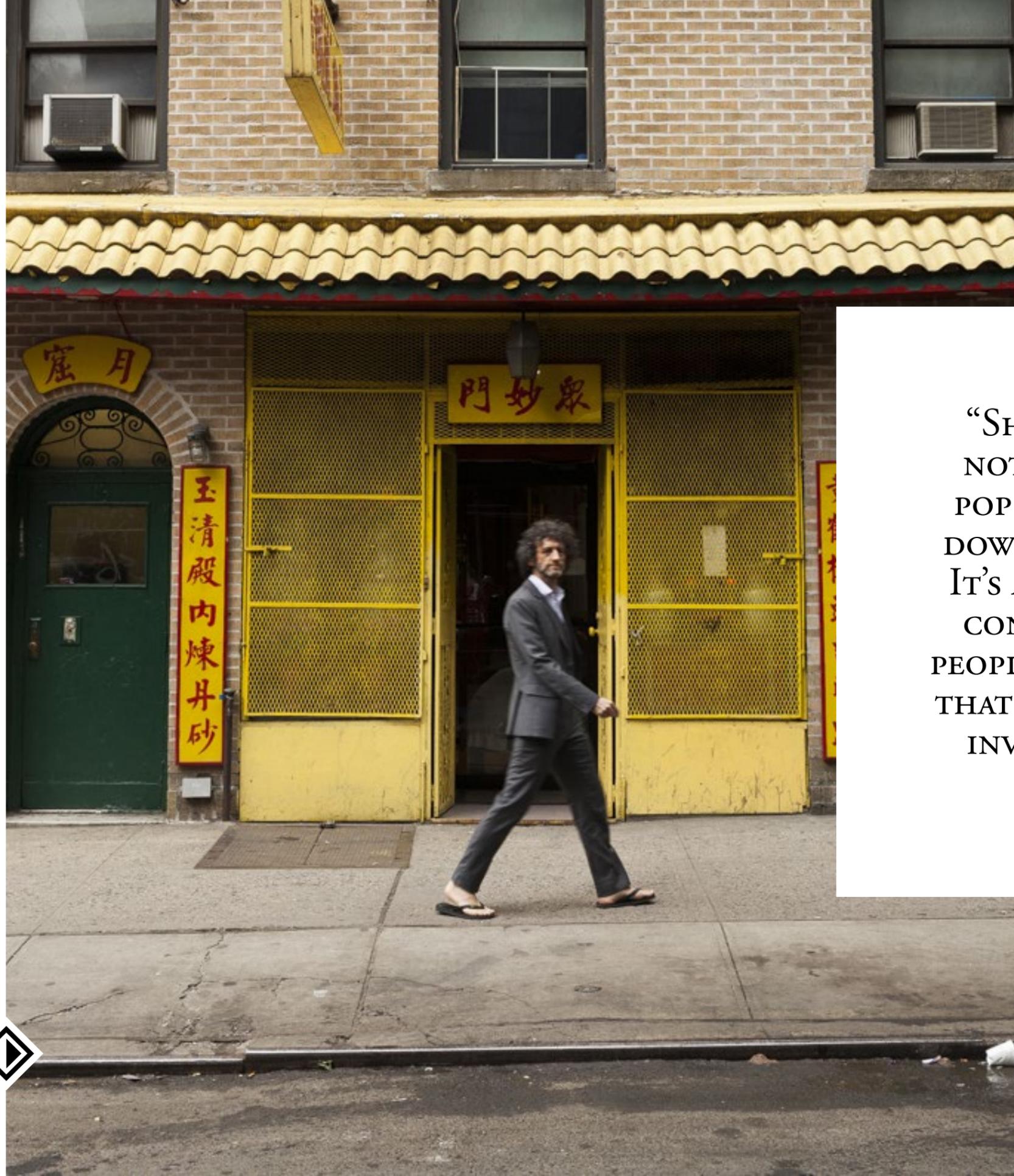
(Laughs.) I'm not a drum and bass drummer. That's bullshit. I can't control what people think of what I do. Really, I'm a jazz and rock drummer, I just don't sound like one. It sounds like I'm playing drum and bass, but really, it's what I learnt playing jazz or rock.





...
“AS MILES DAVIS
SAID, IT WAS THE BEST
TIME I’D HAD WITH
MY CLOTHES ON.”
...





You came to New York 25 years ago, do you feel like you've now achieved what you set out to achieve?

In certain respects, yes. I think I was a bit naïve, childish and ego driven at first. When I saw Tony Williams live for the first time, I was 16. As Miles Davis said, it was the best time I'd had with my clothes on. I wanted to be able to do that when I grew up, to give that sort of musical performance on stage.

♦♦♦

“SHOW PEOPLE IT'S NOT JUST ANOTHER POP ALBUM YOU CAN DOWNLOAD FOR FREE. IT'S ABOUT MAKING A CONNECTION WITH PEOPLE, A CONNECTION THAT INSPIRES ACTION, INVOLVEMENT AND INTEREST.”

♦♦♦

Is there anything you're particularly proud of?

I once met a girl who said she'd seen one of my shows and the next day had gone and quit the job she hated. I was humbled to have had an impact on someone like that, to give her the confidence to quit. She was empowered by something I'd done. I'm proud of that.

You've previously said that the last innovation in drumming was the blast beat. Is that still the case?

In terms of drumming culture, the time and dedication that people have put into developing complex musical vocabularies has been rendered completely useless. We need to be looking for the drummer who is going to connect with the shamanistic potential that the drums have and not just exhibit geekery. I mean, technical brilliance was comprehensively covered by Zappa and Bozzio. Now, I'm not sure it can go anywhere new.

So what options would you suggest are open to people looking to progress their career?

Don't listen to people in magazines talking about getting PR agents and the importance of social media. Instead, start by orientating yourself to things that will likely never go out of fashion: honesty, sincerity and enthusiasm. Take these basic values and put them into your music, and



it will be worth hundreds of times more than all the Facebook “likes” in the world.

It’s easy to say that, but in reality there’s a generation growing up who, through no fault of their own, believe recorded music isn’t really worth money.

That’s true. I just completely surrendered to the fact I can’t really sell music anymore. I give it to people for free and suggest a donation. And lots of people do donate. So we need to recalibrate the perception that music is as disposable as the coffee you’d drink for the same price.

How do you instigate such a recalibration though?

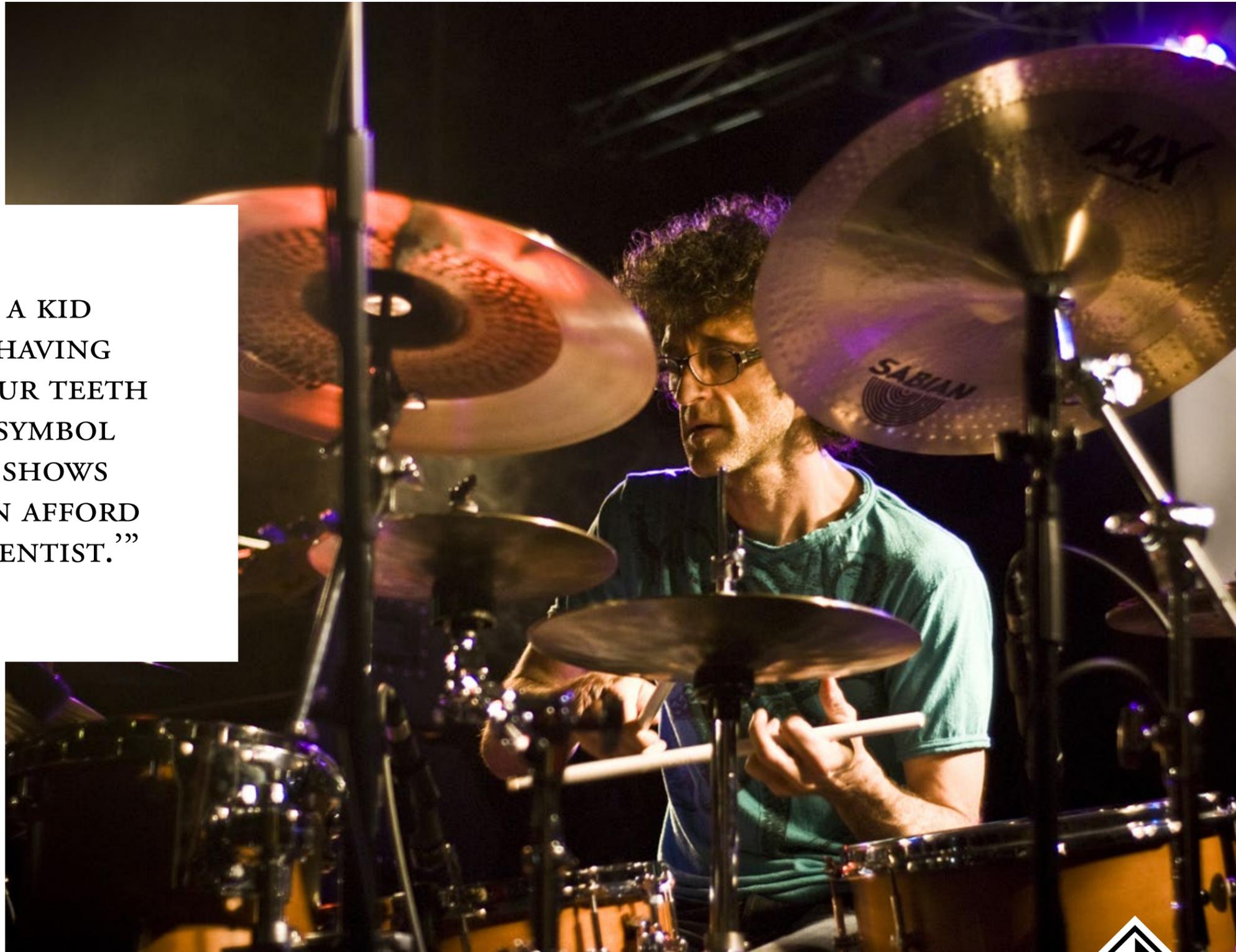
You certainly don’t do it by preaching to people. You do it by convincing people that you’re worth something, that what you’re doing is interesting and empowering. You need to create something for people to support. Show people it’s not just another pop album you can download for free. It’s about making a connection with people, a connection that inspires action, involvement and interest.

