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JUNE 2006

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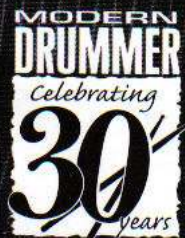
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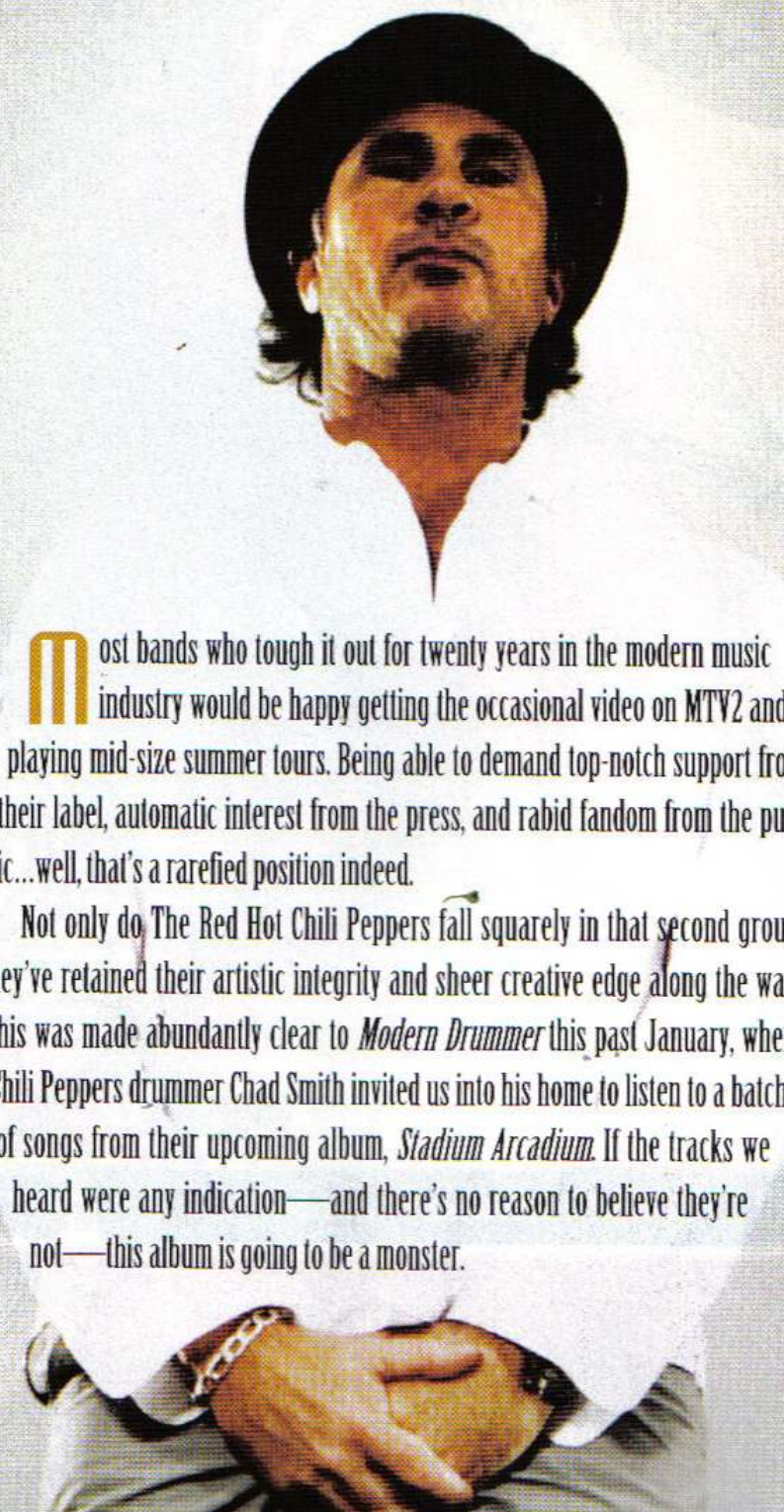


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THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS' CHAD SMITH

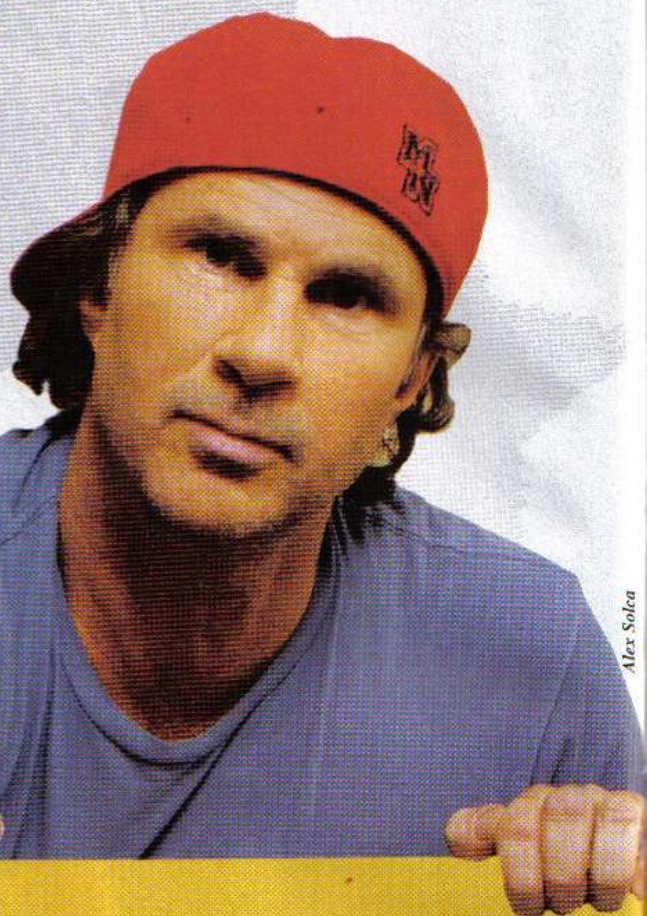


Most bands who tough it out for twenty years in the modern music industry would be happy getting the occasional video on MTV2 and playing mid-size summer tours. Being able to demand top-notch support from their label, automatic interest from the press, and rabid fandom from the public...well, that's a rarefied position indeed.

Not only do The Red Hot Chili Peppers fall squarely in that second group, they've retained their artistic integrity and sheer creative edge along the way. This was made abundantly clear to *Modern Drummer* this past January, when Chili Peppers drummer Chad Smith invited us into his home to listen to a batch of songs from their upcoming album, *Stadium Arcadium*. If the tracks we heard were any indication—and there's no reason to believe they're not—this album is going to be a monster.

