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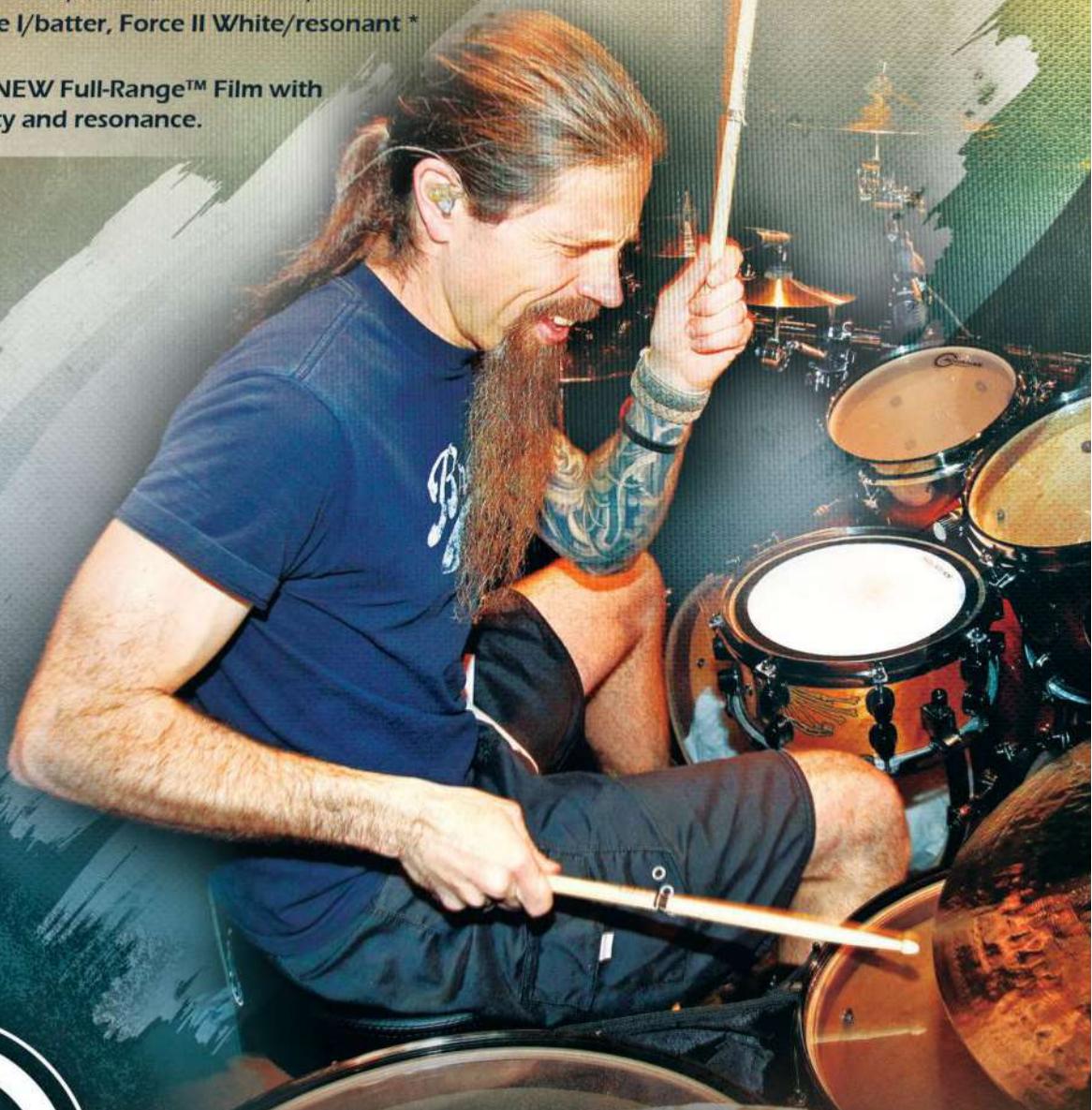


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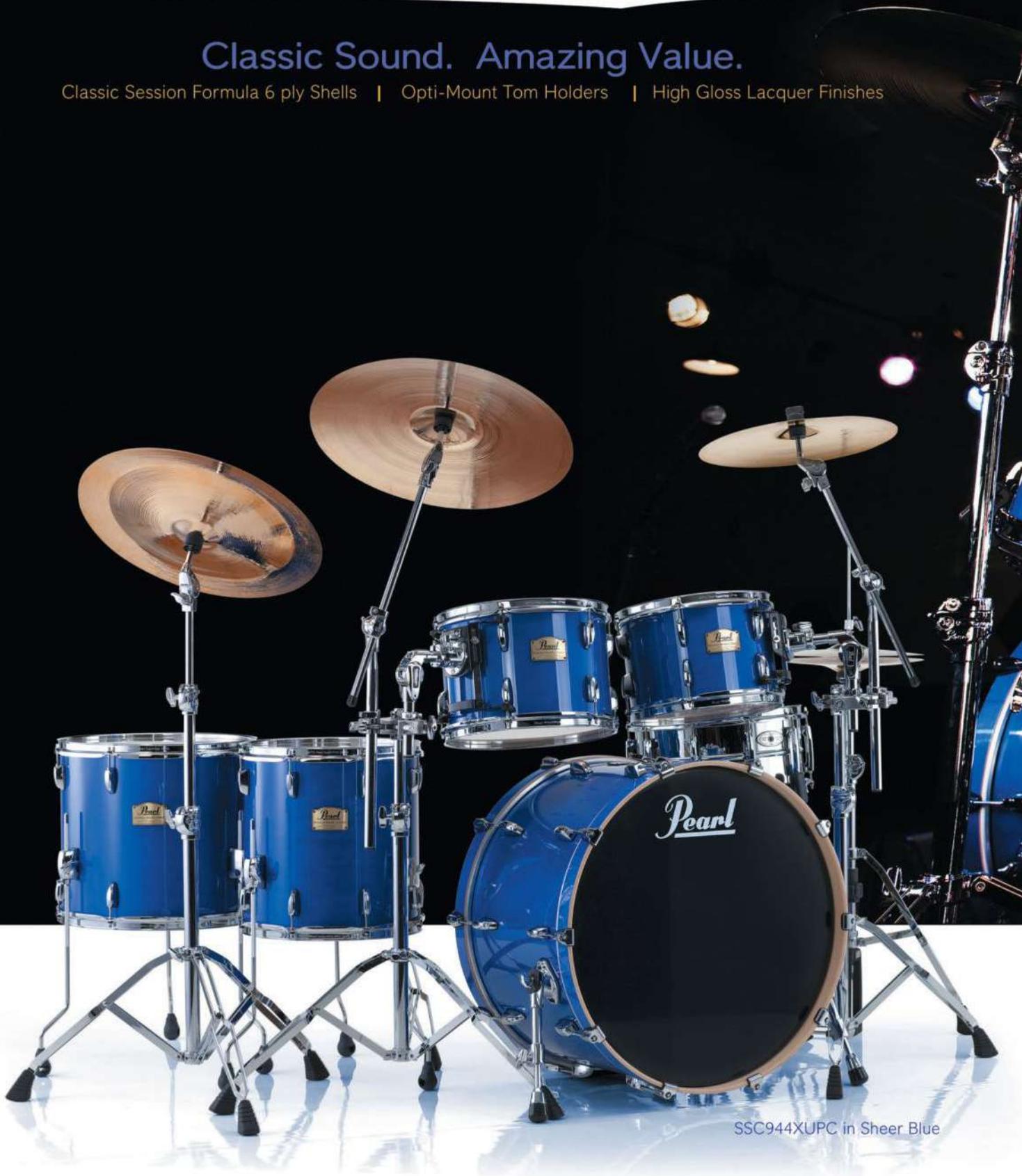


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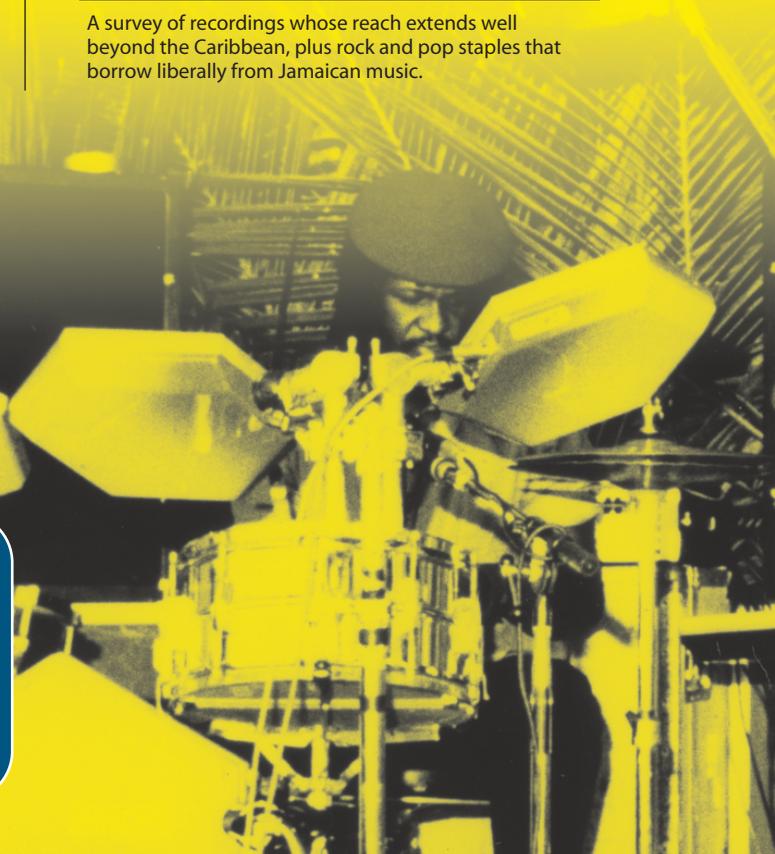
A survey of recordings whose reach extends well beyond the Caribbean, plus rock and pop staples that borrow liberally from Jamaican music.

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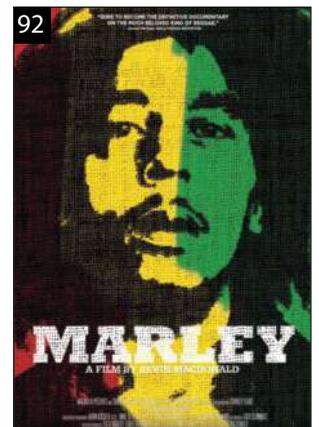
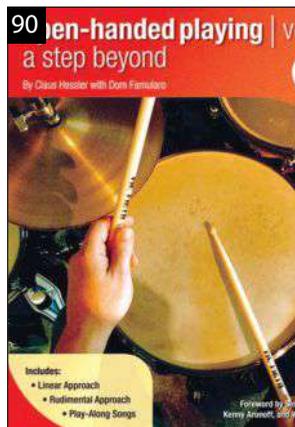
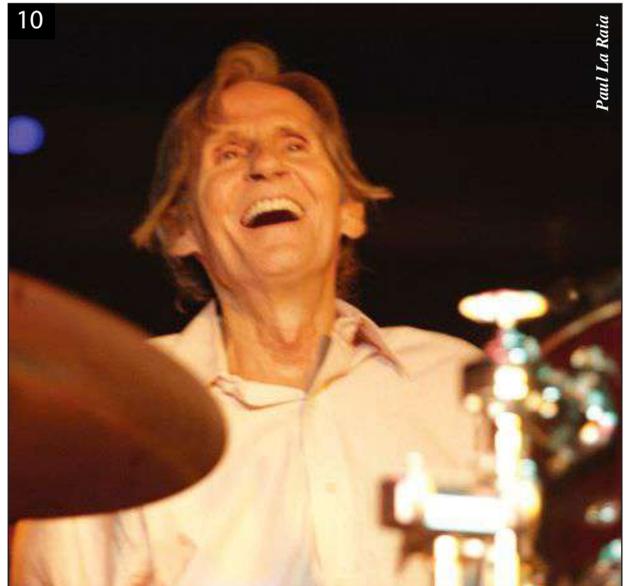
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# Why Learn Reggae Drumming?



I used to wear this Bob Marley T-shirt in high school all the time. For some reason, wearing that shirt made me feel more relaxed, confident, soulful—kind of like the music on Marley's famous double live album, *Babylon by Bus*, made me feel when I listened to it, which I also did a lot.

No matter how much I loved that music, though, I was still treating it like a commodity, never fully investigating the grooves, the history of the people who invented it, or the Rasta philosophies that so deeply inform much of it. Later, when drumming became a bigger part of my life, I began to understand that it was all far heavier than I'd thought.

"You can't fake reggae, like you can't fake swing," says Gerald Heyward, one of several MD Pro Panelists we spoke with this month about the subject. "You have to really shed, and you have to study the culture to really get to the music. Once you learn the culture, the music will come."

Eventually I joined a group that played some 2 Tone music, the "second wave" ska style popularized in the late '70s in Britain by bands like the Specials, the English Beat, Madness, and the Selector. But listening back to a tape of one of our shows recently...yeah, I sounded okay in a kind of bar-band-drummer way, but there were elements of the groove that I definitely wasn't concerning myself with. Since ska didn't make up the bulk of our material, I was content to sort of fake it.

In retrospect, I was doing myself and the music a disservice. "When you decide to become a professional musician, it's your duty to learn as much as you can about every style of music that you might conceivably get called to play," Jim Riley says. "Every bar band I've ever played with had a few reggae songs in the set. And you can't overestimate the influence of reggae music on other genres, from rock to pop and, yes, even country."

"Even if you're not into reggae," Bob Gatzen emphasizes, "it's worth giving it your attention. It's a wonderful 'displacement' exercise where the rhythmic pulse is accented on the 'e,' '&,' and 'a' in both 3/4 and 4/4 meters."

If you still aren't convinced that learning authentic Jamaican grooves will up your game, take the word of jazz great Antonio Sanchez. "Even though I mostly play jazz," Antonio says, "I've always loved listening to and learning different genres. When I was a student at Berklee, I would do gigs with steel drummers from the Caribbean, and they wanted me to play the real reggae and soca beats, so I had to study all of that. Now it comes in very handy, because it's become part of my vocabulary, and I can apply it in different ways to the original music that I play with different jazz bands nowadays."

This special issue of *Modern Drummer* was conceived with two goals in mind: to shed light on the beauty of Jamaican drumming and the remarkably skilled players who fed its evolution, and to help non-Jamaican drummers bridge a gap—to get to a point where they're playing *inside* the music, rather than *at* it.

To help us with that mission, we worked very closely with Pro Panelist Gil Sharone, whose recent *Wicked Beats* DVD and clinic appearances have already done so much to elevate the skill level of those who are interested in being not just the best reggae drummer they can be, but the best drummer, *period*.

"Discipline, consistency, confidence, coordination, taste, independence, feel, versatility, understanding space, rhythmic vocabulary—these are the crucial things that studying these styles can bring to every other style of drumming," Sharone says. "It'll also improve your endurance. When I played with Eek-A-Mouse, we would jam tunes that would go on for eight minutes with no breaks. To play a 16th-note hi-hat groove at a good tempo, not giving your right hand a rest...even my shins were burning from closing the hi-hat so tightly!"

Any drummer who's seen Gil shred with heavy contemporary bands like Dillinger Escape Plan or his own Stolen Babies knows that he's not overstating the case here. Truth be told, studying traditional Jamaican grooves can help you push your jazz, rock, and other drumming skills as far as you want to take them. So school yourself, dig in, and improve. We hope this issue represents the beginning of a wonderful journey for you.

*Adam Budofsky*

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# Love for Levon

When Levon Helm of the Band passed away on April 19 at age seventy-one, the drumming world lost one of its most distinctive voices. At the MD offices, words of affection began pouring in immediately. As we prepare a full tribute for an upcoming issue, we'd like to share these thoughts from friends and fans.

Along with music fans around the world, I mourn the passing of the great drummer and singer Levon Helm. His was a special talent: the ability to bring unequivocal honesty to every note that he sang and every beat that he played. That talent was a major ingredient in the success of the Band, the stellar roots-rock group whose repertoire included the Levon-sung classics "The Weight," "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," and "Up on Cripple Creek."

Later in his life Levon delved even deeper into the historic roots of American music. He won a Grammy Award for Best Traditional Folk Album for his 2007 studio album, *Dirt Farmer*, and his 2009 album, *Electric Dirt*, won the first-ever Grammy for Best Americana Album. He took home the same award for his 2011 live album, *Ramble at the Ryman*.

Levon had an affinity for Gretsch drums throughout his career, and I'm proud to say that he became an official Gretsch artist a few years ago. Whether behind those drums or behind a microphone, Levon Helm was immediately identifiable and totally unmistakable. I'm saddened by his passing, but I celebrate his life and his unique contributions to American music.

**Fred W. Gretsch, president, the Gretsch Company**

I'm in Woodstock this week, and his vibe is still here—memories all over town. Hearing some funny stories too. I saw him play many times over the years, and it's hard to hit a drum without thinking of Levon. He always had the meat.

**Pat Mastelotto, drummer with King Crimson and Mr. Mister (via Facebook)**

Every stroke I roll is influenced by Levon Helm. Godspeed.

**Roger W. Downs (via Facebook)**

An underappreciated, underplayed band led by a drummer with a distinct style and an unmistakable voice. A true classic-

rock legend who will be missed and certainly remembered.

**Michael Losquadro (via Facebook)**

Levon Helm was the best singing drummer in the world, period. He inspired me at a very young age to sing while playing drums. The thing about Levon was that when he sang and played at the same time, neither suffered one bit. This is not an easy thing to do. He was such a soulful musician and person, with an unbelievable feel and musicality.

In my early days of playing drums with Sheryl Crow, I had the unlikely pleasure to play with Levon. He was very complimentary and encouraging. We were playing a few songs together for a TV show. It was Levon, Sheryl, James Taylor, and Steve Winwood. Levon was happy for me to play drums while he was on mandolin. I have nothing against James Taylor, but the whole time while rehearsing, he kept trying to get Levon behind the drums. Levon was not having it, but Taylor just wouldn't let it go. Finally, in front of everyone, Levon said, "I think my man Jim has it well taken care of back there." Discussion over! Needless to say, as a young drummer, getting the thumbs-up from one of my heroes made an impact on me from that day forward.

I always go back to *The Last Waltz*. You watch that movie with all these legendary players, and the one person that stands out is Levon Helm. He was a star among the stars!

**Jim Bogios, singing drummer with Counting Crows**

I can't imagine a world without Levon Helm. The magic he created with his drumming and voice is hard for me to even fathom. Several years ago, I had the rare privilege of getting to know the man. I was initially awestruck at being in his presence, but he quickly put me at ease as only he could. There was that familiar twinkle in his eye, along with an



Paul LaRocca

approving nod, making me feel like I'd always been a part of his family. As a fellow drummer, I was blown away that he treated me like a peer and would always spend a generous amount of time shedding his light on the instrument, his own lineage, and the stories behind some of the greatest music ever made.

More than anything, that was his core: selfless, straightforward, and unabashedly the genuine article. In 2003, after I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, it was on Christmas Eve that my phone rang, out of nowhere. It was Levon on the other end, saying: "Hey, Bobby, this is a brother of the drum, and you stay strong, ya hear?" Here he was, one of the foremost musicians of our time, taking a moment out of his life, while battling his own lethal illness, to help me. And there were plenty more occurrences like that. Just being in the same room with him could inspire you forever. Now I'm alternating between tears and laughter, reflecting and giving righteous thanks to an icon, mentor, and friend. God bless you, Levon. The pleasure has been all ours.

**Bob Girouard, MD contributor**

Levon's ability to place the beats in a very clear and deliberate style influenced thousands of drummers. Bruce Rowlands from the Grease Band and I with Juicy Lucy took his approach on board. A great drummer and writer, and a very nice man. Very much missed.

**Rod Coombes, drummer with the Strawbs and Stealers Wheel (via Facebook)**





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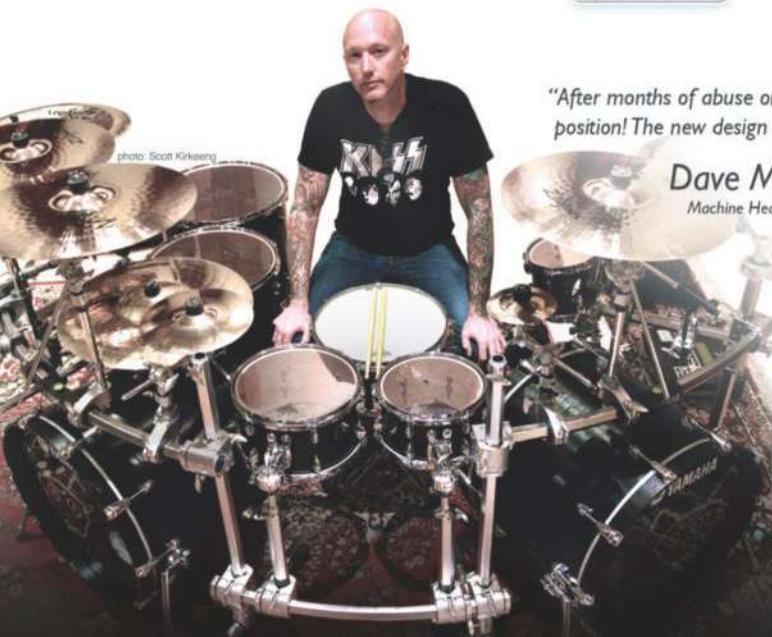


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# Rocking Steady

Jamaica found its musical voice in the late '50s by blending island folk music with swing and R&B from the States. Today's reggae artists continue the tradition of musical mixology by fusing the skank with hip-hop, rock, and other contemporary styles. *MD* regular **Robin Tolleson** digs deeper with four modern rhythmic interpreters.

## Damian Marley's Courtney "Bam" Diedrick

Courtney "Bam" Diedrick never knows what Damian "Junior Gong" Marley is going to throw at him next. Last year it was the Distant Relatives project with Nas, as well as SuperHeavy with Mick Jagger, Joss Stone, A.R. Rahman, and Dave Stewart. To the twenty-nine-year-old drummer, the right groove comes down to preparation and, he says, "playing with intention and playing from your heart—that's the difference." Diedrick has stayed busy in 2012, working with the globally attuned Playing for Change Band and touring behind Marley's smooth dancehall hit "Affairs of the Heart."

Diedrick was born in St. Ann, Jamaica. His father insisted that Courtney and his brothers take piano lessons. At thirteen the youngster discovered a new talent. "All of my brothers took a try around the drums to see who was going to play them," Diedrick recalls. "When it was my turn, they were like, 'Whoa.' There was something different. I switched to drums right there." Growing up, Courtney studied rudiments with Deleon White (Dubtonic Kru), had a mentor in the Jamaican drummer Squidly Cole, and, he says, "listened to Sly & Robbie a lot."

Later Diedrick attended the Edna Manley College of Performing Arts in St. Andrew, Jamaica, for three years. "I studied Latin,



Julian Schmidt

funk, jazz, and different time signatures," he says. "I know there are a lot of drummers who think that going to school for music takes away from your playing. But it helps you to appreciate other musics and understand them better."

The snare and kick provide reggae's heartbeat, according to Diedrick. "That creates the hammer sound, a combination between the rimclick and the bass drum," he explains. "When you're doing fills, whether you do the five-stroke or the four-stroke, or maybe a simple drag, it's mainly the snare that does the talking. I do a lot of experimenting, finding ways to fit the rudiments into our music."

Diedrick warns against playing too busily

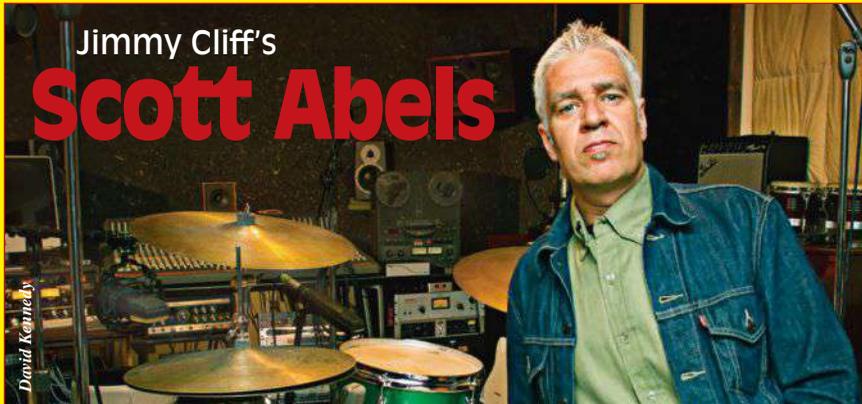
in reggae. "The more fills you do, it's like, 'Okay, it's just a lot of fills now, so I'm not listening to them anymore.' The fewer fills you do, the more they'll feel it."

On the Distant Relatives tour, Diedrick laid down the perfect pocket for Nas's hit "If I Ruled the World." "Hip-hop drummers aren't joke drummers, so you've really got to step up your game," he says. "I've always loved funk, but I had to do a little study on that. I used a deep second snare on my left on songs like 'Strong Will Continue' and 'Road to Zion.' On a couple tracks we incorporated reggae, like 'Land of Promise.'"

On "Strong Will Continue," Marley leads the group into an aggressive dancehall groove. "I usually play that a little stronger, to get the attention," Diedrick notes. "Sometimes it's spontaneous, depending on what Damian wants at the time."

For the SuperHeavy project, Marley brought along Diedrick and bassist Shiah Coore. "Mick Jagger asked Damian to get his dub sound," Diedrick explains. "They wanted the elements of reggae, the bass and the drums, added to rock." Jagger was very involved in the sessions, according to the drummer. "He knows what he's doing. He suggested a few patterns, and I tried things and he was like, 'That's it!' And when we added it to the music, trust me, that was it."

## Jimmy Cliff's Scott Abels



David Kennedy

"It's one thing to try to emulate Lloyd Knibb, but I don't see many people pushing it further," says drummer Scott Abels. "I can play you fifty Skatalites tracks right now, and they're all different."

Abels, a Fresno, California, native who has become something of a Jamaican music historian, recently landed a dream gig with the legendary Jimmy Cliff. "It's amazing the stories I hear and the things I learn on a daily basis playing with Jimmy," he says.

The drummer developed his chops in his high school drum line. His interest in Jamaican music began after he heard British

# Marley Brothers Vet Dave Simmons

**"Y**ou're speaking a language," says drummer Dave Simmons of the art of reggae drumming. "It's about complementing the music, the artist, the song, within that language."

Born in Detroit to Trinidadian parents, Simmons soaked in the sounds of Motown early on, and he loved the Afro-Cuban-based soca and calypso rhythms of the Caribbean. ("Intense and entertaining," he describes, "and very danceable.") He also watched his older brothers and sisters play music together. "I did my share of air drumming and practicing on my mom's furniture," Dave says. "I played with them whenever I got the chance. My brothers would sneak me into clubs to see professional guys, and I was hooked."

After moving to Miami when he was twelve, Simmons played reggae and Caribbean music with his brothers in a band called Force and studied the reggae greats Lloyd Knibb, Steve Nisbett (Steel Pulse), Willie Stewart (Third World), and Sly Dunbar. "I recommend Carlton Barrett to understand the one-drop—and the kotch, where the one-drop lies," he says.

Ky-Mani Marley heard Simmons playing with the Florida reggae group Broken Sound and invited the drummer to join his backup band. "That's where life started to change," Dave says. "Reggae is really all about your feel and groove and the many ways to play certain grooves—one-drop, steppers, the walk, different feels that create the language of reggae."

Simmons worked with Ky-Mani for several years, and then went on to back up brothers Stephen, Damian, and Julian Marley. "Their dad laid the scene," Dave says, "but what was so inspiring with the kids was that they had their own personal identities, and they weren't afraid to venture out and write music that they wanted to write. I loved that."



Correspondingly, the Marleys didn't insist on traditional reggae tones. "The brothers do things that are more crossed over," Simmons explains. "They like the sound of the drums ringing out a little bit more, and higher-pitched toms. With Ky-Mani and Damian I started using 10", 12", 14", and 16" toms. You just want the drums to speak, and having bottom heads on and tuned, you're able to translate a lot better."

"I respect the music, and I pay attention to detail and the drummers that paved the way," Simmons adds. "They dug that I could do the whole electronics thing too. In reggae you hear dub sounds, delays and reverbs on the snare. To reproduce that I put triggers on my drums or triggered from a pad. I learned how to sample and stack drums. I have dub snares, big gated-reverb snares. And I learned how to fly drum and percussion loops and mesh all the sound effects together."

Since working with the Marleys, Simmons has backed other reggae artists, like Yellowman, Lloyd Davis, UB-40's Ali Campbell, and Admiral Bailey, and recently he worked on a reggae tribute to the Who titled *Out Here in the Fields*.

2 Tone bands such as the Specials and Madness. "I got heavily into jazz, 2 Tone, reggae, ska, soul, and funk," Abels recalls. "I tried to go more for the feel and groove. Some looseness and rawness, unrefined—that's how I approach the drums to this day."

After moving to L.A., Abels joined the ska/reggae/rocksteady group Hepcat, then the Aggrolites. "I love Jamaican music," he says. "It's a group feeling, and when everyone's feeling it, it's really good. It's a different feeling from most other kinds of music. There's a funkiness in the drums."

Abels was working on tracks with Cypress Hill's DJ Muggs when he got a call from musician/producer Tim Armstrong (Operation Ivy, Rancid) about working with Cliff, and last year they recorded the EP *Sacred Fire*, covering the Clash, Rancid, Bob Dylan, and Joe Higgs. A new full-length album is all Cliff compositions. To re-create the drum sounds of his favorite period of reggae—the mid-'70s era, epitomized by Cliff's music on the seminal soundtrack to the film *The Harder They Come*—Abels uses concert toms and a '60s round-badge Gretsch bass drum, with black-dot heads.

