

FLOYD



by Bruce Jeansonne

SNEED

FLOYD SNEED AS CONWAY TWITTY'S DRUMMER?

The truth of the matter is that this was Sneed's first professional music gig. It happens that Conway was in town and his drummer was sick and unable to perform. The promoter called Floyd, who accepted the gig, and for 2 1/2 hours in Calgary, Canada, Floyd Sneed performed with Conway Twitty.

Floyd Sneed was born in Calgary, Alberta, Canada on November 22, 1942. He was introduced to music at a young age in the church where his parents, Napoleon and Willa Sneed, played guitar, piano, and sang. At a very young age, 4 or 5 according to Floyd, he became interested in drums.

At 19, Floyd's sister, Maxine, bought him his very first drumkit, a small set of Ludwigs. This led to the joining of his first band, *The Tommy Chong Band*. Tommy just so happened to be married to Maxine at the time. Together, Floyd and the band performed rhythm and blues and funk in the Vancouver area for several years.

Following the Tommy Chong Band, Floyd started his own band, *Heatwave*, and moved to Los Angeles in late 1966. Heatwave was an original rhythm and blues band. During this period, Floyd was playing both Ludwig and Rogers drumkits. In 1967, the band went to Honolulu, Hawaii for 10 months to perform, and then moved back to L.A.

BY 1968, THREE DOG NIGHT WAS IN NEED OF A DRUMMER

Floyd Sneed - *I was working in a club in L.A., the "Red Velvet" on Sunset Blvd. One night, Joe Schermie, the bass player for Three Dog Night, was walking by the club and heard this beat going on inside. Using his last dollar, Joe paid admission to the club and entered to find out who the drummers were. Once inside, he discovered that it was only one drummer. I happened to be doing a solo when he came in. After the show, he introduced himself, said he liked my playing, he was the bass player for Three Dog Night, and invited me to come down and possibly join the band. The band had just formed, and the drums were the remaining slot to be filled.*

Bruce - *How old were you at this time?*

Floyd - *About 23*

Bruce - *Did you realize at this time the popularity that TDN would achieve?*

Floyd - *I could feel the change in the music scene coming. I wanted to get out of the soul type bands I had been in, and into a "Three Dog Night", across the board and "open" type of music. I saw an opportunity with these guys and the timing was perfect.*

Three Dog Night recorded 14 albums, with all achieving platinum status. The band had 22 top 40 hits, with 4 charting at #1, and sales of over 100 million records as of the year 2000.



Discography

With Three Dog Night

Three Dog Night (1969)
Suitable For Framing (1969)
Captured Live at The Forum (1969)
It Ain't Easy (1970)
Naturally (1970)
Golden Biscuits (1971)
Harmony (1971)
Seven Separate Fools (1972)
Around the World with Three Dog Night (1973)
Cyan (1974)
Hard Labor (1974)
Coming Down Your Way (1975)
American Pastime (1976)
It's A Jungle (1984)

More Recordings

SS Fools (1976)
Lowell George - Thanks I'll Eat It Here (1979)
Chuck Negron - Am I Still In Your Heart (1995)

Film

Far Out Man (1989) - Directed by Tommy Chong, with appearances by Martin Mull, Judd Nelson, and Cheech Marin. Floyd played the part of the drummer in the band.

Working in a band with 3 lead singers had its challenges

Floyd - *It felt like playing with 3 different bands at times. I had to be very patient. I had to learn each of the singer's personalities, musically speaking. Where they liked the groove, where they thought the 2 and 4 was suppose to be all the time. One would say "a little faster", the other, "slow down", and the last one was somewhere in between. It was a constant juggling of "you're dragging, you're rushing, you're tired tonight". A lot of that sort of stuff. But I had to be "I'm the drummer, this is where it is suppose to be!". But I always felt very free in my playing with Three Dog Night. The whole band got together and basically re-arranged everything to make it the TDN sound.*

One of Floyd's drumming techniques he uses was employed on many TDN recordings. Both ends of the drumstick are used to strike the hi-hat and the snare at the same time. "I went to see a movie once called King Solomon's Mines. In part of the movie, the natives were doing this rhythm. I learned it really well, adapted that to my playing style, and developed it from there. I call this particular style of drumming "Lafrican". This was used to build different rhythms and sounds for the music. "Liar", "One", and "Drum Solo" are good examples of this technique in use."

Floyd also revealed that he used no click tracks on all the recordings he has performed on.

Following the breakup of TDN, Floyd went on to play with the Ohio Players. Though he didn't get to do any recordings with the band, he did tour with them for nine months.

Chuck Negron on Floyd Sneed

"I think Three Dog Night was a seven-piece band with three stars that young people made. But this band would not have been what it was without every individual. In my viewpoint, we had a drummer who was not skilled in basic, fundamental sound drumming but was totally unique, and when he did his drum solo, that's when the crowd really got on its feet."



