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NOVEMBER 2009

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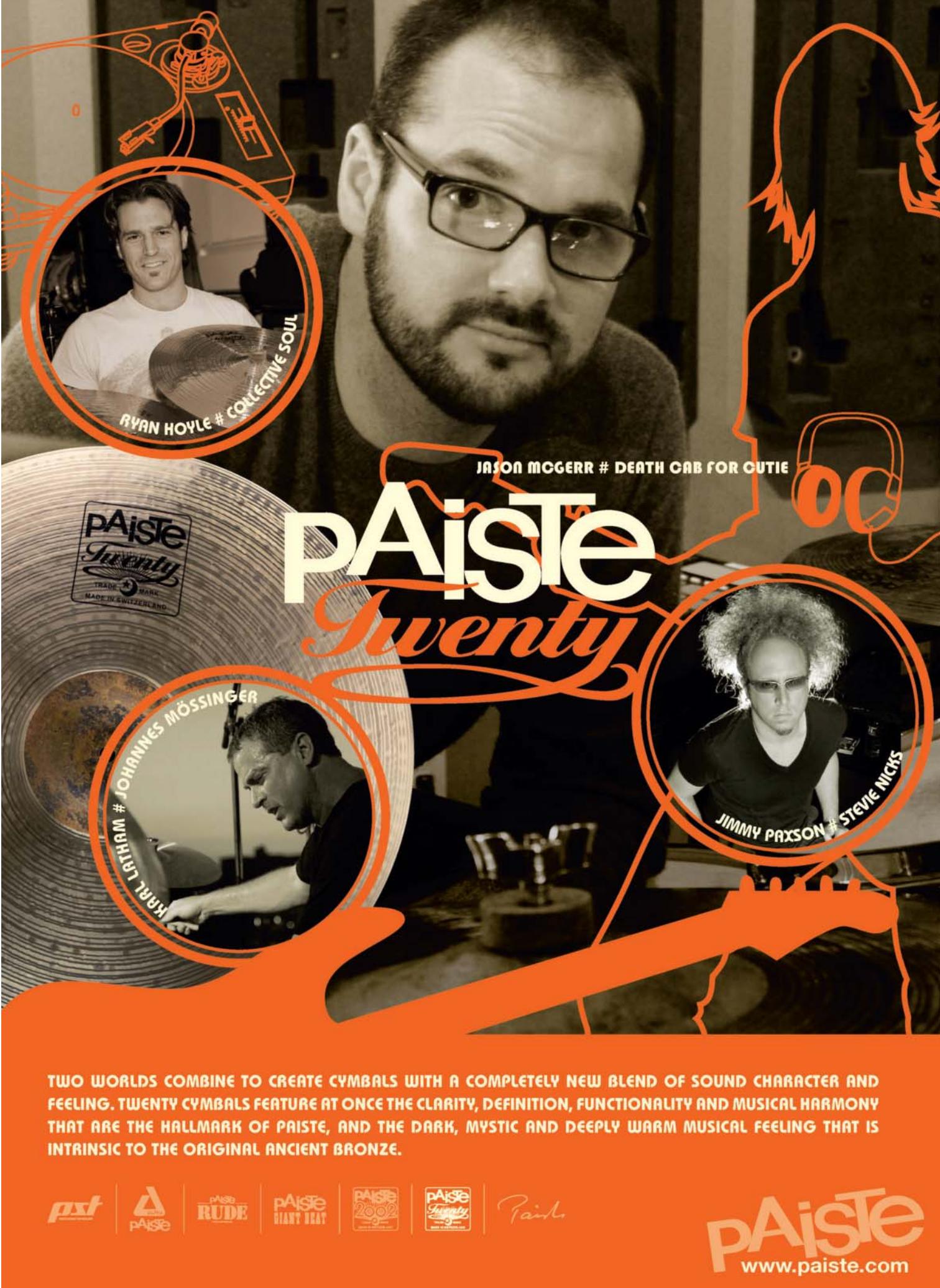
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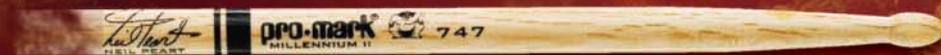
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Gene Ambo

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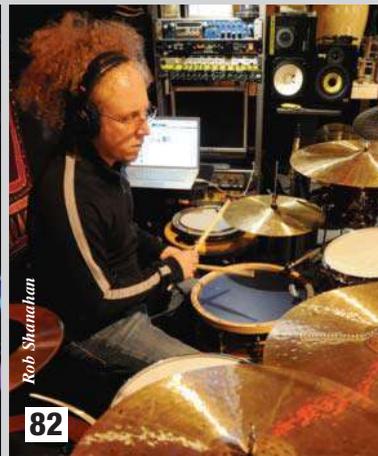
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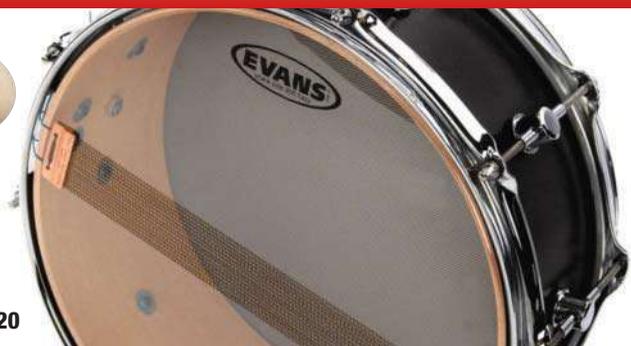
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# KNOW WHAT YOU LIKE, KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T

Last month I wrote a piece on Rush drummer Neil Peart for our Reasons To Love column. The premise was that since Rush wasn't one of my favorite groups when I was growing up, I never went through the common drummer ritual of obsessively analyzing, and then attempting to copy, Neil's every beat and fill. I'm not apologetic about that fact. But I'm not smug about it either, and for the article I sincerely wanted to learn more about why, of all the drummers in the world, Neil seems to attract such huge amounts of attention and devotion from other drummers. So I asked a bunch of notable players that exact question, and I learned a lot. Do I love Neil Peart's drumming now? Honestly, no—at least not as much as I love, say, Art Blakey's playing, or Phil Collins', or Keith Moon's, or Richie Hayward's, or Dale Crover's. But I understand it more now, and I respect it more now. And that is a huge thing.

Every drummer's taste is somewhat a matter of luck—the records that happen to be in your older brother's collection, the players your teacher was most into, the music that was popular when you first started playing.... In time, your tastes become more sophisticated, and you tend to gravitate toward music that makes sense to you, that supports your uniquely developed attitudes about things like feel, mood, and rhythm. Eventually you spend a lot of time listening intently to certain artists, and less to others. I do feel that every drummer who wants to be respected by his or her peers really should attempt to at least understand the reasons why our commonly agreed upon drum gods are so revered. But I also believe that we should never feel we have to actually like the music they make—or that we have to study it exhaustively.

I sometimes get into trouble with academic types who insist that any drummer who wants to have a career in music should focus on learning how to convincingly play every style of drumming imaginable. Baloney! Sure, knowledge is never a bad thing, and the open-mindedness that can result from such curiosity would certainly serve any musician well, artistically and possibly financially. But if every drummer tried to be a jack of all trades, either out of some sense of obligation or, worse, fear of losing auditions...man, I can't think of a

more depressing musical environment than what that attitude would result in.

Making money is important, and it makes sense that having a broad musical vocabulary to draw from can further that goal. But as musicians we also have to take responsibility for moving drumming forward, and sometimes that means rejecting the ideas and attitudes of the past, or of our fellow musicians. Our art—all art—progresses and expands because its greatest practitioners have unique voices that are a combination of specific styles and ideas that touch them on a deep level. No one makes groundbreaking art by spreading themselves thin. Quite the opposite; usually they reach profound heights of accomplishment by focusing, editing, and perfecting.

How many times have you read a drummer comment on the importance of a player's individual "voice"? I'd suggest that the reason a musician's voice sticks out from the crowd is as much about what it *isn't* as what it is. With all due respect to Duke Ellington, you shouldn't only process music as good or bad; you should follow your instincts and allow yourself to be absorbed by music that moves you deeply, whether it's something that the "experts" approve of or not.

I hope that as you continue to read *MD* you'll at least check out what every drummer we profile has to say, even if he or she plays in a band or style that isn't your cup of tea. Knowing what you like doesn't mean completely closing off your ears to things you might not dig.

But if you ever find yourself at a party, talking with some guy who thinks you're a dimwit because you haven't memorized every lick Elvin Jones, Jeff Porcaro, or Danny Carey ever played, politely tell him to go scratch, then walk over to the stereo, turn up the Clash (or the Bee Gees...or the White Stripes...), and feel confident about your musical knowledge—and proud of your own unique interests.



*Adam Budofsky*

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Volume 33, Number 11

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**MODERN DRUMMER** magazine (ISSN 0194-4533) is published monthly by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. PERIODICALS MAIL POSTAGE paid at Cedar Grove, NJ 07009 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2009 by **MODERN DRUMMER Publications, Inc.** All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publisher is prohibited.

**EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: MODERN DRUMMER Publications**, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Tel: (973) 239-4140. Fax: (973) 239-7139. Email: [mdinfo@moderndrummer.com](mailto:mdinfo@moderndrummer.com).

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS:** US and Canada \$34.97 per year; \$56.97, two years. Other international \$59.97 per year. Single copies \$5.99.

**SUBSCRIPTION CORRESPONDENCE:** Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920. **Change of address:** Allow at least six weeks for a change. Please provide both old and new address. Call (800) 551-3786 or (815) 732-9004.

**MUSIC DEALERS:** Modern Drummer is available for resale at bulk rates. Direct correspondence to Modern Drummer Retail Vision, 2 Maple Street, Suite 6, Middlebury, VT 05753, (800) 381-1288.

**INTERNATIONAL LICENSING REPRESENTATIVE:** Robert Abramson & Associates, Inc., Libby Abramson, President, PO Box 740346, Boynton Beach, FL 33474-0346, [abramson@prodigy.net](mailto:abramson@prodigy.net).

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Modern Drummer, PO Box 274, Oregon, IL 61061-9920.

**Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 41480017** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, Stn A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2

**MEMBER:** National Association Of Music Merchants, American Music Conference, Percussive Arts Society, Music Educators National Conference, Percussion Marketing Council, Music Magazine Publishers Association

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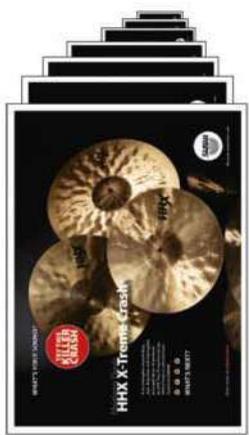


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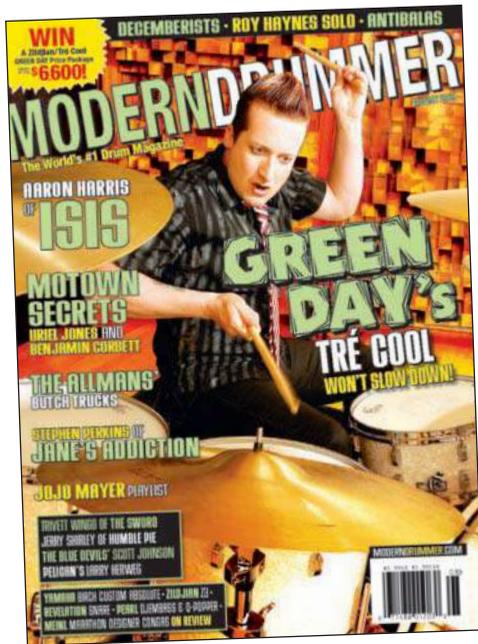
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## AUGUST MD

I just had to write and say that the August *MD* is a great read. The Jojo Mayer piece should be compulsory reading for every drummer, with Mark Griffith doing a fine job of capturing the nuances of Jojo's thoughts. His excellent summation highlights the complexity of simplicity—and the benefit to be gained from reading this feature more than once.

Jerry Shirley's piece was a reminder of what a great band Humble Pie was. Jerry, being so young, was a great inspiration (as was his mentor, Small Face Kenney Jones). He had a nice pocket—very much rock 'n' roll and groove—and for Zep fans, discovering this band could be a very welcome (albeit latent) surprise. I do, however, take issue with the line "Steve Marriott didn't intend to invent heavy metal when he founded Humble Pie with Peter Frampton in 1968." It was Frampton's band—though Marriott had been offering suggestions before joining—and the Jeff Beck Group and Vanilla

Fudge were already heavy and rather metallic. And Marriott himself had already done "heavy" with his previous band, the wonderful Small Faces.

Ben Sesar's "When Matched Grip Won't Work" is a very valid read for every player, especially those who think a new kit or more chops will improve their playing. Sometimes it's as simple as how one holds their sticks. Also, Tré Cool is...er...cool! I don't listen to Green Day (nothing personal), but Tré has piqued my interest. We should all take note of his closing line: "I've evolved."

**Wayne Blanchard**  
Sabian senior marketing manager

## PRODUCT CLOSE-UP

Thank you for the review of the Yamaha Absolute Birch kit in the August issue. However, there is one fact in the second paragraph that is not correct. The writer talks about the waterproof resin on the outside of the drum and says the color changes over time. He may actually be referring to the vintage finish we use on the inside of the drum. We use this waterproof resin on only one finish—which is called "vintage." With all of our lacquer finishes, we actually pay a lot of money so the color does *not* change. We have invested in UV machines to help eliminate any yellowing over time that lacquer finishes experience. I don't think anyone would want this White Grape Sparkle finish to become "deeper hues over time." Thanks again for the review. We truly do appreciate it.

**Dave Jewell**  
Yamaha Drums marketing manager/Paiste distribution manager, Yamaha Corporation Of America

## LET THE MUSIC PLAY

Just got the August issue and really enjoyed reading Billy Amendola's Editor's Overview. Ironically, two weeks before, I did *exactly* what Billy suggests and called up an old friend I used to play with twenty years ago. We got together at a studio in Staten Island, NY, with some other players and had a lot of fun. I love the magazine!

**Eddie DeFressine**

## LOUIE BELLSON

I would like to thank *MD* for the beautiful tribute to a truly beautiful gentleman, Mr. Louie Bellson, in your June issue. I first met Louie at the 1994 Purdue University Jazz Festival and have been fascinated by him ever since. I was impressed by the humility he expressed in his clinic when he said that he was still learning how to play his instrument. He had so much genius and experience behind the kit, yet he



was so genuinely humble. Another thing that I love about Louie was the joy that you could see when he played.

I met Louie again in 1995 at the Northrop High School Jazz Festival in Fort Wayne, Indiana. As he was setting up backstage, I asked if it was okay if we had our picture taken, and he obliged. He could have said, "Get outta here, kid, can't you see I'm busy?" But he didn't. He was that patient a gentleman. Then again, that's who Louie Bellson was. His genius and generosity will be missed. God bless!

**Dan Huston**

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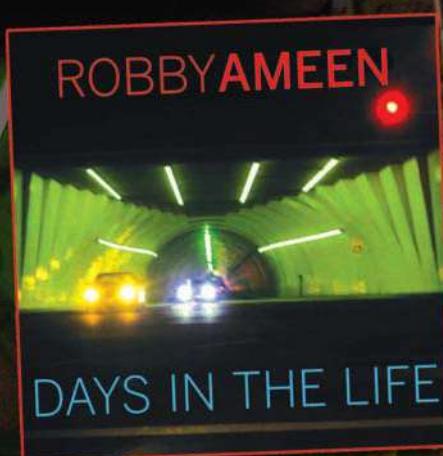
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# STEVE SMITH AND ZAKIR HUSSAIN



**When one of the loudest instruments—the drumset—meets one of the softest—the tabla—how can they share common ground? A jazz-rock master and an Indian classical virtuoso will find a way, and they'll welcome others into the fold while they're at it.** by Michael Parillo

**T**his past spring, tabla legend Zakir Hussain, with help from Vital Information/Vital Legacy drummer Steve Smith, conducted an Indian music workshop in New York City. Over the course of five days, Zakir introduced a group of percussionists and melody players to the concept of making music “the Indian way,” culminating in a Young Artists Concert at Zankel Hall. Smith, who’s been applying Indian rhythms to the drumset for years now, was part of the faculty, sitting at the kit for the rehearsals and the performance. We jumped at the chance to chat with the two rhythmatisms about their international educational collaboration.

**MD:** Steve, when you play with Zakir, do you use your full dynamic range?

**Steve:** The simple answer is no. I have a special approach when we play together, a combination of a lot of things. It took some trial and error to come up with a drumset that really works for that situation,

a kick to it, no pun intended.

**MD:** Steve, how do you orchestrate Indian rhythms on the drumset? Do you have a set approach for specific strokes?

**Steve:** There are in a way two approaches. One is high tones and low tones, to approximate the melody of the tabla between highs and lows. That’s usually between a snare drum and a bass drum.

The other approach is in a much faster type of playing—the rolls, or *rela*. I use rudimental stickings to approximate the feeling I’m getting, so I can play quickly and with the kind of phrasing I’m hearing. I put together paradiddles, double paradiddles, and so on, rather than everything being single strokes. Singles don’t give you the same feeling.

**Zakir:** In other words, no party time for Steve Smith. It’s all work.

We in India believe that practice is of different shades. The brain must exercise. It’s that practice where you get your brain to react instantly to a

**Steve:** I have to do it the opposite. It’s just the way my brain is programmed, because I’ve been a music reader from day one. I look at it, and then I have an understanding of it.

**Zakir:** In India we improvise so much, and half of our learning is from listening. We go to a concert and see a tabla player play, and we should be able to put it away in our mind for later reference. We’re taught to absorb all that information in our mind before we actually put it down [on paper]. Sometimes we don’t even put it down.

In India they believe knowledge is a fast-flowing river, and you can either get a cup out of it or a bucket. Whatever you’ve got with you, that’s how much you can take. They also believe that the teacher or the guru is not the one who teaches. It’s the student who extracts the knowledge. And if the student is the kind who can inspire the guru to teach, then the knowledge will come.

**MD:** So are these students inspiring you two?



Zakir, Steve, and Co. at Zankel Hall

Stephanie Berger

and of course I play with a lot of control and keep my volume level extremely low.

I use a Sonor Jungle kit, which has a 16” bass drum, and I have three toms and two snares. I don’t use what you would call normal cymbals—they’re flat cymbals and splash cymbals only. And then instead of sticks—I almost never use sticks—I use the Tala Wand, which I developed with Vic Firth. The other bundled rods on the market were helpful in keeping the level down, but there’s almost no bounce, and they break easily. The Tala Wand has some foam in the end so it bounces a lot and the rods don’t really break. I use various combinations, sometimes a brush in the left hand and a Tala Wand in the right.

**Zakir:** With the Jungle kit, the bass drum really has

thought and have it send signals to your hands to be able to execute that thought. That’s a major practice. And sometimes I just practice without drums. I’ve broken enough food trays on airline chairs—luckily the plane has been empty enough for me to move to another chair.

**MD:** Steve, do you play tabla?

**Steve:** I don’t play tabla. I played ghatam [clay pot] for a few months and took a few lessons. Mainly I’m learning some Konokol, the vocal system. I usually write the rhythms first [in traditional Western notation], and then I memorize them. Then using Konokol I try to approximate the sounds on the drums.

**Zakir:** That’s different from the Indian system, where we first learn it, then write it down.

**Zakir:** Yes. I would have liked to have a few months with them. It’s so compact, our minds are dying.

**Steve:** Almost all the Indian musical knowledge that I have is from a performance-driven situation. It’s not just spending time studying for its own sake. It’s on-the-job training. And these drumming students are extraordinary. They learn like, *boom*—they’re kicking my ass. So even though this is what you’d call a classroom situation, it’s the ultimate kind of classroom situation because it’s not theoretical. It’s like, You’ve gotta learn this because we have to play it. That’s where you really learn: When you have to perform something, you can’t mess around.





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## IRON MAIDEN'S **NICKO McBRAIN**

Pushing aside concerns of privacy, the metal icons let the cameras roll during their recent world tour. Ultimately, all Nicko McBrain cared about was being able to hear his bandmates on stage.

It's no secret that Iron Maiden enjoys touring on a grand, larger-than-life scale. So when the legends of British heavy metal embarked on their *Somewhere Back In Time 2008* world tour, they found a way to do things bigger and better than anyone else. Traveling via a customized Boeing 757 (piloted by vocalist Bruce Dickinson, who's a certified airline captain) that carried the band, its crew, and twelve tons of equipment, Maiden covered a landmark thirteen countries on five continents, performing twenty-three sold-out concerts in just forty-five days.

The wildly ambitious trek was documented as it happened, by filmmakers Scot McFadyen and Sam Dunn, who traveled with the band on the plane (which was dubbed *Ed Force One* after Maiden's mascot, Eddie). The result is the highly entertaining, award-winning feature film *Flight 666*, released on DVD this past summer. For drummer Nicko McBrain, though, the most daunting part of the tour was neither the demanding itinerary nor dealing with the overwhelmingly massive crowds of fans, but rather the idea of having a film crew capturing the band's lives 24/7.

"Not documenting this tour, from a point of history for Iron Maiden, would have been unthinkable," McBrain says. "But we're private people. We've never, ever given filmmakers access to the band, let alone for seven weeks, living on the road with us. That's where the disgruntled conversations took place. Like, 'No way!' We were a bit protective of our privacy, but ultimately we were so

glad that we let the film crew come out. Scot and Sammy went out everywhere, every continent we went to and every city, interviewing fans, asking, 'What does Iron Maiden mean to you?' That was the nice thing about it—you got a perspective of all walks of life around the world. After all these years, *Flight 666* has actually captured the essence of what Iron Maiden means to a lot of people."

Maiden has been playing sixty-foot-wide stages for twenty-five years now, and the band members no longer need to rely on having close physical proximity to each other in order to remain tight musically. There are, however, logistics to be worked out when performing at stadiums and sports arenas. McBrain admits that his biggest challenges in large venues are maintaining a very powerful monitor system and having a great sound engineer. "The way I have my drums set up," he explains, "I'm behind the back

line—behind the speakers—so I can't hear the band acoustically. I have to have a pristine sound, and if I don't have my monitor system cranked up, it's very muffled.

"At the moment I'm using an HK Cohedra system," Nicko continues. "It has every aspect of the frequencies I need, including special bottom end for [bassist] Steve Harris, because I need him predominantly in my mix. I do a nightly soundcheck,

and as I go down the tour, acoustics, room ambience, and outside venues, depending on temperature, can change the sound. Sometimes I might have to add bottom end or take off top end. The most important thing is just making sure the entire band is in my own PA system."

While McBrain has always favored a single kick drum, he acknowledges that today's percussion benchmark is often speed and double kick blast beats. That said, he has a lot of advice on the importance of knowing your rudiments prior to attempting any acrobatics. "A drummer like Derek Roddy," Nicko offers, "is just astounding at that blast beat business. But he's developed his style. Like anything else, with the drumset you've got to practice to make yourself competent. Most of the guys I know have developed speed and precision over and above the basic fundamentals of being able to groove to anything they're asked to play. Players like Jim Keltner can play these wonderful rock beats that have this feel in there, this funkiness that's so laid back you go, 'Gosh, where did that come from?' You don't have that in a lot of playing that's centered on speed.

"People might say that's the case with Maiden, but there are dynamics in every Iron Maiden song. It's not all just played as fast and as hard as I can. If your own style of music is about playing power beats at 275 bpm on double bass drums, then fine. There's a good deal of precision involved in that. But you have to be able to play that same groove at 120 or 85 bpm and adapt your playing to the situation. I can't play at 275 bpm, because I can't play it on two bass drums. That's not my forte. There are so many great players out there that use two bass drums today. Let's leave it to them. There's no way I could compete, and it's never a competition with me anyway. I just play what I need to play with my band, and that's it."

**Gail Worley**

### BREAKOUT BEATS

Nicko McBrain replaced Clive Burr for Iron Maiden's fourth album, 1983's *Piece Of Mind*, establishing what many fans consider the band's classic lineup. McBrain was a deft technician, effortlessly covering some of Maiden's most advanced arrangements to date. Yet he also displayed a smooth attack and a solid groove, forged during earlier work with more conventional boogie-rock acts like Streetwalkers and the Pat Travers Band. Nicko's skittering two-bar entrance to leadoff track "Where Eagles Dare," which neatly telegraphs the central guitar riff, makes for an auspicious debut.



Long before the Smithereens were crashing the corporate rock party on MTV and radio in the late '80s, with odes to the British Invasion and '60s garage rock like "Behind The Wall Of Sleep" and "A Girl Like You," drummer Dennis Diken and guitarist Jim Babjak were forming their musical sensibilities in a New Jersey garage by bashing away at the Who's *Tommy*.

"I got that album for Christmas in '69, so it's always been a pretty big piece of my musical history," says Diken, who, in addition to his drum work is also a noted radio host and rock historian/author. "It's part of my learning experience, really. I guess you could say it's woven into the fabric of our musical DNA."

So woven into the band's collective DNA, in fact, that the Smithereens have paid tribute to Pete

Townshend's rock opera in the same way they celebrated *Meet The Beatles!* back in 2007: They covered the record, song for song. *The Smithereens Play Tommy*, released this past spring, is an authentic re-creation of an ambitious album, both in sound and performance. And the joy the band takes in covering *Tommy* resonates clearly, particularly through Diken's playing. He tumbles and rolls around the kit and plays the big, crashing beats on songs like "Sparks" as though he's back in that Jersey garage emulating Keith Moon, one of his drumming heroes.

And you can tell from Diken's precise approach to capturing Moon's rhythmic essence that he was aware that behind Moon The Loon was a competent, crafty musician. "Moon is really misunderstood," Dennis says. "He was certainly frantic and wild, but what I think most people don't get as much as they should is that he was very, very musical. Everything he did was done for a reason. He was a great song player as well as a guy who broke down barriers. The way his parts speak is very finessed and nuanced. It's not just a guy thrashing and bashing about. He was really addressing the songs. As crazy as what he was doing sounded, it always made musical sense and had a purpose."

In addition to the covers projects and a fairly consistent touring schedule, the



Smithereens and Diken are moving ahead with new music. The band is working on its first studio album since 1999. (Look for it in late 2009/early 2010.) And the drummer's long-in-the-works solo album, *Late Music*, released under the name Dennis Diken With Bell Sound, just came out. Diken plays drums on *Late Music* and sings lead on all but two of the tracks, which are harmony-heavy pop songs reminiscent of what the Beach Boys and their wild yet musical drummer, Dennis Wilson—another favorite of Diken's—were up to in the '70s.

"The spirit of Dennis Wilson prevailed during the making of the record," Diken says. "Sure, he wasn't much of a technician, but the excitement he created is electrifying and breathed life into the group's music."

**Patrick Berkery**



**BREAKOUT BEATS**

The Smithereens' debut album, *Especially For You*, sounded like little else recorded in 1986—and still strikes a unique stylistic balance today. Songs such as "Behind The Wall Of Sleep" and "Blood And Roses" married a dark, foreboding college-rock mood to a more innocent pop-rock vibe going back to early rock icons like Dion and Roy Orbison. The album also established Dennis Diken as a drummer able to join the recently developed sonic wallop of R.E.M.'s Bill Berry with the sinewy grooves of the Beatles' Ringo Starr and the Faces' Kenney Jones. The Smithereens would score even bigger hits in the next few years, but this is where DD's unshakable pocket and ear for subtlety first caught fans' attention.

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# TIM ALEXANDER OF INTO THE PRESENCE

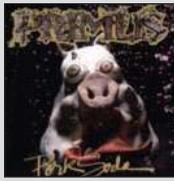
A '90s rhythmic icon lightens his load and journeys into the mystic.

After years of swirling a punch bowl of sonic convulsiveness with the cartoonish, taboo-shattering funk-metal band Primus, drummer Tim Alexander set out to "make a serious living" in



Manuel Chapa III

## BREAKOUT BEATS



Primus's rabid fan base was already established by the time the band's second major-label album, *Pork Soda*, was released in 1993. But with the single "My Name Is Mud" spreading like a virus among the Lollapalooza generation's first wave, Tim Alexander's skewed approach to proggyh drumistics began to make a huge impact on legions of drummers. No wonder; there aren't many antecedents to the way Alexander's famous slappy, reverb-drenched, triplet-based floor tom/bass drum part nudged the track along.

the music business, honing his songwriting skills while wrestling with cosmic questions of his place in the musical universe. "I went through the confusion of being a drummer versus being a musician," Alexander says.

Recently, it seems, many of the answers to Tim's musical (and mystical) inquiries have become self-evident. Fittingly, Alexander's new band, Into The Presence—a name inspired by mysterious unseen forces of nature—combines listener-friendly classic rock fundamentals with an organic approach to music making. "I like to think that Led Zeppelin was a lot like that," says the drummer, who cofounded ITP with guitarist/lead vocalist Luis Maldonado. "Those guys could play the shit out of their instruments, but they also knew instinctually where to draw the line to benefit the song."

Though Alexander has performed with a variety of

musicians over the past dozen or so years, including A Perfect Circle, Attention Deficit, Puscifer, and Primus (again), the drummer/producer/songwriter credits the Blue Man Group with rejuvenating his artistic spirit. "At that time I was sick of drumming, but Blue Man stressed the idea of playing powerful rhythmic patterns that conveyed meaning," Tim says. "Similarly, with Into The Presence, we try to make challenging and listenable yet purposeful music."

Such determination has motivated Alexander to express himself with a scant supply of percussive tools, namely a five-piece custom Tama Starclassic

(5 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 snare; 14", 16", and 18" open toms outfitted with clear Remo Emperor heads; and a faceless 24" kick) and a small assortment of Zildjian prototype and Amir platters. That's a far cry from the multi-cymbal, Octoban-armored kit he punished during Primus's salad days. "It's back to square one," says Alexander, who now doubles as roadie. "It's definitely a test of what you're willing to go through just to put yourself out there. Still, I really enjoy the music we're doing, and that makes it all worth it."

**Will Romano**

## BLOG INSIGHTS

"When a musician finds the strongest emotional connection to playing music, it is heard and felt by the audience. More importantly, it is what stokes the fire within to continue, improve, and never stop making music."

—Dan Dinsmore of Owl



"I'm loving playing big cymbals lately. On live gigs with Gavin DeGraw—which were

way different from the hard-hitting Avril Lavigne vibe I'd been playing for the last two years—I found the bigger sizes responded way better to brushes and rods. And there was something incredibly cool about playing 'I Don't Want To Be' softly but still sounding completely rockin'."