## NEWS



God Forbid drummer **Corey Pierce** has launched a weekly podcast series called *Real Jersey Guys*. According to

Pierce, "The podcast is all about everyday guys who are saying the things that lots of regular guys think. We want to open some eyes and have some laughs." A new episode will be posted each Wednesday at [rjg.podhoster.com](http://rjg.podhoster.com).

Guitarist Adrian Belew, bassist Tony Levin, and drummer **Pat Mastelotto**



return to the Full Moon Resort in Big Indian, New York, August 13–17, for the second annual Three of a Perfect Pair Music Camp. For more information, go to [threeofaperfectpair.com](http://threeofaperfectpair.com).



Italian police have confirmed that drummer **Giuseppe Girolamo** was among the fatalities surrounding the sinking of the cruise ship *Costa*

*Concordia* near Giglio Island, Italy, this past January 13. Girolamo, who was playing with the ship's orchestra, reportedly offered his seat on a lifeboat to a child. Several weeks later, during a concert on Dream Theater's Italian tour, singer James LaBrie dedicated the performance of "The Spirit Carries On" to the courageous drummer.

## ON TOUR

**Joey Kramer** with Aerosmith /// **Xavier Muriel** with Buckcherry /// **Ed Graham** with the Darkness /// **Robert Sweet** with Stryper /// **Brendan Buckley** with Leehom Wang /// **Steve Rodford** with the Zombies /// **Jeff Friedl** with Puscifer

"I have a studio and am forever recording drums," he says, "and I like the vintage sounds, the big open sounds in the ska era. I can get all the rocksteady tones, all the reggae tones."

Abels says Cliff made him feel very comfortable in the studio. "It's a 'This is our music, [but] it's for everybody' kind of vibe. Everybody should be able to play it. We wound up knocking out a bunch of songs on the last day because we had hit this vibe. I was watching Jimmy singing live when I was tracking, and it took my playing to another level, I know that."

# Rebelution's Wesley Finley

While earning a cultural anthropology degree at UC Santa Barbara, Wesley Finley took every world music class he could. There, the seeds of his popular reggae band Rebelution were planted. "I met [bassist] Marley Williams in a world music class," the drummer says. "And he had just met our singer, Eric Rachmany, in music theory. They connected on the reggae note, and I connected with them through the rock music I was into—Dredg and a lot of harder music."

Finley grew up in Monterey, California, developing a love of wind ensemble and marching band. He didn't play drumkit seriously until college. "A percussionist brought some African drums to world music class and asked if anybody wanted to come up and solo with him," Wesley recalls. "I thought it would be fun, and I went off on a few log drums and then sat back down. Marley Williams turned around and was like, 'Dude, do you have a drumset?' I brought it down the next weekend, and we started playing together."

"Sky Is the Limit," the first single off Rebelution's new album, *Peace of Mind*, perfectly illustrates the group's rhythmic blend, with Finley slamming a hip-hop



Jimmy Iles

beat under a reggae groove. "After progressive rock, underground hip-hop is [what I listen to most]," he says. "I get the simplicity of beat making through listening to that stuff, and I adapt fills from rock. I stand out in this genre because I'm not playing traditional reggae drums. It's a hybrid."

"Meant to Be" is a big, funky groove with stops in the beat. "It's taking whole elements in and out," Finley explains, "just to expose other ones, almost in the dub style. I love creating gaps and doing cymbal holds. It's a big sound, collectively."

"There's a lot of negative music out there," Finley adds, "and I'm a fan of a lot of that. But what we pull from reggae is that youthful positivity."

## OUT NOW



### CDS

**Steve Smith and Vital Information** Live! One Great Night (Steve Smith) /// **Rush** Clockwork Angels (Neil Peart) /// **Smashing Pumpkins** Oceania (Mike Byrne) /// **The Grip Weeds** Speed of Live (Kurt Reil) /// **To Speak of Wolves** Find Your Worth, Come Home (Phil Chamberlain) /// **Pennywise** All or Nothing (Byron McMackin) /// **Spectrum Road** Spectrum Road (Cindy Blackman) /// **Joe Jackson** The Duke (Dave Houghton) /// **Tedeschi Trucks Band** Live: Everybody's Talkin' (J.J. Johnson, Tyler Greenwell) /// **P.O.D.** Lost in Forever (Wuv Bernardo) /// **Nile** At the Gate of Sethu (George Kollias) /// **Lettuce** Fly (Adam Deitch)

## WHO'S PLAYING WHAT



**Peter Erskine** is now using Protection Racket cases.

New to Sabian's artist roster are **Monty Bradford** (Chris Young), **Maurie Kaufmann** (Lights), **Benjamin Callahan** (Group 1 Crew), **Isaiah Johnson** (independent), **Moritz Müller** (the Intersphere), and **James Varnado** (Dickey Betts & Great Southern).

Recent additions to Paiste's endorser list include **Craig Monika** (Thousand Needles in Red), **Dino Verdade** (TriOficial), **Henry Hinno** (Shanon), **Benjamin Farrugia** (Inna Modja), **Rustam Ishmuratov** (Tishina), **Primoz Storman** (Tabu), **Fernando Arias** (Oviedo Filarmonia), **Miguel Angel Lloreda** (independent), **Michael Blair** (Hugh Laurie), **Richard Colburn** (Belle and Sebastian), **Simon Hartop** (Junkstar), **Eric Adams** (independent), **Mike Avenaim** (independent), and **Marty Erspamer** (the Dirty Pearls).

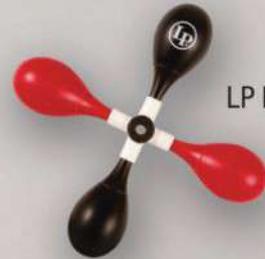
New Vater endorsers include **Chris St. Hilaire** (the London Souls), **Brittany Brooks** (Cee Lo Green, independent), **Chris Knight** (LeAnn Rimes), **Michael Crevier** (Burning Spear), **Ben Antelis** (the New Velvet), **Elliot Babin** (Touché Amoré), **Greg Petersen** (Evaline), **Steve Port** (Polar Bear Club), and **James "JT" Rollerson** (Far East Movement).

**REGAL TIP**  
by Calato

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# Must-Have Gear

Equipment the Pros Won't Leave Home Without



## This month: LAMB OF GOD'S CHRIS ADLER

Obviously you can't check a drumkit on a plane, and extra baggage costs. The bottom line for me is paring down to the absolute necessities. I carry my **Starkey molded in-ear monitors**, my **Trick Pro 1-V longboard kick drum pedals**, and my **Mapex 5x12 Signature snare drum**. If I have those items, in most cases I can pull off what I feel are the essential unique elements of my playing.

It's not always perfect, that's for sure. Last time we arrived in Russia, there were two bass drums of different sizes and colors

that we had to use to build the kit. Far from ideal, but my essentials made me as comfortable as possible, considering the situation.

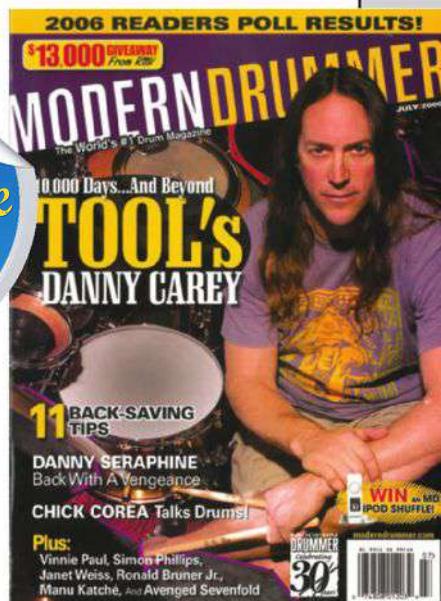
Years ago I carried much more; I considered just about everything essential. As I've gained experience, I've learned that the perfect setup doesn't always make for a perfect performance. And sometimes the challenges involved with the inconsistencies in gear end up helping you grow as a player. It's true when they say that a good carpenter never blames his or her tools. Get in, kick ass, and get out. More gear time equals less beer time.

Interview by Mike Haid



## Back Through the Stack

In July 2006 we asked **Tool's DANNY CAREY** about acquiring and maintaining power and speed at the kit.



Relaxation is the key. When I was younger I tried to play fast, and I would tense up. You have to be relaxed and calm, and you have to hear what you want to play in your head before your hands can do it. If it's not in your head first, then your hands can't do it. Even if you can, it will be some mechanical nonsense that no one is going to want to hear anyway. Your spirit has to be involved. I wouldn't even *suggest* playing fast if you aren't feeling it in your heart.

Playing tabla has taught me to relax a lot more. It's also helped me with my speed and stamina. I used to think that drumming was about really strengthening your hands. But it's more about being able to relax your hands to where the force is coming from your center all the way to the tips of your fingers. Having your arms, forearms, and wrists relaxed allows the power to be transferred right to the tip of the stick. It's a challenge to be that limber and coordinated.

To read the entire Danny Carey feature—and all the other great material from the July 2006 issue—go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) and click on the App Store link.



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## TECHNOLOGY CORNER by John Emrich

# Dynamic Response and Drum Modules

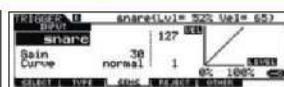
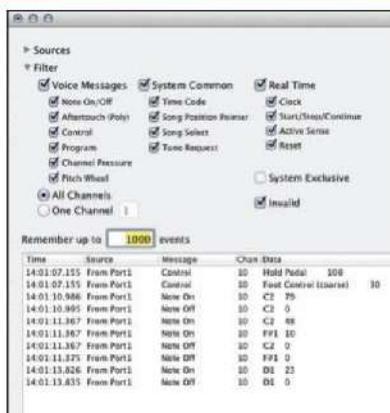
**Can you help me set up my electronic drum module so that it responds to my playing dynamics as accurately as possible?**

There are two scenarios that we should talk about when it comes to setting up your electronic drums for dynamic response: whether you use the internal module sounds, or you use the module to trigger VST instruments like BFD2, Superior Drummer 2.0, or other computer programs. Each scenario will require different settings in the module to get the best dynamic response.

Let's start by working with internal, or module-based, sounds. A very common mistake e-drummers make deals with the gain settings for the pads. Increasing the gain can give you a false sense of dynamics. Yes, it makes softer strikes more audible, but it also condenses the dynamic range so that louder velocities peak out sooner. You'll actually achieve more accurate results by not cranking the gain setting too high. I've seen people try to set their levels by playing as softly as they can, even using finger strikes. In a real performance, you almost never hit the pad that softly. You want to set those parameters under real playing conditions to get the maximum dynamic range from the module.

There are two basic pad types: rubber and mesh. The sensors on a rubber pad are closer to the center of the drum. Keep that in mind when setting the gain sensitivity for the pad. You may not want to play at the extreme edge of the pad, because you're moving away from the sensor and you might start having notes drop out. With a mesh head, you have a different issue. The majority of mesh-head drums rely on a center post that holds one of the trigger sensors. Hitting that sensor dead on will produce the highest velocity. A lot of people complain about this hot spot, because it can lead to a machine-gun effect. The simple fix is to avoid hitting the head right on the sensor every time. Save that spot for only your loudest strikes. Playing just a little off center will get rid of most hot-spot issues.

Earlier I mentioned that these settings will be slightly different if you're using your module to trigger a computer VST program. In this situation, a lot of the sonic adjustments will be made in the software. There are a couple of free downloadable programs that will help you out when setting the levels. MIDI-OX (for PCs) and MIDI Monitor (for Macs) will give you real-time feedback on the info the module is sending to the computer.



Here's the Trigger Input window from the Yamaha DTX900 drum module. The velocity output of a pad strike is shown in the upper-right corner. In this case, a medium-loud strike produces a velocity of 65 (out of 127). Increasing or decreasing the gain will affect the relationship between how hard you strike the pad and which velocity number is output from your module.

**MIDI Monitor software displays all the MIDI information that comes into your computer from your drum module, including note numbers and velocity (shown in the far-right column under the Data heading).**

You want to set up your pads with a gain setting that reaches the highest velocity level (127) only on the hardest hits. In fact, I recommend setting the maximum velocity at 125. The reason is simple. Most people hit harder when they're actually playing music than when they're setting up the gain parameters. As you adjust the module's settings, use the MIDI monitoring software to check your levels. (I suggest not even listening to the sounds when you do this. Believe it or not, your ears can trick you.) Once you have the levels dialed in to respond best to your playing style, you'll get the most out of your software. Remember that you're playing an electronic instrument, and there's no one-size-fits-all setting for every drummer. Take the time to get these gain settings configured correctly in order to have the most realistic and enjoyable experience.



**John Emrich** is an expert in the field of electronic percussion. He has produced sample libraries on FXpansion's BFD2 and Eco platforms and has produced products for *Modern Drummer*, Platinum Samples, Bosphorus, Mapex, Alesis, Pearl, WaveMachine Labs, Native Instruments, Yamaha, and Zildjian. For more info, visit [johnemrich.com](http://johnemrich.com).



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**TAMA****Starclassic Select Walnut Drumset**

by David Ciauro



As I was setting up these absolutely stunning Starclassic Select drums, I couldn't help but be taken aback by their beauty. The deep-brown, satin-finish walnut shells have such a rich quality, which is elevated—in killer fashion—by the black-nickel hardware. The drumset is exotic, enigmatic, and elegant. These drums simply don't give off the vibe of being bright and lighthearted; they're dark, brooding characters that ooze coolness and have that kick-ass-and-take-names persona.

**TUNE 'EM DOWN**

Taking some tuning tips from Gil Sharone's contributions in the Get Good column of the May issue of *MD*, I first tuned the batter and resonant heads of the kick, rack toms, and floor tom finger-tight. About a quarter turn to a half turn later, the 14x16 floor tom was on point, and the 18x22 kick drum was nearly there, but I needed to put a small pillow inside to control the overtones. The results were explosive! There was an enormous amount of low end, along with a clarity that I hadn't heard in a long time—if ever. Even with a few wrinkles in the heads, the tone of the walnut came through, rather than just the slap of the attack off the slack batter head.

The 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms produced the same results, but they needed an extra quarter or half turn before the heads began to resonate harmoniously with the shells. Once the toms were dialed in, the kit came alive, providing nothing less than a thrilling playing experience.

Impressively, the stick response was barely affected by the slackened heads, and the walnut shells seemed to naturally embrace lower frequencies, making doubles comfortable to execute with clarity and definition. As I experimented with different tunings, I noticed that the low end remained present across the tuning spectrum. The tone didn't thin out or change drastically as I increased the head tension. Instead, the low end remained densely concentrated, creating a simultaneously

boomy and punchy tone with a nice touch of top-end cut.

**MATCHING SNARE**

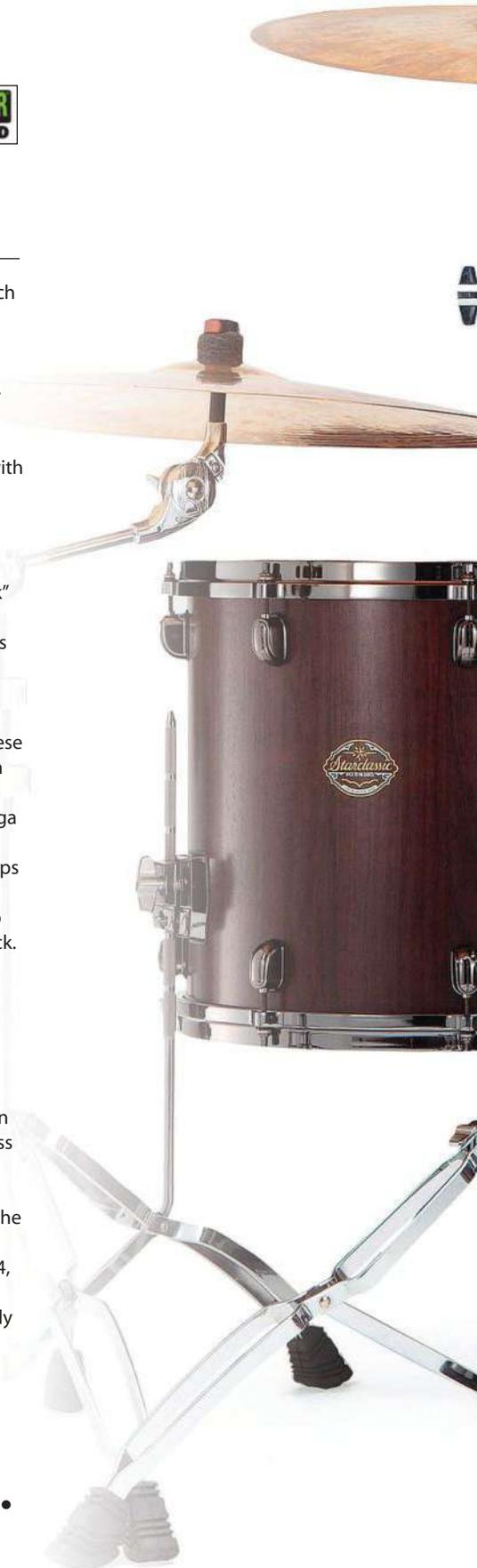
The matching 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 14 walnut snare complemented the kit superbly. Again, the lower frequencies inherent in the wood itself made for a very controlled sound with attenuated lower mids, which beefed up the attack through all tunings. Medium tensions had a bursting quality, with a dusky, warm decay, while tightening the batter head revealed a balanced "thwack" led by a sharp attack. The drum's crisp snare response strengthened grace notes and helped keep the sound lively.

**HIGH-END APPOINTMENTS**

Starclassic is Tama's flagship line, and these limited edition Select walnut drums are a fitting addition to the current lineup of bubinga, maple, and hybrid birch/bubinga configurations. All Starclassic snares and toms come with die-cast hoops. The hoops were a flattering choice to accompany these walnut shells, as they tightened up the overall tonality and focused the attack. Rounding out the kit are air-cushioned floor tom legs, Hold Tight washers on all tension rods, Star-Cast tom mounts, and unique spur brackets and claw hooks on the kick drum. The Hold Tight washers lived up to their name, as I never had to tighten any of the lugs after playing, even when I had the toms tuned slack. The bass drum claw hooks feature a wonderful design that allows you to change out heads without having to remove any of the tension rods. The toms came with clear Evans G2 batters, the kick had a clear EQ4, and the snare had a coated G1 batter.

Starclassic Select walnut shells are 6-ply and 5 mm for the snare and toms, while the kick is 7-ply and 6 mm. The kit can be purchased as a shell pack or with the matching snare. The four-piece shell pack in this review (WN42ZBNS) lists for \$4,615.37 without the snare.

**tama.com**







# VIC FIRTH

## Signature Series Drumstick Additions

by Stephen Bidwell

**V**ic Firth has a quintet of new signature sticks created with the help of established heavyweights and new stars. While the sticks were designed for the particular needs of these individual artists, they may offer a new solution—or a refreshing change—for your hands and your sound. Also new from Vic Firth is a compact stick bag meant to hold the bare necessities.

### GAVIN HARRISON

The Gavin Harrison model was the biggest surprise of the review group. At 16<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" long, it has a contour more reminiscent of a stick designed for orchestral players. Half of the stick has been dipped in blue Vic Grip, a water-based anti-slip coating. The short taper in the shoulder, blended tip, and medium-weight hickory allowed for a comfortable balance and surprisingly dynamic playing despite the model's larger overall size. The contour allowed for a variety of different rimshots, from a "ping" played all the way at the tip to a uniquely soft full shot if you strike

the rim with the Vic Grip coating. The grip assisted in maintaining a good hold with sweaty palms.

### HARVEY MASON

Harvey Mason's second Vic Firth signature stick, dubbed the Chameleon, is like a stretched-out version of the drummer's existing signature model, but in a natural finish and with a more articulate tip. At 16<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" long and .540" in diameter, it's an optimal choice for pop and funk. The short taper in the neck and oval-shaped tip allow for rimshots of all shades, clean and tasty hi-hat work, and consistent rim-clicks no matter which end you hold the sticks from.

### GEORGE KOLLIAS

George Kollias is known for his serious technical prowess in the extreme metal band Nile. His new signature stick is a hybrid of a 5A and a 5B that's clearly built for speed. At an even 16", with a brief traditional taper ending in a barrel-shaped tip, the stick was a good fit for more than just metal. Knowing Kollias's work, I attempted some blast beats, one-handed rolls, and fast flurries around the kit. The

stick handled those with its comfortable weight and a tip that produced a focused and full sound on all surfaces, while having just the right balance for rock or funk styles. If you're looking for help in the endurance department, or simply for something with a solid balance and touch, this is a great new option.

### GREGG BISSONETTE

Also on his second signature model, Greg Bissonette has a new Backbeat stick that's in essence a shorter 5B, at 16", but half of the stick is dipped in black Vic Grip for extra traction. The Backbeat also has a short taper in the neck, making it more top heavy. This front-loaded quality provides a fuller sound when taking the shank to a cymbal bell, but it also seems to allow for highly consistent rimshots, as the model's name would indicate. A larger acorn-meets-barrel-shaped tip, combined with the front-weighted design, necessitates more effort in executing articulate passages, but these sticks make easy work of straight up-and-down rock time. The Vic Grip doesn't let the sticks get away from you.

### KEITH CARLOCK

Keith Carlock recently joined the Vic Firth team, and his signature model measures in at around 16" and has a medium-length taper leading to a small acorn-style tip. The unique tip provides a full but focused sound on drums and cymbals, and while the stick feels like a 5A, its smaller tip and more extreme taper allow for great rebound on any surface—much like a lighter jazz stick. Uncharacteristic for Vic Firth, this particular model has a thick lacquer coating, per Carlock's specifications. If its distinctive design gives any insight into how to groove like Keith, this stick is certainly worth checking out.

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



### ESSENTIALS STICK BAG

**At roughly half the size of a typical stick bag**, this new compact version holds about five pairs of sticks or any combination of implements that takes up the same amount of space. There's also a pocket that's big enough to hold some earbuds, plus a loop of elastic to hold your drum key. While this might not be your everyday utility stick bag, it would be great for casual gigs—or you could just leave it in your bass player's car for that one time every couple months when you leave your sticks or brushes at home.



# ZILDJIAN

## K Custom Dark Complex Rides and Hybrid Trash Smash

by Michael Dawson



Three of the more interesting pieces that Zildjian has released this year are the medium-thin 21" and 22" Dark Complex rides and the funky-looking 19" Hybrid Trash Smash. All three cymbals fall in the K Custom series, which is where Zildjian's Sound Lab places unique designs that offer modern sounds while still carrying the traditional K flavor. Although at first glance these cymbals may seem to be one-dimensional and of limited application, what we discovered was a different story altogether.

### 19" HYBRID TRASH SMASH

The 19" Trash Smash (\$582) was designed, in conjunction with Japanese drum star Akira Jimbo, to provide an aggressive, trashy sound with more sustain and musicality than a China. Like all K Custom Hybrids, this cymbal features a two-tone surface, with the bell and interior bow being roughly hammered and unlathed, while the edge and outer bow are lathed and hammered like a standard K. Unique to the Trash Smash is the inverted "volcano" cup, which Zildjian previously employed on its Z3 Chinas. The cymbal also features eight strips of deep underside hammer marks splaying out from the bell to about 1" from the edge.

The Trash Smash is thin in weight, so when crashed it opened up very quickly,

with a dense, China-like voice, but the decay was much longer and the overtones were richer. We also found that we could get a nice, articulate ride sound when playing the cymbal on the bow and bell, because the wash—though trashy and funky—was surprisingly controlled. You could feasibly use this cymbal as an alternate ride sound in lower-volume situations, and when really spanked it sounded great for explosive accents and noisy crash riding. In a recent session with a Queens of the Stone Age-meets-Morphine rock band, the Trash Smash provided the perfect complement that simultaneously blended and cut through chunky guitar riffs and heavily distorted bass tones. I foresee drummers of all types getting good use out of this funky-looking beast.

### 21" AND 22" DARK COMPLEX RIDES

Heeding the request of artists looking for a more "Turkish sounding" cymbal, Zildjian created the 21" and 22" Dark Complex rides (\$671, \$731). Both are medium-thin in weight and feature extensive hammering across the entire surface, including the bell. They're unlathed but have what Zildjian calls a proprietary satin finish, which gives them a smooth, slightly shiny appearance and also helps control the spread while accentuating stick

definition.

The pitch of both cymbals was very low but not murky, and the bells were much stronger sounding and more defined than those on most thinner, heavily hammered rides. Interestingly, the bell on the 21" model was lower-pitched than on the 22".

The stick attack on the Dark Complex rides was strong and clear but not overly dry. The dark, smoky wash added a complex bed of undertones yet stayed out of the way, even at higher volumes. Shoulder strikes brought out a wide, hollow crash that died down very quickly. I usually try to manufacture that type of response by applying a bit of tape to the underside of one of my thinner rides, but this was unnecessary with the Dark Complexes. The 21" version was a bit more focused and cleaner sounding, while the 22" had a more prominent, breathier wash.

Small-group jazz drummers will love these cymbals for their pinpoint articulation, soft feel, and complex tonality, while harder-hitting funk, fusion, rock, and studio drummers will find that the rides offer all the dark, trashy characteristics of a traditional Turkish-style cymbal, only with more control and an elevated volume threshold.

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



# EVANS

## G14 Clear and Coated Drumheads

by Michael Dawson

Evans recently expanded its single-ply G series to include the G14, a 14 mil drumhead that's available clear or coated. The G14 is the thickest single-ply head that Evans offers. (The G1 is 10 mil, and the G Plus is 12 mil.) Sonically, this new model is said to have "a dark tone with enhanced mid-frequency response to cut through the mix." The thicker film is also said to increase durability. The G14, which is designed for snare or toms, is available in 6" to 20" sizes. We were sent a set of clear tom heads and a coated version for the snare.

### CLEAR TOM BATTERS

I was anxious to test the clear G14 drumheads on my toms, because I've never had any luck with standard-thickness clear single-ply heads in the past; they just seem too "boinky" when tuned anywhere above medium tension and too flappy at the lower end of the spectrum. My hope was that the thicker 14 mil film would help focus the tone a bit while also making tighter tunings sound richer and fuller.

I put the clear G14s on 13" and 16" birch toms and tuned them slightly higher than usual to see if they sounded choked. (I tuned the top and bottom heads on the 13" drum to the note C and both heads on the 16" floor tom to G.) The 13" drum sounded very comfortable at that tension. It had a pointed, quick attack, and the resonance was pure, round, and rich. The floor tom sounded somewhat restricted tuned that tightly, so I backed

off the G14 about three-quarters of a key turn. There, the drum opened up with a fat, round tone, plus a crisp stick attack and a deep, chesty punch. The sustain didn't linger forever with either drum, and the decay was quick and even.

As I tightened the G14 batter on the rack tom, I discovered that the head could go quite a bit beyond the point where others start to thin out. (Some drummers like that sound, and it's commonplace in bebop, but I prefer a rounder, earthier tone from my toms.) When I backed off the tension on the G14, the tone fattened up and became punchier and darker. The head started to distort at its lowest possible pitch, but all it took was about a quarter turn on each tension rod to clear up the tone and get back to a fat, unrestricted, pure sound.

Another impressive thing about the G14 is that it didn't require any muffling at any tuning. If you want a more controlled Steve Gadd-like tone, you could get that easily by adding a thin muffling ring. But without any dampening, the heads had a nice combination of semi-bright attack and full, open sustain.

So, did these models make me rethink my opinion on using clear single-ply tom heads? Well, let's just say I don't plan to take the G14s off my drums anytime soon.

### G14 COATED SNARE BATTER

The coated G14 is available in a range of sizes, but for the purpose of this review we wanted to focus on how it fared on a

6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "x14 black-nickel-over-brass snare. Tuned super-tight, the G14 sounded crisp and articulate, with bright—but not overbearing—overtones and a nice thick tone. I didn't feel the need to muffle the head, but all it took was a fingertip-size piece of tape or Moon Gel to shorten up the decay. The head responded great to light ghost strokes and buzz rolls, and the coating was evenly applied yet rough enough for full-sounding brush sweeps.

Center strokes on the G14 produced a very dry, clean sound, and off-center hits introduced more pitch and overtones. The sweet spot for lighter orchestral-style playing—where you want a bit of tone from the shell to sing through—was a few inches in from the edge. Surprisingly, the feel of the head didn't change much as I backed off the tension, and the overtones remained balanced and focused across all tunings. I prefer a fat, punchy snare tone, so I've had to get used to a more pillowy feel with a standard single-ply batter, which often has to be tuned lower than usual to get that sound. But with the G14, I was able to find that deeper tone without having to detune the head quite so much.

If you're looking for a snare head that has the crisp response of a traditional single-ply model, but with a slightly denser tone and controlled—yet not pre-muffled—overtones, Evans' coated G14 is highly recommended.

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# SYNESTHESIA CORPORATION

**Mandala Drum mk2.9** by Michael Dawson

**W**e reviewed the Mandala 2.0 electronic drum back in September 2008, and we were inspired by its unique design, which involves 128 concentric circle triggers placed beneath a 12" playing surface. That configuration allows you to control different sounds, effects, and MIDI parameters (volume, pan, pitch, etc.) by changing where you strike the pad and how hard you hit it. The Synesthesia Corporation recently made a few major updates to the Mandala, including more powerful and user-friendly Virtual Brain software and an improved playing surface. Let's take a look.

## SOFTER AND MORE RESPONSIVE

We felt that one of the shortcomings of the Mandala 2.0 was the hard plastic Simmons-type pad. The mk2.9 has a much-improved playing surface made of Neoprene, which has the softness of a thick mouse pad. This new surface not only feels better to the hands, but it's said to add up to three times more sensitivity as well. The company also added a trigger so that the rim can now be struck to play different sounds, and the mk2.9 features a simple cymbal-stand thread mount on its underside.

The trigger rings on the Mandala 2.0 were grouped into seven zones emanating from the center to the edge. The mk2.9 has only four groups (plus the rim). While this may seem like a downgrade, what we found was that the seven zones on the earlier model were a bit too close together to be struck accurately. The four zones on the mk2.9 proved to be much easier to target, and we didn't feel we'd lost any functionality.

