TOM TOM MAGAZINE A MAGAZINE ABOUT FEMALE DRUMMERS SUMMER 2014 #18: THE REBEL ISSUE



REBEL ISSUE



Kris Ramos of STOMP

Didi Negron of CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



DISPLAY SUMMER 2014

THE GO GO'S

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THIS ISSUE IS DEDICATED to my favorite person that ever lived and to his favorite number. I love you Aba.

CORRECTIONS FROM ISSUE 17 'Lena Dunham' creator of GIRLS was referred to incorrectly as Leah Dunham.

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TOM TOM THE MISSION

Tom Tom Magazine ® is the only magazine in the world dedicated to female drummers. We are a quarterly print magazine, website, social media community, events and more. Tom Tom serves as the ultimate go-to guide for the latest information about female drummers and beat makers. Tom Tom seeks to raise awareness about female percussionists from all over the world and hopes to inspire women and girls of all ages to drum, all while strengthening and building the community of otherwise fragmented female musicians. We cover drummers of all ages, races, styles, skill level, ability, sexuality, size and notoriety. Tom Tom Magazine is more than just a magazine it is a movement. Get into it.



This issue is focused on the Rebel. The rule breaker. The non-conformist out of the box thinker. If you are a female drummer, a feminist, a social activist or you are just reading this magazine, chances are pretty high that you already fall into that category. And you are in good company, as I feel most of us who work on putting the magazine together and the folks we feature are pretty darn rebellious.

I am not sure when it was that I became aware of the fact that I was a rebel. Being from an immigrant family, nothing in my life ever seemed to quite fit in. By the time I was conscious of the fact that me and my family were different, it was too late. I was already in my pre-teens and committed to doing whatever I wanted and however I felt like it.

Music's origin has been fraught with rebellious characters like us. Drums have been the foundation for many a riot, protest, war and revelry. In this issue we

highlight more risk takers like Gina Shock from The Go Go's and Fav Milton of UK's leading band, Savages. We dip through Brooklyn to check in with break out groups TEEN, Habibi and The Suzan and stop off in Los Angeles to talk to Alicia Warrington who just picked up a gig touring with Kate Nash. We go behind the scenes at Cirque du Soleil's newest show Amaluna to uncover one of the sickest drummers we know, Didi Negron and we get to go backstage with Kris Ramos, the newest member of one of NYC's longest running off Broadway shows, STOMP.

To quote Angela Smith from her newest book entitled Women Drummers, " Viola Smith: Think it over boys. Sometimes the best man for the job isn't.

Drums and Rebellion,

Mindy Seegal Abovitz Founder/Editor-in-Chief

Letters to the Editor



I LOVE TOM TOM HELLO! I just wanted to reach out—as a fan and fellow drummer—and say how much I love this magazine!

—Sophia

Thanks *Tom Tom*—YOU HELPED MAKE MY BOOK ABOUT WOMEN DRUMMERS A REALITY.

-Angela Smith

(author of Women Drummers)

HELLO TOM TOM. LET ME START WITH: YOUR MAG IS AWESOME!

I have yet to get a copy in my hands, but settling with the digital/web content still rocks! I am a drummer based in Montréal and I do a lot of touring with bands, local gigs, freelance stuff. Your usual thing, and I know some great female drummers that are doing some killer stuff.

Thanks so much!

-Lewis

MUCH LOVE AND PLEASE DON'T EVER STOP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING! I'm from New York City and while there are soooo many female musicians/drummers there, the lack of representation/support for them can often feel unbeatably, depressingly low. *Tom Tom* is a gem! Thank you thank you.

-Annelise

I LOVE TOM TOM MAGAZINE! Actually I need to renew my subscription, my boyfriend bought mine last year as a Christmas present so I need to renew it for this year in my name! Great job on it by the way:)

-Carol

Dear ladies at Tom Tom Magazine, Just a short message, because I like the style of your magazine very much. GREAT DESIGN, GREAT PIC-TURES, GREAT STYLE—TOTALLY DIFFERENT THAN ALL OTHER DRUM MAGS I KNOW.

Best of luck with Tom Tom Magazine!

-Catrien
Berlin, Germany

Recently, I ran into your article on this incredible young lady on Facebook and then I found your online magazine and read the article on Paulina. She is INCREDIBLE! To say the least! I just want to thank you for the article and FROM NOW ON I WILL BE LOOKING FOR MORE INCREDIBLE YOUNG DRUMMERS IN YOUR MAGAZINE!

-T.B. Alberta, Canada

The work you are doing to promote women in drumming, music and the arts is so important. And girls really need visible role models like you. **KEEP UP THE FANTASTIC WORK**, and thank you again.

-LeeRay

I am definitely not the most innovative drummer in the world, and I frankly suck at playing, but I love doing it anyway and I am addicted to vintage drums. If I had the money, all of it would go into Rogers snare and obscure japanese kits. I just subscribed to your Issuu page to be able to read the new issues since I don't have access to anything where I am right now!

THANK YOU FOR SUCH AN INSPIR-ING MAG. I REALLY WISH IT EXIST-ED WHEN I WAS 14!

-Julie





THE PEAT AND THE PULSE <



Laila (which means Night in Hebrew) is a hard hitting two-piece based out of Tel Aviv, Israel that leaves you reeling and wanting more. Without much of an online presence and no recorded music available to date, watching them live feels like a rare moment and leaves a larger impact for it. I saw them perform twice while they were in NYC and am looking forward to their first album with bated breath. Shot by Goni Riskin at the *Tom Tom Magazine Frieze Art Festival* with Naama Tsabar.



Skating Polly is 2-piece based out of Oklahoma city, OK. We just found out about them and you should too.

PANDS TO LOOK OUT FOR

QUAALUDES [Art Rock No Wave] // San Fransisco, CA // facebook.com/quaaludesmusic WE WILL BE LIONS [Psychedelic Glam Rock] // San Fransisco, CA // wewillbelions.com **SKATING POLLY** [Ugly Pop] // Oklahoma City, OK // facebook.com/skatingpolly THE BLACK SHEEP [Pop Rock] // Köln, Germany // theblacksheep.de DRUM LESSONS GIRL [Free Drum Education] // Online // drumlessonsgirl.com **DEMI MONDAINE** [Chanson Rock] // Paris, FR // demimondaine.fr **EX HEX** [Punk] // Washington, DC // exhexband.com KATINKA [Funk Punk Rock] // Mannheim, Germany // facebook.com/katinkaband ALISA JOE AND GYRL PROBLEMS [R&B/Soul] // Philly, PA// facebook.com/alisajoeandgyrlproblems HECTOR BIZERK [Hip Hop/Alternative] // Glasgow, Scottland // soundcloud.com/hector-bizerk IF NOT FOR DREAMING [Alt Rock/Pop] // New Haven, CT // ifnotfordreaming.com LITTLE BAND OF SAILORS [Incantation/Dance] // NY, NY // littlebandofsailors.com BAA RAM EWE [Indie] // West Philly, PA // baa-ram-ewe-band.tumblr.com THE WARNING [Rock] // Monterrey, Mexico // facebook.com/thewarningmusic3 BUNNY FIVE COAT [Punk Rock] // Pittsburgh, PA // facebook.com/BunnyFiveCoat/info CHOKING ON BLEACH [Alt Rock] // Brooklyn, NY // chokingonbleach.com THE BOXTONES [Rock] // Dubai, UAE // boxtonesband.com FIELDED [post-apocalyptic pop] // Brooklyn, NY // fielded.tumblr.com

WITCHSISTER









PHOTOS BY ANNA HUTCHINSON

We just got really into the four-piece all girl garage rock band based out of Fayetteville, Arkansas called Witchsister. The band, made up of real life sisters, just finished recording a five song EP with East Hall. Their drummer, Kelsey (Kelso) Petet, commented on the recording by saying her favorite part was getting to track drums on a 1972 Ludwig four piece. "The tonality of the toms was so rich," she said. Hear them here: soundcloud.com/witchsister





As a female drummer I'm often annoyed that the 'female' is recognized before the 'drummer.' All genders should have the same eligibility and ability to play the drums. However there is one very specific problem for female drummers. I'm talking about boobs. Honestly I wish we could just go topless and avoid the issue altogether but unfortunately that can one, be very painful and two, bring more attention to your boobs than your beats. Drumming is like a sport and we gotta play it right. Here are some stories from female drummers about their boob struggles.



BIKINI KILLS

Anonymous: I was playing an outdoor concert in the middle of the summer in a bikini top and a low cut tank top. I was having a blast and really rocking out. In the middle of one song the knot in the back came undone and my bikini top was swinging back and forth from my neck. I had to finish the song with the bikini barely hanging there. I'm pretty sure the audience saw a lot of sideboob that day, not ideal.



GETTING CAUGHT

My drum group and I were standing behind curtains as we waited to be announced. We were wearing cowrie-shell bras and long dangling earrings (not the ideal drumming combo) and right before the curtains dropped my earring got caught in my bra strap. Within seconds I needed to detangle it. Luckily my bandmates rescued me and I was safe. Lesson learned—it's more fashionable to wear something I can drum in.



STRAPLESS OR BUST

Anonymous: The straps fall off I'd say about 85% of the time. I've had moments where I'll be in the middle of a song and my boob decides to make an appearance ... but luckily my friends usually pull through and come to my rescue. I have a select few who are constantly on bra patrol. I sometimes wish it was okay to be completely topless. I'd be all about that.

THE MAGIC BRA

Anonymous: This is not a joke ... As a drummer with small, rounded shoulders, I have always struggled to find bras with straps that don't fall off whilst hitting the drums. For most of my drumming life I have had to put up with straps falling down my arm, thus limiting arm movement, which causes me to lose my groove. In Australia we are pretty behind in boob support technology. However I found this bra while visiting the US in 2012 and have never looked back! (Front-Close Racerback Demi Bra).

DANGER: CAMERA MAN

Anonymous: When I was playing drums in the Dan Deacon ensemble at Bonnaroo, there were three other drummers playing simultaneously: Greg Fox, Denny Bowen of Double Dagger, and David Jacober from Dope Body. It was sooooooo hot out. In the middle of the set, the other drummers took their shirts off and I was like "fux it" and took my shirt off too. I was wearing one of those bikini bras from American Apparel. One of the dudes from the camera crew who was filming the set came over to me and started exclusively filming my boobs. He was being horribly obvious about it. I think a lot of people might have felt uncomfortable with this, and I guess I did a little bit too, but mostly I thought it was pretty funny. I have since attempted to locate the tape, but have been unable to do so. Maybe he kept the footage in his private collection...

PARADIDDLE JIGGLE

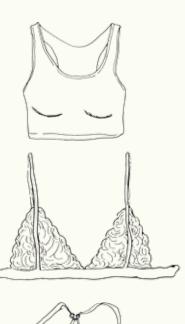
Anonymous: If you have smaller boobs and you usually don't wear a bra that doesn't mean you can go sans bra on stage. Your boobs will still shake around (you can only imagine a paradiddle-diddle) plus the stage lights have a weird effect of making materials transparent. One show I wore a light breezy white tank on stage without a bra and only realized once I looked down that the whole crowd could see right through the shirt to my boobs! That felt like the longest show ever. Pretty much was the reality of one of those naked dreams.

DRUMS AND BREASTS IN EQUAL MEASURES

Anonymous: If you wear a shitty non-supportive bra you are screwed, you bounce too much and everyone is focusing on your boobs instead of your beats. Once I was wearing a button up dress that had become a little too small for me and the buttons across my boobs popped open mid song, a photographer from Impose Magazine took a photo and the tagline was "Drums and Breasts in Equal Measures." Awesome (not). I also have pretty small shoulders compared to my cup size so even if I tighten the straps they end up sliding down and throwing me off, such a pain in the butt (or boob as it were). I now have a trick where I wrap the sleeve of my T-shirt up and around my bra straps to keep everything tucked in, like rolling a pack of cigarettes in your sleeve.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Anonymous: I was playing in a beauty supply store in a shopping center in San Francisco. The lights above us were so bright that it almost felt like I was sitting in the middle of a fashion show. Of course I happened to be wearing a see-through shirt and as soon as I started playing my bra strap fell off my shoulder. My boobs have grown a size or two since I last wore that bra so I could just feel the cusp of my entire breast resting over the fabric. I tried to cover it with my forearm but that prevented me from being able to keep the beat so I just played through it. It kind of made me feel like Tiva from Fantastic Planet and that is extremely worth the exposure.

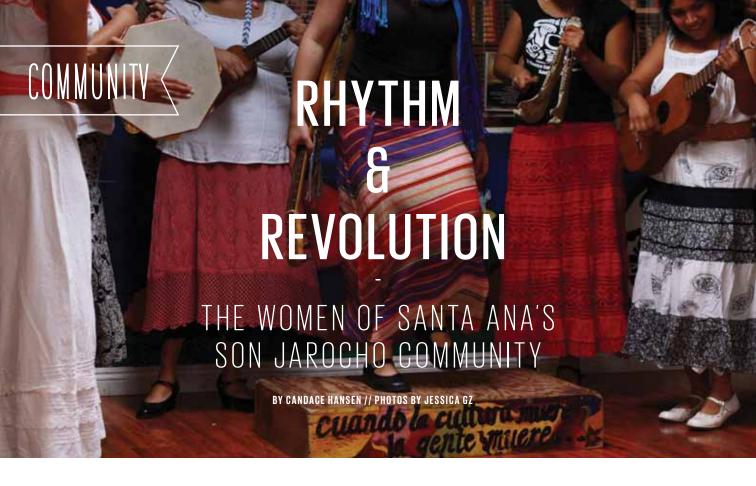








	A CUP	B CUP	C CUP	D CUP
JAZZ	Target Bralette	American Apparel Jersey Cross-Back Bra		
POP/INDIE			Victoria's Secret Racer- back Bra	
ROCK/PUNK		Gap Racerback Pullover Bra	Spanx Racerback Under- wire Bra	Macy's Wacaol Sport Underwire Bra
WORLD	Urban Outfitters Racerback Bra		H&M Sport's Bra High Support	



In a small brick building tucked behind the Orange County Bar Association the sound of feet tapping rhythmically accompanies beautiful vocal melodies and the fierce strumming of a jarana. Voices resonate throughout the empty parking lot of the downtown district and get lost in the night breeze. The building has been christened Orange County's leading finishing school for radicals. It's not an underground punk or hardcore venue or even a coffee shop—it's El Centro Cultural de Mexico, a non-profit community center that boasts free classes and events ranging from art shows to workshops. On this chilly Tuesday evening, the women of Santa Ana's Son Jarocho community have arrived early and are warming up for class.

Son Jarocho music started in Veracruz, Mexico. It is the traditional music of the South-Eastern Mexican countryside. For Mexican Americans this style of music has become a way to connect with their roots. Like many others cities, Santa Ana has created a community where activism, social justice, music, song and dance have become one. The heart of Son Jarocho music is a pulsing rhythm played on a large box called the tarima. Tonight, Ana dances on the box executing grace and style while not missing a single beat; stomping and stepping with dynamics, power and precision. Michelle keeps perfect time on the quijada hitting every downbeat and tastefully filling in with a guiro-style scrape of the teeth of the donkey's jawbone. They both drive the rhythm while belting out vocals. Four stringed instruments make up the melody—Yuri plays the jarana segunda with a fierce biting tone, Carmen L plays her Ito with conviction, Teri rhythmically strums her tercera and Carmen C holds down tasteful vocal harmonies and fills out the sound with the booming bass tones of her full size tercera.

Son Jarocho is popular music rooted to people, particularly farmers living in communal style countryside ranchos, which has made its way all over the world. Its roots are mestizo, mixing African, European, and Indigenous cultures. Not really intended for a stage or to pump out what we would consider to be rock stars or super groups, Son Jarocho is fluid, and a way for people to connect, spend time with others, travel and create community. The songs are inviting and familiar, beautiful and tragic. Some say that it's the manifestation of a value system where people need each other. Its practices breed inclusion and respect, for each other, community, history and tradition. For these reasons Son Jarocho, to many, is a representation of cultural resistance in the face of outside forces.

