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THE 2012 MD  
READERS POLL**  
pg. 26

# Jeff Hamilton

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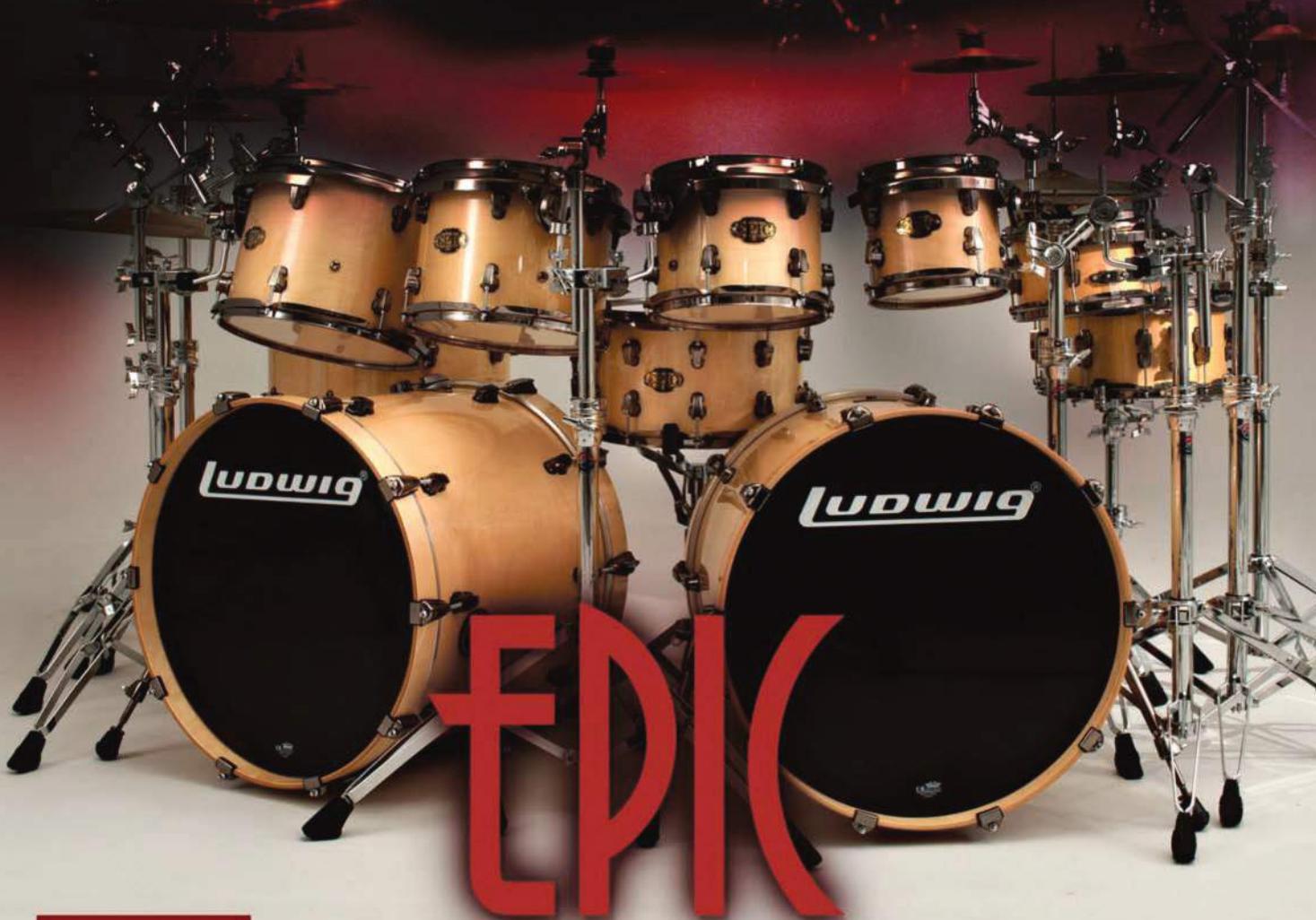
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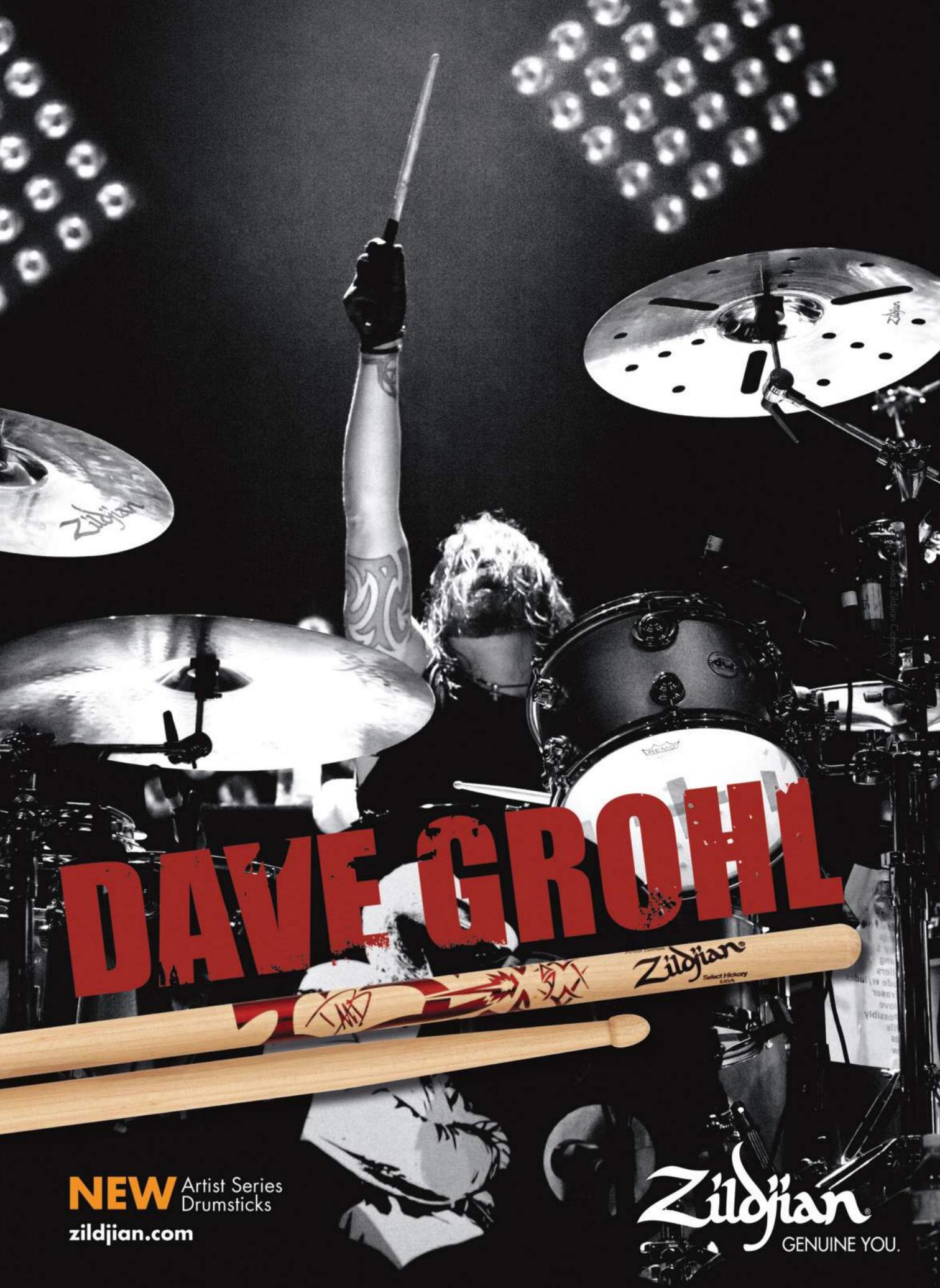
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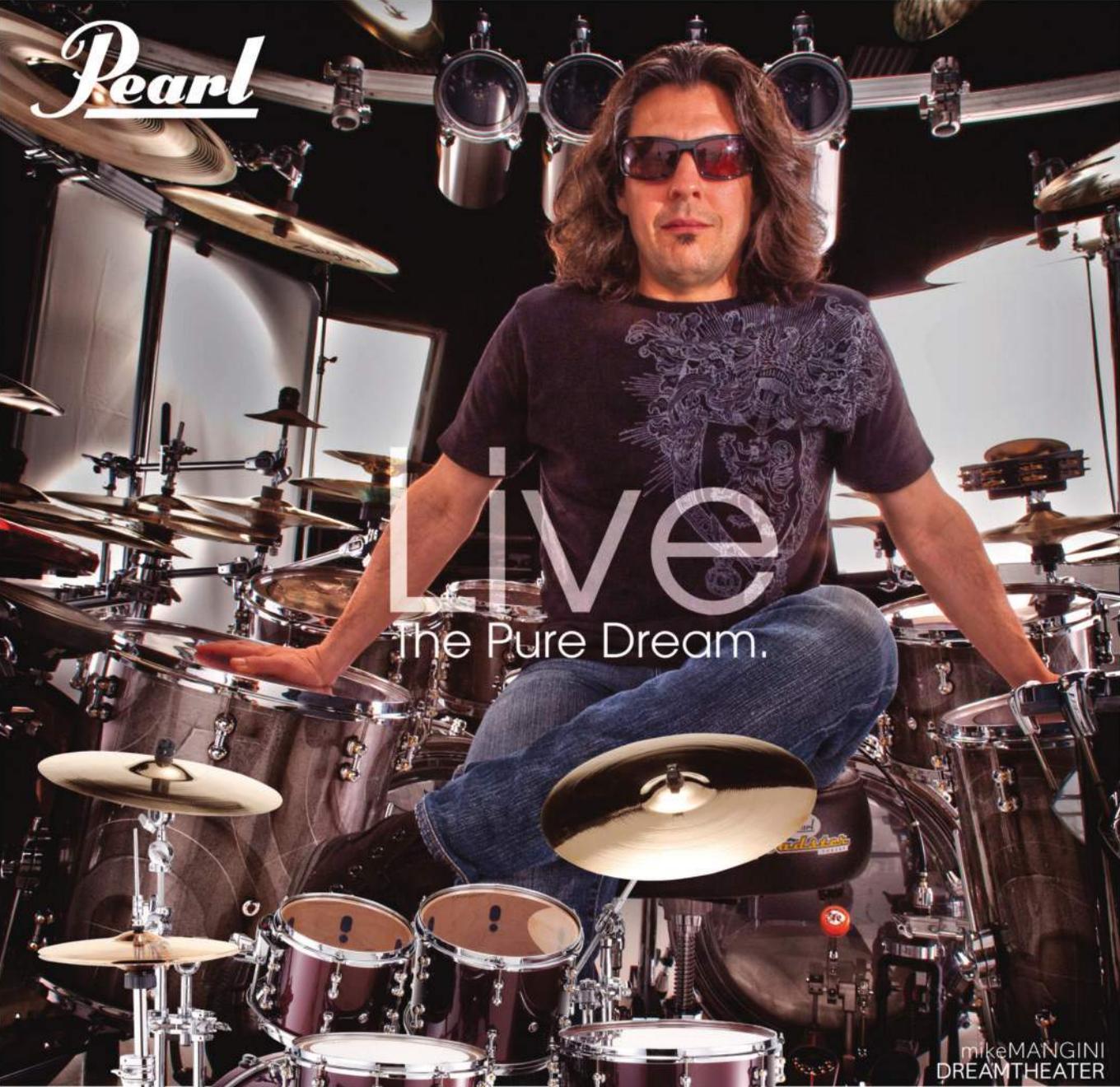
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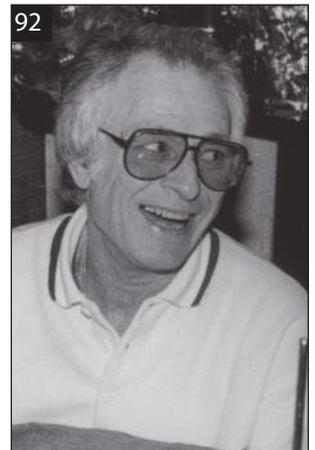
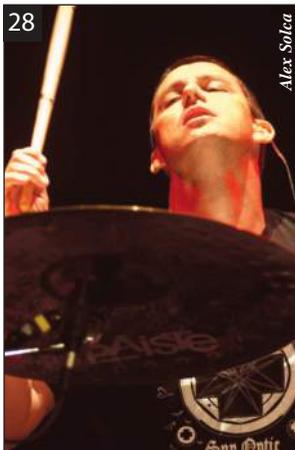
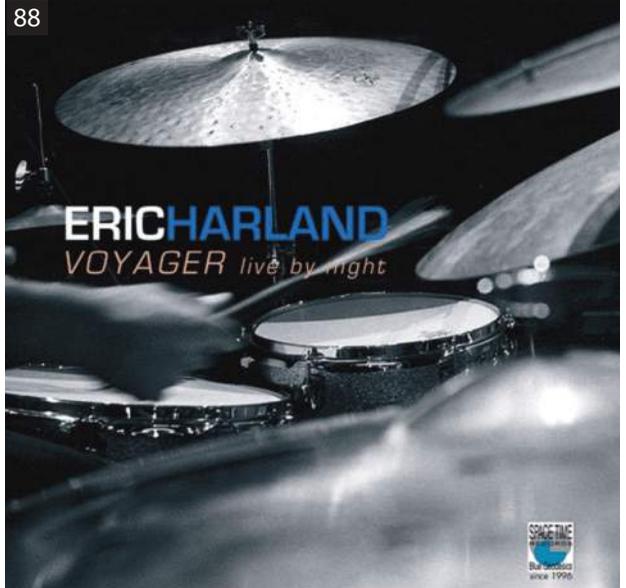
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Cast your vote today! pg 26

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# Awards Season



I'm a big fan of baseball, so right about now I'm really getting antsy for the game to rev up again. Every year brings the same pattern: The season ends with the World Series, and then baseball slips away into a black hole, with even the sports pages offering little to salivate over. With no games being played, all the press seems to be about one of two things—business deals or steroids. Oh well... I read it anyway and wish there was a box score or highlight reel to look at.

But between the World Series and the black hole, there's one other thing—awards. Gold Glove, Silver Slugger, Rookie of the Year, Cy Young, league MVP. Here's when fans pull for their faves to gain an additional sliver of recognition. Some of these honors, like the Gold Glove, are voted on by managers and coaches, and others, like the Cy Young, are bestowed by a panel of writers. Well, last season some of the Gold Glove awards raised more than a few eyebrows, and several dubious winners made fans wonder whether managers and coaches were taking their votes seriously. Maybe they really *do* hand over the voting cards to the batboy, as legend has it.

I'm thinking about all this now because this is the issue of *Modern Drummer* in which we reveal our nominees for the 2012 Readers Poll—and I'll say that we editors at least seemed to try a lot harder than many of those baseball staffs last fall, racking our brains to assemble a truly worthy list. For us, the obligation was to distill a year of drumming into a potent and relevant batch of contenders. For you, the reader, the duty is to really think about who deserves to be recognized this time around—and, if that person isn't one of our nominees, to write in his or her name on your ballot. You might even run into trouble if you have to choose between a perennial favorite of yours and a drummer who really made a mark in 2011. Maybe it's time to say, "It's *his* year... I'll get my guy next time." Go ahead, agonize! We sure did.

In the end, all we can ask is for your two cents. And with so much amazing and inspiring drumming flying around these days—in so many wildly diverse areas—there are seemingly endless ways to spend that two cents. So check out the nominees on page 26, go online to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com), and have fun. We're all looking forward to seeing who you choose.

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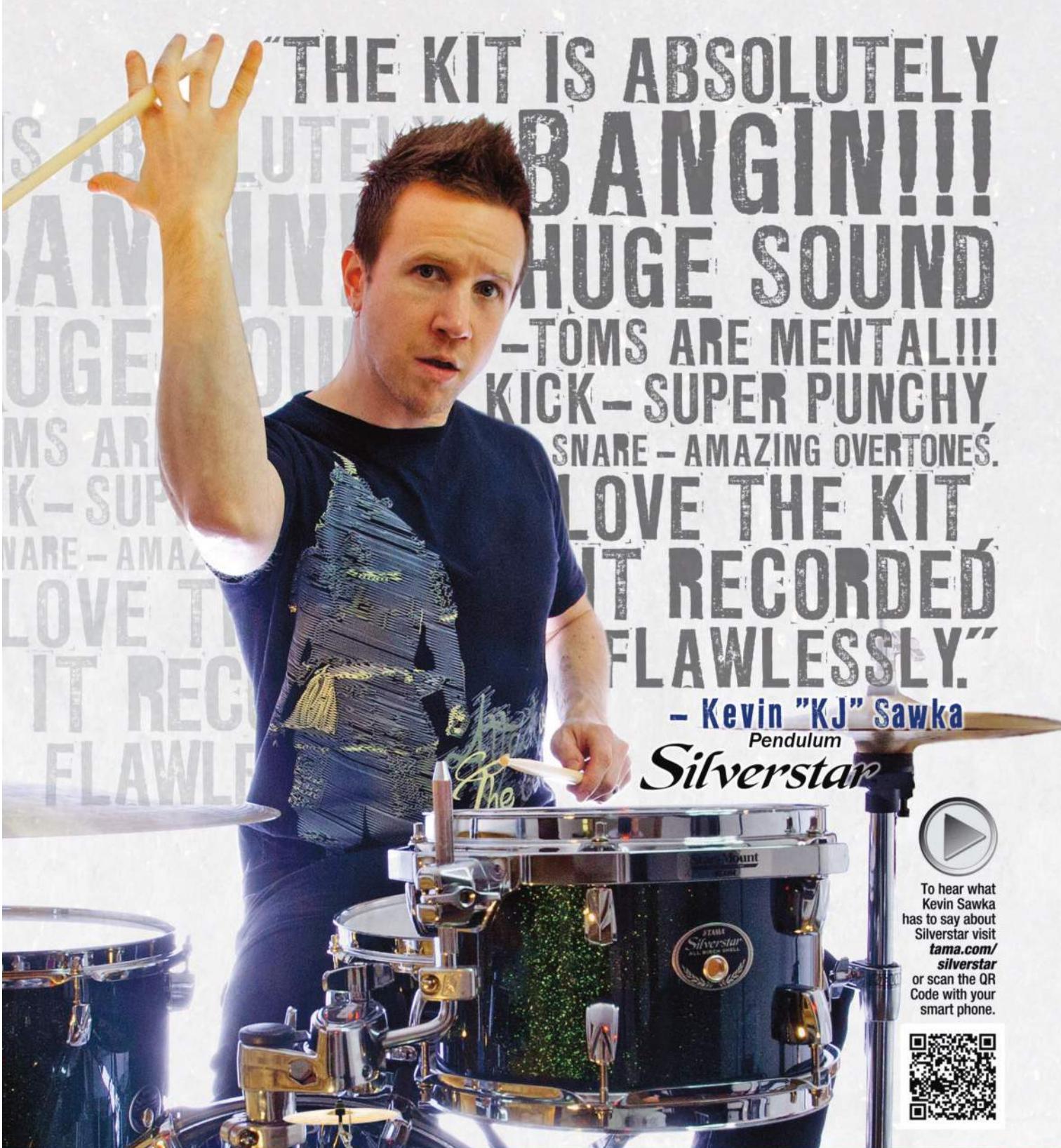
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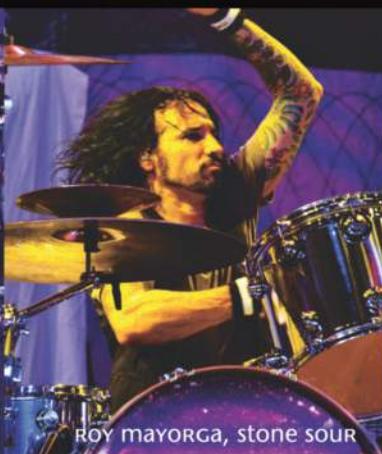
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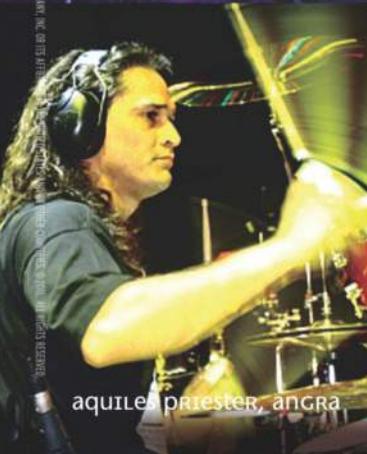
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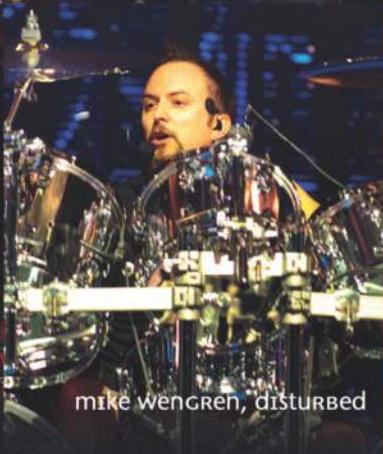
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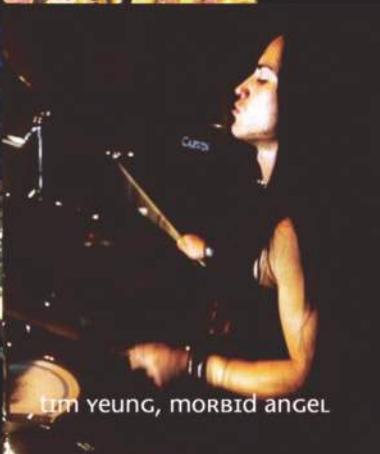
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## ROY MAYORGA

Thanks, *MD*, for doing a Gimme 10! with Roy Mayorga in the October 2011 issue. He has some good advice that everyone can



appreciate, such as: "Play every show like it's your last" and "Be excellent to each other." My thoughts and blessings go out to Roy.

**Timothy Wong, via Facebook**

## SONSHIP THEUS

I just read the In Memoriam on my dear friend and brother Sonship Theus in the August 2011 issue. Thank you very much, *MD*, and a special thanks to Gerry Gibbs for contributing the story on Ship's behalf. Ship and I were friends since junior high school, where we both started out as saxophonists in the school band. Before we graduated from junior high, Ship switched to drums and shocked the entire school (and musical community) with his level of musicianship and the power of his drumming. I never formally studied with Ship, but he's always been one of my greatest inspirations. We miss you and we love you! RIP, my brother.

**Robin Russell, veteran R&B drummer (New Birth, the Nite-Liters), who was featured in *MD* in June 2010**

## ROY BURNS AND HARRY CANGANY

I have been a reader of *Modern Drummer* since the very beginning and always benefit from the magazine. I especially enjoyed the October 2011 issue—fantastic Readers' Platform letter from Roy Burns. I also look forward to Harry Cangany's articles just to see what he'll come up with next. Harry is a true gentleman for all he's done for the drummers in Indiana. I was lucky to meet William Ludwig before his passing, at the Drum Center of Indianapolis, owned by Harry Cangany. Harry asked if I'd like to meet Mr. Ludwig, and I said sure. I had my little girl of five years old with me, and we quickly got a drumhead and asked him to sign it. Mr. Ludwig asked my little angel, "Are you going to be a drummer?" She said, "Yes, and I'm going to play Ludwig

drums!" He smiled, as did I, proud as a peacock of my girl. Thank you to Harry, my friend, who I miss seeing since the shop closed. And Mr. Burns, I would love to buy you dinner and thank you for your years of help as well. In fact, let's get the Percussion Originators together—dinner is on me!

**Scott Drysdale**

## MD WIRE

Wow—the monthly *MD Wire* e-newsletter is awesome! There's so much to digest: instruction, contests, clothing deals, and video links. Keep it going, *MD*, and thank you.

**Bernard**

## EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

I really enjoyed reading Billy Amendola's November 2011 Editor's Overview: "Your Mama Don't Dance and Your Daddy Don't Rock 'n' Roll...or Do They?" As an instructor, it's music to my ears when a child says, "Can I try the drums?" My advice to parents of kids ages seven to fourteen is to get a practice pad, a metronome, and a pair of sticks—that's plenty to get them started. If your child continues to practice, learns some rudiments, and shows promise, then I would say rent a kit first. Teens can do an about-face, and a new set of drums that goes unused is a sad image for guys like me. As a professional drumset artist, educator, and motivator for over thirty years, I can assure you that learning how to play the drums, or *any* instrument, is a life-enriching endeavor. In closing I'd like to thank my parents, Tom and Marta, for being as supportive as two parents could ever be—and still are. I love you both, and *MD*!

**Marc D. White**

Great editorial by Billy Amendola in the November issue. When I look back now, I say to myself, How did my grandparents do it? As a kid I grew up in the projects. When I asked my mother about drums, she responded, "Are you crazy?" With that I got up the courage to ask my grandmother, who lived in a two-family home with my great-grandmother, and they both without hesitation said yes! At the age of ten I was shocked. I proceeded to move my new U.S. Mercury drumkit into their basement, where I played along to Hal Blaine, the Beatles, and every album I owned, and never once did they tell me to go home. Thanks again!

**John Brinkers**

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# STEPHEN CHOPEK

The varied résumé of this journeyman just might be the key to career longevity.

Stephen Chopek has been the secret ingredient on several high-profile artists' records and tours over the past decade, beginning in the early 2000s with guitar wiz Charlie Hunter. Chopek went on to apply his comfy pocket and rock-solid time to the music of John Mayer, Jesse Malin, and Todd Carey.

"I have to trust in myself and my years of experience," Chopek says, reflecting on his preparation. "I've been fortunate to be a sideman in situations where I enjoy the music and the drumming craft. It's been rare when my heart hasn't been in it."

Nowadays, the Jersey City native divides his time between ever-diverse gigs and recordings. He chugs through some country swing on guitarist Jason Loughlin's *Peach Crate* and plays the slick studio cat on singer-songwriter Sarah Jane Wilson's latest EP, *Middle of Nowhere*. The busy drummer also lays down thick beats for the Brooklyn funk outfit the Pimps of Joytime.

In his free time, Chopek, who's an accomplished visual artist as well, creates his own works under the guise SodaCan. The eclectic SodaCan music is less a drumming showcase than an audio collage. "Bits are taken from different sources and my own music library," Stephen



explains, "then looped and manipulated and put together to make a different whole. It comes from an introspective, experimental place." **Ilya Stembkovsky**

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## NEWS

**Mick Fleetwood** and Nicole Atkins recently launched a video conversation series called *Off the Record*, presented by Cabo Wabo Tequila. The Fleetwood Mac founder and the well-regarded singer-songwriter came together in Mick's hometown of Maui at his new bar, Fleetwood's on Front Street, which is scheduled to open in early 2012. The series will launch through Cabo Wabo's YouTube page.



**Thomas Lang**, **Billy Cobham**, and **Luis Conte** are involved in ArtistWorks, a new music education platform that allows for "two-way teaching," whereby students can interact both with the ArtistWorks instructors and other students enrolled in the curriculum. For more information, go to [thomasdrums.com](http://thomasdrums.com) and [cobhamdrums.com](http://cobhamdrums.com).