The response of the pad is similar to that of a medium-tuned snare—soft but with enough rebound to execute fairly tight buzz strokes. The body of the Mandala resonates a bit more while being played than the bodies of other electronic pads do, so this is not the quietest electronic drum on the market. But it does play as naturally as mesh-head or rubber-pad options offered by other companies.

The Mandala mk2.9 is a USB MIDI controller, so it has to be interfaced with a computer in order to be used, either with the included Virtual Brain software or other music production programs. For greater setup options, you can link as many Mandala pads as your computer has USB ports. (The Virtual Brain software offers independent controls for up to three pads.)

## RETOOLED, FRIENDLIER INTERFACE

The interface of the Virtual Brain software for the Mandala Drum has been completely reworked. The main window now has drop-down menus to select from dozens of presets for up to three pads. Each trigger zone has a drop-down menu to assign an individual sound, plus independent volume, pan, and pitch controls. Each zone also has a drop-down menu for effects. You can layer and control two effects (overdrive, bitcrunch, flange, etc.), plus reverb, for each zone of the pad. In the Tones tab, you can apply a defined scale pattern to each zone. Scale options include major, melodic minor, and blues major, among others, and scale patterns include up-and-down waves, up, down, and random. You can choose the starting pitch, as well as the size of the scale

steps and the range.

The Effects tab allows you to apply up to three effects, plus reverb and limiting, to the entire pad. Other global parameters include low-pass filtering and a velocity curve builder, which allows you to draw in your own shape to determine how the pad responds to your playing levels.

The presets in the Virtual Brain software range from abstract textures (including Aqua, Predator, and Darth Vapor) to acoustic drum and percussion samples mingled with effects (such as Djembe 12 Brush, Snare X1, and Tom X1). Individual sound options for each zone range from basic drumkit components and ethnic percussion instruments to digital noises, synth pads, and various melodic instruments. You can also drag and drop your own samples right into the trigger-zone window for a completely customized setup.

You can use the Mandala Drum mk2.9 as a simple electronic pad to trigger one-shot sounds from the included library or from your own collection, but where this drum steps away from others is in its ability to create unique and slightly unpredictable sounds by applying various effects and MIDI controllers (like effects level, pan, and pitch) to the different zones of the pad. You could easily lose yourself for hours as you dig deeper and deeper into the seemingly unending capabilities of this one-of-a-kind instrument. One Mandala Drum mk2.9 with Virtual Brain v3.0 software lists for \$349. A dual pack, which includes two Mandalas, is \$666, and a three-pack is \$969.

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



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# GEARING UP

Drumkit Details,  
On Stage and Up Close

# MIKKEY DEE

Motorhead's



Interview by Dave Previ • Photos by Jim Jones

**Drums:** Sonor SQ2 birch with custom Motörhead

- A. 7 1/4" x 14" Mikkey Dee signature snare
- B. 10x10 tom
- C. 11x13 tom
- D. 12x14 tom
- E. 16x16 floor tom
- F. 16x18 floor tom
- G. 16x22 bass drum

"This is the same setup I've been using since playing with King Diamond," Dee says. "It's a very '80s kind of drumkit. I've been varying between 22" and 24" kick drums over the years. With Dokken, I used 24" drums. They seemed to fit better musically because they're a bit boomier. The 22" kicks are tighter and faster."

"My toms are set up fairly flat. That makes me sit up straight, which helps me withstand these long tours. I get more power this way as well. I really want to dig hard into the drums. Setting them up this way, I have to hit them from above."

"This snare is very warm sounding. You can hit it hard and get so much out of it without having too much tension on the heads. When it's tuned right, it sounds like a cannon."

**Cymbals:** Paiste Signature series

- 1. 14" Sound Edge hi-hats
- 2. 18" Power crash
- 3. 19" Power crash
- 4. 18" China
- 5. 10" splash
- 6. 20" China
- 7. 14" Thin China
- 8. 20" Power ride
- 9. 10" bell
- 10. 20" Power crash
- 11. 16" Power China

"I added some smaller China cymbals to help me get groovier and more dynamic with my playing. They add a little color to the already cool black-and-

white picture.

"I like my cymbals far away, so I have to stretch out between hits. The 18" crashes are very fast and loud. They're very crisp and nice to hit—not too hard and not too soft."

"The ride cymbal is crucial to me because I play a lot of quarter notes on the bell, so I need something that has a nice mix between bell and cymbal sound. I can't have the cymbal bleeding out when I play those quarter notes, and I like to have a nice-sounding cymbal to tick away at too."

**Hardware:** Sonor Signature stands (from the '80s), DW 5000 single-chain pedals

"I'm still using Sonor Signature hardware. The stands are super-heavy and have lasted forever. Some of these stands are from the King Diamond days."

**Sticks:** Wincent Mikkey Dee signature model

"Every drumstick's weight is distributed differently. Even though two sticks weigh exactly the same, they feel different, depending on where the dense part is located in the wood. I'm a bit picky, so I use three different stamps on the bottom of my sticks to indicate the weight. For the songs that have more 'ting-a-ling' lighter stuff, I can look down and grab a lighter stick for my right hand. If I'm playing a lot of quarter notes in my right, I'll grab a heavier stick. If there are a lot of ghost notes in my left, I'll grab a medium stick."

**Heads:** Remo CS black-dot snare batter and Ambassador bottom, Clear Ambassador tom batters and bottoms, and Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and front head

"The black dot centers the sound and also gives the head a little bit of a longer life span. And I like to use a Danmar pad on the bass drum heads for a little bit of click. In the old days, we used to tape a coin to the heads, but we don't do that anymore."



Bob Marley's

# Carlton Barrett



The songs of **Bob Marley and the Wailers** spoke a passionate message of political and social justice in a world of grinding inequality. But it took a powerful engine to deliver the message, to help people to believe and find hope. That engine was the beat of the drummer known to his many admirers as "Field Marshal."

by Jeff Potter

**R**arely does a drummer's work so clearly define the sound of a genre, but Carlton "Carly" Barrett is one such player. His irresistible, deep-pocketed, slinky locomotion is immediately identifiable throughout the world and is synonymous with the uplifting, transporting sound of Bob Marley and the Wailers, the global ambassadors of reggae. Barrett absorbed what came before him, evolved it, and sculpted an archetype for reggae's sound, feel, and vocabulary.

The teamwork between a bassist and drummer is often referred to as a "brother" relationship. With the Wailers, this was literal. Carlton's comrade in groove was Aston "Family Man" Barrett, his older brother, and together they became one of history's most influential rhythm sections. With Bob Marley and the Wailers, they were the backbone of the first Jamaican band to go global, spreading their healing groove far and wide.

Carlton Barrett was born on December

17, 1950, and raised in the ghettos of Kingston, but he never let life's hardships derail his dreams. Aston worked at a welding shop, where he jerry-rigged a makeshift bass guitar with plywood and a two-by-four neck. Stretching a curtain cord over a wood ashtray bridge, Aston fashioned a usable one-stringer. Keeping up with his big brother, Carlton scavenged various paint cans and constructed a kit topped with a street-salvaged cymbal. The Barrett groove was born.

Later, armed with honest-to-goodness instruments, the duo teamed with neighborhood youngsters and formed the Hippy Boys. Another later-famous reggae figure, Max Romeo, landed a gig at the Baby Grand Club and enlisted the unit. Carlton seized this opportunity to exercise and polish his "one drop" beat night after night. The band nicknamed him "Oney." It was his personalized one-drop that would later become central to the Wailers sound.

The Hippy Boys' intersection with destiny was their collaboration with musician, producer, and mad genius Lee "Scratch" Perry. In 1969 Perry and his studio house band, the Upsetters, had scored a number-

five hit on the U.K. charts with the double A-side single "Return of Django"/"Dollar in the Teeth" and were planning a six-week tour. Due to scheduling conflicts, the Upsetters couldn't commit, so Perry drafted the Hippy Boys to play under the Upsetters banner.

The wiry, eccentric producer was impressed with the brothers' commanding groove, and upon returning to Jamaica he hired them—along with band members Alva Lewis (guitar) and Glen Adams (organ)—to be his new Upsetters. Recording behind a steady stream of local acts, the brothers further strengthened their mighty locomotion. Carlton's early infectious drumming from this period can be heard on *Upsetters A Go Go*. A host of rootsy hits ensued, including the Uniques' "Watch This Sound" and the Harry J. All Stars' "Liquidator." The Barretts' winning groove was now highly in demand.

A particularly promising local act that was catching constant airwaves approached Perry for studio time. With its personnel in flux, the group was down to a trio and sought to use the Upsetters rhythm section. Previously calling them-

selves the Teenagers, the Wailing Rudeboys, and the Wailing Wailers, the young trio—Peter Tosh, Bunny Wailer, and Bob Marley—was now simply known as the Wailers. Carlton and Aston Barrett were excited to be working with the group, having been fans of the Wailing Wailers' big local hit, "Simmer Down." But it took their unparalleled feel to complete the formula that would yield unparalleled success.

The Wailers were thrilled by the new recruits' input and invited them to join as full-fledged members. Miffed at losing his prize players, Perry assembled a third version of the Upsetters that included the young heir to Carlton's seat, Sly Dunbar.

The Perry-produced Wailers tracks are some of the grittiest and funkier in the band's canon. Barrett's sweaty, locked-in, slow-groove cuts of this era are well exemplified by *Soul Rebels* (1970) and a compilation of sides, *African Herbsman*, that contained original versions of many later-rerecorded megahits.

The Wailers' rise to international acclaim came with the release of their first major-label album, *Catch a Fire* (1973). It was the first time Jamaican musicians had access to major studios and the promotional machine of the rock world—a potential target forseen by the record companies. Following quickly was the hits-rich *Burnin'* (1973), which ramped up the band's fame in the States.

A major hurdle popped up when Tosh and Bunny Wailer departed the band, bound for solo careers. Still bolstered by the brothers' groove, the unit continued under the Bob Marley and the Wailers moniker. With the charismatic leader taking on a greater role, they released a fur-



ther succession of Carly-fueled reggae classics, including *Natty Dread* (1974), *Rastaman Vibration* (1976), *Exodus* (1977), *Kaya* (1978), *Survival* (1979), and *Uprising* (1980). In addition, outstanding concert albums were issued, including *Live!* (1975) and the powerful and influential *Babylon by Bus* (1978). The band's catalog remains one of the most successful in popular music. The greatest-hits collection *Legend* (1984) alone has sold well over 25 million copies.

In a 1983 *MD* interview, Barrett offered a discography footnote that "nobody knows," revealing that the Wailers did not play on a few of Marley's tracks. The second side of

*Survival* (starting with "Africa Unite") featured a different band, including Mikey "Boo" Richards on drums. Barrett explained that outside influences had encouraged Marley to test different waters. "But after Bob hear the results," Carly concluded, "he realize the Wailers the best reggae band in the world." Barrett also laid down his impeccable beats on Tosh's first solo disc, *Legalize It* (1976).

"Field Marshal," as Carlton was nicknamed, applied a variety of rhythms, both traditional and hybrid, to the Wailers sound. But his calling card remains the one-drop that he evolved and popularized via the megastardom of Bob Marley and his band.

The origin of the one-drop has been debated endlessly. Barrett is often credited as the originator, and Aston has insisted the same in several interviews. But the local music surrounding Carlton had certainly been ingrained in him. He acknowledged being especially influenced by his mentor, Lloyd Knibb, of the ska pioneers the Skatalites. Winston Grennan, known for his drumming with Jimmy Cliff, Desmond Dekker, and Toots and the Maytals, had also laid claim to the "originator" title, and his contributions can't be denied. But many top local drummers peppered the stew. Setting the stage for all of them were the earlier beats of mento, the calypso-like Jamaican folk music, as well as the brisk rhythms of ska and mid-tempo rocksteady grooves.

Considering all the simultaneous cross-fertilization, it's difficult to pinpoint a specific one-drop moment of birth. But



To hear Carlton Barrett's early recordings with Bob Marley, including his groundbreaking work with producer Lee "Scratch" Perry, you can't beat the multi-disc collection *The Complete Bob Marley & the Wailers, 1967 to 1972*. In addition to enlightening liner notes, the set features rare photos, including this 1970 shot of Perry's Upsetters, whose rhythm section would form the nucleus of Marley's bands until the singer's death in 1981. From left: Aston Barrett, Carlton Barrett, Alva Lewis, and Glen Adams.

one thing is for sure: Carlton Barrett took the rhythm to an archetypal peak with the Wailers, and he popularized it to the world. Most of all, he applied a trademark loose, jazzy swing to the pattern, which influenced the sound of reggae. Aston Barrett has also cited the impact of funk, soul, and rhythm and blues on the brothers' groove.

The "official" way to count reggae (4/4 versus "cut time") remains a frequent debate. But that's all semantics—the groove remains the same. Unlike most beats in popular Western music, the one-drop doesn't place a grounding accent on 1 and 3 (when counted as a slow 4/4). Instead, those beats are unaccented, and the strong beats are on 2 and 4 (or on 3 if you're counting twice as fast, as in cut time). Those strong beats are accented by the bass drum and commonly combined with rimclicks. The effect is a funky, laid-

back, half-time feel.

Many of the classic Wailers hits are one-drop wonders, including "Stir It Up," "Get Up, Stand Up," "Waiting in Vain," "One Love/People Get Ready," and "I Shot the Sheriff." Even on early Perry-produced tracks, Carly experimented with syncopated variations of the one-drop, as in his funky original version of "Small Axe."

While Barrett's sensual, loping phrasing helped define the modern Jamaican sound, it also embodied a cultural and spiritual identity. In his *MD* interview, Carlton said, "It's a spiritual vibe that I try and get from my drums to the music. Because drums are from the slavery days and from Africa, it comes from a lot of history. The reggae drummer carries that history more than the guitarist or keyboard player, and the good reggae drummers make playing a spiritual experience."

Carly's infectious swing often straddled the nebulous cracks between straight-8th and triplet phrasing. This was pronounced in his hi-hat work. An especially influential innovation was his use of hi-hat triplets—whole and broken-up partials—laid across the beat, lending an African-like duple-against-triple tension. He applied that with a back-phrasing that leaned against the forward motion of the kit. Anchoring it all was his solid "Field Marshal" time. A strong example is heard on "Crazy Baldhead."

Another reggae fundamental, the stepper beat, was used effectively by Barrett. Playing four-on-the-floor quarter notes on the bass drum against the upper structure, Carly generates an urgent, driving feel, as opposed to the more relaxed nature of the one-drop. Classic examples can be heard on the hits "Is This Love," "Buffalo Soldier," and "Jammin'." "Exodus"

## Carlton Barrett's Beats Transcribed by Eric Novod

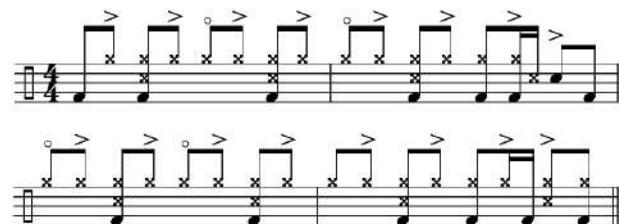
### Bob Marley and the Wailers, "Don't Rock the Boat," *African Herbsman*

This is an example of the classic one-drop, a groove where the bass drum slides over to overlap with the rimclick on beats 2 and 4. Notice the subtle hi-hat accents on the offbeats. (The one-drop can also be notated in cut time, with the bass drum and rimclick landing on beat 3.) (0:47)



### Bob Marley and the Wailers, "Concrete Jungle," *Catch a Fire*

This groove contains many funky developments of the one-drop. Notice the open hi-hats and the way Barrett plays similar rhythmic embellishments on beats 3 and 4 in the second and fourth measures. (2:01)



### Bob Marley and the Wailers, "Crazy Baldhead," *Rastaman Vibration*

This is Barrett at his most complex. Notice the incredibly nuanced choice to accent the two triplets on the "&" of beat 4 in measures 2–4, as well as the mix of 32nd-note and 16th-note-triplet syncopations throughout. (0:00)



### Bob Marley and the Wailers, "One Love/People Get Ready," *Exodus*

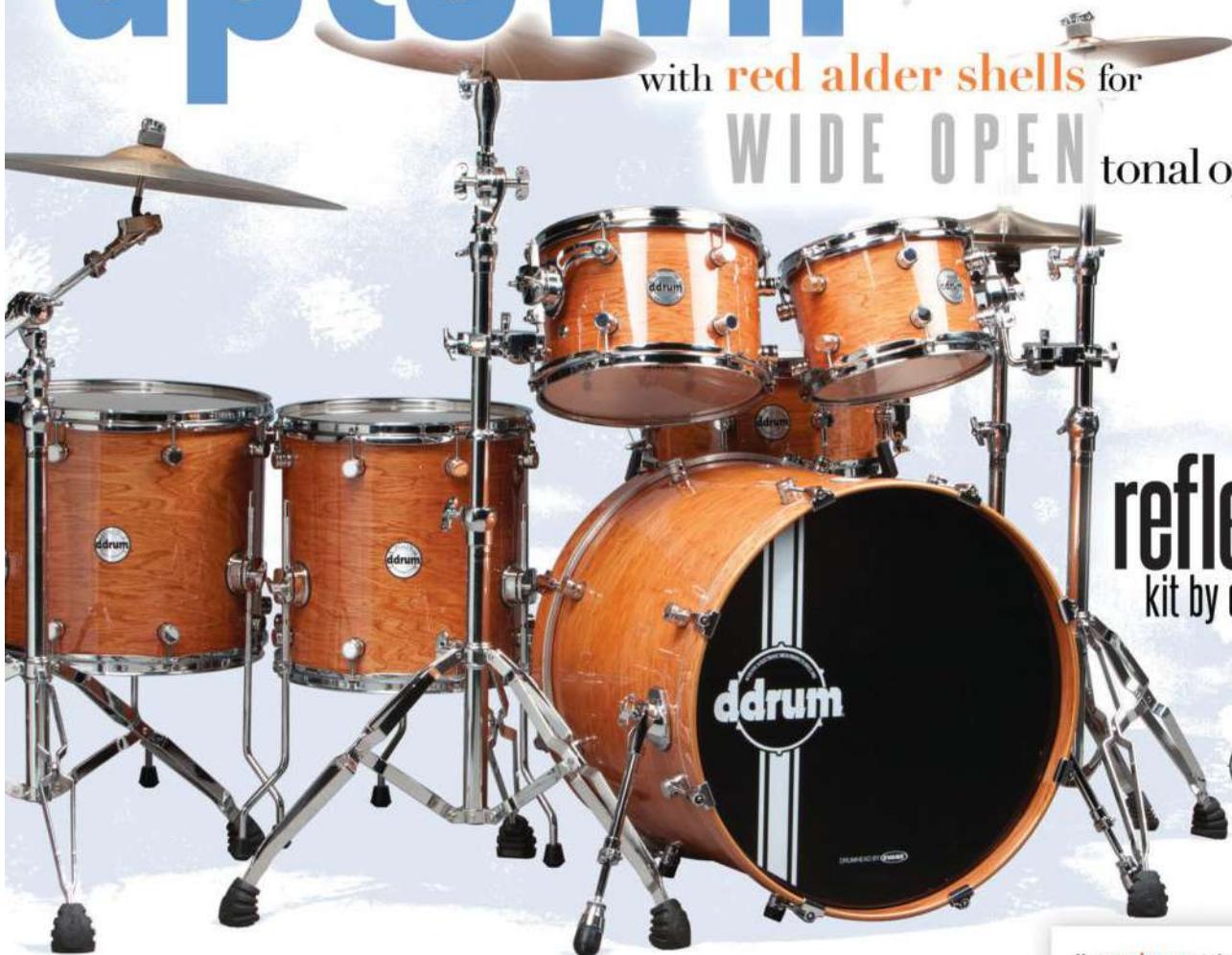
Barrett is an improviser through and through. Here's another example where he plays similar rhythmic ideas in the second and fourth measures. (1:00)



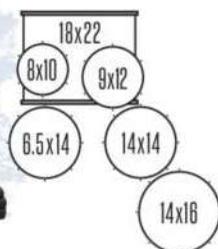
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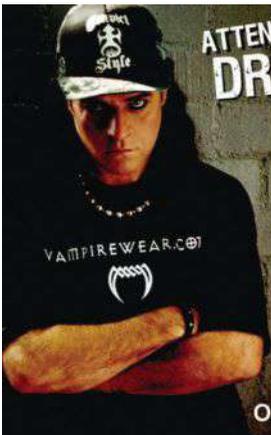
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## CARLTON BARRETT

exemplifies a potent use of the triplet hi-hat against the steppers drive, lending an unyielding tension throughout.

Despite Barrett's relaxed, loose feel, his technique was tight and precise, with little wash or "hangover." His remarkable rudiment-based, dancing fills served as kicking setups, especially in his trademark intro bars, which contrasted thuddy one-headed toms with a high, cracking, timbale-like snare. In fact, the syncopated setups and sudden quick accents on the "&" often suggested Latin influences.

For the bulk of his tenure with the Wailers, Barrett used a five-piece Ludwig kit. The head on his chrome snare was cranked to the breaking point, with snares off, producing a sharp bark that became an identifying sound of reggae. Along with the hi-hat, Barrett used two crashes. Consistent with his tight, crisp approach, he didn't include a ride cymbal. And crashes were avoided at fill climaxes. Carlton later switched to Yamaha drums but claimed the decision wasn't an issue of sound or quality. At that time, Yamaha was simply offering better equipment for the band's journeys to Japan and Europe.

After Marley succumbed to cancer in 1981, the Wailers carried on touring internationally. But well before the decade was over, Barrett's magisterial groove was tragically silenced. On April 17, 1987, the Field Marshal was gunned down on his own front lawn. He was thirty-six years old. Charged with the murder were Carly's wife, a man she was involved with, and an accomplice. Barrett's wife and her paramour were sentenced for conspiracy yet served only one year on a technicality. Carlton is one of three Wailers members—the others are Tosh and Junior Braithwaite—who have perished by gun violence.

Sly Dunbar lauded his fellow innovator in a 1985 *MD* cover story. "Carly was playing drums before I started," Dunbar said. "I used to admire him a lot, because the one thing about Carly Barrett is that he is a very original player. Carly always played drums the Carly Barrett way. Everybody, not just me, admires him for that. He was a big reason why the Wailers rhythm section always sounded so cool."

From streets of turmoil, Carlton and Aston Barrett and their bandmates gave joy to millions round the globe.

*Now feel this drumbeat  
As it beats within  
Playin' a riddim  
Resisting against the system*

—from "One Drop"



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# Jamaican

## THE EVOLUTION OF A STYLE

When Jamaica gained independence in 1962, its musicians reacted by inventing a rhythm style so unique and addictive, it helped an entire population find its voice. As the music evolved, so did its drumming. But the elemental Jamaican pulse remains at its core to this day.

In this exclusive interview, *MD* editorial director Adam Budofsky talks to Jamaican drumming expert and 2012 *MD* Pro Panelist **Gil Sharone** about the history and techniques of the classic styles ska, rocksteady, and reggae. What emerges is a drumming language full of excitement, mad invention, high style—and untold challenges.

**MD:** When does what we would recognize as modern Jamaican music begin?

**Gil:** In the early '60s, starting with ska. Before ska was established, the early Jamaican musicians were playing a lot of different styles. [Skatalites drummer] Lloyd Knibb would talk about how he played in bands in hotels and they were doing bossa novas, sambas, mambos, boleros, calypso, swing, and boogie-woogie tunes. All of these styles influenced ska.

Another hugely important influence on modern Jamaican music was the sound system. Guys would play records with enormous speaker systems on their trucks or in front of a store and battle about who had the best music. The three main producers who dominated the scene were Prince Buster, Duke Reid, and Clement "Coxsone" Dodd. They'd have people go to the States to get vinyl of all the happening stuff, and as soon as they brought the records back to Jamaica, they scraped off the labels so nobody could look at the turntable to see what it was. Whoever got the best reaction was the king of the sound systems.

**MD:** When do we first hear the recognizable elements of reggae?

**Gil:** The very tail end of the '60s into the '70s is when you really start to hear the transition of rocksteady into a more defined sound and feel that people know as reggae.

**MD:** In music it's usually tough to say who undeniably did this thing or the other for the first time. What about with ska?

**Gil:** Everybody will agree that Lloyd Knibb invented the ska beat in the early '60s. Coxsone and Lloyd were in the studio, and Coxsone was looking for a signature Jamaican sound, so he told Lloyd, "Switch the beat around," specifically in an attempt to discover a new feel to call their own. So Lloyd started playing around and came up with the signature hi-hat feel of the ska beat against the 2-and-4 backbeat. Some refer to the ska beat as the reverse or inverted shuffle, because of how the new hi-hat pattern felt. As soon as Lloyd put that stamp on the ska beat, it became the new sound of Jamaica. [To watch Gil demonstrate the quintessential ska



beat, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).]

**MD:** Besides the emphasis of the beat, we're also talking about the introduction of the snare or rimclick and the bass drum hitting at the same time, right?

**Gil:** Well, the 2-and-4 cross-stick in unison with the bass drum was played with the Jamaican boogie shuffle even before ska. The difference from the American feel was that the kick was played on all four quarter notes and the Jamaican boogie was focusing on the 2 and 4, which gave it a different feel. That groove, with a walking bass line and upbeats, or "skanks," played by the guitar, piano, and even horns, was the sound of the ska rhythm section. The upbeats are a huge staple of these Jamaican styles.

**MD:** On your DVD, *Wicked Beats*, you

# Drumming

describe how the evolution of Jamaican music was tied to cultural changes.

**Gil:** It definitely was. The music reflected what was going on socially and politically in Jamaica. For example, ska started right at the time of Jamaica's independence. It was a very happy time, and the music reflected that—it was upbeat, dancey. Reggae had more serious tones and reflected on issues like poverty, civil rights, racism, and spirituality. Reggae is very happy "irie" music as well, but you can see how the music directly reflects what the people were going through.

**MD:** What's clear from your performances on the DVD is that along with the tempo being faster than later drumming styles, it's more appropriate to play busier.

**Gil:** Yeah, with ska there are different fills, embellishments, variations that can seem busier, but what's tasteful about it is that the groove never stops. Even if I drop into four bars of [the pre-Jamaican African drum style] Burru inside a ska beat, or I'm riding the bell of the hi-hat, or I'm playing off what the soloist is doing, there's still that emphasis on the beat. As soon as you turn it into a drum solo that's not dancey, you're doing it wrong.

The later styles have plenty of complex patterns, they're just more subtle. I've seen so many people struggle with play-

ing a basic one-drop, let alone with adding all the nuances you can throw in.

There's a bunch of standard reggae beats that I've seen challenge advanced players in other styles. If you listen to half the stuff Carlton Barrett plays with the Wailers, there's a lot going on in his parts.

**MD:** After ska came rocksteady, which turned the tempo down a bit.

**Gil:** Right. Like we talked about, the music reflected the culture. In 1965, the musicians and the fans were feeling like they needed to add a slower, cooler feel to the dances to balance the up-tempo ska feel. Rocksteady did exactly that and also introduced the beat known as the one-drop.

**MD:** Can you define that?

**Gil:** Just like jazz has the swing pattern and Latin has the clave, one-drop is the essential basic underlying rhythm for rocksteady and reggae. Basically rocksteady was the ska beat slowed down, with a closed hi-hat and straight time. Now slow that down even more, and that's the reggae one-drop. There are a ton of busier hi-hat patterns and snare and bass drum variations. But the stripped-down one-drop of playing 8th notes—"One and TWO and three and FOUR and," with 2 and 4 in unison on the kick and cross-stick—that's the pulse that defines that music.

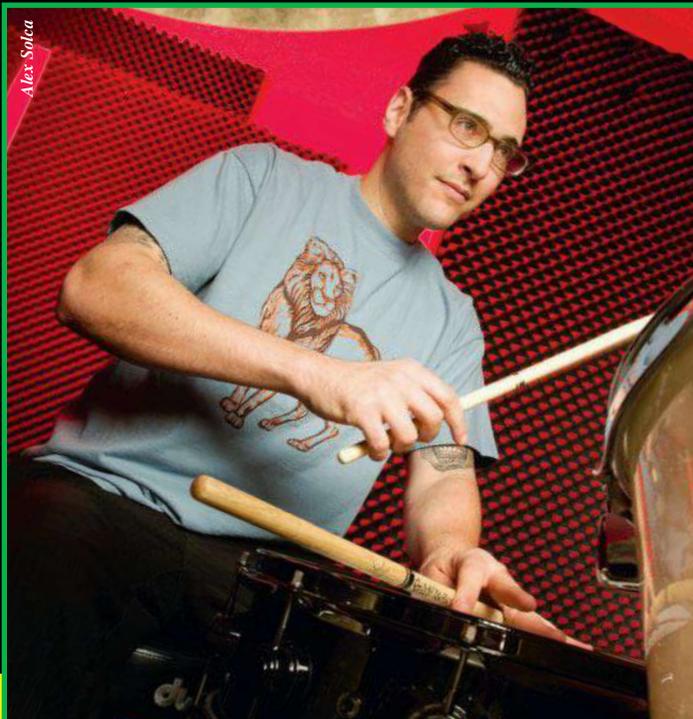
**MD:** Some people count it in half time.

**Gil:** Yes, some people do. People from the Caribbean hear the beats dropping on 2 and 4, though. They don't say, "Reggae is slow, so it changes to beat 3." But some people naturally feel the drops on beat 3, and I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I've even taught students that for the faster tempos, feel the drops on 2 and 4, and for the slower tempos feel them on 3, to help develop a heavier feel.

**MD:** For drummers who didn't grow up playing Jamaican music, it's not necessarily an easy thing to get your mind or body to drop the snare and bass drum together on the 2 and 4.

