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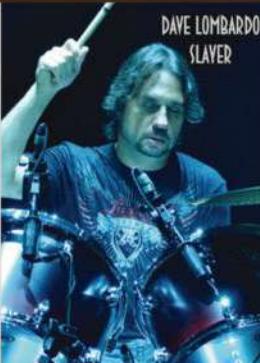
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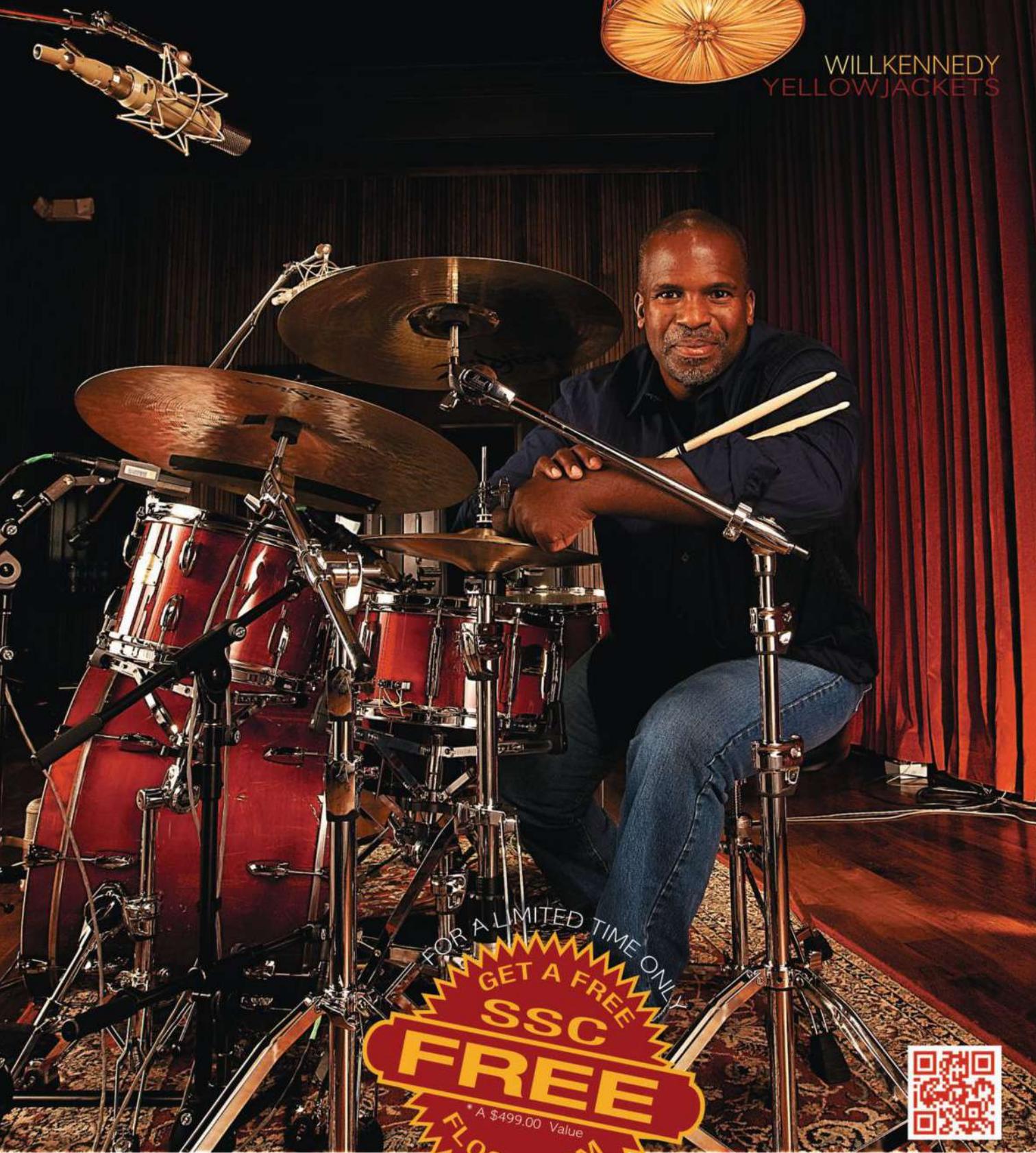
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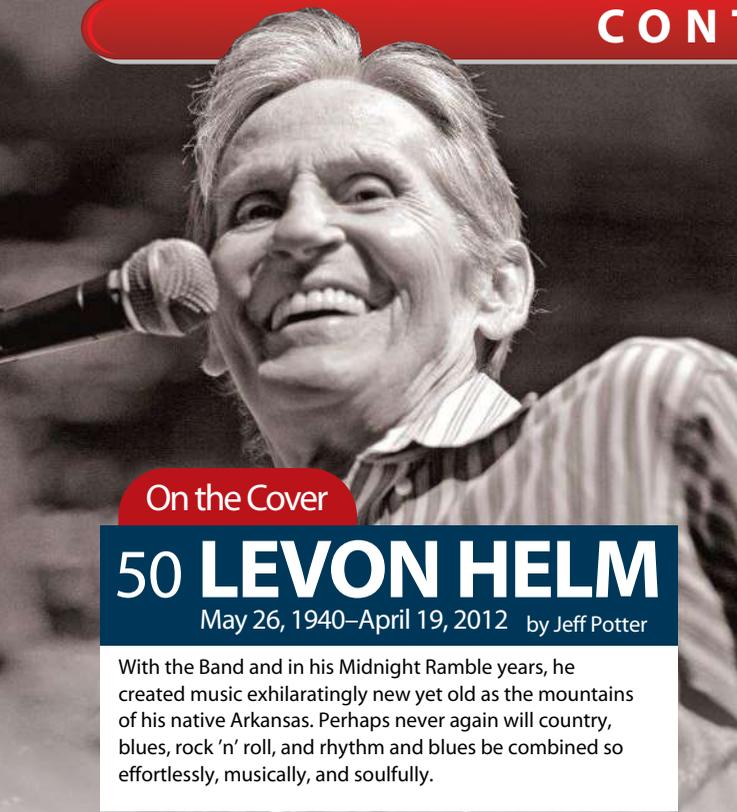
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May 26, 1940–April 19, 2012 by Jeff Potter

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Paul La Roca

Wasn't Born to Follow

Study? Absolutely. Emulate? Most certainly. Remain open to other people's viewpoints? Graciously. But follow? Nuh-uh. Levon Helm played many roles in his life—drummer, singer, actor—but more than anything, he was his own man. And as the figurehead of this issue focusing on Americana drumming, Levon, with his brand of quiet confidence, would seem to be the perfect person for aspiring roots players to study, to emulate, to be open to.

It can be argued that one reason why so many music fans these days find themselves attracted to folk, country, blues, and other distinctly American styles is that in this age of rampant technical "doctoring," roots music at least attempts to represent some kind of purity, or realness. And Levon was the *original* real deal. As a kid in the rural South of the 1950s, he witnessed in person the birth of rock 'n' roll. R&B, country swing, gospel music—to Levon, it all naturally cohabitated in the music of Elvis Presley and Little Richard, Bo Diddley and Johnny Cash. And for ten long years before anybody would hear his remarkable voice introduce "The Weight" with that timeless line, "Pulled into Nazareth, I was feeling 'bout half past dead," Helm honed his craft and paid more than his share of dues. And when, in the drummer's estimation, the price became too steep—his self-respect, in return for the fame gained by backing Bob Dylan in the folk iconoclast's nearly masochistic 1965 electric sets—Levon said, in effect, "I'd rather work on an oil rig than get booed by the ignorant masses." And that's just what he did.

It's no small fact that before the Band, there was Levon and the Hawks. Like far too few leaders, though, Levon didn't wear his stripes on his sleeve. Just by being himself—honest, earnest, caring—he drew you into his world and led you on a trip. Sure, it was someone else's words he sang, but as narrator and rhythmic interpreter of some of Robbie Robertson's greatest lyrics, Helm inhabited his bandmate's songs with absolute conviction, and our attention to the details of "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," "Up on Cripple Creek," and "Ophelia" wouldn't be nearly as strong if someone else was at the mic, or at the kit.

At a party a couple years ago, some drummer friends were saying they'd recently adopted a mantra for times when a tough musical or personal decision needed to be made—WWLD: "What would Levon do?" They were half kidding, but the message was clear. By setting a standard of greatness and absolute sincerity, Levon Helm inspired many of us to pursue the highest levels of quality and honesty in our own work. For that, he will be greatly missed.

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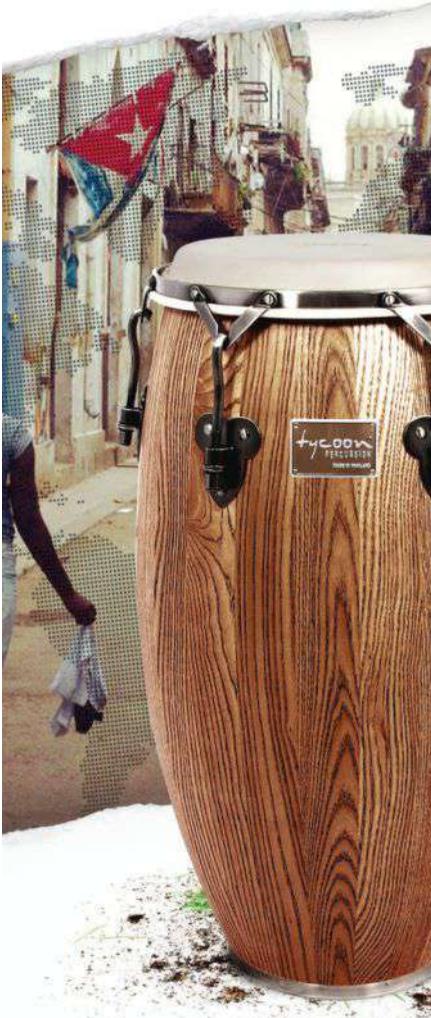
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ROY, JACK, AND TERRI

Thank you for the June 2012 article on Roy Haynes, Jack DeJohnette, and Terri Lyne Carrington. The words of these three are priceless. If only someone would make a book or video with Roy! His knowledge could fill several volumes, and his information and wisdom would be invaluable. Thanks for giving us these nuggets.

Mark Feldman, Bang! the Drum School



MATT HALPERN

I read your July cover story on Matt Halpern, and I must admit I was a little confused by some of what Halpern is saying, at times seemingly contradicting himself. When talking about his track "Mile Zero," he says it was "one take, start to finish." And then he says, "We did quantize the drums after that.... That's a big part of Periphery's sound, being very tight rhythmically."

The fact that he performed this in one take is a moot point, since the drums ended up being quantized. Also, being very tight is the goal of any band and doesn't make Periphery unique in our digital age. I will give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that most of his parts aren't quantized, but for a musician who emphasizes feel above all else (i.e., he has mastered three different grips to accommodate various styles), I am surprised that someone of his caliber would resort to any quantization. Editing tools can, of course, make quantized parts feel good with minimal surgery, but it is no longer the drummer's feel once he's quantized.

Eddie Vesely

CLIVE BURR

I read with great interest the article on Clive Burr in the June issue (What Do You Know About...?). I've been a big fan of his, and as a drummer with MS I feel a kinship with him. Though I am still ambulatory, MS has really done a number on my ability to play. My limbs just don't work right, especially my legs. I am sorry to learn of Clive being totally unable to play, but I remain hopeful that a cure for this disease will be found, and maybe a way to repair the damage will be found so that we will both be able to really play again.

Joe Stack

RICH REDMOND'S CRASH COURSE

I enjoyed reading part two of Rich Redmond's "CRASH Course to Success" series in the May issue. Rich really hit the nail on the head by stressing the importance of forming and maintaining strong, healthy relationships. I believe character traits such as dependability, punctuality, and being a team player can be equally as important as musicianship. Thanks, Rich, for such wonderful advice—it should always be at the forefront of every musician's mind!

Wayne Joyal

VINNY APPICE

I've always been enthusiastic about writing in, but after the May 2012 cover story on Vinny, I had to. I've been a big fan ever since I first heard and saw him play as a kid. I was fortunate enough to see his new band, Kill Devil Hill (great show), and meet him. A true class act and a total professional, Vinny has inspired me to be an all-around better drummer—and human being. Kudos for a great article on one of the best drummers out there. Keep sending the heavy hitters!

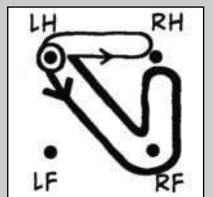
Anthony Angelo Bera



Bera and Appice

Dropped Beat

In George Marsh's "Inner Drumming, Part 2," in the June issue, the second diagram on page 65 is incorrect. Here's the right one.



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Alison Tavel

MATT BURR

Grace Potter & the Nocturnals' drummer cites one source for all that's important to his playing career—the man on the cover of this magazine.

When Matt Burr plays the drums, it booms through your body and down to the soles of your feet. On *The Lion the Beast the Beat*, his fifth album with Grace Potter & the Nocturnals, he provides groove aplenty with a singular influence.

"The reason I first started drumming was Levon Helm in *The Last Waltz*," the thirty-one-year-old Burr says. "That's my holy grail. Not just his drumming, but the idea that rock 'n' roll and playing drums can be fun. Levon was such an epiphany for me. He's playing as simple as can be, yet it seems so technical, and he's having

the time of his life. I still think of Levon during our shows. So my drumming is all about meat and potatoes with a little gravy. That's my mantra."

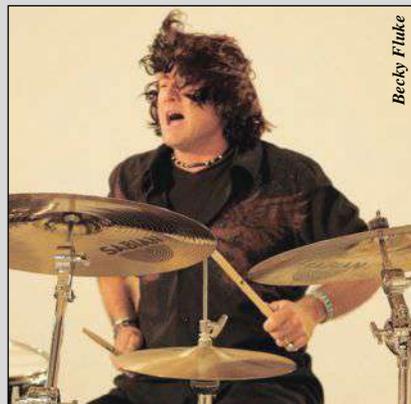
Using a programmed drummer as his click track and taking rhythmic ideas from Potter (herself a drummer), Burr prefers a behind-the-beat approach. "That can stop forward momentum," he says, "but the band likes that feel. It was fun to challenge the click track and play around it. That allowed me to lose myself more than playing to an ordinary click track would. I grooved more; it was like playing as two

drummers, which I love."

A relaxed feel and the tone of his kit—which features single-headed toms tuned low—are Burr's trademarks, as sure as Helm is his main man. "We played a *Midnight Ramble* in 2003," Matt recalls, "and that was one of the most precious and nerve-racking moments of my life. I was playing his drumset. My eyes popped. Then I met Levon after the show. He came up with a smile with his Southern personality, shook my hand, and said, 'Thanks for coming to my house.' He wore his joy on his sleeve." **Ken Micallef**

SEAN O'ROURKE

A journeyman reaps success via subtraction with the Avant Garde Dogs.



Becky Fluke

At an early age, the Atlanta session vet Sean O'Rourke learned a valuable lesson in keeping it simple. "My grandfather, who was also a drummer, taught me the importance of creating musical phrases on a small kit with no toms," O'Rourke recalls. "I learned to get multiple sounds from a single snare drum and to build my phrasing between the kick and snare. I started playing at age three and didn't start using toms until high school."

O'Rourke has worked with such notable roots-rock, blues, funk, soul, and country icons as Sugarland, Derek Trucks, Mother's Finest, William Bell, and Howard Tate. His most recent project, the Avant Garde Dogs, whose latest album he also produced and mixed, highlights the drummer's penchant for organic grooves with an old-school feel and a bluesy roots-rock vibe.

"My whole philosophy of drumming

is to keep it simple and stay out of the singer's way," O'Rourke says. "And there's no better way to do that than to remove sound sources that you don't really need. After I recorded *The Calling* with the fusion troupe Aquarium Rescue Unit on a big kit, blowing chops all over the place, I came back to Atlanta and started gigging again with just a kick, hat, snare, and 18" cymbal."

O'Rourke has developed a solid home-studio production setup that allows him to fine-tune his engineering skills. Recent work includes solo projects for Gary "Moses Mo" Moore and Jerry "Wyzard" Seay of Mother's Finest. "I engineer most of my tracks and mix many of the projects I'm involved with," O'Rourke says. "I just recorded tracks for keyboardist/producer Mo Pleasure [David Foster, Michael Jackson, Earth, Wind & Fire] and for

keyboardist/musical director Wizard Jones [Justin Bieber]."

O'Rourke also recently worked with producer John Kurzweg (Creed, Godsmack, Puddle of Mudd), who complimented the drummer on his homegrown studio mixes. "My goal," Sean says, "is to develop my own sound from my own studio and make a living by going to work each day in my own backyard."

Mike Haid

JOACHIM COODER

With a trunk full of valuable lessons learned at the feet of studio marvel Jim Keltner, the **all-around musician** comes ready for any challenge.

Whether recording with the Buena Vista Social Club, with his dad, Ry Cooder, or with any number of eclectic artists, Joachim Cooder can be nearly all things to all musicians. Equal parts drummer, percussionist, and sonic texturalist, Cooder typically brings a small percussive arsenal to every session. Many of these sounds can be heard on his debut recording as a leader, *Love on a Real Train*.

"I lean toward textural soundscapes," Joachim explains. "It came naturally while watching my dad doing film scores when I was growing up. Also, being around [regular Ry collaborator] Jim Keltner was a huge influence, not only as a drummer, but as someone who experiments with sampling. I watched him do that, then started buying samplers, and it all came together."

Most recently Cooder recorded albums for Carly Ritter (granddaughter of country legend Tex Ritter); the Bird and the Bee's Juliette Commagere, who is also Joachim's wife; and *American Idol* contestant Casey Abrams. Cooder says he takes a similar approach regardless of the artist. "For Casey Abrams I replaced an electronic loop with real drums. I always bring crazy percussion too, just in case that's what's needed. I invariably start with



Julia Brokaw

some ethnic thing, whether it's the gamelan from Bali or doumbeks. For Buena Vista, I wasn't going to show up in Cuba with a conga and bongos. I can't do what they do, so I brought what I do. That was the udu drum—the clay pot—and Middle Eastern-style drums, which the Cubans got a kick out of because it's so different from what they have."

Cooder also creates sampled templates that can summon an otherworldly aesthetic. "I love sampling things like a shaker part or a bell pattern, then pitching it way down," he says. "Slowed-down percussion has a mournful quality that I like. 'Space Shells' from *Love on a Real Train*, for instance, is a slowed-down loop of shakers. You have to be prepared, whatever the situation." **Ken Micallef**

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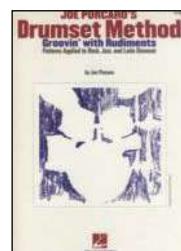
"Fluke" Holland, Mark Ellerbee, Buddy Harman, Roy Huskey, Kenny Malone) /// **Peter**

Appleyard *Sophisticated Ladies* (Terry Clarke)

/// **Greg Lewis/Organ Monk** *Uwo* in the Black

(Nasheet Waits) /// **Ben Folds Five** *The Sound of the Life of the Mind* (Darren Jessee) /// **Macey**

Parker *Soul Classics* (Cora Coleman-Dunham)



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BRIT TURNER

No use for a click: **Blackberry Smoke**, one of new country's hottest acts, keeps it *real* real.

The band that locks in," Blackberry Smoke's Brit Turner says, "that's what it's all about to me." Turner has been the anchor of his group's classic Southern-rock sound for a decade, and he gives his most solidly bombastic performance yet on the new release *The Whippoorwill*.

"I'm more Phil Rudd than Vinnie Colaiuta, that's for sure," Turner says. "It's about the song. What I started listening to at a young age—Bun E. Carlos with Cheap Trick, Levon Helm with the Band, Nigel Olsson with Elton John—those drummers played for the song. They've already got the gig—they're not trying to show what they've got on every song."

Turner started playing drums in sixth-grade band, splitting time between the soccer field and a school practice room where a drumset was available. "I'd take my *Highway to Hell* cassette tape, run in there, and just play along with AC/DC," he recalls with a chuckle. "After I got heavy metal out of my system, it was Americana, rock 'n' roll, and country music like Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson. I'm lucky I got



Cole Cassell/Southern Reel

exposed to that stuff."

Brit's brother Richard is Blackberry Smoke's bassist, and according to the drummer, the siblings have an extra layer of cohesion. "Richard may turn around and give me a look *before* I make a mistake," Turner says. "We're that locked in. But it's cool, because we both also really love the looseness of the Rolling Stones."

After touring and recording with the band Buffalo Nickel as sidemen in 2000, the Turners, along with vocalist Charlie Starr and guitarist Paul Jackson, left to start Blackberry Smoke. Solid touring and a great live show brought them to the attention of country star Zac Brown several years ago.

Coproducers Brown, Clay Cook, and Matt Mangano decided against using a click track for the recording of *The Whippoorwill*. "They were like, 'If we play it with a click, these songs are going to miss certain moments, because you guys have played together for so long,'" Turner explains. "We did seventeen songs in four days, and there are definitely moments that wouldn't have been there if we'd used a click." The producers favored a big room sound, brought to life via vintage mics. "I also like the fact that it's my drumset you hear on the album," Turner adds. "My snare, my cymbals—when you hear me live, that's what I'm playing. That matters to me." **Robin Tolleson**

NEWS



The New York City drumming community came together this past July 10 to honor **Sam Ulano**. The event, which was hosted by DrumSummit.com's Peter Greco at Sam Ash Music on 48th Street in

Manhattan, combined a clinic by Ulano with a celebration of his ninety-second birthday. The controversial instructor famously denounces rudiments and supports the use of metal practice sticks to improve hand and arm strength. "If I hadn't practiced with metal sticks all these years," Sam insisted, "there's no way I could still be playing at ninety-two years old." Among those on hand were veteran TV and Broadway drummer Ray Marchica and *Modern Drummer* ad director Bob Berenson. Fred and Dinah Gretsich sent a personal birthday card to Sam, offering the good wishes of everyone at the Gretsich Company. The clinic was cosponsored by Gretsich, Sabian, Remo, Sam Ash Music, and DrumSummit.com.

The Percussive Arts Society recently inducted studio legend **Hal Blaine**, world percussionist **John Bergamo**, funk pioneer **David**

Garibaldi, and marimbist **Gordon Stout** to its Hall of Fame class of 2012, joining a group of only 110 percussionists honored since the Hall's inception in 1972. Previous inductees include the drumset luminaries Baby Dodds, Jo Jones, Gene Krupa, Max Roach, Buddy Rich, Tony Williams, Shelly Manne, and Jack DeJohnette.

The Guinness world record for the largest full drumkit ensemble was broken this past July 15 at Stick It to MS 2012, held at EventCity in Manchester, England, and sponsored by Natal Drums. For five minutes, 798 drummers from the U.K., Europe, and the U.S. played together, smashing the previous record of 582 drummers, set back in 2009. Among the Natal artists who took part in the event were Darrin Mooney (Primal Scream), Andy Treacey (Faithless, Groove Armada), Sudha Khetarpal (Faithless), Russell Gilbrook (Uriah Heep), Swiss Chris (Snoop Dogg, John Legend), Steve Grantley (Stiff Little Fingers), and Robin Guy (GMT), plus other top players including Steve White (Paul Weller), Mike Joyce (the Smiths), and Pete Salisbury (the Verve). More than £100,000 is expected to be raised from the event for the Multiple Sclerosis Society.

ON TOUR



Patrick McGee with Stars /// **Steve Hass** with Patti Austin /// **Monte Yoho** with the Outlaws /// **Chris Gaylor** with the All-

American Rejects /// **Ed Graham** with the Darkness /// **Byron McMackin** with Pennywise /// **Iffernaut** with Black Moth Super Rainbow

WHO'S PLAYING WHAT



Jamie Levinson and **Matthew Clark** of White Rabbits are playing Dixon drums.

Jose Pasillas of Incubus has joined the Vater artist roster.

Los Cabos Drumsticks has welcomed Pinback's **Chris Prescott** to its family of endorsers.





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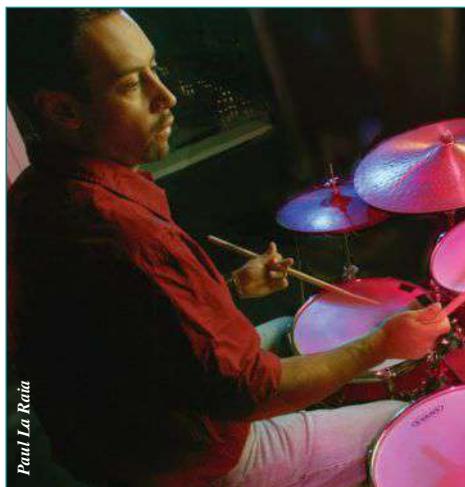
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Must-Have Gear

Equipment the Pros Won't Leave Home Without

This month: 2012 PRO PANELIST **ANTONIO SANCHEZ**, who's been touring the world with guitar great Pat Metheny for much of the year.



Paul La Raia

As a traveling drummer in the jazz world, the most important things I bring with me are my cymbals: an old 21" K Zildjian ride, a 22" Medium Thin High Constantinople ride, old 14" A Zildjian hi-hats, a 6" A Custom splash, a 22" prototype Flat ride, and an 18" prototype crash. Even if I get stuck with a crappy drumset, at least I know I'll have part of my personal sound intact. A soft bass drum beater has also saved me on several occasions where there were only wood beaters. Last but not least: lots of cymbal felts and a big lifesaving roll of strong gaffer's tape—it's amazing how useful this can be for quick repairs of any kind, dampening drums or cymbals, or stopping stuff from sliding around.



Back Through the Stack

GET GOOD
STUDIO SOUNDS
by Patrick Berman

SELECT YOUR DRUMMER **SELECT YOUR KIT** **SELECT YOUR MICS**

S There's a specific drum sound you're going for on the studio. It could be something that's already on record, the hit cymbal that's Mark Tompkins's solo on *Rocky Horror*. Or maybe it's a sound you hear in your head—a blast of a *Sliver* Jordan-style high-powered snare, a warm, relaxing kick like John Bonham's, a range of glass-perfect toms à la Neil Peart, and some big, woody cymbals like Dave Weck's.

To achieve your desired sound, whatever it may be, you research the makes and models of the drums and cymbals used by the players involved. The microphones and mixing consoles employed on the recording, the type of room the drums were tracked in, how the drums were tuned, and what kind of muffling was used on the snare. You try recording with exactly the gear you researched, or as close as you can get. Then you listen to the playback—and it sounds nothing like the drum sound you were after. The engineer fiddles with mix placement, you try re-tuning, the producer suggests a little more compression, you hit the record button again, and... it's still not making it.

In your quest to get the magical drum sound, you might have overlooked one very important variable that has nothing to do with the make and make of gear or track staff. The producers might be with you.

"They recognize who really knows what they're doing and tell you that the most important thing in the signal path is the player," says the venerable engineer Davey Steven Nator. "After that it's kind of a tie between the instrument and the room it's being played in."

Yes, how you play the drums in the studio is pretty much square one when it comes to getting a good sound—on any set, for any style of music, in any kind of studio setting. If you're trying to load the sound into the drum rather than trying the drum on its job, you know why you're not getting the sound you want. The natural tone of your kit and cymbals that you record all of high-intensity live drums that you're probably going to need into every mix on the set and expect every effect on those mixes. That's going to make for a hot mess of high-frequency.

Of course, the kind of drums and cymbals you use on a particular session also matters. You wouldn't want to use an old Ludwig Club DeHo kit on a metal session, nor would you expect to play on a particular drum set—especially if you're in a peccable state

that's based to record live in general. But what you—*the artist, the producer, or the engineer*—decides to be the right gear for the job is just part of the equation involved in getting a good drum sound on the studio.