Another band followed, called SS Fools. As told by Floyd, *“SS Fools was a great band! We were together for two years and cut one self titled album. It had some of the best musicians on this album. The band members were Bobby Kimball, lead vocals and keyboards, who would later join Toto as their lead singer, Joe Schermie, bass and vocals (original TDN member), Michael Allsup, guitar and vocals (also from TDN), Stan Seymore, guitar, timbales, and vocals, and the late Wayne DeVillier, keyboards and vocals, and myself, on drums, percussion, and vocals”*. The SS Fools album was recorded and mixed in 1976 at American Recording Studios where 99 percent of the TDN albums were recorded and/or mixed. It was also produced and engineered by the same wizards, Richard Podolor and Bill Cooper. They were a big factor in making this album so wonderful, Floyd says, and are still in business in Calabasas, California.

Three Dog Night regrouped several times over the years, the last time with the original singers in 1985. Floyd also worked with Chuck Negron for a while in the late 90’s. The group was billed as *“Chuck Negron with original TDN drummer Floyd Sneed”*.

Over many years of recording and road work, Floyd has used just about every major American drum made. Ludwig, Rogers, Slingerland, Camco, and probably the best associated with him, Zickos. *“Someone I met had pictures of the drums. While in Kansas City I met Bill Zickos and later had a kit shipped to me. I had the first set of Zickos here in America. Keith Moon had the first set ever made over in Europe. They were really good drums, top of the line. I had 500 rhinestones put on them. It made them look like a jewel, no, they were a jewel!”*

Currently, Floyd is busy playing a set of REMO’s with his new band, K.A.T.T. Consisting of original TDN bassist, Joe Schermie, Ron “Diego” Johnston, who has performed and recorded with Bo Diddley and Mick Fleetwood, among others, Katt Kleiber, a Motown and BMG Music recording artist, and Floyd, the band is set to release its debut recording shortly and tour. K.A.T.T. brings together a sound not easily forgotten with their straight forward and off the wall beats and rhythms, along with ultra commercial melodies that join almost every genre in rock. This has been a year long project which Floyd and his fellow bandmates are extremely proud of.

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PAST KITS OF FLOYD SNEED

Black Onyx Rogers double bass kit
Camco turret lugged Zickos proto-type
Proper lugged Zickos kit
Various Slingerland kits
Black Yamaha RC
Simmons Toms



Not Camcos. These are a turret-lugged Zickos kit that pre-dates the proprietary Zickos tension casing. Thanks to Will Brumfield for info and picture.

Also, at this time, Floyd has been performing on the road with Guitar Shorty. Shorty is a cousin of Jimi Hendrix and it is he who first taught Jimi the guitar. Floyd has known Guitar Shorty for over 35 years and has performed with him on and off over the past several years, playing a mixture of rock and blues.



In addition to his music career, Floyd has been busy painting. *“About 10 years ago I got a little arthritis in my knee. The doctors said it was best I didn’t do anything for awhile. I had surgery and was laid up for a few months. Out of boredom I started doodling. I used to doodle all my life. I started finishing some paintings, bigger ones, and bigger ones. It started to be a*

collection, which people told me were very good. I sold a couple, got more knowledge about painting, and developed something that is my own style. I currently have an exhibit going on in Ottawa, Canada.”

Danny Hutton on Floyd Sneed

“I don’t know how to explain why Floyd was such a great drummer, but ‘Black And White’ is proof of it. There are no overdubs. He was the only drummer I’ve ever seen play the cowbell at the same time as everything else. I’ve never seen any other drummer in my life do that. And what he was playing was so incredible and off the wall. It was a big part of why the record was a hit.”

And if that doesn’t keep Floyd busy enough, he is working on an instructional drum video. The video is still in production at this time but will be made available at his website when released.



At age 58, Floyd Sneed is still recording and performing music he loves with people he enjoys making music with. He has stretched the boundaries of music with his drumming, opened the eyes of others with his paintings, and has left a lasting impression on all of us who have gotten the opportunity to chat with him for awhile. We wish Floyd a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY on November 22, and continued success in all his career ventures.

Thanks to Floyd Sneed’s personal assistant, Dawna Sodders, for her help in making this article happen. She had this to say about Floyd:

“Floyd has been a big inspiration for a lot of drummers. I’ve read many interviews from fellow musicians. Anyone who has had the

pleasure to meet or work with Floyd, not only comments on his unique style of drumming, African, but they also rave about his wonderful, warm personality. I can’t imagine working for anyone else and being this happy.

Just a little key note - Floyd is multi-talented. To relax, he turns a blank canvas into a beautifully, colorful piece of art work. His style of painting is called surrealism humor.”