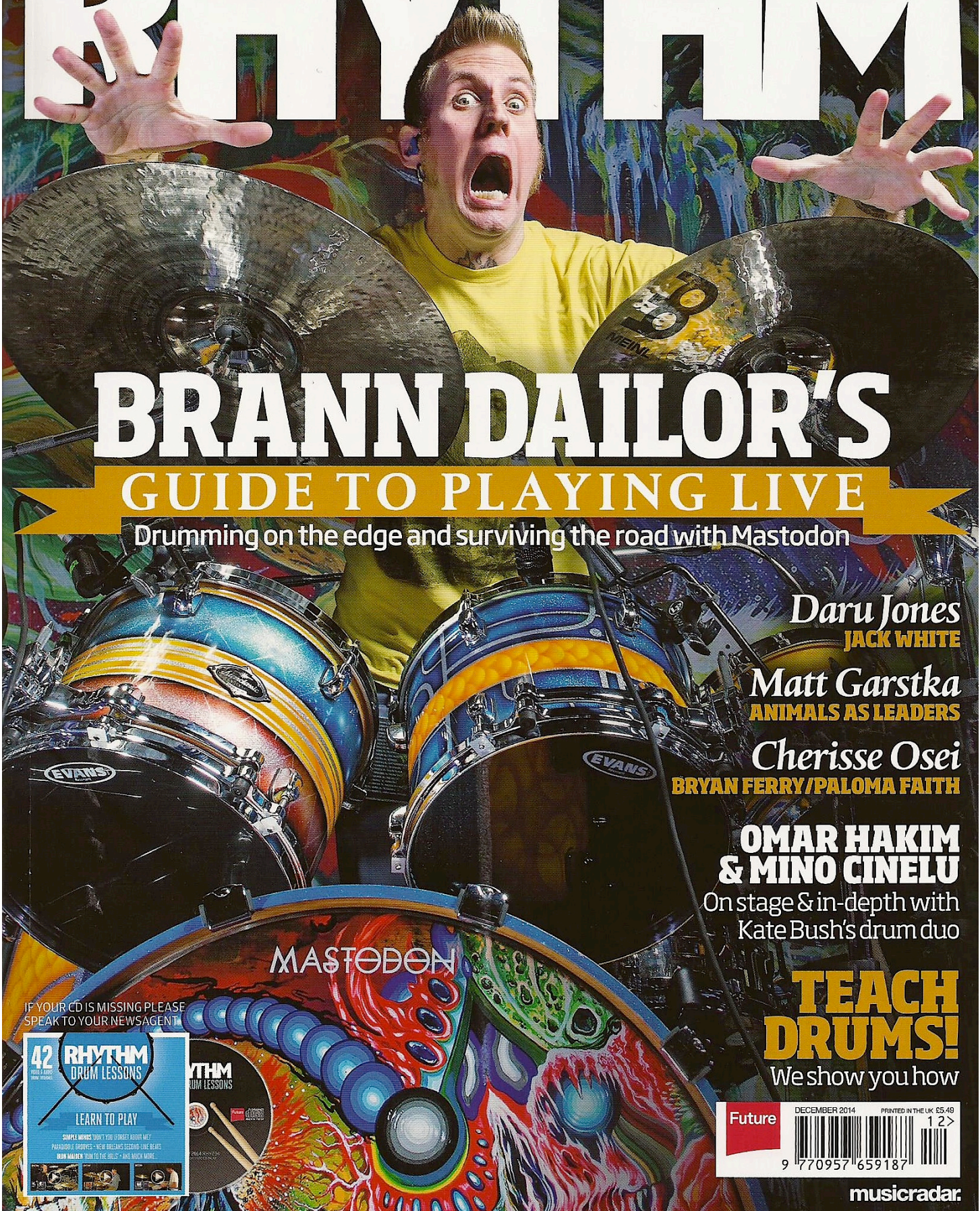


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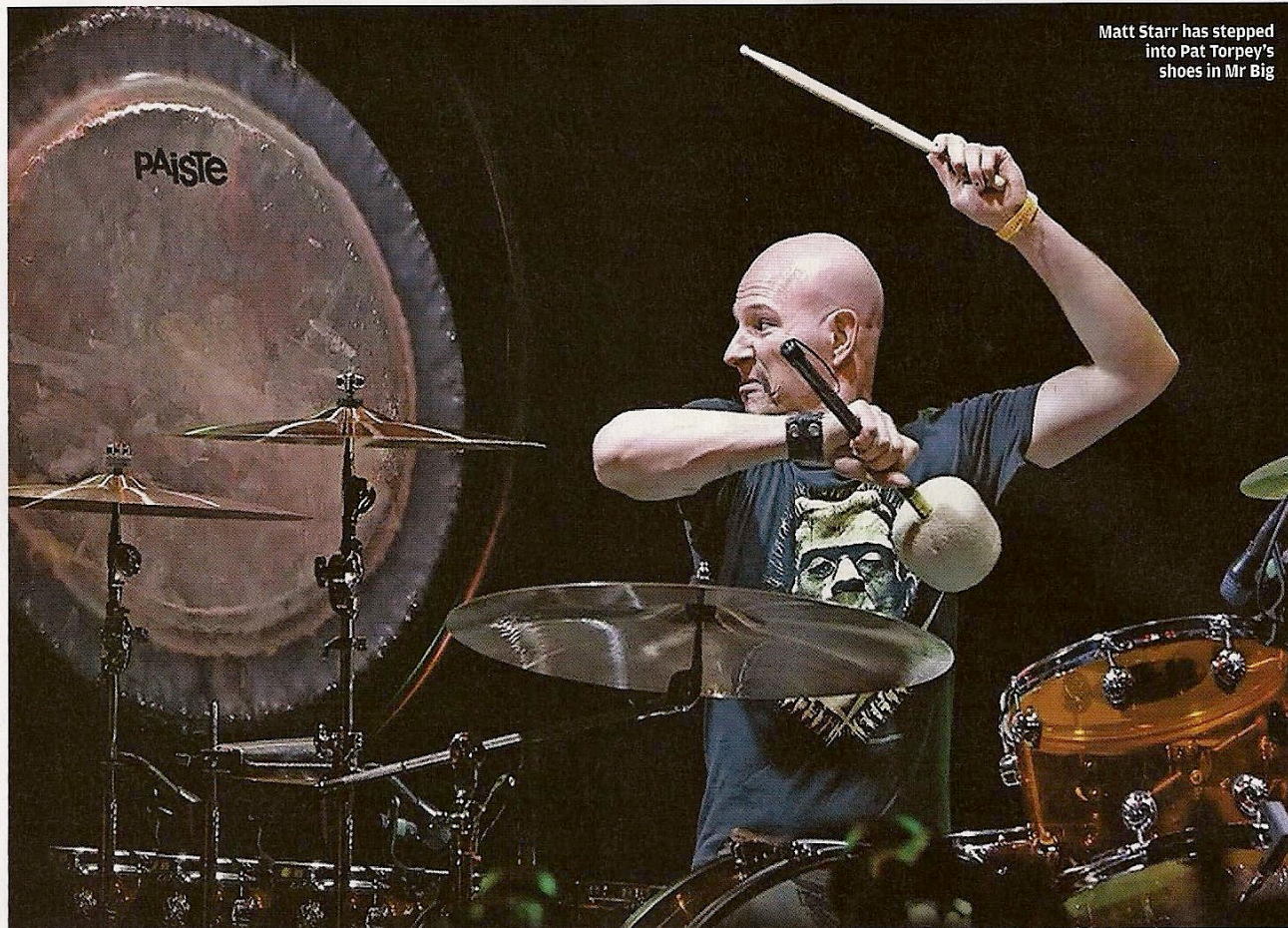
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Matt Starr has stepped into Pat Torpey's shoes in Mr Big

© Jo Anna Jackson

## STARR ON THE RISE

Matt Starr reveals how a jam night landed him the biggest gig of his career

■ Before he landed the job of drumming for Mr Big, after founding member Pat Torpey announced he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, Matt Starr first crossed paths with bassist Billy Sheehan at a jam night in Los Angeles.

"I was singing and playing drums and I did 'TNT' by AC/DC," says Matt. "I got off stage and Billy came up to me and said, 'Hey man, who are you? And that sounded great.' Then he and I got to play again later that night, we played 'Burn' by Deep Purple, that's like the perfect song to play with him, it encapsulates his style so well."

This summer Sheehan called Matt to ask if

he'd be interested in subbing for Torpey on a couple of shows, which grew into playing the whole tour for Mr Big's new album *The Stories We Could Tell*. "After we had the first phone call, Billy said, 'Let's just get together and play a couple of Mr Big tunes, me and you.' So we did 'Take Cover' and 'Addicted To That Rush'. We played through each song once, he's like, 'Cool, I just wanted to be able to tell the guys that we played some Mr Big stuff and it feels great.'

"I really love playing this stuff because I tend to be a minimalist with my drumming," says Matt. "I tend to just keep the groove and the way Pat plays and composes, his stuff is so musical, it's woven right into the songs. The nucleus of where he comes from and where I'm coming from is pretty similar, it's Bonham, Ian Paice, Mitch Mitchell."

Stepping into a role so closely associated with an established player can be daunting, but Matt says the fan reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. "It started on Facebook," he says. "When it was announced

### ALIEN SIGHTINGS

Matt rocks hard on Ace Frehley's spectacular new album *Space Invader*. "I saw them in fourth grade in 1979," says Matt who grew up on KISS. "As a drummer I'm really proud of it but also as a KISS fan I think it's his strongest work since his '78 record."

that I was going to be filling in for Pat on the tour, my friend requests were flying, a lot of people from Japan, and they were super-supportive. The fans have been great and I've got to say too it's been really cool to have Pat during this whole process because if I've got a question about anything he's there. I'll play something and he'll go, 'Hey, on this one, you don't have to do it, but I do this little thing,' so I've got all the little details."

Matt's other high-profile gig is with legendary guitarist Ace Frehley for whom he plays drums and sings Paul Stanley's parts on the KISS classics. Now with Mr Big, Matt handles Pat's backing vocals. "It's been really helpful for getting work," says Matt who used to feel torn between singing and drumming. "In my head I was like, I don't want to be a singing drummer, if I'm going to sing I should just sing and not be a drummer. Then the first gig I get is with Ace and it's like, 'You're also going to be singing lead.' It's interesting how that worked out." **R**