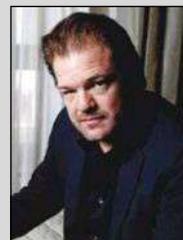
To have your drum sound that equates, will come with your session suite of varying past-greats. Maybe a jazz-travel drummer who has recorded with George Marino, local engineer Dave Allen, famed producer Daniel Laskin, and many others; Jay Bellorose, whose original machine cymbals—built around a business for vintage-Singerland Rolling Bomber kits and a penchant for using maracas and shakers to create the new kit's rich, noisy sound—has produced many a T Bone Burnett production; and Steven Wolf, an on-demand pop-rock and folk drummer, producer, and programmer who often handles and maintains his kit with programmed parts and samples.

While the gig and your input offer for these drum players, all of them know what goes into achieving the proper sound for the job at hand. It takes knowing the right tools—*not necessarily the fanciest or most expensive ones*—and the right touch. It takes knowing when to stop and leaving your ears, eyes, and mind open.

March 2011 • MODERN DRUMMER 21

In the "Get Good: Studio Sounds" feature in the March 2011 issue, we asked **Jay Bellerose** about the tones he achieves when recording with people like the roots-music legend T Bone Burnett.

I love really murky, dark, warm-sounding drums. An important thing is trusting and knowing the engineer. I'm working with great engineers. Ryan Freeland, who works with Joe Henry, and T Bone's engineer, Mike Piersante—those guys really have my back. I can go as far as I want to go. And if I go too far, they'll tell me if it's not translating. There's a great communication going on with those guys. That's a huge part of my sound.



I have the same kind of touch on all drums. Maybe I have the tendency to play a little lighter on calf heads. With [my Slingerland Rolling Bomber] drums, the quieter you play them, the better and the bigger they sound. That's another thing that working in the studio with T Bone reinforced for me. He really loves when you play soft. On the Robert Plant/Alison Krauss record [*Raising Sand*] I was playing really light. They encouraged it.

When I would go into the control room to listen back, they'd turn the drums up. Instead of hitting hard and the notes getting more compressed and smaller, it was the opposite. You'd hit softer, and they'd turn the gain up. It'd sound like a million bucks. You really get the true tone and roundness of the instrument. It's all touch with those beautiful old instruments. Violins, mandolins—when you let the mic do the work, that's when the sound is really gonna happen.

TONY THAXTON

Motion City Soundtrack recently released its fifth album, *Go*, and is hitting the road hard in support of it. Here the pop-punk band's indestructible drummer reminds us to lighten up in the studio and lock in on stage.



Joe Lemke

1 TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE STUDIO. *Go* is easily my favorite Motion City Soundtrack record. Doing it at Flowers in Minneapolis afforded us the time to really maximize the studio to the fullest and experiment with different approaches. There are more tones and textures than on previous MCS records—that's to [producer] Ed Ackerson's credit. "Happy Anniversary" has three different drumkits going at the same time in the verses, and it sounds massive. I love doing stuff like that.

2 TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS. A lot of what I end up playing is based on my first impression. I don't really plan parts out. Unless the song takes a totally different direction—like "Son of a Gun," which underwent lots of permutations—my gut instinct is usually what sticks.

3 GO FOR BROKE EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE. In the past I wanted each drum track to be as real as it could be, with as few punches as possible—I wanted to just nail each take. But with *Go*, we tracked certain songs section by section. I was like, "Punch me in right here; I want to do a totally different fill. It might be stupid, but let me just try it." Then you're not wasting a whole take by taking crazy chances. You can't tell listening back to it after it's compiled, and it might make the track better.

4 BE UNIQUE, BUT ALWAYS BE SUPPORTIVE. There's a fine line between playing something interesting and playing for the song, which is the most important thing at the end of the day. Yeah, maybe you can stick some crazy fills in, but if they're distracting from the song, don't do it. With me, it usually doesn't even get as far as the band or producer having to tell me to tone it down. If I get the inkling that a part or a fill is probably too much, it usually is.

5 SMOOTH OUT ODD TIMES. With odd times, you definitely have to think a little more, but sacrificing feel for complexity can be a mistake. My favorite song on *Go* is "Boxelder," which is in 7/4. Josh [Cain] originally brought in the guitar part, which sounded very bizarre on its own. Matt [Taylor] added a cool, moving bass line that I briefly tried matching, but it felt wrong. To me, the solution was straightening it out with four on the floor—I guess seven on the floor, actually. That way the drum track stays driving, even though the song is choppy and weird.

6 KEEP THINGS FRESH. My least favorite thing about touring is playing the same songs over and over. It's been more fun recently, because we switch it up every night, being that we now have five records to pull from. That helps—I really have to think when we play. Getting to the point where you're just on autopilot with a set can be kind of mindless. You're not really growing as a player.

7 THE CLICK IS YOUR FRIEND. I started using one all the time after *Even If It Kills Me* came out in '07. I would hear or see live recordings and be pissed at myself because of how fast everything was. It always seems spot-on in the heat of the moment, but... Now I love knowing everything is at the right tempo. I thought I was going to hate it, but after one show the click just disappears. You get used to it and you don't even think about it. Playing to a click every night also improves your internal clock. We recently played a festival in Europe where I didn't have the click, and our sound guy said he didn't even notice. It helps you learn what spots you want to push and where you need to pull back, so that if you get in a situation where you don't have the click, you have those mental notes to reference.

8 IF YOU SING, DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE. When you know you have to sing a lot on a particular song, pull back on the drums. We have a tune on *My Dinosaur Life* called "Pulp Fiction" that has these "ahs" at the end, sung over this fast 16th-note beat. Thankfully, the quietest moment of the song happens right before I have to sing, so I take a few deep breaths while playing this little ride part—then I can kick it in with ample air in my lungs.

9 BOND WITH YOUR BASSIST. Matt and I have been playing together since we were fourteen—going on twenty years. We never talk about our parts. We just play. There might be a song where we feel we need to do a syncopated thing where the kick lines up exactly with the bass. Like the back half of the verses in "The Coma Kid," that's something we just did. There was no discussion. I've been playing with some other guys for fun back in L.A., and the bassist is great, but he definitely talks to me a lot more about what we want to do here or there. It's different, because again, I tend to just do, not really think or talk.

10 APPROPRIATE YOUR INFLUENCES' VIBES. My style came from listening to different drummers—playing along to records and figuring out how they did certain things. You take licks from other players and make them your own. On every single one of our records, I'll hear a part and go, "That's totally so-and-so's fill that I lifted," but I didn't realize it when we were recording. It's good to have diverse influences. I didn't just listen to super-fast punk music all the time. Our song "Hold Me Down" from *Commit This to Memory* has a fill that I ripped off from a James Brown track. I always thought that fill was cool, and I love that I was able to fit it into such a different musical context.





WWII-Era Bass Drum

I just finished reading the Shop Talk article in the August 2012 issue, on the drums of World War II. I have a 30" concert bass drum from that era, and I'd like to find out what you might know about it. I restored it, gold-plated the tension rods, and replaced one of the heads, but it still has an original calfskin head.

Carlos

We sent your question to the author of that Shop Talk column, Mark Cooper, to get his insight. Here's what he had to say: "During the second world war, the U.S. government imposed restrictions on the use of critical materials in the manufacture of nonessential items such as musical instruments. Beginning in the summer of 1942, drum companies were required to build their drums using very few metal components, which couldn't exceed 10 percent of an instrument's total weight. Each drum company had its own unique way of complying with this government order. While drum shells remained basically the same as their pre-war counterparts, most were outfitted with maple hoops and large, solid wood lugs through which metal tension rods passed. Colorful names were given to these wartime drums, such as Dreadnought, Defender, Rolling Bomber, and Victorious.

"This bass drum is a Ludwig & Ludwig Victory model. While it has an outer ply of mahogany, most likely it was originally wrapped in a pearl covering. Mahogany-finish drums were available, but the lack of the white-oval Ludwig & Ludwig metal badge suggests that the drum was stripped of its pearl finish. This bass drum was made around 1943. An exact date can often be determined by examining the inner shell for a date stamp such as '4308,' which means August 1943. Based on its condition and originality, the value of this bass drum would be between \$250 and \$300 in today's market."

MIND MATTERS

by Bernie Schallehn

Covers or Originals: Which Band Should I Choose?

I'm currently drumming in a cover band and a group that plays only originals. The original band is the newer of the two—we've had just two rehearsals—and this is my first time performing all-original music. That project demands the most rehearsal time, but it may hold promise. My cover band is comfortable and has regular gigs. Here's my problem: Recently my day job has gotten intense, and I no longer have the time to juggle both bands. I need to quit one, but I can't decide. Can you help?

F.S.

Sure, but first I'd like you to file away one important phrase in the back of your mind: Follow your bliss. We'll return to this later.

Now get your laptop or go grab a pen and paper. I want to perform some consciousness-raising, regarding cover bands and all-original projects. I'll then ask that you write answers to some questions that are specific to your dilemma.

THE COVER BAND

First of all, a cover band is easier to book. Clubs usually advertise which genres of music they feature: blues, country, metal, classic rock, and so on. That helps you avoid wasting time trying to book your Celtic rock band in a place that presents only soul music.

Now, you mentioned that your cover band is comfortable. If a drummer is good at memorizing, he or she will learn a cover repertoire relatively quickly, through listening or playing along to the original recordings. Plus, you may have already known some, if not many, of the songs before you joined. A cover band might update its material on a regular basis or keep the same songs it's had for years.

The money may be better with a cover band. Club audiences—especially if they're having a few cocktails—want to hear something that's familiar to them. They don't want to have to work at figuring out where an original song is going. Patrons are there to be entertained and not have their listening skills taxed. If you're in a good cover band, playing songs as close to the original versions as you can and with pizzazz, you're more inclined to build a bigger fan base. More fans equals more people at your gigs, which equals more money for the club at the bar. The ripple effect is that the club owner or agent is more apt to pay you more and book repeat performances.

THE ORIGINAL BAND

Unless you're working with a domineering bandleader who tells you exactly what to play, you ultimately determine what to lay down in support of the songs. Creatively, you express more of who you are as a drummer in this situation. Because you have more artistic freedom, you're not hemmed in to sound just like another drummer who was featured on the original recording of the tune you're playing.

You're also more apt to be "discovered" by a record company rep if you're performing songs that are uniquely your own. And you may build a large following with fans who are tired of hearing covers and are drawn to something different.

There's an old adage that says you'll never be a star in your own backyard. With an original project, you might have to tour to get a following and recognition. (You state that your original band "may hold

promise." Although you mention that your day job has gotten intense, I'm not sure of your musical goals. Promise could simply mean that the band proves personally fulfilling, or it could connote an aspiration to someday be playing to sold-out arenas.) Some original bands, however, have no intention of ever coming out of the basement. The goal is simply to play music, jam, and maybe record a bit. Gigging is not a goal.

ASK YOURSELF...

Okay, now it's time to put your fingers on the keyboard or pick up the pen. We'll focus first on your cover band. Answer the following questions.

How important is the money you make with your cover band? How much would your life be diminished if you weren't collecting the cash from your regular gigs? If you played for free, would you have the same enthusiasm as you do when you're getting paid? Does performing the music in your cover band fill your heart and soul as well as your pocket? Do you smile and enjoy yourself when you perform?

Now let's move to the original band.

Although you've rehearsed with this group just twice, write down some adjectives that describe how you feel when you're playing those original songs. Do you (and your bandmates) have aspirations of getting signed to a record label? If the band were to tour, would you and *could* you arrange to take leave from your day job? Would you quit your day job to go on the road?

Let's do a quick exercise I call eco-check. Close your eyes and visualize playing in the cover band. Take note of how your body feels. If there's any discomfort anywhere in your physical being, try to put a name to that feeling. Repeat the exercise and visualize performing with the original band.

I know cover-band drummers who've played with the same guys for more than twenty years, and they perform with joy in their hearts and light in their eyes. I also have drummer friends playing original music that tour and barely break even, but they have a ball. They wouldn't trade their experiences for all the money in the world.

We'll end where we started, with a three-word suggestion from the philosopher Joseph Campbell: Follow your bliss.



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

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I'm a Natural!

"My name is Melissa Houston. I'm a Canadian-born, New York City-based drummer and owner of Drums and Other Noise Productions. I also teach drums at the Willie Mae Rock Camp for Girls. I started drumming at 8 years old. I was a shy kid, and rock n' roll drumming was the way I could express myself the loudest. I love teaching because it gives the girls the opportunity to do the same. Supernaturals are the most musical cymbals I have ever heard, made by people who clearly care deeply about music. The Diamond Drives are the pinnacle of cut, tone and versatility. They never leave my kit."

Melissa Houston
Currently playing with Jane Lee Hooker and teaching at Willie Mae ROCK CAMP FOR GIRLS

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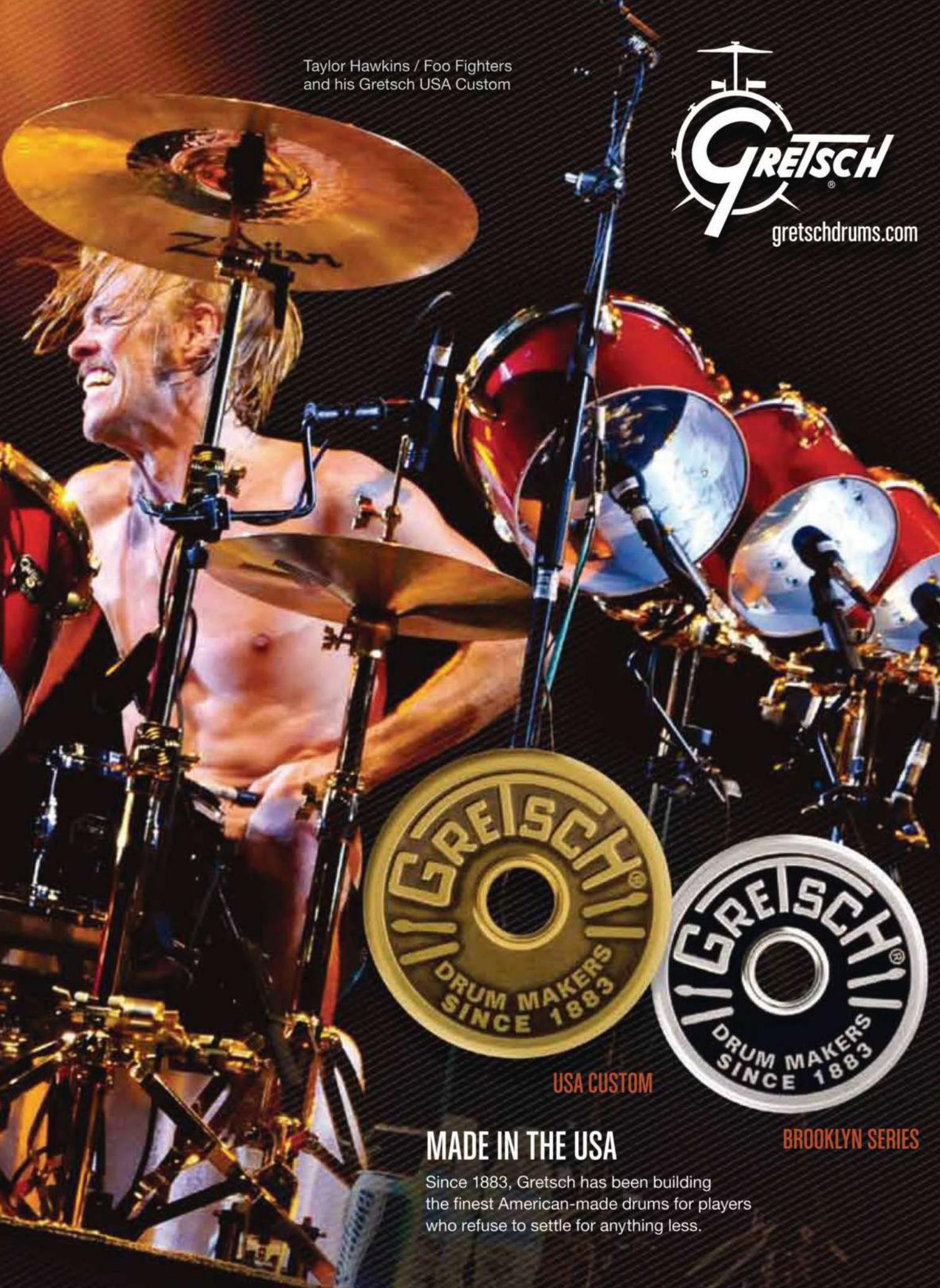
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PAISTE

PST 8 Series Cymbals

by Ben Lauffer

Paiste claims the PST 8 series can handle a variety of styles, but we found that these cymbals, with the exception of a few models, best lent themselves to a more aggressive, high-energy type of playing (punk, metal, hard rock) while at the same time keeping the conscientious shopper in mind. The line features Medium and Rock weights, as well as a Thin splash and specific pieces designed for cajon players.

HI-HATS

The 14" Medium hi-hats (\$296) had a really nice feel—not too heavy yet not at all brittle. Combining a very crisp, clean sound with a little weight allows them to perform well in a variety of styles. When played tightly closed, they had a full sound while retaining a light overall feel. They also had a very tight and articulate foot chick that cut through guitar and bass during a loud rehearsal.

The 14" Rock hi-hats (\$296) were similar to the Mediums, but with a darker sound that was able to project with ease at high volumes. These cymbals had a definite crunch to them. The 14" Sound Edge hi-hats (\$296) were brighter sounding than the Rock models, but because of the thin, crimped bottom cymbal, they lost projection. When I played the Sound Edges in a closed position with the shoulder of the stick, they produced a heavy attack that still retained definition. While I didn't have to worry about air lock, thanks to the crimped edge of the bottom cymbal, I felt these hats had a thin-sounding chick that left me wanting more.

The 12" Cajon hi-hats (\$224) are very thin cymbals that worked well at low to medium-low volumes. They were very crisp sounding and high in pitch. In addition to being suitable for percussionists, they would make a great pair of auxiliary hi-hats, especially for a tight, articulate closed sound. When I played them along with my cajon, they

The Basics

The Paiste Sound Technology (PST) series has expanded once again with the addition of the PST 8 line. Crafted from the company's legendary 2002 bronze, with a ratio of 92 percent copper to 8 percent tin, and featuring Paiste's Reflector finish, these cymbals have a very focused and bright sonority.

blended very well, both in color and in volume. They're thin enough that you can play them with bundle sticks or your hands and still extract a defined sound.

CRASHES

The 16" Medium crash (\$188) is a very full-bodied cymbal that had a quick response with a nice crash at any dynamic, plus a very focused and glossy sound with a moderate to long sustain. The 18" Medium crash (\$226) can be summarized in one word: glossy. It had a moderate amount of stick definition with a long decay and shimmer.

The 16" Rock crash (\$188) is a higher-pitched cymbal that blended well with the other Rock crashes. It's not the one to hit when you're looking for extreme volume and aggression, but it complemented the other cymbals nicely. The 17" Rock crash (\$208) had a very quick response with a long decay, but the fundamental pitch was muddled and unfocused. The 18" Rock crash (\$226) was the loudest of the bunch but wasn't as full-bodied as I expected. This cymbal was quite piercing.

The 16" Cajon crash (\$188) is a very thin cymbal with a super-quick attack. It's designed for low-volume playing, yet it never choked out when crashed vigorously. When playing it with my hands, I was able to get a nice crash sound with little attack.

RIDES

The 20" Medium ride (\$260), which had a very clear attack with a lot of sustain, was my favorite of the rides in the PST 8 series. The bell was high pitched and loud but not overpowering. When crashed, this ride almost washed out but still retained its definition. Constant crashes did become somewhat overpowering, however.

The 20" Rock ride (\$260) was lower in pitch than the 20" Medium and was a bit unstable when crashed. It offered a good amount of stick definition but was the least versatile of the three rides.

Need a cymbal that can clearly and effectively articulate fast rhythmic phrases? Try the 22" Rock ride (\$328). This is a very powerful and loud model with a colorful-sounding bell capable of generating different tones. Like the other rides, it could be used for an occasional crash, but continued crashes tended to wash out.



CHINAS

The 16" PST 8 China (\$188) had a very metallic character with a piercing high end. The sustain was long, with a tremendous amount of stick definition, but the cymbal did wash out when struck repeatedly.

The 18" Rock China (\$226) produced more overtones than the 16", but it was still very focused sounding. Like the 16", it had a long decay. Both Chinas would be well suited for quick accented passages when you need a little extra bark.

SPLASHES

I really liked the 10" PST 8 Thin splash (\$104). It had an underlying Asian-sounding drone that complemented the initial focused attack very nicely. It sounded lively at all dynamics but really excelled when hit hard.

The 10" Rock splash (\$104) had a fast attack with a bell-curve-like sustain, where the sound dropped off quickly and then remained at a low volume for a few seconds.

FINAL THOUGHTS

These PST 8 models aren't for everyone. But reflecting on my first set of entry-level cymbals, I realized how high the bar has been raised for instruments in a lower price range. Paiste PST 8s don't sound like toys. Why? Because they're not! The alloy used in them is the same as what the company employs in its Giant Beat, 2002, and Rude series. If you're looking for quality cymbals that won't break the bank, PST 8s are definitely worth checking out.

paiste.com



C&C

Player Date Drumset

MODERNDRUMMER
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

by Michael Dawson

One of the more impressive offerings we heard at this year's winter NAMM show was the Player Date drumset from C&C, which is based in Gladstone, Missouri. These unassuming drums feature a classic single-lug design with long tension rods, and they're finished in a subtle yet gorgeous honey lacquer. (Other finishes include silver sparkle wrap and mahogany lacquer.) The bass drum has dark-finish wood hoops with white marine pearl inlays. Player Date shells are

made with seven plies of luan mahogany and feature rounded vintage-style bearing edges.

The four-piece shell pack we received is the Big Beat configuration, which consists of a 14x22 eight-lug bass drum, a 9x13 six-lug rack tom (with no mounting hardware), a 16x16 eight-lug floor tom, and a 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x14 matching eight-lug snare. (A smaller Be-Bop configuration is also available.) The Big Beat setup, in a lacquer finish, retails for \$1,745 with the matching

snare or \$1,337 without the snare.

The decision to use luan mahogany, a soft wood that gets a bad rap in drum manufacturing because cheap versions of it are often found in low-quality import kits, stems back to conversations between C&C's Jake and Bill Cardwell and the top touring/studio drummer Joey Waronker. Waronker, who's a genius at getting amazingly fat tones and is also a rabid collector of vintage drums, has long been an advocate of luan. He convinced C&C to



make him a luan kit, and the surprising results led to the development of the Player Date series. “We went the extra mile to get the highest-quality luan we could find,” Jake Cardwell says. “We’re in the midst of changing the connotation that luan is just meant for cheap drums. It’s one of the most musical woods we’ve worked with.”

The first thing we noticed when we pulled the rack tom out of the box and gave it a quick hit was how amazingly mellow and warm it sounded. The attack on these drums, especially the rack tom, was very round, while the sustain was fat and the decay quick. The combined tone was very meaty and pre-compressed sounding. The floor tom was more reverberant, and it reminded me a bit of timpani—especially when played at higher tunings.

Speaking of tuning, Jake Cardwell suggests that Player Date drums sound best at lower tensions: “I like to tune them low,” he says, “which is one of the reasons the single lug works so well: Less mass on the softer mahogany makes it easier to get nice low-end notes that don’t die right away.”

In our testing, the Player Date kit definitely sounded excellent when tuned low. The bass drum, with no muffling inside, had a big, fluffy tone with a chesty and distinct punch (not a thin “click”). The floor tom also took on a punchy kick-drum-like character at lower tunings, similar to the huge sound employed by the late, great Levon Helm on the Band’s classic track “The Weight.”

The rack tom had tons of low end when tuned low, and the snare was total Stan Lynch fatback when detuned and muffled with tape and tissues.

The big surprise with the Player Dates, however, was how incredible they sounded when tuned very tight, à la bebop great Max Roach. Even with all of the heads cranked about as high as they could go, the snare still sounded thick and open, but it became super-articulate; the toms retained some fatness, while emitting pure, melodic pitches with a clean, quick attack and a fast decay; and the bass drum had a controlled, round, and focused tone that wasn’t overly boomy. We feel that these drums would be just as appropriate for straight-ahead jazz gigs and swinging big band concerts as they would be for studio work and most mellow to moderately loud situations. Of course, you could always hedge your bets and get a second Player Date, in the Be-Bop configuration, to cover the jazzier stuff. These models are, after all, priced considerably lower than most high-end custom drumkits.

candcustomdrums.com



DW

MODERNDRUMMER
DIGITALLY ENHANCED

Black Nickel Over Brass Collector’s Series Snare

by David Ciauro

It’s common for drummers to hunt for a snare that they feel best represents who they are as a player—an extension of their personality. Although we may fantasize about never having to compromise our aesthetic, it’s impractical to assume that the sound we feel defines us is also *the* sound that will be universally accepted in all applications.

Enter the world of the workhorse snare, a drum that possesses chameleon-like qualities that capture a variety of essences while also providing a pleasurable playing experience for the drummer. DW’s 6¹/₂×14 Black Nickel Over Brass Collector’s series snare is one such drum. This beauty has a thin 1 mm brass shell plated with black nickel, plus ten lugs, chrome hardware, and the innovative MAG snare strainer mechanism, which comprises a three-position butt plate and a magnetic throw-off.

The three-position butt plate is an excellent feature on a workhorse snare, since it enhances the drum’s adaptability by offering the option to quickly switch between three different snare tensions. I found that tuning the resonant head medium to medium-loose provided the most recognizable differences when toggling between the tension settings.

Cranking the batter head tight dried out the drum’s inherent metallic tonality, providing a fat crack with a shortened sustain and manageable overtones. A medium-tight

batter tension was the drum’s sweet spot to my ear, combining just the right amount of brightness with a metallic uppercut that produced a weighty pop.

The brass shell adds hefty bottom end throughout the drum’s complete tuning range. At any head tension, this snare sounded nice without muffling; the overtones were present but complemented the drum’s tonality. Furthermore, the drum responded well to the smallest amount of muffling with Moongel or tape.

I took this drum to a gig playing original music in the style of Cheap Trick, Kiss, and the Ramones. As luck would have it, the soundman was also a drummer, so I told him a little about the snare and asked him to let me know afterward how it sounded in the front of the house and if he had to tweak the EQ. From my perspective, the snare sounded great. Backbeats sat nicely in the mix, and overtones were noticeably curt, adding the essential crack needed to push the more upbeat tunes without overpowering the sound. After the show, the soundman’s thoughts pretty much echoed what I had experienced. He’d added a touch of reverb and didn’t have to EQ out any problematic frequencies. Knowing that the way your snare sounds to you behind the kit is basically the same as how the audience hears it is the greatest affirmation that the workhorse is doing its job. List price: \$667. dwdrums.com

AHEAD

Armor Cases Rolling Hardware Sled

by Michael Dawson

Some drummers feel that the most important component of the drumset is the snare. I would argue that the most crucial piece is not part of the actual instrument at all but rather what you choose to carry your gear in—especially your hardware. Think about it: Is there a more potentially damaging point in a night than when you have to load heavy cases into a sketchy venue via steep stairs, a long walkway, or a cramped corridor, and you don't have a hand truck or a case with wheels? I know I've strained my back multiple times when toting my stands in a basic gig bag.

The 38x16x14 Ahead Armor Cases Rolling Hardware Sled (\$324.50) proved to be large enough to hold all of my hardware, which includes two double-braced boom stands, one single-braced straight stand, a hi-hat stand, two snare stands, floor tom legs, a double-braced throne (including the top), and a single bass drum pedal (in its own hard-plastic case). The Sled features heavy-duty plastic wheels, a retractable handle, and reinforced carrying straps on the top and front. The bottom of the unit is covered with strong plastic for additional strength and durability. The interior has two adjustable straps to hold hardware in place, and there's a removable insert at the top that can be used to secure a seat top inside. (In my particular situation, the bag was easier to close if I laid my saddle-style seat flat without using the insert, but narrower or rounded seat tops would fit much better when placed horizontally within the insert.)

