

Classic

DRUMMER

FEATURE VIDEO

the **NAMM**
showTM

Classic Drummer
Takes You Inside
Music's Big Show

STUDIO LEGEND

Bernard "Pretty" Purdie

Takes us deep into
the pocket of his
remarkable life & career.

Danny Seraphine

Chicago co-founder
comes back BIG with
his all new CTA.

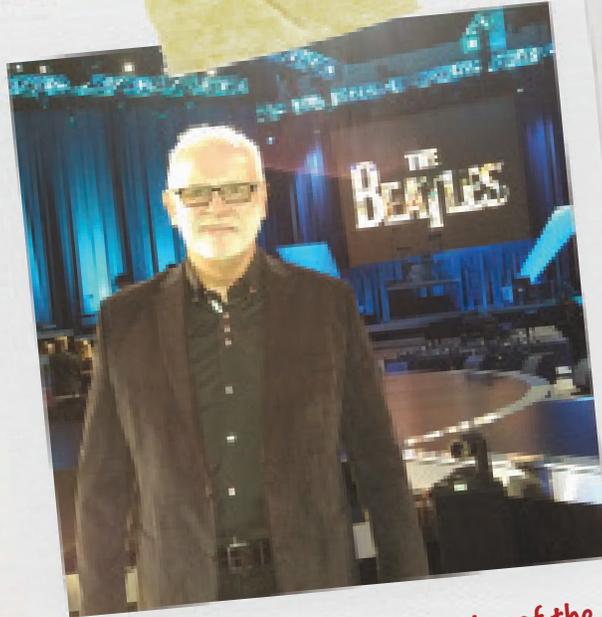
"Cosmo" Clifford

Credence great talks
drumming, Ed Sullivan,
Woodstock and more.

Vincent Dee

Nashville studio
stalwart on his life
behind the kit.

O NCE UPON A TIME
there was a **B**eatles
far . . .



*Gary Astridge at the CBS taping of the
50th Anniversary Beatles Tribute Show.*

**The Adventures of Gary
Astridge in the Fascinating
World of Ringo's Iconic Kits**

Last summer, Classic Drummer made the trip to Los Angeles to cover the opening of the Grammy Museum's "Ringo: Peace and Love" exhibit. The day was a triple treat. First we were able to participate in Ringo's press conference and ask a question of the world's most famous drummer. (We're not worthy.) Second, we were wowed by the Grammy Museum's exhibition of drums, performance wardrobe and memorabilia from one of the most celebrated careers in music history. Oh, and the third thing? We met the unassuming, and oh so knowledgeable, Gary Astridge.

As excited as we were regarding our Ringo encounter, we couldn't begin to match the passion Gary showed for



**The Ed Sullivan Black Oyster Pearl Kit
On Display at Ringo's Grammy Museum
Peace and Love Exhibit.**

the opportunities he had been afforded in support of Ringo's team and The Grammy Museum. Gary knows Ringo's Beatle era drums like no one else and we've convinced him to share his knowledge and experiences with us in a series of exclusive articles that begin in this issue.

My life changed at the slight age of seven after seeing The Beatles perform on the Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964. Thus began my passion for The Fab Four, their music, Ringo, his playing, his drums and my playing drums. As a small boy living in Buffalo, NY, little did I know that I'd win a Beatle Fan's lottery some 50 years later.

None of the other kids in my neighborhood seemed to be bitten by the Beatle bug the way I was and that made me feel isolated. Fortunately, my parents liked The Beatles enough to purchase their albums. My grandfather gave me his magnifying glass because of how I kept analyzing the album covers, magazine photos and bubble gum cards.

I can remember using white lined paper to copy the Oyster Black Pearl (OBP) swirl patterns from photos of Ringo's drums using black, silver and gold crayons. I even taped the finished works to the outside of the coffee cans and a wastepaper basket that made up my own Ringo drum kit. Believe it or not, when I made my first

bass drum head, I wondered what "Ludwig The Beatles" meant? My dad got in trouble with mom when he cut the spoon ends off of two wooden spatulas for me to use as drum sticks.

Early on, I noticed differences in Ringo's drum kits from scrutinizing photographs. It wasn't until years later that I realized what I was noticing was the fact that Ringo had more than one Oyster Black Pearl drum kit.

