

Now Where Are They Now?

More Of Your Favorites Found

by Robyn Flans

It seems appropriate that we're running an installment of this very popular series in our 25th-Anniversary issue, because, to me, this feature is the truest celebration of the drummer. The players included in this article are working drummers, musicians who are making music and sharing their talents with the world. The new drummers coming up are vital to music-making. But the guys who have been out doing it for years must be applauded for their dedication and body of work. Experience and time only make drummers better at their craft. These players, who have been in and out of the limelight, are to be commended for their commitment and consistency.

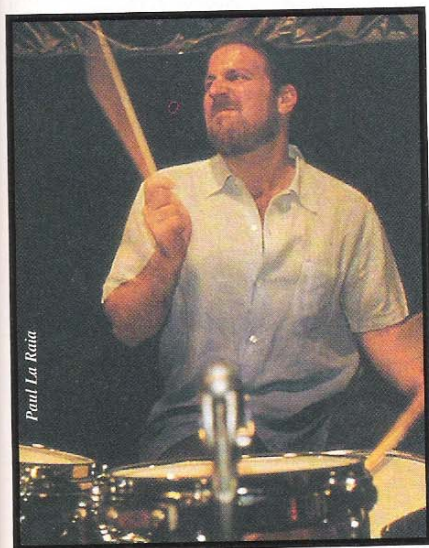
There is no greater joy than to be able to make a living doing what you love. All of the following players have weathered ups and downs in the music business because of their passion for playing. Frankie Banali expressed it best when he said, "You don't tell a carpenter to stop using a hammer and nails simply because he's older or he's not the best-looking guy anymore. You would never tell Miles Davis to stop playing his trumpet. I find it very insulting that some people have the assumption that just because you get to a certain age or because you're not as popular as you once were, that you no longer have the talent."

The following updates are a celebration of that dedication.

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Aaron Comess (The Spin Doctors)

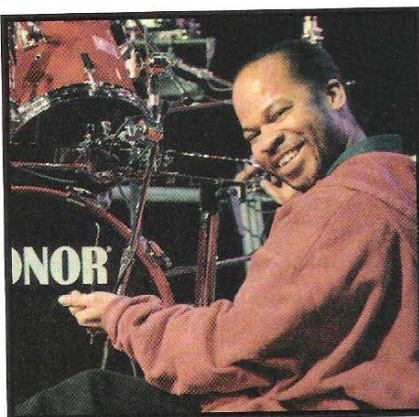
Aaron Comess has been keeping very busy while The Spin Doctors take a hiatus. Following a couple of huge hits, including "Two Princes," and a fourth album, *Here Comes The Bride*, lead singer Chris Barron lost his voice. Upon his recovery, Comess was doing some recording and gigging with him. "The Spin Doctors are still alive and well," Comess says. "We just made a decision to take a break and give everybody the opportunity to do some other stuff."



And Aaron has definitely been doing his fair share. Most recently, he's been gigging with Aaron and Ivan Neville. He's also done some producing and recording for Joan Osborne; his song "Baby Love" is on her new release, *Righteous Love*. Aaron also produced and played on an album by Interscope R&B artist Bilal. And he's been doing some live work with a jazz group called Turquoise, which he describes as "a Turkish jazz group," which has a big band offshoot. Aaron has also recently produced a record for a new artist named Swati, and he's working on albums by Isaac Hayes, Marc Cohn, Deanna Kirk, Planet 14, and Laura Dawn.

"Throughout my life I've always had a love of different kinds of music," Comess says. "I always try to do as much of a variety as possible. I'm sure at some point The Spin Doctors will get together and do some gigs or recording. But until then, I'm enjoying what I'm doing."

Blair Cunningham (The Pretenders, Paul McCartney)



Blair Cunningham began playing with The Indigo Girls in September, 1999 and says it's a fascinating gig. "To see how they work together is unbelievable," he says. "You just don't see that. It's like a Sam & Dave kind of thing, the real classic couples. Musically, it's great because it's not one certain type of music. It's such a mixture, which makes my playing feel so fresh. It's very exciting to work with them."

