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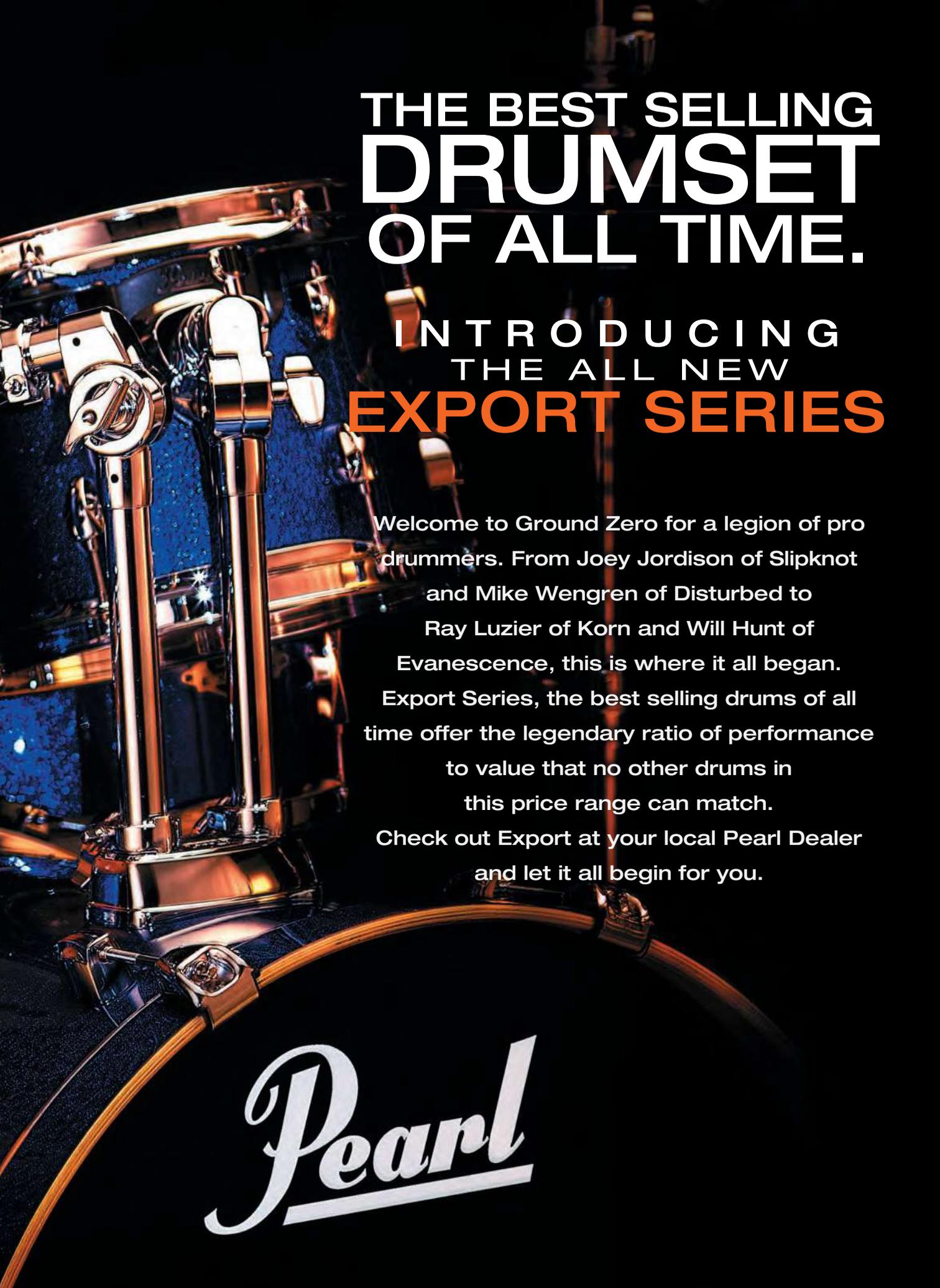




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On the Cover

52 Mike Portnoy

by David Ciauro

In his first *MD* cover story since leaving Dream Theater, the prog-metal icon talks about the infamous split—but makes clear how much he's digging the bounty of new opportunities coming his way.

12 Update

Warlord's **Mark Zonder**
Nashville's **Chuck Tilley**
Os Mutantes' **Ani Cordero**

20 First Person Bill Bruford

His pull-no-punches memoir is now in its second printing, prompting the drumming hero to wax poetic as only he can in the book's new prologue. It's food for thought that the *MD* Hall of Famer felt readers might like to nibble on—and what an intriguing appetizer it is.

34 Portraits Converge's Ben Koller by Stephen Bidwell

Finding inspiration ranging from the iconoclastic pomp-rock group Emerson, Lake & Palmer to hardcore titans the Descendants, the metalcore great has a wider musical scope than many fans might imagine.

38 Eric Hernandez by Billy Amendola

Bruno Mars may be his kid brother, but this drummer has plenty of star power—and musical chops—of his own.

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MD Pro Panelists Matt Halpern, Pat Mastelotto, Stephen Perkins, Rich Redmond, Steve Smith, Todd Sucherman, and Kenny Washington look beyond the classic drumming masterpieces and hip us to a treasure trove of underappreciated long-players.

64 Thomas Hedlund by Ken Micallef

His ability to absolutely *kill it* across a spectrum of styles, from electropop sensations Phoenix to trance-metal behemoth Cult of Luna, is rooted, he insists, not in technique but in pure emotion.

94 A Different View

Meshell Ndegeocello by Eric Wechter
"It's truly the drummer who keeps me buoyant and excited," the great bassist, singer, and bandleader says. And with players like Chris Dave, Gene Lake, and Abe Laboriel Jr. to collaborate with, what's there *not* to be excited about?

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What's Your Worth?

I've always had a difficult time dealing with money, especially when it comes to negotiating fees for creative services, whether it's playing, recording, or teaching. I don't know where this anxiety stems from. Maybe it has to do with not wanting to put a monetary value on my "art." But more than likely, it comes down to self-confidence...or a lack thereof. I mean, what does studio great Vinnie Colaiuta get per song? Do my skills on the kit measure up to 10 percent of his? Those are the things that run through my head when someone asks me how much I charge to record drums. I realize it's ridiculous to think that way. And when you get down to it, very few genres—outside of extreme metal, prog, and contemporary jazz—require that level of virtuosity. But the self-doubt usually creeps in nonetheless.

I've amassed quite a bit of experience playing and recording drums, so I feel much more secure in my abilities to be able to say, "Yes, I can do this, and here's what I'll need." But I've recently slid—unexpectedly—into an alternative role as a mix engineer for a few independent projects. So here I am again, wondering if my ears and EQ know-how are at a professional-enough level for me to be charging anything at all. (What does Chris Lord-Alge get per song? Am I worth even .10 percent of that?)

The problem is that when you work for free, or even for a very low "friend" rate, you'll inevitably start questioning whether or not you should've gotten involved in the project in the first place, especially if the gig or session is more demanding or time-consuming than you thought it would be. (They almost always are.) Those original feelings of inspiration and excitement to just be involved will eventually fade, and you'll be left feeling undervalued, if not downright taken advantage of. But who's to blame? Not the client or the bandleader.

Maybe you already know this, but what I've discovered is that by clearly establishing some type of fair compensation at the onset of a new project, whether it's in the form of cash or trade, it has been much easier for me to stay focused and give my best efforts through to the end. Eliminating that gray area between doing people favors and providing a valuable service has helped boost my own self-confidence and has also made my clients more confident in me. It's funny how it works that way. As the great mix engineer Dave Pensado said, in one of his weekly online interview shows, "If you think you're worth nothing, you're right." But everyone is worth something. The challenge is to figure out what your value is within your particular community, and then stick to it.

Enjoy the issue!

Mike Dawson

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JUNE ISSUE

Just wanted to say *MD* has done it again—the June 2013 issue was packed with great articles. I first became aware of Joey Waronker when I heard him on two tracks by alt-rockers Tonic in the late '90s. He supports both tunes with a Bonham-esque feel. Then he reappeared on the radio in 2003 playing drums on Gavin DeGraw's megahit "I Don't Want to Be." These tracks will get you hooked.

I've also become quite fond of Bernie Schallehn's Mind Matters articles, which offer great advice to musicians of all ages. Great work, Bernie! Michael Parillo hit a home run with *Encore*, describing the Cars' debut record with David Robinson on drums to a tee! That record was so influential to me and brought back a lot of great memories of my youth. I'm hoping Michael keeps with this idea and maybe one day does an article on another great record from the '70s, *Get the Knack*.

Finally, the article by Jeff Potter on Al Jackson Jr. is a great reminder of what a pioneer Mr. Jackson was in the world of drumming. The man was a "hit machine" and had such a great feel.

Where else can you get such diverse articles all in one magazine? Kudos to *MD*!

