

TRAPS

THE ART OF DRUMMING



THE TRIALS OF
TERRY BOZZIO

A STORY OF
SELF DISCOVERY

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Peter Erskine

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TERRY BOZZIO

By JARED COBB PHOTOS By ROBERT DOWNS

There's something about her eyes that stirs him. They're too beautiful, too blue, too focused, too comforting. She observes him intensely from her chair, her humble yet distinguished perch, as he sits slumped on the couch across from her drawing a series of geometric mandalas – a supposed introspective roadmap of sorts – on an unyielding piece of paper. There have been plenty of tears shed on this couch. A few laughs, some screaming, several fits of mania. But it's all been pure and honest, all hard work, digging in the subconscious, searching for complex answers in a complex mind.



MAKING
SOUNDS

OF A

COMPLEX

MAN

Things shouldn't be like this. He shouldn't be here, in this room with this therapist and her stunning intellect and her equally stunning red hair and their shared Catholic guilt and the baggage it entails. He's out of place among the soft, floral décor and the passive, safe tones, the womb-like security. He belongs outside in the harsh L.A. sunshine, weaving through the socially elite, bobbing among the morally bankrupt, hiding behind dark shades and pretending not to sweat through tight leather pants. Someone might recognize him out there. That would be so much easier than this.

But he presses on. There must be answers somewhere, although they weren't where they should've been, in the money and the fame. He'd found his success – first with a blossoming San Francisco gigging scene, then with the genius of Frank Zappa, the curious Missing Persons, and now with the undeniable Jeff Beck – so why did he feel so empty, insecure, and anxious? The money, the car, the beautiful wife, the fame and friends, and yet nothing but pain.

"Count and measure," she tells the drummer. "Look closer and things are not as they seem."

So he tries and it helps but the fear still overwhelms him. He feels an all-consuming need to do something, his *own* thing. To emerge from the shadows of the ultra-famous, to abandon his reliance on other less dependable people without forsaking his own socioeconomic comforts. It's a desire he would soon learn to ignore, but for now it eats him alive. What if it all falls apart?

Then she speaks, drawing his attention up from the burdened paper into those penetrating blue eyes.

"How did you get all those premier gigs in San Francisco?" she asks.

"Well, the phone rang," he replies plainly.

"And the job with Frank Zappa?"

"The phone rang."

"And with Missing Persons and Jeff Beck?"

"The phone rang."

She perks up and he follows, both of them now peaked in anticipation of revelation.

"I think I have it figured out for you," she proclaims. Finally, an answer among all the painful questions.

"What? What is it?" he begs.

"Just don't change your phone number."

And to this day, nearly 20 years later, Terry Bozzio can still be reached at that same number. And his phone keeps ringing.



CHAPTER 1 A FULLY DEVELOPED CHARACTER

Today he is quite possibly our world's most complex, unique, and inventive drummer, but in 1950 Terry Bozzio began life just like the rest of us. His San Francisco upbringing was fairly simple and music was a part of his life from the beginning. Mom once sang in the high school band and still loves to flex her voice, while dad, a salesman by trade, was a child prodigy accordion player.

"There was always music around the house," recalls Bozzio, looking younger than his 58 years. Dressed in his omnipresent black jeans and black, long-sleeved T-shirt, he smells faintly of organic soap. His hands seem ten years older than his smooth, pasty face, while his words are crisp and articulate, thoughtful and intelligent. "My dad loved to play accordion, but he had a messed-up teacher who would hit him and didn't understand that he was memorizing instead of reading and things like that. So it was kind of twisted and made him rebel against music."

"When my relatives would gather for a Sunday meal they would prod him to play the accordion and he would always kind of refuse. Eventually he would take it out and begrudgingly play a few notes, and the whole room would get quiet. People would cry. This power of how he could entrance an audience and enrapture them and move them emotionally was part of my upbringing, and I think if I have any abilities towards that it comes from my dad."

While the ability to move his audience would come in time, first young Bozzio needed to discover the drums. Black-and-white 1950s TV provided his first window into the world of percussion, and after watching child drummers like Ricky Ricardo and Cubby O'Brien, Bozzio began playing on household items – nesting tables and the like – to simulate the Latin sounds of Tito Puente.

"Then when I was ten I received a set of bongos and proceeded to take them apart and create my own makeshift drum set with some loose-leaf paper and a rubber band as the snare on the small one and the block underneath the other one as the tom. Then I used a piece of string to tie up a crumpled high-voltage sign and that was my hi-hat. And I played using broken arrows from my archery set."

The young Bozzio didn't know that he was constructing the first of what would become many legendary drum kits that are more machine, more art, more sculpture than mere instrument. He'd play these makeshift contraptions to surf drum music like The Ventures and The Beach Boys. Then The Beatles played on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and the musical world changed forever.

"That was it. I told my dad I had to have drum lessons. Ringo had a small kit and he sat high so you could see him play. So I sat in front of a mirror we had in the living room and I emulated his movements. By the time I took my first drum lessons I was ready to go because I had practiced it in my mind and mimed it so much. My teachers told me I was four or five weeks ahead as far as coordination and that stuff. I started with a pad and some sticks and books and went along with my two teachers for about six months."

"I learned all the basic rudiments, and *Syncopation* by Ted Reed, and especially *Stick Control* by George Stone. Then I played in garage bands throughout high school, just kind of playing by ear and having fun, that whole '60s revolution was happening. I went from The Beatles into The Stones and then the San Francisco thing. I remember being able to go down the street – Jefferson Airplane, Big Brother And The Holding Company, Country Joe And The Fish, were like local bands – and hearing these bands for like, \$2.50 just blocks away. They would play at the Fairfax Pavilion and I could hear it from my house."

Then it was off to the College Of Marin as a music major for some formal instruction and a rude awakening. The music scene quickly switched from heavy bands like Hendrix, Cream, and Led Zeppelin, into more singer/songwriters like Elton John and David Bowie. Popular music became infinitely

less interesting for drummers, so Bozzio turned to jazz and classical music. It was a massive leap that would challenge him for the rest of his career.

"I really felt like I was at square one. It was one of those complete 'collapse-and-build-yourself-back-up' moments. My teacher, Chuck Brown, changed my hand technique, which kind of crippled me. And I was used to playing loud and letting go, and it's hard to groove at a soft level – that's definitely a cultivated art. Reading music, playing with other instruments, it was a real growing process. We had to have an understanding of all these instruments, and for a kid who didn't know the notes on a staff, it was very difficult. I was waking up at

"I was so nervous I felt faint and weak and could hardly practice"

six in the morning and practicing for two hours before school.

"I had no idea what I was getting into, I just loved the drums. But my teachers sensed my feeling and my abilities, and by then I had some chops, so I could play some paradiddles to raise the eye of the band director, who was a drummer. Somehow I got the key to the percussion department and was the first-call drummer there, and they used me for all these different situations.

"For example, Dr. Wolf, who was a theory teacher and an organist, had a baroque ensemble, and we'd take his antique kettle drums with the turning keys and put together a brass quintet and a group of vocalists and do a little Bach as well as his own arrangements and baroque stuff. Then there was the Marin Symphony and Napa Symphony, just different situations like that. I was always chosen for the faculty/students combination concerts, and it was all part of a great experience. Then there were some jazz classes as well, so I learned that and met people like Mark Isham and Pete Maunu, who are dear friends and great musicians.

"I credit them for my sensibilities in the *quality* of jazz, the originality and innovation side of it. They really turned me on to who was who, who meant something, and who was kind of an 'also ran.' It was Miles and Coltrane and their schools, and then branches off from that.

They'd explain to me, 'Here's this guy doing that, and yeah it's hip, but three years ago *this* guy was doing *this* and he's the one who started it.' And I realized who was more or less a fashion player and who was the real deal. I guess little things like that stick in my mind and make me want to follow those kinds of hero figures, the real innovators.

"I always use this quote, but I'll use it again: 'The day Miles played the trumpet is the day trumpet playing changed. The day Coltrane picked up a horn, that's the day saxophone playing changed.' I'm drawn to those kinds of guys who really did something different way before their time, and ultimately the rest of the world kind of caught up. So those are some deep

motivations there. They kind of stick with me and surface at various times, and I follow them to the best of my ability."

