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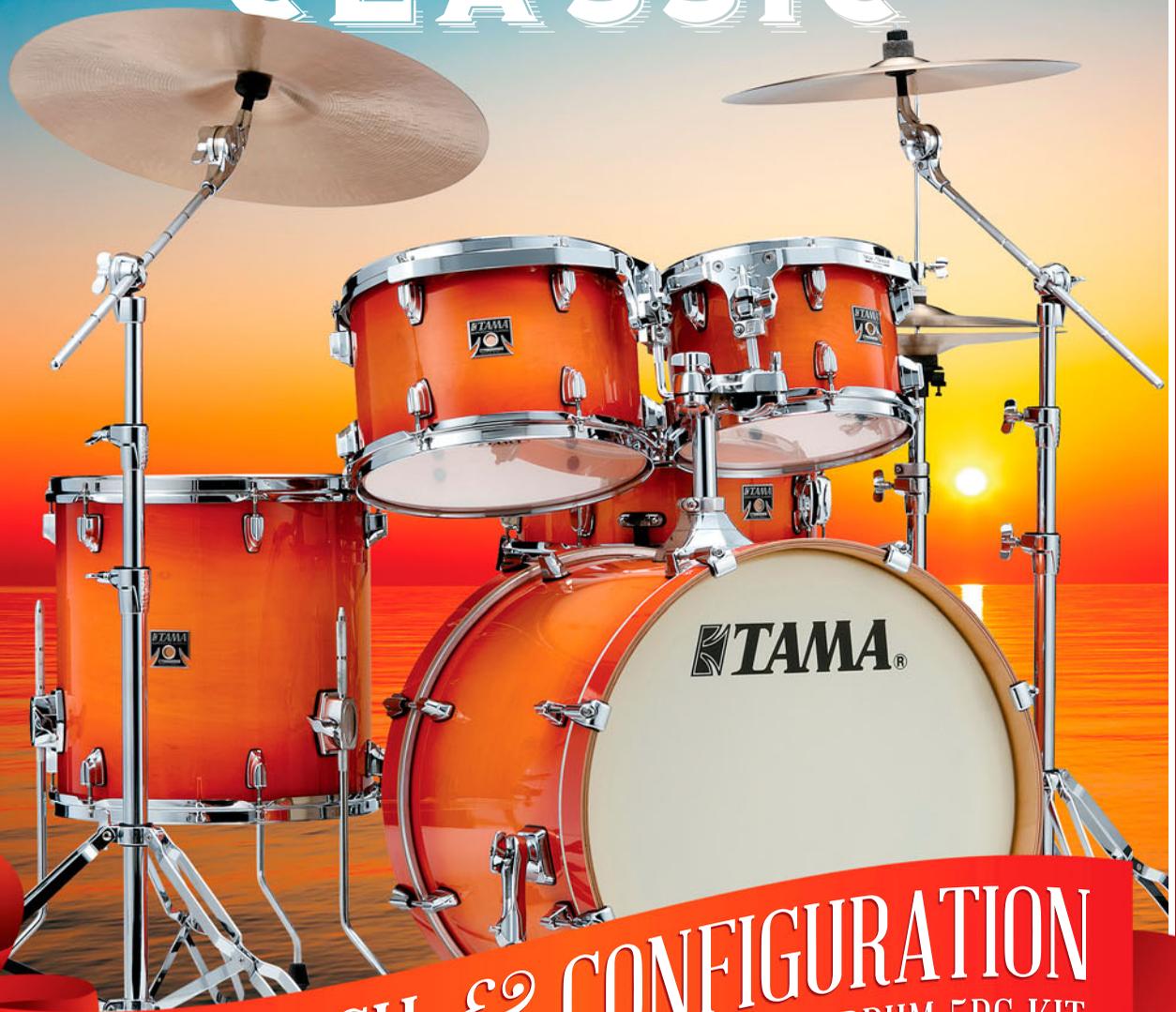
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AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

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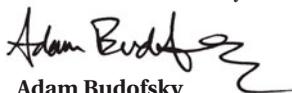
Boy, it was strange typing that title. After all, when you're in the information biz like *Modern Drummer* is, you're generally trying to get people to do the opposite. But we're also in the music biz, and the aim there, at least when you're on stage, is to connect with an audience. And that's hard to do when you're staring at notes on a page.

Recently I had the thrill of watching all three of my kids perform at their annual middle school string concert. A week earlier, I had the pleasure of helping out at our local high school's jazz festival, where I spent a lot of time on the side of the stage. The jazz festival was uniquely cool because I got to be a fly on the wall as each group prepared to go on. Like most parents of teenagers, I find mine and their friends fascinating to be around. Their nervous energy, their charmingly awkward social graces—they're reminders that we humans spend a large portion of our lives in a constant state of learning, and improving.

And it's great fun to watch young musicians prove their skills in front of their families, friends, and neighbors—especially players who are visibly enjoying themselves. I can clearly recall one boy attacking his drums with the glee of a young Keith Moon, and one girl swaying emotionally, eyes closed, as she elegantly bowed her violin. Mostly, though, the young musicians at both events seemed to be processing the performances quite internally, not only avoiding looking into the audience as they played, but at each other.

Of course, it's to be expected that teenagers aren't yet expert at the "performing" part of performance. And at contemporary school jazz festivals, the music can be pretty darned complex—Chick Corea's "Spain," anyone?—and having charts is a given. So we should temper our criticisms. Consider this, though: Everyone in the audience on both nights, including me, was truly floored by the instrumental chops, the understanding of dynamics and ensemble playing, and the reading skills of *all* the schoolchildren on stage. But the players who were the most compelling...you could *feel* the extra connection they were making due to the fact that they were so obviously enjoying the act of making music. Whether they knew it or not, their openness and comfort onstage gave them an advantage.

Especially considering plummeting record sales and the renewed importance of live work to a career in music now, what if we all made it a point to encourage young players to take learning how to connect with an audience as seriously as acquiring the more traditional music skills? It's something that us older folks could use brushing up on as well. In fact, in this month's Concepts column, Mark Schulman, who's spent decades upping his stage game with artists like Pink, Cher, and Foreigner, lays out specific methods for us to do just that. As Mark suggests, fully attending to our audiences' need for some type of relationship with us beyond the notes really is more important than ever. Because one way or another, they *will* remind us of that.



Adam Budofsky
Editorial Director



Jim Esposito

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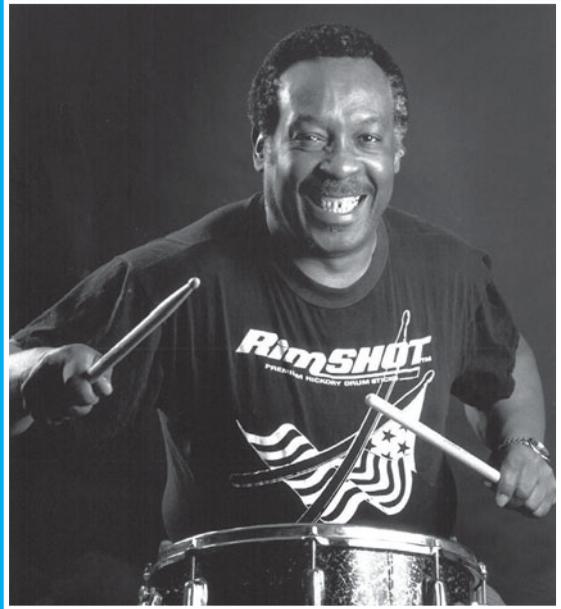
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Favorite Clyde Stubblefield Track?



This past February 18, funk pioneer and renowned James Brown drummer Clyde Stubblefield passed away. To coincide with this month's tribute to the innovator [page 44], we asked our social media followers to name the tracks they think stand out from Stubblefield's career. Although Brown's "Funky Drummer" and "Mother Popcorn" were certainly well-represented, "Cold Sweat" and "I Got the Feelin'" proved to be the most popular by a healthy margin. Here are some of the comments.

Check out the James Brown album *In the Jungle Groove*. It's a great introduction to Clyde. Jabo is on the album too, and you can hear some of their best work. It's a must-have album in general.

I love all of Stubblefield's performances, but my favorite track is "Cold Sweat." Clyde's groundbreaking groove is the foundation of so much that followed in terms of having syncopated backbeats in popular music. Many people consider "Cold Sweat" to be the first real funk record. And it contains the immortal phrase "Give the drummer some."

Steven Wolf

"Cold Sweat," because it changed everything for me when I first heard it. It's still my favorite drumbeat of all time.

Juan Barbosa

"I Got the Feelin'" and "Mother Popcorn." Stubblefield's syncopated snare and bass drum interplay is crazy.

Jason Cruz

Of course the "Funky Drummer" break has to be mentioned. But my favorite is the groove in "Super Bad." It's so simple and it drives the whole song.

Cayce Dillard

Another vote for "I Got the Feelin'." Clyde's drum part works so well with the horns and the bass line. Genius-level work.

Keith Oltman

Want your voice heard? Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and keep an eye out for next month's question.

Thanks From Steve Smith

I would like to express my deep appreciation to my drumming peers that voted for me in the 2017 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll. It has been an eventful year for me, with the Journey tours and being inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, but I get a special joy and inspiration when I am acknowledged by my fellow drummers in the MD Readers Poll. This year was unprecedented for me, in that I topped three categories: Rock Drummer, MVP, and Educational Product for my *Pathways of Motion* book/DVD. I am honored! The MD awards are on display on my living room bookshelf along with the 2012 and 2015 awards for Fusion Drummer!

Thank you all.

Steve Smith



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Out Now



Allyse Gaffken



Gene Chrisman on Dan Auerbach's *Waiting on a Song* A Southern studio legend lends his experience to a modern hit songwriter's latest effort.

This past June 2, Dan Auerbach, vocalist and guitarist of the blues/garage-rock band the Black Keys, released his second solo record, *Waiting on a Song*. Since moving to Nashville from Akron, Ohio, in 2010, Auerbach has surrounded himself with some of Music City's most-recorded veteran musicians, and he recruited many of them to play on the new album. The record's heavy hitters include drummers Jeffrey Clemens, Kenny Malone, Chris St. Hilaire, and Gene Chrisman, the latter of whom played with *Waiting* keyboardist Bobby Wood in the Memphis Boys, a house band for Memphis's American Sound Studio in the late 1960s and early '70s.

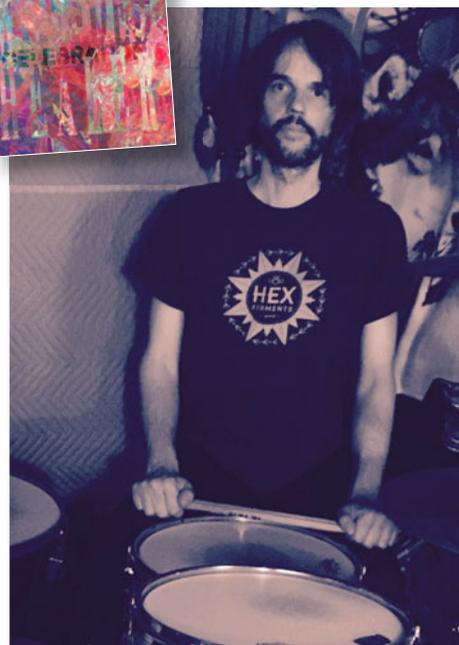
Chrisman's body of work at American Sound Studio alone includes more than a hundred hits, by artists including Elvis Presley, Aretha Franklin, and Neil Diamond, among many others. So what's made him the perfect choice for so many timeless *and* modern artists? "I don't know what it is, but I can say that I'm not an overplaying drummer," Chrisman says. "I like to play a groove. I think a feel or a groove does more good on a record than showing off. And I also don't do solos. I've never been into that. I just like to play the feel of a song. And if I have to do something different, I'll do it. I just like to listen to the song and play to the track and the artist."

Chrisman draws from decades of experience to offer advice for up-and-coming drummers looking to start a studio career. "I've had guys call me and ask me, 'If you're doing a session that you can't make, could you see if you could get me on it?'" he says. "I would have no idea who they are. And I can't just get anybody on a session. I can't go up to a producer and say, 'Hey, this guy called me.' You can't do that. So I'd say, 'The only way I'm going to tell you how to do anything is if you have some kind of tape or something that you played on; then you might want to try to get in touch with some producers and let them see how you play.' As far as me getting them in, that's almost impossible. People aren't just going to hire you without knowing who you are. They just won't do it." **Willie Rose**

David Bergander on Celebration's *Wounded Healer* Capturing unusual beats and tones with a forest of mics.

Celebration, a Baltimore-based psychedelic indie/soul band that formed in 2004, released its fifth studio album, *Wounded Healer*, this past June. Dry, unique drum tones propel the ethereal melodies while complementing drummer David Bergander's creative, prodding, and tasteful parts. The sticksman credits the album's producer, Steve Wright of WrightWay Studios, for helping craft his sounds. "Steve has an enviable collection of vintage and modern microphones," Bergander explains. "He always has me completely surrounded by them, like I'm in a cage. So when we go to mix, there are a lot of options to develop the sound. Most of it tends to be made up of only a few mics at a time, though. And I spend lots of time tuning my drums from song to song as well—making sure they resonate with each other and the song we're tracking at the time. Sometimes we'll also layer drums. On 'Granite,' there are ten or twelve drums that are played simultaneously. There are no electronics, although there's reverb and compression."

Bergander explains that the sparse yet driving grooves that permeate the record, such as on "Velvet Glove," are partly a product of the band's free approach to writing. "Sean [Antanaitis, multi-instrumentalist] and Katrina [Ford, vocals] will sometimes write parts or even a whole song with an idea for a drum pattern or feel," Bergander says. "Sean has an incredible sense of rhythm, and 'Velvet Glove' and 'Spider' were inspired by his original ideas. Some parts come out of thin air, and others start with drum ideas. But there's no formula. Then we just play the songs *a lot* and arrange them together. Some happen quickly, and some take years." **Willie Rose**



MORE NEW RELEASES

Lindsey Buckingham and Christine McVie Lindsey Buckingham/Christine McVie (Mick Fleetwood) /// **Gov't Mule** Revolution Come... Revolution Go (Matt Abts) /// **Ride** Weather Diaries (Laurence "Loz" Colbert) /// **The Birthday Massacre** Under Your Spell (Rhim) /// **Authority Zero** Broadcasting to the Nations (Chris Dalley)



Christopher Guanlao with Silversun Pickups Picking his spots, and setting the pace.

The alternative indie-pop/rock group Silversun Pickups is currently on a thirty-date tour in direct support of veteran rockers Third Eye Blind that lasts through July. Since 2002, the group's drummer, Christopher Guanlao, has energized the band's live show with a wild, head-banging stage presence that complements his propulsive parts. To drive home singles such as "Lazy Eye" or "Panic Switch" with such gusto, Guanlao says he paces himself during live sets.

Recalling Silversun's recent forty-five-minute performance at the When We Were Young festival in Santa Ana, California, the drummer says, "I treated the show like a sprint, hit hard, and tried to stay energetic throughout the set. With a headlining show—about an hour-and-a-half set—I'll treat it more like a marathon. I try to tame my excitement and adrenaline a little in the beginning and pace myself so that I have something left in the tank at the end. I also know the moments in songs or in the set where I drop out or it dynamically changes, so I can pull back and take a breather."

Guanlao developed an open-handed style early on as a self-taught left-handed drummer. "My style is pretty messed up, but it works for me," he explains. "When I was a kid, my dad bought me a drumset for my birthday from a friend of mine. I didn't have a clue what to do with it. So I looked at pictures and videos and set up the drums that way. Then I sat behind the kit and played the way that felt proper, which ended up being open-handed. A few years later during a gig, a drummer saw me play and convinced me to put my ride to the left of my hi-hat so I wouldn't have to cross over the set. It looked and seemed totally weird at the time, but I tried it out, and it ended up being so much easier." **Willie Rose**

Also on the Road

Thomas Hedlund with Phoenix /// **Stacy Jones** with Matchbox Twenty /// **Jim Bogios** with Counting Crows /// **Chad Gracey** with Live /// **Chad Sexton** with 311 /// **Pete Parada** with Offspring /// **Carlos Verdugo** with Sublime With Rome

Claire Marie Vogel

Spooky Tooth/Only Ones Drummer Mike Kellie Passes

Earlier this year Mike Kellie, a longtime member of the proto-prog group Spooky Tooth and the new-wave act the Only Ones, passed away. The British drummer's credits also included Traffic, Jerry Lee Lewis, Joe Cocker, Peter Frampton, Jim Capaldi, Paul Kossoff, George Harrison, Maurice Gibb, Neil Innes, Pat Travers, Andy Fraser, and Johnny Thunders.

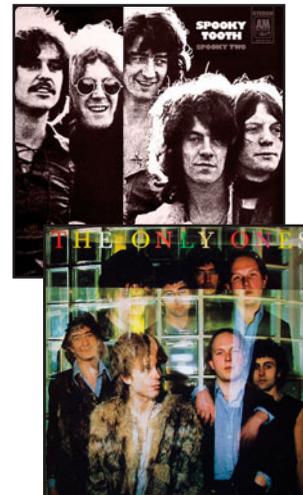
Kellie's playing on "African Thing" on the pre-Spooky Tooth group Art's 1967 album *Supernatural Fairy Tales* featured one of the earliest drum solos to appear on a record by a British rock band, and his drumming on the Spooky Tooth recording "Sunshine Help Me" was reportedly the foundational sample used on the track "No Church in the Wild" on the 2011 Jay Z/Kanye West album *Watch the Throne*, featuring Frank Ocean.

Among Kellie's more well-known performances are the Only Ones' classic new-wave track "Another Girl, Another Planet"; New York Dolls guitarist Johnny Thunders' signature song, "You Can't Put Your Arms Around a Memory"; the deep album cut "Rainmaker" from Traffic's legendary 1971 album, *The Low Spark of High Heeled Boys*; and "I Shall Be Released" from Joe Cocker's debut album, *With a Little Help From My Friends*.

In addition, Kellie was among the drummers contributing to the 1975 soundtrack to the Who feature film *Tommy*, and he played on Jerry Lee Lewis's 1973 album *The Session*, which featured an all-star cast of British and American rockers, including Peter Frampton, Alvin Lee, and Delaney Bramlett.

Kellie was also a songwriter who wrote the lyrics to Spooky Tooth's "Feelin' Bad" and "I've Got Enough Heartache," the latter of which was covered by Three Dog Night on the hit 1970 album *Naturally*. In 2015 Kellie released the solo album *Music From...the Hidden*, which can be heard at soundcloud.com/music-from-the-hidden.

Thanks to Andrew Spacey from Rock and Roll Stew Music Ltd. for some of the background information for this piece.



Mike Kellie, third from right in the top image, appeared on a long list of distinguished recordings, including Spooky Tooth's 1969 album, *Spooky Two*, and the Only Ones' 1978 self-titled debut, which featured the international hit "Another Girl, Another Planet."



First Annual Auckland Drum Festival

This past February 18, the inaugural Auckland Drum Festival was held at the Auckland Showgrounds in New Zealand. Clinicians included American drummers Russ Miller and Andre Boyd, New Zealand drumming legend Frank Gibson Jr., and Sydney-based educator Bruce Aitken. Local pipe, Celtic, and taiko drummers also performed.

Fans turned out in large numbers and checked out booths featuring the latest wares from the local drumming community. There were also several workshops, including drumming for children with New Zealand drummer Pete Warren and a restoration workshop by vintage preserver Grant Sutherland.

The New Zealand music retailer Rockshop was among the sponsors for the event. The festival is the brainchild of Jody Sampionius and Mike Piane, and plans are currently in motion for next year's event.

Stephen Morris Named 2017 Yamaha Young Performing Artist

Yamaha Artist Services Indianapolis, in conjunction with the Band and Orchestral division of Yamaha Corporation of America, recently named jazz drummer, composer, and educator Stephen Morris of Aliso Viejo, California, a winner in the 2017 Yamaha Young Performing Artists (YYPA) Competition. The YYPA program has honored promising eighteen- to twenty-two-year-old artists annually since 1988.

Morris is currently finishing his bachelor of music in jazz studies at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Prior to Eastman, Morris studied drumset and jazz at Saddleback College in Mission Viejo, California, and graduated magna cum laude in May 2014 with an associate degree in fine and applied arts. He was a member of the Disneyland All-American College Band in 2014 and has worked with John Clayton, Jiggs Whigham, Wayne Bergeron, Ron Carter, Rex Richardson, Sal Lazano, Linda Oh, Imani Uzuri, and Ingrid Jensen. Stephen has participated in music outreach programs at Rikers Island Prison in New York City and in an arts residency program in Northwestern China. Morris's current and former teachers include Rich Thompson, Jeff Hamilton, Mark Ferber, and Paul Johnson.

"The YYPA program is a significant opportunity for young musicians who are embarking on careers as professionals and is one of the most visible and distinctive ways that Yamaha offers valuable support for music education," says John Wittmann, director of education and artist relations at Yamaha Artist Services Indianapolis. "We are pleased to honor Stephen at this pivotal stage in his career." Winners of the YYPA competition received an all-expenses-paid trip to this year's Celebration Weekend in Muncie, Indiana.



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PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

VK

Aluminum Drumset

High-end, lightweight shells with a unique tonal character.

Alan van Kleef is a modern-day metalsmith who is carving his own niche in the world of custom drum builders. From his home workshop in Sheffield, England, van Kleef builds snares and kits from various metals such as copper, titanium, stainless steel, aluminum, and magnesium. He aims to emulate a vintage aesthetic using a modern approach, using metal as a means to expand the tonal colors of the drummer's palette.

The Specs

This kit is made from aerospace-grade T6 aluminum, which boasts the impressive combination of being very lightweight and incredibly strong. The quality of components used to craft these drums, combined with the personal care put into them (all of the parts are made in-house), equates to a very high-quality instrument. This four-piece shell pack includes an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x16 floor tom, a 14x22 bass drum, and a 6.5x14 snare.

VK offers a variety of finishes, and our review kit came powder-coated in Antique Bronze inside and out. The shells are 2mm thick, and the 12mm laser-cut tom and snare hoops, like the drum shells, are made of T6 aluminum and have a black powder-coat finish. The hoops have a flat design that sits flush with the drumheads and feature countersunk holes for the tension rods. The bass drum hoops are rolled and welded from 6mm aluminum and are finished to match the shells. The lugs, lug tubes, tension rods, tom mount, spurs, memory locks, thumbscrews, floor tom legs, washers, and fixing bolts are all made by VK from black-anodized 7075 aluminum. The floor tom legs had a less extreme angle, which made for a smaller footprint, and they were very stable.

The Inspiration and Sound

When asked about the inspiration for this kit, van Kleef stated that although he has immense appreciation for tried-and-true drum sounds, his intention was to create something new. And the drums do have a distinct vibe, with distinct mid-range overtones that made for a clear, full, musical sound, and a surprising amount of tonality and warmth.

