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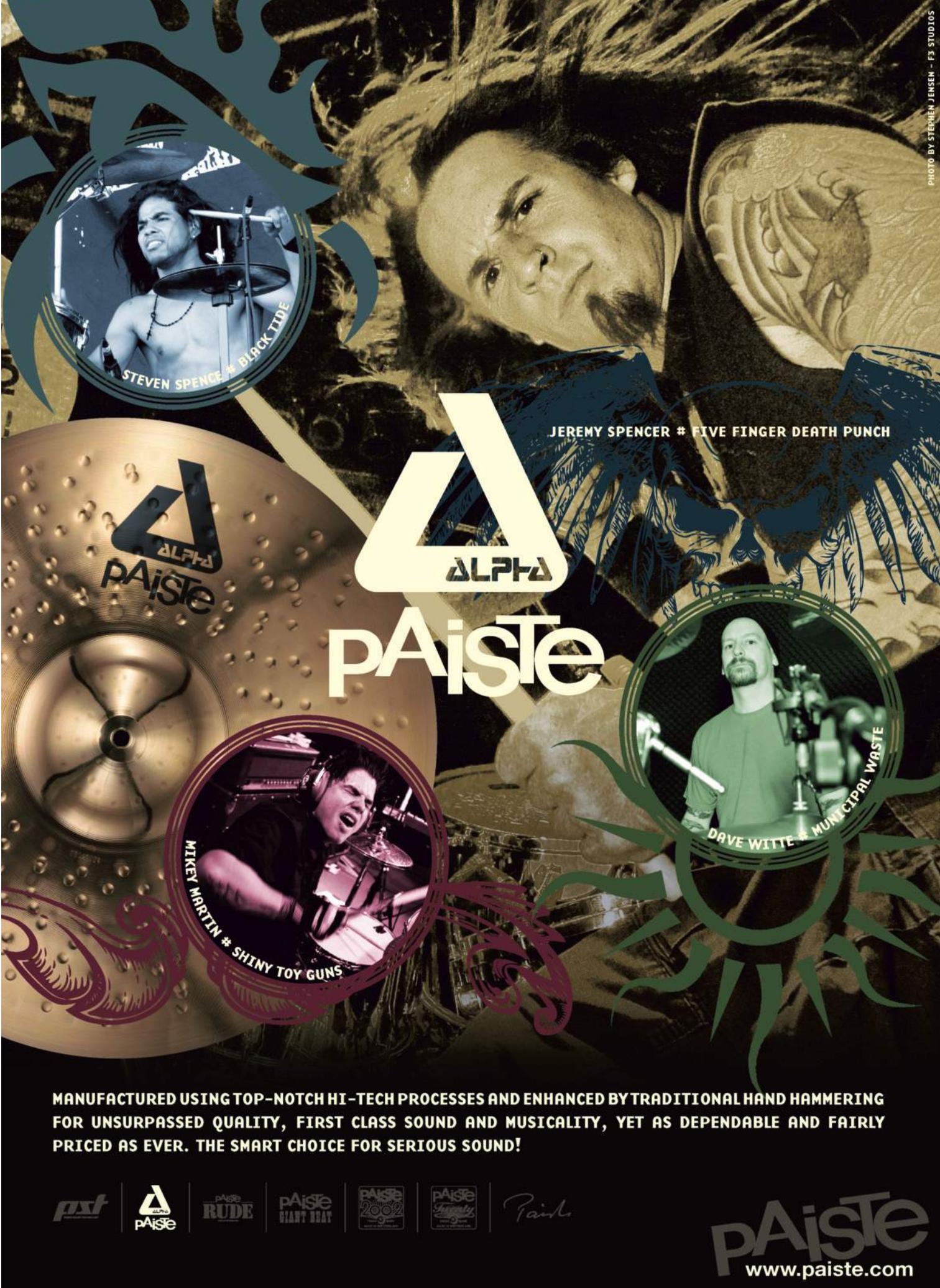


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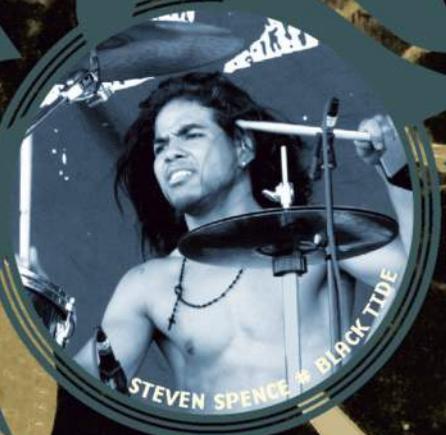
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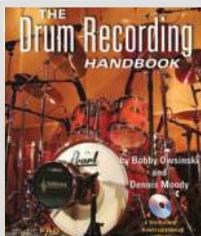
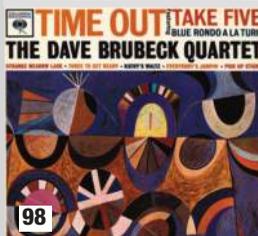
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SEEING THE LIGHT

Got any blind spots?

There's so much to keep up on in the vast world of drumming that it's practically inevitable to have some major gaps of knowledge that could—and likely should—be filled.

Maybe you're as funky as a Crescent City skunk in the middle of August but you can barely play a straight 16th-note beat without busting out the swing feel. Perhaps you've got sizzling jazz cymbal time but you can't slam out a 2-and-4 backbeat with authority.



Or you might be a pillar of confidence with a pair of sticks in your hands but turn to jelly when you have to tune your bass drum.

You know what I mean. You may even have been desperately concealing some sort of deficiency and praying no one would notice. (How's that R&B shuffle?) But if this month's cover artist, the superhuman Jeff "Tain" Watts, can identify and address some of his own blind spots, then surely we can too.

Me, I've been playing for more than twenty years, yet I can still have the sense that I'm feeling my way in the dark. Since I have only a page, though, I'll focus on just one of the many areas where I need to see the light: I've never been as knowledgeable about gear as I'd like to be.

Here's an example. For a while I've known which heads I prefer, but without really knowing *why*. I just happened to try a model that worked, and I stuck with it. Lucky. Still, there's so much to consider, all of it relevant. Do I want a vintage or a modern sound? Single-ply or double-ply heads? Coated or clear? Which brand? As Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley suggests in this issue, it can be tough, and costly, for a drummer to compare different versions to see what's best.

Then, of course, there are the infinite variables in drums and cymbals. Wood types, hoop varieties, bearing edges, shell depths. Cymbal thicknesses, alloy subtleties, hammering techniques, to lathe or not to lathe. With seemingly endless options and countless nuances to keep track of, my mind

clouds over and I think, *Dang, I just want to keep my hands and feet in shape and learn some new ways to play.*

Well, I'm starting to get wise. I've learned a lot from my gearhead drummer friends and my colleagues, with special thanks to our in-house equipment sage, Mike Dawson. They've helped me really begin to consider exactly *how* the variables I've mentioned affect tone and touch. Add the kind of field research every drummer needs to conduct—visits to the drum shop to test different kinds

of cymbals, trips to the club to check out what other drummers are using—and you make progress.

When I played the new wafer-thin Bosphorus Master Vintage rides, which Mike reviews in this issue, it was like turning a floodlight on one of my blind spots; I finally *got* some things about thin cymbals that had previously remained in the shadows. Regardless of whether they were the right rides for me, playing them taught me something, which in my case was more valuable than falling in love with one specific cymbal.

I watched the edges of the 22" Bosphorus shimmy with each gorgeously explosive crash (yep, the big'un sounds as sweet as a crash as it does as a ride, and that's saying something), and then I hit my own crashes. Eureka: I realized it's the spreading sustain of a thin crash that pleases my ear and that works well in the groovy classic-rock-ish music that I play most often. I do own a few thin crashes, of different brands and series; I just hadn't quite made the connection that the reason why I liked them enough to buy them was *because* they were thin. I could now answer the question of *why*.

Addressing our blind spots allows us to stop fearing that we'll have to confront *that thing*, whatever it is, at exactly the wrong time. It gives us power. And it makes us better, and more employable, drummers.

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MD READERS POLL

Got the July issue today—it was exciting to see the Readers Poll. With an independently produced book, I had hoped to place in the poll, but to win was something else. It's a real thrill, and it's already been a game changer, with more good things to come! Without sounding corny I can say that as someone who has been reading *Modern Drummer* from its start and has learned so much by doing so, this is a tremendous honor. I'd like to send my sincere appreciation to everyone at the magazine.

David Stanoch

Winner, Best Method Book
(Mastering The Tables Of Time)

I was so happy to see Jim Riley win Best Clinician in the Readers Poll. I would like to suggest that you create another category, for the person who's had success and is interested in "giving something back." Jim and his drum tech saw my son playing at the Country USA festival in Oshkosh, WI, a couple of years ago, and they encouraged him to move to Nashville. Since my son moved there, Jim has been a mentor



and a pal to him. When I first met Jim I asked why he cared about a kid from Wisconsin. His reply was, "I've had a lot of success, and it may sound corny, but I feel I should give something back." Congratulations to Jim and all of those who keep the beat going!

Martin N. Scheuer Sr.

I'm writing with sincere gratitude for being recognized in the 2009 Best Pop Drummer category. It is one of the biggest surprises of my career. As clichéd as it may sound, merely being in the company of Keith, Vinnie, Carter, and Kenny is an honor beyond belief. Thanks to the readers who voted for me and to the guys at *MD*, who have always been so cool and supportive. Best to all, and keep it rolling!

Rodney Howard

THANK YOU

The "Cross-Training" article by Marc Dicciani in the May issue was the best educational article I've read in *Modern Drummer*. I was feeling unmotivated, and getting out to practice was becoming a chore, but

after reading Marc's article I was motivated once again. My practices are more structured now, and I feel I'm making a lot more progress. I play in two bands, gigging with one and in the studio with the other—and the styles are different, so this helps me out a great deal. Thank you to everyone at *Modern Drummer* who made this article possible, and to Marc Dicciani for giving such great advice that will definitely change my drumming in a positive way. Keep up the good work, everyone!

Joe Briery

JIM CHAPIN, 1919-2009

It seems to me that a drummer unaware of Jim Chapin's famous drum instructional book, *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer*, is like a songwriter who doesn't know the Beatles' music. Only a brilliant mind such as Jim's could have sifted through the music from the New York City streets and juke joints and churn it all into a focused lesson that will forever influence all drummers to come.

To know Jim Chapin was to be astounded by his intelligence (tooled up with a photographic memory and perfect pitch, mind you!) as well as his ever-so-generous heart. He was an always-self-assessing, humble man who drank all he could from life's cup, driven by his insatiable curiosity and thirst for all things creative.

It was drummers who gained the most from this "man's man." From the '70s forward, and as jazz gigs lessened, I think Jim found himself most often teaching grip and rudiments, and he would do so to everyone, whether a nine-year-old child or a fifty-nine-year-old professional drummer. Honestly, I am most amazed that Chapin never tired of those repeated teachings about grip and rudiments, often given in noisy, uncomfortable environments such as trade shows. How did he sustain that?

I recall a common sight: Jim sweating over his drum pad at a trade show or a drum shop, demonstrating another rudiment, with tie and jacket slightly askew and eyes bulging. Unlike what one sees in Hollywood movies, this is true love.

Billy Ward

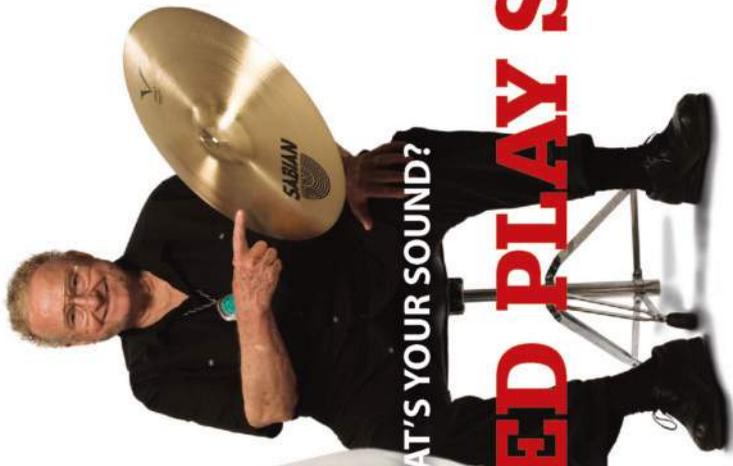
To read more about the life of Jim Chapin, see his *In Memoriam* on page 101 of this issue.

DROPPED BEAT

The Hollywood Drum Show advertisement published in the September issue was incorrect. The 12th Annual Hollywood Drum Show will be held on Saturday, October 17, and Sunday, October 18, 2009, at Raleigh Studios, 5300 Melrose Avenue, Hollywood, CA. Scheduled to appear are Bernie Dresel, Todd Sucherman, Bryan Hitt, and Joe La Barbera, with other celebrity drummers to be announced in future issues of *MD*. See page 81 of this issue for a full description of the event and for more details regarding the show.

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DEPECHE MODE'S **CHRISTIAN EIGNER**

How does a kit player translate twenty years' worth of programmed synth-pop hits in concert? **By honoring the past and embracing the future.**

by Adam Budofsky

When Christian Eigner moved from Austria to England in 1995 to further his career as a drummer, he found a studio scene sympathetic to the type of boundary-pushing approach he was discouraged from taking back home. "People in Britain were a lot more open to new ideas," Eigner says. "I've always experimented with my setup to get different sounds and to do something a bit unusual. But when it came to recording, people there didn't really know what I was doing.

"For example," Eigner continues, "my right bass drum is tuned like a normal kick, and it has a double pedal on it. Then my left bass drum is tuned up very high with nothing in it, like an effect bass drum, and I use a single pedal on it. Whenever I played that second bass drum, everybody thought it was messed up or something, and I would say, 'No, it's supposed to be like that... and if we now send it through distortion, it's going to be perfect!' [laughs] They didn't really get it, though. But when I started recording in London, some people were like, 'Hey, wait a second, what was that? That sounds good.'"

About a year and a half after emigrating, Eigner hooked up with Depeche Mode, the hugely successful British band whose sound had morphed from bubbly new wave to something decidedly darker and more dramatic, yet still largely electronic in nature. Christian found that his "thing" worked perfectly with the group, which had never employed a live drummer before. "When I began playing with them, I started from zero," he says. "All I had [to work from] was old drum machine stuff, so I just started to work out parts myself."

For some of the beloved early Depeche Mode songs, Eigner felt it was important for fans to recognize the original drum sounds—to a point. "I don't

want to replicate them exactly," he says, "because that would absolutely sound too old right now. It's a fine line."

To hit the proper balance on DP's current world tour, the drummer has opted to forgo his previous method of triggering sampled sounds from his drums and instead uses a computer-based sound replacement system, specifically the Ableton Live program. "We're running all my drum mics through Ableton," Eigner says. "So we're not triggering drums but rather processing them live and in the moment, which is quite interesting. First of all, you can completely automate [sound choices for each song]. In addition, you still get the acoustic drum sounds through your overhead mics, which makes it a bit more three-dimensional. If you use triggers, it's just trigger on, trigger off—that's it.

"This system is also the reason I'm using a big kit with Depeche," Eigner adds. "For example, we don't use any effect on snare 1, but snare 2 we'll send through distortion or whatever. For me it's all about having a good combination of electronic and acoustic drum sounds; I'd say it's about 80 percent acoustic and 20 percent electronic now."

Depeche Mode, which has a dedicated technician running sequences and looking after the drum effects, employs a click track for every song live, Eigner says, "because we don't have a bass player. All our bass parts are sequenced, which is quite cool. It took me a while to get used to it, but now I really enjoy it because I'm basically playing with a bassist who plays the same thing every single night, which gives me more of a chance to push the time. For example, perhaps I want to try and play this song a little bit more laid back, so the bass sounds like it's rushing. I find I can play around a bit

more timing-wise."

Eigner recently began an association with DW drums, a situation he seems quite happy with. "That was my biggest change," he says, "and I have to say it's been amazing. The kit I'm using on this tour is the first one they built for me, and it's absolutely great. I went to the factory and had a look, because they've got so many options. There were a few things that I wanted to try out [before DW built the kit], but I never had a chance to, so it was a bit risky. But I ended up just telling them what I wanted—like somewhat longer bass drums, and piccolo toms—and they built it."

Eigner's contributions to Depeche Mode's music go beyond live drumming. He and songwriting/production collaborator Andrew Phillpott cowrote a number of songs for the band's 2005 album, *Playing The Angel*, and the pair worked with DP singer Dave Gahan on his 2007 solo recording, *Hourglass*. And DP's latest album, *Sounds Of The Universe*, features three tunes cowritten by Eigner. The drummer has also put out material under his own name, and with Phillpott as Das Shadow.

"I've got my own recording studio in Austria now," Eigner says, "and it's sort of specialized in drum recording. People can send me tracks and I'll overdub the drums, then send off the track for production. I think this method is quite good for the future; bigger studios are more or less dying off, but there are a lot of people still interested in recording acoustic drums. The other good thing is you can work from home." But with Depeche Mode's hugely popular world tour booked through next February, it might be just a little while before Eigner can work on his studio tan again.



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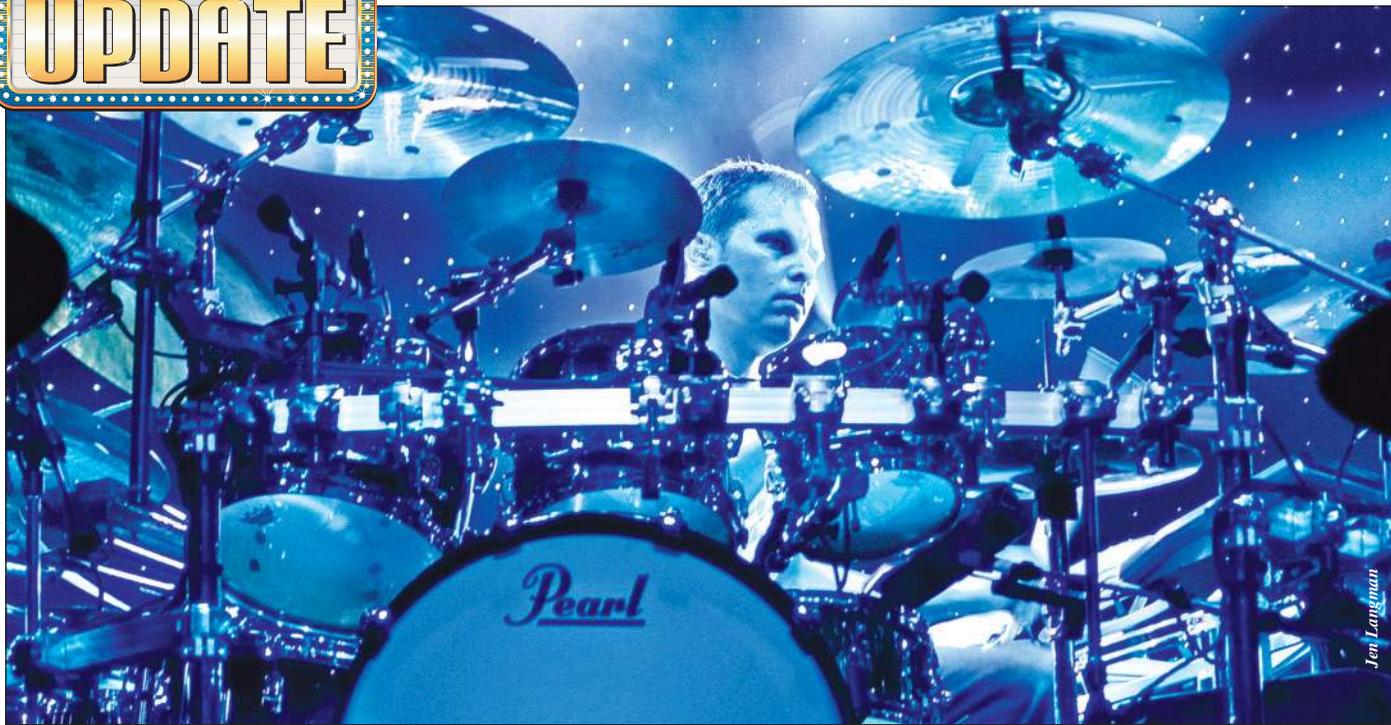
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Jen Langman

311'S CHAD SEXTON

There isn't much about how 311 operates that hasn't been addressed in the four years since the band's last studio album. **What does all this self-reflection mean for our man behind the drums?**

According to Chad Sexton, 311's 2005 album, *Don't Tread On Me*, marked the last time the quintet will follow the expected "corporate-like" schedule: Make a record, tour, make a record, tour.... "There have been many changes in the band," Sexton says, "when in previous years we were maybe on autopilot. The first thing we addressed was the fact that we're only in a band because we love playing music live. At the same time, we decided not to write new songs until we were inspired to write something really great."

The latter decision explains the four-year gap between albums, but the wait seems to have been worth it. This year's *Uplifter* debuted at number three on the *Billboard* Top 200 albums chart, the highest-charting position for 311 in its history. *Uplifter* is also the group's first album with producer Bob Rock, whose seasoned finesse imbues the recording with a heavier guitar vibe, adding hard rock accents to a still instantly recognizable neo-reggae sound.

"In our time touring," Sexton says, "we've been improving as a band and changing our tones. We hired Bob Rock to make some more rockin' and heavy tones come out. It's still our sound; it's just a different way of approaching it. If *Uplifter* sounds different from our previous records, it's because that was our goal."

At the beginning of 2009, Sexton also made a gear switch, ending his longtime association with Orange County Drum & Percussion and returning to Pearl. The drummer's new Reference series kit includes a pair of mounted aluminum-shell Rocket toms, which Chad enjoys experimenting with. "In a

concert setting," he says, "sometimes you've got the same tones over and over. For the drum solo I like to introduce new things, new toms and new tones. Rocket toms are one way of getting that. They're brighter sounding than wood, and it's a pretty cool sound."

The choice to hit the road regularly, independent of a new album, has paid off for 311. Their annual Summer Unity tour, where they share a bill with artists like Matisyahu, Snoop Dogg, and the Wailers, consistently draws crowds ranging from 10,000 to 16,000. "It's really challenging in this industry for a band to tour

without releasing a record or having radio support," Sexton admits. "But we have a little bit of the Grateful Dead fan base following us, so we're able to do that. We've had a very successful three- or four-year run of touring with great numbers. The plan is to keep touring every summer as long as we can and see how it goes."

Chad's also discovered that the road is a great place to hone the reggae chops that are such an indelible part of his sound. "The great thing about touring is that, out here, you can really learn anything from anybody," the drummer says. "I've toured with guys like Zeb [Ernest 'Drummie Zeb' Williams], who played with the Wailers for many years, and Santa [Carlton Davis], Ziggy Marley's drummer. I've learned so much about different styles of drumming, and concepts of the culture, from both of them.

"Zeb basically taught me how and in what ways

Western-style drumming is different from world drumming. Even guitar players from some of these bands have shown me old-school reggae beats they've learned from the drummers that were *making* these beats. It's just awesome! On one tour, I'd ask Zeb before our set, 'Hey, man, give me a new world rhythm.' So he'd give me one, and then I'd go play it in my drum solo. I'm not kidding, the whole crowd would clap to it. It was really cool to experiment that way."

As a drummer who carries marching chops to the kit, Sexton is also known for his creativity, great pocket, limb independence, beautiful ghost notes, funky grooves, and awesome double strokes that are indicative of his snare technique. "The way I hit the snare drum is one of the most distinctive characteristics of my sound," Chad offers. "And that may even be a defining sound for 311. But my style is a combination of drum corps, rock, funk, and reggae.

"When I was in drum corps," he continues, "I used to love the powerful feeling that came with playing in unison. That comes into my playing now, and I guess the rolls are the most obvious element that comes from corps. But there's so much else, like phrasing and putting the bass and snare together on certain beats, as well as how some of the rock beats are structured; those things also come from drum corps.

"When I was younger, I was just 'doing it.' As I got more experienced, I started breaking it down and asking, Wow, is this what I was doing when I was eighteen? The older I get, the more I try to be relaxed, because that's how I get my best performance. As a player, staying relaxed but still having power in your hits is the fine balance you try to achieve to perform really great live. That's my approach, anyway."

Gail Worley

BREAKOUT BEATS

311's sophomore effort, 1994's *Grassroots*, made a great case for the artistic and commercial potential of third-wave reggae and ska. The band's inclusion of rap, funk, and rock elements gave Chad Sexton lots to work with when conceiving his unique, compelling grooves.

When vocalist Ronnie James Dio, guitarist Tony Iommi, bassist Geezer Butler, and drummer Vinny Appice came together to record their first album of new material in seventeen years, they didn't try to fix what wasn't broken. The group had toured sporadically since recording *Dehumanizer* in 1992 under the Black Sabbath moniker, and in 2006 they toured as Heaven & Hell. This year they hit the road once again in support of a new CD, *The Devil You Know*. The long-awaited set doesn't miss a beat in carrying on the aural legacy that metal fans have come to know and love.

"This album is pretty dark and heavy," Appice says. "There are two fast songs, but I think people perceive it as sounding a bit slower because the toms are huge and overall there's a very big sound to the album. The band has always played mostly middle to slower tempos, because it's just what we like to play."

Because Appice has collaborated extensively with Dio and with Black Sabbath, he has an innate feel for which drum parts will work with his bandmates. "There's a way to play this kind of music, and there's a way *not* to play it," he says. "When you

play with Tony and Geezer, you want to make it heavy and kick it into high gear. But you don't want to get in the way too much, because some of the riffs need to breathe. There's a lot of benefit to using the less-is-more approach. On some of the Dio records, I played a lot of stuff because it was crazier. Sabbath was always darker and more lurking. A lot of the drum parts do write themselves; it's just a matter of feeling it and thinking about it. You can hear what those riffs want to be when Tony plays them, and when they're played together with Geezer and the way Ronnie sings, I know exactly what's called for from the drums."

Even when Appice uses Pro Tools, which he did for *The Devil You Know*, he's still very old-school when it comes to his approach to drumming. "There's technique and then there's feel," Vinny muses, "and you have to walk a fine line when you're

combining the two. There have been many technical drummers—especially in progressive rock—that are just unbelievable. They can play free with one hand, in sixteen with the other hand, be in another time signature with the left foot, do something else with the right foot. It's insane. It's like science,

but it lacks feel. If you're all about how fast you can play double bass, okay—it's amazing for five minutes, and then it's like, Now what? I think what makes a good drummer, and a good package, is combining the technique with the feel and just playing from within—playing from your heart."

Gail Worley



BREAKOUT BEATS

After a batch of albums with guitar slinger Rick Derringer, Vinny Appice joined Black Sabbath for their second post-Ozzy studio album, 1981's *Mob Rules*. Carmine's little brother would soon be earning much well-deserved respect (and work), famous bro or no.

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When British screenwriter/director Sacha Gervasi decided to make a documentary about Anvil, the long-running Canadian heavy metal band he'd once roadied for, he took a group that had been rocking tirelessly in obscurity for over twenty-five years and created one of 2009's most surprising music industry success stories. For Anvil's founding members, guitarist Steve "Lips" Kudlow and drummer Robb Reiner, it's been a long, strange trip.

In the early '80s, Anvil was a pioneer of the speed metal genre, keeping company with bands like Metallica, Anthrax, and Slayer. Despite being hailed by peers as highly influential and innovative, Anvil slid off the radar. But while the group never achieved the mainstream popularity of many of its contemporaries, it never stopped rocking: Anvil recorded thirteen albums and continued to play live while working mundane day jobs and raising families. When Gervasi offered to film an upcoming European tour (booked by a fan), Reiner and Kudlow knew they had nothing to lose. The result is

Anvil: The Story Of Anvil, for which over 300 hours of unscripted footage was edited down to a highly entertaining ninety-minute film that's become one of the best-reviewed movies of the year. "After we saw what happened at Sundance, where six separate screenings were all sold out," Reiner laughs, "I knew we were in for a real journey."

While Anvil is just now getting reacquainted with its long-dormant taste of fame, Reiner has remained a legend in the metal drumming community. Charlie Benante of Anthrax counts himself among those who've been Anvil fans since the beginning. "Back in the day," Benante remembers, "I loved Robb's double bass style and how he attacked it. He also had great, creative fills and

lightning-fast triplets. That really appealed to me. One of the reasons my double bass playing developed the way it did is because of Robb's influence. He's definitely a drummer's drummer."

The Cult's John Tempesta also cites Reiner as a major inspiration. "When I first heard [1982's] *Metal On Metal*, I couldn't believe the stuff Robb was doing. At that time, I'd say he was probably the fastest drummer playing double bass. You can hear that his playing comes from an old-school background, with a definite Mitch Mitchell and Ian Paice influence; it's very fast and choppy, with really clean single-stroke rolls. Over the years I've turned a lot of drummers on to Anvil."

While Reiner is praised for his metal technique, he admits he's always felt more like a jazz guy who just happens to play metal. "I'm schooled in jazz, and I love to play jazz," he says. "Playing a snare drum is what it's really all about!" For Anvil's upcoming fourteenth album, *Juggernaut Of Justice*, to be recorded near the end of 2009, Reiner plans to bring his jazz chops to the forefront. "We're experimenting with metal jazz," he offers. "We have a really amazing little piece—

an instrumental—and I believe it's going to dazzle everybody. But Lips and I, we always look to do something different. We've always played jazzy metal feels in our music. This thing now is taking it all the way—like big-band drumming with metal music. It's going to be amazing!"

BREAKOUT BEATS

Anvil's 1982 album, *Metal On Metal*, was an important link between the new wave of British heavy metal represented by Iron Maiden and Judas Priest and the decidedly more extreme thrash music that would soon dominate the genre. Robb Reiner's ridiculously fast footwork was a big, fat street sign pointing future speed demons down the road of burning double bass bliss.



Dadita Krhelt

With *The Story Of Anvil* having surpassed Metallica's *Some Kind Of Monster* as the number-one rock documentary in U.K. box office history, Anvil was overjoyed to score a third-stage headlining slot at this past spring's Download Festival in Donington Park, England, while also booking a number of additional British gigs. This fall the band is taking "The Anvil Experience"—where the group performs live after a screening of the film—to Japan, coinciding with the movie's domestic DVD release. "It's been an amazing experience for everybody," Reiner says.

The drummer emphasizes that the ultimate message of the alternately hilarious and heartbreaking *Story Of Anvil* is simply to never, ever abandon your dreams. "The movie has opened doors for us, and that's great," Robb says. "But it's the music that got us where we are today. We got here on our terms, and we never had to compromise our integrity. Our story needed to be told for a long time, and I'm really blown away that finally some justice is happening. But even if we became the biggest band in the world, we're still going to kick ass, because for us it's all about rocking. That's all I live for—to play drums and perform for people. I love it!"

Gail Worley

BLOG INSIGHTS

"Making music your life is a choice, no matter how talented you are. There comes a point in every artist's life when they must choose whether or not they are truly dedicated."

—Patrick Wood of the Phenomenal Handclap Band

"Meshuggah's Tomas Haake seemed to reach beyond the instrument, forcing the evolution of drumming itself. A steady diet of Tomas was extremely liberating to me—dwelling in the moment, unchaining the soul, and allowing music to swirl around turbulently through my mind, body, and drumset."

—Stephen Nicholson of This Is A Shakedown!

Quotes pulled from the Blog page at modern drummer.com.

ON TOUR

Chris McHugh with Keith Urban

Steve Rodford with the Zombies

Hozoji Matheson-Margullis with Helms Alee

Darryl White with Chris Thomas King

Ulysses Owens Jr. with Christian McBride's Inside Straight

John Tempesta with the Cult

Chachi Darin with the A.K.A.s

Robo with the Misfits

Dave Mackintosh with DragonForce



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The Phenomenal Handclap Band: *S/T* Patrick Wood



Kate Voegele: *A Fine Mess* Matt Chamberlain, Abe Laboriel Jr., Aaron Sterling

T.S.O.L.: *Life, Liberty & The Pursuit Of Free Downloads* Anthony "Tiny" Biuso

Steve Winwood and Eric Clapton: *Live From Madison Square Garden* Ian Thomas

The Datsuns: *Head Stunts* Ben Cole

Pat Travers: *Travelin' Blues* Aynsley Dunbar, Joe Nevolio, Liberty DeVitto

Mike Clinco: *Neon* Jimmy Branly

Judas Priest: *A Touch Of Evil: Live* Scott Travis

CKY: *Carver City* Jess Margera

Gary Go: *S/T* Will Calhoun

Rancid: *Let The Dominoes Fall* Branden Steineckert

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MARK O'CONNELL

When it comes to practicing, expressing himself, and getting a pro sound, **TAKING BACK SUNDAY's** drummer does *not* mess around. And he doesn't think you should either.



In ten years, Taking Back Sunday, from Long Island, New York, has overcome significant lineup changes and gone from indie-label obscurity to having three albums debut in the top ten of the *Billboard* Top 200 albums chart. Mark O'Connell took the drum throne during the recording of TBS's self-titled 2001 EP, and besides having to come off the 2007 Projekt Revolution tour due to back problems, has steadily powered the band since its well-received debut LP, 2002's *Tell All Your Friends*, through this year's *New Again*.

1 NEVER GIVE UP ON YOUR DREAM. If you believe you can make a life for yourself as a drummer, your chances are much greater. I've never imagined any other career for myself. So never give up! When the going gets tough, the tough get going.

2 LISTEN TO YOUR FAVORITE DRUMMERS AND TRY TO LIFT DIFFERENT STYLES AND TECHNIQUES FROM THEM. I used to sit in my parents' basement, playing constantly to my favorite drummers. I would sit there until I learned my favorite songs and beats. Those influences had a major impact on how I drum today.

3 SAVE ALL YOUR MONEY FOR EQUIPMENT AND KEEPING YOUR KIT SOUNDING GOOD. New cymbals, hardware... it's really important to have good-sounding gear. Even if you can't afford a top-notch drumset, always try your hardest to keep your skins, cymbals, and sticks looking and sounding good. The better they sound, the happier you will be. So instead of buying a video game or some other stuff you don't need, invest in your future and keep that kit sounding fresh.