Prior to this job, the London-based Cunningham wasn't very visible in the States, as he was working with a German artist, Marius Muller Westerhagen, who Blair describes as the "Bruce Springsteen/Bob Dylan of Germany." He joined Westerhagen in 1995, recorded an album with him, and toured with him until joining The Indigo Girls.

Fred Coury (Cinderella)

After five years apart, '80s heavy-metal monsters Cinderella re-formed in 1998, most recently sharing a bill with Poison.

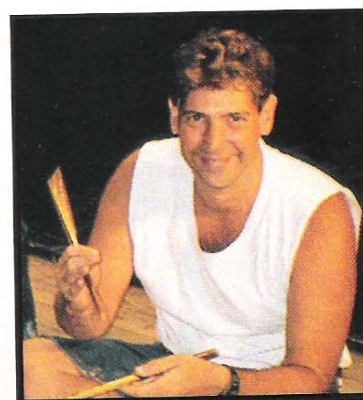


Fred Coury had been working with a band called Arcade before re-joining Cinderella for the club tour. He moved to Nashville about five years ago, where he opened a studio originally called Project One Recording (now called Atlantis), whose clients have included Todd Rundgren and Cleopatra.

"The club tour was fun, but you get burnt on it really quickly," Coury says. "Playing the big places is so much easier than doing clubs. The hours are a lot more human, there are production people helping, and catering helps you eat healthy." Speaking of healthy, Fred jogs every day to keep in shape.

Cinderella fans will be happy to hear that the band has signed a deal with Sony to release a new album, and the band is about to go into the studio to begin recording. Expect a disc by mid-2001.

Danny Gottlieb (Pat Metheny, Elements)



Danny Gottlieb has been enjoying a multitude of career highlights in recent times. Among those are a concert in Thailand and a recording with Swiss sax player Fritz Renold and French keyboardist Christian Jakob & The Royal Thai Navy Band. Lew Soloff's recent record, *Rainbow Mountain*, features Danny, as does a 1998 release by singer Neehna Freelon called *Maiden Voyage*, on which Danny got to play with Herbie Hancock on the title track. Records with Jeff Berlin and Mark Egan (as well as with their group, Elements), gigs with The Blues Brothers, Bobby McFerrin, and The Manhattan Transfer, and clinics and duo performances with his wife, percussionist Beth Gottlieb, have filled out Danny's

schedule.

"My goal has always been to keep growing and playing as much creative music as I can," Gottlieb explains. "I like the fact that I get called for all kinds of different gigs, from Bobby McFerrin to The Blues Brothers to The Manhattan Transfer. And I enjoy playing with great musicians who are also long-term friends, such as Mark Egan and Lew Soloff.

"My most recent thrill, though," Danny says, "has been playing concerts with my wife. Inspired by touring together with Bobby McFerrin, we started performing in concert, teaching, and doing clinics as a percussion duo. We discovered we can cover a full spectrum of percussion. Performing together allows us to grow, both musically and personally."

Liberty DeVitto (Billy Joel)

Billy Joel supposedly retired on New Year's Eve 2000, but Liberty DeVitto is not so sure. He says that Joel may have trudged



through his last long tour, but surely they'll be performing at some future date. In the meanwhile, DeVitto has a band called Big People with Ben Orr from The Cars, Jeff Carlise from .38 Special, and Derek St. Holmes from Ted Nugent. They've been playing festivals throughout the country.

DeVitto is also part of a four-piece rhythm section with two horns called The Fun(k) Club. "We do instrumentals," DeVitto says. "We're writing our own material in a funky, jazzy vein. I'm a rock drummer, so it's more rock than jazz. But the saxophone player and organ player make it a more jazzy sound." The Fun(k) Club is currently finishing up a CD that will be available on the drummer's Web site, libertydevitto.com.

