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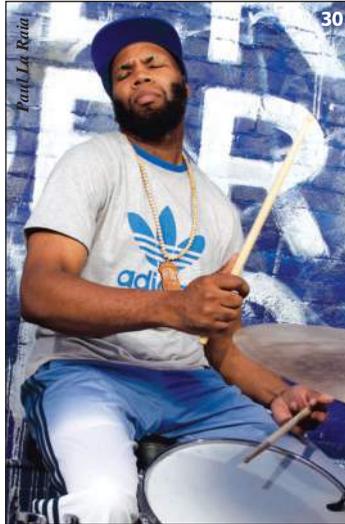
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ARMEN HALBURIAN

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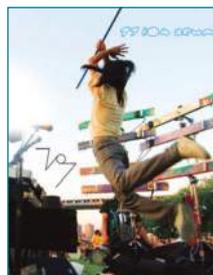
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Guess It Doesn't Matter Anymore. Or Does It?

As in most areas of modern life, the sophistication of technology in music making is profound, offering artists infinite variables to experiment with—along with flick-of-the-switch ease of use.

This magic gear, like all new technology, is a blessing and a curse. Today's listeners are so used to hearing music that's been quantized, pitch corrected, and sound replaced to "perfection" that there's a giant disconnect between what they think they're hearing and what actually went to tape...uh, hard drive...in the first place. It's common to find hit songs featuring rhythm tracks pieced together without any musicians ever having to complete one entire pass, making it hard not to come to the conclusion that today's recording musician simply doesn't have to be as awesome as the giants of yesteryear. ("Just get us 50 percent there, buddy. We'll fix the rest in the mix.")

Worst-case scenario? Upcoming musicians, understanding what's possible in the studio, stop feeling the need to work hard at their craft, and the overall quality of the music suffers.

Best-case scenario? Artists with killer chops *and* creative minds thrive, taking command of the recording studio and making music that blows our minds with physical dexterity as well as conceptual ambition.

Each in his own way, this month's feature subjects, Aquiles Priester, Daru Jones, and Gene Hoglan, represent the optimist's view of music's future.

Priester describes how he uses people's skepticism about his and other metal drummers' seemingly superhuman performances as a challenge. "At my workshops," he says, "I insist on having five people behind the drumkit so they can see that it is possible to execute a good take live if you dedicate yourself."

Jones, using the agility he developed playing along with Vinnie Colaiuta and Dave Weckl records and filtering it through the aesthetic he picked up from analyzing rap recordings, has forged a sometimes-played, sometimes-programmed sound and style of his own, which he calls soul-hop. "Being a producer changed my whole outlook toward playing music," he says. "When I'm on stage, I'm EQ'ing and mixing myself while I'm playing."

Cover star Hoglan deals with the pros and cons of technology every day. He employs a click to help him lock in with video during Dethklok concerts, and he appreciates the advantages triggers provide when drummers don't have the benefit of a soundcheck. But Gene also freely points out that some engineers and producers will always decide to cut and paste his studio performances, no matter how well he nails a take. "If the producer's thing is to chop it all up and align it to a grid, so be it," is his response to the situation. "I can walk away knowing I played the song. It's a matter of pride."

So, does it really matter whether we practice our butts off, if today's engineers are able—and more than willing—to polish a turd in an attempt to turn it into platinum? We have to be honest with ourselves: In some cases, no, it doesn't—if the music is squarely aimed at lowest-common-denominator listeners to whom a soulless "drum" performance is just fine. But to listeners who do appreciate a thoughtful, well-played—or intriguingly *programmed*—rhythm track, it still matters a lot. All we can do is hope there are always going to be enough discerning listeners to tell the difference. And we can practice, practice, practice, so that when they come across *our* music, they decide our efforts were worth the blood, sweat, and tears.




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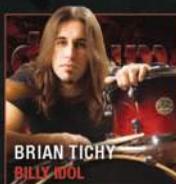
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READERS' PLATFORM



Robert Leslie Dean

READERS POLL HALL OF FAME

I want to thank all of the readers and everyone at *Modern Drummer* magazine for my Hall Of Fame induction (July 2010 issue). This award is one that was worth waiting for. And I would like to wish all my drummer friends to keep swinging; eventually it'll all pay off! Remember, practice, practice, and more practice. All of your dreams will come true! My heartfelt thanks go out to all of you around the world.

Hal Blaine

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

I'd like to compliment *MD* on the What Do You Know About...? column. I am really enjoying it, and I found the recent articles on Mickey Waller, Maureen Tucker, and Bobby Ramirez most interesting. I've been reading *MD* for almost thirty years, and you guys just keep getting better and better. Keep it up!

John Loislle

LOVE MY MD!

I would like to give a quick shout-out to the *Modern Drummer* staff, crew, and family. Like many drummers, I keep all my back issues of *MD*. I look forward to each new magazine with great anticipation, and in between I mine for the gold that I missed or forgot about in previous issues. *MD* keeps on giving.

Billy Ward's excellent book, *Inside Out*, is a wonderful, insightful compilation of Billy's *Modern Drummer* articles coupled with more juicy gems on the mental aspects of drumming. I just started teaching again after a three-year hiatus and happened to be flipping through the December 2005 issue, with the scary-good Rodney Holmes on the cover, and what should I come across but a great article by John Xepoleas

called "Developing Great-Sounding Students One Beat At A Time." This five-year-old article was right on time for me and gave me great ideas to use with my students. And on the very next page is another great article, "Perfect Practice: Making The Most Of Every Minute" by Brad Taylor—also an excellent tool to use with my students.

So, bottom line, great job, *MD*! Founder Ron Spagnardi is looking down smiling as you carry on his dream. Bueno, as they say down here in Miami.

Timothy Lee Cromer

I have been a *Modern Drummer* purchaser/subscriber since the 1980s, and I look forward to every issue. I have never found a magazine where I truly read every article and every advertisement. *MD* is the best in the world!

Jeffrey Serfes

MODERN DRUMMER FESTIVAL

I attended the 2010 Modern Drummer Festival. Unfortunately it was my first time—I cannot believe I missed so many phenomenal past events. The professionalism and the informal atmosphere were a perfect combination, making for a great day. As a hobbyist I walked away with a new appreciation of the drumming art based on the diversity of the artists, which is what education is about. Thanks again for such an enjoyable day, and kudos to all involved, as I know this event takes a lot of work.

Ron Schulman

RICH REDMOND

Thanks for the interview with Jason Aldean's drummer, Rich Redmond. I am by no means well informed on the intricacies of drumming, but I've seen Rich perform with Jason more than twenty times and have to say that he is incredible. I remember coming out of my first JA show in awe—of Rich! He has talent and an incredible personality, and both were showcased in the article.

Leslie Russell

ED SAYS THANKS

From the bottom of my heart, I thank the countless kind brothers and sisters of the drumming world for your beautiful expressions of sympathy and love on the passing of my beloved wife, Ilene.

Ed Shaughnessy

RICHIE HAYWARD PASSES

Modern Drummer was saddened to hear of the passing of Little Feat drummer Richie Hayward on August 12. Watch for a full tribute in an upcoming issue.



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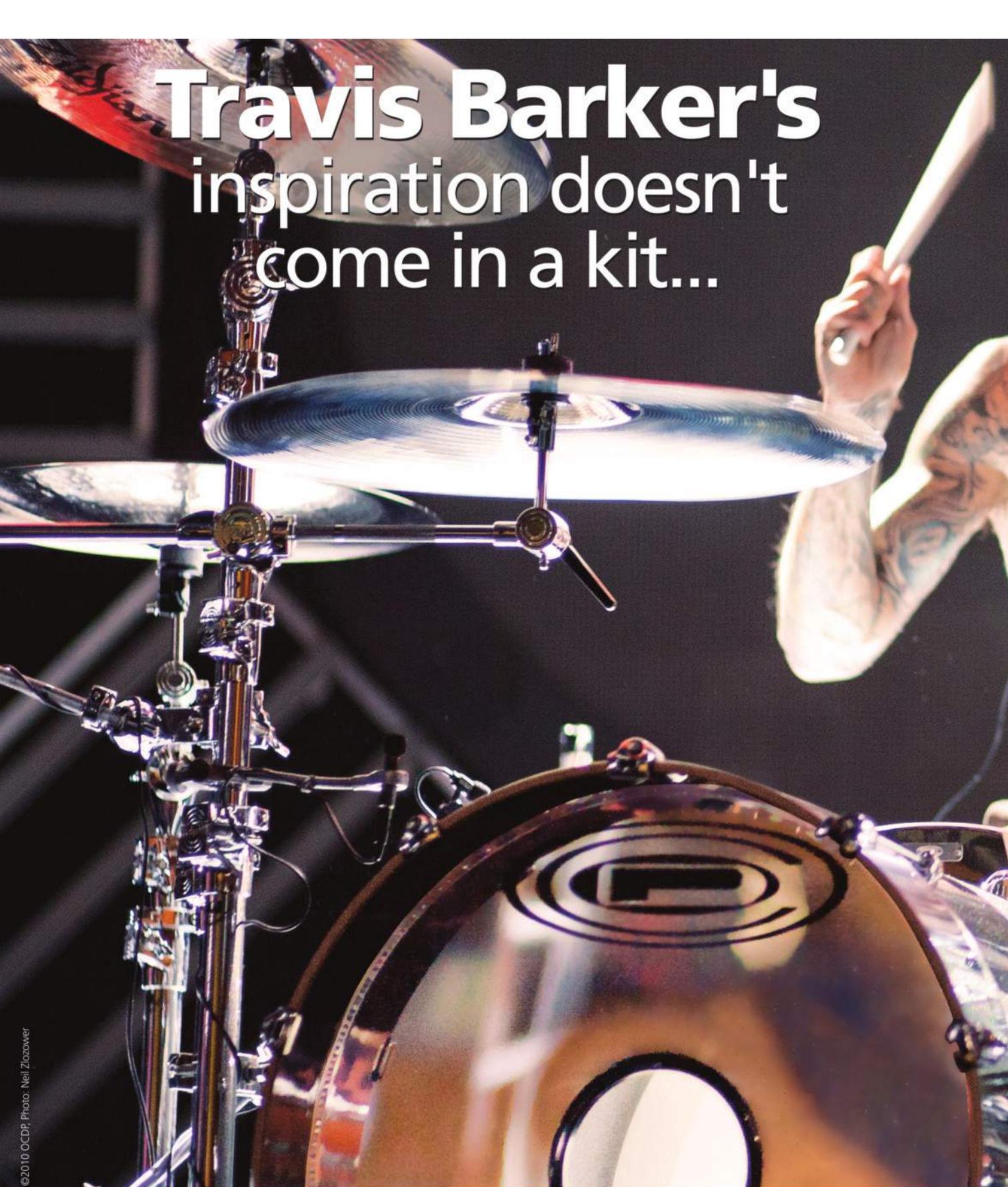
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CLAVE QUESTIONS

How do you know when to play a 2:3 or a 3:2 clave, and when should you play the rumba or son version? Does the music dictate that? Do you just feel it and see what sounds good?
Brian

Hi, Brian. These are probably the two most-asked clave questions of all time, so here goes! First of all, knowing whether a song is in the 2:3 or 3:2 clave *does* come from listening. It's a lot like knowing when the beat has been turned around in jazz or when the backbeat is being played "incorrectly" on 1 and 3 instead of 2 and 4. A good exercise is to take a bebop standard, like Charlie Parker's "Ornithology," which wasn't even written with the

clave in mind. Try playing the 3:2 and then the 2:3 clave over the melody. It'll be obvious to you that the 2:3 version sounds much better. Determining the correct clave is a combination of a lot of things, but ultimately, the more you listen, the more your intuition will tell you what's right.

As for son versus rumba clave, I tend to favor the rumba clave, except when playing a cha-cha-cha tempo or more straightforward salsa-type arrangements. Especially in Latin jazz and more modern timba music, I think the added syncopation of the rumba clave feels better. The rumba clave also corresponds with the 6/8 clave, so it allows you to play in that zone between triplets and 16th notes. Hope this helps!



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NARADA MICHAEL WALDEN

On tour with **Jeff Beck** for the first time since the '70s, the prolific drummer/producer is lovin' life.

Narada (rhymes with Florida) is the name that guru Sri Chinmoy bestowed upon Michael Walden in the early 1970s, shortly after the then-twenty-one-year-old drummer took over Billy Cobham's throne in the Mahavishnu Orchestra, the revolutionary fusion band led by guitarist John McLaughlin. While he was still relatively young, Walden went on to play with Weather Report, Jaco Pastorius, Chick Corea, Robert Fripp, Tommy Bolin, Carlos Santana, and Allan Holdsworth. In 1976 he joined Jeff Beck for the guitarist's now-classic album *Wired*.

"Toward the end of recording Mahavishnu's *Inner Worlds*," Walden says, "I got a call asking me to work on Jeff's next record. I flew to London, and when I got there they only had one song, 'Led Boots,' which I'm so glad I recorded—the beat is so intricate. After we got that together, Jeff needed more material, and the next thing you know I went in and wrote 'Come Dancing,' 'Play With Me,' 'Sophie,' and 'Love Is Green.' Jeff was happy, and it was very cool of him to learn those songs."

Since then, Walden's astounding drumming skills have appeared on albums by artists ranging from jazz and fusion to R&B, rock, and pop. In a career spanning more than three decades, Narada has collected numerous gold, platinum, and multi-platinum records for the many artists he's produced, written for, and recorded with. In the '80s he became a Grammy-winning mega-producer, earning Producer Of The Year honors in 1987.



Michael Jachtes

Since the mid-'80s, Walden has owned and operated Tarpan Studios, a well-known recording facility in San Rafael, California. He's recorded eight solo albums and written and/or produced for superstars like Steve Winwood, Ray Charles, Wynonna Judd, George Michael, Barbra Streisand, Lionel Richie, Diana Ross, Tom Jones, the Temptations, Aretha Franklin, Mariah Carey, Whitney Houston, and Stevie Wonder.

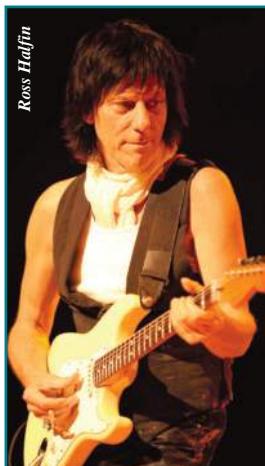
With such a sterling track record, Walden is in the perfect position to offer advice to the songwriting drummer. "The song," he says, "is the star—always! You're not going to reinvent the wheel, so first you have to study what's been done before you. Second, look at what people are listening to now, what they're buying, what they're appreciating. Know the formulas that make those elements become top-ten records. If you're lucky enough to write or find a hit song, the way you produce it is controlled by the style of where people are at that time. And the song should have a strong, memorable

hook. I'll try out different flavors of grooves to find which way opens the sky up. Mix something old *and* new—that combination makes the magic."

Even a hit-making drummer can never fully leave the kit behind, though. In 1996, at the height of his producing career, Walden was invited to play at the Modern Drummer Festival, where he reminded everyone that he hadn't lost an ounce of his drumming prowess. And these days he's thrilled to be back on the road with Jeff Beck. "Playing with Jeff is electric, cosmic, bluesy, tearful, and wonderful all at the same time," the drummer says. "Jeff and I are family, and we're here to spread the love and the music."

So how did Walden prepare for a major tour after so many years behind the glass? "Well, I *never* stopped playing," he explains. "I like to warm up on a practice pad with single- and double-stroke rolls, paradiddles.... I keep my hands going in combinations with my feet."

And what about a new solo record? "I have one that's almost ready," Narada says. "I have all kinds of beautiful, fun songs; it's basically a pop album. One track, 'The More I Love My Life,' is particularly fantastic to me because it has Carlos Santana on guitar and Stevie Wonder on harmonica going back and forth, which is just phenomenal. And it has Sting singing with me!" **Billy Amendola**



Ross Halfin

JEFF BECK ON NARADA

"I first met Narada in 1975, when Mahavishnu Orchestra and my band toured together. Every night we'd jam. Narada's a powerhouse. He puts so much energy into every track we perform, not just every show. Everyone feels his onstage presence, and he is just wonderful to watch. I called Narada last December to see if he'd like to come on the road with me in 2010. He replied, 'I've been waiting for this call for thirty years!'"

HERMAN "THE GERMAN" RAREBELL

The ex-**Scorpions** slammer is still rocking like a hurricane.

How can you revive that old drumming chestnut "Wipe Out"? Just ask Herman "the German" Rarebell, who covers the Ventures classic on his latest album, *Take It As It Comes*, released under the name Herman Ze German.

"Before today's kids moan about 'Wipe Out' being so old, tell them to sit down and try to play it," the sixty-year-old former Scorpions drummer demands. "Take my number and phone me up afterwards, okay? 'Wipe Out' is very hard to play. Especially in my version, where I go to the end with the double bass drums and I am rolling all the time. 'Wipe Out' is a typical drum song that sounds easy but isn't."

Rarebell drummed with the Scorpions from 1977 to 1995 and composed and

wrote the lyrics to some of the band's most popular songs, including the global hit "Rock You Like a Hurricane."

"In drumming everything is timing," Rarebell says, referring to his album's heaviest drum tracks, "Wipe Out," "Drum Dance," and "Heya Heya." "Drummers have a tendency to go faster. But I say, 'Look how steady I can play.' The difficult part is breaking out and playing with creativity. You can go wild, but you have to stay in tempo."

Recording on a 1992 DW Custom kit (5x14 snare, 10x14 rack tom, 16x18 floor tom, 14x22 bass drum) and Paiste cymbals (2002 22" ride, 20" and 18" crashes, 18" China, 15" hi-hats), Rarebell cites his album's title as his overall philosophy.



"Life is not always happiness," he says. "You have to take it as it comes. In my life, three marriages made me come to that title! If I had all the money I spent on women? Omigod!" **Ken Micallef**

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Bebop Drum Sizes

I've noticed that many drum companies offer bebop-style setups, which implies an 18" bass drum, a 12" rack tom, and a 14" floor tom. But most photos I've seen of bebop drummers like Max Roach and Kenny Clarke from the 1950s show them using larger bass drums. When did the current bebop configuration first appear, and who was the first to make it?

Steve D.

"Technically, Gretsch first used the term *bebop* to describe a 20/12/14 set in its '60s catalogs," says drum historian Harry Cangany. "But the trend for smaller bass drums started with [big-band great] Dave Tough, who wanted a 20" bass drum with disappearing spurs so it would fit in a cab in New York City, which is where the Gretsch factory was originally located. Bass drum sizes had been shrinking—they were 30" monsters in the beginning of the big-band era and had gotten down to 24" as the '50s started. Tough went further with his 20" drum, and that opened the floodgate for experimentation. Rogers built 16" and 18" bass drums for Louie Bellson but never cataloged the 16". Gretsch didn't advertise its 18" kick until around 1963.

"Most jazz players during that time, however, used 20" bass drums. One of the reasons for this was the difficulty of reaching a tom when it was mounted on an 18" shell with the hardware that was available. You can find a number of 18" Gretsch bass drums from the late '60s and early '70s with Slingerland's single tom holder, because the arm was so long. Gretsch's simple Walberg rail consolette just wasn't long enough for tall players. Remember, this was decades before the introduction of modern suspension mounts and dependable clamps on heavy-duty stands."



THE DOCTOR IS IN



by Asif Khan, M.D.

Knee Surgery, Or Not?

About two weeks ago I ruptured my right ACL in a sporting accident. X-rays are negative for broken bones. I'm twenty-five years old, I'm in good shape, and I have been playing drums for ten years. This accident put a big damper on my drumming. I'm currently being treated with physical therapy twice a week. Surgery hasn't been a topic so far, but I understand that with a ruptured ACL surgery is a delicate thing where doctors have different opinions. Do you have any advice on how I can get my leg working again? And what are your thoughts about knee surgery?

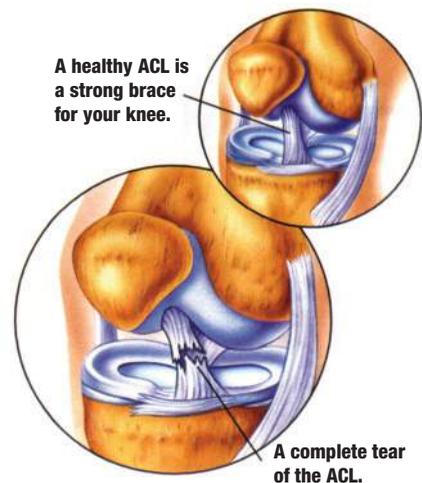
Woody Moore

Hi, Woody. The ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) is the most commonly injured knee ligament, and it seems you are at a crossroad: to cut or not to cut. I'll comment on the surgical approach, which I think you may need just from your story. The decision to have surgery is based on several factors, including age, level of activity, functional demands, and the presence of associated injuries to the meniscus or other ligaments. If you have injuries to multiple knee structures (ACL, meniscus, and other ligaments), you will need surgical reconstruction. Most active, younger patients and high-level athletes (football, skiing, etc.) opt for surgical reconstruction. Patients who decide not to pursue surgical management should be referred to a knowledgeable physical therapist or athletic trainer for rehabilitation. If you decide not to have surgery, it's important to understand that the ACL-deficient knee may place you at increased risk for further injury (like a meniscal tear), as well as chronic pain and an overall decreased activity level. Theoretically, there is no age cutoff for surgery. Although patients older than fifty-five rarely undergo ACL reconstruction, observational studies suggest that ACL reconstruction is generally successful in patients older than forty.

ACL reconstruction is generally performed with arthroscopy, using a graft to replace the ruptured ACL. The best time to undergo ACL reconstruction is when the knee exhibits full range of motion, with no significant swelling and with adequate strength. What about supports? Several studies suggest that prophylactic knee bracing does not prevent ACL tears.

Rehab after surgery consists of four phases. In the first phase (one to two weeks), the aims of therapy are to decrease pain and swelling and to increase the range of motion of the knee. The emphasis of the second phase (two to six weeks) is on further increasing range of motion, increasing weight bearing, and gaining hamstring and quadriceps control. The patient is usually out of a postoperative knee brace by the third or fourth week. The third phase (six to twelve weeks) focuses on improved muscular control, balance, and general muscular strengthening. Balance work progresses from static to dynamic techniques, including exercises on a wobble board and eventually jogging on a mini tramp. In the final phase (twelve weeks to six months), there's the gradual reintroduction of activity-specific exercises aimed at improving agility and reaction times and increasing total leg strength.

