



PETE LOCKETT

By John Clark

PERCUSSION AS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD IT.

Pete Lockett is one of the most versatile multi-percussionists in the world, having immersed himself in musical styles from every part of the globe. From Indian to Arabic, from Japanese to Latin and beyond. He has a number of current collaborative projects and has released 10 CD's. His book, 'Indian rhythms for the drum set' was 'Book of the Year 2008' in the Dutch music press, and he was voted Best Live Percussionist in 2006 in Rhythm Magazine.

But! Before you read on, to really get an idea of the magnitude and depth of Pete's work you should check out his very in depth website (www.petelockett.com) which also gives you an insight into his generosity with its free lesson section. Also check out the Parkour (free running) sequence early in the James Bond film *Casino Royale*, in which Pete's driving percussion propels the score and the scene.

Tell us about your early musical exposure and how did this evolve into your current "state of play"?

There was no exposure at all, really. I didn't start drumming until I was 19. I was walking past a drum shop and saw a sign in the window that said, "Drum Lessons." I went in, had a lesson, and 2 weeks later I was in a pub band! That's how it all started. I used to smash my drums up after the gigs - I've got my Keith Moon tattoo. It all started out a lot 'heavier' (laughs). That all happened in Portsmouth which is

on the south coast of England. After a couple of years I saved up and moved to London and started working in rock bands. Quite by chance, I came across the Tabla and Indian music in a similar way to how I came across the drum set. There was a big festival in Alexander Park, Muswell Hill in North London. One night we were sitting, eating dinner, and this music came through the window and.... well, we have a TV advertisement here in the UK where a group of kids go off searching for this amazing cooking that they can

smell wafting in the breeze ... well it was a bit like that with the tabla - like, "... what's this music that I've never heard before?" Luckily for me, it was a free concert and it was completely mind-blowing. It was Zakir Hussain (Tabla master) playing. I'd just played the drum set up to that point. When I heard Tabla for the first time, there was no concept of how it was. Ok, you can watch the best drum set player in the world, and even if you can't actually do the thing, look at it and you can conceptualize how it

he's doing that with his feet, it's a multi pedal thing, or some sort of independent structure. But with Tabla, when you hear tabla for the first time, there's no concept of how it's done - you know. How do those tiny little drums make that massive, massive sound? That made a really big impression on me. Then a couple of weeks later I saw an advert in the local paper for Tabla lessons. I mean, I've never seen an advert in the paper for Tabla lessons, and I haven't seen one since!! (Laughs)

My experience is that usually you've got to go looking for it...

Yeah, maybe it was karma! Hopefully. Anyway, that was the beginning.

In retrospect, when you saw Zakir play, what was it that got you in? Was it the amazement of what you were hearing sonically? Was it the complexity of the rhythm or something else?

I think it was the overall emotional impact of what was happening; the musicality of it. Out of all the Tabla in the world, Zakir is probably the best drummer in the world. I don't think many people would disagree with that. I saw him play in Calcutta about 6 weeks ago. It was a classical setting and it was completely unbelievable. I don't think many players have got to that level - that unbelievably high level. One person that did is a player who's not alive anymore who's called Harishankar. He was at a similar level of genius. I think it was the overall level of impact. For me at that point, I wasn't necessarily that developed rhythmically. I'd only been playing for 4 or 5 years. My mind hadn't developed that much. A lot of the complexities would have gone right over my head. But the impact and the power of just that pure energy and emotion coming off someone's playing with the Tabla. You've got the crescendo of the bass Tabla, and the virtuosic fast finger work - the melodic rhythm work. The whole thing is such a powerful package

You experienced an awful lot in those performances. I really believe that we need to listen on many levels and that listening is a real skill to develop as musicians.

It's so true. Listening is one of the most important things for me. As a kid I didn't really listen to music that much. At 16 or 17 I started to listen to a few things; primarily to bands like the Sex Pistols. I couldn't play an instrument at the time. I used to work on the docks at Portsmouth and before I'd go to work, I'd put on an album like the Sex Pistols, Suzy and the Banshees, or the Cure's first album - bands like that. If I put one of those albums on before I went to work, I couldn't turn it off. I'd always be late for work by 45 minutes because once I'd put them on I'd have to listen to them again because it made such an impact on me. The great thing about that is that at the time, I wasn't really listening - I wasn't analysing. The music was just having a direct impact on me. The other thing is, I mean let's face it, as a drummer Paul Cook (Sex Pistols) is not the best drummer in the world by about 47 galaxies, but he plays the music. It's so important for me now to listen to the music and not judge it technically. See it for what it is. All the different people that listen to it that are not musicians affected by it in certain ways.

That one of the things often lost in today's music has a direct connection to your mind and to the abstract or imagination...

