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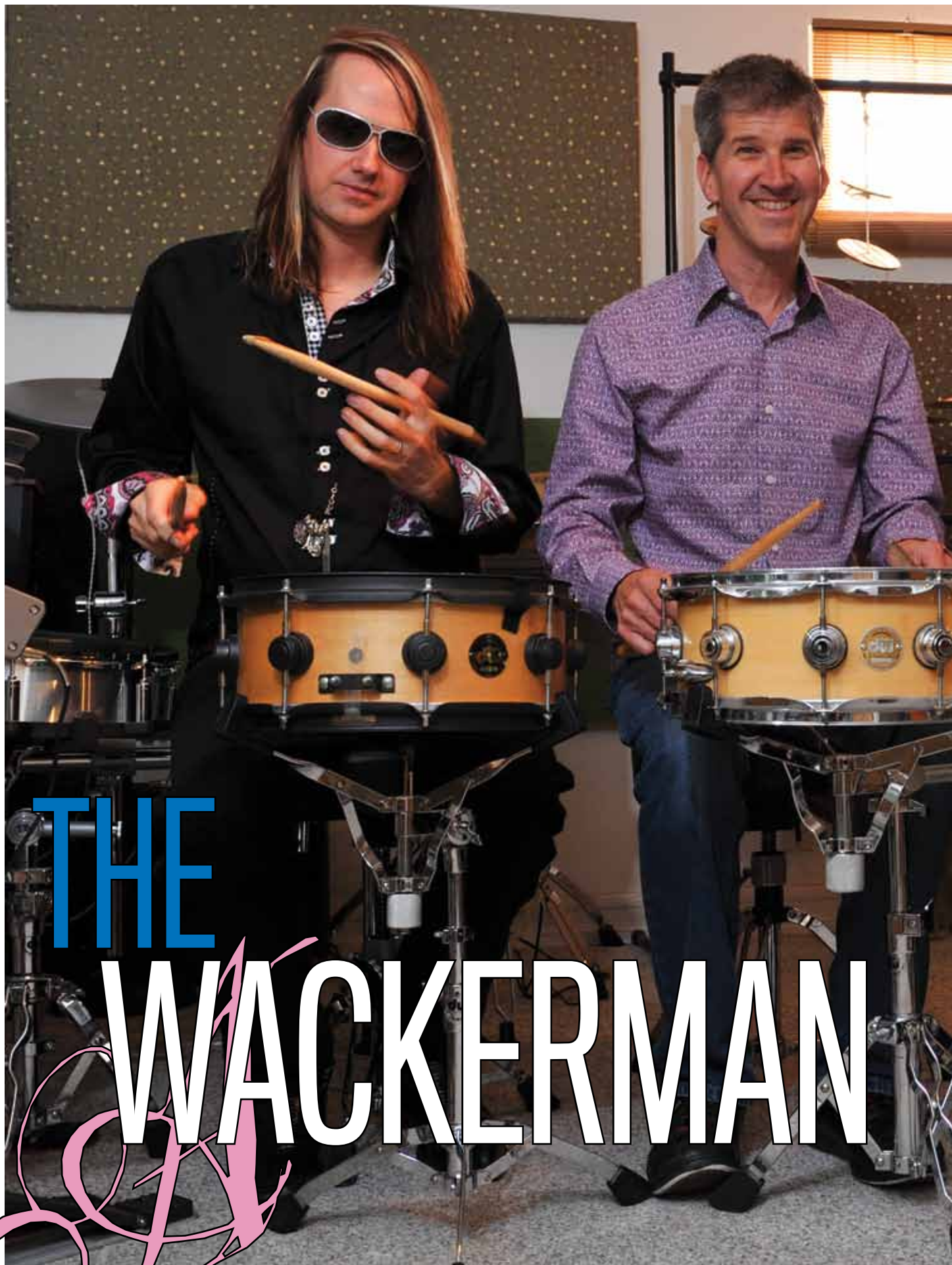


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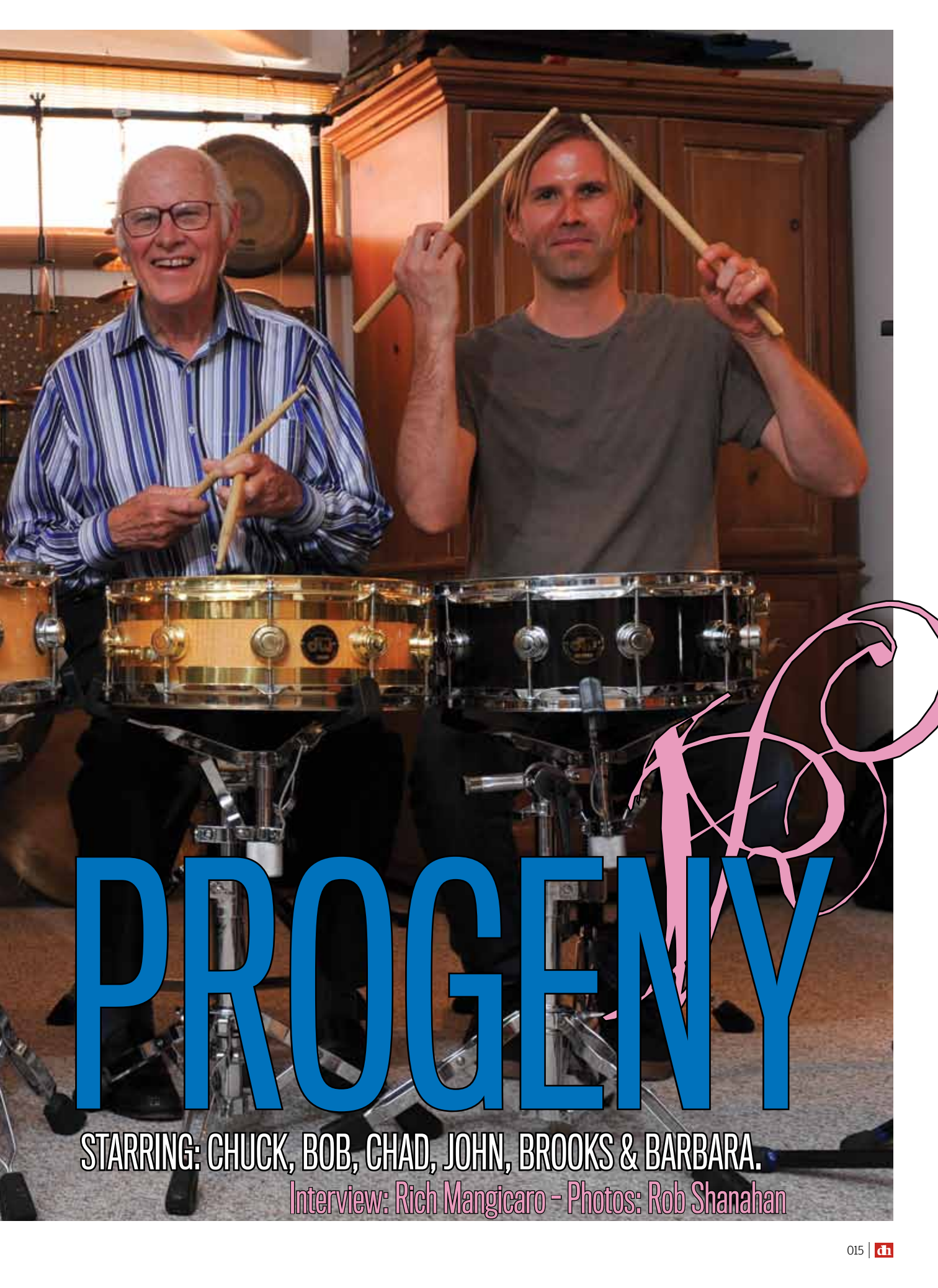


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THE WACKERMAN



PROGENY

STARRING: CHUCK, BOB, CHAD, JOHN, BROOKS & BARBARA.

Interview: Rich Mangicaro - Photos: Rob Shanahan

Parents have a powerful and positive impact upon the development and health of their children. The relationship between father and son early on in life is crucial—dad is his son's first role model. He is both consciously and subconsciously observed, and his words and actions are absorbed, even before the child's first spoken word. With an artistic parent, a child can be influenced even while still in the womb; rhythms and melodies permeate mama's belly and the child is most definitely affected by this. Some say it's the beginning of 'natural talent' or 'being born with it.' Some say the child is an *old soul*. To have one child that is born with this natural artistic talent is quite something to behold, but to have four?! This is extraordinary. Thus is the case with the Wackerman family. Hailing from Orange County, California, this gifted musical family has inspired thousands of musicians worldwide. All four of Chuck and Barbara Wackerman's sons are absolute virtuosos on their instrument. Three of their sons, Chad, John and Brooks became drummers like their dad. Equally as talented as his drumming brothers, Bob Wackerman chose the drummer's right-hand instrument, the bass. Their collective credits read like *THE* eclectic who's who of music: Frank Zappa, Barbra Streisand, James Taylor, Allan Holdsworth, Bad Religion, Tenacious D, Lindsey Buckingham, Kazumi Watanabe, Bill Watrous and Maynard Ferguson, to name just a few.

Chuck Wackerman began as a trumpet player and also picked up drums in high school. He ended up playing trumpet in the Air Force band and when his military service ended, he attended the University of Southern California, obtaining his music education degree there. Upon completing his studies, he began teaching in the town where he raised his family and where he still lives and teaches today, Seal Beach, CA. But his kids weren't your typical beach kids. Yes, they grew up with the ocean at their doorstep, but often times, when their friends were hangin' ten, they were woodshedding.

