

DRUMS

**CHAD
SEXTON**

311 Bounces Back

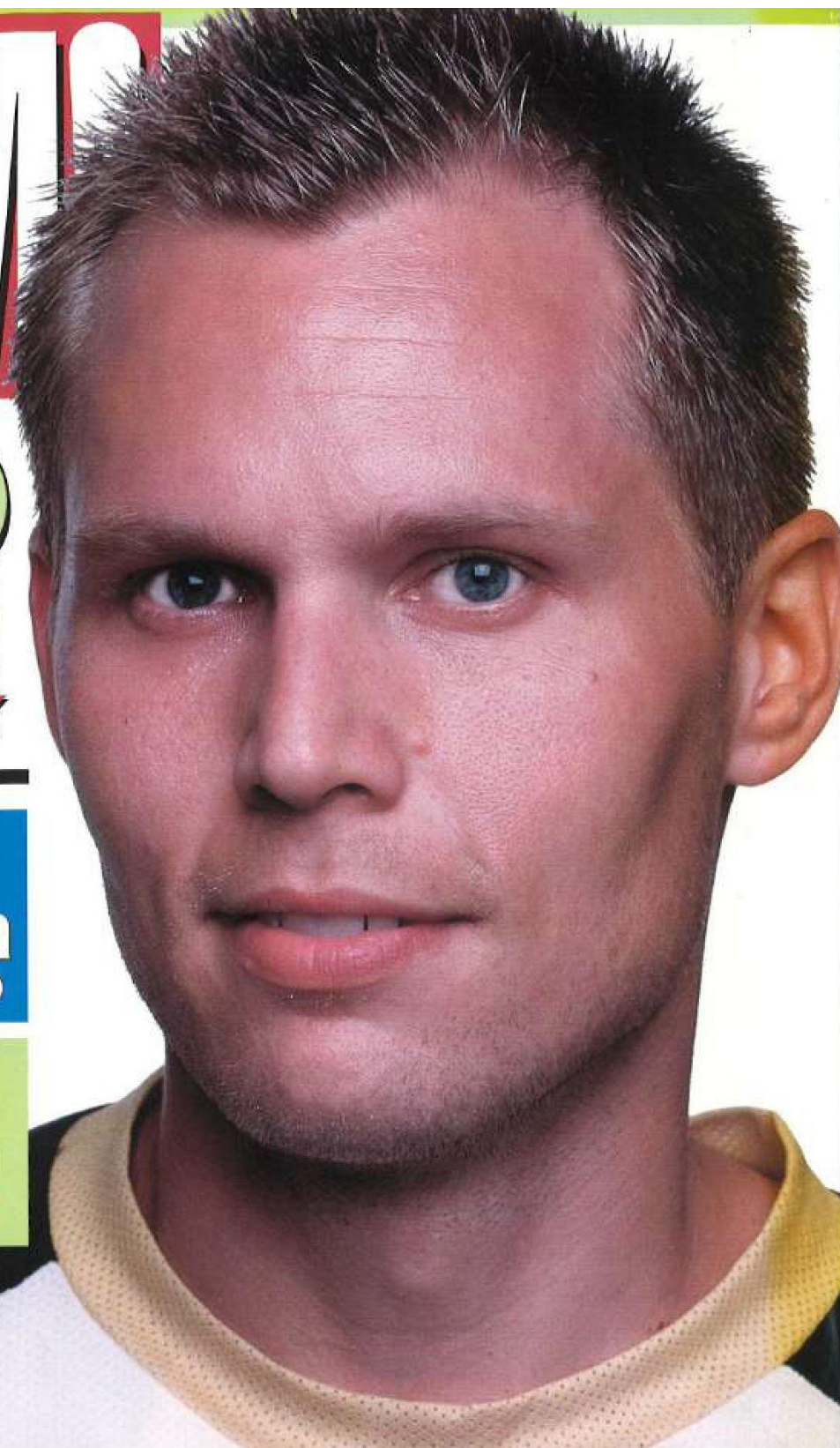
**MONGO
Santamaría**
CUBAN CONGA LEGEND

**KIRK
COVINGTON**
HOT FUSION SOLO TIPS

BILL BRUFORD

COAL CHAMBER

KID ROCK



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DRUM!

