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August 2010

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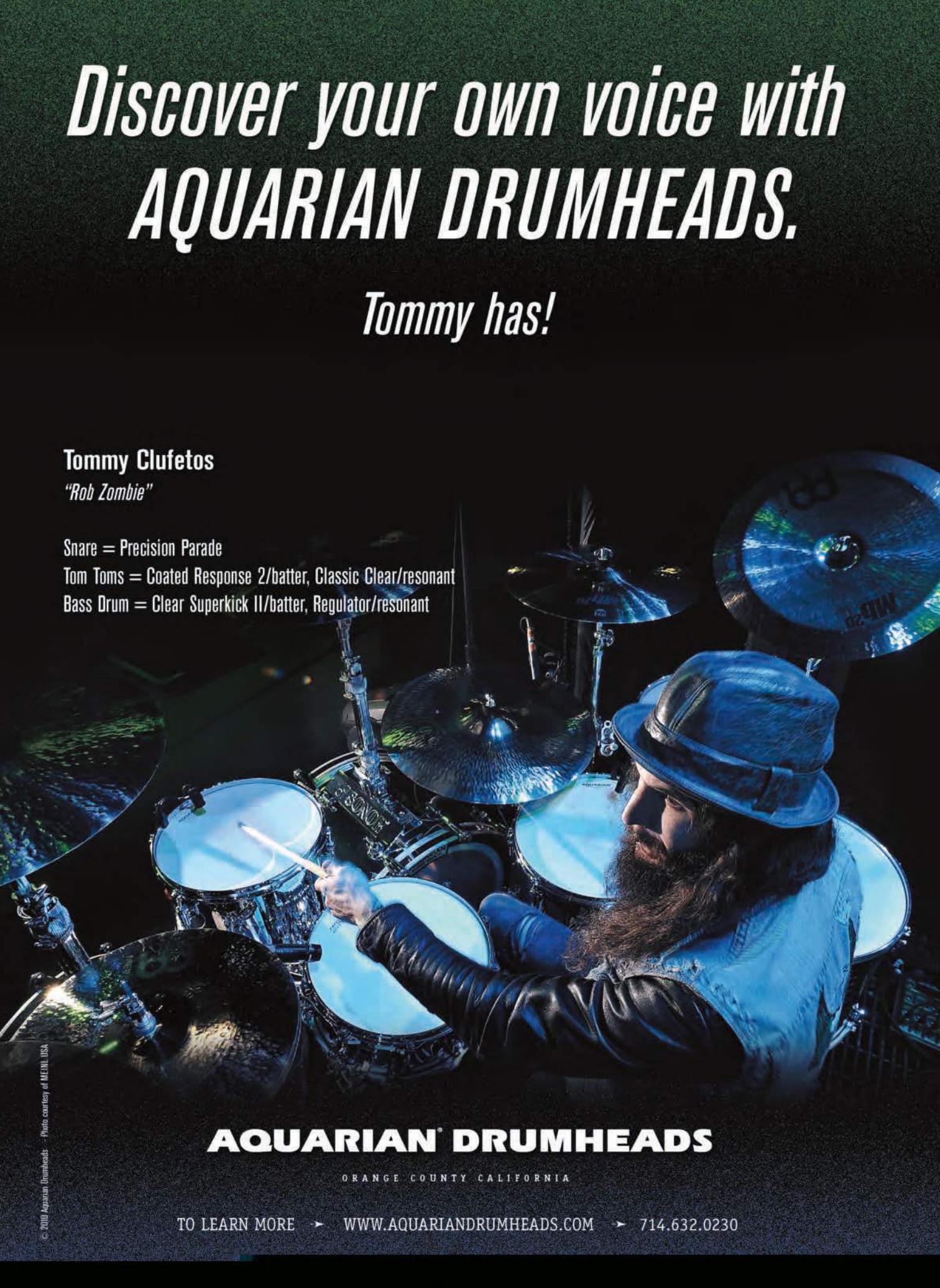
**Tommy Clufetos**

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A photograph of Tommy Clufetos, a drummer with a long beard and a leather hat, playing a drum set. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on the drums and cymbals, creating a moody atmosphere. The background is dark, making the metallic surfaces of the drum kit stand out.

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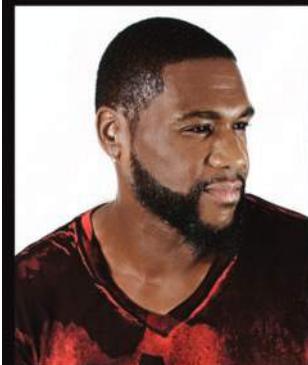
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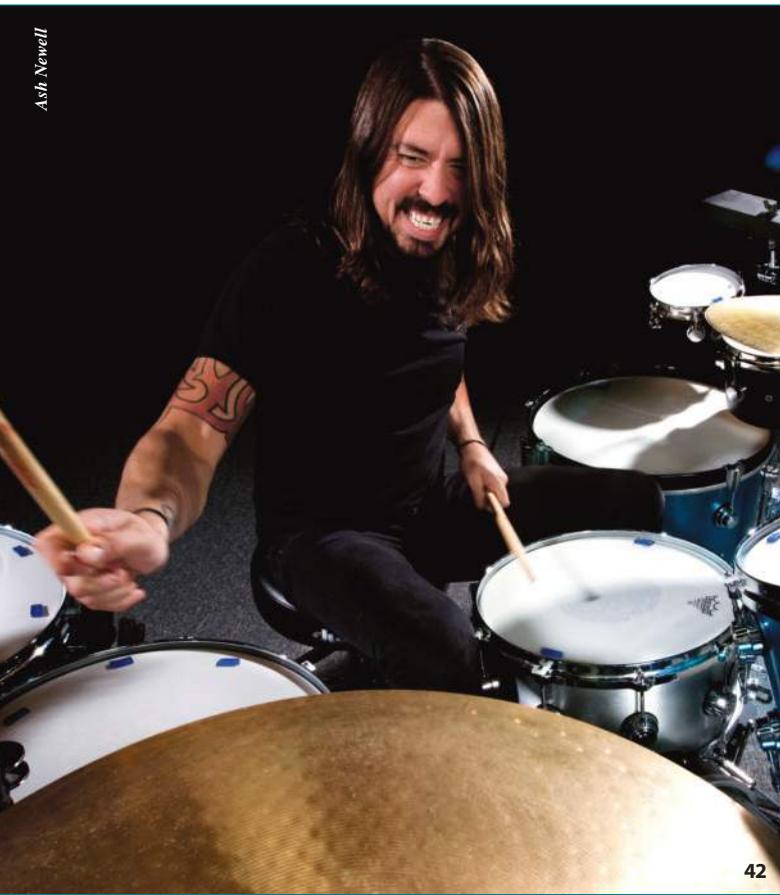
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# Be Slow To Judge

Sixteen years ago, *Modern Drummer* published its first cover story on Dave Grohl, shortly after his band Nirvana released its third—and ultimately final—studio record, *In Utero*. The backlash from that story was incredible. One letter deprecated Grohl's drumming as “primitive” and “utterly lacking in originality” and said Nirvana suffered from “musical ignorance and immaturity.” Another categorized Dave as a “no-talent” who hadn't contributed anything to the art of drumming.



Of course, the praise for Grohl at the time was just as monumental. One reader extolled Dave and Nirvana for having “a unique sound that's instantly recognizable.” Personally, I was affected in a huge way by Grohl's powerful, deliberate, and surprisingly tricky drumming. In fact, shortly after hearing Dave's definitive flam/kick entrance to “Smells Like Teen Spirit” explode from my mom's car speakers as she drove me to seventh-grade basketball practice, I started my first band. And I've been chasing the dream ever since. (How's *that* for an immediate and lasting impact?)

Looking back on a decade and a half of enormous success and endless influence, it seems pretty silly that we—the collective drumming community—had to debate the merits of someone as artistically sincere and as driven as Dave Grohl. Yes, he has long hair, he hits his drums hard (sometimes *too* hard, even by his own accounts), and he sports a few tattoos. But were those valid reasons to write him off as an undeserving flavor of the month? Today, the answer seems pretty obvious, but it's still amazing how quickly we—again, the collective drumming community—will discount someone in a “hot, young” band just because...well, frankly, just because we don't get it.

I had similar difficulty getting it when reviewing some of the exercises from forward-thinking artist Elliot Humberto Kavee that became this month's Jazz Drummer's Workshop. In his May feature story, Elliot discussed how he can play a meter of eleven so that it implies seven. As I read that passage, red flags went flying. I quickly got Elliot on the phone to ask how this seemingly irrational idea could be justified. I even sent some of the examples from his music sidebar to a trusted colleague, who responded quite simply that eleven can't sound like seven; it sounds like eleven.

Well, after a few more phone calls with Kavee and several weeks of practice, I can honestly and confidently say that, yes, eleven *can* sound like seven, albeit in a slightly distorted and elongated form. It just took a bit of extra effort to get my ears to hear the eleven-note pattern in a new, yet familiar, way. (Elliot also claims he can get me to hear the wicked odd-time Zappa tune “Keep It Greasy” in 4/4. Looking forward to seeing how *that* plays out!)

So I'm trying not to wag my finger at those with oppositional opinions. If you don't like or agree with something you hear or read, good! You're well on your way to developing your own aesthetic. I just request that before you pass final judgment you let go of your filters and give whatever it is a chance. If you find you still don't like it, forget it and move on. (I put skinny jeans, splash cymbals, and coconut flakes in the “not for me” category.) But I'm pretty sure there will be one or two things along the way that will lead you down a new path of discovery. As the saying goes, sometimes inspiration comes from the most unexpected places.

Enjoy the issue!

*Mike Dawson*

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**ERIC SINGER**

Though I'm only a few years younger than Eric Singer, after reading his May cover feature I can easily relate to his experiences growing up, and I can understand why he idolized the drummers that he did. Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson had a great impact on me, as they did on Eric and undoubtedly on all drummers growing up in our day. And now DVDs and videos really keep their spirit alive. The other drummers that Eric mentioned in the interview, such as Dino Danelli, Carmine Appice, Roy Burns, Max Roach, Bobby Rosengarden, and Ed Shaughnessy, were musicians that my generation of drummers aspired to be while growing up, and that's why I continue to gig regularly to this day.

**Pat Martucci**

I am twelve years old and have been playing drums for five years now. I want to thank *Modern Drummer* for publishing such a great, informative magazine. I especially loved the interview with Eric Singer in the May issue. I felt very connected with Eric as I read it. Again, thanks for such a great magazine!

**Massimo Asturi**

Thanks for the excellent cover story on Eric Singer in your May issue—it was long overdue since his last feature in 1990, when he first joined the Alice Cooper band. The interview was very well done. Eric is a real intelligent guy and offered some great advice for the modern drummer. Awesome photos and a real attention to detail make this an article I will read again and again.

**Robert Rice**

**CHRIS "DADDY" DAVE**

Thank you so much for your article in the February 2010 issue on the *amazing* Chris "Daddy" Dave. He has been such an influence on my drumming since I first saw him play over five years ago. He is also, I dare to say, the leader of a whole new generation of drummers. I really enjoyed learning about

his musical upbringing because until I read this article he was kind of a man of mystery to me. It's about time he got put in the spotlight, as he has deserved for so many years. I love *Modern Drummer*!

**Todd Elrod**

**GIMME 10!**

I started reading *Modern Drummer* when I first saw the *Drum Gods* issue. What *MD* does for me is educate and push me to learn more about drums and drumming. Now every time I go to a concert I'm not only listening, I'm checking out the kits. One of the articles I love is Gimme 10! Because I'm self-taught, there are things that I never really knew about, and it's wonderful to hear from professionals. Thank you for everything you're doing for me and for all drummers.

**Gary O. Winstead**

**DREAM ON**

I just read Billy Amendola's "Dream On" editorial in the May 2010 issue, and it spoke to me on a very personal level. My band, Xenon, is celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary this year, still with all four original members, and our three CDs are now available on iTunes. I have been a *Modern Drummer* subscriber since 1985 and have also enjoyed attending every MD Festival. I was featured in the April '97 issue, in the On The Move column. Needless to say, I am a huge fan of the magazine, and I've been an active part of the NJ music scene for many years. Billy is absolutely right that there is no harm in dreaming big, and even though Xenon never quite made it to superstardom, I'm happy knowing that our CDs sell, and I'm thrilled that we still get to go out and do our thing!

**Tony Capobianco**

I want to thank Billy Amendola for his Editor's Overview in the May issue of *MD*. I'm a dreamer as well, and perseverance is one of the hardest aspects of this one-time ride we call life. Every issue of *MD* has fed my desire to keep pushing for my dreams, and Billy's words at the beginning were a fantastic way to start my reading of another great issue.

**Philip Kurut**

**DROPPED BEAT**

In the feature on Robin Russell in the June issue of *MD*, we incorrectly stated that he played on the Nite-Liters cuts "K-Jee" and "Afro Strut." The drummer on those songs was Jim Hill. Russell joined the band in 1972, after those tracks were recorded.



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**BOB GATZEN**

**DEALING WITH SNARE BUZZ**



**When I hit my first rack tom (10"), which is placed directly above my snare, it seems to make my snares vibrate. I've tried numerous things to eliminate the buzz, like detuning the lugs on the bottom of the snare on each side of the snare bed or altering the pitch of both drums. I've experienced similar snare buzz on a variety of setups. Any solutions?**

**Jeremy**

You're not alone. Sympathetic snare buzz is an age-old problem that just about every drummer struggles with at some point. Rack toms—usually 10" and 12" sizes—generate the highest levels of sympathetic vibration due to their natural

tuning ranges (pitches that sympathize with snare drum tunings) and their proximity to the snare. You can decrease sympathetic vibration by tuning toms to pitches that are less likely to sympathize with the snare, but be prepared to experience severe degradation in the overall tone and feel of the toms. Another alternative is shortening the toms' sustain by muffling them. Again, how much are you willing to sacrifice in terms of sound and feel versus levels of snare buzz?

One thing that could be causing excessive snare buzz is defective or improperly installed snare wires. Check for loose wires, and be certain that the snare array is mounted evenly. There are some helpful videos on my YouTube channel; try

searching for the titles "Broken Opportunity Pt. 1 Eliminate Snare Buzz," "Broken Opportunity Pt. 2 Eliminate Snare Buzz," and "Drum Tuning Series Pt. 2 Snare."

I personally view snare buzz as part of the overall sound of the drums. Many drummers embrace this philosophy. I'm not willing to degrade the sound and especially the *feel* of my toms in order to decrease snare buzz. A glimmer of hope is on the way, though, as I recently helped complete an innovative snare-wire design at PureSound that offers many benefits, including decreased sympathetic snare buzz. Look for it under the name Custom Pro, or CP.



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# CLAYTON CAMERON

Steppin' out: **Tony Bennett's brush master** takes the drumming/tap dance connection to the stage.

When *MD* gets Clayton Cameron on the phone, he's in a music store eyeing a vintage snare to use in *Traps 'N Taps: A Brief History Of American Rhythm*, a show he wrote that traces four eras of great tap dancers and drummers. In the production, Cameron appears in the roles of Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, Papa Jo Jones, and Max Roach, explaining the musical connections to players like Davey Tough, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Kenny Clarke, and Roy Haynes.

Dancer Clarence Whitmore represents tap royalty such as Bill Robinson, Sandman Sims, Arthur Duncan, Bunny Briggs, Willie Covan, John Bubbles, Baby Laurence, Sammy Davis Jr., and Gregory Hines. "Baby Laurence came up with the concept of tap dancing the solos of jazz artists," Cameron explains. "He would do a Bird solo. Clarence didn't know what I was going to do, but I said, 'When you hear me give you the cue, just go with it.' And he's that kind of dancer. He knows all the different styles, so it fits like a glove.

"*Traps 'N Taps* is a great opportunity to go through the history of the drumset and the history that developed in tap dancing," Cameron adds. "And it's not just for drummers; it's for anybody interested in music and the history of jazz in America."



Cameron, who keeps his calendar filled playing with the likes of Benny Green, James Moody, and the Billy Childs Trio,

draws inspiration from famed jazz drummer Mel Lewis's style of combo drumming. "You're locked in, listening to each other," Clayton says. "Knowing how to set up figures to keep it swinging is the other thing. I take more of that approach, as opposed to the approach of Buddy Rich and those early swing guys.

"I'm constantly trying to learn...not so

much technique as just trying to figure out a groove that makes the music work—to complement what the writer has written or what the artist is hearing. I don't practice 'technique' a whole lot, but how to play different genres and grooves musically—*that's* what I'm trying to figure out."

Cameron hopes to complete his first solo album, *Beats Of Their Hearts*, this year. "It's a tribute to my influences," he says, "like Max Roach and Kenny Clarke, early bebop cats on up to Blakey, Vernel Fournier..."

"It's interesting that sometimes you have to be careful what you wish for," Clayton continues. "People know me for brushes, and some people don't even think I pick up sticks. But there *will* be stick playing on the record."

**Robin Tolleson**

## BREAKOUT BEATS

**Clayton Cameron's first big break was working with Sammy Davis Jr., and the drummer credits Davis's tap dancing for inspiring his brushwork.**

"Just to have a job coming out of college was a big deal," Cameron says. "But to work with him and some of the great tap dancers he brought out... I'd go back to my room to try to emulate what I'd heard." Joining Tony Bennett during the singer's early-'90s resurgence was what really put Cameron on the map, though. "I thought I was only going to be working with him for two weeks, but I've done fourteen records with him and won fourteen Grammys, including Album Of The Year," Clayton says. "Tony would actually let me do drum solos on television, which was unheard of. He was very gracious, and he enjoyed bringing me out front every night. He was always like that—still is."



## ON TOUR

Michael "Moose" Thomas with Bullet For My Valentine /// Cliff Sarcona with As Tall As Lions /// Tico Torres with Bon Jovi /// Tyler Stewart with Barenaked Ladies /// Chris Fryar with the Zac Brown Band /// Billy Cadden with the Postelles /// Trevor Stafford with Adelitas Way /// Keech Rainwater with Lonestar /// Alan Arber with Darryl Stuermer's Genesis Rewired

# LEON MOBLEY

Ben Harper's longtime percussionist taps into the music of distant relatives.

Leon Mobley may have gained fame slapping the djembe alongside Ben Harper on "Burn One Down," but his musical roots extend much deeper. Mobley began studying African drums and rhythms with world-music pioneer Babatunde Olatunji at the age of seven. "That's who gave me what I have," Mobley says. "This drumming thing is much bigger than me, much bigger than him. It was passed on to me, so it's my responsibility to pass it on, to share it, to touch like my teacher did. If I can see that someone is walking away from something that I've done feeling good, touched in a positive light, that's a blessing."

For Mobley, recording the *Distant*

*Relatives* album and touring with Damian "Jr. Gong" Marley and rapper Nas this year was another great opportunity. "Nas is a lyricist," Leon says. "He's very deep. And Damian is so true and righteous with his music. Lyrically you have two brothers who are really talking about some powerful issues on this album."

"I didn't realize what my role was going to be, but I'm sort of a mentor to these gentlemen because of my understanding of African culture. It's such a joy to be a part of and to have both of them look up to me. We talk about African culture. And when I say African, I mean everyone in the world, because to me, as long as you are a human, you are an African. Man began in

Africa, so therefore we are all Africans. To bring that light into the conversation and into the vibe of the recording session, it's really a pleasure and an honor.

"I want to bring West African music to the front of the hip-hop, to the front of the reggae, to the front of the jazz," Mobley continues. "Hip-hop rhythms—they're African rhythms. I went to Ghana and saw the



influence of Ghanaian music on the culture of Jamaica—the food they eat, the music they listen to. So I started to bring even more African influence to the reggae scene. It's a wonderful combination when the two musics and genres come together. They're speaking different languages but the same language."

When he's not on the road, Mobley books dates on the West Coast for Da Lion, the group he started with his brother Jah-Amen. "Da Lion is a chance for me to express myself and the music I love and to speak through my instrument, the djembe. It came about as a means of having fun and getting out these rhythms of West African descent, but with our twist on it. I call it American African music, because of what we've contributed to the preservation of African culture, and also recognizing what we have in our culture in America.

"I love playing, and I love my instruments," Mobley adds. "This is what I am. I'm a heart that beats—that's my drum. I am a drum." **Robin Tolleason**

## BREAKOUT BEATS

Leon Mobley starred on the PBS children's show *Zoom* in 1972 and 1973. "To be on a weekly television series at the age of ten was really out of this world," he says.

"That was a huge break. My theater and drama courses were a big help in my ascent in the entertainment business." When he moved to Los Angeles in 1983, Mobley started Djimbe West African Drummers & Dancers. "I got a phone call one day from a gentleman named Remo Belli," Leon recalls. "I was like, 'Is this someone playing a joke on me?' He said, 'No, it's a gentleman who's made drumheads for forty years. I want to make a drum for you—the djembe drum.' And [the Leon Mobley Signature series djembe] was a big launch in my career."



## OUT NOW



**Lynn Williams** is on *Late Show*, a full-length album by Delbert McClinton's backup band, Dick50. "We decided on an unorthodox way of recording," Williams says. "For the basic tracks, each instrument got one microphone—yes, one mic on the drumkit. And no headphones. It was cool not to have to be concerned about headphone mixes—just four guys in a room playing."



**John Densmore** is featured in director Tom DiCillo's Doors documentary, *When You're Strange*, which is out on DVD and Blu-ray and features period footage of the band. Go to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) for an exclusive interview with Densmore. "Once in a while I'd look down at my drumhead and there'd be a little blood on it," John says when asked about his taped-up fingers in the film. "Then I'd look at my fingers and there'd be blood. But I didn't know what I was doing—I was just into it."

## ALSO ON THE SHELVES

**ARTIST/ALBUM**  
 Jakob Dylan: *Women & Country*  
 Heavy Trash: *Midnight Soul Serenade*  
 Nonpoint: *Miracle*  
 Menomena: *Mines*  
 The Futureheads: *The Chaos*  
 Anat Cohen: *Clarinetwork*  
 MGMT: *Congratulations*  
 Broken Social Scene: *Forgiveness Rock Record*  
 Danzig: *Deth Red Sabaoth*  
 Against Me!: *White Crosses*  
 Shurman: *Still Waiting For The Sunset*  
 Ed Hale: *Ballad On Third Avenue*  
 Rooney: *Eureka*  
 Tracy Bonham: *Masts Of Manhattan*  
 Stick Men: *Soup*  
 Alan Jackson: *Freight Train*  
 Joan Armatrading: *This Charming Life*  
 American Hi-Fi: *Fight The Frequency*  
 Jimmie Vaughan: *Blues, Ballads And Favorites*  
 Hanson: *Shout It Out*  
 Foxy Shazam: *Foxy Shazam*

**DRUMMER**  
 Jay Bellerose  
 Sam Baker  
 Robb Rivera  
 Danny Seim  
 Dave Hyde  
 Lewis Nash  
 Will Berman  
 Justin Peroff  
 Johnny Kelly  
 George Rebelo  
 Ken Coomer  
 Derek Cintron  
 Ned Brower  
 Andy Borger  
 Pat Mastelotto  
 Eddie Bayers  
 Miles Bould  
 Stacy Jones, Brian Nolan  
 George Rains  
 Zac Hanson  
 Aaron McVeigh, Thomas Pridgen,  
 Josh Freese, John Micelli,  
 Luke Johnson, Daniel Morris



# MORGAN ROSE

With their strongest lineup back in place, **Sevendust tests their own resolve in the studio—and comes out with a hit.**

**S**evendust's *Cold Day Memory* marks the band's eighth studio release and first since guitarist Clint Lowery returned to the lineup after leaving in 2004 to play in Dark New Day with his brother Corey. Drummer Morgan Rose's impassioned playing showcases a gift for enhancing songs by laying down brutal grooves with some blistering footwork (check out "Splinter" and "Ride Insane"), while still leaving space for the rest of the band to have their own voices.

*Cold Day Memory* sounds like the work of a group that's on a mission to prove—both to themselves and to their fans—that Sevendust is back with vengeance. "The Sevendust sound really is the five of us," Rose says. "There's no way for this band to put out a record and feel confident about it without Clint being a part of it. That's just the way it is."

The band released three records during Lowery's absence, all of which had great moments. But, as Rose attests, "They just weren't full-on Sevendust records." He further stresses how important it is for a band's chemistry to extend beyond the scope of writing and playing music to include the pragmatic realities of band life. "The only advice I can offer musicians who want to start a band," Rose says, "is to make sure you're playing with guys you really care about. God forbid you get lucky enough to make this a career, you're going to want to get along with your bandmates, because you're going to be driving around together in a metal tube for 300 days out of the year."

Grammy-nominated producer Johnny K (Disturbed, Staind, 3 Doors Down) signed on to record *Cold Day Memory*, and although Sevendust collectively acknowledged his role and respected him as a producer, there was still a period of adjustment. The combination of the band having recorded its three previous albums without producer input and this album being the first effort since Lowery's return made the members very protective of what they were writing, to the point where they were not immediately open to outside suggestions. Rose says honestly, "We didn't appreciate Johnny as much when we were making the record as we did reflecting upon the experience afterward."