John Rogers

CATCHING UP ON MD

I recently renewed my subscription, which I had let fall by the wayside a few months back, and I'm glad I did. My first issue was April 2013, with the Kevin Ellman Update (saw Kevin with Utopia in Augusta, Georgia, in '73) and the Back Through the Stack with Philly Joe Jones reflecting on when he played with Buddy's band. (I had no idea!) As for the May issue, I always loved Joey Kramer but had no idea of his struggles and his overcoming those issues. The June NAMM Show stuff got my equipment mojo going. All this and way too many other pieces, plus Bernie Schallehn's wonderful Mind Matters column.

But what caused me to write was Billy Amendola's July Editor's

Overview, "Believe in You!" Bravo, Billy, right on time. The intro sentence—"At the beginning of guitarist Gary Clark Jr.'s hit song 'Ain't Messin' Round,' he sings, 'I don't believe in competition, ain't nobody else like me around'"—struck a chord in my musical heart, because I had just begun my fifth reading of zany genius Billy Ward's *Inside Out: Exploring the Mental Aspects of Drumming* (a must-read!). In the foreword George Russell says, "Billy leaves his ego off stage (except for the small bit necessary for the challenge), and gives his all. He *listens*, and in doing so responds sensitively to what is going on within the music. He has unflagging energy and enthusiasm and projects positive energy."

Can we as musicians aspire to anything more? This and a thousand other reasons make me so glad to be back in the *Modern Drummer* loop that Ron Spagnardi began and Isabel and staff are continuing to raise the bar on. Well done.

Timothy Lee Cromer

FROM THE AUTHOR OF JULY'S "MISSING STICKINGS"

I've had a couple of people contact me who were having difficulty with Exercises 3 and 4 in my July article, "The Missing Sticking: 12 Essential Patterns Not Included in *Stick Control*," and asked for tips. My suggestion is to first play those exercises with the following stickings.

Exercise 3: RLRR LRLR RLRR LRLR

Exercise 4: LRLR RLRL LRLR RLRL

You can focus on the double strokes going from the end of beats 2 and 4 into beat 3 and back to 1, or focus on the opposite-hand single strokes in beats 2 and 4 (i.e., the two lefts in Example 3 and the two rights in Example 4). I probably should have included those two variations in my article.

Also, the sticking in Example 7 is a misprint on my part. It should be RRLR LRLR RRLR LRLR. I apologize for any confusion.

Mat Marucci

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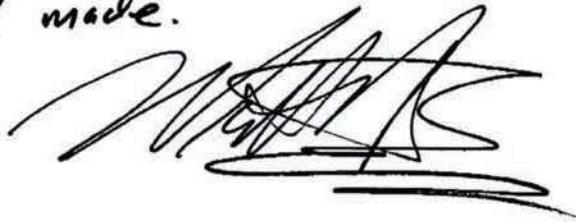
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UPDATE



MARK ZONDER

The drummer, known to many for his work with the progressive metal band Fates Warning, returns with Warlord—the group he was playing with during his first *Modern Drummer* interview, way back in 1983.

Mark Zonder has reunited with guitarist Bill Tsamis to resurrect their '80s metal band, Warlord. "We're a hundred percent up and running," says Zonder, whose stage name with the group is Thunder Child. "It's a complete rebirth, with a new album, *The Holy Empire*, and sold-out shows and festivals in Greece and Germany. And we're doing a live DVD from our European tour featuring the full seventeen-song show and behind-the-scenes footage. We're picking up where we left off thirty years ago and moving forward in a way that we always thought it could—and should—be done."

The drum tracks for *The Holy Empire* were recorded in Zonder's home studio. "I'm fortunate to have a large studio and tracking room in my house," Mark says. "I used the same basic setup I've been using for quite a while, with DW drums, Zildjian cymbals, Remo heads, and Vater sticks. What was a bit different this time was using my new Own Fidelity in-ear monitor system. Going from bulky headphones to

small in-ears with five drivers in each ear and complete isolation really changed my perspective."

In creating the new Warlord tracks, Zonder took the basic songs from Tsamis and went into "creative mode." "Some parts are way out and some are very simple," he explains. "I believe the combo of the two extremes is what really makes a creative, interesting drum part. I was playing with Warlord before Fates Warning, and my Warlord style of drumming was put into my Fates and Slavior playing. When I listen back to early Warlord stuff, I hear my progressive style happening. It's just the way I approach the music. Warlord is more song based, with a very defined vocal structure, so the playing has to be even more thought out. It's not the complete free-for-all that sometimes happens in progressive bands. I need to pick my spots and craft a complete song that ties together from start to finish."

Zonder's biggest challenge in preparing

for the Warlord tour was rereleasing material he hadn't played in years. "I went through each song and gave it the 'Mark Zonder 2013 makeover,'" the drummer says. "We're playing live to a click, so it's important that the groove sits where it's supposed to. Since I play every day, the physical part is not a problem."

Aside from his touring and recording activities, Zonder owns and operates AJ and Syd's Bump City studios, a ten-room recording facility in North Hollywood, California. "The rehearsal-room business died," he says, "so I made all ten spaces into production rooms, with glass studio doors, wood trim, nice lights, a control room, an iso booth, and a lounge area. I named the studio after my kids, and Bump City refers to the Tower of Power album as well as the fact that everyone there—it's mostly rap, hip-hop, and R&B engineers and producers—has a serious subwoofer, and the building actually *shakes*."

Mike Haid

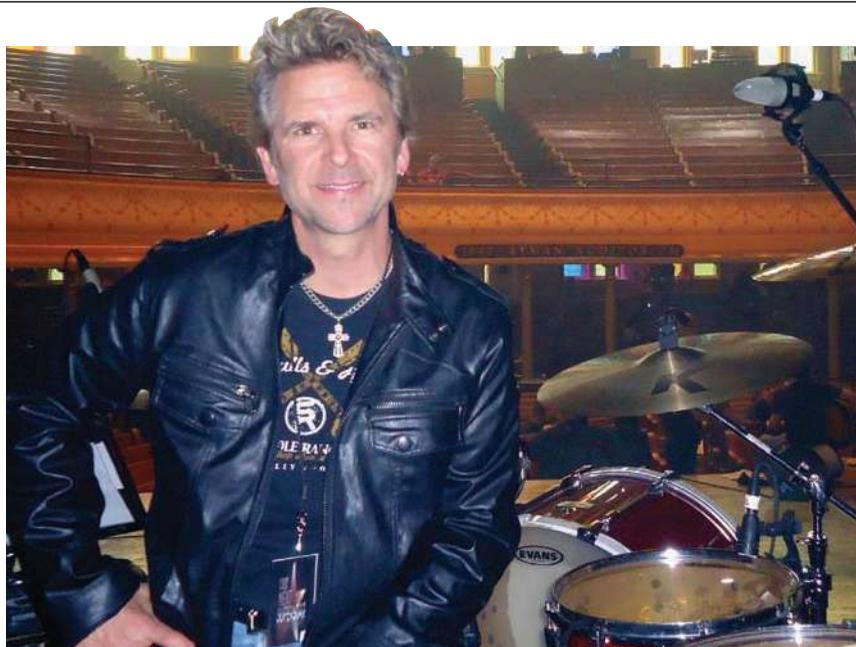
CHUCK TILLEY

One first-call Music City drummer asks another, "How do you get from Nashville to Alabama?"

If you've ever watched the TV hit *Nashville*, you've probably wondered how someone gets a gig playing drums on a show like that. For the answer, I went to my friend Chuck Tilley, the drummer with the gig. "They were looking for 'a fortysomething' group of musicians to cast as the band for female lead character Rayna James," Tilley explains, "players who could add some authenticity to the show. My band Sixwire was recommended, and we got the gig with no audition."

Tilley is no stranger to the small screen. In fact, he's practically made his living over the last decade being "that drummer on TV," working as the house timekeeper for the USA network series *Nashville Star*, as well as for Country Music Television's *Can You Duet* and CMT's *Next Superstar* series and Music Awards.

So what's it like to be on camera week after week? "They shoot *Nashville* like a movie," Chuck says, "doing multiple takes with one or only a few cameras at a time, which makes for fourteen- to sixteen-hour days. The producers have been very understanding of the fact that we're real musicians with playing careers outside the show, so they've been great about shooting us Monday through Thursday to accommodate our touring schedule."



Speaking of touring, Tilley has also landed the gig with the legendary country group Alabama, which reunited after a ten-year hiatus to do a forty-date summer tour. "I'd been working with lead singer Randy Owen for many years," Chuck says, "and during that time he got very comfortable with what I do, so he brought me in to play with his partners, Teddy [Gentry] and Jeff [Cook]. Long story short,

we all hit it off, and I was offered the job with Alabama.

"Being from the state of Alabama, this is an amazing full-circle moment for me," Tilley adds. "My friends and I always considered them like the Beatles of country music. With forty-three number-one hits and 73 million albums sold, their level of success is hard to match." **Jim Riley**

NEWS



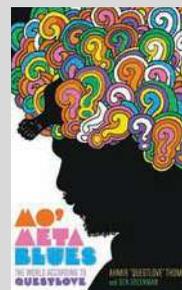
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ON THE QUEST OF A WAVE

Roots drummer Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, one of the most active, astute, and followed

players of today's new-media culture, has released a memoir, *Mo' Meta Blues: The World According to Questlove*. In the book, the *Late Night With Jimmy Fallon* bandleader largely avoids typical tales of pop-star excess, instead focusing on his upbringing in a musical Philadelphia family and describing his many music obsessions.