**Ari Gold**, creator of the air-drumming feature-length comedy *Adventures of Power* (January 2010 MD), has posted on YouTube his Student Oscar-winning short film, *Helicopter*, about the 1991 plane crash that took the life of rock impresario Bill Graham.

Gold's mother, Melissa, who was involved with Graham at the time, was also killed in the crash. Pictured in the accompanying shot are, from left, Ari Gold, Melissa Gold, Bill Graham, and Ari's twin brother, Ethan Gold, who wrote the music used in *Helicopter*.

## ON TOUR

**Shannon Boone** with Puddle of Mudd ///  
**Jake Massucco** with Four Year Strong ///  
**Scott Fuller** with Abysmal Dawn /// **Patrik Johansson** with Yngwie Malmsteen

# JOE TRAVERS

The “vaultmeister” is never at a loss for Zappa-oriented projects to contribute to.

Since his feature in the February 2008 issue of *MD*, Joe Travers has been a very busy man. He continues to perform in Dweezil Zappa’s Grammy-winning group, Zappa Plays Zappa, which pays loving tribute to the music of the guitarist’s father, Frank. ZPZ toured in 2011 with the re-formed pioneering fusion band Return to Forever.

For the last two years, Travers and his bandmates in ZPZ have been hosting Dweezilla, a one-week intensive music camp in the Catskill Mountains of New York. “That was really the brainchild of Dweezil and [ZPZ manager] Danny Heaps,” explains Travers, who has also spoken publicly about Frank’s legacy at events like S’Talking Zappa at the Grammy Museum in Los Angeles and

the Association for Recorded Sound Collections conference.

Joe’s day job as vaultmeister for Frank Zappa’s wealth of recordings—audio and video, in every conceivable format—keeps him occupied as well. The most recent project is *Ho Ho Ho*, a multi-disc set recorded in 1978 in London that celebrates Frank’s seventieth birthday and favorite holiday, Halloween.

Travers also plays in ZPZ bass player Pete Griffin’s side project Gryphon Labs, whose album *Modern Mythology* was released in November 2010. Other projects include guitarist Mike Keneally’s band with bassist Bryan Beller—whose group Joe plays in as well—and the drummer’s ongoing work with Rick



Musallam, who plays guitar with Keneally.

“Rick has his own studio,” Travers explains, “where we write material together. I also like to work a lot with a bass-player friend of mine that I’ve known since I was at the Berklee College of Music, Dorian Heartsong. Dorian is currently playing with Jason Bonham’s Led Zeppelin Experience. I like to get Rick and Dorian in the same room and have writing sessions together. You never know what’s going to happen!”

**Chuck Parker**

# MATT THOMAS

A wise rock ‘n’ roller once said, “From small things, big things one day come.” For this drummer and his band, “one day” seems to be right around the corner.



The Joy Formidable has been hailed as the leading light of a grunge revival in England. Coming from a small town in the little country of Wales, the band is slowly gathering momentum in the States as well with its incendiary debut album, *The Big Roar*. (Listeners can get a taste of an equally burning live approach on three tracks from the *Roarities* EP, as well as in a fabulous YouTube video of the group performing “Whirring” at Mellow Johnny’s Bike Shop during KEXP’s broadcast at South by Southwest.)

Describing his approach, drummer Matt Thomas says, “At the moment I think it’s a mixture of the hard-hitting dirtiness of John Bonham and Dave Grohl combined with a bit of Carter Beauford’s lin-

ear funkiness and Joey Jordison’s double-pedal licks. One lesson I’ve learned is to be myself and let my playing style come through, even if that’s not necessarily who I want to be. Most importantly, don’t over-play, because there’s no need. If you’re good, you don’t need to prove it. One day I would love to master the left-foot clave and get some crazy polyrhythmic metric-modulation type of thing going on. I think I need to practice double bass drumming a bit more too, because my left foot seems a little weak.”

Thomas is probably being modest. Recently the high priest of rock drumming, Dave Grohl—a self-proclaimed Joy Formidable ambassador, promoter, and fan—personally invited the band to support the Foo Fighters on their November 2011 North American tour. “If I had to pick a day that felt like I was living in some kind of dream,” Thomas says, “it would be the day we confirmed the tour with the Foo Fighters.”

**Thom Popejoy**

## OUT NOW

### CDS

**Rush** *Time Machine 2011: Live in Cleveland* (Neil Peart) /// **Cinque** *Catch a Corner* (Steve Gadd) /// **Evanescence** *Evanescence* (Will Hunt) /// **Lisa Jaeggi** *Epic Epic* (Shawn Pelton, Bashiri Johnson) /// **Tony Levin, David Torn, and Alan White** *Levin Torn White* (Alan White) /// **Kyng** *Trampled Sun* (Pepe Clarke) /// **Raoul Björkenheim, Bill Laswell, and Morgan Ågren** *Blixt* (Morgan Ågren) /// **Pat Mastelotto** *Recidivate* (Pat Mastelotto)

### BOOKS



**Me, My Man & His Music: My Life as a Musician’s Wife** by Kim McQuitty /// **The Big Gig: Big-Picture Thinking for Success** by Zoro /// **A Perfect Haze: The Illustrated History of the Monterey International Pop Festival** by Harvey Kubernik and Kenneth Kubernik

### DVDS

**Transatlantic** *More Never Is Enough* (Mike Portnoy) /// **Usher** *OMG Tour: Live From London* (Aaron Spears) /// **Medeski Martin & Wood** *Fly in a Bottle* (Billy Martin) /// **Peter Gabriel** *New Blood* (Rob Farrer, Joby Burgess, John Metcalfe)

## WHO’S PLAYING WHAT

**Will Calhoun** (Living Colour), **Thomas Lang** (independent), **Shannon Larkin** (Godsmack), **Roy Mayorga** (Stone Sour), **Rich Redmond** (Jason Aldean), **Leo Costa** (Everlast, Sophie B. Hawkins, Sergio Mendes), **Ron Lee** (Faith Evans, Tyrese), **Alfredo Ortiz** (Beastie Boys, Rhythm Roots Allstars), **Swiss Chris** (John Legend, Snoop Dogg, Kanye West, Wyclef Jean), **Mike Terrana** (Masterplan), **Frank Gilchrist** (Virgin Steele, Riot, Gothic Knights), **Phillip Ruiz** (Soto), **Matty Amendola** (independent), and **Roberto Serrano** (Jesus Adrian Romero) are Cympad endorsers.

Paiste has welcomed **Dirk Loots** (Arsenal), **Borislav Boyadzhiev** (independent), **Kalle Torniainen** (independent), **Franck Cascalès** (educator), **Nils Berger** (Eschenbach), **Marcus Engel** (9mm), **Lemuel Hayes** (Misfortune500), **Rick Landwehr** (educator), **Thomas Murray** (Kazy), **Danny Vassallo** (For the Foxes), **Jake Hayden** (independent), and **Ben Antelis** (independent) to its roster of artists.

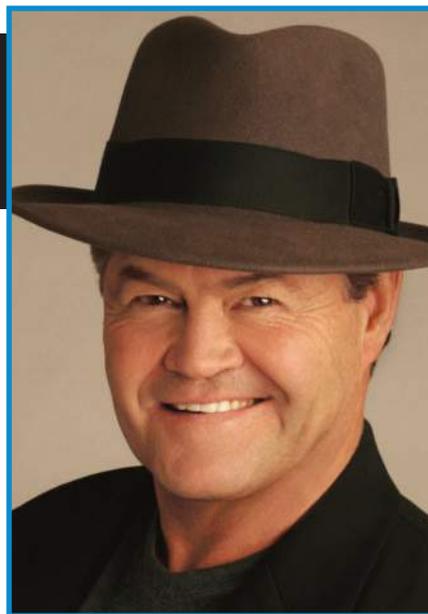
Premier has added the **Highwaymen** drum corps to its marching endorsers.

**Steve Hass** (independent), **Shawn Pelton** (Saturday Night Live Band), **Matty Amendola** (independent), **Brian Delaney** (New York Dolls), **Ulysses Owens Jr.** (Kurt Elling Band), **Adam Gust** (independent), and **Luiz Hernandez** (independent) are endorsing Earthworks microphones.



# GIMME 10! MICKY DOLENZ

With over fifty years in show business, the actor/singer/drummer displays a resiliency that continues to amaze, and he shows no determinable signs of slowing down. *MD* asks the longtime **Monkee** to offer tips on handling fame—a topic he proves more than happy to wax philosophical about.



**1 GET A GOOD LAWYER!** Hey, it's just a joke. But seriously, you do have to have good representation, someone who you can trust and who has your best interests at hand.

**2 UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE TWO WORDS IN SHOW BUSINESS: SHOW AND BUSINESS.** It's very important to practice and rehearse, but if you lock yourself in a room, it's unlikely that your talent will be recognized or exploited.

**3 DO THE R&D (RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT).** People say there's so much bull in the music business. But there's no more than there is in any other industry. You've got to have your business together—keeping lists of contacts, following up without becoming a nuisance—and this is all complicated by the fact that you're selling yourself.

**4 DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITY TO THOSE WHO ARE GOOD AT IT AND BELIEVE IN YOU.** No one person can do it all, so that's why agents, managers, and publicists are an integral part of the equation. *You*, however, have to be able to manage those people. (Currently I have in my employ six agents, a manager, a publicist, and a lawyer.) Ultimately, it's you that will be making the final decisions and choices regarding your career path.

**5 SEPARATE YOUR PERSON FROM YOUR PERSONA.** There are plenty of horror stories out there where performers start believing their own publicity, and the distinction between what they are and who they are disappears altogether. For instance, the real Charlie Sheen at some point started to believe he was his Charlie Harper TV character! Although they may be similar, there *is* a difference between your public and private character.

**6 ADJUST TO THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE BUSINESS.** It's virtually impossible for anyone to sustain an incredible high for an extended period of time. Very few have done it, and nowadays it's even tougher because audiences have so much more to choose from. Back in the early days of the Monkees, before cable, there were only three major television networks. Now you have channels specifically devoted to groups of people. "Tonight on the Carpet Channel, shag and all its uses!" All you can do is be prepared at all times and go with the flow. The more preparation, the more the opportunities.

**7 TRY TO MAINTAIN YOUR OWN ARTISTIC VISION.** You're passionate about your art, but it's tricky. You don't want to sell out, and you're trying to extract some kind of living from it. But that's very difficult to do, because it may not appeal to enough people out there. Then what do you do? Do you abandon your passion, or try to align your interest with a related job? For many, when they turn their art into a job, it becomes not fun anymore. The answer is that there *is* no answer, because it differs with every individual. What's important is that you need to do what's best for you.

**8 THERE'S NO FORMULA TO LONGEVITY.** Contrary to popular belief, there's no specific formula to this business. You can avoid certain things, but if there were a formula, there would never be a bomb. It just doesn't work like that. In our business, our cargo is emotion. It's not the vinyl, CD, download, or film. What we sell as actors, writers, and musicians is an emotion that is somehow magically conveyed from your brain and your heart into music or a stage performance or movie. That's what distinguishes our business from most others; you can't dissect it and say, "That's why it works." For example, in

music you collaborate, write, and rehearse, and one day you come up with a song. Then, if lightning should be lucky enough to strike, the whole becomes greater than its parts. There's no formula for that.

**9 RECOGNIZE REJECTION FOR WHAT IT IS.** The Monkees had some of the greatest songwriters of all time: Carole King, Neil Diamond, Harry Nilsson.... But just as we had our hits, we had songs that were considered "can't miss" and failed for one reason or another. Remember, the public is the ultimate arbiter. Learn from all your experiences, whether they be positive or negative, and use them to grow in both an artistic and a business sense.

**10 YOU'VE GOT TO WORK TOWARD YOUR BIG BREAK.** You can't just rely on your talent or the business side. You've got to wear several hats. For instance, I started years back with my own regimen. In the morning I would make my phone calls, and then a few hours later I would start writing. In the afternoon, there were more business follow-ups. You know, in this business, everybody talks about getting lucky. What I've found over and over throughout the course of my life is that luck is when preparation meets opportunity.

Interview by Bob Girouard

Back  
Through the  
Stack

# Rick Allen

In March 1988, *MD* asked the **Def Leppard** drummer, who three years earlier had lost his left arm in an auto accident, about returning to making music.



"Six weeks after the accident, I was back in Holland working with the band again. It was frustrating for me, as it still is, in that I can't play what I think in my head anymore. It used to be that I could pretty much play whatever came into my head. But now it's slightly different. I have to think ahead a lot more about what I'm doing.

"I think there's a lot of truth to [the suggestion that I was playing better after the accident]. I've consciously worked to improve things that I was a little bit inadequate at. My timing, for instance, has never been better. I used to be a very speedy player, and when I played

live, the songs were twice the speed that they should have been. I was under the impression that if I played it faster, it would sound more powerful. Obviously, that isn't the case at all. The singer can't fit his words in, and everybody's yelling, 'What the hell are you doing, Rick?' [laughs] But now I've got the ability to actually relax while I'm playing, and I play with a lot more thought and a lot more feeling.

"The [1986] Donington Festival was the first big show that we'd done [after the accident]. At the beginning of the set, we do a song by Creedence Clearwater Revival called 'Travelin' Band,' which we've been doing for years. In the middle of it, [singer] Joe [Elliott] announced to the audience, 'Rick Allen on the drums!' And all the people in the field starting cheering and waving their arms in the air! I've never seen anything like it—something like 75,000 people acknowledging me! My mom and dad were on the left side of the stage, plus there were all these people in the wings going absolutely ape, and I was sitting there crying all over my pads! I was thinking, *Hell, I'm going to get an electric shock or something.* [laughs] But I felt a lot of respect at that moment. For me, that confirmed that people were really behind me and wanted me to succeed."



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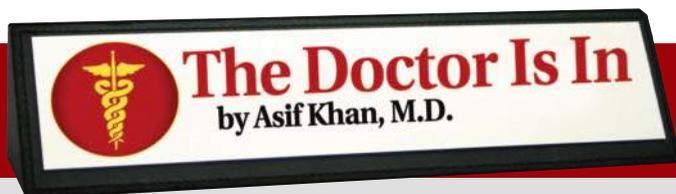
Providing solutions for drummers, it's what we do best. No detail is too small. Nothing is overlooked. At DW, we believe the art is in the details.

## THE EFFECTS OF OFFSET LUGS

Several drum manufacturers offer drums with offset lugs. Simple physics dictates that offset lugs exert torque on the shell, thus changing how the shell resonates. Have any studies been done to determine whether offset lugs affect resonance, either positively or negatively, compared with aligned lugs?

Steve Johnson

We sent your question to custom drum maker and *MD Shop Talk* columnist J.R. Frondelli. Here's his response: "I cannot say that I've ever noticed a sonic difference between offset and aligned lugs. I consider offset lugs to be pure aesthetics. The closer you get to the edge of the drum, the less shell resonance there is anyway, so lug positioning doesn't really figure much into the equation. I suppose it's possible to find some minuscule effects utilizing audiometric testing, but if your ears—or studio microphones—can't hear the difference, then the testing is rendered academic."



## TINGLING LEGS

**I've been having a tingling sensation down the side of my right leg, which began about a year after I started playing the drums. Is there anything I can do before going to a doctor?**

Jimmy K.

The causes of tingling down the leg can be many. Some of the more common ones are standing or sitting in the same position for a long time (sound familiar?), injuring a nerve in the lower back, and having pressure on the nerves of the spine. There are medical causes as well, including diabetes and strokes, but I will focus on the mechanical causes of the common symptom you're experiencing, called sciatica.

The largest nerve in the body, the sciatic nerve, runs out from the spine and down the length of both legs. Sciatica occurs whenever there's damage to this nerve. Damage can be caused by a slipped disk, pelvic injury or fracture, or a condition called piriformis syndrome, which is when a muscle in the buttocks traps the sciatic nerve.

Symptoms of sciatica can vary from mild tingling to severe pain down the entire leg. It's usually one-sided, and weakness can also be experienced. Sciatica worsens when you sit or stand for a prolonged period of time, at night, or even after bouts of sneezing and coughing.

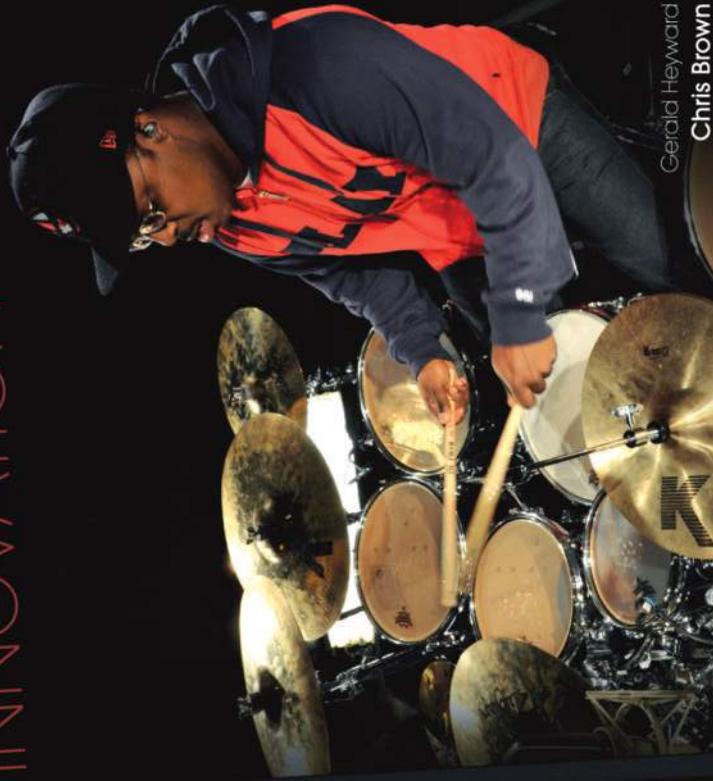
The diagnosis can be made relatively easily, by checking if you have weakness while bending your knee or foot, difficulty bending the foot inward or down, abnormal or weak reflexes, or pain when lifting the leg straight up off an examining table. Expensive blood tests, X-rays, and MRIs are usually not needed unless the pain is severe and long lasting.

Treatment for sciatica consists of getting plenty of rest, icing the affected areas for two days, and then applying heat for a few days after the acute pain has subsided, along with using analgesic medications such as Tylenol as needed. In your case, I would look for common culprits such as improper seat height, awkward placement of cymbals and drums in relation to your body, and any other points of imbalance that occur while you're drumming. Obesity can also be a cause, so having a proper diet to maintain a healthy weight is very important to reduce stress on the lower back. Also, never play drums or drive with a wallet in your back pocket for prolonged periods of time.

If you experience unexplained fever with back pain, redness or swelling of the back or spine, pain traveling down your legs below the knee, pain that awakens you at night, or incontinence, you must be seen by a doctor immediately. Permanent damage can occur, so I suggest taking a break from playing until you're completely pain free.



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# BOSPHORUS

## Hammer Series Additions

by Michael Dawson

**B**osphorus's Hammer series is a signature line of cymbals designed by the company's master Turkish cymbalsmiths in collaboration with the great jazz drummer Jeff Hamilton. The original line included 14" hi-hats, 20" and 22" crash/rides, and a 22" China with rivets. Bosphorus recently expanded the series to include 19", 21", and 24" crash/rides and a 20" China with two rivets. We were sent a batch of the add-ons to check out.

### HAMMER BASICS

Bosphorus describes the Hammer series as being "Crisp and clean, yet explosive when needed. These cymbals offer power, volume, and, most of all, pure finesse." To achieve those qualities, Hamilton had a few design requests, which included smaller, lower-profile bells and a curvier bow. The smaller bell helps control the spread, while the more pronounced bowing raises the pitch of the cymbal a bit to accentuate midrange overtones, which Hamilton felt would help lift the cymbals' sound out of the range of other instruments.

The 20" Hammer China is medium weight and has two rivets that are positioned on opposite sides of the cymbal, about 1½" from the edge. The bell and overturned edge are partially lathed, while the interior bow is fully lathed. This cymbal is designed to be played right side up, rather than upside down, which can be discerned by the way the rivets are installed.

The 19" crash/ride is thin and widely lathed, and it features a band of sparse hammer marks around the bell. The 21" and 24" crash/rides are also thin and widely lathed, but they do not feature the additional hammering. All Hammer series cymbals come with a blue-ink Bosphorus logo and a stamp of Hamilton's signature on the underside.

### IN ACTION

To try out the Hammer additions, I set up a bebop-size four-piece drumkit and placed the 24" cymbal in the traditional spot between the rack tom and floor tom, the 21" between the hi-hat and rack tom, the 19" above and to the right of the 24", and

the 20" China over the floor tom.

Our testing period with the Hammers lasted several months, so we had plenty of time to really get to know these cymbals. During that time many other new cymbal models came through the office for review, and the Hammers often sat idly by as we oohed and aahed over some of the more interesting and esoteric ones. Whenever I returned to the Hammers, however, my hands and ears felt at ease, and my playing became more relaxed. While the Hammers don't have the "wow" factor of some of the more creative things we've checked out recently, what they do have is an incredibly soft feel coupled with a wide, rich, and classic sound that's very pleasing to play and to listen to.

The 20" China (\$725) is the heaviest, darkest, and driest sounding of the cymbals in this review, and it worked great as an alternate ride, especially during sections when I needed to inject a bit of attitude into the groove, or as an explosive crash cymbal. I loved having this China above my floor tom so I could throw in a strong accent at the end of a fill or hit it with a glancing blow to introduce a dark, sizzling texture. The bell of the China produced a complex, dry sound that contrasted nicely with the cleaner voices of the other cymbals.

The 21" Hammer crash/ride (\$750) had a fairly bright-sounding bell that was remi-

### MORE CRASH THAN RIDE

The 19" Hammer series crash/ride (\$640) had a controlled, crystalline voice and could work as a ride for quieter sections of tunes, but the cymbal actually functioned best as a midsize crash. Shoulder strikes brought out a warm, splashy sound that opened up and died down quickly and evenly.

nisc of the tone that bebop innovator Max Roach achieved on many records in the 1950s. Although it's not a dry-toned cymbal, the 21" was very articulate and had a great combination of sparkling stick attack and warm, shimmering wash. This is a timeless, classic-sounding ride cymbal.

The 24" Hammer (\$840) had a very wide sound that enveloped the entire drumkit in a thick bed of overtones while maintaining clear articulation, even at very fast tempos. This cymbal was a bit smokier and trashier than the 21", and it sounded best when played with a loose touch and an open beat. Bell strikes brought out some complex overtones, and shoulder strikes sounded very warm and musical.

### CONCLUSION

Some drummers feel that you can judge the musicality of a snare drum by checking out how it sounds at lower tunings. I have a similar theory about jazz cymbals. They all seem to sound pretty good when played at medium tempos and at moderate volume levels, but how do they perform when played lightly and slowly? On the flip side, can they maintain a sense of clarity and control when hit aggressively and at breakneck speeds? Setting aside extremely hard-hitting situations, the Bosphorus Hammer series proved to be able to handle any and all playing styles with elegance and ease. Truly professional—just like the man who helped design them.

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

# MAPLEWORKS

## Artist Standard Drumset by John Emrich



A lot of new drum companies are springing up these days. With the economy in a strange place, it can be tough to make a decision on how you want to spend your hard-earned money. MapleWorks Drums is an interesting company with some unique aspects (see the sidebar for details), but let's get right to the drums.

### ARTIST STANDARD SHELL PACK

For this review we received a three-piece Artist Standard series shell pack consisting of a 20x22 bass drum, a 9x12 tom, and a 14x16 floor tom. The shells are Keller VSS, with eight plies for the bass drum and six plies for the toms. MapleWorks uses its own lug design that's made from solid aluminum stock. The top and bottom lugs of our review kit's toms and bass drum are offset by 50 percent. All of the drums feature double 45-degree bearing edges. The toms ship with Gauger RIMS suspension mounts.

Our review kit features a smooth satin finish in burgundy fade. According to MapleWorks, all of the finish work is done by hand. The end result is a rich color with plenty of wood-grain detail. The finish combines with the company's unique aluminum lugs to give the kit a very nice look.

### SOUND

The 20x22 bass drum, which came fitted with Evans EMAD/EQ3 heads, delivered a solid punch. Switching to Remo Coated Ambassadors yielded plenty of low-frequency power and brought out a little more pop in the attack. I found that a medium tension worked best for this drum. It still produced a nice low punch while also pushing a little more air, which

is most likely due to its 20" depth. The bass drum never sounded too boomy and always delivered an articulate sound.

The toms shipped with Evans G2 batter heads and G1 bottoms. These drums are very lightweight, and as a result they produced good sustain at any head tension. Switching over to Remo Coated Ambassadors allowed me to retain nice round tones while adding a little more attack. Check out the demo at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) to hear these drums in action.

### SNARES

Artist Standard kits don't come with a snare drum, but MapleWorks sent along two snares. One features a walnut veneer over a 10-ply, 5 1/2 x 14 Keller VSS maple shell. This drum has a dark stain and tung oil finish and came fitted with MapleWorks' custom aluminum lugs, matching satin-chrome die-cast rims, and a Trick strainer system. The shell has double 45-degree bearing edges. This was an excellent all-around drum with a wide tuning range, and it maintained snare sensitivity at various tensions. It would make a great main snare with a very reasonable price (\$585).

### DRUMS FOR A CAUSE

**MapleWorks is owned by U.S. military veterans, and all employees are members of the Army National Guard.**

The company gives 10 percent of the profits on every kit sold to the Disabled American Veterans organization.

The second model features a 6 1/2 x 13 Keller VSS maple shell with a light walnut stain and tung oil finish (\$695). The drum came with chrome tube lugs and a set of matching wood hoops with bird's-eye maple inlays. The shell has double 45-degree bearing edges and a Trick strainer system. Between the two snares, this was my pick. At lower tunings, it sounded a lot like a regular 14" model. But when I tensioned up the heads, the drum really started to sing and crack without choking or losing snare response. It was a real pleasure to play this instrument.

### WRAP-UP

MapleWorks' Artist Standard series offers great-sounding drums at excellent prices. The fact that the company gives back to America's disabled veterans is an additional bonus and another compelling reason to check out these drums. The reviewed three-piece shell pack lists for \$1,495.

[mapleworksd drums.com](http://mapleworksd drums.com)



# AQUARIAN

## Force Ten and Triple Threat Drumheads

by Michael Dawson

**A**quarian is known for its ingenious yet practical drumheads for the working player, like the Super-Kick bass drum head with a floating felt muffling ring, the calf-like Vintage line, and the pre-dampened Studio-X series. The company recently released two thicker models designed to provide extra durability and powerful tones: the double-ply Force Ten tom head and the triple-ply Triple Threat snare batter. Let's take a look.

### FORCE TEN

Force Ten tom heads, which are available as clear or coated models in 8" through 18" sizes, are molded with two plies of 10 mil film, making them the thickest 2-ply head in Aquarian's catalog. (For comparison, the company's Performance II and Response 2 double-ply heads are made with 7 mil film, while the Super-2 features a 7 mil/5 mil combination.) This extra thickness not only adds durability but also increases the attack and depth.