So your ultimate advice to any aspiring musician would be...

Buy music. Buy a ticket to a show. Do not watch shitty movies. Don’t just complain. Instead take action. You can make the change. You. Make a decision to support what you believe in, not what someone tells you that you should. People will respect you. I certainly will.

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 IN BRAZIL, HAVING
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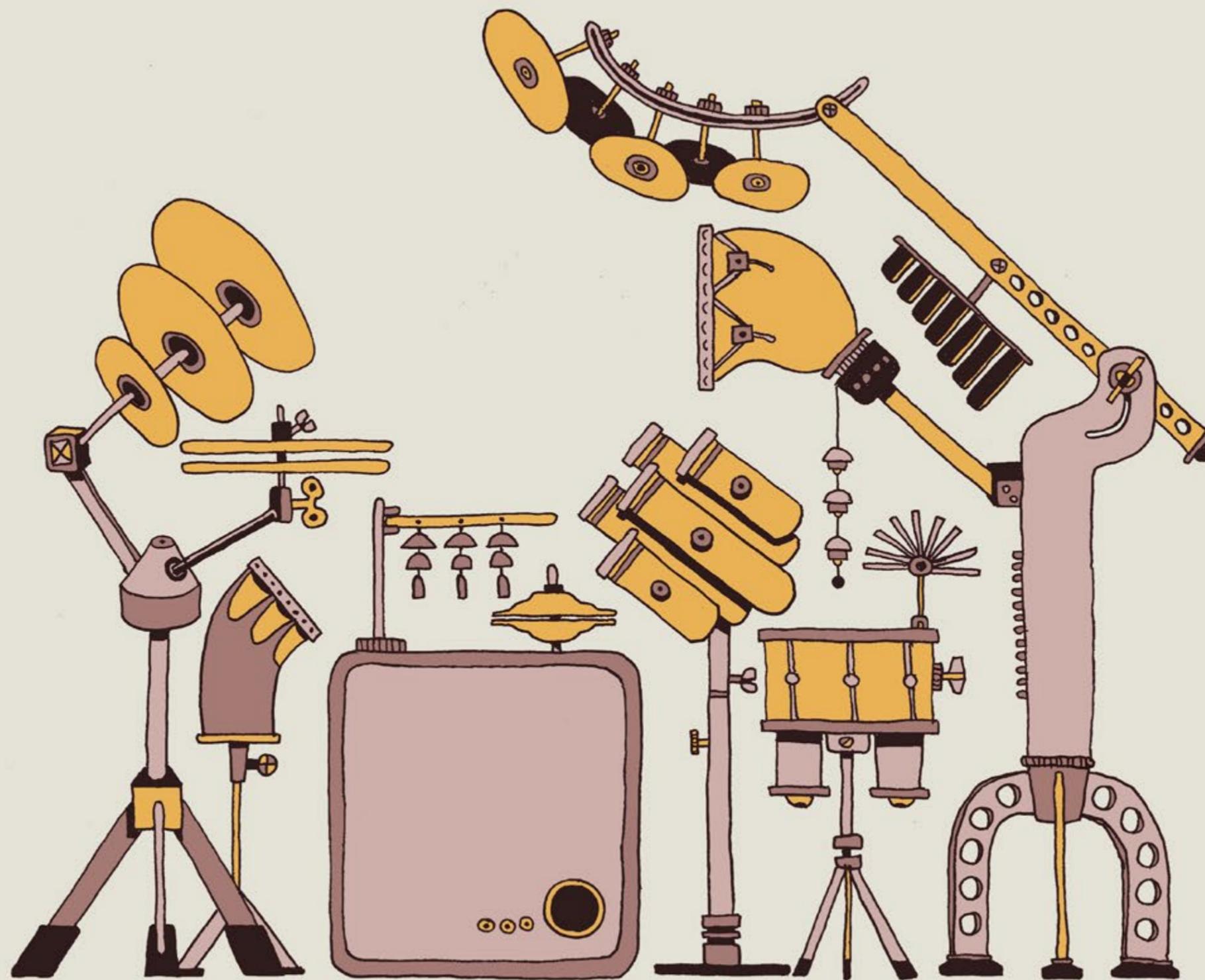
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GRAIN, GROOVE AND INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

SERENITY CUSTOM DRUMS

Words by Tom Hoare & photography by Asbjørg Homme Lindeland & Cristoffer Paulshus

When I was about 11, our household cat urinated in my Lego. An unwillingness to deal with the problem at hand meant any mechanically minded aspirations I harboured were left to marinate in a golden, saline solution for quite some time.

Some years on, I've always been envious of those with any sort of skilled trade. Carpentry, metalwork, mechanics; to me, the skills needed to indulge in such professions remain about as elusive as a winning lottery ticket.

In terms of how the drum set is constructed, there is something most satisfying about looking at an object that a craftsman has put countless hours into, even if you possess absolutely no idea how it has been made. Today, it seems there are no shortage of exquisite drum related products out there. Occasionally, however, you see something that is extra special.

My awareness of Serenity Custom Drums, a manufacturer based in Eastbourne on the UK's south coast, began after seeing some photographs of a snare drum into which a perfect replica of the DeLorean from Back To The Future had been woodburned. Naturally, this was eye-catching. It proved, however, to be the tip of the iceberg in terms of how and why they build drums. They use reclaimed woods which makes each and every item unique, internationally hand delivering their orders. We chatted to master craftsman Jon Hammond and director Dan O'Driscoll in an effort to understand what makes bespoke drum production unique.

♦ ♦ ♦

“DAN WILL OFTEN COME INTO THE WORKSHOP THE NEXT MORNING TO FIND SOMETHING NEW ON THE WORKBENCH AND ME BLEARY-EYED ASKING HIM IF HE WANTS A CUP OF TEA. HE DOESN'T EVEN DRINK TEA.”

♦ ♦ ♦



The Drummer's Journal: How does one go about becoming a master craftsman? Is it as intensive as, say, becoming a Jedi Master?

Jon: I suppose, like a Jedi, it's a simple case of mastering your craft, though that doesn't really touch it. In the case of Serenity it's something way more personal. It comes from the roots. My Dad is an artist and so the encouragement of self-expression has always been around me. As a child I smashed up my toy matchbox cars to see what their insides looked like and see how the metal changed shape when I hit them. Lego was fun but always constricting. When I discovered my Dad's shed and started to sneak down the garden to set things on fire, make candles or hammer bits of wood together, I think that's where my love for shaping wood and its pliability began. At art college I became obsessed with what you can do with it as a material, but then I got into bands. It was only when Dan and I embarked on Serenity that I finally had the freedom to combine my two loves: drums, and the feeling of being able to express myself best in carving and shaping wood forms.

What was the first drum you ever built?

Dan: When Serenity was first established, Jon and I had agreed that one very important thing we wanted to do was to gift our favourite drummers each with a snare. The very first Serenity drum was a full birch snare including birch wood hoops that we made for Jon's good friend and favourite drummer, David Kennedy of The Chariot. The drum went on to be used on part of what would turn out to be their final album, One Wing.

How would you describe what Serenity means to you as an enterprise? Is it safe to say it's simply more than a form of income?

Jon: The day Serenity becomes simply a form of income is

the day I'll stop breathing, I think. I don't think I've ever loved doing anything more. It's the hardest job I have ever had, with the longest hours at times, but I don't really see it as a job. I see it as a calling and something I really need to do on a daily basis; it's my life, as much as it is Dan's. I have had the fortune, in my time, of playing in amazing studios with incredible musicians and on stages in front of hundreds and thousands of people in cities around the world. I honestly can look you in the eye and say I've never been more satisfied with what I'm doing with my life than when I've got a chisel in my hand and I'm carving wood, specifically, creating our drums.