THIS BECAME MY THERAPY

Son Jarocho builds communities wherever it manifests itself. For some transplants living in the US, it is a familiar reminder of home, for others is the opportunity to engage in a living history of heritage. In 2007, Yuri began attending Son Jarocho classes in Santa Ana and found it to be her therapy. In 2011, she had the opportunity to travel to Veracruz and study with some of the most involved people in the Son Jarocho movement. She tells us the story of how she learned to embrace her femininity on the tarima and how inspired she was after being part of the learning community that summer. "I have a little bit of all my teachers in me when I dance." Teri traveled to many places; "I feel like Son Jarocho has allowed me to connect to a community in the many places I have gone." Carmen L was first brought to Son Jarocho at California State University Fullerton. "I knew how powerful it

was immediately," she remembers, "it brought me to all of these women." Son Jarocho is "Neither here, neither there" she states. After coming to the US when she was a very young girl, she is able to empathize with Son Jarocho in that feeling of being between places.

IT EXPOSED ME TO A SPACE OF ORGANIZING

Ana is from Colima and has been part of the Son Jarocho collective at El Centro Cultural de Mexico in Santa Ana for many years. She impresses how formative El Centro has been in her life, particularly in creating a space for her to learn to organize and cultivate her activism. One day she decided to go on a trip that changed her life. She went to many places, one of them being Veracruz. She was struck by the way that people, not corporations or labels, own the music of Son Jarocho. The United States has created a Son Jarocho community that is as equally committed to social justice as traditional Son Jarocho culture. For Ana and many others, the collectivism of Son Jarocho is a refuge from the consumer driven culture that we live in. The women talk about how everything is privatized in the US, even sometimes our emotions. In this culture of maximizing and monetizing, it becomes radical to value the interactions we share with one another as well as ourselves. Sharing is not common in US culture, but within Son Jarocho the music, time, and space are all a celebration of the collective.

Carmen C, the woman playing full size tercera at the beginning of our introductions, reminds us how women and men both play an important role in the music and culture of Son Jarocho.

Collectivism is critical; being mindful of each other musically is the only way to pull off the rhythms and harmonies that make Son Jarocho what it is. While Son Jarocho aims to bring people back to a state of collectivism and community, some people feel restricted by the existence of traditional gender roles. Some things are changing though—in some cities there are strong gay male centric populations of Son Jarocho musicians and performers taking on traditionally female roles. For women existing outside of the binary, the dance of balancing their perceived and internal femininity and masculinity is both a celebration and a challenge. As traditional as gender may be, Carmen C reminds us that through music "we can transcend who we are and have true solidarity."

The social justice aspect of Son Jarocho is both outright and inherent. In Santa Ana, many people involved in the Son Jarocho community are also actively engaged in local social justice organizations like the Santa Ana Boys and Men of Color organization working to stop the criminalization of young boys and men of color. And groups like COPWATCH Santa Ana which works to inform the public of when and where the police checkpoints are located, that yield more deportations and car impoundments of sober undocumented families than drunk drivers, as well as educating people on how to create and sustain justice at the local community level. On top of all of this amazing community work that they do, many of them teach Son Jarocho classes at El Centro Cultural on a regular basis and keep up their own work and school commitments. The woman of the Santa Ana Son Jarocho scene work tirelessly to create community; their work is a form of resistance against oppression and colonization within their own communities and within the US at large.







BY MAR GIMENO LUMBIARRES PHOTO BY FER VEGA

There are many young children who drums on Youtube cover videos. They're super cute and sometimes good drummers, but you're usually left thinking: "they're pretty good for their age." In the case of Paulina Villarreal Velez, however, what really caught my attention is her great technique, which I dare say is better than most teens or adults I know. She owns her skills and she's definitely going places. Paulina is mature, expressive and most importantly, she knows working hard is the only way to achieve things in life.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START?

Paulina Villarreal Vélez: I started at age 3 with musical initiation, then I took piano at 4. When I was 6 my parents bought me the Rock Band game. I only wanted to play the drums and would not even let my sisters play. That's when my dad noticed I was good with tempo and coordination, so I got started with drum lessons.

TELL ME ABOUT DEVELOPING YOUR DRUMMING SKILLS.

I first started with the basics: drumsticks holding, paradiddles and basic rhythms. Then I went through more technique such as doubles and triplets. If I had to choose I'd rather stay with rock genre music although my teachers eventually introduced me to the funk and jazz world. Muse is a great influence band to me.

PEOPLE KNOW YOU FROM YOUR YOUTUBE DRUM COVERS, ESPECIALLY YOUR VERSION OF KELLY CLARKSON'S "MY LIFE WOULD SUCK WITHOUT YOU." WHAT WAS THE PROCESS FOR LEARNING THAT COVER?

When I was told I had to learn it I thought I could never make it. It took too many hours of practice with my teacher and on my own.

I remember, I finally played it through perfectly and then realized that I had the camera turned off. I felt horrible and cried because I had been trying so hard so many times to play it perfectly. In the end, my mom sat here by my side. That made me feel comfortable and I ended playing the whole song right again. OH MAN. PERSEVERANCE REALLY PAYS OFF. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE WARNING, YOUR BAND, HOW DID IT COME TO BE?

My sisters and I chose instruments that we could play together. My older sister Dani plays the guitar and Ale, the youngest, plays the bass. While Dani sings my younger sister and I focus on the backing vocals. This is how The Warning was born. If I were playing with friends it would be difficult to combine our schedules. But my sisters are The Warning so we can play when

we want because we live in the same house. What I like the most is whenever I make a mistake my sisters don't tell me in an indirect way. They just speak their minds frankly and directly.

HOW DOES DRUMMING MAKE YOU FEEL?

I am one of those children who has no patience. If I play the piano and make a mistake, I despair and would love to hit it, but I'm not allowed. Instead, when I'm on my drums and make a mistake I actually hit them and afterwards feel relaxed. I also like the fact that I can improvise and invent my own rhythms. Playing the drums has this groove that makes you want to move. I feel as if all the energy I have saved flows from me. I finally feel tired but very proud

and happy that things have turned out right. That's what I enjoy, doing what I like to do and having a good time. The most important thing of all is to play because you love it. That's the message I want to give.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL IS TO PLAY **BECAUSE YOU LOVE** IT. THAT'S THE **MESSAGE I WANT** TO GIVE.

APT <

THE ART OF DRUMMING:

KUNIKO KATO

WORDS BY EMI KARIYA

PHOTOS BY EISHIN YOSHIDA COURTESY OF JAPAN SOCIETY NEW YORK

I may never meet a percussionist who understands rhythm as much as Kuniko Kato does. Praised by Steve Reich as a "first-rate percussionist," I was grateful to see her perform at the Japan Society in early May. The performance was a collaboration with the composer lannis Xenakis, the Italian choreographer Luca Veggetti, the dancer Megumi Nakamura and Kuniko Kato on an intricate set up of percussion which included a marimba and gongs. She performed the Pleiadis piece, which included her performing live along with five separate video projections of herself playing. It was simply mesmerizing and beautiful. I tapped into her senses to try and understand a little bit of what seems like an extraordinary body movement in her percussion practice and performance.



TOM TOM MAGAZINE: HOW DID YOU GET INTO STUDYING MUSIC AND WHAT PARTICULARLY APPEALED TO YOU ABOUT MARIMBA?

Kuniko Kato: I started with piano lessons because my sister was playing it. But my hands were small and as I got older I wasn't able to play more complicated music, such as Beethoven and Debussy, in the way I wanted to play it. When I started to study with Ms. Keiko Abe, a legendary marimba player, I discovered myself feeling more comfortable about expressing music in rhythm. I didn't care for going to school for music then, I simply wanted to continue playing music. But Ms. Abe recommended that I study at Toho Gakuen, and I enjoyed it.

I HAVE READ IN YOUR PROFILE THAT YOUR STYLE OF PERFORMANCE IS HIGHLY ACCLAIMED AS MUSIC CREATED WITH EXCELLENT PHYSICAL ABILITY. COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT IN YOUR OWN WORDS?

As you focus on making the best hit for each sound, it only comes out naturally with the appropriate body movement. I realize this more and more as I grow older and become more experienced. I understand the importance of practicing yoga and its breathing and form.

Expressing rhythm in dancing begins with body movement to the existing music but with percussion, I focus on how to control each hit to make it the best sound I want to express, and that naturally brings in the body movement.



THIS CURRENT WORK YOU ARE PERFORMING, PROJECT IX - PLEIADES BY IANNIS XENAKIS, FEATURES ONE OF HIS MOST COMPLEX PIECES. IS THERE ANY ELEMENT THAT TAKES MORE CONCENTRATION FOR THIS PIECE, ESPECIALLY IN THIS SIX PIECE COLLABORATION WITH YOURSELF?

That's an interesting question! Music by Iannis Xenakis is really complicated-5-8 beat layered with 9-10 beat and so forth. It's really hard to grasp the music by reading the score. As you gradually decipher the puzzles for all six tracks of the composition one at a time, you begin to understand that there lies a beautiful phrase within what may seem like a chaos. And when I thought about how to express it myself, I came up with the idea of six panel projections of myself playing each track to compose the whole piece. It took some effort because the piece is not arrangeable like Steve Reich's, and it is pointless if you eliminate any of the tracks from the composition. I think showing the same person, me, playing all the tracks simultaneously made it rather interesting in its own way where you can see the sensitive rhythm changes in the movement, such as changes from 5-7 to 5-8 beats.

IT SEEMS THAT YOU ARE FOND OF THE SOUND OF NATURAL INSTRUMENTS, NOT ONLY MARIMBA BUT ALSO LOG DRUMS AND EVEN CLAY POTS. COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DIFFERENCE OF THE SOUND IN COMPARISON TO COMMON DRUMS? DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE MORE HIGHLY DEVELOPED HEARING THAN THE AVERAGE LAYPERSON?

The sounds of nature are good for your body. Within the log drums that Osamu Ishikawa carves for me, there are various sizes and tones. We all play them together from kids to adults in my class where the sound becomes quite full and the vibration feels really precious on our bodies. I don't think that my hearing is extraordinary. What I do think is that people in current urban settings tend to shut-out sounds because there is con-

stantly too much noise. When you are in nature, in mountains and rivers and trees, you can hear every sound more clearly. You miss out on lots of sounds when the atmosphere is crowded with noise and people only hear what they want to hear. In that sense, I'm no different than others and not open to all sounds. But when it comes to the sound I'm creating, I give my concentration to every detailed corner of it.

WHAT DO YOU MOST COMMUNICATE THROUGH YOUR CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS WITH CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

I'm not necessarily "teaching" them how to drum. Instead everyone's rather freely hitting the instruments. Within that "free drumming," I try and build a rhythm that they can get into and take them to a level where it naturally feels good and fun. Kids with disabilities tend to bite into it quicker. Playing with them gives me new freedom and findings as well.



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BACKSTAGE AT

KRIS RAMUS IALKS ADDOL BROWN WITH NYC'S LONGEST OFF BROADWAY PERCUSSION SHOW BY KATE RYAN KRIS RAMOS TALKS ABOUT DRUMMING

BY KATE RYAN PHOTOS BY IKUE YOSHIDA



After months of auditions, constant practice, and a fair amount of leaving it up to the universe, Kris Lee Ramos got the call that she was going to be the newest addition to New York City's underground percussion classic STOMP. Now she's here, performing in eight shows a week, and generally taking the city by the horns.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: DID YOU ALWAYS KNOW THAT YOU WANTED TO DRUM IN THEATRE PRODUCTIONS?

Kris Lee Ramos: No. STOMP is my first theatre production. I grew up as a jazz drummer involved in many aspects of performing behind a kit and in orchestral/school band settings. I love rhythm and that is the essence of STOMP. I had seen STOMP when I graduated fifth grade - I remember the night of my graduation my dad taking me to see the show. I saw it again in my teens. It wasn't until a singer/songwriter friend planted the seed and encouraged me to audition for STOMP that I even considered it, although I had no theatre background.

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO DRUMMING. AND HOW DID YOUR PATH LEAD YOU TO STOMP?

I was banging on pots and pans on the kitchen floor at age three and graduated to the snare drum by the time I was nine. I enjoyed sight reading - I really loved it. My elementary school drum teacher was very inspirational and told me I was better than all the boys. When I was 10, my mom bought me a used CB drum set. From then on, I was hooked. I was involved with extracurricular music from junior high through college. I studied Music Production Technology at the Hartt School and then moved to Providence, RI where I facilitated percussion workshops with



urban youth. A lot of my workshops are STOMP inspired—using everyday household items to create music, so when I heard STOMP was holding open auditions I went for it.

HOW IS THIS JOB DIFFERENT FROM OTHER DRUMMING EXPERIENCES?

The show is completely prop-oriented. No one grows up with special training in brooms and trash can lids. The props are a conduit to what you can do rhythmically. What may be easy to play on a practice pad is completely different when playing with

a wooden pole and hammer handle. Prior to STOMP, I had always played behind the kit. I felt so exposed when I first started performing with STOMP, just out there - vulnerable with no drum kit in front of me.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO PREPARE FOR A SHOW?

I get to the theater early, set my props, warm up, and stretch before rehearsal. 20 minutes before we go on stage is my favorite. We meet in the green room to clap through routines or talk through parts of the show. It's a time where we can set the tone for the night. The solidarity and love that flows immediately before a show is what propels me to perform at my best.

WHAT SKILLS HAVE YOU LEARNED THROUGH THIS, AND HOW HAS IT HELPED YOU GROW AS A DRUMMER?

Listening. STOMP is an incredibly tight ensemble. Balancing the finesse of a prop and being spatially aware on stage is always a challenge, learning to vibe with the cast and connect with

the audience is an ongoing, creative process. The demands of the show have made me physically stronger and have helped me to cultivate a workout discipline. A lot of this job is being depend-

NAME: KRIS LEE RAMOS AGE: 27 HOMETOWN: COLCHESTER, CT LIVES IN: NYC PAST BANDS: THE KIM TRUSTY BAND, GUERILLA MONASTICS DRUM SET UP: FOUR PIECE CUSTOM MADE NESTING KIT FROM DRUMMERS WORLD IN NYC. DW 7000 PEDAL SECONDARY SNARE: 3X13 PEARL PICCOLO, DW AND TAMA **HARDWARE** CYMBAL SET UP: 14" ZILDJIAN A CUSTOM HH'S, 16" PAISTE MEDIUM CRASH, 22" SABIAN RIDE STICKS: REGAL TIP 7AN'S FOR JAZZ AND VATER 5A'S AND VIC FIRTH STEVE SMITH SIGNATURES FOR ALL ELSE **FAVORITE PERCUSSION** PIECE: THE DJEMBE FAVORITE VENUE: HARPA THEATRE IN REYKJAVIK, ICELAND



able - being on time, taking criticism positively, and having a willingness to practice. This is a profession and creative outlet that I do not take for granted.

ARE THE ROLES IN STOMP GENDER-SPECIFIED?

How have you dealt with being only one of two women in the cast? There are certain roles that are female or male preferred. The characters are modeled after the original London STOMP cast members. The producers will cast new members into a role that will fit well, whether it be male or female. I love being a gal on the stage with the guys. My goal is to get to the point in my performing career where they need to keep up with me.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER WOMEN WHO DREAM OF LANDING A JOB LIKE THIS?

Tenacity is key. I auditioned twice before I was considered for the show. Timing is everything. Talent is important, but the producers may not see you fitting in at that moment or with that particular cast. Be patient. Have fun. The casting directors want to see that you're confident. Your music doesn't have to be perfect, you just have to go in there knowing who you

are and play to your strengths. Fluidity with others on stage is paramount. Enjoy the process. Be kind and supportive to others, they want this dream as much as you do.