Bozzio was already honing his instincts to one day become an innovator like those he admired. But first he had to graduate from college, which took a little time thanks to those pesky non-electives. Then he had to avoid Vietnam by fasting himself down to a bodyweight unfit for duty. "I fasted for a week because I was very tall and thin for my age. So I got out for six months for being underweight, and during that time Nixon ended the draft. Suddenly, I relaxed.

"I had been in college doing all this stuff and learning their curriculum, which didn't have anything to do with playing the drum set, which is what I really wanted to do. I basically decided to take six months off and practice, then maybe I'd go on to San Francisco State or something like that. And during that time I turned professional and never looked back. I got a gig with the rock musical *Godspell*, and that lasted for 13 months. I was able to move out of my parents' house and make a living and collect unemployment. I started to meet people and do sessions around San Francisco."

This is when the phone starts ringing. "One day the phone rang and Luis Gasca – who is a great Latin trumpet player who used a lot of great guys around San Francisco – offered me a

gig. That same day another guy called and said he wanted me to audition for Azteca. So I got both those gigs. The day I auditioned for Azteca, Eddie Henderson was in the band and he said, 'I don't know if you're going to make it with this band, but I want you for my own band and this weekend we're playing in Los Angeles. I'll pay you \$400 and it's going to be you and Eric Gravatt – two drummers and all these really great musicians from San Francisco.'

"I was blown away. I got to play with one of my hero drummers, Eric Gravatt from Weather Report. It ended up going great. I think he was maybe not so open about it at first. In those days the idea of two drummers was not such a popular thing. There was one drummer in a band. And I don't think I was at the place where I could see the possibilities of making music with two drummers, at that age. We basically played together and it was very free. The tunes were very open, so it was just anything goes. There wasn't a lot of stepping on toes. It was pretty 'out' music, so we had a lot of fun. Eric is still one of my main influences."

The experience was a highlight in a highlight year for Bozzio's budding career. "I had a really great period of a year or so there where every day I was doing something totally different. Working sessions and jingles and stupid things like that to make some dough or playing with Azteca or a band with Mel Martin called Listen with Andy Narell and Dave Creamer, who played with Miles on *On The Corner*, and Richard Waters, the inventor of the Waterphone. And then me and Patrick and Mike Knock were playing with Eddie Henderson or with Mike Knock's group and the Jim Dukey Big Band, which was a hip big band, at the Great American Music Hall. So every day I had this really wide variety of things to play: Latin, jazz, free stuff, electronic stuff, whatever came up.

"That was just the scene at the time. And that seemed to dry up as soon as I left town. The club scene and all that just seemed to dry up in the mid-'70s. There weren't the same kind of opportunities and there haven't been since. It sucks really. But I was okay. That was right about when I got the call from George Duke telling me Zappa was auditioning, asking if I wanted to come down."

TERRY BOZZIO'S TRAPS



DRUMS

DW Vertical Low Timber (Olive ash burl finish)

10" x 6" snare; 12" x 5.5" solid shell Craviotto snare; 8" x 3" piccolo toms (14); 8" x 6" tom; 10" x 6" toms (4); 10" x 8", 12" x 6", 12" x 8" and 13" x 9" toms; 14" x 10" and 16" x 12" floor toms.

Lower Level

(foot operated drums, left to right) 8" x 3" tom; 10" x 12" tom; 12" x 12" tom; 12" x 25" Paul E. wooden-headed djembe; Paul E. "Mooneye" wooden-headed tambourine; 16" x 14" tom; 20" x 12" bass drum; 20" x 16" (main left bass drum); 20" x 16" (main right bass drum); 24" x 14" bass drum; 18" x 16" bass drum; 18" x 16" bass drum; 20" x 8" bass drum.

CYMBALS

Sabian Radia (Terry Bozzio signature)

Upper Level - Left To Right
21" ride; 16" China below 8" China; 18" China below 10" China; 14" China w/12" crash stack below 7" China w/6" crash stack; 16" China w/14" crash stack below 8" China w/7" crash stack; 18" China w/16" crash stack below 10" China w/8" crash stack; 20" China w/18" crash stack below 12" China w/10" crash stack; 20" China below 12" China; 22" China below 14" China; 36" Wuhan gong.

Lower Level - Left To Right

10" hi-hats; remote China hi-hat, 16" over 18"; Spoxe hi-hat (Roto Tom castings taken apart and used as hi-hat); 12" hi-hats; 12" heavy bell under 8" cup chime; 11" heavy bell under 7.5" cup chime; 10" heavy bell

under 7" cup chime; 9" heavy bell under 6.5" cup chime; 26" B-20 radia gong (used as a ride cymbal); 20" flat ride w/20" China stack under closed 14" flat bottom hi-hats, under 8" Factory Metal Cross Crasher under Pete Englehardt ribbon crasher; 20" crash w/20" novo-type China stack; remote China hi-hat, 16" over 20"; 6" and 7" closed, flat-bottom mini hi-hats on either side of 10" snare.

PERCUSSION

Roland SPD-15 HandSonic, Glockenspiel, LP tambourine, Vic Firth/Emil Richards jingle stick.

Terry Bozzio also uses Vic Firth Terry Bozzio signature sticks, AKG mikes, Randall May miking system, Attack Terry Bozzio signature heads, DW pedals, PDP rack, M-Audio electronics.

SCALE OF THE SETUP

Terry Bozzio's drums are tuned to different notes so that it is as musical as it is rhythmic. The 13 piccolo toms are chromatically tuned from high C to C an octave lower (drums descend a half step in pitch from upper left down to lower right at a diagonal angle). Another grouping includes four 10" x 6" toms descending in the same pattern, tuned to G, F, E, and D. All of the foot-operated instruments, including a djembe, are chromatically tuned as well, including the main bass drums with a tuning of Bb for the left kick and G for the right.

CHAPTER 2 THE GENIUS, THE WEIRDNESS, THE LEGEND, THE GIG

What follows has become almost laughable legend in the drumming community: the much gossiped about Bozzio/Zappa audition. Some versions put Bozzio as the only drummer with enough cajones to ever attempt an audition with the mad genius. Other versions have Bozzio flying, muscles bulging and red cape aflutter, into the rehearsal space and literally blowing people's minds. The reality, as usual, lies somewhere in between. So, from the man's own mouth:

"I took the risk and flew down to L.A. It was an absolute cattle call audition. Scary. One of the scariest things I've ever done. But thank God I did it. I had never heard Zappa's music, but I was listening to Billy Cobham and thinking I could copy his licks, pretty complex stuff, and I should be able to snag this 'rock gig' and make some money. I always had this thought in the back of

my mind, this either/or thing. Either I'm going to do like Miles and do my own thing and say, 'Fuck everybody else,' or I'm going to try and make a lot of money so then I can do my own thing and say, 'Fuck everybody else.' Zappa turned out to be both things at once, and much more.

"The audition was this: They told me I'd have to read, do some memoriza-

tion, play in 19, and stuff like that. I flew myself down under the condition that if I got the gig they'd cover my airfare, if not, it was on me. I was on unemployment at the time and the expense and the risk was a little iffy for me, but I just took the plunge. Two or three days before, I bought two of his records, *Live At The Roxy* and *Apostrophe*, and it scared me. It scared me to the point where I couldn't sleep. I was so nervous I felt faint and weak and could hardly practice. My legs were rubbery. It was so impressive and so difficult.

"You had Chester Thompson and Ralph Humphrey, who were phenomenal drummers, exchanging furious drum solos. You had this incredibly complex music going on. Then you had the sheer volume of memorization of this stuff. It was all just overwhelming. I had no idea this music even existed, that this guy could do all of this – and crack me up at the same time.

"So I went down there, took a cab to his rehearsal space on Sunset and Gower. It was this big warehouse kind of thing and he had a stage with sound and lights, and I had never seen anything like it. They had Anvil cases! I didn't know what those were. I was used to those fiber cases that if you left in the rain they would warp and rot. Pages of the most difficult music were spread out all over the stage. There were probably about 50 drummers hanging around.

