

# The Drum Set

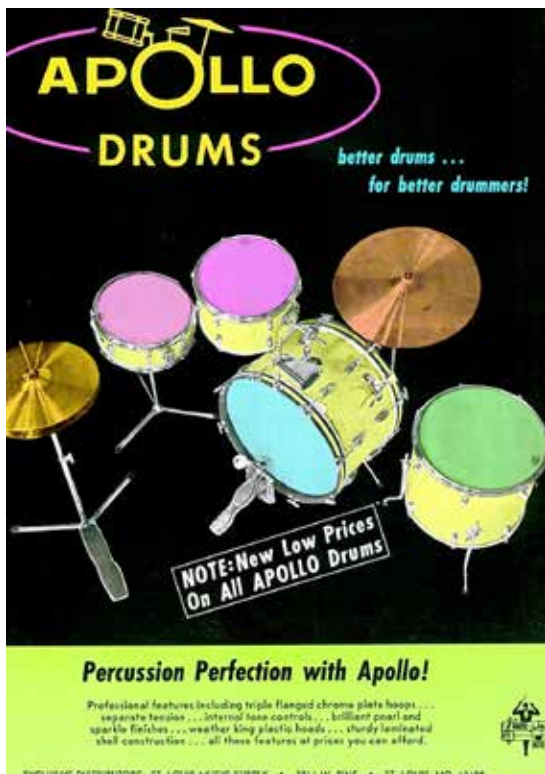
These silver and black pearl finish Apollo drums may be a relatively cheap set, but their wood shells resounded good enough for me, and playing them contributed so importantly to my sense of self-mastery, discipline, awareness of musical constructs, ritual, the transcendent qualities of meditative jam sessions, community, technicality and so much more.

Craig got this set of Apollo drums from Trestman Music Center, just south of Minneapolis, in Richfield Minnesota. I have the original receipts somewhere in a box, which have the date April 1, 1969. Over the following years, Craig would upgrade the hardware to Ludwig, being stronger and the preferred brand over Apollo. Apollo was a subsidiary offshoot of Pearl drums, made in Japan.



## From Craig:

*"I needed DRUMS! I think Mom thought so too. I had been biking over to Trestman's Music frequently and eyeing all of those great kits. The Black Diamond Pearl was popular at the time, mostly since the Ringo Black Oyster Pearl was harder to get, this looked the most like it.*



*Bringing the set home I noticed a tear in the front drum head. Dad was diligent in writing Mr. Trestman a letter about this and the head was gladly replaced. I think there is a copy of the letter with the stash of receipts. Little by little I took this Japanese made kit and replaced a lot of the hardware and stands. Most importantly I replaced the cymbals. Originally a brand to sound Turkish like the Zildjian brand they were KRUT cymbals - Turk backwards - Yikes! Who thought this was a good idea. A friend of mine has always said that you can make a bad drum sound decent, but you can't do that with a bad cymbal.*

*When the drum heads wore out I used a can of drum coating to freshen them up. Replacement was too costly. Then with a clean head I stamped*

them with my homemade Ludwig branded rubber stamps! Oh the counterfeiting begins.

*I had to make monthly payments on these myself, meaning I had to request a check from Dad every month and prove to him I did the work necessary to make this up. The big project was sanding and refinishing the interior window sills. "*



*Craig on the Apollo's, early 1970's*

I acquired the drums from Craig in 1977, much to my thrill as a 13 year old, with a lot of angst that needed the outlet.

Craig opened a whole new world for me! teaching me some important basics of drumming ...holding sticks jazz player style [Regal Tip 5A's were the sticks of choice], syncopating both wrists, arms and feet. I took to it eagerly and practiced daily. Often playing along with favorite albums, with Ringo being #1, Nick Mason's style from Pink Floyd, Willie Wilcox on Utopia albums that I was immersed in at the time, Charlie Watts

of the Stones, and more. That all really helped my timing, and how drums fit into a band playing songs. Otherwise I was prone to bombastic soloing, as a young drummer would tend to be. Listening to progressive rock in the 70's had that impact, and the heavy drumming of John Bonham and Keith Moon who were hugely popular thunder god drummers at the time. By 1979 I had an arsenal of chops, aimed to impress, as a teenager who increasingly attended parties of cute girls and macho poser dudes. If there was a drum kit around, I'd most likely end up on it at some point to hoots and howls of approval. I had found my element. I was no jock, but this was my olympian jump!