Spread across two discs and twenty-eight songs, the Chili Peppers' new opus shows a band maturing in all the right ways—and retaining enough youthful energy to give a band two decades their junior a good fright. As Chad points out, this is largely guitarist John Frusciante's statement. With startlingly unique six-string solos on almost every track, played through a kaleidoscope of tones and timbres, *Stadium Arcadium* is an absolute milestone for the band, a masterly web of cool ideas, slamming beats, and intense lyrical concerns. It's also a very live-sounding collection, the result of the band attempting to record basic tracks all at once, in the same room. Eventually Frusciante moved his amp into an adjacent room, but he, Chad, and bassist Flea continued ripping it up just a few feet from each other, proving that the wisdom of the past can still inspire the magic of the future.

As for the drumming, well, fans of Smith's way around a ghost note and old-school rock thunder won't be disappointed—but they might be surprised. Our ears perked up right from the get-go, as Chad's upside-down beat on "Readymade" added a whole other vibe to the cut—and still made musical sense. And by the way, he played the *crap* out of that Bonham/James Brown concoction. Elsewhere, skewed disco beats (no kidding) and Chad's usual flair for mid-tempo, dig-



Alex Solca

NO DRUMS, JUST...CHAD

You can learn a lot about a musician by checking out the non-musical elements of his life: where and how he lives, the videos sitting on shelves in his TV room, the people he likes to spend time with. This past January, *MD* got to hang with Chad Smith for a few hours at his LA home, an old Spanish-style mansion once inhabited, like many in his neighborhood, by Hollywood royalty.

Actually, using the word "mansion" is probably misleading. Though it's certainly a large, gorgeous building with cool sunken rooms, lots of tile, stained-glass windows, and beautifully framed photographs of Chad's heroes like Ginger Baker, the vibe is definitely groovy and unassuming. First off, band and recording equipment fills the main living room and another large room nearby, the result of Chad's suggestion that ex-Deep Purple singer and close friend Glenn Hughes record his new album here, in a relaxed setting and without outlandish studio fees.

Then there's Chad himself: unshaven, wearing a worn-out Red Wings T-shirt, and obviously happy to be off the road and spending time with his wife, Nancy, and their year-old son, Cole. Chilling in his family room, listening to tracks from the new Chili Peppers album, provides the perfect opportunity to check out Chad's video collection, which mostly consists of music DVDs (leaning toward classic rock) and recent feature films. Though the house is neat, some books and toys lie about. A child's xylophone even comes in handy as a prop when Chad describes his first big percussion overdub, a simple ball part on "21st Century" that he, charmingly, can't seem to conceal his pride over.

At one point Chad's brother, Brad, comes up in conversation. Chad's close with his brother and clearly cherishes his friendship. Brad, incidentally, works

for publishing company Hal Leonard, a position that allows him, like Chad, to indulge his music obsessions for a living. Rhythm and melody were obviously in the blood in the Smith household. (We'll leave the story of the brothers' circa-'71 band *Rockin' Conspiracy* for another time.)

And if you're looking for tales of rock excess, look elsewhere. First of all, it's 10:00 A.M. (Chad's habitually up at 7:30—Cole.) The nanny is about to take the baby for a walk, landscapers are meticulously caring for manicured lawns up and down the street, and during cigarette breaks on the front steps, Chad waves and exchanges pleasantries with neighbors passing by his gate.

One imagines Chad's neighbors are quite unaware of the Chili Peppers' mad-men-of-rock reputation. But Chad's graciousness is no act. Though in the past he's not shied away from the wild life rock stardom brings, Smith is still one of the warmest, funniest, and most accommodating interviewees a drum journalist—or rock fan—could hope to meet. He even insists we take the Keith Moon bio he recently finished reading, probably knowing it'll be a while before he gets it back (if ever...sorry in advance, Chad). More than that, though, Smith accommodates us by answering a few questions that no big-time star should have to suffer through. But inquiring minds deserve some froth, and like we said up top, sometimes the little details of one's life can be mildly revealing. You be the judge.

So, Chad, what's your favorite place to play?

It's really where I have friends, and where the audiences are good. The Irish are great—so passionate and funny—and they have good beer. And they really love us, so we play there a lot. I enjoy Dublin too. South America is also crazy. The audiences are incredible, and there are interesting places to visit. And the Japanese are completely different from anywhere else, funny in their own way. Australia is great too.

Place to eat?

