



▲ "I see this as a lifelong project," says Lavinger (at home with some of his 1,200-odd sticks). "It's such an important body of work."

STICKS AND ROLLING STONES

Drumstick collector Peter Lavinger can't get enough of rock and roll's beat

THE SUN WAS HANGING LOW BEHIND the New York Coliseum that November day in 1993 when Peter Lavinger made his move. Without a ticket (much less a backstage pass), he zipped through a service entrance, hell-bent on persuading Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl to autograph a pair of drumsticks. Lavinger was lurking in the shadows when who should stroll by, looking for his dressing room, but Nirvana grunge idol Kurt Cobain. After shooting the breeze with Lavinger for a few minutes and performing onstage, Cobain (who would kill himself just five months later) obligingly put pen to sticks, writing "Kurt Cobain Model .001" and "Kurt Cobain Model .002." Says Lavinger, 33: "To this day,

I have no idea of what that means."

Not that the message matters much to the onetime fashion model and Syracuse University econ grad. Unemployed and barely getting by ("I don't eat much"), he devotes up to 60 hours a week in pursuit of his obsession. "I see this as more a work of art than a collection," he says, sitting in the tiny Manhattan apartment he shares with (at last count) 668 drumsticks (548 others—insured for \$400,000—are on display in Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum). "I guess I should have been a stockbroker or something," he says, "but I just never wanted to go there."

Raised on Long Island, N.Y., by an internist father and psychotherapist

mother (both now deceased), Lavinger began the stick shift at age 16 when he snared a pair of drumsticks hurled into a concert audience by Joe Franco of the Good Rats. Since then he has met the likes of Mick Jagger ("I like your audacity, kid," he says Jagger told him), Pink Floyd singer-guitarist David Gilmour and Charlie Watts (his favorite drummer boy). "He has all my heroes' sticks," gushes former Pearl Jam drummer Dave Abbruzzese.

Lavinger is still trying to track down Mitch Mitchell from the Jimi Hendrix Experience and other elusive rockers. And he allows that his mission may be too ambitious for a single lifetime. Someday, he says, "I gotta have a son who I can teach this to." ■

Photograph by Kimberly Butler