While DeVitto is doing a little bit of everything, he says he still misses "the big crowds and all of that. To be doing it for

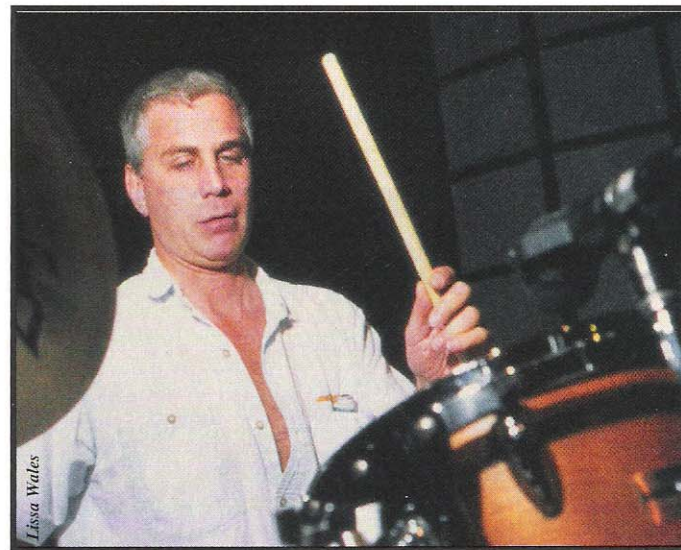
twenty-seven years, making a career out of something I love, has been really amazing."

Andy Newmark (Sly & The Family Stone, Carly Simon)

For Andy Newmark, the declining studio scene in New York, coupled with a relationship with an English woman, dictated a move to England in 1992. "I had quite a few English clients through the years," Newmark explains, "and I love the English countryside. I was ready for a change."

Newmark is currently the drummer for the London stage production of *The Lion King*. "It's eight shows a week," he says, "like a steady nine-to-five gig. I love it. I haven't played so much since I was twenty-one-years old. It's three hours of non-stop playing for me. The show is all drums, all African-derived music, and the drummer is in the hot seat. So I'm playing better than I've played my whole life. I've probably been spending more time on my instrument in the last year than I have in the last fifteen years."

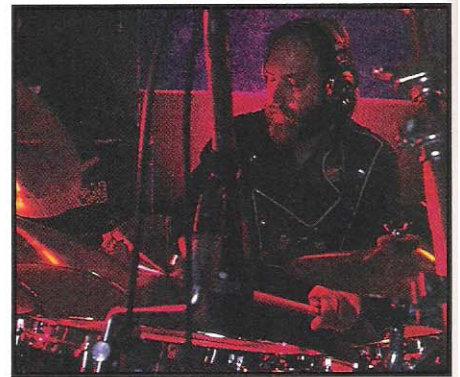
Andy also does sporadic sessions throughout Europe, although with artists whose projects are not released in the States. "It's been really neat, because I've been rediscovered by the younger generation who is picking up on Sly & The Family Stone and finding out I'm living here. I'm working for young bands with musicians who could be my kids. I'm fifty, and some of these kids are twenty. It's cool."



Ron Tutt (Elvis Presley, Neil Diamond)

We're very fortunate to still have Ron Tutt with us. In July of '99, while he was backstage in Bakersfield, California, ready to start a show with Neil Diamond, Diamond's dresser insisted a doctor take a look at Tutt, who didn't appear to look well. Thankfully it was noticed, for Tutt was actually having a heart attack, which resulted in double bypass surgery.

"I was down about as far as you can go,"

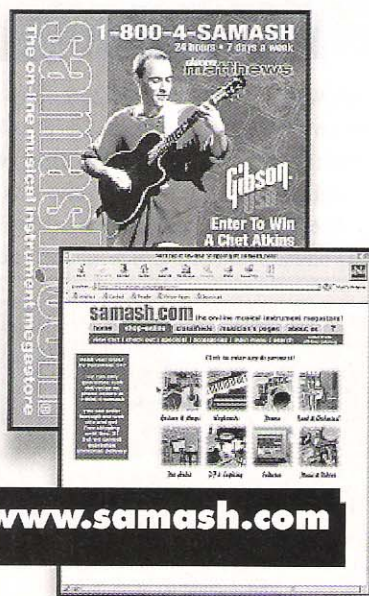


Tutt says. "It was not looking good, but the bypass worked, and recently I graduated from Vanderbilt's cardiac school of rehab. Even though there's been 40% permanent heart damage, through exercise, treatment, and diet, it's been a miraculous comeback." Complicating matters, Tutt, sixty-two, also suffered a stroke. But amazingly, by this past summer, he was ready to go out and wow audiences in Europe and the States with a moving show called *Elvis, The Concert*.