...totally true.

One of the things that I am seeing with a lot of young players is an obsession with technique. I call it the "harder, faster, louder concept" of playing. I believe that technique is another tool in the musical tool box along with many others such as listening, musicality, stylistic knowledge etc., and ultimately one that is just one of many tools that a drummer needs. When you hear the current great drummers such as Steve Gadd, Vinnie Colaiuta, Simon Phillips and Steve Smith to name a few, their technique is only used as a tool to allow them to create. They are really not concerned about playing the paradiddles at mm=210!

Exactly! The other thing is that there are very few places for those types of players to play! Technique can be fascinating but I often view it like this; someone may know as many words as are in a Thesaurus but that does not guarantee that they may be able to write a book. Yet, someone who has very few words may be able to write something very moving and insightful.

Take us through the process that you go through when you first hear a new instrument and make that decision to master that instrument.

I'm always touched by the sound of the instruments. For me I've learnt different instruments to different levels of what shall we say ... "Idiomatic awareness". For example, the Indian drums I've studied absolutely in depth, whereas with the Latin stuff, I haven't studied in such depth but I use the Congas and the Latin concepts on sessions. Having said that, the Bongos are one of my specialities. And some like the Kanjira, Darabouka, and Tabla I take on as solo instruments. Ultimately, they are always a vehicle to get to the music. When I first heard the Kanjira it just blew me away with its melodic aspects, the pitch bending, and the movement of the drum. Then you have the virtuosic potential that goes with that as well. In Indian music you have such a rich rhythmic repertoire and an incredible rhythmic system involved in the whole thing that it just becomes a complete fascination. (Check out Pete's latest book, Indian rhythms for the Drum Set). In terms of technique and the 'Harder, Faster, Louder' concept, some of the Indian drummers are just about untouchable for their virtuosic ability, so it's humbling when you learn an instrument like that to discover that the overall level of Indian musicianship is so incredibly high. I mean, in India the Postie (postman) could be an incredible Tabla player. I'm always trying to connect with my audience - to me, playing for people and not at them, is what it's all about.

Let's talk about your work with David Arnold - composer of 'Casino Royale', 'Quantum Of Solace' and 'Die Another Day', amongst others. How did you meet David Arnold?

He called me for a session - an album called 'Shaken not Stirred', and that led to a long association. Casino Royale was recorded at Air studios London (of George Martin fame) and I hold the distinction of being the first person to cause the studio operating system to freeze up. There were, at one point, 96 tracks of percussion! The studio was completely full of drums. Not only my drums, but also we'd hired in loads of drums, and huge drums made out of oil cans, giant 60" gongs...

Did you do much pre-production with David?

Well, the Bond movies are the one exception to how

I normally work on films. In the case of Casino Royale, David called me a few months earlier and gave me a brief of where the particular cues may be set - Africa, Bolivia, Thailand or wherever - and he got me to write, maybe 8 or 10 percussion cues, about 2 minutes long. I did this in my studio at home. I gave him these before he started on the score and he used these to give him a backbone to his score. Then, I went in at a later point after the orchestra had been recorded and played loads and loads of different percussion. It was 10 or so days in the studio. A lot of the stuff I do now I do from my home studio. I did the whole of 'Incredible Hulk 2' and 'Quantum of Solace' from home.

Is that a case of - they send you a file and/or a brief and you load it up and away you go?

Yes, exactly. Sometimes it's really complex. With the Incredible Hulk film the composer is Craig Armstrong. I could get a 60 second or 2-minute cue with 30 different tempos and 15 different time signatures throughout that piece. It's complex putting it together when it's like that. Often they'll send whatever the orchestra has put down and that's it. But it's interesting though. The more different things that come along and challenge you, the happier I am, really.

The Casino Royale score is particularly impressive in its performance and recording quality.

Yeah, it's a good one.

How did you come to work with Peter Gabriel?

That came about through my work with the 'Afro-Celt Sound System' for whom I did 4 albums. Peter was on one of those albums as was Robert Plant. The thing about working with people like Peter is that they all have completely different ways of working. Peter wasn't there for a lot of those sessions but people like Jeff Beck and Bjork are very "hands on" and give enormous input into the situation. In fact Bjork has really clear ideas as to what she wants and how she wants things rhythmically and in that sense has a really developed mind. On the other hand, a lot of people don't really know what they want!

Which of all those artists that you've worked with have been really memorable?

