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MAY 2010

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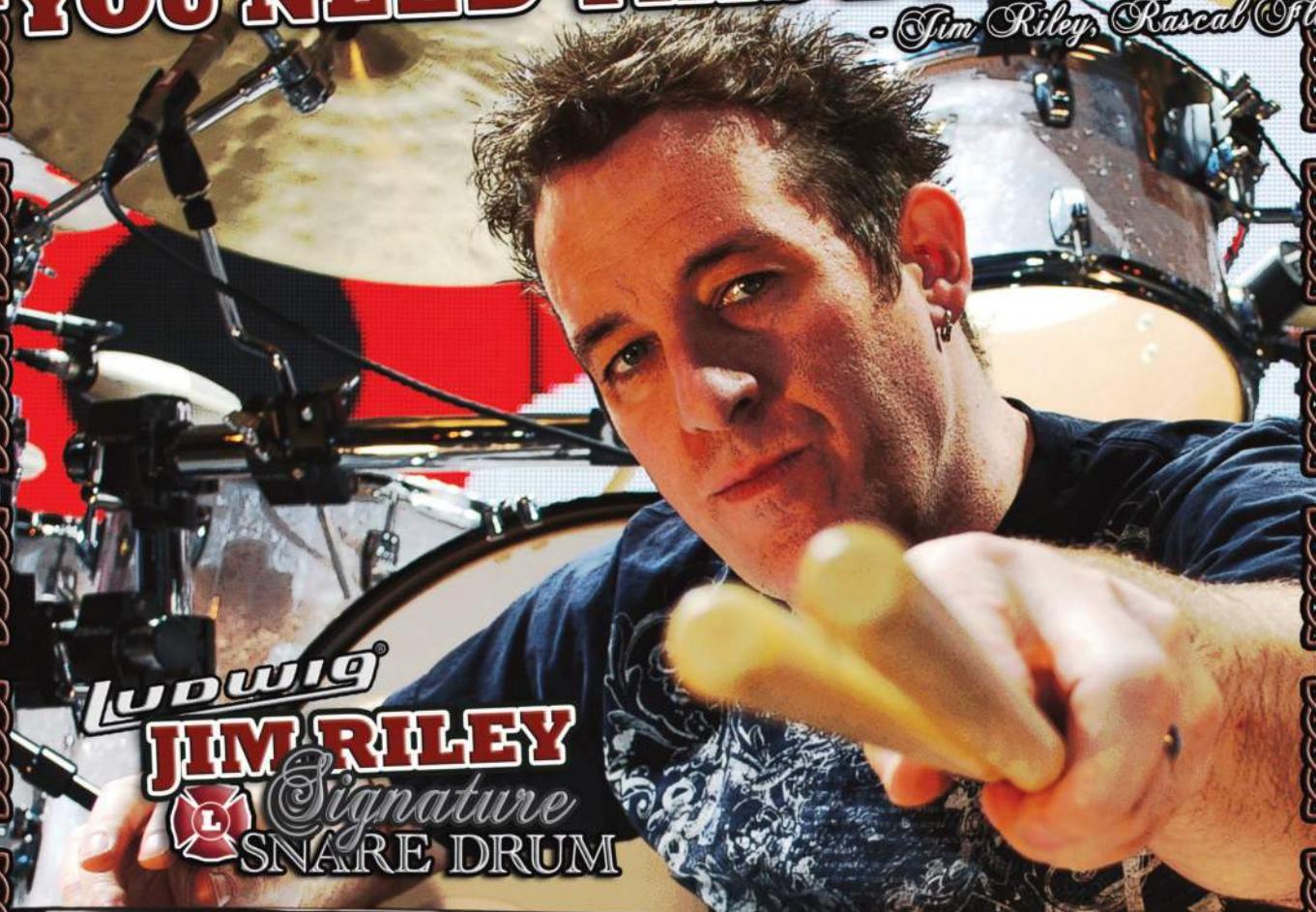
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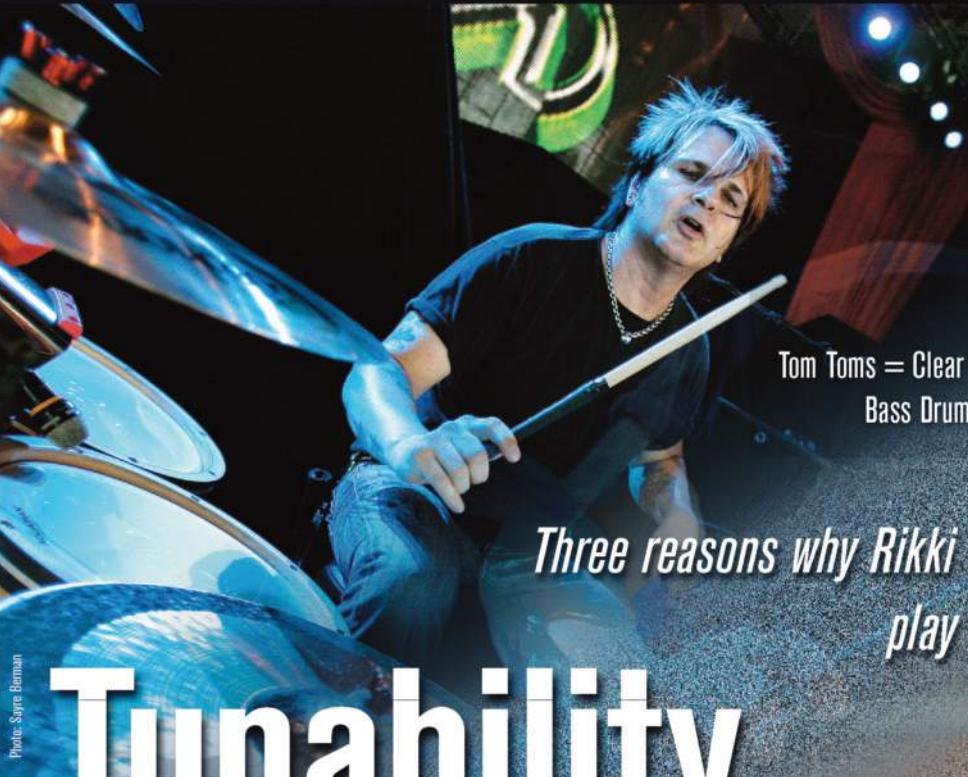
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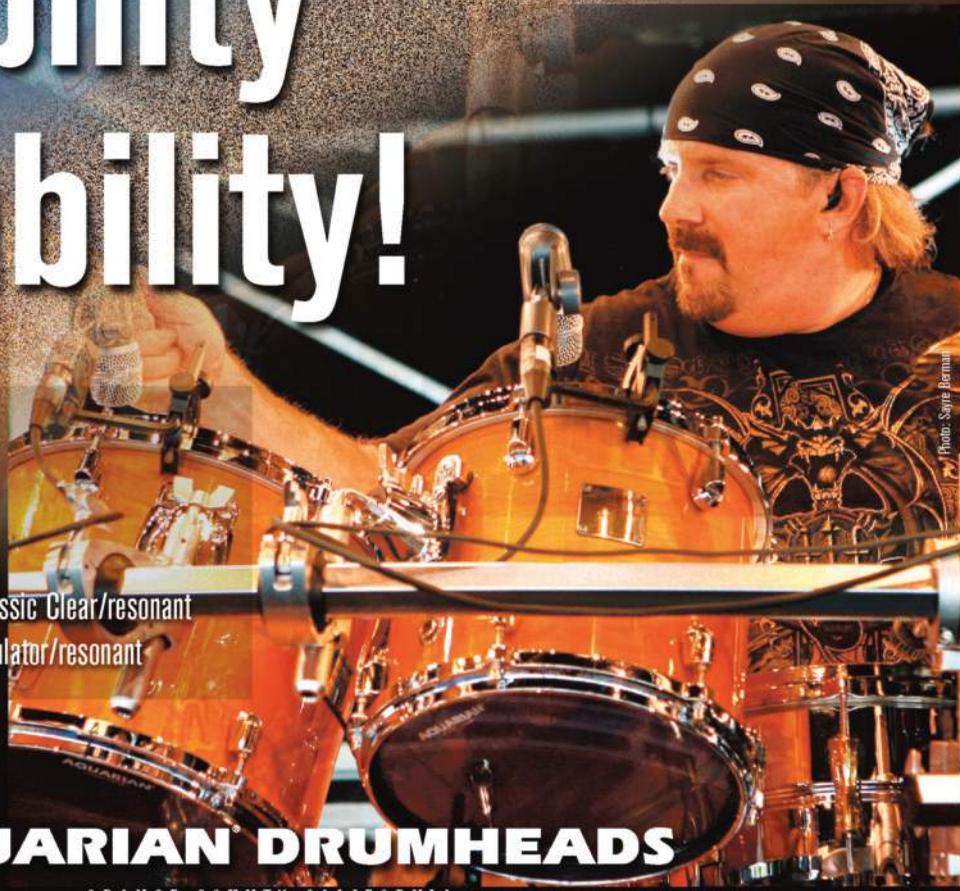
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Sayre Berman



Paul LaRuia



37

**FEATURES**

**37 PETE LOCKETT**

For six years, the modern world-percussion master cleared his mind and his calendar and dedicated himself to studying Indian music. Today every drummer with a curiosity about Eastern rhythms is richer for his experience.

**46 KISS'S ERIC SINGER**

Kiss perpetually tops the list of the world's most recognizable rock acts. Eric Singer carries a great deal of responsibility for keeping them there by simply being who he is.

**58 ELLIOT HUMBERTO KAVEE**

Henry Threadgill's drummer is an original player because he's an original thinker, viewing his craft as nothing less than a way to paint pictures, to tell stories, to "direct movement through imagination."



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**14 UPDATE**  
**KENNY WASHINGTON**  
**TERREON GULLY**

**16 GIMME 10!**  
30 SECONDS TO MARS' **SHANNON LETO**

**76 PORTRAITS**  
RUSSIAN CIRCLES' **DAVE TURNCRANTZ**  
MOBY'S **JOE GORETTI**

**78 REASONS TO LOVE**  
AC/DC'S **PHIL RUDD**

**92 IN MEMORIAM**  
**ED THIGPEN**

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page 68

## EDUCATION

- 64 STRICTLY TECHNIQUE**  
CHOPS BUILDERS PART 3: TRIP STEPPER by Bill Bachman

---

- 66 ROCK 'N' JAZZ CLINIC**  
ADVANCED HI-HAT PATTERNS FOUR-LIMB GROOVES INCORPORATING THE LEFT FOOT by Andy Shoniker

---

- 68 LATIN SYMPOSIUM**  
THE CLAVE IN 5 ODD-METER GROOVES BASED ON THE LATIN TRADITION by Conor Guilfoyle

---

- 70 STYLE & ANALYSIS**  
TONY WILLIAMS LIVE WITH THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET, 1967 by Terry Branam

---

- 74 IN THE STUDIO**  
OVERDUB PERCUSSION LIKE A PRO PART 1: TAMBOURINE by Michael Blair

## DEPARTMENTS

- 8 AN EDITOR'S OVERVIEW**  
DREAM ON by Billy Amendola

---

- 10 READERS' PLATFORM**

---

- 12 ASK A PRO**  
RYAN HOYLE QUICK PRACTICE AND TUNING TIPS

---

- 18 IT'S QUESTIONABLE**  
BUFFING OUT SCRATCHES • REMOVING INNER AND OUTER OBSTACLES

---

- 82 SHOWCASE**

---

- 85 DRUM MARKET**

---

- 86 CRITIQUE**

---

- 89 BACKBEATS**  
GUITAR CENTER DRUM-OFF 2009 GRAND FINALS

---

- 96 KIT OF THE MONTH**  
A KIT WITH SOME CRUNCH

## EQUIPMENT

- 20 PRODUCT CLOSE-UP**
  - TAYE PROX DRUMSET
  - SNARE DRUM OF THE MONTH: ZENZIAN 6½x14 STAVE PURPLEHEART
  - PAISTE ALPHA BRILLIANT SERIES CYMBALS
  - PROTECTOR ELITE AIR SERIES CASES
  - SABIAN XS20 BRILLIANT SERIES CYMBALS
  - QPERCUSSION QSTICKS

---

- 28 ELECTRONIC REVIEW**  
EQUATION AUDIO MTD.8.3 EIGHT-PIECE DRUM MIC KIT

---

- 30 NEW AND NOTABLE**

---

- 32 GEARING UP**
  - TOBY KEITH'S DAVE MCAFEE
  - POISON'S RIKKI ROCKETT



20



28



30



32



86



89

# DREAM ON

**Y**eah, I'll admit it: I'm a dreamer, but I *know* I'm not the only one.... Eric Singer, this month's cover artist, is the perfect example of someone who dreamed as a kid of becoming a working musician, and for the past twenty-five years he has watched those dreams come true. But, as you'll read in his feature, it didn't happen overnight—it took years of hard work and perseverance. Like so many of us when we first started playing, Eric practiced his drums every day, played in bands, and cut out pictures of his heroes and hung them on his bedroom wall. Fortunately for him, over the years he's gotten to play with many of his childhood influences. In fact, he's been playing with one of them for over eighteen years now. Eric shares his thoughts in this issue—as well as on our Web site—about Kiss, surviving the music business, and how he got where he is today.



Everyone's always looking for the secret to success. Well, if we knew what it was, we'd have the key to life. But no one really has that impossible answer. All I can say from my own experience of being a part of the music business for most of my life—and especially in the past twelve years as I've interviewed some of the drummers who grace our pages every month—is that it all starts with a dream, followed by years of practicing, playing, staying determined, having the right attitude, and working as hard as you can. Unfortunately, for whatever reasons (again, no answers), not everything always works out in life. But those who are blessed to have their dreams come true have a passion that drives their desire to keep moving forward, no matter how many times they get knocked down.

We have a lot of dreamers in this issue: Russian Circles' Dave Turncrantz, Moby's Joe Goretti, AC/DC's Phil Rudd, studio and stage ace Ryan Hoyle, and 30 Seconds To Mars' Shannon Leto, among others. After taking top honors in the country category in last year's MD Readers Poll, Dave McAfee—featured this month in one of our newer columns, Gearing Up—called to tell us how surprised he was to win and that it's an honor and a dream come true. Also featured in Gearing Up is Rikki Rockett, who's been living his dream with Poison for the past twenty-plus years. I bet if you spoke to *any* of the artists featured in *MD* over the years, they would tell you they're living their dream because they get to do what they love.

There's no harm in dreaming big. Dreams *do* come true, so why not yours? Enjoy the issue, and dream on...dream until your dreams come true! See you next time.

*Very special thanks to Amanda Maer for putting on Billy's makeup and convincing him to go for it.*

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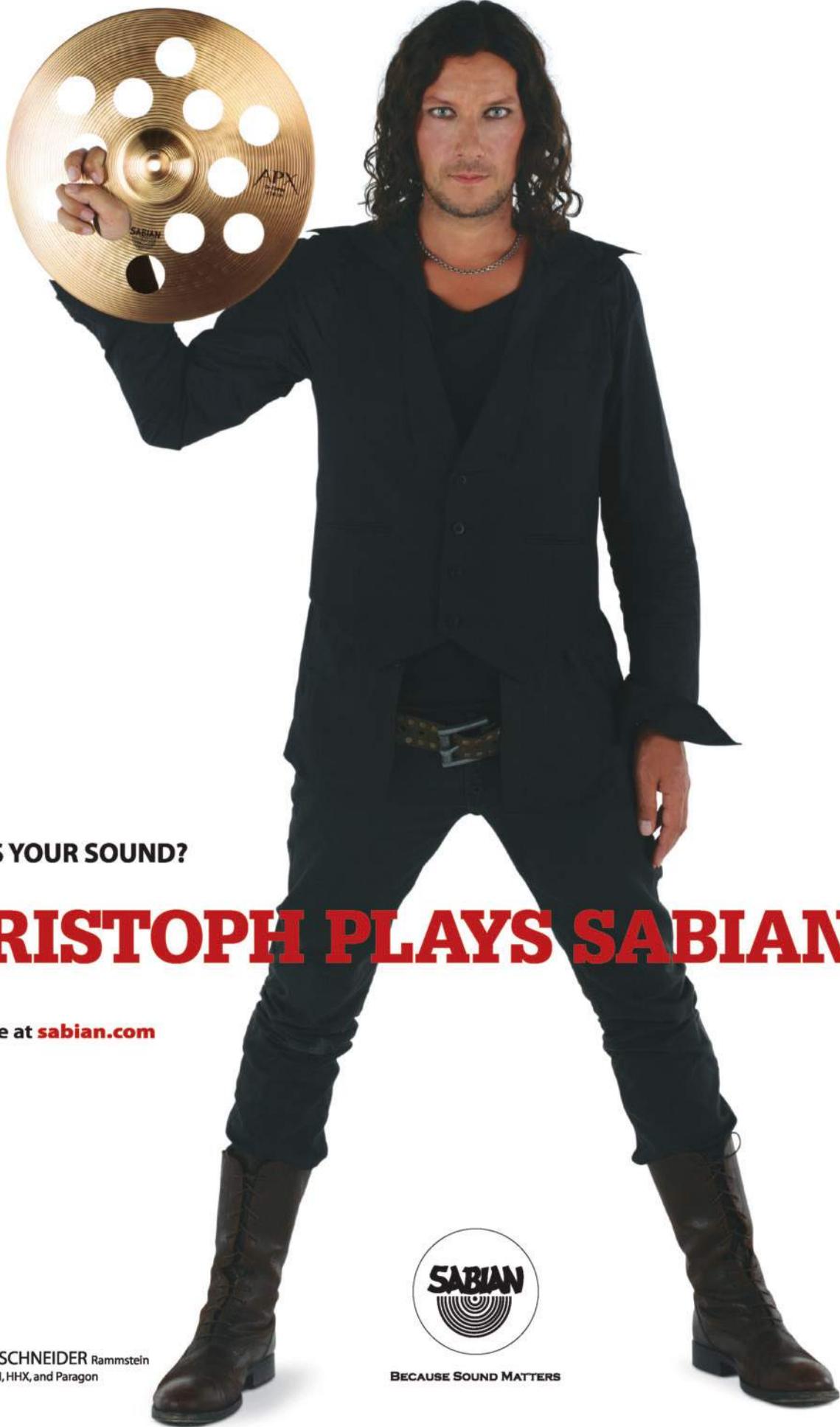
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## THE GUESS WHO'S GARRY PETERSON

It was refreshing to read Paul Shaffer's comments on the importance of the drummer's role in the December 2009 issue of *MD*. It was obvious from his references that he is a drummer himself. I was particularly impressed by the fact that he mentioned Garry Peterson of the Guess Who. I've been a fan of Garry's drumming for years and feel that he has been long overlooked within the drumming community. It would be great to see a feature article on this fantastic drummer. I would encourage your readers to check out Garry's drumming on such Guess Who tracks as "Broken," "Rain Dance," and "Share The Land," to name but a few. I'm certain they will find a new appreciation of what Garry brought to the music, as I did when I matured and really started to listen.

**Mark Saranchuk**

## CORKY LAING MD VIDEO

I just watched the video of Mountain drummer Corky Laing on the *Modern Drummer* Web site, and it's awesome! Corky has been my favorite musician for forty years now. It was great to actually hear



him talk about his drumkit, which he never really does to any extent. And the concert clips of him playing are just spectacular!

**Dave Haladay**

## MAKING IT PERSONAL

I recently read an article by David Stanoch breaking down a fill that Clyde Stubblefield would use ("Mastering Time, Part 3: The Stubble-Stroke Roll," January 2010). I very much enjoyed it. David was able to deconstruct the fill to a basic level, and then he kept building on the idea until it evolved into something personal. I really learned a lot from this approach, where you can take an idea from one drummer and shape it into something more personal. Thanks for your great articles.

**Graham Peterson**

## IMPACT DRUM BAGS

I want to let all the *MD* readers know that I am very happy with my recently purchased set of Impact Signature series drum bags. Not only are they extremely well made and designed to last, they are also quite attractive. These American-made bags are in my opinion among the finest drum bags available today, and the customer service at Impact Industries is excellent in every regard—they certainly went out of their way to make sure I received exactly what I needed. I'm certain that any drummer wishing to purchase a quality set of drum bags will be very well satisfied.

**Bob Owen**



## GEARING UP

Thank you to *Modern Drummer* and Sayre Berman for the Gearing Up feature in the February issue. What a treat! As a twenty-three-year subscriber to your fine publication, I have been missing the fantastic multi-page editorial- and photo-rich NAMM-type spreads that used to grace the pages of *MD*. Along with the rest of your readership, I'm sure, I enjoy peering deeply into great setup and gear photos just as much as reading the written content itself. So here's to a fine addition that I hope will remain a monthly staple for years to come!

**Jodi J. Nepveu**

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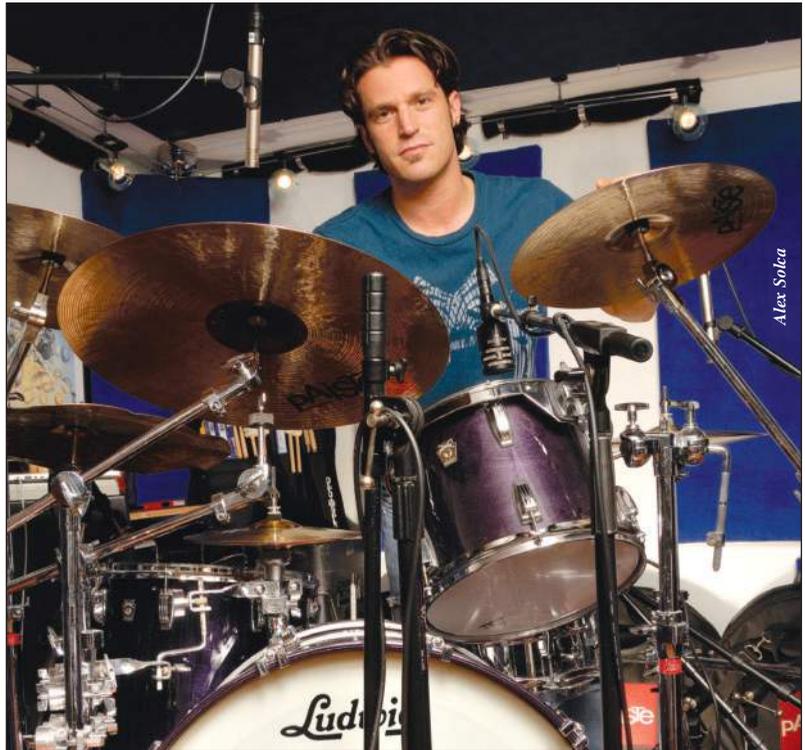
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# RYAN HOYLE

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**Garin Rosen / Arsonists Get All the Girls**

I really enjoyed your Woodshed article in the November 2009 issue of *Modern Drummer*. You seem to know a lot about recording and how to get the best tones out of your drums. I checked out some of the audio samples on your Web site, [livedrumtracks.com](http://livedrumtracks.com), and was impressed by how big and fat your different kits sound. Can you share your secrets to getting a great tom sound? Also, do you have any advice for how to take my drumming up to the next level?  
**Thomas C.**

I'm glad you enjoyed the article, Thomas. And thanks for checking out my Web site. When someone asks for my best tip for becoming a better drummer, my answer is to go to Wal-Mart and buy a cheap full-length mirror. Many people fall in love with drumming because they've watched some really impressive players. For me, it was Steve Gadd and John Bonham. When I saw them on the drums, that was it. It was the most beautiful combination of movement and sound, aggression and finesse, tension and release, athletics and sportsmanship. When you watch yourself playing your drums, your brain will start to recall those images of greatness, and they will start to come out in your own playing. Be sure to change the perspective every once in a while, by putting the mirror off to the

right, to the left, out in front, or on the ceiling.

Regarding tom sounds, I don't tune my rack and floor toms the same way. I like my rack tom to sound gooey, like a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. But if I were to tune my floor tom using that same ratio—same heads, same tuning—it would ring so out of control that it would start humming even when I wasn't playing it.

I tune rack toms for a more resonant approach, with the bottom head a whole step up from the top. I often use Remo coated or Smooth White Emperors, coated CS Black Dots, or clear Pinstripes on top and clear Ambassadors on the bottom.

I use a different bottom head on the floor tom. My current favorite is a Remo Powerstroke 3, to control overtones. I will generally tune the bottom head lower than the top.

When I sing tom sounds to myself, I hear a gentle pitch bend down from the rack tom. When I sing a floor tom, it's more of a bark, and I want it to sound like it's resolving. Plus I don't want the floor tom to be slow and make my fills sound like they're dragging. Tuning the bottom head lower helps prevent that.

**Ryan Hoyle** has been a member of Collective Soul and Paul Rodgers' band and has recorded tracks for, among others, David Cook, Carrie Underwood, Deborah Gibson, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, and *Guitar Hero 5*.

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# KENNY WASHINGTON

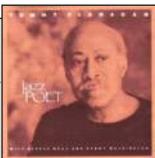
## Providing the “new” sound that people still want

**K**enny Washington, over fifty? He’s aging like a fine cymbal. The perpetually young lion still crackles like he did when first making an impact on the New York City jazz scene in the late 1970s with the likes of Betty Carter, Lee Konitz, and Dizzy Gillespie. The “seasoning” effect of playing with top jazz artists for three decades has made Washington a very

### BREAKOUT BEATS

In 1990, bebop pianist Tommy Flanagan released the album *Jazz Poet*, which featured Kenny Washington’s brush skills on the breakneck “Mean Streets.” Originally titled “Berdandi,” the tune was recorded by Flanagan in 1957 for the *Overseas* album, featuring Elvin Jones. The pianist also tracked it in 1976 on *Positive Intensity* (it was called “Verdandi” this time), with Roy Haynes on drums. “When I joined Tommy’s band, he started playing it again,” Washington says. “He decided to change the name to ‘Mean Streets,’ because that’s what Philly Joe Jones used to call me. When that record came out, people were saying, ‘Damn! How did he learn how to play brushes that fast?’ A lot of people heard that record, and I started getting calls for lessons. [Legendary jazz engineer] Rudy Van Gelder did the sound. That’s one record I can stick my chest out about. I got lucky that particular day.”

P.S. Flanagan recorded the song at least one more time—as “Verdandi”—on the 1997 album *Sea Changes*, featuring drummer Lewis Nash.



complete drummer and has led him into other avenues of musical expression, such as teaching drums at Juilliard, producing classic jazz reissues, broadcasting on the radio and Internet, and even designing a cymbal.

Washington’s ongoing gigs include the Bill Charlap Trio (eleven years) and the Melvin Rhyne Trio. And he still tries to get in two or three hours of practice a day. “Everybody thinks that bashing on the drums is the way to go,” Kenny says, “but to get a nice full sound out of the instrument, it’s not about beating the drums, it’s just about *playing* them. You learn all that and get a better sound by

going back to the basics—learning the rudiments and going through the books. Everybody wants to play like Elvin Jones, but they don’t realize that Elvin Jones had *hands*. He used to practice the twenty-six rudiments. Elvin Jones could play those exercises out of the Wilcoxon *Modern Rudimental Swing Solos* book—that was part of his makeup.”

Last year Washington replaced Idris Muhammad in pianist Ahmad Jamal’s band for six months. “The first record that really knocked me out was *Ahmad Jamal At The Pershing: But Not For Me* [1958], with Vernel Fournier on drums,” Kenny recalls. “When I heard that, I said, ‘I want to know how to do this for a living.’ Vernel Fournier is one of the master brush players, just a master drummer all the way around. But his brushes were unbelievable.”