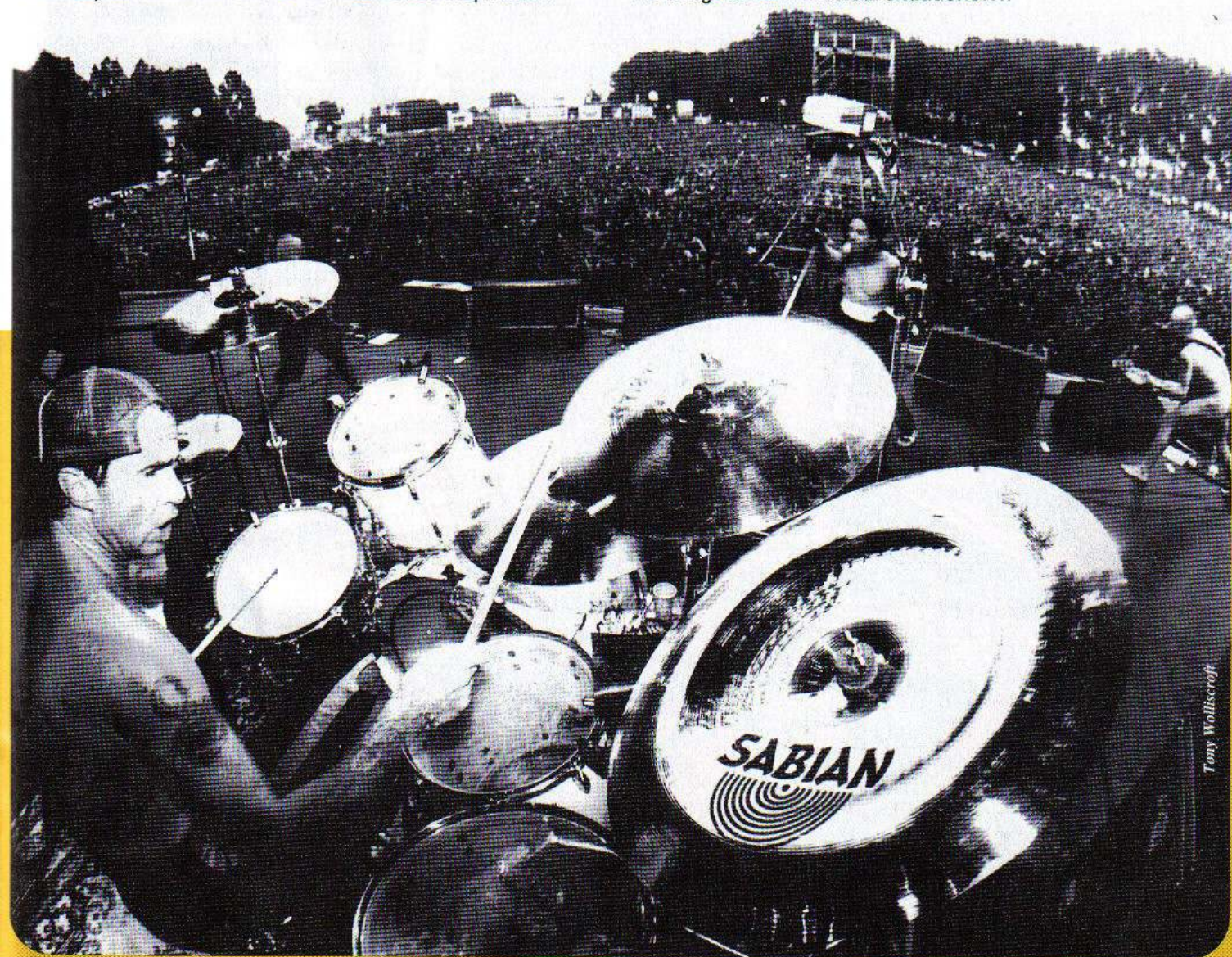
Sushi. But there's an Italian place in Brentwood, Peppone. It's awesome, my favorite place. When I get back in town, that's where I go.

ging-in-the-dirt snare/kick/hat explosions bring back the old heat. At one point we turned to see Chad, sitting on his family-room rug, eyes closed, head-rocking along to the music like a kid deep in sleep, dreaming of being on stage with Led Zeppelin in Madison Square Garden. Two seconds later, we noticed we were head-rocking too and didn't even realize it. *That's* what music is supposed to do.

The secret to the Chili Peppers' success is really no mystery at all. When real artists get together to make noise in the spirit of brotherhood, communication, and truth-seeking, amazing things can happen. The individuals in this band have certainly gone through some heavy stuff, and they are definitely not the people they once were. But they've retained their respect for each other, and haven't let stardom deplete their well of real old-fashioned inspiration.

Chad has added to his own suitcase of musical ideas by continuing his interest in playing on projects outside of the Chili Peppers. Notably, he's been acting as home-studio owner/drummer/producer on ex-Deep Purple singer Glenn Hughes' new album. In fact, we can hear Glenn in the next room doing vocal overdubs as we conduct the interview. Perhaps even more telling, Chad also recently finished recording the new Dixie Chicks disc. Smith might have been called in to "just be himself" on the neo-country superstars' latest offering, as producer Rick Rubin assured him, but you *know* he left that whole situation with some interesting new experiences and skills.

We begin our interview wondering if Chad is aware of his particular strengths as a drummer, and what he feels he brings to new musical situations....



Tony Wollicroft

Favorite car?

The '65 Mustang fastback, which I own, followed closely by the '67 Corvette Stingray, which I don't. My dad was a Ford man for thirty-two years, and I thought the fastback Mustang was the coolest-looking car. The first check that I got, even before *Mother's Milk* came out,

I used to buy that car. This was in 1989. So I've had it for seventeen years—same car.



Motorcycle?

I'm an avid cyclist. My main mode of transportation is a 2003 Harley Davidson Soft Tail, 100th Anniversary issue. And in Mexico I cruise around on a Road King, which is a bigger bike.



Favorite team?

The Detroit Red Wings! I'm very loyal to my Detroit teams.



Chad: Well, I wouldn't say I'm really good at anything. [laughs] I do feel that I have my thing I do, my own style I guess you could say. Before, I would try to change my style depending on who I was playing with. I still do that a little, like with Glenn Hughes: "I can get some of my Keith Moon in there!" When I do that I feel like I'm overplaying, but he's like, "No, I love it," so I must be making him happy. And those are my roots.

But I found it interesting going from the Chili Peppers record to the Dixie Chicks record, which I did right after. It's completely different music, but that's when I noticed that I kind of have this thing I do. It's clean—not clinically precise, but I try to hit hard, play with dynamics, and play to the song—though that's probably just from years of playing and trying to be a good

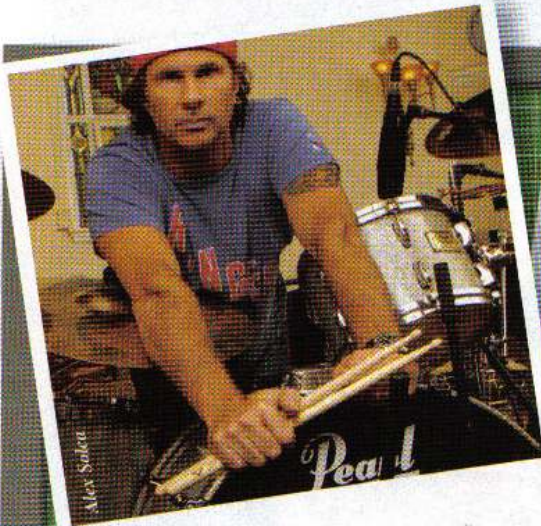
musician.

The other thing is recording: I used to listen back to takes and one would be good and the other three would be all over the place, whether it's the time, or playing the wrong thing, or getting red light fever—playing nothing like you play, or not being in the moment. I don't feel nervous anymore. I'm no Jim Keltner—not every take sounds like a record—but I do think I'm getting better. I used to cringe years ago. There's some stuff on *Mother's Milk...* I loudly strike up a conversation with somebody when that thing comes on. [laughs] "So! Did you see that game?!" But I'm getting more consistent in that way.

MD: Is it also about understanding what you want to get across on a song, rather than simply, "I'm in a rock band, so I need to rock"?

