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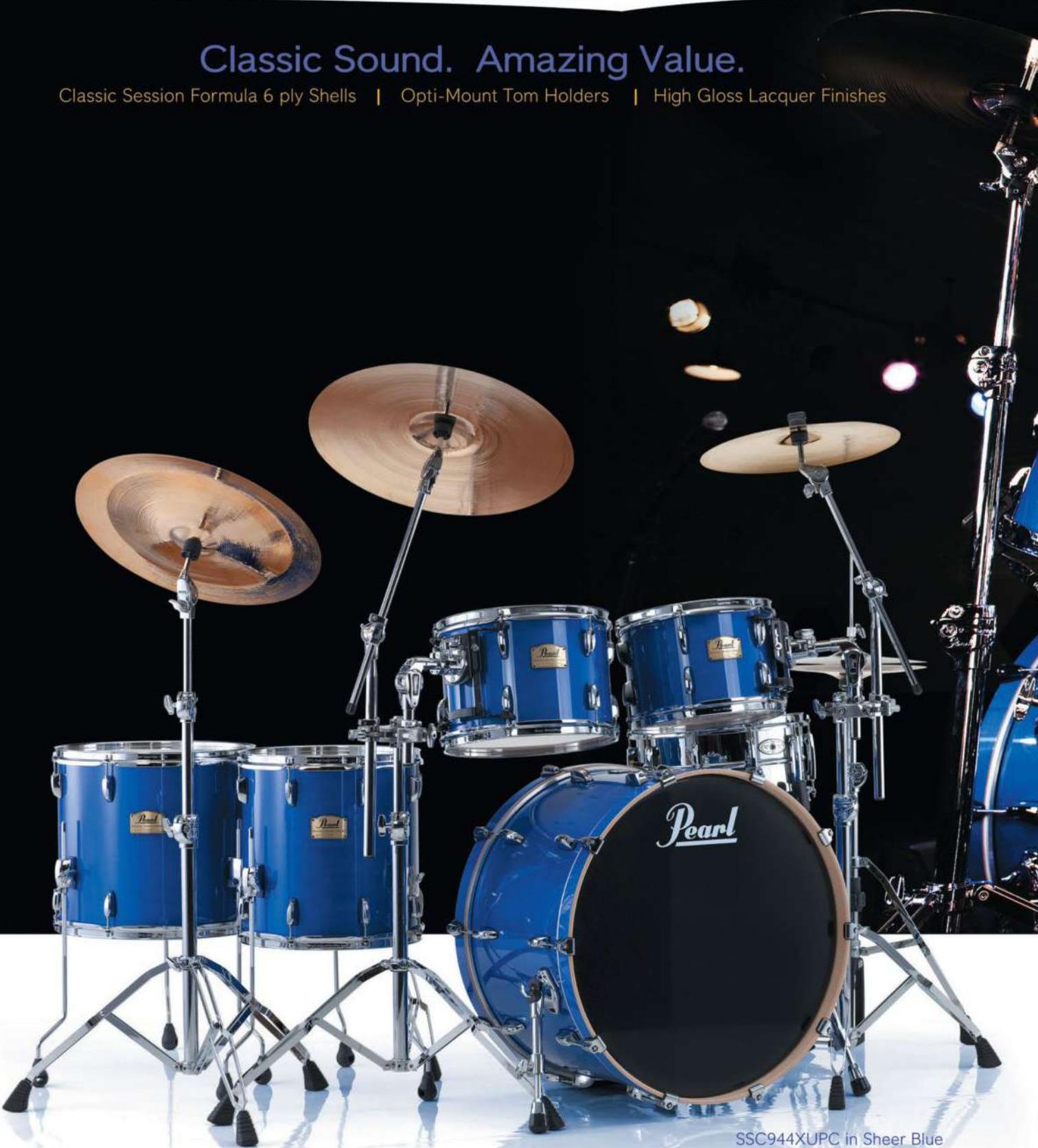
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Paul La Roca

On the Cover

## 36 TRAVIS BARKER

by David Ciauro

Battles mythical and all too real have defined much of his life since *MD* last sat with him for a good long chat. With a recent solo debut, reams of one-off collaborations, new Transplants and Blink-182 activity, and a constant refinement of his craft, Travis can honestly say that he's at the top of his game twenty years in.

This month's cover illustration, "Not Just Another Face in the Crowd: Travis Barker," is by drummer/tattoo artist Corey Miller. 11x14 pen and ink on paper. Read all about Miller in his feature story on page 50. For more on his tattoo parlor/art gallery, go to [sixfeetunder.com](http://sixfeetunder.com).



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# The Readers Respond

In my June editorial, "Shake It Up," I wrote about how refreshing it is to take on a side project. I can now report that the horn band I mentioned ended up breaking up after one show—we'll call it an "indefinite hiatus"—but playing with the group was still a fun experience that had me flexing some new musical muscles. And right around that same time I began playing in a new trio with some old friends, and I was really wondering how I'd be able to make the schedules work when adding my main band, my full-time job, and my gig moonlighting as my wife's personal chef. Problem solved!



Anyway, in June I opened up the floor to you, the readers of *Modern Drummer*, to share your own side-project experiences, and as expected you had some great responses. Here are a few.

After playing in two alternative rock bands for the previous ten years, I joined an original/cover country band. It was something I had wanted to get into for some time, as I have always appreciated the songwriting and musicianship in country music. After learning the new and challenging material, I noticed that my playing in my alternative rock bands began to get tighter and more solid. My timing was also substantially better. When I started learning the country songs, I had no choice but to tighten it up. The band and the dancing audience depended on me to be tighter than ever, and it was a great experience. It only benefits you and your bands to stretch into other avenues if you have the time, energy, and motivation to do so.  
—Philip Kurut

Spicing up my playing from time to time is as simple as heading out to one of the weekly open-mic nights in town. There's something exhilarating about sitting in with complete strangers and playing a couple songs that aren't on your regular set list. Between playing a different instrument, battling the hi-hat that keeps slipping away, and staying in the pocket while watching and listening for solo cues and the shout chorus, those ten minutes of nerve-racking pressure mean everything and nothing when one of the waiters comes over and says you sounded great.  
—Scott W. Gray

I'm currently playing in a (mostly) classic rock cover/originals band, and it's great. I'm an old-school metalhead—forty-two years young—and I always wanted to feed that urge as well. So now I'm involved in a side project of playing heavy metal/punky music with kid-friendly lyrics. (I know—interesting concept.) I also recently got involved in a second side project that is very much indie stylings. This one is completely away from my musical knowledge base, but oh, the challenge and fun! The time factor alone can be very daunting, but I think it's not bad to see what more you can handle when the time arises.  
—Dirk Ayala

I've been in a party/dance band in the San Francisco Bay Area, called Struttin', for twenty-five years. Over the last few years the band has slowed down, and I've been seeking out new musical growth. Most of my new situations involve playing in church. Sometimes I'll be asked to sit in on Sunday morning when there's a no-show from another drummer. This situation has put me on stage with a count-off, without ever hearing the song (or sometimes the whole set). The only thing I ask is if there are any time signatures that could be tricky. There generally aren't, but I ask. It's fantastic to find the song while it's playing—a scary but beautiful thing. Over the years I have developed with my main jamming buddies and bandmates a reactive style of playing. You might tie it in with the jazz concept of having a loose form with certain landmarks that keep it cohesive. Any little nuance can lead everyone in a new direction that is musical and fulfilling.  
—Michael Colon

Warm regards to everyone who wrote in. Here's hoping we all get to keep juggling gigs and shaking up our musical lives. As Scott Gray implies in his note, you don't even need a primary band in order to achieve this—all you need is a local open-mic night with a house kit in need of wrangling.

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Gil Sharone  
Billy Ward

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"And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
That I scarce was sure I heard you, here I opened wide the door;  
Darkness there, and nothing more."

-Poe-  
The Raven



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## Meridian Black - *The Raven*

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**PAUL MOTIAN**

Wonderful—and truly warranted—article on Paul Motian (May 2012). I first heard him with Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra and went back from there (Bill Evans, etc.) and then forward. The Frisell/Lovano/PM trio was sublime. I have most of their recordings, and lots of others with PM too... a real hero of mine. Very best regards.

**Dave Mattacks, independent/  
Fairport Convention drummer**

**MIND MATTERS**

Thank you for the Mind Matters column in which a reader contemplates the sacrifices necessary for the "big time" (December 2011). I was in a "next big thing" band a few years ago, and things were looking up. But I took a look at my fellow players and the sacrifices they had to make to become full-time musicians, and I realized that I didn't want to live my life on the back of a bus. If that's your dream, I say go for it! But I wanted a family, wanted to marry the wonderful girl I had dated for many years, and also wanted to play.

I got my dream: I've gigged more in the last thirty-eight years than many touring bands, and I'm a big fish in a small pond music-wise. Younger drummers in middle Georgia come to me for tips and advice, and I just played two festivals in our area where the locals treated me like a star. You can be just as happy being a weekend warrior. I have a great job with benefits and my family and wife of twenty-eight years, and I still fulfill my fantasies every Saturday night on stage playing my dream kit. As Bernie Schallehn pointed out in Mind Matters, often our fate is out of our hands. Some of us make it and some don't. But I made the choice to have it all, and I'm very happy!

**Donny Screws**

I was dismayed to read the Mind Matters column in your December issue. Here you have a fellow drummer whose marriage is falling apart, and all Mr. Schallehn can talk about is the poor guy's career. I have some advice for T.H.: Make your marriage *the* most important thing in your life, and everything else—including your career—will fall into place. Take my word on this.

**Steve Hartjes**

**THERE'S ROOM FOR EVERYONE**

As a gigging drummer and longtime MD reader, I found Meinl's "I used to play Zildjian" ad on page 15 of the April 2012 issue to be in poor taste. It's one thing to proclaim your product's assets but another

entirely to use a full-page ad to slam a well-respected and long-established competitor by name. I'm also surprised that Thomas Lang would (literally) sign on for such a thing. I am the proud owner of fine cymbals by Zildjian, Sabian, Paiste, Wuhan, and Sountone, and I would welcome the right Meinl into my cymbal family. Great-sounding cymbals by any name are only as good as the hand that plays them.

**Michael Keyes**

**PRACTICE TIPS**

The May 2012 issue had two great practice discussions on stick control, from Steve Fidyk's physics lesson on stick bounce (Jazz Drummer's Workshop) to Travis Orbin's no-stick routine (Portraits). Two techniques that I use fall in between these methods.

The first is what I call the folded napkin stick control method. I play rudiments on a cloth napkin folded into a cone shape. This forces the bounce to be controlled by the fingers only. For the left-hand marching grip, the bounce is controlled between the second and third fingers. For the right hand (or matched-grip method of playing), the bounce is controlled between the palm and the second, third, and little fingers. The point is to control the sticks so that they don't crush the folded napkin.

A second method I use is to practice kit chops and complete songs on only the snare. I've found over the years that applying hi-hat shuffles and cymbal ride and crash techniques to the sweet spot of the snare drum batter has added voices to the remaining drums of the kit. Try doing all your cymbal patterns on the floor tom while doing one-handed fills and rolls on the snare and toms.

**Jim Mansfield**

**Dropped Beats**

In the Taking Care of Business article on Cecil Brooks III in the February issue of MD, it was incorrectly stated that Brooks was the musical director for *The Cosby Show*. While Cecil did play drums for the show's incidental music, his longtime associate Don Braden was the musical director.

In the May Influences story on Billy Cobham, the album by Cobham referred to as *Solar Eclipse* is actually called *Total Eclipse*.

In the July Update, we misidentified Gotye's touring drummer; his name is Michael Iveson.

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# GEORGE SLUPPICK

The one-man soul preservation society is keeping it authentic on two **Chris Robinson** LPs and a ton of live shows.



Neal Casal

When you listen to Memphis native George Sluppick's funky and organic playing, it doesn't take long to recognize the drummer's great love for all forms of groove music, especially the soulful sounds of his hometown. "One day early in my career," Sluppick recalls, "someone said

to me, 'Man, you sound like you're from Memphis!' It forced me to investigate what that meant and where I come from. So I started studying the classic Stax/Volt records with Al Jackson, Howard Grimes, and Willie Hall." This dedication to making the music feel authentic has won Sluppick

gigs with Albert King, Sha Na Na, Robert Walter, Mofro, and the City Champs. Although Sluppick is dedicated to preserving the quality found in classic music, he's hardly just re-creating days gone by. "I like to have one foot in the past and one foot forward," he says.

Now splitting his time between Memphis and Los Angeles, George is touring and recording with the Chris Robinson Brotherhood. The Black Crowes frontman and his band recorded enough material for two albums; the first, *Big Moon Ritual*, was issued in June, and its companion LP will be released in September. The group will be on the road supporting the recordings for the rest of the year.

When asked what might have attracted Robinson to his drumming, Sluppick says, "Chris needed someone who could function in a rock setting but not play like a typical rock drummer. He wanted a drummer who could be funky. He loves country music and Memphis soul, and we've talked a lot about the importance of the shuffle and the two-beat. Chris also needs a drummer who has an understanding of jazz—he and I have had extended conversations about Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Clifford Brown, and Max Roach.

"We also talked about the drum sound," Sluppick adds. "When I showed up the first time with my 1965 blue onyx Rogers kit with a 20" bass drum and Istanbul Agop cymbals, I had the gig!"

**Paul Wells**

## NEWS



Bob Girard

Carmine Appice

The eighth **Connecticut Drum Show** was held on April 22 at the Sphinx Shrine Center in Newington. The show featured a wide array of classic and contemporary products, as well as educational clinics hosted by Ted MacKenzie, Daniel Glass, and Carmine and Vinny Appice.



SIMMONSMUSEUM.COM

**Simmons** enthusiast, collector, and restoration expert Wolfgang Stoelzle has announced the creation of an online archive of documents, images, sound files, video clips, and other elements from the groundbreaking electronics company. Visit the Simmons Museum at [simmons-museum.com](http://simmons-museum.com).

The sixth annual Croatia Drum Camp will be held this August 5–12 at the Jeunesses Musicales International World Meeting Centre in Groznan, Croatia. This year's instructors will include jazz master **John Riley**, U.K. drumming legend **Trevor Tomkins**, Drummers Collective faculty head **Kim Plainfield**, and camp director/instructor **Petar Curic**. To read about last year's camp, go to [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



This past April, former Violent Femmes drummer **Victor DeLorenzo** debuted a new monthly radio talk show, *Frail Pagans*, on [greenarrowradio.com](http://greenarrowradio.com). "Spry talk and sassy comebacks with some wonderful music thrown in," is how Victor describes it.

# J.D. BLAIR

With a résumé featuring the country icon **Shania Twain** and the fusion wizard **Victor Wooten**, is it any wonder that his own solo release is a kaleidoscope of sound?



**W**hen J.D. Blair speaks about drumming, this person of faith gives praise for his considerable rhythmic abilities and career opportunities to, as he puts it, “the boss man upstairs.” But take one listen to Blair’s new record, *2012?*, and it becomes obvious that plenty of woodshedding and experimentation factor into his sound as well.

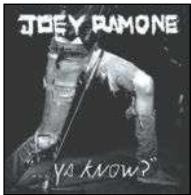
Featuring everything from smooth jazz to solo drum pieces, the album was a labor of love. “It took four years to do it,” Blair says, “and since I didn’t have to answer to anybody, I took my time, and it grew at its own pace. On some of it I used a half-acoustic, half-electronic hybrid kit, which gave me more sounds and a larger palette to work with.”

Blair, aka the Groove Regulator, gained notoriety for several albums and tours with the country superstar Shania Twain, and he’s recently been gigging with the Celtic fiddler Natalie

MacMaster, as well as with the Flecktones’ bass guru, Victor Wooten, on the aptly titled *2 Minds, 1 Groove* tour. “That’s my favorite gig to play,” J.D. says. “Vic can hold it down by himself, so I’m at liberty to go out to the edge and try to be creative. Sometimes my ideas fly and sometimes they don’t, but because of Vic’s competency, it all manages to work. Later this year we’ll go out with a bigger band that will include drummer Derico Watson. There will be lots of polymetric stuff going on.”

And it looks like he’s “still the one”: Coming as a surprise, even to Blair, Twain has announced that this fall she will return to performing after a lengthy hiatus, for a two-year stint at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. “I was born in Vegas, so I feel like I’m coming full circle,” Blair says. “I’ve got my charts from the last tour, and if I can see it, I can play it!” **Ilya Stemkovsky**

## OUT NOW



### CDS

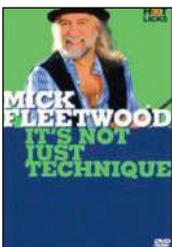
**Joey Ramone** ...Ya Know? (Charley Drayton, Richie Ramone, J.P. “Thunderbolt” Patterson, Bun E. Carlos, Pat Carpenter, Dennis Diken, Steve Jordan) /// **David Haney Quartet** Avenue of the Americas (Mat Marucci) /// **Serj Tankian** Harakiri (Troy Zeigler) /// **Jazz Soul Seven** Impressions of

Curtis Mayfield (Terri Lyne Carrington) /// **Eddie Gomez** Per Sempre (Massimo Manzi) /// **Toadies** Play.Rock.Music (Mark Reznicek) /// **Matt Garrison** Blood Songs (Ulysses Owens Jr.) /// **Mike Stern** All Over the Place (Dave Weckl, Keith Carlock, Lionel Cordew, Al Foster, Kim Thompson) /// **Christian Scott** Christian aTunde Adjuah (Jamire Williams) /// **David Bindman Ensemble** Sunset Park Polyphony (Royal Hartigan) /// **Marvin Etzioni** Marvin Country (Donald Lindley, Don Heffington, Randy Guss, Dave Raven) /// **John Eddie** Same Old Brand New Me (Chad Cromwell, Rich Redmond)



### BOOKS

**Lucky Drummer: From NYC Jazz to Johnny Carson** by Ed Shaughnessy /// **Double Bass Drumming and Power Fills Workbook** by Matt Sorum and Sam Aliano /// **Daily Drumset Workout** by Claus Hessler /// **Essential Drum Lessons With the Greats** by John Xepoleas



### DVDS

**Mick Fleetwood** It’s Not Just Technique (Mick Fleetwood) /// **Scott Rockenfield** R.A.W.: Rockenfield at Work (Scott Rockenfield) /// **Slipknot** (Sic)nesses Live at Download (Joey Jordison, Shawn “Clown” Crahan) /// **Duran Duran** A Diamond in the Mind (Roger Taylor) /// **J. Geils Band** House Party Live in Germany (Stephen Bladd) /// **Gojira** The Flesh Alive (Mario Duplantier)

## ON TOUR



**Abe Cunningham** with Deftones  
/// **Cully Symington** with Afghan Whigs  
/// **Arejay Hale** with Halestorm  
/// **Josh Freese** with Sublime With Rome  
/// **Michael Cartellone** with Lynyrd Skynyrd

## WHO'S PLAYING WHAT

Recent Vater signings include **Lindsey Raye Ward** (independent), **Tyler Soucy** (A Great Big Pile of Leaves), **Luke Holland** (independent), **Peter Wilson** (Joe Zelek Band), **Joe Seiders** (Bleu, Juliana Hatfield), **Monty Bradford** (Chris Young), and **Phillip Hager** (Shawna Russell).



Aquarian has added **Daniel East** to its family of artists.

Paiste’s list of endorsers now includes **Kristen Gleeson-Prata** (independent), **Braydn Krueger** (the Lonely Forest), **Ricardo Lagomasino** (Many Arms), **Chad Lee** (the Silent Comedy), **Jermaine Parrish** (T-Pain), **Nick Pierce** (Unearth), **Tom Seguso** (Southside Johnny & the Asbury Jukes), **Mark Slutsky** (Hugo), **Sonny Tremblay** (Burn Halo), and **Alicia Warrington** (the Dollyrots).

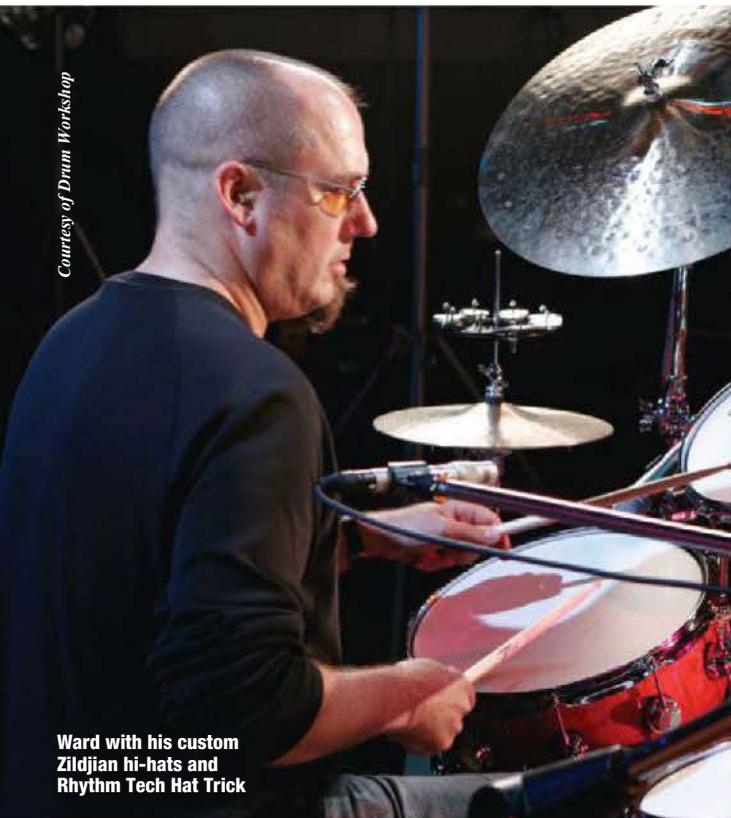
Ludwig has announced the addition of **Vinnie Colaiuta** to its family of drum and hardware endorsers.



# Must-Have Gear

Equipment the Pros Won't Leave Home Without

Courtesy of Drum Workshop



Ward with his custom Zildjian hi-hats and Rhythm Tech Hat Trick

## This month: BILLY WARD

First, of course, is my stick bag, which has an array of my signature sticks from Pro-Mark, plus Rods, brushes, and Vic Firth Emil Richards Maraca Mallets, as well as Rhythm Tech Canz shakers and my Rhythm Tech Stickball. The Rhythm Tech Hat Tricks go with me as well. I usually have two with brass jingles and one with steel jingles. The brass jingles ring more than steel, so the steel jingles sit inside the sound of the hi-hat, while the brass adds more color to the sound.

A towel is also essential, because there's always a chance that I'll want to mute the resonance of a tom-tom or two. I need to have duct tape for that purpose too. Finally, I always bring my 12" Zildjian prototype hi-hat cymbals, which are essentially a K Constantinople top and a Quick Beat bottom, but in a 12" size. They can be very fast—very chirpy, but, especially considering their size, a bit dark and musical sounding. I know it's me when I hear and feel those hi-hats!

Interview by Mike Haid



Billy's Rhythm Tech Stickball and signature Pro-Mark sticks



# ELVIN JONES

In December 1982 we asked the drummer—whose work with the classic John Coltrane Quartet established him as one of the most unusual and influential jazz musicians of all time—whether he ever doubted his controversial playing style.

No, I never questioned it. I knew I was doing the right thing. I also knew that it sounded complicated, but it was only an appearance of complication—it wasn't really. It wasn't status quo, so to speak, but I didn't feel that it was all that different. I grew up with the old methods and learned them, and then I had to reject them. Not really reject, but rather I chose to use the parts of them that suited me, which isn't exactly a rejection. I think it's an improvement. It adds more responsibility to the drummer, but it also offers greater opportunities. When approached properly, it broadens the musical scope of the player, and it *has* to be

musical—it can't be an ego trip, something used to show off someone's personal achievement. It's not that kind of thing because it's not a gimmick. It's an addition to the responsibility that drummers have to eventually accept. One of the responsibilities involves being flexible enough to support the soloist within the full range of support. You won't be just following the soloist, but rather you will become a partner.

It didn't seem logical to me that the music we were playing could be approached in any other way and still have logical conclusions. Music has to be logical, I think. No matter how complex it is, it's still based on logic.



To read the entire Elvin Jones feature—and all the other great material from the December 1982 issue—go to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) and click on the App Store link.

## JOHN TEMPESTA

He's built one of the most diverse and respected résumés in rock drumming over the past quarter century, playing with everyone from the metal vets Testament to the largely acoustic Mexican duo Rodrigo y Gabriela. Here the current Cult sticksmith shares some of his secrets to navigating a journeyman career and growing as a drummer.

Interview by Billy Brennan



Matias Cugat

**1 STICK TO THE ORIGINAL.** I've always been the kind of drummer that came in later on, like with Exodus, Testament, Helmet, and the Cult. I've always been a fan of these bands, so I try to keep it as close to the original format as I can. I hate it when I see a drummer who's replaced someone else put his own stuff into a song and totally change it around. I want to hear how the drum parts were performed at the time.

**2 GET COMFORTABLE IN THE BAND.** That said, you can start to bring in your own stuff. I've been playing with the Cult for six years now, and I feel comfortable enough with the band that I can keep the style of the Cult but add my own little thing to it as well.

**3 SERVE THE SONG.** It all comes down to the song. I've always been a drummer that plays for the song, whether it's to the vocal melodies or the guitar melodies. And don't overplay—unless it's called for.

**4 STAY POSITIVE.** One of the most important things is having a good attitude, because that will take you to completely different places. With any

band that I've been in, I've always kept good relationships with the members. If you work hard, have a good work ethic, and are friendly and just have fun with it, it'll take you as far as you can go.

**5 AIR DRUM.** I've had this thing for auditions that has always worked for me. I'll listen to the songs, sit on my couch, and air drum to them while visualizing myself playing, so that I have that image in my head. That's [the process] that I feel comfortable with, and I'm not going to change it. If it's not broken...

**6 WATCH YOUTUBE.** I was very fortunate at the start of my career, because I was Charlie Benante's drum tech and I was getting a lesson every day just by watching him play. That's what got me interested in playing metal. And with drummers, a lot of what we play is exposed, which is very beneficial [to those trying to learn how to play]. Take YouTube. You can watch all these guys play and just sit down and learn. It's an incredible tool right now for drummers.

**7 PUSH YOURSELF.** Determination and passion are everything. Maybe it's not in your comfort zone, but when you try something different and you

excel and achieve something new, it's really special and helps you grow. That goes for work of any sort. I still push myself to try new things.

**8 GET COMFORTABLE IN THE STUDIO.** Having a good room, a great mix, and a good rapport with the producer and engineer is very important, just to make you feel at ease. And I always like to dim the lights as if I'm on stage. Obviously you need to be prepared with the songs when you go in. You have to do your homework. But creating a good vibe helps.

**9 FEED OFF DYNAMICS.** [Cult singer] Ian Astbury is very passionate, and when I see him perform, he's powerful and dynamic. He can start really softly and just build with the song, and that leads me to play with him, building anticipation to the end, and then boom.

**10 KEEP YOURSELF BUSY.** I love coming back to the Cult, but while I have time off, I like to fit in drum clinics and see if anything else is out there for me—like touring with Testament again or working with Rodrigo y Gabriela.



## MIND MATTERS

by Bernie Schallehn

## I'm Self-Taught and They're Schooled

**I auditioned for and landed a gig with a new band. We've played several shows, and they've gone really well. But after I got to know my bandmates better, I found out that they all have degrees in music. I'm totally self-taught and have never even had one private lesson with an instructor. I'm starting to feel inadequate, like I'm not good enough to play with them. What can I do? HJB**

You got the gig. It was your behavior that mattered, which in this case was your drumming. But your current feelings of inadequacy could eventually affect your playing negatively. It might show up first as high anxiety in the rehearsal room or on stage. This anxiety could sabotage your drumming. You might begin to make mistakes, and eventually the band might ask you to leave. Then—in an odd way—you'd feel vindicated. A little voice in your head would affirm, "See! I knew I was never good enough for them."

Thoughts give rise to feelings, and feelings influence behavior. Here's the formula we're going to use to fix your situation: A change in your thoughts will equal a change in your feelings. Once your feelings change, your drumming should stay right in the pocket.

The only difference between you and your bandmates is that you learned your instrument in a different way. Unless you're some sort of child prodigy who played like a pro the instant your parents put sticks in your hands, my guess is that you learned to drum by playing along to songs, watching instructional DVDs, and viewing videos on YouTube.

The term *self-taught* is really a misnomer. Your teachers were the CDs, DVDs, and downloads that you used to help you figure out how to play drums. You're not truly self-taught—that would connote that you had all those drumming skills in you at the moment of birth and were never influenced by any other drummers. The truth is that you just learned in a different way. You exposed yourself to alternative learning resources, synthesized them, and eventually developed your own skills and style.

Now, does that little shift in thinking make you feel a bit more equal to your bandmates? If it doesn't, here's another way of looking at it.

In essence, the music-school graduates in your band could also consider themselves self-taught. A teacher can stand up in a conventional classroom and offer all sorts of info, but who's responsible for actually learning? The students! They have to absorb and make sense of the subject matter presented to them and then apply it to their own situations.

A few years ago I hiked up a mountain with a group of people. A couple hikers were outfitted with the finest gear money could buy—boots, backpacks, clothing, water bot-

tlés, the works.

One or two others wore hiking boots and carried store-bought hiking sticks. I simply wore work boots with an aggressive tread for traction. One guy showed up in sneakers, cutoff jeans, and a T-shirt, which got a big laugh out of all of us.

But guess how many of us made it to the summit? We all did. And the hikers who had the most elite equipment used only a few of the items they had carried with them.

Remember your days in high school and/or college. In your real life, do you really use all that information that was placed in front of you to absorb? As Paul Simon sings in his song "Kodachrome," "When I think back on all the crap I learned in high school, it's a wonder I can think at all."

Did you ever entertain the thought that maybe your music-schooled bandmates are somewhat hindered by all the formal education they had? Could you entertain the possibility that it may be a disadvantage to have all that rigid formality and that it may put a crimp in their creativity just a tad? Just another thought for you to consider.

Last year I took a series of lessons from two excellent local drum instructors. One was wedded to a particular technique. To his way of thinking, it was the *only* way to hold a stick. The other instructor was very liberal in his approach. His grip was different each time I met with him. His philosophy was to do whatever you have to do to get the job done. So which instructor had the correct technique for holding a drumstick? Both of them!

Here are a couple of closing thoughts that could help you break free of the "I'm not good enough" mentality.

What really matters is that not only did you get the gig, but you've been field tested, and—by your own admission—the performances went really well. You need to keep focusing on this thought until you truly own it.

Lastly, many "name" drummers were self-taught. What matters—for any drummer—is that you consistently deliver the goods in a creative and joyful manner.