After Jamal’s new band had been together only a week, the pianist took the group into the Systems Two recording studio in New York. “We had rehearsals for a gig, and after that he decided he was going to record,” Washington says. “The more familiar you are with the music, the better you’ll play it. His stuff is very complex, so in some cases I whipped out a tape recorder to record the melodies. You take it home and listen, familiarize yourself with the forms, and get the music in your head so that you can sing the pieces. Once you get the music in your head, even when you’re walking up the street, you’re thinking of how you can best play the music. I think we recorded in two or three days, and there was no overdubbing. He didn’t want the musicians in booths, so we were all together in the same room.”

The album, *A Quiet Time*, features Washington, percussionist Manolo Badrena, and bassist Jammes Cammack. “Very intricate, a different



Zildjian/Eric Kralin

kind of thing,” Washington says. “The thing about Jamal, he continues to develop. There are elements in this record that are in the 1958 *Pershing* records. He writes in sections, and he has different extensions and vamps. Plus he uses cue signals, so you have to watch him all the time. You hear things [in his music], different concepts and ideas that were around over fifty years ago, and he continues to take these things to different levels.”

Last year, after cracking an old K Zildjian cymbal that he’d been playing for three decades—a gift from swing icon Mel Lewis, no less—Washington approached Zildjian about making a new model to match its sound. The result is the new 22” K Constantinople Bounce ride. “The idea was to go back to that sound of a lower-pitched cymbal,” Kenny explains. “It’s got that low drone, that low sound. It’s akin to Tony Williams’ cymbal on the classic Miles Davis Quintet records from the late ‘60s. It’s a sound that people want.”

**Robin Tolleson**

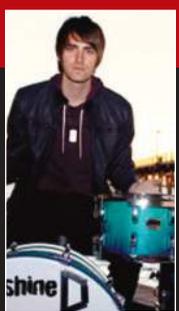
### BLOG INSIGHTS

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

“I played on my high school varsity baseball team. When my parents bought me my first drumset, I started to jam on the drums so much that I didn’t want to go to baseball practice or play the games—even if I was the starting pitcher!”

—**Greg Kaufman** of *Dang We’re On Fire*

“Since the day I was born, my mom has called me ‘the Hammer.’ She gave me this nickname because she said that I came into this world with determination that she knew I would need one day. She was right. I use this determination in the music business each and every day.” —**Michael McManus**



### ON TOUR

**Johnny Salazar** with Janus

**Jeremy Bryan** with Alesana

**Ted Mark** with Dr. Dog

**Michael Bland** with Nick Jonas & the Administration

**Mike Najarian** with State Radio

**Tony Thaxton** with Motion City Soundtrack

**Chad La Roy** with Cavo

**Joey Barnes** with Daughtry



# TERREON GULLY

## A new-millennium funk and jazz master continues to draw inspiration from unexpected sources.

Terreon Gully plays funk like a latter-day Dennis Chambers, delivers heated bop in the styles of Max and Tony, navigates complex sticking with the verve of David Garibaldi, then morphs it all mad with the delay/sample/hold machinations of Photek and Squarepusher. Gully's regular collaborators include bassist Christian McBride, vocalist Dianne Reeves, and vibraphonist Stefon Harris, and recently Terreon appeared on pianist Will Bonness's *Subtle Fire* and Harris's *Urbanus*. But long before the drummer was a first-call fire starter for the jazz intelligentsia, he per-

### BREAKOUT BEATS

The 2004 Stefon Harris & Blackout album, *Evolution*, features Terreon Gully killing



it on a number of different grooves, including Latin, jazz, R&B, and fusion. Gully's creativity is especially apparent on the ballads, where he can be found using a shaker, rods, a Pro-Mark Broomstick, and his signature Pro-Mark drumstick, all at once. "A lot of drummers took from that record," Terreon says. And one listen makes it clear why. Gully's playing reflects a player who draws from myriad influences but finds a way to seamlessly incorporate them into an identifiable and exciting personal style.

fectured his mighty skills in church.

"I came out of church drumming," Gully says. "But it wasn't like it is today, where church music means playing a fill every four bars. It was about being able to keep a pocket, helping the music build, and understanding the importance of a vamp and the emotions behind the music. And listening. Now it's a lot of fusion, and you can't tell the difference between church and R&B."

Along with his mammoth groove concepts and knack for approximating the delays, whirs, and buzzes of drum 'n' bass, Gully plays with startling dynamics. "It's a combination of my being taught timpani, marimba, and concert snare drum and understanding all these subtle rhythms at pianissimo volume level, plus playing in marching band at quadruple forte with arms, wrists, and fingers. It all comes together on the drums."

When Gully enrolled at the University Of Houston, he didn't even know the rudiments, a startling fact considering his ease at firing off a blitzkrieg of notes at will. "I had to focus," he recalls. "I don't remember much about high school except jazz band. And I don't remember much about college except being in the Afro-Cuban ensemble and figuring out how to practice. My Japanese roommates would study at 3 A.M. and go to sleep. So I researched study habits and learned about studying intensely for fifteen minutes, doing a totally concentrated practice for fifteen minutes, and then taking a break. Then I could learn a whole piece and memorize it in a week. That helped me figure

everything out."

Gully has applied the same fifteen-minute method to all sorts of drumming concerns, from learning complex grooves to deciphering independence studies. "I learned left-foot clave that way, step by step," he explains. "I figured out what was happening in each beat. The first beat is the clave and the cascara together, then I took it from there. I analyzed stuff and really figured it out instead of just practicing and hoping I could get it."

Another element of Gully's sound is the unusual tuning regimen of his Premier Gen-X set (7x8 and 8x10 Quick toms, 11x13 Power tom, 16x18 bass drum, 5 1/2x14 brass snare), which draws from particularly weird bedfellows: Aphex Twin, the Police, and Rush.

"You can play drum 'n' bass beats on a big kit, but it won't sound the same," the drummer explains. "Tuning is a major part of what I do—high toms that are reminiscent of Rush or the Police, but a nice meaty middle drum and a super-low low drum. I have the snare tight but not extremely tight. You don't want to choke the sound. And I tune an additional 14" snare deep for a dead snare sound."

Gully's Sabian cymbals also figure into his complete tonal palette, as does the drum corps attack



of his university days. "We would warm up for forty-five minutes with drum corps cadences, playing single strokes and double strokes," Terreon says. "The thing with drum line is playing together. You want ten different drummers to sound like one drummer, so everyone must use the same technique at the same stick height. We did a lot of sextuplets, which helps your singles; a lot ofiddle exercises, which help with doubles; and a lot of five-strokes, to help with control. I still do those warm-ups today." **Ken Micallef**

### OUT NOW ON CD

Latin jazz percussionist/composer **Samuel Torres** has released his second solo album, *Yaoundé*. "Initially I didn't have the intention to do a Colombian jazz album," Torres says. "But as time went on I felt the need to do it in certain styles, from my perspective of living in New York and loving Latin jazz, salsa, Cuban, and African music and realizing how all of these styles can interact." On *Yaoundé* Torres is joined by timbalero **Ralph Irizarry** and drummer **Ernesto Simpson**.

7dayBinge's self-titled debut features **Shannon Boone** on drums. Says Boone, "The Binge is such a great band to be a part of. The combination of musical talent and personalities makes everything exciting. I can't wait for people to hear this record." The group includes Todd Harrell of 3 Doors Down on bass, Jon Nicholson of the MuzikMafia on guitar and vocals, and Kenny Olson of Kid Rock's band on lead guitar.

### ALSO ON THE SHELVES

ARTIST/ALBUM	DRUMMER
Demon Hunter: <i>The World Is A Thorn</i>	<b>Yogi Watts</b>
Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings: <i>I Learned The Hard Way</i>	<b>Homer Steinweiss</b>
HIM: <i>Screamworks: Love In Theory And Practice</i>	<b>Mika "Gas" Karppinen</b>
Rob Zombie: <i>Hellbilly Deluxe 2</i>	<b>Tommy Clufetos</b>
Purdie, McCormick, Hoban: <i>Jersey Blue</i>	<b>Bernard Purdie</b>
Network Of Sparks: <i>One</i> (reissue)	<b>Pete Lockett, Bill Bruford</b>
Roger "Kemp" Biwandu: <i>From Palmer</i>	<b>Roger Biwando</b>
The Whigs: <i>In The Dark</i>	<b>Julian Dorio</b>
Butch Walker: <i>I Liked It Better When You Had No Heart</i>	<b>Darren Dodd</b>
Jeff Beck: <i>Emotion &amp; Commotion</i>	<b>Vinnie Colaiuta, Clive Deamer, Alessia Mattalia, Earl Harvin</b>



# GIMME 10!

PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM  
PROS WHO KNOW

# SHANNON LETO

With **30 Seconds To Mars'** long-awaited third album finally out and an international arena tour in full swing, Shannon Leto is in the perfect place to reflect on what works for him in the studio and on the road.



**1 BE INSPIRED BY THE EXPERIENCES YOU'VE HAD IN LIFE—THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY.** I never want to be trapped into doing the same thing. So I try to remain open-minded. If I'm not open to new ideas, then I'm limiting my creative process.

**2 TUNE THE DRUMS THE WAY YOU WANT TO HEAR THEM IN THE TRACK.** I use different-size toms and different thicknesses of shells for different songs. I also play in various parts of the building to capture different sounds. On our new album, *This Is War*, the song "Night Of The Hunter" took me ten days to get the tom sounds, and having the time allows me more freedom to express myself.

**3 MEDITATE.** I meditate by taking deep breaths in and then slowly letting them out. This helps me be more in the moment while I'm creating.

**4 ASK PEOPLE TO SHARE THEIR IDEAS.** Even if those ideas don't necessarily work, they may trigger another idea in you that does work.

**5 HAVE FUN.** After all, we're making art for a living!

**6 WHEN TOURING, SLEEP, SLEEP, SLEEP, SLEEP!** I try to get eight hours every day. With the time-zone changes of the world, you can get a little bit *craazy*. Also, if I don't get sleep I'm more susceptible to getting sick, which is lame when you're trying to perform. I've learned that eating well helps too.

**7 VENTURE OUT AND EXPLORE WHILE IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD.** I like to do activities such as hang gliding, crocodile wrestling—you know, the normal stuff.

**8 WARM UP BEFORE THE SHOW.** An hour before I perform I take time to meditate, stretch, and warm up so I don't cramp up. Twenty minutes before I go on, I blast some *heavy* music to get my blood pumping.

**9 BREATHE.** While I'm playing I remind myself to breathe, because I forget sometimes. I take deep breaths in and deep breaths out. It sounds corny, but it works when you're playing hard for a while.

**10 REFLECT, ALONE.** After playing a show I disappear in a room for a bit to savor the experience I just shared with everyone.



A black and white photograph of Shannon Leto, a member of the band 30 Seconds to Mars. He is wearing a dark leather jacket and is looking down at a DW 9000 Series pedal that he is holding in his hands. The background is dark and moody, with a faint silhouette of a drum set on the right side.

**SHANNON LETO**

**30 SECONDS TO MARS**

**YOUR MUSIC  
IS ALTERNATIVE,  
YOUR HARDWARE  
& PEDALS  
SHOULDN'T BE.**

You need hardware and pedals you can trust, not some cheesy import brand. DW 9000 Series is serious pro gear. Pedals that help you play better and hardware that never lets you down. Don't wait another minute, buy the right stuff. See everything 9000 at the all-new [www.dwdrums.com](http://www.dwdrums.com).

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## BUFFING OUT SCRATCHES

**I just won a 1997 6 1/2x14 Black Beauty snare on eBay. It's very nice but has several light—not deep—scratches on the outside surface of the shell. I would like to try to buff these out if possible, but I don't want to do anything to cause any further cosmetic issues. Can you tell me the best way to minimize or remove these light scratches?**

**Doug B**

According to Ludwig quality control manager Steve Cotton, "Assuming the scratches don't go deeper than the outer clear lacquer, I'd recommend Novus 2 Fine Scratch Remover. Although it's marketed as a scratch remover for plastics, I've found it to be fairly effective with the clear lacquer coat on our Black Beauty shells. It's available at several common locations. Of course, a very soft cloth is a must for applying the Novus product. If you use a paper towel or something abrasive, then you'll end up with more scratches than you had initially."



**MIND MATTERS**  
Overcoming Common  
Mental Barriers In Music

## REMOVING INNER AND OUTER OBSTACLES

by Bernie Schallehn

**After attending music school in my country, Slovakia, where I took lessons for guitar and drums, I realized the only thing I want to play is the drums. I try to play as much as I can every day, watch music videos focused on drumming, read magazines, and do whatever I can that's linked to drumming. I think about it a lot, but sometimes I feel sad that I'm not improving. I know that playing drums for just one year isn't going to make my skills great—it's something you need to do for your entire life to be good. But sometimes I think I don't have a chance to be good because I'm a girl. Some men drummers are not so friendly to me. Plus my parents don't understand why I want to play drums, and that's why I do not have my own drumkit. Please help.**

**Roberta Dolinska**

Thanks for writing, Roberta. I'm very glad that you're so passionate about being a drummer. Passion and motivation go hand in hand and will help you overcome the obstacles that you'll inevitably meet as you make your way along your drumming path.

Let's talk about beliefs and expectations. You worry about not improving, but in the next sentence you admit—and realize—that if you've been playing for only one year you can't expect your skills to be great. You may have hit a bit of a plateau where your playing seems like it's not moving forward, but that will pass. And here's the kicker: You're better today than you were a year ago, right? Be glad, and own that accomplishment! You stuck with it, and you are, at your current level, contributing your own unique drum voice to the world. Be proud! Skill acquisition for an instrument comes at varying rates for each player. (It took me two years to master a solid conga slap.) So keep up your daily practice, and, as you say, do everything you can that's linked to drumming. That which we think about, we do. That which we do, we become. You're engaged in all the right activities—physical practice, watching videos, reading magazines—that will continue to build your drumming skill set.

Speaking of practice, we live in a fast-paced world and often try to multitask—sometimes working on too many different things in a single block of time. Make sure that when you rehearse you focus on your drums only, cutting out any distractions that may be in your environment. Turn off your cell phone and the TV, and alert your friends and family that you need this block of time to keep developing your drumming.

The men drummers who are "not so friendly" to you are a bunch of jerks.

There are a couple of reasons why they may be acting this way toward you. They may be misogynists (men who hate women). Or they don't think women belong behind a drumkit and believe you should be playing a more "ladylike" instrument, such as flute or violin. Unfortunately, many individuals in our society have preconceived notions about what professions or activities should fall into the category of male or female. Again, these men you speak of may harbor a belief that women shouldn't be drummers. Of course, women can engage in any profession or hobby they desire, which leads me to my next guess: These men are threatened by you. Perhaps you are a more proficient player than they are, or they fear that someday you will be.

Don't let people intimidate you or diminish your love of drums and drumming. Realize that inadequate individuals like this will always exist in the world, but stay strong in your passions and pursuits. (Maybe you can have a T-shirt made that says "Female Drummers Rule!") Also, surf the Web and see if you can find any female drummer support groups—or start one yourself.

Finally, let's discuss your parents. Have you ever asked them why they seem averse to your drumming and won't allow you to have your own drumset? I have a couple hunches as to why, but regardless, you need to have a real heart-to-heart conversation with them where you express your love and passion for the art of drumming.

Here's one hunch. Although they paid for your lessons and came to your gigs, perhaps they fear that you want to make drumming your full-time profession. Their expectation for you may be different, more along the lines of having a conventional nine-to-five job or becoming a doctor, lawyer, etc. Ask them.

Unfortunately, rock music and rock musicians are often associated with a decadent lifestyle marked by heaving drinking and drug use. Ask your parents if they fear you'll get caught up in this, and then assure them that you won't. I think the solution lies in opening more lines of communication. Keep asking questions and making requests, always with a cool head, not allowing your anger or frustration to be present in the discussions.

In closing, celebrate your unique contributions to the world of music, and always remember that you have the right to pursue your passion for drumming. Rock on, Roberta!



**Bernie Schallehn** has been a drummer and percussionist for over forty-five years. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.



# DTX drums

## DTX900 Series Electronic Drum System

### The One to Beat!

We've combined our expertise in acoustic drums with our latest digital sound technology to create the new Yamaha DTX900 Series electronic drum system - featuring the new DTX-PAD with Textured Cellular Silicone (TCS) heads. For quiet practice, playing live, or as a controller, the revolutionary new TCS head's playability and feel combined with Yamaha's acclaimed digital sound technology make the Yamaha DTX900 Series electronic drums the one to beat.



## DTX-MULTI 12 Electronic Percussion Pad

### Whack it! Slap it! Tap it!

The DTX-MULTI 12 electronic percussion pad features 12 pads and 1,277 drum, percussion and effects sounds - many from the legendary Yamaha MOTIF. The DTX-MULTI 12 is the first product of its type playable with sticks, hands, or fingers and has the ability to load up to 64MB of samples to the built-in flash ROM.



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[DTXPERIENCE.COM](http://DTXPERIENCE.COM)

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**TAYE PROX DRUMSET** by Stephen Bidwell

I'd noticed Taye drums here and there in drum shops in many markets since they were first introduced, but until now I hadn't really experienced them for myself. The company is no newcomer, though, as it had been making drums for other companies for over thirty years before introducing its own brand in the late 1990s. Taye's basic philosophy is that "good drums need not cost a fortune," and this plus-size rock kit in the ProX series certainly makes good on that concept.

**WHAT YOU GET**

This monster ProX kit showed up in four relatively light, well-packed boxes. After some assembly, I had a 16x24 bass drum with matching wood hoops, a 5 1/2x14 snare, an 11x14 rack tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and a complete set of double-braced hardware. The drums' gray

gloss finish highlighted the grain of the wood and was accented by Taye's proprietary low-mass lugs. All of the drums came with the company's own Dynaton heads. The bass drum had a clear logo head on the beater side and a flat-white logo head on the front. The snare came with a medium-weight coated head, while the toms were shipped with clear single-ply heads on top and bottom.

The hardware package included a boom cymbal stand, a straight cymbal stand, a ball-tilt snare stand, a movable-leg hi-hat stand, a dual-chain bass drum pedal, and a TS791 tom stand. The TS791 features the base of a DT700 series throne, which creates a lower center of gravity for larger toms. There was also an extra post to mount a cymbal or tom on the bass drum. The ProX series features a standard tom mount that goes through a hole in the shell of the kick, as opposed to the

slide track featured on Taye's more expensive lines. According to the company, though, you can order any kick drum without a tom-mount hole for no additional charge.

**TOP TO BOTTOM**

When I was first contacted about reviewing this kit, I was hoping it would ship with one of Taye's stainless steel snares, so I could get the full Bonham effect. (See the Snare Drum Of The Month review in October '09.) Instead, it came with a matching 5 1/2x14 birch/basswood snare with Taye's SideLatch snare release. The combination of woods made for a nice fat sound at low and medium tensions, but the tone lost some weight when I really cranked up the top head. The most pleasing sound I got from this drum was at a medium tension with one Moongel on the head,

making for a fat '80s-style studio "crack."

The snare release was new to me. When released, it drops smoothly a full 180°, as opposed to the shorter drop of most throws of this style. This could be an obstacle for someone who switches the snares on and off a great deal, but

they were still a bit glassy, given their thin Diplomat-like weight. Through a decent PA, these drums would have sounded great. But for my taste, I needed to use thicker heads to really bring out the low "thud" the drums are intended to produce. I tried a clear Remo Emperor on the 16" and

had an internal ring of Mylar around the interior edge, for a touch of built-in muffling.

## ALL BY THEMSELVES

**Taye does everything in-house. The company makes its own shells and heads, chromes its own hardware, and applies its own finishes and wraps.** The ProX classic-rock-style setup Taye sent for review features 8-ply birch/basswood shells in gray gloss lacquer. Comparable kits from competing companies often lean toward a mix of mahogany and basswood, so if you favor the deep and focused pitch associated with birch, this could be a big selling point. The ProX series comes in a choice of three lacquers and two wraps. Taye ships these drums with 1.6 mm instead of 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops, as well as more modest floor tom brackets, in the interest of keeping down the cost.

most players could adapt to it fairly quickly.

The 14" rack tom tuned up nicely with minimal effort. With a little dampening, this drum reminded me of the floor tom from an early Yamaha Stage Custom kit I used to play. Cranking it up just shy of sounding choked produced a full, round sound, sort of like a bebop floor tom or a Bill Ward (Black Sabbath) rack tom circa 1975.

The floor toms took some tweaking to get sounding right. But I'm admittedly more accustomed to 2-ply coated heads all around. With a bit of tuning and a little muffling, I eventually got the clear single-ply heads to sound decent, although

a coated Emperor on the 18", and with no muffling the drums produced rich, full tones with a solid punch and a brief decay.

I tuned the heads on the 24" kick pretty flappy, which ended up being great for a big thunderous smack. I also tried some different tunings and mufflings (including felt strips and pillows), and the drum proved to have a great range of sounds. While I preferred it wild and wide open, when I put a felt strip on the front head and some Moongels on the beater side I got a more focused but very full "slap" that also had plenty of body and presence. The clear Dynatone head on the batter side

## CONCLUSION

With a retail price of \$1,689, including the hardware package, this ProX kit is a serious value. You get a whole lot of drum for your money, which could leave enough change in your pocket for you to purchase the huge cymbals you'll need to match up with the kit's enormous sound. The core vertical plies of birch in the shells make for added focus and punch, which are often absent in similarly priced kits from other companies. These drums also look very sharp. Everyone who saw the kit agreed that it was an eye-catcher, from the finish to the badges. Again, I wasn't thrilled with the thin heads on the floor toms, but I always purchase new heads the minute I get a new drum. (Taye is currently offering 2-ply heads for after-market purchase.)

If you're used to super-heavy hardware, some pieces of this set (Package C) may appear to be inadequate. But Taye asserts that the hardware can handle professional touring. Through the course of my review, I found the company's customer service representatives to be top notch and very personable, and the shells are guaranteed against defects for five years. Taye is definitely not a brand to be overlooked. And if you need to upsize your rock outfit, this is definitely an option worth some real consideration.

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

**SNARE  
DRUM  
OF THE  
MONTH**

by Michael Dawson

## ZENZIAN 6 1/2 X 14 STAVE PURPLEHEART

**MODERNDRUMMER**  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

**L**ike other Australian drum companies, recent newcomer Zenzian focuses primarily on block (stave) shell construction. In general, stave drums tend to have a drier, more focused tone than their ply- or solid-shell counterparts, making this shell type ideal for snares. The drum we were sent for review features a 6 1/2 x 14 shell made of purpleheart, a very dense and hard wood found in the tropics of Central and South America. Sonically, purpleheart is regarded for its warm tone with increased mid and low frequencies, plus a more aggressive attack than that of softer woods. I asked Zenzian's Justin Scott what type of sound he was looking for when he built this drum. "The sound I was after would be best described as having an even amount of lows, mids, and highs," he replied, "plus sensitivity at all tuning levels. I wanted it to be fairly dry too. In terms of a drummer's sound, I was influenced by Jack DeJohnette's tone in the '90s, when he was playing Sonor Hilite Exclusives with high tuning."

What we found in our testing of this Zenzian drum was that there was no "best" way to tune it—it sounded great at *all* tunings, from deep and



low to high and tight. The best way I can describe this drum is that it's as if you crossbred a ringy Ludalloy Ludwig Supra-Phonic with a warm and mellow solid-shell Radio King. It had an edgy, almost brash attack—which I normally get only with metal-shell drums—that helped my accents really pop through. But at the same time it had a

lower fundamental timbre that kept the overall tone rich and thick. Higher tunings brought out more of the drum's metal-like qualities, while medium and lower tensions accentuated its paunchiness. Very versatile. The drum lists for 1,200 Australian dollars.

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



# PAISTE

## ALPHA BRILLIANT SERIES CYMBALS

by Michael Dawson

**MODERNDRUMMER**  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

**P**aiste's Alpha line was originally launched in 1992 as an affordable but dependable solution for semipro rock drummers wanting quality-sounding cymbals at a reasonable price. All Alpha models are made from CuSn8 "2002" bronze and are crafted in the company's German facility, not in the Swiss factory where Paiste's higher-end series are produced. The Alpha line was reworked in 1997, to upgrade the sound quality, and has since become a favorite among not only semipro drummers around the world but also among top hard-hitting Paiste endorsers like Jason Sutter (Chris Cornell), Jeremy Spencer (Five Finger Death Punch), and Dave Witte (Municipal Waste). This past January, the Alpha series was expanded further with a complete range of brilliant-finish cymbals in varying weights and sizes. We were sent a sample of each to check out for review. Here's our take.

### THIN CRASHES AND SPLASHES

Alpha Brilliant Thin cymbals, which actually have more of a medium-thin weight, are available as 14" (\$175), 16" (\$221), 17" (\$245), and 18" (\$270) crashes and 8" (\$104) and 10" (\$123) splashes. The surface of these cymbals has wide Twenty series-like lathing and large, prominent hammer marks. The markings on the crashes cover the entire surface and are subtler than the deep, sparse dents on the splashes.

Of all the Alpha cymbals, the Thin models were the most playable, having the softest feel and the quickest response. They were also the most all-purpose, delivering classic Paiste tones that were glassy and sibilant with a touch of complexity. The 14" crash was very fast and crisp and had a well-balanced overall sound that wasn't too pitchy or too trashy. It also didn't fall prey to sounding overly splash-like, as 14" crashes often do. The 16" Thin crash, however, was a little too hollow sounding for my tastes. It didn't seem to open up as fully as the 14", and there was a bit of pitchy hum in its sustain that made it a bit gongy. The 17" crash was my personal favorite of this group, as it possessed all of the qualities that I like in a crash: crisp attack; quick response; open, full voice; shimmering sustain; and strong presence. The 18" sounded very similar to the 17", but with a slightly darker sustain. This cymbal is a prime candidate for crash/ride choruses.

The 8" and 10" Thin splashes really impressed me with their quick, crisp, and shattered-glass-like qualities. These were great all-around splash cymbals that sounded just as good as, if not better than, many higher-priced models.

### MEDIUM CRASHES AND HI-HATS

Alpha Brilliant Mediums consist of 14" (\$175), 16" (\$221), and 18" (\$270) crashes and 13" (\$294) and 14" (\$350) hi-hats. These cymbals have the same lathing and hammering pattern as the Thin models, and they feel very similar in weight. When played, the Medium crashes were firmer and less responsive than the Thins, and they had a bit of a pitchy undertone that I didn't find terribly pleasing when I listened to them alone. But if you play in a loud rock band, you probably won't notice these nuances, plus you'll likely need the extra durability these cymbals provide. They were a bit louder and brighter than the Thins, and they had a slightly

## MORE THAN YOU BARGAIN FOR

Although it was designed with the cost-conscious rock drummer in mind, the Alpha Brilliant line offers an impressively wide range of sounds, some of which proved to be of much more professional quality than I expected. I was able to find at least one cymbal in each weight category that I would incorporate into my setup with no hesitation. To my tastes, the Medium and Metal hi-hats, Thin splashes, and odd-size crashes were the overall winners. But there are a lot of options to be explored. It just depends on what you're looking for.

longer sustain. My favorite of the three was the 18" crash.

The 14" Alpha Brilliant Medium hi-hats, however, proved to be excellent all-purpose cymbals. They provided very crispy stick attacks, a warm hiss when held partially open, and a tight foot "chick." I really liked playing two-hand diddle patterns on these hats, where I could explore all the varying degrees of closed versus open sounds. I'd put the hi-hats on par with any pair of medium-weight professional-quality cymbals. The 13" hi-hats were a little more one-dimensional, with a super-crisp and high-pitched closed tone and a throatier, frying-pan-type open voice. I'd personally use these cymbals on an X-hat, where I could keep them clamped down for an alternate ultra-tight sound.

