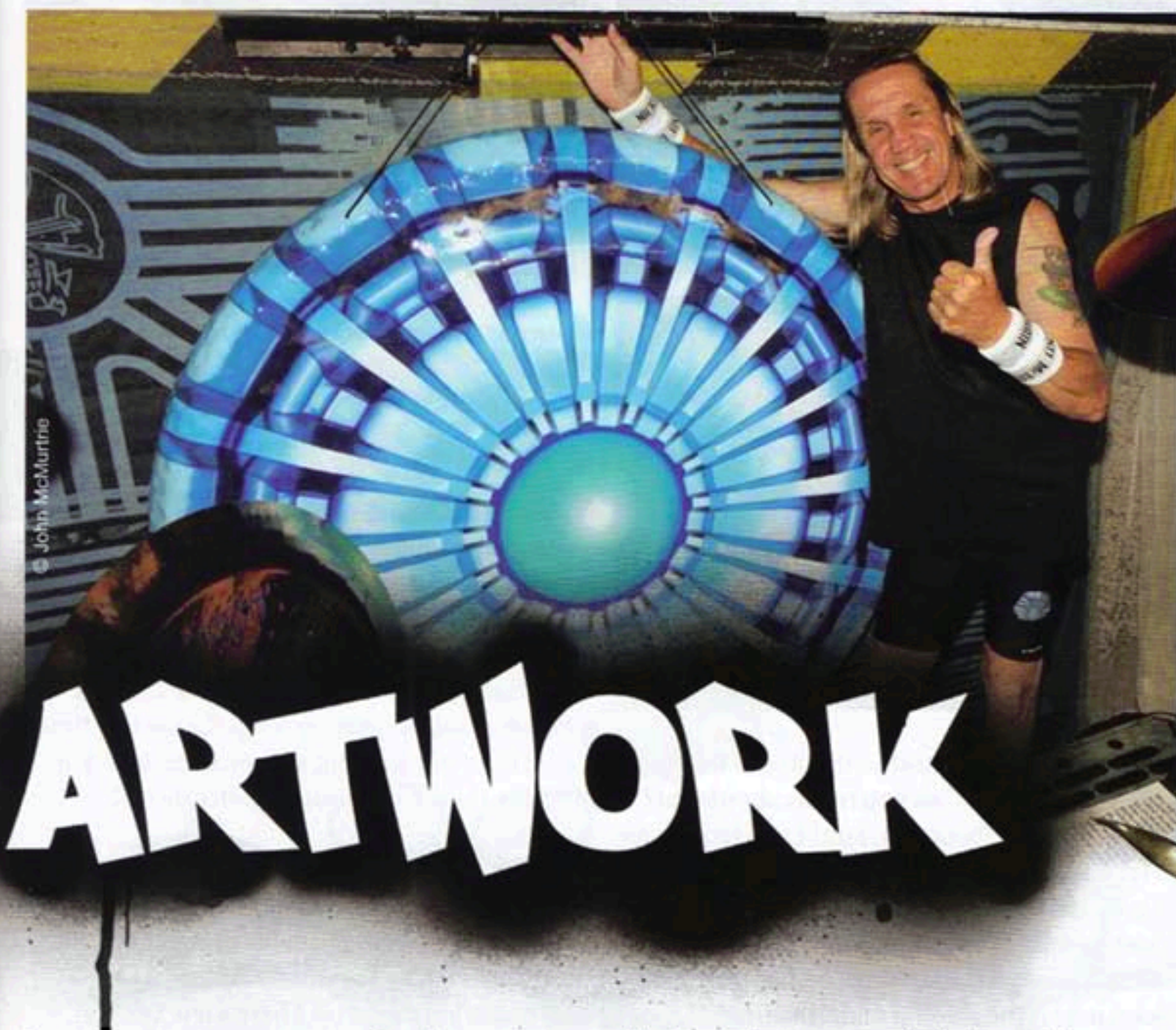


See Brent Fitz's kit by John on page 42!



ARTWORK

Can you name some more artists that you have done work for?

Joey Kramer, Chad Smith, Alex Van Halen, Scott Phillips, Vinnie Paul, Nicko McBrain, Alex González, Brent Fitz, Tico Torres ... to name but a few.

What's the process of producing a kit for an artist?

It usually starts with a phone call or an email. Most of my work comes from word of mouth. Drummers see other drummers playing one of my kits and they pass on my name. Every job is different. Some guys have no idea what they want, just "something cool". Other guys are very specific – maybe it's based on their new album artwork, like with Alex González of Maná. Maybe it's based off of one of their tattoos, as in the drums for Scott Phillips of Creed/Alter Bridge, or even Chad Smith's Octopus kit. With Frank Beard I come up with some ideas and we

talk about it, brainstorm a little bit, and then I run with it. Other players will have an idea and I have to tweak it so that it works when it's onstage. I like for the kit to read well from a distance, 10 rows back, 30 rows back ... I like for it to say 'custom' when you first look at it.

Do you start with a standard kit, or do you build it from bare shells and fittings?

I generally get the drums straight from the drum company because a lot of my clients have drum endorsements. I have built a few drums from the raw shells, but usually just for me. So I start with a factory finish, strip it down and start over.

What challenges are there in producing custom artwork?

There are many challenges to achieving that custom look. The drums themselves, the brand, the lug design, how the drummer sets up his kit ... This is where I think I have the advantage over other artists ... I know drums

and drummers. You have to be able to visualise the kit completely assembled and set up onstage. Where is the hardware? Is he using stands or on a rack? What angle does he mount the toms? I feel that a drum kit is a functional, musical piece of sculpture ... Making those elements line up on one drum kit can be a challenge ... but I love it!

What is your favourite piece of work?

That's a tough one ... Sometimes I stumble on an idea or theme and everything just clicks – I think that's happened on some of the ZZ Top kits: the green one with the spinning wheels, the gold one with the skulls ... It's hard to be objective on the work I've done.