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





# STAGE CUSTOM

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That world-famous Yamaha birch sound you've always wanted can easily be yours in this affordable package. From the YESS mounting system to the tom ball clamps to the rich lacquer finishes, Stage Custom Birch encompasses value, quality, and craftsmanship found previously only on high-end drum sets.

Also available in an 18" bebop setup, Stage Custom Birch now boasts Honey Amber high-gloss lacquer and Matte Black matte lacquer finishes.



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My Stage Custom Birch gives me a great drum sound in the studio  
or in a live setting — they're a step above all those other drums out there."*

**Xavier Muriel**

*Buckcherry*



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[www.4wrdr.it/SCBDRUM](http://www.4wrdr.it/SCBDRUM)

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# DUNNETT CLASSIC DRUMS

Titanium Drumset by John Emrich



Ronn Dunnett is famous for making some of the best metal drum shells in the business, and he was the first to offer titanium drumsets. For review this month, we received one of these signature sets, which included two bass drums, five toms, and two snares. (The photo shows only part of the kit.) These exact drums were sampled for a BFD2 expansion pack called Dunnett Ti.

## LIGHTWEIGHT AND SLEEK

Titanium is a super-lightweight metal, so these drums aren't heavy. In fact, they're about the same weight as—if not lighter than—most wood-shell drums in the same sizes. Dunnett has developed his own tube-lug design, variable air vent, and minted-coin badge, all of which make these drums look sleek and elegant.

The toms and snares include 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops. The shells aren't lacquered, so fingerprints do show fairly easily, and it will take a little effort and care to keep the drums clean. I went so far as to wear gloves when setting them up, just to keep them looking pristine. For players who like their drums to show some age and character, titanium can develop a patina, so the shells will take on a unique look over time.

The bass drum hoops are maple and are finished in a great-looking deep black lacquer. The shells themselves are very thin.

## UNDER THE MICROPHONE

When I first set up these drums for the sampling session, I expected them to have a very bright tone, like most other metal-shell drumsets. I was pleasantly surprised to find that they actually produced a full tone with plenty of lows. The drums were capable of extremely loud dynamics, but because the shells are very thin, I could also get plenty of tone at lower dynamics. The shells responded well to a wide variety

of tuning and head choices.

The titanium bass drums were incredible. We were sent 24" and 26" sizes, skinned with Remo Coated Emperors on both sides. I used felt strips on the front and batter heads of the 24" drum, with no porthole. This setup produced an awesome tone with plenty of definition for quick patterns.

I left the 26" alone, with no muffling and a full front head. The sampling session took place around the Fourth of July, and while I was recording the 26" drum, other engineers working in the studio went outside, thinking that someone was shooting off fireworks in the parking lot. The tone was not only loud but also very full. This drum would perform great on any stage that doesn't have a full sound system, and it produced a solid low punch. When playing it softly, I was still able to get a very nice, deep sound. Many metal-shell bass drums lose that low tone at softer dynamic ranges—the Dunnett did not.

The kit included 10", 12", and 13" toms in traditional depths. The floor toms were 16x16 and 16x18. With the Coated Emperors in place, I was able to get a very nice presence out of these drums, with plenty of attack and sustain. The toms also recorded very well. Changing out the heads for Coated Ambassadors produced a little more attack, while keeping the full tone. All of the toms could be tuned at a wide variety of tensions, but I preferred lower tunings. (The 18" floor tom roared!) These drums would cut through anything, but at the same time I was able to get plenty of tone out of them when working with a set of brushes or playing quietly with sticks.

## CONCLUSION

This drumset was a pure joy to play. If you ever find yourself at a trade show, chances are Ronn Dunnett will be there with his drums. Take some time and go play one of his kits for yourself. Ronn is a man of

## TITANIUM AND STAINLESS STEEL SNARES

Dunnett sent two snares; one had a titanium shell, and the other was made with stainless steel. Both were 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 and came with an R Class throw-off, forty-two-strand snappy snare wires, and a Coated Ambassador batter.

The titanium snare had a little more warmth to the sound when compared with the stainless steel version, which had great balance with a little more high-end presence. Both drums were easy to tune at a wide range of tensions, and they kept their same overall tone at all tunings. The snare response was excellent, and rimclicks produced a full-bodied tone. Rimshots on these drums will take your head off, and the stainless model sounded great when played with brushes. For players looking to add a little metal to their snare lineup, these drums are worth checking out.

integrity who truly loves building drums, and the results of his labor are exceptional instruments that would be great additions to any collection.  
[dunnett.com](http://dunnett.com)

# V-CLASSIC

## Vintage-Inspired Turkish Cymbals

by Michael Dawson



**V**-Classic cymbals are the brainchild of Torab Majlesi, a Turkish session drummer and industry vet who's had an affinity for traditional cymbal sounds since purchasing his first set of old K's back in 1989. (The V in the company name stands for *vintage*.) Majlesi's motto for V-Classic is "one model, one cymbal," so rather than putting out dozens of variations of splashes, crashes, rides, and Chinas, the company has focused on creating one or two basic models for each type (there are two weights of hi-hats: Light and Classic) that best encapsulate the sweet old vibe that Torab, and many other cymbal enthusiasts, treasure so deeply.

### GROUP SPECS

We were sent a complete setup of V-Classic cymbals, consisting of 8" and 10" Vintage splashes (\$99, \$123), 14" Classic hi-hats (\$345), 15" Light hi-hats (\$390), 16" and 18" Vintage crashes (\$204, \$252), an 18" Vintage China (\$271), 19" and 20" crash/rides (\$288, \$342), and a 22" Classic ride (\$399).

All V-Classic cymbals are made of cast B25 bronze (25 percent tin and 75 per-

cent copper) and feature a unique finish that gives them an aged look with a noticeable patina. The surface of each cymbal also appears to have been smoothed out a bit with a light sanding process. (You can see slight circular markings emanating from the bell.) The crash/rides and rides are hammered and lathed from bell to edge, while the Chinas, crashes, hi-hats, and splashes aren't hammered on the bell. The Chinas have a few bands of wide hammer marks on the flange, and the splashes have a single band of wide marks where the bell and bow meet.

### VINTAGE SPLASHES AND CRASHES

The 8" and 10" Vintage splashes are paper-thin, so they responded instantly to stick strikes, brushstrokes, and even finger taps. Both cymbals produced clean and even tones that were very musical and fun to employ for accents and melodic flourishes. The 8" was somewhat glassier sounding than the 10", but neither was particularly dark or trashy. And the transition from the fast bursts provided by the splashes to the flashy, warm colors of the crashes was very smooth. I found

myself returning to a simple four-note melodic motif played between the splashes and crashes—à la Terry Bozzio—throughout the testing period.

The 16" and 18" Vintage crashes are also paper-thin and were just as responsive as the splashes. They performed great for mallet swells, with a tone that was full and open, from super-light strokes all the way up to maximum volume. When used for accents with sticks, the 16" produced a quick, breathy tone, while the 18" sounded fuller, darker, and more "classic." Both crashes offered warm, rich, and balanced timbres—not trashy or distorted ones—across all dynamics.

### 14" CLASSIC AND 15" LIGHT HI-HATS

The 14" Classic hi-hats feature a medium-thin top and a medium-weight bottom. This all-purpose combo is light enough to speak fully and quickly at very low dynamics, yet it's heavy enough to have a clean, articulate foot chick, plus plenty of headroom to withstand more intense stick work. The tone was fairly dark but not murky, and the hats had a lot of sibilance that dirtied up the sound a bit,

whether the cymbals were played open or closed. The hats also had a nice, worn-in feel.

While the 14" Classic pair felt like a set of medium hi-hats that had been broken in from a few years of heavy use, the 15" Lights sounded and responded more like decades-old cymbals that had been around the world a few times—minus the fragility inherent with vintage models. These hats feature a thin top and a medium-thin bottom and had a fairly soft feel and a dark yet smooth sound. The foot chick was low pitched but quick, clear, and easy to manage. Whether played with the foot or with sticks, the 15" Lights blended seamlessly with snare drum comping patterns and low ghost notes.

#### VINTAGE CHINA

The 18" Vintage China we were sent for review is so thin that the edge had actually inverted during shipping. (I was able to pop the flange back into shape easily and with no noticeable effects on the metal.) Many Chinas are much too abrasive for lighter playing styles, but the V-Classic Vintage was one of the more musical ones I've played. It had that complex, trashy voice you'd expect from a China, but with a warm, even sound that was easily controlled via playing dynamics and touch.

It provided a nice biting attack but still managed to blend well with the other V-Classics.

#### 19" AND 20" CRASH/RIDES AND 22" CLASSIC RIDE

The 19" and 20" V-Classic crash/rides are thin, so they opened up nicely with a warm, wide tone at any dynamic yet weren't so washy as to be impossible to control when played as a ride. Of all the cymbals in this review, these were the most distinctly vintage sounding, as they reminded me of an amalgamation of the signature rides of many legendary post-bop jazz drummers.

The 20" produced a big, rich crash when hit on the edge, and riding on the bow introduced a nice stick click that poked through a dark, balanced wash. The bell sound was clear and musical. The 19" was a bit brighter and more articulate than the 20", and the wash didn't build up quite as much. This was my favorite cymbal of the batch; it had that sparkling, Elvin Jones-type vibe that made it nearly impossible *not* to swing when playing it. While these crash/rides demand a bit more finesse than your average ride cymbal, they were a joy to explore. And if you're looking to streamline your setup to include just one multipurpose cymbal, in the way that the funk/

experimental drummer Billy Martin often does with Medeski Martin and Wood, either one of these V-Classics would cover it all with ease.

The 22" Classic ride is listed as being medium-thin in weight, but it has a lot of flex, and it doesn't feel much heavier than the 20" crash/ride. This is a very dark, moody-sounding cymbal that had a nice ride sound, but it also had a grumbling wash that could get in the way of the stick attack if not played with care. Even bell strikes evoked a murmuring sustain. This cymbal sounded best when played at low to moderate volumes, where I could articulate quick broken ride patterns on top of the prominent, dark wash.

#### JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS

V-Classic's philosophy of "one model, one cymbal" harkens back to an era when drummers weren't given hundreds of different types of cymbals to choose from. A ride was a ride; a crash was a crash. By coming out in 2012 as a new brand adopting a similar approach, V-Classic is making a bold statement. But these are bold-sounding and highly musical cymbals, and ones that will appeal to a specialized group of discerning drummers who demand nothing less.

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

# OCDP

MODERNDRUMMER  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

## 6½x14 Brushed Bell Brass Snare

by Michael Dawson

While geeking out with a prominent studio drummer a while back, I got into the topic of which snare drums he feels translate best to recordings. After going through his personal top-ten list, this drummer took me by surprise when he concluded, "Then you can get rid of all of those and just pick up a bell brass. You'll never need another snare again." As hyperbolic as that may seem, bell-brass snares are the drums du jour for many producers and musicians, and they've shown up on countless hit records. You know those gargantuan flams Dave Grohl crushed at the top of Nirvana's breakthrough single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit"? Those were played on a bell brass. Lars Ulrich also used one on Metallica's black album, as did Brad Wilk on Rage Against the Machine's self-titled debut, just to name a few.

These days, new and used bell-brass snares are hot commodities, often demand-

ing a price upwards of \$3,000. Orange County Drum & Percussion decided to step into the market, introducing its own version of the rock drummer's dream drum at a significantly lower—but not cheap—price point (\$1,440). This super-heavy drum has a thick ¼" seamless-brass shell with a brushed outer finish. It comes with die-cast hoops on the top and bottom, ten OCDP aluminum/zinc-alloy lugs, a smooth-operating Trick GS007 throw-off, a coated single-ply batter head with an OCDP logo sticker applied underneath, and twenty-strand snappy snare wires.

The optimal tuning range for the OCDP brushed bell-brass snare proved to start just above medium and extended all the way



up to the point where the drumhead maxed out. When tensioned anywhere within that span, the drum let out a super-strong gunshot-like attack coupled with distinct but quick-to-decay overtones. Its overall tone was thick and chunky, while the snare response was clean and articulate. This drum made me play heavier and with more authority than I typically would—making it an excellent choice for situations where you need your backbeats and snare fills to chop through loudly and with bone-crushing precision.

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

There's good reason for the buzz surrounding the new Sonor Perfect Balance pedal, created in conjunction with Jojo Mayer. It's a meticulously designed single pedal with one foot in the past and the other pointing to the future. It reacts to your stroke—whether heel up or heel down, soft or loud—with uncanny accuracy. The deal about “perfect balance” is that the effort you put into a stroke is reflected in the movement of the beater to the head, while the return is a mirror image. There's no enhancement in terms of acceleration, just an absence of road bumps on the journey.

Thanks to Canadian Sonor marketing director Scott Atkins for giving *MD* dibs on the first pedal to hit these shores on a test production run. I was grateful for the opportunity to check out the pedal over a two-week run of world music/jazz rehearsals, urban jams, and finally an outdoor rockabilly gig that was unmercifully loud and under-miked.

Midway through the tests, a two-hour Skype conversation with Jojo Mayer helped me appreciate the work that's gone into this relatively lightweight composite of the diverse pedals Mayer had purchased and sometimes cobbled into hybrids over the decades. The old Rogers Swiv-O-Matic, with its single “goal post,” is an obvious benchmark. The Perfect Balance is the final stop in Jojo's obsessive pursuit for the elusive equilibrium.

### EXACT TRACKING

I've reviewed many pedals over the years, most of which were infinitely more adjustable. That's all fine and good if you know what you want and what to tweak. But sometimes you can spend hours. The Perfect Balance was unquestionably the most natural-feeling model out of the box. That said, you should know that this pedal will do you no favors in terms of speed. True, its exact tracking of your forward motion and its smooth return will count for something, but you'll still have to put in the hours shedding if you want to be able to pull off Bonham's legendary “Good Times Bad Times” triplets.

Mayer decided to go with a metal-reinforced fabric strap for the Perfect Balance. He feels that stiff-link, direct-drive pedals are a mixed blessing. Think of punching bags: Boxers learn to work them to a blurred frenzy. The problem is that if you break the pattern, you have to start over with your stroke, and all that momentum is for naught. Accordingly, Jojo designed the Sonor Perfect Balance pedal to capture

nuances of your stroke throughout the cycle—but not to perpetuate the stroke, accelerate it, or make it difficult to interrupt. What the Sonor lacks in snowballing speed it rewards with dexterity and flexibility. I was delighted to play it lightly and close to the head and then haul off and smack it for a spell. I felt every stroke through and through and was assured there'd be no lurches in the cycle. Similarly, I felt that if I were to mess up, this pedal would tell no lies.

Mayer also revolted against the idea of using proprietary parts. He's made the pedal so that you can find replacement pieces in any hardware store. For me, push came to shove when I lost the supplied Allen key down a heat vent. In moments, my motley, disarrayed collection of tools yielded the perfect replacement.

### DON'T PUSH THAT BUTTON!

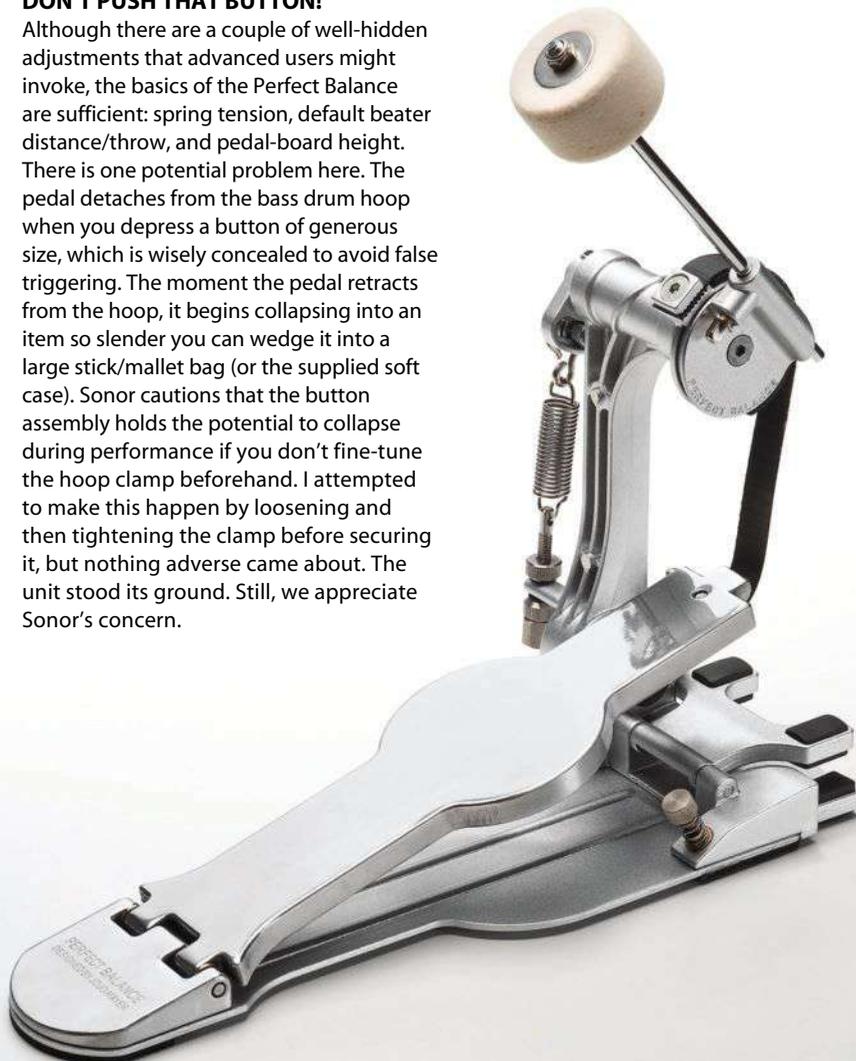
Although there are a couple of well-hidden adjustments that advanced users might invoke, the basics of the Perfect Balance are sufficient: spring tension, default beater distance/throw, and pedal-board height. There is one potential problem here. The pedal detaches from the bass drum hoop when you depress a button of generous size, which is wisely concealed to avoid false triggering. The moment the pedal retracts from the hoop, it begins collapsing into an item so slender you can wedge it into a large stick/mallet bag (or the supplied soft case). Sonor cautions that the button assembly holds the potential to collapse during performance if you don't fine-tune the hoop clamp beforehand. I attempted to make this happen by loosening and then tightening the clamp before securing it, but nothing adverse came about. The unit stood its ground. Still, we appreciate Sonor's concern.



And a word to the wise on the mirror-smooth footboard, which may make some drummers worry about their foot skating around: This pedal is not about anchoring your foot on the sweet spot. It's all about translating feel, irrespective of where you place your foot. Ultimately I think you'll agree that there's barely a sensation of pedaling. You're simply putting your foot down and receiving a righteous response in kind.

The Sonor Perfect Balance pedal is set to sell for \$250 in stores. The sticker price is considerable but not out of whack with the competition. I urge you to try this pedal on a drum—not on a store counter—before making your decision to purchase or not.

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



# CRASH 'N FLASH

MODERNDRUMMER  
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

## Drumset Lighting System

by Miguel Monroy

Captivating an audience is one of the most important aspects of any live performance, and bands go to great lengths to find ways to keep their shows fresh, engaging, and entertaining. That's where Robert Poels, the owner of On Que Lighting Designs and the inventor of the Crash 'n Flash system (\$349.99), comes in.

to the cymbal stand.

Each system can power 1,250 watts of lighting or as many as four 300-watt PAR 56 cans, through the included gang box with two plug outlets. It's important to remember that the lights will stay on for only as long as it takes for your cymbal to settle back to its original position. It's rec-



The purpose of Crash 'n Flash is to allow drummers to control the activation of accent lights throughout a performance. The system consists of a cymbal-stand-mountable switch and bracket, which is activated when the unit's non-marring felt-tip wand is triggered by playing a crash. The included bracket fits cymbal stands that are  $5/16$ " to  $3/4$ " in diameter and comes standard with a satin-aluminum finish. Highly polished chrome-like aluminum, black, and gold finish upgrades are available for \$50.

The initial Crash 'n Flash installation was a bit tedious, as I had to search for that sweet spot that would activate the switch yet not impede the motion of my cymbal. But after the initial install was complete, I didn't have to worry about finding that sweet spot again, as the unit is designed to be mounted permanently

ommended by the manufacturer to use this system in conjunction with other lights, fog machines, and so on. We also highly recommend the optional AC foot switch (\$34.99), which allows you to shut off the system with the press of a button, for segments of a performance where the accent lights are not desired.

The Crash 'n Flash system is very rugged and is rated for more than 10 million operations. The system functioned properly every time we used it, and it didn't interfere with the sound of the cymbal in any noticeable way. If you're looking to take the visual aspect of your performance to the next level, Crash 'n Flash would be a nice complement to any fixed lighting system.

Log on to [modern drummer.com](http://modern drummer.com) to check out a video demonstration. [crashnflash.com](http://crashnflash.com)



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# Drum Shells

## A Quick Guide to Understanding Different Wood Types

by Benjamin Homola

**A**t first glance, a drum appears to be a simple, uncomplicated instrument. That's until we consider the many dimensions of construction that influence a drum's sound—bearing edges, heads, tuning, and, last but not least, the type of wood used. These days, drum companies are offering a variety of woods to choose from, which gives you the opportunity to customize not only the look of your kit but also the basis of its sound. What follows is an overview of the most common wood types used to make drum shells, along with the sounds that they naturally produce.



**Maple** Maple is high pitched compared to most woods, and it has a longer sustain and a more robust overall tone. Usually described as being warm and round sounding, maple has a great tuning range, making it a popular choice among drummers. It has an all-around sound with a good combination of attack, sustain, and tone.

Shown: Ludwig Classic Maple



**Walnut** This wood species produces dry and dark tones with fewer high frequencies. It has a full sound, medium sustain, and plenty of volume. Walnut works great for snare drums because of its inherent sensitive characteristics.

Shown: Mapex Black Panther Velvetone



**Birch** Birch sounds brighter than maple, with a more focused attack and a quicker decay, giving it a punchier quality. This wood is lower pitched and more controlled, making it great for live and studio settings where microphones are used.

Shown: DW Collector's Series

## Insight From an Expert



**Bill Cardwell, the founder of C&C Custom Drums,** has been building drums, restoring vintage kits, and experimenting with wood types for years. Here are some of his thoughts on wood

types, which could be helpful when you're shopping for your next instrument.

"If you have to pick a single wood to make a shell out of, the two best extremes are maple and mahogany," Cardwell says. "Maple is great

for its overall tonal quality and versatility. If you want a drum with fullness, warmth, and a round tone, go with mahogany.

"Ash and oak also have very similar densities, thus producing very similar sounds. Both woods can get out of control without the proper edge on them. Beech sounds somewhere between ash and oak.

"At C&C, we're creating both a thinner 6-ply mahogany shell that uses mahogany reinforcement rings and a thicker 7-ply mahogany shell that requires no rings, which is our Player Date

series. This shell has the lowest natural tone I've heard out of a drum shell as of yet."

To offer a slight twist on the discussion of the overall importance of the wood type used to make a drum, Cardwell concludes, "In my experience, after owning a drum shop for sixteen years, you can take two identical birch and maple shells, cut the same bearing edges on them, and do a blindfold test, asking a person which one is maple and which one is birch. Fifty percent would get it right. The sounds are so similar."



## Beech

Beech drums sound contained, clean, and dry. This wood type produces few overtones, especially at higher volumes, giving it a slightly higher-pitched quality.

Shown: Sonor Benny Greb Signature



## Poplar Blend

Poplar has a lower natural pitch and a longer decay. This wood type is often used as the inner plies of drum shells—especially those modeled after vintage drums, like Gretsch's maple/poplar/maple Brooklyn series shell—because it's known to mellow the sound due to its lower density.

Shown: Gretsch Brooklyn Series



## Oak

This hard wood has a full, low pitch and round sound. Oak has a lot of sustain and projection, making it very versatile for different musical settings. Because the wood is so dense, oak drums have plenty of volume.

Shown: Yamaha Musashi



## Bubinga (aka African Rosewood)

Bubinga has a lot of low-end frequencies, yet it still produces a clear, defined sound. Drums made from bubinga often sound rich and warm, with dominant midrange frequencies, a smooth decay, and a focused tone.

Shown: Tama S.L.P.



## African Mahogany

This is a softer wood that tends to produce lower tones, which is perceived as extra warmth and bottom-end punch. Many mahogany shells are plied with a poplar center. Mahogany shells are also often coupled with maple reinforcement rings, which add strength and a bit of attack.

Shown: Pearl Omar Hakim Signature



## Ash

Ash sounds darker and drier—yet brighter and fuller—than many other woods, and it has a warm, “woody” response.

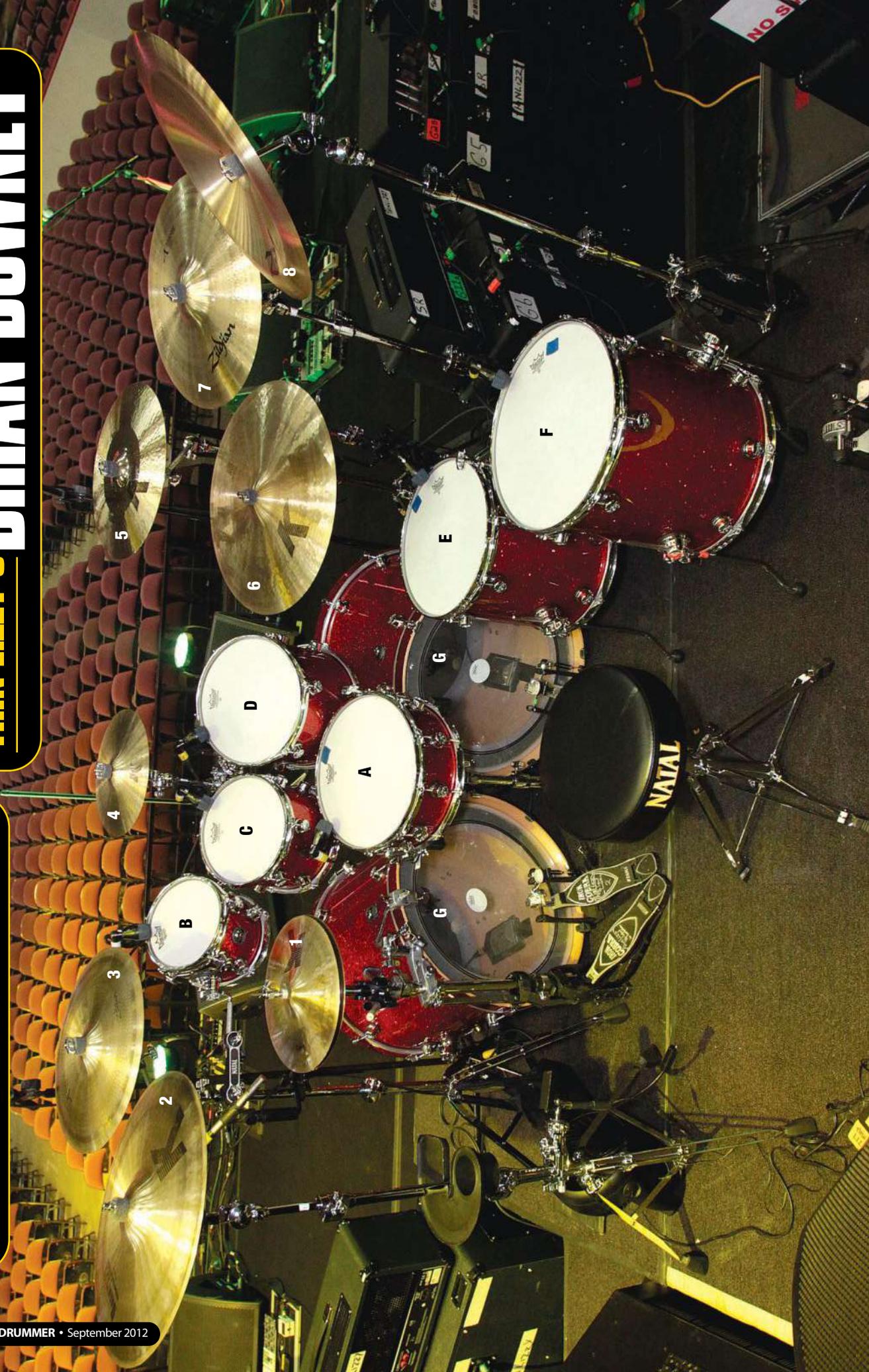
Shown: ddrum Dominion



# GEARING UP

Drumkit Details,  
On Stage and Up Close

# THIN LIZZY'S BRIAN DOWNEY



**Drums:** Natal maple in custom red sparkle finish

- A. 6x14 snare
- B. 8x8 tom
- C. 8x10 tom
- D. 10x12 tom
- E. 14x14 floor tom
- F. 16x16 floor tom
- G. 18x22 bass drum

"I got a call from Paul Marshall after he took over Natal, asking if I would have a listen," Downey says. "He brought some drums over to Dublin from London, and after the first fifteen minutes I knew that it was a nice-quality kit. The smaller toms tuned up quite easily, and they stay in tune wonderfully. The first Natal kit I played on was birch, and I

really loved how that sounded. But maple has the slight edge that suits a rock format."

**Cymbals:** Zildjian

- 1. 13" K hi-hats
- 2. 18" K Medium Thin Dark crash
- 3. 16" A Armand Medium Thin crash
- 4. 10" K splash
- 5. 16" K Custom Hybrid crash
- 6. 22" K ride
- 7. 18" A Armand Medium Thin crash
- 8. 18" A China High

"I love K's, but during rehearsals I was messing about with some of the Hybrids and A's as well. After the first few rehearsals, I really liked the mix."

**Hardware:** Natal Pro series stands and Tama Iron Cobra pedals

"Natal bass drum pedals and hi-hat stands don't have toe stops, which I'm used to. Once they put toe stops on them, I will be switching over to all Natal hardware." Downey's drum tech, Anthony "Anto" Byrne, adds, "The Natal booms are very generous. So much so that I actually cut them back a bit to keep things tight on the riser."

**Heads:** Remo Coated Ambassador snare and tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and black Thin Lizzy logo front head with 6" port on smaller drums to get the tone. They

sound great in smaller clubs but also cut through nicely on the bigger stages."

**Sticks:** Wincent 5B hickory with wood tips  
"Wincent is a Swedish company that Mikkey Dee from Motörhead uses and turned me on to. [Read Dee's Gearing Up story in the August 2012 issue of MD.] When he passed through Dublin, I tried out the sticks on a practice pad in their dressing room, and I thought they had a great feel. For a new company, they make really great sticks that have been very consistent."