4 PLAY WITH OTHER MUSICIANS OFTEN. I've always thought it's really important to play with people and start bands with friends and other musicians. It helps you find your style and who you are as a drummer.

5 LOCK UP WITH THE BASS PLAYER. It makes you and your band sound so much tighter. Listen to John Bonham and John Paul Jones of Led Zeppelin. They're one of the best drum and bass combos in rock history.

6 PLAY AS MANY SHOWS AS YOU CAN, BIG OR SMALL. Playing shows can be a great learning experience, and it's very fun as well. Playing our music or even other people's music in front of any number of people is liberating and makes me feel that all the hard work I've put in is paying off.

7 PICK YOUR LEAST FAVORITE SCHOOL SUBJECT AND REPLACE IT WITH DRUM TIME. When I thought of this it was kind of a joke, but not really. I used to cut class and go home to play music with my band. This is probably not good advice, but I used to do that, and it was way more fun than some boring class that I was never going to need for my future.

8 DON'T HIT THE DRUMS LIKE A SISSY. My least favorite thing about drummers is when they don't hit their drums like they mean it. It just sounds so weak, and the drummer looks so unmotivated that it kills me. Playing the drums can be an amazing release of all your frustrations and problems. So make good use of being able to beat the crap out of something without getting in any trouble.

9 START PLAYING TO A CLICK AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE. My first drum teacher made sure I started playing with a click right away. His name is Dave O'Donnell, and to this day I thank him for that. With Taking Back Sunday I use the click for every practice and every show. It's made me a better drummer, and it's made my band's live show *much* tighter.

10 ONLY TICO TORRES CAN GET AWAY WITH PLAYING DRUMS WITH GLOVES ON. Don't do it. Some drummers like wearing gloves. I guess I can't fault them for that. But gloves look and feel horrible to me. It makes me think that people who wear gloves are scared of getting a couple of blisters on their hands. If I've offended anybody by this, I'm truly sorry.





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5000 Artists (L to R) Robert Perkins (Michael Buble), Jason McGerr (Death Cab for Cutie) and Jason Sutter (Chris Cornell).
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PREVENTING SNARE DETUNING

I have a Tama Starclassic Performer birch snare drum that goes out of tune fairly quickly. Is my drum faulty, or is this inherent in its design?

Dave Jeffries

We've never had any complaints about tuning problems specifically involving the Tama Starclassic Performer. So we suspect your issue is either an isolated one pertaining to your particular drum or a result of your playing style. Do you hit hard and use mostly rimshots? Playing repeated rimshots will tend to gradually loosen one or two tension rods near the point of impact. If you keep the head cranked tight, your drum is likely to hold tension better than if you have it tuned lower.

A number of devices on the market are designed to help a drum hold its tension. Rhythm Tech IT (Index Tension) tuners and TightScrew tension-retaining rods are very good options for this purpose. Check them out at their respective Web sites, www.rhythmtch.com and www.tightscrew.com.

MYSTERIOUS LUDWIG SNARE

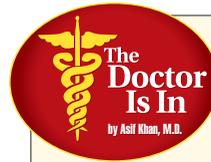


I have a question about an unusual Supra-Phonic snare. This drum has the larger Monroe-style keystone badge, but it's gold in color and says "Chicago" instead of Monroe. The drum has bowtie lugs instead of Imperials. I don't believe that anything has been changed on it; I think it was made this way. The best explanation I can come up with is that it was possibly built in 1983 or 1984 in Chicago, which would make it one of the last drums to be made there, before Ludwig moved to Monroe, North Carolina. Do you have any information on this peculiar instrument? The serial number is 3115691.

Greg

According to drum historian Harry Cangany, "Just before Ludwig was sold to Selmer, the large keystone badge was introduced. This was in 1984. For some unpublished reason, there were Supra-Phonics and Super Sensitives issued with Classic lugs instead of Imperials. The rumor/legend is that in those last days, Ludwig-designed Classic lugs were being used. The Ludwigs designed the Classic lug series in 1947, but Imperial lugs were not designed by the Ludwigs. From a historical standpoint, the Imperial lug was designed by Conn for Ludwig's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1934.

"It's possible that Ludwig had quite a few Classic lugs sitting around in 1984. Those lugs, with cutouts for the center bead, were formally used only on Acrolites. Ludwig never advertised Classic lugs on Supra-Phonics. The shells for Supras and Acrolites are the same; only the number of lugs and the outside finish are different. So, did the shell maker make a mistake? Did the driller make a mistake? Did the plater make a mistake? Or were there just a lot of unused lugs that the company wanted to get rid of? Unfortunately, it's another unsolved drum mystery."



HERNIA REPAIR

I made a stupid move in picking up something I shouldn't have, and now I'm going for hernia repair on my right side. Can you provide some insight into hernia surgery and drumming, and when I can get back to playing? I'm in my forties and have been playing jazz for years.

R. Harris

Hernias are very common and are among the oldest recorded afflictions. There are different kinds of hernias: femoral (in the thigh), inguinal (in the groin), and abdominal. Surgery is the only effective treatment.

The most common type of open repair for a hernia is the Shouldice technique, which involves using fine wire sutures and usually a propylene mesh to close the hernia. Open hernia repairs can come undone, depending upon the level of surgical expertise.

There are three different laparoscopic repair procedures, with the totally extraperitoneal (TEP) repair being the most popular. In experienced hands, this approach has the advantage of eliminating the risk of internal scars, called adhesions, which can be quite troublesome. Laparoscopic repair may be advantageous in returning patients who perform heavy manual labor to work earlier, while open repair may be particularly advantageous for older, less healthy patients. Open and laparoscopic repairs generally do not require an overnight hospital stay. Anesthesia can be local, spinal, or general. Of these, local anesthesia is associated with less postoperative pain, a shorter operating time, and fewer overnight stays (when they are needed).

Although it's discouraged, there is one known non-surgical therapy for groin hernias, and that is the use of a truss—a metal or hard plastic plug—that is positioned to lie over the hernia, reducing the contents of the hernia back into the abdomen.

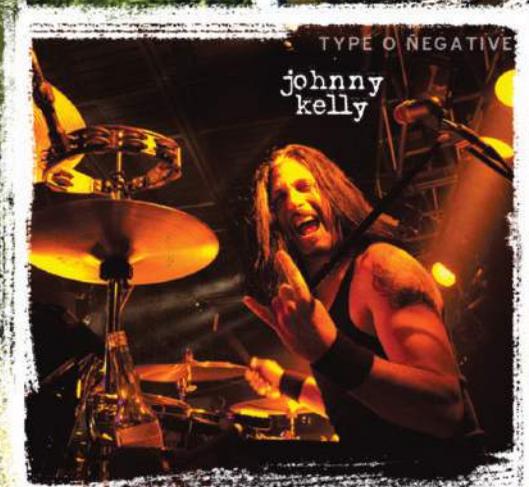
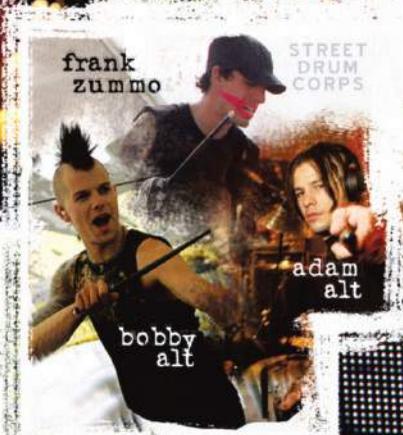
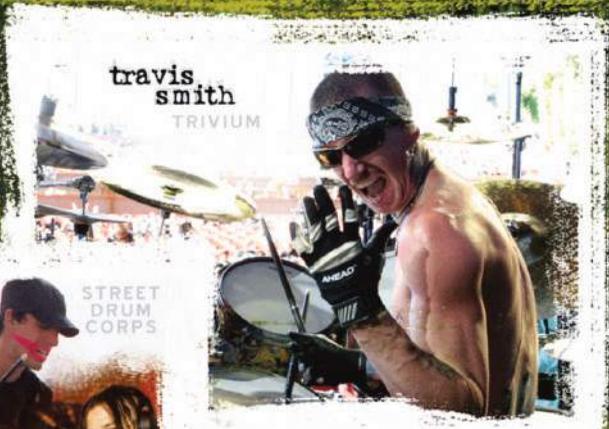
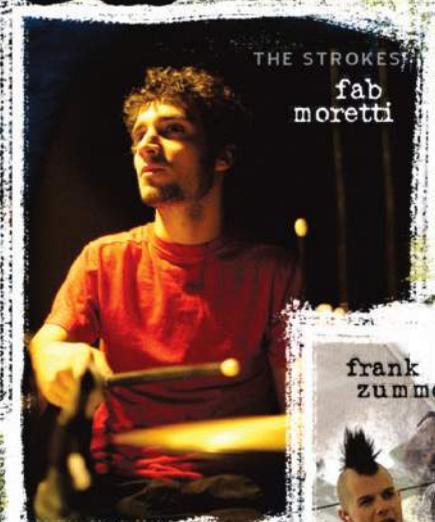
Outcomes of inguinal hernia repair are generally excellent. The time period before the patient can return to work following open or laparoscopic hernia repair is typically brief but depends on many factors, including the type of procedure used and the motivation of the patient. Patients in more sedentary employment, including light jazz players, generally may return to work and resume driving within ten days of surgery. Those involved in manual labor should refrain from heavy lifting (more than twenty-five pounds) for approximately three to four weeks.

As a drummer myself, I personally stopped playing for a full four weeks after having abdominal surgery. I recently spoke with Lorne Wheaton, drum technician for Neil Peart of Rush. Wheaton notes that at shows, "I do nearly everything myself, from setup to breakdown." Because of this rigorous lifting, Lorne has had three hernia repairs over the years, and he recommends three to four weeks for healing. Possible complications—such as infection, bleeding, hematomas, and pain—can be minimized by proper preparation and by following the directions of your physician after surgery.

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STEVE ALBINI

by Patrick Berkery

IT'S THE DRUMMER, NOT THE DRUMS. SO SAYS THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR SONICALLY CAPTURING NIRVANA, CHEAP TRICK, THE PIXIES, THE STOOGES, AND PAGE & PLANT.

Though he doesn't view his role in the studio as that of a producer and doesn't want credit for being one ("Recorded by..." will do), Steve Albini probably has as much or more to

then delaying those mics slightly to closely mimic the slap-back echo swirling in the room the drums are played in. It's that dark, room-y "thwack" that's been heard on Nirvana's *In*



do with how a band sounds on record than the typical producer who critiques demos, demands rewrites, suggests changes to a drummer's part, and so on.

Albini's methods, whether he's tracking rock royalty like Jimmy Page and Robert Plant or a scruffy indie band like the Ponys, are relatively simple: Mike things up, get sounds, put a performance on tape.

What ends up committed to tape is pretty identifiable—particularly the drum sound Albini gets by deploying ambient microphones and

Utero, the Pixies' *Surfer Rosa*, and countless other albums over the past twenty-odd years.

Albini does smaller drum sounds too, and quite well. For proof check out Nina Nastasia's 2006 album, *On Leaving*, which features the drumming of Jim White (the Dirty Three, Nick Cave, Cat Power) and Jay Bellerose (Robert Plant and Alison Krauss, Beck, T-Bone Burnett).

Sure, Albini is pretty particular about which microphones he records drums with: Neumanns, mostly, for room and ambience; Josephson E22 top and bottom pairs on toms; and an assortment

of tube condenser mics on the snare. But if a drummer wants to track using, say, a piccolo snare with a welted head, a 26" kick, and toy cymbals, Albini's fine with it.

"Whatever somebody wants to do, the choice a drummer makes for a drumkit, I think I'm open to any of it," he says. "And I don't even particularly care if it sounds bad. If it sounds bad





and that's an emblem of his style, then it doesn't sound bad, actually."

MD: You rarely get involved in the composition of a drummer's kit, correct?

Steve: It's none of my business what a drummer wants to play with. I'm not going to tell him what hi-hats to use. He should do what he wants. I've had some people use 16" crash cymbals for hi-hats, and I've had people use little saucer-size cymbals for hi-hats. Whatever works, you know?

I did a record with the Stooges, and Scott [Asheton] had been using a sort of toy drumkit during rehearsals. It had little tiny cymbals. He had stacked a few of them up to get a trashier sound. So the cymbals he used for the album were conventional ones, but with little tiny cymbals stacked on top of them. And he made a believer out of me. It sounded kind of odd and piercing at times, but it also had a very distinctive sound, like a half-open hi-hat. He owned it.

MD: Then you probably wouldn't insist a drummer track with a fresh snare head that's been cranked up overnight and dropped back down to midrange tuning in the morning.

Steve: No. People are idiots about a lot of stuff. It doesn't make that much difference. The main thing is that whoever's playing the drums should be able to do the job effectively, right? The less crap I put in his way, the better.

MD: Are there certain characteristics that you typ-

ically look for in a drummer?

Steve: When I think of a great drummer, I don't think of dudes who can play super-flashy stuff. I think of guys that, without drawing attention to themselves, are probably the most important element of the band. And there are very few drummers that can be put into any circumstance and still maintain that level of importance. Glenn Kotche from Wilco is one. He is a phenomenal percussionist. He has a really complex setup, but he doesn't use it more than he needs to.

Jim White, he's a percussionist more than strictly a drummer. He plays in a very expressive, improvisational, fluid style, but I've never heard him sound bad—any lineup, any setting. And Jay Bellerose is a phenomenal drummer. He's one of those guys that's a shadow figure, and he's a super-sweet guy to work with. Really takes the music to heart, knows what matters and what doesn't matter, doesn't get hung up on getting credit for stuff. He just wants it to be awesome.

MD: On records like *In Utero*, you've achieved a cavernous room sound, and it seems like the microphones and the room have as much to do with that sound as the intensity with which the drummer is playing.

Steve: Right. Some drummers play quite softly, and they still manage to maintain the impression of power. They do that by varying their dynamics. Bun E. Carlos comes to mind. He has a fairly light touch, but the drums always sound great. He has

a way of milking the sound out of the drums without having to pound them.

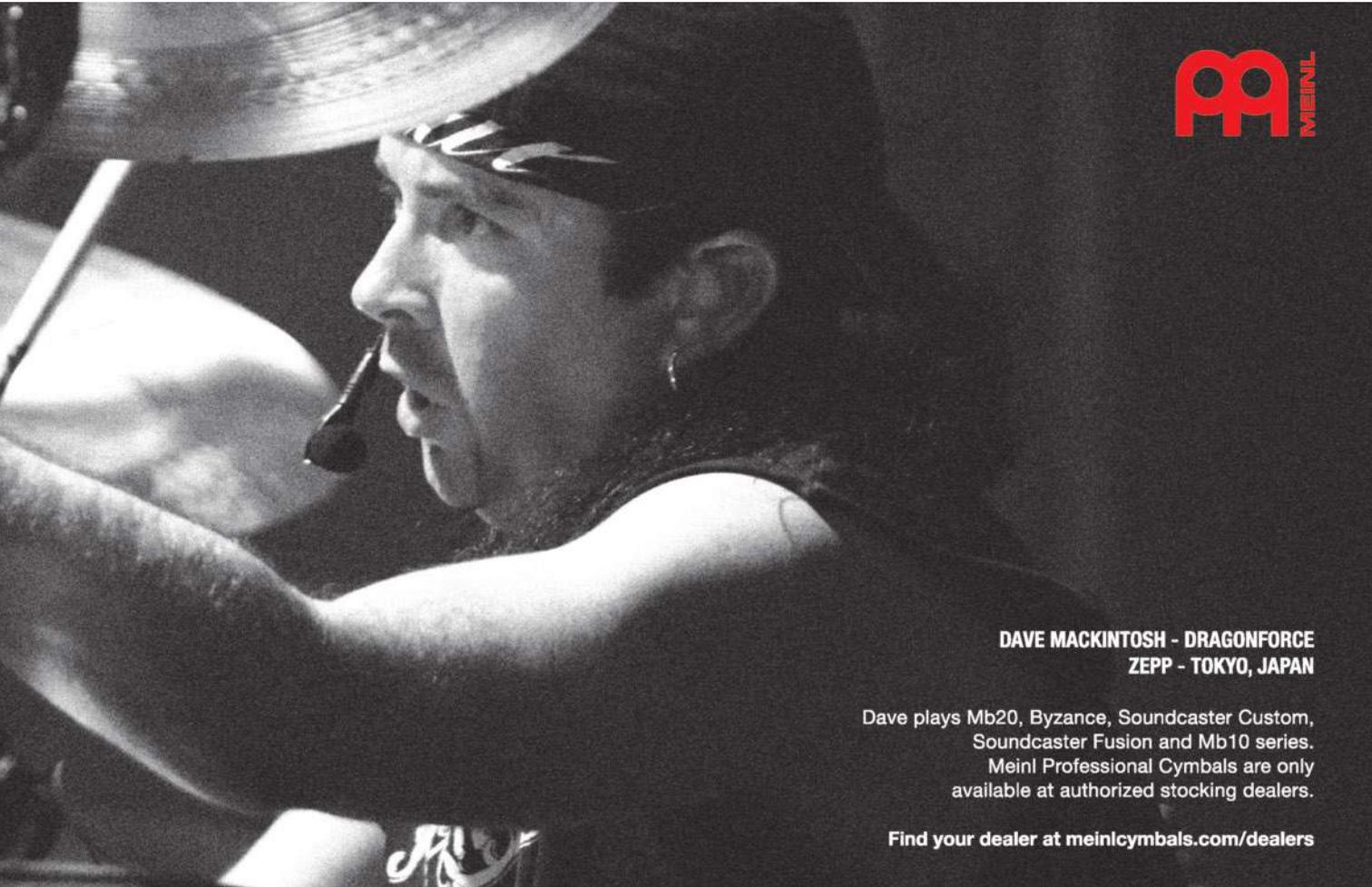
There are other drummers that hit super hard, and the drums sound great, like Rey Washam [Rapeman, Ministry, Scratch Acid]. His technique is as finely tuned as Bun E. Carlos's is. Dave Grohl beats the crap out of the drums, and they always sound great. He hit really hard, but his feel for the music was fantastic, and he was able to adjust his playing intensity on a subtle scale. As highly regarded as he is as a drummer, I think he's really underrated.

MD: That's well put. *In Utero* is one of the greatest drumming performances ever, and it's gotten a bit obscured because of the legacy of Nirvana and what he's gone on to do fronting Foo Fighters.

Steve: What I think is nice about it is he didn't do anything stock. His drumbeat seemed suited to each song. You notice distinctive flourishes in what he was doing, but you don't notice it instantly.

MD: Do you get a lot of requests from artists for that huge drum sound?

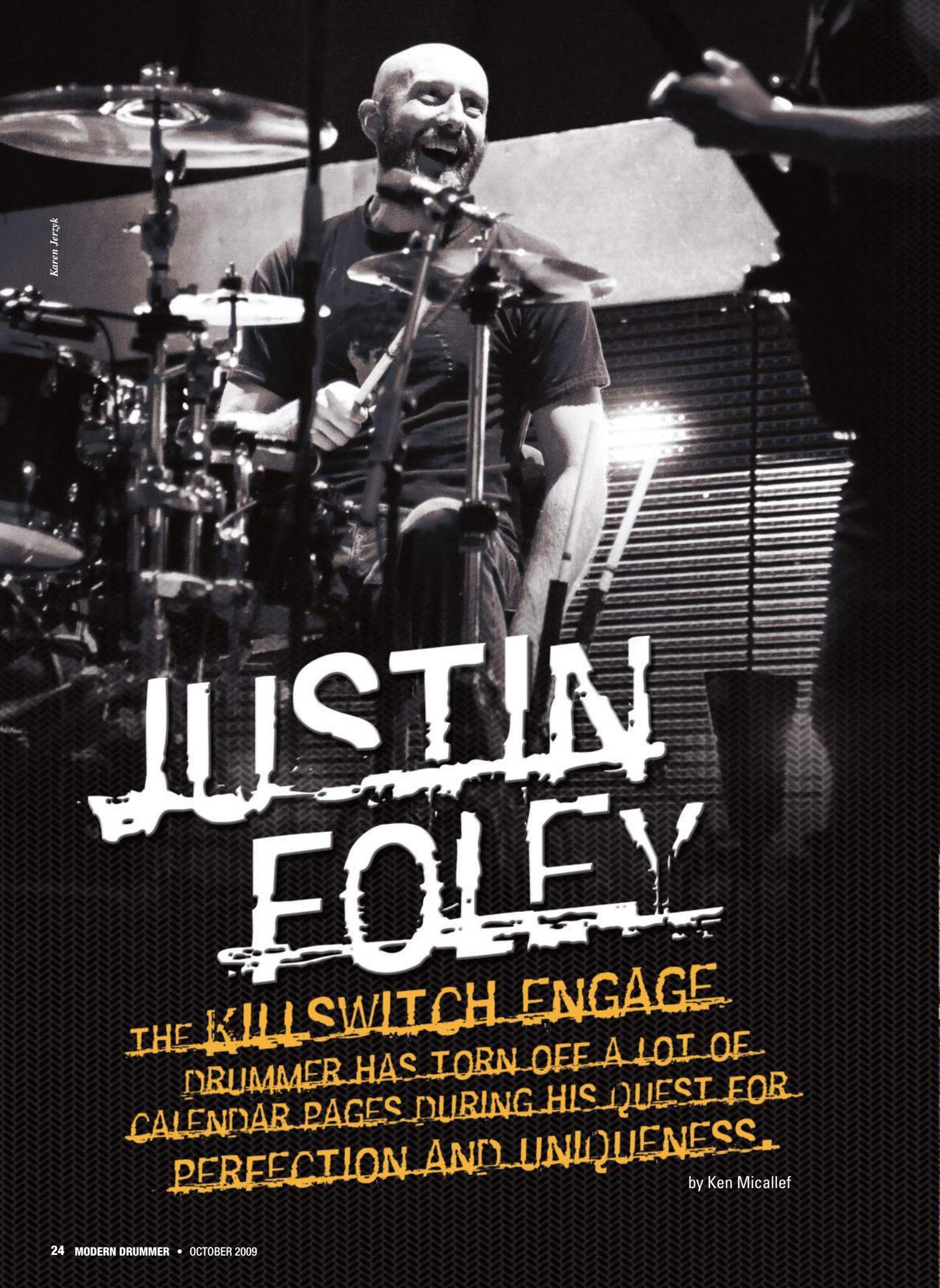
Steve: Twenty percent of the time the band wants a super-tight, super-dry sound; 20 percent of the time they want that super-boomy, deep, cavernous sound; 60 percent of the time they want something in between. I have no qualms about any part of that spectrum. It's just that with an awful lot of the records I've worked on, the drummer liked the ambient sound and wanted to feature it. I have no problem with that.



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Karen Jerzyk

JUSTIN FOLEY

THE KILLSWITCH ENGAGE
DRUMMER HAS TORN OFF A LOT OF
CALENDAR PAGES DURING HIS QUEST FOR
PERFECTION AND UNIQUENESS.

by Ken Micallef

Justin Foley strides into a Roadrunner Records conference room in New York City, his bushy red beard and shiny chrome dome giving him the appearance of an Amish holy man. Then he opens his mouth and speaks eloquently about complex practice routines and the joys of four-mallet technique. You suddenly realize that Foley is a man of the rhythmic cloth incorporating orchestral chops with heavy metal thunder, and the plot thickens.

Killswitch Engage, the drummer's third album with the Massachusetts band of the same name, confirms the red-haired wonder as one of the most intense, perfectionist, and accomplished timekeepers in American metalcore. On prior Killswitch albums, as well as his work with the thrash/jazz troupe Red Tide and the "way more weird" Blood Has Been Shed, Foley brought to bear manic, above-the-skins muscle and straight-to-the-double-kicks extravagance on blistering changes. And though Foley calls Killswitch Engage "a groove band," his drumming on their latest epic is infused with skull-slaming double bass fills, indecipherable duple meter implications, bullet-train single-stroke rolls, and creative full-set patterns. A graduate of the University Of Connecticut and the Hartt School for the performing arts (where he earned his master's in percussion), Foley is a fan of Sean Reinert, Charlie Benante, and Bart Simpson, in that order. Somehow it all makes sense.

Killswitch recorded Foley's drums at Atlanta's Southern Tracks with superstar producer Brendan O'Brien, then returned to home turf for the remainder of the album, tracking vocals, guitars, and bass at Zing Recording Studios in Westfield, Massachusetts. (Guitarists Joel Stroetzel and Adam Dutkiewicz told *Revolver* magazine they didn't enjoy the working environment at Southern Tracks.) The sound is live and direct, and it's the best document to date of Foley's primal/intellectual style.

Though he once spent his days perfecting snare drum and marimba technique and dreaming of holding a chair in the Hartford Symphony, these days Foley is too caught up in Killswitch Engage's success to worry about paying union dues. "When you're no longer in that scene, you fall to the bottom of the list," the thirty-three-year-old admits. "When we tour it's impossible to get regular calls. But I'd love to still be able to do that someday, though my skills are probably incredibly rusty right now."

Foley is modest, soft spoken, and economical with his words; he communicates equally succinctly on his instrument. The drummer finds a spot for sensitive cymbal rolls in "The Return," executes merciless rhythmic illusions paired with odd-meter bars in "A Light In A Darkened World," and uses jazz chops throughout *Killswitch Engage* to explore double bass patterns as fill constructions. He also employs mental techniques learned in symphonic orchestras to focus his thrilling performance aesthetic.

MD: Your drumming on the new album is funkier, more syncopated, and looser than on previous Killswitch Engage records.

Justin: I just think I'm becoming more comfortable with the band. The music is different from what I do in Red Tide or Blood Has Been Shed. I just put down something really solid and don't do a lot of stupid crazy stuff. I'm not out there to play stuff to make drummers happy.

MD: You're an unlikely metal drummer. You have a master's in percussion, yet Killswitch Engage doesn't exactly resemble Mozart. How do you bring your orchestral chops to the band?

Justin: One of the things I learned at UConn and at Hartt was how to play with people. When you play in smaller ensembles or in the orchestra, it's a given that you will play your part right. What you're really trying to do is play with everybody, whether it's playing tight or interacting. That's something that I try to bring to Killswitch Engage, and you can do that in any setting, whether it's a band or an orchestra.

MD: What was your favorite orchestral instrument at Hartt?

Justin: I love marimba. I did a four-mallet solo...it's not mainstream by any stretch of the imagination. When you play marimba you're striking the instrument so you get the same feeling as when you're playing the drums. You can get all of your melodic satisfaction out of it too.

Composers like Gordon Stout, Michael Burritt, Joseph Schwantner—they're my favorites. Schwantner writes a lot of different symphonic works; he and Burritt are more modern percussion guys.

MD: What do orchestral players know that rockers don't?

Justin: They have a different discipline. They'll practice for



Karen Jerzyk

hours upon hours. They'll practice one thirty-second piece of music for six hours a day. Rockers could never do something like that.

I played almost no drumset when I was at Hartt. I would go to school, then practice with a band at home. I didn't take drumset lessons at school. All the practice was for orchestral playing, whether it was learning parts or solo music.

BIG HANDS, SMALL DRUMS

MD: Did the orchestral discipline influence your choice of a smaller drumset?

Justin: The small set came from playing shows with Red Tide in some basement or pool hall, places where there weren't PAs. I'd watch the other bands, and I could never hear the drummer's toms. They were lost in all the distortion. I thought, *How can I get my toms to cut through?* So I began using smaller ones. They cut through the music differently. And when we started getting PAs and my drums were properly miked, I stuck with them. I like the way they sound.

MD: How do you tune your drums?

fairly low—with Moongel—as is the 20" kick drum. I couldn't get away with just any 20" kick drum, but the Yamaha sounds so deep it's unbelievable. It sounds bigger than it really is.

MD: Larger kits are part of the metal aesthetic.

Justin: I thought about it differently. I had a big drumset in high school so I could play all the Rush fills the right way. When I started playing in bands where I wrote original drum parts, I

live situation?

Justin: It's tough to do live. It's easier when you go from a distorted part to a clean part. The other guys have a schooled background as well, and they understand. They think similarly to how I think about music. Adam and Joel both came out of Berklee College Of Music.

MD: Such a well-schooled band.

Justin: It makes for a lot of nerd talk! We can talk about diminished chords and everyone understands. But we all

"I just put down something really solid. I'm not out there to play stuff to make drummers happy."

found myself using less of that for what I wanted to play. Eventually I found myself playing a four-piece kit. Now I have one mounted tom and two floors. After a while, cutting down trips during load-in becomes a goal!

MD: Do you use the same set in the stu-

try to approach the music for the songs. We actually have a guitar solo on this record—we didn't on the last record. Adam and Joel can shred like crazy on guitar, but unless there's a reason, it's not there. We want to play what the song needs.

JUSTIN'S KIT

Drums: Yamaha Maple Custom Nouveau Signature series in blue to dark blue fade. 6x14 Mike Bordin signature snare drum, 8x10 tom, 11x13 tom, 13x15 tom, 16x20 bass drum.

Cymbals: Zildjian. 14" K Custom Session hi-hats, 10" A splash, 18" A Custom medium crash, 22" A Custom medium ride, 19" A Custom medium crash, 17" A Custom medium crash, 19" K Custom dark China.

Heads: Evans. Snare: HD batter, Hazy 300 snare side. Toms: G2 clear batters, G1 bottoms. Bass drum: EQ3.

Sticks: Pro-Mark 5Bs



Justin: I tune them pretty low. I'm into having smaller drums tuned to the low part of their range. They give me better response than larger drums, even when tuned low. I tension the top and bottom heads pretty evenly, with the bottom tom head a little bit higher. It's a touchy thing. Sometimes it works to put Moongel on the toms, but I prefer not to use it. The snare drum is also tuned

dio and for live performance?

Justin: Not exactly, but close. In the studio I used a 22" kick drum. And instead of 13" and 15" toms, I used a 12x14 and a 14x16. They're not massive.

MD: You play some unusual cymbal flourishes in "The Return" and elsewhere. That adds a kind of depth you don't always hear in metal. How do you get that to cut through the band in a

MD: Your tracks on *Killswitch Engage* sound very live. How were the drums recorded?

Justin: Usually we would do a scratch track and I would play through it, but this time everybody was in the room. It's the first time I've recorded that way. Brendan O'Brien wanted us to do that. We'd do maybe three takes. If I wasn't happy with something, I would try to

punch in that exact part.

MD: What did O'Brien bring to the sessions?

Justin: The vibe was really comfortable. He wants to get those takes where you're playing what you're really behind and really believe in. He doesn't want takes where you're thinking about the part; he wants the take where you're blowing through it.

CLICKING WITH THE CLICK

MD: I read that you used a click for the entire album.

Justin: We wanted to get everything locked in. If we had suggested to Brendan that we didn't want to use a click, he would have been cool with it. All the dudes in the band are way into the click, especially Adam and Joel. But I don't even know if the others had the click. The drum tracks were all live; the guys were in the next room playing with me. But then they re-tracked their parts. Being in the room and playing as a band is important, though.

MD: How did you become comfortable with the click?

Justin: I like the click to be a clear note. At home my click combines a cowbell on the downbeat and a conga slap on the other beats of the measure. I like a real sound. But that's not what I had for this album; it was one of those Pro Tools click noises.

PULLING THE SWITCH ON DOUBLE KICK

MD: You don't use double bass just for grooves; you also use it as a fill device or as a separate color. How did you develop that approach?

Justin: From working on jazz. I am not a jazz drummer, but I've practiced and worked out of some jazz books, like John Riley's *The Art of Bop Drumming* and Ted Reed's *Syncopation*. The coordination exercises in those books include the bass drum, often in a jazz fill context.

MD: How did you get to the point where you can rip out those double bass fills effortlessly?

Justin: I don't know. Perhaps playing barefoot and heel-up on the pedals helps. That's how I started. Playing barefoot is something I just stuck with. It feels really connected that way.

MD: What else?

Justin: I played with a lot of Slayer records. You really have to be patient

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JUSTIN FOLEY

with double kick. You have to play things really slowly. The temptation is to hear something that's ripping and go for it, but that will sound awful. You have to play slowly and concentrate on getting the pattern even between the two kicks. And I try to

do the whole left-foot-lead approach across to the hi-hat too, so my hi-hat is keeping time as well. Sean Reinert does that really well. I can do it in my basement, but I can't do it on the gig. Try starting with single strokes on the bass drum with a metronome, and really

speed or fluidity?

Justin: I had to learn all of the twenty-six rudiments when I was at Hartt, though they've slipped out of my memory somewhat. Flam taps are good. Inverted flam taps will really mess with your head. If you're doing a right-handed flam, the next note would be a left, followed by a left-handed flam. I would get those up to speed—well, up to a speed! [laughs] Some people can shred paradiddles like they're double-stroke rolls. I could never do that.

MD: What is your current practice routine?

Justin: I still work out of John Riley's book and *Syncopation*, plus Gary Chester's *New Breed* and Alexander Lepak's *Control Of The Drum Set: Phrasing For The Soloist*. He was the Harvard Symphony timpanist for many years. I practice that, and every day I play to Led Zeppelin with the iPod on random. When you're fifteen you think you've got Bonham down. Then when you're thirty-three you realize you can never play it like he did.

MD: What's your pre-show warm-up?

Justin: I do basic stretches with my

RECORDINGS

Blood Has Been Shed Novella Of Uriel, Spirals /// **Killswitch Engage** The End Of Heartache, As Daylight Dies /// **Red Tide** Type II, Themes Of The Cosmic Consciousness

FAVORITES

Led Zeppelin Houses Of The Holy (John Bonham) /// **Rush** Hemispheres (Neil Peart) /// **Candiria** Beyond Reasonable Doubt (Kenneth Schalk) /// **Cynic** Focus (Sean Reinert) /// **Dave Matthews Band** Listener Supported (Carter Beauford) /// **Dillinger Escape Plan** Calculating Infinity (Chris Pennie) /// **Foo Fighters** The Colour And The Shape (William Goldsmith, Dave Grohl) /// **Meshuggah** Destroy Erase Improve (Tomas Haake) /// **Fredrik Thordendal** Sol Niger Within, Version 3.33 (programmed) /// **Soul Coughing** Ruby Vroom (Yuval Gabay)

practice left-foot leading. Obviously, being a right-handed player, my left foot is weaker than my right. Try playing a mid-tempo double kick groove and lead with your left foot.