I tested the Force Ten heads on a set of thick acrylic drums (10", 12", 14", 16") and found that they tuned up very quickly and produced a rich, snappy, and punchy sound, especially under low tension. The floor toms took on a kick-like flavor when tuned half a turn above slack, while the rack toms had a creamier timbre with

clearly defined pitches and round sustain. The decay was relatively short on all the drums, and the overtones centered in the low and middle registers, so no muffling was needed to bring the sound into focus. The heads held up well after a few hours of heavy playing, detuning only a touch at the tension rods closest to me. If you like deep tom tones with strong attack and you have a tendency to blow through standard 2-ply heads rather quickly, the Force Ten could be a great choice.

### TRIPLE THREAT

Three plies of 7 mil film make for a very durable drumhead. My concern with the Triple Threat snare batter was that the extra ply might make the drum sound a bit dull and feel somewhat flat. What I found, however, was that the Triple Threat offered an open sound close to that of a double-ply head, along with more low end. It was also responsive enough to provide decent rebound for double strokes and buzz rolls.

When tuned to a medium tension (85 on a DrumDial) on a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 brass snare, the head produced a meaty smack, followed by clear overtones that could be accentuated by playing off center or con-



trolled by striking the drum at dead center. I ended up adding a bit of muffling to tamp down the ring when recording, but these extra overtones could prove essential for cutting through on live gigs.

The Triple Threat also handled very low tunings quite well, so you can get a fat, pillowy sound easily by applying a bit more muffling (I taped a 1" square of tissue near the edge) and detuning the tension rods into floor-tom territory. The head seemed most comfortable in the low to medium range, but when tuned medium-tight on a 6x14 acrylic snare, it produced a thick, strong crack with controlled overtones that didn't require any muffling, live or in the studio.

If you're a heavy hitter who prefers the open sound and sensitive feel of single- or double-ply batters, but you can't use those types of heads because they wear out too quickly, you might want to give this one a try.

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

# TRX

## Icon Series Cymbals

by Michael Dawson

**T**RX is a relatively new name in the centuries-old industry of cymbal making, but in the past few years the company has managed to carve out a unique niche for itself, mostly among young contemporary R&B and alternative rock drummers who desire classic Turkish-style cymbals that can handle the extreme playing and dynamic demands of more progressive musical styles. The Icon series is the company's first all-brilliant line, and we were sent a sampling consisting of a 9" splash, 16" and 17" Thin crashes, an 18" Medium crash, a 20" Heavy crash, an 18" Stacker, a 19" China, and a 21" ride.

### TWEAKING THE SONIC ENVELOPE

It's difficult to pinpoint what makes a cymbal sound "vintage" versus "modern." The obvious factor is weight: Heavier cymbals are often brighter and louder (modern), and lighter cymbals are often warmer and more delicate (vintage). The Icon line leans significantly toward the heavier side, to provide cutting power and durability, yet the cymbals still have a classic quality to them. How so? We've boiled it down to this: Icon series models have a rich timbre that combines—in varying degrees—warm, complex decay (the sound you hear for a few milliseconds after the initial stick attack) and silvery, glassy sustain (the sound of the cymbal ringing before it dies down to silence). The balance between these two contrasting qualities is what gives these cymbals that modern-meets-vintage flavor.

### HI-HATS

The 14" Icon hi-hats (\$550) are designated as medium-heavy, but they're actually a combination of a medium-thin top cymbal and a heavy bottom. They produced a wide, chunky sound when hit with the shoulder of the stick in open or closed positions, and they had a slightly pitchy, silvery sustain. The thinner top cymbal added complexity, especially when hit with the stick tip, and foot chicks were fairly strong. These were loud but warm-sounding cymbals, and they performed surprisingly well at softer, more delicate dynamics.

### CRASHES

The 16" (\$375) and 17" (\$400) Thin crashes had a firm feel with a focused and controlled tone. The 16" had a quicker decay,



### THE ICON OBJECTIVE

TRX describes the Icon series as having "the rich, warm tone of vintage cymbals with the brighter, more powerful performance characteristics required by modern players." All Icon cymbals are made with B20 bronze and feature a highly polished brilliant finish.

and it settled into a clear sustain almost immediately after the attack. The 17" was throatier and had a more colorful voice with a longer and more evenly balanced sustain. This cymbal would also work as a crash/ride.

As the Icon crashes get heavier, they become less complex sounding, yet they retain a classic Turkish flavor. The 18" Medium crash (\$425) had a slower attack and a pronounced hum in the lower middle frequencies. It needed to be hit with a firm stroke to open up fully, but it also had good riding capabilities for quieter playing, and the bell sound was strong.

The 20" Heavy model (\$525) was the cleanest-sounding crash of the bunch and proved to be my favorite cymbal in the line. It had a slow, wavelike attack that added a lot of drama and excitement when crashed, and when used as a crash/ride it offered a long, humming sustain that created a giant seamless wash. This cymbal also had a clear and articulate stick sound, so it could easily serve double duty as a medium-light ride.

### RIDE AND CHINA

The 21" Icon ride (\$550) is a heavy cymbal that had a pingy attack followed by a short, warm decay and long, glassy sustain. The overtones were prominent, but we had no problem articulating fast ride patterns over the wash. The bell sound was big, bright, and loud enough to cut through just about anything.

The 19" Icon China (\$500) is medium in weight and possessed the explosive attack and trashy decay you would expect from such a cymbal, but it also had a silvery, con-

trolled sustain that kept it from sounding overly harsh, even when hit aggressively.

### STACKER AND SPLASH

TRX's Stackers come in 14", 16", 18", and 20" sizes. All four models are medium-thin in weight and feature six circular cutouts around the perimeter. The 18" we were sent for review produced a trashy, dark sound that contrasted very nicely with the bright, clean tone of the 20" Heavy crash. As we experienced with the China, the overtones on the Stacker were more controlled than expected.

The 9" Icon splash (\$215) sounded fragile (in a good way) and glassy, but it had a fairly low pitch. This little cymbal stood strong on its own for quick bursts but also worked well for creating special effects when layered on top of the China or Stacker. The Stacker/splash combo sounded like a beat-up rivet ride with a trashy attack and fairly long, sizzling sustain. Modern jazz drummers like Eric Harland, Mark Guiliana, and Chris Dave use this synthetic-type sound to great effect.

### CONCLUSION

If I had to summarize the Icon models in one sentence, I'd say they're strong, modern-sounding cymbals that have a touch of vintage complexity. I don't think hardcore jazzers will ever favor these over their coveted pies from the '50s. But as a contemporary rock/pop drummer with classic cymbal tastes, I'm happy to see that companies are continuing to address the delicate balance between musicality and power.

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



# ELECTRO-VOICE

## RE320 Dynamic Microphone

by Mark Parsons



The new Electro-Voice RE320 is an update of one of EV's classic mics, with some features intended expressly for drums. Based on the long-standing RE20, which is still in production, the RE320 features a contour switch (called "insta-kick") that changes the response to one specifically tailored for the bass drum. Along with its "Variable-D" pattern control and rugged construction, this beast has serious potential for the gigging and recording drummer.

### DESCRIPTION

The RE320 is a large cardioid dynamic mic, measuring 2" in diameter and over 8" in length. Featuring all-steel construction and weighing in at 1.5 pounds, this is not something you're going to clip to your tom rim. Near the base of the body—where you'd find the bass roll-off on the classic RE20—is the insta-kick switch. Activating it results in a dip at about 400 Hz, as well as a small boost in the 3–4 kHz range, to smooth out and "pre-produce" the sound. With the switch in the "flat" setting, the response chart shows it to be fairly linear up through 3 kHz, with a few boosts in the 4–7 kHz range and again at 10 kHz.

### IN USE

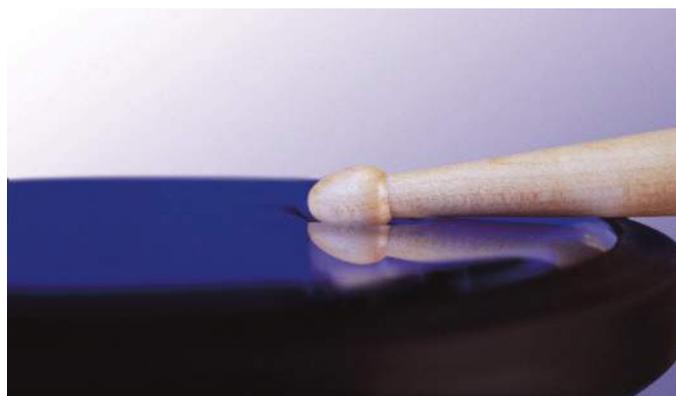
We compared the RE320 with some popular kick mics—the AKG D112, Audix D6, Sennheiser 421, and Shure Beta

91A—to get a handle on where it was coming from sonically. Along the spectrum of pre-EQ'ed mics, where the 421 (and the original RE20, for that matter) would be on the neutral side and the D6 would be on the more extreme side, the RE320 would fall somewhere in the middle, even with the insta-kick setting engaged. Placed inside the port of the bass drum, this mic produced a big, smooth sound, with good attack. Similar results were obtained outside the drum, with less attack and more bloom. You wouldn't want to always run the RE320 through a sound system with zero EQ, but it's a much more universal mic than some of the other pre-curved models.

When used on 10", 12", and 14" toms, the RE320 yielded a big, strong, smooth tone. I preferred the flat setting in this application, but the insta-kick provided a good option when I desired more mid-frequency reduction. On the snare, the RE320 sounded thick and linear but still had good presence in the mids and highs. It had a strong "smack" characteristic and took to compression very well, producing a big, slamming rock 'n' roll snare tone.

If the mics in your studio or live rig do double duty, it's worth noting that the RE320 also works very well for vocals and on guitar/bass amps. It ships with a semirigid fabric case and lists for \$400.

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



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Daniel Lanois/Brian Blade's

# Steven Nistor

STRIPED LIGHT STUDIO

Story by Michael Dawson • Photos by Alex Solca

When he's not busy touring and recording with producer/songwriter Daniel Lanois or holding down the drum seat in jazz great Brian Blade's rootsy side project, Mama Rosa, Los Angeles-based drummer Steven Nistor is busy working with a variety of local artists and composers at his home studio, Striped Light. "A musician named Aaron Embry used to live in this house, and he built the studio," Nistor says. "He glued all these little chunks of foam to the walls, so it's completely diffused. It's like walking into an aquarium—you feel like your ears are popping because it's so dead sounding."

In addition to the randomly shaped pieces of packing foam covering the walls, the ceiling is lined with panels of carpet padding, which helps to eliminate strange acoustic anomalies that often occur in rooms that weren't designed explicitly for audio recording. "When you don't have really high ceilings—these ceilings are about 8½"—you have to make it dead to get the best out of it," Nistor explains. "These days people generally want dry, compressed drums anyway, because they're interested in using their own plug-ins and effects and mixing on the computer."

In line with the DIY aesthetic at Striped Light, Nistor keeps his recording rig simple and as budget-conscious as possible. "People usually laugh when you say that you use Mackie gear, but I stand by their stuff," the drummer says. "I use an Onyx 1640i board, which has hyped-up preamps and a built-in converter, and it sounds very clean." For software, Nistor goes against the grain and works entirely in Apple Logic. "Everybody uses Pro Tools, but I'm on Logic," he says. "So I can't just give someone a session file. I have to edit the tracks myself and then print them, which is kind of cool because I know *exactly* what's leaving the studio."





When asked if being a studio owner has affected how much time he spends honing his craft as a drummer, Nistor explains, "I went through that phase of practicing nine hours a day, so I feel there are some things that I'll never lose. And at this point in my life, trying to nail a three-minute song is a lot harder than mastering something out of Gary Chaffee's books. It requires a different kind of focus, and working on anything that requires focus will make you better."

Along with his mental shift away from practicing tricky drum techniques, Nistor has adopted a "try anything" approach when tracking drums. "Engineering myself has made me almost care less about what I'm playing," he says. "I like to just see what comes out. I recently did a session where they had me record a bunch of fills at the end of the take. I played the most awful, stupid triplet fill, and, sure enough, that's the fill they used."

In an age when practically everyone owns a home studio, including some of the biggest names in the music industry, how can up-and-coming drummers establish themselves? "People appreciate uniqueness," Nistor says. "I live in Los Angeles, and there are probably a thousand great drummers here, so you have to ask yourself: What am I going to do? I'm a goofball, so I figured that I'm just going to be goofy and see what comes out. They can always tell me to scale it back or try something else. Or they may love it. Lanois would always talk to me about the drum track on Neil Young's 'Cinnamon Girl' because it's such a signature part of the song, like a guitar riff. I try to think that way when coming up with drum parts; it puts you in a more musical frame of mind."



## Gear Box

**Drums:** DW Jazz series kit, including a 14x20 bass drum with twin rail mounts, 8x12 and 9x13 rack toms, 14x14 and 14x16 floor toms, a 28" Woofer, and a 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x15 Super Solid snare, plus various vintage Gretsch and Ludwig pieces



"I usually use just one rack tom and one floor tom, either the 12" and 14" or the 13" and 16"," Nistor explains. "The Woofer is usually placed about a foot away from the kick and angled, which actually excites the drum more. It comes with a mic installed, but I like to just let the sound of the Woofer waft back into the other mics."



### Additional snares:

5x14 and 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Ludwig Acrolites, 5x14 Ludwig Supra-Phonic, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Tama Rockstar steel, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 Tama Imperialstar steel with die-cast hoops, 10x14 Ludwig aluminum field drum, brass 4x15 Tama Kenny Aronoff Trackmaster, 5x14 Bison,

custom 4x15 drum cut from a Gretsch marching shell, Italian toy drum, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x15 WFL

"My go-to snares are the '60s Ludwig Acrolite and Supra-Phonic. The tuning on the Supra-Phonic always changes, but I like to keep it between medium and tight. The Acrolite covers all the mushy stuff. It has three cymbal felts taped to it, and three of the tuning rods are backed out and rumbling around. Detuning a snare is almost like turning on a distortion pedal on a guitar—it makes it pop out and sound more exciting."

**Cymbals:** Various Istanbul Agop models, including 16" Alchemy Rock crashes (used as hi-hats), an 18" Xist Brilliant crash, an 18" Mel Lewis crash/ride, and an 18" Traditional Medium crash

"It's intuitive to hit the cymbals as hard as you hit the snare. But drummers who do that are often the hardest to record. I tend to think about hitting the cymbal half as hard as the drums."

**Sticks:** Vater Power House model and assorted brushes and mallets

**Heads:** Remo Renaissance or Coated Ambassador tom batters and bot-toms, Coated Ambassador on both sides of the bass drum, Coated Ambassador snare batter

**Mics/electronics/miscellaneous instruments:** Various Shure and Cascade ribbon mics; Yamaha PA head; Apple MacBook Pro laptop; Mackie Onyx 1640i mixer/interface; harmonium; upright piano; Casio keyboard; Hammond M3 organ; various guitars, guitar pedals, and amplifiers; assorted percussion, including caxixi basket shakers and a doumbek



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## MD READERS POLL CATEGORIES AND NOMINEES

### HALL OF FAME:

Phil Collins, Freddie Gruber, Jim Keltner, Ian Paice, Bernard Purdie

**MVP:** Matt Chamberlain, Vinnie Colaiuta, Josh Freese, Mike Mangini, Chad Smith

**MAINSTREAM ROCK:** Travis Barker, Jason Bonham, Taylor Hawkins, Chad Smith, Brian Tichy

**ALTERNATIVE:** Dale Crover, Glenn Kotche, Jay Lane, Thomas Pridgen, Brooks Wackerman

**POP:** Patrick Carney, Matt Flynn, Nate Morton, Larry Mullen Jr., Scott Underwood

**METAL:** Chris Adler, Charlie Benante, Brann Dailor, Matt Halpern, Jeremy Spencer

**PROG:** Mike Mangini, Marco Minnemann, Carl Palmer, Neil Peart, Todd Sucherman

**R&B:** John Blackwell, Chris Dave, Gerald Heyward, George "Spanky" McCurdy, Tony Royster Jr.

**JAZZ:** Adam Cruz, Terri Lyne Carrington, Jeff Hamilton, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Jamire Williams

**FUSION:** Mark Guiliana, Omar Hakim, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Steve Smith, Lenny White

**STUDIO:** Jay Bellerose, Matt Chamberlain, Chad Cromwell, Josh Freese, John "JR" Robinson

**COUNTRY:** Chad Cromwell, Chris McHugh, Rich Redmond, Jim Riley, Ben Sesar

**CLINICIAN/EDUCATOR:** Chris Adler, Mike Johnston, Jim Riley, John Riley, Billy Ward

**PERCUSSIONIST:** Richard Bravo, Luis Conte, Taku Hirano, Bashiri Johnson, Pedrito Martinez

**UP & COMING:** Elaine Bradley (Neon Trees), Navene Koperweis (Animals as Leaders), Jonathan Schang (District 97), Eric Slick (Dr. Dog), Chris St. Hilaire (the London Souls)

**EDUCATIONAL BOOK:** Mike Adamo, *The Breakbeat Bible*; Florian Alexandru-Zorn, *The Complete Guide to Brushes*; Ari Hoenig, *Systems: Book 1*; Joe Morello, *Rudimental Jazz*; Jim Riley, *Song Charting Made Easy*

**EDUCATIONAL DVD:** Virgil Donati, *Double Bass Drum Freedom*; Billy Martin, *Life on Drums*; Neil Peart, *Taking Center Stage*; Gil Sharone, *Wicked Beats*; Todd Sucherman, *Methods & Mechanics II*

**RECORDED PERFORMANCE:** Dale Crover and Coady Willis, *Sugar Daddy Live* (Melvins); Brann Dailor, *The Hunter* (Mastodon); Steve Gadd, *Live at Voce* (Steve Gadd & Friends); Taylor Hawkins, *Wasting Light* (Foo Fighters); Mike Mangini, *A Dramatic Turn of Events* (Dream Theater)

Vote for these or your own write-in nominees today at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

Matt Chamberlain



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# GEARING UP

Drumkit Details, On Stage and Up Close

This Month

Good Charlotte's

# DEAN BUTTERWORTH



Interview by John Martinez  
Photos by Alex Solca

**Drums:** Tama Starclassic Performer B/B series in piano black finish with red sparkle racing stripes

- A. 6x14 Starphonic brass snare
- B. 10x13 tom
- C. 14x16 floor tom
- D. 18x22 bass drum

"I'm using the bubinga/birch series," Butterworth says, "and I can get any sound I want out of them: warm, rich, dry, dead—whatever. In the studio, in arenas, or in clubs, they get the job done no matter what. It doesn't matter what the venue is."

**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 1. 15" Signature Sound Edge hi-hats
- 2. 18" Signature Full crash
- 3. 19" Signature Full crash
- 4. 22" Signature Dark Metal ride
- 5. 22" 2002 crash
- 6. 20" Signature Full crash

"This is my setup with Good Charlotte: big and powerful. If I were doing a session with Morrissey, I would go with smaller sizes than these. It's all about using what the music needs."

**Hardware:** Tama, including Road Pro cymbal stands, an Iron Cobra Lever Glide hi-hat stand, an Iron Cobra Power Glide double pedal (with Danmar felt beaters), and a 1st Chair Wide Rider throne

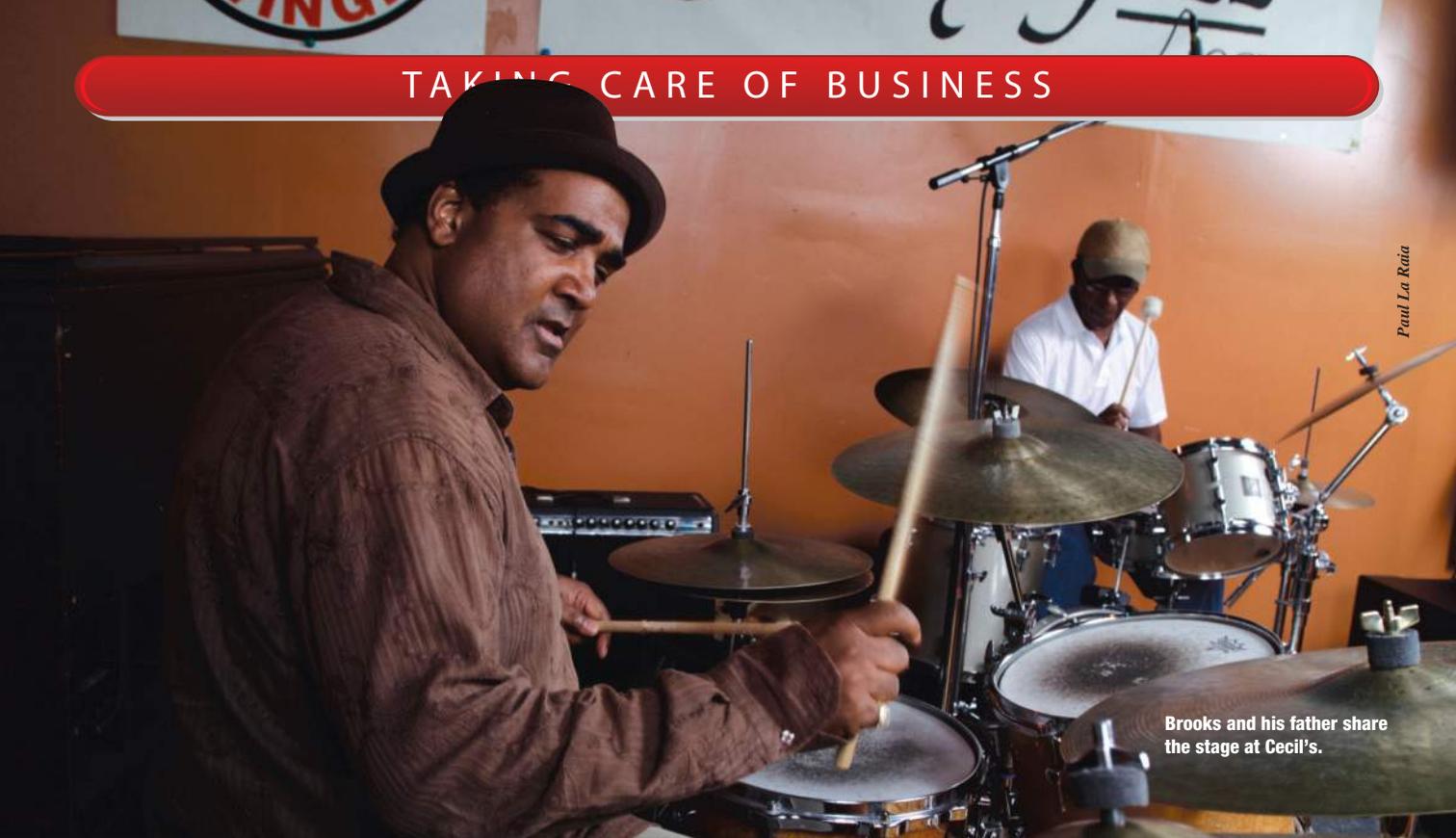
"I take this throne home and bring it to sessions because it's so comfortable, and these pedals are awesome. I put the hard-felt Danmar beaters on them because they give you a little more meat in the sound."

**Heads:** Evans Power Center Reverse Dot snare batter and Hazy 300 bottom, clear EC2 tom batters and clear G1 bottoms, and clear EMAD bass drum batter and black EQ3 front head

"Tuning can go a lot of different ways. In the studio, it depends on the type of song I'm recording. On the road with Good Charlotte, I tune my snare and toms low and rich."

**Sticks:** Pro-Mark SD-9 Dean Butterworth signature model





Paul La Raia

Brooks and his father share the stage at Cecil's.

# CECIL BROOKS III

In an age when it's increasingly difficult to forge a career in any area of the music business, he's a rare example of a success story in many different wings of the industry—drummer, bandleader, producer, concert promoter, and club owner.

by Paul Wells

**A** resident of the New York City area since the mid-'80s, Cecil Brooks III has been an A-list drummer for jazz legends such as Houston Person, Phyllis Hyman, Jack McDuff, Terence Blanchard, Geri Allen, John Hicks, and Stanley Turrentine. He's led his own groups for most of his life, including current projects the CB3 Band and the organ trio Hot DOG (drums, organ, guitar). A natural-born organizer, Brooks has much experience as a concert promoter and as a producer for the jazz labels Muse and Landmark.

Early in 2000, Brooks began to feel a bit restless. He attributes this somewhat to the "empty nest" phenomenon he experienced after his youngest son moved out. The drummer and his wife, Adreana, felt the need to take on a new project and give their lives a different kind of focus. Since 2003, they have been owners of Cecil's, a major jazz club and restaurant located in West Orange, New Jersey.

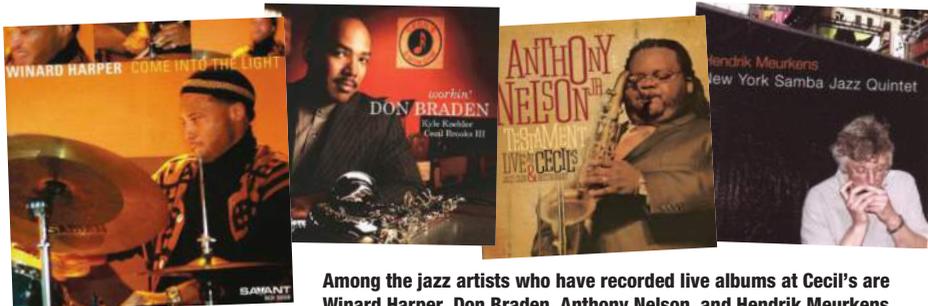
There's a small but rich tradition in jazz history of drummer-owned clubs, including Buddy's Place in New York City—

named after Buddy Rich—and Shelly Manne's Manne Hole in Los Angeles. Cecil's features a wide variety of music with a focus on jazz, reflecting its namesake's tastes and talents. Some of the biggest names in the genre have performed at the club, including Wallace Roney, Kenny Garrett, George Benson, T.S. Monk, Steve Smith, Jeff Watts, Ralph Peterson, Geri Allen, Hilton Ruiz, Steve Turre, Eric Alexander, Billy Hart, Don Braden, and the World Saxophone Quartet.