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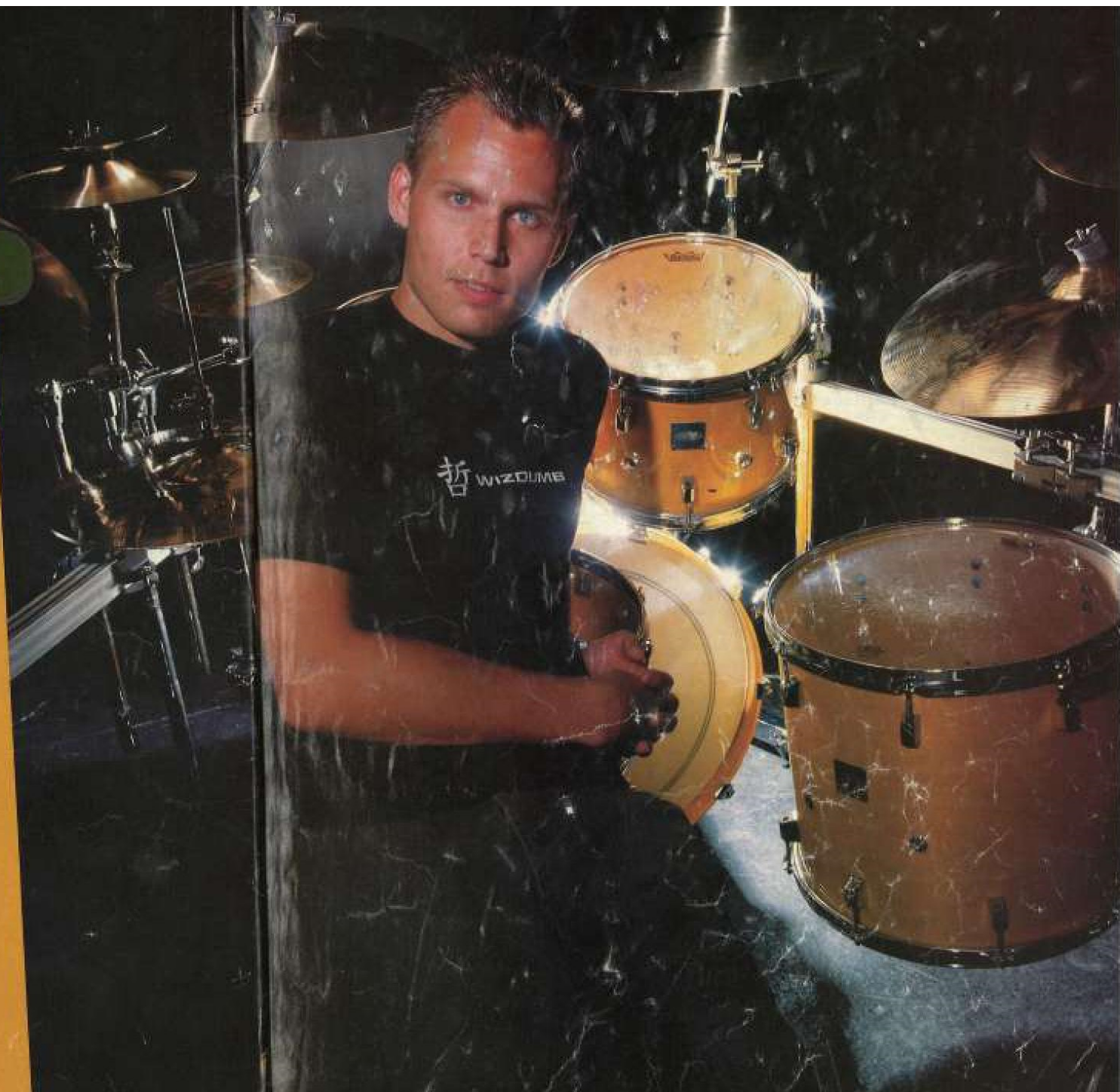
CHAD SEXTON

Bounces Back From Transistor

There's no substitute for making moves. Drummers and other assorted entertainment personnel have a lot of hustling to do, and the only guarantee is that if you do nothing, you'll get nothing. Chad Sexton and his bandmates in 311 are not known for sitting around on their butts — they've sold over five million albums, toured until they dropped, and have a new album, *Sound System*, coming out this fall on Capricorn. And while they've had a lot of hits, they've had some misses too.