MD: Do you actually play left-foot leads with double kick fills?

Justin: No, I haven't been able to do that, but I'm working on it! I'm trying to

strive to get it sounding even. I did a little bit with rudiments on the double kick, but most of the time it was just practicing single strokes slow and even.

MAINTAINING TECHNIQUE

MD: You've talked about applying Swiss triplets to the set. Are there other rudiments you can recommend for

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wrists. I pull each finger back on each hand, and I do the two-handed two-stick twist, reversing the sticks with one hand, then the other. Then I work the pad. I do eight notes on each hand, then nine on each hand, up to sixteen. Then I add doubles each time between each set of singles on each hand. I do that all the way through until it turns into a double-stroke roll. At Hartt I would repeat each group twenty times before adding the double stroke.

TOYING WITH TIME

MD: The new album features songs with lots of rhythm changes—double time, cut time, 3/4 time, four to the bar—often within the same track. “A Light In A Darkened World” sounds like 3/4, 2/4, and a cut-time section. The opening song has a double kick section and then what sounds like three-over-four phrases. How do you make all these different sections sound natural?

Justin: I love two things happening at once, hidden time signatures that come out where you don’t expect. I got into those weird patterns, or hemiola, and finding different ways to make them smooth out. Bands like Rush, Meshuggah, and Candiria are great at that.

MD: How do you suggest drummers become comfortable with the hemiola heard in “Never Again”?

Justin: Understand how the phrases work together. If it’s three over four, focus on the three part of it and understand where the three fits into everything. Try to play it that way, like a straight three. Then focus on the four and how it fits into everything. Then understand how they fall into place when you put them on top of each other.

MD: The pattern you play in “I Would Do Anything” sounds like a loop or a punched-in section. It’s almost perfect.

Justin: That was played live. I’m playing a thrash beat with the snare hits on the beat. The faster that gets, the more tempting it is to add a swing feel to it, rather than a machine-gun feel. It’s hard to do; I swing it all the time.

MD: You play a really interesting slow 16th-note tom rhythm in “The Return.”

Justin: The verses are on the toms; it’s like a Faith No More-inspired part. I flam the tom part with snare drum on 2 and 4. It’s broken up around the set, a

linear pattern.

MD: All your parts are so well orchestrated.

Justin: I put a lot of thought into them. I definitely didn’t create every fill beforehand; I played what I felt at the time. But there are fills that I really liked, remembered, and kept in the songs. I tried to make the parts build from one section to the next. You don’t want everything to peak too early.

I try to figure out where the song is going to have that *moment*, and I try to save the exact part for that peak mo-

ment, even if it’s something small like not crashing on the biggest cymbal until that peak moment. Even if up to that point I’m riding on a crash cymbal, I don’t use my 19”. I save the 19” for the peak moment. Even something that small makes a difference to the song.

MD: How do you continue to grow and improve as a musician?

Justin: I’m always looking for new music to get inspiration. It’s always there. You can find it if you look for it.



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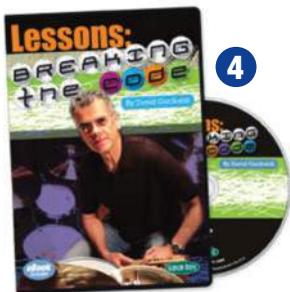
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4. HUDSON MUSIC and legendary Tower Of Power drummer David Garibaldi's new DVD, *Lessons: Breaking The Code*, offers an overview of the general concepts and techniques used to create funk drumming's characteristic sounds and infectious grooves. Garibaldi dissects the patterns he used for several TOP classics, while also covering topics like the fundamental relationship between the kick, hi-hat, and snare, differences between ghost notes and accents, and how to incorporate hybrid/permutated rudiments and displaced patterns into performances. (\$29.95)

www.hudsonmusic.com

5. ZILDJIAN has recently added two signature models to the Artist series drumstick line. For his second Artist stick, superstar drummer Travis Barker went for a black model featuring a thick neck and round bead tip.

Ronald Bruner Jr.'s new drumstick is 15" long and .550" wide and is made of 100 percent U.S. hickory. A short taper gives the stick extra weight up front, and a stubby tear-drop-shaped tip helps to produce full, lower-pitched sounds from cymbals and drums. The stick is said to be perfect for jazz and R&B. The suggested price for each model is \$17.25.

The Steve Gadd Artist collection cymbal bag strives to capture the class and style of one of the most influential drummers of all time. Gadd's signature, the Zildjian logo, and an image of Steve's favorite bulldog are embossed on the outside of the 22"-diameter bag. The bag is constructed from heavy-duty cotton and has a rich brown leatherette-trim exterior. It features an adjustable shoulder strap, padded carrying handle, and rubberized skid plate on the bottom. (\$129.95)

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Ever hear someone described as being "the whole package?" When it comes to drummers, Rodney Holmes is just that. Equally at home playing complex jazz compositions as he is laying down electronica-inspired funk grooves or barn burning twangy rock, Rodney has cut his teeth with some of the world's finest musicians such as Joe Zawinul, the Brecker Brothers, Carlos Santana and more.

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STARWORKS SERIES by David Ciauro



My first impression of a drumset can do a 180 once I discover the kit's target audience—and price range. Such was the case with the Tama Starworks kit, which is visibly not of the same ilk as the company's high-

than you might expect. The shells are 100 percent premium birch outfitted with solid-black hardware and sleek newly designed lugs with etched stars. The snare, tom, and floor tom shells are all 6-ply/6 mm; the kick is 7-ply/7 mm.

key to adjust, which can be a bit cumbersome if you're used to legs with thumbscrews.

RACK AND FLOOR TOMS

The rack toms on the Starworks kit employ a new suspended mount that's easy to maneuver, offers a decent height range, and is equipped with memory locks. Both the toms and floors breathed nicely, offering balanced tones with a focused attack and short decay. The floor tom legs are short, so they won't provide the height needed for drummers (like me!) who sit higher and prefer their floor toms to be even with their snare drum.

SNARE DRUM

In comparison to the rest of the kit, the 5½x14 Starworks snare drum was the weakest link. Snare response and sensitivity was moderate, and a prominent high overtone remained a constant across the tuning spectrum. The rest of the kit sounded nice when left wide open, but muffling was necessary to squash these overtones on the snare. The Starworks snare also lacked the snap and presence you'd need for heavier music.

CONCLUSION

Reaching out to the increasingly popular metal community by offering gritty finishes that match young drummers' rebellious nature is a good move. Although your view of the Starworks aesthetics will depend on personal taste, the sonics are versatile enough that the drumset could work in other styles of music beyond its intended heavy-hitting application. The all-birch shells really make this kit stand out from other drums in a comparable mid-level price range.

www.tama.com

A LIMITED LINE

The Starworks series currently comes in four finishes and two five-piece configurations, which are offered as shell packs or complete kits with hardware.

The distinctive "chaos" finish comes in silver-black, yellow, or red, and there's also a satin cherry burst that has a more universal appeal. Other prototype finishes might see the light of the production line in the future.

Configuration 1 includes a 6½x14 snare, a 20x22 kick without a tom mount, a 9x12 rack tom (with a black-finish tom adapter and multi-clamp), and 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms. Configuration 2 includes a 5½x14 snare, an 18x22 kick with a tom mount, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms (with a black-finish mount), and a 14x16 floor tom. Both shell packs list for \$1,462.99.

end Starclassic bubinga sets. This new series is aimed at the aggressive to extreme metal drummer looking for a quality drumset that won't break the bank but will offer an edgier aesthetic accompaniment to a muscular musical environment.

CUSTOMIZED FINISH AND QUALITY SHELLS

The Starworks finish feels more like a textured countertop than a drum shell, but the nonconformist "silver black chaos" veneer sends an immediate surge of nostalgia. It reminds me of Lars Ulrich's kit from the ...*And Justice For All* era. Metallica's "One" video was my first dose of heavy metal, both sonically and visually, and it played an integral role in my musical development.

Go beyond the feel of the finish, and you'll discover that the quality of these drums is far greater

BASS DRUM

Achieving a good sound with the 18x22 bass drum was quite simple, whether I was looking for a booming raw kick or a short low-end attack. If you want to add some chesty punch to offset sludgy guitars, try tuning the batter head to a medium-tight tension while keeping the front head on the loose side. This produced a full, solid tone that could cut through a low-end mix. The birch shell creates a shorter decay, so muffling isn't necessary. Reverse that tuning method and apply some internal muffling for a tight attack that's great for blistering double kick work.

The kit comes equipped with a solid front head adorned with the Starworks graphic, which might have to be defaced slightly, depending on your porthole needs. The leg braces require a drum

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K CUSTOM HYBRID ADDITIONS

by Fran Azzarto

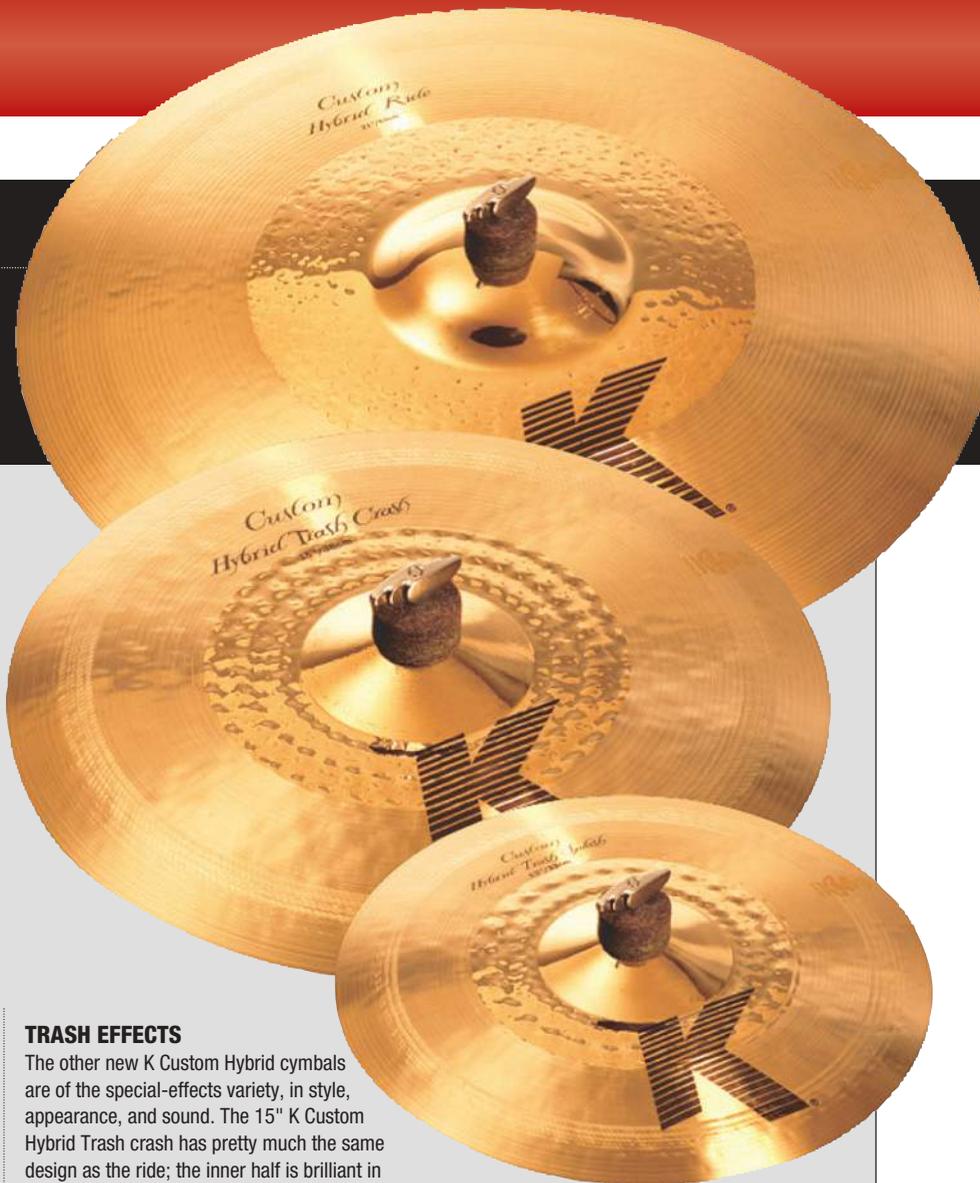
It's such a great feeling when you finally find that perfect ride you've been searching for all these years, or that great crash that's there for you every time you need a big accent. Well, just when you think you've found everything you want, along comes Zildjian's K Custom Hybrid series. Unique in every way, these cymbals will have you scratching your head wondering, *Was my search in vain?*

The newest additions to the K Custom Hybrid family are a 21" ride (\$639), a 15" Trash crash (\$401), and a 13" Trash splash (\$328). Let's start with the big boy.

THREE FOR ONE

The 21" ride lives up to its "hybrid" name, that's for sure. The unlathed inner half has a brilliant finish similar to what you'd find on a standard K Custom ride. The outer half is lathed like a traditional K. The sound of playing on the inner ring was all "ping" and not a lot of sing. Offering great attack, even at fast tempos, the unlathed portion had well-controlled overtones and a clean, quick decay. The lathed section had more of that wash you'd expect from a big ride, plus rich-sounding overtones with a fairly long decay. The two riding surfaces also differed slightly in pitch, with the inner ring sounding almost a full step higher than the outer ring.

The bell is more raised than a standard K bell. Like the inner unlathed ring, it had a tight "ding" sound. Not a lot of complexity here, just



TRASH EFFECTS

The other new K Custom Hybrid cymbals are of the special-effects variety, in style, appearance, and sound. The 15" K Custom Hybrid Trash crash has pretty much the same design as the ride; the inner half is brilliant in finish, and the outer half is lathed. But about 1" from the beginning of the lathed part, moving outward, there are etched concentric circular bands about $1\frac{3}{16}$ " in width. After the last etched circle, the edge of the crash is curved down. (This is one funky-looking cymbal!) More "trash"

and with a squared-off bell. This little guy was light sounding, high pitched, and extremely quick to decay. The overtones were rough and mixed. There wasn't a lot of sustain, just a sound that was short and to the point.

IN USE

Up against a Les Paul screaming through an Orange combo guitar amp and a Fender Precision bass thumping an Ampeg SVT stack, the Hybrids held their own, and more. The 21" ride was mind blowing. The two surface areas gave my timekeeping a whole new life, as the separate sounds inspired new ideas and patterns to fly from my wrist. The Trash crash and splash were also a joy to play with. These two effects cymbals will add a lot of depth to your explosive arsenal.

Hopefully the K Custom Hybrid series is only going to expand to include even more sizes and styles. Perhaps the lesson here is that the search for the perfect cymbal never ends—and it can't hurt to have your cymbal bag filled to the brim with a slew of different sounds.

www.zildjian.com

HYBRID BACKGROUND

The original design concept behind the K Custom Hybrid series came as a result of Zildjian's collaboration with world-renowned Japanese drummer Akira Jimbo.

As the story goes, Jimbo was playing a 20" K Custom ride and loved the bell and stick sound but wanted more of a crash. After some diligent design work and extensive test marketing, the K Custom Hybrids hit the streets in 2006 in limited sizes and styles. Over the past few years, the series has grown. It's all about supply and demand, and apparently this new line of cymbals is a hot commodity.

strength and volume.

When you slam a ride, you usually get a lot of wash and an extremely long decay—but not with the Hybrid. Quick and higher in pitch than most big rides, the crash sound of this cymbal was closer to that of an 18" than a 21" ride. So there you have it: one cymbal with two distinctly different-sounding ride zones, plus an amazingly useful crash sound and a loud bell.

than crash, the overall sound was dark and quick, with some ear-piercing highs mixed in. The bell is cone shaped. This specialty cymbal would be great to have for quick upbeat accents or even to double up with a regular crash on big downbeat smashes. Lots of fun to be had with this one.

The 13" K Custom Hybrid Trash splash is similar to the Trash crash, just smaller, thinner,



GMS

SL SERIES SUBWAY KIT by Dave Previ

A weekend road trip in a minivan with an entire band requires a masterful packing job, especially when you have to provide your own sound. GMS's compact SL series Subway drumkit offers a solution to space issues in the van and on stage. But the true beauty of the kit is its sound. In my case, the minivan stopped for a restaurant gig in Vermont and a show at a music venue in Boston. In these two small rooms, I figured out exactly what the Subway kit was all about.

A TOTAL PACKAGE

This Subway kit, like all SL series drums, comes with a complete set of hardware, including two double-braced boom stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, a bass drum pedal, and a throne.

LOOKS NICE

As I unpacked the short-stack drums, I was surprised that the lugs were not the signature GMS design. Instead, sharp teardrop-shaped lugs adorned the drums, making for an elegant appearance. (The 10" tom had an offset lug pattern due to its short depth.) The natural blond color of the birch shells was highlighted with a clear polyurethane finish that wasn't as thick as I've seen on other brands' kits.

PACK 'EM UP AND LET'S GO!

After removing the SL Subway kit from its factory

boxes and setting it up in my Brooklyn apartment's kitchen for preliminary testing, I packed it back up in some cases for my band's New England road trip. The 10x20 bass drum and 7x14 "floor tom" fit into a 16x20 soft case with room to spare, so I wrapped a blanket around the tom for extra padding. The 5x10 and 6x12 rack toms fit into a 12x14 soft case. The 5 1/2x14 snare fit into a standard snare bag. Altogether, with my stands folded into a hardware case and my cymbals in a separate bag, I had only five items to add to the packing puzzle in the rear of our van, which was pretty good considering I was taking a five-piece kit.

THE TUBS

I tuned up the drums before packing them for the trip, so I knew that the bass drum would deliver some pretty impressive punch for our Led Zeppelin cover tunes. I'm not comparing it to Bonzo's huge 26" kick, but this drum, with both heads slightly loose, had a lot of low end for its size. I wasn't disappointed by its performance at either of the weekend's gigs; it was powerful when I put the pedal to the metal and delicate when I needed it to be.

For small rooms, I would almost prefer a kit of this size, as it had a built-in volume limit. The toms' shallow depths allowed them to get only so loud, which was perfect when I laid into them during "Dazed And Confused." They didn't stun the listeners' ears when I pounded them in unison with the bass drum. Since

these drums are made of birch, they had a pillowy punch and a warm tone. Again, this would be great for small spaces because the drums were easy on the ears.

SNARE!

When I tested the snare drum in my apartment, I didn't lay into it, but I noticed its sensitivity right out of the box. During soundcheck in Vermont, though, I found out how powerful it really was. I hit just a few rimshots before the bass player reached over and handed me his wallet to use for muffling. "That's piercing," he said.

I enjoyed how this full-size snare articulated my most subtle ghost notes while also laying down a defined backbeat. The rich-sounding drum would work just as well with a full-size kit.

CONCLUSION

The SL Subway kit is clearly suited to the small stages you typically find in restaurants and other small venues and at events like weddings or parties. The bass drum was deeper than what I've seen on other compact kits, and it performed on a higher level, laying down the low end needed to push the groove of varied styles of music. The kick and snare created a substantial beat center, while the rest of the drums provided accents and color. And, of course, the compact size of these drums means they're super-convenient to transport. List price: \$1,499.

www.gmsdrums.com

BOSPHORUS

MASTER VINTAGE RIDES AND SMASH CRASHES

by Michael Dawson

The Bosphorus mission is “providing discriminating drummers with genuine hand-made Turkish cymbals.” In the past, this meant the company’s products were targeted mostly toward jazz players, especially those who covet the subtlety and nuance that can be coaxed from a single plate of bronze. But in recent years, Bosphorus has maintained that same discerning philosophy when creating cymbals that can also work in other genres, like the heavier Gold series, the Latin-flavored Versa series, and New Orleans funk star Stanton Moore’s signature line.

To get a better taste of exactly how Bosphorus is simultaneously exploring classic and modern cymbal sounds, we decided to check out two of the company’s latest offerings, Master Vintage series rides and Stanton Moore Smash crashes.

MASTER VINTAGE RIDES

Bosphorus calls the new Master Vintage series “the embodiment of our philosophy and absolute finest work.” That’s a strong statement, no doubt. But as a drummer who’s spent years searching for the perfect jazz ride, I can honestly say that the Master Vintages are some of the most inspiring ride cymbals I’ve ever played. All



you get when you add a bit of tape to the underside of a washy ride. These smaller cymbals had me recalling the ride signature of post-bop masters Joe Chambers and Mickey Roker, as well as the modern vibe of Joey Baron.

The 21" and 22" Master Vintage rides, on the other hand, leaned much closer to the trashy-yet-deadly-precise sound that Tony Williams made legendary on Miles Davis’s *Seven Steps To Heaven*. For my personal taste, the 22" is about as perfect a jazz ride as I could ever want; it

drummer puts into every beat and fill. For his signature line of cymbals, Stanton needed something that was not only warm and complex but also edgy, cutting, and durable enough to handle a series of set-finishing whacks.

Since they’re called “smash” crashes, I expected these cymbals to be explosive, opening up with a full voice at any volume. What I discovered, however, was pretty much the exact opposite effect. Both crashes had a definite volume threshold. Once you reach that peak, they aren’t going to get any louder—no matter how hard you smack them. (I later found out from Bosphorus that this effect was intentional, with the wide underside lathing being the main reason for the shorter decay and controlled resonance.)

The 16" Smash crash had a more traditional voice, with a quick attack and full, sparkling resonance. But the decay time was short. The 18" also had a fast attack and a short decay time, but the resonance was noticeably more contained. You wouldn’t want to use this cymbal if you play a lot of crash/ride grooves. But if you play in smaller rooms, or if you need to be careful not to overpower your band when you start smashing accents during louder sections, these crashes would be a great choice.

CONCLUSION

There’s a lot to be said about a cymbal company that’s as dedicated to producing the “perfect” jazz ride as it is to creating fresh sounds, with complexity and nuance, for more contemporary styles. The Master Vintage rides are very special instruments that rival the most coveted classic tones of Tony, Elvin, and Philly Joe, while the Smash crashes offer dark, rich, and controlled accents for drummers who like to ramp up the energy level but don’t want to crush everyone’s eardrums.

www.bosphoruscymbals.com

SMASHING ACCENTS

The new 16" and 18" Smash crashes round out Stanton Moore’s signature series, which also includes 14" Fat Hats, a 20" Trash crash, 20" and 22" Wide rides, and a 20" Pang Thang. Like the rest of the line, the SM crashes have a traditionally lathed top side and a wide lathing on the bottom.

four rides (19", 20", 21", and 22") feature heavily hammered patina-looking surfaces on top and bottom, with about 1/2" of the outer top edge being lathed to a traditional bronze sheen. The cymbals are very thin—they can be bent easily with the hands—and their profile is quite flat. The small but deep bells are the same size on all four models.

Sonically, the Master Vintage rides shared basic qualities: They had a dark and dry fundamental tone with clear, precise, and noticeably “woody” stick response. The wash was prominent but never overpowering, creating a low rumble of smoldering overtones that was excited ever so slightly by each push accent or bell hit.

The 19" and 20" Master Vintage rides offered a bit more of a controlled sound than the 21" and 22". They had a quicker decay and a slightly muted resonance that was similar to the effect

looks cool (especially when you lay into it to get the edges wobbling in ecstasy), and it has a great blend of dark wash and throaty articulation. As I played this large cymbal, I couldn’t help but be reminded of the super-clear, super-dry ride that modern jazz master Greg Hutchinson used when I saw him on tour with Joshua Redman in 2000.

I was a little hesitant to use any of the Master Vintage cymbals for more aggressive playing, for fear that they might crack with a single overzealous blow. But for die-hard jazzers—or even studio players who play lightly and use small sticks—these rides have that special quality that makes everything you play sound better.

SMASH CRASHES

If you’ve ever watched Stanton Moore perform live with his band Galactic or any number of his other funky projects, you’ve witnessed the high level of energy and passion that the spirited



GIBRALTAR

R-CLASS CLUB CONVERSION KIT by Justin Sokol

Gibraltar's R-Class Club Conversion kit allows you to easily transform a standard-size five-piece drumkit into a bebop-size set with no modification to the shells, by converting a floor tom to a bass drum on which a tom can be mounted. The kit includes three accessories that help you make the switch: a pair of SC-GWS Dunnett R-Class Gull Wing spurs, an SC-FTPM floor tom pedal mount, and an SC-RM Dunnett R-Class rail mount. The spurs and rail mount fit into existing floor tom leg brackets, and the pedal mount secures to the drum's rim.

I tested the conversion kit using a ddrum maple "pocket" kit, which worked great since it has two floor toms. I used the R-Class on the 12x16 floor tom, and the high-quality bass spurs proved to be quite stable and also allowed for

plenty of adjustment.

The rail mount is definitely the most effective solution I've come across for mounting a rack tom on a jungle/club kit. With other conversion kit setups, you have to fly the tom from a cymbal stand, hold it in a snare stand, or, at worst, drill the shell and add a mount. This rail mount solves the issue by fitting into the third floor tom leg bracket. It's similar to old rail consolette mounts on vintage drums, but I found it functioned much better. There were infinite positioning possibilities, and the mount was *very* stable.

The pedal mount was the only part of the conversion kit that gave me a little trouble, because the plate that the bass drum pedal connects to didn't seem to extend out far enough. As a result, my pedal's chain and cam would rub up against

the drumhead. I solved this problem by attaching my pedal farther back on the plate, but that left the pedal feeling a bit unstable.

I played my modified ddrum setup on a gig and was impressed that nothing slipped out of place or even budged. The legs supported the floor tom/bass drum, and my heavy 12" maple tom didn't tip or fall out of place on the rail mount. The tom rail mount didn't move either, and I put it through a good beating!

The R-Class Club Conversion kit is an accessory that will remain on hand for my jungle kit needs. It's also a quick and affordable way to get more mileage out of an existing drumset. List price: \$150.

www.gibraltarhardware.com

**SNARE
DRUM
OF THE
MONTH**

by Michael Dawson



TAYE 6 1/2 x 14 STAINLESS STEEL

This shiny steel snare was tuned up pretty tight when I took it out of the box. When I first played it, it sounded good—loud and cutting with a lot of crisp snare response—without standing out as anything extraordinary. But before I chose to write it off as just another decent metal snare, I grabbed my drum key and started backing off the tension. It took only a couple turns on each lug before my ears really started to perk up. As the pitch went down, the tone got fatter and surprisingly warmer, and the overtones began chiming out in perfect harmony.

I played this medium-tuned TAYE alongside two of my favorite 6 1/2 x 14 Bonham-style metal snares, a beat-up Ludwig 402 and a pristine Slingerland Sound King from the '70s. Both of these drums are great for

getting that fat, honking *Houses Of The Holy*-era snare tone. But even when compared with these two classics, which are go-to snares for many top studio drummers, the TAYE stood its ground, and then some. After I recorded all three drums, I discovered that the TAYE had more presence, packed a deeper punch, and was considerably louder than the others. And while I often have to add pieces of rolled-up tape to the Ludwig and Slingerland in order to get rid of sour overtones, the TAYE sounded amazing when left wide open. I ended up choosing this snare over several others for a recent session where the track called for big, resonant backbeats. Don't let the super-cheap \$315 price tag fool you—this guy's for real.

www.tayedrums.com



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www.tayedrums.com



Roland

TD-4S KIT

by Billy Amendola

Roland has done it yet again, with the latest compact e-kit, the TD-4S. With new and upgraded features, this configuration makes for an excellent practice tool as well as a functional electronic kit for playing live or in the studio.

OUT OF THE BOX

The TD-4S kit was effortless and quick to set up and very convenient to move around, even with all the clamps and hardware attached. Transporting it from room to room or taking it to a friend's studio or rehearsal space would be a breeze. The rack's four sturdy legs can be spread out pretty far, so you can place the pads basically anywhere you'd like. Even though it's a small setup, I didn't feel cramped when I played it.

UPGRADED SOUNDS

The TD-4 sound module is expanded with new sounds and features, adding four times the wave memory of its predecessor, the TD-3. The brain sits between the two toms in the middle of the rack. At first I thought this position was going to be hard to get to and to see, but it wasn't.

Most of the TD-4S's twenty-five kits were playable right out of the box. Roland techs spend a lot of time tweaking the sounds, so whether or not you like something is a personal choice. But this kit was easy to use; I could customize my own sounds and kits in minutes. I really appreciated how straightforward it was to access all of the functions, which was usually done by pressing just a button or two. I modified a few of the kits—as well as renamed them—in no time at all.

The hi-hat pad triggered accurately, and the pedal felt smooth. Plus you can use the kit with Roland's VH-11 hi-hat (not included), on a conventional hi-hat stand. A few of the crash sounds have been noticeably improved as well.

DOUBLE-TRIGGERING RIDE, AND RUBBER PADS

The ride is sweet sounding, but you have to really pay attention to your dynamics in order to avoid triggering the wrong sound. This kit is set up so that when you hit the ride pad lightly, you hear a nice "ping." When you hit it a bit harder, the ride gets a little washier. And when you hit it *very* hard, you get the bell. If you don't like the way this cymbal pad works, you can always replace it with a CY-12R/C three-way trigger, which allows for playing the bell, bow, and edge independently. An additional jack is provided if you decide to make this upgrade.

If you haven't played many kits that use rubber pads, the TD-4S will take some getting used to. I would have preferred all the pads to have mesh



heads like the snare does, since mesh heads are the most comfortable playing surface you can get, next to an acoustic drumhead. But an upgrade like that would make this a different kit altogether, and affordability is one of the goals behind the TD-4S.

IN THE STUDIO

You could definitely record with the TD-4's built-in sounds, or you could use the kit as a MIDI controller for sequencing or for triggering other sound modules. If you're looking for multiple outputs and other options required for high-quality recordings, you should probably check out Roland's professional-grade TD-20 kit or TD-12 module. But if you want a moderately priced, high-quality practice kit with some good drum sounds and easy-to-use features, then this could be the kit for you. It just depends on what you need and how much money you're willing to spend.

TOOLS TO SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS

By far my two favorite aspects of the TD-4S were the one-touch recording and Rhythm Coach features. To record an idea, you simply press the "quick rec" button. This puts the module into standby mode. As soon as you hit any of the pads, real-time recording begins. (I recommend turning on the metronome to keep you steady.) If you're writing a tune and you'd like to, say, lay down a beat and then play bass along with it, this is a great feature. Unfortunately, the function allows you to store only one song at a time, and once you turn off the machine, you lose your work.

The multifunction coach feature, designed to help you during practice, is where this kit really shined. When you first press the coach button, you'll see "warm-ups" on the screen. In this mode, the click will go from quarters to 8ths to triplets to 16ths, and then back. In "time check,"

you play along to the metronome while a graph shows if you're behind or ahead of the click. I loved this feature!

In "tempo check" mode, the click gets louder when you're playing out of time. The "quiet count" program allows you to decide how often the click comes in (every measure, every fourth measure, and so on). When the click is inaudible, you can see the measures and graph on the screen to help you maintain the tempo.

The last coach feature is "auto up/down." This game-like program will strengthen your speed and endurance. The click starts at the tempo you set and then gradually increases in speed up to 260 bpm before returning to where you originally set it. You can go through all five coach modes in succession, or separately if you want to concentrate on certain practice routines.

TO SUM IT UP

The TD-4S is loaded with 125 percussion instruments and twenty-five kits that can be customized with virtual tuning and muffling for the kick, snare, and toms. Natural ambience effects can be adjusted as well, via the buttons and dial on the front panel.

Again, I really liked the "quick rec" function for capturing a performance with just the touch of a button. The TD-4S has no backing tracks or patterns to play along with, but there's a "mix in" connector to allow you to play along with external audio sources. You can use this input for plugging in an MP3 or CD player. I also liked to plug in my mini Sony DVD player so I could watch, learn, and play along to my favorite DVDs. The TD-4S is a terrific practice kit, as well as a useful performance instrument. List price: \$1,199.

www.roland.com/V-Drums

Zendrum

ZAP, ZX, AND LAPTOP MIDI PERCUSSION CONTROLLERS

by Barry Franklin



Electronic drums come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Some of the more unusual instruments are the futuristic-looking Zendrums, which are designed to be played with the fingers instead of drumsticks. These powerful MIDI controllers have experienced growing popularity among electronic drummers. So let's take a closer look at these remarkable instruments.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Each Zendrum triggers via MIDI and is shipped with sixteen user-definable setups. The ZX and Laptop have twenty-four velocity-sensitive triggers; the ZAP has nineteen. Each controller has inputs for foot pedals and sustain, and the ZAP also includes a couple of extra trigger inputs on the back plate. It took a few minutes to get used to the way editing and programming works with Zendrums, since it involves scrolling through menus on an LCD screen.

SENSITIVE RESPONSE

The Zendrums are some of the most sensitive MIDI controllers I have ever played. They tracked everything from the subtlest ghost note all the way up to maximum velocity with great results. If you don't need to make use of very soft dynamics, however, you can

adjust the trigger sensitivity to prevent notes from firing twice from a single tap (double triggers).

PLUGGING IN

I tried the Zendrum with software and stand-alone modules. Once I aligned the MIDI channels between the modules and the Zendrum, I then had to figure out where I wanted to assign the sounds across the triggers. To do this, I simply scrolled through the MIDI notes while tapping individual pads on the Zendrum until I found a configuration that worked for me. When I changed patches on the modules, the groups of sounds stayed very consistent.