## **Discovering the groove**

I remember rolling into an intuitively progressive groove when playing intently, where the rhythms would be locked in place while the discovery of complex patterns would rise and fall. After a satisfactory session, I'd leave feeling refreshed, as if emerging

from a trancelike meditative state, or an intense physical workout. During a strong jam of being in good control, it felt as if I had lightning bolts grasped by both hands. It's a good feeling.

## **1980: Collaborations begin**

Still, I was just a young beginner and not in a band. 1980 was when I began jamming with musician friends I met in school, and friends from the neighborhood. The most experienced being the multi-talented Iverson twins who lived a block away. On guitar, they were well versed in Neil Young and Allman Brothers songs, and it was good for me to try to keep up as an amateur. Memorable highlights were the improvisations we'd cook up, based on guitar riffs that they'd conjure.

Also that summer, the drums left the house for the first time to be resident at my friend Jamie's house across town on the Minnehaha Creek near Penn Avenue. He was a budding guitarist at the time [who soon after became an accomplished master classical guitarist], with an electric guitar and amp. So bearing out our teenage rock music fantasy of being in a band, we started jamming. We even thought the band name should be Haight-Ashbury, after the famed San Francisco hippie neighborhood. [who'da thought that eleven years later, I would be there in San Francisco joining jazz collective the Haight-Ashbury Free Band!]

We didn't really form much of an actual band that summer of '80, but had fun attempting a few songs by The Doors, who we were enjoying listening to that season.

By fall, the drum set went to bassist friend Tom Bergs house for a few weeks, about a mile south of me. He had the freakiest, psychedelic progressive rock fan basement around! We were both heavily into Pink Floyd, and he learned the work from the songbooks. So we were a drums and bass Floyd cover band, playing One Of These Days [great pulsating 6/8 beat, and easily traced back to the Doctor Who theme!], Pigs, Money [7/4 beat], Echoes, Wish You Were Here, etc.

All very good development, plus he had parties we'd play at. I had a girlfriend at the time, and it was always an ego boost to play at these parties with her cheering me on. Especially during my over-the-top Bonham style solo's...it was a young teens world fulfilled.

## **Summer 1981**

the drums went to friend Joe Covert's basement on 49th & Bryant for the summer. Another bassist, but purely McCartney influenced. We were both Beatle freaks of the most dedicated order! [he went on to form fabulously detailed Beatle cover bands, professional to this day]

Joe had led a good "garage band" called Dark Earth, with a local gang of mutual friends I knew from art class at Washburn High. [Joe went to Southwest Free School, near the U of M].

With good players as Bob Foster, and Steve Schlossberg, we later formed a good band

named simply Bryant Avenue. With a set of originals and covers, who played a few good bar gigs in 1984.



This remarkable photograph from 1981 shows a group of musicians playing on the roof of 15-17 Maple Place. The roof is quite steep, so it is unclear how the musicians got themselves and their instruments, including a drum set, up on the roof, but it must have been quite a concert. (Courtesy of Hennepin County Library, Minneapolis Collection.)

### **1981-83, Nicolett Island: Heavy Wave**

Joe brought a friend over one rainy summer evening. Jack Chaffee was a friend of his who I'd heard about, who lived on Nicollet Island in a legendary old mansion. Another of the long haired brigade of friends, and a musician. A uniquely eccentric character, and a musical prodigy of sorts who was comfortable with any musical instrument. When over, he played the piano in our basement, which my Mom absolutely adored. A few weeks later Joe brought me to the island, which proved to be a unique subculture in a bubble within the downtown area on the Mississippi River near the old Main Street area. Truly fascinating, it was a trip into the zone once you crossed the railroad tracks. I was magnetized by the place, with its dilapidated victorians, river beauty surrounded by old urban industry, train bridges, and in the lot near the house was Jack's aunt Doris's donkeys right there in view of the 57-story IDS tower! Jack's band was called Deep Space; a trio billed as "cosmic rock and blues". Jack was

the drummer, but wanted to start a new band where he was on guitar and vocals. I started spending more time there, and one autumn day, my friend Joe Kernan and I had hauled the drum set from my house, down the alley across the street to the bus stop, taking them on the Chicago avenue bus to downtown about 5 miles away, carrying them a few blocks from the bus stop to the house on Nicollet Island! With the drums there, we could start playing in Jacks living room, when his Dad was at work. [often Jack was on piano there] We were a small mix of rotating players that autumn, but no actual band yet.