We were very impressed with the Sled's sturdy build and extreme durability, and the big wheels and reinforced bottom allow the case to traverse all types of urban terrain (such as broken sidewalks, uneven doorways, and concrete steps). The thought of having all of my hardware within one case was also very appealing. The downside is that the full Sled ended up weighing a bit more than my fabric-only hardware case, and it took up a bit more trunk space. (It's about the size of a large, stuffed duffel bag.) The full Sled was pretty easy to pull around, however, and the reinforced handles made it comfortable to lift into and out of my trunk. The Armor Cases Rolling Hardware Sled, which also comes in smaller (28") and larger (48") versions, is definitely one of the strongest and best-designed products of its kind.

aheadarmorcases.com



TYCOON

Supremo 29 Series Cajon

by Michael Dawson

The cajon is a simple box-shaped percussion instrument that originated among African slaves living in Peru during the early nineteenth century. The first cajons were created out of ordinary objects such as shipping crates and desk drawers. These days, percussion companies like Tycoon manufacture all types of box drums, from traditional wooden models to super-high-end versions with fancy options, including adjustable sound holes, multiple playing surfaces, electronics, and jingles. Some of these newer, more advanced offerings can carry a steep price tag (upwards of \$400), which can put them well out of your range.

Tycoon's Supremo 29 Series cajon, however, is a simple, straightforward option that offers a classic sound at a very reasonable price. (It lists for \$159.) It's handmade from hardwood and measures 20x11½x12. Inside are four guitar strings stretched against the front plate, which provide a nice, buzzy snare sound. The snares can be tightened or loosened by adjusting two screws on the bottom of the drum with the included Allen wrench, and there are two strips of hook-and-loop fasteners inside that can be used to dampen the snare effect.

Although the Supremo 29 series cajon isn't as souped-up as others, it does produce a completely professional, classic sound. In fact, when played side by side with a custom-made version we had in our studio, the Supremo won on all fronts: The bass was fuller, the slaps were snappier, and the snare effect had more character. I even used this drum exclusively for a handful of acoustic tracks on an indie rock band's upcoming EP. For drumset players looking for new percussive sounds to add to their kits, this is a great inexpensive option.

tycoonpercussion.com





DAVE GROHL **drums**
dw ENOUGH SAID.

PORTER & DAVIES BC2 Tactile Monitor

by Michael Dawson

As more drummers move toward incorporating electronic kits and using in-ear monitors, there's a growing need for creative yet quiet ways to get that powerful, full-body experience of hearing your kick drum pumping through a subwoofer or stage monitors.

Some in-ears and headphones contain specialized drivers designed to enhance the bass frequencies, but they still lack that hit-you-in-the-chest sensation of playing live through a loud PA. This is where the BC2 tactile monitor, from the U.K.-based company Porter & Davies, comes into play. The two-piece system involves a custom throne top with a built-in transducer and a flight-cased engine that sends a signal from your kick drum mic (or electronic sound module) to the transducer each time you play the bass drum. The signal tells the transducer to move, which transfers energy to your backside. This simulates the feeling of a speaker pushing sub-frequencies into your body, without actually making sound.

THE SETUP

Setting up the BC2 is quite simple. Just install the included throne top to your existing base and connect the BC2 seat to the engine with the included cable. Run a balanced or unbalanced cable from your bass drum mic or module to the input on the engine, and then run a second cable from the output of the BC2 to your mixing board, sound card, or PA system.

With the Master Level knob turned all the way down, play your bass drum at maximum volume while adjusting the Mic or Line

Level knob until the red peak light begins to blink. From here, gradually increase the Master Level setting until you feel the desired amount of kick. The BC2 can be set to give just a subtle push, but it also has the capacity to put out enough signal to make your teeth rattle. In our testing, we found that a little of the BC2 goes a long way in providing a greater sense of power and stability, which helps settle the groove, but too high a level can be disruptive.

The Low Contour switch dials in the BC2's response. An unported bass drum will require less of this, since the drum will have more low end naturally, from both heads vibrating more freely. Ported and heavily muffled bass drums will need more Low Contour to provide the necessary oomph.

DYNAMIC TRACKING

The coolest thing about the BC2 is that it reacts accurately to your playing dynamics and technique, as well as to the sound of your drum. It doesn't just punch you in the rear end each time you hit your kick. Instead, lightly feathered strokes feel softer, while louder strokes carry more impact. There's also a clear difference in how the BC2 responds to the short, staccato sound of a bury-the-beater technique versus slapping strikes that bounce freely off the head. This was especially noticeable with a double-headed, unmuffled bass drum, as the BC2 continues to send signal to the transducer for as long as the bass drum heads sustain.

WEIGHT LIMITS

Aside from its steep price tag, another potential deterrent to buying the BC2 is its weight. The seat top alone weighs 13 pounds, and the engine is 23 pounds. For weekend warriors and working drummers using lightweight gear, this would likely make the BC2 impractical. But for large-scale productions, situations involving in-ear monitor systems, or times when you want to bring some of the "bigness" of the live stage experience to your home practice/recording space without adding volume, the BC2 would be a valuable investment. Porter & Davies also offers a more affordable and lighter version, called the Gigster, which would be much more appropriate for general day-to-day use.

porteranddavies.co.uk



VITAL SPECS

Here's a quick rundown of several key features of the BC2.

- Includes 17" round seat top with built-in transducer
- Engine secured in sturdy 11x11x11 flight case
- Accepts balanced and unbalanced line and microphone cables
- Seat weighs 13 pounds; engine weighs 23 pounds
- Has 115/230 voltage selector to meet international electricity standards
- Costs approximately \$1,644 (with shipping), depending on conversion rate



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Build Your Own TUBE TOMS

by Jordan Hill

A Step-by-Step Guide to Constructing Melodic Drums

Since their introduction in the late '70s, tube toms have been used by progressive drummers like Simon Phillips, Tim Alexander, and Mike Portnoy to add unique and melodic tones to their kits. Several commercial versions of these instruments are offered, but you can construct a set yourself for a fraction of the cost. Here's how!

MATERIALS

The supplies needed to build one tube tom include a 5" PVC pipe, a 6" drumhead, a 6" rim, four lugs, and four tension rods. You'll also need tom mounts to place the drums on your kit. Here we're using Pearl-type mounts that go through the shell, but any version will work.



The 5" PVC pipe is an unusual size. Most home-improvement stores won't carry it. Try a plumbing-supply warehouse. The pipe is usually sold in 20' lengths, but ask if they have a broken piece or if they can cut it down. One end of the pipe

is belled and will need to be cut off or used as the open end of the drum.

The drumheads, rims, lugs, and tension rods can be ordered online from a music store. Alternatively, the lugs and tension rods can be salvaged from an old drum. Bass drum lugs work best for this project, because they're slightly larger than typical tom lugs. The PVC pipe is a bit smaller in diameter than a 6" wood drum shell, so the larger bass drum lugs help compensate for the sizing difference.

CUT TO DEPTH

The drums you're building will all be 6" in diameter, but you'll want to cut them to depths of anywhere from 11" to 23". The different depths give each tom a distinct tone and allow the drums to be tuned melodically. A minimum of a 2" to 4" difference in length is needed.

Measure and mark each depth before cutting.



The pipe can be cut with a hacksaw, but a large-diameter circular saw will work even better. (Be careful!)



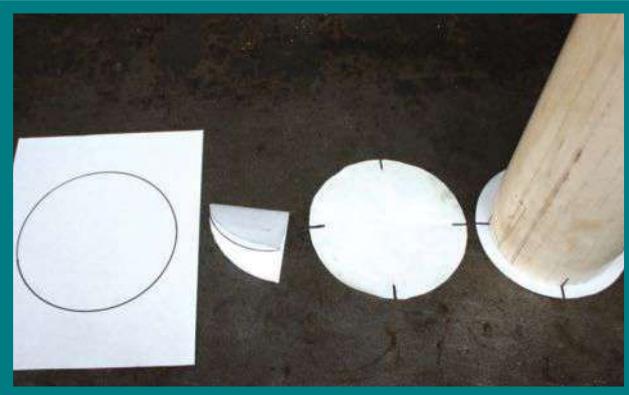
BEARING EDGE

The bearing edge is where the drumhead makes contact with the shell. Edges are usually cut at a 45-degree angle. Cutting a proper bearing edge will improve the sound quality and will help with tuning, but for this project it isn't absolutely necessary. If you decide to cut edges, use a router.

LUGS

Now that the drums are cut to the correct lengths, the lugs need to be mounted. Here's an easy method to determine where to place them.

Put the drumhead on a sheet of paper. Trace around the edges, and cut out the circle. Fold the circle in half twice. The fold lines on the paper are where the lugs should be mounted. Center the pipe on the paper circle, and mark the lines on the pipe. This method has worked for all of the 6" rims I've tried. Just be sure the holes in the rim line up before drilling the pipe.



Next, mark the mounting holes for the lugs. They should be approximately 1" to 1½" below the top of the drum. Be sure to also consider the length of the tension rods when mounting the lugs.

Now drill out all the mounting holes with a 1/4" drill bit.



MOUNTING HARDWARE

Next, the toms need to be mounted to a stand. There are several ways of doing this. Each drum can have its own tom mount, or two drums can be attached together on one mount. For this project, the drums will be mounted individually. Measure and mark the screw holes for the tom mount and the center hole for the tom arm to pass through. Use a 1/4" drill bit for the screw holes and a 7/8" hole saw for the center hole.



PAINT JOB AND FINAL ASSEMBLY

At this point the drums are ready to be painted. The plastic should be wet sanded with fine sandpaper before painting. Pick a spray paint that adheres well to plastic, and then tape off the bearing edge and the inside of the drums. Once the paint is fully dry, assemble all the parts on the drums, and then your new tube toms are ready to be played!



GEARING UP Drumkit Details, On Stage and Up Close

Zac Brown Band's Daniel de los Reyes and Chris Fryar

Interview by Mark Pry • Photos by Cole Cassell/Southern Reel



DANIEL'S KIT

Drums: Gon Bops and DW

A. 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " Gon Bops California series tumba

B. Gon Bops California series bongos

C. Gon Bops Alex Acuña series brass timbales

D. 10" DW piccolo snare

E. 16x18 DW floor tom

"In these types of [arena] gigs, even if you're miked, you still have to project," Reyes explains. "You could bring a 10" tom, but it doesn't have the same impact as a 12" or a 13". The same goes for my timbales. I need them to be loud and projecting, and the Gon Bops are just that. They sound very warm, but at the same time they'll cut your head right off!"

Hardware: DW 5000 series bass drum pedal (used to play the underside of his floor tom), 9000 series bass drum pedals (used to play a tambourine and cowbells under the tumbas and timbales), and drum rack

Cymbals: Sabian

1. 18" HHX X-Plosion crash

2. 10" AAX splash

3. 18" HHX Evolution O-Zone crash

"I always try to be complementary to what Chris is doing. I mainly use the 18" HHX X-Plosion crash for swells, as well as for entrances and exits of sections. The O-Zone is very gongy. When you hit that thing, you're making a remark! The splash is used for little textures here and there. Mainly my cymbals are for swells and creating 'bigness' in the songs, like when going into the bridge with cymbal swells while Chris is doing a drum fill—something to create more impact."

Sticks: Regal Tip signature prototype

Percussion: LP Double Row chimes, Gon Bops guiro and Tumboa timbale bells, LP and Gon Bops tambourines, Gon Bops shaker, LP Afuche, LP One Shot Shakers

(invented by Reyes), toy wooden rattle, and crescent wrench

Reyes is constantly looking for ways to improve both his setup and the instruments he plays. The Regal Tip beater used to strike the tambourine under the tumbas, which fits any pedal, is his own creation. "There's green rubber on one side and red on the other," Danny explains. "I use a regular beater on the cowbell because it needs to be loud, but if you were to use the Regal Tip beater, it would sound like you're muting it with your hand—it's more natural."

Reyes's rig is immediately to the right of Fryar's, atop an 8' riser. "Soon I'll be incorporating the Roland SPD-SX and SPD-30 Octapad," Reyes explains. "They won't replace anything but will add sounds. For instance, the floor tom on the right is used to simulate a Brazilian surdo, but I want it to sound like *ten* surdos. With Roland triggers, I'll be able to adjust the sensitivity so when I hit it hard enough, I'll trigger ten drums."



CHRIS'S KIT

Drums: Gretsch USA Custom in red glass nitro finish

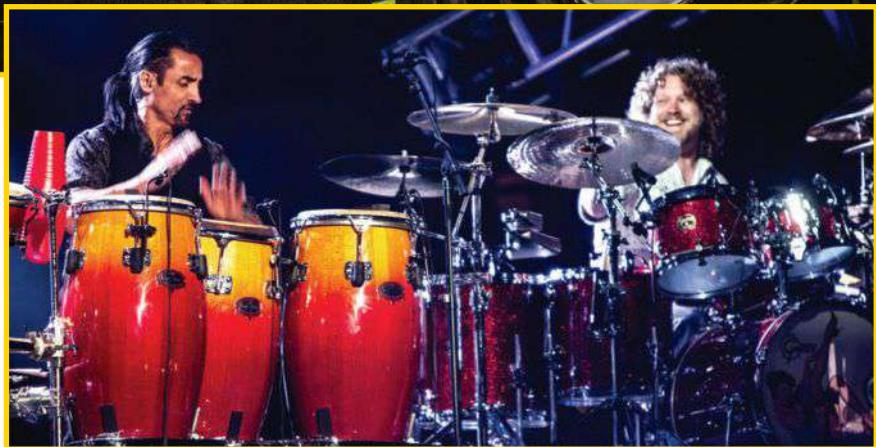
- A. 6½x14 snare
- B. 5x12 snare
- C. 7x10 tom
- D. 8x12 tom
- E. 14x14 floor tom
- F. 16x16 floor tom
- G. 16x20 bass drum

"I love my Gretsch drums," Fryar says. "I can change the head configurations and/or the tunings, and they can easily fit into any genre of music, which is great for us, because we like to play around with so many influences.

"I played on an 18" bass drum for years, but when I joined ZBB I needed something more substantial. A 22" was just too mushy for me, so I split the difference. The 20" bass drum has enough punch while still possessing enough boominess to sound thunderous.

"With all of the subs and amps on stage, it can sometimes be difficult to control a wide-open bass drum sound, so using some muffling is a must. I took a feather pillow, bunched it together in the middle with some straps, and used Velcro to hold it in place. There's just enough pillow on both sides to keep the bass drum from ringing out without sacrificing the bounce and feel of the head. The KickPort really helps bring out the inherent sub-frequencies, which can be helpful when using a 20" bass drum in an arena.

"The second snare drum is used strictly for color and contrast. It's perfect for those moments when a cross-stick sound is not



enough but a full hit on the main snare is too much. Using a second snare in that way can grab the attention of the listener and really help define a section of a song. I usually use it at the beginning of a guitar solo, and as the solo grows I'll switch to my main snare to help drive the whole thing. The side snare is also really great for the occasional fill on island-sounding tunes like 'Knee Deep' or 'Jump Right In.' I have it cranked up really tight, so it can sound like a mix of a snare and a timbale. It's a beautiful color to add to the palette."

Percussion: LP, including 8" Rock cowbell (mounted to bass drum), 8" Salsa Timbale cowbell, and 4¾" Salsa Cha-Cha cowbell (mounted above floor toms)

Cymbals: Zildjian

- 1. 14¼" K Custom Hybrid hi-hats
- 2. 20" Oriental China Trash
- 3. 18" K Dark Thin crash
- 4. 20" A Custom crash
- 5. 20" K Custom Medium ride
- 6. 20" K Custom crash
- 7. 20" Crash of Doom

"We've been playing big venues, including amphitheatres and sheds. When you have a large PA and a huge crowd, the sustain tends to get lost in the mix, so you need projection and cut. Rather than going with higher-pitched cymbals, I prefer them to be darker and trashier."

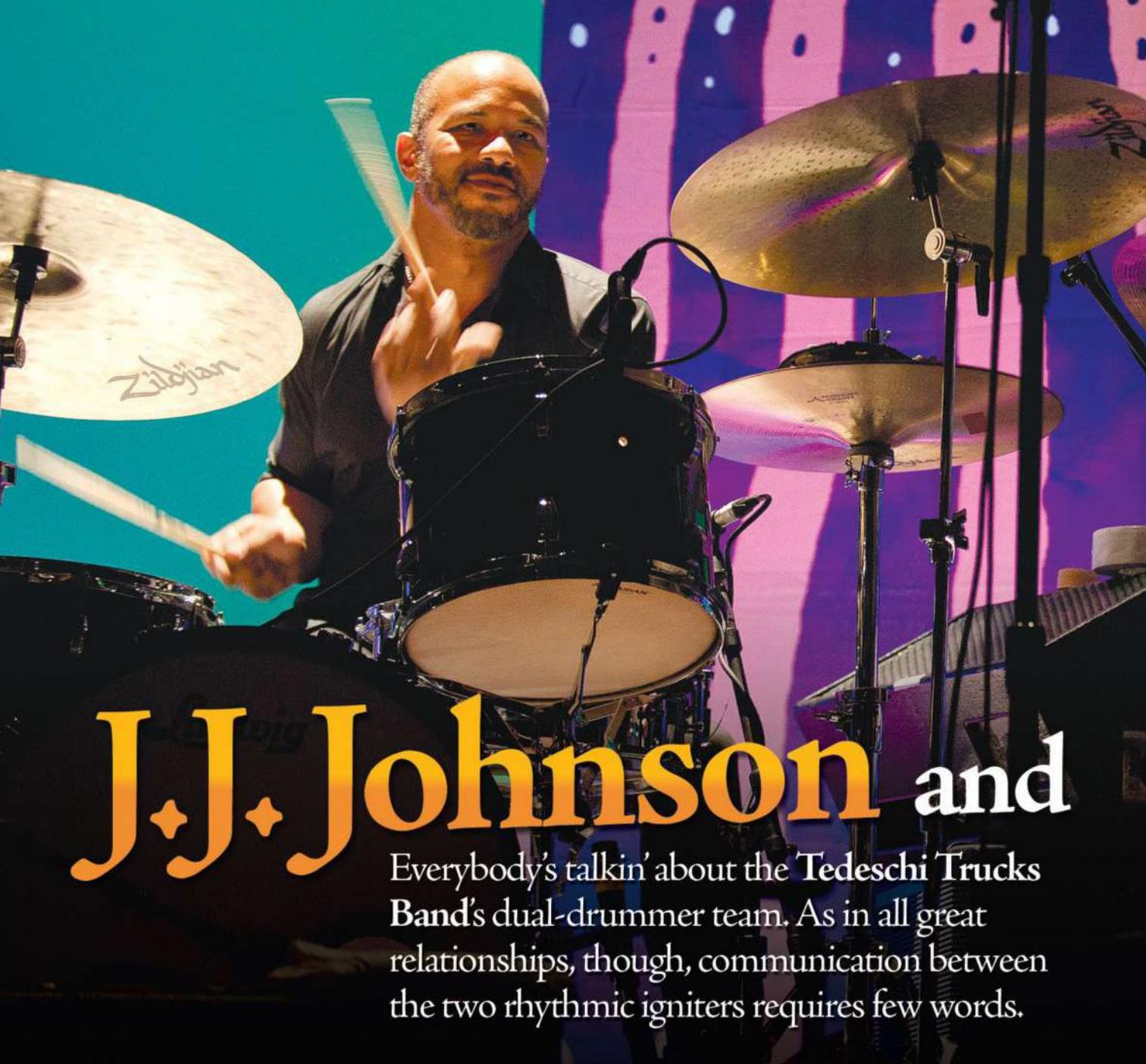
Hardware: Gibraltar, including 9600 series stands and Intruder dual-chain-drive bass drum pedal

Heads: Evans coated Power Center Reverse Dot snare batters, clear EC2 tom batters, and clear EQ2 bass drum batter

"While recording *Uncaged*, I used some Gretsch New Classics with coated Evans G2 heads. The drums spoke well and fit perfectly with the material. It was a great combination of vintage 'tubbiness' and modern sounds. On the road I use USA Customs with a different head configuration, for durability and because they seem to work really well for the size of venues we're playing."

Sticks: Vic Firth American Classic 5B





J.J. Johnson and

Everybody's talkin' about the Tedeschi Trucks Band's dual-drummer team. As in all great relationships, though, communication between the two rhythmic igniters requires few words.

Coming off their 2011 Grammy-winning album, *Revelator*, slide guitar monster Derek Trucks and his wife, the equally gifted singer/guitarist Susan Tedeschi, have upped the ante with their latest release, the double live album *Everybody's Talkin'*. The excitement surrounding the Tedeschi Trucks Band's mix of retro-influenced blues, R&B, jazz, funk, rock, and soul is just about unparalleled among roots-oriented acts. Far more than a jam band, the eleven-piece ensemble balances its exploratory nature with potently well-structured originals and covers, alternately laying it down with rare, soulful grace and exploding into

territory reserved for the members' unique collective virtuosity. In other words, Tedeschi/Trucks can groove and jam like nobody's business.

Like the group as a whole, the two TTB drummers, Tyler Greenwell and J.J. Johnson, can each burn like a house on fire. In tandem, they're lethal—call it telepathy and good taste meshing with great chops. Playing with dynamics and discipline, reveling in their double-dose rhythmic power, and always listening, listening, listening, Greenwell and Johnson have taken the lessons of classic double-drummer roots bands like the Allman Brothers and the Grateful Dead and integrated their own smart ideas, which allow them to stay out of each

other's way without turning down the flame. The concept hasn't sounded this exciting since the early days of the Fillmore West.

Just prior to soundcheck at a Seattle concert earlier this year, *MD* grabbed the opportunity to discuss the TTB way with J.J. and Tyler, and to field some observations from coleader Derek Trucks.

MD: How do you keep the show fresh night after night?

Tyler: Probably by never thinking it's good enough, never being satisfied, always striving. We push each other, and if we happen to have one of *those* nights, you just know it's going to make you approach things differently the next



Story by Bob Girouard
Photos by C. Taylor Crothers

night. Plus the musicians in this band are so amazing, they help you keep it fresh.

MD: How did the opportunity to become members of the TTB come about?

Tyler: I came aboard as part of Susan's band.

J.J.: I'd met Derek some years back, when he was playing with Eric Clapton and I was with John Mayer. He's one of those people—naturally he's a great player, but right off the bat I knew he was also a great person. We stayed in contact and ran into each other every now and then, and one day he phoned me and told me about this band he was thinking about doing. At the time they had a few folks in mind. So I went down to Jacksonville, which is where I met Tyler for the first time. We sat down and played some drums, and I knew it was going to work.

MD: Were you both rooted in Southern-influenced rock or roots music in general? The sound of this band is like Macon meets Memphis, drenched in Chicago blues, with a dose of Motown.

Tyler: I think our musical upbringings are very similar. I bet we both own the same

albums, and we're always turning each other on to new stuff. Our collective roots are American music.

MD: So everything from Howlin' Wolf to Captain Beefheart?

J.J.: Yeah, absolutely. [laughs]

Tyler: For sure!

MD: Derek said in an interview that when he and Susan put this band together, the personalities were key to the mix, especially the rhythm section. Do you think that holds true?

Tyler: Absolutely. I don't know what I'd

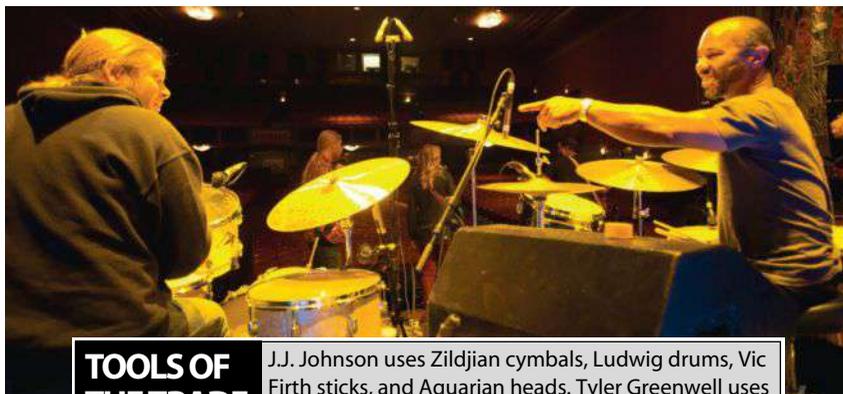
do without J.J. out here. We've established a strong friendship, and our personalities just work.

MD: [jokingly] Gee, that's not what J.J. said. He said you were a pain in the butt!

Tyler: [laughs] The beauty of it is, he *would* tell me if I was being an ass. That's musical honesty *and* life honesty!

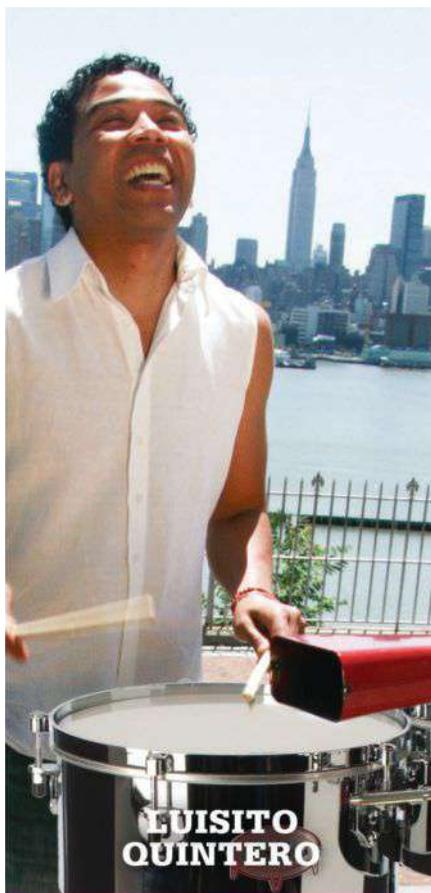
MD: The first show you played together was in April 2010, at the Savannah Music Festival. Did you know it was special from the start?

J.J.: Yes, it's one of those rare things, and



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

J.J. Johnson uses Zildjian cymbals, Ludwig drums, Vic Firth sticks, and Aquarian heads. Tyler Greenwell uses Gretsch drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Vic Firth sticks.



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DEREK ON THE DOUBLE

The Tedeschi Trucks Band's slide master weighs in on Johnson and Greenwell.



MD: You've played with some incredible rhythm sections. What do J.J. and Tyler bring to the table that makes them special?

Derek: It's an intangible thing, really. You know it when you hear it or are around it. Do you know that they actually met in the middle of a song? When we were in rehearsals trying to put the band together, we had two drumsets in the studio. Tyler was already there playing. Then J.J., who had just gotten off a plane, came into the room and eased himself into the song. It was instantaneous. I knew the chemistry was right—no push and pull, no egos—and it continues to this day.

MD: Something that's noticeable on

Revelator and is even more obvious on *Everybody's Talkin'* is the disciplined sense of dynamics that they bring to the music. No matter how far out the solos get, they stay locked in. For drummers, that's always a challenge.

Derek: Both J.J. and Tyler have chops for days. They can play whatever you ask them to, but they play for the song, and they respect the moment. When you listen to guys like Levon Helm and Elvin Jones, that's what you're looking for, the support—meaning, does it have life, does it breathe? These two guys make it happen individually and as a unit. It's a musicality, a maturity they've had since the beginning.

I've got to say, I've been incredibly fortunate to play with some of the great ones, and I think of these guys in the same light. They really are the heart and soul of this band.

it's hard to put into words. Every night when we get on the bandstand, we know that some good music is going to be made. That in itself is inspiring on so many levels.

