



1. VITALS

BAND: Hot Hot Heat **AGE:** 24 **BIRTHPLACE:** Victoria, British Columbia, Canada **BIGGEST INFLUENCES:** Mitch Mitchell, Dave Grohl, Ringo Starr, Ginger Baker **CURRENT RELEASE:** *Elevator*

2. ALL GEARED UP

DRUMS: Ayotte **SNARE:** Ludwig Black Beauty **CYMBALS:** Sabian
HEADS: Remo **STICKS:** Pro-Mark **HARDWARE:** Yamaha, Tama

VIBE

SERIOUS HEAT

“ I try to get inside the feeling of the music ... and the head of the writer ”

BY BILLY RAMIREZ

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
DUSTIN RABIN

PAUL HAWLEY

The butt of many jokes, drummers are sometimes not considered serious musicians. While some do live up to and actualize the Neanderthal stereotype, Paul Hawley's musicianship and contributions to the über hot Hot Hot Heat break down those generalizations. Taking after his father, Hawley first picked up the guitar at age nine but switched to drums a couple of years later.

"I felt that he put a lot of pressure on me to learn guitar quickly," he says, "so I decided to get a set of drums and play an instrument that he didn't know much about. It turned out he could drum pretty well, but I quickly surpassed his skills. For a couple of years it was mainly drums, but when I got to about 13 I studied both pretty closely."

Drums quickly became Hawley's thing, and he taught himself the basics by playing along to records featuring drummers like Ginger Baker, Ringo Starr, and Mitch Mitchell. "I've never taken a drum lesson in my life," he explains. "I used to put on headphones and play along to my favorite drummers. I used to spend a lot of time by myself

drumming alone. I think there was a period in my early teens where I was playing seven days a week, two or three hours a day."

Hawley wouldn't make good use of that drumming for a while, however. Victoria, British Columbia boasts amazing landscapes, but for all its photogenic scenery, it lacks musical outlets. During his high school years, Hawley had a difficult time finding serious musicians to play with.

"Every high school has a group of kids who play rock, and play bass or drums," he says, "but trying to find another dedicated person in my high school was nearly impossible. I had a tough time keeping groups together in Victoria. I had musical partners, who one year were focused, but I would have to move on because they would not keep up. If the band was going to survive, we would have to compete on a higher level. Obviously, the standards in Victoria are lower than places like San Francisco, New York, or London. We didn't get a lot of touring acts near there."

Things changed in 1998 when he met bassist Dustin Hawthorne, vocalist Matthew Marnick, and keyman Steve Bays, forming Hot Hot Heat. A couple years later the band's sound shifted when Marnick departed, Bays took over vocal duties, and guitarist Dante DeCaro joined.

VIBE HAWLEY CONTINUED

“ You really have to push if you want something to work ”

3. INSIDE TRACKS

Hot Hot Heat ELEVATOR Sire

It's been said that the drummer's job is to keep time. This, of course, is hogwash: keeping time is just the first step on each drummer's mission. It's essential, sure, but if just going *tick-tock-tick* is enough to keep you happy, may we suggest moving to Switzerland. These days, the key to achieving percussive excellence involves listening to the song, mapping through its twists and turns, and finding that Zen-like balance of playing more than the backbeat while making it sound like you're pared down to the skeleton of the rhythm. That's what Paul Hawley does on *Elevator*, and

that is precisely what makes this one great album. Consider, for example, Steve Bays, who bawls his vocals and holds down chords on his retro organ pretty

much the same way on each cut. Hawley, on the other hand, is the dynamo here. Though he never seems to exert less than maximum energy, he tailors his playing to fit each section of the song. Check, for example, his massive cymbal wash on the last chorus of "Soldier In A Box" and it becomes clear that everything he threw down before then was conceived to build to that moment. This is smart drumming, people; more than anything else, it's what makes *Elevator* rise. Going up ...

— Robert L. Doerschuk



The band climbed the ranks – touring, small record deal, EP, debut album, and such – and eventually ended up plastered all over the airwaves with their hit album *Elevator*, which rose to #34 on the *Billboard* charts piloted by catchy and memorable tunes like "Running Out Of Time" and "Goodnight Goodnight."