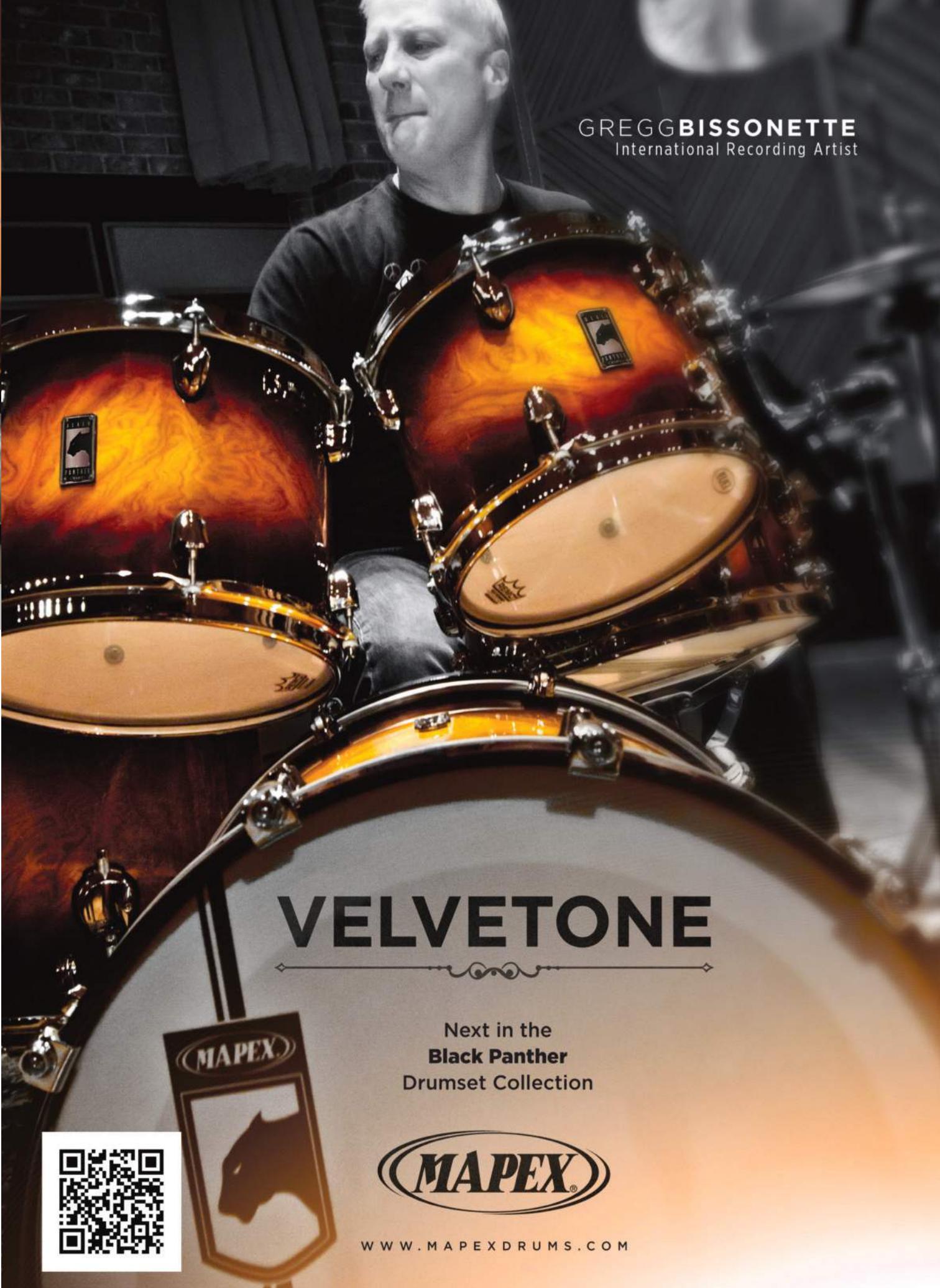
Brooks grew up in Pittsburgh, the son of bebop drummer Cecil Brooks II. As a youngster, Cecil was deeply inspired not

only by his father's playing but also by the professionalism, dedication, and dignity the elder Brooks displayed. We begin our conversation there.

**Cecil:** My earliest impressions of musicians were totally positive. My father didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't cuss—he was just a solid dude. He had a day job and played music at night. He would come home between the day job and the night job and take a little nap, and then he would put on a nice suit and go to his gig. I just thought that was the hippest thing in the world. Later on, once he started taking me with him to gigs,



Among the jazz artists who have recorded live albums at Cecil's are Winard Harper, Don Braden, Anthony Nelson, and Hendrik Meurkens.



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## CECIL BROOKS III

I would sit in the corner and see the joy that music brought people. In turn, they would treat musicians with respect.

When you look at the compensation back in those days, musicians would make \$75 or \$80 per gig—that was quadruple what an average person made working a day job. My father often boasted that he was doing his day gig just for health insurance! Of course, we're talking about before home entertainment; if you wanted entertainment, you had to go out to see it. You could charge for good entertainment, because it attracted people.

**MD:** What brought you to open your club after fifteen years on the New York jazz scene?

**Cecil:** What put the seed in the mind to open the club was being a record producer and having the opportunity to help artists obtain record deals. The producing thing happened naturally, just being the guy in the studio who made suggestions that gave life to the recording. I became the go-to guy; musicians I was recording with would ask, "Cecil, what do you think?" Eventually that became, "Hey, man, can you help me with my record?"

My wife, Adreena, and her family have experience owning real estate and restaurants. She comes from a strong background of entrepreneurship, and I had all this experience with concert promotion, producing, knowing all these artists, and loving to create music, so it just seemed serendipitous. I saw an ad in the paper one day for a bar/restaurant with a liquor license included. When I walked in, it was like a flash went off, and that's where the journey began.

A lot of musicians ask me, "How can you be a businessman and an artist and not have them conflict?" My answer is that the business part comes as naturally to me as the music part. I think everyone is talented in various ways. For example, you may find someone who plays great saxophone but is also a great carpenter. I've always had a natural aptitude to do business and to play and not have them conflict.

**MD:** What were your goals in opening this club?

**Cecil:** Specifically the goal was to make available and accessible a brand of music that is nonrestrictive to the artist. The only requirement is that they swing and groove. There's a term I invented, ESFI, which stands for emotion, sound, feeling, and intellect. Every style of music imaginable, if it's good, has those qualities—classical, rock, jazz, everything.

Another goal was to have a venue that musicians would be comfortable playing in, as far as the sound and stage setup. We built a stage, paying a lot of attention

to the dimensions. We put 10,000 pounds of sand in the stage, insulation on top, then plywood. Underneath the stage is a twelve-foot drop, which made for the perfect sound chamber. On the walls, we used special acoustic tiles with little pockets in them, as opposed to regular painted tiles, which would have created a glassy kind of bounce. I went in every day for months, just trying to fine-tune the room. We went for a good-sounding room, and we ended up with a great-sounding room.

The main reason I did that is out of the spirit of being a drummer. How many rooms do we play in where the drums are too loud or the sound is too dead?

I wanted a room where the drummer could play comfortably and project. Listeners can sit right in the front and it's not overpowering, or they can sit in the back and still hear everything clearly.

**MD:** What have you done to get people to come to Cecil's?

**Cecil:** The July Fourth weekend of '03 was the soft opening. We spent lots of time, energy, and money getting the club up and running, but we opened the doors and nobody came! Apparently nobody really knew we were around yet. Fortunately I had been doing some work for Bill Cosby on *The Cosby Show* as the drummer and musical director. Bill, of course, is a huge jazz fan. I was at a



rehearsal for a record date that he was doing, and he said, "Cecil, you opened a jazz club?" and I said, "Yeah, I thought I'd give it a shot." So Bill said, "I'm going to come to the club and do two shows to help put you on the map, so tell everybody I'll be there."

**MD:** He did those shows as a favor to help the club?

**Cecil:** Yeah! His appearance was an all-out blast. CNN turned up and showed Bill Cosby walking in. Of course, everybody wanted to know what Bill Cosby was doing at this club. He did two shows, two hours each, and the only compensation he asked for was five bottles of water. We were able to put the money we made into

the business and keep it going. Bill Cosby normally gets quite a bit of money for an hour-long performance, and he did a pair of two-hour shows. We really owe him everything. If it wasn't for Bill, I don't think we would have made it. When you look at the statistics for restaurants and clubs, a huge percentage of them close in six months, and a larger percentage close in two years due to undercapitalization.

A few years later, *Nightline* came here and did a thirty-minute segment on Cecil's Big Band, and 30 million people saw that, in fifty-four countries. It also went into the in-flight entertainment for Delta Air Lines. Dave Marash from *Nightline* is a big jazz fan and a regular here at the club.

**MD:** What are the biggest challenges now, nine years in?

**Cecil:** The biggest challenge is certainly not the music. Here we have three businesses: the music, the bar, and the restaurant. They all require long hours and a lot of work. The biggest challenge is getting people out. In this day and age of "perfected mediocrity," you have folks who are happy to just sit at home with their entertainment centers and computers. How do we get them to see the value of live performance and why it's better than sitting in front of the TV?

Running the club has provided a lot of great moments and allowed me to work with a lot of great players. But there have also been a lot of hurdles. Keeping the arts alive is a challenge.

**MD:** What have been the performance highlights at the club?

**Cecil:** Man, there have been so many. Again, I have to mention Bill Cosby. Herbie Hancock has hung out here, and he signed the piano! Grand Mixer DXT, who played the turntables on "Rockit," brought him here. Drummers such as Steve Smith and Jeff Watts have played here. We've had a who's who of heavyweight cats.

I've also enjoyed having my own bands playing here. My organ group, Hot DOG; my quintet, the CB3 Band; and my piano trio—these groups were all formed here at the club. And I've had the opportunity to function as a club owner, record producer, bandleader, and drummer all at the same time by producing live records. Winard Harper, Don Braden, Anthony Nelson, and Hendrik Meurkens have all made live albums here.

**MD:** Tell us about having your dad play at the club.

**Cecil:** That was a great treat, because he's one of the original bebop drummers. He played with a lot of heavy musicians who wanted him to come out on the road, but he was more of a family man. He's just a great drummer—naturally talented. His playing and career inspired me to play, produce, and promote music and now to open up a club. It's a real treat for me to bring him up here and have the opportunity for us to play together in a club that's named after him.

**MD:** What advice would you give to a musician who wants to get involved in concert promotion, booking, or owning a club?

**Cecil:** Jump in and get involved, but make sure that you're willing to give unconditionally. You have to put two hundred percent into what you do, and you have to do it for the music, not for self-glorification. Narcissistic behavior has no place in being a club owner. The music is its own reward.

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# Setting Sights

## TAKU HIRANO

Truly pro players never stop thinking about how they can improve their skills—or how to lift the music that surrounds them.

In the first installment of our latest feature series, we ask the percussionist of choice with Fleetwood Mac, Usher, and now Cirque du Soleil about the concepts he's currently focusing on.

Story by Bernie Schallehn  
Photos by Nilaya Sabnis

In preparation for performance, some drummers assume a serious, no-nonsense game face. Top-gun percussionist Taku Hirano surpasses that, his countenance taking on the appearance of a warrior, with his congas and bongos standing strong and at the ready. When the music begins, Hirano's hands, strengthened by years of diligent practice, begin to fly over his setup with blinding speed, an incredible intensity now taking up residence in his entire being.

Off stage, the first-call percussionist, whose résumé includes Fleetwood Mac, Dr. Dre, Bette Midler, Jay-Z, Whitney Houston, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, the Neville Brothers, Nelly Furtado, and Usher—plus a memorable performance with Trevor Lawrence Jr. at the 2011 MD Festival—betrays the essence of warmth and friendliness. Sincere eye contact, an easy laugh, and a hearty handshake mark a meeting with Hirano.

We caught up with Taku in New York City as he prepared for the year-plus-long Cirque du Soleil world tour of *Michael Jackson: The Immortal*, and grilled him about his current focus. First, though, a little background.

**MD:** What were the circumstances surrounding your introduction to drumming?

**Taku:** I began playing percussion in Fresno, California, when I was in the fifth grade, at nine years old. I was in the school band and orchestra, and I studied privately with Brenda Myers, a mainstay in the percussion education scene in Fresno. When I was in seventh grade my family moved to Hong Kong, where I immediately began intensive studies in classical percussion. I also played in high school jazz bands, talent shows, and jam sessions with friends. My sights were set on Juilliard.

**MD:** What steered you in the direction of hand percussion rather than traditional drumkit playing?

**Taku:** Towards the end of my stay in Hong Kong, Brenda Myers sent me an Airto album. Hearing cuica and pandeiro blew my mind! I bought both instruments and began tinkering, with what little technique I had.

My dad was transferred back to Fresno for my last two years of high school. I attended Roosevelt School of the Arts and was thrown headfirst into the world of Afro-Cuban percussion. I also studied drumset with Joe Lizama and Ndugu

Chandler—who remains a mentor to this day. But by the time I graduated high school, I was gigging around town as a hand percussionist.

Then I was accepted into and attended Berklee. When I learned that Giovanni Hidalgo was beginning to teach there, I diverted all my electives to every class he offered and also studied with him privately. What I thought would be a short stint of Giovanni at Berklee turned out to be four solid years of one-on-one instruction with him...which coincided with my four years at college.

**MD:** When you were getting your chops together while coming up, what aspect of hand drumming presented the biggest challenge, and how did you overcome it? Did you have help from Giovanni Hidalgo or other instructors, or did you conquer it on your own?

**Taku:** The biggest challenge was the physicality of practicing. Training on certain instruments, like berimbau or congas, can be grueling; others, like kanjira, demand finesse and control. Giovanni played a huge role by teaching breathing techniques, feeding working muscles oxygen. I in turn tied this in with my training in martial arts and mental discipline.

**MD:** Is there any particular drumming

topic you're focused on at the moment?

**Taku:** Actually, there are two. The first is for the general public that simply listens to music. Percussion in general, whether it's from a "world" background or a Western classical background, definitely has a place in all forms of popular music. On stage in a pop/rock setting, the percussionist can enhance what the drummer is playing, cover actual percussion parts from the recordings, and cover non-percussion parts via electronics to make the live performance sound like the recorded material without the band being locked into playing along with a static backing track.

Oftentimes, people don't realize the extent of the percussion used. Whether it be tambourine on the Beatles' "Love Me Do," congas on the Jackson 5's "I Want You Back," or cowbell on the Rolling Stones' "Start Me Up," it's ingrained in the grooves. I think it's important that the guy just casually listening to his iPod realizes how influential percussion can be in a song.

The second topic I'm focused on, especially in my clinics, is specifically for the young percussionist who's beginning to play rock, pop, funk, etc., alongside a drummer in a band. I highly recommend three essential philosophies and techniques for a hand percussionist just starting out.

First, avoid playing things redundant to what the drummer is playing. For example, don't crash accents—with a similarly sized cymbal—simultaneously with the drummer. Not only is this ineffective, it can be unmusical. Think about other options,



whether that's laying out, playing on a completely different instrument from a completely different harmonic spectrum—for example, congas—or making the drummer's accent even more dramatic or effective, like by doing a suspended cymbal swell into the accent.

Second, avoid getting in the way of a simple groove laid down by the drummer by cluttering it up. Nothing is worse than a percussionist showboating by trying to fill every hole with a riff or a complicated or syncopated groove. The key is to enhance, not detract or distract.

And third, think about instrument

choice. Sometimes it calls for enhancing what the drummer is doing by playing an instrument similar in timbre or color—for example, a cowbell along with the drummer's ride cymbal bell, a shaker along with the hi-hat, or a tambourine strike along with the snare backbeat. Other times it calls for offsetting and filling out the sonic spectrum, maybe by playing a groove with a metallic percussion instrument like a tambourine, shaker, or cowbell over the drummer's tom-driven beat, or by playing warm skin-and-wood tones on congas against a crisp beat driven by hi-hat and sidestick.





# KARL BRAZIL

Story by Ilya Stemkovsky

Photos by Paul La Raia

He's a pop hitmaker with a rock 'n' roll heart. But a song is a song, and this is one drummer who *knows* what to do with a song.



Don't call U.K. drummer Karl Brazil on his home landline—chances are he's not around to answer. Once he's done laying down an unwavering pocket on tour with popster James Blunt ("You're Beautiful"), Brazil shoots off to do dates here and there with Brit icon Robbie Williams and then convenes with his Feeder bandmates to bring the heavy for festival appearances and club gigs. And, oh yeah, the drummer is in and out of the studio with the aforementioned artists and countless others as he busies himself on the session scene during his downtime.

The real question: What downtime? And how does one juggle all these gigs without overlap issues, à la June 2011 *MD* cover artist Josh Freese? "I've always been careful not to take too much on," Brazil says. "No matter what you do on the drums, you don't want the reputation of being unreliable."

The philosophical challenges of such disparate gigs also yield unexpected musical approaches. "James Blunt asked me to try not playing the hi-hat for a certain tune," Brazil recalls. "Drummers automatically go for the normality of kick/snare/hats. But I tried it and it worked well, so I always think of throwing weird things like that into the mix, because sometimes that can make the track. It's also good to be open to the suggestions of others."

Whether reflecting on playing with house bands, doing TV, or fitting in studio work after lengthy absences, Brazil is refreshingly down to earth. *MD* caught up with the drummer after he took a long flight from Australia back to his home base of Birmingham, England. He wouldn't be home for long.

**MD:** What was it like to play in Ronnie Scott's House band?

**Karl:** I was always a natural and self-taught, so I never relied on reading or writing stuff down. I had an opportunity to take over for a drummer who was going to

**MD:** And the Darius gig?

**Karl:** One night at Ronnie's, I met a guy who was auditioning drummers for Darius, who had won U.K.'s *Pop Idol* [England's equivalent to *American Idol*]. There were about sixty drummers there, and I

**“James Blunt's gig is all about the songs—discipline and groove. If I had a 10" tom and a splash cymbal sticking out in 'You're Beautiful,' I think I'd get in trouble.”**

sit out, and my dad told me that if I wasn't confident reading the dots, we would record the gigs for a week and just learn every track. So that's what I did. It was all jazz. And after a year, it was one of the best things I ever did, for self-confidence and dynamics and not being heavy on the kick. I was about eighteen. Out of that came Bitty McLean, a reggae gig, and it was my first taste of TV and arena tours.

thought, *Oh no, what a waste of time*, but someone was keeping an eye on me because they asked if I could start the next day. Darius rose to fame so quickly, and he put his arm around me and we enjoyed the experience together. We hit it off personality-wise too. From that I met lots of producers and haven't looked back since. Kids ask me how to get into the scene and maintain an existence, and I always stress

how important it is to get on with people.

**MD:** Robbie Williams' material includes a lot of different kit sounds. How do you make choices that cover the middle ground?

**Karl:** I worked with the guy who did the programming and loops, and he wanted me to keep it pretty rock 'n' roll and real, without a lot of pads. We decided to have two bass drums—one small 20" with dampening that's a punchy, disco-y sound, and one open 24" that's a kick-ass rock machine. And then I'd have two snares and two hi-hats as well, which works wonders.

**MD:** How does it feel to play a remote kick where your beater isn't actually going into the head?

**Karl:** There was a resistance at first. It felt like, "Where's the kick?" It's like you're hitting something underwater. But I have a sub speaker now and have gotten used to it. It would have been strange if the main kick was [a remote], though.

**MD:** How do you approach playing Robbie's more famous material, where you weren't on the original recordings? Do you throw in some Brazil spices, or do you try to stay as reverent as possible?

**Karl:** You can really grit your teeth and have fun with Robbie's songs. There are definitely arrangements with his tracks, and I stick to what's on the records. But sometimes we'll have a breakdown or a tail-out. We even go into the Chili Peppers' "Give It Away," and I do let rip with my own thing.

Robbie is excitable and fun to watch, so when he goes for it, I like to do the same and be expressive on the kit—without overplaying, of course. When I was a kid, I'd do too much. So now I try to play what's right, and if you get your moments, have a blast, as long as it's tasteful and within the parameters of the gigs.

**MD:** Your drum sounds for James Blunt's material are pretty dry. Did that come from your love of the Eagles?

**Karl:** James's gig is all about the songs—discipline and groove. It's not a technical muso gig. No one's going to hear some drumming and say, "Wow, what is that? I want to learn that!" [laughs] James likes the '70s thing, so the references are Bread, the Eagles, the Band. When you make your kit sound like that, it makes you play a certain way, and that suits James's music. You work harder, and there's less sustain and ringing going on. If I had a 10" tom and a splash cymbal sticking out in "You're Beautiful," I think I'd get in trouble. [laughs]

I've also gone bigger with cymbals. I don't hit them as hard. I let them do their own musical thing. Our front-of-house engineer makes the kit sound like a vinyl



## KARL'S SETUP

### Drums: Gretsch USA Custom

- A. 6 1/2x14 snare
- B. 5x14 hammered brass snare
- C. 10x13 tom
- D. 16x16 floor tom
- E. 16x18 floor tom
- F. 16x24 bass drum
- G. 16x20 bass drum

### Cymbals: Sabian

- 1. 19" HHX Legacy crash
- 2. 15" Vault Artisan hi-hats (medium)
- 3. 20" Vault Artisan crash (medium)
- 4. 22" Vault Artisan ride (medium)
- 5. 19" Vault Artisan crash (medium)
- 6. 21" HHX Legacy ride with rivets

### Percussion: LP

### Sticks: Vic Firth 5BW Karl Brazil signature model

**Heads:** Remo, including Emperor X snare batters and thin Hazy bottoms, Coated Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and a Coated Powerstroke 3 20" bass drum batter and Clear Powerstroke 3 24" bass drum batter

**Hardware:** Gibraltar, DW 5000 pedals, Ford Smart Ass throne, TunerFish lug locks

### Cases: Protection Racket

*For recordings, Karl's setup varies depending on the gig.*

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## KARL BRAZIL

record out front. If one of the toms is ringing, he'd rather me dampen it than put a gate on.

**MD:** Feeder is the other, heavier side. How much of a green light do you have for writing the drum parts?

**Karl:** On [2010's] *Renegades*, I'd try different ideas out, and Grant [Nicholas, singer/guitarist] would pick out what he liked. So creatively he gave me a bit of freedom there. In Feeder, the drums and guitar speak to each other, which is quite easy for me to understand.

**MD:** Do you have to change your mindset and get more amped up for

Feeder songs? Or is it just about being professional and switching to a more aggressive style?

**Karl:** I have to change my style a bit. It's just bass, drums, and guitars, so it's a big wall of sound, and the cymbals do a lot of the work. There are some double kick parts too. The drum parts are based on patterns that will have a slightly more alternative approach for the bridge section than for the chorus—going from the crash to the hats. We have to all be an engine together. I don't try to be John Bonham all over it either. It's a bit more full-on than that, with a real urgency and

energy. All the drummers before me in Feeder were great players, but it was nice to come in and put my feel on it, and to play a different genre and get my rocks off.

**MD:** Do you call on any references for each gig—say, the Eagles for Blunt or maybe Dave Grohl for Feeder?

**Karl:** I'm a rocker at heart. I love Phil Rudd and Jeff Porcaro and Led Zeppelin and Motörhead and the Foo Fighters and Pearl Jam. I played all that stuff in college. With Feeder, it was the first time I was able to sink my teeth into that. With James and Robbie, I understand what the gigs are and what they need. But I wouldn't say I think of a drummer for each gig. I just think in terms of a certain genre or band.

**MD:** How's the session scene different between England and the U.S.?

**Karl:** A lot of U.K. producers have their own studios, so I go to personal spaces rather than the bigger U.S. complexes. With technology, you're seeing producers build facilities within their own buildings. But I recently did a session in L.A., and the room was fantastic. The kit was there ready to go, and they're obviously churning out stuff regularly. It was slick and fast—everyone knew what they wanted, and there was no messing around.

For James's last album, we recorded at Mark Knopfler's British Grove Studios in London, and I actually had three kits set up: a Rogers and a Gretsch in the big room, and a smaller Gretsch in a booth. We had everything covered, so if we wanted to try something, we didn't have to faff around for an hour with mics. It was a luxury, but it definitely paid off.

**MD:** Is the session scene changing?

**Karl:** I'm a newcomer. From what I'm told, back in the day sessions were aplenty, with a lot more going on, and the bigger studios were more active. Now there's a lot more programming, and people have their own studios where they can take their time and record the instruments themselves.

I've been fortunate over the past few years to play on some great records—although, because I tour so much, I take myself out of the session scene, so I'm not constantly here to see whether it swells or it goes quiet. And it's healthy to be able to tour and also do sessions, to mix it up. But even if you take yourself out of the scene, I don't think anyone can take away what you do. When people know you're back, they call you. Also, there's a load of great players in the U.K., but we all go off and tour, so it's a constant circle—a conveyor belt of good drummers for sessions.

**MD:** You show some serious ambidexterity during clinics, riding your left-side crash



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# THE MIX

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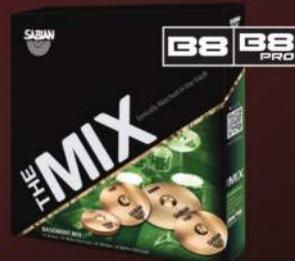
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## KARL BRAZIL

### RECORDINGS

**James Blunt** "I'll Take Everything" /// **Jason Mraz** "Make It Mine" /// **Feeder** "Renegades" /// **Tristan Prettyman** "Hello" /// **Leona Lewis** "Run" /// **Take That** "SOS" /// **Helping Haiti** "Everybody Hurts"

### INFLUENCES

**AC/DC** Back in Black (Phil Rudd) /// **Level 42** A Physical Presence (Phil Gould) /// **Fool's Gold** Mr. Lucky (Jeff Porcaro) /// **Whitesnake** Slip of the Tongue (Tommy Aldridge) /// **Journey** Raised on Radio (Steve Smith) /// **Stockton's Wing** Live (Fran Breen) /// **Toto** IV (Jeff Porcaro) /// **It Bites** Once Around the World (Bob Dalton) /// **Prince** The Gold Experience (Michael Bland) /// **The Band** The Band (Levon Helm) /// **Red Hot Chili Peppers** Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Chad Smith) /// **Queens of the Stone Age** Songs for the Deaf (Dave Grohl) /// **Tower of Power** Soul Vaccination Live (David Garibaldi) /// **Everything Everything** Man Alive (Michael Spearman) /// plus anything with John "JR" Robinson

with your left hand and playing backbeats and ghosting with your right. You're naturally lefty, but do you work on that stuff?

**Karl:** I don't really work on it. When I play, it feels like dancing. I go where the balance is shifted. I'm left-handed at everything I do. I'm even left-footed when I play soccer. My dad bought me a kit at age two and set it up for a righty player. So I lead with my left, and it gives me a bit of an ambidextrous feel. But it's too late to turn back! I enjoy the creative openness it gives me. And I've tried to play a lefty kit, but for the kick drum, my left foot is not as good as my right. On James Blunt's track "I'll Take Everything" [from *All the Lost Souls*] there's a pattern going on with the hats and the ride that has that ambidextrous thing.

**MD:** Have your clinics changed with so many different gigs being added to your résumé? You've got to have a wealth of ideas and beats in your arsenal at this point.

**Karl:** I try to focus on a little journey of how I got started. I'll do a country-shuffle blues track and then I'll do some things from my Celtic past. Then I'll talk about discipline and versatility and the reasons I think I get calls for gigs. I'll play to some Jason Mraz, James Blunt, and Take That and talk about sound and my approach. I'll change a snare and speak about not crashing going into a chorus or not playing any toms in a song. Then I'll solo and talk about feel and timing and how to present yourself and look after yourself on tour. I don't try to be someone I'm not—I'm not Dave Weckl. And I try to make it a bit of fun.

**MD:** The 2010 Brit Awards performance with Robbie Williams features what has to be the biggest challenge of all—you playing in a tux.