DIDINEGRON ROCKS AMALUNA

BY: MELODY BERGER LIVE PERFORMANCE PHOTOS: IKUE YOSHIDA

With Cirque Du Soleil's Amaluna, director Diane Paulus (known for her Tony Award winning revivals of Hair and Pippin) has created an enchanting female-centric island. 70% of the cast and the entire band are comprised of women ass-kickers. Loosely based on the Tempest, Amaluna has all the death-defying acrobatics and fantastical theatrics one would expect from a Cirque show. And through it all, Didi Negron, drummer extraordinaire, pounds out a formidable rhythm from her smoke filled cage in the back stage-right corner. Out of the way, yet ever present, she is the primal heart of this magical island. When the circus rolled through New York City, *Tom Tom* had a chance to catch the show and have a backstage tour and chat.





TOM TOM MAGAZINE: HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH CIRQUE AND WHAT ARE YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR SOMEONE INTERESTED IN LANDING A SIMILAR KIND OF GIG?

Didi Negron: I didn't really have to audition because I got scouted. He saw me online so he had all my information and videos set up for the board and directors. When I answered their email saying, yes, I'm interested, they considered me along with fifteen other candidates who had auditioned. So, I'm not really sure what's involved with the audition process. I do know there are some pieces that Cirque requires you to perform and there are calls where you can actually audition for Cirque in person, but for me I didn't have to do that.

The only thing I had to do was send an mp3 of a song of my choice and my resume. The whole process took about two months and then I got the call.

WHEN I SAW YOUR SHOW YOU TOLD ME THAT YOU'VE NEVER MISSED A CIRQUE PERFORMANCE, IS THAT STILL THE CASE?

Yeah, still! And I've been on tour for around two and half years now, so that's over 720 something plus shows! We started with 8 show weeks, but we've had some 10 show weeks. When we have those I literally have to talk to myself, to pace myself throughout the week. And it's weird, I lose track of the days.

YOUR COSTUME IS QUITE SPLENDID. YOU TOLD ME YOU USED TO HAVE TO WEAR A CRAZY WIG AS WELL?

It was a lime green wig filled with spikes, and some yellow, purple and pink. I had to watch my clearance, especially going into my drum booth, it was pretty tight. With the wig as well I had this superhero looking makeup. I had lime green going across my face and some yellow, and it was pretty cool. But they decided, okay, let's have more of a natural look to match the rest of the band.

SO, THIS IS THE FIRST INCARNATION OF AMALUNA AND YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH IT FROM THE START?

Yes! And they have had female percussionists on other Cirque shows before, but it's pretty cool to be the first female drummer. And in the first all-female band. SOME BAND MEMBERS FLY UP TO THE CEILING WHILE PLAYING. ARE YOU GLAD YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THAT?

Oh, I would love to do that! Trust me, during the creative I tried to convince everyone I could do like a Travis Barker thing, where I'm spinning. Or Buddy Rich used to do stuff like that. He'd be upside down and they'd spin him. I tried to pitch that out to them, but it didn't work.

It was pretty interesting, being part of the creation from the beginning, there have been so many changes. Originally I was supposed to come out on stage more, but the drum kit was too loud for the tent. At one point I did have a drum solo where

I would have blown everyone's ears out. So then we just decided to stay in the back with the drumkit, I really don't mind, because the sound is so much better.

HAVE YOU LEARNED ANY
CIRCUS TRICKS WHILE ON
TOUR?

I've learned how to do handstands, I've learned how to walk on the tightwire. I've been working on my juggling skills, because my goal is to juggle with drumsticks, and it's really hard! So, yeah, working in the circus I have learned a few tricks here and there.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED AS
A DRUMMER FROM THIS GIG?
WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS
GIG AS OPPOSED TO TOURING WITH
A BAND? DO YOU HAVE TO GO MORE OFF
OF SIGHT CUES RATHER THAN SOUND?

It's pretty cool actually. Being used to just performing with a band and that being the main thing, now I'm performing and also playing for acrobats. So I have to be in sync with them. Watching them every night, and catching their next move. For each artist, I kind of know their acts, I learn their tricks. I study their body movements so I know what their next move is so I can enhance it and do a nice little fill. Not only do I have to pay attention to the music and what I'm playing, but I have to be aware of what is happening on stage. They're not worried about the music. They are following it to some extent, but they're mainly focused on what they're doing. They can be completely out of time when doing a trick. So I kind of have to split my brain in two: keep the tempo going with the music while catching their little changes every night. It helps my skills as a drummer and keeps me on my toes. I get asked this a lot, 'so, do you get tired of playing the same music every night?' And really, for me, it's different every night. That's what keeps it exciting.



PLANNINGTOROCK

ALL LOVE'S LEGAL

BY LAUREN FLAX
PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Once upon a time, there was a volcano that no one other than an Icelandic person could pronounce. That volcano kept me grounded in Berlin for an extra couple of weeks, which is considerably lucky since it's one of the more affordable European cities for an American. Due to this natural disaster, I was in town long enough to see MEN (my good friend JD Samson's band). On that night, I hung out with one of my soul mates for the first time. That person is Jam Rostron, aka Planningtorock. Jam is a music producer and video director who has collaborated with The Knife Opera with Matt Sims as well as CREEP. I jumped at the chance to pick her brain while she was on tour supporting her third album, All Love's Legal, which she self-released on her brand new record label, HUMAN LEVEL.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: YOU ARE CUT FROM YOUR OWN CLOTH. GROWING UP, WHAT WERE YOUR BIGGEST MUSICAL AND NON-MUSICAL INFLU-ENCES?

Planningtorock: It was my mum Janet who first introduced me to music through her own fabulous and eclectic taste and from then on music was my big love. Film has also had a strong influence on me. When music and film come together I think it's one of the most power languages around.

YOU GREW UP IN NORTHERN ENGLAND BUT HAVE BEEN IN BERLIN FOR 12+ YEARS NOW. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE ON BERLIN?

I think Berlin chose me. I arrived in Berlin back in 1999 to make an art project with friends and fell completely in love with the place. It wasn't planned and I had no initial intention of staying but I began to form some of my most important friendships here and loved living outside of the culture I was brought up in.

THERE IS A STRONG POLITICAL AND HUMAN-IST PRESENCE IN YOUR MUSIC. HAVE YOU HAD ANY BACKLASH FROM PEOPLE WITH OPPOSING VIEWS?

It's been an amazing experience and people have really embraced the record. I'm learning a lot because people are being so open and sharing knowledge with me and bringing their own interesting ideas and opinions about these issues, which is more than I could have hoped for!

WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO WRITING A SONG AND WHAT GEAR ARE YOU USING?

For this album I wrote the lyrics first which I'd not done in the past. Each track was like an exercise in achieving a balance between open lyrical messages and a sonic home that would work with that. I wanted the songs to be total uppers with a very inviting/inclusive feel ... lots of fun riffs that you could sing along with. The album is a self-released LP through my label HUMAN LEVEL so there were a lot of economic limits—but this was a political choice, and I wanted these limits to be transparent and play a role in the album. I recorded using mostly digital plugins and virtual instruments because I can't afford analogue gear. I do like both analogue and digital and reject any hierarchy between the two ... it's all cool. But digital is great because of its easy access and affordability.

YOU FIND A MAGICAL WAY TO PARTNER MUSIC WITH PERFORMANCE ART, FROM YOUR PROSTHETIC NOSE TO YOUR VISUALLY STUNNING VIDEOS. WHERE DO YOU PULL INSPIRATION FROM?

The video and visuals like the music are motivated by a genuine investigation into topics like gender identity, sexuality and social constructs. These are all things that I'm trying to expand upon and challenge in my own life, as well as creatively.



MOTOWN MEETS THE MIDDLE EAST

WORDS BY MELODY BERGER PHOTOS BY IKUE YOSHIDA

Brooklyn based band Habibi, whose name means 'my love' in Arabic, are riding high off the buzz of their amazing self-titled album which came out on Burger Records earlier this year. With trippy sweet vocals and fuzzy guitars laced over raw pounding drums, you'll find yourself wanting to shimmy shimmy shake and head bang at the same time. This is the first musical outing for lead singer and songwriter Rahill Jamalifard, who is heavily influenced by classic Iranian psychedelic music and poetry, along with her Detroit upbringing. (and, hey, half the Habibi ladies grew up in NYC, the others in Detroit. So thems a bunch of tough broads.) When I chatted with Rahill and drummer Karen Isabel the group was preparing for a summer filled with shows and laughter and an exciting fall tour with mainstays Shonen Knife.





TOM TOM MAGAZINE: I KEEP ON READING ARTICLES THAT REFER TO HABIBI AS AN ALL GIRL PUNK ROCK BAND. IT'S BIZARRE, I'M LIKE HAVE YOU HEARD THEM? YOU'RE ACTUALLY MORE SURFER 60S GIRL BAND, PRETTY MELLOW. MAYBE THEY JUST HOOK ON TO SOME REBELLIOUS AESTHETIC OF THE GROUP?

Rahill Jamalifard: Our attitude is pretty punk. I mean, Karen is punk. She grew up a New York City punk kid, through and through. Don't let the cardigan fool you. So, I think it's maybe the attitude. But on record, in terms of the songs...

Karen Isabel: On record we're not punk.

R: Yeah, on record it doesn't make sense.

K: The most punk rock song on the album is the Tomboy song...

R: And that sounds like a Blondie song.

RAHILL, YOUR VISUAL ART REMINDS ME OF MARJANE SATRAPI (AUTHOR OF GRAPHIC NOVEL PERSOPOLIS). THERE'S OBVIOUSLY THE MIDDLE EASTERN CONNECTION, BUT YOU ALSO BOTH HAVE THIS KIND OF EDGE, AND YOUNG, FEMININE VIBE.

R: That's rad, I'm glad that it translates like that. When I found out about her I was just like, that's so cool. I don't identify all that much artistically, or even just as an individual, with many people from Iran because they have this whole 'my brother's a

doctor' kind of attitude. It's so cool to have this badass Iranian girl who likes punk.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SONGWRITING PROCESS.

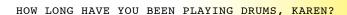
K: Rahill writes the lyrics and comes up with the tunes in her head. Then she calls up us girls and we create our parts.

R: Karen's like, oh, yeah, I can hear drums.

I HEAR THEM EVERYWHERE! I LOVE YOUR DRUMS. THEY'RE VERY CAVEMAN THUMPY.

K: When we started out thinking about drums that was always kind of what we wanted to do, you know, very Moe Tucker, minimal. I'd been playing in hardcore bands my whole life before this so it was kind of a nice change of pace.

R: And she has a very cool innate style of going for tribal. Very minimal but very interesting.



K: Since I was 17, I'm 27 now. I used to do construction at this place that was being built into a record store and they were building a recording studio downstairs. The woman never really paid us but she had a drumset and said we could use it. Then she decided she wanted to start an all girl misfits cover band, and handed me a CD and said learn how to play that. And that's how I started playing drums.

R: And your mom's boyfriend played drums?



TOM TOM MAGAZINE



K: Yeah, my first stepfather played drums in the Victims. I kind of grew up with him on tour a lot, and I looked up to him so I wanted to be a drummer too. Also, I'm Puerto Rican so we're really big into the whole tribal rhythm thing.

YOU'VE ONLY HAD ONE TEMPO-RARY LINEUP CHANGE IN THE THREE YEARS YOU'VE BEEN TOGETHER. THAT'S AMAZING.

R: We're really lucky. A lot of bands aren't fortunate enough to have it be this consistent. For the album a few of the songs have two guitars, so because of that we're looking to expand. We're not sure who's going to become the fifth member and it's really hard because we're so sisterly at this point.

K: We're also four really strong personalities, and we've managed to somehow work together. And now to bring in a fifth one... they're kind of walking into a gang.

R: Ha! Yeah, a gang, a straight up gang. I think we're really kind of intimidating. So now I get why people say we're so lucky. It's really hard to find this perfect mix. I wouldn't say any of us are perfect but we work together perfectly.

WELL, THAT COULD BRING
US TO THE INEVITABLE GIRL

BAND QUESTION. OR THE 'WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING A MAN IN ROCK' QUESTION...

R: Ha! Exactly.

K: The last time we did a radio interview we were hanging out with our friend Allison (Busch), she plays drums in Call of the Wild, and she said, 'Does anyone ever ask Animal how it feels to be a puppet drummer? No, he's just a drummer!'

I LOVE YOUR SONG 'TOMBOY'
AND THAT YOU ALL IDENTIFY
AS TOMBOYS. DO YOU THINK
IT'S A REBELLIOUS GENDER
CATEGORY OR DOES IT REIFY THINGS? YOU KNOW, THIS
LITTLE GIRL DOESN'T FIT INTO
THE GENDER BINARY, BUT ONE
DAY 'THE TOMBOY GROWS UP!'

R: Like the ugly duckling who is suddenly a swan!

WHY CAN'T THE TOMBOY GROW-ING UP JUST BE ME IN MY BOXERS WATCHING A MOVIE AND EATING CHIPS?

K: You know as a girl when you grow you're told to cross your legs and don't talk to too many boys, that kind of thing. When you're a tomboy you're going to do whatever the hell you want. We're all definitely that way.

R: I was my dad's first kid... he definitely wanted a boy. So, I played sports and was super athletic. I was also really ostracized as a Middle Eastern girl at school. I was like, alright, I don't identify with chicks. These girls are weird, they all get to shave their legs, and I have a mustache. I'll never forget this story: in elementary school this kid Tim, who had been held back a couple of years and was just huge, was making all the girls cry during dodge ball. John Folino shouted out, 'Hey, Timmy, I swear I'm gonna beat you up if you hit another girl, even Rahill!' That was fucking 4th grade for me. And I was like, fuck, I'm not a girl?? And then I sort of embraced it because I was like, I don't want to be like them. But I'm girlie too... it's like what you're saying, it isn't like, 'I was a tomboy, but now I'm this beautiful woman!' I was born with dirt underneath my nails. I'm far from perfect, and if that's your idea of womanhood then I'm the farthest from it.

K: Yeah, being ladylike. What's that about? I used to get shit for it all the time. I'd go to shows and get into fights with guys. And girls next to me would be like, 'What are you doing? Why'd you punch him? You don't do that, you don't hit people.' And it's like, what's the point of being at a punk show if you can't hit somebody?



With her car packed to the brim and only \$700 in her wallet, Michigan-native Alicia Warrington set out to Los Angeles to join a rock band on a fast track to success. But when that band never materialized, Alicia quickly found herself in a tough spot. Homeless and working a small waitressing gig to get her back on her feet, Alicia had a chance conversation with a co-worker that led her to an audition for Kelly Osbourne's band. Hours later she was hired and this game changing moment began to open doors far and wide for Alicia including her most recent—landing the job behind the kit of British singer-songwriter Kate Nash to round out her Girl Talk tour. We were excited to sit for a chat with the vibrantly beautiful Alicia Warrington.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: TAKE US BACK TO
THAT MOMENT WHEN YOU AUDITIONED FOR
KELLY OSBOURNE'S BAND. THIS IS SUCH A
BREAKTHROUGH MOMENT FOR YOU. DID YOU
HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU WERE WALKING INTO?

I had no idea what I was walking into. I moved to Los Angeles from a small town in Michigan and had never been on an audition before. I got a voice message saying that Kelly was looking for a female drummer to replace her current drummer. I just remember running out to Amoeba Records to buy her single and I stayed up all night going over the song a million times. My audition was after work the very next day. I was working in a restaurant and went to the audition straight after—in the same clothes that I had worked in! It wasn't like a Denny's uniform or anything, I had normal clothes on but, still. I was a clueless 22-year old.

WAS THERE A LOT OF PRESSURE TO PERFORM WITH ALL THE CAMERAS AROUND YOU?

An MTV camera crew was filming for The Osbournes from the time I met Kelly, which was very stressful but it was at that moment where I was like, 'Okay, this is it. This is how it works here. Just get it together.' It was at that moment that I knew I had just stepped

into a new world and had to act as if I knew what I was doing. All of those years spent practicing along to tapes and videos, touring around the country as a teenager, sleeping in cold vans or on stranger's floors —it was the moment that I had been practicing for my whole life.