"There were two huge Octoplus drum sets up on the stage. So, to save time, one drummer would tweak one kit while the other drummer auditioned. And there was the very imposing Zappa, Duke, and Tom Fowler there. And the drummers were just dropping like flies. Frank was just, 'Nope, sorry. Next.' So I thought there was no way in hell I'd get this gig. I started asking the local guys if they had heard about a Weather Report audition because I'd heard they were looking for another drummer and since I was in L.A. I could kill two birds with one stone and not go back with my tail between my legs. They told me Chester, Frank's drummer, left Frank to go play with Weather Report. So that made it even more nerve wracking for me because that was my hero band and I figured if this guy just left to go to my hero band, what the hell am I thinking?

"So I watched a couple guys fail and the only thing that came to mind was that nobody was listening. Either they couldn't read or they weren't listening. And I thought, 'Okay, I can go up there and try to play *with* this guy and listen like a good jazzer does.' You don't just play and flaunt your chops, you go and play and listen and play *with* the guy. So I went up there and had to read 'Approximate,' which is a really difficult piece of music with changing meters and odd superimpositions. When I came to the 13-tuplet I stopped and explained to them that I knew what it was and could play it slow, even though I couldn't sight-read it. Then we played it up to tempo and I fluffed my way through it.

"Then Frank tested my memorization with this piece, I forget the name of it, but it's a series of fives with some other odd times thrown in and it cycles. He explained the structure and I did the best I could playing through that structure. The next thing was playing in 19, which I could do because I'd heard Billy Cobham's 4/4-plus-three, sixteen thing that Duke would solo over. So we had some fun and burned a little fusion and I had fun doing that. Then he said, 'Okay, let's play a blues shuffle to check out your feel.' So I just did the best I could at swinging on a blues shuffle and he goes, 'Okay, I really like the way you

sound. I want to hear you again after I check out the rest of these guys.'

So he turns to his road manager, who turns to all the other drummers, who all shake their heads. The road manager turns around and goes, 'That's it Frank. Nobody else wants to audition after Terry.' So Frank turns to me and goes, 'Looks like you got the gig if you want it.' I said to him, 'Are you sure I can do this?' He said, 'Do you want to do this?' I said, 'Well, hell yeah, but I just don't know if I'm heavy enough.' He goes, 'If you're willing to work I think you can do it.'

Dinner followed, as well as a tour of the infamous Record Plant studio where Zappa played for Bozzio the then-unreleased material that would become the *One Size Fits All* record. "I told him the truth. I said, 'I think this is some of the best stuff you've ever done.' And I still believe that. He played me 'Music For A Low Budget Symphony Orchestra' and 'Gregory Peccary,' which were just masterpieces. Unbelievable music. So my mind was officially blown. This was my first time I'd ever seen a studio like that, just knobs for days and gigantic speakers and a Jacuzzi room. I mean, the Record Plant was like a hippie crash pad back then. It was a love nest, you know? So it was a mind-blowing experience."

In a rush to get started, Bozzio flew back to San Francisco, packed up his

gear, and returned to L.A., ready to work. He remembers it being more like joining the marines than anything.

"I'd wake up every morning, do some calisthenics, practice my stick control, and warm up. Then I'd make reading exercises using all those superimpositions, just trying to do all the permutations of whatever, say five through thirteen over one, two, three, or four, and then mix them all up on a page and try to sight-read them like that to try to get familiar with that kind of thing. And Frank would give me tapes of some 12-piece bands that were just incredible, with Ian Underwood and some horns and Ralph Humphrey playing 'Eric Dolphy Memorial Barbecue' [from *Weasels Ripped My Flesh*] and 'Be-Bop Tango' [from *Tiny Nightmares*]. It was just phenomenal classical-meets-rock/jazz/fusion music. And he had the charts to those. I would try and rehearse them and get to the point where I could play them.

"We rehearsed eight hours a day every day for three to six months, then we would go out on the road for six months. Every sound check was a rehearsal. Every night we were doing something new. We were always forced to keep that edge. So you were always hyper-aware and stretching that brain muscle to be able to memorize more. It was just terrific."



SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

WITH FRANK ZAPPA

(on Rykodisc): *Zoot Allures*; *Joe's Garage: Acts II & III*; *Orchestral Favorites*; *Sheik Yerbouti*; *Sleep Dirt*; *Baby Snakes*; *Thing-Fish*; *You Can't Do That on Stage Anymore, Vol. 1, 3, 4, and 6*; *Läther*; *Cheap Thrills*.

(On Smilin' Ears): *Titties And Beer*. (On Beacon Island): *Tiny Nightmares*. (On Barking Pumpkin): *Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar*.

(On Siesta): *Supplement Tape*. (On Digital Sound): *Quaudiophilic*.

WITH BRECKER BROS. (on Arista): *Heavy Metal Be-Bop*.

WITH FRANK ZAPPA & CAPTAIN BEEFHEART (on Rykodisc): *Bongo Fury*.

WITH 10CC (on Mercury): *Deceptive Bends*.

WITH RAY BARRETTO (on Atlantic): *Eye Of The Beholder*.

WITH U.K. (on EG): *Danger Money*;

Night After Night.

WITH GROUP 87 (on One Way): *Group 87*.

WITH MISSING PERSONS (on One Way): *Spring Session M*; *Rhyme & Reason*; *Color In Your Life*.

WITH ROBBIE ROBERTSON (on Geffen): *Robbie Robertson*

WITH DWEEZIL ZAPPA (on Chrysalis): *My Guitar Wants To Kill Your Mama*. (on Favored Nations): *Automatic*. (On Zappa): *Go With What You Know*.

WITH PATRICK O'HEARN (on Private Music): *Rivers Gonna Rise*. (On Discovery): *Trust*.

WITH GARY WRIGHT (on Cypress): *Who I Am*. (On Worldly/Triloka): *First Signs Of Life*.

WITH DEBBIE HARRY (on Sire): *Def, Dumb & Blonde*.

WITH MICHAEL THOMPSON BAND (on Geffen): *How Long*.

WITH JEFF BECK AND TONY HYMAS (on Epic): *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop*.

WITH MARK ISHAM (on Virgin): *Mark Isham*.

WITH JEFF BECK (on Epic/Legacy): *Beckology*.

WITH EARL SLICK (on Metal Blade): *In Your Face*.

WITH RICHARD MARX (on Capitol): *Rush Street*.

WITH STEVE VAI (on Epic): *Sex & Religion*.

WITH MICK KARN AND DAVID TORN (on CMP): *Polytown*.

WITH Z (on Barking Pumpkin): *Shampoohorn*.

WITH DURAN DURAN (on Capitol): *Thank You*.

WITH BOZZIO LEVIN STEVENS (on Magna Carta): *Black Light Syndrome*; *Situation Dangerous*.

WITH BILLY SHEEHAN (on Magna Carta): *Nine Short Films*; *Compression*.

SOLO (on Import): *Solo Drum Music, Vol. 1, Vol. 2*.

(On Favored Nations/NPS Output): *Chamber Works*.

WITH EXPLORERS CLUB (on Magna Carta): *Age Of Impact*; *Raising The Mammoth*.

WITH THE KNACK (on Rhino): *Zoom*. (On Image): *Re-Zoom*.

WITH THE LONELY BEARS (on Magna Carta): *Lonely Bears*; *Bears Are Running*; *Injustice*.

WITH STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN & DOUBLE TROUBLE (on Epic/Legacy): *SRV*.

WITH BPM (on Abstract Logix): *Delete And Roll*.

WITH JORDAN RUDESS (on Magna Carta): *Feeding The Wheel*.

WITH OMAR & THE HOWLERS (on Blind Pig): *Big Delta*. (On Ruff): *Boogie Man*.

WITH VIVIAN CAMPBELL (on Sanctuary): *Two Sides Of If*.

WITH KORN (on Virgin): *Untitled*.