ANI CORDERO

The multi-talent with Os Mutantes is happy to flip the script, taking on vocal, guitar, and drum duties as needed.

Ani Cordero first shared the stage with Os Mutantes as the vocalist/guitarist for her Latin-tinged, bilingual indie-rock band, Cordero, which served as the opener for the legendary Brazilian group's 2009 U.S. tour. Mutantes leader Sergio Dias later asked Ani to jump aboard a 2013 U.S. trek to promote the group's new album, *Fool Metal Jack*. But this time, she would play the role of drummer. The band's original drummer, Dinho Leme, was unable to tour, and the versatile Cordero—confident that the chemistry was right—jumped at the opportunity. "They really wanted someone who could sing as well, and someone who would fit into the family vibe-wise," she says.

"I've always been a drummer first," Cordero emphasizes. "Then I became a songwriter and picked up guitar to facilitate songwriting. And I've found that having leader experience has also informed my support role as a drummer."

The iconic Os Mutantes first broke in the mid-'60s, shaking the status quo with its surreal collage of rock, psychedelia, and traditional Brazilian elements. As a member of the inner circle of artists that spawned Brazil's Tropicália movement, the band has an influence that still thrives.

Covering Leme's role meant confronting



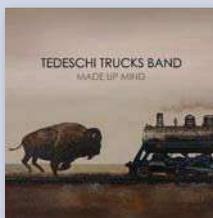
Karlo Ramos

a long, revered legacy and performing for a fan base with a rabid, cultlike devotion. "Dinho is such a legendary drummer," Cordero says. "To me he's like Ringo Starr, who's one of my favorites. He's got that easy, loopy feel. I try to inhabit that. But ultimately it's just me; I respect the history, and I'm having a good time playing these tunes. I'm a real fan of theirs."

Never idle, Cordero juggles multiple projects, including drumming with the

theatrical "cello rock" unit Rasputina and the stripped-down rockers Tuff Sunshine. "I'm addicted to collaboration," she says, adding that she's especially excited about a project she describes as her most personal to date, the Dias-produced *Recordar*. Due out this fall, the album finds Cordero revisiting her vocalist/guitarist role on covers of historic international Latin songs that resonated deeply with her early in life. **Je' Potter**

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ON TOUR

Jeremy Furstenfeld with Blue October /// **Blake Richardson** with Between the Buried and Me /// **Will Berman** with MGMT /// **Joe Tomino** with Dub Trio /// **Brendan Buckley** with JJ Lin /// **Jon Larsen** with Volbeat



Among the acts appearing at the two-day Southern Ground Music & Food Festival this September 27 and 28 are the Zac Brown Band (**Chris Fryar, Daniel de los Reyes**), Dawes (**Griffin Goldsmith**), Blackberry Smoke (**Brit Turner**), Grace Potter and the Nocturnals (**Matt Burr**), and Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros (**Josh Collazo**). The event, which is being held at the Great Lawn at Nashville's Riverfront Park, will also include the Zac Brown Band's nightly Super Sets, featuring special sit-in performances by Kenny Rogers, Clare Bowen, John Fogerty, and Jason Mraz, among others. For more, go to southerngroundfestival.com.



Jonathan Moffett

Rick Latham

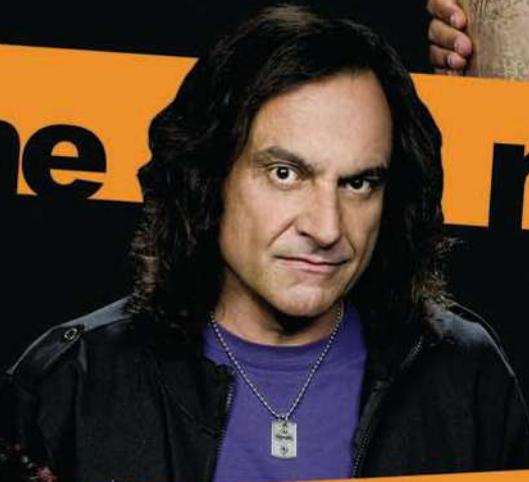
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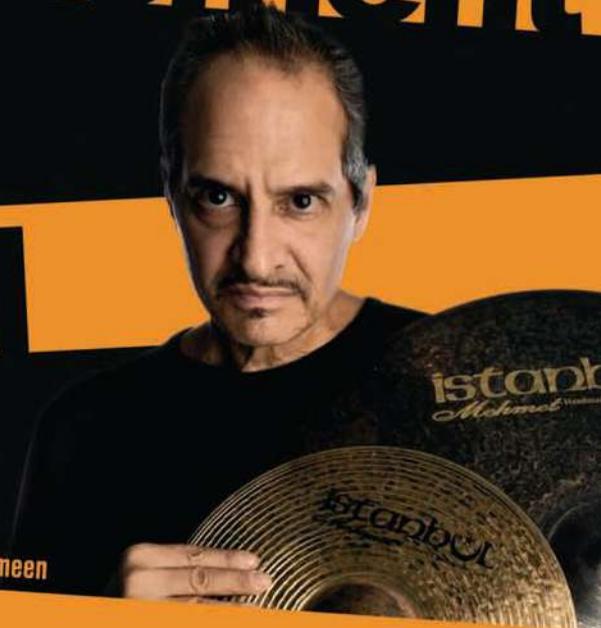
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Must-Have Gear

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This Month: Big Big Train/Cirque du Soleil's Nick D'Virgilio

If I could pick only two pieces of gear from my kit to take to any session or gig, it would be my Mapex 5.5x14 steel, hand-hammered Black Panther snare and my Mapex Falcon double kick pedal. The Black Panther snare is very versatile and can get me through just about any recording session. I know that it will produce a great sound, no matter what style of music I'm playing. The Falcon pedal feels good whether I'm on my kick drum or a rental. I usually use the strap drive, but because I can change it over to chain drive or direct drive in two minutes or less, I know that I can quickly find the right feel for the music.



Mad Sushie Photography

BACK *Through the* STACK

In June 2005, we asked Mars Volta drummer **JON THEODORE**, who's out with Queens of the Stone Age this year, how he would suggest that drummers play along to his recordings.



Do you remember those photographs back in the early '90s, where it looked like a mess, but when you squinted an image would jump out? I think that's a good analogy for my style. That's what I would recommend when listening to the Mars Volta.

What moves me is music that makes me wonder what the drummer was hearing in his head when he recorded it. Anyone can ape someone's style, but the point is to be able to hear the things that person is hearing that sets their limbs and mind in motion on the drums and eventually calls forth the sound they create.

Regarding my drumming style, I would say don't look too closely, because it's not specific to any beat that's happening in a particular song. Try to flip your perception to where you think

accents should go or where you think a fill should go. Then try not to do that. Push yourself out of your comfort zone. Instead of relying on what you know, push yourself over the edge to a place where you don't know what you're doing. Record it, listen back, and then try to reproduce it. Shift your mind into that gear.

As for my playing style, I want to remain relevant. That requires evolution.

To read the entire Jon Theodore interview—and all the other great material from June 2005—order a back issue at musicdispatch.com.





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by John Emrich

ROOM MICS



I recently read your article on overhead microphone placement (March 2013) and have been getting great results from your suggestions. I'd like to now try adding some room mics, but I'm not sure where to place them, and I don't know whether they should be processed. My studio is in a relatively small room in my house, so I don't have a lot of space to work with. Do you have any advice?
RD

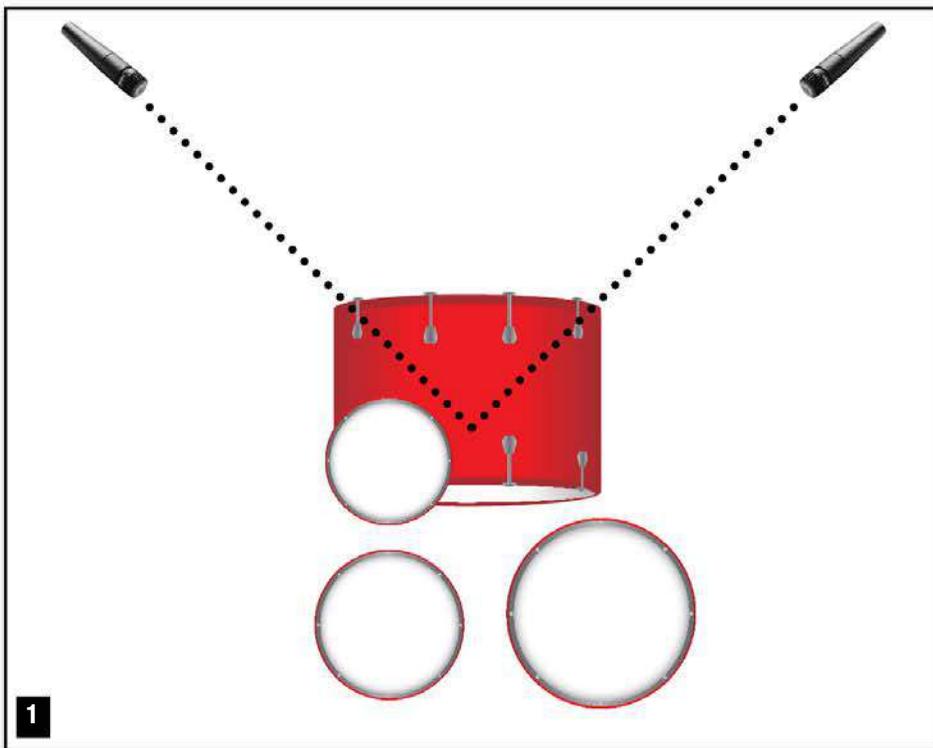
Great question! A lot of people don't understand how to capture a good room tone, and most people with a home studio don't have the type of room that will produce a sound worth capturing. A large, warm-sounding room is wonderful, but most drum rooms owned by drummers aren't that; they serve more as practice spaces. That said, there is a concept that we can explore

to give you the same type of effect as if you *did* have your drums set up in a nice, big room.

