

Drums & Percussion

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Interview

by Adrian Smith

Pete has been writing for *Modern Drummer* and contacted *d&pSA* almost a year ago and offered to expound his knowledge to everyone interested in Drumming & percussive instruments.

The accreditations of this multi-talented percussionist will definitely make your head spin, he has worked with to name a few: Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Bill Bruford, Jeff Beck, Ustad Zakir Hussain, The Verve, Steve Smith, Texas, Ronan Keating, Vanessa-Mae, Pet Shop Boys, Sinead O'Connor and many, many more. Besides jet-setting all over the Globe Pete has also just written his book "Indian rhythms for the drum set" available on Hudson Music.

DPSA takes an in-depth look at the man who has incorporated an acoustic kit with intricate percussive rhythms ranging from Indian, Arabic, Japanese and Latin. Pete's most recent album 'Taiko to Tabla' with Joji Hirota has been included in the top 55 rhythm albums of all time in *Songlines* magazine.



Pete Lockett

**Multi-talented Percussionist
/Drummer**



When I first approached Pete Lockett with regard to featuring him in one of our forthcoming magazines, first thing that came to mind was why would anyone focus more on Tabla, Bongo's, Taiko and the like as apposed to drum set. [From a drumkit players perspective]. Once I had heard Pete Lockett play the drum-kit I figured he must be one helluva percussionist given the fact that he is one helluva drummer. I thought it would insult this man's musical intelligence to go down the road of "twenty question" type interview, far be it for me to pose questions to a master who had achieved percussionist of the year 2005 with my limited knowledge of this form of percussive instrument.

D&PSA Pete, you seem to have studied percussion from all over the world and have worked with artists as varied as Bjork, Peter Gabriel, Robert Plant, Bill Bruford, Jeff Beck, Zakir Hussain, Lee Scratch Perry, Primal Scream, The Verve, Steve Smith, Texas, U Shrinivas, Suga Babes, Kula Shaker, Afro Celt Sound System, Vanessa-Mae, Evelyn Glennie, Errol Brown, Gary Husband, Pet Shop Boys, Amy Winehouse, Steve White, Sinéad O'Conner and many more. How did this eclectic versatility develop bearing in mind you started out as a rock drummer in London?

PETE Yes, drum set was and still is a big part of my life. I

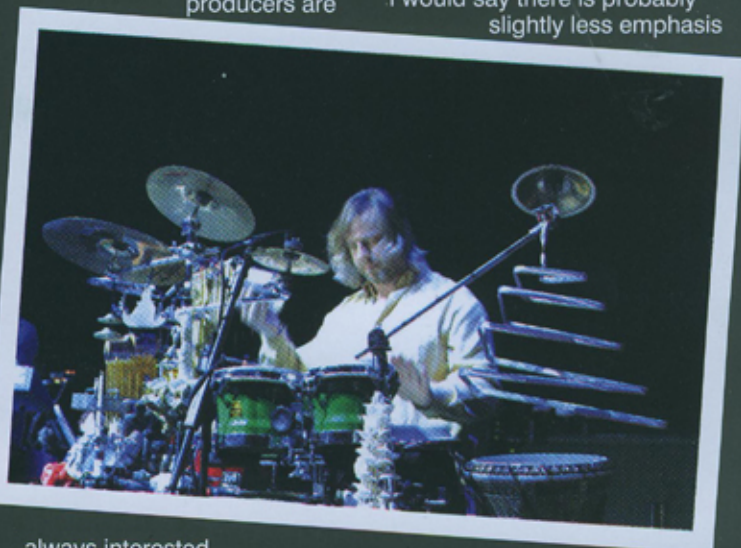
am a multi percussionist in the true sense of the term and consider drum set as another of my instruments, alongside, Tabla, Kanjira, Latin, Japanese, African, Electronics etc. etc. I came accross drum set by chance. I was walking past a drum shop one day aged 19 and saw an advert 'drum lessons' I went in and that was that, my life was changed for the better for ever. Similarly with Tabla. One night this music came through the window on the summer breeze and off I went, only to discover a free concert with Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain. That was astonishing. I had no idea how he made such a huge sound with those tiny drums and I had to take it further. Then lots of percussion influences came on board.