Who has the harder job – Jon or Dan?

Dan: It's safe to say that neither of us could do what we do without the other. Jon is the creative vision and the craftsman. That said, I'd like to think that he relies equally on my input!

Jon: Serenity wouldn't be anything without either of us. Yes, I make the drums and they are unique to my style, but without Dan tirelessly holding me up and enabling the world to see our drums for what they are, we wouldn't be here now.

What made you want to build using reclaimed woods and materials, as opposed to buying in ready made shells or, at least, pre-treated woods?

Jon: This aspect is a constant source of fascination to me. To us, it's about history and what the wood has experienced. It is also the most difficult thing to work with as a lot of what you reclaim is pretty much useless. The rest is usually very, very old and extremely stubborn, but I respect that. Most of it is far, far older than I am. It's the romance that gets me, really.



What value would you say using reclaimed materials adds?

Dan: History is key. We knew this had to be a pivotal part of what we do from the start; our ply wood had to be sustainably sourced and our solid wood always, always reclaimed. Wood has an incredible history that outlives us, that spans centuries. Generations of families have lived on and around the wood we've used in our drums. The value is in the history that will never happen again and is forever embodied in the tone and resonance of the wood.

Some of the reclaimed materials you use must have a significant meaning to either yourself or the customer?

Jon: As an example, I often talk about the old oak table that the very first Serenity sculpted snare was made from. To the people we rescued it from it was just a battered, old broken table. To our eyes it's a century of generations living out their lives through loves, losses and all aspects of family life.

The old oak tree that the table was made from was likely to have been between 500 and 800 years old. It was chopped down and dried out, then shaped by the hands of a master furniture maker. It was lived on and moved around by countless families and individuals; surviving two world wars and then the quickest changing decades the world has ever experienced before it eventually got thrown away. It came to us and was given new life in the form of an epic-sounding sculpted snare. To some that might all be here-or-there, to us it's everything. All of this is captured in that drum's sound. This is a foundational part of the Serenity ethos.

♦♦♦

“IF EVER YOU WANTED
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♦♦♦



♦♦♦
“IF IT WASN’T FOR
CHEAPER, MASS-
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WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO OWN DRUM KITS
GROWING UP. I AM VERY
THANKFUL FOR THAT.”
♦♦♦





Have you ever found yourself subconsciously whispering “My Precious” when handing a drum over to a customer?

Jon: Not specifically, but I do get attached. But once it's gone and in the drummer's hands it doesn't feel like mine any more. I'm comfortable with that.

Dan: I know there have definitely been a few drums that I've not wanted to part ways with. You do get attached, having seen them come to life in the workshop. These feelings are nothing compared to the encouragement that comes from doing a hand over though.

You also hand deliver your orders. Does the price of doing so not significantly eat into any profit margins?

Jon: Yes it does, always, but the best way I can explain it is by referring to cars. If, for instance, I wanted to buy a very nice top of the line Audi, I would go to an Audi dealership and someone who had nothing to do with the production or design of the car would tell me all about it and sell it to me. However, if I wanted to buy a Lamborghini, I would want to fly out to Italy and meet the selection of highly trained designers and builders who put their hearts and souls into making that amazing car. It's that personal for us.

If you had to describe the experience of starting a custom drum company in five honest words, what would these be?

Jon: Humbling, rewarding, terrifying and good.

Dan: Tough, definitely, but also inspirational.

In terms of running a business, what are the most important lessons you've learnt along the way?

Dan: We've definitely learnt our lessons from things



over the years, having spent a lot of time conversing with potential customers, only to find out they had no intention of investing in new drums at all. It can be frustrating but we've learnt to adapt the way we communicate to be more upfront. We've also learnt a lot from the response other people have given to what we do. This has simply reaffirmed our work ethic at its very basic level, which is: be kind, work hard.

At what stage is something most likely to go wrong during the building process? Something like pyrography, for example, seems absolutely perilous! And has that ever happened – having to start from scratch following a serious error or accident?

Jon: The best one would have to be when I sleepily picked up the wrong tool without realising and put it into a piece of cherry wood at the wrong angle as it span at 1300 rpm. There was a loud bang, the wood and chisel vanished before my eyes and I felt something brush quickly past my forehead. I switched off the lathe, took off my face protection and dust mask, looked up and there was the chisel, minding its own business wedged into the ceiling.

Although I'm sure you have excellent fire safety procedures, if there was a hypothetical fire in the workshop, which piece of kit or object do you save above all others?

Jon: My dog, Geoffrey.

Dan: Jon.

How would you describe the state of the custom drum market in the UK currently?

Jon: We don't really see ourselves as a competitive company jostling for the same clientele as others in the





L-R: JON HAMMOND, DAN O'DRISCOLL



custom drum industry. If anything we're out there on our own. Neither Dan or I are particularly interested in doing a common generic kit cheaper than whoever else may do it just to get a sale. Plus, if ever you wanted to see an over-saturated market you need only look at the countless companies in the US trying to come up with the next clever thing to put on a pre-made shell. That's not us.

Dan: We will be attaching an online shop to our website in the coming months to provide customers who prefer to browse any pieces Jon has made with the 'click to buy' option. But this is not something that we see as competitive to other drum companies. They will be priced at their worth as pieces of bespoke, functional art, not against the prices on someone else's instrument website.

Are there more negative than positive aspects regarding the tendency for drums and hardware to be mass-produced?

Jon: If it wasn't for cheaper, mass-produced drums I would never have been able to own drum kits growing up, and some of them were great kits. I am very thankful for that. I know the directors of two of the biggest companies, they are passionate about their brands and about drumming; lovely chaps who love drums. They have done what they can to get their name into every home of every drummer. That is good by me.

Is drum building more of a science or more of an art? Stating it is a perfect 50/50 split is not allowed...

Jon: To drum builders, I assume it's loving what you do, keeping highly accurate measurements and accomplishing finishes the original Ludwig drum makers would have been proud of. There are some absolutely amazing drum builders out there, especially in the UK,





♦ ♦ ♦

“THERE WAS A LOUD BANG,
THE CHISEL VANISHED
BEFORE MY EYES AND I FELT
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LOOKED UP AND THERE WAS
THE CHISEL, MINDING ITS
OWN BUSINESS WEDGED
INTO THE CEILING..”

♦ ♦ ♦

and some who really do push the boundaries. I tend to approach it from a completely different point of view. If I can, I start with who the client is; what they are all about on drums; why and how they play. I need an emotional response to the client in order to see something in my head that they have inspired, which is why I need to meet them or at least see them play in order for them to evoke

said response in me. It's safe to say there is a science to it, but I would say, in terms of Serenity as an individual case, it's about 70% heart and art to 30% science. Once the science parts are in place on a creation I go into my head, becoming unable to finish sentences properly and off in my own world until it is done.

If it's something I have just felt the need to make, I make it, it comes out of me and that's that. Dan will often come into the workshop the next morning to find something new on the workbench and me bleary-eyed asking him if he wants a cup of tea. He doesn't even drink tea.

As a master craftsman, to what extent do your own aesthetic appreciations take precedence over what the customer might initially want?

Jon: I think Dan should answer this.

Dan: Our customers come to us with different approaches to their drum designs; some know what they want and others come to us specifically trusting in Jon's work, simply giving him some inspiration and an overall idea of their preferred sound to start the process. We work much better with the latter; an idea or concept to





explore and create with. That said, we have turned down jobs before if they are something that just isn't what we do. We aren't here to imitate.

Jon, you have an impressive moustache. Why is it that moustaches took off from about 300 BC, but the monobrow is still floundering in terms of popularity and cultural representation?

Jon: This is a deeply confounding question. Some have argued that long before 300 BC the epic fallout between eyebrows was so huge that it's still talked about by nostrils to this day. In some faces a bridge of healing hairs has attempted to rejoin the brows and bring back the once great monobrow, but it has never caught on. The history of hurt is just too embedded. I would say it's testament to the wisdom of the moustache that it's stayed out of the debacle, maintaining a healthy relationship with itself and working hard at its own, successful career. I'll have to see what Doug at Can You Handlebar? thinks about this, he is the knowledge on all things moustache, beard and of course, historical facial hair debacles. If anyone knows the truth, it's him.

Dan: What Jon said.

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THIS ILLUSTRATION IS BEAT LAB, BY DAVID GONZALEZ.