—Avril Lavigne/Gavin DeGraw drummer

**Rodney Howard**

Quotes pulled from the Blog page at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).

## ON TOUR

**Dawn Richardson** with Tracy Chapman

**Alan White** with Yes

**Logan Kroeber** with the Dodos

**Carl Palmer** with Asia

**Jordan Hastings** with Alexisonfire

**Chris Cester** with Jet

**Jeremy Taggart** with Our Lady Peace

**Emil Amos** with OM

**Sammy Merendino** with Cyndi Lauper

**Anthony "Tiny" Biuso** with Rhino Bucket

**Joey Barnes** with Daughtry

**Alex Lopez** with Suicide Silence

**Chris Tsagakis** with RX Bandits

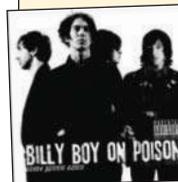
**Tré Cool** with Green Day



Alex Solera

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Jet: <i>Shaka Rock</i>	Chris Cester
Oz Noy: <i>Schizophrenic</i>	Anton Fig, Keith Carlock, Dave Weckl
Dave Tull: <i>I Just Want To Get Paid</i>	Dave Tull
Lou Barlow: <i>Goodnight Unknown</i>	Dale Crover
Roy Hargrove: <i>Emergence</i>	Montez Coleman
Michael Tinhofer: <i>The House Of Jazz</i>	Gary Novak
Native Window: <i>S/T</i>	Phil Ehart
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# GIMME

# 10!

PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM  
PROS WHO KNOW

## MATT WILSON

**In his decade-plus as a bandleader, this month's drum guru has learned that good things come to players with open hearts and minds.**

**T**he great saxophonist Dewey Redman once told me after an amazing concert we played in Europe, "You know, Matthew, people sound their best when they play with me."

I was taken aback by his confident declaration. But my confusion soon transformed into an "ahhhh" moment when I realized what the master was conveying. Dewey was proud to let his fellow musicians journey beyond their boundaries. His giving approach as a selfless "allower" was a gift to all who

were ever in his presence. When I played with Dewey, I was liberated to express freely, for he encouraged me to do so. Hallelujah!

As drummers, we're in a prime position to do the same for our fellow musicians. When you play music with this attitude and approach, you'll gain a deeper sense of fulfillment. You'll also notice that it becomes way more fun. (Note to self: Music should be fun.)

Here are ten suggestions that I hope will broaden your allowing skills.



**1 BE FRIENDS WITH YOUR DRUMSET.** The drumset is our voice to connect to the music, so we'd better have a positive relationship with the tubs. Why do we practice? So that when it comes time to play music we're able to connect with our friend the drumset, to contribute to the festivities. Have you hugged your drumset today?

**2 OFFER SOUNDS.** Notice I wrote "sounds." I feel we should have not just a sound on the drums but *sounds* that we can offer to the song. My mantra: Hear what you play, feel what you play, love what you play. I don't mean "check me out, I'm so good" love. But you must have confidence and pride in what you're adding to the sonic stew. Recall how a memorable meal was presented to you. With love and pride, right?  
"Mmm...sounds." —Homer Simpson

**3 BE PRESENT.** Be immersed in the song, from before the count-off until the last note diminishes.  
Q: What's your favorite song? A: The one you're playing.

**4 TRACK THE EXPERIENCE.** Open up your senses to all that is happening around you. Be able to send your hearing to all of the various elements of the song. Develop your awareness of when to lead, when to follow, and when to just hang, for this allows us to be good citizens in a musical democracy. Lead, follow, *and* get out of the way! (Post on practice-room wall.)

**5 CULTIVATE YOUR IMAGINATION.** The wise Ed Soph once told me, "Your only limitation is your own imagination."  
If you want to play creatively, practice creatively. If you want to play creatively, live creatively. Go to museums, read poetry, see a play. We want to bring more to the music than page 24, exercise 12. You dig?

**6 INVITE, WELCOME, AND CELEBRATE THE MOMENT.** Playing music takes courage. We should be fearless in our quest to welcome the unexpected into the sonic proceedings.

Be grateful that we have the opportunity to have music in our lives. Sit down at your drums today and invite one sound to welcome the next. Celebrate this opportunity of freedom!

**7 BE READY—BUT DON'T PREPARE.** We develop our drumming skills and musical instincts so that we can be ready for whatever the song asks of us. Since music is a team sport, we want to be confident and relaxed for our fellow musicians so we can support the effort. Come to the song with an agenda-free attitude. *Let* the music, don't *make* it.

**8 TRUST AND INSPIRE.** Playing music requires trusting yourself and your fellow musicians. Be there for them and do whatever it takes to inspire them to let go and create. It could be as simple as a smile acknowledging someone's contribution. You can be the spirit that lifts the bandstand. Baby Dodds once said, "Band with a drummer with no spirit ain't no band!"

**9 KEEP LEARNING.** "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, but in the expert's mind there are few." —Shunryu Suzuki  
I'm doing my best to remain a beginner so I can always be surprised by what emerges. Give yourself permission to embrace vulnerability and dispel judgment. This will allow you to grow as a drummer and as a band member.

**10 MAKE THE COMMITMENT.** I (your name here) pledge to allow myself and my fellow musicians the opportunity to selflessly let the music journey beyond our abilities. After the song we will then smile and proclaim, "Wow, that sure was fun—let's do that again!"

*Matt Wilson recently released his eighth album as a leader, That's Gonna Leave A Mark, on Palmetto Records. Check out [mattwilsonjazz.com](http://mattwilsonjazz.com) for more fun.*



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## OPTIMIZING YOUR SNARE SOUND

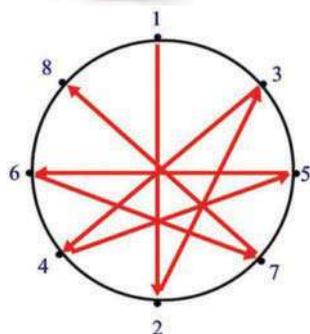
I recently purchased a 6x14 maple snare drum. I switched out the stock head and put on an Evans coated Power Center. I was expecting a warm sound, due to the drum's maple shell. What I'm getting, however, is very much a machine-gun-type sound, with little warmth. It's almost harsh. There's also a lot of snare buzz when I hit my toms and bass drum. I've tried different snare tensions and head tensions, with no luck. Do you have any advice on how to tune the drum and how tight the snares should be? How tight should the snare-side head be compared with the batter head?

**Ben Huber**

We sent your questions to Evans senior product manager Michael Robinson. Here's his advice: "It sounds like the problem you're having might have more to do with the bottom of the drum. Try tuning the bottom head to the pitch A-440, always using a cross-lug tuning sequence [see diagram]. The top head should be tuned a little lower—about a whole step, depending on your sound and feel preference.

"You might also consider upgrading the bottom head to an Evans Hazy 300. Compared with the factory-installed heads that came with your drum, U.S.-made after-market heads from major manufacturers are of better quality. The film quality isn't as good on factory-installed heads, and those heads are made with crimped instead of glued collars. (Crimped heads often result in a tension imbalance in the head.)

"Lastly, upgrading the quality of your snare wires might be the most helpful step in improving your sound. The chrome-plated factory-installed snare wires don't typically produce the best sound, as they're not made from premium wire. The strands aren't tensioned evenly, and the chroming process gives them a brittle sound. Try a set of PureSound Blasters, and you'll notice a huge difference. And check out our online Drum Set Survival Guide at thelessonroom.com for more details on tuning."

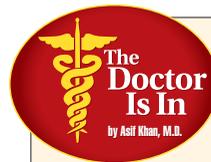


## PEART'S ROCK/PING RIDE

In the April 2005 issue of *MD*, which features a Shop Talk article on Neil Peart's Sabian Paragon cymbals, Sabian's Mark Love says Peart had been playing a 22" A Zildjian rock ride made in Canada—one of the ones from the AZCO plant in Meductic—for the previous twenty years. When Neil endorsed Zildjian cymbals, the company had him listed in its setup guides as using a 22" A Zildjian Ping ride. Did the Zildjian AZCO plant make 22" rock rides during the early to mid 1970s?

**Phil Cormier**

According to Sabian master product specialist Mark Love, "At that time the 22" A rock and Ping rides were the same cymbal. Depending on who was ordering, a blank cymbal could be stamped with either name. For instance, a rock drummer would want the rock model, while a funk or jazz drummer would reject the idea of a 'rock' cymbal but would be okay with the Ping title. Neil's ride—apparently the only cymbal that remained consistent in his setup until he took receipt of his Paragons—was crafted in Meductic and would have been stamped using the same approach. It's possible that the model name had been removed from the cymbal and that whoever wrote the Zildjian catalog assumed from the sound that Neil's ride was a Ping."



## ANKLE PAIN

When I was about thirteen or fourteen, I sprained my right ankle and it swelled up to the size of a tennis ball. I'm twenty-five now and my ankle seems fine, but when I practice for long periods of time I feel a slight tingle in the sprained area, just above the anklebone. There is also some minor swelling. Should I be worried, or is this typical?

**Ryan**

Approximately 20 percent of all musculoskeletal-related office visits involve the foot and ankle. To figure out which part of your ankle is damaged, you must classify the injury by location (i.e., lateral ankle sprain, medial ankle sprain, or high ankle sprain) and by grading from I to III, with III being a complete tear of the ligament where the patient is unable to bear weight. Although higher-grade sprains involve more severe injuries to ligaments, the time for healing is not always proportional to the grade of the sprain.

The next important aspect is the history. What did you do to hurt yourself, and how did the ankle turn? A physical exam should localize the injury. Obtaining an X-ray is generally discouraged unless a fracture is suspected or there is diminished peripheral sensation, such as in diabetics or intoxicated patients. In the setting of acute injury, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) has no advantage over plain X-ray, unless a sprain is still painful after six to eight weeks of standard therapy. Here's a link to a great guide for when to get an ankle X-ray: [ohri.ca/emerg/cdr/ankle\\_rule\\_flash.html](http://ohri.ca/emerg/cdr/ankle_rule_flash.html).

So what do you do after you twist an ankle? Early treatment includes RICE (rest, ice, compression or brace, elevation above the heart) and early mobilization, i.e., exercise. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are recommended, if they can be tolerated.

Most patients should start moving right away and begin a rehabilitation program to limit the chance of reinjury. It may be of benefit to use splints, braces, elastic bandages, or taping to try to reduce instability, to protect the ankle from further injury, and to limit swelling.

Here's a quick rundown of ankle supports. Lace-up supports are superior to semirigid ankle supports, elastic bandages, and tape in preventing persistent swelling. Semirigid ankle supports result in a quicker return to work, a quicker return to sports, and less instability at short-term follow-up than elastic bandages. Tape causes more skin irritation than elastic bandages. Most patients do not require immobilization.

Surgery is reserved for severe sprains causing nerve or vessel damage. It sounds like you may not have properly healed the joint when you first had your injury. Over time, any further stress without proper healing, like heavy drumming, may inflame the area, causing swelling, pain, and tingling, with relief after you're done playing. This may be the cause in your case. You must stretch the ankle properly for ten to fifteen minutes, and I suggest elevating and icing the joint after playing. I would also wear snug—but not tight—shoes when playing to absorb any vibrations in the foot, along with an ankle brace. If this does not help in two to three months, visit a physician to check for suspected chronic inflammation in the joint. The fact that you're still having problems after so many years is also troublesome, so I would recommend visiting a doctor sooner rather than later.



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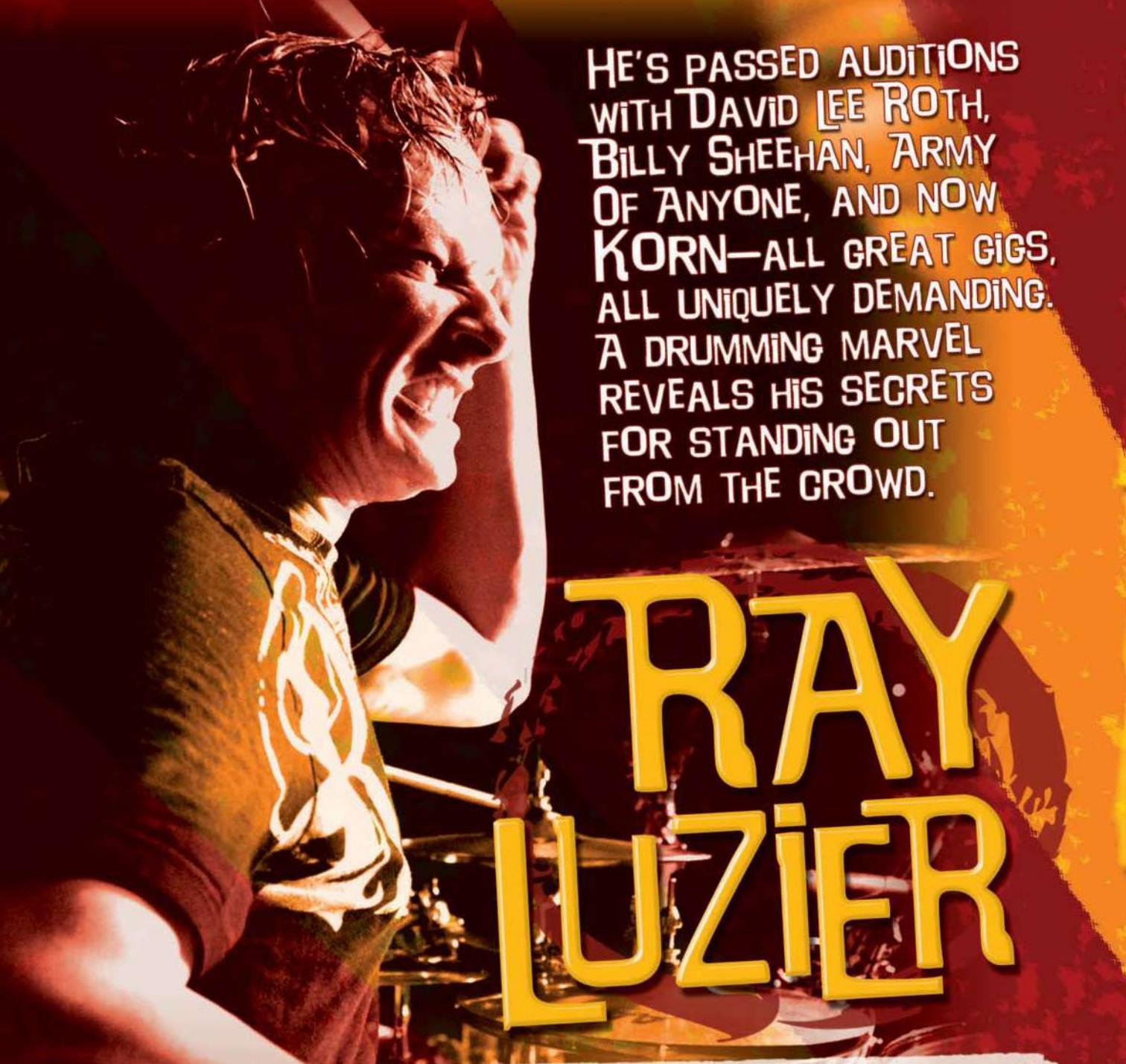
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# RAY LUZIER

**T**he sight on stage is imposing. From left to right, Korn guitarist Munky, bassist Fieldy, and singer Jonathan Davis stand dreadlocked and loaded, with sleeves of ink, ready to pounce. In the back is blond timekeeper Ray Luzier, throwing and twirling his sticks, catching them on the downbeats, and playing like a madman. In person, though, Ray is polite and courteous—not what you would expect from the drummer in one of the heaviest, most badass metal bands.

Luzier is a force, drumming with venerable cats like Billy Sheehan, Steve Vai, Jake E. Lee, and Robert DeLeo. He's

recorded, gigged, and spent two decades behind his kit. He's circled the globe four times with David Lee Roth and played on two of the Van Halen singer's solo albums. Luzier has also drummed in the greatest supergroup no one's ever heard, Army Of Anyone, with Robert and Dean DeLeo of Stone Temple Pilots and Richard Patrick of Filter.

After working a plethora of recording sessions, one-off gigs, and guest appearances, Luzier recently signed on as the new drummer for Korn. His style, chops, and sense of nuance have helped reenergize one of rock's premier groups.

Story by Steven Douglas Losey  
Photos by Sébastien Paquet

**MD:** You're one of the busiest drummers working today.

**Ray:** I got off the Korn tour with Ozzy, playing for 60,000 people, and two days later I was lugging my bass drum up two flights of stairs to play a disco show. I just love to play. I was home for two days, and I did a session. All the guys were taking time off, and I went right back to the studio.

**MD:** How does it feel to be in a band again?

**Ray:** I was in a lot of bands that didn't last that long, like Badlands and Arcade and the Nixons. I haven't really felt part of a band since Army Of Anyone. Korn and Army Of Anyone were under the same management, and that's how Jonathan Davis heard about me. That was October of 2007. Joey Jordison of Slipknot had been filling in, so I went up and auditioned on Joey's last day, at an arena in Seattle. I played six songs, and they said, "Welcome to Korn—see ya in Dublin."

**MD:** You must be an expert at preparing for an audition at this point.

**Ray:** I feel very fortunate to have been able to play drums for the past two decades. I've met so many people that were in this industry but now have regular jobs. I've done everything from playing in disco bands to doing sessions and movie

soundtracks to teaching at PIT.

Being at PIT allowed me to learn a lot of stuff, like secrets about auditions—what people are looking for with certain looks and certain styles. What it comes down to is always being true to yourself. Never fake anything; always be you. Never try to fake an audition or fake a Latin gig or whatever. I've always been into the heavier style of music, but if you told me ten years ago that I would be in Korn, I would never have believed it. They're not just another heavy metal band; there's a certain mentality, and they've definitely got their own thing.

**MD:** How did you approach that audition?

**Ray:** I really wanted to get inside the music. David Silveria, their original drummer, and I are really different players. He has his own thing, and we come from two different playing schools. I respect the heaviness that he brought and the ideas that he had, and even though I don't play just like him, I wanted to bring those things to the table and get the grooves to lay back.

I'm a pretty hyper guy, and David Lee Roth always wanted me to rush everything and play on top of the beat. But with Korn there's a certain heaviness that I need to bring to the pocket. The cool thing is that they wanted Ray Luzier in the band; they

## RHYTHMIC TROUBADOUR LUZIER'S TOP RECORDINGS

**Army Of Anyone** S/T /// **Billy Sheehan**  
**Cosmic Troubadour**, **Holy Cow** /// **David Lee Roth** DLR Band, **Diamond Dave** /// **Korn** *Nightmare Revisited* (soundtrack) /// **The Hideous Sun Demons** S/T /// **Repo!** *The Genetic Opera* (soundtrack) /// upcoming solo albums by **Jonathan Davis** and **Fieldy** /// **Ray Luzier** *Double Bass Drum Techniques, Hand & Foot Coordination, Drum Fills, And Warm Up Exercises* (instructional DVD)

wanted me to bring my own thing, which really meant a lot to me. So I got to do that while staying true to the music and bringing that heaviness as well. It was all about bringing in the chops without overdoing it. **MD:** Obviously it went well.

**Ray:** When they invited me to audition, they asked, "What do you know?" I went in prepared to play thirty-three songs. I learned some stuff off their set list, some live versions, and some more obscure songs where the drumming was a little bit more involved.

I've always said that for auditions you should learn more than they ask you to. When someone asks me to learn three or four songs, I'll learn two or three records' worth. That separates you from someone else. If they've been through fifty drummers playing the same three or four songs, you can bring a refreshing aspect to the table.



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## RAY LUZIER

I can say, "I know you guys have been playing the same three songs all day—how about we do this tune?" A lot of times that really perks up a band, especially when I say, "I also know the live version with the breaks." I've really gained an advantage by doing those types of things. I handed Munky a list of more than thirty songs, and he couldn't believe I knew them all.

Building a vocabulary in your head is incredibly important. I always tell people that if you get to the point where you think you've learned enough or reached a plateau, then it's time to get out and just play. If you want to keep growing and be a professional, then you need to absorb and keep building your vocabulary.

**MD:** So the key to working is building a vocabulary?

**Ray:** I really work hard at every aspect of drumming, to be honest. I was talking to Terry Bozzio about this exact thing. He told me that it took him into his thirties to really find what he's all about. When you hear Terry play, you immediately know it's him. He definitely has his own thing, but it took him a while to get that. I feel the same way. I did about ten or twelve records on the Shrapnel label for a lot of those guitar heroes when I was in my early twenties. I listen back, and fills that I still do are hopefully a lot better and cleaner now. Just like everyone, I went through periods of emulating my heroes and people that influenced them, playing along with Rush, Ozzy, and Ted Nugent.

It means a lot to me when kids say that they know when it's me playing. You can put twenty drummers in a room playing "Back In Black," and all of them will sound different. Some will be bass drum heavy, someone's going to play the hi-hat too loud.... But that's what makes each of us unique. It's okay to emulate your heroes, but I encourage drummers to really find their own thing, their own style. That's what's going to separate you in that hundred-person audition.

**MD:** How do you translate your chops to Korn?

**Ray:** I try to play from the heart, every single thing that I do. I see a lot of guys who have graduated from PIT and Berklee who try to lay down this cool

# RAY'S SETUP



## DRUMS: ddrum USA Custom or bubinga shells

- A. 4x10 side snare
- B. 6x14 bamboo snare
- C. 10x12 rack tom
- D. 11x13 rack tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 18x24 bass drum

## ELECTRONICS: Roland pads and ddrum triggers

## STICKS: Pro-Mark 5B Hickory Ray Luzier model

**HEADS: Remo** coated Emperor X or coated Emperor on snare, clear Emperor on toms, PS3 kick heads with Falam Slam pad, **Eminent Grafix** bass drum logo heads

## CYMBALS: Sabian

- 1. 14" AAX Stage hats
- 2. 10" AAX splash
- 3. 18" APX crash
- 4. 19" AAX X-Plosion crash
- 5. 9" Glennie's Garbage
- 6. 19" AAX X-Treme China
- 7. 19" HHX X-Plosion crash
- 8. 21" AA rock ride
- 9. 20" Paragon crash
- 10. 18" HHX O-Zone crash
- 11. 14" Terry Bozzio Radia with 14" HH bottom hi-hat cymbal underneath
- 12. 12" Max Stax

**HARDWARE: DW** including 9000 series pedals, **Protection Racket** drum cases

groove and pocket, but it comes out sounding like they're a robot. They have to have a chart in front of them, and that's kind of scary to me. People meet me and see that I taught at PIT for ten years, and they think I graduated at the top of my class. I was far from the top of my class—I barely got through. I used that opportunity to meet people and make connections. I can read, but I don't blaze through charts like some people. I'm way more of a heart and feel player.

I do know a lot of different styles, and I can pull off a lot of things, but it's more because of heart than charts. I have a great memory for music and drumming. I can learn a whole record in a couple of days and go and record it. On Billy Sheehan's last record I only had the music for a few days. He wasn't sure what he was going to do on it, so we ended up recording about

thirty songs.

**MD:** What happened with Army Of Anyone?

**Ray:** When you consider that the DeLeo brothers sold millions of records with Stone Temple Pilots and that Richard Patrick sold millions of records with Filter, I think it was assumed that it would sell itself. Personally, I thought we should have opened for some bigger bands. The guys were used to being at a certain level, and to have to take steps backwards is hard to swallow. I think the timing of it was a big reason as well. I feel we should have toured another year on the record, but we didn't. That band was my baby; I was an equal member, and I got to write my own parts. I was completely able to bring "me" into the fold. We actually have a whole other record written, so I'm hoping one day it will come out.

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**MD:** What was it like playing with bassist Robert DeLeo?

**Ray:** I've been a huge STP fan from way back. Robert is very much a '70s-influenced player. He's got this Motown feel about him, and he plays against Dean so beautifully. He'd suggest things like not playing the kick drum against the bass where you typically would, like on the song "Disappear," where I'm playing a funky type of rock beat that's not really going with the bass. That gave me a fresh, cool perspective. It

was a whole new way of thinking for me. Robert and Dean have a very interesting way of interpreting the drums. Robert would say, "What's your hook going to be?" I had never thought of drums as having a hook before.

**MD:** What was that audition like?

**Ray:** It was cool. They saw me playing at the NAMM convention with Billy Sheehan. We were doing stuff off his solo album and stuff like "Shy Boy" and Deep Purple; it was what I call a total wank fest. Robert and Dean were

watching, and I was thinking that they probably hated it because I wasn't quite taking a simple approach. But Robert said, "We want some fire in this band, just like the stuff you're doing." The audition was even better—we got together and didn't play any Army Of Anyone songs. Instead we played *Physical Graffiti* in its entirety.

**MD:** What were your eight years with David Lee Roth like?

**Ray:** It's funny, I've been in three huge bands, but they couldn't be more different. I got an opportunity to play in the studio with David. He hit the talk-back and said, "I'm a big fan." I told him I was a much bigger fan of his. I thought it was just a session, but Dave's manager called me soon after and told me that it was actually my audition and that I'd passed with flying colors. I asked [former Roth drummer] Gregg Bissonette what advice he had for me, and he said, "Don't drag." I stayed loyal to David Lee Roth from 1997 to 2005. That's quite a long time to be playing with a legend, and I was very honored to have that gig.

**MD:** There had to have been some cool moments in that band.

**Ray:** I remember being sixteen years old growing up on a farm in Pittsburgh and learning "Hot For Teacher" in my underwear. A few years later I was opening concerts with that song, with Dave himself.

**MD:** What requirements does he have of his drummer?

**Ray:** With David, your swing has to be super-together. I can't stress that enough to drummers. I can't tell you how many times I've replaced drummers because they didn't have their shuffle or their swing together. Sometimes you're playing ten songs on a record and song eleven needs a shuffle. The biggest compliment Dave ever gave me was, "Hey, man, I like your swing." There are so many songs that have that feel, like "Just A Gigolo" and "California Girls." It was cool to get that feel down even more.

Dave really taught me a lot about things like playing above the beat but laying certain things back. He's really brilliant about things like that.

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Drumming-wise it wasn't just about the chops. We had this jam we would play for ten minutes at the show, and every night it would be different. I love spontaneity and improvising. I always tell drummers to learn to improvise, because you never know when a jam session will break out or when someone will ask you to play something off the cuff.

It really comes back to building your vocabulary. Dave is like the James Brown of rock: At a moment's notice he would drop the dynamics back to nothing to talk in the middle of a song. I had to drop back to nothing but keep the tempo. He would just drop his hand down, and we would have to react.

**MD:** What's it like playing with Fieldy in Korn?

**Ray:** Going from James LoMenzo to Billy Sheehan to Robert DeLeo to Fieldy has been amazing. With Fieldy I'm always thinking of how to play against his feel or his tone. He plays very percussively, and when you hear his sound you instantly know it's him. He has a unique tone, and he tunes down, so there's a whole different pocket for him.

I played on his solo record. He rented an upright bass and we played a jazz piece. I'm no Ed Shaughnessy, but I was playing swing jazz, and that was an insane moment.

We just finished doing sixty-four shows, and we're really just finding each other now. He comes up and plays with me now, whereas he never did that before. We wrote a great bass and drum intro to "Freak On A Leash." It's cool because we throw ideas off each other.

The guys in Korn talk to each other in another language, though. You don't just get a session guy to play in Korn—it's very involved. Musical terminology is different with them. They won't say, "Let's do 16th-note triplets." That's not their thing. They developed a unique style in the '90s, which changed the face of hard rock and metal.

**MD:** Is Korn preparing for a new record?

**Ray:** We're totally going old school and doing the record with Ross Robinson, who produced the first two Korn records. And Jonathan wants to bring back the brutality of the old-school

Korn. I think the old Korn fans really miss that sound. Korn has been creative with every record they've done, and they take chances. Terry Bozzio was on their last record, so they're not afraid to do stuff.

We've been working in a super-small room, just writing raw riffs with no click track. And Ross wants to record to two-inch tape, which I'm really excited about. Today you can teach a monkey how to play and fix it in Pro Tools, but I miss that '70s feel. I like it when you can hear that the drummer hit the rim too far in on the snare. Listen to old Alex Van Halen stuff—that's what we're going for. If it pushes, if it speeds up by the end of the song, then so be it. I'm so sick of the precision of today's music. That's why I really enjoy playing with Korn—they have such an unusual sound. It really challenges me to come up with creative parts. We're all bringing stuff to the table; it's exciting.

For more on Luzier, go to [rayluzier.com](http://rayluzier.com), [myspace.com/rayluzier](http://myspace.com/rayluzier), or [korn.com](http://korn.com).