# J.P. BOUVET

The 2011 **Guitar Center Drum-Off champ** and **Roland U.S. V-Drums Contest winner** shares his thoughts on soloing.

by Anthony "Tiny" Biuso

**J**.P. Bouvet's musical roots started growing early. Nurtured by his bass-playing mother, J.P. began playing the drums at age nine and by the sixth grade was in his first band. Moving from Lakeville, Minnesota, to Boston turned out to be a turning point in his development as a musician; while in Massachusetts he discovered drummers like Dave Weckl and Vinnie Colaiuta, who continue to be some of his biggest inspirations. "I'm drawn to musicians with a unique sound," J.P. says.

Bouvet admits to being a bit of a workaholic, typically practicing up to six hours a day when time allows. In the weeks leading up to the 2011 Guitar Center Drum-Off finals, he even skipped classes to make sure he kept up with his regimen. That routine involves keeping a log of his daily practices, in which he writes down new ideas and areas that need improvement.

This is no "basement star," though. In fact, Bouvet has already been taken around the globe in his playing career. His working band, Helicopria, features a lead singer from Turkey and a guitarist from South Africa, and the group has done two international tours and released a pair of albums. "I really love playing with this band," Bouvet says. "It's a perfect balance between music that will make you want to move and music that rocks out. It also has a depth that I really enjoy; it's challenging for me."

In addition to his abilities as a team

player, Bouvet has developed substantial soloing skills, which obviously came to his aid when competing in—and eventually winning—recent Roland and Guitar Center drumming competitions. "I try to make each solo a composition," J.P. says, "and I think of them in sections. For example, for the Guitar Center Drum-Off, I had a few ideas I wanted to elaborate on, things I thought were impressive, fun, or unique. Once I decided what I wanted to play within each section, I would develop the section and find a place to start and a place to finish."

"I like to build a basic structure of the solo and leave room within that to improvise," Bouvet continues. "The next part of my planning is to find a way to link the sections together, because they might not necessarily be related. I think the transitions are just as important as the sections themselves, because they're the glue that holds it all together and makes one section relevant to the next. One of the most important things in a solo is that it has shape. It needs to start somewhere, go somewhere, and tell the listener a story. It's easy to get bored of too much of the same thing."

Bouvet's super-studious approach to his craft seems to have helped the twenty-one-year-old to keep a level head, even when thrust into the spotlight among drumming luminaries like Terry Bozzio, Mike Portnoy, Dennis Chambers, and

Aaron Spears at the Drum-Off finale. "The other drummers in the competitions were really cool guys, and we spent a lot of time hanging together," J.P. says. "For the Drum-Off we were flown out four days before the finale. We also got to hang, tour the DW factory, and appear on [drumchannel.com](http://drumchannel.com). I met some drumming legends and some of my heroes along the way. Throughout the process I settled into a humble, determined routine. I didn't want to look back and say, 'I should have done this, I could have done that....' I believed this was my shot, and I wanted to know that I did all in my power to make it happen."

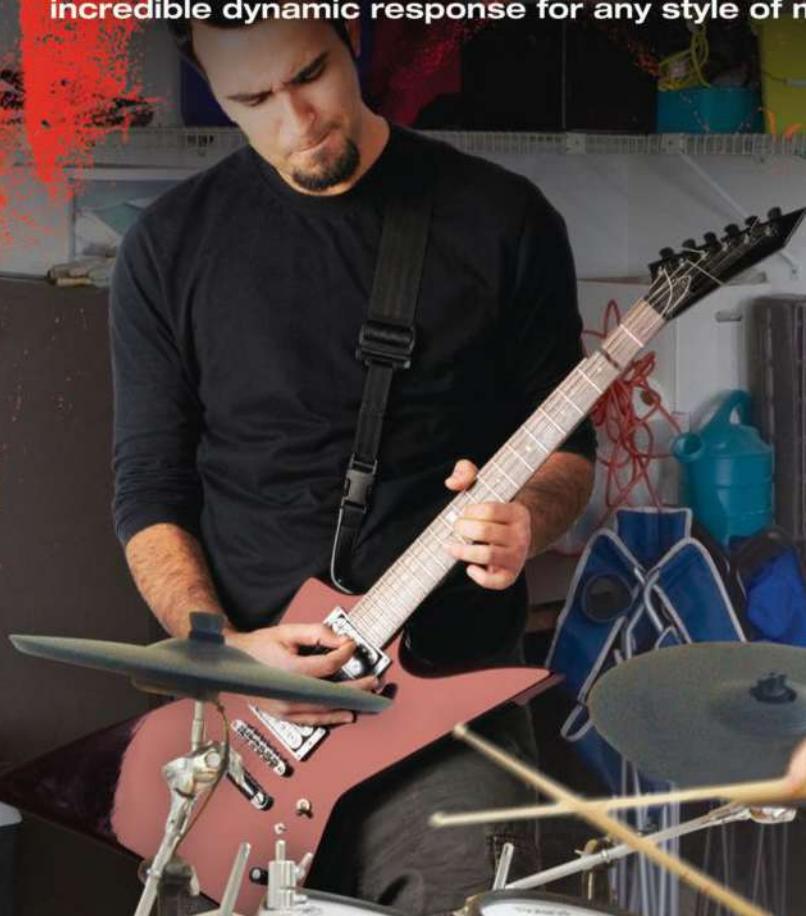
The plan clearly worked. Upon winning the 2011 Roland U.S. V-Drums contest last August, Bouvet was awarded a TD-205X V-Drums kit, among other prizes, and was made an official product specialist for the company. And for his big Drum-Off victory, J.P. took home \$25,000 in cash, a custom DW drumkit, a set of Meinl cymbals, endorsement deals with those companies and with Remo and Vic Firth, a Roland TD-205X electronic kit and PM30 drum monitor, an Audix DP7 drum microphone pack, a \$500 Converse gift card, a 2012 NAMM VIP experience, and a trip to New York to record at Converse's Rubber Tracks studio.

To watch J.P. Bouvet's winning performances at the 2012 Guitar Center Drum-Off finals, check out the Recent Videos at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).



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Michael Flodin

# Joel

For readers unfamiliar with gospel music and its rich history, imagine the way you might feel about John Bonham or Tony Williams, Jaco Pastorius or Charles Mingus. *That's* how much this multit talented musician means to legions of drummers and bass players the world over.

**D**rummer, bassist, bandleader, and producer Joel Smith has had an almost incalculable impact on the gospel and R&B scenes. While Smith is not a large man in terms of physical stature, his timeless performances on some of the most important gospel records of all time have sealed his reputation as a giant among giants. In this special feature, *MD* explores the mind, music, and heart of one of the most prolific and influential gospel musicians of the past thirty-five years.

**MD:** You've been well known for a long time as a session drummer, bass player, and producer, starting with your work on gospel records in the '70s with Edwin and Walter Hawkins. How did your career begin?

**Joel:** Edwin and Walter are my uncles, so I grew up in a real musical family. When I was thirteen I played drums on a live recording with Edwin called *Wonderful*. A few months after the recording, we started traveling and even went to the Holy Land for a three-week tour. Shortly after we got back, Walter started recording the first *Love Alive* album, and it just went from there.

I was doing a lot of drumming at that time. I was playing bass too, but no one really knew it, because I was mainly practicing at home. As time went on, I started laying a lot of tracks on drums and bass, mainly with Walter. Whenever he'd write a song, I would play along with him. I started hearing what his blueprint was, and I was able to color around what his writing was all about. And every time we would record, I'd learn more and more.

**MD:** Would you record the drum tracks first?

**Joel:** It was a mood thing, whether I played bass or drums first. I'd usually start with the drums, though. Sometimes I'd play to a click track, and other times I'd play without one. Playing with a click wasn't really a big thing at that time.

**MD:** Did you take drum lessons when you were young?

**Joel:** I didn't really take a lot of lessons, because most of the time people were kind of tripping on what I was already playing. [laughs] I played in advanced band and jazz band in school, but I was selected mainly for what I was already doing.

**MD:** Were you reading music at this point?

**Joel:** The process of reading didn't dawn on me until a bit later, in junior high school, when I got around Will Kennedy and people like that. A lot of my playing then came from using my ears. I can read, and when I'm in that type of musical situation I'm good with all that. But I still listen more than anything, because I'm more concerned about the feel. I have a really big issue with some people when they read, because they don't give you any feel. They'll give you the proper etiquette that goes with the notation, but the feel is what's really important.

**MD:** What does it take to develop a good feel?

**Joel:** Playing with other people. A lot of times people don't understand that you have to get away from just playing on your own. You have to know how to play with other people in order to make a statement. A lot of guys are virtuoso players who can play all kinds of things by themselves, and they can maybe play with others a little bit. But I'm talking about getting together with other musicians and really putting on your thinking cap and assessing your fellow man for what he can and can't do.

For example, say I'm on drums and there's a bass player playing with me. There may be things that I hear that he could do more of, but if it's the type of thing he doesn't know, I can make up for it to make the sound bigger. That's been my focal point, to try to help the other person shine more, which makes the overall music bigger. That's the reason I freelance a lot. It's magical to me, because everybody has their own approach. But my thing is looking for what I can add from my experience that maybe they just haven't had. The key is to allow people to be who they are and then play around what they do to make it more musical.

**MD:** When you started out playing on the *Love Alive* records and other albums, there weren't many references for gospel drums. How did you develop your technique and approach to playing that music?

**Joel:** When I was coming up, there was only one drummer in the gospel field, and that was Bill Maxwell, who was with Andraé Crouch. We used to be on bills together, so I watched Bill a lot and was able to see him in many different situations.

by Stephen Styles

# Smith

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I love seeing what other people do and checking out their technique and the way they contribute to the music, but I never wanted to get lost in the shuffle when it came to my identity. The only thing that stands true is what naturally comes out of you. So I focused on developing my own sound.

**MD:** Did you realize that you were helping to create a whole new style of playing gospel music?

**Joel:** I didn't know I was even being followed! I was so into what I was doing, I had no idea I was the only one doing it at the time. I was never into trying to do things to get people to hear me. My head was just in the space of trying to learn and doing what I loved to do. Even now, when people talk about me and use terms like *legend*, it sounds funny to me, because that's not where I was at all. I wasn't trying to be a legend or anything else. I was just doing what I loved, learning as much as I could, and enjoying fellowshipping with all the other musicians that I would meet. For me, that's what it was all about.

**MD:** Who were some of the recording drummers that influenced you?

**Joel:** There were two guys that I really loved at that time: Harvey Mason and Steve Gadd. They knew how to be very musical, but they also knew how to play the structure of a song. They weren't caught up in playing a lot of licks. That was the biggest thing that moved me, because that's how I was playing. Until I listened to those cats, I didn't know that someone else was doing the same thing. What really moved me about those guys in particular is the fact that they were really *inside* the songs. Then the licks start to develop—not the licks first, the song first. That's how it's been for me, and I just kept learning and developing my dynamics and not just playing loud.

**MD:** When cutting all those Hawkins records, were you concerned about drum sounds and cymbal selection?

**Joel:** I'm into tones. Colors signify sections within songs. I went for cymbals that weren't too washy. I would get thin crashes and listen for the decay and sustain to make sure I was getting the sound I wanted. Earlier on I was using smaller crashes. As time went on, bigger cymbals started coming into the picture more, but they were still thin, because I wanted them to be in and out, without a lot of overtone. Sometimes I'd go into the store and sit in the drum department for hours, just checking out cymbals. I knew what I wanted to hear within my sound, and I knew it would take time to find the right fit.

Regarding drums and tuning, I learned that pretty much by ear. As time went on, I started changing my sound on the toms and the snare. Sometimes I would listen to

Steve Gadd, and I'd try to imagine what he'd done to get his drums sounding the way they did. Then I'd try to reproduce what I heard from him and what I heard for myself in my head.

**MD:** Did you always listen to other styles of music besides gospel?

**Joel:** My uncles had a lot of music around the house, so I grew up listening to all kinds. At around eleven or twelve I started listening to a lot of Brazilian music, Sergio Mendes, Miles Davis, and Pat Metheny, and that made me want to add other elements to gospel. I hadn't really heard any gospel music that had any of those other elements, so I just took a chance, and it worked. Now look at what gospel has turned into today. It's wide open; people have really taken it to another level.

**MD:** It sounds like your uncles trusted you to do your thing with their music.

**Joel:** They really did, man. That's one of the things I'll always be very grateful for. They trusted in what I did, because they knew whatever I would hear would help enhance everything. They're more writers than players, although they're really great players as well. But they trusted my judgment and asked my opinion about a lot of things, including what other musicians to bring in. People like Kevin Bond and Jonathan DuBose, they asked me about those guys first, and I helped bring them in. When they asked me about Jonathan, up to that point we'd never had guitar. I was excited because I knew there were some gray areas in the music that guitar could help fill, and it was cool because it gave me something else to play off. It helped me get a better understanding of how a band can work together.

**MD:** Besides your uncles and the people you've named, did you have any other musical influences?

**Joel:** I always loved Billy Cobham, because he's a power drummer. He's always had a sound, and still does. Later on I got into Vinnie Colaiuta, Dennis Chambers. I first learned about Dennis when he was with John Scofield on *Loud Jazz*. He was playing all this power stuff that really moved me. I watched as his sound changed a little bit. He just kept growing and growing.

When we play with different people, when we really care about our craft, we take little pieces from all these musical situations, and it begins to define us. Look at people like Horacio Hernandez—he's another one who has really tripped me out with his independence. But everything he plays is around a musical form, even with all the licks. I respect everybody's way of doing things, as long as they're true to their own identity. When you're true to your identity, you're not trying to prove a point. It will stand out, and your personality will shine through it. Whatever you

learn, *learn* it. But once you've learned it, find yourself in it.

**MD:** How can drummers show their identity without stepping on someone's toes?

**Joel:** Simplicity. I don't know any other way to say it. The question is, when you're playing something, are you doing it to be seen? Or are you doing it because it's what the music is really calling for at that time? I say that because I want guys to think about what they're playing.

**MD:** You've played on so many great songs. On one particular song, "Until I Found the Lord," you really changed the game with the feel and energy you brought. How did you conceive your approach?

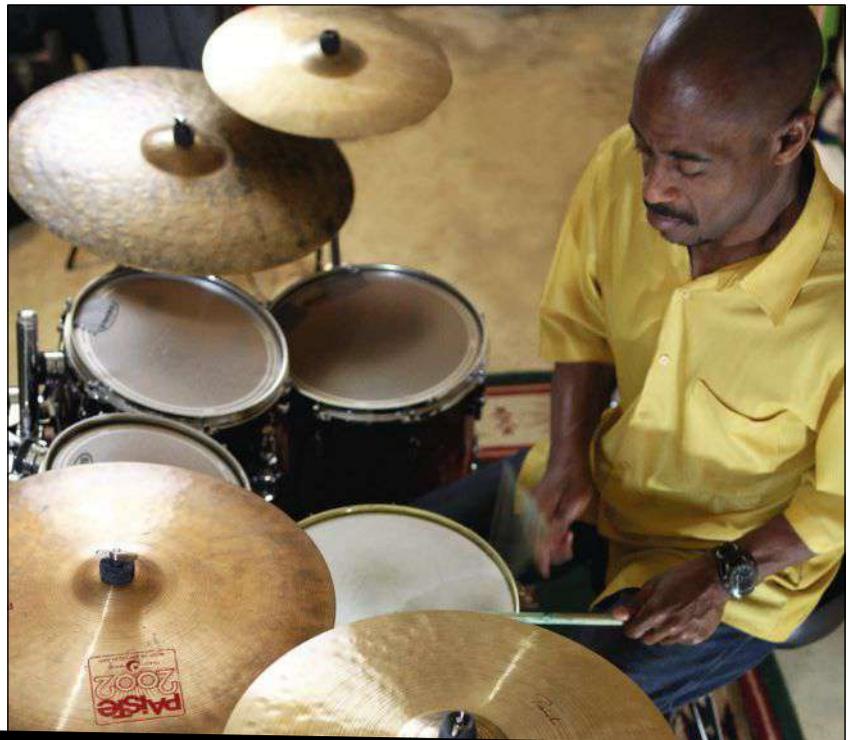
**Joel:** Harvey Mason always did these syncopated things with the hi-hat that intrigued me, and I tried that kind of stuff a lot. When that song came about, it kind of developed into a whole other thing. I just went for whatever, because I knew I was going to go back behind it and play bass. So I figured: If I make it exciting now, there won't be that much more for me to do, since the groove is really based on the drums. You know, I was younger too, and I had a little oats to put out there, so I just decided to let it fly! [laughs]

**MD:** It's funny, a lot of what's popular to play in church today is stuff you were playing on records back then.

**Joel:** What's interesting to me is that there's nothing new under the sun. The bottom line is that we all gravitate to the things that we like, so that's what's going to come out of us. But we have to be careful. I love the innovation that some of the guys have, but it's not like it used to be. In today's society, some players are following each other to a tee. We have the drum sheds where everybody takes licks from each other, and we have a drum community where we lean on each other, and that's great. But back then it was different, because what was most important was for each person to get on the drums and go for what *they* knew, more so than copying licks from each other.

**MD:** Do you think the music is better for the change in the drumming community, or worse?

**Joel:** I'd say both. In a lot of ways it's good, because guys can get together and learn from each other. But you have to be careful. You can have the ability to do a lot of different things, but you can destroy the song with your abilities if you don't have the sensitivity to know what to use within the song itself. Sometimes you'll overcompensate because of all the tricks and stuff that you know how to do. You have to know what's really tasteful and what's being called for, which may mean you have to omit some things



**"The question is, are you playing something to be seen, or because it's what the music is really calling for?"**

to bring breath to the song. You can smother it if you're not careful.

**MD:** You've always had a great sound on ballads. How did you develop your ballad approach?

**Joel:** My ballad playing is based on the keyboards, because there's a lot of color in the chords. Ballads allow me to create a lot of colors through my cymbal work; I'll use certain crashes for their decay, for instance. Ballads are usually so laid back that if you color them a certain way, they can't blossom. It all goes back to listening and playing within the form and adding what's right for that song.

**MD:** When you do sessions nowadays, do you change up your gear a lot, or do you play differently to get the sounds you want?

**Joel:** For the most part my setup stays the same. I change snares from time to time. Doing that helps make you well-rounded, because there are times when you're not always going to have extra gear. It's always best to have a good imagination and use a different approach to get sounds on your instrument. Being flexible and having a good imagination will take you a long way, because when you end up in a situation where you can't get the gear you want, it won't really matter, because the sound is inside you.

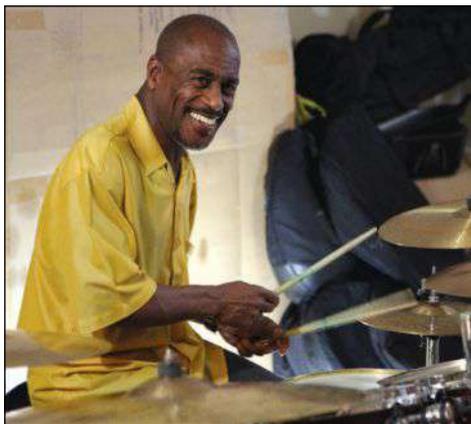
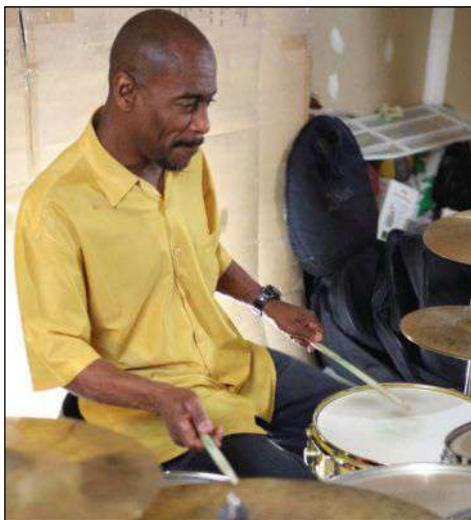
**MD:** You're often called on to play sessions with artists or choirs that have a

regular live band. How do you deal with meeting a drummer who's been around a long time but now has to sit and watch you play on the record by the group he works with?

**Joel:** I've been in that position so many times, man! [laughs] It's been a blessing, because most of the people who've been the artists' regular players have been really gracious with me. I thank God for that, because it could really be a mess. A lot of times you're dealing with people's egos, and sometimes the artist is bruising them by getting outside players.

When I come in, my first thought is, *I know I'm sitting in his chair—let me make sure he knows I'm not trying to take his place.* Sometimes guys are really hurt by that. I'm coming in from the outside, not knowing whether the artist has been dogging him or what's going on. It's not me; it's the artist that they're working with. So I try to come in with an open heart and say, "Hey man, let's hang out." It gives me a chance to get to know them and them to get to know me, and from that point it's not about me being there to take their place; I'm just there to do a job. And hopefully I can teach them some things and they can teach me some things, and everything is cool.

**MD:** Besides all the gospel and R&B you've played and produced, you also toured with a Grateful Dead-related



## JOEL SMITH

band. Can you tell us a little bit about that experience and how it came about?

**Joel:** I was working a lot with a guy named Melvin Seals [keyboardist for the Jerry Garcia Band, who's kept that group's legacy alive after the death of Garcia, via the group JGB]. One day he told me he was preparing to go out on a tour and needed a drummer. I asked what kind of tour it was, he told me, and I figured, why not?

**MD:** What was that like, coming from the gospel world?

**Joel:** I believe that God gives us all talents that He wants us to use. I knew there were other sides of my playing that I needed to challenge, so I decided to try it and wound up doing the gig for two years. It was interesting, to say the least. [laughs] It was like going through a time warp to 1969, with the tie-dye and the hippies. It was cool, but after two years I had to go back. The thing is, I like to create, and that wasn't really the setting for that. It's mostly folk music and that kind of thing. It was different for them because they'd never had a black drummer—so it was different for all of us. [laughs] But it was cool.

**MD:** What message do you want readers to remember from this interview?

**Joel:** I am a person with certain gifts, and what I've been doing is all to give thanks to

God. You've got to give God the thanks and keep Him first, because when He gives you a gift, He expects you to use it in a way that gives Him glory. You can't get a big head and think about the fact that a lot of people know you. We all have things that we want to achieve, and sometimes we don't even know how we got where we were trying to go—we just ended up there. Well, I believe that's because God orchestrates things like that to bless us. But when you get there, you've got to remember to be a blessing and to try to help other people. Because that's the reason God put you there. It's not just about you; it's about helping other people see the vision that you have, which can help them evolve to be even better.

I've seen a lot of guys accomplish certain things, and then, when you see them, you can tell they think a little too highly of themselves. [laughs] They might have a great gift, but you've got to be careful, because God can stop that. I've seen it happen with certain people. Don't be concerned about people watching you—they're gonna watch you. Just do what God has given you to do, and let God bless it. There are a lot of things that I'm still learning. You've got to stay in a place to keep learning.



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# TRAVIS

# BAR

Battles mythical and all too real have defined much of his life since *MD* last sat with him for a good long chat. With a recent solo debut, reams of one-off collaborations, new Transplants and Blink-182 activity, and a constant refinement of his craft, **Travis can honestly say that he's at the top of his game twenty years in.**

Story by David Ciauro • Photos by Paul La Raia

# KEER



**M**uch has happened in the eight years since Travis Barker last appeared on the cover of *Modern Drummer*. In 2005, Blink-182, the multiplatinum band that launched the drummer into superstardom, announced that it was taking an indefinite hiatus. Later that year, the Transplants, Barker's group with Rancid's Tim Armstrong, released its second album, *Haunted Cities*, but soon announced its dissolution. Barker was already focusing on +44, another project with Blink bassist/singer Mark Hoppus, which released the 2006 album *When Your Heart Stops Beating*. Travis also began attracting a lot of attention—and inspiring legions of imitators—with his YouTube “drum remixes” of hip-hop tracks like Soulja Boy's “Crank That” and Flo Rida's “Low.” Despite the fact that Blink-182 remained quiet, life was going well for Barker professionally.

In 2008, however, a string of tragic events forever changed things. In August of that year, Jerry Finn, who'd produced every Blink album since the 1999 breakthrough *Enema of the State*, passed away at age thirty-nine, after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. The following month, shortly after Barker

The band's symbolic rebirth was at the 2009 Grammy Awards ceremony, when Barker, Hoppus, and guitarist/singer Tom DeLonge appeared on stage together for the first time in more than four years. The group soon set off on tour, and early last year released a much anticipated comeback album, *Neighborhoods*. In 2011 Barker also issued his first solo album, *Give the Drummer Some*, teamed up with Guitar Center on an unsigned-artist discovery program, and continued to tour with Blink. And around the time this issue hits the streets, he'll be in Europe performing with the Transplants, who reconvened in 2010 and have a new album due out soon.

Perhaps no other event of the past several years more perfectly captures the healthy place that Barker's in these days than his March 21, 2012, appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live* with the Muppet band Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem, on the song “Can You Picture That?” Mid-performance, Animal calls out Barker with a scream—“*Drum war!*”—and the two trade fours until the infamously furry and furious Muppet, jaw agape and visibly winded, hurls a drum at Travis before counting the band back in, thus ending the epic battle. The next day, Barker tweeted,

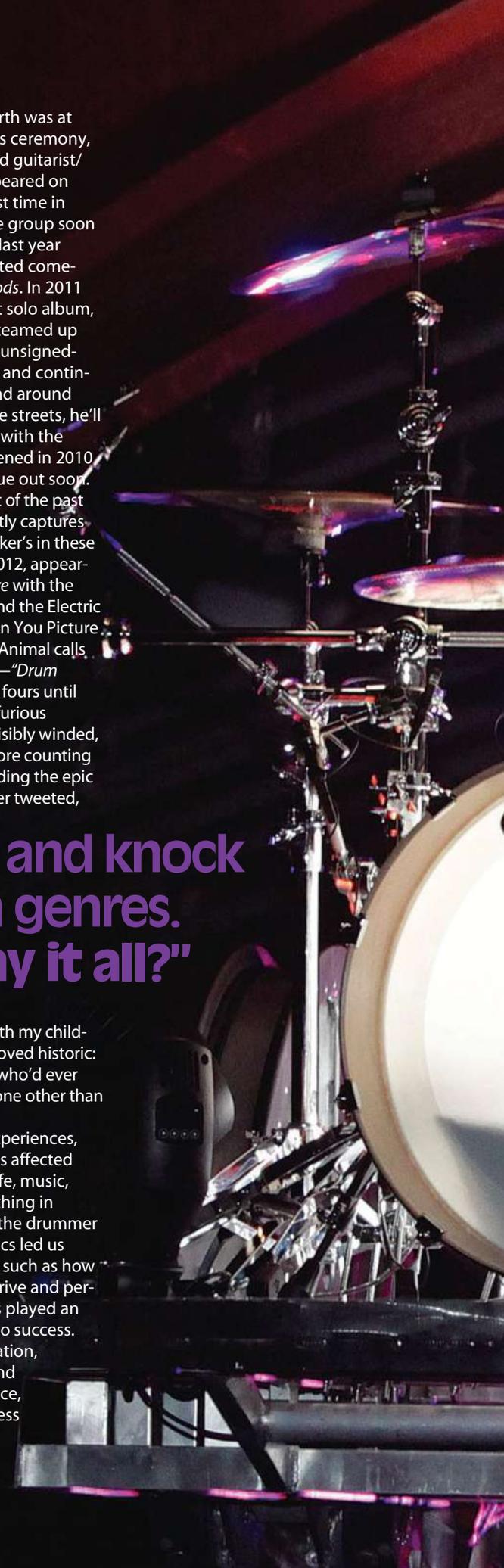
**“I like to break the rules and knock down barriers between genres. And why shouldn't I play it all?”**

played a set with his good friend DJ AM (Adam Goldstein) at Five Points in Columbia, South Carolina, the charter flight they boarded to return to Van Nuys, California, crashed during take-off. Barker and Goldstein were the only survivors; both pilots, as well as Barker's assistant, Chris Baker, and security guard, Charles “Che” Still, perished. Less than a year later, Goldstein died from an accidental overdose.

The events of that remarkably difficult year inspired Travis to make some significant lifestyle changes, and his growing list of high-profile musical collaborations with artists like P. Diddy, Rihanna, the Game, Avril Lavigne, Yelawolf, and Drake kept him busy, creative, and in the public eye. The tragedies also provided needed motivation for Blink-182's reformation.

“Blessed to play drums with my childhood hero.” This event proved historic: The only other drummer who'd ever dare battle Animal was none other than Buddy Rich.

The totality of these experiences, positive and negative, has affected Barker's perspective on life, music, family, health, and everything in between. Speaking with the drummer recently about these topics led us down unexpected paths, such as how his early life shaped his drive and personality, and how tattoos played an integral role on his road to success. Throughout our conversation, Travis was enthusiastic and open, unafraid, for instance, to talk about one of the less pleasant by-products of being a star—haters!





## HATERS = MOTIVATORS

**MD:** While watching your Muppets performance on YouTube, we came across a clip of Buddy Rich, and while scanning the comments we noticed that your name was mentioned. To paraphrase, the person likened your drumming skills, in comparison to those of Buddy, to excrement. There seems to be no logical reason why anyone would make such a pointed criticism about someone who had nothing to do with the video.

someone out there hating on Neil Peart right now because he's doing what he loves to do, and on a huge level. It comes with the territory. You see it in everything. Look up videos of Lil Wayne or Eminem, and some hater will be going on about how they can't rap. It's crazy!

I remember that happening in my high school drum line. Some of my best friends were in that drum line, and they would hate on me. It was always confusing, because they were

is all about the groove being the foundation.

**Travis:** For me it was more of a production album than a drum album. I'd be on the tour bus making beats, and then I'd listen back and start thinking, *This beat would be great for this guy.* So I collected them and sent them out to the people I thought would complement the tracks. It was a chance to collaborate and feature all of my favorite rappers and musicians that I was homies with, and make an album



**Travis:** Man, that's funny. I know what you mean. It's like, "What did I do or say that made someone feel the need to bash me in a comment on a Buddy Rich thread?" The thing is, though, just because you're a popular drummer, it doesn't mean you've ever claimed to be the best drummer in the world. You'll never hear the words come out of my mouth that I think I'm the best drummer in the world. I just do what I do and try to be the best *me* that I can be. That's the only thing I *can* be.

Someone said a long time ago that haters are just jealous admirers. I can relate to that. I've caught myself doing it too, where I'll be hating on someone because I like something about what they're doing—whether it's a band, an artist, or whatever. I guess having it happen to me is a sign that I've made it. Plus I know that I'm not the only one it happens to.

**MD:** Are you able to take comfort in that?

**Travis:** Sure. Crazy as it seems, there's

good friends, but they sure had a weird way of showing it at times.