**Gil:** Very true. It's such a simple beat when you look at it on paper, but how you make it feel is where people struggle. I didn't learn these beats from reading them. I *felt* them. That's why I always say that before you even attempt to play it on the kit, you should just get to know the music. Learn how the beat makes you feel when you hear it as a listener. Internalize the pulse. I say the same thing when teaching odd time signatures.

There are some drummers whose idol is Neil Peart, and when they hear Elvin Jones for the first time, they don't like it or get it. But then later they're like, "Jazz is my life." Sometimes you need to just stick with



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## JAMAICAN DRUMMING

something until it hits you, and you start to appreciate and feel it differently.

**MD:** When does the three-over-two rhythm in the hi-hat start to happen, like what you hear Carlton Barrett doing on the Bob Marley stuff?

**Gil:** Three over two wasn't really in ska, though I'll actually play that pulse on the hi-hat as a variation. There are some of those examples in *Wicked Beats*. But Carly really made that sound a staple of reggae in the early '70s. Those rhythms are standard African pulses. When Santa Davis talks about Carly or polyrhythmic feels on the hi-hat, he says, "That's Africa." Carly definitely made that feel his own and influenced everyone who's ever played that beat after him.

**MD:** On the ska material, you play all over the surface of the snare. Same with the cymbals.

**Gil:** Yeah, that's to achieve a certain sound. You get a distinct sound when you hit a drum in certain places. I can play on the edge of the snare to get a certain crack and ring, or I can hit it dead center without a rimshot to get a different sound. Touch is important too. The more familiar you are with the music, the easier it is to make it sound and feel right.

In terms of the cymbals, one thing a lot of people don't notice is how busy my left foot is on the hi-hat. It's like the silent ninja. I'm moving things around on 2 and 4, or opening it on "e" or "&," even while I'm playing the hat on different surfaces. And you have to do that while keeping the bass drum consistent and the music dancing. So there's definitely a lot of independence and coordination involved. Balance too.

**MD:** How would you suggest practicing this type of playing?

**Gil:** If you talk to the Jamaican legends, they didn't practice all these independence exercises—it's just natural. So one thing I tell people is, don't try to break this down as an exercise. Just listen and absorb the music. You want to make it organic, not forced. When you hear Carly play, listen to how he orchestrates his parts around the kit—where he opens the hi-hat, where he does a roll, where he hits a cowbell. It's all very musical; he's not putting accents there just to do it. Like I said earlier, there can be a lot going on with these patterns. They're just played so tight and with such a hypnotic feel that most people don't notice what's really going on.

**MD:** The independence doesn't hit you over the head when you listen to the music.

**Gil:** Exactly, because it's not about that. Most reggae drummers won't talk technique with you. They'll talk more about the spirit of the music. They'll get deep about its history and its roots and what it means to them.

**MD:** How specifically does tempo define the styles?

**Gil:** Most Jamaicans will tell you that tempo is the first thing that differentiates the styles. But there is some crossover. There are up-tempo tunes that have more of a reggae feel than a ska feel, which can be determined not just by what the drums are doing but by what the bass and guitar are doing. But generally ska is up-tempo, rocksteady is slower, and reggae is the slowest.

**MD:** So what happens in the drums as the music changes to reggae?

**Gil:** Right off the bat, the tempos slow down, there's a lot more space in the music, and there's a different kind of tightness that ska and rocksteady don't really have. And the drums themselves sounded different, especially in



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## JAMAICAN DRUMMING

the '70s. The reggae kits weren't like the jazz setups of the '60s.

There was also a more militant feel to reggae that ska and rocksteady didn't have. The steppers and rockers feels came into play as well. The steppers pattern is when you're marching the bass drum on all four beats in a bar and hitting the snare with either a cross-stick or a backbeat. You can have a real militant steppers, like what Carly plays on Bob Marley's "Exodus," or a more swung steppers, like he plays on "Jammin'." Both songs still have a roots-reggae feel.

**MD:** In the mid '70s, the rockers style comes in.

**Gil:** Yeah, Sly & Robbie pioneered the rockers style, which in a real sense fused the rock influence with reggae and gave the music a whole new power. The overall vibe of the rockers pattern sounds like a basic rock beat, with the kick on 1 and 3 and a snare backbeat on 2 and 4. The difference is how it's played. Reggae has a tightness and power that you don't hear in most rock beats.

**MD:** What about the concept of pushing ahead or pulling behind the beat? Does

that apply?

**Gil:** There's no rule of thumb. It's all about what the bass is doing and the overall vibe of the song. I'll know as soon as I hear a song how I'll drive the pulse. Most reggae bass players that are aware of touch, tone, and feel play real behind, so you can lock with that however sounds best. As long as you're making the song sound how it's supposed to sound, that's the goal. If you're rushing and the bass player is laid back, that might not vibe well with people on the dance floor or with the rest of the band.

**MD:** What would you tell drummers who want to stretch the format of these styles? What do they need to keep in their playing to still be authentic?

**Gil:** The feel. If the feel is there, then you're able to establish a foundation that you can build off. When I play with the Western Standard Time ska big band, even though it's a very traditional project, I'm fusing a massive jazz influence in my fills and setups, but I can still call it ska and Burru because I'm keeping the characteristics and the feel authentic. I'm not bastardizing the style in a way that it's not authentic anymore. I respect the music.

So for any drummer who's just getting into it now, if you want to move forward, you've got to go backwards first. Just like jazz, learn where it came from, what it feels like, the essence. Then you can branch out and create a totally different thing, just like the bands of the 2 Tone and third-wave ska movements did. They listened to the original styles and fused them with their own influences while keeping the roots based in a Jamaican feel. Having passion for the music and doing your homework goes a long way.

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To see Gil Sharone demonstrate the musical examples he talks about in this piece—with the help of reggae legend Santa Davis, Adrian Young of No Doubt, and the late Lloyd Knibb—watch his DVD, *Wicked Beats: Jamaican Ska, Rocksteady & Reggae Drumming*. And to hear Gil and drummer Corey Horn driving the Western Standard Time ska big band, check out the album *Big Band Tribute to the Skatalites*.



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Judith Anderson

# LLOYD KNIBB: Ska Pioneer

**In the early 1960s, when Jamaica was liberated from British rule, the island's musicians were tasting musical freedom, experimenting with and synthesizing a number of diverse influences from their native Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa to create a new style of music called ska. Jamaica quickly became an incubator of talent, generating standout musicians such as the legendary drummer Lloyd Knibb, of the pioneering ska band the Skatalites. Knibb codified the archetypal ska rhythmic pattern, playing rimclick in unison with the kick on beats 2 and 4 of each measure and creating the signature hi-hat swing. He was a font of inspiration for scads of influential Jamaican musicians, who would co-opt, modify, slow down, speed up, remix, and sample his beats.**

Granted, Jamaica has produced other great drummers. Winston Grennan is often credited with creating the slower, heavier one-drop rhythm, which was popularized by Bob Marley's longtime drummer/percussionist Carlton Barrett, and Arkland "Drumbago" Parks projected a sense of playfulness with his use of Latin-esque percussion (as heard in the music of the Jamaican pop star and producer Cecil Campbell, aka Prince Buster). But Knibb's more muscular style, a fusion of Latin, African, and jazz concepts, contains a rare sense of adventure that has not been witnessed since. Simply put, aside from performing with a longtime friend, Skatalites bassist Lloyd Brevett (who died this past May), Knibb wasn't in lockstep with anything or anyone. Arguably, no single musician, and certainly no other drummer, has done more to establish and propagate the rhythmic vocabulary of ska and to lay blueprints for its popular musical offspring, reggae.

Knibb, who was born in March 1931, began playing on pots and pans, with a wooden box for a bass drum, in his onetime home in Trench Town, the storied southwestern region of Jamaica's capital, Kingston. Later, at a Rastafarian meeting, he was introduced to the traditional African hand drum called the repeater. As a teen Knibb observed Donald Jarrett, the drummer for Cecil "Sonny" Bradshaw (dubbed the Godfather of Jamaican Jazz), to learn swing, mambo, and other Latin styles.

"Lloyd's mother was Cuban," says Skatalites manager Ken Stewart, who first toured with the band as a keyboardist in the late '80s. "Lloyd talked about a farm where his mother worked and they held calypso dances."

Unlike many of his Skatalites bandmates, Knibb was not educated at the Alpha Boys School, a noted trade/music institution for the wayward. And Knibb distanced himself from the Rastafarian movement that so many musicians in Jamaica, including the Skatalites' troubled trombonist Don Drummond, had firmly embraced, a fact that may have offered him cultural objectivity.

In sharp contrast to the structured format of the Alpha school, percussionist Oswald "Count Ossie" Williams hosted jams with his Rastafarian Nyabinghi drum troupe in the hills near Kingston Harbor. It was most likely here, in the early '50s, that Knibb, who'd

then been playing with tenor saxophonist Val Bennett, experienced the full complexity of African polyrhythms.

"Knibb's unique style was a mixture of the Burru and Nyabinghi drumming brought to Jamaica by the slaves of Africa," confirms Jamaican-born bassist Phil Chen (the Doors, Rod Stewart, Jeff Beck). Knibb transferred West African rhythms to the drumkit on many tracks; check out the Skatalites' "Don De Lion," as well as Bob Marley and the Wailers' early-'60s recordings such as "Simmer Down," where Knibb plays an Afro-Latin pattern on what sounds like the bell of partially opened hi-hats, and "One Love," which throbs with Knibb's busy, heartbeat-like 8th-note kick patterns.

Knibb's style incorporated many rhythmic elements. His jazz and Latin slant is evident on Skatalites recordings such as "Tribute to Nehru," "Latin Goes Ska," and the turbo-charged "Ska-Ra-Van" (based on the famous Duke Ellington version of "Caravan"). According to Carlos Malcolm, a noted musical

rimshots, as heard on a variety of Skatalites songs, including "Guns of Navarone" and the comical "Lon Chaney."

"The rimshot is a good example of [Knibb's] unique style," the drummer's son Dion says. "When he played, you knew it was him."

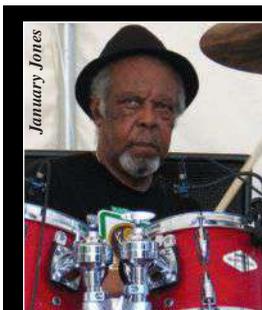
"[Knibb] would push the stick into the drumhead and pick it up again," Ken Stewart says. "I never could figure out how he did it."

By the early '60s, Knibb had become the house drummer for Kingston's Studio One, run by the iconic Jamaican producer Clement "Coxsone" Dodd. Under Dodd's tutelage, Knibb solidified the classic ska feel on recordings by Bob Marley, Prince Buster, John Holt, "Toots" Hibbert, and, of course, the Skatalites.

"I was in the studio, playing the same old boom-cha, boom-cha thing, when Coxsone Dodd said to me, 'I want to change the beat,'" Knibb recalled in a 2005 *MD* interview. "I remembered playing a lot of Latin and different kinds of tunes, so I came up with the second and fourth beat, and that was it."

A mastery of the ska feel also offered Knibb the latitude to explore subtle shifts in the placement of his rimclick swats, such as on the Afro-Latin-tinged Skatalites song "Chinatown." "It was like he took it as a challenge to see how many measures he could go without playing a simple quarter note on a downbeat," explains bassist/guitarist Art Cohen, who played with Lloyd numerous times as a member of Dion Knibb & the Agitators.

Knibb, who passed on in May 2011 at age



**"The members of the Skatalites were known as the best musicians in Jamaica," Gil Sharone says. "They were an all-star group that played on their own but also backed every legendary artist in Jamaica at the time. One of Lloyd's trademarks was the way he played a cross-stick. I've never seen anyone else use his technique or get the sound he did. It was an honor to have learned that technique from him. Lloyd was the godfather of the Jamaican drumming styles, and his influence will live on forever."**

authority and the founder of the band Afro-Jamaican Rhythms, near the end of a performance at the Jolly Roger Club in Montego Bay, a venue that Knibb played regularly with the Eric Deans Orchestra in the '50s, a rumba dancer would perform "exotic gyrations" and Knibb would match these physical movements with beats on his kit.

"What makes Lloyd Knibb one of the greatest drummers from Jamaica is that he combined [African-based rhythms] with the sound of Glenn Miller, Cuban cha-cha-cha, bolero, rumba, and other Latin feels," Chen says.

In addition, Knibb duplicated the timbre of timbales by throwing off the snares of his snare drum and executing resounding

eighty, after years of extensive road and studio work with a reconstituted Skatalites, was clearly one of a kind. He lived for the gig and toured with the band even with an amputated big toe. It's difficult to sum up his *raison d'être*, but perhaps the term *individual expression* will suffice. "If someone asked Lloyd his secret, he would show the guy the calluses on his hand," Stewart says.

Ska and Knibb are intricately intertwined. The forces and circumstances that coalesced to create the genre could never be reproduced, yet the music survives, in large part thanks to Knibb's legacy.

**Will Romano**





Lee Abel

# Sly Dunbar

by Ken Micallef

He possesses one of the most expansive, eclectic, and revered résumés in reggae history. **And he's still hitting it hard.**

**I**n the '70s and '80s, Lowell "Sly" Dunbar and bassist Robbie Shakespeare, aka the Riddim Twins, did as much to popularize reggae as other giants of the genre, such as Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, Gregory Isaacs, Burning Spear, the Aggrovators, Black Uhuru, and Third World. Dunbar's enormous, driving, and insistent groove and Shakespeare's deep bass support fueled not only the music of Jamaican superstars but also that of Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, Joe Cocker, and Yoko Ono, among many others. The duo has also recorded a good number of popular and well-regarded albums under the name Sly & Robbie, including their latest, *Blackwood Dub*. **MD** recently chatted with Dunbar about some of his most noteworthy performances and quizzed the living legend on the qualities of a serious reggae drum approach.

**MD:** You've influenced thousands of drummers, but which ones influenced you?

**Sly:** Al Jackson Jr. was key, then the Stax and Motown drummers, all the drummers on Philadelphia International Records, and the Skatalites' Lloyd Knibb.

**MD:** What is your particular innovation in reggae?

**Sly:** I copped licks from everybody, but I realized I had to go into the studio and create my own sound. At Channel One studio, we wanted that Philadelphia sound for the drums. We knew that would be something new. And I wanted to see people dance. I like groove. I want them tapping their feet. You need to make every song groove. If I can make the people dance with the drums alone, then I will be armed with something.

**MD:** Did you change your groove technically in any way from the earlier reggae drummers?

**Sly:** I don't know what I was doing, but I tried to fall in love with the microphones on the drums.

**MD:** You played something special on the

Mighty Diamonds' "Right Time."

**Sly:** I played double 8th-note snare drum accents. In reggae back then you didn't play a constant pattern through the song. But I played that pattern right through the song. Nobody could believe I was doing that steady for the full three minutes. They thought it was a delay from the console doing it.

**MD:** Were you replicating a delay?

**Sly:** No, I was not thinking of the delay. I was thinking of the pattern and other drummers. I'd heard Lloyd Knibb play a similar pattern in a Skatalites song called "Addis Ababa." And I used to watch a lot of African movies and listen to African recordings, people singing and dancing to drums. On "Addis Ababa" Lloyd's pattern pushed people more into the rhythm. They're hearing the drums right up front. And I would go to a lot of parties and dances and analyze stuff for myself. That gave me ideas and inspiration.

**MD:** You've played on so many great ses-

sions. What was your general approach?  
**Sly:** I would go in with an open mind. The night before I might be listening to some jazz or Earth, Wind & Fire and take in some ideas. I'd listen with patterns in my head, everything going. Then I would listen to the song, check the tempo, check the melody, check what the bassist is doing. Then I tried to fit my drum part right in between everything. I am not trying to play the song; I am trying to perform the song with the artist.

**MD:** Do you play rimclick with the butt or the tip?

**Sly:** The butt end.

**MD:** Heel up or heel down on the bass drum pedal?

**Sly:** I used to play heel down, but now I do a lot of touring, and I need more energy. You can play softer in the studio.

**MD:** In the '70s you recorded at the Channel One studio with Lee Perry, Bob Marley, Bunny Lee, and Peter Tosh, then you and Robbie Shakespeare became even more famous working with many American and British artists. Did your approach change with the Rolling Stones, Joe Cocker, and Bob Dylan?

**Sly:** It didn't really change, but it was a different world. Whatever we did, we took a little part of reggae into the sessions. We did a track for Mick Jagger called "Just

Another Night," and at the end we did a dancehall groove, then back into the rock beat. We experimented; nobody knew we were going to do that.

**MD:** You recorded *Infidels* and *Empire Burlesque* with Bob Dylan.

**Sly:** We couldn't believe it when we got the call. Bob called me directly. The coolest session ever. He came in with his guitar and harmonica and started playing a groove. We'd join in on what he was doing and try to create the rhythm around him. He recorded everything. He said, "I want to recruit 'Jokerman,'" and we thought, *Why?* We went in and ran it down. He said, "That's it." I don't know what he wanted.

**MD:** Can you recall a session that was particularly difficult?

**Sly:** Not difficult, but sometimes it's just not working—the simple little things they ask you to do, and you just stumble until you get it.

**MD:** What's the secret to playing a great groove?

**Sly:** I like to keep things moving, and if the music is not grooving, nobody will move. We come from the Caribbean with the calypso rhythms, and when R&B started coming in we fused it with calypso. We did a Grace Jones song called "My Jamaican Guy," where I'm playing R&B

mixed with mento. She's singing a mento melody and I'm playing an R&B thing—it's coming from both ends. Sometimes I would listen to what someone was singing to find a groove or [incorporate] other patterns I've found over the years; they come to me. People will say, "Play one of your Sly things for me."

**MD:** If a young drummer has just discovered Sly Dunbar, which recordings would you recommend?

**Sly:** One of my favorites is Grace Jones' "Private Life." The recording quality is good, and the Jamaicans still go crazy for it. That took me to that next level internationally. Or they could also listen to the Channel One stuff or Black Uhuru—we produced those as well. We made it all go.

**MD:** What advice do you give to young drummers regarding mastering a groove?

**Sly:** You have to play not for yourself only. You have to try and be steady as you can. I don't like to play a lot of fills unless it's necessary; it has to really feel good within a song. Today's music is more computerized, but I got to create my own sound because we did so much recording. I knew what I wanted my drums to sound like. But it's hard today because there isn't so much live recording being done. But be focused, and practice and listen a lot—that is key.

# WICKED BEATS

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# Sly Dunbar: Heavy Kicks and Double Rimclicks

Transcribed by Eric Novod

## The Mighty Diamonds, "Right Time," *Right Time*

This swung groove is famous for Dunbar's use of double rimclicks on beats 1 and 3. Once the groove is established, Sly ornaments it with additional rimclicks and bass drum notes.

(0:41)

(1:36)

## Sly & Robbie/Black Uhuru, "African Culture," *Dub Masters*

This is an example of a simple, clean Sly groove. Notice the rimclick-to-snare development in measure 2 and the wide-open hi-hat on beat 4. (0:38)

## Sly & Robbie, "Firehouse Special," *Dub Masters*

Dunbar played a lot of these four-on-the-floor grooves. (0:10)

## Sly & Robbie, "Motherless Children,"

### *Sly & Robbie Present Gregory Isaacs*

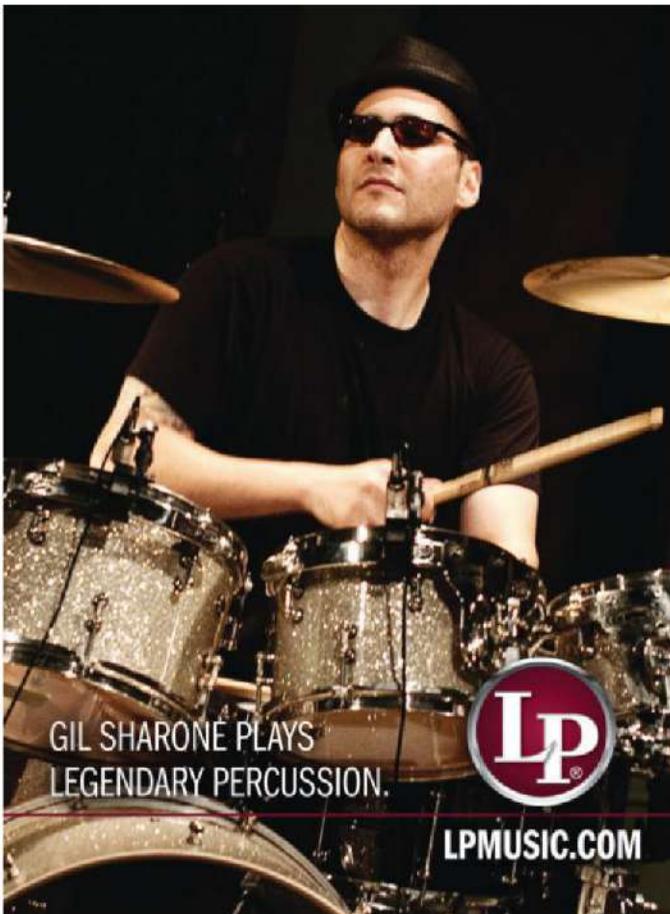
This highly syncopated groove features offbeat hi-hat openings that blur the beginning of each measure. (0:26)

## Black Uhuru, "Sponji Reggae," *Island 50 Reggae*

Notice how Dunbar develops this straightforward 16th-note groove with hi-hat accents and syncopated snare hits. (0:00)

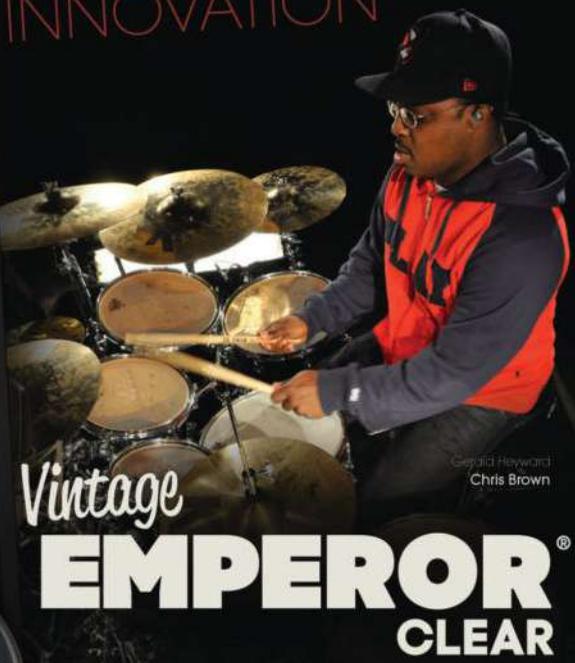
## Sly & Robbie, "Legalize It Dub" (single only)

This signature Dunbar pattern consists of a steady stream of 16th notes moved around the snare, hi-hat, and bass drum. (0:34)



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# Carlton "Santa" Davis

His influential approach, which permeates the landscape of classic reggae, can still be felt today with superstar Ziggy Marley. Santa's secret? **The perfect blend of tradition and experimentation.**

by Ken Micallef



Lee Abel

**T**he first drummer to record at the legendary Channel One studio in Kingston, Jamaica, Carlton "Santa" Davis is one of reggae's true godfathers, with credits as broad as Bob Marley, the Aggrovators, Augustus Pablo, King Tubby, and Peter Tosh. Davis was in Tosh's home when the reggae star was assassinated in 1987, and he remembers the event with difficulty.

"It was a terrible experience," Davis recalls. "That happened because of some greedy cats who didn't want to work. It was tough to see your good friend getting killed right in front of your eyes. I was shot through the shoulder. I'm still walking with a bullet in me, real close to my spine. I'm like a bionic man walking around with a nine-millimeter bullet in my back. That was meant for my head. By the grace of God I shifted my head. I did it so violently I broke my collarbone."

Davis's "bionic" status certainly hasn't hindered his feel. Manning Ziggy Marley's drum throne since 2003, Davis has an approach that comprises a fat pocket, staccato tom fills, and the "flying cymbals" hi-hat style he created with the famed reggae producer Bunny Lee. Santa released a solo album, *Da Zone*, in 2008, and is currently working on a follow-up.

**MD:** How did reggae's accent on the third beat of the bar come about?

**Santa:** It all came from ska, which is more of an up-tempo, jazz/blues kind of thing, then it slowed down to rocksteady. And the accent changed to match the guitars. In rocksteady it was more 8ths on the hi-hat, and then it turned to 16ths, and that is what gave the music the reggae feel.

**MD:** The "flying cymbal" sound that began with the Aggrovators, striking the hi-hat for an open and closed effect, is an important ingredient in reggae drumming.

**Santa:** I was the one that recorded that first, but it was originally part of soca. When I played that in the '70s it became popular because of the attitude I played with—it was more open and pronounced. I didn't name it the flying cymbal; that was Bunny Lee. I played it on "None Shall Escape the Judgment" by Earl Zero. But for years it was played in calypso, where the accent was a little different. I played it more aggressively.

**MD:** You recorded Bob Marley's "High Tide or Low Tide," "Sun Is Shining," "Africa Unite," "Shout Down Babylon," and other tracks. But your groove on Peter Tosh's *Mama Africa* album is much different, more laid back.

**Santa:** You can't play the same way for everybody, even if you're playing reggae. You have to identify the attitude of the leader. If I am working with Peter Tosh, I recognize his attitude and I play with that attitude. I don't go hell for leather. I listen to the song, his singing, then I play with the attitude of that song. You have to adapt. *Mama Africa* has that laid-back vibe, but if you hear Augustus Pablo, I'm pushing.

**MD:** The tom rhythms you played on intros of early

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reggae tracks sound like gerbils running across the music.

**Santa:** [laughs] It's funny. One of my favorite drummers was Billy Cobham. He did these aggressive rolls across his toms. I was in Jamaica, but I listened to Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, Max Roach—all the masters. A lot of those fills that you hear are coming from all these influences. That's why I would play 16th rolls and triplets. Sly [Dunbar] did that too.

**MD:** What are the different reggae styles?

**Santa:** You have roots rock reggae, which is what Bob Marley did. It's the way it swings. Then you have lovers rock reggae, the energy of Gregory Isaacs or Dennis Brown. Revolutionary reggae is that hard-driving thing with cutting horns, like Sly Dunbar would do. We used a lot of tape on the drums back then. We'd remove the bottom head. It was easy to take the bottom skin off and put some tape on the top head so you get that flat, dead sound. Later I realized I couldn't keep doing that, so I learned how to tune both skins.

**MD:** Were click tracks used in the '70s in Jamaica?

**Santa:** No, straight-up playing. It was hard to be restricted to that clicking at first. Back then the LinnDrum was just coming in. Now I play with the click all the time. It's easier to match things to the grid that way.

**MD:** When rimclicking, are you using the butt end or the tip?

**Santa:** I used to use the butt end; now I use the tip. I used to go through heads. So I returned to the way I played in drum corps. It feels better. Nowadays you don't have to play as hard—the equipment is better. When I play easier now it turns out better sonically. And I can still swing the music.

**MD:** Are you playing hard in the studio on the classic '70s recordings?

**Santa:** You play as hard as you can, but not too hard or overly aggressive. If you play too hard you will have a lot of leakage. You play just hard enough to lay down enough signal, but you still have to play controlled.

**MD:** Has the pulse in reggae changed?

**Santa:** In the '70s, you would create something around the artist. In Jamaica right now, drummers are playing to click tracks, so I don't hear that freedom. Everything has a sameness. Even the way a lot of guys tune their drums. They want them to sound like Carlton Barrett's drums. When I was recording in Jamaica everybody had a recognizable sound. Everybody had a different style. Nowadays these guys play the same drum fills. They don't have any originality. They have a drum-machine mentality. They haven't figured out how to be free with the music.

**MD:** What tips can you give to a burgeoning reggae drummer?

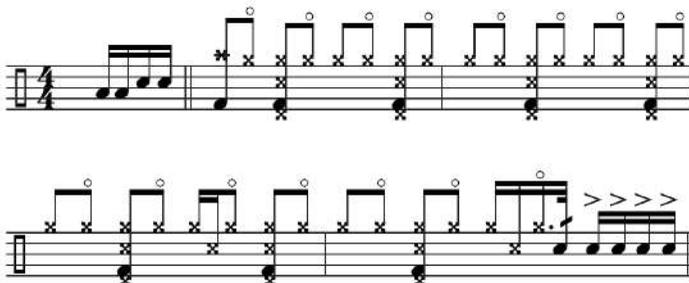
**Santa:** Do the research by listening to ska,

# Santa Davis's Flying Cymbal and Heavy Reggae Pulse

Transcribed by Eric Novod

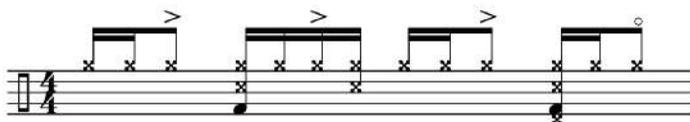
## Tommy McCook and the Aggrovators, "Dance With Me," King Tubby Meets the Aggrovators at Dub Station

This is an example of Davis's famed "flying cymbal" groove. The open hi-hats sustain longer than they usually do in reggae music, creating a floating feeling. (0:00)



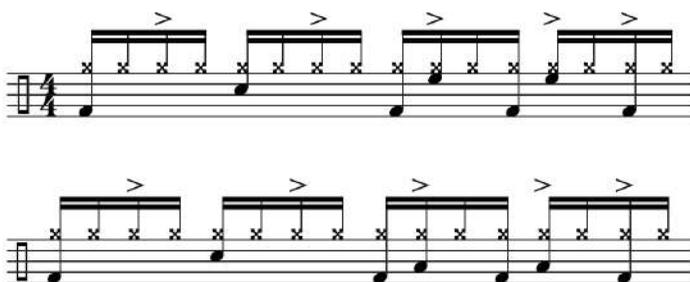
## The Aggrovators, "Ethiopians Rock," Dub Attack

Here's a clean, classic 16th-note reggae groove. Be careful to accent just the "&." (0:56)



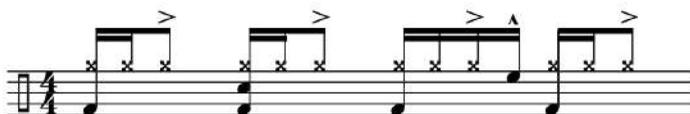
## Peter Tosh, "Coming in Hot," Complete Captured Live

This trickier-than-it-looks 16th-note groove alternates between the rack tom (measure 1) and the floor tom (measure 2). (0:21)



## Peter Tosh, "Mama Africa," Complete Captured Live

Here's one more classic upbeat groove, with a single rack tom played on the "a" of beat 3. (1:28)



rocksteady, and then early-'70s to mid-'80s reggae. Listen to Bob Marley, because his style was a sound of his own. It's different from Peter Tosh or Burning Spear. Listen to the music from Channel One. That will give you an idea of how all the elements are put

together. Reggae is simple, but there are certain nuances and certain feels. It's all about putting your own thing to it. It's not real difficult, but if you think about it too much it *will* be difficult. Reggae music is all about being free.