SELECTIVE EXPLANATION

Word and Image by Katherine Nishigaki

My beloved cymbal bag has stood up well over the years. It came first with the first drum set I ever bought, quite a long time ago. After more gigs than I can recall, this bag has retained an impressively odd collection of trinkets, which, out of these lessons, I have never bothered to remove. I could see

1. Inappropriate sticks. If you can't make them work, they have no value. Unless, of course, what's more is my own gear, not that as a person, I'm not a fan of it. I've never actually used them, you

2. Tuna. You'd never know how to use of these double up as a work.

3. Kala Cello. It's old, it's great.

4. Drum keys. An instrument. The one that have the most of them are the ones that disappear straight at the end of which were important to a few days.

5. Spare keys. Generally hard to lose. The amount of times I've

6. Drum Allen Key. I use the one you have probably used with me in the

7. Drum Allen Key. I use the one you have probably used with me in the

8. Drum Allen Key. I use the one you have probably used with me in the

9. Drum Allen Key. I use the one you have probably used with me in the

10. Drum Allen Key. I use the one you have probably used with me in the

THE DRUMMER'S JOURNAL

AN INDEPENDENT DRUM MAGAZINE



ndj



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THE DRUMMER'S JOURNAL

ICING THE CAKE

A CONVERSATION WITH: BERNARD PURDIE

*Words by Tom Hoare & Eric T Everett
Photography by Camilo Fuentealba, unless stated*

As soon as Bernard Purdie appeared in the hallway, I knew the next few hours were going to be interesting. He swung the porch door open with a booming laugh and stood on his stoop wearing one of the most mesmerizing shirts I've ever seen. "I was beginning to wonder if you were going to make it," he grins – a preface to my impending apology concerning the last hour or so I'd spent wandering around a small township in New Jersey in a state of chronic disorientation.

By all accounts he's a busy man and I can imagine the act of being late as somewhat alien to him. He has a small cell phone that rings incessantly and he forever seems to be scheduling appointments and meetings. It's a credit to the device's manufacturer that it doesn't simply disintegrate. Bernard seems less enthused with it. "I still can't really work it," he chuckles.

◆◆◆



Have you ever wondered what it might be like if they made a film where Indiana Jones is the President? Well they have. It's called Air Force One. I step into Bernard's living room just as Harrison Ford delivers a devastating jab to the face of Gary Oldman – a Soviet terrorist intent on causing havoc on the President's private plane.

Bernard reaches for the remote and turns the TV off. "I don't care much for those movies," he murmurs, before sitting back and relaxing in a leather chair. Behind him is a wall covered with various awards and accolades – photographs, discs and certificates occupying every available space. There's a brief silence as I study a photograph of him arm in arm with Aretha Franklin.

As a musician, you can't help but have an enormous amount of respect for what Bernard Purdie has achieved. He is one of the most prolific session musicians of all time, with a career lasting almost seven decades. The Rolling Stones, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Steely Dan, Miles Davis, BB King, James Brown – in total Purdie has played on over 25,000 recordings and left a lasting legacy on the way people talk about jazz, funk and soul drumming. Yet, he still continues to work and you get the distinct impression it's what he has always done and will continue to do for the foreseeable future.

I'm still looking at the picture when Bernard leans forward in his chair. "You want some cake?"

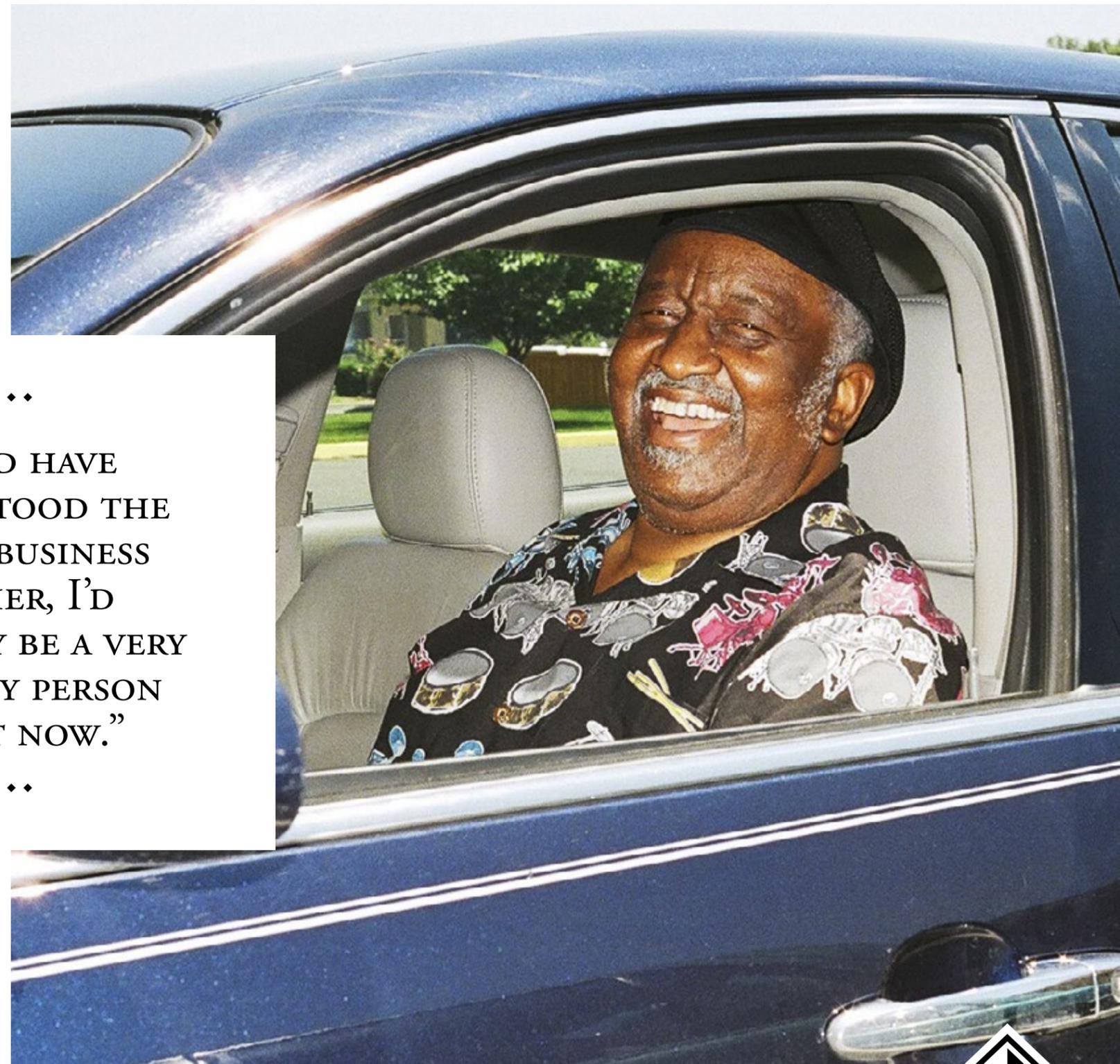
"Cake?"

"Yeah, it was my birthday. I got seven cakes."

We have some of cake five. Then finish what remained of cake seven. By the end I was so full I had to concentrate on slowly breathing in and out whilst resisting the urge to lie down on his sofa.

In years gone by, Bernard's reputation may have preceded him. It's worth considering, however, that much of what would come to represent his canon of work was done at a time when the industry was not only at its most prosperous but also its most ruthless too. Longevity was a rarity and work was far from guaranteed. Purdie not only endured this but actively thrived in it. In some ways this makes his achievements all the more impressive. He truly is one of the greats.

As I battled with the physiological constraints of my own stomach, Bernard sat in his chair and talked about music. I was struck by how much he genuinely seems to enjoy doing so. There was a point where he went to make everyone a cup of coffee and, during the process, could be heard doing another interview via phone in the kitchen.