The batter heads used on the toms and kick were Remo CS black dots, which tend to promote attack and have a more transparent pitch. The way the tone of these drums spread out after the attack was pleasing. The kick had some serious low end, somewhat reminiscent of a Roland 808 electronic kick but with far more natural appeal. The resonant head of the kick didn't have a port, but there were two small sheets installed inside that I maneuvered so that they just touched both heads. This was enough muffling to tame the overtones without killing the sustain. This drum played more like a 22" tom, meaning it wasn't drastically different in tone from the 16" floor tom. In other words, it was far more boomy than punchy.

The entire kit had a respectable tuning range. Cranked up, I could get a Tony Williams vibe going, with an explosive attack and short decay; the overtones had a narrow projection with a cutting bite. Tuned low, the smack of the slack heads competed slightly with the higher overtones. But in the medium tension range, these drums truly sang and had an impressive feel and response that made for a dynamic playing experience.

The matching snare, which came outfitted with a Coated Ambassador batter, also had a sweet spot at medium tension. However, it lacked some of the excitement I heard emanating from the toms and bass drum.

The impeccable attention to detail in the design and the craftsmanship of these unique aluminum drums is sure to make them appealing to avid collectors, and their light weight and serious tone should make them tempting to gigging professionals looking for something a bit different from a more traditional maple kit.

David Ciauro





PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Paiste

PSTX DJs 45 Series

Affordable, micro-sized effects cymbals from the mind of one of today's most distinctive beat-smiths.

The PSTX series is designed to offer unique special-effects sounds at low price points. The cymbals are crafted from B8 bronze (8% tin and 92% copper), and the series comprises perforated Swiss crashes and hi-hats, Flanger stacks, and aluminum Pure bells. It also includes a trio of signature models for hip-hop/alt-rock drummer Daru Jones called DJs 45, which is what we're checking out this month.

DJs 45 Crash

This 12" cymbal, which is labeled as a crash but could easily be considered an effects splash, is thin in weight, has a flexible, soft feel, and features twenty-five different-sized holes drilled throughout the bow. The attack is explosive and trashy, the sustain is fizzy and raspy, and the decay is quick but balanced. The trashy tone pushes this small cymbal outside the realm of a traditional glassy-sounding splash and closer to the more complex character of a larger crash, while the small size keeps the volume and sustain in check. For short, quick accents, this is a very cool option.

DJs 45 Ride

Also 12", the DJs 45 ride is medium-heavy and has a black finish and tight lathing so that it resembles a vinyl record. (It's even labeled as such, with "Side A" inked on the bell.) As opposed to the crash, the DJs 45 ride has a bright, clean tone with a crisp bell-like attack and a focused, high-pitched sustain. If you're familiar with the pitched-up sound of ride cymbals sampled on many electronica and drum 'n' bass records, this is a spot-on replication.

DJs 45 Hats

The 12" DJs 45 hi-hats come with a thin, perforated top and a medium-heavy bottom that's finished in black on the underside. The holes in the top cymbal give these hats a trashy bit-crushed sound when played closed and a gritty hiss when struck open. The foot chick is ultra-articulate and is reminiscent of an overdriven hand-clap sample, which made it an effective voice for





incorporating extra layers of syncopated rhythms within ride-based grooves. These hi-hats would also be a great option as an auxiliary voice for songs, or sections of songs, that require a more electronic-type vibe.

Obviously the DJs 45 PSTX cymbals aren't meant for every musical situation. But when the time comes to drop a more distinct drum-machine/breakbeat flavor, these will get you there acoustically, without having to lean on effects and other studio trickery to dial in a funky, low-fi vibe. Super-fun stuff.

Michael Dawson



KBrakes

Bass Drum Anchors

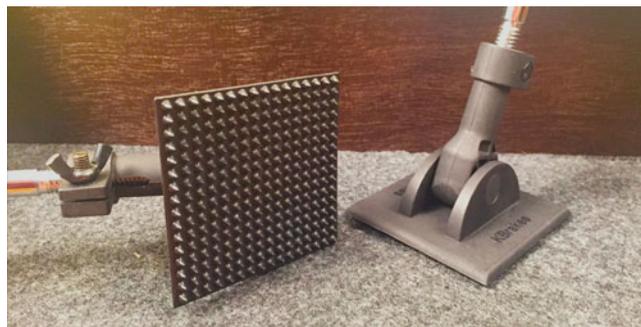
Mitigate kick drum creep with these simple-to-install feet.

I don't know how you feel on the matter, but I think drums sound the best when they are being beaten to the brink of exploding. Especially kick drums.

Unfortunately, laying into a kick drum with the force of Thor's hammer leads to an issue every hard-hitting drummer has experienced: the dreaded sliding bass drum. This brings us to a product I've had the pleasure to gig with for the past month called KBrakes, which is the brainchild of Wes Keely, a frustrated touring drummer with an entrepreneurial spirit.

The idea is pretty simple. Instead of having two points that hold the kick drum in place (e.g. traditional spurs), why not have 512? KBrakes consist of two durable nylon plates that replace the single spur with 256 gripping points per side. Each side also has a joint that allows for 180 degrees of motion for easy pack-up, as the plates fold flush against the side of the shell so that the drum can fit nicely into a case.

The setup for KBrakes is super easy and is clearly explained in the literature provided. You unscrew the rubber feet and washer from the spurs (KBrakes don't work with vintage, non-threaded spurs), and then screw the KBrakes onto the exposed threads. The installation was smooth sailing. (I put them on at a gig right before



we started playing.) The first thing I noticed was how solid the drum felt once I put it down on the rug and aligned the plates to lay flat. I leaned back on my throne and tried to push the drum forward with both feet. It didn't move an inch. Next I set up the rest of my kit and taped off the edges of the KBrakes to see if there was any motion while playing. After three hours of relentless pounding (I hit hard), the bass drum was exactly where it started. The company website, kbrakes.com, prices a pair for \$39.99, and I highly recommend them.

BJ Kerwin

Shure

MOTIV Series Mobile Recording Devices

iOS and USB solutions for musicians looking to document on the go.

Shure recently launched several new devices to increase the quality and simplicity of recording to mobile devices and computers. The MOTIV series has options that utilize Lightning and USB connections. We were sent three models specifically geared toward music makers.

We received the MV88 stereo condenser (\$149), the MV51 large-diaphragm condenser (\$199), and the MVi interface (\$129). In addition to the devices, Shure developed the ShurePlus MOTIV app to provide more control over the recording process.

MV88

This small stereo condenser microphone uses a Lightning connection and works exclusively with iOS devices (iPhones, iPods, and iPads). Utilizing Shure's free app allows you to control the stereo width, polar pattern, and EQ. The stereo width is adjustable from sixty to 135 degrees in fifteen-degree increments, and the polar pattern can be adjusted between mono cardioid, mono bidirectional, and mid-side. The app also offers a limiter, wind reduction, left/right swap, EQ, compression, gain control (from 0 to 36 dB), and five preset level/compression settings to accommodate different recording situations, such as speech or loud music. The MV88 has a hinge that allows the capsule to adjust ninety degrees, and it comes with a travel case and a windscreen for outdoor recording.

Although I had a slim case on my iPhone 6s, the case still prevented the MV88 from attaching to the Lightning port. With the case off, the mic connected perfectly. The first thing I did was set the levels and audio preferences, and then I was free to record directly into the app. The MV88 also worked seamlessly with the native iOS video camera and most other third-party recording apps. However, it's important to note that the gain can only be adjusted while inside Shure's app and not during video recording or streaming.

I tested the MV88 in several recording situations: an acoustic guitar/vocal performance, drum practice, a full band rehearsal, and an interview. In each, the microphone provided crisp, clear audio. Documenting musical ideas and sending them to my fellow bandmates was an easy process with the MV88, as was recording impromptu jams, performances, and personal moments for posting to social media.



In addition to capturing great sound, the MV88 offers the highest possible level of convenience. It's so easy to connect to a device, in fact, that you can be recording high-quality audio, anywhere, within seconds.

MV51

This large-diaphragm condenser microphone features a heavy-duty metal body with controls on the exterior surface. The back of the MV51 has an adjustable arm with threading that allows you to place it on a tabletop or attach it to a mic stand. Unlike the MV88, the gain on the MV51 can be adjusted on the microphone itself. This feature allowed me to use this mic for a Facebook Live event with Korn drummer Ray Luzier that required us to be able to quickly switch from low-volume talking to high-volume playing. The mic also comes with a headphone jack, a mute button, and five gain-level buttons.

Aesthetically, the MV51 has a classic look that pays tribute to the vintage 55 Unidyne series from Shure's early days. Lightning and USB cables are included, so you won't have a problem using the MV51 with most iOS and USB-enabled devices. When used with the MV51, the ShurePlus MOTIV app provides a limiter and allows you to control compression, EQ, and gain. The mounting options and exterior controls made this my favorite mic of the three for more serious mobile productions where I needed to be able to adjust gain levels without opening software.

MVi

This digital audio interface was the missing link in my mobile recording arsenal. While the MV88 and MV51 provide the microphone, the MVi has an XLR/TRS input so you can use any mic that you desire. This allowed me to mike up my entire drumkit and run a mono output from my mixer to the MVi. That setup provided the best drumset sound of the three MOTIV options that we reviewed. The interface has a sleek but rugged metal housing that features the same exterior controls found on the MV51. The unit also comes with Lightning and USB cables, so it's compatible with most mobile devices and computers.

When the MVi is paired with Shure's app, you have control over compression, limiting, and EQ, and there's +20 dB gain boost. The



MVi

MVi needs to be placed on a flat surface, but we'd love to see some mounting options in the future for attaching it to a mic stand or tripod. I would also love to see a second version of the MVi introduced to include another input for stereo recording.

Anyone looking for simple yet high-

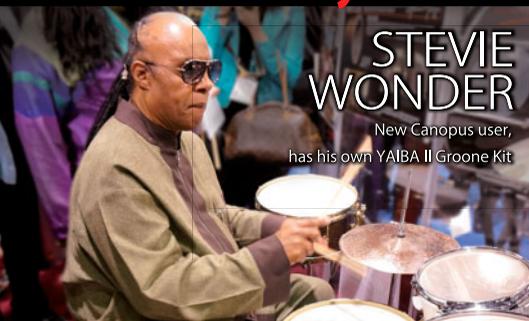
quality solutions for recording on mobile devices and computers has great options in the MOTIV series. The MV88, MV51, and MVi are durable, easy to use, and because no external power supply is required, ultra-portable. **Miguel Monroy**



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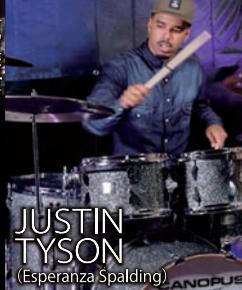
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Matt Mayhall Hollywood Swinger





L.A. native Matt Mayhall boasts a résumé that reads like a fractured West Coast-meets-East Coast iPhone contacts app. The drummer has worked extensively with L.A. denizens Susanna Hoffs (the Bangles), Jeff Babko, John Doe (X), and Liz Phair, and in Josh Haden's Spain. But when nimbly scrambling rhythms down below and above, Mayhall kicks it jazz style with left-coast swingers Larry Goldings, Chris Speed, and Vinny Golia, and he worked with the late master bassist Charlie Haden (father of Josh).

Like a freak brew of the Chicago post-rockers Tortoise and the famed tribute-album producer Hal Willner, Mayhall's debut solo release, *Tropes*, rolls his diverse skills into one untidy, rumbling package. "Conceptually, I wrote the music at the piano," Mayhall explains from his Hollywood home. "I'm limited to what I can actually play on the piano, so the songs are slow and spacious and drawn out. I wanted to orchestrate that idea with these slow-moving, syrupy, kind of druggy-feeling things smeared on top of a groove."

Tropes offers a seemingly endless but somehow unified succession of these smears and sounds. "On the Ceiling" spins like a funky traffic jam flowing in reverse. "Removed" is as lazy and slow moving as asphalt melting in summer, with woozy synth and Hammond organ tones hovering over Mayhall's simple, spacious, syncopated 2-and-4 beat. Brain-addled jazz gets a toss on "Maybe Younger," and glimmering cymbals and textural drums nudge the senses awake on "A&A," while "Myopic" is the album's lone solo piano piece.

Mayhall originally conceived the tunes as performed by an acoustic piano trio, before finding ultimate expression with guitarist Jeff Parker (Tortoise, Brian Blade Fellowship) and bassist Paul Bryan (Aimee Mann, Meshell Ndegeocello), with appearances by keyboardist Jeff Babko (Mark Guiliana's Beat Music) and tenor saxophonist Chris Speed (Human Feel, Claudia Quintet). "The music comes from that headspace of being a jazz musician," Mayhall says, "but a lot of the work I do is elsewhere. My ideas for arrangements and instrument tones and sonic qualities come out of playing many styles of music. I wouldn't classify this as a jazz record."

As Mayhall toured with Aimee Mann, he casually recorded *Tropes* on a drumset previously tuned and set up in the studio by Jay Bellerose, Mann's recording drummer, along with his own vintage 7x14 Leedy and WFL Pioneer mahogany snare drums. If *Tropes* is any guide, one assumes Mayhall's personal drum sound is booming, atmospheric, and as woozy as beat-driven cotton balls. "I do like an open bass drum sound, especially for improvisational music," Mayhall confirms. "And with an electric band as on the record, it makes sense to tune the drums lower in pitch."

A graduate of Cal Arts, where he earned an MFA in jazz studies, Mayhall astutely "tunes" each of his varied gigs with different sources. "You do have to be mindful of what works in a certain context and what doesn't work," he says. "Certain drums and cymbals fit each gig. And they don't cross. I keep those separated in my mind. It's the experience of playing different styles of music and knowing the territory. But for me all these different kinds of music have happened concurrently."

Is *Tropes* Mayhall's calling card to prospective employers? "Well, a noticeable thing about the record is a lack of drum solos," he responds. "The music wasn't about drum solos or my approach as a drummer. The album started as me playing piano and thinking more about tonality and chords and timbres. One of the big challenges of the record was figuring out a way in *as a drummer*. That it's not a real drums-centered record says that I'm more inspired by harmony and building a sonic space."

But there's no denying *Tropes'* reverberating drum tones and atmospheric rhythms. Hollywood swinging, indeed. "It's representative of how I hear music," Mayhall says. "I approach all the music I'm asked to play with an ear to vibrate as opposed to busy-ness. I'm more aware of everything that is going on within the music, as opposed to what hip drum shit I can play. The record showcases that aspect of my musical identity. I can play, but I wasn't interested in showcasing that particular aspect of what I do."

Story by Ken Micallef

Photo by Alex Solca

Matt Mayhall plays **Gretsch** drums, **Sabian** cymbals, **Innovative Percussion** sticks and mallets, and **Roots EQ** tone-control rings and mutes.



ON TOPIC

Louis Hayes

On Working With Jazz Legend Horace Silver in the '50s

Horace got me out of Detroit and working in New York. That put me in the spotlight. I made five recordings with Horace on Blue Note, as well as records with other Blue Note artists and other record labels too, when I first arrived. Horace put me on the scene in New York.

Horace rehearsed quite a bit. I would listen to all his piano playing, and his magnificent arrangements. I interpreted Horace's music the way I felt it, and he was comfortable with that.

On His First Album as a Leader, *Louis Hayes*

I wasn't really interested at that time [1960] in being a leader on a record date. I was so comfortable then being accepted by these magnificent artists...I was satisfied with that. But Vee-Jay asked me to record, and Cannonball Adderley gave me his whole band, including Yusef Lateef and Nat Adderley. After we played at the Apollo, we recorded that night. I just played the way that I played normally. After that recording, I didn't go for a second record as a leader until the 1970s, on *Breath of Life*.

On His New Blue Note Album, *Serenade for Horace*

I wasn't going for a certain feeling on the album. We put together some songs we wanted to play and we improvised. We're playing this art form, and you just play—and what comes out, that's it!

On Emulation

There's nothing a person can say to express feeling. Nothing you can do about that. Everyone is different, everyone plays differently. That's in your body. It's a feeling. But I watched other drummers. You can't get the same feeling that they have, but you can do it your way. You don't copy them, but you do it your way. Then that's how it comes out. Art Blakey played the backbeat a certain way. I saw him many times. Now, I liked the feeling he had playing the backbeat. But he was built differently from me; I can't play the backbeat that way. I play the backbeat my way. A person can watch you and understand.

On the Eternal Question "Can Swing Be Taught?"

No. You can't teach somebody to swing or not be themselves. You can listen and know what swing is. That's not complicated. When you approach the art form yourself, you can only play what comes out. When you get on the stage and play, everyone can see who you are. You can't change a person's body and brain. People ask me technical questions, if I emphasize the third or second beat. I never even thought about that. I just play. You have to put in the time practicing, depending on what you want to do. How it comes out, that's up to you. Even if you try to play like somebody else, it will come out different anyway.

On the Priority of Time

The concept of time has changed. For some drummers time is not as important as it used to be. Playing a lot, and being able to accent and be heard and make the music more exciting—that's what has basically taken over to a big degree. Some guys are not satisfied with just playing time, like they used to be.

On Maintenance

I have a warm-up routine. I have a few exercises that I do. Single-stroke rolls, double-stroke rolls. It's not necessarily based on rudiments—I make up my own things. When I practiced growing up, I played what my mind and body wanted to do. It didn't have anything to do with rudiments, but with how I wanted to express myself.

Interview by Ken Micallef

Louis Hayes plays Sonor drums and Sabian cymbals and uses Regal Tip sticks.





Janette Beckman

Mission Statement

Styx's

Todd Sucherman

For twenty years he's been at the very top echelon of the rock and drumming worlds, largely on the basis of his scalding, unerring readings of classic Styx tracks recorded well before he joined the fray. Truth be told, that interpretation of his career tells only a fraction of the story. And anyway, there's a hot new collection of Styx songs that the drummer owns *completely*, and that perfectly communicate his skills, priorities, and aesthetic. Message received, loud and clear.

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky
Photos by Ash Newell





“*The Mission*

definitely has roots in *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces of Eight*. But it's also about the human beings that make up this band now and where we came from.”

It's almost impossible to see the classic rockers Styx live and not notice that there's some fire coming from the back of the stage. More than two decades after joining the band, Todd Sucherman still brings an unyielding energy to material he didn't originally create but that he's inarguably made his own.

Sucherman beefs up classic numbers like “Blue Collar Man (Long Nights),” “Renegade,” and “Too Much Time on My Hands” with power, precision, and otherworldly chops, and there's no sign of slowing down. “In Styx, I'm twenty years their junior,” Sucherman says, “so I'm never going to be the one who is drag-ass, because those guys are never drag-ass.”

Maybe the non-drummers in the audience are happy to sing along with all those hits from their youth, but anyone who's ever picked up a pair of sticks knows how tough a gig this is. Tricky odd-time grooves, big riffs, and huge power ballads are all in a night's work for Sucherman. But don't be surprised to hear him throw in some raging double bass that's not on the radio version you're familiar with, or forge a healthy slab of blazing hand technique that elevates a part to another level of excitement.

Originally from Chicago but now residing in

Austin, Sucherman was honored in 2015 by the readers of *Modern Drummer* as the top progressive rock drummer in the world. His skills make his phone ring for studio sessions when he has free time, and over the years he's played with everyone from Beach Boys legend Brian Wilson to Spinal Tap. He's also an in-demand clinician, and has produced two must-own DVD sets, *Methods & Mechanics* and *Methods & Mechanics II*, which are indispensable for drummers who are serious about expanding their horizons on the instrument. Dig into those for inspiration and a reality check for how much dedication it takes to get to and maintain this level of skill and work.

And though Sucherman's masterful playing can be found on a slew of live Styx recordings, the band is now releasing a brand-new studio album, *The Mission*, its first in fourteen years. A throwback to the styles of classic Styx records like *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces of Eight*, *The Mission* is a wonderful mix of knotty, '70s-era progressive rock madness alongside the melodic power pop the band does so well. And the production just *sounds* like it's from a bygone time. Sucherman might be the baby of the group, but he's an old soul when it comes to finding the right flavor for the new material.

MD: Twenty-one years in Styx. How do you keep it mentally interesting playing the same material every night?

Todd: I realize I'm in a fortunate position. I'm in a band that sold 30 million records before I came along. A good problem to have is to have hits that must be played. To keep what I call the "Groundhog Day" effect from kicking in, you have to realize why you're there. You're looking out into the audience and seeing these people that paid their hard-earned money to have a wonderful evening and escape from their daily lives, or to remember who they were when they were younger. You have to perform and entertain. You see new faces every night, and the music has to be reborn and be fresh, be a living organism.

When the audience is excited after the first four bars, it fuels the band to deliver. I did Brian Wilson's first-ever solo tour, in 1999. I'm playing songs like "Fun, Fun, Fun" and "Surfin' USA," things that have been played literally multiple millions of times by

every wedding and bar band for decades. What would make this performance real? When I'm playing an exciting four-on-the-floor surfing groove, it has to feel like we're going to the beach and we're going to see some chicks, we're going to drink beers and it's going to be an awesome day. It has to have that spirit behind it and not sound like some guy who's looking at his watch. Every song has to be a special event.

MD: *The Mission* sounds like a classic Styx record from long ago, and all is right in the world when an album opens with a bunch of drum breaks. Did you bribe somebody for that?

Todd: [laughs] That's just how it panned out. Styx hadn't done a record of new material in fourteen years, though I very much wanted to. Two years ago, the band was invited by Dr. Alan Stern and the team at NASA's New Horizons to come by their headquarters in Virginia. After nine years, they were finally hitting Pluto, and they named Pluto's fifth moon Styx.

Our continued friendship with the members of the New Horizons team inspired Tommy Shaw to come up with a bit of a space exploration concept. He had some pretty solid demos. It was a luxury to go to Tommy's home studio and have a week of preproduction and figure out what I needed to change with my parts. It was recorded analog to two-inch tape at Blackbird Studio in Nashville, and I was able to do my parts in two days.

When you're spending that kind of money at a studio, and because I've always groomed myself to be a session musician, you have to do things quickly. I was driven to save my organization money, because we were doing it the old-fashioned way, going into a big studio that has a million-dollar microphone collection. People say you can do records on the cheap, but everyone lives in different cities, so there are flights and hotels—and did you ever buy dinner for eight people? And if you do a record on your laptop, it'll sound like that. *The Mission*



was mixed like a classic '70s Styx record and really does capture that vibe.

MD: Did you record with your normal live setup, or did you experiment with some 1970s-style gear too?

Todd: Actually, I did use some beefy snares, tuned down, with Moongels. I used a 15" snare on some tracks. I knew we were taking a leap toward that vintage sound, and they nailed the pillowy puff of the '70s for sure.

MD: What's that hi-hat thing you do in "Overture"?

Todd: There are four hi-hat notes in a row, the first one stepping with the foot, the second with the left hand, and a pair of doubles with the right. Then there are ghost notes and a tom hit and a bass drum hit. The lick went perfectly with the ascending riff that was happening. I can't believe they let me get that in there, because it's a pretty out, unique-sounding, rattlesnake lick.

