

Featured Drummer ...

CRAIG KRAMPF



by Mary Anne Jeansonne

More than 60 gold & platinum record awards Co-wrote Steve Perry's hit song "Oh Sherrie"
A Grammy award for songwriter for the movie soundtrack "Flashdance"
Produced the debut album of Melissa Etheridge which went double platinum
Noted Rogers Endorsee

Craig looks upon himself as having three entities within the music industry: musician, producer, and songwriter. At the core of his success is his desire to play music that is full of passion and heart. His calming nature and how at peace he is with the world reflects on the music he has performed. The following interview took place recently following knee surgery that Craig had. We wish him a speedy recovery!

M.A.J. *Tell us a little about your beginnings, Craig.*

C.K. I was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 25, 1945. My dad, Joe, was a fireman and then later, an engineer for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. Dad loved music. Very often on paydays, he would bring home records. Some of my earliest memories are of the radio or phonograph always being on. My dad wanted to play the trumpet, but his family could not afford the \$0.50 a month rental for an instrument. My mom, Florence, also loved music and although neither one of my parents played an instrument, they definitely passed on a love of music to my older brother, Carl, and me. As soon as Carl turned ten, he started accordion lessons. It wasn't too long after that I started playing along with drumsticks on two small wooden chairs and some pots and pans. I got my first drum set, a Sears \$40.00 kid's set, for Christmas when I was eight. I played my first gig at nine...a Communion party. I really think that hearing and seeing all that music as a kid made me realize that the bass drum played on 1 & 3 and that the snare went on 2 & 4 or the bass drum went on 1 and the snare

on 2 & 3, if it was a waltz. My brother helped me a lot in pointing me in the right direction with this and by showing me how to hold the drumsticks.

M.A.J. *What drummers did you listen to as you were starting your drumming career?*

C.K. There are so many memories of music before rock and roll. There was a lot of ethnic music being played in the house and I was also exposed to a lot of live music at an early age (Polish & German weddings for example). Some of those polka bands had drummers who really kicked butt...I'm not kidding. My brother and I got a radio from our Uncle Al for Christmas. If the humidity and weather was just right, we could pick up radio stations from the South. We started hearing black music, "hillbilly" music...different music than we had been hearing on radio in Milwaukee. The first strains of rock were appearing...I guess it was a merging of that blues and hillbilly (country). I can remember hearing Bill Haley, Little Richard, Elvis, and a lot of the records coming out of Nashville, Memphis and New Orleans and getting moved in a whole new way...this stuff had a raw passion that really made an impression on a young kid. To this day, I still use fills that I heard Earl Palmer play with Little Richard and Jerry Allison do with Buddy Holly and The Crickets. My brother and I also started to listen to a lot of jazz. We started to listen to Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, Chico Hamilton, Cannonball Adderly, Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Stan Kenton, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller and a host of others...40's and 50's stuff. We were trying to absorb it all...jazz, Dixieland, and the fledging early rock records. I tried to learn from all of them.

There was this drummer in Milwaukee who was a killer...Dennis Bertrandt. The guy had an unbelievable feel...especially how he played the backbeats. I got to hear him a lot with three different local bands. I even took 2 lessons from him. Dennis probably influenced my rock style more than any other drummer out there. I lost track of him and I don't know if he even kept on playing. The guy should and could have been one of the greats.

The Dave Brubeck Quartet was coming to a nightclub (a club that usually had strippers for entertainment, but would occasionally bring in jazz artists) and so, we begged a lot and our mom and dad took us. I was around 11 or 12. There was a snowstorm in St. Louis that night and so the band's plane was late in getting to Milwaukee. We kept pleading with our folks to stay awhile longer and lo and behold, shortly after 11:00 PM that evening, they hustled in through the front door...Eugene Wright carrying his upright bass, Joe



Craig with *The Robbs* on the set of Dick Clark's "Where The Action Is" in the late 1960's. He joined and toured with The Robbs in 1965. In April of '66, The Robbs were on the big stage as part of a nine day festival with such names as Paul Revere and the Raiders, Mitch Ryder, Johnny Rivers, and The Turtles.