You're doing the right thing with rehab, and you should couple that with ACL injury prevention programs. For a drummer, surgery is not strictly necessary, but you mention that you're young and play sports. If you plan to continue being active outside of drumming, I'd get a second opinion on surgery, which might be your best solution.





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PRACTICAL ADVICE FROM
PROS WHO KNOW

SEBASTIAN THOMSON



He lives in a world where the grooves are mechanical and human alike. **Trans Am's** drummer on how to live not just peacefully but adventurously, with both.

1 DON'T BE AFRAID OF DRUM MACHINES. They aren't your enemy—they are your friend. They are better than you, and they can teach you things. Learn to program them, using either a vintage drum machine or a computer. Then play your drumkit along with it. It's about a hundred times more fun than practicing to a metronome, and it will give you new ideas. Program random beats or fills you would never think of playing, and then try to learn them on the kit. This will also give you an appreciation for music without live drummers.

2 RECORD REHEARSALS. Sometimes it's difficult to know what you really sound like. Before you play that new fill live, record it during rehearsal, and you'll know if you're ready. It might make you cringe, but you'll know. You'll also know whether it's appropriate or it's interfering with the song.

3 RECORD GIGS. A good or bad crowd can fool your brain into thinking it was a great or a terrible performance. Don't trust yourself. You are an imperfect ape.

4 DON'T BE MACHO. What I mean is that every beat and every note should have a reason for existing—a goal. Don't just put it in there to impress the two drummers in the audience. Don't shift a beat just because you're bored. Do it for a good musical reason. Even shifting a kick placement by one 16th note is a drastic move. Ask yourself what the goal of your drumming is in that song. Is it to be funky? Or hard? Or aggressive? Or smooth? Or abstract? Or soaring?

5 ON THE ROAD, DO SIXTY PUSH-UPS A DAY—maybe ten right before the gig, to get the blood flowing.

6 MAKE SURE THE GUITAR AMPS ARE SOMEWHAT BEHIND YOU ON STAGE. That way it'll sound more like rehearsal, and you won't have to depend on the busted monitors to hear your bandmates.

7 EAT DINNER AT LEAST TWO HOURS BEFORE YOUR SET.

8 GET SOME EXPERIENCE RECORDING YOURSELF. Then, when you

go into a studio, you'll know what sound you want. Pretty much everybody has a laptop and some mics. Practice recording your kit. Don't worry about the gear. Think more about whether you're getting a room sound or a close sound or a dead sound or a live sound, etc. Play with the mic placement. Also play with the EQ, gate, and compressor plug-ins. The point is not to get a great recording or to become an engineer. The point is that when you go to the studio, you can say, "We need more overheads" or "I don't like bottom snare mics" or "Compress the room, please." It will make the experience much better for you and the engineer. It's frustrating for an engineer to be told the drums aren't "tough" enough or "punchy" enough or whatever. It's good to be able to communicate actual facts if you don't like what he or she is doing.

9 BRING FOUR MOONGELS, JUST IN CASE.

10 REMEMBER THAT DRUMMING IS A TRANSCENDENTAL, DEEP, MYSTERIOUS EXPERIENCE.



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HVX

TAMA

SUPERSTAR BIRCH KIT

by David Ciauro

Tama's 100 percent birch Superstar shell kits are designed for drummers who love the tonal character of high-end birch drums but don't love the increased prices that often accompany straying from standard maple kits. The catch with most mid-level kits, however, is that the pros and cons tend to be about equal, because while these kits do offer professional features and quality wood types, some concessions have to be made to separate them from their pricier high-end counterparts.

GENEROUS OFFERINGS

The snare, rack tom, and floor tom shells in this Superstar birch kit are 6-ply and 6 mm; the bass drum is 7-ply and 7 mm. All of the drums, with the exception of the kick, are equipped with the same zinc die-cast hoops that appear on Tama's high-end Starclassic models. The kick has wood hoops with a matching finish on the external side only. Tama's high-tension Sound Bridge lugs are made specifically for the Superstar series with a unique low-mass design and a floating lug body that minimizes shell contact and reduces tension on the shell. This is said to increase the drums' resonant qualities. The Star-Cast mounting system is also said to increase resonance, plus it's designed in a way that allows the heads to be changed easily.

THE PROS

The Superstars' birch shells worked in conjunction with the die-cast hoops to provide a really fast, solid attack. The die-cast hoop on the snare also added a nice "pop" to rimshots. When I tuned each piece of the kit to its natural pitch,

which I found by tapping on the shell with my fingers, the drums opened up more than with any other tuning I tried, giving off distinct, musical tones with balanced descending intervals as I played down the toms. The attack was quick and the decay short, making the toms great for fast 16th- or 32nd-note roundhouse fills, à la Carter Beauford.

As someone who sits pretty high behind the drums, I was very pleased that the floor tom legs provided the additional height I needed to level the floor toms with the snare. This is an aspect that is so often overlooked, but it's important in drumsets designed to appeal to a wide array of players.

The seven-piece configuration of the Superstar kit—three racks, two floors—just happens to be my favorite setup, despite the fact that, like many other gigging drummers, I've gone to favoring the ease of a four-piece. With this larger rig, I really enjoyed being able to play along properly with some of my favorite recordings featuring big-kit drummers like Brann Dailor, Simon Phillips, Tim Alexander, and Charlie Benante.

THE CONS

As I mentioned, I was pleased when I tuned each drum to its natural pitch. But the kit's tuning spectrum was minimal beyond that. Each drum, especially the smaller rack toms, proved to have one obvious sweet spot. The 12" rack tom and the floor toms had the ability to stretch higher or lower and still sound decent. But since the 8" and 10" had such a narrow tuning range, I found I was stuck using one tuning style for the whole kit if I wanted it to sound bal-

nice low-end punch and a slappy attack when I tuned it just above wrinkling on both heads and added some internal muffling. The kick didn't have the same melodic quality as the toms, but it did remain in line by having a fast attack. Without any internal muffling touching the batter head, pronounced overtones congested the drum's punch, and a tight batter head resulted in a somewhat boxy sound that didn't mesh with the articulate and melodic toms. Again, it's not the most versatile kick drum you'll play. But that low and slappy tuning was a good complement to the quick and snappy tones of the rest of the kit.

The rack tom mounting system proved to be the most distracting component of this set. While it does maximize the drums' resonance, its construction has the mounts facing each other, so the 10" and 12" toms can't be positioned less than 2" apart from each other when mounted on the bass drum.

EITHER PRO OR CON

Depending on your personal style, the following observations of the Superstar birch kit may or may not appeal to you.

The toms' short decay was great for certain styles of music, especially since the drums held a solid tone. But they didn't project very far. The kit wasn't very loud and its projection was linear, which can be seen as good or bad, depending on how and where you'd be playing these drums.

Die-cast hoops were effective on the toms and helped focus the tone, but flanged hoops might let the drums breathe more and might provide a

SEVEN-PIECE SUPERSTAR SETUP

The Superstar birch kit on review is the seven-piece SL72S, which consists of 7x8, 8x10, and 9x12 rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a 5 1/2x14 snare. Also included are an MC61 multi-clamp, an MTH900AS single tom adapter, and an MTH905 double tom holder. Fifteen finishes are currently available on three basic configurations that cater to everyone from jazz musicians to rock players. Our review kit is in the "midnight spectrum" finish.

anced in terms of timbre. Don't get me wrong—the drums sounded good when tuned that way, but versatility wasn't their strong point.

The kick drum also sounded best when tuned one particular way. I found a



fuller sound.

The snare drum, which also has a 100 percent birch shell, would work well if you like a tight sound that borders on being choked. With both heads fairly tight and the snares at medium tension, the drum had plenty of crack, but the overtones were a bit piercing without any muffling. A thicker or pre-muffled batter head would eliminate some of the more troublesome overtones, but I felt this birch snare didn't have the diverse appeal that a less expensive, more forgiving metal snare could provide at a mid-level price.

CONCLUSION

High-end birch kits historically perform brilliantly in the studio, with warm tones that are super-focused and crystal clear, and they can also translate that studio sound to a live setting. The focus of birch creates a very balanced kit sound, with every drum speaking at the same level—*speaking* being the operative word, because birch drums don't shout. There's a built-in reserved sophistication to the sound of birch. Tama's mid-price Superstar birch kit provides similarly focused, warm tones but in a narrower

scope, which gives the impression of their being more studio worthy than road ready. But there's also built-in durability, due to the amount of professional-grade features that come standard. The seven-piece Superstar birch shell pack lists for \$999.99, and the same setup with an additional hardware pack is \$1,199.99. tama.com





TURKISH VINTAGE SOUL CYMBALS

Review by Michael Dawson • Photos by Rob Mazzella

MODERNDRUMMER
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

Turkish is an Istanbul-based company known for crafting a variety of classic, creative, and modern cymbal sounds using secret seventeenth-century processes. With some of Turkish's more unusually named lines, including Kurak, Sezade, and Zephyros, it can be difficult to figure out their intended application without hearing the cymbals first. The Vintage Soul models we have for review this month, however, couldn't be more appropriately branded.

THE LINEUP

The Vintage Soul series, which was designed with the help of L.A.-based journeyman drummer Chris Wabich, consists of a limited selection of hi-hats (14" and 15"), crashes (16" and 18"), and rides (20", 21", and 22"), all in a medium-thin weight with a traditional finish. Their unique lathing pattern, which features widely etched circles on top of the traditional thin markings, gives the cymbals a more distinct yet still classy appearance.

We were sent a pair of 14" hi-hats (\$585), an 18" crash (\$421.20), a 20" ride with two rivets spaced about 6" apart (\$585), and a 22" ride (\$678.60). This particular setup fell right in line with the *vin-*
tage part of the cymbals' name, lending

itself perfectly to a classic bebop-style configuration with one ride on each side of the kit (sizzle ride on the left, 22" on the right) and the crash just to the right of the main ride. Once I started playing the cymbals, I discovered that these aren't cliché vintage jazz replicas. In fact, I wouldn't call them "jazz" cymbals at all, as they proved to be much more universal than any one style would suggest.

FLASHY CRASH

The 18" Vintage Soul crash was warm and rich sounding, with a very quick response. When struck on the edge, it opened up with an explosive flash of color. It also had a papery timbre that reminded me of some older cymbals from the 1970s, minus the hollowness that's kept me from loving crashes from that era. The Vintage Soul had a more glassy sheen in its long, even sustain, making it sound quite full, even for a medium-thin cymbal. This crash would work great in almost any playing situation, from bebop to funk to classic rock.

SILVERY AND SIZZLING RIDES

The 20" rivet ride and the 22" regular ride worked great as a dynamic two-cymbal team. Since they're both fairly thin, they could be crashed for big, emphatic hits,

ROCK-STEADY HI-HATS

It took only one "bark" of the 14" Vintage Soul hi-hats for me to pinpoint their familiar sound: Aretha Franklin's "Rock Steady," featuring R&B legend Bernard Purdie on drums. (This is where the *soul* part of the name comes into play.) In my opinion, there's no funkier hi-hat sound than the one on that track: crisp attack, gritty sibilance, and warm, rich tone. The Vintage Soul hi-hats had those exact qualities, plus a touch of metallic ring similar to what Radiohead drummer Phil Selway achieves in his up-close cymbal sound on his band's 2007 album, *In Rainbows*. Normally I don't like these high-pitched overtones in hi-hats, but they added an extra edge of complexity to the Vintage Souls. When played with the foot, the hats were articulate and clear.

and they both elicited a clean, woody stick attack for articulate patterns. The 22" was more silvery and smooth sounding, due to its more prominent and even sustain. And its bell sound, while rich and thick, blended more with the overall wash of the cymbal than it did on the 20".

The 20" rivet ride was more distinct, as its bell sound was stronger, its crash sound was richer, and its bow sound had more personality due to the subtle sizzle added by the rivets. This ride perfectly embodied its Vintage Soul moniker, as it sounded a lot like the cymbal that funky drummer Jabo Starks spansks during the bridge beat of the 1970 James Brown hit "Super Bad."

CONCLUSION

In an era when many cymbal companies seem to be on a never-ending quest to reproduce quirky and eclectic sounds based on the dark and trashy jazz tones of Tony, Elvin, and Art, Turkish went the other direction with its Vintage Soul line, focusing on warm, classic colors that will satisfy many drummers in a variety of musical contexts. Yes, there are shades of Philly Joe Jones' and Max Roach's cymbal sounds in these instruments. But there's just as much traditional R&B, Purdie/Jabo/Idris Muhammad flavor in there too, as well as some of the more reckless vibes of early rock forerunners like Mitch Mitchell, Keith Moon, and Ginger Baker. As stated on Turkish's website, "It is no small feat to produce a cymbal that rings in such a way as to enchant the human ear." We couldn't agree more.

turkishcymbals.com

REMO

AMBASSADOR X AND TATTOO SKYN DRUMHEADS

by Michael Dawson

Earlier this year, Remo released two new drumhead models: Ambassador X and Tattoo Skyn. The Ambassador X comes in 8"–16" sizes and consists of a single 12 mil ply of coated film. (Most single-ply heads are 10 mil.) Tattoo Skyns are graphic heads featuring original skull or "serpent rose" artwork from famed tattoo artist Corey Miller of the TV show *L.A. Ink*. The heads are available as 13" or 14" Suede snare batters in a thickness of 12 mil, or as 22" Powerstroke 3 kick drum resonant heads. We slapped the new models on a few different drums to see how they looked, felt, and sounded.

AMBASSADOR X

I tested the Ambassador X in studio and live situations, on a 5x14 chrome-over-brass snare and on 12" and 16" maple toms. In the studio, I often switch back and forth between coated single- and double-ply batters depending on the desired sound. If I want something ringy and open, I'll go with single-ply heads all around. If I'm looking for more punch and low-end frequencies, double-ply heads often do the trick. Then there are the times when I'd prefer to keep the drums sounding lively and open, but with standard single-ply heads the overtones are a bit too prominent and the drums sound a little thin in the mix. In those cases, I usually have to resort to taping up the heads to bring them into focus.

The Ambassador X models proved to have that more centered sound right out of the box, while still producing plenty of tone and sustain. They were also very easy to tune, offering similarly punchy yet open tones across each drum's entire range. The heads required a slightly firmer stroke to bring out the most resonance from the drums, but if the bulk of your studio playing involves strong grooves and fills, these models would be great for almost any session.

To test the durability of the Ambassador



X, I used the heads at an outdoor festival gig where I had to play at full volume for ninety minutes. I alternated between two snares. One was the 5x14 brass with the Ambassador X head; the other was a 6½x14 maple with a coated single-ply head from another manufacturer. Both drums were tuned to a medium tension. By the end of the set, the head on the deeper maple drum had a 3" crater in the center. It was ruined. But other than typical stick marks on the coating, the Ambassador X still had a lot of life left. The tom heads also showed minimal wear, even after I gave them a serious workout during a few tom-heavy tunes. List prices range from \$22.75 for an 8" head to \$31.25 for a 16" model.

TATTOO SKYNS

Having no tattoos on my body, I felt a little insincere putting the smooth white 22" Tattoo Skyn head on my bass drum. But I have to admit it looked very cool on the front of my '60s Ludwig kick. Since it's a Powerstroke 3, which means it has an interior 10 mil muffling ring, this resonant head helped make my kick sound punchier by attenuating the higher overtones emanating from the outer edge of the drum.

Unless you want to convey a dark and sinis-

ter vibe at every gig, I'd suggest going with the "serpent rose" graphic over the one with skulls and crossbones. But then again, even that one features slithering snakes and sharp daggers, so there's no getting around a certain edginess that these heads will add to your look. Both graphics are available on smooth white or black heads.

Like the Ambassador X, Tattoo Skyn snare batters are made from a single ply of 12 mil film. The heads are processed using Remo's Suede technology, which creates a textured finish on both sides. This method is said to create a sound that's midway between the brightness and open resonance of clear heads and the warmth and articulate attack of coated heads. I tried a 14" Tattoo Skyn on a 6½x14 purple-heart snare. When compared with the Ambassador X, the Tattoo Skyn was noticeably brighter and more aggressive sounding, and it had more spraying overtones, especially when tuned medium-tight. It was also a bit more sensitive at lower volumes. The Suede surface worked well with brushes, as it's a bit smoother than the regular coating but still has enough resistance to create sweeping "swish" strokes.

Tattoo Skyns are obviously not for everyone, but the artwork looks great, and it adds a bit of rock 'n' roll edge to an otherwise all-around drumhead. List prices range from \$36 for a 13" head to \$104.75 for a 22" Powerstroke 3.

remo.com

ONE SUCCESS LEADS TO ANOTHER

Building on the popularity of the super-durable Emperor X snare drum batter, which is an extra-thick 2-ply head with a reverse dot, Remo beefed up its most popular single-ply head, the coated Ambassador, to be 20 percent thicker and considerably more durable. This new head, the Ambassador X, is said to retain much of the classic open and melodic sound of a regular Ambassador, while boosting the attack, volume, and midrange tone.

HINGESTIX

PRACTICE DRUMSTICKS

Review by Chap Ostrander • Photo by Rob Mazzella



I often find that the most challenging part of working with beginning drum students is figuring out how to get them started. It's very important to get students to hold drumsticks in a way that promotes a clean hand motion. I've seen the death grip from some beginners, while others' grips are too loose. And some students hold the sticks too close to the middle, which limits natural rebound.

To combat these early technique issues, educator Sam Ruttenberg developed HingeStix practice drumsticks. HingeStix have three holes drilled right around the sweet spot where the sticks will rebound most naturally. Then a plastic axle is affixed to the stick through one of these

holes. (Three holes are used so you can custom fit the axle.) Round grip pads for the thumb and forefinger are added on both ends of the axle; when you hold on to the pads, the stick pivots freely, producing the feeling of proper rebound.

I tested the HingeStix with my students and had great success. I also shared them with several colleagues, who loved them right away. I found that the sticks worked best when addressing the technique of a student's weaker hand. The non-dominant hand always takes longer to develop and often holds the stick too tightly, which can lead to tendonitis and other joint problems. HingeStix can also help drummers develop the Moeller stroke, as they move

comfortably in the hand when you work on that technique's flowing three-part motion (downstroke, tap, upstroke). The unencumbered rebound action of the sticks lets you practice finger technique quite easily.

HingeStix have garnered recommendations from legendary drumset players Bernard Purdie, Joe Morello, and Hal Blaine, as well as from drummer/percussionist Richie Gajate-Garcia and orchestral greats Jonathan Haas and Al Payson. That's quite a list. Teachers and beginners should certainly check out this handy practice tool. The list price is \$24.95.

hingestix.com

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ROCKET SHELLS

CARBON FIBER SJC CUSTOM

Review by David Ciauro • Photo by Rob Mazzella



Carbon fiber is well known in the aerospace industry for its unique combination of strength, flexibility, and light weight. Rocket Shells has been manufacturing its patented C-900 carbon fiber drum shells since 1994, and this month we're taking a look at the company's newest offering, a C-1200 carbon fiber shell used on an SJC custom 6¹/₂ x 14 snare with a Victorian pattern design, die-cast hoops, ten single-tube lugs, a Trick throw-off, and cast-iron hardware.

The graphite color of the carbon fiber shell is aesthetically pleasing (even without the SJC design), but even more impressive was the shell's tone. Carbon fiber steals the most attractive qualities from wood and metal shells to produce what would be best described as a hybrid sound in which warmth, attack, and projection are the front-running adjectives. Widespread overtones created a full-sounding backbeat at most tunings, and I really had to crank the top head to get the drum to choke. The

45-degree bearing edges flatten out at each snare bed, which keeps snare response sensitive at either end of the tension spectrum, so the breadth of the tone is minimally compromised.

The shell alone weighs just 18 ounces and is 0.185" thick, so the tone was bright and open. Die-cast hoops added some crack to the attack and dried out the tone just enough that the drum still opened up nicely toward the edges of the shell for some "woody" rimshots. Overtones could be pronounced, depending on how the drum is tuned, so a little muffling might be advantageous if you want a more controlled and direct sound.

Models from Rocket Shells make for a



solid snare drum foundation with ample amounts of tone, warmth, attack, and projection. When you customize the shells to suit your personal preference (hoop type, number of lugs, head combinations, and so on), you can tweak the sound to either blend or enhance the inborn sonic qualities of the carbon fiber. Visit the Rocket Shells website for a list of companies that use these shells.

rocketshells.com



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ROLAND

OCTAPAD SPD-30

by Billy Amendola



Roland has long been an innovative and cutting-edge maker of electronic percussion. The original Octapad was revolutionary when I first played it back in the '80s. I cut many records using just the Octapad, and I've used it many times as an add-on to my electronic and acoustic setups. When I heard about the new Octapad SPD-30, I was excited to get my hands on one to see if our love affair was still strong.

WHO NEEDS A SNARE?

While the Octapad works great as an addition to an acoustic or electronic kit or as a stand-alone instrument, one of the best ways I've found to use the SPD-30 is to put it on a snare stand in place of an acoustic snare drum. There are two reasons for this. First of all, it gives you access to a snare. (I like to have one or two pads set to trigger snare sounds, with the other pads blank so I can hit an

empty pad if I'm playing along with tracks or sequences that already have a snare programmed on 2 and 4.) Second, you can play a variety of drum and percussion sounds without reaching too far beyond your normal snare position.

OPEN UP AND PLAY

Like many electronic drummers, I don't like to read manuals. I prefer to try out the gear *before* I dig into the book. So I

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Blake Richardson – BETWEEN THE BURIED AND ME / Alex Lopez – SUICIDE SILENCE



Full color
booklet inside



took the SPD-30 to my studio and played around with it. (For more technical info on the new Octapad, see the "Techs And Specs" sidebar.)

The SPD-30 has USB, MIDI, and 1/4" Mix In ports for a variety of setup options. The unit comes with 670 sounds in fifty kits, plus thirty effects. These sounds include world percussion, electronic and acoustic drums, tuned synth sounds, special effects, and orchestral and marching percussion. Roland's superior pad-sensing technology, which is a big part of what's made the company the premier e-drum brand, holds true on the SPD-30. During our testing, the unit proved to have excellent pad triggering and no problems with isolation between pads, so there were no instances of false triggering. The Octapad also comes with four dual-trigger inputs and a hi-hat controller input, so you can add pads to build your own super-portable e-kit. Or you can use triggers on acoustic drums to play sounds in the SPD-30.

INSTANT LOOPS

I had the most fun experimenting with the Octapad's Phrase Loop function. Using Phrase Loop, you can really let your creativity flow and layer different beats in real time. The SPD-30 allows you to record infinite layers of ideas using three different kits. Each loop can be up to ninety-six measures long. My DJ friends who play a bit of drums will love the ability to build beats quickly and add real-time special

effects while they're spinning records. The new Octapad is pretty user-friendly and adaptable to a variety of setups.