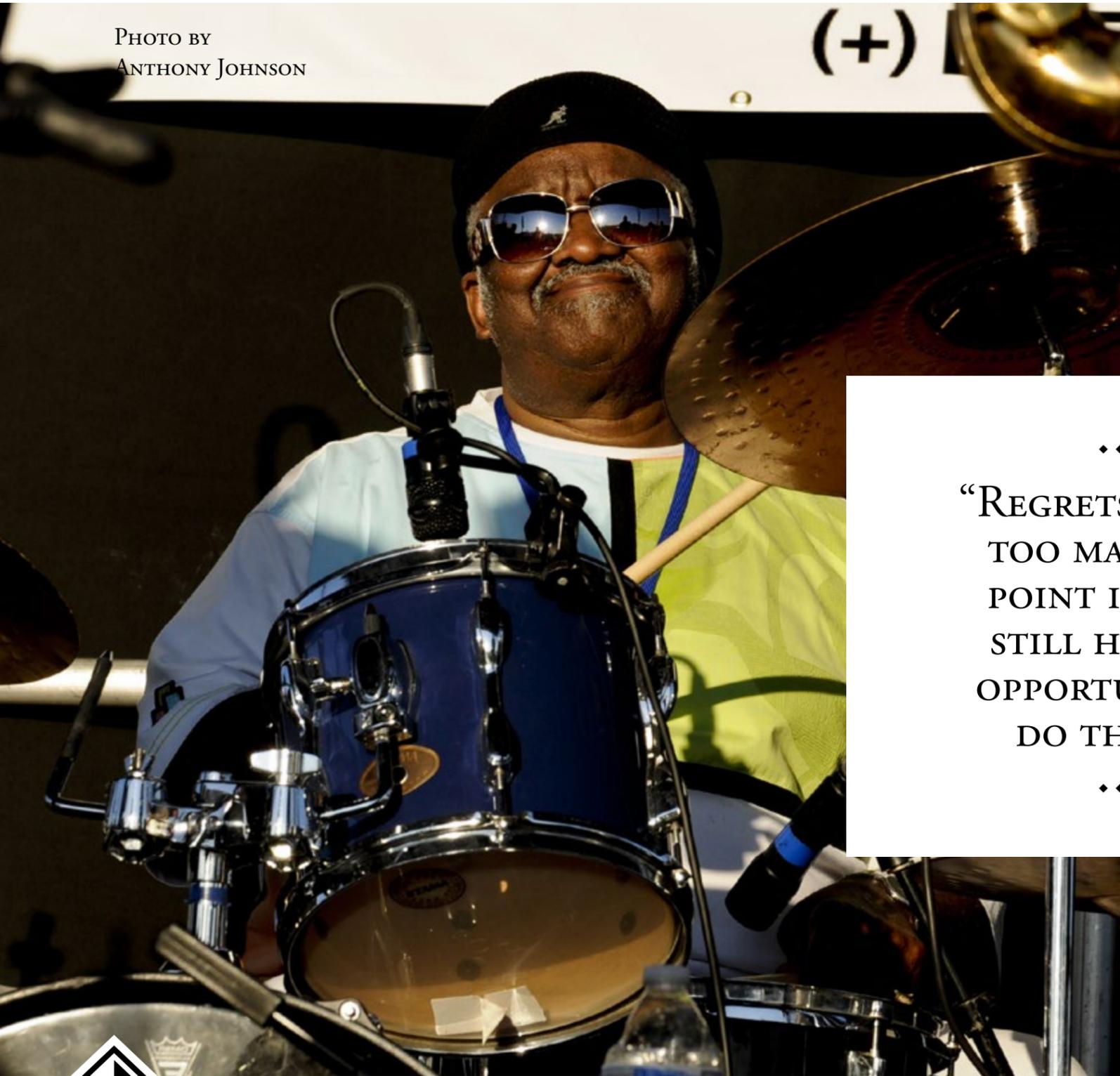


♦ ♦ ♦

"IF I'D HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE MUSIC BUSINESS EARLIER, I'D PROBABLY BE A VERY WEALTHY PERSON RIGHT NOW."

♦ ♦ ♦

PHOTO BY
ANTHONY JOHNSON



♦♦♦
 “REGRETS? THERE’S
 TOO MANY. THE
 POINT IS THAT I
 STILL HAVE THE
 OPPORTUNITY TO
 DO THINGS.”
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The way he talks about his experiences isn’t technical or theoretical but instead invested with feeling and expression. He regularly mimics sounds and movements associated with the drum set - a reminder that, although he might have drums covering his shirt, playing them is something that’s in his blood.

The Drummer’s Journal: What set your approach to playing drums apart from others?

Bernard Purdie: All my life I’ve been told that I have a gift and for years I didn’t know what that meant. I have since learned what that has come to mean – having a sense of time, a sense of feel, and always having very positive energy. All my teachers have said the same thing: you have to understand the job that you’re there to do.

And what does that job usually tend to be?

My job has always been to sit on the throne and command, to give everybody what they

need. Also, at the same time, to command respect meant that I really had to learn my craft. No one can take anything away from you when you’ve learnt your craft.

What’s the most important piece of advice you’ve received?

You have to listen. Don’t take a job you don’t want to do because you’re not going to be happy, you’re not going to make money with it and, lastly, you’re not going to do a good job because you’re already disappointed.

How would you approach a session? Was it just a job or were you more invested than that?

I was taught it’s all about the job, but of course you’re invested in it because it’ll always come back to who you are and what you are about. If you want to be the best of the best it needs to be reflected in your work.

How did you maintain the level of intensity when you were jumping from studio job to studio job, day after day, week after week? Did you go into autopilot?

Anything I was doing meant that someone had hired me and I thought about that a lot. I had a job to do and each one was different, so there was no autopilot in that sense.

Today, artists now have to represent themselves more than ever. You seem to have got that right as you were a great marketer...

All the different artists that I worked with marketed themselves, that’s what they had to do. Your reputation counted for a lot. Also, time was money. That was preached to me from the outset. It didn’t matter if I was washing dishes in the kitchen, taking out garbage, digging ditches or working on the railroad. Show business means just that. It’s a show and a business. The business is where you make your money; the show is what you do to let people know that you are capable.

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PHOTO BY
DARRELL JESONIS





PHOTO BY
DARRELL JESONIS

♦ ♦ ♦
“THERE ARE
WORDS THAT I
TRY AND AVOID.
ONE OF THEM IS
‘HATE’ – I’VE BEEN
THERE AND BEEN
KNOCKED DOWN.”
♦ ♦ ♦

To what extent do you believe the ability to keep time is innate, or is it something you can practise?

To me, I’ve always had the time because of my heartbeat. But I had to learn how to take my heartbeat and bring it out of my stomach. Your stomach is your metronome. See the music, hear the music, play the music, that’s what I was taught.

You’ve written an autobiography, which has been in the works now for some time. It must be nice to see it almost complete. What is the story you’re telling?

Well, basically, it’s my life story, but at the same time dealing with the reality of where I came from, what I did, what motivated me and how I arrived at everything that I came to be doing.

Does the book capture who you really are?

I know the book will let people know where my drive was, why I had the drive and what made me do the things I do. I don’t have to worry about looking over my shoulder because I did something wrong. The biggest thing in the world for me was learning what I was doing and hearing other people.

In the process, did you discover some new things about yourself?

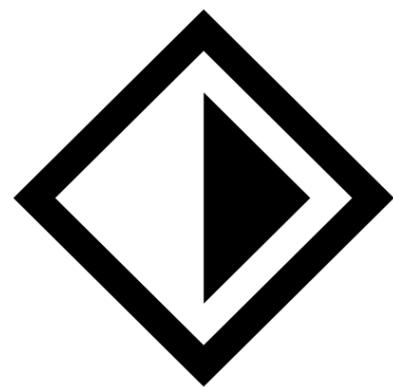
(Laughs) I really did. But I didn’t realise that what I had done coming up through all the years meant something to so many different people. It was a job – that’s how I looked at everything. All my life, I’ve always done my job.

♦ ♦ ♦



PIXEL DRUMMER
BY AUSTIN EUSTICE
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A MEMORY FOR MUSCLES

Words and Illustrations by Ben Martin

How do you feel when I mention the word technique?

Many top educators and professional musicians promote the idea that consistent and repetitive practice in key areas is the only way to advance technically on the drum set. This approach has worked for many drummers, but it has also generated a glut of excess guilt among us lesser mortals. Could our creative scope be suffering as a consequence of this demanding approach, forcing us to push the boundaries of physical capacity to the max? Is it possible that this athletic approach to practising could eventually lead to a diminished sense of creative progress? Perhaps there is another way to compliment your 'drum-ercise' that will allow for an effective and more relaxed approach to technical mastery, while allowing for creativity to flow from the outset.

♦♦♦





Muscle memory, an integral component in musical competence, is largely determined by a complex interplay between the nervous system and an individual's muscular skeletal form. Communications between neurons and the resulting ideomotor response is so quick and intuitive that it is no wonder we spend little time thinking about it in more detail. However, without neural pathways, muscle is but a mass of largely passive tissue. So, it is no surprise that an intensive approach to practice has been advocated and adopted by many musicians. However, even top athletes have their limits. How then, do they manage to achieve a more effective neural-muscular connection that is a prerequisite for advanced performance?

In recent years, sports men and women have been complimenting their physical training with a more holistic approach to the mind and body, encouraging the formation of stronger neurological pathways designed to enhance their muscular responses. Evidence has shown that by actively listening to what our bodies are telling us, we can strengthen the bond between mental agility and physical output. In short, it is asserted that 'brain training' is an essential component for actualising enhanced physical prowess. Perhaps we could look to adopt a similar holistic training program to reinforce our practice, reducing guilt and further advancing our creative scope.

Sports Psychology

Athletes are renowned for their perseverance and determination to better themselves. They strive to become more efficient, shortening times, increasing heights and distances by mere fractions. When we watch them outperform fellow competitors, it is easy to think that the winning combination is greater determination and enhanced physical strength. This may be part of the story, but it is not all of it.

Further gains, complimenting their natural athletic prowess, are made further away, hidden deep within the brain. In effect, a 'fitter' brain does encourage muscle growth, muscle memory and stronger neural pathways. Drummers today are aware of the important link between muscle memory and performance. However, without techniques to strengthen this innate ability, we may be underestimating just how far we could improve individual performance. Perhaps we can take some cues from our athletic contemporaries.