MD: What were you thinking on the Latin-y beat on "Trouble at the Big Show"?

Todd: The song had a bluesy, Jimi Hendrix-type vibe, so I thought of a not-quite—"Manic Depression," Mitch Mitchell type of thing. If I straightened it out to a classic jazz pattern but played it with a rock attitude, that might be an interesting flavor. In

shaping a piece of music, I always try to give each section its own flavor and vibe and think of the hills and valleys and dynamics. That way it could be a smooth listening experience... hopefully. [laughs]

MD: On "The Red Storm," there's a cool odd-time pattern with ride-bell hits, plus those solo breaks later. That might be the most involved drumming track.

Todd: I knew that song would be the drum feature on the record, if there was one. It's very complex. It goes from 5/8 to 6/8 with bits of four in there. The whole middle section has bars of 9/4 and 5/8, and the drums would start and stop with this stutter effect. In the initial groove, there's a polyrhythmic thing happening over the five, where the right hand overrides on a closed hi-hat on beats 1, 3, and 5 of the first bar and on 2 and 4 of the second, which then repeats. And contrapuntal to that, I'm playing quarter notes on the hi-hat with the foot, but every other one is an open slesh. I took that idea when it kicks into the verse, and I go to the ride cymbal to take it up one notch. And I play a couple rhythms every four bars on the bell of the cymbal against that. It went perfectly in between the vocal line, so it ended up being musically effective. [For more on "The Red Storm," see the Style and Analysis following this interview.]

MD: Let's talk about progressive rock in

RECORDINGS

Styx *The Mission, The Grand Illusion/Pieces of Eight Live, Cyclorama* /// **Neil Zaza** *Live From the Kent Stage* (to be released summer/fall 2017) /// **Tzan Niko** *TBA* (to be released late 2017) /// **Brian Wilson** *Reimagines Gershwin, That Lucky Old Sun* /// **Taylor Mills** *Lullagoodbye* /// **The Falling Wallendas** *Belittle* /// **Todd Sucherman** *Methods and Mechanics, Methods and Mechanics II* (DVDs)

2017 and how your new music relates to the music you grew up with.

Todd: I let the music inform me of what needs to be there, what works, what feels right. In the context of this new record, it definitely has roots in the band's past, specifically *The Grand Illusion* and *Pieces of Eight* and that era. But it's also the human beings that make up this band now and where we came from. That's what makes this stew so unique, where you can taste hints of this or that.

With drums, there might be a moment where there's a little splash of Vinnie, a little splash of Steve Smith, or a little of Queen's Roger Taylor, or ... *And Then There Were Three*—era Phil Collins. Because that's the stuff that informs me as a musician and what I can bring to the table when I'm free to do what I want to do. And that's the way it is with Lawrence [Gowan, keyboards]

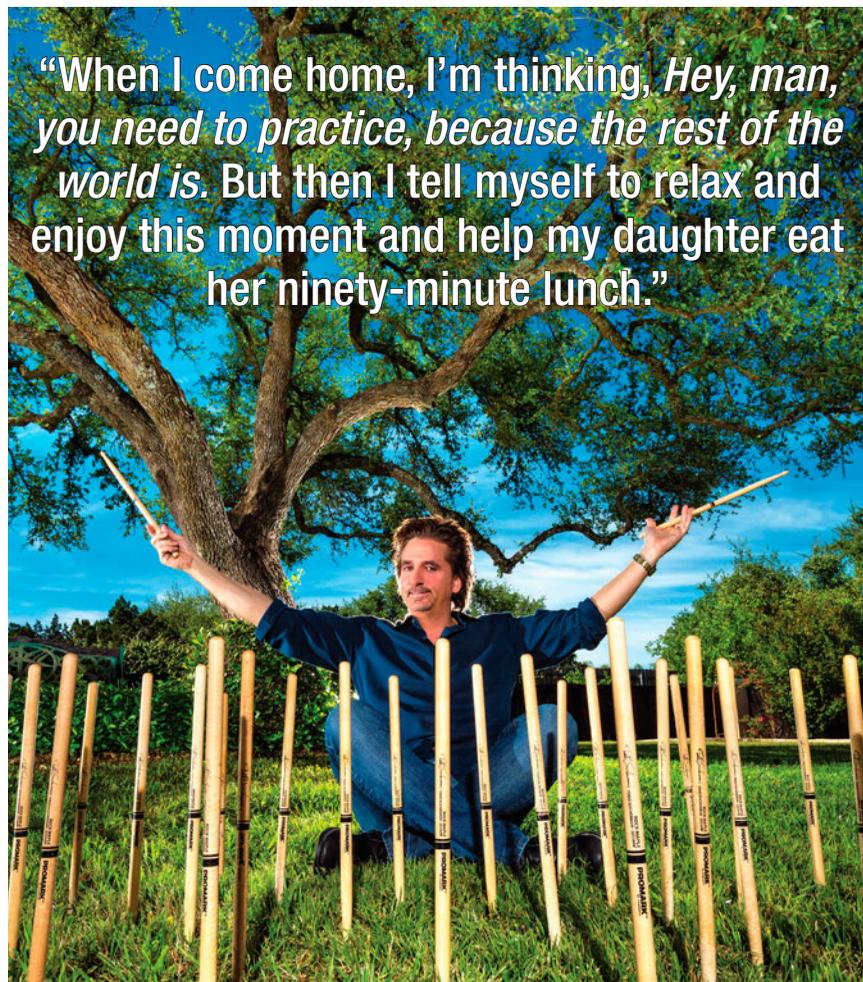
and Ricky [Phillips, bass]. We all take our experiences and the things that we like, and what comes out is something only the five of us could have done.

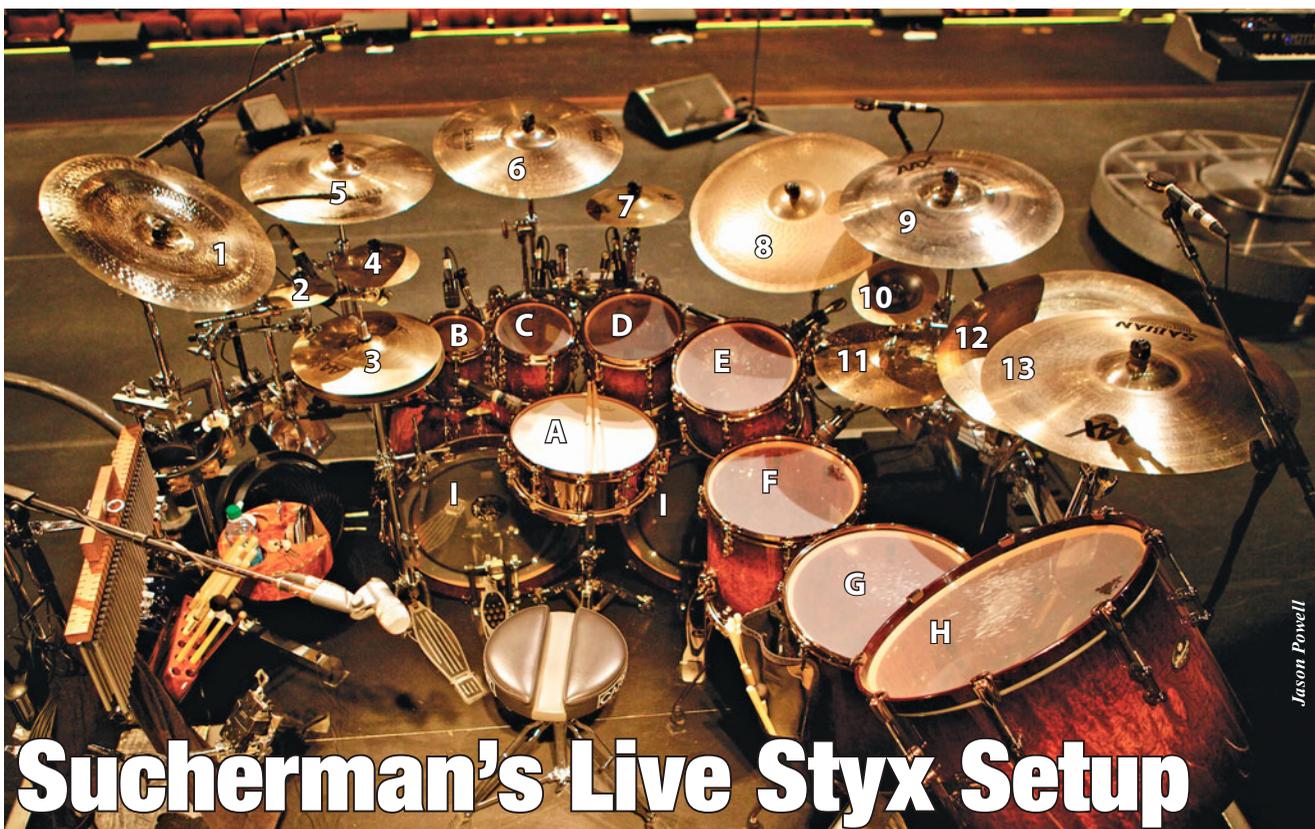
MD: And at this point, people can say, "That sounds like Todd."

Todd: I hope that's the case, but that's for others to decide. I just want it to be good and be proud of it.

MD: So why make a record in 2017?

Todd: Every year I've been asked if we were going to make another record. My answer has been that it's not my money to spend. But at a certain point, we had to do something. It's nice to have this experience and to present something. With Universal on board, it's a rarity for a musician or band to feel this way, in this landscape. It feels like the old days. With any art, some people are going to like it, and some people aren't going to like it. This came at a time when





Jason Powell

Sucherman's Live Styx Setup

Drums: Pearl Masterworks in bubinga with walnut burst finish and rose gold hardware
A. 5x14 rose gold snare
B. 7x6 tom
C. 7x8 tom
D. 8x10 tom
E. 8x12 tom
F. 14x14 floor tom
G. 16x16 floor tom
H. 14x20 gong drum
I. 18x22 bass drum
Not shown: 8x13 tom and 16x18 floor tom (added at press time)

Cymbals: Sabian
1. 19" AAX Extreme China
2. 6" AA splash
3. 14" AA Medium hi-hats
4. 8" AAX splash
5. 18" AAX V-Crash
6. 19" AAX V-Crash
7. 10" AA splash
8. 22" Vault Precision ride
9. 20" AAX V-Crash
10. 9" Prototype bell
11. 14" Artisan hi-hats
12. 22" AAX Extreme China
13. 22" AAX V-Crash

Hardware: Pearl, including bass drum pedal, stands, throne base, and Icon rack system, plus Sonor Signature legless hi-hat stand, Carmichael throne top, and Dunnett R-Class clamps in rose gold finish holding mics on toms

Heads: Remo, including Coated Ambassador snare batter and Hazy Ambassador snare-side, Clear Ambassador tom batters and resonants, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batters; front bass drum head design by DrumArt

Sticks: Promark Todd Sucherman SD330W autograph model

Mics: Audix

Percussion: TreeWorks chimes, Pearl tambourine, Sabian finger cymbal

Accessories: California redwood stick holder by Artisan Customs, bubinga Drum Waiter by Kentville Drums, in-ear monitors by Westone

we're all feeling creative, and it puts some wind in our sails to go and play shows and try to sneak a couple pieces of new music into the set. Hopefully that won't be the bathroom and beer break. You have to do it, or you're just a heritage act.

MD: Styx tours a lot, and you're also doing sessions here and there. How do you juggle the road and family?

Todd: It is a peculiar way to live, doing a hundred shows a year with one band. Now being a father, it's a constant, delicate balance dance. Frankly, I'm not home a lot. There's FaceTime, there's the telephone, but that's not the same thing as being here as a father. My wife is home with our daughter, and she's doing an amazing job. I'm out there supporting a family, and bills will never stop, and this is the life that I and we have chosen. I get back and there are appointments and things that need to be done.

But the other balancing act is I have a studio full of drums waiting for me. I've just been gone for nineteen days in a row, and it's very hard for me to say, "Hey, girls, I'm going to go in the studio for a couple of hours." But there's part of me that's driven to practice and play and get better, and I can't do that on the road. You simply cannot practice and get better on the road outside of the music that you're playing every night. You're not going to get better on the hotel bed or a practice pad in the dressing room.

MD: You mean you're not working out your new left-hand-lead exercise while your tech is setting up your kit?

Todd: Well, when we do a soundcheck, I'm very conscious not to play and annoy our crew. And even if I did, I would have five minutes. But when I come home, I'm thinking, *Hey, man, you need to practice, because the rest of the world is.* But then I tell

myself to relax and enjoy this moment and help my daughter eat her ninety-minute lunch. [laughs]

MD: Now what about the rest of the world? Your gig in Styx seems to be secure, but time is going one way. How do you grapple with a possible future when the band hangs it up?

Todd: I understand that at some point this carousel is going to come to a stop. The only things working against us are time and health. It is frightening to think that one day I won't have the security of this band. I hustled for so long in my youth to get to a certain point, and I don't know that I would have that in me down the line. I don't want to be sixty-five years old and haunting the halls of NAMM. All I ever wanted to do was be a working musician and play good music with good musicians, and I hope that continues once the inevitable happens



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Todd Sucherman

with this band. But like twenty years ago I couldn't envision what the landscape of the music business would be like now, I couldn't possibly fathom what it'll be like ten, twenty years from now.

MD: Do you go on YouTube and check out up-and-comers, or are you just on your own trip?

Todd: I keep my eyes and ears open, and I love a lot of what new, younger drummers are doing. I don't know if I'm part of the older generation, because I don't feel it, but it's our duty to pass on information to the next generation. I'm impressed with what the next generation is doing, but at the same time I like the pace that I'm evolving at, and certain things that I'm becoming aware of that I intrinsically knew but now I'm paying attention to.

MD: Give an example.

Todd: I was doing a recording session in Toronto where I was replacing another drummer, and the music was all done. The information I was getting through the music was that it was Foo Fighters meets Queen meets *Quadrophenia*-era Who, and I really bashed the hell out of the drums. And when I went in and listened to playback, although the parts were correct, no one's head was bobbing. There were no smiles or high fives in the room. It was like a hamburger from a hospital. It'll do the trick, but there's no love cooked into that burger. As a session musician, you have to go through the Rolodex of your mind, like, *The problem is me right now. How do I fix this?*

MD: No one was giving direction or tips at that moment?

Todd: It was ice silence in that room. Then I thought, sometimes drums and cymbals can only get so loud. So I decided to play the drums much quieter. I went out again to play this anthemic, screaming song, and I played the drums like I was at a cocktail party. I went back into the control room and now everybody's heads were bobbing, there were smiles, the drums sounded bigger. You could hear the snares rattle, the bottom tom heads; the cymbals were an oceanic wave hitting you in the face. And somehow the guitar lines became clearer. And now it sounded like a record.

But that's what won the day on that song, with those drums and those microphones, and where the drums were in the room. The next day it could have been a different story. That's the magic sparkle of "shit just is." There's an inherent magic of why things work at any given time. I've had an Acrolite with a Pinstripe and tape on it win the day on a session over a rack of \$1,000 snare drums behind me.

The Prog According to Todd



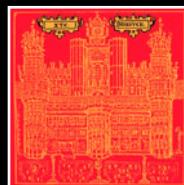
U.K. *Night After Night*

In 1981, Paul, my older brother—and a brilliant keyboardist—handed me *Danger Money* and *Night After Night* by U.K. and instructed me to “check these out.” I had already devoured all the Rush records at this point, but when I heard **Terry Bozzio** on *Night After Night*, it was a giant game-changer. Tom runs infused with flames, patterns phrased in odd groupings, double bass ideas galore, and marvelous symphonic sections in delicious proggy odd time signatures. It's just phenomenal music and brilliant playing that helped shape who I would become as a player.



Genesis *Seconds Out*

Seconds Out features **Chester Thompson** on his first tour with Genesis, and when **Phil Collins** isn't singing, he's ruling behind the drums. The fire, energy, and excitement still make me feel like a kid again whenever I hear it. That's the power of majestic music. A great place to start for anyone unfamiliar with their glorious catalog. When I was discovering this music, I would put on my headphones and be transported away from my seemingly dull suburban bedroom—which was idyllic in reality—to large country houses with manicured lawns to have tea with these English lads as I'd be entering strange worlds and meeting creatures they created with their adventurous progressive rock that was very much like classical music at times. I'd read every liner note, study the artwork, look for hidden meanings and messages. I couldn't get enough.



XTC *Nonsuch*

While this record may not meet the stereotypical notions of “prog,” I think there's truly progressive material here. Masterful songwriting, brilliant performances, and astounding sounds and production fill every second of this seventeen-track masterpiece. Still, after all this time, I hear new things in this record. There's a mix of Brian Wilson influence infused with a sour, British upper-crust thing, and the outcome is unique. **Dave Mattacks'** drumming is sublime. So deep, so hip. There's a beauty in the simplicity. “My Bird Performs” is a masterpiece. XTC's Andy Partridge called Mattacks “the king of the one-note drum fill.” Dave and I met when we played the Chicago Drum Show together and he said to me, “With songs this good, all I had to do was not screw them up.” Well, his playing on this record informs me every time I sit behind the drums. The record requires proper time to digest, and it will slowly reveal things over time, until one day you'll think to yourself, *This is one of the best records ever made.*

MD: But what's the tip for an aspiring session drummer who might go into the control room, feel the ice storm, and go back in to do a take with tons of fills to generate excitement?

Todd: You have to become sound-driven and let your ears dictate exactly what and how you play. There was no other choice in that session. The drums sounded thin. The cymbals were brittle. The vibe was not happening at all. Making the choice of playing softer was the only conclusion I could come to—letting the drums and cymbals breathe more by not bashing them, letting some air in the sound, which made the drums sound huge and the cymbals more dramatic. I was fairly certain this would work, and it did, and the difference between the two takes was astonishing.

Here's what I find a lot of drummers may not be paying attention to: Over the last couple of years, I've had about forty

There's so many of these things that I thought were basics, but maybe they're "not-so-basic basics." You can show someone the Moeller technique or what's involved with the mechanics, but how do you teach a vibe? How do drummers shape their heartbeat and be true to themselves? I try to tell them to play simple time, a simple groove that sounds good on its own. That's music. Other musicians hear that and they want to play with you, because you sound good and you make them sound better. Building from the bottom up, if you're playing 2-and-4, Western-based, backbeat music. A good, strong bass drum. Push the same density of air and sound from your bass and snare.

MD: How to strike the hi-hat is probably not what most people are thinking about.

Todd: In my first *Methods & Mechanics* DVD, I talk about getting different sounds out of the hi-hat, and I demonstrate what I call the shank-tip motion. This is one thing that



drummers take multiple hour-long lessons with me. Every one of these players plays professionally, whether doing tours or playing on records or playing at their stadium church, or they're just weekend guys. So many of them are not thinking about the balance and the sound they get on the drumset with just bass drum, snare, and hi-hat. They're not pulling a good sound out of the drums. Most of them are very weak on the bass drum, the snare is overpowering the bass drum, and they're not paying attention to how or why they're hitting the snare. And very few of them are playing on top of the hi-hat; they're barking into the edge. A very lumbering, cumbersome sound, which is a thing that works musically if that's the choice you're making. But this is their default way of playing.

separates the men from the boys. Think Jeff Porcaro playing a 16th-note one-hand groove, à la "I Keep Forgettin'"—that's what I'm talking about. That motion is an "in and out" motion and *not* an up-and-down motion. Well, three out of these forty students knew what that was and had it in their bag. And they sounded "pro." But the other thirty-seven sounded like stiff drum machines at best. All hunched over to the hi-hat side and looking pained as they played.

I asked all of them if they watched the shank-tip hi-hat section. "Oh, yes" was the reply from all. Well, just watching something doesn't mean that you *know* it. You have to take the time to implement these things into your playing. You must exaggerate the motions, learn them slowly, internalize them, and then—and only then—will this become your default hi-hat playing motion, because

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Todd Sucherman

it *sounds* better. And when you use your ears and become sound-driven in your choices, you will sound like a guy who plays on records.

MD: How about clinics today?

Todd: I was talking to Jojo Mayer when we did a clinic tour together in 2015 in Australia, and he said, "Remember drum clinics in the '80s, when they would rent out hotel ballrooms and there'd be 300 to 500 people there?" And I replied, "Absolutely, I was one of those kids." And he said, "Yeah, that doesn't happen anymore." And it dawned on me that nowadays, if you get a hundred people at your clinic, that's pretty good. But it used to be much more. Why aren't people coming out anymore? Well, while it's a wonderful thing that we can sit in our kitchens and see whatever we want on YouTube, it's a very different thing to go out and experience someone playing live, being able to ask them questions, listening to other questions. It's a bummer if someone knows [a drummer] is coming to town but they'll look at someone's shitty phone recording and decide to stay home and watch *Dancing With the Stars*. You have to go see artists while they're alive and on this planet. Buy a ticket, go—you're not going to regret it.

I used to go see Tony Williams six or seven times a year at the Jazz Showcase in Chicago, and it was a long drive, and it was expensive, and I was sixteen. But those are some of my most cherished musical memories. How lucky was I? People need to get off the couch and check stuff out, especially if you're a drummer and you want to do this. Go see a drummer you don't know anything about. You're bound to learn something.

MD: Do you see a trend from people at clinics or students toward a certain direction musically?

Todd: If anything, there's a slight trend of asking about things that aren't really important. Double bass. Things geared too much toward technique, and not the music or the "why." If you learn something as an exercise, then it might sound like an exercise. But if you think of what you're learning as music, hopefully it will come out sounding like music.

MD: Are you doing anything differently nowadays to get people out or keep people's attention?

Todd: My clinic is normally two hours. I'll play to some songs, do a big solo, and make mention of certain things that I think can help people sound better on the instrument. Then there's a good forty-five minutes to an hour where we're having a discussion, like hanging out in a living room. And there are no dumb questions. I tell them the only dumb thing is if you walk to your car and wish you'd asked a question.

We're all drummers, we're all friends. The camaraderie and brotherhood amongst drummers is unlike anything else. The clinic unfolds organically, whichever way the individuals who attend want to go. We can talk about the music business, gear, technique, whatever. Ultimately, it inspires younger players to be excited about music and the arts and doing this. When I see the kids all lit up and they can't wait to get to their drums, that's what it's all about.

And I'm often asked about what people can do to get to a place they want to be. And I say there are five things you can do starting right now that will enhance your chances to be a working musician. Number one: Always be on time. Be early and be reliable. Number two: Be prepared. Learn the material you're presented with. Know what you're going to do. Number three: Show up with the right tools for the job. Have great gear choices for the music you're going to play. Number four: Nail the job. Play the hell out of the music. Number five: Leave everybody happy that you were there. Be a good guy. Help the other musicians load out.

Put all five of those together, do that for a year, and see what happens. I guarantee you—only good things are going to come.