In a typical large studio with a lot of reflective surfaces, you would put room microphones at a considerable distance from the drums. When you listen to those channels by themselves, you'd hear less direct impact and a little smearing of the sound. Compare that with what you get from the overhead microphones, which should be capturing a well-balanced stereo image of the entire kit with plenty of attack and definition. Since you don't have a big room to record your drums in, you'll need to manipulate the sound of your room mics a bit in your digital audio workstation (DAW) to achieve a similar result.

Before we get to the processing, however, you have to decide which mics to use and where to put them. I recommend starting with a pair of Shure SM57s. These are inexpensive and will work

well for this approach. Placement is going to be key. Take a look at diagram 1. You'll notice that we've formed a triangle. The center point of the drumset is marked, and the positions of the two room microphones need to be at equal distance from that center point to achieve a well-balanced sound and to avoid phasing issues with the other microphones on the kit. You should also take into account the rest of the room and how it's laid out. You want everything to be evenly spaced, and that



includes the distance from the room mics to adjacent walls in your studio.

Now let's talk about how to process these room-mic channels. The first thing you want to do is add a compressor on them. In photo 2, you can see the settings that I used for the compressor to smear the transients (initial hits) a bit and to level out the overall dynamic range. This is all done to taste, so have fun experimenting.

Next up is EQ. Consider what happens when you move farther away from a drumset. The biggest thing you'd notice is that the low end starts to fall away. You have to keep this in mind when processing your room mics, in order to simulate the natural acoustics of a drumset miked from a distance. In photo 3, you can see that I use EQ to roll off the low end a bit. Again, experiment to find the best frequency to start with.

Now apply some reverb to create the feeling that your drums are in a bigger and more reflective space. Photo 4 shows my reverb settings. Use these as a starting point, but be sure to try other presets and create custom settings of your own to get the desired results.

The last item to address is the placement of the room-mic signals in relation to the other tracks. In a big studio, where the room mics are placed twenty to thirty feet from the drumset, the sound of the drums is going to reach the room mics slightly later than it reaches the close mics. That delay is a big part of what makes a drum recording sound "big." To simulate this in your setup, all you need to do is highlight the room tracks in your DAW and slide them to the right a little bit. As you do this and listen back, you'll notice a slap-back delay effect caused by the difference in timing between the tracks. Try different placements until you find one that works for your recording.

I suggest starting with the room-channel faders turned all the way down and slowly bringing them up. If you have too much of this room sound in the mix, it will stick out like a sore thumb. Check out the audio clip that accompanies this article at moderndrummer.com to hear how it all meshes together. The first part of the audio clip is just the overheads. The second part is the room channels. The last section has the drum microphones soloed at first, and then I add the room mics.

In case you're wondering what gear I used to create the audio clips, here you go: Yamaha 01V96i digital mixing

board, Cubase 7 DAW, Milab BDM-01 bass drum mic, Violet Design Wedge mic on snare, Violet Design Grand Pearl mic on pandeiro, Violet Design Flamingo Stereo overhead mic, Shure SM57 room mics, Dunnett Classic Ti drumset (14x20 bass drum, 6.5x13 snare, 8x10 and 14x14 toms), Gon Bops pandeiro, and Crescent cymbals (20" and 22" Vintage rides, 18" Eon crash, 14" Eon hi-hats).

Good luck!



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



Photo: Rob Shanahan (who else?)

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BILL BRUFORD: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Prologue to the Second Edition

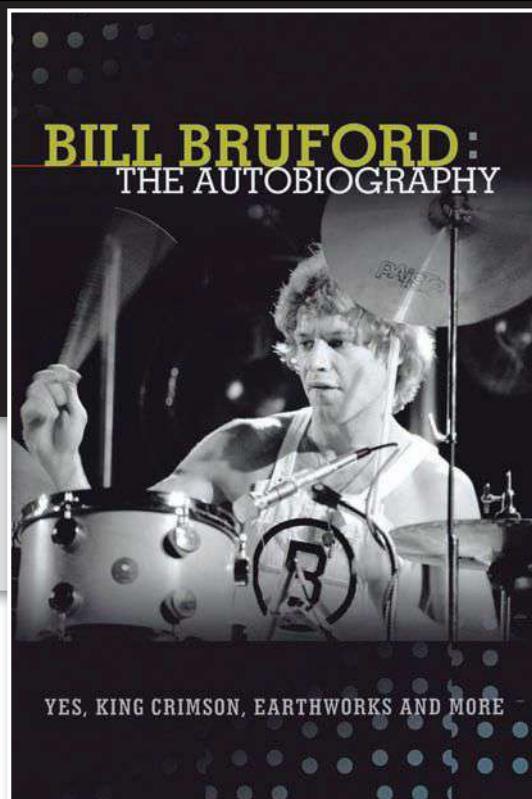
In which the prog-rock pioneer and fusion explorer contemplates the future of our art—and calls on us to determine it for ourselves.

In its short life, this book appears to have struck the proverbial chord. In its efforts to depict the lived experience of one drummer more accurately, it has come to be seen as advocating a greater realism about popular instrumentalists' behaviors, motivations, and intentions in general. It's been refreshing to step back out of the fray and attempt to understand the drumming life and explain it to others.

If I were asked if there was one theme running through this autobiography, it is perhaps that drumming and drummers are misunderstood and accordingly misrepresented. What do they really do? Pounding out rhythms on a drumset is for morons, isn't it? Actually, it's no more moronic than any other human activity; it may be rendered moronic by moronic drummers in the same way that politics may be rendered moronic by moronic politicians. At the other end of the spectrum, musical instrument practice has the ability to change lives, not least the life of the practitioner; I know, because it changed mine. In all my years I've failed to meet the stereotypical pig-eared, pea-brained, non-musical oaf beloved of the tabloid press, but I have met a number

of highly intelligent, self-aware musicians who happen to have specialized on the drumset, and made drumming and popular music all the better for it. In any other walk of life their imaginative, collaborative, and creative skills, matched with the work ethic of an elephant, would guarantee these people a seat at the boardroom table.

Much has happened within the drumming community since the book's first publication in 2009. It is daily harder to earn a living from the music business and daily harder to be creative within an encroaching homogenization of the rhythmic and metrical terrains that lie before the young Western kit drummer. A professional life such as I was privileged to enjoy—playing what I wanted where I wanted with whom I wanted and more or less when I wanted—is increasingly hard to construct. Young players must spend much time deploying formidable networking skills to ensure they can continue to be what they want to be and are good at being; namely, being a drummer. And automation marches on.



The intense but fruitful years I spent being “just a drummer,” playing some cool stuff and getting paid adequately, may be under threat unless he or she rapidly makes himself or herself indispensable. Plenty of music was made before the arrival of the Western kit drummer in the early twentieth century, and plenty more could be made without his or her services. Electronica and folksy singer-songwriters have no need for drummers at all. Several more genres deal largely with sample- or computer-based rhythm—notably electronic dance music, hip-hop, and rap. I'd be sad to see them go, but unless drummers think fast, intelligently, and bravely, insisting on the hip and refusing to play the moronic, demonstrating their musical ideas are more innovative, functional, and useful than other people's, then they may no longer be invited to the creative party. The post-digital,



Bruford released his autobiography in March 2009, two months after he retired from public performance. In 2011 the book was issued by Foruli in a handcrafted limited edition. The unique box set was designed by Andy Vella, creator of many of the Cure's iconic album covers, and it features the seventeen-track 10" vinyl double album *From Conception to Birth*.

post-computer world they now inhabit may already have made that impossible.