All four learned the focus and discipline of an effective practice regime. At the early age of six, the oldest son, Chad, demonstrated a natural ability in music. Actually, Chuck recognized this with all four of his sons. As Chad's first teacher, he began with a simple ride pattern that Chad picked up easily. Bob was five and wanted to play the upright bass, so Chuck got him a stool and a half-size bass to start with. At this young age, both Bob and Chad played in the jazz band at their father's school, where he taught. That's right, while most of us are still playing with our toy trucks, these guys were already in a band. John began on piano, but soon after, switched to vibes, which were purchased with money dad made by selling their boat. In fact, every one of the boys learned a second instrument, something Chuck felt necessary for them to be well-rounded musicians. Being Wackermans, they not only learned a second instrument, but they learned to play it very well. As we discussed their early years and each of their respective paths to success, it became apparent that these five men are very serious about being professional musicians, and, obviously, love what they do. This is the first time an American music trade magazine has gathered this family all together in one room, to tell their story. It's a tale of diligent hard work, dedicated practice, natural talent, extreme intellect, and brotherly love complete with the typical jibs and jabs, but most of all a mutual admiration that is truly inspiring.



CHUCK - LIKE FATHER, LIKE SONS



RM: Chuck, you started with Chad when he was six. Did you mainly work on technique or reading as well?

Chuck: It was mainly technique, but we also used the *Stick Control* book. When he hit the third grade and played in jazz band, he began reading charts. All the boys played in jazz band, from third through eighth grade.

John: We were surrounded by music. Dad used to take us to clinics, to jazz festivals; it was around us every day.

Chad: We traveled to Vegas during the summers of '67 through '69, where he was playing at Caesar's Palace in the lounge. He was playing a variety of styles there and also playing restaurant gigs back home. I think my first gig was when I was about ten years old; I sat in and played a set at one of his restaurant gigs.

RM: Chuck, were you gigging a lot at that time?

Chuck: Yes, but it became increasingly harder to juggle the late nights and then get up in the morning to teach. Eventually I focused exclusively on teaching.

Chad: He is an amazing teacher and his dedication to it has inspired so many young players. Dad was the first to start an elementary school jazz band in California. I remember the first jazz festival we ever played when I was 10 or 11 at Orange Coast College. Some of the judges were Clark Terry, Sonny Stitt and some other heavyweights! On their judging sheets, most of them put just a few words like, 'great' or 'nice' whereas Clark Terry wrote, "Chad, if you ever come to New York, you can join my band!"

RM: Chad, after high school, what was your course of study?

Chad: I went to Cal State Long Beach, but we all studied privately and with Dad, who was our biggest influence early on. Both my dad and I studied first with Chuck Flores and then with Murray Spivack*. I was 12 when I began with him. Murray had a system that was all technique and reading based, and we studied with him for about three years.

** Louie Bellson was quoted as saying that "Murray Spivack was the greatest teacher of all time...he really straightened me out." When you watch the Wackermans play, you'll immediately notice their extremely relaxed and flowing hand technique. Some of Spivack's other students include Carlos Vega, Chuck Flores, Remo Belli and Vinnie Colaiuta.*

John: I studied with Murray as well, along with Earl Hatch (classical marimba) and Charlie Shoemaker, on jazz vibes. Bob also studied with Charlie; we were jazz-focused at that time.

Chuck: Brooks studied with Chuck and Murray too.

Brooks: Yes I did. I think I gave Murray the most grief! (Everyone laughs) He would remind me that the only reason I was there was because of my family. I had a hard time with fractions and the mathematics of reading; I was very young, but I eventually got it.

Chad: When you studied with Murray, you basically had to start over. His system was very methodical and you had to start from the beginning: how to play the stroke and how to play *really* relaxed, so you won't have any stress in your playing. Most of the lessons were spent on a drum pad, focusing on the stroke.

His basic philosophy was that the only way a drummer could master his instrument was if he gained absolute control of the speed, force and direction of the stick. The idea was the faster you go, the more relaxed you become. He used to say, "Drumming is the single stroke, the double stroke and the flam. The rest is just a series of sequences—what follows and what precedes what." His is a slow process and you have to have a lot of patience, but it positively works. For those readers interested in learning more about this, I have an online lesson series covering Murray's teaching method on DrumChannel.com, entitled "Chad Wackerman—The Murray Spivack Method."

John: Yes, he was tough. He had a six-month waiting list of about 50 drummers. I remember one time I wasn't quite prepared and he said, "You know, you don't have to be a drummer. You're wasting my time and yours." That was it. After that I never showed up unprepared to a lesson again.

RM: Indeed. He was also an award-winning sound engineer.

Chad: Yes, he won the Academy Award for *Hello Dolly*. He was a part of early Hollywood history. His credits included *The Sound of Music*, *My Fair Lady*, the original *King Kong*, *Patton*, and he also recorded the Zappa film *200 Motels*. He retired from the movie industry when he was 71. My first copy of *Stick Control* was dated 1972.

RM: When I've watched you, or Carlos Vega, your brothers, pretty much anyone who studied with Murray, there's such a relaxed, comfortable way of playing that it not only looks effortless, it also feels good to watch.

Chad: He focused you on relaxing, and Carlos was a *perfect* example of that. Everyone should YouTube him and check out his hands. They're just beautiful. It's perfect Murray Spivack technique: Louie Bellson, same thing.

BOB - BASS AND PRODUCTION



RM: Bob, what about your bass study?

Bob: I actually took a few lessons from Murray as well, to work on rhythms and sight-reading. I would play on an open string and read down the rhythms, from slower tempos on up, until I got them fast. But early on, I studied with Carol Kaye and got to go on some sessions with her, which was incredible. I also studied with Kenny Wild, Charlie Shoemake and then Bunny Brunel, who completely revolutionized my electric bass playing. The one thing though, with all the teachers we studied with, is that they didn't put up with their students being unprepared. One thing that'll make you practice is getting lectured by your dad on the way home from a lesson, after your teacher reports that you aren't cutting it.

John: Nothing like getting fired by your teacher! (All laugh)

Chad: Yes, but at the same time, when you did well, the teacher's encouragement gives you a sense of accomplishment and it's really addicting.

Bob: And then, when they offer you a gig, you say to yourself, "I guess I did something right."

RM: Bob, after college, what was next for you?

Bob: John and I played with Bill Watrous. Chad was playing with him but left to work with Zappa. John came in and that's when I started playing with Bill. He's a great jazz trombone player with a beautiful French horn type of sound and amazing chops. We had done a double bill at Disneyland with Maynard Ferguson, and that's when we first met Gregg and Matt Bissonnette. They were playing with Maynard, but about to leave that band. So I then joined Maynard's band and Ray Brinker came onboard as his drummer. After a while, Ray left and John came on for a bit, followed by Bernie Dresel. Bernie and I became roommates and played together for a while in that band.

Brooks: That would've been a great reality show! (Laughs)

RM: Bob, in a completely different arena, didn't you also work with Rick Springfield?

Bob: Yeah, towards the end of his hits cycle. Billy Ward was on drums, which was really great.

Brooks: You used to bring me to rehearsals.

RM: You all seemed to have had some time with Bill Watrous. Chad, how did it come to you?

Chad: Jim Cox brought me into it. I played in his big band and we played original compositions and some arrangements of Chick Corea tunes. I also worked with Leslie Uggams around that same time. She was a singer and a Tony award-winning Broadway actress. This was my first road gig. After awhile, we ended up not only doing the Watrous gig, but also a bunch of other gigs, as the core rhythm section. Leaders began hiring us for sessions and gigs; we were able to shift really well and adapt to any situation.

Bob: Kind of the *Orange County Wrecking Crew*...

Chad: Well, kind of, we played together in a lot of different situations.

RM: Bob, tell us how your company, Audio By The Bay, started?



One thing that'll make you practice is getting lectured by your dad on the way home from a lesson, after your teacher reports that you aren't cutting it. - Bob



Bob: It was actually started in 1993 by my business partner Paul Freeman, as an audio post-production house. He was the “go to” recording engineer for newly recorded Disneyland projects. When I quit touring, I was doing mainly studio work and wanted to get more into production. A job came up at Disneyland, to be the Manager of their Music Department, doing music production for all their recorded stuff. I worked with Paul there for Disneyland post projects from 1993-1996, and basically got to hone my music production skills. In 1996 I bought in, becoming 50% owner of Audio By The Bay and started the music production side.

RM: What did that job entail?

Bob: It would vary from reading scores and helping shape the arrangements with the composers, to creating budgets, hiring the orchestrators and contractors, to securing the recording studios. That experience really prepared me for running my own company. Now we do all the Disney post-production work in LA. We do Disneyland shows on occasion, and have many Disney business units as music production clients, including Tokyo Disneyland, Disney Latin America, Disney Special Events groups in Europe and Disney Cruise lines*.

RM: As a producer, what is your perspective on your drumming brothers, stylistically, and also, how did they affect you as a bass player?

Bob: I've always had someone to play with—or hire! Yes, they do play in different styles, but they're all so competent that any one of them, depending on who's available, could cover anything we throw at them, including our dad, who works on various projects with us. But yes, growing up with them was great because each has his own way of playing. For me as a bassist, it expanded my musical ability ever more.

RM: It seems your company really covers the gamut of media.

Bob: The main thing we do is theme park parades and soundtracks for live shows. A couple of years ago, we scored a 45-minute film with Tom Hanks about World War II and got to work with Bruce Broughton, who wrote the theme. It was really fun. We did it at Warner Brothers with a 90-piece orchestra. We also do a lot of work with other theme parks like Universal Japan, SeaWorld and some parks in Germany. The other thing with theme parks is that the productions can be very big—it seems the bar keeps getting raised to produce bigger and bigger events. It's a great challenge for us and really fun.