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Photo of Derrick Wright - Adele, Babyface, Toni Braxton and Thalia



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The fill at 3:16 incorporates rudiments, linear ideas, double bass, and polyrhythmic elements at a breathtaking speed.

@ 3:16

B RLL RLLRL RL RL RLRL RL RLRL RL RLRL RL RLLRLLRLRLRL

RL RLRLLRLLRRL RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLR IRLRLRLIR R

"Gone Gone Gone"

In the third measure of the fill at 1:05, Sucherman reverses the lead hand and plays a linear figure that ends with his left hand on the snare to set up the following crash.

@ 1:05

L R L R L R L L R L R L R L R L R

At 1:49, Sucherman's challenging sticking pattern creates an ascending and descending melodic tom groove with soft snare notes placed between hits on the gong drum, kick, and toms.

@ 1:49

L RLLRLLR LL LLRLLRLLR LLRLL RLRRL

Brad Schlueter is a professional drummer, educator, and freelance writer. Together with Todd Sucherman, he co-authored the book *Methods & Mechanics*, which was nominated in the 2013 *Modern Drummer* Readers Poll educational book category. For more info, visit bradschlueter.com.



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Greg Fox

The Eternal Quest

He thought he'd found "truth" with the transcendental metal band Liturgy. But activating hyperdrive and performing at light speed wasn't the answer for this Jedi drummer. Trading hardware for software was.

Story by Will Romano • Photos by John Fell

In the Red Hook neighborhood of Brooklyn, Greg Fox peers through his sunglasses across the East River and up at the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. Enormous heavy construction equipment clutters the immediate foreground as the gleaming Freedom Tower pierces the azure sky. Viewing "the bottom of the city like this," Fox says, "affords me an unusual vantage point."

Seeing life from different perspectives has become something of a preoccupation for Fox. At thirty-two, the adventurous drummer simultaneously juggles numerous diverse projects, unafraid to turn his musical and personal worlds upside down.

Fox has performed and recorded with a wide range of artists, from the Brooklyn-based esoteric black metal band Liturgy to the experimental/multi-genre act Guardian Alien. He's crisscrossed the globe as a touring musician and solo artist, and, proving he's not allergic to a structured work environment, even holds the title of director of music development at Pioneer Works, sculptor/painter Dustin Yellin's nonprofit art space in Red Hook.

Heralded by the *Village Voice* as the "best drummer" in New York City for 2011, Fox reinvigorated the pulverizing polka-esque blast beat through his near-inhuman stamina and superfast Moeller techniques. Simply put, Fox was one of the fastest metal

drumming dudes in the Big Apple—a Jedi-drummer-in-training tapping into some form of intangible energy and soaring to the top of the underground music universe at hyperspeed.

At least that's the way it appeared. Public images can be deceiving, however. Despite the accolades, and countless blown minds, Fox suffered agonizing internal discontinuity. "The Force," you could say, was out of balance. Fox took steps to remedy this situation, leaving Liturgy in 2011 and stepping out, first with Guardian Alien.

"In a way, Guardian Alien was an attempt to find my voice, but it came out of such tension, insecurity, and fear," says Fox, who has an on-again/off-again relationship with Liturgy. "It was endless pounding as fast and hard as I could."

Risking irreparable career (if not psychological) damage, Fox set the controls for percussive planets unknown, pursuing collaborations with the dirge-delirious, hypno-jazz-metal horn player Colin Stetson (Ex Eye, Arcade Fire), New York-based avant-proggers Zs, and, in the Fox Millions Duo, Oneida's post-rock drummer, John Colpitts. The New York City native also began studying with basement-dwelling jazzier Milford Graves to produce MIDI-controlled music based on the rhythms of his own heartbeat.

Fox further challenged himself by

integrating cutting-edge Sunhouse Sensory Percussion software into his setup and exploring its endless possibilities. Through technology Fox experienced a kind of rebirth while also mapping his imagination, which author Erik Davis has coined "TechGnosis."

Indeed, for a "durational sound installation" performance at the 2016 Moogfest, Fox played continuously for four hours, interfacing with both the Sensory Percussion program and different Moog synths as Sunhouse cofounder and developer Tlacacl Esparza manned the controls. This was a victory, not in the war of man versus machine but in the evolutionary process of man as machine.

Make no mistake, though: Fox is far from cyborg. If anything, the multifaceted rhythmic dynamo applies software technology to achieve a very human form of self-awareness, even enlightenment. Sensory, then, is a mirror for Fox to evaluate and reevaluate his approach—just one of the many tools the drummer uses to examine his life and perhaps ultimately change it.

In a crowded Brooklyn lunch spot, *MD* sat down with Greg to discuss a wide range of topics, from material appearing on his new jazz-ish electroacoustic solo album, *The Gradual Progression*, to mitral-valve music and MIDI drumming.



MEN WORKSHOP

MD: On the walk over here, you said your new solo record, *The Gradual Progression*, is really your voice. What did you mean?

Greg: It's the most authentic communication I've been able to make professionally. It's going to be the beginning of another phase for me.

MD: Why do you say that?

Greg: Do you know about Sensory Percussion? I've known Tlacaél [Esparza] for a long time. I endorse Sunhouse product and was a kind of beta tester, you could say. I've been familiarizing myself with it for probably two years. It's the big game changer. On my new record everything is live and I'm using Sensory with an acoustic kit. The cool thing about working with musicians who are using acoustic instruments is that it's very clear where the electronic sound is coming from.

MD: Does Sensory Percussion software work via MIDI?

Greg: Yes. It turns the drumset into an extremely sensitive, versatile, responsive MIDI controller. You're building this sympathetic architecture that responds to the way you drum.

MD: *The Gradual Progression*, like so many of your projects, can best be described as a multi-genre effort. It's jazz, but not really jazz at all. How has Sensory helped facilitate musical growth?

Greg: There's material on the new record in which almost everything I'm controlling from the computer is tonal. In another piece ["By Virtue of Emptiness"] the snare and kick are both triggering random slices of a drum loop—of another recording of a drum loop. The kick is also controlling somewhat muted, long bass tones. When I hit the middle of the snare it makes a short, higher-pitched tone. A rimshot makes a long, ringing tone. You're dealing with six

different MIDI assignments per drum.

MD: It almost sounds as though you have infinite options.

Greg: Which is why it's so cool. Tlacaél's big innovation is writing machine-learning algorithms.

Changing Perceptions

MD: You've been exploring the possibilities of Sensory Percussion, but the public perception of your talents is very much as an extreme drummer.

Greg: Which was never how I used to describe myself, but it was this thing that preceded me. As a young guy, I needed validation, someone at the end of the night to say, "That was insane." There was a time when I was deriving way too much personal satisfaction from being told my playing was awesome. At a certain point I needed to shift where I was getting my satisfaction. Now I'm not interested in pummeling people into chicken paillard. I'm just glad I've had the opportunity to play with guys like Colin Stetson, who appreciates some of my more subtle abilities.

MD: Can you talk about your drumming background?

Greg: I studied a little with Marvin "Bugalu" Smith and Thurman Barker. I also studied very briefly with Jojo Mayer. He gave me a few little pointers. I worked at Manny's [Music] for about a year, in between high school and college, and I ran the drum department on Sundays when I was seventeen. I started selling harmonicas and effects pedals. Guy Licata [Bill Laswell] worked there, and he took me under his wing. I owe everything to Guy, really. He showed me the benefit of practicing seriously and the Moeller stuff and mini Moeller stuff—the "fill up the gas tank"

push-pull. I took some lessons with him too, which were mostly free and informal. I was awed by his technique, and he got me into jungle and drum 'n' bass music.

MD: How often were you applying the Moeller stuff?

Greg: In college I had a metal band and I was using some of that quick-motion reflex stuff, transferring between blast beats and triplet hits. Then I played in this drone band, Teeth Mountain, learning all of this polyrhythm stuff and using a bit of hand technique. But it wasn't until Liturgy that I started to figure out how to apply it. I remember the moment it happened: During one Liturgy rehearsal, all of a sudden I started using the mini Moeller stuff. I said, "All of these years on the practice pad were worth it."

Smart Software

MD: Let's get back to Sensory Percussion. The software involves the use of sensors. How do they work?

Greg: Sensory Percussion sensors work similarly to microphones and mount onto the rim of a drum. That sensor is connected, via XLR cable, to an audio interface. The Sensory Percussion software interprets that XLR audio signal. The machine-learning algorithms detect the timbral zones of each drum and make MIDI assignments to those zones. It can even blend those zones. It becomes a continuous controller, and that's where it gets magical.

MD: There's a YouTube video of you doing a show with only a snare drum.

Greg: That was maybe the second time I'd ever done that. What you can't see in that video real well is [Esparza] sitting behind me, manning the computer. He wasn't controlling what was happening on the

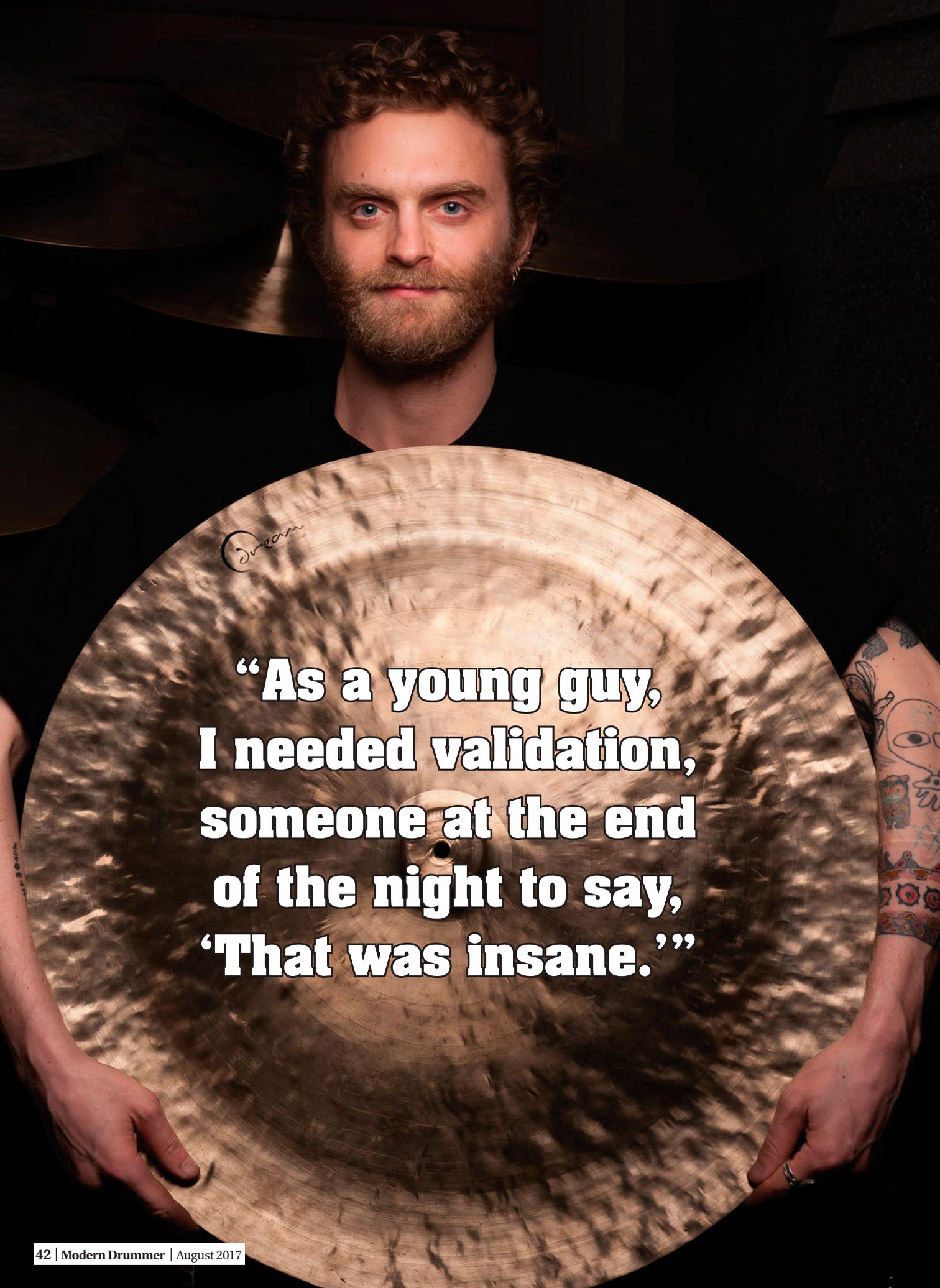
Tools of the Trade

Fox uses a variety of kits in the studio and on the road, but his main setup is a Premier Gen-X in purple sparkle finish, and he will use different combinations of its 10", 12", and 13" high toms and 14" and 16" low toms. Fox uses a Tama Speed Cobra double pedal on the 22" bass drum, as well as a Low Boy custom beater. For cymbals he sticks to his grandfather's hand-me-down Zildjian K Constantinople 14" hi-hats, and he picks and chooses from a vintage 19" Dream Bliss crash/ride, a 22" Dream Gorilla ride, a 22" Dream Energy crash/ride, and a 24" or 28" Dream Lion China. Sensory Percussion sensors and software augment his setup.



MESHUGGAH



A man with curly brown hair and a beard is looking directly at the camera. He is holding a large, circular brass cymbal in front of his chest. The cymbal has the word "Dream" written on it in a cursive font. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the man and the cymbal. The man has tattoos on his arms, including a large one on his right arm that looks like a cartoon character's face. He is wearing a black t-shirt.

**“As a young guy,
I needed validation,
someone at the end
of the night to say,
‘That was insane.’”**

Recordings

Greg Fox The Gradual Progression, Mitral Transmission (digital, released as limited run with plantable “seed paper”) /// **Ex Eye** Ex Eye /// **Colin Stetson** Sorrow: A Reimagining of Gorecki’s 3rd Symphony /// **Liturgy** The Ark Work, Aesthetica, Renihilation /// **Zs Xe** /// **Guardian Alien** Spiritual Emergency, See the World Given to a One Love Entity /// **Man Forever** Pansophical Cataract /// **Fox Millions Duo** Lost Time /// **Ben Frost** Aurora

drums, but he was moving from one sound world to another. [“When I completely pulled the rug out from under him, he looked back at me and laughed,” Esparza tells us.]

Closer to the Heart

MD: You were working with avant-garde jazz drummer Milford Graves to create music based on the rhythm of your heartbeat. How?

Greg: Milford made a recording of my resting heart rate using computer medical equipment and got a very high-quality recording of my heartbeat. Data readings were done too, using EKG. He developed software to convert all of the data and the audio recording into a MIDI score, which was the basis of my record *Mitral Transmission* [2014]. Sensory Percussion came along pretty soon after that, so I switched gears a little.

MD: Is that a hang drum on “It’s OK”?

Greg: It’s a sampled pan drum—same basic thing. That track is two or four EBowed acoustic guitars and a couple of pan drums interpreting the heart score. There’s no actual drumming on *Mitral Transmission*. I processed data that I got from Milford; I told the computer what to do, and it did it. I made a score of “It’s OK” and there was talk of actually trying to stage it, but I never followed through.

MD: How did you hook up with Graves?

Greg: A bunch of people told me I should reach out to him. Then I had a synchronistic event where I was at the Strand [bookstore], browsing in the weirdo/ UFO section. I was looking for new alien books and I pulled out a copy of *Arcana II: Musicians on Music*, the John Zorn book, and opened it randomly to the Milford page. That’s what Taoists and people who use I Ching call an outer sign. Through a

friend I got in touch with Milford. Before proceeding he said he would do some detective work on me and get back to me.

MD: Detective work?

Greg: I think he searched me on the computer. He watched online videos and said, “What is this Liturgy shit?” He wasn’t feelin’ it, but he got a sense of the total energy of the music. I guess I passed the test. He decided that I was worthy of his time. I seem to pick up on certain energies, and in some ways Milford’s the combination of both of my grandfathers. My dad’s dad was a chemist and had a lab in his basement. My mom’s father was a drummer and he had drumset in his basement. I go into Milford’s basement [in Queens, New York], and he has a lab and a drumset.

MD: As far as technique, what have you learned from Milford?

Greg: Nothing. It’s more about championing the thought process behind or the emotional approach to playing than actual hand techniques. One time we sat at the drums and we played Swiss Army triplets as fast as we could. He played triplets very, very fast. Then I did it and it was fast. He was like, “Not bad.” I’ve watched him play piano and tabla.

I got a fair amount of helpful criticism in my playing from him but also a lot of encouragement and good advice.

MD: You created music from a heartbeat rhythm with the Fox Millions Duo.

Greg: Well, sort of. We did and we didn’t. We put contact mics up to our hearts and amplified our heartbeats. We used a recording of the heartbeats for our record.

MD: It’s interesting that the human heartbeat resembles a triplet.

Greg: Right. The mini Moeller thing, the Jojo thing, is like the heart valve opening and closing. It feels better to play a

heartbeat pattern as a triplet than a two-beat pattern.

Infinity and Beyond

MD: You once described a vision you had of an extraterrestrial being handing you a copy of Guardian Alien’s *See the World Given to a One Love Entity*. The cover of the record depicts this scene, a representation of infinity.

Greg: That’s the Droste effect. At the time there were not a lot of boundaries, emotionally and psychically. I was sitting in the back of Liturgy’s tour van, trying to cool out because of tension and nerves. I closed my eyes and was doing some breathing exercises when all of a sudden I had a really vivid image of the title and cover. Sometimes when you’re doing those kinds of meditation exercises it’s like going to sleep. That was one of those moments that I dropped really deep, really fast. It had a lot to do with my emotional state at the time.

MD: Were you dealing with personal or professional stuff?

Greg: Both. It’s really personal stuff that gets projected. Certain things I thought were true weren’t, and I was becoming disillusioned.

MD: Relating to your career?

Greg: Career, music stuff, relationship stuff. I find a lot of tension between two life approaches. There’s the “lazy river ride” approach, which I conflate to a degree with a Taoist philosophy of allowing things to just happen. But there’s the other approach of seeing what you want and going to get it. Maybe ultimately we’re all in the lazy river. Maybe if you’re striving to make your own destiny you’re actually relaxing on the lazy river. I don’t know. I’m still learning.



Clyde Stubblefield

April 18, 1943–February 18, 2017

by Jim Payne with David Stanoch

On the B-side of “Cold Sweat,” the gravelly voice of James Brown shouts several times, “Can I give the drummer some?” The band shouts back, “Yeah, yeah, give the drummer some!” When James finally pulls the trigger—“You got it, drummer!”—Clyde Stubblefield delivers a world-class, super-funky break that would soon take on a life of its own.

From that point forward, the phrase “give the

drummer some” was a rallying cry for drummer power and respect. “Cold Sweat,” which was done in one take with one microphone, was released in 1967, and, with Stubblefield’s groundbreaking groove, is considered by many to be the first certified funk song. Producer Jerry Wexler recalled, “‘Cold Sweat’ deeply affected the musicians I knew. It just freaked them out. No one could get a handle on what to do next.”

“Funky Drummer”

In 1970, James Brown played a show in Atlanta and then drove to Cincinnati, where he dragged the band into a studio to record “Funky Drummer.” Stubblefield said he never really liked what he did on that song, but when he started playing and the band fell in, the result was magic. Clyde’s drum break on “Funky Drummer” is universally understood to be the world’s most sampled beat. And that’s just one of several breaks that have ensured his legendary status.

The “Funky Drummer” break appears in some of rap and hip-hop’s greatest hits, including “Fight the Power” by Public Enemy,

“Mama Said Knock You Out” by LL Cool J, and recordings by the Roots, Nicki Minaj, Sinéad O’Connor, A Tribe Called Quest, Run-DMC, the Beastie Boys, George Michael, DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince, De La Soul, Sublime, and more than 1,300 more.

Was Stubblefield angry that he received no royalties for “Funky Drummer” and all the other songs he played on? “I wasn’t thinking about money at the time,” Clyde told us after a clinic in San Jose, California, in 2006. “I was just thinking about playing music, traveling the world, and having a good time. We got down, and we cooked. When that band was on, it was like Sherman tanks

coming down the aisle. I’m proud of what I’ve done, and I’ve gotten recognition from a lot of wonderful people all over the world. I don’t want to dwell on negativity or spread it around. I try to respect everyone and live with dignity.”

Stubblefield said he would’ve been happy simply with recognition for his work. It’s worth noting that one artist who wouldn’t be satisfied with the status quo was Prince, who’d sampled Clyde on three of his tunes—and donated \$80,000 to pay medical bills that the drummer incurred when he was diagnosed with cancer in the early 2000s.

His Influence Flows Through Us Peers, Disciples, and Friends on the Funky Drummer

Michael Bland (Prince, Soul Asylum)

I did a double-drumming session with Clyde for a track on a Phil Upchurch record at Paisley Park in the mid-’90s. As soon as he started playing, all I wanted to do was put my sticks down and listen. The anatomy of all those JB records was just there in the raw. After the session, he told me to stop by his house if I was ever in Madison, Wisconsin, for barbecue. Great guy and an incredible musician and innovator.

Chris Dave (D’Angelo, Maxwell, Drumheadz)

Clyde Stubblefield = game-changer.

Steve Gadd (Chick Corea, Steely Dan, Paul Simon)

I had never met Clyde personally before NAMM 2017, and it was an honor and a thrill for me. I was obviously influenced not only by the things I heard him play over the years but also by the things I heard others play, where his influence flowed through them—even if they didn’t know his name. He’s an unsung hero, and he gave us so much. I think it’s good that people know that and don’t forget it.

Ahmir “Questlove” Thompson (*The Tonight Show*, the Roots)

The funky-funkest drummer of all time. Thank you for everything you’ve taught me. The spirit of the greatest grace-note left hand will live on through all of us.



The Beginning

Clyde Stubblefield was never formally trained on the drums. He was inspired by the parade drummers he watched marching in the streets in his hometown of Chattanooga, Tennessee. But, as he

related in an interview for the book *Give the Drummers Some!*, “I didn’t want to play right, left, right, left.” He was more interested in the rhythms created by the machines he heard in the factories that he passed on his way to school. “I had that rhythm going

on around me all the time growing up,” Stubblefield recalled in an interview at the Vic Firth website. “The trains used to go to Chattanooga. I heard all kinds of sounds. I’d hear one rhythm on one side of the street and a different one on the other. When I got

Erik Hargrove (James Brown)

As the last drummer hired for Mr. James Brown, I’ve always felt an obligation to carry on what was passed down from one of the longest lineages of drummers from a single artist. Mr. Clyde Stubblefield left more than just a mark on this lineage. He left an enormous crater that can never be filled. Not just because many of his grooves have been sampled and used in multiple genres, but also because of the emotional content that went into his playing. Each drum stroke conveyed his joy, pain, struggles, and victories.

Daru Jones (the Ruff Pack, Jack White)

I had the honor of hanging with Clyde for a couple days back to back in 2012. Clyde and I jumped behind two drumkits for a duo jam that was too funky. (It’s documented and posted on my YouTube channel.) I was humbled by Clyde’s humility and positive attitude as he shared some amazing stories from his experience working with JB. Clyde was truly a one-of-a-kind, beautiful spirit. He’ll be missed.

