

# David Rokeach

## Covering The Musical Map

Since completing a Ray Charles tour in 1991, David Rokeach has made it a point to visit as many areas of the musical map as possible. The drummer can be heard on new CD releases by blues/rock singer Lady Bianca, Brazilian pop guitarist/vocalist Joyce Cooling, jazz diva Kitty Margolis, fusion guitarist Jeff Massanari, and hip-hop point-man Dreadformation. The West Coast-based drummer has also recently backed singers Mark Murphy and Claudia Gomez, performed drum duets with Louie Bellson in Fred Berry's Jazz 91 KCSM All-Stars, and taught with Leon "Ndugu" Chanler at the 1995 Stanford Jazz Workshop.

"The key is having respect for each style you play," says Rokeach. "In most idioms the masters play *only* that. And in order to play an idiom well, you kind of have to live the music. I want it to sound like it's the only music I play, that I've played it all my life.

"My role is usually to make the music feel good," Rokeach continues. "Sometimes solos are required, and you have to understand the



David Rokeach

idiom to solo in it. It's not the same chops or sounds. The sounds help define the idiom, and that's not just equipment or tuning...it's touch."

The drummer's level of commitment has paid off with calls from Los Angeles conductor (and former Ray Charles arranger and conductor) H.B. Barnum to play several television gigs, backing up artists including Patti LaBelle, Aaron Neville, Lou Rawls, and Mavis Staples. His flexibility paid off again in creating interesting rhythm tracks on *Never Ending Game*, the debut Island release by Dreadformation, which combines heavy hip-hop grooves with hot horns, cool acoustic piano, and heady rapping. "I'm really excited about this project," Rokeach says. "The drums helped give the music form. [Composer/bandleader] David Allen, Jr. would play me his demos, and then ask me to find something that worked. I'd usually play the first thing that came into my head, then write it down. And a lot of times the gut feeling was the best."

Robin Tolleson

## News...

**Chris McHugh** recently finished up Amy Grant's tour. He can be heard on Grant's new album, due out shortly.

**John Molo** is on Bruce Hornsby's newest record, *Hot House*, as well as a new album by Asleep At The Wheel and Mike Watt's *Ball-Hog Or Tugboat*. He will be going on the road with Hornsby in the spring.

While Suicidal Tendencies is on hiatus, **Jimmy DeGrasso** has been working with Alice Cooper as well as

doing some dates with Y&T.

**Herb Schucher** has been working with Lisa Brokop. Also, congratulations on his marriage to Regina.

**Jay Schellen** gigging with J. Ferron. He can be heard on the debut album by Murderer's Row.

**Zach Alford** on the road with David Bowie.

**Chris Vrenna** on tour with Nine Inch Nails.

**Albert Bouchard** on the Brain Surgeons' newest release, *Trepanation*.

**Deen Castronovo** is no longer with Ozzy Osbourne. Longtime Ozzy sideman **Randy Castillo** is back in the band.

Congratulations to Rhonda and **Rick Latham** on the birth of their daughter, Tori Rose.

Also, congratulations to Barbara and **Paul Wertico** on their new arrival, Talia Rose. (Roses seem to be popular these days!)



## Duran Duran's Steve Alexander

Not too long ago, Steve Alexander's musical credibility was in danger of being shot to pieces. In the late '80s, the Welshman was drumming for British teenybopper act Brother Beyond, but was, nevertheless, an accomplished musician. "I'd get recommended for gigs after being in that band, but people would think it was a joke," he recalls. "So I would say, 'Fair enough, here's a tape.' Thankfully, my playing would get me the gig. Even when I began to do clinic tours, which I've been doing for the last couple of years for Zildjian, I would still get laughed at before I went on to play."

Nobody's laughing now, as Alexander is one of the U.K.'s fastest-rising drummers. He has been a star attraction on Zildjian's worldwide clinic tours, has been playing with Boy George, and has landed the spot as Duran Duran's recording and live drummer. "Because of the quality of Duran's last album, all of a sudden I've gotten instant respect from everyone. Warren (Cucurullo, guitarist) is quite demanding regarding what he wants from a drummer, and that suits me a hundred percent. We're working on a new album, which will be released soon. It seems very comfortable and relaxed when we all play together.

"I think Duran is a very challenging gig," Steve figures, "because of what they demand, and they've used Terry Bozzio and Vinnie Colaiuta on their albums. They know what makes a good drum track. So it's very gratifying for me to be playing at that level. Warren also wants me to play in his solo project, Thanks To Frank, which is this intense trio with fiendishly complex music. He used Vinnie on his album. So I've got that in my *Walkman* at the moment while I'm rehearsing for the gigs with Warren's band."

Teri Saccone