

## HOW TO PLAY



# Body Percussion

## KEITH TERRY DEMONSTRATES THE RHYTHM INSIDE

BY **SCOTT LOCKLEAR**  
PHOTOS BY **PAUL HAGGARD**

**D**rummers lay claim to one of the oldest art forms on the planet (what, after all, could be more primal than whacking something with a hunk of wood?), but Keith Terry truly returns rhythm to its source. Taking the term *skinsman* to heart, he has turned his own body into a percussion instrument – thigh slapping, hand clapping, and foot thumping his way through complex, dynamic beats that send many a seasoned kit slammer running back to the practice room.

The affable Terry began scaring the hell out of trap players some 30 years ago, when he stumbled upon body music during a rehearsal for a jazz gig. “I realized one day,” the accomplished drummer and dancer remembers, “that I could displace what I was playing on the drums onto my body.” Influenced by everything from Flamenco *palmas* to our own homegrown art of hambone, Terry began quickly developing a unique style of rhythm and movement that he has since incorporated into a wide range of musical settings, including collaborations with heavy-weights such as Bobby McFerrin and Tex Williams as well as with a slew of lesser-

known but no-less-interesting artists – physical comedians, Indonesian and Polynesian dancers, even clowns. Ironically, then, it appears that the frontiers of world and avant-garde music are being marked not by electronics but by the slaps, pops, and stomps of the body.

Now, in case all this sounds like the apocalyptic Second Coming of *Riverdance*, don't flip back to the Chad Smith article just yet. No one hopes to pry those beloved 2Bs from your hands for good, but we do want you to know that getting hip with this whole body-music thing means much more than being able to touch yourself in public. “For me,”

Terry explains, “it really is about internalizing the rhythm. Once you have it inside you, then you can express it in any number of ways – through other instruments or through other dance forms. It's just such a great way to approach rhythm. It really is *embodying*. I feel like you understand [rhythm] on a whole other level when you *are* it.”

So get ready to get inside the beat – and to get the beat inside you – like never before. Follow along as we present the basics of Terry's body music, introduce a few of his advanced moves, and then give a glimpse of the man himself putting it all together in a performance setting. >>

# HOW TO PLAY

## BEGINNER NOTES

Throughout the following exercises, a very important drumming principle holds true: Don't do anything that hurts. Stretch before attempting any of the moves, and remember to stay relaxed. Speed comes when you are tension free.

Also keep in mind that body music is inherently a softer-sounding, lower-volume art form. If the more adventurous among you are thinking about performing live, feel free – and be ready – to experiment with different microphones. Even Terry finds the right miking

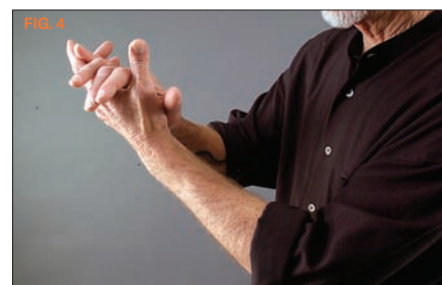
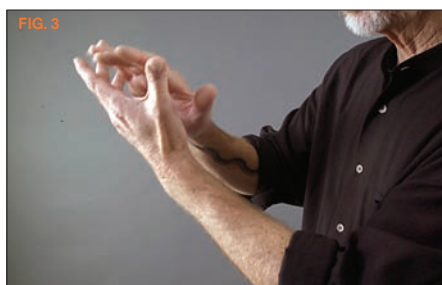
setup to be a challenging work in progress, particularly when he plays on stage with other people and other instruments. "It's easy to get buried," he cautions. So your Slipknot cover band might not be the best place to start incorporating these exercises.

## Basic Vocabulary

Each sequence of figures demonstrates the basic moves and body parts that will have you up and jamming in no time. First off, wear a lighter-weight shirt when practicing and performing (the heavier the material, the more muffled the sound). As for pants, Terry recommends jeans for a good slap sound. Next, think of each body part and striking technique as a way of emulating a sound from your drum set. Finally, remember to watch the force at which you strike: The goal is to make sounds and ultimately music, not to put yourself in the hospital.