Say, for example, a swimmer is practising their flip turns. Each new move, deemed by the brain to be an improvement, in turn leads to a release of performance enhancing hormones. These hormones, endorphins, then help strengthen the neural pathways involved in building the coordination and movement pathways associated with this part of their performance. Learning to drive a car is no different and involves the same neuro-physiological pathways leading to faster automatic response times behind the wheel (in most drivers' cases anyway!) Apply this to learning a tricky manoeuvre on the drum set or a new stick control

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◆◆◆

technique, and your brain is primed to reinforce your ability, in part absolving you of the tendency to endlessly criticise your performance. In fact, being overly critical while practising is likely to encourage a negative response in the brain, building a feedback loop where the associated mistake becomes a habit.

Many drummers get stuck in a trap of self-deprecation, unhappy with themselves if they are not actively forcing themselves to practise over and over until it feels right. This approach is fine, unless you are causing yourself undue distress. It is believed that when learning something new, it is better to learn the most efficient muscle movements and reflexes before building stamina or power.

An interesting fact: in the unfortunate event that you were to be electrocuted by touching a faulty mains electrical socket, you would be thrown across the room. This is not due to an explosion or even the power of the electricity propelling you, but the release of energy from your muscles. We have huge amounts of energy stored within our muscles; part of developing better technique is to persuade our bodies to release just that little more than it's used to.

The Bowen Technique

The Bowen Technique is an unverified physiotherapeutic approach which has been quietly gaining popularity since its invention by Tom Bowen in the 1960s. It is used to alleviate physical problems ranging from sports injuries through to tinnitus. In a nutshell, it involves the physiotherapist gently 'resetting' the patient's nervous response (and therefore their muscle memory). The practice also involves

making physical 'suggestions' to the body, encouraging more helpful muscle responses with a view to easing the patient's condition. In a typical Bowen session, the therapist will apply mild to moderate pressure to various areas of the body. This is done in intervals where the therapist will leave the room for short periods of time to allow the body's nervous system and muscle memory to adapt to what has been 'suggested'. This quiet approach has helped many people recover from injuries and physical problems where other more traditional approaches have failed.

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**“I OFTEN TELL
PUPILS THAT
RELAXATION IS THE
HARDEST TECHNIQUE
TO MASTER.”**

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I have experimented with this approach for my own development and have used similar practices during teaching sessions. For example, when I was struggling to achieve looseness, power and speed in my left hand, something I was managing easily with my right hand, I would practise movements in short bursts. Whenever I felt I had done four satisfactory rounds (in this case practising traditional Moeller accents in fours), I would stop playing and relax, sitting with the sticks resting in my hands and allowing my muscles to adapt to what I had been asking them to do. Then I would repeat the exercise. This allowed me out of a rut much quicker than if I had forced the muscles to adapt through persistent practice to something my body did not yet understand. Once this was achieved I could easily work on building the length of time and speed I could play the exercise and remain relaxed. I often tell pupils that relaxation is the hardest technique to master.

Mental reinforcement

It is well known that athletes will use visualisation techniques to imagine a course or race in detail beforehand. This helps boost their

confidence and keep them focused. Again, similar approaches to drumming can be beneficial.

I'm sure we have all experienced practice sessions where we want to learn something new, but for whatever reason it never really fully comes together. Then you might go away and the next time you try, it comes into focus as if from nowhere. The subconscious mind has a way of working on problems we present to it in the background. Once a problem has been presented to the mind, in the form of a recognised series of muscle responses forming a pattern, it will continue to build associations and pathways long after we have stopped consciously thinking about it. This also works in reverse. A new idea for the drums can be practised mentally. This can make the performance of a new idea smoother when we come to apply it to the drum set for the first time. You may have experienced this sensation when playing a cover of a well-known song for the first time. Because you know the song, you already have an understanding of the dynamics, speed, and structures even if you haven't really ever thought about playing the song before.

Far from being elusive and difficult to control, muscle memory should be thought of as an extension of our natural movement. Rather than berating ourselves for not having worked 'hard enough', put in 'enough' time on the practice pad or built up 'enough' strength, we might remember that some of the most difficult muscular responses, like walking and balance, were achieved before we were really aware of our actions. Gentle guidance is the key to building good technique, and mental reinforcement is the key to keeping and using the technical control we have achieved. Stamina is obviously an important factor but beware of building stamina on top of unnatural or forced muscle memory.

I hope this helps you to enjoy developing technically and removes some of the guilt you may feel for not doing 'enough' – as if there is such a thing as enough drumming?!

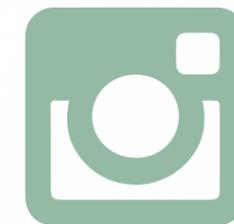
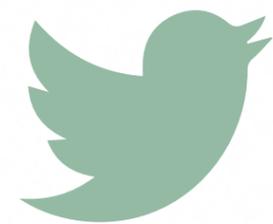
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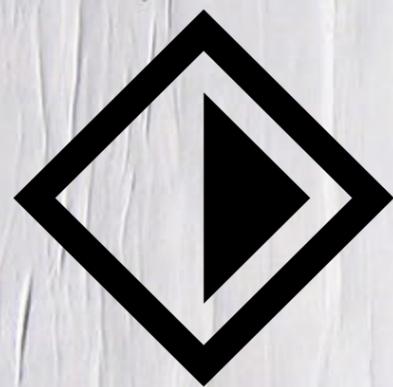
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All i hear is drums



BING DANG BOOM

BING DANG BOOM



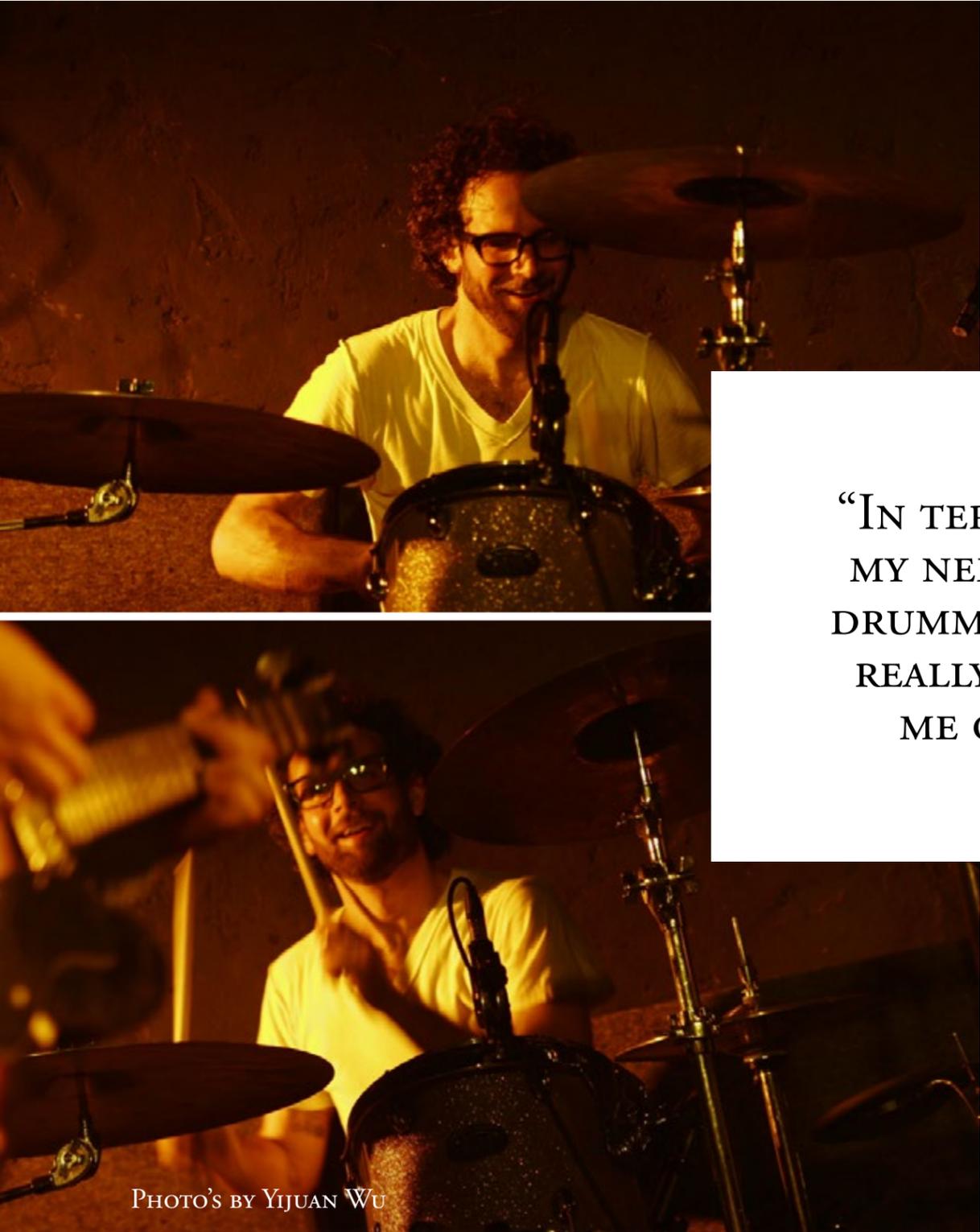
LIFE AFTER BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JUSTIN PEROFF

Words by Daniel Korn, photography by Tijana Martin, unless stated

It happens all the time. The first step is that I'm at a party, leaving my corner of solitude long enough to run into some talkative drunk stranger on the way to the bathroom. The second step is the dreaded conversation-starter of, "what do you do?". The third step is the mention of musical activities, immediately followed up by the always-unfortunate, "what kind of music do you play?". The fourth step is an obnoxiously long and complicated answer forming in my cortex, edited down to a nervous laugh and a statement along the lines of, "you know, some indie rock kind of stuff".





