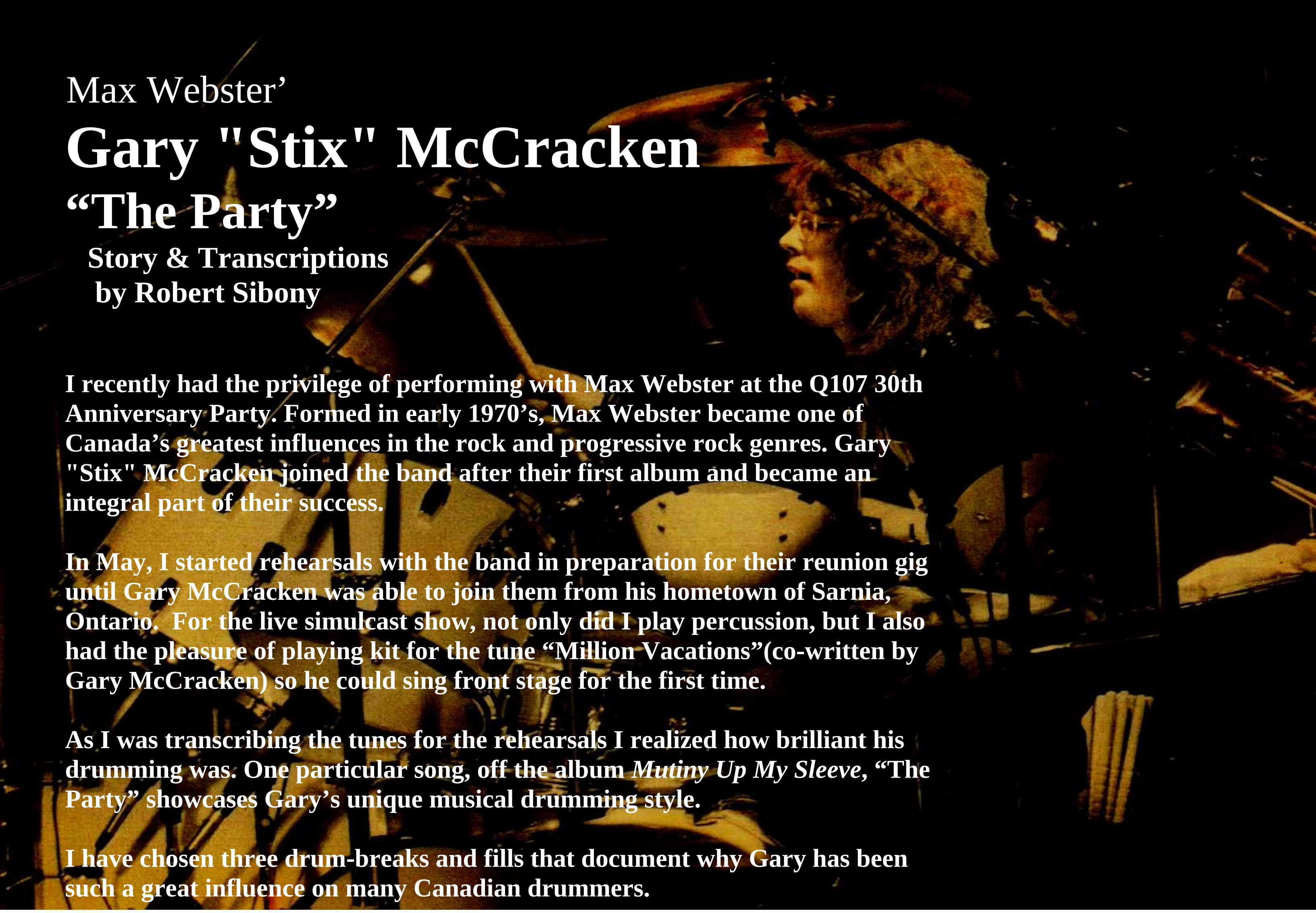

Max Webster’

Gary "Stix" McCracken

“The Party”

Story & Transcriptions
by Robert Sibony

I recently had the privilege of performing with Max Webster at the Q107 30th Anniversary Party. Formed in early 1970’s, Max Webster became one of Canada’s greatest influences in the rock and progressive rock genres. Gary "Stix" McCracken joined the band after their first album and became an integral part of their success.

