

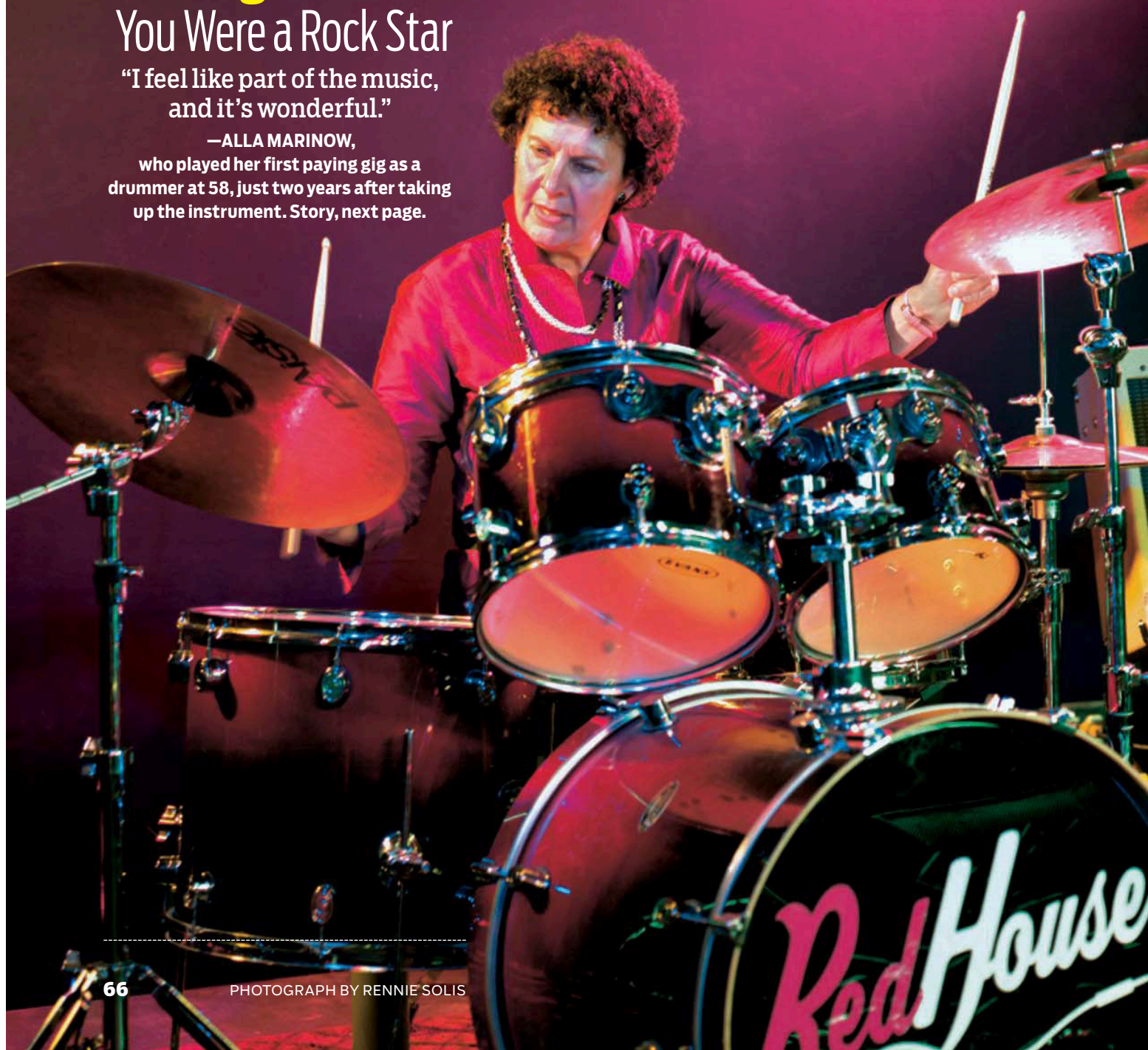
■ The BEST of YOUR LIFE

Imagine If...

You Were a Rock Star

"I feel like part of the music,
and it's wonderful."

—ALLA MARINOW,
who played her first paying gig as a
drummer at 58, just two years after taking
up the instrument. Story, next page.





THE BEAT GOES ON
Marinow rocks steady behind her band, The Lab Rats.

She's Got Rhythm

A wannabe drummer goes from shy to fly

• Newbie musician Alla Marinow was one part terrified and two parts triumphant. Perched behind a drum set, she could see the faces of the 80 people in the audience—though she tried not to look. Her band played its first two songs, and gradually her fear fell away, the panic replaced by elation. “It’s like freedom,” she says of playing live. “It’s like flying.”

This recent Walnut Creek, California, rock show was the entrepreneur’s first paid gig. She started lessons about two years ago, at age 56, knowing “nothing, zero, zipola!” about drums. Weeks after her first lesson, she began feeling tired. Doctors implanted a pacemaker. Then came two more surgeries, for a thyroid disorder and for breast cancer.

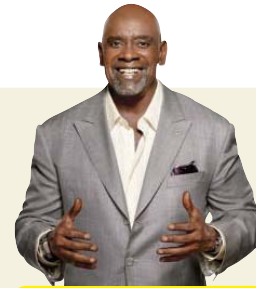
But Marinow kept practicing, even when she was so exhausted she couldn’t walk. When she began attending jam sessions, meeting fellow musicians and forming a band with them—just for fun—it led to playing for pay. “I feel great now,” she says, fully recovered from her surgeries. “Why should the kids have all the fun?” —Leslie Quander Wooldridge

MASTERING A NEW INSTRUMENT

Playing with others is the surest way to develop your musical chops. So hire a great teacher (for tips on how, visit wannaplaymusic.com) and ask for help finding a band. For a supercharged

start, schedule a week at camp. Interlochen Center for the Arts in Interlochen, Michigan, welcomes all skill levels at its adult band camp (\$425 tuition; 231-276-7387; college.interlochen.org). Puget

Sound Guitar Workshop near Bremerton, Washington, also offers one-week courses in summer (\$799; 360-647-0741; psgw.org). See musicafter50.com to find more players and programs. —L.Q.W.



YOU CAN DO IT!

By Chris Gardner

HOW DO I FOLLOW MY PASSION WHEN I'M JUST BARELY HOLDING ON?

DEAR CHRIS,

I'm a home remodeler whose business is suffering due to the weak economy. How do I follow my dreams when my income is down by 70 percent and I'm struggling to pay my bills? I'm happy to have work, but my debt seems endless.

—Doug M., 55,
Morgantown, West Virginia

DEAR DOUG,

How do you choose between pursuing your passion and doing what is practical? The hard truth is, you have to do both: Pay the bills *and* make time for what inspires you. (John Grisham wrote his first thriller while working 60 to 70 hours per week.) When we push ourselves, we tend to find that we are capable of much more than we thought.

As for your debt, do whatever is necessary to make ends meet. Will you downsize? Take in boarders? It may sound harsh, but your old reality is gone. The only way to return to a life you love is by dealing with your new reality. I'm not saying it will be easy, but it will be worth it.

The film *The Pursuit of Happyness* chronicled Chris Gardner's rise from struggling single fatherhood to success on Wall Street. Now he advises others on reaching their goals. Got a question? Ask Chris at aarp.org/chrisgardner.

IMAGINE IT'S
YOUR TURN

Planning to fulfill a longtime dream? Let us photograph you doing it. Go to aarp.org/yourstory.