I can see why drummers might hate on me now, because I tend to jump genres. They may not like to see someone they dig as a punk drummer playing hip-hop or another style they're not into. But it's not like I'm taking jobs away from anyone. I just love every genre of music. I grew up on punk, rap, metal, and thrash, so of course I want to play all those styles and be a part of as many projects as I can. I like to break the rules and knock down barriers between genres. And why shouldn't I play it all? Why wouldn't I want to take advantage of the opportunity to play all the styles I love? It helps me grow as a drummer and as a musician.

## GOING SOLO

**MD:** When drummers put out solo albums, it's often approached as a free pass to overplay. But *Give the Drummer Some*, although featuring different collaborators on each track,

that was different from anything else I'd done. I wanted to do something way different from a Blink or Transplants record, get away from what I'm "known for." It was amazing to work with the artists I idolized growing up that weren't necessarily guitarists or drummers, but also have someone like Slash be involved. I'm blessed to have been able to get that out of my system.

**MD:** The album ends with a hidden track that you recorded with your kids.

**Travis:** It was really fun to do that track with them. My kids bring out the best in me. They both love music, and I'm very involved in everything they do. We did that at my home studio, and out of all the amazing collaborations that made up my solo album, being with the kids at home and knocking out that track was the most fun.

**MD:** Some of the songs on *Give the Drummer Some* feature several artists. Were those tracks hashed out in the studio as a collaborative effort, or did

people just come in and inject their style into each tune?

**Travis:** It varied. With some songs I had the beats done and gave the tracks to different people to get on. Other tracks were more collaborative. For example, on “Carry It” [featuring RZA, Raekwon, and Tom Morello] I had the beat, and RZA worked with me on it and laid down the guitar parts. RZA is a great producer, but people may not know that he plays guitar and other instruments too.

I’ve been concentrating on being able to play quick 32nd-note singles between my hands and right foot. I used that technique a lot for the fills on that track.

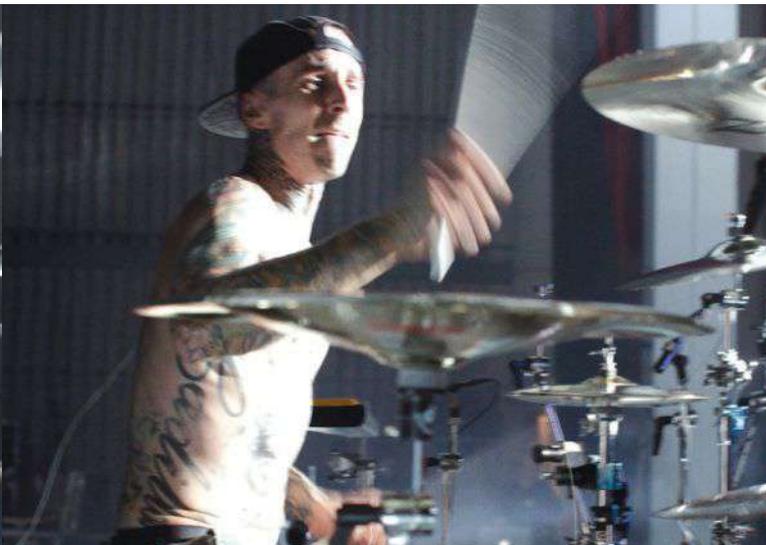
**MD:** To get those fills to be a smooth flow of notes, is there any sound replacement or triggering going on in postproduction?

**Travis:** There are no triggered sounds on my album. I tracked everything with my OCDPs at my studio in North Hollywood. I was conscious of what

Lil Wayne, Nicki Minaj, and Rick Ross in the spring of 2011.

**MD:** You mentioned before that you recorded your album at your studio. What are you like in the studio? Do you obsess over the production?

**Travis:** To be honest, I’m very impatient. I’ve been blessed to work with some amazing engineers. I’m spontaneous; I like to just go in and record. I don’t like to spend a whole lot of time getting sounds. As long as I can hear everything and everything is being



Tom Morello came in later and did his thing.

The track with Corey Taylor from Slipknot, “On My Own” [available only on the album’s deluxe version], was written from scratch. We had about an hour and a half to write and record the song, so we just jammed out and put that together.

**MD:** The track with Pharrell and Lupe Fiasco, “If You Want To,” has a Motown vibe going on, and you play some super-slick fills that really complement the vocal cadence.

**Travis:** Yeah, you nailed the vibe on the nose—it’s like some upbeat futuristic Motown shit. [laughs] That one was fun. Pharrell just came with it, and we collaborated on the beat. He did all the horns and keyboards, and I did all the drums and the bulk of the programming. It was also great to hear Lupe rap like that, because he doesn’t normally rap over beats like that.

**MD:** How are you executing those kinds of fills?

**Travis:** Over the past couple of years

songs had those hand/foot fills, and I told whoever was mixing the track to make sure that when those fills came around, the kick and toms were mixed at the same level.

**MD:** A new Transplants record will be out soon. Why does “Saturday Night,” which features Tim Armstrong and Rob Aston from the Transplants, appear on your album as opposed to that one?

**Travis:** The new Transplants record is a hardcore album—like a swift kick to the face—and “Saturday Night” has a mellow vibe that didn’t fit the album. I recorded that beat in my bus, and when Tim heard it he wrote that hook. Twenty minutes later, the song was done.

**MD:** With *Give the Drummer Some* being such a collaborative album, getting everyone in one place to do a full live show would seem nearly impossible to coordinate. How have you been bringing this material to audiences?

**Travis:** I toured it with [Beastie Boys DJ] Mix Master Mike. We opened for

picked up, we just go for it. Chris Holmes and James Ingram, who engineered the majority of this album, are absolute ninjas in the studio.

**MD:** Do you typically record to a click?

**Travis:** I’ll record to a click if the drums are the first thing being recorded. If I program a beat and put down bass and synths, then I’ll play along to that instead.

**MD:** Is that to keep the feel consistent?

**Travis:** Yeah. If people are recording to a programmed beat, they may feel certain parts either behind or ahead of the beat, and so if I then try to record to a click on top of that, it may throw off the feel. I find it easier to play over what’s already been recorded.

## FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN

**MD:** Your recent recording projects cover a lot of stylistic ground. Has your impatience fed into that type of approach?

**Travis:** It’s more fun to be spontaneous in the studio. That’s something I learned from Tim Armstrong while

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## TRAVIS BARKER

recording the first Transplants records. We had such a blast. Everything was spontaneous, and we wouldn't waste time messing about with sounds. When I got my studio, I said, "I want this to be like Tim's place—a constant workshop."

Over the years I've realized that I love being in the studio, and as I get older I just want to be even more about that. Most of the projects I get to do are a departure from what I do musically with Blink. I have an EP coming out with [rapper] Asher Roth that was produced by Nottz, who is a genius. He's such a good programmer and producer, and he had me playing all these weird drum patterns that were so cool. There's also an EP I did with Yelowolf that will drop soon.

In 2008 I fell in love with the drums all over again. Back in the day when Blink was riding its biggest high, I would come home from tour and not touch my drums for like six months. Now when I'm not on tour I like to

soak up my time doing music that's different from what I've been doing. That way it doesn't get repetitive; it keeps things fresh.

**MD:** So then you probably would have no desire to be in Guns n' Roses, where it takes a decade to release an album?

**Travis:** Ha! No!

**MD:** You're scheduled to have an emergency tonsillectomy tomorrow, and you're heading to Europe with Blink in a few weeks. What else does the near future have in store?

**Travis:** The Blink tour starts in a week and a half, and as long as my tonsil situation is all good, it's a twelve-week run. I get back at the end of July. [The band would in fact have to cancel some North American shows as Travis recovered.] The Transplants album should drop around then, and I'll tour in support of that, and while doing that tour I'll start working on my second solo record. There was also some talk about doing some more stuff with

Animal! I'll probably continue to work with Mix Master Mike as well. At the top of 2013, I might be doing some clinics, which is something I've never done before.

**MD:** You taught privately before joining Blink, right?

**Travis:** Yup. I was teaching a lot while I was in the band the Aquabats and at the beginning of my time with Blink, before that took off. I had some awesome students. Ilan Rubin, who plays in Angels & Airwaves now with Tom DeLonge, is a former student.

**MD:** When we spoke last summer for your Gearing Up segment [December 2011 MD], you said that you wouldn't fly anymore. What travel arrangements did you make for getting to Europe?

**Travis:** I'll go over to Europe on the *Queen Mary 2*. It's like a six-and-a-half-day trip, and I have to drive out to New York first. My kids will be with me, so it's going to be a great trip.

**MD:** Have you mapped out any ideas

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## TRAVIS BARKER

or concepts for your next solo record?

**Travis:** I want to avoid making a “drum” album that only speaks to a drum audience. I want it to connect with people that aren’t drummers or even musicians, but I also don’t want to do another album rooted in hip-hop. I’m probably going to mix it up a little more.

**MD:** You’ve influenced a generation of young drummers, who emulate your setup and tuning and post videos of themselves covering your drum remixes. And playing duets with DJs has become something of a trend. Are you comfortable with drummers copying your style and approach?

**Travis:** It’s very flattering, and it’s awesome to be considered an influence. It all comes from a very positive place for me. I think it’s important, though, to get inspiration from more than one source. You develop your own style by putting a bunch of influences together. That was a goal of mine from when I was very young—to have my own style, so that when

people heard me they’d be like, “That’s Travis!” whether they loved it or hated it. I think that’s one thing I’ve accomplished.

**MD:** What do you feel are the qualities of a great drummer?

**Travis:** Seeing someone who looks like they’re having fun is a big thing for me. I’ll walk away if I’m watching a band and the drummer looks miserable. I like to see someone who’s having a good time and looks like they mean what they’re playing. Obviously they should be solid players, nailing their fills without losing steam, not losing impact when playing at faster tempos, and if it’s slower music, making sure they’re playing in the pocket and making the music feel good.

**MD:** At a Blink production run-through last July, your intensity was notable. Even when you had to run your solo five times in a row while the techs worked out the bugs with the mechanical arm, you never held back.

**Travis:** Practice hard so you can play hard. You can’t practice at 80 percent

and expect to play a show and give 120 percent. You’re gonna get drained. I go hard all the time. I do cardio for an hour or two every day, just so I know I can put everything into a show and not run out of steam. I never want to feel winded or that my muscles aren’t conditioned enough for what I need to play.

**MD:** It’s refreshing to see someone at your level not taking the performance aspect for granted. It definitely comes across as something you’re doing for yourself because you love it, but the fans are obviously feeling the power, which is why...

**Travis:** ...I have so many haters. [laughs] There are a bunch of great drummers out there. I don’t know their daily routine, and it’s not a comparison, but what I do know is that there’s no such thing as a day off for me.

**MD:** What is your current practice routine?

**Travis:** I play for about an hour a day. Right now I’m working on some open-

## I'm a Natural!

"My name is Ameenah Kaplan. I'm from Atlanta, GA, live in Los Angeles, CA, but I gotta throw New York in the middle because I spent many of my formative years as an artist there. I made my first beats on the school desk when I was 9 years old. It just came out of me. I "played" my first groove on a drum set at age 12. It sounded terrible, but I was hooked. I play drums because it's in my nature. Drums give my otherwise busy life some balance and peace. I don't know who I'd be without the drums. They are my meditation. I play Supernaturals because I like the spirit of the company and the quality in sound. Right now my favorite cymbal is my 16" Revelation crash. I love it because of the clarity in the tone. A little on the dark side, I can use it with sticks, mallets, or brushes. As a result, it's useful in a variety of playing environments, be they loud or soft."

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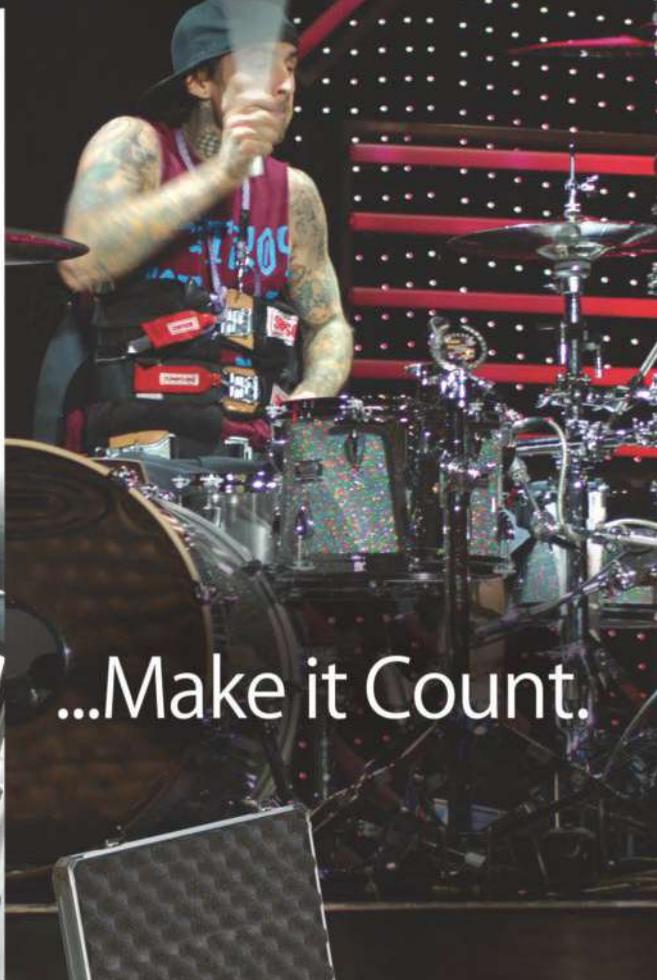
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## TRAVIS BARKER

handed stuff, teaching myself to lead confidently with my left hand. It's hard to get it to where the feel is even. It's tough to get a shuffle to feel right when leading with my left hand.

I'm constantly working on my bass drum too. I've never played double bass. I always wanted to be a single-bass player and to take my single kicks to new levels. I've been jamming with people like Aaron Spears, Eric Moore, and George McCurdy when they're in town, and learning a lot.

### FIGHTING THE FIGHT

**MD:** How did the events of 2008 and the loss of DJ AM in 2009 affect your overall outlook on life?

**Travis:** I know tomorrow is never a given. Nothing is promised. From my perspective—to lose four people, to have 65 percent of my body burned, my leg almost amputated, and my left hand numb—it was like, “Man, if I can ever play the drums again, I promise to love them like I never have.” Everything was like that. The

opportunity to run again—since I got out of the hospital I've been running seven miles a day, every day. I really, *really* soaked up all my blessings. I appreciated all I had: my drums, my music, my family, my success. Not a day goes by now when I don't take time to appreciate it all.

**MD:** It's common in the wake of tragedy to experience a positive turnaround, though often the changes are temporary and old patterns slowly resurface. Your ability to make lasting changes is admirable.

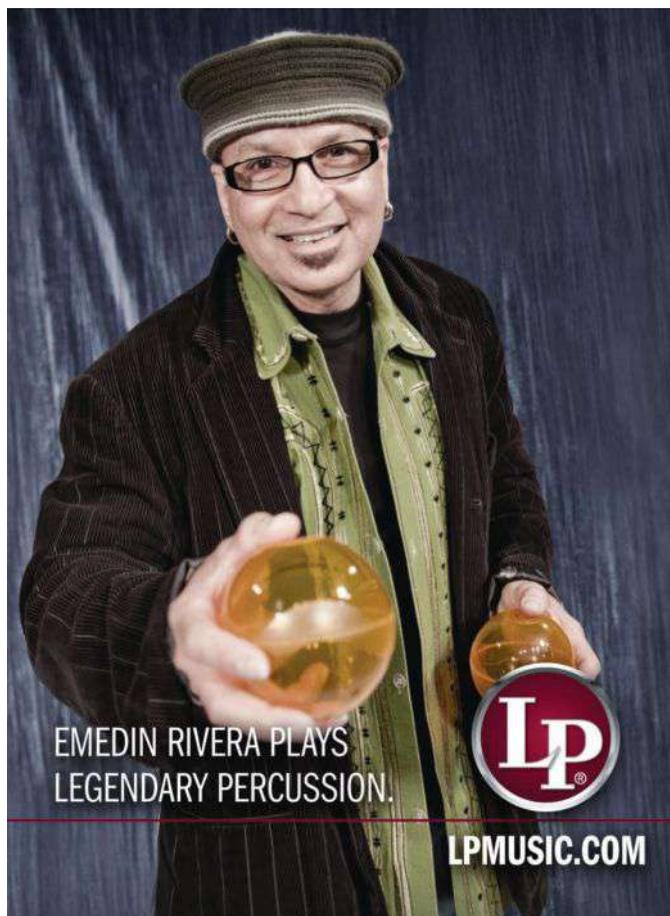
**Travis:** Even with my little distractions, like skin graphs that basically cover both of my feet, and having to put a pad on my right foot every time I play, I never wanted that stuff to be an excuse for me not getting back to the way I played before the accident. In fact, my right foot is better than ever, and I'm able to do things now that I wasn't able to achieve before. Mental motivation! That's why I don't care about any negative comments made about me, because it's not important

after everything I've been through. Drumming has always been therapeutic for me, and more so now than ever. It's who I am, and it's what I do.

Right around the time it happened, AM and I were taking things to new places with the drummer/DJ thing. I wasn't really in a band at the time, so it was cool to kick down new doors as a drummer, and it made for meaningful success. Yet at the same time, I was going through the motions. I'm obviously not saying that I'm glad about what happened—but it woke me up! I would never be thinking and living the way I am today if it wasn't for that. It was a life lesson. I'm a fighter, and I don't think God would have put me through all that if He didn't think I could handle it.

### TATTOOED FATE

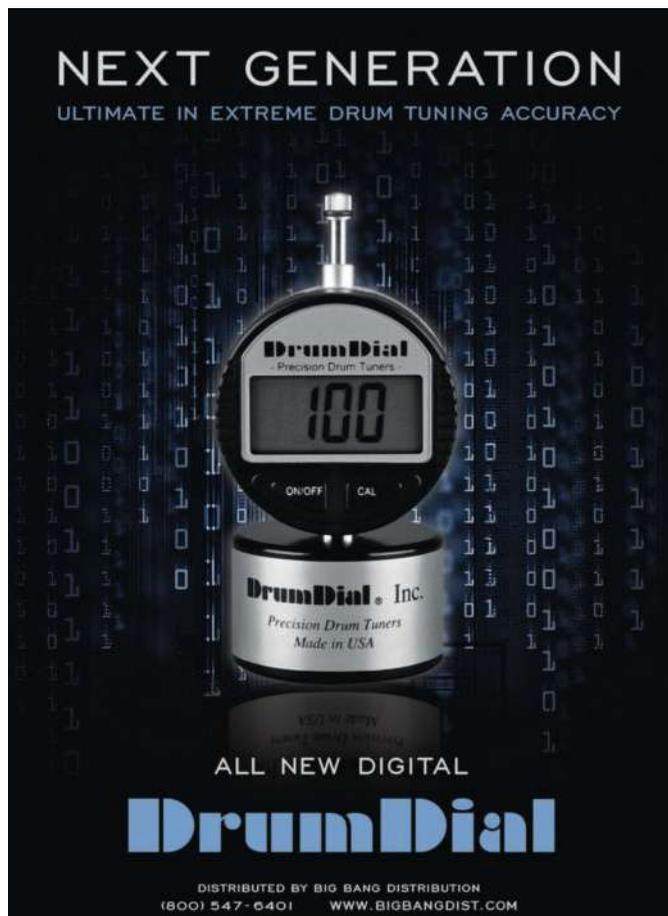
**MD:** It seems as though your new perspective has served to amplify your inherent intensity and drive. In past interviews, you made mention of how you purposely got tattoos as a



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Scan here to find out more about the LP Travis Barker Ridge Rider Cowbell.

## TRAVIS BARKER

means of pushing yourself down an unconventional career path.

**Travis:** Yeah, the “job stoppers”! [laughs]

**MD:** Your first tattoo, though, was in tribute to your mother?

**Travis:** Yeah, she basically told me on her deathbed to keep playing drums. I already felt I wanted to be a drummer, but I was only twelve, and I was thinking, *Oh shit, how do I do what my mom told me to do?* I’ve always felt that my life has been filled with situa-

tions where something bad had to happen in order for me to make breakthroughs. I’ve had to overcome a lot.

**MD:** So that initially sparked your drive?

**Travis:** Yeah. I just played every day. A job, a flash car, crazy clothes—those types of things weren’t important to me. All I wanted was to have enough money to eat, to have a place to sleep, and to play drums.

At that time my pops was saying, “I

don’t know if this drum thing is going to work out; you should probably get a real job,” and I was given an ultimatum: Move out, or start paying rent. So I moved to Laguna Beach, got a job as a trash man, and basically became a drum escort. I played with whoever hired me. Even if there wasn’t pay, I took the gig just to have an outlet to play.

Around that time I started getting more tattoos and putting them in places that would kill my chances to find a “normal” job. I didn’t want a plan B. I wanted to force plan B out of my life. I wanted plan A, and the “job stoppers” helped ensure that plan B was not an option. Thank God it worked!

Growing up, I remember thinking, *Why is my dad being so hard on me?* But tough love was what he knew. My dad is a tough-as-nails military guy and a workaholic. I got my work ethic from him; I just applied it to drumming and music. Everything he taught me rubbed off in a good way, even if I didn’t understand it back then or thought it was negative. I understand that now—that he didn’t want me to become some punk slacker. Now we’re tight. He has a tattoo of my Famous Stars and Straps company logo on him as a badge of honor, and I have one that says “Pal,” which is what I called him as a kid. He came around—that was really a big thing for me.

**MD:** What’s your take on passion versus technique?

**Travis:** With drums, it’s not always a chops thing. You could be a chops monster, but if you don’t have passion and a unique style, the chops don’t matter. To me, a band that has something that translates to an audience because they’re doing it out of their love of music will always outshine bands that might play “better.” I honestly believe that the people who would do it for free are the ones that go places—and if love and fun are the main reasons you play, good things will come!

MIKE JOHNSTON

**PROTECTION PERFECTED**

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USA

SCAN FOR VIDEO

AHEADARMORCASES.COM

DISTRIBUTED BY: BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION - 800.547.6401

The advertisement features a man, Mike Johnston, wearing a black leather jacket over a black t-shirt with a white bullseye logo. He is holding a dark blue drum head cover with the Ahead Armor Cases logo. The background is dark with some bokeh light effects. The text 'PROTECTION PERFECTED' is written in large, bold, red letters with a black outline. The Ahead Armor Cases logo is prominently displayed in the bottom right corner of the image area. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner, and the website 'AHEADARMORCASES.COM' is written in the bottom center. The distributor information 'DISTRIBUTED BY: BIG BANG DISTRIBUTION - 800.547.6401' is at the very bottom.





# DRUM SHOP DEALS

MEINL'S EXOTIC YANG WOOD CAJON WITH FREE MOUNTABLE CASTANETS

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

(CAJ3YW-LB) LIST: \$265.00

**\$159<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$105 OFF LIST



**FREE**

2 MOUNTABLE CASTANETS INCLUDED WITH THE ANNIVERSARY YANG WOOD STRING CAJON - A \$23 VALUE! (WJCT-M) (WJCT-M)



MEINL'S REDESIGNED BONGO CAJON IN EBONY FINISH

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

(BCA3NTEBKM) LIST: \$89.00

**\$49<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 43% OFF LIST



PRODUCE AMAZING TONES WITH THE STROKE OF YOUR FINGERS - MEINL'S WAH WAH KALIMBA

**NEW AT GUITAR CENTER**

(KA9WW-BK) LIST: \$92.00

**NEW**

**\$59<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$32 OFF LIST



GREAT SOUND AND FEEL FROM MEINL'S HEADLINER SERIES RED BONGOS IN WOOD OR FIBERGLASS

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

SELECTION VARIES BY LOCATION

(HB50R) (HFB100R) LIST: \$108.00 - \$134.00

WOOD BONGOS STARTING AT **\$69<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO 40% OFF LIST



YOUR CHOICE OF SIZZLING MEINL TURBO CABASAS

SELECTION VARIES BY LOCATION  
(CA5BK) (CA5BK-S) (CA5BK-L)  
LIST: \$49.00 - \$65.00

SMALL CABASA STARTING AT **\$29<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO 37% OFF LIST



GET BIG, LOW SOUND FROM DOWN UNDER WITH A DIDGERIDOO

(DDG1-BK-NB) (DDG1-R-NB) LIST: \$49.00

YOUR CHOICE **\$29<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$19 OFF LIST



BRING THIS COUPON IN AND **GET AN EXTRA**



**\$20 OFF\***

YOUR PURCHASE OF

**\$99 OR MORE**

OR

**\$50 OFF\*\***

YOUR PURCHASE OF

**\$199 OR MORE**

\*\$20 OFF PURCHASE OF \$99. \*\*\$50 OFF PURCHASE OF \$199 OR MORE. PURCHASE MUST BE MADE AT THE DISPLAYED GUARANTEED LOWEST PRICE. NOT TO BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH OTHER COUPONS, PROMOTIONS OR OFFERS. NO CASH VALUE. EXCLUDES CLEARANCE ITEMS, PRICE MATCHES, USED GEAR, SCRATCH AND DENT, VINTAGE EQUIPMENT, TAX/SHIPPING CHARGES, GIFT CARDS AND MUSICIAN SERVICES (GC GARAGE). SOME MANUFACTURERS HAVE CHOSEN NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROMOTION; THEY MAY BE FOUND AT [HTTP://WWW.GUITARCENTER.COM/COUPONEXCLUSIONS](http://www.guitarcenter.com/couponexclusions). COUPON IS REDEEMABLE IN-STORE, ONLINE OR AT (866) 543-0741 ONLY WITH VALID COUPON CODE. OFFER VALID NOW THRU 9/30/2012.

**GET THE COMPLEX SOUND OF TAMA'S BIRCH/BUBINGA HYBRID SHELLS IN VIBRANT FINISHES**

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

- Includes 10x8 and 12x9" toms, 14x12 and/or 16x14" floor toms, and an 22x18" kick drum, (20" kick and 14" floor tom on natural finish kit)
- Choose from diamond dust, dark cherry fade, shattered turquoise and GC exclusive raspberry fade, natural lacquer or azure oyster red sparkle burst or indigo sparkle finish
- Exclusive black nickel rims and lugs on select kits

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS, SNARE AND PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY**  
**COLORS AND CONFIGURATIONS VARY BY LOCATION**  
 (PL42BNS) (PL42S) (PX52LBNS) (PX42BNS)  
 (PL52LXZS) (PL42SBNZ) (PL40SASMP)  
 LIST: \$2307.00 - \$3076.91

STARTING AT  
**\$1499<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO  
**\$1130 OFF LIST**

**FREE**



**14x6" TAMA BUBINGA SNARE WITH STARCLASSIC BB KIT - A \$299.99 VALUE! (PLS606S-BG)**



**TAMA'S 100% BIRCH SILVERSTAR ACCEL SERIES IN GUITAR CENTER EXCLUSIVE FINISHES**

**\$50 INSTANT REBATE**

- 5-Piece all-birch kit
- 10x8 And 12x9" toms, 16x14" floor tom, 22x18" bass, 14x5.5" snare
- Triple-flanged hoops, streamlined Star-Mount system
- Your choice of silver chameleon sparkle or red chameleon sparkle finish

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY**  
**COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**  
 (VK52KSGXS) (VK52KSRCS)  
 LIST: \$974.99

YOUR CHOICE BEFORE  
**\$50 INSTANT REBATE**

**\$599<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$375 OFF LIST



**TAMA'S SOUND LAB PROJECT EMBODIES QUALITY AT A WORKING MUSICIAN'S PRICE**

- [A] Power Maple 14x6.5", midnight maple burl finish
- [B] G-Maple 13x7", satin Tamo ash finish
- [C] G-Bubinga 14x6", natural quilted bubinga finish
- [D] Vintage Steel 14x5.5", nickel-plated finish

**SELECT STORES**  
 (LST1455) (LGM1375TA) (LMB1465MMB)  
 (LGB146NQB) LIST: \$416.65 - \$583.32

VINTAGE STEEL  
 STARTING AT  
**\$249<sup>99</sup>**  
 SAVE 40% OFF LIST

**FREE**



**TAMA PADDED SNARE BAG WITH SLP SNARE PURCHASE - A \$44.99 VALUE! (DBS14)**



**EFFORTLESSLY FAST PLAYING WITH THE SPEED COBRA LINE**

- Fast Foot pedal board is longer and smoother for added control
- Recessed setting and FASTBALL bearing require 20% less energy
- Convex-shaped Projector Beater offers the choice of a more focused attack or fatter sound (HP910LS) (HP910LSW)
- Road-worthy, smooth-action (HP910LS) (HP910LSW) (HH915N) LIST: \$269.98 - \$599.98

SINGLE PEDAL  
 STARTING AT  
**\$199<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$244 OFF LIST



**POWER AND STRENGTH FROM THE IRON COBRA LINE**

- Cobra Coil accelerates pedal return for effortless playability
- Endless setup options for a fine-tuned fit (HP900PSN) (HP900PSWN) (HH905N) LIST: \$299.98 - \$644.98

SINGLE PEDAL  
 STARTING AT  
**\$199<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO 40% OFF LIST



**SAVE BIG WHEN YOU BUY ANY SABIAN AA SERIES 16" OR LARGER (OR A PAIR OF HI-HATS)**

**\$50 INSTANT REBATE**

- Bright high-end tones for increased cutting power
- Equalizes high and low pitch responses for a bright tonal blend
- Controlled sounds at any volume (SABIAN AA)

AFTER \$50 INSTANT REBATE  
**PRICES TOO LOW TO PRINT**



**ESSENTIAL CYMBALS FOR ANY SET UP – THE SABIAN AAX VAULT CRASH PACK**

**NEW AT GUITAR CENTER**

- Includes 16 and 18" AAX Vault crash cymbals
- All-cast cymbals with bright sound projection

SELECT STORES (25004XBV) LIST: \$579.00

**NEW**

**\$299<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE 48% OFF LIST



**FREE 14" CRASH WITH THE B8 2-PACK +14 FROM SABIAN**

**NEW AT GUITAR CENTER**

- B8 2-Pack +14 set includes an 18" crash/ride, 14" hats and a free 14" thin crash in box (45002-14) LIST: \$381.00

**NEW**

**\$199<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE 47% OFF LIST



**CHECK OUT THE NEW B8 PERFORMANCE SET +16 CYMBAL PREPACK FROM SABIAN**

**FREE 16" O-ZONE CRASH INCLUDED**

- B8 Performance Set +16 includes a 20" Ride, 16" thin crash, 14" hi-hats and a free B8 Pro 16" O-Zone crash in box (45003-POZ) LIST: \$555.00

**NEW**

**\$299<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE 45% OFF LIST



**A COMPLETE SET OF CYMBALS WITH THE AAXPLOSION PACK FROM SABIAN**

**FREE 18" CRASH INCLUDED**

- Includes 14" AAX Stage hi-hats, 16" AAXplosion crash, 21" AAX Stage ride, plus a free 18" AAXplosion crash
- Streamlined design and response-shaping Auto-Focus feature for penetrating definition, all in a brilliant finish

SELECT STORES (25005XXPGC-NB) LIST: \$1295.00

**\$729<sup>99</sup>**  
SAVE 43% OFF LIST



**SABIAN'S Xs20 ALL-CAST CYMBALS AT AN INCREDIBLE PRICE**

Crafted using an innovative technique, Sabian Xs20 cymbals deliver bright sounds, professional looks, and great feel at an outstanding price.