At time of writing, I'm currently researching in the area of drummers' behaviors, motivations, and intentions, in an effort, I suspect, to better understand my own behaviors, motivations, and intentions when I was on active duty. Broadly the thesis is that drumming, like the music that contains it, is becoming homogenized, like hotel rooms, small cars, and white wine. The majority of Western kit drummers increasingly tend to play the same thing at the same tempo, dynamic, and volume, and with the same timbral palette, and that's the majority whom the public hears. Drummers appear to be sleepwalking to their own extinction, goes the thesis, unaware that their very existence as full-time instrumentalists may be under threat. We drummers have too often ceded creative control of the instrument to producers, but there remains that little creative moment in the studio or rehearsal room when the drummer's opinion is sought, and he has the opportunity to make a material difference: to run the track again, to improve, to rethink, to go down the path less followed, to play something not just functional, but creative. Too frequently, under pressure to get the job done quickly and cheaply, that path has understandably been too little taken. We love rhythm, some say, but we use it (or allow it to be used) to deaden, not elevate. We sleep.

Paradoxically, two hunches for which I have no hard evidence seem to run counter to this analysis. First, I suspect that more drummers play more drums more often than ever before, even if the many electronic and "leisure" kits in use never leave home. Second, I suspect that more drummers play more brilliantly and with more imagination, fire, skill, and honesty than ever before, but it is only a tiny minority of the determined that will be heard. Questions have I plenty; answers have I none. How we got here and what to do about it is surely the subject of another book.

The wake-up call may be in creativity—the buzzword of the minute. Everyone wants it, but few seem able to agree on what it is, let alone where you find it, or how it is to be engendered or nurtured. In his inaugural speech, a recent director-general of the BBC urged his staffers to be "more creative." In their restless hunt for creativity, business and commerce have discovered innovation, have decided they need it, and, peculiarly, have turned to the artistic community for guidance in the thorny thicket. [British education expert]

Sir Ken Robinson feels we were all born creative but the education system disconnects us from it. Musicians may be less disconnected than some, but still, problems abound. Even within something called the "creative community" people seem unsure how to define it and how to get it. But a little more creative thinking may be needed among rhythmists if human drumming is to survive in the mainstream of music making, and if we are going to have something to tell business and commerce.

I'd like to think those following me would be able to enjoy the enormously privileged life behind a drumkit that I've tried to describe between the covers of

this book, but the post-digital, post-computer world we now inhabit may already have made that impossible. You and I might know how tricky it is to get by as a drummer, let alone with a family, but the great thing is that young people don't know, and probably wouldn't care if they did. Somewhere there is, right now, a fourteen-year-old with incomparable skill and enthusiasm reinventing the par-diddle in ways inconceivable to his crusty older and betters, because to borrow from Robert Fripp, he doesn't know what he can't do, and goes for it often, with gusto. The new edition of this book is dedicated to that fourteen-year-old.

—Bill Bruford, Surrey, U.K., December 2012



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LUDWIG

CLASSIC MAPLE DRUMSET

by Michael Dawson

DIGITALLY
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modern drummer.com

Ludwig drums are widely regarded as the sound that defined rock 'n' roll, thanks in large part to their close association with '60s/'70s superstars like the Beatles' Ringo Starr and Led Zeppelin's John Bonham. The company still makes kits that conjure those classic tones, within the vintage-spec 3-ply Legacy and acrylic

Don't let the name Classic Maple fool you. These high-end drums from one of the most legendary drum makers will stand tall in even the most demanding of modern musical situations.

Vistalite series, but it also offers some very powerful, distinct, and contemporary-sounding drums in the Classic Maple and Keystone lines. We reviewed the

Keystone kit, which features 5-ply maple/oak shells with dual 45-degree bearing edges, in the December 2010 issue. Up this month is a beautiful Classic Maple outfit.

SHELL FORMULA

All Classic Maple drums feature 6 mm, 7-ply cross-laminated North American maple shells.

The inner three plies have staggered grains (horizontal/vertical/horizontal). Twin-ply maple panels are then added to the inside and outside of the core and sealed in place using the company's proprietary bladder molds and radio-frequency bonding

system. The bearing edges are cut to 45 degrees and hand-sanded to a smooth, even surface. The result is a very strong and stable shell with a sharp attack, high sensitivity, and a wide tuning range. Ludwig describes Classic Maple drums as being ideal for large-scale touring and high-volume performances, featuring a big and open tone, extended resonance, and midrange projection.

SPECS

The Classic Maple kit we were sent (\$3,846) came with an 18x22 bass drum (no mount), 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, and a 16x16 floor tom. Two tom arms are included to hang the rack toms from cymbal stands. The finish is high-gloss natural maple, and each drum is outfitted with Mini

Classic lugs and classy cast-brass Keystone badges. The bass drum features new insulated claws and Elite telescoping spurs with retractable rubber feet and spikes.

The six-lug toms have triple-flange steel hoops and Ludwig WeatherMaster Heavy clear batter heads with Medium clear bottoms. The bass drum has a Power Collar batter, which is a clear 10 mil single-ply head with an outer tone ring. The vintage-style front head is a script-logo, smooth-white model.

At I As Mount

The most significant update on new Classic Maple drumsets is the Atlas mount. This innovative piece of hardware, which debuted at this year's Winter NAMM trade show, serves as a dual-purpose lug and universal mount. The Atlas attaches to the drum with the existing lug-casing holes, so no extra drilling is required to use it, and it doesn't put additional strain on the shell, allowing for full, unrestricted tones.

The Atlas can function in many different ways. In the case of our review kit, the rack toms came with one Atlas each so that the drums could be hung from cymbal stands using the included tom arms. There was no noticeable difference in attack, sustain, or decay when I played the Classic Maple toms mounted versus unmounted. The Atlas proved to function just as well as any suspension system, but with a considerably smaller footprint. It protrudes a bit farther from the drum than a shell-mounted Keystone, Classic, or Modular tom bracket does, but once the kit was set up we had no problem getting the toms into a comfortable position, and the Atlas ended up being nearly imperceptible.

The floor tom comes with Atlas mounts replacing three bottom lugs for attaching the legs. The floor tom's tone was as big, full, and unrestricted when mounted on the legs as it would have been if the drum were elevated with a suspension system.

Epic tones

We tend to begin testing new drums by seeing how low they can be tuned and still produce a clean, clear tone. I've often found it to be the case that the better the quality of the shell and the more precise the cut of the bearing edges, the looser the heads can be before they start to sound papery. The edges on these Classic Maple toms were very well done, and the shells were flawless. I was able to get both

heads on each drum down to a very low pitch, with the tension rods barely a half turn above finger-tight. After fine-tuning the pitch at each lug, I gave the drums a solid smack, and they let out a huge, pure tone. They were ready to roll just as they were, without my even bothering to see how the interval between the top and bottom heads matched up. (When I finally did check the intervals, it turned out that the bottom heads were about a half step lower than the batters.)

For the bass drum, I replaced the included solid front head with a Remo Powerstroke 3 resonant with a porthole, so I could get a microphone inside. I then tuned each head just above the wrinkle point and did some very minor fine-tuning to get roughly the same pitch at each lug. Without any additional muffling, the drum had a lot of punch and low end, and it didn't ring for very long. I could have kept it just like that, especially if I were using the kit for unmiked gigs. In the studio, however, I felt the need to tighten up the tone a touch, so I placed two rolled towels inside the drum, just touching the bottom portion of each head. This really brought the tone into focus. The attack punched through cleanly while the sustain remained full and round, and the decay was short enough to minimize sympathetic rumbling.

Acoustically, Classic Maple drums have a ton of power. When compared with the all-maple kit that I normally use when I want a modern/contemporary sound, the Ludwigs had a noticeably bigger and more robust tone with a punchier, snappier attack.

During our review period with the Classic Maple drums, I was called to play on a few tracks for an ambient alt-rock project. I decided to try the Ludwigs to see how they fared under mics and within a dense mix of atmospheric synths and electric guitars, and they were downright stellar. The kick had the perfect blend of clean, snappy "click" and low-end heft, and the toms jumped right out of the speakers every time I played them. Their attack was clean and punchy, and the tone was fat and pure. I don't play many fills, but when I did, the Classic Maples spoke through the track with a lot of drama and power. Now I see why Ludwig suggests that these kits are optimized for big productions—they're as epic sounding as they come.

ludwig-drums.com

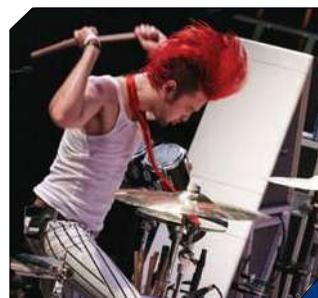
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TURKISH

RHYTHM AND SOUL SERIES CYMBALS

by Kyle Andrews

DIGITALLY ENHANCED
modern drummer.com

Turkish is a company based in Istanbul that makes all of its cymbals from

From classic funk to contemporary jazz, Turkish R&S cymbals provide the perfect balance of dry, funky flavor and enhanced musicality.

scratch. It begins with a proprietary bronze formula and casts each cymbal blank in house. On its website Turkish proudly boasts, "There are no factory seconds. If a cymbal bears our logo, it has attained perfection." Up for review this month are the company's Rhythm and Soul series cymbals. We were sent a pair of 14" hi-hats, 16" and 18" crashes, and 20" and 22" rides.