I WOULD IMAGINE THAT GETTING HIRED FOR A STEADY GIG WOULD BE A GREAT THING AFTER BEING IN A PLACE OF HARDSHIP FOR A WHILE. WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THAT EXPERIENCE?

I learned a lot about the music game during that time. I learned that it is very much a business and there is so much more to it

than just being a good drummer. But, the number one thing I learned was—to always retain humility. I went from having no money, sleeping in my car and on the floor of a band rehearsal space, to being on television, playing arenas, staying in 5-star hotels and traveling around the world. In the words of the great Dusty Rhodes, "I've wined and dined with kings & queens and

I've slept in alleys and dined on pork & beans."

THIS WAS ALSO YOUR FIRST OPPORTUNITY TO GO OUT ON A MAJOR TOUR. WAS THAT A BIT OF A WHIRLWIND FOR YOU?

Absolutely! The very first show that I did with Kelly was in front of 17,000 people, followed by TV appearances on Regis & Kelly, Mad TV, Tonight Show w/ Jay Leno, Top of the Pops UK ... all within the first couple of weeks of working with her.

YOUR EXPOSURE TO PLAYING VARIOUS GENRES RUNS THE GAMUT FROM METAL, PUNK TO ELECTRO-POP. HOW HAS THIS ALLOWED YOU TO EVOLVE OVER TIME AS A MUSICIAN?

Playing different genres pushes you to be a better musician and songwriter. You constantly have to change the way you think and the way you approach a song. I've always listened to everything from Riot Grrl to Country to Hip-Hop to Death

Metal so it only makes sense to me that I would be comfortable working across the genres.

WHAT DREW YOU TO THE DRUM KIT ORIGINALLY?

I started on guitar when I was 10 years old and that was cool, until the day I walked into my grandparent's basement and there was my Uncle Kevin's drum set. It was the most glorious sight I had ever seen—in all 10 years of life, ha! It was a 16-piece, stainless steel, 1970s Ludwig kit with 26" double bass drums. Uncle Kevin was an '80s rocker complete with spandex and big hair so, naturally, he had the drums sitting atop a homemade drum riser with fog, a PA system and concert lighting in the basement. I fell in love immediately.

'I WENT FROM
HAVING NO MONEY,
SLEEPING IN MY
CAR AND ON THE
FLOOR OF A BAND
REHEARSAL SPACE
TO BEING ON
TELEVISION, PLAYING
ARENAS, STAYING IN
5-STAR HOTELS AND
TRAVELING AROUND
THE WORLD.'

THAT IS AMAZING! I APPRECIATE THAT SO MUCH HAVING GROWN UP LISTENING TO HAIR METAL BANDS. SO AT WHAT AGE DID YOU LEARN HOW TO PLAY? DID YOU HAVE FORMAL LESSONS OR DID YOU TEACH YOURSELF?

I took guitar lessons for four years but I am a self-taught drummer. My first experience in drumming was playing along to Kevin's tapes of Dokken, Bullet Boys, Queensryche and other '80s metal. My first two songs learned were 'Hard as a Rock' and 'Smooth Up in Ya' by Bullet Boys. You know, songs that every 11 year old girl should be learning.

HA! YOU'RE MY HERO! AND YOU ARE ON TOUR WITH KATE NASH! HOW DID THIS OPPORTUNITY COME YOUR WAY?

Yes, I am currently on tour with Kate Nash and loving every second. I've always respected her as a songwriter and followed what she was up to. Meeting and working with her has only made me a bigger fan. She and her crew are lovely, and so far we've had a hilarious time in our travels.

I was living in Michigan during 2013 and while moving back to Los Angeles-literally, while driving back—my drummer friend, Samantha Maloney, told me that Kate was looking for a replacement drummer to finish up her U.S. dates. I pulled off the road to the nearest Starbucks to use their internet and sent Kate my resume. A few days later I met with Kate in L.A. The two of us just sat for about an hour, talking, laughing and cracking each other up basically. We kind of clicked right away and that was that. We iust did the Coachella festival and we've had some U.S. dates surrounding that. We will also be playing Lollapalooza this summer with shows around that as well.

TOURING CAN BE REALLY
FUN, BUT IT CAN ALSO BE PRETTY DRAINING.
HOW DO YOU STAY HEALTHY AND FIT DURING
YOUR TIME OUT ON THE ROAD?

I try to make healthy food choices everyday but Kate gives away candy to people that wear pink at her shows and the candy bag always seems to end up seated next to me in the van. Aside from that, I'm pretty health-conscious. I don't drink alcohol or do anything too "Rock n Roll" crazy. I try to stick with a vegetarian/vegan diet on tour.

IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS IT'S SOMETIMES
DIFFICULT TO STAY RELEVANT WITH SO MANY

UPCOMING ARTISTS ENTERING THE SCENE.
IS THERE ANYTHING THAT YOU DO TO
MAINTAIN YOUR ARTISTIC INTEGRITY? WHAT'S
IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO DO IN ORDER TO
LEAVE YOUR ARTISTIC STAMP?

I don't think about that at all, actually. I just keep doing what I do, being myself, and being the musician that I am. I'm not in a competition. At this age, I'm confident in who I am as a person and as a musician. I'm not taking every gig that comes my way just to have a paycheck. I've turned down jobs that required me to wear slutty outfits on stage or tried to "dumb-down the girl" in the band.



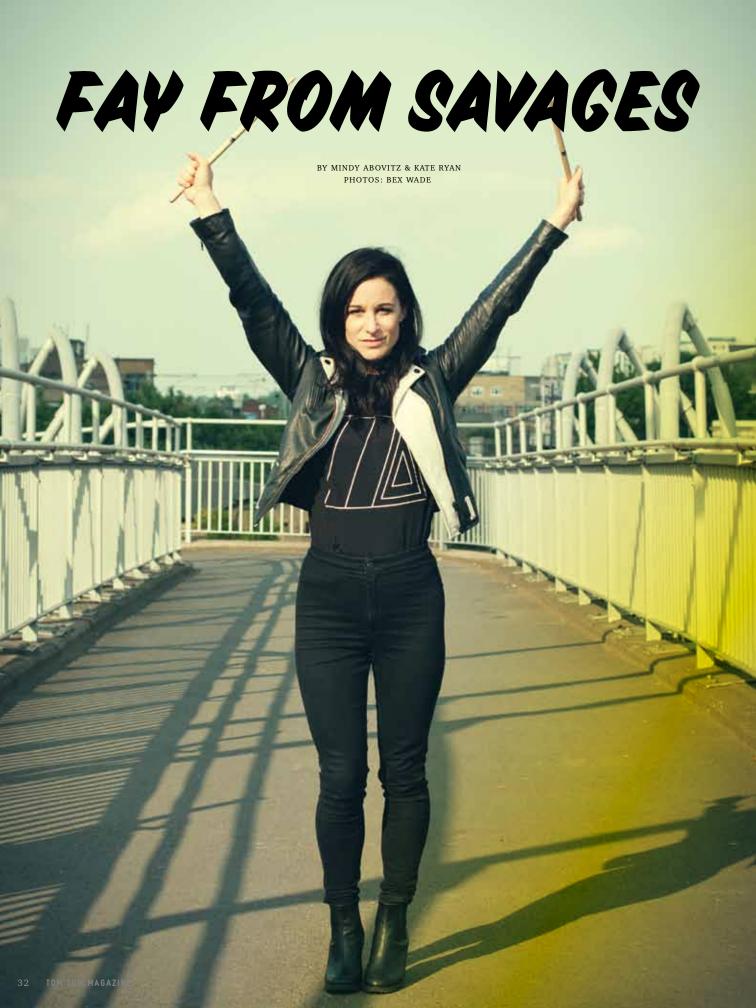
IN YOUR OPINION, WHY
DO YOU THINK PEOPLE
FEEL SO DRAWN TO THE
FEMALE DRUMMER? IS
IT THE JUXTAPOSITION
OF THE FEMININITY AND
THE ACT OF HITTING
OUT A BEAT? OR IS IT
SOMETHING ELSE?

There are a lot more females drummers now than when I was growing up, but males are still dominating the bigger gigs and have the higher profiles. Women musicians don't get the media coverage that our male counterparts do. There is still a sexist attitude when it comes to female drummers. Just the other night, I played a show with Kate Nash and one of the local stage crew came up to me and said, 'Wow, you're a great drummer. I really enjoyed watching you play. You really put on a good show.' but then, that was followed by, 'You weren't trying to play like a guy or anything. I hate when girls try to play like guys.' It made me think, 'what the hell does that mean? Why couldn't he have stopped with the first part of his comment?' Compliments always seem to end with some sort of comparison to a guy drummer.

To your original question, I'm not sure if it's the fact that people think drumming is so physical and often aggressive, that it's too much for a girl? Girls are "supposed" to be proper and not get so sweaty and be so aggressive on stage. I don't know but the whole thing annoys me.

IS THERE ANY ADVICE THAT YOU RECEIVED IN YOUR CAREER THAT YOU FOUND HELPFUL THAT YOU COULD SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

The only thing you can do—is you. Create your own style and define yourself. Oh, and don't be an asshole.





Savages has been a band on the make since well before their explosive 2013 full-length debut with Matador, "Silence Yourself". They released their first single in 2012, on frontwoman-powerhouse Jehnny Beth's Label Pop Noire, to enormously enthusiastic audiences craving a new post-punk dream team. Since then, they've been touring non-stop, and this past year saw the band nominated for a Mercury Prize, with Silence Yourself making it to number 19 on the UK Album Charts. They're an incredible live band, cool and gutsy with propulsive intensity—a tough, lockedin gang of four badass women. We got to interview drummer Fay Milton about her influences, her internal monologue, and what it's like to be in one of the most exciting bands going.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT WHEN YOU'RE DRUMMING?

Fay Milton: Literally what I think about when I'm drumming? Oh, it's hilarious. It's like a Woody Allen monologue sometimes. It's better to not be thinking about anything though. It's only if I drink too much coffee before a show that the paranoia starts.

What I'm thinking when I'm writing drum parts though—I'm usually trying to combine things that don't go together. I take inspiration from music that is completely different to Savages' music and hammer it into a new shape. It doesn't always work, but it's the kind of mathematics of it that I like. When I'm making new drum patterns, I like to play along to music with drum machines usually rather than actual drummers. I like how drummachine-based patterns progress, long sections of repetition, then maybe adding a new element one at a time, the stops and drops. I'm constantly looking for the little details that give a drum pattern its energy and spirit. You can find examples from every genre of music.

WHAT MADE YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH THE DRUMS AND PURSUE BEING A DRUMMER?

I started when I was 8 years old, and it was basically because my best friend Lucy decided to play the drums, so I did too. It's funny, at that age you can make small decisions based on very little, that turn out to be completely life-forming. Me and Lucy loved playing the drums partly because it was a bit ridiculous, we were both really tiny girls and it just seemed so funny to be playing something that was usually the territory of big hairy men. We both learned percussion together from eight until eighteen. We were learning the snare drum, xylophone and timpani mainly. Our real hit was a xylophone duet that we used to play together on our matching xylophones called 'The Two Imps'. It was so cool.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE PLAYING WITH OTHER PEOPLE? WHAT OTHER KINDS OF BAND EXPERIENCES HAVE YOU HAD?

I played in all sorts of groups as a kid, but never a rock band. I played percussion in a wind band and an orchestra too. We played all sorts of music, from Leonard Bernstein to Tchaikovsky to Disney classics. There were about 50-75 young people in the band and it was amazing to all work together and share the music with each other. I also played in a percussion group, and we would play some super avant-garde pieces sometimes, I remember one piece where we set up a dinner table on stage and played wine glasses and spun plates on the floor. I loved that piece. We would have been about thirteen at the time, I don't think the audience of parents at the Bromley Youth Music Centre were really ready for that. I've also played in a samba band, and a gamelan orchestra. Playing music with other people

is one of the greatest and most soulful ways to pass your time, I think everybody should do it. Not just people who consider themselves to be musicians. The first indie-music-world band I played in was with Adem, I played the vibraphone for him on his 'Takes' tour. Then I played in a 2-piece called Psycho Delia vs The Ward with Dee Plume from Robots in Disguise, it was completely riot grrl and crazy fun. That was my first experience playing the drum kit in a band—it was only a few years ago. I also played in a completely mental band called Rex Nemo and the Psychick Selfdefenders. It was kind of krautrock performance art. When we started Savages, I didn't have loads of experience playing the drumkit live so it was a lot of pressure to quite quickly have that level of confidence, but I guess I'd been playing cymbal crashes in the wrong place and dropping drumsticks since I was really young, so I wasn't afraid to go for it.

SAVAGES CITES FILMS AS SOME MAJOR INFLUENCES, AS WELL AS MUSIC. WHAT OTHER CULTURAL ARTIFACTS INFLUENCE YOU AS A MUSICIAN?

A lot of my influences come from life and life situations. I think of a situation or feeling that I want to convey and then make some noise inspired by it. It's quite primal really. Drums are like that. I think it makes more sense to intellectualize a guitar part or a lyric, but drums are based more on feeling movement, spirit and life. I'll take a lot of influence directly from Jehnny's lyrics to inspire what I am writing for a particular song, to find the spirit behind what is being said and then translate that into rhythm. WHAT DO YOU FEEL YOU BRING TO SAVAGES?

We are all really different characters but after spending two years in each others pockets, I think we've become more similar. It will be interesting to write a new album now that we have many more shared experiences and influences.

I'VE READ THAT YOU GREW UP LISTENING TO A RANGE OF THINGS, FROM UK GARAGE TO JUNGLE AND DRUM 'N BASS. WHAT OTHER MUSICAL STYLES DO YOU SEE YOURSELF PLAYING, OR EXPERIMENTING WITH IN SAVAGES?

As a teenager, I was just into dancing. Being from South London, that meant garage, then drum and bass, but also my real love was disco. At that point my way of finding new music was through pirate radio and what DJs would play in the clubs that I'd go to. When you discover music in that way, it becomes relevant to your life and your life moulds itself to become relevant to the music. When the first time you hear a track is on the dance floor, then I think you use different criteria to decide whether you love it or hate it, when compared to hearing a track for the first time by yourself online for example, or at a live gig, or whilst smoking weed in your mate's basement. The context in which you hear music is so vital to whether you think it's awesome or rubbish. For me, it's always just been about rhythm, about that little detail in the drum track or the vocal that makes people dance. Sometimes you can find the most incredible rhythm and energy in music that, judged by different criteria would seem like trash. When you hear music primarily as sound though, the idea of genre can become irrelevant. Now the main way I discover new music is through watching live shows, so music I'm into now much more relates to that live experience— Swans for example and Bo Ningen.

WHAT KINDS OF REACTIONS DO YOU GET AS AN ALL-FEMALE BAND? WHAT MOTIVATED THE FOUR OF YOU TO START PLAYING TOGETHER, AND DID GENDER FACTOR INTO THAT DECISION?

I get 'You're a lot smaller than I thought you were' ... which is a fair call. To be honest I don't generally hear people's reactions as



PHOTO OF SAVAGES FROM BRAZIL LOLLAPALOOZA BY HUNTER BURGAN

being related to gender. I get a lot of female drummers coming to speak to me after the show. It's always so nice to meet them, it's like we share a secret together.

I got really freaked out once when a woman said to me after the show that I looked like I was 'crushing mens balls' or something, I mean that's just horrible! Playing the drums loud doesn't mean that you hate men, it just doesn't equate in any way! There is only love in my heart when I'm playing for everybody! The thing is, people only really come and say nice things after a show and compliments make me feel a bit awkward so I kind of turn off my brain receptors. They could be saying anything for all I know.

When the band formed, it wasn't intended to be an all-female band, it was Gemma and Ayse, they were looking for a male singer originally, then they hooked up with Jehn. Once it was three females, they thought it made sense to have a female drummer to complete the group, which is when they found me. The whole thing happened quite fast really, we had one trial rehearsal together and then our songs started coming together after that.