Jonathan Moffett

Rick Latham

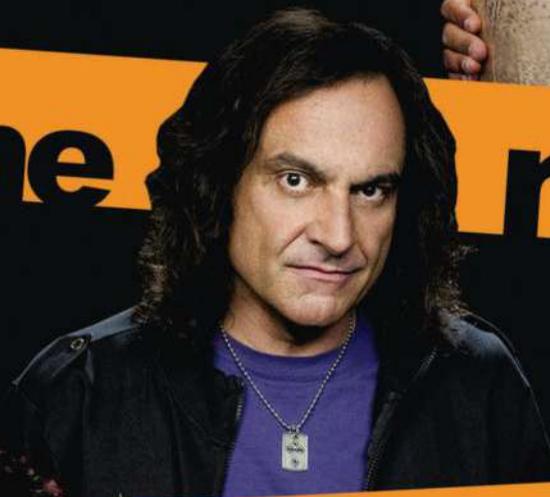
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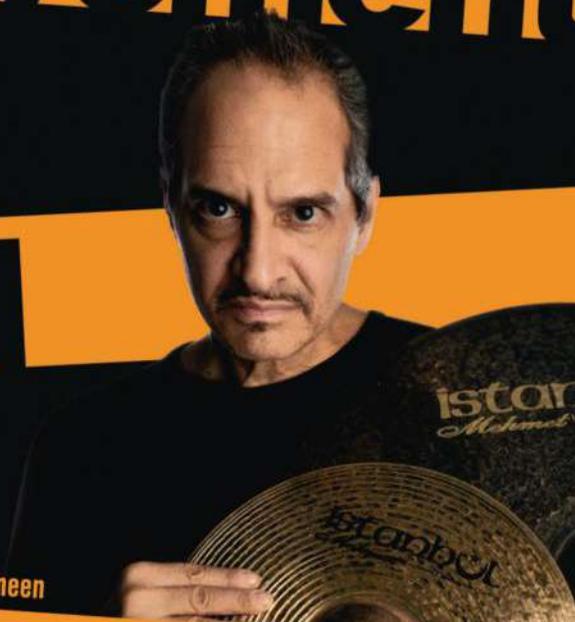
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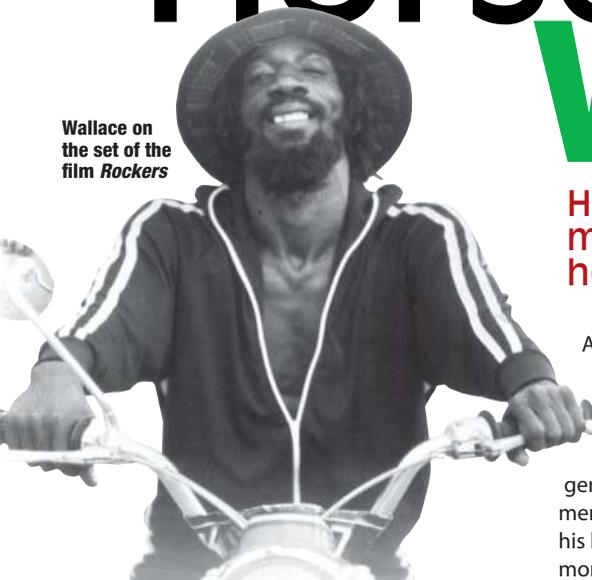
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# Leroy "Horsemouth" Wallace

by Ben Meyer

Wallace on the set of the film *Rockers*



He created an iconic image of the reggae musician on film—but on and off stage, he's always been the real deal.

"Horsemouth is reggae," said the Greek filmmaker Ted Bafaloukos, the director of the 1978 film *Rockers*, one of the first successful movies to focus on the culture surrounding Jamaican music. Along with its predecessor, 1972's *The Harder They Come*, *Rockers* exposed the attitude, music, style, poverty, and social environment that were central to the original reggae scene, and it helped to bring the musicians to an international audience.

Wallace was cast as the male lead in *Rockers* after Bafaloukos saw him playing drums with the popular reggae singer Burning Spear in New York City in the mid-'70s. The director was impressed with the drummer's charisma and felt that he embodied the spirit of reggae music.

Adding to Wallace's star status was an appearance in *Heartland Reggae*, a 1980 documentary of the 1978 One Love Peace Concert in Kingston, Jamaica, which featured many of the genre's heavy hitters. The film also documented Bob Marley's triumphant return to his home country after leaving for sixteen months following an assassination attempt in 1976.

According to Horsemouth, being a movie star proved to be both a curse and a blessing to his music career. "It's a very weird 'ting to be a drummer in Jamaica who becomes a star," he said in an interview in the July 1983 issue of *Modern Drummer*. "Other musicians don't like it. They prefer you to just keep the beat, y'know."

Despite growing up poor in Kingston in the '50s and '60s, Wallace achieved a higher level of musical education than many of his contemporaries, due to his training at the Alpha Boys School, a reformatory run by Catholic nuns, who taught him how to read music and encouraged him to play in the student band. Wallace went on to become a regular session player at the

famed Jamaican producer Coxsone Dodd's Channel One studio during the golden era of reggae in the mid-'70s, and his résumé would eventually include reggae greats the Gladiators, Gregory Isaacs, Horace Andy, Inner Circle, Don Carlos, and the Skatalites.

Wallace would also become known as an effective multi-instrumentalist; his performance credits include playing bass, keyboards, and saxophone on a number of reggae records released in the late '70s and early '80s. Horsemouth is still busy in the studio and on stage, appearing most recently with the Congos and with Errol Organ and the Trenchtown Experience, with which he toured Europe in 2011, including an appearance at the Montreux Jazz Festival.

Credited with inventing the rockers beat, Wallace lists Lloyd Knibb of the Skatalites and Hugh Malcolm of the Supersonics among his early drumming influences. "I used to sit with Lloyd at the bottom of his drum," Horsemouth recently told Harrison Stafford of the neo-reggae band Groundation. "He give me the first idea towards local music."

## Horsemouth Hits

Transcribed by Eric Novod

### Gladiators, "Holiday Ride," *Sweet So Till*

Here's the classic steppers groove, which features a four-on-the-floor bass drum, hi-hat accents on the downbeats, and a snare hit on beat 3. The triplet fills in measures 2 and 4 are classic Wallace.

### Burning Spear, "Old Marcus Garvey," *Marcus Garvey*

After an intense 32-note-sextuplet fill, Wallace jumps into a classic 16th-note-triplet reggae groove with open hi-hats on the offbeats. Later in the tune he adds some slick swung bass drum improvisations. (0:00)



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# Willie Stewart

by Ben Meyer

He spent decades turning global audiences on to the magic of **Third World's** reggae rhythms. These days his focus is decidedly more grass-roots. But his passion is as infectious as ever.

**W**illie "Roots" Stewart is a man who loves, with equal intensity, life, music, drums, and sharing his gifts. For more than twenty years, prior to focusing on his current pursuits in music education, facilitation, and community building, Stewart toured and recorded with Third World, one of the most successful Jamaican acts of the '70s and '80s.

Stewart was born in England and discovered his fascination with music as a small child. Mesmerized by the sounds he was exposed to at home, Willie was most strongly influenced by his oldest brother, Byron Lee, who would play a major role in the drummer's success on the Kingston reggae scene. After moving to Jamaica in 1964 at the age of eleven, Willie was able to see his brother's band, Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, perform at dance halls and festivals all over the island. Hypnotized by the Dragonaires' drummer and his drumset, which was a rare sight in Jamaica at the time, Stewart decided that playing drums in a band was his calling. "People said, 'Why did you choose drums?'" Willie writes on his own website. "I never chose drums, it chose me."

After tenaciously pursuing any music education he could get, Stewart, along with some friends, formed a band called Dynamic Visions while still in high school. The group performed at school events and in the community, ultimately earning quite a bit of notoriety and forming connections on the Kingston music scene that would introduce the budding drummer to his future Third World bandmates.

For the next several years, Stewart was a member of Inner Circle, Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, and Happiness Unlimited. During this time he toured the U.S. and



the Caribbean and performed at many of Jamaica's most prestigious hotels and nightclubs. He also began to book and manage his own band and other acts.

After a short stint in sales, during which Stewart got married and started a family, his obsession with music drew him back to performing, and he joined Third World prior to the recording of its second album, *96° in the Shade*, in 1975. The band would become one of the most successful in reggae history, earning ten Grammy nominations for international hits, including a 1978 cover of the O'Jays' "Now That We Found Love" and a 1982 collaboration with Stevie Wonder and Melody A. McCully, "Try Jah Love." Third World was particularly successful in Britain and the Caribbean, with hits like "Dancing on the

Floor," "Cool Meditation," and "Talk to Me." Stewart toured the globe and played on thirteen albums with the band prior to his departure in 1997.

After exiting Third World, Stewart moved to England and began studying at the Access to Music school. "I decided I wanted to share music," Willie told interviewer Toni May on the TV news show *South Florida Today*. "I do stress-relief percussion workshops with companies and all different groups. I believe everyone has a natural rhythm in them, and I think I can facilitate that."

After becoming a licensed music educator and facilitator, Stewart developed his own unique methods of sharing his innate love of music and drumming. Relocating to the U.S. in 2000, he began working with schools, libraries, and cultural arts organizations in South Florida, ultimately founding Solutions in Music in 2003.

Today Stewart continues to work with students of all ages and with corporate groups. Solutions in Music offers workshops on the history of reggae and on African rhythms, as well as programs designed to introduce children to the joys of music. Stewart also teaches more than forty private students a week at his On the Beat Drum School in Miramar, Florida.



Stewart (left) with Third World and Stevie Wonder during the sessions for their 1982 hit, "Try Jah Love," and today, still sharing the groove

# Roots Grooves

Transcribed by Eric Novod

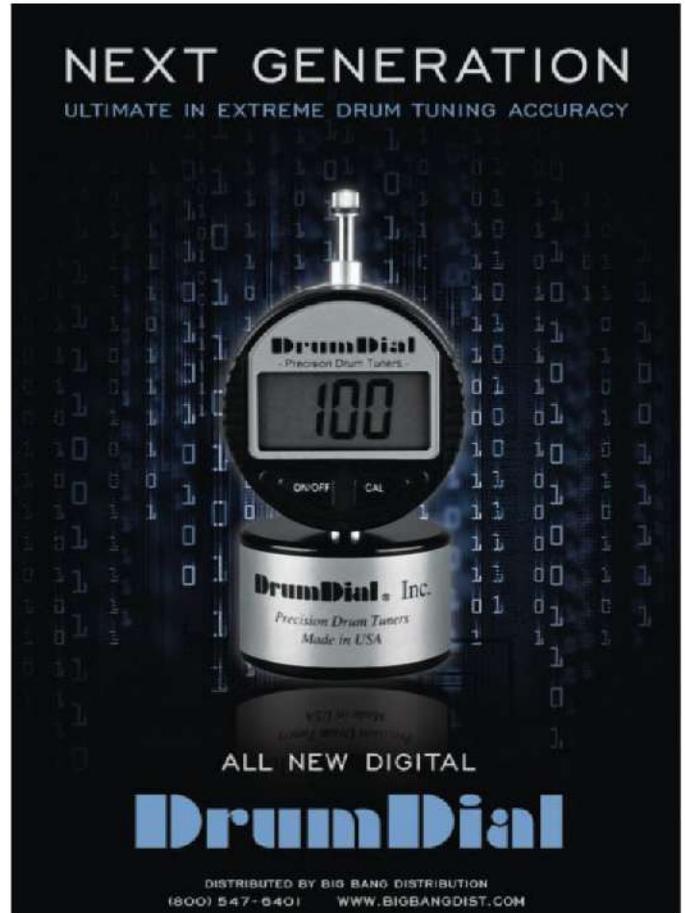
## Third World, "Talk to Me," Reggae Greats

This fast, creatively developed pattern features a rimclick on the "a" of beat 1 and two cowbell hits at the end of the measure. (0:30)



## Third World, "Cool Meditation," Reggae Greats

This busier 16th-note groove features multiple improvised rimclicks followed by an ingenious two-measure fill that pushes and pulls the beat with a jarring shift from triplets to 16ths to 32nd notes. (2:14)



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PHOTO BY BOB MALLON

Steel Pulse, featuring Steve "Grizzly" Nisbett, second from right

# Steve Nisbett

by Ben Meyer

He barely knew what to do with a reggae groove when he started his climb to the top of the pops with **Steel Pulse**. He must have been a fast learner, though, because it wouldn't be long before the man known as Grizzly would become one of British reggae's most identifiable figures.

**S**teve "Grizzly" Nisbett laid down the groove for the Grammy-winning British reggae powerhouse Steel Pulse from 1977 to 2001, when health issues forced him to leave the band. During his tenure, he helped make Steel Pulse one of the most popular reggae acts in history.

Nisbett was born in the tiny Caribbean nation of Nevis and moved to Birmingham, England, at the age of nine. As was common at the time, his parents had emigrated years before to seek work opportunities, and they sent for their children one by one as they found work and adequate housing in their adopted land. Less than thrilled by his new surroundings, Nisbett nonetheless tried to make the best of his living conditions. "It was very cold," he told the British music journalist Andy Brouwer in 2004. "I cried. I arrived at the end of December and woke the next morning to find everything covered in white. I'd never experienced snow before in my life."

Growing up, Nisbett preferred sports to academics and spent a good deal of time playing cricket at the youth club in the predominantly Caribbean neighborhood of Saltley, in Birmingham. It was there that he met the Dean brothers, who sang and played guitar. At first Steve was interested in playing guitar, but after deciding that he had no skill with stringed instruments, he settled with tapping the occasional tambourine and helped support his friends by providing a rehearsal space in his parents' basement.

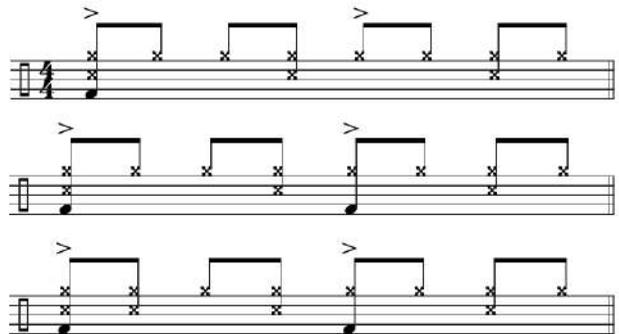
After the band's original drummer quit a few days before the first scheduled gig, Nisbett was convinced to fill in, even though he'd never even sat behind a set of drums before. Resistant at first, he nonetheless was coaxed into playing a few small shows on borrowed drums—and found that he had a knack for keeping time. At the age of sixteen, after convincing his parents to buy him a kit, the young drummer worked to hone his chops and broaden his knowledge of music. "I was hanging around with a lot more black guys," Nisbett told Brouwer, "so my tastes in music widened to include reggae, ska-beat, jazz, R&B, soul, Motown, and so on. I spent time on my own, rehearsing in my cellar, listening to records and trying to imitate them on my drums."

After high school, Nisbett decided to try to make a career of

## Grizzly Beats Transcribed by Eric Novod

### Steel Pulse, "Caught You Dancing," *Reggae Fever*

Nisbett alternates between these three related grooves throughout "Caught You Dancing."



### Steel Pulse, "Prediction," *Sound System: The Island Anthology*

This four-bar drum break features a lesser-used hi-hat rhythm combined with classic one-drops, open hi-hats at the end of every other measure, and a syncopated rimclick pattern at the end of the phrase. (0:16)

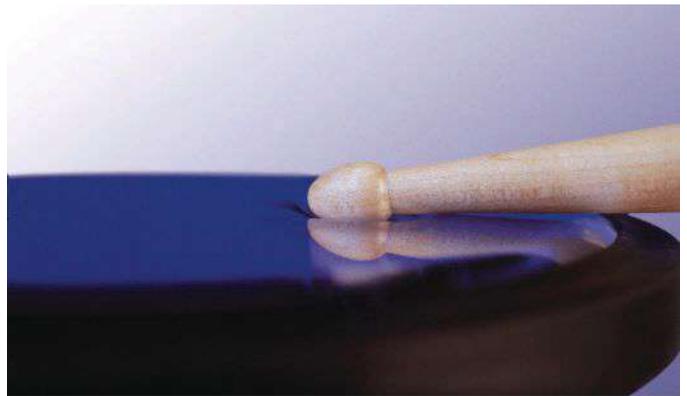


performing and formed his first real working cover band, Penny Black. After a move to London in the early '70s, he began playing with the group Rebel and with Jamaican singer Delroy Washington, among others. A few years later, Nisbett moved back to the English Midlands and played with a succession of bands that aimed to reproduce the popular Stax Records sound epitomized by Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, and Wilson Pickett.

Grizzly—a nickname bestowed upon Steve due to his large, bearlike appearance—met the members of Steel Pulse in 1976, and in early 1977 he played on the band's first single, "Nyah Luv." "I liked them the first time I heard them," Nisbett told Brouwer, "not because they were a reggae band, but of all the bands around, they had a different sound. They were radical."

Nisbett had played very little reggae prior to his first sessions with Steel Pulse, and he created his own style by passing popular reggae beats through the filter of his R&B and rock roots. Nisbett's unique style helped to distinguish Steel Pulse from other British reggae bands of the time, as did the group's lively stage show, provocative costumes, and close association with the burgeoning punk movement. Developing concurrently, British reggae and punk shared countercultural philosophies, making them natural counterparts. Consequently, during this period Steel Pulse found itself sharing stages with XTC, the Clash, Generation X, the Stranglers, the Sex Pistols, and other influential punk and new-wave bands.

In 1978 Steel Pulse signed with the influential Island label, later releasing albums on Elektra and MCA, including 1984's highly regarded *Earth Crisis* and 1986's Grammy-winning *Babylon the Bandit*. The perennially popular band toured nearly nonstop throughout the '80s and '90s, and Nisbett made an amicable exit in 2001. Steve has devoted his time since leaving Steel Pulse to promoting original music in the Midlands and nurturing developing artists, largely through his label Grizzly Records, which he runs from his home base in Birmingham.



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# Style Scott

by Ben Meyer

In a genre defined by sonic exploration, he boldly pushed dub reggae to places where no man had gone before.

**D**ub reggae innovator Style Scott is best known for his drumming with Roots Radics, Prince Far I, Bunny Wailer, Scientist, and Creation Rebel. Scott is also the heartbeat of Dub Syndicate, a loose but fertile association of studio musicians and producers that has been innovating dub for more than twenty-five years. In a 1994 interview with Carl Moses, Scott explained, “Dub Syndicate is just I, really, and my productions that I’ve done in Jamaica with a lot of people.”

Also credited on records as Lincoln Valentine Scott, Style Rattadam, and simply Style, Scott has played drums and percussion (or “percussions,” as they say in the Caribbean) on hundreds of records since the late ’70s. He grew up soaking in reggae culture in Kingston, Jamaica, and was influenced early on by the work of the dub pioneers Lee “Scratch” Perry and Osbourne “King Tubby” Ruddock.

Scott’s musical career began after a stint in the Jamaica Defense Force, during which the drummer would often hang around recording studios and rehearsals and occasionally sit in with the bands that were popular at the time. Through the relationships Scott made on the dub scene, he started to be asked to play on sessions, and slowly his own style emerged. Roots Radics grew out of these sessions, and during the late ’70s they became an in-demand rhythm section in Jamaica, playing in the studio and live with artists such as Bunny Wailer, Israel Vibration, and Gregory Isaacs.

Scott and other members of Roots Radics were drafted to tour with Prince Far I in Europe in the early ’80s, leading to



the drummer’s relationship with the famed U.K. producer Adrian Sherwood, who was also the head of On-U Sound Records. Dub Syndicate developed from Scott and Sherwood’s early studio collaborations in the U.K. and eventually included contributions by many others, such as the members of Tackhead—Keith LeBlanc, Skip McDonald, and Doug Wimbish—who’d previously comprised the house band for the legendary hip-hop label Sugarhill Records. Dub Syndicate continued making music on the cutting edge throughout the ’80s and ’90s and remains active today, producing records with artists such as Capleton, Big Youth, Yasus Afari, and Cedric Myton of the Congos.

In a 2011 interview with Nico Caillaud and Julien “Loob” Zasso for [culturedub.com](http://culturedub.com), Scott explained his

genre’s inner workings. “Dub is really a deconstruct rhythm that you start from scratch,” he said. “The artist go in the studio, they make a song, right? [Then] an engineer with any sort of genius about them starts stripping down the rhythm. They take away the voice, start emphasizing the drum and bass with white noise and delays and all of that.”

These techniques continue to be used in many forms of modern music, including dubstep, which grew out of the 2-step and drum ‘n’ bass styles in the U.K. Evidence of dub’s wide-ranging influence can be heard with artists as diverse as Can, the Police, Tortoise, and Matisyahu. Style Scott helped to shape the genre into what it is today, and his legacy will doubtlessly continue to influence contemporary music well into the twenty-first century.

## Stylin’ Rhythms

Transcribed by Eric Novod

### Doctor Pablo & the Dub Syndicate, “Man of Mystery,” *North of the River Thames*

Common in the Roots Radics style of reggae drumming, this groove features the rare choice to place the bass drum on beats 1 and 3 and the snare on 2 and 4. (0:28)



### Gregory Isaacs, “My Only Lover,” *Lovers’ Rock*

This classic track also features the bass drum on beats 1 and 3 and the snare on beats 2 and 4, but it’s the offbeat hi-hat accents that bring in the reggae feel. (0:15)



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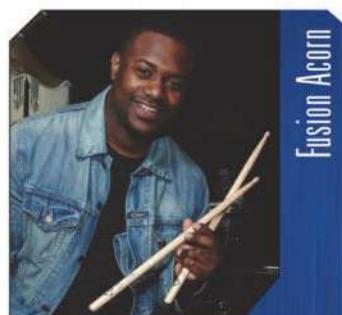
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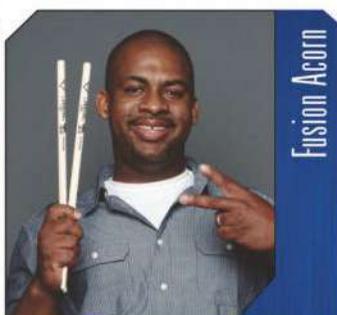
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# Reggae-Core

For decades, classic rock, punk, and jam bands have absorbed the rhythms of ska, reggae, and other Jamaican styles. *MD* contributor **Ilya Stemkovsky** tells the tale, with exclusive insight from two of the greatest drummers to ever make the connection—**Fishbone's Phillip "Fish" Fisher** and **No Doubt's Adrian Young**.

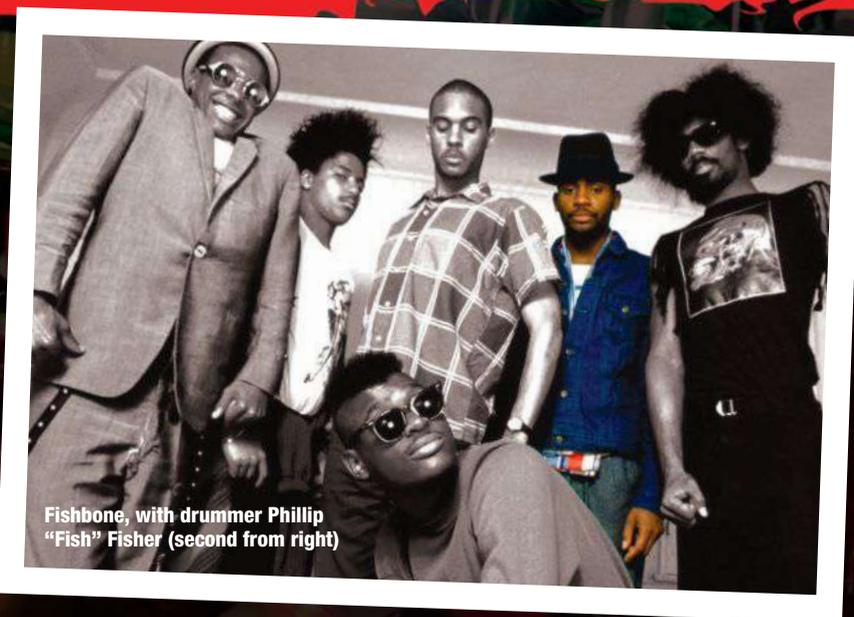
**S**omething funny happened on the way out of Kingston. As reggae music began to spread across the world, it naturally started to fuse with other genres. No longer an insular Jamaican secret, the music and its unique rhythms assimilated into cultures abroad and began to slowly blend with the popular styles of the day, namely rock.

The infusion of rock elements into reggae (or reggae styles adorning popular rock songs, if you take that perspective) occurred early. Bob Marley's first major-label album, 1973's *Catch a Fire*, was taken by producer and Island Records chief Chris Blackwell back to England for remixing and overdubs of electric guitar leads, in effect helping to make the music more palatable for a mass (i.e., "white") audience. The following year, Eric Clapton scored a number-one hit with his cover of Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff"—the first time many in North America and Europe first heard reggae rhythms (albeit drummer Jamie Oldaker's funky backbeat version) on popular radio.

Future drum stars were obviously soaking it all in. No Doubt's Adrian Young specifically recalls Marley's influence. "We had all his records in my house," Young says, "so from day one I was brought up on rock music and also reggae music."

Fishbone drummer Phillip "Fish" Fisher remembers being exposed to eclectic programming on the radio. "I'd hear Jimmy Cliff or Desmond Dekker—stuff that had a certain crossover appeal," he says. "They'd play those guys alongside a Cream or Sly Stone song. Also important was Gaz Mayall's compilations, Roger Steffens' *Reggae Beat* radio program, and Richard Blade's closed-circuit TV show *MV3*, where I'd see early videos of bands."

Clapton legitimized the music. Or per-



Fishbone, with drummer Phillip "Fish" Fisher (second from right)

haps he simply exposed it to others. Nevertheless, England became the epicenter of the new rock/reggae hybrid, with the punk and new-wave movements championing the emerging new sound. By the late '70s, many of the hip new bands were blending reggae and rock, or dabbling in the reggae style for a track or two. The Clash's self-titled 1977 debut contained a cover of Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves," and the Police's 1978 debut, *Outlandos d'Amour*, yielded three reggae-tinged singles, "Roxanne," "Can't Stand Losing You," and "So Lonely"—while also introducing the world at large to the many talents of Stewart Copeland.

The Police tracks were crucial in that they laid down the template for the basic structure of a lot of rock/reggae songwriting moving forward: a reggae-infused verse containing upstrokes on guitar or keyboards and a more aggressive, on-the-beat punk/rock attack during the chorus. The Police would ride this formula to the bank,

on classics such as "Don't Stand So Close to Me," "De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da," and "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic."

"When I started," Young says, "I was trying to emulate Stewart. He was the prime guy who mixed rock and ska rhythms. All the hi-hat action. To this day I'm pretty busy on the hi-hat because of him."

Some artists cut tracks that had less reggae and more punk; others wrote songs that showcased reggae, but with enough of a lip-curved punk snarl that no one could really confuse them with the breezy island sounds that originated in Jamaica. Elvis Costello's 1977 single "Watching the Detectives" features Steve Goulding's distorted, in-your-face drum track, with a steppers rhythm (a four-on-the-floor reggae drumming style) in the verses and a one-drop rhythm (the classic style featuring kick and snare on beat 3) for the chorus. It was clear that the new bands were writing new rules.

By the end of the '70s, a revival move-

ment had begun in England, with such bands as the Specials, Madness, the (English) Beat, and the Selecter. The Specials' leader and keyboardist, Jerry Dammers, founded the 2 Tone record label, which released albums from the aforementioned racially integrated groups and was instrumental in creating a new social and cultural awareness. The 2 Tone movement referenced reggae's godfathers, popular styles (including the genre's faster and more dance-oriented precursors, ska and rocksteady), and previous modes of dress (such as black suits and porkpie hats) but updated the sound with a faster tempo, more guitar, and more attitude.

The Specials' drummer John Bradbury exemplified the new approach with tight snare fills and relentless kick drum on songs like "Too Much Too Young." His influence was clearly felt. "The 2 Tone bands were around during the disco era," Fisher explains, "so a lot of those drum parts have open and closed hi-hat patterns and four-on-the-floor kick drum."

"Around 1980, I started to get really into ska," Young says. "I was enamored with the sound and the music, and this was even before I began playing drums. I got the *Dance Craze* album [the soundtrack to a 1981 British documentary about the 2 Tone movement], and that was it."

Historians refer to this period as the second wave of ska, following original '60s groups such as the Skatalites, whose drummer, Lloyd Knibb, had a tremendous effect on the 2 Tone bands and on any drummer attempting the style. "Lloyd Knibb is a monster," Fisher says. "He and Carlton Barrett and Santa Davis and Leroy 'Horsemouth' Wallace were major influences. They all had their own

sound. People think all reggae sounds the same, but if you're a drummer and you listen closely, you'll hear that there are all these polyrhythms just on the sidesticking alone. Plus all this embellishment between the snare and kick, just conversations—a beautiful thing."

