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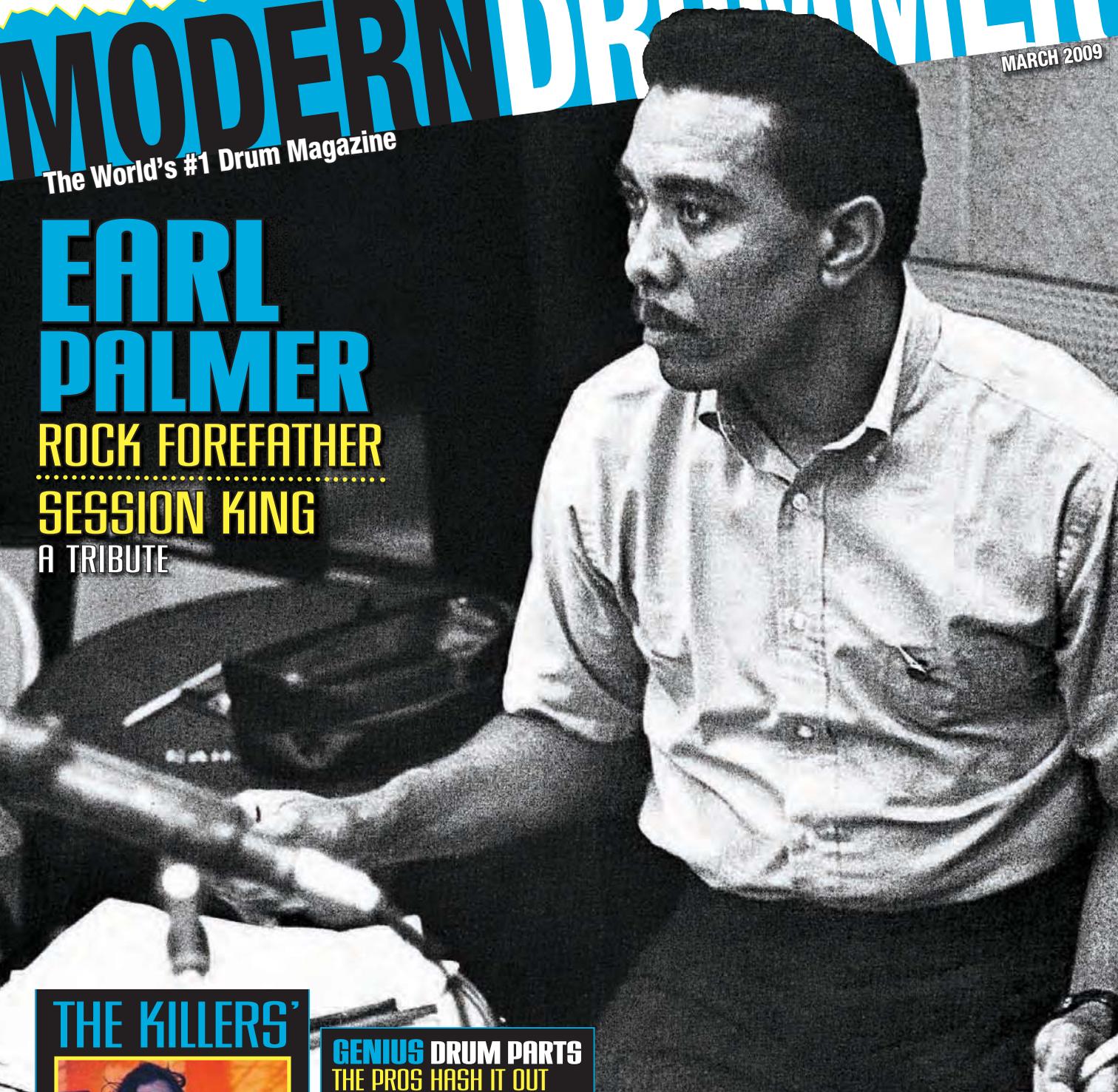
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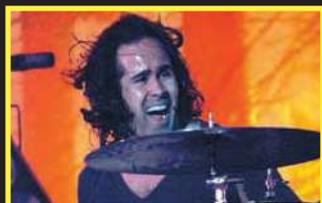
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After Earl Palmer traveled from New Orleans to LA in 1957, he reached musical heights even he couldn't have predicted: Soon the man credited as giving rock 'n' roll its telltale backbeat would be known as the busiest, most respected studio drummer ever.

## 64 The Killers' Ronnie Vannucci

Big beats, bigger ideas, and downright mammoth hi-hats define Ronnie Vannucci's contributions to The Killers' latest collection of modern pop masterstrokes, *Day And Age*.

## 78 Cynic's Sean Reinert

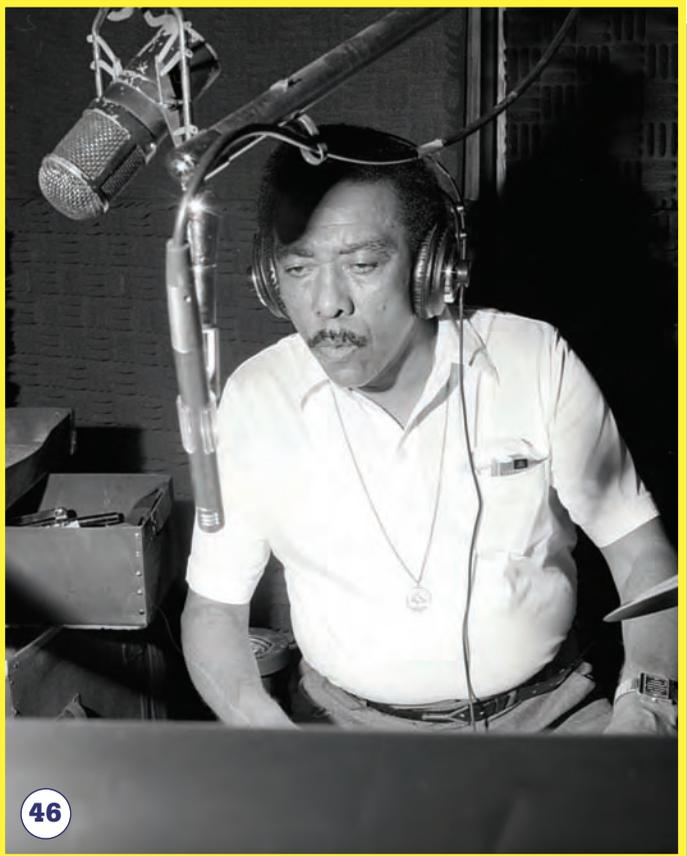
A decade and a half after Cynic simultaneously raised the bar and threw out the rule book on death metal, drummer Sean Reinert is back recording and touring with the recently re-formed band.

## 88 Francisco Mela

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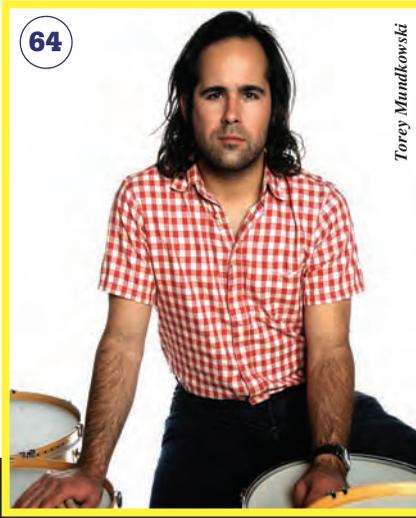
## 114 Great Drum Parts = Genius

Heavy hitters Billy Ward, Simon Phillips, Doane Perry, Marco Minnemann, Thomas Lang, and Jerry Marotta talk about the grooves that inspired them early on—and that continue to today.



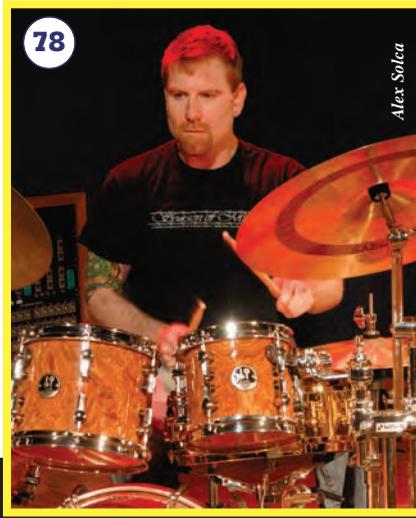
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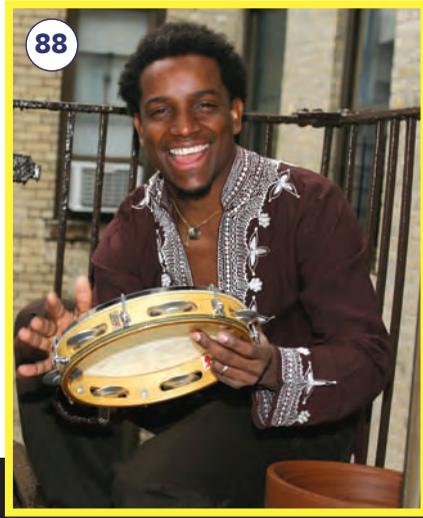
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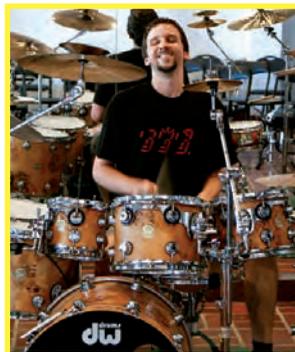


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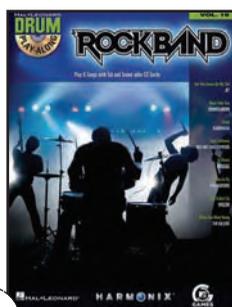
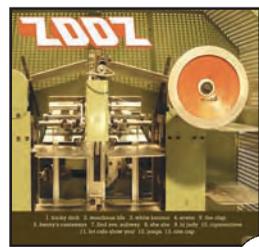
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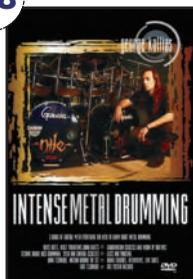
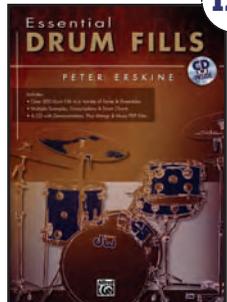
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**I** hate to admit it, but before reading this month's tribute feature to the late, great Earl Palmer, I wasn't all that aware of just how crucial his drumming was to the evolution of how we play the instrument. Sure, I'd heard the songs; "Tutti Frutti," "Good Golly Miss Molly," and "La Bamba" were all in heavy rotation on my parents' favorite "oldies" stations when I was growing up. But until now, I never thought about just how *innovative* that music was, especially considering that Palmer's slick swing/straight backbeat groove wasn't simply something that everybody *did*. Rather, it was the beat that ushered in the rock 'n' roll movement. Think about that the next time your left hand slams rimshots on 2 and 4 while your right hand skids across the ride with a steady stream of 8th notes. Even if you're not aware of it, you're paying respect to the bold, new moves Earl defined over fifty years ago—and that's pretty heavy stuff.

There are also several revelatory moments in Billy Ward's story on the great drum parts that influenced that way that he and several of his drumming buddies (Simon Phillips, Doane Perry, Marco Minnemann, Thomas Lang, and Jerry Marotta) approach the drums. The editors at *MD* also wanted to join in the fun, so we spent the better part of an afternoon discussing some of the songs that inspired us to take up the tubs. Of course, lists like these could be amended ad nauseam, since there are new bands and drummers inspiring us each day (that's part of the fun of it!). But to give you a taste of where I'm coming from, here are three songs that influenced *me* the most during my first year of drumming.

**1) Living Colour, "Cult Of Personality" (1988)**

This was the first song that made me want to be a drummer. Will Calhoun just looked so cool in the video behind that big drumset with his ride cymbal positioned way up high. And those fills in the choruses and guitar solo...monstrous.

**2) The Ramones, "I Just Want To Have Something To Do" (1978)**

The Christmas that I got my first drumset, my brother also got an electric guitar. The first thing we did was throw on *Road To Ruin* so we could figure out the opening cut. This song—with Marky Ramone on drums—taught me everything: how to keep steady time, when to switch to the ride cymbal, and that playing the bass drum independent of the snare is *way* harder than it seems.

**3) Tone Loc, "Wild Thing" (1989)**

I remember how proud I was when I learned to play that classic descending tom fill from this song—on the back of the headrest of my parents' car. (I later learned that the fill is actually a sample of Alex Van Halen from the song "Jamie's Cryin'," another one of my early faves.)

My complete list, the top-five of the other editors at *MD*, and fifty of *MD Wire* subscribers' picks can be found on our Web site and in the blog section of our MySpace page ([www.myspace.com/moderndrummermagazine](http://www.myspace.com/moderndrummermagazine)). After you check out those, feel free to leave comments discussing some your "great drum parts." I'm sure you have some good ones.

*Mike Dawson*

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Volume 33 Number 3

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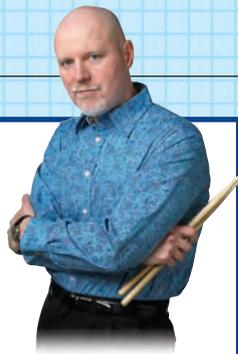
Reference Series shown in #330 Ivory Pearl

## Bill Miller

It is with great sadness that we tell you of the passing of *Modern Drummer* editor in chief William F. Miller. Bill left us this past December 12, after a long and noble bout with cancer. Our hearts and thoughts are with Bill's wife, Sarah, with their son, Clifford, and with the entire Miller and Otazo families.

Bill began his career at *Modern Drummer* as an intern over twenty years ago, eventually rising to *MD*'s top editorial post. A protégé of the magazine's founder, Ron Spagnardi, Bill loved his work, identified himself with it, and dedicated all of his energy and effort toward it. His presence will be greatly missed.

A more detailed story about Bill's life and career will appear in an upcoming issue of *MD*



## Lars Ulrich

I was impressed with the interview of Lars Ulrich in the December issue. I've been reading *MD* for several years and wondered why so little was said about Lars. I'm not a fan of metal, but my son was a huge fan of Metallica in the '80s and early '90s. I became aware of Lars' awesome talent then. Thanks for featuring him.

**Glenn Hamilton**

Great, great article with Lars! He's been a huge influence on me since 1989, when I first saw the video for "One." While I realize he certainly isn't the "best" drummer in heavy metal, he always will be one of the most influential.

**Akil James**

## Greg Upchurch

It was great to see the write-up on Greg Upchurch of 3 Doors Down. I had the pleasure of spending time with him and the band when they came to New Jersey a couple of times. This past July they were here again, and Greg's playing was exceptional. Nice guy, and a great drummer!

**Dan Britf**

## Life Away From The Kit

Thank you all for the brilliant articles, especially the ones that talk about the mind. The "Life Away From The Kit" story in the November issue was so inspiring!

**GG Tung from Hong Kong**

## Frank Briggs

It's about time that the general public is being made aware of Frank Briggs! I first encountered this percussive titan when he opened for a Chad Smith clinic—yikes! This guy is unbelievable. And now there's a Grammy possibility? It couldn't happen to a nicer guy. And wait until you see him live. It's hard to believe.

**Mike Plew**

## Thomas Pridgen Rebuttal

This is a reply to Jason Newman's letter in the December issue regarding Thomas Pridgen. Although Thomas was shirtless on the cover of *Modern Drummer*, there is no reason to be embarrassed to read this magazine at work. *Modern Drummer* is a magazine filled with knowledge. Plus, if you go to a concert in the summer, many musicians aren't wearing shirts.

**Paul Hubbard**

Joe Cistone, Jason Newman: Are you really so easily offended when the outrageously talented, blisteringly fast, and tasty Thomas Pridgen chose not to adhere to any imaginary "dress code" for his cover photo? Have you not seen this former child prodigy in action on the instrument? You're missing the point. I invite you to YouTube "The Mars Volta plays David Letterman," and turn it up!

**Timothy Lee Cromer**

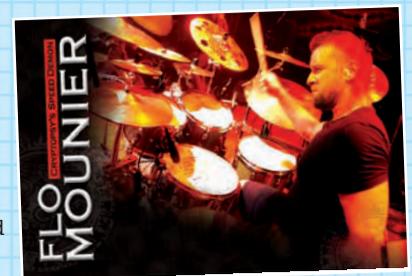


Christopher Otazo

## Flo And Fagen

I just wanted to send yet another "well done" for the December 2008 issue, and here's why: 1) Flo Mounier wasn't even on my radar screen, but thanks to the very refreshing and insightful interview by Mike Haid, he is now! Hearing Flo's take on his system of biomechanics and muscular advancements was very enlightening to the humble funk, R&B, jazz fan that I am. 2) I had recently read through an old issue of *MD* in which Donald Fagan spoke of the various (and splendid) drummers who were put to the test by the great Steely Dan duo. So when I opened the December issue and saw the interview with the overtly cynical and damn-talented Walter Becker, I was hovering over every word he spoke. I loved Walter's take on the click track: "These guys are great players, they don't need remedial tempo assistance." You guys make us better drummers, and in some cases better people.

**Timothy Lee Cromer**



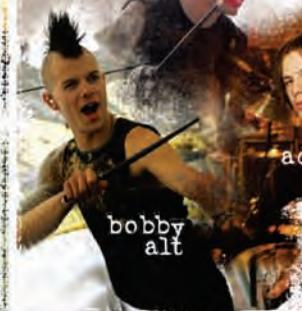
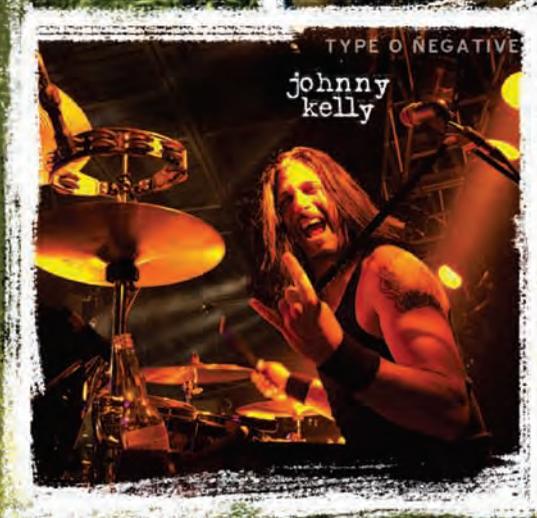
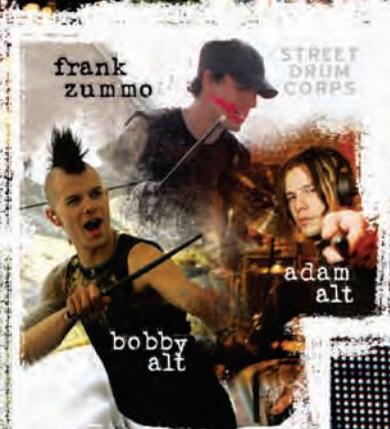
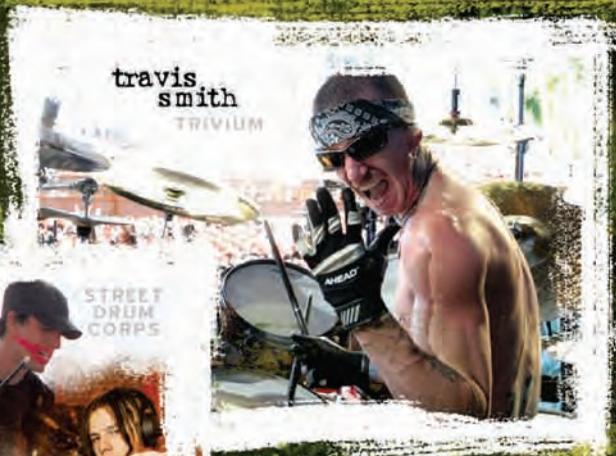
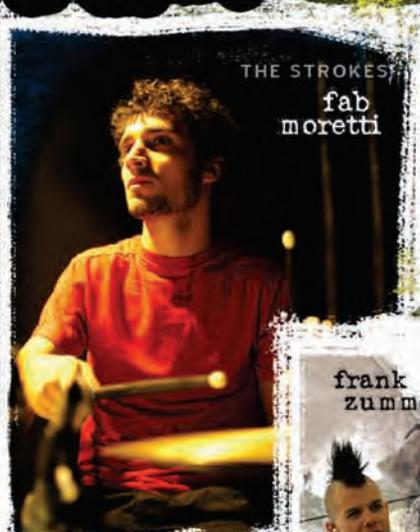
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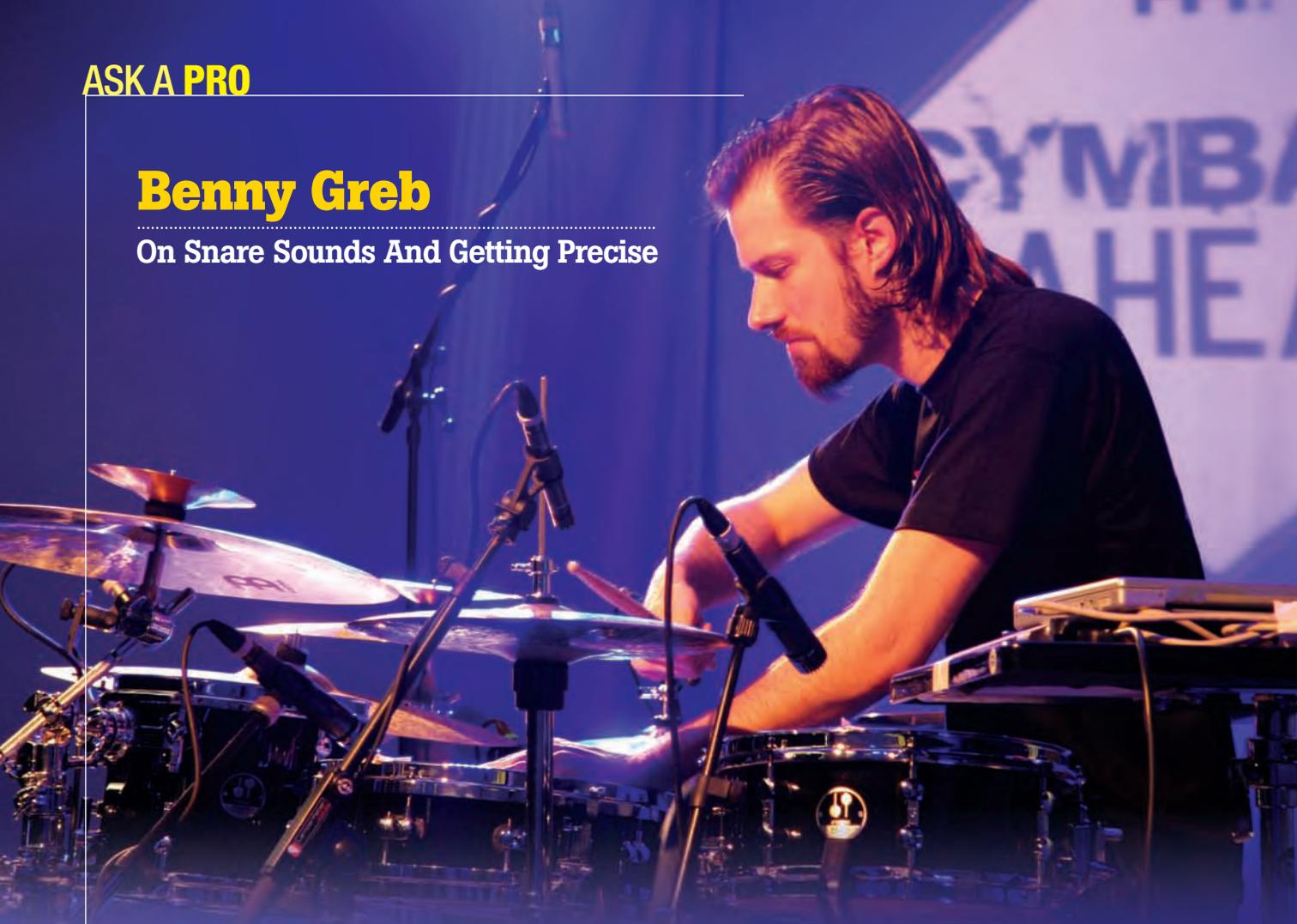
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## Benny Greb

### On Snare Sounds And Getting Precise



Hi, Benny! I recently discovered a video on your Web site, [www.bennygreb.com](http://www.bennygreb.com), of you playing a bunch of super funky grooves. (I had no idea you were such a great pocket player!) Not only does your dynamic and precise playing inspire me to work on my time and feel, but the sound of your drums is amazing. Can you take me through the various snares you used on that video and describe how you got them to sound so good (shell type, tuning, head selection, muffling, mic choice and placement, etc.)? Also, what do you recommend that I practice to improve my precision?

Scott Smith

Hey, Scott. Thanks for the question and for your kind words. I made that "Some Grooves" video two years ago to try out my new recording/practice room. I kept the setup simple and only used two Beyerdynamic MC 840 mics that went directly into a MOTU MK2 interface that was connected—via Firewire—to my Mac that has the recording software Logic Pro on it. One mic was placed in front of the bass drum, about 12" away from the resonant head, and the other one was in an overhead position. I didn't use any EQ, just different types of compression. I love these kinds of recordings. I also sometimes use just one mic to check my balance and overall sound when I practice.

I used three snare drums with different tunings. One was a 5x14 Sonor Delite with a vintage maple shell—the silver sparkle one with die-cast hoops. The other two were Sonor snare drums from the Artist series, a 5x14 AS 07 1405 MB with gold hardware, which also has a thin (vintage) maple shell, and a black

steel 5x14 AS 07 1405 SB. All three drums had Remo coated Ambassador heads on them. At first I always tune the heads with equal tension on every lug. The overall tone differs a lot depending on the style and the song that I'm playing. But in that clip, I would say most of the batter heads were tuned medium, somewhere between a timbale-like sound and a more resonant tom-type tone. I lower the two lugs that face me about a half or a full turn. To get a deeper, muddy tone I loosen them even more. (I have the snares quite loose, and the bottom heads are tuned to the point where you can barely press in on them.) A lot of people are sometimes amazed by how deeply I'll tune my snare. If you would place your thumb in the center of the head, you would be able to press it down about five millimeters. But this is something you have to try out and listen to yourself.

As far as muffling goes, I sometimes use a bit of gaffer's tape or Pro-Mark Drum Gum close to the rim, as you can see on the close-up of the black snare in the video. An important thing to be aware of is to not play the snare (and the cymbals) too loudly so that you get an even and well-balanced overall sound.

Precision-wise, I would recommend practicing grooves or improvising while singing a short sound, like "chid," on quarter notes and 8th-note off-beats. Doing this is my "clarification plant," or point of reference, so that everything I practice is checked to see if it's in time. Of course, it's also important that your playing is relaxed and you have fun.

Thanks again for checking out my Web site. My new DVD *The Language Of Drumming* covers many more exercises regarding matters such as these.



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## ASK A PRO

# Mickey Hart

## On Absurdly Long Rhythmic Cycles

Mickey, I've been enjoying the recent reissue of your solo albums, especially *Diga*. I'm intrigued by the tune "Tal Mala," which according to the liner notes runs in cycles of 205 beats. Could you explain how those cycles work? Presumably you weren't actually counting to 205, so how did you break it into more digestible chunks?

**Evan Gilcrest**

Zakir [Hussain] and I—mostly Zakir, with [Zakir's father] Alla Rakha and me—composed "Tal Mala," which was in 205 beats:  $102\frac{1}{2}$  and  $102\frac{1}{2}$ . Ten and a quarter revolves evenly over  $102\frac{1}{2}$  beats, because  $10\frac{1}{4}$  ten times is  $102\frac{1}{2}$ . Then you double that because you've got to come back on the on-beat. Remember, you're on the offbeat [after one cycle of  $102\frac{1}{2}$ ], because you've got a half beat. That means the offbeat of an 8th note is now the new 1. When it goes for  $102\frac{1}{2}$  more beats, it flips back to the 1. So you resolve in 205 beats:  $10\frac{1}{4}$  beats twenty times. *If my memory serves me correctly*. Remember, this is a long time ago, man. You're asking me a difficult question here, but I think that's the answer.

I don't think people play in quarters here in the West, do they? All twelve, fourteen of us were changing right there on the  $10\frac{1}{4}$ . Not on the half, but on the quarter. That was a challenge, man. After a while I said to Zakir, "Hey, I guess everybody plays in  $10\frac{1}{4}$  in India." And he looked at me and he laughed. Then I realized that we were in very rarified air, that no one had ever done this besides Alla Rakha and Zakir and maybe a couple of gurus up there on the top of Mount Rhythm.



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## Marco MINNEMANN

### The Normalizer

Since his June 2007 *Modern Drummer* cover story, German drumming master Marco Minnemann has performed numerous clinics, drum festivals, and concerts worldwide, recorded two multi-instrumental solo projects (*House Wife Dog & Two Kids*, *A Mouth Of God*), appeared on the animated TV series *Metalocalypse*, recorded performance segments for the drumming Web site *Drum Channel*, and contributed to a variety of eclectic recording projects. He also masterminded a recording concept called *Normalizer*, a fifty-two-minute drum solo template for musicians to build songs from.

Artists who have jumped on the *Normalizer* bandwagon include Mike Keneally (Frank Zappa), Trey Gunn (King Crimson), and Alex Machacek (BPM). The project will be released as a box set on the Abstract Logix label. Meanwhile, for anyone interested in composing to this outrageous track, the solo can be downloaded at [CDBaby.com](http://CDBaby.com).

On the road, Marco displayed versatility, aggression, and speed with German extreme metal band Necrophagist on the sold-out 2007 North American Slaughter Tour. Upon returning to his San Diego home, he composed and recorded music for UKZ, the long-awaited follow-up to the high-profile '80s prog/fusion band UK. Following in

**“I’m very happy that people are seeing me use my drumming skills for composing. That’s what I’ve always wanted to do.”**

the footsteps of former UK drummers Bill Bruford and Terry Bozzio, Minnemann was asked to join UKZ by founding member Eddie Jobson. The four-song EP *Radiation* was just released.

Marco can also be heard on the new release, *Thanks In Advance*, from bassist Bryan Beller (Steve Vai). And Minnemann, Beller, and guitarist Mike Keneally have formed KMB, a power trio featuring original compositions from all three artists. The trio will tour the world in 2009.

Minnemann’s latest solo recording, *A Mouth Of God*, is a thirteen-song collection of musical genius and controversial subject matter. “This album is very dark,” states Minnemann. “Some songs are desperate, some aggressive, some sarcastic but very high energy. There are beautiful moments too, things I’ve always wanted to say but that now come easier in my writing.

“I see myself more as a composer now,” Minnemann admits. “I’m very happy that people are buying my music and are seeing me use my drumming skills for composing. That’s what I’ve always wanted to do.”

**Mike Haid**

# Jay BELLEROSE

## All In A Year's Work

If you caught Robert Plant and Alison Krauss on 2008's *Raising Sand* tour, you couldn't help but focus on the guy providing the heartbeat to the harmony-laden, roots-and-roll revue, Jay Bellerose. Not only was Bellerose's drumming an inven-



tive jumble of slinky grooves, tumbling fills, and graceful accents, his rig was a thing of ragtag beauty, from the vintage tubs on down to the shakers strapped to his ankles.

"The set was a Slingerland Rolling Bomber kit, probably made in 1943 or 1944," Bellerose says of his eye-catching vintage kit, which he also played on the *Raising Sand* record.

"Because of the metal rationing during WWII, every drum company was forced to make a version of this kit. The lugs, lug casings, and rims are all made of rosewood, so it's a very warm sound.

"And through [producer] T-Bone Burnett's influence, I've gotten into the idea of no hi-hat, which was why I had shakers on my ankles. I first had the idea years ago, when I was playing a lot of coffeehouses and couldn't fit a drumkit in there. I like the graininess of the shakers. It's a little blurry, not as specific as a hi-hat, but it covers that same ground."

Bellerose describes 2008 as "rewarding on so many levels," and it's easy to understand why. He played on one of 2007's most critically acclaimed albums in *Raising Sand*, and spent much of '08 touring the album. (By the time you read this, he might be at work on the *Raising Sand* follow-up.)

In 2008 Bellerose also appeared on Sam Phillips' *Don't Do Anything* (and subsequent tour), Loudon Wainwright III's *Recovery*, and B.B. King's Burnett-produced *One Kind Favor*, which found Bellerose drumming alongside Jim Keltner.

"We were side-by-side with kits," Bellerose says of the King sessions. "T-Bone likes the idea of stuff going down together. There's certainly a different thing that happens when you have two kits moving air.

"Jim was the captain of the ship," Jay insists, "as far as I'm concerned. Sometimes we were both playing the same thing, and other times Jim would play a roll and I'd orchestrate more percussion-type stuff, which is kind of the way I play anyway. I basically just tried to contribute but not get in the way."

Patrick Berkery

# Russ KUNKEL

## The '70s Studio Legend Embraces His Past On His First-Ever Solo Album

If you've ever wanted to take a drum lesson with L.A. studio veteran Russ Kunkel—keeper of the beat on dozens of the biggest hits to come out the Sunshine State in the '70s—well, here's your chance. Now you can learn from the studio great in the convenience of your own woodshed, by logging on to iVideosongs.com.

To say that Kunkel is excited about this new project would be an understatement. "I was working on a couple of projects with Graham Nash in my studio in Studio City, California, when Graham was approached by a man named Tim Hoffman to do a new instructional video of a couple of his songs. Graham asked if we could do it in my studio. I met Tim while they were shooting Graham's videos, so he approached me about doing an instructional drum video. We eventually filmed footage for the songs 'Doctor My Eyes' and 'Fire And Rain,' and then something we ended up calling 'Session Drumming 101,' which is just an insight into my views on playing in the studio, producing, and such.

"The iVideosongs.com site has a great format," Russ insists, "because unlike other instructional videos, they're short. They're almost like little sound bites. They're only as long as a song, and they focus on the instrument and its integral parts—intro, verse 1, chorus 1, bridge, and so on—and you can jump forward to any point in the song and watch how the person played it. They have videos of the actual writer of the song showing you how to play it. It's amazing because you can watch it over and over again until you totally understand how to play it the way it was originally done. Everything is revealed. You can then put that track on your iPod or your iPhone and watch it any time you want. It's a great format and a very direct learning tool. This will be beneficial to musicians."

Kunkel also just released his first solo album, *Rivage*, which will be one of a series of CDs he'll be releasing under the Chateau Beach banner. "My business partner, Spencer Merinoff, and I had an idea of doing an instrumental album of some of the big hits I played on in my career," Russ explains. "I was driving around with Spencer, and he asked if I'd ever heard the King Curtis disc *Live At The Fillmore*. We listened to it and realized the concert was just instrumental versions of all the hits he had ever played a saxophone solo on—and right then a little light went off in my head. I thought, If I were ever going to do a record, that would be a great way to go about it, because I have a history of playing on a lot of great songs.

"So I did the record with a dear friend of mine, Jay Oliver," Russ continues, "who is a wonderful keyboard player and programmer. We did the record in conjunction with Jimmy Buffet's label Mailboat Records, who are distributing it. I'm actually about to get started on volume two."

For more on Russ, go to russellkunkel.com.

Robyn Flans



**"I had the idea of doing an instrumental album of some of the big hits I played on. I do have a history of playing on a lot of great songs."**

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## Jimmy DeGRASSO

### Laying Down His Signature Stroke With A New Project

When F5 bassist and founder David Ellefson needed a drummer for the group's sophomore CD, it was a no-brainer to enlist his former Megadeth rhythm section partner Jimmy DeGrasso. Though Ellefson hadn't done any preliminary drum programming, DeGrasso nailed his parts for the eleven songs on *The Reckoning* in less than five days.

"Building around what they'd already recorded," DeGrasso says, "my parts were pretty much dictated by the guitar work." Jimmy was able to incorporate a variety of feels, from standard hard rock to thrash metal, a blues shuffle, and plenty of syncopated double bass drum patterns.

Observing that double bass seems to be all about speed these days, Jimmy adds that he takes a slightly different approach. "With a lot of the syncopated double bass parts that drummers are required to play today," Jimmy explains, "it's really very important to remain relaxed. Every note has got to be dead on, because if you're doing these syncopated patterns and one of your feet starts dragging just a hair, suddenly the whole thing falls apart. You have to be really precise and play through those sections with a certain amount of flow."

