



HOLDING THE UPPER HAND

Nina Simone once threw a glass at him, but a steely determination has put Paul Robinson into a good place with an online recording service that offers much

words: Brent Keefe images: Paul Robinson

Since leaving his native Rotherham and moving to London in 1972, Paul Robinson has built a reputation as a dependable professional. His CV is incredibly diverse, including British jazz-rock group Turning Point, musical director for Eurovision winners Brotherhood Of Man, a trio with ex-Mahavishnu Orchestra keyboard legend Jan Hammer, recording 'Video Killed The Radio Star' with Trevor Horn's Buggles, recordings with Paul McCartney, The Art Of Noise and Rod Stewart and a 19-year association with jazz legend Nina Simone, that continued until her death. He is currently a regular dep on the West End shows *Chicago* and *The Lion King* and continues to play live and in the studio. At the time of writing, Paul is again working with Trevor Horn, recording a live album/concert with The Pet Shop Boys and guests Robbie Williams, Rufus Wainwright and the BBC Concert Orchestra

In the last year, Paul set up his Drummer Online project, enabling him to record and deliver drum tracks for clients without ever leaving his home. Paul explains why he began the service and how it works.

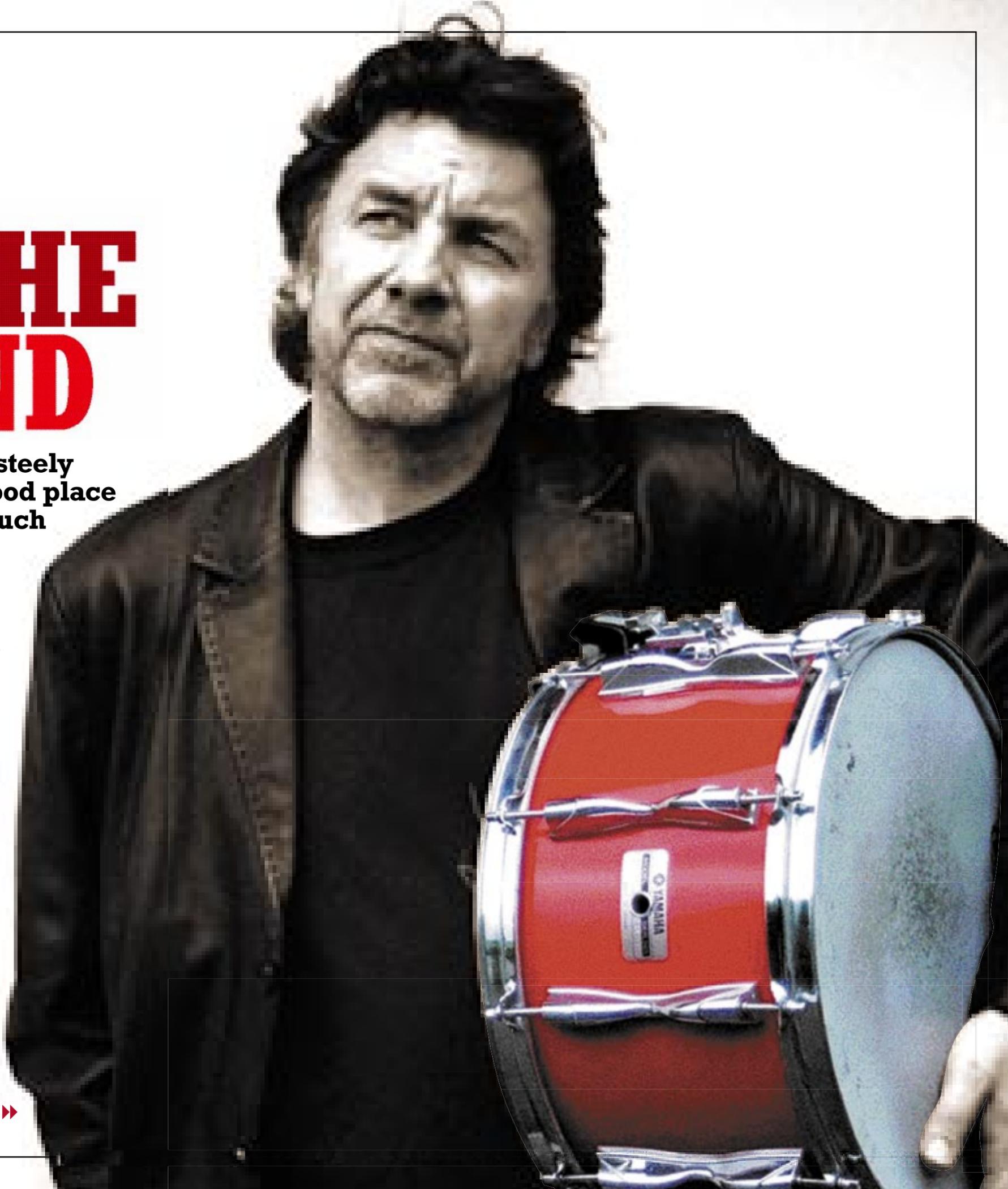
"I started the Drummer Online thing in May 2005 and the clients I have had, love it. They love the ease with which it works. That's down to the experience of myself, and Niall Acott from The Angel Studios, who helped me, set it all up. I can put together whatever anybody needs. I've just been working on an album, for a guy in France, which is a laid back, Norah Jones type of project with lots of brushes, which, of course, is very difficult to programme and get the right feel. I've always