CHAPTER 3 TURNING THE BLACK PAGE

Perhaps the only Bozzio folklore more preposterous than the guesswork swirling around the Zappa audition is the much-fabled piece of music known eerily as “The Black Page” [from *You Can't Do That On Stage Anymore, Vol. 4*]. An incredibly complex and intricate tune born from the deep, dark depths of the Zappa genius, the song was created with drum charts so elaborate that the multitude of notes seemed to black out each page of music.

“I walked into rehearsal, probably in my second or third year with the band, and Frank said, ‘Hey, Bozzio. What do you think about this?’ And he had this piece of music. I was impressed. And I could sight-read parts of it, the easier parts, but there were definitely bars in there that I had to work on. But at that point it wasn't a pressure thing, like an audition, so I chipped away at it for 20 minutes a day just as a little challenge. After a week or two I was able to play it, so Frank took the music back home and wrote the melody to it and we began playing it as a band.

“It's still a pretty hellacious piece of music, and for many years I would do the clinic circuit and people would ask me to play ‘The Black Page’ and I'd say no because I'd have to go back and memorize it, and to be honest with you, I just didn't want to have to go through that pain anymore.”

During the three “Bozzio years” of Zappa's band, there were three world tours and ten albums released. Surprisingly, this involved very little studio time and a hazy, ambiguous list of album credits that remain a mystery to this day.

“We went into the studio a couple of times. I did go to the Record Plant and do part of *Zoot Allures*. I think we went into the Chateau one time and after setting everything up and working through the bugs Frank just said, ‘This sucks. We're out of here.’ I said, ‘Why? We worked all day. What's the problem?’ He said, ‘The way you guys are playing, it just doesn't feel right in this little room. I only want to record live.’ So he would drag stuff out and we would record live. He didn't feel you could get basic tracks in the studio that had the same energy and intensity that a musician put into it when there was an audience there. So that's what we did.

“In the Record Plant we jammed a lot too. Things like ‘The Ocean Is The Ultimate Solution’ [from *Läther*] were done then. And some of that stuff was released, then the Warner Brothers [lawsuit] happened and three records were shot out without any information. These things were, I think, some of the best stuff Frank's ever done. Real masterpieces. Unbelievable conceptual pieces. But they were just schluffed out with this stupid

“There were no credits on the record. I'm on some of the orchestral stuff and not on others. So I don't know how many Zappa records I have a presence on.”

cartoon artwork and not his original mixes or masters. It was just not right. There were no credits on the record. I'm on some of the orchestral stuff and not on others. So I don't know how many Zappa records I have a presence on, whether it's just doing some vocals or spoken word stuff or actually playing the drums.”

Bozzio's tenure with Zappa soon turned odd and awkward. He was hired, seemingly, for his classical sensitivities and his ability to play superhuman drum parts. Then, after he put himself through Zappa boot camp and elevated his play to its necessary level, his new band basically regressed, falling back on a more rock-oriented format. It was confusing for the proud, excited young drummer.

“When Captain Beefheart joined the band everything just kind of took a left turn. A lot of the very difficult stuff was left behind and I always felt a little bit insecure about that. We never played all the great music that was on *One Size Fits All*, all this difficult – beautiful and difficult – stuff that they had done. They had played all that for several years, and it was just being recorded and released

at the point where I joined the band. But Frank didn't want to play it anymore. He was burnt. He had played ‘Inca Roads’ [from *One Size Fits All*] enough times that he didn't want to play it for a few years.

“You know, it was fun. And there was some challenging music and I was pushed, but it became more of a rock thing at that point, and my guidepost was to play like Mitch Mitchell because he kind of bridged the gap. At this point I was more of a jazz drummer trying to relearn rock. So if I threw in some Tony Williams licks Zappa would sometimes turn around and go, ‘Now that's a good example of what *not* to do on stage. That's just too out for what we're trying to do here.’ Then if I did a Mitch Mitchell-ish lick – that made sense to him. So there was a space where it wasn't supposed to get too jazz, it wasn't supposed to smell too funny.

“At the end of the first tour we recorded that live at the Armadillo *Bongo Fury* record, and then I went home and Frank called and said he wanted me to move to L.A., that it was just him and me, nobody else, they all left. So that led to the next phase. I moved to L.A. and the band went through several configurations before we settled on what it was: myself, Andre Lewis, Nappy [Napoleon Brock], and Frank, and Roy Estrada on bass. It was an odd grouping of people. I was sort of the only one then who had the classical sensibilities. The rest of it was burning, for what it was, but not for that. The whole classical/jazz area was just not happening. What came out of that were things like ‘Black Napkins’ and ‘Zoot Allures’ [both from *Zoot Allures*] and some of those beautiful tunes. More space, more comedy, but not the same level of intricacy.”

As the complexity of the music began to wane, so did Bozzio's enthusiasm for the work, and yet the experience was invaluable in making him the artist he is today. There were some regrets, but

in the end, the Zappa days were unquestionably a career highlight.

“The only regret I have with all that is that I was young. I wish I had known what I know now to just back up Frank and play with him because he was a brilliant soloist and really fun to play with. I just didn't know how to do that at the time. I was too young and inexperienced. So that's one regret, and Frank has since given me enough compliments for me to let that stuff go. I've played him some of my music and done some things that he's been very proud of and he told me that. It's like hearing it from your father. I could relax, because he didn't hand out compliments lightly.

“It was definitely the most rewarding and rich musical experience of my entire life, on so many levels. I learned so much. I was pushed beyond what my capabilities were. I had the pleasure of hanging with the cat for three years and listening to his remarkable sense of humor, whether we were just driving down the road or sitting on an airplane. Another regret would be the fact that my vocabulary wasn't as good as it is now and Frank's was far beyond what mine is now. So to not look like a fool I might fake a laugh at a joke when he used a big word that I didn't understand, instead of asking what that word meant. He could zero in and use the exact word to signify something really funny.

“But I learned so much. The difficulty of the music, classically, was way beyond anything I'd experienced in college. Watching him work was phenomenal. He could play the band like a keyboard: ‘You do this; you do this; you do this.’ Or: ‘Here's a little lick, now play that back to me. Okay, now add this to it.’ And before you knew it you had 30 bars of hellacious, odd-time bizarreness strung together and you were burning at it – in a matter of moments. Then that would become a piece in the middle of some larger piece.”

Zappa's life would eventually end in a losing battle against prostrate cancer. When that day of finality arrived, Bozzio found himself experiencing some surprising emotions. “To be brutally honest, and make no mistake about what I mean by this because I love Frank, but I was relieved when he died. There was a fear that left me when he died that I know I won't have anymore because there isn't the chance that he'll call me up and ask

me to do something that scares the hell out of me. And I lived with that fear until the day he died. Then there was this release. *Whew!* Now he won't call me and ask me to act in some Broadway play or perform this weird classical thing where I have to memorize all this stuff.

“Those were things I could do when I was young and didn't have a life. I think a lot of the musicians that came through that band Frank caught at the right time where they could blossom and grow.

Then they got to the point where they either wanted to do their own thing or they got lazy and were no longer adept enough to hang with what he wanted to do. In my case, he sensed I was ready to go and he said, ‘I think it's time you go off and do your own thing.’ I said the same thing to him as when I was asked to join the band: ‘Are you sure I can do this?’ Like a good father he kicked me out of the nest. And it took me a while to learn how to fly.”

ED MANN

Learning From The Master

Frank Zappa hired percussionist Ed Mann in June 1977, a couple of years after Terry Bozzio had begun his tenure with the guitarist/composer. “I didn't know that you could do that on a drum kit,” Mann says. “It was one of those experiences where I walked out a changed person with much higher goals, a clarity and desire to achieve that standard. I was highly motivated.”

Mann admits that his and Bozzio's “working relationship was more student/teacher than peer to peer.” If anything, his role in Zappa's fiery percussive ensemble of the time was an object lesson in how to develop with all that talent coming from the drum chair. “Musically, I mostly focused on the big hits,” Mann says. “Terry was great to rock with! He brought me to a new level of rock awareness, helped me even out my playing.”