**Karl:** [laughs] Not only that, but we had to play an eleven-minute medley of Robbie's hits, with an eighteen-piece brass section, live on TV to a click with cues. The pressure was on, but I feed off pressure—it makes me work.



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# Jeff HAMILTON

Story by Jeff Potter  
Photos by Alex Solca

## O W N I N G I T

His early obsession with jazz might have been out of step with the rock 'n' roll dreams of most kids his age. But his commitment to the art form has worked to his advantage—and to that of some of the greatest artists on the world stage.

**W**hile his playground peers were spinning stacks of the latest rock 'n' roll 45s, young Jeff Hamilton was immersed elsewhere. "I was weird," Hamilton says. "I wanted to be back in the mid-'40s, riding around in a band bus. I was born in '53, so that wasn't possible. But the music I loved and listened to at twelve was big band music—the Basie band, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich—and at ten years old it was Oscar Peterson."

Since hitting the road with the New Tommy Dorsey Orchestra in his youth, Hamilton has never looked back, staying the course as a robust, precise swinging force steeped in the classic sound. His childhood dreams while growing up in Indiana were eventually realized as he swung behind many of his early idols, with an emphasis on his first-love formats: big band and piano trio.

Jeff played stints with Woody Herman and the Thundering Herd, Lionel Hampton, Ray Brown, Monty Alexander, Oscar Peterson, the L.A. Four, Ella Fitzgerald, the Count Basie Orchestra, and Rosemary Clooney. Along the way his full, round sound and grabber pulse have graced more than 200 albums, including twenty Grammy nominees (nine winners), with the likes of Diana Krall, Natalie Cole, Benny Carter, and Michael Bublé—and even a session of standards with Willie Nelson. Other artists in his impressive discography include Mel Tormé, Milt Jackson, Diane Schuur, Frank Sinatra, Lalo Schiffrin, Terry

Gibbs, Charlie Byrd, Dr. John, and Laurindo Almeida. Somehow, Hamilton also manages to don his business hat as a part owner of Bosphorus Cymbals.

Today the L.A.-based drummer's stellar status has afforded him the luxury to pick and chose. Although Hamilton still finds the time to book record dates and squeeze in appearances with top jazz names, his current focus harks back to his roots. "I've kind of whittled it down to my own projects," Jeff says. "The older you get, that's really where you want to be: playing your own music. I made that decision, and one of the reasons I formed the trio was because I didn't want to always be a rhythm section for everyone else. I wanted the trio to be able to stand on its own."

That resolve has rewarded Hamilton with two labors of love: the Jeff Hamilton Trio, featuring pianist Tamir Hendelman and bassist Christoph Luty, and the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra, a thrilling big band co-led with saxophonist Jeff Clayton and bassist/conductor John Clayton. The trio has an extensive U.S. touring schedule ahead and a new CD, *Red Sparkle*, while the orchestra is slated for an upcoming European tour. Hamilton will also be playing with the big band on collaborative appearances with singer/guitarist John Pizzarelli, in support of their popular CD, *Dear Mr. Sinatra*.

Due to his classic roots, Hamilton is frequently cited as a torchbearer. But he doesn't view it that way, being acutely



aware of the depth of history preceding him. "It's odd," he explains, "that a lot of people now come up to me and say, 'I got into jazz because your record is the first one I heard.' And I'll say, 'You're kidding!' It's a weird position, because I was used to going to Mel Lewis or Shelly Manne to discuss things and ask questions. Now it seems that more and more I'm the guy people seek out for that jazz information." Asked if a special responsibility comes along with that, the drummer is thoughtful. "The responsibility is to myself," he says, "to play the music—which so many people have shared so

much information with me about—and to honor the respectability of sitting down at the instrument and giving it one hundred percent."

All philosophizing aside, Hamilton ultimately prefers to get down to the core of things—much like his drumming, which is rooted in the primal elements that move people. "Basically," Jeff says, "I'm still simply doing what I was doing at twenty years old when I hit the road: playing great music with great musicians. That's always been my focus."



## RECORDINGS

**Jeff Hamilton Trio** Symbiosis, The Best Things Happen, Red Sparkle /// **Ray Brown Trio** Don't Get Sassy, 3 Dimensional /// **Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra** Live at MCG /// **Diana Krall** Live in Paris

## INFLUENCES

**Oscar Peterson Trio** The Oscar Peterson Trio Plays, Night Train (Ed Thigpen) /// **Count Basie** Chairman of the Board (Sonny Payne) /// **Ahmad Jamal** At the Pershing: But Not for Me (Vernell Fournier) /// **Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra** Central Park North (Mel Lewis) /// **Woody Herman** 1964, Encore: The Best Band of the Year 1963 (Jake Hanna) /// **Buddy Rich Big Band** Mercy Mercy (Buddy Rich)



**MD:** When you were growing up, what was it in your environment that got you so deeply into big band music?

**Jeff:** My two older sisters brought home an Elvis record, and my dad wanted nothing to do with it. So he went out and bought a cut-out at the record store: "Give me any big band record!" He didn't even know what it was. It was Count Basie. Jo Jones was on it. I heard it and said, "That's what I want to play." Also, my mother was a church organist. She had a little Hammond organ at the house that she practiced on. I realize

**"THE BRUSHES AFFORD US THE LUXURY OF FINDING OUT WHO WE ARE. THE STICKS DON'T DO THAT."**

now that I learned the keyboard at five years old by lying on the floor while my mother told me when to press the bass pedals.

She would buy music books that combined sacred music with secular tunes like "Satin Doll." My two sisters, my mother, and I would sit around the organ, and Dad would tolerate it. We'd sing the tunes with pretty good pitch and then break into four-part harmonies. From there, a neighbor down the street said, "Have you heard Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson?" And I started listening to records with him after school. It was a fertile musical home and town, with great music programs in the schools.

**MD:** Throughout your career, you've been highly in demand



## JEFF'S KIT

**Drums:** Remo Gold Crown Bebop series in black lacquer finish

**A.** 5 1/2 x 14 snare

**B.** 8 x 12 tom

**C.** 14 x 14 floor tom

**D.** 16 x 18 bass drum (16 x 20 for larger ensembles and organ groups)

**Heads:** Remo, including Fiberskyn 3 Diplomat snare and tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Fiberskyn 3 Diplomat on both sides of the bass drum

**Cymbals:** Bosphorus Hammer series

**1.** 14" hi-hats

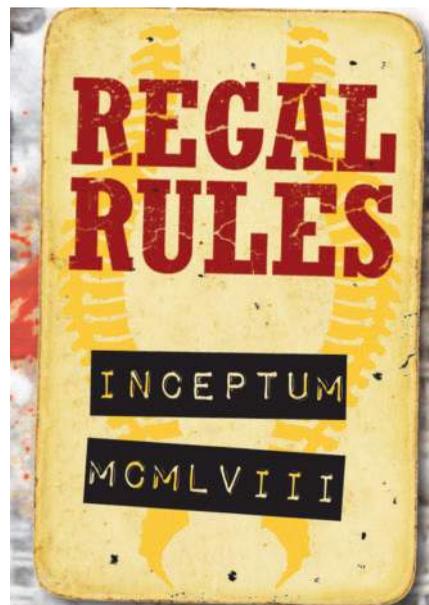
**2.** 20" crash/ride

**3.** 22" crash/ride with three rivets

**4.** 22" China with two rivets

**Sticks:** Regal Tip signature sticks and brushes

**Hardware:** Hamilton snare and cymbal stands



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## JEFF HAMILTON

with the biggest jazz singers on the planet, including your long, successful association with Diana Krall. Jazz vocalists can be notoriously finicky with drummers. What's the quality that puts you in that rare position?

**Jeff:** On the bandstand, you have to be aware of everything that's going on around you, listening all the time.

Those who *listen* better are going to be the better players, because they know what to do to add their talent to the

mix and offer what they have. A lot of times, players may be confident in what they do, but they're not really hearing everyone else.

Vocalists really know and appreciate when you're listening to them. And they know that I've listened to many, many records over the years and have had the experience of being on the bandstand with people like Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Tormé, and Tony Bennett. Applying all this to the vocal-

ist's singing—while having total respect for their voice and the gig—comes out as a pretty good package in the end, because they're getting the best of what I can offer. Total awareness and concentration on the bandstand and big, open ears are essential in *any* group you're playing with, vocalist or not.

The thing I learned early on playing as a fifteen-year-old kid in Richmond, Indiana, at Elizabeth Parker's Restaurant, was the bandleader saying, "Make sure you can hear my wife, Katy"—and there was no microphone! So I pulled out brushes. I couldn't use all my rudiments and astound the diners with my talent, because I had to listen to Katy. [laughs] And that was a great lesson to learn.

I had a one-day lesson with Papa Jo Jones that brought it all to total clarity. I was playing with Monty Alexander and John Clayton at Charlie's Playboy Lounge in Philadelphia, and Papa Jo came in to see the band. I asked him for a lesson, and he spent the whole next day with me. It was an unbelievable opportunity. I asked him what he thought of my playing the night before—what I needed to work on. He said, "Challenge the players more. Bring yourself to the music more; don't just lay there like a doormat and play time." I said, "Challenge them? But I don't want to cover up the bandleader." He said, "I didn't say, 'Play loud,' I said *challenge* them." The rule is, if you can hear everyone on the bandstand at all times, your volume is perfect.

**MD:** A drummer has to lay down the law but be sensitive as well. When playing with vocalists, do drummers sometimes make the mistake of forcing it down their throat, overstating their position?

**Jeff:** All musicians tend to strong-arm vocalists. Piano players can play a lot of substitution chords and make vocalists go someplace they don't necessarily want to go, or make it hard for them to hear their pitch. Bass players can be too loud or forceful with vocalists. It's not just drummers. Vocalists appreciate musicians listening to them and giving them what they need.

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there's a list of vocalists as long as my arm that I won't climb on the bandstand with because I don't feel I'm getting that from *them*. I don't want them to be turning around, snapping their fingers, glaring at me, shoving a microphone in my face, like, "Are you listening to me?" We're all up there to play music together, so once you get that democracy, *then* you can make some music.

Ella Fitzgerald was perhaps the nicest of the legendary singers I ever worked with. I worked with her for one year in '84, and the only thing she ever said to me was after the first tune we played. I was playing kind of lightly, like I would for most vocalists, and she turned around and said, "Give it to me, honey!" [laughs] So, in my head, I immediately went to those recordings with Gus Johnson on drums, where he sounded like he was playing with the Basie band on stage with Ella. I went to that, and she turned around and winked at me. She never said another word about my playing or complained about it. She just always asked us when

we got off the bandstand how *she* did that night.

So when you come from that to a singer who turns around and starts telling you, "Brushes! Sticks!"... There are name artists I could really hang out to dry. They need to know: "Let me play the drums. I studied this instrument, I studied your genre—let me do my job. Don't tell me to put a stick in one hand and a brush in the other. I'll tell you what needs to be done on this, and you can't imagine how great this is going to sound if you just give me a shot to make you sound like a million bucks."

**MD:** Unfortunately, that does happen to drummers. But it seems especially baffling if they specifically hired Jeff Hamilton—a drummer who *has* a name, a signature.

**Jeff:** It's due to artists not knowing exactly what they want and what's possible, yet they want to be in control of the situation. So they have in mind their favorite recording of that song and want you to sound like *that*. They don't know that you can bring some-

thing better than that, because they're not the singer on that recording, and you're listening to what *they* really need to make it sound like it should, instead of trying to re-create another recording.

**MD:** But when you're going into a huge high-profile project like Barbra Streisand's 2009 record, *Love Is the Answer*, aren't you braced for getting more direction than you might like?

**Jeff:** In that particular case, I accepted the work because Diana Krall was selected by Barbra Streisand to produce the record. Diana said, "I will produce it, but I want my rhythm section on it." Barbra said, "Okay, you're producing—it's your rhythm section." So I knew that I only had to answer to Diana. Barbra would work things out with Diana, and it would trickle down to me. Barbra had never worked like this. She was getting used to it and was having input as the project went on.

Actually, she ended up asking for my input. We'd do several takes, and she'd ask which ones I preferred. I thought, *Hmm! This is...nice.* [laughs] On one





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## JEFF HAMILTON

take I said, "I think on the take before this you were more relaxed with your lyric—the tempo was slower, and I felt you just relaxed more." She said, "No, I like the one we just did." I said, "Okay," and that was that. The next morning I did my three-mile jog along the ocean, and when I got back there was a message on my machine from Barbra, saying, "I stayed up late and listened to all the playbacks, and you know what? You're right—that one was the best."

That's when you get those enjoyable little moments of, "Yeah, we're all coming together with this thing."

**MD:** You've said that after your initial early influences, Mel Lewis became a huge inspiration.

**Jeff:** It wasn't until my ears matured that I figured out what Mel was doing. I realized, "Okay, *this* is what musicians want to play with." It's the relaxation that they want to feel on the bandstand, instead of having the drummer going after everything, making everything a drum solo. I was also fortunate

to have had Mel as a dear friend.

**MD:** You're recognized as a brush master. It's been said that brushwork is the most personal and individual of all drum techniques and sounds.

**Jeff:** I would agree that the brushes—for those who want to get all the way in there—allow you to be one hundred percent of who you are, [to reflect] what you're thinking at the time and what you're feeling, to bring everything right to the core of who you are.

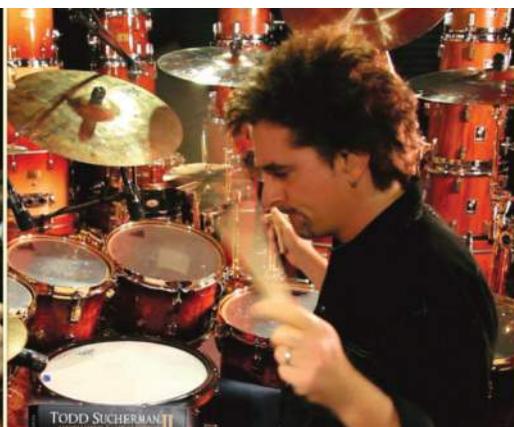
The sticks don't allow us to do that. That's a staccato sound; the brush can be a legato sound. If you just want to drop everything and say, "How am I feeling right now?"—maybe in a meditative mood—then pick up a brush and make a sweep across the head. The hair's going to stand up on the back of your neck. It allows you to experience whatever you're feeling inside at that time and to express it on the drums. A lot of people shy away from brushes because they feel they don't want to go that deep with what the brush can



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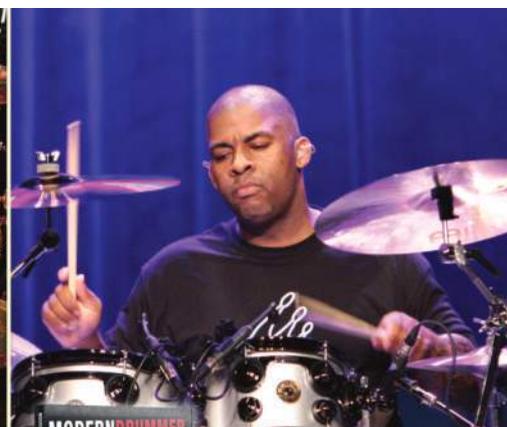
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offer. If you sit in a dark room with a pair of brushes and just try to create *sound* and relaxation, it's like going into a meditative state. The brushes afford us that luxury of finding out who we are.

**MD:** Why would drummers resist getting that deep?

**Jeff:** Because they're coming from rudimental snare drumming or the "hottest beat" of the day. For a lot of young players, drums are an aerobic exercise. So brushes would make them calm down and play music, and

a lot of players don't want to know about that. Then again, Tony Williams didn't like brushes. He said they were invented by club owners. [laughs]

**MD:** In your clinics, you stress the importance of a lateral movement for brushstrokes, even for short notes. I tried your tip, and the result was immediate. It seemed so obvious that I wondered why it hadn't occurred to me before.

**Jeff:** That's also what I said when my teacher John Von Ohlen showed me. I came up on military snare drumming,

so I had the rudimental chops, and I played brushes the same way. John, who is proudly *not* a rudimental drummer, showed me how he approached the stroke from the side. I heard the sound and said, "Holy cow—that's it!" So I applied the rudimental approach with the side-to-side motion, and that started to evolve.

**MD:** Do you have a signature from band to band, no matter what the format?

**Jeff:** People point out to me that I know my beat, I know where the feel is, I know what I can give to the music. And I have a very strong inner beat, so I offer that. I don't shove it down anybody's throat. I *offer* it, to everybody on the bandstand and everyone in the audience. And it's their choice to come into that—into my mental state of playing time. There's something you can't touch about that. It's a feeling that I hope makes people want to move or tap their feet or get up and dance, which I feel a lot of jazz players have lost in their beat. If you just play

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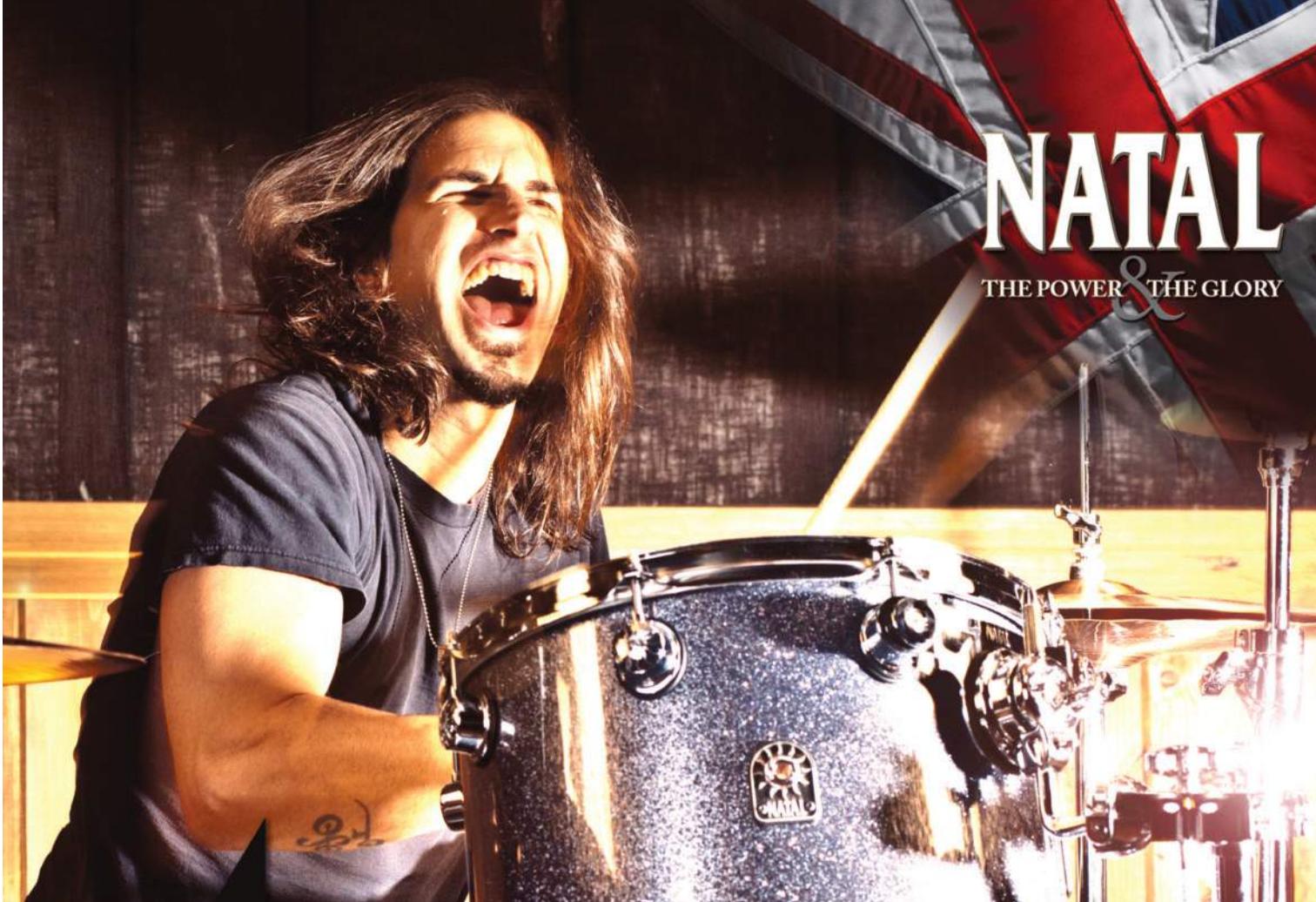
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## JEFF HAMILTON

the ride cymbal, it should dance—it should be strong enough to make you want to get out of your seat and dance. My favorite drummers all have that ride cymbal beat.

**MD:** Why is it missing?

**Jeff:** A lot of people haven't had the chance to stand in front of the live Basie band and experience the feeling of them changing your entire life. Or the experience of dancing to the Basie band or the Ellington band or any older big band. Because those bands were playing *dances*. And to keep their jobs, they *had* to keep the dance floor filled. And I'm not talking about having a "stodgy old-man beat." I'm talking about getting that infectious beat, in whatever genre it may be, and making sure that's the focus of it—first! The basis of it is very primitive. You pick up an object, you strike another one, and you move people. It's *that* primitive.

It's the way this whole thing got started, and I think we've gotten away from that. Jazz education is great. But sometimes you can get too much into that field and forget about having that danceable beat. The younger players in their twenties I've talked to lately say that people their age are bringing in their own original compositions featuring various time signatures and are wanting those to be played. That seems to be more the mainstream, instead of learning the American songbook. They don't necessarily even *want* to learn it.

I taught as a substitute at an institution with drumset majors focusing on jazz. And these people didn't even know where the clubs were in L.A.! But in their combo classes they want to bring in their own compositions for people to play.

It reminds me of a line that Jeff Clayton, my good friend and co-leader, said. At a clinic he was talking about standards and transcribing Cannonball Adderley. A kid said, "I don't want to sound like anybody!" And Jeff said, "Well, at your age, isn't it better to sound like somebody than a nobody?"

Too many people have made the mistake—maybe out of laziness—of not researching the music, to bring it

up to where they can say what they want to say. I don't sound exactly like Mel Lewis. I don't sound exactly like Jake Hanna. I don't sound exactly like Philly Joe Jones. But there are elements of those gentlemen's playing in my music, and I am *always* beaming when somebody comes up and says, "Man, that one thing you did sure sounded like Mel." Because nowadays, when someone says, "That sounded like Jake Hanna," the drummer will get bugged and shoot back, "I'm no Jake Hanna—I'm myself!" I don't get that departure.

**MD:** You spoke of how the dancing pulse should be elemental. I'll never forget seeing you with the Ray Brown Trio. I had never heard Ray live in a small club before, and I couldn't believe the strength of his sound and pulse going straight through the audience.

**Jeff:** Yeah, it's bouncing off the walls. When I was having elbow surgery, a known drummer subbed for me with Ray's trio. And he asked me, "How do you play with him?" because it was so forceful and strong. My reply was, "How can you *not* play with him?"

**MD:** Of course, that's a direct compliment to you as well: You have to be right *in* it.

**Jeff:** Right, you have to have that strength in your own beat to bring *to* that. I've seen Ray turn his back to several drummers who thought they could just ride his coattails—just following. That's the last thing Ray wanted.

**MD:** You've mentioned enjoying extreme tempos, especially very slow ones. How do you approach them?

**Jeff:** On the slower tempos I tend to "groan" a little more; I have an internal groan, which I encourage everybody to try. It brings more intensity to your time. A lot of us do it without knowing it. Louie Bellson called it the fifth limb—the limb of independence. It's an undercurrent throughout. John Von Ohlen described it as an infinite line, like a fishing line from corner to corner in the room. You get up on that, and you're on it through the entire piece until the cutoff. As Mel Lewis would say, "Concentrate from count-off to cutoff." Think the groan



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## JEFF HAMILTON

throughout, and there will be more intensity in your ballads than there is in the up-tempos.

On the up-tempos, I go the other way and think of a downbeat every four bars. It's a longer phrase. And I throw the stick down on 2 and 4 and get three bounces. Snap it up on 1 and 3 to make it clearer. Try to relax, and again, bring it to your mental state. I try to relax even more on up-tempos.

**MD:** You've really paid your dues as a sideman. What do you bring from that to being a leader now, musically or as a life lesson?

**Jeff:** I learned from all that experience to never consider anyone a "sideman" when you're a leader. It's so important to embrace everyone on the bandstand to get the most of what they can bring to the music. The minute you have a leader getting a little ego going, then you get a disgruntled sideman, and that definitely becomes a division. But once you've been kicked in the teeth by a leader, you start thinking, *When I get my own band, I'm not going to do that.* In my trio, it's equal parts—three equal musical minds coming together. I'm the leader as far as calling cues, and when the gig doesn't pay enough, I'm the one that takes the debt. [laughs] But psychologically, the guys in my trio would say it's not a leader and two sidemen. I can't do what they do, and they can't do what I do, so we all need each other to make this music come together. It's similar with the big band. Half of that band is still the original members from 1985, so that means we're doing something right.

Also, what I've learned from the great leaders is: Everything you do, do it one hundred percent. Go after it, don't be lazy, do what you want to do. If you've got a passion for something, an intensity for it, go after it. I could not have climbed on the bandstand with Oscar Peterson, Ray Brown, and Herb Ellis and just said, "Eh, I think I'm gonna relax tonight." You've got to get up there and *contribute*. You'll get rolled over by a steamroller if you don't.

On my first night with Ray and Oscar, we opened with a ballad, and we were in tuxedos in July at the Hollywood Bowl. I heard something, and it was Oscar singing his lines, kind of groaning the way he did. And Ray is going, "Haoow!"

playing long half notes and growling. I was sweating through my shirt by the end of the first chorus, just from the intensity of that ballad. We weren't playing loud; it was the intensity of the *beat*. And I thought, *Okay, this is the way every ballad has to feel from now on.*

**MD:** Your trio's new record is *Red Sparkle*. That's a title all drummers can relate to!

**Jeff:** Yeah, you hear them all giggle in the audience when we announce that tune. [laughs] It starts out with rudiments on the snare drum. It recalls how we had to get that together before we were rewarded a drumset. In my case, I spent five years on the snare drum. I had a Slingerland red-sparkle snare. The tune develops into a rumbling, rolling groove on the whole set that occasionally reverts back to the rudiments.

This CD is a little different in that its identity is more focused on my contribution in the trio. The theme of the record is to open each tune with an identifiable drumbeat that will be the signature. Also, I've written more originals on this; there are fewer standards.

**MD:** Drummer/leaders are the exception rather than the rule. It's "easier" for melodic instrumentalists to stamp a signature sound on a jazz band. What is your stamp as a bandleader?

**Jeff:** It is easier to market bands led by melodic instrumentalists. But I'll never forget something that Woody Herman told me. Toward the end of my second week, on the bandstand he turned around and said, "Don't forget, this is your band, pal!" At twenty-four, I'm thinking, *I don't WANT this band! I just want to play drums in this band!* [laughs]

We talked about it later, and he said, "Every band belongs to the drummer. And it's up to you to make it work or not. The drummer can make a band sound great; therefore it's your band. You're the 'arranger,' you know what's going on, you can shade what's coming next, what we just left. You can fold up what we just did, seal it away. You can make everybody sound like a million, or make everybody sound bad. It's *your* band." You can't share that with everybody, but since this is a drummer's magazine, I'm here to tell drummers that every band you're in can be *your* band!