THREE CONFIGURATIONS

For review, we received a bubinga ZAP (\$999), a zebrawood Laptop (\$1,400), and a maple ZX (\$1,400). The craftsmanship on each instrument was top notch, and the construction was rock solid. The ZX model, the largest of the three, is worn like a guitar. The Laptop model was originally designed for a person confined to a wheelchair, but it quickly became popular as a smaller alternative to the ZX, since it can also be worn. It includes an adapter that allows you to mount it on a snare stand. The new ZAP tabletop version has four leveling legs, so it can fit nicely on a desk next to a computer. All three models are handmade, and you can choose the wood type as well as the finish.

A great feature of Zendrums is that they allow for four-note crossfades. This means you can assign a snare sound to one pad and have it change from a soft hit to a hard rimshot as you strike harder.

The Zendrums really came to life when I used them to control software instruments, and their extreme sensitivity allowed me to include a lot of nuance in my patterns and grooves. They worked great with both the BFD2 and EZdrummer, two popular drum software programs. Whether you use modules or VST instruments, the Zendrum will give you a very dynamic performance.

LOOK, MA, NO STICKS!

In terms of playing the Zendrum with the hands, there's no right or wrong way to do it. You can be a steering-wheel drummer and still get good results. The learning curve can be steep, but the Zendrum is all about the techniques you bring to it. If you already have experience with various hand drum and ethnic percussion techniques, like the swivel sticking used to play bodhran or the finger slides of tabla drumming, it won't take you long to figure out how to best use the Zendrum. These are very addictive instruments that will have you experimenting for hours on end.

www.zendrum.com



Robert Downis Photography

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Bosphorus
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LEVON'S RAMBLE

Levon Helm's Southern-fried rhythmic charm is a thing of rock lore. As *MD* photographer Paul La Raia's new book makes clear, these days *everyone* wants to hang with Levon.

In the late '60s and early '70s, no rock band tapped the well of American roots music with more grit and eloquence than the Band. The group of four Canadians and one Arkansan cut their musical teeth with rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins, served as Bob Dylan's collaborators/muses at a crucial point in his career, and then released a handful of timeless records that made rock gods like Eric Clapton and George Harrison completely rethink their own musical direction. Singing drummer Levon Helm was the Band's

resident Yank, and as such, their one true tie to Southern culture. This played *very* highly on the quintet's persona—and certainly on its groove.

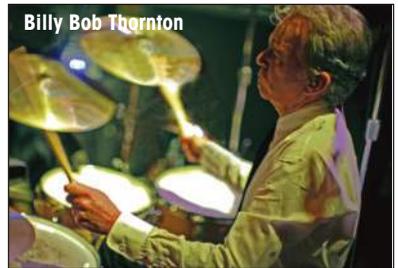
Helm's feel is about as real as it gets, and highly skilled drummers from around the world flock to Woodstock, New York, to get up close and personal with Levon during the week-end Ramble jams he hosts at his barn/studio.



Perhaps they hope some kind of groove fairy dust will rub off on them. At the very least they get to witness Levon's famed earthy delivery firsthand. Longtime *MD* photographer Paul La Raia has been trekking upstate to shoot the jams whenever he can, and he's put the best of his photos into a new book, *The Levon Helm Midnight Ramble*. Here's a taste of what you'll find, heavy on the drummers.



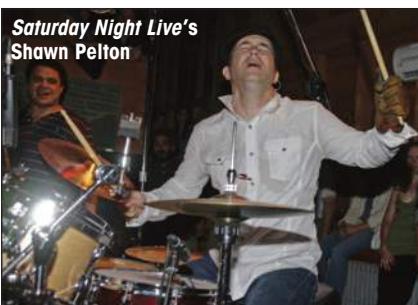
Jack DeJohnette and Levon



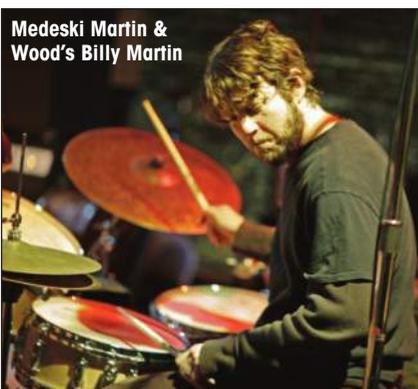
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With the release of the all new Zildjian Z3 cymbal line, Zildjian and Tama have teamed up to give you another reason to Rock Your World. Enter to win a replica of Lars Ulrich's touring kit complete with his signature snare, hardware and a full set up of Z3 cymbals (8 cymbals total). PLUS an all expense paid trip for two to the Zildjian Worldwide Headquarters. Or be one of five runner-ups to win a complete set-up (6 cymbals total) of the all new Z3 cymbals Power, Projection and Playability. And a chance to win big. More reasons to check out the new Z3's at a participating Zildjian Retailer near you. Get ready to rock your world.

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TONY ALLEN

After almost fifty years of drumming mastery, the Afrobeat innovator charges forward with some of his hippest, funkier rhythms on his new album, *Secret Agent*.

by Michael Parillo

Afrobeat, one of funk's most glorious subgenres, may enter your consciousness through your ears, but then it spreads, fast. From head to toe, no part of your body is immune to the music's effects. Afrobeat tickles the mind, nudges the hips, shuffles the feet. Like James Brown's ingenious creations, it triggers a multilevel experience: You can delight in the deceptively simple, almost magical composition of such propulsive rhythms, or you can turn off your brain and dance.

Like its name suggests, this sun-splashed, heat-baked style originated in Africa—southwestern Nigeria, to be more specific, in the late '60s—and its politically charged spirit of social protest cannot be separated from its musical elements. Afrobeat is played by large horn-and-percussion-driven ensembles, and its repetitive grooves are unshakable, unbreakable.

At the core of the creation of this music are two men: Fela Kuti and Tony Allen. But let's back up. In 1964, Allen, who was born in 1940 and began his career as a jazz drummer, was playing the popular dance style highlife in the Nigerian city of Lagos when he auditioned for a group led by Fela, a fellow jazzer. A luckier, more fateful meeting would be hard to imagine; in terms of world music, it's as heavy as the day John Coltrane first shook hands with Elvin Jones.

Within a few years, in Fela's band Koola Lobitos, which was later renamed Africa 70, a fresh musical form was taking shape. Fusing the relentless funk of James Brown with party-hearty highlife and more intellectual jazz—with Fela's sax and empowering, antiestablishment lyrics (often sung in English) out front—this new, Western-influenced but unmistakably African style was fittingly dubbed Afrobeat.

Which brings us to the *beat* part.

"My drumming is like orchestration by itself," Allen tells us by phone from his home in Paris, where he's lived since the mid-'80s. Indeed, any of his signature kit patterns, whether from one of his solo albums or from his classic work with Fela, features a varied landscape of rhythm that runs from mountain peaks to the bottom of the ocean. Up top is a crisply popping, dry-toned snare, played with relaxed authority and perfect (and perfectly unpredictable) placement; down below stutters a ruthlessly funky bass drum, often kicked in double strokes, that's more felt than heard—and it's heard, all right.

Tying the two together is Allen's hi-hat. If the bass and snare are Tony's big guns, then the hats are his secret weapon. You'll understand if you've ever sat down and tried

to cop some true Allen Afrobeat, which, after all, is a mix of funk, jazz, and the Yoruba drumming of Nigeria, plus the most vital component, Allen's imagination. The hi-hat parts are slippery, but they give each groove the grease it needs to keep churning. These cymbal patterns, which often make cruel demands on the independence of the hi-hat hand, can seem at odds with their kick and snare counterparts, at least when you try to put it all together yourself. When Allen plays, though, everything meshes seamlessly.

Around 1980, after many eventful years—scintillating albums, worldwide acclaim, repeated harassment by the Nigerian government—Allen parted ways with Fela. (The singer/activist would die in 1997.) Tony began to devote more attention to the solo career he'd begun in 1975 with the album *Jealousy*, which was produced by Fela and featured the Africa 70 band. It can be argued that the drummer's best work was ahead of him; his playing would grow even more interesting and sharply honed. And with staunch supporters such as Cream drummer Ginger Baker and art-rock producer Brian Eno, plus modern Afrobeat explorers like the New York City band Antibalas and the Chicago Afrobeat Project, Allen would see his influence continue to grow.

Indeed, the twenty-first century has been good for Tony. Highlights include 2002's *Home Cooking*, a collection of devastating beats that throb beneath music influenced by hip-hop and contemporary R&B; 2006's *Lagos No Shaking*, a steamy set recorded back in Allen's native Nigeria; 2007's *The Good, The Bad & The Queen*, a mellow pop project with Blur's Damon Albarn, the Clash's Paul Simonon, and the Verve's Simon Tong; and the new solo effort *Secret Agent*.

The feel-good tracks of *Secret Agent* pulse with the lifeblood of Afrobeat—which is, of course, Allen's drumming. Leading a band of international players who grew up on his music, Allen has found worthy collaborators with whom he can continue to push the evolution of the style he helped create. "Afrobeat is for all, no discrimination," sings Orobiyi Adunni on the vibrant "Ijo." When she purrs, "It's so hard to resist," you know exactly what she means.

Listening to Tony Allen talk, for his admittedly long-overdue first *MD* feature, is a lot like listening to him play drums. He speaks in deep, low tones, relaxed but always on point, and he wastes a word about as often as he wastes a note: *never*. It seems he's content to let some of the magic of his music remain mysterious, and that's part of his considerable charm. Keep your ears and your mind open, keep dancing, and all will be revealed.



MD: Let's talk about your processes for songwriting and creating your drumbeats.

Tony: My drums are first every time. I write my drum pattern on the computer and then go and try to play it physically on the trap drums. After that, when I'm okay with it—because I am always challenging myself—I go ahead and start writing the rest of the things, like bass, for example.

MD: So you write the parts for the other instruments?

Tony: Yes.

MD: When you compose a beat on the computer, do you have the entire

pattern or just the kick and snare parts?

Tony: I do the bass drum, the snare, and the hi-hats. Those are the three things that groove the music.

MD: I'm interested in the way you think of your hi-hat parts, because they're often very tricky and very deceptive.

Tony: It's the way I developed it. In the '60s I discovered Max Roach's hi-hat lesson in *Down Beat* [magazine], about two pages. Before that, when I was playing drums I knew something was missing because everybody had a hi-hat but they never used it. The

hi-hat was there, but it was not played. So I thought, *Something is wrong*. And then, when I discovered that [article] I said, Yeah, that's it—I'm sure now; let me go and fix it.

I thought I had to try to play the way this guy taught it. It was all jazz, because Max Roach is a jazz drummer. But I saw it as: Why can't I fuse this with the highlife everybody's playing? So I started to make use of it in highlife. And that made me unique as a drummer at that time, before I met Fela. Every drummer was looking up to me. They couldn't even imagine how I was doing it.

MD: Did you blend a jazz style of playing the hi-hat into the patterns you were working on at the time?

Tony: Exactly. It was a job. I had to devote enough of my time to get it together, to make it flow. But when it started flowing, I could apply it to any type of pattern. The feel comes into you, and you can manipulate the patterns properly.

MAKING THE BEATS

Tony Allen plays **Pearl** Masters Custom Extra drums (6½x14 wood snare, 12" and 14" rack toms, 16" floor tom, 22" bass drum), **Zildjian** cymbals (14" ZBT hi-hats, 17" A thin crash, 20" A medium ride), Pearl hardware, **Remo** Pinstripe batter heads, and **Vic Firth** or Zildjian sticks ("5B in my right hand and 5A, upside down, in my left hand—it gives a good touch," Tony says).

MD: Did you learn anything about rhythm from Fela?

Tony: No. I'm the rhythm man, you know? I was there doing my thing for four years in different bands before I met Fela.

MD: Your feel is very relaxed. How can a drummer maintain such a groovy feel, especially when playing syncopated patterns at a faster tempo?

Tony: Well, it's kind of difficult to analyze because it depends on the character behind the drums. If it's a character that's not a cool one, the same thing will happen when he handles his instrument. I'm a cool person; I'm playing my drums the way of my life, the way I behave in life.

MD: So it's a natural style?

Tony: It's very natural. If you don't have it inside you, there's no way to get it. You can say, "Relax." But how can one relax? That's why I say it depends on different characters. I'm playing different things at the same time, and the only way to get it is to be cool. I have to be very, very focused. Focused on doing different things at

loud, loud if I have to. But if it's not necessary I'm not going to do it; if it's necessary I will do it. If I'm playing a solo, it's quite different from if I'm backing.

MD: Do you have any sort of philosophy or strategy behind your solos?

Tony: I don't have any philosophy other than to play the solo according to what the song sounds like.



Hugo Glendinning

the same time so that they don't disturb each other—and don't disturb me. So you need some coolness, man.

MD: It seems your stroke is relatively light.

Tony: Yes. But you know, it depends on the mood of the music. I can play loud,

MD: You sometimes do speech-like singing while playing a groove. Singing while drumming is easier when you sing a rhythm that's similar to what you're playing, but the rhythm of your vocals is very much separate. Did that take some practice?

Tony: Of course, yes. Everything is practice makes perfect. Already my drum playing is like four characters, then I have to add the fifth character, which is singing. It's not so easy, but I was prompted to do those things at the same time. It's not something I really like to do, but I'm obliged to do it.

MD: You've been playing for fifty years or so. Do you still practice?

Tony: I practice in my mind. My mind is doing the practice.

MD: You don't play often when you're not gigging or recording?

Tony: No.

MD: Let's discuss Afrobeat in general. If, say, rock is largely about a 2-and-4 backbeat and jazz is about swinging on

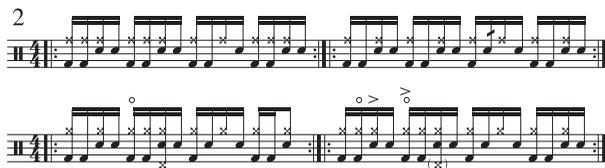


Bernard Benant

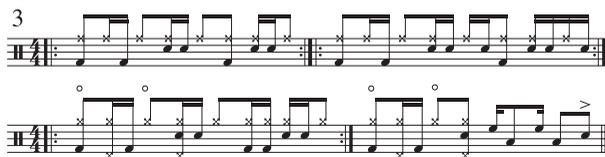
Tony Allen often employs simple but highly propulsive snare-kick conversations, like this one from the track "Hustler," from his 1975 debut solo outing, *Jealousy*.



Allen uses a similar effect in this basic beat, plus variations, from "Ijo," off his new release, *Secret Agent*. Both grooves have a unique and powerful way of locking in with the horn lines and the rest of the rhythm section.



Some might hear this next pattern, from *Secret Agent's* "Ayenlo," as a looser interpretation of a classic James Brown groove, but the variations on the hi-hat make it unmistakable Tony Allen. The signature fill in the last bar pops up in different variations throughout the album. You may remember it preceding breakdowns on beat 1 on many of Allen's previous recordings.



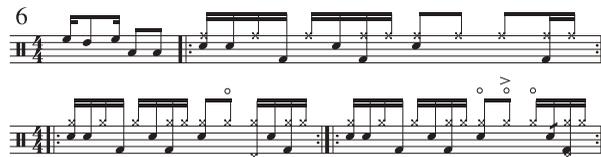
Not all Afrobeat has to be driving in tempo. In print these last next two grooves may appear a bit angular or jittery in that the hi-hat isn't constant, but on "My Lady Frustration," from the Fela Kuti reissue *Koola Lobitos/The '69 Los Angeles Sessions*, Allen locks in with the bass and several percussionists for a lilting but insistent groove.



Tony makes linear funk smooth enough for an MC to rhyme over on "Don't Fight Your Wars," from 2002's *Home Cooking*.



While commencing with a variation on his classic tom fill, Allen sounds as fresh as ever leading his Paris-based band through *Secret Agent's* "Alutere." The lyrics are in Yoruba, with a fitting title that means "the message the drums transmit."



the ride with 2 and 4 on the hi-hat, how would you define Afrobeat?

Tony: Well, Afrobeat is in 4/4, and it depends where you want to start your 1. It could be on the kick, it could be on the snare. It's how you write the music—when you count in, you know where you're starting from. It could be down, it could be up. But it's all within the count of 4/4.

Sometimes you have a silent 1; 1 is still there, but it's silent. And then whatever comes in can come in between the 1 and 2.

MD: It's amazing how many ways you play around the quarter note in your patterns.

Tony: It's where you catch it. That's why I say there can be a silent 1 but the 1 is still there.

MD: Does the intention behind Afrobeat come from the idea of dance and keeping that idea in the mind and body of the audience?

Tony: Yes, exactly. I don't play straight kick: boom-boom-boom. That's not the only dance beat as far as I'm concerned. If you check my patterns, you might be

hearing that straight beat in there, sub-consciously. You know what I mean?

MD: Yes, I do—it feels very accessible

and danceable, but only later, when you really examine the rhythm, do you see how tricky it truly is.

TONY ON TONY

RECORDINGS

Fela Ransome-Kuti & His Koola Lobitos S/T

My first album release with Fela. You could say this is where it all began, and it's interesting to see how we developed our sound to become what is known all over the world as Afrobeat.

Fela Ransome-Kuti & Africa 70

Expensive Shit
In the mid-1970s we were on a roll and Fela was at the height of his powers. Some people ask if I'm sick of always having to talk about Fela, but I never am, as he allowed me to discover myself, and that's an incredible gift.

Tony Allen Hits With The Africa 70 Jealousy

My first solo album, albeit with Africa 70 and with Fela producing. You could say that my lyrics

are more concerned with "social" issues than Fela's "political." And here I included a few solos, which wasn't something I really did with Fela.

Fela Anikulapo Kuti & Roy Ayers

Music Of Many Colors
The last project I did with Fela. I had already left the band and had no intention of returning, but Fela asked me to work on his tour with Roy as sound engineer. Part of the way through, their drummer, Bernard Purdie, decided to quit, but he left his drumkit, so I filled in. I appeared as guest drummer on the track "Africa, Center Of The World," a good way to bow out.

Tony Allen Black Voices

A new generation of hip-hop and dance fans were starting to listen to my music, and they were open to the idea of me trying new things and not

being restricted by listener expectations.

The Good, The Bad & The Queen S/T

I hooked up with Damon Albarn after hearing him praise me on the Blur track "Music Is My Radar." I asked him to appear on my *Home Cooking* album, and our friendship developed from there. Working with those guys was a new and exciting experience, and I even had to adapt my style to fit with the group. The album led to both me and my music being exposed to a rock audience.

Tony Allen Secret Agent

I've tried so many different things, experimented with so many different styles, that it was time to reinvestigate Afrobeat. I was given the creative freedom to make a definitive statement of where I'm at today.

Tony Allen
PLAYS

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zildjian.com/tonyallen

Tony: That's it. But it's in there.

MD: You began a process of refining your style once you met Fela, honing a jazzier vibe into what would become Afrobeat. What was that process like?

Tony: When I met Fela, for the first year it was strictly jazz. I was playing highlife in my steady band, but I was doing jazz with Fela for one good year. Fela presented jazz records on a radio station. But instead of presenting records, he preferred to do it live, to play live. Him on trumpet, me on drums, with bass and piano. We played all the Blue Note jazz records, live. After a year of that, then Koola Lobitos started, and that was a fusion of highlife and jazz.

MD: And that led to Afrobeat?

Tony: Yes. Highlife jazz was renamed to become Afrobeat.

MD: How did your drumming change throughout that process?

Tony: Koola Lobitos was more busy, more jazzy. When it became Afrobeat, it became groovier. More groove, simplified. Simplified, but delicate. And steady.

MD: Was the jazz you were playing based more on the ride cymbal, and then it became more about the kick and snare?

Tony: Yes. Kick, snare, and hi-hats. That's the groove.

MD: Do you generally use your ride cymbal to change color?

Tony: I ride when there's horns.

MD: Did Fela bring in tunes, or did you write together?

Tony: Fela wrote everything, and when everything was written, the drums—me—that came last.

MD: Did he ever write your parts?

Tony: No. I'm the only one he never wrote for.

MD: Did you ever try to highlight certain ideas in his lyrics?

Tony: No. It's the mood of the music itself. The lyrics were always political. He was singing about events, about what was happening in the country. And that is for everybody anyway.

MD: Do your beats feature Yoruba drum patterns adapted for the kit?

Tony: When I'm writing I don't think about anything but what my mind is telling me to do. I've lived in Europe for years now. I'm not in Nigeria to be influenced by what I'm hearing every day there, you know? What I have inside me from day one is still there. I don't need to go and search for it so much. I just have to call it, and it comes.

MD: I'm trying to get a sense of the source

of those popping rhythms of yours. Take, for instance, "Ijo" on *Secret Agent*. Where did that beat come from?

Tony: It's one of those things I was just telling you. It doesn't come from anywhere other than from my mind. I'm writing patterns. I've written one, and then I don't want the next one to look like the other one. That's it.

TONY'S INFLUENCES

Max Roach: I discovered the hi-hat from one of his lessons in *Down Beat* magazine.

Art Blakey: His Jazz Messengers albums are some of my all-time favorites.

Soul Makossa by Manu Dibango: The first record I ever bought.

Damon Albarn: Damon is a fantastic composer. My own assessment is that he's a genius. These are the type of people I like to work with: You don't know what's coming next.

Psalm 23, A Psalm Of David: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want....

Wole Soyinka: My favorite writer and a fellow Nigerian. Here's a quote: "[I] can simplify the history of human society, the evolution of human society, as a contest between power and freedom."

MD: With *The Good, The Bad & The Queen*, was it a challenge to fit into a pop context?

Tony: It's not a challenge, I would say—it's music, just in a different direction. I just have to relate to that and find a way around it and make sure it's going to please the project.

MD: That's the only time I've seen you use brushes.

Tony: That music wants the brush somewhere. But in my music, no brush.

MD: Do you have any advice for a young drummer who's interested in funk or Afrobeat? How can someone from, say, the States, start to learn about how to be so funky?

Tony: I don't know how to explain it.... I think young drummers coming up just have to try and play the drums the right way. Make sure you have your four limbs working properly, and then you get your balance. That's the way I look at it.

MD: Any plans after you promote *Secret Agent*?

Tony: I just keep on playing my music and waiting for whoever is going to call me to come and participate. I look forward to that every time.





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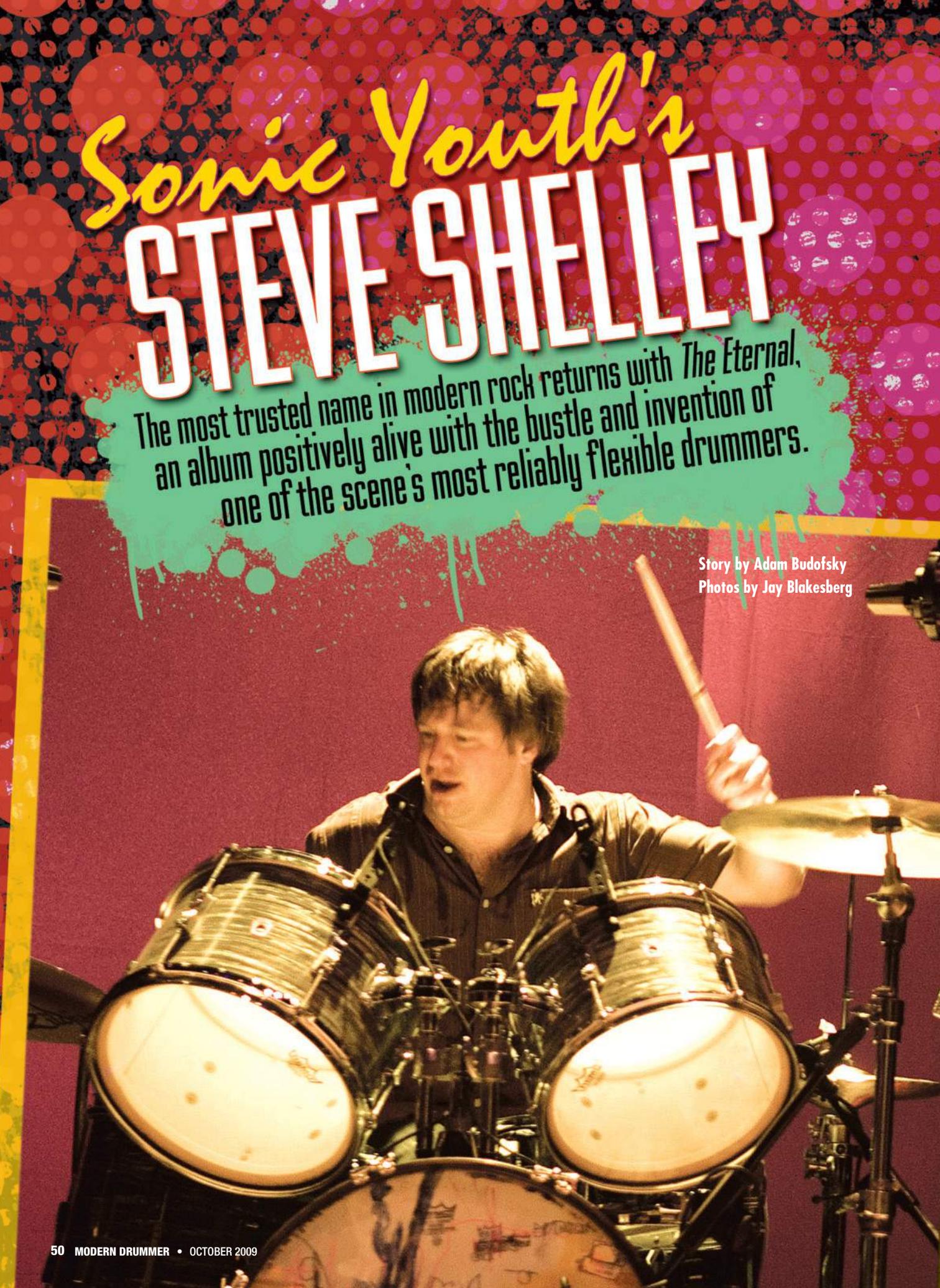
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Sonic Youth's STEVE SHELLEY

The most trusted name in modern rock returns with *The Eternal*, an album positively alive with the bustle and invention of one of the scene's most reliably flexible drummers.

Story by Adam Budofsky
Photos by Jay Blakesberg



Since their initial recordings in the early '80s, Sonic Youth has represented the wild, jagged cutting edge of rock 'n' roll. In a remarkably consistent and productive career, the band has earned its status as the deans of modern art-rock by incorporating unusual guitar tunings, seeking out collaborators from the fringes of modern music, dance, design, and film, and releasing a series of albums on Sonic Youth Records that go full-bore into the domains of noise and minimalism. And on their fifteen "proper" studio albums they've conducted their experimentation within mesmerizing, hook-filled songs, hitting a perfect balance of art and craft. Taken as a whole, SY's output has set a shining example for legions of modern bands who want to rock hard *and* go as out there as they can without resorting to the goofy clichés of art-rock's past.

Since joining the group for 1986's *EVOL*, drummer Steve Shelley has acted as the perfect rhythmic foil to groundbreaking guitarists Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo, and with bassist Kim Gordon he has established one of the most identifiable rhythm-section approaches in contemporary music. Moore and Ranaldo are famous for creating a sound world where the Dead's Jerry Garcia, Television's Tom Verlaine, and the Who's Pete Townshend frolic in a stomp-box warehouse. Shelley's supportive approach is rooted in the warm, groovy thump of classic rock totems, encouraged by the tom-heavy tribalisms of post-punk, and adrenalized by the start-stop rush of early hardcore.

Those who've not been paying close attention since the early '90s—when hits like "100%" and "Bull In The Heather" and appearances on *The Simpsons* and at Lollapalooza made the group an alt-rock household name—might be surprised by the amount of complexity and subtlety Shelley displays on SY's latest album, *The Eternal*. Tracks like "Sacred Trickster" and "No Way" prove the drummer has lost none of the galloping drive he perfected on tunes such as "Eric's Trip" from the breakout double album *Daydream Nation* (1988) and "Swimsuit Issue" from *Dirty* (1992). Meanwhile, "Antenna" and "Massage The History" reveal the touch and spaciousness that he's long shown an interest in but that somehow seem more front-of-mind now. Perhaps this ever-increasing attention to detail is due to Shelley's recent intimate collaborations with folkier acts like Cat Power, Two Dollar Guitar, and Christina Rosenvinge, all of whom have released material on the drummer's own Smells Like Records. Maybe it's simply evidence of Shelley's natural growth as an artist. Regardless, repeated spins through *The Eternal* reveal a logic and playfulness even the most anti-rock listener would deem highly musical and consistently thoughtful.

Sixteen years ago we met Steve for his first *MD* interview at the famous Hoboken, New Jersey, pizzeria Benny Tudino's. Today we join him a mere six blocks south, at La Isla, a trusty Cuban eatery within walking distance of Sonic Youth's Echo Canyon West studio. The easygoing, gracious musician is looking forward to an upcoming SY performance during modern dance icon Merce Cunningham's ninetieth birthday celebration at the Brooklyn Academy Of Music. He's eager to share his excitement at playing with the band's newest member, ex-Pavement bassist Mark Ibold, and to later give us a quick tour through Echo Canyon West. We begin by discussing the issue at the heart of Sonic Youth's sound: the intersection of improvisation and composition.

MD: With the albums on SYR, the band has had a great outlet for its exploratory tendencies, while the major-label releases have been more song oriented. But even your composed pieces seem like they could come from jams that you record and then go back to and develop ideas from.

Steve: That's definitely one way things have worked, though not so much lately. Because we don't have as much time to spend together now, the first thing we'll usually bring in is a chord progression that's a little bit more formed than it has been in the past. It will still go through this sort of Sonic Youth blender. Usually Thurston has ideas and we work on the ones that everybody's most enthusiastic about.

MD: In the early stages, do you try to remain as blank as possible, or do you have preconceived ideas that you'll try to work into whatever's happening?

Steve: I think I'm usually trying to be a good collaborator and, like you say, start with a blank slate. It's rare that I'll come in and say, "I have this great beat you guys should all play with." It's about just trying to let go of expectations. Sometimes what your bandmates come up with is really unexpected, and rather than react like, "I don't like this" or "This is too different," I try to let myself go and see what I can pull out of it and add to it.

MD: A lot of musicians aren't really comfortable with that mindset. They like to think there's always something "right" to play at any given time.

Steve: Well, eventually you do come up with something that makes sense, or that has a theme, or that follows certain songwriting techniques. Once we've recorded and formed a song, I know what it is and what the structure means to me. It's a leap of faith to understand or believe this, but usually I'm trying to do some sort of storytelling. So that's what I work on when the others are bringing these seemingly abstract or hard-to-structure ideas. I'm trying to build some sort of a theme.

MD: Being part of an improvising situation suggests that you can't really worry about making mistakes.

Steve: Mistakes can lead to our best ideas.

MD: But in the moment it can be hard not to get freaked out by the fact that you made a mistake.

Steve: Well, I guess I don't look at mistakes that way. [laughs] Although I disagree with it, my bandmates pretty much consider themselves non-musicians. I think they're *great*



Sonic Youth playing a free concert in the parking lot of the San Francisco Tower Records on August 21, 1990

musicians. But there's not too much in our group about, You dropped the 1 there, or something. That's where unique and interesting music happens. And the mistakes I'm talking about are more during jamming and writing. Once we're on stage or recording, I do try and be as solid as I can. But in general my best, most fun ideas have come from making mistakes, not knowing what I was doing, goofing off, or trying to get away from the norm.

MD: In your last *MD* interview you mentioned listening back to rehearsal and performance tapes to hear what worked and what didn't. Is that something you still do?

Steve: Now that our writing process has gotten faster, I find that I have to act on my feet more quickly. There's not as much time to review. That's still part of the process, but the things that I like to refine have to happen pretty quickly now. We're all into the idea of instant songwriting, like: What if we got together for a day or two with the idea of writing ten songs and recording them? Every song might not be great, but it's a useful exercise.

MD: What was the process for the latest album?

Steve: This past winter Lee and I would go to Massachusetts and work with Kim and Thurston in their basement for a couple of days during the week. Mark was there on most days too. Then the following weekend they would come down to Hoboken and we'd try to track two or three songs that we'd just worked on, with John Agnello and Aaron Mullan, our engineers. So essentially we were doing basics for two or three songs a weekend.

MD: There have been a couple of changes in the band in recent years. How has that affected your playing?

Steve: When Jim O'Rourke was a member of the band [between 2002 and 2006], he and Kim would switch between guitar and bass. Jim's a very solid musician who's familiar with all kinds of genres and approaches—he *doesn't* consider himself a non-musician, though he definitely could play like a non-musician too. He was a lot of fun to play with.

Lately Kim is concentrating mostly on electric guitar, so Mark is playing bass on all the new songs. As much as I love playing with Jim, Mark's background is a bit closer to mine. Jim definitely has a bit more of a proggy basis to what he

does, whereas Mark and I are both, for better or for worse, kids of post-punk. I think Mark's playing on this record is really strong.

MD: At the time of your first *MD* interview you were playing Brady drums. What are you playing now?

Steve: For years I've been playing vintage Gretsch and Ludwig. I just love vintage drums. I keep a kit in Europe that's a '60s Ludwig, and I keep one here, so whenever it's cost effective I can have one of my own kits at a gig. I had this wonderful Gretsch kit that I loved, but it got taken along with a truckload of stuff that was stolen from us in '99. Since then I've been using what was my B kit, which is actually an awesome set. It's a mid-'60s Ludwig in the Ringo finish, but it's blue and white, not black and white. It has small toms—totally opposite of the Brady—12" and 13", with a 14" floor tom. I think I'm married to 14" floor toms now.

MD: How do you tune yours?

Steve: Low but not entirely flappy. My favorite drum sounds are from classic rock records from the mid-'60s and early '70s, so I do like a tuneful tom sound.

MD: How do you go about getting that sound? Last time we spoke you were

thinking of going from Pinstripes to thinner heads.

Steve: Yeah. That was probably when I was just getting into coated Ambassadors. I've used them for years now. When I was younger I couldn't really afford to A/B drumheads, and I thought using Pinstripes was the way to get the deepness I was looking for. But I found that the coated Ambassadors gave me the great tone I was missing. I do still use a Pinstripe on the kick drum.