TWO LITTLE PEEVES

There are two things I didn't like about the new Octapad. First, there's no dedicated stop button for the Phrase Loop function; you have to press the play and record buttons simultaneously to stop playback. (I later discovered that you can use a foot switch to control stop/start

and other functions.) Second, there's no simple way to make click adjustments, like off/on, without going a couple layers into the menu screen. I would like to have had a clearly visible on/off button when I was recording different layers of patterns. Other than that, the new Octapad is a pretty cool self-contained unit, and I'm happy Roland brought it back. The list price is \$799.

rolandus.com

TECHS AND SPECS

The original Octapad was launched in 1985. Although it didn't come with any onboard sounds, drummers and producers found it (and its successor, the Octapad II) to be incredibly useful to control drum machines, MIDI sound modules, and samplers. The third, fourth, and fifth generations of the Octapad, the SPD-8, SPD-11, and SPD-20, came to prominence in the '90s and included sounds as well as built-in effects processing.

The latest incarnation of the Octapad, the SPD-30, is an amalgamation of its predecessors, borrowing the 4x2 rectangular pad layout and right-side control panel from the first and second versions plus onboard sounds and effects as found in the SPD-8, -11, and -20. Significant upgrades in the SPD-30 include a Phrase Loop function that allows you to layer perfor-

mances to create instant loops, USB MIDI and memory ports for storing data and working with computer software, and softer and more isolated pads for more accurate triggering and a more comfortable playing experience.

Other twenty-first-century improvements include dynamic layering that allows you to play two sounds on one pad, which can either alternate depending on how hard you strike the pad or be mixed on top of one another; LED indicators for each pad to help you keep track of the status of the different pads when using the Phrase Loop function; and a V-Link feature that allows the Octapad to control V-Link video devices. The SPD-30 also automatically stores any changes you make to the factory settings, so even if you accidentally turn off the unit your original configurations will be saved.



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Daru Jones

lays down cutting-edge live *and* programmed beats with **Talib Kweli** and **Mos Def** and on his own prolific productions—not only breaking tradition, but bringing a whole new approach to the game.

Story by Stephen Styles • Photos by Paul La Raia

Perhaps it's no surprise that Daru Jones was playing the kit in church by the age of four. Both of his parents are church musical directors and keyboardists, and a number of his cousins and uncles play drums. After studying the drummers of national gospel acts from his home state of Michigan, such as Dana Davis with the Winans and Michael Williams with Commissioned, Jones started zeroing in on the outer-space rhythmic ideas of fusion masters like Vinnie Colaiuta. At the same time, he became fascinated by the art of programming drum machines, leading to a career that now includes a healthy split of production and playing gigs—both of which Jones attacks with killer beats, fresh sounds, and ambitious ideas.

MD: When you were coming up in the church, what did you focus on with your drumming?

Daru: Back then everything was about having a tight pocket, which was a good foundation for me. When I got to middle school, I was put on to the Buddy Rich Memorial Concert video featuring Vinnie Colaiuta, Dave Weckl, and Steve Gadd, and that changed my life. I was influenced by Vinnie. When I first got [Frank Zappa's] *Joe's Garage*, I was amazed to hear him manipulating time signatures like that with such a good feel. I started shedding Vinnie's parts and began to incorporate some of those licks into the music I was playing at church. I got in a little trouble, but it was all good. [laughs]

I got my first instructional drum video, by Terry Bozzio, when I was fourteen. That opened me up even more because I had never heard his style of playing drums. From that point on, every time I learned about a drummer who was dope, I got all the CDs and instructional videos I could, and I started trying to emulate what I saw on tape or heard on records. I'd do everything I could to learn their style and incorporate it into my playing. I would try to play like them, sit like them, and set up my drums like them. Some of these players are Steve Smith, Jack DeJohnette, Peter Erskine, Stewart Copeland, and Dave Weckl. Listening to all those fusion records had a lot to do with my growth on the drums.

MD: Did you take lessons on drums or learn any other instruments?

Daru: I took sight-reading lessons. I also took organ and piano lessons while I was in high school. A lot of what I learned came from experimenting and trying to re-create things I heard, because I never took drum lessons. I didn't always get the chops down perfectly, but I got as close as possible.

MD: You play traditional grip, which is rare for drummers with a gospel background. How did you pick that up, and how does it serve you in the music you play now?

Daru: I had a mentor growing up named Michael Lee, and he's the only person I saw as a kid who played traditional. I also noticed that Vinnie, Dave, and Steve Gadd all played traditional grip on the Buddy Rich concert tape. I was trying to

mimic these people that I admired, and it ended up being more comfortable than matched grip. I play a lot of ghost notes, and traditional grip lends itself to that more than matched.

MD: How did you transition from playing gospel and fusion to playing hip-hop?

Daru: I started listening to more and more rap throughout middle school and into high school. When I was fifteen I got my first drum machine. I started getting into production and making beats, which made me want to learn more about the producers who were making hip-hop records. In addition to trying to understand the various production styles, I was also learning their beats. As I got older, I was always getting into different musical situations, and I had the chance to play with some groups that had a hip-hop approach rhythmically.

After high school, I went back and forth between New York and Pennsylvania a lot. Thanks to a friend of mine named Matt, I was offered a position with Solomon Steelpan Company, which makes some of the best steel drums in the world, playing with their band, Steel Impressions. Once I got to Pittsburgh, more opportunities started to open up, and soon I was playing in most of the music venues in town, many of which were hip-hop clubs. I was always a fan of hip-hop, and I knew this was the music I wanted to play because it's such a big part of me.

DARU'S SETUP

Daru plays TAYE StudioMaple drums, including a 6x14 snare, a 16x16 floor tom, and an 18x22 bass drum, occasionally adding a 9x12 tom. His Dream cymbals include 14" Energy series hi-hats, 16" and 18" Bliss series crashes, and a 22" Bliss series ride. His sticks are the SliverFox JX model, and he uses Mono stick, cymbal, and Fly-By bags.



DARU'S FAVORITES

Ronald Winans "You Don't Know" from Family & Friends Vol. 3 (Dana Davis) /// **Marvin Winans** "Now Are We" from Introducing Perfected Praise (Mario Winans) /// **Dave Weckl** Master Plan (Dave Weckl) /// **Frank Zappa** Joe's Garage (Vinnie Colaiuta) /// **The Police** Ghost In The Machine (Stewart Copeland) /// **Chick Corea Elektric Band II** Paint The World (Gary Novak)

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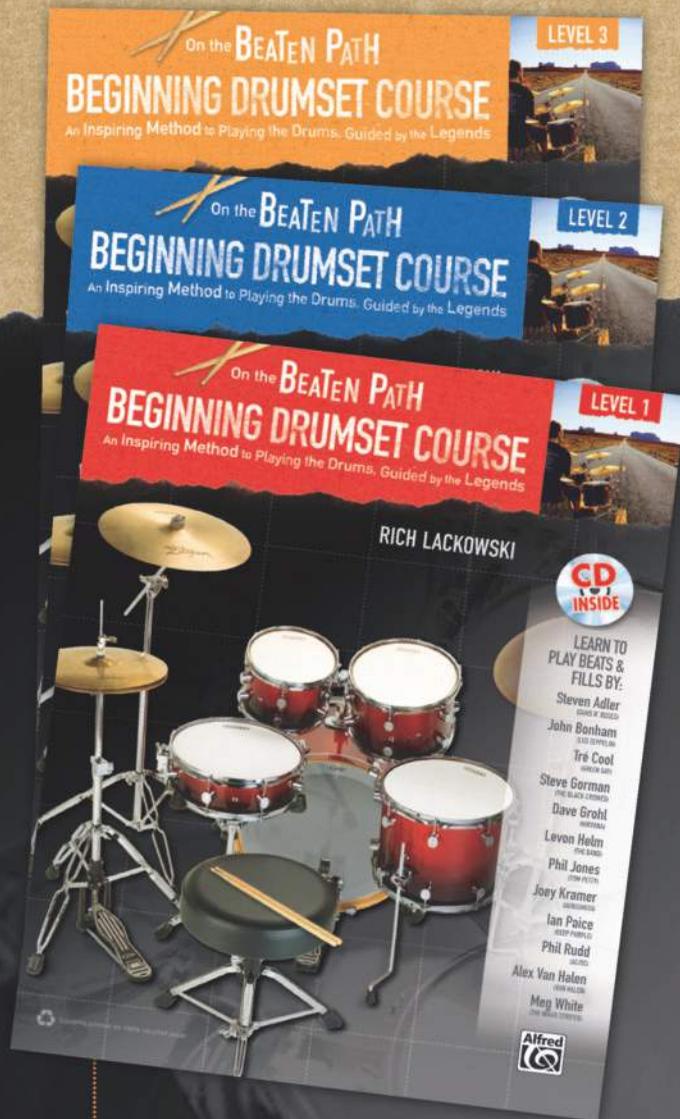
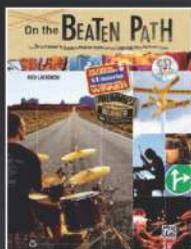
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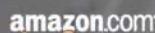
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DARU JONES

MD: Since playing with Steel Impressions, you've gone on to work with influential artists such as the hip-hop innovators Slum Village. How did that gig come about?

Daru: There was a guy from D.C. named Ab who used to commute to Pittsburgh to do shows at a venue called the Shadow Lounge. One day something happened at the last minute where Ab's drummer couldn't make the show. He needed a drummer right away, and I was recommended. It turned out that Ab was also the musi-

cal director for Slum Village. After we did that first show, we hit it off. He invited me to play in his band, and I used to commute from Pittsburgh to D.C. all the time to do his shows. Over time he came to appreciate my consistency, and when Slum Village decided they wanted to add a live band to their show, he told them I was the drummer they should use.

MD: Hip-hop beats tend to be very repetitive, due to the fact that most producers rarely include live instruments. The tracks are usually pro-

grammed loops. What is your approach to giving a live feel to the beats you play?

Daru: A lot of my approach is influenced by Steve Gadd. He gets the job done, but he never overplays and he never underplays. That's always been in the back of my mind. It also comes from that foundation I had in church of playing a tight pocket. It's the "less is best" approach. I use a lot of ghost notes to add more of a live feel. Sometimes I play a shuffle on the snare within the groove.

I base what I play on the original track. In some cases, it's the same as you'd play any other rock or R&B song. If the original track has the same drumbeat but maybe the keyboard does something different on certain sections or something like that, then I'll take the song apart and play it differently in certain sections. The essence of the beat will always stay the same, but I might start on the hi-hat for the verse and then go to the ride on the chorus or change it some other way to open it up. On some songs, the original track might have the same loop all the way through from beginning to end. If that's the case, I'll just play the loop and ride it out, especially if it's a hit, because the audience wants to hear the song sound just like the record.

MD: When you have the freedom to go beyond a fixed loop pattern, how do you avoid overplaying?

Daru: It starts with the selection of fills I play. Most of the breaks that get used in hip-hop are sampled from old-school funk and soul music. A lot of the fills I use are inspired by drummers from that era, like Bernard Purdie or James Brown's drummers. The fills don't have to be big like in gospel or fusion.

I want to resurrect that old-school feel that guys like Peter Erskine and Steve Gadd had when they were playing funk. I want to be a guy who can piece together the new-school stuff with the old-school stuff. I'm trying to help some of the newer guys see that there's a certain feel and vibe to the drums that they're not hip to. If you don't go back and get into some of that old-school music, then you don't realize there's this whole other style of

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DARU JONES

drumming that you've missed out on.

MD: You've got some fun solos on YouTube. Some of them have a lot of notes, but it's still grooving.

Daru: Usually, if drummers are playing straight beats all night, when it comes time to solo, they're like, "I'm gonna go crazy and let it all out." I'm the opposite. I try to play things that make sense musically and to the audience. If it's a big solo, I try to tell a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It's important to play breaks and make sure to play something the audience can groove to, even when I'm soloing.

Usually the music dictates what kind of solo I play.

MD: With all the work you're doing on the hip-hop scene, what do you practice to stay sharp in other areas and keep developing your skills?

Daru: Well, I don't just play hip-hop. I'm blessed to be working a lot right now, and shifting between several different artists and styles on a regular basis helps me stay sharp. I constantly have to learn new material for gigs that I'm called for, so I usually don't get a chance to practice until I'm rehearsing for a gig.

MD: How has your work as a producer impacted your playing?

Daru: Being a producer makes me more aware of the big picture of how the drums fit into the song and the overall sound. It changed my whole outlook toward playing music, not just hip-hop. By engineering my own tracks, I got used to mixing drum sounds, which affects how I play live. When I'm on stage, I'm EQ'ing and mixing myself while I'm playing.

The word *dynamic* goes so far. Listening to music, you hear sections when the beat gets played bottom heavy, or top heavy. Some sections get played louder, and other sections are soft. I became more aware of dynamics through producing, which helped me become a better drummer.

MD: What projects are you working on these days?

Daru: I'm working with Talib Kweli and Idle Warship as well as Blue Nefertiti of Les Nubians. I'm excited to be working for Damon Dash's record company, DD172, as the drummer for the Senseis, which is the house backing band for the label. I'm working with a really talented classical violinist from London named Daisy Jopling. She plays authentic classical pieces by artists like Bach and Beethoven, and I add backbeat-based drum parts including boom-bap hip-hop beats. There's a hip-hop artist I work with named Black Milk, whose new record is coming out soon. It's called *Album Of The Year*, and I played on six or seven of the tracks.

And I'm working on a lot of music for my label, Rusic, which I created so I can put out my own form of music that I call soul-hop. My mission is to create positive music and come with the same musical aggressiveness of many of the producers who've inspired me, such as DJ Premier and J. Dilla, but without some of the language and content that is associated with those types of artists. For me it's all about staying true to my roots by producing positive music for the human spirit, without being cheesy.



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AQUILES

by Ilya Stemkovsky



Antonio Rossa

PRIESTER

Think there's nothing new under the sun in metal drumming? Well, get in the double bass shed, because Hangar's drummer has something to say about that. Just try to keep up.

Infallible, the title of the Brazilian progressive metal band Hangar's new recording, just about sums up the group's extraordinary drummer, Aquiles Priester. It's no coincidence that this technically gifted player has a creepy alien octopus mounted on his drumkit—take one listen to his ferocious double bass chops and detailed cymbal and tom work and you'll be scratching your head while looking for the extra limbs.

Following in the footsteps of the multitalented prog giants who have played many roles (and *many* notes), Priester writes Hangar's lyrics, produces its records, and is heavily involved with its image and art concepts. "I pay attention to everything during the creative process," Aquiles says. "Few drummers are at the head of their bands, so I think this is a great victory, since in the past we were simply accompanists. Imagine Rush without Neil Peart, Dream Theater without Mike Portnoy, Slipknot without Joey Jordison. Impossible! Their image often represents the band."

Having had his mind thoroughly blown by Iron Maiden's Nicko McBrain in the '80s, Priester dedicated his life to growing as a musician. After several high-profile years in the Brazilian power metal group Angra, he struck out on his own with Hangar and the instrumental side project Freakeys. Whether it's with his recordings; his energetic drum DVDs, including the new *Infallible Reason Of My Freak Drumming*; or his advanced double bass instructional text, *Inside My PsychoBook: 100 Double Bass Patterns*, Priester—who's appeared on the cover of the Brazilian version of *Modern Drummer* multiple times and is a bona fide star in his home country—pushes the art of "freak drumming" ever forward.

MD: What did you listen to growing up in Brazil?

Aquiles: I moved from South Africa to Brazil when I was six and played professional soccer into my teens. After attending the first Rock In Rio concert in 1985, I put together a drumkit using cans, gasoline drums, and pans. In 1986 I fell in love with Iron Maiden and Nicko McBrain after hearing "Caught Somewhere In

Time" on the radio. Everything changed. I couldn't understand how a drummer managed to play triplets using only one foot. I still think that song is amazing for the time. Eventually I discovered Tony MacAlpine's record *Maximum Security* with Deen Castronovo—the biggest shock of my life! I couldn't believe he played those absurd things in such a precise way, before

Pro Tools existed. Drummers really had to execute a good take. After that I found Rod Morgenstein, Scott Travis, Joe Franco, Tommy Aldridge, Neil Peart, Mike Terrana, Mike Portnoy, and Gene Hoglan. I developed my style listening to those drummers.

MD: The new Hangar release, *Infallible*, seems like a step up in terms of your technique. Was it a natural evolution of your skills, or did you make a conscious effort to write challenging parts for yourself?

Aquiles: This is the most audacious album of my career. I played things I had never played before in terms of speed and complexity, but I also did simple and consistent grooves. We holed up at a farm in Tatuí, a city in the interior of São Paulo considered to be the music capital of our country, and I think that helped us somehow. After recording finished, I stayed at the farm alone for another three weeks to improve my parts. I pushed myself like never before, and it resulted in the most balanced and refined recording of my life.

MD: The leadoff track on the new album, "The Infallible Emperor (1956)," is a microcosm of your style—intense double bass and creative, grooving beats using cymbals, bells, and tom-toms. There are so many parts in each song; do you ever have trouble remembering what comes next?



AQUILES' SETUP

Drums: Mapex Meridian "PsychOctopus" kit

- A. 8x14 prototype Black Panther snare
- B. 14x14 floor tom
- C. 10x13 tom
- D. 4x10 Deep Forest snare
- E. 6x8 tom
- F. 7x8 tom
- G. 8x10 tom
- H. 9x12 tom
- I. 11x14 tom
- J. 4x6 LP timbale
- K. 16x16 floor tom
- L. 16x18 floor tom
- M. 16x18 gong bass drum
- N. 18x22 bass drum

Electronics: Zoom effects; Staff Drum Power Shot triggers; Power Click in-ear monitors; Ciclotron Vega 2 console, Titanium 700 speakers, and 600 subwoofer system

Heads: Evans HD Dry 14" snare batter and Hazy 300 bottom, black coated Genera 10" snare batter and Hazy 300 bottom, clear EC2 tom batters and black G1 bottoms, and EQ4 bass drum batters

Mics: Audio-Technica ATM23 on snares, ATM35 on rack and floor toms, AE2500 on bass drums, AE5100 on ride cymbals and hi-hats, and AE3000 overheads

Cymbals: Paiste

1. 14" Signature Heavy hi-hats (custom black coated)
2. 18" prototype 2002 Bell ride (custom black coated)
3. Noise Works Triple Raw Smash (12"/14"/14")
4. 18" Signature Reflector Full crash
5. 19" Signature Full crash
6. 18" Signature Heavy China
7. 17" Signature Power crash
8. 8" Signature splash
9. 8" Signature splash on top of 10" Rude Splash
10. 10" 2002 Wild splash
11. 18" Signature Power crash
12. 15" Signature Sound Edge hi-hats (custom black coated)
13. 14" Rude China (custom black coated)
14. 19" Rude Thin crash
15. 20" 2002 Wild crash

Sticks: Pro-Mark Aquiles Priester Autograph model

Hardware: DW 9000 bass drum pedals and hi-hat stand, Gibraltar Road series rack and hardware

Miscellaneous: AeroRic Custom Drums, Urban Boards PsychoShoes Aquiles Priester signature model drummer shoes, Shred cases

Aquiles: Never! I practice my parts until I'm able to perform the songs in a manner that is consistent and convincing. Everything I do is to satisfy my quality standard. At my workshops, I insist on having five people behind the drumkit so they can see that it is possible to execute a good take live if you dedicate yourself.

At a time when musicians perform miracles with digital recordings, I want to swim against the tide. Even when I play with other artists, I write nothing down and make no notations on scores, so I can exercise my mem-

RECORDINGS

Hangar Infallible, The Reason Of Your Conviction /// **Freakkeys** Freakkeys /// **Serj Buss** Liquid Piece Of Me /// **Angra** Temple Of Shadows

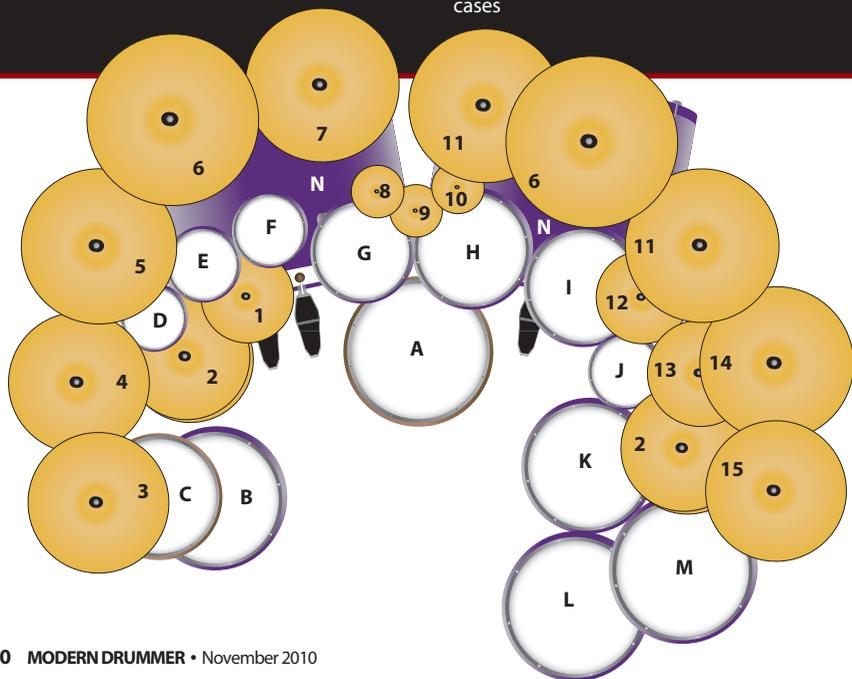
FAVES

Iron Maiden Somewhere In Time (Nicko McBrain) /// **Tony MacAlpine** Maximum Security (Deen Castronovo) /// **Cacophony** Go Off! (Deen Castronovo) /// **Marty Friedman** Dragon's Kiss (Deen Castronovo) /// **Joey Tafolla** Infra Blue (Deen Castronovo) /// **Racer X** Second Heat (Scott Travis) /// **Rush** Roll The Bones (Neil Peart) /// **Dream Theater** Awake (Mike Portnoy) /// **Death** Symbolic (Gene Hoglan) /// **Dave Matthews Band** Crash (Carter Beauford)

ory. A lot can change in the studio, but once the song is recorded, I want to give the fans the same performance as on the album. That's why I love Neil Peart.