Now it is all about sound and texture for me. If you go back to the original traps set from the 20's there was everything in there, bass, snare, cymbals, wood block, bongos, found sounds, metal, wood etc. When you play drum set you are effectively composing a multi voice rhythm involving different tones and syncopation. When you compose on percussion you are effectively doing the same thing, sometimes with different instruments layered upon each other and sometimes with multi limb independence similar to drum set playing. Bearing this in mind, it surprises me that there is not more cross fertilization between drum set and percussion in terms of the sounds that are used. A cowbell, wood

block, crasher and tambourine is often as far as most set players would go. It has become a formalized instrument which for such a young instrument is kind of surprising. I can't say I was any different before I got into percussion. That really got me into 'sounds' and textures a lot more and opened up how I saw the drum set. For me, a player like Billy Ward is someone who really explores the different possibilities of the instrument. Also, percussionists such as Airtio and Trilok Gurtu blur the boundaries between drum set and percussion. It helped develop how I saw rhythm and sound and from my experience, producers are

When you start to think of sounds in abstract then it opens a lot of doors. I remember recording with Phil Manzanera from Roxy Music and we went around deconstructing the studio and building a set with all the found sounds. Dustbins, lamps, heaters, you name it. It turned out to be a great percussion track.

This openness to exploring sounds has certainly helped me record and perform with many of the artists I have been lucky enough to work with. With the options available now with computer generated effects I would say there is probably slightly less emphasis



always interested in sounds and different rhythmic approaches and if you can come up with something interesting and surprising as an option then it usually keeps you in their phone book. Of course, you need to have the conventional stuff available as well, not just maverick options.

on it but all the same, if you take in an interesting acoustic sound made from bits of metal and bottle tops or whatever, it always turns heads. Check out the third track on Weather Reports 'Domino Theory' album for an example. The percussionist was a guy called

José Rossy. Really interesting sounds, some sampled and triggered by Zawinal on his Emulator as well.

Of course, some people want something completely straight and more often than not very simple. If that's what they want then that is fine by me. You have to remember that they have their vision of the track and you are not there to do a solo or impress like that. You just need to play the music. Of course, the more you learn and the more technique you develop then the more inclined you are to want to express those ideas in your playing. For me I solved this by developing my own projects in the studio and on the road. Then you are creating an environment where you can explore your own musical ideas in depth without feeling resentful that you can't do it on your hired gigs. I was lucky with this in that I have released eight albums (Available on itunes / napster etc – plug – plug!!!) And have had numerous tours with my projects and solo shows worldwide, from Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Thailand to Sudan, India and the Middle

east...(Hopefully soon SA as well!!)

Going back to the eclectic influences. In the same way that I try to perceive sounds as much as I perceive specific instruments, I also mix up various traditional drumming techniques and rhythmic systems from around the world. When you start to look at drumming methodologies from around the world you really get to see how in depth and developed many of them are, often in completely different ways. Take for example Japanese Taiko and Indian Tabla. Completely different approaches to Rhythm and articulation on the instruments, Indian being very cerebral and with intense finger technique and virtuosity whilst the Japanese is a much more physical and tribal pulse approach. Bringing these type of 'opposites' together is one of the things that fascinates me. One of my first projects was 'Taiko to Tabla' which featured myself and a Japanese drum master named Joji Hirota who had previously worked with Kodo. We spent a long time developing a means of dialogue and over

time structured a way of making music together with these different traditions. I then went on to a quintet which featured Myself, Bill Bruford, a group of Indian Dhol drummers, a western classical percussionist and a Ghanaian percussionist. These projects reflected what I was doing as an individual, taking instruments from every avenue to sessions. Of course, you need to take time out to study that stuff. I took six years out to get the Indian thing happening and during that time that was all I did, 100%. No other gigs, no other instruments. Nothing. That is how to get it down.