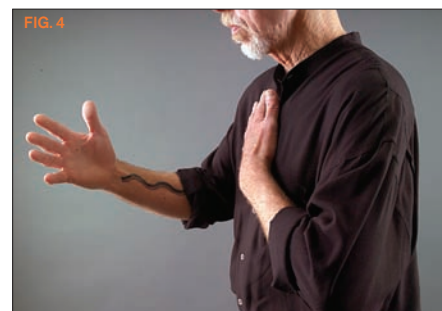
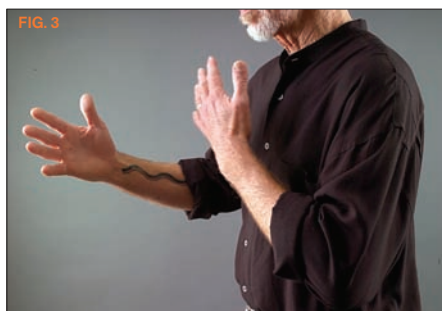
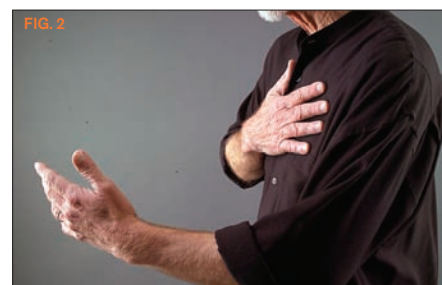
### HANDS

The handclap replicates the highest, sharpest sounds of your kit – snare drum and hi-hat. There are a number of different clapping sounds possible and a number of different ways to clap. Variations in sound can easily be produced by cupping your hands, which Terry encourages because it saves some wear and tear on your paws if you're clapping a lot, and it also evens out the tones. In terms of which hand goes on top, experiment a bit to find what works best for you. **FIGS. 1 AND 2** demonstrate the left hand on top (or left-hand lead); **FIGS. 3 AND 4** demonstrate the right hand on top (right-hand lead).



### CHEST

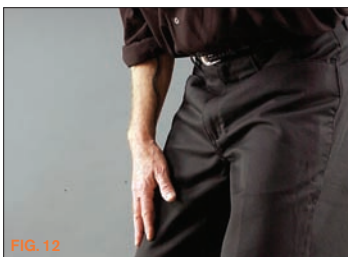
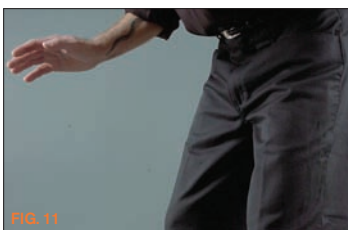
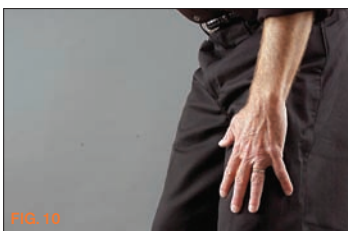
The chest strike simulates your highest rack tom. It should be focused in the center of the chest, right in the sternum (see **FIGS. 5-8** for right- and left-hand lead, respectively). "You get the best sound there," Terry insists, and it's also where you get the most efficient, economical range of motion, particularly if you are looking to eventually gain speed. Again, remember to cup your hands if necessary so that you're not pounding your chest too hard.





## THIGHS

The thigh strike (FIGS. 9-12) is equivalent to your middle tom. The sound can change dramatically depending on whether or not your hands are cupped.



## BUTT

Yes, in body drumming your tush is good for more than just parking on a throne. Pitch-wise, the butt is the lowest of the toms. Be sure to hit all cheek (FIGS. 13 & 14) and not cheat by aiming for the front or back of your hips. (Think of this as the spanking you probably deserve anyway.)



# GROOVE ANALYSIS

BY BRAD SCHLUETER

## BODY JAMS

This body-music samba (Ex. 1) is fun, fairly easy to do, and will get your fingers and feet fired up and flexible. To hear an audio version of the body samba, check out the first cut from Terry's latest CD, *SLAMMIN All-Body Band*. Ex. 2, a trio piece, is a great way to explore ensemble playing and listening to others in a body-music context. In Part 3 of Ex. 2, right- and left-hand snaps are indicated in parentheses above the note.