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John Riley conducts a master class at the 2011 MD Fest. Original photo by Rahav. Photo illustration by EJ DeCoske.

# Get Good: Drum Clinics

by Mike Haid

Teaching has long been a stable source of income for musicians. For the modern-day drum clinician, doing clinic tours and festival performances is also a way to communicate musical concepts in an intimate and interactive setting. This month *Modern Drummer* corners two of the most sought-after clinicians on the planet, Jojo Mayer and Billy Ward, to discuss the good, the bad, and the ugly of drum clinics and to explain what a productive clinic means to them.

MD 2012 Pro Panelist and master clinician Billy Ward opens with this realization: "One thing I think drummers need to understand," he says, "is that there's not enough money in doing clinics to make a full-time income. And

most clinicians aren't millionaires. The dream in the arts should never be about money anyway. You're going to have a terrible life if that's the only reward. The reward should be the path and the art."

Now that we've burst that bubble, what skills are necessary to put on a superior drum clinic? "There's an IQ test involved," Ward says. "You really need to be overqualified. You have to have a strong verbal sense. And you need to be a giver. In the old days, the drummer walks out, plays a solo, and then asks, 'Are there any questions?' That's not what I'm about. I want to give them tools to build their careers. That's the type of education that I try to give in a clinic. If you do X, it will sound like Y, and that's how easy it is to accomplish Z.

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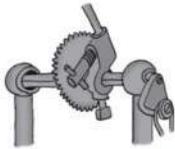
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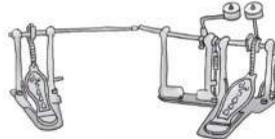
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## Know Your Place



Becoming a well-known drum clinician can do wonders for your career—and your ego. In your ascent to the

top of the heap, suggests **noted clinician Mike Johnston**, make sure not to lose sight of your duties, or your manners.

### RESPECT THE EMPLOYEES

One thing that a lot of drummers miss is how disruptive the clinic can be for the music store that's hosting the event. Even though it's a big deal for you and your fans, it really throws a wrench in the works. Shop employees have to move the store around, set up chairs, set up your gear, and stay late, and sometimes they get very little thanks for all their effort. I try to get there early to help them set up and make it as easy as possible for them by never complaining and always ending my clinic on time.

### THINK ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

I try never to come in, establish dominance, and leave. I want the crowd to be inspired after the clinic, not deflated. Choosing topics that relate to a wide variety of skill levels helps with achieving that. A simple sticking pattern is tangible to a beginner, and that same sticking pattern over a polyrhythmic ostinato is tangible to an advanced drummer. I think my favorite thing is seeing a guy or girl in the crowd lean over to their friend and say, "I'm gonna practice that."

### DO THE LEGWORK

In the old days, music stores were very close with their customers, and they were like a large family. The drum shop manager would make a few calls to his loyal customers, and before you knew it the whole town knew what drummer was coming by to give a clinic. Nowadays it's the drummer's responsibility to promote his or her own clinics through social networking. Using YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to get the word out that you're coming to a specific town is becoming part of being a clinician in today's shrinking world.

## GET GOOD: DRUM CLINICS

That's giving them something that's across the board, and a ten-year-old or a sixty-year-old can both enjoy and learn from it."

International superstar drummer and clinician Jojo Mayer looks at clinics from an artistic and conceptual standpoint. "There's a difference between scripting a clinic and structuring a clinic," he explains. "I use three rough entities in my clinic structure. The first is physical, which addresses issues like tuning, hand



**"You can't teach someone to do certain things in one hour, but you can give someone a paradigm shift in two seconds." —Jojo Mayer**

exercises, posture—things that address the body. The second is the conceptual entity that includes style, independence, odd meters, and the like. The third and most important entity, which is the most difficult to understand, is the emotional aspect. It's the key to what I want to convey. The other two entities lead up to the emotional entity, which is the artistic one. I believe a good clinic must have a balance between the physical, the conceptual, and the emotional aspects of drumming."

Mayer is quick to condemn the use of flash and sensationalism to sell a clinic. "The young drummers of today don't have many role models," he says. "There are a lot of guys with chops, but not many that really make a statement. We need more artistic role models in drumming. That will invigorate the music scene *and* the clinic scene. I don't see a problem with being a professional clinician. A clinic is a condensed educational event. But when you turn it into something else, like a freak show or an athletic event of speed and complexity, it loses its value as an educational event. Some drummers think that if they can create enough razzle-dazzle to make people drop their jaw for a minute, they've done their job. But there will quickly be another guy who's faster and more complex than you, and your clinic will soon have no value.

"My main concern as a clinician is to be sincere in everything I say and everything I play. It's my opportunity to pass along useful information that drummers can walk away with that will help them become better musicians and not

baffle them with a bunch of meaningless razzle-dazzle."

In terms of structuring his clinics, Ward likes to have a variety of options. "The first thing I do is determine the average age of the audience," he explains. "I don't want to talk about a subject as deep as *feel* to nine-year-olds. For them, safe topics are grip, rudiments, and the like. On the other hand, if it's a more mature crowd, I tend to avoid those topics. I'll have a sheet of paper with notes written in different col-

ors, so at a glance I don't get lost. It's not necessarily in any particular order, but it's all there."

Billy adds that the general mood of the audience also affects his approach. "Some audiences are more responsive and in the moment," he says. "Some are very passive. But when there *is* feedback, I'll ask them where they want to go next. It becomes a group effort when you're really rolling with the crowd.

"The entertainment aspect is very important in my clinics too. It's got to be fun. I like being funny, and I get a kick out of making people laugh. If mistakes happen, I try to make light of it."

For Mayer, incorporating a question-and-answer segment is an important piece of the puzzle. "I'm giving people access to me," he says. "I'm there to answer any questions, which can be either entertaining or educational. I don't want to give the impression of some guy on stage that they admire. I want to give them access to me and what I do. My favorite clinics are not when I'm elevated on stage, but when I'm at floor level and people are surrounding the drumkit. I like to create a drummer-hang vibe. I want to create a human element where I can become a person and not a concept. I want them to ask as many questions as possible, no matter how simple or complex.

"I like the Q&A because it makes them feel like they're participating," Jojo continues. "And even though I may think that a question about pedal tension is boring, this guy may have been agonizing over pedal tension and has been waiting all this

A photograph of Mike Portnoy, a drummer, performing on stage. He is wearing a black bandana, sunglasses, and a black t-shirt with a graphic design. He has a beard and long braids. His right arm is raised, holding a drumstick. The background is a dark stage with blue lighting and a large window with vertical bars.

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## GET GOOD: DRUM CLINICS

time to ask me that question. Plus, any question gives me an opportunity to elaborate on my philosophy that surrounds that particular question.”

Ward, however, sees a danger in the question-and-answer approach. “For me,” he explains, “Q&A can kill the vibe. I’m so interested in pleasing peo-



“When there’s feedback from the audience, I’ll ask them where they want to go next. It becomes a group effort when you’re really rolling with the crowd.” —**Billy Ward**

ple that I’ll waste ten minutes of precious clinic time answering one specific question. I think there’s too much risk involved. I’ll do it with certain audiences, but it has to feel right before I go into that arena.”

Questions about a drummer’s gear are common at clinics, a fact that’s certainly not lost on manufacturers, which are typically the source of funding for an artist’s appearance. But a fine line exists between shilling and educating, Ward says. “I think it’s very important to acknowledge and thank the people that are paying you for the clinic.

Selling product as part of my clinic is not something that I do consciously. But I love all the gear that I use, and talking about my gear is something I would do anyway if I were just hanging with a bunch of drummers. So the selling aspect is really automatic. If a question comes up about my gear, I will certainly acknowledge the companies that graciously sponsor me. The companies do not see immediate benefits. It’s rare that someone buys the drumset that I just played at the clinic.”

Increasingly common at clinics is the use of video recording devices, which presents another ethical issue for a clinician to deal with. “I have no problem with people videotaping my clinics,” Ward says. “To me it’s part of the gift. Maybe there will be one guy that’ll see the clip and be inspired. But if it becomes a moneymaker for them, that’s a different story.”

Mayer has reluctantly surrendered to the digital video recording of his clinics. “My only concern with videotaping clinics,” he says, “is that some people

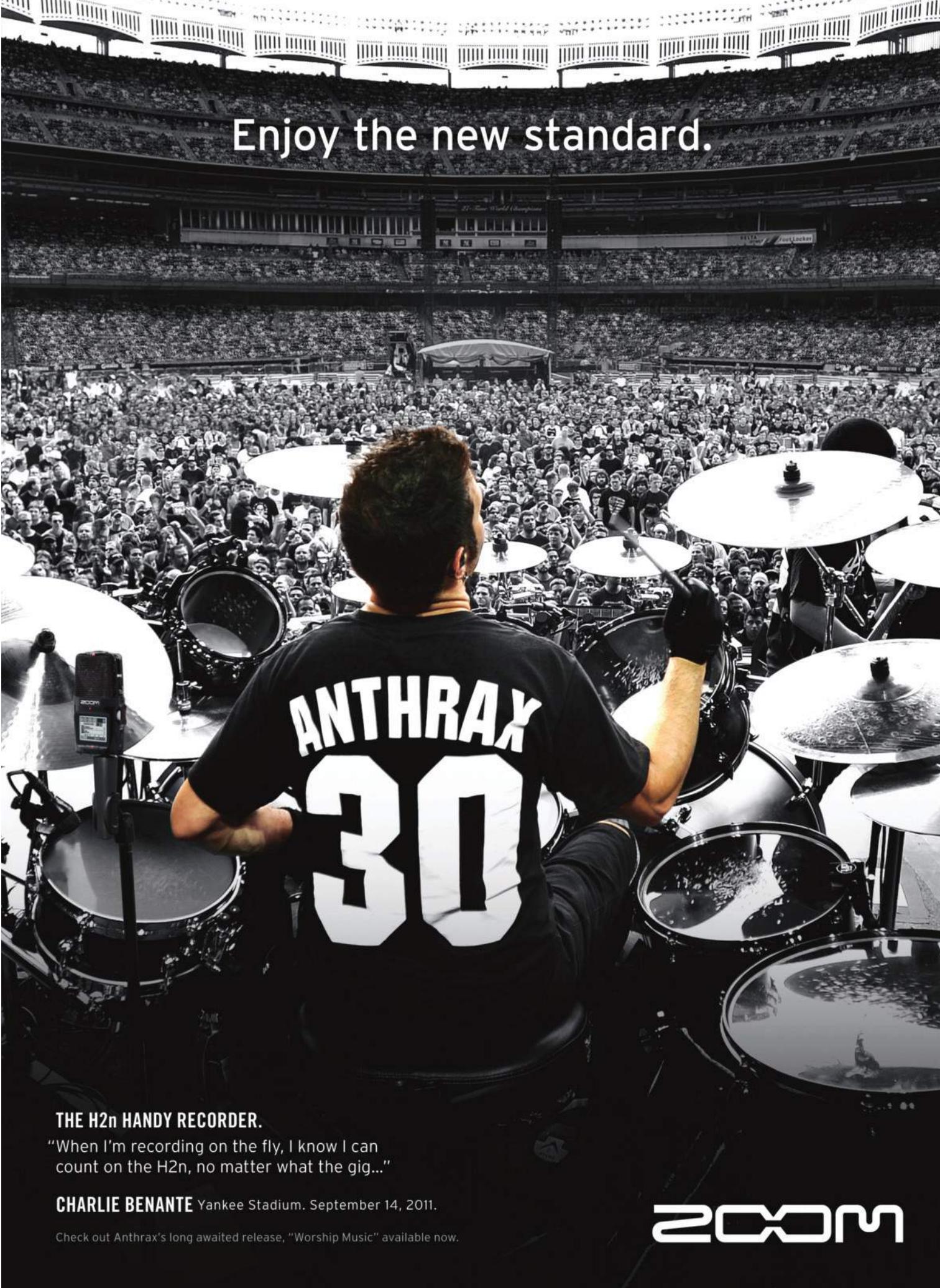
don’t pay attention to what they’re recording, and it’s a materialistic approach. They just want something to have from the clinic. I love YouTube, but there are many poor-quality recordings from clinics that people have to sift through to find a real quality representation of what I do. The dis-

appointing thing for me is that the sound quality is usually poor and the content is beyond my control. I also want people’s undivided attention at the clinic. And if they’re going to have the luxury of recording it, I’d like more thoughtful discretion from them about what they’re recording and posting online.”

As both Ward and Mayer suggest, though the drum clinic has limitations as a teaching tool, if handled well it can be a profound experience for the artist and the audience. “The reason I do drum clinics is to give the gift,” Ward says. “With a band, you have banter, you have jokes, and you have interplay. In a clinic you’re usually by yourself in a music store with the drum department manager, who’s typically twenty years younger than you. There’s usually no place to eat, and it’s not typically an enjoyable experience. It’s a sacrifice. But it’s about the giving of the gift. It’s all worth it, if you achieve the honor of giving them that gift.”

“You cannot teach someone to do certain things in one hour,” Mayer says, “but you can give someone a paradigm shift in two seconds. Paradigm shifts are extremely powerful. Many people probably come to my clinics because they want to see how I execute certain things. But if I manage, in that one hour, to change the paradigm for one person to understand that it’s not about a tangible, measurable, or physical accomplishment, but it’s about expression and art—and if that guy goes home, applies that artistic concept, and starts playing differently—then I did my job well.”





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Michael S. Jaehles



# CHARLIE BENANTE: Beyond Speed

**Alongside Metallica, Megadeth, and Slayer, Anthrax is part of the “Big Four” architects of thrash metal, and the band is a monolith in the metal genre in general. Drummer Charlie Benante may be the single biggest reason for the group’s trailblazing success over the past three decades.**

Like so many drummers, Benante was first inspired by the Beatles—in Charlie’s case, largely from their feature film *A Hard Day’s Night*. Later Benante would find inspiration in proto-metal bands like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, before edging closer to his own calling with groups like Motörhead and Venom. Benante joined Anthrax in 1983 prior to the recording of debut album *Fistful of Metal*, and over the course of the next several releases his drumming became the definition of speed in the ‘80s, reaching previously unimagined heights of double bass quickness, endurance, and precision.

“We just have this New York type of vibe,” Benante tells *Modern Drummer*, “and we were really influenced by the hardcore scene. That’s why we kept up with the speed so much. It was just this ball of energy, and when we played together, it naturally happened that way.”

Anthrax’s breakthrough 1987 release, *Among the Living*, is one of the most influential metal albums of all time, with songs such as the title track and “A Skeleton in the Closet” highlighting the kind of playing that baffled scores of would-be metal drummers. Benante also helped usher in the prominence of blast beats—the all-out aural assault that has become a metal staple in the years since—with his work on the 1985 album *Speak English or Die* by Stormtroopers of Death, a side project featuring other members of Anthrax. Benante points to the track “Milk” as the first time such a beat appeared on record—a feat made even more impressive by the fact that he played it on a single kick.

Charlie is one of those drummers who is seemingly gifted from up on high, having never practiced in a regular, disciplined fashion. As he explained simply in his first *Modern Drummer* feature, in 1988, “As far as speed, I started using the double pedal, the songs got faster, and before I knew it the double bass got faster. Kids were starting to ask me how I played so fast. I don’t know—it just happened.”

Beyond his speed, Benante has always brought a play-for-the-song mentality to Anthrax. As the band matured and entered new

phases through the ‘90s and beyond, the drummer adjusted his playing accordingly rather than stubbornly clinging to increased bpm. He put it best in his ‘93 *MD* feature, when he said, “There are other players who I think are good with two bass drums, but is the end result me having to race those guys? To me, it’s not about trying to outdo anybody, and I’m not trying to win a poll. Too many younger drummers think it’s about how fast you play. That doesn’t matter. Whatever the song calls for, that’s what I deliver.”

While his drumming alone would be enough to enshrine him in the all-time pantheon of metal influences, Benante has never been satisfied to be a one-trick pony. In addition to drumming, Charlie designs all of Anthrax’s artwork, handles much of the business side of the band, and plays guitar. In fact, he’s been Anthrax’s primary songwriter throughout its history. And while songs like “Only” and “Caught in a Mosh” were reportedly written around beats Benante had in mind, most of his work begins on the guitar rather than on the instrument he’s famous for. Indeed, Benante had a hand in writing all of the songs for Anthrax’s 2003 album, *We’ve Come for You All*, and has played guitar on every record since 1993’s *Sound of White Noise*.

The fall of 2011 finally saw the follow-up release to *We’ve Come for You All*, titled *Worship Music*, as well as the continued progression of this drumming icon and his bandmates.

**Billy Brennan**



“Charlie was one of the innovators of thrash metal drumming, with a sound and style that are untouchable by most mere mortals,” says 2011 *MD* Pro Panelist Jason Bittner, who toured with Anthrax in 2006 while Benante and his wife were having a baby. “Charlie was the guy who was pushing the envelope as far as pure speed in speed metal, but he has a certain finesse to his playing that his peers of that time didn’t have, and I personally feel that he never gets the credit he deserves. I can’t even begin to explain how he’s influenced me as a player.”



# Understanding Odd Time Signatures

Part 2: Time Playing in Five and Seven by Rick Landwehr

MUSIC KEY	
H.H.	R.C.
S.D.	(X)
B.D.	Ghost Note
H.H. w/foot	Note

In the previous article in this series (October 2011) we looked at 3/4, which has a quarter-note pulse and is the most common odd time signature in contemporary music. We also looked at 6/8, which is based on a dotted-quarter-note pulse. Now it's time to apply rhythmic ideas from 3/4 and 6/8 to less common odd time signatures.

In odd time signatures other than 3/4, measures can be subdivided into note groupings of two and three. For example, 5/4 can be subdivided into two quarter notes plus three quarter notes (2/4 + 3/4), or vice versa (3/4 + 2/4).

Here are some time-playing ideas in 5/4.

## 2+3 rock/funk

## 2+3 jazz

## 3+2 rock/funk

## 3+2 jazz

A measure of 5/8 subdivides into one quarter-note pulse (two 8th notes) plus one dotted-quarter-note pulse (three 8th notes), or vice versa. This is an example of a "mixed pulse" time signature. Here are some 5/8 time-playing ideas.

## 2+3

## 3+2

Similarly, 7/4 and 7/8 can be subdivided into twos and threes, but with three possible combinations: 2+2+3, 3+2+2, and 2+3+2. Here are some time-playing ideas in 7/4.

## 2+2+3 rock/funk

## 2+2+3 jazz

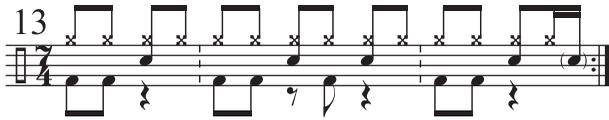
3+2+2 rock/funk



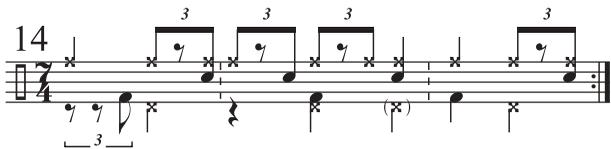
3+2+2 jazz



2+3+2 rock/funk



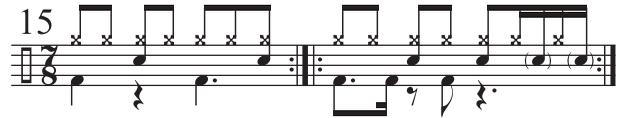
2+3+2 jazz



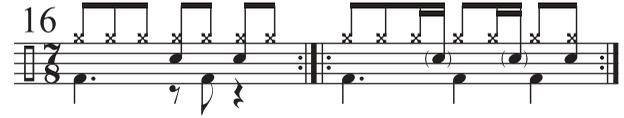
**Rick Landwehr** is a Boston-based private instructor, a studio musician, and the drummer for the progressive jazz/rock band Tamandua. His recent book, *Drummer's Guide to Odd Time Signatures*, is available through Alfred Publishing. Rick endorses Vic Firth, Paiste, Evans, and PureSound. For more info, visit [ricklandwehr.net](http://ricklandwehr.net).

Here are some 7/8 time-playing ideas.

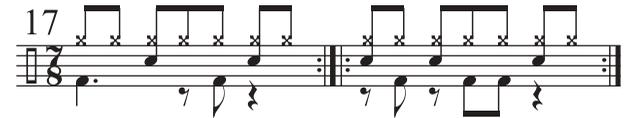
2+2+3



3+2+2



2+3+2



Now it's time to get creative and come up with some of your own ideas. There's no right or wrong way to play in odd time signatures, as long as you respect what the music is telling you to do. Use your creativity to combine different patterns based on twos and threes. Start slowly, and count to help internalize how the different time signatures feel.

In the final part of this series, we'll look at 9/4, 11/4, 9/8, and 11/8.



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# Chops Builders

## Part 17: Two-Hand Coordination, Triplet-Based Ride

by Bill Bachman

In Chops Builders 15 and 16, we looked at two-hand coordination exercises involving 8th- and 16th-note ostinatos and various 16th-note-based rhythms. This month we're going to shift into triplet mode. We'll combine the two most commonly used triplet-based ostinatos—the jazz ride and the shuffle—with a variety of one- and two-beat triplet-based rhythms.

Your hands will be playing with different techniques, yet they will have to remain completely relaxed. The key is to coordinate the hands so that each is seemingly unaware of what the other is doing, yet they're playing together perfectly without hitting any unwanted flams. Mastering these exercises will greatly increase your vocabulary and will undoubtedly manifest itself in different contexts in your playing.

First let's look at the jazz ride ostinato, which you most often use on the ride cymbal. Every note in this pattern should be played as a loose rebounding free stroke to maximize flow and to achieve the most resonant stick sound. I recommend using French grip with the ride cymbal hand, since the vertical hand position (with the thumb on top) gives the fingers a wider range of motion and better access to the stick. French grip also lets the stick breathe more, which results in a more articulate stick-click sound.

The stick should be in constant motion within a loose hand; avoid picking it up after each stroke. It may take some time to develop the finger control necessary to dribble the stick so that it pops up by itself.

Now let's look at the fill-in hand, which most often plays the snare drum. This hand will play the eight triplet-based rhythms using the free-stroke technique. The free stroke is the easiest and best-sounding way to play consecutive notes at a uniform volume level (notes with no accent/tap variation). Free strokes are relaxed dribbles of the stick played

with the wrist and fingers. The key is to play a relaxed stroke with good velocity into the drum and then let the stick freely rebound on its own back up to where it started. Never pick up the stick! If you find yourself needing to pick it up, either there's tension in the hand or the last stroke in the series wasn't played with enough velocity into the drum.

Our triplet-based rhythms consist of all of the possible combinations within a quarter note and within quarter-note-triplet patterns starting on the downbeat and the upbeat. The objective is to coordinate these patterns with the opposite hand's ostinato, without disrupting the flow. If the lead hand's motion is affected when you add the other hand, then the flow, timing, and groove will be lost. If the fill-in rhythms are played tightly or inaccurately (creating unwanted flams), feel will be sacrificed. You want to be able to play each of these patterns while observing the hands, making sure they're comfortable and perfectly in sync.

Practice the following coordination patterns with a metronome (or play them along with your favorite tunes), and don't go any faster than you can play comfortably using relaxed finger control. Play each pattern for at least five minutes, making sure that there are no flams between the hands before moving to the next tempo. (If you can't have a conversation with someone while playing these patterns, you're not ready to move on.)

For part of this practice session, I recommend splitting the hands on different playing surfaces so you can analyze and perfect each hand's motion individually. Finally, be sure to switch the hands so that the opposite hand is leading. Whether you think it's practical or not, learning to lead with the opposite hand will make you a better player when you go back to playing with your normal hand leading.

1

Now let's switch the lead hand's ostinato to the shuffle pattern.

2

RH: 4/4  
LH: 4/4

You can play the shuffle pattern without accents, but it's also common to play it with an accent on the downbeat and a tap on the third partial of the triplet. To get a strong accent immediately following the low tap, you'll want to play the accents with the Moeller whip stroke. Think of the tap as a Moeller upstroke, where the stick just happens to hit the surface as the arm is lifted and the hand and stick drop limp. Then throw the forearm down, causing the stick to whip back down with high velocity. The arm essentially drags the relaxed hand and stick up and down. The key is to avoid engaging the wrist muscles during this motion, because that will cause excess tension and will make the system seize up.

When the lead hand is on the hi-hats, I recommend playing the tap with the bead of the stick on top of the cymbal and the accent on the edge with the shoulder of the stick. When you're playing the ride cymbal, the taps could be played with the bead of the stick on the bow and the accents could be played with the shoulder of the stick on the bell.

3

RH: 4/4  
LH: 4/4

**Bill Bachman** is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player. His latest book, *Stick Technique*, is available through Modern Drummer Publications. For more information, including how to sign up for online Skype lessons, visit [billbachman.net](http://billbachman.net).

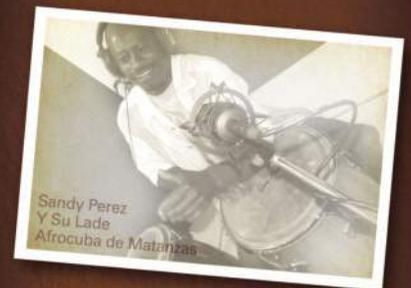


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# Brush Workshop

Part 3: Linear Motion by Florian Alexandru-Zorn



Many drummers think that brushes can be used only in jazz, but if you've been following this series and practicing the various patterns in each article, you should realize by now that brushes can be used in any musical style. This month we're covering a linear motion that allows you to play at extremely fast tempos, and it's great to use when playing funk, Latin music, or up-tempo swing.

The first diagram shows the basic motion. The hands sweep in unison but in opposite directions. The legendary jazz drummer and brush master Philly Joe Jones called this motion "the windshield wiper."

2, 4 ← → 1, 3  
1, 3 ← → 2, 4

1 2 3 4

♯e

Now let's try the motion in 8th notes. You can use any sticking. In the next two diagrams, the main sticking patterns are RLRL and RRLL.

2, 4 ← → 1, 3  
2+, 4+ ← → 1+, 3+

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

♯e

1+, 3+ ← → 1, 3  
2+, 4+ ← → 2, 4

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

♯e

A great exercise for all stickings is to play a "time pyramid," where you start with quarter notes and then shift to quarter-note triplets, 8th notes, 8th-note triplets, 16th notes, quintuplets, 16th-note triplets, septuplets, and 32nd notes. Of course, you have to start at a very slow tempo (50–60 bpm). I demonstrate this exercise in the free video lesson that's posted at moderndrummer.com.

Here's one way to play 16th notes using the sticking RLRL. With practice, you'll be able to use this motion to sweep a single-stroke roll. Be sure to use your fingers and wrists when you sweep outward, in a thumbs-up French-grip position. The motion looks similar to throwing a Frisbee.