(XS1005B) (XS2012B) LIST: \$141.00 - \$296.00

10" SPLASH STARTING AT  
**\$85<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO 39% OFF LIST





**TOCA SYNERGY CONGA SET IN CUSTOM ANNIVERSARY FINISH - INCLUDES MATCHING BONGOS**

**GUITAR CENTER EXCLUSIVE**

- Lathed and handcrafted in Thailand by local musicians
- Harvested wood is low-impact to be as environmentally friendly as possible
- 28" Tall, two-ply wood shell construction
- Black Powder coated hardware, double-braced stand

(2300TB) LIST: \$385.00

**NEW**

**\$249<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$135 OFF LIST



**FREE**

**MATCHING BONGOS WITH THE NEW SYNERGY SERIES CONGA SET - A \$49.99 VALUE! (2100TB)**



**TWO PERCUSSION ESSENTIALS FROM JOHN DOLMAYAN'S KIT**

- Reduced in size to 6 and 8"
- Black nickel-plated steel shells
- Traditional Cuban-style tuners
- Also includes a Cha-Cha cowbell

(845JD) LIST: \$279.00

**\$179<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$99 OFF LIST



**FREE**

**\$25 GIFT CARD WITH 845JD TIMBALE SET PURCHASE (GIFT CARD TO BE USED ON FUTURE PURCHASES)**



**SPECIAL SAVINGS ON THESE TOCA DJEMBES**

**UP TO \$35 IN INSTANT REBATES**

- Antique Silver: one-piece synthetic shell with 10" head diameter
- Lava: lightweight and durable seamless synthetic shell
- Lava: 14" goatskin head, 25" height with rope handle
- Lava djembe comes with a free carrying bag

(SFDMX-10AS) LIST: \$174.00

(SFDJ14LB) LIST: \$259.00

MODELS VARY BY LOCATION

ANTIQUE SILVER  
AFTER \$20 INSTANT REBATE

**\$83<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 51% OFF LIST

LAVA  
AFTER \$35 INSTANT REBATE

**\$119<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 53% OFF LIST



**LP ASPIRE ACCENTS DARKWOOD CAJON**

- Siam Oak sound board
- All wood construction
- Three sets of internal snare wires
- Textured seating surface

SELECT STORES  
(LPA1332-DWS) LIST: \$219.00

**\$142<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$76 OFF LIST



**GET TRAVIS BARKER'S SIGNATURE COWBELL AT YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD GUITAR CENTER**

- 8" Mountable cowbell based on LP Salsa Sergio
- Lower pitch than Rock Ridge Rider bell
- Jenigor bar dampens sound and helps prevent denting
- Artwork designed by Brian "Pushhead" Schroeder for the cover of Give The Drummer Some album

(LP009-TB) LIST: \$77.99

**\$49<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$28 OFF LIST



**PICK UP A PACK OF MUST-HAVE LP PERCUSSION AT A SPECIAL PRICE**

- LP Cyclops tambourine with versatile tone
- LP City bell for a crisp dry sound
- Gibraltar SC-AM1 percussion mount

(LP160NY-K) LIST: \$114.00

**\$39<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 64% OFF LIST





# Zildjian



## DEEP DARK TONES WITH THE ZILDJIAN K CYMBAL PACK

### NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- Includes: 14" K hi-hats, 16" K dark thin crash, 20" K ride and a free 18" K dark thin crash included
- Cast cymbals with unique sound qualities and tones

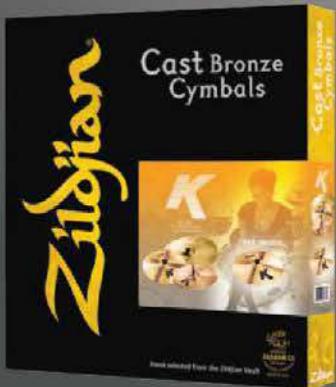
SELECT STORES

(K0800) LIST: \$1511.00

NEW

## \$899<sup>95</sup>

SAVE 40% OFF LIST



FREE

18" K DARK THIN CRASH CYMBAL INCLUDED IN BOX

## CLEAN AND REALISTIC DIGITAL CYMBAL SOUNDS WITH ZILDJIAN'S GEN16

### \$50 INSTANT REBATE

- The world's first hybrid acoustic/electric cymbals
- Dual-head mini microphone "pickup" design
- Includes a Digital Cymbal Processor with preset tone shaping capabilities

SELECT STORES

(G16AEB51) LIST: \$1349.00

AFTER \$50 INSTANT REBATE

## \$899<sup>99</sup>

SAVE \$449 OFF LIST



## THE ZILDJIAN 7-PIECE ZBT SUPER PACK

### FREE 18" CRASH INCLUDED

- Includes 14 and 16" crashes, 20" ride, 14" hi-hats, 10" splash and a free 18" crash
- Zildjian's high-power ZBT alloy in a brilliant finish

(ZBTC4P-SP) LIST: \$743.00

## \$399<sup>99</sup>

SAVE 46% OFF LIST



FREE

18" CRASH INCLUDED IN BOX WITH ZBT 7-PC SUPER PACK

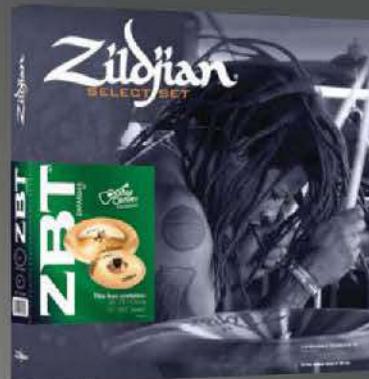
## TWO MUST-HAVE ZILDJIAN ZBT CYMBALS FOR ONE LOW PRICE

- 10" Splash and 16" China expander pack
- Zildjian's high-power ZBT alloy in a brilliant finish

(ZBT1016PK) LIST: \$216.00

## \$99<sup>99</sup>

SAVE 53% OFF LIST



## GET A GRIP ON THE MAPLE 7A GREEN DIP STICKS FROM ZILDJIAN

### NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

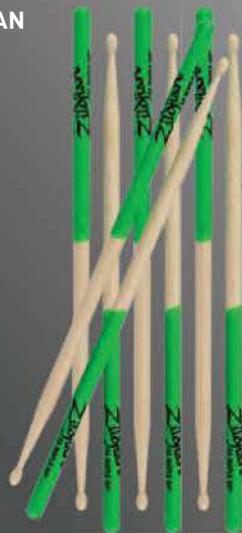
- Hickory stick with oval wood tip
- Bright green DIP grip
- Great for hip hop, R&B, rock and more

(SDSP184) LIST: \$51.75

NEW

## 4 PAIRS FOR \$26<sup>99</sup>

SAVE 47% OFF LIST



## PICK UP THE ZILDJIAN WEIGHT PACK WITH 3 PAIRS OF 5A WOOD STICKS

### NEW AT GUITAR CENTER

- Includes: 1 pair of hickory, 1 pair of laminated birch and 1 pair of maple
- 5A sticks are durable and versatile for most styles
- Try all three wood types and find your favorite

(SDSP213) LIST: \$52.75

NEW

## 3 PAIRS FOR \$26<sup>99</sup>

SAVE 48% OFF LIST



**GET THE GRETSCH CATALINA MAPLE 6-PIECE KIT AND THE PERFECT MIX OF SABIAN CYMBALS FOR ONE LOW PRICE**

**SAVE OVER \$320 WHEN PURCHASED TOGETHER**

- 100% Maple shells
- 22x18" Kick, 10x8 and 12x9" rack toms, 14x14 and 16x16" floor toms and a 14x6" snare
- Guitar Center exclusive satin green burst finish

If you're looking for a versatile set with top-quality sound and features, you need to check out this Gretsch Catalina set. Its maple shells project a warm, round, classic tone you'll fall in love with. The beautiful satin green burst finish is sure to capture everyone's attention.

**HARDWARE AND PERCUSSION SOLD SEPARATELY**  
[CMTE8262-SGB] PACKAGE LIST: \$2189.99

PACKAGE PRICE

**\$999<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 54% OFF LIST



**FREE 8" TOM INCLUDED WITH GRETSCH RENOWN 100% MAPLE KITS**

**\$200 INSTANT REBATE**

- Includes an 22x18" kick drum, 10x8 and 12x9" rack toms, 16x14" floor tom (14x14" with Autumn kit) and a free 8x7" tom included
- Gretsch maple shells with 30° bearing edges
- Choose from autumn burst or Guitar Center exclusive finishes satin walnut or ebony black

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS, SNARE, PERCUSSION AND ELECTRONICS SOLD SEPARATELY**  
COLORS VARY BY LOCATION

[RNE824PT6]  
LIST: \$2460.00

BEFORE \$200 INSTANT REBATE

**\$1499<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 39% OFF LIST



**GRETSCH ENERGY 5-PIECE STARTER KIT WITH HARDWARE AND SABIAN CYMBALS INCLUDED**

- 14x5.5" Snare, 22x18" bass drum, 10x7 and 12x8" rack toms, plus a 16x14" floor tom
- Sabian SBR cymbal pack with hi-hats, crash and ride included
- Kick pedal, and double-braced hardware included
- Non-drilled bass drum for solid, low-end punch

**COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**

**SELECT STORES**  
[GEE8256PK]  
[GEE8256PKGST]  
[GEE8256PKWHT]  
LIST: \$1080.00

YOUR CHOICE

**\$699<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$380 OFF LIST



**FREE**



**GRETSCH CELEBRATES ITS ROOTS WITH THE USA MAPLE/POPLAR BROOKLYN 4-PIECE SHELL PACK**

- 10x7, 12x8" Rack toms, 16x14" floor tom, 22x18" bass
- American Maple/Poplar shells with 30° bearing edge
- Vintage cream oyster Nitron wrap

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND SNARE SOLD SEPARATELY**  
SELECT STORES

[GBE8246CO] LIST: \$3695.00

**\$2399<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$1295 OFF LIST



**MARK SCHULMAN'S 13x6" MAPLE/BUBINGA SIGNATURE SNARE DRUM FROM GRETSCH**

- 9-Ply, 100% maple shell with double bubinga inlay
- 45° Bearing edges
- Die-cast hoops
- Extra wide 42-strand snare wires

**SELECT STORES**  
[S0613-MS] LIST: \$500.99

**\$329<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 34% OFF LIST



### FREE GIFT CARD WITH YAMAHA'S 100% BIRCH SHELL PACK IN EXCITING NEW FINISHES

- Includes 10x8 and 12x9" rack toms and a 14x5.5" snare
- 22x17" Bass drum and a 16x16" floor tom with raven black, honey amber or matte black kits
- 20" Kick drum and 14" floor tom with natural or cranberry red kit

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND SIDE SNARE SOLD SEPARATELY**  
**COLORS VARY BY LOCATION**  
 (SCB2F50) (SCB0F50)  
 LIST: \$1099.99 - \$1180.00

YOUR CHOICE  
**\$649<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE UP TO 44% OFF LIST



**FREE**



**\$50 GIFT CARD WITH A STAGE CUSTOM KIT PURCHASE (GIFT CARD TO BE USED ON FUTURE PURCHASES)**

### HIGH-QUALITY PADS AND SOUNDS WITH THE YAMAHA DTX500K ELECTRONIC KIT

**\$100 PRICE DROP**

- DTX500 Drum trigger module with 427 drum, percussion and effect sounds
- 50 Preset drum kits to cover a diverse range of genres plus 20 user editable drum kits, 63 preset songs in a wide range of genres and 20 user songs
- Bass drum pedal included

(DTX500K) LIST: \$1055.00

**\$599<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 43% OFF LIST



### THE YAMAHA DTX520K AND THE GUITAR CENTER EXCLUSIVE DTX540K OFFER INCREDIBLE DRUM SOUNDS WITH REAL-FEEL DTX PADS

- 5-Piece electronic kit
- 3-Zone TCS snare, 3 rubber tom pads (DTX520K) or 3 TCS tom pads (GC Exclusive - DTX540K) and 2 three-zone cymbal pads
- DTX500 Tone Generator featuring 449 Voices
- 50 Preset drum kits and 20 user kits

**KICK PEDAL SOLD SEPARATELY**

(DTX520K) LIST: \$1507.00 (DTX540K) LIST: \$2412.00

DTX520K  
**\$999<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$507 OFF LIST

DTX540K  
**\$1599<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$812 OFF LIST

**FREE**



**\$50 GIFT CARD WITH THE DTX520K OR DTX540K E-KIT PURCHASE (GIFT CARD TO BE USED ON FUTURE PURCHASES)**



### CUT THROUGH WITH SHARP ATTACK - THE NEW 14x6.5" STEEL SNARE FROM YAMAHA

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

- Deep, resonant sound
- 1.2mm Steel shell
- 10-Lug design
- Yamaha custom quality at a great price

(SD266A) LIST: \$249.99

**NEW**

**\$149<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE \$100 OFF LIST



### YAMAHA'S INNOVATIVE HEXRACK II TAKES THE NEXT STEP FORWARD

**NEW AT GUITAR CENTER**

- Slip-free hexagonal tubing keeps your gear upright
- Smooth tubing allows infinite lateral adjustability
- Strong, durable curved frame looks great on stage
- Includes 2 CH-755 boom arms

(HXR2LCHII) LIST: \$679.00

**NEW**

**\$399<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 41% OFF LIST





### CHECK OUT THE NEW OCDP 4-PIECE NEWPORT ALL-MAPLE KIT IN A GREEN GLASS GLITTER FINISH

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

- 22x20" kick, 10x8 and 12x9 rack toms with exclusive V mounting system, and a 16x14" floor tom
- 100% Maple shells
- 4" Extended front bass drum hoop
- Custom green glass glitter lacquer finish

**HARDWARE, CYMBALS AND SNARE SOLD SEPARATELY**

**SELECT STORES**  
(OCV4022CW)  
LIST: \$1167.00

**NEW**

**\$699<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 40% OFF LIST



### THE LIMITED EDITION OCDP ADRIAN YOUNG SNARE WILL ROCK YOUR WORLD

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

- 14x5.5" 100% Maple shell
- Only 110 available, serialized and personalized with Adrian Young caricature
- A must-have collectors item
- Custom pink/black oyster sparkle finish

**SELECT STORES**  
(OCDP5.5X14AY)  
LIST: \$599.99

**NEW**

**\$299<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 50% OFF LIST



### AN UNBEATABLE PRICE ON THIS 4-PIECE KIT WITH HARDWARE

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

- Includes 12x9 rack tom, 14x12" floor tom, 20x16" bass drum and 13x5" snare
- Includes double-braced hi-hat, snare and cymbal stands, plus bass pedal

**CYMBALS SOLD SEPARATELY**  
(SP2BK) LIST: \$529.99

**\$279<sup>99</sup>**

SAVE 47% OFF LIST



### OCDP SNARE DRUMS THAT MATCH ANY STYLE

**PLAY IT ONLY AT GUITAR CENTER**

These deep snares from OCDP boast a nice, fat sound with the warmth and focused punch of maple with chestnut or ash outer plies. Plus, the black chrome hardware is a great contrast to their satin and lacquer finish. Come and check them out at your local Guitar Center.

14x6" BLACKBURST ASH/MAPLE (OCSN0614-NBBA)

13x7" CHESTNUT ASH/MAPLE (OCS0713CA)

13x7" NATURAL ASH/MAPLE (OCSN0713NA)

LIST: \$399.99

**YOUR CHOICE**

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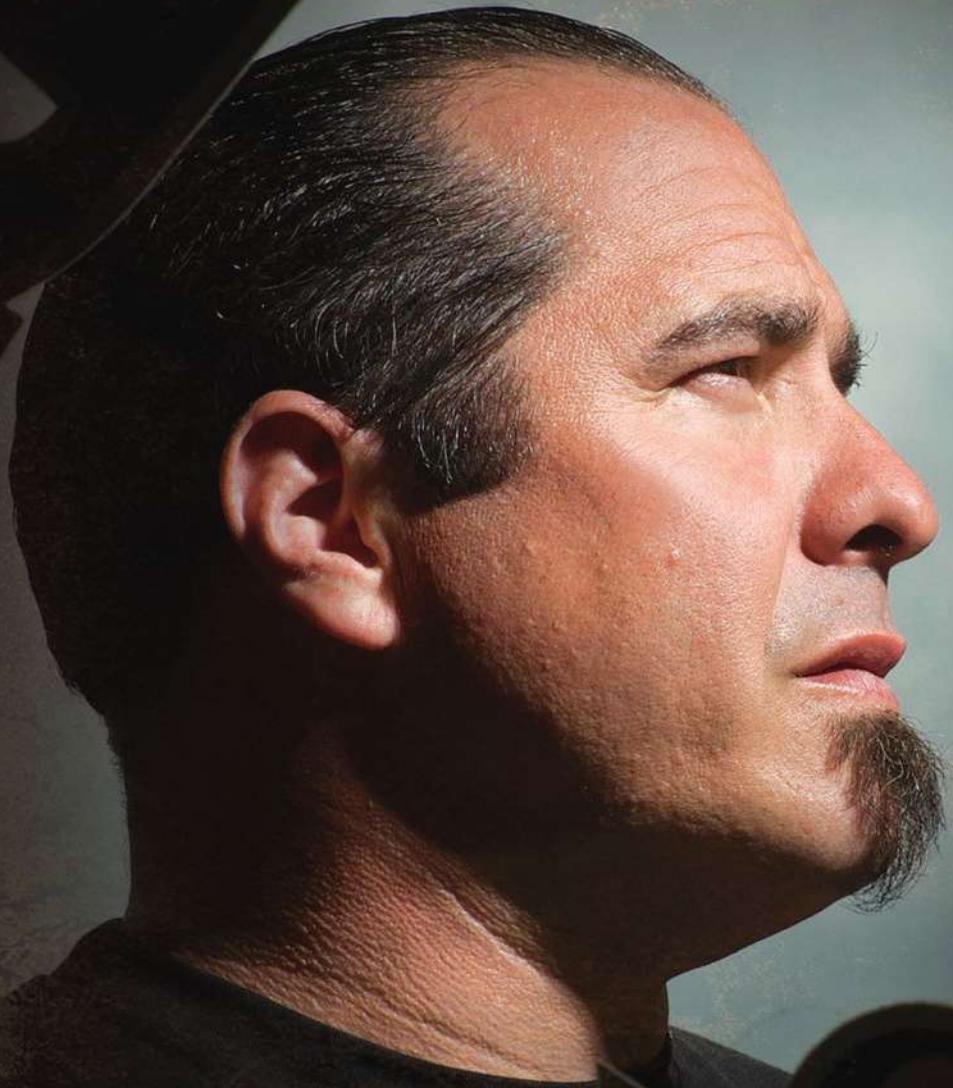
...I was at Thomas Lang's house.

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J.P. Bouvet

2011 Guitar Center Drum Off Champion / Helicopria



COREY

MILLER

Music and art have been inseparable for the tattoo icon since his earliest experiences as a drummer on the L.A. punk scene. Today his work is seen on TV, in national ad campaigns, on drumsets, on albums—and on the cover of this issue—but his passion and humility haven't diminished at all. *MD* editorial director Adam Budofsky gets a firsthand account.

**T**rust. For drummers, the ability to instill it in other people is part of the job description. Good players take naturally to the role: “Guitarist, go on and take your cosmic trip; bass player, knock yourself out doing your best Jaco Entwistle impersonation—everything’s under control back here.”

Trust isn’t something I easily allow myself to feel, though. It’s not as if I’m a control freak; I just prefer to be the one taking the wheel on long road trips, or the one counting off the songs. Unfortunately, I don’t have the ability to give myself a tattoo, so I have to trust that to an expert. Preferably one who’s a drummer.

Which is how I ended up here, sitting in a vintage dental chair in Upland, California, and having a remarkably detailed rendering of a family heirloom etched into my left shoulder.

I’d wanted a tattoo for ages, and a couple of years ago I found the right image: a heavy, brass, Japanese-style fish pendant that my mom wore for years. It was my favorite keepsake of hers that I held on to after she passed away; something about it perfectly recalls her humility and artistic nature, and I’d often carry it around as a reminder to, first off, always strive for a high level of artfulness in whatever work I do, and second, avoid being a jerk to people in the process.

Around that same time, at the NAMM convention in Anaheim, California, my friend Lisa introduced me to the drummer and tattoo artist Corey Miller, who was appearing in the reality TV show *LA Ink*. I told Corey that I liked his work and that I’d especially enjoyed the scenes where he talked to his clients about the stories behind their body art. He was polite and thankful but seemed somewhat out of place among the throngs of networkers that populate a NAMM show. Later, as I got to know more about this self-made man and his experiences living and working on both sides of the

proverbial tracks, I’d have that notion confirmed, and I’d understand more about it.

If Miller is one thing, it’s sincere. And though he considers himself blessed to have been given the opportunities he’s had to share his art with an enormous audience, he’s unimpressed with people who’ve attained success but who show little integrity. Punk rock in the best sense, Corey identifies with the outcast core of the culture he serves, but he steadfastly refuses to dis the “soccer moms” who make up an increasingly large part of his clientele. Not just a gifted independent thinker, he’s a standup guy who’s unafraid to admit his own human foibles and, more important, determined to learn from them.

He’s also, at forty-five years old, at the peak of his abilities in both tattooing and drumming. Music and art followers tend to be intrigued by people who excel in both fields. There’s often something to be learned about one discipline by looking at it through the lens of another. When we met at NAMM, Miller had already crossed platforms in a sense, having recently designed a drumset for Ludwig and heads for Remo.

Lisa suggested that I interview Corey about his unique career and the ways that music, drumming, and art intersect for him. And maybe get my tattoo while I’m there. Well, all right then...

**W**hen I arrived at Miller’s Six Feet Under tattoo parlor, I saw none of the studied rock-star nonchalance or the clinical indifference you might expect from a sprawling art and music space owned by a TV celebrity. To the contrary, visiting Six Feet Under is like hanging out at the home of your favorite uncle—you know, the one with all the great stories about being a photographer for *National Geographic* or touring the Northwest with Mudhoney. Paintings and neatly arranged art objects fill much of the walls in the main

room and nearly every nook and cranny in Miller’s personal inking studio, serving the dual purposes of setting a vibe and giving customers plenty to look at during long sessions, such as the four-hour one I was about to embark on.

When you trust people, you can learn some interesting things—about them, and about yourself. As I sat back and prepared to find out what an inking needle feels like, Corey recalled the beginnings of his curious life path....

**Corey:** My music and my art both came from rebellion. The punk rock scene is what got me into music. Anybody could play it. Honestly, the first record I played to—I wish I could say it was something a little harder [laughs], but it was the Eagles’ “Heartache Tonight”—that “boom-bap, ba-boom-bap.” Luckily, my dad bought me a drumset—a CB-700—and by seventh grade I was in a punk band called the Degenerates. That was the scene in 1979 or ’80.

**MD:** Where did you grow up?

**Corey:** Right here in Upland. The thing that put us on the map was the Pipeline Skatepark. It was one of the coolest skate parks in the world. Its pipeline was modeled after the one we have in our mountains here. We’d go up there and party, and kids would skate.

Anyway, then I got into a second band, one of the meanest, coolest bands around. They had a really bad name: Manson Youth. You know, punk rock is all about pissing people off, and boy, that sure did it. But we did well. We made a compilation that Pushead did the cover art for, and we played with bands like Fear, Suicidal Tendencies, Channel 3—all those early staple bands. I got to see them all: Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, the Adolescents. I just saw X and the Adolescents and Social Distortion a couple weeks ago. The punk rock scene—when it came out, it was such an abrasive hit to rock ‘n’ roll, and I love that we were totally right. That

stuff's stronger than ever! And it's great seeing buddies of mine who've totally made it.

**MD:** What got you into tattooing?

**Corey:** There was a band that I wanted to be in, and they had this little insignia. Black Flag had the bars, and they had their thing. So I got a little old straight pin and a razor blade and did my first tattoo ever, on myself. I rubbed that ink in—"Oh, cool!"—it was a little dedication. But at fifteen, sixteen, the farthest thing from my mind was becoming a tattooist. I used to draw on my bass drum heads and stuff. Everybody did it; it's nothing original. I'd draw on my snare too. God, I wish I saved

some of them! I was always drawing. Then I slowly started tattooing. I made my own homemade machine. I never formally apprenticed, like a lot of guys do these days. Basically I was playing music and had a group of fans and friends who wanted to get tattoos. We'd sit around and watch [the 1980 documentary about the early L.A. punk scene] *The Decline of Western Civilization* and tattoo.

As time went on, I consistently tattooed and played drums. In the early '90s I got in a band called Rumble King. We were playing gigs with Royal Crown Revue and Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, and we opened up for the Blasters at the House of Blues in

Hollywood. We did a few albums and toured around. It was jump blues and swing, no guitar.

Then I sat in with my buddy Steve Alba's band, Powerflex 5. It was all guitar-based instrumentals, and I really liked it. Bill Bateman from the Blasters ended up taking my spot in Rumble King. We're all still buddies; they're a really good band. But Powerflex 5 is the funnest band I've ever been in. We're total spaghetti-western gumbo. We'll take a classic surf tune and in the middle of it break into "Neat Neat Neat" by the Damned. This spring we're playing in Tampa, Baltimore,

Texas.... Hey, could you stand up and face that way for a sec? [Miller is ready to draw the initial sketch on my arm. It occurs to me that this is the most unusual setting I've ever conducted an interview in.] So, which way is the fish facing?

**MD:** I think the way you have it.

**Corey:** Yeah, right? Okay, good.

**MD:** So, did you keep playing drums as your tattooing work increased?

**Corey:** The only time I really took a break from drumming was in 1987, when I got my first job at a tattoo shop. When you're in a band, you usually play on Friday and Saturday nights, and my hours were on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

It took me a while to get into a tattoo parlor. It was a very closed industry back then, a complete 180 from what it is today. People wouldn't tell you *anything*, basically for fear of you taking what you learned and opening up a shop down the street. Tattooing was this sacred, dark art.

**MD:** When did you get back into playing drums?

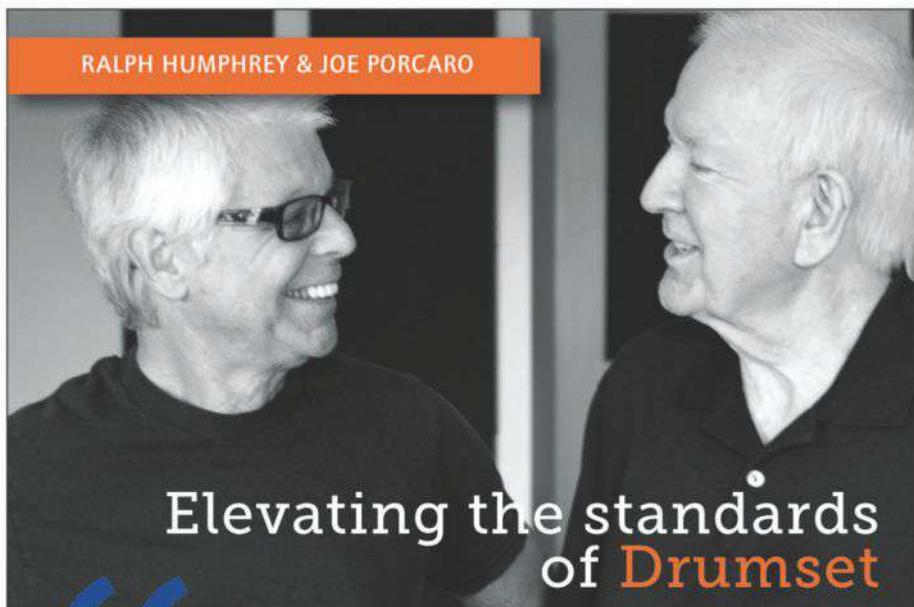
**Corey:** When I started working in this other shop and then opened my own shop, I started making time to play music again.

**MD:** What year is this?

**Corey:** I opened my first shop in 1992. It ended up in chaos, and I left town and then came back and started from scratch. I've been at this location for fifteen years now. We opened up in 1997, on April Fool's Day.



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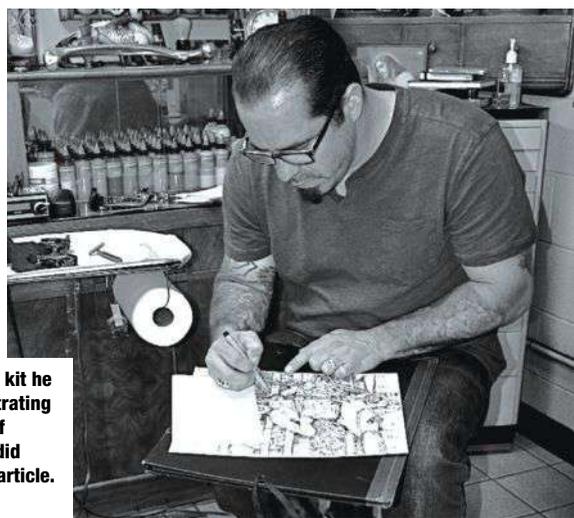
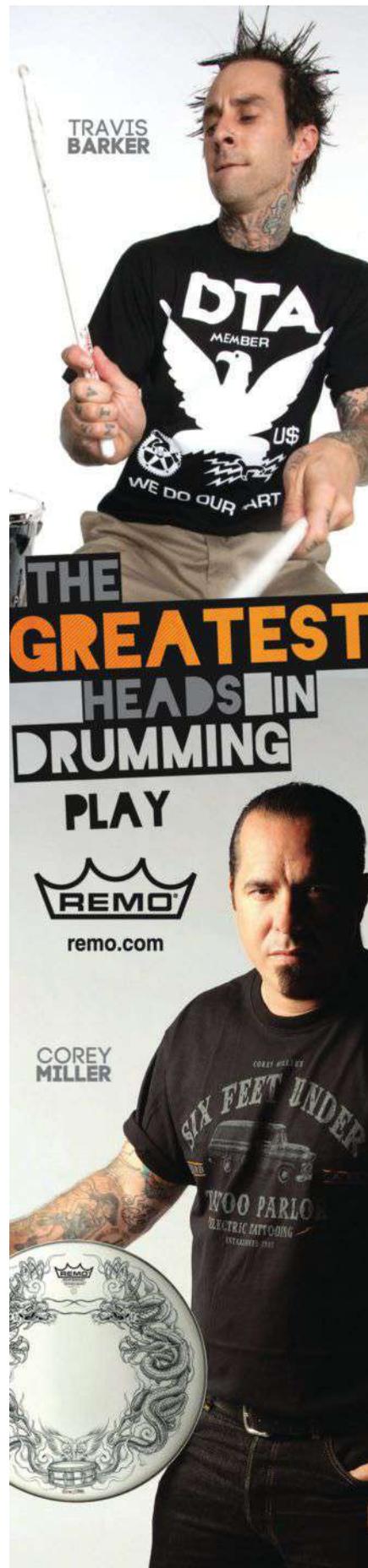
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Clockwise from top: Miller at the kit he designed for Ludwig; Miller illustrating the cover of this month's issue of *Modern Drummer*; the tattoo he did while being interviewed for this article.