### ROCK RIDES, CRASHES, AND HI-HATS

For harder hitters, Alpha Brilliant Rock cymbals include 16" (\$221), 17" (\$245), 18" (\$270), 19" (\$287), and 20" (\$305) crashes; 20" (\$305), 22" (\$388), and 24" (\$472) rides; 14" (\$350) and 15" (\$396) hi-hats; and an 18" China (\$270). The lathing pattern on these is much tighter and more uniform than that of the Thin and Medium models. There were a few gems in the Rock line that caught my ear by having the most balanced overall sound. These were the 17" and 19" crashes, which had a bright, shimmering tone that opened up surprisingly quickly for such heavy cymbals. The 16" and 18" crashes were a bit pitchy and constrained, while the 20" was a little too mellow for my taste. (I expected that sucker to *roar*.) All of these cymbals required a strong stroke to bring them to a full voice, but the 17" and 19" were the most user-friendly.

The Rock rides all provided a clear stick ping, chiming bell tones, and a controlled but prominent wash. I preferred the "Welcome To The Jungle"-type

bow sound of the 24", mainly because it had minimal wash and a chunky attack. But the bell on the 20" had the most cut. The 20" and 22" rides sounded very similar; it's a difference of overall pitch more than anything else. The giant bell on the 24" gave off more of an industrial anvil-like effect.

The 14" and 15" Rock Hats were a lot of fun to play. They had a strong metallic quality that inspired me to play a lot of reggae-type grooves—they just seemed to have that Carly Barrett vibe built in. These were also some of the first hi-hats I've tried that didn't sound overplayed when I really laid into them. The 18" Rock China was very loud, aggressive, and bright, with a long sustain. If you want more of a short white-noise effect, I'd suggest stacking a crash on it.

### METAL CRASHES, SPLASHES, AND RIDES

For the *really* aggressive market, Alpha Brilliant Metal models come as 10" (\$123) and 12" (\$132) splashes; 14" Metal Edge Hats (\$350); 17" (\$245), 18" (\$270), 19" (\$287), and 20" (\$305) crashes; and a 20" ride (\$305). All of these extra-heavy plates feature very fine lathing patterns and deep, sparse hammer marks. The Metal splashes, especially the 12", had a cool Chinese Feng-gong-type sound, where the pitch distorts and dips when you hit the cymbal. Beyond their capacity for quick accents in extreme metal situations, I can also see these splashes being useful in multi-percussion settings where you want to explore more unusual tones. The Metal Edge Hats feature a rippled-edge bottom cymbal. They were my second favorite of the entire line. They performed much like the 14" Medium Hats, only with the volume turned up to eleven.

The Metal crashes sounded similar to the Rock models but had higher pitches, a bit more volume, and a dirtier timbre. The 17" actually sounded smaller

than I expected, while the 18" had a fast, flashy crash sound. The 19" and 20" Metal crashes were slower to respond but built up to a huge roar when used for crash/ride patterns. The 20" Metal ride had a strong bell that wasn't too bright or high pitched, and its strong stick ping poked through a deep bed of sustain.

### SOUND EDGE HI-HATS, FULL AND GROOVE RIDES, AND CHINAS

The 14" Alpha Sound Edge hi-hats (\$350) are medium weight and have a rippled bottom cymbal. These hats were a bit warmer and lower pitched than the 14" Mediums, making them sound more like 15" cymbals to my ear. While they're intended primarily for rock settings, the Sound Edges blended more than they cut, putting them on the mellower side of what I'd consider "rock."

The 20" Full ride (\$305) was the washiest of all the rides in the Alpha line. The bell was low-pitched and came accompanied by a steady sustain from the body of the cymbal. The bow sound was clear and articulate but not dry. You could also accent on the edge of this ride to get a washy crash sound. The 21" Groove ride (\$348) sounded very similar to the Full ride, just a bit lower in pitch. Either one of these cymbals would make a good all-around ride for soft to medium-loud situations.

Alpha Chinas come in 14" (\$175), 16" (\$221), and 18" (\$270) sizes. All three have squared-off bells and deep flanged edges. While not as trashy as traditional Chinese-made crashes, these accent cymbals provided a quick and explosive attack with a fairly short, hissing decay. The 18" produced the gnarliest tones, while the 14" sounded the closest to a traditional Chinese hand cymbal. Again, for a tighter and trashier accent, I'd recommend stacking some splashes or crash cymbals on top.

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

## PROTECTOR ELITE AIR SERIES CASES

by David Ciauro

**P**rotector's Elite Air series cases combine innovation, function, and practicality. As many drummers have found, suspended mounting brackets can increase a drum's diameter or depth to the point that it no longer fits into its standard-size case. The unique design of the Elite Air models accounts for such scenarios, offering an alternative to buying larger cases to accommodate slightly bulked-up drums. (Larger cases, after all, can compromise the drum's protection, since the fit is no longer customized.)

The Elite Air series positions the drum in the center of the case and secures it with small, strategically placed molded foam strips attached to the case walls. This lets the drum "float" and eliminates the need for cumbersome foam inserts. The design is simple yet well thought-out. The customized fit keeps the drum from rattling around, and the oversize case proves to be quite versatile. If you have two kits, one with suspension mounts and one without, you can buy just one set of cases without sacrificing durability or protection. The Elite Air series offers snare, tom, floor tom, bass drum, and marching cases, plus two sizes of combination cases that allow you to stack 10" and 12" toms or 12" and 13" toms in one case.

The series also offers a cymbal case with wheels and a folding handle, which can hold up to nine cymbals—ideal for drummers on the go. All cases are backed against cracking by a limited lifetime warranty and are available in black, blue, red, purple, green, orange, yellow, gray granite, red granite, or purple granite.

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



# SABIAN

## Xs20 BRILLIANT SERIES CYMBALS

by David Ciauro

The Xs20 series was first introduced a few years ago to provide pro-grade sound at a reduced cost to the consumer. It's a full line of cast cymbals made with the same B20 bronze as Sabian's higher-end AA, HH, and Paragon series, but manufactured in a way that allows them to be priced roughly 30 to 40 percent less than other cast bronze models on the market. The 20" AA Medium ride lists for \$443, for example, while the 20" Xs20 Medium ride lists for \$282. Now Sabian presents the same line in a brilliant finish that has a brighter bite and more pronounced articulation.

### MIND THE GAP

With the Xs20s, Sabian has successfully bridged the gap between beginner and pro models. Reviewing such a line, however, can be a bit problematic because the company's objective was ultimately to produce a quality product, yet one that's knowingly inferior to high-end models for the sake of being cost effective. With that in mind, it wouldn't be fair to compare the Xs20 series to a high-end line and describe these models in terms of how they measure up to admittedly superior cymbals. We also did not have the Xs20s in their natural finish to use as a comparison. So it's best to put ourselves in the shoes of the targeted consumer and see how the cymbals measure up to the expectations of the amateur drummer.

### HI-HATS

The Xs20 line has three hi-hat options: two pairs of Medium hats (13", \$289; 14", \$314) and 14" Rock hats (\$314). The 13" Medium hats were sharper and higher in pitch than the 14" Mediums and had a distinctive metallic wash. When I opened and closed the 13" pair, a tight "chip-chip" came through more than the impressively thicker pulsing "chick" sound of the 14" Mediums. The difference of an inch made for quite a significant sonic upgrade. With a fuller, deeper tonal wash and warmer characteristics than the tinny 13" set, the 14" Mediums felt more comfortable immediately. The powerful 14" Rock hats combined a bright, cutting top end with a tight low-end "chick" but had a glassiness that kept them from being abrasively loud. These are good, solid hi-hats for rock drummers who want to dig in without being overpowering.

### SPLASHES

Smaller cymbals in a price-conscious series, more so than larger ones, often run the risk of exposing the reality of cost-effective manufacturing methods. This is true in the case of the Xs20 splashes. Splashes are all about the subtle character in the overtones, the flash of the thinned-out "caaa" sound, and the ability to add a dynamic alternative to crashes. Both Xs20 models voiced their better qualities when struck hard.



The 12" (\$138) sounded more like a trashy fast crash, with a quick attack and decay. The series as a whole had a thick, glossy tactile feel, and the 10" (\$134) didn't seem to have enough give, resulting in a stiffer, less splashy sound.

### CRASHES

The Xs20 series offers 16" (\$208) and 18" (\$238) Medium Thin and Rock crashes, as well as an 18" Crash Ride (\$238). The 16" Rock crash had a good attack and a somewhat metallic wash that bordered on being shrill. The 18", on the other hand,

overtones. The medium-size bell cut through well enough but felt more like the bell of a crash. A slightly larger bell would help distinguish the cymbal more as a ride. When I played steady upbeat patterns, the overtones overtook the stick articulation. I thought this model actually performed better as a crash and for quarter-note riding with a lot of crash accents.

The 20" Rock ride (\$282) has a larger bell than the Medium ride, and the difference was huge. The bell pierced through with a high-end decay that contrasted nicely with the body of the cymbal,

## PROFESSIONAL SOUND/AFFORDABLE PRICE

It's not uncommon for cymbal companies to manufacture a line geared toward the novice drummer. For Sabian, the B8 and B8 Pro series cover that introductory terrain but use a lesser-quality bronze than the company's standard B20 cast bronze. It's rare, however, to find a line that focuses on what is probably the largest group of drummers: intermediates and amateurs—the students in garage bands who rely on paychecks from part-time jobs or handouts from Mom and Dad to buy gear, and the nine-to-fivers who moonlight on the weekend playing in bars and at wedding receptions. Sabian's Xs20 cymbals are designed for these types of players.

was a powerful crash that lived up to its name and also doubled nicely as a crash/ride.

The 16" and 18" Medium Thin crashes were paired better sonically than the Rock crashes. They were more homogenous, held a wider appeal, and were less brash. They had a nice shimmer and warmth, and their thinner wash made for a pleasing decay. The Rock models felt like cymbals made for harder-hitting gigs. They had a bit more bite and volume but weren't jarring.

The 18" Crash Ride fell somewhere between the 18" Medium Thin crash and the 18" Rock crash; calling it an 18" medium crash would have been just as apropos. It worked equally well as a straight-up crash and a full-out crash/ride, giving off an explosive attack with a full wash.

### RIDES

The 20" Medium ride (\$282) could easily double as a crash/ride. But as a primary ride it was very smooth in its articulation, with a full wash of steady

which had a solid, bright ping but was noticeably lower in pitch than the bell. Both rides had simple tonal washes that remained bright throughout their decay.

### HITTING THE TARGET

Sabian describes the Xs20 as a series with "modern value." This is an accurate branding, and the line is perfect for drummers who don't want to shell out beaucoup bucks but who appreciate good-sounding cymbals that will perform well. The models have power and attack, but the roar of their projection is subdued; considering their likely musical applications (rehearsal rooms, bars, small clubs, reception halls), this is a huge plus.

Also offered within the series but not included in this review are a 14" Medium Thin crash (\$157) and an 18" Chinese (\$238). There are eight sets in various combinations as well, ranging from \$172 to \$1,272.

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



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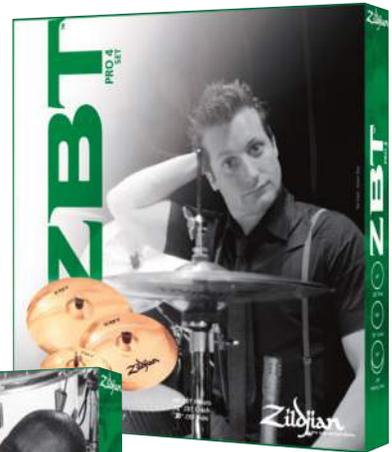
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- Includes quick size 8x10 and 9x12" toms, a 14x16" floor tom, 18x22" bass drum plus a free 7x8" tom
- 6-Ply maple shells for a bright, focused attack
- Die-cast top and bottom hoops increase tuning stability and sustain
- 30-Degree bearing edges for brightness and articulation
- Available in autumn-burst or a transparent ebony finish you can see only at Guitar Center

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**COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**

### GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE

**\$1499<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$960  
OFF LIST

RENOWN 4-PIECE (RNE824-AB)  
(RNE824PT6-TEL) LIST: \$2460.00

**INCLUDES FREE  
EXTRA 8" TOM!**



## GRETSCH 6-PIECE CATALINA MAPLE KIT WITH FREE ADDED FLOOR TOM

If you're looking for a versatile set with top-quality sound and features, you need to check out this Gretsch Catalina Maple set. Its maple shells project a warm, round, classic tone you'll fall in love with. The beautiful UV gloss finish is sure to capture attention and evoke that unmistakable Gretsch vibe and spirit.

- Includes 8x10 and 9x12" mounted toms, 14x14" floor tom, 18x22" bass drum, 6x14" 8-lug snare drum and a free added 16x16" floor tom
- All-maple shells with natural interiors and a custom red fade lacquer that can only be played at GC.
- GTS suspension systems, die-cast claw hooks, hinged tom brackets, Mini Gretsch lugs

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY**

### GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE

**\$749<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$405  
OFF LIST

(MCE825PT-RF) (MCE825PT-MR) LIST: \$1155.00

**INCLUDES FREE  
EXTRA 16" TOM!**



## GET CLASSIC GRETSCH LOOKS AND SOUND WITH THIS 5-PIECE ASH KIT

Known for their ability to cut through without being harsh, ash drum shells give you balanced tone that's great for everything from small jazz clubs to noisy rock venues. Gretsch has been building great kits from the very beginning, and this Catalina series kit is poised to continue their legacy. Step up to this great setup now, available for a great price at your local Guitar Center Drum Shop.

- 8x10, 9x12" Rack toms, 16x16" floor tom, 18x22" kick, 5x14" snare, plus a free 7x8" tom
- 6-Ply toms, 7-ply kick, 9-ply snare
- GTS Suspension mounts
- 2.5mm Triple flange hoops

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(ACE825PT-BF) LIST: \$1045.00

**NEW!**

**INCLUDES FREE  
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## A GREAT DEAL ON TOP-OF-THE-LINE CLASSIC II CONGAS FROM LATIN PERCUSSION

From deep, resonant open tones to crackling slaps, LP Classic II congas deliver the goods. Not only do they sound good, with Comfort Curve rims, an integrated shell protector and hand-selected rawhide heads, these drums will stand up to even the most vigorous playing.

- Includes 11" quinto, 11.75" conga and 12.5" tumba
- 30" tall, 2-ply Siam oak shells
- Pro Care integrated shell protection
- Hand-selected rawhide heads
- Available separately or as a package
- Matching bongos sold separately

SELECT STORES

### CONGA TRIO PACKAGE PRICE

**\$899<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$867  
OFF LIST

(LP1100-AW, LP1175-AW, LP1250-AW)  
LIST: \$1767.00

### MATCHING PRICE

**\$99<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$74  
OFF LIST

BONGOS (LPP601-AWC) LIST: \$174.00

**SPECIAL PACKAGE PRICE!**  
\$160 LESS THAN IF PURCHASED SEPARATELY



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## 42% OFF LP PERFORMER SERIES CONGAS

Ideal for the intermediate player or aspiring pro who's looking for good sound and quality.

- Includes 11" quinto, 11.75" conga and 12.5" tumba
- Built from kiln-dried, environmentally friendly Siam oak with uniquely shaped horned side plates
- Exclusive dark wine redwood finish
- Matador Soft Strike Rims offers more playing comfort
- Available separately or as a package
- Matching bongos sold separately

### CONGA TRIO PACKAGE PRICE

**\$599<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$447  
OFF LIST

(LPP311-DWC, LPP312-DWC,  
LPP313-DWC) LIST: \$1047.00

### MATCHING BONGOS

**\$99<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$74  
OFF LIST

(LPP601-DWC) LIST: \$174.00

**SPECIAL PACKAGE PRICE!**  
\$105 LESS THAN IF PURCHASED SEPARATELY



## AFFORDABLE, TOP-NOTCH CONGAS WITH YOUR CHOICE OF NATURAL OR SUNBURST FINISH

These affordable Aspire congas have a big, powerful, well-rounded sound with added warmth. To match its pure, distinctive sound, the LP Aspire Conga set is available in either a natural or sunburst finish.

- 28" Tall, natural rawhide tucked heads
- Crafted from kiln-dried, environmentally friendly Siam oak
- Chrome plated adjustable double stand
- Chrome comfort curve style hoops
- Available in natural or sunburst finishes
- Matching bongos sold separately

### CONGA PAIR WITH STAND

**\$299<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$235  
OFF LIST

(LPA646-AWC)(LPA646-SBC)  
LIST: \$535.00

### MATCHING BONGOS

**\$89<sup>99</sup>** SAVE \$55  
OFF LIST

(LPA601-AWC)(LPA601-SBC)  
LIST: \$145.00



SUNBURST



### REAL SIZES



Pearl created an electronic drum set that no longer feels like you're hitting a collection of practice pads. E-Pro Live features ultra realistic shells to give you a true electronic drum playing experience.

### REAL HARDWARE



The foundation of e-Pro Live begins with a modified hardware rack. Designed with expandability in mind, the tom arms, shells, cymbal holders and rack are all covered by Pearl's lifetime warranty.

### REAL SHELLS



E-Pro Live features a 6ply wood shell with real hardware and two durable drum finishes—Jet Black and Quilted Maple Fade.

**COMING TO GUITAR CENTER FIRST! PREORDER YOURS AND GET AN EXTRA \$300 OFF OUR EVERYDAY LOW PRICE!**

## THE VERSATILITY OF ELECTRONICS WITH THE FEEL OF AN ACOUSTIC KIT – THE NEW PEARL E-PRO LIVE

The new Pearl E-Pro Live is a revolutionary electronic drumset that looks, feels and sounds like real drums. Never before have drummers been given the limitless sonic capabilities of electronic drums on a drum kit built with real shells, brass cymbals, and drum set hardware. Sized and configured exactly like acoustic drums for a natural and real feel. Pearl's Tru-Trac Electronic Heads not only feature dual zones, the smooth coating on the heads produces a feel virtually identical to acoustic drums. Made of 6-ply wood shells, E-Pro Live can easily morph into a great sounding acoustic by removing the top hoops and the Tru-Trac heads and replacing them with regular drumheads. But the E-Pro Live is more than just a great feeling kit, it's also a great sounding kit. With fully editable sounds ranging from vintage drum sets to digital beats to orchestral to world percussion sounds, the E-Pro Live has almost unlimited options.

- 10 x 6.5, 12 x 7 and 14 x 8 rack toms with a 20 x 12 bass and 14 x 4.5 snare with white heads
- E-Classic high-end electronic cymbals, made with real brass – 16" Ride, 13" chokable crash and super responsive 12" hi-hats.
- r.e.d.BOX module with 128MB of RAM, 1000 High Definition sounds and 100 High Definition kits
- Fully editable sound including tuning, decay, filtering, level, panning and attack, plus effects include reverb, EQ, flanger, chorus, vibrato, delays and compressor
- Includes Pearl Icon rack

**PEARL E-PRO LIVE-  
PRE ORDER**

**SEE STORES  
FOR PRICE**

**(EPLXL05P/13) LIST: \$5499.99**

# QPERCUSSION

## QSTICKS by David Ciauro

Netherlands-based company QPercussion, founded by drummer Luuk Kranenburg in 2004, developed QSticks (Q stands for quality) to add versatility in sounds and dynamics to a drummer's stick arsenal. Specifically designed for playing at lower volumes, these handmade rods are made of white birch, beech, and Scandinavian maple. White birch is used for the model with the lightest weight (called the Whisper), beech for the two middle weights, and Scandinavian maple for the beefiest version. Each wood was chosen for its highly flexible and durable characteristics. To further enhance durability, each pair of QSticks receives two layers of hard lacquer. The four stick weights are color-coded at the base to make for easy stick-bag selection. QSticks are available in natural finish or in the hues with which they are color-coded.

The sticks have comfortable rubber grips; personal preference dictates whether you opt for the hexagon- or triangle-shaped grip. The shoulder of each rod has a small adjustable band that slightly alters the sound, allowing either more or less rod separation.

Each pair of QSticks performed well, with a quick, smooth response and that direct yet understated attack you want from rods. The rounded-off tops enhance bounce and help protect drumheads. Each weight has its own personality, ranging from delicate to just softer than playing with a stick. One drawback is that the colors can rub off on drumheads after a few hours of use, which might lean some buyers



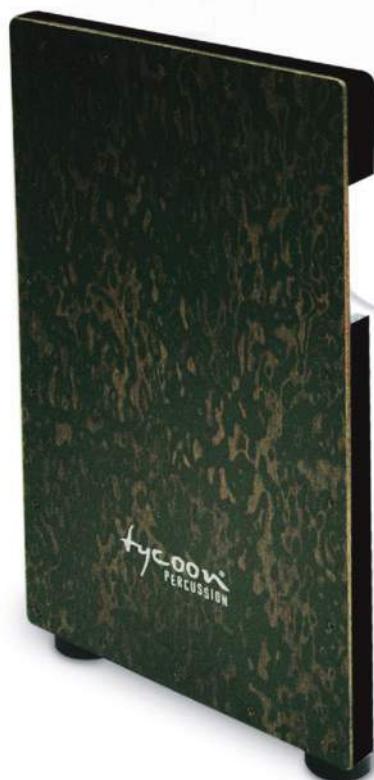
toward the natural finish.

QSticks are sold in the Netherlands, Germany, Spain, the U.K., Denmark, and Switzerland. Although they are not currently being distributed in the United States, you can place an online order by sending an

email to [info@qpercussion.com](mailto:info@qpercussion.com). However, at 37 euros (roughly \$52), QSticks are significantly more expensive than the rods that are available stateside, which typically list in the ballpark of \$20 to \$30. [qpercussion.com](http://qpercussion.com)



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(SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE)

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Drum Workshop • Zildjian  
Remo • Vater  
Rhythm Tech • LP



**STANTON MOORE**  
(GALACTIC)

courtesy of:  
Gretsch • Bosphorus  
Remo • Vic Firth • LP  
DW Hardware • PureSound



**BENNY GREB**  
(ARTIST/EDUCATOR)

courtesy of:  
Sonor • Meinl  
Remo • Pro-Mark  
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**DANIEL GLASS** (ROYAL CROWN REVUE)

courtesy of: Drum Workshop • Bosphorus • Aquarian • Vic Firth

**CHRIS COLEMAN** (CHAKA KHAN, NKOOTB, BOOTSY COLLINS)

courtesy of: Sonor • Meinl • Evans • Vic Firth • PureSound  
Drummers Collective • Hudson Music



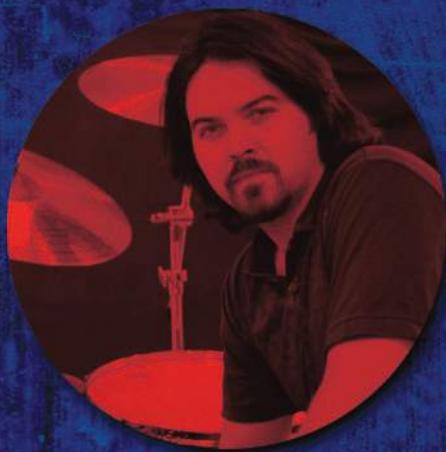
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# EQUATION AUDIO

## MTD.8.3 EIGHT-PIECE DRUM MIC KIT

by John Emrich



**S**ooner or later, most drummers will need to purchase some microphones. Picking the right ones can be a difficult task. To help you out, many of today's professional audio companies have started releasing prepackaged sets. In this review we'll take a look at the eight-piece MTD.8.3 set from Equation Audio.

### THE PACKAGE

MTD stands for "mic tools for drummers." These microphones are manufactured in Equation Audio's facility in China, which makes it possible to produce a full set of mics for the very low price of \$369. The collection, which comes in a small foam-lined nylon case, includes one bass drum mic, four snare/tom mics, and three overhead/hi-hat mics. Each of these microphones is small, like most drum mics available today. Their lightweight design is great for mounting them directly on the drums, but keep in mind that the package does not include clips. Equation does, however, offer a mic clip as an accessory.

The mics were put to the test in a small studio the size of a typical drum room. Each was plugged directly into a Yamaha 01V and recorded using Nuendo 4 software.

### HOW DO THEY SOUND?

The DMI.104.SLF bass drum mic produced a very sharp attack. I started with the microphone halfway into the drum, pointed at the beater and slightly off-axis. The result was plenty of attack that would cut through any mix. I then moved the mic to align the diaphragm with the resonant head. Again, there was a lot of attack, plus just enough low-end presence to encourage the use of a slight bit of compression and EQ. The tone was very consistent and would work within a wide variety of popular music.

There are two types of tom/snare microphones in this package. The DMI.101 is a cardioid mic, and the DMI.102S is configured as a supercardioid. The supercardioid pattern is a little tighter and would typically be used on the snare, where you want to

prevent the hi-hat from leaking into the mic. The snare mic produced a very workable sound and took subtle EQ changes well. I ended up scooping out some of the high-mid frequencies, but that's normal with most snare drum microphones. The supercardioid pattern worked well to tame some of the bleed from the hi-hat. This mic produced a pleasant sound with plenty of definition. The cardioid mics also sounded good on the toms, with plenty of attack and enough body to respond to subtle EQ changes. They would perform well under live conditions with a sound system.

The CMI.103 microphone is a small-diaphragm condenser meant to be used as an overhead or on the hi-hat. You could also use it on small percussion instruments. This extremely small mic is very easy to position. It has a low-frequency roll-off switch (80 Hz) and a switchable -10 dB pad. I found the mic worked well on the hi-hat, without using the roll-off. (It can be hard to find a hi-hat mic that's not harsh sounding.) In the overhead position, I set up

both CMI.103 mics as a spaced pair with no roll-off and no low-frequency cut. The overall stereo image was great, and the mics sounded smooth, with a strong low-end presence. I did end up adding a little high-frequency boost to give the sound a bit more sparkle, and the mics responded well to these EQ changes.

Equation Audio offers the CRM.2 mic clip, which attaches directly to the top rim of a drum and is tightened by a finger knob. Its design functioned well, and the clip fits most hoop types. (If your drums have wooden hoops, though, you'll be out of luck.) Positioning was easy, and the fact that everything is lightweight means your tom sound will not be choked by clipping the mic directly to the drum.

### WRAP-UP

**I was impressed with this collection of microphones.** At less than \$400, it's a bargain that should be considered by every weekend club warrior. I personally would be comfortable using these microphones at a club gig. To check them out for yourself, listen to the two audio examples that are posted on [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com). The first has no extra processing. The second has a little compression on the bass drum and a bit of EQ added to the rest of the mics, similar to what most engineers would do in a studio session.

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





# THE PRIME MERIDIAN.

Watch Chris Pennie and the Mapex Meridian at [MapexMeridian.com](http://MapexMeridian.com). Starting as low as \$589.



PERFORMANCE IS EVERYTHING™

\* Minimum advertised price 5-piece Meridian Birch Shell Pack. See dealer for details.

# NEW AND NOTABLE



1



5



3



4





**1. PEARL's e-Pro Live is an electronic drumset that looks like real drums.** It features 10", 12", and 14" toms, a 14" snare drum, and a 20" bass drum. The drums are built with wood shells and are available in two finishes: quilted maple fade and black wrap. The kit's Tru-Trac electronic heads feature dual-zone triggers, and the smooth coating on the heads is designed to make moving from drum to drum fast and easy. The Tru-Tracs can be swapped with regular mylar heads to allow the kit to function as an acoustic set.

The cymbals are Pearl's E-Classic electronic models, made with brass. Traditional rubber EPC2 cymbals are also available. Both sets feature a three-zone ride, a crash, and a set of hi-hats. The drum and percussion sounds of the kit are generated from the r.e.d.box (Real Electronic Drums) drum module. The r.e.d.box's 128MB RAM capacity accommodates a thousand sounds and a hundred kits, plus space for a hundred user-created kits. Pearl has partnered with digital drum sample companies Toontrack, Sonic Reality, Ocean Way, Steven Slate Drums, Virtual Drumline, and BFD to provide downloadable kits through the Web site [redboxsoundshop.com](http://redboxsoundshop.com).