Which brings us back to moves. At age 28, Sexton has made plenty of good ones as well as bad ones, and if you ask nicely, he's perfectly happy to tell you about both kinds. Whether it's high points or low points, this even-tempered Omaha native seems to get to each stage in his life via an uncomplicated formula — listen to yourself, act, evaluate.

BY DAVID WEGGS | PHOTOGRAPHY: NEIL ZIOZOWER



more simple in our writing, so a normal ear could understand where we were coming from. I didn't apply any new techniques. I did just make it a little more simple. I still have ghost strokes all over it, but it's not any weird-ass drum beats where I'm just putting snares on the second sixteenth-note of three. I love meshing funk and rock, so it's like a groove rock."

To record *Sound System*, 311 decided to rent a bare-bones studio for a year, then dropped in their own gear with the objective of writing, rehearsing, doing pre-production and recording all under one roof. "It enabled us to write really easily," Sexton explains. "We were able to stay there, build music, communicate and still feel real comfortable being grounded by the time we were kicking the real tracks." An important visitor for recording many of the basic tracks was Hugh Padgham. The legendary producer had initially agreed to produce the entire project, but a schedule conflict with Sting forced him to ditch *Sound System* in mid-stream, leaving 311's long-time engineer Scott Ralston to rally the devastated troops. But Padgham was there to capture most of Sexton's tracks, and was more than a little surprised at the drummer's unique recording method.

"We lay a click track on tape and then we lay the drum tracks," Sexton says. "Then we lay the bass and guitars and whatever. [Padgham] said he's been doing albums for 25 years and never has done it this way." While it would seem confusing to play the drum track without even a scratch vocal or guitar in the headphones as a guide map, Sexton finds the alternative even more harrowing.

"If I'm lining up to a click track and I hear guitar tracks that are out of time, my ear is like, 'Wait, which one am I supposed to be listening to?'" Sexton says. "So that way, I get rid of all the crap that might not be in time. And I've been playing the songs for four or five months before I record them, so they're in my head, and I know I've got eight measures of this and then we kick into the chorus."

Listeners can also expect Sexton's drums to ring out on the new album courtesy of more room mikes, after close-miking sucked a lot of the *oomph* out of his playing on *Transistor*. "I was envisioning how '70s drums were [on *Transistor*]," Sexton admits.

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PRIVATE LESSON

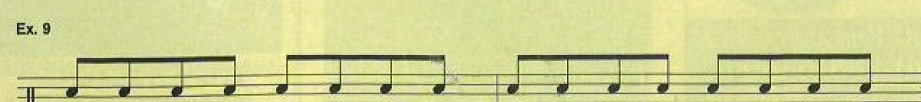
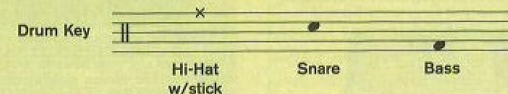


You might think of reggae music when you hear the term "dancehall drumming." But when Chad Sexton talks about dancehall drumming, he means a particular hybrid of reggae and rock that is instantly recognizable as his style, and his style alone. DRUM! wanted to delve a little deeper into his approach, so we met Sexton at 311's L.A. studio and sat down with him behind the kit.

Many of Sexton's 311 drum grooves are based on the dotted sixteenth-note associated with reggae music. He started by showing us his basic dancehall groove, shown in Ex. 1, then expanded upon it with the variation in Ex. 2, which is derived from the song "Rub-a-Dub" off of 311's *Transistor* album.

In Ex. 3 Sexton demonstrates how he uses double stops as a rhythmic pulse, and offers two variations of the pattern in Ex. 4 and 5. In Ex. 6, Sexton shows yet another basic groove, which is a more traditional dancehall style beat, and offers another variation in Ex. 7, which appears on the song "Prisoner" off the *Transistor* CD.

Chad Sexton Shows Off His Dancehall Stuff



To wrap things up, Sexton showed us a groove from 311's new album *Sound System* for a song aptly titled "Dance Hall." While learning any new groove, start the patterns slow before playing it up to speed. The recommended starting tempo for the grooves is quarter-note = 80 bpm.