I remember the pain that came to my hands when I started playing again. I told myself, *Never let that happen again—keep playing*. Like now, with Powerflex 5, we practice religiously on Mondays. But it's been like that for years. It didn't matter whether we were playing in front of big crowds—although it is an amazing feeling playing in front of a few thousand people. But sometimes it's just as amazing to play in front of three people when you know you're moving them. That's pretty much all I need.

**MD:** Your career as an artist has been anything but low key for quite a few years now—interestingly, many of our readers probably became aware of you through your design work for companies like

Ludwig and Remo.

**Corey:** As a kid I was lucky to meet Todd Trent, who was our local retail guy. He's a big name in the drumming industry now and was huge with Ludwig for years. I got to tattoo him, and I was like, "Yes—I got an in with the guy!" [laughs] But in '04 or '05, tattooing was becoming very popular, and I went to Todd and said, "Hey, let's do a tattooed drumset—how cool would that be!"

Now, I'm not the first one to do it—I didn't know it then, but Hanky Panky did a drumset, which I just saw recently in an encyclopedia. He's a curator and a tattoo artist in Amsterdam, and he'd done this thing for the Chili Peppers. But nothing's new, man. We all imitate and replicate and

## COREY MILLER

take a little something from the past and put it into our new thing. It happens in tattooing and in music. Every once in a while someone comes up with a new beat or a new style, and that's nice. But it's good to always acknowledge where stuff comes from. Like a good friend of mine, Lyle Tuttle, says, "The only stuff you don't know about is the history you haven't read about." Anyway, Todd was like, "Man, that's a great idea." This was right at a time when I was about to open a huge window and change my life... a little bit.

**MD:** In 2007 *LA Ink* premiered.

**Corey:** Right. Being on TV, in a *reality* show, was a complete contrast. I mean, I was a big name in the tattoo industry. But *Six Feet Under*, that name came from being completely underground—no advertising. It wasn't a morbid thing; we weren't goth. But the mentality of it was, you had to know how to get here. And the next thing you know, I'm on TV. I'm sure that sparked the interest of Ludwig.

I gotta hand it to them—it was pretty ballsy of Ludwig to do this. They did decide to go with something more standard. I'd done flash art since the early '90s, and they felt safer going with an established thing, and I was fine with

that. I love the old white marine pearl drum finish, so we decided to go with that and make it look aged. I picked a lot of my favorite drawings from over the years, and we went back and forth a few times. It was cool—I got to be involved with the whole process.

**MD:** Had you done much commissioned work before that?

**Corey:** I'd done album covers, I did some artwork for Cheap Trick singer Robin Zander, I designed a guitar for Metallica's James Hetfield—this was all before the TV show. And recently I did Face to Face's album cover. But to this day, it's one of the hugest honors having my name on a Ludwig drum. And believe me, it doesn't go to my head. I'm very humbled. This snare drum that Ludwig just did is apparently doing real well; some bands I know are even using it. And I'm not thinking about the money. I'm like, "Dude, if they come to town I can totally get back-stage!" [laughs] We used to sneak into gigs when we were kids. It's like, now we've arrived.

**MD:** You recently designed a bottle for Tuaca Liqueur.

**Corey:** It's actually a loop in my life; a guy I tattooed in my living room twenty-five years ago became a distributor for them.

They filmed all these cool videos of me and covered my history of tattooing and art and music. In the videos I'm playing my beautiful Ludwig kit with the Remo heads I designed.

**MD:** What do you say to people who focus on the commercial aspects of these types of jobs?

**Corey:** You can stand back and say, "Yeah, commercialism at its best..." But it has nothing to do with that. It might, down the road, when Preparation H gives me an endorsement for sitting on my ass all day! [laughs] But this stuff has been a hundred percent from my heart, man. To have all these elements come together, you just have to stick to what you do. I remember one of the first things I did on the TV show, I said, "So remember, kids, ditch school, go play your drums, and tattoo your friends—look where it got me!" [laughs] And they're all like, "My God, you can't say that!" But I do tell people: If you want to be an artist, draw every day.

Sometimes I beat myself up about getting to hang around with these master musicians. But my wife reminded me last night, "You've been doing this forever—you just didn't get a record deal. It's not what you strived for." And it's true, I didn't strive for that. I strived for sitting in

drum  
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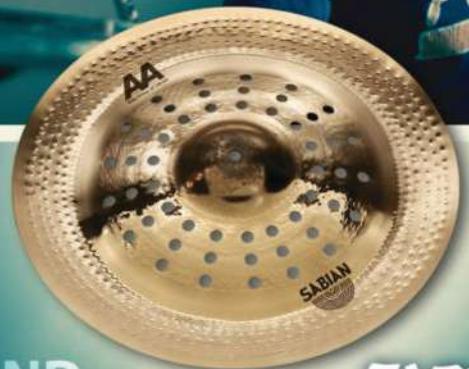


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OBSESSION



## COREY MILLER

a tattoo shop every night. People hear about things like my going on tour with Metallica—which all came to me because of my artwork, long before the TV thing—and say, “It must be great to do what you love.” But you can almost resent that, like, “Hey, man, this is hard work.” And not only that, the shit I put myself through in the late ‘80s coming up in the tattoo business, all the bad elements...

**MD:** You mentioned earlier that *LA Ink* changed your life “a little.” How so?

**Corey:** After four years I’m *still* trying to figure out what all this was about. I went into it pretty green and not knowing what a huge machine television really was. And it was reality TV—if it had been a union show, I would have ended up sitting on a pile of cash. Reality TV doesn’t give you that. But what it gives you is exposure. It’s like having a hit record. So it’s a true blessing—I got work from people like Ludwig, for instance.

I came from that real underbelly of tattooing, that dark code of ethics. But I figured the cat was out of the bag at that point, and what an incredible opportunity it was for me. Out of thousands of tattoo artists out there—some that are a lot better than me—I have the opportunity to do this. Then again, I’ve seen great tattoo artists get on camera and clam up. I think being in music probably prepared me for that. Eventually, though, I realized that this is a pretty divisive, manipulative thing. Reality TV really does thrive on the worst behavior in people.

**MD:** How are the principles of music and art similar to you?

**Corey:** Like in music, it seems that almost anything can be done in tattooing; people have gotten so good at it. But over the years you do have to pay heed to what has looked or sounded good. You know, a ‘40s-style tattoo isn’t just this bold-line, simplistic drawing. There’s a true science to it, and there are guys from back in the day who didn’t have the Internet to learn the art; they wrote letters from Japan to North Carolina and Hawaii.... People like Sailor Jerry, these were real guys.

Some people come around and think anyone can do this. Well, yeah, I guess anyone can stab you in the arm and put some ink in there, and it’s gonna last just as long as a masterpiece. But you can bang on a tin can and then bang on a nicely crafted maple shell with a tuned head—one’s gonna sound a little more pleasant.

**MD:** You mentioned that you never apprenticed as a tattooist. Did you ever take drum lessons?

**Corey:** No, I’m self-taught. But I’ve actually never wanted to take drum lessons more than I do today. There are certain things that I just never learned. I watched this video on Neil Peart, and that dude went and learned how to play traditional grip. Man, if you don’t push yourself, you’ll never get any better. I feel obligated to push myself. I mean, to get to hang out at a Ludwig event with Alan White of Yes and Matt Sorum and all these new-school guys—I owe it to myself and to the drum community to learn some new shit.

I put my heart and soul in drumming. You know, like many kids, I came from a house that was kinda crazy. I had a lot of free time because my parents were apart. But all you need is a slice of support, like I got from my dad. Now I’m the most lenient dad, but I tell my kids, “Piano, it’s the one thing you have to do.” I’m gonna stick with that and have them introduced to music, because it was never about getting paid for me. I can go and make quite a bit of money off my celebrity, but nothing makes me happier than going into a local dive bar and playing for a couple drinks and fifty bucks. That’s my *soul*. It’s nice to get paid good money too. But luckily I’ve made some good decisions, and I try to be a good person, and I think karma will bring you good things back.

Okay, we’re gonna get started now. [Miller gives the inking machine a few test buzzes.] It’s a little sting, so just ride with it. [An apt metaphor for the life of an artist, I figure. Let’s do it.] Yup, this is basically what it’s all about....



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# RINGO STARR: The Perfect Fit

**When he joined the Beatles, he was *the man*, the one with all the playing experience. He fit like a glove, driving the music with a singular feel while meshing perfectly with the other Mop Tops and their wry sense of humor. As the '60s progressed and the Beatles' speedy skiffle gave way to psychedelic flights of fancy, Ringo was there at every step, unflinchingly providing vivid drum parts that were elemental yet daring, stripped down yet probingly creative. Each arrow in his giant quiver of beats and fills was aimed right at the bull's eye of the song he was playing.**

Is there another drummer who translates as much sheer exuberance? If there is, that person was surely influenced by Ringo. Take a hard-driving early track like "She Loves You," with its big snare flams, sloshing hi-hat, and propulsive bass drum double strokes. The drumming shouts with glee, underscored by mid-'60s images of a head-bobbing, arm-swinging young Ringo perched high above his Ludwigs. The interaction between the hi-hat and bass drum is particularly instructive in understanding the Starr magic; examples abound where Ringo kicks doubles beneath the steady chatter of open hats.

"Ringo was able to mesh with the guys and support those records in such a way that made you feel glad to be alive," says Smithereens drummer Dennis Diken, who uncannily summons the Starr spirit on the Beatles tribute *Meet the Smithereens!* Like thousands of others, Diken had his interest in drumming spurred by the Beatles' first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, on February 9, 1964. That few minutes showed an ultra-tight band, confident yet playful, and the indelible shots of Ringo in control—launching into "She Loves You" with a killer floor tom roll, lifting George Harrison's "Saw Her Standing There" guitar solo with tasty bass drum/crash accents—sold a lot of drumsets. Because the Beatles stopped touring in 1966 and released so much great music afterward, they're often considered a studio band, but let's not forget how sensational they were live...when they could be heard over the high wall of crowd screaming.

The Beatles canon—thirteen albums and two *Past Masters* collections—is often divided into two parts, early and later. But it's tempting to point to a middle period starting around *Help!*, comprising *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, and ending before the Technicolor dream that is *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. This is when the songwriting was expanding, at first influenced greatly by the deeply personal and political songs of Bob Dylan, and it's one of Ringo's most fertile times.

"Ticket to Ride," from *Help!*, is among the drummer's many masterpieces. On the verses Starr plays an airy triplet-based bass/snare/tom pattern, with a bit of extra pop in his rimshots. He fires off little rolls on the rack tom or snare between sections and finally brings in some hi-hat locomotion for the "I don't know why she's riding so high" part. *Rubber Soul* kicks off with "Drive My Car," which features one of Ringo's most wonderful intro licks, a quick back-and-forth snare/tom

figure. At the end of the verses Ringo plays around with syncopated bass/snare fills, each one sweeter than the next. The drummer's unique feel jumps right out on "What Goes On," his right stick rocking on the hi-hat in that utterly human zone between straight and swung time, which he favored. Starr sings lead here, with his deep, chummy voice showing yet another side of the band and setting the stage for his solo success in the wake of the Beatles' 1970 breakup.

*Revolver*, a perennial fan favorite, has way more Ringo awesomeness than we could ever detail here. So let's focus on two of John Lennon's psychedelic classics, which display opposite sides of the former Richard Starkey. "She Said She Said" shows the active Ringo, hitting huge, washy crashes and filling constantly through the verses. These kinds of highly nuanced, dynamically varied fills would become a trademark, and no other drummer has captured their quirky feel. The figures are likely influenced by the fact that Ringo is a lefty playing on a righty kit, a fact the man himself has used to try to explain the largely unexplainable wonder of his drumming. And on "Tomorrow Never Knows," Ringo switches gears and plays it straight, his pounding syncopated ostinato anchoring the chaos that swirls around it.

As the Beatles' scope widened, Ringo maintained his cozy, buoyant time feel, which remains as important as his innate creativity and expanding vocabulary on the drums. Examples of pocket playing include songs like "The Word" (*Rubber Soul*), "Getting Better" (*Sgt. Pepper's*), "Glass Onion" (*White Album*), "I've Got a Feeling" (*Let It Be*), and [insert your own choices here].

It helps to remind ourselves that Ringo was part of a rhythm section, with an ultra-inspiring partner in bassist Paul McCartney. "People don't talk about Ringo and Paul, how they played together," Diken says. "It wasn't that he was a simple drummer. I think he knew, intuitively, that he needed to leave the space for a player like Paul, to have all the other rhythm carry the song and support the singer." The 1966 A-side/B-side combo of "Paperback Writer" and "Rain" is a fun illustra-

tion of the Ringo-Paul connection, but, again, examples abound.

The last few years of the band weren't easy on the members, who were being pulled apart by various forces, yet somehow the music didn't suffer. "As the Beatles evolved, they were one living, breathing organism, and they lived and breathed and changed together," Diken says. "They all adapted to the music, and it all succeeded." The scattered sonic experimentation of the *White Album* gave way to the live, rocking-the-rooftop vibe of *Let It Be* and, finally, the mature but emotional, fully realized opus that is *Abbey Road*. (*Abbey Road* was recorded last but was released before *Let It Be*.) Just to compare the opening tracks of the final two albums, you've got the imaginative echoing full-kit groove of *Abbey Road's* "Come Together," in which the entrance of Ringo's snare at 1:10 is a major happening, versus the unlabored old-school train beat of *Let It Be's* "Get Back." It all shows how the band, and its drummer, covered an absurd amount of ground in less than a decade.

In detailing the influence of Ringo Starr, of course, the Beatles are the first and foremost place to look. No band in history has matched their impact, and with the group Ringo helped us see that every song warrants its own special drum parts—sounds, patterns,



Courtesy of Ludwig

"With the Beatles is my favorite period of Ringo's playing," Dennis Diken of the Smithereens says. "His groove had this floating quality. It's like 'Roll Over Beethoven' appeared from heaven. It gets especially cool after the intro, where he changes from the surf beat to the straight 2-4 backbeat. It's so tight, like a fist, and it's just joyous."

or embellishments that are unique to that individual piece. In the '70s, after the Beatles' breakup, Ringo applied this aesthetic to a string of solo hits, and since that time he's kept spreading peace and love, on more recent solo releases and on frequent summer tours with various incarnations of his All-Starr Band. The man who helped bring the drummer to the rock 'n' roll forefront might not spend a whole evening on the throne anymore, but he'll always be the king of creative, feel-good pop timekeeping. **Michael Parillo**

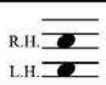




# Polyrhythmic Coordination

Part 2: Three- and Four-Note Base Rhythms by Ari Hoenig

## MUSIC KEY



This series of articles is designed to further your rhythmic knowledge by providing you with a way to practice mentally, away from the drums. In the first part (July 2012), we played one- and two-note base rhythms with one hand and added between one and eight notes with the other hand. This time we'll do the same thing with three- and four-note base rhythms.

Examples 1–8 show how the eight different rhythms layer over a three-note base (quarter notes in 3/4 time). Notice the subdivisions, which are written above the staff. By subdividing the polyrhythms in this way, it's possible to figure out exactly how the rhythms fit together. If the tempo is very fast, it may not be necessary to think about the subdivisions, but understanding them at slower tempos will make it easier to play the polyrhythms accurately when you increase the speed.

Look at the relationship between the quintuplets (measure five) and the three-note base rhythm. Do you notice that the space between the third and fourth notes and the base rhythm is the same? The same is true of the third and sixth notes in the measure of seven over three. There are many of these types of relationships, and you'll see more of them moving forward. Keep an eye out, as it's helpful to recognize them.

After you've practiced these polyrhythms from one to eight and then back to one, try jumping randomly from one to another, playing at least four bars of each. Also try counting out loud, first along with the base rhythm and then with the superimposed rhythm.

Now let's switch to a four-note base rhythm. In the bar with five over four, notice that the space between the second and fifth notes and the base rhythm is the same. The same thing is true for the third and sixth notes in the bar that has seven over four.

You should also practice these exercises with the opposite hand playing the base rhythm. Keep in mind that the exercises are meant to bring improvement technically before they can better you musically. Don't rush to apply them during a gig. Always use a metronome, and be sure to vary the tempo. I like to practice these exercises using a different tempo each day.

Next time we'll move on to five- and six-note base rhythms.

**Ari Hoenig** is a New York City-based drummer/composer/bandleader and a faculty member at New York University and the New School in Manhattan. He recently released a quartet album (*Lines of Oppression*), a method book (*Systems*), and an educational video (*Melodic Drumming*), all of which are available at [arihoenig.com](http://arihoenig.com).



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# Don't Disturb the Groove!

Part 1: Broken Doubles and Paradiddles by Tobias Ralph



**D**on't disturb the groove." Whether we're playing to an audience that's pumping their fists, moshing, or simply dancing, as drummers we never want to be the one

held responsible for clearing the floor. But what happens when someone yells, "Give the drummer some!" and you start going for your latest lick? Does everybody suddenly make a beeline for the bar? Do you see people checking their cell phones? Unfortunately, this has happened to me more times than I care to remember.

Back in the late 1990s, when I was playing quite a bit of electronica music in smaller venues in New York City, I would often use just a snare, bass drum, and hi-hat out of sheer spatial necessity. I would occasionally use a floor tom. This kind of setup forced me to focus on the groove. And since people came to these places to dance and have a good time, I needed to figure out a way to maintain the groove while also incorporating some tasty patterns that stayed under the radar and worked within the limited setup.

In the process of trying to replicate programmed drum patterns on such a small set, I came up with some techniques and stickings that I hadn't thought about previously. Then, when I brought these ideas to my full kit, I discovered that the possibilities for varying my grooves were limitless, even while I maintained the backbeat on 2 and 4. My hope is that some of these patterns will help you gain the confidence to feel comfortable jumping on any drumset, regardless of how many, or how few, drums are at your disposal.

All of the stickings used in these examples are basic patterns that we drummers play every day. It's the way they're orchestrated around the kit that makes them sound new and fresh.

## BROKEN DOUBLES

A broken double is when two right- or left-hand strokes in a row are split between two different sound sources. For example, you could break up a double-stroke roll by playing the first right on a cymbal, with a bass drum underneath, and the second right could be played on the floor tom. Vinnie Colaiuta and Marco Minnemann whip these around the set at warp speed.

1

That's simple enough, right? Now let's try an exercise in 5/8, to get more comfortable with the broken-double motion on the left side.

2

Now we'll apply the same concept of breaking up the doubles to our old friend the paradiddle, and we'll put in a backbeat.

3

Here's a variation in which you're bringing your right hand across the kit from the hi-hat to the floor tom.

4

Let's apply the same approach to an inverted paradiddle, where the double is in the middle of the pattern.

5

Here's the same pattern, this time involving the rack tom.

6

Now let's work with the double paradiddle. We'll play this pattern as 16th notes in 6/8.

7

Instead of playing the double paradiddle in 6/8, try phrasing it as straight 16th notes in 6/4.

8





# Improve Your Bottom Line

Part 1: Bass Drum Comping in 4/4 by Steve Fidyk



Drummers depend on the bass drum to help drive the band and provide depth to their time feel. Throughout the 1920s and '30s, the bass drum was the "solid four" time-keeper of the rhythm section. Many modern jazz drummers use the bass drum to attain a softer, feathering pulse in union with the acoustic bass. A dynamically controlled quarter-note pulse on the bass drum, played in sync with a walking acoustic bass line, can help expand an ensemble's sound and reinforce the swing feel. The bass drum can also be used as an accent texture for stressing ensemble rhythms or as a third hand to execute patterns that are generally played on the snare drum or toms.



## THE TECHNIQUE

To achieve a round tone and a consistent swing pulse with the bass drum, it's essential to have control of the heel-down foot technique. This approach works particularly well when you're playing rhythms at a softer dynamic range (pp-mp). I find that when

my foot is resting on the pedal as I improvise, I have greater control and an improved sense of balance.

## THE SOUND

I achieve my bass drum sound by tensioning the batter head until there are no wrinkles around the perimeter. For the resonant head, I start by matching the pitch with the batter side, and then I tighten each lug approximately a half turn to produce a somewhat higher tone.

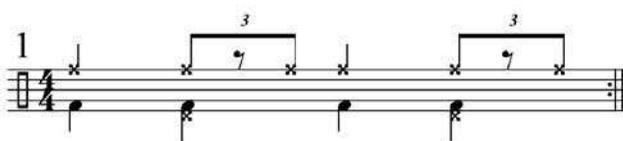
For dampening, jazz legends Joe Morello and Buddy Rich would put a 3" felt strip against the inside of the batter head. Swing drummer Dave Tough placed torn newspaper inside his bass drum shell. Mel Lewis would tape a piece of paper napkin to the edge of the batter head to help decrease the overtones. Experiment with your sound to find something that supports the music you're playing.

## THE EXERCISES

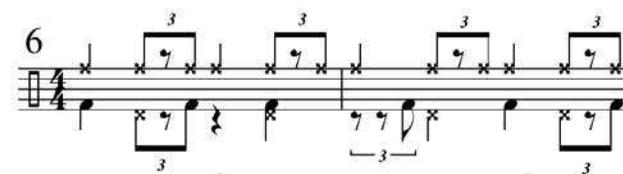
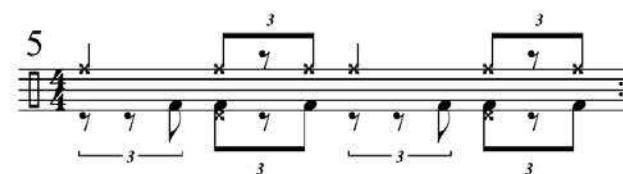
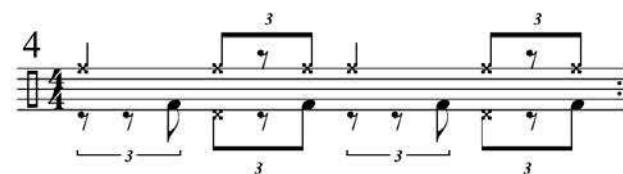
In this article series, we'll examine repetitive riff-style bass drum comping rhythms, first in 4/4. (Future articles will explore ideas in 3/4 and 5/4.) The phrases included here are intended to help you develop balance between your bass drum foot and your upper appendages.

As a starting point, center your attention on the ride cym-

bal, hi-hat, and bass drum, and keep the instruments balanced dynamically so that they sound like one entity. As you practice the following pattern, focus on keeping the bass drum beater rebounding off the head at approximately 2" for a soft, feathered pulse.



Now try playing the following bass drum riffs in conjunction with the ride cymbal and hi-hat.



7

8

9

10

Once you can play the previous three-voice examples with control, add the following two-measure snare drum patterns to complete the riff.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

As you practice, you'll probably discover that these bass drum riffs produce a great deal of musical tension when combined with the ride, hi-hat, and snare. Have fun!

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



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# Inner Drumming

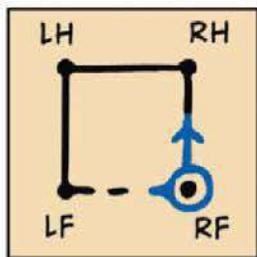
by George Marsh

## Listening With All Four Limbs, Part 3

In parts one and two of this series (April and June 2012), we worked with one, two, and three limbs. Before launching into the study of four limbs, I would like to review the process of working with the diagrams. The purpose of each diagram is to help the drummer focus on the flow of energy within the body. The goal is to decondition pathways of reflexive, inappropriate responses, which can appear when energy is not flowing. It is my belief that the drummer who practices these exercises will play more loosely, more accurately, and with more highly developed muscle memory. As a result, there will be less energy blockage, and the musical ideas will flow more freely.

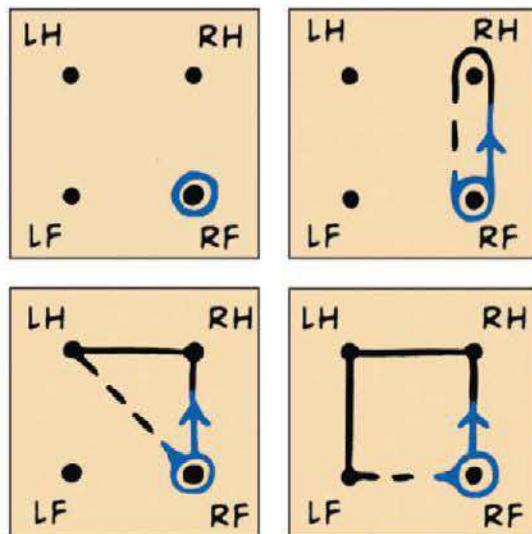
The awareness of internal flow leads directly to a more melodic execution of musical ideas on the drumset. Influenced by t'ai chi ch'uan, this study can be thought of as the organization of movement around a single principle, which then allows for an open and creative response to any given musical situation.

Below is an example, in standard notation, of a four-limb sequence in 2/4 time. Following that is an example of the same sequence using an Inner Drumming diagram. The lines in the diagram show the direction of internal movement from limb to limb. You have the choice of where and how to play the strokes. Standard notation can be very specific, but it doesn't indicate internal energy flow, even though flow is inherent in any rhythmic sequence. It's my belief that the study of internal flow can—and should—be part of daily practice.



### MAP IT OUT SLOWLY

Feeling the movement of energy inside the body is at the core of these exercises. When working with all four limbs, start with one limb and progress to the others. The following diagrams start with the right foot (blue-circled dot) and proceed through combinations of two, three, and four limbs. As before, take your time and feel the movement of energy through the pathways. The point is to give yourself permission to relax and establish an internal map of the different linear combinations. Speed and musical expression will then flow more freely in your playing.

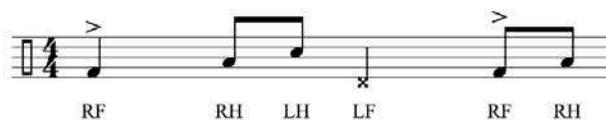


### PLUGGING IN A RHYTHM

The Inner Drumming diagrams allow for the insertion of any rhythm that you choose. Here's a simple three-note pattern that we'll plug into the four-limb sequence RF-RH-LH-LF.



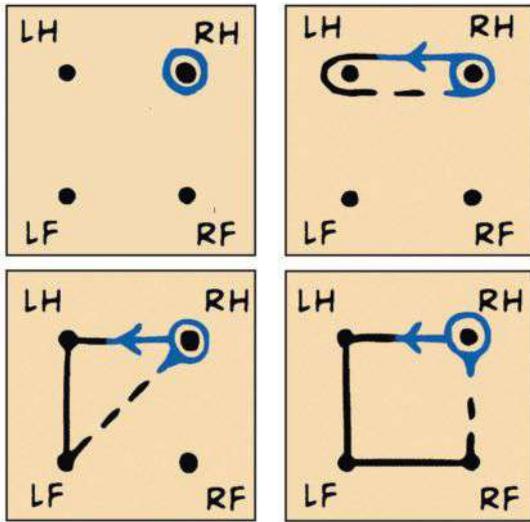
Here's what that three-note rhythm looks like when played with the four-limb sequence. The accents show the beginning of each group of four.



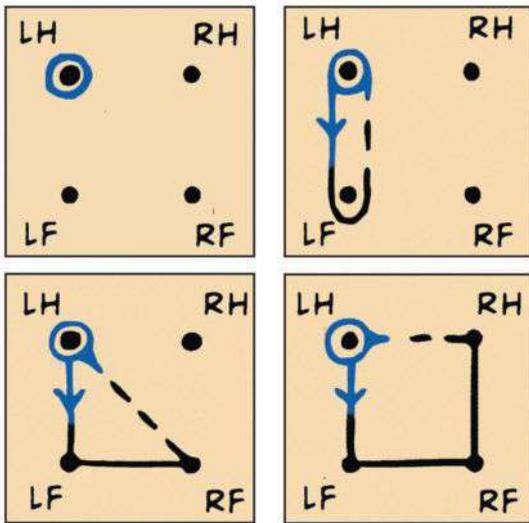
Now repeat the same rhythm and four-limb sequence without reading the notation. Make sure you stay true to both the rhythm and the sequence, and remember to count. This pattern produces an interesting polyrhythmic effect, which could look very complex when written in standard notation but is quite simple to comprehend when using the diagrams. You will have success when the rhythm is allowed to flow internally and the linear movement from limb to limb becomes second nature. Then you can improvise freely, in or out of time, with any rhythm that you choose.

### DIFFERENT DOWNBEATS

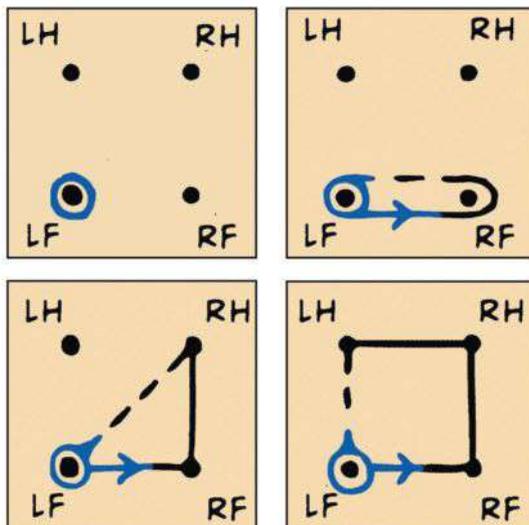
You should also practice the preceding diagrams starting with the other limbs. This will strengthen your ability to play phrases that begin on different parts of the kit. The following diagrams start with the right hand.



The next set starts with the left hand.

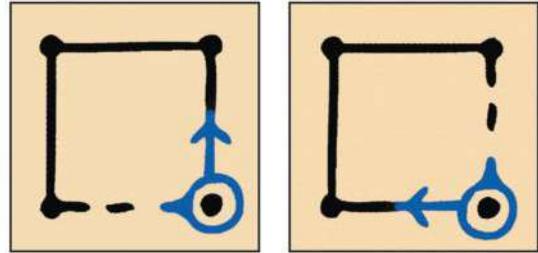


The final set starts with the left foot.



