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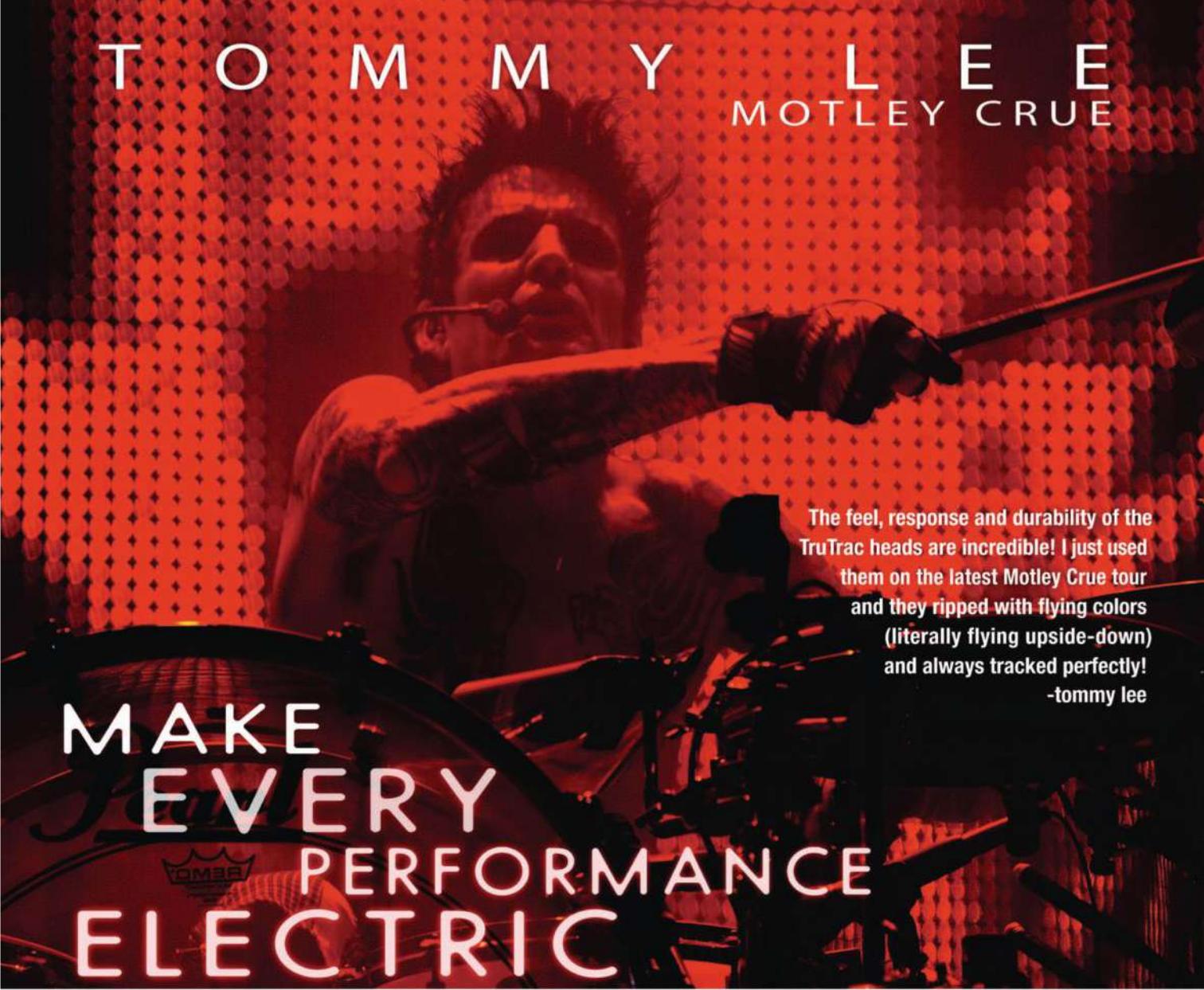


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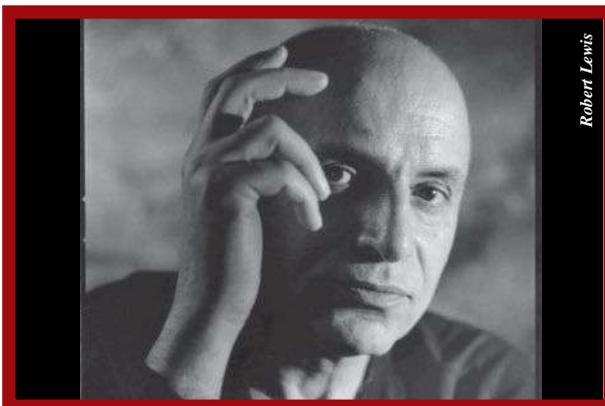
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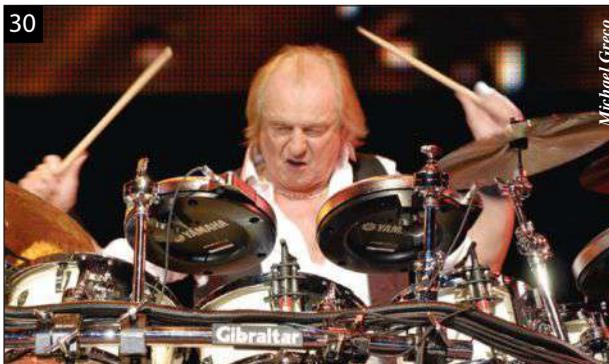
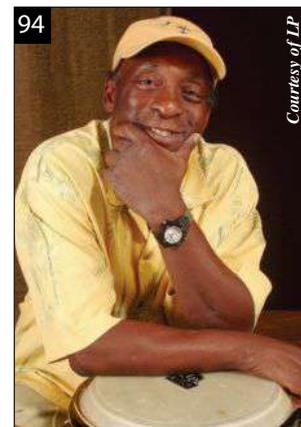
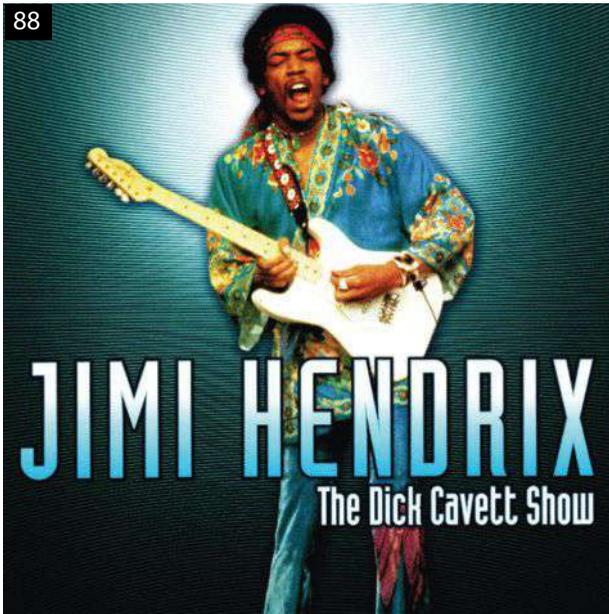
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# Coasting Not an Option

Vinny Appice says something in his cover story this month that got me thinking. According to the veteran drummer, who's elevated the music of many a hard rock legend in his thirty-five-year career, he hadn't really been a fan of at least two of the more famous bands he later landed gigs with.

At first it seemed kind of strange to read Vinny admitting that. In the music biz, you witness so much backslapping and smoke blowing that bald-faced sincerity can come as a shock. The more I thought about Vinny's comment, though, the more I understood it. Here's a drummer who's eminently confident in his skills, prepared in his research, sure of his decision-making abilities, and easy to hang with. Whether he happens to be a longtime fan of a band or not, when he's in a room with those musicians, getting ready to throw it down, fandom becomes a relatively unimportant issue. Even to the band itself.

Vinny lets his drumming do all the communicating that's necessary. And that's because he knows that no matter how much you chat up a potential employer/bandmate, your playing is going to say more about your understanding of the music and your ability to rock it than gushing claims of "I'm your biggest fan" could ever get across.

A few days after reading Vinny's interview, I was hipped by a friend to a potential gig, a band that does covers of Joy Division songs. I immediately got excited. I haven't played out in a while, and here was a great opportunity to perform the music of one of my favorite bands.

Now, about twenty years ago I interviewed Joy Division drummer Stephen Morris. Stephen, along with the surviving members of the band—singer Ian Curtis had taken his own life a decade earlier—had become successful with their post-Curtis group, New Order, and I was fascinated by the dovetailing acoustic and electronic drumming he'd done as early as Joy Division's classic debut album, *Unknown Pleasures*. So it was full circle in a way. Only now I'm not preparing for a conversation about Joy Division drum parts, I'm honing my ability to play them. Big difference, as Vinny Appice would be the first to tell you.

When I first heard about this cover-band gig, I hardly thought about whether I could pull it off. After all, even though I hadn't dissected Morris's playing in a while, I've been all geeky about his bands since college—and heck, I've interviewed him, for goodness' sake. I've got this.

Then I listened to the music again. Oh-oh. Those beats that I recalled being fairly straightforward...not so much. Morris, like many of his peers from the British punk and post-punk scenes, essentially invented his own way of doing things, and he sometimes played pretty unexpected parts. You can't coast on this music as much as you might think at first. Add the fact that Joy Division did a lot of drum overdubs, and all of a sudden copping some of these "performances" note for note is not an option. Seems I've got some homework to do.

My audition with the band is this Friday, and sitting here today I'm fairly confident I'll do okay. But who knows? I've nailed some tryouts in my day, but I've bombed on a couple as well. There are few experiences that get you wondering more than an upcoming audition. But one thing's for sure—on the day, I'm not going to rely on my love of the music to get me in the zone. Vinny Appice reminded me of that.



*Adam Budofsky*

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**JEFF HAMILTON**

Thanks for the cover story on Jeff Hamilton in the February 2012 issue. He is a class act, as the cover says, and full of good information and advice. I particularly enjoyed his comment

that when you can hear everyone on the bandstand all the time, you're playing at the correct volume. More of us should take that to heart. Last summer I bought Diana Krall's concert DVD *Live in Rio*, and there are some very generous views of Jeff's playing on it. I lent the DVD to a friend, and now I can't get it back!

**Jim Patten**

**YOUTUBE HIT-AND-RUN**

I just read Adam Budofsky's January Editor's Overview, and I want to thank you for addressing the importance of being a courteous professional. I'm twenty-nine years old, and I've already accomplished many of my goals, one of which was playing on Broadway. When I did the national tour of *Legally Blonde: The Musical*, I lectured at colleges in the cities we'd go to, discussing the business side of things. One of my main topics was how to present yourself in a professional manner. Too many people out there think that being a great player is all it's about. Many don't realize that how you act as a

human being is almost more important than how you play. Anyway, I just wanted to thank you for shining some light on a subject that isn't often addressed.

**Danny Taylor**

**JAZZ DRUMMER'S WORKSHOP**

I'd like to send kudos to *MD* for publishing Mat Marucci's article "Make It Swing!" in the December 2011 issue. I am a semiprofessional drummer, and that article was immensely useful to me. After I put his advice into practice, my playing improved dramatically. This was commented on by my entire band, who noted that my feel underwent a significant change for the better. I hope there will be more articles by Mat in the future. Thank you very much!

**Jeff Kahn**

**POLYRHYTHMS FOR THE DRUMSET**

In January's Aaron Comess feature, Aaron mentions that he worked out of my book *Poly-Cymbal Time*. It comes to my attention sometimes that high-level players such as Aaron mention the book, and I'm flattered that they do. However, the title was changed about fifteen years ago, to *Polyrhythms for the Drumset*. Otherwise, with the exception of the title and the cover, it is the exact same book. It is now published by Alfred. Thank you.

**Peter Magadini**

**DROPPED BEATS**

In the February cover story on Jeff Hamilton, it was incorrectly stated that Hamilton took a drum lesson with Papa Jo Jones; it should have read Philly Joe Jones. "Papa Jo did give me advice, however," Jeff says, "on the two things I need for the road: a ham sandwich and white socks."

In the March *Jazz Drummer's Workshop* article, "Focus on the Hi-Hat," we ran an incorrect transcription of Ray McKinley's performance on "Lullaby in Rhythm," instead printing a transcription of Papa Jo Jones's hi-hat work on "Honeysuckle Rose." Here's the correct music for the McKinley excerpt:

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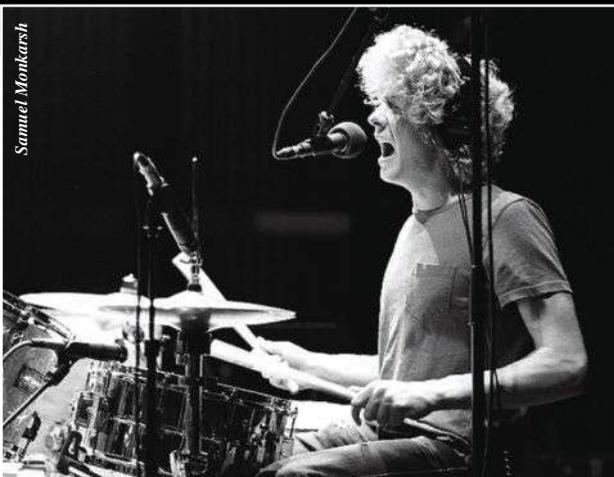
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# YOUNG SOULS

The drummers from two of today's best indie bands are finding themselves dealing with distinctly old-school vibes—yet each is coming from a very different direction.



Samuel Monkash

## DAWES'S GRIFFIN GOLDSMITH

Griffin Goldsmith sets the pace for his band's California rock sound with the same kind of supportive feel that masters of the form like Russ Kunkel first displayed in the '70s. Such a tasteful style might seem odd from a twenty-one-year-old who came of age when monster chops were all the rage. But Goldsmith, whose older brother, Taylor, fronts Dawes, has groove and soul in his DNA.

Griffin's father, Lenny Goldsmith, sang lead for a spell with Tower of Power and collaborated frequently with fatback groove legend Barry "Frosty" Smith, of Lee Michaels fame. At Lenny's urging, Frosty gave Griffin lessons early on. "It wasn't so much reading and traditional stuff," Griffin says. "It was focusing on what he thought was tasteful and good, giving me records that were inspiring to him—listening to unique players and their idiosyncratic qualities."

Studying with Frosty paid dividends, as Goldsmith's drumming on Dawes' 2009 album, *North Hills*, and latest long-player, 2011's *Nothing Is Wrong*, provides the perfect song-first foundation for the band's three-part harmonies and peaceful, easy hooks. Lessons with another groove master, James Gadson, helped Goldsmith get his shuffle chops together. Check out "The Way You Laugh" from *Nothing Is Wrong* to hear the results. Goldsmith sits deep in the pocket, playing quarter notes on the hi-hat while shuffling on the snare with his left hand.

"That was one thing in particular I wanted to take away from Gadson," Goldsmith says. "He's one of the best shuffle players ever. I was just like, 'How do you play a shuffle?' and he'd say, 'Well, do you want the Kansas City shuffle or the Chicago shuffle?' He's so rad." **Patrick Berkery**



Nicky Devine

## DR. DOG'S ERIC SLICK

"I've always been in bands where I was encouraged to play as fast as I possibly could," Eric Slick says. "Now I'm in one where I'm encouraged to play as few notes as possible."

Slick, twenty-five, began drumming for the Philadelphia rock band Dr. Dog in 2010, after stints with the Frank Zappa tribute Project/Object and the Adrian Belew Power Trio. "With Adrian I was trying to emulate Bill Bruford, Danny Carey, and other monster drummers who are known for their chops," Slick says. "The same with Project/Object."

Dr. Dog offers a different challenge. "The guys in the band are fans of groove music and drumming that's expressive but simple, like Jim Keltner or Ringo," Slick explains. "Ringo was great at following the lyric phrasing, and that's how I come up with fills and grooves. It's about serving the song, leaving space for the song to breathe. I'm learning to be more dedicated to the part, knowing that it's going to be mostly the same every night. The part needs to be the glue."

Slick says he had fun recording Dr. Dog's new release, *Be the Void*, playing 18" Paiste Giant Beats as hi-hats, running his '65 Ludwig Club Date drums through vintage guitar amps, and lifting the end of "That Old Black Hole" with a powerful double-time pattern that hints at the controlled chaos of the band's shows. "Live we try to go for the reckless abandon," Slick says. "Controlled, barely. Just enough."

Before working with bassist Toby Leaman in Dr. Dog, Slick had mostly played with Julie Slick—his sister—on bass; the siblings have worked together in various situations since Eric was eleven. "Toby is really solid and melodic," Slick says, "whereas with Julie it's more like playing with a guitarist than a bassist. Toby is also a singer, so there are all kinds of new pockets to follow. It's all about locking in." **Robin Tolleson**

# SARAH TOMEK

The powerhouse drummer with Glen Burtnik and Bebe Buell proves it's not just fist pumping and hairspray down at the Jersey Shore.



Asbury Park, New Jersey, might always be linked to early Springsteen, but it has also enjoyed a musical rebirth as of late, with drummers like Sarah Tomek fronting the pack. "There's a great community vibe with lots of original-music venues in Asbury," Tomek says. "It's not as fast-paced as bigger cities, so people pay more attention."

Tomek cut her teeth over the past

decade with the jam band Days Awake and shore rocker Lance Larson, eventually hooking up with the heavy rock group Cavalier Rose and alt-country rocker Danny White; on White's *A Beautiful Crazy* LP, Tomek overdubbed drums to an already-recorded band on several tracks—without a click. Word spread about her steady pulse, focused energy, and ability to hang with different styles, and Tomek found herself playing in ex-Styx guitarist Glen Burtnik's Summer of Love concert, alongside Bernard Purdie. "We traded playing a lot of these '60s tunes," Sarah says, "some of which Purdie played on originally, and I had this big solo on 'Soul Sacrifice,' which was fun."

And if learning that repertoire wasn't enough, Tomek got a call from the renowned tribute band Lez Zeppelin, after their drummer broke her ankle before a European tour. "I had to learn thirty-eight tunes in three weeks—that's the best my chops ever were," Tomek says. "Lez was

doing *Led Zeppelin I* front to back, so I'm in my basement trying to get the foot triplet in 'Good Times Bad Times' up to 88 bpm—plus, learning Bonham's fills and [capturing] the intensity while laying back... being an on-your-heels kind of player. That tour was a great experience."

After proving herself time and time again, does Tomek feel that the drumming community is still a boys' club? "It's most natural for a female to be a drummer," she explains, "and bands work better when there's a matriarch—like a Mother Goose who'll give you confidence that the 1 will be super-hard and you'll have a nice pocket to sit in."

On the horizon in the coming months are recordings and tours with the soulster Gedeon Luke and the rocker Bebe Buell, where Tomek hopes to use "the most amazing-sounding snare I've ever heard," which was crafted by Christina Bulaong's District Drum Company in Berlin.

**Ilya Stemkovsky**

# ROLAND GAJATE GARCIA

The percussionist is feeling freer than ever on *Idol*.

In 2011, the big news for *American Idol* fans was the departure of judges Simon Cowell and Paula Abdul and the arrival of their replacements, Jennifer Lopez and Steven Tyler. But there were equally significant changes in the house band, including the hiring of percussionist Roland Gajate Garcia. Now, well into season eleven, Garcia is in a position to reflect on the century's biggest popular music phenomenon. "After working on the show last season," he says, "I was excited about coming back. This year I was comfortable taking more risks, both with my percussion setup and my playing."

Roland, who's worked with Diana Ross, Patti LaBelle, and Frankie Valli, and whose father is the renowned percussionist Richie Gajate Garcia, is faced with *Idol*'s famously rapid production schedule, which, between early February and late May, includes six full days a week of taping. "It's fast-paced, and the band must perfect the show music in a considerably short amount of time," the percussionist says.

"Typically the band is given a song one or two days before the live television taping. I'm also given charts, which are subject to change at any time. The entire band then rehearses together, and I make any changes to fit what [*Idol* drummer] Rex Hardy is doing and what they're going for in terms of the ensemble sound. As you can imagine, many



other things are going on during the process, from stage rehearsals for the television cameras to the recording sessions that are released on iTunes each week. For me it's the best of both worlds—live and studio."

Garcia earned his bachelor's degree in music at California State University at Northridge and was mentored by 2012 *MD Pro* Panelist Gregg Bissonette. Roland also studied privately with his father and with the legendary drummer/percussionist Alex Acuña. "I'm always playing with different bands in order to broaden my musical awareness," he says, adding that he plans to return to his role as an instructor at the Los Angeles Music Academy when *Idol* wraps up, as well as doing clinics with his dad and playing sessions. "I'm always looking to challenge myself as a musician. This is something that my father would *always* encourage me to do."

**Billy Amendola**

## OUT NOW



### CDs

**The Mars Volta** *Noctourniquet* (Marcel DeRouge-Lopez, Deantoni Parks) /// **Flying**

**Colors** *Flying Colors* (Mike Portnoy)

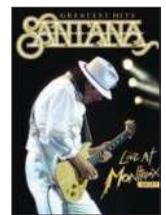
/// **Big Brother and the Holding Company** *Featuring Janis Joplin*

*Live at the Carousel Ballroom 1968* (Dave Getz) /// **Esperanza Spalding**

*Radio Music Society* (Terri Lyne Carrington, Jack DeJohnette, Billy Hart) /// **Meshuggah** *Koloss* (Tomas Haake) /// **Rodrigo y Gabriela** *Area 52* (John Tempesta) /// **Meat Loaf**

*Hell in a Handbasket* (John Miceli) /// **Gary Husband** *Dirty & Beautiful*

*Volume 2* (Gary Husband)



### DVDs

**Santana** *Live at Montreux 2011* (Dennis Chambers, Raul Rekow, Karl Perazzo) /// **The B-52s** *With the Wild Crowd! Live in*

*Athens, GA* (Sterling Campbell) /// **Soh Daiko** *Taiko in New York*

(various)

## NEWS

Dashboard Confessional's **Mike Marsh** recently teamed up with the National Lung Cancer Partnership, announcing that 100 percent of all proceeds from downloads of "Speak of Love," a song written, produced, arranged, and recorded by the drummer at his home studio in Nashville, will benefit the NLCP's research program. For more info, see Marsh's blog at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com).



**Mark Castillo** (ex-Crossfade, Bury Your Dead) is the new drummer in Emmure.

Drummer, producer, and MD contributor **Jim Payne** is issuing a computer-, smartphone-, and iPad-compatible digital version of his popular book *Give the Drummers Some! The Great Drummers of R&B, Funk & Soul*.

The release date for the **Duduka Da Fonseca Quintet's Samba Jazz/Jazz Samba** (April 2012 MD) has been bumped to June 19.

## ON TOUR

**Joe Plummer** with the Shins /// **Amos Memon** with Fanfarlo /// **Alex Shelnett** with A Day to Remember /// **Matt Thomas** with the Joy Formidable /// **David Hidalgo Jr.** with Social Distortion /// **Daniel Adair** with Nickelback /// **Robin Goodridge** with Bush /// **Joey Dandeneau** with Theory of a Deadman

## WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Zildjian cymbal endorsers include **Arin Ilejay** (Averged Sevenfold), **Boone Daughdrill** (the Band Perry), **Brittany Brooks** (Cee Lo Green), **Mark Beckett** (Nashville sessions, Grand Ole Opry), and **Kevin Winard** (Steve Tyrell). Zildjian drumstick artists include **Dave Grohl** (Foo Fighters), **Rian Dawson** (All Time Low), and **John Keefe** (Boys Like Girls).

**Brian Frasier-Moore** (Madonna) is playing DrumCraft drums.

**Keith Carlock** is playing Gretsch drums.

**Carlock** has signed on with Vic Firth as well. Also joining Firth's artist roster are **Ramon Banda** (Banda Brothers), **Hector Barez** (Calle 13), **Dave Brogan** (ALO), **Jonathan Donnaes** (Chunk! No, Captain Chunk!), **Alvin Ford** (Boneraama), **Sal Giancarelli** (Staind), **Ben Harclerode** (Whitechapel), **Joel Haynes** (Joel Haynes Quartet), **Eric Hernandez** (Bruno Mars), **Dan Weiss** (Dan Weiss Trio), **Steve Rodford** (the Zombies), **Joey Sanchez** (Scotty McCreery), **Spencer Smith** (Panic! at the Disco), and **Jim Campilongo** (Paula Cole).

**Chris DeRosa** (Nishi Rajan, sessions) is endorsing Audix microphones.

**Mike Casano** (My Key C) has joined the Soultone family of artists.



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Brann Dailor  
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# STEVE HASS

## Internalizing Phrasing Ideas



Hi, Steve. First let me just say how much I love your playing. Man, it's got everything. But what really blows me away is your phrasing—even something as simple as the comping in your hi-hat independence video is so musical. [To see the clip, search YouTube for "Steve Hass discusses left foot jazz independence."]

My question is, how can I work on phrasing? I use the same books everyone else does: *The New Breed*, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*, *Syncopation*, Peter Erskine's *Essential Drum Fills*.... While these books have definitely helped me improve in all aspects of the drumset, I still feel I haven't been able to transfer the phrasing in them to my bag of tricks. Is it simply a matter of time before my phrasing matures? Do I just need to wait it out?

Stephen Silva

Thank you, Stephen, for the compliments and the insightful question. Because information is so easy to obtain in the Internet age, I find that drummers are developing technique and physical skill much more than they are developing ideas. Playing 32nd notes accurately around the drums, orchestrated between the hands and feet in countless groupings, will get you only so far in the music world. Motivic development, phrasing, and musicality are what separates the musical drummer from the drummer who is merely reciting orchestrated rudiments.

I developed and continue to develop my phrasing concepts by listening in three ways: to drummers I enjoy, to other instrumentalists, and to the soloists I'm supporting.

When I look back on my development as a Berklee student, I was transcribing the solos and comping of my favorite players. At that time it was Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, Max Roach, Art Blakey, Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, and a few modern-day jazzers, like Jeff Watts and Brian Blade. That was step one. Step two was listening to other instrumentalists, such as Phineas Newborn Jr., Herbie Hancock, and Bill Evans on piano and Ben Webster, Charlie Parker, Cannonball Adderley, Sonny Rollins, and John Coltrane on saxophone. I listened to certain albums so much that eventually I was able to sing the solos these guys played—like Miles Davis's

trumpet solo on the studio recording of "Seven Steps to Heaven"—as if I was humming a pop tune. I believe this very much helped my phrasing and motivic development on the drums.

The third step takes place while I'm actually playing. When I accompany soloists, I listen intensely to what they're saying on the instrument, learning how they develop their ideas. When I play with Bob Sheppard, Christian McBride, Ravi Coltrane, Donny McCaslin, or John Scofield, I'm learning constantly. These guys are incredible improvisers, and when I'm backing them I'm also getting inside their phrasing. So when you're out playing gigs, really focus on how certain soloists develop their ideas.

As far as books, I used *The New Breed* and *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*, along with *Syncopation* and *Stick Control*. This was for hand development and independence. I'm sure the rhythms and phrases in those books worked their way into my phrasing, but I've never consciously decided to work out of a book for phrasing. In my opinion, phrasing is about listening to music. Try the tips I gave you above, and make it more about music than about the written rhythms you get out of a book. I had to hear phrases in a musical context for them to work themselves into my playing. Reading them didn't really work the same way for me.

Back  
Through the  
Stack



## MARCO MINNEMANN

In the June 2007 issue of *MD*, we asked the wizard of interdependence about his practice routine. Here's what he said.

I make sure to practice the rudiments every other day with each side of my body. As a warm-up, I play all twenty-six rudiments while also keeping time. For example, I'll alternate quarter notes between my left foot on the hi-hat and my left hand on a 10" tom. Then I'll play all twenty-six rudiments between my right hand and right foot. This strengthens my independence, speed, and hand/foot technique together.