MD: How do you tend to structure your drum parts? Are they worked out or improvised?

J.J.: It's a combination of both, really. It's dictated by what we feel fits the songs, but we still have the luxury to rethink things. If we happen to come upon something stronger and more effective, we'll go with that. And there are some nights when you gamble and go for stuff even if it's arranged. How can we take this further and embellish it more?

MD: You both seem very heads-up, never overshadowing each other or overplaying. With this band, the grooves are as important as the solos.

J.J.: Very true. That's one of the things we key in on. That's what's great about people hearing a live record at this point; things have evolved to another level by us playing nightly and adding new things.

Tyler: The changes aren't very drastic, though. They're subtle.

J.J.: They make things fit just right—the setups, the decision to have either one of us lay out in a section, trying different embellishments or counterpoints. These little things can make a huge difference.

MD: Do you cue each other rhythmically? Visually?

Tyler: We've developed our own form of communication, but I don't know

if we can really talk about it, because I don't want to give away our recipe! It's like great barbecue—we can't tell you exactly how much paprika we put in. [laughs]

MD: So it's intuitive?

Tyler: Yeah. We can read each other so well that, if anything, it might just be a quick glance or something. Plus we know what's required of us in each tune.

MD: The Allmans and the Dead popularized the double-drumming concept in the '60s and '70s. How much have they had an influence on what you're doing now?

Tyler: The Dead had their thing and the Allmans had theirs; it's like apples and oranges. Both bands had fantastic double drumming. Those are the guys that paved the way, and they each created their own sound. But I think if there was any influence on us, it would probably be from Butch Trucks and Jaimoe with the Allmans.

MD: With the amazing talents you have within this band, it's easy to see this ride lasting for a long time.

Tyler: We certainly hope so. It's a fantastic band and a great group of people—a gigantic family, a baseball team, a big band, a small army. Everyone hangs together. It's incredible, and that translates to the stage. We still have a lot of music to write and record, and there's a lot more to come.

J.J.: It's refreshing on so many levels. Obviously, musically—but also personally. And that's invaluable.



The first time I played Meinl,
the touch and feel were nice.....
They have a certain characteristic
of sound where you end up with
something personal.

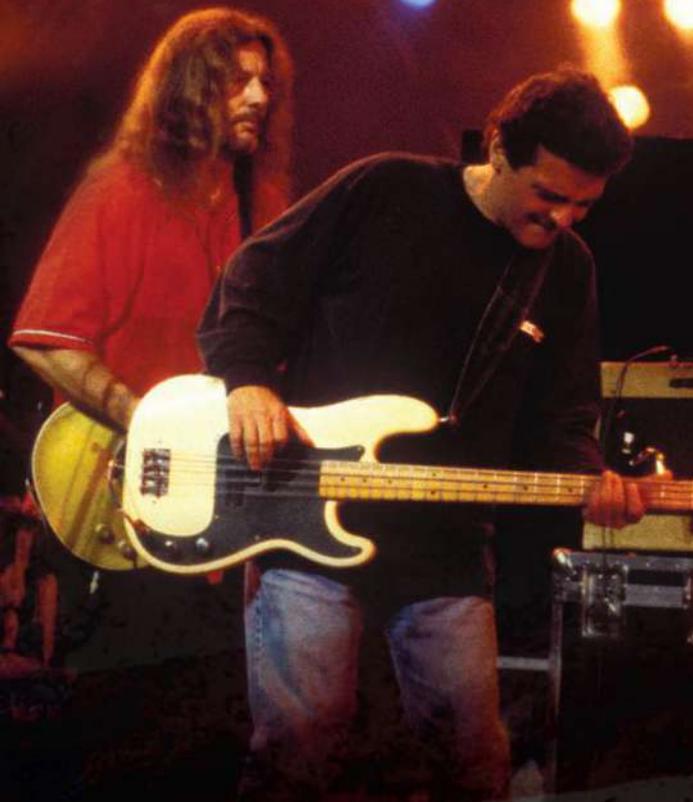


Ralph Peterson
Professor - Berklee College of Music
Ralph Peterson Fo'tet / Sextet

Ralph Molina

Rock 'n' roll bands don't get any more quintessentially American than Neil Young's longtime collaborative soul mate, **Crazy Horse**. What does the drum chair demand in this famously off-the-cuff combo? Guts, intuition, and a taste for spontaneity.

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Ebet Roberts



“I don't like new cymbals or new shoes,” Ralph Molina says. “They're not me. It feels like I'm sucking a lemon—you know how you pucker when you eat a lemon? New shoes are too clean, like new cymbals. I go by sound.”

As Neil Young & Crazy Horse's drummer for more than forty years, Molina has operated “by sound” and not much else. When the band records, there are no rehearsals, and no charts are handed out. Young blasts his trademark distorted guitar squeal, and Molina, guitarist Frank “Poncho” Sampedro, and bassist Billy Talbot fall in with remarkably little fuss, relying on the unspoken psychic connection that has made Crazy Horse *the* go-to symbol for any group of rockers seeking the holy grail of playing like one mind, one body. Molina's ramshackle, raw, from-the-heart drumming is the perfect foil to Young's metal-scraping scrawl.

This year's *Americana* is Neil Young & Crazy Horse's fif-

teenth proper release, and it stands strong among classic albums like 1969's *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere* (featuring the iconic “Cinnamon Girl,” “Down by the River,” and “Cowgirl in the Sand”), 1975's *Zuma* (“Cortez the Killer”), 1979's *Rust Never Sleeps* (“My My, Hey Hey,” “Powderfinger”), and 1990's *Ragged Glory* (“Mansion on the Hill”). In addition, Crazy Horse's band members, alone and as a unit, have appeared on several other Young records, contributing to further hits including “Like a Hurricane” and “Lotta Love.” And the group has released five additional studio albums without Neil. This latest chapter in Young's ceaselessly prolific career interprets the American songbook—of sorts—with the band riffing madly through such classics as “Oh Susannah,” “Clementine,” and “This Land Is Your Land.” *MD* caught up with Ralph Molina as the group prepared for its current U.S. tour, which includes stops at Red Rocks, the Hollywood Bowl, and Madison Square Garden.



Neil Young & Crazy Horse at Farm Aid VII in New Orleans, September 18, 1994

MD: How do you usually create a drum part with Neil Young & Crazy Horse?

Ralph: The process we've had for years is that Neil will start playing, and everybody will join in with him. That's how we record with Neil. We don't have parts. I hate parts. I like to be spontaneous.

MD: Once an album is done and you're on the road, do you repeat your recorded drum parts?

Ralph: Never. I'm better live than on the recordings. When we record we really don't know the song yet. We're just feeling where Neil is going with it, and we go along. But when we play live I let it all hang out. It's like being an actor. In the studio we nail it within one or two takes. When you go on stage you have one shot. You just go for it. Like when we play "Like a Hurricane" or "Cortez the Killer," it's never the same. We always play differently. I like to call it jazz-rock because it's

spontaneous; it's not a part. Some songs, like "Cinnamon Girl," stay closer to the original. When we play that [sings the famous guitar riff] the drum part stays the

getting into. When you get it on the first or second take, the feel is there. When you play it ten times, you have a part and it's structured. When you're playing free

"When I'm playing live with Neil, my head is down—but I know exactly when to look up. I can feel it, and when I do look up, Neil's going to the same place I'm going."

same. But when Neil plays "Cortez" or "Hurricane" or "Danger Bird," we can take it out.

MD: Is it frustrating to record a song without knowing it?

Ralph: We've been doing this for a long time with Neil. So we know what we're

and not thinking, you're *really* playing and feeling. That's what the songs are about. When I'm playing live with Neil, my head is down—but I know exactly when to look up. I can feel it, and when I do look up, Neil's going to the same place I'm going. He's a feel player and I am too,

so we feel it together.

MD: You have Neil's guitar in your monitor. How would you describe his style?

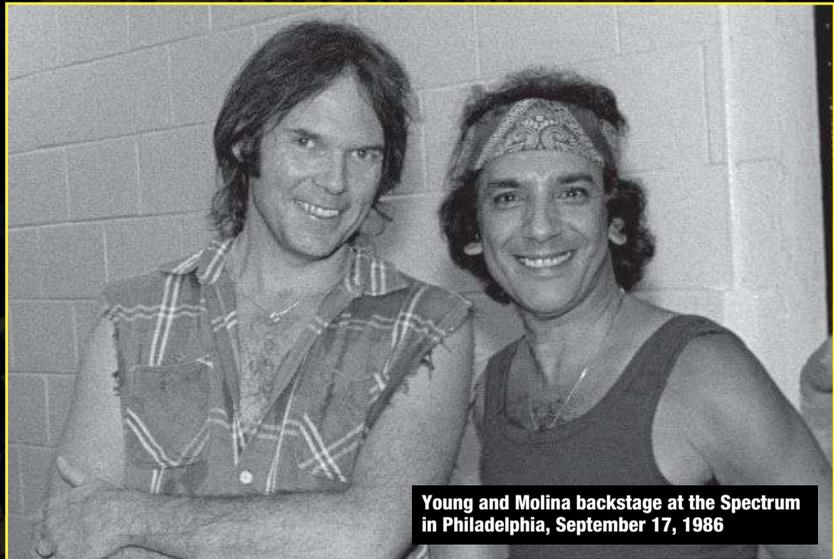
Ralph: You have the chops players—"poseurs," I call them. Neil's rhythm guitar playing goes everywhere. He's not like those guitar players that play patterns. He plays with a lot of air and a lot of emotion. When he plays rhythm it's not stock rhythm, bar after bar. It's so soulful. It's all from his heart. It's not easy to predict his next move. It's not a steady rhythm, but when Neil plays it's all passion, all emotion.

MD: If he changes constantly as a guitarist, how are you changing as a drummer?

Ralph: I'm keeping the groove, but it's not like a three-minute song and *this is the groove* and I stay there. I can be spontaneous and just play along with Neil. And it works.

MD: Do you record to a click?

Ralph: No, we tried that years ago in New York. Neil was the first one to pull the plug on that. You're following a click; you're not playing with feeling. I'm playing with headphones and I'm trying to play a fill with the click track? Screw this.



Young and Molina backstage at the Spectrum in Philadelphia, September 17, 1986

We kept the headphones on, but as soon as Neil ripped his off, we ripped ours off too.

MD: What drummers do you like?

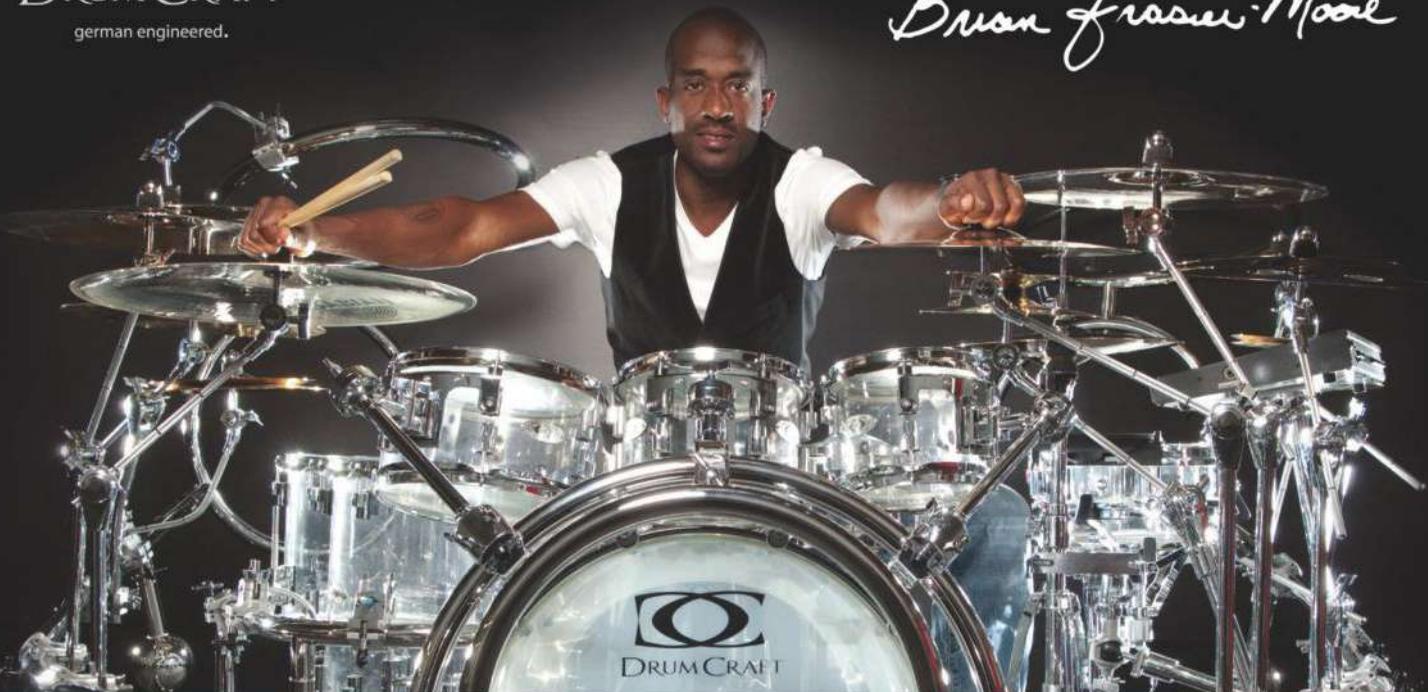
Ralph: I like Neil Peart. He has chops, but he doesn't sound like a studio drummer. And Dave Grohl, he plays with passion.

I grew up singing doo-wop in New York City. I never thought about drum-

mers or that I would be playing drums. I always thought I would be singing. But the group I was in, Danny and the Memories, convinced me to play drums. Then we became the Rockets [the band that Young renamed Crazy Horse and tapped for his second album as a leader]. I had more rhythm than the other guys. I began playing paradiddles on cardboard


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RALPH MOLINA

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

MD: What drumset are you playing on *Americana*?

Ralph: Usually I play my 1960s Ludwig set, but Neil asked Johnny Cravotto to build a custom set, so I played that with my old Ludwig snare on the album. I'll take both sets on tour. I like my old K Zildjian cymbals. I use thin 16" crash cymbals for hi-hats; they sound great. I don't know why they sound better than 14s. But they're warm sounding, and they cut through. When Dave Grohl played on the Queens of the Stone Age album [*Songs for the Deaf*], I loved that crash he was using, and I asked him about it. He said it was an old cymbal he found in the studio. Old cymbals can sound great."

boxes. Then I evolved from there.

MD: Tell me about your drum tuning. It's flat and direct and no frills, which mirrors your drumming.

Ralph: I tune the drums by ear, the way I hear them. I have a drum tech who tunes at soundcheck, and then I'll retune them if they sound too high. I like drums to sound low. It fits what we do. I don't like tight heads on my toms. I do keep the snare tight because I want that snap, but I also want that bottom end. If I tune it too loose I don't get the crack.

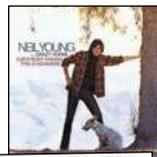
MD: Would it be an intimidating experience to sit in with Neil Young & Crazy Horse?

Ralph: It might be intimidating to sit next to me. But not playing with Neil.

MD: But playing with Neil with no idea of what he's going to do next would seem extremely difficult.

Ralph: I don't think about that. When we used to play clubs with Neil years ago, Stephen Stills would follow Neil around with his drummer, Dallas Taylor. Dallas sat in. He just played. He just had fun. Neil is *great* to play with.

RAGGED GLORY: MOLINA ON RECORD



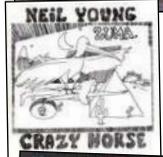
Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere (1969)

Zuma (1975)

Rust Never Sleeps (1979)

Reactor (1981)

Life (1987)



Ragged Glory (1990)

Arc-Weld (recorded live in 1991)

Sleeps With Angels (1994)

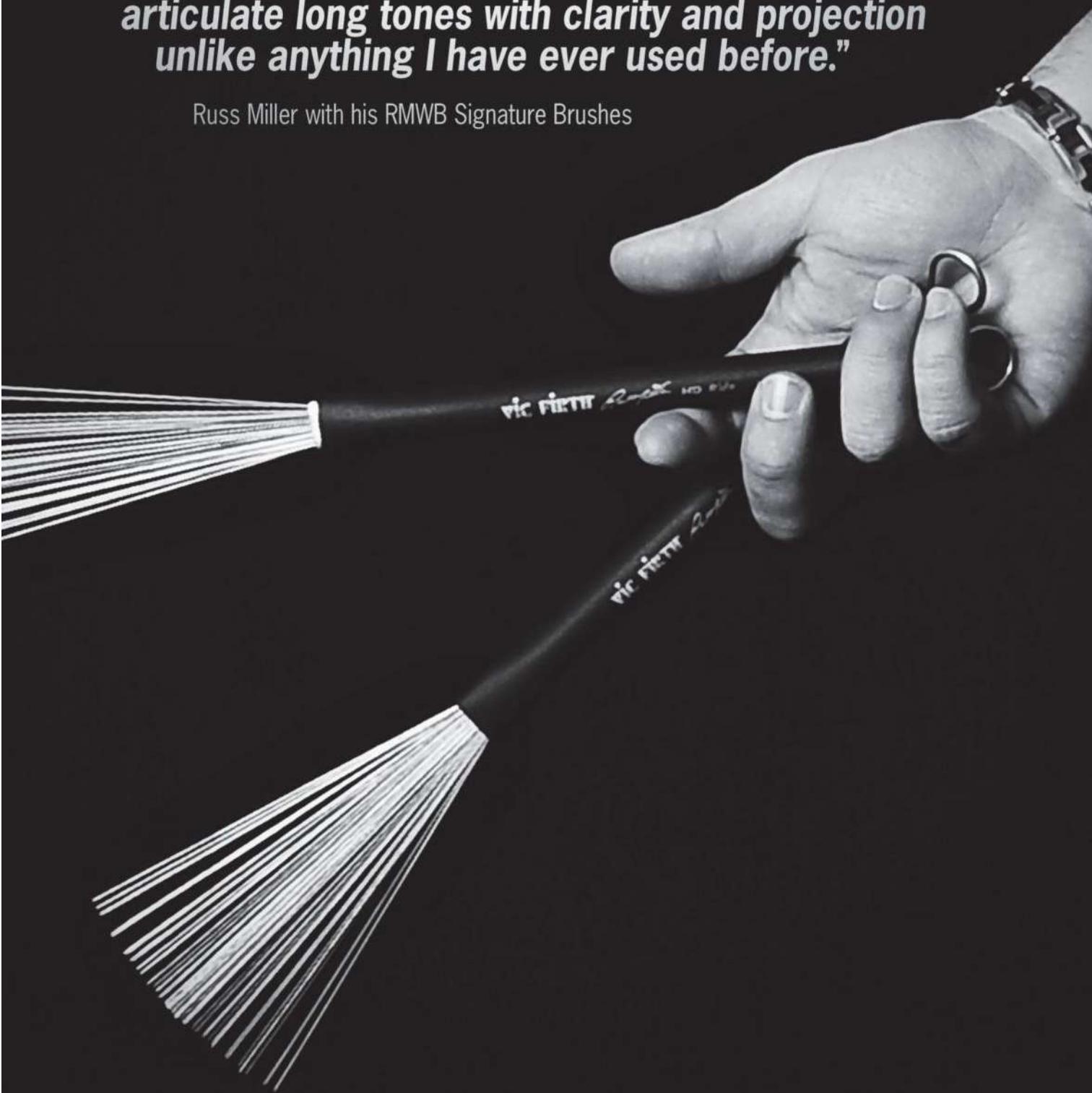
Year of the Horse (recorded live in 1996)

Americana (2012)



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Doug Clifford

Creedence Clearwater Revival achieved an unprecedented level of success in a short span of time with hits like “Travelin’ Band,” “Proud Mary,” and “Who’ll Stop the Rain,” helping to establish a down-home sound that has informed several generations worth of roots-rock musicians. Today the drummer responsible for much of CCR’s famous style is still pumping it out for the fans.

Story by Jeff Potter • Photos by Alex Solca

Doug “Cosmo” Clifford laid down the gritty backbeats for Creedence Clearwater Revival, one of the most successful bands of the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. CCR’s twenty hit singles still enjoy ever-present airplay, and the group’s album sales have surpassed a hundred million worldwide. On stages as far flung as the Royal Albert Hall in London and the Woodstock Festival in upstate New York, and during the band’s furiously creative four-year recording career—the legendary albums *Bayou Country* (“Born on the Bayou,” “Proud Mary”), *Green River* (“Bad Moon Rising,” “Lodi”), and *Willy and the Poor Boys* (“Down on the Corner,” “Fortunate Son”) were all released in 1969!—Creedence powered out a swampy roots-rock/country/R&B mix that remains influential to artists aligned with the current Americana scene and well beyond.

Today, teamed with original bassist Stu Cook but sans vocalist/guitarist John Fogerty and rhythm guitarist Tom Fogerty (the latter died in 1990), Clifford co-leads a successful touring band dubbed Creedence Clearwater Revisited. The quintet has been bringing Creedence hits to audiences around the globe since 1995, supported by guitarist/vocalist John Tristao, lead guitarist Kurt Griffey, and multi-instrumentalist Steve Gunner. Here, Cosmo tells *MD* about drumming on classic tracks from back in the day.

MD: What are some CCR songs that best represent your drumming strengths?

Doug: “Born on the Bayou” is my favorite for several reasons. The beauty is that it’s a quarter-note song, so there’s lots of space in there for it to move. I look at all these songs as living things. That’s my philosophical approach. In “Bayou” there’s so much power. As a drummer I have a very simple style, but I use a lot of fills. We’d always done it that way, because we started off as an instrumental trio, with Stu Cook on piano and John Fogerty on guitar. I used my left hand for little fill ideas to supplement the lack of a rhythm guitar. I played a lot with the guitar, and my concept was that whatever I played, it had to be musical and had to make sense for

the song. It has to take the song somewhere or bring it back. It’s a simple, basic philosophy.

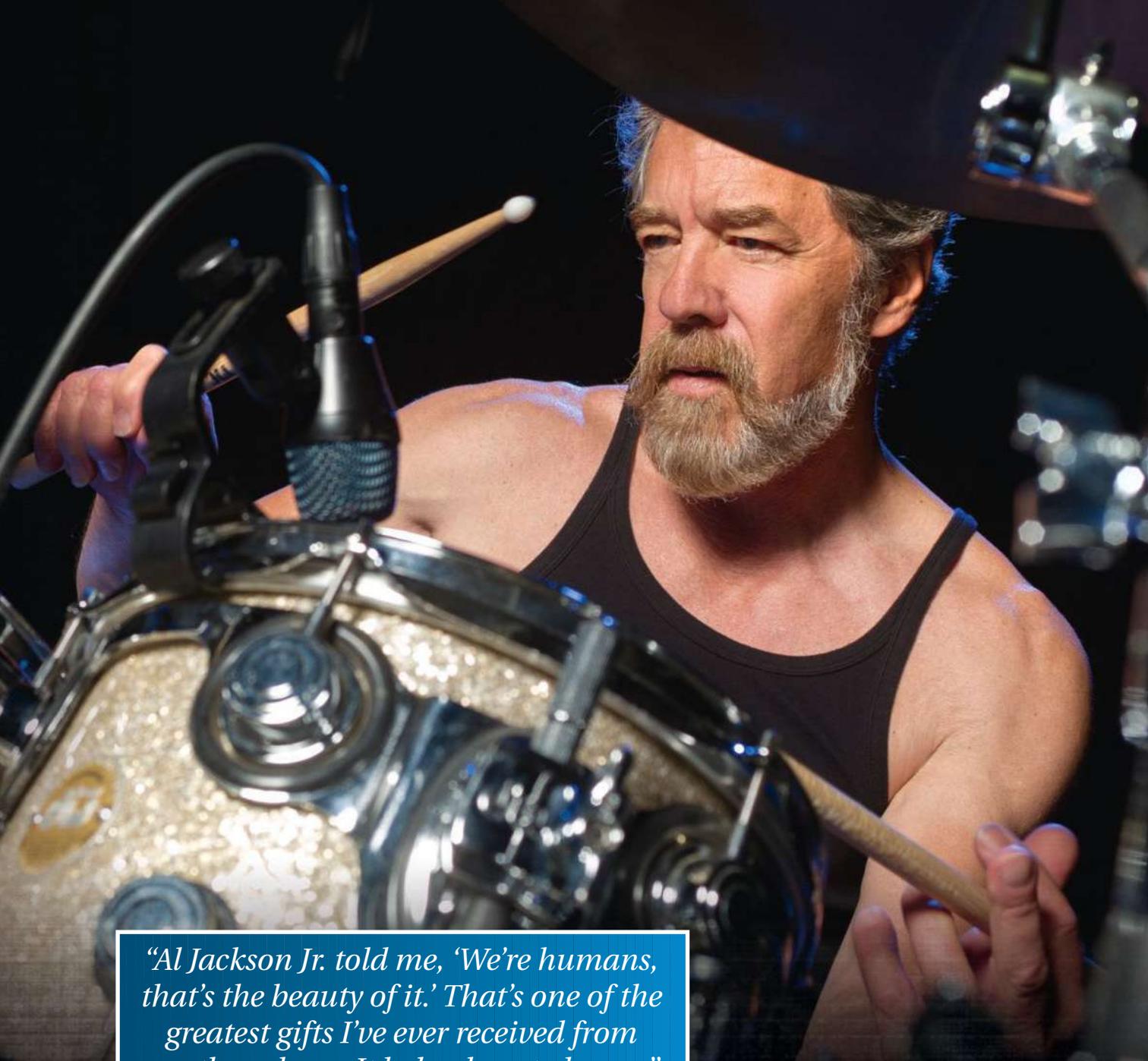
We were a die-hard American roots band in San Francisco right in the midst of all the psychedelia that was happening at the time. We had some psychedelic embellishments—more so on the first album—because we were trying to be hip and cool. We didn’t have any hits at that time, so we thought maybe if we put a little of that flavoring in there, it would help. That resulted in our first hit, “Suzie Q.” It was an eight-minute song that we had to cut in half to make a single. Our peers laughed at us and said, “You’ll never make it playing that music. You need to get with it, man!”

MD: Another impressive element of

“Bayou” is that there’s zero harmonic movement, so the rhythm section has to make it all happen. And in CCR character, it’s socked in and solid but not in a click-track-feeling way.

Doug: I never played with a click track in my life. I just won’t do it. The great Al Jackson Jr. of Booker T & the MGs was a kind of mentor in terms of discussing these philosophies. We did thirty-one dates with them in America. When we hit the big time, we chose opening acts for our tours that we wanted to listen to every night. They were the house band for Stax. Their approach to playing was very basic. It grooved.

Al said to me, “What are your goals?” I said, “I want to be a metronome.” He said, “Why would you want to be a



“Al Jackson Jr. told me, ‘We’re humans, that’s the beauty of it.’ That’s one of the greatest gifts I’ve ever received from another player. It helped me to be me.”

metronome? A metronome is a machine.” I said, “But I want to be *on*.” Al held up one finger. “Look,” he said, “here’s the beat. The right side of the finger is edging the beat—not going past it but a bit on that side of it. The left side is when you’re pulling it back, maybe from a solo and back into a verse, or from a chorus. Then there’s the middle of the finger. That’s okay too. It can be a verse or something else. You move these notes.”

Growing up, I had listened to Little Richard and heard those cats go into an instrumental section and they would just jump, all moving together. I mentioned that to Al, and he said, “We’re humans, that’s the beauty of it.” That’s one of the

greatest gifts I’ve ever received from another player. It helped me to be me. I don’t play perfect time. The groove is a living thing.