Chad: Absolutely. It could be about changing the sound. Like this song we were doing yesterday: Hearing the song before I played anything on it, it sounded like a Beatle-y, Ringo-ish thing. I'm not going to sound like Ringo—nobody does—but I might put more dampening on the drums, or change to a bigger snare drum, because I felt that the song would benefit from that sound. And it kind of makes you play differently when you change things. Part of this is about engineering, but some of it comes from you.

So that's a big part of it now: being sensitive to what you think, and to the artist as well. The drums are such an important part of the song. You have to play with confidence. You have to *own* the drums, man. Because if you're unsure about things, the mic' will pick that up. If you make a mis-



Chad's Setup

Drums: Pearl Reference Series

- A. 5x14 snare (14 outer plies of maple, 6 inner plies of birch)
- B. 10x12 tom (6-ply maple)
- C. 14x14 floor tom (4 outer plies of maple, 2 inner plies of mahogany)
- D. 16x16 floor tom (2 outer plies of maple, 4 inner plies of mahogany)
- E. 18x24 bass drum (2 outer plies of maple, 6 inner plies of mahogany)

According to Pearl, Chad was key in their development of the Reference Series drums. After initial R&D over shell composition and bearing edges, Pearl sent the original prototypes to his studio. The Chili Peppers' *Stadium Arcadium* is the first album to feature Reference Series drums.

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 14" AAX X-Celerator Hats
- 2. 18 1/2" Signature Explosion Crash
- 3. 21" AA Rock ride
- 4. 20" AA Rock crash
- 5. 19" AA China

Sticks:

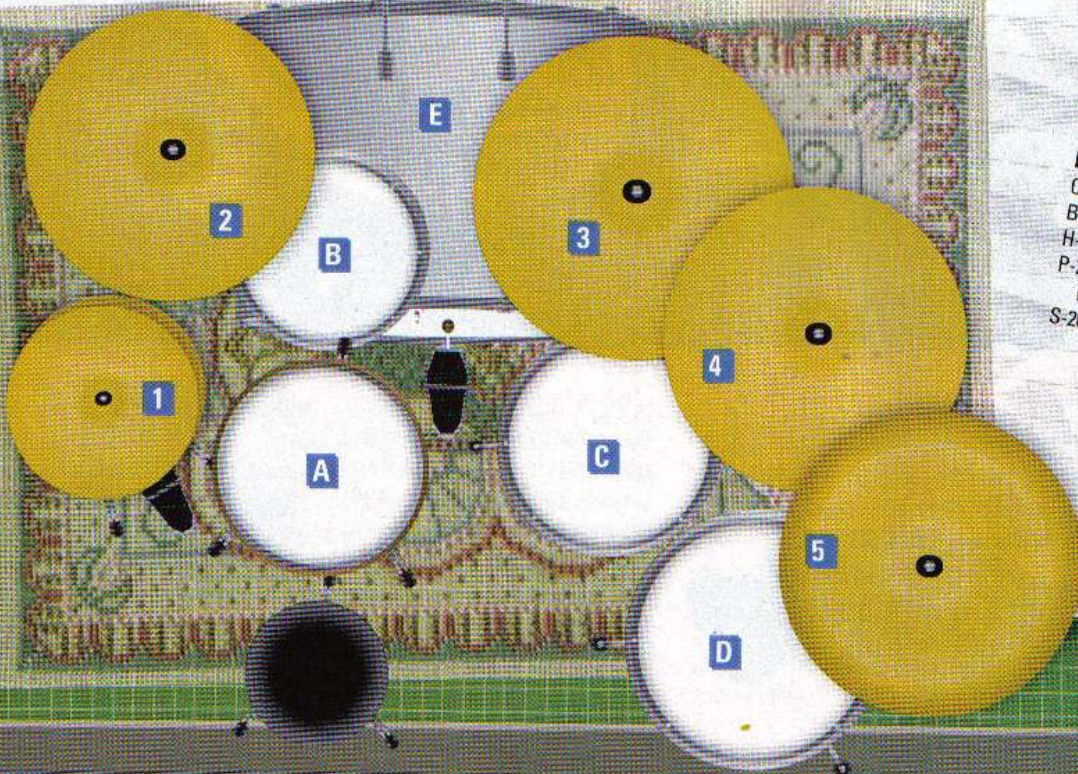
Vater Funk Blasters

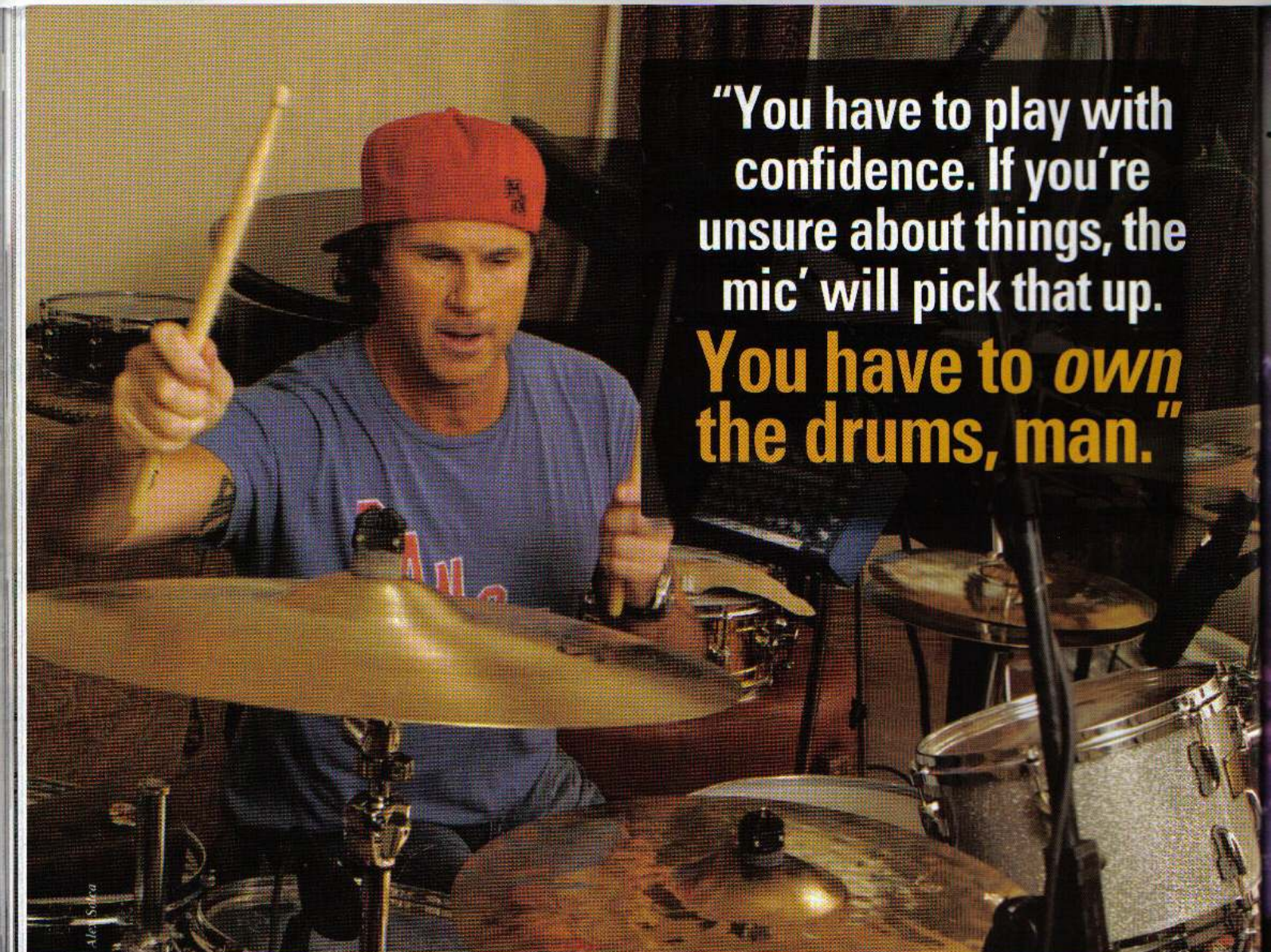
Heads:

Remo clear Emperors on tops of toms, Ambassadors on the bottoms, CS Black Dot on the top of the snare drum

Hardware: Pearl

- C-1000 cymbal stands
- B-1000 boom stand
- H-2000 Eliminator hi-hat
- P-2000C Eliminator chain-drive bass drum pedal
- S-2000 snare stand





"You have to play with confidence. If you're unsure about things, the mic' will pick that up.

You have to own the drums, man."

take, make it big! If you're a bear, be a grizzly on that mistake. If I mess up, I do it twice. Now it's a *part*. [laughs] And sometimes you make a mistake and you're like, I didn't mean to play over the bar, but it sounds really good.

MD: Lately you've made it a point to showcase some of the players you were inspired by growing up, such as the studio-legends feature you spearheaded in this month's issue, as well as the clinics you've been doing with Deep Purple drummer Ian Paice.

Chad: Growing up, I would never in a million years think I'd be making records with Glenn Hughes or doing drumming events with people like Bad Company's Simon Kirke and Ian Paice, and having them say, "I really like the way you play." That's amazing to me. The cool thing is, the young people who enjoy what I do and come out to see me might not normally be exposed to players like them. I think it's important that they learn the lineage. I

wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if it wasn't for this guy or that guy, and there's millions of them that I'd be able to say that about. And from a purely selfish standpoint, it's an excuse to hang out with my heroes and ask them what it was like being on the Starship jet or whatever, or to hang out with Jim Keltner and just soak it up. I love that stuff.

MD: What do drummers most often get wrong when they're trying to rock, or be funky?

Chad: You can't really *try* to be anything. You have to do what the music calls for, but first and foremost you have to be yourself. You have guys like Stewart Copeland or Phil Collins, and you know when you hear them that it's them. Even if they play different kinds of songs, or with different people, their personalities still come through. That's the pinnacle. The individuality of any instrument is what makes people latch onto a song and what makes them like it—or dislike it. At least you're getting

a reaction. There's nothing worse than, "It's okay." I don't want to be "okay." If you believe in it, people pick up on that. I think our band has a sound, we make a statement.

People tend to focus on the heavy metal guys with the fast double bass chops, but there's great guys in every genre of music. Some people are like, "Oh, I don't like country music." Well, go listen to Hank Williams or George Jones or Merle Haggard. That drumming is authentic and soulful and moves people and makes those songs great. Those blues guys, like Buddy Guy—Hendrix wanted to *be* those guys. It all comes from somewhere.

I'm not saying there's not new guys doing it, but I try to go back to Chuck Berry and early guys like that. I can't play like a really good country player. But I can incorporate what their thing is, how they're approaching the music and the feeling. It's really about copping the feeling. It's like when I was younger, I'd listen to Led

After nearly twenty years playing with the same group of musicians, you can bet Chad Smith knows singer Anthony Keidis, bassist Flea, and guitarist John Frusciante pretty darned well—as musicians and as people. So what's at the root of their famous musical telepathy?

"We've known each other a long time," Smith says, "and it's an interesting dynamic. It's kind of changed as we've changed as

other is going to do. He might say, I wrote this part and it's this tight funk thing, or we might make suggestions about each other's parts. But most stuff is unspoken. And Flea's in a great place now. He lives in Malibu and he surfs and he's got a great lady. And he's such a great musician. Forget about the slap-rock-funk-bass thing; he's just incredible, and melodic, and keeps his own time, without relying on the drummer. And

THE BOYS IN THE BAND CHAD ON HIS MUSICAL BROTHERS

Michael Muller



people. I think I'm the most different of all of us. They have closer tastes and likes and outlooks on life. I grew up in the Midwest, and they grew up in Hollywood, so maybe that's some of it. But I don't *ever* feel left out. Before, we'd all party and hang out, but now everybody's got their lives—you know, married with children. And it's fine, it's natural. I don't feel like I have to play golf with Flea or meditate with John to feel connected. We respect ourselves as people and as musicians, and we know that we have something special that we do together. When John left the band and came back, we realized, for whatever reason, these four people are supposed to be playing together. Obviously, with all the material we have on this new record, we still have lots of stuff between us. [laughs]

"Flea and I rarely talk about music," Chad adds, somewhat surprisingly. "Even when we play, we just naturally know what each

that's inspiring.

"Anthony is smart and funny," Chad continues, "and he's gotten really great at finding the essence of a song. He's changing and growing. And he's really fun to be around. He's a great entertainer—though I always have to cue him. [laughs] Again, we don't talk about music very much.

"John Frusciante is the most incredible musician I've ever known," Chad insists, with obvious sincerity. "He just breathes, sleeps, and eats music. He knows everything about every type of music, a walking encyclopedia. That's inspiring. When we show up at rehearsal, I have to be on my toes, because John's coming in with like six great ideas. And his guitar playing on this album...it's *the* guitar album. Not in a loud rock guitar way, but there's a solo on almost every song. John is getting his on this one. [laughs] He's so into every aspect of playing and recording. And he's a sweet guy, like my little brother."

