



PAUL LEIM THE TWO-BILLION-

DO THE MATH.

Paul Leim has manned the drum kit for literally hundreds of pop and country hits. More than 125 have been certified Gold or Platinum, and 75 have received Grammy, CMA, Dove, or Academy Awards. Leim estimates that records on which he's played have sold in excess of 200 million units, or well over two billion dollars in sales. Paul has been the drummer of choice for such artists as Shania Twain, Lonestar, Trisha Yearwood, Montgomery Gentry, Peter Cetera, Lionel Richie, Ricky Skaggs, Tom Jones, Randy Travis, Neil Diamond, Reba McEntire, Lyle Lovett, Amy Grant, Dolly Parton, Tanya Tucker and Michael W. Smith.

LEIM HAS WORKED almost nonstop since leaving Texas for Los Angeles 23 years ago. If anything, the pace accelerated after he relocated to Nashville in '88, and Paul shows no signs of slowing down. "Last week," he says, "I did triple sessions on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday, in addition to two rehearsals for a benefit concert. And on Saturday I caught a plane to San Diego to showcase a new album to radio programmers."

Leim insists that success on this scale is as much about sweat as skill: "You have to do a lot of legwork. Even at this point I can't sit around waiting for the phone to ring. I have to know what's going on—who's doing what with whom, what the new sounds are, what equipment people are using."

For Leim, that means adopting an expanded definition of drumming that includes electronic percussion, sequencing, and loops. Leim's high-tech skills are especially valued in Nashville, where, he suggests, producers are more inclined toward tradition-

"I just got in from overdubbing and synchronizing electronic and programmed drums for a pop version of a John Michael Montgomery song called 'The Little Girl,'" he says. "I was replacing real drums with programmed electronic ones this time, as opposed to the other way around." Leim's studio rig includes a sequencer, samplers, a Yamaha SU700 Loop Factory and a Yamaha RM1X Sequence Remix Workstation.

But Leim still lives for the flesh-and-blood side of his craft. "To this day," he says, "nothing turns me on like walking into the studio knowing I'm going to work with a great rhythm section." For most dates Leim brings Yamaha Recording Custom toms, a Yamaha Maple Custom kick, and 12" to 15" snare drums. For years Leim's most requested snare was a heavy 6 1/2" chrome-over-brass drum from the '60s, modified with a wider strainer and die-cast hoops. "That drum is on so many records," says Leim. "All the Lionel Richie albums I played on, all the Amy Grant. When we were getting ready for the new Shania record, 'Come On Over', I brought in 82 snare drums, and (producer) Mutt Lange and I listened to 25 of them. Again, his favorite was a 6 1/2" vintage chrome-over-brass model.



That sound inspired the C/B Paul Leim Platinum Series snare that Leim designed with Yamaha. Paul is thrilled with the results: "It sounds amazing! The new drum has more top-end brightness than a vintage snare, which makes it more versatile. And since it requires less EQ, it's easier to record. On top of that, it looks like a million bucks, with black chrome hoops and gold casings. Now producers ask for 'triple-ought-one' — my new serial number 0001 Yamaha." The 14" C/B snare is available in both 5 1/2" and 6 1/2" depths.

Among the thousands of projects, which does Leim remember most fondly? "I love those rare sessions where everything worked out perfectly," he says. "Where I felt I played as good as I could, the production was great, and the record was a hit. I think of Peter Cetera's 'Forever Tonight,' a beautiful ballad with a combination of live playing and programming. I always thought Trisha Yearwood's 'Powerful Thing' was just great. Randy Travis's 'Look Heart, No Hands' has an incredible feel. Lionel Richie's 'Truly' was very special, because it was the first one he did after he left the Commodores. And Shania's 'You Win My Love' is a fun, fun record that still rocks me every time I hear it."

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al recording techniques than their more computer-oriented West Coast counterparts. So when a track does call for programming, Paul has it covered.