Wally Ingram (Sheryl Crow, Bonnie Raitt, Steve Kimock)

Clyde’s smile and undeniable syncopated backbeat groove are burned indelibly into my mind’s eye and soul forever! Since I met Clyde at age nineteen, he’s been a huge influence and inspiration as both a mentor and a friend.

Christian McBride (bassist)

A huge chunk of funk history has passed on to the ages. RIP to the great Clyde Stubblefield.

Steve Jordan (John Mayer, Keith Richards, David Sanborn)

In 1967, I was just a little boy in the Bronx. I didn’t own a drumset. I had a gold sparkle Zim Gar snare. My best friend, Leroy Clouden, had a blue sparkle four-piece Kent kit. When “Cold Sweat” came out, if you played drums in the hood and couldn’t execute that beat, you could *not* call yourself a drummer.

Clyde Stubblefield changed the face of music by his use of

Clyde Stubblefield

home I'd try to play them both together."

Clyde left Tennessee in the mid-'60s to work with blues guitarist Eddie Kirkland in Macon, Georgia, which led to several road trips with Otis Redding, whose career was starting to take off with songs like "Pain in My Heart," "Respect," and "I Can't Turn You Loose."

Then, one night in a Macon nightclub, James Brown heard Stubblefield's drumming. He called Clyde over to his table, told him he liked what he was doing, and said, "Come down to Augusta and let me hear you play. I'm gonna need a drummer." A few days after Clyde jammed with Brown and his group in Augusta, he got the call: "Mr. Brown wants you to come to North Carolina and join the band."

"I flew in and started playing with them," Stubblefield recalled in *Give the Drummers Some!* "When I walked on stage, they had five sets of drums sitting there already! What'd he need another one for? Eventually, Brown broke it down to two drummers—Jabo Starks and myself were the two left." Thus began a long partnership between the two groove masters.

Things progressed rapidly after Stubblefield joined Brown's band. "Cold

Sweat" was followed by "There Was a Time" (1967), "I Got the Feelin'" (1968), "Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud" (1968), and a string of other hits, including "Mother Popcorn" (1969), "Ain't It Funky Now" (1969), and "Funky Drummer" (1970). This period also included amazing live albums featuring Stubblefield and Starks: *Live at the Garden* (1967), *Live at the Apollo II* (1968), and *Sex Machine: Live in Atlanta* (1970), which features Clyde playing one of the most powerful drum breaks ever on "Give It Up or Turnit a Loose."

An Everlasting Influence

I met Clyde in New York in the late '70s. I was doing a recording session with singer Edwin Birdsong. Saxophonist Pee Wee Ellis had recently left his post as James Brown's bandleader and had joined Birdsong's group, which also included the modern-jazz greats Michael and Randy Brecker. After we'd recorded a couple tunes, Pee Wee came over to me and said, "A friend of mine is in town, and Birdsong wants him to play on a few tracks." I was surprised but said okay.

Then Clyde walked into the drum booth and introduced himself. I thought to myself, *Oh my God... it's Clyde Stubblefield!* He sat

down, and the band started running down the next track. Clyde had it memorized after one run-through and began playing a variation of his "Mother Popcorn" groove, which fit the music perfectly.

Stubblefield was in New York a few years later, and he came to visit me. I brought him to my gig near Woodstock. There were about ten people in the club, and I had Clyde play a set. The guys in the band were super-impressed with not only his playing but also his positive, easygoing spirit. Here was the legendary funk drummer playing with some young guys in a nearly empty club and having a great time.

"When you work with other musicians," Clyde said after the 2006 San Jose clinic, "you have to be at peace with yourself. You have to respect yourself in order to deserve respect and love from others." When asked if he had any regrets, Clyde replied, "I have a few, but I can't think of 'em, because I don't keep 'em in my head."

Clyde Stubblefield, *the* funky drummer, created and recorded some of the most gut-wrenching, determined, and creative grooves ever, and the musical community will miss him dearly.

syncopation. Along with John "Jabo" Starks, these two men did their share to usher in a new way of thinking and playing. To me, there's nothing more thrilling than watching footage of Clyde playing with Mr. Brown during the period from '67 to '70.

One of the biggest thrills of my life was hanging with Clyde, Jabo, and Zigaboo [Modeliste] in New York City, just listening to great music and hearing great stories from back in the day. What a sweet, humble man. I don't think Clyde ever realized the impact he had on modern music. He will be missed.

John Scofield (jazz/fusion guitarist)

I got to play with Clyde on a long tour in 1999. He was super-funky and a wonderful person to be around. We had so much fun. We would watch *Teletubbies* in his hotel room and crack up! The last time I played Madison, he sat in with us, and I heard his band at a late-night set. He was playing better than ever. He was *the* funky drummer.

Stanton Moore (Galactic, Stanton Moore Trio)

I can't think of any other drummer who has had as much of an impact on popular music and culture as Clyde Stubblefield. Clyde helped create funk with his work with James Brown. He laid down tons of amazing funk-drumming gems. As if "Cold Sweat," "Mother Popcorn," and "Since You've Been Gone" weren't enough, his drum break in "Soul Pride" has been sampled and used as a foundation for drum 'n' bass. And his break in "Funky Drummer" literally laid the foundation for hip-hop.

Clyde was a beautiful soul and a humble human being. He took his impact in stride. It was always great to be around his wonderful spirit.

The world will miss you, but your incredible musical contributions will live on.

Johnny Rabb (Collective Soul)

I had the honor of meeting Clyde years ago, when I was working at my drumstick company. Clyde was kind enough to do a telephone interview with me regarding the epic amount of times he had been sampled. In the interview, I quickly understood how humble, kind, and down to earth Clyde was. Over the years I would see him and Jabo at events and trade shows. They would always take time to chat and talk about what they'd been doing. As a team, they had so much feel, touch, and groove... it was mind-blowing. I will miss Clyde's personality and

approach to music and drums. He truly was an original. Thank you, Clyde, for your kindness and inspiration.

Bernard Purdie (Aretha Franklin, Steely Dan, James Brown)

Clyde was a friend. He was a super-musician with the personality to go with it. We shared a great deal of music together, and we got along because we admired each other. People think that we were rivals, but we were friends. He was a very lovable person who liked what he did, and he was good at it!

Ben Sidran (producer, pianist, songwriter)

Clyde was a bundle of joy and a steam engine, and playing with him was like rolling off a log or grooving with the washing machine. We used to call him Sugarfoot, because if you ever needed to make a tough edit in the studio—and this was in the days of sixteen tracks and cutting tape with razor blades—all you had to do was solo the kick drum.

Alfred "Pee Wee" Ellis (James Brown bandleader and saxophonist)

Clyde lived simply, loved generously, cared deeply, and left the rest to God. He was naturally funky without bells and whistles and fancy complex time signatures. Just solid and dependable, he cared about the big picture more than himself. I loved working with him.

Zoro (Lenny Kravitz, Bobby Brown)

There are many great drummers that have come and gone in this world, but few of them have changed the art of drumming and the way we approach the groove in such a quantifiable way. Clyde Stubblefield was a game-changer! As one of the architects of funk music and funk drumming, his timeless grooves have made an indelible mark. As a person, Clyde touched the hearts of all those who were fortunate enough to meet him. And for those blessed to call him a friend, he was always a delight to be around. He will be sorely missed.

John "Jabo" Starks (James Brown, Bobby "Blue" Bland)

Clyde was one of the finest drummers and funkiest drummers we will ever know. It was a blessing to have worked with him for the many years I did. Please don't forget him. He's one of the roots.

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"I Got the Feelin'"

Tower of Power's David Garibaldi on a Classic Clyde Track

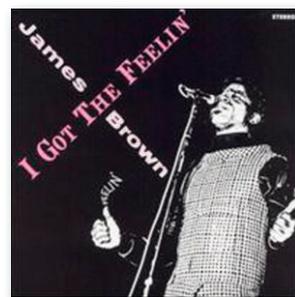
James Brown's "I Got the Feelin'" is my favorite Clyde Stubblefield track, and the following transcriptions from this song are my tribute to one of the greatest modern drummers. Recorded in 1968, the performance is as fresh today as it was when it was first recorded, and it represents the true sign of a genius. At that time in the funk world, no one else was playing with this degree of sophistication. Many of Clyde's unique, forward-thinking sticking ideas from this song have found their way into the modern drumset vocabulary.

Stubblefield's performance is a tremendous lesson in feel, and transcribing and capturing his feel in print is virtually impossible. However, notating the dynamic changes and subtleties in a performance can help to highlight his style. That being said, feel is as personal and unique as handwriting, and this track is a great example of a drummer who has his own voice.

There's some very subtle and seemingly random dynamic articulation in this song. For instance, Stubblefield plays improvised accents with and without rimshots while incorporating ghost notes. The bass drum also improvises accents with softer attacks. The hi-hat is accented, however it's as if Clyde is leaning into the louder hi-hat notes as opposed to actually accenting them. And there's always an emphasis on beat 1. Learning the following grooves, or any other phrases from the track, while matching the articulation of the original performance can help in understanding how to build one's own voice.

These transcriptions also have some sticking combinations that make this performance special. The rhythms themselves were groundbreaking, but the inner parts are truly genius. When I started listening and learning to play this way, I came upon a three-note left-hand sequence that I use in certain situations to create continuous 16th notes. I realized years later that this came from Clyde's drumming. The following excerpts show two-measure sequences that contain these three-note figures. The two-beat turnaround at the end of each phrase can be used as a separate exercise to isolate these groupings.

The ideas discussed here are central to Clyde's organic and intuitive approach. I'm still learning from him and am so very thankful for what he has left for all of us to explore.



@ 0:00

1

@ 1:03

2

@ 1:07

3

@ 1:14

4

@ 1:59

5





I N M E M O R I A M
CLYDE STUBBLEFIELD
1943-2017

Thank you for the music.

We will miss you.



Great Drums at Sun

A new compilation puts drummers square at the center of the most important musical invention of the mid-twentieth century. They called it *rock*.

by Patrick Berkery



J.M. Van Eaton with Billy Riley

As Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and Roy Orbison were defining rock 'n' roll's first wave at Memphis's Sun Studios in the 1950s, a group of shadow-figure drummers led by J.M. Van Eaton and W.S. Holland were forming the bedrock of rock 'n' roll drumming on the hundreds of songs released by Sam Phillips' in-house Sun Records label. You can hear that style taking shape across the twenty-eight tracks featured on the recently released collection *Great Drums at Sun* (Bear Family). It's exhaustively researched

and painstakingly annotated drumming anthropology, highlighting the spark these Sun sticksmen brought to their work during rock's nascent days.

This is not an assemblage of quaint 4/4 and gentle *ting-ting-a-ting* shuffling from a bygone era. *Great Drums* lives up to its name, showcasing no-joke chops that sound as vibrant today as they did sixty years ago, from Van Eaton (dig the flipped beats and two measure-long single-stroke rolls he plays on Lewis's "Lovin' Up a Storm") and Holland (like the alternating Latin and rock feels he applies

to Carl Mann's "Foolish One") along with others in the studio's drumming crew, including Johnny Bernero (who played on many Elvis sides at Sun), Bobby Crafford, Joe Riesenberger, Billy Pat Ellis, and Houston Stokes.

It didn't matter that the blues had only recently birthed this baby called rock 'n' roll, that Van Eaton was barely out of high school, that Holland had precious little experience behind a kit, or that Bernero's tastes leaned more toward jazz. The Sun drummers blazed a path for future generations of rockers. Taking their cues from

Dixieland, swing, and early R&B timekeepers, they brought the rock and, most important (as Keith Richards and the late Chuck Berry would tell you), the *roll* to these simple and usually very sparse songs. Charlie Watts, Ringo Starr, John Bonham, and many other top names would take it from there over the course of the next decade, but their lineage runs directly back to Sun Studio.

"We were at ground zero, trying to create all this stuff," the seventy-nine-year-old Van Eaton says with a noticeable measure of pride. "We were just

trying to figure out how to do it ourselves.”

Holland, who at eighty-two is still gigging regularly, laughs, then politely interrupts *Modern Drummer* in the midst of a compliment about his playing on the aforementioned “Foolish One,” a peppy song whose Latin feel is referred to as a tresillo rhythm in the *Great Drums* liner notes. “Here I was in 1958 playing a rhythm that was developed in Cuba,” he says. “I am so glad to find out all these years later what I was doing, because I had no idea.”

You can forgive Holland for being tresillo-ignorant. He wasn’t exactly a student of rhythm or drumming coming up. In fact, he wasn’t a drummer at all when Carl Perkins invited him to play drums at his audition for Phillips at Sun in 1954. Holland was a friend of the Perkins family who worked as an air-conditioning repairman, and he would regularly go see the burgeoning rockabilly legend at local clubs. When the spirit moved him one time, he hopped on stage to tap along on the hollow body of Perkins’ younger brother Clayton’s upright bass. That impromptu act launched Holland’s drumming career, the highlights of which include rollicking and chugging along with Perkins in his glory days, followed by a forty-year stint doing the same with Johnny Cash.

“Carl saw something in me,” Holland reminisces. “I had never even seen a drumset before, but he says, ‘You keep time on that bass like that, you’ve got the feel. I know you can play.’ And it never crossed my mind to take lessons. If I did, I’d have just played like everybody else. And none of this probably would have happened.”

Unlike Holland, Van Eaton, who also still plays regularly, had been playing drums, learning the instrument in his high school orchestra. He says he was offered a music scholarship to attend the former Memphis State College, but



W.S. Holland with Carl Perkins

declined it when he saw an opportunity to work his way up the ranks at Sun, starting on a session with Jimmy Williams for an amped-up shuffle called “Fire Engine Red,” which can be found on *Great Drums*.

“It was a terrible song,” Van Eaton says, failing to note that his powerful drumming dominates the admittedly undistinguished bit of jump blues. “I was about seventeen and still learning how to play. Later I went back in with a band called the Echoes. I’d just bought a new set of Gretsch drums, and I was playing a little bit better by then and they offered me a job to play with Billy Lee Riley. That kinda got me started. Next thing you

know, here comes Jerry Lee, and it took off from there.”

Jerry Lee Lewis was hardly “the Killer” when he arrived at Sun in 1956. “A total misfit,” is how Van Eaton remembers him in those days. “He was just a guy that came in who played piano.”

It didn’t take long, though, for Lewis to strike gold with a raucous sound that featured his pounding piano atop Van Eaton’s insistent drumming. “Our rhythm patterns fit perfectly,” Van Eaton says of the sound that propelled hits like “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Going On,” “Great Balls of Fire,” and “Breathless,” and transformed the “misfit” into an international sensation and one of rock’s first true outlaws.

“That little shuffle I do on the

snare and cymbal at the same time on ‘Whole Lotta Shakin’ Going On’—that’s me just fitting in with the rhythm he was playing with his left hand. That ‘Easy now...’ part at the end—we developed that on stage the first time we played it, the weekend before we cut it. We were just following him in the studio. And I learned a lot with him about recording. Our theory was if you couldn’t hear the piano—which wasn’t miked—you were playing too loud. So we just didn’t play loud in that room.”

Holland and Perkins toiled for about a year after they first recorded at Sun, gigging regionally while the drummer held on to his air-conditioning



Johnny Bernero with Warren Smith

repair job. ("They let me leave early on Fridays to drive to the gigs," he says with a laugh.) All that changed when "Blue Suede Shoes" became a hit in early 1956. Though it's not included on *Great Drums*, the iconic track includes one very noteworthy contribution from Holland. Out of habit, Holland didn't count the song in as they were laying it down, a "mistake" he cites as the reason for the slightly askew cadence when Perkins sings, "Well, it's one for the money...two for the show" in the intro.

"A drummer counts a song off...I never did that," Holland explains. "I still don't. I don't know, for sure, what the singer is going to do. I don't know what tempo he wants. So I let somebody else kick it off. All I knew to do was when somebody was singing a song, let 'em start. And as quick as I could, start playing behind them."

The success of "Blue Suede Shoes" meant Holland could finally quit his day job in early 1956, something he'd been giving serious thought to after a gig in Helena, Arkansas, with Perkins the previous summer. "We're driving back in my car to West Memphis after the show, and we stop to gas up," he recalls. "So we're counting our money and we had nearly \$20 apiece. I told the boys, 'Y'all don't realize this, but I work all week at 75 cents an hour, and I don't make very much more than this.' Not only that, three different real pretty girls asked me to stay and have a party with them that night. And I said to the boys, 'I never had a lady ask me to stay and have a party with them when I was working on their air conditioner. So

Really Great Drums at Sun Highlights From the *Great Drums* Collection



"I Forgot to Remember to Forget" (Johnny Bernero) Bernero's jazz roots show here as he glides effortlessly from a double-time shuffle to half time on this tender Elvis ballad.

"You're My Baby" (Billy Pat Ellis) Roy Orbison was but a pup when he cut this rave-up, on which an old pal from Texas, Billy Pat Ellis, keeps the stop-rhythm breaks tight and pushes the band forward in the choruses and guitar solo.

"Greenback Dollar" (Joe Riesenber) Legend has it Elvis asked Riesenber to come on the road with him but the devoted family man declined. Listening to the sweet parts Riesenber adds to this Ray Harris shuffle—a mighty tasty rim and snare pattern, and quick

snare trills within that groove—you can see why the King wanted him.

"Lonely Weekends" (J.M. Van Eaton) Van Eaton spread his talents around the Sun roster, and Charlie Rich was often the beneficiary of his swinging rock touch. Hearing Van Eaton's steady 8th notes on the cymbals and that snappy little fill out of the bridge, you can't help but think a young Richard Starkey studied this song intently.

"Boppin' the Blues" (W.S. Holland) Holland and Carl Perkins had a good groove going, and it's on display here with drumming that's slightly busy for the time. Of note: Holland's snare and tom combinations, something you didn't hear a lot of on the early Sun stuff.

you can do whatever you want to do the rest of your life, but I'm gonna play in a band."

Holland played steadily with Perkins through the end of the '50s, eventually hooking up with Johnny Cash after Perkins started slowing down following the death of his brother Clayton. While Holland was beginning his forty-year ride with the Man in Black, Van Eaton saw the writing on the wall at Sun as stars like Elvis and Cash left the label, and he began looking for new opportunities beyond drumming. He eventually became an investment banker in Memphis, a job he still works at part-time to

this day.

"The last few sessions I cut, I felt I didn't get the right money for it," Van Eaton explains, adding that \$42.50 was the union scale rate for a session in those days. (Holland remembers it as being more like \$11 per session.) "I thought, *If this is where it's gonna be, count me out.* Sam was losing interest, all the superstars had moved on, and the work started drying up. That was really the downfall for me.

"But we were the pioneers, man. This music was brand new—nobody was playing it. And that's something special."



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Finding a New Musical Home

Let's face it, sometimes it just isn't happening at home. We may be in the age of bedroom studios, high-speed digital transfer, and cloud computing, but for the foreseeable future our physical address will continue to have a significant impact on our work opportunities. This month we speak with three pro drummers who decided they needed to up stakes to begin a new chapter in their careers. If you've been contemplating a move lately, their experiences could help you in making this important decision.

by Jeff Ryan

There are a thousand reasons why you could be thinking about uprooting yourself from your natural surroundings, your family, your friends, and your fellow musicians. It's a good bet, though, that you've begun to feel you've reached the limit of how far your local environment will allow you flourish creatively.

"When I decided to move, I really had

no other avenues to pursue," says Michael Jerome Moore, whose credits include Richard Thompson and Better Than Ezra. "Everything in my hometown had kind of run its course."

"You [decide] to move because you want to better your life," is how Kliph Scurlock puts it. Scurlock played with many artists based near his home in Lawrence, Kansas,

including the Flaming Lips, before moving to Wales, where he now works with Gruff Rhys of the much-heralded group Super Furry Animals, as well as the up-and-coming singer Gwenno.

It requires a certain amount of courage to take a hard look in the mirror and ask yourself, *Am I doing everything I can every day to be the best possible musician I can be?*



Greg Fox
Photo: Ebru Yildiz

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If your honest answer is yes, then maybe it's time to ask yourself the next, even harder question: *Am I in the right creative environment to help me get where I want to go musically?* If the answer to that question is no, then it could be time to take the first step in finding a new creative home to help you on your journey.

The Drummer in Us

Imagine yourself in a completely different environment, one where you're not only trying to do what you do best, which is create music and play drums, but also establish a new lifestyle, social circle, and routine.

We drummers can be a finicky bunch. We like things a certain way—the angle of our ride cymbal, the type of rug we set up on, the height of our throne, our stick and drumhead choices.... Basically, we like to be comfortable in our domain, whether that's on stage, in a studio or rehearsal room, or at home. We look forward to enjoying a sense of familiarity as we're playing.

These things are important to us, because once a comfort level is established, we become confident that the musical world we inhabit is ours to conquer. When we're taken out of our natural environment, however, things can seem skewed, as if somehow every angle of our drumming world and life in general is off center. It can take some time to familiarize ourselves with our new domain to the point where we're free enough to do our best.

Digging Deep

To deal with all the changes involved in moving, we need to tap into our inner strength—which, whether we know it or not, we all have. After all, it takes courage to step on stage in a packed club or walk into a rehearsal room for the first time with a new project. It even takes a certain amount of inner strength to sit behind our kit at home and attempt some new pattern that we've been avoiding. We can use that strength when it's time to address bigger-picture issues, like establishing a career in a completely new town.

We all lean on familiar patterns on the drumkit and in life, and yes, we should feel good about ourselves as we fine-tune our abilities. But it takes a ton of courage to step into the unknown, whether that means trying to add new things to our drumming toolbox or learning how to survive and prosper in a foreign environment.

A Fresh Start

Packing some specific items can make adjusting to a new location a little easier. We asked our pros to share what they took with them—and to tell us when they knew they'd made the right choice to move.

Kliph Scurlock

"Besides my drums and recording gear, I brought everything I didn't sell to pay for the visa and the flight over, which ended up being some records, CDs, books, clothes, memorabilia items, and some of my favorite dishes. I didn't bring them to stave off homesickness per se, as when I get homesick, it's for the people and places I miss, rather than stuff.

"I go back and forth between feeling like this is home and like it's a place where I'm living. I mean, I do love it very much, and I wouldn't want to live anywhere else at the moment. But there is a level of comfort and a sense of community I felt in Lawrence, Kansas, that I'm still not 100 percent at here yet. For example, a good friend of mine died a couple of days ago, and I know a bunch of friends in Lawrence have gone out to remember him and celebrate his life, whereas nobody here knew him. So I've been commiserating via email. It's times like these that I most feel like somewhere else is *home* home, if that makes any sense."



Michael Jerome Moore

"There's always some sort of heart-shaped piece of glass, or pebble, or trinket-charm-thingy traveling with me so that my better half is traveling along with me too. I never leave home without them.