MD: Describe that choking hi-hat move you do in the second verse of the song, after the instrumental part.

Aquiles: The idea came in 2004, when I was recording my parts for Angra's *Temple Of Shadows*. At the time I couldn't execute that groove with much confidence and precision. I had to wait for the right time to record it. I knew this part would be a shock to some drummers because it's a 16th-note pattern with both feet while opening and closing the hi-hat during the groove. When the album was released in Brazil, it was the center of discussion in various drum forums, and the mystery only ended after I was seen performing it on the teaser



of my new DVD, *The Infallible Reason Of My Freak Drumming*.

MD: You've played very fast double bass parts throughout your career. How do you work on that?

Aquiles: When I began practicing it a lot, in 1993, there were no specialized double bass teachers in Brazil. I started noticing that my left leg always lagged behind, so I began working on playing

ments of their songs. Clones are very common, but people aren't interested in them. They want innovation. Why would I listen to a drummer who sounds like Nicko? I'll listen to Nicko, because he created his style, right? I think it's all a question of good taste.

A drummer who plays double bass doesn't necessarily have to play above a specific speed to be interesting. I like it

when someone plays interesting patterns with one bass drum and uses the other parts of the drums to connect it all.

MD: Songs like Angra's "Running Alone" and Hangar's "The Reason Of Your Conviction" have some very slick hand technique, polyrhythms, and pure double-time speed. How do you have the stamina to play that long and that much?

Aquiles: First of all, I'm passionate about double

bass drums, and I love practicing repetition exercises that give me a certain comfort to play for hours on end without tiring. I never practice resistance exercises when I'm feeling well, only when I'm very tired, because then I increase my ability to play well in any given situation. Some of the exercises in my book are exactly the same things I practiced when I began my career. The more you practice, the closer you get to perfection.

Furthermore, I try to live a healthy life. I don't drink, smoke, or use drugs. I'm happy you noticed that there are interesting patterns going on with my hands. I'm very careful with the accents of the hi-hats and rides when I'm playing. That makes all the difference to me.

MD: *The Infallible Reason Of My Freak Drumming* expands on your previous DVD, *Live In Concert: Inside My Drums*. This time, as opposed to Angra material, you're focusing on Hangar and Freakeys songs.

Aquiles: Freakeys is by far the most complicated work I've ever recorded. Fábio Laguna, who is also Hangar's keyboard player, composed everything and created lines on electronic drums that sounded like me playing. When I tried to



16th-note patterns while sometimes pausing with my right foot. Thus, when I increased the speed, my left leg would stay in position without losing the pulsation. A good example is the track called "Hastiness" on Hangar's *The Reason Of Your Conviction*. That drum pattern was an exercise that became a good groove. I never practice strange or bizarre exercises that can't be used in songs. My concern is to always explore my limits and be sure that everything I'm practicing can be used in my music—not just to prove that I have independence or coordination.

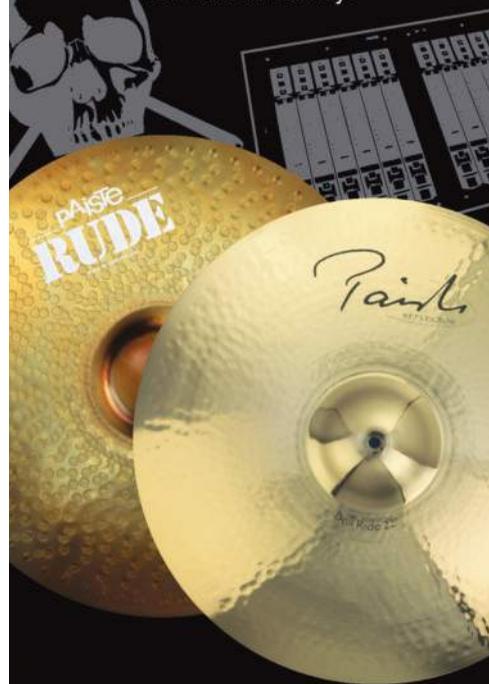
MD: Your book, *Inside My PsychoBook*, is a great tool for drummers looking to expand their skills. With so many amazing drummers doing new things with their feet, how do you advance the art of double bass playing or make it different?

Aquiles: I think about creating patterns that have my identity. Beginners think that all they have to do is practice what they saw on the Internet and they'll sound just like another drummer. They're forgetting the essence of the drums and will only be aware of this when they have to record an album and find they have no ideas for the arrange-



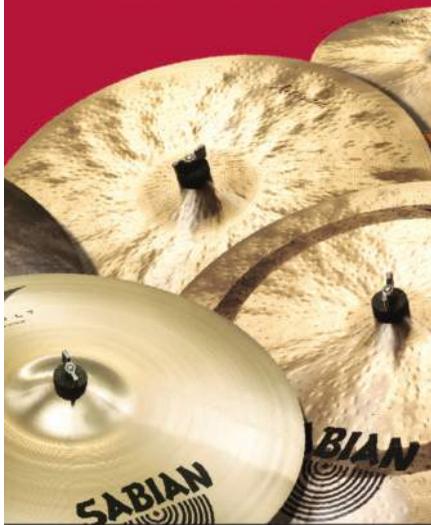
Aquiles Priester # Hangar

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AQUILES PRIESTER

play them, I realized he had naturally developed my style, thus forcing me to study to be able to play the parts! His only recommendation was, "Play things you've never played before and as strangely as possible." The Hangar *Infallible* tracks are also a great challenge, since they were only composed last year. I'm still smoothing out my ideas.

MD: Brazil is musically and culturally rich. You play an extreme type of music that didn't originate there. Do you ever find the surrounding flavors, like samba, influencing you?

Aquiles: Brazilians are born with rhythm in their blood. Samba is not my specialty, but because I played with many ballroom and cover bands early on, samba is incorporated into my style. Of course, it's not the traditional samba—it's the "heavy metal samba." For a certain solo on my new DVD, I mixed so many things that there's a part where I play a samba pattern of "Brasileirinho" followed by a passage of Buddy Rich's "Mercy, Mercy."

MD: What's next for Aquiles Priester?

Aquiles: It's been an excellent couple of years. Hangar recorded a great album, and I produced my new DVD, took part in several drum festivals, and toured Europe with guitar player Vinnie Moore. I also interviewed Mike Portnoy and Nicko McBrain for the Brazilian *Modern Drummer*.

I've always had a dream of playing on the same stage as Nicko, and it happened recently at the Drummer Live Festival in London. Someone I had looked up to my whole life was not only a great drummer but also a great person. After he introduced me, I told the audience that I began playing heavy metal because of Nicko and Iron Maiden. I thought about everything I had done over the last twenty years and how it was the happiest moment of my life. The following day, as we said goodbye, Nicko looked at me and said, "Man, what you said to those kids yesterday was awesome. You showed that we can make our dreams come true."

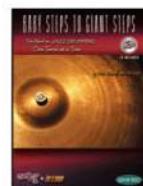


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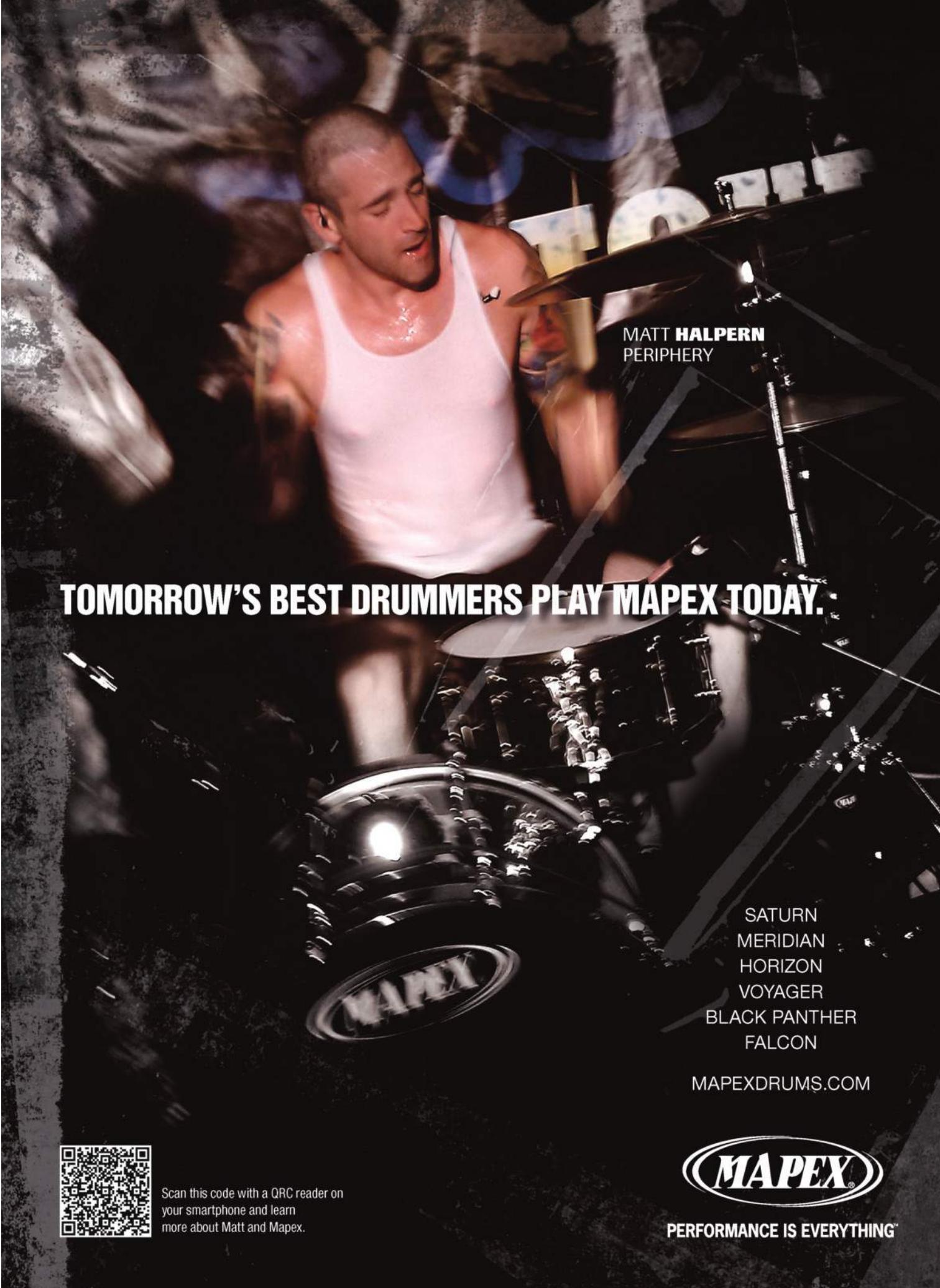
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Hero With A Thousand Faces

GENE HOGLAN

It took having a cartoon alter ego named Pickles to finally put the death metal trailblazer—and the genre itself—at the top of the charts. But to those who aspire to a **drumming career filled with heroic performances and boundless creativity**, the Atomic Clock's reign has long been indisputable.

Story by David Ciauro
Photos by Paul La Raia

Since his 1986 debut with the underground thrash metal band Dark Angel, Gene Hoglan has worked incessantly, compiling a discography of more than thirty-five albums with a slew of metal acts. He's a go-to guy for extreme metal session work and a member of eight bands. He also recently released *The Atomic Clock*, an instructional DVD that was three years in the making, largely due to his extensive work schedule.

Hoglan's two most high-profile gigs, with the industrial metal icons Fear Factory and the animated yet very real Dethklok, have kept Gene on the road or in the studio virtually nonstop, leaving him with roughly fourteen days off in the past few years. Forever the workhorse, Hoglan utilized that "free time" to work on his DVD or to fly somewhere in North America to lay down tracks for one of his other bands. To capture the essence of his whirlwind life in a suitcase, we caught up with the drummer three times over the past year—once in October 2009 while he was on tour with Dethklok, once by phone in January 2010, and once again this past June while he was touring with Fear Factory.

For the unfamiliar, Dethklok is the world's most infamous fictitious death metal band, starring in the Adult Swim car-

toon sitcom phenomenon *Metalocalypse*, co-created and composed by Brendon Small. The show chronicles the Spinal Tap-esque life and times of the group, and its soundtrack of short musical vignettes was eventually turned into a full-length album. *The Dethalbum* (2007) debuted at number twenty-one on the *Billboard* charts, making it the highest-placing death metal album of all time—that is, until Dethklok's sophomore effort, *Dethalbum II* (2009), debuted at number fifteen. Such success warranted a tour, so Small and Hoglan, along with guitarist Mike Keneally (Frank Zappa) and bassist Bryan Beller (Steve Vai), hit the road, teaming up with Mastodon, Converge, and High On Fire for one of the sickest and most diverse metal packages of 2009.

At the sold-out Hammerstein Ballroom show in New York City, I find myself in Dethklok's dressing room, face to face with a true metal legend. Despite his intimidating six-foot-four, black-clad frame, Hoglan is a soft-spoken, straightforward, incredibly humble guy, with a pleasant, relaxed demeanor. We talk at length about all things drumming and metal, including his entrance into a professional music career in 1983, not as a drummer but as a lighting tech for Slayer.



"The more you pay homage to your heroes, the more your own style develops. Even today, that remains true in my playing."

MD: Did your work as a tech with Slayer jump-start your drumming career in any way?

Gene: Yeah. I would sit in and play soundchecks with them so Dave [Lombardo] could hear what the band sounded like out front.

MD: Had you just started playing?

Gene: I'd been playing for a couple years, but I knew how to play their songs. Playing fast and playing double bass just came naturally to me.

MD: Did you learn a lot from Lombardo?

Gene: He was just starting to play

double bass at that time, so I actually coached him through some things, but I by no means taught him how to play double bass.

MD: Do you remember anything you showed him?

Gene: One thing I remember showing him was how I concentrated on my left leg and made sure it came down solidly. He asked me to be his drum tutor after that tour, but I was sixteen and wanted to be in a band, so I pursued that instead.

MD: Are you self-taught?

Gene: Yes, but to this day I'd love to

take lessons. I was lucky enough to be able to learn by osmosis. Listening to my favorite drummers, I could always pick out every little nuance and know exactly what they were playing. I thought that if I could incorporate a little bit of Tommy Aldridge, Neil Peart, Terry Bozzio, Sonny Emory, and Deen Castronovo into my playing, my own style would emerge. The more you pay homage to your heroes, the more your own style develops. Even today, that remains true in my playing.

MD: Who were some of your other early influences?

RECORDINGS

Death Symbolic ("It's a fan favorite, but I definitely overplayed. I should have changed my name to Phil Allgaps for that one!") /// **Strapping Young Lad** City /// **Devin Townsend** Infinity /// **Dethklok** Dethalbum II /// **Meldrum** (yet to be completed) /// **Mechanism** Inspired Horrific /// **The Almighty Punchdrunk** Music For Them Asses

FAVORITES

Kiss Destroyer (Peter Criss) /// **Rush** Hemispheres (Neil Peart) /// **Gino Vannelli** Brother To Brother (Mark Craney) /// **Van Halen** Van Halen, Van Halen II (Alex Van Halen) /// **Raven** Wiped Out (Rob "Wacko" Hunter) /// **Anvil** Forged In Fire (Robb Reiner) /// **UK** Night After Night (Terry Bozzio)

Gene: Peter Criss, Mark Craney, Robb Reiner, Rob "Wacko" Hunter, and Alex Van Halen can certainly be added to that list. I didn't learn to appreciate drummers like Phil Rudd early on because I was into more technical drummers. I didn't understand the tenet of playing in the pocket and how locking in a simple groove is just as amazing as freaking out.

MD: Any drummers you're currently digging?

Gene: Tomas Haake, Derek Roddy, and Bobby Jarzombek are all badass players. I also discovered Stevie Wonder years after I started playing, but he'll forever be one of my favorites.

MD: Stevie is a popular influence on a lot of drummers, regardless of their musical preferences. Do you like to play any other styles besides metal?

Gene: Shuffles—I love playing shuffles. During soundchecks, I'm typically playing shuffles or Stevie Wonder grooves.

MD: You're well known for having monstrous double bass chops, so I was surprised to see you holding up a pair of old Camco single-chain-drive pedals in the trailer for your DVD. Have you always played those?

Gene: Pretty much. Last year I finally retired my first two Camco pedals, which I bought in 1988, and they were five years old when I bought them. They obviously don't make them anymore, but my sister was kind enough to scour eBay and find me a bunch, which she gave me as a Christmas present last year. So now I have four or

GENE'S SETUP



Drums: Pearl Reference series in charcoal gray finish with black chrome hardware

- A.** 8x14 snare
- B.** 10x12 tom
- C.** 12x14 tom
- D.** 16x18 floor tom
- E.** 16x24 bass drum

Sticks: Pro-Mark Millennium II 2B wood-tip

Heads: Evans coated HD Dry snare batter, clear G2 or EC2 tom batters and clear G1 bottoms, and EQ3 bass drum batters and EQ3 Resonant front heads

Electronics: Alesis DM5 drum module, Roland RT-10K/S/T acoustic triggers

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1.** 15" AAX X-Celerator hi-hats (plus 15" AA Metal-X auxiliary pair in Fear Factory setup)
- 2.** 22" HH Power Bell ride
- 3.** 19" Paragon Chinese
- 4.** 18" AAX X-Plosion Fast crash
- 5.** 18" AAX Metal crash
- 6.** 8" Paragon splash (first owned by Neil Peart)
- 7.** 10" Paragon splash (first owned by Neil Peart)
- 8.** 19" AAX Metal crash
- 9.** 19" AAX Chinese or 19" Paragon Chinese

five pairs.

MD: Is it easier to play the short staccato bursts you often use for doubling guitar lines or longer passages of consistent 16ths or 32nds?

Gene: I've been playing those short, staccato-style galloping beats for so long now that they're easy for me. Dark Angel songs required that type of double kick work, so it was just a style I developed many years back. Longer steady strands are the more challenging of the two for me. Back then a lot of double bass patterns in metal consisted of straight 16ths or triplets, but songs like "Time Does Not Heal" or "No One Answers" by Dark Angel sounded best when the double bass followed the guitar.

MD: You also utilize your symmetrical pair of ride cymbals by doubling your footwork in fast clusters. What rides are you using? Every hit is crystal clear, even at feverish tempos.

Gene: They're both Sabian HH Power

Bell rides. The bells on my rides are so important. I rarely use the body of the ride but instead crash the bells. The bells on those rides are huge, something like 8" across, and they cut through everything. Fear Factory uses a lot of ride patterns. [Guitarist] Dino Cazares loves ride patterns. Lots of 16th-note one-hand riding going on. **MD:** In the DVD trailer you also mention playing with leg weights. How has that helped you develop your double bass chops?

Gene: I'd been playing for about five years before I came up with the idea. The concept is very similar to a baseball player putting a donut on his bat and taking warm-up swings in the on-deck circle. Then he knocks the donut off and is able to whip the bat around. I started using weights when I practiced, and when I took them off, my feet were flying. There are fringe benefits as well. They increase stamina, power, and most importantly control,

because you're using a bunch of different muscles to stabilize when you play with leg weights.

MD: I read you played baseball growing up. Was your baseball background the impetus for the leg weights?

Gene: Yep! In 1988 I was prepping to record the Dark Angel album *Leave Scars*, and a week before we went into the studio my double bass chops vanished. Back then I didn't play to a click track, so I probably psyched myself out by practicing the songs a bit faster than they really were, and my feet just stopped working. I was racking my brain trying to think of what I could do to fix the problem, and then the donut concept came to mind. So I tried using leg weights, and sure enough, it worked. More than twenty years later, I'm still using them.

MD: How heavy are the weights?

Gene: Three-pound weights work best for me. I've experimented with weights both heavier and lighter, but three-pound weights feel most comfortable.

MD: Do you mainly use them now to warm up before a show?

Gene: I take about ten to fifteen minutes and do some real simple movements with the leg weights. I saw Dom Famularo do this foot-swivel technique at a clinic, which warms up the feet and helps break up any adhesions. That's on my DVD as well. The best I can explain it without showing it is that the motion is similar to how you'd use your foot to put out a cigarette. It looks a bit silly, but it does the job. I also do this really cool stretching regimen. And I'll do some rudiments, using real heavy marching-corps sticks to warm up with, borrowing from the concept of the leg weights. I actually keep the leg weights on for most of the Dethklok set.

MD: Hold up. You play most of those tunes while wearing leg weights?

Gene: [laughs] Yep! The set is configured in such a way that we play a string of songs and then there's a short skit with the Dethklok characters on the LED screens, and then we play another string of songs and there's another skit. When we come back after that second break, we do a really hard, relentless blast-beat song. So during that break I grab the marching-corps sticks and do some rudiments to keep warm. I pop off the leg weights before the tune starts, and I'm able to get through it and the rest of the set with ease and play really relaxed. I'll also grab a lighter pair of sticks from my bag for that tune.

MD: Lighter than your regular 2Bs?

Gene: Nope, I just try to find the lightest two 2Bs in my bag. A few always feel a bit lighter. I'll try to find any type of advantage to give myself an edge over the difficulty so the song is fun to play. That's why I play most of the set with leg weights—it makes the easier tunes more of a challenge, which makes it fun, and the harder tunes are easier after I take them off.

MD: Have you ever stopped using the weights?

Gene: There have been a few moments throughout the years, but I always find my way back to them. It also depends on the musical nature of the project. With Dethklok and Fear Factory, for example, I like to use them. A band I'm in called Meldrum, however, doesn't require double bass

brutality, so I won't typically use them while working on that project. Another band I'm involved with, the Kehoe Nation, is this crazy psychobilly band, and there's really no double bass at all.

MD: You're like the Kevin Bacon of metal. With all the projects you've been in over the years, it's pretty easy to link you to another band or musician in fewer than six degrees. Other than what we've touched on so far, what projects are you currently involved with?

Gene: I have a new project with members of Meldrum that I'll be working on later in 2010, which is going to be ripping metal songs with some pop sensibility as far as the vocals are concerned. There's Mechanism, whose music is featured heavily on my DVD. That's probably the craziest, hardest drum album I've ever done. I'm really proud of that record, *Inspired Horrific*. There's also Tenet, Zimmers Hole, and Pitch Black Forecast. I might be forgetting a couple as well.

From 1997 to 2006, I played on something like twenty albums, half of which were with Devin Townsend, either on his solo projects or with Strapping Young Lad. And I also do clinics and studio sessions when I get the chance.

MD: You play to a click live with Dethklok, since the show is synched up with video from *Metalocalypse*. Do you use a click live with any other projects?