DOES SAVAGES SEE ITSELF AS A POLITICAL BAND?

I think politics and music can go hand in hand, but if you want to make a point, then you really have to commit yourself to it. I think we make a point by existing, but we are not a specifically political band.

WHAT'S THE WEIRDEST JOB YOU'VE HAD, IN PURSUIT OF ROCK AND ROLL?

I've done a million different jobs. Cleaner, gardener, barmaid, office worker, camera operator, editor, director, but they weren't in the pursuit of rock and roll. Jobs were to eat, pay rent and buy loads of crap. My pursuit of rock and roll was more based around finding places to practice the drums. I've had my drums set up in all sorts of grotty basements and warehouses, playing in a huge dusty room lit only with one candle. I had my drums set up in a dilapidated toilet at one point. I've practiced when it's been freezing cold, damp, dark. That was the pursuit. I've actually liked most of my jobs. My main job video directing and producing, I really loved. I was mainly filming live music and working with loads of bands that I loved and it was quite difficult to have to stop completely. I'm filming Bo Ningen playing live in London. It'll be the first thing I've filmed in over two years and I'm really looking forward to it. There's a video I made with Caribou Vibration Ensemble that should be coming out soon. It took me two years to finish the edit because I was touring so much.

WHO'VE YOU BEEN LISTENING TO?

Recently, non-stop wall-to-wall Sun Ra. Previous to this obsession in the last few months: Liars, Arthur Russell, Darkside, Black Sabbath, Queens of the Stone Age, John Maus, Nisennenmondai, King Krule, Mount Kimbie, Schlomo, ZZZs, Connan Mockasin, Leonard Bernstein, Julian Casablancas, Beethoven.

ARE THERE ANY PARTICULAR PIECES OF EQUIPMENT THAT YOU ALWAYS BRING TO GIGS, OR DO YOU MOSTLY USE BACKLINE?

I take the normal stuff to gigs when I'm flying, my cymbals, snare, kick peals and sticks. I use Promark Shira Kashi Oak sticks in 7A, they're small but really hard so you can whack things really hard and they don't break. I always have my big red water bottle with me on stage so I don't waste too many plastic bottles. Refill not landfill, if you know what I mean. I also always have a ball of old Moongels stuck together with bits of dust and hair. It's really gross. I always think I'll get round to washing them and I never do. That's about it really, my set up is pretty simple.

SAVAGES GOT NOMINATED FOR THE MERCURY PRIZE FOR YOUR DEBUT ALBUM. WAS THAT EXCITING? DID YOU RECEIVE ANY BACKLASH FROM YOUR FANS BASED ON ITS COMMERCIALIZED MESSAGE?

It was exciting to be nominated for a big award. It was nice to make my family proud and be able to have our album recognised by an award as well known as the Mercury Prize. I hated having to stand in front of a Barclays logo to have my picture taken though. In hindsight I would have just not done that part. With Savages we have managed to avoid being associated with brands that we don't genuinely endorse, it's tricky to keep watchful of that constantly. Our fans were happy for us being nominated, they know we're not about being involved with lots of sponsors, they are good people. My main memory from the ceremony was just being really really hungry. We didn't get anything to eat for hours. The after party was good though.

ARE THERE PRESSURES OF EXPECTATION THAT
YOU AND YOUR BAND ARE DEALING WITH?
YOU HAD SUCH A BIG YEAR LAST YEAR AND
SUCH A GREAT START IN TERMS OF HYPE
AND EXPOSURE. DOES THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT
TO WRITE NEW SONGS OR DOES IT GIVE YOU
THE CONFIDENCE TO PUMP THEM OUT?

It's funny I haven't heard the word 'hype' for a while, but that word was ringing in our ears night and day at one point. I think we've kind of cocooned ourselves enough from all of that nonsense. We're coming out the other side of that whole thing more sane and healthy than we were at the start—so I'm not worried at all about writing. We're all really looking forward to it. We all love our instruments.

DO YOU THINK YOUR BAND CAN BE SEEN AS REBELS? IF SO - WHY?

I'm not sure if we are seen outwardly as rebels, but our most rebellious behaviour has been behind the scenes. It's more about the things we have not done rather than the things we have. As a new band you're flashed wads of cash by brands wanting to drain a sip of your young blood. You're constantly offered exposure in return for your decency. People think you're crazy when you turn down money and exposure.

OUR DEAR GIRL GINA FROM BALTIMORE:

GINA SCHOCK OF THE GO-GO'S

BY MELODY BERGER PHOTO: ARNOLD NEIMANIS

Badass drummer Gina Schock has delightfully retained her Baltimore accent, despite living in California for over 30 years. With her feisty attitude and forthright charm, it's easy to see how she was a galvanizing force behind the success of girl super group The Go-Go's. To date they are the only all women rock band to play their own instruments, write their own songs and have their debut album skyrocket to number one on the Billboard charts. Due to hard living and rock n roll drama, the band called it quits just a few years after making the big time. (only to reunite several years later) During the hiatus, Schock concentrated on songwriting because she found the idea of being a session drummer less than appealing. She had a solo record, House of Schock, on Capitol Records and has been an in demand song-writer for loads of people ever since, notably, Miley Cyrus and Selena Gomez. We had quite the rollicking conversation- Gina is super hilarious and full of rock star wisdom.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: HOW DID YOU START PLAYING DRUMS?

Gina Schock: When I was 11 my brother had to babysit me so he took me to a concert. So, the first concert I ever went to in my life was in 1969 and it was Led Zeppelin opening for the Who. I had this epiphany. I hadn't decided on what instrument I would play, but I knew I wanted to be up on that stage. Music moved me in a way that nothing else did, spoke to me in a language that I understood and made perfect sense to me. I think I got a bass first and took some lessons. And it was just too slow, because at that age you want to be way ahead of yourself anyway. Then I got a guitar and took lessons for several months, and that was just too slow. So I thought, 'well, I'll save up my money and try drums.' And I bought a set of these Japanese drums called Lido Supremes that were blue sparkle, I'll never forget them.

I would come home from school every day and play with my favorite records, which is sort of how I would start with guitar or bass, I'd play by ear and then take lessons, of course. With the drums I put the headphones on and I knew I would never have to take a single lesson because it felt very natural and comfortable. It wasn't like I had to think about anything—it was just an easy flow. I knew that was what I was supposed to be playing.

The drumsticks felt right in my hands and moving all four limbs at once just seemed simple and easy.

SINCE YOU WERE ORIGINALLY INSPIRED BY A LED ZEPPELIN CONCERT I ASSUME JOHN BON-HAM IS AN INFLUENCE?

Oh, yeah, John Bonham and Charlie Watts, for obvious reasons. They're completely different, and that's what I love about them. They're the guys I looked up to when I was learning how to play drums. I'm also knocked out by Dave Grohl, he knocks my brain right out of my head. And I just watched Black Sabbath at the Hollywood Bowl. That dude Tommy (Clufetos) is so badass, my jaw was on the ground. Usually when a drummer takes a solo, is when I go to the bathroom or get a drink or something, but this guy is incredible.

THAT'S FUNNY, BEING A DRUMMER I WOULD EXPECT YOU TO BE LIKE, 'MORE DRUM SOLOS!!'

Nah. I'm the kind of drummer, I just play whatever the song requires. I've never thought about drums in that way. Drums are just part of the overall sound of a song to me.



HOW DID YOU MOVE TO L.A. AND JOIN THE GO-GO'S?

I played in a band with this actress Edith Massey and she was in John Waters' films—our dear boy John from Baltimore. She asked me to be in her little punk band and I did that. I was 21 I think. So I got to go to New York and play at CBGB's and all that and we went to L.A. and San Francisco and Philly. And when I came back I thought, 'this is it, I need to get out of here. Nothing else matters to me except playing in a band.' So, I left Baltimore in my dad's pickup truck with a friend of mine from school, \$2,000, and two grams of cocaine.

When I got to L.A. I put my name up in Guitar Center saying I was a girl drummer, and my influences and all that, and I got into two bands right away, of course. I was living with this guy, Steve Martin (not *the* Steve Martin) and he told me, 'Gina,

I LEFT BALTIMORE

TRUCK WITH A

FRIEND OF MINE

FROM SCHOOL,

\$2,000, AND TWO

GRAMS OF COCAINE.

IN MY DAD'S PICKUP

there's this band called the Go-Go's. You need to kick their drummer out and join that band. You're going to make them great.'

I went to see them play. They had just been together six months, so they came out and played two songs, and then they came out and played one of the songs again. They were having so much fun, and there was something about them, man, that struck a chord in me. So, I had a couple of them over the house. I had my drums set up in the living room and a couple of guitar amps and a PA system. They were really knocked out at the whole setup which is so funny. I played a couple of songs with them, and the next day they fired their drummer and I quit the two bands I was in and I joined the Go-Go's.

YOU WERE PRETTY MUCH
DRIVEN FROM THE AGE OF 11, AND WHEN YOU
JOINED THE GO-GOS YOU STARTED DRIVING
THINGS FOR THEM BOTH RHYTHMICALLY AND
GOAL WISE. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

Jane (Wiedlan) had just picked her instrument up. Belinda (Carlisle) played drums in the band the Germs, but she decided to be the lead singer, so that was new to her. And Charlotte (Caffey) the guitar player had been in a couple of bands so she actually did know how to play guitar pretty decently. Margo (Olavarria), the original bass player, had just picked up her bass. I, on the other hand, had come from Baltimore playing in clubs where I was playing four sets a night.

My work ethic was completely different than these guys—I had come to L.A. to make my mark. They were just kind of doing it for fun. I think I injected this more professional attitude towards making music, and they liked that. Instead of rehearsing two times a month I said we have to rehearse five times a week. They got on board with that, thank god, because they were all really talented but it's all about practice.

Before we knew it we started to get a real following. Because we worked! Everybody got serious about doing it. And we started to get better and better, the songs were getting better and better—the harmonies. There was this tremendous upward swing, and that's contagious. It was really an incredible time.

You know what was so cool about it was, it was very organic. We just came together and just pushed, and pushed, and pushed—and that's how it happened for us. We believed we were going to be huge, which is great about being that age. When you actually believe that your dreams come true, if you work hard enough. I love it, being that age is so fantastic because anything is possible. I still feel that way! I've been so lucky, my whole life coming from a working class family in Baltimore and leaving and driving to L.A. When I left town I said 'next time you see me I'll be a big rock star.' How fucking cracked is that? When you're that age you say it and you believe it! You don't think for a minute that it

can't really happen, that the odds are so stacked against you that you have to be cracked to really think that.

MAN, SWAGGER TO THE HILT!

Mmhmm, it goes a long way!

THE ROOTS FOR THE GO-GOS WERE PUNK AND Y'ALL WERE THESE CRAZY PARTY ANIMALS WITH WHOLESOME GIRL NEXT DOOR PERSONAS. I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THAT A BIT.

When we went to make our first record our producer Richard Gottehrer was like, 'well, the first thing you've gotta do is slow everything down so I can really hear the melodies and understand what Belinda is saying.' We would play an hour set in half an hour, that's how fucking fast I would play. I was so pumped

up and crazed. The record company came up with the PR for the band: 'America's Sweethearts.' Meanwhile we were just these kids from the punk scene in LA, and we played that way! Oddly enough, if you come and see us play now, you're going to get that. On the records we were a little sugarcoated. When we play live it's really not like that at all, it's raw and driven. You're going to see that right away. That was a façade, a thing they wanted us to do for the general public because it's easier to consume little pop princesses instead of these punk rebel girls. Especially in the early '80s. They were just trying any angle they could to sell records, and I totally get that. Because they didn't want to sign us anyway! No one knew what to do with a girl act that was hugely successful, that wrote our own songs and played our own instruments.

EVEN AFTER YOUR BREAKOUT HIT OF 'WE GOT THE BEAT' RECORD COMPANIES STILL OPENLY WOULD NOT SIGN YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE WOMEN!

There was no Wizard of Oz scenario there, no one behind the curtain.

GOING BACK TO THE DISCONNECT WITH YOUR MEDIA PERSONAS, I GUESS IT WAS ALSO A DIFFERENT TIME WHERE YOU COULD DO THAT?

Absolutely, completely different! No cell phones, man! I feel sorry for kids coming up in the business these days, I mean, Jesus Christ. They can't do a goddamn thing without being followed or tortured by the paparazzi, or just someone walking down the street taking a picture of them. We talk about this in the band all the time. If that technology had been available back in our heyday we would have been in jail many many times. We were just like the guy bands, we did everything they did and then some. If you got in a room with us, guys would be so intimidated because we were like this five-headed monster. It was like the girls club. Us five against the world. We were putting our gloves on every day ready to go.

Y'ALL ARE REALLY ROLE MODELS AND HAVE PAVED THE WAY FOR OTHER WOMEN GROUPS.

But where are the next Go-Go's? That's what I want to know. We talk about this in the band all the time, it's really fucking weird that all these years later there's no all-female band that has done what we've done. Who really knows why. But the biggest and the best compliment ever is to know that someone picked up an instrument or learned to write songs because of one of the girls in the Go-Go's.

WE COVER SO MANY AMAZING ALL-GIRL BANDS, BUT YOU'RE RIGHT, NONE HAVE BEEN NUMBER ONE ON THE CHARTS FOR SIX STRAIGHT WEEKS WITH THEIR BREAKOUT ALBUM.

I want to find that next band and produce them!

I THOUGHT IT WAS SO FUNNY WHEN I WATCHED THE BEHIND THE SCENES CENTRAL PARK VIDEOS WHERE Y'ALL WERE JOKING ABOUT HOW, 'IT'S AMAZING THAT WE'RE NOT DEAD.' AND THEN I WATCHED THE VH1 BEHIND THE MUSIC SPECIAL AND I THOUGHT, 'HOLY SHIT! IT REALLY IS AMAZING THAT THEY'RE NOT DEAD!'

It's true, we've all done our share of drugs and we've done some very stupid things while on drugs. Like all of us taking hits of acid and driving from San Francisco to L.A. on Route 1 in a huge horrible rainstorm. I mean, you can barely drive that straight! And we made it to L.A., I mean, we should be dead! That's just one example over a 30 year period where we should have been dead so many times. I'm sure any band you talk to is going to give you some war stories like that. That's just the way it goes when you're starting out. You do whatever you have to do. And you do it on a shoestring budget.

YOU HAD TO TAKE SOME TIME OFF TO HAVE SURGERY FOR A CONGENITAL HEART DEFECT.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT THAT?

Yeah, that was a really weird thing. It was '83 or something and we had just finished the Talk Show record in England and were getting ready to go on tour for like a year. Before we went on a big tour like that we all had to get physicals to make it cool with the insurance companies. I got a physical and the initial findings were that I had a heart murmur, and then they did some more tests, and I had to wear this monitor. One day we're rehearsing and I get a call from my doctor saying 'I need you to come in, I want to talk to you about the results.' I immediately just withered and fell to the ground. So we stopped what we were doing and we all drove over. He pulled out a plastic model of a heart and I got out-of-control. A woman came in and gave me a shot of liquid valium because I was so hysterical. Then he brought the girls into the room and he told them I had a hole in my heart and that I was going to have it operated on, and they all got hysterical. I decided to have the heart surgery in the next couple of weeks. And then what did we do? We rented a Cadillac, an Eldorado Convertible and I think a Convertible Jag

and we go to Palm Springs for a week or two and take a bunch of drugs. The only drugs I'm allowed to do are valium and pot because I can't do coke because I have a hole in my heart. That was the mentality you're dealing with, just fucking nuts! So we go out there and have our last big hurrah, and then I came back and had the heart surgery. It was a congenital defect, it had nothing to do with my partying. They went in, they sewed the hole up and that was it! I went out on tour a couple of months later.

on tour a couple of months later.

ONCE THE GO-GO'S GOT FAMOUS YOU LOST SOME OF YOUR 'US VS THEM'
SOLIDARITY. DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR
YOUNG BANDS ON HOW TO STAY STRONG?