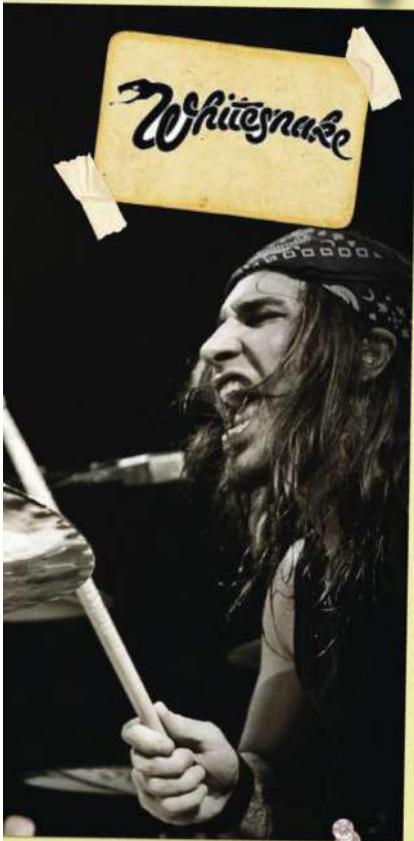
MD: CCR hit the bull’s-eye with so many infectious hits. What’s the magic formula for the rhythm section that evolved from your long pre-fame period?

Doug: I listened to what John was playing on guitar, and from that I would formulate what was going on in my upper body. My lower body was Stuey’s bass. I was connected to these two guys, with me being the middle. John’s topside part was the feel of the song. Connecting with Stuey on the foot pedal, I either worked with him or opposite. For instance, on

“Suzie Q,” the bass drum pattern is real simple. I’m playing the accents. It’s a quarter-note song, but the foot is on 8th notes in between.

Sometimes the backbeat is on the front side of the “finger,” sometimes on the back. Quite honestly, it just happens. It’s not something I do consciously. Playing with Stuey, it’s like riding a bike; we’ve been doing it all our lives. We started the band at thirteen years of age! We learned to play our instruments together and to be a band together. That’s one of the things that gave us a unique sound. We were all on the same page, striving to get where we eventually ended up.

MD: “Fortunate Son” is very different feel-wise from “Bayou.” As opposed to the “back” feel of “Bayou,” it has such an



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Doug: It had to be—it was an urgent song. It was about the inequities of the draft. Young guys like us were being taken from their homes and put in the jungles of Vietnam. Fifty-eight thousand of them didn't come home. It was a very intense, real story line, and we transformed that into the song itself.

Another favorite track of mine is "I Heard It Through the Grapevine." That's the closest that I came to playing a solo. Again, it's back and forth between the lead guitar and me. It was our longest track, at over eleven minutes, so I had to do things to keep it interesting and moving. I used crashes on the backbeats a lot. It sets up the song: "I heard it through the grape-VINE." Those little things guide and support a song; that was my role.

The album track "Effigy" is also a favorite. It had a Band-type feel. It's a

powerful political song. There are a lot of drum fills as it builds instrumentally to the finale. Speaking of the Band, I'm honored to be included in an *MD* issue honoring the great Levon Helm.

MD: You make an unusual choice on "Who'll Stop the Rain." On the last verse, the backbeat drops out for a few bars and you just play bass drum and 16ths on the hi-hat. So when the backbeat suddenly drops back in, it feels even greater.

Doug: That was my idea to mix up the song a little bit. It was a powerful song about the Nixon administration: The "rain" was a metaphor for the reign of Nixon. I played a lot of 16th-note fills to imply a marching snare drum. John said he didn't like that, but just to shut me up he kept them in. [laughs] I fought hard for that one. So, with all those fills, the cymbal breakdown helped to give it a breather and moved the song along nicely.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE



MD: Your drums on the records have a very natural, open sound, sometimes with a nice bit of ring on the snare—it never sounds compressed. Was that a conscious production decision or just a result of recording as live as possible?

Doug: It was pretty much just the way it was. I had a basic four-piece kit with one crash on the left side and a 22" ride. I used the ride cymbal as a crash quite a bit.

Another unique thing that I've been doing since 1969: I have 18" hi-hats. In the old days—drum gear is made much stronger now—I had to go to the hardware store and buy a spring that would hold up their weight. With the store-bought stand I couldn't even open the hats! [laughs]

MD: Did you do it for volume or for a fatter sound?

Doug: A fatter sound. It gave me more options. I did a lot of things between the shank and tip of the stick. When I opened it, it sounded like a ride cymbal, but because the cymbals were touching, part

of the sound would be these big cymbals washing back and forth against each other. When I played straight 8ths, it had one effect, but if I alternated between shank and tip it was like a crosscut saw. It added something really different. Most people never figured it out, even drummers! It's a simple thing that had a life of its own, and I still use it.

Camco were the drums I played back in the day. They went out of business, but their operations were bought out by Drum Workshop, which I play now. On my kit today I've added a middle tom and a crash on the left—I've added two pieces in forty-four years! I've used Paiste cymbals since 1969. [Clifford's cymbals include, from left, a set of 18" hi-hats featuring a Signature Full crash on top and a Signature Power Crash underneath, an 18" Giant Beat, an 18" Signature Power crash, and a 22" Signature Blue Bell ride.] I'm their oldest endorser—or should I say longest endorser. [laughs] I also use Vic Firth 2B nylon-tip sticks.



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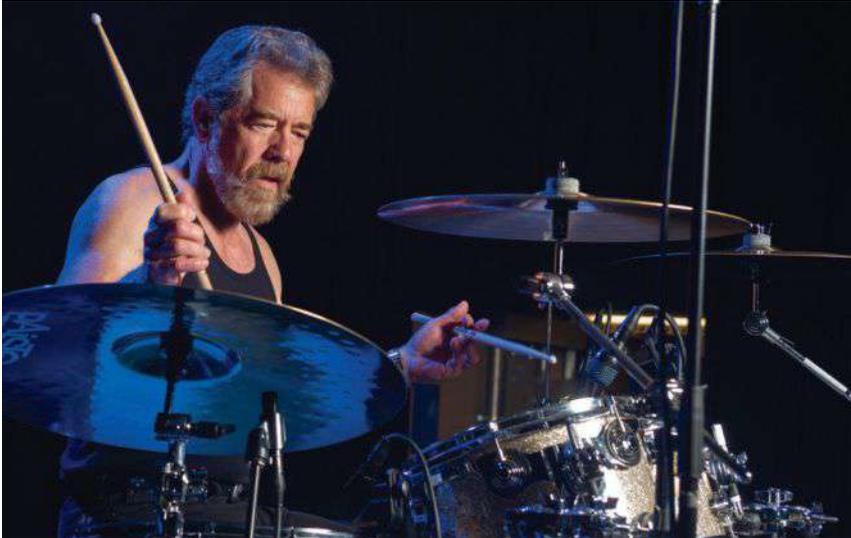
DOUG CLIFFORD

MD: CCR at its best sounded like a bunch of guys having a blast playing together in a room. That rootsy vibe is a part of today's Americana ethos. It seems the approach that initially made you out of sync with psychedelia has helped the records endure.

Doug: I'd always proudly described us as the best garage band in the world. And now the Creedence Clearwater Revisited

project is in its eighteenth year. I'm as flabbergasted as anybody. We have three generations coming to the show, which I find phenomenal. Now I see a fourth one—what we call the single-digeters!

I never thought I would be doing this at this age. We're traveling all over the world, and we don't have the pressure of putting out a record next week. We're just a "travelin' band"!



COSMO COLLECTED



Creedence Clearwater Revival (1968)

Bayou Country (1969)

Green River (1969)

Willy and the Poor Boys (1969)

Cosmo's Factory (1970)

Pendulum (1970)

Mardi Gras (1972)

The Concert (recorded live at the Oakland Coliseum, Oakland, California, January 31, 1970)

Recollection (recorded live on tour in western Canada, 1997)



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Levon Helm

May 26, 1940–April 19, 2012

by Jeff Potter

There were flowers and a closed casket. And standing next to it, an unmanned drumset. Mourners from nearby and as far away as Australia arrived by the thousands at the Woodstock, New York, barn that served as a communal performance/gathering space for Levon Helm's joyous Midnight Ramble concert series, featuring stellar guests and good will. Lingering in the shared sadness was a question that Levon had once phrased in song: "Where do we go from here?" Fearing the end to an era that had brought joy to so many, the music lovers hoped to somehow revive the Rambles.

Bob Dylan told the press that Helm "was one of the last true great spirits of my or any other generation." But none said it better than Levon's wife, Sandy, who announced his final stages of cancer: "He had loved nothing more than to play, to fill the room up with music, lay down the backbeat, and make the people dance."

Decades ago, when Helm was a member of the Band, the legendary group planned to record its *Stage Fright* LP in a free concert setting at a Woodstock theater. Local authorities denied the permit, citing fears that the already too-famous band would draw further unwanted attention and troubles to a quiet town. But now flags throughout Ulster County flew at half-mast to honor Helm's lasting contributions to the community.

Woodstock is a microcosm of Helm's contributions to the wider world of music. As a cornerstone and cofounder of the Band, the drummer created music exhilaratingly new yet old as the mountains of his native Arkansas. By the time they exited the world stage, Levon and the Band had changed American music forever.

Mark Lavon "Levon" Helm was born in Elaine, Arkansas, on May 26, 1940, to a cotton-farming family. Growing up in the town of Turkey Scratch, he knew the rigors of hard work but also the great joys of music in a family that embraced singing and playing together as a way of life.

Young Levon absorbed roots music from Southern radio stations broadcasting blues, country, R&B, and the Grand Ole Opry. From an early age, he witnessed seminal musicians passing through, including Conway Twitty and Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys. Later, as a teen, lightning struck when he saw Jimmy Van Eaton play drums with Jerry Lee Lewis.

When Levon was nine, his father bought him a guitar. By high school he was playing in his first rock group, the Jungle Bush Beaters, and drumming in the school band. At seventeen he was making a splash gigging in clubs in Helena and eventually sitting in at nearby Memphis nightspots. Ronnie Hawkins, the outrageous, larger-than-life rockabilly singer, sought out the fledgling teen, convincing him that Canada



Edward Przydłaj



Paul Natkin

offered better money and steadier work. Helm was sold.

Now a member of Ronnie Hawkins and the Hawks, Helm uprooted to Toronto and hit the road, playing a hardscrabble six-nights-a-week route of rough roadhouses. It was heaven to the wide-eyed drummer. His band-

mates consistently mispronounced “Lavon,” so he called himself Lee-von, and it stuck.

By the early '60s, Hawkins had recruited four Canadians—Rick Danko, Richard Manuel, Robbie Robertson, and finally Garth Hudson—who were destined to

become the Band. After endless road grinding, the ambitious sidemen agreed they had outgrown their leader. The five ventured out on their own in 1963, reborn as Levon and the Hawks, and cut their teeth on club tours of Canada and the American South, generating a growing buzz along the way.

Their grit paid off when a call came in offering another gig as a backup band—this time with none other than Bob Dylan. Dylan had just come off his infamous Newport Folk Festival date where he'd “gone electric” to the violent uproar of folk purists. The Hawks signed on and jumped aboard the ongoing electric/folk roller coaster. In August of 1965, at a Queens, New York, stadium concert, Dylan braced the group with the combat briefing, “Just keep playing no matter how weird it gets.” And weird it got. Caring too deeply about music to endure the booing and literal fruit throwing, Helm instead chose to quit. He traveled back south to work grueling shifts on an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico rather than put up with the negativity. The others pressed on, with Bobby Gregg initially covering the drum seat.

FAMOUS FRIENDS

Among the dozens of musicians who shared the Ramble stage with Levon were (counterclockwise from top left) singer-songwriters Sheryl Crow and Emmylou Harris and drummers Aaron Comess of the Spin Doctors and Max Weinberg of the E Street Band.



Paul La Raia



Paul La Raia



Paul La Raia



Paul La Raia



Paul LeRita

When Dylan suffered injuries in a motorcycle accident, he returned to Woodstock in July 1966 to recuperate. The four remaining Hawks (now casually referred to as “the band”) retreated there as well. Renting a now-iconic pink house in nearby West Saugerties, the group shedded for a rebirth, hunkering down to focus on its own writing.

The upstate setting yielded the material for the groundbreaking debut album *Music From Big Pink*. And the continuous jams/workshopping along with Dylan became the raw materials for the widely bootlegged sessions released legitimately seven years later as *The Basement Tapes*. An imminent record deal developed via Dylan’s manager Albert Grossman, and Levon got the pleading call from his bandmates to return to the fold. He hastily packed his suitcase.

Big Pink arrived in July of 1968 as a breath of fresh air, and its impact has never faded. While scores of rock acts of the time were increasingly absorbed by the trappings of psychedelia and studio trickery, the Band’s debut offered a homespun earthy sound devoid of bluster. It arrived as an affirmation that the inspirations and materials musicians needed for the future were right at their feet: the deep traditions of rural America, from mountain music to gospel to R&B, rockabilly, and especially the sounds of the deep South and folk music. *Big Pink* echoed an earlier world where communities gathered to share their lives in song.

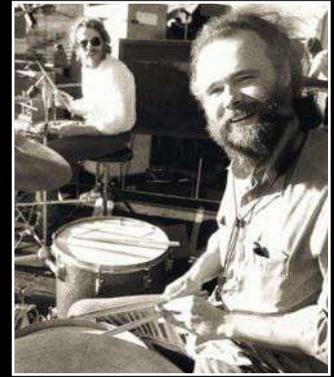
The musical quilt of the Band was at once oddly strange and deeply familiar and resonant, like the soundtrack of the



Paul LeRita

WATCHING, WANTING

Over the course of a full half century, **GARTH HUDSON** spent untold hours alongside Levon Helm, as they and the other members of the Band honed their craft. Here the wizardly multi-instrumentalist riffs on the process. Jeff Potter mans the recorder.



Copyright 2012, John Scheide

“All those pleasant memories of Levon Helm... I would call Levon’s drumming very crafty. Very crafty. Somebody used this word: They said he was the ‘foxiest’ drummer. He accompanied songs, just as I did. That’s what we did a great percentage of the time, isn’t it? It wasn’t a jam band. There weren’t many long solos—somewhat in the tradition of basic country music and jump music, rhythm and blues. We paid great attention to the language of blues and jazz. We would hear twelve bars and we knew it as a work, a piece of art.

“Levon had a great touch. His special thing: the pickup grace notes that precede the beat. He did it subtly, and he did it so you almost didn’t hear it. It was a treatment—tapping to find out how close you are to being on the money. When I say on the money I don’t mean precise like a machine, but having the same feel as the other people you’re playing with. There we go round the mulberry bush again: It’s reiterated exercises that can heal and cure. It also helps maintain focus.

“Along with Levon’s drumming, you’d have to include Richard [Manuel]. Levon said more than one time, ‘Richard’s my favorite drummer; he’s a natural drummer.’ That’s Richard on drums on ‘Rag Mama Rag,’ just laying it in there with those straight 8ths against the triplet—one shifting against another in the middle of a phrase, as you hear more obviously in old Memphis piano playing and drumming too.

“Richard and Levon used to do the hambone together—slapping skin on skin. They were good at it. It has something to do with having that kind of muscle setup. Both Levon and Richard had it. It was a fluid drive. Their bones and everything just worked well. Fluid drive!

“We listened to all the stuff over the radio. A New Orleans feel is a combination of swing and Latin. We picked it up. Levon lived near New Orleans. Of course he heard it and was most influenced by the folks that he saw play on the King Biscuit Flour Hour stage, the rambles that happened down there. He was watching this stuff and gathering information: different nuances, techniques, hints, tips, and quotes. He was there analyzing in some way. Or remembering a time and a place when that shuffle had that straight thing goin’ on along with it.

“Levon *watched*. He went to see Sonny Boy Williamson and took us there. Ronnie [Hawkins], Robbie [Robertson], and Levon rented a hotel room near Helena, Arkansas, near where Levon was born. They got Sonny Boy over there to play the harmonica. Got a little amp in there. We all jammed with him on a Sunday afternoon. What I’m saying is that Levon watched and wanted—as we all did. We loved to speak that language well. We knew that was one way of maintaining a feeling of...of...well, I’m thinking of that wonderful word that the good Lord sometimes uses—integrity!”

GREATNESS BEGINS WITH THE MAN

JIM KELTNER recognized Helm's unique gifts—as a musician, and as a humanitarian—the moment he met him, all those years ago. Ken Micallef gets the story.

A month before that Thanksgiving Day in 1976, when Martin Scorsese filmed the Band's farewell concert film, *The Last Waltz*, Jim Keltner was in the studio recording "Josie" with Steely Dan. A week later, Keltner was back in the studio with Band producer John Simon, playing with the future unknown Heath Martinez. Keltner has seen many years and many sessions since then, but Levon Helm remains one of his greatest heroes.

"When you spend time around someone and you watch how they treat people," Jim says, "you get some real insight into what makes that person tick. Levon Helm was an extremely honorable person. He would be the guy to go get you a chair if there wasn't one; he would always ask you if you needed anything, and it didn't matter if he knew you or not. He was just truly a caring person. Levon changed my whole world of drumming, my entire attitude about playing the drums.

"At one point," Keltner recalls, "I went to the house where the Band was recording their second album, up in the Hollywood Hills. I spent a couple days at the house hanging with Levon. By the time I left I was convinced that I would never play the same again. Hearing what Levon was doing with the Band in those hours I spent with them, how they were playing together, and particularly how Levon was interpreting the songs, I remember thinking, *Man, I play completely wrong. I'm talking too much, I'm having too much conversation with myself during the song, and it has to stop.* I remember saying to Levon, 'If I could just hit one tom the way you do and make it be so meaningful the way you do...' But he stopped me and said, 'Jimmy, if I could play those damn little rolls that you do...' I told him I would have traded with him in a heartbeat. We had that kind of relationship."

Keltner agrees with those who say that Helm's style was a direct result of the hours he spent listening to the radio as a kid in Arkansas. "And he got to see those guys play," Keltner adds. "Sonny Boy Williamson and those rhythm sections. That is irreplaceable. You can learn from hearing a record, but to see it going down in front of you, that's like nothing else.

"Levon had the touch and the feel of those early blues drummers," Keltner continues. "That's where he was coming from. But he lived in the world of rock, so the way he played rock was coming straight out of that blues thing. His choice of where to play a fill and where not to play and how to make the time feel so sexy was extraordinary. He would start to play a fill and you'd think you knew where it was going, and then it would shift. Or it would be finished before you expected and leave you with all that space to think about what you'd just heard. With any great player, what you play is who you are. And your choice of notes—that's what thrills people."

Keltner suggests that Helm's already commanding skills were further enhanced by the remarkable musicians he worked with. "As with Ringo and Charlie Watts," Jim says, "Levon played in an amazing band with amazing players and songwriters—songwriters being key. If you're fortunate enough as a drummer to be able to play on songs by a great songwriter, especially if there's more than one in the same band, then your drumming is going to sound a whole lot better. And you're going to have the time of your life. And that's extremely important. Levon was very fortunate to be playing with those guys in the Band; part of what made him great was the music he was singing and playing to. And they were fortunate to have him.

"The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down" is a favorite of mine," Keltner says. "I watched the Band mix that song. There was no automation. I sat on the couch at the Hit Factory in New York and watched. That song is meaningful to me on so many levels. To hear Levon sing it—was there ever a voice as distinctive and chilling as his? Every song Levon ever sang and played did it to you, but 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down' is the pinnacle. And I still cry any time I hear it."



Rob Shanahan courtesy of Paiste

American collective unconscious. It was a seminal and lasting statement of a genre only much later referred to as Americana.

Al Kooper wrote in a 1968 *Rolling Stone* review that the LP was "an event and should be treated as one... [Helm] is an exciting drummer with many ideas to toss around. I worked with him in Dylan's first band and he kept us together like an enormous iron metronome."

The group delayed touring until its live debut at San Francisco's Winterland in April of 1969. It was a year of mega-festivals, including appearances at Woodstock and alongside Dylan at the Isle of Wight.

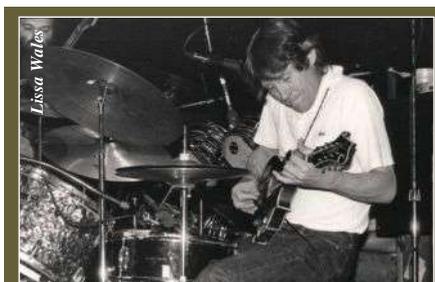
Following the success of *Big Pink* came *The Band* (1969), an even more cohesive statement that further heightened the group's importance. Another brilliant outing, *Stage Fright*, arrived in 1970, this time with a darker, searching

tone. While the Band was blessed with several distinctively different vocalists, Helm's soaring, expressive twang was especially appropriate when spinning tales of the South. As a result, Levon lent his unmistakable sound to many of the quintet's best-known classics, including "The Night They Drove Old

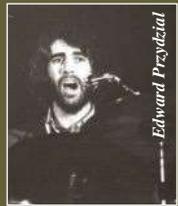
Dixie Down," "The Weight," and "Up on Cripple Creek." It was a sound that was sometimes yearning, sometimes rascally, and often simultaneously world-weary—yet defiantly unsinkable.

Much like his vocals, Helm's drumming was a stew pot echoing early rock 'n' roll, swing, rockabilly, country, blues, soul, gospel, and R&B. Levon's creative, song-serving drum parts varied endlessly, depending on the story he chose to tell, from the orchestrated patterns of "The Shape I'm In" and "King Harvest (Has Surely Come)" to the very minimal. A mesmerizing example of "less is more" is heard on the poignant meditation on mortality "I Shall Be Released." Helm placed his snare drum upside down and during verses raked his fingers across the snare bed. The effect was like the sound of a distant military drum carried on the wind.

Although Helm is commonly remem-



Back in the day, Helm would occasionally hand the sticks over to keyboardist Richard Manuel (right), while he played mandolin. In more recent years, Randy Ciarlante was Levon's trusty backup.



Edward Przybyl

bered for his loose, swampy, back-phrased feel, in truth his approach was quite versatile. Listen to “The Shape I’m In” for a more driving, on-top vibe. And notice his beautiful light, suspended feel on the dreamy “Tears of Rage” and the jazzy triplet lilt of “Sleeping.” On “Life Is a Carnival,” Levon creates a quirky fun-house take on New Orleans funk by simply shifting accents between various downbeats. For a dead locked-in approach, look no further than the funky groove on the live cut “Don’t Do It.”

A trademark was Helm’s deft manipulation of ruffs and open rolls as grace-note groups, creating waves of smooth ghosted subdivisions that often set up backbeats, as heard prominently on “Cripple Creek.” The coloring echoed the flourishes of New Orleans second-line street-beat snare drumming. A related nuance is the unexpected press-roll crescendo leading into the crashing downbeat on the chorus of “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.” The effect is cathartic. Helm also employed a very syncopated bass drum foot, yet it was frequently used in a subtle kit-balanced approach rather than as part of a heavy bass/snare center.

True to his selfless goal of serving the song above all else, Helm sometimes deferred to keyboardist Richard Manuel, who was also a drummer, albeit in a less-tutored manor. Levon occasionally found Manuel’s unorthodox approach more appropriate for a particular track, so he handed over the sticks, often freeing himself up in turn to play mandolin.

The sound of Levon’s drums on the early Band LPs was a perfect match for the group’s dark, weathered, bass-end timbres, which is especially apparent on *The Band*. It was a distinctive sound at a time when rock production was exploiting an enhanced high end.

Keyboardist Garth Hudson, a master of vintage sounds, enjoyed scouring out-of-the-way instrument sources, and he helped Helm find the vintage kit— nabbed for \$130—that’s heard throughout that second LP. The album pulses with a loose bass drum head and the thump of detuned toms. “You can hear the wood in there,” Levon said. He used the thick low toms to great drama on *Big Pink*’s “The Weight,” on which

his setup fills succeed with only three fat, resonant notes. He also preferred the arcane wooden snare rim, saying that he loved the “knock” of a perfectly angled rimshot.

The first three Band LPs are commonly acknowledged as the group’s defining masterpieces, but the follow-ups offered several gems as well. *Cahoots* (1971) contains classic cuts such as Dylan’s “When I Paint My Masterpiece,” featuring a warm, humorous Helm vocal, and the jubilant “Life Is a Carnival.” The excellent double live *Rock of Ages* (1972) hit the top

ten with a boisterous take on Band classics supplemented by a rollicking brass unit. Levon is heard in top form here, driving the expanded ensemble. *Moondog Matinee* (1973) offers a loving throwback to the R&B covers of the group’s Hawks days. *Northern Lights–Southern Cross* (1975), the finest studio disc of the latter years, yielded the beautiful “Acadian Driftwood,” and *Islands* (1977) supplied a wrap-up of odds-and-ends tracks. The Band also reunited with Dylan on his 1974 LP *Planet Waves* and toured the U.S. with him, this time appearing as a featured

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LEVON HELM

co-force, as captured on the live *Before the Flood* album.

Although the Band's recordings are his greatest musical testament, Helm amassed an impressive discography as a sideman, which alone could have earned him greatness. He recorded with Ringo Starr, Graham Nash, Todd Rundgren, David Bromberg, Norah Jones, Rufus Wainwright, Charlie Musselwhite, Carl Perkins, Emmylou Harris, Joe Walsh, Los Lobos, Eric

Clapton, Neil Young, and Muddy Waters. Alongside Band-mates, he also sang in Roger Waters' massive 1990 production of *The Wall* in Berlin.

By 1976, interpersonal strains and the rigors of the road caused Robbie Robertson to lobby for disbanding the group. Helm vehemently disagreed, and the wound between them was never patched.

The Band's grandiose farewell took place on Thanksgiving 1976, bolstered

by a grand roster of superstar musical guests. The event, dubbed the Last Waltz, was documented by a 1978 Martin Scorsese film and an LP of the same name. Even though Helm disowned the film, saying it unevenly glorified Robertson's role in the quintet's collective creativity, it nevertheless remains an archival treasure, capturing Levon's charismatic musical command and reaffirming his major role in this great legacy.

Following the group's grand finale, Helm unexpectedly branched into acting, delivering an outstanding performance in the 1980 film *Coal Miner's Daughter*. His friend Tommy Lee Jones gave him an acting crash course over a bottle of Wild Turkey. As Levon told it, he realized that acting is not all that different from music. "It's a certain rhythm and phrasing," he explained. For research, he even took on a few shifts in a coal mine. The drummer went on to act in eleven films, including *The Right Stuff* (1983) and *The Dollmaker* (1984).

The demise of the Band also gave Helm the opportunity to release his own solo projects, starting with 1977's *Levon Helm & the RCO All-Stars*, a grooving outing supported by Dr. John, Booker T & the MGs, and Paul Butterfield. A string of solo discs followed, with *Levon Helm* (1978), the well-received *American Son* (1980), and a second self-titled album (1982).

Missing the brotherhood of the Band, Helm recruited Rick Danko, Richard Manuel, and Garth Hudson for a 1983 resurrection. The group, with supplemental personnel, toured and released a concert video. But tragedy struck in 1986 when they endured the suicide of their comrade Manuel while on the road.

In 1993, the drummer's fascinating autobiography, *This Wheel's on Fire: Levon Helm and the Story of the Band*, coauthored by Stephen Davis, was published. It's a colorful volume that captures the rolling rhythm of Levon's oral spinning of tales. Soon after, the first reborn-Band CD, *Jericho*, was released. The disc proved that despite the absence of previous central songwriter Robertson, the sound and spirit of the group was still vital.

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AN UNDENIABLE PRESENCE

Latter-day Band member **RANDY CIARLANTE** made it his business to know Helm's drumming inside out. Bob Girouard finds out what he learned.