**The Boom Box cajon (\$332)** creates low-end frequencies from a fiberglass cajon. This instrument features a fixed snare system and a built-in bass port for subsonic frequencies. The Boom Box cajon comes in a red mahogany finish.

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

**2. ZILDJIAN has added two new models to its ZHT mid-priced cymbal line. The 22" ZHT ride (\$296)** is for drummers looking for a ride that's clear and powerful. This medium-heavy model is designed to provide excellent wash and a very clear ping. To augment the existing 13" and 14" ZHT hi-hats, **15" ZHT Mastersound hi-hats (\$344 per pair; \$172 top, \$172 bottom)** have been added. The new 15" top hi-hat is a medium-weight cymbal, while the bottom is heavy with a rippled Mastersound edge for extra presence. ZHT is produced from Zildjian's 88 percent copper/12 percent tin bronze alloy.

**Designed in conjunction with jazz legend Kenny Washington, the 22" Bounce ride (\$868) is the latest addition to the K Constantinople line.** It is medium-thin in weight and produces a pitch that can ride over and cut through most music, from small groups to big bands. The Bounce ride has traditional K Constantinople hammering, but with more pronounced lath/tonal grooves, plus a series of eight "cluster" over-hammered marks on top that are visually distinctive and give the cymbal just enough trash and growl when crashed. The original concept came from Washington's desire to replicate the sound of an old K cymbal that he had been playing for years.

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

**3. GATOR's Artist series drum bags with G-FLEX liners feature multiple layers of impact protection while remaining lightweight.** These cases become rigid when drums are in the bag, due to a piece of PE plastic in the lid and bottom of the case. The wool-like interior

adds a soft layer of protection. The series features standard and fusion sets, as well as popular individual sizes for snares, toms, and bass drums. The line also includes a stick bag and a cymbal bag.

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

**4. AQUARIAN's Super-Kick beater has felt on one side and hard plastic on the other.**

Each beater comes packaged with the company's patented Kick Pad drumhead patch. For double pedals, two beaters are available as a package with a Double Kick Pad.

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

**5. Based on an idea from jazz great Jack DeJohnette, the new SABIAN 21" Vault 3-Point ride features three playing surfaces.**

An unlathed ring around the center of this hand-hammered cymbal produces tight, glassy sounds, while the lathed area between the ring and the bell delivers a more pointed attack. The area from the ring out to the edge is designed for a more open response.

**Praise & Worship pre-packs in AAX and HH/HHX cymbal combinations** contain a splash, hi-hats, a crash, and a ride. As a bonus, a free second 18" crash is included in each pack. The choice of series and models is based on what has proven popular with top gospel and church players.

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

**6. RHYTHM TECH's SMP (Stick Mounted Percussion) Stickball (\$19.95) is a shaker that slides on and off a drumstick and is secured in place without the use of a wing nut or other tightening mechanism.**

The **Stick Jingle-er (\$19.95)** provides a percussive jingle sound and also slips on and off any drumstick. Its securing mechanism is lightweight, minimizing additional stick weight.

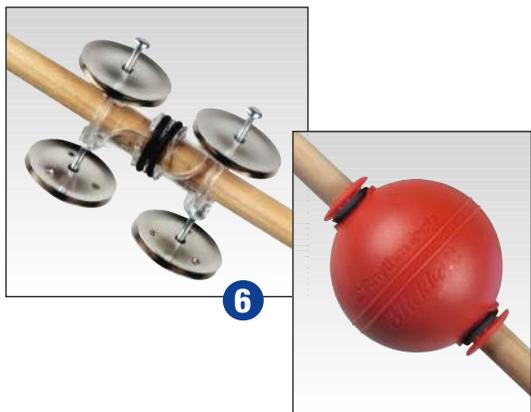
[rhythmtech.com](http://rhythmtech.com)

**7. Utilizing exclusive artwork designs by Corey Miller of the TV show L.A. Ink, REMO's Tattoo Skyn drumheads are offered in two patterns—Serpent Rose and Skulls—**

for snare and bass drum heads. The snare head, in 13" and 14" sizes, features a 12 mil Suede single-ply film for durability and overtone control. The 22" Powerstroke 3 bass resonant head features a 10 mil film and a 10 mil inlay ring. Both snare and kick heads utilize Remo's Skyndeeep proprietary imaging technology, which enables the graphic to be embedded in the structure of the film without affecting sound quality. Prices range from \$31.25 for a 13" single-ply head with the Skull graphic to \$104.75 for a 22" black Powerstroke head with the Serpent Rose graphic.

**Ambassador X drumheads utilize the same film as coated Ambassadors but are 20 percent thicker.** This extra thickness is said to produce greater attack and volume and wider midrange tones, while increasing durability and providing a unique feel for enhanced stick rebound. Ambassador X heads are available in sizes ranging from 8" (\$22.75) through 16" (\$31.25).

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



# GEARING UP DRUMKIT DETAILS— ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Photos and interviews by Sayre Berman

MODERNDRUMMER  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

## TOBY KEITH'S DAVE McAFEE

**“WHEN YOU PLAY HIGH-QUALITY GEAR THAT GIVES YOU HONEST FEEDBACK WHEN YOU’RE PLAYING IT, YOU JUST KNOW IT’S SOUNDING GOOD. AND IF YOU LOVE YOUR SOUND, YOU’LL PLAY BETTER. THAT’S THE HONEST TRUTH.”**

**DRUMS:** Yamaha Absolute Birch Nouveau

**A.** 6½x14 Paul Leim signature snare

**B.** 10x10 tom

**C.** 11x12 tom

**D.** 12x14 floor tom

**E.** 13x15 floor tom

**F.** 18x20 kick with Subkick mounted inside

**G.** 6½x14 steel snare (spare)

“I’ve always been a birch guy,” McAfee says.

“I prefer the warmth of the sound from birch. I also love my Paul Leim signature chrome-over-brass snare for its versatility. It’s my main session drum, but I take it on the road because nothing else sounds like it.”

**HEADS:** Aquarian. “Everyone always asks me about my snare sound. The snare head I use is the Texture Coated Response 2. It’s the real deal! Super-2 clear tom heads are amazing for arena tom sounds. And as soon as I put on my first Super-Kick II, I knew it had the punch and tone I needed, and it’s very easy to tune. The sound engineer, my tech,

and I all love the consistency of the Aquarian heads on tour and in the studio as well.”

**CYMBALS:** Paiste Signature series

**1.** 14" Reflector Dry Crisp hi-hats

**2.** 13" Sound Edge hi-hats (on X-hat mount)

**3.** 16" Mellow crash

**4.** 19" 2002 Wild Crush ride

**5.** 17" Twenty series crash

**6.** 18" Full crash

**7.** 20" Reflector Dry ride

**8.** 18" Full China

“The reason I use Paiste goes back to when I saw Jeff Porcaro playing the original Paiste Signature cymbals in the ‘80s. The sound was unique. I started buying those cymbals the very next day. I’m very particular about cymbal sounds, especially in the studio. Paiste’s quality control is amazing. Let’s say you’ve fallen in love with the sound of your 18" Signature Full crash, but then something happens to it and you have to get a replacement. It will sound just like the first one.”



**STICKS:** Vic Firth. “I’m with Vic Firth because of their great educational programs. When I was in grade school, I was in the school band. The school had a program that enabled us to buy drumsticks at killer discounts. The only sticks they had were Vic Firth. So they were the first and only sticks I’ve ever used.”

**ELECTRONICS:** Yamaha ClickStation

**HARDWARE:** Yamaha Hexrack system. “The Hexrack is a much more complex rack than the one I had been using for the last couple of years, but in reality it’s much easier to set up. Even after several shows, we haven’t had a single problem. It’s very stable.”





## POISON'S RIKKI ROCKETT

### DRUMS: Rockett Drum Works

- A. 6½x14 snare
- B. 8x10 tom
- C. 9x12 tom
- D. 12x14 floor tom
- E. 14x16 floor tom
- F. 16x22 kick with 8x22 subwoofer

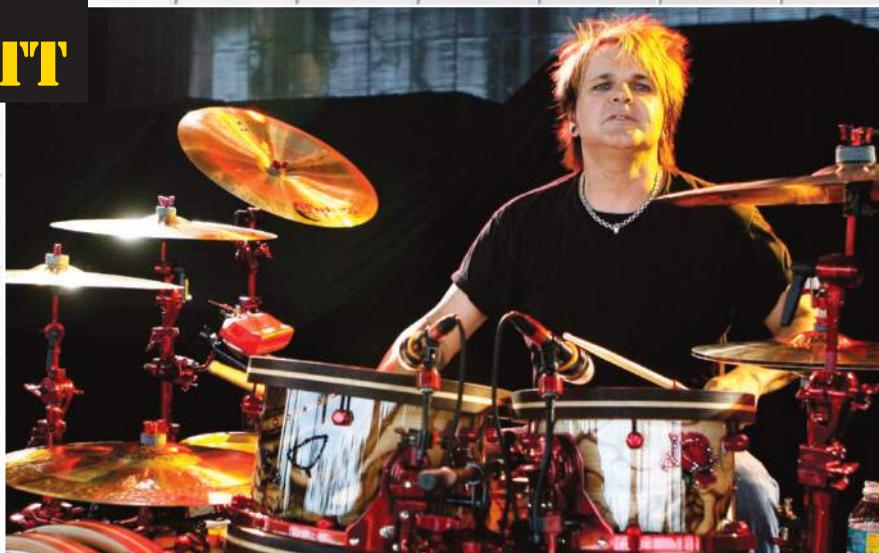
"The kit I'm using has 100 percent steam-bent hickory shells that Vaughncraft made for me," Rockett says. "The challenge was making a natural-wood kit for the Poison tour that still looked 'rock 'n' roll.' The paint was done by Mark Remling. We let the wood show through and incorporated the paint job into that wood. I used wood tom hoops from Stellar Drums & Hoops. I have a metal hoop on the snare drum because I hit that one hard and don't want to risk breaking a wood hoop."

**HEADS:** Aquarian Response 2 on toms, Studio-X on snare, Super Kick II on bass drum

**PERCUSSION:** LP Ridge Rider cowbell and Jam Block (low), Pearl Ultra Grip tambourine

**STICKS:** Vater Bottle Rockett. "It has a tapered grip, which is great because it keeps the stick from slipping out of my hands on sweaty nights."

**HEADPHONES:** Hear Technology in-ear monitoring system



### CYMBALS: Bosphorus Gold series

- 1. 14" hi-hats
- 2. 8" splash mounted on 12" splash
- 3. 6" splash
- 4. 17" crash
- 5. 20" Rockett ride
- 6. 18" crash
- 7. 19" crash
- 8. 20" Master series China

"Bosphorus had been known primarily as a jazz cymbal company, but they're far from being just that. I designed a model for them called the Rockett ride. It has a bigger bell."

**MICROPHONES:** Equation Audio Alpha series mics, Kelly SHU bass drum mic mount. "The Kelly SHU internal mic system works well because I can keep the mic mounted inside the drum during transport. Just plug in and go!"

**HARDWARE:** DW 8000 series pedals and stands (powder coated in transparent candy red by **Extreme Powder Coating**), Drumplates drum anchors. "Drumplates help make your setup exactly the same for every show. They make these little clamshell-like discs that your stands fit right into. They're like memory locks for your stands."



# NEW PRODUCTS 2010

## AMERICAN HICKORY

American Hickory dowels have to meet very strict quality characteristics to be made into a Vater drumstick. Vater only uses dowels that have a specific moisture content, straightness and grain structure to in-turn, produce a higher quality drumstick.



**52nd St. Jazz**  
L 16" • 40.64cm  
D .530" • 1.36cm  
VH52JW

**Swing**  
L 16" • 40.64cm  
D .535" • 1.40cm  
Wood VHSWINGW  
Nylon VHSWINGN

**Traditional 7A**  
L 15 1/2" • 39.40cm  
D .540" • 1.37cm  
Wood VHT7AW  
Nylon VHT7AN

**Hitmaker**  
L 16 1/4" • 41.27cm  
D .570" • 1.44cm  
VHHITW

**DSK**  
L 17" • 43.18cm  
D .590" • 1.50cm  
VHDSK

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VSMSEW

**Power 5A**  
L 16 1/2" • 41.91cm  
D .580" • 1.47cm  
Wood VSMP5AW  
Nylon VSMP5AN

**Power 5B**  
L 16 1/2" • 41.91cm  
D .610" • 1.55 cm  
Wood VSMP5BW  
Nylon VSMP5BN

**Fusion**  
L 16" • 40.64cm  
D .580" • 1.47cm  
Wood VHNFW  
Nylon VHNFN

**Universal**  
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D .595" • 1.51cm  
VHNUW

## NUDE SERIES

The Nude Series sticks are the same dimensions as the regular hickory versions, just without the lacquer for some added grip.

## PLAYER'S DESIGN



**Cora Coleman-Dunham Model**  
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D .530" • 1.36cm  
VHCCDW

This design is as versatile as Cora herself. Performing with Prince, Cora needed a stick that could cover all genres of music without changing models. Cora's design combines a little extra length and a gradual taper to an acorn tip to offer superb response, feel and dynamics in any musical application.



**Tito De Gracia Model**  
L 16 1/4" • 41.28cm  
D .500" • 1.27cm  
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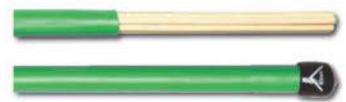
Timbalero Tito De Gracia has a long list of recording and performing credits with major artists from the worlds of Salsa and Latin jazz. Tito's timbale model has a bit extra length for some added weight and is made from hickory for supreme durability.

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# PETE LOCKETT

For six years, the modern world-percussion master cleared his mind and his calendar and dedicated himself to studying Indian music. **Today every drummer with a curiosity about Eastern rhythms is richer for his experience.**

by Mike Haid

**A**t the weeklong 2009 East Meets West International Percussion Camp in Groznanj, Croatia, British world percussion master Pete Lockett blindsided the unsuspecting students, dismantling their rhythmic vocabularies and overloading their already swollen brains with his advanced concepts of Indian rhythms. It was merely another stop on his lifelong quest to single-handedly change the way the drumming world looks at rhythm.

During his career Lockett has collaborated with a plethora of notable drummers throughout the world, including heavyweights such as Bill Bruford and Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez. An amazing drumset player in his own right, Lockett has also mastered many world percussion instruments, including tabla, taiko, kanjira, darbuka, and ghatam. He's an expert at Konokol, the art of Indian vocal percussion. And his constant stream of session dates, world tours, clinics, festival performances, and solo projects is enough to put your average workaholic to shame.

Lockett's most recent book, *Indian Rhythms For Drumset*, is the golden key to unlocking the mysterious and highly advanced rhythmic art of Indian drumming. *MD* spoke with the jovial and witty percussionist at the East Meets West Camp during a break from the otherworldly rhythmic lessons he was laying on us.



**MD:** Talk about your initial concept of incorporating Indian rhythms into traditional Western drumset playing.

**Pete:** It's about vision, in a sense. Originally I was a drumset player. Then I started to learn the tabla, thinking it would give me some new rhythmic ideas for the drumset. But it didn't end up happening like I had expected. It was so abstract. Everything was so different. The way you play the tabla, the way the rhythm works...

For instance, there is a predominant backbeat in most Western music. But when you go to Africa, India, Japan, or the Middle East, none of that music is backbeat driven. It's lyrical-phrase driven. For that reason, it was very hard to imagine any way I could employ Indian ideas on the drumset. So it became a separate study for many years.

For six years, that's all I did. I didn't gig. I didn't do *anything*. I just learned North and South Indian music. When I'd accumulated so much common parlance of the instruments and the rhythmic repertoire, I could slowly start to see different ways of putting it all together. I realized that what I had to do is restructure all of the material that I'd gotten from North and South India. It partly came about from my educational practices, like the workshops where I would teach people the basics of the rhythm and then develop ways to orchestrate those ideas on the drumset.

After having gone through that whole journey, at the end of the day I realized that what we're talking about are phrases and how we look at time. When I'm asked how I play in odd time signatures in Indian music, I say it's the same as playing in 4/4. The phrases may be divided into odd numbers, but it's the combination of phrases that creates the rhythm. So the important thing is learning the phrases and building grooves from them and then creating lyrical patterns.

**MD:** Can you go a little deeper into incorporating Indian phrases into the drumset?

**Pete:** For me it's an amalgamation of North and South Indian music, because they're as different as rock and jazz in many ways. It all starts with the phrases. That's how I've structured my book *Indian Rhythms For Drumset*. I start



**"MOST PRODUCERS USE INDIAN PERCUSSION IN A WAY THAT'S NOT AUTHENTIC. I WANT TO CREATE NEW MUSIC THAT ALSO REPRESENTS THE INTEGRITY OF THE TRADITION."**

with a five-beat phrase, then go to a seven-beat phrase, and then modulate from there. Then I put it all in 4/4 so the whole thing becomes a practical exercise. It's not foreign ground at all for drumset players. The whole modulation concept that Gavin Harrison uses is very similar. This is simply how you can approach the same concept with Indian rhythms.

**MD:** Is your concept to re-orchestrate the various percussion instruments on specific parts of the drumkit?

**Pete:** No, I look at the phrases as abstract linear entities. Then I impose

very simple stickings and orchestrations on the drumset to create the phrases.

Then, instead of taking blocks of 16ths, I've stripped them into rhythmic units—for instance, taking a group of five 16th notes and dividing them between the bass drum and snare to create a pattern. It's all about building your patterns around the rhythmic units. So you start with a unit such as nine-nine-nine-five, looking at that unit as a sticking pattern. Then look at it as a paradiddle-based groove. It's not like a specific syntax, where every "na" is a snare drum.

Others have tried to use that concept for

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the drumset. I think, beyond using three syllables, it doesn't work.

**MD:** How would the three-syllable concept work for drumset?

**Pete:** The three syllables come from the tabla. They are "na," which is the high-pitched note on the small drum; "ghe," which is the open sound on the bass drum; and "dha," which is both sounds together. You can create any two-handed independence pattern with those three syllables. It's an easy way to learn independence. I've tested it on people, and it works so much better than seeing the two lines written and trying to read them.

**MD:** Do you feel it's important for a drummer to learn to speak the syllables before trying to apply the rhythms to the drumset?

**Pete:** It's a finite thing, because there are really only five syllables that I use in the book, which are the main units that all South Indian rhythms are built from. But once you learn the syllables, it's a really useful tool. For example, when I hear an odd phrase, I immediately find the syllables that fit the phrase, and I can quickly subdivide the

phrase based on the syllables. It's a fantastic tool.

**MD:** You're one of the first Western drumset players to really bring Indian rhythmic concepts to the forefront of Western drumming from a true Indian master's reference.

**Pete:** I'm not saying that my Indian rhythms will change the world. What I do is just a doorway. But when you look at the depth of what Zakir Hussain and the Indian masters have reached, it's completely frightening. What they are able to do is from a different planet.

**MD:** Your ability to master both the art of Indian drumming and the art of Indian vocal percussion, or Konokol, is rare, even in Indian culture.

**Pete:** Most South Indian percussionists don't master the art of Konokol. They develop a rough version but usually don't master it. In North India, tabla recitation isn't specifically an art form in its own right. Sometimes you'll hear Zakir and his father recite a composition in the middle of a tabla solo. But it's not a solo thing in the way that it is in South India, where Konokol is actually a part of the percussion group.

I really focused on it and spent a lot of time learning it.

**MD:** So mastering the art of Konokol has been beneficial in helping you dissect odd rhythms?

**Pete:** Yes, it's an amazing tool. And counting with your fingers is extremely helpful. It's good to learn the syllables with clapping cycles as well, so you're also pitching the rhythm against the quarter points of your clapping cycle and the syllables. Time cycles and phonetic recitations are very important aspects of Indian music.

**MD:** How do classical Indian percussion masters feel about having their rhythmic approach incorporated into Western drumset playing?

**Pete:** If you go to England and speak to classical Indian musicians, you'll find people with very closed minds, because they're about four generations removed from India. Their families may have come through Kenya or another African country, and they've held onto values that are way out of date. When you go to India and hang out with the young players, they're very open-minded. They want to explore. There are not many drummers who play Indian stuff that most Indians would hear anyway. Steve Smith is among the few Western drummers really doing anything with Indian rhythms.

My feeling is that they love it. Everything I've done has been very well received in India. I'm releasing CDs on Indian labels that also feature classical Indian music. And they're releasing CDs with me collaborating with Indian musicians. I want to create new music that also represents the integrity of the tradition. Most producers use Indian percussion in a way that's not authentic. There's no true integration of musical styles. I put a lot of effort into putting an authentic angle on the music while also including electronics and sound design.

**MD:** At what point in your career did you feel ready to establish yourself as a serious Indian percussionist?

**Pete:** I got an offer from the British Council to tour the world. The idea was to go out with a couple of local musicians from England, spend a couple of weeks in each country rehearsing with local traditional musicians, and then



Ken Powell / Independent  
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## PETE LOCKETT

perform with them. When I came to India, I had already learned some of the local music of the region. It's very intense music, similar to learning authentic Cuban music. So when I got there I decided to seek out the top percussionists of the region to find out if I was really ready to hang with the heavyweights.

I decided to really push the boundaries and do some shows with V. Selvaganesh, who's the leading frame drum player of his generation. You can't sit on stage with players of that caliber

if you don't have it together, because they will eat you alive. Luckily it was very well received. Bickram Ghosh, who is Ravi Shankar's tabla player, said to me that I had entered at a very high level and was immediately accepted. That tour was seven or eight years ago. I made a conscious effort about three years ago, after getting my foot in the door, to target India and see what happens. It's worked out well. I've done numerous tours and solo gigs and have recorded eight albums.

**MD:** You seem to be everywhere in the

international drumming community as well, with multiple collaborations under your belt.

**Pete:** Yes, I recently recorded an album with Airtio in Calcutta. I also did a track with Mark Schulman for his new DVD. I've collaborated with Nicko McBrain from Iron Maiden. I performed with Steve Smith at the Montreal Drum Festival. And I'll be working with Russ Miller in Holland. I also enjoyed my duet with Benny Greb on his [*Language Of Drumming*] DVD.

I also just improvised with Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez for the first time, and it was fantastic! Instead of discussing ideas of playing Indian rhythms or Afro-Cuban rhythms, I wanted to just improvise to see what we could create, to just sit in the middle and see what happens. It was a special moment, like breaking bread with a new friend. We are now collaborating on a piece that El Negro is sending to Giovanni Hidalgo to record with us.

**MD:** What have you found to be the major technical advantages of incorporating the Indian rhythmic system into drumset playing?

**Pete:** I think not just in terms of incorporating it into drumset playing, but into the whole of the percussion world. It allows me to incorporate new techniques on different instruments. Like with the darbuka, I use ghatam technique. Or I'll use ghatam or tabla technique on darbuka. Sometimes I'll use tabla technique on bongos.

So for me it's all about the whole cross-fertilization thing, of not just the rhythmic system but also the technique. The intricate finger techniques for a percussion player are immense. I was vocalizing some rhythms to El Negro, and he asked how you could ever play them with sticks. I explained to him that it was very possible with the proper stickings. Obviously with single strokes it wouldn't sound very interesting, but with the correct single- and double-stroke combinations it wouldn't be complicated at all to interpret many of the Indian rhythms—certainly less complicated than several of the major rudiments.

**MD:** How did you approach the conversion of Indian rhythmic patterns into your drumset examples for *Indian Rhythms For Drumset*?

The advertisement features a black and white photograph of Pete Lockett, a drummer, in a dynamic pose. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and a necklace, and is holding a drumstick in his right hand, pointing it directly at the viewer. His expression is intense, with his mouth open as if shouting or playing. In the background, a drum set is visible, including a snare drum with the 'METALLICA' logo and a signature. The text 'GET IT?' is written in large, white, distressed letters at the top. At the bottom, the text 'MAKE THE SWITCH!' is written in white, bold letters. Below that, the 'AHEAD DRUMSTICKS' logo is displayed in a stylized, yellow and black font. The website 'www.AheadDrumSticks.com' is listed at the bottom, along with distribution information: 'DISTRIBUTED BY BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION UK / WWW.BRDISTRIBUTION.CO.UK' and the phone number '800-547-6401'. A small vertical credit 'photo credit: JEFF YEAGER' is visible on the right side of the image.

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# KORG

## PETE LOCKETT

**Pete:** I wanted to make sure the examples I played were very simple. I didn't want it to be a showcase of drum technique. I wanted to play the simplest possible variants of rhythm as examples so it would allow people the freedom to create their own ideas within those building blocks. I wanted my drumset orchestrations to be simple examples of the basic units.

**MD:** When producers call you for soundtrack, film score, and jingle work, do most of them hire you because of your knowledge of Indian rhythms?

**Pete:** Absolutely not. I wear many dif-

ferent hats in the studio. Most producers want sounds. Even in my own music, I'm most interested in making new sounds. I make a lot of my own sound samples. I've chopped a ride cymbal up and tied all the bits together. What an amazing, fantastic sound! It's a matter of putting those sounds and frequencies together in the same way that you'd think about the drumset, between the bass drum, hi-hat, snare.... I work with the frequencies to try and make the music sound interesting. Although people don't book me because of my knowledge of Indian rhythms, my

rhythmic repertoire has increased immensely because of it.

**MD:** As you said earlier, so far Steve Smith is one of the few Western drummers to really explore Indian rhythms on the drumset.

**Pete:** Praxis and poiesis is one of my main guiding philosophies in music. Poiesis is an action that contains a goal outside of itself. For example, you're playing music to become famous. You're playing music to make loads of money. Praxis is an action that contains its own goal. You're playing drums because you love playing drums. You've got to have business sense to earn a living, but your main reason for playing is because you love the instrument and you love to play. Steve Smith is a classic example of that. He loves learning new things for the drumset. It inspires him, he's excited by it, and he's moved to action by it. He's possessed with learning new stuff and bettering his skills. He's taken the awareness of Indian rhythms and is moving it forward, as are Benny Greb and Russ Miller.

**MD:** Do you see music as a language?

**Pete:** I consider music a language in as much as I want to be able to improvise with it. As we speak now, I'm improvising with my limited knowledge of the English language. To me, music's the same. You learn as much of the syntax and formalities of the music and the technique as you can, and then you use that to improvise. That's why I don't do any specifically classical Indian music anymore. That was simply part of the learning process for me. These are all tools to develop my rhythmic voice. That's also why I don't play Western classical music. I have no interest in playing specific things off the written page in a classical idiom. I just don't see the art in that.

**MD:** You're a great drumset player. Why do you choose not to add drumset playing to your repertoire?

**Pete:** I do have a Trilok Gurtu-type kit that I use quite often, which I prefer to the traditional drumset. The "hand kick" is like a sub-808 type of thing, very closely miked. I like that approach in the sense that you're limited to using your hands. I feel closer to the hands-only kit than the traditional kit. I like the small, compact jungle snare. If you listen to the recorded examples from the book, none

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## PETE LOCKETT

of them are recorded with sticks. I use Pro-Mark Lightning Rods.

I don't like the sound of sticks on drums. It's too aggressive for me. With sticks and traditional drums, it seems to be either jazz-led in technique and style, or it's driven by the backbeat. With my hands-only kit I get different phrasings, so I can do more tabla-like things between the hands, like Trilok does. It's a very different sound. If you apply Indian drum techniques to the hands-only kit, you get different-sounding ideas. I use the hands-only kit a lot in India. It's really good musically because you're forced to play much simpler parts than you'd play at the full drumset.

**MD:** What makes up the kit?

**Pete:** It's a 14" bass drum, 12" snare, and 10" and 12" toms, all very shallow in depth. The low drums are from left to right. It's the same tonal position as the tabla, so I can use those types of patterns in my playing. I also like using the Zildjian cymbals that you can play by hand, like the Azuka models and various gongs.