"Playing out and about town with fellow artists from my previous home state of Texas would eventually help me find some amazing musicians that I could learn from and be encouraged by. It took about four years to feel settled enough to call Los Angeles home, but home it became, and home it's been for sixteen years now. I'd have to say that walking fifteen minutes down the road to Capitol Records from my neighborhood to record a few albums with the Blind Boys of Alabama, and all the awesome musicians I had the opportunity to record with on those records, helped me feel pretty dad-gum good about making the move at the time."



Lia Braswell

"To ward off homesickness I took all the journals I've been writing for the past few years.

"There were so many attributes to the move that happened at once! Lugging a suitcase of all my belongings any further? Ack!

"An anecdote: A day after arriving I met someone who was to become one of my best friends. It was also the day that we took a stroll through the East Village to get fancy, honey-flavored ice cream while talking about Patti Smith and her significance around the neighborhood—also how I'd just traveled six hours from the south of Portugal to the north to see Patti perform at Primavera Sound music festival. In a chance of fate, she—Patti Smith—entered the ice cream parlor to take a quick gaze at the flavors of the day. My friend Jamie and I rushed out to greet her with chocolate ice cream dripping from our chins and shaking hands. She was ravishing. I mentioned having seen her play in Porto a few weeks prior, and she asked, 'Oh, how was it?'"



Finding a New Musical Home

"I didn't have a plan," says Lia Braswell, a Los Angeles native who worked with bands like Gothic Tropic and Le Butcherettes before relocating to New York City. "But my friends said, 'Just try it for a while,' and I've loved it ever since. I just took a chance, and I'm so happy that it's worked out the way it has in a little over a year." Since moving, Braswell has landed a much-coveted position as the drummer for A Place to Bury Strangers.

Devil's in the Details

Overcoming practical obstacles, like limited finances, can be one of our biggest

challenges. So you must determine as closely as possible how much it will cost to relocate to your new musical home. Is there an emergency fund that you can access to help you get where you want to go? If not, perhaps you should begin doing some extra gigs or odd jobs specifically to fill your "move fund." Another thing you must consider is the relative cost of living in the city where you want to move in comparison with where you are now.

Questions like these are vital to your decision-making process. Input from family and friends can be extremely helpful in these

matters, so take advantage of the wisdom of anyone who has your best interests at heart.

What to Bring

Consider whether you need to take your entire setup with you, or just prized possessions such as your snare, cymbals, pedals, and throne. When Michael Jerome Moore was packing his little Honda for the drive from Dallas to his new headquarters in L.A., he made sure he had room for all of his gear, because he felt that he was going there to do the one job he knew he could do, and he didn't want to compromise his ability to do that.

But you may feel differently, and you may be perfectly fine, at least at first, in taking a minimal amount of gear. At many of the gigs I've done in New York or L.A., and at festivals I've played in other towns, there's either been a house kit or I've used the headliner or support artist's kit, augmented by my essentials. Try to determine if you'll be able to get by initially on provided gear.

If you're thinking about settling in a city like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, or San Francisco, you have to consider the inevitable parking dilemmas that go along with living in a bustling metropolis. Research a city's transportation opportunities. Don't let not having your own car to transport your eight-piece kit discourage you from actually playing. You're going to need to be malleable in order to be the busy drummer you want to be. Bringing your dream kit to every gig is just not feasible most of the time; adapting to playing unfamiliar house kits or other drummers' sets is usually the norm.

This doesn't have to be a bad thing. Of course we all like to play our own gear, but wrangling unfamiliar tones and setups are things that we have to deal with from time to time. And playing strange kits can be exciting and inspiring. While in Germany recently, I was playing at a festival where the house kit was specially made from indigenous wood by a local drum company, and it seemed to sing as I played it. Then, of course, there are times when you're forced to play a rickety old house kit with heads that are older than you! You just have to make the best out of these situations. Remind yourself that you're lucky to be able to be paid to play the drums, and play to the best of your ability. When you make that decision, usually good things happen.

Weighing the Pros and Cons

Ultimately the question we must answer is whether the pros of moving to a new location outweigh the cons of staying

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put. Moore decided it was time to leave Dallas when he became convinced that his friends' connections and recommendations could result in his getting more work in L.A. "My buddy Jeff Liles had some connections with the group Blind Melon," he recalls, "and I was able to jam and make good connections through that experience. Then my great friend and de facto manager, Donnie Graves, said that Richard Thompson from Fairport Convention was doing solo stuff, and I was recommended to play and hang out. That was over ten years ago, and I've been lucky enough to be his drummer and tour the world with him ever since."

So, do you have a good group of contacts that can help you network and keep you as busy as possible? If not, begin building one. Take full advantage of the power of social media. Check out some of the top acts in the city where you're thinking of relocating, and see if any of your friends are connected to them somehow. Spread the word that you're considering moving there, and bend their ear a bit about potential opportunities. Are any of them immersed in the musical community, and if so can they help spread the word that you're coming to town and are hungry for work?

"I spent years not only playing any gigs that were offered," Moore says, "but just getting to know as many musicians and music industry people as possible." Again, the more malleable you are as an artist, the easier it'll be to play with different acts. If you're a rock drummer, that's great, but start learning and listening to other genres. Having a light touch and the dynamic control to be able to create lovely textures with just brushes on a snare will get you further than you think, and it could open the door to multiple opportunities down the road.

Again, treat your preparations for moving the same way you treat your drumming. Analyze the details and make adjustments, just like when you're trying to learn a new playing concept. You've done that all these years, and you've seen success in your drumming as a result. It should serve as proof that you have the ability to achieve goals. Our life goals are no different. We *can* have the musical and creative lifestyle we've always dreamed of having.

First Steps are the Hardest

I'm not suggesting that the relocation process is going to be easy, but with hard work, in time you'll see results. Kliph Scurlock spent months nailing down his Exceptional Talent visa and was granted foreign citizenship based on his accomplishments, among them having appeared on the cover of this very magazine.

What was it that Thomas Edison said? "Success is 90 percent perspiration, 10 percent inspiration." Putting these initial steps in place *will* help turn your dream into reality. To quote another famous American, Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." And sometimes in a way these big decisions make themselves—if you're honest enough with yourself to see it. "I realized that I was spending more time in Wales than at home," Scurlock says. "And I [noticed that] I was feeling more at home there than in Kansas. That's when I decided it was time to make the move."

Focus on what's best for you, and keep moving forward. Ultimately only you can decide where the greatest opportunities are to do the thing that we all like to do the best: survive on our earnings made from playing the drums.

Dallas-based drummer **Jeff Ryan** has worked with St. Vincent, Sarah Jaffe, and the War on Drugs. He releases ambient music under the moniker Myopic, has a duo project with Apples in Stereo drummer John M. Dufilho called JDJR, and recently recorded and toured with the bands Pleasant Grove, Baptist Generals, and Motorcade.



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Ricky Martin's Tony Escapa

Drums: Yamaha Hybrid Maple in Silver Sparkle finish
A. 6.5x14 Recording Custom Aluminum snare (swapped with 6.5x14 Recording Custom Brass and 7x14 Recording Custom Steel throughout the show for different tones)
B. 13x14 tom
C. 7.5x10 tom
D. 8x12 tom
E. 15x16 tom
F. 16x18 tom
G. 18x22 bass drum

Hardware: Yamaha, including Universal Tilt cymbal stands, mini hi-hat boom, and double-tom mount; DW 9000 Series double pedal

Electronics: Yamaha twenty-channel mixer and DTX MULTI-12 pad, Drumlite system (in toms and kick) with MIDI module to link to show lighting, Telefunken DC7 drum mic pack, and ClearTune CT-500 Elite and CT-6E in-ear monitors

Percussion: LP Black Beauty Cha-Cha and Bongo cowbells

Cymbals: Zildjian
1. 14" New Beat hi-hats
2. 12" Oriental China Trash
3. 17" A Thin crash
4. 18" A Thin crash
5. 10" A Flash splash
6. 8" A Flash splash
7. 10" ZHT hi-hats (discontinued)
8. 17" K Custom Special Dry Trash crashes (used as hi-hats)
9. 23" A Sweet ride
10. 19" A Thin crash
11. 20" A Custom EFX crash
12. 14" Oriental China Trash

Accessories: Vater Josh Freese H-220 sticks, cup holder, and double-stick holder

Drumheads: Remo White Suede Emperor tom batters, Ambassador X batter on aluminum snare, CS Coated batter on brass snare, P77 batter on steel snare, and Smooth White PS3 batter and front bass drum heads (custom printing by Woodshed Art)

GEARING UP ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview by Michael Dawson



For the past thirteen years, Puerto Rican-born drummer Tony Escapa has been manning the throne with Latin-pop superstar Ricky Martin, who is currently in the midst of a six-month residency at the Monte Carlo Casino's Park Theater in Las Vegas. The setup Escapa is using for the residency is the same one he takes with him when the band hits the road. "This is my main touring kit," he says. "Yamaha is super-consistent, sound-wise and with tour support all over the world. My setup has always been a six-piece, but I've added electronics and other things over the years."

Most notably, Escapa has expanded his cymbal setup to meet the demands of Martin's multi-genre music. "I have three hi-hats," he says. "There are a lot of songs that are electronic, so having the regular hi-hats on top of that would be too much. The 17" effects hi-hats are used as another color, and the tiny hi-hats fit better when we're in a more electronic realm."

The drummer also supplements his acoustic tones with loops and samples that are played from a Roland multipad. "The SPD-SX is used to play some things to make the show sound bigger," Escapa explains. "We always play live, but there are some sounds

that I trigger. We go through every song, and I pick out what I'm going to play from the recordings that will make the show more organic. I can't really get the techno bass sound out of the acoustic kick, so I grabbed a sample of that. [But] the acoustic kick is what the dancers use to keep time, so it has to be going the whole time."

Escapa has three floor toms on his setup so he can replicate the sound of multiple players when the band launches into segments of the show that are more percussion-heavy. "I use the 18" floor tom as a surdo," he says, "because we play some [samba] battucada stuff that involves a lot of drumming for fifteen to twenty minutes straight."

Tony also has to be mindful of his snare tone when jumping between Latin, pop, and rock tracks in order to convey the proper feel. "I have a high-pitched [aluminum] snare for the techno-pop and Latin stuff," he says. "And I have a low-pitched [steel] snare that I use for the ballads and rock songs. The Yamaha snare stands allow me to remove the top quickly to swap the drums. I only have a few seconds to change them, and sometimes I barely make it." [laughs]

Paradiddle-Diddle Inversions

Straight and Triplet-Based Rudimental Rock Fills

by Joel Rothman

The **paradiddle-diddle** is a particularly useful rudiment since it's relatively easy to play within straight 16th and 16th-note-triplet subdivisions. Its repetition also maintains the same sticking without reversing the lead hand.

There are six inversions of the paradiddle-diddle within a straight 16th-note subdivision.

1

R L R R L L R R L L R L R L L R R L

R R L R L L R L L R L R R L R L L R

Also try playing these inversions using 16th-note triplets.

2

R L R R L L R R L L R L R L L R R L

R R L R L L R L L R L R R L R L L R

The previous variations are notated with a right-hand lead. Simply reverse the sticking to play another six inversions that lead with the left hand.

Next we'll play the six inversions of the 16th-note paradiddle-diddle in a rock context. We'll start the figures on the "&" of beat 3 in a 4/4 groove. The fifth and sixth inversions end with a right-hand stroke instead of the left, so try playing the downbeat of the first measure with your left hand when repeating the phrase.

3

R L R R L L
R R L L R L
R L L R R L
R R L R L L
R L L R L R
R L R L L R

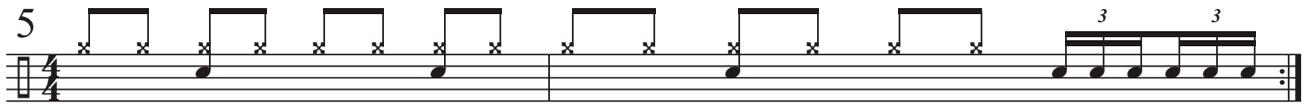
Now try the inversions within a three-beat fill.

4

R L R R L L R L R R L L
R R L L R L R R L L R L
R L L R R L R L L R L R
R R L R L L R R L R L L
R L L R L R R L L R L R
R L R L L R R L R L L R

The bass drum is omitted in these examples, but you can play any kick pattern that you feel is appropriate and comfortable. Although these exercises are notated on the snare, try orchestrating the figures around the drumset, and experiment with different tempos.

Here are the six paradiddle-diddle inversions within a 16th-note-triplet fill over one beat.



R L R R L L
 R R L L R L
 R L L R R L
 R R L R L L
 R L L R L R
 R L R L L R

And here they are within a two-beat fill.



R L R R L L R L R R L L
 R R L L R L R R L L R L
 R L L R R L R L L R R L
 R R L R L L R R L R L L
 R L L R L R R L L R L R
 R L R L L R R L R L L R

Also try applying these same paradiddle-diddles to breaks within a jazz context. Have fun!

Joel Rothman is the author of nearly 100 drum and percussion books, which sell worldwide through his company, JR Publications. For more info, visit joelrothman.com.



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1,000 Ways to Practice a Single Page

Part 6: Building Independence

by Libor Hadrava



In this lesson, we'll develop independence while reading a single page of rhythm. Developing and maintaining independence will help you execute any musical idea that comes to mind. There are many possible combinations with this material, so be sure to come up with your own new ideas and unique twists to this approach.

Here's the rhythm we'll be interpreting in this lesson. Remember to practice these concepts with other single-line rhythms.

1

To start, play the first line with your right hand while playing the second line with your left. At the end of each line, move both hands down the page by one line, so your right hand will play the second line while your left hand plays the third, and so on. Try orchestrating each hand on separate voices to expose your ears to new ideas, patterns, and phrases. I prefer using combinations of cowbell and snare, tom and snare, ride and snare, and hi-hat and floor tom.

In the following exercise, both hands are shown combined into a single system. However, practice applying this concept while reading the material as it's written in Exercise 1. This approach will force you to look ahead when reading music.

2

Once you're comfortable with that approach, switch the roles of your hands from measure to measure. Your right hand plays the first measure while your left hand plays the first measure on the second line. In the next measure, your right hand plays the second bar of the second line while your left hand plays the second bar of the first line. Alternate in this manner for the rest of the rhythms in Exercise 1.

3

Now let's pick a single measure of rhythm to use as an ostinato. We'll use the last measure of the full page of rhythm that was notated in Part 1 of this series in the March 2017 issue.

4

Repeat this ostinato with the left hand while reading through Exercise 1 with the right. Once this is comfortable, try flipping the roles of each hand.

5

You can also play the ostinato with the bass drum while reading the page on top with the hands. Experiment with the sticking by using alternating strokes, doubles, or paradiddles.

Next we'll create a two-limb ostinato based on a single measure from the original page of rhythm. In this case, we'll use the first measure of the sixth line.

6

Now play both of these previous ostinatos with the hands. The right hand will play Exercise 4 while the left hand plays Exercise 6. Use this new ostinato while reading the page of rhythm with the bass drum. Once comfortable, try reading the page with your hi-hat foot, or try different combinations that use the kick and the hi-hat. Here's the hand ostinato.

7

Now move the ostinato to the feet by playing Exercise 4 with the left foot and Exercise 6 with the bass drum. Read through the page with the hands, and experiment with sticking.

8

Let's check out a three-limb ostinato. Play the following right-hand ride cymbal pattern over the previous foot ostinato, and read the page of rhythm with the left hand.

9

For an added challenge, try combining the foot ostinato in Exercise 8 with the reading concept from Exercise 3 in the hands.

Libor Hadrava is the author of the book *In-Depth Rhythm Studies: Advanced Metronome Functions*. He also plays with Boston metal band Nascent and is an endorsing artist for Evans, Vater, Dream, Pearl, and Ultimate Ears. For more info, visit liborhadrava.com.



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Transitions

Exercises for Improving Time

by Wayne Salzmann II



Inconsistencies in a drummer's tempo often occur during musical transitions. For instance, moving from the hi-hat to the ride cymbal to change the sonic texture alters the drummer's positioning behind the kit, which can cause changes in the tempo. Dynamic changes can also alter timing—drummers often tend to rush when they get louder and slow down when they get quieter. And changing the feel or style of a groove, such as transitioning from half-time to double-time or from straight 8ths to swing, are both likely places for the tempo to shift. Practicing transitions between grooves is as important as practicing the grooves themselves.

In this lesson we'll explore sonic, dynamic, metric, and stylistic transitions. Each measure in the following exercises should be repeated four times before moving back to the top of the phrase. Repeat each exercise until it's consistent and comfortable, and employ a wide range of dynamics and tempos. I recommend starting with a medium tempo (80–140 bpm) before pushing into a broader range. Also experiment with appropriate fills that fit within each transition's new sonic texture, dynamic, feel, or style.

Sonic transitions alter a groove's orchestration. These changes occur often in music. For instance, you might color a song's intro with cymbals, move to a closed hi-hat and rimclick groove in the verse, and play a ride and snare pattern in the chorus. Sonic transitions can also include switching from brushes to sticks or from sticks to mallets, among other choices.

It's important to transition comfortably within a wide range of dynamics as well. Be sure to apply the following dynamic variations to any of the other transition exercises provided here.

When playing the following examples, the length of crescendos or diminuendos between dynamic markings can vary. For instance, the notated volume changes occur on beats 3 and 4 of measure four. However, these transitions could be four beats long, eight beats long, or even four measures long, so try different combinations.

Metric transitions include changes in time signatures, such as moving from 4/4 to 3/4; metric modulations, such as hearing the dotted quarter note as the new pulse; and feel changes, such as shifting to half-time or double-time grooves. In the following two examples, we'll transition from regular time to half time and from a jazz waltz to a swing groove.

Stylistic transitions alter the subdivision or feel of a groove. A common stylistic transition would be moving from a straight-8th groove to a swung-8th jazz feel. Stylistic transitions can include changes in the sonic, dynamic, and metric information as well. Experiment with other style transitions not notated here, such as moving from a funk groove to a disco feel or a jazz ballad to a double-time swing pattern. And listen to recordings in a wide variety of styles to develop appropriate language to play these grooves and transitions.

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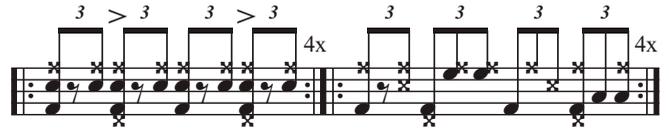
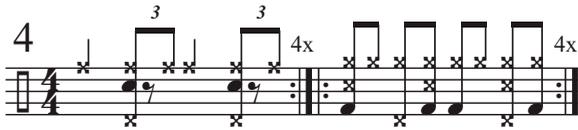
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Note density should also be considered when practicing these concepts. For instance, a 16th-note groove has a denser texture than an 8th-note groove. Typically, the more notes a drummer plays, the more likely he or she is to speed up. Similarly, drummers tend to slow down when there's more distance between the notes, so practicing more spacious grooves using half notes and whole notes is a great way to develop consistency in time.

Wayne Salzmann II is the drumset instructor at the University of Texas at Austin. He has performed or recorded with Steve Miller, Kenny Rogers, Kris Kristofferson, Christopher Cross, Eric Johnson, Joe Satriani, and Mike Stern, among others. Salzmann plays DW drums and hardware, Zildjian cymbals, Evans drumheads, and Vic Firth drumsticks.



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Playing Melodically

Part 3: Stickings and Interpretations

by Peter Erskine



Last month we studied a solo that trumpet great Freddie Hubbard played on the song “Make It Good” from the 1967 Duke Pearson album *The Right Touch*. I recommended listening to the solo to the point of being able to sing it before applying it to the drums. Here we’ll look at some of my suggested stickings and interpretations for this solo.

Remember, when implying a melody on the drums, higher notes are generally louder than lower notes on a horn because they require more air. Accent these higher notes with your lead hand. Also, utilize diddles when playing consecutive 8th notes. Legato phrasing is more easily achieved by occasionally using double strokes versus only using alternating strokes.

Let’s take a closer look at diddles. Although double strokes can help emulate a legato phrasing, something interesting happens if the first of two consecutive 8th notes falls on or off the beat. Play the following rhythms—taken from Duke Ellington’s “It Don’t Mean a Thing (If It Ain’t Got That Swing)” —on the snare while playing the jazz ride pattern, and record yourself playing it.



Now listen back. Do the 8th-note combinations sound identical every time? Most likely they don’t. While the two 8th notes that start on the beat will come out sounding relatively even, the off-beat pickup notes will usually be tighter in spacing, which is more like a typical shuffle than a vocal-like “doo-wop.” This difference isn’t a big deal, unless your goal is to play these rhythms in the same manner.

Now play the previous snare excerpt using two hands on the snare while the hi-hat pedal keeps time on beats 2 and 4 and the bass drum feathers quarter notes. I would bet that the 8th-note combinations now sound nearly identical. Our hands can teach us a thing or two if we pay attention and listen to them.

Here’s Freddie Hubbard’s solo played on the snare with my suggested stickings. Consecutive 8th notes can be played any number of ways, including with alternating stickings. However, experiment with various patterns while paying attention to how close your playing sounds to the original solo in each instance. You might discover some pleasant truths about your phrasing.

21

L R R L L R L R R L R L L R L

25

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R R L L R L R L R L R

Now try orchestrating the solo on the entire drumkit. The key to playing melodically, and selling it to the listener, is learning to trust the ring of the cymbals and the tone of the drums. It's not necessary to fill every space with rolls, licks, and extraneous rhythms. Build up your comfort level when it comes to rests. Rests are pauses. And just like a great actor reciting Shakespeare, the goal is to communicate an idea and a feeling, as opposed to spitting it all out as fast as possible.

This concept of developing melodic phrasing and utilizing space effectively isn't pie-in-the-sky drumming romanticism. I recently played a concert with Patrick Williams' big band at the Fiftieth Annual Elmhurst College Jazz Festival in Illinois. One of the tunes with Pat's band was a drum feature on the tune "In the Still of the Night." What does that title suggest to you? Bombast and pyrotechnics, or Fred Astaire dancing away while whispering sweet nothings into his costar's ear? I went the Fred Astaire route, and I cannot tell you how many people came up to me afterward to thank me for that performance. One band director told me, "I said to my drummer, 'It's not what you play, but what you don't play.'" One thing I did during that performance was utilize combinations of alternate stickings and diddles to achieve maximum melodic phrasing. You can do this too.

Peter Erskine is a two-time Grammy Award winner and an *MD* Readers Poll Hall of Famer who's played on over 600 recordings. He is currently a professor at University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music, and he teaches an online jazz drumming program at ArtistWorks.com.



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Advanced Herta Applications

Rudimental Polyrhythms in Odd Subdivisions

by Aaron Edgar



The **herta rudiment** has seen a growth in popularity recently, especially in metal. For an example, check out Tomas Haake's playing on Meshuggah's track "Bleed" off the album *Obzen*. We commonly hear this rhythm applied within 16th-note or triplet subdivisions, but hertas can create interesting ideas when applied to quintuplets and septuplets as well.