For Mann, who had just come from an in-depth study of not only American but cross-cultural percussive styles at Cal Arts, the trek to Zappa seemed only natural. With Bozzio and beyond, he performed and recorded as percussionist, synthesist, electronic sound designer, vocalist, and programmer during 1977–1988. In fact, Mann might



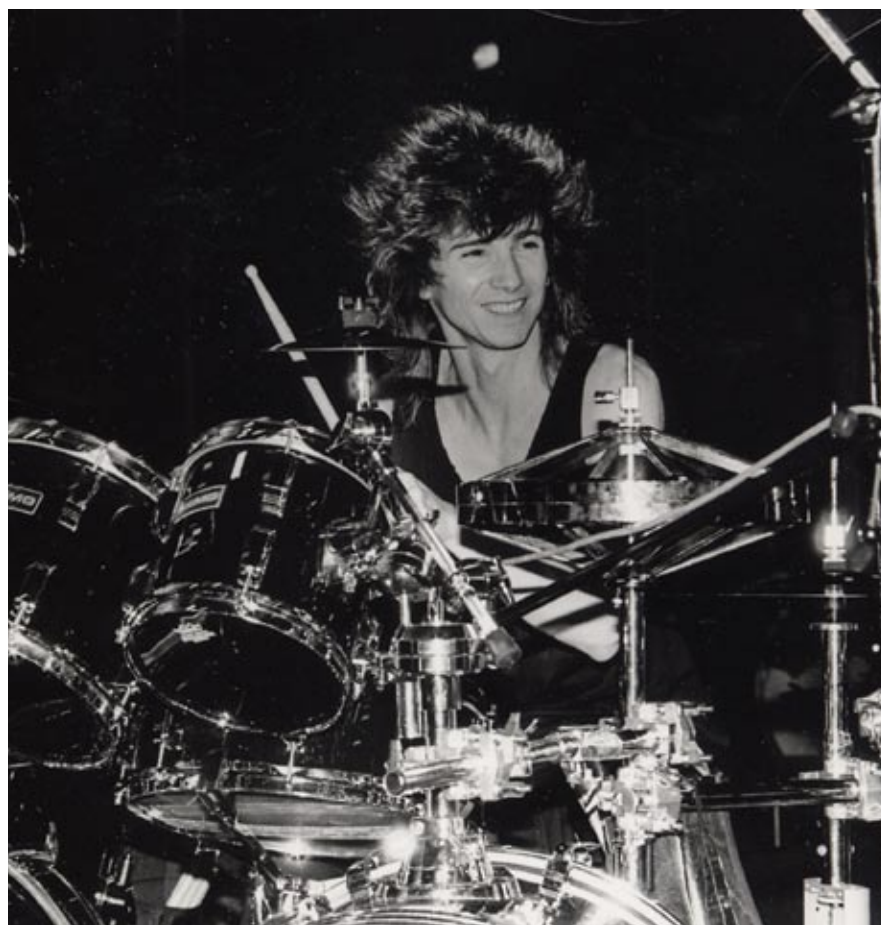
just be the most recorded musician in Zappa's catalog.

With Bozzio on board, Mann says he “focused on keeping it minimal, in most places, allowing Terry to do what he was going to do and not get in the way. I kept my eyes on him, to be in synch, on a physical and metaphysical level.” Concentrating mostly on playing mallets with the vibes, Mann found his connection as someone else holding two sticks. “Terry helped create more evenness, more accuracy in my playing. He was slammin' with both hands, with attitude. It was an attitude of, ‘Don't be afraid of playing a wrong note.’ Like Frank, he believed that a strong wrong note was better than a weak right note. Early on, he was like a drummer on steroids. Later, with Frank's orchestral music, he was always experimenting, always pushing himself to go further, with lin-

ear patterns – it was all mixed up. If there was a double it was on purpose to create a double effect, all the bass drums and hands going all at once, even tripling and quadrupling! His playing was very orchestrated. And he always had a goal point.

“By that point he was Frank's master drummer par excellence,” Mann continues. “Everybody followed Bozzio. Terry owned that band. The thrills of that band bring to mind Keith Moon. One of the things I love about Bozzio's attitude on the kit is that mood of youthful exuberance and expressive exploration that he rides like a high wave. Keith is the only drummer I know of who plays that way, and I am a huge Keith Moon fan. When Keith died – rest in peace – I was sure The Who were going to snatch Terry up. That would have been a great band!”

—John Ephland



CHAPTER 4 THREE MUSICIANS, ONE MISSING PERSON

“It was what it was in hindsight. Pretty much everything I’ve done I can look back on and go, ‘This was pretty good for what I knew and who I was at the time.’ And if I look at it that way, I like and enjoy everything that I’ve done.”

That’s how Bozzio reflects on his days with the curious – some say confused – ’80s freak show known as Missing Persons. It’s a somewhat typical stance. Many artists look back at their work during the

’80s with a tinge of embarrassment. But whatever it was, it was right for the times and it granted Bozzio and his bandmates – including then wife and singer Dale Bozzio – significant success, at least financially speaking, at least for the short term.

“I had some savings and we decided to form Missing Persons. We got together with Warren [Cuccurullo, guitar] and got a keyboardist, Chuck Wild, and it was scary. I ran out of money, had to start teaching. We made this demo

with Ken Scott, thinking he could get us a record deal with one phone call, but nobody wanted to hear it. So we just kept slogging it out, the whole do-it-yourself thing with packaging and everything, back when that was meaningful. Now, everybody is able to do that. Everybody can make a CD at home and it doesn’t mean anything anymore.

“But at that time there was a progressive rock station that would play interesting new music. So we took it to them and got some of our friends to call

up and request it and then it just took off. We did a few gigs and people had heard us on the radio and they started going nuts. ‘What the hell is this?’ Then it really took off. We got signed; we were on MTV because we had videos before videos really existed. So we got heavy rotation on MTV and we’d go to places like El Paso and sell out a 2,000-seat venue even though we’d never been there before.

“The concept was to make it like a Fellini movie – look weird, sound weird and quirky, but be a pop band. It was a weird assumption because the word ‘pop’ [presumes] that you have to be successful and popular and there’s no way to really gauge that. We did the same thing twice and the second time it wasn’t successful. And the third time it was not successful again. And it doesn’t seem to matter. Things are what they are and they’ll be what they’ll be.

“The good parts of that, it was three guys who could really play who liked each other and liked what each other did. We came up with some really interesting music within the ‘popular’ spectrum. Within that spectrum is a universe of possibilities, so we tried to give people something interesting even though they didn’t know they were getting something interesting – under the guise of excitement during the show or what have you. So it worked and it was fun.

“In terms of my ex-wife, it worked the first time, but by the time we did our second record and tried to be a little more sophisticated, I don’t think her voice could cover it. And by then she was having personal problems, and Warren was too, and so the whole thing started to fall apart. To this day I’m still in touch with Patrick [O’Hearn], who is my dear friend, and Warren as well. I don’t contact my ex-wife. She’s still out there using the name and doing the Missing Persons thing and, you know, that’s all she has and God bless her. I think it’s kind of sad and I wish her the best. It just wasn’t meant to be. That whole thing, in hindsight, was probably just a relationship that should have been a one-night stand.

“It was a good, bizarre combination for what was popular at the time and then it didn’t work. And it took us a little while to let go of it.”

CHAPTER 5 FOLLOW YOUR RIFF BLISS

A depression soon set in, slowly rolling over Bozzio like the San Francisco fog in which he was raised, until he was completely consumed, zero visibility, and fighting for a line of sight. He pressed on, playing with U.K., The Brecker Brothers, then Jeff Beck, as well as other miscellaneous gigs. An unsuccessful audition for Thin Lizzy certainly didn’t help matters, and Bozzio soon found himself in a deeply introspective state, studying philosophy and occupying that familiar therapist’s couch.

“A lot of it revolved around insecurities, financial insecurities and things like that. And when you mix that up with creativity you’re really creating a hopeless situation. Creativity is all about, ‘Fuck It. Let’s go make mistakes. I’m going to go do something fun that nobody has to see and there’s no reason to think about it or criticize it.’ That’s how all the good stuff happens. And you can prepare yourself by practicing and learning and you can guarantee yourself some results by *doing*, but if you just *think*, you’re not going to *do*. The critic sits on your shoulder telling you what’s not a good idea, then nothing gets done.”