**MD:** What are your thoughts on the tonal quality and feel of traditional

handmade percussion as opposed to modern-day percussion that the major companies are putting out?

**Pete:** Certain instruments, such as tabla, you can never replicate. I don't think any company could make a tabla that could compete with the original. One of the most impractical things about many of the traditional instruments is that the skins are very susceptible to the effects of the weather. And many of them have bizarre and awkward tuning systems, especially African drums, things like fish-skin darbuka, and most notably the kanjira, which is made with very thin lizard skin. When you play it, you have to put water inside the drum to control the pitch. The company making the greatest strides in quality replication of the original instruments is Remo. They make a kanjira that sounds stunning; it's tunable, and the skin looks authentic. The new Remo darbuka is amazing as well. The fish skin looks real, and it sounds and feels like a professional drum.

**MD:** What do you hope to accomplish with your *Indian Rhythms* book?

**Pete:** I want to open the door and completely demystify the concept behind



Pete's hands-only kit

Indian rhythms. You're not going to read the book and become Zakir Hussain. But you will learn how the rhythm system works, and what you can do with it. It's like a book of new rhythmic grammar. It's intended to offer rhythmic cells for any instrument, including guitars, keyboards, and horns. You can also orchestrate, and then interpret, these rhythms on any instrument. That's the ultimate goal, to orchestrate and interpret. In fifty years' time, every drumset player will incorporate Indian rhythm as a common part of his or her study. I give the Pete Lockett guarantee on that one!

Go to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) to check out what Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez and Bill Bruford have to say about Pete Lockett's groundbreaking work.



  
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# ERIC SINGER

Kiss perpetually tops the list of the world's most recognizable rock acts. Eric Singer carries a great deal of responsibility for keeping them there by simply being who he is.

**E**ric Singer joined Kiss, history's most notoriously theatrical rock band, in 1991, replacing an ailing Eric Carr, who himself had stepped in for original drummer Peter Criss a decade earlier. (Carr would eventually succumb to heart cancer.) Singer was an in-demand hired gun and had performed with band cofounder Paul Stanley a few years prior, on Stanley's solo club tour. Singer's debut record with the group was *Revenge*, which was released in 1992. During the drummer's tenure, Kiss has rarely been far from the public's attention, continuing to release hit albums and attracting legions of new fans with a series of blockbuster world tours.

Eric Doyle Mensinger was born in Cleveland on May 12, 1958, and grew up in a musical family, listening to jazz as well as the classic rock of the day. "My mom is a singer," Eric says, "and my dad was a society band-leader who exposed me to Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson. Seeing them perform and meeting them when I was a kid had a huge impact on me."

I became aware of Eric's drumming skills when I heard his playing blasting from my son Matty's room

during Kiss's mid-'90s resurgence. Matt was seven years old at the time and immediately became a full-blown Kiss fanatic. Though I wasn't a certified member of the Kiss Army when I was growing up, I immediately connected with Singer's hard-hitting style and developed a newfound respect for the band, including the abilities of former members Criss and Carr.

Over the past twenty-five-plus years, Singer has built a successful freelance career pounding the skins and singing backup for a number of artists, many of whom were his childhood heroes and influences. Besides playing the role of Kiss's drummer on and off for the past eighteen years, he's toured or recorded with Lita Ford, Black Sabbath, Alice Cooper, Queen guitarist Brian May, guitarist Gary Moore, and Montrose, as well as with his own groups Badlands and ESP.

These days Singer continues to hit the road with the band that keeps on coming back to "rock 'n' roll all night and party every day." And he can be heard on Kiss's latest hit album, 2009's *Sonic Boom*, their first new set of studio material in over a decade. Eric has appeared in the pages of *MD* many times over the years, but this marks his first cover feature.

**MD:** What brought the drums to your attention?

**Eric:** Both my older sister and my late older brother played piano and went to the Cleveland Institute Of Music for piano lessons when they were kids. And I remember always liking drums since around second grade. I was really influenced by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Dave Clark Five. Dave played a red sparkle Rogers drumkit, and to me that finish, even now, stands out. Then I got into Dino Danelli with the Rascals and Carmine Appice with Vanilla Fudge. I was like a sponge, absorbing everything. We didn't get to stare at YouTube clips for five hours back then. We got to see one of our favorite groups maybe once a week—one song, and there were no repeats. [laughs]

**MD:** How did you discover jazz?

**Eric:** From my dad. He would take me to see the big bands led by Buddy Rich, Count Basie, and Woody Herman, even the Air Force big band. In Cleveland in the early '70s they would have concerts in the downtown square during the sum-



mer. And Louie Bellson would do drum clinics in the area. Plus there was a local guy, Ray Porrello Jr., who was a really good drummer. His father was a drummer

too and was one of the officials at the musicians union in Cleveland. He was a good friend of Louie Bellson's, and Louie got Ray's son the gig with Count Basie. I remember going to see Count Basie with Ray Jr. playing drums.

Roy Burns used to do clinics as well. And we watched Johnny Carson every night, so I would see Buddy Rich, Louie Bellson,

Max Roach, and of course [Tonight Show drummer] Ed Shaughnessy and Bobby Rosengarden. Bobby was the bandleader on *The Dick Cavett Show*.

**MD:** How old were you when you first discovered Kiss?

**Eric:** I was in high school when they came out, so I would have been about fifteen or sixteen. I used to buy a magazine called *Rock Scene*, and I remember the first time I saw Kiss in there it was a little black-and-white picture mentioning them as a new band on the scene. I was instantly attracted to it, cutting the picture out and sticking it on the side of my dresser. Finally they came to town and played the Cleveland Agora, which was one of the most famous clubs in America

## ERIC'S 5 TIPS FOR SURVIVING ON THE ROAD



**1. SLEEP AND REST.** This is *the* most important thing. You have to allow your body to recover each day. Sometimes it means taking catnaps or doing meditation to recharge.

**2. EAT WELL.** You are what you eat! Us drummers burn a lot of energy, and road life takes its toll if we don't take care of ourselves. Eating fresh foods and staying away from fast food makes a world of difference.

**3. STRETCH.** Take the time each day to stretch your limbs and go for a walk or exercise in the gym. Keeping yourself limber and loose adds to your energy and performance levels.

**4. WARM UP.** It has such an impact on your drumming, especially if you play high-energy music. You'll notice your body and your playing respond better, and your recovery will be much faster.

**5. KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN.** This applies to every situation, on stage and off. You always have to adapt to your environment, musically and personally. By remaining open to other ideas and points of view, we become better musicians and better people. We're always learning from each other, and our attitude may determine how far we go in life. Just as we're taught to listen to others on stage, listening off stage can often lead us to higher places. And I suggest that everyone try to learn as much as they can about the business side of the music industry. It will serve you well. Knowledge is power!





## ERIC'S **SETUP**

**DRUMS:** Pearl smoke acrylic with Masters series lugs (custom kit)

- A. 6 1/2x14 free-floating acrylic or 6 1/2x14 10-ply maple Eric Singer signature snare
- B. 7x8 tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 8x12 tom
- E. 9x13 tom
- F. 14x16 floor tom
- G. 16x18 floor tom
- H. 15x24 bass drum

**CYMBALS:** Zildjian

- 1. 12" A brilliant splash
- 2. 19" Z3 Medium crash
- 3. 19" Z3 Medium crash with inverted 8" splash on top
- 4. 14" A Rock hi-hats
- 5. 6" A brilliant splash
- 6. 21" K Custom Hybrid ride
- 7. 19" Z3 Medium crash with inverted 10" splash on top
- 8. 9 1/2" Zil-Bel
- 9. 16" Oriental China Trash

**ELECTRONICS:** ddrum 4 brain and triggers. "I use the ddrum system for sound reinforcement in my monitors," Singer says. "This helps me and the band have a consistent sound for every gig."

**HARDWARE:** Pearl, including an Eliminator bass drum pedal with a four-sided beater (usually using the felt side). "I like the pedal spring-tight for more torque and power. I also use anti-skid tape on all pedals."

**HEADS:** Attack Terry Bozzio signature. Two-ply medium coated snare batter, medium bottom. ("I use a wide-open tuning on my snare unless I'm asked to dampen it in the studio. I usually tension it on the tighter side for better response and crack/attack.") Single-ply clear tom batters and bottoms. ("Again, I like a wide-open tuning. I like to hear drums sing and ring. I tension the toms on the higher side for response and playability.") No Overtone bass drum batter and front heads. ("I try to use as little dampening as possible in the bass drum, though it varies with each situation. I cut a 6" hole in the front head for mic placement.")

**PERCUSSION:** LP Bongo Bell in chrome finish

**STICKS:** Zildjian hickory wood-tip Eric Singer signature model

at that time. I was a huge music fan, so I was listening to everything and going to see as many concerts as I could.

**MD:** What other bands were you digging?

**Eric:** Humble Pie, the Who. Mott the Hoople was one of my favorite bands because they looked cool, they could play, and they had a rough edge about them. To me, Kiss had a similar thing. There was rawness there, but you could tell they could play. I liked the whole image thing because all the bands I loved—Queen, Bowie, T. Rex, Sweet—had an image. I think it's

great when you marry image, the-atics, and music to create what you are. That's been the beauty of Kiss, Alice Cooper, Bowie, Queen....

My three favorite bands at one time were Queen, Mott the Hoople, and Kiss, which is ironic because I ended up playing in Brian May's solo band years later and in Kiss. And then later I played with Alice Cooper. I loved Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, but those three were *my* bands.

**MD:** What's on your iPod these days?

**Eric:** I've got every Queen, Zeppelin, Sabbath, and Beatles

# THE **UPERSTARS** ON WORKING WITH ERIC

## GENE SIMMONS

To say that Eric Singer is one of the finest drummers in the business would be stating the obvious. Let me put it into perspective:

1. He's got a killer work ethic. This one feature alone puts Eric leagues ahead of other skin bashers and time wasters.
2. His range of percussive abilities runs the gamut from big-band jazz to straight-out, balls-to-the-wall rock.
3. The man is not only a powerful drummer, he can sing most frontmen under the table.
4. And he's cute to boot.



## PAUL STANLEY

It's no wonder everyone from Queen to Alice Cooper to Black Sabbath to Gary Moore has wanted Eric to be the backbone of their band. Eric is without a doubt in the highest strata of rock drummers and makes most other contenders look like pretenders. His spirit is every bit as dynamic as his drumming, and every night I play with him makes me proud that he's there. With him manning the kit, Kiss is now everything I ever hoped and dreamed we could be.



## TOMMY THAYER

Not only is Eric one of my closest friends, he's one of the greatest drummers in rock, hands down. He is the one that drives Kiss. I was watching him play on stage recently, and I remember feeling so proud to be in a band with someone who kicks so much ass.



## BRIAN MAY (QUEEN)

Eric Singer is an utter perfectionist—his attention to detail is beyond awesome. He's also full of passion and fire, and this, combined with a commitment to consistency, makes him the perfect rock to build any rock group around. Eric just rocks.

## ALICE COOPER

There are guys who play drums in a band, and then there are guys who drive the band like a truck. Eric Singer drives the band like a truck. For the better part of the past twenty years he's been my go-to guy. And I never buy a watch without consulting him.

## BRUCE KULICK (KISS, BK3)

Eric Singer is a powerhouse drummer—exciting to watch and great to play with—and that talent always connects with the fans.

## BOB DAISLEY (OZZY OSBOURNE, RAINBOW, GARY MOORE, BLACK SABBATH)

Eric Singer and I have been good friends since first working together on the Black Sabbath album *Eternal Idol* in 1986. I enjoyed Eric's drumming on that first encounter and then when we played with Gary Moore together in the late '80s. Eric always understood my playing well. He got it, and he often tried to get other bass players to play like I did with him because we grooved so well together. He's a special drummer and a special person. I'd work with him anytime.

## RICKY PHILLIPS (STYX, THE BABYS, BAD ENGLISH, MONTROSE)

I always look forward to working with Eric. Anyone who's worked with him knows he's a motivator, and this positive energy makes him a great live performer and a focused drummer in the studio. But I think what really makes Eric such a great drummer is the fact that he's also a great singer. He intuitively creates parts that support the vocals and drive the song. This awareness makes my job easy.

record. I never get tired of that music.

**MD:** Would you say that since the day you started playing, this is what you always dreamed of doing?

**Eric:** Yes! What we all aspire to be may be different. I think there's nothing wrong with it if you just want to be in a band because you want to dress cool or whatever. It's all okay, because it's up to you as an individual to choose your path. My mother said I played the pots and pans as a kid—the same story you hear from 99.9 percent of drummers. I

was a very hyperactive kid, and I still am. [laughs]

**MD:** Did you take lessons?

**Eric:** I had a couple teachers in my formative years. The first one was good, but he was a bit of a taskmaster, and I was shy and sensitive as a kid. Being a good teacher is really only about two things—communicating information and having a relationship with the student. A good teacher knows how to be sensitive to the differences between kids, instead of treating everyone like puppets.

I taught drum lessons for a short time in the early '90s. It helped me, because when you teach you're teaching yourself as well. The big lesson I came away with was that everybody's level of comprehension is different, so sometimes you have to learn several different ways to convey the same information. You might be able to tell one person, point blank, "Here's what I'm trying to show you," and they get it, bingo. Someone else may not get it that way, so you have to try another route.

Getting back to my early drum lessons, I ended up having a different teacher when we moved to another part of town. His name was Buddy Kummel, and he looked just like [famous '60s/'70s rock DJ] Wolfman Jack. Buddy always had a smile on his face, and though he didn't have the technical teaching abilities of my first teacher, he did have the one thing I thought was more important: communication skills. He knew how to make lessons fun, enjoyable, and encouraging. Right away, instead of feeling intimidated, I enjoyed taking drum lessons. When I think about him now, I smile—what a great atmosphere he created.

**MD:** You've worked with so many people over the years. What advice can you offer for becoming a successful journeyman?

**Eric:** If you're a drummer auditioning for a band, it's not about being "better," it's about being the right person for the job. Having great hands or the fastest feet—that's all fine. But it's all about playing music. It's also about working with people—getting along and fitting into situations. Those are social skills, which you need to learn as well. Those might be the *most* important skills to develop if you want to make music a career.

I've been fortunate to make a living playing the drums for over twenty-five years, and if I've taken anything away from my experiences, it's that you have to learn how to get along with people and fit in. Those skills are applicable to whatever you do in life. Ultimately it's about giving people what they want, on stage and off.

**MD:** How is it working for Gene Simmons

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## ERIC SINGER

and Paul Stanley?

**Eric:** Once you have their confidence, they're not hard to work for. In fact, they're actually a lot of fun. But you always have to remember: These guys *created* something. They know how they want things done. It's not about doing it your way or even trying to get them to understand your way. You're there because they believe you can give them what they need. You should have the common sense and maturity to recognize that you're there to fit into a situation that was established before you came along. You have to find a way to work within the rules and the style and direction of what people want. If you want to do it your way, then start your own band. A lot of people don't get this. I don't mean you have to mimic somebody verbatim—though if somebody does ask you to do that, well, then you should do that to the best of your ability.

I remember preparing to play with Brian May. When I would learn his songs, whether they were from his solo record or the Queen records, I would try to really replicate the drum parts.

## Boom Boom, Up Go The Lights Eric Singer's Listeners Guide

### RECORDINGS

**Kiss** *Revenge*, *MTV Unplugged*, *Sonic Boom* // **Alice Cooper** *The Eyes Of Alice Cooper*, *Brutal Planet* // **Badlands** *Badlands* // **28IF** *28IF* // **Black Sabbath** *Seventh Star*

### FAVORITES

**Queen** all (Roger Taylor) // **Led Zeppelin** all (John Bonham) // **Buddy Rich** all (Buddy Rich) // **Pat Travers** *Go For What You Know* (Tommy Aldridge) // **Montrose** *Montrose* (Denny Carmassi) // **The Beatles** all (Ringo Starr) // **Captain Beyond** *Captain Beyond* (Bobby Caldwell) // **Jeff Beck** *Rough And Ready* (Cozy Powell)



Granted, you're never going to cop somebody's exact feel, because that just doesn't happen. But you try to get as close as you can and make [the artist] feel as comfortable and secure as possible. That gives them confidence in you.

**MD:** What have you learned from the great leaders you've played with over the years?

**Eric:** I've learned something from everyone I've ever worked with—Gene and Paul, Alice Cooper, Brian May.... I've learned about music, about business, about playing in a band. I've learned a lot from Gene and Paul about performance. They're all about being entertainers, and I give them credit for that. I can tell you this: If you put all the business things aside, they both *love* being in Kiss and

being on stage performing for the fans. I've especially noticed that on this past tour. They both seem to have a different kind of vibe about how they're approaching performing. I can tell they're really enjoying and cherishing it now, because they know they've been doing this for a long time—and let's face it, we all know we can't do it forever. So I think they're having a newfound appreciation for what they do. They've been going for close to forty years now. That's a long time.

**MD:** Besides playing the drums, you're also singing for most of the night. Any tips on singing while drumming?

**Eric:** I kind of learned how to do it just by doing it. I'm not a trained vocalist. I don't have proper technique, and I'll be the first to say it. But I try to stay relaxed

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and use my diaphragm and move air. I sing from energy and emotion and just go for it. I basically know how to sing one way on stage, and that's full tilt, as loud and as hard as I can. I sing all the high harmonies, and I sing lead on "Black Diamond" and "Nothin' To Lose." I also sing double lead on "She" and "Parasite."

I do find it's really difficult to sing if I'm feeling run down or getting sick. I

worry more about my singing than I do about my drumming, because I realize my role as a background singer has become an important tool that the band relies on me for. I take a lot of responsibility for being able to sing. To me, singing is just like drumming—it's all about being on the money every night. I try to sing in key, have good pitch, sing the right parts, and do it in a way that adds to what we do. Our guitarist

Tommy Thayer is pretty good about telling me things like, "Be careful with those vocals. I think you're pushing a little hard and you're getting a little bit sharp." I tend to sing sharp if I'm trying to push hard or overcompensate for one reason or another.

The same thing is true with the drumming. Once in a while Paul will say, "On this song it seems like you're getting a little too fast. We've got to chill out." So, I always tell the guys, if something seems wrong, tell me and I'll remember it for the next show. I'll make a conscious effort to retrace my steps: What was I doing? What was I thinking? How was I feeling? I don't try to overthink it, but you do need to recognize and be mentally conscious of the moments when people tell you it doesn't feel right.

**MD:** Do you use a click?

**Eric:** Not on stage. I know a lot of bands where the drummer plays along to a click but the rest of the band doesn't. I've always thought that's weird—it seems like one is chasing the other. It works for a lot of bands, but I think if you're going to play together you should *all* work on timing. If everybody has reasonably good time, the music will breathe naturally. But to put it all on the drummer's shoulders and sit back and think, *I'm just going to follow him....* A drummer is not just a metronome that everybody plays along to. Sometimes people will say, "That drummer has such great time, he's like a metronome." But when I think about a metronome or a drum machine, I don't think of it feeling good.

**MD:** Do you use a machine or click in your practice routine?

**Eric:** Yes. When I practice on my own I'll play along to a drum machine or to the radio set to a rap station, because that music is usually done with machines. I'll use that as a reference to help develop my timing during fills and my inner clock. Ultimately you should be able to turn the click off and still have good time. Some people naturally have a better sense of time than others. That's how you find out things like when you do a fill you always feel you're pushing ahead, or you sometimes slow down during certain sections. Playing to a metronome can help you recognize those things so you can work on them. But,

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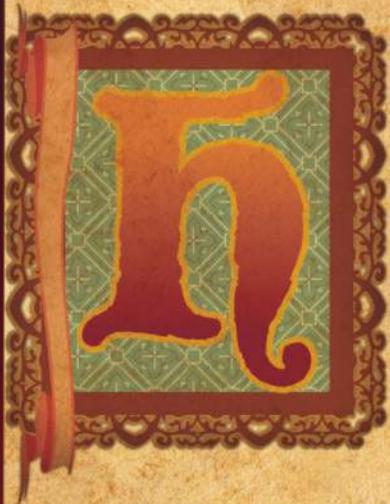
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## ERIC SINGER

again, you should be able to turn it off. I've noticed some guys who are so used to playing with a click that the minute they turn it off, they're sloppy and all over the place.

**MD:** You don't want it to become a crutch.

**Eric:** Right, and to me that's what's not good about playing to a click all the time. When I practice on my own, I'll play to a click, but I'm using it as a tool.

**MD:** What are some of the things you practice with it?

**Eric:** Working on licks, playing a double bass pattern to build up stamina, soloing over a double bass feel, or just playing straight 16ths. I want to work on things in the context of being in time. Because having a bag of tricks, if you can't apply them musically, it's like: So what? You've got to be able to use them musically and play them in time.

**MD:** Tell us about recording the latest Kiss record, *Sonic Boom*.

**Eric:** I recorded that live—I didn't play to a click at all—and the songs were mostly done in two or three takes.

**MD:** What about the new *Kiss Classics*?

You recut all those tracks, correct?

**Eric:** Yes, and some of them were done with clicks. For some songs, like "Forever," I played along to the original. That song was originally done with a click track. A couple times, to save time, rather than having everybody relearn the arrangement, I said, "Guys, I already know the arrangement. Why don't you just have me cut the drums on my own? Then you can put your parts on." With some of them I couldn't do that, because they weren't done with clicks in the '70s. It feels cool and it absolutely has a vibe, but the timing is all over the place at times. We did fifteen songs very quickly. I did twelve songs in one day and three the next afternoon.

**MD:** On this tour you're back to using a double bass setup.

**Eric:** Yeah, I have a smoked Plexiglas kit that Pearl made especially for me, with 24" bass drums. For years I was using single bass. Sometimes it was a 24", though I was using a 26" for a while as well.

**MD:** Do you prefer playing two bass drums to using a double pedal?

**Eric:** I like both ways. As every drummer knows, there is a difference. You can get used to either method. If I've got a choice, though, I prefer two separate bass drums.

**MD:** How do you tune them?

**Eric:** I like to tune the left bass drum a little lower than the right so that you know it's two different drums. Just like you wouldn't tune two floor toms the same. I don't go for real drastic intervals between the drums, but sometimes I'll lead with my left foot, so I want the lower drum to be the left one. I don't know why I lead with the left, it's just how I learned to do it, even though I'm right-handed. Part of it has to do with the fact that sometimes I'll do certain fills between the rack tom, the floor tom, and then the two bass drums, and the way I end it will be left, right with the hands and then right, left with the feet, so it descends. But when I play 16th notes or triplet stuff with the feet, I lead with my right.

**MD:** How consistent are you with your drum solos?

**Eric:** Sometimes I change it up,

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depending on how I feel. Some nights I'll go longer or do something different. Honestly, I don't really like drum solos. But some bands want you to do it basically so that everyone else can have a break. [laughs] Some drummers like to do their thing during solos, but I've always felt the most important thing is how you perform within the context of the music. That's what I would rather concentrate on. Most people in the audience aren't drummers, so if you get too technical it goes over their heads. I'm playing to the whole audience, and I'm trying to entertain people from three-year-old kids to people in their seventies. So I've got to think about the big picture.

**MD:** What do you consider a highlight of your long and varied career?

**Eric:** Doing the *Kiss Unplugged* show and album for MTV. Playing those songs in a more stripped-down way made me rethink my approach to them. On the *Revenge* tour I was playing a lot of double bass and more fills because at the time that was what was going on—a bit of overplaying. But now sometimes

when I hear that stuff I cringe, like, *What was I thinking?* But for *Unplugged* I like the fact that I took the time to go back and really listen to the records and make a more conscious effort to play the songs like they were done originally.

**MD:** You played alongside Peter Criss on *Unplugged*. How would you compare your playing?

**Eric:** I hate to make comparisons between me, Eric Carr, and Peter Criss. I believe each drummer was the right drummer for Kiss at that particular time. Peter had a certain vibe that worked undeniably well with the four original guys. I mean, we wouldn't be talking today about my being in Kiss if it wasn't for those four guys. You have to give props to Gene, Paul, Peter, and Ace [Frehley] for being unique. They created this thing for themselves that's more than just a band; it's a *brand*. Even if you don't know the music, people know who Kiss is. But unfortunately, just like in marriages, sometimes people go in different directions and grow apart. They were in their early twenties when they started out. I'm fifty-one now; I'm

not the same person I was when I was twenty-five. Add to that the fact that they were four very different personalities, plus the effects of wealth, fame, egos, and whatever other problems there were. Things change.

**MD:** How do you respond to nonbelievers who say this isn't the "real" Kiss?

**Eric:** Well, this is what Kiss is, like it or not. Good, bad, or indifferent, this is the gig. I think it's like trying a new restaurant. If I like the food and the service, I'll go back; if I don't, I won't. I would only ask fans to be open-minded. Come see the show, and then form your opinion. Don't be so emotional about it just because it's not all the original band members. It's just music, it's just a band. It's personal to me because it's my life, but Kiss is not solving the problems of the world. Hopefully we're making people's lives fun and enjoyable by playing music. That's all it's ever been about.

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



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# ELLIOT HUMBERTO KAVEE

Henry Threadgill's drummer is an original player because he's an original thinker, viewing his craft as nothing less than a way to paint pictures, to tell stories, to "direct movement through imagination."

Story by Ken Micallef  
Photos by Paul La Raia



**D**rummer, multi-instrumentalist, and composer **Elliot Humberto Kavee** doesn't approach the drums from one angle—not when many distinct and thoroughly dissected angles will do. A regular presence on New York City's creative improvisation scene, Kavee is exceptionally skilled at making his adventurous polyrhythmic pursuits sound as simple as a 2-and-4 backbeat. Deep within the confines of his rambling forward-motion grooves, Kavee has done the deep work required to make difficult drumming sound natural, free, and easy.

A graduate of California's Institute Of The Arts, where he studied gamelan and West African and Indian drumming, Kavee is part mad scientist of the skins, part philosopher, part serious and skilled technician. On some of his earliest recordings with pianist Omar Sosa, Kavee brings what sounds like a folkloric dance approach to the drums, his rhythms breathing along with Sosa's esoteric vocal and piano utterances. On Fieldwork's *Simulated Progress*, Kavee joins in the trio's combustible perambulations, exchanging ideas, tossing back bombs, creating dense figures from integral drumming dust. With Henry Threadgill's *Zooid*, Kavee's driving cymbal-directed rhythms recall the waves of the ocean—but also the groove machinations of studio legend Earl Palmer or Little Feat's Ritchie Hayward.

Kavee has distilled years of training, interaction, and improvisation into a style that at times is deceptively simple and at other times reaches the breaking point of complexity. Among his most unusual pursuits is his solo cello/drum work. For these recordings—*Elliot Humberto Kavee*, *Robert Is Forty*, and *Live At The Internet Cafe*—Kavee positions the cello between his legs while sitting at the kit. As his feet tap out support rhythms, he plays the cello traditionally, radically, and bizarrely, using it as both a melodic and a rhythmic device. Free your mind, and your hands will follow.

Kavee has also recorded a handful of trio recordings, including *Lament Of Absalom*, *White House Tapes*, and *Sangre*, working with similar free spirits Francis Wong, Trevor Dunn, and William Roper. And many have taken notice of his involvement with various theater and dance troupes, his work with Frame and Club Foot Orchestra, and his scores for G.W. Pabst's *Pandora's Box* (performed at Lincoln Center) and CBS TV's *The Twisted Tales Of Felix The Cat*. The leaders Elliot has worked with include Joseph Jarman, Steve Coleman, Don Cherry, Cecil Taylor, Ben Goldberg, Glenn Horuchi, Myra Melford, Tim Berne, Jon Jang, and Rudresh Mahanthappa.