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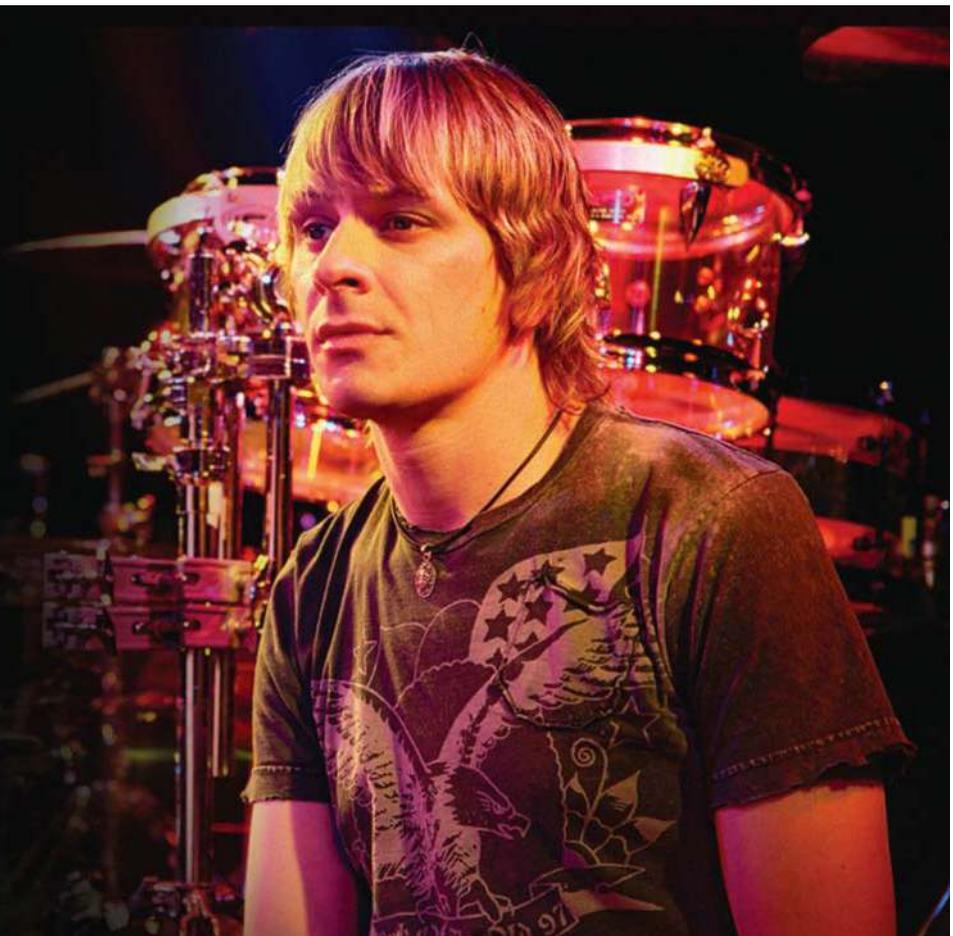
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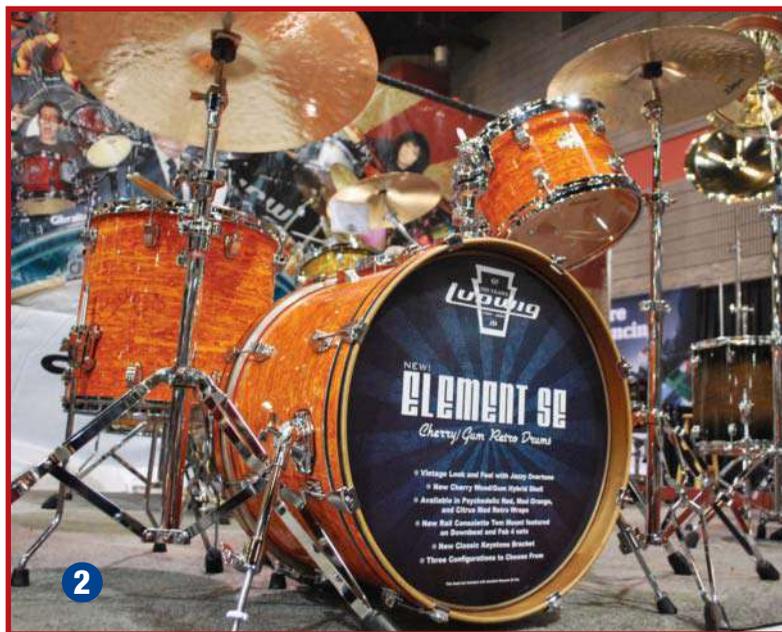
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# SUMMER NAMM 2009

Even with the economy in a down cycle, a few drum companies still made the trip to Nashville for the annual Summer NAMM trade show. Here's a wrap-up of the new drum gear being displayed.

by John Emrich



**1. MAPEX** showed off the new 8x14 Black Panther Big Cat snare drum. The 6-ply, 5.1 mm shell composition is similar to that of the company's popular Saturn series—two inner plies of walnut and four exterior plies of maple. The drum is finished in a natural gloss. [mapexdrums.com](http://mapexdrums.com)

**2. LUDWIG** showed a new cherry gum drumset in "citrus mod glass glitter" finish. [ludwig-drums.com](http://ludwig-drums.com)

**3. SUPERNATURAL**, a new company, offers affordable handcrafted Turkish cymbals. Its conceptually named product lines—Aura, Mystic, Relic, Divine, Universal, Heritage, and Prodigy—are designed for hard-hitting players, jazz musicians, and everyone in between. [supernaturalcymbals.com](http://supernaturalcymbals.com)

**4. ALESIS** unveiled the DM10 electronic drumset, which features new hardware, two sizes of dual-zone Mylar drumhead triggers, and a new module.

Alesis also showed a drum amp, the TransActive Drummer, which has a docking station for an iPod. [alesis.com](http://alesis.com)

**5. MEINL** debuted the Byzance Jazz Sand ride, which is Benny Greb's signature model. [meinlcymbals.com](http://meinlcymbals.com)

**6. TAMA** Starphonic snare drums aim to combine the technological advancements of modern times with the much-desired sub-



**ities and nuances of vintage drums.** These models feature a new Stick Saver-style inward-flange hoop, quick-release Freedom lugs, and Linear-Drive strainers, which prevent the snares from slapping the bottom head when engaged. Satin mappa burl (6-ply maple with an outer ply of mappa burl), 8-ply bubinga with an outer ply of cordia (shown), 1.2 mm nickel-plated brass, and 1.2 mm seamless aluminum drums are available. All four models have 6x14 shells.

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

**7. YAMAHA added red sparkle, black sparkle sunburst, and amber sunburst finishes** for the Oak Custom line and natural wood, red black sunburst, and cranberry red for Tour Custom kits.

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



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# SONOR

## FORCE 3007 ROCK SET by Anthony Riscica



**E**ven with an impressive endorser roster that ranges from jazz great Jeff “Tain” Watts to Tool powerhouse Danny Carey, and with lines that include some of the most revered

of the drum made for an even greater thump, which I could hear and feel while sitting behind the kit. When I had a friend play the drum while I stood in front, I found the bottom frequencies

liked it because it felt more solid than your average floating mount, while still giving the drum some space to breathe.

The floor tom fit in with the rest of the set beautifully, as there were traces of the same deep sub-tones that were heard from the rack and kick. The drum had a solid feel, and, like most 16x16 drums, it preferred to be tuned low or medium-low. As with the rack tom, tuning was a breeze. I tried bringing the pitch up a bit but found that overtones started to take over once I got past a medium tension. That’s fine, though;

given this kit’s intended rock application, it should be tuned on the looser side. The beefy floor tom legs helped anchor the drum, even when I played it very hard.

### OPEN SNARE

The snare had a wide-open sound out of the box, and it retained that characteristic wherever I tuned it. When I cranked it up, it offered a good “crack,” followed by high-pitched overtones that still had some depth. Often, when you tune a snare way up, it starts to sound thin. That was not the case with this drum. The snare was also at home at lower tunings, where it had a nice full thud. Snare response was sensitive across the tuning spectrum, and the strainer adjustment and throw-off operated very smoothly.

### WITH FLYING COLORS

Not only did each of the Force 3007 drums perform well individually, but they also fit together well as a team. Because of that cohesion, I loved playing thunderous triplets between the toms and kick. Sonor says on its Web site that this set is intended for beginners and advancing players and could be “an interesting alternative for semi-professional drummers.” I would agree on both counts. If you’re looking to upgrade from your starter kit or you’re a touring drummer, the Force 3007 offers exactly what you’ll need. Not only did it sound great in my home studio, but its quality construction also makes it a serious roadworthy choice.

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

## ROCK SET SPECS

**Our review model is the Force 3007 Rock set, a four-piece kit consisting of a 20x22 kick, 6x14 snare, 8x12 rack tom, and 16x16 floor tom.** The setup also comes with Sonor’s 400 series double-braced hardware (two mini boom stands, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, and a kick pedal). The stands are sturdy enough to take a beating, but they won’t break your back when you carry them around. This makes them great for gigging or touring. List price: \$1,799.99.

instruments out there, Sonor continues to introduce new products that emphasize why the company is such a leading presence in the drum world. The new Force 3007 is a series of affordable, quality kits made for drummers who want a real-deal set but don’t want to surrender their bank account to get it. Not only is the Force 3007 made from 9-ply maple, it’s also loaded with features found on Sonor’s pro-level kits. Let’s check it out.

### DETAILS AND APPOINTMENTS

Our review kit’s finish, an eye-catcher called “black red sparkle,” consists of a sparkling red that fizzles down into a straight black lacquer. (Very nice!) The rims and Sonor’s logo lugs have a matte black finish, giving the whole kit a dark, almost gothic vibe, which I liked. The lugs also feature TuneSafe, an insert that prevents the tension screws from loosening, thus keeping the drum in tune longer. This is one of those details that you can’t see but that can make all the difference in the world once you start using the drums on gigs.

All of the shells are 7 mm and made of 9-ply maple. They’re constructed using CLTF (Cross Laminated Tension Free Process), which is said to add to the strength and tuning capabilities of the drum. The shells are claimed to bring out lower pitches, and, boy, did they ever!

### LOTS OF KICK

The kick on the 3007 set was a cannon. At 20x22 you’d expect some serious bottom end, but the extended low range

were even more evident. When I tossed a pillow inside the drum, it still thumped, but that natural sub-frequency push I’d heard earlier was almost completely lost. I’m usually an advocate of using muffling inside the kick, but in this rare case I preferred the drum wide open. I might have swapped out the Sonor head that came with the kit for a thicker head, maybe even with a muffling ring, but that’s as much dampening as I’d want.

### CLEAN TOM TONES

The 8x12 rack tom was fun to play and easy to tune. The fairly shallow depth allowed for a clean, warm tone without a lot of sustain. The edge of the drum, and all the drums for that matter, was clean cut and even, which is important in achieving a great sound but is often overlooked in sets in this price range.

This tom could be tuned any way I wanted it. Down low, where I enjoyed it most, it gave off a nice thud and had very little sustain. You could almost hear a miniature version of the kick’s sub-tone coming from the small drum. Up high, the tom sang. This ease of tuning allowed me to get a nice uniform pitch from all the lugs, which cut down on those unpleasant overtones you can get from higher-pitched tunings.

The rack tom features a hybrid fixed/free-floating mount. The top of the mount attaches to two of the tension rods, like a normal floating mount, but the bottom is fixed to the shell with one screw. This T.A.R. (Total Acoustic Resonance) system is said to provide maximum resonance and sustain. I





Our Force 3007 review kit came in the moody "black red sparkle" finish with black hardware (above). This kit is also available in a more straightforward "smooth red burst" (below).





# PAISTE

## 2002 AND RUDE WILD SERIES, NOVA CHINAS by David Ciauro

A few years back, Paiste introduced an untamed alternative to its already successful 2002 series with the addition of the 2002 Wild models. Geared toward aggressive players—especially in the rock, metal, and punk genres—who were looking for more tempestuous crashes and more cacophonous hi-hats, Wild cymbals proved they were aptly named.

Paiste's penchant for pushing the envelope, however, didn't stop there. The company has since unveiled the unapologetic fury of its RUDE Wild models. RUDE Wild crashes and hi-hats are for the most extreme players, who require nothing less than a piss-and-vinegar attitude from their cymbals.

### A DIFFERENCE OF DEGREES

To draw an analogy, if the sonic effect of the 2002 Wild crashes produces an arctic winter, the RUDE Wild crashes are the frozen tundra. The 2002 Wild models possess brazen musical qualities that spit out biting metallic sounds with powerful attack and

applications I was able to use them in. But when I practiced on my own, I found each cymbal paired nicely with a particular artist or genre as I played along with different songs on my iPod. It makes sense that drummers who run the metal gamut—such as Testament's Paul Bostaph, Gas Lipstick of HIM, Bobby Jarzombek of Sebastian Bach's band, Strung Out's Jordan Burns, and Matt Byrne of Hatebreed—are playing Wild models.

### 2002 WILD CRASHES

The stick sound on these medium-weight cymbals was metallically tuneful and stout. The 17" crash had a nice high-pitched ferocity, while the 20" model had much more body and a deep, bellowing decay. Both cymbals were near equal in volume and didn't need to be whacked to offer a lot of projection, but their intentions were made clearer the harder I hit them.

The large bell of the 20" added some texture to offset the sheer power of the crash. The 17" model's attack was fast and lively but got out of the way just as quickly. The 20" left a nice wake of howling overtones. The 19" played very similarly to the 20", and the two balanced nicely when I used them as my main crashes. The 18" held a nice contrast between the higher-

models, so they're a bit heavier than their 2002 Wild counterparts. The stick sound was fuller and more defined, and the cymbals were a bit more animated. They sustained longer, with a meaty wash, which made them great for filling up space as crash/rides. Because of their added magnitude, I felt the smaller 17" and 18" RUDE Wild cymbals were a bit more versatile than the larger 19" and 20" ones. But if you're looking for maximum volume, projection, and moxie, go for the latter.

### WILD HI-HATS

The 2002 Wild hi-hats consist of a medium-heavy top and a heavy bottom. The foot chick sound was crisp, dry, and sturdy, which complemented the frostbite attack of the stick and the harsh unruliness of half-open hits.

The RUDE Wild hi-hats darkened up the mood slightly, while keeping an intensity and ire that pierced unforgivingly. The medium-top/heavy-bottom combination created a barking chick sound and unleashed a howl when played open.

### NOVO AND RUDE CHINAS

Nova Chinas are yet another Paiste innovation. These cymbals are designed so that the bell and downward edge of the China are on the same side, creating a unique tonal character. These Chinas were more exotic than trashy, with a pang sound that was deep and complex rather than jarring. Sustain was long yet even, and although it was made for louder environments, I felt the 20" Novo (\$450) was quite dynamic and performed well at medium volume or in a textural atmosphere.

The 20" RUDE China (\$450) was very dark, pingy, weighty, and explosive. This is a no-nonsense China meant to scream and shout. It's the cymbal equivalent of a two-year-old child's full-blown temper tantrum.

### CONCLUSION

These cymbals are no joke. They are rebellious. They are bullies. And they aren't claiming to be anything other than what their labels suggest. The adjectives I've used to describe the cymbals might, in normal circumstances, come across as negative, but in this context, they're all meant in a good way.

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

## WILD DIFFERENCES

Like Paiste's standard 2002 and RUDE models, the Wild versions in each series are made from the CuSn8 bronze alloy, which is commonly referred to as "2002 bronze." Each 2002 and RUDE Wild cymbal is hand hammered. The 2002 Wild models are hand lathed, whereas the RUDE Wild models remain unlathed and are uniform in thickness, adding to their icy frequency wash.

raucous midrange decay that freezes over fairly quickly. The RUDE Wild models offer the same, only with magnified aggression.

### WILD PAIRINGS

Although these models are conceptually similar in their dare to be bolder and boldest, the results of our testing showed that size *does* matter with regard to the cymbals' individual personality and playability. The 2002 Wild models offered brighter and more exact tones, while the RUDE Wild models were darker and slightly brasher—as the name of the series reminds us.

I tested 17" (\$352), 18" (\$392), 19" (\$414), and 20" (\$450) crashes, as well as 14" hi-hats (\$540), in both series. I preferred the sound of larger 2002s combined with smaller RUDEs for the hard rock

pitched 17" and the deeper, fuller 19", which I preferred most as a crash/ride due to its controlled responsiveness. I reserved the 17" for quick accents.

### RUDE WILD CRASHES

When I think of RUDE cymbals, one of the most inspirational drummers of my youth comes to mind: Charlie Benante of Anthrax. I always loved his drum and cymbal sounds, and RUDE cymbals were largely present in his setup. Today he's using a few RUDE Wild crashes. To me, Benante and Anthrax embody the spirit of what RUDE Wild cymbals are all about: loud, in-your-face, bombastic sounds that work perfectly with drummers who convey the same message in their playing.

The RUDE Wild crashes are medium-heavy



## FAMOUS DRUMS

### TWO BY FOUR, INDESTRUCTO, SIGNATURE, AND TURBINE SNARES

by David Ciauro

Famous Drum Company has been successfully lurking in the high-end custom-drum underworld, earning the respect of many professional players. Now the company is breaking through to the masses with the introduction of its Two By Four snare drum, which is said to embody the spirit of John Bonham's studio sound, plus other innovative designs that dive

drummers with a penchant for high-pitched snare sounds. The shedua wood shell is 1" thick, allowing drummers to achieve higher pitches without choking the drum. If you prefer to take the head tension to its tightest extremes, the massive proprietary hand-milled hex lugs are made to be indestructible (hence this drum's name). The included die-cast hoops help deliver rimshots that

tuning range, and crisp articulation with a focused attack at the center and more breathing room toward the rims made the Signature a pleasure to play. It comes equipped with a Dunnett strainer. List price: \$1,500.

#### PURPLE HEART TURBINE

To date, this is the most interesting drum I've encountered. The term *futuristic woodworking* seems like it should be an oxymoron, but it's appropriate in this case. The interior of the  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14 shell reveals twenty turbine fins (patent pending) that essentially act as a built-in compressor. The fins' vibrations are said to "excite the shell," and this keeps the energy of a stick hit

within the shell. The result is a drier sound off the batter head that allows the shell's tonal characteristics to come through. The turbines also create an even dynamic and controlled overtones over the spread of the batter head, thus extending the sweet spot almost out to the rim. The overall sound was impressive. The interplay of the throatiness of the shell and the defined dry "crack" of the batter head made for a great balance and a sonorous tone. This drum is equipped with a Dunnett strainer. List price: \$2,000.

#### IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Famous Drum Company builds exemplary drums that demand attention in terms of both aesthetics and function. Each snare model has a personality that echoes the thought and time behind the company's innovations, and playing the drums brings this to life. The snares reviewed here are also available in different sizes and depths, with optional add-ons, wood selections, and finishes.

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

## HOME DEPOT MAKES SNARE DRUMS?

The straight-out-of-the-lumberyard look and branded 2x4 insignia serve as a visual metaphor for the Two By Four drum's raw, no-nonsense power. As its name suggests, the snare's 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14 shell is made from a single spruce framing stud. Spruce is not commonly associated with drum shell composition, but this lightweight wood is often used in pianos and guitars for its resonant qualities. While all Two By Fours retain relative tonal characteristics, each drum is made unique by the knots, sap, and natural imperfections in its shell.

into the realms of block construction, patent-pending turbine shells, exotic wood combinations, and snares built to withstand a deathblow from Thor's hammer.

#### TWO BY FOUR

The Two By Four snare was very open sounding and quite loud. It produced crisp, even tones that were full, no matter what head tension I tried. With the drum at medium tension, the "Bonzo vibe" was in full effect.

Famous claims that abundantly available spruce wood works for this drum because it doesn't choke, which proved to literally ring true. Even after I cranked the outfitted Evans G1 coated head, the drum's bright tone sustained nicely and never dried out. The eight-lug design mirrors that of a Slingerland Radio King, and the drum is equipped with a Ludwig-like P85 strainer. List price: \$650.

#### INDESTRUCTO

This 7x13 titan is designed for heavy-handed

detonate, producing a truly sizable "crack" while also allowing for clearly articulated ghost notes. Stick response was quick enough to get some serious drum 'n' bass groove madness going. To achieve maximum snare response on such a dense drum, specially designed snare channels are cut directly into the shell.

Although it's designed for high tension, the Indestructo was very versatile in its tuning and threw out some beefy backbeats at medium tension. A great thick, thudding sound was achieved at an even lower tension, and stick response remained solid. List price: \$1,000.

#### SIGNATURE

The beautiful scalloped-wood look of this 5x14 wenge and bubinga snare makes the drum just as enjoyable to gaze upon as it is to listen to. The  $\frac{3}{8}$ " shell is made using block construction, which adds function to the snare's performance, as there is no tension on the shell itself. Warm, rich sounds emanated from this elegantly powerful drum. Superior stick response, an impeccable



# SABIAN

## AAX X-PLOSION FAST CRASHES AND MEMPHIS RIDE

by Anthony Riscica

**S**abian's AAX cymbals are known for their focused and controlled sound. The company is now taking that idea one step further with the X-Plosion fast crashes and the Memphis ride. Here's the skinny on these distinctive new cymbals.

### ON THE STAND

AAX X-Plosion fast crashes are created using the same core principles as the rest of the AAX series but are slightly thinner, making their response a bit quicker and more sensitive. We received the entire line of crashes and one splash for review.

show. But for light to moderately loud situations, it played well and had an ear-pleasing quality.

The 17" was in the same boat as the 16". If given the choice, I would go with the larger of the two, because it had a more versatile sound. The 17" was capable of being just as responsive as the 16", but it offered more volume and a rounder sound.

The 18" and 19" X-Plosion crashes were in a slightly different category. Due to their bigger size they could be used as crash/rides. When played as such, the result was a quicker decay than I've heard from an HH crash/ride. This

The AAX X-Plosion cymbals definitely lived up to their name. They were quick to explode with a full sound, and they got out of the way in a hurry. While these models might not make a strong impact on louder, heavier gigs, they could pretty much go anywhere else and add a nice flavor to your setup. List price: \$209–\$403.

### MEMPHIS RIDE

Also new to Sabian's AAX line is the 21" Memphis ride. This cymbal has all the right stuff to take you anywhere from a jazz combo gig to a ballroom rock show. It sports a raw surface with a single line of lathing on top and a completely lathed bottom. The stick sound was articulate, never disappearing under the minimal wash the dry cymbal provided. The cymbal gets thinner toward the edge, which allows for easy shoulder crashing. The crash sound was very controlled and didn't overpower the rest of the cymbal. The bell, while seemingly smaller than average, gave off a nice tone that cut at most volume levels.

I tried the Memphis ride with both 5A and 5B sticks, which yielded some interesting results. When played with the smaller-tipped 5A, the cymbal worked great for up-tempo swing patterns. The wash was warm and apparent but stayed in its place, even when I tried to make it go crazy. I then played some straight-8th-note rock grooves with 5Bs and was surprised by how much attack I could get out of the ride, with minimal buildup. Crashing the edge with the 5B rocked as well. It created a nice bed for my kick and snare to lie on, while still giving off plenty of attitude. I was definitely intrigued by this ride cymbal. If you play in situations where the style of music changes from song to song, a versatile ride like this one is a must. List price: \$483.

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

## AAX X-PLOSION FAST CRASHES

**Each X-Plosion cymbal, from the 11" splash to the 19" crash, was consistent in keeping with the explosive, punchy description Sabian has given the line.** These models are thin, which is the cornerstone of a quick, responsive crash. The cymbals can be bent with the hands, but they aren't as pliable as Sabian's HHX Evolution series.

The 14" X-Plosion crash was extremely quick, sounding quite splash-like. While I don't normally play crashes this small, I enjoyed the way this one worked for spicing up accents, especially when hit in unison with the snare. At all volumes, the cymbal opened up very easily. And when I really laid into it I didn't feel like it was going to shatter to pieces.

The 15" also felt similar to a splash in its feel and response. Due to its size, however, it had a deeper tone than the 14" and gave off a more complex set of overtones.

It wasn't until I got to the 16" X-Plosion that I started to feel I was playing a crash cymbal. This one was still fast, but it had enough depth and sustain to help punctuate the beginning of a new section of a tune. Depending on your volume and the style of music you're playing, this crash might be a bit weak to hold its own through a whole

allowed me to play rock grooves with a quarter-note ride pattern and still feel there was some air between the beats. These larger cymbals can be used as accent crashes, of course. In this application, they sounded more like standard crash cymbals than the other cymbals in the series. But their thinness helped produce a deeper pitch without a ton of high-frequency cut.

The 11" splash was a nice bonus to the AAX X-Plosion line. It was relatively thick for its size when compared with the X-Plosion crashes, but it was still super-quick. The tone was just glassy enough to cut through at most volumes but didn't upset my ears when I played the splash by itself. Also, the fact that it's an 11", as opposed to a 10" or an 8", gives this cymbal more character than your standard splash even though it still reacts like a smaller cymbal. It's a great choice for a versatile splash.





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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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# Alesis

## SR18 AND PERFORMANCE PAD

by Anthony Riscica

**A**lesis has long been known for its electronic drum ingenuity. From drum machines to sound modules, the company has run the gamut on digital percussion units. Alesis has recently added to that history with two new products—the SR18, a follow-up to the ever-popular SR16 drum machine, and the aptly named Performance Pad electronic percussion instrument. We had the chance to put these two devices through the wringer to find out exactly what they offer and how they perform.

### SR18 DRUM MACHINE

First things first: How does it sound? Comparatively speaking, the 24-bit sounds in the SR18 are an automatic upgrade from the 16/18-bit sounds found in the SR16. With electronic drum tones constantly evolving, improved fidelity was clearly one of the top priorities for the Alesis team when designing this new unit. I was very pleased with the quality of the sounds in the SR18, and I even used a few in some tracks I was producing. The SR18 offers the option of adjusting the pitch of each individual sound, which gives you loads of freedom to create your own vibe. Add the onboard effects (compression, EQ, and reverb) and the SR18 is capable of re-creating a realistic drum track in many different genres.

As far as programming and editing go, using the SR18 is very intuitive—especially if you're familiar with the SR16. There wasn't much of a learning curve before I had a fairly firm grasp on how to get the most out of this machine. There are a couple of things that should be noted, however. First, if you're programming or editing a beat and the SR18 shuts off, everything you've been working on is lost. When you boot the machine back up, it brings you back to the default home screen. Second, I would have liked the SR18 to have a USB port, so I could use the unit in conjunction

with computer software.

But once I had some beats programmed and ready to go, the SR18 was fantastic. With its "pattern play" mode, you can assign different patterns to the individual pads, which makes it easy to change beats on the fly. All in all, overhauling the SR16 to create the SR18 was definitely worth it, and Alesis has succeeded in redefining a classic. List price: \$399.

### PERFORMANCE PAD

The Performance Pad is an electronic instrument that can be played with sticks while also offering the same programming functions found on most standard drum machines. The control surface has eight velocity-sensitive pads that can be used to create and record your own beats. For practice or performance, you can also play along with the Performance Pad's built-in patterns, or you can plug any audio device with an  $\frac{1}{8}$ " output into the unit's stereo input and play along with that.

The Performance Pad can be expanded to become a more full-scale electronic drumset by adding kick and hi-hat trigger pedals to the extra inputs on the back of the unit. This creates an extremely portable electronic kit or a fully functional add-on to an acoustic kit. The MIDI-out on the back allows you to trigger other sound modules or samplers. I used this feature in a rehearsal where I had to play along with sequences that I had recorded with a digital sampler. Programming the pads to trigger the individual tracks in my sampler took a bit of time, since I had to scroll through MIDI note numbers in order to find the ones that would play the samples, but it wasn't

rocket science.

I really liked the fact that the Performance Pad, unlike the SR18, stays on the preset page you're on, even when you turn the unit off and on again. This helps you avoid losing info if you're in the middle of programming a beat and the power goes out, or if you just need to take a break.

"So how does it play?" you may ask. Well, the Performance Pad was a lot of fun. The pads reacted well when played with sticks, and the sounds were usable for most situations. I loved exploring new ideas that I wouldn't have come up with on a regular kit, especially when I *didn't* have an electronic kick pedal plugged into the pad. This "limitation" opened the door to understanding how someone like Trilok Gurtu plays standard beats without a bass drum and how a simple change in

## ALL GROWN UP

Most drummers who've been playing since the late '80s have run across the SR16 drum machine somewhere along the line. Heck, some of us might have even lost a few gigs to this popular module. Alesis's SR18 is a "new and improved" version that retains some of the basics of the SR16 while adding more up-to-date features.

sticking can create a unique kick/snare combination when you're playing with your hands only.

The bottom line is that there are tons of uses for the Performance Pad. From practicing in your hotel room on tour to using the unit on stage to enhance a live performance, you'll find this versatile drum machine/instrument to be an affordable way to keep an electronic kit with you at all times. Check it out, and you'll see how hard it is to tear yourself away from this mighty mite. List price: \$399.

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





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Centennial

# LUDWIG DRUMS

**The venerable drum maker, still a serious player on the world stage, celebrates its centennial this year. Surviving the Depression, the potentially overwhelming demands of Beatlemania, and the ire of Buddy Rich.**

by Lauren Vogel Weiss

**T**he year was 1909. William Howard Taft was president of the United States. The Model T automobile was on the road. Broadcast radio was just three years old and was still in limited use. It was the dawn of the recording business, with many people still listening to wax cylinders. And it was when Ludwig & Ludwig was founded.

The year is 2009. Barack Obama is the first African-American U.S. president. An airplane can fly from the East Coast to the West in under six hours. Portable entertainment devices like iPods bring music and video to listeners wherever they may be. And the Ludwig Drum Company celebrates its centennial—

something extraordinary for any business, especially in the music industry.

“The Ludwig brand never went away,” explains Jim Catalano, director of sales and marketing for Ludwig/Musser School And Concert Percussion and a member of the Ludwig “family” for twenty-six years. “There were times that were up...and down...but we persevered while many others did not.”

Faced with having to play fast ragtime rhythms on a bass drum, William F. Ludwig Sr. invented a pedal with a short beater rod connected close to the playing spot. He used it during performances of the Ziegfeld Follies of 1909, and soon other drummers wanted one too. Bill and his brother Theobald opened a small drum shop called Ludwig & Ludwig, and they patented this revolutionary idea and made pedals



Legacy Classic

## THE CLASSICS NEVER GO OUT OF STYLE

Ludwig looks to its rich history—and to the future—with its latest models.

Ludwig is celebrating its centennial with a splash, introducing many new (and “old”) products. The “Snare Drums Of A Century” Anniversary Collection includes a replica of the 1928 Gold Triumphal snare drum. “We’re making only one hundred of them,” Jim Catalano, director of sales and marketing for Ludwig/Musser School And Concert Percussion, says of the \$10,900 snares. “Each drum is serialized by a date in Ludwig’s history.” Ludwig has also introduced special 100th Anniversary Black Beauty snares as well as “The Chief” Supra-Phonic snares, labeled with a special CHIEF keystone badge in honor of William F. Ludwig II’s nickname.



Replica 1928 Gold Triumphal snare

Among the exciting new models the company has introduced are Epic Centurion Exotic snares featuring bubinga, sapele, and American walnut burl woods, as well as Legacy Exotic series drums. According to Kevin Packard, director of marketing, Combo Percussion, “We took our 3-ply shell formula—maple-poplar-maple—which created a lot of buzz several years ago with the Legacy Classic, and incorporated some new finishes with exotic woods that are imported from Africa, Australia, and the Amazon.”

Also new are Epic X-Over drums, which *Drum Business* magazine picked as a spotlight kit in this year’s NAMM wrap-up. “We took inner and outer plies of walnut and segmented them with plies of maple, so it looks like a striped finish,” Packard says. “We then put a poplar core in the middle of it, so you’ve got three different types of woods that are being combined for one drum shell, with birch reinforcements. In essence, there are four different types of wood in one shell—that’s unheard of!”