Much of the band's success is owed to Hawley's contributions, which range from keeping the beat, laying down some guitar, and even to writing. "I am very involved in our songwriting," he explains. "Steve and I wrote most of this record. Some songs are definitively his, and some that are definitively mine. Usually, he or I have a song sketched out with rough melody, rough verse, and a rough chorus. One of us will bring it to the other and we'll work on it together, then we bring it to the group. From then on, it goes from being a solo

project to being a band project where the other members add their bits and the song starts to take shape. There's a certain point where we decide that it's working and decide to continue or if it's not we drop it. For the most part, it happens differently every time. The amount of people's involvement is equal to the amount of passion they feel for the song. Sometimes, you really have to push if you want something to work. You need to push and pull your way through the process."

Hawley's dedication to his art is a testament that the Heat are not flash-in-the-pan MTV fodder destined for a quick 15 minutes. Behind the addictive hooks and bumping beats is a serious musician determined to deliver a serious performance. "From a drumming perspective, I approach every song as open-mindedly as possible. I try to get inside the

feeling of the music and the vibe and the head of the writer. Then, I amplify that vibe with the drums. The feeling of the songs is all drums. You can make or break a great riff or a great song with the drums and obviously it's my job to make a song. I don't take that responsibility lightly. I try to listen to it and *feel* it, for lack of a better term."

Hawley "made" all the songs using his bumping playing style and fat drum sounds, which he utilized a little professional medical help to attain. "I learned a lot from the Drum Doctor Ross [Garfield]. He worked on the record and is a man unto himself. He really makes magic happen with drums. He does it so subtly. Tuning is such a black art, and you can take a great drum and wreck it or make it sound like gold. He's got a touch that I just don't understand. If you take a good drum,

4. "SHAME ON YOU" Transcription by Anthony Geluso

This opening groove features a cool and unexpected Rush "Subdivisions" vibe. The dynamics then drop into a quasi salsa groove with sixteenths on the hat and syncopation on the snare, which further evolves into an open hi-hat disco feel.

VIBE HAWLEY CONTINUED

with a good tuner, you get the sound that ends up on the record. The first conversation I had with [producer] Dave Sardy over the phone, I said, 'I want the best snare sounds I've ever heard.' We both agreed that snare sounds define records. They define the time period, and quality. Our aim was to find the perfect drum sound for the song. We used a couple kick drums and I think we ended up using a combination of hi-hats and cymbals. It wasn't as varied as I thought it was going to be. We basically rotated in different hi-hats

and crashes and the whole idea was to find what suited the song the best. We wanted it to be obvious, with no egos or arguments. When it was obvious that it was going to sound as good as it was going to, it would be obvious to everyone involved."

