

GIL SHARONE

Recording Otep's *Atavist*

by Michael Dawson



Patrick Saurace

MUSIC KEY

open	R.C.	C.C.
H.H.	×	*
T.T.		
S.D.		
F.T.		
B.D.1		
H.H.		
w/ foot	B.D.2	Add 1
	T.T.	

Since finishing up a brief tenure with the progressive hardcore band Dillinger Escape Plan, which included recording and touring behind the 2007 release *Ire Works*, Los Angeles-based

drummer Gil Sharone has kept himself extremely busy with a diverse selection of projects, like producing an incredibly informative DVD on Jamaican drumming called *Wicked Beats*, writing and recording new material with his eclectic metal band Stolen Babies, and dipping into studios around town to lay down tracks for various artists. We had a chance to meet up with Sharone at famed metal/rock producer Ulrich

Wild's Wilderness Studio in L.A.'s Silverlake section, during the recording of "artcore" poet/vocalist Otep Shamaya's latest album, *Atavist*.



The drumming that went down that day was extreme and decidedly

metal, yet not without the deep pocket and head-bobbin' groove that have been hallmarks of Sharone's work, regardless of genre. "It's all music to me, whether it's metal, jazz, or pop," Gil says. "I always go for feel and vibe. I knew this session was going to be about being aggressive, heavy, and focused. I wanted to do it justice, while throwing in some stuff that people wouldn't necessarily hear on a traditional metal record."

Sharone struck up a rapport with Ulrich while exploring those same concepts in the studio on upcoming Stolen Babies tracks. "We had a great vibe right away," the drummer explains, "and he liked how quick my brother Rani [Stolen Babies' bassist/vocalist] and I worked. Plus he liked that I could lock in with a click, and he knew I would be a good fit to work with Otep."

The vibe at Wilderness on the day of our visit was calm, relaxed, and casual—not what you'd typically expect when hearing someone lay down bone-crushing double bass grooves and China-chopping fills. "Ulrich wanted to collabo-



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rate with me on the drum parts so we could take the album someplace different,” Sharone says. “He gave me reference tracks to listen to with basic sequenced drums, and then we created magic in the studio. He wanted us to just have fun and throw around a bunch of ideas. We were creating on the spot and keeping things fresh, which is what I live for.”

The drumkit Sharone brought for these sessions was one he handpicked from DW’s Oxnard, California, showroom. “My custom kit was still in the works,” Gil explains, “so I went down to their facility and picked out some drums. They’re all maple. The sizes were 8”, 10”, and 12” rack toms, 16” and 18” floor toms, a 23” bass drum, and a 20” gong drum. I used a matching 5 1/2x14 snare on some tracks, but most of the time I used a DW steel in their new vintage brass finish.

“My cymbals were all Zildjian. I used 14” Mastersound K/Z combo hi-hats on the left and 14” A Mastersounds on the right. My crashes included an 18” A Custom and an 18” and 19” K Dark Thin. I used 20” K Custom and 22” A prototype rides, plus 12” K and 9” Oriental Trash splashes and a 19” K China.”

Here’s a handful of drumming highlights from *Atavist*.

“Atom to Adam”

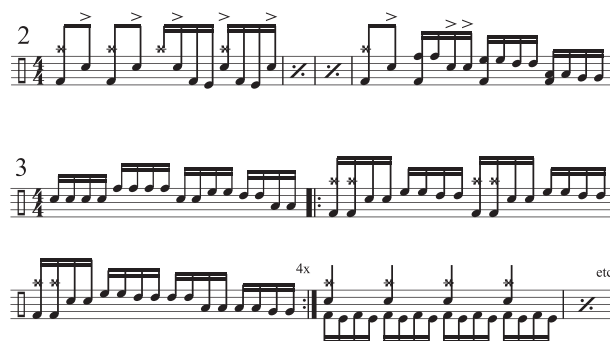
“This song had a reference drum track that I loved,” Sharone says. “I wanted to keep it but elaborate on it a bit. My hands are moving between the snare and the crashes. I’m not just playing caveman quarter-note crashes; there’s more finesse in how I’m playing the part. The sticking is a huge element of how it sounds.” (0:15)



“Blood of Saints”

“This song has a couple of looping double bass/snare/tom patterns. It was not only challenging to have to come up with cool things on the spot, but then there’s the physical part of having to execute the ideas. Everything had to be

precise because the notes are so close together. But I also wanted to maintain a sense of feel and space, even when there’s so much going on at that fast tempo.” (0:59, 3:08)



“Remember to Forget”

“This song is super-groovy. Otep can go from an intense scream into a flowing part where I feel like I’m backing a rapper.” Here’s an excerpt from one of the song’s funkier sections. (0:39)



“Skin of the Master”

“All of the songs are riff heavy. I hear the riffs as the lead voice, so I structured my parts around that, whether it was locking in directly or just catching key spots. On this song there are hits within a rhythmic progression. It was obvious that I had to accent those, but I threw in my own ideas around them.” (1:12)



“I Stand Alone”

“This track alternates between a heavy half-time reggae-type groove and an up-tempo thrash beat. I think of myself as a groove player, whether or not chops are involved. I always try to let the parts breathe. As far as not over-hitting or overexerting yourself, it’s important to be aware of your comfort zone. Sometimes when you’re recording, the adrenaline gets pumping and you have that extra bit of energy to hit harder. But just because it’s heavy music doesn’t mean I need to hit three times harder than I normally would. As long as I bring the intensity and maintain the technique that I trust, I’m able to express without hurting myself. The power comes out without being forced.” (0:17)