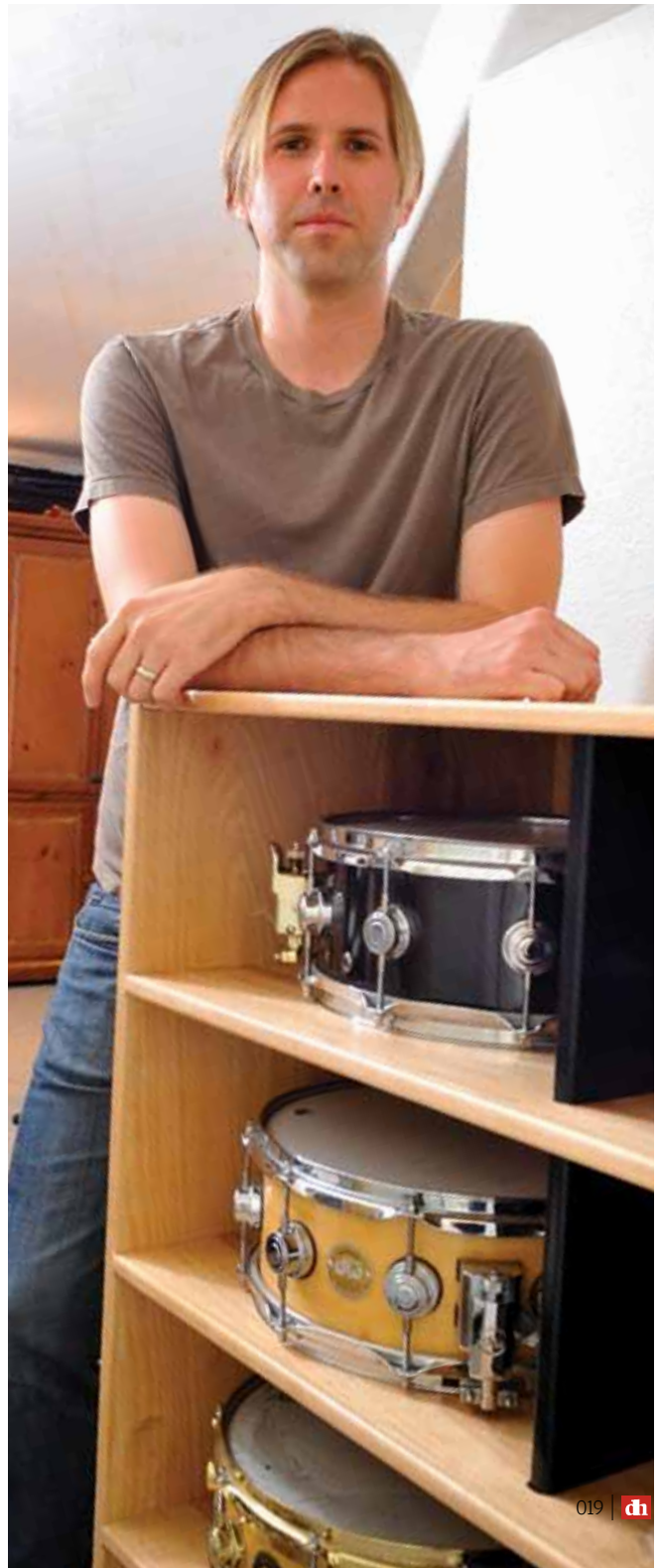
RM: Bob, do you have other drummers you've played with over the years that were special moments?

Bob: I know you were close with Jeff Porcaro. I got to play with him once on a Budweiser commercial. It was a two-day session and he was amazing. He basically took me under his wing and was really personable. What impressed me most was the way he shaped the band and the music. He took a producer's role, and his way of making suggestions to the other players was so effective and respectful: just incredible.

** Bob Wackerman is the recipient of five THEA Awards and two Gold record awards.*

RM: Yes, I feel so fortunate to have had the years I did with him.

BROOKS - BAD, GOOD, INFECTIOUS AND TENACIOUS.



I think that there's too much desire for immediate gratification with younger kids wanting to be famous. - Brooks



RM: Brooks, when we first met, I believe you were still in high school, playing with Bad4Good and then with Infectious Grooves.

Brooks: Right, I was 13 when we met, and Infectious Grooves led me to working with Suicidal Tendencies. Half the band from Infectious was also in Suicidal.

RM: Steve Vai produced the one Bad4Good record. What did you learn from working with him?

Brooks: Well, I was already a huge Vai fan from seeing him with Chad on the Zappa gig. So when I found out he was producing, I was elated. It was my first record that I played on, so I had a lot to learn: how to play to a click with a band, all that. I would say though, that the main thing I learned from Steve was how to play even.



RM: Do you mean dynamic consistency?

Brooks: Yes. Even though we were basically playing at triple forte, he taught me how to play even and consistent around the kit, to think thematically with my fills and to play in context with the music. It was a bit intimidating because of the age difference, but he was a great mentor. The only touring

we did was opening for Joe Satriani in the States, and we were all under 15, so we had parental guardians with us. My mom had the bunk under mine! (All laugh)

RM: Did you ever feel pressure from your older brothers, either from them just being older brothers, or pressure you placed on yourself?

Brooks: No, never. Stylistically, I chose a different path, and having brothers who were well-known in the industry didn't really affect what I was doing. Like them, I was very focused on what I was trying to do and they've always been very supportive.

RM: Brooks, what was it like sharing drum duties with Terry Bozzio on the Korn recording session?

Brooks: Well that came to me via Jonathan Davis, Korn's singer, who is a friend of mine. Terry has always been one of my biggest influences, so I was reeling—it was so great! He played a lot better than I did. (Everyone laughs) So that part sucked.

RM: Did they approach you to tour with them?

Brooks: They did. I did one show with them, but since I'm a full-fledged member of Bad Religion, I didn't have the time to do a tour. It's been 11 years now with BR and I'm very happy there, but, I was very honored that they asked.

RM: So your time is now split between Bad Religion and also Tenacious D?

Brooks: Right. Tenacious D is gearing up for a record and tour, so I'm busy with them right now. And I gotta say, it's great to be on a gig where you can laugh for the majority of the show!

RM: Oh man, they're absolutely hilarious! But, they're serious players as well.

Brooks: Oh yeah, Jack has impeccable pitch and they both write all the music. At times, their music reminds me of Zappa: well-written, great parody-style music. And they really take good care of us. I get a 10-minute solo every night, so they're into their bandmate's contribution to the show.



RM: Brooks, what are you thoughts of the current state of the music industry? It's quite different now, compared to when your brothers first got into it.

Brooks: I think the record company is obsolete, which there's good and bad to that. The bulk of your money comes from merchandise and live



ticket sales now. Regarding record sales, if you can sell even half of what you did 10 years ago, you're doing okay. I think last year, there were only 12 Gold records, compared to 50 or 60 back in the day. But I'm actually living this reality right now because I've formed my own band where I sing and play guitar. Trying to gain a following and getting our music heard is very challenging—even for those of us who've been doing it for a while. My advice is that if you really love doing it, then stay on it. Work hard and eventually you'll be heard. Even with a band like Bad Religion or Tenacious D, we have to be creative with what we offer to the fans. You gotta think outside the box—offer something that they can't find on YouTube.



RM: You mentioned playing guitar and singing: watch out Dave [Grohl]. What do you look for in a drummer to back you up? And would that person end up playing on the recording, or would that be you?

Brooks: I really look for someone that can play compositionally, for example thematic fills with a driving feel, since the music I write has an artsy-pop angle to it. On the most recent Kidneys record, my drummer, Todd Hennig, played on eight out of 10 songs, and I did the other two because I had specific ideas. Our first record I performed all the drums and found that I really prefer playing as a band with proper pre-production rehearsals, so that the songs can evolve.

RM: There was a time where up-and-coming bands could formulate their identity and promote themselves with My Space. Now that is non-existent. Would you say that all they have is Facebook, YouTube and Twitter?

Brooks: Yeah, that's it. You know, there's an audience out there for every genre, for every niche, so you just have to do the work and find your audience. Thankfully, people still enjoy live shows and you really can't duplicate that experience without just being

there. One thing, I think that there's too much desire for immediate gratification with younger kids wanting to be famous. They see shows like "American Idol," and if it doesn't happen for them, they get discouraged. It's not going to happen like that: you gotta jump in the van and get out there. You gotta put in the time.

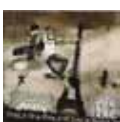
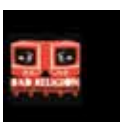
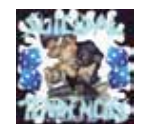
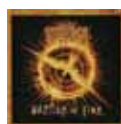
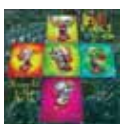


RM: You bring up a really good point, with all these reality shows and competition shows, it seems that media is encouraging the climate of "being famous for the sake of being famous." It feels like America is rewarding mediocrity and it's detrimental to our industry.

John: That's a good point. There really is a very small percentage of winners who "make it," who've really done the work.

Brooks: That's right. I'm still a true believer of the classic work ethic. If you're passionate about it and you're good, people will pay attention.

Chad: And within that group of kids who audition for "American Idol," many we never get to see, are those who *have* studied and done



Stylistically, I chose a different path, and having brothers who were well-known didn't really affect what I was doing. - Brooks

the work. I think we just have to keep encouraging hard work and creativity.

John: Terry Fator is one who did do the work. His last DVD *Terry Fator Live From Las Vegas*, which I played on, sold 500,000 units.

JOHN - DUETS, VEGAS, BANDEADING, LINDSEY AND FLYING TOMS



RM: John, you're the first drummer to do a *Drum Duets* project with so many of the world's top drummers! What was the impetus behind getting that together?

John: I had that idea even way back in high school. I've always wanted to write percussion pieces and perform duets with other famous drummers. We never get to play with other drummers. I decided to create the opportunity so I could play with the guys I idolized. Rather than a typical drum jam, I wrote pieces in three or

four minute formats. Chad was the first one I brought into the studio.