The drummer was having difficulty being an artist. So many different negatives – self-criticism, inflated ego, self-doubt, L.A. – were pulling him in so many directions, he felt like he could be ripped apart at any moment. This is when others turn to drugs. Bozzio, the intellectual, instead turned to the readings of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell, and began the long, often torturous process of self-discovery.

“The emotional attachment to music, that’s one thing that I had to work through. It doesn’t matter how I feel about the music at the time because how I feel is subject to change. I’ve had enough experiences where I thought, ‘Man, I killed it tonight.’ Then I listen to the tape and it sucks. Or times when I’m sick and hanging on by a thread and don’t think I’m playing well at all, and it ends up being unbelievably good.

“So if I take that emotional attachment away and look at it later in time, I see it with fresh eyes and an understanding of the context. I get this detachment from my actual creative source and then I can take my ego out of the picture and say, ‘Okay, this really isn’t me because my intention was to do this and look what

the result is.’ If my intentions are out of the way then the real creativity comes through. It’s just part of human nature, and some people are good at tapping into it while others are not. Some people are just too caught up in all the other stuff.

“When you get to the point where you just don’t give a shit, then the best stuff happens. Or you just accept whatever it is as what happened that

“We grossed something like a million dollars or more with Missing Persons, and I was never more miserable”

day. Eliminating your ego is something that can’t be forced, but you can work towards it if you’re open to it. My earlier years had a lot of pain. I feel I was younger and stronger and yet more in denial and more arrogant. All those youthful things are there for a reason, so you don’t collapse. As you get older maybe those things aren’t so present so you’re more willing to be humble.

“When I was first going out there doing clinics I thought I should know everything about everything for all drummers. I soon learned that every drummer has a different story and every drummer has some basic truths we’re all talking about, no matter how smart or stupid or how complex or simple a drummer you are. We’re all talking about this same truth. The accent and the vernacular change, but it’s the same truth. I’ve met thousands of drummers all around the world and we’re all talking about the same thing. It’s like we’re at the edge of this ever-widening circle and anybody can join in. We’re all looking at the same center point, but I’m at north and that guy’s at southeast, and that’s okay.

“I appreciate that now, as opposed to what I believed before, which is one size fits all – you’re either Buddy Rich or you’re nothing. I think the more I went through these things and looked at them, the easier it got. People use the phrase ‘old idea.’ Well, having an ego became an old idea. I didn’t have to think that way anymore. It’s okay if I want to say, ‘Fuck society,’ and live in a cave. Those are easy things to say, but that’s the truth.

“It’s harder to live that way. But on the other hand, what I thought I needed to have in order to be happy didn’t make me happy. I had the money, the car, the beautiful wife. We grossed something like a million dollars or more with Missing Persons, and I was never more miserable. So if money and fame don’t make me happy then what does? I thought it was creativity, but I was doing this creativity for these presump-

posed ideas of popularity, and that didn’t work for me.

“Then reading Joseph Campbell and the whole ‘follow your bliss’ thing, it’s really true. When you find something that gives you enjoyment, you should do *that*. It’ll take you on its journey – for me, all the ostinatos and drum composition stuff – and on the other side of it you thank God you followed it, instead of trying to get a gig with some pop guy to make money.

“A lot of that has to do with living in Los Angeles. When you live in L.A. you don’t realize the pressure that you live under and the things you assume, habits you indoctrinate into your lifestyle, until you leave it. So fuck all that. Fuck having to dress up and be Terry Bozzio to go shopping because, well, a couple months ago I was in *People* magazine because of my divorce and God forbid somebody might notice me and I’ll have to explain myself to someone.

“All that crap left when I left L.A. and moved to Austin. Now the air is clean, the schools are better, and I can actually afford to buy a house.”

PATRICK O'HEARN

Fun With The Bozzio Show

"My relationship with Terry – working or otherwise – is always about laughter and having fun," says long-time friend and musical colleague Patrick O'Hearn. "Terry and I were introduced to one another through keyboardist Mike Knock. During the summer of 1973, Mike – a New Zealander living in San Francisco at the time – made a sightseeing road trip up the West Coast in his van, which, in addition to having a bed, was equipped with a powered Fender Rhodes suitcase piano."

As the bassist recalls, "While passing through Portland, Oregon, Mike came to a jazz club I was playing at. I was living there at the time. After sitting in with our group, he took me aside and suggested that I move to San Francisco, where he could help me find more work –

"Terry joined in '75 and toured with him, while I was touring with Charles Lloyd. George Duke had contacted Terry to come join Frank, Chester Thompson having left the band by that point. In the spring of '76 Terry invited me to drop by the studio. Frank had let the whole band go except for Terry. Frank was a night owl, getting to the studio around 4:00 in the afternoon and working till 4:00 that morning. I was playing at the Lighthouse with Joe Henderson and got off



"I've always had the utmost respect for his dedication to craft, musicianship, and creative soulfulness"

including with his own band where Terry was the drummer."

O'Hearn's retelling of this tale seems as important as any chapter in his life story with Bozzio. "The first day we played together at Mike's studio, I remember walking in with my upright bass and seeing Terry's kit – a beautiful, dark ruby-red-stained kit – and thinking to myself, 'What a marvelous-looking set of drums.' I had a good feeling that their owner was happening. I don't recall a formal introduction, I think we just got behind our instruments and commenced playing and the sparks flew. Anyway, that day Terry and I became friends, and within a short period of time we became the best of friends, of which we remain so to this day."

From there O'Hearn went on to play with Charles Lloyd, Joe Henderson, Dexter Gordon, and Joe Pass, among others. In 1976 he met Frank Zappa, who offered him a job as bass player. As O'Hearn tells it,

around 2:00 A.M. Terry said to come by and meet Frank and say hi. I had my upright with me and he asked if I would like to play on a track he had just finished. I started playing, he liked what he heard, and he asked if I play electric, and I came back the next night and added some electric to the mix. Frank asked me to join and we became a trio at that point. Frank toyed with the idea of a trio but his music needed more. I stayed a little over two years."

After forming Group 87 with trumpet player Mark Isham and guitarist Peter Maunu, and working with Tony Williams, O'Hearn was invited to play bass in Bozzio's exploding new wave band Missing Persons in 1981. In 1986, after three albums, the group disbanded.

"Terry and I come from and share several general sources of influence and inspiration – at least from the earlier years," O'Hearn says. "The

center of that would be Miles Davis, the whole enchilada up to that point, especially when Tony joined the group. I was more interested in learning how to play the bass by following him. As for Terry, I've always had the utmost respect for his dedication to craft, musicianship, and creative soulfulness.

"We've been working on a recording project at Terry's studio in Austin that we started in the summer of 2002, and regrettably has remained dormant. It needs to get finished, mainly to be mixed. It's different – not real rhythm-section playing, not like we're grooving – it's more spacey, with different electronic processors and keyboards, some steel guitar. Needless to say, we were not focusing on our principal instruments."

—John Ephland

CHAPTER 6 HIGH WIRE BALANCE

Bozzio emerged from that thick fog a fully realized, self-sufficient artist. A big part of that emergence involved his decision to begin touring as a solo clinician. He would go on to become one of the most sought-after artists in the clinic circuit, but first he had to learn the ropes.

"First of all, I was scared to death to do a clinic. Second, I didn't want to be known as a 'drummer.' I wanted to be Phil Collins and be a pop star, damn it! I wanted to sing and take control and all that kind of crap. Yeah, real good motives there [laughs]. So my first clinic was totally frightening.

"I went out there with my leather pants on and the whole shebang. It was down at the Musician's Union and I was playing with Sonny Emory, who is a hell of a nice guy, but I didn't know anything about him. He's a college graduate, corps-meister, stick-twirling, funky, musical motherfucker, and he got out there and just shredded. And I choked. I got up there and did my same ol' drum solo from the Zappa days, clicking sticks, and struggling, and sweating. I just sucked. But I got through it.