With Jacks roommate Al [who became soundman], Bob Foster [guitarist friend], Jim Capra [friend living on the island], Jason Englehart [guitarist] and Joe Ryan [bassist friend], we hauled tons of dirt and debris from Jacks mansion basement which had been neglected for decades. The house was built in 1886, and needed structural work. Our intent was to make a practice studio for the new band! It took months, and Jack and Al did the construction of platforms over the dirt floor, partition window to the sound and lighting controls, and safer stairs. The walls were made of what were like medieval castle blocks of stone — or resembling walls of the Cavern Club of Liverpool.

## **The psychedelic year of 1982**

So by January of 1982 it was more or less ready, and a new band was born. We were Joe Ryan on bass, Jason Englehardt on guitar, Jack on guitar and vocals, and me on drums. It was actually warm down there in the thick of frozen Minnesota January. Water trickled down the archaic stone walls while we played. Al's colored lights reflecting on the moisture.

Jack came up with the name Heavy Wave, which stuck. A band with mostly two chord jams we'd vamp on for lengthy times, setting up a strong groove. An early jam band. We were huge deadheads. We also had our garage punk side, which was in the Minneapolis air during that era.

We had quite an amazing year, playing gigs, parties, on the roof and on the river banks and bridges...it was a magic time through into summer 1983. The island fascinated with its details to explore...tunnels of sandstone were spelunked that winter. Bonfire parties began at various areas after winter thawed that spring. Bridges were climbed. By April of 1982 the sun got us outside to play ! There is nothing quite like playing drums while the mighty Mississippi River tugs by,...and we heralded springtime by doing so a number of times — Once on the rooftop which was a most impressive memorable day! We were even photographed by the newspaper.



This remarkable photograph from 1981 shows a group of musicians playing on the roof of 15-17 Maple Place. The roof is quite steep, so it is unclear how the musicians got themselves and their instruments, including a drum set, up on the roof, but it must have been quite a concert. (Courtesy of Matt...)

The view was fabulous from up there, as we played all afternoon. We heard from Jack's dad John [who is an excellent mandolin player] that we could be heard downriver on the Hennepin Avenue bridge.

A fine day!

## **Cedar-Riverside**

We had our first real gig at the Cedar-Riverside cafe on June 25th, as the warmup for the more known band Deep Space. We weren't all that developed as a band by then, but feel I played those drums well that day. I recall Jim Capra remarked that my playing had a Pink Floyd touch at that show. Good times! [Craig & Brian showed up! ]

Before that, we did play our first gig for a party at Jason's house in the nice Kenwood neighborhood. [early June]

We played outside in the backyard on a nice spring evening to a full crowd. Also playing was another band more well known, with members who ended up in Soul Asylum...including Grant Young who I'd just met. A nice guy and a drummer. It was agreed that he'd play my drumkit to lessen setup switch time. Afterwards when I got back on the set, I noticed the snare engaging lever was bent downwards, so I had to unbend it. Obviously Grant did this, probably due to his snare lever turning a different direction than mine. He later denied this, which annoyed me more than the bend itself. But it functions okay.

So to this day, that's where the kink in that lever originates.

Jack came up with some cool songs. To name a few...Sunny Days was a melodic favorite, 'Sorry' was a fast-paced rocker, and Split Membranes was a funky, danceable highlight of a collaboration. 'Fields of Blue and Green' was one that Jason brought.

We played a few good parties that summer, mostly at Jack's house, which was an attractive central social hub for all sorts of people.

4th of July was a memorable party, switching between Heavy Wave and Deep Space, so I had breaks, walking the island in scorching summer heat with some of our attractive young lady friends! Swimming in the river by late night....our pastime was a daily plunge—occasionally at night, off of the abandoned railroad bridge on the north side of the island. A fun cooling off from hot and humid Minnesota summertime.

The stuff of a magic summer.

In addition to our own band activities, were the excellent bluegrass/folk players who lived there, emerging out on the front porches with mandolins, standup basses, and accomplished chops. John Chaffee was one of those players! A musical world I hadn't been exposed to before. I was amazed.

By our next pro gig, we were in good shape and with more songs. August at the People's Center, Heavy Wave had top billing this time. It was a successful showing and we got the crowd dancing up a storm! \*

\* Jack set up a vacuum cleaner to sing through at this gig, predating Phish!

We all experienced the Grateful Dead that month, [8/6/82] so that inspired us, upping our energy. [we played a fun party at Dhaivyd Hilgendorfs house in St Paul the next day]

By autumn we slowed down, while I started to attend my first collegiate art classes at MCAD.