Chad: He had my number already. (Laughs)

John: It escalated from there with 15 guys on the first CD, which came out in 2005. When I initially shared the idea, no one seemed to get my vision, so I decided to produce and put it out myself. Don Lombardi from DW and Drum Channel ended up loving it and distributed it for me. I included the transcription book and play-along CDs to go with it. *Vol. 1* features duets with Steve Gadd, Alex Acuña, Ron Tutt, Peter Erskine, Steve Smith, Clayton Cameron, Adrian Young, John Ferraro, Marc Atkinson, Ricky Lawson, Josh Freese, Gary Novak, as well as Brooks, Chad and my father.

RM: What a fantastic list of players.

Brooks: It's really easy to sight-read. Not! (Laughs)

John: Actually, it's a book I wish I had growing up. Seeing transcriptions from all those guys *and* my family, all in one book, is a wealth of information on grooves and soloing. But the cool thing is that it had a non-commercial appeal, and I still sold stuff all over the world, a lot of European and Asian drummers. Many of them now perform them at colleges for their recitals. Utilizing the play-along tracks, they get to play with Steve Gadd at their recital! It was so successful that now I'm working on my second one, and Don Lombardi gave me the green light to do a DVD this time. I got thousands of emails on the first one saying they wanted to see it visually this time.

RM: Who are the drummers you play with on the second one?

John: *John Wackerman Drum Duets Volume 2* features Ronnie Vannucci from The Killers, Terry Bozzio, Mark Schulman, Dennis Chambers, Justin Spencer from Recycled Percussion, Thomas Lang, Taylor Hawkins, Scott Johnson from the Blue Devils Drum Corps, Jon Theodore, Bernie Dresel, Gene Hoglan, Marco Minneman, Luis Arturo, Brooks and Chad, and Travis Barker.

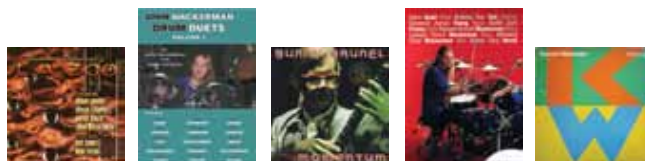
RM: Interesting that you have drum corps virtuoso Scott Johnson in the mix. I'm sure these varied styles inspired some very interesting compositions. What's the progression for writing a piece and choosing the drummer, or vice versa?

John: We as drummers never get to play together, so when I think of a drummer I want to play with, I call him up and see if he's interested. The hard part then is scheduling. Once we figure out a date I then start writing the piece. I use Roland V-drums to get my ideas down, since I can quickly pull up so many different sounds that are invaluable for composing. I try to write a drum duet that will feature something interesting about the drummer I'm playing with and frame it around them. I also want open interaction sections between both of us. With the Jon Theodore duet, we made drum sets out of cymbals, the bass drums are Chinas, the snares are cymbal stacks, the toms are cymbals—really percussive. With Bernie Dresel, I wrote a five snare drum and five hi-hat duet: Bernie on snares, me on hi-hats. It's a hard read and very unorthodox, but Bernie is a great reader and nailed it!

RM: I see Terry Bozzio is on this as well.

John: Yes, Terry was a big influence on me. I have known him since I was a kid. When I contacted him to play on my second duets project, he said, "Why didn't you call me for the first one?" I said I couldn't afford his cartage bill! He has great ears and makes it extremely easy to play with him. The hardest part of doing the duets is the mental thing for me. It's not so easy to just let go and

It's not so easy to just let go and play when you look over and there's Terry or Dennis. - John



Working with Lindsey, I really learned about the space between the notes. – John

play when you look over and there's Terry or Dennis, drummers I have admired my whole life, and we're playing together on my project—very surreal.

The project is definitely an uphill climb though. I do the producing, writing, video editing and basically back the whole thing myself. My wife, Linda, helps with all the logistics, pictures and business.

I love technology and the fact that I can learn all aspects of the project and put it out myself. We live in a great time for art and expression. I project a release for this in 2013.

RM: You moved from Los Angeles to Las Vegas. Aside from the duets project, what other things are you doing in Vegas?

John: I'm the bandleader MD for Terry's [Fator] show at the Mirage Casino. He was the winner of "America's Got Talent" and signed a five-year, 100 million dollar contract. He's an incredibly popular and talented guy.

RM: You mentioned being Terry's bandleader MD. What exactly does that entail?

John: Being in charge of all the business, from negotiating contract rates for the band for the Vegas show, tours, corporate shows, video/DVD and TV, to doing the band payroll and keeping accurate hours. I'm also in charge of the band, which can mean solving any problems that arise musically or personally, and any changes that may have to happen, including submittals for any musical equipment needed for the show. I work with Bill Zappia, the keyboard player and MD/conductor. Together, we interface with Terry on any show changes or creative visions and create a timeline. I schedule all the rehearsals and band call-times, as well as rehearsals for any substitute musicians. I basically oversee that Terry is happy with all the arrangements.

RM: When we initially met years ago, you were working with Lindsey Buckingham.

John: Yes, I toured and recorded with him on and off for years. What an amazing songwriter. When I initially came onboard, I was playing electronic percussion and Jonathan Moffett was playing drums. He then left for another gig and I moved over to a hybrid-type drum set, which incorporated percussion instruments as well. At that time,

Lindsey and Mick (Fleetwood) were in a fight. Lindsey had quit Fleetwood Mac and poured his time into his solo work. Working with Lindsey, I really learned about the space between the notes. He was so used to playing with Mick that I had to learn to lay back but still have a forward momentum going. This is hard because the band wants to drag when you lay back, and if you don't have forward momentum the song will keep slowing down. Jim Keltner has that down. He played on Lindsey's first album *Buckingham/Nicks*. I loved his playing, so that helped give me that perspective. I wasn't familiar with Fleetwood Mac, so once I started playing with him, I did my homework, learned all of Mick's signature fills, grooves and became a fan of that music. That's when I learned about playing for the song and not overplaying, and, instead, listening to the singer so as not to get in the way. Lindsey has an impeccable ear and feel. He plays with a lot of emotion and expects that from everyone in his band. His solo music was way different from the Mac, and some of it is very eclectic, which I love. I was surprised when we started rehearsing and he played the same solos that were on the record. Coming from a jazz-fusion background, solos were always improvised and different every night, but in pop and rock music, the solos are actually part of the song and almost as important as the melodies in most cases. So, in that mindset, when Lindsey added the song "Tusk" to the set, I went home that night and listened to it. I loved that song because it was so not a pop-rock song but



I've always wanted to write percussion pieces and perform with other famous drummers. – John

Photo: Linda Wackerman



Photo: Linda Wackerman



was still a big hit. It had the USC marching band on it. The middle section sounds like a cacophony of drums. I transcribed what Mick played verbatim. It was all odd-time phrasing and real unorthodox. I thought, “Wow, cool...I’m going to nail it.” So I show up to rehearsal the next day, all excited to get to the middle section that I spent hours on. I play it exactly like the original, note-for-note. I proudly hit the downbeat with a smile on my face. Lindsey and the band are looking at me—silence, nobody came in! Lindsey said, “John, do the open, out-of-time cacophony a little longer than that, and when you feel it, just give us two beats on the snare and a head nod on ONE.” It was never played the same: it was different every night!

RM: What was the motive for your unique setup of basically exchanging the position of your toms with your cymbals?

John: It started when I was in this crazy art band called Big Fun. Everyone in that band was pretty unorthodox and experimenting with alternative ways to play their instrument. So, I came up with the idea then. It made me play different and I liked the challenge. Around that time, I also played with Kazumi Watanabe and that setup allowed me to incorporate a MalletKat just over the bass drum. The keyboard player had left so I told Kazumi that I could cover some of the keyboard parts, while playing drum set. I’d play a groove with my left hand and lines on the MalletKat, with my right.

Chad: That was amazing to watch. He incorporated keyboard lines within the beats.

John: The cool thing about it is that you can play a 16th-note pattern between your hands and even if you leave out some notes on the keyboard, your ears still hear the line, so it works. And, I saved them money, so they were *all* about it!

RM: With regard to flying the toms above the cymbals, aside from making you think differently, were there any pros and cons that came from it? I notice you still set up that way.

John: Yes, the pros are like anything. I have done it so long that I am use to it, I feel comfortable playing that way, and again, I like the challenge. When you go for a tom fill, you have to *go* for it; there is no phoning it in. Also, when people see the set-up for the first time, it inspires me to really play and dig in. You don’t want to have a crazy set-up and not be able to deliver on it. When Terry [Bozzio] and I filmed our drum duet he sat down on my set and said, “I’ve heard of your set up but have never sat down behind it. Your set-up is really unusual.” I thought that was ironic coming from Terry! It was a surreal moment. The con is you have to work harder to play. Physically, it takes more energy to constantly reach high for your tom fills. But if you think about it, it’s easier than having your cymbals high, because, unless your playing a tribal beat, you wouldn’t be grooving on your toms like you would on your ride. Another con is if you’re playing live and they have video screens in back of you, the toms will block the lower half of the screens.



Photo: Jose Altonaga



Photo: Linda Wackerman

I try to write a duet that will feature something interesting about the drummer I’m playing with. – John

CHAD - ZAPPA, ALLAN, BOZZIO & BRUFORD, BABS, JT AND GOING SOLO.



Photo Courtesy of Vic Firth

RM: Chad, how did the Zappa gig come to you, and what was your age?

Chad: A bassist friend of mine had heard about his open-call auditions and told me about it. I was 21. Vinnie Colaiuta was leaving the gig so Frank held cattle-call auditions for three weeks and he heard 40 different drummers. I only found out about it during the last three days of it. Frank had set a time period to make his decision, so as not to wear out his band.

RM: What did the audition consist of?