I do! My advice for young bands, I'll say it, not that anyone's going to do it: keep yourself in check with the drugs. I can count on one hand the amount of people I know who have not been in rehab in this business. We all have scars. But I wouldn't trade any of it in, because everything I've done adds up to the person I am right now and it's all good.

Also, if you're a band, remember that it is you guys against everyone else. Record companies are not your friends. They're there to take advantage of you and make a lot of money off of you. And they don't give a fuck where you end up in five years or ten years. It's all about money. You need to know that going into this, and if you don't you, need to wise up really quickly. What you do is your art, but it's just another commodity for other people out in the world. I would also tell any group that is a band: always, always, always split everything equally. Because if you do, your band will stay together a whole lot longer.

THERE WERE SEVERAL INTERNAL LAWSUITS OVER THE COURSE OF THE GO-GOS HISTORY, AND ONE OF THEM WAS BROUGHT UP BY YOU AND YOU'RE STILL IN THE BAND! THAT BOGGLED MY MIND.

You've gotta do what's right and what's fair. If someone in my band is screwing me, then I'm going to deal with it, that's just how it goes. There are some management companies I know that will not work with a band—a band, not an artist—unless they split things equally.

NO MATTER WHO'S WRITING.

It doesn't matter! Because it is that band, that sound, and each individual part that makes it so successful. Bono would never be

who he is if he didn't have those three guys in back of him. It's just the way it is, man. I'd rather see the Police than Sting, and I love Sting! I think he's great, a really nice guy and incredibly talented man, but I'd rather see the Police than Sting because they're fucking great!

HOW PERFECT THAT YOU
BROUGHT UP THE POLICE.
AFTER P DIDDY FORGOT TO
GET PERMISSION TO SAMPLE THE GUITAR RIFF FROM
'EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE'
STING SUED HIM AND NOW
GETS 100% OF THE ROYALTIES FOR THAT SONG.
BUT HE DIDN'T PLAY THAT
RIFF! HE MAKES SOMETHING
LIKE \$2,000 A DAY OFF OF
A PART HE DIDN'T PLAY.

Probably because he wrote the song. He wrote the melody that Andy then riffed on. Honestly, if you want to do the right thing just split it all equally. Don't be foolish. Because it will come back to bite you in the ass eventually.

With the Go-Go's stuff and the songwriting, I was really bitter for several years and then I got over it! I was like, okay, whatever, I'm just grateful to be in this band.

BEING IN A BAND IS AN INCREDIBLY COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP. IT'S KIND OF LIKE BEING IN A MARRIAGE WITH FOUR PEOPLE.

Tell me about it!

AND WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT A SPAN OF OVER 30 YEARS I CAN SEE HOW THERE WOULD BE SOME ROCKY YEARS, AND THEN YOU'RE BACK TO THE GOLDEN AGE AGAIN.

It certainly has been like a marriage. This relationship with the Go-Go's has lasted longer than any personal relationship I've

ever had in my life. And everyone else in the band would have to say that. This is the longest relationship any one of us has ever had. That being said, respect it and do the right thing.

WHAT'S COMING UP FOR YOU?

We tour for about eight weeks every summer so we're getting ready for that. And on June 21st we're being inducted into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame with the L.A. Philharmonic backing us up on like four songs!

WOW!

And next year is going to be really big because we're going to have a musical on Broadway! It will start off at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, which is apparently a really prestigious place to get your play or musical started. And we've got some super badass people attached. Jeff Whitty, who won a Tony for Avenue Q, is writing the script, and Ed Sylvanus Iskandar is directing it. Gwyneth Paltrow is producing it along with Donovan Leitch and Rick Ferrari.

HOW COOL! WILL IT BE LIKE MAMA MIA WHERE THEY JUST USE YOUR SONGS AND HAVE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLOT?

Yeah, it's something completely different. What's going to be the star of this musical is not any individual who's playing in it, but actually the music. So, I'm pretty excited about all this stuff!

I'M EXCITED TOO!

Oh! And I met with Linda Perry (of 4 Non Blondes) a couple of months ago. The four of us are going to sit down with her to talk about writing and producing three or four new Go-Go's songs. That's a really exciting prospect because she's such a badass. I mean,

could it be any better? She said exactly what I wanted to hear: 'Gina, I'm not interested in coming in and making a change to the sound of this band. What I want to do is make a classic Go-Go's record.' And I was like, 'fuck yeah!' It's always a drag when a big name producer comes in and takes a band that's been around for a while and tries to give it some new hip sound. It always sounds stupid and not right. She's obviously a smart girl. A recording is way overdue and it couldn't be with a better person at the helm. So, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the chemistry is right, because you can't predict that shit. But it sounds like the perfect match. There's just so many wonderful things going on, I'm kind of blown away!

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SKIP THE NEEDLE

ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC

BY JD SAMSON



Vicki Randle, bass player for Skip The Needle, explains the philosophy: "One of the things I love most about this band is that what we're doing is totally honest, totally about the music. We're not selling a look, or a sexy chick, or dude, or attitude. We are four strong women, who accept that as a matter of fact, and play hard, and believe, and respect the power and depth of that experience. We're not trying to convince anybody. We're just offering what we have musically, and rocking it as hard as we can, because it just feels so good. It seems to be resonating with our audiences and I think it's possible that its time has come".

Skip the Needle is made up of four incredibly talented musicians (and front women) that I have been lucky enough to discover through the Women's Music scene. Vicki Randle on bass guitar, Shelley Doty and Katie Colpitts on guitar, and Kofy Brown on the drums make up this incredible foursome. These identifications don't lend themselves to the whole process of the project, though, as it has been common for one person to write on a different instrument and then perform another one live. Each of these women are multi-instrumentalists, they breathe music, and it is a beautiful thing to experience.

Vicki Randle recently moved to Oakland from Los Angeles after 20 years of being the first (and only) female member of the Tonight Show Band, predominantly playing percussion. She was interested in playing music again, and 'moving back to Oakland was the first step in trying to reclaim (her) musical sense of exploration, innovation and fun.' She knew Shelley Doty, and Kofy Brown from their other projects, and decided to start jamming with them. In the meantime, Katy and Shelley had a similar conversation, and soon enough the four found their way into Kofy's practice room, and the rest is history. They started by playing under the name KVSK, and finally settled on Skip The Needle.

The project's effortless slide between funk, soul, and rock flows just as easily as the lead vocals movement from member to member as the set moves along. The music is hard, and loud and intentional, but it is certainly not angry. The democracy is captivating, and somehow contagious. Each member of the





LIVE PHOTOS: NEIL MOTTERAM

band has the utmost respect and love for their bandmates, and this is clear from the moment they walk on stage.

Shelley explains her feelings about the rest of the women, "I already knew that I respected and liked all three folks as dear friends, so I suppose that was a good jumping in point. You spend a lot of time with band members, and rely on them for the important emotional stuff like creative custodianship, as well as the mundane things like being able to schedule rehearsals and showing up for gigs on time. So,

knowing that these were my dear friends certainly helps in both of those arenas. Plus, I am a *huge* fan of all three of them and I feel super honored to get to share this musical journey with them. I happen to love their individual music and musical sensibilities. I had a strong suspicion we would have fun playing together, and that was correct."

After spending most of her life as an 'improvisational singer and percussionist' in her own project as well as touring with other artists such as Laura Nyro, Mavis

Staples and Carol Pope, Vicki is happy to fit into the bass position in this project, "What I love about playing bass is how vital and basic it is to music—it puts me inside the songs in a deeper way. Committing myself to a less familiar instrument has meant learning and practicing and rudiments, bringing me back to the same kind of discovery that I loved when I was a kid."

This idea of trying something new is imperative to the project's vulnerability, and restless experimentation. Kofy Brown, of her own solo project, as well as Sistas In The Pit (also with Shelley Doty), is playing a new instrument this time around:

"The drums feel like me as a kid, my younger self. I think it would have been fun to play the drums when I was younger, but I was too intimidated by the instrument and what I thought it meant to be a drummer. I am older now and more patient and understand and appreciate the simplicity of keeping the pocket. Emotionally I am ready for the drums. It's the passionate, wild and rambunctious, but calm and steady part of my personality that I can present. I now know how to emote with more depth and range than I used to. I most enjoy the physical nature of drumming, it's a good challenge and it is definitely one of the only instruments that I play that will make me laugh at myself out loud. It's funny 'cause I have definitely made myself cry on the keys and bass, but never laugh. On the drums I laugh out loud all the time. I simply love it!"

Shelley Doty and Katie Colpitts (of Dolorata) share the guitar duty in this project, but it's their collaborative energy that pushes this band up and out, over the audience and exploding above. There was one particular moment in the show when the stringed instruments created a harmonic/rhythmic/scale that blew the audience to pieces. It was a captivating and colorful composition of the sound and strength of women, together, intertwined, so radical, so healing. I had never heard anything like it. And the power they gave to the audience, the energy up there, was life changing. I have never ever seen an audience respond to something like that in my entire life. Clapping for 2 minutes straight. The above mentioned song, "Lay it Down", began as a groove that Kofy started on

the drums, and democratically, everyone started adding pieces of the puzzle together. They massaged it separately, and together in the studio, until they settled on the present structure.

This moment of the show seemed to be the climax of the experience for myself, and the rest of the audience. It was a point of departure from everything that I had on my mind. I forgot I was about to play a show of my own, I forgot about genre, judgement and categorization— and I remembered how to enjoy the art made from four humans playing instruments on a stage.

When asked about this moment, Shelley Doty explains, "For me personally, I'm really just having a great time. It is awesome to play stuff that you can tell that the audience is getting off on, and that particular case is a great example of 'write what is fun for you as a musician', and bring the audience along on your roller-coaster ride. I think the fact that we are all badass women expressing ourselves authentically is something that no one can ignore—we just kinda dig in and it is a gift to have an audience share the experience with us. In actuality, we have such a blast in rehearsals as well ... it is really an honor, not an expectation, to share that with folks who come to the shows."

And Katie responds similarly, "Being able to play with the women in this band is

a complete and total honor for me. What each of these musicians have to offer is beyond my ability to express at times. What I love about this band is that we each are here for the love of music and nothing else. I think that is why it can be so raw and so true. Everyone in this band gives the music everything it's got and that definitely happens naturally.

The response from the crowd was an incredible moment. It felt as if everyone in the entire room was levitating. I felt completely overjoyed and intoxicated by the height of vibration".

I couldn't have explained what happened to me any more perfectly than Katie's comment about this peak of the set. She goes on to discuss the band dynamics and mutual respect each band mate has for the next, "I have never played in a band with all front women. Think about that ... all badass, powerhouse, insanely talented, very alpha, front WOMEN. The gorgeous part of it is that no one is stepping on anybody's toes. No one needs to be the leader. No one needs to control how things go. We are all in it for the love of music and to be able to create within a space like this is fundamentally life changing."

While watching this band on stage, I remembered what playing music is supposed to feel like. I felt the admiration, and respect the four women have for each other. I felt the creative explosion of trying new things, and the vulnerability of explor-



TEEN

LEGENDS ON THE RISE

BY RACHEL MILLER PHOTO: ANNIE FRAME



TEEN, simultaneously youthful and insistent that age is irrelevant, are not teenagers. They are three sisters and one friend: Teeny (hence the name), Katherine, Lizzie, and Boshra (the friend).

Their new album is called *The Way and Color* and they're currently on tour with Phantogram, bringing heavy, trippy, fun music to the masses. These women are bonafide rock stars in the making.

We were happy to catch up with them right before they released their new album in their current hometown, Brooklyn.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: THE "NOT FOR LONG" MUSIC VIDEO IS PRETTY PSYCHEDELIC. THE VIDEO FEATURED ON YOUR WEBSITE IS NUTS, TOO. WHERE DID THESE IDEAS COME FROM? WHO DID YOU COLLABORATE WITH TO MAKE THESE VIDS?

Teeny: "Not For Long" was directed by Roland von Tessin, the album teaser was animated by Jake Fried. Both are old friends. The teaser animation already existed and we set the music to it. "Not For Long" was completely Roland's idea—we knew we liked his work and just trusted his vision for the music. We make it a goal of ours to collaborate with people who we think are original and willing to be far out.

"NOT FOR LONG" IS ALSO THE SONG WHERE YOU SAY 'BITCH.' YOU MENTIONED BEING SHOCKED WHEN YOU FIRST HEARD THAT WORD RECORDED. WHAT HAPPENED HERE? AND HOW DID YOU ULTIMATELY DECIDE TO LEAVE IN THAT LYRIC?

T: The original intention was to point at the various stereotypes powerful women are subjected to. You're either a bitch, too hungry or too willing. It's very difficult to maintain a respectable and balanced seat. I wrote the song with the lyric in it already. The rest of the girls heard it back after I recorded it and were a little shaken up. We had a long discussion about the importance of the word, and using it. We considered leaving it out, but it felt important not to shy away from or sugarcoat the issue.

BOSHRA, WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK WITH THREE SISTERS? DO YOU EVER FEEL LEFT OUT? DOES THEIR UNSPOKEN LOGIC EVER FREAK YOU OUT?
DO THEY WORK TOGETHER WELL?

Boshra: It's never boring! Their sisterhood comforts me. It's a source of real strength to the band. Everyone cares. And musically—forget about it—you feel buoyed up walking into that. They're all too perceptive to ever make me feel excluded. It's more of an open circuit. I have a sister so I get it. I know when to walk away. Most of the time we are all having a laugh, though.

FOR THE SISTERS: WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER YOU RECORDED RADIO SHOWS / MIXTAPES TOGETHER AT HOME. WHAT WERE THEY LIKE? DID YOU EVER SING TOGETHER ON THOSE HOMEMADE TAPES?

T: They were mostly gibberish. Some singing happened, but it was a lot of screaming about acquiring food. Katherine used to read books aloud. Then we got into doing skits and characters.

LIZZIE, YOU PLAY KEYBOARD AND "BUILD IRRESISTIBLE SYNTH HOOKS", ACCORDING TO THE INTERNET. YOU ALSO TOOK PIANO LESSONS WHEN YOU WERE YOUNGER? COULD YOU DESCRIBE THE EVOLUTION FROM THAT TO THIS?

I took piano when I was younger, but I stopped when I was a teenager. I definitely retained some basic theory and facility but it wasn't totally easy reintroducing myself to the keys. I think that's been generally a positive thing though and I think it's informed the way I play synths. I was forced to really listen, focusing the most on sounds and melody. It's been a constant learning process. And the learning curve with playing synths, like music in general, is endless. I just got a Moog Voyager and the capabilities are absolutely incredible.

SEVERAL OF YOUR SONGS, IN PARTICULAR "BREATHE LOW AND DEEP", HAVE LENGTHY INSTRUMENTAL JAMS (FOR LACK OF A BETTER DESCRIPTOR). HOW DO THESE COME TO LIFE? ARE THEY MINUTELY PRE-WRITTEN OR DO THEY BUILD/GROW WHILE YOU'RE RECORDING OR PERFORMING LIVE?

T: Generally, the instrumental jams happen on the fly. They're mainly improvised and worked out as we play the songs.

KATHERINE, YOU'RE IN THE LEAGUE OF SELF-TAUGHT DRUMMERS. COULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR LEARNING PROCESS?

Katherine: Actually I don't know if I'd really call myself self-taught or not—I do work with a teacher in New York. But I'm definitely late to the game. I didn't play drums growing up or anything like that. In the beginning of TEEN, I gradually started playing more and more percussion and started to fool around on the kit just for fun. When our drummer left the band, we had a couple of weeks before we were set to do a mini-tour and it was kind of like, 'okay, let's try this' and then I got pretty serious! At first I was just trying to soak up anything and everything I could about technique and trying to do it on my own. But it wasn't until I started working with a teacher that things started really developing. At the end of the day, I think any drummer will tell you practice and repetition are key, especially if you're touring and playing live!