"Then Sonny and I went on the road together and we started having fun. I got more into it, although there were bumps in the road. I remember one day I forgot a huge section of my solo. Somehow I was at the end and had forgotten this whole big section. And when I finished, somebody in the audience yells out, 'Is that it?' It was fucking hilarious. I was so embarrassed.

"But Sonny had an idea for me to come up with a lick, then he'd come up with a lick, then each day we'd add the licks and by the end of the 30-day tour we'd have this big string of ideas that we could do. So we did that. At the end of the clinic we would jam, but then we'd go into this thing in unison and people loved it. When I was playing with Sonny there was this *thing* that happened that can occur when two drummers are actually musical and not trying to do an, 'I'm Buddy and you're not' thing, even though he was and I'm not. [laughs]

"It reminded me of my days playing in San Francisco where we'd close our eyes and there was this fog and you just went into this other world. That started to happen with Sonny, so I reconnected with that. Then I think we played together at a PAS thing as a duet and it was serious

music. We played for 45 minutes straight and it went anywhere and everywhere. By then I was getting more into my vibe, and into the idea of studying classical music and listening in a classical way, or expressing myself in a classical way. It started to conjure this stuff up, so I would do little minimalist things to set him up – like Steve Reich or Philip Glass or something – and he'd burn on it. Then he'd do something like that to set me up and I'd burn on it. Colors and textures and stops and starts and grooves, all this music was happening. It was a ball.

"So doing clinics quickly went from that egotistical approach, where you're second-guessing what you think the audience wants from you to, 'Here's what I found, do you want to come check it out or not?' There was trepidation at first, but after a year or so I was feeling this spiritual connection and a disconnect from my ego. I would lose myself. Terry Bozzio didn't exist while I was playing. He's over on the side of the stage, thank God, not interfering. This stuff is *happening*. Like playing with Zappa, I was incredibly consistent and hardly ever made mistakes because I got into this zone. I had found that zone again and learned how to tap into it. And an audience is an integral part because it's like a circus act. You're on the high wire."

But before he fell into the warm embrace of 'the zone,'

Bozzio would struggle with his new role as a solo artist, often doubting himself and following those deceptive, false motives. He eventually figured it out. "When I was about a year or so into these clinics, I was still finding my zone. My therapist, again, said, 'If you have a fear about not having something prepared, then have something prepared.' So, okay, I'd have an ostinato prepared and a theme or two prepared. But what would inevitably happen is I'd go out there and start doing this free shit. Like, 'Okay, let's see how we can fuck with these people.' Before you know it, amazing things are happening. And my consciousness was developed enough as far as listening and retaining that I could hold on to these things. 'Okay, I don't know what the fuck that was, or where it came from, but it was amazing – so let's do that again.'

"Then that would become part of the composition, and before I knew it I had these incredibly complex, drawn-out compositions that all came from spontaneous improvisation. It all came from playing with the intent of being musical and then listening as I played, then retaining. Dip into the unconscious, let something happen, but then be intense and focused on what that is so it can be



analyzed and understood. Then it can be repeated. Otherwise it's totally intuitive and lost.

"There's a balance factor that I feel is really important, psychologically, between intellect, physicality, intuition, and emotion. None of those things can be out of balance when you play. The 'emotional' type of player might be a guitarist who is incredible and plays with such feeling, but God forbid if he gets in a fight with his girlfriend before he goes on stage, because then he can't play. Or there's the physical animal, just chops for days, but no sensitivity, no comprehension of what he's doing. Or the intellect who is maybe a classical genius but can't play with any feel, can't make something swing to save his life. Or the intuitive type who is capable of doing some amazing things, but you can't ask him to play what he played last night because he's not in touch with what it was. It came from his subconscious.

"So, for me, I try to have all four of those elements firing at the same time in somewhat balance, in order to be effective in one given day, one given moment in a performance. I'm better or not so good at it depending on the day, but my intention is always there. And if I'm playing too physically, I back off. If I feel it's too intellectual, I play with more emotion. Or I try not to get too emotional and get out there and fuck up because in the heat of the moment you can lose the bottom of something. And I find that if I have that understanding in my mind and go out there with my ego out of the way, I always have a good day.

"My watermark is always my best time I just played, so I'm never satisfied unless I reach that or go beyond it. But I realize also that that's what makes me good. That's what makes me revisit things in practice. 'Why did I fuck that up?' Okay, fix that so you don't fuck it up. That hurts but it's also what makes me better. So if I have those intentions and that motive then my ego is out of the picture and I'm able to just have a good time, allowing whatever music is supposed to happen in the moment happen. And I'm able to accept that, and love it, and let it be whatever it is, living with the parts I don't like and trying to make it better the next day."

CHAPTER 7 WATERSHED IN THE WOODSHED

Jump back to when Missing Persons was struggling and Bozzio was taking more lumps, teaching drum lessons to help cover the costs of getting his band off the ground. One day, a kid no-shows, and Bozzio finds himself with time to kill alone in a room with half of a drum set. So he starts playing ostinato patterns and quickly realizes there are only a few combinations to learn – if he could play those combinations with his left hand he could then play any pattern against them with his right.

The half-hour is up. As he exits the practice room he runs into a fellow instructor who stops him and says, "Oh, I thought there were two drummers in there." "That comment stuck in the back of my mind," Bozzio recalls. And that concept would eventually progress into an enormous beast of ostinato material that would become the solo artist's calling card.

Soon thereafter Rod Morgenstein hears a Missing Persons song on the radio and calls up his drumming pal to say, "I just heard some of your Bozzio trademarks on the radio." It was a small comment, but a revelation for Bozzio.

"It was the first time I realized that I was playing things that people were perceiving as some kind of authentic expression of mine. So then, okay, so let's build on those and stop doing the big Billy Cobham single-stroke roll around the toms. So I started to develop this more and more.

"Then when I got with Jeff Beck, I noticed Tony Hymas would wake up and play piano for over two hours every day, committed to memory, practicing Mozart and all this amazing classical music. I would watch him and think, 'I've made a career out of a little bag of crap that I know and here's a guy who is really living it, who is really in it.' So I decided to start practicing. I started working on these different ostinatos and making them happen.

"I would practice almost as therapy. I would just practice something I didn't know how to do for one hour every day,

mostly working on these ostinatos. It gave me an inner satisfaction and it was at least one hour a day where I wasn't worried about writing songs and making a living. As that crept into my daily habits and into my consciousness, all that material started to happen.

"And as I got more comfortable doing the clinic thing, I'd go ahead and play my ten-year-old drum solo, then if the crowd applauded and I talked and interacted with them a little bit maybe I could risk playing something that they might not

like. So I'd toss a couple ostinatos out at them. And they liked it. I started to realize I had this wonderful opportunity developing where I had total artistic freedom. Then, through reading Joseph Campbell

and experiencing all the trials and tribulations you go through, I got to the point where I realized, 'Hey, it's only about me, and whatever it is I'm supposed to channel. Screw *everything* else.'

Bozzio kept up with his learn-while-doing process, staying on the road between clinics and Jeff Beck gigs, all the while reshaping and remolding who he was and who he would become as an artist.

"Then I was doing some clinics after the Beck thing, and I was in Oslo jet-lagged and I found out that this other drummer, Dom Famularo, who I'd never heard before, was on with me. So I was a little afraid, thinking he might be a competitive chops guy who would try and blow me off the stage and that kind of vibe. Well, Dom and I of course had a wonderful day and played together

"I've made a career out of a little bag of crap that I know and here's a guy who is really living it, who is really in it"

CHAD WACKERMAN

Double The Trouble On Traps

"The first time I heard him, he sounded like an individual." If ever a pair of ears could make that kind of inference about Terry Bozzio, it's colleague Chad Wackerman. "I knew who his influences were," says Wackerman. "People like Tony Williams and Eric Gravatt, but I never heard him play their licks."