Gene: This is the only project so far that I've used a click track with live. With Strapping Young Lad, for example, we had the set so well rehearsed that when the keyboardist would start a sample, I was close enough to just make an adjustment, if necessary. Also, in the studio the songs didn't

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GENE HOGLAN

have a set tempo; there were rampings and de-rampings, pushes and pulls. We just adjusted by what worked best for each part. With Dethklok, the tempos are consistent throughout a tune. I understand that when I go out with Fear Factory right after this tour ends, we'll be using a click as well, which is fine.

PUNCHING THE KLOK

Dethklok's live set is a flawlessly executed, mind-blowing metal show. Performances, skits, and song-specific

animations of the 2-D members of the group are displayed on a gigantic LED screen. The human version of Dethklok remains cloaked in darkness on stage, as if Hoglan and company were the pit band for a Broadway play.

From the first mezzanine, I keep my gaze on Hoglan, who's illuminated mostly by the glow coming off the video screen behind him. I'm amazed at how effortlessly he gets through blazing songs like "The Gears" and the odd-time complexities of "Deth Support." Mere minutes after the house lights come on,

I catch up with Gene once more, shocked to see him with scarcely a bead of sweat on his brow and just as relaxed and composed as he had been in the dressing room a few hours earlier.

MD: How are you able to play so fast and powerfully while remaining so relaxed?

Gene: I hit pretty hard, but I have an economy-of-motion thing going on where I'm not super-demonstrative with my arms and legs. I pretty much channel my energy out to my farthest extremities and just explode from there. The best analogy I can give is that of a sniper. Snipers are trained to be completely calm and in control before, during, and after they pull the trigger. That's how I approach playing the drums. I almost get into a Zen mindset. Even though the music I'm playing is fast and aggressive, I'm very relaxed and at a point where I don't really get tired after an hour-long set of nonstop hauling metal.

MD: Humility aside, being self-taught and playing as well and as fast as you do, you clearly have a natural inclination for drumming. Do you believe in the idea of innate ability?

Gene: I'd like to think that if I can do it, anyone can do it. That's the mindset I like to have, and I think it's a positive vibration to send out there. It's 90 percent mental and 10 percent physical. My whole philosophy about drumming has always been "I can do this." I'm the little engine that could. If someone throws some crazy tempo or pattern at me, I tell myself I can do it. I'd like to think my playing is not that special.

MD: The sound was amazing out front. How do you like your kit to sound out front and in your monitor?

Gene: I just want it to sound huge and destroying. Our soundman is amazing. He gets a massive, bone-crushing front-of-house sound. The whole show is so precise because of the LED screens that the sound also has to be spot-on. In my monitors I have the click, which the show relies on, so that needs to be loud enough in the mix that I can reference it, along with the guitars and a little kick. I used to have

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my kick drums off in my cans, and I would just stare at the note chase on my triggers and get a visual. If it was strobing correctly, I knew I was good, because I couldn't stand the sound of the triggers in the monitors.

Working with Fear Factory earlier this year for the *Mechanize* album had me acquiescing to using kick in the monitors because Dino likes to crank the kick drums at rehearsals. Most of the time at rehearsals, we broke-ass bands have these little rinky-dink PA systems to rehearse with, but Fear Factory happens to have a ball-crushing PA system, so I got used to having a ball-crushing kick tone.

MD: Since you play so effortlessly, it made me wonder if some drummers—who perhaps discovered you through Dethklok and aren't familiar with your extensive past in extreme metal—might question how much is really you and how much is “technology.” You started out when there were far fewer, if any, technological luxuries. Especially while recording, you had to play the entire song and didn't have today's tricks to bail you out. How has technology changed the recording industry?

Gene: The recording technology available today really does make it confusing, upon listening to an album, to know what's real or what's enhanced or created. The way your career should go is that your first album is supposed to be kind of rough. Maybe you're nineteen years old and you've been playing for only a couple years, so it's expected that your performance will be rough. The next album should be, “Hey, check this out. This guy is getting better.” Bill Ward from Black Sabbath is a great example of that natural progression. With each album, his playing [got better], and the band as a whole became better players and writers. They were evolving. With technology being what it is today, you never really know who's actually playing. There are some really famous bands, really famous drummers, and the drums are completely designed and created in the studio, and the drummer didn't play it.

I guess I'm an old-school dude. I've always enjoyed the idea of working hard

to achieve something. In the Dark Angel and Death days, we recorded on analog and had to play it right, and there was a magic to capturing the vibe and getting the performance right. There were definitely mistakes on those early records. I can listen back to my early recordings and tell you what's a mistake.

Going into the studio and recording is a matter of pride—you say, “I can do this,” and afterward you're able to say, “I did this!” If the songs are intended to be played live, you have to be able to do it. Every now and then, there's the odd bit of technology, but I have no qualms about pointing it out: “Hey, that part, this thing right here, that's not me playing it, because I couldn't get that part down that day, so they fixed that little section.” It's easier not to hide behind it. I'm very human, and there are times when I can't get something on a certain day, but knowing that 99 percent of the album is all me is important.

MD: So the technology today, and the ability to edit easily with digital rather

than analog, works to your favor, because it makes recording a bit more convenient since you're not reliant upon it.

Gene: Absolutely. If you did eight takes all the way through, it's all you, so for the sake of the strength and permanence of a recording, it's great to be able to take the strongest parts of each take and make one perfect take.

Obviously you want to have your parts down so that very little comping is required. But like I said, it's great to have the luxury of using all of take three, with the exception of one fill from take seven that was executed better and a bridge part from take eight that just felt better. Again, the goal is not to hide behind it.

MD: Do you use triggers while tracking in the studio?

Gene: I've never tracked with triggers, but I'll set them up in the studio because I like to stare at the note-chaser lights on the triggers. In post, the way I like to mix is to have a little acoustic for

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the top end and blend that with a triggered bottom end. With Strapping Young Lad, it was an amalgamation of about four different kick sounds—one being the acoustic, and then three or four for the middle and the bottom. I like to detune one of my kick drums slightly as well, so there's a subtle dynamic that keeps it from sounding stale. It gives it a bit more breadth. Fear Factory, on the other hand, is probably mixed with flat-out triggers, but it's tracked acoustically.

I think a lot of people are under a misconception—they accuse you of triggering when what they're really trying to accuse you of is gridding. Gridding is when what you played is taken and aligned perfectly on a Pro Tools grid. I personally appreciate projects that aren't gridded because there's more of a vibe, but again it all depends on the project, the producer, and the genre. I still bust my ass to lay down tracks that are perfect to me, but if the producer's thing is to chop it all

up and align it to a grid, so be it. I can walk away knowing I played the song. It's a matter of pride.

Triggering, on a whole, is very misunderstood. People get confused with the details. For starters, just because you trigger your drums, that does not mean you're not playing them. However, a lot of guys set up their triggers so sensitively that if you sneeze within five feet of the kick drum, it'll trigger. **MD:** That leads to a much-debated question: Can triggers make you play faster? Let's say I sat behind my kit right now with no triggers and my kick pedal set normally; my feet would naturally peak at a certain bpm. But if I had a super-sensitive trigger, couldn't I then adjust my pedal so the beater is an inch or two off the head, keep a really tight spring tension, and literally shake my feet on the footboards to get the triggers popping off like machine-gun fire? It's like claiming you just ran a marathon when in reality you were wearing Rollerblades.

Gene: Well, that comes down to one's own sense of honor, and there are guys in bands who do that. I've seen it done. I set my sensitivity way back around 37 percent, as opposed to 99 percent, because I like to hit the drums. It's the Bonham in me. I want to feel what I'm playing. I'd prefer to max out at a certain bpm rather than cheat some extra bpm by adjusting my pedals and sensitivity. Again, it really comes down to one's integrity and honesty.

Even worse than triggering is the fact that with today's technology you can now record at half speed and then speed up the tracks without it going Chipmunk. To me, if you can't play the song or do it live, then why bother?

MD: What about the pros of triggers?

Gene: The clarity of the trigger tones in live settings will help keep the mix tight and the drums audible. Contrary to what some people believe, triggers will not mask your mistakes. In fact, they will *highlight* your mistakes, because of the triggers' clarity.

The best pro of triggers in live situations is the "kick tone in a box." When you're an opening band, you aren't always afforded the luxury of sound-checks. You often get a quick line check, and that's it. The sound guy probably doesn't care how the opening band sounds and surely doesn't want to have you sit behind the kit for fifteen minutes pounding out quarter notes until he gets a decent sound. Also, if you're touring overseas, you often wind up playing on some borrowed kit, so the kick tone in a box is a saving grace in those situations. Quite simply, all triggers really do is give you a kick drum, snare drum, or tom sound in a box. You can certainly exploit them to make yourself sound like an absolute demon, or you can use them as a viable resource.

In regard to recording technology, what's funny is that young drummers are now learning licks from albums recorded over the past ten years that were gridded and, in some cases, totally fabricated in the studio, and they're learning to play naturally like this.

MD: We're in an era where editing technology becomes a source of creation.





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BECAUSE SOUND MATTERS

GENE HOGLAN

Gene: There are definitely drum parts being recorded today that are completely created by the producer in the studio, cutting and pasting away to make drum parts. Sadly, some of the drummers these parts are created for are actually receiving praise for their recorded performance. Where's the honor in that?

NO COMPROMISES, NO REGRETS

My last meeting with Hoglan is in Philadelphia on June 6, 2010, before Fear Factory takes the stage at the Trocadero Theatre. Gene walks out of the venue after soundcheck, hops into my car, and greets me with a "What's up, dude?" as if I were an old friend, while handing me a bottle of water. We drive off to the hotel for the final phase of our interview.

MD: Any new gear for the Fear Factory setup?

Gene: I added a second hi-hat above my main one for the 16th-note "disco" beats that are on a lot of the tunes. I've never really played that type of beat in my other projects. Since I've played open-handed when I have played them, I've always done a left-hand-lead paradiddle in order to get my right hand to land on the snare, but Fear Factory tempos get insane, so the X-hat allows me to play alternating 16ths between both hi-hats and still land with my right hand on the snare. Old tunes like "Martyr," "Zero Signal," and "Edgcrusher" are all very hi-hat oriented, while also having crazy double bass going on at the same time.

MD: What's the state of some of your other projects?

Gene: I'm currently mixing some of the Meldrum album on my laptop while on the road. Pitch Black Forecast got to open for Fear Factory on some of the U.S. dates, so I was pulling double duty on those nights. Zimmers Hole and Mechanism both have albums that need to be recorded as well. I try to devote as much time to those projects as humanly possible, but I'm anxiously awaiting cloning technology.

MD: How has the feedback been about the *Atomic Clock* DVD?

Gene: I've been pleasantly overwhelmed by the positive response. My

initial intention was really not to make an "instructional" DVD as much as a really fun yet informative DVD about who I am as a person and a player. I self-financed the project and had a limited amount of time to schedule filming days. I didn't have the luxury of shooting countless performances and picking the perfect ones; it's very spontaneous, even down to some of the songs I played along to.

MD: The Mechanism tunes really showcase your playing, and the songs work well as instrumentals, even

though Chris Valagao of Zimmers Hole sang on the album.

Gene: Yeah, Val did an amazing job with the vocals, but not having vocals kept the songs safe from being "stolen" while also highlighting the drumming, which was obviously the point of the DVD.

MD: Is bouncing around from project to project something you choose to do consciously, or does your career just happen to follow that pattern?

Gene: Some of my favorite drummers when I was growing up, like Tommy

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GENE HOGLAN

Aldridge and Cozy Powell, were always bouncing from band to band, so I guess it's been ingrained in me to follow suit. When I was still in high school I was in a band called Wargod with Michelle [Meldrum], and we were rehearsing three or four times a week. At the same time, the Dark Angel gig came up, but I was loyal to Wargod.

Michelle actually booted me from the band so that I would join Dark Angel, because she knew they were going somewhere. But I kept my loyalty and rehearsed three days with Wargod and four days with Dark Angel, or vice versa, each week for forty-five days straight while still going to high school. So I guess my "work-ethic-o-holism"—or whatever you want to call it—has been there since day one. Even at seventeen, I knew I wanted to be able to look myself in the mirror each morning and be proud of what I was doing.

MD: You're part of a select minority of

for-hire drummers who are able to say they never really had to compromise who they are as players or the music they like to play. How were you able to accomplish that?

Gene: Well, I've always lived a very Spartan life, and that's not for everyone. I didn't start making money until very recently. I definitely turned down opportunities early on in my career to play for bands where one year and one record could have had me financially set for life, but that goes back to my not wanting to compromise myself just because something paid well. All I've ever wanted to do was play drums for a living, and I'm lucky that I've lived my dream of playing cool music with cool people and stayed passionate about it at the same time. I always figured it was going to pay off someday, but I was still perfectly content knowing that if it didn't, I could look back and say I made some killer music and had a great time doing so.



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4 [durable] (add) - 1. able to withstand extreme impact 2. tough





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DEVIN TOWNSEND

As he scorches the earth on his first headlining solo tour, the iconic metal artist and notorious producer, **who's worked with everyone from Steve Vai and Skinny Puppy to GWAR and Lamb Of God**, reminds us mere mortals what it requires for a drummer to be truly godlike.

by Waleed Rashidi

Canadian vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Devin Townsend knows drums. "As much as I have no physical coordination at the kit," he says, "I do have a thorough understanding of the instrument. I know what I like, I know exactly which subtleties make a drummer excellent versus average, and I've played with some incredible drummers."

Incredible indeed. Just pan across the liner notes of his extensive discography—or toss on a few sample tracks—and you'll find that Townsend works with the best in the business, including his Strapping Young Lad bandmate (and this month's

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PATENT PENDING

MD cover artist) Gene Hoglan. Townsend shares the diligence, dedication, and creative, collaborative mindset of the drummers in his various groups, the latest of which is the Devin Townsend Project.

"From my point of view as a producer and a musician," Townsend says, "a drummer's identity is typically in connection to the snare. With some drummers—Gavin Harrison, for example—the way their wrists interact between the stick and the skins really gives an indication of their per-

"Rhythm is an essential element to any riff. The way the riffs are in my head, it's like, 'That's where the snare is, that's what the feel is, that's where the offbeats go.'"

sonality. And with Gene Hoglan, right off the bat, the first thing I noticed was the way his snare sounded. It has this connection, brings out the top end, and also really emphasizes the low end. And it really defined what I was looking for when we continued to produce records from there on out."

Townsend even seems to pick up on drumming nuances that kit players themselves might miss. "There are some drummers," he explains, "that once the beater hits the kick, they keep the beater against the head slightly longer than other drummers. That makes for a real difference in sound, especially in tracking. And some drummers just bash the cymbals. The way they hit, it's not like they're reacting with the metal. Other guys watch how the cymbal moves and catch it on the upswing. You hear the actual sound of the metal."

Though Townsend jokingly calls himself "the world's absolute worst drummer," it's likely he's being overly modest. After all, if the parts he's programmed over the years are any indication, he does have one heck of a creative drummer's brain. According to Townsend, who uses EZdrummer, Drumkit From Hell, Superior Drummer, and BFD to create demos, "Rhythm is an essential element to any riff. The way the riffs are in my head, it's like, 'That's where the snare is, that's what the feel is, that's where the offbeats go.' It's very easy for me to conceptualize drumbeats. But in terms of me sitting down to play, it's like, 'Dude, pat your head and rub your belly.' I can't do it!"

Townsend's recently released *Addicted* recording, the second in a four-album series, features drummer Ryan Van Poederoyen, who had to meet the band leader's exacting standards. "When I was in Strapping," Townsend says, "I was looking for a local band. Ryan was a local guy who

had a reputation for being a real solid, hard-hitting technical drummer. When it came time for me to represent twenty years of my solo material, I wanted people who could accurately represent all these things I had done in the past, to a tee. 'Interpretation' is not really an option at this point. What I'm trying to do with my live performances is present the music like it was recorded. It was a very easy decision for me to go with Ryan because of his stamina and his ability to focus on something

until it's perfect—plus his diligence and technical skills. It was great for me to have someone who could step in, in a kind of session musician capacity, and study the back catalog and present every song as it should be."

As for working with this month's cover star, Townsend speaks highly of the intense metal slammer, calling Hoglan "an artist before he's a drummer" and noting his maturity and confidence in being able to work with various components in a song.

"Gene can shift the snare by one hit every four bars because he hears that how it would change the groove ultimately changes the tone of the riff," Townsend says. "I remember one thing in particular with Gene that was an absolute epiphany for me. We were writing for the [Strapping Young Lad] record *The New Black*, and we had a real short period of time to perfect that. There was one part in the song 'Monument.' Number one, Gene came up with the riff on guitar. And I remember I had this idea: I wanted the trombones to do a slide. I said to him, here's what I'm thinking. And at that part he just stopped playing, for like three-quarters of a beat. A lot of times drummers would say, 'Oh, you need something cool in there?' and would [play a fill]. But that's confidence, where the drummer stops, just because it makes the riff cooler.

"It's not just drummers, but musicians in general," Townsend adds. "Everybody's got a lot invested in their role, as opposed to the bigger picture. So when you find a drummer like Gene, who can play technical parts that very few people can play but still has the foresight to use the drums as a contribution to the big picture—for me, *that's* what makes a drummer incredible."

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Chops Builders

Part 8: Single Three

by Bill Bachman



For this month's Chops Builder, we're going to look at the single three. This rudiment consists of groups of three notes, with the RLR and LRL stickings alternating back and forth. It's a great pattern for building even stick control from hand to hand, and it's also very beneficial for building double strokes once you see the bigger rhythm played by the lead hand. The single three can be used very creatively when put into different rhythmic placements and voiced around the drumkit. Drum gods Billy Cobham, Simon Phillips, and Neil Peart have done this to great effect.

Technically speaking, the single three is a very simple rudiment to play. All of the strokes should be played as relaxed free strokes (aka full or legato strokes), where the sticks rebound by themselves much like a dribbling basketball. The challenge is to play the single three perfectly relaxed, with accurate rhythmic placement and good flow, especially

when you move the rudiment to different positions rhythmically and/or change lead hands.

When you dissect the single three, you find that the lead hand plays a very familiar part: double strokes. If you have good control of the double-stroke roll, then it's just a matter of dropping in a note in the middle of the double with the opposite hand. The logic of this may be simple, but feeling the doubles in your hands while playing single threes is a different matter entirely. Once you're able to feel the doubles smoothly within the single threes, you'll be able to play them with better sound quality, a more relaxed flow, and greater speed.

The following exercises develop single threes by separating the hands and isolating them in different rhythmic locations, in triplet and duple frameworks. Be sure to play the double strokes consistently from the check pattern into the single threes. When you add the fill-in single stroke, the lead hand that plays the double

strokes shouldn't tighten up or change its rhythm or motion. It's very important that the last stroke of each single three is a true full stroke, where it rebounds up smoothly and is instantly ready to play again. Since most of the exercises go from doubles to single threes, it's a good idea to practice playing the doubles on a drum or a pad and then add the inner beats on a different sound source. In doing this, you will be able to hear whether the doubles stay perfectly consistent when the inner beats are added.

Single threes will become even more challenging as we put them in different places rhythmically. Some placements will be familiar, while others may seem very strange. Practice these exercises with a metronome, and tap your foot so you have a musical point of reference. Go slowly, and take the time to learn each rhythmic placement thoroughly so you can play single threes with a good feel. Good luck!

1

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

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

2

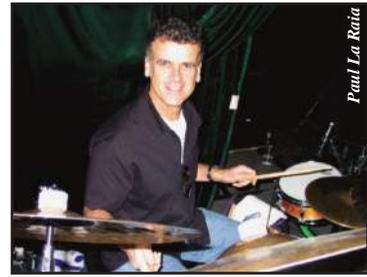
R R L L R R L L R R L L R L R L R L R L R L
L L R R L L R R L L R R L R L R L R L R L R

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

The Precision Test

One Sticking, Eighty Different Ways

by David Garibaldi



In many of my articles I've talked about two sticking concepts found in all the drumming we do: layered, where we play multiple sound sources at once, and linear, where no two limbs play together. This month we'll further develop the material explored in a previous article, "Building Precision, Accuracy, And Groove," which appeared in the November 2008 issue of *Modern Drummer*. The linear sticking we'll use here is a twist on the one used in that piece.

One of my teachers used to say that repetition is the mother of learning. If you want a deeper groove, repetition is absolutely necessary. Not to mention that there's a definite benefit to musicians. Practicing this material at a variety of tempos will help you develop the muscle memory that comes only from repetition.

Muscle memory? What's that? Here's a simple definition from Wikipedia: "Muscle memory, also known as motor memory, is a form of procedural memory that involves consolidating a specific motor task into memory through repetition. When a movement is repeated over time, a long-term muscle memory is created for that task, eventually allowing it to be performed without conscious

effort. This process decreases the need for attention and creates maximum efficiency within the motor and memory systems."

That definition is a little technical, but it basically tells us that if we get to work, we'll see results! The challenges in this study are:

1. An unusual sticking pattern using all four limbs
2. The use of two hi-hats
3. The permutation of rhythms
4. Getting a transparent texture on the snare drum through ghost notes
5. Voice substitution

Exercise 1 is the base idea, and it's followed by fifteen permutations. The notated hi-hat voice is the right hi-hat, which can be placed anywhere that's comfortable on the right side of the drumset in order to put your hands in an open position. The left-side hi-hat is notated inside the staff. (If you're playing a left-handed setup, then all of these instructions are reversed.) If you don't have a second hi-hat, try a cowbell instead. The focus should be on playing with precision. Once you can perform Exercise 1 in its entirety, start working through the permutations.

1
L L F F R L R L L F F R L R L R

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

Exercises A–D are additional variations that include instructions for using voice substitutions. After you learn those, apply the permutation concept by shifting the rhythm back one 16th note at a time. This will give you a total of eighty exercises to practice.

This variation substitutes left-foot hi-hat for one of the bass drum notes.

This variation substitutes left-hand hi-hat for the snare drum ghost notes.

This variation has the floor tom substituting for one of the right-hand hi-hat notes.

This variation replaces a snare accent with an open hi-hat note played with the left hand.

The speed at which you can move through this material depends on your desire and current level of technical facility. The main thing is to relax, moving step by step through each layer of challenge. Focus on making each exercise swing and groove. It will take some time, so think of it as a long-term project.

When facing challenges, perspective is important. A few things to remember:

1. Do what you must to be inspired. Motivation is the engine of success.
2. Your dreams are your fuel.
3. If I can do it, so can you.
4. If we can believe it, we can receive it.

Success never comes before work. That said, if you have patience and the will and discipline to work, success will come. With faith and focus, anything is possible. Enjoy!

