



Musical mantras

CAJANN DUDHAIKAR

Lockett's work covers an extraordinary range from the purely commercial to the extravagantly experimental. He arranges and records scores for the best names in Hollywood. Also, he travels the world and plays on local percussion instruments like the Middle Eastern *darabuka*, *req* and *bendir*, the Japanese Taiko, the West African *djembe* and the Irish Bodhran. And he has a special corner in his heart for Indian percussion and instruments like the *mridangam* and the *dholak*.

Consider the schedule described in his website which gives a flavour of the fast-paced, drumbeats of his life. "2008 kicked off with performances in India with U. Shrinivas, U. Rajesh and Loy Mendonsa. Pete then had extensive recording work on the new *Incredible Hulk* film with Craig Armstrong along with the new Bond film with David Arnold due out late 2008."

He's definitely a figure who has made himself heard in Hollywood. He has arranged and recorded the ethnic percussion pieces for Hollywood hits like *The Incredible Hulk 2*, *City of Angels*, *The Bone Collector*, *Moulin Rouge* and *Snatch* among others. In India too, he's recorded with A.R. Rahman for the 2007 blockbuster *Sivaji*.

Movies apart, he's collaborated and played with the likes of Bjork, Peter Gabriel, Bill Bruford, Ustad Zakir Hussain, The Verve, Nelly Furtado, and Ronan Keating. He's also taught at places like the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School of Music in London and done live gigs across the globe.

But the focus has been on India for quite some time now and it shows in his work. In

India is the flavour of the season for multi-percussionist Pete Lockett, says **Promita Mukherjee**

You might say that percussionist Pete Lockett is playing half-a-dozen tunes simultaneously. He's just released a book, *Indian Rhythms for Drum Set*, which explains Indian rhythms and is a guide for wannabe drummers. And if, like thousands of others, you've headed off to the nearest multiplex to watch the latest Bond thriller *Quantum of Solace*, listen for the 'ethnic' percussion bits composed and played by Lockett.

The best word for Lockett is probably 'musicaholic'. Music is his lifeblood and his mind is never far away from the high notes. "There's hardly a day when I don't play music or write something. The idea of not having music in my life would be bizarre. Like chopping off my head or something," he says passionately.

RASHBEHARI DAS



PROFILE

Drummer Sivamani, Pete Lockett and Bickram Ghosh get together for an impromptu gig

January there'll be the launch of an album *Kingdom of Rhythm* with Bickram Ghosh and Kai Eckhardt for which he spent 18 months in Calcutta. The album has influences like Latin, electronica, Japanese and Middle-Eastern beats. Says Lockett: "We wanted the album to be accessible to both the layman and the connoisseur."

Over the next two months he also plans to release other three albums — *Taalisman*, a jazz-based fusion album with guitarist Amit Chatterjee, *Journey through the Master Drummers of India*, with Vikku Vinayakram and Ghosh in end February-early March and *Made in Chennai* with Uma Shankar.

Then he's negotiating with the music companies for another album *Made in Calcutta* with Pandit Shankar Ghosh, sarod player Pratyush Banerjee and a host of Calcutta musicians.

Lockett was first introduced to Indian music about 15-20 years back when he heard Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and Zakir Hussain play in London and was instantly hooked. For a percussionist, Lockett feels, the Indian rhythmic system is the Holy Grail of rhythm. "I don't know if Indian people quite appreciate what they have got. But if you coming from somewhere else in the world, it's a thing to behold really," he chuckles.



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He toured the country extensively seven years back with musician Selva Ganesh and admits that he's been influenced a lot by Indian music. "The system is so developed. It's 50 lifetime's study," he says. Ever since, he's been coming back and his collaborative projects are the outcome of his interactions with musicians over the last two years.

Lockett feels that the key to successful collaboration lies in the ability to know how the other person's mind works. "A part of the quest is to get inside the mind of other cultures and see how they approach music. For example, classical musicians in India approach music differently from jazz players in the West or drummers from Ghana," he explains.

He doesn't approach composing like a regular job. Unless when he's scoring for a film and there are schedules to adhere to, Lockett doesn't sit down with his music every morning. "Different things come together in different ways," he says. Music is a part of life so whenever he comes across an idea, he jots it down quickly. "You think of different sounds —

(From far left) Guitarist Guiliano Modarelli, Ghosh and Lockett at the Ballantine's Leave an Impression concert in Soho

metallic, wooden, sound of skin, resonant tones, how they might fit together, the kind of elements you might use. I try and approach it much like that," he says.

Nevertheless, he reckons that for a musician, nothing beats playing live. He likes connecting to the audience and the fact that there're no second chances. But he's quick to point out that he also loves being in the studio where there's always the scope to reorganise things.

Lockett got into music "by chance" when he was 19. He was walking past a drum shop in London when he noticed an advert saying 'Drum lessons'. He went in, took the lesson which "made complete sense" and "decided this is what I want to do with my life."

From drums, his interest moved on to different kinds of music and rhythm and he studied and incorporated them in his music. He has, over the years, come out with a string of albums like *Network Of Sparks One* and *Network Of Sparks Two*.

Quiz him on what he does on his free time and he's quick to point out that there isn't any. "There's always something to be done," he rues. When he can, he watches games like cricket and football, reads, edits his music and cooks.

Cooking is number one on the list. "I cook a mean *dal* and curries and other Indian food too," he laughs. He likes reading "heavy-duty stuff" like philosophy which he believes helps in philosophising his music.

Lockett's aim is to capture his audience's ear, and imagination. After all, like he says, "If you can't affect the audience then what are you doing it for?" ♦