The next day I'll just play an improvised solo for at least forty-five minutes and push myself as far as I can go. I play freely until I come across an idea that I really like. Then I'll focus on that concept and build independence around that idea. I keep a book with me so I can write down any new ideas as they come. When I improvise like this, I reach "the zone," or a partial state of hypnosis, free from thought, very similar to the state you reach just before you fall asleep. I love that feeling of letting go and just creating musical ideas without thinking any technical thoughts.

The following day I'll go back to rudiments and switch sides, keeping time with the right side and playing rudiments with the left. My goal is always to keep things exciting and fun. Then I'll make time to write and record music. These are things that I do every day, but I pace myself. I don't burn myself out by doing all these things nonstop each day. I'll work a couple of hours, do something else that has nothing at all to do with music, and then come back to it later in the day. This keeps me fresh and focused and allows me to enjoy what I do.



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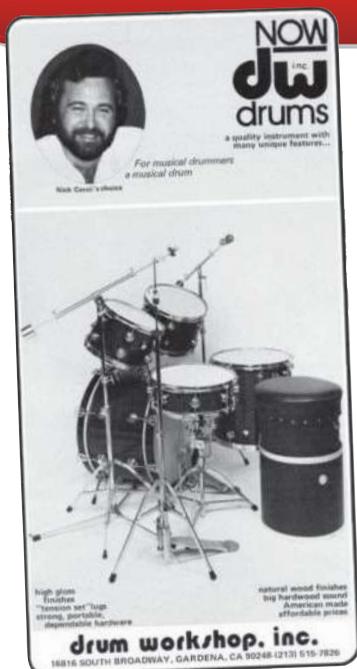
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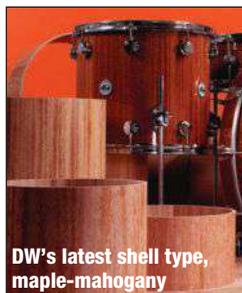
## DRUM WORKSHOP'S SHELL-MAKING HISTORY

**I'm wondering if you can provide any info about when DW started making its own shells. Thanks!**  
Mike Jepsen

Drum Workshop started out in 1972 as owner Don Lombardi's teaching studio, but its focus shifted to manufacturing in 1977 after Lombardi and his partner, John Good, purchased the Camco drum company's molds and dies for its popular bass drum pedal.

Drum Workshop drums were introduced to the world in a *Modern Drummer* ad in 1979 (shown above), but they were made using third-party shells. DW started making its own shells in 1997, a few years after Good developed what the company calls the "timbre matching system."

"I found out that everything about a drum's shell construction, size, bearing edges, heads, hardware, and finishing individually and collectively affects the quality of a drum's sound," Good says in a company bio posted at [dwdrums.com](http://dwdrums.com). "As I learned about each drum's timbre, or tonal range where the drum sounds its best, I became extremely interested in trying to control the timbre of the shell and, in doing so, improving the balance of the entire kit."



DW's latest shell type, maple-mahogany

## Mind Matters by Bernie Schallehn

### I BOUGHT JUNK DRUMS

**I won a set of used drums in an online auction, at a fantastic price. My problem is that they turned out to be junk. The kick pedal fell apart, the crash cymbal cracked, two of the tension rods on the tom are stripped, and a lug snapped right off the bass drum. The seller had a no-return policy, but the kit looked great in the photo, so I thought I was getting an excellent deal. I hate the drums now, and I want to take a hammer and smash them to pieces. I'm wondering if I should just quit playing altogether.**  
Dominic S.

Dominic, take my next statement and make it a core belief of yours: If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

My friend, you got suckered. But please don't let some crappy equipment diminish your fledgling interest in drums and drumming! Until you're in the position to buy a better-quality set, *keep playing this one*—even if it eventually disintegrates into a heap of splintered wood, metal, and plastic. Think of it as a practice kit. You're still building your chops each and every time you play. Take your focus off the drums and put it on your drumming.

When you're ready to buy a different set, make sure you know what you're getting. If you choose to go the online route again, buy locally. That way you can actually see the drums in person and take them for a test drive. Arrange to meet up with the seller, and take your time in giving the drums a careful visual inspection. Then play them as you normally would. How do they feel under your sticks? Solid and sturdy or shaky and cheap? Check the cymbals for cracks and keyholing. Are the stands in good working order? Don't be afraid to touch the kit to get a tactile sense of its quality.

If you're a heavy hitter, play hard—but not so hard that you put dents in the heads. Ask questions of the owner, the main one being: Why are you selling your kit? If the answer sounds shady, trust your gut, thank the seller for giving you the time to check out the drums, and leave so you can look for other kits that are for sale. If the owner won't let you play the drums, walk out the door—immediately. He or she is probably hiding something (like when the online ad said "no returns").

When people buy a used car, they often bring their mechanic to check out the vehicle before they even *think* about forking over any cash. If you know an experienced drummer—maybe your instructor, if you're taking lessons—have him or her look at the kit with you to help you judge whether the drums are of good quality and in good shape.

You should also check your local music store for deals on new and used equipment. They have a reputation to uphold, so they're not apt to sell you junk. And many have a thirty-day return policy, in case you're not satisfied with the kit.

Okay, last hurdle: what to do with your junk set. As I said, keep playing the kit until you can upgrade. When that time comes, don't unload your crappy drums on some unsuspecting buyer. The drumming community is a fairly tight-knit one, so this move would likely come back to haunt you.

Drummers tend to be weird about snare drums. I've seen guys playing a beautiful top-end kit with a low-end snare. (We often develop an affinity for a certain snare sound or timbre, even if it's coming from a cheap instrument.) If you're going to sell anything—and if it hasn't fallen apart—try selling your snare. Or see if there's a residential treatment center or nonprofit in your area that would welcome a donation. You might be surprised by how thrilled someone is to have your cast-offs, and you'll feel good inside.

One last thing: caveat emptor, or let the buyer beware.



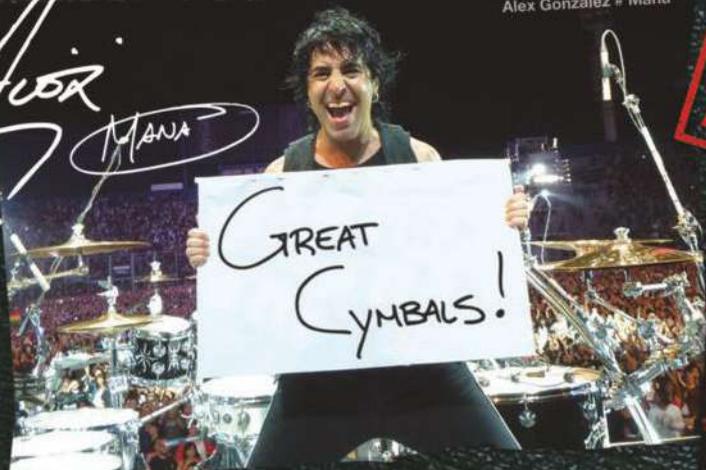
**Bernie Schallehn** has been a drummer and percussionist for over forty-five years. He holds a master's degree in counseling psychology and, while in private practice, held the credentials of a certified clinical mental health counselor and a certified alcohol and substance abuse counselor.



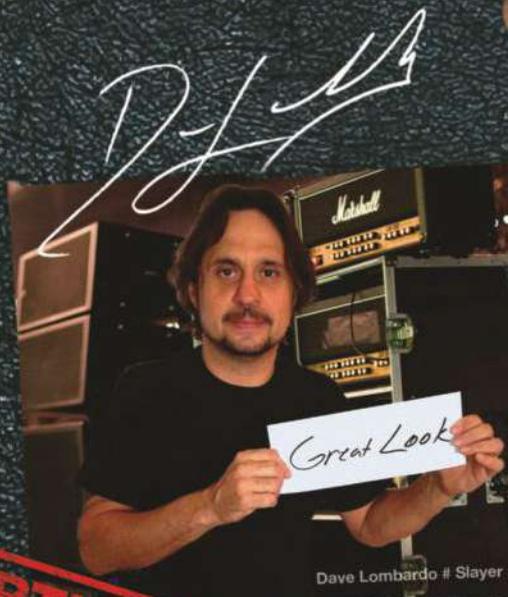
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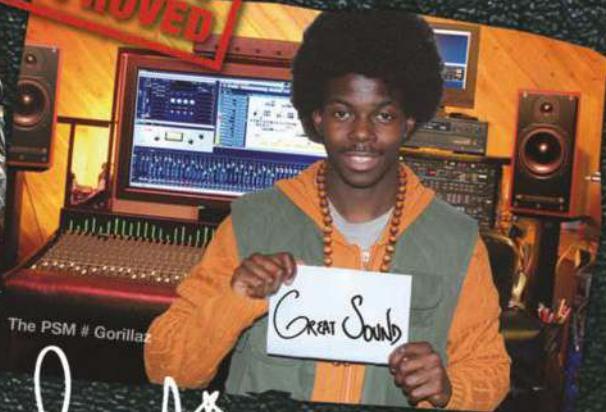


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# MAPEX



## Saturn Special Edition Studioease Drumset

by Michael Dawson

**T**he Saturn series is a line of high-end drums designed for professional touring and studio drummers alike. Whereas Mapex's other high-end line, Orion, is built exclusively with North American maple shells, Saturn drums feature composite shells blending the darker sound of walnut with either maple or birch. The birch/walnut variety is what makes up the Saturn Special Edition series, which

Mapex recently upgraded to include four new finishes over an outer veneer of figured maple. Let's check them out.

### STUDIOEASE SETUP

The Saturn SE kit we were sent for review is in the standard-depth Studioease five-piece configuration, which includes an 18x22 bass drum (with no tom mount), 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, and 14x14 and

16x16 floor toms. The toms feature Mapex's Isolated Mounting System and low-mass single-point-contact lugs, and they come outfitted with Remo Clear Emperor batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, plus 2.3 mm steel Powerhoops. The bass drum has cushioned and recessed die-cast claws and comes with a Remo Clear Powerstroke 3 batter and an Ebony Powerstroke 3 front head imprinted

with the Mapex logo.

This shell pack also includes two sets of floor tom legs featuring spring-loaded rubber feet, two TH684 tom arms, and two AC910 multi-clamps for attaching the tom mounts to cymbal stands. The entire package lists for \$2,979. Saturn SE add-ons include a matching 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14, 7-ply, 7.1 mm birch/walnut snare (\$639) and a 7x8 rack tom (\$399).

### RICH, ARTICULATE TOMS

Out of the box, the 8x10 and 9x12 Saturn SE rack toms were tuned fairly tightly, which produced a round, pure tone with a fairly bright attack. The floor toms didn't come with drumheads installed, so once I had the heads mounted I tried to tune the drums to a tension that matched the rack toms'. The floor toms were super-easy to tune, and within minutes I had a nice, balanced spread from the high, cutting 10" down to the booming 16". For a modern fusion sound, this tighter tuning would be perfect. The toms had a ton of articulation and cutting power, plus a controlled decay and an even, slightly dark tone. Rimshots sounded really good when the heads were taut.

We felt, however, that these birch/walnut toms really came to life when the tuning was backed off to the point just above where the heads started to growl. Here, the natural snappy sound of the birch produced a super-punchy attack that moved a ton of air, while the walnut introduced a rich, creamy timbre. The toms were very articulate and responsive at all dynamics, and they produced big, deep, focused tones.

### PUNCHY, POWERFUL KICK

The 18x22 Saturn SE bass drum was a little bouncy and boingy when set up with the included Clear Powerstroke 3 batter and Ebony Powerstroke 3 front head with no muffling or sound port. But all it took was swapping the front head with a version that had a small port. I then threw in a little piece of bedsheet, and the kick instantly produced a much more focused, punchy sound. The sheet didn't even have to be touching the heads; the drum just needed a little something inside it to break up the reflections and allow the birch/walnut shell to settle into the same fat, snappy sound as the toms. This kick pushes a lot of air, and it sounded big and punchy as I listened from several feet in front. Metal, modern rock, and funk/R&B drummers will like this drum's combo of quick attack and deep tone.

### WIDE, SNAPPY SNARE

The Saturn SE Studioease setup doesn't include a snare, but Mapex sent a matching 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 model to test out with the kit. The drum perfectly complemented the toms and kick, producing a wide and rich sound that was also very strong and present. Rimshots made accents snap to life, while buzz strokes and softer ghost notes sounded clean and dynamic. Mapex's proprietary snare strainer has a tension adjustment on either side, so it's easy to dial in the snare response to match your particular playing style. Medium tension and no muffling was the way to go with this expressive, articulate drum.

### PERFECT PAIRING

Every time I play a set of drums made with birch shells, my ears immediately perk up. There's something about the focused, crisp snap of birch that just sounds right to me. But what's often missing with some birch drums is that deep, resonant sound that comes more naturally with other woods, like maple, mahogany, and walnut. The birch/walnut combination shells in the Saturn Special Edition line marry those two qualities perfectly, which makes the drums an excellent choice for players looking for a kit with a lot of articulation, presence, and punch to help cut through the mix, along with extra depth and richness for a full-spectrum drum sound.

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

## NEW SATURN SHELLS AND FINISHES

Saturn Special Edition drums feature 7-ply, 7.1 mm birch/walnut toms and a 7-ply, 7.8 mm birch/walnut bass drum. All of the drums feature an outside ply of figured maple. Saturn finishes are applied by hand using eight coats of deep-gloss lacquer. The finish on the kit shown here is "ocean wave fade." Other options include moss green, wine burst, and walnut fade. The figured-maple outer ply has a gorgeous grain pattern that shows through the lacquer. Combine that with the optional black hardware, and you have a kit that looks as great as other drums that cost twice as much.



Moss green

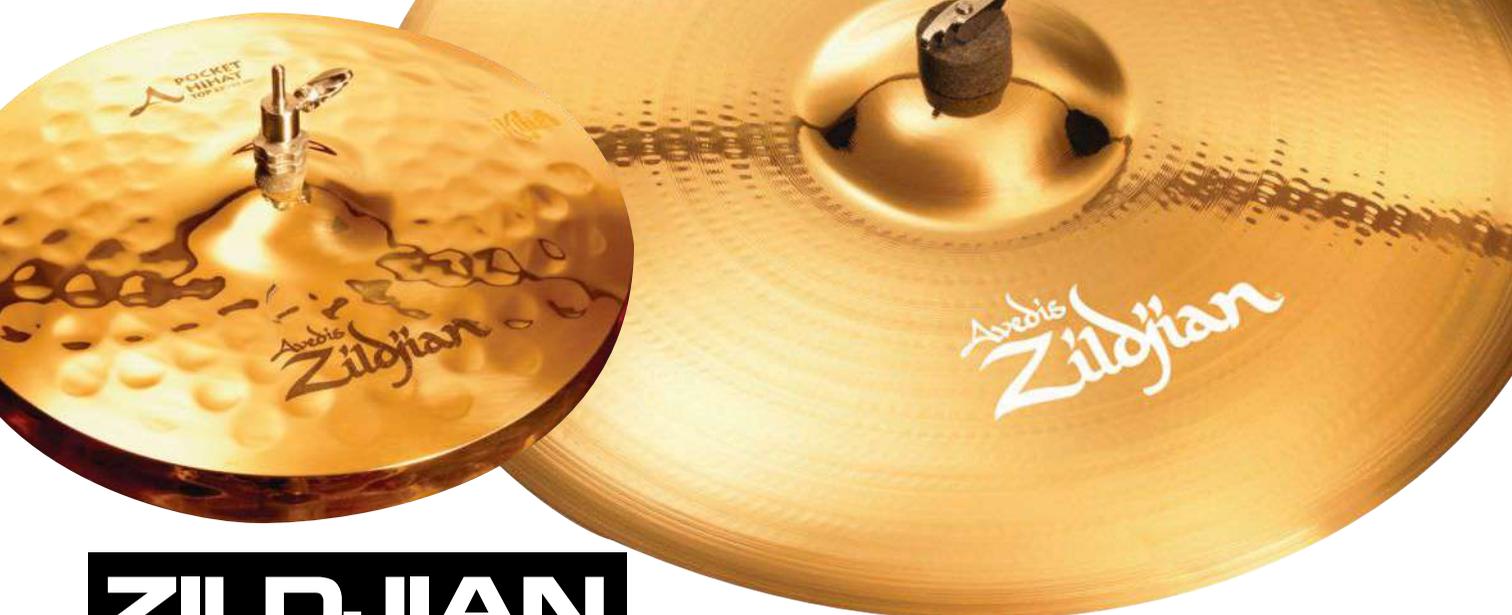


Wine burst



Walnut fade

**MODERNDRUMMER**  
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# ZILDJIAN

## 13" A Pocket Hi-Hats and 21" A Custom 20th Anniversary Ride

by Michael Dawson

New additions to Zildjian's all-purpose A and A Custom lines include a set of super-funky and articulate 13" Pocket hi-hats and a limited edition 21" ride cymbal commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the award-winning A Custom series, which was originally developed in the early '90s in collaboration with drumming legend Vinnie Colaiuta.

### 13" A POCKET HI-HATS

The unique-looking Pocket hi-hats (\$284.95) were originally released as part of the gospel/praise-and-worship Inspiration Pack, which also included a 12" A splash, a 16" A Custom Fast crash, and a 20" K Custom ride, but now they're available separately for use by any drummer looking for a bright, quick hi-hat sound.

Both cymbals are unlathed and have a brilliant finish, and they feature large crater-like hammer marks throughout the bow. The bells are unhammered. The top cymbal is said to be thin, but it felt firm and didn't have much flex when I struck it or tried to bend it with my hands. Playing the top cymbal by itself gave off a ringing, bell-like sound with a long, pitchy sustain. The bottom cymbal is very heavy and firm, with no noticeable flex. It also had a long, pitchy sustain when struck by itself, coupled with a clear, strong attack.

When played as a pair, the Pockets produced a glassy semi-open tone, a super-quick stick attack when held

closed, clean open barks when struck with the shoulder of the stick, and a strong foot chick. Riding in the fully open position produced a sound that was a bit too bright and short for my personal tastes, but for funk/hip-hop grooves involving a lot of quick hi-hat chatter and fast open/closed figures, these cymbals really excelled.

### 21" A CUSTOM 20TH ANNIVERSARY RIDE

Available only in 2012, the 21" A Custom 20th Anniversary ride (\$314.95) comes with a cream-white logo, and it has a special A Custom trademark etched above the regular Avedis Zildjian imprint. Like all A Custom cymbals, this ride features symmetrical hammering, tight lathing, and a brilliant finish. Its medium-thin weight is lighter than other A Custom rides, so it had a bit more wash and could double as a big, full-sounding crash. The large bell had a strong, chime-like sound that would work just as well for quick Latin patterns as it would for driving rock grooves. Crash-ride enthusiasts will love this cymbal's long, glassy sustain, while the simmering ride sound is best suited for low-to moderate-volume situations or for recording work. This special model was made in a 21" size to pay homage to the late Armand Zildjian, who preferred odd-size cymbals.

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

# GIBRALTAR

## 9608-2T 2-Tone Compact Saddle Seat Throne

by Miguel Monroy

**G**ibraltar has continued to assert itself as one of the industry's most consistent manufacturers of durable and rugged hardware. The company recently brought us new innovations such as the Quad Mount tom stand and the Ultra Adjust hi-hat stand, which were reviewed in the December 2011 issue of *MD*. Gibraltar has now refined one of the drummer's most essential components—the throne.

The 9608-2T series 2-Tone Compact Saddle Seat thrones come in a variety of two-color options (blue and white, black and white, gray and light gray, and red and white). These thrones have a standard B9608 base that's adjustable from 20" to 28" high. The base features Gibraltar's Rock Solid double-braced legs and Super Foot solid-foundation rubber feet. Both the legs and the feet live up to their names and are likely to endure years of use.

The adjustment system used to raise and lower the seat can be a bit cumbersome initially, because first you have to loosen a wing nut on the base and a memory lock on the threaded adjustment bar, which requires a drum key. The memory lock could be a positive feature for some players, since after the seat height is set, you can rest assured that it will be held securely. The lock may be less desirable for those who like to fine-tune the seat height quickly between songs.

The seat itself features a compact 13x16 saddle design. After using the throne for a few hours, I found that the size was just right for achieving Gibraltar's goal of being compact, easy to carry, and comfortable. The center of the seat is a durable cushion covered in textured fabric, and premium foam padding



is employed for additional lumbar support. Finishing off the design of the 9608-2T is a nicely stitched Gibraltar logo on the back.

This is a well-built, classy-looking throne for drummers on the go. List price: \$210.

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

# PROVENANCE

by Michael Dawson

**T**he U.K.-based Provenance Drums makes one-of-a-kind instruments out of recycled top-grade aluminum culled from discarded high-performance machines, like the engine of a Jaguar sports car, a NASA rocket, or, in the case of this snare, the wheel of a retired F-4 Phantom fighter jet.

The drum's 5 1/2 x 14 sand-cast aluminum shell is lathed on the outside to ensure that it's perfectly round, but the inner wall is left rough to break up the sound reflections a bit, which is said to produce a drier tone. To further mellow out the lively, bell-like sound of the cast-aluminum body, Provenance employs classic rounded bearing edges, plus flat snare beds for supreme sensitivity.

The shell is outfitted with ten tube lugs, a Dunnett R-Class throw-off, PureSound sixteen-strand snare wires, triple-flange steel hoops, and Aquarian drumheads (Texture Coated batter and Classic Clear bottom). The drum is surprisingly heavy, considering that aluminum is known for being a lightweight metal, but it doesn't weigh much more than a standard wood-

shell snare and certainly isn't as back-breaking as drums made from cast steel or cast bronze.

I put this Provenance snare through its paces in the *MD* studio, recording it at a range of tunings from extremely low (80 on a DrumDial) all the way up to super-tight (90 on a DrumDial). It was superlative at each point along the way, combining a lively, present snap with tons of depth, punch, and power. Lower tunings offered more smack and overtones, yet the drum didn't ring so much that it needed to be muffled, even when close miked. Tighter tunings produced a ton of "crack" with a focused, high-pitched bite, which recorded great and sounded super-funky. Medium to medium-tight tensions had that classic Mitch Mitchell/Keith Moon open tone. In short, you could get this

## Cast-Aluminum Snare



drum to do just about anything; it's one of the most versatile metal drums I've ever played. The hard part is deciding *how* you want it to sound.

To authenticate each drum, Provenance includes a disc containing photos and background information about the building process. This particular snare also came with the original servicing disc from the F-4 wheel mounted inside the drum, beneath one of the lug-casing screws. List price: \$1,980.

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



# YAMAHA

## DTX520K and DTX700K Kits

by David Ciauro

I've always maintained a balanced position on electronic drums—I fear them as much as they intrigue me. My personal and professional drumming has never required me to dive into the realm of MIDI or even have the need for electronic sounds. Nevertheless, whenever I visit a music store, I sit down behind an electronic kit, put on some headphones, and enjoy scrolling through the preset sounds.

For an e-drum novice like me, the Yamaha DTX520K (\$1,509) proved to be an excellent introductory kit. This entry-level model has an incredibly user-friendly module with a host of sounds and functions. After getting comfortable with the DTX520K, I found a very smooth transition to working with the intermediate-level DTX700K kit (\$3,467), with its more advanced module and functionality. The module was equally user-friendly and well thought out in terms of design simplicity, without limiting functionality.

As with many electronic instruments, it's easy to home in on the technical components. Being that these are entry- and intermediate-level drumsets, however, the focus of this review will be more about the experience of working with the kits from a player's perspective. Instead of asking techy questions about voice polyphony and bit rates, which are all answered in colloquial language in the product manuals, we're addressing the following questions: Is it easy to use? Does it sound good? Is it fun to play? Are the extra functions practical?

### SIMPLE ASSEMBLY

The DTX520K and DTX700K kits took roughly fifteen to twenty minutes each to set up and approximately the same amount of time to break down and repackage. The DTX520K includes a DTX500 module, DTX520P pad set, DTX520C cymbal set, and RS500-A rack system. The DTX700K includes a DTX700 module, DTX700P pad set, DTX700C cymbal set, and RS500-B rack system.

Both rack systems are sturdy and lightweight. They maintain a small footprint and are tight and compact when collapsed. The cable snakes couldn't be easier to manage, and the cable lengths vary, depending on how close the respective pads are in relation to the placement of the module. This thoughtful design helps



the rack stay free of clutter, and strap ties are included to keep the wires neatly secured and out of the way.

## IN PERFORMANCE

The DTX520P pads have a nice rebound, but the DTX700P pads offer a more realistic playing experience. The wide thickness of the rims/edges of the DTX700Ps sometimes made rimshots feel a bit unnatural, but I was able to find a more comfortable position by angling the pads a little more than I do with my acoustic drums.

One of my favorite features of the DTX700 module was the ability to add snare buzz and resonance to each pad, which provided a very nice realism to the acoustic kit samples. It's also cool that when you change to a snare sound with the snares turned off, the snare buzz and resonance go away on the other pads, just as they would on an acoustic kit.

The areas of the module that I spent the most time tweaking were the volume and sensitivity levels. The good thing is that each pad has three trigger zones, which can be set to have different sounds, volume, EQ, and effect parameters. Additional features include snare, tom, and kick tuning and muffling; hi-hat clutch height; cymbal size; cymbal resonance; cymbal choke speed; hi-hat chick volume; and sensitivity.

It's a little time-consuming to go in and tweak all of these settings, but it's well worth it in order to get the most natural and responsive sound for your playing style. My preference was to max out the volume and sensitivity levels. By doing this, I felt I was able to control the dynamics as finely as I could on my acoustic drums. I then used the slide faders on the module to balance the output of the mix to my headphones or PA.

## MODULE COMPARISONS

The Rhythm Gate and Groove Check features in the modules are excellent practice tools. The click can be set up to play a chosen number of bars and then go silent for another selectable number of measures, to test your timing.

Rhythm Gate will humble many drummers who think they're human metronomes. This feature literally gates (cuts out) any hits that aren't played precisely on the beat. Users can select three levels of difficulty (Easy, Normal, and Pro), each with a progressively narrower margin of error before gating occurs. Groove Check grades your accuracy over a set period of time, and playing even the simplest beats can be quickly transformed into an eye-opening experience. I discovered that I naturally place my bass drum hits ahead of the beat, while my snare and hi-hat are, for the most

part, directly on the beat. Once I realized that, I was able to make adjustments in order to get my body to play consistently ahead of, behind, or directly on the beat.

Both modules house a bunch of preloaded songs with existing drum parts that can be turned off once you learn the arrangement. Downloads of the drum charts are available. You can also raise and lower the accompaniment volume and even solo the bass track to work on locking in your grooves.

The DTX700 module comes with Cubase AI 5 recording software, and you can hook up the kit directly to your computer via a USB cable, which allows you to record your drum parts as MIDI. (MIDI In and Out ports are also included.) Once you've recorded the MIDI, you can then edit your parts in Cubase and assign them to trigger any software plug-in sound library you own. There's also a USB input on the module, which allows you to import additional samples and song files from a Flash drive.

## THE AUDIENCE

At the end of the day, electronic drums may still not be every drummer's cup of tea, but here's a quick rundown of applications where these DTX kits would be a perfect option. First, they'd be a great choice for gigs that require extreme volume control. Next would be Top 40/variety gigs where it's ideal to have the ability to select different drum sounds for each song in the set list. The kits also serve as an excellent, non-intimidating introduction to electronic drums and MIDI, with professional sounds, quality pads, and practical functions.

We also feel these DTX kits would be a perfect addition to project studios. They're affordable and compact, and they allow

## COMBO CONFIGURATIONS

**For e-drummers looking to take advantage of some of the more advanced features of the DTX700K while keeping the price closer to that of the DTX520K, Yamaha offers the DTX530K and DTX560K configurations.**

The DTX530K (\$1,732) uses the DTX500 module and DTX520P pad set in combination with the DTX700C cymbal set and the RS500-B rack. The DTX560K (\$2,647) is essentially the DTX700K kit with the DTX500 module.