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



Linear Fills

Part 3: 32nd Notes

by Mike Johnston



MUSIC KEY

| | |
|------|---|
| H.H. | X |
| T.T. | ● |
| S.D. | ● |
| F.T. | ● |
| B.D. | ● |

Playing trends come and go in drumming. Some ideas are easy to execute, and some are difficult. Thankfully, the concept of linear drumming is about as simple as it comes, with the basic rule being that no two limbs play at the same time. Pretty straightforward, right? The great thing about linear drumming is that practicing it teaches you how to have a conversation between your hands and feet.

Last month we took things to a new level by changing our subdivision from 16th notes to 16th-note triplets. Now we'll be stepping things up even further with a new subdivision: 32nd notes. People tend to think of 32nd notes as being fast, but in reality a subdivision is neither fast nor slow until it's bound to a consistent pulse. (Thirty-second notes aren't very fast when they're played at 5 beats per minute.)

If you're new to this subdivision, try slowing your metronome down to 50 bpm, and remember that there are eight notes per beat. This will help get your ear and your body used to 32nd notes.

Just like in the first two installments of this series, we'll start by playing a linear pattern between the snare and kick. Then, step by step, we'll add simple changes such as movement and dynamics to vary the sound of the pattern. The better you master the first step, the easier the next four steps will be.

PATTERN 1

To begin, play the linear pattern between the snare and kick drum as written.

1

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RLRL

Now move your right hand to the hi-hat. The pattern doesn't change, but the sound does.

2

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RLRL

Next, bring in some accents. This step is crucial for creating the texture and feel we're going for.

3

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RLRL



This time, move the right hand to the floor tom to bring in a new sound. Keep the dynamics the same as they were in Example 3.

4

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RLRL

Finally, alternate your right hand between the floor tom and the first rack tom. This last step will help you be able to play the linear pattern anywhere on your drumset.

5

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RLRL

PATTERN 2

Here's another 32nd-note pattern to work with. Again, start by playing the rhythm between the snare and kick drum.

6

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RL RL

Now move your right hand to the hi-hat.

7

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RL RL

Bring in the accents to create texture and feel.

8

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RL RL

When you move the right hand to the floor tom, remember to keep the dynamics the same as they were in Example 8.

9

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RL RL RL

Now alternate your right hand between the floor tom and the first rack tom. This last step will help you be able to play the linear pattern anywhere on your drumset.

10

RL RL RLRL RLRL RL RLRL RL RL RL

You can check out a video of me demonstrating these examples at moderndrummer.com.

Mike Johnston teaches out of the mikeslessons.com facility in Sacramento, California, where he offers live online drum lessons and international drum camps.



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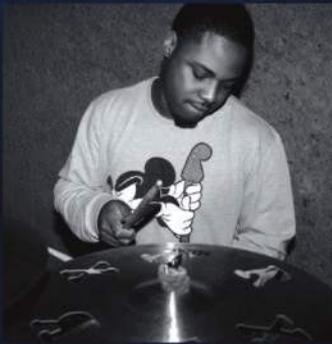
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MIKE PORTNOY

Channeling The Rev With **Avenged Sevenfold** by Ken Micallef

"I am not replacing Jimmy," Mike Portnoy says regarding his performance on Avenged Sevenfold's *Nightmare*. "I'm just helping to keep his spirit alive on the new album."

Stepping in for drummer Jimmy "the Rev" Sullivan after his death in December 2009, Portnoy—long Sullivan's favorite drummer—was honored when the group asked him to record *Nightmare*. "I was surprised to be asked," Portnoy says, "but the band and I had been talking. I wanted to be there for them during this sad time. It is so tragic. Jimmy was their only drummer, and they had grown up together, since grade school. Ultimately I wasn't trying to fill Jimmy's shoes, just lace them up for him."

Playing what he describes as "a mini Dream Theater kit," Portnoy used a rig that included three rack toms, four Octobans, two floor toms, and a gong drum. He also played Sullivan's Sabian

ride cymbal for the entire album. "That ride would ring for days," Mike says. "It was the ride he played on all their albums and tours. It would ring for minutes after a take, like the end of *Sgt. Pepper's*, the chord that lasted forever."

Portnoy developed his parts strictly from Sullivan's original demos, which were played on an electronic kit and were ultimately unsuitable for the album. Once he charted the parts, Portnoy recorded basic tracks with lead guitarist Synyster Gates and bassist Johnny Christ, who gave advice about Sullivan's character and aesthetic.

"There were challenges," Portnoy says. "I had to learn the Rev's style. Strangely enough, his style was already so influenced by me that it was almost full circle. But there were other influences too—the way Jimmy would pump quarter notes on the kick drum throughout a groove, or

how he would play double bass while a fill was happening on top.

"This is the fans' first taste of me with Avenged Sevenfold," Mike adds. "One of my biggest concerns was how defensive they would be over the Rev's drum throne. I'm grateful that they've been welcoming."

What follows is a track-by-track breakdown of *Nightmare*, as told by Portnoy himself.

"NIGHTMARE"

We rolled my Tama set into the studio, so when it came time to play the fills I utilized my Octobans. The choruses are 16th notes on the bass drums with some ride bell patterns on top, but underneath the guitar solo there are 32nd-note bass drum ruffs going on. I knew that "Nightmare" would be a great album opener—Avenged Sevenfold always has great

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MIKE PORTNOY

opening tracks. They always come out of the gate big.

“WELCOME TO THE FAMILY”

“Welcome To The Family” is essentially exactly what Jimmy played on the demos. Only the opening drum fill is different. He played snare drum on the opening downbeat, but they wanted me to improvise an intro. Those 16ths around the kit are a big part of my style, and Jimmy’s as well. My breaking up the drum pattern to match the chorus vocal phrasing is just following Jimmy’s original demo. His patterns and parts were worked out very meticulously for this song. I followed them as closely as possible. The moments that are more mine are the fills going into and out of sections.

“DANGER LINE”

The marching-corps intro was on Jimmy’s demo. That took me the longest to chart out. It was a very syncopated intro. Dream Theater had just recorded a track called “Raw Dog” for the *God Of War III* soundtrack, and it begins almost exactly the same way, with that crazy syncopated pattern on the snare and the kick drums joining in on the repeat. The rest of the tune is an upbeat, Orange County pop-punk groove that I had never played before. Then the verses have a very strange pattern on the hi-hat and splashes. Jimmy’s demo had a weird thing on top. When I tracked, they wanted me to improvise. I was thinking Stewart Copeland while the kick and snare were pumping a half-time groove. So that’s Jimmy’s main idea, along with my improvisation.

“BURIED ALIVE”

This felt like the Dream Theater song “Endless Sacrifice.” It had a Metallica vibe as well. I was playing Jimmy’s part exactly. But it’s a style that’s familiar to me. Again, it’s me copying Jimmy, with him already having a bit of my style. That full-circle thing happened a lot.

“NATURAL BORN KILLER”

Those single-stroke rolls in the intro were all the Rev. I copped his parts almost entirely on the grooves. The only things that are me are the little splash and cymbal fills I’m doing each time before the vocal phrasing. The double bass and driving downbeats and upbeats—those are all Jimmy’s patterns. I only added the nuance fills. Jimmy sang on the original demo, as he did on many of the demos.

“SO FAR AWAY”

I’m thinking John Bonham and Ringo Starr here, just playing straight-ahead grooves.

I played Ringo fills on the second verse, something out of “A Day In The Life.” Ringo is a huge part of my blood and my body. This song and “Tonight The World Dies” were recorded on a smaller drumkit, to keep me more groove oriented. This song was written for Jimmy. You really feel how tragic the band’s loss is.

“GOD HATES US”

This is one of my favorite tracks on the album, and it’s one of the heaviest songs I’ve ever played. It feels like Pantera or Lamb Of God. Once again, I was following the demo. I just had to slam down the patterns.

“VICTIM”

“Victim” is Pink Floyd meets Metallica, which is what Dream Theater has been doing for twenty years, so it was a natural kind of world for me.

“TONIGHT THE WORLD DIES”

This is the other track recorded on a smaller setup. I don’t often get to embrace that pocket-oriented style. When you play a song like that, you have to go into a John Bonham/Dave Grohl headspace. Those guys play behind the beat, and I love emulating that style. Sometimes I like drummers who play ahead of the beat, like Stewart Copeland. You do what’s called for.

“FICTION”

This track is one-thousand-percent Jimmy. I don’t know if I would have played the drum parts that way—I would have done less. It’s such a strange heart-felt song for those guys. The original demo had Jimmy playing piano and drums and singing. When I tracked the song, I played along to his demo. The band played all the other tracks with me, but this was just me and the Rev playing a duet. The song was originally called “Death.” It’s the last song Jimmy wrote. I had to play it exactly as he left it.

“SAVE ME”

This song is one continuous take. For most bands, including Avenged Sevenfold, an eleven-minute song would be a huge undertaking. But I’m used to Dream Theater and Transatlantic—those fifteen-, twenty-, and thirty-minute songs—so eleven minutes is a cakewalk. I’m not downplaying the epic portions of the song, but the arrangement reminds me of Dream Theater. These guys really show their progressive background here. And it’s my favorite drumming on the album.





Nicko McBrain
Iron Maiden

Photo by
John McMurtrie

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GEARING UP

Drumkit Details, On Stage And Up Close

Interviews and photos by Sayre Berman

Crosby, Stills & Nash/Joe Walsh's **JOE VITALE**

Drums: DW Collector's series in amber to tobacco dark burst finish with chrome horizontal outer grain (with 3-ply reinforcement hoops on kick and toms)

A. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 piccolo chrome-on-steel snare/timbale

B. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 bamboo snare

C. 8x10 VLT tom

D. 9x12 VLT tom

E. 10x13 VLT tom

F. 13x15 VLT-X floor tom

G. 14x16 VLT-X floor tom

H. 16x22 VLX bass drum

"John Good, the executive vice president at DW, loves making drums," Vitale says.

"When I visit him at the factory, he's always so excited to show me something new that he's working on. He's never without a new idea, like this bamboo snare. I have an arsenal of snares, but this one works great with CSN. Bamboo has the warmth of wood and the crack of metal."

Heads: Remo Powerstroke 3 main snare batter, Evans coated G2 tom batters, Evans clear EQ4 kick batter



Cymbals: Sabian

1. 14" AA Regular hi-hats

2. 16" AA Medium Thin crash

3. 17" AA Medium Thin crash

4. 18" AA Medium Thin crash

5. 21" HH Raw Bell Dry ride

6. 15" Rock hi-hats (stationary)

7. 19" AA Medium Thin crash

"The 21" HH Raw Bell Dry ride is perfect for all my needs. I feel 20" rides sometimes have too small of a sound for me, and 22" rides tend to run away. These cymbals are tough, night after night."

Sticks: Vic Firth 5B and 55A hickory wood-tip sticks, homemade "powder puff" bass drum beater

"The powder puff is my own little invention. They're round makeup sponges that you can get in any drugstore. I use these for the softer ballads, where I want the bass drum to sound more like a heartbeat. Regular beaters are just too heavy. Rather than change the beater, which is a pain when you're playing live, or change my attack, I figured out how to soften the sound. I just make a loop with some gaffer tape, put it on the back of the powder puff, and then stick it on the beater. The guys really like it on tunes like 'Helplessly Hoping' and 'Our House.' When I want to rock, I just reach down and peel it off."

Hardware: DW, including 5002AD3 double bass drum pedal, 5100 throne, 9700 cymbal stands, 9300 snare stand, and SM991 tom clamp





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Brooks And Dunn's **TREY GRAY**

Drums: Spaun Custom series (100 percent maple)

- A.** 7x14 Trey Gray signature snare (13-ply birch/maple hybrid shell)
- B.** 8x12 rack tom
- C.** 16x16 floor tom
- D.** 20x22 bass drum

"Ronnie [Dunn] decided he wanted a big kit this year," Gray explains. "I usually play just two toms and a kick drum. So this year, to be kind of funny, we made three 8x12 toms—tuned exactly the same—and a 16x16 floor tom. The kicks are a little longer than what I would typically opt for because we have this eight-foot-wide cow skull that spans the kit."

"Spaun approached me to design a signature snare drum, and a portion of the proceeds for its sales go to my charity, Huntington's Disease Society Of America [HDSA.org]. The snare has eight plies of birch on the outside and five plies of maple on the inside. The top bearing edge is cut at a sharp 45-degree angle. The bottom is rounded, old-school style, with deep snare beds like an old Gretsch."

Heads: Aquarian coated Reverse Dot Response 2 snare batter and Classic Clear

bottom, clear Studio-X tom batters and Classic Clear bot-toms, and Super-Kick III bass drum batters and custom Spaun front heads

"I'm very '70s when it comes to [kick] drum sounds, so I deaden both heads. I've been using square Danmar beaters for years now because they have great slap and attack, yet they produce a warm sound."

Cymbals: Sabian

- 1.** 18" hi-hats (Signature Saturation crash top, AA Medium crash bottom)
- 2.** 22" AA Medium Thin crash
- 3.** 22" Signature Liquid ride

"I have *big* cymbals. The 22" Liquid ride has a flange around the edge, so I can crash on it too. Crash, ride, hats... that's really all you need."

Hardware: Custom DW rack made by John Douglas of Spaun, plus DW 9000 pedals
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of the box. I don't even know what tension I have them at—all I know is that they were ready to rock!"

Sticks: Vic Firth X5B with nylon tip, Ahead Tommy Lee signature

"Going back to my Faith Hill days, I had some bursitis in my left shoulder. Now, because of Huntington's disease, I have some muscle issues with my left side. So I will use the Ahead Tommy Lee stick in my left hand and a Vic Firth X5B in my right."



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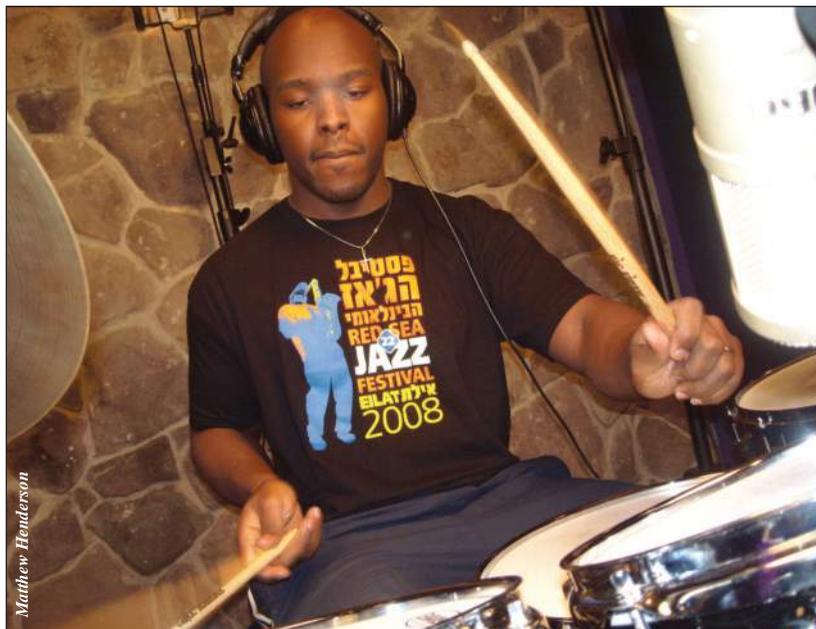
by Jeff Potter

A fountain of positive energy, dynamic jazzer Ulysses Owens Jr. learned he had the power to move people through the drums in Jacksonville, Florida, where his two-year-old tush first sat on a throne. "My mother was a choir director," he says. "She would take me to rehearsal and sit me by the drums, where she could make sure I wasn't getting into trouble. One day they went for a break, and I got up and started playing. My first ten years of playing was gospel drumming." An immersion in jazz followed, leading Owens to a full Juilliard scholarship and a quick circulation among New York jazz heavies.

This contender for major status in the new twentysomething jazz generation has firm roots in tradition teamed with boatloads of technique. "I work on my chops all the time and make sure there's nothing I can't do in terms of getting around the drums," Owens says, "but that's not my first focus. I always want to make the band feel good. My main focus is doing whatever I can to make the *music* special."

Awareness of jazz history has been a priority and an ongoing inspiration for Ulysses, who recently released his debut album as a leader, *It's Time For U*, under the group name U.O. Project. "I grew up loving Philly Joe Jones, Sid Catlett, Kenny Clarke, and Billy Higgins, and later I got into players like William Kennedy, Greg Hutchinson, Steve Jordan, Joey Baron, and Karriem Riggins." Citing a favorite, Lewis Nash, Owens says, "I can *feel* him, but he's not brash. Likewise, it's my desire to be one of the most present, intense drummers you will ever hear, but that doesn't necessarily mean *loud*. Intensity is having a full presence, a full sound, and a full passion."

Embracing the opportunity to work under a jazz great, Owens relishes his tutelage with bass ace Christian McBride. "On a recording session with the big band," the drummer says, "we were doing one of the tunes where I can really get some stuff in. There's a four-bar fill before the band comes in. So I had a really hip



thing I wanted to get in. I played it, and he cut the band off and said, 'Hey, that was hip. But you've got seventeen mouths to feed.'" Owens laughs, then adds, "In a smaller group, he'd let me cut loose, but I've got *responsibility* here."

A must-see YouTube clip features Owens playing "Cherokee" with McBride at a hellacious tempo (see Ulysses' site, usojazzy.com), starting with brushes and building to sticks. "I didn't even learn to keep up with it till we got on tour," Owens says. "The biggest thing on a tempo like that is paying attention to who's leading it, and with something that fast the most definite thing is the bass. So I try to make sure I'm not chasing the beat but I'm on top of it. When you're shedding that, it's good to tap your foot on 1 and 3 as opposed to the upside of 2 and 4. It's easier to ground it and keep it from going away."

Along with the importance of time and feel, Owens preaches the value of developing a good sound. "When I first studied with Kenny Washington," he

recalls, "I was used to playing on the edge [of the snare] for buzz rolls and soft dynamics. But Kenny said, 'Play *everything* in the center of the drum. You've got to learn how to bring sound *out* of the drum and how to bring sound *into* the drum.'"

Whether accompanying the singer Kurt Elling ("I play with him like he's a horn"), driving McBride's big band ("I've got to chop wood, swing hard, and think orchestrally"), or funking it up in a recent big-band tribute to James Brown featuring Maceo Parker and Fred Wesley, Owens loves the challenge of changing hats and tailoring his feel and sound to each format. "I try not to change my setup too much," he says. "I try to alter my *touch*. When it really gets down to it, bro, it's what's in your hands."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Owens plays Yamaha Maple Custom Absolute drums in natural wood finish, including a 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ ×10 tom, an 8×12 tom, a 14×14 floor tom, and a 14×18 bass drum, plus a 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ×14 maple Craviotto snare drum. His Zildjian cymbals include 13" Armand hi-hats, a 20" prototype Bounce ride with one rivet, an 18" Constantinople Thin crash, an 18" K EFX crash, and either a 22" Bounce ride or a Constantinople Medium Thin Low. He uses Remo coated Ambassadors on all drums, Vic Firth AJ2 sticks and Jazz Heritage brushes, and Protecator cases.



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ROSS JARMAN

The Crib's' drummer plays through the pain.

by Patrick Berkery

Under regular circumstances, Ross Jarman's drumming on the Crib's' fourth album, 2009's *Ignore The Ignorant*, would be considered impressive. Jarman's playing adds might to the English band's guitar pop, marked by tempo surges that allow songs like "We Were Aborted" room to breathe and by mighty accents like the Dave Grohl-esque tom flams in the ballad "Save Your Secrets," a simple part that sparks a cathartic release. But the fact that Jarman unknowingly tracked these tunes and more with a broken left wrist—an injury he sustained while skateboarding during recording sessions in Los Angeles—makes his performance seem utterly amazing.

You might think Jarman must have a masochistic streak to endure such pain for his art. Truth is, he was simply a bad patient who was misdiagnosed. Initially believing the wrist was just sprained (even though it had swelled to twice its normal size), Jarman went against the doctor's orders of six to eight weeks' rest and was back behind the kit three days after his accident.

"I had an X-ray, and they said I'd just badly sprained it," Ross says. "At that point we'd only gotten one drum track down. So after three days of taking Vicodin and ibuprofen to get the swelling down—I even tried acupuncture—I started recording again. We had to start off with some

slower tracks because it was extremely painful.

"And then about a week later I got a letter saying that upon further inspection I had a fracture. If I'd known that, we would have probably canceled the recording session. It was one of those weird things where I learned to block the pain out, but you still have to use your wrist. I just strapped it up the best I could. I had to bite my teeth and have a wooden spoon in my mouth while I was playing."

Learning how to deal with the lingering effects of the broken wrist while playing live presented another challenge. Several months off between recording and touring allowed the healing process to take its course—but when the band hit the road, Jarman felt the injury flare up, particularly during a damp and chilly stretch on the East Coast.

"When we started touring, it was fine," Ross recalls. "But then I started having pains during and after the shows, so I began seeing a wrist specialist. Looking back, it was probably a bit early to be hitting it so hard



Andrew Youssef

on the road, doing five shows a week. And I tend to rimshot a lot on the snare; that's when I was really feeling it. I was even icing down after we played, and it wasn't making that much difference.

"It's cleared up a little bit now," the drummer adds. "I'm stretching, which I never used to do. And I'm trying to change my technique—playing as loose as I can but striking hard. I'm young enough that I'll get over it, I guess."

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Jarman plays Highwood drums, including a 5x14 snare, an 8x12 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 16x22 bass drum. His cymbal setup consists of 14" K Custom Dark hi-hats, an 18" K Custom Dark crash, and a 20" A Custom ride, all from Zildjian, as well as a vintage 18" Zyn 5-Star Super crash. He uses DW vintage-style flush-base cymbal stands, a Tama Iron Cobra hi-hat stand and bass drum pedal, and Remo heads, including a coated Pinstripe on the snare, coated Emperors on the toms, and a Powerstroke 3 on the bass drum. Jarman's stick of choice is the Vic Firth Dave Weckl signature model.



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Nashville Session Drummer

NICK BUDA

The Loft

Story by Michael Dawson
Photos by Rick Malkin

South African-born/Nashville-based session drummer Nick Buda, whose recording credits include country star Taylor Swift's hit 2008 album, *Fearless*, and singer-songwriter Jewel's recent *Sweet And Wild*, owns a beautiful house in a quiet, reserved neighborhood just south of the city. Inside, there's very little clue to what Buda does for a living, with not even a single drumstick in plain sight. "The one thing I knew I wanted was to not see drums whenever I'm not working," Nick says while walking us up a staircase leading to a single door that conceals his studio, the Loft, from the remainder of the house. "I wasn't going to put the drums in a bedroom. I wanted a space that was set up just for them."