In America, the turn of the decade saw the formation of bands like Bad Brains, from Washington, D.C., who played intense hardcore punk rock and also featured several authentic reggae tracks that paid homage to the members' Rastafarian beliefs. Although the band didn't truly mix both styles—its albums and live shows separated the fast rock songs from the reggae—Bad Brains and drummer Earl Hudson still proved that the different genres could coexist. On tracks like "Jah Calling" (from 1982's self-titled debut) and "Rally Round Jah Throne" (from 1983's *Rock for Light*), the drumming is lean and mean, and Hudson would go on to influence a slew of future players.

"There are many of us drummers that have made a blend of reggae/ska/rocksteady and rock," Young says, "such as Stewart Copeland, Phillip 'Fish' Fisher, Chad Sexton, Pete Thomas, Bud Gaugh, and John Bradbury, to name a few. But one of the first to widen the boundaries by playing hardcore and reggae in the same band is Earl Hudson."

In the mid to late '80s, there came yet another revival, but this time it had less to do with mod-style clothing and everything to do with being faster, harder, and louder. Ska-core (or ska-punk) originated on the West Coast of the United States when pioneering groups like Operation Ivy began to mix in ska elements alongside their punk songs. This wasn't exactly music for the dance floor, as the songs

could go from bouncy upstrokes to a noisy punk riff instantly. Operation Ivy's drummer, Dave Mello, plays it straight and fast on tunes like "Yellin' in My Ear" and "Sound System." The group's precious few recordings—the *Hectic* EP and the full-length *Energy* album—are models of economic drive, and they set the new standard for most ska-core drumming that came after. Much as its British brethren had done a decade earlier, Operation Ivy infused its songs with a socially conscious angle but soon broke up under its own weight.

Around the same time, the all-black Fishbone began to create a buzz with its blend of ska, reggae, soul, and rock, eventually signing a major-label deal and touring the country with the Beastie Boys. Early Fishbone songs like "Ugly" and "Party at Ground Zero" (from the band's 1985 self-titled EP) featured Fish Fisher's incredible command of multiple styles, swung and straight feels, and a well-developed dynamic sense. "I was influenced by Bad Brains, Cro-Mags, and Motörhead, as well as the 2 Tone bands and the Clash," Fisher says. "I soaked it all in. It was all colors to me, and I was a painter."

Before No Doubt existed, Young was attending Fishbone concerts while still in high school in L.A. "They, and Fish, were amazing talents," Adrian says. "To this day I've never seen a better live band. At that point, no one was playing like Fish—such power and finesse, and an overload of skill."

On the horn break in "Lyin' Ass Bitch" from the band's first EP, Fisher throws down furious rimclicking and hi-hat doubles that proved chops weren't taboo in the new punk and ska mix. Over the course of several increasingly heavier Fishbone albums, Fisher set the bar where only the truly accomplished could reach. For advanced studies, check out "Unyielding Conditioning" from 1993's *Give a Monkey a Brain and He'll Swear He's the Center of the Universe* and "Love... Hate" from 1996's *Chim Chim's Badass Revenge*.

Eventually a new crop of groups sprung up, directly influenced by Operation Ivy, Bad Brains, and Fishbone, as well as by the English bands that came before. The third wave of ska would infiltrate the radio and MTV, led by No Doubt, whose breakthrough album, *Tragic Kingdom*, sold millions and helped establish Adrian Young as a fun-loving but authentic reggae and rock kitsmith. No Doubt's "Sunday Morning" and "Spiderwebs" feature a melodic, easily digestible version of the ska-punk sound,



## REGGAE-CORE

while former Operation Ivy members formed Rancid, which charted with "Time Bomb."

By the late '90s, ska-punk was as marketable as any genre, even providing material for popular movie soundtracks. The third wave of ska was in full swing, and the string of '90s hits featured an assortment of talented drummers. The Mighty Mighty Bosstones' "The Impression That I Get" (Joe Sirois), the Offspring's "What Happened to You?" (Ron Welty), Reel Big Fish's "Sell Out" (Andrew Gonzales), Goldfinger's "Here in Your Bedroom" (Darrin Pfeiffer), Save Ferris's "I Know" (Marc Harismendy), and many other tracks

were now in the public consciousness—and moving units. The Bosstones even put out a 1993 EP, *Ska-Core, the Devil, and More*, that name-checked the genre on a major-label release.

No Doubt continued to crank out hits, and 2001's *Rock Steady* included production help from reggae legends Sly & Robbie and featured Young's adept beats on the dancehall/reggae-flavored "Hey Baby" and the sexy, laid-back "Underneath It All" (which Young says was recorded in Jamaica, with no bottom heads on the toms, and which also contains a timbale sample from a Steel Pulse track). Alongside No Doubt's success, there was 311, which

broke out in 1995 with a self-titled album featuring drummer Chad Sexton doing his best reggae and rock interpretation on "All Mixed Up," and Sublime, in which Bud Gaugh provided the pingy snare and steady backbeat for radio hits like "Santeria" and "Wrong Way."

Young, who is excited about new No Doubt material coming later in 2012, also offers an educational tidbit. "Gil Sharone, a world-class drummer of many styles, recently put together a DVD on Jamaican ska/rocksteady/reggae drumming, called *Wicked Beats*," Adrian says. "It's very thought-out and comprehensive and is a must for learning about some of the pioneers, including Lloyd Knibb and Santa Davis. The instruction is helpful, and even though the drumming can seem simple at times, often it is not! There's a feel that can take years for even very talented rock drummers to really get it."

Fisher admires his admirers as well. "Adrian is to be commended for what he did with ska and reggae and pop music," Fish says. "He took the torch far."

Other style revivals would come and go (including a short-lived, late-'90s big-band-swing refresh), but ska-punk was here to stay. With so many different subgenres, coupled with the audience's equal love of dancing and punk rock, it was a match made in heaven.



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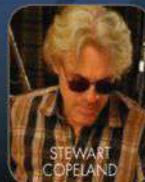
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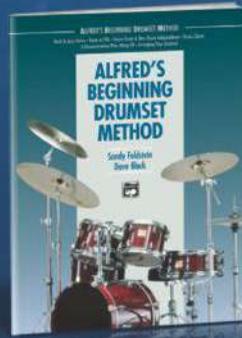
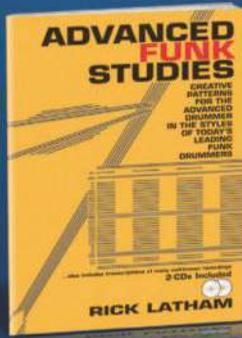
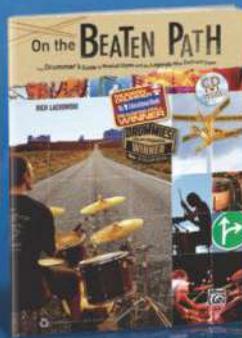
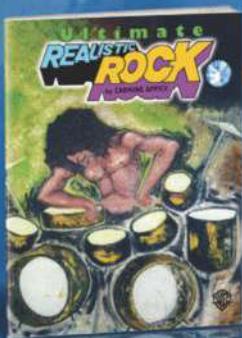
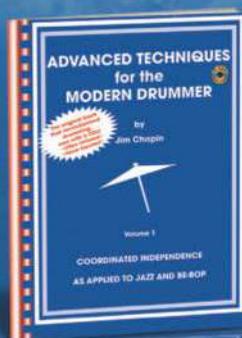
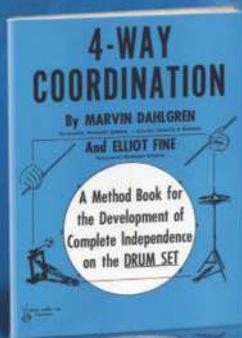
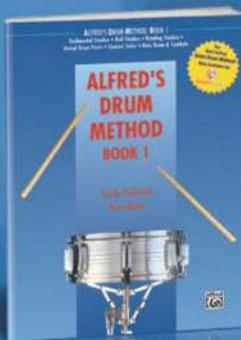
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# 20 Crossover Hits

A survey of recordings whose reach extends well beyond the Caribbean, plus rock and pop staples that borrow liberally from Jamaican music.

**"Amber" by 311** (Chad Sexton)  
Chad Sexton's insistent 16ths on the hi-hat make this hit from 311's 2001 album, *From Chaos*, reminiscent of a Sly Dunbar rockers beat, while adding drive to a gentle ballad that would have sounded corny if played with a standard rock approach.



**"Bathwater" by No Doubt** (Adrian Young)  
It's Adrian Young's deep

understanding of Jamaican grooves that allows him to break the rules in a rock context yet retain important elements of island drumming. Adrian nicely cops a ska-derived push-and-pull tension in the verses of this hit from No Doubt's 2000 album, *Return of Saturn*.

**"Dreadlock Holiday" by 10cc** (Stuart Tosh)

This 1978 hit is a reggae pastiche that features 10cc's usual unerring melodic sense, sophisticated vocals, and, as the announcer said on the group's *Top of the Pops* appearance, "post-ironic pop style." Stuart Tosh (Pilot, Alan Parsons Project) leans hard on the 1.



**"D'yer Mak'er" by Led Zeppelin** (John Bonham)  
Pronounced "Jamaic'er," this

track from 1973's *Houses of the Holy* is obviously aiming to establish a reggae vibe. But the upbeat guitar part is where the literal connection to island music ends. As reported in *John Bonham: A Thunder of Drums* by Chris Welch and Geoff Nicholls, Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones insisted that Bonham didn't like reggae, and that his antipathy toward the style is why Jones feels this is a lesser Zep track. Many, of course, would argue that point.

**"Ghost Town" by the Specials** (John Bradbury)

2 Tone's mother band had a number-one U.K. hit in 1981 with this spooky, topical single. John Bradbury and producer John

Collins reportedly used the rhythm track of reggae star Gregory Isaacs' "Oh What a Feeling" as a template, and the similarity is striking—and indicative of the variety of grooves reggae music can accommodate.

**"I Shot the Sheriff" by Eric Clapton** (Jamie Oldaker)

EC's mammoth 1974 hit version of the Bob Marley song did much to inform the world that a style of music called reggae even existed. Jamie Oldaker takes a predictably straighter rock approach, though his upbeat hi-hat adds some island flavor.

**"Live and Let Die" by Paul McCartney & Wings** (Denny Seiwell)

Check out the brief section at 1:20 where the band falls into a reggae groove—a short but effective diversion that adds a touch of light-heartedness to an uncharacteristically dark McCartney composition.

**"Lucille Has Messed My Mind Up" by Frank Zappa** (Vinnie Colaiuta)

Frank Zappa had a fondness for using Jamaican feels, twirling imaginary dreadlocks on stage when he wanted his band to conjure a reggae vibe, as on mold-busting covers of "Stairway to Heaven" and Ravel's "Bolero." On this laid-back track from 1979's *Joe's Garage*, Vinnie Colaiuta puts his own twist on the one-drop, toying with hi-hat and rimclick accents and tom fills.

**"Many Rivers to Cross" by Jimmy Cliff** (Winston Grennan)

The gospel and soul roots of reggae are evident on this, one of Jimmy Cliff's most famous songs. (It's been covered by, among others, Cher, Bruce Springsteen, U2, Joe Cocker, Harry Nilsson, Linda Ronstadt, Lenny Kravitz, and the Black Crowes.) Winston Grennan comes in so sweetly at about the thirty-second mark that you hardly notice him, but his stately performance is crucial to the recording's power, allowing Cliff's voice, the real star here, to shine.

**"Mother and Child Reunion" by Paul Simon**

(Winston Grennan)  
Recorded in Jamaica with Peter Tosh's backing band, including Winston Grennan, "Mother and Child Reunion," from Paul Simon's self-titled debut album, was Rhymin' Simon's first solo hit after splitting with longtime partner Art Garfunkel.



**"My Boy Lollipop" by Millie Small** (John Marshall)

The Jamaican shot heard round the world in 1964, Millie Small's version of "My Boy Lollipop" was in fact recorded in England with future Soft Machine sticksman John Marshall.



**"One Step Beyond" by Madness** (Dan Woodgate)

The popular video for the title track of the 2 Tone band's 1979 debut album represented middle America's introduction to pre-reggae ska sounds, not to mention to the unique dance style known as skanking.

**"Revolution Rock" by the Clash** (Topper Headon)

This favorite from the Clash's 1980 masterpiece, *London Calling*, features Nicky "Topper" Headon doing a serviceable steppers beat with some tasty rimclick work.

**"Sunday Papers" by Joe Jackson** (David Houghton)

This reggae-style cut from Joe Jackson's 1979 debut album, *Look Sharp!*, finds David Houghton taking a playful, rock-ish ska approach to the hi-hat but synco-pating the bass drum more than a traditional Jamaican drummer generally would.

**"The Spirit of Radio" by Rush** (Neil Peart)

Like "Live and Let Die," the reggae reference here (at 3:50) is fleeting yet important to the arrangement. Neil Peart employs a typical reggae rimclick, in-the-idiom snare fills, and a one-drop beat reference.

**"The Tide Is High" by Blondie** (Clem Burke)

Blondie's reworking of this classic 1967 hit by the Paragons reached number one in America and the U.K. in 1980. Clem Burke plays it straight and lean, replacing the hi-hat swoops of the original with a busier 8th-note shaker part and striking full snare hits rather than rimclick backbeats.

**"Time Bomb" by Rancid** (Brett Reed)

One of the SoCal band's most popular songs, "Time Bomb" represents the rock approach to Jamaican drums, which often keeps the bass drum on all four beats, but sits heavy on the 2-and-4 snare backbeat.

**"Walking on the Moon" by the Police** (Stewart Copeland)

Stewart Copeland is perhaps the musician most responsible for inspiring non-Jamaican drummers to woodshed reggae skills. On this cut from the Police's second album, 1979's *Reggatta de Blanc*, Stewart goes to town, spraying all kinds of fun rimclick and hi-hat punctuations (3:15), mimicking a delay effect on the bass drum (3:30), and adding well-placed snare hits.

**"Watching the Detectives" by Elvis Costello** (Steve Goulding)

Steve Goulding's approach on this 1977 single features a rocksteady/reggae four-on-the-floor bass drum with rimclick on 2 and 4, copious Carly-style three-over-two hi-hat accents, and dramatic snare/tom fills—including the classic one that opens the song.

**"You Enjoy Myself" by Phish** (Jon Fishman)

Jon Fishman, who's often cited Carlton Barrett as his favorite drummer, plays a brief yet memorable one-drop pattern (2:45) on the archetypal Phish song, from the 1989 debut album *Junta*, helping the band take a collective deep breath between two denser sections. Live staple "Harry Hood" gives Fish even more of a chance to air out his reggae feel.



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# Jimmy Cliff



Greg Watermann

For half a century, on record, on stage, and on the silver screen, he's represented the breadth and depth of Jamaican music as fully as anyone. **Gil Sharone** chats with the ageless performer, whose recent work finds him collaborating with a group of second- and third-wave riddim ambassadors.

**S**tudying the arc of Jimmy Cliff's career is a pretty effective method of understanding much about Jamaican music. As a teenager with stars in his eyes, Cliff (née Chambers) quickly honed the skills that would help him become recognized as a leader throughout the evolution of post-independence Jamaican music, from ska to rocksteady to reggae and beyond. And as the star and principal composer and singer in the film *The Harder They Come*, Cliff aided the world's non-Jamaican music fans in understanding not only the music of the country's burgeoning reggae scene but also the social environment that fed the quickly growing subculture.

Last year Cliff released the excellent five-song EP *Sacred Fire*, helmed by Tim Armstrong of the West Coast punk-reggae pioneers Rancid. Armstrong's well-publicized involvement has helped return a favor of sorts to Cliff, whose classic tracks like "Many Rivers to Cross," "The Harder They Come," and "Wonderful World, Beautiful People" have been inspirational to underground rockers since the dawning days of British alt-rock. This year Cliff builds on the cross-generational success

of *Sacred Fire* with a full-length album, *RE.BIRTH*, again featuring contributions from a group of musicians who, despite their relative youth, brilliantly capture the classic reggae sounds that Cliff himself hadn't explored in many years. Since his recent recordings bring Jimmy full circle in a sense, we thought it would be the ideal time to speak with him about the history and mystery of Jamaican music.

**Gil Sharone:** Not many musicians can say they've had a career like yours. In Jamaican music, you've spanned every genre, starting with ska and going into rocksteady and reggae. Could you talk about the unique aspects of those styles?

**Jimmy Cliff:** With ska, which is where we started, the musicians were jazz musicians. But [as Jamaicans] we wanted respect and an identity, and out of that need the creativity came out, and it turned out to be what is known today as a form of ska. That was a very exciting period. The music was upbeat...I really enjoyed that period. Then, when we went into the rocksteady

period, the music slowed down, because the social aspect of Jamaica also slowed down. We were coming out of British colonialism, and people started questioning what this independence was all about.

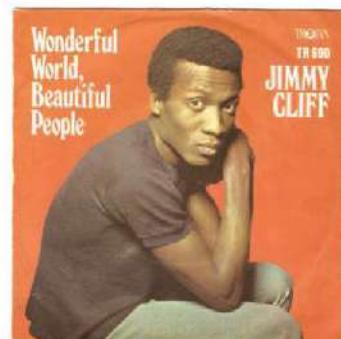
Rocksteady was more or less the same drumbeat, but slower. What changed it was the guitar and the bass pattern. When we came into what became reggae, the guitar rhythm was kind of in between the two. And the bass line changed a little—you had some new, creative bass players. The drummer still played the one-drop, which started in the rocksteady era.

Looking back now, it was such a great thing being a part of all that development. We didn't even recognize it at the time. And now recording this album with Tim Armstrong, who has inspired so many people all over the world, it's very gratifying.

**Gil:** The lyrics to the first track on *RE.BIRTH*, "Reggae Music," that's a history lesson right there. You mention [legendary drummer] Winston Grennan, [rocksteady pioneers] Alton Ellis and Ken Boothe....



Striking a rudeboy pose in *The Harder They Come*



Cliff broke internationally with the 1969 single "Wonderful World, Beautiful People."

**Jimmy:** Oh, yes. I wanted to get in a few more names of the most important people, but I didn't have space. [laughs] There are so many of them.

**Gil:** You've played with so many great drummers over the years. Who were some of your favorites?

**Jimmy:** Mikey "Boo" Richards. Sly Dunbar, of course. Winston Grennan. From the ska era, Drumbago.

**Gil:** Lloyd Knibb told me he learned from Drumbago.

**Jimmy:** Yes, Drumbago was not just a great drummer, he was a great teacher. He taught us singers a lot of things too. People would come in with just an idea, and he would formulate that and put it together.

Hugh Malcolm was another important drummer. He had his own style, and he influenced Carly Barrett. He was an originator of the one-drop, which you can hear on many of my records, like the tracks "Time Will Tell," one of my older songs, and "Struggling Man."

**Gil:** Tim Armstrong put together the Engine Room to back you up on *Sacred Fire*, and they've done such a great job. Did you expect that the band was going to have such a classic sound?

**Jimmy:** Not at all. I knew of Tim via Joe Strummer [of the Clash]. I felt a really good vibe from him when we spoke on the phone, and when we met it was confirmed. But I didn't expect anything like that from the musicians. That's what kind of inspired me to do the whole album. I said, "Wow!" I had forgotten about some of those sounds. [laughs]

And it turned out to signify an important aspect of my career. You know, after I made an impact on the international scene with "Wonderful World, Beautiful People," I went to Muscle Shoals and did a totally different type of album [1971's *Another Cycle*]. And so a lot of people were kind of disappointed—"Why has he left reggae and gone to do all that?"—while a lot of other people were very happy that I come with some fresh music. That chapter of my career was unfinished, and so this really signified the closing of that chapter.

**Gil:** You recorded pretty much in a live setting, right?

**Jimmy:** That's correct, like we used to do it. Everybody gets the progression of the song, the singer goes into his room, and you count it off and you go. That was such a great feeling doing that.

**Gil:** Do you play drumset at all?

**Jimmy:** I play a little. I never played on a record. I more play percussions, on my own records and on the records that I produce as well.

**Gil:** I noticed you play some binghi on the

new album. How important is it for drummers not only to learn these rhythms on the drumset but to go back and learn the Nyabinghi patterns?

**Jimmy:** That is so important, because that is an indigenous trademark of Jamaican music. And I was really and truly surprised that they knew that aspect of the music and got it down. On "The Guns of Brixton," when the drummer, Scott Abels, dropped in a Burru pattern, like Lloyd Knibb, I was so amazed and pleased to hear that! It's a great thing.

**Gil:** What's a definite no-no for a drummer to do in ska or rocksteady or reggae?

**Jimmy:** You just have to be sure to keep the beat steady. Don't let it speed up, and don't let it drop.

**Gil:** Drummers often don't understand that less is more in reggae, or about the power and the discipline of keeping the groove hypnotic and heavy. They want to put fills all over the place and make it flashy.

**Jimmy:** [laughs] Yeah, you have to keep the trance-type feeling.

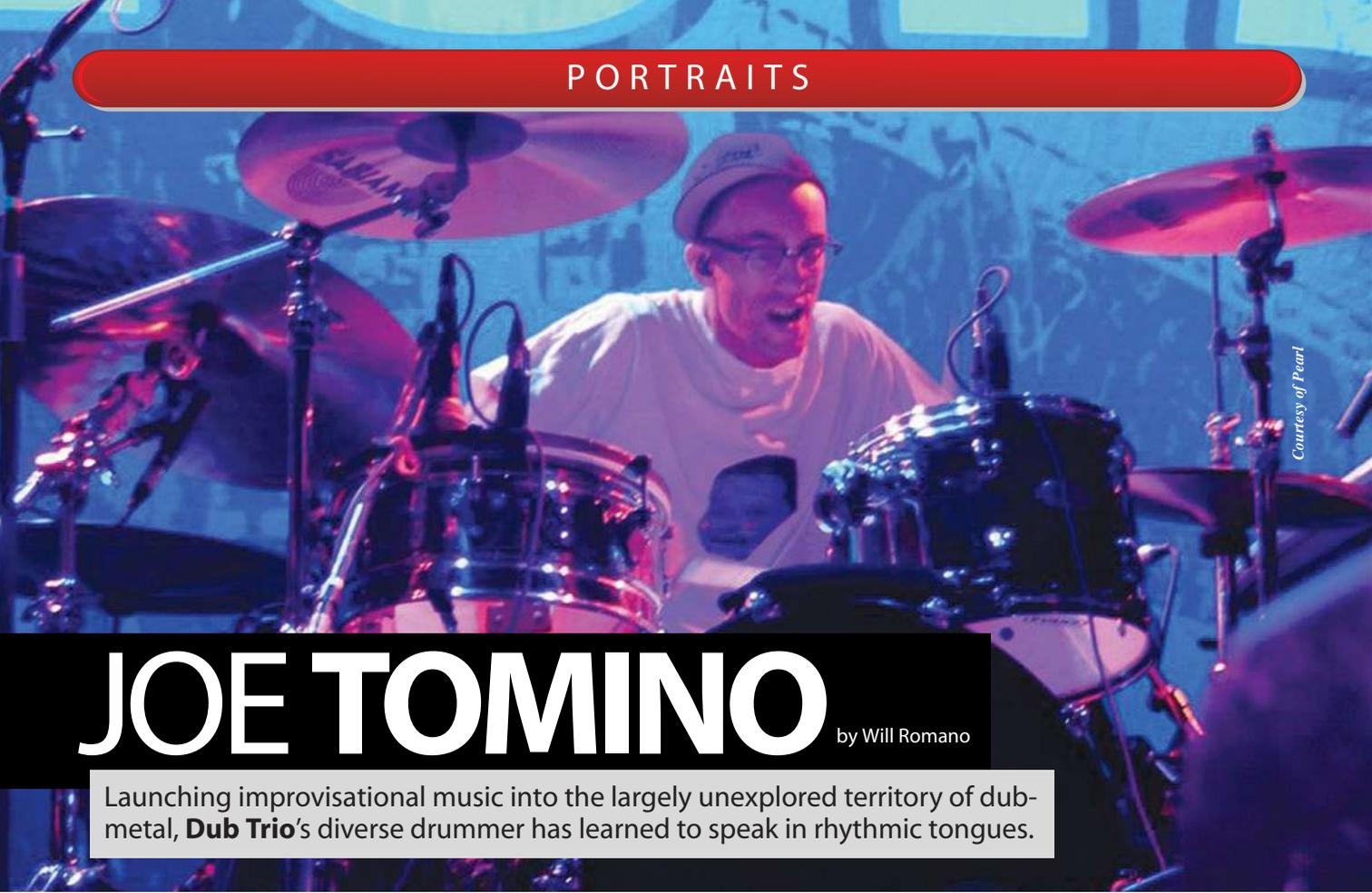


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Courtesy of Pearl

# JOE TOMINO

by Will Romano

Launching improvisational music into the largely unexplored territory of dub-metal, **Dub Trio's** diverse drummer has learned to speak in rhythmic tongues.

**D**ub-metal drummer Joe Tomino, the engine powering the reggae acts Dub Trio and Matisyahu, is fluent in several musical languages. Tomino, thirty-four, is a classically trained percussionist who grew up listening to hard rock. He immerses himself in different styles, from pop to hip-hop, to learn their rhythmic vocabulary and to accent and flavor his double-kick-propelled, hybridized playing approach. It's an attitude that has served him well for fifteen years.

In 2000, after generating a buzz with the Cleveland-based avant-garde jazz/electronica band Birth, Tomino moved to New York City, where he met his future Dub Trio bandmates, bassist/keyboardist Stu Brooks and guitarist/keyboardist Dave Holmes, then members of Actual Proof. As Dub Trio, Tomino and his cohorts began mixing reggae with rock and metal in instrumental improv settings. For the next decade, the Brooklyn-based skinsman continually pushed himself to become an in-demand recording and touring drummer, performing in the studio and/or live with a variety of artists, including Lady Gaga, Fugees, Wyclef Jean, Mike Patton's Peeping Tom, and the Hasidic reggae-rap sensation Matisyahu.

Unsurprisingly, to achieve a global (some might say cosmic) understanding of rhythm, Tomino has had to remain open to many influences. The cover art for Dub

Trio's 2011 album, *IV*, created by Kostas Seremetis, seems to speak to this. Intended to be a graphic interpretation of the band's deep, dirge-y dub music, the tri-panel composite image, featuring pictorial slices of the moon, Minuteman missile guidance-system circuitry, and a metallic motorcycle wheel, could also represent Tomino's propulsive, amalgamated, Space Echo- and electronics-inflected style. "I never wanted to be in a band that had to play a certain way," Joe says. "That's the magic of what we do: We can create without boundaries."

**MD:** With each successive Dub Trio studio album, your music becomes progressively more aggressive.

**Joe:** I agree. I remember we were in rehearsal one day for our second record [*New Heavy*], and we were playing a dub/reggae riff. We decided to add distortion to the riff, and then I thought, *I'll beat the hell out of the drums as if I were in a punk or metal band*. It seemed to work.

**MD:** Did you have to sharpen your technique to play metal?

**Joe:** I had to build up my chops a bit, yeah. If I had to analyze what I'm doing, I'd say I'm using more of my fingers with the faster stuff. I continue to practice a lot more finger exercises on the pad.

**MD:** What exercises specifically?

**Joe:** Nothing too crazy. Basically it's going back and forth between singles, doubles, and inversions while using wrists and then

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Tomino plays two Pearl sets. His Reference kit features a 10x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, a 16x20 bass drum, a 14" Elite timbale, and a 20-ply, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ x14 snare, as well as a variety of other snares. His Masters MCX kit features a 9x12 tom, a 14x14 floor tom, and an 18x20 bass drum. Tomino's electronic setup consists of a Roland SPD-S multi-pad unit, a Line 6 Verbzilla pedal, a Danelectro Spring King reverb pedal, a Roland DS-1 distortion pedal, a Roland Boss RE-20 Space Echo pedal, a Roland Boss Dr. Sample SP-303 phrase sampler and multi-effects unit, and a ddrum bass drum trigger. Joe plays Sabian cymbals. With Matisyahu he uses 14" Paragon hi-hats, a 19" AAX Saturation crash, a 19" AAX X-Plosion crash, a 21" HHX Heavy Legacy ride, and a 19" AAX China. With Dub Trio he plays 15" X-Celerator hi-hats, a 19" AAX Saturation Crash, a 20" HHX Stage crash, and a 19" AAX China. He uses Vic Firth 5B, 55A, and Peter Erskine Ride sticks. And he employs a variety of Evans heads, including an EC Reverse Dot or G Plus Coated snare batter and Hazy bottom, EC2 tom batters and G1 bottoms, a J1 Etched tom/timbale batter, and a GMAD Clear bass drum batter and EQ3 Resonant front head.

fingers, then back again, on my drum pad.

**MD:** You attended Cleveland State University and the New England Conservatory. How did your musical education and training prepare you for later gigs?

**Joe:** Technique has always been an important part of what I am as a player, and I still love classical music. But once I discovered jazz, everything changed. I couldn't see practicing xylophone etudes eight hours a day with a metronome blaring. I essentially learned that nothing is perfect. I think technique is vital, but I don't let it hinder my playing in any way.

**MD:** Would you say that musicality is just as important as technique?

**Joe:** Yeah, definitely. Technique will only take you so far. For me it's about learning the vocabulary of the style in which I'm playing. I'm all about breaking rules, but I wouldn't play a swing pattern in a Dub Trio metal section. Well, I could, but I probably wouldn't. So doing my homework is important. Plus I approach different songs from different perspectives. You know: How would Tony Williams play this figure, as opposed to, say, Phil Rudd of AC/DC?

**MD:** Is it true that you change cymbal and drum sizes depending on the gig you're playing?

**Joe:** Yes. That's mainly because Dub Trio's music is heavier and has more space than, say, Matisyahu's music. I need the weight and resonance of the larger sizes to give more body to what I play. On the turn of a dime we could go from something dubby to something doomy. A 16" crash isn't going to work in that situation.