Working without Pro Tools, triggering, or what DeGrasso refers to as "anything tricky," the drummer captured what have been referred to as "perfect drum sounds" on the CD. In fact, Jimmy chose this recording to break in the prototype of his Pearl signature snare: a 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> x 14 drum with a hammered beaded-brass shell.

"I own over seventy snare drums," the drummer admits. "I brought five or six of my favorites to the studio, including the signature snare, and that was what worked the best." Jimmy adds that the hammered brass shell warms the drum's tone, while the snare's triple-flanged hoop keeps it more open and bright.

"A lot of the metal records today are very digital and so Pro Tooled that you can't hear any articulation in the drums," Jimmy asserts. "Everything is too clean, to the point where there's no variation in volume and tone for certain things on the bass drum or snare. You can pick it out a mile away. The drums on *The Reckoning* are clean and very analog, and that's what I like about them."

Gail Worley

# Slipknot

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# UPDATE NEWS

**Neil Peart** and Rush recently released the *Snakes & Arrows Live* three-DVD set.

**Vinnie Colaiuta** is on Jeff Beck's *Performing This Week...Live At Ronnie Scott's*.

**Dave King** and The Bad Plus have a new one out, a covers disc called *For All I Care*, featuring vocalist Wendy Lewis.

**Chris Parker** is on *Etched In Stone* by Funkasaurus Rex.

Veteran drummer/leader **Chico Hamilton** has two new releases out, *Dreams Come True* and *Trio! Live @ Artpark*.

**Clint de Ganon** is on Phoebe Snow's latest, *Live*.

**Allison Miller** is on Shakers N' Bakers' new one, *Yearning For Zion*.

Drummer **Zach Velmer** is on STS9's latest, *Peaceblaster*, which also features **Jeffree Lerner** on percussion.

**Nick Vincent** is on Benny Mardones' new one, *Let's Hear It For Love*.

**Alvino Bennett, Brian Zsupnick, Tal Bergman,** and **Sheila E** are on Dave Mason's first studio album in twenty years, *26 Letters 12 Notes*.

**Rod Morgenstein** and **Ken Mary** are on Kip Winger's new release, *From The Moon To The Sun*.

**James Gadson** and **J.J. Johnson** are on Nikka Costa's latest, *Pebble To A Pearl*.

**Darren Dodd, Josh Kane, Joey Waronker,** and **John Yarling** are on Pink's *Funhouse*.



**Darrin Mooney** and **Harry James** join Don Airey on the keyboard great's first solo release in two decades, *A Light In The Sky*.

**Lenny Kravitz, Steve Jordan, Keith Benson,** and **Kevin Johnson** all played drums on LaBelle's comeback CD, *Back To Now*. The disc also contains a rare, unreleased track from the '70s that features the late Nicky Hopkins on keyboards and The Who's **Keith Moon** on drums.

Percussionist **Tom Teasley** can be heard on his latest CD as a leader, *Painting Time*.

## Happy Birthday!

**Roy Haynes** (jazz legend) 3/13/25

**D.J. Fontana** (Elvis Presley) 3/15/31

**Ralph MacDonald** (percussion great) 3/15/44

**Micky Dolenz** (The Monkees) 3/8/45

**Carl Palmer** (ELP, Asia) 3/20/50

**Kenny Aronoff** (session great) 3/7/53

**Michael Bland** (Soul Asylum) 3/14/69

**Brendan Buckley** (Shakira) 3/13/74

**Ryan MacMillan** (Matchbox Twenty) 3/16/75

**Ryan Hoyle** (Collective Soul) 3/10/78

**Barry Alexander** (Jonny Lang) 3/21/82

## DRUM DATES This month's important events in drumming history

**3/25/78: Mick Fleetwood** is on drums for Warren Zevon's track "Werewolves Of London." The song is produced by Jackson Browne and peaks at number twenty-one.

**3/3/83:** The compact disc (CD) is made available in the US. Just a few months earlier, in late '82, Billy Joel's *52nd Street* (with **Liberty DeVitto** on drums) is released on the new format in the Japanese market as the first-ever officially released CD.



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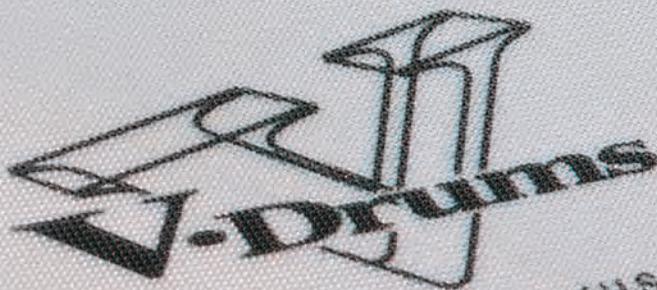
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## Keep It Simple

I'm a guitarist and singer, and I have a question about drummers, specifically younger drummers in their early '20s. I'm thirty-two and have been playing in bands over half my life. In all that time I've rarely met a younger drummer who *doesn't* overplay. My question is: If I'm working with a drummer who has advanced technical ability but doesn't seem to understand the concept of playing for the betterment of the songs, how do I tell him that what he's playing—while amazing—is whack in respect to the song, and that in general he should simplify?

**Luke**

The best thing you could do for your overactive drummer is to offer up some constructive advice and concrete examples on how you'd like him to play. Chances are, these younger players you're referring to are still caught up in the physical phase of their musical development, where the "shock and awe" of drum licks and technically challenging drumming is more fascinating than a perfectly placed one-note tom fill. In order to get the rhythmic support that you're looking for, you'll need to open up their ears to hear more than just "drummer stuff."

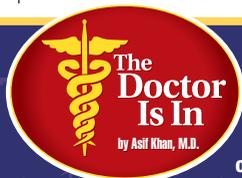
Since you're a singer, talk to your drummer (as well as the other band members) about the overall message/vibe of the song. You may even want to print out a copy of the lyrics, which will help your drummer get a deeper understanding of what you're trying to say, and influence him to focus more on your vocal phrasing. When drummers overplay or play out of context, they're most likely not listening to anything but themselves. By having them concentrate on what's going on melodically, lyrically, and even

harmonically, you're bound to encourage their drumming to become simpler and more musical.

One you've made your drummer aware of this "play for the song" mentality, let him borrow some of your favorite CDs that feature this type of drumming. For straight-up rock, anything by AC/DC, Pink Floyd, The Kinks, The Rolling Stones, and The Beatles would be a great place to start. If you play more punk or alternative rock, bands like The Ramones, Talking Heads, White Stripes, R.E.M., Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, or Foo Fighters are good examples of direct and energetic drumming. Singer/songwriters love the creativity and sophisticated touch of guys like Jim Keltner and Matt Chamberlain. And for funk/R&B, nothing beats the steady pocket of Al Jackson Jr., James Brown's drummers, or P-Funk's rock-solid rhythm section. You also can't go wrong suggesting anything featuring Steve Ferrone, Steve Gadd, Rick Marotta, Steve Jordan, Levon Helm, Charley Drayton, John Robinson, Jeff Porcaro, Kenny Aronoff, or Abe Laboriel Jr., among many others.



Illustration by Jeff Harry



## Elevated Heart Rate

**I've been playing for years, mainly rock but occasionally jazz. Lately when I'm playing, my heart suddenly starts racing really fast, like it's going to burst out of my chest. I'm soaked, dizzy, and sweating really bad. Most of the time, I can't go on until my heart slows down again, which sometimes takes an hour. I'm not that old, but should I be worried?**  
**John M.**

On the surface, it sounds like your heart is just responding normally from the exertion of playing. But since you mentioned that this is a new development, it needs to be investigated further.

Fast heart rates, or tachycardia, have many different causes. With exercise, the normal response is called sinus tachycardia. But there are many other disease states that cause tachycardia. Atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter, and Wolf-Parkinson White Syndrome are very serious conditions, to name a few. They have a number of common causes. The first is aging coupled with heart disease. Smoking, a sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, alcohol abuse, and other factors can cause heart disease, which in turn damages the heart to the point of causing an arrhythmia, or abnormal heart rhythm. This can also happen in younger, seemingly normal persons, mainly from straining and/or simple dehydration.

Alcohol is a dehydrating liquid. Mix that with strenuous drumming, and all of a sudden you're dehydrated. In a dehydrated person, your heart needs to work a bit harder to circulate blood. Because of this, the electrical conduction system in the heart becomes overburdened, which can lead to abnormal heart rhythms.

You mentioned that you become very tired and dizzy, and that you're drenched in sweat after your heart starts beating very fast. The worrisome

part is that these symptoms were prolonged in your case, which could be indicative of an abnormal heart rhythm. When these symptoms arise, you should stop playing immediately. If medical aid is not nearby, there are a few things you can do to help slow the heart down quickly: Rest, hydrate yourself with water, and squat down. Having an elevated heart rate can be a fairly terrifying feeling. To minimize its occurrence prior to performing, try to hydrate and limit your consumption of alcohol.

Your symptoms can also have many other causes, like hyper- or hypothyroidism, diabetes, etc. If your symptoms persist, consult with your physician to determine the cause so you can receive proper treatment.



**Dr. Asif Khan** is a board-certified internist, specializing in allergy and immunology, with a private practice in northeast Ohio. He also directs the non-profit organization Passion And Profession ([www.passionandprofession.com](http://www.passionandprofession.com)), which focuses on career counseling and education. Dr. Khan has been an avid drummer for twenty years and is currently performing with Johnny Hi-Fi ([www.johnnyhi-fi.com](http://www.johnnyhi-fi.com)).

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We received one maple and one birch Meridian kit in identical sizes (8x10, 9x12, 14x14 toms, 18x22 kicks, and 5½x14 snares), so we could A-B the two to suss out their individual strengths as well as their similarities.

#### High-End Hardware

All Meridian drums feature low-mass, single-point-of-contact lugs, low-profile bass drum claws with rubber gasket insulators, and 2.3mm steel Powerhoop rims. The new double tom mount

has a sleeker appearance and more setup flexibility than the previous one, and it includes a built-in cymbal arm adapter. Meridian rack toms sport re-engineered off-the-shell Isolation Tom Mounting, which is lighter and lower in profile to allow easier and more precise positioning. We had no problems finding comfortable tom positioning, although there's no way to bring the toms closer to you because of the preset length of the L-arm mounts.

All Meridian preconfigured drumsets (Mapex also offers add-on components) come with a 700 Series hardware package consisting of a straight cymbal stand, a telescoping boom stand, snare and hi-hat stands, and a basic chain-drive bass drum pedal. Hardware upgrades in this series include Super-Glide toothless cymbal tilters for limitless positioning angles, as well as Multi-Sustain cymbal felts, which are half-felt/half-rubber washers that can be used in different combinations to affect cymbal sustain. These new washers are great for road-warrior types who do a lot of outdoor gigging, since the rubber side



#### MERIDIAN MAPLE SERIES

- 7-ply, 5.8-mm all-maple shells (7.2-mm kick)
- Remo UT Pinstripe tom heads
- Seven lacquer and three sparkle wrap finish options (review kit is Maple Steel)
- Spring-loaded floor tom feet for increased sustain
- Articulate and cutting tom sound
- Prices start at **\$1,539.99** for a five-piece setup, **\$1,929.99** for six-piece configurations.

helps to keep the felts from falling apart when they get damp.

The bass drum pedal and hi-hat stand felt solid and were responsive enough to execute any musical idea I could throw at them. (The bass drum pedal wasn't the quickest I've played, but I didn't feel it restricted my playing in any way.) The snare and cymbal stands were very sturdy and easy to adjust.

### Strong And Cutting Vs. Round And Focused

Meridian Maple kits come with Remo UT Pinstripe heads, which surprised me a little since maple is a lively and resonant wood type that often sounds best with thin heads. However, even with the thick 2-ply Pinstripe heads on them, the Meridian Maple toms were very articulate and responsive, which would easily cut through the busiest R&B or fusion grooves. The pitch wasn't totally pure—there were some funky overtones that couldn't be tuned out. But when hit with a firm stroke, the toms' sharp attack and rich pitch-bend resonance was strong enough to cover up any dissonance in the tone. When recorded, these toms jumped out of the mix as if they'd already been EQ'ed to perfection. The matching maple snare was equally as alive sounding (but not too ringy).

Tuning-wise, the Meridian Maples (as well as the birches) were a little limited—the kick sounded best tuned just above the point of wrinkles for a punchy attack, the snare excelled in the medium to

medium-tight region, and each tom only had one spot that seemed totally "dialed in." However, the sound that these drums produced at that tuning was something that most drummers playing fusion, R&B, funk, pop, or other high-energy modern styles would be totally happy with.

Out of the box, the Meridian Birch toms (with clear single-ply heads) were a little unruly—the spraying overtones made tuning a bit of a challenge. But after I stretched the heads and placed small pieces of rolled-up gaffer's tape near the edges, the drums' focused, deep tone began to shine through. (Speaking of shine, the high-gloss lacquer fades on both of these kits was superb, which was a big surprise given the mid-range price point of this series.)

Once I had tamed the overtones a bit, the birch toms proved to be my favorites of the two kits. The pitch was pure, the attack was pronounced (but not sharp), and the sustain was round and even. The drums also sounded very fat when miked, which makes sense because birch drums are often preferred for studio work. The 14x14 floor tom had an incredibly deep hit-you-in-the-chest presence that was much bigger-sounding than its petite dimensions would suggest. The kick drum on this kit was also a little more versatile, since it produced a rounder tone than the attack-heavy punch of the maple.

Overall, there's not much to complain about with the new Meridian Maple and Birch drumsets. Of course, they're not as versatile or instantly tunable as high-end handmade drums. But if you're willing to spend a little extra time tweaking these bad boys, you're going to come up with a really nice modern drum sound that's much more "pro" than you might expect.



### MERIDIAN BIRCH SERIES

- 6-ply, 7.2-mm all-birch shells
- Remo UT clear single-ply tom heads
- Eight lacquer finish options (review kit is Tobacco Fade)
- Warm "all-around" tone
- Prices start at **\$1,229.99** for a five-piece setup, **\$1,539.99** for six-pieces configurations.

[www.usa.mapexdrums.com](http://www.usa.mapexdrums.com)

## Reference Series Brass And Steel Snare Drums

The Reference Series is a relatively new and exciting series from Pearl. Their larger-than-life sound possesses qualities best suited for large venues, amphitheaters, and even stadiums. Now the Reference Series has been expanded to include 5x14 and 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x14 brass and steel snares. The tone of these additions falls right in line with the rest of the series: They're downright massive. And they have exciting new hardware designs. Let's check them out.

### Upgraded Features

All Reference Series snares are equipped with high-end features, similar to how luxury vehicles come with all the "extras." These improvements help create a precise tuning and effortless playing experience. The highly engineered swivel lugs (standard on all Reference series drums) pivot slightly for tension rod alignment, making the head sit perfectly on the 45° bearing edge. The new SR-1000 Glide Lock Strainer won't disengage unless you press a small button at the tip of the throw-off lever. So the snares stay on "no matter how hard you play," to quote Pearl's description in their catalog. Once you release the lever, the throw-off mechanism drops the snares to a position where you get no snare sound at all, regardless of the amount of tension on them (which isn't always the case with cheaper strainers). When you reengage the snares, a lever clicks to let you know that they are locked into position.

The snare tension adjustment knob is on the opposite side of the drum, so it works independently from the throw-off. This made me rearrange my normal position of the strainer from vertical (between my legs) to horizontal so I didn't have to reach across the drum to adjust the tension. In order to adjust the tension on the snares, you have to depress the tension knob, turn it to the desired tension, and then release it back to the locked position. This keeps the snares tensioned at a consistent level while you play, but it also makes quick, on-the-fly adjustments a little more difficult to pull off.

The lugs are mounted on the drum with rubber separators to reduce contact with the shell, and they're attached with only two screws to minimize holes in the drum. The Reference Series Remo head is uncoated on the outer diameter, which is said to promote resonance and ring.

### The Sound

Some of my favorite snares are made of brass. I love the way this metal adds "attitude" to a backbeat. These brass drums, however, are more extreme than usual, as rimshots explode off the head like legendary trumpeter Maynard Ferguson's famously piercing high C. The loud, sustained ring of all of these snares is a result of the thick shells. When played off center, these potent



drums work great for reggae or for timbale-type accents (especially the steel ones). However, I found myself looking for a muffling ring or Moon Gel pad to reduce the ring for my backbeat playing. The overtones are there for you to own or to dampen, depending on what you want to hear. The steel drums are brighter and have a bit more "bite" to them, while the brass have more warmth. The 5" brass snare has a shorter, quicker tone, while the 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" version is throatier and richer-sounding.

What impressed me most about all four drums was their range of dynamics. They're sensitive and completely articulate at low volumes, catching every nuance of my ghost notes, while each note was clear and defined. It also didn't take much for these drums to get extremely loud. A low-level rimshot was plenty powerful for the type of amplified music that I play. If I used one of these snares on a club gig, I imagine that the soundman would pull the mic fader way down after hearing a single accent. Simply put, these are some of the loudest drums I've ever laid into.

### Heavy Metal

The new Reference Series metal snares are heavy enough to anchor a boat in a strong current. (The brass drums have 3-mm shells, the steel ones are 2.5 mm thick with 5mm reinforcement rings, and all four models have thick die-cast hoops.) You definitely would want to hold these drums on your most stout snare drum stand. The payoff is that these drums are quite powerful and will do a lot of the "work" for the player. Their massive sound

is attained without much effort, and with some minor tweaks (muffling, tuning, etc.), they can be a real joy to play.

### THE NUMBERS

Reference Steel RFS1450: \$959  
Reference Steel RFS1465: \$999  
Reference Brass RFB1450: \$1,059  
Reference Brass RFB1465: \$1,149  
[www.pearldrums.com](http://www.pearldrums.com)





## A Custom ReZo Crashes



Since their conception, Zildjian's A Customs have been praised for their shimmering, sweet sounds. Now the line has expanded to include the unusual-looking ReZo models. With a modified bell and a new lathing pattern, these cymbals offer a slightly different vibe (visually and sonically) from the other A Custom cymbals.

### New Details

The bells on the ReZo models are slightly larger than those on the standard A Customs. This affects the reaction time and the sound by leaving less bow area. The result is a subtraction from the overtones and decay. The ReZos are noticeably quicker to respond off the stick but offer a slightly glassier tone. This creates a sound that's less explosive than regular A Customs, A Custom Mediums, and Projection crashes.

Next on the list of modifications is the lathing design. The ReZo line incorporates both the brilliant finish of the A Customs and the traditional finish of the classic As, while keeping the A Custom hammering technique. This lathing pattern warms up the sound just enough to compensate for the glassier sound created by the smaller bow area.

The new lathing pattern also spices up the appearance of the cymbals. The alternating brilliant and matte finishes creates a sort of target-like look. Based on their looks alone, I used these crashes during a music-video shoot with my band, although I was very pleased with their sound as well.

The last detail that sets these cymbals apart is their weight. Zildjian ranks them as medium thin, which fits somewhere between the regular A Customs and A Custom Mediums.

### The Sound

As stated earlier, these cymbals react quickly. But unlike other "fast" crashes, they don't sacrifice all of their sustain. So they still have a great presence on stage and in the studio.

I used the ReZos in a session where the producer wanted a "U2/Coldplay" sound. For this situation, I used the 17" and 18", and they sounded great miked up. They were bright and explosive

without covering up my fills. In this setting, I noticed that the ReZos had a little less low end than other A Custom crashes I've played. But I didn't really miss it. The producer was happy too, and that counts for a lot.

I also used the ReZo onstage at Webster Hall, a larger venue in New York City. For this show, I used the 17", 18", and 19" crashes. Again, I was fully satisfied. Not only did they sound and feel great individually, but they were also harmonious when struck together. And because they were so responsive, I didn't feel like I had to smack the logo off of them to get the volume I needed. This definitely helped to keep me more relaxed while onstage.

Another thing I noticed at the gig was that I wasn't killing the other guys' ears onstage, even though there was plenty of volume. This, I believe, was due to the quality of tone these cymbals create. They had a decent sustain, but they didn't overtake the other sounds happening onstage.

The 15" and 16" crashes lent themselves to more of an R&B sound. They were a little quicker, as smaller cymbals usually are, and slightly higher in pitch. But they fit in well with the larger cymbals when played together. The 20" crash was a beast, in a good way. I could definitely hear this crash being used in a heavier rock or punk settings. In fact, Gil Sharone used a prototype of this crash during part of his last tour with Dillinger Escape Plan.

### The Sum-Up

Overall the ReZo crash cymbals have a great balance of volume, reaction, and quality of sound. From the time I pulled these cymbals out in my home studio until I packed them up after the show at Webster Hall, I really enjoyed playing them. And the people I was working with appreciated them as well. It's another hit for Zildjian.

### THE NUMBERS

List prices for Zildjian ReZo crashes range from \$333 for the 15" to \$495 for the 20".  
[www.zildjian.com](http://www.zildjian.com)



## Blue Devil Marching And New Autograph Sticks

The American hickory DC50 and TS8 Sean Vega Autograph tenor sticks are just a few of the new additions to Pro-Mark's ever-expanding marching percussion lineup. Also new are Autograph models for Styx drummer Todd Sucherman, Dominic Howard of Muse, and Led Zeppelin progeny Jason Bonham.

### Heavy-Duty Wood

Both the DC50 and the TS8 models are part of Pro-Mark's new System Blue series, which features sticks and mallets designed with and endorsed by the percussion staff of the award-winning Blue Devils drum corps. The DC50 is a stout .72" in diameter and 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" long. These specs make for a chunky stick that has no trouble producing a full tone on today's highly torqued marching snare drums. The shoulder produces consistent rimshots and the full, round bead makes both open- and closed-roll passages a breeze. As with any hickory stick of this size, the DC50 is best suited to more mature players. Pro-Mark offers the lighter-weight DC51 and DC52 for younger stick slingers.

### It Feels Like A Stick

The TS8 tenor stick is the brainchild of former DCI individual tenor champion Sean Vega. It's designed to have the feel of a snare stick with the sound of a tenor mallet. When I took the TS8 to a local high school marching band rehearsal, the tenor player I gave them to had no trouble adapting to them, and his playing projected easily to the sideline. Because of the stick's thick hickory shaft, rimshots came easily and didn't have that "metallic" ring that you sometimes get with aluminum-shaft mallets. The shorter length of the TS8 is also well suited for navigating a set of multi-tenors, which typically isn't the case with standard snare drum sticks.

### The Signature Says It All

The Todd Sucherman, Dominic Howard, and Jason Bonham Autograph models

add to Pro-Mark's star-studded list of endorsers, which already includes names like Elvin Jones, Chris Adler, Bill Bruford, Carter Beauford, and Ringo Starr. The Dominic Howard model sports the smallest diameter of the three (.571"), which is close to a standard 5A. These sticks are pretty hefty, and they feel nicely balanced because of their slim taper and small acorn bead. Given Dom Howard's heavy-duty playing with Muse, they are designed to take a beating. I used them at an outdoor festival show, and I was pleased with their sound, feel, and durability. Pro-Mark's proprietary Millennium II finish kept them from getting slippery in the heat of battle, and the shaft didn't splinter at all, even after two hours of heavy rimshots and bashing a crash/ride.

Though they are both larger in diameter than the Howard model (.595" and .600" respectively), the Bonham and Sucherman models are lighter-weight, due to their American rock maple construction. The Bonham model is noticeably longer than the others (16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>"), but it shares a similar large modified acorn tip with the Sucherman model. Both of these models produced good sounds on drums and cymbals, and they would both be suitable for most medium- to loud-volume situations. As with most signature sticks, the music the endorser creates is a good indication on how that stick may be best used.

### Conclusion

All of these sticks demonstrated Pro-Mark's commitment to quality design and manufacturing. However, one minor issue I found was that the printed details on all of the models—as cool as they were—tended to come off on my drum rims when I played rimshots. Despite this minor quailm, these new models are great additions to the huge array of sticks, mallets, brushes, and percussion accessories that Pro-Mark already offers.



### THE NUMBERS

TXDC50X: \$15.95

TS8: \$17.95

Autograph models: \$13.75

[www.promark.com](http://www.promark.com)

## Idris Muhammad Signature Ride

Most of us picture Turkish hand-hammered cymbals as thin, wobbly-edged plates that exude dark, even trashy overtones and a significant wash that drummers learn to play like a fish on a line. The stereotypical Turkish overtones arise, in part, from cymbalmakers hammering a flat B20 bronze casting into shape—as opposed to the North American way of hydraulically bumping the entire disc into the familiar cymbal shape, and then dressing it with hammer blows.

Istanbul Agops are made today as they were during the Cold War and Sputnik eras—the time window when Leo Morris, now known



as Idris Muhammad, was appearing on countless records. Though he's often labeled as a jazz drummer due to his stirring work with pianist Ahmad Jamal, Muhammad has recorded more funky classics than you can shake a stick at. Accordingly, his 22" medium-heavy signature cymbal leaps musical genres with ease. It's an instrument that heralds a new wave of Turkish cymbals: light on trash, heavy on articulation.

We received one test model, which was all that was needed to verify that this cymbal is as useful a tool for rendering yesterday's folkloric "Poinciana" as it is for the electric urban vibe on John Scofield's *Groove Elation*.

### Out Of The Fire, Then Hammered Silly

This is a pretty cymbal, all shiny and bright with a crisp tone to match. It really shone brightly when placed aside my ancient Turkish Ks, cymbals made in similar a fashion but that are now oxidized and discolored from the passage of time.

To manufacture the Muhammad signature, Agop stamped a moderate-sized bell into a flat bronze plate. Then the hammerer bludgeoned the disc, forcing it into a fairly low profile. Quite obviously,



various-sized hammers were employed, resulting in overlapping craters mighty and meager. One hammer pattern radiated like spokes of a moving wheel, diverging from straight lines as they weaved from bell to edge—evidence that the hammerer turned the disc with one hand while carefully striking with the other.

Next, the lathe operator chiseled narrow rings across the moon-like surface. Finely etched lathe lines tend to reduce "zing" that can emanate from deeper trenches, thus enhancing focus. The bottom side was hammered but not lathed, only scraped with a heavy wire brush. In addition, there were nearly 600 additional fine-peen hammer marks atop the cymbal, administered after lathing. This "over hammering" further compresses metal and fosters crisp tip sounds, without promoting a hard feel.

The bell, with no hammer marks, was thicker than the norm and sang brightly without being piercing. The Muhammad's smallish bell predictably restricted crashability.

In sum, the Muhammad is a cymbal rich in mid frequencies. Audiophiles, who extol the virtues of drivers that render the full spectrum of mids, would certainly approve of the Muhammad according to the old mantra: The music's in the mids.

### Last Night The Sun Came Up

This cymbal expresses a dichotomy where brilliant tip action and a bright bell emerge from a dark place. I noticed this on gigs ranging from roots rock to piano trio. Lots of ping was happening, but the effect was given extra dimension by the traditional Turkish undertones. Istanbul Agop literature describes this model as "dry." I'd agree but suggest that the stick attack is more than an arid click—it's a crystal ping.

### A Thicker, Brighter Agop

I'm growing to appreciate heavier cymbals that balance old-world complexity with new-world brilliant focus, especially when the shank-against-bow effect isn't as crass as that high squawk you get from some modern cymbals. Try laying the shank of a stick across the bow of your rock ride, and you'll get my point. Chances are you'd likely employ the Agop Muhammad in lieu of your rock ride or Latin go-to cymbal. And once you "learn the cymbal," you'll evoke the darker mid-'60s vibe, which in this instance is more Tony Williams than Art Blakey. Agop's Scott Liken intimated that this cymbal was a sleeper initially, passed over by drummers scouring for the iconic thin, trashy jazz ride. But some of them gave it a go and then another. A bell went off, and they perked up.

### THE NUMBERS

22" Idris Muhammad Ride: \$769  
[www.istanbulagop.com](http://www.istanbulagop.com)



# TAMA JOHN BLACKWELL SIGNATURE

WHAT'S IT COST? \$459.99



### HOW'S IT SOUND?

Since this surprisingly affordable 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 13 nickel-plated steel snare was made especially for John Blackwell (as you can plainly see by its giant white "JB" logo), I decided to get the pop/funk/fusion giant on the phone to find out if the sound he was hearing in his head when he helped design this drum matches the results we got here at MD's studio. According to John, "I like to tune my snare pretty tight, but not to the point where I don't hear some tone when I'm not hitting rimshots. The bottom is tuned tighter than the batter, but again it's not too tight. I want some open space in the sound." This snare also comes with three star-adorned adjustable air-vent plugs, which don't affect the sound that much. Their purpose is to accentuate the tight, responsive feel that John was after. As JB attests, "I keep the air holes all the way in to give me a quick attack." And the same goes with the snares: "No rattle."

So how does this setup compare with how we felt the drum performed best? It's pretty much dead on. This snare has a very explosive, almost over-driven tone when tuned medium-tight like John suggests. And the overtones spray through without ringing for days—perfect for high-energy funk. But this isn't a one-trick pony. The drum also has one of the best deep/muffled sounds I've ever played. And medium-tension brush playing was sensitive and musical. John must think highly of this drum too, since he used three of them for the Justin Timberlake tour—one tuned to his "ideal" for a general sound, one muffled and tuned deep for ballads, and one outfitted with a cranked Kevlar head for a hip-hop vibe. That's pretty impressive.

[www.tama.com](http://www.tama.com)

To hear a selection of the products reviewed this month, go to the Multimedia page at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).



# The Berklee PERCUSSION FESTIVAL 09

June 22–26, 2009

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Casey Scheuerell

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Bob Tamagni

Dave Weigert

Steve Wilkes

#### Hand Percussion

Mohamad Camara

Eguie Castrillo

Sa Davis

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Jamey Haddad

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**Note:** Visiting artist faculty subject to change.

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Whether you are new to the world of percussion or a player looking for new ideas; whether you are a hand percussionist, a drum set specialist, a marimbist, a vibist, a concert percussionist, or an educator, the Berklee Percussion Festival will give you a new edge on rhythm, improvisation, percussion craft, effects, sound, and performance skills.

If you are interested in being considered for a partial tuition scholarship, you must send in a cassette tape or CD of your best playing in the style you wish to study. These materials should be submitted with your application. However, they may be sent separately if you apply online and your application has been received and processed.

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Summer Programs

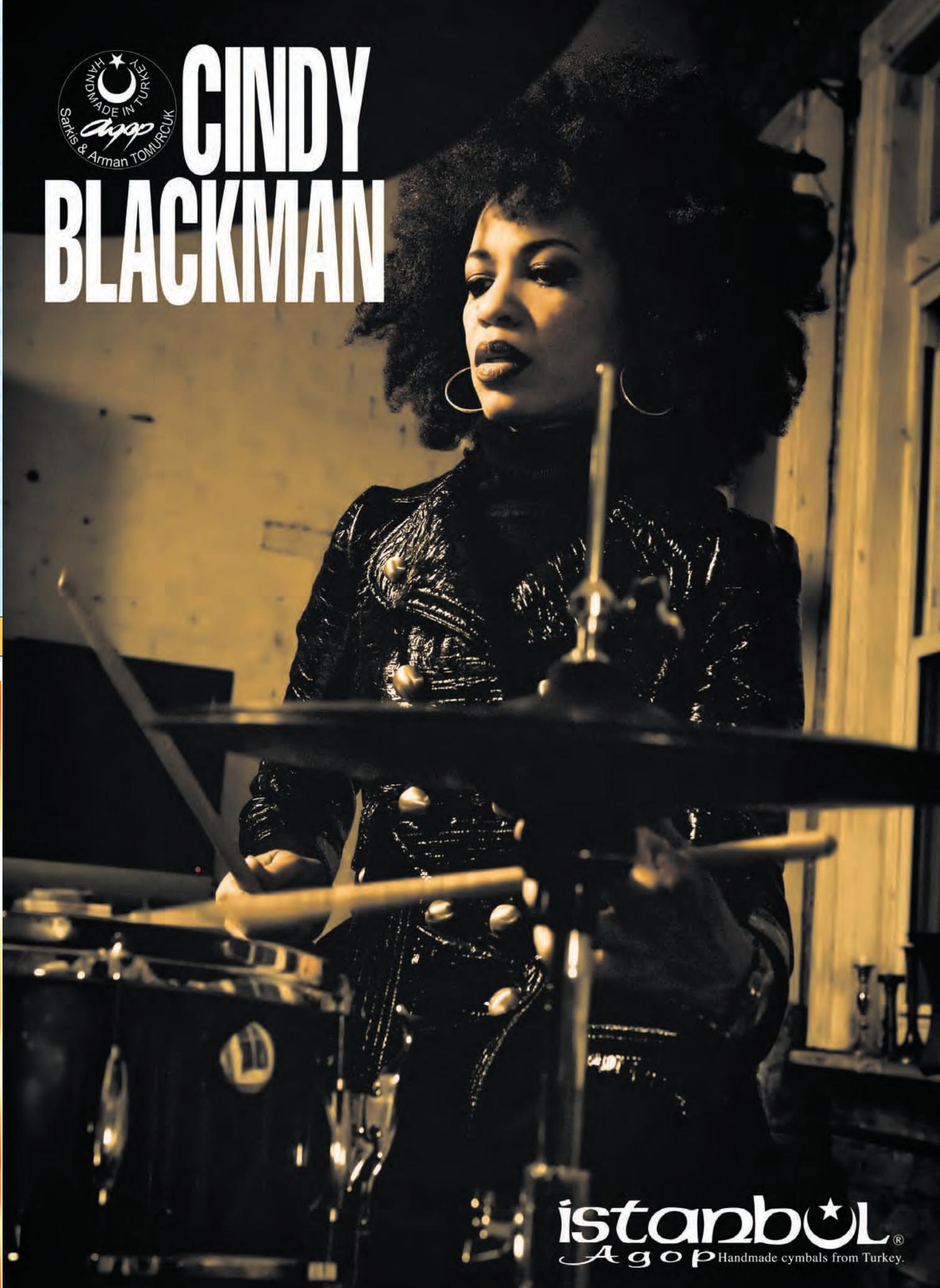
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# CINDY BLACKMAN



istanb<sup>OL</sup>  
Agop Handmade cymbals from Turkey.

# JUST INTRODUCED!

Niche-y cymbals, black-finished heads and sticks, and a Stanton Moore snare highlight this month's latest releases.



1

3



2



4



5



6



7



**1. SOULTONE CYMBALS' latest cymbal line, simply called Gospel,** was created specifically for many of the company's artists working in the Christian and Gospel scene. These cymbals were developed under the guidance of NYC Gospel drummer Eddie Heyward.

[soultonecymbals.com](http://soultonecymbals.com)

**2. EVANS' line has expanded** to include black-coated Onyx batters, GMAD bass heads, and EC1 Reverse Dot snare heads. **The Onyx series** is a black alternative to standard G2 clear and coated heads. They are made of two plies of 7.5-mil film with a micro-clear coating that gives a matte black appearance, which helps produce more low end and a punchier attack. Onyx batter heads are available in 6"–20" sizes. Front bass drum heads—designed using the EQ3 Reso construction—are available in sizes 18"–26".

**The GMAD** is a synthesis of Evans' EMAD and G Plus concepts. By utilizing the same exclusive 12-mil film used to produce the G Plus, the GMAD has greater punch, depth, and durability relative to the original. This head is ideal for heavier hitters looking for a solid sound and more life to the head, but prefer the feel of a single-ply. Like the original EMAD, the GMAD features a black plastic sleeve around the perimeter that holds the included foam damping rings.

**The EC1 Reverse Dot** snare head features a center patch that produces focused and attack-heavy backbeats when hit in the middle, while the perimeter of the head produces an articulate but sensitive response for ghost notes.

[evansdrumheads.com](http://evansdrumheads.com)

**3. THE KELLY SHU COMPOSITE is the latest edition to the Kelly SHU line of suspended kick drum microphone mounts.** These economical mounts are

injection-molded using lightweight yet tough high-density compounds. The system is adaptable to kick drums of any size or depth, utilizing a drum's existing tuning hardware screws as attachment points for the solid-rubber isolation cords. The system accepts any standard kick drum mic that's designed to fit on a mic stand. List price: \$69

[kellyshu.com](http://kellyshu.com)

**4. TRX's oversized BRT series cymbals have been created in response to requests from hardcore and progressive drummers looking for larger, more powerful cymbals.** The line now includes a 24" ride, 21" and 22" crashes, and 15" hi-hats. BRT series cymbals are custom-crafted by master Turkish cymbalsmiths and

feature heavier weights with extensive hand hammering and a highly polished surface. Additional crash, splash, ride, hi-hat, and China models are also available.