“We’re taking everything that we’ve always done and making it more exciting, new, and current,” Packard concludes. “It’s an honor to be a part of Ludwig—but even more so to be able to create something with the help of this team and have it become a part of someone’s drumming life.”

as fast as they could.

Other innovations soon followed, among them pedal-tuned timpani and a metal snare drum called the Black Beauty (black nickel on a brass shell). Unfortunately, the arrival of talking pictures put a lot of theater drummers out of work, and the Great Depression created more economic downturns. So in 1930 the business was sold to the C.G. Conn Company.

In 1937 Ludwig Sr. founded another drum company. Since he had sold the

Ludwig name, he called this new business the W.F.L. Drum Company, after his initials. Son William F. Ludwig II joined him the following year. (Originally called “Junior,” Bill II changed his name in the 1990s to avoid confusion between his father, Bill I, and his son Bill III.)

Even more innovations were to come, such as the still-popular Speed King pedal, and the Ludwig artist roster grew. Early endorsers included Ray Bauduc (Bob Crosby), Saul Goodman, Lionel Hampton,



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# alchemy

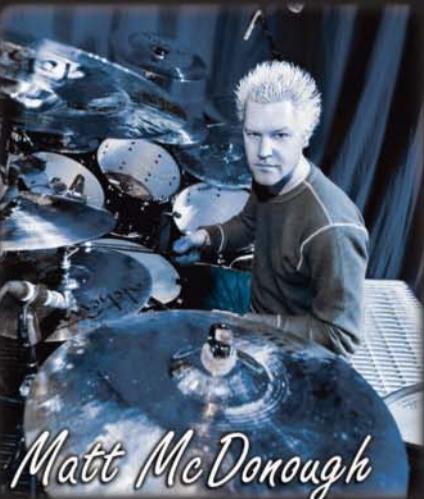
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## LUDWIG



Stainless Steel

Roy Knapp, Max Roach, and Mel Tormé.

In 1955, Bill Ludwig Sr. repurchased the Ludwig name from Conn—twenty-five years after he had sold it—and the W.F.L. Drum Company became the Ludwig Drum Company. The Musser Marimba Company was acquired in 1966, completing Bill Ludwig II's goal of "total percussion."

Buddy Rich, arguably one of Ludwig's two most famous endorsers over the years, was affiliated with the company in three different eras. During the 1920s he was billed as "Traps, The Drum Wonder," and Ludwig made ever bigger bass drums for the growing Rich to hide behind during his parents' vaudeville show. In the 1950s Buddy was lured away from chief competitor Slingerland to play W.F.L. drums before he was recruited again by the competition—this time Rogers. But Buddy returned to the Ludwig family once more in the late '70s and early '80s.

The other famous endorser? "The highlight in Ludwig's one-hundred-year history, as far as it affected me, is just any time Ringo Starr sat behind a drumkit," says Steve Gorman of the Black Crowes on Ludwig's recently released anniversary DVD. On this same video, Ringo Starr recalls the first time he saw a Ludwig drumset: "I was walk-

ing down the streets of London with [Beatles manager] Brian Epstein and some of the boys. I saw this kit in the window...it was black [oyster] pearl. It looked great! The dealer went to take off the decal that said LUDWIG and I said, 'Leave it on.' I just loved everything American!" And with that simple decision—and an appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* on February 9, 1964—Ludwig became a worldwide household name. The factory worked two to three shifts a day, six days a week, producing about a hundred sets per day. "Mr. Ludwig always referred to his home as 'the house that Ringo built,'" Catalano says with a smile. As a thank-you, Ludwig gave Starr a gold-plated Super-Sensitive snare drum.

The Beatles' popularity led to a flood of young garage bands around the world, which helped not only Ludwig but other drum companies as well. The 1960s were good to Ludwig, and the factory expanded its size on Damen Avenue in Chicago, where the W.F.L. Drum Company had been established in 1937. (The factory remained there until 1984, when it moved to Monroe, North Carolina.)

The 1970s saw tremendous growth in the rock genre, and Ludwig introduced the first stainless-steel drumset and

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popularized Vistalite Plexiglas drums. Endorsers of this era included Carmine Appice (Vanilla Fudge), John Bonham (Led Zeppelin), Don Brewer (Grand Funk Railroad), Danny Gottlieb (Pat Metheny), Joey Kramer (Aerosmith), and, promoting the Octa-Plus model, Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake & Palmer).

Many other well-known drummers have played Ludwig over the years, such as Ginger Baker (Cream), Bun E. Carlos (Cheap Trick), Eric Carr (Kiss), Joe Morello (Dave Brubeck), Neil Peart (Rush), Ed Shaughnessy (*The Tonight Show*), Alex Van Halen (Van Halen), and Alan White (Yes).

Bill Ludwig III, the company's first full-time artist relations manager, shares an amusing story: "I did my first artist poster when I was fresh out of college. Instead of choosing just four drummers, I decided to have everyone come in for one picture in a horse stable, with a caption that would read, 'Ludwig's stable of stars doesn't horse around.' Dad thought I was crazy, but I sent invitations to everybody, including Buddy Rich. The next time Buddy was in Chicago, I went backstage at his concert and he proceeded to rip me up one side and down the other. 'How dare you invite me to be in a picture with a bunch of blankety-blank rock 'n' roll drummers!' he shouted. 'Wait till I tell your father what you've done!' When I told him what had happened, Dad started laughing. I asked him what was so funny, and he said, 'Buddy used to rip into me when I was your age...and now you're taking the heat, not me!' That was a classic."

Bill Ludwig II became president of Ludwig in 1971, succeeding his father, who passed away in 1973. Bill II helped to build Ludwig into one of the largest drum companies in the world. In 1981, as he approached retirement age, he sold the business to the Selmer Company, but he continued to serve as a percussion ambassador until a few years before his death in 2008. In 2002, the company became a division of Conn-Selmer, beginning yet another chapter in Ludwig's prestigious legacy.

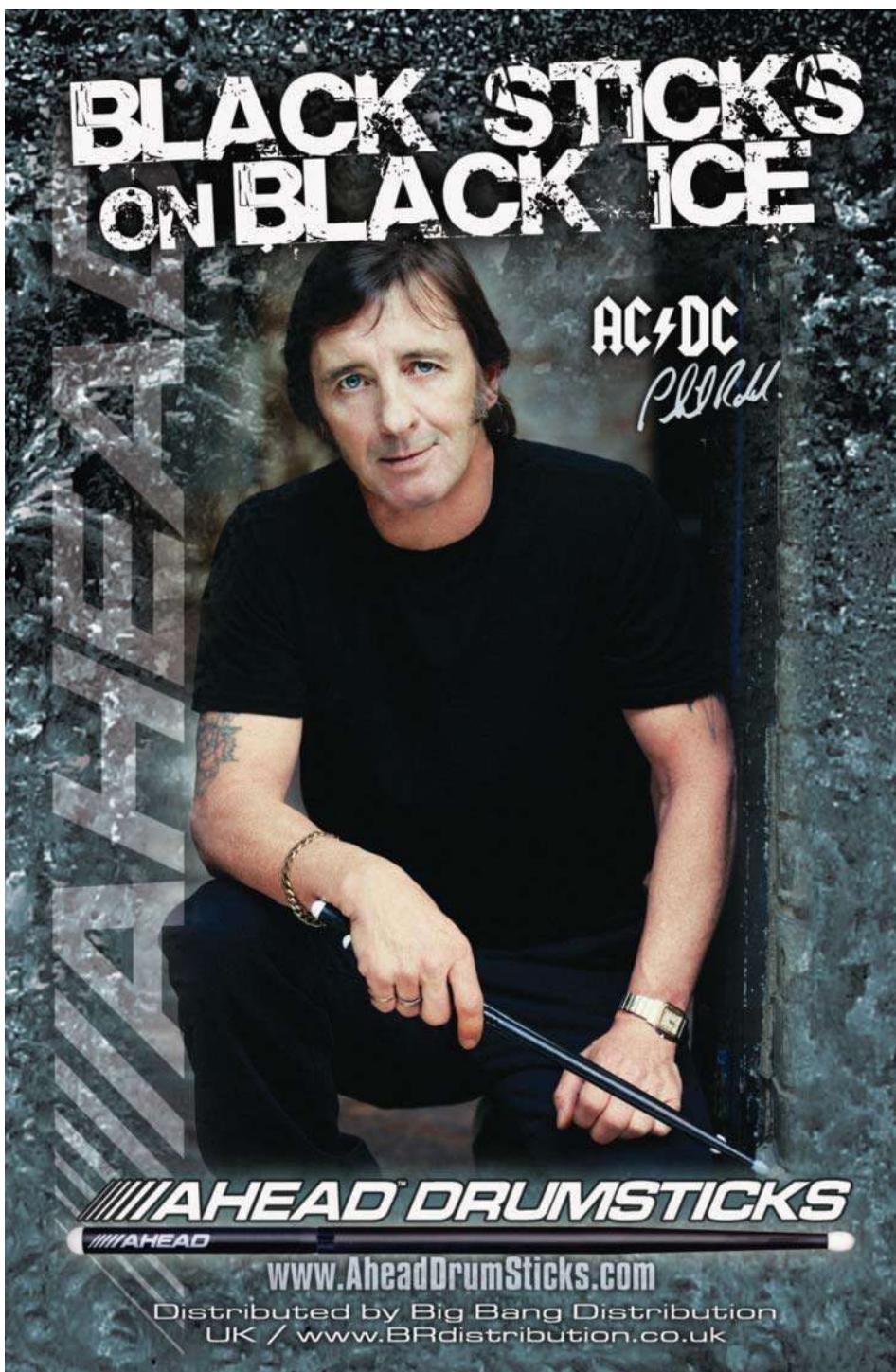



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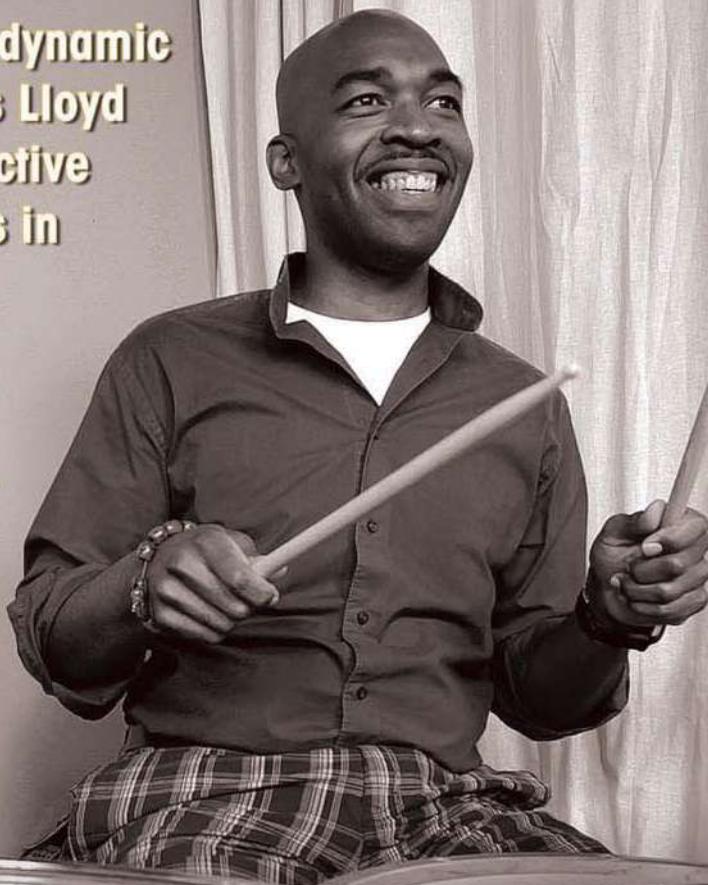
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The influential, super-dynamic drummer with Charles Lloyd and the SF Jazz Collective has taken no shortcuts in achieving clarity and precision at the kit. Next challenge: leading his own band.



# Eric Harland

Story by Michael Parillo • Photos by Paul La Raia

It's a crisp spring evening in New York City, and an excited crowd files into Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium for a concert titled Zakir Hussain & Friends. The lights dim and Zakir greets the audience, and then taking the world's most famous stage is the trio behind the 2006 album *Sangam*: Charles Lloyd, Zakir, and Eric Harland. Lloyd, a sax and flute player by trade, sits at the piano, Zakir gets comfy behind a pair of tabla and assorted percussion, and Harland perches at his kit. As the crowd falls silent, Zakir begins casting a spell over the room by singing a hypnotic, chant-like incantation.

Then, before you know it, Lloyd and Harland switch places. Without even touching a drumstick first, Harland eases his way into a rhythmic exploration of the piano. He plays chords on the low end of the keyboard, slaps and bangs the lid with his palm, jingles a tangle of bells over the strings inside. Lloyd coaxes a wash of color from Harland's cymbals and then joins Eric at the ivories to create a mesmerizing four-handed cascade of piano power that mingles with Zakir's drums and vocals. It's openness at the highest level, three men glorifying their collective muse in the purest way they know how: without preconception and with clear minds. It's gorgeous music, and soon the group cannot help welcoming a few friends, including pianist Jason Moran, into the fold.

When the first piece comes to a close, Harland returns to the kit and Lloyd picks up his tenor saxophone. Sparks will fly. Rolling and tumbling, hootin' and hollerin', mas-saging and caressing, the group plays music that kneels at the altar yet breathes fire. With Zakir Hussain, one of the most accomplished drummers in the world, pushing him, Harland coolly proves to be an equal focal point. Mirroring but not mimicking the sly and furious rhythms of the tabla, Eric flits around his kit with playful but precise command. He falls to a whisper, awakens with a roar, and brushes, smacks, or taps every surface of his arsenal, whether head or rim or shell, bell or bow or boom stand. Before the set is over he even grabs a microphone and dredges up some guttural Tuvan-style throat singing.

"With Eric," Zakir tells us, "it's like: What's coming next? You don't know. Wherever it goes, it's a positive area simply because the kind of energy that he brings to the table is so giving and so accommodating that it allows us to explore any part of the world."

The versatile Harland, who grooves as hard as he swings and whose drumming bursts with surprises, is indeed an explorer, with a slew of gigs to his credit. These days, in addition to having played several tours with the *Sangam* trio, he's a member of Lloyd's anything-goes quartet, along with pianist Moran and bassist Reuben Rogers. He's part of the forward-thinking SF Jazz Collective, in which he not only reaches dizzying improvisational heights but also gets to tinker with some serious odd-time and polyrhythmic brainteasers. And now the Houston-bred drummer is leading a band and diving deeper into writing.

For a guy with such a stylistically comprehensive and technically fearsome presence at the kit—even when he's just *singing* rhythms, he's fast, complex, and meticulous—Harland brings with him an aura of joy and warmth. As anyone who's heard his drumming knows, he never shies away from center stage, but he's even happier to share, and to support. "Everything, I think, comes from the same core laws of the universe," Eric says. "It's all about compromises, all about relations, all about growth and evolution. It's a beautiful thing."



**MD:** Let's talk about jazz in general. What is jazz these days? What does the word *jazz* mean? Is it even worth asking?

**Eric:** Oh, man, that's a really good question. Once it was one thing, but it's taken on so many different forms that it's become whatever you want it to be, pretty much. You have the historical sense, which is the standards and the tunes you grew up listening to and the history of jazz from Louis Armstrong, or from wherever you want to make it from. But now people are giving it different names—you have classic jazz, you have modern jazz, you have post-bop jazz, bebop, hard jazz, smooth jazz....

But the core of jazz is just improvisation. It's a way to communicate with other people. This is what I believe.

Jazz is always going to grow, it's always going to turn into something different, and it's always going to go through periods where people maybe don't want to respect it, because that's the way it always has been. When John Coltrane was doing his thing, the masses didn't really respect it. Now you put on Trane and everybody's like, "Oh, God!" You listen to the old recordings, like some of the last days when Trane was playing with Miles, and he was actually getting booed off the stage. Damn, did they hear what he was playing?

But that's the difference between what's happening within the music and then people's natural response to just wanting to be entertained. You can't really be upset with it because it's obviously a natural course. I think

any feeling that anyone feels at a given moment is valid.

For me, I love it all, because I love to entertain and I love to play and I love to be complex. That's what I love about jazz: At any given moment you can do whatever you want to, and it's okay.

**MD:** There's an openness, a welcoming vibe you have when you play. Some people consider jazz to be too internal, too intellectual. You might be doing something intense and complex, but it's fun and joyous, not remotely academic.

**Eric:** Just now I was basically saying what I feel jazz means to *me*, not necessarily what jazz *is*. I think that, like religion, jazz—and music in general—is

a personal experience. And the thing with me is that I really want to make people happy. That's my goal in life, because I'm having fun and I hear music and all I hear is the joy. That's mostly because I grew up in the church, and music was always a kind of celebration or a way to display your emotions.

I just love people, man. I've always been this happy-go-lucky kind of person, and I just want to have fun. Let's communicate, let's play together. Let's just be together and make music, but let's challenge each other too. Let's really play some complex stuff but make it fun. Even if we're going to be competitive, let's make a show out of it.

**MD:** You were playing in church for a good while before you got into jazz. Is there anything specific you got from



those pre-jazz years that you've applied to your more recent endeavors?

**Eric:** Definitely. Being in church

taught me about how to let your heart speak and that there's nothing wrong with being passionate. And it was the endurance and the groove, because there's a certain discipline in gospel music.

You've got this fast kind of shout groove—straight 2 and 4 backbeat, but real fast—and you hold that for fifteen, twenty minutes, minimum. Then they might be like, "If you're feeling the Holy Spirit, take a drum solo!" Other drummers are sitting there looking at you, and you've got to *play*. So it helps build endurance that just doesn't exist in jazz because you've got to play loud; they want to feel the drums. Whereas jazz guys are more into the tasty thing. A lot of jazz drummers don't have that kind of dynamic impact—they can't just produce it like that [snaps fingers].

**MD:** Your voice on the drums is always articulate and clear. Is that something you've thought about?

**Eric:** That's what I'm all about: clarity. I can't stand when it's not clear. If a certain cat has like a muddy sound, okay, cool, I understand he's going for a muddy approach—but let it be on purpose. I don't want it to be because of a lack of technique.

Elvin [Jones] had technique. You hear Elvin on certain recordings, and that stuff would be popping, clear. And then on other recordings he had a wash kind of thing. It depended on the different cymbals, or the different places he played. Clarity, I think, helps the music. It helps everybody kind of know where they are, so there's no guessing. They don't have to be like, "Was that 1?" You

## ERIC'S SETUP



### DRUMS:

**Yamaha** Maple Absolute in mica green

**A.** 5x14 maple snare

**B.** 7x10 tom

**C.** 8x12 tom

**D.** 14x14 floor tom

**E.** 16x18 bass drum (sometimes 18x20)

**Misc:** tabla, bolt tightened, with denser head for stick playing

### CYMBALS: Zildjian

**1.** 16" EFX combination hi-hat

**2.** 22" Thin Dry Complex K ride

**3.** 22" Constantinople Medium Thin Low ride

**4.** 16" EFX crash and 18" EFX crash, stacked ("Sometimes I place an 8" splash under the 18" EFX crash for a real dry cymbal effect," Harland says)

**STICKS:** **Vater**, various models (Recording, Sweet Ride, Fusion), maple with wood tip

**PERCUSSION:** Traditional cow hooves, Indian bells (ghungroo long)

**HEADS: Remo.** Coated Ambassador on snare batter, clear Ambassador on bottom. ("Top is tuned tight and bottom just a bit looser. I often use my cow hooves for muffling.") Coated or clear Ambassador on rack tom batters, clear Ambassador on floor tom batter; clear Ambassador on tom bottoms. ("Sometimes I go for a traditional jazz high tuning, but there are times that I go for the more fusion midrange tuning. My bottom head stays at about a midrange tension, which gives me versatility with top head tuning on the spot.") Coated or clear Ambassador on bass drum batter, black front head, sometimes with a porthole. ("Batter head is tuned tighter than the front head, which helps achieve a faster, more precise beat but at the same time a deeper sound.")

**HARDWARE: Yamaha** hi-hat stand, double chain bass drum pedal. **Vater** beater, padded. ("I use as much pedal tension as possible.")

## THE TWO-STICK TRICK



**Ever hear Harland blaze silky-smooth 32nd notes while leaving one hand free to explore? Well, he isn't the only drummer to meet the challenge of gaining pinpoint control with two sticks in one hand, but he's really honed the technique, and he busts it out in unfailingly musical ways. Let's let him explain.**

In order to play with two sticks at the same time, I had to find a comfortable way of holding the sticks. At first it was keeping my index finger between the sticks and using my wrist and arm in combination. It was all arm, with one stick between the thumb and index finger and the next one between the index finger and middle finger, in a French grip where the palm is to the side (photo 1).

The thumb presses, kind of like a fulcrum, just enough to hold the top stick stable. It was all arm, pushing the stick up and down. After a while my wrist began to get stronger, so that's when I was able to get more give and get faster. But it still wasn't fast enough, because after a long time I couldn't sustain it

the way I wanted to. So I had to find a different technique.

That technique was removing my index finger from in between the sticks. I hold the two sticks as if I'm holding one big stick, but I keep my index finger to the side just enough, kind of pushing so the sticks aren't directly on top of each other (photo 2). My pinky and the next finger hold the space between the two sticks. My thumb and middle finger hold everything together, just barely.

From that I'm able to hold the sticks in a more comfortable German grip. You can utilize much more wrist, you get much faster, and it's so much easier. You get more accents because everything is in the wrist and less in the arm. Then I go back and forth. When one grip gets tired, I go back to the other. You're using the stick and slapping down, up, down, up, and it has a natural flow. You use arm to elbow to wrist to hand, in a kind of snake motion. That's how I sustain it.

The next thing I'm working on is three sticks....

never want *that* look.

That's what I appreciate about Indian music. It's so precise. Even when Zakir is being open, the way he's executing rhythmic sequences is unbelievable. Or Trane, even when he got into this period of playing open and out and free, you could always hear a big difference between him, Pharoah Sanders, and Eric Dolphy. Those cats, they couldn't match Trane's technique.

They had a vibe, but Trane had perfected his technique.

Tony Williams, the same thing. When Tony would get an open solo his execution would just be unbelievable. It would have so much presence and so much clarity.

**MD:** So what can you do in terms of your technique and your gear to get closer to precision?

**Eric:** One, you have to pay attention to

your cymbal sound. Certain cymbals are just way too washy. If you're going for the washy sound, that's cool, but you have to pick the right stick because certain sticks with certain tips are going to be able to get the kind of articulation you're looking for.

If you're going to use weighted sticks, make sure you have the strength to hold up because the sticks can sometimes cause you to be a little more sloppy if they're heavier.

**MD:** Do you mean just heavy sticks?

**Eric:** Yeah, bigger, heavier sticks.

Unless you're really used to them.

Sometimes precision requires speed.

You've got to be able to think really fast and be able to respond really fast. But that's if you *want* to be fast. Sometimes you want to be slow and precise. But it's hard to be fast and precise with heavier sticks.

I try to find a stick in the midrange, and I use more of a rounded tip because I think they get the best kind of direct cymbal sound and a more precise sound on the drums. I try to dampen the drum as much as I can without losing the actual tonality of the instrument.

I'm learning from other instrumentation that once you find your touch it's not so helpful to expand beyond that, to push yourself. Unless you're practicing pushing for more endurance. But I think every drummer has a zone where their touch resides. You can expand that, but it's hard to get away from what just feels organic and natural. It's good to grow and to be able to play any drumset and things like that because you never know what you're going to get, but don't be afraid to have everything come back to you too.

I was fortunate to study with a classical instructor when I was in high school. He really taught me the significance of the three different stick grips, from French to German to American, and how to go back and forth between the three so you can always maintain endurance. Once you get tired, your whole precision thing is off. That's something they even teach you in boxing. You want to always keep a pace so that you don't tire yourself. All your functions start to go down, you're no longer listening, and everything is



## ERIC HARLAND

sloppy. It's natural—your body is just tired, and that's how it compensates; it only produces energy when it needs to.

**MD:** Does using single strokes enter into the idea of playing precisely?

**Eric:** Yes, completely. Doubles are great, but it's really all about single strokes. You can use single strokes in many different ways, but you have to use them if you want absolute precision. It sounds completely clean. You can get doubles clean, but it will never be as clean as natural singles. And you can displace them any kind of way. It

doesn't have to be all snare drum or all floor tom. Move it around—and if you get it fast enough, it has such a unique, clarifying sound.

You work on getting precision with the stick. For me it's really using the finger, where I'm holding the stick in the first joint of my index finger. Then I use my three fingers to make the stick move the way I want it to move. When I'm playing on a cymbal, it's just unbelievable. And then when I don't want to get too tensed up, I move over to German or American grip for a minute

and just do more subtle, simple things with the wrist. The wrist can hold steadier pulses where my whole arm isn't getting tired, and that's another kind of precision. Each grip has what it's precise about, and you find what you need. You have to practice each way.

There is a correct way to do everything. You can do whatever you want, but you're using a lot of tendons and muscles, so it's easy to get carpal tunnel and joint pain. You can avoid that if you use correct technique.

**MD:** Have you ever had to fight through cramping and locking up or anything like that?

**Eric:** Never. Technique, man. The body will tell you what's comfortable and what's uncomfortable. Then a good teacher will really be able to help you have the correct posture. A lot of it is just the way you sit. It's like yoga, stretching your body. I do a lot of stretching and different things. When I was younger, I didn't do any of that, but I knew I had a good teacher because he really helped me get a lot out of a little.

One thing my teacher Craig Green used to do that I didn't really pay attention to is that I would come in and I'd be playing whatever rudiment he asked me to play, and I'd play it kind of wild because I was really into it [raises sticks high]. And he'd push down on the stick, just so I could get the same thing, but here [shows the stick much closer to the head].

He was like, "You don't need all that." It's the difference between doing something for show and doing something because that's the only way you know how to do it. He was like, "Okay, if you want to be this wild drummer and have that for show, cool, but that's not the correct way."

He taught me that everything has to be even, and he taught me the significance of the right versus the left. You have to even out both hands so that you're not heavily weighted to one hand. You don't always have to play right foot, right hand, left hand [taps out triplet pattern]. If you're putting all the emphasis on your right, then everything you do is going to lead with your right. He said if you're playing basketball, it's predictable. Your right hand is

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## ERIC'S RECORDINGS

**Charles Lloyd Quartet** Rabo De Nube  
/// **Mark Shim** Turbulent Flow ///  
**Monterey Quartet** Live At The 2007  
Jazz Festival /// **Aaron Parks** Invisible  
Cinema /// **Jacky Terrasson** Smile ///  
**Ravi Coltrane** From The Round Box ///  
**SF Jazz Collective** 3rd Annual Concert  
Tour /// **Terence Blanchard** Bounce ///  
**Jimmy Greene** Mission Statement ///  
**Charles Lloyd** Sangam /// **Kurt  
Rosenwinkel** The Remedy: Live At The  
Village Vanguard

## HIS FAVORITES

"I'm not necessarily listening to these recordings for the drummer," Harland says. "It's just that the quality of the music is so rich to me."

**Pat Metheny** The Way Up (Antonio Sanchez) /// **John Coltrane** Transition (Elvin Jones) /// **Miles Davis** Live At The Plugged Nickel (Tony Williams) /// **Kim Burrell** Everlasting Life (H. Powell, Andrew Ward Jr.) /// **James Taylor** October Road (Steve Gadd) /// **Yellowjackets** Blue Hats (Will Kennedy) /// **Busta Rhymes** various (programmed) /// **Various slow jam mixes** to keep things mellow

going to be super-heavy and your left hand is going to be super-weak. So he would teach us [slaps out triplet pattern, accelerating to lightning speed]: right foot, right hand, left hand, then right foot, left hand, right hand....

Once you even it out, you can get different sounds. You can go either way. If you're going bass, snare, snare, you can go bass, snare, hi-hat, bass, hi-hat, snare. Or bass, snare, floor tom, bass, floor tom, snare. And you get all these different nuances just because you're even with your left and your right.

**MD:** You're right-handed. Is your left hand your weaker one?

**Eric:** Definitely versus my right it's the weaker hand, but in a way it's not because I work on my left hand as well. And the thing we used to do in Houston, because we were always trying to push each other to the limit, was set the drumsets up so we could play left-handed. So you play on the bass drum with your left foot, and you've got the snare on the right side. It was weird trying to use the hi-hat.

**MD:** Yeah, I've tried that a bit. Playing the bass drum with the opposite foot is tough, but playing the hi-hat is really tough.

**Eric:** It works. The funny thing is that from playing jazz my hi-hat foot was definitely stronger than my bass drum foot. My bass drum had more groove, but my hi-hat was always playing 8th notes, even if I was hitting quarter notes. I naturally developed more muscle in my left foot. So when I go to play the bass drum, even though I don't have the doubles that I have with my right, as far as synchronized singles, my left is the shit.

I was like, *Whoa, my left can actually do that better than my right.* I had to sit there and develop the muscle. I switched the kit around and started playing more hi-hat with my right, and that's what helped. I started swinging and got my right foot used to supporting that way, and it trained the muscles.

**MD:** Do you have any advice for getting better at playing intensely and quickly at lower volumes?

**Eric:** The intensity comes from how you imply your attack on the drums and cymbals. A lot of it can come from tuning, but at the same time you want to be able to work on your attack so that you're not just using your arm to kind of go into the cymbal. You want to be able to lean back and still get the intensity, but the power is in your wrist. You get the same kind of whip effect, but it's not like you're throwing your arm.

**MD:** Your particular kit setup seems to have a lot to do with it too. It's all right in front of you, easy to reach.

**Eric:** Downstairs [as in the photos] I'm using 10", 12", and 14" toms, so I have the normal "quartet" thing going.

**MD:** Usually you have just one rack tom?

**Eric:** Just the 12", in the middle. I used to use the 12" where the 10" is, over to the side, and there was a space in the middle, but it was kind of silly: *What is this space for?* That's why cats start taking the cymbal and putting it on an extension rod and pushing it over so it's directly due north of the floor tom. But if you don't have a boom stand, then you have this enormous space between the rack tom and the floor tom. To me that just did not make any sense. There's no natural flow. When I moved the tom to the middle it was just perfect because there was no big leap from here to



**Eric Harland**  
- Charles Lloyd

# PLAYS



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## ERIC HARLAND

there. I could move the cymbals in and everything was right there. There's no unused space basically. As a drummer, you ain't got time for unused space.