"When my wife and I first moved into the house, this space was completely unfinished," Buda continues after opening the door and revealing a clean and compact tracking room, complete with hardwood floors, a drum riser, and a gorgeous Gretsch kit. "The space was open to the rafters, and there weren't any baseboards or anything. I put in a double subfloor to help minimize vibration underneath, and I framed out the room. It's only about 230 square feet, but the ceiling is slanted, and it goes up fifteen



feet at the highest point. It's just enough space to get a really big drum sound. But from the outside you wouldn't guess there's anything behind the door."

Buda spends most of his time tracking demos and masters in big commercial studios around Nashville, but he's been using the Loft for independent projects, overdubs, and his own productions. "It's fun to produce, not just thinking about drums but also thinking about the big picture of the song," he says.

To prepare the room for recording, Buda let common sense and his well-tuned ears guide him. "I built baffles that I hung on the walls," he explains. "It's actually a very live room, which is a great problem to have."

GEAR BOX



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Pro-Tools Digi 002 (modified by Black Lion Audio)
API 3124 four-channel preamp
DBX 386 dual vacuum tube preamp
Focusrite OctoPre eight-channel preamp
Empirical Labs EL8 Distressor compressor
TL Audio dual-valve preamp/compressor
M-Audio BX8a monitor speakers

MICROPHONES

Shure Beta 52A, SM57, and SM7A
Audio-Technica 4033B
Avantone drum mics (CK-1 overheads, Atom for toms, ADM for snare, Mondo for bass drum) and CR-14 ribbon mics
Digital Reference DR-CX1
Audix D2
Røde NT5
Sennheiser e 835
MXL 990, 991, and V63M

DRUMSETS

Gretsch (18x22 bass drum, 9x12 rack tom, 12x14 and 14x16 floor toms)
Ludwig early-'70s butcher-block maple (16x22 bass drum, 9x13 rack tom, 16x16 floor tom)

SNARES

George Way 6 1/2x14 solid-shell maple
Ludwig 6 1/2x14 hammered brass, 5x14 400 (from 1971), late-'60s 6 1/2x14 maple, 5x14 and 6 1/2x14 Black Beauty
Early-'70s Rogers 5x14 Powertone
Brady 6 1/2x14 jarrah block
Pork Pie 6x12 maple
Tama stave-shell 3x14 piccolo
Noble And Cooley 4 3/4x14 Alloy Classic
GMS 5 1/2x14 maple
Gretsch 8x14 hammered brass

CYMBALS

Zildjian, including K Custom Darks, Constantinoples, 19" Armand "Beautiful Baby" ride, 20" K Custom ride, and 13", 14", and 16" hi-hats

HEADS

Evans coated G1, G2, or Power Center snare batters and Hazy 300 bottoms; coated G1, clear G2, or clear EC2 tom batters and clear G1 bottoms; clear EQ1 or EMAD bass drum batters and EMAD Resonant front heads

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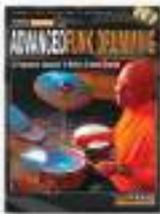
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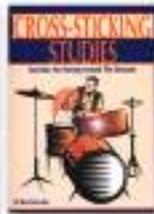
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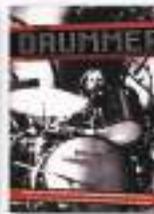
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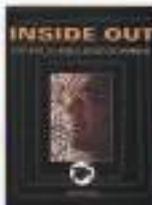
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One thing we noticed about the Loft is that it isn't overrun with the latest, greatest recording gear. There are just a few choice pieces that Buda feels he needs in

order to get the sounds he hears in his head. "I learned from Taylor's engineer Chad Carlson that you don't need a lot of expensive gear to get a great sound," the drummer says. "I've seen him use Shure SM57s on everything but the kick drum, and it sounded awesome. So I know you can get the sound you want without having to spend ridiculous amounts of money on mics and pre's. The biggest purchase I made was the API 3124, which has four channels of A-grade 512C pre's. API is very popular around Nashville. They make my drums sound big and fat, like what I'm used to hearing when I go to a

big studio, which is obviously what I'm competing with.

"But I'm not a gearhead by any means," Nick continues. "I'm about playing drums and not about geeking out on mics and gear to ensure that I have absolutely perfect tones. If it sounds great, that's all you want."

When discussing what it takes to be a top session drummer, Buda offers the following advice, starting with how to choose a snare drum for a particular track. "There's always a little bit of randomness with everything," he says. "I'll listen to the song first and decide if it needs a snappy sound or a dead Fleetwood Mac-type tone. If it's an up-tempo song, I won't use a snare that's too deep. In country music, there are so many layers of instruments that you don't want the snare taking up too many frequencies. So I'll usually use a 5x14.

"Choosing between wood and metal just comes down to the moment. I have favorites that have gone in and out of fashion for me over time. If it's a slow 6/8 tune, I usually want that super-deep, slightly tuned-down, padded vibe. If it's a mid-tempo shuffley thing, I'll go for a 6 1/2 x 14 Black Beauty tuned a little above medium. A lot of the sound is how you tune the drum and what heads you use. Some producers are going to be more specific about what they want, so it's up to you to provide that sound. As drummers, we know that the spectrum of snare drum tones is endless. Producers are usually looking for one of four or five possibilities, so you should at least have those covered. But I'm not one of those people who says, 'It sounds good, but could it possibly sound better?' Ultimately, you have to acknowledge that you're looking for a great sound. Once you find one, know it's great and stick with it. Otherwise you'll drive yourself crazy.

"The same idea applies when I'm tracking drums. I'm comfortable doing just a few takes and feeling good about what I've played. I'll give clients two or three passes that I think are right on, so they have options for different fills and things. But I'm all about the emotion. I'll sometimes let a couple weird things go if the vibe is right.

"It's also important to focus on building the song," Buda adds. "You want to make sure the first and second verses have something that makes them a little different from each other. You want the song to progress in some way. But the vibe—how it feels—is the be-all, end-all for me."

For more info on Nick's studio, go to theloftsound.com.



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As expected, the summer NAMM midyear music industry trade show, which was held this past June 18 through 20 in Nashville, was a much leaner convention than in years past. But a number of manufacturers were still on hand to display their latest offerings. Here are some highlights from the drum industry.

Photos by Rick Malkin



AMEDIA

Amedia's new D-Rock series has a deeply lathed bell and inner bow with pronounced hammering, while the outer portion is finely lathed and has a brilliant finish. The cymbals' different sections are designed to produce multiple tonalities.

amediacymbals-usa.com



MAPEX

High-quality but reasonably priced Mapex Meridian kits are available in jazz-size configurations, like this four-piece Manhattan shell pack in candy apple burst lacquer. Also on display was the compact five-piece Horizon Fastpack drumset, which features small, shallow drums that fit into a few easy-to-carry cases.

mapexdrums.com



MEINL

Complementing the dark but versatile Benny Greb Byzance Sand ride, Meinl created a pair of funky 14" Byzance Sand hi-hats.

meinlcymbals.com



KELLY SHU

The Kelly Shu kick drum mic shock-mount system comes in two models: the anodized aluminum Pro and the lower-price Composite series shown here.

kellyshu.com



REMO

Remo frame drums, like this Middle Eastern riq, come with graphic-embedded Skyndeeep synthetic drumheads.

remo.com



YAMAHA

The latest offering from Yamaha is the super-affordable GigMaker series, which is available as a basic shell pack or as a complete package with hardware and Paiste 101 cymbals.

yamahadrums.com



SABIAN

Sabian expanded the Neil Peart-inspired Paragon series to include a complete set of shiny brilliant-finish models. sabian.com



MUSIC FURNITURE

This novelty drum stool is made from a real 14" snare drum with faux leather upholstery. webshop.muziekmeubels.nl



LUDWIG

Featured prominently in Ludwig's booth was this oak/maple Keystone series kit, as well as Rascal Flatts drummer Jim Riley's new 8x14 signature Black Magic stainless steel snare.

ludwig-drums.com



DREAM

Products from the Toronto-based Dream Cymbals And Gongs include thin jazz-like Bliss, Vintage Bliss, and Contact models and more aggressive contemporary sounds in the Energy and Dark Matter series (shown). All Dream cymbals are made in China.

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thedrumwallet.com



ISTANBUL MEHMET

Istanbul Mehmet continues to put out great-sounding jazz cymbals, including this Nostalgia series sizzle ride, which is designed to conjure up the tones of '60s post-bop.

istanbulmehmet.com

TAMA

These mid-price Superstar Hyper-Drive drums feature an eye-catching white satin haze finish and black nickel hardware.

tama.com



PURESOUND

PureSound's new Custom Pro snare wires feature anti-choke end plates, which lift the wires away from the bearing edge to reduce snare buzz while also increasing the wires' tension range. CP snares come with Speed Release straps, so you can remove the wires without releasing the straps from the strainer or butt clamps. Numbered alignment marks on the straps ensure straight positioning.

puresoundpercussion.com

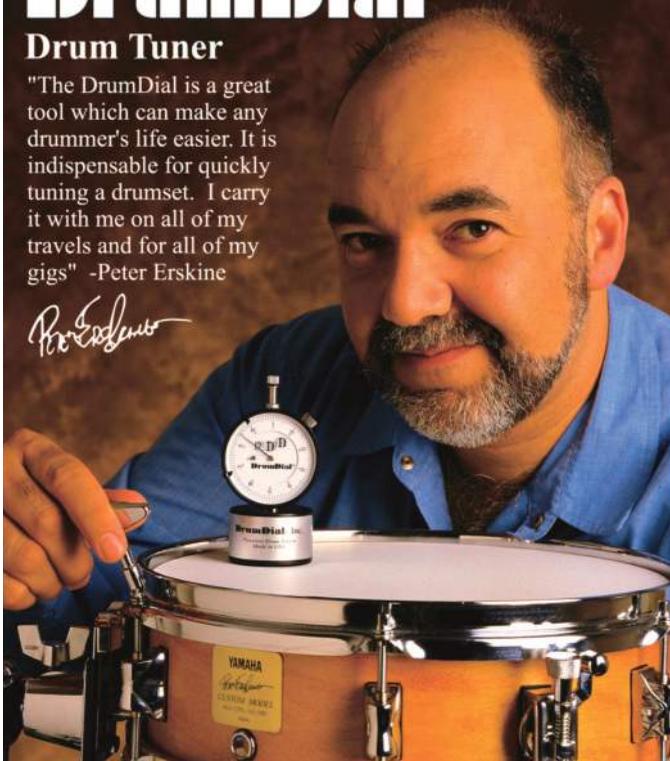


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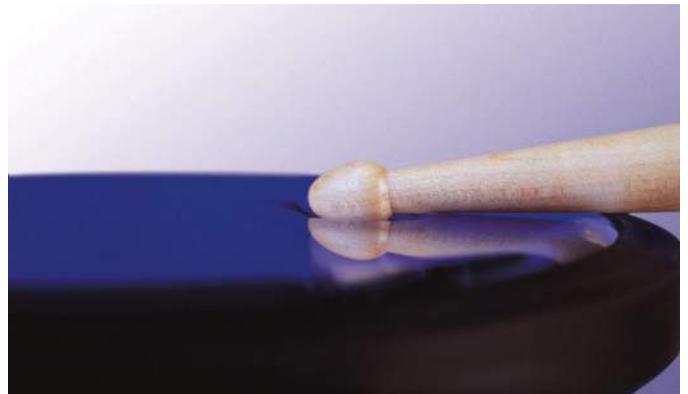
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11 REASONS TO LOVE MATT CAMERON

by Patrick Berkery

Funny this story is called "11 Reasons To Love Matt Cameron," because if you've ever tried to replicate Cameron's parts—particularly on tracks from the newly reunited Soundgarden—you might end up with plenty of reasons to dislike the drummer. To paraphrase a famous saying, Cameron's style can be imitated, to a degree, but it can't be duplicated. If you've tried, you know.

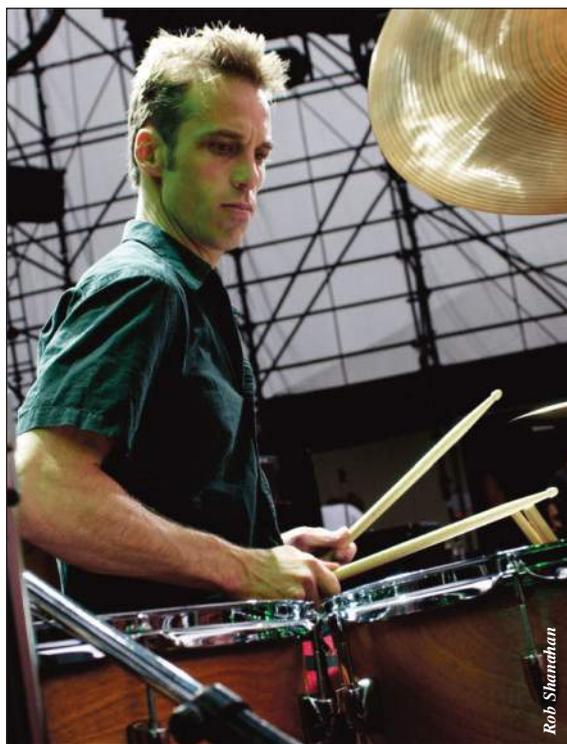
There's usually more going on in Cameron's tracks than initially meets the ear. Take the big-bottom groove of Soundgarden's "Outshined," from 1991's *Badmotorfinger*, and the sprightly backbeat of Pearl Jam's "The Fixer," from 2009's *Backspacer*. Both drum parts are foundational but represent just a fraction of what Cameron brings to these disparate songs.

In "Outshined," Matt's compositional attention to detail—especially in the bridge, when he drops ghost strokes on the snare in just the right spots and builds his part gradually—nicely embellishes the grungy bluster. In "The Fixer" it's his simple yet forceful entrance and the way his kick drum pattern dances with Jeff Ament's bass line that ignite the song's tightly coiled energy.

Informing Cameron's unique drumming style is the fact that Matt is a well-rounded musician. See his numerous songwriting

credits with Soundgarden and Pearl Jam, and listen to the four albums from his excellent psych-rock side band the Wellwater Conspiracy—which features Cameron on lead vocals, guitars, keyboards, and drums—for proof.

Cameron applies his musicianship and boundless creativity to everything he does behind the kit. In his capable hands, straight 4/4 time is completely open to interpretation. (Seek out "Down Undershoe," from the 1993 self-titled debut album by another side project, Hater, for a brilliantly twisted example.) Conversely, Cameron's clever orchestrations can make odd time signatures feel accessible, as on Soundgarden's "My Wave," from 1994's *Superunknown*, and "Switch Opens," from 1996's *Down On The Upside*. And on the rare occasion that he breaks out the brushes with Pearl Jam (like on "All Or None," from 2002's *Riot Act*), it's not just to keep time softly but to bring a fresh texture and mood to the band's sound.



Rob Shaughan

Of all the rock drummers to emerge over the last twenty-five years, few have been more consistently tasteful and inventive as Cameron. Let's dig further into reasons to love his work.

the TOP of the ORDER

Up first, is **Mike Portnoy** in a candid conversation and amazing performance with Terry Bozzio from Terry's show, "The Art of Drumming"... Up second, **Stephen Perkins**, playing and teaching you 11 Jane's Addiction songs in his newly released DVD, "Hands-Feet-Mind-Soul"... Up third, **Terry Bozzio**, in the re-release of "Melodic Drumming," a performance he looks back on as some of his best work... And coming up fourth is five star winner "Buddy Rich: Up Close," the ultimate **Buddy Rich** DVD.

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MATT CAMERON

SOUNDGARDEN, "HAND OF GOD" (1987)

Soundgarden was a work in progress on its debut EP, *Screaming Life*, but an element solidified from the get-go was Cameron's interplay with Kim Thayil's thick, jagged guitar riffs. With measures of three cycling throughout "Hand Of God," Cameron accents Thayil's intro part creatively and turns things around slightly in the verses. This is an early example of the drummer's ability to make odd meters sound completely natural.

SOUNDGARDEN, "GUN" (1989)

From the Sabbath-gone-math part that bookends the track, to the gradually accelerating verses that sound like the agitated awakening of a sleeping giant, to the mosh-pit-stirring bridge, this song from *Louder Than Love* is way heavier than most metal of the time. And, drum sound aside, it holds up today. Cameron dictates the tempo surge with a sludgy kick/snare/tom pattern that darkens the song's low-end rumble, and his work on the aforementioned intro and end section sounds like a drummer playing in quicksand.

TEMPLE OF THE DOG, "WOODEN JESUS" (1991)

Seattle supergroup Temple Of The Dog is like Bad Company in flannel and Doc Martens. Cameron plays the role of

straight rock timekeeper—with characteristic twists—throughout most of the group's self-titled one-off album. The highlight is "Wooden Jesus," which Matt introduces with a martial snare and kick part that gives the song a woozy feel when set against Chris Cornell's melody and squared-off guitar strums. When the drummer slips into a straight 3/4 beat for the chorus, the transition is seamless. This is a great example of Cameron's bringing unorthodox feels to traditional time signatures.

SOUNDGARDEN, "JESUS CHRIST POSE" (1991)

The mix of old-school heavy rock dynamics and punk rock abandon that Soundgarden had been working toward congealed into something truly spectacular on the band's breakthrough, *Badmotorfinger*. For a testament to Cameron's prowess, this album is Exhibit A, with "Jesus Christ Pose" the centerpiece. Matt locks down the guitar and bass mayhem at the beginning with a busy kick/snare/tom pattern that builds in intensity throughout the track. He applies a variation on that feel when he goes to the ride and hi-hats, pausing only to spray accents and quick licks across the song's midsection. He finally gives in to the chaos and starts flailing around the kit as the song collapses to a finish.

SOUNDGARDEN, "FACE POLLUTION" (1991)

You barely have a chance to catch your breath after "Jesus Christ Pose" when "Face Pollution" comes roaring in at a Ramones-worthy clip. Of course, any similarities with the two-chord, one-tempo punk legends end right there. The twists and turns are many in this 2:24 track. Cameron punctuates the tops of verses with quick fills, dances around the kit to accent a repeating carnival-like melodic break, and ushers in the final chorus with a lightning-quick 32nd-note snare roll.

SOUNDGARDEN, "SPOONMAN" (1994)

At the height of Soundgarden's powers, even the band's singles were wildly adventurous, thanks in large part to Cameron's chops and versatility. Take "Spoonman," for example. On the 7/4 figure that opens the song and forms the basis for the verses, Cameron throttles his toms like Bill Ward backing Bo Diddley. After the band breaks for a call-and-response vocal line, Cameron flips the 7/4 feel into a backbeat that eventually morphs into the funky chorus part. In both the chorus and the breakdown—where Matt puts down a stuttering groove behind Artis the Spoonman's spoons solo—the drummer hammers away on a crash cymbal like it crossed him. It's

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SOUNDGARDEN, "LET ME DROWN" (1994)

No song better encapsulates the latter half of Soundgarden's first run than the opening track off *Superunknown*. The grinding riff is all dropped-tuning brawn, but there's melody and serious playing within the din. What's so brilliant about Cameron's contribution to this leaden tune is that his feel on the verses is so relaxed. He lets the guitars do the heavy lifting while he lays back in the pocket with a beat that accents all the right points of Thayil's riff. Later he drops some wild fills during the solo and pilots a sharp turn into the bridge. But really, the groove is the thing. Bonham could've laid it down, or it could be a hip-hop sample. It's that classic, timeless, and huge.

PEARL JAM, "GIVEN TO FLY" (1998)

It's as if the guys in Pearl Jam knew Cameron would eventually be their drummer when they included "Given To Fly" on 1998's *Yield*. The song's slow-to-build dynamics were tailor made for Matt, and he proves as much with his performance on this version from *Live On Two Legs*. He mostly stays faithful to Jack Irons' parts, while sneaking in some tasty embellish-

ments (dig the tom fill just before the second verse) and taking things a bit faster. Like Irons does on the original, Cameron transitions the song's lumbering tribal feel into a backbeat with a simple extra snare hit. And when the chorus kicks in, he makes it explode with a heavier touch, adding more drama to an already dynamic song.

WELLWATER CONSPIRACY, "OF DREAMS" (2001)

It's hard to determine what's more impressive about "Of Dreams," from Wellwater Conspiracy's third album, *The Scroll And Its Combinations*—the drumming or the fact that Cameron wrote, sang, and played guitar on this loopy bit of psych-pop, which would've fit nicely on the original *Nuggets* compilation. Let's focus on the trap work, which is marked by a driving double-time beat that anchors the song's float-away feel, plus melodic runs around the toms and trippy little bursts of cymbal filigree to mix things up. As the song progresses, Cameron mashes up the parts, creating serious rhythmic chaos beneath his own wickedly infectious melodies and fuzzed-out guitar. If Keith Moon had his stuff together enough to write tunes regularly, they might have sounded—and been played—like this.

PEARL JAM, "1/2 FULL" (2002)

While Cameron's work with Pearl Jam seems simpler when stacked against his Soundgarden achievements, don't let his relatively straighter playing lull you into thinking he's dialed it back. Matt still does his thing with Pearl Jam. And his thing—like bringing a solidly swinging ease to 3/4 time—makes a beautiful foundation for the blues-rooted feel of this track from *Riot Act*. Like he does on Soundgarden's "Let Me Drown," Cameron plays the groove with restraint, punctuating all the right spots in the guitar riff but mostly laying back in the cut. He shines on "1/2 Full" by not outshining his bandmates.

PEARL JAM, "SUPERSONIC" (2009)

Sometimes a drummer just needs to blow the doors off its hinges, and that's exactly what Cameron does on "Supersonic." This *Backspacer* track is a Foo Fighters-like rush of infectious melody and guitar crunch, and Cameron keeps it moving by putting a simple backbeat to the whirl of action. He breaks that groove down to half time for a Zeppelin-like bridge, playing a halting fill in unison with the guitars and then sending the song into double-time orbit as the final chorus rolls around. Cameron's part is punchy, tasty, and supportive. And that's the perfect rhythmic MO for a band like Pearl Jam.