These alternative configurations provide more options to find an e-kit that matches your specific needs. The interchangeability of the DTX520K and DTX700K systems also means that you can easily upgrade from the DTX520K to the DTX700K without having to worry about compatibility issues.

you to record basic ideas quickly and easily without having to worry about miking up an acoustic kit.

## CONCLUSION

Even though the functionality of the DTX500 and DTX700 series kits is very intuitive, Yamaha's support site, [dtxperience.com](http://dtxperience.com), has an array of useful information, including manuals, videos, PDF-formatted tutorials, and charts for all the songs included in the modules. And the instructions that come with the kits are well written, well organized, and easy to follow.

The 500 and 700 modules are easily digestible interfaces that novice and non-tech-savvy players will appreciate, but they also aren't dumbed down to the point where experienced electronic musicians will feel that they're simplistic. Even though the 500 and 700 series kits are considered entry- and intermediate-level, respectively, the sounds, functions (especially Groove Check and Rhythm Gate), and overall ease of use are all professional grade.

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



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by rick "BooM" steel

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ARE YOU IN THE 200 CLUB?

# Early Engraved Snare Drums

## Classic Pieces From Ludwig, Slingerland, and Leedy

by Mark Cooper

The Roaring Twenties were quite a tumultuous and exciting time in American history. The newly instituted alcohol prohibition laws sent throngs of thirsty Americans running for the nearest illegal watering holes and speakeasies. Behind the locked doors of these secret saloons, patrons were drinking, dancing, and living it up in defiance of the new amendment. At the same time, a fresh style of music—jazz—was sweeping the country, and Americans couldn't get enough of it.

With speakeasies, roadhouses, and dance halls popping up all over the landscape, the demand for jazz bands became huge. This new dance music emphasized rhythm, and the drummer's seat was hotter than ever. Never before had the drums played such a prominent role in music, and with the spotlight now on the drummer, the appearance of his or her equipment became of great importance. In response to this, drum companies of the 1920s began producing some of the most beautifully designed snare drums in history.

### LUDWIG & LUDWIG ORNAMENTAL FINISHES

Near the beginning of the '20s, the Ludwig & Ludwig Drum Company introduced a line of beautiful and luxurious-looking metal snare drums. These models could be ordered with special lavish "ornamental finishes." Offered were intricate hand-engraved designs on black nickel-plated shells, imitation gold-plated hardware (known as "De Luxe"), and even real gold-plated shells. The earlier ornamental-finish drums incorporated a paisley or ocean wave engraving design, but by 1926 a floral pattern was adopted. Because the drums were engraved by hand, no two were ever exactly alike. The shells of these Ludwig & Ludwig snares were constructed from two pieces of heavy spun brass, joined in the middle with a solder joint and center bead for extra strength. While vintage drum collectors commonly refer to these drums as "black beauty" snares, that name did not appear in Ludwig & Ludwig catalogs until 1932.

In 1926, Ludwig & Ludwig offered a unique snare called the Triumphant model. Its spun-brass shell and hardware were plated in genuine twenty-four-karat gold, with magnificent floral engraving. Even the counterhoops featured specially engraved designs. Considered by many collectors to be the holy grail of vintage drums, these Triumphant snares are extremely rare and valuable today. In 2009, the Ludwig Drum Company celebrated its hundredth anniversary by reissuing a limited edition Gold Triumphant model. Handcrafted to the original specifications by Adrian Kirchler of Italy, these magnificent gold-plated and engraved creations are true works of art.



From top: 1920s Ludwig & Ludwig Deluxe, 1928 Slingerland Black Beauty Artist model, and restored 1930 Leedy Black Elite

### SLINGERLAND ARTIST MODELS

In 1928, the Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company launched a new line of snares known as Artist models. These drums could be ordered with decorative hand-engraved black shells and imitation gold electroplating, called Artgold. Slingerland also offered a very special Artist snare that featured genuine gold plating and intricate floral engraving, which sold for a whopping \$130. The Slingerland catalog proudly states that the company's heavy

My

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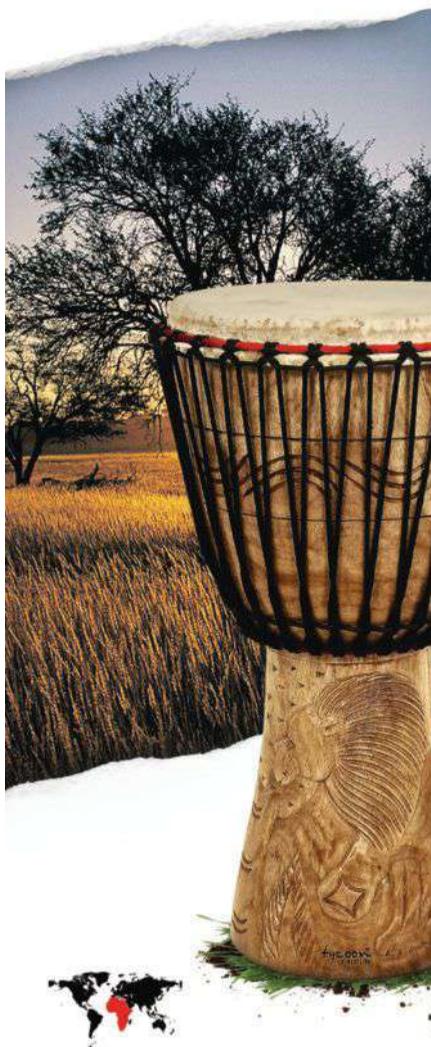


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## SHOP TALK

brass shells are "one piece...and absolutely no solder was used at any point."

Slingerland was the first drum company to use the Black Beauty name, but by 1934 the drums were no longer being produced. (Engraved snare drums known as Full Dress models were available for another year or so.) Slingerland Black Beauty snares are exceptionally rare, and approximately a dozen examples are known to exist today.

### LEEDY FULL DRESS BLACK ELITE AND BROADWAY MODELS

The Leedy Manufacturing Company of Indianapolis entered the engraved snare drum market with its Full Dress Black Elite model. These beautiful drums have glossy black-nickel shells and contrasting gold floral engravings. The hoops, rods, and strainers were finished in imitation gold plating, which Leedy called Nobby Gold.

In 1930, Leedy moved to Elkhart, Indiana, and introduced a redesigned line of snares, called Broadway. These new drums featured modern tension casings, which were a radical departure from the old tube lugs still being used by other manufacturers. Broadway models could be ordered with the Full Dress option, along with a new geometric engraving pattern on the shells and hoops.

The black-nickel finish on Broadway drums was described in the 1933 Leedy catalog as being "Not of a bluish gun-metal cast, but a true, deep, glossy black that has the appearance of new patent leather." Known today by collectors as the Thunderbird pattern, this majestic-looking design, along with the gold tension casings, gave the drums a much more modern appearance. Unlike the Ludwig & Ludwig metal-shell drums, Leedy's heavy one-piece brass shells were seamless and made without any solder. (The use of a solder joint was considered undesirable, as it imposed a sound-deadening quality on a metal shell.)

### SOUNDS AND APPOINTMENTS

The engraved solid-brass-shell snare drums of the '20s and '30s are not only pretty to look at, they sound wonderful too. Their warm tonal qualities and crisp snare response make them highly

prized by studio drummers and concert percussionists. Older heavy-brass-shell snares typically have a wide tuning range suitable for most types of music. Potentially loud enough to compete with a large orchestra, these drums are also sensitive enough for whispering passages.

In addition to more conventional snare strainers, Ludwig & Ludwig and Leedy offered extended snare systems for extra control and sensitivity. Ludwig & Ludwig's Super mechanism and Leedy's Parallel system kept the snare strands under constant tension, even when thrown away from the bottom head. The Super-Ludwig drum also had individually adjustable snare wires. Some models, like the Leedy Broadway Dual and Ludwig Super-Sensitive, came equipped with a second set of snare wires under the top head.

Not to be outdone, Slingerland introduced the Duall Radio Model snare in 1933. With optional black-nickel plating, Artgold hardware, and shell engraving, the Duall featured an impossibly complicated parallel snare strainer. Slingerland was compelled to cease production of the drum in 1934, because of its similarity to Ludwig & Ludwig's Super snare mechanism. No black engraved Slingerland Duall snare drums are known to exist today, and it's quite possible that none were ever actually produced. An illustration of the drum appears in the 1934 catalog with a plain nickel-plated finish.

Ludwig & Ludwig Black Beauty snare drums are probably the most renowned among drummers and collectors, due to the large number that were produced and to the company's long history and famous name. Fortunately, quite a few of these extraordinary drums still exist, compared with the relatively scarce engraved drums made by Slingerland, Leedy, and others. As America's Great Depression of the '30s wore on, drum companies gradually stopped producing these wonderful engraved snares in favor of more practical models. This marked the end of a fanciful and golden era in drum history, when some of the most luxurious and elegant instruments were being created. As the old saying goes, "They sure don't make 'em like they used to!"





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## Interview by David Ciauro

**Drums:** Ludwig Classic Maple in custom "everything sparkle" lacquer finish by Bill Detamore of Pork Pie Percussion

**A.** 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 hammered-bronze snare (Black Beauty alternate in the studio)

**B.** 8x8 tom

**C.** 8x10 tom

**D.** 8x12 tom

**E.** 9x13 tom

**F.** 10x14 tom

**G.** 16x16 floor tom

**H.** 16x18 floor tom

**I.** 18x22 bass drum

"This kit has been around since the 2005 tour," White explains. "I sent the shells to Bill Detamore of Pork Pie Percussion to cut the bearing edges and do the finish. I told him I wanted some kind of sparkle finish, but I didn't know which color. He told me he had always wanted to combine sparkles, so that's what he did."

"It's a silver metallic base coat and two good coats of my special sparkle mix," Detamore adds. "There are equal parts sil-

ver, orange, purple, pink, copper, and charcoal. After that, I added about six coats of clear and did a lot of sanding and buffing."

### **Cymbals:** Zildjian

**1.** 13" Quick Beat hi-hats

**2.** 14" K Dark crash

**3.** 20" K Custom ride

**4.** 16" K Dark crash

**5.** 17" K China

**6.** crotale

### **Not shown:** 16" Orchestral crash

"The 16" Orchestral crash has an excellent low, dark tone and rings nicely," White says.

"It has a big sound but doesn't linger on too much. I don't really like large cymbals for that reason; I like the sound to get right to the point. The crotale is really just there for posterity's sake. It's been on my kit for years, but I have it sampled now for when we play 'And You and I.'"

**Hardware:** Ludwig Vibra-Band tom mounts; Gibraltar rack system, hi-hat stand, and throne; Axis Longboards X-L2 double pedal

**Sticks:** Zildjian Z4A hickory model

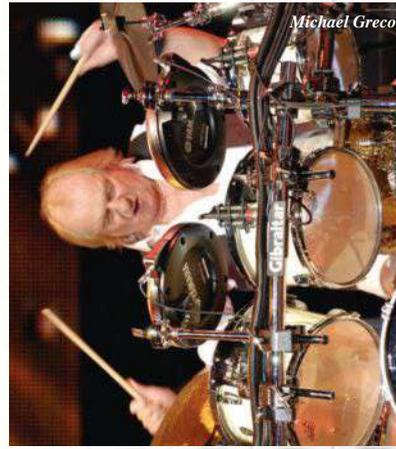
**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador X snare batter and Ambassador bottom, Clear Ambassador tom batters and bottoms, and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Ebony Ambassador front head with Yes logo

"My characteristic sound is very live and open. I do use a little dampening pad in the bass drum. I think open-sounding drums ultimately give engineers more control over the sound, instead of messing with it at the source with muffling."

**Electronics:** Yamaha DTX brain and pads great to play, and the hardware is really roadworthy. I have four pads on my kit now, but I basically use electronics to enhance the sound of my drumkit. The samples I typically use are a generic drumkit from my own sample library on DrumCore. I use that when I need something electronic that still sounds like me. Other than that, I use the pads for samples of vocals, guitars, gongs, crashes, and other things."



Michael Greco



Michael Greco



Michael Greco



**D**rum tuning is a very personal thing, since each player's taste in sounds is unique. And there are many elements beyond tightening a tension rod that go into the way a drum sounds, including head selection, stick choice, drum-shell type, bearing-edge angle, and a drummer's touch. But there's one thing all the best players agree on: Focusing on tuning is worth every second you put into it.

The ability to tune is one of a drummer's most powerful tools. A well-tuned kit makes people like us. And it makes us like ourselves, because when our drums are sounding good, we want to play them that much more.

A well-tuned kit will also make soundchecks a lot shorter, since the soundman won't have to search for ways to compensate for sour notes you might be putting through the PA. It's a basic fact of performance: It's better to be in control of your own sound than to rely on someone else to rein in any wayward tones.

This month we talk to three very different—but equally invested—drummers about the art and craft of getting a good sound: jazz great Jack DeJohnette and 2012 *MD Pro* Panelists Bob Gatzen and Gil Sharone.

Gatzen's father owned an auto service station, and Bob grew up racing cars and playing drums. "Fine-tuning an engine is the same kind of thing that happens with fine-tuning drum sounds," he says. "With the drums, I just kept messing around, matching pitches between the top and bottom heads, paying attention to details, and practicing. With my mechanical nature, tuning drums just came easy."

Jack DeJohnette is convinced that his background in piano has made a big difference in how he approaches tuning. "Tonally and melodically—definitely," he

says. "I tune my set in such a way that anybody who plays it, no matter what they play, they're going to be playing melody as well as rhythm.

"I taught myself tuning," DeJohnette explains, "by playing piano and listening to other drummers, like Roy Haynes. Roy tunes his drums really well. People like Rashied Ali tuned their drums musically. Max Roach was a composer, played timpani and so forth. He was quite conscious of tuning the drums. These drummers all played melody."

Gil Sharone, who recently released the

highly regarded DVD *Wicked Beats*, has done a lot of research on getting effective sounds for ska, rocksteady, and reggae gigs. "If you're going to a session to play an authentic-sounding reggae track, you want to get the right vibe," he says. "You want to get a dead tom sound and a fat kick. You don't want to walk in there and play wide-open drums with a 26" kick drum. Even if your touch is amazing, you're just not going to get the right sound."

#### STARTING OUT

"When you have two heads vibrating at different rates, you get all sorts of interesting coloration and tone," Gatzen explains. "The important thing is to try to match the pitch of both heads and have that be the starting point. Find the lowest possible pitch, make sure both heads are resonating, and then move the heads up in small increments."

Gatzen employs a crisscross technique with tuning rods, ensuring first that the head is centered on the shell. "The best thing," he says, "is to go from, say, 1 o'clock to 6 o'clock to 3 o'clock.... Go back and forth across the head so that the head seats evenly."

#### RELATIVE PITCH BETWEEN BATTER AND RESONANT HEADS

Relative tension between the batter and resonant heads can significantly affect pitch, attack, sustain, and how the note decays. "If you tune a top tom head either lower or higher," Gatzen says, "you'll get a bending tone. On my 12" tom, the bottom head is a B and the top is a C, a half step higher. When you strike the batter head, the pitch will actually bend and then

**"With the space in reggae music, I don't want the toms ringing out over everything. I might just lose the bottom heads completely and get even more of a thud." —Gil Sharone**

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recuperate. A lot of drummers like that sound. Generally it works best at lower pitch levels."

Gatzen advises drummers that learning to play piano, melodica, or harmonica will improve their ability to get the sounds they want out of the drums. "That will give you a sense of what a major third is, a minor third, a perfect fifth.... Once you learn something about tonality, tuning drums becomes a much richer experience."

DeJohnette focuses on the quality of tone created by the relationship between the batter and resonant heads. "I tune the top and bottom head so they're in resonance with each other and you get a real rich sound out of them," he says. "Sometimes I'll have the top or bottom head tighter or looser, if I want different overtones. But I won't go too loose."

"For reggae, I like my drums to sound tight," says Sharone, who goes as much by feel as by sound. "I usually have all my heads cranked pretty firm. The tops feel pretty firm, without much give. The bottoms are a little tighter than the tops. That helps achieve that vintage sound. The drums crack a certain way, have a certain ring."

For the really hard-hitting projects he's worked on, including Stolen Babies, Otep, and Dillinger Escape Plan, Sharone uses a 2-ply head, like a Remo Clear Emperor on the toms and a Coated Emperor on the snare. "I don't crank them as tight as I do for reggae," he explains. "I like them a little wet, so they're beefier."

## RELATIVE PITCH BETWEEN DRUMS

"I like to tune my toms to perfect fourths, fifths, octaves, or major thirds," Gatzen says. "There's a harmonious thing happening then; it's not just about playing rhythms—it's actually melodic. These are intervals that people can relate to and that have been proven over decades to have a way of stimulating listener and player. Why not use that melodic nature?"

DeJohnette doesn't strictly tune to specific notes. Rather, he says, "I tune within the kit. The 8" and 10" toms are up in bongo range, while the 12", 13", 14", and 16" toms are in a midrange, medium to low. Sometimes I tune in thirds, sometimes seconds or fourths. It depends on the music and the instrumentation, if it's guitar or electric piano or acoustic piano, for instance. When I play with other drummers, conga players, or other percussionists, we all tune so that we're not competing for the same frequencies. This approach works across a broad spectrum of music, unless it's some funk

or something else that requires me to have a lower tuning."

## SNARE, BASS, AND TOM SPECIFICS

Gatzen learned early on that various types of drums respond differently to tensioning, and that different drums call for different approaches. "The bass drum is unlike any other drum on the kit," he says, "and so is the snare drum, considering that we're tuning it up two or three times higher than all the other drums. And each drum really has a character and [demands a specific] way of tuning. For instance, you'll find more possibilities of sound in a 12" tom than in a 16". You could move a 16" up a step or so, and then it starts to go 'boing' and doesn't sound like a 16" anymore."

To a certain extent, DeJohnette lets his technique dictate how he treats each element of the kit. "My snare is tuned fairly tight, top and bottom, with the snares

**"I tune in such a way that anybody who plays my set, no matter what they play, they're going to be playing melody as well as rhythm." —Jack DeJohnette**

fairly tight," he explains. "I get a crisp sound, which matches and works with my touch. My snare drums usually have a double strainer, so I can get a good balance of the snares on and off."

Jack goes on to explain how he likes his kick drum to be distinct but not dominant. "It's tuned more high than low," he says, "though low enough that it sounds below the rest of the kit."

Sharone has come across an approach to floor tom tuning that he feels works particularly well for him. "I'll keep my 18" floor tom super-low and loose and wet," he explains. "When I was out with Dillinger on the Warped tour, drummers were like, 'Dude, your floor toms are going crazy—how are you tuning them?' I'm like, 'Man, I'm finger-tightening.' I'm basically going as tight as I can with my fingers and not even using a key. Sometimes I like that effect on all my drums. I've tracked reggae or experimental stuff and kept my toms super-loose, the screws fitting in just enough that you don't hear them vibrate. It gives the toms this fat, crazy, explosive sound."

"It's attack, and it's not based on wanting to hear sustain," Gil continues. "I like a real fast response when I'm playing reggae fills. With the space in that music, I don't want the toms ringing out over everything."

Sharone says he was inspired to go down this path by seeing Dennis

Chambers play several years ago. "His toms were super-loose, and he got that really fat, round sound. Just loosen the heads like crazy, and then finger-tighten them. Maybe give them like a half turn with a key all around. It's all attack, punch. I've been into the open, concert-tom vibe anyway, because so many of the reggae albums in the '70s were recorded that way. I might just lose the bottom heads completely and get even more of a dead kind of thud out of the toms."

## MORE ART THAN SCIENCE?

Though there's generally more science involved in sound production than most laymen—and even many musicians—are conscious of, taste, imagination, and experimentation play equally important roles in tuning for sound. "There's a plethora of sounds available to you—if you're willing to experiment," Gatzen says. "Most drummers don't experiment enough."

Sharone tries to pick up as much information as he can on the job. "I've been around amazing techs," he says, "and you can't help but watch them and ask questions. I'll see a tech buddy and say, 'Dude, what are you doing to get the kick to sound like that? I can't ever make it sit like that.' And he'll say, like, 'Oh, just leave one tension rod really loose.'"

Gil took that trick and applied it to other types of drums as well. "I can have the snare cranked but leave one tension rod super-loose, and it really changes the vibe and sound," he says. "It also kills the ring. The drum still has a crack, because everything else is tuned normally. You're basically adding an element of fatness when normally a head would be very pingy and thin sounding because it's cranked. You can get the best of both worlds by loosening one or maybe two."

As DeJohnette explains, one of the most important reasons to experiment with tuning is that in the end it provides you with a way to find your individual voice on the drums. "Your drum sound is who you are," he says. "It's your personality, what you're trying to go for."

Hopefully this article will be a catalyst for you to more actively search for your own unique drum sounds. After all, in terms of setting yourself apart from the pack as a musician, defining what your instrument sounds like is as important as the beats you play on it.



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# TRAVIS ORBIN

Methodically and magnificently, one of future metal's brightest lights is going to places most of us mortals would never dare.

by Ken Micallef

**P**rogressive metal drummer Travis Orbin has been confounding and inspiring his fellow sticksmen since his early days as an original member of the band Periphery. Orbin left that groundbreaking group in early 2009 to join the equally intense Sky Eats Airplane. Recently he's also recorded epic tracks with Us & Them, Of Legends, Nick Johnston, and the "ecology inspired" Simbelmynë.

A deep pocket sets Orbin apart amid the clamoring double-pedal speed hits and hyper pulse fixations of progressive metal, but he can absolutely *shred* when required, as seen in his many YouTube videos tracked at Oceanic Recording and at his own Woodshed studio. Travis is one of the clearest, most articulate drummers playing in any genre, and his knowledge of metric modulation and odd groupings is as impressive as his unusual practice routines and literate mindset.

**MD:** How did you achieve the level of clarity and power we hear in your drumming?

**Travis:** Slow, repetitious practice to the metronome. I practice off the set, just bare hands and bare feet. I don't want to be dependent on rebound. The bare-handed approach has improved my consistency since I began doing it in 2006.

**MD:** So you play with your hands on the drumheads?

**Travis:** I play with my hands on my quadriceps [the muscle group on the front of the thigh], to a metronome. For my legs, I shift between heel down and

heel up, with an emphasis on heel up. I keep the legs as still as possible and throw from the ankle. I time my hits to the metronome and play flat flams or unison strokes, four-way, with the hands and feet all timed together. That fundamental motion is the most difficult drum move to do accurately.

**MD:** So it's a coordination exercise.

**Travis:** Yes. It translates, clarity-wise, to the kit. I've really seen improvements in power and precision and speed, but mostly in consistency. I warm up with this regimen as well, but also using sticks on the set. With the sticks I can warm up

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Orbin plays a Pearl Reference Pure drumset with a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ ×14 Reference brass snare drum, an 8×12 tom, a 16×16 floor tom, and a 16×20 bass drum. His TRX cymbals include a 21" DRK ride, an 18" MDM crash, a 19" MDM hi-hats, 13" hybrid hi-hats (BRT top/DRK bottom), a 19" LTD Custom China, and a 14" Icon Stacker on top of a 16" ALT china. His Remo heads include a Controlled Sound snare batter and Ambassador Snare Side bottom, Coated Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and a Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter. He uses Vic Firth Ralph Hardimon Hammer SRH2 sticks.



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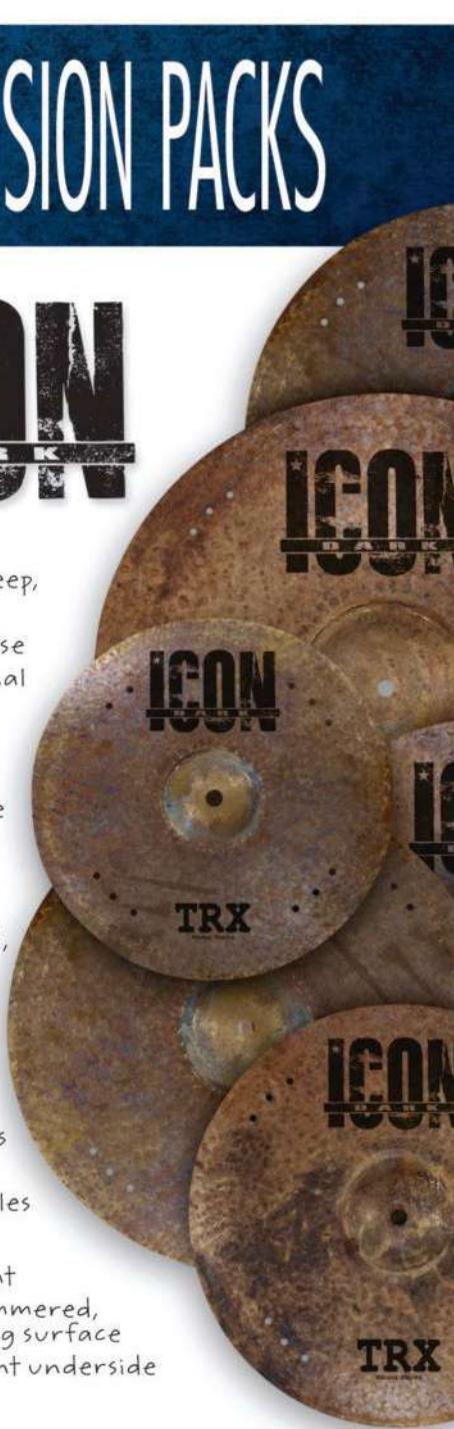
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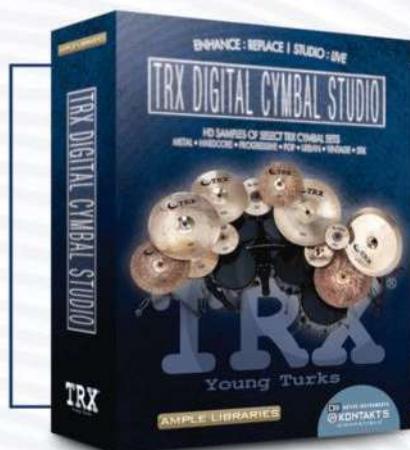
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## TRAVIS ORBIN

my grip muscles, which you can't do using the bare hands only.

**MD:** You're playing unison flams between the hands and feet?

**Travis:** Yes, the hands mirror the feet, which makes it more difficult. It's all like a machine. I choose the most fundamental, four-way unison motion because that's what translates to all the sub-motions. For example, I never really drilled myself on double strokes, but I can sustain them at like 250 bpm with my hands. I attribute that to barehanded practice.

**MD:** When doing that practice regimen, are you playing double-stroke rolls on your legs using palms or fingers?

**Travis:** I modeled my hand technique after Mike Mangini. He claims to never use any fingers. I'm the same—it's all driven from the wrist. Playing from the wrist takes longer to develop, but you get increased clarity and power that translates across the entire kit. I'm using the palms on my legs.

**MD:** You record tracks in your own studio. Does recording yourself aid your drumming?

**Travis:** It does, but I think more as a musician than as an engineer. When I finish tracking I create a stereo mix for the client. I also provide them with stems of each individual track without plug-ins, so that they can build their own mix. I use Pro Tools as a marker for how well my

lars on a drum room.

**MD:** You have a great pocket, especially for a drummer in this style of metal, which is typically about speed and complexity.

**Travis:** I recommend that drummers practice to a metronome. I practice not only to quarter notes but to the dominant subdivision within the song. So if it's a heavy 16th-note feel, I'll plug in the 16th-note subdivision on the 8th-note and 16th-note upbeats on my metronome. That's had a tremendous impact on my time. You're lending importance not only to the downbeat but to all the beats in between. I also mike my bass drum into the mixer. And I patch the metronome into the mixer, so now I can clearly hear how well my kick relates to the metronome.

**MD:** The intro to Of Legends' "Nothing Matters" is a real lexicon of modern drumming ideas and oddly grouped phrasing. What exactly are those odd note groupings?