**MD:** Everything looks like it's almost flat.

**Eric:** Almost, but I try not to go too flat, just a little bit of angle so I can get rim when I need rim. When I'm leaning into the snare, if it's too flat I can't get a rimshot. I want the same thing with the floor tom and the rack tom. So I'm producing more sound but using less effort. If you go too hard you'll break a stick.

A lot of it is just practicing that kind of position, which comes from when instructors have you play single-stroke rolls in this one little dot: "Okay, just play right here. Do not move." You're sitting there like, *Why am I practicing that?* It's so you can execute precision to get a really good tone.

Even on a cymbal there are spots that sound different. If you fluctuate all around the cymbal you're not getting a direct and precise tone. It's cool if you're going for that kind of effect, but like I said, if you're going to do it, make sure you're doing it on purpose, not out of ignorance. I play with different cats and they're like, "Man, how did you get a washy cymbal to sound so articulate?" Well, it's the way you play it, and it's the way you set it up. With a washy cymbal, if you set it flat, you can't get a lot of stick control because you have to play on top and then you're changing your whole approach. But if you tilt it down, then you're playing with the very tip of the stick, so it's a more precise sound.

**MD:** Let's switch gears. What's up with your band?

**Eric:** It's great. We did pretty much our first tour in October of last year. It went really well. Right now I have the pianist Taylor Eigsti and the great guitar player Julian Lage. They're both in the Bay Area. And there's Walter Smith, a fantastic tenor saxophone player, and Harish Raghavan, who's a wonderful bass player.

This is my time to really do it, and it's a great group of guys. I've been a sideman so long. It's just focusing on my groove, which always kind of took

the back end. Plus I've been waiting for daybreak, something to really help push it up off the ground. The buzz is there and everybody I know keeps asking me about it because I write for the Collective and people are familiar with the way I write. I hear so many different styles and I want to mix so many different things because I feel like the blend of it would be great.

**MD:** Do you write mostly on piano?

**Eric:** Yeah, mostly. I'm not a guitar player, but I get ideas from guitar as well. And sometimes I write from the drums just to get a rhythmic approach, and then I apply harmony and different things. Or I might sing, because my mom and my family in general are just great. I grew up around singers. My wife is a singer, and my daughter sings, so I hear singers every day.

Sometimes we have so much technique in our instruments that it's hard for us to get back to basic harmonizing and melody that's simple but impactful. People who really use their voice are more in touch with that. Something about singing is that you feel it more on the inside because it's coming from within, versus playing an instrument and having to have the right technique to get the perfect tone.

**MD:** Does your band have a name?

**Eric:** At first I wanted to call it the Messiah Complex because I think we all have this thing where we want to heal the world and be known as great. Also, when I do emails I always have to end with dot, dot, dot, so I had the name as "Harland..."

**MD:** It's got a "to be continued" vibe.

**Eric:** Exactly. I'm a "to be continued" kind of person, I guess—like you can't put a period on anything. I didn't want the standard Eric Harland Quartet or Quintet. That's been beat in the ground so much, and it's so jazz oriented. It takes away from it being a unique group too, and something that's going to stand out. I just like the Messiah Complex. It's such a fearless move and controversial but at the same time meaningful, impactful—everything I'm looking for.





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# MASTODON'S

# BRANN DAILOR

MASTODON HAS RECORDED THE ALBUM OF THEIR LIVES. BUT BRANN DAILOR INSISTS HE'LL NEVER BE AS GOOD AS THE DRUMMER INSIDE HIS HEAD. THAT MUST BE SOME **AMAZING** IMAGINARY DRUMMER.

Story by Ken Micallef

Photos by Gene Ambo

Every generation has its *Dark Side Of The Moon*, its *In The Court Of The Crimson King*, or its *Reign In Blood*. With Mastodon's *Crack The Sky*, the '00s get their due. Not since...well...perhaps ever, has a band so successfully combined the space-rock profundity of Pink Floyd, the math-rock mechanics and surreal imagery of King Crimson, and the heavy metal histrionics of Slayer.

After Mastodon finished their epic 2006 album, *Blood Mountain*, they wanted to hit it harder than ever before. Drummer/lyricist Brann Dailor wanted a fatter kit sound. Bassist Troy Sanders was hoping for

his first cool million. Guitarist Bill Kelliher imagined the band's fourth album as falling somewhere between Frank Zappa's *Chunga's Revenge* and some as yet unrecorded prog rock masterpiece. While Dailor dreamt of Bonham, guitarist/composer Brent Hinds planned the next phase of Mastodon's career from a hospital bed.

*Crack The Sky* was largely inspired by an assault Hinds endured while "enjoying" an MTV Music Video Awards after-party in 2007. The bad breaks didn't stop there. Before the album was completed, Kelliher had developed an inexplicable stomach disease, and his



wife was struck by a car. And Dailor suffered trauma as well: His mom was evicted and her husband died. And Dailor's sister, Skye, overdosed on pills.

For many rockers this level of chaos and pain would result in disillusionment, even breakdown. But Brann Dailor got busy. *Crack The Skye's* themes cover amputation, astral projection, time/space travel, wormholes, and 1800s czarist Russia, and Dailor's fantastic imagery is surpassed only by his extraordinary drumming.

"Oblivion" opens the record with Dailor's deep rolls plus some riotous guitar work, soon giving way to the cathartic "Divinations," then the majestic mayhem of

"Quintessence." Ten-minute-plus opus "The Czar" blasts through dark terrain; "Ghost Of Karelia" blends Hinds and Kelliher's guitar wonder with Dailor's warlike, tom-taunting splendor. The title track offers brief consolation from the dread, and the album closes with the thirteen-minute prog rock masterpiece "The Last Baron." For the thirty-four-year-old drummer, who began his rise to the top of the metal mountain with grindcore legends Today Is The Day and Lethargy, *Crack The Skye* is easily the greatest album of his career.

**MD:** Is *Crack The Skye* the landmark record Mastodon had to make?

**Brann:** Every record is the record we want to make at that moment. You

then bounced it into Pro Tools. I was more prepared for this record than I have been for anything else we've done. We made sure we were prepared.



never go into it thinking you're making some landmark album. There are just things in your mind. Going into the writing phase, you're not sure. Emotionally, it's up and down. One minute you love everything, then the next minute it's all doom and gloom.

**MD:** How did the turmoil the band was going through before and during the recording sessions affect the music?

**Brann:** It was pretty gloomy in the practice space for a while. We were trying hard to maintain a positive attitude and be upbeat. We didn't want to pretend that nothing happened; we just didn't want to dwell on it. We're still Mastodon, and we had to make a record. After Brent left the hospital after being punched out, he sat home. The rest of us, we could have waited for him to be okay, but we wanted to show him: "The band is forging on—we'll be down here when you're ready."

**MD:** How did you record the drum tracks for the album?

**Brann:** We recorded everything to two-inch tape and

We've rushed efforts previously. This time we really took our time and made sure everything was right. By the time we got in the studio I had been playing the songs forever. I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I knew every fill I wanted to play, every beat. We'd been playing through the whole record from start to



finish for weeks, as if it was a set.

**MD:** Why do you prefer live recording to stacking parts?

**Brann:** First, there's a cheating aspect that I'm not comfortable with when you stack parts. I want to know personally that I can play a whole song from start to finish. You have to play it live anyway. I'd rather know in my head that I can play the songs, especially the long songs we do, like "The Last Baron." I view it as a personal achievement to be able to record a thirteen-minute song like that from start to finish without any mistakes.

### BUILDING THE BEAST

**MD:** What do you focus on when creating a drum part?

**Brann:** Guitars. But if I'm not big on a part I become paralyzed. I can't even play to it. I really have to feel something from the part. Everybody in the band knows when we've got something. Brent or Bill will play something and we'll all automatically join in.

Sometimes I need to search for it, but I know it when I have it. Sometimes it's immediate—the hair stands up on your neck and you lay into it and feel it. You know when everyone is connecting. It's all about taste and feel. It's ephemeral; it has to do with each person's emo-

## BRANN'S SETUP

### DRUMS: Tama Starclassic Bubinga

- A. 6x14 Warlord Masai snare
- B. 8x10 tom
- C. 9x12 tom
- D. 11x14 tom
- E. 16x18 floor tom
- F. 18x18 floor tom
- G. 18x22 bass drum

### CYMBALS: Meinl

- 1. 14" Mb20 heavy Soundwave hi-hats
- 2. 18" Mb20 heavy crash
- 3. 20" Mb8 heavy crash
- 4. 20" Mb8 heavy ride
- 5. 8" Classics medium bell

### STICKS: Vater 5B

**HEADS: Evans.** Power Center Reverse Dot on snare, Evans G2 on tops of toms, G1 on tom bottoms, EQ3 on bass drum.

Live, Brann uses **Shure** in-ear monitors ("My mix is usually a lot of guitars, very little drums, maybe a little kick and snare") and **Moongel** on his snare drum to control ring.

tional attachment to their instrument and their ability to convey that or evoke something out of nothing.

**MD:** Did you want to play more groove-oriented drums on *Crack The Skye* than on previous Mastodon records?

**Brann:** That is a big part of my musical upbringing, listening to R&B and funk—particularly Stevie Wonder. When it's just me and the drums, I'll start with a funk beat and work from there. I'm not practicing double bass or a grindcore groove. I always go back to Stevie Wonder. His drumming maintains that groove, and that's what drumming is all about.

**MD:** Which Stevie Wonder albums do

the song.

**MD:** *Crack The Skye* is your first album using a click. How did you get comfortable with the new machine?

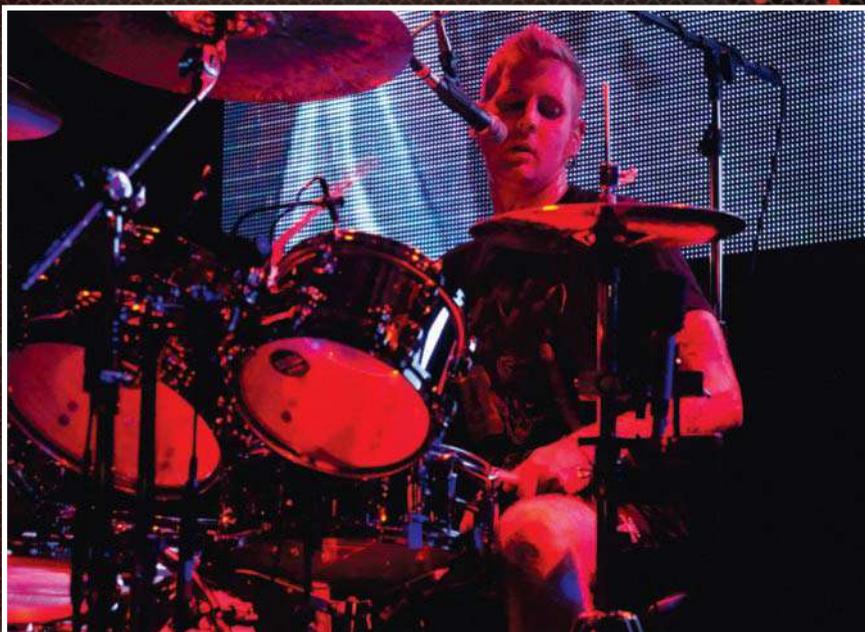
**Brann:** I was dying laughing after the first time through with the click. *This is what I've been afraid of for so long?* It was easy. [Producer] Brendan O'Brien and [engineer] Nick DiDia just threw it up and I rolled over it. It was right on. It gave me the freedom to not have to think about the time anymore.

It was important for me to capture these parts where I have to exercise a lot more control. I had to calm down, and I'm so not used to doing that. Playing with Mastodon has always

come in and out of it. I do little ebbs and flows. I like the long fills; it's something I do often, going past the 1 and past the 2. I do that on every record.

**MD:** You also often play Stewart Copeland-style polyrhythms, alluding to three over two or three over four, playing three on a bell while the beat is in four, for instance. At one point in "Oblivion" you're accenting the hi-hat in half-time phrasing; that's very Copeland-ish, though you don't mention him often as an influence.

**Brann:** He is a big influence. I remember tapping along to the Police in my



you play with, and why?

**Brann:** *Innervisions*, *Talking Book*, *Music Of My Mind*, and *Fulfillingness' First Finale*. He has a really original approach. It's rooted in funk and that super-groove-oriented playing. He's definitely self-taught; it's obvious in the way he structures his beats and fills. It's really bizarre. It's something you can only get from someone who hasn't been trained. He's got an amazing approach and imagination behind the drums, and he has a way of masking [the rhythm]. It's something that Stewart Copeland does as well—playing something that sounds simple but that has intricacies you don't notice at first. Stevie's drumming can be all over the place, but it never takes you out of

been about breakneck speed. I do try to maintain feel, but in live situations I have a tendency to go too fast. Now it's totally different. It's a challenge. You have to relax.

#### CRACK TRACKING

**MD:** "Oblivion" sounds like it's in 3/4, but your phrasing and over-the-barline fills make the meter hard to decipher.

**Brann:** I have no clue what meter it is, I really don't. I've never taken a lesson in my life. I don't know what my deal is, but I've never had a technical understanding of what I'm doing behind the drums.

**MD:** So how do you approximate the groove there?

**Brann:** I go with the guitar line. I can

dad's car when I was eight years old.

**MD:** Why allude to the three-over-two or polyrhythmic time feel?

**Brann:** It grooves better.

**MD:** In "Divinations," where you're playing a three-over-four rhythm on the bell, what is the bass drum doing?

**Brann:** It's playing the last 16th of the bar, then the downbeat, then the second 16th of the next bar.

**MD:** You open "Quintessence" with those beautiful drum breaks. When the band goes into the spacey 7/4 bridge and Brent's singing about "the space/

#### BRANN'S RECORDINGS

**Mastodon** Remission, Leviathan, Blood Mountain, Crack The Skye // **Today Is The Day** Live Till You Die, Today Is The Day, Sadness Will Prevail // **Lethargy** It's Hard To Write With A Little Hand

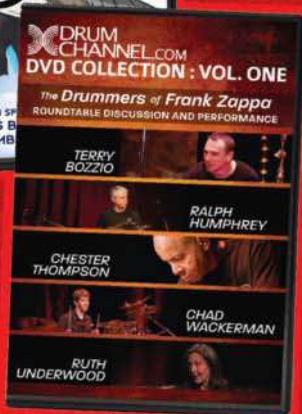
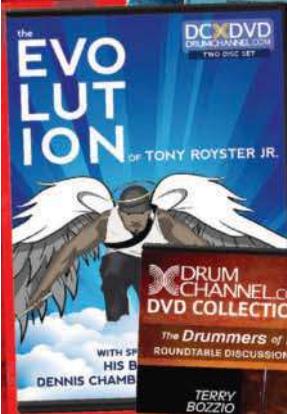
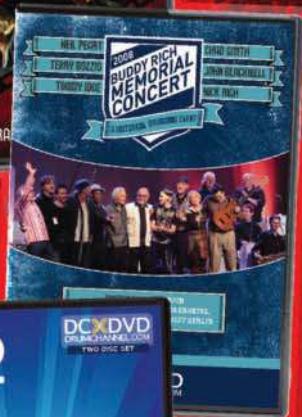
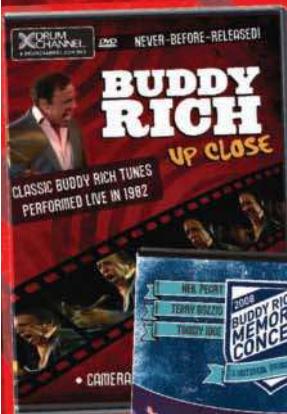
#### HIS INFLUENCES

**Genesis** The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway (Phil Collins) // **King Diamond** Them (Mikkey Dee) // **Stevie Wonder** Innervisions (Stevie Wonder) // **Human Remains** Using Sickness As A Hero (Dave "The Dholi") // **Cynic** Focus (Sean Reinert) // **John Coltrane** A Love Supreme (Elvin Jones) // **Slayer** Reign In Blood (Dave Lombardo) // **Mahavishnu Orchestra** The Inner Mounting Flame (Billy Cobham) // **Metallica** ...And Justice For All (Lars Ulrich) // **Miles Davis** Bitches Brew (Lenny White, Jack DeJohnette) // **King Crimson** Red (Bill Bruford) // **Iron Maiden** Powerslave (Nicko McBrain) // **The Mars Volta** Frances The Mute (Jon Theodore) // **Death** Human (Sean Reinert) // **Yes** Close To The Edge (Bill Bruford)

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## BRANN DAILOR

time paradigm," are you singing the background harmony?

**Brann:** That's me and Troy and Brent singing an elongated "omnipresence."

**MD:** Then you break into the odd-meter bars in "Divinations," which sound like they're broken into sections of three, three, and two. In sections like that, or later on in "The Last Baron," are you thinking 16ths or quarters to maintain your own pulse?

**Brann:** I'm taking each part on its own merit. I know the song from start to finish; we play it over and over again. I got it. The section you're referring to is the same [meter] as the beginning of the song, then we add a different feel, which came with the evolution of the drumbeat. When we're playing that rhythm in the beginning, it's a looser feel, a looser drumbeat. Then when it gets to the second part it becomes chop-pier sounding. There are so many different ways to phrase that. I try to do it differently every time we play it, though I keep it real choppy.

**MD:** Do the other members of Mastodon feel odd meters as easily as you do?

**Brann:** In the past the music has been even more complex. We all know what's going on with that. It's not a big deal. I've been playing with Bill since '94, so that's fifteen years.

**MD:** "Ghost Of Karelia": 5/4 or 7/4 in the groove?

**Brann:** We were playing that yesterday and I wondered: *What timing is this in?* It's weird. I do that all by the fill placement. I mathematically figure it out with the number of drums that I have and the fill I'll be doing to build a particular beat, and it will be like that every time. I don't know anything about what timing anything is in. If I'm going to play [four 16th notes] around the toms, if I go snare, first tom, second tom, third tom, crash, it will be like that every time and I know it fits there. However many toms I'm using to fill that space, then I can work from there. And I can do all those hits just on a snare; I just figure out how many hits it's going to be.

**MD:** Why does Mastodon favor odd meters?

**Brann:** I'm not really sure. It's just the

way things get written. There are times when a rhythm will seem too standard and we'll throw in an extra little note just to make it more fun to play. The people who get into our music are normally headbangers. We'd be thrown on those bills and you'd see the frustration in the audience. Though we'd have a few mosh songs, like "Blood And Thunder," we were never that total mosh band.

**MD:** There are many different sections in "The Last Baron." After the first section you're playing a march figure, then the band goes into a 5/4 pattern for the groove. Can you break down the beat?

**Brann:** That's another hi-hat to ride thing. I think it's paradiddles between the hi-hat and the snare and the kick drum. I often break up a paradiddle between the hi-hat and snare or the ride cymbal and snare. It's not a straight paradiddle, it's something born out of a paradiddle. FYI, we inserted a higher-pitched snare in one part of the song.

**MD:** What is your bass drum playing in "The Last Baron"?

**Brann:** Live I make it busier, but for the recording it's a [downbeat and an 8th note].

**MD:** There are so many marks to hit within "The Last Baron." Is it just a matter of memorization, or is there a constant source you refer to?

**Brann:** At first "The Last Baron" was really hard to get through. At the beginning, songs like that are about memorization, but once you've played them a bunch of times, you can just have fun. It becomes second nature and you've got your muscle memory locked in. But you have to play the songs a lot.

**MD:** Do you write a road map or make notes?

**Brann:** No. At first we'll refer to sections as part A, part B, part C.... With so much going on in "The Last Baron" it was parts A, B, C, D, and E. It can be confusing in the middle of the song. You think you know the next riff, but you'll be like, *What am I playing to it?* It takes a few months.

## DECIPHERING DAILOR

**MD:** One of your trademarks is long sets

of single-stroke rolls around the toms. You do it in "The Last Baron" when Brent is singing "staring at the world," for instance.

**Brann:** I do a series of what I call quads right there.

**MD:** Four-stroke ruffs?

**Brann:** Yeah, it's a really weird fill and it fits in there. That's one of my harder fills. It's four notes with a bass drum. It gets a little lost because there's so much going on. I'm just trying to fill the space.

**MD:** And you did punch in that long prog rock line?

**Brann:** Yeah, that was fun. I used a 13" Noble & Cooley snare drum there. We wanted a higher-pitched snare just for that part. I used a set with a Slingerland bass drum and Fibes toms for most of the album. We also used three or four different Black Beauty snares. The hi-hats and rides were Meinl, with some Zildjians from the 1920s for crashes.

**MD:** What do you like about Meinl?

**Brann:** They have a wide variety of cymbals, comparable to the other big cymbal makers. And they did a really good thing—they got aggressive and went after up-and-coming drummers, especially in the metal community.

**MD:** What is your approach to tuning?

**Brann:** From the floor tom up to the high tom, I sing a phrase to match them to—the trumpet call at a horse race. The heads are not real tight but not super-loose either, and I like a long decay and a lot of ring on the toms. I try to tune them so I get enough response to get some good movement across the drums. And the bottom head is a bit lower in tension.

**MD:** You're a big fan of pronounced ghost notes, which a lot of guys in metal don't often play.

**Brann:** I really like how ghost notes work; my left hand is pretty much doing ghost notes in between everything. If I want to leave them out I have to really concentrate to not do them. If you watch me from behind you'll see it; it just naturally happens in my playing. I never meant to do them, they're just there.

**MD:** You never drilled rudiments to get your chops up to speed?

**Brann:** No. I had one lesson as a kid.

I didn't like it. I asked my dad not to bring me back. Back then and up to now my drums are more like a toy. I was always a musical person, but as a kid it felt like school having to practice. For that one lesson the teacher and I sat in a corner with two snare drums, playing right, left, right, left for an hour. It was boring. I wanted to play the drums; at that point I already had some marching patterns together.

**MD:** Did you spend time on drumset practice?

**Brann:** I just played in bands. I had my drums in my house, and a lot of kids would come over with their guitars and we'd play Metallica songs. I practiced on my own, but not rudiments. I would just play whatever came to mind. It was never a regimented thing. I was just playing music with my friends, and it was fun. When Lethargy began I became more serious. We had gigs and I wanted to play cool stuff. The music was challenging, and it was fun to master it.

**MD:** Do you have a pre-show warm-up?

**Brann:** Yeah, I do single- and double-stroke rolls for a couple hours on my right thigh. There's a big nasty callus there now.

**MD:** During your performance at PASIC in 2007, why were you shaking out your hands?

**Brann:** I used to get really tight because I would never warm up when I played. My forearms would feel like cement halfway into the set. It took me years to realize that if I would just warm up before hitting the stage, that wouldn't happen. In between songs I always shake out my hands, and it became a habit.

**MD:** How do you plan to move forward as a drummer?

**Brann:** I'm always critical of my playing and always want to do better. But I'm also happy with what I've achieved. I think about my drumming constantly. I drum with my teeth, with my toes, tapping constantly, working out ideas and beats. There are so many possibilities when we're working on a song. I work on those mentally all the time. But I don't think I'll ever be as good as the drummer inside my head.



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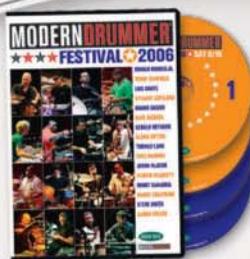
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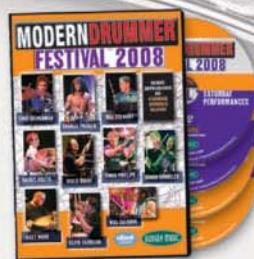
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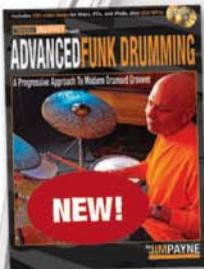
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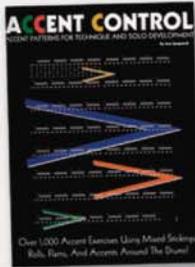


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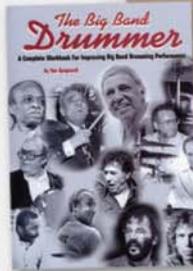
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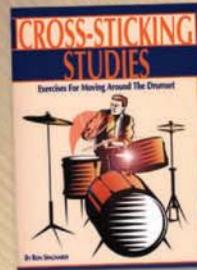
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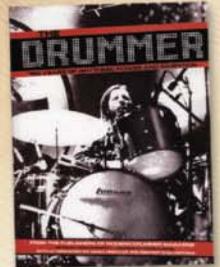
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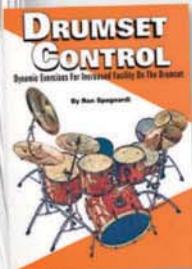
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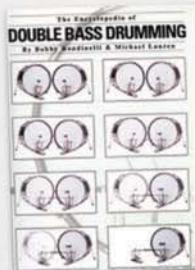
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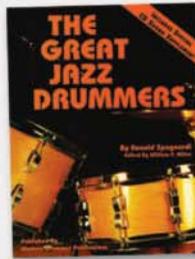
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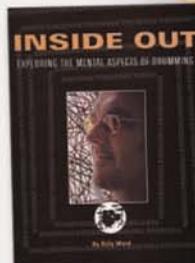
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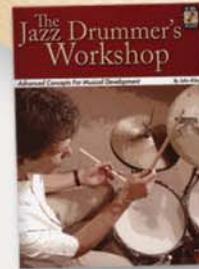
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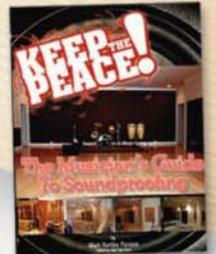
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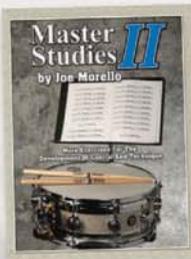
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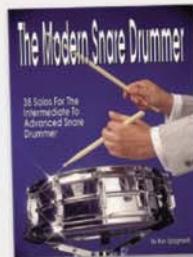
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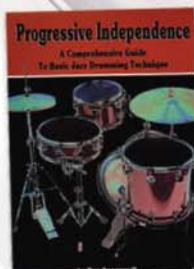
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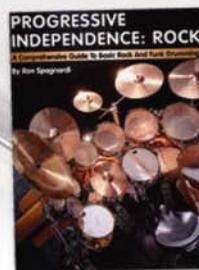
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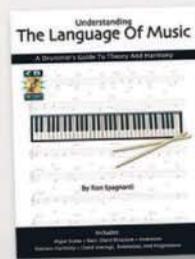
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# MODERN DRUMMER

# Nouveau Retro

## PART 4: EARLY ROCK 'N' ROLL

by Daniel Glass

**T**his series of articles focuses on classic genres that helped create the blueprint for how we play today. Although these styles may not be prominent on your radar screen, knowing a bit about each of them will connect you more deeply with your craft, not to mention make you more employable. In previous articles we talked about the classic swing of the 1930s and the early rhythm and blues of the 1940s and '50s. This time we're going to come full circle and see how these styles, along with country music, came together to produce a uniquely American art form—rock 'n' roll.

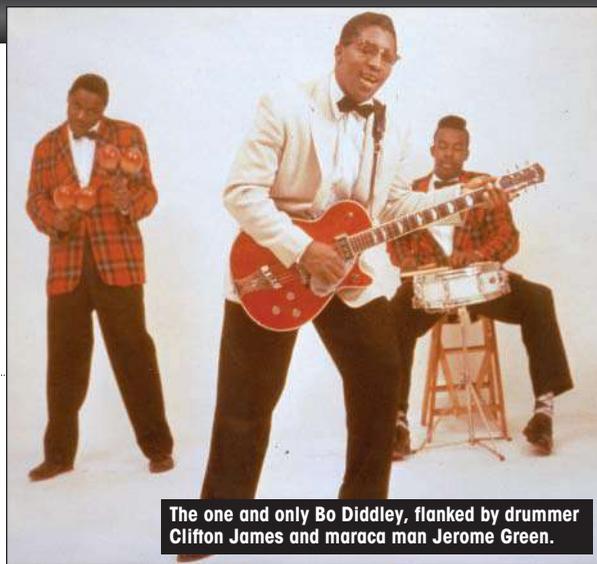
Most of us tend to take rock music for granted. It's been with us for so long that we rarely consider a time before drummers bashed out heavy backbeats and roundhouse fills on enormous kits. But rock 'n' roll was a very different animal when it first appeared in the mid-1950s.

Allow me to set the scene. In the early '50s, with the Great Depression and World War II in the rearview mirror, America was experiencing a huge economic boom. Average household incomes were on the rise, and, for the first time ever, young people no longer

had to enter the workforce at an early age. With time on their hands and money in their pockets, this new generation of adolescents—dubbed “teenagers”—was suddenly a demographic to be reckoned with. Teens had buying power, and companies began taking interest in what they liked to eat, what kinds of clothes they wore, and, of course, what kinds of music they listened to.

The teenagers of the '50s had little interest in the music of their parents—novelty songs, big-band standards, and clean-cut singers like Perry Como. Instead, they preferred rhythm and blues, an African-American musical style that utilized electric guitars, honking saxophones, and a very heavy dance beat. Unlike most artists on the radio at the time, R&B performers like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Bo Diddley wrote lyrics that spoke to teen issues—cars, clothes, going steady—and their songs contained a raw, manic, sexual energy that made many parents uneasy.

In 1955, Bill Haley, a white singer inspired by R&B, turned the world



The one and only Bo Diddley, flanked by drummer Clifton James and maraca man Jerome Green.

upside down with an anthem called “(We’re Gonna) Rock Around The Clock.” Suddenly, this new music had a name. Southern performers such as Carl Perkins and Jerry Lee Lewis also struck gold by combining elements of R&B with country music to create a new hybrid called rockabilly. Artists like Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran broke new ground by proving that any teen could pick up a guitar and write hit songs. And in 1956, a twenty-one-year-old singer named Elvis Presley completed the transformation, seamlessly marrying R&B and country with pop and gospel. He turned rock 'n' roll into a worldwide phenomenon and changed the face of music forever.

### EARLY ROCK DRUMMING

Being that there was no such thing as a “rock drummer” in 1954, the jazz, blues, and country players who invented the new style had to make things up as they went along. The

## GETTING STARTED 5 key recordings to introduce you to the early rock 'n' roll style

**Earl Palmer, *Backbeat: The World's Greatest Rock 'N' Roll Drummer*.** This compilation is a terrific introduction to Earl Palmer, a drummer who perhaps more than any other deserves the title of rock inventor. Palmer's playing shows off all of the innovations discussed in this piece, from straight-8th grooves to stomping backbeats to killer fills.