MD: Do you still have that Brady kit?

Steve: Yeah, though the last thing I used it on was when Thurston, Mike Watt, Don Fleming, Ron Asheton, and I played in a band called the Wylde Rattz for the soundtrack of the film *Velvet Goldmine*. We were this Stooges-type band, and the kick sounded amazing for that kind of music. But for our music I've mostly been using these smaller Ludwig drums. And I love 5x14 Ludwig Supra-Phonic snares from the early '70s. Whenever I see one I grab it—though on this record we changed up the snares a lot, including going back to the Brady. It's a little deeper, and it's made out of cubes of Australian hardwood.

MD: How about your cymbal choices?

Steve: I have a couple sets. For club gigs I use a 14" crash and an 18" ride, and for bigger shows I'll go up to a 16" crash and a 20" ride. I use Zildjians mostly. Recently I found in my drum closet a really old Zildjian that had holes drilled in it but no rivets, and it's just fantastic. For the recording we swapped out cymbals a lot too. We tried to give different songs their own flavor. I did this more than I had on the last four or five records, I think partially because we recorded Christina Rosenvinge's last album at Echo Canyon West, and doing that album gave me a lot of ideas about what to do with *The Eternal*, which we recorded there a few months later.

MD: Over the years you've found interesting ways to create rhythmic colors by using mallets and maracas.

Steve: I also have a number of small gongs that we bought at Asian food stores or wherever. I like Zildjian Earth Plates, which I use for a couple songs on *The Eternal*. I mount them all on a homemade rack that I keep behind me.

Something else I really like is the old stock Ludwig bass drum beater. It's black with a soft head, more like a vintage beater, as opposed to the really hard felts or, even worse, hard plastic beaters. I really hate that sound. No offense, but I call it "the Lars" whenever someone plays the bass drum and it's all click sound.

One of my favorite moments in a musical movie is from *Standing In The Shadows Of Motown*, when Steve Jordan is talking about how it was so great that in Motown the bass drum had this note that spoke, and how it was a part of what was going on. I totally agree with him, and I love that about '60s and '70s music. So whenever I go to a rehearsal studio or a recording studio that only has these hard plastic-y beaters, I try to leave one of my beaters behind. I want to turn people on to this.

MD: What's your preferred stick size?

Steve: I was using Pro-Mark's Ringo stick, but I switched to their Elvin Jones model, which is a little smaller. In my dream world I thought that maybe I was getting a little bit better with nuance. When I was nineteen, half of my thing was power, and I got that by putting my whole body into playing. Now I've begun to use my forearms more. I still get excitable and I use my whole body a lot, but I think my technique has changed a little bit.

MD: Sonic Youth's music can be intense, and a lot of times you're playing very active tom-tom patterns. Has stamina ever been an issue?

Steve: Your body definitely changes. I'm in my late forties now, but I don't feel like I can't keep up. Last year we played our double album, *Daydream Nation*, in its entirety about twelve times at venues around the world, and those were the longest shows we'd played in a long time. I actually find that the more I do that kind of thing, the better I feel. I won't say that time doesn't affect you, but I feel okay. As long as we can play.



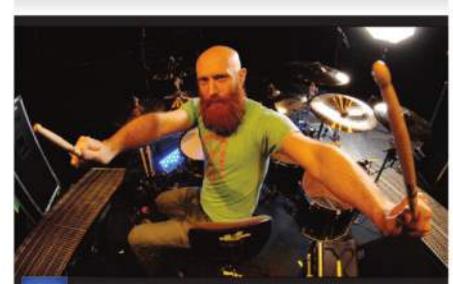
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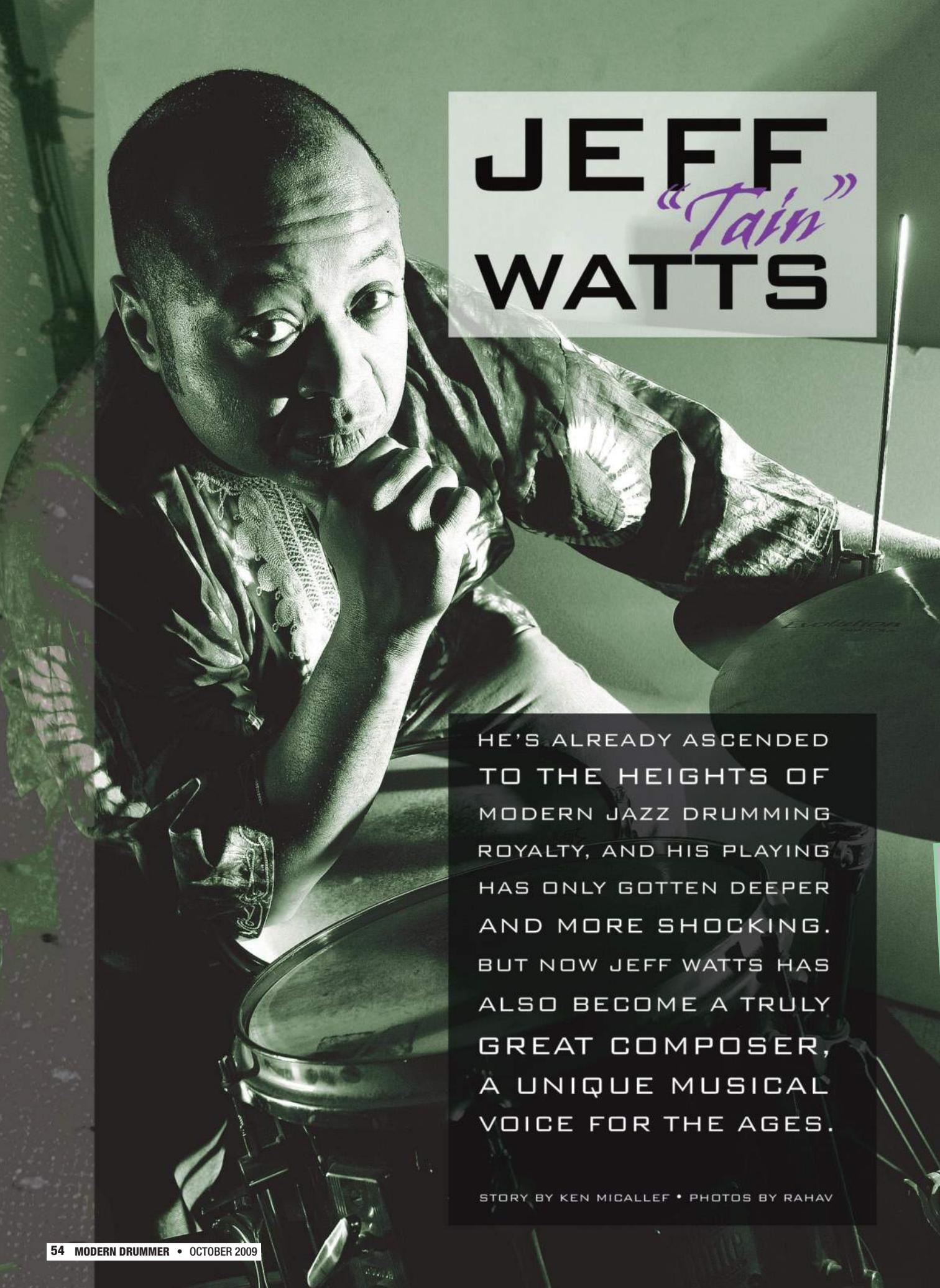


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JEFF *"Tain"* WATTS

HE'S ALREADY ASCENDED TO THE HEIGHTS OF MODERN JAZZ DRUMMING ROYALTY, AND HIS PLAYING HAS ONLY GOTTEN DEEPER AND MORE SHOCKING. BUT NOW JEFF WATTS HAS ALSO BECOME A TRULY GREAT COMPOSER, A UNIQUE MUSICAL VOICE FOR THE AGES.

STORY BY KEN MICALLEF • PHOTOS BY RAHAV

It's Saturday night at the Jazz Standard in New York City, and Jeff "Tain" Watts is swinging the Mingus Dynasty Band down the block, up to Harlem, and practically across the U.S.A.

Tain wipes his brow as the tempo rises, his trademark grin spreading across his face while the music broils, churns, and somehow survives his endless percussive permutations. Tain's boisterous rhythmic commentary is the stuff of legend, and the audience arrives expecting the magic to flow. Executing full-set triplets a la Elvin Jones one moment, kicking a Dixieland beat like New Orleans master Paul Barbarin the next, and playing explosive solos and animated Afro-Cuban figures, Watts illustrates the history of jazz drumming with his Sonor Phonic kit. And he's just getting started.

Citizen Tain and *Bar Talk*, Jeff's first releases as a leader, proved Tain was not only a great drummer but a composer with an equally unique voice. Shades of Monk and Mingus, tempered by a growing interest in New Orleans and places unknown, influenced his nascent compositions. Beyond the drumming, here was a surprise: an already established musician evolving into the realm of risk-taking, soloist-challenging composer. Far from intellectual head trips, Tain's tunes left your toes tapping, your head bobbing. As his drumming intoned earthquakes, his melodies were as attractive as those of the best folk songs.

Next up, *Detained At The Blue Note* presented Watts and band in a concert setting, performing such blistering Tain-ish vehicles as "107 Steps" and "Sigmund Groid." He followed it with Tain & The Ebonix's *Folk's Songs*, a clear indication of his direction as both drummer and writer. Now he's issued *Watts*, the culmination of all that has come before: social commentary and dark humor meet improvisation of the highest order.

"I started to write things for more than one lead voice,

and that kind of led me into doing a predominantly piano-less record," Watts says. "I wanted to hear these musicians [Branford Marsalis, Terence Blanchard, Christian McBride] in that setting, with more room to roam. I was inspired by the album *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, that piano-less quartet. The more research I did, the more I liked where he was coming from. I grew up during the civil rights movement. I remember the riots in Pittsburgh, in Watts, and around the country when I wasn't even listening to jazz. I heard that feeling through the music of Curtis Mayfield, James Brown, Hendrix, and Sly Stone. Mingus's pieces represented the jazz expression of a vibration that was going on in art, and in the United States in general."

Equally informed by Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, and Frank Zappa, *Watts* heralds Tain's growing mastery as a composer. The sweet tunes of *Bar Talk*, the incendiary thunder of *Detained*, the thoughtfulness of *Folk's Songs* all coincide on the new album, with a dash of sociopolitical commentary befitting the age. "Return Of The Jitney Man" (the tune also appears on Branford Marsalis's latest, *Metamorphosen*) is straight-ahead blowing perfection. "Brekky With Drecky" recalls slow-spined swinging a la Dewey Redman. "Katrina James" dances the funk with Tain's slippery sticking. The two-part "Devil's Ring Tone" intones all the madcap hilarity of Zappa's *Joe's Garage* by way of George Bush's Crawford ranch. Tain also presents two drum solo pieces, "Wry Köln" and "M'Buzai," completing one of the finest releases of the year.

From his earliest days with Wynton Marsalis, on such albums as *Black Codes (From The Underground)*, to his ongoing role as a member of Branford Marsalis's impressive quartet, to sideman work with the Tonight Show Band, Kenny Garrett, Michael Brecker, Greg Osby, Geri Allen, Danilo Perez, and others, Jeff "Tain" Watts continues to cement his rep as one of the baddest drummers on the planet.



**TAIN: DRUMMER,
COMPOSER, MATHEMATICIAN**

MD: Your 1999 debut as a leader, *Bar Talk*, was a favorite on many year-end lists, and you've continued to grow as a composer. Has composing become more important than drumming to you?

Tain: I have definitely come to enjoy writing as much as playing, and having the outlet to choose a set of music that is predominately mine. People tend to get

has to be treated. I dig it.

MD: To what do you attribute your growth as a composer?

Tain: I listen to a lot of music and try not

when I was eight. I didn't steal the melody, but it's in there.

MD: Some drummers' personalities seem constrained on the set. But you're obvi-

“A lot of drummers will repeat the rhythm another musician in the band plays, to show that they're listening. In conversation, that's the worst thing you can do.”

to limit myself. Inspiration can come from anywhere: a joke, some vague reference

ously having fun; your drumming is very much a representation of your personality.

Tain: When I first studied jazz I tried to accumulate a certain amount of vocabulary, so bebop was an obvious starting place; you acquire licks to have a jazz sound. That's what I got from drummers that came before bebop, like Papa Jo Jones, Chick Webb, or the drummers who played with Monk. They play melodic statements that aren't really drummy things—they're purely playing music. That opens up what you can bring into the jazz setting as far as vocabulary.

MD: I hear Dannie Richmond, Frankie Dunlop, and Ed Blackwell in your drumming now.

Tain: Those are three of my favorites. They just play some funk. Ed Blackwell has that kind of Max Roach sound, tonally, but then he has so much African as well, and New Orleans. And Dannie Richmond just plays the whole world. It's pretty obvious from hearing him that he was probably a great rhythm and blues drummer. Even if the band is playing something really complicated, Dannie gives it a down-home feeling. His tuning is kind of jazzy, but it sounds like he could sit down and play with the Allman Brothers.

MD: On your debut recording, Wynton Marsalis's self-titled 1981 album, you

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my music more and more, and that feels really good. I am completely into writing and understanding how every tune comes from a different place and how it

in popular music, even country music. I just wrote a tune. I needed a melody, and Glen Campbell's "Galveston" popped into my head. That's a song I heard

RECORDINGS

Jeff "Tain" Watts *Watts, Bar Talk, Citizen Tain* /// **Kenny Garrett** *Songbook* /// **Wynton Marsalis** *Black Codes (From The Underground)* /// **Branford Marsalis** *Crazy People Music, Requiem* /// **Kenny Kirkland** *Kenny Kirkland* /// **Geri Allen** *The Nurturer* /// **Tain & The Ebonix** *Folk's Songs* /// **Greg Osby** *Channel Three* /// **Branford Marsalis** *Bloomington*

FAVORITES

John Coltrane *Transition (Elvin Jones)* /// **Billy Cobham** *Crosswinds (Billy Cobham)* /// **Thelonious Monk** *Criss-Cross (Frankie Dunlop)* /// **Miles Davis Quintet** *1965-1968: The Complete Columbia Studio (Tony Williams)* /// **Lester Young/Teddy Wilson Quartet** *Pres And Teddy (Jo Jones)* /// **Jimi Hendrix** *Band Of Gypsies (Buddy Miles)* /// **Mongo Santamaria** *Yambu (Mongo Santamaria, Willie Bobo, Francisco Aguabella, Modesto Duran, Pablo Mozo, Carlos Vidal)* /// **Dewey Redman & Ed Blackwell** *Red And Black (Ed Blackwell)* /// **Aretha Franklin** *Live At The Fillmore West (Bernard Purdie)* /// **Stevie Wonder** *Talking Book (Stevie Wonder)*



were clearly pushing the envelope. Now, in many ways, you sound more traditional.

Tain: When I was playing with Wynton I had only been checking out jazz for a year and a half. So all this time I've been backtracking to bebop and before that—the Preservation Hall Jazz Band, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Fats Domino—just trying to develop a thread between what a parade band does and all the instruments being played in the percussion section, and what one drummer would do to synthesize those situations.

MD: When you first hit the scene with an album like Wynton's *Black Codes (From The Underground)*, you seemed fully formed right out of the gate. Prior to that you played in drum corps and studied classical percussion at Duquesne University—you wanted to be a professional timpanist at one point. All the building blocks were there. Was it more about developing a mental process with Wynton?

Tain: Yeah, but even to this day, there are certain drummy things that are cool for me that fall into my hands. For rhythm-section people, I will always be focused on trying to develop from the functional standpoint. I'm just trying to get everything dependable and clear and under control at different volumes and trying to have that type of presence, like a Billy Higgins. He could play half notes, but they feel really, really good. They're not loud but they're intense; he had the mastery to be able to project that really strongly. I've been around a while, but hopefully the best is still yet to come.

MD: You've commented in the past that "Elvin's triplet thing fell naturally into my hands...I stopped resisting and let my inner Elvin come out." Could you elaborate?

Tain: As far as specific vocabulary from Elvin, I don't truly know a whole lot, but I know how to get that rolling type of texture from the drums. That kind of long, swinging feel, at medium to medium-slow tempos, I understood from the time that I heard it. I almost instantly had a way to play at it. Then a lot of my focus was more on Tony Williams and Art Blakey, just given the repertoire Wynton was playing at the time. But after a while I came back to Elvin and thought, *Why not have that be the basis for my time feel?*

MD: You've talked about your math aptitude. Does that figure into your drumming somehow?



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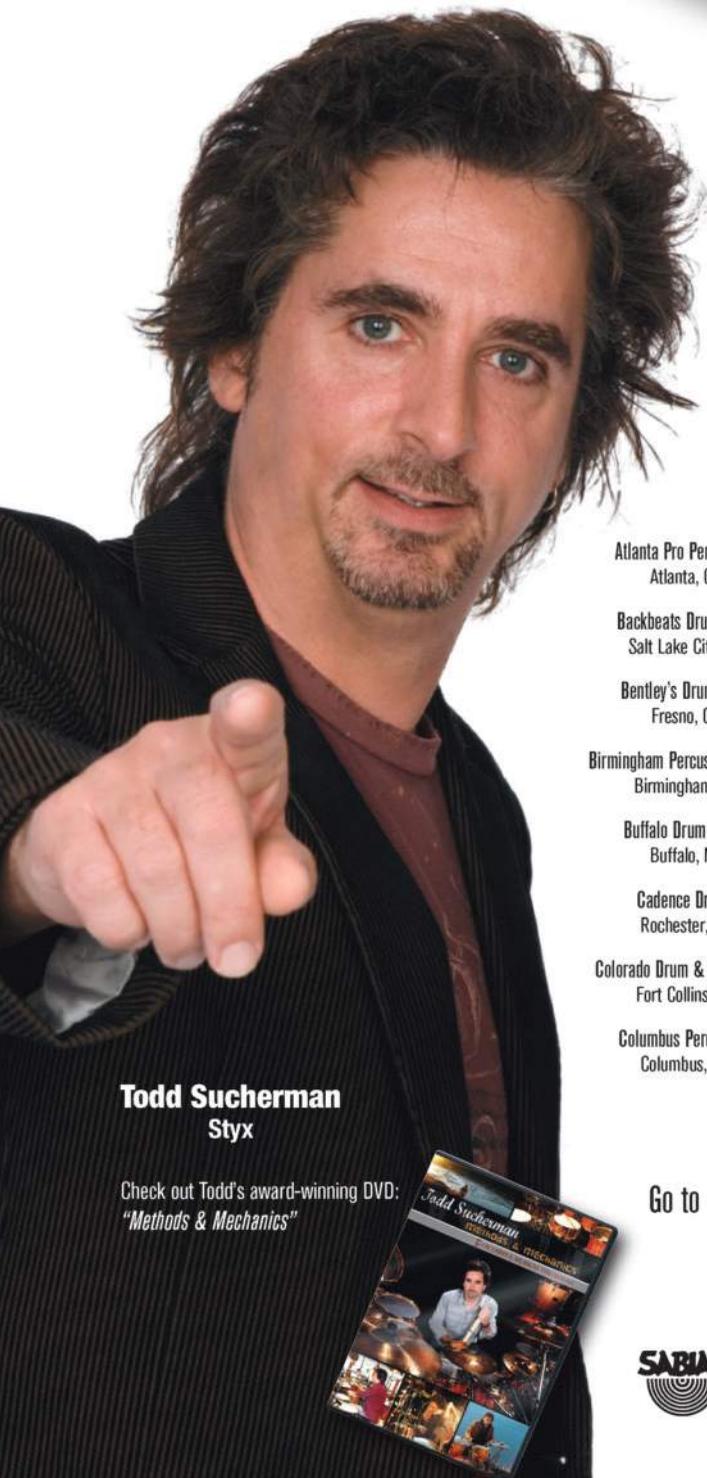
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JEFF WATTS

Tain: I think it does, almost too much sometimes. I'll hear a rhythmic sequence and it will become a number, and I'll think about the opposite of that number and how I can break it down. All these different things pop into my head like conceivable tangents to a rhythmic sequence. Sometimes I have to resist that and stay in the moment. In the '80s, when I was really experimenting with rhythm, I got into creating this logic just to give myself options for things to play. Now that system is ingrained in me and I'm more free to make purely musical choices and not be so locked into whatever system I have.

MD: You've also talked about emulating conversation, about using the holes in a rhythm to form a reply. Does that go back to math again?

Tain: It does go back to math. I'll hear a rhythm and be able to almost see it in the air. Then I'll see everything besides what the rhythm is, to give options to create an answer—to give a response that is informed by the statement. A lot of drummers will repeat the rhythm another musician in the band plays, to show that they're listening. In conversation, that's the worst thing you can do. So I just started thinking like this because it shows you've heard what was played but you're actually trying to interpret it. It's an exercise that I don't really think about now.

WATTS TRACKS

MD: Right away on *Watts*, with "Return Of The Jitney Man," you play that Elvin-ish rolling-thunder assault while swinging. Did the technique required to play that way come by osmosis?

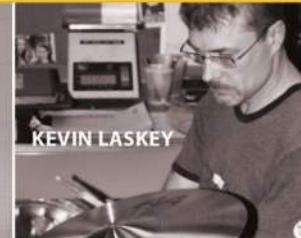
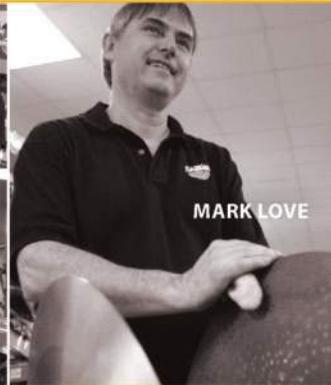
Tain: I didn't really work on it. Of course, there is always refinement to do. The concept of having that texture going but still having some kind of feeling is another thing. It's also about being able to push accents through that texture. It's something I never really had to work on. If I'm swinging, that flow is there. The melody of that tune has a lot of dotted-quarter-note pulse going on. I'm playing triplets and pushing that accent through that texture.

MD: If the ability to play that texture was always there, what elements of your drumming have required work?

Tain: Just trying to play a roll! Trying to be reasonably accurate at fast tempos. Trying to have some control and consis-

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JEFF WATTS



tency. Just general time concerns. I always feel like I could play better time. At a slow tempo you have more space to mess up. So you have to develop the concentration required for that.

MD: "Brekky With Drecky" is played at a medium-slow tempo, and you're doing it with a beautiful, floating groove. It reminds me of Frankie Dunlop's drumming with Thelonious Monk. What's the key to playing that kind of groove?

Tain: I'm thinking about the traditional blues shuffle. And since there's all that space to interpret the beat, I'm thinking triplets and African in a way, so I can

try to stretch the beat out but still have that heartbeat, that pulse.

MD: "Katrina James" is a kind of funky strut. It reminds me of Branford Marsalis's *Mo' Better Blues*. Is the meter 15/4?

Tain: It's a fifteen-beat cycle, definitely. It's based on a James Brown tune I just started messing with one day. A lot of these things, I don't realize that they're odd. I have a feeling that they're odd, of course, but I'm not thinking, *Let me write something in thirteen or fifteen*.

MD: Do musicians of the caliber of the ones who perform on *Watts* ask about things like meter, or do they just feel it

automatically?

Tain: These guys are all pretty sharp. Sometimes Branford won't even know what the meter is. But it doesn't really matter. Of course, Branford can figure it out, but he kind of chooses to not know. He's very comfortable jumping out of bed in the dark and walking across the room. That's where he's at with music—he likes to be in that space.

MD: You also swing the funk so well within odd meters. What's the key to doing that in a tune like "Katrina James"?

Tain: When you have something like that, the downbeat pulse tends to flip over by an 8th note, or something similar. It's like you get to the end of a phrase, and you can either go through it and resolve it to the upbeats in the next phrase or else just make a conscious effort to flip it and make that 1 come after where an upbeat would be if you're playing in 15/4, for example.

In "Katrina James" it helped that it's open in a way. It's in 15/4 and the bass kind of marks that, but then it's not trying to be hip-hop. It's an open R&B sensibility. That New Orleans thing is in there too. When you're listening to traditional New Orleans in 4/4, sometimes the upbeat is the downbeat in just the way that dance [feel] goes. It opens up for it to flow and bounce back and forth. In any kind of groove, the best thing to do is mean what you say.

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MD: There is so much tradition in "Dancin' 4 Chicken," from the march segment to the snare and bass drum hitting unison accents across the bar-line. Who originated that style of playing unison accents?

Tain: Maybe Sam Woodyard. I'm trying to work on a certain amount of independence where I can have a line happening with the snare drum and a line happening with the kick and they intersect at certain points to get that polyphony. But I have no idea where that comes from. It might be one of my things, but I'm not sure.

MD: You take a great solo in "Dancin' 4 Chicken." It's like Tain meets Elvin. You play some interesting combinations with an ascending tom melody. In general, when playing those types of combinations within a solo, is there a way you approach it?

Tain: It's just a shape. Often I will stumble into a fragment and then to make it less of an accident I'll try to find another placement for it, maybe starting on another part of the beat just to cosign that melodic idea. That's a typical-sounding tune with a tag on it that makes the form strange. It might be a thirty-bar form, just a little weird. I'm trying to stretch it but at the same time make it sound like I'm actually playing on the song.

MD: In "Wry Köln," the drum solo piece



[a tribute to Ornette Coleman's "T.&T." from *Ornette!*], how much is planned and how much is free? Are there markers you aim to hit?

Tain: There are a certain number of cues coming from the drums that tell the musicians when to play. Roy Haynes has this thing he can play, like two things on the snare drum, and the band will know they're going to play a drum feature. He can do it anytime, and I wanted something like that, so I adapted that tune.

MD: When you solo, are you singing an internal song of some sort?

Tain: On "Wry Köln" there are a certain number of quotes in there. One of the breaks is my interpretation of what Ed Blackwell would play. In another of the early breaks, a whole section is in seven, then I take it out. The motif that I start with is a beat in seven, but I got the beat from this Max Roach solo dedicated to South Africa, which he played in the '70s. I'm just trying to exploit that medium of playing by yourself, where you're free to sort of move in and out of tempo, introduce song forms if you want, or just play free and play colors.

MD: You play another solo in "Dingle-



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JEFF WATTS

Dangle." It's a great interpretation of the song's melody. When soloing, do you think melody vs. rhythm?

Tain: I guess the line between them is becoming more and more vague. As you learn more music, you start to accumulate a more [melodic approach] just from gaining experience. So that will come out. And rhythm, of course, implies melody. That's the whole key to playing melodically on the drums, because you don't have specific pitch. But as far as that tune, I'm just trying to catch a groove and play the song. There

are licks in there, but it's not seriously lick-oriented. It's about the melody.

MD: "Devil's Ringtone: The Movie"—is that about faith healers, ritual sacrifice, George Bush?

Tain: The comedian Eddie Griffin said, "I can't listen to no opera music. It sounds like the devil's phone number." [laughs] That put me in a vibe at least as far as the introduction, then the more I got into it I developed different sections. Why not have a little play in there and try to challenge myself compositionally? Have music that goes with the dialogue, then

open it up and control the different sections to involve the dialogue.

MD: "M'Buzai" is a solo piece, this time with mallets. Is anything overdubbed there?

Tain: No. I guess it's my tribute to Max and Elvin. A lot of times I'll put a set of music together for a gig and forget to feature myself. People get pissed off: "Man, I came to see you!" I'm just so happy to be playing my songs and trying to make people feel good and getting everyone else to take a solo that I forget about myself. But I'm trying to work up to perhaps doing a solo drum recording one day. "M'Buzai" is getting at that.

MD: How did you arrange that solo?

Tain: I didn't plan it. There's a motif at the beginning and the end that I have used before, but more as an introduction to a more traditional song. I decided to use it as a starting and ending point, just make that rolling statement.

CONCEPTS: HEARTBEATS, LATIN BEATS, INDEPENDENCE

MD: How do you work on overall sound and control now?

Tain: I just want to be able to get to all my shit but get to it at a controlled volume. I want to be able to play my fastest, most intricate stuff but do it really, really relaxed. I'm starting to play with recordings more, and I'm playing with the metronome more and having that as a reference. A lot of the stuff that I've worked on with poly-rhythms and the like, I've worked on based on the heartbeat. It makes it really natural. But for some things I want to be able to do more soloing and play more freely over ostinatos.

MD: What records do you play with?

Tain: It can be some Afro-Cuban, like Mongo Santamaria's *Yambu*, or *Top Percussion* with Tito Puente. I'll play beats, and along with the 6/8 I'll play swing and shuffles. Lately I'll do this weird thing where I set up a pulse, maybe around 120 bpm, and that pulse will be my quarter note in swing, my 8th note to play a slow funky beat to, or the dotted quarter note of a 6/8 pulse. I'll play in 6/8 but phrased in four with that type of accent going across it. It's all just to have options.

MD: Do you ever practice rudiments or

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work from books?

Tain: Definitely. I'm getting back into playing rudiments. I have *Wrist Twisters* by Buster Bailey, who played in the New York Philharmonic. Supposedly Buster had this beautiful roll, and he would create a different lesson for each one of his snare drum students based on their particular needs. So I work out of his book and Joe Morello's *Master Studies II*; that has some cool warm-ups and control exercises.

MD: What else are you working on?

Tain: Just playing time softly. And when I'm trying to do things with independence, I feel like my individual parts could speak better. A lot of my playing is reactionary; I'll set something in motion with one limb, and the other limb will do something else. That's cool, but sometimes you don't want things to be distinct against each other.

TAINISH TECHNIQUE

MD: One of your trademarks is playing a pretty straight ride pattern on the cymbal, with more boisterous commentary on the rest of the kit.

Tain: I guess I developed one type of technique for time and one to interject ideas. Some of it I am conscious of, and other things I would like to have more control over to make all those transitions more seamless. I want to have more control over why I do something.

MD: You get such a beautiful cymbal sound. Where do you place the bead of the stick on the ride cymbal when playing time?

Tain: About a third of the way in. I'm trying to be more conscious of that too, and of where I'm striking the cymbal at a particular time. I always remember Kenny Clarke coming to my house to check out these early Sabians that I had. They weren't the greatest cymbals, but he played the shit out of them. He got on this 24" cymbal that sounded like a trash can lid, a big, super-loud, ugly, dark cymbal, and he started pulling all these tones out of it. He told me he used different parts of the cymbal for different soloists.

MD: Do you do that as well?

Tain: Yeah. Like I said before, a lot of my thing is reactionary. A lot of what I play is all that I can play. I'm trying to have more choices, so I'm getting with

the individual instruments on the kit, down to how I play the kick pedal or how I play the ride cymbal. I'm working on that now, playing each drum or cymbal by itself. I'll focus on a rack tom and really get into it and the sounds I can get from it.

MD: Regarding bass drum technique, are you heel-up or heel-down?

Tain: Kind of half and half. I mostly use heel-down to play four on the floor, certain swing feels, and particular techniques. For faster tempos I tend to use heel-up.

MD: On "Brekky With Drecky," are you feathering the bass drum?

Tain: Definitely. It helps to initiate something like feathering at a slower tempo just so you have a choice in the type of articulation you're putting up under the cymbals. You want to be in control and make sure you're really sitting comfortably, because you'll have to do it for a long time. I would recommend feathering with the kick pedal and just naturally allowing it to be open and closed—striking the kick and letting the beater come off, or pressing the beater into the head. Try both ways. There will be times when you want either/or. You don't want to be limited.

"YOU'RE IN THE STUDIO NOW—IT'S TOO LATE TO PRACTICE"

MD: From day one with Wynton Marsalis and then with Branford Marsalis, not to mention your sideman work with everyone from Michael Brecker, Danilo Perez, and Kenny Garrett to the Mingus Big Band, your personality as a drummer was totally recognizable, totally established. What is your broad view of your drumming?

Tain: I go back and forth. I'll think about things that I need to do better, and I'll try to focus on that, but my priorities are always changing. I'll get in the studio and try to do a better job with different aspects of my drumming, but all you can do is prepare as best you can. And at the moment you have to play, it's like that joke: "You're in the studio now—it's too late to practice." Whatever you have inside you at that particular moment, that's all you are going to get. So be comfortable with that, and just play.

Go to modern drummer.com to read an interview with Jeff's longtime collaborator Branford Marsalis.



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Jeff "Tain" Watts

by Dr. David Glover

MUSIC KEY				
	closed			
	H.H.	+	C.C.	R.C.
open	+	+	+	+
H.H.	+	+	+	+
T.T.	+	+	+	+
S.D.	+	+	+	+
F.T.	+	+	+	+
B.D.	+	+	+	+
H.H.	+	+	+	+
w/ foot	+	+	+	+
	Add'l	Cross		
	Tom	Stick		

Jeff "Tain" Watts has played with many of the most critically acclaimed and popular jazz artists of the past two decades, including trumpeter Wynton and saxophonist Branford Marsalis, pianist Danilo Perez, and saxophonists Michael Brecker and Kenny Garrett. Watts can be heard on dozens of recordings encompassing styles from straight-ahead combo jazz to hip-hop, Afro-Cuban, and big band. The drummer possesses a tenacity that propels his music forward and provides an inspirational spark to the musicians that surround him.

This article will examine Watts' drumming from several perspectives, including his unique posture and physicality; his distinct sound; his use of tension and release in comping, metric modulation, and beat displacement techniques; and his versatility and authenticity in playing different musical styles and odd time signatures.

THE EVOLUTION OF STYLE

While attending Berklee from 1979 to 1982, Tain met several musicians that would help to focus his drumming career, notably Branford Marsalis. It was through Branford that Watts met and began playing extensively with the saxophonist's younger brother Wynton. The drummer performed on Wynton's self-titled debut in 1981, *Think Of One* in 1983, the critically acclaimed *Black Codes (From The Underground)* in 1985, *J Mood* in 1986, *Live At Blues Alley* a year later, and, finally, *Standard Time, Volume I* and *Volume II*, released in 1987 and 1991 respectively. These albums offered Watts the opportunity to come of age with his peers while gaining vast international exposure in the otherwise bleak jazz scene of the 1980s.