[trxcymbals.com](http://trxcymbals.com)

**5. THE STANTON MOORE DRUM COMPANY's Spirit Of New Orleans signature**

**4 1/2x14 titanium-shelled snare drum** is the result of a seven-year collaboration between the famed Galactic drummer and drum maker Ronn Dunnnett. Describing the design of drum, Stanton explains, "As I was playing to larger rooms with Galactic, I needed a drum that would be sensitive and buttery enough for the intricate buzz-roll work that I do with some of the New Orleans second-line grooves, but would also cut through a loud funk band when I smacked a backbeat. This drum has what I was looking for."

Although Moore is a Gretsch endorser, he received the company's blessing for his drum. The aesthetics of the snare (tube lugs, single-flange hoops and claws, etc.) were inspired by a '20s-era snare drum that was given to Stanton by his friend and mentor Johnny Vidacovich. The Stanton Moore Spirit Of New Orleans titanium snare also features a polished titanium shell, beautifully minted badge in antique pewter finish, the Dunnnett R2 snare throw-off system with keyless snare wire release, Dunnnett Hypervent adjustable air vents, and Puresound Metrix snare wires. The drum will be distributed exclusively through Bosphorus.

**6. AQUARIAN has expanded its accessory program with the Quik-Bounce**

**practice pad.** This product is smaller (6" diameter) and more portable than the company's 12" Tru-Bounce pad, but retains the same realistic response. The Quik-Bounce mounts easily to any cymbal stand with an 8-mm thread. Each pad comes with a rudiment chart, Aquarian owner Roy Burns' "First Step: Elementary Snare Drum Studies" exercises, and a free pair of graphite practice sticks.

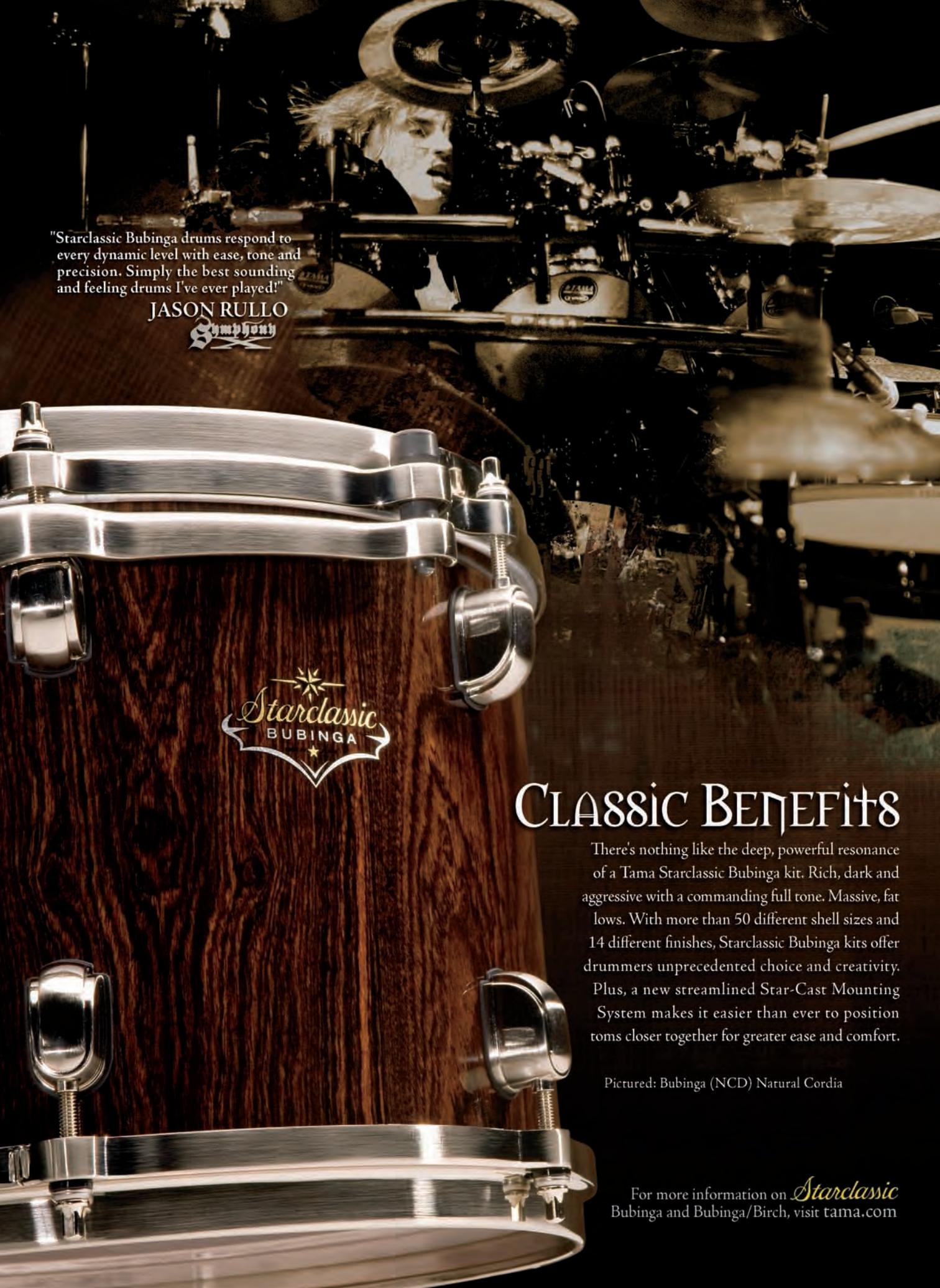
[aquariandrums.com](http://aquariandrums.com)

**7. VIC FIRTH has made American Classic 5A and 5B sticks available with a black finish, and they've released a new Anti-Slip Vic Grip on ten popular models.** The specially formulated black finish is comfortable to grip and looks distinct, while the tips have a clear finish to keep heads and cymbals clean. (Both hickory models retail for \$14.50.) The eco-friendly, water-based urethane Vic Grip provides a comfortable and slip resistant grip to 5A, 5B, 7A, 2B, and ROCK sticks. (Retail price:

\$18 for wood tip, \$18.50 for nylon.)

[vicfirth.com](http://vicfirth.com)





"Starclassic Bubinga drums respond to every dynamic level with ease, tone and precision. Simply the best sounding and feeling drums I've ever played!"

JASON RULLO

*Symphony*



## CLASSIC BENEFITS

There's nothing like the deep, powerful resonance of a Tama Starclassic Bubinga kit. Rich, dark and aggressive with a commanding full tone. Massive, fat lows. With more than 50 different shell sizes and 14 different finishes, Starclassic Bubinga kits offer drummers unprecedented choice and creativity. Plus, a new streamlined Star-Cast Mounting System makes it easier than ever to position toms closer together for greater ease and comfort.

Pictured: Bubinga (NCD) Natural Cordia

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Wingo photo by Marcus Parker



"I can say without reservation that these are the best-sounding drums I have ever played. The volume and rich tone of Bubinga combined with the hard dry punch of Birch really makes for the best of both worlds. Bubinga and Birch together = the perfect storm."

TRIVETT WINGO



"I had no idea what to expect from Bubinga/Birch shells. They're amazing. My Antique White Sparkle finish is flawless. I get compliments on the look and sound of these drums all the time."

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# CREATIVE CHOICES

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Pictured: B/B (ABD) Astral Black Diamond



## How To Build An Efficient And Effective Backing-Track System



**W**hen most modern rock/pop fans go to their favorite bands' concerts, they expect the performance to have CD-like consistency. As a result, most major touring artists use prerecorded tracks, loops, and synthetic textures to enhance their stage performances. Now that trend to augment live performances with electronics has worked its way down to lower-budget local/regional bands working in clubs around the world. In this article, we'll take a look at how to put together three different electronic setups based on your budget or your musical needs.

### Setup 1: Backing Tracks

Today's recording software has enabled artists to record hundreds of instrument tracks and artificial textures for each composition. A standard four-piece band can only play a few of these parts live. If you want to add more of those tracks from the recording to your stage show, you need to either hire more players or create a pre-recorded backing track.

A typical backing track often includes a reference click track, backing vocals, drum loops, secondary guitar parts, and any additional synthetic textures used in the song. These backing-track elements have to be stored on some type of digital player, and you have to wire them into the club's PA system.

### Rack-Mount Stereo Mini-Disc Recorder And Line Mixer

More often than not, the artists I perform with who use backing tracks play their songs the same way every time, with a set length, form, and structure. For the majority of these gigs, I use a rack-mount stereo mini-disc recorder and a line mixer. (See photo 1.) Not only does this simple "press play" configuration enable me to concentrate on my drumming (rather than on a wide variety of technical issues, such as calling up various patches on my laptop and triggering loops in real time), it's also extremely road-worthy and requires very little setup time.

I place a four-space rack case behind my floor tom. In that rack are the following items:

**1. Power conditioner.** This provides the AC power to my gear and protects them from power surges. This rack-mountable unit also has a ground lift and two recessed front lights, which help me deal with gigs that have either poor lighting or a lot of neon signs (which can cause gear to buzz).

**2. Rack-mount stereo mini-disc recorder.** This dedicated playback unit stores and plays my backing tracks, and is much more stable than a finicky computerized software system. (Mine once fell five feet off the side of a drum riser and kept playing!)

**3. Eight-channel line mixer.** This mixer acts as my own personal in-ear monitoring system. It has a lot of power to drive my earphones at a suitable level, and it allows me the flexibility to adjust the volume of my backing track and click.

This four-space rack is the "central hub" of all my electronic rigs.



### Understanding Stereo— Separating Backing Tracks From The Click

Most people believe that a stereo device plays a mix equally in both speakers (or earphones). However, all stereo components (like mini-disc recorders) are actually two-track entities: There's a right channel and a left channel. When I create a backing track, I use this to my advantage. As I listen through a song's multi-track session in my computer, I mute the parts that are going to be played live by the band (bass, drums, guitar, lead vocals, etc.). Then I pan the remaining elements (keyboards, drum loops, etc.) all the way to the left of the stereo field and pan the click track to the right. This splits the click and the other musical elements into two channels.

To record this two-track backing/click track mix into my mini-disc recorder, I connect the left and right outputs of my computer audio interface (in my case, it's a Pro-Tools Mbox) to the left and right inputs. Then when it's time to send my output signal to the house PA of whatever club I'm playing, I only send the left (backing track) channel from my mini-disc recorder. The audience won't hear the click track because it's on the right channel of the stereo field and isn't being sent to the PA.

To feed my in-ear mix, I connect the left (backing track) and

right (click track) RCA outputs of my mini-disc recorder to channels 1 and 2 of my line mixer. This gives me independent control of the balance of the backing track and the click in my monitor mix without affecting the house PA's level.

### Setup 2: Backing Tracks—A Portable Solution

Every now and then, I'm not able to bring my four-space rack case on the road (usually when I have to fly). For those situations, I use a condensed setup that fits into a small carry-on bag. This setup contains the following items:



**1. Surge protector.** This standard multi-outlet provides power to all of my portable devices, and it protects them from power surges.

**2. Compact desk mixer.** This mixer acts as my personal in-ear monitoring system, with separate channels being used for my backing track and click levels. It's also lightweight and has enough power to drive my earphones at a suitable volume.

**3. Portable mini-disc recorder.** Just as in Setup 1, here a mini-disc recorder is used to play the click and backing tracks. By keeping in the mini-disc format, I'm able to use the same discs between my portable and rack-mount configurations. (If you own an iPod, you can use it as a substitute for the mini-disc recorder. In fact, Alesis has a great new piece of gear called the iMultiMix 8, which consists of a compact mixer, an iPod dock, and a two-channel USB audio interface.)

**4. Passive DI box.** This small and lightweight unit converts an unbalanced audio signal ( $1/4$ " cable) to a balanced audio (XLR) output signal. This helps to avoid any ground (buzzing) issues with a PA system.

The wiring in this scenario is identical to the previous rack-mount example, with one notable exception: This portable mini-disc recorder only has one stereo mini-plug ( $1/8$ " headphone output). So I use a stereo Y-cable (one  $1/8$ " stereo cable to two mono  $1/4$ " cables) to split the left (backing) and right (click) channels from the headphone output into separate  $1/4$ " mono signals. I connect the left  $1/4$ " mono plug into channel 1 and the right  $1/4$ " mono plug into channel 2 of the desk mixer. Then I pan the backing track (channel 1) to the left and the click (channel 2) to the right. This allows me to control the level of each track independently. Finally, I connect one  $1/4$ " mono patch cable from the left output of the desk mixer into the DI box. The DI box then connects to a channel in the house PA.

Although this setup is lightweight and simple, it does have a disadvantage: Because the portable mini-disc recorder only has one  $1/8$ " headphone output (the rack-mount recorder has four), I can't change my personal monitor mix on the desk mixer without

also changing the mix that goes to the PA. My only flexibility is over the volume of the click track.

### Setup 3: Manually Triggering Loops In Real Time

Although the prerecorded backing track scenario is my most common setup, there are occasions where an artist's music requires me to be able to alter the length of each song's verse or chorus to fit a particular performance. This means that I need to be able to control the start and stop points of the backing tracks, so I manually trigger (play) every single track, loop, and sample that's present in the song. Not only is this method very labor-intensive, it also puts me (the drummer) back in the driver's seat, as I am responsible for every direction taken on stage.

In order to manually trigger these electronic elements, I supplement my four-space rack-mount mini-disc setup with the following items:



**1. 15" Apple Macbook Pro laptop.** I use this as my "stage computer" because of its compact size and weight, as well as its backlit keyboard. The headphone output is CD-quality, so I don't need an external soundcard.

**2. Ableton Live 7 software.** Live is my favorite piece of software because it allows me to trigger loops at any tempo without altering their pitch. In addition, I can freely tap in tempos to start each song for a true real-time performance.

**3. Alternate Mode drumKAT.** The drumKat is very expandable. It has ten pads and an additional nine trigger inputs on the rear of the device. Each pad/trigger input can either be assigned to one MIDI number/sound, cycle through a series of sounds, or layer multiple sounds from within its onboard software. The KAT allows me to trigger nineteen pads (or a combination of nineteen pads and pedals) alongside Live in an unlimited number of ways.

**4. Alternate Mode kickKAT And hatKAT foot trigger pedals.** These road-worthy pedals are built from aircraft aluminum, so they can take a beating night after night. I connect them to the additional trigger inputs on the drumKat so that I can control Ableton Live's Tap-Tempo and Stop functions with my feet. (One is placed to the right of my kick pedal and the other to the left of my hi-hat.)

**5. M-Audio 1x1 USB MIDI interface.** This small and inexpensive device sends MIDI information from the drumKAT through a USB signal, which is then sent into my laptop and interpreted by Live.

**6. Passive DI box.** Again, this lightweight DI box converts an unbalanced audio signal to a balanced XLR output. With this setup, I Velcro the DI box to the back of the four-space rack.

## ELECTRONIC INSIGHTS

To hear the sound produced from Ableton Live, I connect a Y-cable (one 1/8" stereo cable to two mono 1/4" cables) from the headphone-out of my laptop into channels 3 and 4 of my eight-channel line mixer. (Remember, channels 1 and 2 already hold my RCA mini-disc outputs that feed my in-ears.) I then go into Live's Track Mixer and pan each backing-track item to the left side of the stereo field and the click to the right. Next, I connect the left output of my line mixer into the DI box, which connects to an XLR cable that's sent to the house PA.

In order to trigger my sounds in Ableton Live via MIDI, I connect the MIDI In and MIDI Out cables of the M-Audio interface to the MIDI In and Out ports of the drumKat. Then I connect a USB cable from the M-Audio interface to my computer.

Once everything is wired together, when I strike a pad on the drumKAT (or step on my trigger pedals), the MIDI information is sent to my laptop and Ableton Live. I have this MIDI information assigned to trigger audio loops, electronic samples, and all other playback functions within the software. This audio is immediately routed out of my laptop's headphone output and then sent into channels 3 and 4 in my line mixer.

Just like the portable mini-disc setup, this configuration doesn't allow me to change my personal in-ear volume on the line mixer without changing the house PA's level as well. But I can change the click track's volume because it's not being sent to the PA.

Setup 3 allows me to cover two performance obligations from one vantage point: I can perform with prerecorded backing tracks that are playing straight through on the mini-disc recorder while also manually triggering loops in real time. I can also monitor everything at once through the line mixer.

### A Final Thought

Please keep in mind that my backing-track setups are not all-inclusive. They are illustrated here to serve as an entrance point into the world of creating your own electronic playback rig. Hopefully, this article will enable you to implement these ideas into your band's live performances. Even though I mentioned specific brands of gear throughout, be aware that those pieces of equipment are what work best for my professional needs. There are many other suitable products on the market, so make sure you do your own homework before putting together your unique electronic setup. Have fun!



**Donny Gruendler** is a professional drummer, Musicians Institute faculty member in Los Angeles, and the author of Carl Fischer's *Playing With Drum Loops—How To Work With Drum Loops, Samples And Backing Tracks*. His DVD *Creating And Performing Drum Loops* is also available through Carl Fischer.



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# EARL PALMER

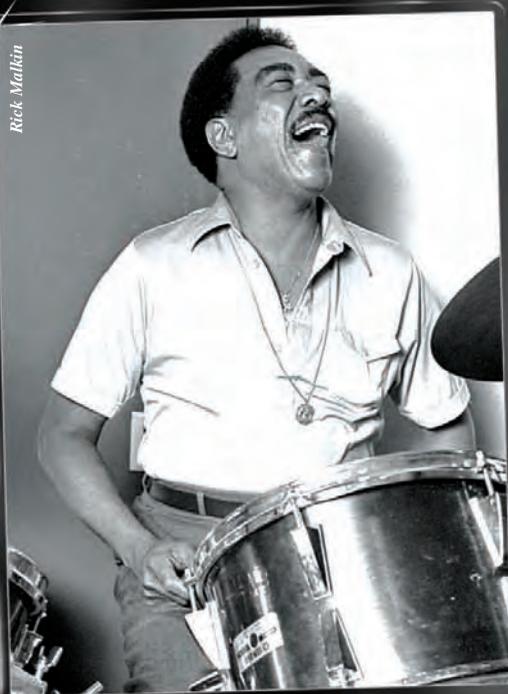
*History You Can Dance To*

by Mark Griffith

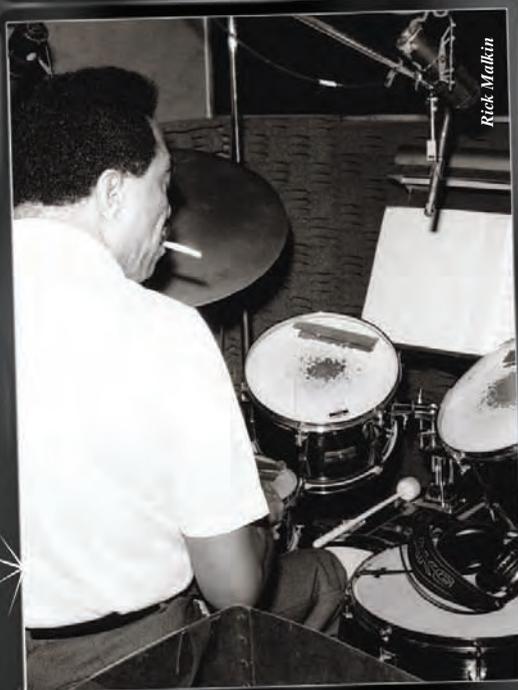




Rick Malkin



Rick Malkin



Rick Malkin

In drumming, the terms legend and innovator are thrown around far too often. Yet Earl Palmer deserves both of these titles. Drumming legends have grooves that are instantly associated with them. True musical innovators come up with (or popularize) an ingredient that's used by future generations to create a musical approach (or sound) that outlives them and their musical disciples. Earl Palmer did all of this and more.

Earl Palmer's drumming pulse was the backbeat that he created in New Orleans, but his heartbeat came from the musicality and the swing of jazz. After moving to Los Angeles, he made hit records, worked with musical legends, and dominated the session scene through his tireless work with contractors, producers, and the musicians union.

**The Beginnings:  
Tapping And Swinging**

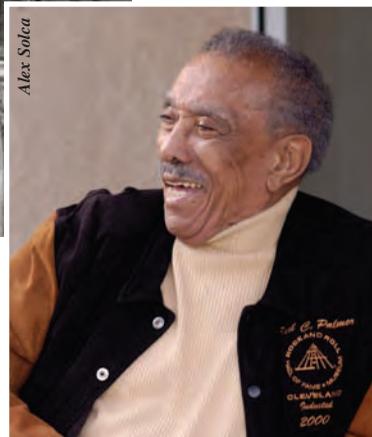
Earl Palmer was born on October 25, 1924. He was raised in the Tremé district of New Orleans, a section of town alive with culture, character, community, style, and rhythm. Earl was born into a vaudevillian family, and beginning at the age of six he toured the vaudeville circuit as a tap dancer with Ida Cox's Darktown Scandals Revue. In Earl's words, "Through dancing, I learned the structure of songs, which was a boon to me as a drummer. I learned how to improvise. That's all that tap dancing

is, improvising. They have set steps, but you make up plenty of your own." You can hear Earl's highly tap-influenced contributions behind the verses of the 1957 Big "T" Tyler song "Sadie Green."

In Earl's outstanding biography, *Backbeat*, author Tony Scherman states, "Years spent sweating to make an audience applaud gave Earl an intuitive knowledge of how to achieve emotional effects, how to build tension to the point of climax and catharsis, and how to sell a song." Throughout his life, Earl's drumming would sell many songs.



Rick Malkin



Alex Solea



Rick Malkin



# The Essence Of Backbeat

Earl Palmer In Print, On Record, And On DVD

**ESSENTIAL READING**

*Backbeat, Earl Palmer's Story* by Tony Scherman // *The Big Beat: Conversations With Rock's Great Drummers* by Max Weinberg // *Hal Blaine And The Wrecking Crew* by Hal Blaine And David Goggin

**ESSENTIAL LISTENING**

**Dave Bartholomew** The Chronological Dave Bartholomew 1947-1950 // **Earl Palmer** *Backbeat: The World's Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Drummer* // **Smiley Lewis** *Mama Don't Like It* 1950-56 // **Antoine "Fats" Domino** *They Call Me The Fat Man: The Legendary Imperial Recordings* // **Little Richard** *The Georgia Peach* // **Art Neville** *His Specialty Recordings 1956-58* // **Sam Cooke** *Portrait Of A Legend 1951-1964* // **Sarah Vaughan** *The Benny Carter Sessions* // *Mel Tormé Sunday In New York* // **Lou Rawls** *Live* // **Frank Sinatra** *Sinatra And Swingin' Brass* // **Ray Charles** *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music* // **Various** *Crescent City Gold: The Ultimate Session; Crescent City Gold: New Orleans Suite* // **Howard Roberts** *HR Is A Dirty Guitar Player* // **Buddy Collette And The West Coast Jazz Quintet** *Block Buster*

**ESSENTIAL VIEWING**

*Earl Palmer And Herman Ernest From R&B To Funk* (now issued as *New Orleans Drumming*) // **Various** *Make It Funky: The Music That Took Over The World* // **Various** *Keepintime*

Music saturated the air that Earl breathed on the road and at home. In the 1930s, music was the heartbeat and the pulse of the most important American musical city. New Orleans isn't only the birthplace of jazz, it's the birthplace of American music and has always been a breeding ground for well-rounded musicians who play music *for the people*—which is also a very good description of Earl Palmer.

## Palmer's pocket playing always found the perfect position between a swung and a straight 8th note, which will forever define the elusive concept of groove.

After spending a discouraging stint in the Army, Earl returned to New Orleans. Upon hearing the Dookie Chase band with drummer Vernel Fournier and Billy Eckstine's big band with Art Blakey, Earl realized that he wanted to be a drummer. Earl's uncle Dave Oxley played the drums, and the young Palmer began studying drumming with Bob Barbarin, and harmony and theory with Willie Humphrey. Throughout his musical formative years, Earl played a lot of jazz around New Orleans, working with the legendary Dave Bartholomew, Harold Dejean, and Earl Williams.

In 1947, Palmer made some of his first recordings with Bartholomew, "Dave's Boogie Woogie," "Bum Mae," "Stardust," and "She's Got Great Big Eyes." All of these classics are available on *The Chronological Dave Bartholomew 1947-1950*.

We don't have many recorded examples of Earl playing small group jazz. Among those we know of are a rare 1955 album called *New Orleans Suite*, the swinging 1963 Howard Roberts recording *HR Is A Dirty Guitar Player*, and Buddy Collette's outstanding 1973 live jazz recording, *Block Buster*.

On *Block Buster*, Earl's jazz drumming is very loose, sporting a very quarter note-influenced ride cymbal pattern that swings hard (similar to his fellow New Orleans native Idris Muhammad). His fours on the tune "Billie's Bounce" show a well-conceptualized jazz approach that falls somewhere between those of Art Blakey and Jimmy Cobb.

### The New Orleans Tradition

The lineage of great New Orleans drummers began in the late 1800s with Dee Dee Chandler and continues today with Stanton Moore and Herlin Riley. In between, there are decades of celebrated drummers including Earl, his influences, and his peers: Vernel Fournier, Idris Muhammad, James Black, Robert Stevens, John Boudreaux, Cornelius "Tenor" Coleman, June Gardener, Smokey

Johnson, Lester Millier, Charles "Hungry" Williams, Wilbert Hogan, Zigaboo Modeliste, and Ed Blackwell.

In this influential cadre of masters you'll find hard-working musicians who swung, rocked, and funk'd it up. But the unifying sound that identifies all of them is their use of the bass drum. The bass drum is the funky underpinning that makes New Orleans music come to life, and Earl's drumming certainly followed suit. In fact, Earl is responsible for bringing this distinctive sound to wide attention, through the early recordings of the renowned Fats Domino.

Fats Domino was a significant link between boogie-woogie and rock 'n' roll, and Earl's drumming solidified this transition. Beginning in 1949, Earl contributed some of his hippest performances on a long succession of Fats Domino singles. "I'm Walkin'" remained one of Earl's favorite recordings of his career. "The Fat Man," "Mardi Gras In New Orleans," "My Blue Heaven," and "I'm In Love Again" also received Palmer's special down-home treatment.

Domino's music is a treasure trove of drumming well worth examining. The box set *They Call Me The Fat Man: The Legendary Imperial Recordings* features each of these tunes and dozens more, as well as some *seriously* funky drumming from Palmer and some of his aforementioned drumming peers.

### Behind The Backbeat

It's no coincidence that Earl's outstanding biography is titled *Backbeat*. It's a concept that will forever be associated

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## EARL PALMER

with him. However, Palmer was not the first drummer to regularly play backbeats. The groundwork was laid by hard shuffling boogie-woogie musicians like Louis Jordan (and his drummers), and the forgotten drummer-bandleader Roy Milton. Milton is often referred to as the "Grandfather Of Rhythm & Blues." Although he's not widely recognized, Milton's drumming in the 1940s provided a firm musical foundation for Earl to build upon.

In the early to mid '50s, Earl made numerous recordings with Smiley Lewis. Along with the Domino recordings, these selections feature Earl's early backbeats in more traditional 6/8 and 12/8 contexts. On these recordings you can hear the control that Earl had over his early drum sound, as well as the "swing factor" that he infused into these traditional grooves. Check out the tunes "Shame, Shame, Shame," "I Hear You Knocking," and "Big Mamou." Although this was years before Palmer's widespread popularity, you can already hear a real distinction in Earl's drumming.

In his biography, Earl explains the relationship between his early jazz

drumming and his "invention" of the backbeat: "I made much more of a name for myself in the other music [rock 'n' roll], but ask yourself: If I was one of the beginners of rhythm & blues, what was I playing before? I'm a jazz drummer. Jazz is all anybody played until we started making those records. The backbeat came about because the public wasn't buying jazz, so we put something in that was simpler, and that's what made the difference."

Earl Palmer was the first drummer to make the transition to playing backbeats on national hit records, and Little Richard was his most important beneficiary. Earl's insistent straight 8th-note groove evolved out of a shuffle, and sparked most of Richard's most popular early recordings. The steps in this "groove evolution" created hit records, but there were rhythmic bumps along the way.

On 1955's "Tutti Frutti," you can hear Earl playing a shuffle behind Richard's straighter right-hand 8th notes. While this clearly didn't detract from the popularity of the song, we can hear a bit of a "conflict" in the groove between the two musicians on this specific recording. When Palmer recalled this session, he

stated that he was just trying to "match Little Richard's frenetic right hand."

By 1956, when Earl and Richard recorded "Lucille," "Slippin And Slidin," "The Girl Can't Help It," and "Good Golly Miss Molly," the rhythmic conflict had been resolved. Earl's popping time feel and Richard's pounding piano rhythms were now as complementary as red beans and rice. Together they locked into a relentless groove, and rock 'n' roll's backbeat was here to stay. By the time we hear Little Richard's "I Got It" in the '60s, the groove had matured into rockin' Palmer perfection. Most of these recordings, and more of their genre-defining hits, are included on the CD *Little Richard: The Georgia Peach*.

### New Orleans To Los Angeles: The Hitmaker

Earl made numerous memorable recordings that had a certifiable New Orleans R&B feel about them. None were better than Shirley & Lee's "Let The Good Times Roll," Thurston Harris's "Little Bitty Pretty One," and Ernie Fields' rocked-up version of "In The Mood" (all of which Earl also arranged).



## STICK GRIP

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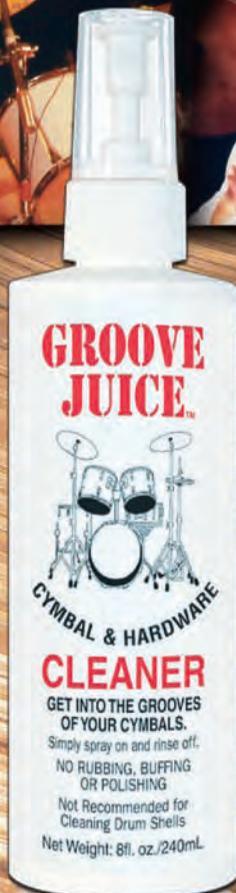
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# EARL PALMER

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## EARL PALMER

Earl infused a creative and funky traditional second-line approach on Eddie Lang's "I'm Beggin' With Tears" and Big "T" Tyler's "King Kong." But it's Palmer's pocket playing on Richard Berry's "Mad About You," Joe Don & Dewey's "Koko," and Eddie Cochran's "Somethin' Else" that finds the perfect position between a swung and a straight 8th note, which will forever define the elusive concept of groove.

On Art Neville's swinging "Ooh-Whее Baby" and the unique "quasi half-time funk" feel of "The Whiffenpoof Song,"

Earl's feel is sheer perfection. Many of Palmer's greatest recordings (as well as a few rarities as a leader) are collected on an absolutely essential CD titled: *Backbeat, The World's Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Drummer*. Also check out Art Neville's *Specialty Recordings 1956-58* for more of Earl's greatest grooves.

After making major contributions to the beginning of rock 'n' roll, Earl followed the industry west and arrived in Los Angeles in 1957. There Shelly Manne introduced him around, and before long Palmer and his trusty Rogers drums

became an integral part of the Los Angeles session scene. Earl proceeded to make hundreds of film soundtracks and television jingles. (There's a sizable list in the book *Backbeat*.) Interestingly, the drummer recalled that the Warner Bros. cartoon music was the most difficult music that he ever had to play.

Earl's exciting drumming put a legion of tunes onto the charts and propelled many of them to become all-time hits. The "Latin tinge" of Ritchie Valens' "La Bamba," the rambunctious backbeats of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" and Ike and Tina Turner's "River Deep Mountain High," and the minimalist perfection of The Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Loving Feeling" and Nat "King" Cole's "Ramblin' Rose" are a mere sampling of his "magic touch."

It's no coincidence that Earl's contributions to many of Sam Cooke's tunes helped create instant classics. While his drumming on "You Send Me," "Cupid," "Shake," and "A Change Is Gonna Come" is not flashy, attention grabbing, or eye popping, Earl provided the perfect time-keeping concept to frame great tunes and classic performances. It's this supportive example that everyone from Ringo Starr and Charlie Watts to James Gadson and Jim Keltner have followed. All of these performances can be found on the vital Sam Cooke collection *Portrait Of A Legend 1951-1964*.

### Long-Playing Masterpieces

But it wasn't all rock 'n' roll singles and *Tom And Jerry* cartoons. There were several artists that called on Earl's musicality to create full-length musical masterpieces. Many of the greatest singers insisted on Earl for their best recordings. Lou Rawls called on the drummer for many of his popular Capitol recordings. Yet none are better than Rawls' 1966 recording simply titled *Live*. This exquisite small-group recording blurs the line between jazz, soul, R&B, and pop music, and Earl was clearly the ideal drummer to support Rawls' "good time music." The spirit and the enthusiasm that Earl's grooves exude on this CD show us all the way to become a successful working drummer in just about any context.

Because of his many pop successes, many people forget that Earl was a fantastic big band drummer. *The Explosive*

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## EARL PALMER

*Side Of Sarah Vaughan* (now available as *The Benny Carter Sessions*) and Mel Tormé's *Sunday In New York* find Earl setting up hits, backing saxophone section soli's, and unifying the groove on outstanding charts written by Hollywood's top arrangers.

But it's the singers that gain the most from Earl's tasteful support on these recordings. He doesn't make these dates into "look at me" drum features. Rather, he plays the charts and supports the singers with finesse and excitement. These recordings feature Earl in his most

swinging contexts. In fact, one could almost mistake Earl for the great Mel Lewis on either of these recordings. Also check out the contributions that Earl makes to Frank Sinatra's *Sinatra And Swingin' Brass* and Ray Charles' *Modern Sounds In Country And Western Music*.

### Representing His Brother Musicians

As Palmer spent more time in the music industry, he saw a pattern of neglect among musicians towards business interests. So in 1983 Earl began

working with the musicians union as secretary treasurer, fighting hard for musicians' rights. Palmer's work directly created (and increased) income for musicians, and helped the musicians who weren't looking out for themselves.

In 1994 the producers at High Street Records assembled an outstanding group of New Orleans musical legends for the recording *Crescent City Gold*. On it, Earl and his old friends Allen Toussaint, Lee Allen, and Alvin "Red" Tyler don't just re-create some of their old magic, they take the concept of an all-star session to new heights. This recording is an indispensable example of Earl Palmer's groove wizardry.

There are several drum solos included on this CD (a Palmer rarity), but the groove on "Mid City Bop" and others is worth the price of admission alone. While there isn't any specific "drum sound" commonly associated with Earl, pay close attention to what Earl produces on the drums and cymbals. His touch *was* his sound. That's immediately apparent on this well-recorded CD.

### Earl On Tape

Because Earl did most of his work behind the closed doors of the recording studios, there's not that much video documentation of his work. This made his instructional video *From R&B To Funk* very welcomed. On it, Earl breaks down many of his grooves and approaches, and we get to see the magic up close. In addition, the concert DVD *Make It Funky* includes some outstanding footage of Earl playing double drums with Steve Jordan, as well as some interviews with the master.

Thankfully, Earl Palmer's legend and innovations were acknowledged when he was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in March of 2000. Appropriately, he was one of the first inductees in the sideman category.

Earl Palmer helped create American popular music, and with his recent passing, music will never be the same. But through his vast recorded legacy, we will all continue to learn from his impeccable sense of groove, time, and musical wisdom.

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# REMEMBERING EARL PALMER

Compiled by Robyn Flans

## **Jim Keltner** (legendary session drummer)

"The first time I remember hearing Earl Palmer was probably the same time that anybody near my age would have heard him on the radio, with 'Rip It Up,' 'Lucille,' and all those incredible records. You couldn't avoid it. I was very, very young, and even though it was before my real jazz consciousness, I knew instinctively that I liked this. Later on, when I became, basically, a jazz snob, I didn't want to listen to anything that wasn't jazz. Still, in those days if I heard Little Richard or Fats Domino, I knew that I liked it in my bones. I might not have admitted it to my jazz buddies, but I knew I couldn't stay away from it; I had to hear it again, and I loved it. Later on in life, I realized the reason was that the drummer was Earl Palmer, and he was a jazz drummer. He never considered himself a rock drummer. He played rock to make a few extra bucks, but his jazz playing came through without us even knowing it.

"The first time I saw Earl play live was at an assembly at PCC. To this day I don't recall who he was playing with—he could never help me with that—but I remember thinking that he sounded like Shelly Manne, which was a real revelation. I loved the impeccable swinging style he had, the lovely-sounding cymbals, his beautifully tuned drums, and his great playing behind the vocalist. This guy was an expert—a thorough, wonderful jazz drummer—and I remember thinking how weird it was that he would be the guy that had played on all those Little Richard records.