**Bill Haley And His Comets, *From the Original Master Tapes*.** If you associate Bill Haley with the lighthearted nostalgia of the *Happy Days* TV show, prepare to get schooled in some serious groove. Haley predated Elvis, Buddy Holly, and Chuck Berry by several years and was instrumental in giving the teens of the '50s their first taste of rock.

**Elvis Presley, *The Complete '50s Masters*.** This amazing five-CD box set instantly clarifies why Elvis—and his original band—scared the pants off

the establishment in the late '50s. It includes memorable performances from drummer D.J. Fontana on “Hound Dog,” “Jailhouse Rock,” and “My Baby Left Me.”

**Little Richard, *The Georgia Peach*.** Little Richard's manic energy and bombastic style helped define the early rock sound. In addition to many classic Earl Palmer grooves, you'll find drummer Charles Connor's killer opening to “Keep A Knockin',” which John Bonham “borrowed” fifteen years later as the intro to Led Zeppelin's “Rock And Roll.”

**Chuck Berry & Bo Diddley, *Guitar Legends*.** This compilation contains numerous examples of the half-swung/half-straight feel that defined Chuck Berry's sound, plus the famous “Bo Diddley beat.”



most important of these early drummers was Earl Palmer, who was responsible for groundbreaking recordings in New Orleans (Fats Domino, Little Richard) and later in Los Angeles (Eddie Cochran, Ritchie Valens, Ricky Nelson, Sam Cooke, and countless others).

Palmer was part of a new generation of studio drummers, guys who had extraordinary ears and the innate ability to come up with the perfect accompaniment to the music that teens were demanding. Other drummers on that list include Fred Below in Chicago, Buddy Harman in Nashville, and Panama Francis in New York. These and other early rock drummers created a huge new sound that was clearly different from what came before it. Perhaps more than melody or lyrics, the rhythmic innovations of this "big beat" truly defined what rock 'n' roll was all about, including...

**Bigger backbeat.** Part of what made rock so exciting was the consistent backbeat (accented strokes you hear on beats 2 and 4 of a drum pattern). The backbeat had always been part of the drummer's vocabulary, but it was usually reserved for the most exciting sections of a song. Starting in the late 1940s, first R&B and then rock drummers began playing backbeats for the full length of a tune. This was a fairly radical move, but dancers loved it, and a new standard was set that we follow to this day.

**Half-swung/half-straight feel.** Another defining element of early rock 'n' roll was the shift from a swung-8th-note feel to a straight-8th-note feel. The change was prompted when drummers began responding to the hyped-up piano pounding and guitar strumming of artists like Little Richard and Chuck Berry. The result was an unusual "in between" feel that was neither swung nor straight but a little bit of both. This feel and its many variations have come to be associated with the '50s rock sound and can be heard on tunes like Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock" and Jerry Lee Lewis's "Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On."

**Busier bass drum.** Early rock drummers were the first to move away from the steady four-on-the-floor feel that had so strongly characterized the beats of swing and R&B. New Orleans drummers in particular began applying funkier, more syncopated lines, like this one recorded by Earl Palmer on the 1956 Little Richard hit "Rip It Up."



**Fills.** Prior to the '50s, drummers rarely placed a crash on beat 1 following a fill; such a move was seen as stepping on the beginning of the next phrase and therefore frowned upon. Instead, fills were played with a three-against-four poly-rhythmic feel, followed by a crash on beat 4.

With the rise of rock 'n' roll, however, drummers such as Earl Palmer began to develop a more aggressive approach. When recording up-tempo hits like Little Richard's "Good Golly Miss Molly," Palmer began transitioning from the hi-hat to the ride cymbal on the chorus and/or solos as a way to build excitement. Today we take this type of transition for granted, but at the time it was nothing short of revolutionary. In switching instruments, Palmer would often slam the 1

when he went to the ride. This set up a new framework for how and when a cymbal could be crashed.

At the same time, straight-8th grooves were becoming the standard in rock. Studio ace that he was, Palmer took this into account and began highlighting his setups with bursts of 16th notes and other fills that complemented the straight-8th style. By 1957 he'd taken to playing these kinds of fills around the toms, another totally original move. (Check out the classic New Orleans track "Bony Moronie.")

As the rock 'n' roll revolution progressed into the early 1960s, the technique used by rock drummers—once considered radical—gradually became codified into a very identifiable style. By the time the Beatles arrived on American shores in 1964, this drumming looked and sounded very much like the style we still play today. That said, there is one major rock innovation that can be credited to Ringo Starr: When the Beatles appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Ringo's use of a new technique called matched grip caused an entire generation to switch over from traditional. Today matched grip is still preferred by a wide margin. Now *that* rocks!

Since 1994, **Daniel Glass** has played drums with the pioneering "retro swing" group Royal Crown Revue. He has also recorded and performed with Bette Midler, Gene Simmons, Mike Ness, Freddy Cole, and many others. Daniel's writings on drum history have appeared in *The Encyclopedia Of Percussion*, *MusicHound Swing: The Essential Album Guide*, and numerous other music and drumming publications. His latest book is *The Commandments Of Early Rhythm And Blues Drumming* (cowritten with Zoro). You can learn more about Daniel's obsession with classic American music at [danielglass.com](http://danielglass.com).



An advertisement for the OFF-SET Double Bass Drum Pedal. The background is a dark red, textured surface. At the top, the OFF-SET logo is in a blue oval. Below it, the text "A NEW STANDARD" is written in large, white, bold letters. In the center, there is a photograph of the double bass drum pedal, which is silver and blue. Below the photo, the text "OFF-SET Double Bass Drum Pedal" is written in white. At the bottom, there is a promotional offer: "OFF-SET Fall Give Away! Purchase an OFF-SET Double Bass Drum Pedal at the regular price and receive an OFF-SET Pro Swivel Hi-Hat Stand Free." To the right of this offer, it says "See details at www.off-set.net". At the very bottom, there is a blue oval with the OFF-SET logo, and two lines of contact information: "info@off-set.net" and "814 • 672 • 5780".



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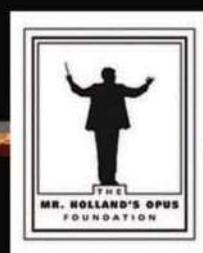


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# "On The Serious Side" 2.0

## UPDATING A TOWER OF POWER CLASSIC

by David Garibaldi

**A**nyone who has attended a Tower Of Power show knows that you'll hear us do a few of the old favorites, like "What Is Hip?" or "Knock Yourself Out," with a few new wrinkles. In the life of the band, we've played those songs a few thousand times. But honestly, most of them are still a lot of fun to play. The songs that we tire of get put away for a while and then resurface months—or even years—later. The ones that we've worn out completely get a proper burial, and we move on to others.

Early this year, we reintroduced a very cool song called "On The Serious Side," which appears on the 1975 album *In The Slot*. We had performed this tune a few years ago but put it away in favor of some others. I was never happy with the way the B section felt; it just didn't seem to work as well as the main groove. But even the main section wasn't quite right, at least from my perspective. So we reworked the song to include a keyboard solo that isn't on the original recording, and I made some major changes to my grooves.

The first few performances were shaky. I was searching for the right combination of things to play, so there were a lot of mistakes. Eventually it all came together, and now we're performing the song at almost every show. (Although by the time this issue of *MD* goes to press, we might have

thrown it out again!)

The main groove is a two-bar pattern in two sections. The sections are basically the same, except for a cymbal crash along with the snare drum on the "e" of 1 in measure 2 of the second pattern. This hit goes with the horn line. Also, the 2009 version of the groove is more linear, which makes it a bit "easier" to play.

The B section is a one-bar 2-and-4 pattern, which is also in two parts, including an alternate groove for the second part. Next comes the organ solo, which is again a 2-and-4 feel. This beat is the perfect release to the tension created in the choruses.

The bad news is that there's no video of the song being performed back in the day and no video of this 2009 version in its entirety. The good news is that there's a clip of the new arrangement on YouTube, which was filmed at the House Of Blues in Los Angeles in 2000. (Search YouTube for "Tower Of Power On The Serious Side.") There's also a clip of us performing a portion of the 2009 version during a clinic at Jazz Alley in Seattle. It can be found on my travel blog ([web.mac.com/jdg114/](http://web.mac.com/jdg114/)); click on the entry called "On The Serious Side."

See you next time. Enjoy!

**MAIN GROOVE: A**

**MAIN GROOVE: B**

**"B" SECTION: A**

**"B" SECTION: B**

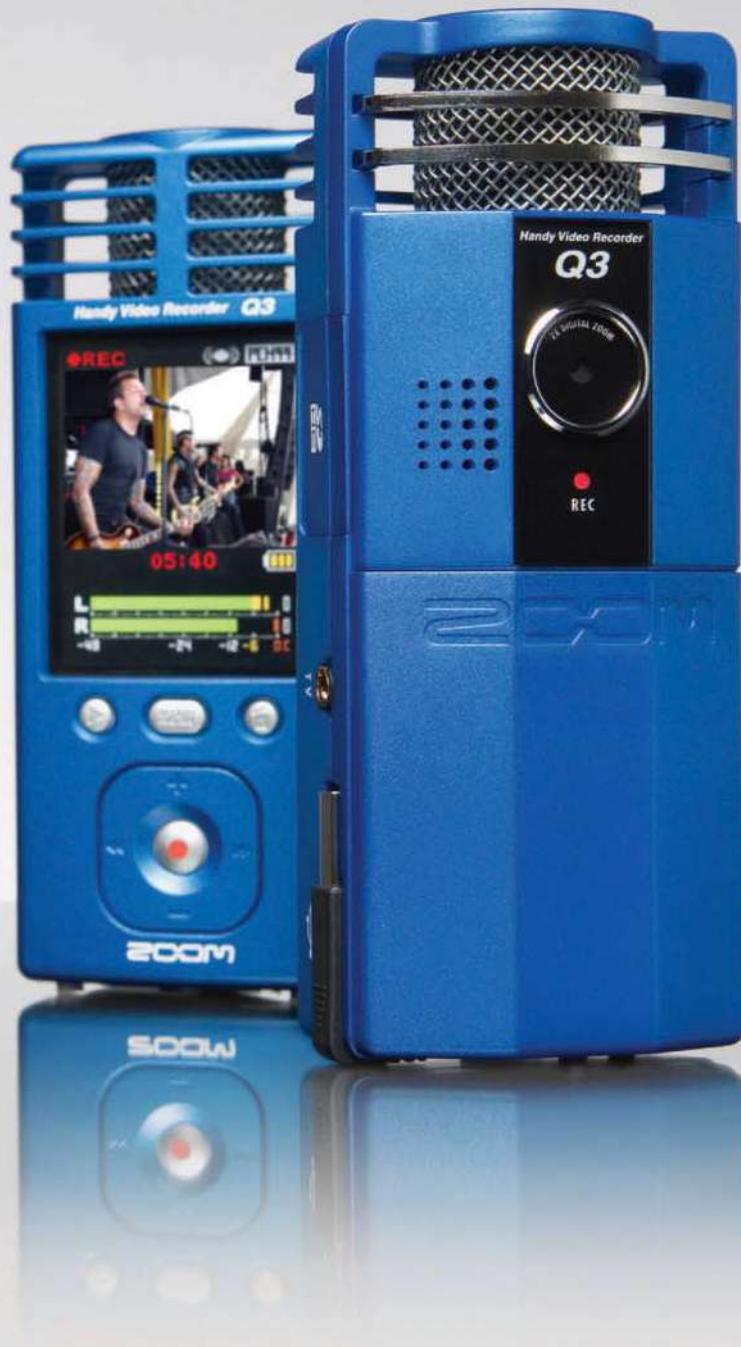
**"B" SECTION: B (ALTERNATE)**

**ORGAN SOLO:**

David Garibaldi is the drummer in the award-winning funk band Tower Of Power.



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# Polyrhythms

## PART 3: FOUR-AGAINST-THREE RIDE AND KICK PATTERNS

by Rod Morgenstein

**MUSIC KEY**

R.C.  
ghost note

R.C.  (X)

S.D. 

B.D. 

B.D.2

In my previous article (September 2009), the final three exercises focused on creating a four-against-three polyrhythm by playing only the accented notes that occur on every third 16th note (which is equal to playing dotted 8th notes). Now let's bring those figures to the drumset.

Exercise 1 applies the polyrhythm to the ride, while the kick and snare play four on the floor and backbeats respectively. For the polyrhythm to run in its entirety, the pattern must be played for three full measures.



Ultimately the goal is to be able to move smoothly and comfortably in and out of "polyrhythmic consciousness." The best way to achieve this is by alternating between playing regular time and polyrhythmic sequences. Example 2 is two measures of groove with a straight-8th-note ride followed by a sequence with the polyrhythmic ride pattern.



Exercises 3 and 4 follow the same process as in Examples 1 and 2, except this time the polyrhythm is played on the bass drum while the ride and snare play straight time. Practice these exercises with both an 8th-note ride pattern and a quarter-note ride pattern.




In Examples 5 and 6, the four-against-three polyrhythm is stated with the ride while the kick drums and snare play constant 16th notes and backbeats respectively.




When you've become relatively comfortable with the patterns above, try playing short fills leading into and out of the polyrhythmic grooves. This will help expand your ability to switch the polyrhythmic concept on and off at will.

Next time we'll dig even deeper into the world of polyrhythms.

**Rod Morgenstein** is a founding member of the groundbreaking fusion band Dixie Dregs. He was also a member of the progressive Steve Morse Band, as well as the pop/metal band Winger. In addition, Rod has performed with the Rudess/Morgenstein Project, Jazz Is Dead, Platypus, and the Jelly Jam. Morgenstein is currently a professor of percussion at Berklee College Of Music.



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## TOURING/SESSION DRUMMER

# RYAN HOYLE'S HOLLYWOOD DRUM CAVE

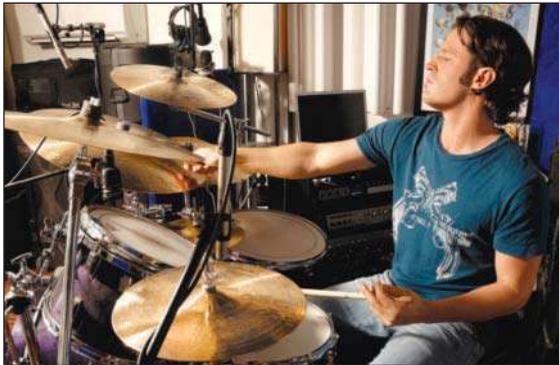
Story by Michael Dawson • Photos by Alex Solca

Although he's spent the past five years touring the world with the legendary classic rock frontman Paul Rodgers (Free, Bad Company, Queen) and the alternative rock band Collective Soul, thirty-one-year-old drummer Ryan Hoyle knew he wanted to be a studio musician from the day he got his first drumset. "The drummer in my church gave me a kick and a snare that he wasn't using," Hoyle recalls. "When he came over and gave me the kit, he brought along Steve Gadd's *Up Close* video for me to check out. As I watched Steve in a studio environment with mics on his kit, I thought, *I want to record.*"

Hoyle made his first attempt at setting up a personal studio when he moved to Nashville to try to break into that city's fruitful but highly competitive session scene. "I set up my first Pro Tools rig when I lived there," Ryan says. "But by the time I got my setup really happening, I didn't feel like a drummer anymore. Plus, hearing some of the inadequacies of my drumming was uncomfortable. When you sit in a room by yourself and really start digging around, it's like, *Wow, I can't tune, I can't play quarter notes, and my snare sounds like it's next door.* I learned a lot from that experience. But when I moved to Los Angeles, I sold all my computer gear."

Hoyle's self-imposed five-year hiatus from being a studio owner allowed him to focus more on his drumming, which eventually landed him gigs with Rodgers and Collective Soul. But it wasn't long before fate came knocking again. "About a year and a half ago, I found this wonderful spot," the drummer says from his current home facility—dubbed Cave Studio—in the heart of Hollywood, about five blocks north of the now-defunct Capitol Records building. "I knew as soon as I walked into this room and clapped a few times that this would be great for drums. Some techno-beat-making musicians designed it, so it already had thousands of dollars invested in soundproofing and making it a nice acoustic environment. So I thought, *Here I go, down the road of having a setup again.*"

Cave Studio has an unusual layout that makes it great for drum tracking. "The room is about fourteen feet wide and twenty-six feet long," Hoyle says. "The floor and ceiling aren't parallel; the ceiling gets about three or four feet higher as you move from the drums to the back of the room. And there's a loft in the back that I use as a huge bass



trap. That keeps the sound waves from hitting the wall and flying back into my mics. I also have wood floors that give me a nice live environment."

Ryan discovered that his drum-collecting habit helped to optimize the room acoustics for recording. "I have a lot of drums stacked around in cases," he points out. "The round plastic cases create a nice diffusion that prevents the sound waves from bouncing back and forth symmetrically, which can create standing waves, flutter echo, and comb filtering. All of those things are counterproductive when you're recording drums."

Hoyle also figured out how to take advantage of the room's unusual dimensions to offer a wide variety of sound options. "One side of my room is like a standard drum booth," he explains, calling out the section where some beautiful Ludwig Classic birch drums and Paiste Twenty series cymbals are miked up and ready to roll. "I have a lot of absorption and diffusion materials around the kit, which gives me a tight and somewhat focused drum sound, like what you hear on recordings from the '70s. But when I want a

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**Overheads:** Large-diaphragm Mojave MA-201 FET mics for a classic full-kit sound or small-diaphragm AKG 451s “if I’m doing something more modern, more produced, or more ‘athletic,’ like modern rock.”

**Ride and hi-hats:** AKG 451s. “I typically don’t need a ride mic, but a lot of mixing engineers request it. And a lot of video game work requires a mic on every sound source.”

**Toms:** Audix D6s, Sennheiser 421s, or Beyerdynamic M 201 TGs, placed three fingers’ width from the head and pointed down at a spot about two inches from the bearing edge.

**Rooms:** A pair of Royer R-121 ribbon mics placed a few feet in front of the kit. “Those capture the body of the kit, the growl of the bottom heads of the toms, and the throw of



the kick drum.” And a pair of Mojave MA-200 tube mics in the back of the room. “I use tube mics with tube mic preamps for the back of the room because I want to capture the beef and the round body of the drums. They also help tame the cymbals and warm everything up.”

**Kick:** Three mics. A large-diaphragm dynamic mic—like an AKG D 112, Sennheiser 421, Shure

Beta 52A, Heil PR 40, or Audix D6—is placed inside the drum or just inside the porthole. The second mic is a speaker wired out of phase, which turns it into a microphone. “The speaker mic captures the sub-harmonic lows, like a Roland 808 rap kick sound, that you blend in for



extra low end.” The third mic is often a Mojave MA-201 FET placed six to twelve inches from the front head. “It captures an athletic low end that you need to cut through loud guitars.”

**Snare:** Three mics. A Shure SM57 or an Audix i-5 on top (“I use this to capture the body of the snare”), with an AKG C 451 B condenser placed next to it so that the capsules align. “The condenser gives me a bright ‘crack.’” A Shure SM98 is placed under the snare to capture the wires.

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DANIEL DE LOS REYES

PHOTO: STANLEY BENDERS

bigger Bonham-type sound, I open up the mics that I have in the back of the room.”

When it comes to getting drum sounds at Cave Studio, Hoyle’s priority is his instruments rather than effects processors. “I make sure my drums are in top shape,” he says. “I focus on things like the bearing edges, heads, tuning, muffling, and using different hoop combinations in order to get the right sounds for the track. For instance, if I want more attack from the snare, I’ll use a die-cast hoop on top and a brass triple-flange on the bottom to let the drum open up and get some low-end breadth in there. I also have nickel-plated WFL brass hoops from the 1950s, single-flange hoops from the ’20s, big 2.3 mm triple-flange steel hoops, and ’80s Tama brass Mighty Hoops. Hoops have a *huge* effect on a drum’s sound.”

Even though his impressive array of drums is enough to make even the most seasoned collector drool—Ryan has a Leedy kit from the ’40s, Gretsch drums from the ’80s, a ’70s Rototom setup, several vintage and modern Ludwig kits, and many more classic pieces—the drummer emphasizes that it’s not all just for show and tell. “A great bass player friend, who saw all these snares I was bringing to sessions, said to me, ‘Just make sure these snares make you *play*.’ He also told me that it’s better to have one snare that you know inside and out—that you can get five different sounds out of—than it is to have thirty that you don’t know anything about.

“But it’s good to have options,” Hoyle continues. “There are pieces of gear across the history of drums that are defining pieces. Gretsch drums from the ’80s, 3-ply Ludwig drums from the late ’60s and early ’70s, Slingerland Radio Kings, mahogany Leedys, Yamaha Recording Customs from the ’80s... It’s nice to have those flavors available, if you can.”

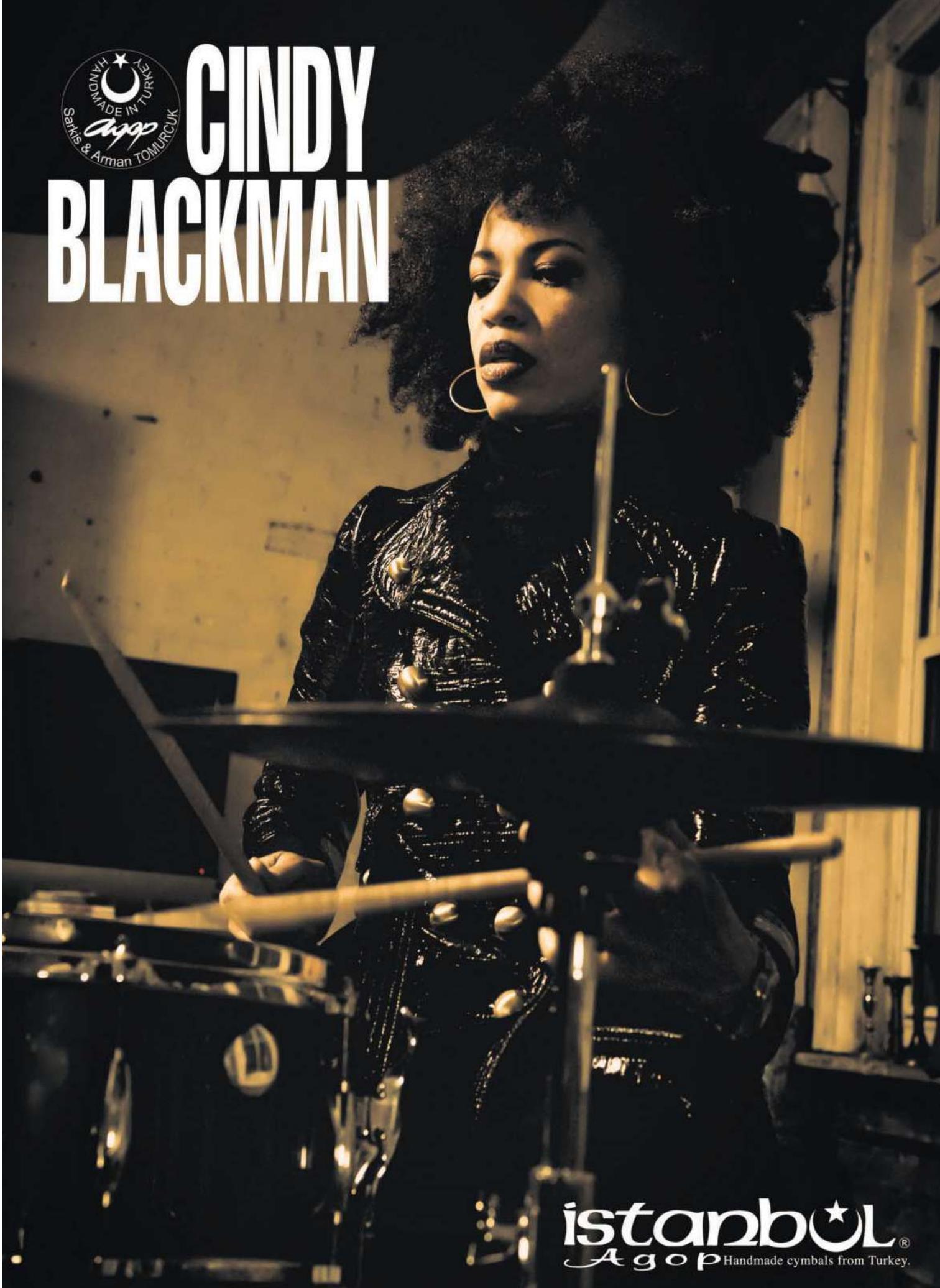
Ryan is currently recording about five sessions per week at Cave Studio. “I’ve been working on and off with Deborah Gibson on her solo album,” he says. “I’m working on a solo album for Brad Smith, who’s the songwriter and bass player for Blind Melon, plus an album for Collective Soul guitarist Joel Kosche and tracks for David Cook and Carrie Underwood. I also do a lot of video game work. And I did four drum tracks for Greek superstar Anna Vissi. Her record is certified platinum in Greece, so I’m very proud of that one.”

For more on Hoyle and Cave Studio, including sound files of Ryan’s various kits, go to [livedrumtracks.com](http://livedrumtracks.com).





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# KARL LATHAM

by Dena Tauriello

Whether his ability to excel in a wide range of styles is the result of cosmic alignment or tuning in to late-night radio shows, **the Johannes Mössinger/Shirelles drummer has this versatility thing down.**

Those who know Karl Latham know him for his diversity. He is not only technically proficient with tremendous style, but he's also cultivated the skills needed to play many genres of music effortlessly and without sacrifice of groove or feel—funk to fusion, swing to soca, rock to R&B, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban. Latham studied music performance at Rutgers University, Ohio University, and Berklee School Of Music and studied privately with Gary Chester, Joe Morello, Michael Carvin, Freddie Waits, Joe Cusatis, and New Jersey legend Vincent “Muzzy” Mizzone. In 1983, Karl placed second (behind Sonny Emory) in the Carmine Appice National Drum Battle. Soon thereafter, he was picked up by RCA recording artist Charlie Elgart. Since that time, Latham has remained busy juggling jazz, Latin, and rock gigs and sessions.

The drummer currently tours with Johannes Mössinger and the Shirelles and performs in the New York area with the Dalton Gang, Big Fun(K!), Unit1, and a solo project. He teaches privately and at Morris County Community College and Passaic County Community College in New Jersey. If that's not enough, Latham is set to begin subbing in the band for the musical *In The*

*Heights*, which features some of Broadway's most diverse and challenging drum parts.

Karl got the itch to begin playing drums thanks to his older brother, Rich, who was a drummer. He started banging around the house, officially taking up the instrument around age six. He inherited Rich's 1960s red sparkle Slingerland kit and played “Soul Finger” in his first public performance—in first grade.

Several years later, Latham was inspired by a Mahavishnu Orchestra concert and by Miles Davis's *Big Fun* record—not likely choices for your average grade school student. He also enjoyed rock, blues, and classical music. Karl was most influenced by the drumming of Jack DeJohnette, “because of his completely individual and personal vision when playing in any style of music.” These were signs of things to come in regard to Latham's own desire to be diverse.

We recently caught up with Karl to discuss his knack for versatility. Here's what he had to say.

**MD:** Who was the primary influence in shaping your style?

**Karl:** Gary Chester certainly was an enabler.

Actually, it was not my drum teachers per se, it was from the many stylistically influential musicians I had the good fortune to perform with, such as Mark Egan, Johnny Winter, Dave Valentin from the Fantasy Band, longtime Dizzy Gillespie bassist John Lee, Brazilian great Claudio Roditi, the Shirelles, and many other great performers and artists.

**MD:** Who was the primary influence in shaping your diversity?

**Karl:** It could have been the great radio station WRVR that was on the air in New York at the time, but maybe it's merely a product of my personality. I'm not sure what I think about the zodiac, but I'm a Gemini. [Gemini traits include being adaptable, versatile, and inquisitive.] I've played nearly every sport imaginable, I love almost every style of food, and I grew up playing classical music, Mahavishnu

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Latham plays **Yamaha** Maple Custom drums, with **Evans** G1 coated heads on all drums except the bass drum, on which he uses an Evans EMAD. Karl describes himself as “a cymbal fanatic. I absolutely love the **Paiste** Traditional, Twenty, and Dark Energy cymbals I play in different musical situations.” He uses **Vic Firth** sticks and **Factory Metal** Percussion.

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Orchestra, Jeff Beck, Steely Dan, and Led Zeppelin. Maybe there's some truth to it.

**MD:** For drummers who are comfortable with only one or two styles, what do you suggest as the most practical way to branch out?

**Karl:** The first advice I always give to my students is to listen to the music before looking at a drum book or hitting a drum. You have to really suss out the key influences—for Afro-Cuban, Ignacio Berroa, Steve Berrios, Changuito; for Brazilian, Portinho, Duduka Da Fonseca; for rock, Bonham, Copeland, Mitchell, Ringo, Blaine, Chester, and Purdie. When I first learned to play straight-ahead jazz, my good friend John Lee asked Sonny Rollins, "What should a good young fusion drummer do to try to learn to play jazz?" He told him, "Tell him to listen to nothing but Philly Joe Jones for a year," which I almost did!

**MD:** Reading something out of a book and applying it in a live setting are totally different. How do you make that jump?

**Karl:** First, I learn the basic rhythms and groove feels of a given style. Then I often develop specific exercises based on the elemental grooves and rhythms, along the lines of Gary Chester's method or Alan Dawson's method, which will facilitate ease of execution and increase independence. Then I play along as much as possible with record-

ings of the greats, trying to match the vibe of the music as closely as possible. Jam sessions are a great place to try out new ideas, if you're brave enough to take some risks.

**MD:** Big Fun(K!) and Unit1 are new projects—tell us about them.

**Karl:** Big Fun(K!) is a collective soul/funk/jam project featuring jazz saxophone great Don Braden, keyboardist Nick Rolfe, and bassist Gary Foote. I had played with Nick in John Lee's quartet and with Don with Johannes Mössinger. Gary and I started playing together with Charlie Elgart in the late '80s. The band is hard hitting and funky.

Unit1 is a group that bassist Mark Egan and I put together with guitarist John Hart. We stretch on jazz standards, original compositions, and pop songs. There's a tremendous amount of interplay, and the band is also hard hitting, with many surprises in each performance. I just love playing with Mark. He's a drummer's dream.