Rose's drum sound and performance on *Cold Day Memory* are lively and aggressive, possibly because Morgan tracked all of his parts live, with the rest of the band playing along with him in the control room. "We recorded the drums to



two-inch tape to get the warmth, and then we dumped everything to Pro Tools," he says. "This method gave us less wiggle room in editing, so I had to make sure my takes were real solid."

Since the material was unfinished when Sevendust hit the studio, the band took the unconventional approach of recording one song at a time. "Once we felt we had nailed the arrangement," Rose says, "we would just go for it and record drums, bass, and guitars until we had a good rough mix, and then we'd move on to the next song. It was pretty tedious at first, because I would record my drums and then not play drums again for a few days. But after we got the first song done, it started to flow."

Rose was happy that he got to use his own Pearl Masterworks kit in the studio. "This is going to sound like an artist endorsement," he says with a chuckle, "but it's the truth. Johnny had a kit he used on a bunch of recordings that wasn't a Pearl kit, and we tried 'jellybeaning' kits in the studio, but we agreed that my kit sounded best for this batch of songs."

The gravity of *Cold Day Memory* can be directly attributed to the band's emotional state while making the album. "We were nervous on this record," Rose points out. "After finishing the album, we did *not* walk out of the studio with our heads held high. There's a DVD that goes with the album that shocked me when I watched it for the first time. There's some pretty heavy, emotional material that really shows how we feel about each

## BREAKOUT BEATS

**Morgan Rose and Sevendust burst onto the underground metal scene with their self-titled debut in April 1997.**

The band's unique blend of thrash and groove, fronted by Lajon Witherspoon's emotionally charged and aggressively melodic vocals, spoke to a new generation of fans who had been awaiting a metal renaissance. Rose's knack for crafting memorable, creative poly-rhythmic grooves caught the attention of the drumming world, but his effortless playing style, animated stage presence, and lead and backing vocal contributions made him a drummer to watch over the next decade and beyond.



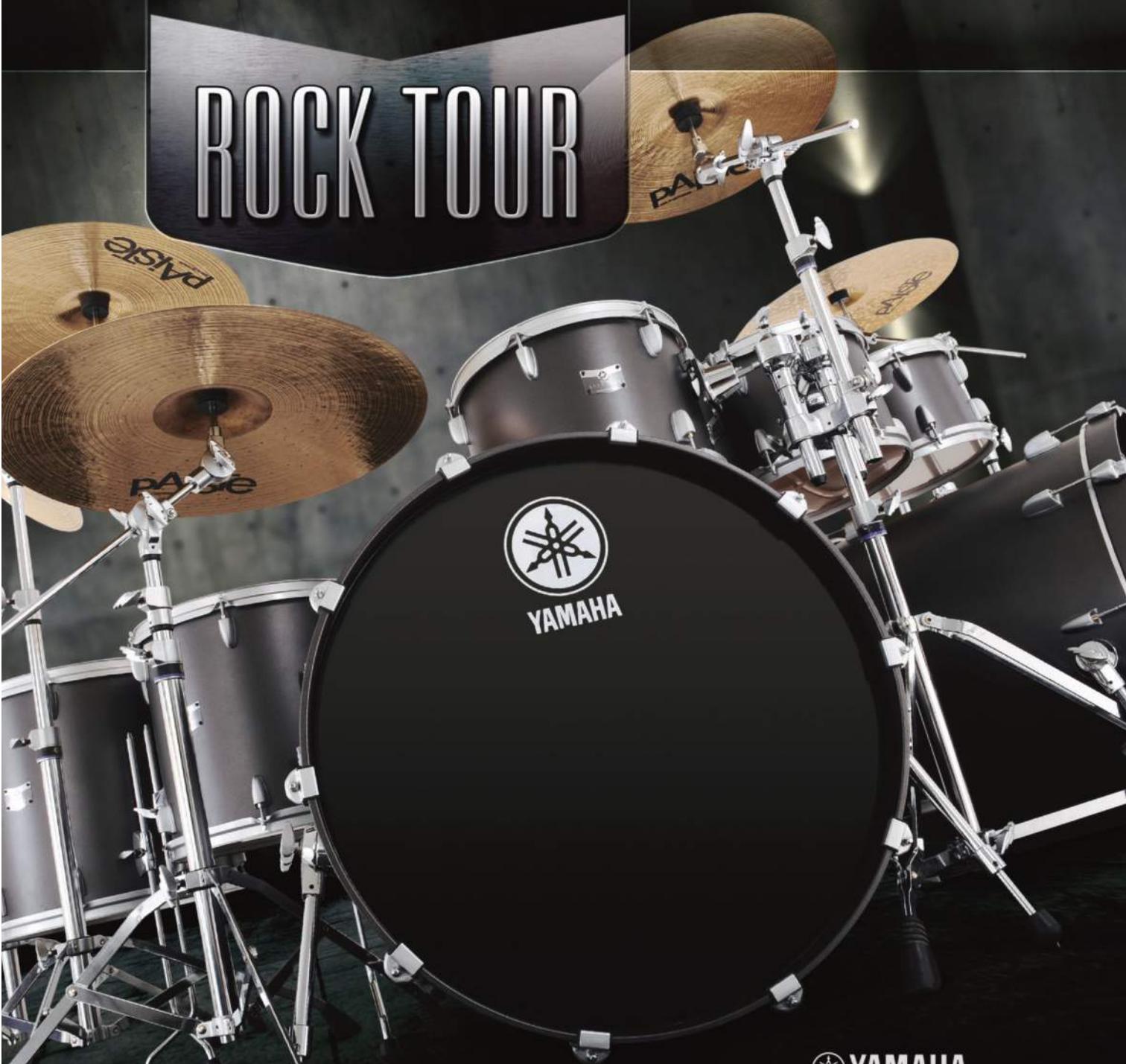
other and shows all we've been through personally and as a band. This record proves to me that although we've been kicking around for a while and have been through some tough times, we're not going anywhere. As cliché as it sounds, I feel this album is a bit of a rebirth for us."

Sevendust did a month-long tour in March of this year in preparation for *Cold Day Memory*'s April 20 release date, followed by another four-week stint to promote the album. The first single, "Unraveling," is the band's highest-charting song to date. In mid-July, they hit the road with Shinedown, Chevelle, Puddle Of Mudd, and 10 Years, and they'll continue to tour into the fall.

**David Ciauro**



# ROCK TOUR



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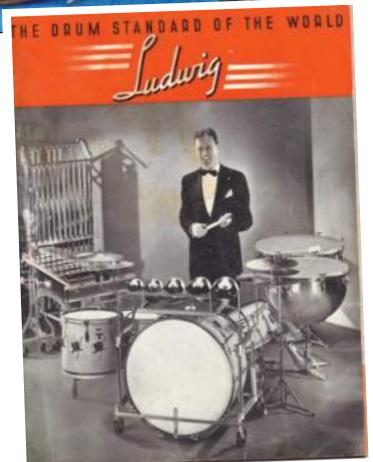
# Console Kit

I have a 28" Ludwig & Ludwig bass drum on a rack with wheels. Can you provide any information on the history and value of this instrument?  
George Meyers

"If we could go back to 1938-40, we would see a lot of big-band players with this sort of rig," explains drum historian Harry Cangany. "It's a Ludwig Super bass drum in 'white Avalon pearl' (aka white marine pearl) with nickel metal parts. It's a 3-ply drum that was Ludwig & Ludwig's finest model (chrome was available for an up charge). Back then, 28" bass drums were the common size. The other item we see is part of the Wheel-Away Trap Console. The tray on top held sticks and small instruments ('traps'). Temple blocks could also be attached. The aluminum frame had cymbal arms that went into the holes. These were typically bent into L shapes to fit the holes, extend out, and bend up to hold the cymbals. Then toms went on the right arm, and a snare drum was held on the left side (from the rear of the console). Smaller rail unit tom holders came out later and were called consolettes.

"The console idea came from England, and big-band pioneer Chick Webb used one with his Gretsch setup. The console was easy to assemble and disassemble off stage and wheel into place. The idea fell out of favor after World War II, as bass drums got smaller, toms were mounted directly on bass drums, and drummers used fewer traps. Of course, this console was the predecessor of our modern rack system.

"The bass drum has separate-tension Imperial lugs and is probably worth \$400 to \$500. The console is mostly complete, with the hardest-to-find parts intact. The artwork shown at right is a scan of a full console from the cover of the 1938 Ludwig & Ludwig catalog. Your console is valued at around \$500 as well."



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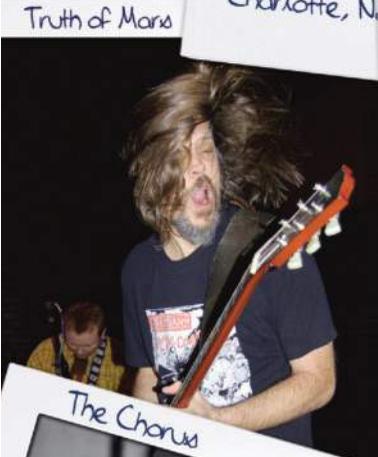
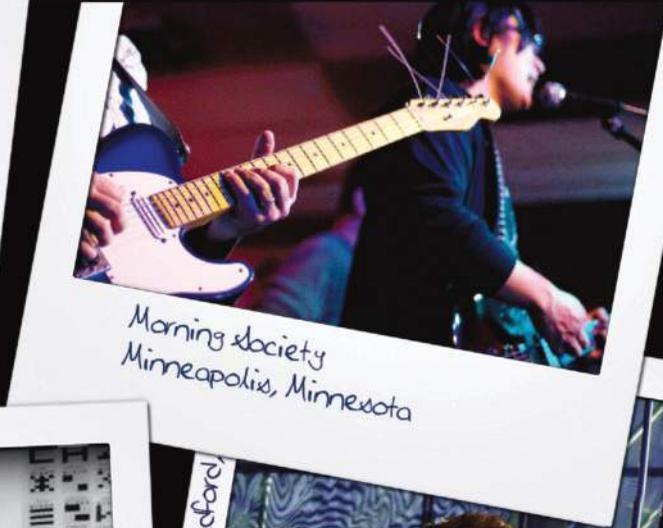
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# Mind Matters

Overcoming Common Mental Barriers In Music

# Competitions And Auditions

by Bernie Schallehn

**A few years ago, when I was in high school, my group was in a battle of the bands. We didn't win—we weren't even in the top three. The guys in the band blamed me because I was nervous and sped up the tempos too much. I later quit the group because I felt guilty about messing things up for them. This past year I entered a drum competition at a local music store and was cut after the first round. Then I auditioned for a band and didn't get the job. I'm not playing with anyone right now, and I'm thinking of learning to play guitar instead. But I think what I want is to play drums in a band again. I'm really kind of confused.**  
**John**

I've got a question for you: What's another name for the second-place finisher in a competition? Answer: loser.

Do I really mean that? Of course not. I simply wanted to get your attention fast

and shoot straight to the heart of your problem. Because of your interpretation of the events you mention and their unwanted outcomes, I'll bet you've judged and labeled yourself a loser. There's a very thick thread that runs through your letter, and it can be summarized as "better than/less than" or "winner/loser."

Let's start with your debacle at the battle of the bands. You'll need to let go of that experience in order to move on and make a clear-headed decision on whether to stick with drumming or try expressing yourself through another instrument. Try this: Close your eyes and imagine one of those old 12" black-and-white televisions. Turn it on. Now, on the TV screen see yourself performing in that band competition and hear the music. Watch yourself speeding up the song tempos. (If you're feeling twinges of discomfort or pain, you're performing this exercise correctly. Stick with it; hang in.) Maybe you see the other guys giving you

nasty looks or you notice your face frozen in fear. After a couple minutes, start to make the image fuzzy, like when your cable TV is acting up. At the same time, begin to turn down the music. Notice whether your discomfort begins to lessen. Now fade the image to black and turn off the TV. Gone. All that's left is a blank screen. No images, no music.

Remind yourself that your drumming has improved since your high school years. How can I make this assumption? Since you had these experiences a few years ago, you've likely put in some practice time that strengthened your chops. I don't know if you're still speeding up tempos, but maybe you've overcome that tendency. If you, as you are now, were able to go back in time, that experience may never have happened. But you have to accept and celebrate the drummer you are *today*. By revivifying your memory of the battle of the bands, you're only keeping yourself stuck in the past. The

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previous exercise should have helped fade the memory. But should that recollection pop into your awareness again, don't fight it. Eventually it will get tired of terrorizing you, and your attention will soon be snagged by something else.

If you're still rushing your grooves in front of an audience, it's probably due to stage fright/performance anxiety. Find a method that puts you in the zone for playing. Relaxation CDs, yoga, and physical exercise are just a few of the things that can help you calm yourself before a gig. See which ones work for you.

Finally, and perhaps most important, begin to move away from thinking of drumming as a competitive sport. If you want competition, play a video game or join a hockey league. Begin to think more in terms of what you can add to the universe of music. If you want to compete in the field of music, compete against yourself. Challenge yourself to be the best drummer you can be.

We live in a highly competitive society, so it's only natural that competitions would leak into the world of music. There were highly publicized "drum battles" between big-name drummers back in the 1940s and '50s. But was it really a competition? I don't think so. It was more of a way to showcase the superb skills of drummers of that era to a totally enamored audience. But somewhere along the line, things got much more serious. Look

at the popularity of *American Idol*, with winners becoming superstars almost overnight. In the drum competition world, the winner takes home prize money and high-end gear. And the rest of the competitors—like you—often walk away feeling like losers.

Obviously there's a place for competition in drumming. Drum corps hold competitions every summer. But the rules of engagement and what the judges are seeking in those situations are clearly defined. I'm not so sure that's the case with battles of the bands and contests sponsored by music stores. Preferences in drumming and tastes in music are extremely subjective. Keep in mind that some drummers are highly competitive adrenaline junkies that crave any opportunity for a thrill. That's cool. Different strokes for different folks. It'd be a very dull world if we were all identical. But from your letter, that doesn't sound like you. And remember, you chose to put yourself in those three competitive situations. I wonder if you chose to compete as a way to prove to yourself that you're a "good" drummer. In other words, if you had beaten the competition, would that mean you were a better drummer?

Most performing musicians have experienced at least one, if not many, auditions throughout the course of their careers. No way around it, this is a competitive situation. The band is looking for someone who will be the best fit. However, written or spoken

descriptions of what an existing band is looking for are often vague and foggy. Obviously, don't show up for a formal wedding band audition in skateboarder kicks, ripped jeans, and a Bob Marley T-shirt. And if they give you several songs to learn, learn them! Drummer/percussionist Wally Reyes Jr. recently told me that you don't ever truly know what existing band members are looking for, even if their description of the perfect new drummer is clearly defined. For instance, how would you define feel? Wally's advice to me—as I was preparing for an audition myself—was simply to play my best and see what happens. That freed me from my anxieties of thinking, *What do they really want?*

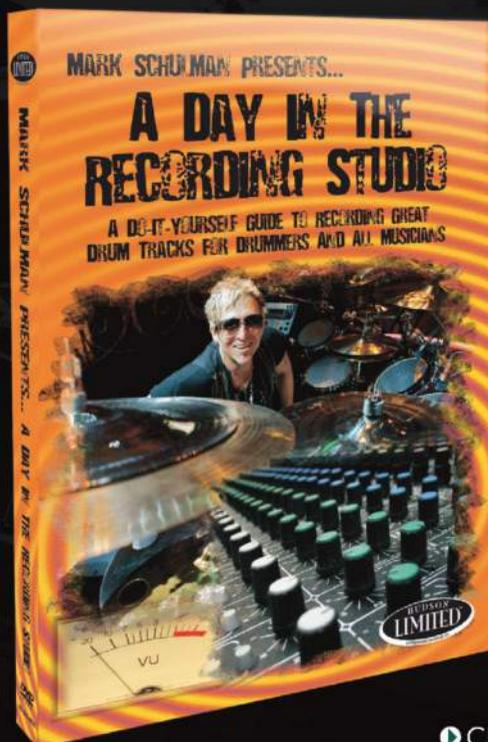
I won't try to dissuade you from dropping your sticks and picking up a six-string. But before you do, please mull over what I've written, perform the exercises, and perhaps take a shot at another audition. Or christen yourself a bandleader and carve out a rehearsal space in your garage or basement, and then *you* can hold auditions for others. Best of luck!



**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.



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# CANOPUS

## JAPANESE SWORD BOP DRUMSET

by Anthony Riscica

**W**ith the Japanese Sword series, Canopus is heading in a new direction of drum manufacturing. Since its inception, the company had used solid brass tube lugs because of their “efficient vibration transfer.” The problem is that cutting solid brass lugs is not very efficient, which raises production costs. In an attempt to cut down pricing while maintaining quality, Canopus has designed a new Japanese-sword-style die-cast lug, called Yaiba (the word is Japanese for sword). The Yaiba lug is modest in size, super-sleek in shape, and, as the name suggests, reminiscent of the blade of a sword.

These lugs are offered on two drumkit configurations: Bop and Rock. We were sent the Bop kit (\$3,083.32), which consists of an 8x12 rack tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and a 14x18 bass drum. Along with the kit, Canopus sent two snare drums from this series, a 5x14, 1 mm steel model and a 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 drum that’s made with the same 7-ply maple shell used on the toms and kick. Here’s the rundown.

### RACK AND FLOOR TOMS

When I pulled the rack tom out of its box, I was immediately struck by its looks. The lugs are eye-catching, and the almost matte oil finish on the natural maple shell is a sight to behold.

The rack tom comes equipped with a suspension-mount holder that attaches to the tom arm included for the bass drum. The drum came tuned pretty high, which makes sense because this is a bebop kit. When I loosened the tension a bit, the tom still sang out nicely with plenty of volume. A medium head tension gave the drum a good round tone that would work in other styles besides straight-ahead jazz, while the original higher tension yielded a brighter Max Roach-type sound.

This tom’s response was beautiful at all tensions, as soft taps still made the drum resonate. Another notable aspect of this drum—and all the others, for that matter—is the quality of craftsmanship involved. For starters, the bearing edges were about as perfect as I’ve ever seen

on a wood drum, and each ply of maple looked flawless. Even smaller details, like the lug/washer combination, were unlike anything I’d seen before. Canopus uses a sandwich of three separate washers on each key rod: plastic, metal, then plastic again. This combo proved to be valuable, as the drums’ tension never slipped. It also made tuning a very pleasant experience.

The 14x14 floor tom followed with many of the same characteristics. It also came tuned at a higher tension and encapsulated a classic bebop sound. But this drum had even more range than the rack tom; it was capable of going very low—to the point where the tension rods started rattling—while still producing a discernable tone. As with the rack tom, the response and feel were great. The legs are beefy, which gives this relatively small floor tom a solid feel. Even though the drum belongs to the Bop kit, its versatility knows no bounds.

### STEEL AND MAPLE SNARES

I tested the 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 maple snare (\$709.89) first and was blown away by its sound. The over-ring it gave off allowed for a sweet rimshot at all volumes. I liked the sound so much that I didn’t stray far from the original tuning, though if this snare is anything like the rest of the kit, it has plenty of range to explore. The moderately high head tension it came with seemed to suit the drum perfectly, as the response and sensitivity were impeccable. I used the snare on a few live recordings, and even with a minimal microphone setup it came out sounding

like an engineer had EQ’ed it for hours. Both snares come with one-piece dual-sword lugs that look almost like a yin and yang symbol, but with blades. The maple drum also comes with 2.3 mm steel hoops and eight tension rods.

The 5x14 steel snare (\$593.22) has 2.3 mm hoops as well, but with ten tension rods instead of eight. This drum had more volume and a little less warmth than the maple, but it pleased my ears nonetheless. It was a bit more versatile than the maple and could be used in any playing style. The two drums came tuned roughly the same, but I experimented more with the tension on the steel model, bringing it down low and gradually bringing it back up. At its lowest, this snare punched nicely while still retaining some tone. As I brought it up, the “kang” of the shell became more evident and the sensitivity increased until I was back where I started, which proved to be the ideal tuning for the drum. Both snares tuned very easily, and the throw-offs operated smoothly.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Whether I was at home enjoying these drums for myself or on a jazz trio gig, everyone who heard and saw them praised their sound and looks. In short, these Bop drums are a pleasure. Their sound is ideal for their intended jazz application, but they could be coaxed—rather easily—to fit other styles as well. Add to that their manageable pricing and uncompromised quality, and you’ve got a great set that’s worth checking out. [canopusdrums.com](http://canopusdrums.com)

## BEYOND-BOP BASS DRUM

**The 14x18 bass drum came tuned moderately high, with no muffling inside.** The drum sang with tons of resonance—maybe even *too* much. When I used felt strips on the front and batter heads, I was able to rein in the resonance perfectly, and I was smitten with the sound. There was just enough bottom end to be felt in the chest, plus plenty of tone and the range to go to any pitch I wanted. The legs on the bass drum are beefy and sturdy. This helped the drum feel solid and stable, which is important with a smaller kick. Another thing that helped keep this light drum from flying away was having the rack tom mounted directly on it. Again, the exceptional quality of the kick stood out, as everything from the wood hoops to the spurs made for a pleasant experience for the eyes, ears, and foot.



# MEINL

## BYZANCE SERIES ADDITIONS

by David Ciauro



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Meinl's Byzance series is renowned for being a widely expressive array of cymbals, in both sound and appearance. Under the Byzance umbrella exist six product lines, all meticulously hand hammered yet all aesthetically unique and sonically diverse. Models range from fully lathed to completely unlathed, and each line appeals to a different audience of drummers, leaving no genre of musical application out of the picture. In this review we'll be taking a look at what's new in the Traditional, Dark, and Extra Dry lines.

### BYZANCE DARK RAW BELL RIDE AND CHINA

The 20" Dark Raw Bell ride (\$560) lived up to its name in all respects. Its unlathed appearance has a lot of color variation, and the finish gives the impression that the cymbal was unearthed from a spud garden. Fittingly, the tone was quite earthy and wickedly dark. The noticeably different-size hammering marks made for a drier sound and a pronounced stick attack. The untreated raw bell projected a dis-

tinctly dark chime, and crashing the ride created an intense, murky wash that nicely contrasted the definition of the stick. I used the ride during some rehearsals for a rock gig and found it didn't have enough presence or volume to penetrate the mix of a standard five-piece band. This cymbal would work better for jazz or in an acoustic setting where the ride doesn't have to compete with overdriven amps.

The 18" Dark China (\$480) is also completely unlathed and earthy in tone and appearance. Again, the volume was reduced in comparison with typical Chinas, and the pitch was much lower, making this a model that's suitable for more ambient applications. Its lower frequencies gave the cymbal a naturally dark sound with a cool, grimy quality. The attack was fast and surprisingly aggressive, with a fleeting decay.

### BYZANCE EXTRA DRY SPLASH, THIN CRASH, AND CHINAS

Byzance Extra Dry cymbals take dark qualities to new depths with untreated natural finishes, while bigger hammering marks create decidedly drier tones.

## BYZANCE TRADITIONAL FLAT CHINAS

### What happens when you remove the bell

from a China? Well, for starters, the sustain is shortened, which takes away some of the immediate bite. We drummers love our Chinas, but we've all been in the situation where our string-playing counterparts can't stand them because they sound too harsh. If this seems familiar, Byzance Traditional Flat Chinas may be your saving grace. They are completely lathed with flat bells and have a warmer sound and a less abrasive attack than standard Chinas.

The 16" Flat China (\$400) had an attack that was fast and bright yet with subdued volume. The tone was focused, with an even sizzle to the decay. Since Flat Chinas are quieter by nature, light playing found them less responsive than regular China cymbals; the tone became more flaccid and, interestingly enough, started to take on characteristics of a flat ride with rivets.

The 18" version (\$480) had more pang than the 16", with a firmer tone and a linear tonal quality, while remaining less overtly trashy than a typical China. The 18" Flat China had a solid presence and a shimmering tone, without the bursting attack of a standard 18" China.

The resultant tones are all taken down several notches in pitch and have dirty, foreboding characteristics.

The 10" Extra Dry splash (\$228) was deeper sounding than most splashes, but its paper-thin weight gave it an attack that started at a higher frequency and dropped quickly in pitch during the decay. The overall sound was metallic bordering on tinny, very dry, and exceedingly trashy.

The 20" Extra Dry Thin crash (\$560) had a flexible feel that, when combined with the cymbal's dark and dry tone, created a

trashy sound with a mellow attack. It also decayed nicely, with just the right amount of presence. This model is definitely for use in lighter playing situations, because hitting it harder didn't really make it any louder. Its volume peaked at a pretty low, controlled level.

The 18" (\$480) and 20" (\$560) Extra Dry Chinas are medium-thin with partial lathing. The attack had an explosive "caaaa," yet the tone was incredibly dark, earthy, and dry, with a metallic undertone. The wash was full but not prolonged.

## CONCLUSION

This collection of Meinl Byzance models is purposely off-color and unique to each cymbal type, be it splash, ride, crash, or China. Meinl certainly tries to ensure that every drummer has a cymbal that relates to his or her personal style yet maintains high-end quality standards that professional drummers seek. And that's worthy of applause.

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

# KICKPORT

## BASS DRUM PORT INSERT

by Butch Jones

The KickPort is a "tuned port" that can be installed on any bass drum that has a reinforced 5"-5½" hole in the resonant head. The product is designed to generate a low-frequency boost at 20–30 Hz, while also tightening up the overall kick drum sound. At those low frequencies, the boost should be felt more than heard, but the tighter tone should be clearly audible. Let's see.