The fifth and final step is the knockout punch:
 “What do you mean, ‘indie?’”

This is a more difficult question than it should be. It’s a relatively simple descriptor – at its most basic, a status-based prefix that merely indicates a band that isn’t signed to a major label – but one that has grown to carry a lot of weight with it. The notion of indie being a mere marker of social status is long-dead, replaced by a vaguely-described sound that often involves angular guitars and experimentation with electronics. It’s an umbrella term, and one that confuses people so much that I hear the aforementioned question brought up at least once a month.

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 “IN TERMS OF WHAT
 MY NEEDS ARE AS A
 DRUMMER, IT WASN’T
 REALLY SATISFYING
 ME ONSTAGE.”
 ◆◆◆

I wish I could just carry a stack of copies of Broken Social Scene’s *You Forgot It In People* to give these people. What that album – the epitome of the genre, insofar as it can be described as such – proves is that indie is not so much about a sound as it is a mood. Broken Social Scene’s songs are lush but not overblown, dance-y but reflective, nostalgic but forward-thinking. The atmosphere is dense, with strings and keyboards and an army of guitars on every song, but harmonically they’re only made up of a chord or two. It’s heartfelt and emotional, but in a modest way that serves as a direct rebellion to the angsty post-grunge that preceded it.

The band is also the prototypical indie success story: two guys, Brendan Canning and Kevin Drew, record a bunch of lovely ambient music, and end up essentially creating an

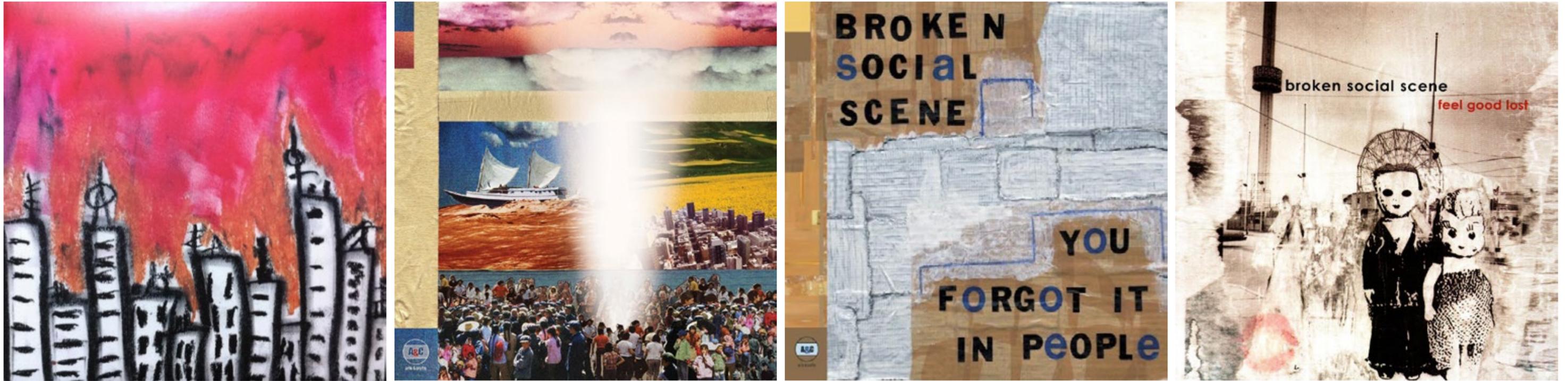
entire industry by themselves. An argument can be made that Broken Social Scene and their record label Arts & Crafts are the central nervous system of Canadian indie rock, with other industry stalwarts like Metric, Stars, and Feist serving as its appendages.

If this is the case, the heart of it is undoubtedly drummer Justin Peroff. With his curly, fro-ish hair and thick glasses, Peroff cuts an unassuming figure that’s reflected in his playing. He never attempts to seize the spotlight with flashy stage moves or around-the-kit fills, preferring instead to exude a quiet confidence. His drumming is best defined as “stable”, the rock that keeps the often ten-or-more-member band grounded amidst the textural chaos, but like the rest of the band it is complex and layered in a way that you might not realize until you try to sit down and learn the parts.

But what’s a player like this – one so based on supporting others – to do when the band stops playing? With Broken Social Scene on an “indefinite hiatus” as of 2011, minus the occasional revival for Arts & Crafts’ own Field Trip festival, Peroff has been left with a whole bunch of time. Rather than sulk, he prefers to move forward and experiment, while also reflecting on the creation of what is perhaps indie rock’s finest moment.

The Drummer’s Journal: So, what are you working on these days?

Justin Peroff: I’ve been doing some drumming and electronics for Tom Krell’s band *How To Dress Well*. That was pretty neat – it was the first time he was performing with a full band, and also with a drummer. We did a lengthy tour in North America, a little thing in the UK, then a full European tour that ended a few weeks ago. But that chapter has closed for me, I decided to bow out of that, on good terms. I love his music but it just wasn’t really satisfying me onstage, just for what my needs are as a drummer.



BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE ALBUMS, LEFT TO RIGHT - BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE (2005), FORGIVENESS ROCK RECORD (2010), YOU FORGOT IT IN PEOPLE (2002), FEEL GOOD LOST (2001)

Tom Krell programs the drums himself for that project, right?

He works with producers. The first stuff he was doing was more self-produced, but this last record is really big and there's a lot going on, it's a really big record. If you get the chance, you should check it out. There's a lot of cool percussive and electronic elements going on.

Was that weird for you – to have to learn all of these electronic parts and translate them to an acoustic kit?

It was a welcoming challenge. I did use a Roland SPDF-X sampling pad onstage to trigger and emulate some of the electronic stuff, and I was running Ableton as well. It wasn't total foreign territory for me but I just wanted to play my instrument more, y'know what I mean?

You wanted to be able to dig in a bit more.

Yeah, exactly.

Speaking of you on the more traditional kit, Broken Social Scene are on indefinite hiatus, but you guys have your one performance a year at your own Field Trip festival.

Apparently, that seems to be what we're doing! But it's not predesigned in that way – it just so happens that I got a phone call from Kevin [*Drew, co-founder of BSS*] over the holidays and he was like, "we're gonna do it again", and I was like, "what are we going to do?" and he said, "we're going to play Field Trip again." I was really surprised to get that phone call. I thought we would only do that one show, the first Field Trip, which was the 10th anniversary of *You Forgot It In People* and totally made sense. But I guess it just so happens that we've played twice in a row. I have no idea what's going to happen next year for Field Trip, but maybe I'll get that phone call again over the holidays. Who knows?

Is it hard for you to get pulled back in to that mindset, especially after all of these new avenues you've been exploring?

It's kinda cool! It's like going on a vacation and coming home again. It's a very warm, familiar feeling, and a bit of a tease because it's just the one show. I grew up with those guys – they're some of my best friends – and when your best friend calls, you make time for them. It's time you want to make to hang out and visit with an old friend. Those shows have been very special, especially being in our hometown and it being a festival that was created by our own record label. To say no would be a very wrong thing to do.

I've seen you guys play probably three or four times – Which shows did you see?



I was at last year's Field Trip, Hamilton's Supercrawl a couple years back, and then...I guess the last time you guys were actually on tour and played in Toronto, at the Sound Academy. You played for like two and a half hours with no break.

That seems pretty standard, yeah (*laughs*). Sorry, I just wanted to know which ones you saw.

Considering the number of performers in the band, which is sometimes in the double digits, is it difficult or stressful to provide that rhythmic center? How do you create a style where you're leading these other musicians but not invading what they're doing?