"The next time I saw him was on a soundstage, playing live with Little Richard for some movie, and my whole soul was lifted up to the heavens. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Between that and hearing Hal Blaine play live at Sunset Sound with the H.B. Barnum Band, I've never heard a power like that, the power of a groove, the power of somebody in control of a whole band, rockin', making it feel good, making it sound good. And on top of that, I loved the way he looked! He was just a bad-ass looking



In June 2006 MD cover star Chad Smith orchestrated a historic roundtable with a veritable Mount Olympus of studio drumming. From left: Jim Keltner, Hal Blaine, Chad, and Earl.

dude, so handsome you couldn't believe it, but unapproachable. Hal was the old Jewish uncle you could go up and hug, but Earl was dangerous. Of course, later on in life, Earl loved that I would remind him of that. He would laugh and give me a big hug and tell me how cute I was. That was my experience as a young person with Earl Palmer.

"After that, I would find myself in the Valley at a jazz club, and he would be at the bar and I'd go up to him and have these great conversations. Occasionally I'd get him to talk about himself, though very rarely. But I found out during one of those conversations that he played on Sinatra's *Swingin' Brass*, so of course I immediately went out and got it. And it's one of my favorite Sinatra records.

"Earl did everything. He was a great jazz drummer who played great rock 'n' roll, with a capital G, and then, on top of that, he was able to play on the great pop stuff. His discography speaks volumes and needs to be looked at to appreciate what effect he had on the music industry. And of course, he was such a sweet man. He came from an area of the world that was known for that. If you know New Orleans musicians, most of them are like that.

"Earl went through a lot. If you read his book, or heard him tell certain stories, you could really understand what it might have been like to go through the things he had to go through, although you can never know unless you've been there. We can sit here and really only appreciate and marvel at what black folks during that time period went through and how they came through the fire to become the awesome inspirational people who changed the world. Earl Palmer is one of many who actually changed the world. I'm honored to be able to have counted him among my good friends."

## **Chad Smith** (Red Hot Chili Peppers)

"I feel really lucky, honored, and blessed to have gotten to know Earl on a personal level. I got to have lunch with him a few times, and he was open and happy to do the interview for *Modern Drummer* that I did with him. I remember telling *Modern Drummer* editor in chief Bill Miller that I would be on the cover of the magazine if I could interview who I deemed the three most influential studio masters alive—Jim Keltner, Earl Palmer, and Hal Blaine—and Bill said that if I could pull it off and get them to sit down together, *absolutely*.

"So we went down to Hal's place, and just getting to spend the time with Jim in the car, we were like two kids in a candy store, in awe of these guys. What blew me away about Earl, the first time I had lunch with him about three or four years ago, was when he was telling me stories about the life he led before he invented rock 'n' roll drumming, and what an incredible journey it was, so full of racism. He was a survivor. He worked hard.

"Earl was an incredible reader. He knew that in order to work in the studios, he had to read and be well educated. He was a well-rounded musician. I think I said in the *Modern Drummer* piece, without Earl Palmer, there would be no rock 'n' roll. He invented, as we know it today, the rock 'n' roll drum beat and the feel of rock 'n' roll, the feel of the drums pertaining to rock 'n' roll, the straight 8ths. I asked him, 'How did you come up with it?' He couldn't remember who it was, thought maybe it was Eddie Cochran—some greaser-looking dude, leather jacket.... The guy didn't really know what he wanted, and the feel wasn't quite right. So Earl was getting kind of frustrated—and Earl could be intimidating, he looked unapproachable—but he said, kind of as a joke, 'This is ridiculous. I'll do this.' And he started playing straight and the guy said, 'That's it! That's it!' So without Earl, John Bonham couldn't have done his thing, I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing, and the entire lineage wouldn't be there.

"Earl was a loving, smart, funny, ornery, grumpy man. But he was so nice to me...he embraced me, and it turned out we had the same birthday. He was just a genuine person, and you don't come by that very often. They broke the mold after Earl Palmer."

**James Gadson** (R&B session great)

"It was always a pleasure to be around Earl. He always made you feel special. He

had a great personality. He was very wise, and he told great jokes. Musically, as far as popular music and R&B, he's the guy who started it. We haven't caught up with him yet. I listen to a lot of things he's done—Little Richard...and not just R&B. He did so many things that I didn't even know he did. He was such a good person, and he advised me on things and always told it like it was. He didn't pull any punches.

"I was honored to be in the film *Keepintime* with Earl and Paul Humphrey, and to get to talk with Earl. I found out that he liked some things that I did, which blew me away. He was the innovator of what we do, especially that backbeat. He was the king.

"I can see his face and those shoes. [laughs] I'm really going to miss him, but his work immortalizes him. All of us playing today who have had any success in R&B, pop, or jazz, whether we know it or not, we got a lot from him."

### Ringo Starr

"Just the scope of what Earl's been on is amazing. Eddie Cochran's 'Summertime Blues' blew me away—I never knew it was him—and Sam Cooke's 'Shake'...the drum part is as heavy as the song. And he was still going up until recently; he's on an Elvis Costello album. And what about *The Flintstones*? His passing is a great loss to the drumming world.

There were many recordings he did

that I didn't learn were him until much later on. I always just listened to the record for the record. I was never stalking the drummer. But when you look at this guy's resumé, it's unbelievable.

"What I loved about Earl was that his drums were deep and there was nothing real busy about what he played. He played when he was needed. And that's very hard a lot of the time. And don't forget 'Tutti Frutti'—how far out is that? And what about Tom Waits? One track I recently listened to, '(Everytime I Hear) That Mellow Saxophone' by Roy Montrell—he's got a great rock line: 'We're going to rock, rock, rockit like Davy Crockett.' They don't write songs like that anymore! And 'Little Bitty Pretty One' [Thurston Harris And The Sharps]—that intro is just him, it's hi-hat and bass drum. Early rock 'n' roll was very swing, and Earl knew how to do that. When you consider things from 'Shake' to 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy' by Lloyd Price, it's amazing. All classics. Earl certainly warms my heart."

### Steve Jordan

(Eric Clapton, John Mayer)

"I was lucky enough to befriend Earl over the last ten years or so. Obviously, it was a dream come true to know the man who basically started the thing that inspires me the most, and that's the bridge between jazz and rock 'n' roll and the creation of real rock 'n' roll. He was

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## EARL REMEMBERED

the architect of that, and to know the architect of that is a pretty special feeling. His performances are so moving that they're really hard to describe, but he's the catalyst for a lot of other great performances. So when he plays the way he plays on the recording of 'Shake' by Sam Cooke, it inspired the performance by every musician on there, and consequently, it's one of the most incredible recordings you'll ever hear.

"Earl's been so much to so many people that it's really hard to talk about one aspect of his life. He was such an ambassador for musicians all around the world, just the way he carried himself as a person, as he moved into different circles and his career progressed. When he moved from New Orleans in 1957, that's when the Dodgers and the Giants went west, and he did the same thing for music. He's much too deep to get into in one sitting, but let's just say he was an incredible human being and it was so great to hang out with him. He had the greatest sense of humor and passion.

"To see him really happy with Jeline was so great. That's the kind of reward you get for being the kind of person you

are. You get to spend all your last days with a person you love and who loves you. We know what kingdom he resides in, and hopefully if we do the right thing, we'll get a chance to see him again."

### Charlie Watts (The Rolling Stones)

"Earl was a true gentleman and one of the nicest people I've ever met. As a drummer, he was enormous, from 'Shake' to 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling.' And he was a jazz drummer, really. The stuff he did with King Pleasure I heard when I was eighteen and have loved it ever since. 'Parker's Mood' and 'Moody's Mood For Love' are fantastic. And everybody's danced to Little Richard.

"He impacted my life before I knew him, and even more so when I met him. He was always a lovely, lovely man. Every time I went to LA, I'd be with Keltner and Earl Palmer, and I won't have that anymore. It will be a huge loss."

### Hal Blaine (LA studio legend)

"How do you thank a guy for over forty years of work? Earl was really the guy who got me started, passing my name around. He just handed it to me on a sil-

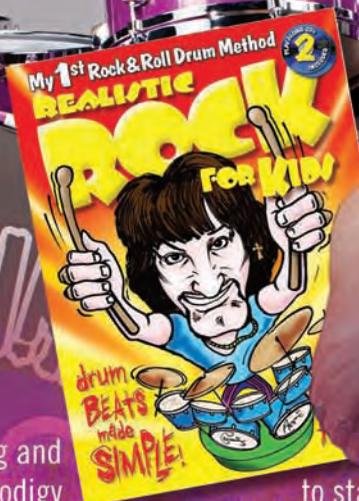
ver platter. It was like falling into a vat of chocolate.

"I met Earl because I was starting to get a few little calls and he had heard about me and saw me do something. He gave my name to H.B. Barnum, and H.B. started using me with Sam Cooke and a lot of different people.

"Earl and I became very good friends. We used to laugh because a lot of people thought we had a feud going, but that was the furthest thing from the truth. We were really good friends. The only work we did together was the Jan And Dean records. We did double drums in the days before people thought about double drums, and we wrote our parts out identical—every fill, every tom-tom, everything was identical. We were one of the first to play double drums—'Little Old Lady From Pasadena' and all those records. That was wild. We even had identical blue sparkle drumsets."

For more top drummers' memories of Earl, go to [www.modrndrummer.com](http://www.modrndrummer.com).

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# Earl Palmer Style & Analysis

by Ed Breckenfeld

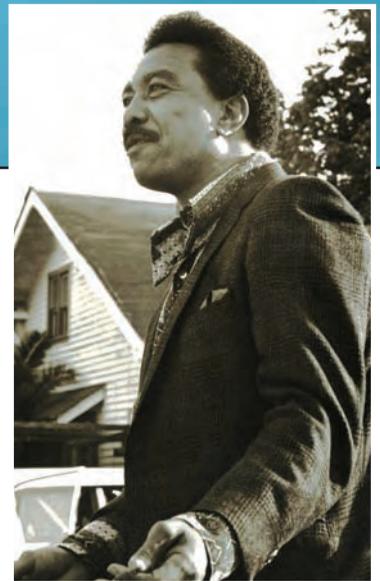
**MUSIC KEY**

open	O	R.C.	Bell
H.H.	⊗	C.C.	Bell
T.T.	⊗		
S.D.	⊗		
F.T.	⊗		
B.D.	⊗		
H.H.	⊗	Rim	
w/ foot	⊗	Click	

**E**arl Palmer was there at the beginnings of the rock 'n' roll movement, powering up the backbeat in 1950s New Orleans behind the hits of Fats Domino and Little Richard. Palmer's driving 2 and 4 snare became the standard beat of popular music. Later in Los Angeles, Earl was a versatile first-call session drummer on countless albums and singles, from Ray Charles and Nat King Cole to Frank Sinatra and Bobby Darin, to Jan And Dean and The Righteous Brothers. Earl also dominated the movie and television soundtrack business in the 1960s and early '70s.

Earl grew up in the musically fertile New Orleans of the 1920s and '30s. Although he didn't start drumming until he was twenty-two, the rhythms of the city ran through his veins, and he expressed them as other significant drummers from the late vaude-

ville era did—through dancing. Palmer became one of the top child tap dancers in his area, and when he took up the drums as a young adult, his rhythmic control and stage confidence were already in place. A steady gig with trumpeter Dave Bartholomew led to Earl becoming the house drummer for New Orleans' main recording studio. The studio band consisted of jazz musicians like Palmer, who recorded rhythm & blues and rock 'n' roll as a day job and went out to the clubs at night to play bebop. Here's a sampling of this late, great drummer's style from some of his most classic recordings.



## "Bo Weevil" Fats Domino (1956)

This Fats Domino R&B hit showcases the percussive hybrid that Earl was cooking up in the early rock 'n' roll era. After a classic New Orleans set-up intro, Palmer's jazz hi-hat pattern swings the song over his backbeat snare groove. (0:00)

1

♩ = 185

## "When My Dreamboat Comes Home" Fats Domino (1956)

Simplifying his drumming for the sake of making hit singles doesn't mean that Earl never got his licks in. He drops an exciting fill between his verse hi-hat beat and his ride cymbal groove for this tune's sax solo section. The marching-type 8th- and 16th-note fill jumps right out of the swing feel of the track. (0:39)

2

♩ = 195

## "Tutti Frutti" Little Richard (1955)

A swinging rhythm section under a straight 8th-note piano pattern propelled Little Richard's first single. This straight/swing duality was an important element of early rock 'n' roll, as it created a tension that mirrored the energy and rebellious lyrics of the genre. Here Palmer doubles Richard's famous line, "A-Wop-Bop-A-Lu-Bop-A-Wop-Bam-Boom," with a great fill. (1:16)

3

♩ = 186

## "Long Tall Sally" Little Richard (1956)

In the out chorus of this Little Richard classic, Earl drops some bebop-style "bombs" as Richard sings, "We're gonna have some fun tonight." These offbeat accents shake up the smooth groove and add to the party aspect of the track. (1:48)

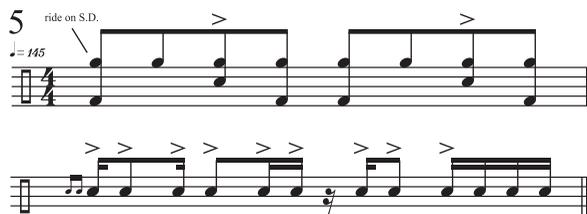
4

♩ = 187

### "Lucille" Little Richard (1956)

On this hit, Earl and the band lock tight into the straight 8th-note groove that would become rock's signature feel. Palmer rides on his snare drum to ensure that the 8th notes cut through. (1:55)

5 ride on S.D.  
♩ = 145



### "La Bamba" Ritchie Valens (1958)

Earl's move to Los Angeles in 1957 opened up a new world of studio work with established West Coast artists and brand new acts. He played on virtually all of Ritchie Valens' output before the fateful plane crash that ended the young singer's brief career. This tune is Valens' most lasting legacy, and it churns over Palmer's sinuous Latin groove. (1:08)

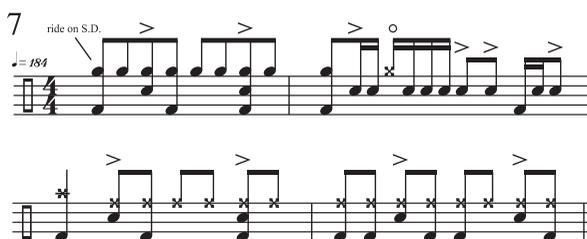
6  
♩ = 150



### "Come On, Let's Go" Ritchie Valens (1958)

This rocker was Valens' first hit. Earl's snare ride, backbeat, and bouncing New Orleans bass drum pattern carried the song's verses, with another cool transition fill leading into the guitar solo section. (1:00)

7 ride on S.D.  
♩ = 184



### "Cupid" Sam Cooke (1961)

Palmer also played on important sessions for another ill-fated star, vocalist Sam Cooke. In this song Earl's snare ride is soft and subtle, with a few 16th notes adding a cha-cha flavor to his rimclick groove. (0:02)

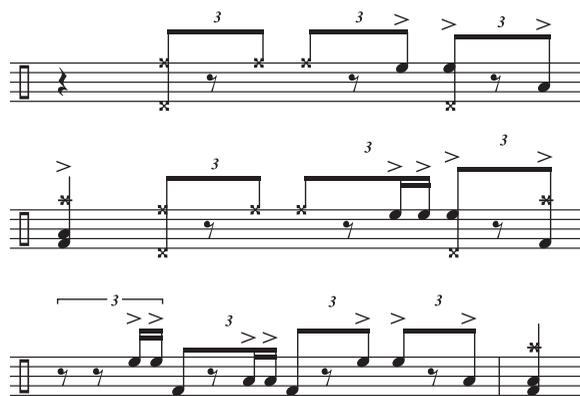
8 ride on S.D.  
♩ = 122



### "Twistin' The Night Away" Sam Cooke (1961)

Earl's exciting drumming is featured strongly on this hit single. In this short dynamic intro he sets up horn kicks like a big band drummer, using tom flourishes and a strong swinging groove. (0:00)

9  
♩ = 156



### "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'" The Righteous Brothers (1964)

On the sessions for this huge hit, Phil Spector wanted a deeper sound out of the snare drum, so Palmer played his backbeat on the snare and tom-tom simultaneously. Al Jackson Jr. would later use this technique for many of his hits with Al Green in the 1970s. (0:02)

10  
♩ = 92



### "Mission Impossible Theme" Lalo Schifrin (1967)

Here's a famous example of Earl's soundtrack work. He employs a straight-up approach for this 5/4 track, matching the melody note for note. The rimclick sound evokes the aura of '60s secret-agent mania. (0:21)

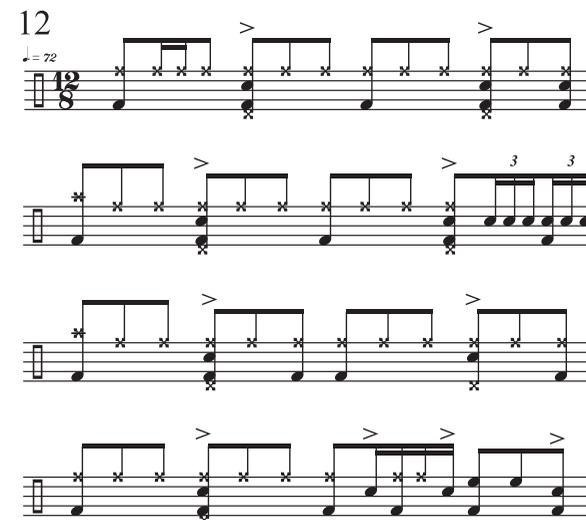
11  
♩ = 181



### "Poisoned Rose" Elvis Costello, King Of America (1986)

Late in his career, Palmer could still rip it up with younger musicians. He used brushes on this 12/8 ballad for Elvis Costello, adding fiery flourishes to keep the song from becoming too sappy. Notice Earl's expressive bass drum work in this climatic sequence. (1:49)

12  
♩ = 72





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# THE KILLERS'

## Ronnie Vannucci

### KILLER WITH A CAUSE

STORY BY KEN MICALLEF · PHOTOS BY TOREY MUNDKOWSKI

**S**eeing as he's from Las Vegas, the home of twenty-four-hour gambling, retina-freezing neon, and spontaneous wedding ceremonies, The Killers' Ronnie Vannucci has a penchant for doing things—to quote a famous Vegas crooner—his way. A natural drummer with a massive beat and a creative, chameleon-like tendency to create a new flow as the song dictates, Vannucci pulls out all the quirky stops for The Killers' third release, *Day And Age*.

With sales of twelve million and climbing for their earlier albums, *Hot Fuss* and *Sam's Town*, The Killers employed producer Stuart Price (Madonna, Missy Elliott, Gwen Stefani, Seal) to twist their already unpredictable pop style for *Day And Age*. Where previous Killers albums offered equal parts gritty urban beats, heraldic melodies, and chest-thumping Bruce Springsteen-style theatrics, *Day And Age* streamlines the band's approach into something more groove-heavy and dance-oriented. But far from a click-track slave, Vannucci saw The Killers' change in direction as a chance to experiment, and to expand his skill set as well as his cymbal set.



Vannucci plays 18" and 22" hi-hats on much of *Day And Age*. Even so, if he wasn't happy with a particular hi-hat sound, he'd sing "chick chick chick" into a mic and add it to the mix. If he wanted a different drumset sound, he used a small "side kit" for a textural change of pace. And he was only getting started. For one song, Vannucci tracked nine snare drums for a massive rock 'n' roll march. For another, he combined two drumset tracks into one, running snares in the middle of the mix, toms hard left and right, and the bass drum rumbling like a subsonic depth charge. Vannucci even sent all of his beautiful acoustic drum sounds through ancient Simmons SDS pads, and then tweaked the results beyond recognition for The Killers' first single, "Human."

Vannucci's been a drummer since he was seven, playing in various bands around Las Vegas until, in his twenties, he landed a job working as a wedding photographer at the

Chapel Of The Little Flowers. The job allowed him to pay the rent by day and gig by night. Shooting all those starry-eyed honeymooners drove him mad, though, and after seeing a Tom Waits gig in 2000, the drummer enrolled at the University Of Las Vegas as a double music major. Simultaneously, he and the rest of The Killers (Brandon Flowers, David Keuning, and Mark Stoermer) honed their songs and created a fresh pop sound that would result in their topping critics' polls throughout the US, and, especially, in the UK and Europe. Sales in the millions soon followed.

Soft-spoken yet given to statements that seem to surprise him as they exit his mouth, Ronnie Vannucci is an old-school drummer in an unpredictable new world. Digital recording platforms and dance-oriented click tracks don't phase him in the least. For Vannucci, creativity rules. Like all great rock 'n' roll rebels, Ronnie Vannucci is a killer with a cause.

## RONNIE'S DRUMS

**Drums:** Craviotto with solid walnut shells and maple hoops

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- B.** 9x13 tom (mounted in snare stand)
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x24 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1.** 18" hi-hats (K Constantinople crash top/1940s-era ride bottom)
- 2.** 22" K Constantinople Hi Bell Low with six rivets
- 3.** 22" K light ride
- 4.** 24" K light ride

**Side Kit (not shown in photos)**

**Drums:** 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 solid ash snare, 14x18 bass drum

**Cymbals:** 18" hi-hats (K Dry crash top/Breakbeat ride bottom), 22" unlathed ride with one rivet

**Hardware:** DW, including a 9000 series hi-hat stand and a 5000 series single bass drum pedal

**Heads:** Remo coated Emperors on snare batters, coated Ambassadors on tops of toms (Vintage As on floor toms), clear Ambassadors underneath, suede Powerstroke 3 on bass drum batter with Craviotto Fiberskin on front

**Sticks:** Zildjian Ronnie Vannucci Signature model, bent bristle brushes, cymbal mallets



## Day And Age Dynamics

**MD:** You played with a tremendous amount of freedom for a pop drummer on *Hot Fuss* and *Sam's Town*. Were there any restraints put on your drumming for *Day And Age*, which sounds more dance-oriented?

**Ronnie:** As I get a little older I still try new things, but it comes down to what

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sounds the best for the song. What's going to propel the message of the song? That's everybody's job in the band.

To have a well-balanced song, every-

more groove-oriented. I've been revisiting old Stax records, and I got the new Al Green record, which has Questlove just laying it down on the drums. He's one of my favorite drummers. And I'm a big fan of Al Jackson Jr.—the funky drummers. They just laid it down and did it with ease.

**MD:** Overall, how does *Day And Age* differ from the first two albums?

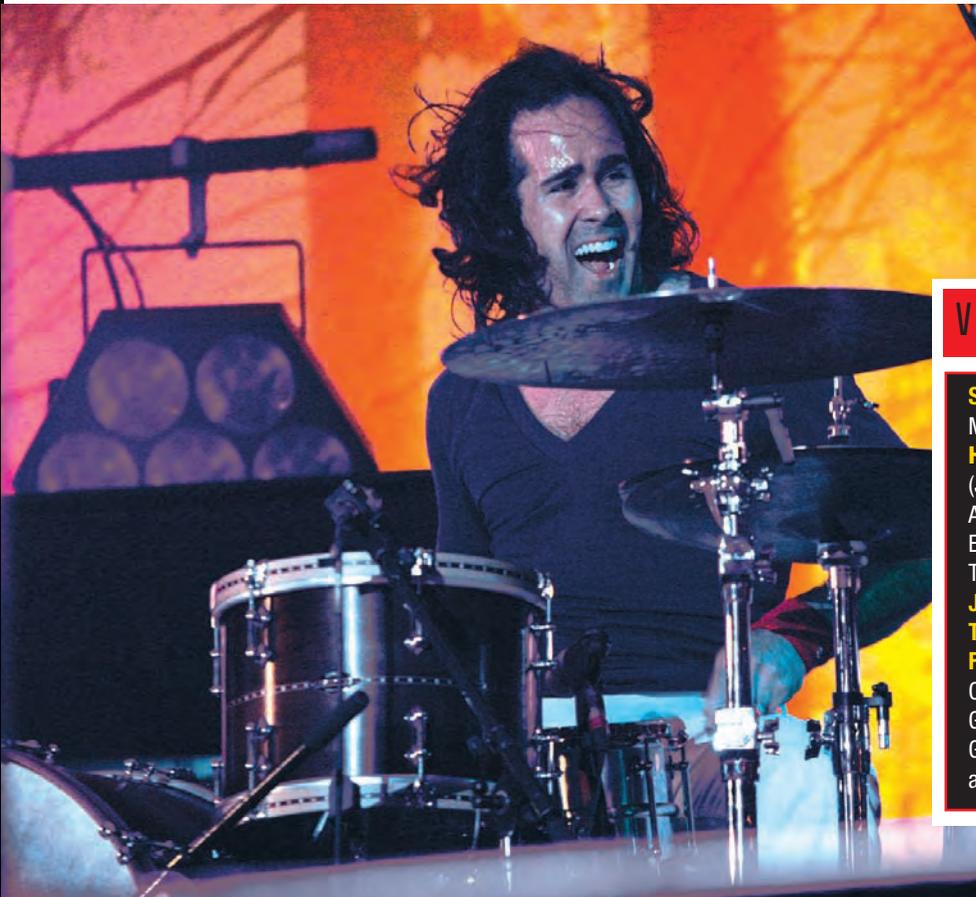
**Ronnie:** We homed in on following where the song needed to go—and not force it to go somewhere. There's a lot of freedom in that. We've taken more chances on some

as being unburdened by any thoughts of a click. Do you record to a click?

**Ronnie:** Most of the time we do. When I was in school I spent a lot of time with a metronome. I learned how to use it but not let it hinder my musical sensitivities. I practiced a lot of snare drum exercises with a click, and the challenge was to make them flow along with it. It also depends on the song you're playing. Some songs need to swing more than others, and some need to lay back. Sometimes you need to be right on top of it. I use the click as an "approximator."

**MD:** There are songs on *Sam's Town* that have a *Born To Run* vibe, where the drumming is unchained and sounds like it would be impossible to even consider performing to a click.

**Ronnie:** It comes back to the song. On a song like "Human," I had to stay right with the click because it has such a dance element. Dance music can move; it doesn't have to be rigid. But we wanted that song to sound rigid. It's a song that asks, "Are we human?" Then we throw in things that aren't necessarily human-sounding.



body's got to work together. Sometimes that means the drummer has to take a back seat and hold it down. But that doesn't mean you can't be creative with the sounds and dynamics.

**MD:** Is there anything on *Day And Age* that matches the Bonham-meets-Hal Blaine concussions of *Sam's Town*? There are moments on that album that recall the classic Hal Blaine thunder toms.

**Ronnie:** I guess this record might be a little

songs on the new album than we have in the past. For instance, on "I Can't Say," we brought in a sax player and let him go free. We didn't have any hangups, and we didn't want to write for trend's sake. As a joke I stuck some steel drums on "I Can't Say," and we ended up keeping them. We followed what felt good and that often meant pulling back more often than putting the kitchen sink in.

**MD:** Your drumming generally strikes me

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### Click Fooling

**MD:** What do you use for a click in the studio?

**Ronnie:** We recorded in Apple Logic. I did some of the recording myself using Logic's built-in metronome. Stuart Price used an 8th note-based click—a strong quarter note with a weaker 8th note. Stuart also used a harsh-sounding synthesized hi-hat with a cross-stick.

**MD:** That sounds like it wouldn't be an inspiring sound to play along with.

**Ronnie:** I hated it! And then I found

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## RONNIE VANNUCCI

myself using it. Sometimes you use the click as an instrument, where it's a cowbell or agogo bell with different pitches. Or you might have a loop that you play with. That can be fun. But when you take it out, the music feels like your drumming is missing something. So there might be an advantage to playing something that doesn't sound musical and using it as a meter approximator instead of as a musical instrument.

**MD:** So you approached it as the opposite of playing with a percussion part?

**Ronnie:** I like to play off of things that I hear. If I play with a musical click, I'll leave room for it—unless what's in there doesn't sound right to me. So that's why I initially hated the click that Stuart used. Then I got used to it. It was just a guide for the time.

"Believe Me Natalie," "On Top," "My List," "Sam's Town," "The River Is Wild"—all epic drum tracks. Granted, you want to play what fits the song, but many drummers might have played a less expressive part on these songs. What are you typically listening for during the songwriting process?

**Ronnie:** When you play with four guys, there's a limit to what's happening. I often try to listen to the diction in the vocals and to the melody, and try and complement that. And not just the vocals, but also things that are not happening. Maybe I'll accent a hi-hat or do some type of tom pattern that will help the other guys fill in the blanks or help move the song. I'm guilty of overplaying, too. But some of that lends itself to that creativity. I'm still working on trying to



**MD:** Are we hearing more software-edited drum parts compared to *Sam's Town* and *Hot Fuss*?

**Ronnie:** No. A lot of this album is one or two takes, but then the final take is a combination of the two. Surprisingly, many takes are one continuous take.

### Beats That Breathe

**MD:** You have a real talent for creating dynamic, personal drum parts. I think of

strike the right balance between the two.

**MD:** You get away with more than most drummers would in the same situation, but it's not overplaying. It's creative and drives the music. The bands The Killers are often compared to might as well use drum machines.

**Ronnie:** Yeah, some of that stuff sounds lifeless. It's a taste thing. What I play isn't hard. I'm not reinventing the wheel. I'm just trying to make the music move and



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## RONNIE VANNUCCI

come across.

**MD:** It's not prog rock for sure, but it's very tasteful and flowing. How do you gauge when to let it flow and when to hold the beat?

**Ronnie:** It's often determined during playback. It's something that takes time to develop, or at least it took time to develop for me. Some guys know right out of the gate where things need to be. I had to figure it out, and I'm still figuring it out.

**MD:** "Believe Me Natalie" is a good example of your style and shows what you're really capable of. Do these kinds of parts develop over time, or quickly?

**Ronnie:** Most of the time it's pretty spontaneous. There's a song on *Day And Age* called "Good Night Travel Well" that is slower but with a really cool pattern. I recorded it as a demo, and it just came off the top of my head. I sat down and played it, and it worked. Sometimes it just falls into your lap and other times it takes more work.

**MD:** Besides the drumming, was there more electronic or dance production overall on the new record?

**Ronnie:** There is, but it's done in an organic way. We messed around with the Simmons SDS-V modules from the '80s and ran snares and other drums through that. We tweaked knobs as the song was playing. We'd have one track triggering the snare drum and it would make the drum sound change; it would get really hairy and fuzzy, or go back to being more regular sounding. That's what you hear on "Human" and on "This Is Your Life," which is a march. There are nine snare drums on that one, one of which was triggered with an SDS-V.

**MD:** Were there other unusual experiments like that on rest of the album?

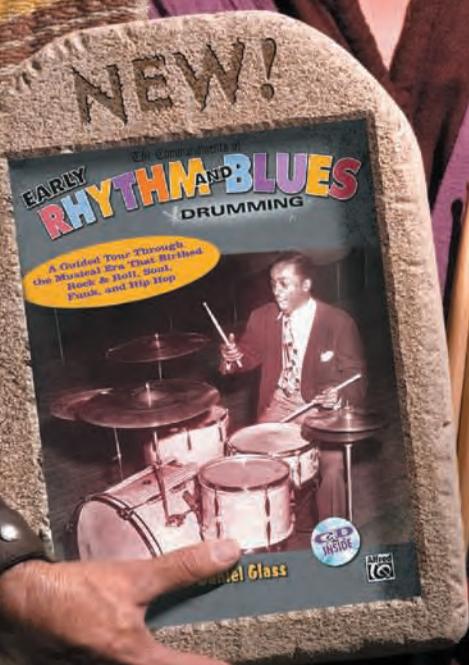
**Ronnie:** Yes. For "Neon Tiger," the demo drums sounded great. I then re-cut it with a totally different feel using a much smaller drumset with an 18" kick, a solid mahogany snare, and one little cymbal, all in an isolation booth. At that point we couldn't decide which track we liked better, so we ended up using both, panning one hard left and the other hard right, with the snare drums in the middle. The bass drum is toward the middle but not dead center. So it's really an experience to hear that tune in headphones. It made for some really cool textures. The fills went together really well, too.

**MD:** There's a feeling of breath and air in your beats. The *Live At Abbey Road* sessions show that sense of air and space, almost like Levon Helm in a way.

**Ronnie:** I think it comes down to the player and to his musical sensibility. Drummers like Levon,

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## RONNIE VANNUCCI

Mitch Mitchell—those are my guys. They had something in common. They really breathed and moved with the music. One of the best things you can be is a drummer. People think drummers just hit things, that we're a bunch of knuckle-dragging caveman with sticks. But if you're sensitive to the music, you can make a real impact. Just because you're a drummer doesn't mean you have to lose that.

### Recording No Over-Kill

**MD:** How involved are you in the recording process as far as getting drum sounds?

**Ronnie:** Very. And it's something I'm learning more about. The interesting thing is we only used hi-hat mics on two songs. Our approach to recording the drums was to capture the whole kit rather than have isolated mics. We caught the hi-hats with the overheads. We put a Royer 121 ribbon mic over my left shoulder, then two overheads, or a Neumann U47 behind me. Sometimes nothing. There are actually some tunes on the record where we only used three drum mics.

**MD:** Why go for that more minimal approach?

**Ronnie:** If you can get a good drum sound with what you have, go with it. Of course, sometimes we ran into trouble, because once you start layering sounds, certain things can be lost.

**MD:** Did you record in an isolation booth?

**Ronnie:** I was out in the live room for most of the recording. I did about three tracks in an isolation room where we also recorded the guitar. It's about the size of a bathroom. I had the little bop set in there, with the 18" bass drum and 12" and 14" toms. It sounded great.

**MD:** It generally sounds like your drums are recorded wide open with no damping.

**Ronnie:** Yes, I tend to like that. I experimented a bit more this time, though. I went with more muffling, especially on the snare drums. Matt Chamberlain is one of my favorite drummers. He's another good example of breathing and groove. He's incredible. I kind of used a lot of sounds styled from him. For a couple of songs I broke out the blanket for the bass drum, but for most of the songs the drums were open. I made careful head choices and bass drum beater choices too, which can affect the sound so much.

### Hot Drums & 22" Hi-Hats?

**MD:** Are we hearing your new Craviotto set on *Day And Age*?

**Ronnie:** Yes, it's all Craviotto. I was hung up on vintage gear for a long time, and I had a ton of stuff in my garage. I used it all on *Sam's Town*. At the end of the day I settled

on Ludwig drums and various snare drums—Supra-Phonics, a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14 Leedy Black Elite, Radio Kings, and a Craviotto I had. But *Day And Age* is all Craviotto.

**MD:** What do Craviotto drums give you?

**Ronnie:** Johnny Craviotto came to me early on, and I bought a couple of snare drums from him. He offered to build me an entire set in the exact same sizes as my Ludwigs. He did it, and when I put the drums side by side, there was no comparison. The Ludwigs are great, I don't have anything against them. But my ear went with that solid-shell sound of the Craviottos. It seems like less is in the way of the sound, like you're getting more of an honest, pure, woody tone.

The best way to put it is the Craviottos sound honest. They sound pure, and you don't hear much other than the wood. I'm also using wood hoops on these drums, and you can tell the difference when you replace the steel hoops. There's nothing in the way, just that solid shell. If you use metal hoops you can hear that metallic tone.

**MD:** Tell me about your fixation with huge hi-hats. You're playing 18" hi-hats on the new album!

**Ronnie:** I don't like a glassy, thin hi-hat sound. I like a deep chick. Plus I like hi-hats with a little bit of body, too.

**MD:** So 14" hi-hats sound too glassy?

**Ronnie:** Yeah, depending on the brand. For me 14" hats can sound too mousy. On *Sam's Town* I used these great 1950s Zildjian 15" hi-hats. They sounded terrific by themselves, but by the time you miked them and put them on the track, the only way you heard them was if you turned up the highs. That's another reason I didn't want to record with a hi-hat mic. I wanted to be able to play balanced enough so I didn't have to use a lot of moving faders and EQ.

On *Sam's Town* I used my mouth to overdub the "chick, chick, chick, chick, swoosh" over the hi-hats on some songs. You can hear it on the title track and on "Reason's Unknown." Live, I wanted to get a different hi-hat sound, so on the first gig for *Sam's Town* I had an old 18" A Zildjian ride from the '40s and a K Constantinople crash that I put together for a pair of hi-hats. That was the winning combination. And there was one track where I used two 22" K Constantinople rides, one high and one low, for the hi-hats.

