FUTURE Talk

An Interview with BAZHRI CHICKLET

The staff of DRUM! almost tried to let this one slip by without an explanation, then decided that it just wouldn't be fair to our readers. When we began planning this special electronic percussion issue, we called the world-renowned expert on the subject, Norm Weinberg, and asked him to peer into the future of electronic percussion, to try to predict what kind of hardware and software might be available in the next couple decades. Okay, we admittedly left the assignment kind of open-ended, and relied on him to figure out a way to make it work. But we couldn't believe our eyes upon opening his Fed-X package. Norm had composed a fantasy interview with an electronic drummer from the future in order to illustrate how limitless the scope of technology is, and will continue to be. Bazhri lives!

—Editor
Those of you who subscribe to Music Month (and who doesn't?) recently found last month's collection of music/virtual video in your mailbox. As always, it contains some interesting contributions. Of course, with 650 gigabytes of data on a play-chip, you're bound to find both good and bad material. Well, the critics have been busy filling their senses (all six of them) and the verdict is—in kudos have been coming in fast and furious for Bazhri Chicklet.

You all know Bazhri's work from his powerful drumming in Band #12, but this—his second outing as a solo performer—is bound to place him in a new light. We caught up with Bazhri yesterday morning as he was having breakfast at his pod in Ontario, Sector 5.

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DRUM!: Tell us Bazhri, how long have you been working on the new release?
Bazhri: Actually, I've been thinking about the material for this opus for quite some time. It must have been at least three weeks since I first started planning some of the structural organization and a few of the important lyrical concepts, to the final product.

DRUM!: I'm glad you mentioned the lyrics. Many of the songs on this new release have a sense of inner-peace to them. Compared to the lyrics of your last solo recording, these are much more relaxed. Is this a result of your recent studies in ancient religion?
Bazhri: Well, in a sense, I guess. Yeah, I had a good deal of trouble at first, deciding which words would generate the lyrics. On the cut "Billy's Got a Bug", I finally settled on six words that expressed my inner feelings at the time. They were: bug, trip, copper, potato, fish, and wall. I just spoke these words into the computer, and the software generated three outstanding verses and the chorus.

DRUM!: Are you running LyricMan?
Bazhri: No, I've never gotten completely comfortable with LyricMan. I started out with Verse-A-Tile about three years ago, and never bothered to learn another package. I'm completely happy with this one. Even though LyricMan offers a few more bells and whistles, and that 3-D hologram display is way cool, only Verse-a-tile could come up with this line (and from only six words!). "Against the black fin of your mettle, I leave his box alone." I tell you man, that's poetic, just poetic!

DRUM!: Did you do all of the singing yourself? On some cuts, it's a little hard to tell if it's your voice or not.
Bazhri: No, I'm not singing at all. It's my voice, but the whole thing was synthesized with the new version of Voicebox. I just digitized the vowel sounds, the syllables; and such. You know how great the new version is? It can automatically place the lyrics on top of the melodic line and... bingo! It's in the can! That reminds me of an old joke. Remember when we all used to say that we were looking for a singer with a MIDI-In connection? Well, Voicebox is a lot slicker than a real singer, because... well, I don't have to tell you why, do I?

DRUM!: Tell us a little about the way you work. How did you approach the creative process of writing and recording the music?
Bazhri: Well, you know that I'm a trained percussionist. I've also studied composition and counterpoint, so in time, I've developed a pretty good handle on the creative process thing. I didn't have much opportunity to showcase that side of my personality while in the band. But as a solo performer, I can pretty much do whatever I want.

Lately, I've been experimenting with a new software package called Think And Do!. It has drastically changed the way I work. I used it for all 20 cuts on the new chip. You know, not everyone was impressed with this new technology. So, I was a little reluctant to give it a try. But I saw a demo of the software a few months ago and it was truly astounding! I think that some people were just afraid. You know, musicians going through another bout of techno-phobia. And, I thought we were all finished with that crap years ago.

Well, with Think And Do!, I just put on my headset, twiddle a few knobs, and music starts to play. Within a matter of minutes, T&D has transcribed my thoughts into the sequencer. Every one of my ideas—whether dealing with individual instruments or assigning particular sounds to musical lines—comes through without a hitch. I can even make orchestration decisions like part doubling and choosing the proper dynamic levels for the various instruments. But, let me tell you, learning this software was no walk in the park. If your mind starts to wander, you can end up with a terrific noise. It takes quite a bit of concentration and focused energy to keep this software on track.

DRUM!: What would you like to say to your detractors—the folks who think that you're not creating the music, that the technology is creating the music?
Bazhri: Leave me alone man, I'm havin' a good time! Are you havin' a good time? Then just listen to the music and don't worry about anything else! 