**MD:** How do you overcome that?

**Joe:** It's tricky. Some of it is in how I choose to actually hit the cymbal. If I'm hitting it with the tip of the stick, or with the shoulder, or if I "play through it," it's more about technique than switching cymbals in the middle of a gig. Generally, though, I try to find the cymbal that has the right decay—just long enough, but not too long. And it has to be just heavy enough to cut through distorted guitars and bass, but not too heavy.

**MD:** Some of the effects you use add an almost psychedelic dimension to your playing. How long have you used electronics in your setup?

**Joe:** There came a point at which I wanted to play electronics, but not a full e-kit. That led to using my Roland SPD-S multi-pad unit. Then I began to sample all my own sounds and use a phrase sampler and effects such as an RE-20 Space Echo delay and reverb pedal. I try to make sounds that are unique to me.

**MD:** In what way?

**Joe:** Initially I had one or two pads, a trig-

ger, and a sampler that had onboard effects. I would run a keyboard or a microphone into the sampler and process their signals and sample them on the fly. Now I can create sounds with computer software and sample those.

**MD:** Dub Trio's music is so diverse. Who would you list as your main drumming influences?

**Joe:** I'm inspired by a lot of drummers. Tony Williams, Sly Dunbar, Carlton Barrett, classical/avant-garde percussionist Max Neuhaus, and so many others. Even non-musicians, like chefs, inspire me.

**MD:** Chefs?

**Joe:** To me, a great meal can inspire a great show. [New York City chef] Wylie Dufresne uses extended techniques with

## RECORDINGS

**Dub Trio** Exploring the Dangers Of, New Heavy, Another Sound Is Dying, IV /// **Birth** Find /// **Peeping Tom** Peeping Tom /// **Lady Gaga** The Fame /// **Wyclef Jean** Carnival, Volume II: Memoirs of an Immigrant /// **Matisyahu** Live at Stubb's, Volume II /// **Janita** Haunted

molecular gastronomy, and a drummer like [composer/percussionist] Gerry Hemingway does something similar, using extended techniques on the kit. Chefs are like musicians: Everyone has the same ingredients to choose from, but it's how they choose to arrange them that matters.



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# Jamaican Drum Sounds

## Quick Tips to Achieve Authentic Reggae-Style Tones

by Michael Dawson and Gil Sharone



SKA/rocksteady setup



Reggae/dancehall drums

The drum sounds employed in each subgenre of reggae are just as important to the overall vibe of the music as the distinctive grooves played within each style. While you work on getting your one-drop, rocker, and dancehall beats to sit right in the pocket, consider your gear choices—as well as how you have your drums tuned and muffled—in order to get your kit sounding as true to form as possible.

Here, we've broken it down to two basic setups: a classic open and jazzy set for early ska and rocksteady styles and a more modern, heavily treated configuration for the deeper, drier sounds heard on reggae and dancehall records in the '70s and '80s.

### SKA/ROCKSTEADY SETUP

The Jamaican drummers who invented ska and rocksteady in the '50s and '60s started out by emulating the American jazz and R&B records they heard on the radio. As a result, their choices in gear and tuning reflected that aesthetic.

To get your drums sounding appropriate for ska and rocksteady, go for open, ringing tones. Try single-ply coated heads on the snare, kick, and toms. Tune the drums fairly high, and

forgo any muffling, except maybe a felt strip on the bass drum. A felt beater will bring out a rounder sound from the kick, and thinner, darker cymbals are your best option. The DW Classics kit shown here features a 13" rack tom, a 16" floor tom, a 22" bass drum, and a 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x14 snare.

### REGGAE/DANCEHALL DRUMS

As the more modern reggae and dancehall styles developed, drummers began experimenting with ways to make their kits sound fatter, punchier, and more distinct, especially in the recording studio. Twin-ply or heavily treated drumheads, like Remo Pinstripes or CS black dots, were often used, and all of the drums were muffled to kill the overtones. The goal was to achieve a focused pitch with maximum attack.

Try covering your toms with T-shirts, towels, or chamois, and stuff the bass drum with whatever materials you have available—blankets, pillows, jackets, torn newspaper.... Anything that tightens up the kick to a deep, punchy thud will suffice. Some drummers even went so far as to remove the bottom heads of the toms and the front head of the bass drum in order to reduce the resonance and

emphasize the attack even further.

The snare tones of these later styles vary from super-tight and ringing (à la Carlton Barrett) to the taped-up, deep "smack" made famous by Style Scott on dozens of DJ/dancehall records. The kit shown here has muffling rings and gaffer's tape on the snare and toms.

Reggae and dancehall drummers often went without a ride cymbal, opting to focus on the hi-hat for timekeeping and using thin crashes with fast decay for accents. Some players, like Carlton Barrett, placed chamois between the hi-hat cymbals to make them sound drier.

Percussion instruments are also commonplace in these later setups. Timbales are an essential voice and were placed either to the left of the hi-hat (as shown) or in the floor tom position, so they could be played for accents at the ends of fills. Sly Dunbar used timbales in this manner. Barrett often used a small cowbell—placed over his hi-hat—to add a touch of melodic flavor to his grooves, and Dunbar also incorporated bongos into his setup.

To hear these two drumkits, log on to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



# PERCUSSIONALITY

by **TOCA**

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Nina Rodriguez / Percussionist and Educator



# Chops Builders

## Part 19: Irish Spring With Accents

by Bill Bachman

Last time (April 2012) we explored variations of the 12/8 double-beat exercise Irish Spring to work on our free-stroke finger control for diddles. This month we're going to add accents and taps to those same exercises to create a different sound and flow. These variations require a different technique in order to be played correctly.

When you get the exercises dialed in with the maximum stick-height and dynamic differential between the accents and taps, your shuffle feel on the drumset will improve greatly. If you've ever struggled to play Jeff Porcaro's famous half-time shuffle on the song "Rosanna" by Toto, then it's time to pull out your metronome, pad, and sticks and get to work!

First let's look at the technique needed to play the Irish Spring with accents at a slow speed. Each hand plays a low tap, immediately followed by a high accent. At a slow tempo, you can easily play an upstroke for the low tap and a downstroke for the accent using the wrist. But if you try to play the exercise at a medium or fast speed using that same technique, your wrists will seize up, since there's not enough time for the hands to play an upstroke preceding the accent. This is where the Moeller whip-and-stop technique will come into play.

Let's take a brief look at the infamous Moeller technique. When drummers hear the name Moeller, they usually think of a looping three-note accent/tap/tap pattern. I call that the Moeller whip-and-flop technique, and while it's useful to know how to play that pattern, it's only one example of what's possible when employing the Moeller technique.

A Moeller stroke is one that uses a whiplike motion. After the whip, you have the option to flop into a tap immediately following the accent, or you can stop the stick when there's time after the accent, before the next low tap. (The whip-and-stop could also be called a Moeller whip downstroke.) Both whip-and-flop and whip-and-stop have

appropriate applications, so you should have command of the two techniques.

The following exercises are best played with the Moeller whip-and-stop technique so that you can replace the wrist's motion with a forearm motion. This allows the wrist to simply relax and enjoy the ride. The accent should be played with a Moeller whip stroke from the forearm. Immediately after hitting the drum, the stick should be stopped so that it points down slightly, with the bead about 1" off the head. The next note should be played with what I call a Moeller upstroke, where the stick just happens to hit the drum as you pick up the forearm and let the wrist hang limp. Think about dragging the stick up with your arm. When you use the Moeller technique, your forearm should always be the first thing to move, and the bead of the stick should be the last. After playing the Moeller upstroke, you're back in the up position, ready to repeat the process.

As you play the exercises faster, the forearm motion should get smaller in order to conserve energy. The increased stick height for the accent will now be achieved in part by the whipping motion and also by the palm of the hand bumping down the butt end of the stick, which consequently pops up the bead. Regardless of the tempo, be sure to quickly stifle the stick's rebound after the accent in order to freeze the stick pointing down toward the drum so that it's ready for the next low tap. The greater the stick-height differential between the accents and taps, the greater the dynamic contrast.

In the following Irish Spring variations, each phrase will be played leading with the right and left hand. Since all of the notes in the two-bar turnaround are accented, they should be played using smooth, rebounding free strokes. This will serve as a refreshing break from the Moeller whip-and-stop downstrokes used in the remainder of the exercise.

1

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

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

RRRLRLLLRLL RRRLRLLLRLL RLLRRLRLLRLL RLLRRLRLLRLL  
 LLLRRLRRLRRL LLLRRLRRLRRL LLRLRRLRRLRRL LLRLRRLRRLRRL

Now play the exact same exercise while filling in the missing 8th notes with the opposite hand. This leaves us with steady, flowing 8th notes, with accents landing on the downbeats. The challenge is to make

the entire exercise sound perfectly steady, with no rhythmic hiccups and no accidental dynamic shifts caused by inconsistent accent/tap stick heights or stroke velocity.

2

RLRRLRRLRRLR RLRRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR  
 LRLRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR RLRLRRLRRLR RLRLRRLRRLR

RLRRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR RLRRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR  
 LRLRLRRLRRLR RLRRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR RLRLRRLRRLR

RLRRLRRLRRLR RLRRLRRLRRLR RLLRRLRRLRLL RLLRRLRRLRLL  
 LRLRLRRLRRLR LRLRLRRLRRLR LLRRLRRLRLLR LLRRLRRLRLLR

**Bill Bachman** is an international drum clinician and a freelance drumset player in the Dallas area. For more information, including how to sign up for online lessons through Skype, visit [billbachman.net](http://billbachman.net).



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# Funky Threes

## Breaking the Mold With Broken Stickings

by Jeff Salem



**MUSIC KEY**

open	○	R.C.
H.H.	●	
T.T.	●	
S.D.	●	
F.F.	●	
B.D.	●	
H.H.	●	
w/foot	●	
	○	T.T.

In this article, we're going to look at a very simple three-note sticking pattern (LLR) and apply it on the drumkit in a way that you may not have thought of before—with the double strokes voiced between the hi-hat and snare. It'll take a bit of time to get the orchestration under control, but it will be worth the effort. I've found that, when used judiciously, this concept can be a great way to add a little spicy sauce to your grooves.

I've placed brackets around the three-note stickings in order to make it easier for you to recognize the pattern. Start off slowly, and repeat the stickings until the motion of your hands feels natural and relaxed. Take your time, and enjoy the sounds of these funky ideas.

To begin, here's the basic sticking phrased as triplets.

Here's the same idea, but phrased as 16th notes, with the right hand moving to the toms.

Once you have those exercises under control, try the following 16th-note grooves.

In these examples the three-note lick is phrased as 16th-note triplets.

In this final groove, I've introduced another three-note lick (RRL), voiced on the rack tom, ride cymbal, and snare. Try coming up with your own variations.

To watch a video demonstrating these grooves, log on to the Education page at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).

**Jeff Salem** is an internationally recognized drummer/educator based in Toronto. He has released three instructional videos (*Groove-a-Diddles*, *Drumology*, and *Double Bass Vocabulary Volume 1*) and written two books for Hudson Music (*Turn It Up & Lay It Down: Messin' Wid Da Bull* and *A Rhythmic Twist*). For more info, visit [salemrum.com](http://salemrum.com).



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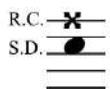


# Make It Swing!

## Part 2: Coordination and Consistency

by Mat Marucci

### MUSIC KEY

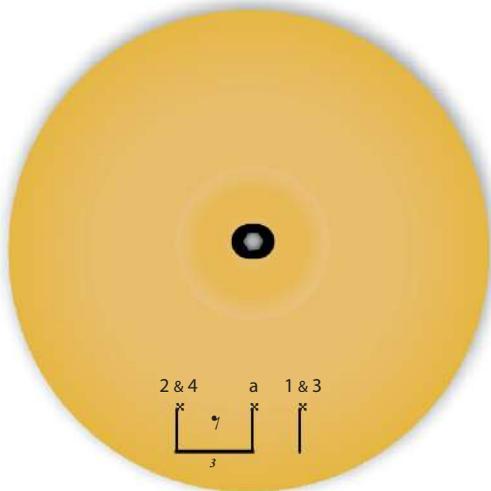


Part one of my “Make It Swing!” series, which ran in the December 2011 issue, contained excerpts from my book *Jazz Drumming Essentials and More*. That article was an overview of techniques used to develop a strong swing feel when playing jazz. This article is a follow-up designed to fill any gaps of information in the first part and to fine-tune the techniques set forth previously.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE CIRCULAR RIDE MOTION

When you use a circular ride motion, as illustrated in the artwork here, there's limited up-and-down motion. When you play the ride in just one spot, the stick must come up and down as many as four times. With the circular motion, the stick comes downward once, moves across the cymbal laterally, and then comes up on beats 1 and 3. This makes for a smoother sound, and it allows you to play faster tempos because of the lesser amount of motion.

The stick should move in a counterclockwise direction (clockwise for left-handed drummers). This motion consistently brings the stick back to the center of the drumset toward the snare, which is where many fills start.



The rebound of the stick moving across the cymbal should be controlled with the fingers rather than allowed to bounce randomly.

With the circular motion, the notes are spaced in a way that helps give a consistent and accurate triplet spacing and a flowing feeling to the pattern. You can visualize the cyclical movement, as opposed to an up-and-down motion, where it's more difficult to develop consistency.

### CONSISTENCY IS KEY

When you're playing a circular ride pattern, it's easier to coordinate patterns between the hands and feet, because the ride hand will always be in the same place whenever a specific note is played. For example, when you play a quarter note on beat 1 or 3, the ride stroke will be on the far right point of the cymbal pattern; when you play a quarter note on beat 2 or 4, the ride stroke will be played at the far left point of the pattern.



In the next exercise, the left hand plays the ride cymbal rhythm on the snare. Think about where each of the snare notes lands along the ride cymbal's path.



Exercise 3 shows how the circular ride motion relates to each 8th-note triplet. When breaking it down, count the triplets as “1-te-ta, 2-te-ta, 3-te-ta, 4-te-ta” (pronounced as “tay” and “tuh”). This is a great way to count triplets, because it rolls off the tongue very well.

For the first triplet note on beat 1, the hands will be hitting the cymbal and snare at the same time. When the left stick plays the second triplet note of beat 1 (the “te”), the right stick is moving laterally to the left and should be about halfway to the point where you would play beat 2. When you play the third triplet note of beat 1 (the “ta”), the right stick should be all the way over to the left, ready to play the cymbal on beat 2.

On beat 2, both sticks play together. On the “te,” the ride stick is moving laterally to the right and getting ready to play the “ta.” The ride stick continues moving laterally into position to play beat 3. The entire process repeats for beat 4. Try the exercise slowly, and keep the motion very steady and as smooth as possible.



Repeat the process with the following 8th-note and 16th-note exercises. Even though the hands no longer play in perfect unison, the ride hand still maintains a consistent position in relation to the snare notes. This will be true with any snare drum rhythms.



Once you've gotten comfortable coordinating the circular motion between the ride cymbal and the snare, play the snare parts with your bass drum instead.

The consistency of motion that we're discussing is advantageous for a number of reasons. When you practice coordination exercises where you're reading snare parts against a ride rhythm, or when you're reading figures in a chart, you will have developed the coordination and muscle memory to play those particular notes against the ride motion comfortably and with a smooth feel. You'll also find that when you're playing forms of jazz where the cymbal ride rhythm doesn't stay constant, the motion and muscle memory will stay with you. I've found that even when I mix up the ride pattern regularly, 2 and 4 are still played on the left side of the cymbal. This can be a huge help in situations where everyone is improvising and stretching over the barline. That consistency of motion helps me keep the correct time and meter.

### FINE-TUNING THE HI-HAT TECHNIQUE

In the previous article, I described a hi-hat technique using the ball of the foot and the heel to get a good strong "chick" sound and to help strengthen the groove. Now we'll fine-tune that technique.

To begin, hold the hi-hat cymbals together using the ball of the foot, with the heel raised in the air. Apply a good amount of pressure to hold the cymbals together. Next, bring your heel down to the heel plate on the hi-hat stand. Notice that this causes the pressure on the cymbals to relax. Raise the heel, and you'll feel the pressure increase again. This pressure is what helps give that strong "chick" sound.

When you use the technique described in the earlier article, don't bring the heel down lower than the level of the ball of the foot. At most, the heel would be parallel to the floor, with the ball and heel being on the same plane.

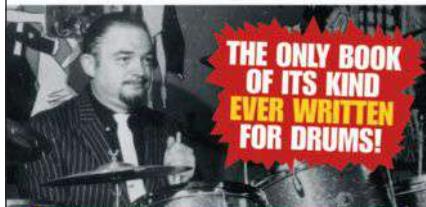
In situations where you're playing the hi-hat with the hands and doing a lot of opening and closing with the foot, a standard heel-down technique would provide more control.

I hope these articles have helped you improve your swing and groove. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me through *Modern Drummer* (info@moderndrummer.com).

**Mat Marucci** is an active performer, author, educator, and clinician. His latest book, *Jazz Drumming Essentials and More*, is available through Mel Bay. His latest recordings are *Live at the Jazz Bakery* (Marco) and *Why Not?* (Cadence Jazz).



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# Drum Athletes

by Billy Cuthrell

## Coordination Exercises, Part 1



**W**e spend countless hours sitting behind our drumsets, working to build our independence. I've found, though, that some of the very best exercises for developing dexterity don't involve the drumset at all, but rather a few small bouncy balls and a training partner.

I've tracked the results of these exercises with a group of students in my private teaching studio, and each student has shown marked improvement in dexterity and coordination. The routines can be done in your home, in a gym, or out on your driveway on a nice day. For this set of beginner exercises, you'll need a partner, thirty-five to forty tennis balls and racquetballs, and a bucket to hold the balls. Follow the directions as outlined, and keep in mind that these exercises are designed to be challenging. Start slowly, and work your way up.

### DROPS

Drops start at close range, and you gradually increase the distance between you and your partner to make them more difficult. Track the number of times you catch the various balls in the correct hand. Each week, aim for a greater number of successful catches and for increased distance between you and your training partner.

Here's how the exercise works:

1. Have your partner stand facing you, about two feet in front, with a tennis ball in each hand.
2. Your partner raises his or her arms straight out in front and then drops one of the tennis balls, not telling you which hand will drop the ball (photo 1).
3. When the ball drops, you run to catch it, in the hand your partner calls out to you, before it bounces on the ground a second time (photo 2). Your partner could drop the ball from the right hand but call out "left," meaning you have to catch the ball in your left hand. After you catch the ball (or not), give it back to your partner and quickly return to the starting position.



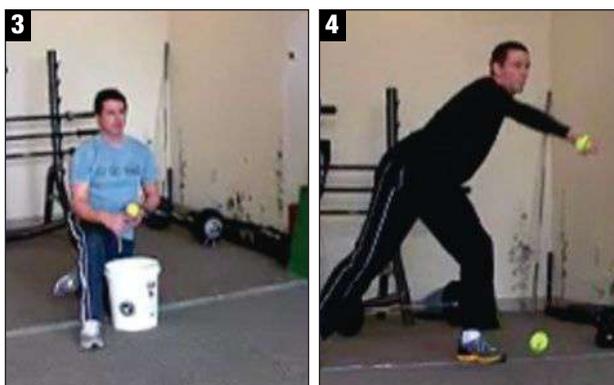
4. Repeat this exercise ten to twenty times.
5. Now move five to six feet apart. Your partner will switch to racquetballs or other smaller bouncy balls. Do another round of ten to twenty reps, catching the ball in the hand your partner instructs. Each time you complete a set, move a few feet farther apart.

To make the exercise more advanced, do it on a slight incline, with your partner standing at the top of a hill. You'll have to run up to catch the balls as they bounce. Keep the pace quick, and repeat as many times as possible.

### BOUNCE DROPS

To do this next exercise, you'll need a little more room to move. Bounce drops are the opposite of regular drops, in that they get harder as you move closer together. Here's the process:

1. Stand about twenty feet apart from your training partner, facing each other. Your partner should have a tennis ball in each hand and a small bucket holding twenty or so balls of various sizes.
2. From a kneeling position, your partner will bounce the balls in different directions toward you so that they hit the ground only once (photo 3).
3. As the balls bounce toward you, your partner will call out which hand to use to catch them. The balls will travel to your left or right, so you must run in the right direction—but you must catch each ball with the hand chosen by your partner (photo 4). This is a difficult exercise that will keep you moving from side to side until the bucket is empty.



4. Rest for one or two minutes, and reset your position at about fifteen feet apart. Repeat the exercise five more times, moving closer for each round.

### CHALLENGING CIRCUITS

You can combine regular drops and bounce drops as a circuit with no rest. Start with regular drops, and do a set of ten to twenty repetitions. Immediately move into position to do ten to twenty bounce drops. Rest and repeat five times.

Another variation is to perform bounce drops, but with your partner bouncing the tennis balls hard enough that they go a little above your head. This will not only work on hand dexterity but will also improve hand/eye coordination, as you have to watch how high each ball bounces and catch it in the correct hand at different heights.

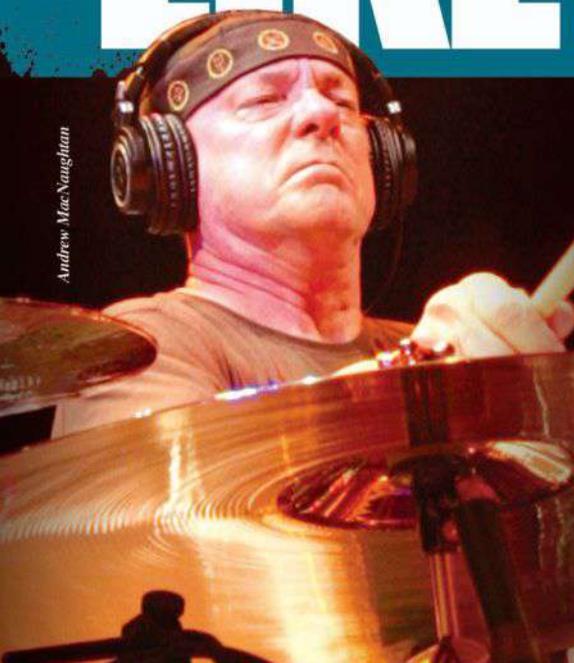
Log on to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com) to watch a video of these exercises. Next time we'll look at a few more challenging routines. Until then, good luck, and have fun!

**Billy Cuthrell** owns and operates the Progressive Music Center and is a fitness trainer for musicians in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area. You can contact him directly at [bcjm@nc.rr.com](mailto:bcjm@nc.rr.com).



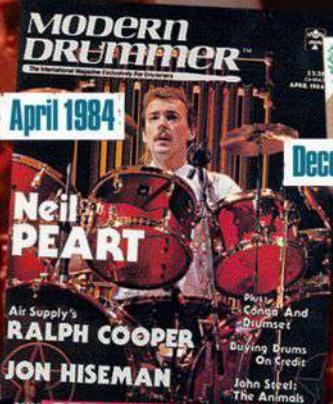
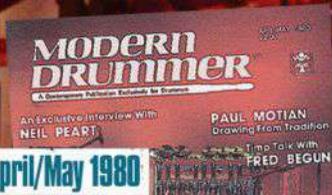
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1943 Slingerland  
Rolling Bomber set

Dave Brown

# The Drums of World War II

## All-Wood Solutions to Wartime Restrictions

by Mark Cooper

If you were listening to the radio on December 7, 1941, you might have heard the exciting big band sound of Glenn Miller's number-one hit "Chattanooga Choo Choo." You might also have heard that radio broadcast interrupted by news that Pearl Harbor had just been attacked. This was the day that World War II began for the United States, and the war would drastically change the American way of life. It would also change how musical instruments—especially drums—would be manufactured for the next few years.

During the difficult years of World War II, Americans were called upon to do their part for the war effort. Because an incredible amount of resources was needed to conduct the war, vital materials such as food, gasoline, metal, and rubber had to be rationed. American manufacturers quickly converted their factories in order to produce military equipment. Even musical instrument manufacturers like C.G. Conn, of Elkhart, Indiana, were producing

components for military use, including aircraft altimeters, bombsights, and tank parts.

### NO MORE METAL

In June 1942, after the country had been at war for over six months, the U.S. government issued General Limitation Order L-37, which instructed musical instrument companies to curtail the manufacture of their products. Companies had to limit the amount of critical materials used to produce musical instruments to no more than 10 percent of their total weight. The order prompted drum manufacturers like Slingerland, Gretsch, Ludwig, Leedy, WFL, and others to design and build drums using very few metal parts. This resulted in some unique and very beautiful drums.

The typical five-piece drumset made at that time consisted of more than seventy-five metal lugs, eight heavy brass hoops, five brass cymbals, and numerous holders and stands. That's a lot of metal! Drum designers went to



Tony Williams

1943 Ludwig & Ludwig Victory snare (top)  
and 1944 Leedy Dreadnought snare

work and came up with creative solutions to the problem of building drums with very few metal parts.

### PATRIOTIC OFFERINGS

The Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company met the challenge by introducing Rolling Bomber drums. These beautiful drums were made with hand-carved rosewood or walnut lugs, along with maple hoops and solid-wood snare strainers. Floor toms were suspended on wooden legs. Rolling Bombers were fully tunable, and the snare drums were built around the famous Radio King solid-maple shells. Bass drums and toms were made from 3-ply mahogany and poplar shells with heavy maple reinforcing rings.

In order to meet Uncle Sam's wartime demands, design engineers at the William F. Ludwig Drum Company (WFL) came up with a special internal tensioning system, most likely inspired by the L&S Master Model drums of the 1930s (see photo at top right). Constructed largely of maple parts, the new WFL Victorious models were tuned by turning a series of tension rods from outside the drum. This caused wooden rings to be pushed against the heads, increasing the tension. Maple lugs were fastened to the hoops and shell with wood screws, and very simple metal snare strainers were employed. WFL offered snare stands, hi-hat stands, and even foot pedals made almost entirely from wood. The company's sales brochure read, "You help yourself *and* your country when you purchase WFL Victorious drums and outfits, built to conform to government regulations." The listed price of WFL's five-piece pearl-finish Commando set was \$230, while the four-piece Liberator outfit sold for about \$165. Later in the war, WFL changed the design of its drums to look almost identical to Slingerland's Rolling Bombers.

In 1941, both Leedy and Ludwig & Ludwig were owned by C.G. Conn. The two drum divisions operated under one roof, resulting in models that were quite similar in design. Leedy offered the Dreadnought line of drums, named after a type of battleship, while Ludwig & Ludwig was producing Victory models. The instruments utilized hardwood lugs, 3-ply shells, maple hoops, and wooden stands. Older simple metal strainers were used, along with some wooden strainers. Huge maple hoops and long, rounded lugs gave Victory drums a cartoon-like appearance. Unlike Slingerland's Rolling Bomber drums and WFL's Victorious models, the toms made by both Ludwig & Ludwig and Leedy had tacked-on bottom heads that could not be tuned.

The Gretsch Drum Company also manufactured a small number of drumsets dur-

ing the war, which were quite similar in design to those made by Leedy and Ludwig & Ludwig. Gretsch Defender drums had very thin maple shells and solid-maple center-mounted lugs, through which long tension rods passed. The lugs were often painted silver. With the emphasis on simplicity, Gretsch used long, rounded lugs on its bass drums and snares; tom lugs were made by simply cutting these larger lugs in half.

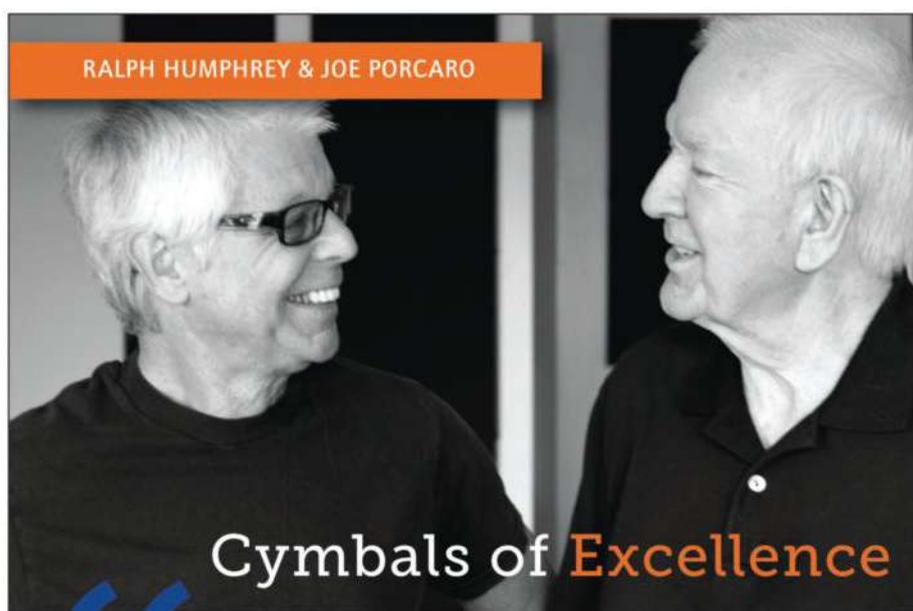
The drums of World War II were offered in several finishes. Most were available in pearl and sparkle wraps, as well as two-tone Duco finishes. All metal parts were nickel plated. Typical bass drum sizes were 14x26 and 14x28, and toms were 7x11,

9x13, 12x14, and 16x16. Snare drums were usually available in 7x14 or 8x14 sizes.

### A RETURN TO FORM

As the tides of war began to turn in favor of the Allies, government production restrictions loosened. In October 1944, Slingerland sent a letter to its distributors, which said, "We have just received release from the War Production Board to use all material we have on hand to manufacture pre-war drums." The letter went on to say, "We cannot sell accessories separately, and no complete drum outfits.... We must put pearl-inlaid wood hoops on tom-toms, using pre-war hardware."