Morello and Dave wheeling in and carrying drum cases, Paul Desmond protectively carrying his treasured alto sax. They quickly conversed with the club owner and the opening band and soon were up on stage. Joe used the other drummer's set, he just set up his own snare drum and cymbals. Wow...there they were in person. With a quick story of being delayed in St. Louis due to the huge storm, Dave smiled and kicked off "St. Louis Blues." When they took a short break, my brother and I got to meet them and they all signed the "Jazz Goes To Jr. College" album for us. They were so cool with us...something that I will always remember. That was a longer than necessary story, I guess, to say that to this day, Joe Morello is my all-time favorite drummer. Joe and the whole quartet inspired, and still inspire me a lot.

I don't know whether this is unusual or not. The majority of the time, I am influenced by passion, and the heart and soul...so that might mean the whole band and other players in the band, and not just the drummer. For example, I love the various incarnations of the Byrds, but especially the last one with Clarence White on guitar and Gene Parsons on drums. What Clarence played absolutely moves my soul and kills me to this day. Of course, Gene is playing some incredible stuff, but the whole band, how they played as a band, the songs, and Clarence is what is really getting to me. In a similar fashion, Bruce Springsteen and his songs and passionate vocal performances inspire me...usually more than what the band or drummer is doing. I put on Bruce a lot before sessions...it's the passion. I hear the passion and want to get up, go out there and deliver in a similar passionate manner.



photo by Courtney Krampf

M.A.J. *What formal lessons have you had, especially in the earlier years of your playing?*

C.K. As I said, I started playing when I was around 8 or so. When I was ten, my folks gave me accordion lessons...every German/Polish boy growing up in Milwaukee in the 50's had to play accordion. So even though I was already playing gigs on drums with my older brother, I still started accordion lessons. In retrospect, I'm glad I had those lessons. It taught



me how to read music, learn about chords and progressions...it was great. I did buy some drum books and so by having learned to read "real" music, it wasn't that bad picking up on drum music and notation.

I went to the high school band director, as an incoming freshman, and he said, "We have too many drummers...you will learn to play trumpet." "But I don't want to play trumpet." "Here's a horn, take some lessons and come back to see

me."Well, I took about 3 lessons and realized that this wasn't for me...I just wasn't into it. I came back to turn in the horn. "Okay, you will play string bass." "I don't want to play string bass." "I'll give you lessons." Well, that lasted for about another month and finally I said, "I'm a drummer. If you have too many now, I will come back next year. You know, you haven't even heard me play." Sort of begrudgingly, he finally listened to me play. "Okay, you are in the drum section." The band director helped me with my reading and working on my rudiments. I did start formal lessons with a drum teacher during sophomore year of high school. I took for about two years or so. So, I guess I came in a little backwards...playing for several years before beginning to study.



M.A.J. *Have you ever taught lessons and do you teach now?*

C.K. When I was in college, I began teaching and eventually had around 40 students a week. It was a great experience. Some kids would come in and say that they just wanted to play rock and roll and not learn how to read. I would pick up the sticks, play a rock groove for a second and then would do some fills. I then would say, "Okay, how are you going to go home and practice that...are you going to remember what I just played?" If I show you how to read, I can write that out for you and then you can practice that when you get home." All of the kids saw the logic in that and realized that reading music was pretty cool after all. I had one student who troubled me...he was one the most uncoordinated persons I ever encountered. I was at a loss. Finally after several weeks I asked him, "By any chance are you left-handed?" He said yes. I changed the kit around to a lefty set and the kid began to play great. He told me that his former teacher said that he wouldn't change the drum set around for one student and that he would have to learn to play right handed. URGH! To this day I still can't understand what was going on in that teacher's brain. I had one student, Tony, who was a monster. I finally said to him that I couldn't show him anything more. I said that he was welcome to come in each week and that we could play together, and that I wouldn't charge him. I often wonder what happened to young Tony...the kid was unreal.