The first era of Watts' drumming (1981–1988) represents a period of growth, experimentation, and dedication to swinging. Tain took the

advanced rhythmic concepts of jazz legend Tony Williams' 1960s drumming style—like accenting odd groupings during comping—to the next level. He did this by not only expanding and codifying triplet, dotted-quarter, and three–8th-note ideas, but also by push-



ing the vocabulary forward through the incorporation of five-, seven-, and eleven-note groupings. Tain opened doors for drummers to apply these advanced rhythms to straight-ahead jazz by phrasing them in a way that could still swing. After leaving Wynton's band in 1989 to join Branford Marsalis's quartet, Watts entered a new phase of development.

During this second period (1989–1995), Tain began experimenting with manipulating time even more, while also exploring different musical styles. He developed ways to play "backward swing" in which the second or third part of a triplet grouping is accented and the ride cymbal and hi-hat phrasing shifts to create the illusion that the downbeat has moved over one or two triplets.

Watts also began superimposing odd groupings over even groupings (five over

four, seven over four, and so on). These cross-rhythms had never before been employed on top of a straight-ahead swing groove with any consistency.

The third and current phase of Watts' drumming (1996–present) has been the most groundbreaking and

complex of the three. Tain has maintained and advanced all of the aforementioned concepts, continued to innovate, and explored composition. His latest recordings combine several of his influences into a cohesive textural style that is, at times, more supportive and mature than any of his earlier drumming.

One of Watts' major innovations in recent years has been the creation of elasticity in his timekeeping. This isn't a new concept in drumming, as Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, and Jack DeJohnette all developed the technique to some extent. But Watts limits the tension created by this method to relatively brief periods of time, usually at the height of a solo that he is accompanying.

Such flurries of activity usually involve nonsequential accents that the listener doesn't perceive as being in time. The tension is released by a

strong accent, usually on the downbeat of the next major formal landmark. As intense as these sections may be, Watts never takes you too far away from the pulse for too long. The forward motion of the swing feel isn't lost, and the original pulse remains consistent. This technique has been evident in most of Tain's recordings, but it's most prominent, sophisticated, and swinging in his current performances with musicians like Branford Marsalis, Kenny Garrett, and Dave Kikoski.

SOUND, POSTURE, AND PHYSICALITY

Watts has maintained a relatively consistent sound over the past two decades. He has always played heavy maple Sonor drums in varying nontraditional sizes. On his earlier recordings, he used a large set with deep drums (22" bass drum and 12", 13", 14", and 16" toms). When he began playing with Branford Marsalis in a trio format, Watts switched to a smaller kit with smaller drums (16" bass drum and 12" and 14" toms).

Tain tunes his drums to common intervals of fourths and fifths, but the pitches are lower than the ones favored

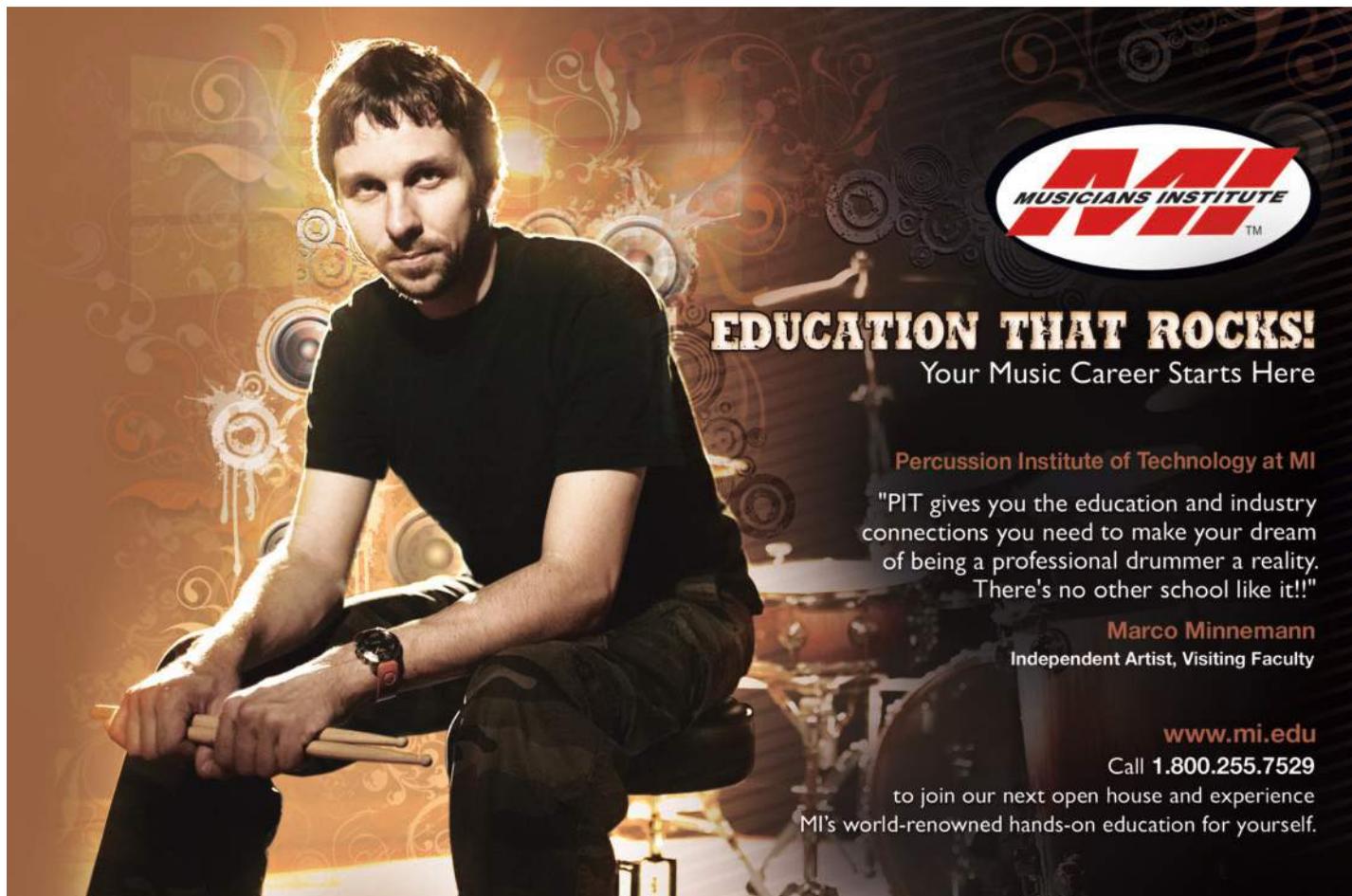
by most jazz drummers. The effect is a very thick, full, and round sound with a lot of punch, which complements Watts's aggressive comping and solo styles. During periods of musical tension, Tain is able to play louder and denser passages without overlapping the same sonic space as the other instruments in the group. When Jeff solos in a linear, stream-of-consciousness style, his drums and their tunings help to create a wall of sound.

Both of Watts's ride cymbals are very dry, which creates a clear stick sound. His ride pattern is always audible, regardless of the activity on the rest of the set. His hi-hats are small, dark, and very dry, and they create a crisp "chick" sound when played with his left foot. The most interesting cymbals on Tain's set are the two crashes that he uses for accents, for color on ballads, and for white-noise effects at the height of comping tension. These cymbals, especially the octagonal Rocktagon by Sabian, have become a trademark of Watts's sound.

Another unique aspect of Tain's style is his physical presence at the drums. He

sits slightly above his kit and maintains a very straight posture. He moves around the drums by pivoting at the waist and throwing his wrists, using very little arm movement. This economy of motion helps Watts move quickly around the kit with very little effort. The drums and cymbals are set in close proximity and at relatively low heights, which helps the drummer incorporate denser rhythms, on more instruments, at faster speeds. All of these characteristics are evident in the Branford Marsalis documentary *The Music Tells You*. The video, shot while Marsalis's trio was on tour in 1992, includes several close-ups of Tain.

Watts's classical percussion education has afforded him the option of utilizing various drumstick grips. He has been known to switch mid-tune from his favored traditional grip to matched grip, and he often shifts from French grip (palms facing laterally) to German grip (palms facing down), which can be seen in the first full performance on *The Music Tells You*. Watts uses French grip to produce an open, resonant sound and German grip for more articulated, staccato tones.



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STYLE & ANALYSIS: JEFF WATTS

TENSION AND RELEASE

Watts is a master of manipulating tension and release while playing behind soloists. In all of his comping, he maintains a consistent rhythmic conversation with the soloist; builds an arc of excitement with increasingly denser rhythms using more drums and cymbals, unpredictable accents, and over-the-bar phrasing; and releases the tension at the climax of a solo with an explosive drum fill, usually landing on the "&" of beat 4 or on beat 1 of a formal milestone.

All of the basic principles listed above can be heard in the vast majority of the solos Watts has comped behind since his early recordings with Wynton Marsalis. An example occurs in the track "2 Down & 1 Across" from Kenny Garrett's 1997 album, *Songbook*. The following eight bars are taken from the climax of pianist Kenny Kirkland's solo. Tain often changes the hi-hat pattern when he's about to play denser, more flowing rhythms around the set. By measure 7, he has abandoned the ride and hi-hat altogether, opting for an extremely syncopated wall of sound. Interestingly, Kirkland plays more sparsely during this section, choosing to punch and jab around Watts's barrage. Tain and Kirkland both land on the "&" of beat 4 in the final measure. This unified accent releases the tension, allowing the pianist to gradually taper off the end of his solo.

This next example, taken from the Pat Metheny composition "Missouri Uncompromised" on Alex Sipiagin's 2001 debut album, *Steppin' Zone*, contains one of Watts's trademark fills, a four-stroke ruff between the bass drum, floor tom, and snare.

BEAT DISPLACEMENT

Watts possesses incredible command of manipulating time through beat displacement. He uses this technique as a means of starting or prolonging tension. The next example demonstrates beat displacement by shifting the entire time feel, including accents and phrasing, to an unusual rhythmic position. The transcription is taken from the track "Housed From Edward," from Branford Marsalis's 1989 recording, *Trio Jeepy*. During this swinging, medium-tempo blues, Watts shifts the time feel backward an 8th note between beats 2 and 3 of measure 2. Note the movement of the accents from 2 and 4 to the "&" of 3 and the "&" of 1. This technique builds a tremendous amount of tension.

VERSATILITY AND ODD TIME SIGNATURES

Watts has gone out of his way to educate himself on the nuances of big band, fusion, funk, hip-hop, and many Latin styles. He has managed to get beyond the surface level of these genres and, in the case of Afro-Cuban music, has even blended elements to

create his own hybrid grooves. Moreover, Watts is often asked to play these styles in odd time signatures, an aspect of his playing for which he is well regarded.

What follows is an excerpt from the track "Think Of One," from pianist Danilo Perez's *Panamonk*, an acclaimed album of Latin-jazz arrangements of Thelonious Monk compositions. The transcription is of the first four measures of the piano solo (starting at 1:08). The time signature is a brisk 10/4 that can be subdivided into two measures of four and a measure of two. The two grooves Watts plays in this excerpt are mambo and songo. Both patterns are Cuban in origin and require an advanced knowledge of the clave (an all-encompassing pulse in Latin music that dictates the harmonic and melodic rhythms played by the entire ensemble). Because of the arrangement's unconventional time signature, no traditional clave can be used—so Watts creates his own. In this case, the clave can be described as 2-3-1 son, and Tain adheres to it throughout the tune. Check out how he morphs the groove, from a traditional mambo in the first measure, where he plays the clave strictly with the left hand, to a songo pattern by the fourth measure.

$\text{♩} = 180$

Here's the main groove for the title track of saxophonist Gary Thomas's recording *Seventh Quadrant*. The tune is more fusion oriented than any other Watts recording, and this groove is almost completely linear (no two limbs playing at once).

$\text{♩} = 132$

The following transcription comes at the end of the piece "Schott Happens" from Branford Marsalis's 1996 release, *The Dark Keys*. These eight measures are tagged onto the end of the piece, after the track has seemingly ended. It doesn't sound planned in any way and lasts for only a short time, but it shows the group having a bit of fun in the studio. All of the elements of a strong funk or hip-hop groove are present: the balance of limbs, strong backbeats, simplified rhythms and instrumentation, and the use of open and closed hi-hat.

$\text{♩} = 132$

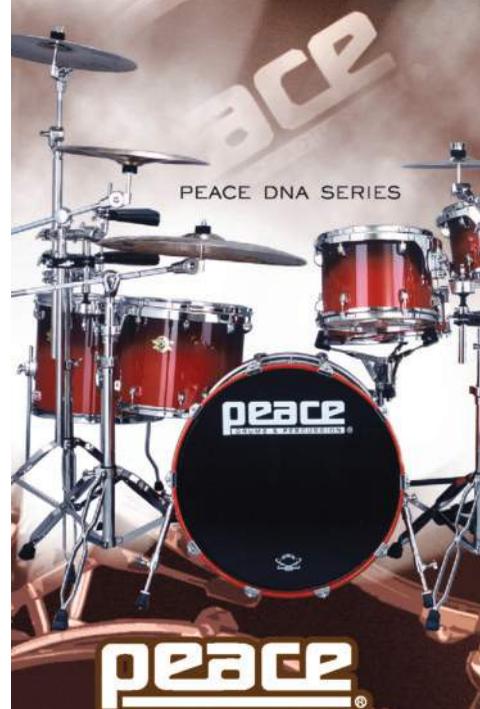
The drumming of Jeff "Tain" Watts has been, and will continue to be, a benchmark for current and future jazz drummers. Watts has proven himself to be not only one of the world's premier timekeepers but also an innovator in his approaches to time manipulation. There is no doubt that Tain will be a driving force in the next century of jazz drumming.



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Mastering Time

PART 2: DYNAMIC CONTROL

by David Stanoch

If rhythm is the heartbeat of music, then dynamics are its lungs, inhaling and exhaling to provide mood and emotion. Without dynamics, music becomes monotonous, lacking the color and drama needed to engage the listener. This article will focus on ways to develop dynamic control by applying various velocity levels to the standard timetable of common dupe and triple subdivisions.

CRESCENDO AND DIMINUENDO

Our first exercise involves playing the standard timetable in rondo form (A-D, D-A) while gradually getting louder as you increase the subdivisions and then softer as you shift back down to 8th notes. This type of practice will help you anticipate and control the common urge to rush when getting louder and drag when getting softer. Make sure you practice this with a metronome.

Exercise 1: Musical notation in 4/4 time. The exercise is divided into four measures, each with a dynamic marking and a slur indicating a crescendo or decrescendo.

- Measure 1: Labeled 'A', starting with a dynamic marking of *ppp* and ending with *p*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes.
- Measure 2: Labeled 'B', starting with a dynamic marking of *p* and ending with *f*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '3' above the notes, indicating a triplet.
- Measure 3: Labeled 'C', starting with a dynamic marking of *mf* and ending with *f*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sextuplet.
- Measure 4: Labeled 'D', starting with a dynamic marking of *fff* and ending with *f*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sextuplet.

The exercise concludes with a final measure labeled 'A', starting with a dynamic marking of *mf* and ending with *ppp*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '3' above the notes, indicating a triplet.

Now you'll reverse the dynamic flow, getting softer as the subdivisions increase and then louder as you slow back down.

Exercise 2: Musical notation in 4/4 time. The exercise is divided into four measures, each with a dynamic marking and a slur indicating a decrescendo or crescendo.

- Measure 1: Labeled 'A', starting with a dynamic marking of *fff* and ending with *f*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes.
- Measure 2: Labeled 'B', starting with a dynamic marking of *f* and ending with *p*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '3' above the notes, indicating a triplet.
- Measure 3: Labeled 'C', starting with a dynamic marking of *mf* and ending with *ppp*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sextuplet.
- Measure 4: Labeled 'D', starting with a dynamic marking of *ppp* and ending with *p*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sextuplet.

The exercise concludes with a final measure labeled 'A', starting with a dynamic marking of *mf* and ending with *fff*. It contains a sequence of eighth notes with a '3' above the notes, indicating a triplet.

TONE CONTROL

Let's explore another dynamic approach, which will improve not only our touch and control but also our listening skills and our sensitivity to tone. In *MD* in July '08, PAS Hall Of Famer Roy Burns shared the following observation: "I learned how to develop my technique by using my *ear*...going through quarter notes to 8th notes to triplets to 16ths, all single strokes. I noticed that each time I went to the next note value the sound would change a little bit. I would tighten up, and that would cause the sound to change. So I learned how to play through all those note values at various speeds without developing any tension."

Let's put Burns's wisdom to work for ourselves by applying three separate and consistent dynamic levels to the standard timetable. Practice the following example on a snare drum, not a practice pad. Play in the center of the drum, and try to achieve a consistent sound through each dynamic and rhythmic variation.

Here are some things to consider for each dynamic.

1. *p*: piano (soft)

Use low ($1\frac{1}{2}$ ") tap strokes. The tone produced should be the lowest of the three variations.

2. *ff*: fortissimo (very loud)

Employ full strokes, striking the drum from a high stick position that utilizes a full range of wrist motion (8–12"). The tone will be noticeably higher in pitch than what you get at softer dynamics.

3. *mf*: mezzo forte (moderately loud)

Use half strokes, striking with a moderate range of motion (4–6"). The tone produced will be roughly a third lower in pitch than what you achieve at fortissimo.

The image shows six staves of musical notation for drum exercises, labeled A through F. Staff A is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes. Staff B is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes. Staff C is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes. Staff D is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes. Staff E is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes. Staff F is in 4/4 time and features a triplet of quarter notes followed by a triplet of eighth notes.

Once you're comfortable with the previous exercises, try playing them over a foot ostinato of your choice. You can also practice these examples with the feet and accompany them with a hand ostinato. Have fun!

David Stanoch has worked with a variety of artists including Bonnie Raitt, Jack McDuff, Butch Vig, Richard Davis, and the Minnesota Orchestra. He's also a faculty member at the McNally Smith College Of Music. Material for this article is adapted from David's award-winning book, *Mastering The Tables Of Time, Vol. 1*, published by Rhythmeloic Music. Used with permission. For more information, visit www.rhythmeloic.com.



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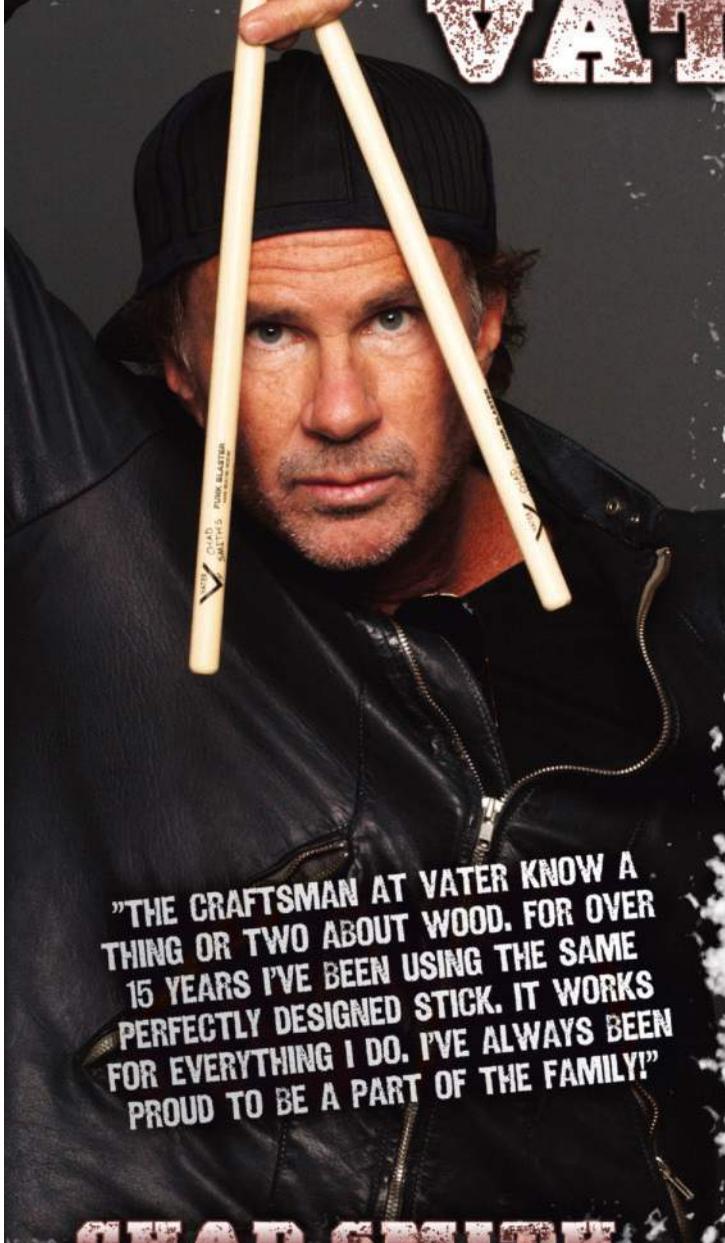


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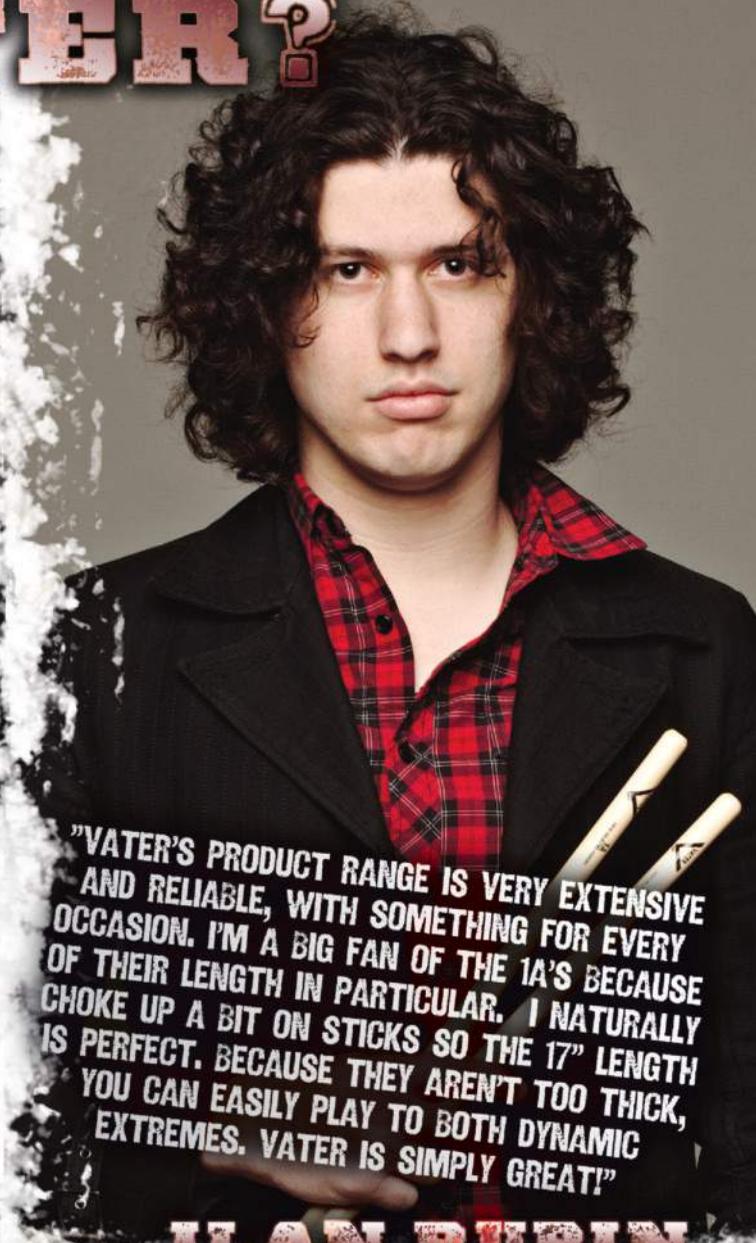
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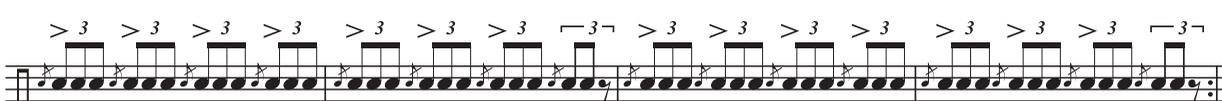
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IRLRRRL IRLRRRL IRLRRRL IRLRRR rL RLLL R rL RLLL R rL RLLL R rL RLLL



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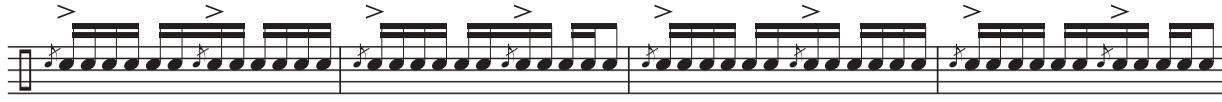
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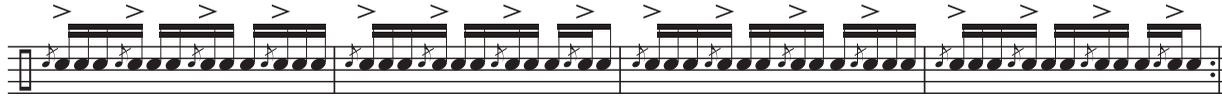
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Bill Bachman is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the author of the Row-Loft books *Rudimental Logic*, *Quad Logic*, and *Bass Logic*, the producer of the instructional drum DVDs *Reefed Beats* and *Rudimental Beats: A Technical Guide For Everyone With Sticks In Their Hands*, and the designer of Vic Firth's Heavy Hitter practice pads. For more information, visit www.billbachman.net.



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REASONS TO LOVE



Paul Narkin

RUSH'S NEIL PEART

by Adam Budofsky

The words you are about to read may shock you.

I never loved Neil Peart.

Rush's Neil Peart. Certified drum god of his generation. Winner of a hundred Readers Poll awards. Childhood hero to a thousand future drum stars. Inspirer of a million air-drumming episodes. Setter of enumerable drumming bars.

Drumming has been a major part of my life for over thirty years, twenty of which I've been writing about the subject, yet I was never a big fan of Neil Peart. To many drummers, there's *fighting* words. The wonderful player/educator Joe Bergamini, who you'll be hearing from later, has called me out on it for years. I'll say, "But Joe, I grew up obsessed with progressive rock bands like Genesis and King Crimson...I just never got into *Rush*." Joe stands there, shaking his head. "Dude, I simply don't get you sometimes."

Of course, I'm not completely immune to Neil's charms. Whenever I hear "The Spirit Of Radio," I do the same thing everyone else does: maniacally air-drum Neil's famous fills in the intro and sing his lyric "One likes to believe in the freedom of music" in a bad Geddy Lee imitation. And like everyone in the drumming community, I've admired Peart's dedication to self-improvement, when he could easily

have rested on his laurels; marveled at his workload of records, tours, books, and tribute projects; quietly cheered him on when he's taken on those who'd like to paint him into an artistic or political corner; and watched in wonder as he soldiered through immense personal loss.

But unlike so many drummers, I'd never gone through a heavy Neil/Rush phase. Maybe it's because by the time I

"What made Neil Peart such an important influence was his implementation of various styles of drumming and his precise execution. He hit pretty hard too. Thanks, Mr. Peart, for sending me in the right direction."

—Ken Schalk of Candiria

started with the drums in the '80s, my musical tastes had largely shifted to new wave and post-punk like XTC and Siouxsie & The Banshees. Eventually I delved into all kinds of other styles, like bebop, Tropicália, math rock, and death metal. And I still love prog. But the music of Rush and the drumming of Neil Peart never registered deeply with me. Had I missed the opportunity to fall

in love with Rush when I was sixteen? Should I have put down that copy of *Cheap Trick At Budokan* and bought *All The World's A Stage* instead?

Recently I began to feel it was time to confront my "Neil problem." *Modern Drummer* editor in chief Bill Miller—a Rush devotee if there ever was one—had passed away last December, and I was handed the editorial baton. To serve *MD* readers well, I decided, it was imperative that I better understand Peart's importance. It was time to do some research.

As I began dropping Neil's name in conversation with drummers in bands I admired, I discovered that they had all gone through a Peart obsession at some point. Then I expanded my questioning to respected old friends and a clutch of drummers in some great bands I've recently been turned on to. I'd get to the bottom of this Neil thing yet. Here's what I learned.

1. INSPIRATION. Even more than specific playing concepts, a number of the musicians I spoke to referenced Peart's ability to arouse drumming passion in

MICHAEL BLAIR: 3 (OF MANY) REASONS TO LOVE NEIL

- 1. He's articulate.** Neil loves language, and he writes lyrics, articles, and books.
- 2. He's artistic.** Feast your eyes on those beautifully designed drumkits.
- 3. He's an artilleryist.** Listen to his powerful, explosive playing.

BRIAN REITZELL: A KID INSPIRED

When I was a freshman in high school, my English teacher instructed the class to write a business letter. The only business that interested me at the time was music. So I composed a letter to Neil Peart asking him a dozen or so questions about drumming. I sent the letter to *Modern Drummer* because I saw that Neil's name was mentioned in the magazine's "advisory board"—whatever that was. Much to my astonishment, about six months later I got a postcard in the mail from Neil answering all of my questions! I couldn't believe it. The advice he gave me has stayed with me to this day. I still have that postcard and am forever indebted to Neil for being so generous with his time and making a kid feel that his heroes were real people and that my dream was possible. I love that guy!

leads to an exciting, unique, and aggressive sound that projects through the mix live and on record. To hear a great example, check out the fills leading out of the guitar solo on 'Open

Secrets' from *Hold Your Fire*."

"*Moving Pictures* is one of the best-sounding drum recordings of its time," adds longtime *Modern Drummer* contributor Mike Haid. "Remember, Neil

taped a PZM mic to his chest to help capture the sound that *he* was hearing. Innovative!"

5. ABILITY TO GARNER RESPECT, EVEN FROM NON-FANS. "Regardless of whether Rush is your favorite band," says Mads Solås of Madder Mortem, "if you've ever touched an instrument, Neil's brilliant technique, understanding of music, and effortless yet complex and impressive playing put him in the league of people you just have to admire."

Fiery Furnaces' Bob D'Amico uses film as a metaphor to describe the respect Peart receives—a device one imagines Neil would appreciate: "I've always thought of Neil Peart as the *Star Wars* of rock drummers. Film buffs who worship Fellini also have an appreciation for movies like *Star Wars* and *The Wizard Of Oz* because, as campy as they might seem at times, they're universally appealing and memorable. Neil writes the lyrics to Rush songs, and his drum parts coincide with that thinking—every fill is like a little story that's complicated but simple at the same time, and totally memorable. How many non-drummers have you seen air-drum Neil Peart fills almost exactly?"

"Whether you're a fan of Rush or not," suggests Tim Yeung of Divine Heresy, "the word *respect* will always come to mind when you mention Neil Peart, especially if you're talking to a fellow drummer. To be completely honest, I hated Rush the first time I heard them—it was the title track of *Presto*—and at that time I had no clue who Neil Peart was. With an angry, narrow-minded, fourteen-year-old brain, I didn't know any better, and all I wanted to hear was Megadeth, Slayer, Napalm Death.... A couple of years later a friend of mine was playing 'YYZ' off *Exit Stage Left*, and I've never been the same."

Dave Witte had a similar experience. "I was somewhat of a closed-minded metalhead around the time Neil came into my life. That's when I knew I was really 'getting' drumming, because someone that wasn't metal was getting through to me."

6. EXPERTISE AT HANDLING ODD METERS. Says Dean Butterworth, "I love all the different time signatures Rush plays in, like 6/8 and 7/4. It's not your traditional

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"I always knew I wanted to play drums when I was a kid, but I also knew I had big shoes to fill, being a Canadian drummer with the name Neil. He sets the bar extremely high for all rock drummers, with a style that's as musical as it is mathematical." —Neil Sanderson of Three Days Grace

4/4 rock 'n' roll—it's very progressive and cool."

Perhaps understandably, two of the contemporary jazz drummer/leaders I spoke to also mentioned Peart's way with an odd time. "When I first listened to Rush, at a young age," recalls Tim Kuhl, "I could hardly play 4/4, let alone 7/4, so I was pretty blown away by Neil's playing. Today I can understand what he's doing. I'm not saying I can play exactly like Neil, because he is a true master of the drums. But I have certainly learned a few things from him."

Brian Woodruff says, "I grew up listening to classic rock, but by the time I was about sixteen, I had become a jazz snob and was kind of turning up my nose at that music for a while. After the Brad Mehldau Trio got popular in the '90s, jazz players started to get really serious about playing odd time signatures again. I jumped on it and worked real hard at being able to play in five, seven, eleven, and thirteen. One day not long after, I was driving to New Jersey and scanning through the radio stations. I heard 'Limelight' and felt a strong nostalgic tinge. This and many other Rush classics were so much a part of my youth that I found I could sing the whole thing. I'd never realized the whole opening was in seven! I then heard how adeptly Neil Peart could move between seven, six, and four throughout the song, even playing four over the six at times. I also remembered that a lot of 'Tom Sawyer' was in seven, and I was impressed after listening to it again to hear Peart moving the back-beat around with ease and also super-imposing four over seven throughout the instrumental section."

7. ELABORATE AND IMPECCABLY DESIGNED KIT SETUPS. Beyond his actual playing, many drummers have been inspired by Peart's fondness for adorning his setups with classical percussion devices like crotales and tubular bells. And the number of drummers who've at one time or another set up their kit just like Neil is incalculable. "Maybe trying to emulate his playing and setting up your

kit exactly as he would is not the way to do it," offers Tim Yeung. "But it can do you no harm."

"I loved seeing that kit where he took the legs off the hardware and mounted the poles right into his stage," Pat Mastelotto says. "I'd seen that done before, but he did it well." As a young drummer, Roy Mayorga had his budding creativity spiked by Peart's use of

multiple cowbells. "I remember finding little metal bits such as different-sized coffee cans and mounting them to get that cluster of cowbell sounds Neil had," he says.