1a, 2a, 3a, 4a ← → 1, 2, 3, 4

1e, 2e, 3e, 4e ← → 1+, 2+, 3+, 4+

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

♯e

The sticking of the next pattern is RRLL, so the faster you get, the more it sounds like a double-stroke roll. Practice this motion with a lot of patience, because you can get many good groove ideas out of it.

1a, 2a, 3a, 4a ← → 1e, 2e, 3e, 4e

1+, 2+, 3+, 4+ ← → 1, 2, 3, 4

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

♯e

Our third pattern for playing 16th notes uses inverted double strokes.

1+, 2+, 3+, 4+ ← → 1, 2, 3, 4

1e, 2e, 3e, 4e ← → 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a

1 e + a 2 e + a 3 e + a 4 e + a

♯e



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A great exercise for practicing the linear motion is to read a line of rhythms from Ted Reed's book *Syncopation* or any other easy sheet, while sweeping 16th notes. Play the notes in the music with pressure and acceleration accents. (Refer back to part one of this series, in the October 2011 issue, for info on how to play sweeping accents with brushes.)

Eighth-note triplets can be played in the following way.

You can use any sticking for triplets. For example, use RLL and play an accent with pressure and acceleration on beats 2 and 4 in a 4/4 rhythm. If you then play accents on beats 1 and 3 with the bass drum, you can create a shuffle or a hip-hop feel. The possibilities are endless. Think about patterns you often play with sticks, and translate them to brushes.

Our final example contains a polymetric figure. Practice it

very slowly at first, and split the hands between two sound surfaces, such as a rack tom and a snare or two snares, so you can get different sweeping sounds.

Throw in accents on beats 2 and 4, or at other places in the pattern, and you will soon discover a world of useful grooves and patterns that aren't limited to just one genre. In the next installment, we'll deal with some of the American and Swiss rudiments. If you have any questions about these exercises, feel free to contact me via email at [florian@alexandru-zorn.de](mailto:florian@alexandru-zorn.de) or visit [brushplaying.com](http://brushplaying.com). And be sure to check out the video lesson at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Florian Alexandru-Zorn** is an international drum clinician and freelance drumset player in Germany. He is the author of the acclaimed book *The Complete Guide to Playing Brushes* (Alfred Publishing). For more information, including how to sign up for online Skype lessons, log on to [brushplaying.com](http://brushplaying.com).



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# Advanced Shuffle

The Universal Groove Expanded by Jim Payne

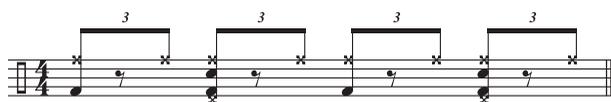


The shuffle runs through all types of music, from jazz to gospel, rock, country, R&B, soul, jungle, fusion, funk, and beyond. In this article, we're going to explore a few ways in which the shuffle has been used in classic R&B and funk tracks, as well as a few of my own variations.

## Basic Shuffle

**Example: "634-5789" by Wilson Pickett (drummer: Al Jackson)**

The shuffle is a triplet-based groove. The right hand plays the ride cymbal or closed hi-hat, the left hand plays backbeats on the snare, and the right foot plays a solid four on the floor on the bass drum.



When the guitar or horn section is playing on beat 1 and the "let" of beat 2, it's common to kick the bass drum along with the pattern.



## Double Shuffle

**Examples: "Honky Tonk" by Bill Doggett (Shep Sheppard) and "Preach" by King Curtis (Ray Lucas)**

The next step is to convert the basic shuffle to the double shuffle. With both hands playing the shuffle pattern, the left hand has to do a little more work because you have to get a nice "crack" on beats 2 and 4 (played either as rimshots or snare drum accents) while you're shuffling. The in-between snare notes should be played softly. In many cases, double shuffles are played at fairly fast tempos (100–150 bpm), so this groove may require some shedding.



If you add a bass drum accent on the "let" of beat 2, you get the following.



## Texas Shuffle

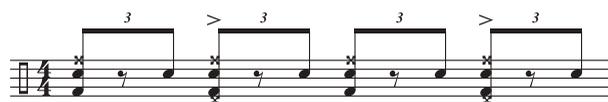
**Example: "Frosty" by Albert Collins (Herbert Henderson)**

The Texas shuffle has the same coordination as the double shuffle but a different feel. Every note that's played on the "let" is pushed a little closer to the downbeat, so the groove becomes tighter and more insistent.

## Quarter-Note Ride

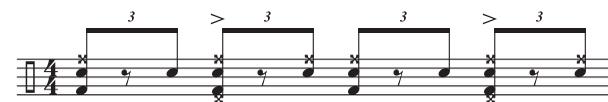
**Examples: "Green Onions" by Booker T. & the MGs (Al Jackson) and "Cold Shot" by Stevie Ray Vaughan (Chris Layton)**

Playing quarter notes on the ride gives the shuffle a slightly different feel that really drives the band. Keep the left hand shuffling as usual, with accented backbeats on 2 and 4.



## Jazz Ride Pattern

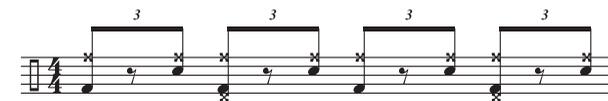
The jazz ride pattern also works well with the shuffle rhythm. This feel has been used by many drummers in organ groups that play a mixture of jazz, R&B, and funk—Ben Dixon with Lou Donaldson, Grady Tate and Donald Bailey with Jimmy Smith, Joe Dukes with Brother Jack McDuff, and Byron Landham with Joey DeFrancesco, to name a few.



## Flat-Tire Shuffle

**Examples: "Every Day I Have the Blues" by B.B. King (Sonny Freeman)**

For this variation the right hand shuffles but the left hand plays only on each "let." It sounds like driving along with a flat tire. If your bandmates aren't used to this feel, it can throw them off. But if you really lay it down and the bass player plays solid quarter notes, it *grooves*.



## Add a Drag

**Example: "Soul Twist" by King Curtis (Ray Lucas)**

This song has several drags and a backbeat on beat 2. A left-hand drag can scoot the rhythm along. It can be played as a distinct double or as a buzz stroke.

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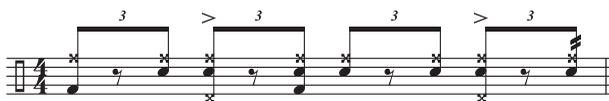
From the moment we heard the opening fill of Nirvana's 1991 classic "Smells Like Teen Spirit," we were hooked on Dave Grohl. After driving the band to legendary status, Grohl formed the Foo Fighters, one of the biggest rock bands of the past twenty years. Stints with Queens of the Stone Age and Them Crooked Vultures further emphasized Dave's position as a modern-day drum god. And through it all, *MD* has been there.

Ash Newell



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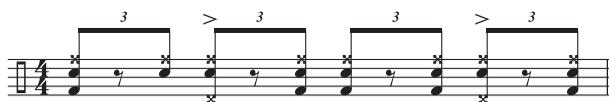
### With Ghost Notes

This version has a buzz stroke on the “let” of 4 and ghost notes on the “let” of 2 and the “trip” of 3. The right hand and left foot play quarter notes.



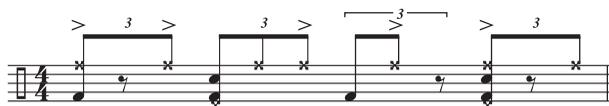
### More Bass Drum

Here’s an example of the shuffle with more bass drum notes. On slower material, some drummers will play the entire shuffle pattern with the bass drum. This can get heavy, but it can work well on the right tune.



### 6/8 Latin Cowbell Pattern

You can also throw in a Latin cowbell pattern on the ride cymbal. Check out the accents; they really make this pattern move.



### Swing Feel

Examples: “Up on Cripple Creek” by the Band (Levon Helm) and “Papa Don’t Take No Mess” by James Brown (Jabo Starks)

The shuffle can be heard in lots of modern R&B and hip-hop. Putting some swing into any 16th-note pattern will give it that feel. With a little experimentation, you’ll find the amount of swing that works for you.

### Half-Time Shuffle

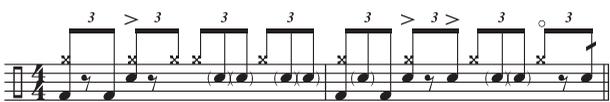
Example: “Rosanna” by Toto (Jeff Porcaro)

If you play the shuffle pattern on the hi-hat in double time and then add backbeats on 2 and 4, you get a half-time feel. “Rosanna” has some ghost notes within the shuffling hi-hat pattern, but the following examples focus only on various bass drum patterns under the basic half-time feel.

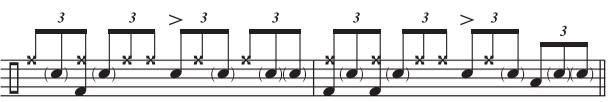
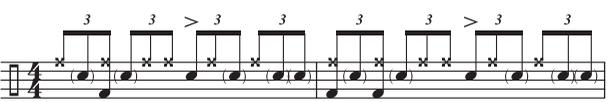


### Advanced Combinations

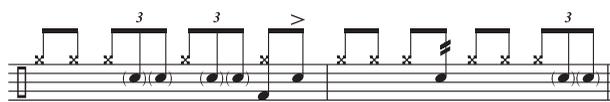
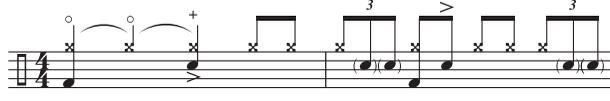
Here’s a shuffle groove from my *Advanced Funk Drumming* book/DVD. It has a backbeat in the first bar, followed by a quarter-note hi-hat pattern with some ghost notes in between. The second bar keeps the quarter-note pattern and has snare drum accents on 2 and the “let” of 2.



This four-bar example has some snare ghost notes within the 6/8 hi-hat pattern, and there’s no bass drum on beat 1 in bars 1 and 3.



Finally, here’s a four-bar half-time-shuffle groove with a long hi-hat opening on beat 1. Swing the 8th notes.

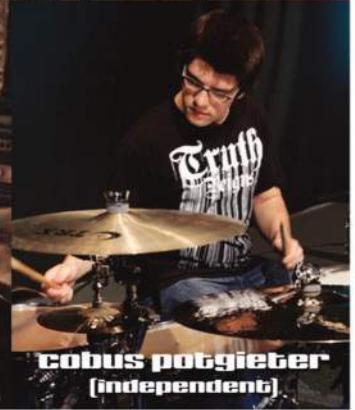
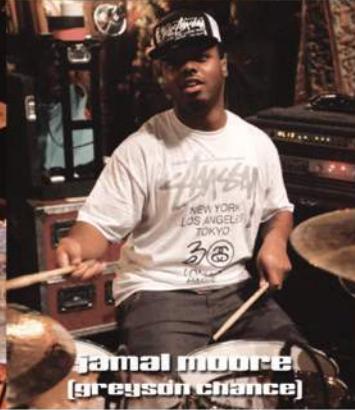
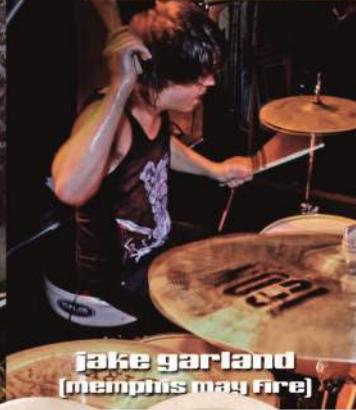
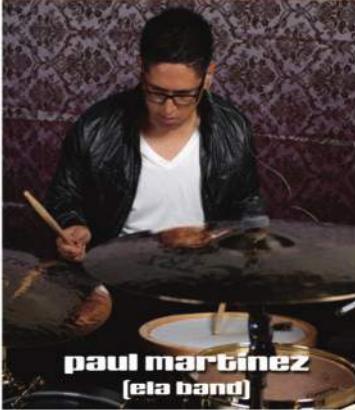
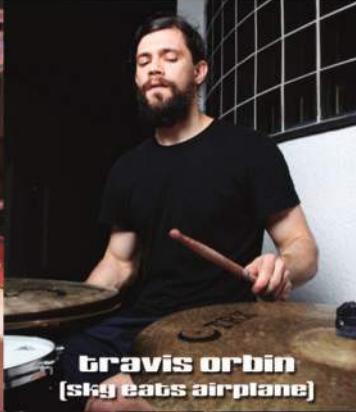
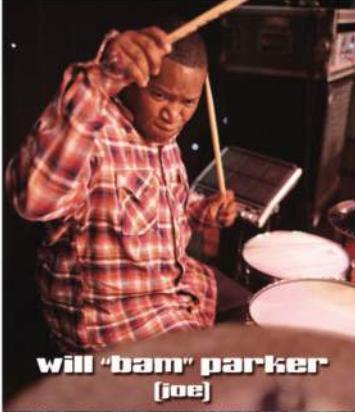


For video demonstrations of the various shuffle grooves explained in this article, log on to the Education page at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Jim Payne** has played with Maceo Parker and the J.B. Horns and has produced records for Medeski Martin & Wood. He teaches funk and R&B drums online for the Berklee College of Music, and his book/DVD *Advanced Funk Drumming* is available from Modern Drummer Publications. For more info, visit [funkydrummer.com](http://funkydrummer.com).



# THE NEW ICONS





# The Sounds That Drew Me In

## And What I Drew Out of Them

by Marko Djordjevic

**T**hink back to that first moment when you knew drums were *it* for you. For me, this happened after seeing a traditional Serbian folk group with a drummer who played a set of mounted bongos. Now think about the many other times when drums and music worked their magic to draw you ever deeper into their rich, beautiful, and vast world.

The five instances I've chosen to write about here by no means comprise a comprehensive or definitive list. I could just as easily have picked the moment I discovered doubles on the bass drum, courtesy of a beat by one of my first influences, Boris Leiner, a fantastic rock drummer from the Yugoslav group Azra, or any of the many insightful and useful ideas taught to me by my first drum teacher, Miroslav Karlovic. Maybe on another day I'd talk about Stewart Copeland's incredible feel on "Contact" from the Police album *Reggatta de Blanc*, the great drumming of Clive Burr on the tune "Another Life" from Iron Maiden's *Killers*, or the mind-expanding omnidirectional approach to drumming that Rashied Ali presents on my favorite album of all time, John Coltrane's *Interstellar Space*.

Each of those musical moments has influenced me a great deal, and there are many more. I'm sure each one of you has a similar list. Regardless, at the risk of being incomplete and perhaps even leaving out some sounds and concepts I would ultimately consider *more* influential on my drumming, I submit to you the following list of five sounds that drew me in. At the same time, I invite you to think about the moments when the drums really spoke to you and the effect those experiences have had on your playing.

### The Rolling Sound of Elvin Jones

Even though I was a complete neophyte, around thirteen years of age and barely conversant in the language of drumming, hearing Elvin Jones play on the John Coltrane album *A Love Supreme* was an unforgettable experience. It's a testament to the universal power of art and its potential to transcend the gap between the expert and layman by projecting raw, emotional intensity. After listening to the track "Resolution," I knew this was the way to swing. Even though I hardly understood anything about jazz at that time, such was the conviction of Elvin's performance.

There was something else about Elvin's playing that intrigued me: the sound he made when he rolled around the drums during his solos. Even though I could hear him

rolling and accenting on the toms and bass drum, there seemed to be a steady stream of snare drum chatter running throughout as well. It was the most mysterious thing, like a drone and improvisation played simultaneously. I desperately wanted to find out how to do this.

After a lot of trial and error, I realized that to successfully approximate this sound it helps to keep the snare notes at a much lower dynamic level than the bass drum or tom accents. This makes the phrases flow better, and it provides distinction between the constant snare drone in the background and the melodies you're improvising on the toms and bass drum. Also, sonically, there's a certain amount of sympathetic snare buzz occurring when other drums are played, and the more open your drums sound (higher tuning and little to no muffling), the more of this effect you will get.

### Gadd's Ghost-Note Overlaps

Steve Gadd is noted for many things that have influenced today's drummers, from his great feel to his ability to play a phrase over and over with captivating passion. One thing that may not be talked about as often is Gadd's amazing ability to thread ghost notes throughout his beats, specifically in those moments when the bass drum and the snare coincide.

The best example of this concept is found on "Nite Sprite" from Chick Corea's album *The Leprechaun*. Gadd's playing in the first chorus of the sax solo contains a bass drum pattern that collides with ghost notes played on the snare. It's a very subtle thing, and it could go unnoticed, especially when you consider the high speed of the track and how soft the ghost notes are played. But these overlapping parts are a crucial component of Gadd's very fat sound.

Gadd utilizes this technique often in groove solos, especially during sections when he's playing rhythms on the bass drum, snare, and cowbell. You can hear many contemporary drummers, such as Keith Carlock, Ari Hoenig, Antonio Sanchez, and Mark Guiliana, to name a few, using this overlapping approach to great effect.

### The Moving Hi-Hat

Around age fifteen, I became more aware of the role of my left foot in drumming, especially in more interactive styles of music. Previously I had practiced the concept of playing



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## CONCEPTS

something steady with the hi-hat foot, like 2 and 4, quarter notes, or 8th notes, while keeping all the other parts moving without interruption. But some drummers, such as Roy Haynes, Jack DeJohnette, and Dave Weckl, were utilizing the left foot in ways that I simply couldn't understand.

Then one day my left foot just started moving in new ways, and I found myself producing rhythms that weren't straight ostinatos. This was very exciting, but along with the excitement came doubt: How do I know these hi-hat variations are valid? What if I'm just playing nonsense? Luckily, there's no hi-hat police that will fine you for breaking the rules. In my book, *The New Frontier*, there's an entire section devoted to hi-hat foot ideas.

### Vinnie's Clear Clusters

If you've ever listened to Frank Zappa's *Joe's Garage*, you probably have a good understanding of how incredible a drummer Vinnie Colaiuta is. Although my favorite Colaiuta performance came about a decade later on fusion great Allan Holdsworth's album *Secrets*, there are some awe-inspiring moments on *Joe's Garage*. The song "Packard Goose" is chock full of goodies, from the impressive linear playing in the 4/4 and 9/8 intro to the subtle metric modulations in the dreamy, swingy middle section in 3/4.

About halfway through that middle section, Vinnie plays a broken five-note grouping over the dotted quarter note, which is orchestrated to give the impression of a faster tempo. But it's a fleeting phrase that happens in the guitar/drum solo section that really drew me in. For one measure, Vinnie settles on a RLRL sticking, played over a dotted quarter note. The first R is a crash cymbal/bass drum unison, the first L is played on the middle tom, and the remaining three notes are played on the floor tom.

Try this orchestration on your kit. As you speed it up, the notes become very close together, but each should be

articulated clearly. There are some great examples of these cluster ideas on Colaiuta's self-titled solo record and on *Secrets*. I often use these concepts in musical sections where the excitement and intensity are high.

### David Moss's Linear Melodic Approach

David Moss was one of my teachers early on, and he was the first person I heard play in a linear fashion. I was blown away by the ease with which he moved from drum to drum, one at a time, striking a perfect balance between melody and rhythm, with a seemingly endless array of ideas. When I asked David how he played that way, he said he had no formula and that he simply spent time practicing playing in that fashion. In other words, if you want to be able to play in a linear style and make cohesive, melodically connected statements, you have to practice doing just that.

### Pass It On...

The time that I spent writing this article and reflecting on the sounds that inspired me to be the drummer I am today has been particularly poignant and has reinforced the fact that we are part of a rich tradition in which ideas get communicated and then passed on, reworked, and thrown back into the mix. A heritage that began in time immemorial, when people used rhythm to imitate nature and get closer to the cycles of life, drumming is still one of the most organic ways to connect with the infinite possibilities of an ever-expanding, pulsating universe. Listen for the sounds that draw you in, let them bring you to your own ideas, and then put them back into the world to start the cycle all over again.

**Marko Djordjevic**, who was born in Belgrade, Serbia, has performed with Aaron Goldberg, Matt Garrison, Eric Lewis, Jonah Smith, and many others. He is the bandleader of Sveti and is on the faculty at the Collective in New York City. Djordjevic's DVD, *Where I Come From*, and book, *The New Frontier for Drumset*, are available through Alfred Publishing. For more info, go to [svetimarko.com](http://svetimarko.com).



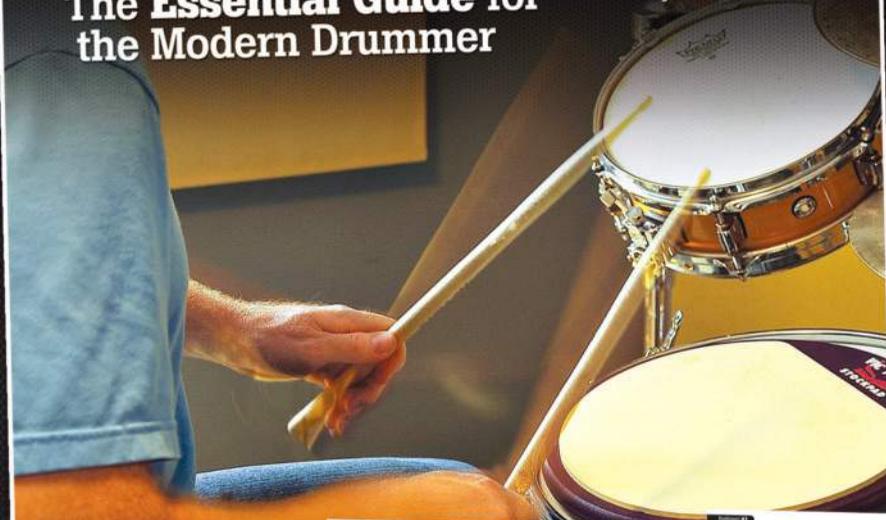
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## VINTAGE SHOWCASE

The Ludwig Book! by Rob Cook. Business history and dating guide, 300 pages (64 color), Wm. F. Ludwig II autobiography, books on Rogers, Leedy, Slingerland, calfskin heads, gut snares, and more. Contact Rebeats, tel: 989-463-4757, [Rob@rebeats.com](mailto:Rob@rebeats.com), Web site: [rebeats.com](http://rebeats.com)

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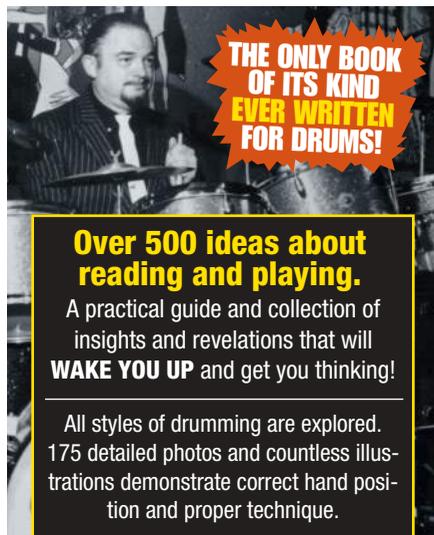
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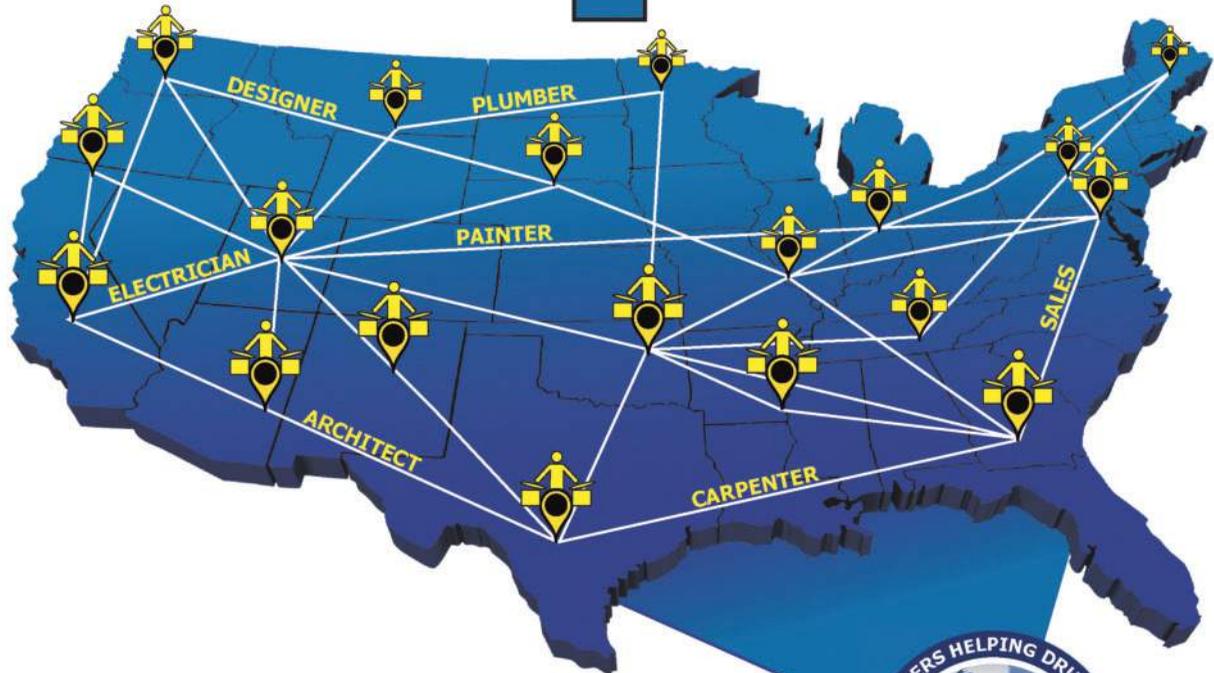
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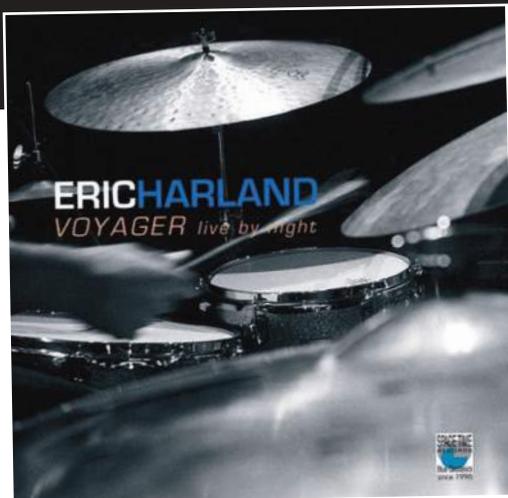
Classic ●●●●●

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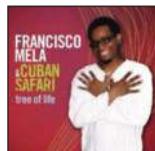


## TAKING THE REINS

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### ERIC HARLAND VOYAGER: LIVE BY NIGHT

Is this really Eric Harland's first album as a leader? Recorded live in 2008 in Paris and featuring a stellar band including pianist Taylor Eigsti, the engaging post-bop of *Voyager: Live by Night* is full of the drummer's propulsive cymbal drive and turn-on-a-dime dynamics. Dig the rimclicking, chatterbox outro of "Turn Signal" and the tasty eight-minute drum solo "Intermezzo 2"—an ostinato workout displaying excellent chops, advanced independence, and inspired melodicism. Harland has been a regular choice for heavyweights like Charles Lloyd for years, but if you've yet to experience his top-notch playing, this revealing album is a perfect place to start. (Space Time/Sunnyside) **Ilya Stembkovsky**



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### FRANCISCO MELA & CUBAN SAFARI TREE OF LIFE

His roots are deep, and his branches stretch ever higher. *Tree of Life*, Mela's third outing as a leader, is the drummer's most aggressive and diverse offering yet. Still present is the acoustic core of jazz, Afro-Cuban, and world music. But this time there's a mischievous electric edge, primarily via the inventive excursions of guitarist Ben Monder and via Mela's unleashed funky side, hinting at late-era Miles Davis jams. Largely penned by Mela, the angular, shifting grooves become fluid through bold, inquisitive cascades of polyrhythms and swirling colors. There's a gentle side too, including unexpectedly heartfelt vocals by the drummer himself. Unstoppable vitality. (Half Note) **Jeff Potter**

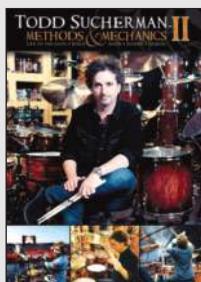


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### UTSI ZIMRING ZONE 23

This moody and organic acoustic/electric jazz collection from drummer/composer Utsi Zimring features an all-star lineup of NYC jazz greats including guitarist Mike Stern, pianist David Kikoski, and saxophonist Bob Franceschini. Zimring dances playfully around the melodies with a loose, dynamic feel. A colorful rendition of the Latin-jazz "Softly As in a Morning Sunrise" shows Zimring's ability to improvise creatively over the melody, without clutter. Zimring's "The Others" reveals depth of composition and powerful command of time in a trio setting. A spirited version of Sting's "Seven Days" is a delightful odd-meter jaunt led by Franceschini's masterful sax work. The set closes with "Heckle & Jeckle," an all-out jazz fusion tour-de-force, allowing Zimring to shine brightly with impressive, funky gospel chops. (utsizimring.com) **Mike Haid**

## MULTIMEDIA



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### TODD SUCHERMAN METHODS & MECHANICS II DVDS (2) LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$29.99

This outstanding follow-up to Sucherman's award-winning *Methods & Mechanics* DVD proves an important point: Todd cares. He cares about sharing lessons learned on the road with vital travel advice; preparedness and survival tips on the gig; and proven ways to become a musical drummer, drawn from his years of recording and live experience with Styx, Brian Wilson, Spinal Tap, Jerry Goodman, and his wife, Taylor Mills. The well-produced DVD moves quickly between subjects as well as locations (indoors and out) and keeps things interesting and pertinent to most working drummers. Sucherman bares his soul, with no drumming stone left unturned. He performs numerous examples from various musical formats and articulately explains his thoughtful methodology behind the music. *M&M II* is an affordable and worthwhile investment, delivering four hours of real-world information designed to educate, entertain, and inform. (Hudson Limited) **Mike Haid**



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### JOHN "JR" ROBINSON THE TIME MACHINE DVD LEVEL: ALL \$24.95

It's been a number of years since JR's last instructional video, but this project is well worth the wait. Robinson is widely regarded as the world's most recorded drummer, and he's never slowed down his session and touring schedule, a topic he discussed at length in his April 2011 *MD* cover story. In *The Time Machine* he shows us why—and how—he's remained so in demand.