Kavee lives on City Island in the Bronx, the farthest point from Manhattan that's still in New York City. Once home to an ancient fishing village, the region is populated with residents who are now part of New York's bustling vibrations but are also well apart from them. An oasis of calm amidst the city that never sleeps, City Island mirrors Kavee's unique position in the creative improvisation scene.



**MD:** Your drumming is hard to quantify or describe in a nutshell.

**Elliot:** My drumming not being easily quantifiable has led to many people calling me to play their music. Most people I work for have an original point of view in their music. They want someone with a similar outlook. I really work their music.

**MD:** What do you mean by "really work their music"?

**Elliot:** Looking at it from different points of view. What is the rhythmic structure of the piece? What is the form? I take apart different kinds of rhythms within individual bars to see what I can draw from them. If you have a rhythmic structure in seven, there are many variables you can use to play that. I've worked out different formulas.

Say you've got a meter of eleven. You can divide it as three, three, three, and two. But that can also imply a seven. If a rhythm is in seven as two, two, two, one, often we will play that as straight pulses. But sometimes we'll "tripletize" a rhythm, like swinging it. For example, if you play a bar of seven and it's two, two, two, one and then you repeat it, you might do the triplet version played as three, three, three, two. So the triplet cleans up at the end.

You can adjust or finesse it a little bit. That rounds off the time and opens things up to metric modulations and directions you can take that aren't so obvious. It makes the relationship between pulse and meter a little more fluid. And it works all the spaces



## ELLIOT'S SETUP

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- D.** 14x18 bass drum

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- 2.** 19" 1950s A with rivets
- 3.** 20" 1950s A

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**STICKS:** **Vic Firth** American Custom SD2 Bolero sticks, **Regal Tip** Classic brushes

between all these rhythms. You can rearrange the rhythms into half time, double time, different pulses, taking the rhythms outside the meter and thinking of them as a string of pulses so you can move them around the bar. [See music sidebar.]

**MD:** Where did you do that recently?

**Elliot:** Henry Threadgill will have longer cycles, like a cycle of eighty-one quarter-note beats divided into several kinds of bars. My bars will be different from the other musicians'; their downbeats are in different places. With Fieldwork we were doing things with really short cycles. That involved a lot of displacement. With Threadgill the displacement happens from dealing with different bars but also from moving them around. It keeps everything moving. We know the basic material and the time cycles, but we're able to move

the relationships around, sometimes on the fly. Sometimes I will set up exercises with bars in different combinations just so I can hear the entire form in as many ways as possible. The listener will hear the alteration and where we're hitting together and where we're hitting in opposition. But it's not so much a pattern of accents but the result of hitting these combinations and rhythms and improvising so the relationships are really spontaneous.

**MD:** Have klezmer, tango, or gypsy rhythms influenced your drumming?

**Elliot:** Not really. To the degree that dance has influenced me, it's being aware of movement. As drummers we are choreographing movement. We're composing with movement as well as rhythmic patterns and colors. I've been really conscious of directing movement through imagination. As drummers we have a

## RECORDINGS

**Henry Threadgill's Zoid** This Brings Us To, Volume I; Pop Start The Tape, Stop // **Fieldwork** Simulated Progress, Your Life Flashes // **Rudresh Mahanthappa** Mother Tongue, Black Water // **Myra Melford's Be Bread** The Image Of Your Body // **3 Big Guys +1** 3 Big Guys +1 // **Omar Sosa** Prietos // **Elliot Humberto Kavee** Elliot Humberto Kavee

## FAVORITES

**Miles Davis Quintet** Miles Smiles (Tony Williams) // **Freddie Hubbard** Super Blue (Jack DeJohnette) // **Steely Dan** The Royal Scam (Bernard Purdie, Rick Marotta) // **John McLaughlin Trio** Live At The Royal Festival Hall (Trilok Gurtu) // **Frank Zappa** Shut Up 'N Play Yer Guitar Some More (Vinnie Colaiuta) // **Flora Purim & Airtó** Humble People (Airtó Moriera) // **Wayne Shorter** Speak No Evil (Elvin Jones) // **George Benson** In Flight (Harvey Mason) // **Dave Grusin** One Of A Kind (Steve Gadd) // **Toto** The Seventh One (Jeff Porcaro)

## PULSE/METER EXERCISES by Elliot Humberto Kavee



**O**ne common way to state seven is by playing three groupings of two, followed by a single 8th note (2-2-2-1).



You can "tripletize" that phrase by replacing the twos with threes and the single note with a two-note grouping (3-3-3-2). This gives you a pattern in eleven that still feels like it's in seven.



Here's a basic pattern in fourteen: 2-2-2-1, 2-2-2-1.



Using the method above, you can tripletize that figure so it becomes 3-3-3-2, 3-3-3-2.



Here are some quick tips to help you master these ideas:

**1. Use your ears to adjust the pulse and keep the groove in the sweet spot.** You have to make some minute timing adjustments to get the pulse to fit the meter. Train your ears, hands, and feet to feel the similarity between 2-2-2-1 and 3-3-3-2.

**2. Start with RLL for the threes and RL for the twos** until you have internalized the concept.

**3. Apply this concept to other rhythms** that are made up of twos and ones, replacing them with threes and twos, and vice versa. For instance, the common 12/8 bell pattern (2-2-1-2-2-2-1) becomes 3-3-2-3-3-3-2 when you apply the substitutions. And the traditional cascara pattern (2-2-1-2-1-2-1-2-2-1) becomes 3-3-2-3-2-3-2-3-3-2.

**4. Try substituting fives and threes for the threes and twos** (quintupletizing!). The "eleven as seven" pattern in Example 2 would become 5-5-5-3.

To conclude, here's a breakdown of the patterns in my composition "Peril," from the Fieldwork album *Simulated Progress*. I start by tripletizing the traditional 12/8 bell pattern (2-2-1-2-2-2-1) to turn it into nineteen. The groupings are now 3-3-2-3-3-3-2.



Now add 2-2-1, 2-2-2-1, 2-2-2-1 underneath.



Here's how it looks on the full kit, phrased in 19/8.



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## ELLIOT HUMBERTO KAVEE

skeletal system, we're dropping our arms as a yield to gravity, we catch the rebound, then create movement. We can move the point of view into our stomach or picture our skeleton [playing]. That takes drumming out of this realm of numbers and meter, and it becomes pure movement. It changes the qualities of energy.

**MD:** Where did you learn to do this?

**Elliot:** My first teacher, George Marsh, teaches a system called Inner Drumming. He had us do visualizations where we'd picture our thoughts and our energies moving between each limb. It's feeling the energy of your body and directing that with your thoughts. It diminishes the separation between your mind and your body.

I really think drumming is a gateway to all the other arts. We're dealing with storytelling, which is theater, we're using our entire body like dancers, and sometimes we paint pictures like visual artists. We can compose in so many media as drummers. I was born in San Francisco, I worked at [the jazz venue] Keystone Corner. I got to see everyone play—Max Roach, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Ed Blackwell, Billy Higgins, all at this small club. Being able to see Elvin's feet and hands, or Billy Higgins playing this five-note fill from the A to the B section and swinging like crazy, and he's smiling. Vinnie Colaiuta fresh off the road from Frank Zappa. That sense of performance was a major influence.

**MD:** How did you bring all that into

your playing from a purely mechanical standpoint?

**Elliot:** A lot of it was from George Marsh's Inner Drumming exercise. You're picturing your energy moving from limb to limb. His book [*Inner Drumming*] explains it. When I was at CalArts we did this mad scientist thing of writing down every rhythmic combination, how many ways you can divide different meters, trying to figure out each one over the other ones. For instance, if you're playing five over three, you graph out fifteen beats, then block off groups of three and groups of five and see where they lie. Then you do the pulses really slowly and find the accents. And then you figure out the movement on the drums to be able to play the rhythms around the kit.

**MD:** Did you approach this rudimentally?

**Elliot:** Not so much. I studied the rudiments with Anthony Cirone, who was my first percussion teacher back in high school. But I drew more from pure pulse rhythmic combinations. Not so much rudiments, in terms of what I'm really pursuing. I reduced everything to the essentials, like visualization. You can touch the drum with so much concentration that it may not even make a sound at all, then you build up your sound from that. That approach removes the clichés.

**MD:** Your rhythms are more cymbal driven than drum driven much of the time.

**Elliot:** That's something I learned from George, just yielding to gravity when

playing the cymbal. Like dropping your arm and letting the stick rebound off the cymbal and following that rebound, so you're not pushing so much but you're yielding to gravity and the rebound of the stick. I think that helps the tone too.

I have these older cymbals, which are pretty cool. When you're interacting with a cymbal, often the energy of the cymbal changes you. A cymbal has a certain vibe, and you can move your energy to match that. So all of a sudden you become light, like a cymbal. The sound of the cymbal changes the way you feel, then you put that back into the cymbal. It can create its own sound. The sound is affecting how you're hearing the cymbal and how you interact with it. It's a circle in sound, how the stick feels in your hand and how the sound and feeling of the instrument itself influence your interaction with it. That kind of cymbal playing creates a lot of clarity within an ensemble.

**MD:** On Henry Threadgill's "Sap" from *This Brings Us To, Volume 1*, you repeat snare drum phrases, which recall the delays in the electronic music of Squarepusher or Aphex Twin.

**Elliot:** It's what happens when you start doing these adjustments within the pulse. Often it's about setting up different directions and then just letting them interact with each other. I began doing this a long time ago. At CalArts in the '80s I studied West African drumming with Kobla and Alfred Ladzekpo and

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Javanese gamelan with K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat. And tabla with Taranath Rao. I was a world music major dealing with polyrhythms at CalArts.

The Ladzekpo family wrote incredible polyrhythmic music in the 1600s and 1700s in West Africa. At the same time Bach was writing all these polyphonic masterpieces, they were writing polyrhythmic masterpieces. I worked on those [polyrhythmic] relationships, and reducing them. If there were four parts I would put them all on a graph and see how they worked together and learn that like a language. When do three rhythms hit together and then hit separately? I'd apply that to the drumset with all the combinations you have with your limbs. You have your four limbs, then the pairing of limbs, then the trios of limbs.

I would do exercises with those different combinations, playing them simultaneously and separately so it reduced all the parts down to one track. You could take one rhythm at a time. I'd score out these ideas in my mind. Then I'd load a song with information and see what happened. It's setting all these processes in motion that relate to the composition. I would play them over and over until it became second nature and it blurred the line between composition and improvisation. It becomes almost the same thing. It's all about what you're playing in the moment.

**MD:** Often, whether with Myra Melford or Threadgill or Fieldwork, it sounds like you're setting up a theme or motif and

the musicians are simply responding to it.

**Elliot:** I brought a language to the table in a lot of these situations. That's why Henry Threadgill hired me. It's about casting. He works with what you have and composes with it. With Myra, I was playing solo cello and drum concerts, and she heard me. Often they will write a piece of music and I will reduce the rhythmic information in it and look at it from as many angles as I can. I really get it into my body where I'm not counting anymore. I've taught my body these rhythms, but from so many different angles, running all the repetitions of every way of playing a particular rhythmic structure in a composition. The songs have these structures, and I work them in every possible way, run them physically so when I get to the bandstand it's a beat, but it's from the composition. It might sound like I'm setting it up, but it's from the composition. The more intimately you know the composition, the more you can just play. Then you're not just winging it—you've adopted the composition.

**MD:** When you play drumset along with cello, I imagine sometimes you're playing straight cello while your feet are playing support. But at other times do you play the cello as more of a rhythmic instrument?

**Elliot:** Sometimes I'll do that. I'll play hammer-ons with the left hand on the fretboard, which frees up my other hand to move around the drums. After I've

plucked a string or played it with the bow, or bowed a cymbal, often the interaction between the instruments creates a new instrument. I play the drums differently because of how I'm playing the cello, and vice versa. I play the strings with a stick like a berimbau sometimes. Or I'll play the body of the cello like a cajon.

It's the thing with the four limbs where you're doing these combinations. If you do a hammer-on on the cello fretboard and then hit a cymbal, and at the same time you're playing the hi-hat and bass drum, then doing them in series will sound like it's all happening simultaneously. I'll play figures on two strings and bow really fast and work the feet. And I can use the bow as a stick. It's about the interaction between the two instruments. Playing the cello with the drums has made my drumming rounder.

**MD:** What are your new or upcoming projects?

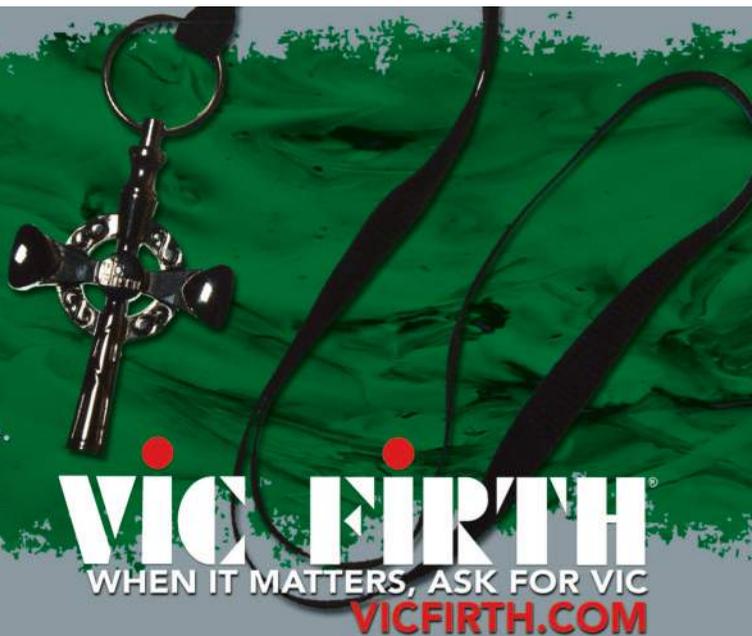
**Elliot:** For one, a new trio with bassist Stomu Takeishi and pianist Kenny Werner. It's pretty heavily improvised music with spontaneous composition and building a language from that. And a trio with Stomu and guitarist Brandon Ross. I'm also playing in a new band with Myra Melford called Happy Whistling. The music is based on the work of the writer Eduardo Galeano. Finally, I've been playing with up-and-coming songwriters, which basically involves studying the work of Earl Palmer!



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# Chops Builders

## PART 3: TRIP STEPPER

by Bill Bachman

In order to warm up different muscle groups as quickly as possible, I find it helpful to change up the physical demands put on the hands. A warm-up exercise I call Trip Stepper accomplishes this by switching from accents and taps, which require downstrokes and upstrokes, to straight accented singles, which should be played as full or free strokes. The exercise consists of adding accents to and subtracting accents from 16th-note triplets, one 8th note's worth at a time. Trip Stepper may look like a long exercise, but once you understand the formula you'll be able to play the entire thing without needing to read it. Your hands should start to feel good after just one time through.

Let's start with a quick review of the necessary techniques. The full stroke (aka legato or free stroke) is a simple rebound stroke, or a dribble of the stick. Using wrist and fingers, throw the stick toward the drum, let it hit the

drum loosely with all of its velocity, and then let it rebound back up to the height it started from. Resist any temptation to hold on to the stick tightly or pick the stick up.

The downstroke is a high stroke where the stick stops low to the drum. A downstroke should be played exactly like a full stroke, until just after hitting the head. The stick's natural rebound should then be stifled by squeezing the back of the stick into the palm of the hand. The stick should be stopped near the drumhead so it's ready for a fresh start on the following relaxed low tap strokes. Keep in mind that there are varying degrees of strictness with downstrokes, but if they come up too much, there won't be enough dynamic contrast between the high accents and low taps. The upstroke used to return the stick to the high accent height is simply a low stroke that's lifted up after hitting the drum.

Now let's look at where and when to

apply those techniques in the exercise. The accents that are followed by low taps should be played as downstrokes. All the other full, up, and tap strokes should flow freely and be played as relaxed rebounding strokes. It's especially important to stay loose on all of the low strokes. Listen to the sound of the wood as it resonates within your loose hands on the taps. Every accent that isn't followed by a low tap should also resonate freely as the stick rebounds. Pay close attention to the sound and pitch of your notes—they can really tell a tale about your hand technique, especially when you're playing on a practice pad.

Start slowly to avoid putting stress on your hands, and be sure to play the exercise with the correct stickings. Settle into a nice mental zone, and groove along with good time. Loop through Trip Stepper as many times as you like. Your hands will soon be feeling great!

The musical notation consists of five staves, each representing a different triplet pattern. Each staff begins with a 4/4 time signature and a treble clef. The notation uses eighth notes grouped in triplets. Above the notes are accents (>) and some have a '6' above them, indicating sixteenth-note triplets. Below each staff is a sequence of letters representing the stickings: 'R' for right hand and 'L' for left hand. The patterns are as follows:

- Staff 1: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L
- Staff 2: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L
- Staff 3: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L
- Staff 4: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L
- Staff 5: R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R L R L L



# Advanced Hi-Hat Patterns

## FOUR-LIMB GROOVES INCORPORATING THE LEFT FOOT

by Andy Shoniker

**W**e drummers tend to overlook our hi-hat foot. The exercises in this article are designed not only to improve your hi-hat foot in terms of control, speed, and endurance, but also to act as a great four-limb independence exercise.

The concept is simple. Start by taking a common pattern that you'd play on the hi-hat or ride cymbal, like 8th notes, and then add your hi-hat foot underneath, playing all of the positions of the 16th note. Here are those 16th-note fragments.

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	✕ R.C.
S.D.	●
B.D.	○
H.H.	○ Ghost Note
w/ foot	

On top of those patterns, play various kick and snare combinations. Here are seven possible rhythms. Notice that they get more involved and syncopated as they go along.

Here are some groove examples that weave all the elements together. The hi-hat foot becomes busier as you go along. Example 7 consists of a 3/16 pattern between the ride and hi-hat, which creates a four-over-three polyrhythm. It's a great independence workout that also makes for a cool-sounding groove.

7

8

9

10

11

Once you get a handle on the basic concept and you've mastered all the patterns from these examples, experiment and come up with your own ideas.



**Andy Shoniker** is a professional musician living in Toronto. He is a graduate of Berklee College Of Music and endorses Mapex drums, Paiste cymbals, Vater sticks, and Evans heads. For more information, go to [andyshoniker.com](http://andyshoniker.com).



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# The Clave In 5

## ODD-METER GROOVES BASED ON THE LATIN TRADITION

by Conor Guilfoyle

**MUSIC KEY**

H.H.	F.T.	Shell	Rim
T.H.		▽	Click
S.D.		○	
F.T.		○	
B.D.		○	
H.H.		○	Ghost
w/ foot		○	Note

The clave is the cornerstone of Afro-Cuban music. There are two clave patterns, rumba and son. Clave patterns have two sides, one containing three strokes, the other two. Each clave takes four pulses to complete. In this article we'll be working with rumba clave. To stress the concept of four pulses per clave, I have written the clave as one bar of 4/4 instead of the usual two bars of 4/4.

Here's the basic rumba clave.

Now let's extend the rumba clave to 5/2. I've added an extra stroke, so now we have four clave strokes over the first three pulses and two over the last two pulses.

Once you're familiar with the five clave, you can take any clave-based rhythm and adapt it to fit the new clave. For the next example, I'll use a rhythm called cascara. The cascara pattern is played on the floor tom shell with the ride hand (playing it on the hi-hat or ride cymbal will work too), while the other hand states the clave. The bass drum plays on the beats often referred to as bombo, while the hi-hat keeps the five pulse.

Here's an adaptation of a standard conga pattern often used with cascara, known as tumbao. The conga slap sound is copied with a rimclick, and open tones are played on the toms. Both are played against the cascara.

Let's get funky! We'll split the clave between the bass drum and the snare, while the hi-hat plays an adaptation of a pattern known as bongo bell, which is usually played on the cowbell. I call this rhythm mambo funk.

Now embellish the pattern with extra snare and bass drum notes. The snare strokes in brackets are to be played very softly, while the accented strokes should be loud.

Staying in the funk zone, let's adapt the songo. This popular rhythm is very flexible. Although it's based on clave, songo incorporates many influences, from folkloric to funk. Here are a couple of possibilities. Again, play the unaccented strokes very softly and the accented strokes loud. Another option would be to play the hi-hat part on the cymbal and to move the left-hand part around the toms. Use your imagination.

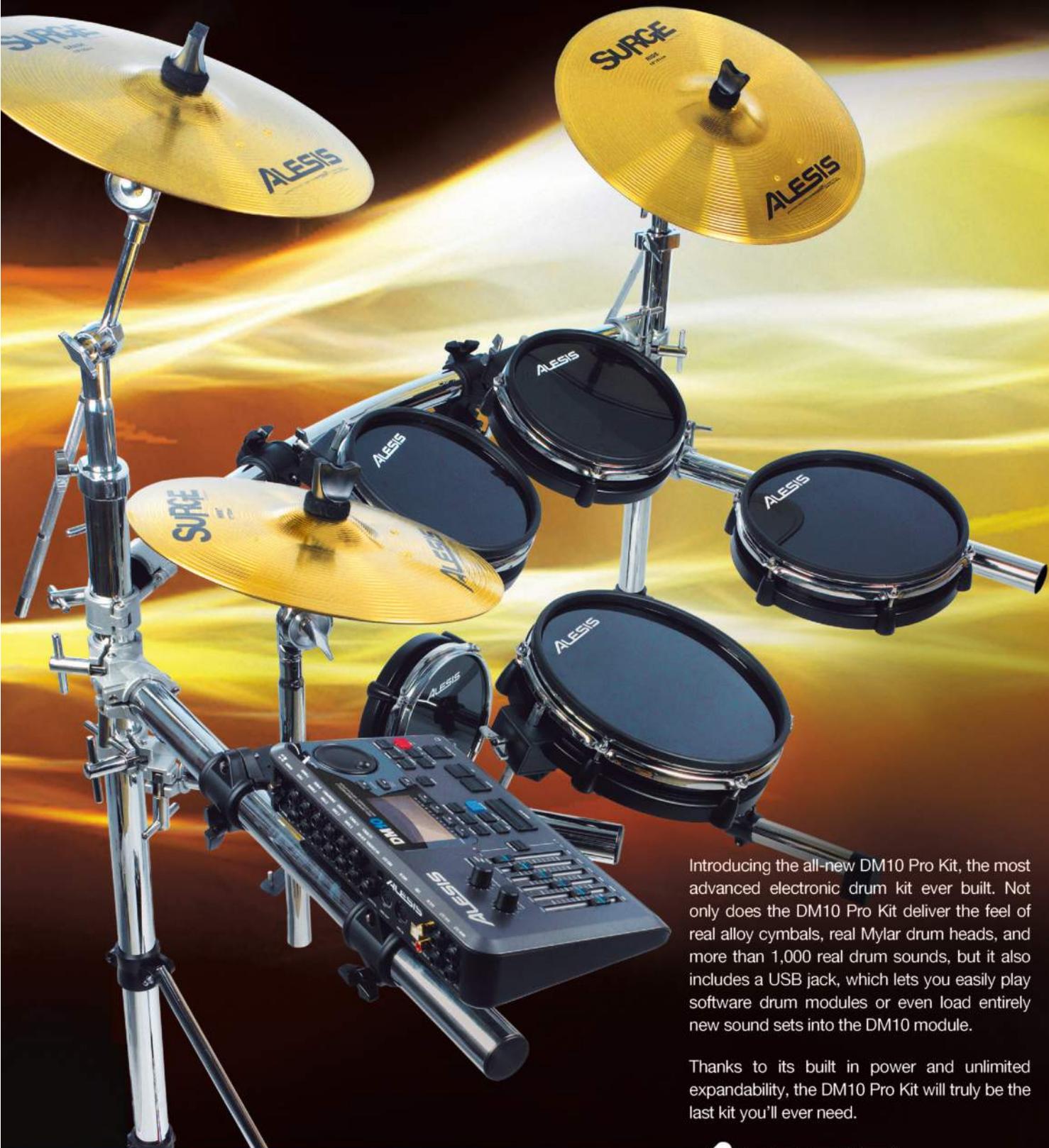
Finally, here's a version of the guaguanco, which is a rhythm that's part of the rumba family. The right hand keeps the clave, while the left hand imitates the conga rhythms commonly associated with guaguanco. The strokes in brackets are optional and are used to embellish the basic pattern.

I hope you've enjoyed this unusual take on the Cuban tradition. With a little imagination, many of the tried and trusted rhythms can be used in very creative ways, allowing you to produce fresh yet natural-sounding odd-meter patterns. Good luck!

 **Conor Guilfoyle** has performed with David Liebman, John Abercrombie, Kenny Werner, Mark Levine, and many other artists. His book, *Odd Meter Clave For Drumset*, is published by Advance Music. For more information, visit [conorguilfoyle.com](http://conorguilfoyle.com).



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# Tony Williams

LIVE WITH THE MILES DAVIS QUINTET, 1967

by Terry Branam

**MUSIC KEY**

The word *genius* is thrown around all too often these days. When it comes to Tony Williams, however, it's the most accurate description. Williams was a prodigy, an innovator, and a creative force who changed music and drumming. In this analysis, we'll take a peek at his playing with the Miles Davis Quintet, documented on the amazing new DVD *Live In Europe '67*. Along with Tony and Miles, this lineup also includes jazz icons Herbie Hancock on piano, Wayne Shorter on saxophone, and Ron Carter on bass.



Tom Coppi

Davis always surrounded himself with musicians who would push his music to new places. Like any great leader, he would carefully assemble the right team to work together harmoniously. While each member in the band is a giant in his own right, these musicians were at their strongest when they played together. Like a fine-tuned sports car, the group was able to take pinpoint turns, stop on a dime, and let it rip when the time was right. The *Live In Europe* DVD captures two performances in 1967. From night to night, the band would reinvent the music, with maximum freedom for their brilliant minds to explore. Though it was rooted in tradition, the Miles Davis Quintet thrived in the moment, while pushing the limits into the future.

One of the most impressive things about watching these performances is the fact that Williams was only twenty-one years old at the time. His musical voice was already unique and seemingly fully mature. Of course, these performances are a mere snapshot of his incredible evolution on the instrument.

## TONY'S TIME

The sound that usually comes to mind when you think of Tony Williams is his ride cymbal. His cymbal playing was capable of telling a story all by itself. Whether he was coaxing forth a delicate crystalline shimmer or bashing out a lion's roar, Tony would dictate the band's intensity with his ride cymbal alone. Over the years, his ride from this era has become the Holy Grail for jazz drummers on a lifelong quest to achieve a similar sound. It's important to realize, however, that it's not just the cymbal that contains the magic—it's the player as well.

Williams often thought in big phrases, especially when the tempo was blazing. Here's an example of how he would sail right over the barline by phrasing in three. Note how his hi-hats steamroll four to the bar in order to free up the other limbs to improvise.

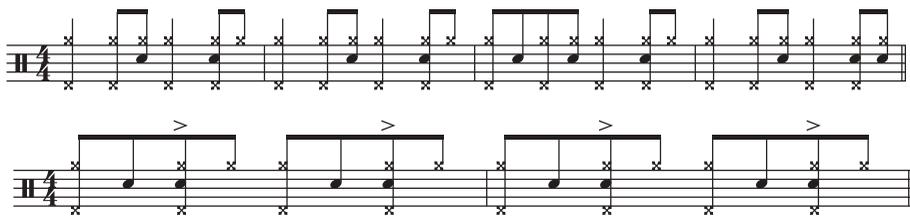
$\text{♩} = 150+$

Tony's outstanding technique allowed him to play things like these five-note clusters, even at the fastest of tempos.

$\text{♩} = 150+$

## JUST RIFFIN'

While Williams' comping vocabulary could get very aggressive and complex, sometimes he would play repetitive riff-type figures to offset some of the busier playing. Here are two of those patterns.



### EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Williams had a knack for finding the least obvious way of accenting phrases. The following example is from the Halloween performance of "Footprints" in Stockholm. This transcription is from the second time through the head of the tune. Tony lays down dagger-like accents in the spaces of the melody and infuses some of his signature flams.