When Randy Ciarlante talks about "the boss," it's not Bruce Springsteen he's referring to. Rather, he reserves that title for one man only: **Levon Helm**. Ciarlante shared a thirty-two-year friendship with Helm and played a significant role in some of his milestones: **Occupying the second drum chair throughout the Band's decade-long resurgence in the '90s, Randy accompanied the group on its comeback tours and appears on the *Jericho*, *High on the Hog*, and *Jubilation* albums. As a close creative partner, he gained unique insight into the roots and idiosyncrasies of Helm's magical drumming.**

"Levon's infatuation with the drums came with Sonny Boy Williamson's *King Biscuit Time* radio show in Helena, Arkansas," Ciarlante says. "Peck Curtis, Sonny Boy's drummer, inspired him first. The first thing he really learned how to do was a shuffle. He always said that Peck was having so much fun, and he wanted to do the same thing.

"Jack Nance, who played with Conway Twitty, was another influence, especially for showmanship. I believe Levon got his deep pocket from watching those Memphis cats like Al Jackson, Willie Hall, and his favorite jazz drummer, Louis Hayes. He loved Hayes' cymbal work. He also dug the Southern marching bands: Grambling, Arkansas Razorbacks, etc. His famous shuffle against the 8th-note beat was something he couldn't describe technically, but instead he talked about Curtis, Sam Lay, and Earl Palmer laying down a 'fat-back.' Jazz guys at the time were also using a triplet feel, and with rock 'n' roll crossing over, all of a sudden you're floating that triplet in with the 8th note.

"There's a big difference between swinging and playing straight," Ciarlante continues, "and what made Levon so special was that he combined the two. I used to love when he got off the hi-hat and laid into a march feel. When you played alongside Levon, you had to learn how to stay out of the way. You can practice double bass drum technique, paradiddles, funk beats, all that stuff, but none of that is going to work, because he doesn't come from that. He just plays. It's a musical, lyrical, and melodic thing."

Around November of 2011, the boss requested that Ciarlante come on board with the Levon Helm Band in the second drum chair. "Knowing they had just come off their third Grammy Award," Randy shares, "I wondered, *What do they need me for?* It was and is a phenomenal band. He was visibly happy I was back in the fold, though, and I really felt that we recaptured some of that old magic. I know we laughed a lot. Whether he knew how sick he was or not, he never complained. He was the most intense warrior I've ever seen. He loved what he was doing so much and was an inspiration to the end.

"I always had to prepare hard to play with musicians of the level that I've been fortunate to work with. Levon, on the other hand, had a gift. His personality as a singer and a drummer were unique. He's among the select few that when you hear them you know it's special. The feel, the voice, the undeniable presence took hold of you every time he played, sang, or told a story. Lee also had that distinct quality of making everyone around him better. He was the quintessential band component."

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	Moline, IL	West Music
	Dallas, TX	Lone Star Percussion
	Carle Place, NY	Sam Ash
	King of Prussia, PA	Sam Ash
October 3	Edison, NJ	Sam Ash
	Margate, FL	Sam Ash
October 4	Reno, NV	Bizarre Guitar
October 6	Pittsburgh, PA	Drum World Pittsburgh
	St. Louis, MO	Mozingo
	Houston, TX	Cymbal Fusion
October 8	Hollywood, CA	Guitar Center
October 9	La Mesa, CA	Guitar Center
	Philadelphia, PA	Guitar Center
October 10	Fountain Valley, CA	Guitar Center
October 11	Milwaukee, WI	Cascio Super Sale
	Fredericksburg, VA	Greenbrier Percussion
October 12	Brooklyn, NY	Sam Ash
October 13	Champaign, IL	Skins-n-Tins Drum Shop
	Harrisburg, PA	Dale's Drum Shop
	Bellevue, WA	Donn Bennett's
	Las Vegas, NV	Sam Ash
October 17	Ontario Mills, CA	Sam Ash
October 18	Sacramento, CA	Skip's Music
	Detroit, MI	Guitar Center
	Manhattan, NY	Sam Ash
October 20	Chicago, IL	Vic's Drum Shop
	Columbus, OH	Columbus Percussion
	Los Angeles, CA	Guitar Center
October 25	Albuquerque, NM	Grandma's Music
October 24	Raleigh, NC	Sam Ash
October 26	San Antonio, TX	Sam Ash
October 27	New Berlin, WI	Cascio Drumfest
	Hollywood, FL	Resurrection Drums
	Mesa, AZ	Milano Music

LEVON HELM

The members followed up with *High on the Hog* (1996) and *Jubilation* (1998), until Danko's passing in 1999 brought the group's final chapter to a close.

Helm's own greatest challenge arrived in 1998, when he was diagnosed with throat cancer. His once expressive instrument dwindled to a whisper. A tumor was removed, and over the following years Levon endured twenty-eight radiation treatments.

From the adversity, however, came triumph. Due to physical challenges and mounting medical bills, Levon was determined that if he couldn't travel to bring music to the people, he would invite the people to come to the music. He set upon converting his barn/recording studio to an informal gathering/concert space, and soon he was hosting spontaneous events dubbed Midnight Rambles. Starting in 2004, the warm homespun presentations became a sensation, resulting in more than 150 shows featuring a growing number of top-star guests.

Helm kept performing and, amazingly, slowly regained his voice. Though not as robust as before, his singing retained its expressive call. The Rambles gave Levon a phoenixlike resurgence. With the core of his Rambles band, he toured sporadically, and then he released *Dirt Farmer*, his most tradition-grounded recording—and the recipient of the 2008 Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album. That same year, the Band received a Lifetime Achievement Award Grammy.

The inspired and even more expansive follow-up, *Electric Dirt* (2009), garnered a Grammy for Best Americana Album. Levon went full-circle in 2009, performing at the fortieth anniversary of the Woodstock festival. The 2011 CD *Ramble at the Ryman*, the soundtrack to a PBS presentation of a live Nashville concert, gave him yet another Best Americana Album Grammy.

Always evolving, Levon continued turning out great drum tracks in his later years. With a consciously stripped-down style, he switched from traditional to matched grip in order to “discipline” himself to concentrate on the beauty of a simpler backbeat. *Electric Dirt* in particular boasts tracks that stand with his finest groove moments.

Helm performed nearly until the very end, when he finally succumbed to complications from cancer on April 19, 2012, at New York's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, at age seventy-one. Longtime friend and Ramble musical director/guitarist Larry Campbell told *Rolling Stone*, “All his friends were there, and it seemed like Levon was waiting for them. Ten minutes after they left, we sat there and he just faded away. He did it with dignity. It was even two days ago they thought it would happen within hours, but he held on. It seems like he was Levon up to the end, doing it the way he wanted to do it. He loved us, we loved him.”

In the “simple” strains of American roots music, Helm heard a bottomless wealth, a source of inspiration and innovation, a directive for a full life. In his singing, he found a channel through which he could express the day-to-day struggles of common folk that resonated as a greater collective experience. In his drumming, he found a vehicle for sharing joy, sorrow, struggle, and fulfillment. In a



THE MASTER INTERPRETER

In 2008, *MD* contributor Ken Micallef recorded for posterity a historic conversation between Helm and renowned drummer/producer **STEVE JORDAN**. Here Micallef reconnects with Jordan and gathers further insight into the musician that Steve calls “a complete artist.”

“You have to play some good music to get the people on the floor. I want to hear the meat. Until you can do that, it’s suspect to me.”

When Levon Helm said this to groove master Steve Jordan for a *Modern Drummer* cover story, Jordan’s excitement was palpable. Steve relished the opportunity to ask Levon not only about his drumming but about his amazing life. What came through the interview was two musicians enamored of each other’s talents and enjoying their shared love of music.

“Levon plays the song,” Jordan told *MD* at the time. “He was born with this beautiful rhythm. When you have a brilliant musician like Levon who has an inherent take on music—he’s a great singer, he’s a composer—with that combination you can’t lose. His drumming is gorgeous, and his interpretation of the song is magnificent. I just love what emanates from the drums when he plays.”

In a recent chat, Jordan says, “Levon is a complete artist and an inspiring human. Basically, he took the same approach when he was acting as when he got behind the kit playing with the Band or played mandolin. When he couldn’t sing due to throat cancer, it didn’t make him any less of a musician. It probably fine-tuned his musi-

anship even more, if that’s humanly possible. Levon was a complete and total inspiration as a human being.

“Levon is a true storyteller,” Jordan goes on. “There’s the controversy over who wrote the songs in the Band. Levon thought he was cowriting some stuff, then he found out he wasn’t. Obviously the songs credited to Robbie Robertson are solely his, and Levon is singing them. But they are obviously [cowritten], because you can’t tell a story like that if you didn’t have something to do with them. Levon’s Grammy-winning solo records validate that idea. I wasn’t in the room with them, but I am a musician and I know how collaboration can be murky, and how people can forget what they did and didn’t do. But the proof is in the music. It speaks for itself.”

Jordan cites “Up on Cripple Creek” as his favorite Levon Helm performance. “‘Cripple Creek’ has one of the greatest introductions ever recorded,” Steve says. “The groove, the musical choices, every note that’s played, the sound, you name it—it’s just incredible. Then it goes into the first verse, where Levon sings something that sounds like he’s just talking about his life. You’re sucked into his story. You’re not thinking about how great he’s singing or



Paul LaBeija

about the groove; the guy is just telling you a story that’s irresistible.

“Then the song gets into your consciousness. You think, *How can I do that? How does Levon sing and it doesn’t sound like he’s drumming, and how does he drum and it doesn’t sound like he’s singing?* Some singers who sing and play drums, the drums sound blocky or there is no nuance. Very few drummers can play and sing with such fluidity and independence. There are people who do it, but you can sense the mechanics. Levon has quintessential independence. And he’s so natural. It makes it even freakier. How does he do that? And he passed it on to his daughter, Amy, who is a hell of a drummer. It’s in the genes.”

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DANNY GOTTLIEB

life-threatening illness, he found an opportunity for rebirth. In death, he found a graceful exit, leaving behind a forum in which others could carry on. Whether Levon was singing, drumming, strumming, writing, or acting, his art made us feel as if we were gathered

around a timeless campfire.

Ulster County's flags are now restored to their full heights. Those gathering Woodstock mourners who asked, "Where do we go from here?" need only reflect upon the inspirational resilience of Levon Helm's life and

recall another lyric he sang with the Band, on "All La Glory":

*Before the leaves all turn brown
Before they tumble to the ground
You will find the harmony
Wait and see*



Paul La Raja



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Style & Analysis

Levon Helm

by Eric Novod

MUSIC KEY	
open	R.C. Bell
H.H.	C.C.
T.T.	
S.D.	
B.D.	
H.H.	Ghost Add'l
w/ foot	Note Tom

Perhaps never again will country, blues, rock 'n' roll, and rhythm and blues be combined so effortlessly, musically, and soulfully as in the drumming of the late Levon Helm. In this memorial Style & Analysis, we examine Helm's common groove choices, his constant awareness of dynamics, and his mastery of lyrical drumming, enhanced by the fact that he was delivering some of rock's greatest vocal performances right along with the grooves. Any compartmentalization between rhythm, melody, and harmony vanishes in Helm's drumming, leaving behind loads of "playing for the song" source material for all of us to learn from.

We're going to explore the technical end of the Band drummer's style from here on out, but let's let Levon remind us what it's truly all about, as he said once in *MD*: "If you give it good concentration, good energy, good heart, and good performance, the song will play you."

The Band, "The Weight," *Music From Big Pink*

After a 16th-note-triplet turnaround, Helm displays many of his favorite moves in the span of a few measures here—the stand-alone snare drum, combinations of linear and syncopated patterns, and a constant implied swing with occasional, powerful straight-8th-note statements. (1:00, 1:17)

Musical notation for 'The Weight' drum part, showing various patterns including triplets and syncopated rhythms.

The Band, "Up on Cripple Creek," *The Band*

This famous intro is Levon personified—layered dynamics, combinations of linear and syncopated ideas, hip ghost notes, and an entirely personal placement of the beat that lives right between straight and swung time. (0:00)

Musical notation for 'Look Out Cleveland' drum part, featuring a steady 16th-note triplet on the ride cymbal.

The Band, "Look Out Cleveland," *The Band*

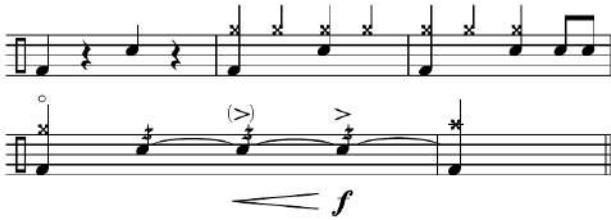
Notice how evenly the ride cymbal 16th notes are played throughout this groove, while the subtle dynamic shifts in the bass drum create the movement. Also notice that the downbeats are hit fairly assertively in the first two measures, but then Helm leaves out the bass drum on beat 1 of measure 3. When he comes in on the "e" and the "&," the beat turns around. (0:57)

Musical notation for 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down' drum part, showing a powerful and complex groove.

The Band, "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," *The Band*

If you ever need an example of soulful drumming, look no further than this track. The spacious march is amazingly lyrical during the intro, and it builds in intensity to the famous crescendo rolls. The accent ideas and ghosted press rolls have become part of the vocabulary used by session greats such as Jim Keltner and Steve Gadd. (1:58)

Musical notation for 'Up on Cripple Creek' drum part, illustrating the transition between swung and straight time.



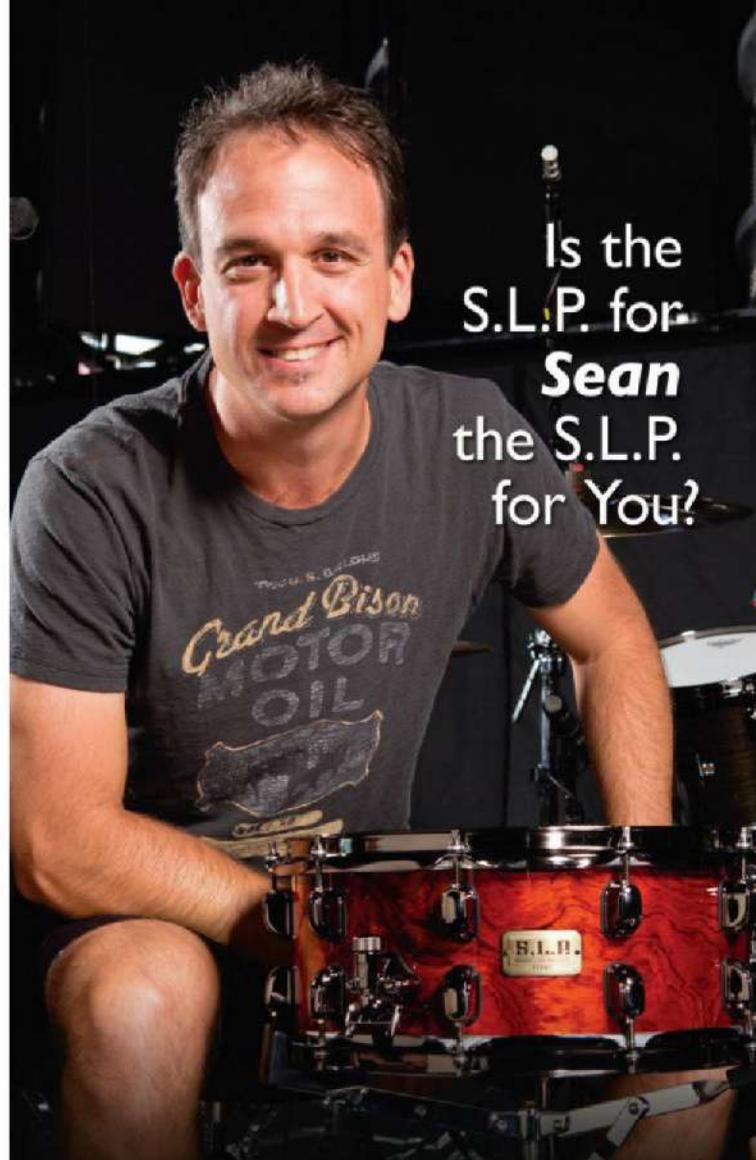
The Band, "King Harvest (Has Surely Come)," *The Band*
 The bass guitar/kick drum lockup on this tune is all about the 16th notes on beats 2 and 4 of measure 1. Helm also gives a slight funky push on the hi-hat on the "&," and he occasionally lifts the hi-hat away during a snare drum attack (beat 2, measure 4). (2:18)



Bob Dylan and the Band, "Highway 61 Revisited," *Before the Flood*
 The Band perfectly matched Bob Dylan's impulsive energy. When Dylan was ready to go, Helm unleashed some of his most impassioned drumming. Check out this four-on-the-floor groove. Levon is essentially playing the same thing on beats 3 and 4, but the accent on the "&" of beat 3 and the open hi-hats on beat 4 make it sound like it's building. (2:17)



The Band, "Time to Kill," *Stage Fright*
 There's a lot of great drumming throughout "Time to Kill," including fine cowbell work, but this excerpt reveals another important Levon-ism: the quick and frequent jumping from the body of the ride to the bell. Notice how the drummer slightly alters the rhythm of the bell pattern in every measure. (2:09)



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Sean
 the S.L.P.
 for You?

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S.L.P.

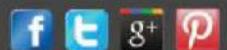
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LMB1465
 Power Maple

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The Band, “The Rumor,” Stage Fright

This underrated groove captures Helm at his most complex. In the span of six measures, he moves from the hi-hat to the ride to the bell and then back to the ride—all with direct purpose. The snare and bass drum comping, executed mostly with 16th-note triplets, creates tension and release throughout the section. (1:40)

Four staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, showing a complex drum pattern. The notation includes various note values, rests, and triplet markings (indicated by '3' above groups of notes). The pattern transitions between different drum sounds (hi-hat, ride, bell) as described in the text.

The Band, “Don’t Do It,” Rock of Ages

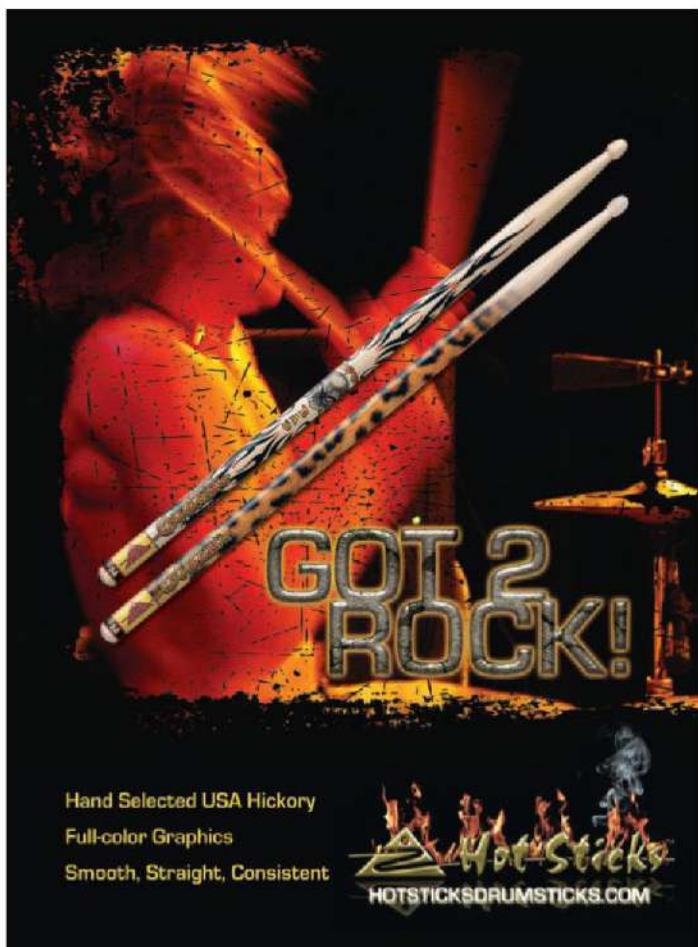
This groove is a variation on the “Cripple Creek” theme, complete with “left alone” bass drums on the “e” and “a” of the beat, and quick 32nd-note doubles to conclude phrases. (1:49)

One staff of musical notation in 4/4 time, showing a drum pattern with accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte).

The Band, “Ophelia,” Northern Lights–Southern Cross

Here’s a master class in motivic development. Notice how Levon plays five bass drum notes in measures 2 through 4 and then reduces it to four for the main verse groove (measures 8 through 10). The other measures comprise alternating combinations of the two. It might appear random on the page, but when you check out the track, the addition or absence of the bass drum always reinforces the bass and/or vocal. (0:00)

Seven staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, showing a complex drum pattern with various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation includes accents (>) and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte).



The Band, "The Shape I'm In," *The Last Waltz*

There's a lot of inspired drumming on the soundtrack to *The Last Waltz*, and many of the groove choices are quite different from the way they appear on the Band's studio albums. Here, Levon runs with an energetic four-stroke-roll idea that appears occasionally on the original recording but never this many times in a row. The rolls are clean and effortless and supported by a powerful four-on-the-floor groove. (0:50)

f R R L R R R L R R L

Levon Helm, "Stuff You Gotta Watch," *Electric Dirt*

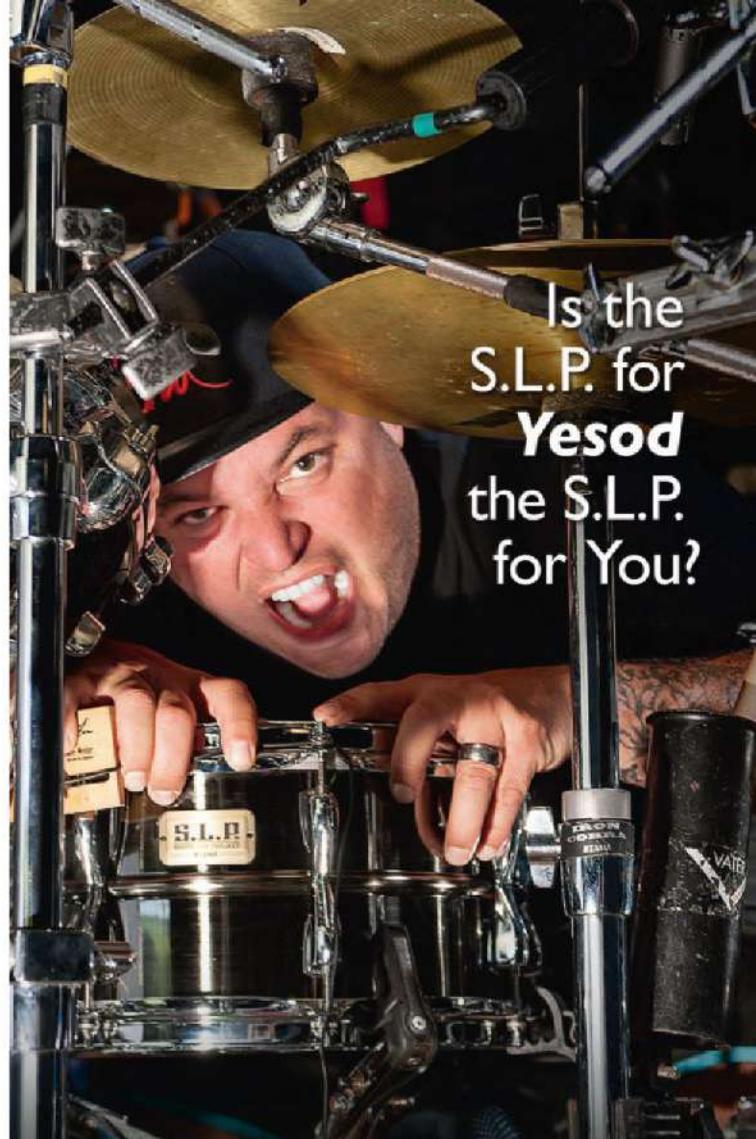
Check out this interesting blues shuffle snare pattern. The accents begin predictably, but then the forceful accent on beat 4 of measures 1 and 2 comes out of nowhere. As the accents become what you'd expect to hear again in measure 3, Levon gets creative with his snare/bass note choices. (0:59)

f

Levon Helm, "When I Go Away," *Electric Dirt*

The open hi-hat releases on the "&" of beat 2 and on beat 3 in this section are given the perfect amount of space. Most of the time the bass drum is played along with the first open hi-hat, except in measure 2, when it's played along with the second open hi-hat. (1:50).

mf



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The new Sound Lab Project from Tama is eight great snares, each with its own clear identity. Making a choice ain't easy. Yesod William's selection for Pepper's energetic brand of reggae? The Sonic Steel LST1365. "The 6.5 x 13" Sonic Steel covers the full spectrum of our music. Amazing high end that cuts like a razor, and that beefy bottom end that you don't only hear, but you feel. It's apples AND oranges all on one tree!" Which S.L.P. will do it for you?

S.L.P.

SOUND LAB PROJECT

LST1455
Vintage Steel

LAL145
Super Aluminum

LBRI465
Black Brass



Ginny Belofsky

STEPHEN BELANS

He never planned to become an expert in the field of roots drumming. But after twenty years as one of Austin's most in-demand musicians—not to mention his participation in two recent Americana drum software packages—that's how things seem to have worked out. And it's all to our benefit.

by Adam Budofsky

Stephen Belans has spent the better part of two decades enriching the scene in—with apologies to Nashville—the rootsiest of America's music towns, Austin. The reliable freelancer has contributed to projects by such well-regarded international Austin-based artists as Small Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan, critically acclaimed indie-rock band Okkervil River, and Americana Music Association Lifetime Achievement Award winner Alejandro Escovedo. Other well-known roots musicians with whom he's collabo-

rated, from within and outside the city limits, include Peter Case, James McMurtry, Abra Moore, Rosie Flores, Mike Rosenthal, Beaver Nelson, Radney Foster, Ray Wylie Hubbard, and erstwhile Fastball singer-songwriter Tony Scalzo.

Coinciding with Belans' (rhymes with *felons*) performing and recording work is a long history in music education, privately and at leading outlets like the Austin Lyric Opera's Armstrong School. And Stephen's work on Toontrack's Americana EZX Expansion Pack drum

sample library and Backbeats MIDI groove collection means that elements of his playing will eventually appear on music originating from the farthest corners of the civilized world.

The first steps of Belans' career path didn't exactly telegraph any of this activity. While enrolled as a classical percussionist at Indiana University in Bloomington, Stephen spent equal time playing in original rock bands and taking classical gigs with one of several local orchestras. "The weird thing about that

period," he recalls, "was that all the rock 'n' rollers were like, 'Oh, Stephen's pretty good, but he's mostly a classical guy,' and all the classical musicians were like, 'Oh, he's pretty good, but he's mostly a rock guy.' So you become a sort of jack of all trades and master of none."

Belans has made the most of his multiple musical personalities, though. "That's how I've survived up to now," he insists. "Back then, I was doing all that stuff out of necessity; the goal in everybody's mind was to hook up with an artist or get in a band, write good tunes, get a record deal, and go on tour. Well, none of my bands ever really clicked, and as such I was always doing many things at once, just to keep the calendar full."

Today it seems that it was destiny for Belans to be in a city like Austin, where there's a growing pool of artists with whom he has an aesthetic connection. "It all does kind of come full circle," says the drummer, who moved to Texas in 1993. "Back in Indiana, I was discovering music that wasn't necessarily popular—you couldn't hear it on the radio or see it on MTV, and most people you talked to didn't know about it. But there were cool records coming out that I really identified with. These records were more acoustic and raw, and they told stories instead of just being about boy/girl issues all the time. And you can tell that the drummers on them were listening to what the writer was talking about, feeling, and trying to get across, and pushing that without being up-front about it. That was really instructive to me, and it made me gravitate to those types of songwriters."

Belans says that in relatively stripped-down musical environments like these, "It's really easy to get super-esoteric with your playing and refuse to do the obvious thing. Like, 'I'm gonna do something people haven't heard before—turn the pulse around, find sounds no one's ever heard....' And then you realize: This is ridiculous; all this needs is a simple heartbeat."