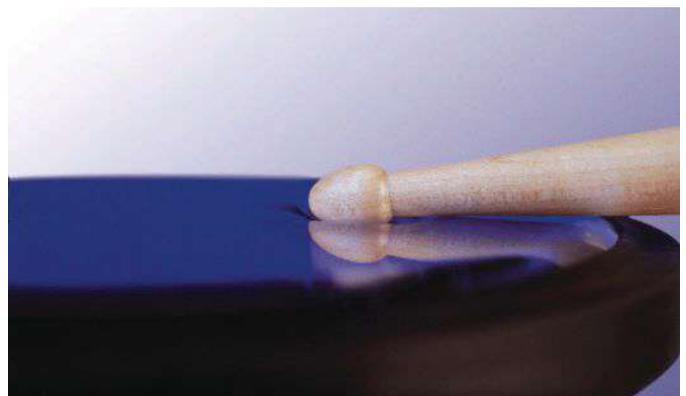
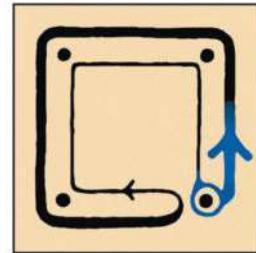
### THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

The remaining diagrams show more ways to “sound” through the four limbs. The first two are the reverse of one another. By now you should be able to read the diagrams without the labels for each limb.



### FOUR-LIMB PENDULUM RUDIMENT

The next diagram is a four-limb pendulum rudiment that’s created by alternating between the two previous diagrams. Before playing this one, make sure to work with the other two separately. Take your time and experiment by playing them with different pulses and rhythms. Then work slowly with the pendulum rudiment until it’s internalized.



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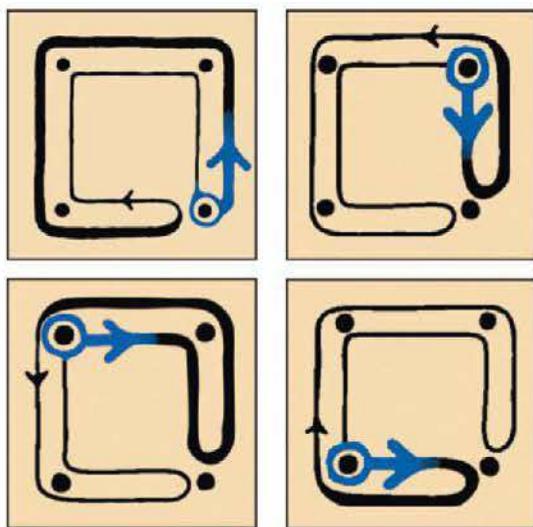
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When you feel ready, plug the three-note rhythm into the four-limb pendulum rudiment. This can seem strange at first, but if you make sure you're staying true to the sequence, you will be surprised by how easy it is. Try different rhythms, and see what you can come up with.

Here's what the combined four-limb pendulum diagram and three-note rhythm looks like when expressed in standard notation. As you can see, things are getting more complex.

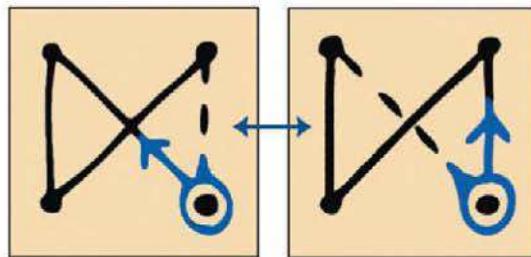
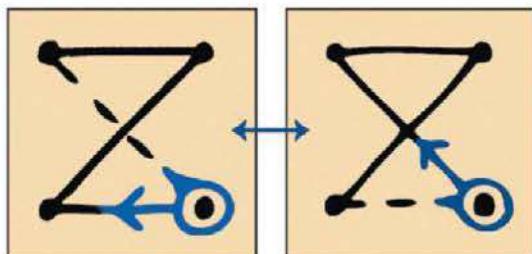
### THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT

The four-limb pendulum rudiment can have four different starting points. It's the same sequence, but starting with different limbs.



### FOUR MORE

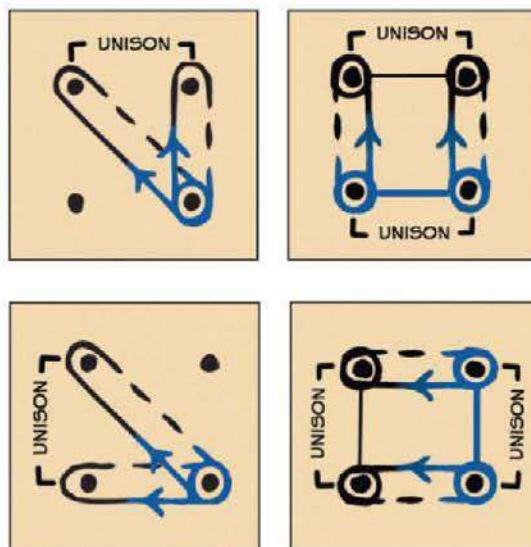
Next are four more ways to scan through the four limbs. As before, play the separate four-limb rudiments first before working with them as pendulums. To create the pendulums, alternate between adjacent diagrams, as indicated by the arrows.



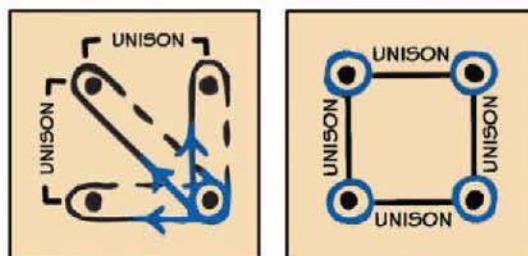
### UNISONS CAN IMPROVE ACCURACY

Before playing all four limbs in unison, start with the first diagram below. Alternate between the right foot and the unison combination of the right and left hand. (The single hit is the blue-circled dot.) Work slowly at first, paying attention to the quality of the unison and how energy flows to both limbs simultaneously. This is similar to alternating between two limbs, because the unisons are being treated as one sound. (See part two, in the June 2012 issue). Plug in a rhythm, and let your imagination take over.

Next, play right foot/left foot unisons versus right hand/left hand unisons (as in the second diagram below). This is also similar to alternating between two limbs. The blue-circled dots are always the starting points. Play the bottom two diagrams in a similar way.



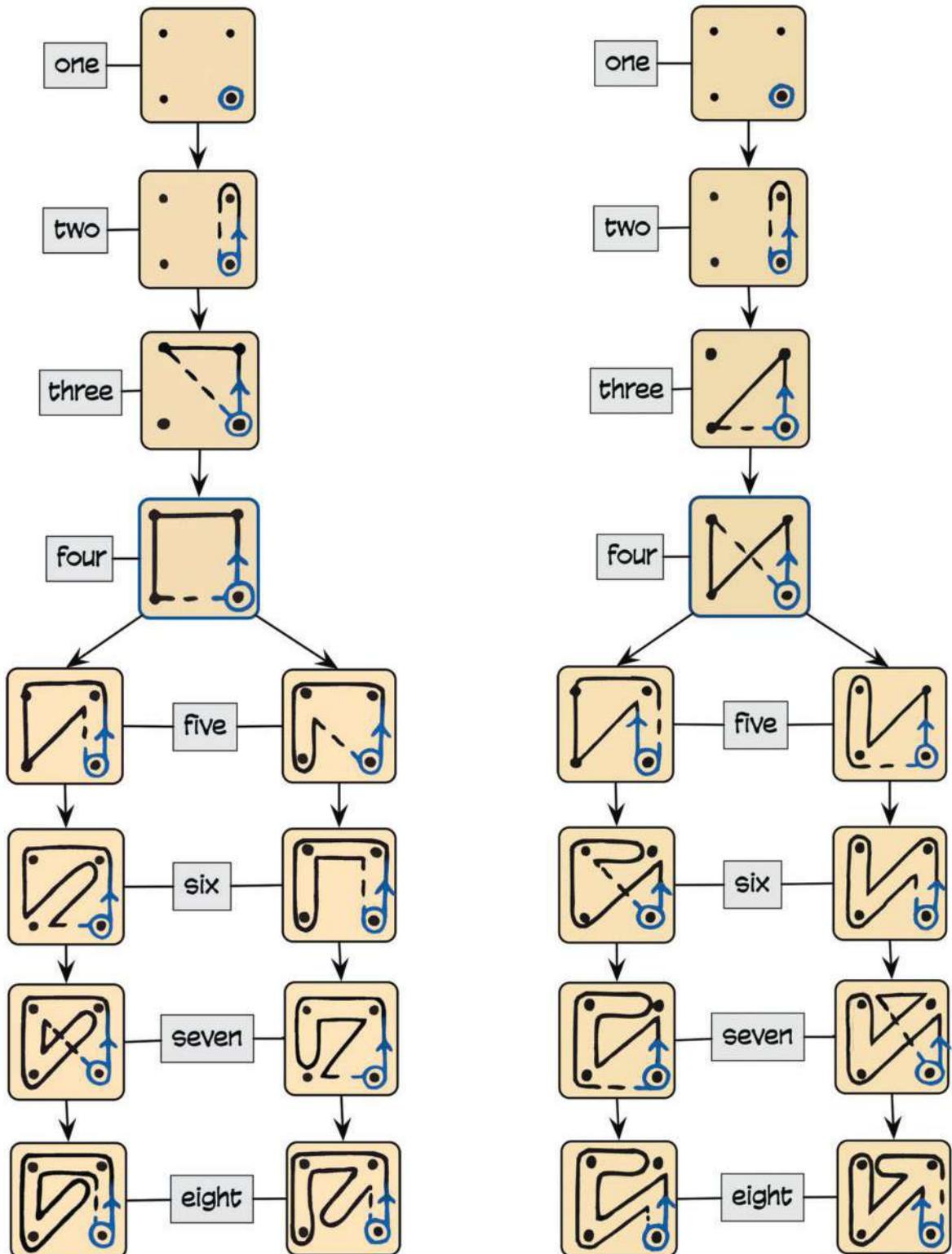
In the first diagram below, you'll be alternating between the right foot and a right hand/left hand/left foot unison combination. The unison of the three limbs is to be felt as one sound. Let the awareness of internal movement travel to all three limbs simultaneously. Finally, work with all four limbs in unison. Feel the energy move from the center of the earth to your lower belly and out through all four limbs simultaneously.



## MORE THAN FOUR

So far we've been scanning from limb to limb, with only one hit on each limb. (Four scans produce four hits.) If we continue the scanning process without repeating the direction of any of the previous scans, we can come up with more than four hits. The limit is reached at eight, after which the scanning directions start to repeat themselves. The follow-

ing chart shows you how this works. The system starts with a single stroke and adds one more as you proceed to the next diagram. Start at the top and work your way down. I've included two diagrams for the five-, six-, seven-, and eight-note sequences. There are many more possibilities to be explored.



**George Marsh** is a San Francisco-based jazz drummer/composer currently playing with the David Grisman Sextet. He's recorded with John Abercrombie, Terry Riley, Jerry Garcia, Pauline Oliveros, Denny Zeitlin, Maria Muldaur, and others. Marsh has taught at the University of California at Santa Cruz and at Sonoma State University since 1982, and he maintains a private studio in Santa Rosa, California. For more info, visit [marshdrum.com](http://marshdrum.com).



# Drum Athletes

**Part 2: V-Sit and Push-Up Catch** by Billy Cuthrell



Last month I outlined several ball-drop exercises designed to develop your hand/eye coordination, dexterity, and agility. The next set of exercises will continue to build those skills but will get progressively harder. You can combine the ball-drop drills from part one with these exercises for a challenging circuit-training session.

The exercises can be done in your home, at the gym, or out on your driveway during a nice day. You'll need a partner and thirty-five to forty balls of various sizes (like tennis, racquet, and squash balls). Follow the directions as outlined for each exercise, and keep in mind that the routines are designed to be challenging, so it's best to start slowly and work your way up.

## V-SIT CATCH

The V-sit catch will challenge your movements from both sides of your body. The exercise gets harder and more complex as you and your training partner move closer together.



Here's how it works:

1. Have your partner kneel facing you, five to six feet in front, with the various balls gathered in front of him or her on the floor.
2. Sit on the floor facing your partner, with your legs spread about shoulder width apart, so as to form a V with your legs. Keep your legs open enough that the balls can roll inside and outside the V without hitting your feet.
3. Have your partner roll the various balls to either side of you while calling out which hand to use to catch each one. Start slowly, and gradually speed up the process.
4. As you catch each ball, discard it quickly so your hands are free to grab the next ball that's rolling toward you.
5. Complete fifteen to twenty repetitions on each side.

The next phase of the exercise would be to shorten the distance between you and your partner, while your partner gradually increases how fast the balls are rolled and how quickly the next ball comes toward you. Do another round of ten to twenty repetitions. Each time you complete a set, move closer together.

## PUSH-UP POSITION CATCH

This is the most difficult of the exercises we've tried so far, and it gets much harder as you and your partner move closer together.



Here's how it works:

1. Stand ten to fifteen feet apart, and face your partner. Get down into a full push-up position. (If you have trouble holding yourself in a full push-up, let your lower body rest on your knees while keeping your arms extended.) You will remain in the push-up position for the entire exercise. Keep your head up so you can see in front of you.
2. Have your partner kneel in front of you with the various balls gathered in front of him or her on the floor.
3. As you hold the push-up position, have your partner roll the balls toward you while calling out which hand to use to catch each one. Start slowly, and gradually speed up the process. Your partner should roll the balls to your right and left sides and also between your arms. You must catch each ball while your other arm holds your body up and maintains balance.
4. Rest for sixty seconds, reset your positions at five to ten feet apart, and repeat the exercise five times, moving closer between each round.

## CHALLENGING CIRCUITS

You can combine regular drops, bounce drops, V-sit catches, and push-up position catches as a circuit, where there's little rest going from one exercise to the next. Try combining drops and the push-up position catch, followed by a short rest, and then proceed to bounce drops and the V-sit catch with no rest. The objectives are to keep your body guessing and to keep the speed and pace of the exercises inconsistent so that you're always working both mentally and physically to stay in top shape.

We've posted a video demonstrating these exercises on [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com). Feel free to add twists to come up with your own variations. Until next time, 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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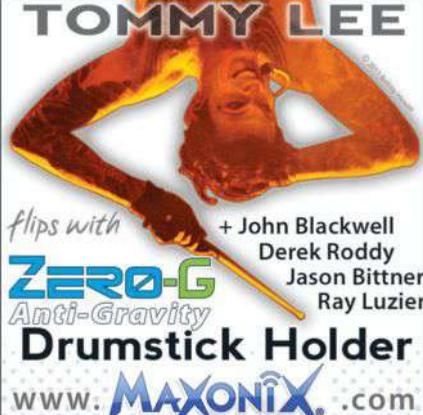
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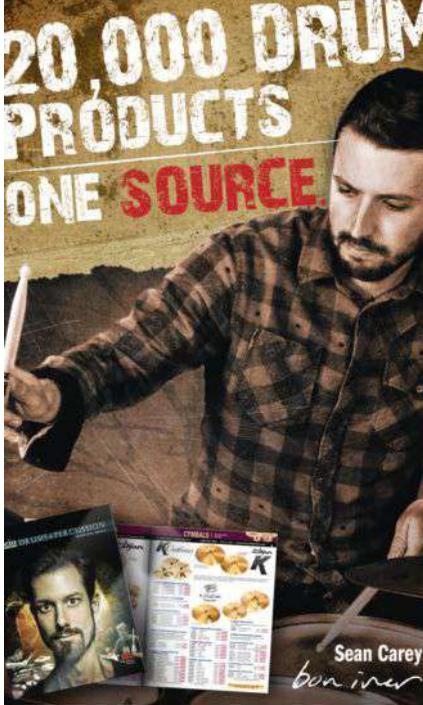
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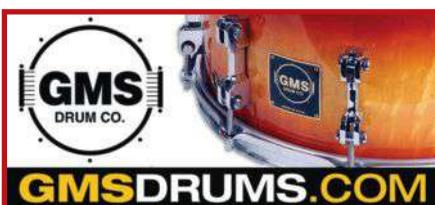
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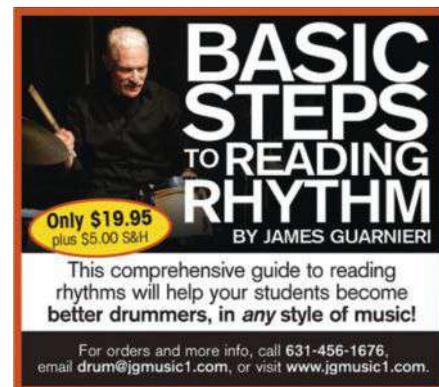
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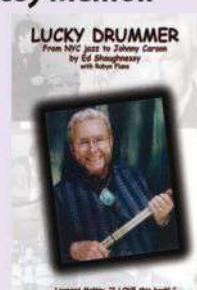


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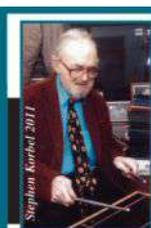


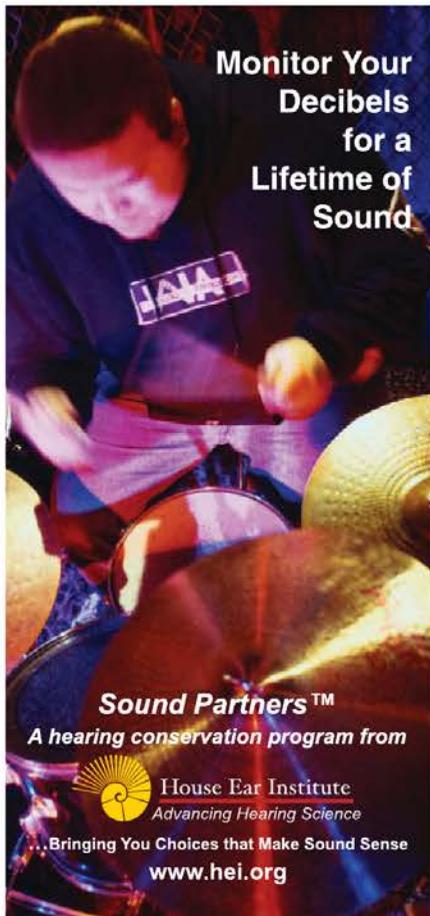
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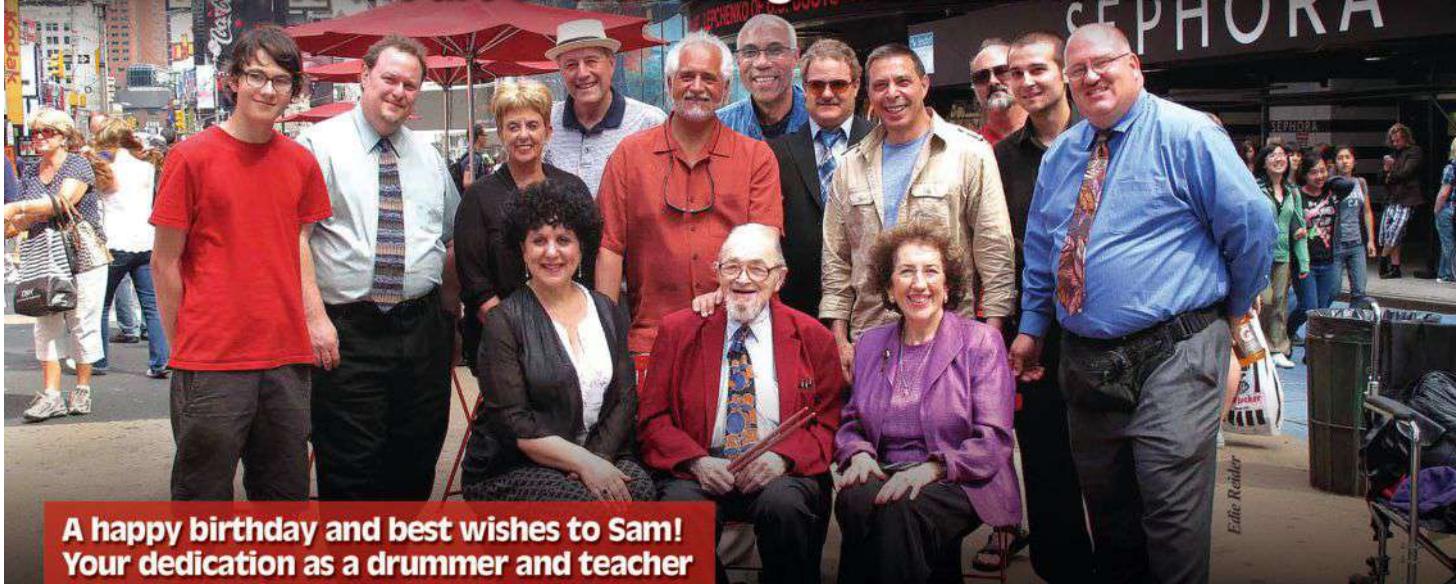
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Standing, left to right: Robert Jenkins, Rich Stern, Mary Ingolia, Peter Ingolia, John Sarracco, Tony "Thunder" Smith, Howie Reider, Peter Greco, Tom Jenkins, Alex Louloudis, and Eddie "Stix" Liotard. Seated, left to right: Diana Nikkolos, **Sam Ulano**, and Michele Zalkin.

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New Orleans, the birthplace of our instrument, has produced untold numbers of great drummers, from inventors of the jazz language such as Warren "Baby" Dodds to contemporary musical ambassadors like Johnny Vidacovich, Herlin Riley, Stanton Moore, and Russell Batiste. Among the city's most revered players is Allyn Robinson, whose playing has elevated the work of hundreds of local artists, including some who were at the center of important evolutionary changes in New Orleans music.

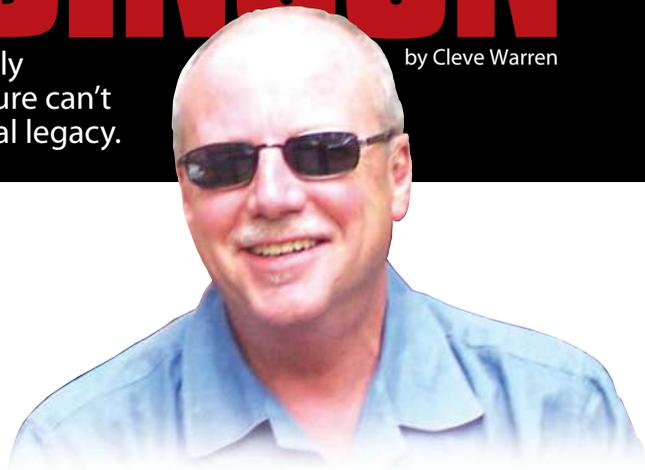
Robinson, a true exponent of the New Orleans style of drumming, was born and raised in the Crescent City. He began playing at age thirteen and soon was performing in his high school band and with local drum and bugle corps. The drum instructor Al Doria Jr., who provided Robinson with a strong rudimental background and taught him various styles, would later remark on Allyn's uncanny sense of time, even at a very young age.

Robinson's early live experiences involved accompanying go-go dancers and jukeboxes in New Orleans nightclubs, as well as playing in a series of local teenage R&B bands. His first professional act, New Era, took him to Colorado, where he played for over a year. The group was on the brink of a recording contract when it broke up, as Allyn says, "for all the usual reasons."

The breakup turned out to be a windfall

for Robinson, though. Soon after moving back home, he wound up with what many at the time considered the gig of a lifetime, with the legendary thirteen-piece horn band Wayne Cochran and the C.C. Riders. The group bridged the gap between James Brown, Southern R&B, and big band jazz and boasted some of the most promising players on the scene. Among them were the future Grammy-winning composer Alan Silvestri (*The Bodyguard*, *The Polar Express*), saxophonist

Dick Oatts (Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, Flim & the BB's), trumpet player Lee Thornburg (the *Tonight Show* band, Tower of Power), and guitarist/musical director Charlie Brent

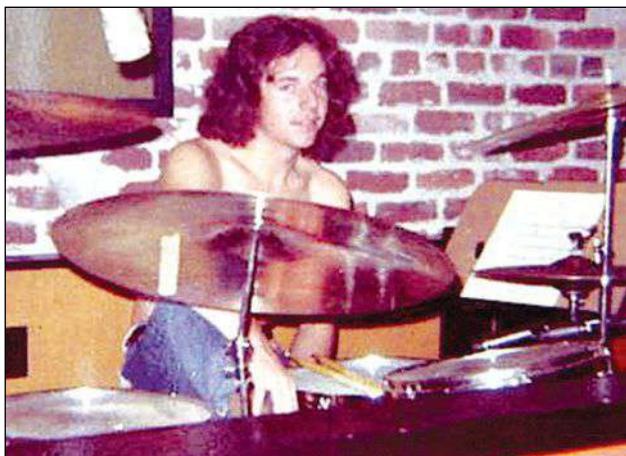


## A VITAL LINK IN THE CHAIN Peter Erskine on Allyn Robinson

I have a tremendous feeling of gratitude toward Allyn Robinson, even though we met only briefly back in 1980. Allyn is a key missing link in the history of the time and place where R&B intersected with jazz and fusion styles.

Allyn was Jaco Pastorius's rhythm mate in the Wayne Cochran band, the group Jaco toured with pretty much up until the time he joined Weather Report. I had been listening to Allyn's drumming on the album *Cochran* since 1972, and it had a big influence on me. Aside from some Earl Palmer recordings, it was my first connection to New Orleans drumming. Something about Allyn's beat must have gotten inside my own; this is one of the only explanations of why Jaco recommended me so strongly to Weather Report after only one listen—he heard and sensed a rhythm comfort zone, in addition to the jazz chops I had, and that comfort zone came directly from Allyn's influence on me.

When Jaco and I were together in Weather Report, he never stopped talking about Allyn. There's an incredible synergy to explore concerning the meeting of the Florida beat of Jaco, the New Orleans beat of Allyn, and the R&B big band writing of Charlie Brent. I hear it as being pivotal, and the history seems undocumented for the most part.

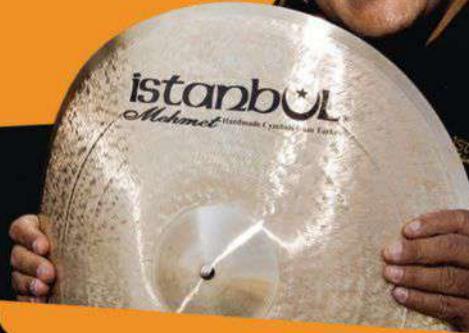


Robinson back in the day, and today

Jonathan Moffett

Rick Latham

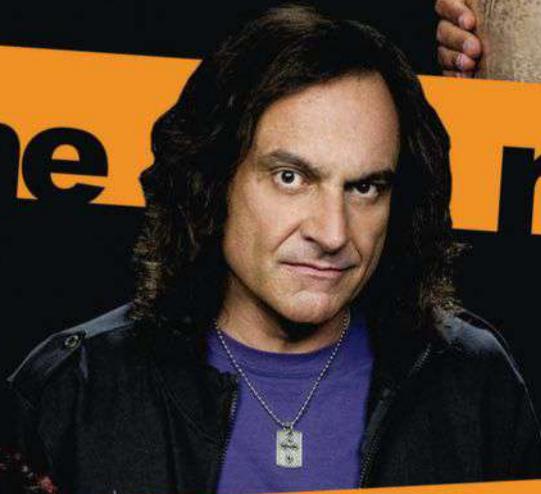
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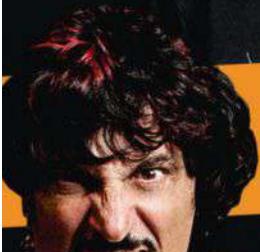
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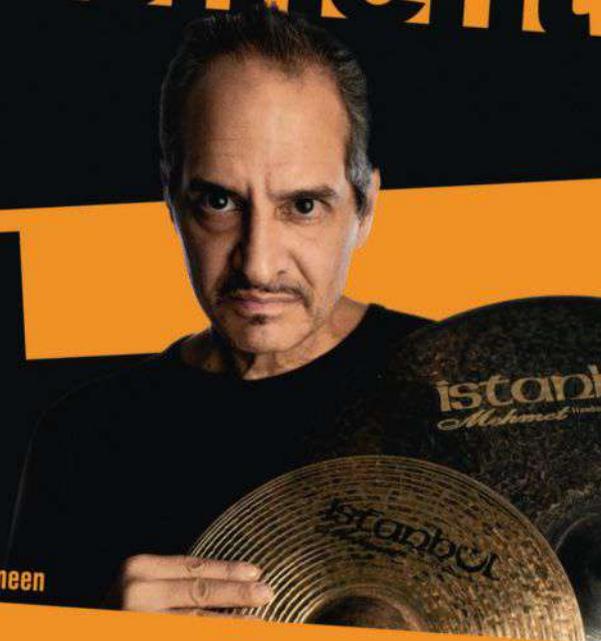


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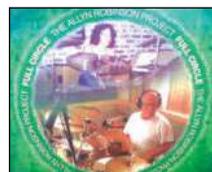
(Sea Level, Dukes of Dixieland).

The Riders' arrangements were notoriously tough, but Robinson's great groove and reading background kept him in the drum chair for four and a half years. Aside from an annual twelve-week stint in Las Vegas, the band played one-nighters year-round, including gigs with Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Presley, Ike and Tina Turner, and Tower of Power.

Among the most notorious musicians in the C.C. Riders lineup was a young bass player from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, named Jaco Pastorius. Pastorius, who would go on to change the way we think about the electric bass via his playing with the fusion supergroup Weather Report, called Robinson one of his favorite drummers, mentioning him alongside such heavyweights as Peter Erskine and Kenwood Dennard. The duo's rhythmic connection certainly did produce some incredible grooves. Check out rehearsal performance of "Rice Pudding," for instance, available on *Portrait of Jaco: The Early Years, 1968-1978*. Robinson and Pastorius practiced together constantly in the ten months the bassist was in the band. In fact, Allyn was in the Florida hotel room where Jaco famously pulled the frets out of his bass, kick-starting a new phase of modern music.