The Indian thing is so developed. It is a must for any serious rhythmist. That is partly why I wanted to get my book out, Indian rhythms for the drum set' which is out now on Hudson music. I wanted to put down some of the structures and rhythmic systems in a systematic and transparent way that could be immediately employed, either on drum set or for that matter any instrument. The rhythm shells are looked at independently and

then extrapolated onto drum set so it really can be utilized by all musicians and composers. With drummers such as Steve Smith, Russ Miller and Johnny Rabb seriously getting into the Indian thing, the path is being set. I am off next week to do some Indian stuff on Benny Grebb's new DVD. For rhythmic development, it is the way to go.

Steve Smith is someone I have worked with for a number of years now. We have done solo shows together, I recorded on his new Vitalisation CD and performed with his band, Vital Information. He is the model of the perfect rhythm professor who humbly has an insatiable quest for new information and knowledge. An inspiration all round and I'm sure he will cause a great stir when he is out with you soon. 'Top Banana' as we say in the UK.

Steve is one of the new breed. It has been more common therefore that drummers have been more turned towards the Latin thing. El Negro and the whole battery of players





that have sprung up with the left foot clave and multi limb approach. It is very different from the Indian approach to rhythm. Latin rhythms are primarily for dancing and consist of a number of interlocking parts played by different players. That's why it has been a logical link to the multi limbed independence of the drum set. The Indian thing is more of a 'Linear rhythmic approach' which is a little more along the lines of Gavin Harrison's rhythmic illusions book. A time cycle is set, either by melodic ostinato or clapping pattern and the percussionist or melody player pitch their things against it rhytmically, similar to

drum set players soloing over an ostinato. It was primarily a Court music and therefore was for listening and not dancing, hence the deep intellectual development. For a similar approach check out Keith Carlocks solo over an ostinato on the track 'Oatmeal Bandage' by Tal Wikenfeld. A great ostinato divided 7 + 9 + 9 and a stunning Carlock solo.

Mentioning Keith Carlock brings me to another point regarding percussion and drums. The dominance of the backbeat and the prominence of the snare in rhythmic structure for drum set. When you look

at a lot of rhythm styles from around the world, say Indian, Latin, Japanese and African to name a few, they have much more lyrical, almost melodic based rhythmic approaches. It seems strange that with all that rhythmic history we have ended up often penned in by two and four on the snare, albeit predominantly in popular music. Of course, on a Pop gig that is often what is required and I am not suggesting that is wrong. However, a study of percussion helped me a lot in getting out of that often habitual train of thought. It helped me approach the instrument in a more lyrical way. Keith Carlock

is one of the players who has really taken this concept to a very high level, especially in his playing with Wayne Krantz. It grooves like hell and is often in 4/4 but you would never know it. He uses a concept he calls 'rhythmic melodies' and that is really closely associated with how a percussionist might approach something. Of course, he intersperses this with some serious back beat stuff that we all love.

With all these new approaches, when you get on the gig you have to do what is required. For younger players I feel the whole drum clinic scene can be somewhat misleading in that you see some intense 'Drumnastics' and virtuosity from often three legged maestros, but, for most working situations this would not be required at all. I really try to bear all this in mind when I get down to some practice.

I philosophize long and hard about the objectives and about what I am trying to achieve. I am fascinated and love technique and so that is essentially a part of what I do but I also know that a lot of the time it is not required on many working situations. The simplest thing can get you the biggest gig. This is especially true in the recording studio when you are with the click.

D&PSA: What about developing contacts and getting into studio work.

PETE: I often get asked that about developing contacts and getting studio gigs. It is a question I find really hard to answer. Word of mouth and the phone rings. Right place at the right time. Most importantly I have always 'believed' and without that I would not have been lucky enough to have worked in the diverse situations that I have. I suggest to people that they Mail out to loads of people. Chase it up once but do not hassle them. Expect a 2% return on anything you send out. Get a good web site and myspace site. Email people. Practise, be prepared for when the time comes, think about your objectives realistically, love the music and BELIEVE!!!!!!!!!!!!