"On the other hand," Stephen says, "there are times when you go, 'I'm not going to get all fancy—I'm just going to nail this thing with *boom-crack, boom-crack*,' and then you listen back and say, 'Hmm, it might be cool if there was something a little off-kilter going on.' So you just have to find that zone where the artist is happy. Some people don't want to hear the standard thing, and some people get very uncomfortable if you stray from it. So even if you have an idea that's fresh and cool and you're excited to put it in, sometimes the writer, who's the boss, isn't quite as inspired or impressed

by your marvelous idea."

So how does a drummer know how and when to make certain arrangement suggestions? "You have to have a good antenna," Belans says. "Especially with younger artists—they're so worried about what they're doing half the time that they're counting on you to do something that inspires them without a lot of effort."

ROOTSY BLUEPRINTS



"There are several records I discovered early on, where the music spoke to me a lot and I was knocked out by the drumming," Stephen Belans says. "One album is John Hiatt's *Slow Turning*, which is sort of the blueprint for me in terms of playing roots music. That features a drummer named Kenneth Blevins, who played with Sonny Landreth for a long time. He's actually back with Hiatt now. He's awesome—very loose and creative, and he definitely does not play a lot of notes."

"Another album was Peter Case's *The Man With the Blue Post Modern Fragmented Neo-Traditionalist Guitar*. That totally killed me at the time, though it sounds a bit dated now, with that kind of '80s drum sound. But that's Jim Keltner, David Kemper, and Peter's drummer Michael Bannister, who was also awesome."

"The third album was James McMurtry's *Too Long in the Wasteland*. Kenny Aronoff played on that, and they recorded in Bloomington with John Mellencamp producing. It was a way I hadn't really heard Kenny play before, because it was freer and there weren't the constraints that there were in John's band."

Then there are other folks who are more controlling—and not necessarily in a bad way, but they *can* get microscopic about what you're doing.

"You have to figure this out pretty early in the game, because if you start asking a lot of questions and trying to be earnest about doing your best, now all they're thinking about is you, instead of what they need to be thinking about, and the whole vibe of the session sinks at that point. Same thing live—you want to focus on keeping the flow happening. You can try things if you think the leader might be open to unusual ideas. If they look at you funny, don't put that lick back in there the next time you play. But if they smile, you look back in your bag of tricks and see what other unusual things might

be in there."

As we all come to find out, many singer-songwriters speak a different musical language from drummers, and it can be hard to find common ground. "The advice I've often got," Belans says, "is to always listen to the leader. And that's true—you have to do that. The only advice I ever got that's better than that was to *never* listen to the leader. [laughs] Because what they want is for you to provide the foundation for them to move around and be emotive. So you have to decide in the first ten seconds of playing with these people: Do they know how to play their own instrument? Can they play it in time? Are they even aware of what they're doing?"

"Seventy-five percent of these songs start with the guitar player strumming the first four bars, and then you come in. Are they truly establishing the feel that they want? The tempo? Sometimes yes, but a lot of times no. So if they start off at one tempo and you come in and keep that tempo, and they turn around and freak out because it's either too fast or too slow, you're tempted to say, 'Sorry, you counted it off.' But you can't say that to them. You just have to figure it out. To me, that's the most important thing—if they have an instrument in their hands, do they really play that instrument, or is it something they just wear to write their songs?"

"Another thing to identify," Belans goes on, "is whether their feel is the cool part of the song, or are they just pounding out the chords to get through it and it's up to us to get the feel? Sometimes their feel is the important thing but they don't have any clue about what they're doing. And then, as the band starts to work up the song and keys off of that, you have to decide: Are they maintaining that and playing with us, or are they reacting to what we're doing and we lose that thing that made it cool in the first place? These are all split-second decisions, and nine times out of ten they're best not discussed."

While improvisational or inherently complex styles like jazz or progressive rock have their own technical demands, singer-songwriter music can in some ways be just as difficult to play well. "For me it is," Belans agrees, "because you have an extremely limited palette in a lot of ways. Not so much in terms of colors, but there's only so much space you can take up as a drummer in this kind of music and have it work out."

Almost as important as how you play on an Americana gig is what gear you use, which is also related to the overall

mix. Roots musicians tend to be suspicious of flavor-of-the-month sounds, and as such, drummers playing in these situations should be very sensitive to the sonic world they're entering. "An Americana sound is generally a 'natural' sound," Belans says. "It doesn't sound gated, it doesn't sound crazy squished, it doesn't have some ridiculous false reverb."

That said, Belans believes that there isn't *one* roots sound. "There can be close natural sounds," he explains, "like Crazy Horse records, where the drums are tight and super-present and there's not a huge amount of sustain, but you can still hear reflection—it's not like you're only hearing the stick hitting the drum. Then go to something like early Wilco records, which are also considered Americana, and it's a lot of room sound. Or the Steve Earle record *I Feel Alright*—that's just a ton of compressed room sound, but it's natural; it sounds like you're standing in the room with him playing. If you listen to a modern rock track, it doesn't sound very natural. Sometimes the kick or the snare is way louder than other elements of the kit. I look at Americana drums as much more balanced, like they sound when someone's playing a kit.



Ginny Belofsky

"From a gear standpoint, we tend to work with a more traditional setup, with fewer voices. Aside from Wilco and all the

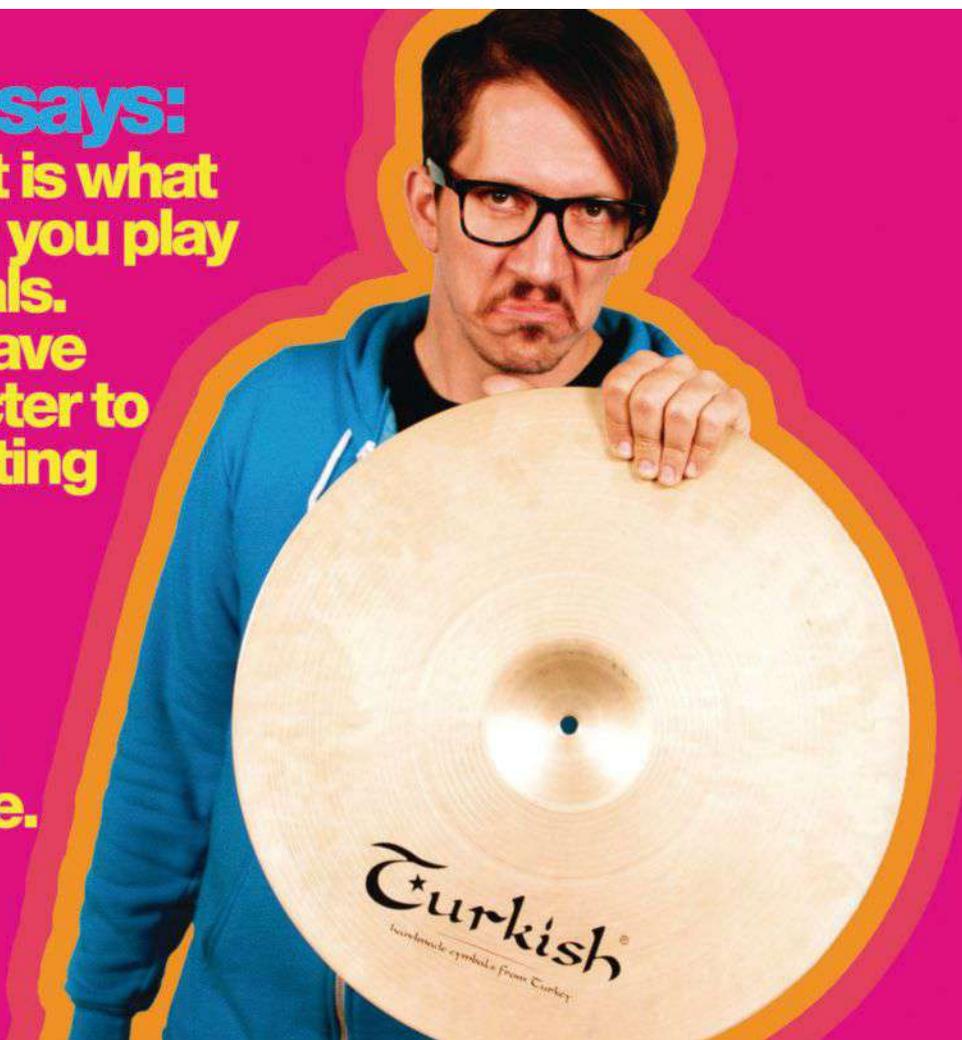
things that Glenn Kotche has on his kit, 95 percent of the time you're going to see a standard four- or five-piece kit, a couple of cymbals, and not much else. That's usually a good starting point."

Belans, who also engineers and produces many of the recordings he plays on, usually takes one of two approaches. "Sometimes I hear a live, ringy rock 'n' roll sound, so I'll use a smaller set of toms, maybe a 12" and a 14" with coated heads to get some snap on the attack, and I'll maybe tune them up and let them ring. I recently started putting my rack tom in a snare basket, but rather than having it sit *in* the basket, it rests on the tops of the arms, and I'll crank the basket tighter, which makes the drum sing differently. That works well for the higher tunings. If I want it to be thuddier, I might loosen the basket and have it sit in there, and let the stand absorb some of the vibration. I also might tune down a little and go for bigger sizes, like 13" and 16". In terms of bass drum sizes, for a while you'd see 24", 26", and even 28" kick drums, but things seem to have come back to more traditional sizes.

"Either way, at the beginning of a session, I need to decide how I see the

Brad Davis says:
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drums functioning in the song and in the mix. Are they going to be up-front and prominent, or maybe washier and in the background? At the same time, it has a lot to do with tuning. If you're going to play a busy part, sometimes tuning up a little gives you more bite, which is nice, but then maybe the sustain gets in the way. So you have to find that balance."

In terms of cymbals, Belans suggests that you might not want to show up at a roots gig with eleven cymbal stands. "And I rarely use specialty cymbals," he adds. "The fastest way to have someone look at you funny on a gig like this is to throw up a China cymbal. It'll be like, 'Look, we're not playing that Steve Miller song tonight.' [laughs] But really what's important is the thickness and the weight of a cymbal. It comes down to sustain—do you want the cymbal to ring through the bar, or are you looking for a fast, punchy decay? I used to think that smaller cymbals worked better in the studio, but I'm finding that bigger, heavier cymbals are more in line with what I want to hear now. If I want a thinner sound, I still go with a bigger cymbal but a thinner weight."

It makes poetic sense to use a vintage drumset on an Americana gig, but Belans says there can be pragmatic reasons too. "Everyone always seems to enjoy the older, thinner mahogany drums," he explains. "I have a '59 Slingerland 3-ply mahogany kick drum and a matching snare, and people rent just the bass drum from me a lot. It's feather light and has clamp-on spurs, and the low end is ridiculous, but you still have a lot of beater attack. I've got some other older mahogany/poplar drums that record really well for that thuddier tone, and some Ludwigs from the '90s that sound great tuned up and ringy *and* tuned down and thuddy."

"The way a drum is mounted makes a difference too," Belans adds. "If you've got your rack tom and floor tom hanging from a suspension system, that really does record differently from the way they will if they're sitting in a basket and on legs. For this kind of music, I prefer the legs and the basket. In terms of pureness of tone, a suspended drum gives you a beautiful and satisfying sound. But you have to think about how you're going to fit in with everything else that's going on around you. If each tom hit sustains for that much longer and takes up that much more frequency range, then you're probably getting in the way of someone else, and people rarely want to hear the true richness that we hear when we hit a drum alone."

Finally, there's the all-important question of snare drum choice. "You should have a good metal drum and a good wood drum,"

Belans says. "Piccolo drums don't usually apply to this kind of music—middle-range tuning and lower fits better. But just because it's lower doesn't mean it doesn't have a bright attack, because you might need that to cut through. There are two drums that I go to over and over. One is a 5" hammered bronze Ludwig, which is very versatile, and mics love it. The other is a '60s Slingerland Artist series, with a single-ply steam-bent shell and reinforcement ring. Mics love that one too. The crack is tough to get with any other wood drum. And for ballads I'll often use an old 7" Tama

Artwood from the '80s."

Whether we're talking about what licks to play or what drums to play them on, Belans emphasizes that it's all about fitting into the bigger picture. "It's definitely a supportive role that we play," he says. "We're one cog in a wheel—a big, important cog, but we're still part of the machine, and all the parts have to fit together and expand and contract and give and take as the song develops, and it should be a very organic thing. We're in a dance with everyone else who's involved with the performance and the recording."



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The CRASH Course to Success

Part 4: Skill by Rich Redmond

This month we focus on the fourth part of our CRASH concept for success. For those of you who have not been following this series, CRASH is an acronym that stands for “commitment, relationships, attitude, skill, and hunger.” These are five global concepts that anyone from any walk of life can use to attract success.

In the short time the drumset has been around—roughly a hundred years—the skill set required to play at a competitive level has continued to increase at a rapid rate. With each passing year, new standards for speed, power, and creativity are set, yet the majority of the drumming game can be boiled down to several big-picture concepts. We’ll address those concepts here.

TECHNIQUE, TOUCH, AND TONE

Great drummers know that you have to learn proper technique so you can develop a quality sound on the instrument. Tone is achieved through the use of proper technique. Learning the techniques that are grounded in rudimentary and symphonic drumming styles can lead to creating an excellent sound on the instrument, which is a musical attribute that separates amateur drummers from true professionals.

Ask yourself the following questions. Do you draw the sound out of the instrument and make it sing? Are you at one with your instrument? Is your drumset an extension of your personality and a vehicle for your creative voice? These are things that are developed from countless hours of repetitive practice alone in a practice room and then applied by playing music with other musicians.

TIME, FEEL, AND GROOVE

Ultimately the drummer’s role in a band is to keep time—and to keep the time *honest*. Although every great musician knows that all members of a band are responsible for creating a solid time feel, a larger part of the responsibility falls on the drummer’s shoulders.

In its simplest form, time can be divided into two categories: perfect and human. Perfect time can be achieved by playing in sync with an inhuman electronic source like a metronome, drum machine, or computer. Human time can flow in a truly emotional and intuitive way. Like the ebb and flow of the ocean’s tide, human time can push and pull in spots in the music. An example of these human tendencies would be pushing the time forward during choruses and laying back in verses. Perfect time doesn’t necessarily always feel good, and human time can sometimes be *too* human. So our challenge is to play great time but also make it swing, rock, and groove.

The art of grooving and making time feel great is a skill that comes from studying the great drummers that have come before us and emulating their feel. You can fine-tune this ability by playing constantly with great musicians that hold you accountable for the groove. How do you know if things are grooving? Watch for a packed dance floor, bobbing heads, fists pumping in the air, smiling bandmates, and increased record sales!

COORDINATION AND COLORS

One of the first steps in learning to play the drumset is handling four-way coordination. The initial learning

curve can be fierce. (It was for me!) Even if we learn to play just one simple beat, we can continually change the feel, lope, and character of the groove by playing subtle rhythmic variations with each limb. Master simple grooves with many variations and you will be well on the path to a creative and fulfilling musical career.

Since the drumset is a collection of non-pitched sound sources, the drummer has to look for interesting ways to alter its sonic characteristics. You can affect the sound and *mood* of the music by playing with brushes made of metal or plastic or with dowel bundles of different thicknesses, by using riveted cymbals, by swapping the type of bass drum beater (wood, plastic, or wool), and by employing various muffling devices (such as tape, Moongel, or notebook paper). You want to paint sonic pictures, so it’s crucial to have a full palette of creative ideas and sounds.

PERSONALITY AND PEOPLE SKILLS

No other instrument is as direct an expression of the player’s personality as the drums. Play your personality on the drums and watch like-minded people find their way into your life. They will seek you out. Remember the old phrase “Birds of a feather flock together”? It’s true! Don’t hold back. Let your personality soar on your instrument, and your soul will resonate and affect people in meaningful ways.

Don’t forget to also focus your attention on people skills. Music is a group art form, so try to perfect your bedside manner. I’m always pleasantly surprised to meet a doctor who takes time to ask about my lifestyle, diet,

stress level, and overall mood, and likewise I'm always disappointed when a doctor barely looks me in the eye and quickly writes a prescription for some drug he's peddling. If you're easy to get along with and possess a team-player mentality, you will be playing a lot of drums with a lot of people.

Knowing how to take direction from bandleaders, artists, and producers is vitally important as well. Don't take suggestions and criticisms personally. Have a servant attitude, and give, give, give! If a client asks me to play 16th notes on the hi-hat during a recording session, I play 16th notes with a smile on my face. Taking direction and criticism without being offended or becoming angry is a great skill, and it's one that will make people remember you and recommend you to their friends. Ask yourself: Am I easy to work with? If there's hesitation before you answer, then you may have to work on that bedside manner.

RUDIMENTS AND READING

Understanding rhythmic values is essential for mastering any instrument. Rudiments are the anatomy of drumming. Singles, doubles, flams, ruffs, and other rudiments can be combined endlessly to express creative music.

My ability to read rhythms has saved my career countless times. On many occasions, after losing a drummer, an artist or band has asked me to leave for a tour the night before a run, without a rehearsal. I've filled in with opening acts after the drummer gets injured or leaves the tour for a family emergency. If I didn't have the ability to listen to a record and scribble out cheat charts with important rhythmic figures and phrases notated, there would be no way for me to help in those situations. By being able to read and write music, I developed a reputation as a go-to guy who can fill in for bands with little to no rehearsal and make it sound like a finely tuned machine. I firmly believe that reading music is the single greatest thing you can do to improve your chances for sustainable success in the music business.

The best way to learn to read music is

to get together with a qualified teacher. A great place to start is to work from Ted Reed's classic book, *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. There are also countless books on the subject of reading different types of charts. Great drummers can interpret any chart, or make their own chart, on the spot.

CLICKS AND LOOPS

The ability to play tightly with a click track and loops is an imperative skill for working in today's environment. In fact, it's an *expectation*. Church gigs, wedding bands, Top 40 acts, tribute bands, gigs on cruise ships, and headlining touring groups all incorporate clicks, loops, and backing tracks these days. You can develop your comfort level by practicing daily with drum machines or loop programs like Reason, Ableton Live, and Stylus RMX, or by purchasing affordable and fun play-along packages like DrumFun's *Turn It Up and Lay It Down* series. The more you play with clicks and loops, the more comfortable you will become. If your band is planning on playing with clicks, loops, or tracks at a live show, be sure to practice with those sources for a long time at rehearsals so that everyone gets comfortable. The live stage isn't a place to take chances. Prepare in advance.

STYLES

An understanding of many musical styles can make a big difference in getting (and keeping) gigs. It can also help set you apart from other drummers. Over the years I've researched rock 'n' roll, roots music, New Orleans second-line, Latin and Caribbean rhythms, and many other styles. I've played polka, cumbia, big band, small-group jazz, classical, experimental music, old country and western, Nigerian Afro-pop, reggae, and so on. I've played the Grand Ole Opry with Pam Tillis and Vince Gill *and* with the country rocker Jason Aldean. If you understand the common elements that tie these various styles together, you can more easily jump between them. You never know when you may be asked to shift

between styles on a recording session or a Vegas-style variety show. Embrace the wide variety of cultures and musical styles the world has to offer, and don't paint yourself into a stylistic corner.

COMFORT ZONES

Success can also be defined as when preparation meets opportunity. You never know when you're going to be asked to stretch past your comfort zone. The best way to prepare for these situations is to have as wide a comfort zone as possible. Know how different drummers play. Know your styles. Know how to read. Know how to write your own charts. Know how to play with a click. Know how to program loops. Know how to play percussion. Be in the know, and never be out of work.

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



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Practical Practice

A Four-Stage Approach to Developing Independence by Robert Brian



Over the years I've tried to devise exercises to help with certain problems that all drummers face. I've amassed a backlog of ideas and patterns, which I continue to use. I've found that as my knowledge and technique develop, the exercises grow and get more complex.

What I'd like to discuss here is a neat idea to improve your independence on the drumset. The concept came from watching drummers like Vinnie Colaiuta and Buddy Rich play complex patterns between their left hand and right foot. I noticed that they could play fast alternating strokes as well as phrases that weave in and out of double strokes and paradiddles, which sounded great to me. I wanted to incorporate these ideas into my own playing, and in doing so I developed my independence further. The concepts can be used in a drum solo or fill, or they can be incorporated into grooves.

STAGE ONE

The first bar of the exercise starts with a linear single paradiddle played between your leading hand and your bass drum foot, beginning with the bass drum. The second bar also starts with the bass drum and includes an inverted single paradiddle. The third bar contains double strokes between your bass drum foot and leading hand, starting with the bass drum. The fourth bar features inverted doubles leading with your bass drum.

Once you've reached the end, go back to the beginning and loop the entire exercise. None of the strokes should be accented or any louder than the others. Keep them all flat for now, for complete dynamic control. As you're playing through the patterns, listen to how they sound, and work on getting them smooth and even. Start at a slow tempo and gradually build up speed as your coordination develops.

1

L R L L
R R R R

L L L L
R R R R

L L L L
R R R R

L L L L
R R R R

STAGE TWO

Once you have the hand/foot pattern established, you can begin to add other elements. Start by playing quarter notes on the ride cymbal with the other hand. This creates a pulse through the exercise.

2

1 2

STAGE THREE

Now add your hi-hat foot stepping 8th notes throughout the bar. Be careful that all of your limbs are lining up exactly in unison. No flams!

3

1 & 2 &

STAGE FOUR

The final stage is to switch it around and lead with your other hand. Try playing the quarter notes on a crash cymbal or any other instrument on the hi-hat side of your kit. Your hi-hat foot plays the same part as before.

CONCLUSION

Once you have the exercises in place, record yourself via audio or, even better, on video. Video will allow you to see as well as hear how you're performing the patterns. Try not to let your body lean over as you play, as some students shift their position to compensate and help the weakest limb play its part. If you have bad posture when you perform the exercise, then you're probably not completely relaxed. You want to be comfortable in an upright position. You'll find that any flammings between limbs will dissipate with practice. Eventually you'll have a tight pattern that sounds great and helps bring spice to your grooves, solos, and fills.

If you want to increase the independence challenge, try reversing the foot pattern and leading with the weaker hand. Good luck!

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



Jonathan Moffett

Rick Latham

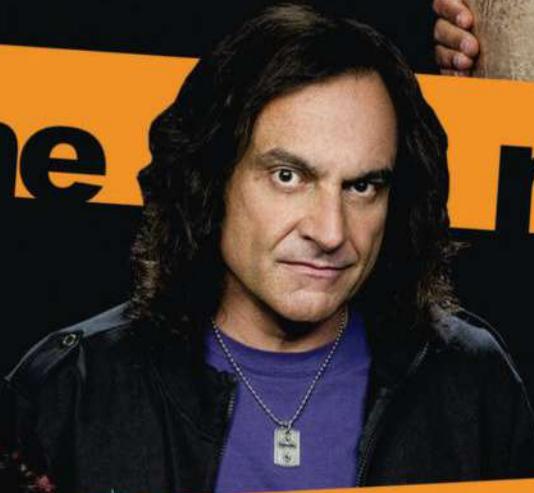
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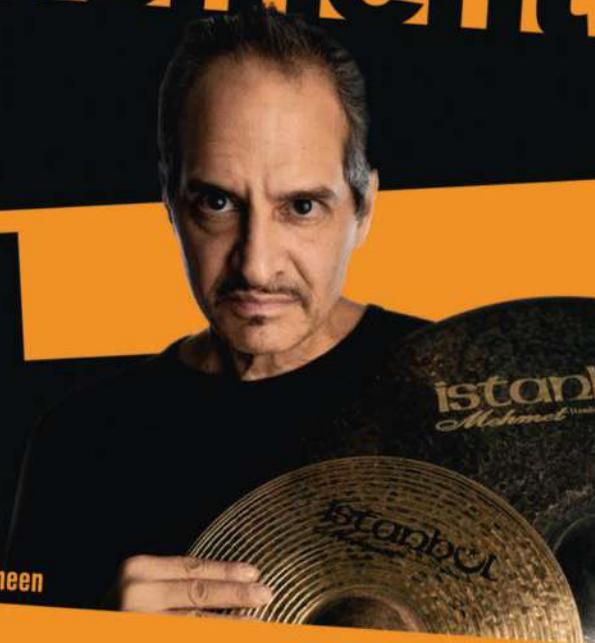


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Polyrhythmic Coordination

Part 3: Five-Note Base Rhythm by Ari Hoenig

MUSIC KEY



Last time (September 2012), we continued our look at ways to further our rhythmic knowledge, by playing three- and four-note base rhythms with one hand while adding one to eight notes evenly per bar with the other. This month we'll tackle the five-note base rhythm.

The left hand plays a base rhythm of five (quarter notes in 5/4), while the right hand plays one to eight notes evenly over the top. When you've reached eight notes in a bar, go backward from eight to one.

Make sure to line up your beats with a metronome. Also be sure to switch hands so that the left hand plays the top line and the right hand plays the base. If done correctly, this will likely be some of the most concentrated and mentally

tiring practicing you'll ever do.

Look at the measure of six over five. Do you notice that the second and sixth notes of the six are the same distance from the second and fifth notes of the base rhythm? The fourth and fifth notes of the six are also the same distance from the fourth note of the five. Understanding these relationships is helpful when doing the modulations at tempos where it becomes too fast to hear the actual subdivisions.

Also, for eight over five, you can think of it as four over five with an extra note added evenly between each stroke of the four. This is a good way to think of the eight, especially at fast tempos.

Play each bar at least four times before you move on, and start at 70 bpm.

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.



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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?".

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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.

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- Mike Johnston

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Don't Disturb the Groove!

Part 2: Hi-Hat Substitutions by Tobias Ralph

MUSIC KEY

H.H.	X	
S.D.	(●)	
B.D.	(●)	
H.H. w/foot	X	Closet note

In this article we'll discuss substitutions where we're basically using the hi-hat foot to replace either a hand or a bass drum note. The idea is to look at the hi-hat as not just an instrument that plays quarter notes or 8th notes, but rather as an instrument that can be incorporated into any linear-type groove.

I stumbled on the idea of hi-hat substitutions when I was playing a lot of electronica. The beats in that music are usually created by DJs or producers and often have many different hi-hats playing within one groove. In order to replicate these patterns live, I had to figure out how to get as many different sounds out of one hi-hat as I could. I would incorporate the bell of the hi-hat, the edge, and the foot chick.

I started by experimenting with the famous Purdie shuffle heard on the Steely Dan tune "Home at Last." I practiced replacing the third note of every 16th-note-triplet grouping with a left foot. The challenge was trying to line up my right foot with my left foot just before the backbeat on the last triplet partial.

Example 1 is the "Home at Last" variation. Practice it very slowly, as the normal inclination will be to push the time. Also, try to avoid hi-hat barks (open sounds). Strive for a clean, precise, and tight hi-hat pattern throughout.

The next thing I did was experiment with a double-paradiddle sticking that starts with the left foot instead of the left hand. Try playing this pattern as a fill at first. Play three bars of the Purdie shuffle with the hi-hat substitutions, and then play the double-paradiddle fill.

Now let's put the double paradiddle into a groove. The pattern will start with the left-foot hi-hat playing on the last triplet partial of beat 4, to allow you to hit the snare on beats 2 and 4 with your right hand. You can also play the 16th note following the snare accents on the hi-hat by crossing the left hand under the right.

Let's play that same pattern as 16th notes instead of 16th-note triplets. The pattern is now in 6/4, and the snare is accenting every other downbeat. This creates an additional challenge, because the accent appears at different places within the double paradiddle.

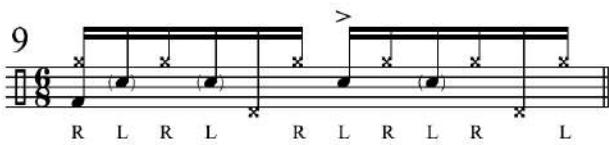
Now try using the double paradiddle as a two-bar fill. Accent beat 3 of the first bar and beats 2 and 4 of the second bar on the snare.