First we'll isolate hertas on each partial of a quintuplet. In Exercise 1, the herta starts on the first note of the quintuplet. Start by counting out loud and playing only the bass drum pattern until it feels comfortable. Once it's even, add the cymbal stack and snare. If you're having trouble, play quarter notes on the stack.

In Exercise 2, the herta is placed on the second quintuplet partial. In this variation, the rudiment starts with the left foot. This can be challenging, so start slowly. If you're having trouble, try reversing the footing.

Exercises 3–5 demonstrate the remaining permutations while adding an alternate stack pattern in Exercises 4 and 5. Practice all five of these examples with right- and left-foot lead.



Hertas are often played consecutively, and we can phrase them this way in quintuplets as well. Try playing quarter notes on the stack until you have this next foot pattern down, and then add the embellished right hand.

Things get interesting when we play one extra partial between each herta. In the following pattern, the herta eventually falls on each quintuplet partial. The lead foot also reverses in the second measure. Try this with quarter notes on the stack before embellishing the hand pattern.

The bass drum patterns in Exercises 6 and 7 are polyrhythmic. By equally spacing five hertas over 3/4 and 4/4, we create five-over-three and five-over-four, respectively.

Now we'll place hertas into septuplets. Exercises 8–10 demonstrate three of the seven positions. Make sure to experiment by placing the herta on every partial, and practice leading with either foot.

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Exercise 11 places a five-note grouping into septuplets to create a seven-over-five polyrhythm with seven equally spaced hertas in a measure of 5/4. Go slowly, and count out loud while playing the bass drum pattern alone. When you can play it evenly, add the hand pattern.

We can also spread these patterns across multiple septuplets or quintuplets by adding rests. To help you learn these rhythms, program a metronome to play the full quintuplet or septuplet subdivision.

Once comfortable with Exercise 13, try splitting your feet onto different sound sources. For example, keeping your right foot on the bass drum and moving your left to the hi-hat yields an interesting variation in which your left foot plays an evenly spaced pattern on every third quintuplet partial.

We can also play hertas in odd subdivisions with the hands. In Exercise 14, our feet play solid quintuplets while the hands split hertas between the hi-hat and snare. Every third snare note is accented, but get comfortable with the basic rhythm before adding accents and ghost notes. The bass drum pattern alternates on the repeat.

Exercise 15 demonstrates an independence challenge and places the bass drum pattern from Exercise 3 underneath the hand pattern from Exercise 14. The overlapping herta phrases create a five-over-three polyrhythm. If you're having trouble, try playing straight quintuplets with the bass drum, and add in the hertas one at a time. It can be helpful to ignore the dynamics at first until you can play the pattern consistently. Then add in the ghost notes and accents.



Aaron Edgar plays with the Canadian prog-metal band Third Ion and is a session drummer, clinician, and author. He teaches weekly live lessons on Drumeo.com. You can find his book, *Boom!!*, as well as information on how to sign up for private lessons, at aaronedgardrum.com.



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Connect With Your Audience

How Perspective Changes Everything

by Mark Schulman



Most people feel more comfortable performing in front of a lot of people than in front of just a few. Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh says his ideal audience is at least 500 people. The audience size he hates the most: fifty. A group that size is too big for him to make a connection with each person, but too small for his jokes to go well. He says bigger crowds make everything seem funnier. And eye contact? “I’ve read books that suggest that you find three people and make eye contact with each person,” he says. “I don’t do that. That doesn’t work for me.”

It’s smart to clarify the method that works best for you when trying to connect with your audience. Pink makes eye contact with as many people as possible, and she talks to an audience of 20,000 as if they’re in her living room. When she and I hang out one-on-one, she talks to me the same way.

Entrepreneur and CEO David Kalt sweats when he gets passionate about something. He says the condition was particularly bad when he was holding investor meetings prior to the stock market launch of his company, the Chicago Music Exchange. To stem the tide, he uses eye contact. “If I can make eye contact and play offense, I feel much more comfortable than being on defense,” he says. “That wasn’t very natural to me because I’m more of a laid-back, relaxed kind of guy. I’m not very aggressive. I’m not super-competitive. But in the context of a business meeting, there are two, three, or four people, and you immediately have the opportunity to set the stage and get in a position where you feel strength and confidence. I realized I had to make eye contact and make that visual connection—and then it all just came up from there.”

Kalt goes on to say, “I use my eyes because people have told me in the past that when I get excited, there’s a glitter in my eye. When people tell you that, you’ve got to figure out how to use it. Anybody who is passionate about something has that gleam in their eyes. There’s something about the body that physically changes, and the eyes always sparkle if you’re truly, authentically passionate about something.”

Define Your Relationship

Here are some questions to ask yourself about the audiences you perform for on a regular basis, whether it’s a playing gig, a clinic or other group-teaching situation, or public speaking.

- Do they know me personally?
- Do they have prejudices about me? Do I have prejudices about them?
- What are our similarities and potential shared experiences? What are our differences?
- Are there any barriers in communication for which I can prepare?
- Are they knowledgeable about what I’m doing or saying?
- How much background on me do they need, if any?
- How much can they relate to what I’m doing?
- What can I do to maximize the takeaway value?

Regardless of audience size, I’m happier, more effective, and vastly more generous when I turn my attention away from myself and strive for clarity with the audience.

Integrate, Don’t Isolate

A few years ago I performed at a tribute to Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham. This was not only a performance for fans; there were also twenty-one of the most accomplished drummers on the planet performing in the same show. I wasn’t overwhelmed with nervousness, but some self-imposed things got in the way of me really enjoying the experience.

After my performance, I was disappointed and embarrassed—I didn’t think I played well. Even after some heartfelt endorsements from friends, my viewpoint remained rigid. And my attitude was not only undermining my ability to enjoy the rest of the show, it was impeding my sense of judgment and sanity. I wasn’t nearly as present and supportive of my peers as I would’ve been with a clear head. And I beat myself up more as the night went on, comparing myself to the other drummers rather than enjoying

the event.

I got a chance to play again in the finale, as we all took turns playing solos to Bonham’s classic drum feature, “Moby Dick,” but my thoughts were so distorted by that point that I couldn’t turn things around to feel as though I was playing anywhere near my best.

I lost nearly a full night’s sleep to self-loathing, and that’s not how I usually operate. It wasn’t until my manager, Stephen Stern, sent me a YouTube link and I watched the performance that I realized I’d actually played pretty darned well. The experience galvanized my belief that it’s not about me—it’s about integrating with my audience and having an accurate sense of self rather than a potentially unhealthy fixation on how well I performed.

Make It Feel Like the First Time

I’ve played with the band Foreigner intermittently since 1992, but the most recent tour gave me more joy than just about any other gig. When I was playing with the band around 1994, I had a very different experience.

We’d been on the road for nearly eighteen months, and I was burned out. One night after a show, I realized that I’d (ironically) played “Feels Like the First Time” more than three hundred times, and I just wasn’t feeling all that excited about it. And that was really selfish. The show wasn’t for me. It was for the audience.

I had a moment of clarity that night. I needed to focus on those screaming, happy fans and their joy and excitement. I started thinking about my first rock concerts (Peter Frampton, Boston, Foreigner...) when something really weird happened—I got a hint of butterflies in my stomach.

The next day I went onstage before the show and drew a big, ridiculous, happy face with large teeth on my snare head as a reminder to be audience-centric and selfless onstage. And every night for the rest of the tour, I got on stage, grinned at that face (which I drew again every time we changed the head), and focused on connecting with the audience.

Celebrity chef Guy Fieri once asked orator Zig Ziglar how to get rid of the butterflies. His answer? “The day that that happens will be the day you don’t do as well.” You need a little bit of fear to remind you to respect those moments and the consequences, or you start getting sloppy.

Selfishness can exaggerate stage fright as well. So when I start to get too nervous, I think, *You selfish bastard... it’s not about you!* This makes me laugh and squelches the nerves.

Carve Your Own Path to Clarity

There are differences in what propels people to higher states of confidence. Some people do better with a smooth, well-planned presentation, and some thrive on spontaneous challenges from the audience. You need to figure out which approach is best for you.

Some of my best (and worst) moments have occurred because of technical blunders with equipment during presentations. I often purposefully incorporate some snafu into my presentation, only to resolve it and let the audience witness the process. How you deal with mistakes—the way you compensate, utilize, and invite adversity—can set you free from any fears you may have of the unplanned.

Saxophonist Dave Koz once analyzed how viewers responded to entertainers while he was in the audience. He came to some distinct conclusions: “You have to be sensitive. People who are great in real life—not just in music—are sensitive to their surroundings. They can read a room. They don’t barge in and say, ‘I’m here now and whatever is important to me is going to be.’ The great ones scan the room to get a feel for the vibe, and then they tinker with their message to deliver it in the most effective way based on whatever they’re receiving. They deliver a message that can be heard.”

Being altruistic not only connects you with your audience but also with your fellow performers. Actor Jeremy Piven’s mother, Joyce Piven, a noted director, actress, and theater instructor, tells her students to focus on their fellow actors (or the audience) rather than on

themselves. “The anxiety subsides once you put the focus on the other players and not yourself,” Piven says. “Then you’re on to something.”

I have a ritual that I do before performances. I close my eyes and focus my energy on inspiration, freedom, release, and being in sync with other people. I put it out into the universe that some extraordinary, spontaneous, and unexpected things will happen to enhance my performance, and that the lives of everyone in the room will be forever enhanced as a result.

Prodigal Sunn of the Wu-Tang Clan focuses on the audience, too. “I make everybody feel at home—the bartender, the bouncer, the security, the sound man, whoever’s in the house,” he says. “They all get love. You might even catch me in the crowd. You might catch me hanging out front.”

Sunn recognizes people as people. You build up fear because you’re worried about people’s opinions, and that stops you from performing at your best. Prodigal goes all out for his audience, sometimes above and beyond what other members of his band want to do. “Wu-Tang was invited to do a concert in Miami, and some of the group didn’t want to participate,” he recalls. “But I went out there and did the show myself, even though the crowd wanted to see the group. I was confident enough in myself to know that I could hold it down. When I was out there, I got the respect of being the guy who showed up. The crowd met me halfway. That takes the fear away.” Sunn could have worried about what the crowd was expecting, but instead he made it his goal to give the crowd the best experience possible.

In closing, I’d like to ask you to think about a past performance or presentation that made you anxious. Was your attention focused on your anxiety or on your audience? Relive that event, but focus your attention completely on your audience. How does the experience change?

Mark Schulman is a first-call drummer who’s played for Pink, Foreigner, Cher, Billy Idol, Sheryl Crow, and Stevie Nicks. For more information, go to markschulman.com.



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by David Perazone



My grandfather used to say, "Every board tells a story."

This is my story of three boards that found their way from a tropical forest into some very special instruments.

My grandfather, Edward Perazone Sr., emigrated from Italy to the U.S. in the early 1900s. He worked hard and eventually saved enough money to acquire a small woodworking shop in New Jersey, where he turned bocce balls from lignum vitae wood ("wood of life").

Lignum Vitae

After graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering, my father, Edward Perazone Jr., joined the family business in the 1950s. Dad set about expanding the company's product line to include pool cues, police batons, judge gavels, chairs, and many other

designer items turned from exotic hardwoods.

The company's claim to fame was manufacturing the stern bearings that housed the propeller shaft in the first United States nuclear submarine, the *Nautilus*. Made from lignum vitae, these bearings are still in use today in a wide variety of submerged applications.

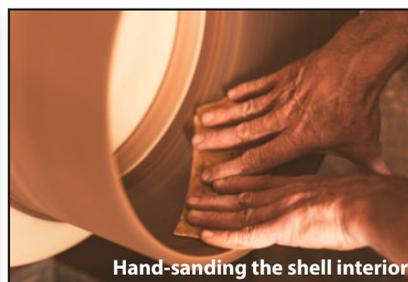
Much of the exotic wood species that were used to make these items were imported from Central and South America. My father and grandfather spent many years scouring tropical forests procuring species such as cocobolo, zebrawood, canary wood, and the most prized exotic South American hardwood species of them all: Brazilian rosewood. Brazilian rosewood is highly prized for its tonality and has been used for woodwind and stringed instruments as far back as the Renaissance.



The rosewood plank before milling



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Hand-sanding the shell interior

As a youngster, I was drawn to the family business and spent my weekends sweeping sawdust from the shop floor and painting walls. It was around that same time when I was introduced to drumming through my school music teacher.

After I left Berklee College of Music in the 1970s, I worked as a professional touring and recording musician. During that time, my interest in high-quality instruments began in earnest.

Serendipity

The winter of 2013 was bitter cold. A water pipe in my parents' home froze and burst. While a crew was busy recovering various precious items, I reacquainted myself with my father's exotic wood off-cuts that had been collecting dust in his basement for six decades.

As I sorted through the chunks of wood, I discovered a few hidden gems: a piece of select-grade canary wood, a crazy-looking chunk of eastern black walnut, and two thick boards of genuine, old-growth Brazilian rosewood.

I brought these boards home that day and, after a thorough



The author with the raw planks of canary wood, black walnut, and Brazilian rosewood

cleaning, stacked them in my basement, thinking they'd stay there until one of my own children or grandchildren stumbled upon them in the same way that I had that day.

I pondered what to do with these beautiful boards for another year, and then it hit me: *Why not make some drums?* Thus began a very personal journey to fulfill my dream of turning my father's rare and precious wood into heirloom-quality instruments.

Trust

I spent a year researching drum-building techniques. I communicated with craftsmen from around the globe with the hope that a conversation would resonate with me in such a way that I could embark on this journey with unfettered confidence.

What I wasn't hearing from these conversations was the language of wood spoken in a way

that I inherently understood it. Having grown up in a family with a long history of woodworking, I knew how things like moisture and oil content could impact a glue joint. I'm also familiar with grain

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Shop Talk

direction and seasonal movement and how to make necessary accommodations when joining two boards together.

I conferred with a handful of boutique makers. I'm sure many of them make fine instruments, but it wasn't until I spoke with Jefferson Shallenberger of Sugar Percussion in Santa Cruz, California, that I felt I had found the craftsman who could create the three stunning hand-made custom drums I wanted built from the boards I discovered in my father's basement.

Jefferson spoke my language. He respected the story each board had to tell, and he was as anxious and excited as I was to hear them speak. The goal was to craft one drum from each of the different species. To complicate matters, there was barely enough yield of each to make a single drum without any mistakes. If the material fractured or split, this entire effort would be for naught, and the boards my father had treasured for six decades would be rendered useless. But Jefferson, in his calm, understanding, and

caring manner, put my concerns to rest.

As the months passed, Jefferson and I had numerous conversations, talking our way through each step of the project. Decisions needed to be made, from hoop types to shell dimensions, exterior and interior finishing, and what type of glue was to be used to ensure shell integrity.

In May 2016, I shipped my prized boards to Santa Cruz. Over the course of several months, Sugar Percussion began making these amazing heirloom-quality snare drums.

Perfection

The finished drums arrived on December 22, 2016. The first box I opened was labeled "walnut." Pulling the drum from its thickly padded case, the unusual grain pattern of the shell grabbed my attention. The source wood didn't have a straight grain, so rather than attempt to make the shell appear seamless (as is often the goal) we decided to accentuate its unique character. The result is a shell that appears to be in constant motion.

Accouterments include single-contact lugs designed by Jefferson, die-cast hoops, and gorgeous hand-cut bearing edges and snare beds. A Trick GS007 multi-stage throw-off and a satin hand-rubbed finish complete this stunning instrument.

The canary wood drum has a brown and gold grain with a lush visual appearance that elicits a "wow" every time I show it off. It's best tuned low for a big, fat sound, with just enough overtones to distinguish it from other wood species.

The star of the three is the Brazilian rosewood. Its appearance is punctuated with a dark, exotic richness that only a rare species of timber can exude. Sonically, this drum does it all with style and grace. It's articulate and luxurious, with a tuning range that's ridiculous.

Conclusion

I hadn't intended this story to sound like an endorsement for Sugar Percussion. I received no preferential treatment from Jefferson, but I have to give credit where credit is due. In that sense, I owe my deepest appreciation and gratitude to the craftsmen at Sugar Percussion for turning my dream into a reality and exceeding my wildest expectations in the process. Addio!



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From The *Modern Drummer* Library

Written by renowned drummer Jonathan Joseph (Jeff Beck, Joss Stone, Richard Bona) and University of Miami director of drumset studies Steve Rucker, *Exercises in African-American Funk* is designed to introduce musicians who've studied jazz, R&B, rock, soul, and blues to a concept that applies West African rhythms to various genres.

The series of exercises contained in the book guide you through a fusion of African and American elements. On the American side, we have shuffle and shuffle-funk. On the African side, we have the rhythms from Cameroon known as mangambe and bikutsi. Mastering these exercises will strengthen your groove, provide you with an understanding of the three-against-four polyrhythm, give you an awareness of the second partial of the triplet, and introduce you to a fresh new way to hear and feel music.

MODERNDRUMMER Presents:

Exercises in African-American Funk Mangambe, Bikutsi, and the Shuffle

- Strengthen Your Groove
- Master the 3:4 Polyrhythm
- Increase Rhythmic Awareness

by Jonathan Joseph
and Steve Rucker

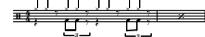


Chapter 4: Half-Time Shuffle-Funk

In this chapter, we move the backbeat of the shuffle groove over to beat 3. What this does is transform the shuffle into a half-time, triplet-based funk groove, which we'll call "shuffle-funk."

The "shuffle-funk" made famous by the legendary 19th-century drummer Bertie, is one version of this type of groove. The first hand pattern contains no ghost notes. The grooves become more and more dense as we add ghost notes. In the previous exercises, the ghost notes should be played extremely soft. The primary focus of the groove is on the bass drum and the backbeat.

As mentioned before, it's very helpful in your practice to alternate between a simple groove and the more difficult exercise. For instance, you can switch between each line of the exercises and the traditional mangambe groove.



Although these exercises are written with 16th-note triplets for consistency, you might also conceptualize them as 10th-note triplets. That interpretation would put the backbeat on beats 2 and 4 of a bar of 4. So Hand Pattern 1 would look like the following:



As before, we'll start with a simple hand pattern and gradually add ghost notes. Practice the exercises between 70 and 120 bpm.



Here are some exercises that use Hand Pattern 1 with different bass drum variations.



Chapter 6: Bikutsi

In this chapter, we introduce the African rhythm known as bikutsi. Bikutsi is a musical genre from Cameroon that features the 3:4 polyrhythm. It has roots in the traditional music of the forest people, who live around the city of Yaoundé, along with various elements of the pop-rock idiom.

The characteristic rhythm of the bikutsi is a grouping of triplets in a four-note pattern. Elements of this chapter are directly related to Chapters 1 and 2. If you aren't clear on the 3:4 polyrhythm, please review those chapters.



Here are examples of a 3:4 polyrhythm rhythm.



By moving the snare across to beat 3, we can create a simple bikutsi shuffle-funk pattern.



Here's a shuffle-funk variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



We can also open the hi-hat where the accents occur.



Here's the same variation with the bass drum on the first beat only.



Check out a video of concepts and exercises included in the book at moderndrummer.com, and order a copy today—for only \$14.95.

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rbhdrumsusa.com

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Agazarian's new line of handcrafted gongs from China's Hubei province includes 26", 30", and 34" Chau gongs and a 22" Wind gong. Chau gongs, made from bronze alloy, deliver a big, deep crash and provide a large spread of low tones. The nearly flat design of the Agazarian 22" Wind gong is said to provide a smooth, low-pitched sound that opens up with a wash of overtones when played more aggressively.

Agazarian's steel gong stands feature a textured, powder-coated finish and offer three height adjustments to accommodate instruments of various sizes. Rolling, locking casters are included for easy transport and placement. Gong prices start at \$149.99, stands at \$89.99.

agazarian.com



Sonor Steve Smith 40th- Anniversary Snare

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sonor.com

Aquarian Texture Coated Reflector Snare Batter

Aquarian's Texture Coated Reflector snare batter is born from the same 2-ply hybrid film combination as the Reflector series but adds a Slate Grey coating. The combination of a heavy-duty 10-mil bottom ply and a top layer of 7-mil film is said to offer a sound that's warm and musical at low volumes and bright and articulate when played hard.

aquariandrumheads.com



Vic Firth Benny Greb Signature Stick

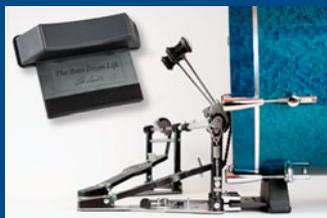
This .595"x16" signature stick features a medium taper that places the shoulder in an ideal spot for durability. The 5B shaft and shortened teardrop tip are designed to provide excellent rebound and a focused cymbal sound.

vicfirth.com



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CRITIQUE

RECORDINGS

John Frum *A Stirring in the Noos*

It's a band, not a person. And that's not the only unexpected thing here.

John Frum's debut full-length, *A Stirring in the Noos*, offers a new voice to the ever-growing technical death metal melee with thick, twisting compositions rife with the double bass onslaught and complex cymbal textures common to the genre. Intermittent synth and spacious interludes set this release apart from the chugging groove metal that's so common of late. A Philadelphia native with music degrees from both Temple University and the University of the Arts, drummer **ELI LITWIN** ably leads bandmates Matt Hollenberg (guitar, John Zorn, Cleric), Derek Rydquist (vocals, ex-the Faceless), and Liam Wilson (bass, Dillinger Escape Plan, Starkweather) through the album's eight dense tracks. Litwin's creative use of space and unexpected snare drum double strokes on the grinding "Memory Palace," blast-beat punishment on opener "Presage of Emptiness," and fluid navigation of endless serpentine groupings on "He Come" stand out. (Relapse) **Ben Meyer**



Gabrielle Hennessy

Tabah *Symmetry Somewhere*

MURPHY JANSSEN breathes new life into American indie rock on this Minneapolis-based group's full-length debut.

It's not easy being a rock drummer these days. There's a compelling argument to be made that every bit of rhythmic territory the genre has to offer has been effectively mined by now. But just when this claim becomes most tempting to make, a record like Tabah's *Symmetry Somewhere* comes along. The quintet—and particularly drummer Murphy Janssen—manages to forge a unique identity. By blending Afro-Cuban rhythms with '70s dance aesthetics, Janssen is able to hone a formally inventive approach to the drumkit, one that often bypasses time-honored rock grooves in favor of freewheeling syncopated patterns that mutate every few bars. The end result is that Tabah's rhythmic left turns and 1990s Alternative Nation-style melodies always find a soft place to land. (tabahmpls.com) **Keaton Lamle**



Between the Buried and Me *Coma Ecliptic: Live* Nova Collective *The Further Side*

A pair of new releases from the expanding BTBAM universe should raise your antenna.