In May, I started rehearsals with the band in preparation for their reunion gig until Gary McCracken was able to join them from his hometown of Sarnia, Ontario. For the live simulcast show, not only did I play percussion, but I also had the pleasure of playing kit for the tune “Million Vacations”(co-written by Gary McCracken) so he could sing front stage for the first time.

As I was transcribing the tunes for the rehearsals I realized how brilliant his drumming was. One particular song, off the album *Mutiny Up My Sleeve*, “The Party” showcases Gary’s unique musical drumming style.

I have chosen three drum-breaks and fills that document why Gary has been such a great influence on many Canadian drummers.

DRUM

KEY

In the first fill, pay close attention to the sticking. The use of the left hand is equal to the use of the right hand making it possible to navigate up and down a multi tom-tom set up with effortless fluency.

In the Second fill, take note of the way he is able to move from a triplet feel to a strait 16th noted feel flawlessly. McCracken's use of his left foot in playing quarter-notes under the fills, gives a solid foundation for his fellow musicians.

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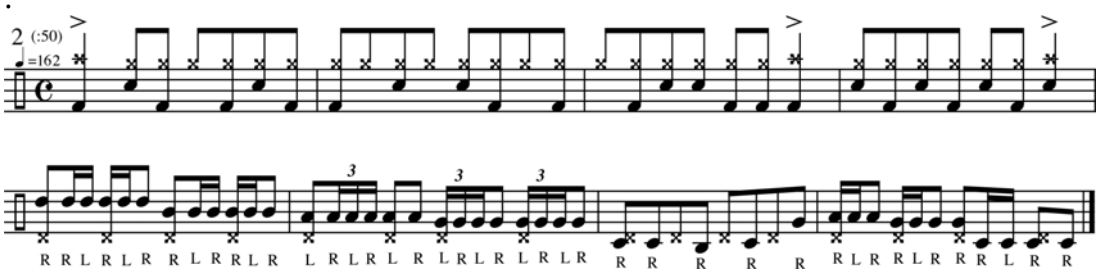
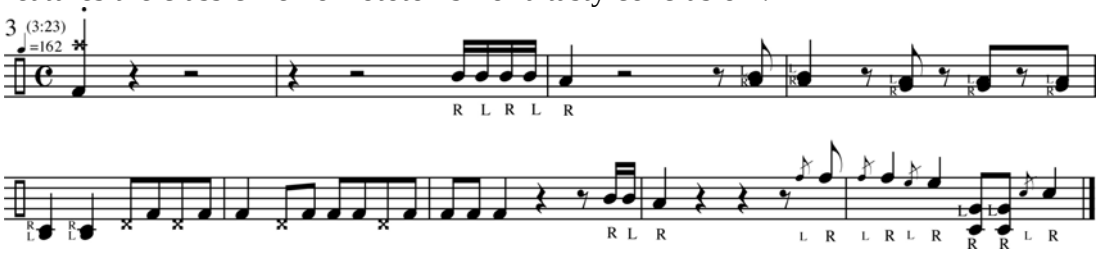


The third fill shows great use of space, which releases some much needed tension midway through the song. In the 5th measure beat #3 he starts with his left foot (pedal Hat) that perfectly matches the vocal line. The end of this 8bar section features the classic Remo Rototoms for a tasty conclusion .



I always thought the three fills I selected were a direct reaction to the vocal phrasing but to my surprise the drumming was established before the final lead vocals were written and recorded. This fill In particular defines Gary's natural musical sense of phrasing.

For more Information on Robert go to robertsibony.com

The Party (Mitchell/Dubois)
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From the Max Webster album "Mutiny Up My Sleeve" on Anthem Records