Zeppelin and Van Halen records, and I'd play along, and it was like I was trying to be that guy. I *can't* be that guy, but I want to try to get into that vibe of what he was doing.

MD: What's the easiest way to make a musical companion feel comfortable?

Chad: With the Dixie Chicks we had like eight people tracking at once. Luckily it was all talented people, like Mike Campbell from Tom Petty's band. But I was coming in cold. In situations like that, you go with your gut feeling almost all the time. This was straight-ahead pocket. Every song has its right tempo, especially to sing to. If the singer has to rush or drag, you're screwed. So I always make sure that when we're cutting something, Anthony sings to it.

Besides that, make a good vibe, make sure everybody's happy to be there, and talk. It's very social. You want everyone to be comfortable, because if they're comfortable, they're going to play relaxed. You can't come in like, "Hey, I'm the man!" You just have to serve the song and do what they want you to do.

I didn't play anything that I didn't think was right, but because they wrote the songs, they had a vision, and I had to respect that. In our band, we write everything together, and I know where it came from—though I'm always willing to try anything. You can't get your hairs up if somebody wants to change something. You won't know unless you try it. It might be the stupidest suggestion. You know, "Do something on the toms." I'm a drummer guy, so I go right to the hi-hat. You have to be open. Rick Rubin's really big about that: "It might suck, but just try it for me, I just want to hear it." And you never know what kind of doors that opens creatively. Don't be stuck on this really cool part you came up with at home and really want to fit in somewhere. You have to be open.

MD: Did you find yourself playing different kinds of grooves with The Dixie Chicks? They're not ultra-traditional.

Chad: No, they're not, and on this record it kind of sounds southern California, Sheryl Crow-ish. But I did some waltzes! I didn't say it, but I was thinking, I don't do foxtrots. [laughs] The last time I did that was seventh grade dance class. But they're cool songs...there was this Irish-sounding thing too. But I surprised myself a little.

PROPS FOR PEERS

Want to know more about Chad's drumkit priorities? Read what pops into his mind when asked about some of these famous drummers.

Deep Purple's Ian Paice

English. Funny. Traditional. Huge early influence on me. When I started on the drumset, he was the guy to listen to. And I'm in awe of him, so sometimes I have to remind myself, he's just this guy, like me. But fan guy comes out sometimes, and I know how people are with me at times, so I have to curb my dorkness. I have to dork down. [laughs]

Terry Bozzio

Freak of nature. Sweetheart. Animal. Dale Bozzio. The groove in "U.S. Drag." No one does what he does as far as the drums as a solo instrument. He's taken it to whole new levels, and that's great. A drum ambassador, and an innovator. Always thinking about the future of music and drumming. I'm always interested in what he's doing, because he's always doing something completely mind-blowing. I really like to see him rock out with a band, too.

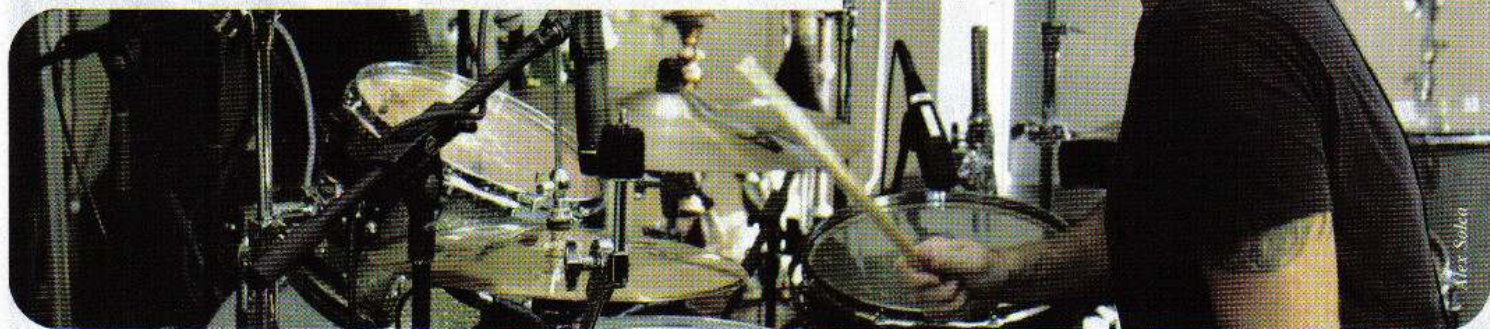
Audioslave's Brad Wilk

A super-nice guy. I really like him as a person. He's a contemporary of mine. Powerhouse. Loves his cymbals, his crashes. Doesn't mind beating the hell out of them for a groove. Funky and hard-hitting. A lot of the stuff I like is in his playing. And he's an integral part of Rage Against The Machine and now Audioslave.

The Who's Keith Moon

The first guy I ever heard who didn't play traditional rock beats, and who put cymbal crashes in the middle of fills. Keith was like the guitar player in the band or something, the lead instrument. He played melodically along to the vocals and stuff. And there can't be a better example of personality on an instrument than Keith Moon. I mean no disrespect to Kenney Jones, who's a great drummer. But you can't approach that. It's a chemistry thing.

Grand Funk Railroad's Don Brewer
Oh, man. Afro. Power trio. Detroit. I saw him when he played with Bob Seger. Where I grew up, you couldn't get away from Grand Funk. I got the yellow vinyl of *We're An American Band*. That era... I played the beat to "We're An American Band" in Hyde Park during my "Drum Homage Medley." I know his drumming seeped in, because I listened to a lot of Grand Funk.



And it's great having new challenges. Going in, I was a little nervous. Not that I thought I wouldn't be able to do it, but it's just like going to a new school; everybody wants to fit in. But Rick was like, "They want to rock up a little bit. You'd be good, come on down." So when I was preparing to bring my drums down there, I was like, "What should I bring?" And Rick was like, "Just be you, I want you to sound like you." Which was really cool, a nice compliment actually.

MD: Did you study up on their records?

Chad: I probably heard one or two of their songs, but I didn't go back and research them. You have to bring your own thing to the table. If they wanted it to be like those older records, they would have gotten the old guy. Unless that guy's dead [laughs] and you're replacing him specifically to

sound like him. But that would be like me wearing a suit or something. I don't wear suits. It won't sound right, so get the guy with the suit.

MD: Let's take the different elements of the drumkit and talk about any obstacles you've had to get past in your development as a drummer. Let's start with the hi-hats.