I found out so much about myself and drumming through the teaching experience. It kept me on my toes and kept my reading sharp. Reading does go. In LA, the music at the sessions was usually written in chord charts. I got a few calls for real drum chart reading, (i.e. commercials and movies, like for Honda and Rocky III) and I was scared...my reading was definitely weak (I did get through the sessions fine, but it was scary how much that I had forgotten). Here in Nashville, the charts are written in the number system...probably one of the most logical and best ways to write charts for record sessions. I feel all young players should at least familiarize themselves with this method...there are several books written on the subject. It can also be beneficial in great ear training...picking out chords and progressions, etc. As of now, I am not teaching. There are so many things that I am involved with at the moment, that I just don't have the time or real desire to do it now.

M.A.J. *Please tell us about your drum collection.*

C.K. Well, I really don't think I am a collector. I know that I'm not a collector. I came to be aware of the vintage market for drums only a few years ago, and actually quite by accident. I wanted to change over a lug system on a Tama snare drum that was driving me crazy. John Aldridge (Not So Modern Drummer) came out and told me not to do it. I went on and on about what a pain it was to change a head and John said, "Wow Craig, you really don't know do you?" He explained that this indeed was a fairly rare drum...an all maple, solid wood snare with the "Gladstone Three-Way Lug". I also bought my first copy of *Not So Modern Drummer* that day and became aware of what was going on. My heart sank at all the dumb-ass things I had done over the years. But then, I realized that I was a working drummer...I needed my drums to work and work properly. So, when my Camco strainer started acting weird, I took it off, threw it away and replaced it with something that would hold up under studio conditions. I now realize that I should have saved it (as a guitar player would save the original pick-ups from his guitar). There are so many stories that I have about drums, drum sets, hardware that I just got rid of. I won't repeat them here...all you collectors will hate me and they are also painful now to me.

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Craig Krampf *continued ...*



photo by Jason Moon Wilkins

I do have some of my old equipment though. I have my original Rogers Dynasonic Snare drum, serial # 2651 with the “Bread and Butter” lugs and “Clock Face” snare strainer, that we bought in 1961 or so. We traded a wood Slingerland Capri Pearl snare (yeah, I know I should have hung onto that drum also) for a metal drum. I just started to like how a metal snare drum sounded. I was even going after the cutting power of a metal drum even back then. Speaking of Rogers, of course I still have my old “monster” (two bass drums, eight toms) New England White Rogers set that I got when I joined the company as an endorser. Those drums were on a lot of sessions and they still sound great. I have told the story for Rob Cook’s

Rogers book, so I won’t go into it here, but I have a prototype 7 x 14 blond wood Rogers snare...it is truly one of a kind. When Rogers was folding, Roy Burns and gave me that drum. He said, “Craig, you were the only one who truly loved that drum, so it is only fitting that you should have it.” To say the least, I was honored to have this drum. I also have two 6.5 x 14 Super Ten snare drums, a 6.5 x 14 Fullerton era Dynasonic and a blond wood 5 x 14 that Rogers made up for me. That last drum is unusual. They sent the drum and it came with no logo, internal muffler (they knew I would take it out anyway...no unnecessary buzzes or rattles in the studio), and no metal air hole. I just said I needed a 5 x 14 snare and a few days later that drum and a 5 x 14 Super Ten metal drum arrived via UPS. The metal Super Ten did not have an internal muffler either.