been into recording at home. In fact, I bought one of the first Portastudios from Turnkey many years ago. Having done many sessions, including several for Simon Brint, [*Monarch Of The Glen, Absolutely Fabulous and London's Burning*], I knew that budgets had been getting tighter and tighter. Previously, for some projects, if Simon wanted real drums he would have to pay for it out of his own pocket, so I suggested that if I set up this system at home I could do demos for a minimal fee, and if he got the gig, he could pay me the difference for the finished product. That seemed to be a good way forward for the both of us. It was Simon who loaned me the money to buy another kit and get the extra equipment I needed to set it all up. Finally, I asked Paul Carmichael to set up the website for me and now I have a professional product that I can market. I am hoping that the volume of work will increase by word of mouth but I am also advertising strategically. So far, I have recovered all of my set-up costs."

Paul went on to explain how it all works.

"People email me an MP3 of their music and I record the drums to that track. It's then up to them to request what they want. I can give them any sound files, WAV or AIFF files, for example, that they request, either at 16 or 24-bit resolution. For a jazz track, someone might request only the overheads, bass and snare, in which case I would only send those four files, whereas other clients may just want a stereo file of the mixed kit. I can also add percussion if required. The completed files are delivered to my FTP site for collection. It's simple for people to use and it works very well."

In 1984 Paul got a call out of the blue to work with legendary jazz singer and pianist >>





She went into a rage and threw her glass of champagne at the wall right next to me

Nina Simone. It was a call that changed the next 19 years of his life.

Paul explained how it all happened.

"I was at Ronnie Scott's playing in a band called SuperJazz, which included Richard Edwards and John Paricelli and Nina was due to start at the club the following week. Nina's brother, Sam, came in on the Saturday night and saw the band. The following Monday, Martin Drew, who was the house drummer at the club at that time, started the gig but halfway through the engagement, he had other commitments with Oscar Peterson so they needed a replacement. They weren't sure whom to call, so Sam suggested they call me. Pete King called, and asked me to do the gig, so I went in that night and did it, but it was all very strange. I didn't speak to Nina and she didn't speak to me. She had a British band that had been put together for her, and although they were all good musicians, it was not quite right for Nina. The club, however, was sold out for three weeks. When my two

and a half week stint ended, I thought that was the end of it, but Nina was booked back at the club only about four weeks later, and she asked for me on drums. We should have been a trio, but there was a screw up with a work permit for an American musician, so we did it as a duo! At that point, I still don't think we had actually spoken to each other at any length! We had no rehearsals, no drum charts and Nina never told you what to play. My personality and playing are both quite strong, and I'm not easily pushed into areas where I don't want to go, and I think she related to that. She could often give you very menacing looks onstage, but I never crumbled, or was fazed by them. Whenever she looked at me like that, I simply tried to work out what it was that she wanted. After a few nights as a duo, she began to trust me, and before long was calling me for gigs outside of England. I first played the Lincoln Centre in New York with Nina in 1985."

It took a little time but eventually, Nina and Paul communicated verbally as well as musically.

"Nina began speaking to me when she realised she could trust me but there was a pivotal event that I remember. When we played Ronnie's as a duo it was billed as 'Nina Simone with Paul Robinson' so I figured that I should be on a little more money than I was on the previous time with the band. I went into the dressing room after one of our shows, and Nina was drinking a glass of champagne, and there were always people milling about backstage so I said, 'Nina, I need to talk to you, about money'. Now, whenever you spoke to Nina about money, you were always in danger of some sort. Anyway, I said to her, 'I think I should be on

more money as I am the only other musician on stage' and she went into a rage and threw her glass of champagne at the wall right next to me. When she did that, I didn't blink and I didn't move. I just kept looking at her, because I know how those games work, and at that point, I knew I was going to get my money. If she had really wanted to hurt me, she would have thrown it at me!

The gig with Nina varied considerably as she was a constant improviser. We may have played the same tunes a few times over the years, but they would often have a different angle, depending on her mood. For example, if she was feeling lazy she wouldn't want to sing, so she would put all of her efforts into playing piano, which she was very good at." **D**

GEAR BOX

Drums: Yamaha 9000

Recording Series drums

Hardware: DW including all pedals.

Cymbals:

Paul uses a variety of cymbals in the studio but some of his favourites are:

Avedis Zildjian 10" Hi-hats

20" Bosphorus Mel Lewis Dark Ride

13" Stagg Hi-hats

Assorted K' Zildjians

www.paulrobinsondrummeronline.com