The drums stayed in Jacks basement studio for most all of 1982.

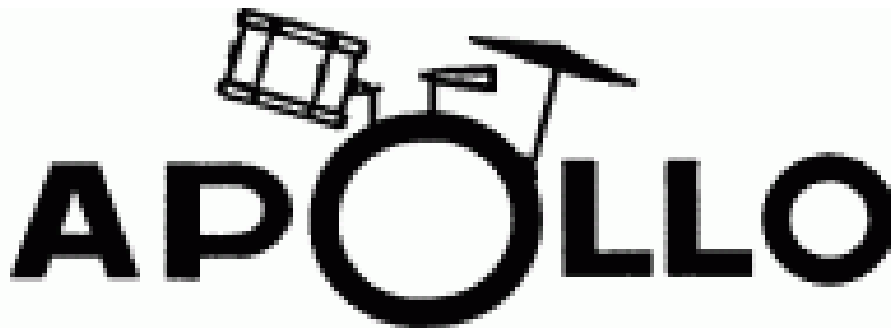
### **Then we resumed by 1983**

Starting with a well played new year's party at a house in the southeast neighborhood of Minneapolis. Our rehearsals then moved to Jasons basement in Kenwood that winter. [I suspect Jacks Dad may have had enough of us over the previous year, needing a break from our crazy young band activities]

April 1983, back on Nicollet Island, for big gig on the yard next to the house on Jacks birthday. We built an elevated stage atop several large metal barrels. It was a sunny day, big crowd, and we played well. Great times! I drew the flyer, with my then obsessively detailed rapidograph style.

### **July 4th '83. Final gig by Heavy Wave**

We played on a flatbed truck on the swimming bridge over the river. Good turnout! But we needed to move on, as the teen years ended.



### **Hardware**

For parts, I'd get them from either Shmidts music center in downtown Minneapolis, or a place in suburban Richfield.

Then later in San Francisco, I'd go to the Haight-Ashbury Music Center, and Drum World [?] in the south part of town.

Mainly for commonly worn out pieces of hardware, such as screws, bolts, sticks, drum heads and felt pads. I didn't add much to the old kit, except for the two smaller toms I bought at Trestmans in Richfield, MN. in 1981. [pictured in the famous Burning Man picture by Stewart Harvey, seen ahead here in a few pages. Those two drums are unsaved, given to a friend years ago]. Cheap Continental brand name, but I enjoyed having more variety of tone.

## **1984: Before and after California**

I was in the bands Bryant Avenue, Misfit Toys, then Mach Shau.

Bryant Avenue gigged that spring at a few dive bars on Lake street... Irish Pub Too, and Lucky 17. We rocked the house, but the owners thought our friends didn't bother buying beer, and that we drove the locals out.

Misfit Toys was our occasional art college trio with Brad Ptacek bass and vocals, Dan Bohnsack guitar, and me on drums. We played in MCAD after hours in the basement classrooms only. A punky new wave rock sound.

## **Mach Shau**

I named from early Hamburg Beatles history, meaning "make show". Lasting September through January. We played a super fun gig in Duluth that Halloween, at a place called the Magnolia House of college students. [frat house? ].

A birthday party for good friend Tony at Childrens Theater...with great lights and sound. And another gig at a bar [?]

It was Joe Covert, Scott Soule, Joe Ryan and I.

## **Art and Europe, 1985**

I decided to quit playing in bands to become a serious painter, and focus on getting to Europe.

I still practiced occasionally. My drive was now visual art, and discovering Europe.

## **Return to drumming in 1989**

After a few years in California, I returned to the drums after a few years off. Or rather...the drums returned to me.

Jill drove to and from Minnesota , and kindly brought the drums back with in the car! [they must've been stored by Craig in Minneapolis] I set them up in the old Victorian flat living room where I lived in the Mission, which worked fine for years of regular practice, which felt great.

On ocean cliffs, one fine October day, Joe was going surfing, and offered to drive them to south Ocean beach, near Ocean avenue at the end of the Great Highway, where good cliffs are for setting up. That was a major highlight of a drumming experience all that day — jamming with the crashing, pulsating ocean waves!





## 1990

Steady solo practicing. Bringing the drums to Baker beach for the aborted Burning Man burn. A great day of drumming at the ocean, with a view of Golden Gate bridge, and crowds there for the burn event which became stopped by police.

Here's a pic of me playing the Apollo's at Baker Beach as the sun was setting.