### INSTALLATION

The KickPort has a pretty cool setup for creating a seal with the resonant head. One end is coated with foam weather stripping, which runs flush against the outside of the drumhead. Then there's a flap placed about midway along the port, which is flexible enough to fold in two directions so you can seal and unseal the KickPort against the head from the inside.

For installation, you need to have the flexible ring folded back, and then you carefully work the KickPort through the hole in the head. Once the KickPort has been pushed through to the flange edge and the outside seal is flush, you reach through the hole and pop the ring back to make a seal against the inside of the head. You can use the back end of a screwdriver or a Sharpie pen to accomplish this if your hands aren't small or flexible enough to reach. Once the flap is completely turned back toward the head, the KickPort is installed and you're ready to rock.



### APPLICATION

I checked out the KickPort on a 22" bass drum with an undampened Evans EMAD Resonant head. I placed an Audix D6 kick drum mic approximately 4" from the hole in the head, looking straight inside the drum. I recorded the drum into Pro Tools without processing, first without the KickPort, and then with the product installed. I placed the two audio tracks side by side in Pro Tools so I could alternate playback between the two sounds.

The first thing I noticed was that the KickPort pulled out the range of frequencies (200–350 Hz) that I normally cut with EQ. This is great, because with the KickPort you no longer have to worry about getting rid of the cloudy overtones that most kick drums put into all of the other mics on the kit. I always feel that when it comes to EQ, less is best, whether it's in the recording studio or at a live venue. So I liked the fact that the KickPort

did a bit of pre-EQ'ing for me.

The second thing I noticed when listening to the recorded files was that with the KickPort the bass drum had a thicker, punchier sound, which is something I normally get only after spending some time filling the inside of the drum with my own custom muffling elements. Again, I appreciated the extra help the product provided in carving out a workable drum sound.

To hear the full impact of the KickPort, you really have to listen to what it does to the tone of a bass drum on recordings or through a full PA system. While the KickPort wouldn't keep me from using my Subkick to capture super-low frequencies, it certainly helped me dial in a cleaner overall sound before turning on a single mic. The KickPort lists for \$59.95.

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

# MAPEX

## FALCON BASS DRUM PEDALS

by David Ciauro

Sometimes the most innovative approach is a simple one. There are a lot of bass drum pedals on the market today that pride themselves on the amount of science incorporated into their design. But the high-tech innovations in these NASA-class pedals can significantly hike up costs and ultimately send the pedals into a niche stratosphere of consumers. From a business standpoint, it can be argued that offering a product that will be envied more than played overshadows its innovations. Mapex understood that logic, and while the company *did* take an innovative approach when creating the Falcon pedals, it wisely listened to what drummers wanted rather than simply trying to impress with a litany of high-tech and high-price components.

### **PRACTICAL, DURABLE, FUNCTIONAL, AND PLAYABLE**

Straight from the box to my bass drum without any tweaking whatsoever, the Falcon felt familiar under my foot. The action was smooth, noiseless, and responsive. The footboard is slightly elongated at 13.25"; Mapex's standard pedals are 13".

Although an extra quarter of an inch doesn't sound like it would have much of an impact, it added noticeably anchored support under my foot without my feeling the pedal itself was too heavy. This allowed me to really feel in control of my power, especially from the middle of the footboard down to the heel plate. The Falcon responded consistently and seamlessly regardless of where I dug my toes into the footboard.

### **INNOVATION FOR FUNCTION**

The footboard of the Falcon is slightly narrower than other footboards. It outlined my Chuck Taylors perfectly, making the pedal feel like an extension of my foot. Another worthy feature is that the footprint of these pedals is slimmer than most, which means double-pedal players can get their slave pedal closer to their hi-hat stand while also freeing up space for snare stand legs. Most bass drum pedals opt for wider frames in order to ensure foundational strength and stability. To create a narrower frame without compromising its strength, the Mapex R&D team figured out a way to add mass within the horizontal

shafts by using silver frame side struts machined from metal inox (stainless steel).

### **SMART FEATURES**

The patented Falcon Talon hoop clamp has a slightly curved design that follows the natural arch of any bass drum hoop and keeps the heel plate on the ground after the clamp is tightened, further enhancing the anchored feeling I mentioned earlier. The base plate has ribbed rubber footing that grips floor surfaces, and a removable plate covered in hook-and-loop fasteners runs under the middle of the pedal, so your slave pedal will never get away from you, whether you're on a carpet or hard floor. The double-pedal linkage bar adjusts from both ends and has a stop on both extension posts to keep them from falling out of the center bar. The linkage joints have flexible rubber



sleeves that prevent dust, dirt, and moisture from settling on the axis points.

### CONCLUSION

I very much appreciated the out-of-the-box playability of the Falcon pedals. Some newer “innovative” pedals are quite unwieldy at first, requiring hours—or even days—of tinkering between options and adjustments in order to customize the feel. Not everyone has the patience for that, and you could argue that you shouldn’t have to spend so much time customizing your pedal, especially after paying such a pretty penny for high-tech design. The Falcon offers no shortage of adjustments and options, but the designers kept the drummer in mind, so the variables serve to enhance an already very playable pedal to a place of personal customization. These pedals are priced competitively, so they will find their way to a wider consumer audience than most.

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



## CUSTOMIZING YOUR FALCON

**Like most pedals on the market today, the Falcon offers independent adjustments of the angle of the footboard and the beater.** For further customization, you have the choice of two interchangeable cams: the Glide cam for an even feel, and the Pursuit cam for more power. The double-chain-drive assembly can also be replaced with an included strap drive to alter the feel even more.

The beaters are the final stroke of genius in the Falcon’s design. They feature interchangeable weights in the beater head, not on the beater shaft. The pedal comes equipped with a 10g weight that can be removed with an included Allen wrench and replaced with a 20g weight for a heavier feel. You can also remove the weight altogether for a lighter feel. Using the strap drive with no beater weights and the Glide cam will result in the pedal’s lightest feel, while the double chain drive with the 20g weight and the Pursuit cam will be the most powerful option. The beater itself has felt on one side and hard rubber on the other.



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# ALESIS DM10 PRO KIT

by Fran Azzarto

When you ask drummers what they think about electronic drumkits, you might get answers like, "It would be great to have one at home," "I've played one at the drum shop and it was cool," and "Yeah, they're fun, but..." The last piece of electronic drum gear I owned was a trigger that I hooked up to an old Remo practice pad and an early drum module. When struck, it made fun (or funny) "peeew-peeew" sounds. When it came time to take a look at the new Alesis DM10 Pro drumset, I was intrigued to find out how far things have progressed since my early electronic experiences. I also had the good fortune of being able to ask one of the

developers of the DM10 Pro Kit, Alesis's Dan Radin, a few key questions.

## THE SETUP

I love to put things together. And as a longtime drummer, I'm used to it. But this was slightly intimidating. Once I had everything unpacked, there were wires everywhere, metal tubes and clamps that went somewhere, and shiny pads and "cymbals" that looked familiar—but where would I place them? Thankfully, the manual is written clearly and comes with nice big pictures. Even with that, though, it took an hour and a half before this percussive piece of technology was ready to be struck. But I'm sure

that with practice, setup could be chopped down to about the time it takes to assemble an acoustic kit.

## POWERING UP

When you turn on the DM10's drum module, the first kit that shows up on the brightly lit LCD screen is 000 Fusion, at a tempo of 96 bpm. Twelve circles on the bottom of the screen represent the different triggers/pads. Like many drummers I know, I don't consider patience one of my virtues, so once I fired up the module I immediately broke into a groove. All the anticipation had come to an end. *This is fun! I'm jamming on a drumkit, making minimal noise*

in the room, and the sound is huge in my headphones!

But before I go into the sounds themselves, let's examine the kit's feel. At first the pads seemed a little hard; there wasn't as much give to these heads as to those on an acoustic kit. Then I noticed the lug screws. The tension of the pads is adjustable, just like heads on an acoustic kit. The pads feature Mylar drumheads, called RealHead—which can be replaced when they get worn out—and real triple-flange counterhoops. The difference with RealHeads is that when you tighten them, the sound doesn't change; the feel just gets firmer.

The cymbals on the DM10 Pro, called SURGE, took a little more getting used to. They're made of a genuine cymbal alloy coated with a clear sound-dampening film that keeps the noise to a minimum so you won't bother your neighbors when slamming a crash. The cymbals don't move much when they're struck because the washers and nuts that hold the plates in place need to be fairly tight. But the overall feel was easy on the sticks.

The DM10 drum pads come in two

upload them to the module via a USB connection. Alesis is also working with sound library companies to continually create new sounds exclusively for the DM10. According to Radin, the sounds are "uncompressed multi-samples of real drums and cymbals, with dynamic articulation, including all necessary articulations such as continuous hi-hat control with heel splash." Dynamic articulation means the sound you hear in the DM10 is actually, Radin says, "a series of multiple-dynamic-level samples and articulations that are built in, so as you play harder and softer, the drum or cymbal changes its timbre, not just its volume."

Indeed, these drums sounded amazingly real. One of the highlights was the snare. The DM10's snare pad was very sensitive, and the snare sounds, rimshots included, were incredibly realistic. The toms were clear and clean with no nasty overtones (unless I wanted to dial in some funk), and the cymbals sounded slick.

#### MULTIPLE ZONES

The cymbals and pads of the DM10 Pro Kit have multiple trigger zones. The main pad of the left rack tom on the Fusion kit, for example, triggers a "Y 8x10 MCA" tom, and the rim triggers a muted tambourine. The ride cymbal is a triple-zone pad. With the DM10 module you get a velocity-sensitive ride sound, plus a clear bell and a crash at the edge. The ride and crashes also come with a large choke strip on the underside that allows you to stop the sound by squeezing the cymbal between your fingers.

All of the zones and sounds on the DM10 can be edited extensively. For example, instruments can be layered dually (two different sounds combined within a single zone), tuned, effected (with reverb, for instance), equalized, panned, and much more. There are also twelve trigger inputs onboard the DM10 module, which are expandable to accommodate up to thirty-five triggers/pads without needing to add a second module. That's a lot of sound from one little box!

The possibilities seem endless with the Alesis DM10 Pro electronic drumkit, and the sounds are unstoppable. For under \$2,000, you can walk out of the store with a single instrument that offers a hundred preset kits, plus even more options when you factor in the downloads available through the company's Web site. You gotta love electronics!

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



## FEATURES FOR PLAY-ALONG

When discussing the DM10 Pro's key components, Alesis's Dan Radin makes a special point of calling out the kit's play-along feature. He



describes this as "real audio—not MIDI—play-along tracks with a three-part sequencer: drums, percussion, and accompaniment." That means the DM10 module offers a variety of real band performances to play along to, with or without drums. Additionally, the metronome feature is, according to Radin, "advanced and highly configurable, with tons of options, and it can be routed to different outputs, so you can send just the drums to the PA and send the click to the monitors or just to your headphone mix."

sizes, 8" for the two rack toms and 10" for the snare and floor tom. The rack toms are mounted with individual clamps on a slightly curved metal tube, which is part of the kit's high-end chrome ErgoRack. The rack was sturdy and flexible, and after I spent a short time making adjustments to the drum and cymbal positions, the kit felt great to play.

#### THE SOUND

The DM10 Pro comes with more than 1,000 factory-installed sounds. But that's not all. The DM10 module is the first of its kind to allow users to download new sounds from the Alesis Web site and to



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Story by Ilya Stenkovsky • Photos by Alex Solca

# JASON SUTTER

has been up to his ankles in high-profile gigs for over a decade. His recent shift from working with Chris Cornell to touring with Foreigner this summer is merely the latest move on a remarkably star-studded career path.

**W**hether it's playing the huge drum assaults in Soundgarden songs like "Outshined" or the straight-ahead, radio-friendly pop-rock of Vertical Horizon, L.A.-based drummer Jason Sutter brings it with the conviction of a seasoned vet. Spending years developing his drumming in every conceivable rock situation, Sutter landed the gig with Soundgarden/Audioslave singer Chris Cornell, and his star has never stopped rising. Recently another huge opportunity opened up—the drum chair with the classic-rock band Foreigner.

Having honed his chops at the drummer factory that is the University Of North Texas, Sutter has lent his sonic bombast and rock-steady time to a wide array of artists, including Juliana Hatfield, Jack Drag, Letters To Cleo, Ben Lee, Jason Falkner, and the Rembrandts. In the mid-2000s, a stint with American Hi-Fi led to work with the pop band Smash Mouth, which later led to a chance audition with Cornell. Prior touring and studio experience served Sutter well, because not only did he get the gig, he was subsequently asked to endure marathon shows, solo multiple times a night, and play along with loops and beats crafted by the hip-hop producer Timbaland. Plus he had to slide confidently into copping distinctive drum parts from the likes of Matt Cameron and Brad Wilk.

When he's not out killing it with his steady employers, Sutter busies himself drumming and writing for his own project, Run Through The Desert, an old-school power trio that includes two of his Cornell bandmates. *MD* caught up with Jason in New York City while he was on tour with Vertical Horizon. We spoke about tracking drums while double-parked, getting rid of the click, and what Neil Peart thinks of *him*.



**MD:** How did the Foreigner gig come about?

**Jason:** I was playing tennis with a buddy, and on the other court was Michael Bluestein, who plays keys in Foreigner. I knew that Brian Tichy was drumming with Foreigner, but I told Bluestein that if the gig ever opened up, I was interested. Flash forward a couple months, and Tichy, whom I'd met when he was with Billy Idol, decided to move on, and I got the call. Luckily Tichy knew of my playing from

Cornell and put in a word. Just goes to show that if you put it out there, it might happen, and if you keep your mouth shut, it might not.

**MD:** Was it strange to ask about the gig when Tichy basically still had it?

**Jason:** I knew that Billy Idol was starting back up again and that Tichy had done some writing with him, so you never know what someone is going to do. I did preface it by saying how much I respected Tichy. He was super-cool too. Having seen a bunch

of YouTube clips of me with Cornell, he thought I'd be perfect for the gig.

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

**Jason:** It was in an arena during a soundcheck before one of their shows in Texas. This was a whole new set of challenges. I flew down with Tichy, and we bonded, being similar guys with similar backgrounds, listening to Tommy Aldridge with Ozzy and all that. And of course I grew up listening to Foreigner. I had to learn eleven songs. That's a lot, not to mention that

it was the live versions. So I had to emulate what Tichy was doing and get inside his head, because I wanted it to be a seamless transition.

Luckily I was supplied with recordings from as recent as a week before. But I had to learn the solo sections and all the ending hits, which were pretty involved. "Juke Box Hero" was twelve minutes long! The audition was like a half hour before the doors opened—you have your monitors and you're trying to hear everyone, the musicians are all the way across the stage, and you're on someone else's kit. Pretty stressful.

**MD:** Was the band into it? Or were they more businesslike?

**Jason:** They were pretty cool and very enthusiastic about how prepared I was. I thought I had really hit it off with the bass player, and of course they're an amazing band, which makes it easier. The best compliment you can get is from the soundman and monitor guys, and they were super-jazzed about how the sound was so similar to Tichy's and how they couldn't really tell the difference. That right away is good, because those guys are very sound conscious. In my experience, when those kinds of guys give you props, it means you did pretty well. But I was the first guy to audition. Many times I'm the last guy in and I'll get the gig on the spot,



**Drums:** Ludwig Epic X-Over (maple/walnut/maple) in striped natural finish

- A.** 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Black Beauty (engraved by John Aldridge) or 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 titanium "The Chief" snare
- B.** 10x13 tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 14x26 bass drum

**Sticks:** Vic Firth 5B/55A (Jason Sutter custom)

**Heads:** Ludwig coated heavy snare batter (with dot underneath) and clear thin bottom, coated heavy tom batters and coated medium bottoms, clear heavy bass drum batter

**Percussion:** Rhythm Tech DST tambourine and percussion

**Hardware:** DW hardware and pedals, including Accelerator 5000 bass drum pedals; PureSound thirty-strand snare wires

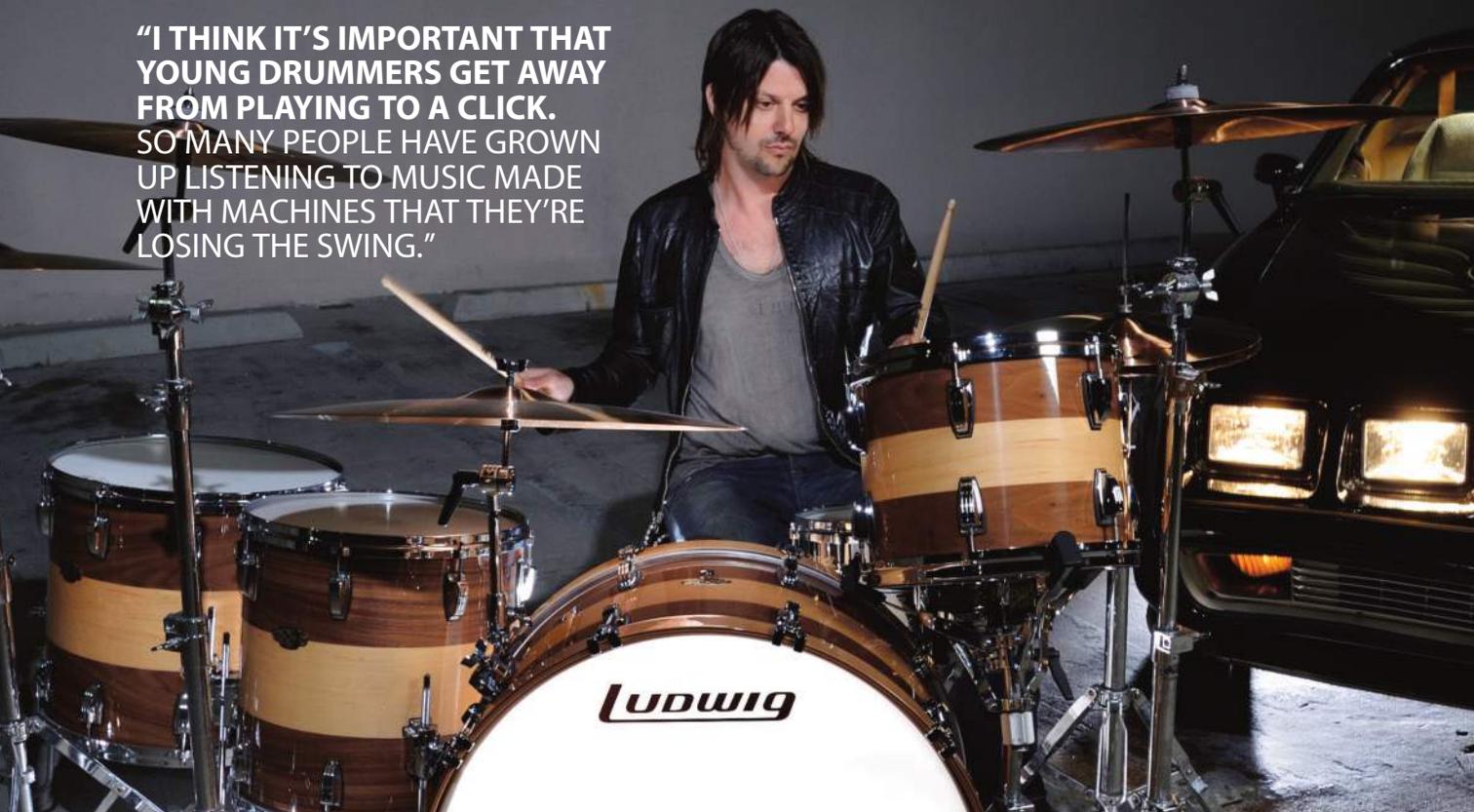
**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 1.** 15" 2002 hi-hats (Medium top, Sound Edge bottom)
- 2.** 20" 2002 crash
- 3.** 24" 2002 ride
- 4.** 20" 2002 Medium
- 5.** 20" 2002 ride

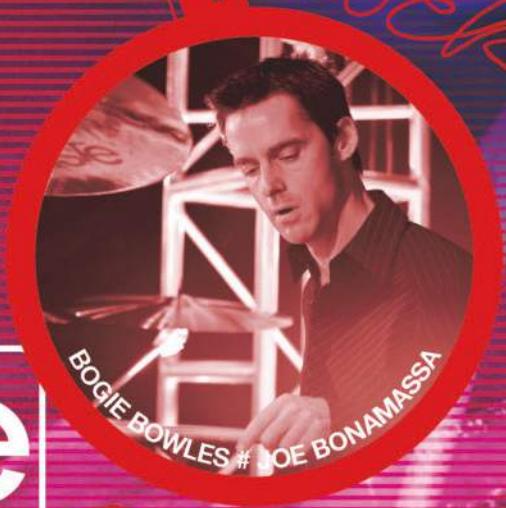
For bigger venues Sutter will substitute Alpha Rock crashes, and for recordings he tends to use Giant Beat rides and hats and Dark Energy crashes.

**Miscellaneous:** Tama Rhythm Watch and 1st Chair throne

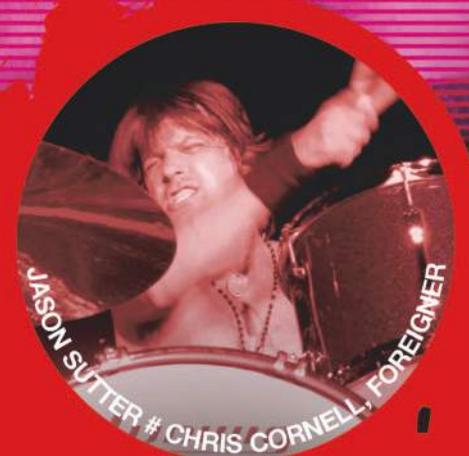
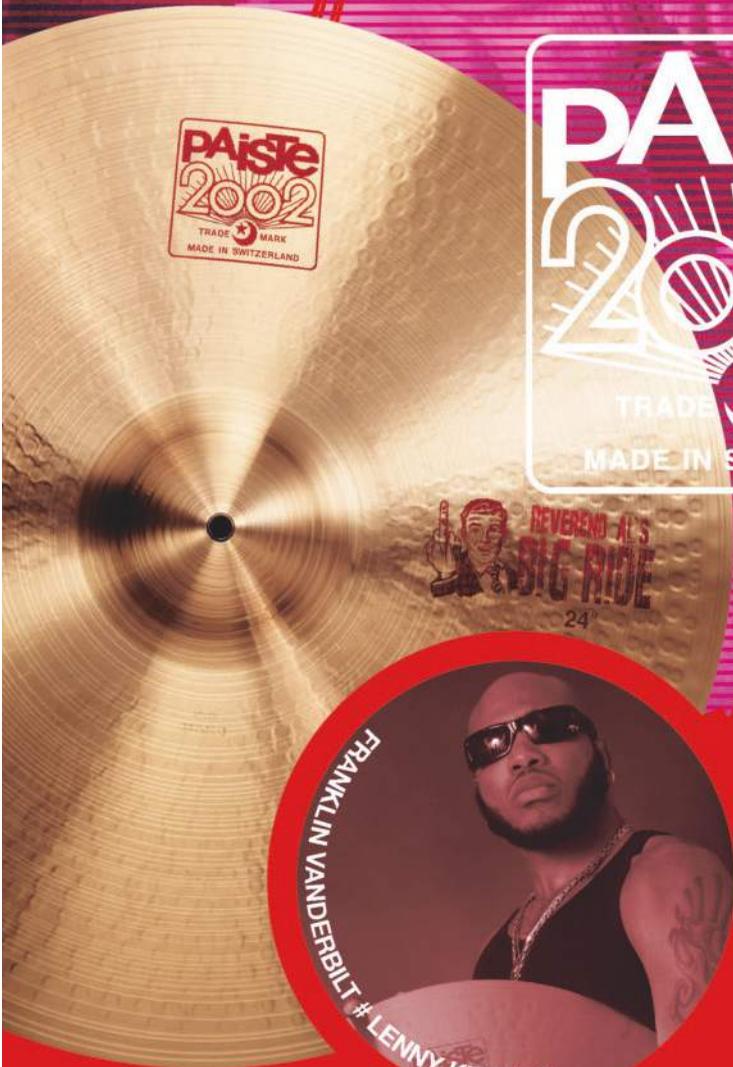
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## JASON SUTTER

but this time I couldn't get the instant gratification. I had to wait.

**MD:** What are some of the other challenging Foreigner songs to play?

**Jason:** I wanted to bridge the gap between Tichy and [original Foreigner drummer] Dennis Elliott and bring myself into it as well. Those songs are deceptively simple and rocking, and every Foreigner song has one drum fill that's really gnarly, like the outro in "Cold As Ice." There are lots of rhythmic variations, like triplets going into 16ths or ruffs.

**MD:** Cornell is reuniting with Soundgarden, at least for a while. This opens yet another door for you, but no doors are truly closed in Jason Sutter's world, are they?

**Jason:** Yeah, actually Smash Mouth called me out of the blue and asked if I could play this Mardi Gras thing in New Orleans. It was great, because I hadn't played with them in a long time. It was like seeing an old girlfriend again and hitting it off and having a good time. But it's perfect timing, with Cornell doing Soundgarden and this Foreigner thing landing in my lap. It's like swinging from vine to vine in the jungle of being a drummer—when one vine is swung all the way over, you hope there's another one to grab, in the form of a gig.