Key

Snap Clap Right Left Right Left Right Left Right Left  
Chest Chest Thigh Thigh Butt Butt Foot Foot

Ex. 1

Ex. 2 Part 1

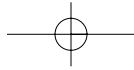
Part 2

Part 3

## FEET

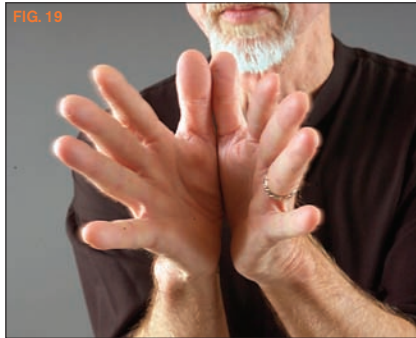
Not surprisingly, the foot stomp replicates your bass drum. Terry recommends wearing hard-rubber-sole or hard-leather-sole shoes, and for some nice low end, he prefers playing on a hardwood floor, "preferably sprung so that it gives a little" and saves the knees. The basic step is grounded and very flat-footed, where your weight is almost on your backside (FIGS. 15-18). You can also just use your heel by keeping your toes on the floor. The sound will not be as powerful as when you lift your entire foot (somewhat like whether you play heel up or heel down on your kit). For semi-advanced moves at this point, try playing hand and foot vocabulary together for different sound combinations.



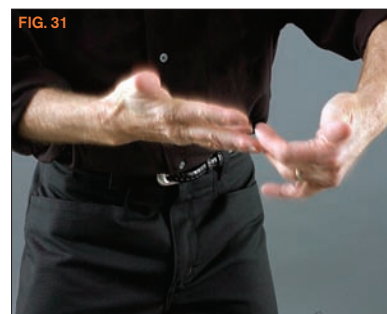
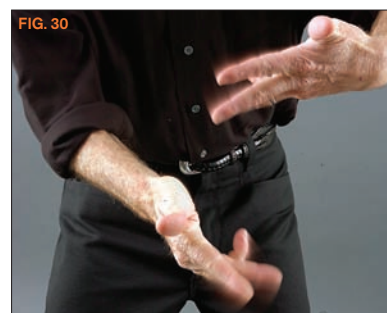
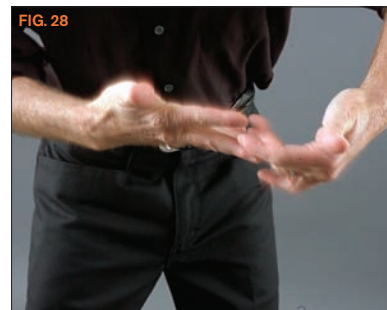
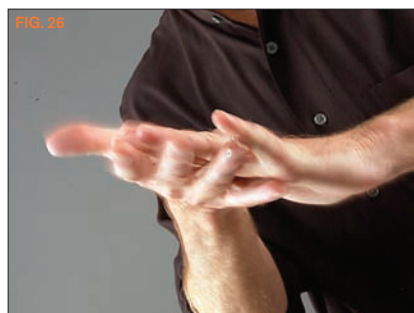
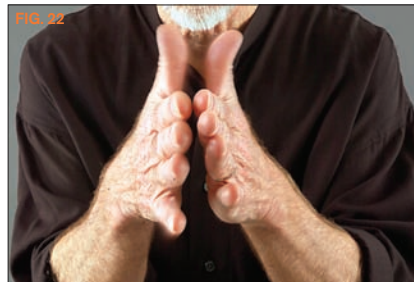


# HOW TO PLAY

## Advanced Hand Vocabulary



Now that your hands are limber, get ready to do some serious smacking. The first sequence (FIGS. 19-23) is a finger technique that produces a lighter cupping sound than the handclap. Be sure to keep your fingers relaxed. The second sequence (FIGS. 24-26) is a swift move that creates a sound akin to brushes on your snare. If you're really serious about body music, you might want to think about giving up the hand lotion, because according to Terry, it helps the swish if your digits are a bit dry. "Mine will shred you if I touch you," Terry confesses. The third sequence (FIGS. 27-31) is an alternative way to make a brush sound.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 74 >>