The unique finish of the Rhythm and Soul (R&S) line is the result of a quick acid bath and very light lathing. This gives the cymbals a bright, but not brilliant, color and leaves behind the pits of the hammer

marks for a slightly raw appearance. The entire surface of the cymbal is hammered, save the bell, which is sparsely lathed on top and totally unlathed underneath.

These models sport a low-profile bell and a fairly shallow bow, which contributes to their strong stick definition and dry wash. They are in the medium-light range and have a decent amount of flex. The hi-hats have a slightly steeper bell and a more dramatic bow, which gives them a somewhat brighter character, and they're proportionally heavier and less flexible than the rides and crashes.

HI-HATS

The hi-hats (list price: \$732.55) were my favorite cymbals from the R&S series.

They were dark and almost trashy when loose or open and could produce a tight, articulate chick when played with the foot or when clamped hard. They were capable of a wide variety of dynamics and responded very quickly. (So quickly that I realized how much I need to work on my left-foot technique!) These hats reminded me of Clyde Stubblefield's sound on classic James Brown tracks like "Mother Popcorn" and "Funky Drummer." They also worked well in a more supportive 2-and-4 role underneath a jazz ride pattern.

The hi-hats blended excellently with the wash properties of the crashes and rides in this line and offered a nice, open voice when played with the pedal up. Because of their dark and dry tone, I imagine that the R&S hats would get lost when competing with loud, amplified music, but they would cut through a full horn section without

much trouble. When I took them out on an outdoor vocal jazz gig, they fit into the overall balance effortlessly.

Crashes

The crashes in the R&S line were dark and breathy but still bright enough to sing above the ride cymbals. They had a quick decay, so even when played loudly they didn't wash out the rest of the kit. The 16" (\$468.83) was very effective as a contrast to both of the ride cymbals. It was bright enough to provide a sufficient color change yet was still darker than you'd expect from a model of its size. It also had very good stick definition for such a small cymbal and worked excellently as an alternate ride behind a muted trumpet or bass solo.

The 18" R&S crash (\$527.44) was similar to the 16", but it had a lower pitch that was closer to the crash sounds of the ride cymbals. What was extraordinary about this instrument was the bell tone, which was clear, bright, cutting, and complex—just like what so many jazz drummers used in the '60s. This crash also worked well as an alternate ride for color changes in lighter settings.

rides

The R&S rides had superb stick definition and a really cool low, dry wash. The balance between definition and wash was such that the wash played a supporting role and would only cover up the "tah" stick sound at extreme volumes. The 20" model (\$732.55) seemed a little heavier and less flexible than the 22" and had a very versatile stick sound. I could see using this cymbal in a lot of different low- to medium-volume settings.

The 22" (\$849.76) was thinner than the 20" and had a much drier stick sound, which was uniform across the playing surface and was similar to what you hear from Jack DeJohnette's cymbals on the Keith Jarrett trio's records, but with more wash. The ride produced a killer wooden "click" attack that rivaled that of any other cymbal I've played. I loved the definition that this ride provided. At the same time, I found myself wanting to get different timbres by playing closer or farther from the bell, but the cymbal didn't respond well in that regard. Its sound characteristics didn't change, whether I played 1" off the bow or smacked it hard, à la Art Blakey.

The 22" R&S ride had the better bell of the two review models. Playing on it elicited a dry, smoky wash, but it was still distinct and cutting and provided a very useful change of color. The 20" ride had a less distinctive bell but was still useful.

These rides, being as thin as they are, performed best when played with lighter drumsticks. Bopworks' Mel Lewis sticks, also reviewed this month, sounded great on them, but the cymbals tended to wash out and lose their characteristic sounds if played with anything heavier than a 5A. The rides were, however, very responsive to brushes and mallets.

summing up

All in all, Turkish's Rhythm and Soul cymbals are superior handcrafted instruments that will fit a variety of styles within the soft to moderate volume range. They are sensitive, responding accurately to as much subtlety in dynamics and touch as you can conjure. My one reservation about using the entire R&S line is that the cymbals match so well that it becomes a bit difficult to achieve a significant change in color. For that reason, I would suggest placing one of these models next to something a bit brighter sounding, to spotlight the defining qualities of the Rhythm and Soul line. That, of course, is a personal opinion—you should try them for yourself.

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MOLECULES

ACRYLIC DRUMSET

by Stephen Bidwell

The drum evolves in strange ways—sometimes by necessity, sometimes by ingenuity, and sometimes by pure imagination. And every few years a new product comes along and gets heralded

Only time will tell whether these bubble-shaped acrylics catch on or fade into oblivion. But what we can tell you is that Molecules drums look and sound like nothing else.

by some and detracted by others. The Molecules Drum Company offers a unique sound palette in an eye-catching package for daring players looking to step outside the bounds of the everyday.

WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?

Molecules are bubble-shaped, single-headed acrylic drums. The bubble portion is adhered to a 3"- to 5"-deep acrylic shell that holds all of the hardware and has a standard 45-degree bearing edge. The idea came to company founder Rob Lerner, a Miami-based drummer, around the start of the new millennium, as he was seeking a new sound and shape for drums and hoping to eliminate right angles in order to create a rounder sound. After some experiments with different composite materials for shells, Lerner settled on acrylic.

We were shipped a 20" clear bass drum and white 12" and 16" toms; both toms featured suspension mounts. At

the widest area of the bubble, each drum extends about 4" beyond the head size. The drums are also about 4" deeper than the head size. Therefore these three pieces shipped in 18", 20",

and 22" Humes & Berg Enduro cases with 20" to 22" depths. The thin .25" acrylic shells made the drums quite light despite their apparent bulk. The tom shells were completely closed, while the bass drum featured a 5" porthole in the floor-facing side of the bubble.

SET 'EM UP

As the bass drum has no legs or mounting hardware, the drums shipped with a DW cradle. I had to set up the kick at an angle to get the beater to hit the center of the head. I was curious to see whether striking the drums in the center would create a dead sound, like when you hit in the middle of timpani, but this was not the case. The sweet spot on the Molecules kick proved to be just off center, as it is with any single-headed drum.

Given their extended size, these drums will make a larger footprint and may not allow for a fully ergonomic setup. The

rack tom came with a suspension mount bracketed for a standard Gibraltar L-arm, while the floor tom legs were made from two interlocking pieces in order to accommodate the shape of the shell. They were a bit clunky to operate but did the job just fine.

THE SOUND

The Molecules drums shipped with Remo Coated Emperors on the toms and an Aquarian Super Kick-10 on the bass drum. After stretching the heads and tuning them to what I normally use for a rock or funk gig, I was intrigued by the amount of punch coming from the bass drum. The Aquarian head featured some pre-muffling, and something about the bubble chamber of the shell gave the drum a round and focused sound that was similar to what you find on a vintage drum machine or what you get when you pump a kick drum through a PA system after applying EQ and compression. There was a mild overtone in the sound that was similar to what you hear when you swat a beach ball. But when the drums were miked up or listened to from a distance, the overtone wasn't noticeable.

The 16" tom was the most normal-



feeling drum to play, and it was the easiest to tune. It was also quieter and more focused than a typical 16" floor tom. The bubble chamber gave back more of a "thoonk" than the "thoomb" of a two-headed drum, and the stick feel was similar to that of a Rototom.

The 12" rack tom was tricky to tune with the thick, coated head. Given that the bubble-shaped shell has a self-equalizing nature, I found that a thinner head made more sense to get the most sound out of the small drum. It also took some work to get the 12" to have as much body as the 16"; this tom felt like the most single-headed of the bunch. That said, when I played tribal tom patterns on the whole kit, the 12" drum filled in the sonic space nicely.

HOT OR NOT?

Molecules drums are visually and sonically unique, but they carry some basic issues of practicality. You get a visually stunning effect from the drums, which can be painted in any combination of colors and could pair well with lights. They sound different from any other drums out there, and the bubble-shaped shells rein in the unruliness often associated with standard-size acrylic models. While these drums may not be for everyone, a perfect example of the kind of player with enough mojo to play them with confidence is fusion legend Billy Cobham, who was an early adopter of acrylic Fibes drums, North horn-shaped toms, early electronic percussion, and now Molecules.

The three-piece shell pack we received lists for \$3,889 and is available through Guitar Center. (You can try out the drums if you live near one of GC's flagship stores.) A four-piece setup, with an additional 14" tom, is also available, as are single drums. But any larger sizes would have to be special ordered for now. Molecules has taken a brave step forward with these drums, and anyone searching for new sounds or a futuristic look would be wise to check them out.

moleculesdrumcompany.com

DUENDE

CON FUSION CAJON

by Michael Dawson

Duende is a Spanish company that specializes in manufacturing a variety of cajons at different price points, from entry-level children's models to professional-grade hybrid drums, like the Con Fusion model we have for review. This unique cajon, which features two playing surfaces, measures 12x12x19 and weighs about 12 pounds. The front, which is made of African zebrawood, features a V-shaped wound-steel cable snare system. The birch back comes with thicker guitar-style strings and a machine-head tuning system on the inside of the shell. The body of the Con Fusion cajon is made from okume wood. The tone hole is placed in the middle of one side.