8. DESIRE FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT.

"Neil is a never-ending inspiration to all of us in the drumming community," says Madina Lake's Dan Torelli. "In part this is due to the lifetime's worth of music he's given us to listen to and enjoy learning to play ourselves. But more importantly it's because of his ongoing quest for perfection. Despite the monu-

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"My first encounter with Neil Peart was watching a live video from the Presto tour. 'Tom Sawyer' was the jam. I was sixteen at the time and ready to try to do what he did. It didn't work out so well. Hats off to Neil Peart. He is truly mind-blowing." —Cheney Brannon of Collective Soul

mental level of success he's reached with our instrument and the new ground he's broken decade after decade, he continues to reinvent and better himself. If all of us had his level of dedication, who knows where our craft would be today!"

"The idea that he would go back to [noted drum teacher] Freddie Gruber for lessons was inspiring," Pat Mastelotto adds.

9. DRUM SOLOS. "Neil was one of the few rock drummers to perfect the art of soloing as an organized and melodic statement encapsulating the evolution of drumming from a historical perspective," Mike Haid explains.

Nickelback's Daniel Adair was particularly fired up by the solo on "YYZ" from *Exit Stage Left*. "I would stay up at night listening to it, thinking, *One day I want to make people feel the way I do right now*, which was euphoric," he says.

10. PRECISELY ORCHESTRATED PARTS. "I've never heard another drummer orchestrate China and splash cymbals as beautifully as Neil does," says Joe Bergamini. "These instruments are placed in specific places that suit the music. It's never haphazard. In terms of orchestration, Neil is one of the great masters. Could you imagine hearing 'Tom Sawyer,' 'YYZ,' or 'Free Will' without the exact fills that Neil played? He's one of the few drummers who writes a part like this and then re-creates it live. We could enter into a debate about

whether improvising fills or playing pre-orchestrated ones is more fulfilling, musical, or difficult. But the undeniable fact is that Neil has created some of the most memorable drum parts in rock music. To me, not hearing Neil play those fills at a Rush concert would be like going to see the Beatles and having them decide to change the chords to 'Sgt. Pepper' on the spur of the moment."

11. INCORPORATION OF ELECTRONICS. "Like Bill Bruford," Mike Haid says, "Neil has always been on the cutting edge of acoustic/electronic drum technology."

12. HI-HAT WORK. "Neil Peart's incredible use of the hi-hat always blew me away and was a huge influence on my drumming," says Dino Campanella of Dredg. "I first heard Rush's album *Hemispheres* when I was thirteen," Daniel Adair recalls. "I was playing drums for about six months at that point, and the moment I heard the hi-hat work on 'La Villa Strangiato' I was captivated and absolutely stunned by the possibilities the drumset possessed."

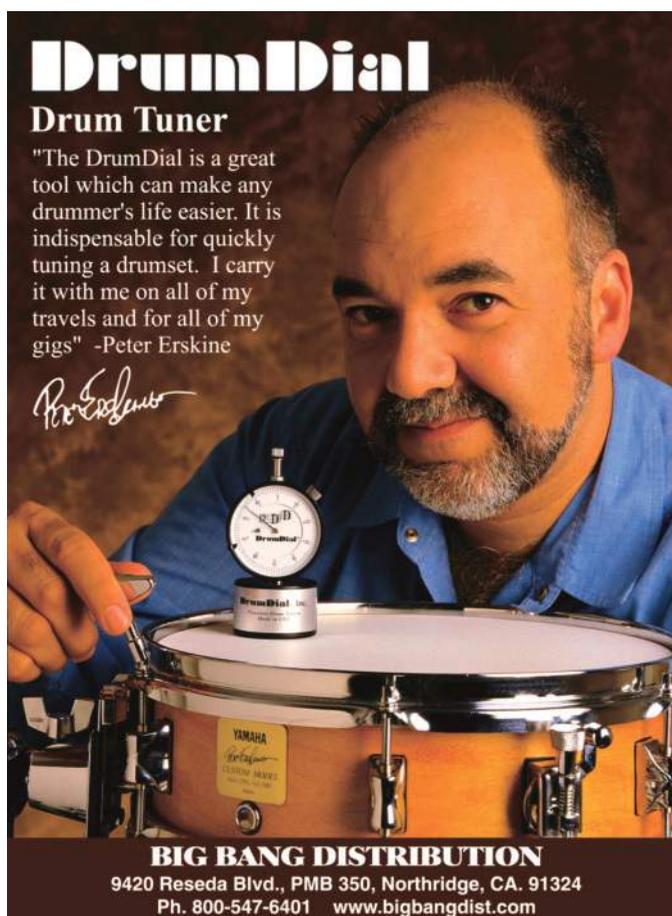
13. SUPPORT OF OTHER PLAYERS. "Neil went out of his way to compliment [Porcupine Tree and recent King Crimson second drummer] Gavin Harrison early on," Pat Mastelotto recalls. "You gotta love him for that."

14. BURNING FOR BUDDY. "Neil single-handedly organized the *Burning For Buddy* project," Mike Haid reminds us, "which brought together an amazing cross-section of drumming royalty to pay tribute to the master, Buddy Rich."

15. ELEVATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF DRUMMERS. Perhaps the most compelling reason to love Neil Peart is the impact he's had on all of us drummers—progsters, post-punks, and polka players alike—simply due to the care, intelligence, and worldliness he's brought to his art. "Neil's talents and abilities extend far beyond drumming," famed Dixie Dregs drummer Rod Morgenstein says. "He is one of the most extraordinary human beings I have ever had the pleasure of knowing—an award-winning author, an avid cyclist and motorcyclist, and the lyricist for Rush. Neil's lust for life and thirst for knowledge are unparalleled. So much for all the trashing drummers get for being 'the guys who hang out with musicians!'"

"I can sum Neil up in a question he posed one evening during an incredible dining experience the Steve Morse Band had with the members of Rush when we were on tour with them: 'Hey, Rod, have you ever considered the effects of climate on the development of Western civilization?' I need say no more, except that Neil Peart *rocks!*"

To read what Mastodon's Brann Dailor, the Flaming Lips' Steven Drozd, ex-Fates Warning drummer Mark Zonder, and other drumming greats have to say about Neil Peart, go to modern drummer.com.



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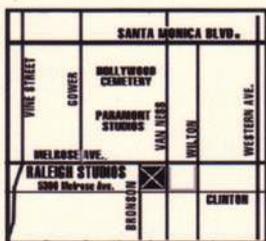
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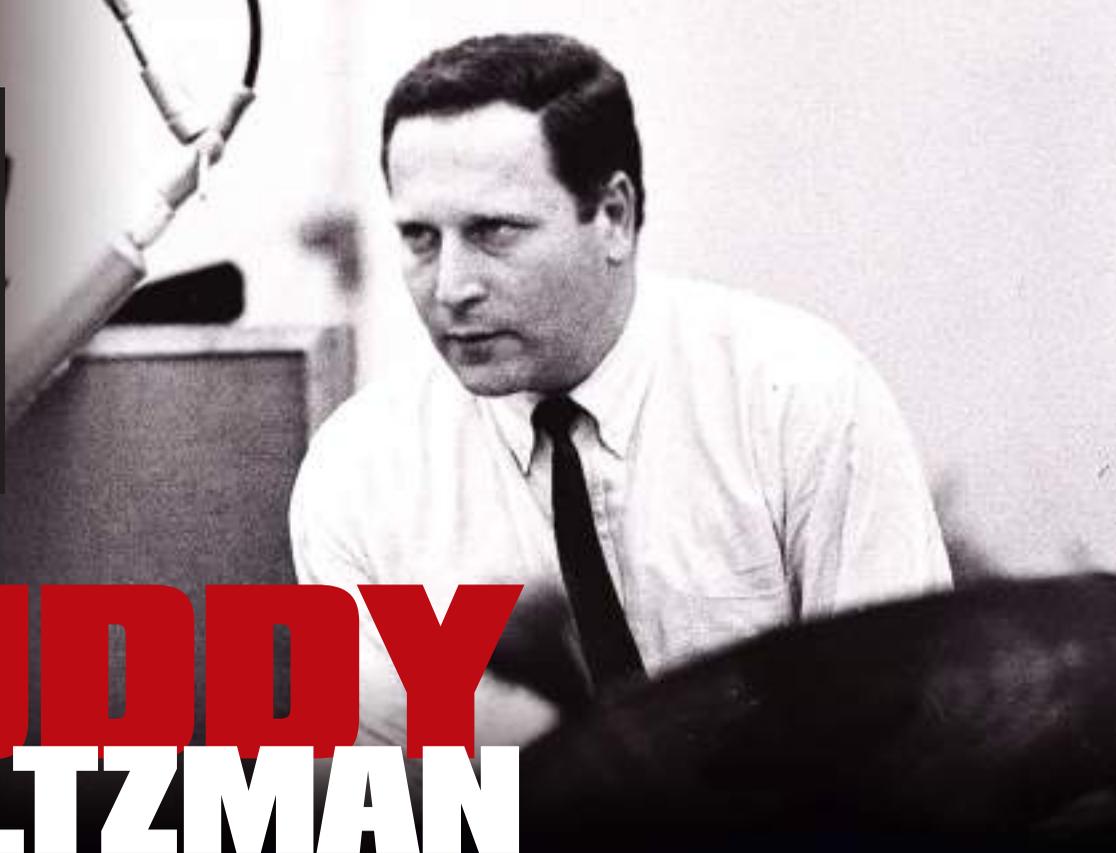
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BUDDY SALTZMAN

Living the creative life in Manhattan has always been as maddening as it is exhilarating. That intensity was a major inspiration for one of the most recorded and beloved figures on the NYC session scene.

Story by Dennis Diken (with thanks to John Cowsill) • Photos by George Showerer

The time has come to praise Buddy Saltzman. Of all the great studio drummers who made their bones during the golden age of rock 'n' roll, this superb musician has too long received the short end of the stick.

Saltzman was one of the architects of the New York City big beat that propelled thousands of sessions in the '50s, '60s, and '70s. His jazz sensibilities, ironclad time, and impeccable feel can be heard in grooves that range from lilt-ing and swinging to downright fierce. He's worked with Burt Bacharach, Neil Diamond, Tim Hardin, Dionne Warwick, Laura Nyro, Phil Spector, Leiber & Stoller, Goffin & King, and the Shangri-Las. And that's not even the short list!

Arguably, the bedrock of Buddy's legacy is his work with the Four Seasons. These drum tracks have a strong sense of purpose, usually sporting arresting intros and head-turning fills, and illustrate how a sticksman can use his imagination and have fun while

driving the bus on a session.

You know the sound. Now meet the man. Hilliard "Buddy" Saltzman was born in Bridgeton, New Jersey, on October 17, 1924, and grew up in Woodbury, New Jersey, where he began his percussive pursuits playing triangle in the kindergarten band. When Buddy was around age nine, his family moved to the Bronx, and later Brooklyn, where he started playing drums in "kid bands." His father, a violinist, had connections at CBS, and by age ten Buddy was drumming on the *Horn And Hardart Children's Hour* radio show. He won



With Frankie Valli. Some of Saltzman's most enduring work was with the singer's group the Four Seasons.

third prize in a Gene Krupa contest at the 1938 World's Fair and went on to study with Henry Adler, Billy Gladstone, and Terry Snyder. "I just lived for drums and went to hear the great drummers of the day at Small's Paradise in Harlem," Saltzman says. "I'd watch Chick Webb and guys like Davey Tough and try to copy what they did."

During World War II, a family friend who knew Glenn Miller arranged for the famous bandleader (then an Air Force major) to write a letter of endorsement for Saltzman, giving Buddy entry to the Army/Air Force band, where his reading skills enabled him to play USO shows. Upon his discharge, the drummer sat in with rehearsal bands, played club dates and theater gigs, and began doing recording sessions.

Like every young musician in the big-band era, Saltzman wanted to play jazz. But he heeded the words of Adler, who told him that if he stayed in New York and learned the business, he'd always work. "He was so right," Buddy says. "Because a lot of my friends got on the *Down Beat* list [the famous jazz magazine's annual poll], and they disappeared after ten years!"

In the '50s, Panama Francis was the guy in Gotham to call for rock 'n' roll grooves, and in time Saltzman joined the esteemed ranks. Then Gary Chester

KNOW THESE TOO!



PANAMA FRANCIS

The freight-train arrival of rock 'n' roll in the 1950s put the kibosh on many a promising jazz drummer's career. This was not the case with Albert "Panama" Francis, a well-regarded sideman with jazz leaders like Cab Calloway, Lucky Millinder, and Roy Eldridge. Eldridge gave the drummer his famous nickname when Francis wore a wide-brimmed hat on a recording date. Though jazz was where his heart lay—later in his career he saw success with the swinging Savoy Sultans, who traveled the festival circuit and earned a couple of Grammy noms—Francis understood the popular new music styles and provided unstoppable energy behind early rock and soul icons like Buddy Holly, Jackie Wilson, Ray Charles, and James Brown. In the '60s he successfully moved into the world of TV, playing in the orchestras of Ed Sullivan, Jackie Gleason, and Dinah Shore. Francis passed away in 2001.



GARY CHESTER

If you drop Gary Chester's name today among drummers, chances are those who recognize him will mention his sterling career as an ace educator who gave early inspiration and guidance to players like Kenny Aronoff and Dave Weckl. They'll also likely cite his famous tutorial *The New Breed*, which popular progressive rock drummer Marco Minnemann credits for "opening doors for the drumming community to take the instrument to a whole new level." That view is shared by scores of players who are *still* working their way through the advanced text. Despite Chester's reputation as an esteemed academic, though, the drummer's playing career is perhaps even more notable. He reportedly played on more than 15,000 sessions during the '50s, '60s, and '70s, making him one of the busiest drummers of the New York studio scene's golden age. Among the hits he recorded are "Twist And Shout" by the Isley Brothers, "He's So Fine" by the Chiffons, "Under The Boardwalk" by the Drifters, and hundreds of other songs that remain staples on oldies radio to this day. Chester passed away in 1987.

(whose style was similar to Buddy's) came on the scene. "Gary and I would give each other club dates, sessions," Saltzman says. "In fact, we played

together on a lot of records. It was a lovely friendship."

By the early '60s, Buddy was doing demos—including sides with Jerry Landis (aka Paul Simon), Bobby Darin, and Bob Dylan—record dates, jingles, and soundtracks, working three or four sessions a day, five to six days a week, with artists like Connie Francis, the Coasters, and the Shirelles.

And the Four Seasons. "Dawn (Go Away)," a number-three smash in early 1964, showcases the Saltzman sound. An around-the-kit roll arouses a brisk groove, with Buddy riding the snare and snapping the 2 and 4 with power and precision. Ghost notes and smack-dab accents lead to a climax of pulverizing triplets as the song fades. And no cymbals!

Saltzman's signature tracks teem with the pulse and grit of Manhattan and the drive of a man who could "lose it" at any minute. When asked what inspired his creative process, the drummer replies, "I think it was partly madness."

Fighting paralyzing traffic in daily commutes from Queens, wheeling his kit for city blocks, frantically hailing taxis that occasionally sped away with a trap case—and no Buddy—were par for Saltzman's course. Throw in truant cartage guys, stolen bass drums, sessions with mobsters' tone-deaf girlfriends, and producers who "wanted to



NUMBER-ONE DRUMS

Buddy Saltzman mixed and matched brands of drums but favored a Ludwig ten-lug metal snare. His toms were 8x10 and 9x12 (at times with bottom skins removed), plus timbales, tuned low. "I didn't use a floor tom," he says. "If I needed it, I would tell the studio that they had to get me one.

"I played a lot of brushes and always kept them halfway closed, with tape," Saltzman adds. "For rock, I held the sticks timpani style [matched grip], with the butt end on the snare. I put a wallet on the snare, and I stuffed the bass drum with newspaper for a dead sound."

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BUDDY SALTZMAN

take my guts," and you'll find a man on the edge. "Especially when someone was bugging you: 'Buddy, do it again—I want something different.' I'd play the radiator, an old electric fan, or the Manhattan phone book. One time, Tony Orlando says, 'Hey, Buddy, come on, come up with a different sound.' I was very tired and disgusted that day. So I dropped my pants and turned around to the mic and went, 'Is that okay, Tony? Record *this!*' Instead of throwing a plate at somebody, I took it out on the drums. You had to get it out of your system."

Saltzman employed three phone services, with his wife managing the bookings. "It was a madhouse," he recalls. "I used to walk down Seventh Avenue and go for maybe a cheese sandwich for lunch. A producer would say to me, 'Hey, Buddy, you're on a number-two record this week!' And I might not have known it, because we would cut tracks when the vocalist wasn't at the session."

Here are a few of the number-ones: "The Loco-Motion" by Little Eva, "I'm A Believer" by the Monkees, "Rag Doll" by

the Four Seasons, "The Sounds of Silence" by Simon & Garfunkel, "Sugar, Sugar" by the Archies, and "Lightnin' Strikes" by Lou Christie. Saltzman's voluminous discography also boasts records by the Cowsills, Neil Sedaka, Solomon Burke, Tommy James, Lesley Gore, Barbra Streisand, and Peter, Paul & Mary.

Looking back, the drummer finds, "It's all like a fog." Two records stand out for him, though: the swinging, big-band "He Loves Me" by Lena Horne, and "My Way" by Frank Sinatra. "He told the contractor to get him the drummer who played on the Four Seasons' version of 'I've Got You Under My Skin,'" Saltzman says.

"In terms of the arrangements," Buddy adds, "very little was written out for me. My chart usually read, 'You know what to do!' My forte was that I had a click track in my head, and that's the only reason I made a good living—not because I was a great drummer. There were many wonderful drummers around, but so few who knew what to do. They couldn't play what producers wanted or do the same thing two,

three, four times, take after take. Or if they knew what to do they didn't want to do it. You gotta have the attitude.

"All I can say is, thank God I got lucky. I was around at the right time. And they needed somebody like me. I always tried to stay positive. But there were always guys who would try to tear you down. It was getting tougher. The demands were greater, and the styles changed."

In the early '70s Saltzman helped the producers of *Grease* tailor the teen sound they sought for the musical's Broadway debut. He relocated his family to Florida in 1978, where he returned to playing club dates.

These days Buddy enjoys retirement along with his wife of sixty-two years and spends time with his children and grandchildren, content with his accomplishments. "All I ever wanted to do is play drums and provide for my family," he says. Indeed, Saltzman fulfilled his goals in spades. And in the process he helped create some of the coolest and longest-lasting music of the twentieth century.



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Stefano Masselli

TV ON THE RADIO'S
JALEEL BUNTON

He may have stumbled into a career as a drummer, but the artful results of his “hybrid” approach are no accident. by Patrick Berkery

Guitar was TV On The Radio drummer Jaleel Bunton’s first instrument of choice. And like many young guitarists, Bunton gravitated toward the music of Jimi Hendrix. It didn’t take long for him to realize the guy pounding the skins, Mitch Mitchell, was just as important to the guitarist’s sound as Hendrix’s Stratocaster. So while Bunton’s sensibilities as a guitarist were taking shape, his drumming instincts were forming as well.

“As a kid, I was a super-big Hendrix fan,” Bunton recalls. “Really soon after dissecting his music, I started to realize Mitch Mitchell was an essential part of that and an amazing entity in his own right. The things Hendrix was able to do with Mitch Mitchell were amazing, and they were *because* of Mitch. He was so melodic, and so creative. He had this fury that was so colorful and swirling, it really made the music come alive. I can’t think of many drummers who could do that.”

Those words Bunton uses to describe Mitch Mitchell’s drumming can be applied to his own playing, which on TVOTR’s last two albums—2006’s *Return To Cookie Mountain* and last

year’s *Dear Science*—has been a hybrid of live drumming and loops. Bunton’s sophisticated rhythms have given the Brooklyn-based quintet

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Drums: **C&C** Custom in brown with mother-of-pearl stripe; 6x14 snare, 16x24 bass drum, 10x13 tom, 16x16 floor tom. Hardware (including bass drum pedal): **DW** 5000 series. Cymbals: **Zildjian**; old 20" A ride with rivet, 20" A Custom crash, 14" K Custom dark hi-hats. Sticks: **Pro-Mark** Japanese Oak 5A, wood tip. Heads: **Remo**; coated Emperor on tops of toms, clear Ambassador on bottoms; coated Emperor on kick batter; coated Ambassador on top of snare. Electronics: two **Roland** PD-8 trigger pads, Roland RT-10S snare trigger, Roland RT-10K kick trigger, Roland TMC-6 MIDI converter, **Akai** MPC1000 sampler.

a sturdy bedrock on which to construct the melodic and atmospheric elements that define those albums, allowing the band to weave its

way from surging post-punk to more polished soul- and funk-based styles with relative ease.

It’s not the kind of chops-based drumming with complicated figures and rapid-fire fills that leaves listeners marveling. Bunton’s style is forward thinking yet un-showy, man and machine working in unison to deliver whatever the song calls for, whether it’s a frenetic freak-out (“Dancing Choose”) or something more sparse and deliberate (“Family Tree”). You would think the drummer anchoring such an ambitious unit would have spent years holding it down for all kinds of bands. But the guy providing TVOTR with its unique rhythmic flair insists he was a part-time drummer who sort of fell into his current gig.

“I’m definitely the drummer by default,” Bunton says with a laugh. “Drums are my fourth instrument, maybe third. I love playing drums, but I’m not a ‘chops’ guy.”

TVOTR’s “drummer by default” didn’t audition for the spot. He didn’t have to learn a few songs for a getting-to-know-you jam, didn’t have to prove his mettle at crafting grooves from live drums and programming in the studio and

then whipping those parts into stage shape. He simply fulfilled an urgent request he received on a street corner from founding member David Sitek.

"One day David accosted me and said, 'You have to join our band,'" Bunton explains. "I wasn't playing drums then; I was playing keyboards and guitar and doing some sampling stuff. David asked me to do this month-long tour. My intention was to get out of town for a month and go on the road with some friends, and that was going to be it. But it never ended. It's become a five-year month."

At the dawn of that never-ending month, Bunton's contribution was limited to adding rather primitive accompaniment to a couple of tracks on 2004's *Desperate Youth, Blood Thirsty Babes*. Now he's a vital cog in a band that he describes as "a group of reject scientists." Bunton contributed not just drums and programming to 2008's *Dear Science* but also guitars, keyboards, bass, and

string arrangements. He even cowrote one of the album's standout tracks, the skittering soul-pop jam "Crying." He estimates his drum work on the recording—which includes the constantly shifting strut he gives "Shout Me Out" and the tribal, tom-heavy pulse of "Halfway Home"—was evenly split between playing kit and programming, resulting in sometimes busy parts that are challenging to approximate in a live setting.

"When we play live, my whole mission is to make it *feel* a certain way rather than make it sound a certain way," Bunton says. "Sometimes that involves playing exactly what I played on the record, but usually it involves some kind of hybrid of what's programmed and what was live. And sometimes it's neither one of those things. It's just to try to get whatever feeling is in that song. Early on we tried using loops live, but we decided a much better method is to use drum triggers. You

have the sounds rather than actual loops. That way you're never beholden to a click track; you have the freedom when you want to branch out. I feel a lot more comfortable with that."

Since the band wound down its busy touring cycle behind *Dear Science*, Bunton has begun working on a solo record. Given the varied bag of tricks he brings to TVOTR, it seems natural that Jaleel would try his hand at going it alone. Still, it's somewhat surprising to find out the one instrument he has no plans on playing for his solo outing: drums. "I just want a different feel than what I'm used to," he explains. "I have a really awesome drummer in mind, Damali Young. He used to play with Apollo Heights. I can't even pretend I'll ever be able to touch him playing drums."

NICK JONAS

by Billy Amendola

He spends most of his time up front singing and playing guitar with the Jonas Brothers. But when he takes a seat behind the kit, he kills it there too.

Forget the millions of records sold, the paparazzi, and the thousands of screaming little girls—Nick Jonas just wants to have fun, and to him fun is playing the drums.

Jonas started playing drums at a young age, teaching himself by watching the drummers in his father's church. Today he's a *very* good player, and he's getting better every day. *MD* spoke to the

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Drums: **Truth** custom acrylic JB logo kit with light bulbs in each drum; 22x24 bass drum, 8¹/₂x14 tom, 14x16 floor tom, Pork Pie Big Black 6 1/2x14 snare. Hardware: **DW**, black powder coated; 9000 series cymbal stands, 5000 series three-leg hi-hat stand, 9000 series kick pedal, 9000 series Airlift throne with **ButtKicker** low-frequency audio transducer. Cymbals: **Zildjian**. Heads: **Remo**; Powerstroke 3 with Falam Slam pad on bass drum, Powerstroke 3 on snare, coated Emperor on toms. Sticks: **Vic Firth** American Classic Metal with signature and Jonas Brothers logo.

teenage superstar about his passion for drums right after he and brothers Joe and Kevin rocked Central Park in NYC for an appearance on *Good Morning America*.

MD: Tell us about your early days of drumming.

Nick: When I was very young I had a set of bongos around the house. But I really started taking drums seriously when I was around twelve years old. We were a very musical family, and my dad was a pastor for a while. I'd be in church and watch the drummers, and I just wanted to get up

there and do it.

MD: Were drums and percussion your first instruments?

Nick: Yes, and then I moved to piano and then guitar. I quickly fell in love with all of it.

MD: What would your practice routine be like?

on our records, is an incredible drummer, and just watching him in the studio has taught me a lot.

MD: Has playing the drums made you a better overall musician?

Nick: Definitely. It helps make you really comfortable with grooves and settling into the pocket.



Nick: I played on other people's sets until I got my own for my thirteenth birthday. It was a Roland V-Drums kit, and I would plug my iPod into it and play along. Once I started playing on that kit, I *really* loved it. The first day I got them I played for six or seven hours straight. [laughs]

MD: Did you ever take formal drum lessons?

Nick: When I first started playing, a few drummers showed me some beats, but for the most part I picked it up naturally and learned just by watching people play. Dorian Crozier, who plays

MD: Speaking of Dorian, you're in pretty good company, sharing drum tracks with him and Michael Bland on Demi Lovato's CD *Don't Forget*. You played two songs on the record. How was that experience?

Nick: It was very cool. It was the first project that we produced and totally laid down for another artist. Then to play drums on it was an honor. We had a lot of fun making that record. I also play on a couple of cuts on our new record, *Lines, Vines And Trying Times*.

MD: After you record your drum tracks, is there a lot of postproduction going on?

Nick: We try not to go overboard with it. There are little fixes here and there as things need to be tweaked—because you want to have the best-sounding record possible—but we prefer to make it sound like there's a band in the studio rockin'.

For tracks that I play on, we usually have a scratch guitar and vocal, to get the song in form, and then basically we outline it from there. We'll do two or three different takes, see what we like, and pull things from each one. In the end we always try for that one-take feel.

MD: I first saw you play drums on your recent *Saturday Night Live* performance. You were singing

while playing. Do you find that difficult?

Nick: There are songs that are harder than others. There's a song I'm playing on tour called "Live To Party," and it has this beat in the verse that Dorian and I created that's *very* difficult to sing along to. But I'm working on it, and I think it'll be ready by showtime. I'm always up for a challenge and for keeping it interesting, and this is a prime example of that.

MD: Your touring drummer, Jack Lawless, is a solid player. Do you two have drum battles at sound-check and rehearsals?

Nick: [laughs] We do! Jack and I are really close. He's been our live drummer now for close to four years, and he's a great guy *and* an amazing drum-

mer. On the Look Me In The Eyes tour last spring, we did this really cool drum-off at the beginning of [Elvis Costello's] "(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea," which is one of the coolest drum intros I've ever heard.

MD: So what do you love most about playing drums?

Nick: The best part about playing drums is that it really is the core of the song. When you're playing with a band, it's the drums that will keep it together, and you're really the one in control of where the song goes. And there are always new ways to play something, like experimenting with different beats and time signatures. Drums are amazing in that you can just be hitting something and make it sound so cool in a song. And playing drums is a lot of fun!

GERRY GIBBS

by Paul Wells

What's on the mind of a modern drummer/leader?
Mixing, mastering, and moving the music forward.



Gerry Gibbs' grooving, tasteful, and fiery drumming with jazz legends such as Alice Coltrane, McCoy Tyner, Joe Lovano, Randy Brecker, Sam Rivers, Joe Henderson, and Stanley Clarke is informed by years of leading his own bands—the Thrasher Sextet, the Thrasher Band, and the Thrasher Big Band—as well as writing and arranging original music. A multi-instrumentalist who considers the drums his primary instrument, Gibbs has been described by jazz drumming master Billy Hart as “a cultural asset and a pillar of the community of the classical music we call jazz. He has studied and plays with the knowledge of what has gone before. That is why his music has truth, depth, and maturity.”

Gerry, the son of legendary jazz vibraphonist and big-band leader Terry Gibbs, grew up in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles. He was reared on a steady diet of his father's bebop-infused groups and the influence of family friends such as Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson, and Mel Lewis. Wisely, Terry Gibbs had the foresight to make sure his son was exposed to a wide variety of music, encouraging Gerry to explore the entire world of jazz.

The drummer spent a productive eight years as a beacon of the San Antonio, Texas, jazz scene, playing with his own bands, bringing legendary jazzers to town as guest soloists, and running a jazz radio show. Since heading back to L.A., Gibbs has released the Thrasher Band CD *Moving On*, on Ravi Coltrane's RKM Records. He also organized and produced the burning disc *Gerry Gibbs And The Bitches Brew Orchestra Play The Music Of Miles Davis 1967–75*.

MD: What was it like growing up with a father like yours? Were there legendary jazz musicians hanging around your house?

Gerry: To be honest, it really wasn't like that. My pops is not a “Hollywood” type of guy. Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson would call the house and were friendly with us, but there weren't famous people constantly walking in the door.

One thing I can say about my pops is that he

was always very clear about his opinions on music. But he would also tell me about things he thought I should check out, even if he didn't care for them himself. Because of that, by the time I was thirteen or fourteen I was listening to quite a diverse selection of artists. I was very interested in the modern music of the day with drummers like Harvey Mason and Jack DeJohnette. He would buy me those records and be supportive, even if it wasn't his type of music. Every year, my Christmas present was to go to the record store and pick out thirty records that I wanted. My pops would add in five or ten that he thought I should listen to. He would say, “Gerry should learn about Elvin Jones or Baby Dodds,” so he'd add them in with the batch.

MD: Who are your biggest influences?

Gerry: McCoy Tyner had a huge influence on me. He was a guy who played one instrument and made it sound like an orchestra. When I listened to McCoy, I realized I could make a trio sound like a big band, and I use that concept a lot in my writing. Another big influence was the Don Pullen/George Adams Quartet. They took an avant-garde approach to playing music and made people snap their fingers and dance to it.

I want to take Albert Ayler's style and put Harvey Mason under it and mix in a little bit of Art

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Gibbs plays **Slingerland** drums in white marine pearl—with a catch. The basis of his kit is a set that was a gift from Buddy Rich, given to Gibbs “off the bandstand” in 1971. Unfortunately, much of the set was stolen later from a storage facility, but Gerry still has the 16" floor tom (which he converted and uses as a bass drum), the 8x12 rack tom, and the snare, which he keeps in the auxiliary position. He also has a 13" tom from another set, which he uses with legs as a first floor tom, and a converted 1960s 15" marching band snare, which he uses with legs as a second floor tom. His main snare is a 1933 Radio King, which was a gift from A.D. Mannion, a legendary Austin drummer who gave the drum to Gerry two weeks before he passed away.

Gibbs uses two 20" 1930s **K Zildjian** cymbals with rivets, both with severe cracks—one belonged to Tony Williams in the '60s, during his tenure with Miles Davis, and was a gift from Jim Keltner—plus an assortment of other types of cymbals, gongs, and percussion. All of Gerry's drums are customized and maintained by Stan Keyawa at the Hollywood Pro Drum Shop. Gerry plays **Vic Firth** 7A sticks with nylon tips, as well as Zildjian models.

Ensemble Of Chicago and McCoy Tyner, then add some Weather Report-style synthesizer to it—except have the keyboardist harmonizing the way Woody Herman used to harmonize his sax section. That type of mixture is how I've always imagined my own music.

As far as favorite drummers, I love Jack DeJohnette, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Louie Bellson, Buddy Rich, Sonship Theus, Mel Lewis, Art Blakey, Mike Clark, Billy Cobham, Harvey Mason, Don Moye, Eric Gravatt, Alphonse Mouzon, Airtio, and Billy Hart. Later on, Jeff Watts had a huge influence on me, although not the same influence he had on many other drummers.

When I first moved to New York, all of the young drummers were trying to play like Jeff, but only the busy elements of his playing. When these drummers got on a gig where they had to just play time on the cymbal, they couldn't keep simple time and swing! One night I saw Jeff sit in on a gig where the drummer had just a ride cymbal and a snare drum. Jeff got on the cymbal, and his time feel was just dancing. I realized that he had the right to play all of that other intricate stuff because he based everything off the cymbal—he had that as his foundation.

MD: Did you find it hard to take all of these diverse influences and incorporate them into your personal concept?

Gerry: I gave up playing drums during my last year of high school and took up cello because I couldn't figure out how I wanted to tune my drums or how I wanted to play. Should I tune my drums like Mike Clark or like Buddy Rich, or like Elvin or Jack? Should I use dark cymbals with rivets or clean-sounding fusion cymbals? As a kid, it was all too much for me to understand. But then, all of a sudden I started to hear all these threads that went across everything, and I came back to drumming, feeling I could take all those elements and put them into my playing.

One thing I always hated is when someone would hear me play with Alice Coltrane and say, "He's an avant-garde drummer." Then someone else would hear me with Buddy DeFranco and say, "He's a bebop drummer." And someone would hear me with Billy Childs and say, "He's a fusion drummer." Why does everyone want to put musicians into a little category? Granted, some musicians do fit into a specific thing, but it seems to freak people out when they can't categorize everyone. Look at all the controversy that Herbie Hancock creates because he wants to be a part of all the different kinds of music that he likes. People act like he doesn't have the right to do it, and that attitude keeps the music from moving forward.