**MD:** In your last *MD* interview, in 2005, you had recently gotten the American

Hi-Fi gig. It was a new level for you, but now you've added Smash Mouth, Vertical Horizon, Chris Cornell, Foreigner, and your own band, Run Through The Desert, to the résumé. Have your goals been attained, or are you just getting started?

**Jason:** That's a good question. I'll sit at a table with some of the biggest drummers in L.A., and the question is always, "How can I get busier? How can I work more?" And these guys have some of the most coveted gigs, whether they're in some band or making crazy money doing sessions for big acts.

So, have my goals been attained? Hell, yes. Have I done everything I wanted to do? I have to say that I pretty much have. But there's still a lot I want to do, and you still have to scuffle and fight for your food. You never know where the next gig is coming from, and that's kind of the risk you run when you're a hired gun and a drummer in general. But I've gotten the recognition of peers and been fortunate to tour consistently. The biggest thing,

though, is playing a gig where you get to spread your wings. So it's a rock 'n' roll fantasy dream come true.

**MD:** Chris Cornell's latest record, *Scream*, is pretty heavily produced. When you began rehearsals for that tour, was it agreed that you'd approach the album's Timbaland beats by playing rock drums over loops?

**Jason:** Timbaland's people actually sent Nisan Stewart to oversee things, and all eyes were on me! But the band was so good that Nisan didn't have much to say. We had a week of rehearsal with just me, Chris, and an engineer running Pro Tools. We'd run

## RECORDINGS

**Vertical Horizon** Burning The Days /// **Chris Cornell** Scream /// **Run Through The Desert** Break The Silence /// **Smash Mouth** Summer Girl /// **Monterey** Monterey /// **Juliana Hatfield** Beautiful Creature /// **Jack Drag** Dope Box /// **Campfire Girls** Tell Them Hi /// **Josie And The Pussycats** soundtrack

## FAVORITES

**Led Zeppelin** How The West Was Won (John Bonham) /// **Bennie Wallace** Twilight Time (Jack DeJohnette, Chris Parker, Bernard Purdie) /// **Cheap Trick** Live At Budokan (Bun E. Carlos) /// **Kenny Wheeler** Music For Large & Small Ensembles (Peter Erskine) /// **Van Halen** Van Halen II, Fair Warning (Alex Van Halen) /// **Miles Davis** My Funny Valentine/Four & More (Tony Williams), The Man With The Horn (Al Foster) /// **Genesis** And Then There Were Three, A Trick Of The Tail (Phil Collins) /// **Brand X** Unorthodox Behaviour (Phil Collins) /// **Ozzy Osbourne** Speak Of The Devil, Tribute (Tommy Aldridge) /// **Frank Sinatra** Live At The Sands (Sonny Payne) /// **Frank Zappa** Zappa In New York (Terry Bozzio) /// **Missing Persons** all (Terry Bozzio) /// **Hector Berlioz** Symphonie Fantastique by Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Herbert von Karajan

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it and then discuss how to make it fuller or whatever. There were no drums on the completed tracks, just programmed beats. And we talked about how the real drums would make the tracks feel. Then Chris actually had me record some real drums over some of the tracks at the last minute because he liked what it sounded like.

But before the tour, I went into my practice room and thought, *What would Matt Chamberlain do? What would Manu Katché do?* You know, guys who are beat oriented but really tasty. *How can I play with this machine rather than on top of it?* And I worked out some parts that added much more girth. I also got more into playing interesting double bass parts, because there's so much bass in those Timbaland beats.

**MD:** Chamberlain and Katché seem like the right guys to inspire that loop-oriented approach.

**Jason:** It's funny, because when I got to North Texas University, we used to see Matt play around town, and it cracked all of our brains seeing his bizarre setup and him doing traditional Moeller and all that. One of the coolest things that happened to me was that when he would go out with Pearl Jam, who hadn't broken yet, I got all his jazz and fusion gigs, playing with the best players in town. It was a good growing experience—made me realize at a

young age about personality as a player. It made me step it up. But the loops were Chamberlain's thing from the beginning. For the Fiona Apple records and everything, you weren't just getting him, you were getting his loops, and they would often become an integral part of the song.

**MD:** You play a lot of classic Soundgarden tunes with Cornell and stay pretty true to Matt Cameron's parts. Anything you did to prepare for that?

**Jason:** I listened to Soundgarden forever, because that stuff is genius compositionally. And Matt was always his own person—how he accented the bass drum and all that. Certain gigs I'll get a record and I'll have to learn the drum parts, and I quickly know it will be a walk in the park because I can relate to the drummer. Other gigs are going to be a lot of work because you don't think like the drummer at all. Matt was somewhere in the middle. I could relate to him, but I wanted to discover the essence of his parts. And Cornell didn't want me to stick so close to the guitar parts, because that's what Matt did.

Once I started playing the songs live, it was much easier than playing along to the Soundgarden records, because Matt's thought process is unique to him. But I never really try to fully emulate Matt or [Audioslave drummer] Brad Wilk when playing their parts. The

fill in "Black Hole Sun" will be like the record, but once you're on the gig, you have to try to be you.

**MD:** You need a certain amount of irreverence to break through as well, right? You have to do your own thing.

**Jason:** Right. And Cornell appreciates and expects that. If the bass drum doesn't feel right for some part I'm learning, I don't have a problem moving it at this point in my career. Plus I was never the guy to learn all the drum parts from records. Like that one senior in high school who learned all of [Rush's] "La Villa Strangiato"—I never did that; I always tried to be me. But I have since learned the entire Soundgarden catalog.

**MD:** There's great YouTube footage of you taking extended drum solos during "Slaves And Bulldozers" and "Spoonman." How do you keep them fresh?

**Jason:** In the '90s, drum solos were not cool, but in the '70s and '80s they were, and the drummer would work out his solo and play it the same way every night. Even Bonham, when you listen to multiple bootlegs, would stick to a strict pattern. But I always wanted to be spontaneous, and Cornell thrives on that reckless abandon. This is the first band he says he can jam with. I make a conscious effort to do something different every night, and if I really stretch out, nine times out of ten he'll come up

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## JASON SUTTER

to me and comment on how much he liked it. So he's always listening and grooving out. And I get two extended solos a night!

I've been lucky to have a solo on every gig—in Smash Mouth during "Walking On The Sun," and in American Hi-Fi too. And people will come up and thank me because that's the first drum solo they've ever seen and they had always wanted to. So I try to keep it musical.

**MD:** There are some cool alternating right-hand/foot combos in that footage. Do you work on that stuff?

**Jason:** I just go in and lose myself. I don't remember anything I play, so my tech will videotape the solos and I'll go back and watch and learn from the videos to use stuff later. I don't think I do those hand/foot things much, but it could have been that era of solos you saw. Like everybody, I pick something and gravitate toward it for a while. Sometimes the song that I solo in will change, and the different tempo will dictate a different approach.

**MD:** Let's talk about some live drumming specifics. How do you prepare for a gig?

**Jason:** The way I prepare for a gig is I practice my ass off. I really spend a lot of time with the music, immersing myself. I used to chart out stuff with my own shorthand, but now I try to make it more organic, so it takes even more time. I have an extensive drum corps background, and before every gig I incorporate a lot of that with my hands. Now with all the double bass stuff, I'll do some warming up with my feet as well. And no matter what, I have to have my Black Beauty with me, religiously. That's my sound.

**MD:** How do you avoid fatigue when you're playing aggressive rock music?

**Jason:** The Cornell shows will be three hours long. It's insane. It's taught me how much your body can take. I do push-ups and walk a lot. I'll get off the bus and walk for miles in every town. That's kind of my exercise routine. And you always have to practice at home. As a drummer, you'll lose it faster than any other instrumentalist. So it's tricky.

**MD:** Do you take your jazz studies background with you on rock gigs?

**Jason:** On rock gigs, drummers tend not to listen to other musicians as much. So I'll use my jazz background to listen and to know when to play and when not to play. And the improvisation during the solos, of course.

**MD:** How did Run Through The Desert come about?

**Jason:** We had about two weeks of band camp with Cornell. Yogi Lonich, the guitar player in the band, had this material he played me and the bassist, Corey McCormick, between rehearsals. So we put this thing together during soundcheck jams and time off. I wrote for the project as well, and the album was recorded very quickly. I recorded three tracks while my car was double-parked outside the studio! It's reckless and loose and doesn't always sound like me. The studio drumheads were beat to death, and I just cranked them. I didn't overthink it. And we would fit in shows between Cornell dates.

**MD:** You wrote the track "Someone Else's Name." Are you getting drummers some writing respect?

**Jason:** A lot of drummers I know are good writers. We have a different sensibility than other instrumentalists, which is why so many good producers were drummers. We think of the big picture and are hyper-aware of form because of our job as the traffic cop. As songwriters, drummers get right down to the essence of it. Kurt Cobain wasn't the most versatile guitarist, but because of that he was able to hone in on the perfect notes rather than all the other notes that cloud a guitarist's brain. Guitarists tend to get a little involved, so my job is to keep it simple. I'll rope in Yogi, who has this great facility on guitar and with melody. I'll dumb him down. It's a good yin to his yang.

**MD:** How does your gear choice affect your performance? Do you change drum sizes, cymbals, sticks, and heads for all your different gigs, or is it all uniform?

**Jason:** For this Vertical Horizon tour I'm playing a 24" kick drum for the first time in years. But for American

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## JASON SUTTER

Hi-Fi, Smash Mouth, and Cornell I've always used a 26", which is a natural sound for me. The 26" is a very dynamic drum—it can be quiet and soft or have the thundering qualities you would expect. More producers and studios are using it, and some will use it exclusively, whether it's a ballad or not. I generally use 13", 16", and 18" toms, and I'll crank up the heads, à la Bonham or Alex Van Halen.

I got to hit Alex's drums recently,

and they're tuned very similarly. That's the sound I hear. There's something sexy about getting the attack and body out of a big drum tuned very high and melodic, because out front the pitch drops. People are always surprised when they sit behind my kit, compared with how the drums sound out front.

**MD:** Are the batter heads cranked too?

**Jason:** The kick batter is loose, but the front is cranked. The more low end needed, the higher I crank the front

head. It's a weird thing. And nothing sounds better than the Ludwig Black Beauty snare. You have all the records from the '70s to prove it. As for cymbals, I use Paiste 2002s or Giant Beats in the studio, but live I've been using their Alpha series, which is a more entry-level cymbal. The alloy metal is heavier, but I love the tone and attack. And they're durable. But I never change my Paiste 24" 2002 ride. I use that religiously.

**MD:** So who is this Neil Peart guy you're sharing duties with on the new Vertical Horizon record, *Burning The Days*? What was the experience like meeting him?

**Jason:** [Vertical Horizon leader] Matt Scannell had asked me to join his band a long time ago, and I couldn't. Jump ahead to recently, and I hooked up with them and recorded some tracks. Matt met Neil, they expressed a love for each other's music, and then Matt asked Neil to play on some tracks as well. Then Matt told me that Neil loved my tracks, and we went to see Rush to meet him.

Who knows if that was true, but I went to see them, and we were about four feet from the stage. They're sounding better than ever. After the show, Neil was very nice and said how much he loved the bass drum offbeats in "Can You Help Me" and how tricky they were to play. And I'll never forget that at the end Neil said to me, "I love your playing, and I'll forever hold you in my highest esteem as a drummer." [laughs]

I was like, "Um, you're Neil Peart." One of the nicest compliments you can get, but also coming from one of the most important, influential drummers, period. He's the Buddy Rich of our time. I studied, worshipped, and still marvel at his playing. On our way out, we passed a line of drummers waiting to meet him—Chad Smith, Taylor Hawkins, Jon Theodore, some of the biggest guys. It was pretty amazing.

**MD:** "The Lucky One," on *Burning The Days*, has a looser, deeper snare on the verses. How much say did you have with timbral choices for different parts of tunes?

**Jason:** Matt knows exactly what he



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wants. He'd have an idea for a hi-hat part or for some fills, and we'd try it. He'd adjust even the slightest little ghost note, which would drive other drummers crazy, but not me. Timbral choices were all his.

**MD:** What's the key to playing such straight-ahead drum parts?

**Jason:** The key is concentration, because it's not easy. The changes are very subtle in Vertical Horizon tunes. Like the first verse to the second verse will have a slight accent change in the

snare. Even harder is to maintain it throughout a tour and to keep that focus. The simpler, the trickier.

**MD:** Do you ever wish you could rerecord or change parts, to play them with a more mature approach? Or what's done is done?

**Jason:** What's done is done. Rock 'n' roll shouldn't be perfect. Black Sabbath's Bill Ward—there are all kinds of little mistakes on those records, and those are my favorite parts. That's another thing about Run Through The

Desert—no clicks, no nothing. I love that ebb and flow.

**MD:** Any recording tips? Advice for playing with clicks and loops?

**Jason:** Bring the click down in the mix. If the click is too present, I find myself having stiff, straight time. If it's lower, I know it's there and I can coast on it, but I don't feel like I'm playing with a click.

I think it's also important that young drummers get away from playing to a click. Go listen to Led Zeppelin and the blues. So many people have grown up listening to music made with machines that they're losing the swing. Everything's to a grid. Go buy Bad Company and Skynyrd records. That's going to make you a better player. You don't want to lose the dirt in your playing. That's what makes me *me*. Reckless, dirty, edgy.

**MD:** What's the climate like for freelancers in this economy? Any tips for aspiring drummers trying to make it in a world where clubs are closing and people are nervous?

**Jason:** You have to go where the action is. For me L.A. is the right place. You have to go out to the clubs and meet people. You don't have to drink, but that's how our business gets done. It's a social networking thing. Music schools helped me do that too. With Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube, people can promote themselves. It's a great divider. If someone's on YouTube, you can tell quickly whether he's worth his weight.

So practice as hard as you can and get to a major city. There's a lot more competition but a lot more opportunities. Rock 'n' roll isn't down for the count, but I wouldn't trade my career for a twenty-year-old's. When I was a kid, the dream was to get a record deal, and now I don't know if that even exists anymore. But be as versatile as you can be and get along with people, because that's 80 percent of the gig.

**MD:** What's next for Jason Sutter?

**Jason:** I feel like my playing is stronger than ever. I'm excited about what I'll be doing in five years. I'm hoping there will be some fallout from this much exposure and this much playing. Work gets work. What's next? I have no idea, but it's been such an amazing ride that it's all gravy from here on out. As long as I'm playing drums, I'll be cool.

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**DAVE**

**GROHL**

**“I LIKE TO BECOME WHATEVER THE MUSIC REQUIRES ME TO BECOME. AND IN THIS CASE THERE WERE NO BOUNDARIES.”**

The Foo Fighters leader’s career takes yet another compelling detour—this time with Queens Of The Stone Age’s Josh Homme and Led Zeppelin’s John Paul Jones in **Them Crooked Vultures**.

In 1991, a song that would change the history of rock leapt out of indie and college radio. Like a neutron bomb exploding in your pants, the Nirvana single “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (from the band’s second album, *Nevermind*) was all about adolescent rage, quiet/loud dynamics, and dreamy guitar, and its drumming signaled something entirely fresh. Dave Grohl’s aggressive snare flam/bass drum intro was irresistible and immediately memorable, an instant trademark lick

that had everyone air drumming to its staggering punk rock power. The groove sections of the song were no less revelatory, with Grohl playing slippery syncopations with the attack of a warring rhinoceros. Coupled with Kurt Cobain’s menacing melody and fellow drummer Butch Vig’s larger-than-life production, “Smells Like Teen Spirit” ignited a new rock subgenre—grunge—and launched Grohl’s soon-to-be-epic career.

**Story by Ken Micallef**  
**Photos by Ash Newell**

**T**wenty years later, Grohl is arguably the most influential rock drummer since John Bonham. Meanwhile, his songwriting gifts, as expressed in his band Foo Fighters, have shown him to be one of the most influential *musicians* of the past twenty years as well. Grohl's drumming can smash your skull to splinters and just as easily surprise you with a perfectly placed tom fill or unusual hi-hat accent. Grohl can groove, Grohl can kill, and Grohl can also create.

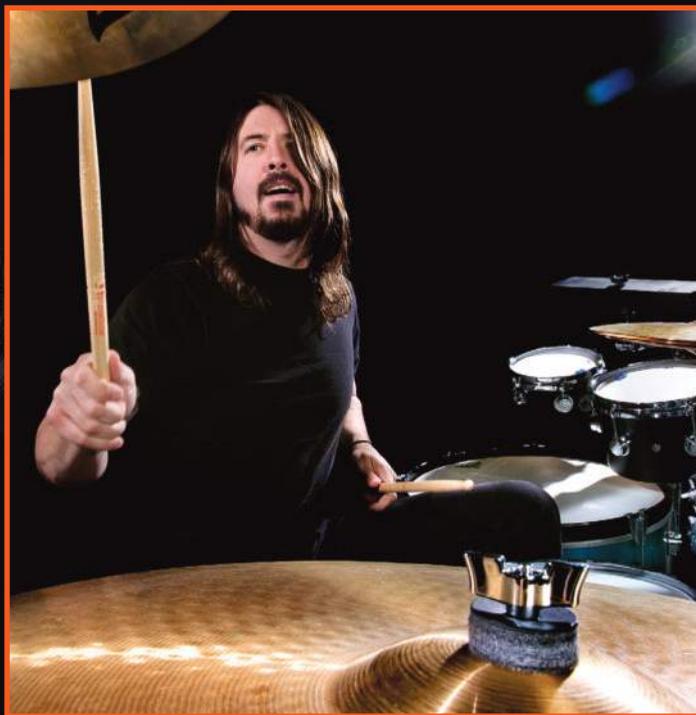
Always one to recognize a powerful riff and a great melody, Grohl started Foo Fighters after the demise of Kurt Cobain and Nirvana, impressing a wary public with potent pop songs waged over heavy thunder beats (initially performed by Grohl himself, then by best friend Taylor Hawkins). As Foo Fighters' fame spread, so did its leader's wings, as Grohl plied his drumming wares with Nine Inch Nails, Tony Iommi, Killing Joke, Tenacious D, Cat Power, Garbage, Pete Dinklage, the Prodigy, Probot (Dave's own metal project), and, perhaps most important, Queens Of The Stone Age.

Impressed by QOTSA frontman Josh Homme's mighty guitar riffs, Grohl drummed hard and heavy on the band's 2002 release, *Songs For The Deaf*. But in hindsight this was just a warm-up for the Homme/Grohl/John Paul Jones project, Them Crooked Vultures.

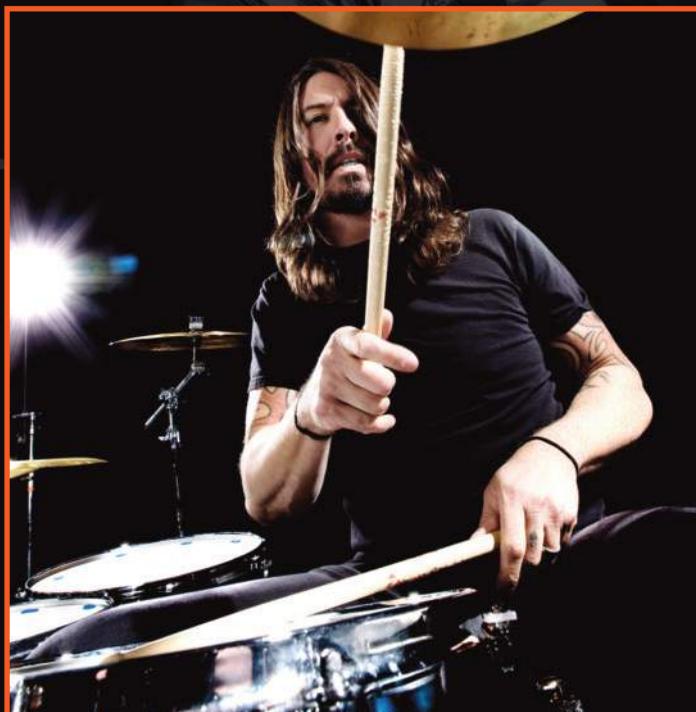
With all the experience of a lengthy résumé brought to fruition, Them Crooked Vultures crystallizes the evolution of Dave Grohl and highlights his reinvention as a drummer. Listening to a twenty-two-year-old Grohl slamming his drums senseless on *Nevermind*, you'd never guess it's the same dude who crafted the sophisticated drumming sentences and intricate time-bending grooves of the Vultures' self-titled debut disc. Though Homme claimed the group was about reinventing the blues, the album is really a journey through open-ended, Black Sabbath-inspired jams and heavy psychedelia.

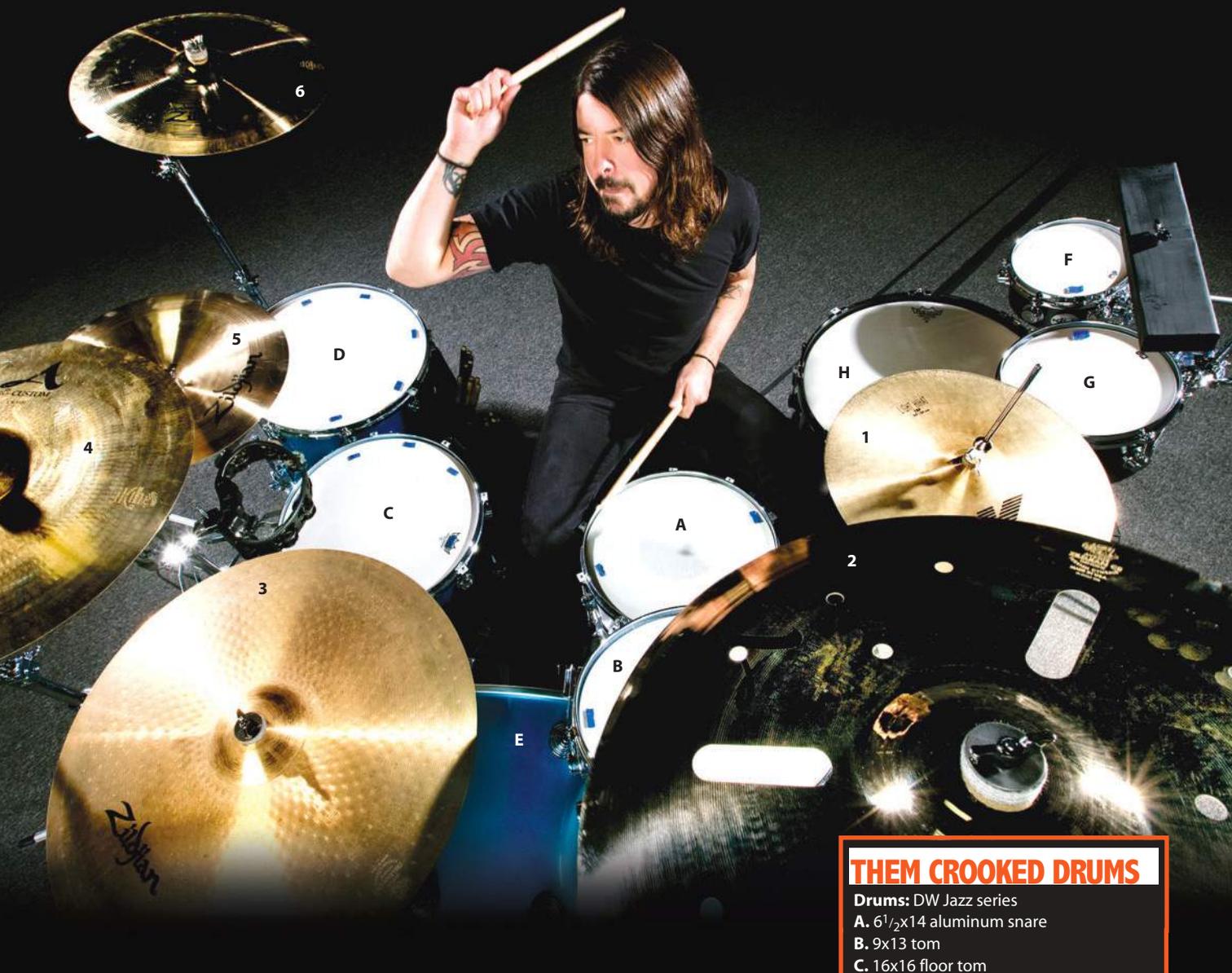
At a Vultures concert in Charlotte, North Carolina, Grohl plays roaring combinations and staggered, slashing beats, executed with his trademark massive sound and redwood-thick groove. The band's album only cements this sonic ID. The cacophonous tom overload of "Mind Eraser, No Chaser," the four-on-the-floor thump of "New Fang," the gluey groove goodness of "Scumbag Blues," the roly-poly rhythms of "Bandoliers," and the full-on Led Zeppelin ripping of "Reptiles" prove Grohl capable of launching a new era of air-drumming fanaticism.

Speaking by phone with *Modern Drummer* from Homme's Pink Duck Studios in Los Angeles, Grohl reveals the secrets to consistency and volume, praises the beauty of dance grooves, and explains the inner workings of his hot new band.



**"I GREW UP WORSHIPPING LED ZEPPELIN. BUT WHEN I LISTENED TO THOSE RECORDS, I DIDN'T WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY HOW BONHAM DID WHAT HE DID—I WANTED TO KNOW WHY HE DID WHAT HE DID."**





**MD:** Them Crooked Vultures really shows the reinvention of Dave Grohl the drummer. What inspired these new ways of expression?