**MD:** Using such big hats, do you play on different areas of the cymbal surface?

**Ronnie:** With bigger cymbals you've got more options. You can play all over the cymbal to achieve different sounds. And when you're

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## RONNIE VANNUCCI

laying down the time it sounds nice and big. I also position my hats a bit lower, maybe four or five inches above the snare. I play the hats with the shank of the stick because I like a thicker sound. Of course, if you're doing something that requires rebound, you use the tip of the stick, obviously.

**MD:** I heard you say that you like to record so it sounds like there's "eighty years of smoke on the cymbals."

**Ronnie:** I dig that sound. I'll go searching through the vaults of pawn shops. When we would be in different cities I would try

to find the oldest pair of Zildjian hi-hats ever. This is back before everybody got hip to the pawn shop game. Now you have to pay \$800 at a Vintage Drum Center for the same thing. But Zildjian is really accommodating. They've made me some cymbals that sound like they've been buried for a hundred years. Some are prototypes, and some are discontinued models that they had lying around, like the Dry 18" crashes that were *really* dry. They have a cool, smoky sound. I'll use that for my hi-hat setup from time to time.

**MD:** We've been talking about all of the

big cymbals and drums you prefer, but I've occasionally seen you use a small kit just off to the left of your main one.

**Ronnie:** I used it during a tour this past August. I only used it on a few songs, but it gave me a different sound. It was fun from a feel standpoint to just turn to my left and have a completely different drum-set that made me play differently. I'll continue to use that on tour from time to time.

**MD:** You often pump a loud four on the hi-hat while playing a tom pattern around the kit. That's more of an old-school approach. You do it in "Uncle Johnny," for instance.

**Ronnie:** That's just my foot playing those big hats, with my right hand on the floor tom. You can hear the hi-hats clearly underneath that floor tom part that has all of the grace notes and different accents and fills.

### Finding The Kill Zone

**MD:** What dictates playing a simpler pattern versus something more spacious with total set involvement, as in "Uncle Johnny"?

**Ronnie:** It has a lot to do with the vocals, because we're essentially playing pop music. I want to do stuff that works with the diction of the voice. Most people are listening to the vocal. It's all about moving that vocal and the expression of the song along.

**MD:** You sit rather high when you play. What does that give you?

**Ronnie:** My legs are longer and it simply gives me the right balance. I used to hunch over the kit. I had a teacher who really worked on me about my posture, and from him I learned to sit higher and maintain balance. But if you sit too high you can get off balance and lose your center. You have to find the right spot.

**MD:** You were a classical percussion major at the University Of Las Vegas. What was your goal at the time?

**Ronnie:** In 1999 I was really fed up with my playing. I wanted to learn other instruments and become a better drummer. And I always wondered how I was going to eat! I became a dual music major, focusing on percussion performance and music education. I wanted to have a job, and I wanted to explore percussion a little more. I heard some Tom Waits music that had all these great vibraphone, marimba, and timpani parts that I just fell in love with,

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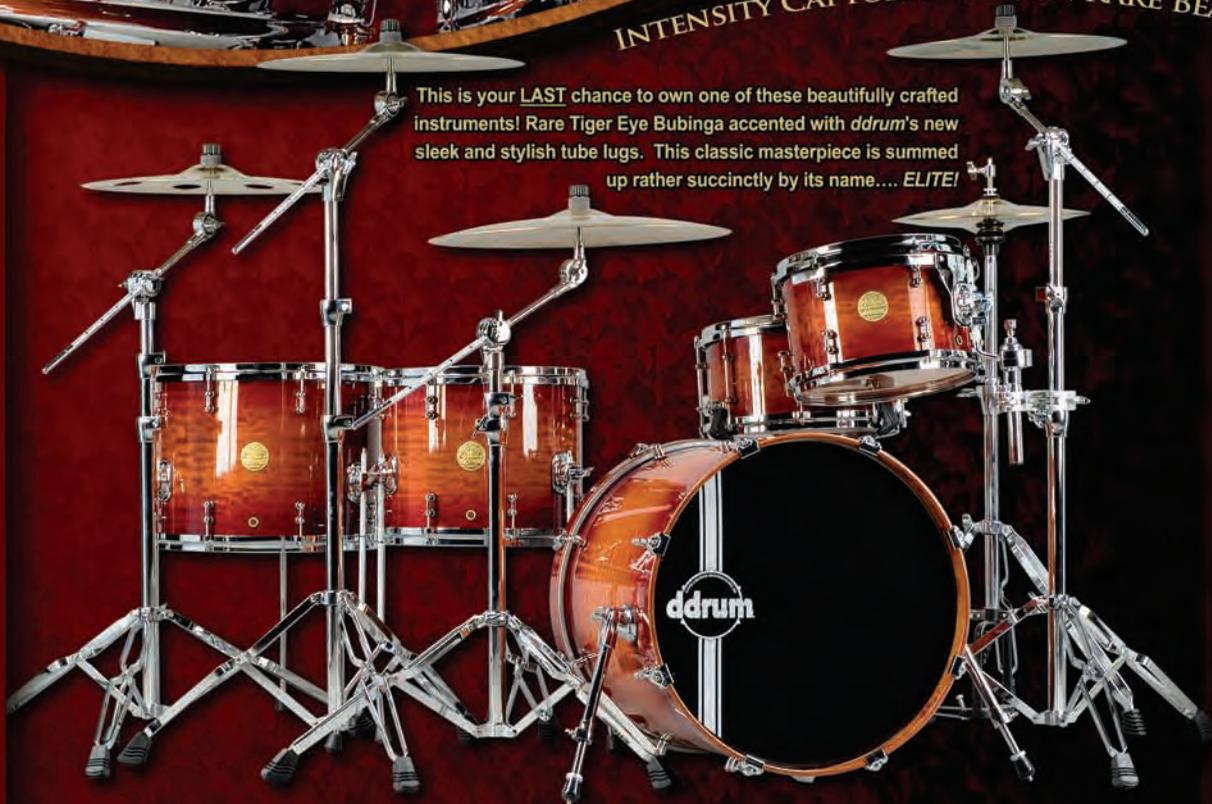
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## RONNIE VANNUCCI

and I wanted to learn it. That's what I went to school for. I got my learn on! I studied all of the above as well as concert snare drum, glockenspiel, tambourine, castanets, guiro, hand drums; four years does not give you enough time to learn all those instruments.

**MD:** So studying at ULV overlapped with The Killers' growing popularity.

**Ronnie:** We began touring, and in my last semester I had to cut out before graduating. The band was starting to get busy. We had to do shows and record demos,

which became *Hot Fuss*. I remember telling my professor I had something going on and I thought we had a shot. I brought him the demos and he basically told me to follow it. Lucky me.

**MD:** As a former percussion major, you must be well versed in reading, rudiments, and snare drum technique.

**Ronnie:** Yeah, for the most part, though my reading is crap these days. But I still keep my chops up. I basically do hybrid rudiments: playing inversions, just trying to keep the brain warm and the hands

talking to each other. I always start out with eight or sixteen strokes on each hand really slowly to get the blood moving. And then I basically just work up with combinations of rudiments—double strokes, flams, flam fives, Swiss triplets, and so on.

### And Then The Planets Aligned...

**MD:** When did you start playing?

**Ronnie:** I was about six. Before that I was already in the garage playing on a refrigerator and a washer & dryer. I used them for different sounds. I would be out there for hours singing to myself. My aunt left a crummy Spinet piano that was also in the garage, so I would go between tickling the old ivories and beating on the refrigerator and washer & dryer. The fridge had more of a mauted Steve Gadd sound, and the washer & dryer had more of a wide open, Buddy Rich bass drum and cracking snare sound. [laughs]

**MD:** You've said you're influenced by Mitch Mitchell, Keith Carlock, and Jo Jones. That's a pretty disparate bunch.

**Ronnie:** I just like drummers. I don't go for any one style. I appreciate Neil Peart now more than ever. Keith Carlock is a monster, and Jo Jones was unreal. He taught me how to play hi-hats. And Mitch Mitchell taught me how to swing. I always think of him as a lead drummer. And I like Charley Drayton.

I was brought up on old bop drummers, where everybody had one tom. I didn't get more toms until I got my second drumset. I did that for the fifth grade talent show, where I combined a red and white set to have multiple toms. I was pretty impressed.

**MD:** You're an earthy drummer in an organic, song-driven band. Given those traits, does it ever strike you as ironic that you come from Las Vegas, of all places?

**Ronnie:** Yes, and it's also ironic that we've been referred to as a synth band. We're just four different people coming from four different musical areas. But it works for us. The planets aligned and it's worked out. If we were all the same, the music would be boring and I probably wouldn't be doing an interview with *Modern Drummer*.

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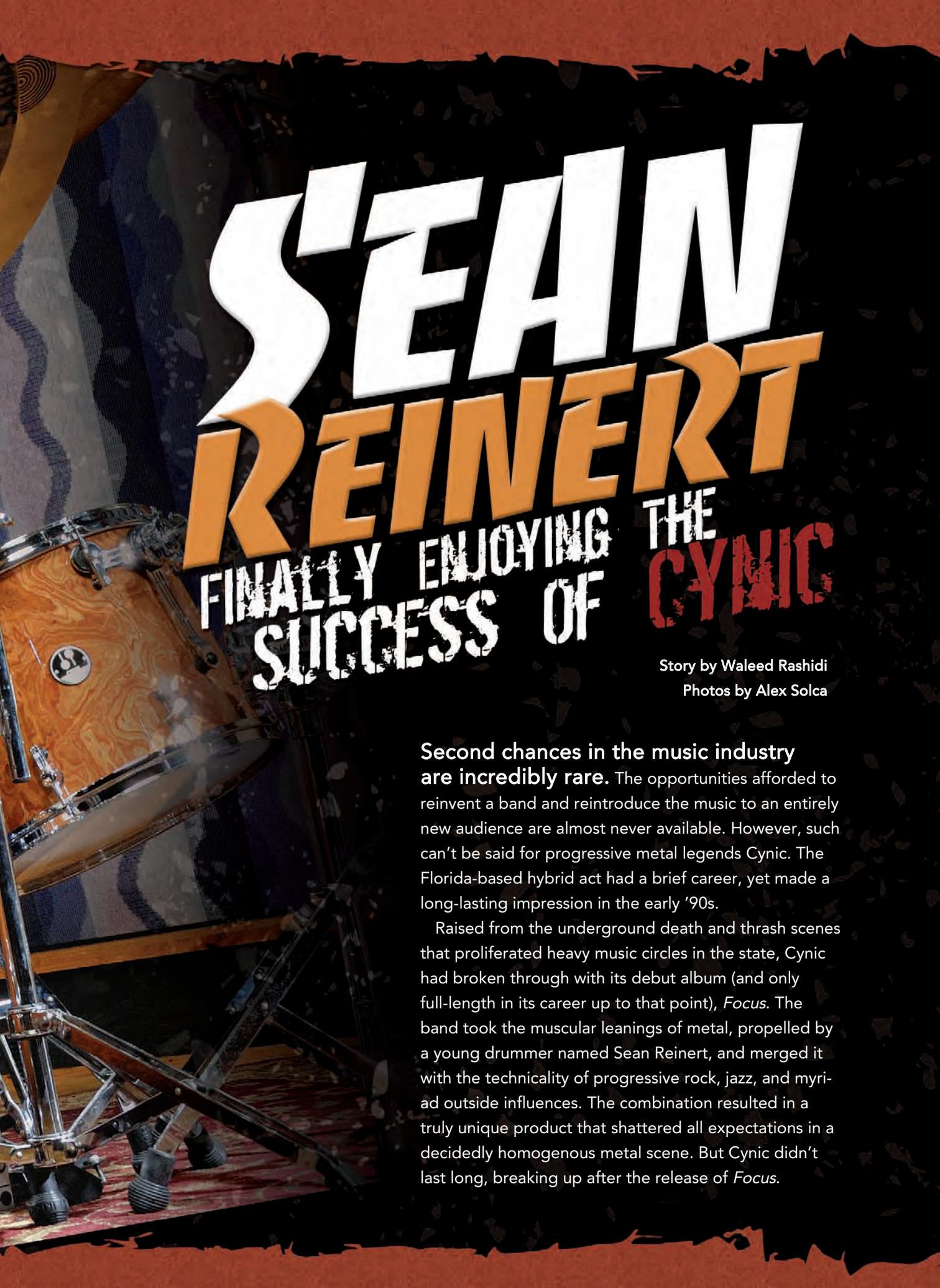
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# SEAN REINERT

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Story by Waleed Rashidi  
Photos by Alex Solca

**Second chances in the music industry are incredibly rare.** The opportunities afforded to reinvent a band and reintroduce the music to an entirely new audience are almost never available. However, such can't be said for progressive metal legends Cynic. The Florida-based hybrid act had a brief career, yet made a long-lasting impression in the early '90s.

Raised from the underground death and thrash scenes that proliferated heavy music circles in the state, Cynic had broken through with its debut album (and only full-length in its career up to that point), *Focus*. The band took the muscular leanings of metal, propelled by a young drummer named Sean Reinert, and merged it with the technicality of progressive rock, jazz, and myriad outside influences. The combination resulted in a truly unique product that shattered all expectations in a decidedly homogenous metal scene. But Cynic didn't last long, breaking up after the release of *Focus*.

**R**einert had already been moonlighting in the band **Death**, an immensely popular and influential death metal band from which he gained even more popularity—performing on the band's *Human* album and touring with them.

Reinert went on to try his hand at a wider variety of styles, recording with everyone from the acoustic-based indie musician Mia Doi Todd to the textural, melodic duo Aeon Spoke, not to mention composing material for television programs and films.

However, opportunity came knocking once again a couple of years ago. Cynic re-formed, and after over a dozen years of performing in other capacities, Reinert was back in the band, performing at large festivals throughout Europe. Once again audiences were treated to Reinert's signature fast, fluid, and intelligent playing, primarily on the band's older material, but also on a few new songs. And many agreed that the sheer musical magic and footprint that had left such an indelible impression over a decade earlier was still there. "The response was insane and the energy was so great," Reinert says.

This energy was downright inspirational, and within months Cynic had several new songs in the can, with the

intention of releasing the long-delayed follow-up to *Focus*. Reinert demoed three songs with the band, cutting the drums at Joey Heredia's studio in Los Angeles. The group then shopped the demos, garnering a massive response, and eventually signed in early 2008. By the summer of last year, Cynic was in the studio recording their second album, *Traced In Air*, which finally saw the light of day in late 2008, some fifteen years after their debut full-length.

"It's a trip on all levels," says Reinert. "But in a weird way, it's a second chance to relive or to get a different side of the Cynic experience. There's an audience now. The scene has grown so much since 1993, when you wouldn't be considered death metal if you didn't have an aggressive vocal part throughout your song. You can be on [radio station] KROQ now because you've got these Orange County bands that go from screaming to these melodic verses and choruses. I don't think it's perceived as being as extreme as it was in the past. I think the audience is a little smarter as far as the technicality of the music. I think that the production qualities have gotten much better as well. So right now the musical environment is very fertile for the stuff that we're doing."



**MD:** After so many years, there's a *new* Cynic album available. What are your thoughts on that?

**Sean:** For many years people asked, "Are you ever going to re-form and put out an album?" I always doubted that it would happen, because Jason [Gobel], Paul [Masvidal], and me—the core of the

we've got to make sure this is right if we do this. There's this kind of legacy, amazingly enough, and we don't want to tarnish it. So to come back and have this new-found enthusiasm, and hear people talking about *Focus* as this landmark record, is such a trip.

**MD:** Did you understand how important

recent session for *Traced In Air* feel from the *Focus* sessions? Is this a continuation from where you left off, or is this a whole new Cynic?

**Sean:** There's no way it could be the same Cynic, and there's no way it couldn't have certain trace elements, even if it was a completely different

## "I ALWAYS SEEMED TO HAVE ONE FOOT IN THIS FUSION/ELECTRIC JAZZ WORLD AND THE OTHER IN THE THRASH METAL AND UNDERGROUND SCENE."

group—all went in different directions when we broke up. So I never saw that aligning again, and certainly not for all the right reasons. Cynic had so much integrity that we would never want to re-form any other reasons than it just being right—wanting to play music and explore, and having something to say. So, yeah, it's a trip. Even thinking about doing the reunion, it was like, Wow, you know,

*Focus* was before you re-formed?

**Sean:** Well, we always believed in it. But I never imagined that—as I found out when I talked to kids at shows—they'd be so moved by the music and had tried to play it. They seem to get so much out of it, which to me is the most humbling experience—and that's the best payback, too. It's like, it wasn't all for nothing.

**MD:** How close or distant does this most

thing. Being so close to it, it's hard to make these sorts of judgments. It's definitely a more mature Cynic, definitely a more song-based Cynic, which I think is something we didn't have before. We were struggling as songwriters; we knew how to write parts and riffs, and we knew how to rip on our instruments. But as far as writing whole songs, I think we were in a learning process at the point

### SEAN'S KIT

**Drums:** Sonor Deluxe, walnut finish

- A. 16x16 tom
- B. 5½x14 Artist Series brass snare
- C. 8x8 tom
- D. 10x10 tom
- E. 12x12 tom
- F. 14x14 tom
- G. 18x20 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Sabian

- 1. 14" HHX Stage hats
- 2. 16" HHX Medium crash
- 3. 21" HHX Legacy ride
- 4. 21" Jack DeJohnette Encore ride
- 5. 17" HHX Evolution crash
- 6. 13" HHX Evolution hats (mounted on X-Hat)
- 7. 18" HHX Legacy crash

**Hardware:** Sonor stands, Tama Iron Cobra Power Glide double pedal (springs set as tight as possible)

**Heads:** Evans G2 coated on snare batter, Hazy 300 snare-side (tuned open—not too tight), clear G2s on tom batters with clear G1s underneath (bottoms tuned higher than tops), EQ3 on bass drum batter, Vintage Logo Vivid head on bass drum front (tight batter, with foam inside for dampening)

**Sticks:** GrindStix 5B model, hickory with wood tip

**Electronics:** DrumKat 4.0, Roland SPD-S and V-Drums, various sound modules and gadgets



## SEAN REINERT

when that first record was made.

As for the recording session for the new disc, since our musical skills, production skills, and recording skills are so much better than they were back then, there's a certain wide-eyed-ness that you don't have. But in the same respect, having this opportunity again, I'm enjoying it much more. I'm so thankful and blessed to be in this creative situation.

You learn after working with a lot of people that some of them don't deserve to be where they are, they don't have the skills. So when you have the chance to work where the music is great, the production is great, the studio is great, and the record company is great, it's like, Oh, *this* is what it's all about. So I've been enjoying it much more.

**MD:** You cut the pre-production at Joey Heredia's studio. But tell me about the actual album tracking sessions.

**Sean:** We mixed and tracked at a studio in Glendale called Broken Wave. They have a nice A room with an SSL board. And then we mixed in their B room, which has a Neve 88R. The guy we hired to mix and record was Warren Riker. He's an amazing engineer, a three-time Grammy winner with Lauryn Hill in the '90s. It's just crazy, old-school analog all the way. There were twenty-four inputs

for the drums. There were room mics he had hollowed out and caved out from behind my drumset. They were like

purest analog.

Warren also did some stuff with transient filters on my drums. We even set up different kits for certain sections of songs. We did a lot of other experimenting, like recording toms in the bathroom and getting these crazy slap-back echo effects for treatments and sections. He was kind of a mad scientist like that.

**MD:** How long did you spend tracking the album?

**Sean:** My parts took four days, and that includes comping the tracks. I'd do about five takes of the tune, and be like, "Wow, okay, that was a really good verse section," and just put them together. Getting sounds took the first day and a half. The miking technique was just insane...tenting off the floor toms with blankets to suck the low end in a certain direction. I was like, Well...all *right*. It doesn't look good, but it sounds awesome!

**MD:** How different was your approach to tracking a Cynic album this time around?

**Sean:** After Cynic, I got into a lot of pocket playing, really bare-bones kick, snare, hat, and ride, just locking it down. But for this, the Cynic hat came back out. I was just doing what I do. I think back then I might've said, "Oh, check out this cool Vinnie Colaiuta lick. I could throw this in here."

## REINERT ON RECORD

### HIS BEST

**Cynic** Traced In Air // **Aeon Spoke** Above The Buried Cry // **Cynic** Focus // **Death** Human // **Aghora** Formless // **Gordian Knot** Gordian Knot // **Aghora** Aghora // **C-187** Collision

### HIS FAVORITES

**Allan Holdsworth** Secrets (Vinnie Colaiuta) // **Chick Corea** Inside Out (Dave Weckl) // **Trilok Gurtu** Living Magic (Trilok Gurtu) // **Pat Metheny** Letter From Home (Paul Wertico) // **John Zorn** Naked City (Joey Baron) // **John Coltrane** The Complete Impulse Studio Recordings (Elvin Jones) // **Allan Holdsworth** Atavachron (Gary Husband) // **Tribal Tech** Tribal Tech (Joey Heredia)



walled off a low-end tunnel, and there were five inputs for the kick drum. I was like, really? But then he put it up and I was like, *Wow*, what a sound, and there's not one sample on that drum. It's the

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This time I was more like, If it calls for that, I'll play it. It's definitely more about serving the music versus serving my part or my fill.

I was a lot guiltier of overplaying when I was younger. That said, it's definitely about the energy and pumping it up with these big dynamic shifts. There's a little bit of restraint, but at the same time, it's about playing a bit more when the music calls for it.

**MD:** How did you get involved in the Florida metal drumming scene?

**Sean:** When I was ten I started with a good teacher, and I had an older sister who was into classic rock, so it was John Bonham and Alex Van Halen, playing along to their records.

Then, when I was twelve, it was the Rush phase. It was like Neil Peart *everything*. Then I started getting into Metallica, Megadeth, and Anthrax until I was about fourteen. But at the same time, I was still studying privately, and I was reading music. My teacher turned me on to Chick Corea, and I saw a Dave Weckl clinic when I was fifteen. I always seemed to have one foot in this fusion/electric jazz world and the other in the thrash metal and underground scene.

When I was thirteen, I met Paul Masvidal at my school. He was really the only guitar player there, and we formed a band when I was fourteen. We've been writing songs together since we were thirteen, which is pretty crazy.

When I was fifteen, I auditioned for a performing arts high school in Miami. I

was accepted, so half of my day was spent doing academics, while the other half was spent sight-reading and playing in wind ensemble and jazz band. It was two years of that, which got me onto the track of school.

At the same time, Paul and I were doing Cynic, and that kind of took off a little bit. After I graduated, I got hired by Chuck Schuldiner to do a record for the group Death. I was registered at Miami-Dade Community College, but I had to keep withdrawing to do a record or tour with Chuck. That went on for four or five years, which was odd considering it was only a two-year school. [laughs]

**MD:** Eventually you started doing Death full-time.

**Sean:** Yes. We did a couple of tours, including a big US tour.

**MD:** At the time Cynic was more on the darker tip, right?

**Sean:** Yeah, we were more of this power thrash band, because we never had the death metal vocal. Paul was screaming vocals by default because we couldn't find anybody who was good enough. And if you were going to be in Cynic, you had to play an instrument. We didn't consider the vocals an instrument. It was like, well, if we found somebody who totally ripped on something, and then could do vocals, then that would be great. Otherwise, vocals were a secondary thing to us.

Chuck was writing a lot of good music at the time, and Death was a lot of fun to work with. It was a win-win situation for

us. We knew it was going to take time away from Cynic. But in the end, we felt it was going to not only help our careers but help promote Cynic too.

**MD:** To a lot of people, you're still Sean from Death.

**Sean:** That's true more often than not. People think I've been out of the scene for a while, which is understandable, and so when I hear these people still talking about Death's *Human* record, I'm like, Wow, really? I can remember losing sleep at night, thinking, God, am I good enough to play on this record? It was my first real date. I'd been in studios before, but this was a *real* record. I just remember thinking, Oh my God, I hope I don't mess up. Thankfully things went very well. Those songs were all one take, and it was so much fun to record. I just remember thinking after it was all done, Why did I trip out about it? I was very thankful to Chuck for giving me the opportunity.

**MD:** Tell me about where you were at that point in your career.

**Sean:** When I listen to Death's *Human* record and hear my playing on it, I'm reminded that I was in a different place, because my thought process was different. Back then I was thinking in notation, I could see the bars and the beats divide. I was thinking math. I would start fills like two bars before the downbeat, and I'd be like, Let's hope this thing lands! Now I'm more reactive to the music. I'm really into listening a lot more. I think I'm a little more sensitive and I'm not thinking, Well, I can fit a quintuplet here or a

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## SEAN REINERT

thirty-second double there. The brain's a little different. But the style, when I listen to it, is still there.

It's a good mix of the kind of double bass heavy metal stuff I'm known for, with some syncopated sophistication and some fusion-y stuff going on. That's what I was going for. It's a merging of those styles, the fusion and the metal.

There's a tune on the new record, "Evolutionary Sleeper," and the main groove, even though there's double bass on it, is reggaeton or Turkish dance music. I brought those kinds of elements to the music that you may not even realize, but when you break the rhythm down, it's like, Oh, how funny, that's just a 6/8 djembe vibe.

**MD:** Where does Aeon Spoke [Reinert's ethereal rock project with Paul Masvidal] fit into your musical continuum?

**Sean:** After Cynic broke up in late 1994, in 1996 Paul moved out to LA to go to GIT. I went to the University Of Miami to get my degree in composition and music theory. So I stayed there because I wanted to get into TV and film scoring; that was and still is my goal. After a year of that, and getting straight A's, I was like, I'm ready to do something, I don't want to be in school. I thought it was great. I could score for an orchestra, and I wrote for these chamber orchestras at school, but I was done with all my theory and my ear-training classes. It was costing my Mom ten grand a semester. I didn't care about having a diploma.

So I moved out to LA and took some classes at UCLA in the film-scoring program. And before I knew it, Paul and I were writing songs for Aeon Spoke. I got a job writing for the Discovery Channel, for an *Animal Rescue Kids* episode. Then I scored an animation short that won the Student Academy Awards in 2000. At the same time we were doing the Aeon Spoke thing, which started taking off. We got music placed in TV shows like *Smallville* and *One Tree Hill*, and we finally said okay, we're going to turn our attention to becoming an actual live band. Then in 2006, we did the debut of Aeon Spoke.

At that time, that was where I wanted to be as a drummer. In 1999 I was fed up not only with the music business, but with playing super-fast and aggressive. It just didn't interest me. So I went back to basics. I was listening to bands like Level 42 and to disco, funk, R&B—just pocket

playing, laying it down. With Aeon Spoke, that's kind of where it was. I could just lay down this nice pocket. And funny enough, it's been quite challenging. It's about making it feel good.

**MD:** You recently toured with Cynic using pre-recorded vocals. How does that change your drumming dynamic, if at all?

**Sean:** With the click, obviously, you're a slave to the tick-tock, which can be good and bad. You know you're going to be playing the same tempo, and that's great, but if you get off, oh boy.

**MD:** For a live situation, do you want to play to a click?

**Sean:** I prefer not to. I prefer to keep that push and pull; let the fast parts speed up a little bit, let the slow part slow down a little more. I'm all for that organic energy. For the faster songs, if I'm not warmed up, it's great to know I'm going to start at a certain tempo instead of letting my adrenaline dictate it. But no, I prefer to keep it live.

**MD:** You maintain a groove amidst the double bass kicking and the technical intricacies so well in Cynic. Tell me about finding that groove and really understanding what groove is in the first place.

**Sean:** Well, thanks. Again, it's a cliché, but it's true: It's about serving the music and keeping time. And if you're completely losing the time because you're playing this killer fill, that's going to take every other listener except another drummer away from the song. I reached a certain point where I got over the fact that I'm not the fastest drummer in the world. And I decided that I would play every kind of music that I could, and put myself into every kind of situation, regardless of whether or not I felt like I was able to do it as well as the guy before me. And you learn so much just by listening and playing in different situations. It allows you to know that if you do this here, it's going to get in a certain guy's way, and if you do this, it'll get in this other guy's way.

When you're sensitive to the people you're playing with and the environment in which you're creating, you can do what you do best, and that's driving the band and really leading the way. If you can get even quieter in that quiet part, then that loud part is going to be even more extreme and even bigger-sounding. Playing in different situations, listening, and using your ears is key.



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# FRAN

# MELA

## Spreading A Message Beyond The Drums

Last January, New York's Blue Note hosted a performance by Cuban-born band-leader/drummer Francisco Mela dubbed "Mela & Friends," and the gig was truly a coming-out party for this industrious drummer. As on his 2006 debut album, *Melao*, Mela's live performance mixed influences from Cuban folk and American jazz, traditional vocals with near free improvisation, and US jazz stars with an unknown Cuban upstart.

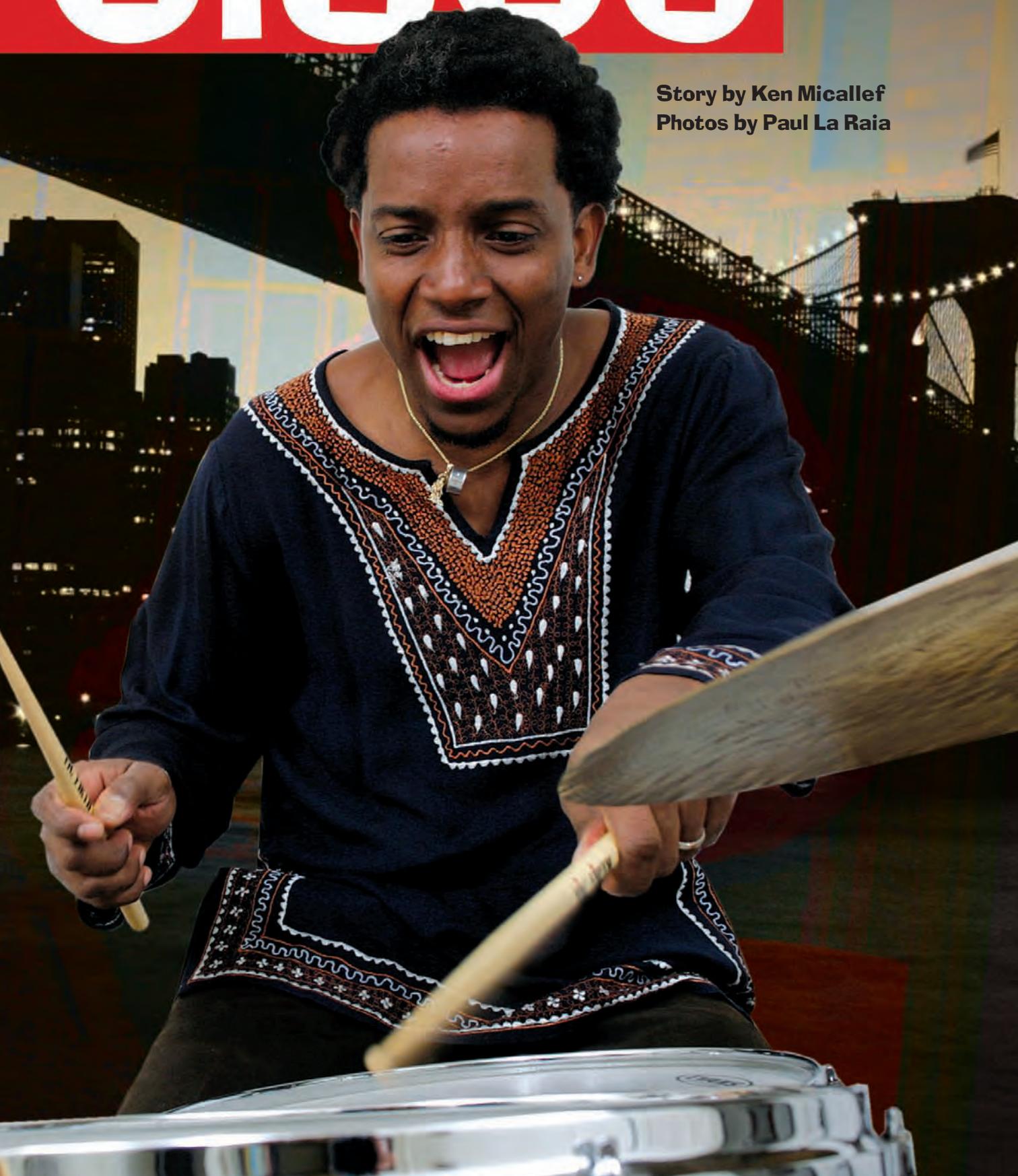
Forty-year-old Francisco Mela is a house on fire. Watching him play is to be immersed in an emotional experience—yours and his. Mela sings and shouts, bangs tambourines on every part of his body, swings his ride cymbal like a fevered madman, and swipes at his toms and snare drum as if they're flaming timbales.

At the Blue Note, joined by an all-star cast that included pianist Jason Moran, guitarist John Scofield, and tenor saxophonist (and current Mela employer) Joe Lovano, Mela played rhythms that were equal parts Cuban and American jazz, joined at the gut by pure emotion.

Typically riding his right cymbal while playing accents on his left, Mela approached the music with an unusually light touch belying its heavy content, a constant in his drumming battery. Often playing with careening, full-body blows to his kit, Mela's drumming jumped, prodded, and cajoled the band, providing endless fireworks. Mela's style changed from loose and reverberant to mellow and thoughtful at a moment's notice, as if he was conjuring a Cuban spirit against noirish New York City winds. And it's all documented on Mela's latest album, *Cirio: Live At The Blue Note*.

# CISCO

Story by Ken Micallef  
Photos by Paul La Raia

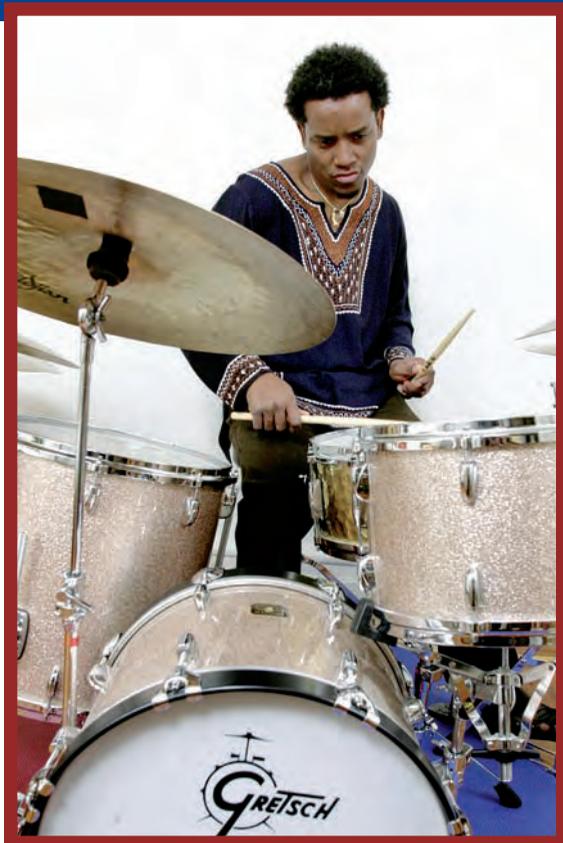


**M**ela's path to jazz renown has been a strange one. He was born in Cuba, didn't begin playing drums until he was almost *twenty*, and like all good musicians under the Communist regime, attended arts school and studied Russian classical technique. But in his heart he wanted to play jazz. Eight years of legit schooling in Cuba, and a gig teaching at the Conservatory in Havana, led to work in Cancun, Mexico, where a famous jazz pianist played a cymbal beat on a table with a fork—and changed Mela's life. A similar experience occurred a few years later when what could have been perceived as an insult—coming from Roy Haynes, no less—set Mela off on the path of drumming discovery and adventure.

Mela moved to the US and hit Boston in hopes of attending Berklee, but couldn't afford the tuition. Instead, he landed a

local house gig (singing, composing, *and* drumming) that practically made him a star. Soon Berklee called and gave him a teaching position! In fact, The Mars Volta's Thomas Pridgen still counts Mela as one of his favorite instructors at the school. Then Joe Lovano heard Mela at a Berklee recital—and soon he was gigging with the sax star and entertaining offers from the influential Nonesuch label for his *own* debut recording.

Sound like a charmed life? Sure it does. But Francisco Mela isn't just any drummer. He may be more of a percussionist than a drummer, and more of an enlightened spirit than a normal human being. As the drumming and compositions on *Cirio* attest, Francisco Mela is that rare musician who expresses every emotion and color. Ultimately, Francisco Mela almost seems mad, but it's only the music that is disturbing his mind.



**MD:** When listening to your record *Cirio: Live At The Blue Note*, or seeing you perform live, I never hear you play what I would consider standard or even recognizable Cuban rhythms. You seem to be more of a straight-ahead drummer influenced by Cuban folk music.