MD: What brought you from NYC to San Antonio?

Gerry: My original Thrasher band had just broken up and I met a woman in San Antonio. I started spending time down there and we ended up opening a jazz club called Carmens De La Calle Cafe. I discovered, much to my surprise, that there were about forty musicians within a seventy-five-mile radius that played on the level of the musicians in New York. The difference was, these guys weren't going out on the road, so they could rehearse and help me develop something.

When we started the club, I began bringing all kinds of musicians to San Antonio to play with the rhythm section I put together, such as Randy

Brecker, John Abercrombie, Tom Harrell, Larry Coryell, and Mike Stern. Nobody else in town was doing this, so the club was always full.

The thing that brought me back to Los Angeles was to be close to my pops, who is eighty-five years old. He's in great shape and doing well, but I still wanted to be near him. Also, I missed doing work as a sideman. I don't only want to lead my own bands. I just did a record with saxophonist Doug Webb featuring Larry Goldings and Stanley Clarke. I am also about to do a big-band record date with Joey DeFrancesco where I'm going to write arrangements of all the music as well as contract the band and help produce. My conductor and musical partner Adrian Ruiz from San Antonio is going to work with me on it. He's a huge help for me with my big band—he knows exactly what I'm going for. I also play with various New York musicians when they come through L.A. I recently

played with Greg Osby, and I'm playing with Randy Brecker in a few weeks.

MD: Do you ever have a hard time switching between so many different styles of playing?

Gerry: No. I never spend so much time on one style that my chops for a different style get out of shape. I look at it like having different things for dinner each night—I don't have tacos every day for three months and then have a hard time going back to spaghetti!

When I did that recording with Stanley Clarke, Larry Goldings, and Doug Webb, I listened to classical music on the way to the studio because that's the mood I was in. When I got in the studio, I got into the mood to play bebop, because that's what we were doing. On the way back home, I listened to Nirvana playing "Smells Like Teen Spirit"!



Live photo by Alex Solca

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DAVE WITTE

Lightning speed, relentless power, unflinching precision, limitless energy—these traits are at the core of mega metal/hardcore drummer Dave Witte.

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Scott Kinkade

It's no surprise that Dave Witte is an incredibly in-demand musician, particularly in heavy underground circles, where he's on the road and in the studio for most of the year. In fact, just compiling a list of artists Witte's performed with throughout his two-decade career is a challenge, but here goes: Discordance Axis, East West Blast Test, Melt-Banana, Burnt By The Sun, Municipal Waste, Alec Empire, Black Army Jacket, Merzbow, Major Burns, Human Remains...the list goes on. "I always have a couple pans on the fryer," Witte says. And when there's downtime, he works for a catering company. "I love cooking—it's really cool."

The New Jersey-based drummer's remarkable hands and feet are thanks in part to a thirst Dave developed for extreme music early on. "When I was growing up, my friends and I would go to the record store and buy the album with the coolest cover art," he recalls. "And that happened to be a lot of the early thrash. I always loved the aggressiveness of it. I was drawn to the speed of it. I just loved playing fast. At one point, I was *that* guy—yeah, man, the faster, the better. I didn't care about anything else. I went through that phase where I'd get more and more extreme. And it all started with that stuff."

Witte's since tempered his need for speed with a sense of musical balance. "I've learned to be a better player and use it when it's needed, in context, to make it stand out a little more," he says. "As I've grown as a player, I've learned to play with space and put the fills where they're really needed, instead of going nuts all the time—which is fun, don't get me wrong!"



MD: Your latest release with hardcore punks Municipal Waste is called *Massive Aggressive*. How did you assemble your drum parts for the album?

Dave: A lot of this stuff, the beats pretty much write themselves. But in the fills and transitions, I'd really take some time to think it out and make everything different. There are so many people who play this type of music, and it starts to sound the same. So I just try my hardest to think outside the box and incorporate other elements to make it stand out. I have no problem taking a fill from a hip-hop song and putting that in what I'm doing just to make it different.

I think you have to invest a little more time to make it special. I've always approached drums that way—all those fills, I'd make them unique and tasteful without going overboard. I listen to a huge range of music, so I have a lot to choose from.

MD: What do you listen to?

Dave: A lot of experimental music. A lot of free-form music. A ton of progressive rock. I listen to pretty much everything across the board. I like most stuff if it's done well and if it's challenging.

MD: One challenge was East West Blast Test with guitarist Chris Dodge, where the two of you weren't even in the same state while writing and recording your two albums.

Dave: I recorded all the drums in New Jersey and sent them to Chris [in California], and he put everything else on top of it. I just went into the studio, did a bunch of four counts, and played whatever I wanted, like twenty-eight times. None of it was rehearsed, and it was all pretty much one take. I just fired it off. The first one was really cool, but the second one, I think we might've gotten a little too adventurous for our own good. It turned out really strange. Definitely some cool moments on it.

MD: You've also toured with Japanese experimental hardcore vets Melt-Banana. Learning their angular, intricate stuff must've been tough.

Dave: They mentioned that they needed a drummer for a European tour, and I said sure. I went and did it, and it was an eye-opening experience. It was sixty-five shows, four Japanese people, two Germans, and me. It was my first time in

almost five years with them—seven full tours, about two months long each. I love playing with that band. I wish I had more time to do it. I got to really go out on a limb and use dynamics and different stuff. It was quite free at times too.

learn how to always be on time and when to change.

MD: Have you ever done a gig as straightforward as AC/DC?

Dave: No. A few friends of mine wanted to start an AC/DC cover band, but we

Dave's Gear

Drums: Trick in aluminum finish with custom skull pattern

- A. 5 1/2x14 stainless steel snare
- B. 10x12 tom
- C. 11x13 tom
- D. 14x14 tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x22 bass drum
- G. 16x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Paiste

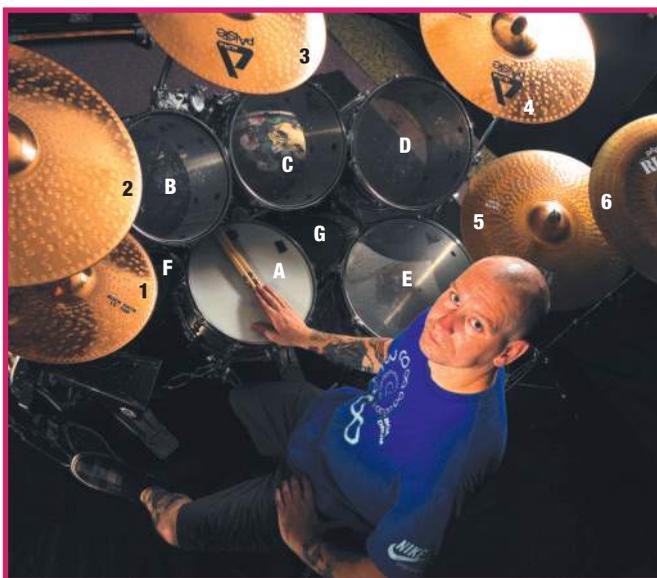
- 1. 15" Alpha rock hi-hats
- 2. 19" Alpha rock crash
- 3. 18" Alpha rock crash
- 4. 20" Alpha rock crash
- 5. 20" Rude ride
- 6. 20" Rude Novo China

Percussion: LP cowbell

Hardware: Tama Road Pro. Hi-hat stand: DW 5000 (two leg). Bass drum pedal: Trick Pro 1-V. Beater: Danmar UFO Skate Beaterz.

Heads: Remo coated Emperor X on snare batter, clear Diplomat on snare bottom. Clear Emperor on tom batters, clear Ambassador on tom bottoms. Evans Powerstroke 4 on bass drum batter, black EQ3 on bass drum front head.

Sticks: Vic Firth Rock N, hickory, nylon tip



Europe, and I didn't know anything. I learned a lot real quick! It was overwhelming, but it was one of the greatest experiences of my life. So many great things came of it, and I wound up doing

There was an experimental element where you had the timing and you could just go out on a little journey and check back in when need be.

They sent me CDs of the music I needed to learn; it was a ridiculous amount of songs. So I just put them in my headphones and drummed along to them every day as much as I could. I pretty much had it all memorized and ran through the whole set without any problems.

They were really happy, and that made me super-happy because I love the band so much that I would not want to let them down.

MD: What got you started behind the kit?

Dave: AC/DC is pretty much responsible for teaching me everything. Phil Rudd is the king of the easy beat. He's a good timekeeper. And I tell everyone who's interested in learning drums to play along with their records because you're going to

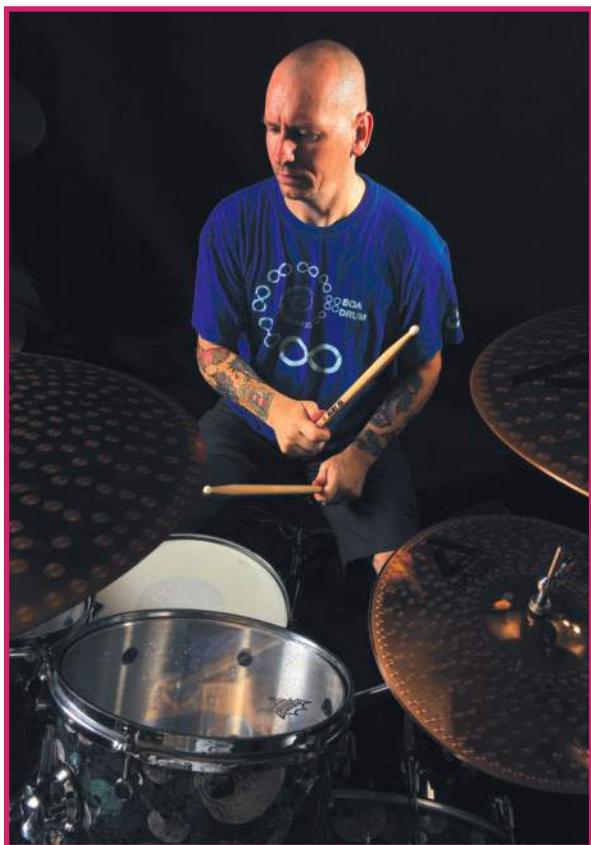
never got around to it. The opportunity hasn't presented itself.

MD: What are some of the things you've done to put yourself in such an advantageous playing position?

Dave: The best way to go about that is just to be positive, stay as open-minded as possible, and practice a ton. That's what I did. I've never wanted to limit myself, so I always do what's needed to adjust. I would always seek out new ways to be creative so it wouldn't seem like I was doing the same thing over and over again.

I'd try to jam with people who were better than me. I'd play with other musicians from other categories, like blues and jazz guys. Just people that were more advanced on their instruments and could outplay me. So I would learn real quick. I'd have to adapt. My growth rate would be overnight, almost, because they'd push me so hard. That's a real creative way to learn. It can be intimidating, but you have to get over that and just try it. You're not going to know if you don't try it.

To watch exclusive footage of Dave Witte playing in the studio, go to moderndrummer.com.





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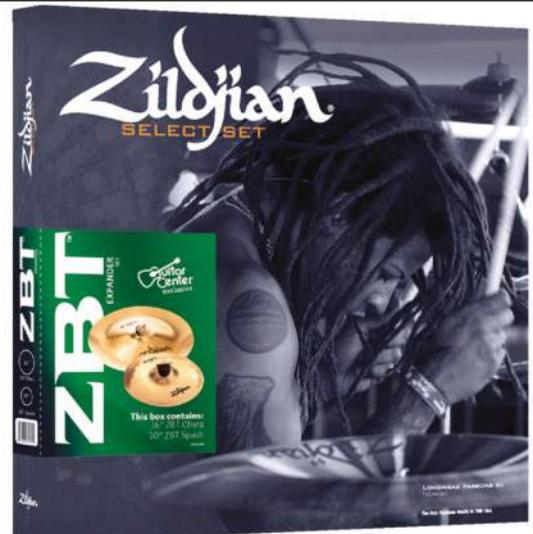
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DREAM THEATER BLACK CLOUDS & SILVER LININGS

DT continues its winning formula of multilayered prog metal, creating epic-length adventures through odd-meter mind trips and personal, reflective lyrical content. **MIKE PORTNOY** keeps pushing his drumming abilities with an aggressive, musical approach. The opener, "A Nightmare To Remember," is a metric-modulation tour de force, with Portnoy's constantly shifting double bass patterns leading the charge impressively. Another rhythmically charged collection. (Roadrunner) **Mike Haid**

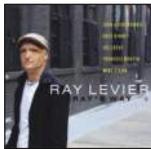


★★★★★

STEVE LEHMAN OCTET TRAVAIL, TRANSFORMATION, AND FLOW

Sometimes *more* is more. Such is the case here, where altoist Lehman's super-dense and complicated structures call for a busy, involved approach. **TYSHAWN SOREY**, who's not yet thirty, knows a thing or two about tempo shifts and odd times, having honed his skills with the likes of Steve Coleman, among others. The jagged linear breakbeats of "No Neighborhood Rough Enough" engage the music from the top down, supporting the soloists while providing another melodic line. Sorey's off-kilter, linear-lockstep beat for "Echoes" is a lesson in deception, space, and chart reading; just try finding the 1. (www.pirecordings.com)

Ilya Stemkovsky



★★★★★

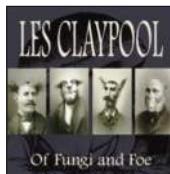
RAY LEVIER RAY'S WAY

Drummer Ray LeVier steps out front with an impressive debut as a leader. His "way" includes ideal ingredients: brilliant sideman (Mike Stern, John Abercrombie) and a sense of mature, modern swing that belies his young age. LeVier's solo on "You Never Know" is filled with dramatic over-the-bar phrasing and hip flams. (www.origin-records.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

★★★★★

CARL ALLEN & RODNEY WHITAKER WORK TO DO

Drummer Carl Allen and co-leading bassist Rodney Whitaker deliver jazz with polish and class. But first and foremost they want to make you feel great. You will. This swinging, under-your-skin rhythm section is a strong Rx. Rooted in the straight-ahead, Allen's band also draws from R&B and pop, swinging numbers like the Isley Brothers' title track with driving conviction. Precise popping chops in service of your feet. (Mack Avenue) **Jeff Potter**



★★★★★

LES CLAYPOOL OF FUNGI AND FOE

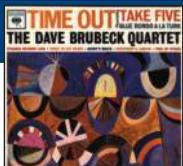
The bass of Primus boss Les Claypool creates most of the melodies and much of the rhythm on this surreal outing, augmented by drummer **PAULO BALDI**'s tribal beats, with cartoonish percussion from **LAPLAND MICLOVIK** (a Claypool pseudonym). Based on the bassist's recent movie and video game soundtracks, *Of Fungi And Foe* is a noisy assemblage of cage rattles, fart jokes, humorous vocals, and stumbling Humpty Dumpty rhythms. (Prawn Song) **Ken Micallef**

★★★★★

RICHIE GOODS & NUCLEAR FUSION LIVE AT THE ZINC BAR

Famed Herbie Hancock *Thrust*-era drummer **MIKE CLARK** isn't sitting idly by on this 2007 live date with bassist Richie Goods. Not only is it cool to hear his slick ghosting and linear funk on the *Thrust* tune "Palm Grease," but his driving ride attack on "Sly" makes you wonder what Hancock's original *Head Hunters* album would have sounded like with Clark instead of Harvey Mason. Elsewhere, Mike lays down some bouncy second-line and Elvin-esque triplets ("King Jaffe Joffer") and plays with inspiration on Weather Report and Return To Forever standards. *Fusion*, a dirty word? You wouldn't think so listening to Clark in his sixties. (www.myspace.com/therealrichiegoods) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

Encore by Rick Mattingly



DAVE BRUBECK QUARTET TIME OUT: 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Fifty years after the Dave Brubeck Quartet, with drummer **JOE MORELLO**, proved that meters other than 4/4 can swing, the music still sounds fresh and modern. Morello had as many chops as anyone, but he always used his technique sparingly and very musically. On this set in particular, he plays extremely fast tempos on tunes such as the 9/8 "Blue Rondo À La Turk" with such finesse that you don't realize just how brisk they are unless you try to play along. And Morello's legendary solo on the 5/4 classic "Take Five" is all about musicality and phrasing.

The *Time Out: 50th Anniversary* set includes a CD containing live tracks from the Newport Jazz Festival in 1961, '63, and '64, and Morello's solo on the concert version of "Take Five" has all the drive and fast single strokes anyone could want. There are also several straight-ahead standards that show the drummer's more mainstream side, and the brushwork on both discs is exemplary. The set is rounded out by a DVD that includes a lengthy interview with Brubeck and some (unfortunately short) television clips of the *Time Out*-era group.

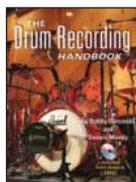
Joe Morello On "Take Five"

Brubeck says he got the idea for "Take Five" from hearing you playing in 5/4.
When I did drum solos, I would sometimes play them in 5/4 just to get away from the usual thing that drummers do.

Did you ever think you'd have the chance to play a whole tune in 5/4?
No, because although it was easy for me to play in five, other musicians would get confused by it. But I was doing 5/4 solos in the middle of a blues, so Brubeck asked [saxophonist] Paul Desmond to write a

5/4 tune that we could use for a drum feature.
The fact that Brubeck kept the vamp going during your solo gave you the chance to play musical phrases.
When we first started playing "Take Five," Brubeck was uncomfortable soloing in five, so that's why he just played the vamp all the way through. But that gave me a chance to do something different from the Gene Krupa/Buddy Rich kind of solo. I never wanted to copy anyone else.

MULTIMEDIA



★★★★★

THE DRUM RECORDING HANDBOOK BY BOBBY OWSINSKI AND DENNIS MOODY BOOK/DVD LEVEL: ALL \$29.95

Right up front, I find some of the drum tuning tips contained in this book and DVD questionable (for instance: top head tighter than bottom head, period), and I recommend that anyone seriously interested in recording drums also pick up *Drumset Tuning Theory* by Tony Adams. That said, there's still more than enough practical *recording*-related information here to highly recommend this book, whether you have two mics or twenty. The authors explain how to prepare recording environments, deal with phase cancellation, mix for headphones, and mike a kit, with specific alternative strategies for limited equipment—one-, two-, three- (the John Bonham method), and four-mic techniques. On the DVD, engineer and co-author Dennis Moody chats with veteran funk session drummer Michael White at his kit about muffling theories and techniques, mic placement, and much more. Later, sitting at the mixing console, Moody dials in the various mics placed around White's kit, offering specific frequency recommendations for each of the drums and cymbals. (Hal Leonard) **Robin Tolleson**

★★★★★

VERA CRUZ ISLAND: BRAZILIAN RHYTHMS FOR DRUMSET BY VERA FIGUEIREDO AND DANIEL OLIVEIRA BOOK/CD (2) LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$24.95

This book centers on thirteen tracks recorded by the dynamic Brazilian drummer/percussionist Vera Figueiredo. Charts accompany each tune, along with several pages of in-depth chart analysis that points out subtle shifts in feel and color. The authors explain the origin of the rhythms, including maracatu, choro, samba jazz, new bossa, cha-cha, and forró; identify the instruments the grooves were originally played on (surdo, pandeiro, tamborim, timbal, repinique); and suggest how to emulate the patterns on the drumkit. The music is terrific, and Figueiredo's drumming is at the heart of it, blending baião and rock on "Reaching Another Day" and mixing samba-baiano and reggae on "Terere." Dennis Chambers and Dave Weckl also take guest turns in this entertaining, musical, and informative package. (Hudson Music) **Robin Tolleson**



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INTERNATIONAL DRUM FESTIVAL Story and photos by Jim Cornall

The ninth annual Cape Breton International Drum Festival took place this past May 23 and 24, at its traditional venue of the Savoy Theatre in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia.

There were more performers this year, many of them from around eastern Canada (each day offered an Otarion Showcase for local drummers), but there was still a focus on education and variety. **Bill Ludwig III**, who received a Legends Award, gave a very entertaining performance. He examined the history of percussion using a variety of instruments and contraptions, many of which were created by the Ludwig Drum Company.

Next, drummer/educator **Dan Britt** drew gasps of delight from the crowd. He was followed by Australian drummer **Damian Corniola**, Quebec rising star **Emmanuelle Caplette**, jazz/funk great **Mike Clark**, ex-Vixen rocker **Roxy Petrucci**, ace clinician **Johnny Rabb**, and world percussionist **Pete Lockett**. Capping off the day one performances was virtuoso **Virgil Donati**, making his first appearance at the festival.

On day two, Newfoundland teacher **Sonny Hogan** performed an enjoyable set and offered advice to the drummers in attendance. To follow were up-and-comer **Scott Pellegrom**, Canadian blues drummer **Tom Bona**, Kittie's **Mercedes Lander**, and Rob Zombie's **Tommy Clufetos**.

The second Legends Award of the weekend was then

presented to the late, great **Buddy Rich**; accepting was **Dom Famularo**. **Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez** gave the penultimate performance, playing to a variety of tracks that highlighted his virtuosity. That set the stage for the traditional last performance, by Famularo. Dom offered a summary of the weekend, inspired and motivated the audience with words of wisdom, and then launched into a breathtaking solo, perhaps the finest of his eight performances at the festival.

Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the Cape Breton International Drum Festival. For more, go to www.capebretoninternationaldrumfestival.com.



Dom Famularo



Tommy Clufetos



Virgil Donati

L.A.'S PRO DRUM SHOP

CELEBRATES 50 YEARS Photos by Alex Solca

This past June 6 at the Avalon in Hollywood, Pro Drum Shop owners Stan and Jerry Keyawa started their night of celebration by accepting honorary plaques and gifts from Gretsch, Sabian, Remo, Mapex, and Zildjian. Live music was performed by **Ronald Bruner Jr.** with the Bruner Brothers and **Emil Richards** with his seventeen-piece big band. A short documentary film on Pro Drum's history (narrated by Stan Keyawa) outlined how founder Bob Yeager started the shop all those years ago.

Modern Drummer e-media sales rep Lisa Jenkins checked in with some of the guest drummers attending the fiftieth-anniversary celebration.

"I was one of their first clients who had a charge account," says studio master **Hal Blaine**. "Luckily they trusted me. I've been with them from day one. They're such nice guys. My drum tech had carte blanche—he could go in there and get anything."

Says Wings/Paul McCartney drummer **Denny Seiwell**, a Pro Drum customer since 1967, "You knew you made it in this town if you went into the store and Bob insulted you." Educator **Freddie Gruber**'s take: "Bob Yeager was real, and that's a rarity."

L.A. studio heavy and drum tech **Mike Fasano** says, "They're the grease to the wheel. They take care of you. It's a real special place. I've been happy to experience



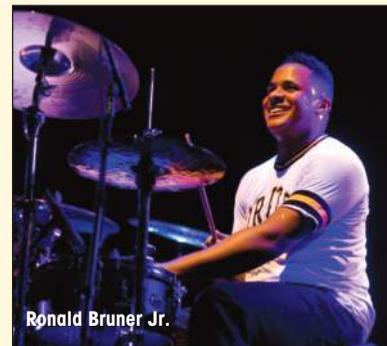
this for the past twenty years."

"I love the store because it's a true drum shop," says the Cult's **John Tempesta**. "They really treat their customers right."

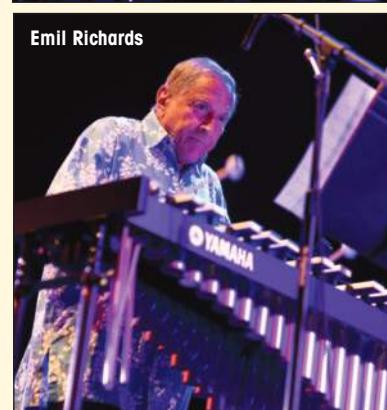
Many famous Pro Drum customers established their connection to the shop long before they turned pro themselves. "For my sixteenth birthday my dad took me there to buy my first drumset," says Frank Gambale/Diane Reeves' **Joey Heredia**. "Stan remembers the day we bought that set from Bob. I got a Slingerland kit with Aztec wrap. Everyone thought it was so ugly."

"When I was twelve years old, my mom and dad stopped by and bought me some sticks," session drummer **Denny Fongheiser** recalls. "They had heard about the store. The Pro Drum shop helped me a lot when I first moved down here."

Jerry Keyawa himself supplies a couple of reasons for Pro Drum's impressive longevity: "Everyone gets a calming feeling when they walk in the store. They ask, 'Is this heaven?' *Everyone* is like family."



Ronald Bruner Jr.



Emil Richards



JIM CHAPIN

Story and photo by Rick Mattingly

Drummer, teacher, and author Jim Chapin died in Florida on July 4 at age eighty-nine. Born in New York City in 1919, he started playing drums at eighteen after being inspired by Gene Krupa. On Krupa's advice, Jim studied with the legendary drummer and teacher Sanford Moeller.

During the early 1940s, Chapin played at New York's Hickory House jazz club with Flip Phillips. After serving in the army during World War II, the drummer worked jazz gigs in Greenwich Village and played with big bands at the Roseland and Acadia ballrooms. He toured with the Casa Loma orchestra and worked in Atlanta for a spell before returning to New York. Then, making the needs of his growing family his priority (the singer Harry Chapin, now deceased, was one of his sons), Chapin settled into a life of teaching and playing mostly dance jobs, with the occasional jazz gig.

In 1948 he published an instructional book, *Advanced Techniques For The Modern Drummer*. Since its release, what most people simply call "the Chapin book" has been considered the definitive study on coordinated independence as applied to jazz drumming, and generations of drummers have struggled to master it. "I started studying from *Advanced Techniques* when I was about thirteen, and it was the first really frustrating thing I'd encountered," Dave Weckl said in an *MD* interview. "That book definitely put me through changes. It was helping both my reading and my coordinated independence, and it brought me to a new level of concentration and ability."

"He beat a lot of drummers up with that book," said Max Roach in an *MD* article commemorating Chapin's seventy-fifth birthday. "We were all stumbling on it. But he made a significant contribution to conceptualizing what the drumset is all about, explaining it so clearly in his book."

"A big misconception is that the book came out of what the bebop drummers were doing," Chapin told *MD* in 1981. "But a lot of my inspiration came from guys who played the shuffle. All the exercises that showed how to play dotted 8ths/16ths, straight 8ths, triplets, and 16th notes against the cymbal pattern were written in 1941—long before bebop. By the time I put the book out in 1948, the bebop era was in full flower, so I added some exercises with a lot of the phrases I heard the bop drummers playing. But those drummers didn't play independently. When they would play those phrases, they would stop the cymbal or play it in unison. All I did was notate the mechanics and show how to play those phrases while keeping the swing pattern going on the ride cymbal."

Once the book was published, Chapin found it necessary to carry around a pair of sticks and a practice pad, as he was frequently challenged to prove that the patterns and exercises in the book could actually be played. It wasn't long, however, before *Advanced Techniques* became the book for aspiring drumset players to master. It is considered one of the most influential drum books ever published.

In the 1960s, Chapin released a Music Minus One album based on *Advanced Techniques*, as well as



Jim in November 1980

other MMO productions featuring big-band, jazz, rock, and combo arrangements. Jim also put out two albums on the Classic Jazz label: *Skin Tight*, which featured big-band drumming, and *The Jim Chapin Sextet*, which featured the group that Chapin used on Monday nights at Birdland in the mid-'50s.

In 1971 Jim published his second book, *Independence: The Open End*. Innovative in design, it featured removable pages that could be superimposed to create seemingly endless patterns, and it was generally agreed that one could never really "finish" the book. Expensive to produce, *Independence* was published in limited quantities.

Once *Advanced Techniques* had become established and Chapin no longer had to prove that the exercises could indeed be played, the drummer turned much of his attention to promoting the benefits of the Moeller technique. With the zeal of a Southern evangelist, Jim would stroll around Percussive Arts Society conventions and NAMM shows with a pair of sticks and a RealFeel pad, demonstrating the "Moeller stroke" to the crowds

that would form around him. One of my favorite memories is seeing Jim out on the sidewalk in front of the Nashville Convention Center in the mid-'90s after the summer NAMM show had closed for the day and everyone had been herded out. He had his foot propped up on a fire hydrant and a practice pad balanced on his thigh, and he was demonstrating the Moeller technique to half a dozen eager students.

In 1994, Chapin received the National Music Council's American Eagle Award in Washington, D.C., and a lifetime achievement award from Berklee College Of Music in Boston. In 1995 he was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall Of Fame.

When I heard that Jim had died, an image flashed into my mind of him standing in front of the pearly gates with a pair of sticks in his hand and a practice pad under his arm. Before entering heaven, he likely gave St. Peter a quick lesson on the Moeller stroke.

Go to moderndrummer.com to learn more about Jim Chapin's career from his friends, peers, and admirers.



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PULLEY POWER

This set comes to us from Todd Perteet of Bayfield, Colorado. The kit began to take shape in 2003 with the purchase of five red-oak segment shells from Global Drum Company. "At that time I had been building drums for a couple of years," Todd says, "and was hoping to do something a little out of the ordinary."

After the shells were finished with thirteen hand-rubbed coats of oil, it was time to install lugs, vents, and tom suspension mounts. The end result was not cheap, nor was it quick and easy to realize. "I bought several stock items to build a prototype assembly on a single drum prior to attempting a go at the full kit," Perteet explains. "The tuning system consists of machined aluminum pulley housings equipped with free-rolling Delrin wheels. I had the housings threaded to accept standard tension rods and finished with black anodizing. Vinyl-clad stainless steel cables with locking brass turnbuckles tie the system together. Brass thumb nuts above the pulley housings lock the tension rods to prevent detuning. The through-the-hoop bass claws were made with the same material and finish as the pulley housings."

"After playing the five-piece kit for several months," Todd continues, "I decided this had to be taken to another level. And since I'd had enough components manufactured, all I needed were more shells. I contacted Matt Wille and Andi Leech of Global Drum Company with an order for six more shells, and they did an outstanding job of matching the original shells' grain patterns, wood color, and overall look. These additional shells were finished exactly as the original five, and the kit now became eleven pieces."



Photo Submission: Digital photos on disk as well as print photos may be sent to: Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Hi-res digital photos and descriptive text can also be emailed to billya@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.



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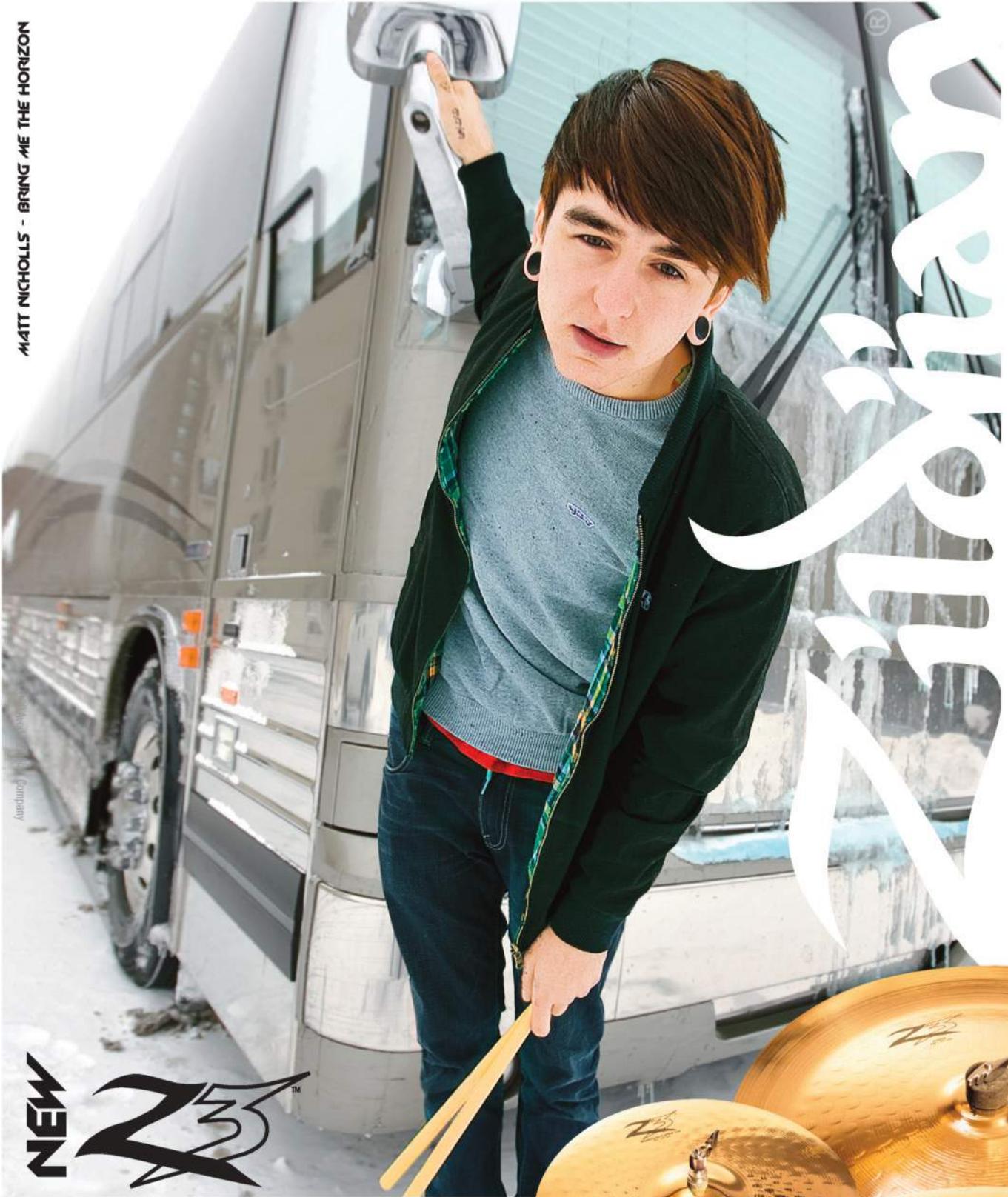
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