Chad: It was in stages. The first thing was reading, and when I first spoke to Frank he asked if I read. I said yes, and then he asked, "Well, are you a good reader or are you a phenomenal reader?!" No pressure, eh?

RM: How did you respond?

Chad: I said, "Look, I know your music notation's reputation, but I've never seen it. I've played in percussion ensembles and big bands, so I'd love to give it a shot." So he said, "Well, fair enough, come up to the house in an hour." He was very direct.

RM: Were you nervous?

Chad: Well, I really didn't think I'd get it. I went thinking at least I'd get a funny story out of it. I think that took the edge off a bit. When I got there, the first person I met was Steve Vai. He introduced me to Ed Mann and Tommy Mars. I heard a couple of other guys audition and then it was my turn. The pieces he auditioned on were "Alien Orifice," "Drowning Witch," the classical interlude part; and "Mo 'N Herb's Vacation," which is one of the most difficult drum parts of all his music. The next stage of the audition was playing in odd-time signatures. We played in 21/16 and 19/8. We played grooves in these meters for a long time and then Frank had me play in just about every style imaginable including metal, swing, funk, New

Orleans feel-he called Delta groove-Latin styles, various reggae feels and punk. We did some improvising in certain feels as well. I ended up there three days in a row, and at the end of the third day he had a band meeting and then decided to offer me the gig.

RM: I heard once that Frank had an interesting view on playing in odd time.

Chad: Yeah, he used to say that it's harder to play in 4/4 time than in odd meters. When asked what he meant, he said, "Well, we don't speak in 4/4. We speak in different phrases, so we should be able to relate to odd meter in terms of a conversation." That made a big impression on me.

RM: So interesting. Considering he'd already heard so many drummers before hearing you, what was the main factor that got you the gig?

Chad: I didn't get lost. I'd heard a few other guys before me and they'd stopped playing in the middle of a tune if they got lost in the part. I think it was that I kept on playing. Even if I didn't get every difficult part right: I played through. I got most of it though and ended with the band. Luckily, no one else was able to get through the reading part of the audition. So the next two days we played through a bunch of music. There were a few other drummers, who'd flown from overseas on their own dime, that he wanted to hear, and also, to A-B to me. On that third day, he called me and the conversation went like this, "Look, I've talked to the band and we wanna offer you the gig, but, here's the deal: I just bought a recording truck from the Beach Boys and we'll be recording every single night of the three-month tour. We're gonna rehearse for three months, eight hours a day, six days a week; you're going to have to memorize a stack of music; I'm planning on playing about 80 songs for the first tour; here's what it pays; we start rehearsing on this date; are you interested?" I said, "Yeah of course. I'd love to do it." He said,

Anyone can learn the technical stuff, but you still have to make it feel like something. - Chad

Even if I didn't get every difficult part right: I played through. - Chad

"Okay, meet me at my house at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. I'll give you ten albums and you better start memorizing them." Then, before he hung up, he said, "You know why you got the gig? You got it because I liked your feel." I thought that was a weird thing to say, after all the mathematics of his music, but then I figured it out. Really, anyone can learn the technical stuff, but you still have to make it feel like something.

RM: Were there charts for everything?

Chad: No, just for some of the hard stuff. Some of the rock tunes had classical sections within the tune and he'd have charts for those sections. I found that I was ahead of the game if I just memorized everything as I learned them because we couldn't have charts onstage. Also, during rehearsals, he'd often change the arrangements. So the way we played it three months ago could, and often would be a different style or feel, if he called the same tune again. During our rehearsal period, even after an eight-hour day, I'd listen to tapes all the way home, that evening, when I got up the next morning and on the way to rehearsal. There was so much music to learn and once we had the show together, we had two prepared sets of music, which he would pick from.

RM: Would he ever throw something at you spontaneously during a show that you hadn't rehearsed?

Chad: We'd rehearsed all the music, but he would use various hand signals to change a song's feel or style, during the set. One night, a song would be in a rock feel, but the next night, he might want it in a reggae or even heavy metal—you always had to watch him. His audience loved the surprises onstage and he felt a serious obligation to them. He was quoted as saying that the main difference

between him and a pop act was that he respected his audience more.

RM: The high level of musicianship on his stage is well known. As long as you worked hard and were prepared, what was he like to work with?

Chad: He was great and really respected his players. If you did

your job well, he was happy and would talk about the band in interviews and appearances. He demanded that his music be played right. He worked very hard and expected the same of his musicians.

RM: Do you have a certain special gig or experience that you recall?

Chad: One time, Nicolas Slonimsky, 20th Century composer and author of the *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, sat in with us. He had never played with a rhythm section before and he was in his 80s. Frank introduced him and we went into a reggae vamp that started out with a familiar fanfare and then went totally out. It was so abstract, totally unrecognizable and it never really resolved—his whole solo was just tension. It was amazing. I'd never heard that much tension without being resolved, and the audience loved it. One other time, we were in Palermo, Italy and it was the first rock concert they'd had there in 12 years. In the stadium there were police everywhere, chain-link fences separating the crowd from the stage, and one person apparently jumped the fence, causing a riot. It was mayhem. The police tear gassed the crowd and we had to stop the show. And, that was the last date of the tour!

RM: During the seven years you worked with him, you recorded what seems to be an unprecedented amount of work: 27 recordings! How is that even possible in such a short time period?

Chad: He recorded every show and every sound check; even the studio recordings had a few live tracks as well. He just worked all the time and wrote a ton of music. We all knew he was recording everything we did, so we all tried really hard every time we played—definitely some long hours there.

RM: What was it like soloing for him?

Chad: When he gave you a solo, you had the stage for a long time. He would leave the stage and you realized that you were gonna be out there for a while. So, you better have something to say. Sometimes you'd know when the solo was coming, and sometimes, he'd just cue you within a tune.

John: I remember the first time we went to hear a rehearsal; I didn't know anything about his music. We walked in and the band was just tearing it up, and there were naked blow-up dolls floating all around! I was like, "What is this?!"

Bob: Right! I met Frank and he said, "What do you do?" I told him I was a bass player and he asked me why I didn't audition. I said I didn't know about it, and probably couldn't have read it anyway.

Chad: Oh, I think you could have. You toured with Allan Holdsworth and me when we opened for Stanley Clarke's band.

Bob: With Allan's music, there's no reading but the level of musicianship is so very high, with crazy time signature changes all the time. I remember one tune when there was a different time signature, every bar!





And during the soloing, we were playing with the time as well. It's a level of playing you can't even imagine, unless you experience it. You kind of hold on for dear life and hope you get through!

Chad: You tore it up and played really, really well.

RM: Chad, you also worked on Dweezil Zappa's first album. How was that experience?

Chad: It was fun and Dweezil played great. He was young; I think around 18 at the time. Steve Vai was his teacher, and Scott Thunes, bass player who also played with Frank, helped arrange his tunes. They had the arrangements completed before I heard the music, so it was session ready when I got in with them.

RM: What was the project called Band From Utopia [a.k.a. Banned From Utopia]?

Chad: That was a Zappa alumni band that started with a gig in Stuttgart, after Frank passed away. A promoter in Germany requested to assemble a few of us from the band and we ended up doing a recording and some touring. It was nice to be with the guys and play that music again. You know, when you play in a band like that, it was a very special time for us, and even though it was great, without Frank, it was fine that it wasn't too extended.

RM: Chad, how did you meet Allan Holdsworth and when?

Chad: It was also in the early '80s, through John Ferraro. He'd told me about open auditions and that audition was completely different than Frank. It was just the two of us, improvising for an hour and a half, and he taped it. He thought that anyone could play a tune; he was more interested in interaction. When I got the gig, Jeff Berlin was the bass player and we toured for a while. We recorded an EP called *Road Games*. The record deal came through Eddie Van Halen who was a big Allan fan. He helped us get on Warner Bros.

RM: You'd mentioned that working with Allan is much more of an improvisatory thing. Talk about playing spontaneous music.

Chad: He feels that anyone can learn and play a part, which is why he's more interested in the interaction and chemistry between players. He doesn't tell you what to play, suggest beats or grooves. Rather than focusing on a one-bar pattern, he strives to make the whole tune groove. There's a great amount of freedom playing with him and we know that he's not into the typical clichés. One thing I had to learn was to play more aggressively in contrast to Allan's delicate approach in some sections. His compositions are often very rubato, and while the A, B, C sections are played the same, it's



between the sections where he might adjust the time to fit what he's hearing and feeling, thus lending to odd-time feels. A spontaneous style of arranging, one would say. With soloing, we've been playing together for so long and are able to read each other, make those turns together, musically and dynamically while still surprising each other too.

RM: What do you think makes Allan so unique?

Chad: Allan's a guy that can improvise instinctually. He really wanted to play sax, not guitar, which explains why his playing is more legato, like a horn player breathing. His guitar sound is more like a cello—he never strums a guitar but rather, plays all the notes at same time. His father was a jazz pianist and taught him about chords. His early influences were Django Reinhardt, Charlie Christian, Debussy and John Coltrane, a pretty interesting blend of styles.

RM: And after all these years, you still work with him a lot. We'll talk more about your new album that features Allan a bit later, but, I'm curious, how did the duets with Terry Bozzio come about?

Chad: It was Terry's idea, actually. He wanted to do something different, and due to our connection to Frank, and also that we're both DW artists, he presented the idea. He booked a 20-city tour, and, initially, he came out and played, then I played, then we both ended up playing "The Black Page" together. As the tour went on though, we realized that we had much more fun when we were playing together. So for the next tour, and since then, we've been doing duets.

RM: And it's all improv?

Chad: Except for "The Black Page," yes, all spontaneous. Every time it's different too.



Knowing whether to use brushes or sticks can either enhance or even degrade a song. - Chad

Drummers have a lot of power and control over the mood of the piece. – Chad

RM: Would you say your ability to improv developed from your years working with Allan?