"It's as close to a real Elvis concert as you'll ever see," Tutt explains. "It *is* real, although he's the only one who is not. With the video enhancement and three screens, the audience gets caught up in the excitement. There are live cameras shooting shots of us playing live, and there's footage of us from thirty years ago when we were with Elvis."

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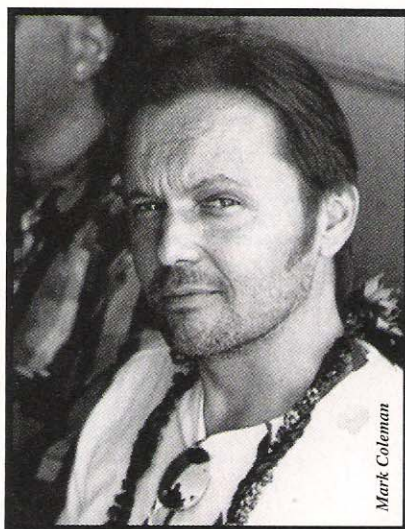
on standby, just in case. "It was really frustrating not being able to play," Vinny admits. "For two months I was going crazy, but it was great watching the show every night."

Upon his return to LA, Appice put together a band called Hunger Farm, which recorded one track for the film *Bedazzled*. The band is currently seeking a record deal. In his spare time, Vinny enrolled in a seven-month computer program and became a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer. Now, in addition to playing music, he's gone into business building computer systems. "I love this stuff," he admits. "It relates to what we do. For the song we did for *Bedazzled*, we did drums in the studio and then everything else on computer."

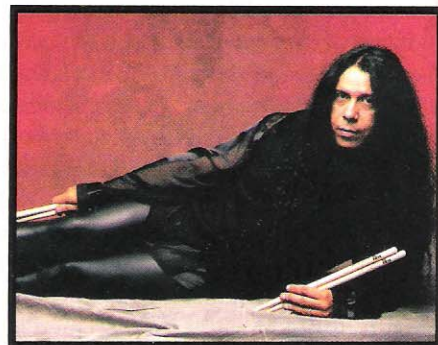
Mark Craney (Gino Vannelli)

Unfortunately, due to his ongoing health problems, Mark Craney had to stop working with British rock icon Eric Burdon in 1995 after three years of service. "I had to surrender to it," he says. "I've been doing dialysis for nearly five years, and I'm still waiting for a kidney and a pancreas. I'm not too good at hauling drums in and out of the car right now."

Craney says his girlfriend is the person who keeps him going. He's also doing some teaching, which is keeping his morale up. "There have been some dark tunnels," Mark admits. "Now I would just like all of this resolved so I can start making some plans in my life."



Frankie Banali (Quiet Riot)



By the end of the '80s, Quiet Riot, who scored big with a cover of Slade's "Cum On Feel The Noise," suffered too many personnel changes to continue. In 1991, a couple of the members reorganized the band, and Banali re-joined them in 1993. That lineup lasted about three years. Then, when Marilyn Manson requested that Quiet Riot's original lineup play at one of his 1997 after-show parties, the band agreed—as a one-off. But it felt so good that the group got back together again and asked Banali to take care of the band business. So he opened up a limited-liability corporation, hired a new accountant, investigated the most economic form of travel, and commenced booking the band. Frankie found that there was still interest in the band, and VH1 even produced a *Behind The Music* show about them. Recently they've performed in Japan and Moscow.

Banali says the band is now enjoying performing for a varied audience of old and new fans, and has been treating concertgoers to autograph sessions following their shows. "I am incredibly grateful that at this point in my life and career there are people out there who care about the band," Frankie says. "I am so thankful to the fans. Internally, the thing that makes the band work is that the individuals have matured. We've all grown up."

Apparently they've improved musically, too. "The comments I've been getting from the band now are that I have a lot more power and passion about my playing than I used to," Banali says. "I think what they get from me is a driving force as the drummer. On the business front, I bring stability. I make them have meetings and I hand out calendars and itineraries. I take it