$\text{♩} = 85$

5  
R L R L R L R L R L R L r L r L

9  
r L

13  
r L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

17

21  
L R L R L L

### AWAY WE GO

In the November 7 performance of "Walkin'," Williams plays a very moody, lyrical solo. Instead of using traditional bebop-style licks, he takes a more textural and melodic approach. In this example, he imitates a horn player by using the toms to evoke a melody and by playing through the spaces with double strokes.

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

A signature "Tonyism" is the way he used flam triplets. Here are a few different applications of these figures, including the now-legendary "blushda."

r L L R r L L R

r L R L r L R L

r L L R r L L R

r L R R L r L R R L

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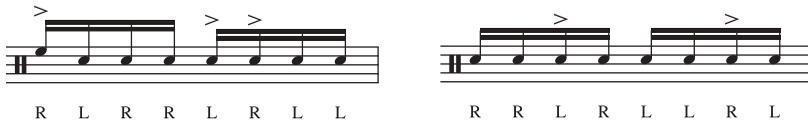
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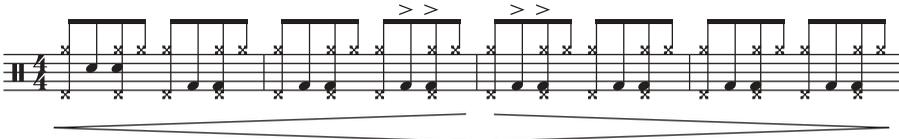
Tony would articulate rapid-fire accents with these paradiddle-type stickings.



### DYNAMICS

A big part of the quintet's persona involved the use of dramatic dynamic shifts. Williams' deep understanding of tension and release is apparent when you hear him stretching out behind a soloist or interacting with the other accompanying instruments. He would often push the soloist to the outer limits by bashing the drums and cymbals with the butt end of his sticks, and then he'd unexpectedly trail off to total silence. His no-limits approach defined the attitude of this band.

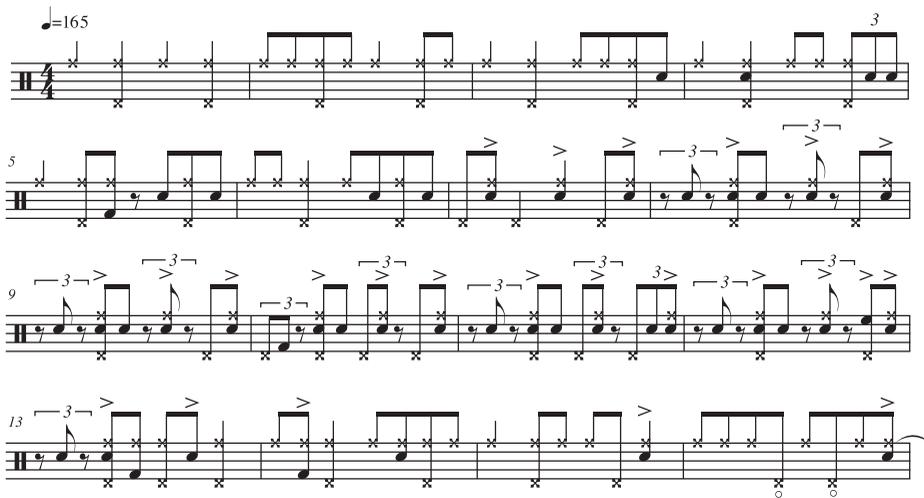
Tony also had incredible internal dynamics. He could independently adjust any part of the kit's balance at will, without affecting the continuity of the other limbs. Check out this example, where the bass drum crescendos and decrescendos while the ride and hi-hat remain at the same volume.



### CHAIN REACTION

The level of interaction within Davis's band was almost telepathic. It's as if these musicians were of one mind. Like a championship basketball team, everyone plays a vital role as the ball gets passed around at lightning speeds. Tempo changes happen based on the rhythmic ideas flying around, and the modal atmosphere of the compositions leads to some very free harmonic explorations. Williams is always at the helm, with his ears wide open and brilliant ideas flowing constantly.

The following passage is taken from a chorus of "Gingerbread Boy," from the November 7 concert. Tony superimposes a metric modulation as a response to a part of Hancock's piano solo, to bring some suspense to the phrase. Note how he brings the time back just before the end of the chorus.



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# OVERDUB PERCUSSION LIKE A PRO

## PART 1: TAMBOURINE

by Michael Blair

**“Hey, Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me/In the jingle-jangle morning I’ll come following you.” —Bob Dylan, 1964**

We’ve been following the jingle-jangle of tambourine players for thousands of years. The riq and dajre of the Middle East and Asia, the pandeiro of South America, the buben of Eastern Europe, the metal sistrum of ancient Egypt, the kanjira of South India... The tambourine, in one form or another, has been with us for a very long time.

We beat and shake tambourines for dancing and spiritual praise (gospel music). And the great Motown session pioneer Jack Ashford—to name just one ace of the instrument—laid down the mighty grooves of classic tambourine-driven songs like “Reach Out (I’ll Be There)” by the Four Tops.

In this article I will suggest a few things that can make your life easier when you go into the studio to record overdubs with the tambourine. In addition to how to play the instrument, I’ll get into tips regarding microphones, room acoustics, and signal path.

### SOME BASICS

There is useful information available in many books about the construction, development, and performance techniques of the tambourine. I remember reading *Percussion Instruments And Their History* by James Blades when I was a music student in college. Other titles include *The Arabic Tambourine Book* by Mary Ellen Donald and *Making Musical Instruments* by Irving Sloane.

Sound-wise, there are as many possibilities as our ears and imagination can allow. The tambourine is simply a hoop of wood or metal, with or without a head, with round jingles attached to the shell with small pins. The jingles are usually made of copper, silver, or tin, with the different metal types helping to give each instrument its characteristic sound. Bright, dark, sharp, long sustain, short sustain...

### RECORDING YOUR TAMBOURINE

With today’s recording options, anyone can capture the beautiful sounds of the tambourine in a home studio. I suggest you have a few types of tambourines on hand (no pun intended). You’ll inevitably need different versions, to drive your tracks with aggressive 16th-note patterns, to add shine and muscle to your snare hits, or to get the dance floor rocking with steady quarter notes.

When I was first coming up as a session player, I was very fortunate to be able to perform in studios that had well-designed acoustic features and amazing selections of microphones. The sound of the tambourine was supported and enhanced by the rooms themselves: hardwood floors that amplified the volume, acoustically designed walls that gave back warm musical reflections, and the best microphones ever built, such as a top-of-the-line tube Neumann U 87 (with its full-bodied frequency response), the crisp and clear AKG 414 (which accentuates the upper mids), and the DPA 4011

(used around the world as an overhead mic). If you already own some of these classic microphones, be happy and keep them well maintained.

If you’re on a beans-and-toast budget, look for one of the many good-quality but affordable mics that have characteristics similar to the wallet-busting types. Companies like Studio Projects, Oktava, Røde, and MXL are good places to start.

The construction of your instruments, the acoustic characteristics of your recording space, and the electronic signal path all contribute to the sound you’ll ultimately get from your tambourine. Knowing how to choose and shape these options will give you the result you’re looking for, whether you have an expensive setup or you’re going directly into your laptop.

Good questions to ask yourself: What do I want the tambourine to do on this tune? Should it fill out the backbeats and accentuate the crack of the snare or give a strong, driving 16th-note motion? Or should the tambourine sound like it’s “live,” giving the track a feeling of spontaneous energy? Once you’ve made up your mind about the what and the why, you can proceed to the how.

I asked my friend and colleague Kevin Killen (U2, Peter Gabriel, Elvis Costello, Tori Amos), who has extensive experience as an engineer and producer, about his favorite setup for recording tambourine. He gave us an expensive option and a more reasonable home studio solution, including microphone, preamp, and compressor combinations.

For more money, Kevin suggests a Neumann M 149 mic (large diaphragm with sweet top end), a Hardy M-1 preamp (transformer-less design with a variable sweepable gain pot and a meter to see peaks—very useful for percussion), and a Manley or Distressor compressor. For less money, his picks are a Shure SM57 or Audio-Technica 4040



mic, a M-Audio FireWire 1814 preamp, and a DBX 160 compressor.

I had a recent recording session in Stockholm with another colleague, Pete Davis, a programmer/engineer/mixer who has collaborated with Gwen Stefani, Björk, Shakira, and many others. We did a percussion session together where we could really play around with sounds, effects, and distortion. It was fun. We made a setup with three different microphones and recorded simultaneously onto three separate tracks. Then we could mix and match as we wanted. All the sounds were very different and worked well together in various combinations.

For microphones, we chose a Coles 4033 (the “Ringo ribbon mic”), an AKG 414, and a very cheap no-name dynamic that Pete calls “the hairdryer.” We used a Neve 33122 tube preamp and no compressor.

### MIXING AND ARRANGING

Something to watch out for as you’re recording is the frequency range of the instrument itself, espe-

## PLAYING TECHNIQUES



**Here are a few things I’ve found useful for getting the best sound out of any tambourine.**

When shaking 8th- or 16th-note patterns, hold the tambourine at a right angle to the ground (straight up). Keep the forearm of your playing hand straight; don’t twist or flex your wrist. The hand holding the tambourine is the one that moves. Keep the beating surface (the heel) of the other hand steady (photo 1).

For single hits, I usually hold the tambourine parallel to the ground in a stable position. Then I use my other arm/hand as the beater and bring it to the instrument (photo 2). I use as little extra motion as possible so I can control the sound and be specific about where the tambourine pattern sits in relation to the groove of the track.

Experiment with holding your tambourine at different angles to find as many unique sounds as you can. For instance, the jingles will vibrate more freely, and longer, if you hold the instrument straight up. If you hold the tambourine horizontally, the sound will be shorter because the jingles won’t ring as long. You can also use your fingers to play just one pair of jingles for a much quieter and subtler sound (photo 3).

cially when you slap the head or rim. For instance, if you feel the timbre of the tambourine is conflicting with that of the snare drum, use EQ on it and scoop out the area in the 1–5 kHz range. You'll have to experiment a bit to find the sweet spot of the snare and then take away the conflicting frequencies of the tambourine, which should open up the groove and clear the way for a stronger snare sound.

Another thing that may mask the snare is the rhythmic placement of your tambourine part. Does it sit just ahead of, dead on, or behind the beat? If you're recording with computer software, take a look at your screen to see how the tambourine hits relate to the snare hits. One time after I recorded a tambourine overdub, the feel became blurred in a way I didn't like. I could have rerecorded the part, but when I delayed the tambourine track by just a hair (nudged it to the right), the groove opened back up, and it sounded like the snare was leading the charge again.

Over years of recording percussion overdubs in every possible condition, I've found I have to use my ears to get the result I want with the equipment I have. For instance, I own at least thirty different tambourines—wood, metal, single jingles, double jingles, with or without heads, skin heads, plastic heads, big, small—and I know what each one sounds like. So I can do a lot of work before a session by picking the ones I think will serve the tracks best. That helps the engineer, makes the producer happy, and inspires the artist because it shows I've spent time taking the music seriously.

## MIC/PLAYER PLACEMENT

In the studio I place the microphone at the same height as the tambourine when I hold it in front of me, usually a bit above waist level. After you set up the mic at your playing level, take a full step back from it. This will give you a useful place to start (photo 1). In this spot you won't overdrive the mic membrane with too much signal, but you won't be so far away that the sound becomes unfocused.

From here you can experiment with the kind of sound you want. In general, you won't want to stand closer than a full step away from the mic. The sound pressure level (SPL) coming from a tambourine is strong and can easily overdrive the membrane on a mic. Analog distortion is not usually a very musical thing. And digital distortion is one of the most horrible, mind-killing sounds I have ever heard. So watch your VU meters.

For more room sound (resonant wall reflections), stand farther away from the mic (photo 2). This will create a bigger space around the instrument and give the track more of a live feeling.



It's the same for you and your home studio, except you need to be all these people at once—producer, artist, performer, and engineer. So be prepared. Surprise and inspire yourself. Your energy and commitment will make it to the recording, and the audience will hear it.

And remember, the tambourine is a wonderful and flexible instrument. Treat it with respect, and your tracks will swing, rock, and roll. A jingle-jangle morning indeed.

Producer/percussionist/writer

**Michael Blair** is best known for his work with songwriter Tom Waits (*Rain Dogs*, *Franks Wild Years*, and *Big Time*). He also added percussion to Elvis Costello's *King Of America* and *Spike*, and to Costello's collaboration with Ann Sofie von Otter, *For The Stars*. More recent projects include collaborating with the Swedish software company Toontrack for the Twisted Kit sample library. For more info, visit [myspace.com/michaelblairdrummer](http://myspace.com/michaelblairdrummer).



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# DAVE TURNCRANTZ

**Russian Circles'** drummer might employ decidedly old-school methods—simple four-piece kit, liberal use of room mics, absence of in-ear monitors. **But the resultant sound is cutting-edge.**

by David Ciauro

Since its 2004 debut, the eclectic Chicago-based instrumental trio Russian Circles has gained increasing notoriety and respect from a broad spectrum of musicians and audiences alike. The band's sound, which incorporates elements of metal, prog, and post-rock, isn't easy to pin down, and Dave Turncrantz's playing, sound choices, influences, and drumming philosophy contribute immensely to Russian Circles' uniqueness. Turncrantz believes that woodshedding may make for a skilled drummer, but it's what you learn from playing with other musicians that makes you a skilled *musician*. His drumming on the group's latest release, *Geneva*, proves he knows when and how to let loose, but also when to hold back, listen, and let parts breathe.

**MD:** Russian Circles is tough to classify musically. Your playing and the band's overall sound are much more organic in nature than the stylistic labels you're usually given might suggest. What do you attribute that to?

**Dave:** For the type of music we're playing, if I were a drummer who was schooled at Berklee—not that there's anything wrong with that—I think my approach would be much more mathematical or formulated. Playing in bands has taught me how to feel out other musicians and the music.

When I first started playing, at fourteen, I would consciously think, *Okay, I'm going to sit down and write something really hard that looks really cool*. Gradually, though, as I matured as a player, I started to appreciate drummers who play in the pocket. When I took that approach with our newer material, everything started sounding better—more organic and spacious—but it also made the complex parts and busier fills I play have much more of an impact on the song.

**MD:** Who are some of your influences?

**Dave:** Stewart Copeland, John Bonham, Dave Lombardo, Rodney Holmes, Jon Theodore, Will Goldsmith, and Bernard Purdie, to name a few. I also learned a lot from instructional videos, especially Dave Weckl's. I took what I liked about everyone's individual style and brought [those elements] into my drumming. I think it's important to have the whole package as a drummer: timekeeping, dynamics, musicality, creativity, groove, chops, and power.

**MD:** The drum sounds on *Geneva* are huge and very cohesive. Where did you record the album?

**Dave:** Steve Albini's studio, Electrical Audio. There's a massive live room in studio A where they usually record guitars, but I was pretty set on recording my drums in a huge room.

**MD:** It sounds like you used a ton of room mics.



Chris Strong

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Turncrantz plays a 1970s **Gretsch** kit in green glass glitter, including an 8x13 rack tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x24 bass drum. He plays a 6½x14 **Ludwig** Supra-Phonic brass snare drum with PureSound Blasters series twenty-strand snares. His **Istanbul Agop** cymbals include 15" hi-hats with a Traditional Medium top and a Traditional Heavy bottom, a 21" Traditional Medium ride, a 22" Traditional Medium ride, and a 22" Xist Brilliant ride. Dave uses **Evans** heads, including a coated Power Center on top of the snare and a Hazy 300 on the bottom, coated G2s on the tops of the toms and coated G1s on the bottoms, and a clear EQ4 bass drum batter and coated EQ3 Resonant front head. His hardware includes a **Trick** Pro 1-V bass drum pedal and a **DW** 5000 hi-hat stand. He plays **Pro-Mark** 808 Japanese oak sticks.

**Dave:** Yep. Room mics are the greatest invention. You get such a natural sound. I didn't want the drums to sound perfect. I wanted to hear the imperfections—the buzzing of the snares in my bass drum mic, the cymbals ringing out in the tom mics. I wanted the whole kit to make one massive sound. I wanted it to sound as organic as the songs felt.

**MD:** In keeping with that theme, were the drums recorded to analog?

**Dave:** We recorded the drums using Pro Tools but then dumped the tracks to tape, which added to

the natural sound. The advantage of doing it this way is that you have more control over the mix but still get a nice vintage sound.

**MD:** Did you use your Gretsch kit?

**Dave:** Yeah! It's funny, every time I go into the studio, I have the mindset that I'm going to use eight different kits and a slew of snares, but I always go back to my old Gretsch.

**MD:** The song "Geneva" has a great drum outro. It sounds like multiple grooves going on at the same time.

**Dave:** I recorded a second take in a small "dead"

room using an old four-piece Ludwig kit, a ride, and a hi-hat. I accented off the original drum part, playing on the “& a” instead of on the beat. We pretty much used all room mics in the dead room as well, and then we dirtied it up in postproduction to the point where the cymbals were pretty much taking over.

**MD:** For a three-piece instrumental band, Russian Circles has a huge layered sound. How do you go about translating that in a live setting?

**Dave:** Mike [Sullivan, guitars] is really amazing at using looping pedals, which allow him to play a guitar line, step on the pedal to loop it, and then play a second line over that. So for a three-piece band we’re able to still have a layered sound in a live setting.

**MD:** You must play to a click then, right?

**Dave:** Unfortunately, I don’t. I just pick up on an accented note or phrase and follow that. We knew our material would be a challenge to pull off live without a click track, so we rehearsed for almost a year before playing out.

**MD:** Without a click, I suppose a lot of factors can hinder the monitor mix.

**Dave:** Yeah, a lot of people assume I have in-ears, but I don’t. I need to hear Mike, so if we’re playing a venue with poor monitors, Mike will set up his amp closer to me and maybe slightly behind me.

**MD:** The opening groove of “Melee” involves a lot of interplay on the rims, but it sounds like there are distinct tonal differences. What exactly are you playing?

**Dave:** I’m mainly playing a pattern between the rim of my brass Supra-Phonic, which has triple-flange hoops, and my rack tom, which has die-cast hoops, and ending the phrase with a paradiddle on the wood hoop of the bass drum.

**MD:** For a prog-ish instrumental trio, you play on a pretty minimal kit. Have you ever considered expanding it to have more sound options?

**Dave:** I like the challenge of being creative on a four-piece kit. Fills become all about the placement. Big kits are a blast to play, but if I had a bunch of toms to playing descending fills on, it would limit my creativity in some ways. I can see myself adding another cymbal or two before I add more drums.

# JOE GORETTI

The drummer, whose recent credits include gigs with **Moby** and **Ne-Yo**, has taken a logical approach to climbing the ladder to success—and he’s sharing what he’s learned through a well-rounded career-prep course.

by Ken Micallef

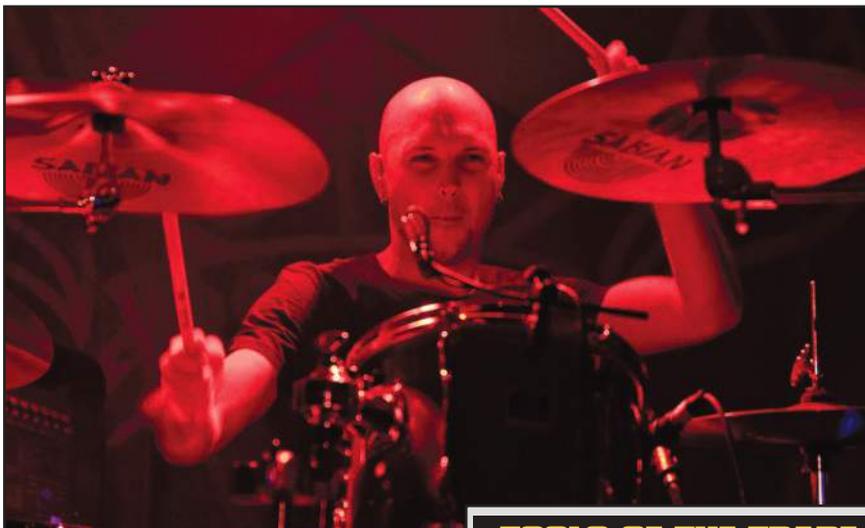
When Buffalo, New York, native Joe Goretti graduated from Berklee in 1998, he could play stimulating paradiddles and displace odd-meter beats like a banshee. Now all he needed was a gig. “I had to find ways to make a living,” Goretti says. “I realized there are different places you can go to get the highest-paying gigs, but you need to know the dirty little secrets.”

Ten years and many minor (club dates) and major (Moby, Ne-Yo) gigs later, Goretti has distilled his knowledge as a “blue-collar drummer,” as he calls himself, into a fifteen-week study: the Drumming Career Course. For a fee of \$1,800, students receive instruction on what’s needed to prosper, whether the economy is flush or failing.

Themes in the Drumming Career Course (you’ll find more info at joegoretti.com) include networking skills, timekeeping, developing and applying playing styles, recording, pit-band methods, essential repertoire, negotiating fees, and more. And those “dirty little secrets”? “They include weddings and bar mitzvahs,” Goretti explains. “It’s surprising how well they pay—a minimum of \$400—and how many great players are doing them. Then you can fill in the week with singer-songwriter and club gigs, and teaching.”

The lessons, which run ninety minutes once a week, aren’t as much a technique primer as a jump-start for the mind and body. Goretti teaches what he believes are the fundamental styles and rhythms needed to crack the circuit in your hometown and, to sweeten the deal, focuses on networking methods that include Web sites and business cards, gig preparation, and recording techniques.

“Business cards are essential,” Joe explains, “and so is a Web site—somebody can check out what you look and sound like and watch videos. Anything is good enough, even wedding-band



clips. People have found me through my site, and I’ve gotten good gigs from it.

“I also discuss the essential repertoire,” the drummer continues, “from KC & the Sunshine Band to new standards. And we talk about the four major playing styles: pocket playing, which includes rock ‘n’ roll and hip-hop; swing; world music; and blues and shuffles. I explain what to listen for, different nuances. Each week a different topic is presented.”

The Drumming Career Course culminates in a live recording session with the student playing various styles, resulting in a professional CD that can be used to attract work. Finally, students play for forty-five minutes in a pit-band environment with two veterans of stage and screen (including bassist and musical director Ivan Bodley, who’s played with Sam Moore, Martha Reeves & the

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Goretti plays **Yamaha** drums and hardware, including a 14” snare drum, a 12” rack tom, a 16” floor tom, a 22” bass drum, and a double pedal; and **Sabian** cymbals, including a 10” AAX splash, 14” Stage Hats, a 16” AAX Bright crash, an 18” AAX X-Plosion crash, a 20” Hand Hammered ride, and a 20” HHX China.

Vandellas, and the Shirelles), who critique their performance.

“You can’t be a one-trick pony,” Goretti says. “I had to learn as much as I could, make myself as versatile as possible, and play in every kind of situation. The misconception is that you play drums and people pay you a lot of money, but it’s actually a lot of hard work. You have to train and hustle constantly to keep your calendar full.”



# REASONS TO LOVE

# PHIL RUDD

by "Pistol" Pete Kaufmann

Even his name is lean and mean, without a syllable to spare. **The lifeblood of AC/DC earns the ultimate respect** of other top drummers for his elemental, unshakable groove.

**A**C/DC's Phil Rudd is one of the greatest rock drummers of all time. His playing is often cited as a perfect example of why "less is more" in rock drumming. And when Rudd does play more...look out! He's like a kung fu master unleashing his skills—only when the time is right.

Why is Rudd's playing legendary? Because more than most, he's mastered *the* fundamental of drumming: grooving. Call him the Jimmy Cobb or the Al Jackson Jr. of rock, and you'd be pretty close to a spot-on description. Rudd's tasteful meat-and-potatoes 2-and-4 backbeats can be heard throughout the AC/DC songbook, on classic cuts like "It's A Long Way To The Top (If You Wanna Rock 'N' Roll)," "Girls Got Rhythm," "High Voltage," and "Back In Black." Let's not forget about Rudd's 12/8 feel on "Ride On," played with tasty dynamics, conviction, and rock-solid time. Even the way Phil opens his hi-hat oozes authority. And when it comes to the shuffle, Rudd's powerful swing feel on AC/DC's version of Chuck Berry's "School Days" is a lesson on how to keep people moving on the dance floor.

As many of us have found out, copping Rudd's groove is much harder than it might seem. The only real way to play like Phil Rudd is to *be* Phil Rudd. It's similar to the difficulty pianists have trying to mimic Thelonious Monk's distinctive playing: You can try as much as you want and even play the exact notes, but you'll never truly pull it off. There may be transcriptions out there of Rudd's drum parts, but no drum book in existence can teach us to *play* like Phil. Perhaps if he ever writes an autobiography, we'll have some understanding of the whys of his playing style. In the meantime, let's ask some of the drummer's peers why they think Rudd rules.

## **KENNY ARONOFF (JOHN FOGERTY)**

Boom crack, boom crack, boom crack, boom crack—wow! That sounds so simple and easy. Yeah, right! How come it sounds better when Phil Rudd plays that beat? Hmm. Maybe it's because he has played and owned that beat for 50,000 hours over thirty years and *really* believes in that beat when he's playing with AC/DC. Talented? Yes! Musical? Yes, yes! Great choice of beats, and grooves like no one else? Yes, yes, yes! Steady. Simple. Solid. And he plays what's perfect for AC/DC. Phil knows just how to integrate his kick, snare, and hi-hat to get his beats to sound so amazing, and he knows just where to place his kick, snare, and hi-hat against the guitars, bass,



Tim Stratford

and vocals to make the band sound amazing. Phil Rudd is one of a kind.

## **JOEY CASTILLO (QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE)**

When I was just starting to play the drums as a kid, one of the first guys who really inspired me was Phil Rudd. I was a huge AC/DC fan, and Bon Scott and Phil were my faves. Enough so that I actually came to blows over Phil one day with the so-called "best drummer" in my junior high school. True story. He was highly offended when I told him Phil was a *way* better drummer than the world-famous double bass drummer (who shall remain nameless) who he considered, as he put it, God. Ha! To this day I still feel the same. Phil is definitely rock's most underrated drummer. The solid, groovin', heavy pocket, with great parts and sound, can vary rarely be duplicated. And watching him on last year's tour was amazing!

## **DAVE POWELL (EMERY)**

If someone asked me what a rock beat sounds like, I would just start playing an AC/DC song. Phil Rudd is *the* rock drummer. The dude is a machine. He is so reserved and always knows just what to play.

## **SAMANTHA MALONEY (CHELSEA GIRLS, HOLE, MÖTLEY CRÛE, EAGLES OF DEATH METAL, PEACHES)**

Descriptions of Phil Rudd's playing run the gamut from too simple to simple perfection. I agree with the latter. Nothing is too simple when it comes to AC/DC. Maybe the problem some people have with Phil is that his beats and grooves are just too right. Like my mom always said, it's not what you say, it's how you say it. Well, with Phil it's not what he plays, it's how he plays it.

## **CLAUDE COLEMAN JR. (WEEN, AMANDLA)**

Phil Rudd is the coolest not only because he has a backbeat three miles wide, but because he used to play in a band named Coloured Balls.

## **TONY PALERMO (PAPA ROACH)**

My first memory of Phil Rudd takes me back to the mid-'70s, when I was rocking out to AC/DC on my boom box. I've always admired the rock-solid, simple groove he gives the band. There's no denying he is the engineer that drives the AC/DC train. His old-school sound combined with his command of the tempo is such an inspiration. The fact that he never uses a click track is a statement about his internal timing, which we all wish we could

# GROOVE ALCHEMY GIVEAWAY

To celebrate the release of Stanton Moore's *Groove Alchemy*, Moore and *Modern Drummer* are teaming up to offer Stanton's signature products in one incredible giveaway.