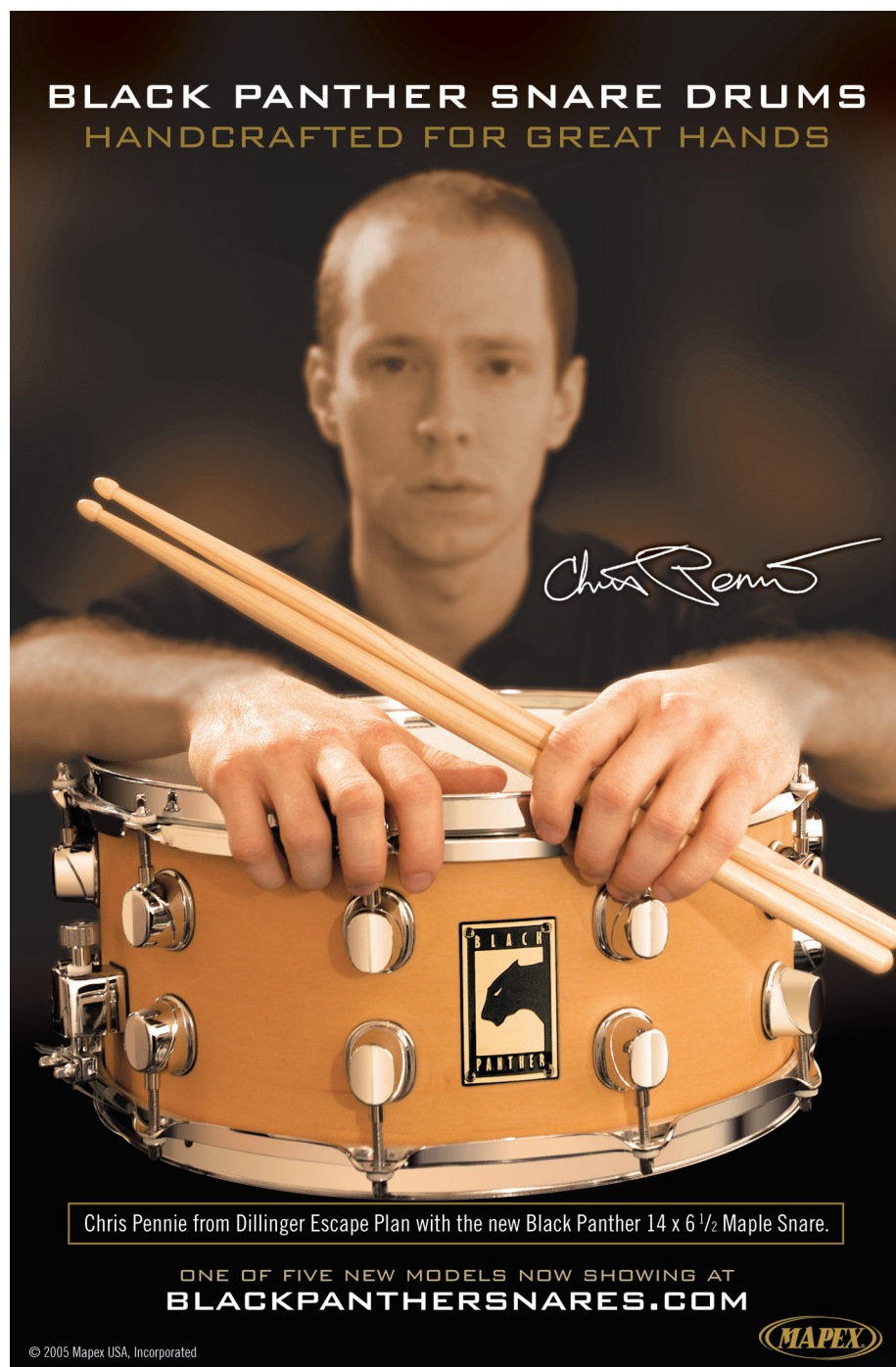
Hawley experimented with different drums and cymbals, but also played with a click track for the first time. Many drummers are horrified of playing with a click, and Hawley wasn't exactly looking forward to the task. "I've never played with

a click before and I was really nervous," he admits. "We did a couple songs without the click and Dave asked me if I wanted to try it. I was hesitant but I agreed to do it. I found out that it came natural to me and I did a bunch of songs in a row and really got into it.

"I remember hearing about Dave Grohl doing the *Nevermind* album. I heard it took him hundreds of times to get that stuff right because he was playing to a click for the first time. That's always been in the back of my mind and sort of tainted my view on clicks. I found that I ended up liking playing to a click because it makes me feel like a better drummer."

It's no surprise that Hawley liked playing to a click track. He's not a flashy drummer who is interested in playing too many notes. He is a musician who connects with the music he plays. "To me, a drummer who can play a steady rock beat consistently and steadily is almost as exciting as a drummer who can do 1,000 quadruplets in a minute. Drums should bring out the emotion in a song. If you're in Rush, then that has to be done, and if you're in White Zombie, that's how you have to play. You have to play for the song. I have no doubt that I can probably switch to any type of music and try to sort of serve it, but I became interested in the nuts and bolts and the roots of drums as opposed to the 21st century, trying to take it to a new place with thousands of RotoToms. Not that I have anything against that, but it's just not me."

"I can't imagine how I would play if I wasn't a musician other than a drummer," he concludes. "I honestly don't know how other drummers do it who don't play another instrument. I always think about Ringo. He's such an amazing drummer and so perfect for that band, but he couldn't play guitar, wasn't a writer. He always knew where the pocket was and knew how to play the song. I always think of him as such an amazing example of a real musician's musician. You're listening to swells and chord changes. It can make the whole thing a lot easier or a lot more difficult than it needs to be. In the end, drums are very primal things. After the human voice, drums are what people respond to instinctively before guitars and melodies and harmonies. Hitting a piece of skin tied to a drum shouldn't be a complicated thing." ■



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