Chad: I think Frank and Allan. To me, improv and composition are related. You can use compositional devices to play spontaneously, like building melodies, harmony and rhythm, but doing it in the moment. And melodies can be very short, like little melodic cells. Three notes, let's say, you can put them in different rhythm and when repeated, people will begin to recognize it, and it gives an impression of a melody. You could then modulate that, up or down a series of three other tones. Melodic cells are never married to a certain rhythm though, you can play them fast or slow, and it's pretty identifiable if you put space around it—that's the key, the space allows it to be recognized. Then, opposite of that is the rhythmic cell, which has no melodic sense at all—it just has a fixed rhythm. Often, I'll use both to give the solo contrast, so you're not just in melodic mode.

RM: When soloing within a song, I think the best drum solos I've ever heard are the ones that go somewhere, that start out and develop, utilizing the melody of the song.

Chad: Well, that comes from the jazz tradition. I think any great improvisation does that. It's more like an adventure, especially if you have time to develop it. Keith Jarrett, Allan Holdsworth and Chick Corea are masters at that. What Terry and I do, what Max Roach was great at, is to think of the drums more as a melodic instrument.

RM: You also did a very interesting project called World Drummer Ensemble with Bill Bruford, Luis Conte and Senegal's Doudou N'diaye Rose. How did that eclectic grouping happen?

Chad: That was put together by a Dutch drumming event promoter who had the idea of putting drummers together who'd never played together before. We did two tours in Holland and performed various original pieces that we each brought to the table. Bruford and I played kit, Luis mainly played congas and Doudou played his sabar, an indigenous drum from Senegal.

RM: What was the music like?

Chad: Doudou's was of course African, but not the typical 12/8 feel you'd expect. It was very composed with rhythmic modulations, just much more intricate and composed than other African music I've heard. Bill had some stuff he'd performed with Crimson or Earthworks, that we adapted. Luis's contribution was more Cuban flavored. I wrote one piece that was specific for this ensemble. The few tours and festivals we did spanned about three or four years. It really was a great experience and there's a DVD/CD package available called *A Coat Of Many Colors*.

RM: Chad, what common denominator would you say is present, playing with such a diverse list of artists from Allan Holdsworth to Barbra Streisand, to James Taylor or Colin Hay?

Chad: Well first, Allan never says anything, so there's that. He wants it to groove, but he never wants to hear patterns or a backbeat. Really! He never wants to hear a cross stick. I've grown accustomed to what he wants over the years, and I knew he loved Tony Williams so I had that to go on. But, when you're backing a singer, everything changes. The whole focus is the singer and the song. You should really know what the song is about: know the lyrics. Drummers have a lot of power and control over the mood of the piece, so, it's really having respect for the song you're playing. Your job is to make him or her sound really good. You have to know how to be the

leader, from a supportive position, like a good producer. It's really a producer's role when you're in the drum chair—how to make the whole thing sound good and make it musical.

RM: I think that's a great way to illustrate the drummer's role: To lead and be supportive, to know the music and know the other players' roles as well.

Chad: You're like the conductor from the drum chair, and there's a certain responsibility that comes with that. Playing with James Taylor is a great example of the complexity of simplicity. Knowing whether to use brushes or sticks can either enhance or even degrade a song, and when playing slower tempos, what you play is much more exposed. You must make your choices wisely—not only your stick choices but also your musical choices. So I think the common denominator is the music, knowing what the music requires of your instrument and of your role.

RM: You have something coming up again with James, right?

Chad: We just played the Democratic National Convention. Due to the weather, it was pretty crazy because they had to move it from an outside 60,000 seat arena to the inside 20,000 seater. We were on call all the time and ended up playing only three tunes. I had to share a kit with Taylor Hawkins from the Foo Fighters, which was fine, plus we shared a dressing room with them and that turned out to be pretty fun!

RM: How did you initially get the call to work with James?

Chad: It was a very last minute thing. James's bassist was Jimmy Johnson and he asked, "What are you doing tomorrow?" He asked me if I wanted to play a Pops concert (with a full orchestra) in San Francisco with James, and of course I said yes. So, we stayed up the entire night going over all the music together. He and Carlos Vega, who had just passed away, he detailed notes of stuff they'd worked out over the years, so we had a lot to review that night. Of course, there were a lot of nuances that he and Carlos had done together, so we made sure I was familiar with them, in order to make James feel comfortable. I did the concert and I think James realized how much work I'd done to prepare for it and never forgot that. Then later, he had a Pops concert tour and asked Steve Gadd to do it. Steve could only do two weeks of the five-week tour because he was booked with Clapton, so I ended up doing three of the five weeks with him. He flew me in on Steve's last gig and I got to hang with him and watch him do the gig. It was so fun.

RM: With such iconic songs, does James generally hold to the original recordings, or does he like to make changes in feel, arrangements or interpretation?

Chad: He really respects his musicians and what we all bring to the table. Not much is really talked about. I think he knows we all have our own self-editing process and trusts that we'll respect the music while bringing something of ourselves to it. We'll rehearse and decide what does or doesn't work. James is such an accomplished musician himself that I listen to how he interprets the song and I try to fit with him.

RM: I've seen him many times and he's done "Steamroller" a bunch of different ways. With such incredibly well written songs like his, you can do that because the strength of the song stands out.

Chad: That's right. That song in particular, I've done with him at

You may know a lot of words, but you don't use them all at the same time. – Chad





Photo: Adolfo Galli



least three different styles: a Latin style; a 12/8 blues feel; and then recently, an R&B, kind of *bent* New Orleans feel. I think the whole thing is to get inside the music and not think *drumistic*, but rather, what will benefit the tune the most.

RM: Talk about working with Barbra Streisand.

Chad: It was really fun and she's very serious about the gig. We rehearsed in a studio in LA with a small eight-piece band, so it was a nice, intimate situation to work in. I did one live show, a fundraiser at her home for the Democratic Party, which became an HBO special and a DVD called *One Voice*. We rehearsed for a week and played the one gig. It was highly professional of course and she sounded amazing. Even during rehearsals, she sang each time as if it was her final take—her voice is just an incredible instrument. Michael Fisher was on percussion, by the way, and my old friend Jim Cox was playing keyboards.

RM: What were rehearsals like with her?

Chad: She was nervous because she hadn't done a live gig in 12 years. We rehearsed in a studio with headphones, so it was just like doing a session. She had just done a Broadway recording, so along with her famous tunes, we also did some things from *West Side Story*, including some odd-time stuff, which you wouldn't expect from her gig. She was just great to play with.

RM: You did some work with Andy Summers, which turned into a TV house band gig.

Chad: Right. I did two records with him and some touring. Both records were instrumental guitar music, basically jazz-rock fusion

and ambient type stuff. He was a session guitarist before joining The Police, and I know he loved jazz cats like Thelonius Monk. He was also, at one time, a member of John Mayall And The Bluesbreakers.

RM: How did Dennis Miller decide on Andy for his house band?

Chad: I think Dennis was into classic rock and The Police, and after "Saturday Night Live," NBC offered him a show. After about six months Andy decided he didn't want to do it anymore. So he left and we ended up hiring another guitar player and saxophonist and kept it going. Nice thing about that gig was we all got to write original music for the play-ons and play-offs. It was nice while it lasted. I was still juggling Allan's gig too, so it worked out okay when it ended. In '94, we moved to Australia and I ended up staying there for 10 years.

RM: You set up a recording studio there. I remember that beautiful space you had.

Chad: Yes. It was an analog studio. I first used it as a rehearsal space and had my drums all mic'd up. There was an engineer upstairs and he liked the sound I got in there. He started bringing me projects to work on, and it turned into a nice situation.

RM: You did two of your solo records there.

Chad: Yes, I recorded *Scream* and *Legs Eleven* there with my Australian band. We also began my latest CD, *Dreams, Nightmares and Improvisations* there as well. It was a great, creative space, but there never was quite enough work in Australia to sustain a consistent salary, so I ended up traveling back to the States a lot.

RM: Speaking of *Dreams, Nightmares and Improvisations*, when did the idea begin for this project?

Chad: It actually began nine years ago, when I was still in Australia. We did the record in three different sessions. I'd just finished a tour with Allan, including Jimmy Johnson on bass, in Japan and Australia, so I got the guys to stay an extra day. We went into my studio and did six improvs, five of which ended up on the record. We just played spontaneously, very fast, one take each and Allan played very different from how he generally does. Jimmy Johnson was amazing too, of course.

RM: Was it because of everyone's busy schedule that it took nine years to complete?

Chad: It's a bit complicated. It was mainly because we had to coordinate the ideas and recordings to fit within all of us just making a living. I had also composed some pieces on keyboards and soon after we did the improvs, James Taylor was touring in Australia, so, I nabbed Jimmy on a day off and we recorded bass and drums to

If you really love doing it, then stay on it. Work hard and eventually you'll be heard. - Brooks



the sequenced keyboard parts. I then got together with Allan and showed him the parts and he replaced them with guitar. So that was the second session. The third session I did here [home studio in California] and had keyboardist Jim Cox play some improv duets with me. Jimmy overdubbed bass on those. I also did a couple of pieces on my own: a drum solo piece and a piece on gongs, samples and various ringing metals called "Glass Lullaby." This record really features two different trios, me with Allan and Jimmy, or me with Jim Cox and Jimmy. I'm really, really proud of the way this album turned out.