They all are to a certain extent. I try to look at my whole career with things that have had longevity maybe. Film composers like David Arnold for instance - we worked very closely together for many years, over many films, and we had a duo together at one point and did a few gigs. In that sense, that stuff becomes more memorable than just turning up with your regular stuff. But it's all part of the bigger picture. It's like anything. Once you've worked with people, generally speaking for me, I tend to offer different sounds and a lot of the time that's what people are really interested in. You know what can make their tracks and their music sound different from the run of the mill. It's about coming up with different sounds. I've got loads of homemade stuff made of different things like milk tops - odd sounds to complement the regular percussion - the Remo percussion that I use and the ethnic percussion such as the Indian stuff. Some of the film sessions are more full-on like for example, the film sessions for Casino Royale.

One of the things on your website is the great diversity of not only your instruments but also of the artists that you have collaborated with eg; the

"Parallax Beat Bros.", Amit Chatterjee (Joe Zawinal), "Network of Sparks" (with Bill Bruford). They are all such musical hybrids, such melting pots. Do they start with the idea of "who do I need to play with to make this idea happen" or, is it a more organic process?

It's more organic really, and it comes out of relationships. You meet someone or hear someone at a festival and you talk and you end up saying "let's do something together one day". It's not really a pre-conceived thing. It's often like opening a new mystery-box of music and seeing what comes out. One of the things that I do like are completely different musical settings like the Parallax Beat Bros. with Scanner, who is the first person to tell you that he is not a musician. In fact he is more of a sound designer and to make music with someone who is not approaching it from a typical musician's viewpoint is really interesting for me. It's all about sound and not some preconception about how to make music.

What brought you to put free lessons on your website when so many players these days are very keen to play their cards close to their chest and not let out their secrets?

I do well enough out of music, so for me it's about giving something back, whatever little that is. For me it was very hard to source the information for some of those instruments, particularly the Indian stuff. Someone who lives somewhere more remote may not have access to that information. I want to give something back, put it out there. I don't want to hide anything. "This is how these drums are played (to my knowledge), and here it is." Sort of, take it or leave it.

I think it's wonderful that you do. I think a lot of what is labelled 'ethnic percussion' has a certain element of "mystique" about it. You can search for a long time to get to the bottom of it.

Exactly. A lot of people hide that stuff. I can't see the point in that. Just put it out. Imagine if only a few people spoke English and they were the ones writing the literature, whether it was good or bad, they wouldn't put the basics of the language out there - the syntax of the language. That's not a level playing field. With the little knowledge I have, I put it out there and hopefully more people will start using it in their percussion and their playing and in music, generally. Given the variety and depth of your work, what, in your opinion, makes a great drummer?

I think if you play the music. There are lots of different roles for a drummer. If one is a soloist, the answer is going to be slightly different than if one is primarily an accompanist or a band drummer. If you look back to the '60's and '70's at some of the great drummers like Bonham and Keith Moon - I'd include these guys because they're such unique players. Guys like Ginger Baker. You'd call them character drummers - they've got great character in their playing and it's their imagination and creativity. They've taken how you play the basics on the snare and the bass drum and the high-hat, and they make it their own with their own creative process. It's the creative process that gives them their personality on the instrument. They're not playing stuff by rote or copying stuff off the DVD - this is important in the beginning, but then you have to take it and make your own, and you do this with your own creative process. I think that's important to develop individual aspects of your playing - an

individual style. If you're playing with a band as an accompanist, you're setting up the skeletal structure and power of those songs and if you do that in a way that brings things out in a song, in a musical manner, then your job is done; you have succeeded. Look at someone like Steve Gadd - what an icon. He completely changed the whole perspective of drumming with his creativity and his vision. But he makes the songs work. You can say he's a brilliant, technical drummer but he makes the songs work - it's not the technique that comes first it's the musicality that comes first. It's a combination of elements, I think.

Ultimately too - the art of playing a musical instrument is something that you can give back to your community, or the society however big or small that may be...

Yeah, absolutely. The other thing is, if you're feeling down, you can go to your instrument and play and it's an uplifting thing. I'm not saying it's always been like that. Sometimes one has to work really hard at one's psychology. The negative thoughts that might come in. You start to compare yourself to other players, silly negative things that can creep in early on in you're playing.

Of all your tracks on the net that I had a listen to, the "Solo in Turkey" disc is my personal favourite. In particular, the duo you play with Sedar Pazarcioğlu (Violin), there's a wonderful sense of space and respect going on between the two of you.

That's another thing I've been lucky with. I've travelled all over the world and collaborated with musicians of different cultures. I've been to Sudan, Thailand, India, Pakistan - loads of different places.

I tend to offer different sounds and a lot of the time that's what people are really interested in. You know what can make their tracks and their music sound different from the run of the mill. It's about coming up with different sounds.



I've collaborated with local musicians, rehearsed for a week and done a tour of the country. There's always a connection you can make with music, regardless of whether you speak the language. It's great. It's a good track that you pinpoint there. Thanks.