## Labor Day weekend 1990: drums at Burning Man

It was back in the days of no authorization by the BLM, or by anybody! We just went ahead, set up and did it. John Law was the most instrumental person in making this happen in the Black Rock Desert. This was called "Zone Trip #4." It was really a Cacophony Society event originally organized by John Law and Kevin Evans (with the "Black Rock Desert Rangers"), with the Burning Man as an added feature... and what a fine feature it was! It was a lovely time, back before the days of huge insurance needs or worries of petty theft by strangers.

It was the only Burning Man I attended in the desert under a completely full moon. There were around 80 of us camped in a place that seemed as desolate as on the Moon or further. Luckily we \*did\* bring enough water, thanks to the experienced informational organization of the desert-savvy John Law, Kevin Evans, and Michael Mikel, to name the primary few.

## ~THE NIGHT OF THE BURN~

We hauled my old 1969 Apollo trap set out there, and I was determined to be ten drummers in one, especially after the missed opportunity to play before a blazing figure on Baker Beach. (I did love the sensation of playing on Baker Beach earlier that June for the failed burn, anticipating the towering burning figure shape, warming up to facilitate this spectacle with some seriously energetic polyrhythms on the summer solstice). After being asked by Larry to bring the drums out to Black Rock, I was honored and wouldn't in any way miss out on this experience!

At sundown, Larry wanted me to generate some rhythms to alert attention as the Man was being fueled. As Dan got the crowd to lower and then raise the Man with the rope, I played some incidental percussion to heighten the drama, timing the flow of beats

to the lifting — like drums beating in cadence to the rowers of ancient ships. At Dan's request, I played a decreased grade of tempo as the Man was raised. The crowd that held the rope (almost the entire camp) was dressed mainly in formal wear as costume. Some, like John Law, effectively mixed western formal with Middle Eastern. Brian in a pith helmet, Phil Bewley looked dandy in an all-white suit. Women wore beautiful dresses and evening gowns. This was an extravaganza I was glad to not miss! And the weather conditions were perfect.



Then with moon overhead, and sky darkening, with the hot desert air cooling, the Man was raised and ready... it was burning time. I changed into my tuxedo with tails.

The honorable David Warren (whom many know from the years he spent hosting the Camera Obscura at Ocean Beach), in his

wonderfully theatrical style, lit the Man with flames from his mouth. I gave a drum roll, also at his request... it all had the drama of a circus act at that point. Floom! The Burning Man blazed from the leg up, and I raged with wildfire drumming— it was happening!

I played with the Burning Man blazing approximately 50 feet ahead of me, with hardly an obstruction, with the wild glow of high flames leaping into the sky illuminating and warming all around, complete with full moon just over the Man's shoulder. I played with as much polyrhythmic power as I could muster until my arms and hands were strained with a fiery pain; I felt as if I were a burning man myself — the flesh-and-blood percussionist version.

People were enjoying this from all different angles, without too many barricades or limitations as to where and how one could roam and dance about the figure. Luckily no one got hurt at this experimental layout. There were some other noisemakers too; someone (Sesha?) effectively banging a piece of sheet metal to add a shimmering sound. Brian added some fireworks [bought in Wyoming'84] off behind the Man. It wasn't too long before the whole Man came crashing down, falling backwards onto the playa with a dramatic fiery crash. Eventually I broke the head of my floor tom and one drumstick. If the wood grain were

not so even on those Regal Tip 5A drumsticks they would have gone much sooner. I kept it up until after the Man had fallen and became a bonfire under the lunar light. I stopped playing soon after I broke the bass drum pedal, and I was exhausted. The bonfire of the Man burned on, with many after feeling purified by the intensity of it all, and then moving to the formal cocktail party organized by P Segal, the hostess of the desert cafe. Others lingered to slow down to chill around the embers.



This was an exclusive core experience to be the solo drummer at the first event, giving added motivation to play my heart out and try to sound like ten drummers in one... and it seems I'm the only one who knows how that feels, as now collective group drumming has naturally taken over to great effect.

After I packed up my damaged and ravaged drumset, I quaffed a homebrew with friends around camp. The stout I made was one of the most refreshing tastes, signifying that time in particular, and I haven't been able to get the same effect in a homebrew since.

There is still playa dust in the crevices of the old Apollo drumset... I hope some always stays there. It probably wouldn't even if I painstakingly tried to remove it!