**Travis:** There's a three-against-two polyrhythm, 8th-note quintuplets, then 16th-note quintuplets phrased partially in two, like two within the five. Shortly after that is a nine-tuplet and three groupings of 16th-note septuplets, then towards the end is a three-against-four polyrhythm. It's two bars; the kicks are playing two groupings of 16th notes, then two group-

## RECORDINGS

**Sky Eats Airplane** The Sound of Symmetry /// **Us & Them** Adventures Into the Dark /// **Of Legends** Stranded /// **Nick Johnston** Public Display of Infection /// **Simbelmynë** Trillium /// **Andy Gruhin** World Out There, Let the Darkness Grow! /// **JudaBlue** Forty Days /// **Cyclamen** Senjyu /// **Pete Peterson** Transitional Farms /// **I Am King** I Am King /// **Set Apart** Fear & Trembling /// **The Countdown Starts Now** The Countdown Starts Now

time is developing. I can't do severe editing; I can move a few hits around. My hands have to be spot on, and the kicks have to be uniform. When I edit I import MIDI drums from Guitar Pro, which are 100 percent accurate. I can see just how well my hits are timed. Since I've been recording in my studio starting in early 2010, my time has been improving.

**MD:** How do you program drum parts?

**Travis:** I don't do too many programming gigs; I far prefer the real thing. But when I do, I program in Guitar Pro, export it as MIDI, and send it to the client. Often they use Toontrack's Superior Drummer sample library as a plug-in. They can EQ that to get a big sound right out of the box, rather than spending thousands of dol-

lings of 8th-note triplets. The right hand is playing quarter notes orchestrated between the stack cymbal and the snare. The left hand is playing two groupings of broken 8th-note triplets, then two groupings of broken 16th notes orchestrated solely on the ride bell.

**MD:** What do you practice now?

**Travis:** Fifteen minutes of improv, some stretching, twenty minutes of barehanded practice, and then I move to the pads for a half hour. Then four-way unison again, but with the pedals and sticks, and then I rehearse for upcoming sessions. I start at half the performance tempo and work my way up in 10 bpm increments. I work out all the kinks. Methodically.

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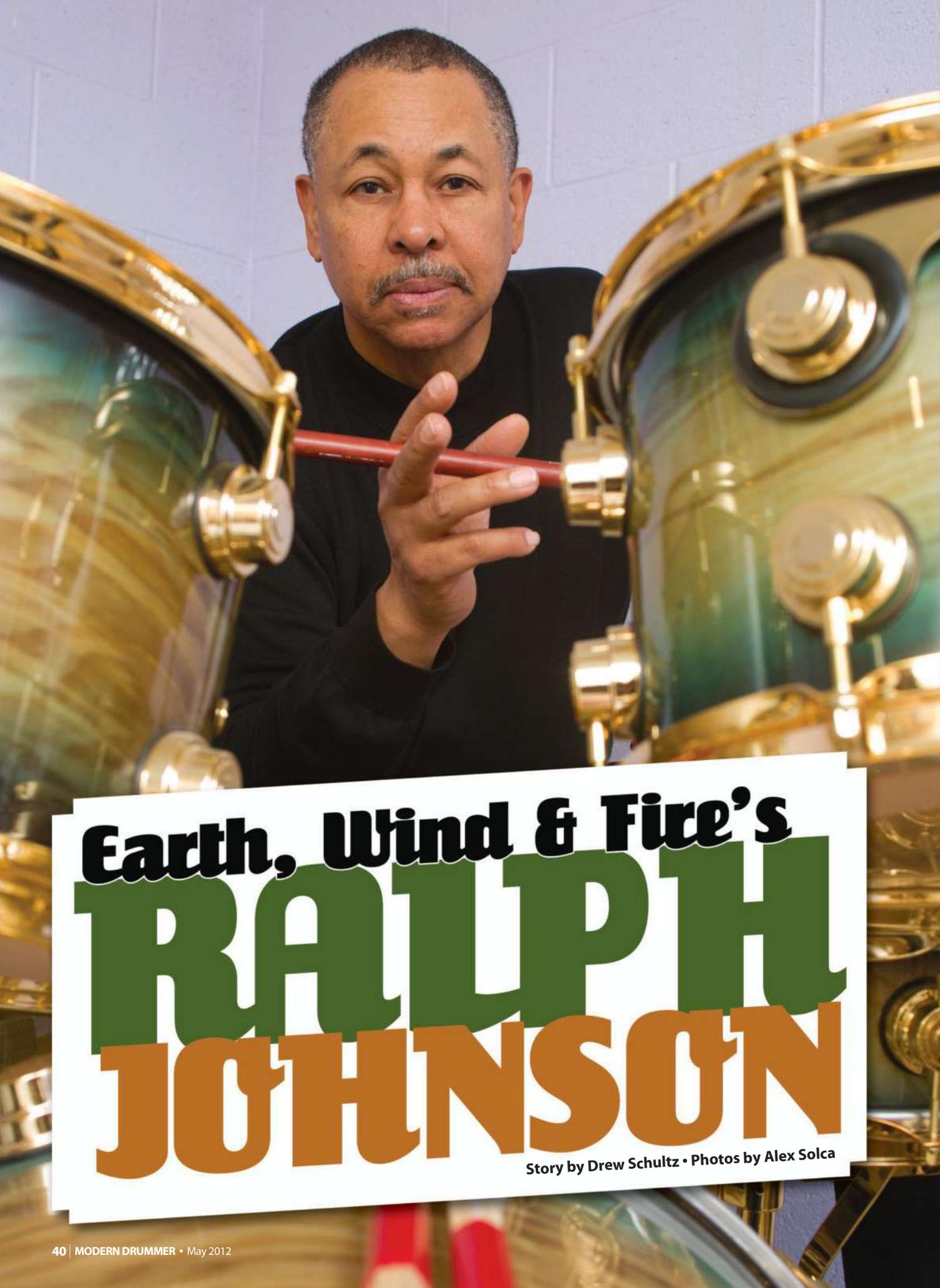
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**Earth, Wind & Fire's**

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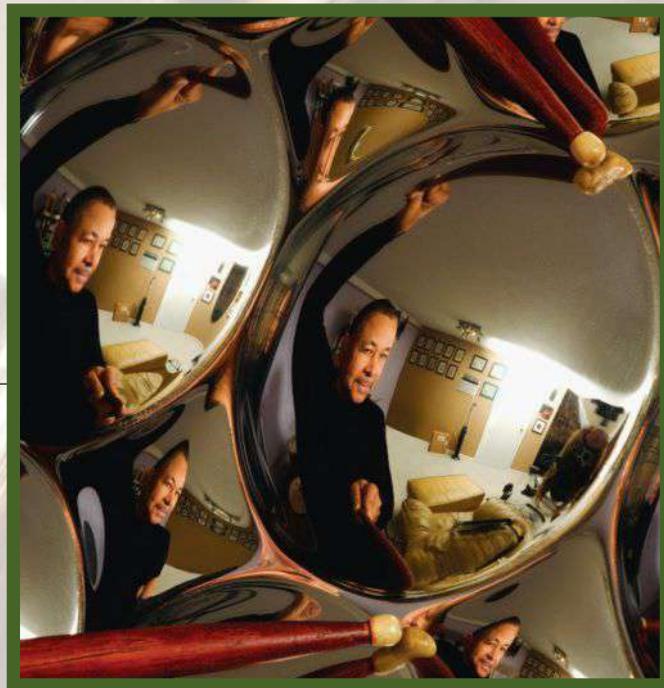
Story by Drew Schultz • Photos by Alex Solca

In the '70s, chart-dominating hits like "Shining Star," "Let's Groove," and "September" made **Earth, Wind & Fire** a household name. Forty years later, the band's appeal to audiences of every kind only seems to grow. Here, EWF's longtime drummer/percussionist/vocalist tells the tale and reveals the details behind his unique educational concepts.

**A**s the lights in the theater go down, a fog, illuminated by blue light, rolls onto the stage. A horn line pierces the air, and applause fills the room. The frontmen walk out with heads held high and arms stretched upward, and the crowd *explodes*. Blaring horns and cymbal swells morph into an irresistibly funky groove, the musicians start to move, and the crowd, still yelling and clapping, follows suit. Given the band's tight choreography, passionate vocals, energetic stage presence, and screaming fans, you'd be forgiven if you were surprised to learn that this unit has been bringing it on like this for *forty* years.

Drawing inspiration from the three elements in his astrological chart, Chicago drummer Maurice White founded Earth, Wind & Fire in 1971 in an attempt to break from the mold of the commercial music of the time. At first the group, which consisted mostly of jazz musicians, found little success outside the college scene. Wishing to have a younger, fresher sound, White completely reworked the band, keeping only his brother Verdine on bass. Members of the new lineup would become some of the best-known faces in EWF history, including guitarists Johnny Graham and Al McKay, keyboardist Larry Dunn, saxophonist Andrew Woolfolk, vocalists Philip Bailey and Jessica Cleaves—and drummer Ralph Johnson.

Although Maurice White would often play drums in the studio, Johnson was the group's onstage glue. In 1975, Maurice and Verdine's brother, Fred White, was



added to the lineup and began playing a second drum set on stage with Johnson. Several years later, Ralph moved to the front of the stage alongside Bailey and Maurice White, singing and playing a percussion setup. Johnson remains a pivotal part of the group's percussive sound today, playing next to frontmen/percussionists Bailey and David Whitworth. All three sing lead at various times in the shows and are integral to the group's extensive instrumental jams.

EWF's huge crossover appeal began with a string of hits in the '70s and '80s, and despite an extended hiatus in the '90s, the band has never fully left our consciousness—or stopped trying to appeal to new audiences. The well-regarded 2005 studio album *Illumination* features contemporary stars like OutKast, Will.i.am, and Raphael Saadiq. That same year, Johnson teamed up with guitarist Steen Kyed and former EWF keyboardist Morris Pleasure as Audio Caviar, releasing the star-studded album *Transoceanic*. And major appearances such as *American Idol*'s 2007 "Idol Gives Back" episode and Justin

Timberlake's 2011 Old School Jam concert further remind fans how timeless and influential EWF's music is. Last year, Legacy issued *The Columbia Masters*, a fifteen-disc collection of EWF titles, and the band has continued to perform live to rapturous audiences. This past January, yet another best-of collection, *Now, Then & Forever*, was released.

When he's not in EWF mode, Johnson focuses on educational activities, including his recent method book for Cherry Lane, *Drum Exercises for the Pop, Funk, and R&B Player*, whose follow-up he's currently hard at work on. Last October Ralph conducted a two-day master class at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington, D.C. "I love being a teacher," he says. "I like the idea of being able to give back."



**MD:** You've gotten to be pretty passionate about teaching.

**Ralph:** Absolutely. I've always wanted to be a great teacher, not just a great player. I want to be able to get students to open up, to think about what it is they're doing, and if they're having a problem with something, we try to figure out a way to get them past it. Teaching is definitely one of the most important aspects of what I do.

**MD:** What about your own drumming instruction?

**Ralph:** I took my first drum lesson at the age of eight. Some of my early memories are of my father buying me a copy of a Benny Goodman album called *Brussels World Fair 1958*. Roy Burns took a drum solo on "Sing, Sing, Sing," and I would come home from school and play that over and over.

**MD:** Did you play along to records a lot?

**Ralph:** I did. And at an early age I became fascinated with jazz.

**MD:** Did you play jazz in a school music program?

**Ralph:** No, there were no programs for jazz in school. Though when I was in the fourth grade, I played in an orchestra. The educational system was adding new musical programs, but back then it was hard to find an orchestra in an elementary school.

**MD:** What was the first group you played with outside of school?

**Ralph:** The first group that comes to mind was a band I had called the Teen Turbans. We won a battle of the bands for a big radio station near Los Angeles, and we went on to do some things. Eventually I got hooked up with the club situation here in L.A., and then in the summer of '71 I auditioned for Earth, Wind & Fire. They saw me playing at this club. But until then, I was doing the garage-band thing, playing this gig and that gig....

**MD:** At that point Earth, Wind & Fire had already recorded two albums.

**Ralph:** Right, for Warner Brothers, but that band broke up. Then they re-formed, and I was the drummer. We went on to sign a deal with CBS/Columbia Records. Clive Davis was the president of the label at that time, and he was really hands-on. [Second drummer] Fred White came in after the 1973 album *Head to the Sky*.

**MD:** For a long time you both played drums on stage. Was this true for recordings as well?

**Ralph:** No, just basically live. For tours we would usually have a couple of drumsets.

For the song "That's the Way of the World" [from the 1975 album of the same name], I recorded the main drum track, and then Freddie and I overdubbed snare and clave parts. That album was actually



the soundtrack to a film, which was a bomb. That's why when you look at the record, you don't see stretched across the front of the cover, "The Soundtrack From..." Maurice didn't want to do that. The movie was released on DVD eventually.

**MD:** When did you start playing and singing up front?

**Ralph:** We were filming the scene in the movie *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* where we performed "Got to Get You Into My Life," and our choreographer, George Faison, who also did the choreography for the Broadway musical *The Wiz*, asked me to come out front and do the scene. I had been messing around with singing, but that kind of solidified everything.

**MD:** When the drum machine was introduced, how did that affect the band?

**Ralph:** It didn't really affect Earth, Wind & Fire at all. We were a live band, and we

were used to playing live in the studio. There might have been some loops we played over. Maurice got introduced to MIDI and wanted to try some things, especially on the *Electric Universe* record.

**MD:** After *Electric Universe*, there was a hiatus. What were you doing at that time?

**Ralph:** I did some production work with Otis Williams and the Temptations, with Al McKay, who was the former guitar player with Earth, Wind & Fire. That was one of the most fun things I ever did. I was a big fan of Motown music. I worked on *Truly for You*, which spawned the hit "Treat Her Like a Lady." I didn't really do anything on the performance side at all; I was basically concentrating on writing.

**MD:** Earth, Wind & Fire came back with Sonny Emory on drums. How did you hear about him?

**Ralph:** We discovered him down in Atlanta. He was playing locally. His solo became a big part of our shows.

## RECORDINGS

**Audio Caviar** Transoceanic /// **Earth, Wind & Fire** Gratitude, That's the Way of the World: Alive in '75, "Drum Duel" from the Chicago/EFW Live at the Greek Theatre DVD

## FAVORITES

**Miles Davis** Nefertiti (Tony Williams) /// **Dianne Reeves** The Calling (Gregory Hutchinson) /// **Joe Henderson** Big Band (Al Foster, Joe Chambers, Paulinho Braga, Lewis Nash) /// **Wes Montgomery** "The Shadow of Your Smile" from Bumpin' (Grady Tate) /// any recording of "The Look of Love" (composed by Burt Bacharach and Hal David)



**MD:** Now you guys have John Paris, and he's the man.

**Ralph:** Oh yeah, definitely.

**MD:** I was happy to see you play drumset on the 2005 *Live at the Greek Theatre DVD*. Do you play on stage very often?

**Ralph:** No, not really, because I'm needed out front. But I do keep my chops up, believe me. I've decided to work hard on my hands. I'm working out of George Lawrence Stone's *Stick Control*, and I'm doing some exercises that the drummer with Chris Botti, my man Billy Kilson, showed me. For the record, Billy is one of my favorite drummers. He had a chance to study with Alan Dawson, so he showed me this practice routine that Alan turned him on to. I've been working on that, and I have to thank Billy for it.

**MD:** What made you want to get into the educational side of drumming?

**Ralph:** It came from a need to share something more than just sitting up on stage with a set of drums. I've always been a teacher, and I felt I needed something to put my ideas in, something that I can refer to when I'm dealing with my students. So I decided to write a book.

Quite honestly, I got the inspiration from Verdine, our bass player, because he already had a bass book out. I thought, *Shoot, I can write a book!* It became kind of a competitive thing, and the end result was *Drum Exercises for the Pop, Funk, and R&B Player*. But I decided that I needed to

do another book and that it needed to be more specific. So I came up with a method to teach four-way coordination that I think is a totally different approach. It's called asymmetric drumming. As you know, the word means off-center or unbalanced.

**MD:** So the method involves splitting your playing into two sides?

**Ralph:** Exactly. The goal is for the student to have the ability to play any combination of rhythms and/or meters on top of an odd-time ostinato played by the feet, preferably in 3/16. If you think in terms of 3/16, you would sit there and play your right foot on 1 and 3 and your hi-hat on 2, and you get this three pulse of "boom chick boom." Now if I told you to play three quarter notes against that, where would you jump in?

**MD:** Well, one set of that foot pattern is only a portion of a beat...

**Ralph:** Now you're getting to what I refer to in the book as the enigma of the order of twelve. If you're counting "one, two, three; one, two, three," you'll never jump in because your brain won't let you work on top of that three loop. So, because you're counting 16th notes, let's count them a little differently. Instead of "one, two, three; two, two, three; three, two, three; four, two, three," let's count them like "one-e-&-a, two-e-&-a, three-e-&-a." Now you've done what I call in the book the mind switch—you're thinking in terms of even groups of notes that will allow you

to come in and play whenever you want.

The other important thing is that the order of your feet never changes. It's going to be the same sound. If I listen to you start to play just the feet on the drumset, that "boom chick boom, boom chick boom" isn't going to change for the listener. But for you, the player, you're not counting "one, two, three; two, two, three"—you're counting 16th notes. So that's where the book is coming from.

**MD:** What's the status of your next instructional book?

**Ralph:** I've finished all the musical notation. Now I have to add the text and record the audio tracks.

This second one is more personal for me. I was watching Terry Bozzio do some stuff on his DVD, and I was like, All right, if you had to begin to teach a student to get to that level, where would you start—how would you do it? There's a way to get the independence he has, and that's what will be in this book, *Asymmetric Drumming*.

**MD:** What's next for Earth, Wind & Fire?

**Ralph:** We plan to release two CDs this year, one of which will be a live recording that we did last September at the Hollywood Bowl with a full orchestra. That's going to come out in the fall. A lot of people forget that on record, a lot of the songs had strings on them. When you see us on tour, we don't usually bring the strings, only the horns. So we also plan to add symphony dates to our yearly tour schedule. Those will probably take place closer to the fall.

For the other CD, we're going to take some of our hits and let people like Will.i.am and Raphael Saadiq do remixes, and we're going to add some new studio material to that. We're also doing a deal with Monster Cable, based on headphones that we plan to release commemorating our fortieth anniversary. We're always trying to give our fans their money's worth—stay consistent—and I'm always trying to learn new things on the drums.

**MD:** Speaking of learning new things, what advice do you have for young drummers?

**Ralph:** If you believe in what you're doing, you've got to figure out a way to make it happen. Unfortunately, the music business is really only in three places in the United States: New York, L.A., and Nashville. You've got to be as close as possible to where it's happening. Additionally, when you get to the point where you're recording, it's very important that you be a songwriter. Don't go on a ten-year ride with a group without publishing some material, because when you're too old to tour, that's your retirement fund. You can't forget that it *is* the music business.





# WA

## VINNY APPICE LEAVING HIS MARK

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Even appearing on national television with an ex-Beatle—as a teenager, no less—couldn't have prepared him for the rock 'n' roll glory that lay just around the corner. Thirty-five years later, the quintessential journeyman is embarking on a new adventure.

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Story by "Pistol" Pete Kaufmann • Photos by Alex Solca

**P**ractice, hard work, networking, and perseverance are skills one must develop in order to become a working musician. Luckily for us mere mortals, these goals are attainable with focus, effort, and a master plan. Every now and then, however, a special individual is chosen by the gods of rock to put his or her stamp on music history. With his muscular, no-frills drumming style, self-dedication, and older rock-star brother to inspire him, it makes perfect sense that Vincent Samson Appice would be selected to join the ranks of the hard-rocking elite.

The native New Yorker moved to Los Angeles over thirty years ago, but he never let the “Hollywood” attitude replace his old-school Brooklyn charm, despite having played with some of the biggest names in the business. It might be that it never occurred to Vinny to be star-struck, since his brother Carmine, eleven years his senior, was already renowned for his work with Vanilla Fudge, Jeff Beck, and Cactus by the time Vinny began making a name for himself. Vinny recalls being a young teenager and seeing Carmine bring famous musicians over for Sunday dinner. (Could you imagine? “Excuse me, Mr. Beck, would you mind passing the meatballs?”)

Inspired by his brother’s talent, success, and encouragement, Vinny took to drum lessons and practiced regularly to earn Carmine’s respect as a serious musician. And respect he got—not only from his brother, but from some of the biggest artists in the music world. It wasn’t long before Vinny was playing with John Lennon—while he was still in high school—touring with Rick Derringer, and landing the gig that would point his career in a particularly weighty direction: playing with the godfathers of heavy metal.

As the 1970s were giving way to the ‘80s, Black

Sabbath was in a rebuilding process. In 1979, original singer Ozzy Osbourne was replaced by ex-Rainbow vocalist Ronnie James Dio, who, along with founder Tony Iommi (guitar), Geezer Butler (bass), and Bill Ward (drums), recorded the album *Heaven and Hell*. In the middle of the Black and Blue tour to support the LP (Blue Öyster Cult shared the bill), Ward left the band, and Vinny stepped in.

Appice recorded the 1981 Sabbath studio album *Mob Rules*, and in 1982 the *Live Evil* set was released. But musical differences within the quartet were already causing tension. Americans Dio and Appice, who’d developed a bond amid issues with Iommi and Butler, left their unhappy British bandmates and formed the heavy metal group Dio, which itself would go on to become one of the most beloved acts in metal history. Though Appice left the band in 1989, he would reunite with the singer in a mid-’90s Dio lineup. (In the interim he worked with Sabbath for its 1992 *Dehumanizer* album and tour.) Vinny and Ronnie joined forces again in 2006, in the group Heaven & Hell, which reprised the lineup from Sabbath’s *Heaven and Hell* record.

Appice’s last studio recording with Ronnie James Dio was Heaven & Hell’s 2009 album, *The Devil You Know*. Not long after, Dio was diagnosed with stomach cancer, and in May of 2010 he succumbed to the disease.

Though he’s greatly saddened by the loss of his long-time friend, Appice refuses to dwell on the past and continues to move forward. The veteran drummer is excited about Kill Devil Hill, the band he recently formed with Pantera bassist Rex Brown, guitarist Mark Zavon, and vocalist Dewey Bragg. We spoke with Vinny during a string of KDH dates across the U.S. in support of the band’s brand-new self-titled debut album.





**MD:** So, Vinny, before we start talking drums, can we set the record straight on your last name? How *do* you pronounce it? When you performed with Carmine on the Drum Wars shows, you pronounced your last names differently.

**Vinny:** Right. I pronounce it “A-pa-see.” That’s how my father says it. But when Carmine first came out, people pronounced it “A-piece.” I think he began pronouncing it that way himself around when he played with Rod Stewart—he liked the way it sounded. Everywhere we go together, we get that question. They don’t even have to finish the question. They just go, “How do you...?” and I say, “It’s A-pa-see!” My oldest brother, Frank—he doesn’t play drums—he says “A-peach-ee.” That’s the Italian version. So there are three pronunciations.

**MD:** You’ve been playing professionally since you were a kid in Brooklyn.

**Vinny:** Carmine used to rehearse in the enclosed porch at the front of our house. He was maybe eighteen or nineteen, and I was eight or nine. I used to see all these guys rehearsing, and I was inspired by all their gear and by listening to them play. That got the bug in me—the fever. I used to play Carmine’s drums. At first I didn’t know what I was doing. I was just banging on ‘em. I think I broke a cymbal once. I remember one time he said, “I’m going out. Don’t play the drums—you’re breaking everything.” “Okay, Carmine.” I waited ten minutes, then I started banging on the drums. He came running in, shouting, “I told you not to play the drums—

you’re breaking everything!” I thought he left! [laughs]

Then, as I got a little older, I started playing a bit more seriously and listening to music. I listened to lots of stuff Carmine did and tried to cop his licks. He saw that and started teaching me things whenever he would come off the road. “Hey, check this out,” some groove or fill. Finally Carmine told my parents that they should send me to

take drum lessons from the same guy he took lessons from. His name was Dick Bennett. God bless my mom. She was totally into supporting me and Carmine, and so was my dad. The whole family was. I used to go for lessons every Saturday. They were \$5. The first books I learned out of were *Stick Control* and *Syncopation*.

**MD:** Tell us about you and your band playing with John Lennon when you

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were still a teenager. How does a group of teens get to play with a megastar? At that point you were pretty much unknown.

**Vinny:** I took drums very seriously. I figured, Carmine is so good—so if I'm going to do this, I'm going to have to be *really* good to get noticed. Otherwise I end up just being Carmine's brother. Like, "Yeah, he's okay, but he's not as good as Carmine." I wanted to beat Carmine up. [laughs] So I took it seriously and practiced a lot, and I wound up playing in bands around Brooklyn where the guys were always older than me. That actually happened my whole career. Guys were always older than me, at least up until recently—because now I'm old. [laughs]

Anyway, I went from band to band for a while. I played a couple of weddings and things like that with a local cocktail band. I was like fourteen—you know, good money for the weekend. Eventually I wound up in this nine-piece funky rock band with a guitar player, Joey Dambra, whose brother Louie was in a band in Brooklyn called Sir Lord Baltimore. They were kind of the big thing in Brooklyn. Joey knew [future heavyweight producer] Jimmy Iovine, who played bass in a

Brooklyn band called Fantasy. Jimmy heard our band and said he wanted to produce us.

So we went into the studio and did a bunch of demos, which Jimmy played for the owner of the studio, Roy Cicala. Roy liked the band and thought we had a lot of potential, so he signed a management deal with us and gave us a room at the Record Plant on 44th Street in Manhattan. It was a really big room at the top of the place, and we were rehearsing for free. It became like a club. At that time, John Lennon used to record at the Record Plant, and one night Jimmy said, "Guys, can you come down and do handclaps for us?" We didn't know what it was for. So we go downstairs and get in the room, and there's John Lennon and Elton John in the control room. And we're like, "Oh my God!"

**MD:** How old were you?

**Vinny:** About fifteen, sixteen. And so they tell us what they want. The song was "Whatever Gets You Thru the Night"—that's my band and me doing handclaps on that song. Afterwards, John asked Jimmy who we were. Jimmy said, "That's a band that Roy manages, and I'm producing them. They're really good." A couple days later, John came up and hung out with us and watched us rehearse. Then he asked us to do a gig with him at the New York Hilton hotel. It was a salute to Sir Lew Grade, a worldwide ABC special. Of course we said yes.

Yoko Ono had an idea to have the band go on in black satin jumpsuits and these two-sided masks, so we were like bald with two faces. That was to symbolize two-faced people—I guess. [laughs] John wore the same jumpsuit as us, but in red. We were like, "Sure, whatever you guys want to do," obviously. John gave us the tracks we were gonna play, and we played "Slippin' and Slidin'" and "Imagine" with him. [Footage of the event can be found on YouTube by searching "John Lennon Salute to Sir Lew Grade."]

