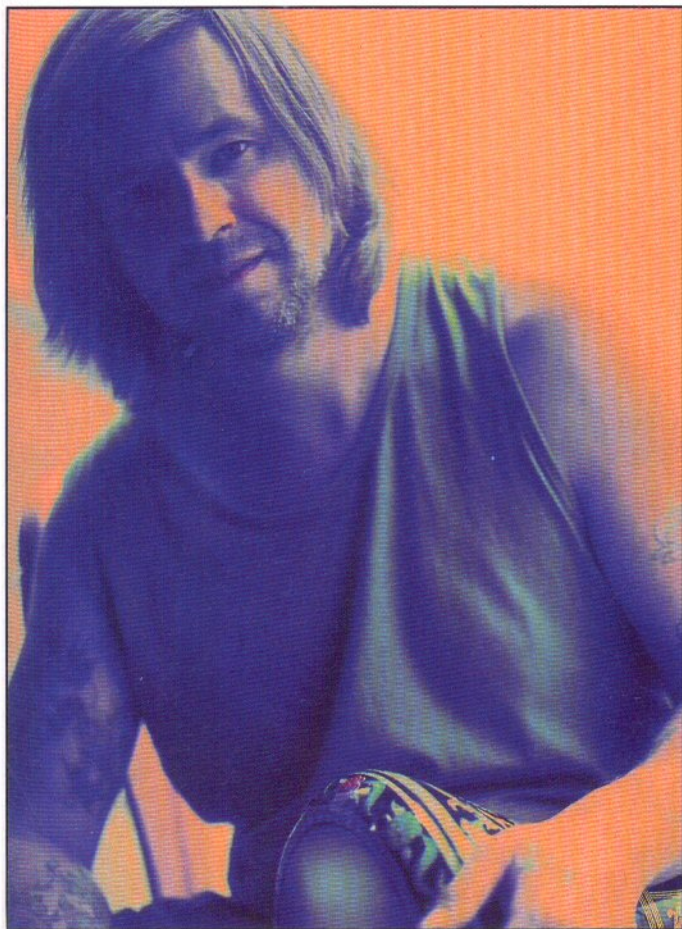


# PICK UP THE PIECES



**Part 9: All-round percussion dude Peter Lockett takes us off the beaten track with the Egyptian tabla and describes what it takes to be a shakermaker with some Blue Peter-style do-it-yourself advice (ask a grown-up to do any tricky cutting out).**

**S**o far in this series we've looked at variations on a fairly straightforward set of percussion instruments. But the percussion family incorporates a wide variety of tools once you start to include less common ethnic instruments.

Many shops now stock a huge range of alternative drums which, if you'd wanted to purchase ten years ago, would have entailed a flight to the other side of the world. It's also a fact that a lot of these drums are not nearly as expensive as you might first assume.

Bringing these sorts of ethnic drums into a standard percussion set-up can add a lot of colour, and can really turn some heads in the studio or at the gig. One important thing to bear in mind is that when you employ these sorts of drums out of their idiom, there are no rules. Basically, if you hit it and it sounds good, go for it.

Creativity with rules around it is ultimately inhibited (although this certainly doesn't negate the study of traditional techniques in the future). Bear in mind that hundreds and thousands of years ago man

**FIG. 1: EGYPTIAN TABLA PLAYING POSITION WITHIN THE PERCUSSION SET-UP.**



**FIG. 2: RIGHT HAND OPEN TONE.**



**FIG. 3: RIGHT HAND SLAP.**



made a drum, hit it without inhibition and made a noise. One thing is for sure, when he hit it he didn't think, 'Am I doing it right?' He discovered and created. So why shouldn't people today endeavour to discover their own voices instead of always referring to other people's values to create their self worth? Just check out Keith Jarrett's *Spirits* album where he's playing tablas with mallets – amazing!

Anyway, this month we're going to be incorporating the Egyptian tabla, using two tones learnt on the congas – open and slap.

Along the rim, sound with the right and left hands. The goal of this integration will be to mix the drum with some conga tones. To do this we need to raise our left leg on a stool or box and balance the drum along the angle of our leg, with the left hand coming over the top as in **Fig. 1**: where the left hand helps to hold it in place.

Now, a brief summary of the four strokes:

**Fig. 2:** Right hand, open tone. Resonant open tone as per conga open tone.

**Fig. 3:** Right hand slap. Same as conga slap.

**Fig. 4:** Right hand, rim. First finger right on edge of drum.

**Fig. 5:** Left hand, rim. Fingers hang over top edge of drum and ring finger hits sharply on top rim edge.

These strokes are represented by phonetics in Egypt, but for the purposes of this instalment we really don't need to look at this.

**Examples 1-6** are rhythms just for Egyptian tabla.

**Examples 7-12** are combinations created by moving the right hand over onto the congas.

The mellowness and warmth of the congas works well with the sharpness and 'cut' of the tabla. Bongos wouldn't work as well, because both instruments display such similar frequencies.

To finish this month, I'd just like to talk a bit about sound effect-type shaker instruments. In my opinion you really can't have enough of these. They go down well in the studio and can add an awful lot live, not just because of how they sound, but also because you can employ some dramatic arm movements if you place your mics with care.

There are many different shakers you can use that offer a wide range of sounds. Good stuff on the market includes the Meinl birds and crickets, some of the Remo sprung drums and a lot of LP stuff, but remember, you can also make your own. It sounds a bit *Blue Peter* on paper, but you'll be surprised by what sounds you can come up with if you string 50 bottle tops or some medicine bottles together.

Sometimes you get something much warmer in tone than some of the stuff made by big companies.

**KEY**

O S (R) O S O S

Egyptian tabla open tone    Egyptian tabla slap    Egyptian tabla rim    Hi conga open    Hi conga slap    Low conga open    Low conga slap

**Ex 1**

R L R L R L R L

**Ex 2**

R L R L R L R L

**Ex 3**

R L L R L L R L R L L R L R L L

**Ex 4**

R L L R L R L R

**Ex 5**

R L R L R L R L

**Ex 6**

R L L R L L R L L R L L R L R L

**Ex 7**

R L L R L L R L

**Ex 8**

R L R L R L R L

**Ex 9**

R L L R L L R L R L L R L R L L

**Ex 10**

R L L R L L R L L R L L R L R L

**Ex 11**

R L R L L R L R L L R L L R L L

**Ex 12**

R L R L L R L R L L R L R L R L L