CULTIVATED LADIES OF

THE SUZAN

BY EMI KARIYA Photo by: Mike Nogami



The Suzan are a tight team of ladies who don't seem to be affected by their surrounding environment, even with their relocation from Tokyo to New York when they signed with Fool's Gold back in 2011. Their music transcends any single genre—with songs that feel like instant classics and are the sonic equivalent of being at a punk show while drinking a pina colada. I asked them some questions to find the secret of their not just spirited, but badass band style.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: DID YOU ALL PLAY MUSIC GROWING UP? WHEN AND HOW DID YOU FORM THE SUZAN?

Nico: We all learned piano growing up, it's very Japanese. All girls do, it's part of our raising a "cultivated lady" program, ha. We all went to the same all-girls private high school into college. Rie (keys) and Kaori (vox) are sisters and I'm from the same town in Saitama. Rie's the master of the band. She and Saori were making songs in their bedrooms before it was anything.

Saori: We were writing songs but we didn't have much intention of playing out. We sent demo tapes of our super rough recordings to labels instead. We didn't know a drummer so we used a Zoom rhythm machine that was around in Japan back then, added melody with guitar and she made me sing. I always liked karaoke but I didn't think I was a singer.

N: Keiichi Sokabe (famous guitarist) picked up their demo to release it, pretty much as is on his label Rose Records, so they suddenly needed a drummer. We were all having a homemade hot-pot party and Rie and Kaori say, 'you look like you can hit!' They told me to drum straight up based on how I look! I had just turned 19, first year in college. Then within a month they were like 'we have a show in Berlin, just so you know.'

THAT IS AMAZINGLY QUICK!
I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW SENT
DEMOS WERE EVEN HEARD.
BUT YOU DIDN'T HAVE A KIT,
HOW DID YOU LEARN TO PLAY
DRUMS?

N: They told me to listen to the songs and use visualization so I was mostly air drumming to make my body learn the rhythm. I used tissue boxes a lot too. We worked, saved up money, and toured Europe during our summer vacation a couple of months later.

HOW WAS WORKING WITH ROSE RECORDS AND RECORDING WITH MR. SOKABE?

N: He was very nice and we learned a lot from him. We were extra lucky in a sense that there were no other girl bands and we were the youngest on the label too. We were like his kids, so he looked after us for everything.

S: I think what was unique about us was that we sent the demo package all in English because our focus was to go to Europe. We weren't planning on doing the band in Tokyo so much—we only sent the demo to Rose Records because we had an extra. Probably no Japanese band was sending demos in English which made us punk in a way. Or he liked the candies we included in the package, ha!

GOOD THING YOU MADE EXTRAS!

N: In 2006 we recorded Suzan Galaxy with Rose Records and then went to Europe every summer where we met a lot of great musicians. We met our current producer, Björn Yttling (of Peter Björn and John) through mutual friends out there too. He was looking for a band to produce during Fuji Rock Festival when he heard about us. He first contacted us through Myspace and we didn't believe it because PBJ was big. But then we got to record in Stockholm with him soon after.

HOW WAS THAT?

N: Amazing!! It was like going to class everyday. It would start early in the morning and then we'd all be out of the studio by 7pm because Stockholmers have to go watch ice hockey. We didn't know anything about recording so he taught us everything too.

YOU NOT ONLY ROCK TOGETHER BUT ALL LIVE TOGETHER TOO. HOW DOES THAT WORK? N: We're like family and don't step into each other's lives so it's almost like air. Aside from the band, we all do different things.

ARE YOUR RECENT TOURS
MOSTLY IN THE US? WHAT WAS
YOUR FAVORITE SHOW?

It's all in the US so far, all west coast and east coast. But we wanna go to Europe! Or anywhere outside of the US! We were touring with Chromeo for a few weeks so we got to play 2,000-3,000 capacity halls and the sound was great. My favorite may be the show in Portland on that tour. Portlanders have heat, like passion, so the energy of the crowd was something else!

WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE DRUMMER?

N: Travis Barker of Blink 182. He's so skinny and covered with tattoos but he's so tight, practices everyday and loves his family. That's my ideal style!

S: A-track, the owner of our label Fools Gold, was touring with Blink 182, collaborative DJing. We got to see that show at SXSW. They were totally amazing.

N: That might be also something I'd want to do in the future. Collaborate with a good looking killer DJ! I want to play with kids too. We played a couple of times at the Willie Mae camp with *Tom Tom Mag* and the excitement of kids about the live music is definitely amazing. So I want to play more with kids.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU?

S: Our new album! We already recorded it, about a year ago back in Stockholm and we all want to put it out within this year.

R: Björn is very specific with the mixing and mastering so it requires a lot of time. It's been almost three years since our last album so we can't wait to release it!



Los Angeles band The Belle Brigade, consisting of siblings Barbara and Ethan Gruska, took the folk-pop world by storm with their self-titled debut album. Now they are turning the genre on its ear with their second album Just Because which incorporates a radical new sound and more electronic elements. Currently touring with Ray LaMontagne, not just as a supporting act but his backing band, Belle's drummer and lead vocalist took some time out to talk to Tom Tom.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BE A DRUMMER?

Barbara Gruska: I think what made me want to be a drummer when I was a kid was Michael Jackson. Bad came out in 1987, I was four and completely obsessed with every aspect of the record and with Michael himself. I danced every day to him and Whitney Houston. I played violin for two years when I was eight and sucked at it. I hated knowing I had musicality somewhere inside of me, and then have to listen to myself suck all the time on violin, which I felt no connection with. So I literally started playing on pots and pans for fun. I hung a pan lid on a pull up bar-that was my cymbal. It clicked emotionally and there was something about it that made me feel like I was playing basketball, and I loved basketball. A year into doing that, my uncle loaned me a hand-me-down Frankenstein 4-piece Pearl kit with 14" new beat hats and an 18" K. I got obsessed with figuring out the coordination of it all-gradually giving an awkward feeling some finesse and ease.

It's a powerful tool of expression for a 10 year old girl who doesn't have a voice in the world yet.

WHAT IS IT LIKE PLAYING WITH YOUR BROTHER?

It's amazing playing with my brother. We didn't grow up playing together because I was 6 1/2 years older than him, but once he picked up piano and guitar we would play duo in my apartment all the time and write songs and our feel locked immediately in a sibling kind of way. We grew up listening to the same shit, we share a similar kind of pocket. When Ethan graduated high school I was like 'this kid is f***ing amazing, yoink!' And that's how we evolved into the Belle Brigade.

WHY DID YOU INCLUDE MORE ELECTRONIC AND DIGITAL ELEMENTS IN YOUR NEW ALBUM?

Before we started recording we didn't say 'we want to be more electronic or more

this or that.' We knew we wanted to let ourselves experiment and take some more time to find different sounds. Our budget was nowhere near the first record so we scaled down the operation and kept it very simple. We only invited in a couple other musicians and recorded the whole thing at Tony Berg's home studio, Zeitgeist. Mostly it was Ethan, our coproducer/engineer Shawn Everett and me in the room being dorky and having fun.

TALK A BIT ABOUT YOUR
TOUR WITH RAY LAMONTAGNE.
NOT MANY SUPPORTING BANDS
ALSO BACK THE TOURING
ARTIST. HOW DID THAT
COLLABORATION COME ABOUT?

This came about because of Ray's generosity. He told me he saw me play in 2009 with Jenny Lewis when we opened for him at The Hollywood Bowl and was interested in playing together at some point. I think we really just lucked the f*** out.



I saw the band PRIESTS at Williamsburg Music Hall opening for The Julie Ruin.

Their music is joyful punk and features GL Jaguar on guitar, Taylor Multiz on bass, Katie Alice Greer on vox, and Daniele Daniele on drums. Inspired by Daniele's exuberant performance, I proposed a conversation on punk.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: IF PUNK IS ABOUT RESISTANCE TO STRUCTURE WHY IS PUNK DRUMMING SO HIGHLY STRUCTURED? IT STAYS PRETTY TRUE TO A FAST 4/4.

Daniele Daniele: I think one reason for that is a 4/4 beat is the easiest/most intuitive beat to learn and play. Punk values the amateur because punk was originally about fighting society's restrictions and rules. Pop music in the '40s, '50s, and '60s was very restrictive. You had to be connected or you had to be pretty or sing about such and such subject matter in such and such a way. Punk was intended to be a f^{***} you to all that. Punk is the idea that if you have no money and want to make loud, ugly music and sing about taboo topics, you can do it, and no one can stop you if you just do it yourself (hence DIY). Valuing amateurism is part of that. Requiring that musicians have certain technical skills excludes a lot of people from making music. Maybe I couldn't afford to buy gear as a kid, maybe my school didn't offer music lessons, maybe I didn't start playing music till I was much older. By valuing simplicity, punk values a type of music that is inclusive, that everyone can participate in no matter their background.

WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES YOUR BAND PUNK? WHAT ATTRACTS YOU ABOUT THAT LABEL?

Sometimes, I just feel like my whole life has to be channeled through commodities in one way or another and that makes me angry. Too often I think we feel like the only way we can connect with other humans is in this predetermined way, like buying and selling things or via social networking. Making music was so revelatory for me, because it was a way of creating an identity and connecting with people that didn't involve money or predetermined forms. It makes me especially angry when music becomes not this thing uniting people, but another commodity that someone else can use to manipulate how people express themselves and connect with others—and then, in turn,

make money off that process. I was drawn to punk, well a certain lineage of punk, because it seemed to express an understanding that everything in this world is manipulated by market forces. I want to focus my energy on making sure that I'm the one creating these identities not some third power hiding in the wings. We are performance artists after all.

HOW DO YOU GET TO DO THAT BY DRUMMING IN A PUNK BAND?

A drum beat is so powerfully subversive. It makes you follow its time, move in its time, think in its time, and when you play in front of an audience, it has this really cool effect of syncing everyone up, almost against their will. Like, 'oh shit, you didn't mean to, but look! you're a part of this bigger thing. See your foot tapping, your head bobbing? You're doing it in time with all these other people!' I think being reminded you're a human that is connected to all these other humans whether you like it or not is important.

ANIKA NILLES

IN THE POCKET

BY MAX MARKOWSKY PHOTOS BY: PETRA FELDMANN



Anika Nilles' technique and in-the-pocket grooves are the first things that will blow your mind about this German drummer based in Mannheim, a city near Frankfurt. Her play-along pop video "Wild Boy" on Youtube hit the German drumming scene Bonham-hard and turned the music-student into an up-and-coming drummer in a few weeks and a lot of clicks. Apart from studying and eating a lot of her favorite food, curry, Anika teaches drums herself in her school Groove Design, tours in her band Mini Moustache and practices, practices, practices.

TOM TOM MAGAZINE: WHEN DID YOU START PLAYING THE DRUMS AND WHY?

Anika Nilles: I honestly don't remember how it started. It was always there I guess. I went to music school when I was 6 but I already could play some simple grooves. My dad was a drummer as well and showed me a couple of things. Drums were always around me.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE THING ABOUT DRUMS?

Oh, everything ... I just love to hit on them and get this direct feedback. How rebound works and the stick is digging into the drumhead and at the same time not, you know? Haha, I don't know. The whole motion and vibe around them is really fascinating. Playing drums is just the most satisfying feeling of all and the most fun thing to do. I can't really describe it. It's a part of me.

HOW DO YOU MAKE A LIVING PLAYING MUSIC?

From teaching drums and playing gigs a lot. I've also been in cover/gala bands for two years now and there's good money in that. I don't do session work that much because I like to write my own songs and practice a lot, being free to do what I want. It's nice to play with different people and connect, but I want to move forward all the time and get better. I love to play live but I'd rather practice and write new material than play 200 gigs in a year.

YOU MUST PRACTICE A LOT OF THE TIME TO GET TO THIS LEVEL. WHAT DO YOU PRACTICE USUALLY?

It's a mix of technique and coordination. I train with grooves. That's my strength I think: the big fat grooves. I also practice playing on click, microtiming. When you play in the studio, you hear an honest reproduction of what you play—all the mistakes and when you're even just a little off —you hear it immediately. It's frustrating. That's how I learned and am still learning a lot, by playing in the studio, listening to my mistakes and then working on them.

YOU PLAYED A BIG TV SHOW IN EUROPE, "WETTEN DASS...?", LAST YEAR WITH THE

BAND CALIGOLA FROM SWEDEN. HOW WAS THAT EXPERIENCE?

It was my first TV experience. It was playback, but it was really interesting playing the show. The guys sang live, but we were just miming. But as a drummer you still have to play and hit the drums, you know? Somebody got me the tip that there was a job opening for the show. So I called somebody that was in charge for casting the backing band and they were looking specifically for an ethnic looking female drummer, with a darker skintone ... which I'm absolutely not, ha! It was a day before the show and they still hadn't found what they were looking for so I got the job and packed my bags.

HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED DISADVANTAGES WITH BEING A FEMALE DRUMMER IN THE MUSIC BUSINESS?

In the last two to three years it kind of turned for me. People come up to me after the shows and tell me 'Wow, you play so well and on top of that you're a woman!' And that's cool, but when it's the other way around like, 'For a woman, you play really well!' then it's weird and I think 'You still don't get it, do you?' It's such an old way of thinking.

ARE THERE OTHER FEMALE DRUMMERS AT THE SCHOOL YOU'RE STUDYING AT?

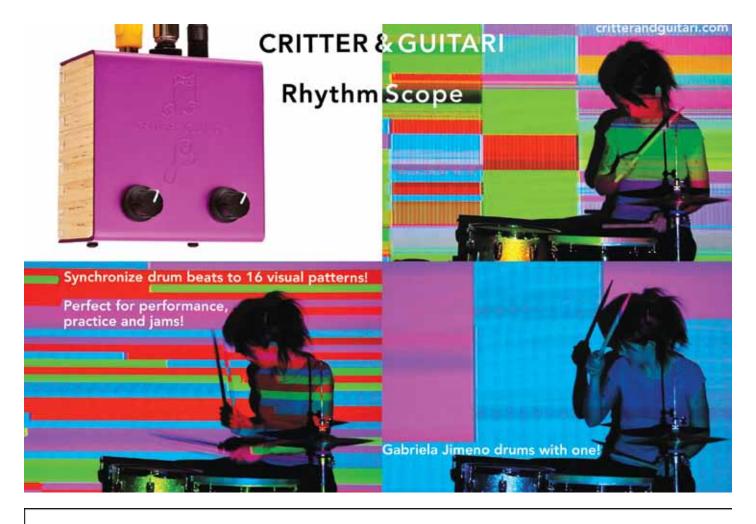
There are two others. I actually was the first one, ever. The percentage of female drummers is really small. Especially when you're entering the more professional league of drummers, you seldom see a woman playing drums in Germany.

WHAT MAKES A GREAT DRUMMER IN YOUR OPINION?

Feeling is extremely important. There are a lot of people I listen to where I just don't feel anything and it's because the player doesn't feel it themselves and conveys absolutely no emotion. I love it when drummers play exactly how they feel. Even if they make mistakes and miss a hit or something, it doesn't matter, they're feeling it and it's awesome. On the other hand, to play jobs it's necessary to have good technique and play the thing clean. I think both technique and feel are very important to make a good drummer.









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technique



KICK SPEED AND LEFT HAND INDEPENDENCE

BY MORGAN DOCTOR



You wanna get your kick speed up? Best way to approach speed work is to work in groupings of three or four, then when you go to play doubles it is super easy. While you are at it you might as well add the left hand to also practice independence.





Play the right and right foot together (right hand on the hi-hat), left hand plays Son Clave pattern (2:3 and 3:2). Start at 60 bpm and work your way up to 100.





TRY OPENING THE HI-HAT ON ALL QUARTER NOTES (1,2,3 AND 4).