**MD:** Would you say that Lennon gig was your stepping-stone to everything else you've done?

**Vinny:** No, believe it or not. The funny thing was, after those shows and working with John at night, I'd go to school the next day. I would be drumming on the desk while the teacher was trying to teach, and she'd go, "Who's making that

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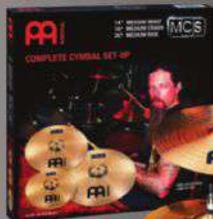


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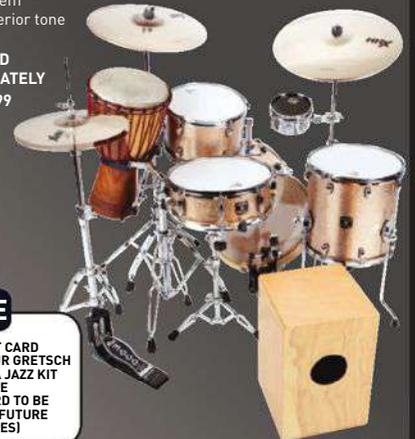
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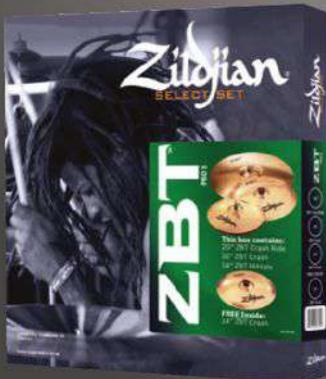
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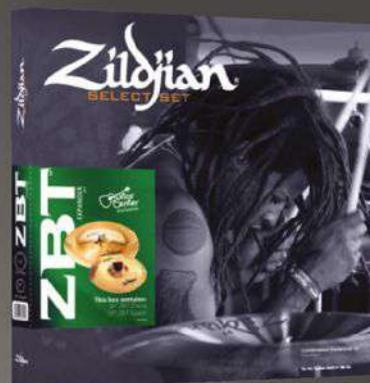
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noise? Vinny, stop that drumming!" And I would stand up and go, "Excuse me, did anybody *else* play with one of the Beatles last night? C'mon!" And the whole class would laugh. But that wasn't really the stepping-stone, because it was just

a one-off thing. I didn't go on tour or make a complete record with John.

I did meet Rick Derringer in the same studio, though. He heard the demos we did with Jimmy and asked, "Who's that?" Jimmy said, "That's Carmine's little brother, Vinny." Oh, man! Then I met Rick at the studio, and he goes, "I like the way you play." He asked for my number, saying he was going to put a band together as soon as he was done with Edgar and Johnny Winter.

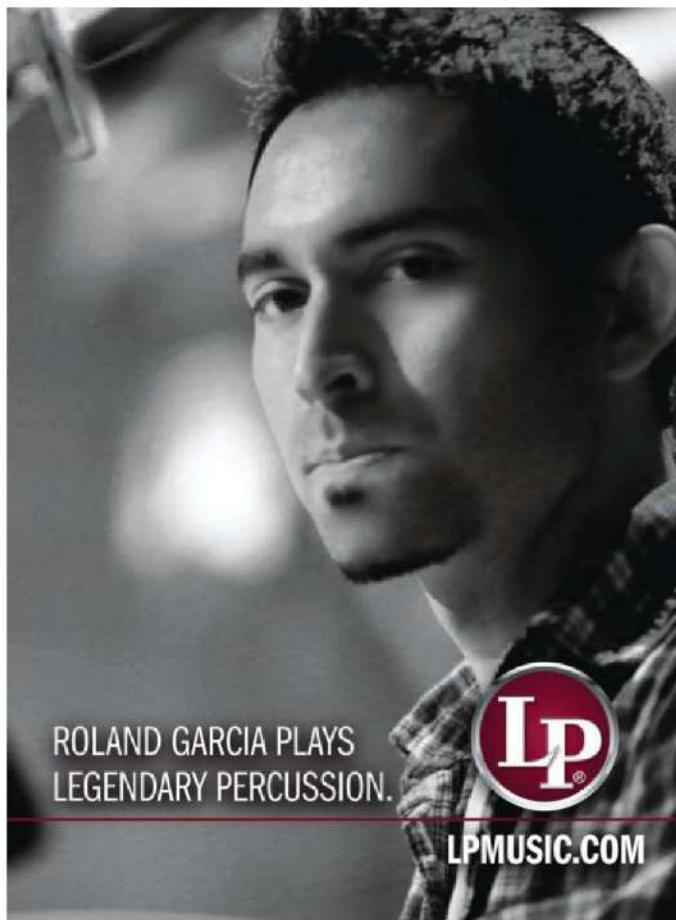
After that, I went out to California and played with a band that Carmine was trying to produce. Then I went to Louisiana to play with a band called Axis. This was like late '75. While I was down there I got a call from my mother, saying that Rick Derringer called. When he called, my mother answered, and when Rick said, "I want to speak to Vinny," she goes, "No, you must want to speak to Carmine." "No, I want to speak to *Vinny*." "No, Carmine's not here right now." Finally she was convinced that he wanted to speak to me. [laughs] On the first tour, we opened for Aerosmith. So it was a good learning experience.

**MD:** Were there any challenges the first time you went on tour?

**Vinny:** I remember the first big arena gig and how the sound was different. Everybody was farther away from me, and I couldn't hear the amps next to me. I remember thinking, *Okay, I have to get used to that.* Those were great learning experiences right there. Rick was like a teacher, and he's still such a great player—such a pro. I was in that band at nineteen, and he was pretty big back then. From then on I just kept my eyes open and tried to learn from everyone.

**MD:** Tell us about your transition from Derringer to Sabbath.

**Vinny:** Derringer lasted about two years, and then I got a call from Sharon Osbourne saying that Ozzy was putting a [solo] band together with Randy Rhoads. I knew Randy from Quiet Riot. At that point I had heard all these stories about Ozzy—



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Check out Vinny and his new band Kill Devil Hill at [killdevilhillmusic.com](http://killdevilhillmusic.com).



## VINNY APPICE

you know, "He's crazy," blah, blah. So I decided to ask Carmine about it.

**MD:** Carmine was playing with Ozzy during the *Bark at the Moon* tour, right?

**Vinny:** This was before that. This was the first thing Ozzy was going to do [after leaving Black Sabbath]. He wanted me to go to England, and I didn't even know where England was. I hadn't really been out of the country yet. Derringer had only played in Canada and the U.S. And Carmine told me, "Yeah, he's pretty crazy," and said he knew Ozzy from the '70s,

when Cactus used to play with Black Sabbath. So I turned it down. I was a kid, man. I was twenty years old at this point.

A couple of months later, though, I got a call from the tour manager for Sabbath. Bill Ward had left the *Heaven and Hell* tour, and they had to cancel a show in Denver. "We heard about you, and we're interested in you coming down to audition for the band." Tony Iommi had heard Axis and liked the drumming. Funny thing was, I wasn't a big Black Sabbath fan or even a Derringer fan. I was a Beatles fan—

which was probably good, because then I just concentrated on doing my job rather than being goo-goo-eyed.

**MD:** You weren't really influenced by the heavier drumming of the time?

**Vinny:** No. I first listened to a Black Sabbath album at a friend's house, and I was like, "That's scary, man," but I didn't like the drum sound. Carmine and Bonham had way bigger sounds. When I met Tony, though, we hit it off. So we went to SIR studios on Sunset Boulevard, where they rehearsed, and the first song we played was "Neon Knights," from *Heaven and Hell*. I'd heard that song on the radio a couple of weeks before and thought, *That new singer, Ronnie James Dio—he's really good*. Incidentally, that's also the last song I played with Ronnie before he passed away. Anyway, we played that song, and they were all happy: "Yeah, we got a drummer!" Ronnie was so happy that they were able to keep the success of the band going.

We only had five days of rehearsal, but every day we'd rehearse a couple of hours and everyone was like, "Let's go to the pub!" I had to learn all these songs that I wasn't really familiar with—especially these old Sabbath songs where the changes are weird. Tempos are changing, there are stops and starts.... I had to write out charts. But we kept going to the pub, and we were running out of time. The first gig was Hawaii, a 30,000-seater at Aloha Stadium.

We'd rehearsed probably two solid days, then we played the show. Ronnie told me that was the first time they ever played with another drummer. They were probably more nervous than I was. But I just went, "The hell with it—whatever happens, happens!" I had my charts—not really serious charts, more like notes: verse, chorus, stop, hang for four beats, that kind of stuff. But then it started raining, blowing water on my book, and after three or four songs all the ink started running, and the charts became useless. So we had to wing the rest of the show, but it turned out great. At the end of that show I signed the book and threw it into the audience.

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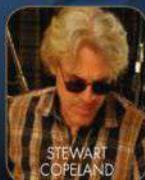
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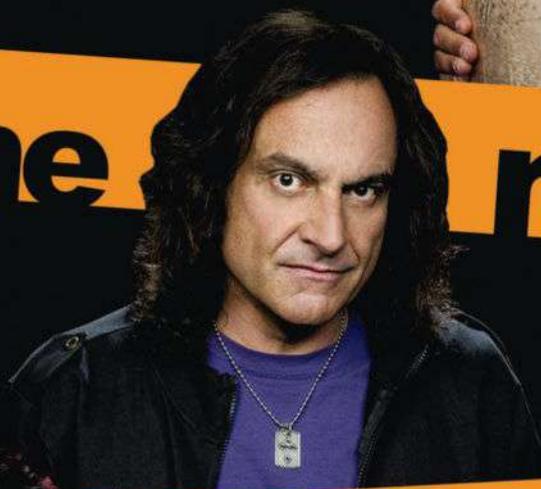
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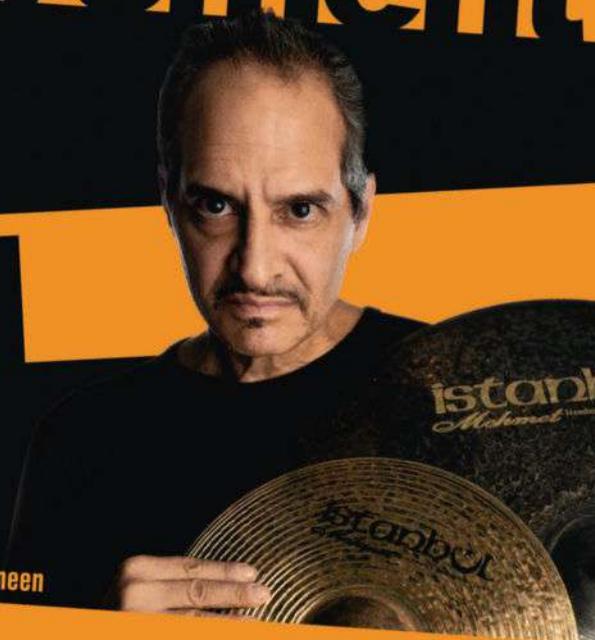


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## VINNY APPICE

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**MD:** Your playing style is very focused and musical. Your drumming has a lot of energy, but you also have the ability to lay back—a not-so-common trait in the world of heavy metal. How did you approach the early Sabbath music? Bill Ward's drumming is manic. It almost sounds like he's not going to come out of his fills on time.

**Vinny:** That's right. I love the way Bill plays, and when you talk to Bill he says, "I'm not a drummer—I'm a percussionist." And that makes sense when you listen to all that old Sabbath stuff. Because he didn't just play 2 and 4; he sometimes played tom rhythms—crazy stuff, kind of like what Keith Moon or even Ringo would do. And I respect that stuff more than anything. Anybody can play 2 and 4 through a song—but somebody who thinks of another part that works, whether it's on toms or bass drums...that's creating music, playing more musically, thinking out of the box. Bill did that. His stuff was crazy, and some of the timings on those records you can't even count, because they just stopped and watched each other and all came in together. I listened to that and went, "Wow."

In the beginning I tried to emulate Bill, but I don't play Bill. I'm more "power and straight ahead." Bill's more melodic and orchestrated. I tried to incorporate both approaches to see how it would fit with Tony and Geez. That's where I learned a little bit more of the laid-back-ness too. Especially from Tony; he's so steady and almost behind the beat, and everything just sits in the pocket. When we played the song "Black Sabbath"—it's really slow, with almost no time to it, and it's supposed to fall apart a little bit—that told me there's no rush to let it get to the next part. You know, we just let it breathe.

**MD:** What about incorporating Bill's fills?

**Vinny:** Some of Bill's fills I definitely had to do—I *wanted* to, because they're an important part of those songs.

**MD:** Was Ronnie always cool with your drumming?

**Vinny:** Ronnie was the man. He was always so cool with the drumming. If you listen to Dio's "We Rock" on the *Last in Line* album, I went nuts. There are a lot of fills going over the vocals, but it doesn't get in the way.

**MD:** When you play longer phrases, it's almost as if you're playing in the cracks of the music. "Holy Diver" is a perfect example of groove and creative fills falling in exactly the right place.

**Vinny:** When I hear a song, it almost becomes part of me. I get inspired, and these things...I just feel them. It comes from my heart and soul, almost like pictures. I never sit there and think, *I need to play a fill there*. It's really weird—where the dynamics should build, where they should come down, it's just inside my soul and kind of comes out.

**MD:** You can play with great simplicity and with great complexity; someone could watch you play a certain song with Dio and not even know you have the chops to do what you do on another song.

**Vinny:** Yeah, right—you can't do it on every song. That's called playing musically. If it's more of a straight-ahead pop song, like Dio's "Rainbow in the Dark," yeah, there are a couple of things in there that you can listen to and say, "That's a cool drum lick." But then if you listen to "We Rock," it's on *fire* with fills and drum-led stuff. The drums are pushing that song. And I get that from having listened to Bonham, Mitch Mitchell,

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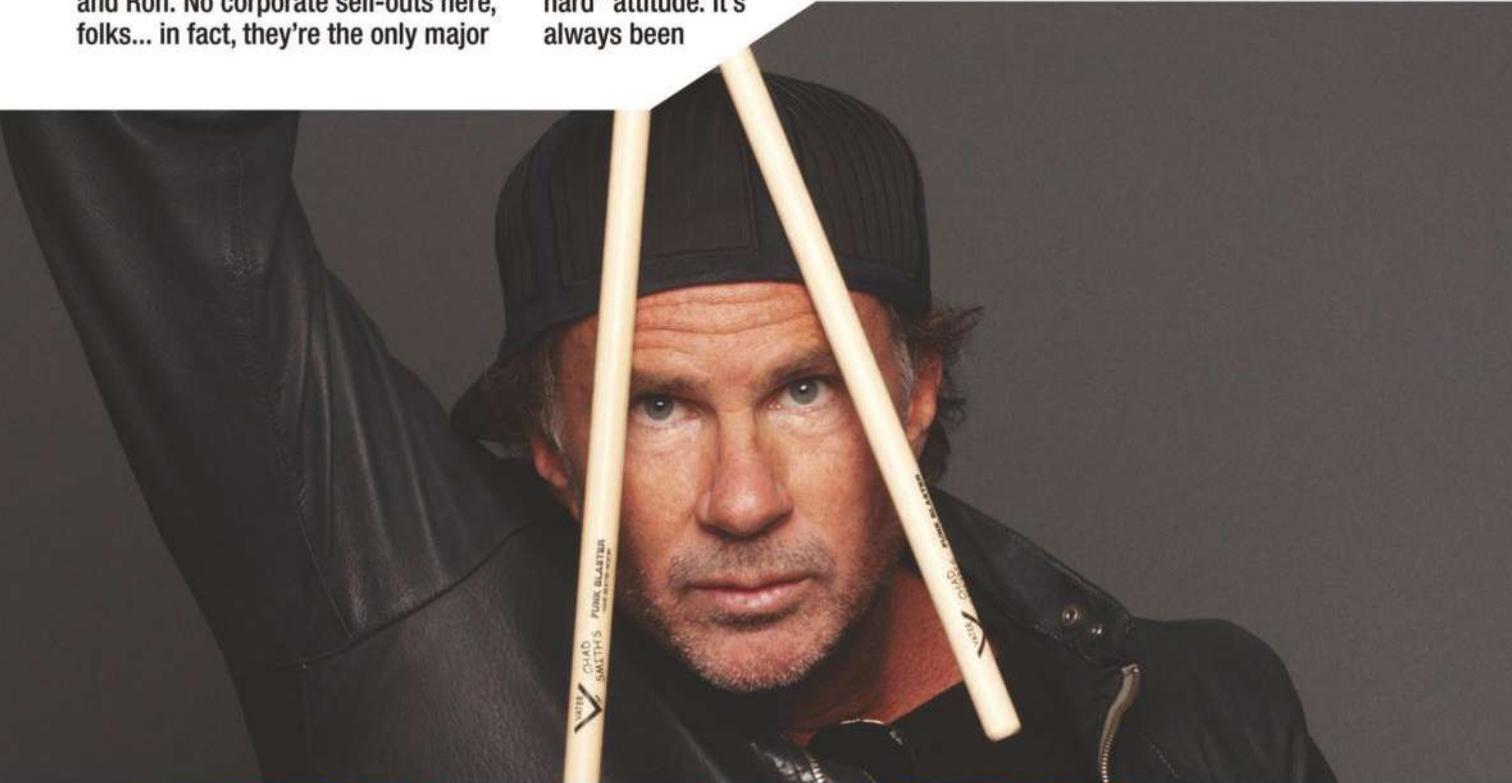
The Vater staff enjoy their work and I enjoy hanging with them whenever I can. They better keep it up, cause I plan to keep playing until the wheels fall off!!!



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## VINNY APPICE

Carmine—those guys didn't play it safe. I remember always backing up the needle to learn the fill.

**MD:** Your timekeeping is solid as a rock too. Did you ever use a click with Dio?

**Vinny:** No, there are no clicks on any Sabbath or Dio records, other than *The Devil You Know* by Heaven & Hell.

There's no click on the Kill Devil Hill record either. We thought we'd go old-school and just pump it up. If it speeds up a little bit at the end, that's okay.

**MD:** There's a signature drum fill of yours, a 16th-note snare/bass drum combination, that appears on "Revenge" by Kill Devil Hill and at the beginning of "King of Rock and Roll," from Dio's *Sacred Heart*. Can you talk about that?

**Vinny:** I base those on what I call "two, four, and sixes": two on the snare, two on the bass drum, four on the snare, two on the bass drum, six on the snare, two on the bass drum. You can put it into the middle of a longer 16th-note fill, and you can end it with four on the bass

drum. It sounds powerful and fast.

On "Revenge" I tried to do more of a Keith Moon fill and spread it across the toms so it would take up the stereo effect; if you listen to that on headphones you'll hear it. "King of Rock and Roll" is two, four, six, four, two, and a flam at the end. We'd open with "King of Rock and Roll," which starts with me doing that fill. It was a challenge some nights to pull that off. Sometimes it sputtered out and sometimes it was great, so it was a lot of pressure.

**MD:** Regarding your hand technique, you seem to hold the sticks pretty far up when you play.

**Vinny:** I don't hold them *too* far up—I'd say about a third of the way up. In my right hand I do hold the stick between my index finger and middle finger, which looks weird. I also play butt-end all the time, even on ballads. And there's no middle of the snare for me—I hit rimshots all the time, which makes for a different, more powerful sound.

**MD:** Did you always play that way?

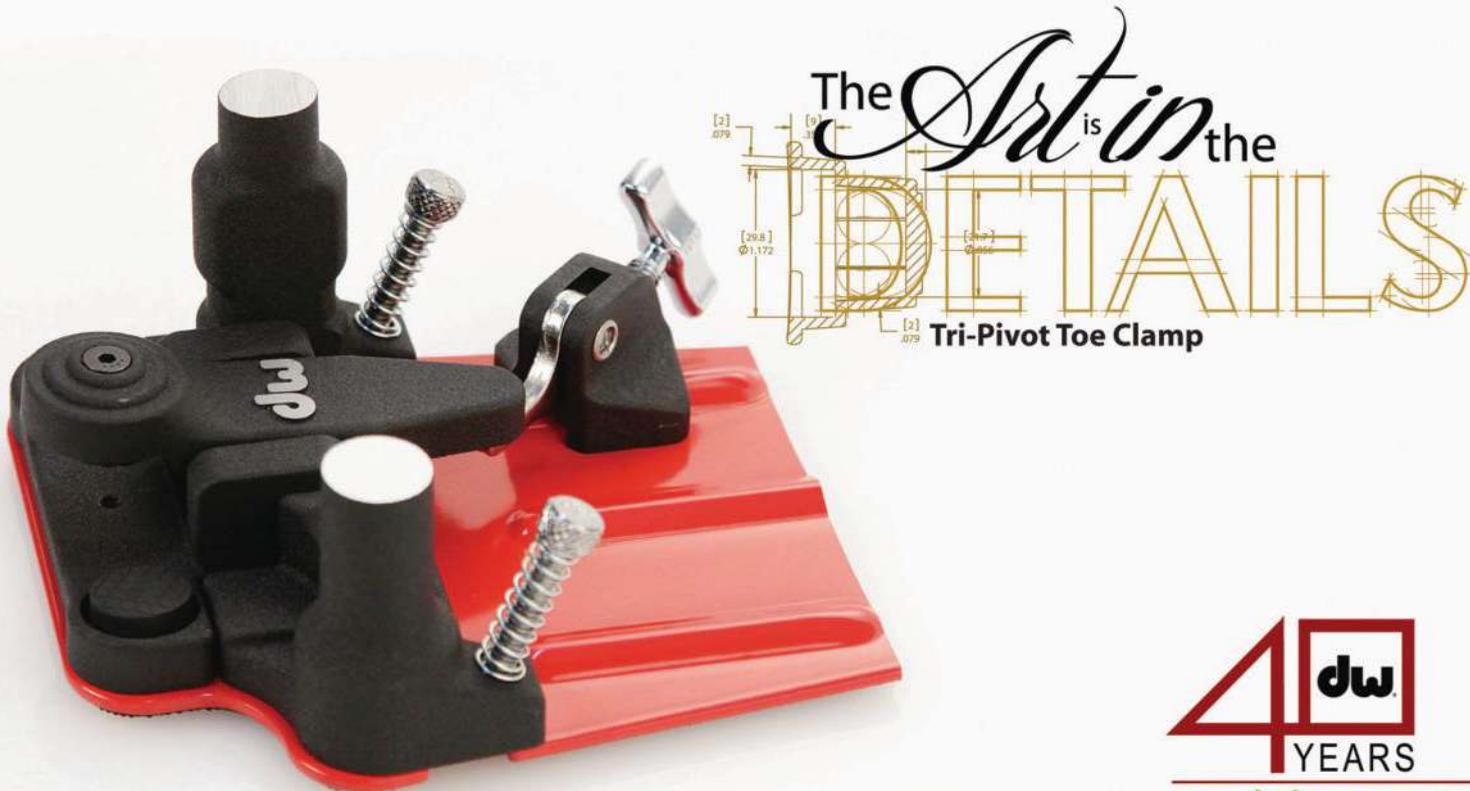
**Vinny:** That happened when I was younger; my tips kept breaking, and Carmine started playing butt-end. To get more distinction off the ride cymbal rather than having it ring uncontrollably, I'll hit it more on the edge of the butt.

**MD:** Tell us more about Kill Devil Hill.

**Vinny:** I've known Rex since '92, when Pantera was on the Black Sabbath *Dehumanizer* tour. I loved the way he played. He reminded me of Geezer—he's just got that clank.

In 2009, on the last Heaven & Hell tour we did, I had a giant drumset with about ten drums that were mounted high up in the air, some of them behind me. So I was playing facing the audience but hitting backwards and up, and eventually my shoulders started killing me. When the tour ended I got an MRI and found out that one of my tendons came off my right shoulder. I was told I needed to get surgery, which was scheduled for January 2010.

Meanwhile, at the end of 2009, a



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## VINNY APPICE

company approached me for some drum tracks [for a sample library]. So I did twelve tracks, three to four minutes long each, with different tempos and different feels. We were going to put them online for people to download.

After I underwent surgery, I was going, "Man, this sucks." It was my right arm, so I couldn't play the drums. But a couple of days later, I was in the little studio in my house, and I put on the drum tracks for the sample library. I thought, *These actually sound killer. Why don't I get [Dio's] Jimmy Bain down here to play bass to them?* So he came down and started messing around with the tracks, while I was engineering with my left hand.

I'd met this guitar player named Mark Zavon, so he came down and put guitar on it. We kept working on the tracks, and the next thing you know, Mark says, "I've got this singer, Dewey Bragg," and he plays me this song that Dewey was on. I go, "That's the guy!" I was being approached about a lot of singers that sounded like Ronnie, but nobody's Ronnie, plus I wanted to

move forward to a different sound.

Eventually it didn't work out with Jimmy, so we tried a couple of other bass players, and then I met [late Pantera guitarist] Dimebag Darrell's missus and she said that Rex was looking for something. So I contacted Rex and played him some of the stuff, and he loved it. When Rex put his bass on it, man, it just came alive.

Then we did a six-week tour across the U.S., just to warm the thing up. That was a trip—some of these places were just really bad. But it got the band so tight. Each night was a different PA—some good, some really bad. Same with the monitors, the stages... But I used a little kit, and we just kicked ass. We're going to go on tour again this summer.

My dream was always to have my own band and play big arenas—making decisions, and having people support it because it's *me*. I'm *totally* thankful for everything I was able to experience with Sabbath and Ronnie James Dio, but I just happened to be doing my job. This is a new challenge. **MD:** Things have changed drastically

since you started playing professionally. What kind of advice would you give to someone entering the music industry today?

**Vinny:** I always believed in myself. And I'm very aggressive—I'm an Italian guy from Brooklyn, you know? Whenever I've gone into a place to play—a club or an audition—I get on the drums, adjust them, tune them a little, then say to myself, *Now I'm gonna make my mark*. Whoever is in the room, whether it's the road crew, the people I'm auditioning for, or the club owner, instead of warming up, I make a statement right there, like, "I...am...here!" That sets the standard—and it works. It's like a cat spraying its territory.

So always play from your heart, from your soul, and believe in what you're doing. That way, even if you don't quite make it to where you want to go, you can say, "I gave it everything I had, and I'm proud of it." Put 110 percent into everything you do. And *never* let anyone see you play badly.



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by Michael Parillo





**O**n a dark night at the Village Vanguard, the audience snakes slowly down the long staircase and settles in at tiny tables, squeezed together nice and tight. In such close quarters, strangers exchange greetings, knees bumping. Soon the house lights go down and the stage lights come up, the back curtain casting a lush red glow on the Gretsch kit out front. Along with his bandmates for the week, Paul Motian—bald with tinted glasses, lithe, stylish, *cool*—weaves his way from the green room through the cheering crowd, with all eyes on him, and eventually reaches the stage. As the applause dies down, a hushed sense of anticipation takes its place. The Motian veterans in the house practically feel uneasy. *What's going to happen? What will it sound like tonight?* No one knows.

With the occasional shoveling of ice by the bartender in the back now providing the only sound in the room, Motian picks up his sticks and glances at his comrades. Then he extends his right arm, and—clang!—he hits a cymbal, once, with authority, shattering the silence. Starting to create a loosely knit web of rhythm, he plays a brief, wide-open roll on the snare and brings the hi-hats together a few times with his left foot. The nervous energy at the tables deflates a bit; the magic is beginning. The other players join in, and they're off. The spell won't be broken for around seventy-five minutes, when the band takes a bow.

Great drummers play at the venerable Vanguard every month, but in recent years the shabby-chic basement room was Motian's turf. Starting in the mid-2000s, Motian, who passed away this past November 22 at age eighty, figured out a way to maintain a productive career without leaving Manhattan, and the Vanguard was the venue that hosted him and his varied groups most often. The drummer and composer made serious music, but the little club on Seventh Avenue South was his playground for fifty years.

#### BEGINNINGS

Stephen Paul Motian was born in Philadelphia on March 25, 1931, to Armenian parents and grew up in Providence, Rhode Island. In a 2005 *MD* interview with Burt Korall, Paul offered insight into the Middle Eastern-sounding themes in many of his compositions by saying, "As a kid, Arabic- and Turkish-derived melodies and rhythms got me dancing around the parlor."

Taking up the drums in earnest around age twelve after a brief fling with the guitar, Motian found his life's work. After high school, he played in the U.S. Navy band; he was sta-

tioned at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1953 and '54, studying with the famed Radio City Music Hall percussionist Billy Gladstone, among other teachers. Bebop pioneer Kenny Clarke, whom Motian often credited with inspiring his wonderfully sensitive brush playing, was a major influence around this time, as was Max Roach. Once Motian got out of the service he moved to Manhattan's East Village.

Just as jazz was really blossoming in the '50s, so too was Motian's drumming, as Paul played tirelessly and made his first significant recordings in the middle of the decade. He gigged briefly with pianist Thelonious Monk, whose tunes he would later cover frequently—and whose angular presence seems to lurk in the background of some of his own compositions. And then he joined forces with pianist Bill Evans.

