



MODERN DRUMMER
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Fates Warning/Slavior's **MARK ZONDER**

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Alex Solca

Some folks—including a number of pro drummers—need a little distance between their work life and their home life. But for prog metal master Mark Zonder, the gap is nonexistent, as his workspace is housed right in his home's two-car garage.

This isn't any ordinary garage, though. It's also a comfortable, terrific-sounding studio full of prime gear. Granted, there are no specially constructed walls or rooms, just sound-deadening material placed primarily against the main garage door. (Yes, the door opener is still installed, but it's been unplugged for the time being.) The playback from Zonder's recent recordings reveals that his garage-turned-studio sounds great.

"When we moved to this house, it was a no-brainer," Mark says, noting that the only changes he made to the garage were adding lights and sound deadening. "I didn't get into constructing a room within a room, because I'm not going to play at night."

The drummer's day usually starts with tending to his children and then doing some cycling. (He's an avid bicyclist, and his studio garage doubles as his bike storage.) By the afternoon, Zonder is hard at work behind the kit or mixing console tracking. "I play three to four hours a day," he says. "I'm one of those guys who has to play. With the studio and the other endeavors I have, I'm fortunate enough that the day is mine. I use my time to practice and record other people's tracks."

Though he's playing constantly, Zonder doesn't see the need to house several kits. In fact, his studio holds just a simple Drum Workshop setup, with a 20" bass drum, a 10" rack tom, and a 14" floor tom. "Honestly, I'm not a collector," Mark says. "This is it—this is what I use. I've found that with the way DW builds their drums, the 10" rack and 14" floor are all I need. If I want anything else, I'll get it electronically. I've got another snare that I can use too."

Cymbals are a different story, as Zonder has a sizable stack of Zildjians at the ready. "I've had some of these cymbals for a long time," he says. "And I got tired of having them on the floor." The solution? Zonder picked up a cymbal tree on eBay. "It's amazing," he says. "I need another one, actually."

Zonder uses Steinberg products for recording, primarily running Cubase and Nuendo software on his PC. While looking for some high-quality plugins for his computer, Mark was turned on to the Focusrite Liquid Mix 16.

GEAR BOX

OUTBOARD GEAR

Amek Big 28 automated console; KRK V8 monitors with sub-woofer; Neve 33115 mic pre's and EQ; Summit Audio MPE-200 and TPA-200 mic pre's, DCL-200 compressor, EQP-200B EQ, and ECS-410 Everest channel strip; Calrec PQ10 mic pre's and EQ; Manley Dual Mono mic pre; vintage DBX 160 compressor; Lexicon PCM91 reverb; Empirical Labs Distressor compressor

MICROPHONES

Lauten Audio tube mics (Horizon, Torch, Oceanus, and Clarion)



DRUMS

DW (8x10 rack tom, 12x14 floor tom, 6 1/2x14 snare, 5x13 snare, 16x20 bass drum), plus DW rack, hardware, and pedals

HEADS

Remo coated Ambassador batters on all drums, clear Ambassador tom bottoms, and smooth white Ambassador bass drum front head (with hole)

CYMBALS

Various Zildjians, including 17" and 18" K Custom Dark crashes, a 20" K Custom Dark ride, and 12" Band cymbals (used as hi-hats)

ELECTRONICS

Yamaha DTX-Multi 12 and Hart Dynamics Hammer triggers

PERCUSSION

Toca

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"I have been a die-hard outboard gear guy for many years, but the Focusrite—with its compressors and EQs—completely blew me away," he says. "I won't be selling the outboard gear, but they will work together very well." Zonder relies on a host of outboard gear to handle much of his signal processing, including Summit Audio MPE-200 mic preamps for the toms, Neve 33115s for the kick and snare, and Cal Rec PQ10s for the cymbals. "The overheads are going through the Manley Dual Mono mic pre and the room mics are going through the Summits, and both are getting squashed through the Distressor compressor," Mark says.

Zonder doesn't always engineer his own tracks. He leaves plenty of that work to award-winning engineer Joe Marlett (Foo Fighters, Queens Of The Stone Age). "Joe says this is a funky room in that there's sound reflection here and there, but it sounds freakin' amazing," Zonder says. "It starts with a great mic. All of these are tube mics from Lauten Audio. So it's a combination of great mics, great-sounding gear, and a phenomenal engineer. All of the mics go through an analog console. We're not using tape, but the computer is like an intense tape machine."

Though Zonder uses his studio mostly for tracking drums and recording overdubs, he has also recorded a full ensemble of musicians. But not everything fits in his workspace. Guitar cabinets are usually placed in an adjacent bathroom. "Grab a couple packing blankets, and it works out great," Mark says.

Lately the drummer has been focused on playing with his band Slavior, practicing Fates Warning material, holding clinics, and tracking drums for other artists. "What I'm offering people is album-quality tracks," he explains. "I give them the individual files for each channel, and I give them a stereo mix. That way they can get the sounds to where they want them. My thing is to keep things on a very personal level."

Zonder usually closes shop around 5:30 P.M. "Then I become Mr. Mom again," he says. "We have a nice little setup here, and everything's going great. I can say that I do what I want to do, and that's very important."

To check out sample tracks and videos made at Mark's studio, visit markzonder.com.



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