With two separate playing surfaces, the Duende Con Fusion cajon offers subtle but distinct tonal variations for the discerning percussionist.

The purpose of having two playing surfaces on the Con Fusion cajon is to provide contrasting sounds within a single instrument. (Most standard cajons have only one sound.) The zebrawood plate offers a crisper high end and deeper bass and open tones, while the birch plate provides a drier, more focused, traditional timbre. Snare adjustments are made on the birch string side via two internal



guitar-tuner machine heads, and twisting each head a full turn makes the snares go

from loose and rattling to soft and subtle. Snare adjustments are made to

the zebrawood side from the bottom of the drum via an Allen wrench.

In terms of sound, the difference between the birch and zebrawood plates was distinct but not drastic. The birch had an overall tighter tone, so it responded faster and more clearly. The zebrawood had a bigger and more open sound, so it occupied a bit more space in the mix. The snares on the birch side sounded chunky

but articulate, adding a cool shekere-type flavor. The snares on the zebrawood side offered a brighter texture. On pure acoustic gigs, I could see the value of having these two slightly different sounds at my disposal. (I'd probably start the night playing the subtler birch side and then later spin the cajon to the zebrawood side to get a bit more presence and cutting power.) On louder gigs or in studio sessions where you want to mike the cajon at the tone hole, you'll have to adjust the mic each time you switch, since the hole is located on the side of the drum. List price: \$470.

duendepercussion.com

BOPWORKS DRUMSTICKS

ART BLAKEY, SHELLY MANNE, AND MEL LEWIS SIGNATURE MODELS

by Kyle Andrews

For the past two years I've been on a hunt for a pair of sticks to feel at home with. All of the models I'd played either sounded great on my hand-hammered cymbals but too thin on the drums, or great on the drums but too overpowering for the cymbals. I've tried various shapes and sizes by major brands, but they all fit into one of those two categories. Then a friend showed me a pair of Bopworks Mel Lewis sticks, and I was sold. They sound dark on cymbals, with a clear, wooden "click," yet they're still heavy enough to get a full sound on drums. Fast forward a couple of months, and here we also have the Art Blakey and Shelly Manne signature models to review.

In the 1960s and '70s, players were generally less picky about the size or model of the stick they played, and

Bopworks sticks, which are designed after models used by some of hard bop's finest drummers, are lighter and thinner than most contemporary offerings, allowing for even greater dynamic control.

manufacturers weren't as precise as they are today. Within any given company, different pairs of sticks would have slight variances of weight and shape. The folks at Bopworks tried to find the essence of the different sticks used by renowned players and built signature models using modern standards of choice hickory. The results are true to the specifications that the drummers preferred, but with more precise and consistent manufacturing.

The only thing that made me hesitant to make the switch to Bopworks was the hand feel, which was at first quite foreign. Since these sticks are modeled after those from the '60s and '70s, their taper is different from that of most modern sticks, and they feel much lighter. But this is what makes them sound so great. They have enough mass to get a full drum sound, yet they rebound lightly enough not to overpower thinner cymbals. It took me nearly two weeks to get used to the rebound of the Bopworks, but now

that my hands have acclimated to them, the sticks I used to play with feel like telephone poles.

The Mel Lewis and Shelly Manne models are both fairly short, coming in at 15.125", while the Blakey sticks are a full 16". The Blakey stick has a diameter of .530", the Shelly Manne model is .500", and the Mel Lewis is the thickest of the series, coming in at .540". The Lewis and Manne models are very much alike despite their difference in diameter. They feel similar in the hands, have a nearly identical tip shape, and create similar sounds. The difference is that the Manne stick is lighter, which produces a brighter sound. Still, the two models feel alike enough to practically be interchangeable, depending on the gig. Though either could be used convincingly in both

settings, I might use the Manne for trio gigs, while the extra weight of the Lewis could be ideal for kicking a big band.

The Art Blakey model is a totally different animal. Its extra length and long taper give it a strikingly bright and cutting cymbal sound. The tip is larger and more acorn shaped than that of the other two models, which helps offer a powerful sound on drums. These sticks feel very light and have an extremely lively rebound. They take some time to get used to, but the sound they produce is worth it.

Bopworks drumsticks can be ordered directly from the company's website and are priced reasonably at \$10.80 per pair. If you're trying to get an authentic jazz or classic pop/R&B sound by using drums, heads, and cymbals that are modeled after designs from the '60s, why not apply that thinking to your choice of sticks as well?

bopworks.net



Simple user interface, large backlit LED screen, and quick-access buttons

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GEARING UP DRUMKIT DETAILS, ON STAGE AND UP CLOSE

Interview by Michael Dawson • Photos by Paul La Raia

Kinky Boots'

SAMMY MERENDINO

DRUMS: Sonor Prolite series in silver sparkle finish

- A. 5x14 chrome-over-brass Phil Rudd signature snare
- B. 8x12 tom
- C. 14x14 floor tom
- D. 16x16 floor tom
- E. 17x22 bass drum

"I'm up in the penthouse, I call it," Merendino says of the fourth-floor room above New York City's Al Hirschfeld Theatre where he plays the live drums for the Broadway show *Kinky Boots*. "It's a 10-by-12-foot drum booth, which is massive for Broadway. It's good and bad. I like that I can play as loud as I want, but I miss the interaction with the band during the show. My kit is pretty big and wouldn't really fit in the pit. Also, they'd be telling me to play quieter, and this is a real rocking show. Cyndi [Lauper, who wrote the music and lyrics] wants me to play full out every night, and so do I. I think you can actually hear me out on the street. It's pretty loud.

"The conductor can show me a lot of the audience, so I can draw energy off that. I have to stay focused, in that moment, and keep the energy up. I might have done it a hundred times already, but when most people come see the show it's their first time. I try to play every show like it's the last I'm ever going to play."

HEADS: Evans clear EQ3 bass drum batter, coated Power Center Reverse Dot snare batter and Hazy 300 bottom, and Onyx tom batters and clear G1 bottoms

"I like the Onyx heads because they last forever. I don't want to change heads every week. And I don't have to put anything on the toms, which is great. I tune the toms really

low, with the heads barely on, and they sound good."

CYMBALS: Paiste

- 1. 15" 602 Medium hi-hats
- 2. 19" Dark Energy crash
- 3. 10" Reflector splash
- 4. 22" Traditional ride (with two rivets)
- 5. 20" Reflector Full Power crash
- 6. 18" Twenty series China

STICKS: Vic Firth 3A sticks and miscellaneous mallets

ELECTRONICS: Roland TD-30 V-Drums kit and SPD-SX sample pad, Mac Mini and two RME Fireface interfaces and Ableton Live software, Radial SW8 backing-track auto-switcher, FatKat pedal, custom M.A.R.C. footswitch triggers (courtesy of Vincent Gutman), Miktek mics

"I realized I had to make it more of a unified kit, because a lot of times the song starts off with electronics and then halfway through I have to switch to acoustics. I designed it so I could play all of the electronic bass drums from my normal sitting position. Ableton [Live] controls all the clicks and all the sequences, and they're fired from the SPD-SX, from footswitches placed by my heel next to the hi-hat, or from a couple of other triggers around the kit. I really need a couple more limbs.

"The challenging part was learning the choreography of how to fire off the different sequences. On one song I have

to make ten or twelve different moves just to fire off different loops, while I'm playing the part as well. If I miss a trigger, you won't hear some percussion or arpeggiators that are integral to the show, so I'm not allowed to have a bad night."

HARDWARE AND PERCUSSION: Grover Spectrasound Mark Tree bar chime, Rhythm Tech tambourine, Porter & Davies BC Gigster throne and engine, Auralex HoverMat, Kelly SHU kick-miking system, Drum Wallet and Snare Weight mufflers, DrumDial, GK isolation headphones, Sonor Giant Step double pedal

"The Gigster really helps to anchor down the groove. You kind of get addicted to that low end. I end up playing a little less, because it feels so good. I could just play 1 and 3 on the kick and be totally happy."





Ben Koller

When he's not holding down the drum chair with the metalcore giant Converge, this force of nature explores psychedelic punk with Acid Tiger, metal with All Pigs Must Die, and mathcore with the two-piece Mutoid Man. In each instance, band and drummer are undeniably, unrelentingly *going for it*.

by Stephen Bidwell

Converge has distilled choice elements of hardcore, most styles of metal you can think of, and the fury of classic thrash, yet no single genre name can account for the totality of the group's sound. This at least partially explains why Ben Koller, whose career has featured a number of projects exploring different hybrids of punk and metal, is the perfect drummer for the group.

Koller's first band of note was a grindcore outfit called Forcefedglass, which recorded a 1997 album with Converge guitarist Kurt Ballou engineering and producing. Ballou later used Koller on a side project called Blue/Green Heart. It only made sense that Ben would eventually land in Converge himself, which he did

following the departure of drummer Damon Bellorado. Since joining in 1999, Koller has played on all five full-length Converge albums and a handful of singles and split releases, all produced by Ballou and the band.