It's a good question. The first thought that comes to mind is that I feel that everyone in the band is a fan of rhythm in regards to the music they listen to or conversations that we have about music or just in life. I've got to give credit where credit's due – Brendan Canning is a great bass player, as is Charles Spearin [*the two main bass players in the band*]. It's really just a conversation that we're all having together. It's not like responsibility is being purposely put on any one member of the band, it's just what it is. We're a band that loves melody and loves rhythm, and I think that's what's coming out of our music – this texture-based, weird indie-pop. It could also be the fact that they allow me to get away with...what I get away

with doing! It makes sense in the music. We're just a weird band, and there's a lot of trust that goes on in any given band.

On *You Forgot It In People*, there are some really interesting drum tones, it almost sounds like the drums have been cut up and pasted together...

Dave Newfield, who produced that album is one-of-a-kind – there will never be anybody else like him. The hours in which we recorded were between 3 PM and 6 AM, during the summer months with no air

♦ ♦ ♦

“I GREW UP WITH THOSE GUYS – THEY’RE SOME OF MY BEST FRIENDS – AND WHEN YOUR BEST FRIEND CALLS, YOU MAKE TIME FOR THEM.”

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conditioning and no air circulation. A lot of those drum parts were played in my underwear. Honestly, the process was often frustrating and completely insane, but the end product – I’m so proud of that record.

You’ve got a style that’s very idiosyncratic, but also driven and pulsating in an almost traditional rock way. Where does that come from?

I don’t know! I get asked this question and I never know how to answer it. I’m a big fan of hip-hop music, so I think the production of early hip-hop stuff – I’m 36, born in ’77, so when I was 10, hip-hop was 10 years old. I was also into hair metal – Tommy Lee somehow became a big influence on me. So did Steve Gadd, so did Dave Grohl, and to a degree other drummers that I don’t even know the names of – like the drummer from Neu!. But I’m not strictly a rhythm nerd. I’m a really big fan melody, pop music, ambient music, distorted white noise like Merzbow.

I’m always surprised how listening to melodies can give me ideas for rhythms.

Yeah! Drums can be a melodic instrument. I mentioned Dave Grohl – that’s a guy who, for a rock drummer, he’s singing with those things. He’s communicating in every way, shape, and form within a song.

You mentioned having some projects coming up, can you talk about any of them?

I just got back from the Pemberton Music Festival with Vice Media – I was tapped as a host for a segment that

they’re doing. I’ve also been managing this really talented producer called Harrison. He’s this 19-year-old electronic producer who’s more based in future-funk and French touch – not the bro-y EDM shit, but more soulful stuff. I’m going to continue to produce my own variety of music at home in my studio room. I put the stuff out on a cassette label called Spring Break Tapes, which is based

in Los Angeles. I’ve put out four cassettes with them. We release about a hundred cassettes at a time, and they get snatched up by Broken Social Scene fans and people who are genuinely into it. It’s a bit more experimental, ambient and hip-hop based. It’s me documenting my own learning process of how to do self-production, and then I put it out there and if somebody likes it, they do, and if they hate it that’s fine too.

Will there be anything more from Broken Social Scene?

Eventually, I could see Broken Social Scene getting back into writing, maybe hopping back in the studio with them in the next couple of years. Our plan was never to go away forever, and we all get along, which is one of the reasons we wanted to stop. Stopping can help maintain a friendship as opposed to just staying together and punching a card. We remained friends for a reason. Too many bands break up for the wrong reasons, and sometimes stepping away can help the longevity.

♦ ♦ ♦
 “A LOT OF
 THOSE DRUM
 PARTS WERE
 PLAYED IN MY
 UNDERWEAR.”
 ♦ ♦ ♦

♦ ♦ ♦



PHOTO BY DANIELLE ST. LAURENT



BACK ISSUES

READ ISSUES 1 - 6 [HERE](#)

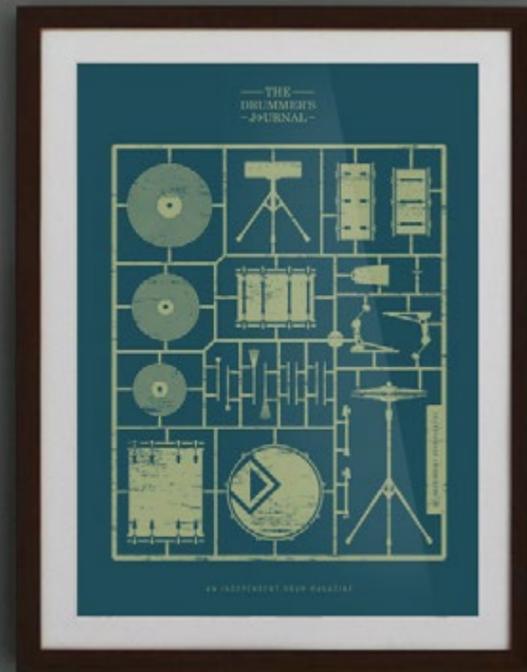


TDJ SHOP

We've designed a limited range of prints now available in our online shop. So far we've shipped our wares all over North America, South America and Europe. Each purchase comes with our quality assurance guarantee and a deep-seated sense of satisfaction (smugness optional). Every purchase helps support the magazine too.

◆◆◆

VISIT THE SHOP



ISSUE 08

WINTER 2014

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AUX OUT

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A few extra images



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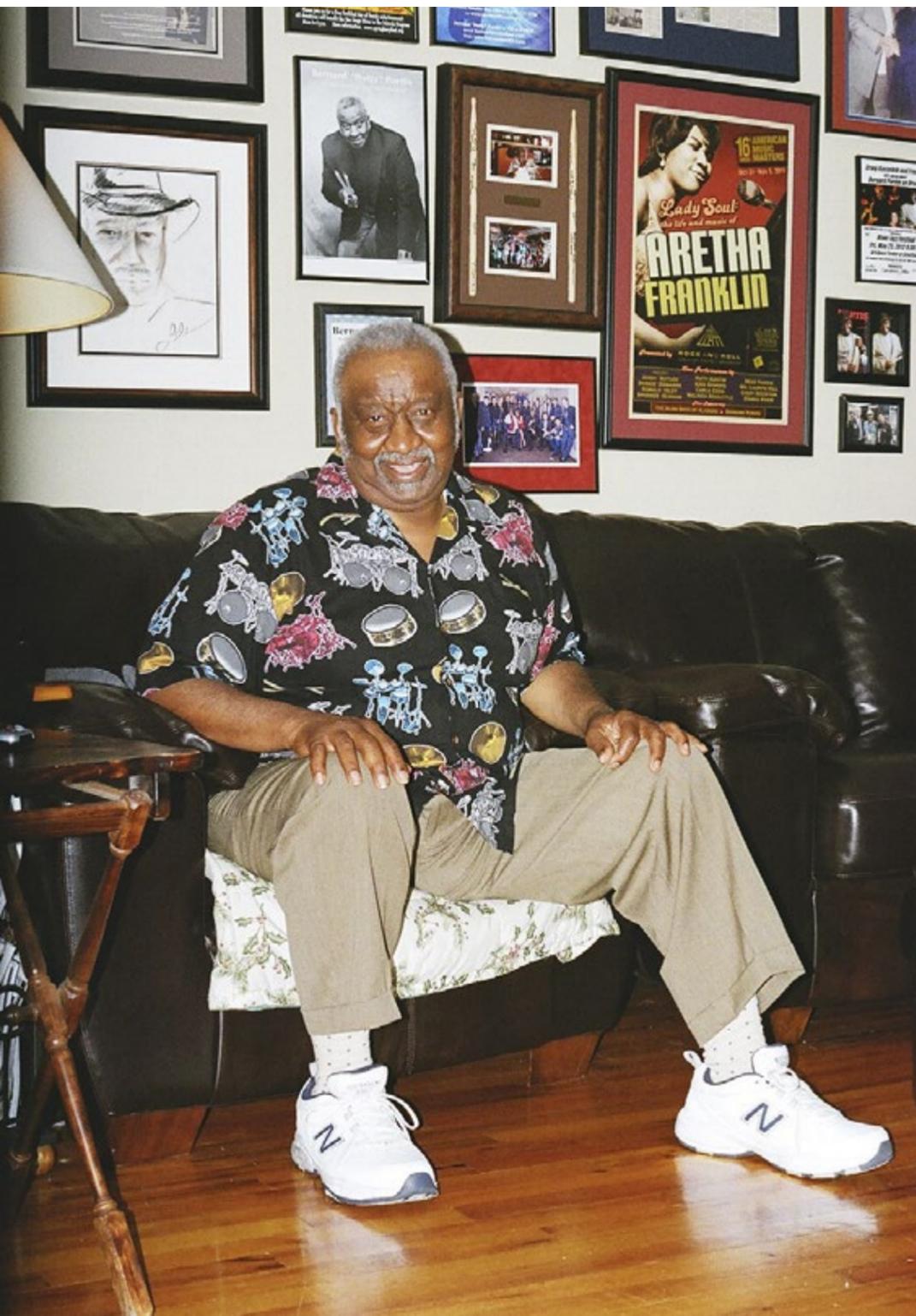
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THE
STONE