Because of the transition from pre-war



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## SHOP TALK

drum manufacturing to the restrictive wartime production from 1942 to 1945, it was only natural that odd shell and hardware combinations would occur. As parts supplies were depleted, more and more wooden components were used. The same holds true of drums sold immediately after the war. They often comprised a combination of older parts and some newly manufactured pieces. Toward the end of the war and into 1947, Slingerland replaced its brass "cloud" badge with one fashioned from aluminum.

On May 10, 1945, the U.S. government revoked the L-37 law, and manufacturers were able to return to the pre-war methods of making drums. Metals and other essential materials were still in short supply, however, and it would be another year or so before production would return to normal.

### WHAT'S LEFT

Due to the limited number of drums produced during World War II and their somewhat fragile nature, relatively few examples have survived. Slingerland appears to have produced more drums

than any other company, and many Rolling Bomber models can still be found today. One problem with Rolling Bombers is that their seventy-year-old wooden lugs are prone to breaking under higher tension. While this is not really an issue with toms and bass drums, the higher tensions usually required of snare drums can cause lugs to shatter.

The drums of World War II are highly prized by collectors and players alike. Modern drummers like Jay Bellerose (Robert Plant, Alison Krauss, Ray LaMontagne) often use these old wartime kits because of their unique sound and appearance. The combination of wooden lugs, shells, and hoops produces very warm, organic sounds. Surviving examples of these drums serve as a reminder of American ingenuity at a time when U.S. manufacturers were called upon to do extraordinary things to aid the war effort. These beautiful, handmade wooden instruments look and sound like no others, and seventy years later they're still helping to create some incredible music.



Interior of WFL Victorious drum

REV Productions/J.M. Messina



1940s Leedy Dreadnought set



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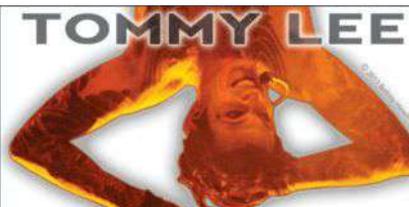
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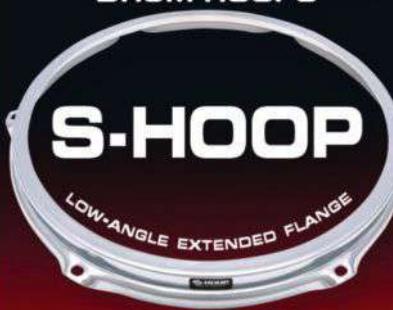
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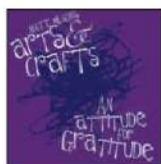
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# TAKING THE REINS

Writing, arranging, recording, producing—and performing with chops and intuition. More drummer/leaders making their mark. by Robin Tolleson



### MATT WILSON'S ARTS & CRAFTS AN ATTITUDE FOR GRATITUDE

Matt Wilson delivers again—the chops, the intuition, and the humor. After a raucous opener, Wilson's Arts & Crafts ensemble does one *slow* and slinky version of "Happy Days Are Here

Again," with pianist Gary Versace echoing trumpeter Terell Stafford's melodic muse. Stafford plays a moving tribute to late bassist Dennis Irwin, "There's No You," though the group's take on "Teen Town" seems flat. It's a rare misstep, though, as Wilson writes a big, swinging twist on the standard "Out of Nowhere" ("No Outerwear"); playfully employs skins, shells, and rims on the frantic "Bubbles"; and drives it home on the free-form gallop "Stolen Time." (Palmetto)



### KAROLINA STRASSMAYER AND DRORI MONDLAK (KLARO!) JOINING FORCES

Saxophonist Karolina Strassmayer and drummer Drori Mondlak deliver a powerful duo intro on *Joining Forces*, and Mondlak stays aggressive and musical throughout the album.

Strassmayer has a great tone, and Mondlak speaks melodically with his toms, as on "Promise to Myself." The rhythmically angular "See You Later" has a touch of funk as well as Monk, and Mondlak has the green light on "After All," laying the rhythmic groundwork with some skipping, flam-buoyant stickwork. The drummer also plays a nifty seventy-eight-second solo, "Overtime." (Lillypad)



### JOHNATHAN BLAKE THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Johnathan Blake is highly impressive on *The Eleventh Hour*, driving this modern jazz outing, his first as a leader, with quick thinking and creative stickwork. Blake wrote seven of the tunes

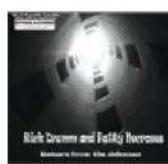
and quotes from all types of rhythmic schools (check out his James Brown breakbeat on "Clues"), spreading his ideas all around the kit and toying with the downbeat consistently. He gives "Freefall" some gas, throwing in a bit of dancehall as saxmen Jaleel Shaw and Mark Turner hit their stride. On the title track, Blake shows hints of Tony Williams and Chris Dave in his dynamic grooving with bassist Ben Street. (Sunnyside)



### JOHN ARRUCCI METAPHORS

John Arrucci keeps a tight grasp of the reins on this original jazz release. He has a confident touch on the kit, playfully rooting the showy "Little Drum" and skillfully easing into some breathy bebop. And his excellent vibes work on

"The Fall" is matched by thoughtfully orchestrated hand percussion. Arrucci plays a drum solo on the 6/8 vamp of "Menachem" that's wonderfully independent of, yet in tune with, his marimba's montuno. Arrucci proves to be a percussionist of rare versatility, equally proficient with sticks, mallets, and hand drums. (johnarrucci.com)



### RICK DRUMM AND FATTY NECROSES RETURN FROM THE UNKNOWN

*Return From the Unknown* is a strong shot of well-played, improv-tinged funk. Throughout, Rick Drumm locks in with bassist John Benitez, composer/guitarists Fred Hamilton and Corey

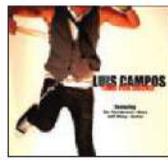
Christiansen, and an excellent horn section. This is a tight, old-school fusion octet, with value placed on dynamics and restraint. Drumm is aggressive throughout the rubato intro to "Gentle Spirit," takes a sweet textural drum solo, and fills out the jam nicely on the jazz-rock cut "Detours." (rickdrumm.com)



### BARRY ROMBERG'S RANDOM ACCESS WORLD CREATIVITY

*World Creativity* is the tenth release by drummer Barry Romberg's talented Random Access collective. Romberg composed four tunes here and oversaw the recording and production. The

music is complex, creative, and soulful too. "Fork in the Road" has a Lounge Lizards-esque irreverence, and after the fun the group breaks into some serious funk interlaced with Ravi Namपाल's tabla. This material might find favor with fans of the Zawinul Syndicate and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. (barryromberg.com)



### LUIS CAMPOS TIME FOR SOUND

Luis Campos, who composed the material on *Time for Sound*, shows some serious funk-fusion chops. His trio, which includes guitarist Jeff Miley and bassist Ric Fierabracci, concocts a sound that's sometimes reminiscent of Allan

Holdsworth's trio, particularly on "Jeff's Tribute." Campos can hit hard, but he does it with equal flair and taste. He's a patient player too, enjoying the space on "Conquer" before settling into the groove. Campos offers a nice drum solo to close out the album. (mipmusicgroup.com)

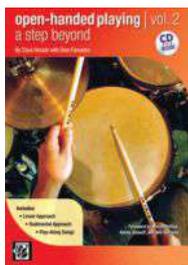


### RIVER GUERGUERIAN GROOVES FOR ODD TIMES

*Grooves for Odd Times* displays River

Guerguerian's rhythmic depth and unearths his sound-making ability, which includes some butt-shaking and ear-bending sonics. Guerguerian makes "Seventeen Eights" sexy and trance inducing, with a grouping of gongs, tabla, tambourines, dun dun, tuned frame drums, and kit. The thirty-two- and twelve-beat cycles on "Boulevard" are outlined by Guerguerian's cajon, dombeks, and bongos. On "Seven Tambourines," kanjira and riq mix beautifully with Chris Rosser's piano, oud, and dotar. And "Gong Lab" features Guerguerian playing nine gongs and drumkit on an arresting nine-beat dub-flavored cycle. (sharethedrum.com)

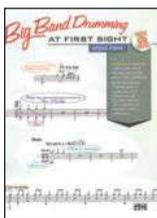
**Next time in Taking the Reins:** Henry Cole, Chad Wackerman, Gary Husband, Joachim Cooder, and more



●●●●●  
**OPEN-HANDED PLAYING, VOL. 2: A STEP BEYOND**  
 BY CLAUS HESSLER WITH DOM FAMULARO

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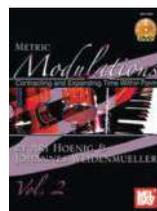
Volume one of German author Claus Hessler's *Open-Handed Playing* series dealt with the basics of drumming with uncrossed hands (developing ride-hand phrasing, voicing alternatives, etc.). This second volume focuses on linear concepts and applying rudiments to an open-handed setup. The linear section progresses through two- and three-voice patterns and then covers ways to incorporate the hi-hat foot, double strokes, accents, rests, and layered rhythms before concluding with a bunch of fill ideas. The rudimental chapter takes paradiddles, double paradiddles, and a handful of flam rudiments through a variety of applications, including orchestration possibilities, ostinato options, and superimposition over different subdivisions. The book concludes with eight fusion/rock play-along charts designed to help you figure out how to use this stuff in real-world situations. If you've never considered open-handed drumming before, this book offers a very strong argument for it. (Alfred) **Michael Dawson**



●●●●●  
**BIG BAND DRUMMING AT FIRST SIGHT** BY STEVE FIDYK

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'Tis a conundrum! When charts are passed out, the drummer—who must lead the way—is the one who receives the *least* specific information. Yet experienced players quickly clue in to filling the canvas. Author Fidyk's goal is to help drummers with these skills, guiding them to see the forest for the trees. Rather than offering exercises in speedy *note* reading, the volume covers the fine art of chart interpretation with useful advice and clear illustrations. The well-produced CD includes band tracks, play-alongs, isolated part loops, and expanded chart materials. Plenty of good know-how. (Alfred) **Jeff Potter**



●●●●●  
**METRIC MODULATIONS: CONTRACTING AND EXPANDING TIME WITHIN FORM, VOL. 2**  
 BY ARI HOENIG AND JOHANNES WEIDENMUELLER

**BOOK/DVD** LEVEL: ADVANCED \$19.99

If you're familiar with the adventurous music that NYC drummer Ari Hoenig makes with his band as well as with the modernistic pianists Kenny Werner and Jean-Michel Pilc, then you know that Hoenig's a wizard when it comes to bending barlines and implying alternate time signatures without ever losing track of the form. While it may sound as if Ari is stepping out of time at random points in a tune, there's actually a very specific method to his madness. In this second book/DVD package, the drummer and his bass-playing partner Johannes Weidenmueller outline their approach in very clear, progressive steps. The first book, *Intro to Polyrhythms*, dealt with the basics of implied time, which involves internalizing "core rhythms" based on various triplet groupings, quarter-note triplets, and dotted quarter notes. *Vol. 2* digs into advanced approaches to metric modulation, including implied time in odd time signatures, five- and seven-note groupings in 8th notes and triplets, and five-over-four polyrhythms. The DVD is really the focus here, as the book content serves more as a supplement than a page-by-page guide. But there's a lot of heavy material to be digested, internalized, and explored in this brief—but not skimpy—collection. (Mel Bay) **Michael Dawson**



●●●●●  
**THE DRUM KIT HANDBOOK** BY PAUL BALMER

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Choosing, buying, and maintaining a kit can be intimidating for drummers. Paul Balmer's new book may help ease some of that anxiety. The 200-page how-to contains lots of valuable tips and common-sense advice, covering topics as basic as changing heads and issues as complex as studio recording. Beginning drummers and seasoned professionals alike will find something useful here, including tips on tuning, head options, cymbal choices, hardware maintenance, and even drum repair. In the final chapters the author test-drives twelve different drumkits, including vintage, modern, and electronic ones, closing with a brief historical tribute to famous drummers from Gene Krupa to Neil Peart. While the layout of the text can be confusing, the hundreds of gorgeous, high-quality color photographs add a unique dimension. *The Drum Kit Handbook* might not be the first book of its kind, but for the player who struggles with achieving that perfect sound or agonizes over choosing the right equipment, it may be just what the doctor ordered. (Voyageur Press) **Mark Cooper**

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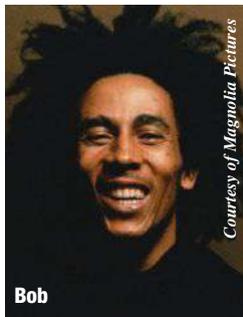


## Marley: The Movie

The new two-and-a-half-hour documentary *Marley*, which was released simultaneously in theaters, on Facebook, and on demand this past April 20, takes a subtly different approach to illuminating the life and art of a world-famous figure: Practically every single one of the many people interviewed on camera actually knew Bob Marley. No historians, no journalists, no outsiders—which makes for a uniquely intimate view of reggae’s most renowned artist. “That was very important to us,” says Ziggy Marley, Bob’s eldest son and himself a globally successful musician. “[Other types of Marley documentaries] have been done before, and we didn’t want to do that again.”

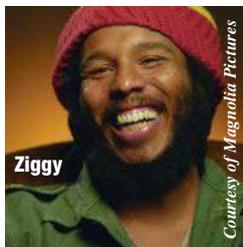
Instead, we hear from Marley’s family—his wife, Rita; two of his eleven children, including Ziggy; a half sister; and cousins both black and white. (Bob had a black mother and a white father.) We hear from members of the Wailers, including percussionist Alvin “Seeco” Patterson, singer/percussionist Bunny Livingston (aka Bunny Wailer), and bassist Aston “Family Man” Barrett, brother of Wailers drummer Carlton Barrett. We learn about Marley and reggae in general from the legendary Jamaican producer Lee “Scratch” Perry. (“Ska music was to drink beer and dance,” Perry says of the style that evolved into reggae. “It wasn’t spiritual music.”) And we receive insight on the man behind the music from, among others, Island Records founder Chris Blackwell and a nurse in Germany who befriended Bob in late 1980, when he traveled to the country to undergo an alternative form of cancer treatment.

*Marley* pulses with the percolating rhythms of reggae, and the primary drummer on the soundtrack is, of course, Bob’s longtime comrade Carlton Barrett. If Marley himself is something of a man of mystery, preferring to speak through his music, Barrett, who was murdered in 1987 at age thirty-six (the same age Marley was when he died), is even more shadowy. We don’t get to hear Carly speak in the film, but we’re treated to a good look at him behind several of his kits, with their single-headed toms and bass drum.



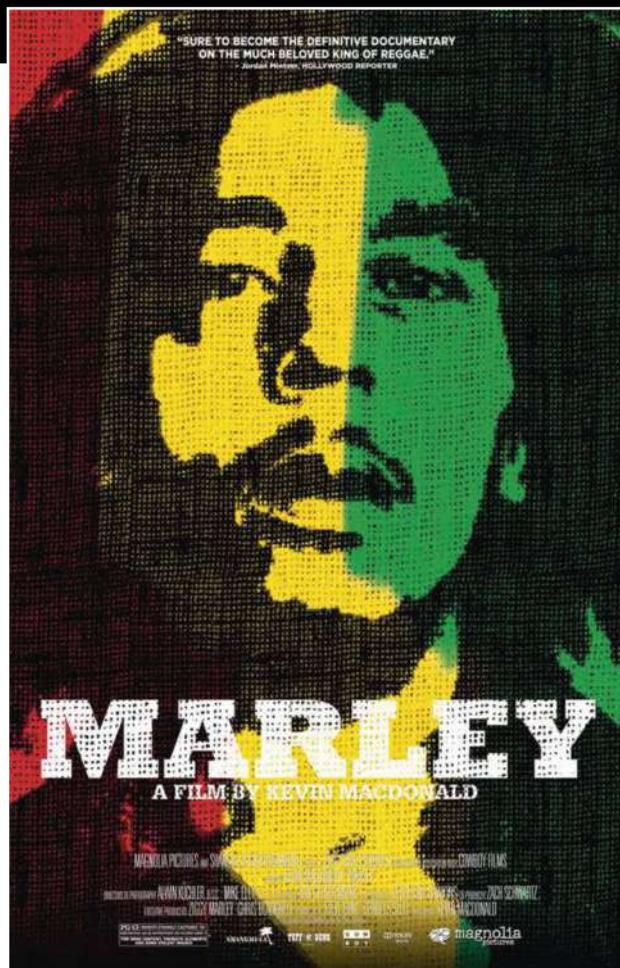
Bob

Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures



Ziggy

Courtesy of Magnolia Pictures



Incongruously, the slender drummer displays somewhat stiff body language yet plays with an utterly smooth, casual flow. His perfect little rolls and trills seem effortless.

“Carlton was an innovator,” Ziggy Marley says. “His style was his style. How he plays, his timings—very unique. A lot of people try to imitate him now.” Ziggy goes on to explain that his own first instrument was the drums. “When the Wailers would take breaks from rehearsal,” he recalls, “I would jump on the drums.” Did he receive any guidance from Barrett? “No, no, no,” he answers with a chuckle. “Usually we’d get, ‘This is not a plaything! This is not a joke.’ They wanted us to take it seriously.” Of his dad’s dabbling in the percussive arts, Ziggy says, “He played around on the drums but never really played seriously. But he could hold a beat.”

Director Kevin Macdonald, who also directed the Oscar-winning *Last King of Scotland*, has said that one of his challenges in making *Marley* was the fact that no footage existed of the first decade-plus of Bob’s career. Macdonald jumps the hurdle handily, using still photography, along with video of the interview subjects, while the music throbs beneath. But as the story reaches Marley’s mid-’70s heyday, suddenly the band is much more visible.

In some of the later performance shots, one manifestation of the Wailers’ global success seems to be the expansion of Barrett’s drumset; Carly added a bunch of drums to his rig, mounting his toms higher and at steeper angles.

The film leaves no doubt about Marley’s quiet (and, on stage, not so quiet) intensity, and it goes far in humanizing a man that many consider a prophet. Bob might have been unable to resist the advances of the many women who pursued him, as the movie explains, but his “one love” message was no joke. He spoke relentlessly in his life and in his music about his wish for all people to live together peacefully, and he seized a powerful opportunity to illustrate the idea at the One Love Peace Concert in Kingston on April 22, 1978, his first performance in Jamaica since an assassination attempt in 1976. In a remarkable moment of unity, shown here in sharp detail, Marley summons to the stage the leaders of Jamaica’s opposing political parties, Michael Manley and Edward Seaga, during “Jammin’.” Heavily dreadlocked and dancing in possession of the spirit, Marley stands between the two men and joins their hands together high above his head. “Love, prosperity, beautiful, Jah Rastafari!” he says.

**Michael Parillo**

# KEN SCOTT

by Ken Micallef

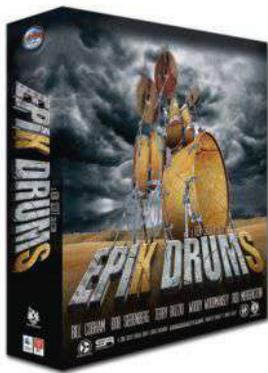
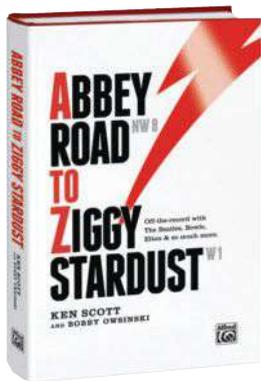
**"The three worst words in the English language are *on the grid*," Ken Scott says. "It's ridiculous. We're humans. Music needs to be played, felt, and loved by humans. It's becoming automatic, non-feeling, non-human."**

One of the most influential recording engineers of the 1960s, '70s, and beyond, Scott has worked on albums by the Beatles, Mahavishnu Orchestra, David Bowie, Harry Nilsson, the Dixie Dregs, Kansas, Santana, Missing Persons, Jeff Beck, the Rolling Stones, and Pink Floyd. He's recently released two projects focusing on his stellar career: the book *Abbey Road to Ziggy Stardust: Off-the-Record With the Beatles, Bowie, Elton, and So Much More*, and the multimedia educational DVD/sample library *EpiK DrumS EDU*, which features Terry Bozzio, Billy Cobham, Rod Morgenstein, Bob Siebenberg, and Woody Woodmansey playing their best-known drum parts as Scott explains his recording techniques. Here, *MD* asks Ken about working with the greats.



## RINGO STARR

My favorite track we did on the Beatles' *White Album* is "Yer Blues." I put the band together in a tiny room, because John wanted the track to sound different. They were so close to Ringo that the guitar necks almost hit the cymbals. We had incredibly fun sessions. Nobody ever replaced Ringo's tracks, as has been rumored. He was an incredibly creative drummer.



## BILLY COBHAM

The only thing I did differently with Billy from other drummers was use more mics. We always used to record at Trident. They had a drum booth next to the control room, but we couldn't do that with Billy. With the size of his kit, he had to be out in the live room. We'd never seen a kit that large before. And he was *loud*. But that was his approach to recording. Bill is the consummate professional, absolutely astounding, and he blew me away. Mahavishnu Orchestra recorded takes pretty quickly. All live, virtually no overdubs.

## JEFF PORCARO

I don't usually like working with session musicians. I like someone who isn't quite as good and who has to struggle to get it right. I find that that has more feeling. Someone who comes in and plays it down perfectly usually leaves me a little cold. In 1976, I was already iffy about working with Jeff Porcaro [before

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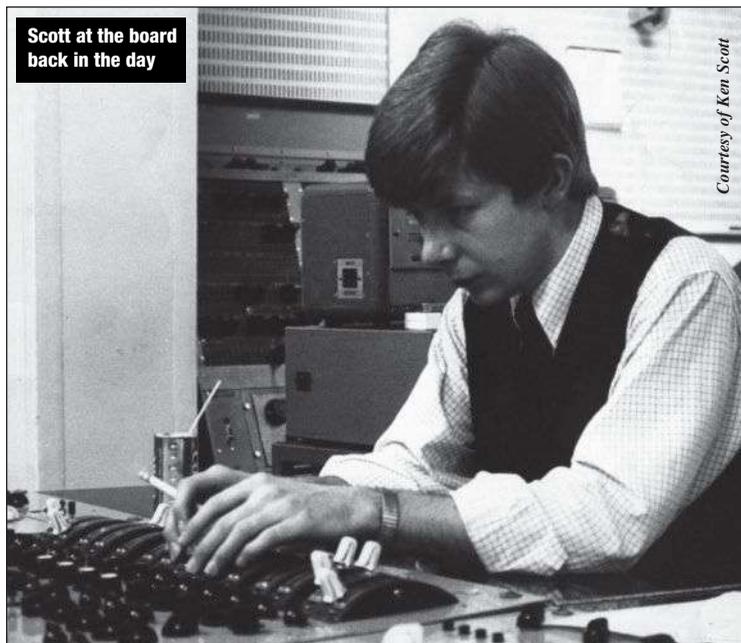
David Batteau's *Happy In Hollywood* sessions]. But it was my first experience with American session musicians. At that point, the big L.A. sound for drums was really dead. In England we'd outgrown that; we went for more live drum sounds. Jeff comes in and sets up and I arrange the mics, and I say, "Jeff, I'm sorry, but you will have to pull all that damping off." And he looked at me and said, "It's taken me months to get that right, and everyone loves it." "But I'm sorry, I don't. Take it off, mate." And he said, "Okay." There was no more argument—he took it all off, and I got the drum sound. He heard it and loved it, and from what I was told later, from then on Jeff was going to every studio saying, "You have to record my drums like Ken Scott does."

### GERRY BROWN

He was the only drummer I ever had problems with. Coming from that jazz background, he was used to getting the sound in five minutes and just going for it. On Stanley Clarke's *School Days*, I was taking longer than five minutes to get his drum sound, and he was getting impatient. Because Stanley and I had worked on a couple of albums before and Stanley knew exactly what I was capable of, he just kept saying, "Calm down, Gerry." Gerry was getting antsy, but once I got the sound and we began, no problems.

### TERRY BOZZIO

Terry is one of the most musical drummers I've ever worked with. If you see him at his own concerts it's just him and his massive kit. He has one set with chromatically tuned toms and another with toms tuned diatonically. He plays music while keeping rhythms



Scott at the board back in the day

Courtesy of Ken Scott

going with other parts of his body. With Missing Persons, he was the main writer in the group, along with Warren Cuccurullo and Dale Bozzio. Terry knew the songs so well, he would record his parts without anyone else playing, and all at Frank Zappa's studio. Terry would sing the song and record the drum track. After that, we'd add everyone else's part, and they had to match to his drum track. Terry's tracks had to feel really, really good on their own. He almost had to achieve perfection.



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## HEAVENLY SPAUN

**T**his sharp-looking outfit comes from Billy B. “Doc” Brice, a veterinarian from West Chester, Pennsylvania. “It took me four years of buying, selling, swapping, returning, and giving away—and *much* playing—to find what I really wanted for my dream drumkit,” Brice says. “But I finally found it.”

Brice continues, “Mike Calamia at Sam Ash educated me on Spaun drums. Consequently, I had several conversations with Brian Spaun, and his knowledge and his love for drumming were invaluable and sold me.” Brice says that he’s the proud owner of Spaun’s very first Edgevent Zig Zag snare. “It consists of two shells,” he explains, “with the white-pearl inner shell resonating freely, while all the hardware is on the blue-pearl outer shell. The zigzags allow the drum to vent in coordination with the slits between the shells.” Brice’s

mix of cymbals includes models by Zildjian, Paiste, Meinl, Wuhan, and UFIP.

Describing the sound of the kit, Doc says, “It virtually sings and cuts through the mix with a beautifully melodic and warm yet ‘stern’ maple sound. The Edgevent snare seems from another planet—warm, loud, and very fat, with no ring or harsh overtones.” Brice, who’s a lefty and plays open-handed, and who’s set up here in the choir loft of the

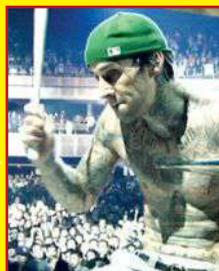


Saint Katharine Drexel Church, concludes, “I just love playing this kit. Every time I pick up my sticks, it affirms why I love drums and drumming so very much.”

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



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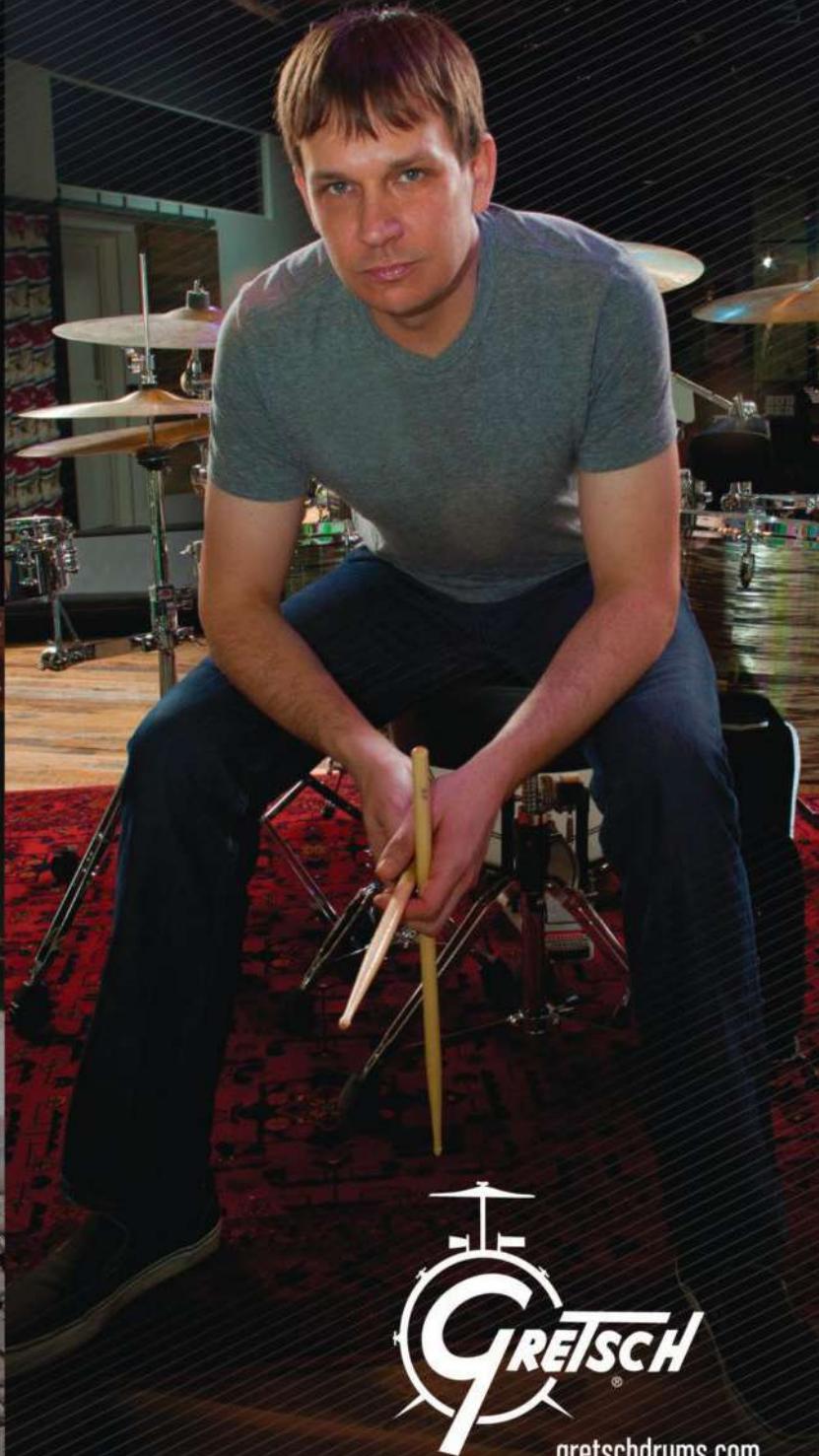
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