**Dave:** I hadn't played drums seriously in a long time. I'd skipped in and out of studios with friends, but I hadn't been in a band as the drummer since Queens Of The Stone Age, which was eight years ago. So finally having more than a few hours to sit down behind the drumset, I started discovering things I was capable of doing that I'd just never had the opportunity to do before. It was almost like I'd been away from the instrument for so long that I came back to it with a totally new perspective.

**MD:** How did you put that perspective to use?

**Dave:** Rather than just sit down cold and play the same chops I'd always been playing, I sat down and got comfortable

and got warm and started to reach out more than I ever have. It's rock 'n' roll—I'm not reinventing *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. But still, there were grooves I had never played. And there were little tricks and flicks I did that I had never imagined before, because maybe the songs I'd been playing and recording had never required that.

Also, when I sit down to play with someone, whether it's live or in the studio, I usually adapt to what I consider is necessary. I don't sit down and "do my thing" when I jam with someone. I usually kind of feel it out and meet them halfway, extend my hand to the songwriter or whomever. I like to become whatever the music requires me to become. And in this case there were no boundaries. The three of us walked into the studio as multi-instrumentalists who had years of wonderful music behind us,

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## SOUNDING OUT DAVE GROHL

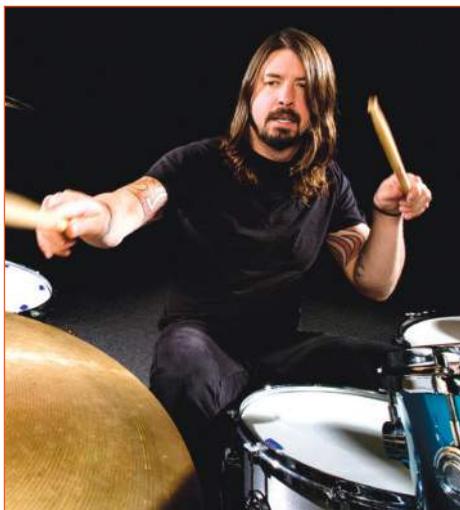
Gersh of DrumFetish.com rents and helps record the kits of many drum stars, and he's been working with Dave Grohl for years. **We asked him to shed light on Them Crooked Vultures' recording process.**

"Although Dave appears to be playing extremely hard, which he is, he has good technique," Gersh says. "He has good snap-up, so he pulls the sound out of the drums. The velocity with which he hits all his drums is very consistent. That produces a very even sound. He mixes himself while he plays, and it's a massive sound."

"On the record we used my '80s Gretsch kit, '60s Ludwig kit, and DW Timeless Timber set. Dave had never used the Ludwig kit, but they wanted a focused sound in a little room at Josh Homme's studio, Pink Duck, and those drums sounded huge there. The Gretsch gave us a bigger sound in the bigger room. If you don't have a lot of room and air around the drums in the mix but a tom has a lot of point to it, it can sound bigger on a track than some other big drums might."

"The Bonham theory of his big drum sound is because there wasn't a lot of sound around the drums—there weren't a million guitar parts on a lot of Led Zeppelin songs, so his drums sounded bigger. But with today's stacked-track recording methods, you can't have that big drum sound—it'll wash out. A focused drum sound in a small room will sound bigger."

"I designed Dave's live kit to replicate what we did in the studio, so I keep his drums very open, with a very focused tone. I have dampening on them—Moongel on the toms and snare, a Falam Slam pad on the inside of the bass drum head, and Doctor Scholl's Moleskin at the beater contact point—but they're very open sounding. Dave sits really low so he can get that velocity into his kick drum head."



and we didn't talk much about what we were going to do. We'd just do it. The idea was that it would sound like the three of us. So there weren't boundaries or restrictions or parameters; it was open season. I went berserk.

**MD:** You certainly went berserk creatively. There are so many trademark grooves. With Queens Of The Stone Age you created a classic beat on "No One Knows." There are a number of similar beats with Them Crooked Vultures.

**Dave:** I don't pick up the sticks and jump on the tour bus for anybody. I might go play drums and record with friends. But when it comes to being in a band, I only truly want to play drums with Josh Homme. He is a brilliant musician, producer, and songwriter. He brings out the best in everyone. He surrounds himself with musicians who are willing to rise to the occasion or challenge themselves or do things

they've never done before. And his riffs are so good. He's the only other person I've ever met who plays his guitar like a drumset.

### RECORDINGS

**Nirvana** In Utero "Scentless Apprentice"  
 /// **Queens Of The Stone Age** Songs For The Deaf "A Song For The Deaf" ///  
**Nine Inch Nails** With Teeth "With Teeth" /// **Killing Joke** Killing Joke "The Death & Resurrection Show" /// **Foo Fighters** The Colour And The Shape "Everlong" /// **The Prodigy** Invaders Must Die "Run With The Wolves"

### FAVORITES

**Bad Brains** Rock For Light (Earl Hudson)  
 /// **Melvins** Ozma (Dale Crover) ///  
**Trouble Funk** Saturday Night (A. Robinson) /// **NoMeansNo** Wrong (John Wright) /// **Led Zeppelin** Physical Graffiti (John Bonham) ///  
**Power Station** Power Station (Tony Thompson) /// **Black Flag** Damaged (Robo) /// **Michael Jackson** Off The Wall (John "J.R." Robinson) /// **Pixies** Surfer Rosa (David Lovering) /// **Corrosion Of Conformity** Animosity (Reed Mullin)

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## DAVE GROHL

**MD:** So you were copping his riffs for your patterns?

**Dave:** When Josh goes [sings riff from "No One Knows"], I just do my version of what he's doing on guitar. If he goes [sings riff from Them Crooked Vultures' "No One Loves Me & Neither Do I"], I'm just mimicking his riff with my drums.

**MD:** And there are tracks where the groove is sucking all the air out of the room. Like on "Scumbag Blues," there's nothing between the instruments.

**Dave:** And you realize that I am playing with John Paul Jones! That has everything to do with why I played the way I did on the album. I am a Zeppelinologist. I grew up worshipping that band like they were my church. I didn't go to church—I listened to Led Zeppelin, and that was all I needed. They were God to me. I learned a lot about groove and drumming and feel from those albums. When I listened to those records I didn't want to know exactly how Bonham did what he did—I wanted to know *why* he did what he did.

**MD:** That's a great question.

**Dave:** Look, there are not many people who are capable of doing what John Bonham did. He's the greatest rock drummer of all time. It's true. The guy was so well balanced, he could do anything. And he was fearless. He wasn't perfect. But he was the most beautiful human rock drummer of all time. Anyway, it was his intention that fascinated me. Why did he do that particular thing there? Why is he so behind the beat on that part? Why did they keep that mis-hit in? His playing had such personality and had its own fingerprint, its own blueprint.

**MD:** So what did working with Bonham's closest musical partner bring out of you?

**Dave:** I know every riff that John has recorded on album, solo projects and otherwise. When we got into the music I thought, *This will be easy*. What, I'll be John Paul Jones' favorite drummer ever? No, I'll just relax and jam. I'd met him when he worked on a Foo Fighters record, and he and Jimmy Page jammed with us at Wembley Stadium a few years ago. We became

friends. With Them Crooked Vultures, we started jamming, and within minutes I knew it was the best band I had ever been in. We were noodling, dude! And I also thought, *Man, I am really killing it!* The feel was good and the time was there, the pocket. Then I realized that was all John Paul Jones making me sound good.

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

**Dave:** That is what he does. He's had years of studio experience, playing charts, even long before Led Zeppelin. He has so much feel. He finds your groove and sticks to you like glue. So in "Scumbag Blues," that's Josh and John and me in a 10' by 10' room recording the song live.

**MD:** No clicks on the record?

**Dave:** There's a click on only one song, "Reptiles."

**MD:** Many of the songs comprise various sections. Did you record them in one pass or in parts?

**Dave:** Usually we would start the day by drinking fifteen pots of coffee. We'd sit on the porch, then it was like riff roulette. We'd say, "Who's got one today?" John might have one and we'd play along. If we felt we had the foundation of a song or at least a starting block, we'd go in and start jamming. By nine at night we would have turned a verse/chorus basic idea into an eight-and-a-half-minute epic instrumental. Then we would shave it down.

Once we had an arrangement we thought made sense and we could play it through, we'd take a break, set up the mics, and record it. Some are first takes, some are second or third takes. Then we did broad editing in Pro Tools. But it was like doing it to tape. We would mix and match verses or choruses, depending on the best version. And we were good about tempos, so we didn't need click tracks.

**MD:** So there are no grid maps.

**Dave:** F\*\*k, no.

**MD:** Your tech, Gersh, noted that when your drumming is up on the recording console, all the VU meters hit the same level because you strike everything with equal weight and intensity. That explains the power and meatiness of your groove.

**Dave:** Consistency is very important to

me. Perfect time, perfect tempo, locked-in perfection doesn't turn me on. But consistency does. It can still be spontaneous and insane, but when I play drums in the studio I don't barrel down on my drums like I do at live gigs.

**MD:** Really? Your power is one of your trademarks.

**Dave:** I will pound the heck out of them for sure. But the live gig is a marathon. I really beat the crap out of my drums live. Not because I think it sounds great, but because I get so excited to play. In the studio I play the drums so that they'll sound good. If it sounds great to crack the snare, then I crack it, hard. If it chokes, then I back off.

A long time ago I learned a lesson with three microphones in my bathroom in Seattle. I had a Fostex cassette 8-track and a drumset, and I wanted to record some songs on my own. So I arranged my three mics: room mic, kick mic, and snare mic. I recorded a drum track and listened back and realized I was bashing my cymbals too hard. I couldn't really hear the snare. So I did another take and laid off the cymbals a little bit and gave it a little more snare. I did a roll, but I lost that because I didn't have mics on the toms. So next time I did the roll I laid into the toms more. Basically I learned to equalize or mix myself in the room.

As most drummers should know, you want the recording to sound great with one microphone in the room. I want to be able to put one beautiful Neumann mic fifteen feet away from the drums and make it sound like the greatest mix I've heard in my life. So you play to the room. Often that doesn't mean bashing your drums to shreds. I try to be a responsible drummer in the studio, be consistent, and play to the room so I can get a bigger sound by playing less.

**MD:** You recorded yourself and judged the results.

**Dave:** It's a common mistake: People imagine that the harder you hit the drums, the bigger they'll sound. A lot of times it's the opposite. When you're at the bar down the street and you have two microphones and you want to tear people's faces off, that's when you start

to splinter sticks and break stuff.

**MD:** So you're not stomping quite as hard.

**Dave:** It depends. A good example is the second half of "No One Loves Me & Neither Do I." I'm practically busting through my kick head on that section because I want that wallop in the room. I'm not really going hard on the cymbals, though. Every song is different. It's just a matter of having that dynamic control over each one of your [sources], knowing what should be louder and

when and what should sit back.

**MD:** When you're creating one of those memorable beats, is it something you think about away from the drumset, or is it the first thing you hear?

**Dave:** It's somewhere between being clever and being flashy, where you can find something that becomes a hook. I'm not a trained drummer, so I have bad habits. There are certain things I just can't do.

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## DAVE GROHL

tom combinations I've never heard from you.

**Dave:** Oh, thanks. I've always found simplicity to be a lot more entertaining than complexity. I like disco drumming. I like AC/DC. I like old rock 'n' roll. I like the Ramones. Drumming that's just so simple you almost don't even notice it. It's beautiful in its restraint and its minimalism. That's what I really dig.

It's like [Led Zeppelin's] "Kashmir." That song is so perfectly spare and sparse, until you get to the section with the kick drum flip. That's when you realize Bonham is a lot better than he's leading you to believe.

**MD:** Old video of Bonham shows he wasn't bashing all the time either. He was like a big-band drummer at times—he swings.

**Dave:** Honestly, it's a popular misconception that beating the crap out of your drums is the way to make them sound bigger. It can, but not all the time.

**MD:** Gersh also mentioned your sliding bass drum foot technique. You don't

always play heel-up?

**Dave:** Me and Gersh, it's like *The Newlywed Game!* First of all, I sit low, so I can push forward with my foot and rock my foot back and forth a little bit when I need to do something that's quicker. When I'm doing faster footwork I rock my heel back so I can bounce my foot off the pedal. But I'm not heel-up all the time.

In some songs I let the beater rest on the head after I hit it, just to kill the resonance of the head. And there are other songs when I smack the crap out of the bass drum to get as much ring as I can out of it. I think I need a foot cam to really answer that one!

**MD:** You play a few odd-meter tracks on the album. Do you count, or do you approach the meter melodically with your guitarist hat on?

**Dave:** I'm thinking more in terms of melody and riff than numbers. I still get confused with time signatures. When people say it's in seven or nine or five, it doesn't really register with me as numbers. I use my ear. If it's way too complicated, then good luck!

Taylor Hawkins told me he once got a tip from Gary Novak that if a time signature is too complicated, just cut it in half and count those halves. But that's way too complicated for me. It would ruin my experience.

**MD:** Playing guitar for so many years must have changed your view toward drumming.

**Dave:** The two came hand in hand for me. I began learning guitar when I was eleven. But I had an understanding of the drums; I would play [Rush's] *2112* or punk rock records on my pillows. I didn't have a drumset, but I understood what the drummer was doing just by listening. Not that I could actually do it, but I got it. Since I was young I've been one of those guys who plays drums with his teeth while he walks down the street. I'm humming a riff and coming up with a drum line by grinding my teeth. You should interview my dentist!

**MD:** Did you create some Vultures parts away from the kit like that?

**Dave:** Once the riffs started taking shape, I would really try to minimize

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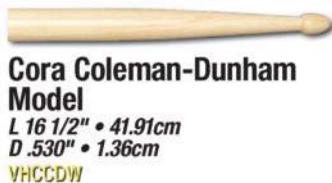
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everything. It's not unlike writing a song. Writing a drum part for the song is just as important as writing the lyric or the chorus or the title. It's important that a drum track has structure and arrangement and that you're using your head; you're not just playing and bashing away and doing the same thing every time. It's important that you think about entering into a section and building the song and sitting with the bass. There are a lot of things to consider, but ultimately make it as simple and memorable as possible. Whether it's Tony Thompson or John Robinson, there are drummers who write parts, and it's not rocket science. They're just great drum hooks.

**MD:** Can you give me an example?

**Dave:** Take a song like "Dead End Friends." I got to the studio at midnight. And Josh had to leave in fifteen minutes. He played me a guitar riff and said, "Let's go." We did two takes in fifteen minutes, and the second take was the keeper. I'd never heard the song before. And I was kind of drunk. Then there are songs, like "Bandoliers," that

I'm really proud of because of the groove and the composition that was put into that. And I recorded the whole drum track by myself when everybody was out screwing around. We'd been working on the arrangement all day, then Josh split and John went out to eat. "Where is everybody?" So I recorded the whole song by myself.

**MD:** "Elephants" is one of the dance grooves you talked about. Did you think differently regarding those songs?

**Dave:** We are probably more inclined to play dance grooves over rock songs than rock beats on rock songs. That's the way the three of us jam. We put a lot of emphasis on the groove and that it be somewhat danceable, whether it's "No One Loves Me," which swings, or "Dead End Friends," which has a cute go-go shape to it. Or "Gunman," which has a blatant disco beat, the one beat I promised myself I would never play.

**MD:** Are there things you do within the beat in the moment to make it groove more? Do you make adjustments?

**Dave:** Sure, I do that all the time, to sit

comfortably in the groove. That's what I do. You have to pay attention to whether the song is grooving or not. It's hard for me to articulate a lot of what I do as a drummer, because I am not a technical musician. I'm a big dummy when it comes to anything technical or rudimental. So to me it's all about the feel. That's really hard to describe. I heard a producer trying to describe the formula that made up Bonham's behind-the-beat feel, which is ridiculous. It's just feel. You can't explain it; it is or it isn't. It's my mission to try to get drummers to stop listening to other drummers and listen to themselves.

**MD:** I've read that you don't practice away from the kit.

**Dave:** Playing by myself is a very lonely and depressing feeling. So I prefer to play drums when there's music happening at the same time. It's when I'm jamming that I get practice in.

**MD:** So you didn't feel any need to get your chops in shape after being away from the kit for so long?

**Dave:** Not really. The most important

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## DAVE GROHL

thing to me was that my body be able to do the things it used to do. If I can imagine doing it, I can probably pull it off. If I can hear it in my head, I can make my hands and feet do what they need to do. It's just a matter of being physically capable of pulling off the things I have in my head.

**MD:** The early press on Them Crooked Vultures reported the band was basically doing Zeppelin. Did you feel you were channeling Bonham at times?

**Dave:** There are sections that we stretch out into jams. They're totally open to anyone taking it and running with it. There are times where John leads the pack or Josh goes in his direction. It's those moments where I feel like what we're doing is not the same as what Led Zeppelin did, but we're doing it for the same reason. We just played at Royal Albert Hall, and that was an hour and fifty minutes long. Those jam sections are stretching out into eight or fourteen minutes. It's moments like that on stage where John and I are just looking into each other's eyes, building a jam from a whisper to a big crash.

**MD:** And that dance-groove mentality must be in there as well.

**Dave:** For sure. That's the fun that John and I have. While Josh and [Vultures touring guitarist] Alain Johannes are focused on their playing and their pedals and their vocals, John and I get to play with the groove. We try to make each other laugh by tossing little bits back and forth. The audience might not notice what we're doing, but we're getting away with murder back there.

**MD:** You used three drumsets on the album, as well as a toy set on "Interlude With Ludes."

**Dave:** That's was Josh's daughter's drumset. That's one of the great things about working with Josh. He'll say, "I want you to go in and play a random pattern using this block of wood and my kid's drumset." He records it with one microphone, and it's distorted as heck.

**MD:** The drumming on "Interlude

With Ludes" almost sounds like a Stephen Perkins thing, with weird drums and editing. Is that live playing?

**Dave:** Just live, just me doing one pass. That's how much thought is put into a lot of this music. Very little. That's the instruction I would get from Josh: "Here, put that block of wood on a stand. Cool. And just do whatever, but don't play an actual beat."

**MD:** Did that ever make you nervous, like you needed more time to work out a part?

**Dave:** No. It's just a matter of what the song deserves. A song like that deserves something off the wall. A song like "No One Loves Me" deserves something that is heavy like a wrecking ball. You just have to figure out what it needs and do it quick. Don't spend too much time thinking about it.

**MD:** As a frontman and a drummer, have you noticed other drummers focusing on things that don't actually help their playing?

**Dave:** It depends what you're playing and why you're playing it. If you're playing on a song, then why not play for the song? If you're looking to jam, then just go. It's hard to say. I think feel and groove are overlooked a lot. Even something as simple as "Smells Like Teen Spirit" or "Heart-Shaped Box"—people wouldn't recognize those songs as songs that have groove, but they do in a way.

**MD:** But "Smells Like Teen Spirit" is one of the great rock drum moments.

**Dave:** Thank you.

**MD:** That's when everyone said, "Who is that guy?" The part is perfect for that song, and its energy is just impossible. And it has that massive drum sound.

**Dave:** I think one of the reasons the sound was bigger on "Smells Like Teen Spirit" was because I was doing less. There was that space between the beat; there was that air. When you chop it down to its bare essentials, that's when you can feel it, and you know more is less. That's when you know how to impress with less!

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# Jim Black

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Paul La Raia

In an alternate universe, musicians play exceptionally creative music that is cliché free. Madly inventive melodies fly above fresh rhythms. Exacting technique and equally charged creativity propel both free improvisation and through-composed pieces on a level that can recall at any moment metal, prog, or jazz rock, while pointing to a future without barriers. This music references jazz, Bulgarian, heavy rock, Slavic, orchestral, and electronic styles yet amalgamates it all under a simple rubric: improvisational music for open minds.

This alternate universe isn't some never-never land. It's Brooklyn, New York. And one of its prime movers is drummer/composer Jim Black. "When you are the first person to play an original composition, there is no drum part to copy," Black says by way of explaining his original style. "You get first crack. The ghosts of Tony Williams and Elvin Jones fall off your shoulders; now you get to call the shots. You have to recognize what is your groove. That's when you pay more attention to what you do than to someone else. Remove your heroes and let them rest in peace."

Black performs regularly with a diverse cadre of Brooklyn-based groups, including his own AlasNoAxis, and coleads Pachora, Human Feel (accompanied by laptop), H-Alpha, TYFT (often combining solo drums and laptop), and Sons Of Champignon (with guitarist Nels Cline). And let's not forget his copious sideman work (Hank Roberts, Tim Berne, Uri Caine, Laurie Anderson, Dave Liebman).

The forty-two-year-old drummer strides the sharpest teeth of the cutting edge.

At a 2009 show at Brooklyn's Southpaw, Black and AlasNoAxis (Chris Speed, tenor sax; Hilmar Jensson, guitar; Skúli Sverrisson, bass) rip through what sounds like Zeppelin one moment, a Macedonian brass band the next (with Jim banging a darbuka in place of snare), and a free-jazz ensemble a little later. Black never follows the usual or traditional path, his arms creating wide, balletic arcs that result in colorful cymbal and snare figures, his non-flashy feet driving volcanic bass drum patterns.

Black seems unbound by technical concerns, and, more important, his mind is as free to roam as his body. His latest AlasNoAxis CD, *Houseplant*, is perhaps more moody and ethereal than his collaborative efforts. But that's no surprise coming from this heavyweight thinker, renegade programmer, composer, instructor (at the School For Improvisational Music in Brooklyn), and tub thumper. Black adapts to any situation, producing unique commentary while constantly adjusting and reinvigorating his technique to match the sounds erupting from his ever-expanding brain.

At his apartment in Brooklyn, Black is just as likely to pick up a guitar or encourage weird sounds from a sampler as to extract a groove from his Sonor Hilites. And that's what he's doing when *MD* arrives at his door. Operating a Kenton Killamix controller, an M-Audio Trigger Finger, and a laptop, Black is busy creating otherworldly sounds on the fly.



Whether supporting the border-busting jazz of **Tim Berne** and **Uri Caine** with wild creativity, reliably sticking to a twisty script with **Laurie Anderson**, reimagining Balkan beats with **Pachora**, or manipulating zeros and ones with his own projects, **the New York City drummer always lets his ears—not habit—call the shots.**



**MD:** Why did you add laptop and electronics to your drumset?

**Jim:** I wanted an instrument that could extend the range of the drums in terms of timbre. [Black plays a cymbal sound looped and sustained via the controller.] By itself that's just a low drone. You could use it in different ways [makes the sound swell by pushing the Trigger Finger's sliders]. You could distort it, add delay or reverb, but pitch-wise it would be great to use for chords and harmonies. Any sound can be scratched, stretched out, or decimated as I need in the moment. I use only one patch in Reaktor, which I've been building for five years.

**MD:** How does it work with live drumming?

**Jim:** My right hand might play a bass line while my left hand and body play the drums. Or I might trigger different samples and play over them. It's built around how I hear improvisation in real time. I find a sample, and if I need to play chromatically or in fifths I just turn a knob. [Black twists a cymbal sample into weird shapes via the Trigger Finger's knobs and pads.] I am inspired by people like Bill Frisell and Nels Cline, who will do whatever it takes to realize their imagination in sound. I've always loved jamming with pedals.

**MD:** You lead and play with such a wide variety of artists, all heavily improvisational, all unique. How

would you describe the music of AlasNoAxis?

**Jim:** I write all the music on baritone guitars while singing the melodies. It's my chance to touch the energies and textures I love in rock and pop music, through distortion, electronics, free improv, and melodies played by a tenor sax in place of a vocalist. I consider myself an improviser first, and through that lens we focus on different musical elements to make our bands. In Pachora, we take the melodies and rhythms of the Balkans and write our own versions of that music.

**MD:** How would you describe your drumming?

**Jim:** I grew up playing the music of Zeppelin, Rush, the Police, and Hendrix. I got into jazz via Weather Report and Wayne Shorter's music, which led me to check out Philly Joe Jones, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones. My live connection to this was getting to see Jeff Watts many times. He could channel that swing and intensity from the '60s. Paul Motian, Jack DeJohnette—I slept with all their albums.

In college I met Joey Baron, another

amalgam of all these different musical approaches. He is so strong as a drummer while being completely free as an improviser, unafraid of pushing the envelope. Through these masters I realized music wasn't about hip or not hip or right or wrong. All music shares the same basic five elements:

form, timbre, rhythm, melody, and harmony. So it's more about finding your voice by discovering your relationship to them.

**MD:** I hear Paul Motian in your drumming as well.

**Jim:** I could never understand how Paul would play free. It's so *him*. You can't copy it. But watching him play time and watching his technique is what I've been exploring recently—how little motion he uses to generate his sound. It just reflects how good his time is. He is one of the last guys to make that stroke, using more of the fingers to articulate on the cymbal.

**MD:** You were playing some unusual patterns at Southpaw. Those loping alternating arm movements.

**Jim:** I'm looking for a slightly different inflection in the attack. A different tone. Or occasionally I want to play multiple notes that have a different articulation or accent that you might find clumsy using only one hand. When you start



playing faster with one hand you sacrifice the ability to change your motion. If it's a slow rhythm, then it's about doing what the body wants to do. I am not thinking about it at all. You're generating an energy with one hand, and the other hand comes in to make that more malleable. It's a linear approach; if you just move your hands, a different sound occurs with the same rhythm. That is a powerful thing.