The idea of dressing up in formalwear in the dusty desert to the burning of an oversized wooden figure was very much a Cacophony Society type of irreverent involvement... especially during that phase of the group. I had my tuxedo with tails on as I jammed into the night. This was no mere neo-pagan ritual; there was much more of a sense of humor and a kind of surrealistic quirkiness.

I'm grateful for the encouragement that the main organizers of the event gave me to

go gung-ho on the traps... it was indeed a standout “immediate experience” (so called as something special to be respected in the event above almost anything else). This was something else, and we were all in the spark of its realization... yes, this had to happen again, and bigger every time.

I’m still haunted by the beauty of that time long gone by as I write this. I imagine this is what happens after everyone’s first Burn and experience of the Black Rock Desert. And it could not possibly be repeated in the same way. Something about doing this event this way for the first time ever... real originality was at work here at this very seminal event, and I felt lucky and proud to have been part of it. For me, it was a grand birthday week!

And I have never have played the drums harder or wilder since.

### **1991 The Haight-Ashbury Free Band**

Specializing in out jazz, odd unique Cacophony Society events!



After the Burning Man experience, event organizer Dan Miller asked if I wanted to play in the Free Band, whose crazy “out jazz” sounds I’d dug at various events. They reminded me of early jazzy Mothers of Invention. So, yeah! I was on it.

They agreed to haul my kit to practice spaces — mainly Nicks flat at 46 Belvedere, being Free Band HQ in the heart of the bustling, crazy Haight neighborhood. At this stage, we were about original improv, and very out there. With a rotating cast of players, and played the most unconventional music and gigs.

The core from 91-95 was Nick on keyboards, and leader in the sense of making the band happen. David on sax and other instruments; a very knowledgeable musician, sometimes intimidatingly so.

Dan on sax.

Rick on sax and poetry rants.

Michael on bass.

Me on drums.

Along with other temporary members, we set out for musical/cultural adventures! With an underground twist, mostly playing Cacophony Society events, bringing that drum set to previously unimagined zones of San Francisco. Some of them were video taped and can now be seen on YouTube! [under the username Nickel Baggs]

## **A few of our early Free Band gigs.**

Cacophony Society event in the old piano factory

Deaf postal workers convention

A secaedarean odyssey: Cacophony event in abandoned warehouse 6 on the bay.

The atomic café Cacophony Society event in abandoned toothpaste factory

Truck gig, invading the Haight street fair, and other sections of the city

1992 MusiCircus event by John Cage at Stanford

1993 Red Vic on Haight street

And parties at Nicks and 1907 Golden Gate!

During the early 90s, it was mostly 'out' improvs, with the approach that whenever the music headed into tunefulness, someone would then veer it off of the cliff into uncharted territory. "Rising and crumbling walls of sound" was how we were described. Always an adventure!

## **June 1991: drums at Fort Mason, for the Burning Man display**

The Burning Man sculpture was on a floating platform on the bay, with documentary film showing in the theater This was an early summer Burning Man promo event at Fort Mason. Burning Man grows as an anticipated event. Last year [1990] was such a life-altering time, that everyone knew it should happen again! But with no idea how huge it would eventually become.

This event featured the Man raised on a floating dock between the piers, and fully lined with neon. It looked fantastic floating on the bay!

There was a Burning Man documentary showing in the Bayfront Gallery there on the pier—featuring most of us from 1990. A big crowd showed up that evening, like an art opening. We had a ritual lowering and raising of the Man, with crowd participation pulling the rope, guided by Dan Miller. I was the solo drummer in 1990, but now joined by drumming enthusiast Bob Gelman, who was totally into it! Time to expand. So we both played drums at that Fort Mason event, and we sounded good near the water, having a good flowing drum duet. It was a terrific event, everyone was there. And fun to see myself drumming In the documentary showing on a relatively large screen!

The neon lined Man was out on display on that floating dock for a few good weeks. That June I enjoyed bicycling by to view it from the hill, in variously lit skies, with the Golden Gate seen beyond.



## Black Rock desert. Communal drumming for Burning Man 1991

I got back to camp, changed into my tuxedo with tails [like last year], got the drumset with Brians good help, all before sundown.

Convened with Bob and more drummers he found to participate. He took good charge, to make this a good drum team. While I was the esteemed solo drummer for last year, I wasn't much of a social organizer. I did suggest that we spread out to balance the sound from around the man, Bob was right to keep the team united.