**Francisco:** You're totally right. I always say to my people—Cuban people—if I want to play Cuban music, I will stay in Cuba and continue to play with Chucho Valdes. I can go all over the world playing Cuban music. But if I came here it's because I really want to play jazz—and not jazz that sounds Cuban. I want to play like Elvin Jones. But of course, I am from Cuba, and so my drumming will always come out differently. The rhythms that I apply when I play jazz come out differently. I play jazz rhythms, but my Cuban roots come through.

**MD:** Often when playing straight-

ahead, you adapt it with rimclick patterns.

**Francisco:** Exactly. But I'm not thinking of a Cuban pattern when I'm doing that. The cascara, the clave, and Mozambique—that's all in my blood already from when I was born. So it comes very naturally. I'm never going to lie to my roots. I have to play jazz; I want to die playing jazz. But I know that my influences will always come out from having been born in Cuba.

**MD:** It gives your drumming a real edge, along with a folk element. On *Live At The Blue Note*, you played a tambourine solo using your face, arm, and elbow. Is that part of Cuban street percussion?

**Francisco:** Exactly. One of the biggest influences on my drumming is José Luis Quintana, better known as Changuito, one of the greatest timbale players in all of Cuban music. To play jazz, I would listen to Jack



## Francisco's Funhouse

**Drums:** Gretsch USA Custom

- A. 10" Arabian doumbek
- B. 6x14 hammered chrome-over-brass shell, ten-lug snare
- C. 8x12 tom
- D. 14x14 floor tom
- E. 16x18 bass drum

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 16" hi-hats
- 2. 22" K Constantinople Light ride (two crashes placed together)
- 3. 22" K ride
- 4. 24" K Light ride (with 2 rivets)
- 5. 20" Oriental Crash Of Doom

**Heads:** Remo coated Ambassadors on all drums

**Percussion:** LP Mambo cowbells and Jam Block

**Sticks:** Vic Firth Francisco Mela models and brushes

DeJohnette or Roy Haynes, of course. When I was learning Cuban music, Changuito was the influence I used for that music.

When I decided to play jazz, I was doing an investigation, trying to come out with a natural sound, like playing jazz on timbales. Most of my drum tuning sounds like timbales, but played with the swing pattern. It's like having a set of

timbales in front of me with a ride cymbal. I play the swing pattern [sings ride cymbal pattern], but with [timbale accents] on the drums.

**MD:** So you're approaching the drums sonically as if they're timbales?

**Francisco:** More like that, the whole drumset.

### Timbale Tuning

**MD:** That explains your very improvisational, very in the moment approach. How do you tune your toms then, since you're going for a timbale sound?

**Francisco:** Very simply. I think of a timbale and tune them [sings high/low timbale notes]. From the floor tom to the snare is like a set of timbales. The toms are normal tuning. The bass drum has a really high tuning, like Elvin Jones'. It's the same with the toms. I combine all of these sounds.

**MD:** What's the tonal relationship between the two toms?

**Francisco:** I have the floor tom to be the sound of the macho timbale, and the rack tom is a real tom, like Elvin's. It's a dissonant sound to help create the overall sound that I want.

**MD:** It sounds as if you play with the snares turned off quite a bit.

**Francisco:** Yes.

**MD:** Do you maintain high tension on your heads?

**Francisco:** Yes, and the same with my bass drum. But it's not about the heads; it's what I want to hear in my head.

**MD:** So perhaps with your right hand you're thinking as a jazz drummer, but the rest of your body is a Cuban percussionist.

**Francisco:** That's right. That helps me. My right hand is straight-ahead, and



when I play the toms and the other drums I'm playing Cuban music, referencing the tradition and also the rhythms I've applied to the different styles of music that I'm playing.

### Dynamics And Daring

**MD:** You play with great dynamics, and you have a very emotional approach to the drums and the music. You have a sensitive, delicate touch even when you're being aggressive; your touch remains refined and sensitive. How did you develop that kind of touch?

**Francisco:** I have to be honest, I used to be a very loud drummer. My mother was like, "You shouldn't be a drummer, because you play too loud." [laughs] My mother said that all my life! I didn't agree with her because I was like, "Wow, Mom, don't say I can't be a drummer!" But my father told her to let me do my thing my way, and I'd find out.

Then one day I had to stop playing loud because I needed a gig. I wanted to be able to play music, not just the drums. So I had to keep the same energy but bring down the volume.

**MD:** How did you do that?

**Francisco:** Instead of listening to the drumming, I started listening to the music. We as drummers love to play loud; that's a physical characteristic of the instrument. You want to play a strong groove and let it be known. Ha!

But at some point I had to come out with something totally opposite to the Cuban drumming approach I was hearing. With Cuban drumming, if we don't play loud, we don't play good. But I had to learn how to play without my ego, because that's why we play so loud. I had too much ego.

When I started playing with Joe Lovano, he said, "Mela, why don't you write some music?" He thought I should because it would really help my drumming. When I sat down and wrote notes at the piano, and then gave it to the musicians and listened to what I wrote, I immediately started playing softer. I wanted to hear those notes.

**MD:** Did you physically practice playing closer to the head?

**Francisco:** Yes. I got a pillow and I played lightly on it. After you do that a lot, you'll play with the intensity that the music requires, but when you finish your ears won't hurt, your hands won't be throbbing, and you won't be bothering anybody. I practiced on a pillow every day, and I still do.

**MD:** Did you already have that concept when you came to New York?

**Francisco:** No, I was still very loud at that point. Nobody called me for gigs, so I knew something was wrong. There's a point in your life when you just think of *you*, and you don't focus on the other musicians around you. You play what you want. That may seem to make sense somehow, but when nobody calls you for work, then you're wrong.

**MD:** Did anyone say, "Man, you play great but you're just too loud"?

**Francisco:** No, they just didn't call. In America they don't say, "You're too loud." But the next day you'll see someone else in your spot.

You have to ask yourself why you're not there. You have to sit down and see what the other drummer is doing to realize what you were doing wrong. That has to happen a couple of times in a young drummer's development. If you're smart—really smart—you'll learn from it.

## HIS BEST RECORDINGS

**Kenny Barron** *The Traveler* // **David Virelles** *Oblivion* // **Francisco Mela** *Cirio: Live At The Blue Note, Melao* // **Joe Lovano** *Us Five* *Folk Nation* (May 2008 release)

## HIS FAVORITES

**Keith Jarrett** *At The Deer Head Inn* (Paul Motian) // **Pat Metheny** *Question And Answer* (Roy Haynes) // **Thelonious Monk** *The Composer* (Frankie Dunlop) // **Kenny Barron** *The Perfect Set* (Ben Riley) // **Roy Haynes** *True Or False* (Roy Haynes)

## FRANCISCO MELA

### The Roy Haynes Message

**MD:** When you're playing the toms for a more timbale-like sound, are you hitting more rimshots and on the outer edge of the head?

**Francisco:** Yes. One of my experiences was bringing Roy Haynes to my house one day, way back in 2001. I said, "Roy, let's play some drums." He said, "No. I want to hear your cymbal sound. You don't know how to play cymbals. How can you play drums?"

**MD:** What did you do?

**Francisco:** That really touched me. He told me I didn't know how to play cymbals. As soon as he started playing the cymbal I realized that I wasn't playing melody. I was just playing rhythm. When he started to play cymbal he just played the ride pattern with accents. That killed me. I was playing fast with no idea of what I was doing. My swing feel was nervous and erratic. But swing isn't that. The feel has to be inside of the pattern. I was playing the rhythm, but I wasn't paying attention to the feel or the sequence of the beat.

I went to the practice room the next day and I found out that I was not playing correctly. Then Danilo Perez came to

me and said, "You have to know this pattern to be able to play." He showed me the pattern that Roy Haynes and Jack DeJohnette played. He showed me with a fork. We were eating and he got the fork and played it on the table. Roy didn't show me exactly. Danilo showed me, and it was too much. It killed me right there. I didn't know that. When we play Cuban music, like the clave and the cascara, those provide the same function as the swing cymbal pattern in jazz.

**MD:** Were you playing the ride cymbal beat wrong?

**Francisco:** I wasn't playing it wrong, but it didn't have any sequence, or flow, or musicality. I was playing my own jazz. After that I began listening more to Roy's ride cymbal pattern, as well as to Jack's, Tony's, and all of the classic guys'. I discovered that everybody played differently, but they created a similar effect.

Roy Haynes plays quite a syncopated ride cymbal, for example. Tony Williams played more even 8th notes. Elvin Jones was more 16th-note oriented. Jack is in between those guys. You realize that no matter how they interpret it, they all swing, and that's the most important thing.

### Sound Is Money

**MD:** You're so responsive and interactive within each bar, and very dramatic. Does that freedom result from the mix of Cuban and jazz?

**Francisco:** I was very uptight when I was learning to play the swing pattern. But as soon as I started to play with George Garzone and Joe Lovano, I realized that I wanted to play free like that—swing but very free. Even my improvisation and comping was too tight and needed to be free.

**MD:** How did you become looser?

**Francisco:** I apply feeling as number one. If I'm not sure of what I'm going to play, I can't be free and loose. But if I learn what I'm doing, then I can play with freedom. All my drumming is about this: Sound is money, and feel is number-one.

**MD:** Can you explain that concept?

**Francisco:** If we don't sound good, then we can't sell what we're doing. And feel has to be number one. I learned all these things from Roy Haynes and several other people.

**MD:** Did you play with Roy again?

**Francisco:** Yes. I just did a record for piano trio for a Cuban piano player, David Virelles, and the company asked us to

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## FRANCISCO MELA

play all Bud Powell music. Roy really influenced me for that record. But I never got back with Roy just to play drums.

### Cirio: Live At The Blue Note

**MD:** What kind of rhythm are you playing on "Channel 2" on *Cirio*?

**Francisco:** The meter is 6/4, and as for the rhythm, I'm just feeling that meter with the swing and Latin, but it's not a specific groove. I play it differently every time.

**MD:** "Pequena Serenata De Urna" is swinging, but it's also very chunky and funky sounding, like Cuban swing.

**Francisco:** That's in 12/8. You can say that it's a good example of Cuban merged with swing drumming. I was thinking 12/8, but with a straight-eight rhythm on top of the 12/8.

**MD:** "Benés" is like a rolling march. Are you playing all sticks on that track, or are there some brushes on it?

**Francisco:** It's brushes at the beginning, and then I switch to using a stick in the right hand at some point. I'm not thinking of a march really.

That's a song by guitarist Lionel Loueke. He'd recorded that several times,

so I was just trying to do my own thing with it—a stick and brush approach, straight-8th feel, and a little swing.

**MD:** You play a *great* solo in that song, and the solo is over a vamp. Do you prefer to solo alone or with a vamp?

**Francisco:** I prefer to solo alone. Then you don't have to think of anything, you just play. But that particular time, it was a live recording and I wasn't thrilled with the solo. That's not what I was hearing. But it came out like that and people seemed to really like it. It was a challenge to solo in that 6/4 meter.

**MD:** Do you always play the form, or will you go "rogue" and play more abstract as well?

**Francisco:** If I can play more over the form, I feel more comfortable, because I'm playing the tune. I don't have to think of the solo.

### From Bayamo To Berklee

**MD:** As far as learning the instrument, were you a set drummer first, or a percussionist?

**Francisco:** I actually played guitar first, and then conga. After that, drums. My dad would sing on radio and TV programs, but I never saw him perform live.

He opened a club to play *penas*—everybody played their guitars, bongos, congas, and jammed. I got the music from him and the family.

I was twenty when I began playing drums at the El Yarey School of Music in Bayamo. I studied there from 1984 to 1987. I studied orchestral percussion, where we played classical snare drum in the Russian tradition. Then I went to the National School of Arts Preparation in Havana to study classical percussion for three years. And then I taught at that same school.

**MD:** What did you teach?

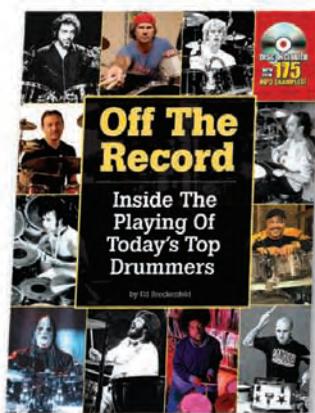
**Francisco:** Cuban music and classical snare drum.

**MD:** When did you come to the US?

**Francisco:** In 2000. But before that I was in Cancun, Mexico for five years. In Mexico I played in jazz clubs with different artists, including an important piano player named Gabrielle Hernandez, and I put together a band called Mela Son.

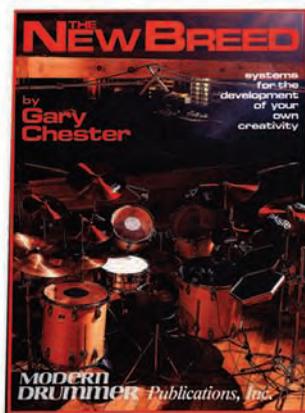
It was in Mexico that I started playing more jazz, and that's when I met Danilo Perez, who wanted to play my drums. He wanted to show me how to play, and I was impressed. That's when I wanted to

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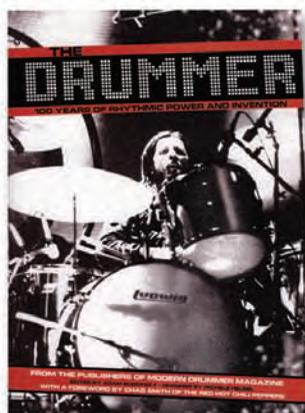
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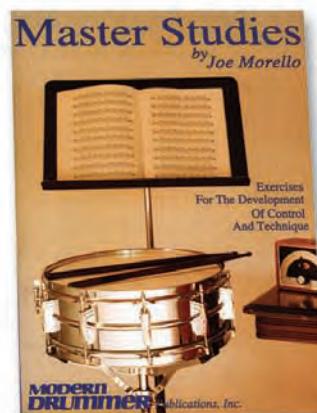
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come to the US. I wanted to come to New York, because I thought I was ready, but Danilo said to come to Berklee. He said if I auditioned they would accept me. I said, "If I study at Berklee, can I play with you?" He said, "No, you'll play with people who are much better than I am." I moved to Boston, but I couldn't afford to study at Berklee, so I stayed in town and kept practicing like crazy and sitting in at clubs around town.

**MD:** When did you start teaching at Berklee?

**Francisco:** Even though I didn't have the money to go to Berklee, teachers at the school started to call me to play there, which gave me a connection. Two years later, they offered me a job.

I also created a band while I was there, Los Barbaros. I was the singer and composer in that band. We played around Boston, and I also became the house drummer at Wally's, an important jazz club in Boston. That's where I played with Danilo Perez, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Roy Hargrove, Robert Glasper, Giovanni Hidalgo, Horacio Hernandez—so many people. That's where everyone came to

jam. I played there for five years.

**MD:** What did you practice during this period?

**Francisco:** I began learning many songs to build up my repertoire. I learned all of Thelonious Monk's standards. Then Joe Henderson, Chick Corea, Bud Powell—now it's like a complete library I draw from. And I learned how to swing, play brushes, and tune the drums. I practiced a lot of music too, without drums. When you practice drums, you sound like a drummer. But when you practice *music* you sound like a musician playing the drums.

### Twin Drummers From Different Mothers?

**MD:** What finally brought you to New York?

**Francisco:** I met Joe Lovano when I was teaching at Berklee. I was playing with one of his students, and Joe really liked my drumming. So I began to play with his trio [featuring bassist Esperanza Spaulding], and after one year I moved to New York. We played a gig at Birdland. Now we play trio and quintet with Joe. And we even use two drummers at times with Joe's group, Otis Brown and me.

**MD:** Why does Lovano want you to play with another drummer in the group?

**Francisco:** At first I was worried about that. I thought we'd be competing with each other, but we really *complement* each other. It sounds like one drummer. Joe is really into that John Coltrane period when he had Elvin Jones and Rashid Ali in his group. So he wanted to experiment with two drummers. He wanted it to sound like one drummer, but complementing each other. Now it's such a beautiful thing to hear.

**MD:** You're a drummer, a composer, and a singer. What's your long-term goal as a musician?

**Francisco:** Honestly, I want to be a part of this world, to be recognized and to be able to share my music with everybody. That's most important, more than being famous or being the best drummer. I'll never be that. It's more about the music and the spiritual element, and I want to bring *that* to people. When I tell you that I've left my country to make a career here, it's because I have a strong calling to bring a message to the people.



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# Rudimental Combinations

## A Condensed Overview

by Bobby Borg



If you're as enthusiastic about drumming as I am, you probably wish there were a few extra hours in the day so you could practice everything you wanted for an extended period of time. At one point I wanted to work on each rudiment for an hour a day. With twenty-six standard rudiments, I would need twenty-six hours per day!

To maximize practice time, I created "the condensed rudimental overview," which is a routine that combines the twenty-six standard rudiments into ten exercises. This unique, efficient, and challenging workout will strengthen your hands, enrich your fill and solo vocabulary, and further your development of the twenty-six standard rudiments.

### Ratamacues (Single, Double, And Triple)

1

1st X: I I R I I R I I R L R L r r L r r L r r L R L R  
2nd X: r r L r r L r r L R L R I I R I I R I I R L R L

I I R I I R L R L r r L r r L R L R I I R L R L  
r r L r r L R L R I I R I I R L R L r r L R L R

### Drag Paradiddles (Single And Double)

2

1st X: R I I R I I R L R R L r r L r r L R L L  
2nd X: L r r L r r L R L L R I I R I I R L R R

R I I R L R R L r r L R L L R L R R  
L r r L R L L R I I R L R R L R L L

### Drags (Single And Double) And Ruffs

3

1st X: I I R I I R L r r L r r L R I I R I I R L r r L r r L R  
2nd X: r r L r r L R I I R I I R L r r L r r L R I I R I I R L

I I R L r r L R I I R L r r L R I I R r r L I I R r r L  
r r L R I I R L r r L R I I R L r r L I I R r r L I I R

### Flamacues And Flams

4

1st X: I R L R L I R I R L R L I R I R L R L  
2nd X: r L R L R r L r L R L R r L r L R L R

I R L R L I R r L I R r L I R r L I R  
r L R L R r L I R r L I R r L I R r L

### Double Paradiddle-Diddle, Single Flam Paradiddle, Flams, Flam Accents, And Flam Taps

5

I R L R R L L r L R L L R R I R L R R  
r L R L L I R L R r L R L I R R r L L I R r L

### Lesson Twenty-Five: (Inverted) And Single Paradiddle

6

1st X: R I I R L R I I R L R I I R L R L R R  
2nd X: L r r L R L r r L R L r r L R L R L L

### Paradiddles (Single And Double)

7

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

### Fifteen-, Eleven-, Ten-, And Seven-Stroke Rolls

8

1st X: R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L  
 2nd X: L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

10 stroke > > 7 stroke >

R R L L R L R R L L R R L IR r L IR r L  
 L L R R L R L L R R L L R r L IR r L IR

### Thirteen-, Nine-, And Five-Stroke Rolls

9

1st X: R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L  
 2nd X: L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

9 stroke > 9 stroke > 5 stroke >

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

### Single Strokes

10

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

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

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

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



**Bobby Borg** serves as a music business educator at Musician's Institute in Hollywood and at the University of Los Angeles in California. He is also the author of *The Musician's Handbook: A Practical Guide To Understanding The Music Business*, as well as seven other instructional music books.



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# Ask Chris

## My Two Cents, Part 3

by Chris Adler

**H**ere we are once again. It's an honor for me to have the opportunity to continue this series of articles. As I mentioned in my last column (October '08), after receiving so many letters with your questions, thoughts, and thanks, a sense of belonging to a drumming community hit me for the first time. *MD* had taken a big risk letting me send a message into the dark to find out if I was alone. Were there other players like me with less structured playing styles or beginnings? Was I the only one who felt like I was on the outside of some secret drum organization that I didn't quite understand? Am I the only one who's intimidated by some of the players and concepts I've found in many drumming magazines?



What I discovered has been extraordinary: We are everywhere! We play for the love of playing. We hit hard. We look at the books and DVDs in an effort to try to understand the terms. But the raw passion is what keeps us playing. We do it our way, and our evolution is based more on motivation than notation. This is how I have made my way, but there have been many challenges that I've had to overcome.

From here on, I want to create an open, non-threatening or overly technical dialog in which we can navigate some common drumming challenges. I don't think of myself as much of a teacher, but I've been through a lot in my career. So I look forward to offering my thoughts and experiences to your questions and ideas. Let's get started.

**Mr. Adler,**

**I've been fortunate enough to have met you a couple times, and I would like to thank you for always being cordial and genuinely appreciative of your fans. A few years back, you said on a tour blog for Mapex that you never could understand the fame that went along with what you're doing because you felt anybody who wanted it bad enough could do it. I've been playing in a band since 2004, and it seems that almost every time we take a step forward, we take two steps back. Is there something I can do to help myself out, or should I just keep swimming upstream and hope to win the lottery?**

**Mike Lomas**

Mike,

I'm glad to have the opportunity to talk to you again. Here's the

deal: Being in a band that "makes it" is a ton of hard work. Being in a band that doesn't make it is *also* a ton of hard work. You'll get knocked down time and time again. You'll take what appears to be steps backwards for years. You'll lose money, make sacrifices, and experience strained relationships. This is what is called "paying your dues." I played in many bands before Lamb Of God that never made it, but without those experiences I never would have learned the ropes and been prepared for what eventually took root. The guys and gals that make it are the ones that keep getting back up when they get knocked down. When you believe in what you're doing, there's never a quitting time.

Another thing to keep in mind is that creating and playing music you love is the best part. It's important to set goals for yourself and your band, but if you're defining your worth with the money you make or the size of the venue you play, then you're inviting frustration and disappointment into your life. Focus on the music and you'll be surprised by how the things around you begin to change in positive ways.

**Chris,**

**Your performance at the 2005 Modern Drummer Festival was fantastic. It really inspired me. But I would like to know what happened to your side project with Ron Jarzombek.**  
**Jake Larson**

Jake,

Thanks for the kind words. As you note, in 2005 I was part of a project with Ron called Blotted Science. If you're not familiar with Ron, in my opinion he's one of the greatest progressive

guitar players around. I was a huge fan before we ever crossed paths. We met and hung out at several Lamb Of God shows and decided to start a project. We utilized the Internet to transfer ideas and tracks back and forth to each other, since we lived on opposite sides of the country. The one song we completed, called "The Near Dominance Of 4 Against 5," appeared on the album *Drum Nation III* from Magna Carta records.

I'm extremely proud of the song, as it's the first and only time I've played drums outside of my band. It was the perfect opportunity for me to get out of my comfort zone to do something very different and extremely challenging. It helped me grow as a player. As we completed that song, the writing process for the LOG record *Sacrament* began. Trying to maintain both projects wasn't allowing me to give 100% to either one, so I had to step down. Ron's record was completed with Charlie Zeleny behind the skins, and it's an incredible listen. Ron and I still keep in touch, and I look forward to trying to do something again down the road.

Like my appearance at the MD Festival, working with Ron was extremely challenging for me as a player. I was intimidated and wasn't sure if I could pull it off. I proved a lot to myself and grew tremendously as a player and as a person by accepting those opportunities. I would encourage everyone to take on whatever challenges you're presented, even if they're very daunting. Success or failure is irrelevant. Making the attempt and giving it your best is the key to growth.

Chris,

**You've talked about being the manager of your band in the early days. I'm fifteen years old and in a metal band, trying to assume the same position. Is there any advice that you could give me about what helped you the most on the business side of things?**

Jeremy Klein

**P.S. There's a video on YouTube of my band covering "Blacken The Cursed Sun" from our high school talent show. It's horribly embarrassing. But as of now, it's our only exposure to our channel (which also has videos we are actually proud of). Should we keep it up?**

Hey Jeremy,

I watched your YouTube video and loved it so much that I showed it to my wife and the rest of the band! We thought you guys rocked. Don't be embarrassed. I think it's the best Lamb Of God cover performance on the Web. The drum solo at the top is great! I was playing bass in a cover band in high school and we played Mötley Crüe's "Shout At The Devil." I wore a cape. Now *that* is embarrassing!

As for managing a band—somebody has to do it, right? The list of things to do seems endless, but the key is organization and having a plan. Until you're on a record label and have to attend meetings with marketing and sales reps, you can do a lot yourself. Here are a few of the more general things I did that may help you get rolling:

**Coordinate rehearsals and show schedules.** Nobody wants to hear an unrehearsed band or go to a show where the singer is missing because of a family vacation. Once you're ready, get out and play any show, any party—any time. There is nothing more

important than building a grass-roots following for your band.

**Put together a press kit and a demo.** Create an electronic version as well. Mail your package out to labels, promoters, and booking agents. Much of this can be done online these days and is essential to getting things moving.

There was a print resource at the time I was doing this called *Book Your Own F\*\*\*\*\* Life*, and we used this to contact promoters and book shows across the country. They've stuck around and moved to the Web at [www.byofl.org](http://www.byofl.org). This site is full of DIY resources.

**Negotiate and coordinate recording time.** Professional studio recording can be very expensive, but technology is helping us do things quicker and cheaper. It will never be perfect regardless of the budget, so make sure the band is ready before you start paying anyone. This is how most people will first hear your tunes.

**Share your music every way possible online.** You guys already have a head start with the YouTube videos, but get a Web site, make sure your MySpace page is rocking, and don't forget Facebook!

**Try to make sense of the finances.** For years this meant that we had to sleep in campgrounds and eat Ramen noodles. Everyone in the band was working full- or part-time jobs to help bring in some money. When we toured, we lost the jobs and got new ones when we got home. Don't expect anyone to pay for you to do this, and don't be disappointed when you spend your own money to keep moving forward. You're basically starting a small business, and that takes more than the blood, sweat, and tears.

**Market yourself.** Our bass player, John, and myself screen-printed our own shirts on my back porch using T-shirts we bought from WalMart. We made stickers at Kinkos, and these made all the difference when we were playing shows for free 300 miles away from home.

**If and when the agents and labels come along, don't jump into anything.** Find an entertainment lawyer (yes, the "entertainment" part is very important) to help you look over any contracts. Make sure you understand publishing, licensing, royalties, and merchandising rights before you sign anything. The devil is in those details, and careers are made or lost on these decisions.

It can be overwhelming at times trying to keep a handle on the business of your band, but it's certainly worth trying if you're able to do what you love. This list far from covers everything, but it's a good place to start. Give it your best, don't be afraid to ask questions, take note of other bands' successes and failures, don't be too big of a jerk to anyone along the way, and good luck!

Killer questions this time, guys! Again, this is an honor, and I really appreciate hearing from you. Anything goes, so don't hesitate to ask. Let's do this again soon. Stay metal!

**Chris Adler** is the drummer for the platinum-selling metal band Lamb Of God. His impact on the drum community is marked by his win in the Up & Coming Drummer category in *MD's* 2005 Readers Poll, and in the Best Metal Drummer category only two years later. His performance at the 2005 MD Festival Weekend is highlighted on that year's Festival DVD, as well as on an expanded special-edition DVD with Jason Bittner. Questions for Chris may be sent to [miked@moderndrummer.com](mailto:miked@moderndrummer.com). Indicate "For Chris Adler" in the subject line.



# Classic Studio Performances

## Josh Freese On A Perfect Circle's "Judith"

by Mike Malinin



**MUSIC KEY**

open	O	C.C.	R.C.
H.H.	+		
T.T.	•		
S.D.	•		
F.T.	•		
B.D.	•		
H.H.	•	ghost	Add
w/foot	•	note	T.T.

**J**osh Freese is a busy guy. In fact, over the past decade he has consistently been one of the most in-demand studio and touring drummers in the United States. His résumé is as impressive as it is diverse, with Nine Inch Nails, Sting, A Perfect Circle, The Vandals, Paul Westerberg, Axl Rose, Devo, and The Offspring representing just a sampling.

Josh's work with A Perfect Circle features some of his finest playing. Maynard Keenan, the band's front man, is best known for his work with Tool. I asked Josh how he and Maynard hooked up for A Perfect Circle.

"I met Maynard at Lollapalooza in 1997, when Tool and Devo were both on the bill," Josh remembers. "We became pals but went our separate ways at the end of the tour, unsure of when we'd meet up again. Soon after I started working with Guns N' Roses in the studio and met Billy Howerdel, who was handling the Pro-Tools editing for them at the time. Billy and Maynard were roommates, so the three of us started hanging out. Maynard mentioned to me that Billy had some cool songs he'd written, and that I should record some drums with them to see if it would be something I'd be interested in pursuing with them. That's how it all started."

The first CD that Freese recorded with A Perfect Circle was *Mer De Noms*, released in 2000. "Judith" is one of the standout tracks on that album. Among the most exciting aspects of Josh's playing are his energy, deliberate approach, confidence, and power, all of which are evident on "Judith."

Here's a rundown of the gear used for the *Mer De Noms* sessions, as best as Josh can remember: "I used a DW Collector Series drumset and Paiste Signature cymbals. It was probably an 18x22 kick drum with 12" and 13" rack toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, and a bronze snare that was pretty deep. If I recall correctly, the cymbals were 19" and 20" Full crashes, 14" Dark Crisp hi-hats, and a 21" Dark Heavy ride."

The song starts off with a straight groove that's broken up by some cool punctuated accent changes that lead nicely into the first verse. (0:19)



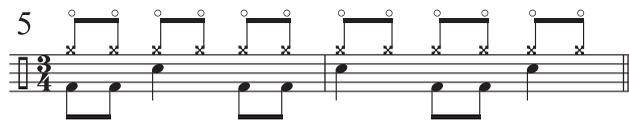
Alex Solca

Josh plays very solidly through the first verse, with a straightforward groove that suits the song perfectly.

Freese's playing really begins to shine in the middle of the first chorus, as you can hear him building on the repeating theme. By the time he hits the second verse, he's able to expand his groove while staying musical. (1:59)

Josh acknowledges that his influences show up in this performance, most notable to him being Terry Bozzio and Stewart Copeland. "The fill going into the pre-chorus sounds like a bit of Terry rubbing off on me," the drummer admits. (1:00)

"One of my other favorite spots is towards the very end of the song, when the drums kick into double time for a few bars," says Josh. "Towards the end of the double time, the movement in the kick drum reminds me a little of Stewart's style." (3:09)



"Judith" highlights some of Josh Freese's talents. He remains to many of us one of the most consistently exciting rock drummers out there, which may help explain why he's always so highly in demand.

In the end, though, it's Josh's humility and appreciation for the song itself that could be his most impressive attributes. "Recording 'Judith' was challenging and rewarding for me," he states. "I love that song, and it stuck out to me among the first batch that the band was working on. It was so inspiring to me that I was a little freaked out and nervous that whatever I ended up playing wasn't going to be good enough, or that I wouldn't be able to get across what I wanted to get across in the song. I was afraid that I wasn't going to do it the justice I felt it deserved. In the end I felt satisfied with how it ended up and, for once, I felt like I *did* achieve what I'd hoped to."



Wendy Marvel

In this new series, **Mike Malinin**, drummer for platinum-selling band **The Goo Goo Dolls**, takes his magnifying glass to burning tracks recorded by some of his drumming buddies. Tracks from Mike's side-project **Forty Marshas** can be heard at [www.myspace.com/fortymarshas](http://www.myspace.com/fortymarshas).



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## The Hi-Hat A Candid Perspective

by Ian Froman

**I**n this article I would like to discuss hi-hat technique and my thoughts concerning it. I'm sure that everyone has heard of rocking your foot between heel and toe, using the ball of your foot in the heel-up technique, or swinging your foot from side to side. These are all perfectly valid techniques. But I feel they are all limited in some form or another.



Paul LaRoia

You know that there's only so much energy to be distributed for all four limbs to use while drumming. If you waste some of that energy on a technique that is useless or outdated, then you'll have less energy to use elsewhere. I strongly feel that conserving energy and only using what's necessary is the best way to go.

### Heel To Toe

There are many reasons I don't like "heel to toe." (See photo 1.) This particular technique is quite difficult to use at fast tempos, for instance. You can certainly feel a cramp when the tempo hits 300 beats per minute. This only becomes accentuated at faster tempos, when our heel is forced to lift off the footboard of the hi-hat stand to keep pace. The motion of the foot at this tempo becomes stiffer and stiffer, and sometimes it's difficult to maintain a consistent 2 and 4 with a tight, crisp chick sound. This inaccuracy of rhythm can make it difficult for the other musicians to play with you and feel the time.



Another reason I object to "heel to toe" is related to style. Today, in 2009, contemporary jazz drummers use the hi-hat as an integral comping voice in conjunction with the snare drum and bass drum. In fact, they're all equal voices.

Now, of course, the tradition is such that the hi-hat can play 2 and 4 to maintain time, but we can now phrase with it too. Listen to Roy Haynes, for example, or to Jack DeJohnette. These players consistently use the hi-hat as a creative, improvised comping voice.

What I find troubling about "heel to toe" is the fact that it's very difficult to enter and exit the technique if you plan on phrasing with your hi-hat. You get locked into the rocking motion of playing 2 and 4. Then you have to abandon it in order to phrase the hi-hat between the snare drum and bass drum. And then, after the phrase, you have to return back to the rocking motion to play 2 and 4 again. In contemporary jazz it's not *necessary* to play 2 and 4 in every bar—though I think I'll leave that to another article!

So the bottom line is, in the heat of the moment, onstage, it's going to be hard to change techniques and thought processes to play hi-hat in a repeated pattern, phrase with it, and then return to the pattern. Music goes by too quickly.

### Heel Up

I have just as much of a problem with this technique. There are sometimes balance issues if one foot is playing heel up and the other is playing heel down. Playing heel up at certain fast tempos is fine. But generally at medium and slower tempos it's a waste of energy to keep your heel up and defy gravity. (See photo 2.)

You see, when we sit down at a drumset, our feet naturally plant themselves directly on the pedals. The force of gravity



2.



3.

holds our heels down. Therefore it takes energy to hold your leg up in order to achieve a heel-up technique. That's an unnatural position to begin with. And, musically speaking, at slower tempos it's very hard to hold up your heel while you're playing time, let alone trying to phrase with the hi-hat. This is definitely wasted energy as far as I'm concerned. Don't do it!

### Combination Technique

I don't believe that there's one technique that works in all situations. Therefore a *combination* of various techniques is the best solution.

At slow tempos, as previously mentioned, gravity holds your foot down on the hi-hat pedal. To execute a chick sound, you simply raise the ball of your foot and the springs of the hi-hat stand enable the rod to lift, causing the hi-hat cymbals to separate. Pressing the foot back down to the ground allows the cymbals to come together and create the chick sound. When the volume gets a little louder, or when the tempo gets a little faster, the heel will move slightly

upwards with the force of pressing your foot against the pedal board.

You'll know when this technique has reached its limits, as your foot will feel sore from the pressing motion.

At this point, another technique comes into play. Medium tempos or moderate volumes require that more force is needed to generate a stronger chick sound. In order to achieve this, a technique of slightly stomping your foot on the pedal should be executed (See photo 3.) This is different from stomping your foot directly on the ground, as the springs of the pedal aid in the

upward motion needed to play louder and faster.

With this technique you're not locked into a repeated motion, making it easier to play 2 and 4 while shifting over to play hi-hat comping as well.

At fast tempos, the quick motion allows the heel to naturally stay in the up position. The hi-hat is used so quickly that the heel doesn't have the pull of gravity to keep it down. Playing 2 and 4 is also easy with this technique, as is shifting over to play improvised comping rhythms.

### Dynamics

Of particular importance in this discussion is dynamics. There are some drummers who insist on keeping their hi-hat open to only a quarter of an inch. But I recommend keeping the cymbals separated by at least an inch and a half. This works extremely well in executing a full dynamic range on the hi-hat.

If you want a soft sound, simply open the cymbals an 8th of an inch. If you want a loud sound, open them the full couple of inches. This works directly with the principles of physics. The drums are a physical instrument. Hit softer and the sound is lighter. Hit harder and the sound is louder. This also pertains to the hi-hat. It's important to have a full range of dynamics to blend with the music.

### In Conclusion

I believe that being flexible in your approach to hi-hat technique will give you the freedom to express yourself in any way you choose. If you're forced into some sort of dated technique that doesn't work with today's music or is physically useless to you, know that there is an alternative. A combination of techniques will be useful, as it will allow you to use the hi-hat in every possible situation. Try it—you have nothing to lose.

**Ian Froman** is a New York-based jazz musician who has performed with Dave Liebman, Gary Burton, Miroslav Vitous, and many other established jazz masters. He also teaches at Berklee College Of Music, The Collective in New York, City College, and New School University, and at his home studio. Froman was featured in the October 2008 issue of *Modern Drummer*.