**"He never settled into a safe zone,"** guitarist Bill Frisell says. **"He was always reaching for something he'd never played before."**

Evans' groundbreaking trio, which also featured bassist Scott LaFaro, remains one of the most heralded units in jazz history. Rather than supporting Evans as subordinates, Motian and LaFaro blended with the pianist as equals, nurturing a fresh style that was rooted in tradition but branched out into new modes of improvisational interplay. Motian said his favorite album with this group was *Portrait in Jazz*, a studio session released in 1960, which he preferred to the more famous—and more understated—live recording from 1961, *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*. (A second album from the same June 25 date at the Vanguard, *Waltz for Debby*, was released in 1961, and a three-CD box set, *The Complete Village Vanguard Recordings, 1961*, was issued in 2005.) Tragically, LaFaro was gone mere days after the legendary performance, killed in a car accident on July 6, 1961, at just twenty-five. Motian remained with Evans until 1964, when he quit and went home in the middle of a tour. By then, Paul told *MD* in 2005, "We played so softly, we were hardly moving."

"That original trio made such an indelible mark on the jazz world and trio culture," says bassist Eddie Gomez, who played with Evans for eleven years starting in 1966 and joins Motian and keyboardist Chick Corea on the new double-disc Evans tribute *Further Explorations*, which was recorded over two weeks in May 2010 at the Blue Note in Manhattan. "Bill chose the musicians for the kind of interactive play that Scott and Paul

developed. Scott and Paul were very contemporary in the sense that they were looking to expand the music back then, in the '60s. Miles's band was exploring that too, in a different way, with Herbie Hancock, Tony Williams, and Ron Carter. Those bands were opening up the language of trio playing."

In the mid-'60s Motian worked with pianists Paul and Carla Bley and with saxophonist Albert Ayler, before joining another far-reaching trio, this time with pianist Keith Jarrett, who was just bursting onto the scene, and bassist Charlie Haden, who'd been in saxophonist Ornette Coleman's band. This group made many recordings, including Jarrett's debut as a leader, *Life Between the Exit Signs* (1967). Motian pointed to Jarrett's *The Survivors' Suite* (1976), which augmented the trio with saxman Dewey Redman, as his favorite album by the unit. Starting in the late '60s, Motian and Jarrett also spent time in sax/flute player Charles Lloyd's group. And Paul famously backed Arlo Guthrie at Woodstock in 1969.

As the '70s dawned, the always feisty drummer took up a new challenge and began his parallel career as a composer and bandleader.

## BRANCHING OUT

Motian did his writing on the piano—and his first set of keys was most likely a charmed one, as he bought it from Keith Jarrett. Motian's 1972 debut as a leader, *Conception Vessel*, kicked off a fruitful, albeit interrupted, association with the ECM label and features Jarrett and Haden, plus Becky Friend on flute, Leroy Jenkins on violin, and Sam Brown on guitar. Notice the presence of the guitar, an instrument that would continue to take on heavy significance in Motian's musical endeavors.

For his 1982 release, *Psalm*, Motian was joined by Ed Schuller on bass and Billy Drewes on sax, plus two men around twenty years his junior who would be counted among his very closest musical accomplices for the rest of his life: saxophonist Joe Lovano and guitarist Bill Frisell. "I was a huge fan of Paul's," Frisell says. "The day he first called me, it was a complete surprise that he would ask me to come over and play. I had his *Conception Vessel* album sitting there facing me on the floor, and the phone rings and he says, 'Hi, this is Paul Motian....' I just about had a heart attack. We played together ever since. It's just gigantic, the importance of him in my life—even if I hadn't played with him."

For a drummer who made a habit of flouting expectations, Motian was per-



John Rogers



Agostino Mela

Motian and Bill Frisell in Cagliari, Italy, July 1986

haps at his most unpredictable with Frisell and Lovano. The trio's recorded output runs the gamut from beautiful ballads to dreamy cloud-watching soundscapes to flaming barn burners, all heightened by sharp listening and a unified sense of melody among the bandmates—as well as by a rare ability to ditch the past and live in the moment.

"Paul made me feel like I was discovering everything I was playing for the first time," Frisell says. "He was allowing me to be myself, and I could just go full force, as far as my imagination could go. I credit him with giving me the confidence and the experience of really finding my own voice.

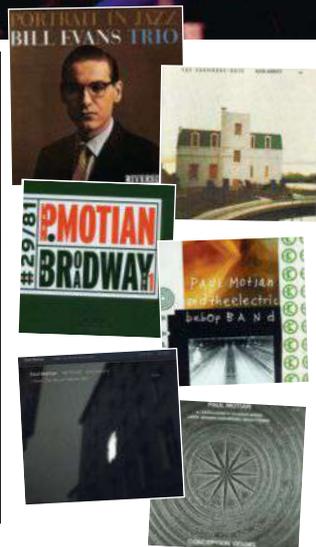
"I'm playing with him and I think, *Wow, I just had this great idea*," Frisell continues, "but then I realize later that there was a lot of telepathy stuff going on, almost like he was transmitting his ideas into me. Like we'd be on a train somewhere, and I would be singing some song in my head that we had played the night before, and then he would start singing it right at the exact same moment, at the same point,

in the same key. You just get into a zone of being connected in this amazing way."

The Motian/Frisell/Lovano trio played all over the world, always coming home to the Vanguard for at least a couple of weeks a year. Its discography, sometimes with special guests, includes *Monk in Motian* (1988), three volumes of *On Broadway* (1989, 1993), *Motian in Tokyo* (1991), *Trioism* (1994), *At the Village Vanguard* (1995), *I Have the Room Above Her* (2005), and *Time and Time Again* (2007).

## DEEPER AND DEEPER

By the '90s Motian had enjoyed a long career and was already something of an elder statesman, even if the word *elder* never quite fit him. He was free to mix in his pieces with time-honored standards that could either be deconstructed or served straight up—whatever he felt at that moment. "I'm into *me* now," he told Ken Micallef in a 1994 *MD* interview, after being told that he sounds like no one else. "That's what I play. I don't give a shit if it's this or that or whatever. I'm just



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## PAUL MOTIAN

playing from what I'm hearing and turning myself on and getting myself from myself!" Motian laughed, but it's clear he wasn't joking.

As for the drummer's compositions, Frisell says, "He would sometimes write very specific harmony—real dense, unusual harmonies—but there were also ones that were super-open, where I could make up my own stuff. Some songs are maybe just a major scale, and then others are sort of odd, chromatic, 'puzzle' things. There was a lot of variety in the stuff he wrote, and it always sounded like him somehow."

Motian performed with so many combos in his last two decades that it's hard to make sense of it all. In 1993 he released

*Paul Motian & the Electric Bebop Band*, an album of standards featuring two guitarists, Kurt Rosenwinkel and Brad Shepik. In the lineage of packs of young lions led by big-cat drummers, which includes Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and Elvin Jones's Jazz Machine, the Electric Bebop Band was something of a training camp for emerging musicians with a searching soul (although in this case the leader was neither the largest member of the pride nor the one with the biggest mane). In recent years the group changed its name to the Paul Motian Band. Its very fine last album, the stylistically and dynamically varied 2006 set *Garden of Eden*, features Chris Cheek and Tony Malaby on sax, Jerome Harris on bass, and Ben Monder, Steve

Cardenas, and Jakob Bro on guitar.

Fittingly, much of Motian's last great work was done in trios, and his final week of gigs, in September 2011, was at the Vanguard with saxophonist Greg Osby and pianist Masabumi Kikuchi. Paul's 2010 album, *Lost in a Dream*, which earned a perfect five stars from *Modern Drummer*, finds the drummer on stage—at the Vanguard, of course—with pianist Jason Moran and saxophonist Chris Potter, playing mostly ballads. And this year's aforementioned *Further Explorations*, with Chick Corea and Eddie Gomez, is the ideal document of late-era Motian accompaniment.

"Paul had an almost orchestral-percussion-section sound," Gomez says. "And his sound is his. It's like composing all the time, the way he plays—and it's also improvised. I've always loved approaching music so that it breathes and has the components that make it sing, dance, and touch your heart. And Paul has all that. He makes the music just kind of vibrate. He's very subtle, and he also has all that energy and swing that you want." *Further Explorations'* opening number, Bill Evans' "Peri's Scope" (first heard on *Portrait in Jazz*), offers a prime example of Motian's straight-ahead swinging, with a crisp hi-hat shuffle and singing ride cymbal work, plus crafty little solo breaks.

Speaking of soloing, like everything else Motian did it his way. He sometimes mentioned a dislike of drum solos, yet it wasn't as if his arm needed to be twisted to get him to play a few choruses by himself. Besides, he was so skilled and creative—not to mention so musical, keeping the form and melody alive—that he always found something compelling to say during his brief showcases. Listen to the *Lost in a Dream* reading of his haunting tune "Abacus." After the sax and piano take turns stating the melody, Motian downshifts into a solo. He takes his time developing his ideas, as always, slowly building on his own minimal foundation. He begins with a cymbal, some bass drum, and a bit of hi-hat, and starts adding his throaty snare and rumbling, deep-voiced toms, getting contrast by playing on the rims as well. Over the course of around three minutes, he allows his sound to grow until he's whipping up a frenzy, like a storm starting far off at sea and building force as it crashes to shore. Just at the high point, he hits a resounding accent, and his mates reenter for one last triumphant pass through the melody, with Motian still rolling and tumbling around the kit. It's a deep, spine-tingling solo that tells a story—in the way that only Motian's drums can.

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The advertisement features a large, high-quality image of a Sabian 22" Artisan Medium Ride cymbal in the foreground. In the background, there are two smaller images: one of Billy Cobham in a white shirt and glasses, and another of Miles Davis in a white shirt. The overall aesthetic is professional and artistic, with a focus on the cymbal's texture and the musicians' association with it.

## HONORING THE MUSE

Motian often talked about being an accidentalist, saying he just let things *happen* in the music, without discussion or forethought. "He was always on the edge," Bill Frisell says. "I think that's why we were able to play so long and it always felt new. He never settled into a safe zone—he was always reaching for something he'd never played before."

Part of the reason why Motian was so successful at subverting expectations and demolishing any clichéd concept of what "the jazz drummer" should be is because he had a firm grasp of tradition; he possessed the ability to follow any rule that he might also gleefully break. Paul could come at you with a style that challenged your idea of traditional timekeeping, but it's equally true that he could lay it down simply and solidly with the best of 'em. He often blended both approaches within a piece, showing that traditional and avant-garde jazz simply represent points along a continuum.

"Some people say he didn't play time, or something," Frisell says. "That's absurd. He had the deepest beat of anyone I ever played with. Some of the stuff I read about him, they talk about how he's 'abstract,' or this or that, but they miss

that he did play with Oscar Pettiford and Coleman Hawkins. That's all in there. I think they have to listen a little harder."

"I think Paul is one of the grand artists of the twentieth century, certainly on the instrument," Eddie Gomez says. "But I don't know that he gets enough credit. I think his art makes him less accessible to others. If you only like to hear a kind of playing that's driven either by technique or by certain stylistic ways, Paul isn't going to come up on your radar, because he's so understated and artistic and special. He heard music in a different way and opened up all kinds of possibilities."

Motian would probably just blow off the subject of "in" versus "out," straight up versus abstract, with a wave of his hand. "I believe that 'time' is always there," he told Scott Kevin Fish in a 1980 *MD* interview. "I don't mean a particular pulse, but the time itself. It's like a huge sign that's up there and it says *time*. It's there and you can play all around it."

## THE MAN HIMSELF

"Paul was a lot of fun to be around," Gomez says of his weeks spent with Motian at the Blue Note playing the Bill Evans-inspired material that comprises *Further Explorations*. "Honestly I had no

idea he was ill. He seemed so perfectly healthy and full of life, and he played that way. We got a chance to hang out and kid around a lot and talk about older times. He was a great spirit."

After spending thirty-plus years making music with Motian, Frisell offers rare insight into a man who could seem a bit prickly to the outside world but who also often wore a wide smile. "He was protective of his own space," the guitarist says. "He lived alone, and his whole life was about music. He just wanted to stay in the music, I think. He was super-sensitive, and sometimes people like that have to put up a little bit of a barrier, just to keep themselves from getting trampled on. But he was so generous with people too, and if he let you in, he *really* let you in."

When Frisell is asked about Motian's sense of humor, he responds, "Paul had this real intense thing, but I was looking at a bunch of old pictures, and there are millions of 'em where he's just laughing and laughing. He always tried to lift things up. He wouldn't stay down in some dark place for long. He had that effect on people, and certainly on the music. It was very serious and it was never a joke, but there was joy in it."



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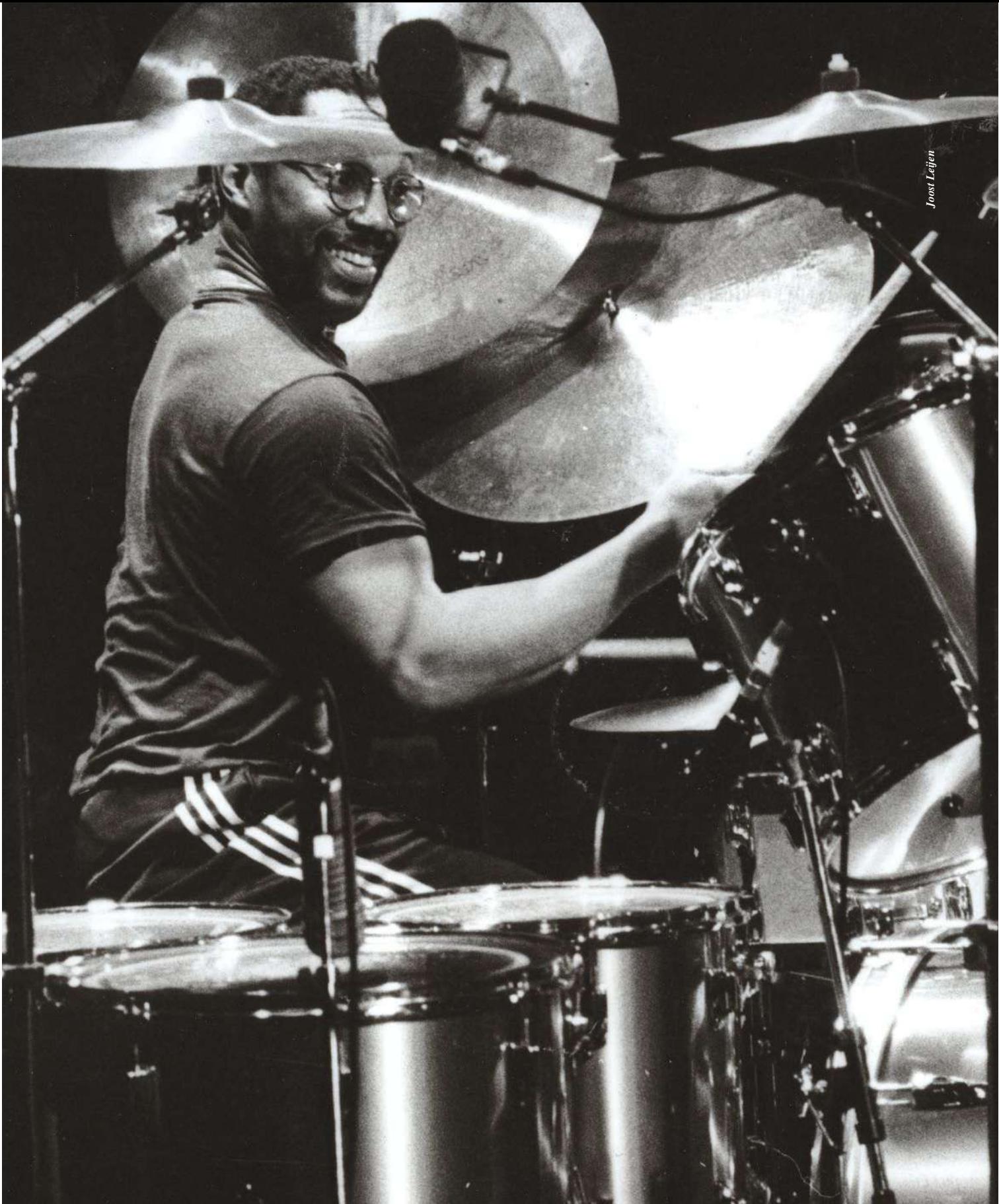
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Joost Leijten

# BILLY COBHAM: The Power Player

**Billy Cobham is widely regarded as the premier drummer of jazz-rock fusion's golden era—and he remains a dynamic and revered player to this day. Whether it's his astoundingly intense and dense work on Mahavishnu Orchestra tunes like "One Word," his heavily sampled and widely covered solo track "Stratus," or his earlier studio output with giants of jazz and R&B including George Benson, Miles Davis, James Brown, and John McLaughlin, Cobham's innovation, flexibility, and inner drive serve as examples of drumming drama and imagination that players still aspire to today.**

Cobham was born in Panama in 1944 and moved with his family to New York City when he was three. In his teenage years, he developed his profound snare drum technique as a member of St. Catherine's Queensmen, a prominent drum and bugle corps. Cobham attended the High School of Music & Art, then served as a percussionist in the U.S. Army band. After leaving the military, he became a first-call session drummer, working with Horace Silver, Stanley Turrentine, and George Benson, among others. Cobham also recorded a number of seminal Miles Davis albums, including *Live-Evil*, *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, and *On the Corner*. Even on these early recordings, the Cobham trademarks are present: an angular feel that implies an almost cubist rock sensibility within jazz rhythms, incredibly graceful yet powerful snare drum punctuations, and a devilishly determined pulse.

These qualities would be maximized in the innovative Mahavishnu Orchestra, founded by guitarist John McLaughlin and featuring the brilliant ensemble of Cobham, bassist Rick Laird, keyboardist Jan Hammer, and violinist Jerry Goodman. Combining the velocity and complexity of Indian rhythms with the aggression of heavy metal, Mahavishnu performed with nearly unfathomable improvisational skills, setting a new bar for musicians of virtually every genre.

Assailing his clear double bass Fibes drumset with earth-flattening single-stroke tom rolls, aggressive rudimental snare figures, and complex odd-meter rhythms, Cobham brought a heretofore-unknown power to the instrument. Mahavishnu's 1971 release, *The Inner Mounting Flame*, established Cobham as a new force in the drumming world. Playing spectacular linear patterns against agitated full-set orchestrations, Cobham stuns, track after track. On the opener, "Meeting of the Spirits," he astounds with multilayered tom fills and a dancing 3/4 rhythm. But as "Dawn," the album's next track, proves, Cobham could also play with great sensitivity and subtlety, performing a mellow rock groove closer to Jim Keltner than to

Terry Bozzio. *The Inner Mounting Flame* also features the turbulent samba-on-steroids metal of "The Noonward Race" and the completely in-your-face "Vital Transformation."

A series of atmospheric gong peals signals the self-titled opening track of Mahavishnu's second release, 1973's *Birds of Fire*, which is enlivened by Cobham's floating pulse and Hammer's ethereal electric piano. Supporting McLaughlin's howling guitar solo, Cobham creates a unique space somewhere between Indian chant hypnosis and free-jazz exploration. Other *Birds of Fire* highlights include the tom-bursting rolls and rumbling bass drum patterns of "Celestial Terrestrial Commuters" and the intense buzz-to-double-stroke roll that introduces "One Word," one of the greatest tracks in the band's discography. Fired by blistering ensemble figures and Cobham's head-demolishing fills, the tune settles into an agitated groove that builds in intensity, rising to additional unison figures, solos, and even greater dynamic shifts. "Open Country Joy" recalls a rustic rural jaunt until Cobham and McLaughlin rip a blazing 16th-note unison figure that leads into intense guitar, violin, and keyboard solos.

*Between Nothingness and Eternity*, from 1973, documents a live Mahavishnu performance in Manhattan's Central Park. Free from studio constraints, the album reveals the band's amazing telepathy—and

Cobham's profound stamina and power—over three long tracks.

Cobham's solo debut, *Spectrum*, confirms not only Billy's great drumming originality but also his distinctive compositional flair. Featuring Jan Hammer, Deep Purple guitarist Tommy Bolin, and bassist Lee Sklar, *Spectrum* remains one of the most enduring albums of the fusion canon. Cobham's knotty patterns pop like firecrackers, while sticking flurries erupt with primal ferocity. Alternately, the drummer's delicate touch enlightens "Spectrum" and "Le Lis," while "Taurian Matador" and "Quadrant 4" are raging improv vehicles, with Bolin and Hammer trading exhilarating fours as Cobham drives the music to feverish heights.

After *Spectrum*, Cobham enjoyed growing popularity as a bandleader, and he released two adventurous albums in 1974, *Crosswinds* and *Solar Eclipse*. "Live" on *Tour in Europe*, from 1976, captures the amazing Billy Cobham–George Duke Band, which included bassist Alphonso Johnson and the then-unknown guitarist John Scofield.

While still possessing remarkable drumming abilities, Cobham was drawn to more commercial fare in the late '70s and '80s, seemingly determined to shake off the fusion tag. He continued to perform in challenging situations, however, including Jazz Is Dead's 1998 recording, *Blue Light Rain*, and his own later solo releases *Paradox*, *The Art of Three*, and *Drum 'n' Voice*. Cobham's excellent *Palindrome*, from 2010, reminded fans why the drummer caused such a fuss in the first place. And *The Lost Trident Sessions*, an album documenting the original Mahavishnu Orchestra's final days, was released in 1999, confirming that lineup's ferocity, group telepathy, and influence on subsequent generations of fusion musicians.

**Ken Micallef**

"Billy Cobham is an extremely melodic and rhythmic drummer, not just a great timekeeper and technician," says 2012 *MD* Pro Panelist Terri Lyne Carrington. "His ability to make the drumset groove while playing interesting figures makes him one of the most musical drummers of his time. His solid background in more traditional jazz is an important factor in his greatness as well. And his sense of freedom inside uncompromising groove sets him apart. Love him."





# Get Up!

## Strategies for Playing Fast and Staying Relaxed

by Steve Fidyk



**MUSIC KEY**

- R.C. — x
- S.D. — ●
- B.D. — x
- H.H. — x
- w/foot — x

It's widely understood that the faster the tempo, the more relaxed your body needs to be. In some cases, however, players psych themselves out when playing fast, which in turn affects their confidence in

the ability to compose beat and solo ideas that flow. This month's Jazz Drummer's Workshop provides relaxation strategies for playing tempos in excess of 300 bpm.

### THE PHYSICS OF IT ALL

Newton's third law of motion explains that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. For example, when one object (a stick) pushes against another (a drum or cymbal), the object rebounds back in the opposite direction with equal force.

Try this exercise. Sit comfortably behind your ride cymbal with your upper arm hanging naturally to your side. Bring the head of the stick to the "up" position where it's ready to strike. Throw your stick (make a loose, flowing stroke), and allow it to rebound freely out of the fulcrum and back to the original starting position. Continue this drill, accepting each rebound as you develop your wrist reflexes to follow the stick back up without inhibiting it. Note that the faster you throw the stick downward, the more intense the sound and rebound off the ride cymbal become.

Realize that the driving force for each stroke comes from a combination of forearm, wrist, and finger action. In order to control fast tempos, it's vital to stay relaxed and allow your sticks to rebound naturally.

### RELAXATION WARM-UPS

Below are four ride cymbal patterns to practice at fast tempos. Each example contains five notes per measure (which is one fewer than the standard jazz ride beat). Omitting one note per measure helps provide rest and recovery time for your wrist, forearms, and fingers at faster rates. Practice these in front of a mirror to ensure that your form remains loose and flowing as the tempo increases.

♩ = 280+

1

### EIGHT-MEASURE PHRASES

Once you have control of each single-measure example, try putting them together as an eight-measure phrase.

♩ = 280+

2

Experiment with the phrase above by reordering the measures. The example below is written in retrograde (backward) motion when compared with the original.

♩ = 280+

3

### JAKE'S BEAT

Several years ago, I had a conversation about up-tempo playing with Jake Hanna, who worked with Woody Herman's big band in the 1960s. The Herman band was famous for playing fast, and Hanna explained that they developed the ability to perform these tempos gradually and as a unit. "Our lead trumpet player, Bill Chase, would ask me how fast I could play the arrangement," Jake explained. "I said that I could play it this fast for four measures, this fast for a chorus, and this fast for the entire night. At first we opted for the third tempo, gradually building it up until we could play the arrangement at the tempo that at first we could only play for four measures."

Here's the pattern Hanna uses on the Woody Herman

arrangement of "Caldonia," from the live recording *Encore*. (The track also appears on the more widely available Verve compilation *Jazz Masters 54*.) Notice how Jake releases physical tension by substituting a rimclick for the ride on beat 2.

♩ = 392+

4

### MAX ATTACK

Another up-tempo master was the jazz innovator Max Roach. His playing on saxophonist Charlie Parker's box set *The Complete Dial Sessions* is a great model for how to handle the scorching pace of bebop. Roach's beats have a relaxed feeling, and his pattern of choice is a left-hand-lead double-stroke roll broken up between the snare and ride cymbal.

♩ = 300+

5

For a variation, try inverting Max's pattern.

♩ = 300+

6

### PARADIDDLE VARIATIONS

Another great rhythm to utilize for tension release is the paradiddle-diddle. As you practice the phrases below, focus on blending your upper and lower appendages dynamically, which can help the flow and consistency of each idea.

♩ = 280+

7

Here's the same phrase starting on the "&" of beat 1.

♩ = 280+

8

To change things up, try inserting a single paradiddle between each paradiddle-diddle sticking. This gives you a 5/4 phrase over the 4/4 time signature.

♩ = 280+

9

An interesting variation on the paradiddle-diddle idea, used by Vanguard Orchestra drummer John Riley, involves lopping off the last note of the sticking to create a 5/8 motif over the 4/4 time signature.

♩ = 280+

10

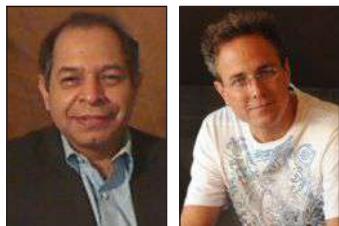
## ESSENTIAL UP-TEMPO LISTENING

"Lover Come Back to Me," *Off to the Races*, Donald Byrd with Art Taylor on drums (330 bpm) /// "One for Mort," *The Blues Book*, Booker Ervin with Alan Dawson (332 bpm) /// "Daahoud," *The Trio Live From Chicago*, Oscar Peterson with Ed Thigpen (352 bpm) /// "Caldonia," *Verve Jazz Masters 54*, Woody Herman with Jake Hanna (368 bpm) /// "Cherokee," *At the Prelude*, Red Garland Trio with Charles "Specs" Wright (376 bpm) /// "Tanga," *Don't Get Sassy*, Ray Brown Trio with Jeff Hamilton (376 bpm) /// "Bebop," *The Arrival of Victor Feldman*, Victor Feldman with Stan Levy (400 bpm) /// "Playmate," *The Place to Be*, Benny Green with Kenny Washington (412 bpm)



**Steve Fidyk** co-leads the Taylor/Fidyk Big Band (with arranger Mark Taylor), freelances with vocalist Maureen McGovern, and is a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. Fidyk is the author of several instructional books. His latest, *Big Band Drumming at First Sight*, is available through Alfred Publishing.





# The Spivack/Wilson Approach to Technique

## Part 4: Advanced Concepts

by Richard Martinez and Kevin Crabb

As you've seen throughout this series of articles, technique is built on learning a series of small, progressive steps that become more and more complex. First we discussed how to hold the sticks and how to make the basic wrist-turn stroke. Then we presented a common language to describe drumming technique using a lever system (force, resistance, lever arm, and fulcrum).