READING, CLINICS, FESTIVALS AND GEAR

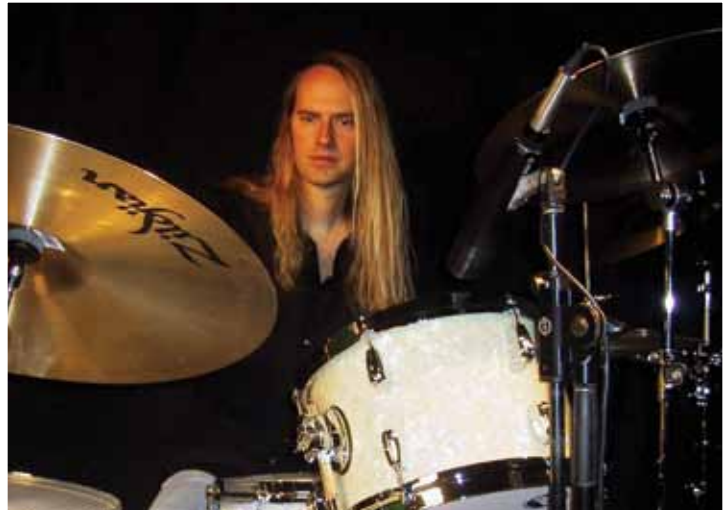
RM: Chad, for drummers that don't have much experience reading charts but want to improve their reading, what would you recommend?

Chad: I just created a master class for Drum Channel on how to play a big-band chart. It's kind of designed for kids, but it's great for anybody and it applies to studio work or rock charts. It's an 11 episode series, and we're just about to edit it. The number one thing to know: Reading is easy. It's nowhere near the difficulty of learning a foreign language. It's like if you looked at the same paragraph over and over and over, you eventually memorize it. Same with reading rhythmic figures—you eventually memorize it. Then when you get to it on chart, you can recognize it and just glance over it as you move on.

Number two, if you're a good reader, you're more employable. You might be a good drummer in a band, but what happens if that band breaks up and you have to offer yourself for other work? Chances are the guy who can read would have a better chance being considered, because the other musicians and/or leaders know they can rely on you at a moment's notice. More times than not, I've gotten gigs when I've filled in at the last minute for someone, done a good job and the word travels quickly. Being a good reader is really creating job security for yourself. You just never know what situation will be presented to you.

RM: Do you recommend any key books to improve one's reading ability?

Chad: Sure. Louie Bellson's *Modern Reading Text in 4/4* is great. It's a great book to learn to read, for all instruments, and basically takes you through the math. When I studied it with Chuck Flores, he'd enforce you not to stop: to read from top to bottom without stopping. I think this is really important for improving sight-reading. The next one is more difficult and requires you to go through slowly, Louie's *Odd Time Reading Text*. Really good but requires some



time. And another one, a snare drum etude book and something we studied with Murray, is Anthony Cirone's *Portraits In Rhythm*. It's not a beginner book at all, but very good for reading. There are other ones in between of course, but these are the ones for me, that really helped with reading.

RM: You have extensive experience as a clinician. Have you seen the interest in drum clinics change over the years? Do you think people still want to attend them, given that so much information is available online?

Chad: I think we drummers are pretty tribal and like to hang out. So, I think it's still one place that we all have to share the community feeling. Drummers love to talk about stuff, and check out how someone else approaches music. I've always found it really interesting.

RM: From all your years doing clinics, has your approach changed since you first started conducting them?

Chad: Well, it always starts with hands. During a clinic, you might have a kid who's been playing for only two weeks, as well as a very experienced player. One of the key things is how do you keep everybody's attention, without just being a *circus act*. I've found one thing that everybody seems interested in is Murray's hand technique. At first I thought that pro players wouldn't be interested in it, but I found out they were. His way of teaching really hadn't been well documented until now. So, there's a whole new audience for it.

With my clinics, I want someone to walk away with something. The main thing I talk about is being a musician first and not just being an *athlete drummer*. I can appreciate that kind of technique,

We live in a great time for art and expression. - John

The number one thing to know: Reading is easy. It's nowhere near the difficulty of learning a foreign language. - Chad

but I think, to maintain everyone's attention, and for the audience to take something home from the event, one needs to have a blend of different ingredients. I also like to offer the audience a chance to ask questions.

RM: I remember years ago at one of your clinics, you spoke about technique and its importance, but you did it in such a way that the focus was still about being musical.

Chad: I think technique is *very* important. If you don't have good technique, you can get tied up. It's your vocabulary and it's like conversing: you may know a lot of words, but you don't use them all at the same time. Same with technique, you must have it, but you have to know when it's best to utilize it. If your technique is good, you'll then have a much easier time executing ideas with good time and musicality.

RM: John, you also organize a drum festival in Vegas. When's the next one?

John: It'll be on July 14, 2013. At this festival, for the past three years, we've been trying to do a drum trio with Chad, Brooks and myself, but Brooks hasn't been available. So, the first year Dennis Chambers played the part of Brooks. Last year, Marco Minnemann filled in.

Chad and John: Brooks, when are *you* going to play the part of Brooks?

Brooks: You know, I have a great Skype connection, so just say the word, mount up a big screen, and I'll be there. (Laughter)

John: The reason why I started the festival is because dad used to take us to drum clinics all the time and that was really inspiring. When I moved to Vegas, I thought it to be a perfect place to start one. Surprisingly, up to this point, there hadn't been one of this caliber. My wife, Linda, and I host it, and we work on it all year. Our goal is to bring great drummers from all different styles into one festival, and I'm happy to say it's growing each year. We also give people an excuse to come to Vegas. We've had Dennis Chambers, Thomas Pridgen, Chester Thompson, Allan Holdsworth, Kit Chatham, Danny Seraphine and CTA, Blueman Group's Drummers, Johnny Rabb and Scott Johnson.

RM: Let's talk about gear. Chad, your relationship with Drum Workshop goes back 30 years. It's pretty rare these days to have an endorsement with the same company for that long. That started with John Good, right?

Chad: Yes, John was my tech on the Zappa '82 tour, and then I took him with me when I worked with Men At Work in '85, and also on a Holdsworth/Chick Corea tour I did. I was playing a Slingerland kit at the time and having troubles with it so John offered to redo the edges. He told me he had his own drum company with a guy named Don Lombardi. Soon after, I become one of their first endorsees. They were a small boutique company back then, beginning with making pedals. I started using their drums and they sounded really good, their Collector's Series, which was their original shell and still part of their selection.

RM: You came up with some ideas for them too, which they now offer.

Chad: I used their first double pedal on the '82 Zappa tour. No one else had a double pedal that worked, except DW. Frank didn't want me to use two bass drums because we recorded every night and he didn't want another open mic onstage. The double pedal was great for what he wanted to hear musically. I did have a few original ideas for them, which they ended up keeping: the cymbal stacker and the tilting boom cymbal stacker were something that Don Lombardi and I came up with.

Also, the cable hi-hat was something we came up with and it was a really big deal for me. I wanted to be able to play two hats and suggested to him the possibility of mounting a hat on the opposite side of the kit. I'm not sure whether he'd already had the idea, but



There's still something really satisfying to walk in the studio with amazing musicians and spend the day playing and sight-reading a pile of music. - Bob

he's the one who initially constructed the first one using a bicycle cable. I was his guinea pig for all the early experiments though.

RM: John, you're also a DW player.

John: I met John Good through Chad. I was also endorsed by Slingerland at that time, so John redid the edges on my set too and made them sound great! I left Slingerland and eventually ended up endorsing DW. I chose DW because of their quality control. They go the extra mile to make sure the drums leave the factory sounding great. They're always coming up with new ideas on sound. I've been using the Classic Series lately, which sound like a great vintage set. Also, doing my Drum Duets, I need to be with a company that can give me great different sounds across the board, and DW delivers. Their hardware is the best. They made a rack for my high toms, which make the set up extremely easy every time.

RM: Brooks, yet another DW player. Do you have a story with them, or was it just a house full of DWs when you were growing up?

Brooks: Actually, I remember seeing many Slingerland sets in the garage before the DWs arrived. Chad's DWs were at his house, so I only saw them when he performed. I acquired my first DW kit [Regal Blue Grain] when I joined Bad4Good, and still have it at my parent's house. I remember the round lugs looked very distinct and sexy when I first laid eyes on them. I've been with them since I was 13, back when they used to have a small shack in Newbury Park [CA].

RM: It's interesting that you all play the same drums, but not the same cymbals. Chad, you've also had a very long relationship with Paiste, and yet, John and Brooks are with Zildjian. Any of you care to elaborate?

Chad: Yes, this is my 30th year with Paiste. I joined after my second tour with Frank Zappa. I always loved the fact that each model of cymbal had such a defined character. They have so many cymbal lines that all sound individual. I also found that they had metal sounds that no one else had—the cup chimes, gongs, sound discs, etc.—I was able to incorporate these into my playing. It gave me a whole new palette of colors to work with and often inspired me to go into a melodic direction.

John: Well, my dad's a Zildjian endorser, so I've had a very long relationship with them. Lennie DiMuzio gave me my first endorsement with Zildjian when I was 17. For me, I love Zildjians because they all sound a little different, which I like. I have my

favorites, but I like that I have to search them out and know I have a unique sound that not everybody will pull off the shelf. I also like the Zildjian Gen 16 electronic cymbals. They are the only cymbal company pushing the limits with electronic technology. Brooks and I played them on our drum duet, and they not only feel good to play, they look way cool as well.

Brooks: I think all of us have our palettes of sound and know what each company provides, so that influences our choices. All metals have a different range of sound, and the Zildjians come through for me. Another element here is the relationship and support you have with a company, which can influence your decision-making on who you're most comfortable with.

John: One more thing on endorsements. They're like marriages—it's a two-way street. We all want to use the best equipment for us, but you have to have a great relationship as well. There are many variables. The companies want exposure and the artist wants great equipment. But sometimes, it's just business. Like, when you see some guy advertising a particular company's drums, yet he always uses an old Grestch set in the studio. Somebody buying the set that he's advertising would never get the same sound as the old Grestch set. So I think it's important to use what you endorse when possible. Also, every once in a while the focus of the company you're with changes and you have to switch to find a company that is interested in what you do.