Sexton doesn't have a very elaborate warm-up routine. Instead he plays one-handed eighths, which eventually turn into open rolls (Ex. 9). He also plays barefoot. "All shoes have different weights and thicknesses," he explains. "I play barefoot for the consistency that I get." To keep his feet from slipping off the pedal while working a sweat, Sexton uses a product called the Grip Peddler, which is an adhesive-backed piece of foam rubber that attaches to the bass drum pedal.

"Don't look elsewhere for a fill or groove," Sexton advises. "Instead of taking from others, steal from yourself." As an example, Sexton suggests taking half of two different grooves and mixing them together into a new pattern. By taking the first half of Ex. 2 and the first half of Ex. 8, you end up with Ex. 9. It's that easy!

—Todd Vanciguel

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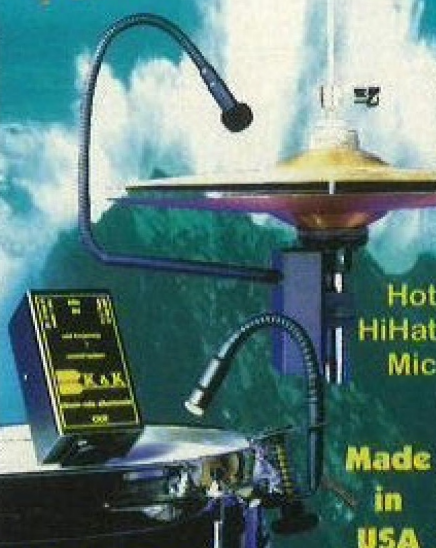
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SEXTON CONTINUED

"It sounds like it's in a carpet studio, really dry and really close up. I think it kind of backfired, honestly. They had no liveness. I used a piccolo snare on the last album a few times, and just the other times you think I'm using a piccolo it is a normal 6" x 14" snare. It just came out that way.

"I made sure with Hugh that I said, 'Look, this is how the snare sounds in the room right here. Even though there's a really high-pitched crack and it can just smack in your ear like a gunshot, I want there to be some body as well.' Everyone thinks I crank my top head, and back in the day I guess I did really crank it. But now I don't, because if you crank that top head, you're going to lose that body. So I get the crack from the rimshot, not how tight the head is. You're still going to get that pop from the rimshot."

But all this talk about the studio is making Chad hungry — for the road, that is. "They've made some great recordings, but their secret weapon is the impression they make live and in person. "There's no secret, man," Sexton differs. "We just get out there and rock the songs. That's it. There's no programming, no nothing, just our instruments and us.

"When we go on tour this next time, we're going to start out in smaller clubs, and that is really so exciting for us. When we toured last we were doing big stages and big arenas, which is fun for a while. But really for the musicians, nothing is like playing on a small stage. We enjoy that — our power is going to be back where it should be, instead of spread out across the stage."

The stage isn't the only thing that will be smaller this time. This time around, the duration of each leg of the tour will be pared back to a maximum of nine weeks. "When I was 22, I could go ahead and handle five months of touring straight," says Sexton. "Right now I could not take that. On the road you start missing normal things — cooking a pasta dinner, having a consistent shower each day. By the end of the third month you're like, 'Yeah, I guess we'll play the show, but I do miss my dog.'"

For 311, who have a long-term plan worked out to keep the band working together through the year 2032, jamming is sure to conquer all else. No matter what Sexton's next move is, count on him to follow his muse. "I love music so much and that's all I do. People ask, 'What's your hobby?'" he says. "It's music."

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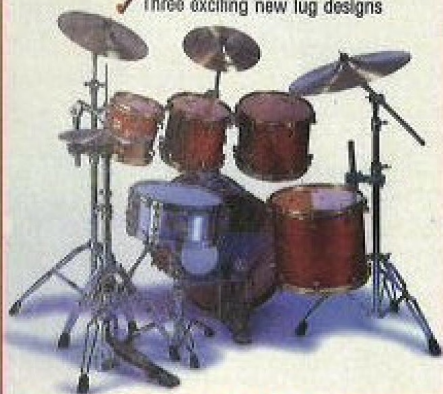


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