In 1967, my family moved to the suburbs where I met new mates that had an interest in music and The Beatles. I even became involved in a few neighborhood bands. It was during this time that my dad took me on a short drive to the E.W. Kent Drum Company in Kenmore, NY to pick out my first drum kit.

As years went by, I made a decision to purchase my own Ringo Oyster Black Pearl drum set. I did enough research to know that I wanted a Ludwig set from the sixties. So I located a kit out of town and had it shipped to my home. Unfortunately, when I opened the boxes, I could see that the drums didn't look at all like Ringo's Oyster Black Pearl finish. The kit was built in late 1969 and I discovered that Ludwig changed their OBP wrap to something that resembled a bowling ball finish sometime in mid-69. From that point I was intent on thoroughly researching Ringo's drum kits. I was bitten by the "collecting bug" and over the decades, I managed to amass a complete collection of drum gear specific to the equipment Ringo used during his career with The Beatles.

Because I had gained so much knowledge from my research and collecting, I decided to build a website to share what I had learned and launched RingosBeatle-Kits.com in 2006.

I had even considered displaying my collection in a museum and I had an idea. In 2007, I set up a meeting and flew to Liverpool to discuss the possibility with The Beatles Story Museum. Though there was a strong interest, the plan fell apart due to the cost of crating, shipping, and insuring my collection.

As luck would have it, in 2008, I heard that Ringo & His All Starr Band were to be rehearsing and opening their summer concert tour in Niagara Falls, Canada, a short drive from my home. It was there that I first met Jeff Chonis, Ringo's drum tech. Anyone that knows Jeff,

will agree that he is a class act and the best at what he does. Those are only two of many reasons he's been with Ringo for more than 25 years.

In 2010, Ringo & His All Starr Band came back to Niagara Falls and I hooked up with Jeff and asked if he would give Ringo a gift from me for his 70th birthday. It was a 1960 Premier Piccolo Royal Ace snare drum with a Mahogany Duroplastic wrap finish, identical to the one Ringo owned when he first joined The Beatles in 1962. Rob Shanahan, Ringo's personal photographer, took photos of Jeff presenting the snare drum to Ringo. Rob later contacted me and shared some of the photos. During our initial conversation, we discovered that we both had a common interest in drumming. He plays in a Stones band (TheHollywoodStones.com) and I play in a Beatles and 60's band (TheBBCband.com).

During the early part of 2013, a project was in the works for the Grammy Museum in LA to hold an exhibit on the life of Ringo Starr (Ringo: Peace & Love). It was decided that the best way to represent his drumming career was to display two Beatle kits, and one All Starr Band kit.

How could I have ever imagined that nearly a half century after seeing The Beatles on TV, I'd be consulted as an authority and historian by the museum and Ringo's inner circle? After months of emails and phone conversations, there I was, in LA, working side-by-side with Jeff Chonis. I was actually involved in preparing, documenting and setting up for display the most famous drum set in music history, Ringo's Ed Sullivan kit. I did the same with Ringo's iconic Hollywood maple kit and his Ludwig Gold Plated snare drum. I also had the honor of meeting Ringo and being invited to a VIP reception for the opening of his exhibit. This is what I mean about winning a Beatle Fans lottery and it only gets better...

Working with Jeff Chonis, we later set up a Ringo kit



The Abbey Road/Let It Be Rooftop Concert Kit at the Grammy Museum

display at Bloomingdale's in New York City for the Holidays. Since that time, I have had the opportunity to document Ringo's entire Beatle era kit collection. Currently, I am involved in a number of other related projects including a series of articles for upcoming issues of this magazine.

On Sunday, April 27, I am giving a talk at the Grammy Museum's Clive Davis Theater. This is the final day of the Ringo: Peace & Love exhibit and I consider this to be quite an honor. Classic Drummer Magazine has invited me to be a guest at their booth at the 24th Annual Chicago Drum Show,

May 17 & 18, so stop by and say hello. I will be doing two formal presentations during the show, so please make plans to attend.

In the next Classic Drummer I'll start at the beginning and share some little known facts regarding Ringo's early kits and accessories. See you then.



Click to See Classic Drummer Ask Ringo a Question at the Press Conference.