It's great to be on a gig where you can laugh for the majority of the show! - Brooks

WHICH WACKERMAN?

RM: I would imagine that the Wackerman name has been a positive thing with regard to being a drummer, but have any of you found it to cause confusion? Has anyone hired the 'wrong' Wackerman?

Chad: That hasn't happened. But something similar has. Years ago I played a session in Hollywood for a composer. He had another session some months later and wanted to hire me, but couldn't remember my name. He thought it was either Chet or Chad. He looked up drummers in the Los Angeles Musicians Union directory book and when he saw Chet McCracken's name, he decided that must be me! A friend of mine who was on the session called me and told me how surprised everyone was that I wasn't there, but how cool it was that they got to play with the Doobie Brothers' drummer.

Brooks: [Jokingly] Only one time when my father showed up to a Bad Religion session and thought he was going to be tracking with Chick Corea. I actually haven't found any baffling moments yet. It seems that the producer would hopefully know the style of each Wackerman before the session, but I'm sure something weird is bound to happen one of these days.

computer programs, but all for the sake of music. Which, in this day and age, I think is really important to learn. It's makes you a better musician and more in the loop with current technology.

RM: Is there any product available with all the brothers?

Chad: Not yet, although we did a thing for Drum Channel with the four of us, which you can see there. Some day though...we'd need a big room!

RM: Guys, this next question is for all of you: What are the similarities or differences between all of you: grip, setup and technique?

Chad: Can I jump in here? One time, we did a trio thing at Drum Channel and Terry Bozzio was there. He was watching the monitors and checking out the kits and grips and said, "This is freaky: it's all the same!" He just saw the same motion because it's Murray's motion that we all use.

John: Although, I'm the only one playing traditional grip now.

Brooks: Well, real men play matched. (Laughs)

RM: Did you guys share ideas and show each other stuff when you were coming up?



RM: Was there ever a point in time where any of you thought about a non-musical career?

Bob: Since the flower industry was probably not an option for me, I thought it was better to stick with music. I did think about becoming a music teacher like my dad when I was in high school, but I soon realized I did not get the patience gene my dad has and I wanted to play. Up to the point when I was 30 years old, I never really thought about anything but being a bass player, except for that one high school moment. Growing up I always wanted to be a great studio musician. Even now when I play on my own sessions, there's still something really satisfying to walk in the studio with amazing musicians and spend the day playing and sight-reading a pile of music. At the end of the day it usually culminates in great performances and music that have been captured forever.

Chad: No, I had decided very early on that I wanted to be a drummer.

John: No, I always wanted to play and create music. I've learned a lot of different programs like Pro Tools, Final Cut Pro and other

John: Chad would help me figure stuff out. I remember one time I totally duct-taped up his drums because I saw some article about Gadd, and he was pretty upset about that! But he would help me a lot.

Chad: And then John helped Brooks out a lot too, taking him to sessions and gigs.

Brooks: John helped me get on a Brian Auger gig, as well as playing with Bunny Brunel. We all played with both of those guys at one time or another.

Bob: One time, John and I were playing with Maynard Ferguson in San Francisco and our parents brought Brooks up to see the show; he was in eighth grade at the time. We got to the encore and John put Brooks up on the kit and walked away. Maynard turned around, not noticing it at first. It was a gig opening for Buddy Rich. There's Brooks playing with Maynard's band. Maynard ends up laughing his ass off and Buddy Rich was side stage, checking it all out!

Brooks: I have an *encore* to the story—pardon the pun. Buddy wanted to meet me, so they brought me onto his bus. He was very

To me, improv and composition are related. - Chad

I think it's important to use what you endorse when possible. - John

nice and said he enjoyed my playing. He gave me a pair of his drumsticks, and to this day, I have no idea where they are.

All: Oh no! (Room explodes with laughs)

RM: Now at this point in your careers, do you guys still critique and/or compliment each other?

Brooks: The best compliment I've ever received from Chad was this past year, we did a Guitar Center drum-off, and afterwards, he came up to me and said, "I don't know what time signature you were in, during your solo." So, if I could stump him, I felt pretty good!

RM: Do you recall what time signature it was?

Brooks: I mapped it out and naturally it was in 84/23. (Laughs) I think I was playing in 5/4 on the hats, against a sporadic quarter-note triplet on the kick, which gave it some tension, so yeah, 84/23.

But it was inspiring to see these guys [Chad and John] soloing. The first time that the three of us played publicly as a trio was at PASIC and then Montreal Drum Festival. It definitely made me practice more.

Bob: It really is amazing that we all went into the music business. Mom and dad sacrificed a lot for us and were always so encouraging. They really taught us discipline but were also very open-minded. If we didn't feel like practicing one day, dad would sit down with us and help us figure it out. Just amazing patience.

Chad: For dad's 80th birthday party last year, we had the Tom Kubis Big Band and we all played, including our kids too. It was one of those incredibly memorable evenings. Just a who's who, not only in the band, but also in the audience!

Barbara: Chuck really didn't want a party, but when he found out that the boys arranged to have Tom's band, he said, "Oh, what time

shall I be there?!"

John: You know, it is cool over all these years, whether it's a session or a gig, that somebody knows at least one of my family members. I've never been able to do a gig without a mention of them. All I can say is I'm glad they don't suck!

Brooks: You can run to Vegas, but you can't hide!

PARENTAL GUIDANCE

RM: Chuck, with four successful children in the music industry, you obviously did something right. Aside from music-related guidance, what, if anything, was the most important lesson you tried to teach them?

Chuck: General work ethic is paramount to any endeavor in life. I try to instill this in my children as a life philosophy. I've done the same with my students as well. In all of my bands, I post a very detailed list on the wall to show how many hours each student practices in each area: private lessons, combo music, big-band music, improvising, etc. I believe developing this type of discipline and great work-ethic skills can cross over to any chosen field. I have always felt it doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do it really well. I also emphasize that dedication, hard work, determination, patience and being open-minded, are keys to success.

RM: Barbara, do you endorse any specific earplug?

Barbara: I like the free earplugs you receive on flights. The boys always bring them to me from all over the world. For Christmas presents I give them brushes, not sticks, and the bass amp volume does not go past the halfway mark. ✱

CHAD
Drums
DW Drums Collector series
22" x 18" Kick
10" x 8" Rack
12" x 9" Rack
14" x 11" Floor
16" x 13" Floor
14" x 6.5" Solid Shell Snare
13" x 5" Collector Series Snare
Cymbals
Paiste
14" Dark Energy Hi-hats
16" Dark Energy Crash
17" Dark Energy Crash
20" Dark Energy Mark 1 or 20" Masters Dry Crisp Ride
18" Dark Energy Crash
18" Dark Energy Crash w/ Rivets
20" Signature Thin China
3 to 5 Cup Chimes
Heads
Evans
Snares - Power Center Reverse Dot
Racks & Floors - G1 Clear
Kick - EMAD Batter / EQ3 Resonant Front
Hardware
DW
DW 9000 Double Pedal
Sticks
Vic Firth
5B, Heritage Brushes, T1 Mallets
Percussion
Meinl
Cowbell, Tambourine, Bongos and Cajon.
Microphones
AKG
Electronics
Roland
TD-30 V-Drums, SPD-SX Sample Pad, SPD-30, Octapad.

JOHN
Drums
DW Classic Series (Poplar and Mahogany)
10" x 7" Rack
12" x 8" Rack
13" x 9" Rack
14" x 14" Rack
16" x 16" Floor
18" x 16" Floor
22" x 14" Kick
22" x 14" Kick
14" x 5" Classic Snare
14" x 6" Acoustic EQ Snare
16" x 10" Ballard Snare
Cymbals
Zildjian
21" K Ride (1950's)
14" New Beat Hi-hats (1980's)
16" K Crash
18" K Hybrid Crash
19" K Crash
17" K China
Hardware
DW
DW 9000 Rack, DW 5000 turbo w/ Eccentric Systems
Quick Torque Cams.
Heads
Aquarian
Racks & Floors - Force 10 Top/ Classic Clear Bottom
Kicks - Superkick 10 on w/ Aquarian Triggers
Snares - inHead Trigger
Sticks
Vic Firth
5A Extreme Wood Tip
Miscellaneous
Roland V-Drums TD-20, MalletKat, Audix Mics,
Auralex Acoustics, Rhythm Tech Percussion, Factory
Metal Percussion, Protection Racket Cases, Kelly Shu,
Stick Hammock, Toft Audio Designs Console.

BROOKS
Drums
DW VLT Mahogany Wood Custom Series
22" x 16" Kick
10" x 8" Rack
12" x 8" Rack
16" x 14" Floor
16" x 16" Floor
14" x 6.5" Aluminum Snare
14" x 6.5" Craviotto Nickel Over Brass Snare
Cymbals
Zildjian
18" Constantinople Crash for Hi-hat Top
18" Breakbeat Ride for Hi-hat Bottom
18" K Custom Session Crash
18" A Custom EFX Crash
20" A Custom EFX Crash
22" K Light Ride
22" A Custom Ride
Hardware
DW
9000 Series Double Pedal, Two Leg Hi-Hat Stand,
Straight/Boom Cymbal Stand, Double Tom Holder w/
Straight/Boom Attachment, Airlift Throne (Round)
Sticks
Zildjian
Brooks Wackerman Signature Model
Heads
Evans
Snare - ST Coated Top / 300 Hazy Bottom
Racks & Floors - 10", 12", 14", 16" EC2 SST Clear Tops
10", 12" G1 Clear Bottom 14", 16" EC Res Clear Bottom
Kick - Evans EQ4 Clear
WEBFOOT
▶ chadwackerman.com
▶ johnwackerman.com
▶ drummerworld.com