Across the two-disc package, which was filmed and recorded beautifully at Drum Channel Studios in California, Robinson explains his concepts of time, feel, groove, and style—the most important elements of becoming a studio musician and a well-rounded drummer. He goes on to demonstrate hand and foot technique, talk about his gear, and cover working with bass players and percussionists. (About an hour into disc one, bass legend Abe Laboriel Sr. and percussionist Luis Conte make an appearance.)

Disc two features topics ranging from tuning and miking to playing with a click track. We get a sneak peek at a recording session with Quincy Jones, and JR's drum tech, John Oreshnick, discusses his duties. Other guests include producer David Foster, bassist Nathan East, guitarist Paul Jackson, and Robinson's band.

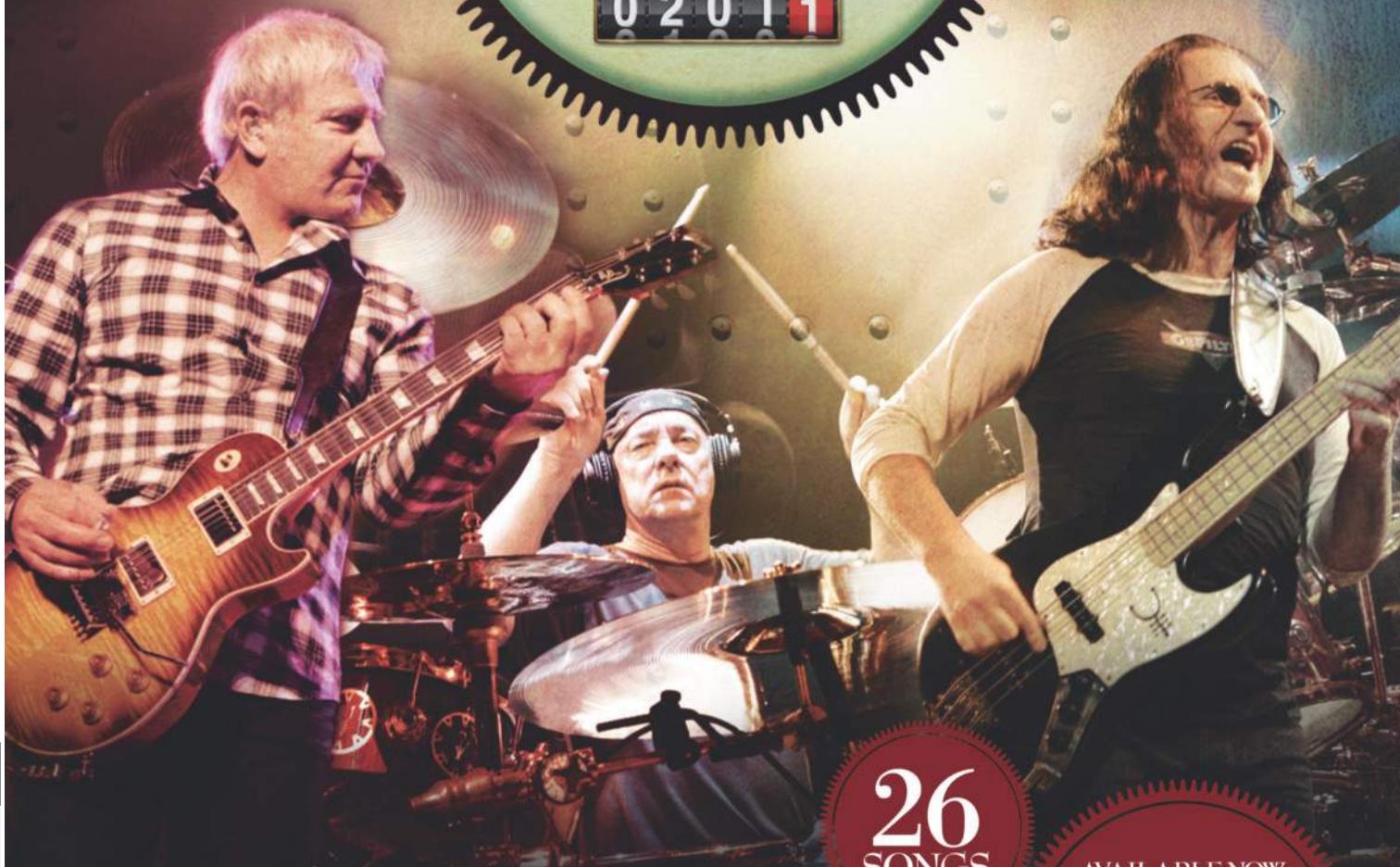
JR is very charismatic, so he holds your attention when he speaks. And when he plays, his feel is perfect every time. If you're a follower of Robinson's playing or just a fan of great groove music, this DVD is for you. (Drum Channel/Alfred) **Billy Amendola**

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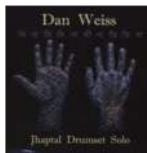


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### DAVE KING TRUCKING COMPANY GOOD OLD LIGHT

The Bad Plus's Dave King returns with yet another project, Dave King Trucking Company, a postmodern improvising outfit with a penchant for rocking. "Hawk Over Traffic" finds King in an assaultive mode, his open hi-hats pushing the saxes and guitar further into the deep end. Elsewhere, the drummer plays time with understated brushes on "Church Clothes w/ Wallet Chain" and accents a tricky syncopation before the abrupt entrance of an odd-time beat on "The Road Leads Home." The rollicking drum solo on "Night Tram" reminds you that King's approach is rarely safe—that's never been Dave's style. (Sunnyside) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### DAN WEISS JHAPTAL DRUMSET SOLO

Named by the *New York Times* in 2009 as one of the "Five Drummers Whose Time Is Now," Dan Weiss has kept that promise as a busy jazz sideman. His intriguing concepts, deeply influenced by Indian music, culminated in *Tintal Drumset Solo*, on which he applied tabla patterns to solo drumset. This follow-up CD is an even more challenging East-West mesh. Jhaptal is a ten-beat cycle of North Indian music; here, while a guitar continually outlines a melodic cycle, Weiss vocalizes each composition's tabla bols (syllables representing strokes) and then mimics them on the drumset while expanding with improvisations. On a technical level, it's a stunner. But, more important, it's passionate, coherent, and mesmerizing. (Chhandayan) **Jeff Potter**

## MORE DRUMMER-LED RELEASES



### ROY HAYNES ROY-ALTY

The ageless Roy Haynes is still swinging away, leading his Fountain of Youth Band on *Roy-alty*, a straight-ahead blowing date featuring Haynes' trademark ghosted triplets and fiery "all in" comping that lends the tunes urgency. Chick Corea guests on Monk's "Off

Minor," a rolling drums/piano duet that's like old friends having a chat. (Dreyfus) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### CHICO HAMILTON REVELATION

Speaking of ageless, the ninety-year-old Chico Hamilton is also still at it on his newest release, the twenty-two-track(!) *Revelation*. Hamilton's ride dances on the up-tempo pulse of "Evanly," and the bossa-esque "P&E" is pure feel. Subtle waltzes, ballads, and even lite funk round out an eclectic offering from a true elder statesman. (Joyous Shout) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### JEFF WILLIAMS ANOTHER TIME

Veteran jazz drummer Jeff Williams has done it all, from gigging with Stan Getz and Joe Lovano to recording two previous albums as a leader. *Another Time* extends his reach to exploratory jazz propelled by his spacious time feel and superbly articulate stick work. Slightly to the left, and swinging all around. (whirlwindrecordings.com) **Ken Micallef**



### ZIGABOO MODELISTE NEW LIFE

New Orleans legend Zigaboo Modeliste provides vocals and oh-so-funky drums on *New Life*, his latest collection of R&B/rock jams. "Tough Nuts" is a classic head-bobbing, beat-displaced Bayou groove, while "Let It Go" sounds like a Meters-style update of "Funky Drummer" with snare ruffs added. Modeliste's is the authentic stuff. (zigaboo.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### ERNESTO CERVINI QUARTET THERE

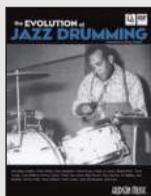
While *There* is not as thematically well organized as Canadian drummer Cervini's previous album, *Little Black Bird*, the drummer still shoots sparks here on a live date with saxophonist Joel Frahm and an empathetic rhythm section. Cervini recalls such old-schoolers as Art Blakey and Billy Higgins, but it's ultimately his robust, magnetic personality that fascinates consistently. (ernestocervini.com) **Ken Micallef**



### HOSSAM RAMZY ROCK THE TABLA

Hossam Ramzy, "Egypt's ambassador of rhythm," assembles an all-star cast including **BILLY COBHAM** and **MANU KATCHÉ** for *Rock the Tabla*, an ambitious world music amalgam featuring loads of global percussion. Katché's splashes grace "Arabantana," while Cobham navigates the sevens and nines of "Six Teens" with ease. Ramzy's dexterous playing is the glue throughout. (arcmusic.co.uk) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

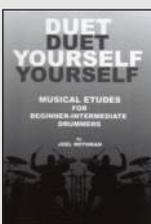
## MULTIMEDIA CONTINUED



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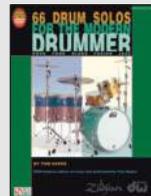
Educator and renowned player Danny Gottlieb chronicles the history of jazz drumming in an entertaining and educational workbook format that offers a brief background, photos, transcriptions, audio, and video of the featured players. From Baby Dodds to Jack DeJohnette, the list highlights the high-profile legends as well as lesser-known masters who helped shape jazz drumming. Gottlieb interjects personal notes along the way and includes helpful practice tips and performance pitfalls. The exercises, videos, and audio clips are thoughtfully constructed to capture the essence of each player. Although the book stops chronologically at DeJohnette, excluding today's jazz innovators, the early pioneers are well chronicled, giving the jazz novice an opportunity to absorb the roots of this great American art form. (Hudson Music/Hal Leonard) **Mike Haid**



### DUET YOURSELF BY JOEL ROTHMAN

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER TO INTERMEDIATE \$14.95

Don't judge this book by its cover. Despite the silhouettes of two kit drummers, this volume is neither a drumset book nor a true study for two. The title is a play on words. Now that you impulse buyers are clear on that, it should be noted that *Duet* is helpful for reading development and nimble hand/foot coordination. Five-line snare etudes are featured, increasing in difficulty in various time signatures, followed by etudes that also incorporate bass drum (the "duet"). Since the hand/foot interaction is mostly linear and non-repetitive, it's effective practice for keeping the eye-balls moving. (J.R. Publications) **Jeff Potter**



### 66 DRUM SOLOS FOR THE MODERN DRUMMER

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German drummer Tom Hapke's newest book is a worthy learning/teaching tool set up to challenge and improve players' technical facility, independence, and reading ability. Each of the solos or beat examples is spread across just twelve bars, and mastering them doesn't require the serious time commitment of longer percussion etudes. That's not to say that this stuff is easy. In fact, the pieces are chock full of interesting stickings, odd meters, and a variety of styles, from rock to fusion to funk to jazz. Included is a DVD of every solo, which is useful for students who wish to dissect the parts visually, or simply as a drum-performance video to enjoy. (Cherry Lane) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



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# Freddie Gruber

He helped raise the art of players already famous for their prowess on the kit. The drum community loses a "none of a kind."



Jim Keltner recalls a fond memory of Freddie Gruber, who passed away in Los Angeles after a long illness on October 11, 2011, at the age of eighty-four. "I went to see Dave Weckl at Catalina's once," Keltner says. "Freddie was there, so he joined me at my table. We watched the first set, and Dave played his butt completely right off. There was nothing that he couldn't do. The music was complex, the band was grooving and playing this insane stuff, and Dave was on fire, that beautiful way that he plays. I knew Dave, and he's a great guy. He comes over to our table, and I say, 'Dave, I want you to meet Freddie.' And Freddie looks up at Dave, and the first thing he says is, 'I can help you with that left hand.' That's what Freddie was all about right there. I was laughing like crazy. But Freddie was not laughing. He meant what he said. Dave wasn't laughing either. Immediately Dave sat down, and they started talking about his left hand."

There are drum teachers, and there are drum legends. Freddie Gruber was decidedly a member of the latter camp. He will be remembered for his distinctive personality and for his contributions to the many drummers he called both students and friends.

Longtime pal Buddy Rich described Gruber as "none of a kind," the sort of compliment that only "Traps, the Drum Wonder" could bestow. But Freddie also counted among his drumming family Neil Peart, Anton Fig, Kenny Aronoff, Gregg Bissonette, Vinnie Colaiuta, Adam Nussbaum, Ian Wallace, Clayton Cameron, Rod Morgenstein, Peter Erskine, and Steve Smith. And during his Swing Street heyday, Gruber performed with Charlie Parker, Tal Farlow, Dizzy Gillespie, Zoot Sims, and countless other jazz greats.

"Freddie Gruber had a profound effect on my life," Steve Smith says. "At my first

## THE GIFT OF SELF-DISCOVERY

Vinnie Colaiuta on Drumming's Zen Master

Freddie, to some, was enigmatic. And also a "character."

As for his being enigmatic, I would say that perhaps it's worthwhile to really listen to what he said nonjudgmentally for a moment. Because I've found that, when one does this, something extraordinary happens. It's called thinking. Thinking for yourself, to be precise.

Hearing a Zen master ask, "What is it?" and giving no answer might cause one to suspect said Zen master. Does the Zen master care? Will he "give" you the

answer? I'd say not. Freddie inspired one to look inside oneself to experience, and develop. Wise, indeed.

Characters? Sadly, they don't make 'em like that anymore. Harmless, and hilarious. Freddie delivered his message to us with wit, charm, and humor that never distilled the message but rather made the medicine taste good. I'm going to miss him.

Rest in peace, Freddie, and thank you for helping us to help ourselves, as no one else. Brilliant.

lesson with him he said to me, 'If you work on the concepts that I'll show you, when someone asks you how you played a certain phrase on the drumset, your reply will be, "Easily."'" And he was correct. His approach was organically connected to playing music. I not only became a better drummer, I became a better musician. He was grateful for every day he lived and would remind me to take a moment and give thanks for my talent, my great relationship with my wife, Diane, and my career. Freddie was truly a singular personality, and I am forever grateful to have known him."

Distilling his teaching methods from years spent closely watching and befriending greats from Philly Joe Jones to Shelly Manne to Buddy Rich, Gruber took a unique approach with each student. Beyond simple stickings or rudimental drills, he understood—perhaps by intuition—that combining psychology with mechanics can make a good drummer a great one. Everyone who studied with Gruber became a better drummer, and perhaps a better person, for having done so.

"Freddie had such great instincts," says

former student and close friend David Bronson. "He could instantly see what you needed as a player. He would trick you into what it's really supposed to feel like. Freddie also had a genuine interest in how everyone was doing, not just with the drums but with their lives. He was generous with his time, his home, and his heart."

"Freddie taught wrist turns, circular motion, finger and hand technique, grip, fulcrum—and he made sure you had each thing right," says Gene Stone, who studied with Gruber for a year and a half in the early '60s. Stone says he's applied those methods ever since. "He gave insight into how a lot of the great drummers did things. He broke down the finger-bounce method for me, how you develop the wrists, how they work together, how they work separately, how they work as a system. And he taught how to play the sound up out of the drum instead of down into it. That's how you develop speed and control. Freddie could visually imprint on your mind what you were looking for and then inspire you to do it."



Freddie hanging with his longtime friend Buddy Rich, circa 1946, and years later hamming it up at a trade show with Gregg Bissonette, Danny Gottlieb, Steve Smith, and Carmine Appice.

**OPENING UP TO THE KNOWLEDGE** Dave Weckl on Freddie Gruber's Unique Insight

I remember when I started to gain enough recognition as a drummer on the scene to pull in big crowds at clinics, and I saw Freddie for the first time. My initial thought was, *Who is this loud, boisterous older dude in shades, chains, and old-fashioned fancy duds talking jive BS to everyone?* That's how Freddie came off to me, and I remember that at other events not very long after that, if I saw him coming I'd literally go out of my way to avoid him.

Funny how we humans can form opinions that can detour us from more knowledge and a possible richer life in many ways. I have to thank Steve Smith for convincing me to give Freddie a chance. I'm glad he did.

Fast-forward six years or so from that first impression. After witnessing the growth in Steve, and really wanting and needing guidance to learn and grow more myself, and then formally meeting Freddie with Jim Keltner when they came to see me play, I decided to put my guard down and see what this guy had to offer.

I'm not sure if it was at the gig when Jim was there—I actually think it was a bit later—when I decided to consider studying with Freddie. I was playing, again at Catalina's in Hollywood. I saw Freddie standing off stage to my right, checking me out. He was there, with his ever-present unlit cigarette, for most of the set, just watching me. I was not feeling particularly "on" or comfortable that night, but by the last song of the set I finally felt I played something worthy of the music and of his (and everyone else's) viewing/listening.

But I was still a bit skeptical of this character, about what he actually knew about playing drums and how he could help me. I came off the stage, and Freddie was backstage hanging and waiting for me. I started to say to him, "Sorry for that, I was not really comfortable..."

"Until the last song," he interrupted me, mid-sentence. It was at that

moment when I realized, *Wow, maybe he does know what's going on. He SAW what I felt.* Freddie then proceeded to tell me, "You play great. You're in the zone some of the time—I want to get you there *all* the time."

That was enough for me—I started studying with him the next week. And although being in the zone at a one-hundred-percent level is always at a distance, thanks to Freddie I now know where it is, and how to look for it, and I damn near get there a hundred percent on occasion. No teacher ever helped me to understand the physics of playing the drums like he did, and his teachings live on in every clinic I do, with every student I teach.

Needless to say, my time spent with Freddie was profound and special. We had somewhere between six and ten lessons over the next few years in the mid-'90s and spent lots of time hanging and talking after that as well. My touring schedule has taken me out of town quite a bit for many years now, so unfortunately my time with Freddie was limited. But I will never forget what this loud, boisterous, older dude in chains and fancy duds, talking the real deal, did for me.

Thanks, Freddie.



Like other students, Peter Erskine experienced Gruber's focused method and concern for the musician and the inner person. "Freddie Gruber fashioned himself as a Zen master teacher," Erskine says. "He often offered answers in the form of a question. In my case, he dismissed my concerns about technique, offering that the only bad technique was one where the drummer might hurt himself. Freddie wanted me to lift the sound out of the instrument. Our lessons consisted of Freddie tap-dancing for me in his kitchen, and when I failed to grasp the significance of the dance, he shuffled over to the drumset and played exactly as he danced: 'Don't you see? I'm dancing on *top* of the floor, not trying to dance beneath the surface.' And when I saw and heard the beautiful tone he produced in this way at the kit, my light-bulb moment began to glow more and more, and that light guides me to this day. Thank you, Freddie. Your lessons have proven to be, just like you, timeless."

**Ken Micallef**

For more on the life and times of Freddie Gruber, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



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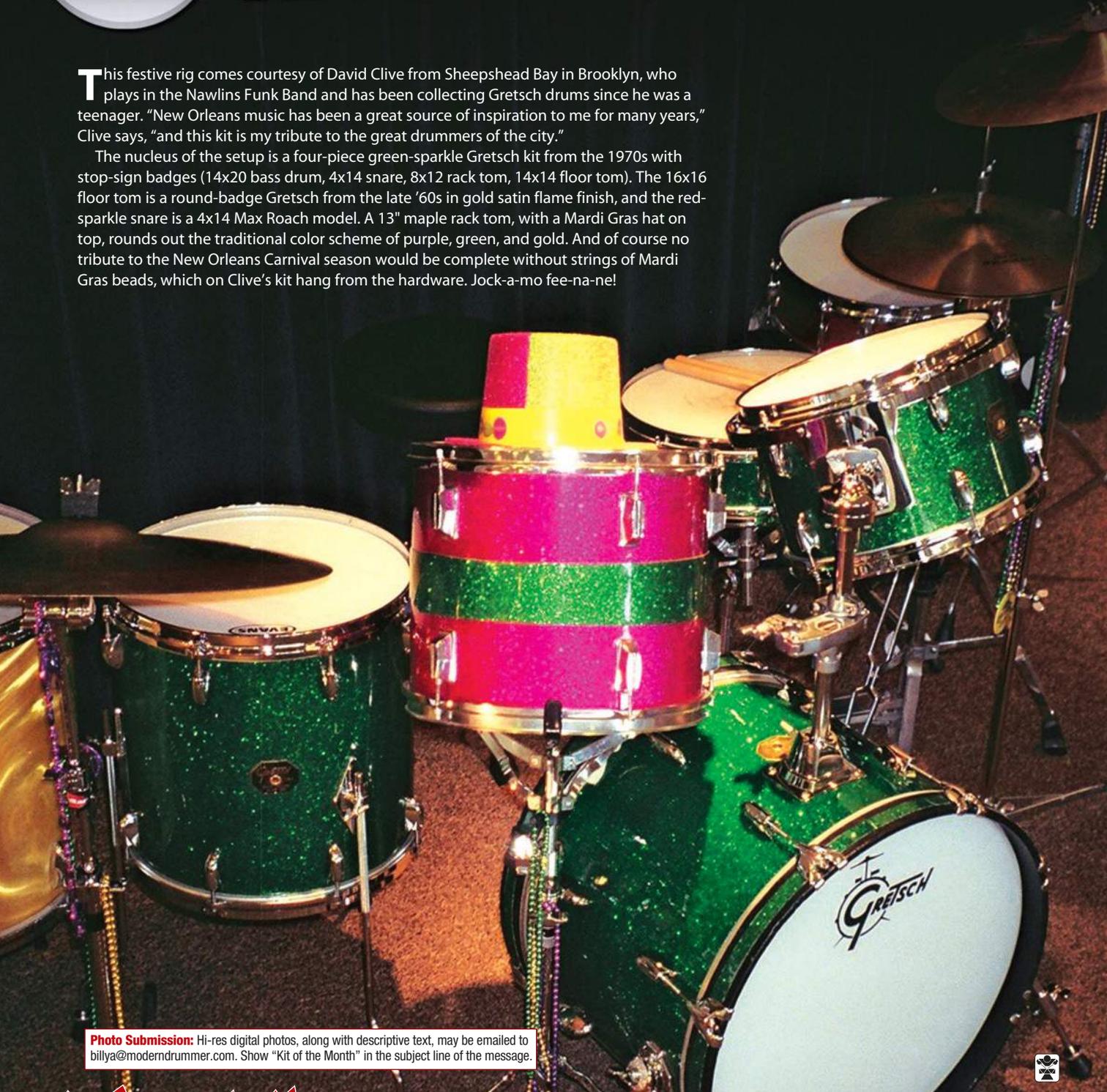
ROCK 'N' ROLL

**KIT  
OF  
THE  
MONTH**

# Fire on the (NYC) Bayou

This festive rig comes courtesy of David Clive from Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn, who plays in the Nawlins Funk Band and has been collecting Gretsch drums since he was a teenager. "New Orleans music has been a great source of inspiration to me for many years," Clive says, "and this kit is my tribute to the great drummers of the city."

The nucleus of the setup is a four-piece green-sparkle Gretsch kit from the 1970s with stop-sign badges (14x20 bass drum, 4x14 snare, 8x12 rack tom, 14x14 floor tom). The 16x16 floor tom is a round-badge Gretsch from the late '60s in gold satin flame finish, and the red-sparkle snare is a 4x14 Max Roach model. A 13" maple rack tom, with a Mardi Gras hat on top, rounds out the traditional color scheme of purple, green, and gold. And of course no tribute to the New Orleans Carnival season would be complete without strings of Mardi Gras beads, which on Clive's kit hang from the hardware. Jock-a-mo fee-na-ne!



**Photo Submission:** Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to [billya@moderndrummer.com](mailto:billya@moderndrummer.com). Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line of the message.

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