**MD:** The way your arms move almost looks like an affectation.

**Jim:** [Plays a groove on the kit, striking a cymbal in various ways to capture different tonalities and attacks.] I am thinking about envelope and length. Most of the drums are about attack and decay. So by rubbing the edge of a cymbal [makes it swell and crescendo] you can reverse the sound. The technique comes from hearing and needing to make a particular sound. How many different ways can you create sustain on the drums? There's not always time to

## Jim's Gear

**Drums:** Sonor Hilite in red maple finish

- A. 7x14 Sonorlite Scandinavian birch snare
- B. 9x10 tom
- C. 10x12 tom
- D. 15x14 floor tom
- E. 15x18 bass drum

**Cymbals:** UFIP

- 1. 10" or 12" Natural hi-hats
- 2. 20" Experience crash/ride
- 3. 20" Experience ride
- 4. 14" no-name student crash covered in gaffers tape

**Percussion:** 8" Indian serving bowl and round serving platter, Pearl Ganzeiro, various small bells, shakers, saxophone reeds, etc.

**Electronics:** Kenton Killamix controller, M-Audio Trigger Finger, Apple MacBook, PreSonus FirePod

**Sticks:** Vic Firth SD 10 sticks and Heritage brushes, brass bell mallet, yarn-wound vibraphone mallet, 1/8-size student cello bow

**Hardware:** Pearl boom stands and snare stand, Yamaha hi-hat stand and belt-drive bass drum pedal



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grab mallets for a cymbal swell, so you find other ways to achieve the same effect.

**MD:** You prefer a dead, flat cymbal sound.

**Jim:** I used to use jazzier, ringing A and K Zildjian cymbals. In '92 I started playing with Tim Berne and Chris Speed in a very acoustic environment, and I needed sounds that vanished quickly to make more space for the other sounds in the room. I found these UFIP cymbals that had attack but not a lot of sustain. I wanted them to be more like high-pitched drums than actual cymbals. I love Bill Stewart and Brian Blade's cymbals, let alone their music, but I can't get that sound to work for me.

**MD:** What is your basic stick technique? It looks a bit like Tony Williams' French-style grip.

**Jim:** I'll try any and all techniques to get the sound I'm hearing in the moment. My ear calls the shots. I remember seeing Peter Erskine—he has such beautiful technique, an amazing stroke. But often when using that kind of motion you end up playing ideas that are based *around* that motion. [Jim plays series of quick moves around the set.] Short note, long note. Tight, hard accents, immediately soft.

Sometimes I question every single thing I've been conditioned to learn to play properly. Why limit yourself? We tend to get all bent out of shape when somebody doesn't follow the tradition. I'm trying to un-condition myself. You can make any technique obey the need to make the sound. That's where I'm at now.

**MD:** What are you playing in TYFT's "Pittles"? It sounds like quarter-note displacements.

**Jim:** All the bars are different lengths, and I tried to play something in an even time through the whole track. It only resets once, in the first bar. Otherwise you can put quarter notes to the whole thing. We decode the music, for instance, telling each other, "It may be in 7/8, but it should feel like 7/2." Or, "It's different-length bars, but it's still a total of eighteen beats; turn the beat around here." On paper it looks like a nightmare, but it's just an illusion. The last thing we care about is *odd*; we just

want to create different shapes and forms. Rhythms have different colors and moods. That's the beauty of less common meters.

**MD:** You improvise your brains out, and the musicians in your bands can deconstruct anything a million ways. Who would possibly want to sit in on your gig?

**Jim:** The most important thing I do in workshops is explain how to improvise with another musician. Spontaneously compose something for the first time together. I might be stretching something and pulling it apart, but hopefully it makes sense in the context of what the other musician is doing. You can play together, one of you can be on top, you can obliterate each other, you can be in harmony, or you can go in different directions. It's just sound on sound. You can improvise with anyone, as long as you instantly trust in what they're playing.

**MD:** You seem able to apply that idea with anyone.

**Jim:** I don't play guitar, for instance, but I can take guitar and generate motion, rhythm, and intention. All music is basically just a color in some sort of rhythm.

Sound appears, and right after that we perceive the flow and the rate of it.

[Black picks up a guitar and sampler and plays tones.]

**MD:** How would you apply these principles from sampler to drumset?

**Jim:** Don't make a distinction between instruments. Your musical sense is all that matters. Remember the five elements. For example, rhythmically I'm only using 8th notes, triplets, and 16th notes, then grouping them in different ways to get fives, sevens, nines, or any other shape. Add rests, silence, groove, and feel, and that's enough to create the illusion of playing free.

**MD:** Don't we have to talk technique to understand the drums and the music?

**Jim:** I could watch Jack DeJohnette do rolls for hours. There is mystery in that as much as there is music. But the guys without technique don't get talked about so much in drum magazines. We've seen technique explode in the last forty years, and it tends to eclipse the music of what it's attached to. Is technique music? No, not on its own. It's more like the beauty of shredding.



**MD:** But it takes a lot of technique to play what you play.

**Jim:** I am trying to find a sound; sometimes that requires technique. But it's better to come at the instrument with the need to make a sound versus something for its own sake. Too many drummers spend hours in a room alone learning to do it simply for the sake of doing it, versus playing with bands, where you will discover what you need to get together. I remember working hours on Alan Dawson techniques at Berklee, which I wanted desperately. But I began to get fed up because meanwhile I couldn't keep the tempo on a bossa nova with my ensemble. All that technique means nothing if you can't function in a musical groove.

**MD:** It takes some technique to play a basic bossa nova.

**Jim:** Sure, I am always getting my butt kicked in that realm. The bossa nova is a beautiful sound, so knowing the sound of it comes first in this case. Trouble begins for most drummers when they don't have a blueprint for what to play, as when playing free. It's easy to play

## RECORDINGS

**Jim Black's AlasNoAxis** Houseplant, Dogs Of Great Indifference, Habyor, Splay, AlasNoAxis  
/// **Pachora** Astereotypical /// **Human Feel** Galore /// **TYFT** Smell The Difference, Meg Nem Sa /// **H-Alpha** Red Sphere /// **Andrew D'Angelo** Skadra Daxis /// **Ellery Eskelin** One Great Day... /// **Tim Berne** Unwound

## FAVORITES

**Miles Davis** Milestones (Philly Joe Jones), Nefertiti (Tony Williams) /// **John Coltrane** Transition (Elvin Jones), Interstellar Space (Rashed Ali) /// **Paul Motian Trio** Live In Tokyo (Paul Motian) /// **Keith Jarrett Trio** Standards Live (Jack DeJohnette) /// **Bill Frisell** Before We Were Born (Joey Baron) /// **Power Tools** Strange Meeting (Ronald Shannon Jackson) /// **Ornette Coleman & Pat Metheny** Song X (Jack DeJohnette, Denardo Coleman) /// **Steve Coleman & The Five Elements** Rhythm People: The Resurrection Of Creative Black Civilization (Marvin "Smitty" Smith) /// **Jan Garbarek** It's OK To Listen To The Gray Voice (Michael DiPasqua) /// **Aphex Twin** Come To Daddy (programmed) /// **Rush** Moving Pictures (Neil Peart) /// **Led Zeppelin** all (John Bonham) /// **The Police** all (Stewart Copeland)

when you always know what's supposed to happen, but now you've been given the freedom to do anything, yet you can't see it that way because you only hear what you've learned. I often get asked by young drummers, "How do I know if it's the right thing when I'm playing free? How do I know I'm playing free right?" In this instance, the idea of right and wrong isn't musical.

**MD:** But there is a right way to play a bossa nova.

**Jim:** It depends on the situation. "Right" for what reasons? There's the feel, the time, the sound, the phrasing, and the

whole vibe of a bossa nova—which is a lesson in itself. Hear it, then play it.

**MD:** You have to play the right template for the music.

**Jim:** Absolutely, and that ranges from obvious and known to making it up in the moment to being very specific. If I don't do a certain thing, then the whole structure can fall apart. When I'm playing with Laurie Anderson I'm replicating note after note, night after night. Same thing for a live film score.

**MD:** So what is "right" then?

**Jim:** You have to think and feel as a musician first and know what the correct approach is for that particular moment. Open up your ears, mind, and heart, and learn to listen and to feel music. The question is occurring because the drummer is not hearing anything. They only know how to play when they know what they're supposed to do. Go back to the beginning and play one stroke and see if that sounds like music to you. Maybe it's more gestural than intellectual in terms of four beats to the bar or 8th notes. Maybe take the vocabulary you already know and stretch it.

We're really good at copying things that have already been played. That's easy. But consider the more open things, where your personality has time to step out, because there is no requirement now—you get to make it all up, you're composing spontaneously. It's not free at all. You own every note. That's why free improvisation—spontaneous composition—is the ultimate challenge. It allows you to go through your entire reference library. And only your ears and your taste can call the shots in that moment.



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# Chops Builders

Part 6: Pu-Du-Du by Bill Bachman

**T**his month we're going to develop an incredibly useful sticking pattern called pu-du-du, the name of which is onomatopoeia for the sticking RLL. We'll also invert the pu-du-du into the du-du-pu (RRL) for contrast. These combinations of three strokes may seem simple at first, but once you dig into them you'll find they're quite difficult to play accurately and with a loose and musical flow. Taking the time to master these stickings is worth the effort, since they're very expressive and handy when you're playing triplet feels. Jazz drummers use the stickings a lot in comping figures and in solo phrases.

The pu-du-du is a right-hand accent followed by two left taps. You're essentially playing triplets with an accent on the first partial. The inversion, du-du-pu, is two right-hand taps (or a low right-hand diddle) followed by a left-hand accent.

This puts the accent on the third partial of the triplet. Using diddles instead of single strokes saves energy, and it also gives the triplets a different feel. The pu-du-du should have a clear accent on the first note, and the two following taps should be played low to the drum with a light touch. The du-du-pu should get the same treatment, with a low and light diddle followed by a big accent.

It's important to have a firm grasp on the double-stroke roll before working on the pu-du-du, since one hand has to play double strokes. Be sure the doubles are played loosely, with the fingers smoothly rebounding the second stroke of the diddle. If the doubles are played as pure bounces with no finger reinforcement, they will sound weak. On the other hand, if the doubles are played as two forced wrist strokes, they will sound choked, and you'll also have limited potential

for speed and flow. If your finger control is still a work in progress, err on the side of bouncy, since tight playing will never develop into finesse.

Once you can perform these exercises comfortably and with good technique, you'll find they lend themselves to very fast playing. Rudimentally savvy players may notice that when you play a pu-du-du and a du-du-pu back to back, it's actually a slurred six-stroke roll, or an inversion of the paradiddle-diddle. Get creative and combine these stickings in a variety of ways to say what you'd like to say musically. The combinations are a lot of fun on the kit too. Try moving the accents to different drums and cymbals and even playing some of the double strokes on the bass drum instead of the snare. There's a wealth of vocabulary built into these two vital stickings. Good luck!

1

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

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

2

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

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

3

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

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

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

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

4

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

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

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

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

5

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

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

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

6

12/8

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

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

7

9/8

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

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

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

8

9/8

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

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

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



**Bill Bachman** is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player in Nashville. For more information, visit [billbachman.net](http://billbachman.net).



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# The Oakland Stroke 2.0

Bringing Back The Clyde And Jabo Feel by David Garibaldi

**O**n Tower Of Power's most recent recording, *Great American Soulbook*, we perform a tribute to James Brown called "Star Time."

The grooves I play on that tune were inspired by JB drummers Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield. Some of the original grooves used quarter-note hi-hat patterns while there were conversations going on between the snare and bass drum. This is a very cool concept that has a terrific sound, along with some very challenging coordination.

When I was learning how to play, Clyde and Jabo's methods were the way many drummers were approaching funk. This coordination concept became the basic model for what I played on "Oakland Stroke." On that track, I took a samba bass drum part, moved it to my right hand on the hi-hat, and then built a groove around that. The idea was born out of trying to construct a groove in the style of Jabo and Clyde.

I recently sat down in my practice room and came up with some variations of "Oakland Stroke" that use a quarter-note ostinato (repeating figure) on the hi-hat instead of the original samba-influenced part. The goal is to keep a similar flow to the groove,

while redistributing some of those missing hi-hat notes to other voices or leaving them out completely. The end result is much more linear and easier to play.

Here's what I came up with, along with updated performance notes from my previous article "The Oakland Stroke," from March 2009.

## PERFORMANCE/PRACTICE TIPS

These ideas can be applied to any material you're working on.

**1. The important thing is control, not speed.** Practice for control. Speed will come as you gain more control of your limbs.

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

**3. Start with the hi-hat part.** Play that sound source as an ostinato, and then play the first two or three written snare and bass drum notes until you can perform them comfortably. Then start adding to the groove, one written note at a time. Use the same process to assemble the remaining snare and bass drum parts. Move on only after control is established. If you want more information on this practice concept, check out pages 19 and 20

of my book *Future Sounds*.

**4. The concept of having two sound levels in the hands—accents and ghosted notes—is very important.**

Not only are you practicing coordination, you're developing your ear as well. The ghosted snare notes must be played as soft as you can make them. Staying with a stick height of no more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ " will force you to relax so you can play these notes softly. Playing the sound levels correctly and accurately will make the groove come alive.

There are a lot of technical challenges going on here—layered notes, ghosted notes, pullouts (a ghosted note immediately before an accented note with the same hand), control strokes (a ghosted note immediately after an accented note with the same hand), rimshot accents, and left-foot hi-hat notes. Once you've mastered these concepts they will begin to appear in your playing, and you should notice more balance and definition in your sound.

I'm sure that with some thought you can come up with even more variations. Should you have questions regarding this material, I can be reached through the Tower Of Power Web site, [towerofpower.com](http://towerofpower.com). Enjoy!

(\*OMIT BASS DRUM NOTE WHEN PATTERN REPEATS)

The image displays 11 staves of drum notation, numbered 3 through 11. Each staff is written in 4/4 time and features a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and various dynamic markings such as accents (>) and slurs. The patterns are consistent across all staves, suggesting a single drum part. The notation is presented in a clean, black-and-white format on a white background.

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



# My Two Cents Part 4 by Chris Adler

**H**ello, once again. My apologies for the hiatus! I didn't intend to be away quite this long, but you never know what turns life has in store.

My band, Lamb Of God, has been touring the world relentlessly on our newest album, *Wrath*, and it's left little time for much else. The album came out in February 2009, but we started the tour in December 2008 and stay out until October 2010. It's been a very busy and exciting time for me. We're on our second trip around the globe and will do much of it three times before we head home to begin the process again.

While I was home briefly for the holidays, I learned that we had been nominated for a Grammy for the second time. I try to never let myself stop and think about this stuff. I'm afraid that if I actually acknowledge any type of success, I'll get lazy. (Thanks for the work ethic, Dad!) I know tomorrow can be bigger than today, and I'll have plenty of time to think back when the ride slows down. For now it's time to stay sharp, continue to learn, and push forward.

I've learned most of what I know about drums from listening to, speaking with, and watching other drummers. This column is designed to encourage those learning conversations and to take a break from the theory books, tabs, and drum code. Everyone learns in different ways. I personally play from the heart and find inspiration all around me. I love music and love to hit my drums. I may not be the most educated player, and I'm not classically trained, but I'll rock till I'm dead. So, until then, let's get to your questions!

**Chris,**  
**I am fifteen years old, and I play in a metal-influenced punk band called the Aggressive Pedestrians. I used to**



**be the guitarist, but I had to switch to drums, which I enjoy more anyway. Being that most punk rock is not the most "virtuosic" genre of music, I try to apply metal and Latin grooves to my playing, to make it a bit more interesting. I'm curious: Who are some of your influences from genres other than metal that inspire you to mix it up a bit?**

**Connor Donegan**

Hey, Connor, thanks for writing. We have a lot in common! I played bass guitar in several bands until I was twenty-one—then I switched to drums and began Lamb Of God. The experience of playing bass in those bands was extremely helpful when I decided to make the switch. I understood what it was like on the other side of the kit. I'm able to put myself in those shoes when communicating within the band.

Another helpful element was that several of those bands were *not* metal. It's important to be open to other kinds of music and to allow those influences to help you create your own unique voice. By asking your question, you obviously understand. But many players don't. Like anything in life, it's easy to become uninspired when you stay zoomed in on only one

thing. I definitely listen to a lot of metal (it's kinda my job), but two of my biggest influences in learning were Stewart Copeland and Billy Cobham. And I learned how to play by studying the first Aerosmith record. I'm not a big fan of commercial radio, but other than that I try to take it all in. Trust me, it won't hurt. You'll be much more creative behind the kit, regardless of the particular gig or genre.

**Hey Chris,**  
**I'm in a band that's starting to record a demo. I've been listening to and watching drummers like you, Brann Dailor, Jason Bittner, and Aaron Gillespie play these incredible fills. I try to find ways to incorporate things like that into songs, but I'm worried people will think I'm overplaying. I want to express myself in my drumming, but I don't want to overplay. How do I know if I'm overplaying?**  
**Brian Shivers**

Brian, very mature question. It took me years to even understand what you're talking about. I was so wrapped up in my playing that I probably wouldn't have noticed if the guys in the band had left. I suppose in large part I was trying to prove to myself that I was good enough. Years later I

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## CHRIS ADLER

finally understood that it doesn't help anyone (unless you're Yngwie Malmsteen) to have one guy showing off all the time.

I said this in my last column, but it begs repeating: Just because you can do it doesn't mean you should. Play for the song, not for your ego. All the guys you mentioned are very talented and accomplished drummers playing aggressive and drum-heavy music. They have the room to stretch out and let it rip, but they've learned where and when to do so. If you're playing in a similar style, go for it. But know your place in the project and, just as important, in the song. You don't want to fill up the chorus with blast beats or do a sixteen-bar roll during the guitar solo. And unless the band is called the Brian Shivers Project, make sure you leave some room for everyone else.

**Chris,**  
**Thanks for the great Q&A column. I was wondering what tips you have for practicing with a click track. When did you start practicing with a**

**metronome? What have you found to be the best routine or method for getting the most out of playing with a click?**

**Chris**

Hey, Chris. I started working with a click in 2003, about nine years after I began playing. I had been intimidated by it. For some reason, I didn't think I was good enough to use it. I had tried several times, but I would always fall off the click. In 2004 we did preproduction for our album *Ashes Of The Wake*, and we recorded demos and mapped the click tracks from the recordings. This allowed me to define the click, not the other way around. Once I had those clicks to rehearse to, the switch flipped. I now had an assistant with me behind the kit, helping me keep my own time. It's helped me tremendously ever since, in recording situations and in live settings as well. Since then I've become comfortable with clicks through this process, I use them to rehearse all the time. If I'm not using the clicks I create to rehearse Lamb Of

God songs, I'm using steady clicks at different speeds to work on rolls, double bass, endurance, and timing. Good luck!

**Chris,**  
**I'm a twenty-nine-year-old drummer living in Baltimore. I taught myself by playing along with Green Day's *Dookie* and Nirvana's *Nevermind*. I was taking lessons when I started, but I was young and it wasn't moving fast enough for me. I wanted to be playing songs, not exercises. So I quit. For a while I thought I was the best around, so I never strived for improvement. I joined a punk band, made a lot of friends...and started getting high. As the time passed, I got pretty good, but not great. I never learned to read music, and I developed a heroin problem that eventually got me kicked out of the band. I also lost every single one of my friends. I was completely alone. I put my sticks down and pawned my set. But I finally got myself clean and bought a new drumset.**



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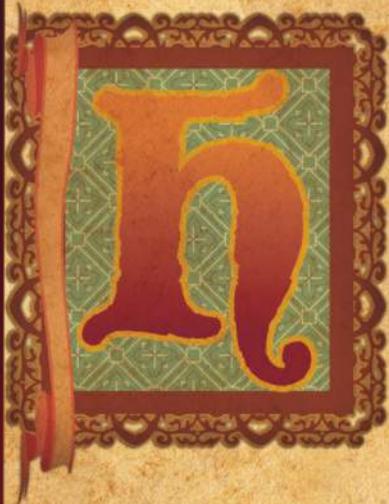
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Now that I'm older and I realize I wasted so much time thinking I was good enough with the skills I had, I see I never learned anything "real." I'm thinking about taking lessons to learn basic rudiments, but I'm afraid it won't keep my attention. My question to you is: Should I find someone who can teach me beginner stuff as well as intermediate things like learning popular songs, or should I focus on starting over completely?

Rob

Wow, Rob, that's a heavy story. Glad you made it through! Your question stuck out to me because it made me take a good look in the mirror. You mentioned that you never learned anything "real." What is real? Do the guys who spend years in lessons have something more real? If so, my whole jam is a sham. I occasionally question myself and wonder how much different my playing would be if I had studied formally. Would I still be playing at all if my playing had turned into homework?

Would I be a hundred times better?

What I can tell you is that I spend a lot of time with other drummers on the road—and some of them have studied extensively. I do occasionally feel a bit out of the loop if the conversation turns technical. But outside of that, we all drum for the same reasons. It's fun. It's in our blood. Couldn't turn it off if we tried. That's not to say that because we *want* to be able to play, we *will* be able to play. It takes a lot of time and energy. The keys will be your level of motivation and your ability to discover what truly inspires you. Many people find inspiration from lessons, DVDs, and books. Others may crank up some of their favorite tunes and get down to business. I occasionally pick up a guitar or sit at a piano and think of rhythms with my hands that I can take back to the drums.

Like you, I've recently been considering getting some books on rudiments. It's good to break out of a routine and get back to basics. Strong foundations never hurt. Whatever you decide to do, stay focused on the future and not on the wasted time, as you called it. Don't define yourself based on how well you play or how popular your band is. You've been through a lot and have come out on the good end. Some people don't make it. You've already succeeded.

We can all grow and learn something new. We can all be better than we are today. Inspiration comes differently for everyone, but it's everywhere and in every form. Don't be afraid to reach out and find what works for you. Your letter was a great start.

Thanks for all the letters over the past several months. I look forward to reading more and catching up again soon. I'm not a teacher, a psychiatrist, or an expert in much, but I've been around the block a few times and don't mind sharing what I've picked up along the way. If something is on your mind, give me a shout.

**Chris Adler** is the drummer for the platinum-selling metal band Lamb Of God. Questions for Chris can be sent to [miked@moderndrummer.com](mailto:miked@moderndrummer.com); indicate "For Chris Adler" in the subject line.



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# Pulse And Meter

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T.T.	⊗
S.D.	⊙
F.T.	⊗
B.D.	⊙
H.H. w/ foot	⊗
	R.H. on rim
	rim-click

## Part 1: Bending And Morphing Common Rhythms

by Elliot Humberto Kavee

**I**n this series of articles I'll show you ways to manipulate the relationship between pulse and meter to create new and interesting ideas. I'll use numerals and notation to represent the rhythms. Many of these concepts have been used as the basis for compositions I've written and recorded with various ensembles. Let's get started!

### MANIPULATING PERCEPTION

Musical elements are relational. Something isn't actually loud; it's louder *than* something else. You could show absolute loudness on a dB meter, but that doesn't quantify the perception of loudness. For instance, you can make a 90 dB sound seem louder than something at 100 dB, if it's preceded by a sound at 60 dB.

The same concept applies to meter. If you structure the grouping of pulses in an eleven-note pattern so that it sounds like seven, then it *is* seven. In music, as in many other arts, perception rules—not measurements. For example, what we think of in music as a seven is actually a grouping of long and short notes, such as 2-2-2-1 (long, long, long, short).

What's important about that seven isn't the number of raw pulses. It's our perception of the wholes and parts that create the meter. It's not, "How many notes are there?" Rather, it's, "What do they do?" Because we hear these groupings in a relative sense—rather than as absolutes—we can substitute other numbers for the ones and twos and still retain the overall feel of the original meter. For instance, a phrase of 2-2-1 can become 3-3-2, and our ears will perceive them in a similar way because of their relative lengths. We will explore this ambiguity between meter and pulse in the following examples.

### DIFFERENT PULSE/SAME METER

To begin, play a 7/4 rhythm made up of 8th notes grouped in ones and twos (2-2-2-1-2-2-2-1). (The headless notes can be played as rests or as soft ghost notes.)



Now "tripletize" that pattern to give it a swing feel. This creates a pattern in 21/8 (3-3-3-2-3-3-3-1).



With a little finesse, you can play the single note at the end of Example 2 as a two-note grouping. This creates a pattern in 22/8 (3-3-3-2-3-3-3-2) that still feels like it's in seven. You have to use your ear to adjust the note spacing in order to keep it sounding like the tripletized seven.



Since the pulse in Example 3 is slightly faster than it is in Example 2, you get more forward momentum while still retaining the laid-back feel of the swing. And because the 22/8 rhythm ends with a two instead of a one, it takes some of the edge off and makes the phrase sound rounder.

This process of substituting threes for twos and twos for ones will work with any rhythm that's constructed from ones and twos. For instance, a standard Afro-Cuban 12/8 bell pattern (2-2-1-2-2-2-1)...



...will become 3-3-2-3-3-3-2, which is in 19/8.