Let's return to a single-paradiddle sticking, but instead of playing the third note with the right hand, substitute the left foot.

The next example is an inverted paradiddle sticking with the fourth 16th note of beats 1 and 3 played by the left foot instead of the right hand.

Now substitute the hi-hat foot on the "&" of beats 2 and 4.

The next example shows how a double-paradiddle sticking might work with a hi-hat substitution on the first note of each double stroke.



In this final example, I've thrown in two 32nd notes before the backbeat. Make sure that you hear the hi-hat notes evenly and that there are no barks.



In the next installment of this series, we'll explore how broken doubles and hi-hat substitutions can work together. Until then, have fun experimenting!

Tobias Ralph is a New York City-based drummer currently performing with the Adrian Belew Power Trio and Defunkt. He has performed with Lauryn Hill, Tricky, and 24-7 Spyz, among others. Ralph is a faculty member at the Collective in NYC. For more info, visit tobiasralph.com.



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Improve Your Bottom Line

Part 3: Bass Drum Comping in 5/4 by Steve Fidyk



MUSIC KEY

- R.C.
- S.D.
- B.D.
- H.H.
- w/foot

Welcome to the third and final installment in this series on bass drum comping. This time we'll be working in 5/4. The phrases included here are intended to help you develop dynamic balance with your bass drum foot in unison with your three other limbs. They are also designed to inspire you to improvise with your bass drum foot handling rhythms generally played on the snare drum.

When practicing the pattern below, center your attention on the ride cymbal, hi-hat, and bass drum rhythms, keeping the sounds dynamically balanced as one unit. In addition, focus on keeping the bass drum beater rebounding approximately 2" off the head to obtain a soft, round sound. (Don't bury the beater into the head!)

Next, try substituting the following nine bass drum riff patterns in conjunction with the ride cymbal and hi-hat rhythm from above.

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



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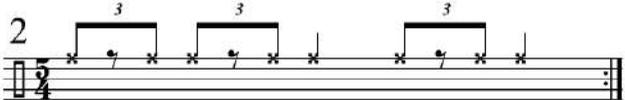
As you continue to practice each of the layered rhythms, listen across your appendages to check that you have complete rhythmic and dynamic control of all the parts. Focus your attention on each limb, and repeat the riffs several times until the groove is locked and feeling strong.

For variation, practice the nine bass drum patterns with the following ride cymbal variations. Then create your own riffs. Have fun!

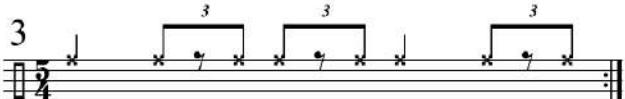
1



2



3



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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ROLAND V-Tour and V-Compact Series V-Drums

V-Tour and V-Compact series kits include new modules with Roland's SuperNATURAL sounds, produced with the company's Behavior Modeling technology, which was originally introduced in the V-Pro series. Both lines have the new Ambience feature, large LCD interfaces for easy navigation and sound customization, and Coach and Quick REC functions. Also included are two USB ports to play audio files from Flash media and to connect directly to a computer.

V-Tour kits feature the TD-15 drum sound module with 500 instruments and a hundred user-customizable drumkits. Components include two PDX-100 mesh-head V-Pads for the snare and floor tom, two PD-85 mesh-head V-Pads for the rack toms, and a KD-9 kick trigger pad. Cymbals include the VH-11 V-Hi-Hat, plus CY-12C and CY-13R/C V-Cymbals for crash and ride.

The slightly more compact and affordable TD-15K set offers two PDX-8 mesh-head V-Pads for the snare and floor tom, two PDX-6 mesh-head V-Pads for the rack toms, and a KD-9 kick trigger pad. Other components include a CY-5 dual-trigger cymbal pad, an FD-8 hi-hat controller, and CY-12C and CY-13R/C V-Cymbals. Both kits include the MDS-9V drum stand.

V-Compact kits include the TD-11 drum sound module with 190 instruments, fifty user-customizable drumkits, and ten trigger inputs. Also included are PDX-8 mesh-head V-Pads for the snare and floor tom and two PDX-6 mesh-head V-Pads for the rack toms. Additional components include the KD-9 kick trigger pad, a CY-5 dual-trigger cymbal pad, an FD-8 hi-hat controller, CY-12C and CY-13R/C V-Cymbals for crash and ride, and the new MDS-4V drum stand. The TD-11K set offers a PDX-8 mesh-head V-Pad for the snare, three PD-8A rubber-head single-trigger pads for the toms, and a KD-9 kick trigger pad. A CY-5 dual-trigger cymbal pad, an FD-8 hi-hat controller, two CY-8 dual-trigger cymbal pads, and an MDS-4V drum stand are also included.

rolandconnect.com



SLUG PERCUSSION Batter Badge Triad Pad

The Batter Badge Triad Pad is said to improve bass drum head durability without sacrificing sound quality. The compact, triangular-shaped pad flexes with the head and provides a larger contact area with less weight than conventional circular pads. Made of .01" clear polycarbonate film, the Triad works with single and double pedals.

slugdrums.com



DANIEL GLASS THE CENTURY PROJECT

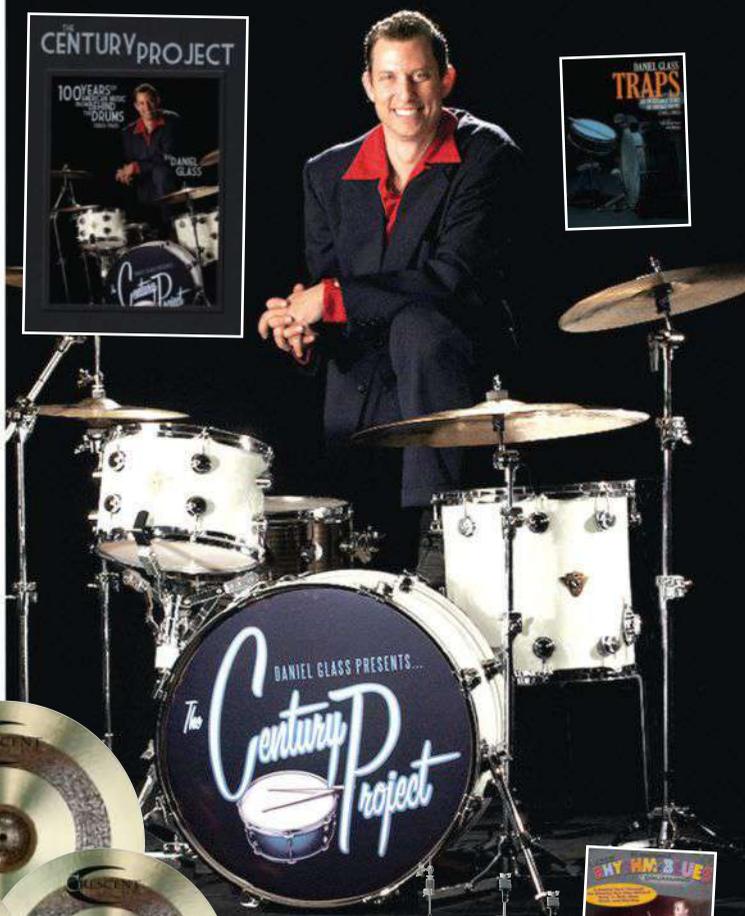
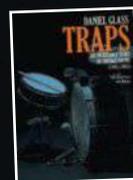
TO CELEBRATE THE RELEASE OF DANIEL GLASS'S NEW DVD *THE CENTURY PROJECT*, MODERN DRUMMER AND DANIEL'S SPONSORS ARE TEAMING UP TO CREATE "THE CONTEST OF THE CENTURY," WITH A RETAIL

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Daniel Glass's *The Century Project* takes you on a journey through 100 years of music history and reveals a side of the drums never before seen. Using vintage drums, rare photos, and stellar performances, Daniel traces the drumset from its inception at the end of the Civil War (1865) to the dawn of the British Invasion (1965), showing how the drums evolved hand in hand with American pop music. As a companion to *The Century Project*, Daniel will also be releasing a second DVD package:

Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965).



Grand Prize:

Daniel Glass's **Drum Workshop** Classics Series Custom Shop Outfit

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An **LP** Aspire woodblock with striker and mounting bracket and an LP Tapon 4" black cowbell with a 6" sliding bass drum percussion mount

A custom *Century Project* bass drum head from **DrumArt.com**

A library of 20 **DrumChannel.com** DVDs plus a one-year subscription to DrumChannel.com

A set of 6-ounce (170-gram) warm-up sticks from **Power Wrist Builders**

From **Alfred Music Publishing**, a copy of Daniel's newest DVDs, *The Century Project* and *Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965)*, plus the book *The Commandments of Early Rhythm and Blues Drumming* by Daniel Glass and Zoro

Second Prize:

A **DW** 6000 series hardware package, including a single bass drum pedal, a hi-hat stand, a snare stand, and two straight cymbal stands; a one-year subscription to **DrumChannel.com**; and, from **Alfred Music Publishing**, *The Century Project* and *Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965)* DVDs and the *Commandments of Early R&B* book

Third Prize:

A Vintage Factory Accessory Pack from **DW**, including a 770 rail mount, a 7771 bass drum-mounted cymbal arm, and a 2224 clamp-on bass drum hoop spur; a one-year subscription to **DrumChannel.com**; and, from **Alfred Music Publishing**, *The Century Project* and *Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965)* DVDs and the *Commandments of Early R&B* book

Consumer Disclosure: 1. To enter, visit www.moderndrummer.com between the dates below and look for the Daniel Glass Century Project Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS OCTOBER 1, 2012, AND ENDS DECEMBER 31, 2012. 4. Grand Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on January 9, 2013. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about January 10, 2013. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Drum Workshop, Crescent Cymbals, Aquarian Accessories, Vic Firth Inc., Ahead Armor Cases, Latin Percussion, DrumArt.com, Power Wrist Builders, Alfred Music Publishing, Drum Channel, and their affiliates are ineligible. 6. Sponsor is not responsible for lost, misdirected, and/or delayed entries. 7. Open to residents of the U.S. and Canada, 18 years of age or older. Void in Quebec, Canada; Florida; and where prohibited by law. 8. One prize awarded per household per contest. 9. Prizes: **Grand Prize:** One (1) winner will receive one (1) Daniel Glass four-piece DW Classics Series Custom Shop Outfit including a 16x22 bass drum with retro-inspired tom and cymbal mounts, 9x13 and 16x16 toms, and matching 6x14 snare drum; a hardware pack including a DW 6000CX (Turbo) single pedal, 6710 straight cymbal stands (3), 6500 hi-hat stand, 6300 snare stand, and 9100 throne; a set of Crescent Eon Series Cymbals: one (1) 20" ride, one (1) each 16" and 18" crashes, and one (1) set of 14" hi-hats; Latin Percussion: one (1) LP Aspire woodblock with mounting bracket and one (1) LP black 4" Tapon cowbell with LP sliding bass drum percussion mount; a set of Aquarian 10 mil single-ply, medium-weight drumheads including Classic Clear, Modern Vintage, and Super-Kick I; a brick (12 pairs) of Vic Firth Daniel Glass Century Project Personal Custom 5A drumsticks, one (1) pair Heritage brushes, and one (1) pair Legacy brushes; one (1) Ahead Armor Ogio Engineered Hardware Sled, one (1) Ahead Armor Cymbal Silo, and four (4) Ahead Armor drum cases: 16x22 bass drum, 6.5x14 snare, 9x13 rack tom, and 16x16 floor tom; twenty (20) DrumChannel.com DVDs and a one-year subscription to DrumChannel.com; one (1) custom bass drum head with the Century Project logo from DrumArt.com; and one (1) pair Power Wrist Builders model PWB6-170 (6 ounces/170 grams) aluminum drumsticks. Approximate retail value of Grand Prize: \$12,065. **Second Prize:** One (1) winner will receive the DW 6000 series hardware package, including one (1) each single pedal, hi-hat stand, and snare stand and two (2) straight cymbal stands; a one-year subscription to DrumChannel.com; and one (1) copy each of *The Century Project* and *Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965)* DVDs by Daniel Glass and the *Commandments of Early R&B* book by Daniel Glass and Zoro from Alfred Music Publishing. Approximate retail value of prize: \$1,000. **Third Prize:** One (1) winner will receive one (1) Vintage Factory Accessory Pack from DW including a 770 rail mount, 7771 bass drum-mounted cymbal arm, and 2224 clamp-on bass drum hoop spur; a one-year subscription to DrumChannel.com; and one (1) copy each of *The Century Project* and *Traps: The Incredible Story of Vintage Drums (1865-1965)* DVDs by Daniel Glass and the *Commandments of Early R&B* book by Daniel Glass and Zoro from Alfred Music Publishing. Approximate retail value of prize: \$400. Approximate retail value of contest: \$13,465. 10. Sponsored by Modern Drummer Publications, Inc., 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009, 973-239-4140. 11. This game subject to the complete Official Rules. For a copy of the complete Official Rules or the winner's name, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Modern Drummer Publications/The Century Project/Official Rules/Winners List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.



JENKINS-MARTIN DRUM COMPANY Blæmire-Shell Fiberglass Drums

Jerry Jenkins and David Martin have formed the Jenkins-Martin Drum Company and will produce a full range of one-piece composite shells. The initial offering will be a limited edition fiftieth-anniversary setup commemorating the original release of drums featuring the Blæmire fiberglass shell formula.
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Three new models have been added to the K Constantinople series—15" and 17" crashes and a 19" crash/ride. These cymbals feature a new hammering technique for more overtones, an additional pin lathe on the top and bottom, and new vintage-style cups on the 15" and 17" models. The new pin lathing gives the cymbals an appearance similar to K's from the '60s. The 15" and 17" crashes are thin in weight, while the 19" crash/ride is medium-thin.

K Constantinople 14" hi-hats and 16" and 18" crashes have been updated to incorporate the same features as the 15", 17", and 19" models.

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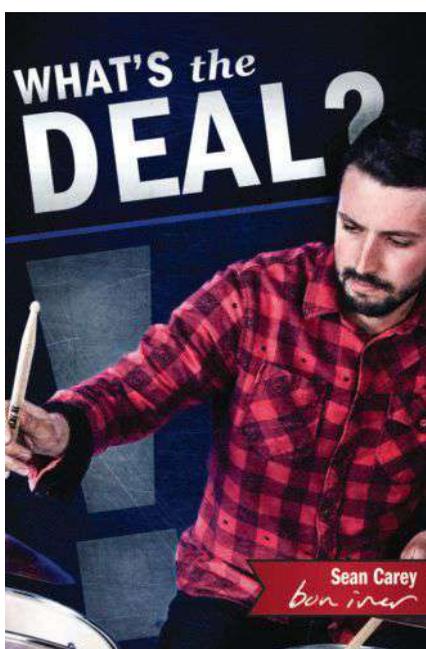
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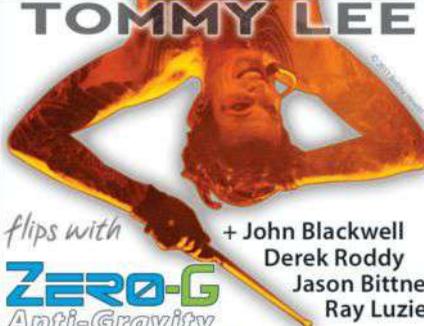
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The Ludwig Book! by Rob Cook. Business history and dating guide, 300 pages (64 color), Wm. F. Ludwig II autobiography, books on Rogers, Leedy, Slingerland, calfskin heads, gut snares, and more. Contact Rebeats, tel: 989-463-4757, Rob@rebeats.com, Web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

Vintage: Snares, sets, singles, cymbals, hardware, logos, and trades. Look/see, www.drumatix.com



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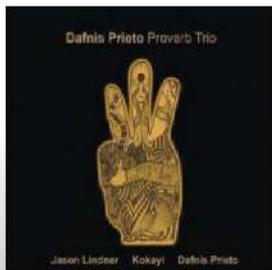




TAKING THE REINS

Drummer/Leaders Making Their Mark

by Ilya Stemkovsky



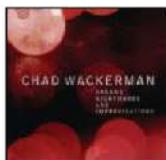
DAFNIS PRIETO *PROVERB TRIO*

A group consisting of drums, keyboards, and vocals will certainly give the musicians plenty of space for individual expression, and Dafnis Prieto leads the mostly improvised proceedings on his *Proverb Trio* album with a flair for tight, funky parts and great comping. Freestyling singer Kokayi and Prieto lock horns on "The Magic Danzonete," leading to the drummer working his cowbells and blocks during a feverish solo. Later Prieto lays down a second-line-inspired groove on "You Got It" and some burning rimclick doubles during an up-tempo swing part in "In War." With this release, Prieto shows yet another side of his musicianship and willingness to explore. (dafnisonmusic.com)



JIM BLACK *SOMATIC*

Following years of writing and touring with his rock/jazz group AlasNoAxis, Jim Black returns with the decidedly less aggressive *Somatic*, an acoustic piano trio outing focusing on textural interplay and the leader's introspective compositions. "Hestbak" features Black's trademark nuanced cymbal work, liquid snare ruffs, and forward-motion timekeeping, while "Protection" is a freer piece, full of staccato drum jabs and off-balance rhythms. Be it on dark brush ballads ("Chibi Jones") or moody post-swing ("Sure Are You"), Black infuses his songs with the supple percussive work of a drummer slowing down to smell the roses. (Winter & Winter)



CHAD WACKERMAN *DREAMS, NIGHTMARES, AND IMPROVISATIONS*

Chad Wackerman assembles his usual-suspect cohorts (guitarist Allan Holdsworth, keyboardist Jim Cox, and bassist Jimmy Johnson) for a new fusion record featuring plenty of opportunity for blowing and some excellently recorded drums. "A New Day" is a washy, open-hi-hat number à la the Tony Williams Lifetime's "Snake Oil," and it gives Chad an opportunity to interject wicked flams and singles before moving to his ride. The solo drum vehicle "Rapid Eye Movement" contains melodic, rolling tom patterns, while the keys/drums duet "Two for Ya" is a vintage Wackerman half-time shuffle with some slick two-against-three fills and great listening by each player. (chadwackerman.com)



GARY HUSBAND *DIRTY & BEAUTIFUL VOLUME 2*

Dirty & Beautiful Volume 2 picks up where the first installment left off, and it features not only Gary Husband's famous fusion drumming but also his accomplished keyboard skills. Husband, along with guitarist Mike Stern, navigates the fluid "Rolling Sevens" convincingly, and the drummer brings the funk to guitarist Wayne Krantz on "East River Jam." With Robin Trower, Husband rocks the quarter-note pulse of Miles Davis's "Yesternow" with head-banging abandon before settling into a hip delayed snare beat. Elsewhere, *more* six-string giants appear in the form of Allan Holdsworth and John McLaughlin. With such a star-studded lineup of musicians, it's hard to go wrong. (Abstract Logix)



HENRY COLE AND THE AFROBEAT COLLECTIVE *ROOTS BEFORE BRANCHES*

Drummer Henry Cole pays homage to the Afrobeat music made famous by Fela Kuti, while stirring elements of jazz, funk, and electronica into a modern stew. It's an exciting mixture of tradition and new-think. Cole keeps the grooves tight, focusing on pulse and vibe, though he frequently lets loose with jazzy modulation flurries, as on "Una Para Isabel" and with tumbling tom fills on "Música Para un Sueño." But the numerous different Afrobeat elements keep things interesting throughout, from the kick doubles of "Solo Dos Veces" to the snare downbeats of "Trabájala." (henrycolemusic.com)

OTHER RECENT DRUMMER-LEDS TO CHECK OUT

Ralph Peterson The Duality Perspective /// **Billy Martin** (with Wil Blades) Shimmy /// **Ben Riley Quartet** Grown Folks Music /// **Bruce Cox** Status Cymbals /// **Mickey Hart Band** Mysterium Tremendum /// **Simon Barker** Driftwood /// **Towner Galaher** Uptown! /// **Carmen Intorre Jr.** For the Soul /// **Howard Curtis** Perkussion Diskussion /// **Tom Teasley** All the World's a Stage /// **Deric Dickens** Speed Date /// **Paolo Pacciolla** Enchanting Circles /// **Joe Chambers Moving Pictures Orchestra** Live at Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola



JOACHIM COODER *LOVE ON A REAL TRAIN*

Joachim Cooder has spent years playing in a variety of rootsy ensembles (with Mavis Staples, Dr. John, and his father, Ry Cooder), so it's no surprise that for *Love on a Real Train*, his debut as a leader, he chooses a song-based approach, heavy on lush arrangements and light on drum pyrotechnics. A craftsman he is, however. A flowing kit pattern with percussion is the perfect rhythmic prescription for "Strike Up Your Matches," while "Come Home" contains a Dirty South-style hi-hat part on the choruses, eventually giving way to a heavy backbeat, with Cooder riding the snare rim on the outro. You can read Joachim's thoughts about the album in this month's Update section. (Aeronaut)



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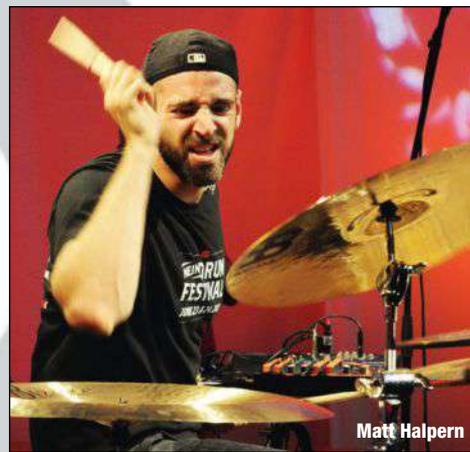
The eighth Meinl Drum Festival was held this past June 23 and 24, at the company's facility in Gutenstetten, Germany. Day one was devoted to master classes by Benny Greb, Mike Johnston, Hannes Grossmann, Jost Nickel, Jens Herz and Guido Marggrander, and Georg Feltes, and the second day was packed with drum performances.

J.P. Bouvet went on first, followed by Milos Meier, Hannes Grossmann, Mike Johnston, Matt Halpern, and the group Drio, featuring Benny Greb, Onkel, and Jost Nickel. A second stage hosted percussion performances by Giovanni Imparato, Juan Carlos Melian, and Onkel, plus drum circles with Charly Böck. Meinl factory tours were arranged in various languages, for attendees hailing from seventeen different countries. As the event came to a close, Meinl artist relations and event manager Norbert Saemann announced that next year's festival will be held in China. For more information, visit meinldrumsfestival.com.

**Text and photos by
Heinz Kronberger**



Mike Johnston



Matt Halpern



Benny Greb



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TO THE BATCAVE!

This setup, comprising a ddrum kit and Sabian cymbals, hails not from Gotham City but rather from Tecumseh, Ontario, Canada, where Jeff Azar leads a bit of a double life of his own—he's a graphic designer by day and a drummer by night.

"I work for a large-format printing company," Azar says, "and this project was initially something to show off what I could do at work. I'm a huge Batman fan, so I purchased a few comics and started scanning. As I got more into it, it became much more for me than for work."



"I wanted it to look like a giant comic-book layout," Azar continues, "hence the white gaps between staggered images." And many of the comic-wrapped drums are dedicated to a specific character or two: there's a 10" Joker rack tom, a 12" suspended floor tom featuring the Riddler and Hush, and a 16" floor tom on legs depicting Poison Ivy and Catwoman. The crime-fighting snare sports various images of the Caped Crusader himself.

"I wanted to create something that people would talk about and enjoy," Azar says. "This was a fun project that may actually turn into more of a hobby/part-time job, as I've had some requests for custom designs." Holy thundering rimshot, Batman!

Photo Submission: Hi-res digital photos, along with descriptive text, may be emailed to kitoftthemonth@moderndrummer.com. Show "Kit of the Month" in the subject line of the message.



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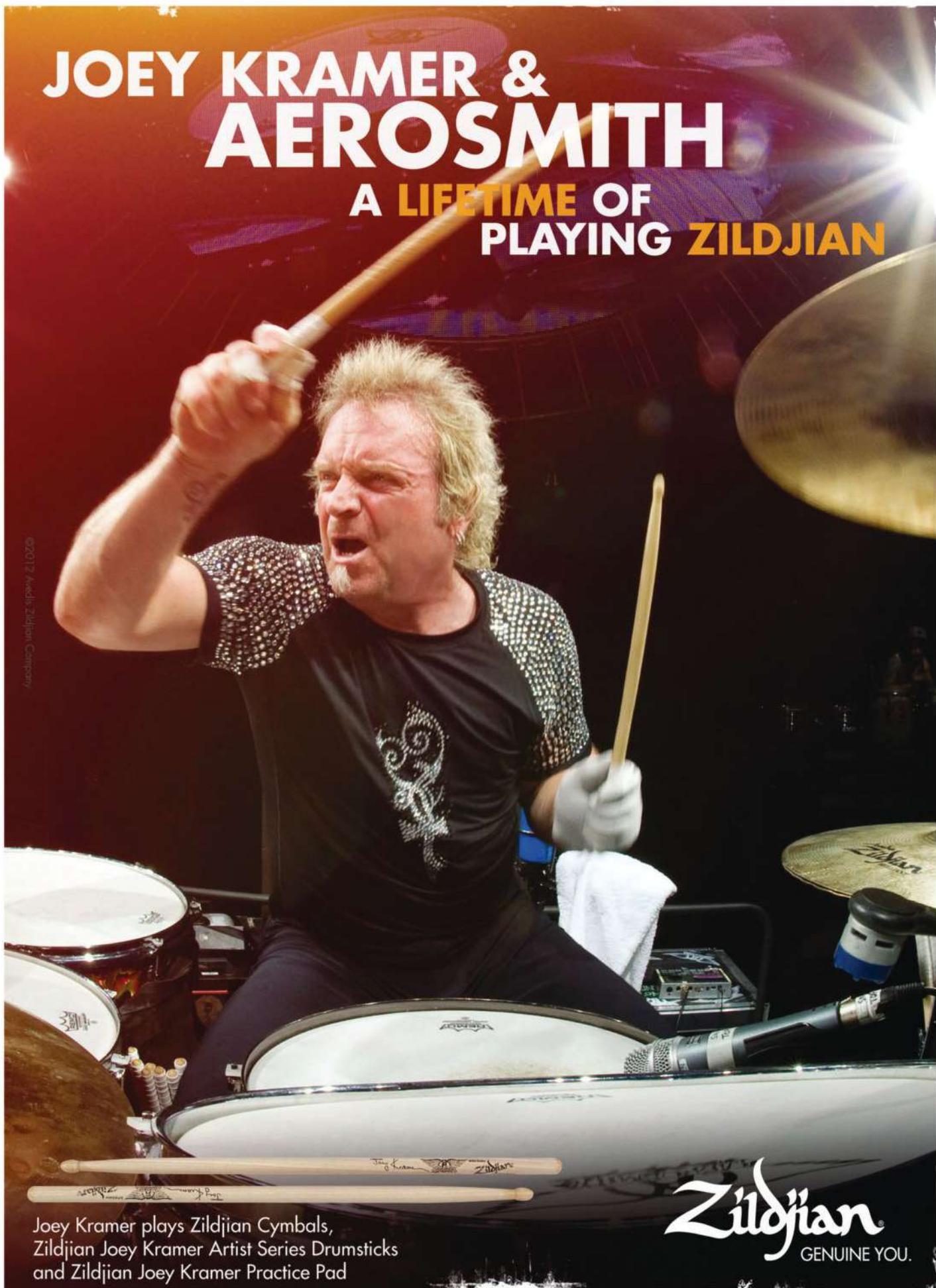


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