



## SEAN PADDOCK

WATERTOWN, NEWYORK, ISN'T KNOWN AS A HOTBED of country music, but it's produced at least one great player: Sean Paddock, drummer for Kenny Chesney and all-around Nashville session ace.

Paddock, who is currently on the road with Chesney, has been at home behind the skins since he got his first drum kit at age four. "My father is a bass player, and my mom's a singer and guitarist," he explains. "They were in bands together, and I would go to their gigs and watch the drummer, just waiting for my turn to sit in. There was always good music being played around the house—rock, country, R&B, jazz, you name it. One minute it was Emmylou Harris or Dolly Parton on the turntable, then an hour later it was Steely Dan."



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When Paddock's family moved to Arizona, his musical horizons started to expand. "There's more country music out there, so I had to play in country bands to make a living," he says. "But just because it's country music doesn't mean it's not happening or challenging—or fun. It helped that my father taught me not to be jaded or biased towards different genres of music. He always told me that you need to know as much as possible in order to be a well-rounded musician."

By the time Paddock reached his 20s, he'd realized that a move to the epicenter of country music was essential to continuing his career. "I went out to Nashville just to check it out," he recalls, "and I heard about the Kenny Chesney drum spot opening up. The steel guitar player in Kenny's band at the time knew me from Arizona—he had played with my father in a band based out of Arizona, believe it or not. So the connection was there. I just needed to jump on it!"

And jump on it he did. "For the audition, I asked which tunes they wanted me to learn, and I concentrated on those the most. But then I learned even more of his tunes, just in case. Simply put, I went in and did my best. And a week and a half later, I was on a tour bus."

On tour, Paddock plays a Yamaha Absolute Birch kit, with 10", 12", 14", and 16" toms and a 22" kick. "In the past, I've been more of a maple guy," he says. "Maple is a little rounder and deeper sounding, whereas birch is punchier, with a stronger midrange attack. But these have been working out great. I also use a 14"x6½" by Yamaha brass snare. I love the projection and the loud 'crack' of brass, but this particular snare has a nice warmth to it as well, a sound that's very wood-like."

In the studio, however, Paddock usually sticks with his Yamaha Recording Custom set. "I actually toured with that kit last year, but I decided to put it in my studio because they're such great studio drums," he says. "I always wanted a Yamaha Recording Custom kit, and I finally got one. I love it. I'll probably die with those drums!"

Lately, Paddock has branched out into recording and production work, fleshing out song demos with drum tracks recorded at his home studio. "I just dove into recording, and I'm already getting work," he says. "Typically, I lay down drum tracks for songwriters and producers. The way it's done these days is by swapping sound files via email or an FTP site. I usually work from a scratch vocal and piano part, and play to a click track, building the tune from the ground up. I chart the song out, track it, and send it back. Then they lay the rest of the instrumentation on top of my tracks."

Sean still gleans inspiration from his earliest influences. "I was just talking about Steve Gadd today and how his playing continues to move me," he says. "The same thing goes for Jeff Porcaro. I first heard Toto's 'Rosanna' when I was 11, and it was like, 'Oh my God. I have to do this!' And Carlos Vega—his feel is just sick. I just gravitated to the musical style of drumming those guys have. They always play the song rather than showing off, but you always know there's a monster behind the kit."