I also have my old LA Camco blond drum set that I got around 1975 when I joined up to be a Camco endorser. The drums are a little worn and most of the hardware (cymbal stands, snare drum stand, etc.) I gave away, but someday I would love to restore or have those drums restored. I do have two Camco metal, I guess they were brass, 6.5 x 14 snare drums. One of them wound up being on two number records... “Hot Child in the City” and “Bette Davis Eyes.”



photo by Jason Moon Wilkins

I have lost, due to theft, four snare drums that I wished I still had...the matching blond wood 6.5 x 14 Camco snare, an 8 x 14 blond wood Dynasonic with the green felt around the lugs that was inscribed (on the inside shell) to me by Rogers for my work as an endorsee, that 5 x 14 metal Super Ten Rogers that I talked about earlier, and a no name custom built 4 x 14 blond piccolo that was made for me by a young drummer, as a thank you for working with his band. Oh yeah, the Slingerland Capri Pearl 1959 drum set was stolen out of the band’s house in 1967. I guess when you consider all the years that I have been playing and all the miles that I have traveled that isn’t too bad, but it does hurt.

I have things on my “would love to own” list, but sometimes things such as paying for college tuition for our daughters and paying other bills gets in the way of that. I still have dreams and that is a good thing.

M.A.J. *What drums do you presently play?*

C.K. After Rogers folded, I kept on playing my Rogers because they were great sounding drums and if you think back, the mid-eighties was a little strange with quality...nothing new was impressing me too much. That changed when I went to the LA NAMM show in 1987. I saw the Tama ArtStar II’s and was blown away. It was also good timing for me. Tama had all the rock & metal guys and Hugh Carr, the artist relation’s person, wanted to bring me aboard as one of their first sessions players. (Conversely, Yamaha at that time had the studio guys and wanted to land some metal-type touring guys.) My current main number one snare drum is the Tama Bell Brass 6.5 x 14. That drum is unbelievable. I also occasionally use what I refer to as my “Al Green/Fleetwood Mac” sounding snare drum.

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Craig Krampf *continued ...*

It is an old Sonor 6.5 x 14 Rosewood. All the drum does is that low, dark, dry sound. That brings me to another little thought. I have always believed that a drum will let you know where it wants to live sonically. Try different heads, different tunings etc, and normally when you hit the right combination, the drum will get magical...it will let you know what it likes.

In my head, I have always heard toms having a low depth to them. I play 10 x 14, 12 x 15, and 16 x 16 toms. Those are not "power" tom sizes. They are just the next sizes up from the old time standards of 8 x 12 and 9 x 13. My kick is a 16 x 24. Once again, the 24 diameter brings a depth that I feel is part of my sound. You have heard these drums on a lot of albums...everything that I have done since '87. They are starting to get a little worn and so I have been looking and checking out various manufacturers. Something may be put together shortly...still a little premature to talk about it.... *To Be Continued*

Due to space limitations and in order to present the entire interview with Craig Krampf, along with exclusive and rare photos, we are forced to continue this article in the next issue of Vintage Drummer. We strive to present to our readers the most thorough and complete articles, and therefore appreciate your understanding. So in the meantime, pull out your albums and cds, send us your list of songs you can find Craig on, and we will have Craig pull a name from the list received and we will present you with an autographed copy of Vintage Drummer from Craig Krampf!

Zickos Drums *continued...*

shell seam makes it as strong, if not stronger, than the shell itself. The different series, *Stealth* and *Mach 5*, differ only in the lug style used on the drums. Tom mounts can be chosen by the person purchasing a set to accommodate their playing style.

Today, different tints are available for the drums. They have also re-introduced their *Classic* set from the 70's after discovering molds and parts that had thought to be long lost. This set has the original "fat teardrop" lug, original tom mounts, and housing for the floor tom legs and bass drum spurs.

Zickos Drums are definitely back in the drum business with a great line of new drums, a classic set from the past, and years of experience in acrylic drum manufacturing. Their website, www.zickosdrums.com, has their complete line of drums with a great photo section of past and present players on their kits. Clearly a drum for the serious musician.

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