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- Jared Owens, Independent

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# The Oakland Stroke

## Breaking Down One Of Tower Of Power's Most Popular Beats

by David Garibaldi

**I**n 1973, Tower Of Power recorded *Back To Oakland* in Seattle, Washington. These recording sessions produced some of our most memorable songs, many of which we still perform today. One of our favorites is "The Oakland Stroke." This song never would have made it on the recording, had we written enough songs for the album!

I had finished all of my basic tracks, and flew back home to the San Francisco Bay area. Some of the band remained in Seattle to complete the tracks with overdubs. A few days later bandleader Emilio Castillo called me to say that we needed one more song. He said I was going to have to fly back, and we were going to write something since we had no more material prepared to record.

When I got to the studio, we started talking and remembered that for the past year and a half the rhythm section had a groove that we played during rehearsals. But it had no title or structure.

This "jam" became "The Oakland Stroke," and in a matter of a few hours we had a recorded track. Seeing as how there wasn't time to really turn this into a song, we kept it as a jam for solos, which then became "bookends" for the completed album. Consequently, *Back To Oakland* begins and ends with "The Oakland Stroke."

The idea for this drumbeat started by putting a samba bass drum part in the right hand on the hi-hat, then building a snare drum and bass drum part around it. The original groove was born on a Remo practice-pad drumset, which I used at songwriting sessions. (In those days our habit was to write all night; to avoid making a lot of noise to disturb our neighbors, I used a practice pad set.) Eventually I moved this idea over to the drumset, and it evolved into the groove that we recorded.

### Performance Tips

1) The important thing with this beat is control, not speed. Eventually speed will come as you gain more control of your limbs.

2) Use a metronome, and set it slower than the designated marking. When you become comfortable, gradually increase your speed.

3) Start with the hi-hat part. Play the hi-hat as an ostinato (repeating figure), and then play the first two or three written snare drum and bass drum notes until you can perform them comfortably. Then start adding to the groove one written note at a time. Use this same process to assemble the remaining snare drum and bass drum parts. Move on only after control is established. So, while the hi-hat part is going continuously, you're going to be adding one note at a time until you can play the entire two-measure phrase. If you need more information on this practice concept, see pages 19 and 20 in my book *Future Sounds* (Alfred Publishing).

4) The two-sound-level concept in the hands—accents and ghosted notes—is very important. Not only are you practicing coordination, you're developing your ear as well. The ghosted snare notes must be as soft as you can make them. Staying with the stick height of no more than 1/2" will force you to relax so that you can play these notes softly. Playing the sound levels correctly and accurately will make this groove come alive.

Technically, there's a lot going on in these two bars—layered notes, ghosted notes, pullouts (a ghosted note immediately before an accented note in the same hand), control strokes (a ghosted note immediately after an accented note in the same hand), and rimshot accents. Once you've mastered these sticking concepts, they will begin to naturally appear in your playing. You should also notice more balance and definition in your sound.

Be patient, and enjoy. See you next time!

♩ = 120 - 126

(OMIT BASS DRUM NOTE WHEN PATTERN REPEATS)

To see David Garibaldi playing "Oakland Stroke" live, check out youtube and search **David Garibaldi Oakland Stroke.**

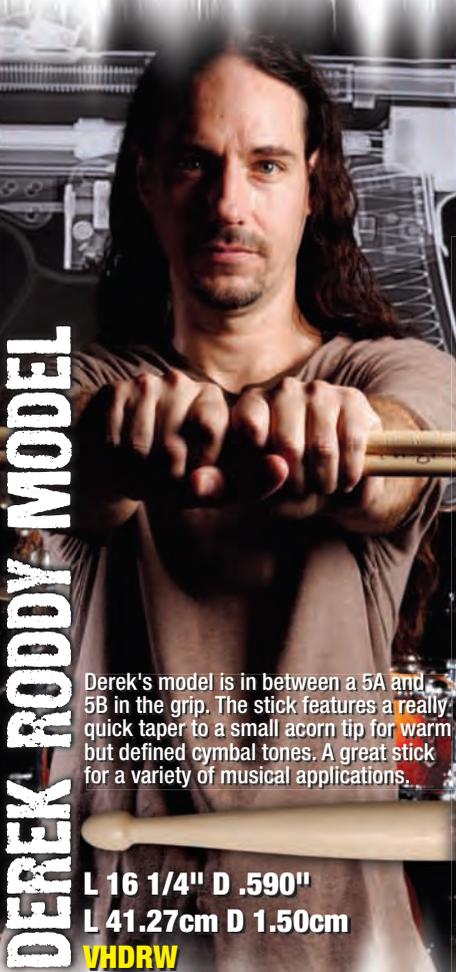
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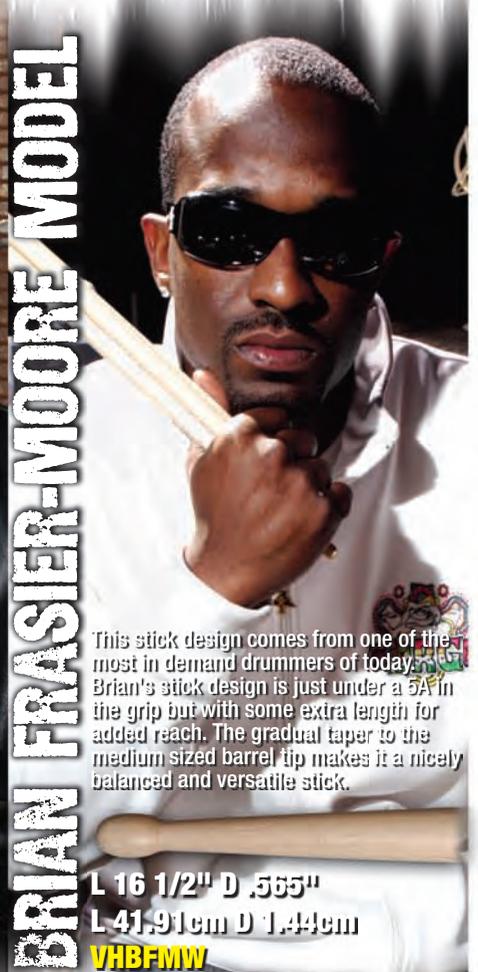
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# Vinnie Colaiuta

## Shredding "Evidence" With Oz Noy

by Terry Branam

**O**n his latest album, *Fuzzy*, New York fusion guitarist Oz Noy took a new approach to the Thelonious Monk tune "Evidence" by contorting the melody into a wild 6/8 syncopation fest. For this session, Oz hired an ace rhythm section of Jimmy Johnson on bass and Vinnie Colaiuta on drums.



Alex Solera

**MUSIC KEY**

Open	C.C. China Splash
H.H.	C.C. Bell
T.T.	
S.D.	
B.D.	
H.H.	** Aux. MHI/MSH
w/foot	SD, TT, FT

These two masters are known for their versatility and have played together in many different musical settings, both live and in the studio. On this track, they really let loose, pushing Noy's fretwork to new rhythmic heights.

In order to understand the displaced feel of the song's melody, have a look at the following ensemble figures. The form is AABA throughout. Here is the A section. Count out loud while you clap the rhythm, and start slowly with a metronome.

1

A

(1) + (2 3) + (4 5) + (6) (1) + (2 3) 4 5 (6)

(1) + (2 3) 4 (5) + 6 (1) + (2 3) + 4 + (5 6)

The bridge has a dotted-8th feel with an offbeat kick at the end.

2

B

1 (2) + (3) 4 (5) + (6) 1 (2) + (3) 4 (5) + (6)

1 (2) + (3) 4 (5) + (6) 1 (2) + (3 4) + (5 6)

Try practicing Example 3 to get comfortable with the A section's rhythm. The two left-foot hi-hat notes at the end of the phrase are there to keep the 8th-note pulse going. Once you

have this phrase down, replace those hi-hat notes with rests. Then add ghost notes and embellishments while keeping the bass drum part and snare accents intact.

3

$\text{♩} = 195$

R R L R

The groove in Example 3 can also be perceived in 3/4 time. Vinnie is able to switch the perspective whenever he wants to manipulate the jagged rhythmic structure.

4

R R L R

Here's a skeleton groove for the B section. Dotted 8ths in 6/8 can lead to many possibilities. Experiment with phrasing around the figures. The last snare accent is displaced to match the guitar part.

5

Here's the transcription of what Vinnie plays on the first half of "Evidence." (We'll present the remainder of his performance in this month's edition of *MD Wire*.) I've added some suggested stickings to help with the flow, but experiment to find the best ones for you. Also note that Vinnie's China cymbal and auxiliary snare are on his left side. This is very advanced material and may be difficult to play without understanding the concepts of beat displacement, polyrhythms, stickings, and the rhythmic scales. Check out the following books to help get a better grasp on this material: *The Unreel Drum Book* by Marc Atkinson, *Rhythmic Illusions* and *Rhythmic Perspectives* by Gavin Harrison, and the *Patterns* series by Gary Chaffee. Good luck!

$\text{♩} = 195$

7

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

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

R R L

L R L R L L

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## Demands And Rewards

**T**his fact culled from the pages of *MD* should grab any gigging drummer's attention: Many of today's leading funk and rock drummers cite their experiences playing in church as their most important formative times for building skills in a band situation. Combine this with the fact that churches across the country are scrambling to put together praise & worship bands (often called teams) that appeal to the taste and musical preferences of their congregations.

Once you put your hat in the ring, you're very likely to find churches beating a path to your door—and these are potentially well-paying gigs, not donations of your efforts. This is especially true in more densely populated areas and particularly in affluent churches.

As a praise worship director in busy South Florida, I can attest to the fact that the drummer in a church situation is the core ingredient in putting together a quality, fully rocking group. Once you enter the venue, you'll find that people want high-quality, full-bore music—exciting and energetic. This can lead to a very satisfying experience both for the player and the audience.

### Here Comes The Sun

There's only one downside that comes to mind: If you've built a career on Saturday-night club gigs, then you can be sure that 7:00 A.M. on Sunday morning is going to come pretty early and pretty hard. It's common practice to show up this early to soundcheck and run through the music set for that day. But balance this with the many positives that come with the gig, and you may find a very attractive package.

The finest programs feature top-notch performances and theatrical presentations. To sample the world-class services of some notable "mega-churches," check out the Web sites for Willow Creek Community Church in Illinois, Saddleback Church in California, or Northpoint Community Church in Georgia.

A key ingredient to the music of praise & worship churches is a diversity of style and flavor. In addition to straight-up rock, drummers may be asked to dive headlong into Latin styles, Indian rhythms, world music beats, reggae, and even hip-hop and punk genres. Don't worry; it's not likely that you'll be required to show a mastery of these styles on your résumé for your very first appearance. The point is, you'll have an opportunity to grow into learning and expressing yourself musically in styles outside of your normal comfort zone.

Churches usually have many volunteers who participate in their music ministries. You'll find that many or most of the players and singers on a praise & worship team will be volunteers



and will likely be members of the church. However, church volunteers have widely divergent commitment levels to the music program. Some participate on a weekly basis and some only once in a while. Therefore churches that are serious about their music program will commonly pay the core musicians—and expect them to fulfill the terms of their employment so as to ensure quality and dependability. These performers usually consist of a singing worship leader who also plays guitar or piano, a bass player, and, of course, a drummer.

A great benefit of a church gig is that age is almost a non-issue. An older musician who is experienced and stable will be very well received in a congregation. The "weekend warriors" out there, able to afford top-quality equipment and a desire to use it to drive a slammin' band, could find a really cozy niche in this kind of gig. Young players (even teens), if reliable and reasonably presentable in appearance, will fit in just fine as well. It's worth mentioning that casual attire is commonplace for

church performers in this type of venue. You probably won't be expected to wear a suit and tie.

### In Search Of...

So how do you find a gig? Well, other than the Internet (the obvious first choice), cold calling is actually a good option. Ask the receptionist if the church has a praise & worship service. An older but very familiar term is a "contemporary" service. If the answer is

or two pages of lyrics and chords for each song. Some charts will have melodies on a musical staff, but this is often a luxury. The music is typically repetitive, and you'll be asked to quickly understand and remember how many times the verses and choruses are played.

You're likely to rehearse a song you've never heard before, so pencil notations are a must. Bring a three-ring binder and try to put your music securely inside, in the order of performance. It's

## Churches that are serious about their music program will commonly pay the core musicians—and expect them to be qualified and dependable.

yes, ask to speak to the praise worship director. If that falls flat, ask for the music director or pastor. This will likely lead to a straightforward conversation about their program and whether it includes paid positions for core musicians. If the director expresses interest, this will probably lead to an informal audition.

Assuming that you present yourself well and that you have solid playing skills, you're off and running! There's no limit to the potential for different church venues. But you may find more success if you begin with the non-denominational Protestant churches. From there move to the mainline denominations. In semi-urban areas, there may be fifty or more churches within a five-mile radius of your home!

Perhaps you don't have a specific desire or need to be officially employed by a church. If your musical development is the main thing, then volunteering may be the answer. The "playing field" will open up even wider for you, and you'll reap all the benefits of the musical experience while "giving back" to your community. There's certainly a personal reward for volunteering in a church. It's also reasonably certain that you're going to meet some very nice people and also widen your base of friends and contacts.

So now you've found a gig and you're walking into the first rehearsal. There are a few things to keep in mind that will quickly make you an indispensable member of the team. Note that "band" is not the right idea here, because it's common for the ministry volunteers to have a different personnel lineup from week to week. "Bands" are closed groups; "teams" are usually wide open, and this has special relevance in a church situation. Therefore being a "team player" is very beneficial.

Now let's detail the areas you'll need to have covered if you want to become the ideal church drummer.

### Is There A Drummer In The House?

**Bring the equipment you need.** Usually a church will have a drumkit that remains set up and in position. The quality of that kit could vary widely, but normally it will be reasonably complete. Therefore you simply need your stick bag, outfitted with regular sticks, "rods" for lower-volume playing, mallets, and possibly brushes. At your option, you might bring your favorite snare drum and kick drum pedal if you're particular about the action you want. If you remove any items from the kit, treat them with care and set them back up as you found them.

**Be sitting in the drummer's seat on time, and with copies of the music you need ready to go in front of you.** Bring a pencil! Church bands routinely play from lead sheets, which consist of one

never appreciated when your music slides off the stand and you become hopelessly lost. If the director expects you to count off each tune, it will be essential equipment to have a metronome with a tap feature. During practice, tap in the tempo that the director likes and then *write it down* at the top of the lead sheet. This makes things simple and leaves the director feeling very comfortable.

### Sound Off!

**During the rehearsal, never play until the director starts the tune or otherwise asks you to play your instrument.** There's inevitably too little time to get through all of the arrangements and nuances of an entire service. Nothing is more annoying than a musician who is constantly noodling on his or her instrument, creating distractions, and failing to follow the flow of the rehearsal. Yes, it's hard to sit silently, particularly when the director suddenly sidetracks into a forty-five-minute special session with the vocalists. But do it anyway. You'll be regarded as worth your weight in gold. Rehearsals are most often sixty to ninety minutes max, so time is usually precious.

### Thrills, Spills...And Fills!

Never play a fill until the bandmembers ask you to. This is clearly an ultra-conservative policy, but one that I believe will keep you in the highest graces. Countless *MD* featured drummers have stated that their prime goal is to play for the song. Never is this more true than in church. People are trying to attain a worshipful state of mind, so a sudden cataclysmic drum fill may pull them violently back into the space. Better to play a straight beat consistently through the song. When the music reaches a certain point, the director will say, "Why don't you put in a fill right there." Don't be surprised if he or she is very specific about the fill that is wanted. They may be trying to replicate the performance from a CD or make some other specific transition. Again, you'll be revered if you're responsive and conservative when it comes to fills. Avoid putting the director in the awkward position of trying to get you to cut back on your fills.

**If you don't know a style or can't sustain a particular beat (or tempo), just say so clearly and directly.** Nobody expects you to be the Zen master of every conceivable genre. And with some simple direction, a substitute compromise can usually be made so that you can make it through the tune. But you'll waste a lot less time and avoid unnecessary blows to your ego if you're straightforward about your limitations.

## Can I Get More Drums In The Monitor?

### Learn to control your volume to match the levels of the group.

Church bands often play at strikingly different sound levels. Some groups routinely play at very low "acoustic"-style presentations, while others bring a full stadium onslaught of sound. You must be able to match your playing to the comparable levels of the other instrumentalists and that of the PA system. Reading between the lines here, you must be able to have control and musicality at quieter levels. This is a skill that many drummers lack and one that takes time and experience to build.

One of the easiest ways to manage this is to have a variety of sticks at your disposal that allow quieter playing while keeping your playing style consistent. Again, use "reverse engineering" tactics here: It's much easier for a director to ask the drummer to play louder than it is to try to get that person to play quieter. Bear in mind that hearing the singer or other vocalists is almost always the most important priority in helping the congregation engage in the music.

Lastly, I would stress the need to play exactly the same way in performance as in rehearsal. Too many players in too many situations (across the board, not just in church) are attentive to their director or their bandmates in practice. Then when the lights come up and there's a positive response from the crowd, the player gets excited or over-involved, suddenly breaks away from a balanced performance, and goes off on their own. This is almost impossible for a director to control mid-performance without creating a scene, so don't put the director in this position. Trust their judgment and try to duplicate your performance in practice as much as possible.

## Shake It Up!

Many great players will attest to the fact that church performances were among their richest and most satisfying experiences. Short of being a full-fledged kit player, percussion is another excellent entry point into church playing. As a director, I look for the "egg shaker" more often than any other percussion instrument as a first-call sound effect. Tambourine is a close second for achieving that great pop-rock sound. And never forget our friend the cowbell! Many church bands routinely use a dedicated conga/bongo player for the flavor and dynamics that these instruments add. (Just take my advice, though, and go easy on the windchimes!)

Be a team player, keep a good spirit, and look forward to audience interaction, which can truly be a deep experience level whenever you play in a worship setting. Pay attention to the director and your bandmates, play tastefully and conservatively when you begin, and keep your instrument silent when other things are happening in rehearsal or soundcheck. Follow these guidelines, and you may find yourself in one of the best musical situations that you've ever experienced. Heed the excellent advice that Cab Calloway gave to John Belushi in *The Blues Brothers*: "You get wise...you get to church!"

**Stephen Bragalla** is a multi-instrumentalist, singer/songwriter, and praise worship director in the South Florida area who also has an extreme passion for jazz drumming. He teaches drumming and percussion privately in the genres of rock, drum corps, and jazz.



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# GREAT DRUM PARTS = GENIUS



Groovemeister **Billy Ward** Goes Toe To Toe With **Simon Phillips, Doane Perry, Marco Minnemann, Thomas Lang, And Jerry Marotta** To Talk About The Grooves That Inspired Them Early On—And That Continue To Today

**I** believe there might be an imbalance in the study of drumming in that we tend to study the great drummers' physical technique more than what they actually played. And why? I believe *context* separates the masters from the skilled. Shouldn't the study of an artful part be as important as the notes played? After all, a well-constructed drum arrangement can be crucial to the success and impact of a song. What drumming part first sent your heart out to the moon and back? If you can remember your very first part, it is entirely possible that it was what sent you towards becoming a drummer.

For me, a few examples (from tons of great drum parts) would be James Brown's "Cold Sweat" and Sam & Dave's "I Thank You." Also, Joe Morello's interpretation of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" somehow made 5/4 accessible to everybody. Anyone could've played those songs, but could anybody make up a better part for those same songs? I don't think so! Let's take a look.

## "Cold Sweat"

The first thing to notice on this song is the guitars' "march," like soldiers from an old Eastern European documentary. Nothing is going to stop these guitars, and they *are* the groove. To me, James' music has everyone playing drums. One might say the guitarists are playing conga drum lines, which frees the drummers to choose which detail to accentuate. I love that one displaced backbeat in "Cold Sweat." In JB's music, the drummer gets to hang his butt over the back of the boat and enjoy the spray of that oh-so funky water.

## "I Thank You"

Wow, what an intimate sound. Is the drummer muffling the snare with his hand? Many drummers back then placed a wallet on the snare head to get that sound. On the first part of the verse the drummer is *riding on the snare drum*. Yessir, this is a good one, and funky at that! It seems it's extra funky as a result of the entire band's parts. (Dig the clavinet!) This song's arrangement has a place for everything and everything in its place.

## "Take Five"

If "Take Five" had been made without Morello's easy-riding swing, the song would've ended up as stiff as a politician who just found out he's been busted for "indiscretions." Instead, Joe Morello dances on this groove, which is based on the piano ostinato, and tip-toes into a drum solo that is not a drum solo. Rather, it is a music solo played on the drums. Powerful stuff.

If I had to pick just one song that blew my mind when I was a kid, it would be "Devil With A Blue Dress" by Mitch Ryder & The Detroit Wheels. If I were combustible, I would've exploded upon hearing that song. First of all, that bass drum is playing 8th notes (*alone* in places) during the intro. (I thought, "My God, I'm going to have to speed up my bass technique now.") Then, there is this amazingly snappy fill:

1/4 rest, Di-Ga-Di-Ga-Da-Boom-Boom-DA (crash!)

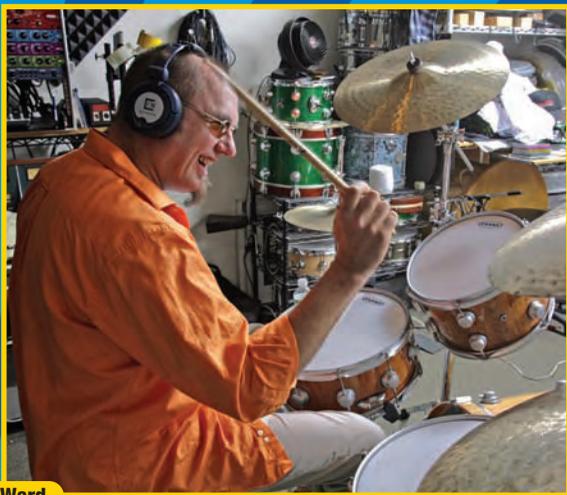


Then there is *the* VERY BEST DRUM FILL OF ALL TIME. (Repeat after me: "Yes, this is the very best drum fill of all time.") DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA-DI-GA



Played entirely on the snare drum with equally loud notes, this timeless fill is played at the very *vortex of ecstasy* within the song. That fill spells P A N D E M O N I U M. My suggestion: Play this fill at the end of the highest peak of your band's most exciting song at your next gig, and watch the results. When I was recently recording with Bill Champlin's band, they were insisting that I *HAVE* to get *that fill* on the record somewhere. When I play that fill, grown men who have been there and done it all turn around and look at you like they are thirteen years old and just saw their first hot rod.

For a more sophisticated version of that fill, start it very softly (thus enabling you to make it last longer—maybe even go over the bar) and create tension as it gets louder, and louder, AND LOUDER, and then play all rimshots! Exhale. Ah...that was good. Jimmy Chamberlin does this so very well in The Smashing Pumpkins. Here's a bit of a warning, though. This fill is much harder to do than many of the more complicated ones. You'll likely find that it gets more and more difficult to keep it at tempo, especially as it gets louder and louder. I believe the best way to execute this is to stay inside yourself while playing it. Let the listeners enjoy their endorphins kicking in when they hear it, but you, as executor of this fine fill, must keep yourself somewhat calm inside, or else it will be really stinky.



Ward



Perry



Lang

### What's your favorite drum part?

### What are your early musical influences?

I asked a few drumming pals that I ran into at the last NAMM show and got some interesting answers.

**Simon Phillips:** My first big influence was recognizing song sense, or learning about the forms of songs. Thanks to my father being a professional musician, I grew up listening to Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Louie Bellson, Dave Tough, Count Basie, and Harry James from the time I was three years old. Pop songs of that day were only two minutes long because they had to fit onto a 78 rpm record.

As a kid, I played to those records, and the fun of it as well as the lesson wasn't learning the beat, it was learning a sense of each of the songs. This gave me a very strong background on how to play almost any song, because no matter how complicated the music, it eventually reveals itself to have a form of some sort. Also, I learned about accompaniment, to play supportively on drums.

**Billy:** So staying on that cymbal and keeping that harmonic sense throughout that section of the song was something that you were aware of early on.

**Simon:** Yes.

**Billy:** And when the solo ends, for example, the drummer whacks the snare—perhaps once, quite loudly....

**Simon:** Yes! It's like telegraphing the end of the bridge or verse or chorus. Typically—and I mean in the older styles of music such as traditional, Dixieland, and swing—you would have closed hi-

hat on the verse, or maybe a bit of open hi-hat, then on the chorus you would have the open ride cymbal. If it was a piano solo, the ride pattern would go to the hi-hat—softly! If it was trumpet player, then the drummer could ride on the ride cymbal because the trumpet is louder than a piano. So the first thing that I learned and was interested in was that there's a pattern or template on how to play a song. This interested me far more than simply what pattern the drummer on a record was playing. Also, I grew up reading charts from the very beginning, because my dad was a bandleader and I would read all of his drum charts and play along by reading them. I was very lucky to have such a luxurious musical upbringing.

**Doane Perry:** Billy, I've got to echo your "Devil With A Blue Dress," because the energy of that track jumped off of that little blue 45 rpm record. But when I heard The Who's "My Generation," I didn't understand it. It felt like complete anarchy on the drums! It felt as if that record could barely contain Keith Moon's energy. He was a force of nature that completely lifted The Who above everything that I had ever heard before.

**Billy:** "My Generation" is a great pick!

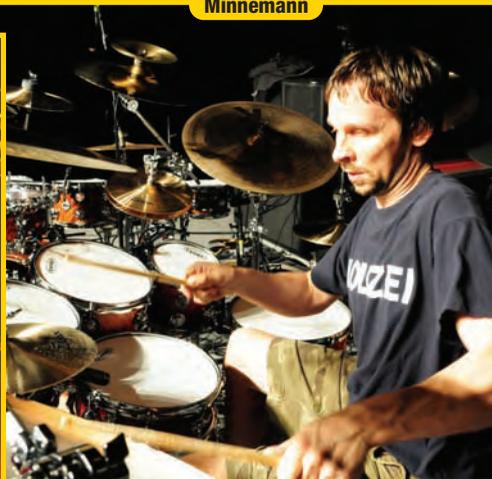
**Doane:** It was almost like he was playing a duet with [singer] Roger Daltrey. Those vocals and drums kind of wrapped around each other. When you listen to the way the drums are phrased around the vocal, Keith was relating a lot less to tradition, with a fill at the end of each phrase, and instead played with a more jazzy kind of purpose.

Keith and Daltrey in The Who are a lot like Elvin and Coltrane.

Marotta



Minnemann



Phillips



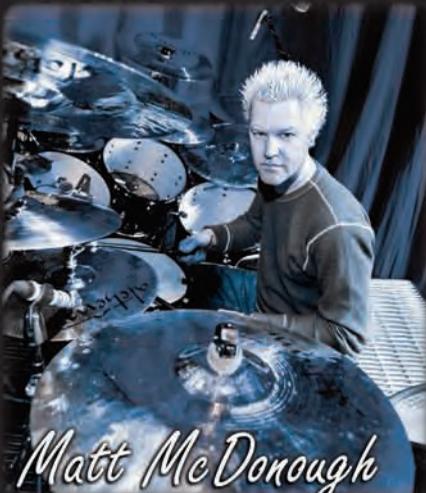
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## GREAT DRUM PARTS

Elvin always showed a similar kind of anarchy in his playing. Elvin was well aware of form, but he would also throw form out the window, the same way Keith did. Though I didn't really understand what was going on as a young drummer, because the point of view was so foreign to me.

There was a lot more passion in those days—*intense* passion. They didn't care if they made mistakes, I mean they made mistakes all over those records, but it hardly mattered.

**Billy:** It clearly takes bravery to leave something "imperfect" in today's digital studios. But let's get back. What do you do when confronted with a difficult new musical situation?

**Doane:** Whether simple or complex, I will try to sing it. If I can sing everything in the music and think of it all in a linear way, it will usually tell me what to play. At times, all of us drummers have to think of patterns, but I play better when I'm swimming inside the song and relating to it in a natural, passionate way. Another drummer that built incredible drum parts was B.J. Wilson.

**Billy:** Procol Harum, yes!

**Doane:** Ringo Starr was the guy who started this trend of tuning the bass drum down low with deadening, and the toms were low as well. B.J. took this idea with Procol Harum and played in a very orchestral way. He had an orchestral snare technique and was a powerful, strong drummer. Jimmy Page asked B.J. Wilson to be in Led Zeppelin but he was committed to Procol Harum. He was a huge influence on me. What a brilliant style.

**Marco Minnemann:** My dad was a big lover of Jethro Tull, Queen, Led Zep, stuff like that, so I heard all of those great records when I grew up. But really, John Bonham's "Houses Of The Holy" really blew my mind because I had never heard a *sound* like that before. It sounded like he was playing so *hard*. And even now you see drummers who are playing so hard they are breaking their cymbals and drumheads. Yet when you look at the Zeppelin DVD, Bonham is actually quite balanced really, and quiet. In all honesty, the single biggest impression on me from Bonham is how he just stayed on the groove and didn't crash on "1." He would just stay on that groove for seven or eight minutes on "When The Levee Breaks." He may be the most sampled drummer of all time, and it's not so much anything technical as much as his tone and commitment to groove.

Nowadays, when I do a session for a producer, they sometimes don't even care if they have one full take. They are perfectly willing

to use one bit and copy and paste it into the rest of the song. I mean, what if they had told Robert Plant that he didn't need to sing the second verse to "Stairway To Heaven"? It wouldn't work.

**Billy:** They wouldn't stop there. They'd line up all the music and straighten out all the triplets. It would suck.

**Marco:** Hopefully, there will be a new trend and they will begin recognizing other bandmembers and featuring them behind the singer as these great groups of the '60s did. Led Zeppelin knew they had more people to feature than just the singer.

**Thomas Lang:** I was five years old when I began studying drums with my teacher, who was a classical guy. I didn't think much about drum parts or having structures in arrangements with others. But once I started playing with other local musicians, bandmembers would say, "You need to play soft in this section, and loudly in this other section." I was playing cover songs around the age of twelve, and we were playing a lot of '70s songs. The first time I heard Deep Purple's "Smoke On The Water" I was floored. It sounded so heavy and impressive.

The intro shows a clear build-up. It's like everything is muted, and then instruments come in one by one. Guitar riff in the beginning, then the hi-hat enters, then the snare, and then the bass and bass drum enter. It showed me that everyone is playing together. It's very simple, but it shows that nice incline or ramp-up to the first verse of a song, and it works because they're all holding back and creating tension. Nobody is bashing. *They're playing parts.* I'm still a huge fan of Ian Paice and Deep Purple. It shows that within a band, there are parts that need to be played so that another part will then work, like gears.

**Billy:** It was huge for me to realize that the bass drum doesn't always have to go in unison with the bass.

**Thomas:** One of the key examples of that, where the bass drum is not always in sync with the bass, is Stewart Copeland with The Police. I was always a huge Police fan, and if you listen to *any* Police song, because of Copeland's fusing of reggae with pop music.... [Thomas sings the bass line with the drums to "Material World."] Stewart had such a different "vibe" from everyone else. Look at "Roxanne"! (See the example on the following page.)

**Billy:** Really orchestral, too. He would use his toms in place of the bass drum. Mick Fleetwood did that too sometimes....

**Thomas:** I see it much like architecture.

♩ = 133

Stewart's tom build-up before the chorus [do do do DO DAT, "Rox-Anne"] and then back to the reggae in the verse—it's like incredible brickwork. Not only is the drummer's job to excite the band and get everybody fired up, and have great time and feel, but also to build a beautifully constructed drum part. The drummer has to create that solid foundation of the structure—the building. He can choose the size or dynamics of each room, like how big each room is and what its purpose is, but it can be a safe structure for the others to work in, and then the others come in to do the fancy work. One guy enters to apply paint and to install the fixtures. Another installs the windows. Those jobs are for the other musicians, but the drummer needs to build this great structure. And then he can make some changes, like maybe turning the beat around here, or making a nice feature for the keyboard there. The drummer can turn two bricks sideways to make a nice arch under the window, knowing full well how the change in space and time is changing that feature.

**Billy:** I think it was Thelonious Monk who said, "All great musicians are also mathematicians."

**Thomas:** Yes, I agree. Music and math used to be one science in ancient days. It fits! We drummers need to learn what fits and doesn't fit.

**Billy:** We all learn to *feel* or inherently know what four measures passing by feels like, or sixteen. It comes more from our stomach and experience than our minds.

**Thomas:** Absolutely.

**Billy:** But thinking about parts is also accomplished away from the act itself of playing.

**Thomas:** Yes. That's where it comes from. You need to step back and work privately. Listen to a tape of the song and work up something by yourself before you bring it into the band. See what you can do to make it better. It's a great time of self-reflection or contemplation. Self-censorship is so important too. You need to learn to not play everything you can just *because* you can. I mean, sometimes you need to play something just because it makes someone in the band feel good; maybe they need that as a timing reference, whatever. So, I think

I learned a lot from Stewart and The Police.

[Thomas sings "Walking On The Moon"—*really* well.]

**Billy:** Oh yeah...and you and I learned to play each of those delayed notes with our hands.

**Thomas:** Yes, and isn't it great that it's such a simple beat. It makes you want to re-evaluate: "Am I playing the best part here?" When you listen to funk music, you can see that this is what they're doing. They're taking a normal drum beat and changing it to suit themselves and their song. They wanted to do something different.

In my mid-teens, I approached my drum studying by going so far as to thinking of the drum part away from the kit, and then writing it out before even trying to play it. I still do this sometimes. It takes a unique, even advanced personality to pursue original parts. Sometimes taking a simple approach is so much better than chasing everything with complications.

**Billy:** Let's bring Jerry Marotta into the conversation. What drum parts influenced you early on in your drumming life?

**Jerry Marotta:** It is hard to pinpoint one specific song, but when I think about what got me excited as a ten-year-old, it would be stuff like Carla Thomas's "Baby" and Wilson Pickett's "Midnight Hour." There's a ton of them from that period. Sam & Dave's "You Got Me Hummin'" was one of those where I just remember the *sound* of the drums. Of course, the early James Brown stuff was amazing because of the sound and the pocket, which was easy, but so solid! Insane stuff.

I have to add the Stax and Motown stuff—The Four Tops, The Temptations, and Otis Redding—too. All of that got me into music and then drumming as a result. At that time, my older brother, Rick, had just inherited a drumkit, so when I got excited about those songs, I could sit on the drums and play along to the records. Really, that's how I learned to play.

**Billy:** Did you try to re-create the actual sound of the drums when you played along? I remember how heavy and thick the backbeat is on "Midnight Hour" for instance.

**Jerry:** No, I wasn't studying like that. But now, it occurs to me that those records have great

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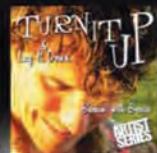
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## GREAT DRUM PARTS

drum sounds because the drums were in a room with everyone else, and the sound of the drums was going into all the other musicians' mics. As the recording process got more complicated, engineers started isolating instruments for better control, but the sound isn't as good. I remember hearing the ambience on the kick and snare as they were leaking into all the other mics—even the singer's mic—as being so attractive to me, more than anything else.

**Billy:** Sam & Dave's "I Thank You." The tightness of it all—the snare sound in the verse. The horn hits and then the clavinet "did-i-did-di-did-doo..."

**Jerry:** Exactly! That stuff was pure sex to me, at a time when I didn't even know what sex was.

**Billy:** Well, music does involve love, among other things.

**Jerry:** Now, having talked about that, don't you just want to sit down and go through the record collection and play to all of those great songs?

**Billy:** So much!

**Jerry:** Do you know J.J. Jackson? [Starts singing: "It's alright. Alright, babe. Oh you don't know....how I feel."] You *know* it wasn't about just the drummer. It was about the *ensemble*. It was about how they played together, and when you watch [the DVD] *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*, you really get that sense of how they played together.

They had guys who had specific jobs; maybe one guy would just play tambourine, or another guy would just play hi-hat. That was a fantastic time. And *now* is a great time as well. It's just easier now to complicate things because you can record nine million tracks with loops, samples, Beat Detective, and all the fixing, cutting, and pasting. Back then, there weren't many tracks, and the margin for error was much smaller.

### How Does It All Come Together? Billy Ward's Summation

In my view, some of the greatest drum parts ever played are somewhat simple to execute by many semi-pro drummers. What

was that first single thread that led you into drumming? Let's consider the possibility that maybe any one of us can create the perfect part and play it more perfectly than anyone else, with just the right amount of nuance. (Jim Keltner?) Or on the other side, wild Gypsy abandon. (Keith Moon?) Or possibly some perfect combination of both! (You?)