Catching up with him while on tour with Allan Holdsworth, Wackerman was eager to speak of his musical friendship and collaborations with Bozzio. And while their tenures were separated by a good number of years, like Bozzio, Wackerman was the man behind the drums for Frank Zappa during the combustible 1980s, appearing on 26 albums. "I met Terry in the early '80s," Wackerman says. "I had joined Frank's band after Vinnie Colaiuta left. I stayed from 1981 through '88. I actually met Terry through Frank, at one of our dress rehearsals. At the time I was also living in L.A., and he just came by the Zappa rehearsal after one of their shows and we hung out. It was great to meet him. After seeing him



Of Drumming' tour in 2000. For that tour I played my drum pieces for 45 minutes, then Terry played his compositions for 45 minutes, followed by both of us playing the Zappa composition 'The Black Page.' We found out we had a lot more fun playing together, so when we play

"What [Bozzio] plays is not predictable. He covers bass lines and melodies, and thinks in modes."

with Missing Persons, for years we'd run into each other at drum festivals and clinics. It helped that we have similar influences and tastes in music."

From there it was only a matter of time (no pun intended) before the two decided to lock arms rhythmically. "We started playing together in 2000, did a 20-city tour of the South," Wackerman recalls. "We've done quite a few duet tours. It was Terry's concept of going out with two drummers to promote *Solo Drum Music*. So we did the 'Art

together now, we mostly play duet improvisations. We also found that that kind of musical interaction was really enjoyable and very powerful. At times it feels like we are playing in a band, because there is so much melody, harmony, and rhythm going on. Terry is so melodic. Terry and I have two DW DVDs out, including one on 'The Black Page.' So far, we've done four tours."

What has Wackerman learned from working with Bozzio? "The obvious thing was the compositional aspect – he took drum set

composition to another level. He's a great improviser, because Terry is all about the music. That's why the duets are so incredible, with the common goal of being extremely musical and interactive. It's never a chops-based competition. What he plays is not predictable. He covers bass lines and melodies, and thinks in modes. Max Roach, in his solo work, was playing like a horn. Similarly, Terry also plays like a pianist or a horn player when he solos. He sometimes even uses certain buzz effects to emulate the sound of a Harmon trumpet mute. Of course, it sounds completely different on a set of drums."

And speaking of drums, Wackerman's very large setup – still somewhat smaller than Bozzio's – is impressive and tailor-made to playing with Bozzio. "I play a huge kit with diatonic pitches," Wackerman says. "I'm using 12 toms. Most of the melody we play comes from the toms, so I found I needed more pitches to play these duet shows. With six piccolo toms that are tuned very high – Terry uses 15 in

a chromatic scale – the rest of my setup includes three rack toms, three floor toms, and two bass drums and a snare drum." Wackerman chuckles, "The kit is big, and it's what I am comfortable with.

"We tend to get into more musical patterns than beats and rhythms. And audiences really pick up on that. In fact, that's one of the biggest things that they enjoy. They know some music is being made. One of the other DW DVDs, *D2*, is miked really well, so you can hear the notes very clearly."

But about Zappa's "Black Page" – how in the world did the drummers decide to make that such a central work in their shows, given how much they love to improvise? "It's really a 20th century classical piece. We are playing the correct melody and every note is written on that page. It's only about three minutes long, but it's been considered a rhythmic litmus test for drummers. It is a difficult piece to play, and Terry was the first one to play it with Frank."

–John Ephland



at the end and it was very musical and wonderful and sympathetic. And we're having dinner afterwards, raising our glasses and having a great meal in Europe. He says, 'Look at me. I've never played with a major artist, I've never recorded, yet I'm a drummer who gets to go all over the world playing drums. And they pay me for this.' And as he's saying these words, I'm thinking, 'Bozzio, what is your fucking problem? You're in the same situation, why don't you look at it that way?'

"And I swear, I had a tour for 30 days after that and I played my ass off, had so much fun, every night was great. I went home and for the next six weeks had a watershed of ostinato ideas. I had a studio in my house then, in L.A., and I went in every day for an hour and just

chipped away at it. Some days it would go so well I'd stay for three hours, other days I'd barely make it through the hour. But I showed up every day. Then I was able to put all that stuff out on those three Paiste videos, all in one shot. And that's kind of the way it works for me. I'll compile stuff and it's not ready until it's ready, then there's this watershed of stuff that just comes out."

The instructional videos, *Ostinatos, Vol. 1, 2, and 3*, solidified Bozzio as one of the world's top drumming minds and, more personally, informed his own idea of who he was as a person and an artist. He was a *solo* artist. A *drummer*. He came closer than ever to becoming that larger-than-life innovator whose art lives well before its time. It skyrocketed from there until the

drummer became essentially a one-man orchestra.

"I guess the next watershed moment was when I did all the stuff for my solo CDs *Drawing The Circle* and then *Chamber Works*, just chipping away and writing stuff and paying attention. People would say, 'You sound so orchestral, have you ever thought about hiring somebody to write some music to go along with your drum stuff?' And I'd think, 'Ugh, what a drag to read charts and be confined and all that.' Then it came to me one night: All right, make an overhead chart of the way you tune your drums. So I just put the circles and wrote the notes my drums were tuned to. Then when I play a certain theme on a certain drum composition, that's these four notes. Okay, I write that down. Then I think, 'That could be a cello.'

"Normally when I'm playing it's just me - that's all there is, and people think that's music. Now I look at it like, 'That part could be a bass line; that could be a top-line melody; that could be an inner voice of something totally reharmonized.' This has endless possibilities. And I just went from there. I just started spewing out all this music and within six weeks or so that was done. And then the process began of correcting it, putting it in MIDI file, spitting it out in note-writing software and all that junk. I finally got to play it in Austria at the Vienna Jazz Festival, and I recorded it more recently, expanded for a 60-piece orchestra.

"So these things just happen like that. I just get an idea and go with it. Nobody's twisting my arm, there's no critic on my shoulder judging me. I just want to do this, have some fun, hopefully get some positive feedback from the sounds and the overall feeling you get from the music playing it back. And I found that was happening. Now I compose all the time. I just do *not* care. I've compiled lots of stuff that, when it's ready, I'll put it out. Things like that keep happening.

"And I don't really look at the financial side other than trying to get some dough together to actually produce a product. I've never gotten rich off my solo stuff. It is what it is and it's for me, and if someone else likes it, great. Come on into my world and I'll show you all this stuff. And if you don't dig it, great. Go play fucking *Guitar Hero* and have a great life" [*laughs*]. ■

BOZZIO-ISMS

Any discussion of Bozzio-isms must begin with his gargantuan percussive instrument. It can't be ignored. The sight of Bozzio's face peeking out from behind a dense wall of drums and cymbals has become his signature as much as his complex solo drumming compositions. He began writing and performing his now-legendary percussion pieces in the late '80s, which are based around ostinatos that hold down the rhythmic foundation while the other limbs, freed from repetitive duties, create a tapestry of melodies, syncopations, and polyrhythms.

On the other hand, when Bozzio finds himself in an ensemble situation, his drumming can become simple and straightforward or intricate and melodic - depending on what the music demands. Therefore, another important Bozzio-ism is his musicality.

Ex. 1 is taken from "Big Block" off of the 1989 recording *Jeff Beck's Guitar Shop With Terry Bozzio And Tony Hymas*. This track, based on a 12/8 groove, illustrates Bozzio's melodic tendencies. In measures two, four, six, and eight, Bozzio brings the drums to the front line with tom fills that match the guitar melody exactly while orchestrating them around the kit. In the second half of this excerpt Bozzio keeps the groove going with steady eighth-notes from his left foot on the hi-hat and backbeats on the snare. His right hand plays a six-over-four polyrhythm on the ride cymbal by playing every other eighth-note triplet.

And speaking of polyrhythms, Ex. 2 contains plenty of them in the form of triplets played over steady quarter-notes pedaled on the hi-hat. This transcription is taken from "Dicht," the opening cut from Bozzio's *OUTrio* DVD featuring Alex Machacek on guitar and Patrick O'Hearn on bass. Here Bozzio navigates odd-meters and triplets of all varieties, including threes, fives, and sevens. And he does this in lockstep with the guitar melodies, creating rhythmic unisons and melodic counterpoint.

Transcription By WALLY SCHNALLE

♩ = 80

"Big Block" at 1:38

♩ = 190

"Dicht" at 3:30