Using those principles, we presented Murray Spivack's seven basic strokes, which we then applied to the rolls and various rudiments. We showed how different strokes can be taught sequentially, in what Spivack called continuity and Richard Wilson referred to as chronological order. As Spivack explained, "It makes the whole thing much simpler, because one stroke leads you into the next, so they don't get anywhere near as complicated as you would imagine. It's a much simpler way to understand what's going on."

Continuing in our order of development, in this final article we're going to present a few advanced techniques.

### WILSON'S THROW

Wilson and Spivack approached the throw (stroke) a bit differently. Though this is not exactly an advanced technique, applying Wilson's method will be useful for some of the material in this article. You can also apply it to what we discussed in the previous installments.

Here's how to execute Wilson's throw. Starting with the stick parallel to the drum and the bead about 1" from the surface, turn your wrist down and—without letting the bead touch the drumhead—allow the wrist to leverage the arm up and the elbow out. Then cock up the wrist and throw the stick toward the head.

The differences in approach between Wilson and Spivack include:

1. The type of force used to initiate the throw. For Wilson, the force is muscular, while Spivack used gravity (or release) to create force.

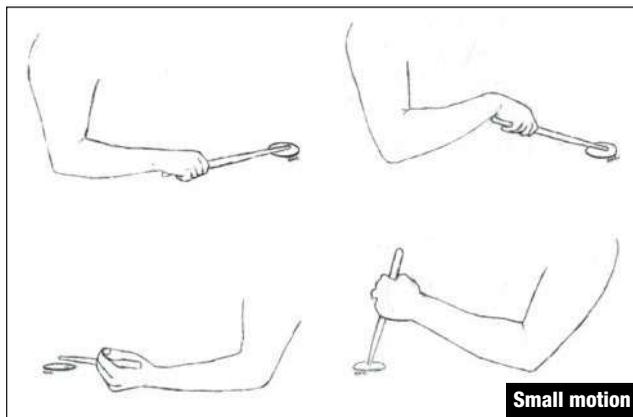
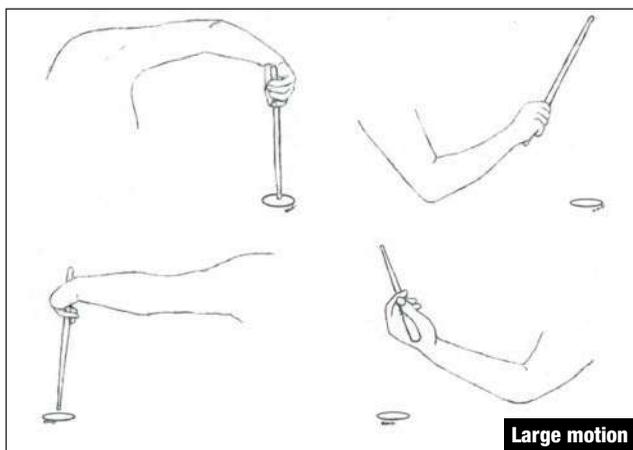
2. The distance you continue to turn the wrist (pronation) before cocking the stick back to throw. Whereas Spivack would bend the wrist and quickly cock the stick, Wilson would continue to turn down the wrist until maximum pronation was achieved. Note that in both cases the elbow or upper arm moves outward from the body.

To help you feel the "up" motion in Wilson's method, try holding one stick parallel to the playing surface. With the other hand, place your index finger in front of the bead. Imagine that where the stick meets the finger is a fixed

point. As you turn your wrist down and its angle changes, the fixed point remains consistent until you cock back the stick.

The top illustration below is a view of the motion in its largest form. Ultimately the motion can become tiny or, as Wilson described, like a little flick of the wrist (bottom illustration).

Remember that the throw is motivated by the wrist.



### HALF THE EFFORT, TWICE THE SPEED

The three techniques we'll discuss next (one up/one down, two up/two down, and bouncing the wrist on the upstroke) are methods where you can play with half the effort but twice the speed.

### ONE UP/ONE DOWN

For this technique we're looking to play unaccented, continuous notes. There are two ways to approach this:

1. Allow the stick to fall to the surface from parallel (force equals gravity or release), followed by a very slight throw.

It's like a single stroke—as described in part one of this series—without the accent.

2. Turn the wrist using Wilson's throw (force equals muscular effort) from parallel to the surface. Much like playing a single stroke, when you turn the wrist, the wrist begins to go up. This time, however, you're not going to throw the stick; you're going to turn down the wrist to strike. This is like a single stroke, except you don't cock the wrist.

Note: It's important that the downward force is equal to the upward force, because force in this case equals volume.

### TWO UP/TWO DOWN

Playing "two up/two down" is very much like playing "one up/one down" except that we allow the stick to rebound to achieve two notes on the way up and two notes on the way down.

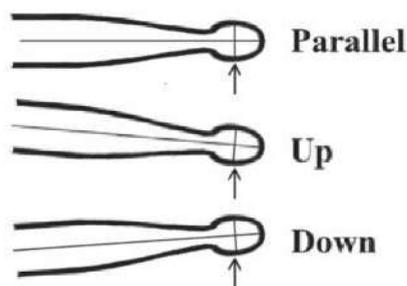
Allow the stick to fall to the surface from parallel (force equals gravity or release) and rebound for two notes. Then execute a very slight throw that rebounds for two notes.

Turn the wrist from parallel, as in Wilson's throw (force equals muscular effort), and let it rebound for two notes to a down position. This is like a single stroke, except you don't cock the wrist.

To make "two up/two down" sound as smooth as possible, consider the timing of the motion and the rebounds. The notes must be properly spaced as you move up and down. The combination of the motion and the rebounds can be thought of as a wave.



One way to get a feel for "one up/one down" and "two up/two down" is to consider the motion of the bead of the stick (see illustration). When you play these motions, you want to think of striking the surface with the middle part of the bead, although you're actually playing slightly off-center.



### BOUNCING THE WRIST ON THE UPSTROKE

Bouncing the wrist on the upstroke means you're adding a bit more force (muscular) as you turn to the surface to go up. As with "one up/one down" and "two up/two down," it's impor-

tant to consider the kind of force (gravity or muscular) used to turn the stick to the surface. In this case, the force to the surface is muscular, as in Wilson's throw.

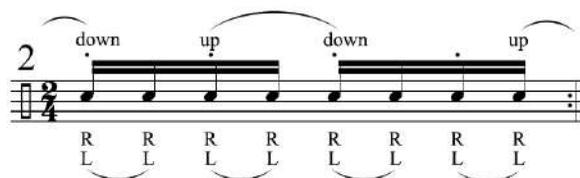
This technique can be used with "one up/one down" and "two up/two down," as well as for singles and doubles.

As you play the following exercises, note that the upward force is like Wilson's muscular throw. The dots above the notes are in place of accents, which Wilson would use to indicate a louder stroke but not an accent. Remember: The "down" motion is not a throw. These exercises can also be played using Spivack's "up" motion following a slight throw.

Exercise 1 contains a series of one-handed notes, or concurrent single strokes, without accents.



In Exercise 2, one hand plays concurrent singles, with the first half of the single stroke played as a rebound double and the second half played in a "down" position for two notes.



### CRESCENDO STROKES

The last two strokes that Wilson introduced to students were what he called crescendo doubles and crescendo singles. He would introduce crescendo doubles when the student was able to play rebounds and roll strokes at 192 beats per minute, and then he would discuss crescendo singles when the student could play crescendo doubles and roll strokes consistently at 208 beats per minute. Wilson observed that when students were able to play at those tempos, they were turning their wrist and the stick was rocking evenly over the fulcrum as their fingers opened and closed naturally.

Crescendo strokes demand as much relaxation as possible. If Wilson observed that the student was becoming tight or stiff, he would slow down the tempo considerably or stop working on the stroke altogether, until the student was able to play comfortably at the marker tempos.

To play crescendo doubles, start at 192 bpm and play pianissimo (extremely quiet) doubles. Slowly increase the volume (turn higher) until you reach your maximum wrist turn. At that point, change the rhythm to five against two, which will make the pulse of the roll more transparent.

Now you'll start playing rebounds with the arms, but the wrists should not be held tightly or rigidly. Employ some wrist movement, like in an up/down motion. Turn higher (add more force) until you're playing with the arms and

shoulders only (no wrists) at approximately 10" above the surface, using a flat stroke for the ultimate power and speed.

3

max. wrist

*mf* ————— *f*

arms

*ff*

arms and shoulders

*fff*

To practice crescendo singles, start by playing 16th notes at 60 bpm. (You'll ultimately want to be able to play this exercise at 208 bpm.) While playing 16th notes, slowly increase the volume (turn higher) until you reach your maximum wrist stroke.

At this point, you're going to start playing singles with the arms, but don't hold your wrists tightly or rigidly. Turn higher (add more force) until you're playing with the arms and shoulders only (no wrists) at approximately 10" above the surface, using a flat stroke for the ultimate power and speed.

4

max. wrist

*mf* ————— *f*

arms

*ff*

arms

*fff*

arms and shoulders

*fff*

When you play the louder portion of crescendo rolls, there's more pressure on the fingers, but that force will be offset by the stick rocking over the fulcrum. To raise the volume, increase the amount of force applied—not the amount of tension.

As you turn higher to increase the volume, you'll notice that the stick begins to move away from the palm in matched grip and away from the fourth finger in traditional. But when you move from wrist turns to arm and shoulder strokes, the fulcrum in the fingers remains the same.

Remember that the playing surface provides its own amount of force. So when you strike, let the stick rebound and recoil freely.

What has been described in this article is the end of the fundamentals. Once this material is mastered, as Wilson stated, "the student has ultimate power, speed, endurance, and finesse to play whatever he or she wants."

**Richard Martinez** has recorded with Julian Lennon, Dan Hill, John Jones, and Rick Nowels. He is also general manager of the Music Is Hope Foundation, which produces music for children's nonprofit organizations. **Kevin Crabb** is a drummer/composer who has performed with Alphonso Johnson, John Beasley, David Garfield, and many others. His recent album *Waltz for Dylan* is available at [kevincrabb.com](http://kevincrabb.com).

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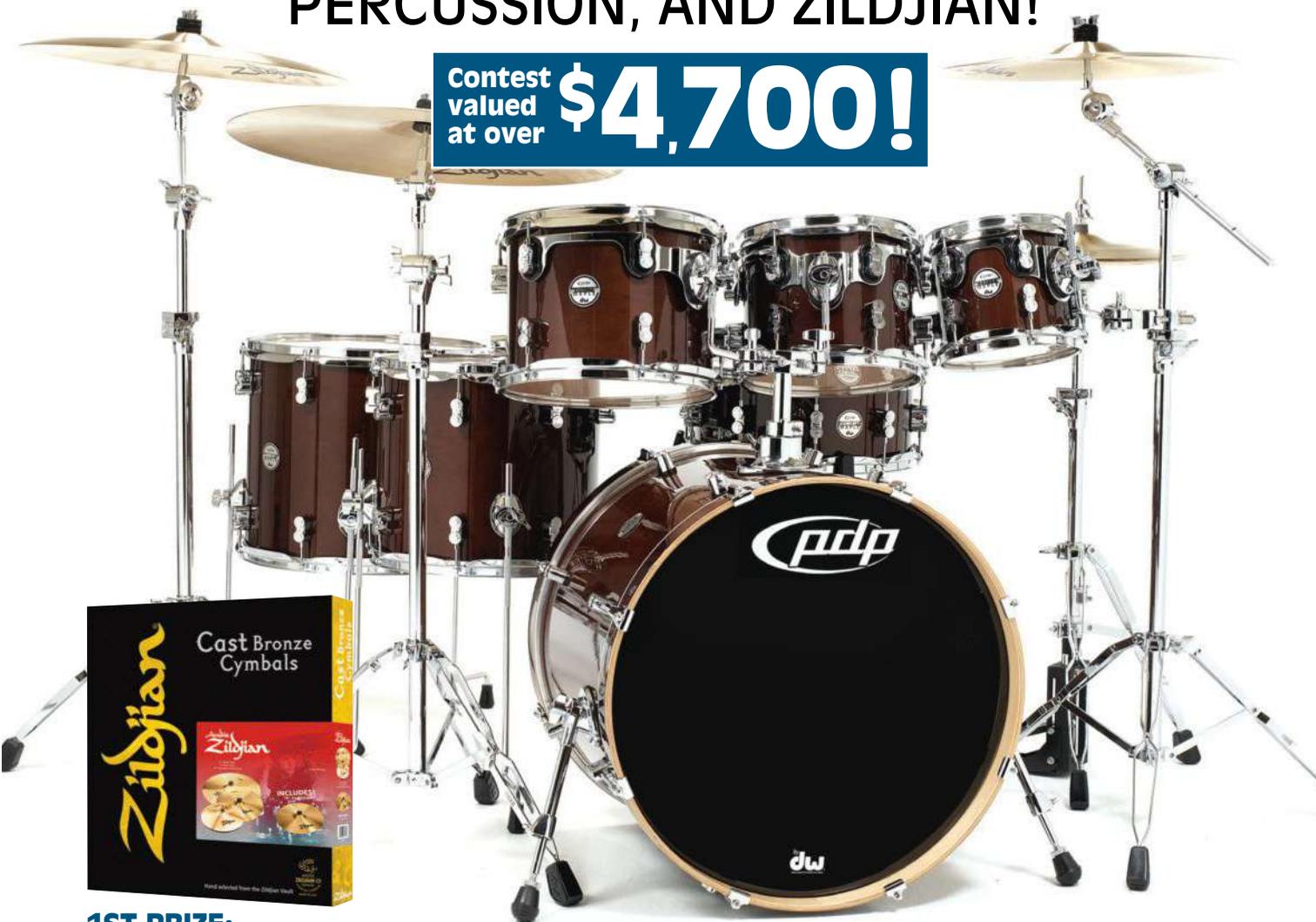
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# Brush Workshop

## Part 4: Rudiments

by Florian Alexandru-Zorn



Almost every drummer practices the rudiments—with sticks. If you're serious about learning how to use brushes, why not also practice the rudiments with them? This article deals with just that. I guarantee that with some practice, you will be able to sweep (not hit) any rudimental solo using brushes.

In order to sweep all of the rudiments, you first have to understand the structure of each one. The basic building blocks of the rudiments involve double strokes, single strokes, flams, and drags, so we'll focus our attention on those core elements.

In part three of this series (February 2012), we covered the linear motion, which is the best one to begin with when working on the rudiments. (Of course, you can sweep each rudiment with circular and half-circular motions too.) To avoid having to draw too many diagrams, I've notated the direction of the sweeping motion. The right hand is notated above the staff, and the left hand is notated below. I suggest beginning your practice by sweeping with each hand on a different sound surface. This allows you to check the motion of the hands separately, to avoid mistakes.

### SINGLE-STROKE ROLL

For this rudiment, hold the brushes using French grip (thumbs on top), so your wrist is free to maximize its horizontal movement. Each hand does a little acceleration stroke inward and then outward.



### DOUBLE-STROKE ROLL

For this rudiment, use a linear motion and hold the brushes so that the hands sweep in a V shape. (The right hand sweeps the right side of the V, and the left hand sweeps the left side.)



Using that same motion, you can now play metered rolls, like the five- and nine-stroke.



### SINGLE PARADIDDLE

The single paradiddle is a combination of two single strokes and one double stroke. When you play paradiddles with your right hand on a tom and left hand on the snare, you get a natural backbeat happening. Just add the bass drum on beats 1 and 3 to complete the groove.



### DOUBLE PARADIDDLE

The double paradiddle is a perfect rudiment to create a 6/8 feel. Mess around with adding some accents on the hi-hat (played with your foot) and bass drum to create new rhythms.



### FLAMS AND FLAM TAPS

For flams and flam taps, I like to use a half-circular motion. Experiment with the other motions to discover the most comfortable way to play these rudiments.



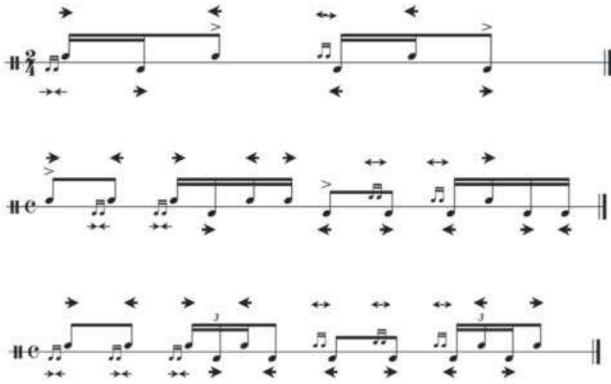
### SINGLE DRAG

Practice playing the ruff with an open (32nd note) interpretation, as well as with an unmetred closed one.



### LESSON 25, DRAG PARADIDDLE #2, AND TRIPLE RATAMACUE

Here are three more rudiments involving drags that you can sweep with the brushes.



Once you've gotten comfortable with these rudiments, try learning a short rudimental solo, like anything by Charley Wilcoxon, using brushes. I also suggest incorporating the brush rudiments into your daily workout.

Be sure to check out the free video posted at [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) so you can see how to sweep the rudiments and also how to use them in grooves.

**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).

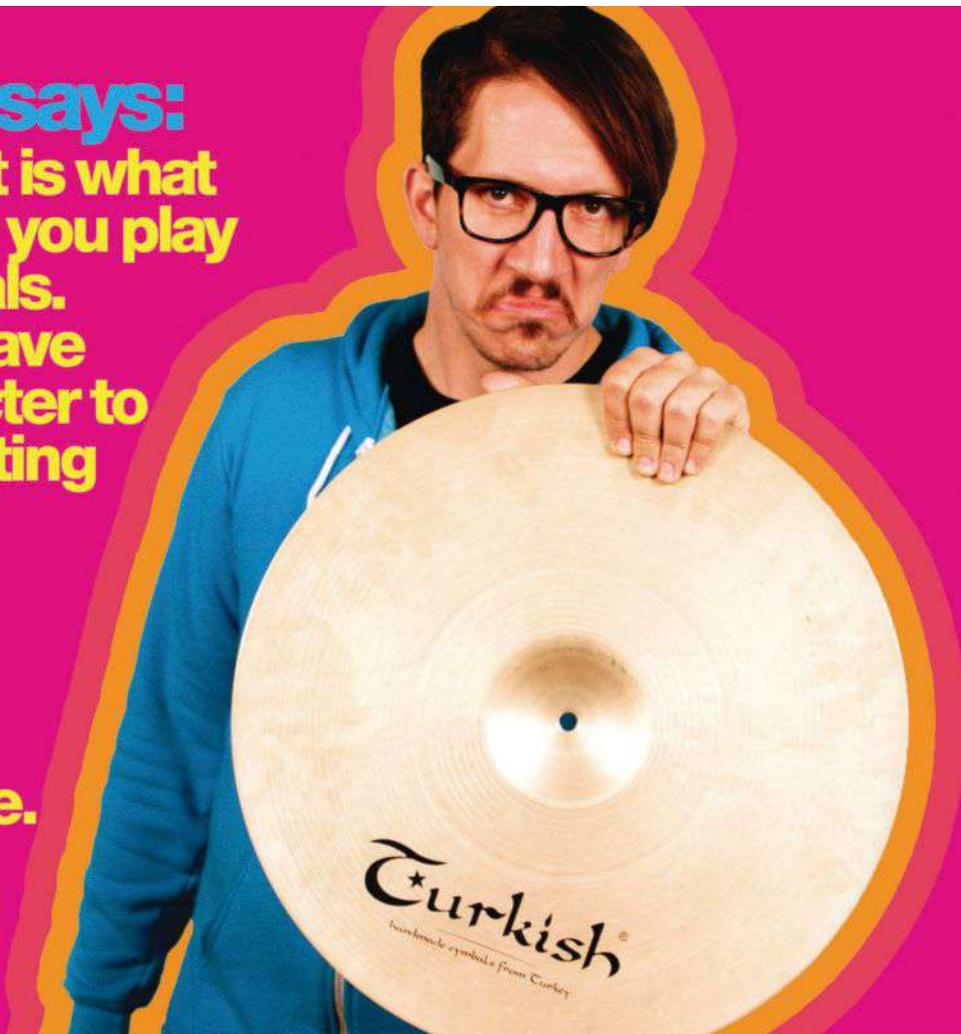


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# Asymmetrical Warm-Up

A 3-Bar Exercise to Awaken the Hands and Mind

by Robert Brian

**MUSIC KEY**

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T.T.	●		
S.D.	●		
F.T.	●		
B.D.	●		

**W**arming up before a show is extremely important, whether you're about to play to 30,000 people or thirty. An effective warm-up routine gets the blood flowing to your hands and wrists and allows you to

feel supple before playing for long periods of time.

Sometimes when I play without warming up, it's a little like not driving a car for several months—when you finally get back behind the wheel, it all feels familiar, but you're a bit rusty. A proper warm-up gets you in the zone, so you can concentrate on playing the music without worrying about whether you're at your best.

What I've included here is a three-bar warm-up that I use before every show. I came up with it because I wanted an exercise that would get not only my hands but also my mind ready to perform. When I tried playing the usual one- or two-bar patterns, my hands would get loose, but my mind wouldn't be as focused as I wanted it to be. The warm-up routine I devised is in 4/4 and involves a three-bar loop that includes single strokes, double strokes, and accents, and the lead hand switches, which helps get my brain working.

## THE PATTERNS

The first bar of the warm-up involves playing a measure of 8th notes with one hand, with an accent on every other stroke.

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

The second bar starts with the same lead hand, but now you add the remaining 16th notes with the other hand. Keep the accents in the same spots (now the third stroke of each 16th-note grouping). This 16th-note accent pattern is often used to play a traditional country train beat.

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

The third bar involves a run of two paradiddle-diddles followed by a single paradiddle. Add an accent on the first note of each paradiddle-diddle and the first note of the sin-

gle paradiddle. This pattern shifts the sticking so that you can start the exercise again, leading with the opposite hand.

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

Work on each bar individually first. Try to match the different stick heights of the accents and the unaccented notes, and make sure each stroke is relaxed and not forced. Once you have the individual bars looking and sounding good, play through the entire sequence a few times, again making sure that it's being executed well.

I suggest starting with your metronome at 80 bpm and moving up in small increments as the exercise gets more comfortable. Keep a record of your progress. The idea isn't to sit down and play this warm-up as fast as you can; you want to play through it slowly at first, to get your hands to loosen up gradually. If you can shoot video, try recording yourself as you practice, in order to check your execution visually.

## FUTURE WORK

As with all basic hand exercises, you should feel free to experiment with ways to apply this warm-up to the drumkit. You could try adding the bass drum underneath the accented notes, or you could step quarters or 8th notes on your hi-hat. There are many options. For instance, you could play the first bar on the hi-hat with a regular 4/4 groove on the snare and bass drum.

The same idea could be used with the 16th-note pattern in the second bar of the exercise.

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

The third bar could be played in a repeating loop, shifting from right-hand lead to left-hand lead. You could place a bass drum note underneath the accents and move the accents to the toms and cymbals to create some nice fills. Good luck!

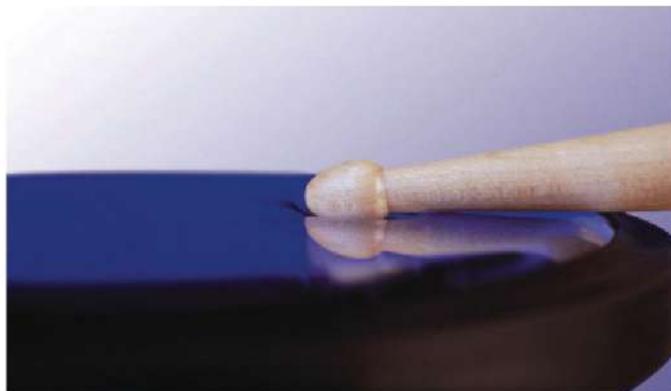
**A**

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

**B**

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

**Robert Brian** is a U.K.-based drummer who's played with Peter Gabriel, Jason Rebello, Andy Partridge, Modern English, Jamie Cullum, and others. For the past six years he's toured and recorded with the punk legend Siouxsie Sioux. Excerpts from Brian's new DVD, *Technique and Musicality*, are posted at [robertbrian.co.uk](http://robertbrian.co.uk).



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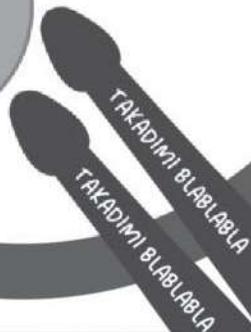
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# The CRASH Course to Success

## Part 2: Relationships

by Rich Redmond

**T**his article focuses on the second portion of my CRASH (“commitment, relationships, attitude, skill, and hunger”) concept. We’re going to look at how relationships apply to our drumming, our onstage interactions, and our overall musical career.

Here’s an interesting fact: In all of my years of drumming, I’ve gotten only one job from an audition. Even in that particular situation, the drummer that had the gig before me called the artist and management to put in a good word for me. The message he left with management went something like this: “You guys can still have your cattle call, but I promise Rich is the guy. He’s a team player, he shows up prepared, and he’s always on time. His drums sound great, he’s versatile, he can take direction, and he has a good personality.” My relationship with the previous drummer was ultimately what secured my position on this new gig. How about a round of applause for our friends!

Every other job I’ve gotten has come from a recommendation. Simply put, another person was willing to stick out his or her neck for me. Of course, I always feel compelled to return the favor. Relationships make the world go round, especially if they’re based on mutual admiration and sincerity.

### GET TO KNOW EVERYONE

I have meaningful relationships with instrumentalists of all types, as well as with songwriters, producers, artists, managers, booking agents, publishers, studio owners, club owners, and so on. I know a lot of people working in

many subfields of the music industry (touring, recording, merchandising, publishing, etc.), and it takes all types to make the business work properly. Why limit your social circle to just one small group of people? By associating yourself with many groups, you’ll find that your next gig can come from anyone at any time. The music industry really is a small world, and many of the gatekeepers know each other.

### DON’T BE AN OUTSIDER

I’m often asked by struggling musicians via social media outlets to keep them in mind for major auditions. Many of these players live in rural areas outside the leading music markets (New York City, Los Angeles, and Nashville). How could I champion someone when I don’t know anything about his or her playing, personality, and people skills? It’s an unrealistic request. Another factor to remember is that there are hundreds of qualified musicians in the larger markets scratching and clawing for the available work, so there’s rarely a need to look outside those cities. The best way to guarantee success is to relocate to one of the big markets and start cultivating sincere, lasting relationships.

### BAND BUDDIES

Strong relationships within a band are crucial for creating great music, and being comfortable and friendly with the people you’re playing with is paramount. I’m fortunate that I’ve been touring for over ten years with my best friends. We know each other inside and out, and many times we know what’s going to happen musically long

before it actually does. We anticipate, we encourage, and we listen to one another. There’s a brotherhood there, and we are committed to making things sound, feel, and even look great. (Remember: The average person hears with his or her eyes, so give ’em a show. Think Gene Krupa.)

There’s also a relationship between my right foot on the kick drum and the bass player’s right hand. When I whack my snare, I want to hear the guitar locking in precisely with me. Our goal is to play together as a section and make it sound fat and sexy. If we make the groove feel great, it will motivate and inspire the rest of the band—especially whoever’s out front. It’s always about making the artist happy. To solidify the relationship, we try to play at a high level each night so that it’s super-easy to entertain the audience. If you can please the artist and bandleader, you *will* have job security.

### BUILT-IN MIXER

For drummers, the relationship between your limbs and the various sound sources of your kit is very important. Imagine each sound source having its own fader on a mixing board; it’s your job to balance those elements so they combine to sound like one instrument. The great Steve Gadd is a master of this concept.

At whatever dynamic level you choose, all of your limbs should be balanced to create a cohesive feel and groove. Try playing a swing feel with a rimclick on beat 4, à la Jimmy Cobb. If you play the rimclick too loudly, you’ll throw off the sonic relationships, and

the groove won't feel right. Maintaining the proper sonic relationship among the limbs is crucial. Be your own mix engineer on the gig.