**MD:** What's coming up for you?

**Karl:** I have a number of cool projects on the slate. So far I'm scheduled to perform on Johannes Mössinger's tours in Europe this year, as I appear

on five of his CDs, including his latest release, *The New Jersey Session*, with Seamus Blake and Boris Kozlov. I have a number of dates with my own group, and I'll be appearing live with Big Fun(K!), Unit1, the Shirelles, the John Lee Quartet, and a number of other groups.

## RESONANT TONES: Latham On Record

**Karl Latham** Resonance, Dancing Spirits /// **Johannes Mössinger** The New Jersey Session, Nu Love, Monk's Corner /// **Andy Snitzer** Cool Struttin'



Big Fun(K!) is recording a live CD/DVD, and Unit1 will be releasing an already-recorded live CD early in 2010. I regularly record as house drummer at Visionary Music Group for producers Tom Gioia and Andy Snitzer, so I'm sure they'll throw some cool things my way as well. I'll be releasing my next solo CD early next year, and I'm working on some other interesting productions at Skyline Pro in New Jersey. And to be true to form, I'm branching out in learning *In The Heights*, which is no small task, due to the exceptional drumming of Andres Forero.

## GOD FORBID'S

# COREY PIERCE

by Waleed Rashidi

Feeling empowered by his own musical advancements, the trailblazing metal band's drummer relaxed, thought hard, and pushed himself further than ever.

Extreme metal drumming, in the league in which Corey Pierce plays, is the definition of awesome. The fiery, punishing, and relentless stage performances are otherworldly. The hand and foot speed are unparalleled. And, most of all, the players make it all sound so effortless, like they're simply clocking in another day at the office.

For this kind of true talent, displaying amazing

technique really is just another night behind the mics in the studio. Still, Pierce is putting in the hours to perfect his playing—it ultimately shows on his recordings—and he's willing to push the envelope by leaving no drumming idea untested.

The proof is in God Forbid's latest, *Earthblood*, which puts the New Jersey-based drummer in the foreground in a way, navigating the still largely

uncharted waters of extreme metal drumming while elevating himself to new heights in soaring percussive expression. Such a stellar collection of songs—in terms of both performance and sonic quality—made it that much more compelling to wrangle insight on the creation of the album from the veteran drummer's perspective behind the glass.

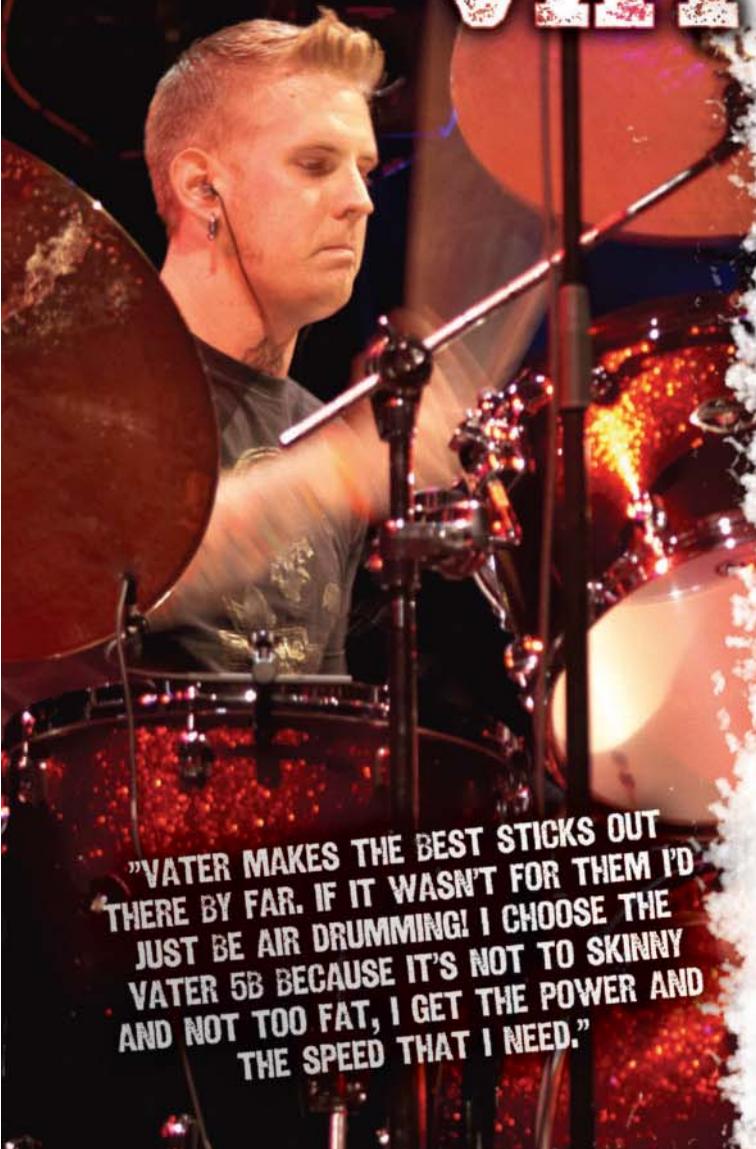
## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Pierce plays a **ddrum** Swamp Ash kit with 9x10 and 10x12 rack toms, 14x18 and 16x18 floor toms, two 20x22 bass drums, and a 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x14 bamboo snare. They're fitted with **Evans** heads, including Onyx tops and clear G1 bottoms on the toms, clear EQ3s on the batters and black EQ3s on the fronts of the bass drums, and a Power Center top and Hazy 500 bottom on the snare. Corey's **Meinl** cymbals include 15" Mb10 custom hi-hats, a 17" Generation X effects crash, an 18" Soundcaster Fusion crash, an 18" Byzance medium crash, an 18" Mb10 crash, a 22" Mb10 ride, a 10" Mb10 splash, a 10" Soundcaster Fusion splash, an 18" Soundcaster Fusion China, and a 20" Mb10 China. His hardware includes a **Gibraltar** rack and stands and **Premier** pedals, and his sticks are the **Vic Firth** Extreme 5B heavy model.



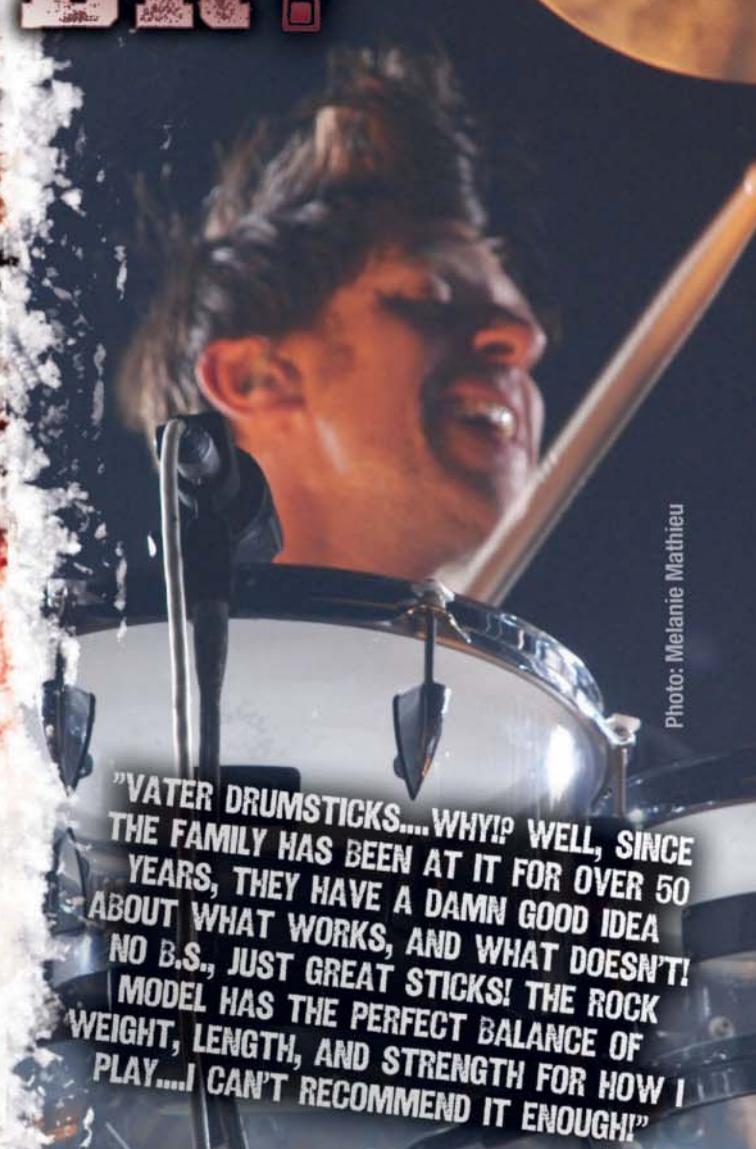
Hristo Stihodov

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**MD:** Tell us about how you put together your drum parts for *Earthsblood*.

**Corey:** Usually I'll get riffs of a song that's already constructed, and I'll basically take the ideas and run with them. A lot of parts I just come up with when we jam. On this record I felt freer than I have before, writing-wise, just doing my own thing and

always have ideas, things you want to do, when you're writing. A lot of times, as a drummer, your first instinct is to take the safe route, because it's all about consistency and support. As you get better, you get more confident and you want to try more things. Your range becomes a little [wider], and you can throw things out that you've always dreamed

trying to bang it out as quickly as possible. I wasn't into that idea this time—I tried to take my time. I was just concentrating, doing like two songs a day and doing the best I could. I'd do three or four takes of those two songs, then I'd sit back and listen and we'd fix this or replay that. And I did that every day. It gets to a point that when you're hovering around that 210 to 215 bpm range for an hour and a half or two hours, your body's like, "All right, it's not getting any better."

**MD:** What's the studio setup like? Does the full band track together, or is it just you?

**Corey:** Primarily it's just me playing to the scratch tracks and the click. That's the way I've grown to do it—it's easier for me to kind of be in my own headspace. Sometimes I'll even cut the scratch track out and just have the click going. It depends on the part I'm doing. I do what's needed to be effective.

**MD:** And you always play to a click when recording?

**Corey:** Yes, I have for the past few records. At first, like anything else, it's kind of awkward. It takes a little time to make it a part of what you're playing and get comfortable with it. After a while you come to rely on it, because it makes things a lot easier. It takes away a lot of the guesswork.

**MD:** How hard are you on yourself when you're cutting a record?

**Corey:** I don't know that I'm hard on myself, but you have to be truthful with yourself about what you're doing. You have to know when you're playing well and when you're not. I pretty much know when I make mistakes, and I generally know how to correct them. I don't know that I'm super-anal about it, but I know what's good and what's bad. You just have to know what your limits are—and what you're capable of.

## PUNCH AND DETAIL: Getting The Right Sounds For *Earthsblood*



"On the last record," Pierce says of *IV: Constitution Of Treason*, "we went for a more punchy sound because of the nature of the album. The whole principle was the power of it. That material was more one-dimensional for me. There are a lot of sections on *Earthsblood* where we needed to have a more natural drum tone without a load of effects. I'm not a fan of that over-compressed, boxy sound. I wanted the drums to have a nice, open, warm tone. I didn't want that standard metal sound; I wanted that Opeth kind of sound, where everything has just the right amount of punch, where it cuts through the guitars but when you're playing more melodic things it's a little more laid back and detailed. You want widely spaced open tones when you're doing a couple tom hits during a groove. That's the focus of the tone to this record. To achieve that, I used a different head combination here and there. I went a little lighter on my snare bottom head, and I changed my top heads a couple times to single ply.

"I played a smaller snare drum on this record as well," Pierce adds. "I used a 4x14 maple, and for some reason that thing sounded incredible. It didn't have that typical shallow drum sound. It had a big sound and a ton of 'crack.' I've since moved on to a ddrum bamboo snare, which is the craziest thing I've heard in my life."

getting more progressive and creative with the parts. It's not your standard metal with just a bunch of double bass under it. When the guys are writing songs, they have a certain direction, and they have certain terminology to express how they want it to be, and I'll just go off on it.

**MD:** Why was there more freedom this time around?

**Corey:** I just think I got a lot better, honestly. I got to a point where there's a lot more I could do. You

about but never really had the balls to do, for a lack of a better term.

I just didn't want to feel that feeling of "I could've done that" or "I should've done that." I wanted to actually *do* those things. And I finally took that extra initiative and made it real for me.

**MD:** How did you pace your playing in the studio?

**Corey:** Drummers are always trying to rush to give everybody else the time to do their eighty-five guitar tracks and fifty-eight vocal parts. So you're always

## THE NEW YORK DOLLS'

# BRIAN DELANEY

by Billy Amendola

How does an impeccably educated jazz drummer fit in with a notorious rock institution? **Banging it out with the older and wiser Dolls.**

**B**rian Delaney was only four years old when his current band, the legendary New York Dolls, first performed in New York City, on December 24, 1971.

The Dolls' outrageous, genre-bending style and Todd Rundgren-produced, self-titled 1973 debut did much to set the stage for the punk revolution waiting around the corner. Members of the Clash and the Sex Pistols took note when the Dolls opened for the Faces on a European tour, glimpsing the future of rock in the band's ultra-trashy, stripped-down approach. Unfortunately, the Dolls were beset with turmoil right from the start: Before they recorded their first album, original drummer Billy Murcia died of an overdose while on tour. He was replaced by the great Jerry Nolan, who had his own issues to deal with, as did, notoriously, guitarist Johnny Thunders. The band put out a second album, *Too Much Too Soon*, but in 1975 Nolan and Thunders quit to form the



### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

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## BRIAN DELANEY

Heartbreakers, and in 1977 lead singer David Johansen and guitarist Syl Sylvain officially called it quits. (Thunders died of an overdose in 1991, Nolan of a stroke in 1992.)

In 2004, Sylvain and Johansen re-formed the band with original bassist Arthur Kane (who would soon die of leukemia), plus guitarist Steve Conte and drummer Gary Powell. Brian Delaney replaced Powell in 2006, and the new New York Dolls released the Jack Douglas-produced *One Day It Will Please Us To Remember Even This*. This year the Dolls put out *'Cause I Sez So*, reuniting the band with producer Rundgren.

Besides holding down the beat for the Dolls on record and on tour for the past four years, Delaney has also played on J.J. Appleton's *Uphill To Purgatory* and Lucy Woodward's *Is Hot And Bothered*, among other albums. A well-schooled musician, Brian studied music at Southwest Missouri State University as well as the University Of North Texas, where he learned jazz drumming from Kevin Gianino and Ed Soph. *MD* sat down with the drummer and kicked things off by asking how he can go from playing sophisticated jazz and pop to the loose, free, and rockin' drumming he displays with the New York Dolls.

**Brian:** I've always been trying to figure out the approach on this gig. Back in the '70s the Dolls were known as a *very* loose band—it was more about their personalities. So I figured I could totally go for everything and just create the energy without trying to be heady about it or worry that it might speed up a little bit.

It was interesting because the first record, which we did with Jack Douglas, was done to Pro Tools and with a click on everything. That was definitely challenging, playing with a click with this band. Then on this new record, with Todd Rundgren producing, he was like, "We're not going to use a click on anything." That obviously makes it a little easier to be looser and crazier.

Being a schooled guy can sometimes be like a curse—you critique the heck out of everything you do. And you get used to having the click, so in the studio when listening back I would analyze everything: "Let's lean back," or "Aw, it's moving a little bit." But Todd would be like, "Don't worry, it's breathing."

**MD:** How was it working with Todd?

**Brian:** He was very soft-spoken and he didn't give a lot of "Do this" or "Do that." He was very cool and had us do our thing. He definitely had some good suggestions with form and things like that, but I guess he figured we're a bunch of old guys—we should know our stuff. [laughs]

**MD:** How were the drum tracks recorded?

**Brian:** We were in a house in Hawaii, where Todd has a place, rehearsing for a bit, and then he basically just set up the mics and we played live. We all played together, and the vocals were scratch with a couple guitar overdubs. We did use Pro Tools, but I don't think he fixed anything, like, "Oh, this snare is a millisecond off the grid." So it's a very live-sounding record.

**MD:** With Rundgren being a multi-instrumentalist, did he suggest any drum parts at all?

**Brian:** There were just a couple things, like,

"Maybe place the bass drum here," or "Try something here," but he pretty much left it up to me.

**MD:** Let's talk a little bit about your gear. Do you use the same kits live and in the studio?

**Brian:** For the previous studio album it was my own DW kit with a bunch of different snares. And with this last record, since it was recorded in Hawaii, we used a drumkit that Todd had set up. It was also a DW, with an 18" floor, a 14" rack tom, and a 22" kick. And I brought a few snares with me. Todd was still sort of setting up his own studio, so we used a house that we rented. It had a really good sound to it—very uneven ceilings; the rooms were kind of weird shapes—so it actually worked well as a studio.

**MD:** Were the drums out in the open?

**Brian:** He had some gobos around the kit, but they were pretty much out there in the room.

**MD:** What drummers did you listen to in your formative years?

**Brian:** When I was growing up I really got into Peter Erskine and Steve Gadd—all the studio guys who can play everything. I also loved Jack DeJohnette on those Keith Jarrett records. I still listen to them today.

**MD:** What advice would you give to up-and-coming drummers?

**Brian:** Study with a good teacher. I feel like I had two of the best with Ed Soph and Kevin Gianino. And learn all the basic drumming techniques—and all the different styles.

For more with Brian Delaney, go to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).



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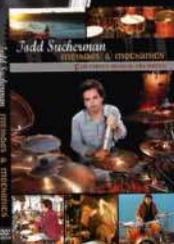
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# JIMMY PAXSON

Story by Rich Mangicaro  
Photos by Rob Shanahan



He was born into the life of a working musician, weaned on the greatest drummers of the age, and trained by legendary instructors. Still, **Stevie Nicks' drummer of choice** knows it would all amount to a hill of beans if he hadn't put in the difficult work.

**O**n the night Jimmy Paxson was born, bass legend Stanley Clarke was on his way to play a jam session with Jimmy's mom, jazz keyboardist Sunnie Paxson, when she went into labor. Clarke later became a musical mentor to the drummer, an association that continues to this day.

By the time Paxson was three, his parents had him sitting at the mixing board of their home studio, pressing the record button while they played. Dad Jim Sr., an accomplished drummer and teacher, saw early on that his son had not only the gift but the drive to succeed, and he actively had Jimmy listening to the great drummers, like Tony Williams, Lenny White, Steve Gadd, and Billy Cobham. Later Jimmy became obsessed with Stewart Copeland, Russ Kunkel, Mickey Curry, Steve Jordan, and John Bonham.

Twenty years later, Paxson can boast a long, diverse list of gigs. Since 2005 he's been best known as Fleetwood Mac singer Stevie Nicks' go-to drummer for her solo work—and with his unique hairstyle, it's been hard to miss him on stage at Nicks' concerts.

But it's much more than Paxson's 'do that sticks in fans' memories; the drummer possesses the kind of groove that vocalists love to sing over. He's also revered for knowing how to play for the song—and for having the facility to step outside the box when need be. Nicks is hardly the only leader who understands that it's a real score to find a drummer so adept at providing *just* what's needed.

We begin our conversation with Paxson by asking if growing up in a musical family was a major contributor to his supersensitive musical approach.



## PAK TRAX

### RECORDINGS

**Stevie Nicks** Crystal Visions, The Soundstage Sessions /// **The Casualties Of Jazz** Kind Of Black /// **A Fine Frenzy** One Cell In The Sea /// **Sharon Little** Perfect Time For A Breakdown /// **Sub.Bionic** You I Lov /// **Rod Stewart** Thanks For The Memory: The Great American Songbook, Vol. 2

### INFLUENCES

**The New Tony Williams Lifetime** Believe It (Tony Williams) /// **The Police** Ghost In The Machine (Stewart Copeland) /// **Led Zeppelin** all (John Bonham) /// **Emmylou Harris** Wrecking Ball (Brian Blade) /// **Medeski Martin & Wood** Friday Afternoon In The Universe (Billy Martin) /// **Stevie Nicks** Bella Donna (Russ Kunkel) /// **Peter Gabriel** Security (Jerry Marotta) /// **Jeff Buckley** Grace (Matt Johnson) /// **The Cult** Sonic Temple (Mickey Curry) /// **John Mayer** Continuum (Steve Jordan)

**Jimmy:** My dad was always blazing on the drums, and I watched him play all the time. He never sat me down and said, "Well, son, this is how you do this...." It was more through observation. He would have me play along to all these great jazz records while my mom would have me listening and playing to Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, and whatnot. She's really artsy and helped me get in touch with the emotional side of drumming.

**MD:** It's interesting that both you and your brother, Charlie, play drums, even though you didn't grow up together.

**Jimmy:** Yeah, I stayed in New Jersey while he moved to L.A. with my mom.

**MD:** How did you end up in L.A.?

**Jimmy:** When I was fifteen I visited my mom, and she sent me to take a few lessons with [famed drummer and

**Stevie Nicks:** "I chose Jimmy Paxson out of many drummers that I auditioned several years ago. His style reminded me of Russ Kunkel, my favorite drummer. Just like Russell, his sticks dance across his drums. Jimmy's never let me down. He's the best."



**Waddy Wachtel:** "Jimmy came in and played Stevie's songs, and each one sounded and felt like the records we had made. Stevie and I knew immediately that we were hearing her music the way it's supposed to sound and feel—and that this was our guy."

**Stanley Clarke:** "I had the pleasure of meeting Jimmy shortly after he set foot on this earth, and I've always admired his fierce passion for music. A great moment in my life came when

percussionist] Alex Acuña. Alex told me I should consider staying in L.A. Shortly after that, in New Jersey, I got an offer to play with a high-paying local hero, but my father insisted that I turn it down and instead move to L.A., in order to avoid getting stuck in Atlantic City. I took that advice and never went back.

**MD:** What was it like when you first got to L.A.?

**Jimmy:** Well, the first thing I did was call a few drummers I hoped to study with, finding their numbers through the musicians union. I left messages for Vinnie Colaiuta, Jeff Porcaro, Gregg Bissonette, and some other cats. Gregg was teaching at the time, so I studied a bit with him, which was great. Later I met Joey Heredia, and he hipped me to Murray Spivack. I had been dealing with tendonitis and thought I needed to

Jimmy shared the stage with me on a European tour some years ago. He was very powerful, but he was also able to be subtle. And not every drummer has the ability to naturally construct good solos that have an arc, and end with impact."

**Edgar Winter:** "Jimmy is a complete drummer who plays with heart, style, and character. The main thing I like about Jimmy is his versatility. He has the technique, intelligence, and sensitivity to play jazz, and he understands the simplicity and power needed to play rock."

**Idina Menzel:** "Jimmy commands respect not only because of his great feel and inspired musicianship, but because he is a terrific human being. He's the glue of the band sonically and socially. He's always open to discovering new arrangements and he can play many styles, yet he always plays from his gut. I love him dearly."

see a doctor, but Joey said, "You don't need a doctor, you need to see Murray." Studying with Murray was the greatest thing I ever did for my drumming.

**MD:** What did you work on?

**Jimmy:** Murray reworked my entire approach. In the beginning he said to me, "Play like you play, and practice like I show you. What I teach you will creep into your playing, and the change will take care of itself." It was a whole

## JIMMY'S GEAR

**DRUMS:** DW VLT in "gold glass" FinishPly with DW hardware

- A. 8x14 Edge snare
- B. 9x12 tom
- C. 14x16 floor tom
- D. 16x18 floor tom
- E. 16x24 bass drum

**CYMBALS:** Paiste

- 1. 16" Twenty hi-hats
- 2. 18" Dark Energy crash
- 3. 24" 2002 ride
- 4. 19" Dark Energy crash
- 5. 20" Traditional light ride with rivets

**HEADS:** Evans. G2 clear or G-Plus coated on tops of toms, G1 clear on bottoms; EMAD clear 2-ply on bass drum with white logo front head; Reverse Power Center or Super Tough on top of snare, Hazy 500 on bottom.

**ELECTRONICS:** Alesis drum machine for tempo reference/click. Korg Wavedrum and Roland SPD-S sampling pad.

**STICKS:** Vic Firth 5A nylon tip, 7A wood tip, Steve Gadd brushes, T-1 General mallets, Rute 606.



## JIMMY PAXSON

different way of holding and controlling the stick—lots of emphasis on upstrokes, downstrokes, and things like the mechanics of a flam. Through a change in my technique, my hand problems went away. But I really had to study hard. Learning the upstroke itself was the biggest breakthrough. It's the one thing I see missing from players who are struggling with technique.

**MD:** Could you explain a bit more about the upstroke?

**Jimmy:** It's a delicate release where the hand naturally drops. That puts the wrist

into motion, and a stroke happens on the way up. For example, the leading hand of a five-stroke roll would play the first two strokes on an upstroke and play the fifth on a downstroke—so you get three strokes from one up-and-down motion. It's just a more efficient way of playing.

**MD:** How long did you study with Spivack?

**Jimmy:** Right up till his passing [in 1994]. Because of Murray, I'm not only a better drummer but a better person. My dad was studying with him as well. In fact, he currently teaches Murray's

method at the Philadelphia University Of The Arts. Stop by and have him look at your hands—he'll straighten you out!

**MD:** While you were studying, what was going on with you professionally?

**Jimmy:** I was playing locally. There was a jam session at an L.A. club, and I met [Alanis Morissette, Jane's Addiction bassist] Chris Chaney there. Chris later introduced me to Gary Novak, and honestly a lot of what I've accomplished as a drummer stems from their early support. Later I ended up subbing for Gary with Robben Ford. It was my first actual tour—and a serious crash course. From there I went on to work with Ronnie Montrose, which turned into a gig that lasted, on and off, for years.

**MD:** What was that gig like?

**Jimmy:** It was great, all instrumental music. The hard part was that I knew I needed to establish myself more in the mainstream music world. Strangely enough, it was around that time in '99 when I got an unexpected call from Alanis Morissette's tour manager, asking if I could leave for Venezuela, immediately. At first I thought it was someone playing a joke on me, but Gary was leaving the tour with short notice and Chaney recommended me to take over. It was an interesting position to suddenly be in, to say the least.

**MD:** Did you get to rehearse before the first show?

**Jimmy:** Not formally; the first sound-check was all we had. It was a lot of pressure, but it worked out pretty quickly. Alanis was one of the warmest individuals I'd ever met, and I'm happy to have been there.

**MD:** Do you follow a specific method when learning tunes?

**Jimmy:** I follow these five steps: Listen to the tune. Make a chart. Play to the tune, with the chart. Play to the chart, without the tune. Play the tune, without the chart or the recording. My goal is that when it comes time to play, I don't need to reference anything.

**MD:** After your work with Alanis, you had a band project, right?

**Jimmy:** Yes. It was basically Alanis's band with a different singer. The band was called Sub.Bionic. We made a great record together, on *Ecstasy Records*.

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## JIMMY PAXSON

Initially it offered a lot of freedom because we also coproduced the recording as a band. But once the record was done, I was suddenly the only original guy left, other than the singer. From there, it was like Spinal Tap—times a hundred! So that was the end of the band thing for me.

**MD:** How did you turn it around?

**Jimmy:** After so many ups and downs, I knew I needed to get back out on the road, when an interesting opportunity came up. My brother, Charlie, and I got to double drum for skateboarder Tony

Hawk's tour as part of what was called the Anarchy Orchestra. Charlie played a four-piece kit while I played a stand-up rig that included a drumkit, timbales, Octobans, a Korg Wavedrum, mounted garbage cans, and loads of Spoxe and cymbals. I played melodic counter-rhythms while Charlie grooved. The way we would cop things, brothers playing together for the first time, was psychic and scary. We played instrumental versions of whatever the athletes wanted to perform to, and it was an all-arena tour.

Right after that I juggled gigs with Edgar Winter and Sophie B. Hawkins. Edgar's shows were real physical. Everything was to a click, and it was heavily sequenced. "Frankenstein" is one of the only pop songs in history to have a drum solo on the radio version, and live it begins and ends with an extended version of the unison drum thing, with Edgar on timbales. In the middle of it, he would leave the stage, encouraging me to take the longest solos of my life.

**MD:** How did Stevie Nicks find you?

**Jimmy:** During a break from touring I came home, and my cartage guy, Ross Garfield, who's the owner of Drum Doctors, said he heard that Waddy Wachtel, Stevie's bandleader, was looking for a drummer for her. Ross recommended me, for which I'm eternally thankful.

**MD:** Besides learning all the songs, how did you approach the idea of bringing the right drum sounds to the audition?

**Jimmy:** I'm a firm believer that bringing the right sound for any situation is key. I knew from learning Stevie's music that I wanted the snare tuned way down into that Mick Fleetwood/Russ Kunkel/Stan Lynch zone. Ross has an old 7x14 Tama Bell Brass snare that I rented a few times, and we both agreed it would deliver. At the audition, I hit it once and everyone noticed. That is the sound for Stevie's music, and she heard it right away. To achieve that sound now, I use a DW 8x14 Edge snare that just sounds unreal.

**MD:** So how did the audition go?

**Jimmy:** Stevie was sitting directly in front of the band, staring straight at me. At this point I didn't know if she would just watch or if she would actually come up and sing. I just hoped I could play in a way that would make her feel at home. Stevie did in fact come up, and we played five tunes. She seemed really into it, and afterwards she said, "Thank you for making my music sound like it should."

**MD:** When did you find out that you had the gig?

**Jimmy:** Back on the road with Edgar, I didn't hear anything from them for

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## JIMMY PAXSON

three or four days. In an airport, I noticed I'd missed a call from Waddy. His message said, "Jim, it's Waddy Wachtel. Listen, I don't know what to tell you—but you got the gig. Welcome to the family. Hope you're not doing anything for the next year or so!" That was about five years ago.

**MD:** How did it feel, getting that call?

**Jimmy:** Incredible. I've had other big gigs, but that call was life changing. I had about three weeks of back-to-back work in Europe with both Sophie and Edgar, so I had no choice but to learn

all the songs in hotel rooms. I didn't even get home until the night before the first rehearsal.

**MD:** So, without a kit to learn the tunes, how did you prepare enough to feel you were ready?

**Jimmy:** I transcribed pretty much note for note what Mick Fleetwood, Russ Kunkel, and Stan Lynch had played on Stevie's recordings, and I pretty much slept with headphones on. I had some practice pads in my room, so that, along with a lot of determination, got me through it.