In April 2010, Moore released *Groove Alchemy*, a multimedia project that includes an instructional book, a DVD (Hudson Music), and a twelve-track CD (Telarc). All three facets of the project are designed to explore Stanton's approach to funk drumming, starting with examining the work of pioneers like Jabo Starks, Clyde Stubblefield, and Zigaboo Modeliste. Recorded at Levon Helm's studio in Woodstock, New York, this project is the follow-up to Stanton's widely acclaimed *Take It To The Street!* DVD and book, which focus specifically on New Orleans drumming styles.

## GRAND PRIZE

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- 24 pairs of **Vic Firth** Stanton Moore Signature sticks
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- Extra **Remo** snare heads: two (2) each coated and snare-side 14" Ambassador
- *Groove Alchemy, Emphasis! (On Parenthesis)*, and *Stanton Moore III* CDs from **Telarc**
- *Groove Alchemy* DVD and book from **Hudson Music**

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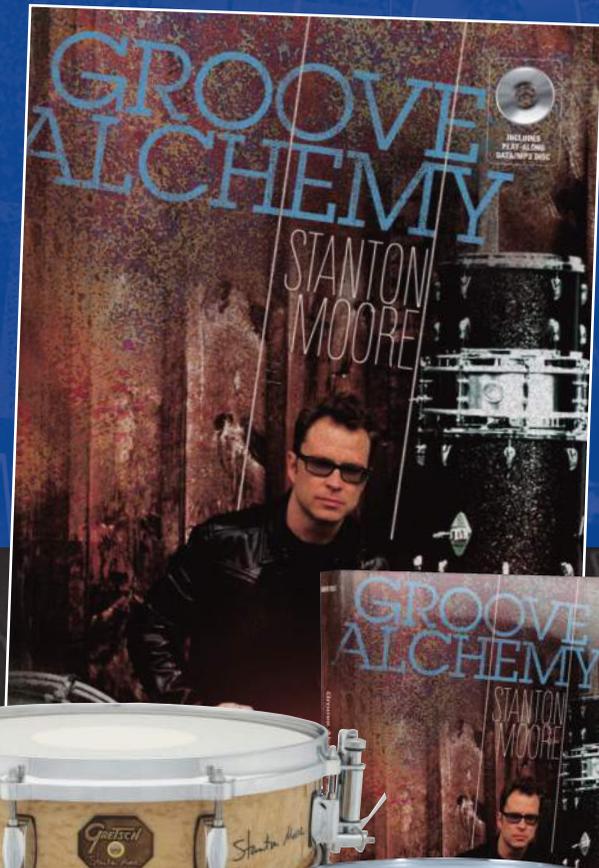
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- *Groove Alchemy, Emphasis! (On Parenthesis)*, and *Stanton Moore III* CDs from **Telarc**
- *Groove Alchemy* DVD and book from **Hudson Music**

## SECOND PRIZE

- *Groove Alchemy, Emphasis! (On Parenthesis)*, and *Stanton Moore III* CDs from **Telarc**
- *Groove Alchemy* DVD and book from **Hudson Music**

## THIRD PRIZE

- *Groove Alchemy* DVD and book from **Hudson Music**



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## PHIL RUDD

master. If he was paid every time his name was brought up in a recording session, Phil would have a second income. All of us drummers get a bit crazy behind the kit sometimes, but our playing always comes back to: How would Phil play this part? AC/DC has always been one of my stranded-on-a-desert-island bands, and I'm glad you're back behind the kit, Phil. You've brought so much influence to my musical taste as well as my approach behind the drumkit.

## MATHIAS BRENDEL (PEACHES, SWEET MACHINE)

Phil Rudd's drumming is absolutely solid and beyond tight. His playing is powerful, yet his beats are so simple. Phil *never* overplays, and his beats are the perfect framework for AC/DC—*pure rock 'n' roll*. Exactly what a headbanger needs!

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## ERIC SINGER (KISS)

When you think of AC/DC, you don't just think of the guitars or vocals, as is the case with most legendary bands. You want to air-drum to Phil Rudd's parts! Here's a drummer who really lays it down in the most economical yet effective way. And his feel is really the heart and soul of the band. After watching a live concert recently, I was reminded just how strong the chemistry is in AC/DC, and Phil Rudd plays a vital role in that by really gluing everything together, not just on record but even more in a live setting. I understand why Phil came back into the band after his hiatus. With all due respect to other drummers past, Phil is the right drummer in that band. He has proven that substance and foundation are the real key ingredients to being a great drummer. Phil Rudd is as good as it gets in that department.



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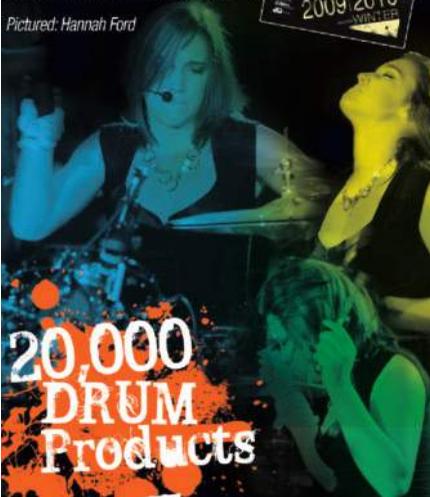
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RECORDINGS



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**FEAR FACTORY MECHANIZE**  
*Mechanize* marks Fear Factory's first release since 2001's *Digimortal* with its creative core of Burton C. Bell (vocals) and Dino Cazares (guitars) intact. The reunion was also a renewal for the band, which enlisted the master of all things metal, **GENE HOGLAN** (Dethklok/Strapping Young Lad), to drive the industrial machine that is Fear Factory. Hoglan's inhuman speed—executed with equally inhuman precision and power, plus perfect meter—has earned him the moniker "the Atomic Clock." Start to finish, *Mechanize* is a metal drumming clinic. Hoglan's blast beats are tireless, and his footwork is baffling; his feet effortlessly double any staccato picking pattern that Cazares throws his way. Tasteful single-stroke bursts played on the bells of his two ride cymbals also nicely offset the ceaseless bottom-heavy blitz. Tracks like "Fear Campaign" and "Powershifter" highlight not only Hoglan's contributions but also the band's trailblazing duality of abrasive industrial verse structures segueing into catchy melodic choruses. (Candlelight USA) **David Ciauro**



★★★★★  
**VAMPIRE WEEKEND CONTRA**  
 Vampire Weekend's sound is intriguing to say the least, even if it's not your usual cup of tea. Sophomore effort *Contra* is an intimate journey into the mind of a band that interprets an impressive wealth of eclectic influences with a refreshing twist. The group's ability to seamlessly weave multicultural instrumentation into succinct songs makes each track enjoyable to listen to, whether you're a musician or someone who simply appreciates good music. Drummer **CHRIS TOMSON** plays exactly what the songs call for and has a swagger behind his beats that gets your foot tapping. Overall, the drumming is understated; the parts are written to contribute to the song and give it shape. Yet they're interesting, creative, and fun at the same time. (XL Recordings) **David Ciauro**



★★★★★  
**SLAYER WORLD PAINTED BLOOD**  
 For almost thirty years, Slayer has been carrying the thrash metal torch, always staying true to their core principles of aggression, speed, and heaviness. Recording *World Painted Blood* (the band's tenth studio album) was a departure in that the majority of the writing was done in the studio. **DAVE LOMBARDO**'s footwork and fills echo the pioneering generation of thrash metal drummers that took an unrefined or self-taught approach to building chops and speed. You can *feel* the physical exertion when his feet are pushing the pedals on tracks like "Not Of This God" and "Unit 731." His signature blazing single-stroke fills with displaced beats between the snare and toms also give each song an in-the-moment vibe. *WPB* proves Lombardo to be the sultan of the skank beat, peppering grooves with fervent double kick bursts and propelling the songs with his raw technique. (Columbia) **David Ciauro**



★★★★★  
**PETE ZELDMAN TWILIGHT WALKS OVER**  
 A Pittsburgh-born musician who teaches at the London Centre Of Contemporary Music, Pete Zeldman is a rhythmic genius, an innovator pushing the drums into extreme territory. Zeldman's solo drumset compositions fuse African- and Caribbean-influenced themes with time manipulation involving, in his words, "multiple time signatures, cross-rhythmic phrasing, rate work, polyrhythms, rhythmic displacement, metric modulations, and more." Zeldman plays a mean backbeat too. *Twilight Walks Over* often sounds like three drummers at once, with Zeldman's feet playing one pattern and his other limbs split to play totally opposing complementary patterns—typically in multiple odd meters. Most important, though, Pete Zeldman makes *music*. (4D Drumming Ltd) **Ken Micallef**



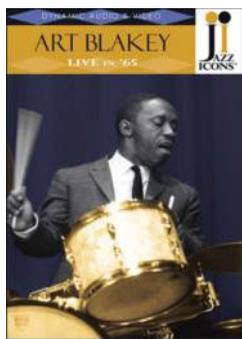
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**NIRVANA BLEACH (20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION)**  
 Drummer **CHAD CHANNING** doesn't get the love or respect that his more famous Nirvana successor, Dave Grohl, deservedly does. But the brutality and rawness of tunes on the band's debut album, like "Negative Creep" and "Blew," benefit from his crash and doom. This twentieth-



Nirvana in 1989, with original drummer Chad Channing at left

anniversary edition of *Bleach* sheds light on the true grunge sound of Nirvana's early years, aided by Channing's insistent thump and Melvins drummer **DALE CROVER**'s tom bombast. (Crover guests on three tracks.) A bonus live show from 1990 is a snapshot taken before the fame, and it further illustrates Channing's aggressive kit work and double bass flurries on scorchers such as "School." (Sub Pop) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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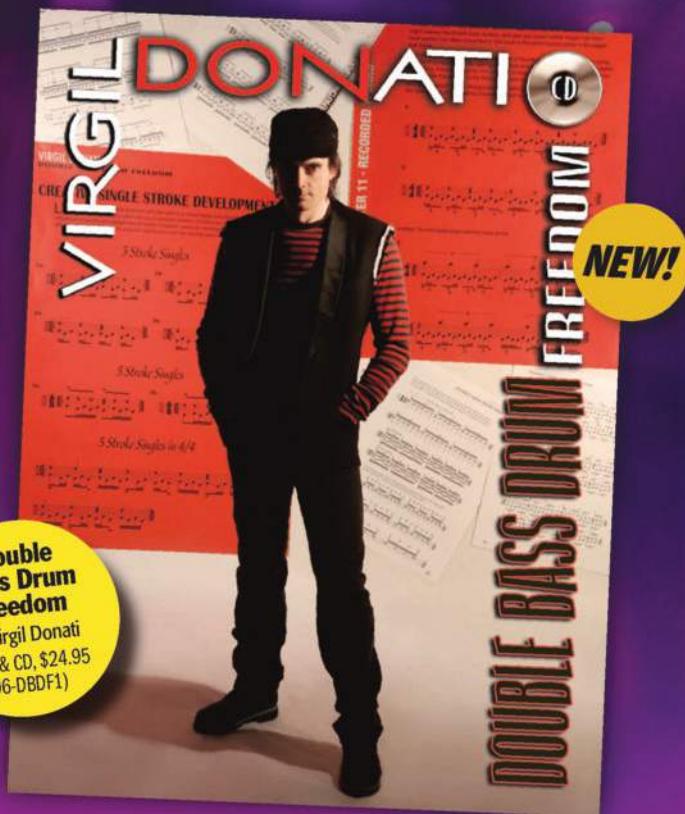
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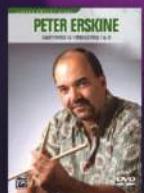
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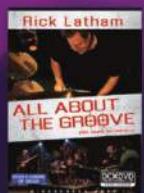
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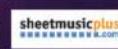
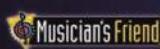
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## GUITAR CENTER DRUM-OFF 2009 GRAND FINALS

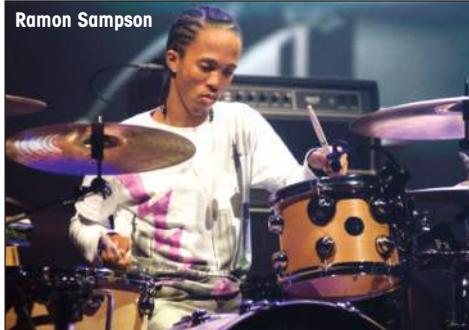
The Guitar Center Drum-Off 2009 Grand Finals took place at the Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles this past January 8. What had started with more than 4,000 drummers in local and regional competitions was now down to only a handful. These five drummers made it to the Grand Finals after months of preliminary battles at more than 200 Guitar Center stores across the country. Taking the title this year was nineteen-year-old **Ramon Sampson** of Cordova, Tennessee, who was selected by a panel of judges that consisted of some of the world's top players.

These judges truly had their work cut out for them because every drummer brought the heat and was ready for some extreme competition. On the panel were **Peter Erskine** (Steely Dan), **Taylor Hawkins** (Foo Fighters), **Ray Luzier** (Korn), **Thomas Lang**, **Kenny Aronoff**, **Jason Sutter** (Chris Cornell), **Tony Royster Jr.** (who won the Drum-Off many years ago at age eleven and is currently with Jay-Z), **Nisan Stewart** (50 Cent/Jamie Foxx), **John Tempesta** (the Cult), and **Drew Hester** (Joe Walsh/Foo Fighters). The judging was based on overall performance, originality, technique, stage presence, and style.

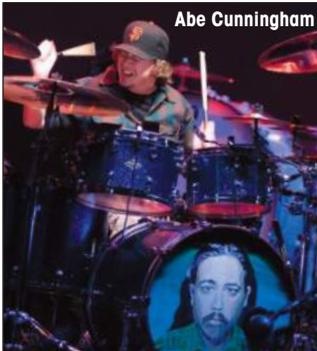
Hosting the event—his third stint as the Grand Finals MC, in fact—was **Stephen Perkins** of Jane's Addiction. The night kicked off with a fiery performance by Volto! featuring the progressive pulsating madness of **Brann Dailor** (Mastodon) and **Danny Carey** (Tool) and music written by guitarist John Ziegler. Volto! also includes **Kirk Covington** (Tribal Tech), who played keyboards and a super-small Yamaha kit.

Then came the Grand Finals. Sampson performed first and was a crowd favorite right out of the gate—all in attendance instantly felt his intense energy and

Ramon Sampson



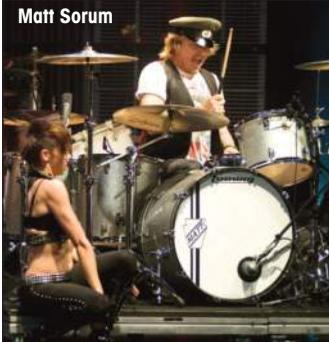
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charisma. His cymbal-switching, splash-on-the-drumhead work was an amazing sight to see. He laid down some serious grooves and paid tribute to Michael Jackson at one point, donning a single white sequined glove and pounding out the beat to "Smooth Criminal."

Putting their best efforts forward were the other finalists: **Troy Molsberry** of Carlsbad, California; **Eugene McBride** of Flint, Michigan; **Stanley Jamal Hampton** of Smithtown, New York; and **Michael McGrath** of Henderson, Nevada. The latter blew everyone away with his incredible display of funky stick flipping and his double bass prowess. But in the end no one could touch the mighty powerhouse who would soon be crowned victorious.

**THE FINALISTS** From left: Michael McGrath, Stanley Jamal Hampton, Troy Molsberry, Eugene McBride



Ramon Sampson began playing drums at the ripe old age of two in his native South Africa. He was touring with his own jazz band by age fifteen and attended the National School Of The Arts in his home country. In 2006 Ramon and his family moved to the States. A year later the young drummer signed up for the Drum-Off and didn't make it past the first round of competition. In 2008 he made it all the way to the Grand Finals but was beaten by winner **Jerome Flood II**.

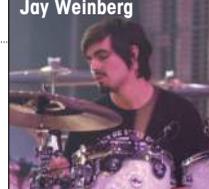
This year, though, it was obviously in the cards for Sampson. As the winner, he took home a grand prize worth more than \$40,000 that included \$25,000 in cash, a Roland TD-25 electronic kit, a custom Tama drumset, and a set of custom signature cymbals from Zildjian, plus drum, cymbal, stick, and head endorsement deals and an upcoming feature in *MD*. Also part of the prize are a VIP appearance at NAMM 2010 and an endorsement deal with Monster Energy Drink.

After the Grand Finals was an inspiring performance by **Jason Bonham**, who paid tribute to his legendary father, the late John Bonham of Led Zeppelin. Jason brought along Glenn Hughes (Deep Purple) on bass and Joe Bonamassa on guitar to help with the Zeppelin drum masterpiece "Moby Dick." The band played it perfectly. Jason also bashed along in perfect synchronicity to a video of his dad's solo piece "Bonzo's Montreux," complete with lighting cues. After his performance Jason accepted the Guitar Center Legends Award on behalf of his father. Next up was a solo performance by master blaster **Billy Cobham**, whose work with the Mahavishnu Orchestra and Miles Davis earned him the second Legends Award of the evening.

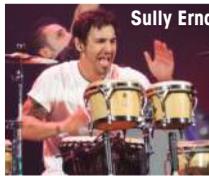
The final act was Bezerk, a cacophony of cymbal-crashing crazies put together by **Tommy Lee** (Mötley Crüe) and **Frank Zummo** (Street Drum Corps). This



Max Weinberg



Jay Weinberg



Sully Erna

over-the-top percussion production was by far the most powerful closing act Guitar Center's Grand Finals has ever seen. Consisting of some of today's most popular drummers, Bezerk was like a three-ring circus of drums, dancers, percussive wall climbers, and clowns. The stage was covered in drums and percussion, and the crowd seemed ready for the aural assault. The **USC Trojan Drumline** launched the sight-and-sound spectacle, marching right through the sold-out crowd and up onto the stage.

First up with Bezerk, playing double drums, were

*MD*'s December 2009 cover boys, **Max and Jay Weinberg**. "This has been an awesome experience for both my son, Jay, and me," Max says of his experience at the Grand Finals. "It reminds me of being a ten-year-old kid looking through the plate-glass window at the big music store in Newark, New Jersey, and gazing at all the drums." Adds Jay, "To be involved with my dad and for us to do this together is a dream come true! Our schedules had been so crazy, with his *Tonight Show* gig and me playing with the E Street Band, that we could never be together and play at the same time. This was the first time anyone had ever seen us play next to each other. It was a very special night for me."

For their part in Bezerk, the Weinbergs would pay homage to the swing era by performing "Sing, Sing, Sing," which was made famous in the 1930s by Benny Goodman's group, with Gene Krupa on drums. It was truly a standout performance, complete with dancers and the two drummers facing off mid-stage on two beautiful custom DW kits.

Next up was **Chad Smith** (Red Hot Chili Peppers), doing his best to bring us back to the grooving '70s. He sat at a stunning all-white Molecules kit and played in a white Afro wig. Also included in the festivities were **Matt Sorum** (Guns N' Roses/Velvet Revolver), **Jose Pasillas** (Incubus), **Abe Cunningham** (Deftones), **Sully Erna** (Godsmack), **Adam Ait** (Street Drum Corps), and **BANG!**

Finally taking the stage together for the finale were Tommy Lee and Frank Zummo. They ended the Bezerk performance by pounding it out with DJ Aero, playing along to a whirlwind of dance and house-mix tracks.

**Story by Anthony "Tiny" Biuso**  
**Photos by Alex Solca**



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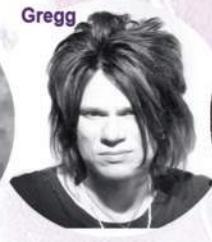
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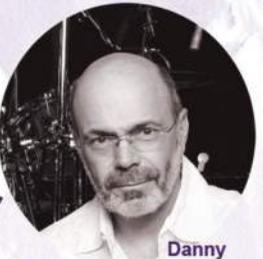


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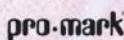
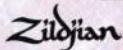
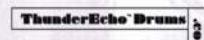
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## IN MEMORIAM

# ED THIGPEN

by Rick Mattingly

Jazz drummer Ed Thigpen, known for his playing with Oscar Peterson and Ella Fitzgerald, died this past January 13 in Copenhagen, Denmark, at age seventy-nine.

Known as "Mr. Taste," Thigpen spoke in a deep, articulate voice. He never had to shout to make his points; the logic and sincerity of his speech were enough to convince you that he spoke the truth. His words were filled with wit and wisdom, and his conversations were never one sided; he listened as intently as he spoke. He gave respect and was respected in return.

His gentlemanly demeanor was reflected in his drumming. Thigpen was never overbearing but always in control. He was most noted for his brush technique, with which he could drive a band with more conviction than some drummers can achieve with sticks. But listeners' ears were never assaulted by Ed's playing. His articulate sense of pulse and swing drew you closer, as the subtle, heartbeat-like pulse he achieved by feathering his bass drum gave the music a gentle momentum that invited listeners to share the musical journey.

It's easy to contend that Thigpen had drumming in his genes. Edmund Leonard Thigpen was born in Chicago in 1930, the son of jazz drummer Ben Thigpen, who was highly regarded for his work with the bandleader/bass saxophonist Andy Kirk. After his parents separated, young Ed moved with his mother to Los Angeles, where he studied piano, sang in a church choir, took dancing lessons, and played drums in his school band. His first professional gig, at age eighteen, was with Buddy Collette. The drummer soon joined the Jackson Brothers' show band and worked with Cootie Williams at the Savoy Ballroom in New York City before playing in the army band for two years.

Thigpen then returned to New York and began working with a variety of artists, including Dinah Washington, Johnny Hodges, Lennie Tristano, Bud Powell, and Billy Taylor. During the 1950s he recorded with Toshiko Akiyoshi, Ira Sullivan, Mal Waldron, Mundell Lowe, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, Teddy Charles, and Blossom Dearie.

During that time, Thigpen became highly regarded for his brush playing. "Brush technique was very important then," Ed explained. "I always played brushes with the snares turned off, to get a more harmonic sound coming through the open snare drum. I also learned that volume and intensity were not the same thing. Jo Jones used to tell me, 'Make it sound as big as possible. Not loud, but big, and as musical as possible.'"

In 1959 Thigpen joined the Oscar Peterson Trio, which included bassist Ray Brown. "Working with the trio gave me an opportunity to develop certain elements of my playing," Ed told *MD* in 1982. "I had a chance to develop a cymbal technique and a method of phrasing which simulated a big-band situation. I learned how to listen to the melody and how to phrase with the improvised line to give the feeling that other things were happening. It was complementary, but it was still the time, which is what Oscar wanted in the first place.

"Ray and I roomed together. When I first joined the group, Ray said to me, 'Okay, we're gonna practice time—just the two of us.' We'd wake up in the morning and practice time. We'd practice dynamics, tempos, and singing the tunes we played. We could recite our name and address as we were playing time and know where we were in the tune at all times."



Peterson, Brown, and Thigpen briefly ran and taught at the Advanced School Of Contemporary Music, but the venture was short lived due to the demands of the trio. Of the many recordings Thigpen made with Peterson, he cited *West Side Story* as being one of the best and the most difficult. He also recalled a drum fill on the tune "Judy" from the album *Oscar Peterson & Nelson Riddle*. "I played the best two-beat solo you ever heard—or at least that I ever heard," Ed said, laughing.

After leaving Peterson in 1965, Thigpen worked with singer Ella Fitzgerald for a year; the two collaborated again from 1968 to 1972, when Thigpen moved to Los Angeles and worked freelance for a spell. "When you're in situations like that, with good singers who really have respect for the music, the most important thing is to be sure it swings," Ed told *MD*. "Second would be to get a good blend and a good balance. Watching the artist is also critical. You pick up little signals in the way in which they move. Of course, listening to the way they phrase is also essential, and that even involves breathing with the singer, which in turn helps you phrase with them. As an accompanist, you have to literally put yourself into that other person."

In 1972 Thigpen moved to Copenhagen after marrying a woman from Denmark. He became very active in the European jazz scene and recorded with a wide variety of artists, including Toots Thielemans, Johnny Griffin, Horace Parlan, Helen Humes, Clark Terry, Kai Winding, Thad Jones, Benny Carter, Art Farmer, and Monty Alexander. In addition, Thigpen led his own groups and released a number of fine albums, including *Mr. Taste*, *It's Entertainment*, and *The Element Of Swing*.

Thigpen was active as an educator as well. His book *The Sound Of Brushes* is considered a definitive resource on the art of brush playing, and his *Rhythm Analysis And Basic Coordination* (now out of print) found favor with many teachers and students. He taught extensively in Copenhagen and gave countless clinics and master classes around the world. Thigpen was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall Of Fame in 2002.

"Ed believed in the three Ps: preparation, presentation, and precision," says longtime manager and friend Donald Meade. "You prepare it, you present it, and you give it your best—that's the precision. Ed was a class act in anybody's book."





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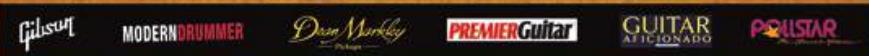
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 DRUM-OFF 2009  
 GRAND CHAMPION

# RAMON SAMPSON





On January 8th at The Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles, 19-year-old **Ramon Sampson** from Cordova, Tennessee beat out four other Drum-Off finalists from across the country, winning a prize package worth over \$40,000 and earning the title of **Guitar Center's Drum-Off Champion**. Ramon was chosen by a panel of judges including **Peter Erskine, Taylor Hawkins, Drew Hester, Thomas Lang, Jason Sutter, Kenny Aronoff, John Tempesta, Tony Royster Jr., Nisan Stewart and Ray Luzier**.

Hosted by **Stephen Perkins**, the evening began with a collaboration by **Danny Carey and Brann Dailor** followed by an emotional performance by **Jason Bonham** as he

paid tribute to his father, the legendary **John Bonham**. Next came a performance from **Billy Cobham**, whose work earned him the second induction into **Guitar Center's Drum Legends** of the night. The show culminated with **Tommy Lee and the Street Drum Corps' Frank Zummo** presentation of "BEZERK", featuring **Max Weinberg** and his son **Jay Weinberg, Chad Smith, Matt Sorum, José Pasillas, Abe Cunningham, DJ Aero, Sully Erna and BANG!**

For more on Guitar Center's Drum-Off and to see Ramon Sampson's winning performance visit: [guitarcenter.com/drumoff](http://guitarcenter.com/drumoff)





## A KIT WITH SOME CRUNCH

**O**ur latest setup comes from seventeen-year-old Ryne Tedford of Bolton, Connecticut, who's been drumming since he learned to walk and whose dad has been reading *MD* for more than twenty years. He tells us the idea for the kit came when he and his Curses bandmates (find the group at [wearecurses.com](http://wearecurses.com)) went through a month-long Funyuns binge, saving all the bags and putting them on the wall of their practice room. "One night I had the idea to wrap my drums in them," Tedford says. "What started off as a red-to-black-fade lacquer Pearl Export set ended up as the Funyuns Fiesta kit!

"I was sure to thoroughly wipe all the oil off the bags before I taped them to my drums, so I wouldn't run the risk of ruining my finish," Ryne continues. "After I removed all my hardware, I cut the bags to size and pulled them tight over my drums, taping them to the top and bottom of the interior of the shells. Each drum took about three to five hours, with the exception of my bass drum, which took close to eight."

So, was it worth all the time and effort? "Yes, it was!" Tedford says. And how did he feel after consuming all those onion-flavored snacks? "I gained fourteen pounds in one month, but it helps people remember my band and my drumming, which to me is the most important factor. I did the calculations, and it adds up to roughly \$213 worth of Funyuns. Unfortunately, now we all *hate* the taste of them. But I'm looking to do a new kind of chip soon, so be on the lookout!"



**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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