Everyone amped up, for this bigger than last year event, and it was different. I missed David Warren that year, who was the igniter in 1990. This was more dramatic by having nude fire dancing woman Crimson Rose ignite the man. This felt more staged, as a performance art event.

Rolling on the drums with the drum team while the burn went on, was a spectacle I was more in the mood for taking it all in from a distance — different to the previous year when I was so absorbed in intensive solo drumming at the exclusion of all else. So after a short while I simply stopped playing to listen and watch. I really wanted to walk around to appreciate this scene! But I didn't want to leave my drums, so Brian and I packed them up. That part wasted my time, since the peak of the event was going on, the man fell, while moving the drums back in Brians Jeep.

[years later, Bob expressed that I "wasn't really there." Since I was sidelining I can understand why that was thought, but that's not true...I was simply there in a different frame of mind, to hear and see more than performing.]

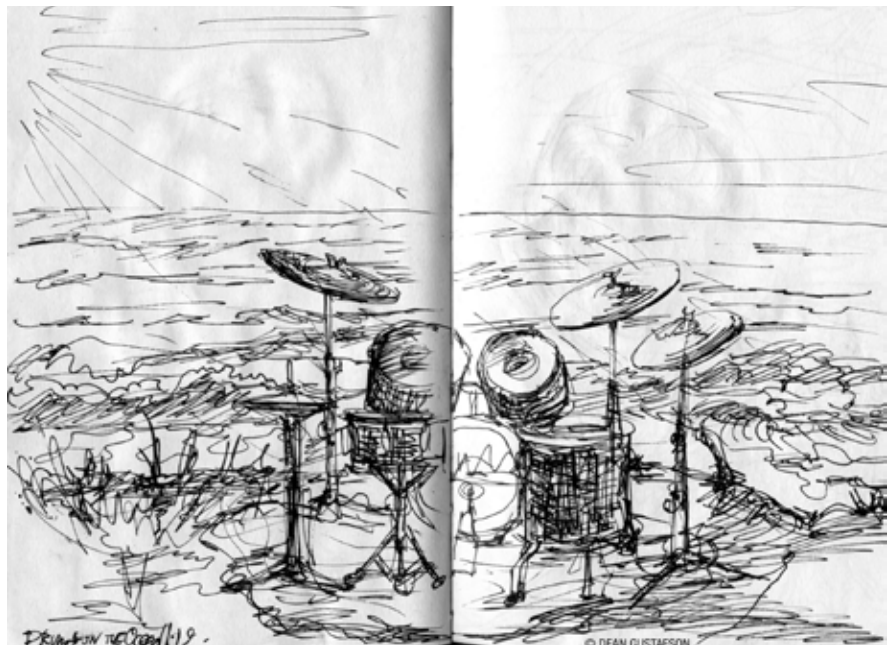
It was still great, it was a perfect desert night, the party went into the wee small hours, and the burning man embers glowed on the ground for hours.

I took some quality solo time in, by walking way out on the playa under a thousand stars you felt you could reach up and touch. Then the rising of the waning Moon, in still, windless silence...and the occasional haunting sound of a distant train horn/whistle.

### The early 90's

Other than Free Band gigs and practice, and my own personal drumming practice in the Mission flat living room, there were a few good drum jams at the ocean every year!

1993, brought the drums on ocean cliffs of Half Moon Bay for my 30th birthday, with friends Dhaivy, Diana, Jason, Jim. A great September 6th! Nice weather and a full day of drum-



ming through to the dramatic sunset.

Dhaivyd was instrumental in getting us playing in complex polyrhythms, which I had taken a keen interest in mastering. Playing in rapid beats of 7's, 9, 13's etc. Elementary to construct when working in combinations of two's and three's. I was also playing a metal doumbek by then, which I bought at Samiramis: a middle eastern import shop on 25th and Mission street nearby.

### **Another break**

I didn't play the drumset much from 1995 – 99, which were years of focusing on acoustic guitar. Free Band was mostly inactive from 1995 -1998, other than the odd occasional party at Nicks. I rejoined regular Sunday afternoon sessions in '99 - 2001, with the focus on jazz standards and much less 'out'.

Those were years of regular rotating players who really played authentic jazz well, which was Nick and Davids focus. So I

learned how to play much better, more listenable music by emulating the greats. The Ken Burns jazz documentary was in our zeitgeist, and I was playing along with classic albums such as Kind of Blue and Song for my Father...and plenty of Coltrane. I caught Elvin Jones live at Masonic auditorium around then, who is a big favorite! We played several gigs at Caffe Proust as the house band! Had some great times, but by mid-2001 I was dissed by the Free Band as not being a conventional enough jazz drummer to continue, and so they found others to fill my spot. I was only half-miffed, not totally interested in being conventional anyway...but I was the longest running drummer they had, so that had me feeling a bit sore to be not involved anymore.