**MD:** Stevie's band is quite a cast of virtuosos.

**Jimmy:** That's for sure. They're all incredible. I've learned more from playing and hanging with Waddy than I could ever convey in this interview. As a person, he's one of a kind, and I'd take a bullet for him. Being in a band with him is like rock 'n' roll boot camp. He's played with all the great drummers, and he's never done anything but steer me in the right direction, for all the right reasons.

**MD:** How is it playing with percussionist Lenny Castro?

**Jimmy:** Playing with Lenny is effortless. He's simply the deadliest percussionist there is—period. His feel and choices are second to none, and we quickly became real close, both on stage and off. I thank God for every moment with him. And on top of playing all those great songs, Stevie gives us a big solo every night. With Lenny, you never know which direction it's gonna go. One night he may play his entire solo on his gong bass drum and a cowbell; other nights, he may use his entire rig. We both look at our solos as a place to be spontaneous. We have a set ending worked out, but other than that it's wide open.

**MD:** Considering you've known him since you were born, have you ever gotten to play with Stanley Clarke?

**Jimmy:** Yes, I have. Stanley came to a gig I was on a while back, and afterwards he said, "So when are we playing?" It took a few years for that to materialize, but we finally did it. As you can imagine, getting ready for that gig was some hardcore work. It was a great time, and I hope at some point we do it again.

**MD:** Stanley has complimented you on your solos. What drummers helped you learn to construct a good solo?

**Jimmy:** The Tony Williams Lifetime album *Believe It* is the drum bible. Also, there's a live solo with Steve Gadd and Ralph McDonald on a Grover Washington Jr. video that blows my mind. Any Dennis Chambers or Simon Phillips open solo, John Bonham on Led Zeppelin's *How The West Was Won*—these are all huge for me.

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## JIMMY PAXSON

**MD:** You're currently working with singer Idina Menzel. Tell us about that gig.

**Jimmy:** Idina is a Tony Award-winning actress who was in *Wicked* and *Rent*. She's a great singer—very influential, with a huge following. The gig has just gotten better and better. She was a wedding and bar mitzvah singer coming up, so she's been in the trenches like the rest of us and knows how to hang with the band. It's a really cool gig.

**MD:** Working with singers as diverse as Stevie and Idina, how do you adjust your playing to fit their styles?

**Jimmy:** I try to get acclimated to where they lay the cadence of their vocals in relation to the beat—their way of feeling the groove. Then I connect with what they're saying lyrically and emotionally and convey dynamically what's needed from there. It's all about the subtleties.

**MD:** What other gigs have you been doing?

**Jimmy:** For a while I was working with Georgia Todorani, who's one of Italy's

most iconic singers. Recently I've been doing some one-offs with Johnny Rivers, whose hits include "Memphis" and "Secret Agent Man." Other recent projects include CDs with A Fine Frenzy, Sharon Little, the Casualties Of Jazz, and Julian Coryell, and I recently did an eclectic tour opening for Loudon Wainwright III, with my girlfriend, singer/songwriter Jenni Alpert.

**MD:** Tell us about your studio.

**Jimmy:** My room is a recording/rehearsal space. I operate both Pro Tools and Logic there. The room is about 20'x40' with a 16' ceiling, and I do a lot of sessions there. I have an extensive drum collection, including some cool vintage kits—I'm a junkie for classic American drums, as well as mahogany drums from Taiwan and Japan. And I've got tons of percussion stuff. So it's a one-stop shop.

**MD:** What would you say to players who are trying to make something happen for themselves, especially given our tough economic situation?

**Jimmy:** Work on your time, and be prepared. With the Internet and all the available resources, the knowledge is out there to be absorbed 24/7. Like they say, practice at home. Once you get on a gig, if you're lucky enough to have people to lean on, know that they'll only carry you so far before you're expected to stand on your own.

Always support the music first, and know the boundaries. Then know when and how to step out without being musically distracting. The pressure is immense, but if you love music and you play for the song, that's what it's all about. You never know when the call is going to come in, so just keep growing...and keep going.

*Rich Mangicaro has performed with Glenn Frey, Joe Walsh, Jackson Browne, Michael McDonald, Billy Idol, and many other artists. For nineteen years he was the director of artist relations for Paiste America. For more on Rich, go to [richmangicaro.com](http://richmangicaro.com).*



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RECORDINGS



★★★★★

PAOLI MEJIAS JAZZAMBIA

Anyone who plays any type of drum should check out *Jazzambia*—no fusion album in recent memory has delivered more tantalizing rhythms. Percussionist Paoli Mejias is behind this intense, joyously free Afro-Cuban jazz, with help from soulful band-mates like bassist Hans Glawischnig, pianist Luis Perdomo, and drummers **ANTONIO SANCHEZ** and **TONY ESCAPA**. Sanchez's playing somehow combines total commitment and focus with an embracing looseness and abandon. He toys with the 6/8 time of "Diaspora" alongside the high-flying alto of Miguel Zenón, goes toe to toe with Mejias on "El Tintero," and creates a beautiful 11/8 backdrop for the percussionist on "Links." Escapa just crushes the tricky nines of "Logos" and creates a perfect montuno for Mejias's floor-rattling riffs on "Fragment." Grooving and sparring together, Mejias and the drummers seem to lift each other up a few extra notches. (paolimejias.com) **Robin Tolleson**

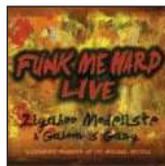


★★★★★

JACKDAWG S/T

Nineteen years is a long time for any album to spend in the vault, but in the case of *Jackdaw* it doesn't seem to have taken any edge off the music. This project was recorded in 1990 by the now deceased drummer/vocalist **KEITH KNUDSEN** along with guitarist/vocalist and fellow Doobie Brother John McFee and Creedence Clearwater Revival bassist Stu Cook. For legal reasons the album did not come out on time and was shelved... until now. Knudsen locks in tight with Cook on thumping 8th-note grooves, rides hard with the horns on the bluesy and raw "When The Sun Don't Shine," and kicks "Relentless" with a souped-up Mersey beat. Rugged rock, big (not *quite* over-processed) drum sounds, and strong hooks—and Knudsen nails each tune with drive matched by musical flair. (Sonic Past Music)

**Robin Tolleson**



★★★★★

ZIGABOO MODELISTE & GABOON'S GANG FUNK ME HARD: LIVE

New Orleans funk master Zigaboo Modeliste is captured here in transitional phase, on the cusp of his departure from the original Meters. The live five-track EP, recorded in 1980, highlights the drummer's own tunes. Adapting to his new setting, Zig applies a harder straight-8th drive, as compared with the slinky, swampy groove he famously trademarked with his former band. The material is killer-backbeat, slappin'-bass, hang-on-two-chord classic funk fronted by gritty vocals. Although the fidelity is a tad murky, the commanding groove crackles, making *Funk Me Hard* a satifying slice of Zig history. (JZM) **Jeff Potter**



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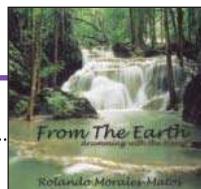
The late **IAN WALLACE**, perhaps the most underappreciated of all King Crimson drummers, swings with passion and rhythmic command on these jazzy (and at times Latin-jazzy) reformulations of classic KC tunes, such as "The Court Of The Crimson King" and "Lament." Wallace's fast, fluid brushwork ("Frame By Frame"), smoking left-hand ride/hi-hat patterns ("Pictures Of A City"), and sensitivity to light and shadow ("Inner Garden") and the well-paced drum solo "Press Gang" help deconstruct and reconstruct compositions once believed to be off-limits to aggressive reinterpretation. These are Wallace's last studio recordings, and history may very well deem them his greatest. (Inner Knot) **Will Romano**



★★★★★

MATT WILSON QUARTET THAT'S GONNA LEAVE A MARK

Drummer Matt Wilson is on a mission: to swing hard and have fun doing it. His newest offering, aided handily by his long-time quartet, is a trip through a musical funhouse. "Shooshabuster" is a hard-charging, Ornette-ish bop extravaganza, complete with a driving ride attack and audible yelps from the drum chair. Elsewhere Wilson provides mid-tempo shuffles; funky, behind-the-beat rock grooves; and all manner of "been doing this awhile" snare and tom licks. (Dig his melodic solo on "Celibate Oriole.") The drummer's maturity and healthy sense of humor are evident all the while, whether on tightly played heads or outlandish fills that knock the listener back. (Palmetto) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



TAKING THE REINS by Will Romano

ROLANDO MORALES-MATOS, PATRICK GRAHAM, MARTIN URBACH

Coaxing ringing melodic overtones from a metallic, UFO-shaped resonator called a Hang (imagine a cross between a steel pan, a kalimba, and a doumbek), **ROLANDO MORALES-MATOS** sends the listener on a meditative journey by evoking howling winds, trickling glaciers, and cavernous echoes on *From The Earth*. (cdbaby.com)

Similarly, **PATRICK GRAHAM** and guests (Debashis Sinha, Nicholas Williams, Kaoru Watanabe, Ben Grossman, and the On Ensemble) employ numerous multicultural percussion techniques and musical instruments—from Japanese to Indian to Irish—on *Rheo* to conjure the repetitive rhythmic patterns often found in nature. (patrickgrahampercussion.com)

**MARTIN URBACH**'s post-bop outing *Free Will* is brilliant, subtle, and at times completely wild. Urbach's swing soothes just as it confounds with violent eruptions. (Check out the syncopated, snaky sequence tunneled by vibes and drums in "I Broke The Jazz.") On the surface these tracks may seem convoluted. But there's more order than chaos in this largely medicinal jazzy stew. (martinurbach.com)

STAFF FAVES

THIS MONTH:

Managing Editor **MICHAEL DAWSON**

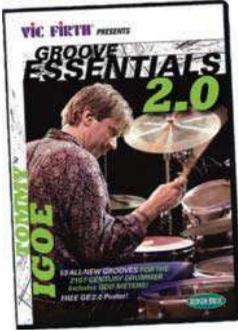
There's something about the way **MATT CHAMBERLAIN** approaches the drums that just makes perfect sense to me. Whether he's driving straight-quarter kicks and popping backbeats on a Noble & Cooley brass piccolo with the Wallflowers (the band's 1996 album, *Bringing Down The Horse*, features textbook studio rock drumming), creating deep trancelike grooves with Fiona Apple (*Tidal* and *When The Pawn...* have some of the hippest-sounding/feeling drum tracks of all time), bouncing a quick shuffle with pop singer Sara Bareilles ("Love Song"), blending loops and acoustic drums with Tori Amos, or letting it all hang out with his own experimental band Critters Buggin', I just can't get enough!

One of Chamberlain's most recent recordings, early Seattle rock scene-stress DeJha Colantuono's *Tea & Vodka*, is also one of the drummer's finest. On this quirky and diverse album, Matt flexes

all his creative muscles. Check out how he slams driving but dynamic beats on the riffy new-wave-infused tracks "Color Blue" and "Poolside," and how he elicits a dark and moody vibe with a simple 6/8 rimclick groove on the opener, "Beginning To End." But for the "real" Matt C. stuff, dig the lilting hi-hat work and dub-style fills on "Feel You're Going Nowhere"; the loose, crunchy, and punchy 16th-note beats on "Second Sight"; and the unexpected triplet accents and slick tom licks in the subtle shuffle groove of "Fences." This album is also great for fans of Chamberlain's earthy drum tones. It's one of the most natural sounding in his ever-expanding discography. (Mad Meow Music)



To find out what else the MD editors are listening to every month, sign up for the Wire e-newsletter at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



★★★★★

**GROOVE ESSENTIALS 2.0 BY TOMMY IGOE**  
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LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED

Here's a jam-packed source of modern, very usable grooves intended for drummers who have fully absorbed the first installment. Igoe's tone is one that says, "Challenge yourself and don't be afraid to stumble," heightened with occasional doses of cold reality that alert students to what to expect in professional situations. Fifty-three new grooves with variations are covered (this time including odd meters), along with full and play-along tunes plus many extras. The challenge deepens with "Global Tracks," which comprises cuts that demand quick shifts in style. The extensive DVD, which parallels the book, is

especially enlightening due to Igoe's knack for succinct explanations and demonstrations of the subtleties that make all the difference in achieving a satisfying "human" groove versus stiff mechanical drumming. Well conceived, practical, and polished, it's something you could chew on for decades. (Hudson Music) **Jeff Potter**



★★★★★

**RUDIMENTAL DRUM SOLOS FOR THE MARCHING SNARE DRUMMER BY BEN HANS**

BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED  
 \$12.95

Hans, a Milwaukee-based teacher and performer, has added another snare solo book to the repertoire. *Rudimental Drum Solos* is not only a collection of twenty-six etudes, it is, more important, a "progressive teaching aid." Groups of five rudiments include warm-up exercises with stickings, followed by one- to three-page solos. The first eight groups cover the forty P&S International drum rudiments, while the last three address hybrid rudiments. The pieces allow players to work on the basic building blocks of drumming with a variety of musical examples, complete with stickings, dynamics, and musical interpretations. Excellent notation and an informative bibliography complete this noteworthy publication. (Hal Leonard) **Lauren Vogel Weiss**

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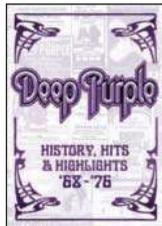
★★★★★

**KALLES WORLD TOUR**

LEVEL: ALL

12 EUROS (APPROX. \$17)  
 Danish multi-instrumentalist Kalle Mathiesen isn't the first musician to use technology to stage a one-man show. But he may be the most gloriously goofy. Filmed on the streets and in the clubs of the U.S., Europe, South America, and Australia, Mathiesen uses anything and everything at his disposal to create a groove, including a looping device, a hand truck, a power drill, a six-string bass, his mouth, and even a human skeleton (crowned with a crusty hi-hat cymbal). Though not all the footage here is of high quality, Mathiesen finds a good (and fun) balance of artistry and gonzo entertainment.

(kallesworldtour.dk) **Will Romano**



★★★★★

**DEEP PURPLE HISTORY, HITS & HIGHLIGHTS '68-'76**

LEVEL: ALL \$24.98

I don't normally join in this type of conversation, but if I met you in a bar and you said, "IAN PAICE is the greatest rock drummer ever," I'd say, "Buy me a drink and I might buy your argument." A lot of people feel that DP is right up there with Zeppelin and the Who in the pure excitement stakes, and in many ways they were physical equals to the players in those bands. And in Ian Paice they had a drummer whose feel and chops were more overtly connected to those of the great jazz technicians of the previous generation, such as Buddy Rich.

A concise twenty-minute history of the band, composed of a fast-paced stream of period interviews and performances, leads off the program and offers a good idea of DP's joyously excessive space-truckin' proto-metal. But you'll want to dig deep into the full takes that these sound bites are culled from, also presented here. My favorite clip is the "Mandrake Root" performance from the Pop Deux Paris Concert in 1970, where the intimate camera angles put you *right there* onstage. All of Paicey's charms are on full display, and by song's end you're fairly wrung out by the band's overwhelming attack.

DP often made reference to fiery explosions, in their music, artwork, and song and album titles; the performances collected in this two-disc set prove they had as much claim to the flames as any of their peers. (Eagle Vision) **Adam Budofsky**



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# SHEDDING NEW LIGHT ON CLASSIC RINGO TRACKS

THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND AND REMASTERED CD BOX by Billy Amendola



Apple Corps Ltd

No group has changed the sound of popular music more than the Beatles, and now is a great time for drummers to get deeper into Ringo Starr's unique rhythmic contributions to the Fab Four's revolutionary records.

In fact, it's practically Beatlemania all over again, as this season sees the release of the *Beatles: Rock Band* game (formatted for Wii, PS3, and Xbox 360) as well as the group's entire catalog in a digitally remastered box set, which features behind-the-scenes footage, new liner notes, and never-before-seen photos, all in a beautifully assembled package. The CDs, which have been four years in the making, were remastered with the latest technology by the top engineers at Abbey Road/EMI studios, where most of the original Beatles albums were recorded. This means Ringophiles will be able to hear greater sonic detail in Starr's playing than ever before, making close analysis of his parts that much more possible.

Besides having the ability to now play along to Ringo's famous beats in a game format, fans of the drummer—especially younger ones—will also find much to celebrate with *The Beatles: Rock Band*. Not only are players taken on a journey from the Cavern

Club (where the group started out) to the Apple Records rooftop (where they performed a number of cuts from their swan song, *Let It Be*), they're also given the chance to learn how to play drums, via a Beatles Beats feature.

According to the game's developers, the Beatles Beats mode eases new drummers into the world of rock timekeeping, using notable drum patterns and feels from iconic Beatles songs. Bundled with the game's Drum Lessons mode, which focuses on core skills and rudiment training, *The Beatles: Rock Band* allows drummers to practice more than 120 beats, with the ability to increase or decrease bpm in order to perfect their performances.

To find out more about the ideas behind the package, *MD* spoke with the game's music supervisor and creative director, Giles Martin, who also happens to be the son of Beatles producer George Martin.

**MD:** What was done to Ringo's tracks for the game?  
**Giles:** One of the most challenging aspects of making the *Beatles: Rock Band* game was isolating drums from the songs recorded earlier in the Beatles' career. The very first Beatles album was recorded on 2-track,

which means that all the instruments are on one track, the vocals on the other.

A very clever man at Abbey Road called Simon Gibson sifted through each individual element and isolated the drums. We were determined that game players feel as though they are playing like Ringo. The later tracks were easy. "Come Together," for example, was recorded on an 8-track machine, so the drums were isolated. Consequently we didn't have to do any filtering. Once we had made the drum stems [tracks], they were sent off to Harmonix in Massachusetts to be authored for the game.

**MD:** While you were working with the drum parts, what occurred to you about Ringo's playing?

**Giles:** What is noticeable about Ringo's drumming is how unique it is. I've had the privilege of working on the Beatles catalog for around six years. When I isolated the drums, I could hear that Ringo always played something different, something more interesting. He always locks into a groove, but it's his variations within a song that set him apart.

**MD:** Are there any songs that particularly showcase Ringo's drumming ability and that may be challenging for drummers to cop?

**Giles:** There are a bunch of early songs, such as "Ticket To Ride" and "I Feel Fine," that are really fun to play, because the rhythm parts are so different from what most drummers will be used to. Possibly the most challenging, however, would be "Helter Skelter." We decided not to fade the track at all, so a player can play the song in its entirety. I think there will be a bunch of people who'll be screaming, "I've got blisters on my fingers!"



For more on the Beatles' digital box set and *The Beatles: Rock Band*, visit the news section at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) or go to [thebeatles.com](http://thebeatles.com).



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# RASHIED ALI

COLTRANE'S COSMIC COLLABORATOR by Rick Mattingly

**J**azz drummer Rashied Ali, best known for his work with saxophonist John Coltrane, died on August 12 at age seventy-six after suffering a heart attack.

Ali described his drumming as “multidirectional rhythms/polytonal percussion,” a style in which the drummer “interfaces both rhythmically and melodically with the music...coloring both the rhythm and tonality with his personal perception.”

In 1992 Ali told *MD* that he grew up playing bebop. “Max Roach and Philly Joe Jones—those were my first jazz heroes,” he said. “Later on down the line it was Elvin Jones. Max put me onto the melodic approach to the drumset. He put me into knowing what the time was about, knowing exactly what we were all playing instead of just trying to keep the time for somebody.”

Ali, who was born in Philadelphia in 1933 as Robert Patterson, studied piano, voice, and conga drums in his youth. During his three years in the army, which he joined at age sixteen by pretending to be older, he studied percussion and began playing drumset. After returning to Philadelphia, he worked with a variety of rhythm and blues bands as well as with such jazz musicians as McCoy Tyner, the Heath Brothers, Lee Morgan, Don Patterson, and Jimmy Smith. After moving to New York City in 1963, Ali became active within the avant-garde jazz scene, working with Pharoah Sanders, Don Cherry, Paul Bley, Sun Ra, Albert Ayler (where he and Sunny Murray played drums together for a spell), and Archie Shepp, with whom Rashied made his first significant recording, *On This Night*.

In November 1965, John Coltrane invited Ali to join his group, playing drums alongside Elvin Jones. Rashied debuted with the band at New York City's Village Gate and then appeared with Jones on Coltrane's 1965 album *Meditations*. Jones left Coltrane's group soon after that, as did pianist McCoy Tyner. Ali remained—along with pianist

Alice Coltrane, second saxophonist Sanders, and bassist Jimmy Garrison—until Coltrane's death in 1967. The drummer appeared on the Coltrane albums *Cosmic Music*, *Live At The Village Vanguard Again*, *Concert In Japan*, and *Interstellar Space*, the latter of which featured only Coltrane and Ali.

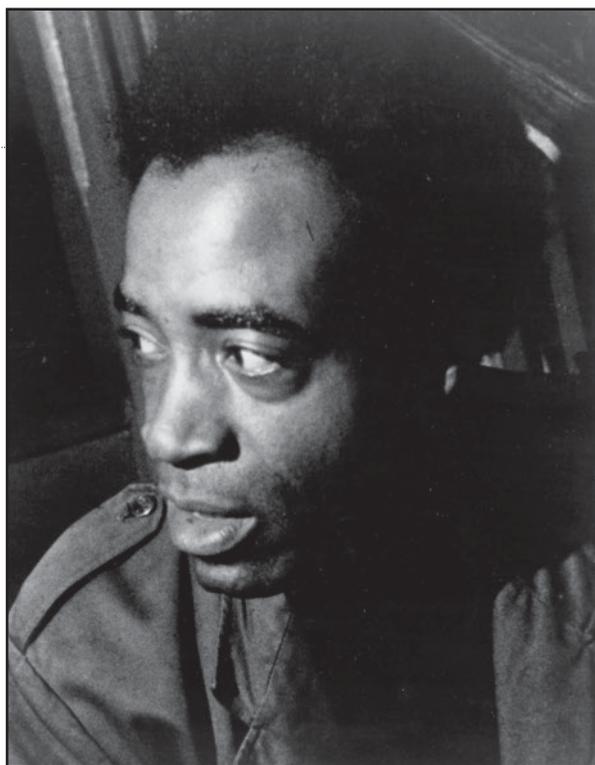
After Coltrane died, Ali moved to Europe and played with Niels-Henning Orsted Pederson and John Tchicai in Copenhagen and with Jon Hendricks in London before forming his own free-jazz trio with John Surman and Dave Holland. After returning to New York, Rashied led a group and also worked with Alice Coltrane (appearing on her 1970 album *Journey In Satchidananda*), Sonny Rollins, and Jackie McLean. During the mid-1970s, Ali, Milford Graves, and Andrew Cyrille performed a series of concerts together called Dialogue Of The Drums.

During this period Ali became active in a movement among jazz musicians to take better control of their careers and become economically self-sufficient. Toward that goal, he formed a label, Survival Records, which released his solo albums *New Directions In Modern Music* and *Moon Flight*. In 1974 he opened a New York City club and restaurant called Ali's Alley, which ran through 1979.

In the '80s Ali performed with a wide variety of artists, including the groups Afro Algonquin, the Funkyfreeboppers, and Phalanx (featuring guitarist James “Blood” Ulmer), and with bands led by

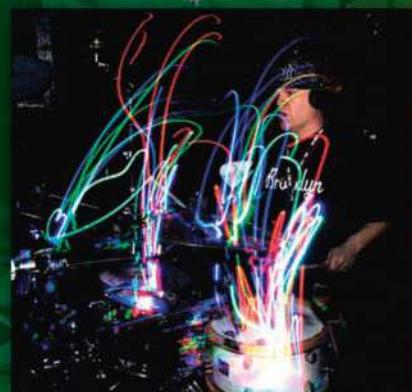
Jaco Pastorius, Billy Bang, Sonny Fortune, Odean Pope, and Calvin Hill. One of his more surprising gigs was with Hot Tuna, the group formed by former Jefferson Airplane guitarist Jorma Kaukonen and bassist Jack Cassady. “I wasn't taking anything away from my playing in order to do the gig,” Ali said. “I was playing as out as I could with that stuff.”

In the '90s Ali led his own groups, including one called By Any Means, and he also played with the band Prima Materia. During the final years of his life, he primarily played with the Rashied Ali Quintet, which released the CDs *Judgment Day, Vol. 1* and *Judgment Day, Vol. 2* in 2006. He also performed duo concerts with bassist/violinist Henry Grimes, with whom he recorded *Going To The Ritual* in 2007.



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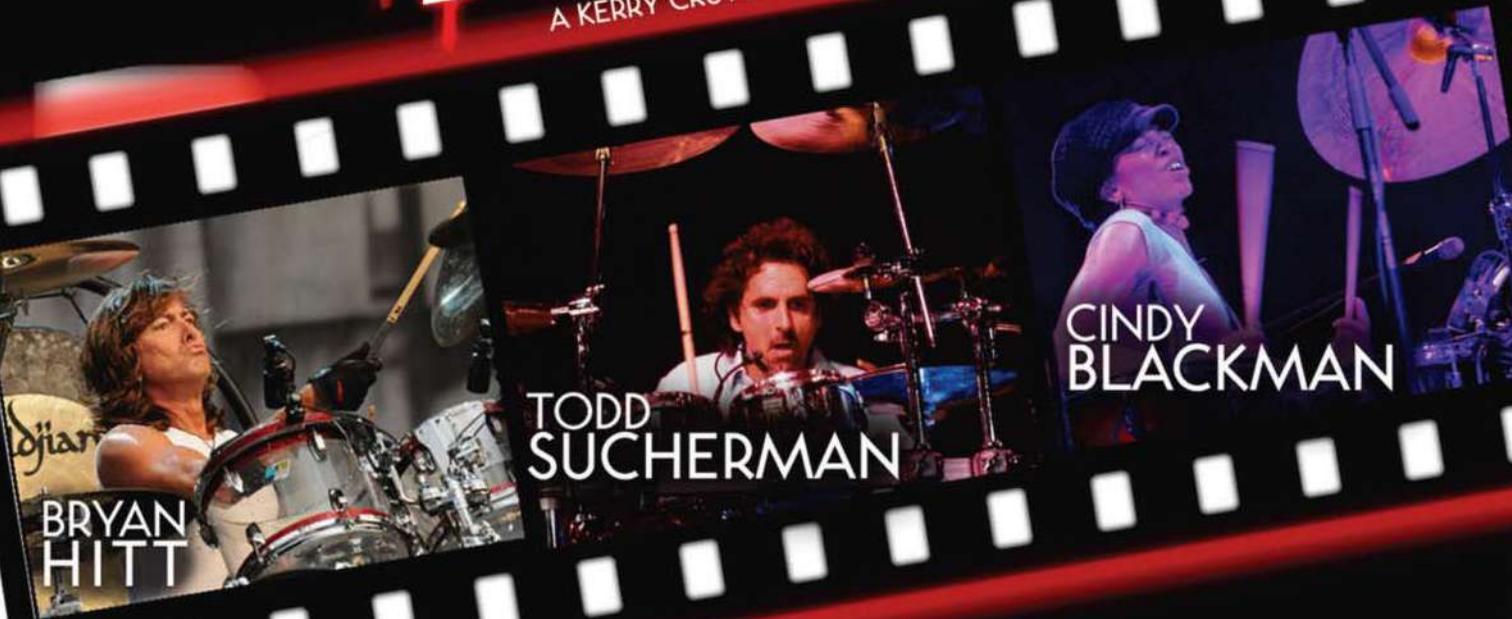


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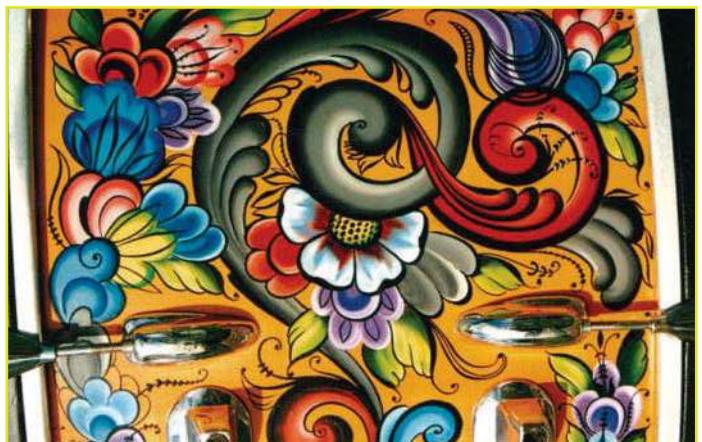
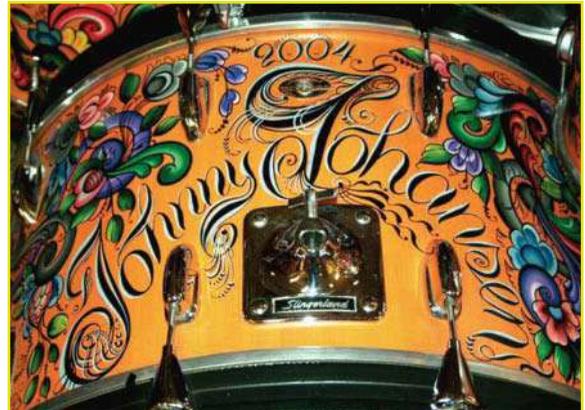


# THE ART OF THE BRUSH

**T**his rose-painting kit comes from Vigdis Berg Nordgarden, all the way from West Telemark, Norway. Nordgarden speaks very little English (and we speak zero Norwegian), but he did his best to gather and convey information. He tells us the kit is a combination of Ludwig and Slingerland shells.

“A well-known drummer from Vadsø in Finnmark, Johnny Johansen, asked me to rose-paint his Slingerland/Ludwig Classics,” Nordgarden says, “and I thought, *Why not?* The drums were primed with faint interior two-coat glazing, and I chose very strong colors—I wanted it to show from the stage and fit the music. The final colors ended up with contours that I liked the best.” Nordgarden, who began rose painting in 1970, used an oil color brush on the drums.

The artist sums things up with a quick history lesson. “Rose painting from the west of Telemark has roots since 1700. At the Norwegian Museum in Bygdøy, Oslo, there is a bowl from Vinje, painted by Thomas Blix in the year 1713.” Nordgarden adds proudly, “This kit is special to me because I’m very satisfied with the results and proud to be in *Modern Drummer!*”



**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](mailto:billya@moderndrummer.com). Show “Kit Of The Month” in the subject line of the message. Photos cannot be returned.



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