Now let's take things a step further and substitute fives and threes for the twos and ones ("quintupletizing"). When you quintupletize a 2-2-2-1 rhythm in seven, it becomes 5-5-5-3 (18/8).



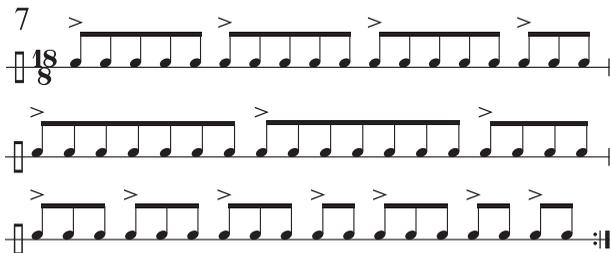
Work with Example 6 for a while until it sounds and feels like a modified seven (2-2-2-1). What's nice about this quintupletized 18/8 pattern is that it has a locked-in pulse that can then be divided by six, three, nine, or two for even more possibilities.

### DIFFERENT METER/SAME PULSE

I wrote a composition called "Gaudi," which is in eighteen, for the Fieldwork album *Simulated Progress*. The polymeters sound like five, seven, and eleven, even though the pulse per bar remains eighteen. Here's how: The seven is our quintupletized friend from Example 6 (5-5-5-3), the five

is 7-7-4 ("septupletized" 2-2-1), and the eleven is 3-3-3-2-3-2-2 (derived from 2-2-2-1-2-1-1).

To train yourself how to hear and execute these patterns, practice them back to back on a single surface using hand-to-hand stickings and accenting the first note of each grouping. The 8th-note pulse should remain the same as you move from one grouping to the next. Try to hear the implied meter of each one.



Once you have that under control, try layering the patterns between the limbs. Here are three full-kit combinations I used in "Gaudi." For these, treat the headless notes as rests. The rim/cymbal parts determine the perceived meter.

Eighteen as seven



Eighteen as five



Eighteen as eleven



Again, Example 8 isn't literally in seven, Example 9 isn't literally in five, and Example 10 isn't literally in eleven. Rather, they're what we can *perceive* as seven, five, and eleven. Given a raw stream of pulses, our ears will always group them one way or another. We also tend to hear slightly altered or distorted rhythms as the same thing. That's one reason why we can hear swung rhythms as derived from straight 8th notes, and vice-versa.

Next time we'll take these concepts a bit further by making even meters sound odd and odd meters sound even. See you then!

New York-based drummer **Elliot Humberto Kavee** has played on more than fifty acclaimed recordings, including Henry Threadgill's current release with his band Zooid, *This Brings Us To, Vol. I*, and the upcoming *This Brings Us To, Vol. II*. He was recently featured in the May 2010 issue of *MD*. For more info, visit [elliothumbertokavee.com](http://elliothumbertokavee.com).



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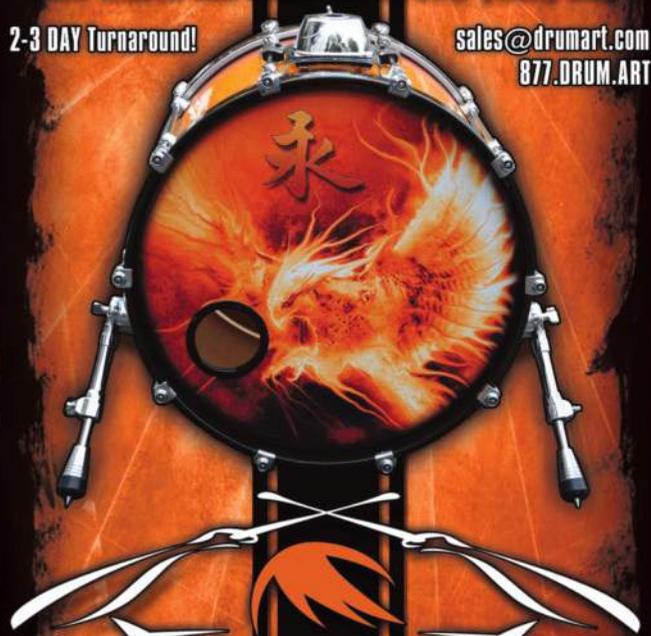
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# Slingerland Tone Flange Snare

by Harry Cangany

**I**n 1928, the Slingerland Banjo And Drum Company introduced a drum production concept called **Tone Flange that was borrowed from the banjo side of the business.** For about six years, in the pre-Radio King days, the company sold high-end snares with a removable beveled metal ring that was actually the top bearing edge. The top wooden edge of the drum was flat and had equally spaced brass screws placed in it. The Tone Flange metal ring sat on the screws. Luckily, Slingerland used high single-flange brass hoops and clips, or else this design might never have worked.

Here's copy from the 1928 Slingerland catalog that helps explain the concept:

Through scientific experimentation to develop the percussion instrument, which has been at a standstill for many years, the Slingerland Banjo And Drum Company introduces the Slingerland patented Tone Flange drum with its many advantageous features.

This Tone Flange eliminates the ring and overtone, which drummers have worried about for years. It rejuvenates and clarifies the tone, and staccato notes "pop" out like the crack of a machine gun. It also enables the drummer to make a clean "cut off" without any overtones, regardless of where his sticks may be: at the center or extreme edge of the head. Tone quality cannot be pictured. Hear one—play one.

Our featured drum this month is a 5x14 Tone Flange in rose pearl—often called rose marine pearl—that was available only in 1929 and 1930. The Tone Flange idea started on plastic-wrapped drums, but by 1929 it was available on natural-finish and painted shells. This beautiful snare has a solid mahogany shell, tube lugs, and the Speedy Sure Hold strainer, which later became known as the three-point or Radio King strainer. It's the property of Mark Cooper, a noted vintage drum dealer and authority ([coopersvintagedrums.com](http://coopersvintagedrums.com)). He got it from the original owner, and it was kept in a case for most of its eighty-year life.

How many Tone Flange snares are out there? Many exist, but most of the time the flanges have been removed. If you inspect the edge of a vintage Slingerland snare and you see a flange (it looks like an old-style hubcap with an open center), you'll know you have one. But if you find a Slingerland with brass screws protruding from the top bearing edge or little screw holes with no screws, you have a Tone Flange that's missing the beveled ring. Replica rings cost about \$250.

Tone Flange snare drums are 14" in diameter, with depths of 4", 5", or 6½". This beauty from 1929 has an estimated value of more than \$5,000.

**The Tone Flange's removable metal bearing edge, which looks like a hubcap, was designed to eliminate ring and overtone.**



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# GEARING UP Drumkit Details, On Stage And Up Close

Interview and photos by Sayre Berman



**Drums:** ddrum Dios M series in olive sparkle finish

**A.** LP Giovanni Compact bongos

**B.** 4x14 piccolo snare

**C.** 6½x14 hand-hammered bronze snare

**D.** 9x12 tom

**E.** 13x14 floor tom

**F.** 14x16 floor tom

**G.** 20x22 bass drum

"I knew I needed a drumkit for the road that could provide the dynamics Collective Soul music demands," Brannon says. "The kit I had just wasn't doing it. I spoke with Rick Hughes at ddrum for a long while about what would be good for us to use on the road and in the studio. What they sent me is this Dios M kit, and what a difference it made! It can handle the softest song, like 'Run,' and then I can just bash on a song like 'Gel.'"

"The drums have thinner shells than what I'd been accustomed to. The toms are 6-ply, and the other components are 8-ply. The plies are thinner. At first I was skeptical about that, but since I've been hitting the

## Collective Soul's **CHENEY BRANNON**

drums it's so much more thrilling to be playing these same songs each night. The thinner shell gives more tone than a thicker shell. It's like the classic drums from the '50s and '60s that had tone for days, along with a fuller sound. Some newer drums have a lot of clicky high-end sounds, and it's often hard to distinguish one drum from another. I want each of my drums to sound like what it is, and these shells make that happen."

**Hardware:** Pearl cymbal stands; DW 9002 double bass pedal, 9500 hi-hat stand, and 9999 double tom stand; Vater Slick Nut cymbal fasteners and drink holder; Roc-N-Soc throne with ButtKicker transducer  
"The feel of my pedals and stands is almost as important as the feel of my drums themselves. It's about finesse, and it's about power. The DW 9000 series kick drum pedal and the DW 9000 series hi-hat stand have helped me immensely to fine-tune what I'm doing with my feet."

**Heads:** Evans EQ3 on bass drum, Super Tough snare batters and Hazy 300 bottoms, clear EC2 tom batters and EC Resonant bottoms  
"I'm a hard hitter, but I can play about three shows with the Super Tough head before it starts losing its tone. The biggest change for me on this tour was when I swapped tom

heads. I was using coated EC2 heads on top. I swapped over to the clear EC2s, and I got a much brighter tone with enhanced dynamics. I will continue to use the coated EC2 in the studio, but I'm going with clear for the live shows."

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

**1.** 18" Oriental China Trash

**2.** 15" A Custom Mastersound hi-hats

**3.** 18" A Custom crash

**4.** 19" A Custom crash

**5.** 22" A Custom ride

**6.** 11" Oriental China splash

**7.** 16" A Custom crash

"When this tour started, we had a lot of bleed from the cymbals in the vocal mics. The cymbals I had been using, Z Customs, were a little bit louder than the music required. I needed to switch to something that would be smoother but still able to provide the right range—cymbals that wouldn't cut but would blend more. The thinner A Customs did the trick. This combination of drums and cymbals is perfect for the Collective Soul sound and for the way I play. Also, it feels surprisingly good to hit thinner cymbals."

**Sticks:** Vater Xtreme 5B with wood tips





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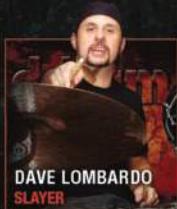


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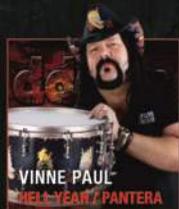
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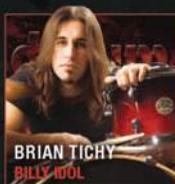
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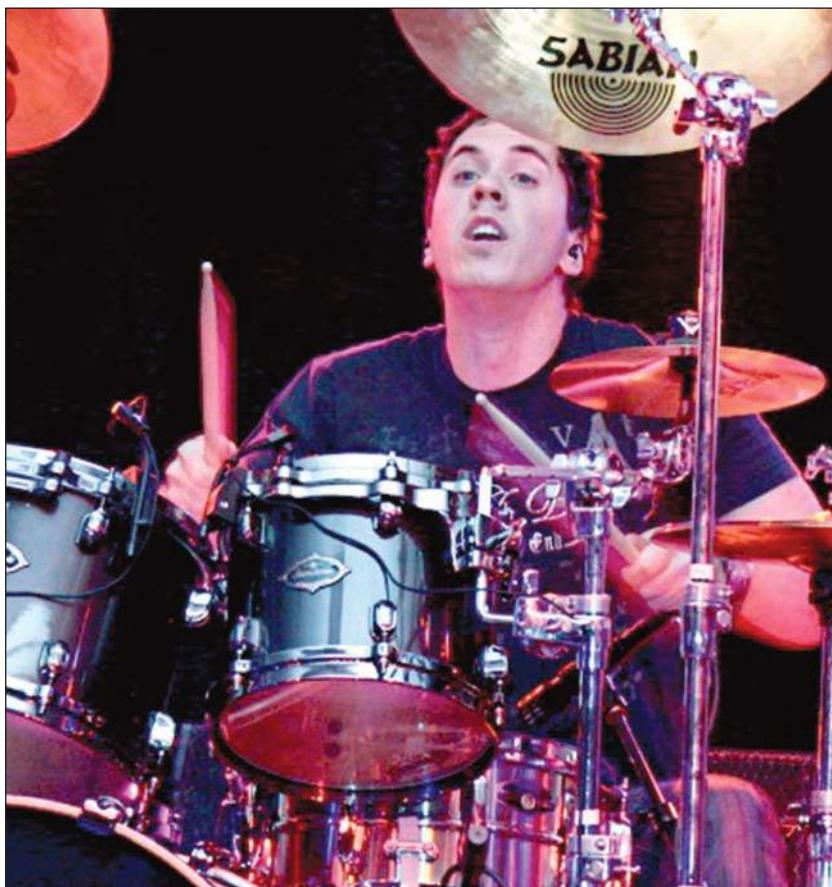
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# JEFF BOWDERS

Guitar shredder **Paul Gilbert**'s best drumming buddy makes a science of coming up with that perfect fill.

by Mike Haid

**A**s the rhythmist with former Mr. Big/Racer X guitarist Paul Gilbert, L.A.-based drummer/educator Jeff Bowders joins a list of drumming heavyweights that includes Marco Minnemann, Mike Portnoy, Scott Travis, and Pat Torpey. The ever-upbeat and witty Bowders has performed on Gilbert's last two Shrapnel Records releases, *Get Out Of My Yard* and *Silence Followed By A Deafening Roar*, and

is currently recording a new Gilbert CD. He also toured the world extensively with Gilbert last year, following 2008's successful G3 tour, during which Bowders shared the bill with guitar slingers Joe Satriani and Dream Theater's John Petrucci.

"The main challenge of playing Paul's music is balance," Bowders says. "With instrumental music, it's easy to get carried away and just blow. But instrumental gui-

tar rock music needs to *rock*. So sometimes I have to keep my technique in check. I want to achieve a perfect balance of contributing technically and still making it drive without being a distraction."

Bowders' most recent recording credits include albums by guitarists Leigh Williams and Pink's Justin Derrico. This year the drummer will release his debut disc as a leader, *The Pilgrimage Of Thingamuhjig*, featuring Gilbert and fellow

**"I WANT TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE OF CONTRIBUTING TECHNICALLY AND STILL MAKING IT DRIVE WITHOUT BEING A DISTRACTION."**

guitar greats Richie Kotzen, Greg Howe, and Larry Mitchell, plus bassist Philip Bynoe. Bowders, who labels the project "a progressive-rock instrumental drum-solo concept album," says his goal was to write songs that were rhythmically interesting while still maintaining musical integrity. "I'm planning a clinic tour this summer to promote it," adds Jeff, who is also releasing the songs as drum play-alongs with charts, which will be available at [jeffbowers.com](http://jeffbowers.com).

Recently Bowders released an instructional book/CD, *Essential Drumset Fills*, a title that stems from the Fill Fest class he teaches at Hollywood's famed Musicians Institute. Bowders has taught at MI since 2003. In fact, that's where he met Gilbert, who was also teaching at the school. "I teach at MI when I'm in town," Bowders says. "I've always loved the educational side of drumming. Just being in a position to be a positive influence is something I take very seriously."

*Essential Drumset Fills* follows two earlier Bowders instructionals: 2003's book/CD *Double Bass Drumming: The Mirrored Groove System* and 2005's follow-up DVD, *Double Bass Drumming Workshop*, which sealed Bowders' credentials as a bona fide double kick master. "There are many educational books about groove and style," Jeff says. "But fill and soloing concepts are generally overlooked. Fills are the area where most drummers break the time, because they don't have a confident vocabulary on the entire drumset. Fills are also an area where drummers can create and develop their own voice, which has always been essential to me. In the package I present six concepts that can be used alone or in combination to help the student develop his or her own vocabulary."

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Bowders plays Tama Starclassic Performer birch/bubinga drums, including 8x10 and 9x12 toms, 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a 5 1/2x10 auxiliary snare. His main snares are a 6 1/2x14 brass model and a 6x14 birch/bubinga with triple-flange hoops. His Sabian cymbals include 14" HHX Power Hats, a 21" AAX Raw Bell Dry ride, a 10" AA splash, 10" Max Stax Mids, 16" and 18" AAX X-Plosion crashes, a 12" AAX O-Zone splash, 13" Vault Fierce Hats, a 17" Saturation crash, a 14" AA Thin crash, a 19" AAX X-Treme China, a 12" AAX Mini China, and a 19" V-Crash. He uses Vater SD9 wood-tip sticks and Acousticks, Tama Iron Cobra pedals and Road Pro hardware, and Evans heads, including HD Dry snare batters and Hazy 300 bottoms, clear EC2 tom batters and G1 bottoms, and a clear EQ4 bass drum batter.

# MATT HELDERS

Don't judge the hype. **Arctic Monkeys'** self-made man makes sure there's more to the band than four pretty faces.

by Patrick Berkery



So much hype accompanied Arctic Monkeys' debut album, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, when it was released in early 2006 that many dismissed the youthful English quartet before even hearing a note.

Those haters might've been shocked—perhaps disappointed—to discover that not only was the band's frantic slant on Britpop engaging, but Arctic Monkeys' members, particularly drummer Matt Helders, were all quite accomplished musicians as well. Good for a couple of halting rhythmic twists per song, Helders' kit work helped define the band's head-on collision of manic energy and fragmented arrangements.

Typical of a young band, Arctic Monkeys' debut was primal in feel. Yet the performances had character, a byproduct of Helders and his bandmates having cut their musical teeth together. "In many ways, it was probably a good thing that we weren't too educated," the drummer says. "If we were all established musicians when we started the band, we might not be as tight as we are. Learning together developed that. My style developed. And because we did our first record quite early on in our careers as musicians, the jump in our abilities from the first to the second record was big. You notice album to album that I can do more."

How right Helders is. While his playing is impressive on Arctic Monkeys' second album, 2007's *Favourite Worst Nightmare*, he really comes into his own on the group's latest, *Humburg*, as a unique drummer with a vivid imagination.

He opens "Dangerous Animals" with a leaden backbeat before turning the beat inside out in the chorus with snare hits on the 1 and the "&" of 2. Before you even notice that he's slipped back

into the pocket, Helders crowbars in a quick stumbling fill before the second verse. And his work on "Pretty Visitors" is pretty phenomenal. After kicking off the song with a surging 2/4 beat, Helders sprays a tumbling succession of triplets over the pre-choruses, returns to the 2/4 beat, and then hollows out the groggy-sounding choruses with tight-fisted punctuations. From there it's a sludgy half-time beat, and as the song progresses Matt starts combining those seemingly ill-fitting elements into one cohesive and mind-blowing pattern.

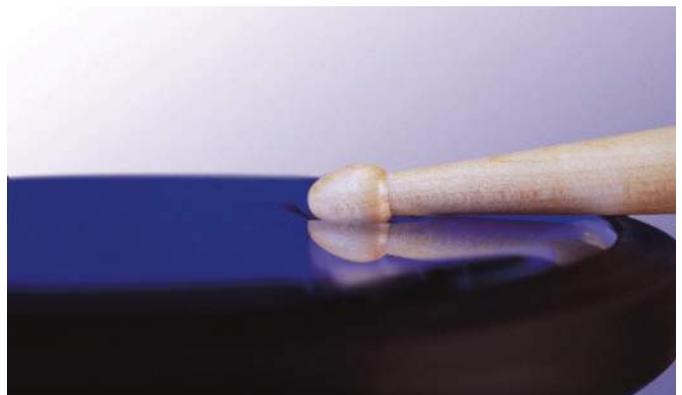
Even with all that back and forth and rolling around the kit, Helders' playing never overwhelms the songs. His parts are integral, never intrusive. Sometimes they're the last crucial detail, and sometimes, as in the case of "Pretty Visitors," they serve as the catalyst. "We keep some rhythms and beats in the arsenal and apply them

to songs where they fit," Helders says. "Like 'Pretty Visitors'—that was a mad one. We didn't know what to do with it. When I first did it, I couldn't actually work out what I was doing. I had to play it loads of times to see if it made sense. It's quite a weird way of doing it, I suppose. But it's what I do as a drummer; I come up with beats at all times. Songwriters don't just write songs when they need to. It's something I just always do."



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Helders plays RCI drums with Premier lugs, in solid white with clear spiral, including an 18x24 bass drum, a 16x16 floor tom, and an 8x13 rack tom. He plays a Ludwig 4 1/2x14 Vistalite snare. Matt's Zildjian cymbals include 14" Avedis Mastersound hi-hats, an 18" A Fast crash, and a 20" A crash ride. His Evans heads include a coated EC snare batter, clear EC2 tom batters, and an EMAD2 bass drum head. His hardware includes two Pearl 2000 series snare stands (for rack tom and snare) and a DW 9000 series bass drum pedal, 9500 series hi-hat stand, and 9710 straight cymbal stands. Helders uses Vater 3A Fatback sticks.



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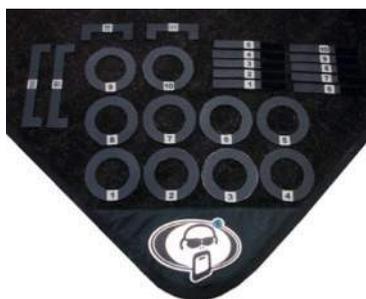
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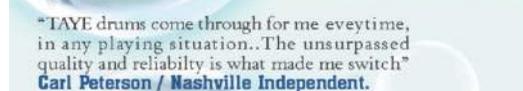
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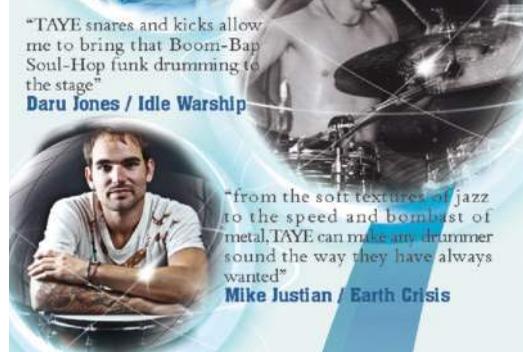
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# CHARLES CONNOR

He helped put Little Richard on the map and gave John Bonham one of his best ideas. A witness to history shares snapshots of rock's evolution.

by Robin Tolleson

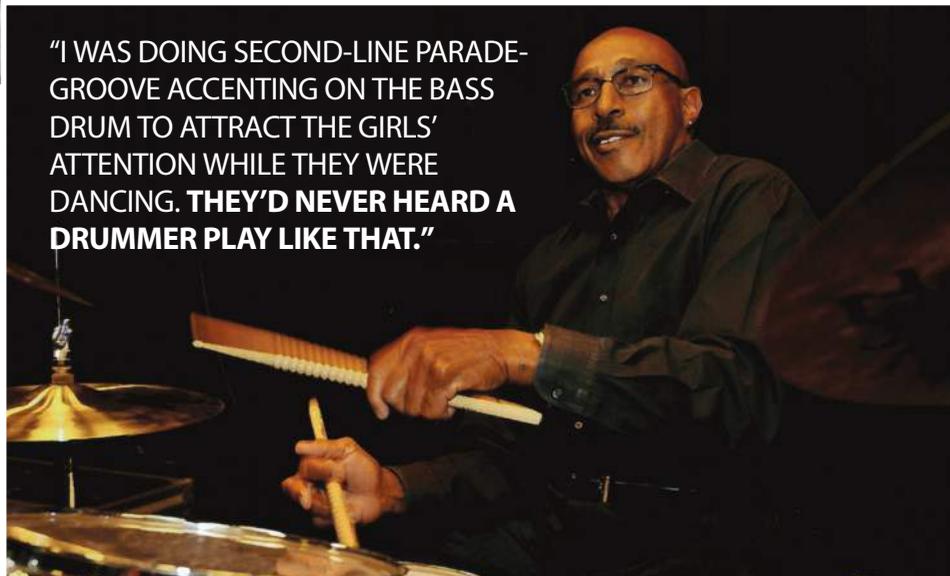


Charles Connor with Little Richard in the 1956 film *The Girl Can't Help It*

The third-grade teacher who didn't like his desktop drumming called Charles Connor a class clown. "I liked the sound on the old wooden desk with the hole for the inkwell," Connor says. "It sounded like congas or bongos. But she told me, 'Charles, you will never be a drummer because there's no such thing as a left-handed drummer.' And I wound up playing with some of the greatest black entertainers that ever walked the face of the earth."

A true rock 'n' roll pioneer, the seventy-four-year-old Connor has lit up the kit behind Little Richard, James Brown, Sam Cooke, Jackie Wilson, and many others. The drumsticks Connor used with Little Richard are on display at the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in Cleveland. Connor's riveting four-bar drum intro on Richard's 1957 hit "Keep A Knockin'" was copied by R&B master Earl Palmer on Eddie Cochran's "Somethin' Else" and by rock god John Bonham on Led Zeppelin's "Rock And Roll." Connor

**"I WAS DOING SECOND-LINE PARADE-GROOVE ACCENTING ON THE BASS DRUM TO ATTRACT THE GIRLS' ATTENTION WHILE THEY WERE DANCING. THEY'D NEVER HEARD A DRUMMER PLAY LIKE THAT."**



has lived in Los Angeles for the last thirty-eight years, where last year he was featured playing drums in a Nike SPARQ training commercial.

Connor's father moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic and worked as a chef in the merchant marines. Connor's mother was Louisiana-born Creole. "I was born at 610 North Main Street in the

French Quarter in New Orleans, where all the bands and restaurants are," Charles says. "Right in the Vieux Carré—you could smell the food from my backyard."

Connor remembers making fifty cents after school and a dollar and a quarter on the weekends by dancing for tourists in the French Quarter. "That was a lot of money for a little kid

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Manhattan Store Manager Judd Goldrich hangs behind the kit with his friend and customer, drummer Steve Jordan of John Mayer Trio, Keith Richards & The X-Pensive Winos and The Verbs. January 15, 2010 in the Drum Shop at Guitar Center, Manhattan.