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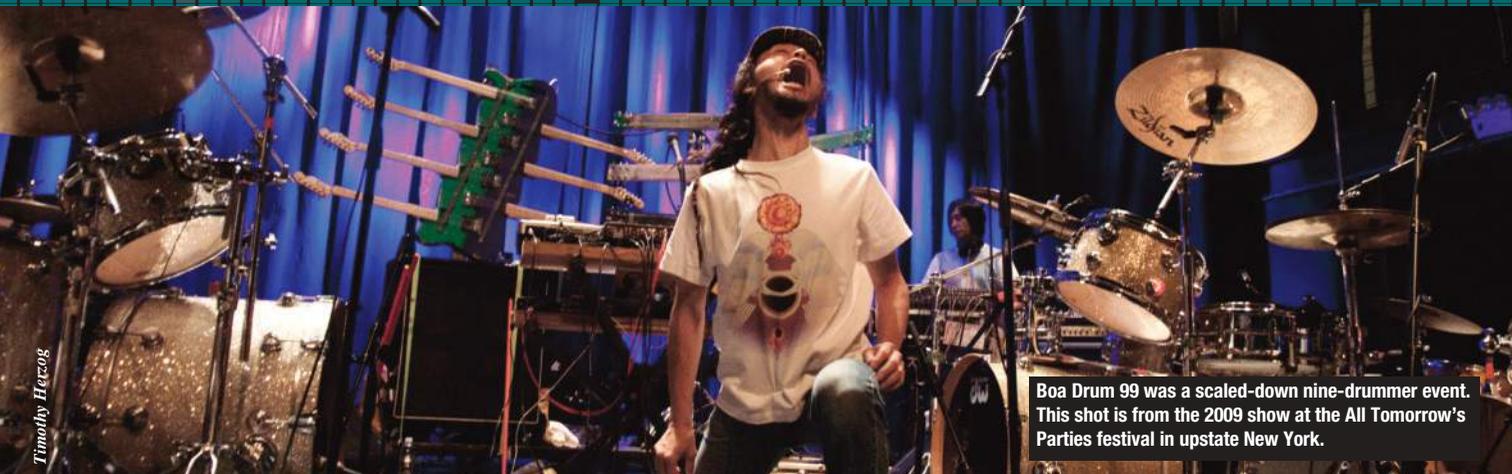
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Timothy Herzog

Boa Drum 99 was a scaled-down nine-drummer event. This shot is from the 2009 show at the All Tomorrow's Parties festival in upstate New York.

THE BOREDOMS 77 BOA DRUM by Adam Budofsky

For the past three years, dozens of top indie-rock drummers have participated in BOA DRUM, a live drumming spectacle unlike any other. A new DVD captures the event's sounds and spirit.

Yamataka Eye will never be accused of thinking small. In 2007, 2008, and 2009, the leader of the Japanese avant-garde rock band the Boredoms, which is famous in alternative circles for pushing any number of musical boundaries, staged a small number of Boa Drum shows to do nothing less than harness the power of the universe through sound and rhythm and then send it back to humankind for our collective betterment.



Jeff Winterberg

The concerts feature a stunning long-form piece comprising interlocking sections, conducted by Eye and including drumming approaches minimal and maximal, structured and improvised. Terrific drummers like Jim Black (AlasNoAxis), Zach Hill (Hella), Weasel Walter (xbbrx), Kid Millions (Oneida), and Brian Chippendale (Lightning Bolt) have participated in the performance, though Boa Drum is not about the skills of the individual as much as it is about the power of the tribe.

The Thrill Jockey label has just released a DVD documenting the July 7, 2007, seventy-seven-drummer performance at the Empire-Fulton Ferry State Park in Brooklyn, New York, which commenced at 7:07 P.M. and ended seventy-seven minutes later. The video includes interviews with many of the performers, including Eye, as well as revealing backstage footage and handheld camera work from the center of the storm, making it one of the most inspiring, outside-the-box drumming DVDs you're likely to see. To read more about Boa Drum from participants Yoshimi P-We and Hisham Bharoocha, go to moderndrummer.com.

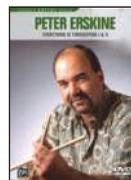
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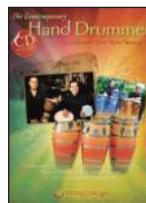
From one of the most respected drummers in history, these outstanding reissued master-class-style videos focus on the artistry of musical drumming. Among the techniques covered are creating clarity on the ride cymbal, brush technique, improvising Latin grooves, subdividing time in various styles, listening skills, improvisation, the orchestration of a beat, steady pulse versus interaction, and musical communication. The centerpiece is the music, though, with mesmerizing trio performances with guitarist John Abercrombie and bassist Marc Johnson. (Alfred) **Mike Haid**



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●●●●● CLUTCH LIVE AT THE 9:30

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Clutch's two-DVD set *Live At The 9:30* contains a December 2009 concert filmed at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C., featuring the band's self-titled 1995 album in its entirety, plus the film *Fortune Tellers Make A Killing Nowadays*, which takes the viewer on the road with Clutch through the fall of '09, collecting insight from band members, crew, fans, and contemporaries along the way. In concert, drummer **JEAN-PAUL GASTER** steers the band with his pocket playing and stunning fluidity. Behind the scenes, he oozes passion for the instrument, practicing endlessly, teaching, and indulging in the nitty-gritty of gear talk. Gaster's jazz-influenced style, deep knowledge, and warm personality seem to touch everyone who sees him. (Weathermaker) **Billy Brennan**

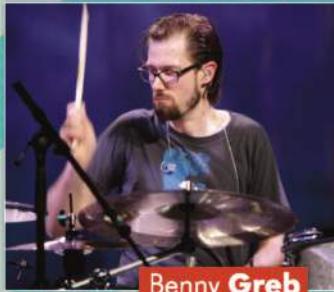


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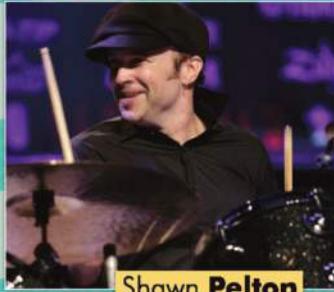
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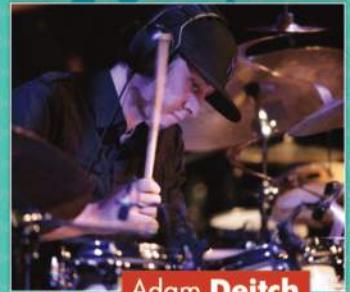
Stanton **Moore**



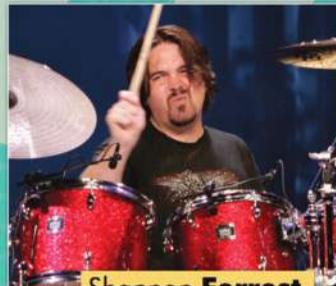
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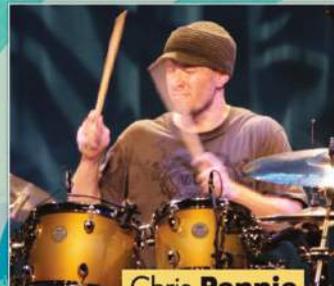
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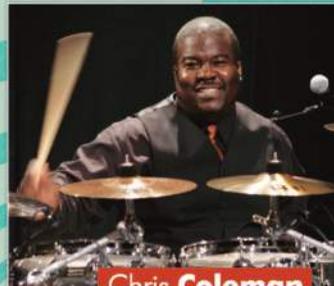
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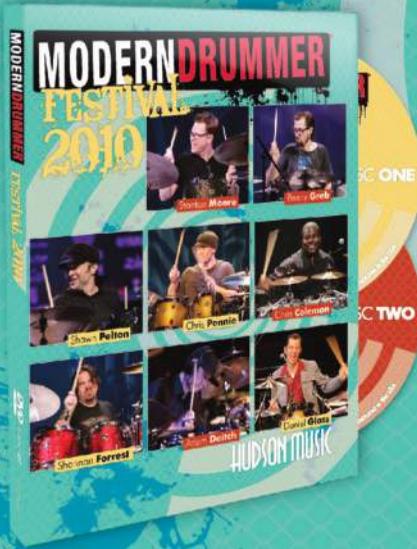
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Jeff Hamilton knows a thing or two about swing, as evidenced by his work with Oscar Peterson, Diana Krall, and the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra. But it's in the trio setting of *Symbiosis* that he unleashes his full jazz arsenal. A hip arrangement of "Fascinating Rhythm" features Hamilton's beautifully articulate brush breaks, and his remarkable solo on "Samba De Martelo" finds the drummer muting the snare head with his fingers. The trio's interplay certainly benefits from Hamilton's tasteful cymbal drive, and Jeff's ability to keep the dynamics soft is unmatched. (caprirecords.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



●●●●● JACKY TERRASSON *PUSH*

Once again jazz pianist Terrasson dazzles with his facility and wide range. But more intriguing is how he spins webs of overlapping thought. Seemingly stream-of-consciousness snippets suddenly intersect, revealing a surprising logic. How about a mash-up of "Beat It" and "Body And Soul"? Not a gag—it works. Up-and-comer **JAMIRE WILLIAMS** leaps in a-blazing, upping the ante of ideas while his commanding chops lend drive, nimble interaction, and grit. This newest trio, which includes bassist Ben Williams, is one of Terrasson's most spontaneous groups yet. (Concord Jazz) **Jeff Potter**



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The founding father of fusion guitar continues to impress on this instrumental tour de force. Drummers **MARK MONDESIR** and **GARY HUSBAND** supply adventurous, playful chops and over-the-top skills that align perfectly with McLaughlin's timeless jazz-based compositions. Multi-instrumentalist Husband also displays tasteful, seasoned keyboard improv and comping skills. This is one of McLaughlin's most compositionally balanced releases to date, with inspiring improvisation and challenging rhythmic structure, a trademark of his enduring genius. (abstractlogix.com) **Mike Haid**



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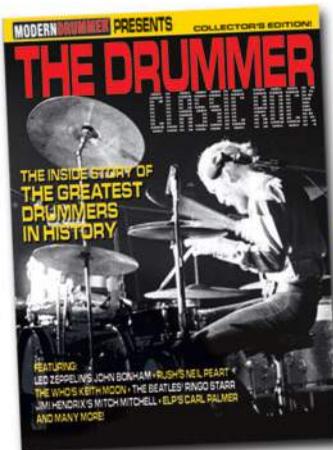
by Billy Brennan

Recent releases by **DANKO JONES** and **AIRBOURNE** bear the stamp of long hours spent listening to *Back In Black*—in particular to AC/DC's iconic drummer.



With topics such as rock star excess, balls-to-the-wall bravado, and erectile dysfunction, it's clear from the get-go that Danko Jones' *Below The Belt* harkens back to old-school "tough guy" rock. Drummer **DAN CORNELIUS** fuels the band's in-your-face enthusiasm with appropriate machismo as he stomps through straightforward yet solid beats in the vein of Phil Rudd. While never detracting from the single-minded drive of the tunes, Cornelius finds appropriate times to stretch out his chops; witness the creatively catchy cowbell syncopation and hi-hat/tom fills in "Full Of Regret."

Australian pub rock band Airbourne's sophomore release, *No Guts. No Glory.*, continues to showcase the quartet's freewheeling attitude and dedication to loud, fist-pumping rock. Like Danko Jones' Cornelius, drummer **RYAN O'KEEFE** carries Phil Rudd's mantle admirably. His bare-bones yet undeniably fat grooves prove that sometimes nothing more than a pounding bass drum underneath a persistent hi-hat is needed to keep heads bobbing and feet tapping.



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ARMEN HALBURIAN

Long before most Western drummers were exposed to anything more exotic than a pair of bongos, there was Armen Halburian—quietly adding flavors of the Middle East to **dozens of influential albums during New York City's golden age of recording.**

by David Licht

Armen Halburian was one of the first drummers to bring ethnic percussion to New York City's studio scene in its golden age of the '60s and '70s. As a member of Herbie Mann's Family Of Mann, Halburian recorded and toured alongside heavyweights Steve Gadd, Tony Levin, David "Fathead" Newman, and Sam Brown. He was an essential ingredient in the jazz flautist's rule-breaking ensemble, which became popular with R&B audiences of the day, and he later gained popularity among modern DJs and funk drummers, who mine his catalog for rare grooves to cop or sample. Halburian has put his exotic stamp on releases that include Larry Young's *Lawrence Of Newark*, Dave Liebman's *Lookout Farm*, Leonard Cohen's *New Skin For The Old Ceremony*, and founding Weather Report bassist Miroslav Vitous's *Miroslav*.

Almost every Thursday night since the summer of 2009, Halburian has traveled from his home on Cupsaw Lake in Ringwood, New Jersey, to the Chapala Grill in Bergenfield to perform with Cactus Salad, a nine-piece Latin jazz band led by traps master Russ "Styles" DiBona. The gig has become Armen's musical and spiritual refueling, as in recent years his activity has slowed due to health problems.

Sharing the stage with Halburian, I'm

amazed by how sharp he is and by his timing, fills, and choices of sounds. A custom-made percussion setup reflects his lifelong pursuit of music and invention. (I've been using his Stay-Set multi-drum key, which was bought by Ludwig, since the late '60s.) He has a mambo bell mounted on a bass drum pedal, a gong to his right, Chinese cup chimes mounted sideways under a strange crash cymbal, a metal guiro, an oval shekere mounted on a hi-hat pedal, and a timbale right in the center, with a large pile of handheld bells, rattles, and tambourines on the floor.

Halburian seems to know just what to add to move the music forward. A bright moment for me during the set happens when he plays brushes on the timbale, Styles plays a clave and bell pattern, and I play two congas. Armen's wide-eyed, tongue-wagging smile transmits a flood of positivity, affirming that I'm in the right place. Speaking with him one afternoon at his home and recalling how, on a recent gig at Chapala, he picked up the tambourine and the whole sound of the ten-piece band changed at that very moment, I ask how he knows when it's the right time to hit a percussive accent.

"Well, we *all* can do that," he says. "It just takes concentration and focus. If you're playing and thinking about daily life—what's going on with your family, the war—you're not putting everything in the music that you can, because you're distracted. It's like driving a car: You can be distracted, and that's how

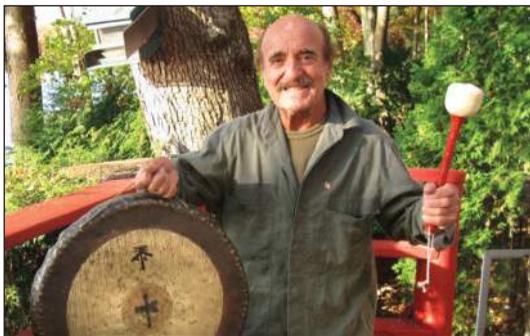


accidents happen.

"In the past," Armen continues, "if there were times when I wasn't working a lot, I'd start thinking, *Man, I gotta practice more!* But you have to know how to be with your life. It's like when someone who has a lot of money loses it all, they freak out and jump out of a building. Musicians jump out of buildings in their minds! 'I can't play...I don't know what I'm doing....' But when they play again, they say, 'Jeez, I played better just now than I did when I was working steady.' That proves that the difference is in the way you look at it. You turn that negative thing into a positive thing. And that's partly about learning how to live with a little bit of happiness—not freaking out over everything. There are many expressions from different cultures that explain it, like 'Don't sweat the little things!'"

Halburian's fascinating musical journey was sparked by his jazz-loving sister, who would frequent a bar called Junior's on Broadway in Manhattan, where top musicians would congregate between performances at the Strand and Paramount theaters. "My sister took me to these places," Armen says, "and I fell in love with the drums. Then

David Licht



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ARMEN HALBURIAN

I started taking lessons from a teacher named Sam Ulano. He used to have people like Art Blakey and Max Roach come in and do clinics, and that inspired me even more.”

After a stint in the army, punctuated by lessons from Joe Morello during trips home, Halburian took the drum chair in pianist Marian McPartland’s band (when Morello vacated it for greener pastures with Dave Brubeck) and began to build his reputation around New York, eventually developing a setup that included a gong and an early invention of his, the bell tree. “I would hang it from my ride cymbal to

my crash cymbal,” the drummer explains.

“My father, who had escaped from Turkey, played records from the Middle East, so I heard a lot of dumbek playing and tambourine playing,” Halburian says of his musical upbringing. “It’s part of my soul.” Eventually Armen landed a gig with the Hungarian jazz guitar innovator Attila Zoller, with whom he traveled to Germany. It was on this trip that he met well-known musicians like Polish sax player Michael Urbaniak and his wife, singer Urszula Dudziak, and began attracting attention to his own unique musical

approach. “I got a write-up in Germany,” Halburian recalls, “and it said, ‘The percussionist was amazing; he played all these gongs and cymbals and sounded like he was listening to John Cage.’”

Back home, Halburian became a regular on the influential New York City loft scene and built up an impressive (if often uncredited) résumé of pop, world, jazz, and avant-garde releases. Today he remains humble and full of wonder, but he’s realistic about the difficulties of a musical life, punctuating his conversations with references to world cultures and psychology and the need to study music history.

“When you play the drums,” Halburian says, “you originally get into it because of your love for what the drummer is contributing to the music—the sound, the rhythm, the grooves; it’s something that we relate to. It starts there, but you have to then develop. You could go to school and learn—there are a lot of great players teaching today, and you can learn a lot quickly. But if you’re not going to school to learn, then you’ve got to study who came before the drummers you love and then go back before *those* guys played. Go back to the quarter note, and then the ride beat, and then the addition of the bass drum, and then the hi-hat. That’s how it all happened. And listen to the way they played solos in relation to the music and how they developed the solo from a rhythm pattern that they started into a more developed pattern. If it’s just [sings] tak-a-di-tak-a-di-tak, expand on that.

“Learn how to play the *conversation*,” Armen concludes. “That’s one of the benefits of being a musician—experiencing that communication. That’s what our lives are about: being in tune with your spirit and the world around you. ‘Be here now’ explains it simply. Being a musician, you know that’s part of your life. It helps you to tune in, so you can then play to your potential.”

For more on Halburian, including a full discography and descriptions of his drum inventions, go to armenhalburian.com.



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Greb and Itt



Coleman



MEINL DRUM FESTIVAL 2010

The sixth Meinl Drum Festival was held this past June 26 at the company's headquarters in Gutenstetten, Germany. The event featured performances by **Gergo Borlai** from Hungary, **Oli Rubow** and **Bertil Mark** from Germany, **Dave Mackintosh** from the U.K., **Chris Coleman** from the U.S., **Damien Schmitt** from France, and **Thomas Lang** from Austria. **Holger Mertin** conducted a master class on frame drums, and **Charly Böck** ran outdoor drum circles. Last but not least was a special master class with **Benny Greb** and bass virtuoso **Frank Itt**, which was all about groove. All in all, the day offered more than ten hours of drumming to enthusiasts from around the world.

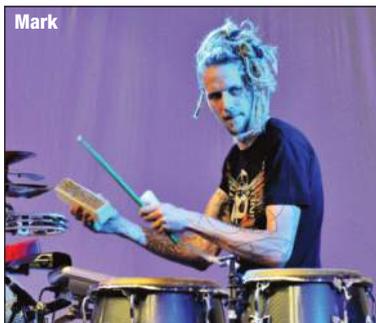
Next year's MDF will be in Mexico City. For more info, visit meinldrumsfestival.com.

Text and photos by Heinz Kronberger

Schmitt



Mark



SONOR DAYS FESTIVAL 2010

The first Sonor Days Festival was held on May 29 and 30, 2010, in Bad Berleburg, Germany. The program offered a variety of performances and master classes by an international array of artists, including **Gavin Harrison**, **Dave Langguth**, **Benny Greb**, the Carl Orff Ensemble, Ritmo Del Mundo (**Stephan Emig**, **Néne Vásquez**, and **Rodrigo Rodriguez**), **Wolfgang Schmitz**, **Robert Brenner**, and **Jörg Lesch**. Day one concluded with a set by the German AC/DC cover band Jailbreaker. Highlights of the event included Sonor factory tours, which were enjoyed by hundreds of visitors. For more information, go to sonor.com.

Text and photo by Heinz Kronberger



Harrison

Meyer and Giorgi



ITALY'S GROOVE DAY 2010

The second installment of Groove Day was held near Milan, Italy, this past April 18, with a diverse lineup occupying three stages. (Sadly, **Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez's** flight was grounded by Iceland's volcanic-ash cloud.) Several duets were featured: **Christian Meyer** and **Giovanni Giorgi** played a melodic and sophisticated double-drumming piece, **Federico Poulovich** and **Riccardo Lombardo** exalted their soloist side, and **Roberto Gualdi** and **Stefano Bagnoli** showed what kind of fun can happen when a metal drummer meets a jazz brush specialist.

Ronald Bruner Jr. drove his drumming to an interstellar speed, focusing on a blend of energy and musicality. **Mylious Johnson**, who's popular in Italy as a session and live drummer, played hip-hop and dance pieces with his band. And **Dave Weckl** showed his extraordinary style, enhanced by new chops and techniques. Other sessions featured pedal specialist **Marco Iannetta**, teacher **Gigi Morello**, **Andrea Beccaro** on a Yamaha DTX electronic kit, and **Gianluca Palmieri**. In the grand finale, **Terry Bozzio** and **Pat Mastelotto**, along with bassist Tony Levin and guitarist Allan Holdsworth, played a meditative set of improvised music, writing a new page in the avant-garde rock story.

Text and photo by Mario A. Riggio



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Psychedelic Sunshine

This Blaimire/Ludwig hybrid kit comes from Jerry Jenkins of southern California. "I've always liked the look of vintage Ludwig drums," Jenkins says, "but I also like the raw power and sound of fiberglass. This is the third Ludwig tribute kit I've built using Blaimire fiberglass shells." Being a child of the psychedelic '60s and '70s, Jenkins says he loves Ludwig's "citrus mod" wrap, and he's always wanted a kit with Mach lugs.

"I used all three sizes of Mach lugs—5", 8", and 10"—which Ludwig still sells," Jenkins explains. "All of the hardware on this kit is new. Ludwig never used Mach lugs and citrus mod together, so this is more of a custom one-off than an era-specific replica. I have a set of custom badges crafted by JM Smith Custom DrumWorks with my Drum Forum name, Drumjinx, on them."

"I had originally planned on selling this kit, but of course things change. I love the



way it came out, and I'm now playing it in my '70s funk band. The kit has the perfect sound and wrap for that era of music. The sound of the fiberglass drums always gets a reaction from those who hear them. It's a very warm-sounding kit with awesome power—sort of like wood on steroids! All Blaimire shells sound at least one size big-

ger than they are, and they tune up very quickly, without much fuss.

"Since building this kit," Jenkins concludes, "I've started a matching snare. I'm building it like one of Ludwig's Coliseum snares, with the longer bow-tie lugs. It will be a 7x13, to go with the style of music I'm playing right now."

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to 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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