North Carolina prog darlings Between the Buried and Me, who've been defying neat genre labels for over fifteen years now, recently released a double-disc set that contains their third live album and second live DVD. Documenting a complete live performance of the 2015 concept album *Coma Ecliptic*, the CD and DVD feature audio and video from a single show at the Observatory North Park in San Diego in October of 2016. Mixed by longtime collaborator Jamie King of the Basement Recording NC, *Coma Ecliptic: Live* features eleven tracks of the band at its tour-hardened zenith, deep into the album cycle for *Coma Ecliptic*. Drummer **BLAKE RICHARDSON**'s precise, powerful playing comes across beautifully throughout.

Also available on Metal Blade Records is the debut album from Nova Collective, a new quartet featuring BTBAM bassist Dan Briggs along with members of Trioscapes, Haken, and Cynic. *The Further Side*, the band's first recorded output, will feel familiar to fans of Trioscapes, a collaboration also including Briggs and Nova Collective drummer **MATT LYNCH**. Lynch's playing on *The Further Side* is slick, breathless, razor's-edge precise, and once again artfully recorded by Jamie King. Exotic keyboard textures from Pete Jones (ex-Haken) and probing, intellectual guitar playing by Richard Henshall (Haken) help this inspired record offer something we haven't quite heard before in the ever-expanding world of instrumental music. (Metal Blade) **Ben Meyer**



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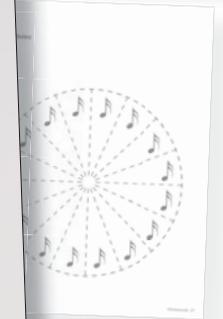
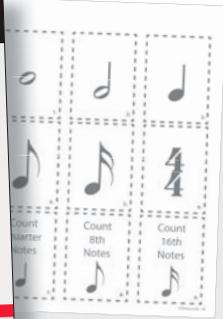
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TAKING THE REINS

Vinnie Sperrazza *Juxtaposition*

The drummer/leader displays a thoughtful, dynamic voice both on the kit and within the classic jazz quartet.

There are many jazz quartets with sax, piano, bass, and drums, yet it's the way individual personalities converge that makes each group special. Vinnie Sperrazza's latest release finds Chris Speed's searching sax lines playing among Bruce Barth's gorgeous piano chords, while Peter Brendler's bass throbs beneath. Yet the character of the group really relies on Sperrazza's contributions, which feature floating polyrhythmic cymbal patterns, crisp and dynamic snare accents, and a supportive drive. "House on Hoxie Road," for instance, displays all these traits. At times Sperrazza's playing is subtle, while at other times he locks in with Brendler for a solid swinging groove, as on "Alter Ego." While the songs vary from meditative to swinging, Sperrazza is never bombastic. Instead, his excellent technique, control, dynamics, and rhythmic sense (check out "One Hour") combine with his sense of color and space to support the group. Overall, as both composer and drummer, Sperrazza has an approach that rewards further listening. (Positone) **Martin Patmos**



Gustavo Cortiñas *Snapshot* *Esse*

An emerging drummer to watch combines his passions for music and philosophy.

Rhythm freaks may salivate over the complexities here, including polyrhythms of five against four and three, left-foot clave in five, and a ballad in 15/8. But that's not the point. The selections on *Esse* ("the act of being") are inspired by the work of key Western philosophers, and Gustavo Cortiñas' music successfully conveys the spirituality of those topics. In addition, Cortiñas is, foremost, a highly musical and grooving drummer as well as a laudable composer. A bonus: The music is surprisingly danceable.

Cortiñas, who was raised in Mexico, is currently active on the Chicago jazz scene. On his second disc, he leads his septet, *Snapshot*, through engaging numbers mixing elements from jazz and multiple Latin cultures, including folkloric styles from his homeland, such as Huapango. Check out the thrilling groove-shifter "Arête," where Cortiñas gets some blazing feature space, delivering high-energy precision soloing framed by vivid ideas. A joyful meeting of mind and spirit. (OA2) **Greg David**



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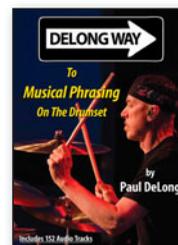
DeLong Way to Musical Phrasing on the Drumset by Paul DeLong

A new method book promises that you can increase technique and musicality when you focus on how the building blocks fit together.

The term *phrase*, defined as words forming a conceptual unit, is similarly defined in music as notes grouped together. Likewise, phrasing refers to how something is played, similar to how something is spoken. Exploring the core performance concepts of phrases and phrasing, Paul DeLong's newest book challenges drummers to develop their musicality. Part of the secret lies in avoiding a nonstop barrage of notes. Yet techniques like grouping notes into rhythmic patterns, repetition, shaping, and letting the music breathe are some of the real tricks.

DeLong opens with a wealth of transcriptions that demonstrate musical phrasing as played by numerous jazz and rock greats—Tony Williams, Vinnie Colaiuta, Ian Paice, and so forth. Then DeLong offers examples of three-, five-, and seven-beat phrases by other popular drummers, demonstrating how they can create musical patterns across 4/4 barlines. After solidifying these concepts, the book wraps up by looking at combinations, odd-time phrasing, and working around ensemble figures.

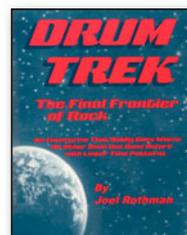
By drawing on examples from real recordings, DeLong offers a variety of stylistic challenges grounded in genre practice. Looking at how phrasing has been used by famous drummers really strengthens the book's appeal—brief transcriptions of Bill Stewart, Steve Gadd, John Bonham, and many others are used throughout to explain the ideas at hand. Further, viewing these drummers in context adds awareness to what makes them great. As a bonus, all the transcriptions have been recorded by DeLong and are available as downloads. Playing through this book, you will definitely walk away with a deeper knowledge of drumset phrasing, and likely some improved chops as well. (\$24.95, pauldelong.com) **Martin Patmos**



Drum Trek: The Final Frontier of Rock by Joel Rothman

Explore the bond between hi-hat and snare with this linear-groove starter kit.

If you're interested in learning how to execute Tower of Power or other linear patterns, but transcribing the parts is proving challenging, then this book is your ticket. *Drum Trek* is almost exclusively made up of linear patterns for just snare and hi-hat, so all you'll need to focus on is making sense of two staff lines. Author Joel Rothman starts things off easy enough with simple 8th-note exercises in 4/4 time but eventually moves into more complex odd-time passages (very tricky) and chapters with titles like "Linear Patterns for Four Bars With Two Consecutive Quintuplets in the Fourth Bar," so don't get too comfortable too quickly. Your paradiddle-diddles should also be together. And of course, before you go and try to tackle that sick pattern in TOP's "Oakland Stroke," you'll have to grapple with the elephant in the room—adding the bass drum. For that, at the moment, you're on your own. (\$19.95, J.R. Publications) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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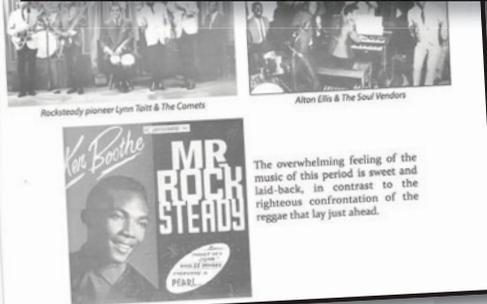
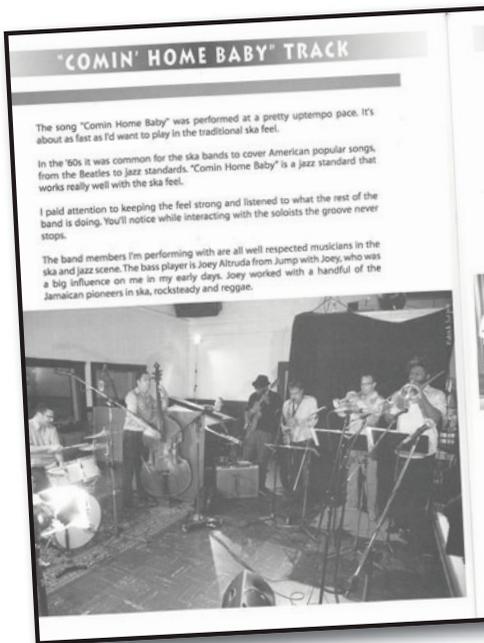
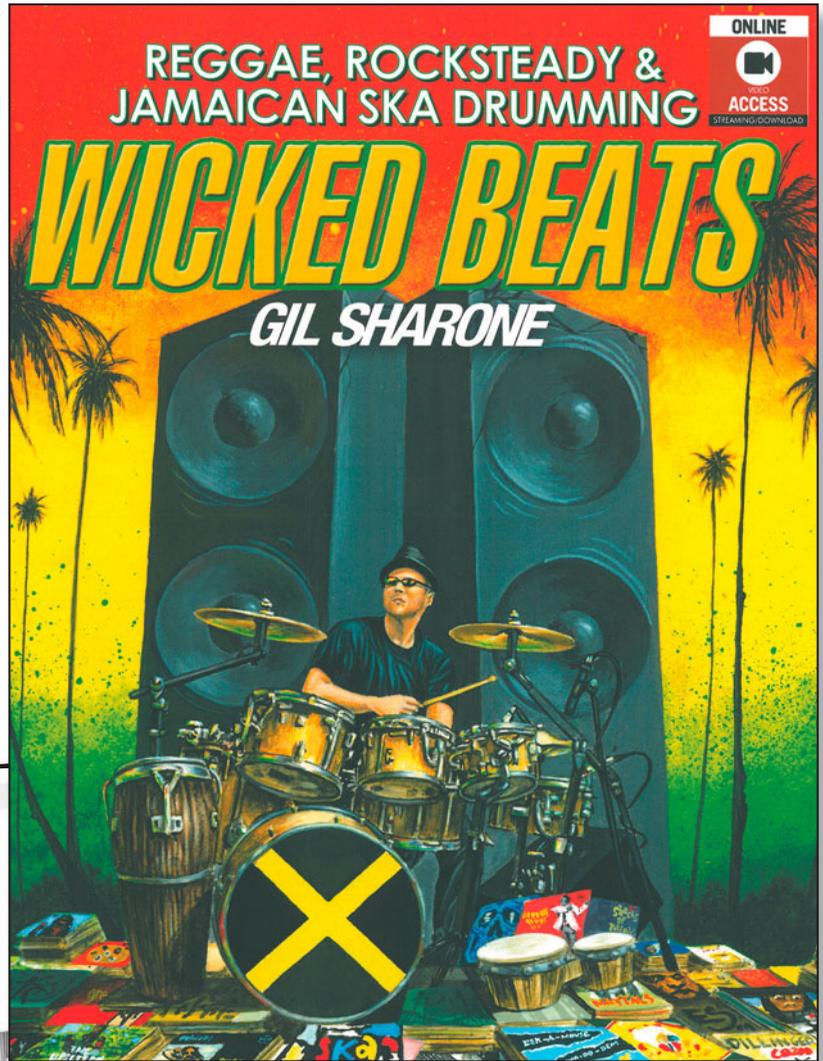
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Gil Sharone's *Wicked Beats* Book

by Stephen Bidwell

September 2015 *MD* cover artist Gil Sharone has built a career around his ability to navigate numerous styles in a convincing and authentic manner. If you don't know him from his day gig with Marilyn Manson or his stint in Dillinger Escape Plan, you've probably heard him in passing on recent film and television soundtracks, including *John Wick* and *Samurai Jack*. Now Sharone has partnered with Hudson Music to publish a companion book to his 2010 instructional DVD, *Wicked Beats*, which offers a historically based approach to reggae, ska, dub, and most other Jamaican drumming styles that have evolved since the 1960s, with an emphasis on feel and style.

Being raised in Los Angeles gave Sharone access to the best players in many styles, and he dove into ska and reggae with the same vigor as he did jazz and rock. "I was coming up with competent musicians that could play some bebop," Gil says, "and we could also play a ska tune, or a bebop tune like 'Billie's Bounce,' but in a



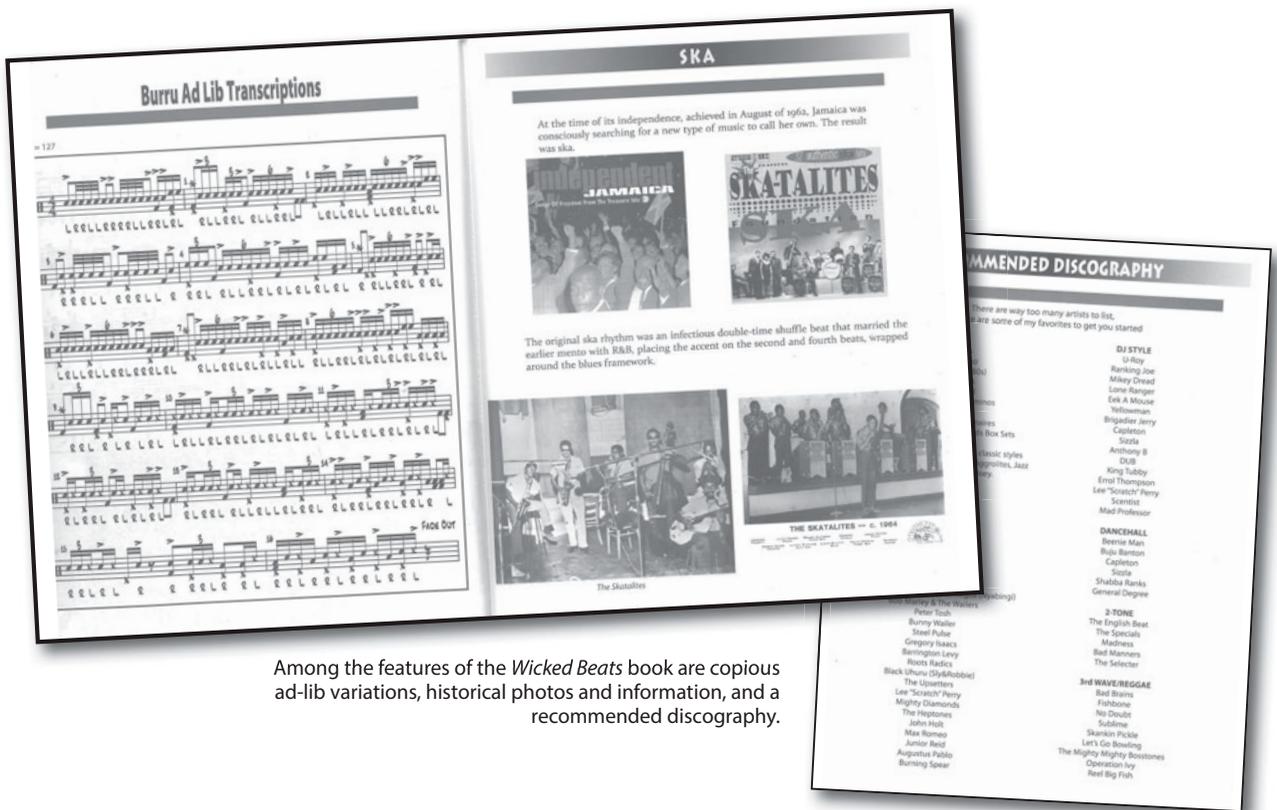
Wicked Beats comes with a download code that allows you to view corresponding video files, including clips of Gil Sharone performing tracks with a full band.

Study Suggestions

To best understand the evolution of the music, Sharone suggests that the book be worked through front to back at first. "You can jump into any of the sections just fine," he explains, "but it's an easy

enough read that it flows. And all these styles are connected. So working through it from start to finish would be my best advice. Obviously the accompanying DVD is there to help you as well. And if

you have the digital copy, there are video camera icons that you can click on to fly you right to that part of the DVD."



Among the features of the *Wicked Beats* book are copious ad-lib variations, historical photos and information, and a recommended discography.

ska rhythm. Coming up, it was just a part of me. I didn't learn these beats from transcriptions."

Early in his professional career Sharone got the chance to play with the multi-genre masters Fishbone. "Playing with them was huge to me," he says, "because it laid the groundwork for how I discovered a lot of the other styles of reggae and ska. When I wanted to dig deeper and see who invented this, I discovered the Skatalites and this beat that is so unique to Jamaican ska." Sharone's résumé grew to include stints with Dave Wakeling (the English Beat), Eek-a-Mouse, H.R. of Bad Brains, and Grammy winner Morgan Heritage.

Sharone outlines a few crucial requirements to understanding Jamaican music in the book's introduction: feel, spirit, tempo, and a lot of listening. He also emphasizes that any player working through the book should not learn the patterns just from reading them. "You've got to soak it up," Sharone says. "You've got to absorb it; you have to be around the music. You have to understand how it makes you feel, and internalize the pulse, the pocket, and get comfortable with those tempos." To this end he offers a concise discography of key artists and drummers as a springboard for digging into the respective subgenres and connecting the dots between eras and players.

While a good knowledge of some other genres is helpful, Sharone says that a strong understanding of feel may be the most crucial concept in developing an authentic reggae sound. "You can't have a good reggae feel if you can't differentiate between a straight feel and a swung feel," he explains. "You can't have a good ska feel if you can't swing, and you can't develop any of those if you don't have a shuffle, because all of them came from a shuffle." Without a good sense of groove or "bounce," Gil says, drummers will have difficulty developing an authentic feel.

While the transcriptions are helpful for proficient readers, the video content is included as downloadable or streaming content on the publisher's site. "If people are good readers, they can go through the whole thing without sitting at a kit," Sharone says. "Then there are other people who can use the book just as a guide while they learn visually from the DVD."

Sharone's stated goal for *Wicked Beats* is for it to be the standard text for reggae drumming. "No matter where anyone is in their career," Gil says, "I want them to have this as a go-to point to cop the styles, but from an authentic point of view."



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Pearl Nashville Drum Day

Two New Series of Drums Debut in Music City

This past March in Nashville, the drum manufacturer Pearl Corporation held a luncheon for local drummers to try out some of the company's newest offerings. An estimated 150 attendees demoed five different Masterworks Sonic Select Recipes drumsets, which comprise the latest additions to the company's high-end Masterworks series, along with five new Modern Utility snares.

For the Sonic Select series, Pearl developed five distinct wood combinations, each boasting a unique tonal quality. The Studio model has maple and gumwood shells with 60-degree outer edges. The Heritage has maple and mahogany shells with 45-degree outer edges and maple reinforcement rings. The Urban has a birch/gumwood/birch combination with maple reinforcement rings and 45-degree rounded edges. The Stadium has maple shells and outer 60-degree edges. And the Modern Dry has maple and gumwood shells with mahogany reinforcement rings and inner 45-degree edges.

"Up until now, all Masterworks kits have been custom built," says Steve Armstrong, Pearl's director of marketing. "That made it rare for anyone to have an opportunity to play five different kits in one place." And because of the company's location in Music City, Pearl has plenty of drummers in its backyard. "We value the feedback we get from Nashville drummers," Armstrong says. "It's like having a massive focus group."

Pearl artist and Yellowjackets drummer Will Kennedy presented a clinic while playing a Masters Maple Reserve kit, the newest addition to Pearl's Music City Custom series. He was first introduced to the new Sonic Select Recipes at Nashville Drum Day. "I'm in big trouble now," Kennedy said with a grin at the event. "I have Reference and Reference Pure kits, and I'll never give those up. But, oh my goodness, to have these five new Recipes... These are wonderful tools of expression, and that's what playing drums is all about. It's about being able to have your equipment become transparent, allowing you to freely focus on the music that you're performing. These new drums are a great invitation for that to take place in performance." Kennedy's



favorite set was the Urban. "This is the one that grabbed my heart. The sound is rich and warm with incredible dynamic range."

Nashville session drummer Wes Little (Robben Ford) said of the Sonic Select kits, "Pearl has tailored these five drumsets to the player's sound rather than the other way around." Little was drawn to the Modern Dry line and its older, vintage sound.

Pearl's use of gumwood is new to the Masterworks series. "When we were developing the Sonic Select kits, we started off using maple, birch, and African mahogany," Armstrong explains. "Those woods got us where we wanted to be with several sets. But to achieve the other sounds we wanted, gumwood was added. It's a medium-density wood that produces explosive tones and increased volume. It was added to the Studio, Urban, and Modern Dry sets."

According to Pearl, the new Modern Utility series is a line of five well-appointed, no-nonsense snares priced under \$200 each. Tom Hurst, instructor at the Drum Pad at the Nashville equipment rental center Drum Paradise, wants one of each. "In Nashville we're often called upon to play in numerous musical situations that require quite a range of stylistic applications," he says. "This Utility snare line provides an unbelievable quality of sound and a broad range of versatility at a price point that is so low that I could own them all and be covered for any eventuality without breaking the bank." Another Nashville educator, George Lawrence (Poco), was impressed with the array of options. "I think the Modern Utility snares sounded so good and are so affordable that they could become *the* workhorse snares for Nashville working drummers," he says.

Kennedy best sums up the event: "[Drumming is] about being able to close your eyes and get deep into the music that you're performing. There's something really wonderful about that perspective of playing. It's not about you or your chops. It's about what you're doing to contribute to the music. With tools like the Sonic Select Recipes, you can express yourself freely and take your playing to another space."

Text and photos by Sayre Berman



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The Steam Brain



Brooklyn-based percussionist, theater designer, and artist Eric Farber built this month's monster setup for the Off-Broadway Civil War and science fiction musical *Futurity*. He created the production with his indie-rock band the Lips over the course of eight years while continuously adding to the rig he uses during the show. "The longer we worked on it," Farber says, "the more things I collected, and the bigger it got!"

The drums include a 1968–69 Ludwig kit in sky blue pearl with a 22" bass drum, a 13" rack tom, and a 16" floor tom, plus a mid-1950s Gretsch round-badge snare. A set of vintage 14" Zildjian A hi-hats, a 21" Istanbul Agop Mel Lewis ride (without rivets), a vintage 12" Zildjian A splash, and an '80s Latin Percussion mambo cowbell round out the standard acoustic *percussion* of the kit. "The other mounted objects around the drums are assorted industrial materials that are mounted to three Tama Roadpro boom stands and tons of other clamps and boom arms," Farber explains. "Everything else beyond that includes nontraditional percussion contraptions that

are operated by a total of twelve people, including myself." Farber, along with the rest of the production's cast, employs inventive techniques while performing. "I'm the only one using sticks to play—actually, a number-six knitting needle and a railroad tie nail," the drummer explains. "All of the other percussion and kinetic movement happens through individual cranks and other simple hand-powered mechanisms."

The kit also includes an old tractor grill that gets scraped when a crank is turned, crop-thresher teeth jingled by a trombone horn, an industrial fan cover on top of a giant steel kettle that creates a deep reverb chamber, a spring-loaded potato ricer, an antique corn-shelling machine that spins a network of wheels and film reels, and an iron wagon wheel powered by a 1980s Schwinn exercise bike, which plays a programmed beat.

For more about the production, including videos of the kit in action, visit kineticontology.com.

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitoftthmonth@modern drummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line.



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