### **Marin county, 2002-2008**

Years spent soloing on them at home in San Anselmo. Had only one jazz gig with a makeshift band formed for a party at the Volkswagen repair shop just up the street. Good musicians too, we played Duke Ellington, Monk, Miles, etc.

In 2002 I discovered A Drummers Tradition drum store in San Rafael [when it was on 4th street] and met good life long friend and owner Robert. A great place to expand vintage drum knowledge!



For a few sessions, I played with members of Stony Point in rural Sebastopol. A talented group, in the style of Neil Young, The Band, and Jerry García. Those were great jams in their impressive barn converted into a studio!

I kept my chops up by playing the old kit at the house until 2008. Then they went into storage until 2015.

I was in Oakland by then, taking to playing just the snare and hi-hat. I brought that much to Golden Gate park once, and my final performances were at backyard jam sessions at a few of Sebs parties in Oakland.



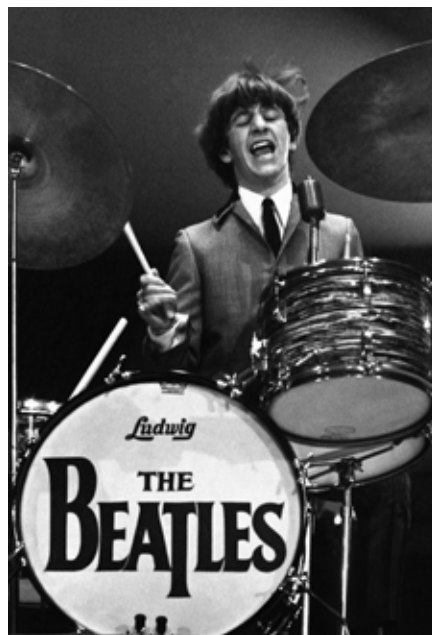
And now the old Apollo kit is passed along to drumming nephew Ben in Seattle.

*Long may they run!*

## **Influential drummers**

### **Ringo is always #1 !**

He is who I've listened to nearly since birth, and never stopped. Ringo plays the song, and tastefully with impeccable timing.





## **Bill Bruford,**

of King Crimson and Yes. WOW! Such precision. With stunning skill and complex progressive inventiveness.



## **Prairie Prince**

The San Francisco powerhouse from the Tubes — then as Todd Rundgren's main drummer from '91 on, who I've caught live many times.



## **The Rhythm Devils**

### **Bill Kreutzmann**

Grateful Dead. I loved his recent comments about drumming being less about keeping time, but more about keeping feeling.

### **Mickey Hart**

Grateful Dead. A drummer who is also an ethnomusicologist, expanding the meaning and history of worldwide percussion.



## Nick Mason

Pink Floyd's stylish drummer, delivering a smooth, paced style to suit the sound.



## Tony Williams

One of the all-time great jazz drummers, with an untouchably sophisticated touch.



## **Elvin Jones**

He cooked! Making Coltranes classic quartet really explode. My fav jazz drummer, who I had the privilege to see in 2002!



## **Terry Chambers**

Big pop drum sound with early XTC. Punchy and to the point.



## **Marc Anderson**

Amazing Minnesota drummer/percussionist who plays with Steve Tibbetts. bringing one on an exotic polyrhythmic journey.



There are several more...Charlie Watts, Vinnie Coliuta, Willie Wilcox, Ginger Baker, Neil Peart, John Bonham, Keith Moon, ...from the rock albums most of my generation grew up with.

## **Conclusion**

Drumming made me who I am. I was dedicated to it for significant decades of my life. From the formative days of self discovery, soloing as a teenager, through making music with other like-minded musicians in bands. On to San Francisco's unique creative underground events [also the Nevada desert] and ocean cliffs, to conventional jazz, folk and rock. I worked hard at gaining my chops, arriving at meditative states in the process. It became a healthy, addictive discipline!

**~Dean Gustafson, December 2018**

**DEDICATED TO MY PARENTS, WHO WERE BOTH TOLERANT OF ALL THAT RACKET...AND WHO WERE ENCOURAGING, WHICH IS KEY TO THE YOUNG DRUMMERS EXPERIENCE.**