### SAVOR THE SPACES

Discussing the relationships among the limbs also brings to mind the concept of space. The spacing between two backbeats, or even between the kick drum and snare in a basic rock beat, will determine how the groove feels. As drummers, we have total power in shaping the feel of a song with the space we use between our beats.

Taking control of this power requires a massive commitment to subdividing. When I play a quarter-note-based groove, I subdivide the time in my mind as 8th notes. If I'm playing an 8th-note-based groove, I subdivide 16th notes. I often pretend there's a funky percussionist playing in my head, helping me keep my note

spacing consistent and honest. I also use body language to maintain those relationships. Think of Ringo's head bobbing or Shawn Pelton's full physical commitment when he plays. Those guys aren't afraid to involve their body in their groove, and the result is an out-of-this-world feel with fantastic timing and perfectly balanced dynamics.

The idea of forging meaningful relationships is a catchall concept that you can use to improve your drumming, get heard, and get yourself hired for gigs. So keep practicing, but also get out there, shake hands, and make your presence known.

**Rich Redmond** is a Nashville-based touring/recording drummer with the multi-platinum country rocker Jason Aldean. He has also worked with Kelly Clarkson, Bryan Adams, Jewel, Ludacris, Lit, Joe Perry, Miranda Lambert, Steel Magnolia, Thompson Square, Rushlow, and others. For more info, visit [richredmond.com](http://richredmond.com).



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Ahead Custom Molded Earplugs (ACME) are nontoxic, hypoallergenic, and EPA approved, and this pack allows users to quickly create a personal set of soft, silicone earplugs. The ACME kit comes with easy-to-follow instructions for combining the components, placing them in the ears, and allowing them to cure. The earplugs have an EPA-certified noise reduction rating of 26 dB. Each pack also includes a soft carrying pouch. List price: \$29.95. [bigbangdist.com](http://bigbangdist.com)

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Toca's Custom Deluxe drumset timbale is 5½" deep and 12" in diameter, a convenient size for kit players to incorporate into their setup. The steel shell, which is great for cascara playing, has a black mirror-chrome finish accented with brushed-nickel hardware. The drum has five tuning lugs and comes with a tuning wrench. It includes a mounting bracket that accepts any standard ¾" rod. List price: \$129.

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



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[jimuding@stlouismusic.com](mailto:jimuding@stlouismusic.com)

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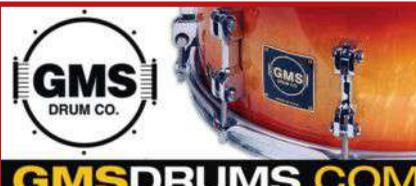


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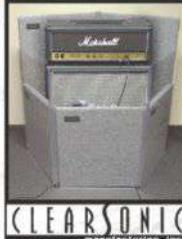
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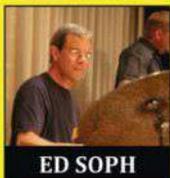
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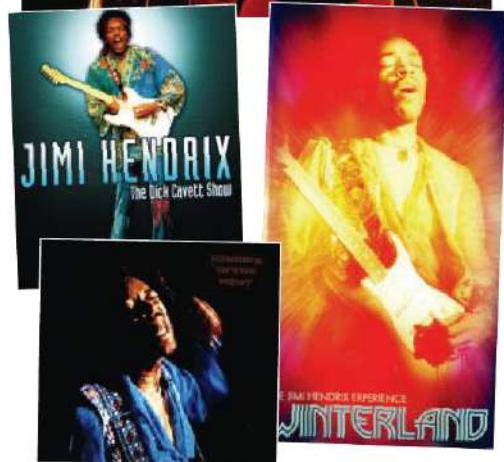
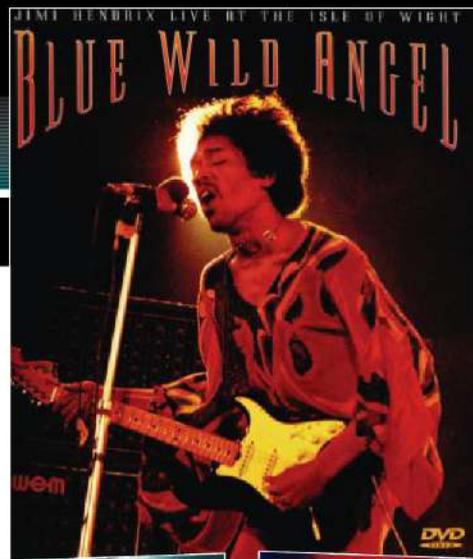
It was Jimi Hendrix's overriding artistic ambition to create an "electric church," an alternate reality for his audiences, by exploring sonic territory previously unknown to him, his band-mates, and the crowds in attendance. Four recent releases demonstrate how the guitarist and his musical cohorts achieved this mystical goal.

The four-disc set titled *Winterland*, which expands on the 1987 single-platter release *Live at Winterland*, culls jam-centric performances from the Jimi Hendrix Experience's six-show, three-night stand in October '68 at the famed San Francisco venue, and highlights Hendrix's otherworldly gifts and drummer **MITCH MITCHELL**'s versatility. Elevating the music to something beyond psychedelic blues-rock, Mitchell traces every aural inflection emanating from Jimi's Marshall stack with a jagged sense of time and a disregard for backbeats.

The turbocharged *Hendrix in the West*, first issued in 1972, ups the ante with searing renditions of "I Don't Live Today" and "Spanish Castle Magic," the latter of which features Mitchell's tour de force double-kick drum solo, chased by Hendrix's auditory dive bombs and teasing "Star-Spangled Banner" snippets.

The *Dick Cavett Show* DVD depicts a somewhat restrained though oddly appealing Hendrix band (percussionist Juma Sultan appears), and, by contrast, the reissued *Blue Wild Angel* boasts a revamped and energized Experience. Throughout, Mitchell strikes the right balance of rock and jazz drumming to spur Jimi on (and shine individually during the menacing "Machine Gun").

Hendrix, who died within weeks of this Isle of Wight concert, is rightly labeled a genius. But it was Mitchell's twisted grooves that helped to fuel that genius and define drumming for an entire genre. (Legacy) **Will Romano**



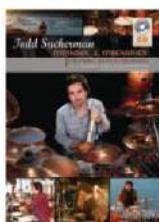
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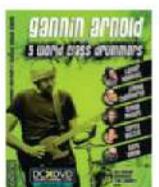
As the third volume of the broader Greenleaf Portable Series, whose other installments feature trumpeter Dave Douglas leading groups with drummers Marcus Gilmore and Nasheet Waits, *Bad Mango* highlights So Percussion, bringing Douglas's horn together with various percussion instruments for a wild concoction of rhythm, melody, and improvisation. **JASON TREUTING** lends a traditional kit to the rollicking "One More News," while **ADAM SLIWINSKI**, **JOSH QUILLEN**, and **ERIC BEACH** fill the space with a buffet of musical saw, glockenspiel, marimba, toy bells, and crotales. Each player thinks compositionally, and the proceedings avoid cacophony, even when the group dispenses with meter, as on the textural "Time Leveler." (Greenleaf) **Ilya Stembkovsky**



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The companion book to Sucherman's award-winning *Methods & Mechanics* instructional DVD provides detailed transcriptions of eight songs and five solos from the video performances. Sucherman is a class act who focuses on quality, writes passionately, and describes his musical approach in a very personal way. *Methods & Mechanics* effectively opens his toolbox to reveal his hybrid rudimental and double bass concepts. Sucherman's commentary and Brad Schlueter's masterful transcriptions supply detailed insight into the drummer's advanced ideas, and the entertaining and educational music on the accompanying CD includes all the tracks from the book plus several music-minus-drums play-alongs. This well-organized and affordably priced package provides an ideal mechanism for dissecting Sucherman's every move. (Hudson) **Mike Haid**



●●●●●  
**GANNIN ARNOLD PROJECT 5 WORLD CLASS DRUMMERS**

**DVD(2)** LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$24.95  
On this double-DVD set, fusion guitarist Gannin Arnold assembles five badass stickmen to whale on his Jeff Beck-inspired material. The result is an often-fascinating look at the different approaches, ideas, and emphasis that the players give to the same piece of music. The DVD works well because Arnold makes it about the drummers, who invest heart and soul in each track. **TAYLOR HAWKINS** is brazenly strong and accurate, punching the kicks with ease, while **GARY NOVAK** burns but is clearly laboring by the end of his take. **SIMON PHILLIPS** has a smooth calm to his grounded playing and gives one section a double-time feel à la Beck's "Savoy." **JIMMY CHAMBERLIN** shows a mastery of flams and feel. And **TERRY BOZZIO**'s orchestral use of cymbals and white noise punctuates his almost primal drive. (Drum Channel) **Robin Tolleson**

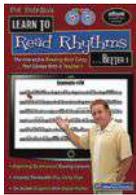
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# START HERE

A trio of educational packages offers choices for beginning drum students—and a bit for more advanced players as well.



## LEARN TO READ RHYTHMS... BETTER!

BY PAT PETRILLO

DVD(2)/E-BOOK/MP3s LEVEL: ALL \$29.95

The new multimedia offering by Drummers Collective instructor Pat Petrillo is the next best thing to an actual live lesson. An "interactive reading boot camp that comes with a teacher," the two-DVD set allows students to play along with charts of 16th-note combinations, dotted rhythms, odd times, and everything in between, with the aid of a click track and digital pointer. (Think of a bouncing ball following the lyrics to a song.) Petrillo's "sound picture" method connects the way rhythms look with the way they sound, and the exercises feature Pat speaking along with the pointer, which is a great help. The package also includes MP3s and a hundred-page e-book. (Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## KID'S ROCK DRUM METHOD

BY DAWN

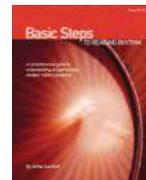
RICHARDSON

BOOK/CD LEVEL:

BEGINNER \$14.99

Dawn Richardson's latest book is for the early elementary school crowd, using large print and childlike drawings to illustrate the instruments. *Kid's Rock* begins with single-line exercises (to be played on any kind of drum) before combining snare, bass drum, and hi-hat. The San Francisco-based Richardson, who also authored *Building Blocks of Rock*, explains all the basics—time signatures, note values, even rudiments—in a very simple way. By the end of the fifty-six-page book, she has introduced syncopation as well as elemental four-bar phrases with fills. The accompanying CD demonstrates nearly half of the almost 200 exercises but sounds more like a metronome than music, which might not connect with the iTunes generation. (Mel Bay)

**Lauren Vogel Weiss**



## BASIC STEPS TO READING RHYTHM: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING AND PERFORMING

MODERN RHYTHM STRUCTURES

BY JAMES GUARNIERI

BOOK LEVEL: BEGINNER TO

INTERMEDIATE \$19.95

This hundred-plus-page, spiral-bound, self-published book covers the fundamentals of reading rhythms and could be useful for other instruments beyond the drums. Guarnieri, a student of the legendary educator Sam Ulano, begins with the usual definition of notes and time signatures before jumping into lessons (seventy-one in all, each featuring ten exercises). The book, which is aimed more toward snare drum students than set players, introduces closed (buzz) rolls, open ("rebound") rolls, and thirty rudiments (rather than the standard twenty-six or the Percussive Arts Society's recommended forty). Subdivisions are written out clearly, but there are no tempo markings and few dynamics, which somewhat limits *Basic Steps'* effectiveness. (jgmusic1@optonline.net, 631-261-4550)

**Lauren Vogel Weiss**

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❶ Send us a paragraph describing how drumming fits into your educational and life goals along with your name, address, email address, age, and telephone number to: MD/KOSA 17 Scholarship, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. ❷ A distinguished panel of judges will evaluate each written entry and determine the winners. ❸ ODDS OF WINNING EACH PRIZE DEPEND ON THE QUALITY OF THE WRITING. ❹ CONTEST BEGINS 4/15/12 AND ENDS 5/31/12. LETTERS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY 5/31/12 AND RECEIVED BY 6/4/12. ❺ Prize Drawing: Two (2) winners will be selected on or before June 5, 2012. Winners will be notified by phone on or about June 6, 2012. ❻ Employees and their immediate families of Modern Drummer, KoSA, Mapex, Sabian, and their affiliates are ineligible. ❼ Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. ❽ Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Florida; Quebec, Canada; and where prohibited by law. ❾ Prizes. Two (2) scholarships to the KoSA 17 Percussion Workshop, Drum Camp & Festival. Prize includes tuition and room (double occupancy) and food for the one-week workshop. Transportation to and from Castleton, Vermont, is the winner's responsibility. Approximate retail of contest: \$5,000. ❿ The judges' decisions are *final*. No prize substitutions will be permitted.

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# ROOTS RHYTHMS

Anyone looking for fresh and powerful drumming in the blues and roots-music worlds should listen to these creative rhythm makers.



## DANIEL LANOIS *BLACK DUB*

Producer/leader Daniel Lanois wraps *Black Dub* around Trixie Whitley's vocals, and also creates an excellent feature for the dynamic drummer

**BRIAN BLADE**. Sparsely orchestrated, soulful, and raw, the album gives Blade a chance to play big and heavy rock-steady grooves, forging a playful rhythmic partnership with bassist Daryl Johnson. (Jive/Sony) **Robin Tolleson**

## KNUCKLE YUMMY *CACOPHONY, BOO, AND DOWN TO THIS...*

On this recent set of EPs, the Texas trio Knuckle Yummy explores a raw blues sound that might be called "psychedelicana," or perhaps "krunka-billy." Drummer **DONY WYNN** (Robert Palmer, Brooks and Dunn) plays huge, embracing beats

and loves raw and organic sounds. On some tunes, nothing that he's beating on sounds like a drumset. (facebook.com/dony.wynn)

**Robin Tolleson**

## BOW THAYER & PERFECT TRAINWRECK *BOTTOM OF THE SKY*

*Bottom of the Sky* is a distinct Americana roots-rock collection, thanks in part to drummer **JEFF BERLIN**'s subtle shifts in feel, exemplified by accents on "&" on "Good Time to Holler" and by beat displacement on "Epitome." (bowthayer.com) **Will Romano**

## LUBRIPHONIC *THE GIG IS ON*

**RICK KING** kicks off *The Gig Is On* with a high-energy drum solo—and the groove is on. King

and bassist Pennal Johnson form a formidable rhythmic core, whether sitting back in the pocket on "Pimp Limp," rocking it some on "Punk," or fueling the bluesy funk on "Whatever You Do Don't Stop." (lubriphonic.com) **Robin Tolleson**

## VICTOR WAINWRIGHT & THE WILDROOTS *LIT UP!*

Drummer **BILLY DEAN** toys with blues conventions while propelling *Lit Up!* He double-times "Coin Operated Woman," swishes brushes soulfully on "Pile of Blues," slams the syncopated title track, and attacks the various shuffles with creative dynamics and inflections. (wildrootsrecords.com) **Robin Tolleson**

## THE EVER EXPANDING ELASTIC WASTE BAND *THE EVER EXPANDING ELASTIC WASTE BAND*

A hip-hop-type bounce pervades the slightly psychedelic, Delta-blues-informed debut from the Ever Expanding Elastic Waste Band, a trio consisting of multi-instrumentalist/two-string slide bassist Jeremy Lyons and two surviving members of the art-rock band Morphine, drummer **JEROME DEUPREE** and saxophonist Dana Colley. Deupree's greasy touch is perfect for these chilled-out, stylistically diverse originals and Morphine covers. (myspace.com/membersofmorphine) **Will Romano**

## JAMBALAYA BRASS BAND *IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE*

The sophomore release from this New York City-based, New Orleans-style jazz brigade is a virtual nonstop musical parade that rattles and swings with blaring contrapuntal horn lines, bobbing tuba thumps, and outrageously funky interlocking second-line rhythms coordinated by **WASHINGTON DUKE** (snare drum), **CHAUNCEY YEARWOOD** (bass drum, congas, percussion), and **ETHAN SHORTER** (bass drum, percussion). (jambalayabrassband.com). **Will Romano**

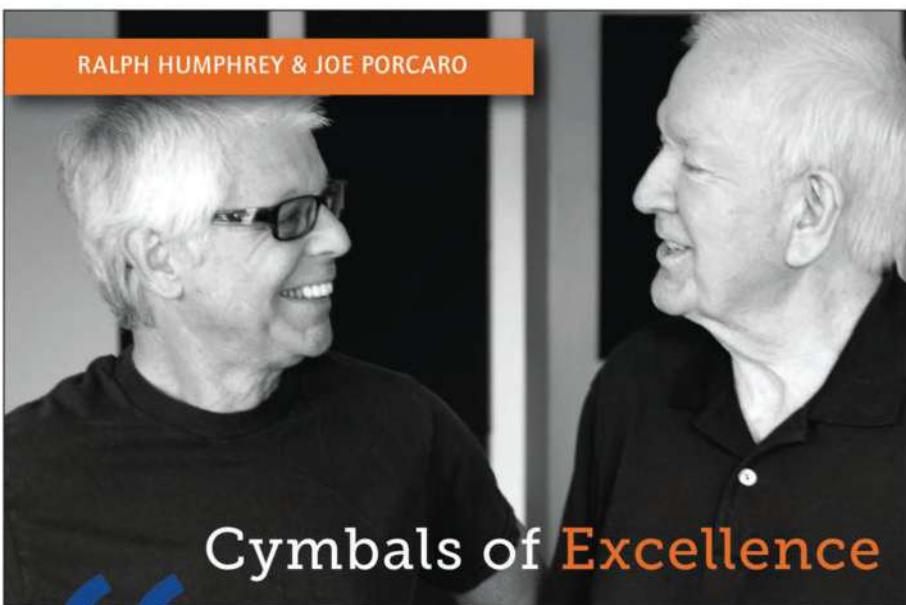
## JP SOARS *MORE BEES WITH HONEY*

**CHRIS PEET** delivers another lesson in ass-kicking blues drumming on *More Bees With Honey*. Peet is seriously dealing from the first downbeat, propelling the double-time-to-half-time "Hot Little Woman" and presiding over the funky, swampy "Doggin'." He does what's right for the song and gets great tones. (jpssoars.com)

**Robin Tolleson**

## LIGHTNIN' MALCOLM FEATURING CAMERON KIMBROUGH *RENEGADE*

Drummer **CAMERON KIMBROUGH**, grandson of North Mississippi bluesman Junior Kimbrough and half of a rootsy guitar-drums duo on Lightnin' Malcolm's *Renegade*, powers through dramatic mood shifts, from hypnotic Hill Country blues to horn-based soul, while punishing his kit with open hi-hats and tom-heavy grooves that punctuate Malcolm's fuzzed-out finger-picked guitar licks. (rufrecords.de) **Will Romano**



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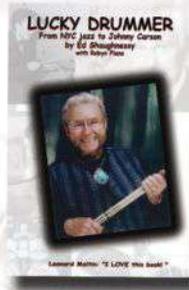
## EXHIBITORS

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## In Memoriam RALPH MACDONALD

The ace percussionist and cowriter of “Just the Two of Us” and “Where Is the Love” passed away last December 18 at age sixty-seven. A fellow percussive legend pays tribute.

by Bashiri Johnson

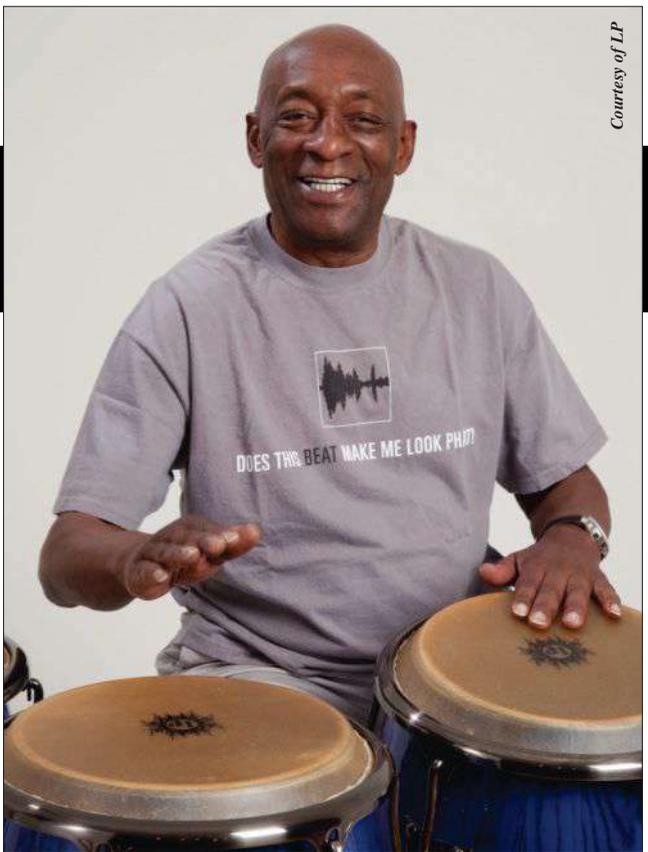
Call the Grammy-winning percussionist, songwriter, and producer Ralph MacDonald “Mister Magic,” not because he cowrote that classic hit for Grover Washington Jr., but because he left us a legacy of magical work and performances. Ralph, who played with, among many others, Harry Belafonte, George Benson, David Bowie, Diana Ross, Quincy Jones, Billy Joel, Carly Simon, James Taylor, and Steely Dan, was one of the most influential artists I have ever encountered in my life and career, and he unknowingly provided me with a trio of incredible lessons in greatness.

### LESSON 1: THE STANDARD OF PERFECTION

I first met Ralph MacDonald over the airwaves and on records, which provided some of my first studies in recorded percussion. I studied percussion most intensely. I practiced my sound and technique first by imitating what I heard, then later with brash self-confidence, emulating and creating my own parts. The artistic standard of perfection and excellence I heard in Ralph’s work set a very high bar that I would always strive to meet. Ralph’s first lesson revealed to me that upon finding my own sound and voice, maybe one day I would get called to do what I loved to do: play percussion.

### LESSON 2: “JUST DO YOU”

As my career grew over the decades, I was blessed to work for many amazing artists and play on numerous high-profile projects. Ralph was always there as an inspiration. One memorable day, the call came from Ralph himself, to play on a Japanese project he was doing. The four percussionists were me, Steve Croon, Crusher Bennett, and of course Ralph. All of the percussionists in the room were quite talented and adept. During the session I asked Ralph, “What would you like me to do?” Ralph replied, “Just do you! I want you to do what you hear.” With that, Ralph provided me with my second lesson, which was to know yourself, trust yourself, and



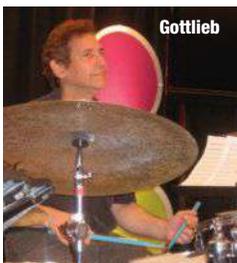
always be yourself. This lesson revealed to me that the reason why people seek out and hire you is because they want you to *just do you*.

### LESSON 3: THERE’S NOTHING YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU, BUT THERE’S PLENTY YOU CAN LEAVE BEHIND

I attended and performed at the services for my beloved friend and mentor Ralph MacDonald. Roberta Flack, Jimmy Buffett, Valerie Simpson, Mayor Mike Pavia, and many others spoke and performed at Ralph’s Memorial Concert in Stamford Connecticut on January 15. Ralph’s family showed a video slide show of his life and work, which was very moving and spiritually sobering. I was humbled not only by the outpouring of love and tribute paid to Ralph but also by the quantity and quality of his professional legacy and body of work. Ralph touched so many people, contributed to so much music, and gave us all something to move to, groove to, and smile about.

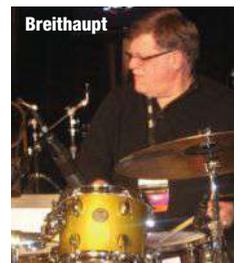
Thus Ralph provided me with my third lesson, which is that when you pass on there isn’t anything you can take with you, but there’s plenty you can leave behind. Ralph MacDonald taught me that you should always be honest, be excellent, give love, and be yourself. Thank you, Ralph. Rest in peace, my friend.

## JAZZ EDUCATION NETWORK CONFERENCE



The third annual conference of the Jazz Education Network, held in Louisville, Kentucky, this past January 4 through 7, featured a number of prominent drummers in its wealth of clinics and performances. Appropriately enough, the opening concert began with a percussive blast from the Louisville Leopard Percussionists, an ensemble made up of kids in grades two through six who play like pros. As the conference progressed, attendees were treated to clinics and performances by Danny Gottlieb, Derico Watson, Ndugu Chancler, Sherrie Maricle, Steve Fidyk, Bobby Sanabria, Steve Houghton, and Bob Breithaupt, among many others.

Text and photos by Rick Mattingly



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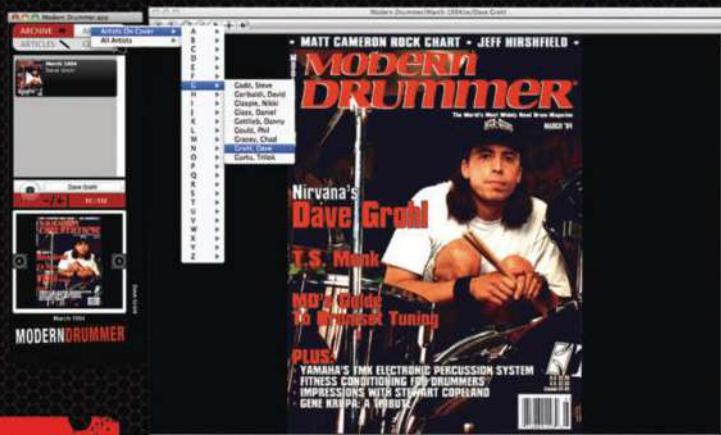
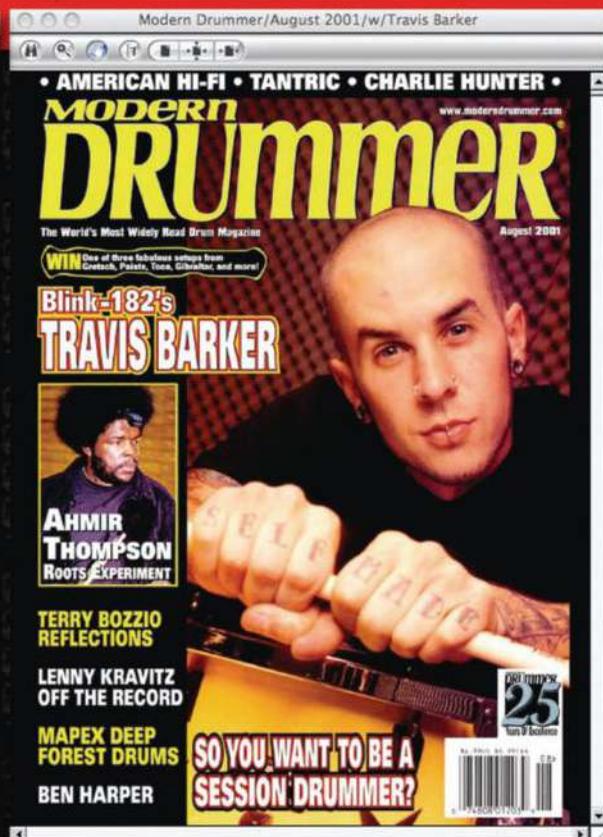
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## A REAL SHINER

This reflective rig comes from Mark Gorman of Sound Beach, New York, who's kept the drums in mint condition since he bought them as a teenager in 1979. "I haven't gigged with the kit for almost ten years now," Gorman says. "It's too valuable to me."

The chrome-over-wood Ludwig outfit features concert toms, and the cymbals include 14" Zildjian New Beat hi-hats, a 16" Zildjian A crash, and 18" and 20" Paiste 2002 crashes. A Legacy Percussion Gear Remote Speedy Hat was added to the setup after Gorman suffered a back injury caused by playing hockey. The device eases the back strain and allows Mark to play in what he calls "a Bill Bruford style."

**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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