Chad: For me, the kick, snare, and hi-hat are the holy trinity of the drumkit. With rock and funk, the hi-hat is the thing that the most notes are played on, and it's the lead timekeeper on the kit. Plus there's so much personality you can get out of it, not only the dynamics, but the rhythms that you play, and what you can do with your foot—closed, not closed, in between. It has so many possibilities.

I was a real rock player growing up, a real basher, so my hi-hats used to be really

big and open and sloshy all the time. In 1982 I played in a group in Detroit called Pharaoh that had some the best players in the area. I was twenty years old and I knew the leader's son from high school, so I got picked for the band. The other guys were like, "This guy's a hack, man," these very accomplished North Texas State guys. But the percussionist was Larry Fratangelo from P-Funk, and Larry kind of took me under his wing. He was like, "Here's some Tower Of Power records, learn how to play this."

Larry and I would ride together to rehearsal every day, and we'd listen to all this great music in the car. He turned me on to a lot of funk stuff, and he explained the way that those guys would play the hi-hat—the dynamics, when to open it up right before you go to the chorus, and barks

Chad Smith

and accents you can do with it. Before, I was banging away on it like it was just another cymbal. He also taught me when to do a fill, when not to, how to use toms in my beats, how to think of the kit as one big instrument, keeping time, listening—just musical stuff. I think I was a drummer up until then, and then I became a musician. He's a first-call percussionist in Detroit now and teaches a lot.

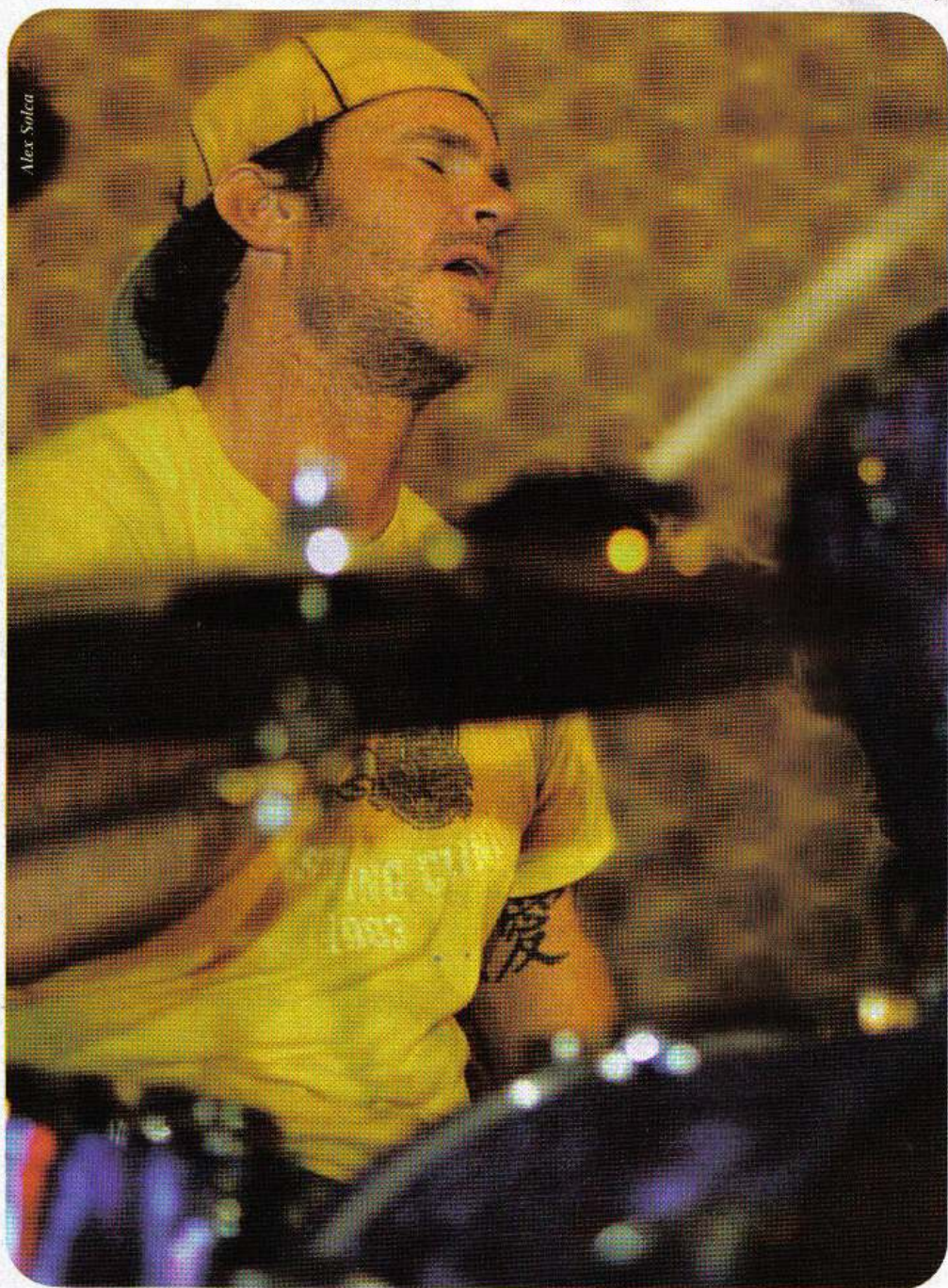
MD: The snare drum.

Chad: The snare drum is the most recognizable voice in the drumset. Like, if it's Stewart Copeland, you'd know it from the snare sound. I used to really analyze snare sounds. I'd go back and listen to those drummers and those records that I love from the early '70s, like Ian Paice, and they had that kind of tight, more jazzy tun-

ing. Bonham's snare drum was tight, although it was a big drum. And I like that. But I couldn't get that sound because I just didn't know how to do it, and I had these bigger drums.

I think once I got into the metal drums and the brass drums and the smaller sizes, I found my sound. When we did *Blood Sugar Sex Magik* I used mainly this 5" Black Beauty. When you find a drum that sounds really good, it makes you play better. The snare is the drum you're playing all the time. That's the backbeat, that's what people are dancing to, and that's what the band hears. It's what pushes the track.

When I got in the Chili Peppers, we were doing a lot of fast, funky stuff, like James Brown on speed. And in order to really cut through, and because of the way I played



Chad Smith

with ghost notes, I used a Pearl free-floating piccolo drum, which wasn't bad. Really cutting. But there wasn't a lot of body to it, so I settled on a 5" drum, and that seems to be versatile enough. I like just a little higher pitch, and the smaller drums give you that. So that's kind of where I'm at right now. On the Glen record, which is more rock, I ended up using a bigger drum, a 6". I used that on the Dixie Chicks album too.