Robinson left Cochran's band in 1975 to spend more time with his family, working day jobs and

### BRINGING IT FULL CIRCLE



After a lifetime of playing the role of the consummate musical accomplice, Robinson recently released his debut recording as a

leader, the Allyn Robinson Project's *Full Circle*. It's a showcase of the drummer's ease with all styles of New Orleans drumming, facilitated by an excellent band. Lately Robinson has also begun to lecture on the evolution of New Orleans music and the great players responsible for its development. Allyn says that his ultimate goal for the project is to accompany his master classes with live playing.

gigging around New Orleans at night. After a yearlong residency in Jacksonville, Florida, with the gospel singer and trumpeter Phil Driscoll—replacing Jamie Oldaker, who moved on to play with Eric Clapton—Robinson returned to New Orleans once again and formed the band Trick Bag with Charlie Brent and the famed Louisiana singer Luther Kent. Every major artist that appeared in New Orleans over the next five years came to hear or sit in with this incredible band. To get an idea of Robinson's absolute mastery of handling a large band with horns, go to YouTube and search for "Jazz Excursions/Luther Kent & Trick Bag 1981."

By the mid-'80s, many of Robinson's friends had moved to Los Angeles and were encouraging Allyn to do the same. The drummer decided to make the move, but despite occasional blues tours up and down the coast, little of substance was happening with his career. Discouraged,

# WHEN YOU'VE FOUND THE RIGHT STICK, IT REALLY HITS YOU!



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It never occurred to me to check out any other models, or even brands. It really wasn't until I started pulling sticks out of a store bin one day, while helping a new student pick out his first pair, that I really started to notice the differences between them all. While doing that I thought: "Maybe the stick I'm using isn't the right one for ME?".

When I picked up Vaters that day, I instantly discovered what I had been missing out

on for all those years. It didn't matter what Vater model I pulled out of that bin, they all felt great while having their unique differences. That experience really got me thinking and analyzing my stick choice and size. Not only were the Vater sticks better quality, but my playing had been somewhat restrained from using a size that really wasn't comfortable for me after all.

I checked out dozens of Vater models, and paid attention to what my hands were "telling" me. I kept going back to the 5A/5B-ish grip size, which was MUCH smaller than what I was using with that other company and I settled on a .580" grip. That feel was the winner for me, without a doubt!

Fast forward to now. Since joining the Vater Family, we developed the 2451. It has that same .580" grip size that Vater

has on several models but this has a small barrel tip....FREAKING AMAZING! Now I have the feel and sound that I never knew I was missing all along. The best part is that VATER makes my stick in hickory and maple. I always tell my students, "Maple = Finesse, Hickory = BASH!"

Trust me, with all the models that Vater makes, there's definitely one that's just right for you. Whether you currently play Vater or not, explore their product line and experiment with different models. You will find yourself very pleased with what you discover!.....That's a wrap!

PS: The picture above is REAL! Go to [vater.com](http://vater.com) to see a video of this photo shoot with footage of me getting hit with flying sticks!

- Mike Johnston

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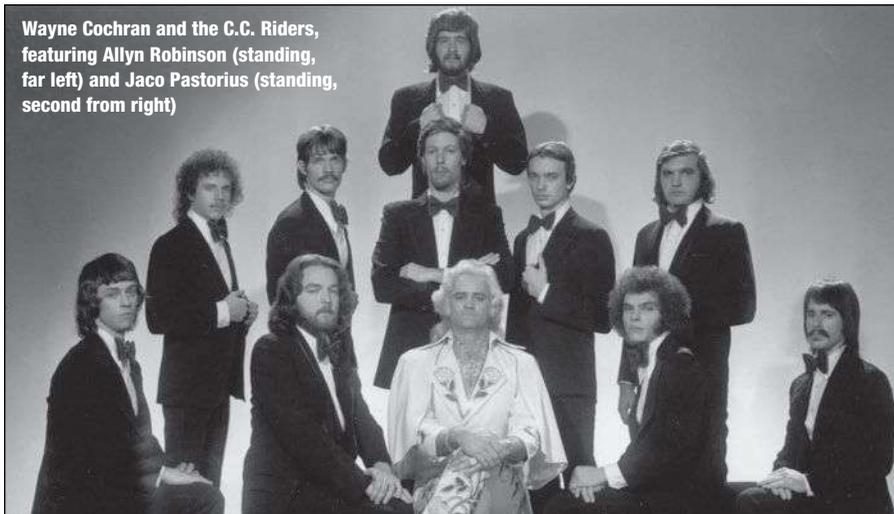
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Wayne Cochran and the C.C. Riders, featuring Allyn Robinson (standing, far left) and Jaco Pastorius (standing, second from right)



he went back to New Orleans for a seemingly endless series of club jobs and local recording projects.

Allyn caught a break in the early '90s, when a friend, drummer Karl Himmel, recommended him for overseas work with Dr. Hook featuring Ray Sawyer. Word of mouth about his outstanding drumming on the gig led to work with the Louisiana blues guitarist Tab Benoit, who was putting together a band for touring and recording. Six years and three CDs later, Robinson, tired of the constant grind of traveling, decided to quit the road—and begin a new chapter in his life.

For years Robinson's family recipes and expertise at cooking local dishes made him a

highly valued bandmate on the road. In 2001 he became a personal chef for a family in town, a job that enabled him to have a steady income *and* to choose the kind of music he wanted to play. Finally he was able to have a life filled with stability, a good income, and musically satisfying work. This situation lasted for four years—until August 29, 2005, the day that Hurricane Katrina hit southeastern Louisiana.

The failure of the levee system in and around New Orleans resulted in Katrina's becoming the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history. At the time, Robinson was living in the suburb of Chalmette, where 81 percent of the homes were severely damaged or destroyed. Allyn and his family were given fifteen minutes to take out anything they could carry before the floodwaters would reach them. The drummer was able to grab only a few family mementos before the water engulfed his home. All of his equipment, and nearly everything else the family owned, was lost in the course of just a few minutes.

In retrospect, the Robinsons were lucky to get out alive; more than 1,800 people lost their lives as a result of Hurricane Katrina. But like tens of thousands of other victims, Allyn's family struggled through a long and painful journey back to a normal life. One person moved by the Robinsons' plight was Peter Erskine, Jaco Pastorius's rhythmic partner in Weather Report, who helped Allyn obtain replacement equipment through Drum Workshop. It was Erskine's first recommendation after joining the DW team.

Seven years after the disaster, Robinson's stature as one of New Orleans' most respected drummers is stronger than ever. Today, on any given night, you can find Allyn playing around town with a killer local or national act. You'll be experiencing the art of a true New Orleans drummer immortal, a musical titan loved and respected by his family and his peers, and a testimony to the values of hard work, talent, kindness, and determination.

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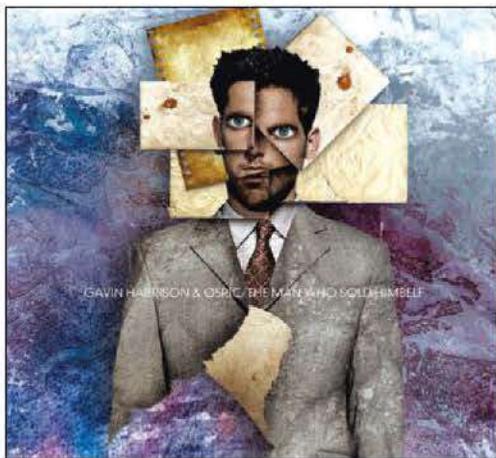
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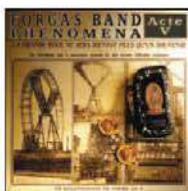
by Mike Haid



## GAVIN HARRISON & 05RIC *THE MAN WHO SOLD HIMSELF*

The duo featuring Porcupine Tree's drummer and his oddly named cohort is back for a second, highly anticipated long-player. They do not disappoint.

Rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic complexity run very deep here. **GAVIN HARRISON'S** advanced knowledge of subdivisions allows him to drill down through layers of thick cross-rhythms, creating endless aural illusions with a rarely heard artistic depth. The music stimulates the senses in a manner similar to the way King Crimson did when it was resuscitating progressive art rock in the '80s. The title track highlights Harrison's smooth, crisp snare work and tasty rudimental chops, while the standout cut "Own" exemplifies the drummer's ability to inject amazingly advanced ideas over odd meters while retaining a solid feel. A "Where's the 1?" factor positively consumes each counterpoint-laden track. (Kscope)



## FORGAS BAND PHENOMENA *ACTE V*

Fans of the '70s British Canterbury scene and early jazz-rock fusion should welcome this CD/DVD package.

French drummer/composer/bandleader **PATRICK FORGAS** crafts his odd-meter,

instrumental material with the adventurousness of the British prog-fathers Soft Machine and the soaring improvisational intensity of early Mahavishnu Orchestra and Jean-Luc Ponty. Forgas practically comes across like an old-school jazzier, with his small kit, soft touch, and minimal flair—along with maximum musicality and direction. The lengthy compositions draw the listener in with hypnotic rhythms and crafty horn/violin melodies. The DVD, which features the band's 2010 NEARfest appearance, captures a spot-on performance by the seven-piece group in front of a captive audience. (Cuneiform)



## FLYING COLORS *FLYING COLORS*

An all-star lineup covers a lot of ground, in search of its own voice.

The self-titled debut by this band of prog and fusion superstars—guitarist Steve Morse (Dixie Dregs, Deep Purple), keyboardist Neal Morse (Spock's Beard, Transatlantic), drummer **MIKE PORTNOY**

(Dream Theater, Transatlantic, Adrenaline Mob), bassist Dave LaRue (Dixie Dregs, Steve Morse Band), and singer Casey McPherson (Alpha Rev)—features a diverse collection of vocal and instrumental tracks, all performed commandingly. Prog, pop, metal—each direction the band takes is successful on its own terms, but the many stylistic changes can leave the listener wondering where Flying Colors' musical center is. The most captivating piece here is the twelve-minute opus "Infinite Fire," which allows Portnoy's prog side to take over. The machine-gun-like double bass chops explode on "All Falls Down," while Mike delivers passionate, solid pop grooves on several other tracks and lends convincing lead vocals to "Fool in My Heart." Hopefully the group will reconnect for a sophomore effort and define its direction more completely. (Mascot)



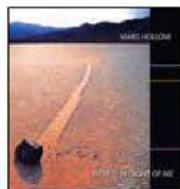
## 4FRONT

### *MALICE IN WONDERLAND*

An instrumental power trio unveils a collection of complex, driving tracks.

The superb mix of *Malice in Wonderland* complements 4Front's big sound, while the cohesive material

reveals a well-balanced style that travels the sonic spectrum from classic to contemporary prog. Drummer **JOE BERGAMINI'S** stellar chops are definitely *at* the forefront here, and the drum sounds, especially the snare tones, are to die for. Bergamini's keen musical ear allows the odd-meter-laden music to dictate his energized performance. "Hairless Ape" will interest Rush fans, but "Runaway Train" will make the seasoned prog fan *really* take notice. (spcrecords.net)



## MARS HOLLOW *WORLD IN FRONT OF ME*

Old-school prog with a modern flair.

On Mars Hollow's *World in Front of Me*, the upper-register vocals of guitarist John Baker and the heavy production of onetime Yes guitarist Billy Sherwood transport the listener back

to the early days of melodic prog rock. Drummer **JERRY BELLER** understands melodic structure and creates an interesting blend of '70s- and '80s-era Yes drumming. The opening number, "Walk On Alone," and the title-track closer are lengthy, masterful epics that highlight Beller's focused groove, precise snare work, and powerful fills. (marshollow.com)

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## MESHUGGAH *KOLOSS*

The Swedish metallers strip down their sound for the follow-up to *ObZen*.

It's time to take the usual bank of adjectives used to describe Meshuggah—words like brutal, dizzying, and relentless—and add...*laid-back*? First let's be clear that *Koloss* includes an undiminished sense of power and complexity. It's just that many of the tracks feature a bounce and a settled-in feel that show the band breathing together in a way that feels new. **TOMAS HAAKE**, a pioneer in constructing head-scratching drum parts that seem to exist in two (or more) rhythmic spheres simultaneously, pares down some of his patterns here, while maintaining his usual swashbuckling chopping of subdivisions. "Do Not Look Down" practically *grooves*, and it features an old-school-shredster guitar solo by Fredrik Thordendal. And the heavy, hypnotic ride-outs at the end of songs like "Marrow" and "Break Those Bones Whose Sinews Gave It Motion" are positively majestic and play into the album's measured vibe. On the more frenetic end of the spectrum is "The Demon's Name Is Surveillance," which, with Haake's unstoppable triplet-feel kicks, is almost a sequel to *ObZen*'s double bass marathon "Bleed." And "Swarm" is to be taken literally, especially when Haake's snare starts swatting at the menacing guitars buzzing around it. (Nuclear Blast) **Michael Parillo**

## MULTIMEDIA

## RATINGS SCALE



### DUET YOURSELF, BOOK TWO: MUSICAL ETUDES FOR INTERMEDIATE-ADVANCED DRUMMERS

BY JOEL ROTHMAN

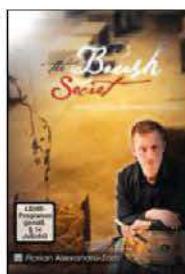
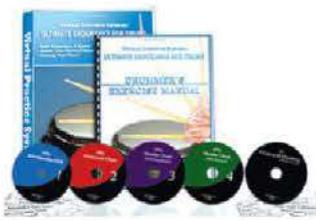
BOOK LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE TO ADVANCED \$16.95

This book focuses on developing the relationship between the hands and feet by way of thirty-nine well-conceived etudes. Each etude focuses on a single concept, presenting useful material like alternating flams, bass drum/right hand unisons, flat flams, and call and response, in a musical way that simultaneously develops reading skills, phrasing, and technique. Readers are urged to apply their own dynamics spontaneously, which opens up another level of expression to be explored with the duets. Private instructors could make good use of these etudes to help burgeoning students apply fundamental/technical lessons in a more challenging yet realistic context. (J.R. Publications) **Michael Dawson**

### VIRTUAL PRACTICE SYSTEM: ULTIMATE ENDURANCE FOR DRUMS BY JASON FENICHEL DVD (4) PLUS ADDITIONAL MULTIMEDIA ITEMS

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The endurance exercises constituting this goal-oriented video workout course (which includes four instructional DVDs, a bonus DVD titled *The 6 Aspects of Drumming*, a manual with practice sheets, website membership, and a one-on-one video chat lesson) are designed to improve stick speed and build physical stamina. On the introductory disc, host/teacher Jason Fenichel demonstrates different grips and the mechanics of arm motion to help develop touch sensitivity. The subsequent discs challenge us to perform full-stroke and Moeller triplet patterns by isolating each hand—as well as using alternate sticking—at tempos that exceed a muscle-cramping 100 beats per minute. (The metronome settings escalate to an astronomical 150 bpm for the advanced Moeller "whip" exercises.) Some students may balk at this instructional guide's hefty fee, but the videos, and all of the bonus items included in the asking price, are an attractive alternative to traditional music education. (thedrummersalmanac.com) **Will Romano**



### THE BRUSH SECRET: HOW TO APPLY YOUR OWN VOICE TO THE BRUSHES BY FLORIAN ALEXANDRU-ZORN

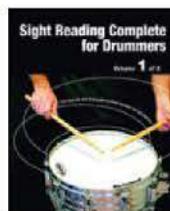
DVD (2) LEVEL: ALL \$39.99

I can usually assess the value of an educational DVD based on how quickly it causes me to reach for the remote, hit pause, and start practicing. I made it only about five minutes into the first full chapter of *The Brush Secret* ("The Right Hand Holding

Position"), which was at the point where German drummer/clinician Florian Alexandru-Zorn introduces pressure accents within basic full-circle sweeping patterns, before I grabbed my brushes and got to work.

In the remaining 187 minutes of this jam-packed two-disc set, Alexandru-Zorn covers two other types of sweeping accents (acceleration and a combination of pressure and acceleration), before moving into a variety of more advanced yet stylistically open-ended patterns for playing 16th-note and triplet sweeps, half-circle sweeps, half-circle/full-circle combinations, and linear side-to-side motions. He also covers various vertical sounds (open tap, closed tap, sweeping taps, rimclick adaptations, and flex strokes). The remainder of disc one discusses how to apply the different brushstrokes to a variety of musical styles, and play-along MP3s are included for your own practice.

Disc two comprises interviews with professional drummers and brush adaptations of those drummers' favorite sticking patterns, plus chapters on sweeping the rudiments, using the right equipment, and recording brushes, along with several performance tracks. Also included is a large foldout poster with diagrams of the patterns discussed on the DVDs. If you're new to playing with brushes, or if you're a seasoned pro and you feel stuck with just a few stock strokes, check this out. There's enough here to keep you inspired and practicing for a long, long time. (Alfred) **Michael Dawson**



### SIGHT READING COMPLETE FOR DRUMMERS, VOLUMES 1-3 BY MIKE PRESTWOOD

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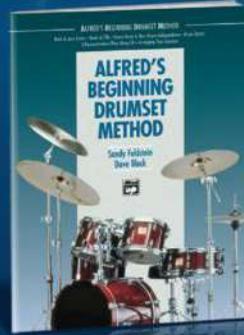
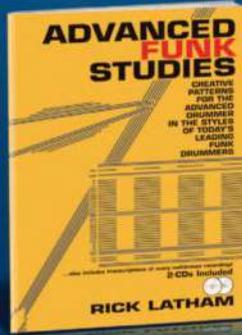
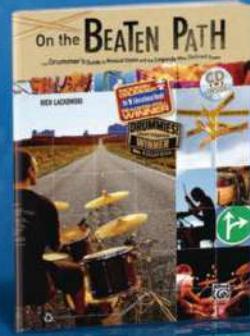
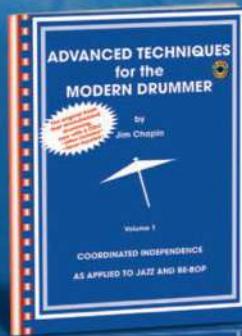
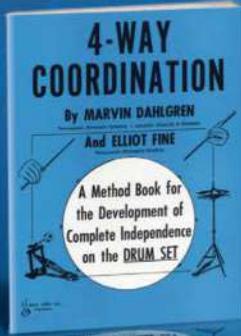
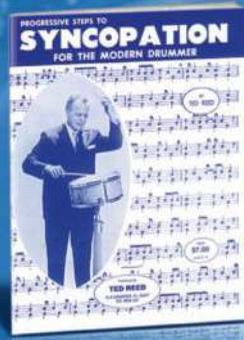
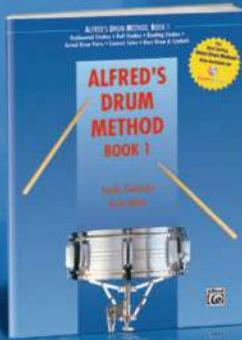
*Sight Reading Complete* is a drummer-specific system that's thoughtfully presented to prepare us for the pit, studio, drum line, drum circle, fusion gig, or big band rhythm section. *Volume 1*'s topics are notation and rhythm, dynamics, accents and repeats, and standard time signatures. *Volume 2* deals with triplets, the beginnings of odd time signatures, refined accents, and more. Besides having fun with flam attack rolls and beamed groupings, *Volume 3* gets into specific things a drummer might trip up on at a gig, including advanced tuples, mixed rhythm accents, and alternative notations. Play-along exercises are available on free MP3 files. (play-drums.com)

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# IN MEMORIAM

## SONNY IGOE

**J**azz drummer and teacher Sonny Igoe died this past March 28. "Sonny was a wonderful drummer with fine technique and a very musical approach," says Ed Shaughnessy. "He was also very kind to this younger beginner drummer when we both studied with Bill West in New York City. Sonny then became a masterful teacher for many years. God bless Sonny."

"Somehow, Sonny got overlooked," says Igoe's longtime friend Roy Burns. "He was very successful doing studio work in New York, playing TV shows, but he never got the kind of publicity that gives drummers notoriety. Maybe he didn't happen to play the right gig at the right time to get attention. But he was a fine player."

Born on October 8, 1923, in Jersey City, Owen "Sonny" Igoe began playing drums at age five, and when he was sixteen he won the first Gene Krupa drumming contest held on the East Coast. "Sonny told me that one of the reasons he won was because he could play exact choruses on the tunes," Burns recalls. "He had worked with a lot of older musicians and had learned the songs. A lot of drummers would just start playing and hope for the best."

From 1942 to 1946 Igoe served in Marine Corps bands, and afterward he played with Les Elgart and Ina Ray Hutton. He achieved his first major prominence with Benny Goodman, with whom he played from December 1948 to October 1949. From 1950 to 1952 Igoe was a member of Woody Herman's small group and Third Herd, and he was a featured soloist on Herman's 1951 recording of "New Golden Wedding."

"I first saw Sonny when I was in high school in Emporia, Kansas, and he came through with Woody Herman," Burns says. "He was the first drummer I saw who had really great technique—good left hand, good bass drum technique, good single strokes, and he played very well with a big band. I went backstage to ask him some questions, and he talked to me through the whole intermission, which was very gracious of him."

"Sonny had good, solid time," Burns continues. "He would play exciting fills and breaks with the band, but he would never overplay. Sonny told me that Woody gave him a free hand and let him play the charts the way he wanted to because Sonny had such a good ear. He knew when to go to the Chinese cymbal or when to go to the hi-hats, or which drum to use to punctuate a figure. He was a very accomplished big band drummer."

Igoe worked with Charlie Ventura from 1953 to 1955 and also played Dixieland gigs with Phil Napoleon, Pee Wee Erwin, and Billy Maxted. He then began a long stint as a studio musician in New York. During the 1960s he played in CBS and NBC staff orchestras, on such TV programs as *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *The Garry Moore Show*, *Candid Camera*, *The Merv Griffin Show*, *The Jackie Gleason Show*, and



*The Carol Burnett Show*. Igoe also became a popular and respected drum teacher and instructed thousands of students from the 1970s to near the end of his life. In 1973 he published an instructional book, *Get Your Fills Together*, which was hailed for its clear, straightforward approach to setting up big band figures.

One of Igoe's students was Shakira's Brendan Buckley. "Once a week I'd drive over to Sonny's New Jersey home and enter his 'den of education,'" Buckley says. "We'd spend about a half hour on the pads sight-reading snare drum solos, always making sure to tap our feet and count out loud. Then we'd spend the rest of the lesson sight-reading Stan Kenton and Buddy Rich big band charts while he videotaped my struggles. My favorite Sonny quote while I grimaced my way through a song was, 'Hey, kid, smile a little—drums are supposed to be fun!' Sonny would focus on breathing and relaxation. He emphasized exhaling during fills and crashes so as not to get tense. Before I'd leave for the day, we'd look at the videotapes to make suggestions, criticisms, and improvements."

Igoe co-led a big band with saxophonist Dick Meldonian in the 1980s and played with various small groups into his eighties. "He lived a wonderful, long life," says his son, Tommy Igoe, an accomplished drummer in his own right. "We were grateful to have him as long as we did." **Rick Mattingly**

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# MICHAEL HOSSACK

The early '70s saw something of a surge in double-drummer groups, with perhaps the three most well known being the Grateful Dead, the Allman Brothers Band, and the Doobie Brothers. Having two drummers allowed one player to hold down the beat while the other was free to add looser, jazzier fills. When it came to the reliable timekeeper among famous drum duos, the Dead had Bill Kreutzmann, the Allmans have Butch Trucks, and the Doobies, up until recently, had Michael Hossack.

Hossack, the longest-serving Doobie Brothers drummer, died of cancer this past March 12 at age sixty-five. In 1972, when the Paterson, New Jersey, native joined the band, the Doobies had already recorded one unsuccessful album with John Hartman on the kit, but Hossack helped tighten up the sound dramatically. The group immediately began recording and releasing some of its biggest hits, including "Listen to the Music," "China Grove," "Long Train Runnin'," and "Black Water."

While Hossack and his "built-in metronome," as he described it to this magazine in 1989, cannot take full credit for the Doobies' catapult to success, the drummer's arrival in the band did bring a much-needed driving force to the music. As Hartman explained to *Modern Drummer* in 1989, "It worked out with Michael from day one. He was a different style than I was. He was more strict in his playing performance, and I was looser. He came from a parade, marching-band background and plays the set like a jazz player." In the press release for the band's 2010 CD, *World Gone Crazy*, longtime Doobie Brothers producer Ted Templeman enthused that Hossack was "the first band member/drummer in a rock group that was as good as or better than any session player out there."

In 1974, after recording three hit albums, Hossack surprisingly left the band. For the remainder of the decade the Doobies continued to grow in popularity, while Hossack tried in vain to find success with

two other acts, Bonaroo and DFK. Through it all, Hossack's precision drumming was always highly regarded by his former bandmates, as the Doobies invited Michael to perform at their 1982 farewell concert, and he was also hired by latter-day Doobies keyboardist Michael McDonald to serve as the drummer on an album McDonald produced for his future wife, Amy Holland. As Doobies guitarist Tom Johnston recalled after Hossack's death in a statement on the band's website, "He was an incredible musician, a studio-quality drummer."

In 1987, when twelve of the Doobie Brothers reunited, Hossack was back in the fold full time. He remained in the band for the rest of his life, enjoying many highlights (like serving as a celebrity spokesman for Nu/Hair Hair Transplants) as well as weathering quite a few bumps in the road (such as when longtime percussionist Bobby LaKind died in 1992 and co-drummer Keith Knudsen passed away in 2005). But Hossack genuinely appreciated his second chance at success. As he told *MD* in 1989, "After you lay off a situation like this for a while, and after you've had a chance to mature a little, you realize what a great opportunity something like this is."

**Philip Varriale**



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# DRIVING A HYBRID

This outfit is what Emedin Rivera, of Landing, New Jersey, calls the percussion kit. "I invented it when I was called for a gig where there was no drummer," Rivera explains. "It was only me on congas, a bass player, and a guitarist. At one point the vocalist turned and asked me to emphasize the back-beat on 2 and 4. I obliged, but it just didn't sound big enough. From that day forth, I've been strategically adding more variety to my setup. Now I'm able to play drums and congas at the same time, allowing me to function as a drummer and percussionist simultaneously."

Longtime MD readers with a very good memory might remember Rivera from the On the Move column in the September 1984 issue. Emedin's more recent work includes projects with Ben E. King, Blues Counsel, and David Broza. Here, he explains the origin of his rig's eye-popping look. "A band I was working with was invited to do a tour opening up for Chicago. I knew we'd be playing big venues, so I wanted the congas to be more visible from far away." Rivera adds that it's not always smooth sailing with this brightly colored ship. "It's funny how on different occasions the colors of the drums have been an issue," he says. "For example, I did a country-and-western video that took place in a saloon, but the drums didn't match the setting. When there's a clash between the situation and my drums, I bring my all-wood percussion kit. The late Vicki Sue Robinson, however, always requested my psychedelic setup!" And yes, Rivera cut that red Paiste China when it developed a crack.

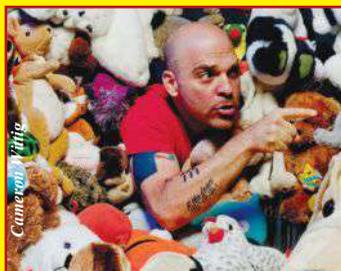
Emedin concludes, "To this day I'm learning new techniques to create a more full sound. I believe the percussion kit is the future of drumming."



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



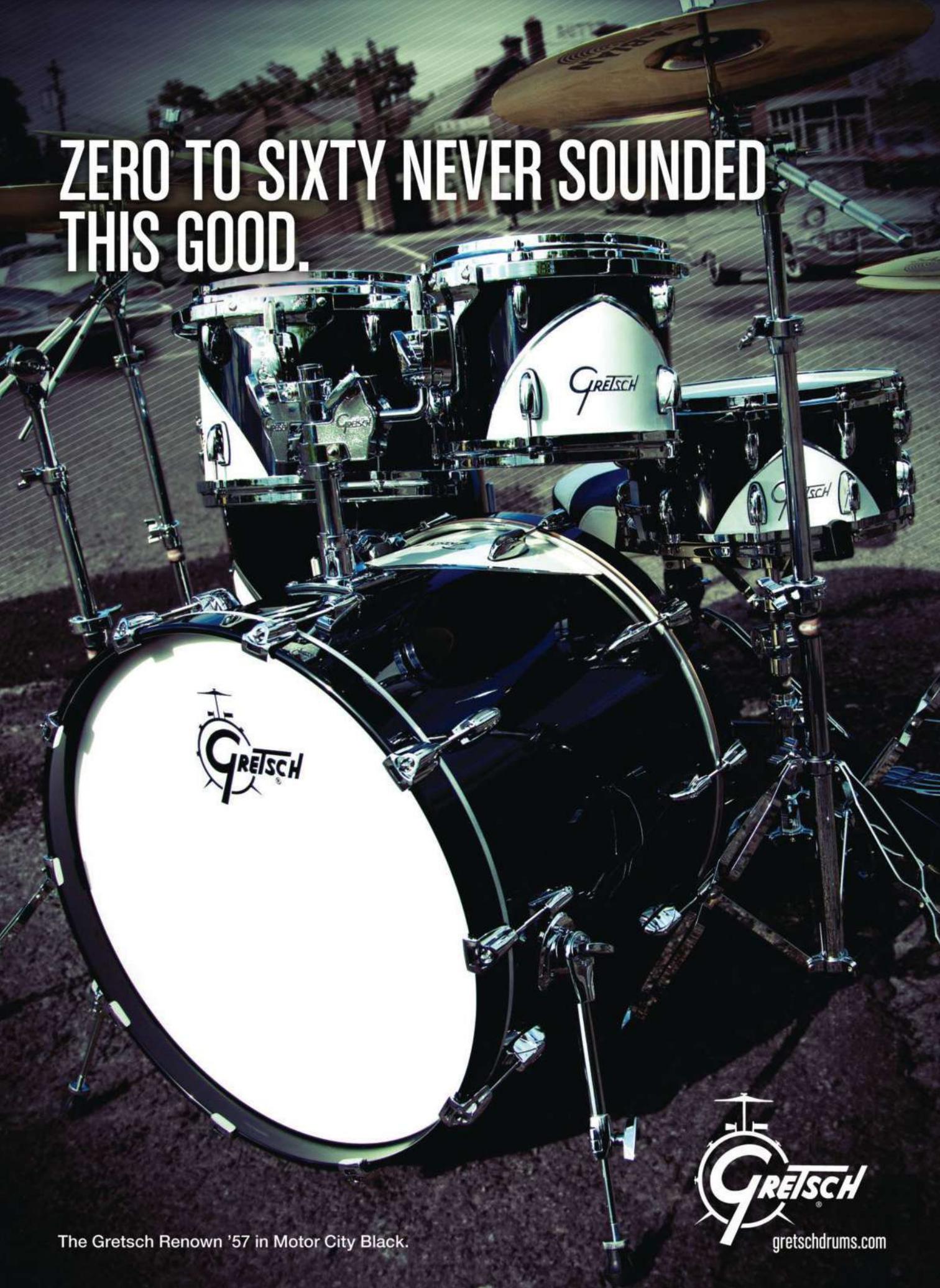
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