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# KOSA

This is it.

## CHARLES CONNOR

in those days," he says. "I was rich with eight dollars a month. My father told my mother, 'This boy has got a lot of rhythm.' He bought me a set of drums at five years old."

At twelve Connor started taking private drum lessons. He learned to read music and began playing house parties around New Orleans at thirteen. At fifteen he got his first professional gig, with Professor Longhair at the Hi Hat Club. "We'd play five or six hours, and I think it was paying twelve dollars an evening," the drummer recalls. When Connor was sixteen he saw Little Richard at Club Tijuana in New Orleans. "He was with a group called the Temple Toppers. I said, 'Man, that guy looks like a woman with all the hair on his head and pancake makeup.' I never thought I'd be playing music with this guy."

In 1953, Connor was in Nashville playing with Shirley & Lee, and Little Richard happened to be playing at a club next door. Richard sneaked by to listen to Connor in between his own shows, and he sent his guitar player over to arrange a meeting with the drummer. "I was a struggling, hungry musician, holes in my shoes," Connor remembers. "I had to pawn my drums just to eat. I was laying around Nashville, sleeping in cars. In those days you called that paying your dues."

Richard invited Connor to Macon, Georgia, to be part of a new band he was forming, the Upsetters. "I said, 'Richard, I ain't got but eleven cents in my pocket, and I need my shoes repaired.' I said, 'Another thing, Richard, I don't know if you want to take me or not, but I don't have no drums.' He said, 'That's no problem.' He got my drums out of the pawn shop, bought me some clothes, and paid my hotel."

Connor was still a minor, so Shirley & Lee's road manager told him he needed permission to go with Little Richard. "I said, 'Okay, let me call my mother and let you talk to her.' And my mother said, 'Little Richard...is that the boy with that long hair that looks like a woman?' I said, 'Yes, Mama, but he's gonna be famous.' I didn't know

Richard was going to be *that* famous.

"We went to Macon, and Richard paid for our food, three meals a day for a month. After three or four days of rehearsal, Richard said, 'Charles, I want you to come to the train station with me. I want you to hear the way this train is taking off. And the train went like, 'ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch-ch, one-and-two-and-three-and-four-and,' like 8th notes. And that's the way Little Richard wanted it—fast tunes in 4/4, solid introduction, one-and-two-and-three-and-four-and. I would accent on the backbeat, on the center of the snare drum, and play fours on the bass drum. And it sounded like a choo-choo train."

It was a time when swing, shuffle, and rock were intersecting, and Connor also tossed New Orleans second-line rhythms into the stew. "Richard didn't have a bass player," he says, "so I was trying to make the bass drum sound like an upright or electronic bass. I would play that, and everybody seemed to like it. We were very clever and smart young musicians. I tried that beat out at rehearsal in Richard's living room, and the people there couldn't get rid of that beat—they'd never heard nothing like it. I found out at the next gigs we played, around Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Tennessee, that the choo-choo beat was addictive. You get addicted to that sound. There are thousands of drummers playing that beat today, and they don't even know where it's originally from.

"Fats Domino used to do the 16th notes," Connor continues, "and then you had the swing beat, right? A lot of drummers in those days were ashamed to play a backbeat because they thought it was so simple. But I figured the best effect you could get was if your sock cymbals were almost closed and it sounded like a rattle on your hi-hat, and you got your snare drum and it really sounds good, especially with that 4/4 on the bass drum. That filled in everything."

It turns out there was also a strategy to the look of Little Richard's band. "Fats Domino's musicians were all in tuxedos and suits, and we had to look

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different,” Connor says. “We put pancake makeup on and one earring if possible, and we wore grilled hair or a process. He couldn’t make us do it, but a couple of us guys in the band did it. The reason we looked like a bunch of gay guys with loud-color pants and shirts and swishing on the stage and all that was that we could play the white honky-tonk clubs and we wouldn’t be a threat to the white girls. They’d say, ‘Those colored boys are a bunch of sissies—they’re not going to mess with your girls.’ That was the strategy, ’cause you know how segregation was in those days.

“Back then [1955 and ’56] we used to play these little supper clubs in Southern towns—Amarillo, Texas, different places.... One night was for whites, and the next night was for coloreds. The white people could come back the next night when we would play for coloreds, but they had to be spectators upstairs in the balcony. But when Richard sang ‘Tutti Frutti,’ ‘Long Tall Sally,’ those songs, the white kids would jump down from the balcony and start dancing with the black kids, and I had never seen that before. And that was in the ’50s. That started all that stuff, before the Civil Rights bill passed.”

Connor recalls a healthy competition among musicians. “There were always about twenty drummers trying to get your gig, fifteen guitar players, two or three bass players, and a piano player, because Richard was hot. You had to stay on your toes and practice every day on your own. When you think you’re too good to practice, give up that instrument. You’ve got to practice every day. I still take my practice pad out for fifteen to twenty minutes every day. You have to have courage and confidence in yourself, and it’s all about having respect for each other.”

Little Richard’s manager, Clint Bradley, arranged for Connor to moonlight with James Brown when Richard wasn’t working. “That’s when James Brown found out that I was doing all these funky things with my bass drum syncopation,” the drum-

mer says. “We’d be playing and I might do something special on the bass drum just to be heard and seen. James Brown looked back and said, ‘What are you playing? Whatever it is, keep playing it.’ I was doing second-line parade-groove accenting on the bass drum. I did that to attract the girls’ attention while they were dancing, because they had never heard a drummer play like that. And it worked for me. That’s how that developed, to be seen and be heard and flirt with the girls. It sounded so good and so soulful.”

When Little Richard “retired” to the ministry, his band backed Sam Cooke for three months. “By playing with Richard, I didn’t have to audition for any of these guys,” Connor says. “I played with Larry Williams, the original Coasters when they were hot, I played with Jackie Wilson, Big Joe Turner, Little Willie John, Lloyd Price.... Jobs kept coming because of my background with Little Richard. And I kept a lot of work because I wasn’t afraid to play the backbeat loud.”

Today, Connor, who figures he’s lived “a privileged life,” still teaches several students regularly and is as passionate and as curious about music as he was when he joined Little Richard’s band over fifty years ago. “Just because I’m a rock ‘n’ roll drummer,” Charles says, “that don’t mean I only love rock ‘n’ roll. I like classical, I like jazz, I like hip-hop. Anything that’s got a beat on it, I like it.”

Connor also feels it’s important to actively encourage young musicians. To that end, he wrote a book about his life experiences, *Don’t Give Up Your Dreams: You Can Be A Winner Too*. “Put your heart and soul in whatever you’re doing,” he says. “If you want to be a good musician, you’ve got to practice. Turn that TV off, turn that computer off, and don’t be worried about running around, drinking, and getting yourself high. Have confidence and be around people that support you—that’s what you need.”





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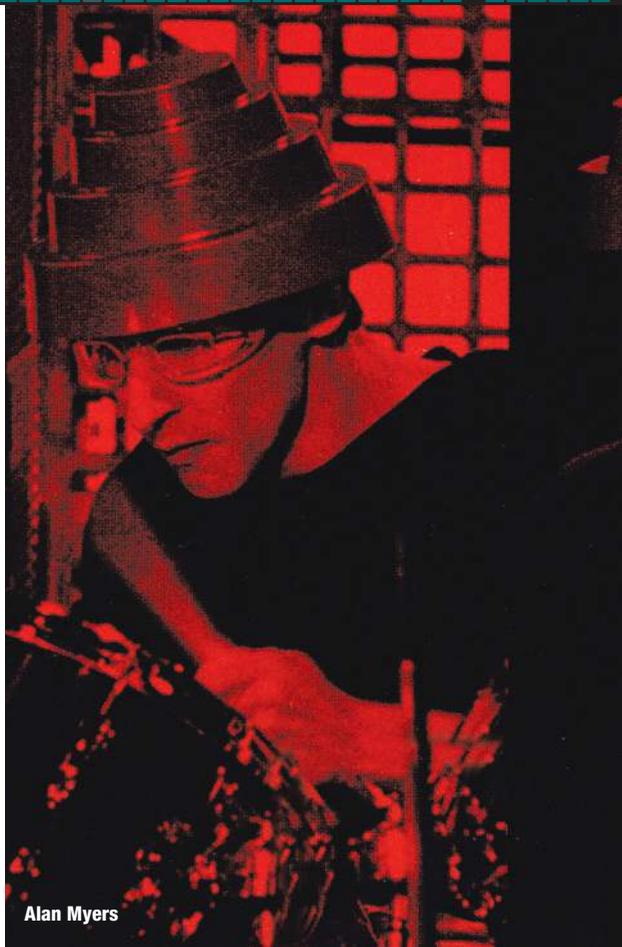
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## RATINGS SCALE



Josh Freese

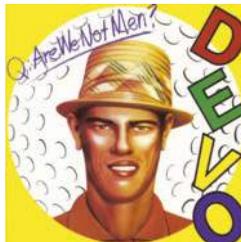


Alan Myers

## SPACE-JUNK MUSIC

by Adam Budofsky and Ken Micallef

**While DEVO's classic 1978 debut album is reissued, their first new album in twenty years drops. The connection? Modern master Josh Freese revives the old and records the new.**



For decades, retro-leaning indie bands have aped Devo's jittery new wave sounds. The group's combination of inter-

twining rhythmic webs and garage-rock appeal is especially prevalent on today's indie scene, where you can find more keyboards on stage than at any time since prog icons like ELP, Genesis, and Pink Floyd roamed the land. The recent reissue of Devo's 1978 debut album, *Q: Are We Not*

*Men? A: We Are Devo!*, reminds us how hard—and idiosyncratically—they rocked.

Drummer **ALAN MYERS** was at his best when creating oddly phrased linear patterns, like on "Jocko Homo" and Devo's cover of the Stones' "Satisfaction," or eerie tribal attacks, like on "Mongoloid" and "Too Much Paranoias." Myers' icy, almost awkward groove is not so easy to cop, and recent Devo-tee **JOSH FREESE** certainly sounds more "professional" on the May 2009 London performance of *Are We Not Men?* tagged on to the reissue than Myers did back in the day. It's fascinating to listen to someone of Freese's caliber attack Devo's bizarre songs. In fact, it would be hard to think of another contemporary player who could inhabit this rhythmic space so fully. With his own quirky nature and the studious approach he takes to everything he plays, Josh nails the material, if not quite the charmingly clumsy vibe

of the original recordings.

Meanwhile, Devo's first studio album in twenty years, *Something For Everybody*, picks up where 1990's *Smooth Noodle Maps* left off, relying on robotic 8th-note rhythms and new wave synth lines, with vocal hooks as catchy as a cold. A strict adherence to militaristic uniformity is needed to man the drum chair with Devo, and Freese hits the skins running. Josh helps humanize Devo's modern mechanized rhythms; indeed, he *becomes* the machine, changing the music's android pulse into a human, even warm rhythmic flow that is maddeningly clever and highly crafted. (Warner Bros.)



## THE BUZZCOCKS

*ANOTHER MUSIC IN A DIFFERENT KITCHEN, LOVE BITES, A DIFFERENT KIND OF TENSION*

The more infamous (Sex Pistols) and politically charged (the Clash) bands to emerge from the 1970s English punk scene enjoyed greater acclaim than the Buzzcocks. But the Buzzcocks' lower profile wasn't for a lack of songs that were both throttling and infectious, like the timeless tunes found on these reissues of the group's first three albums.

Similar to many of his peers, drummer **JOHN MAHER** learned on the job. He was a quick, if primitive, study, able to reshape a Bo Diddley beat without mangling it ("Moving Away From The Pulsebeat") and keep the band's frequent tempo fluctuations on the rails ("You Tear Me Up"). And as songs like "Everybody's Happy Nowadays" prove, Maher also kept snappy time without pulverizing the melody. (Mute)



## JOHN MAHER REFLECTS ON HIS BUZZCOCKS DAYS

**Some punks wore their lack of musicianship as a badge of honor, but you could clearly play.**

I'd only been playing drums for six weeks before joining the band. The concept of "being able to play" wasn't something I was aware of. The spirit at the time was to dive in and have a go, regardless of ability.

### What drummers of the day did you admire?

The album I spent most of my time playing along to before joining the Buzzcocks was Blondie's first. Clem Burke was the main man for me, and I still rate him as one of my all-time favorites. I liked drummers who sounded like they were adding something to the song rather than being a boring meat-and-two-veg timekeeper.

### Most Buzzcocks songs were speedy. Were they presented to the band that way, or did you dictate the tempos?

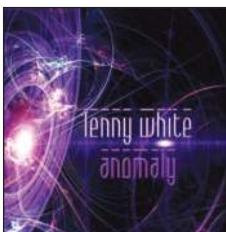
The songs were designed from the off to be delivered at a fast pace. Because I'd only been playing for a short period, I had no preconceived ideas on how things were meant to be. Pete [Shelley] would thrash out a guitar riff; I tried to come up with something complementary. Nobody told me otherwise. My style was born. Being thrown in at the deep end is a great way to learn, develop your own style, and pick up a multitude of bad habits.



## ORPHANED LAND

*THE NEVER ENDING WAY OF ORWARRIOR*

The multifaceted Israeli metal band Orphaned Land has long been known for appealing to both Israelis and Arabs despite the conflicts of the region. *The Never Ending Way Of OrwariOR* continues this tradition with combined European, Jewish, and Arabic music traditions and languages. **AVI DIAMOND** provides much of the energy with his enthusiastic drumming. With both physical and mental agility, Diamond powers the progressive group through its many mood shifts with grace. He's equally at home playing active syncopated beats and simple, softer parts. There's something here for all types of metal lovers to enjoy. (Century Media) **Sean Bertrand**



## LENNY WHITE ANOMALY

Vying to stoke the fusion flame for today's metal-addled youth, drumming pioneer Lenny White surrounds himself with a rock-hard cast on *Anomaly*. Drawing on precise arrangements and wonderfully elastic grooves, White propels his meanest funk/fusion artillery in years, displacing slinky bass-drum-driven beats, washing out dry cymbal commentary, and generally loosening the rhythmic flow as only he can. Long suffering under the legend of Cobham, then Gadd (the first Return To Forever drummer), White has always been his own man, a better jazz drummer than he's generally given credit for and a fearless fusion innovator. *Anomaly* sets things straight, finally. (Abstract Logix) **Ken Micallef**

## BLOOD. SUGAR. SEX. MAGIC.

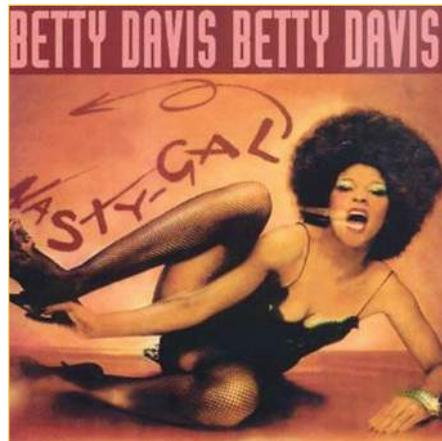
 by Adam Budofsky

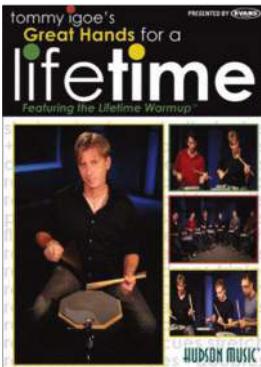
**Funk diva BETTY DAVIS's *Nasty Gal* persona had people picketing her concerts in the '70s. As a recent reissue proves, those poor folks were clearly missing the musical brilliance behind the trashy talk.**

On the cut "F.U.N.K." we hear Betty Davis delivering a stream of shout-outs to music icons, while the band hammers a gritty mid-tempo groove that your average Red Hot Chili Peppers fan could easily mistake for a *Blood Sugar* outtake. Stevie Wonder, Isaac Hayes, and Funkadelic all get name-dropped,

and you can hear their influence here—but the singer was no follower. In fact, the former Mademoiselle Mabry, who released three remarkable but underappreciated albums in the mid-'70s, is credited by many for strongly encouraging her husband of one year, one Miles Dewey Davis, to explore the psychedelic funk of Sly Stone and Jimi Hendrix—which you *could* argue changed the course of modern jazz.

This reissue of Betty's third and last proper album, 1975's *Nasty Gal*, shows she didn't just talk the talk, she strutted the strut. Davis was an incendiary, hardcore funk presence, and her backup band, including drummer **SEMMIE "NICKY" NEAL JR.**, matched her note for note. Besides having a groove to die for, Neal puts all kinds of interesting, subtle details to his parts, like a momentary double time of the hi-hat on the breakdown of the title track, the removal of a snare backbeat on "Dedicated To The Press," and the spastic basketball dribble of a beat in "Shut Off The Light." Ultimately, though, Neal's most important contribution is being an inseparable part of an unstoppable rhythmic machine. *Nasty Gal* is a remarkable achievement for everyone involved. (Light In The Attic Records has also released a newly reissued version of the aborted sessions for what was to be Davis's fourth album, retitled *Is It Love Or Desire*, also highly recommended.)





●●●●● **TOMMY IGOE** *GREAT HANDS FOR A LIFETIME*  
**DVD/POSTER** LEVEL: ALL \$24.95

NYC drummer/instructor Igoe returns to the basics with an ingenious rudimental workout, the Lifetime Warm-Up, designed by his father, drumming great Sonny Igoe. Tommy simplifies and demystifies stick technique, keeping it from becoming daunting and technically confusing. His mantra for relaxed sticking is "Air in the back, sound in the front." Viewers will need a previous understanding of rhythmic notation and music terminology. The DVD begins with Igoe discussing fulcrum/grip and performing examples of accents, which leads into the basic rudiments. He gathers students at various playing levels to help perform the program as they work their way through the rudiments and into increasing levels of the warm-up. Affordably priced and including an e-book, MP3s, a poster, and a chart, this progressive program is an outstanding teaching aid and hand-maintenance warm-up for drummers of all abilities. (Hudson) **Mike Haid**

Photo: sayrejoanphotography.com

**WHAT'S YOUR SOUND?**

**CHRIS PLAYS SABIAN.**

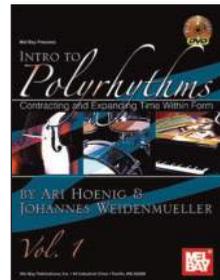
With a 19" Paragon Chinese roaring oriental trashiness, an HH Raw Bell Dry Ride offering solid bell and ride responses, a set of 9" Vault Radia Nano Hats plus the Modern Dark sounds of HHX Groove Hats and X-Plosion Crashes cutting through with their HHX 'Tone Projection' design, Chris Pennie's compact set-up is all about killer sounds.

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●●●●● **ARI HOENIG AND JOHANNES WEIDENMUELLER**  
*INTRO TO POLYRHYTHMS: CONTRACTING AND EXPANDING TIME WITHIN FORM*  
**BOOK/DVD** LEVEL: ADVANCED \$19.95

The Miles Davis Quintet explored polyrhythms extensively in the 1960s, but it's taken until now for someone to pen a clear and concise method on applying metric modulation, polyrhythmic feels, and rhythmic displacements in a jazz context. Building on what they call core rhythms, the authors progress from displacing a swing feel to the second and third triplets to implying 3/4 over quarter-note triplets to superimposing different grooves over a dotted-quarter-note pulse. The accompanying DVD contains a lot of demonstrations, as well as brief trio performances that show how to incorporate these concepts in a musical and improvisational setting. Highly recommended. (Mel Bay) **Michael Dawson**



●●●●● **RICK LATHAM**  
*ALL ABOUT THE GROOVE: STYLE, SOUND, FEEL, AND FOCUS*  
**DVD** LEVEL: ALL \$35.99

On this three-disc, five-hour package, studio/touring drummer Rick Latham dispenses knowledge gained through years of developing his clean and open sound. Latham's funk is top notch, and he demonstrates the minutia of hi-hat technique, snare/bass drum relationships, and everything in between. Add a generous helping of shuffles, rock beats, New Orleans styles, rudimental concepts, and warm-up exercises, and you get a good overview of how to be a well-rounded musician—and how to groove hard along the way. Shot in HD and featuring Latham's slick band, this multimedia set includes an e-book and downloadable play-along tracks without drums. (Drum Channel) **Ilya Stembkovsky**



## GUITAR CENTER CELEBRATES NEW HOLLYWOOD DRUM DEPARTMENT

This past April 10 and 11, Guitar Center held a grand reopening celebration for the company's flagship Hollywood store, after completing a major remodeling of the drum department. The store, which opened twenty-five years ago, received display, carpet, and fixture upgrades.

More than a thousand southern California drummers attended the event, and major manufacturers provided giveaways worth several thousands of dollars. Guitar Center's new electronic drum room lets customers test kits in a spacious enclosed environment, while the new self-serve drumhead display and accessories wall allow drummers access to all the parts and supplies they need to fine-tune their kits. Other upgrades include new percussion islands and an expanded percussion area, along with custom risers for all merchandised kits.

Day-one festivities included **Ron Powell** (Kenny G, Chaka Khan) leading a massive drum circle, DW VP **John Good** hosting an informative session about shell construction and tuning, and presentations by educator **Dom Famularo** and double bass master **Derek Roddy**. The second day started with a meet-and-greet where more than twenty popular drummers signed autographs, posed for pictures, and hung out with fans. The artists included **Hal Blaine**, **Dave Lombardo** (Slayer), **Kenny Aronoff** (John Fogerty), **Vinny Appice** (Heaven & Hell), **Curt Bisquera**, **Xavier Muriel** (Buckcherry), and **Mike Mangini**. Clinics by **Stephen Perkins** (Jane's Addiction) and by **Peter Erskine** closed the successful weekend event.

Photos by Alex Solca



Blaine



Perkins



Roddy



Bisquera, Aronoff, Mangini



A Paiste artist signing was a popular aspect of the event. Left to right: Paiste's Andrew Shreve, Dave Lombardo, Jason Sutter, Kelly Paiste, Curt Bisquera, Dean Butterworth, Paiste's Wayne Wilburn.

## SAM ASH HOSTS DRUM FEST ON SUNSET BLVD.



Donati



Calire, Sam Ash's John Parker, Brower, Burulcich



Cameron, Ferrone

Sam Ash Drums and Percussion on Sunset Blvd. in Hollywood, a dedicated drum shop for aspiring and pro drummers, hosted its first annual Drum Fest on April 10 and 11, 2010. Joining the well-attended event was a wide variety of artists, including **Virgil Donati** (Planet X), **Steve Ferrone** (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers), **Vinny Appice** (Heaven & Hell), **Clayton Cameron** (Tony Bennett), **John Tempesta** (the Cult), **Charlie Benante** (Anthrax), **John "Bermuda" Schwartz** ("Weird Al" Yankovic), **Anthony Burulcich** (the Bravery), **Ned Brower** (Rooney), **Mario Calire** (Ozomatli, Wallflowers), and **Kofi Baker** (OHM). Many of the artists performed and signed autographs for fans.

Pearl hosted a competition for the fastest drummer. **Kaspars Grinbergs** won a Pearl Morgan Rose snare drum for having the fastest hands, and **Cesar Escobar** won an Eliminator double bass pedal for having the fastest feet. All contestants received a pair of sticks and a T-shirt for participating, and DW, Zildjian, Vater, Remo, Ludwig, LP, Samson, and Meinl provided numerous free giveaways for the event, as well as specially priced products. The Gibraltar Geosphere rack made its Hollywood debut after being unveiled at the NAMM show in January.

Photos by Alex Solca

## NEXT MONTH IN MD... PHISH'S Jon Fishman



- GOOD CHARLOTTE'S Dean Butterworth
- THE STOOGES' Scott Asheton
- 2010 MD FEST REPORT AND MUCH MORE!



# EIGHT ON THE FLOOR

This month's kit comes from Kevin Franciosi, who lives in the Boston area. The rig is a combination of Rogers and horn-shaped North drums from the 1970s, with Rogers hardware from the same era. "I used to play this kit out on a regular basis, and it's really quite an easy setup despite its look," Franciosi says.

"I've had the kit in varying forms since 1977. It started out as a Rogers Londoner 7 and grew from there. Unique items, besides the obvious North drums, would be the rare and in some instances one-off Zildjian cymbals. But what truly makes this drumset special to me isn't the drums or the cymbals at all; it's the platform they sit on. My father—who has since passed—built the platform with me out of aluminum, and all the stands with the exception of the snare and throne are mounted to it."

As for the eight DW pedals, from left to right they control a 5 1/2" Rogers Dynasonic snare drum on the floor, a set of 10" and 12" Oriental Trash hats, a 21x22x24 North bass drum (double pedal, one on either side of the main snare), a 14x22 Rogers bass drum, a set of 13" Mastersound hats, a set of 10" SR hats, and an LP Rock cowbell.

Franciosi currently keeps this intricate outfit at home and gigs with one of his three more modest setups. "As I get older the kits get smaller and the ride cymbals get lower to the ground," he says. "These days I mostly play a Yamaha Hipgig kit with a ride, a hi-hat, and a couple of crashes."



**Photo Submission:** Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to [billya@moderndrummer.com](mailto:billya@moderndrummer.com) (show "Kit Of The Month" in the subject line of the message) or burned onto a disc and sent to Kit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288.



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