Vanessa Domonique is a freelance drummer and tutor from London, UK. She is currently playing for contemporary dance company, Clod Ensemble, doing various festivals and tours. Catch Vanessa in action at www.vanessadomonique.co.uk



RYTHYM PYRAMID

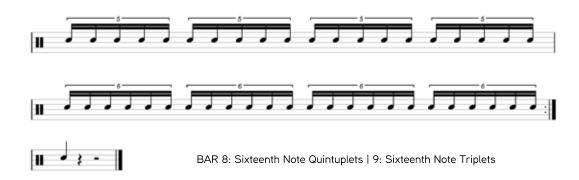
BY VANESSA DOMONIQUE

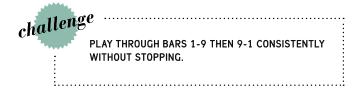


The purpose of this exercise is to get you to comfortably switch between note values whilst maintaining a set tempo. In this exercise we will play everything from Whole Notes to 16th Note Triplets. Essentially we'll be speeding up (sticking wise) as we go through the note values but the tempo (metronome) stays the same.



BAR 1: Whole Note | 2: Half Notes | 3: Quarter Notes | 4: Quarter Note Triplets | 5: Eighth Notes 6: Eighth Note Triplets | 7: Sixteenth Notes







Vanessa Domonique, born and raised in London is quickly gaining respect in the industry as one of London's top drummers. Playing professionally for the last seven years, Vanessa is no stranger to the live music scene and her playing is often referred to as "Meat & Potatoes"—Solid. Strongly rooted in Funk, Vanessa's infectious groove and energy has enabled her to work around the world with such artists / theatre productions as Nicola Roberts, K-Koke, Laura White, ZERO, An Anatomie In Four Quarters, Cabaret and many more at some of the world's biggest venues and festivals.



DOUBLE BASS

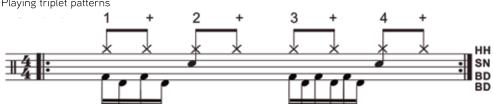
BY FERNANDA TERRA

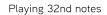


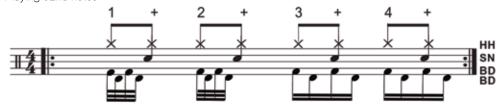


Bass drum/snare exercise using sixteenth notes.









Playing the hi hat in quarter notes



MUSIC 6



BEVERLY

Careers Kanine Records / July 2014

Frankie Rose is back on the drums again after a few years playing guitar and fronting Frankie Rose and the Outs. In her newest band, Beverly, she collaborates with guitarist/vocalist Drew Citron who plays in Rose's backing band and the pop group Avan Lava. Rose has consistently shown herself to have a keen ear for arrangements and this time she and Citron draw upon '90s bands like the Amps and early Weezer, with more than a pinch of Stereolab. They're at their best when they stay at least mid-tempo like the two opening tracks, "Madora" and "Honey Do." Some of the slower tracks seemed to drag, although I must say, "Yale's Life" did make me nostalgic for the Twin Peaks theme song.

While Rose's drumming is very pared down (think Moe Tucker) she shines at the center of any band she is in. She's finishing up a solo record, so unfortunately, she won't be joining Citron on tour for this album.

Listen to this: On the way home from the beach with sand stuck to your skin and salt water in your hair.

-Rebecca DeRosa



CHAIN & THE GANG

Minimum Rock and Roll K Records / May 13

K Records knows their stuff. Their passion for minimalistic, bass fuzz, funky, post-pop "little" bands has been tried and true since Calvin Johnson was a DJ at the indie radio station KAOS-FM when he was fifteen. Chain & the Gang is that quintessential lo-fi band; jangling over-driven guitars, shouts, and shudders, all topped with a middle finger to the listener, Chain & the Gang demands musically: 'like us or go home.' Their new record *Minimum Rock and Roll* drips with sarcastic, self-aware tracks ("I'm a choice/ not a child/ you've got the choice/ to drive me wild/ make the choice to stay/ with me a little while"). Chain & the Gang is Gene Vincent on acid meets X-Ray Spex.

Listen to this: to fit in perfectly into no-wave history.

-Matthew D'Abate



COUSINS

The Halls of Wickwire
Ba Da Bing Records / Hand Drawn Dracula
May 2014

Somewhere between washed out and punk, Cousins are releasing *The Halls of Wickwire* on Ba Da Bing this May, which will fill the bill for their US tour with Chad Van Gaalen. The Halifax duo created a punk album that we yearn for this decade, with its pop undertones, sharp drumming, and reverb soaked vocals. The stand-out tracks are "Death Man" which starts slow but begs you to stay for a classic punk (and almost '80s) feel and "Mess" which comes with an off-color video from Canadian filmmaker, Neal Moignard. The album weaves in and out of your emotions with its hard guitar and lyrics that ask you simply "What's your name, what's your name?"

Listen to this: to get pumped for your first drum lesson.

-Attia Taylor



DESPICABLE ZEE

Despicable Zee BG Records / September 2013

I took a public speaking course once. The most memorable exercise required us to eat while reading aloud. Who knew chewing a Rolo would make me a better speaker? But something about having too many things going on makes you take nothing for granted. I talked pretty and had a blood-sugar spike to boot.

The same can be said of Despicable Zee (Zahra Tehrani): the beat-maker out of Oxford does her best when she's doing too much. The strongest songs of her five-song self-titled record are the first, "Introduction," a densely layered beat-and-voice mash up, and her melody-synced collaboration with Stray Dog, "Give Up." Stray Dog must have the same voice coach as me: the video shows her staring at the audience, chewing up a few days worth of food and belting her heart out, DZ's steady beats pushing her on.

Listen to this: when you want a beat-y snack.

-Emily Nemens



DEX ROMWEBER DUO

Images 13 Bloodshot Records / March 2014

Jack White is already on record saying that Dex Romweber and his Flat Duo Jets were a major influence on his music, both for Romweber's rockabilly swagger and wild man blues. In Romweber's massive oeuvre, the Dex Romweber Duo (with his sister Sara pounding on the drums) newest release, *Image 13*, is no different—chalk full of crunchy, Danelectro riffs, sparse and bone crunching drums, and Romweber's distinct whiskey soaked vocals. Tracks like "Beyond The Moonlight," with its hand-clapping, story telling jive to the Zombies inspired "So Sad About Us," Dex Romweber Duo's latest addition reminds what exactly good old fashioned rock 'n' roll really is in this sea of laptops and 808s.

Listen to this: when you want to grab your partner, spin them around, and pound down some moonshine in the Spring rain.

-Matthew D'Abate



THE COLOURIST

The Colourist
Republic Records / March 2014

Life is not a box of chocolates, it's a box of crayons, according to the world of The Colourist, an Orange County based band delivering us their recent self-titled new release of infectious dance beats and good spirited harmonies. The brainchild of Adam Castilla and drummer Maya Tuttle, The Colourist are a candy coated pop gum ball machine, rolling out head-bopping tunes for a penny. "Say What You Need" is a notable stand out amongst the other sparking gems, landing stylistically somewhere between Clap Your Hands and Say Yeah and Metric. It is nearly impossible not to smile and start dancing the moment the first track booms out from your bedazzled speakers.

Listen to this: if the doctor says you're depressed and dancing is the only cure.

-Matthew D'Abate

REVIEWS



STREET EATERS

Blood::Muscles::Bones
Nervous Intent Records / June 2014

From the first doom rock riffs and ritual left/right panning on the first track "Reverse," you feel like a fight is going to break out. The riot anger of Street Eater's latest release Blood::Muscles::Bones is obvious, chalk full of power-punk chords—their songs are a punch through a wall. Out of Berkeley, California, there are no sunsets and best coasts here, only Siouxsie-Soiux-howls and angsty percussion. Notable tracks from the newest opus are the quiet narcotic of "Null" and the Sleater-Kinney inspired "Comets." Street Eaters, representing Nervous Intent Records to the fullest, is a love letter to punk rock music.

Listen to this: when you are late on rent and the electric company is at your door—and remember to tell them where to stick it.

-Matthew D'Abate



WATER SARK

Esquisses Number4door / April 2014

Water Sark is an '80s style punk nouveau French female fronted band that features dark synth undertones, simple sexy rhythms, and a quality not unlike The Cure when they hit the music scene with "Boys Don't Cry." The album embodies what rock 'n' roll is about, seduction, rebellion, talent and taste with a dash of femme noir, and smoke. The album features only five songs, which is really just a tease for those who endlessly crave great music, but it's worth the nibble. And check out their song "Walkie Talkies" if you're ready to experience a layered drum experiment that incorporates haunting vocals and a hypnotizing beat.

Listen to this while: sporting your Walkman and barrettes.

-Stephanie Reisnour



BELLE BRIGADE

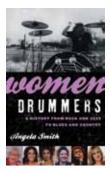
Just Because ATO Records / February 2014

Belle Brigade is a brother-sister duo that proves that there is nothing more amazing than sibling love. Born from Barbara Gruska's drums and Ethan's guitar, *Just Because* is an uplifting, sunshiny homage to timelessly appreciated music. With a dash of intermittent piano, electric punctuations, and hipster flare, Belle Brigade's new album is addictive and reminiscent of a Peter Gabriel, Phil Collins, Arcade Fire, Peter Bjorn and John, pure talent mash up. *Just Because* is such a breath of fresh cool spring air, it makes me wonder why I hadn't heard of them sooner.

Listen to this while: anytime, anywhere, with anyone. You'll smile no matter what.

-Stephanie Reisnour





WOMEN DRUM-MERS: A HISTORY FROM ROCK AND JAZZ TO BLUES AND COUNTRY

Angela Smith Rowman & Littlefield / April 2014

This comprehensive book about women drummers through-

out the ages is worthy of living on university shelves worldwide. Angela Smith takes the reader from the advent of drums (BCE), to the first rebel drummers facing religious decrees, through contemporary drumming legends like Sheila E, Cindy Blackman, and Viola Smith. She tips her hat to all of the movers and shakers who have paved the way for us female drummers thus far. This book is thoughtful, thought provoking, historical, intelligent and interesting. If you like *Tom Tom* you will love this book because it is the very book we would have written ourselves. Buy it for your favorite drummer (if that is you more, power to you!) today.

Mindy Abovitz

WE ARE THE BEST

Directed by Lukas Moodysson Release date 2014 (USA)

The first time I saw this movie I knew I had to see it again. And I did. Less than one week later. That is how much this film resonated with me. It is simultaneously witty and light while illuminating the darkness and reality of social pressure. The Swedish film follows two relatively androgynous and rebellious teenage girls, Bobo (Mira Barkhammar) and Klara (Mira Grosin), as they stumble upon forming a band, coming of age, and that beautiful moment when we get to press up against what society deems as norms. These girls challenge music, religion and femininity with humor, compassion and honesty in a way I haven't seen since I lived it.

-Mindy Abovitz



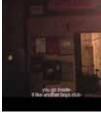
Dir., Juliana Lindenhofer Self produced / April 2013

In 2013, *DJ Mag* came out with a Top 100 DJ List. Considering the fact that it was social media driven, all but three spots were given to male DJs. Nervo, the twin sisters' DJ duo, cracked the Top 20 at #16. Great? On the surface, but as a whole, in a world in which women are taking more initiative in more male oriented "boys club" industries, we can do better in society to stop judging based upon appearance but more upon skill. Which is what the female DJs and producers, in the short documentary by Juliana Lindenhofer, convey.

The camera shows a staircase, in a dimly lit, bare basement. A phrase being versed, and thought so many times even in my own head, "I don't even want people to know what I look like. I don't want them to know if I'm a girl or a boy. I want it to be about the music." The women in the film talk about bias within the industry, and not just about gender, but also sexuality and race. We Won't Eat Your Hate Like Love is a short film addressing that there not only needs to be a progression of equality within the nightlife club scene industry, but in the entertainment industry as

—Lola Johnson







GERRREVIEU

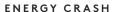
dream

BY ANDREA DAVIS

Dream Cymbals was first established in Canada in 2005. Since their start, Dream successfully distributes its product all over the world. Their cymbals are carefully crafted in the Wuhan region of China where Dream creates its amazing cymbals and gongs. Selling in over 14 countries. Dream cymbals is just getting started, creating exceptional cymbals and gongs for an affordable price to drummers and percussionists around the world.

Dream is unlike any other cymbal company on the market, specially designing their cymbals and gongs with bronze bell technology. They have many popular lines of cymbals which include the Bliss series, Energy and Contact. Their cymbals translate into all genres of music and are sturdy and durable for long term playing. Dream cymbals are a must-have if you want a cymbal with interesting tones, dynamic sounds, a competitive price, and beautiful aesthetics they're simply a great choice for any drummer.





Dream Cymbals has recently introduced a new Energy Crash to its line. At 17", this cymbal has great attack with a long decay. The cymbal is adorned with a raw bell and is hand hammered, which adds to its interesting and explosive sound. It's shimmery but balanced with dark tones which make this a dynamic cymbal for many genres of music. After I set it up with my kit, I noticed how loud this cymbal really was. The Energy's explosive shimmer matched with its low timbre can cut through anything. Using it to complete drum fills, I wanted to see how it sounded as a ride. It has beautiful balance tonally and keeps its attack going when hit harder and harder. It has great presence and a dynamic sound that would be perfect for any musician who is playing live or recording in the studio. The Energy crash is a solid pick for someone who is looking for a new crash with a lot of character. Dream perfectly delivered quality, matched with great tone and volume.



RIDE

Dream has recently created the new 22" Gorilla Ride to the family. Some of the outstanding aesthetics include a 5" bell, deep hammer marks adorned all over the cymbal, and matched with a lathed surface. Once I set it up with my kit, I realized how much power this cymbal packs. The heavy weight adds to its long sustain that cut over the sounds of my drums. I started playing eighth notes on the edge of the cymbal, which were a little drowned out by the ride's loud ping. I began to play quieter so I would be able to hear the natural tones more clearer. The ping sound does not seem to subside no matter how loud or soft you play. After, I began to play quarter notes on the bell to see how it affected the timbre. The bell has very dry tones, but there is no real distinction in sound between the bell and the body of the cymbal—all the sounds blend together. I was hoping for a more pronounced bell but it did not seem to deliver for me. Overall, I had a fun time playing with the Gorilla Ride. Its 22" size is definitely exciting to play and it's a gorgeous cymbal. Dream's Gorilla ride is great for anyone who wants their ride in the forefront with dark and dry tones.







CONTACT

BLISS

ENERGY

The Contact 8" splash is the brightest out of the three. It has thicker lathed marks that set it a part from the rest of the splashes. Once I set it up with my kit I noticed that I couldn't hear it very well when I added it within my fills. The tone is bright, almost too tin-sounding for me, and the decay is very quick. This splash would be great for someone who plays mellow music, so it's not drowned out by the other cymbals and drums when you're playing. It also isn't rounded correctly. On the right half and left top of the splash it's not evenly cut. I'm not sure if this augmented the sound at all or if its the design. Overall, I would recommend this splash to anyone who plays softer music. It has nice bright tone and short sustain that works perfectly for a quick accent cymbal.

The new Bliss series 8" splash is powerful with middle range tone. The Bliss splash is thin and is complimented with subtle lathing. In terms of sound, the Bliss reminds me of the Energy but without the initial shimmer. Playing it with my kit I also found it was hard to hear over the sounds of my drums and other cymbals. The Bliss has a very bright sound on the first initial contact with my stick that quickly decays into a mid range tone. There is also a quarter size dent in mine. which could have altered the sound. I would recommend the Bliss for any drummer that plays softer music. Overall, this splash is great for any drummer that wants a distinctive, middle range sounding splash that won't overpower any of the other cymbals.

The new Energy 8" splash is a great cymbal to add to any kit. It has fast attack and a mid-low tone. This was my favorite to play with my kit because of its outstanding presence. On initial contact, the splash gives off a shimmery and distinctive sound—close to that of a gong. The raw bell adds to its interesting tone and weight, truly setting it a part from the bliss and contact series. I would definitely recommend this splash if you're looking for one modestly priced, combined with a bright explosive sound that quickly decays into a distinct mid-low range tone.





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QUESTLOVE AT GUITAR CENTER



Go Dark

For the ultimate in sonic contrast and versatility. The new HHX Omni. Designed by Jojo Mayer.