MD: With ghost notes, do you find that it's best if you're not thinking too much about them?

Chad: Yes. I hardly think about it at all. It's just really an extension of how I play a groove. Unless I'm really trying to articulate those notes, then I would think about it. But in general, just playing a straight 2 and 4 groove, I don't think about what my left hand is doing in between. I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing, it's just being natural. I just like the way that sounds. Sometimes Rick will say, "What's all that? You've got to cut that stuff out." I understand what he means, because sometimes it can be too much. It all has to be in the context of the music.

MD: Something I've been thinking of late-

ly in my own playing is finding certain fills that I might just retain for a particular song. Because my tendency is not to plan things, which I'm trying to change a little. So now maybe I'll do a variation on one basic fill, rather than just splattering different ones all over the place. Do you think about that?

Chad: At first I'm just thinking about coming up with a part that will complement the other instruments or the vocals, not so much the variations. Then, going to the second chorus doesn't necessarily mean you have to play more, but rather give the impression that it's a bigger deal this time, maybe leading into the solo. You want to let people know, Here comes the solo! That's exciting. It's about building the song and trying to keep it interesting for the listener. Something new happens, and hopefully you can do it without being distracting. That's the only issue: You don't want to step on anybody.

I'm not a Neil Peart all-thought-out kind of guy. I'm more like you, I just kind of go for it and see what happens. When you're recording, you can go back and listen to it, and you might think, "Hmmm, maybe I should do less" or "maybe I should do more" or "maybe I can serve the same pur-

MAKE IT A DOUBLE

The Chili Peppers' new studio album, *Stadium Arcadium*, is a double, placing it among a special group of rock epics that are busting with so many ideas, a normal disc won't hold them all. For his *Modern Drummer* Listeners Guide, Chad Smith shared his list of favorite double albums, as well as the ones he gravitates to for "special" occasions

Fave double albums:

The Beatles, *White Album*... **The Who**, *Quadrophenia*... **The Clash**, *London Calling*... **Led Zeppelin**, *Physical Graffiti*... **The Rolling Stones**, *Exile On Main Street*... **Kiss**, *Alive*

Morning music: **Johnny Cash**, **The Carpenters**, **Mozart**, **Black Sabbath**

Love me some **Peter Gabriel** and **Marvin Gaye** for the ladies

James Brown if you want to boogie oogie

Pink Floyd for partying (or headphones), **Hendrix** for the headphones (or partying)

Frank Sinatra for martinis before dinner

Sex Pistols for pinball at **The Powerhouse Club**

Humble Pie for cranking your car stereo

Van Halen to play drums to in the garage

Rush to air drum to

The Strokes and **Queen** for late-night pool



Chad Smith

pose with just one snare shot," and leave some space. And that tension makes it exciting. Just from being in the studio and having experience with that, I think I've become pretty good at that.

Sometimes it's about playing as musically as you can, but then at other times it's about just rocking out and the raw excitement of playing something that's kind of off the wall. That can be really cool too, because you get, "Wow, that dude's really going for it." I like that too. I like people who take chances.

MD: What about tempos? At this stage, are they still an issue?

Chad: I'm the one that makes sure the tempos are right. I've got this little Tama metronome thing. That way the guys are confident that the tempo's right. You can end a lot of arguments with that. And then they feel confident when they're playing it, even if they're thinking, "This feels slow tonight," which sometimes happens when you play live every night. Maybe I laid around all day in the hotel: "Oh, this is too fast." No, this is where it is.

MD: I had a strange experience with tempos recently at a gig. I thought there were a couple songs that I started off too slow. So

after the show I was going to apologize to the guitar player, but before I could he was like, "It was a really good show tonight. The tempos seemed really on." And I'm thinking, "Okay, I'm not going to say what I was going to say."

Chad: You never know, man. It is a weird physical phenomenon. When you play every night on tour, and you're like eight months in and you keep playing the same songs, they can really get a little out of whack. Taping is great, if you can stand to listen to it and take the time to go through the tapes. The songs that I don't start, if Flea or John are a little off, I can look at them and kind of give them the old, *This is where it's at*. I try not to make it too obvious, but it's all part of playing live, which is great. Otherwise you have to play with a click. Screw that.

MD: Another thing I struggle with is "jumping on the train," you know, when the drums come in after the song starts, and doing it without affecting the tempo, especially with slower songs.

Chad: Yeah, absolutely. It's harder to play slower tempos in general, just to make them feel confident and solid. Anybody can play fast. You can get away with it.

The more space, the harder it is.

MD: You don't always want to have a hi-hat thing going in those situations, so I try to keep some part of my body moving in time.

Chad: I think your body should be moving all the time. It teaches your limbs to talk to each other, and to do the same thing in certain grooves. I do the same thing when I'm getting ready to count something off. I'm not stiff. I get everything moving. I think it's just like revving your engine. You don't want to stop cold and then step on the gas. So, yeah, I would move something—your head, your neck. You don't have to look like you're air drumming back there, just get into the feel.

MD: Can you recall any difficult musical lesson you had to learn on a gig?

Chad: I did a session with Fishbone, and it was with Billy Bass, who was the bass player for P-Funk for a long time. So it was three bass players: Flea, Billy Bass, and Norwood. And it was me, a percussionist, three guitar players, a keyboard player, horns...there were like ten people. This was at a studio in Venice. I was in this upstairs loft space where the drums were, which was kind of odd. Everybody was on the floor and I was upstairs looking down on them. There was no ending to one particular song, it was just like a fade-out. So I'm playing and everyone's rocking, and we get to the end of the song, so I stop playing. Billy Bass looks up and goes, "What are you doing?! Don't you ever stop until I stop!" And I was like, "Oh, shit!" I was really chastised, in front of all these people. He really let me have it. I was embarrassed. Flea is looking at me like, "Man...look at Billy Bass, don't screw around." And believe me, the next track we did, there was a twenty-minute ending, my friend. The tape ran out. [laughs]

MD: You mentioned in the liner notes of *Greatest Hits And Videos* that the band would hopefully be remembered for more than just "the socks." Ideally, what would you like to be remembered for?

Chad: That we played music that was from our hearts, and that we were honest and passionate and that we are music lovers.... And that we persevered and stayed together twenty-plus years. That's a long time for a band to do what they do and still be relevant. We're very fortunate.

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