You have a real affinity for India and its music and culture. Are you spending much time in India at the moment?

I've been taking 6 or 7 trips a year the last few years. I've recorded 7 albums there in the last 2 years. Five have come out; 2 are coming out later this year. It's been a busy period of time over there!! (laughs). I'm working on another 2 at the moment. It's all go!

What do you value most out of your life as a musician?

I'm incredibly fortunate to do something I love doing. I don't have to work to want to play music. My wife's a musician as well. She's a classical pianist. I just feel so lucky I've got something in life that inspires me and makes me want to get up in the morning. A lot of people don't have that in their lives, and I can certainly remember not having that in my life in my youth. To have inspiration and desire is just fantastic.

What can people expect from your performance at this year's AUDW?

My aim is to present percussion as you've never heard it. I don't want people to think it's some obscure ethnic thing that I've sat under a Banyan tree and learned - it's a much greater musical experience. It's percussion that's going to blow people away.

PETE LOCKETT **TECH SPECS**



REMO - PERCUSSION & DRUMS

Tuneable Cuban Bongos
Larger size of the new 'Ergo solo Doumbek'
Remo Crown Wood Cajon
Paulo Matteoli Djembe and short stand for sitting playing position
22" John Bergamo or Glen Velez frame drum (Bodhran)
2 x 16" Floor Toms
3 x Boom cymbal stands
Tablas in the pitch of D

ZILDJIAN CYMBALS

A Series or K Series 8", 10" and 12" Zildjian splashes



Artist set ups can change regularly.

Pete Lockett

INDIAN RHYTHMS FOR DRUMSET



BOOK/AUDIO
PACKAGE

"...demystifies the fundamentals of Indian rhythms and clearly explains this untapped creative resource to drumset players."

—Steve Smith

"...a wonderful tool that will help you widen your view of rhythm, add new repertoire to your playing, and become a better musician."

—Benny Greb

★★★★★

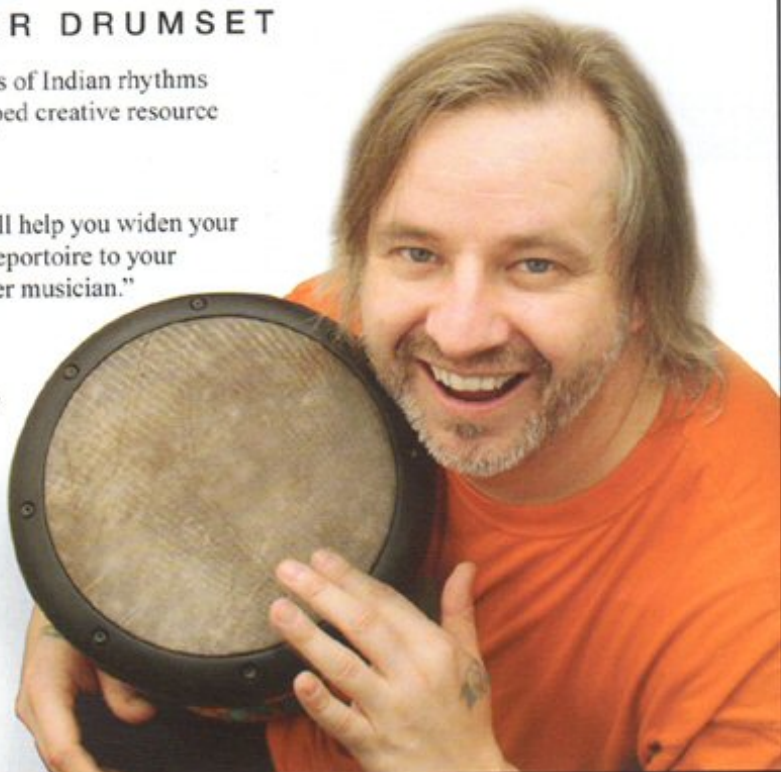
—Modern Drummer Magazine



NEW! @ HUDSONDIGITAL

Download Pete's introduction to Bongo, Cowbell, Doumbek, Kanjira, Shaker and Tambourine "MasterClass" lessons at hudsonmusic.com/digital.

HUDSON MUSIC®
hudsonmusic.com



DRUMTEK

AUSTRALIA

PRESENTS



CONCERTS / WORKSHOPS / DRUM EXPO

DAMAGE FEATURING:



Special appearance by
"Australia's most inspirational drummer"
ROBIN LEWIS & SHY-RODONGMA

25th & 26th JULY 2009

Darebin Arts & Entertainment Centre
(Corner of St. Georges Road & Hill Street Preston Melbourne)

OVER 40 PERFORMANCES



FOR FURTHER DETAILS GO TO: www.drumtek.com.au

CALL DRUMTEK: 03 9482 5550