When I spoke with Abe Laboriel Jr. and asked how he chooses his drum parts, he simply said, "I listen to everybody." To me, that means not only is he listening to everyone, he is also sending what he hears through thousands of musical filters and choices that have grown inside him based upon every listening and playing experience he's ever had—from being three years old to his current age. He also has drumming skills that are honed to match his aesthetic drumming instincts.

The "graduate school" of studying drumming is not how to play faster or louder, or even softer. It's how to make music with other people, how to interpret a song and how to create "special-ness" around everything you do on your instrument.

I'm hoping that you can learn for yourself how a guitar part can influence a hi-hat pattern and note how, if one part is dancing in the sky, then perhaps another part needs to be more of the earth. Or perhaps the drums and guitar share both territories together, in the same way that the clavinet and hi-hat share both sky and ground (straight and syncopated) in Stevie Wonder's "Superstition."

A great drummer has layers and layers of subtleties, yet looks to the greater good at all times. The great Jimmy Cobb, drummer on Miles Davis's classic record *Kind Of Blue*, mirrored Thomas Lang's note about playing for the other members of the band: "When you're playing on a bandstand with five horns, you realize each one has a different personality. You should play what they like. Play what will move them." Satisfying your band and your audience is your first job. Satisfying yourself is a difficult second, but that's another story! Just keep listening and learning.

## MD Editors And Readers Weigh In!

To read about the drum tracks that inspired our editors when they were starting out—as well as 50 performances that set MD readers on *their* paths—go to [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com).



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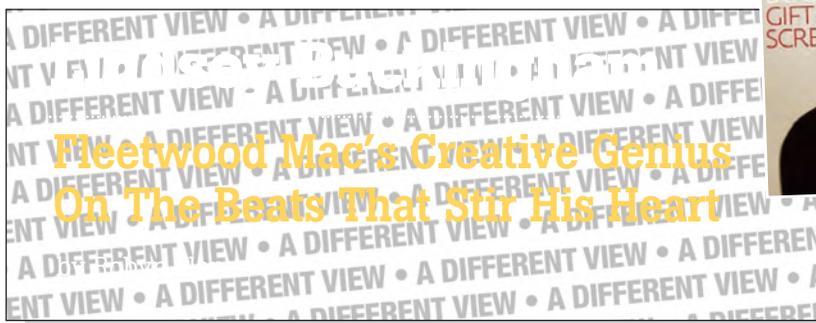
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**L**indsey Buckingham might not be able to tell you the specific names of the drummers who excited him when he was growing up. But he can certainly point you in the right direction, enthusiastically mentioning Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" (D.J. Fontana), "Louie Louie" by The Kingsmen (Lynn Easton), and the music of Fats Domino (Earl Palmer). And he'll reliably name-check The Beatles' Ringo Starr and The Stones' Charlie Watts.

Yes, and even though Buckingham will try to tell you that he doesn't know much about drums and drummers, the evidence is very much to the contrary, as anyone who's spent time with Fleetwood Mac's album *Tusk* will attest to. *Tusk* is the record most often cited as evidence of Buckingham's production mastery and creative ambition, and he in fact had much to do with the wildly experimental attitude toward Mick Fleetwood's drum parts on the infamous double album. And once you delve deeply into topics like *Tusk*, it becomes obvious just how much Buckingham really does know about the percussive arts. Eloquent and unconventional, Buckingham is all about feel, grit, and an anything-goes philosophy.

**MD:** Let's start with your new album, *Gift Of Screws*. Your buddy Mick Fleetwood is on the new album, as is Walfredo Reyes Jr. How do you decide who's going to play drums on your albums—or whether there are going to be drums at all?

**Lindsey:** I've had an interest in songs without drums for a long time. Once you apply an entire kit of drums to a track, it can be great. It can also be a form of tyranny. In order to open up possibilities for other approaches, sometimes the conventional approach has to go.

Getting back to Mick vs. Walfredo or somebody else, the three tracks on the new album that Mick plays on hearken back a ways. There was an album I was going to put out as a solo release, but the band intervened and said, "Let's make a studio album." So, much of that material got folded over into an album we did in 2003, *Say You Will*. I used the remaining songs for this album, which is why Mick is on those. [Fleetwood Mac bassist] John McVie was on a couple of those tracks too.

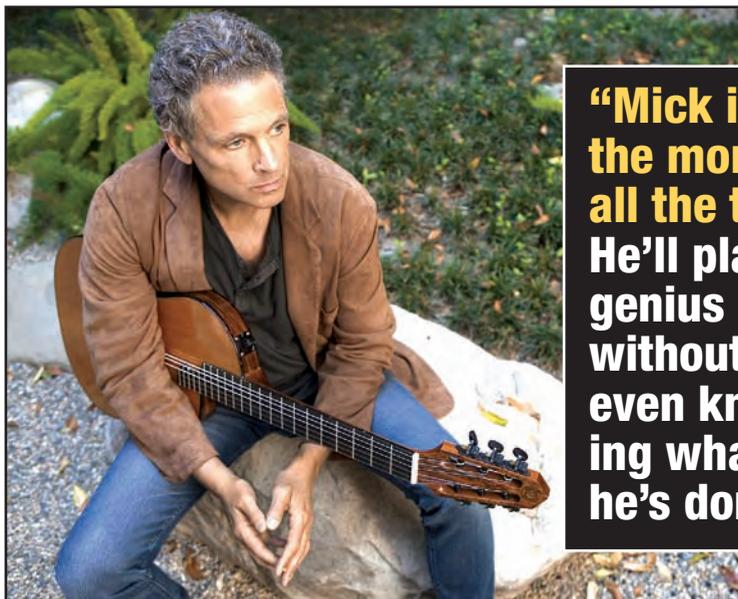
I didn't intend for this album to be as "rock" as it ended up being. I was trying to step it up from the last one a little bit, but when I got together with my own band mates, it just seemed to want to go in that direction. Which leads to, Why Walfredo? I've not done a ton of solo touring during my career. But I had one of the best times I'd ever had last year when I went out with these guys, and I wanted to share that as a studio experience as well.

**MD:** You also worked with John Wackerman at one point.

**Lindsey:** I did. Back in '94 I did an album called *Out Of The Cradle*, and I took this crazy band with like five or six guitarists, and John, and two percussionists, and...I lost a lot of money. But we had a great time. John was a jazzier. He would scare me with some of the stuff he could do. He was way overqualified for me.

**MD:** On the *Buckingham Nicks* album, which you did before joining Fleetwood Mac, you used Jim Keltner, Ron Tutt, and Gary Hodges. What appeals to you about a drummer?

**Lindsey:** Here's an interesting thing: Mick is one of my favorite drummers, and yet he's like me: He has his limitations. We both follow the adage of, "It's not what you got, it's what you do with what you got." If you understand what it is you do well, and have a certain appreciation for that thing, you can find any number of ways to express that within a certain range. Keltner is an all-around drummer in a whole different way. That's why he can succeed so well at studio work. He can play in an extremely laid-back way—the way he played on something like *Imagine*—or he can do the opposite if he's called to do so. He's the consummate all-



**"Mick is in the moment all the time. He'll play genius stuff without even knowing what he's done."**

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around drummer. Ronnie Tutt and Jerry Scheff were part of Elvis's band, and when that record was made, Elvis was still alive. I didn't make the choice for either one of those players at that time, because Stevie and I were young pups and we didn't know from L.A. or drummers. Keith Olsen, who co-produced that album, had the line on the musicians. All I did with Ronnie Tutt was ask questions about Elvis—of course. He had a great Southern feel, and he had that grease thing going.

**MD:** What is it that you love about Mick's playing?

**Lindsey:** As a guitarist, I never had a lesson. I don't read music, so it's all by intuition, feel, and whatever I've taught myself to do. I'm sort of a refined primitive in the way I approach everything, including writing. Mick is also a primitive. He's even a little less refined.

Because I'm a producer, I can analyze what I'm doing, think it through, repeat it, and intellectualize it—put the kind of thinking into it that needs to be done in order to make a record. But Mick is just in the moment all the time. He'll play genius kind of stuff without even knowing what he's done—and that's the beauty of it. There's a Zen to what Mick does. There's a kind of childlike quality to it. He couldn't explain it to you. It's a phenomenon of an inner part of his being and sort of a force of nature. And yet, at the same time, he's quite a scholar of certain kinds of music. So as a listener, he can appreciate certain things, and he and I bonded over that as people. He actually knows more about different kinds of music than I do, and he has a lot of courage. The fact that he went over to Ghana and made *The Visitor*, way back in 1981—which was a triumph as far as I was concerned—took a lot of courage. He's an extremely soulful guy.

**MD:** *Tusk* had a lot of drum experimentation. I assume a lot came from Mick and a lot came from you. Can you address that?

**Lindsey:** I was at my house doing a whole other kind of recording. We had done *Rumours*, which had become such a success, but at some point the success seemed to become less about the music and more about the tabloidism behind the band. And of course, here we are poised to fulfill a record company's expectations to make something like *Rumours II*.

In the meantime, a lot of new music had come out of England and America that in many ways reinforced my own sense of how

music could and should be approached. So even though I wasn't necessarily looking to subvert the *Rumours* model, that's indeed what happened. I said to the band, "I have to spend some time working at home."

As opposed to the movie-making process—which is an analogy you might use when referring to being in the studio with a band, where there's a lot of verbalizing and politics involved—working at home and playing a lot of instruments is more like painting, because you're kind of slopping the colors on the canvas. It's a way more subconscious kind of thing, where you can actually get to other things that you wouldn't get to in the studio. You can move far more to the left. So that's what I did. I spent a lot of time working at home, and then I'd bring in a song and the band would work on it a little more. I'm not sure how happy Mick was about that. I would bring these things in and they would be sloppy, maybe not up to his standards, but still have a certain quality to them that we left alone, as far as drum tracks went.

**MD:** What were you using?

**Lindsey:** Whatever I could find. Sometimes I would use a snare drum. I certainly wasn't playing a kit of drums all at one time. There's a song called "Walk A Thin Line," a slow cut that has two or three snares sort of slopping around, left, right, and center. The pocket is there collectively, but it's anything but precise. I remember Mick going, "Geez, I don't want people to think that's me." At the end of the day, though, he could see the validity in what it was.

One of my all-time favorite drum tracks of Mick's is "What Makes You Think You're The One," from *Tusk*. It was about 2:00 in the morning, and there was nobody else in the studio. I played the piano and Mick played the drums, and we were trying to get a really trashy sound. So we put this cassette player up against the front of the drums. It had one of those cheap mics in it, with a compressor, and that became the main sound of the kit.

**MD:** Walfredo is your band mate of choice

## BUCKINGHAM'S BEAT

by Bernie Schallehn

When it came time for Lindsey Buckingham to choose a drummer/percussionist to tour behind his album *Gift Of Screws*, he chose well. Walfredo "Wally" Reyes Jr., a top-gun drummer/percussionist



who boasts live and recording credits with Santana, Jackson Browne, Stevie Winwood, Traffic, and Robbie Robertson, was selected for the enviable position.

After coming off the road last summer with The Mickey Hart Band, Wally caught up with the Buckingham ensemble on September 6. (He'd previously played on Buckingham's 2007 tour.) Wally's drumming can be heard on two cuts from the album, including the single "Did You Miss Me," which has gotten significant airplay.

Reyes says he's particularly enjoying himself on this tour. He gives props to Buckingham as a "great composer, singer, and performer, and an incredible guitarist."

At Buckingham's request, in concert Wally plays a Roland TD20 electronic kit. According to Reyes, Lindsey likes to have the flexibility of a variety of virtual drumkits, each tailored to the song. Reyes also uses a custom-built cajon and an array of Sabian cymbals. And various shapes and sizes of shakers sit on a large box within easy reach of his right hand.

these days. What does he bring to your table?

**Lindsey:** Walfredo has energy and spirit, something intangible. We're using a click track on some of these things, for various reasons, and Wally is able to listen and play spontaneously, even while under less than spontaneous conditions.

**MD:** How does percussion fit into your situation?

**Lindsey:** A lot of what I like is found sounds, so whether you're hitting a tape box or a snare drum, it's going to be good for me—as long as it's the right thing. The same thing holds true of percussion, or what could loosely be defined as percussion. That can be as important as—or *more* important than—a drum track, especially if the tune does not include a kit of drums.

I have a console downstairs that has a Naugahyde front, and if you hit it with your elbow, it sounds great. You can get great 8th- and 16th-note sounds off of that. I love furniture sounds...you can get good approximations of 1-and-3 kicks off of any number of other things, and sometimes those sounds are more manageable because they're less ambient, less tonal, less identifiable than your standard kit drums. Anything I find can qualify as percussion.



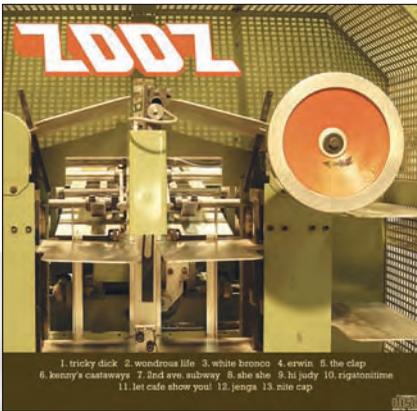
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August 23, 2008, 3:15 p.m. Guitar Center Sales Associate Blake Ehoff and Nickelback's Daniel Adair share insights on studio vs. live kits, kick mics, Motown grooves and great cymbal sounds.



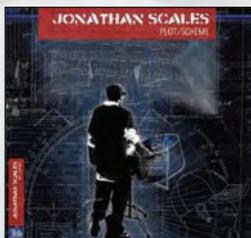
# RECORDINGS



## ZDDZ ZDDZ

★★★★★

Imagine organist Jimmy Smith grooving with Portishead and Lalo Schiffrin, and you've got ZDDZ, funky slicers of the rope-a-dope rhythm and jive. Created by **ZACH DANZIGER**, ZDDZ draws on his work with David Holmes' *Oceans 12, 13*, etc. soundtracks, then takes it a step further. Summoning the spirits of Bernard Purdie and Brian Bennett, Zach kicks it soul-fired and dry on "Erwin" (mildly displacing beats like Silly Putty), rips into 16th-note funkification absurdity on "2nd Ave. Subway," and goes Latin-zombie mad with "Let Café Show You!," a dead ringer theme for *The Gong Show* hosted by a psychedelically inspired Vincent Price. (www.ZDDZMusic.com) **Ken Micallef**

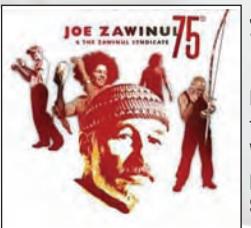


## JONATHAN SCALES PLOT/SCHEME

★★★★★

North Carolina-based steel drummer **Jonathan Scales** makes the pans fit snugly in unconventional musical spaces. On *Plot/Scheme* he serves up odd-time fusion and funk alongside Flecktones saxophonist **Jeff Coffin**, and brings in veteran stick slinger **JEFF SIPE** and newcomer **RYAN LASSITER** to handle drumming duties. Jam master Sipe pumps a righteous groove under the feisty sparring of

Scales and guitarist **Tim Marsh** on "Old Jailhouse," beautifully nailing the combinations of sixes and fours there and on Scales' complex "Room Of Maps." Displaying a musical touch with some edge, Lassiter sticks the ensemble parts on "This Road" and lays back in the pocket on "Heart Engineer." (www.jonscales.com) **Robin Tolleson**



## JOE ZAWINUL & THE ZAWINUL SYNDICATE 75

★★★★★

Recorded just two months before Zawinul's death in 2007, this two-CD live set is a fitting final statement from the famed Weather Report leader and his multicultural ensemble. The proceedings here are urgent and frantic—drummer **PACO SERY** knows how to play nice with others but doesn't fear whipping out ahead-of-the-beat 32nd-note hi-hat flurries on

the dotted funk of "Madagascar" and massive tidal-wave rolls around his kit on "Orient Express." (Heads Up) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN VALLEY OF FIRE

★★★★★

*Modern Drummer* contributor **MIKE HAID** and guitarist **David T. Chastain** join forces once again with bassist **Dave Swart** and singer **Eric Johns** (think Chris Cornell meets David Coverdale) on this old-school, blues-informed (sometimes tongue-in-cheek) hard-rock outing. Haid's uncluttered performances and spotless time-keeping serve these riff-driven, often suggestive Whitesnake-esque tracks. (www.leviathanrecords.com) **Will Romano**



## DRORI MONDLAK POINT IN TIME

★★★★★

Drori Mondlak used to stay up late investigating the truths about jazz drumming. Seems his red-eye regimen sorted out any issues of sound and feel. Witness this fourth collaboration with guitarist **Cary DeNigris**. The pristinely recorded album abandons the joyous clatter of the earlier *Between The Lines* in favor of a more gentle revelry, the calm interrupted by the creeping intensity of originals such as "No Name Blues." (www.drorimondlak.com, www.myspace.com/drorimondlak) **T. Bruce Wittet**

## AND WHAT'S MORE...



### CRAIG YAREMKO SYNC

Saxophonist Craig Yaremkó's *Sync* features no chordal instruments, allowing ample room for the sax/trumpet front line to weave in and out of the leader's interesting

modern compositions. Veteran drummer **STEVE JOHNS** burns through the breaks of the title cut with lightning-fast rolling tom triplets and fluttering snare singles. (www.jazzexcursionrecords.com)

**Ilya Stemkovsky**

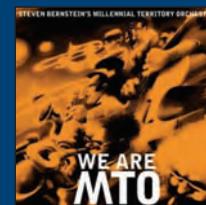


### OBLIVION SUN OBLIVION SUN

Founding members of Happy The Man lead this talented Maryland-based quartet through excellent old-school melodic prog rock à la Peter Dinklage and King Crimson, UK, and Bruford's early solo works. Drummer

**CHRIS MACK** handles the odd meter-laden charts with taste and dynamics. (www.oblivionsun.com)

**Mike Haid**



### STEVEN BERNSTEIN'S MILLENNIAL TERRITORY ORCHESTRA WE ARE MTO

Trumpeter Steven Bernstein's MTO is a heady

concoction: equal parts 1930s big band juke-joint swing and a healthy dose of NYC attitude. Downtown stylist **BEN PEROWSKY** is all authentic snare ruffs throughout (think Baby Dodds playing stripper beats), and his rowdy propulsion is infectious, sensitive, and fun. (MOWO!) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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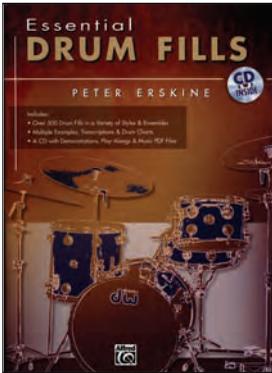
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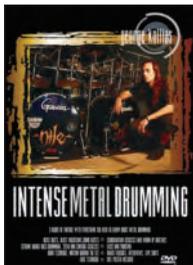


## ESSENTIAL DRUM FILLS BY PETER ERSKINE

★★★★★  
**BOOK LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED  
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Peter Erskine, no stranger to fills, delivers an instructional text on 500 of his favorites, complete with big band charts and fully transcribed drum solos. Erskine tackles swing feels (show-casing triplets and 16ths) and straight 8th-based rock and funk. The fills have various “destination points” (places the fills will end—the “&” of 4, for example) and Erskine’s sometimes beautifully off-kilter phrasing and unique

dynamics are on full display regardless of a piece’s difficulty. Early examples look and sound simple, but beware: Making them feel right is no easy task. A CD with and without drums is included. (Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



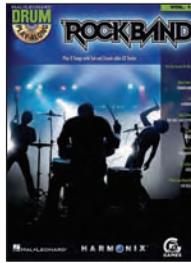
## INTENSE METAL DRUMMING FEATURING GEORGE KOLLIAS

★★★★★  
**DVD LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$55

George Kollias, drummer for death metal band Nile, sheds light on extreme metal drumming concepts including the expected analysis of blast beats, double bass, and fills. Kollias’s playing is simply superhuman: His endurance and speed will have aspiring metal drummers shaking their heads and running to the practice room,

not knowing where to start. Plus his licks are clean and his technique totally relaxed and efficient—even when playing 16th notes at 280 bpm! (A foot camera shows you just how fast his single-kick work is.) Kollias also applies his concepts to various full-song performances. Informative and indeed intense.

(www.georgekollias.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

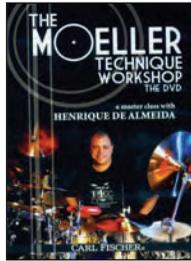


## ROCKBAND DRUM PLAY-ALONG VOL. 19

★★★★★  
**BOOK/CD LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE \$14.95

Some instructional books are pure fun, and publisher Hal Leonard’s play-along *Rockband* book/CD package is definitely one of them. The title may refer the popular video game from which its “setlist” is drawn, but make no mistake, this is no game. The nineteenth book in this series is filled with eight popular rock tunes written out for full drumkit, from Jet’s “Are You Gonna Be My Girl” to

The Killers’ “When You Were Young.” Each tune is easy to read, with standard drum notation, and also includes lyrics to help you along if you get lost. It might be a little tough to flip the pages as you read along, which is always a drummer’s nightmare. But the audio CD is enhanced with a program that lets you slow everything down without changing pitch—very cool if you can put your laptop near you while you rock. (Hal Leonard) **Fran Azzarto**



## THE MOELLER TECHNIQUE WORKSHOP FEATURING HENRIQUE DE ALMEIDA

★★★★★  
**DVD LEVEL:** INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$19.95

Henrique De Almeida, director of the Percussion Institute Of Colorado, presents a master class on the oft-elusive and mysterious Moeller technique—the stick-rebounding, “whipping motion” method used for dexterity, speed, and power. De Almeida describes the technique as “a principle of negotiating bounce,” and though it’s not

always clear when he’s employing the method while he’s playing full kit—or when you should apply the technique yourself—he does provide many examples of hybrid strokes, odd-group phrasing, and cross-accented rhythms while applying the concepts to performance and soloing. (Carl Fischer) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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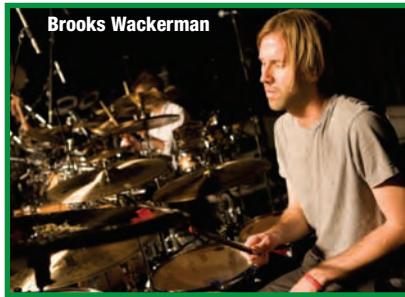
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PASIC 2008



Dafnis Prieto



Brooks Wackerman



Marko Djordjevic



Ari Hoenig



Taku Hirano

According to the Percussive Arts Society, more than 6,500 drummers and percussionists from around the world gathered at the Austin Convention Center to attend PASIC this past November, setting the event's third highest attendance record. Attendees from North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe were able to witness more than 130 clinics, concerts, master classes, and performances by noted percussion artists. As usual, the events covered areas from drumset and orchestral percussion to world percussion and marching.

Featured drumset artists on Thursday included **Albe Bonacci**, who discussed the ever-elusive concept of touch; Norwegian master **Erik Smith**, who explained and demonstrated how groove and feel originate from "within" and not "on" the instrument; Serbian jazz/fusion monster **Marko Djordjevic**, who dug into ways to discover new ideas from things you already know; speed-metal king **Derek Roddy**; and funk/fusion hero **Derico Watson**. Friday started off on the educational front with a great master class on swing interplay with jazz master **Ed Soph**. Stevie Wonder drummer/percussionists **Stanley Randolph** and **Fausto Cuevas** then surprised everyone with a super-tight, high-energy duo performance.

**Brooks, John, and Chad Wackerman** followed with a handful of interesting trio compositions, and then percussionist to the stars **Taku Hirano** and Jessica Simpson's **Gorden Campbell** broke down the art of pop accompaniment. The day finished with masterful performances by Porcupine Tree's **Gavin Harrison** and studio great **Steve Ferrone**. Highlights of Saturday's clinics included **Ari Hoenig's** demonstration of truly melodic drumming; **Terence Higgins'** New Orleans rhythm lesson; **Marco Minnemann** and **Johnny Rabb's** dueling chopsfest; **Dafnis Prieto's** brilliant Latin breakdown; **John Hollenbeck's** clinic on composing; **Robby Ameen, Richie Flores, and Jessie Caraballo's** Latin jam; **Ray Luzier and Seven Antonopoulos'** heavy duet; and jazz master **Roy Haynes'** closing performance. Aquarian founder/drum clinic legend **Roy Burns** and percussion great **Evelyn Glennie** were also inducted into the PAS Hall Of Fame.

PASIC 2009 will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, November 11-14, at the Indiana Convention Center. For more information, go to [www.pasic.org](http://www.pasic.org).

Story by Michael Dawson • Photos by William Hawkins

Who's Playing What

**TAYE** has added **Keith Zebroski** (Miranda Lambert), **Dan Bailey** (Phil Wickham), **Gerald French** (Charmaine Neville), **Mike Justian** (Unearth, The Red Chord, Trap Them), **Pete Maloney** (*Dancing With The Stars*, Andrew Ripp, Edgar Winter), **Darius Minaev** (Volumen Cero), and **Satnam Ramgotra** (*Dark Knight*, *Madagascar 2* soundtracks) to its artist roster.

**DDRUM** has signed metal icon **Vinnie Paul**, with a new signature product line to be launched soon.

**VATER** is pleased to welcome the following artists: **Ari Hoenig** (independent), **Al Wilson** (Taylor Swift), **Aaron Draper** (Common/Bilal/Jill Scott), **Mauro Refosco** (David Byrne), **Derek Ries** (Push Play), **Justin Glasco** (Kate Voegelé), **Chaun Horton** (Natasha Bedingfield), **Carlos McSwain** (Snoop Dogg), **Blake Dixon** (Saving Abel), **Terrell Sass** (Tyler Perry), **Adam Marcello** (Katy Perry), **Dave Agoglia** (Rev Theory), **Aaron Redfield** (Nikka Costa), and **Alex**

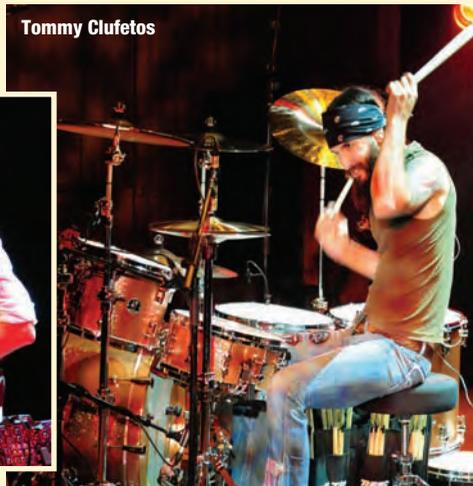


**Johnson** (The Cab).

New artists signed to **SONOR** include **Christoph Schneider** (Rammstein), **Mark Kulvinskaskas** (Dear & The Headlights), **Nathan Walker** (Kerli, Lucy Walsh, Rufio), **Charlie Z** (Blotted Science, Jordan Rudess, Behold The Arctopus), and **Paul Collier** (Angelcorpse).

# Montreal Drum Fest

Tommy Clufetos



Morgan Agren



Wolfgang Haffner



The sixteenth annual Montreal Drum Fest took place this past October 25 and 26. **Tommy Clufetos**, of Ted Nugent fame, was the first to take the stage. He strolled out, long and lanky, and proceeded to rip it up. Before a single bead of sweat had broken, he had executed beyond mortal capabilities. Charismatic and well versed in acoustic drumset navigation through electronica waters, **Johnny Rabb** then brought his freehand technique to life. Next was **Markus Czenia**, who held it together with remarkably long bouts of uninterrupted primal precision pounding. **Hakim Ludin** personified versatility as he traversed a world of percussion that even included Indian rhythms on djembe. The Yamaha Groove Hour, new to the Montreal Fest, kick started with a lethal trio of **Paul Brochu**, **Mark Kelso**, and **Larnell Lewis** accompanying the house band on a snaky version of "The Chicken." Finally, jazz/fusion legend **Lenny White** and his band closed the night with a contemporary, edgy set spiked with hot improvisation.

Sunday morning began with the Yamaha Rising Star Showcase. Tomorrow's drum heroes from the area (**Olivier Bernatchez**, **Jean-Francois Nadeau**, **Edwin Ling**, and **David Belanger**) displayed incredible skills beyond their tender years. After the showcase, German master **Wolfgang Haffner** demonstrated why he's played on so many records. Then local hero **Eric Boudreault** played with passion and energy as he served up a blend of hip-hop, Latin, and jazz-rock. **Eric Velez**, **Jafet Murguia**, and **Daniel Diaz** then played a set that rolled over the audience like ocean waves.

**Morgan Agren** was the day's wild card. His thing is so far beyond chops it's sick. The Montreal Drum Fest climaxed with the legendary **Simon Phillips**. He demonstrated perfection—his drum sound, professionalism, execution, and maturity. For more info, log on to [www.montrealdrumfest.com](http://www.montrealdrumfest.com).

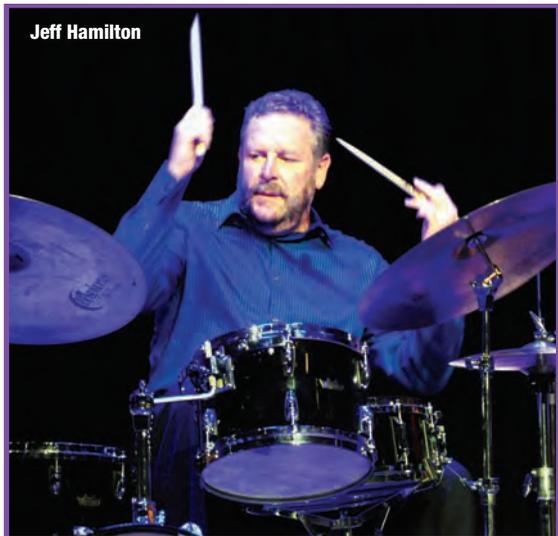
Story by T. Bruce Wittet • Photos by Heinz Kronberger

## Superdrumming

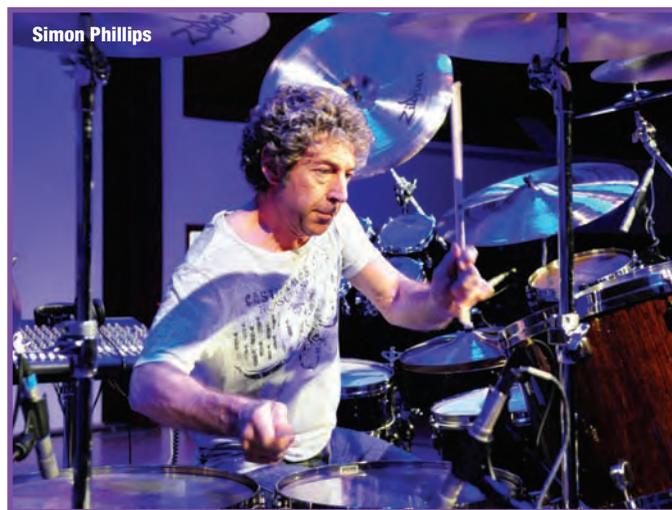
This past October 18 and 19, more than 2,000 people gathered in Gmunden, Austria to attend music store Frumhouse Gerhard Jessl's Superdrumming event. Featured performances included the **Jeff Hamilton** Trio and **Wolfgang Haffner's** Acoustic Shapes trio. Workshops were given by **Will Calhoun**, **Dirk Brand**, **Stephan Maas**, Haffner, Hamilton, **Ralf Gustke**, **Benny Greb**, **Felix Lehrmann**, **Matthias Philipzen**, **Omar Hakim**, **Thomas Lang**, **Simon Phillips**, and others.

Story and photos by Heinz Kronberger

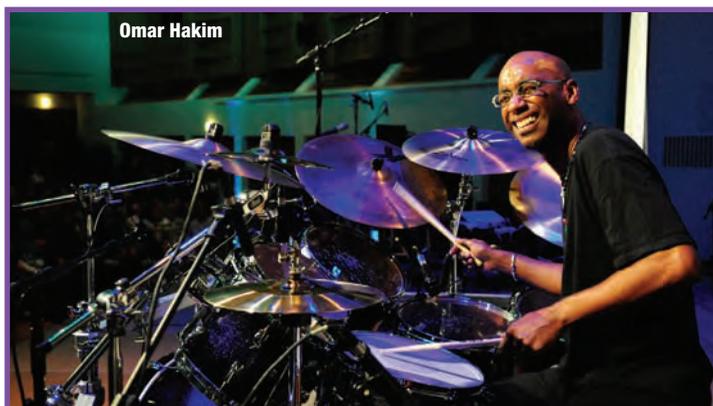
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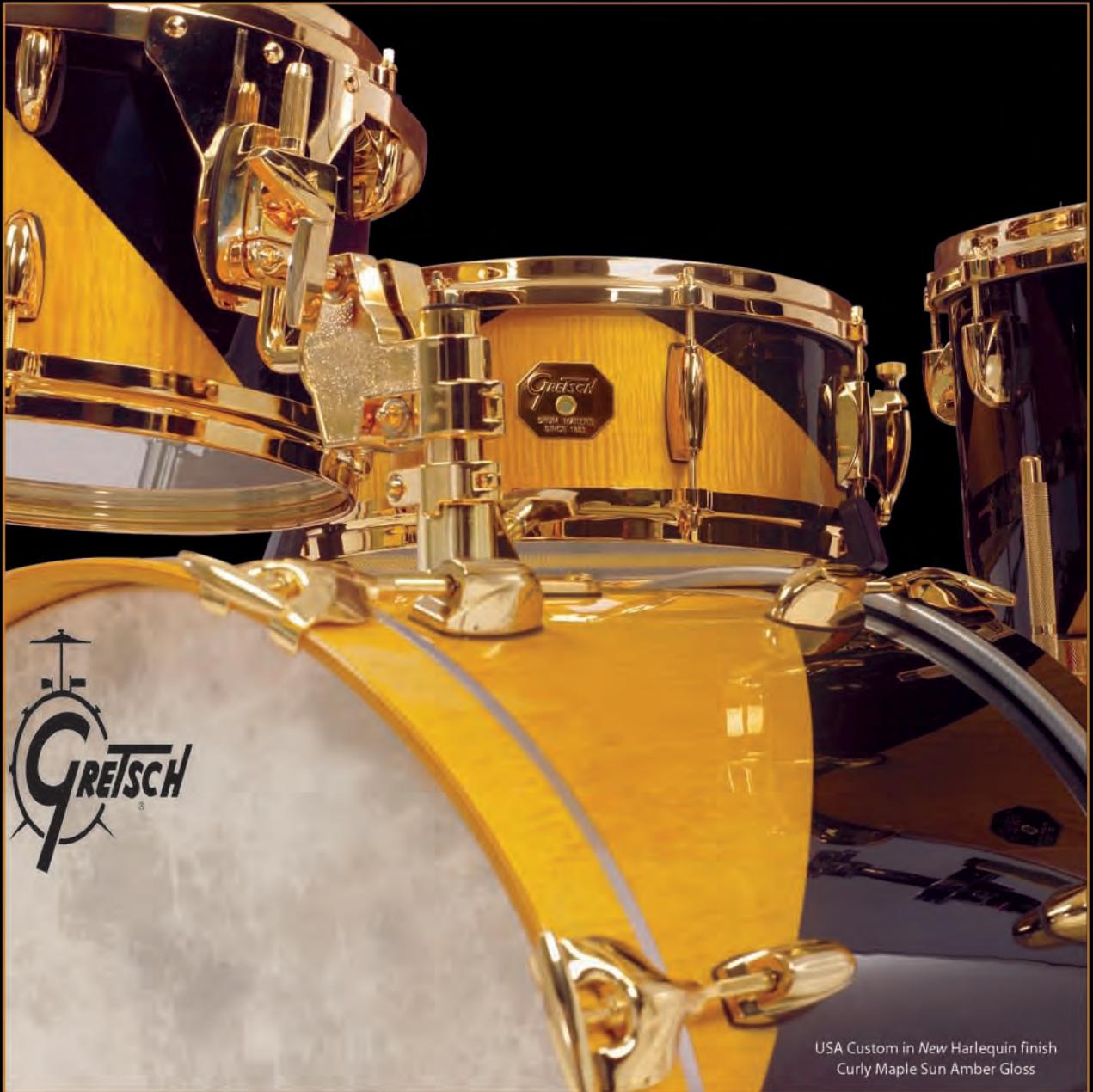


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