While Converge is off the road, Koller has involved himself in a series of well-received projects, including Mutoid Man, his two-piece collaboration with Stephen Brodsky of the metalcore stalwart Cave In. The drummer has also filled in with Cave In on tour and in the studio, and he may or may not have been a member of the parody screamo band United Nations. We sat down with Ben after he and Converge destroyed an Austin stage at Fun Fun Fun Fest.

MD: Your precision is something else. What was your training?

Ben: When I first started, when I was in high school, I took lessons from a drummer who was really into samba and Latin music and played in a symphony. He really taught me a lot about rudiments. I also remember working out of Rick Latham's *Advanced Funk Studies* with him.

MD: Do you still draw on Latin rhythms?

Ben: Yeah, a little, when it comes to deviating from normal drumbeats, like on the song "Last Light." It's kind of jammy, and there's maybe a little Latin swing going on in there—just some atypical beats in general.

MD: What else pushed your development?

Ben: When I first started, pretty much all I did when I had any free time was music related. In school I was in every band I could join—jazz bands, orchestra. And I had lessons after school and went in the basement and played with Ramones tapes, and if I had free time I'd start bands with friends. It was just total immersion. I was a tennis player and I ran cross-country, but then I heard the Descendents and all that sports stuff went out the window.

MD: Converge includes elements of punk, hardcore, and metal. Do you have any particular drumming influence in each style?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Koller plays Trick aluminum drums, including a 10x12 rack tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and an 18x22 bass drum. He plays a 6.5x14 Dunnett stainless steel snare. His Sabian cymbals include 19" and 20" AAX X-Plosion crashes, a 22" Paragon ride, and 14" hi-hats (usually made up of a Rock bottom and a Paragon bottom on top). His hardware is mostly Yamaha, plus a DW 9000 double bass pedal.



Ben: My favorite punk drummer is pretty easy, because Bill Stevenson was incredible in Black Flag, Descendents, and All. Descendents was pretty much the first punk band I ever heard, and I've just always been a fan of Bill's surfy, ultra-fast, single-stroke style. And let's see...for metal it's probably Dave Lombardo. There's really no one like him.

MD: I was reminded of him while watching you and Dave Witte of Municipal Waste tonight, just in terms of making it look easy and playing relaxed.

Ben: Yeah, Lombardo and Witte are both very relaxed. We usually play fifty-minute sets, but on this tour it's about ninety minutes every night. So I've been trying not to burn myself out too fast. When I feel like I'm getting tired, I just take a couple of deep breaths and relax and not use so much arm, relying on the wrists a little bit more.

MD: How about hardcore drummers?

Ben: You know who's great? Chuck Biscuits. I guess he's kind of a hardcore drummer, but he's punk too, really powerful. Some of those Black Flag shows with him—he just destroys. Maybe Bill Stevenson had more finesse, but Chuck was so insanely powerful. [For me it was about] how hard he plays and the simplicity of his playing. Matt Byrne from Hatebreed is also great—really tight, makes good decisions.

MD: As far as the endurance needed to play a ninety-minute Converge show, do you have any kind of warm-up routine?

Ben: I do lots of warming up. I try to stretch out my fingers and wrists as much as possible, warm up on a pad for a while, stretch my legs, do a little yoga, and try to get centered. I try to do all of that about forty-five minutes before the show. Plus I'll do some jumping around to try to get the blood flowing. I'll have someone hit me with a belt... [laughs] Anything that helps to get me pumped up.

MD: Some people talk about Converge in terms of a pre- and post-*Jane Doe* era. As that was your first record with the band, what would you say you brought that might have contributed to the differentiation?

Ben: I think that before I joined, Converge was operating within a stricter set of guidelines musically. I think when [bassist] Nate Newton and I joined, the chemistry between the four of us allowed for a wider range of possibilities. I've always admired and appreciated bands that pushed the weirdness and creativity outside the normal boundaries. I was happy to push

the weirdness factor on *Jane Doe*.

MD: What elements would you attach to this weirdness factor?

Ben: Before Converge I was in a band called Forcefedglass that was part of the whole 1990s screamo thing. I really looked up to bands like Reversal of Man, the Locust, Antioch Arrow, and Clikatat Ikatowi. I was doing a lot of blast beats and just playing like an overall spaz. That style comes through a lot on songs like "Concubine" and "Fault and Fracture."

MD: When it's time to record a Converge record, are your parts generally worked out during writing or preproduction?

Ben: We do a pretty good portion of rehearsing and recording demos before we start tracking. I think having solid demos to listen back to before going into the studio is extremely important for fine-tuning. The songs are constantly morphing, though, from the initial writing stages all the way up to playing live. Even songs we've been playing for over ten years are subject to being played a little differently from time to time.

MD: Has Converge changed recording approaches over the years?

Ben: Our process is generally the same. Drums are laid down first with a scratch

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BEN KOLLER

guitar track, then guitar and bass, vocals, and extra stuff like backing vocals, percussion, and guitar overdubs. Every band is different; this approach seems to work best for us.

MD: Do you improvise during recording?

Ben: It depends on the song. Some of my parts are pretty straightforward, whereas others can be twisted around with some weirder stuff that's outside the box. We're not really the type of band that calls for four on the floor all the time. This is a good thing for me, since I'm a big fan of overplaying!

MD: Kurt Ballou is a prolific producer. Do you generally agree on how drums should sound on record?

Ben: We butt heads here and there, but we're generally in agreement on sounds. I've been recording with Kurt since the mid-'90s, so we work together pretty smoothly. He understands what I mean when I say, "Can you add more Vinnie Paul to the kick?" or "More Bonzo, less *St. Anger* on the snare."

MD: Do you find yourself taking this approach with most of the records you make?

Ben: It depends on what sort of time and resources are available. Converge is really lucky to have Kurt as a producer/engineer, because he has his own studio, and that affords us as much time as we need to record a certain way that works well for us. I have a new band called Mutoid Man that recorded an EP recently, where we took an entirely different approach. We went a hundred percent DIY and did all the tracking in our ridiculously small rehearsal closet in Brooklyn. We recorded to Logic with an eight-track tape machine and tracked guitar and drums live. We then added bass, vocals, and extra guitars on top of that and sent it out for mixing and mastering. It came out sounding pretty awesome.

MD: What was your inspiration for the solo on the Acid Tiger track "Big Beat"?

Ben: Ever since I saw Led Zeppelin's DVD [titled *Led Zeppelin DVD*] I've wanted to have a ridiculous drum solo on a record. The version of "Moby Dick" on that DVD makes me insane, so yeah, it was mostly Bonzo worship. I think I only did one or two takes and just tried to have fun with it. There are some tongue-in-cheek moments on that record, and if we had an idea that was ridiculous we just sort of went for it.

MD: Are there any records you're into that would come as a surprise to people?

Ben: Maybe '70s prog kind of stuff, like Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds of Fire*, all the Bill Bruford stuff with King Crimson and Yes. There are so many bands from that era, like Lucifer's Friend, Atomic Rooster—that stuff is great. Oh, Emerson, Lake and Palmer! The first song on their self-titled album, "The Barbarian"—that was early blast-beat innovation there.

MD: Who is your blast-beat model?

Ben: Chris Maggio. He was in Coliseum, and now he's in Trap Them. His blast beat is super-clean, super-heavy, and super-fast. I learned blast beats from playing in a hardcore band when I was fourteen, and I've kind of modeled it from that; kick and right hand together, left hand on the offbeats, just as fast as you can do it. I've never been into the double-kick-half-time and hands-doing-double-time blast beats. It seemed kind of like cheating to me.

MD: Have you ever dabbled in gravity drops or one-handed rolls?

Ben: Maybe just for fun, but I've never applied it to songs. I always try to make it just as heavy and hard as possible, without cheating.

MD: That's very apparent, watching you with Converge.

Ben: No cheat beats—play all the 8th notes, and keep it fast and on time.



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BRUNO MARS'

ERIC HERNANDEZ

The R&B phenom he plays for—who happens to be his younger brother—has rocketed to stardom, seemingly in no time flat. But this drummer has had fame in his sights for the better part of three decades. You bet he's excited about his view from the riser these days.

Story by Billy Amendola • Photos by Alex Solça

If you've been living underground for the past few years, take a quick look at the magazine racks, scan the record charts, flip on the radio, or visit any social media network, and you'll immediately learn that Bruno Mars is a bona fide modern pop superstar. Dig deeper, and you'll realize that in addition to being one of the freshest songwriters to come along in quite a while, he's also among today's most exciting entertainers. Mars puts on an *incredible* live show, and keeping it all together on stage from the drum stool, electrifying the backing band, the

Hooligans, is Bruno's older brother, Eric Hernandez.

"E-Panda," as he's known to family and friends, was born in 1976 in Brooklyn, New York. His father is the popular Latin percussionist Pete Hernandez. Shortly after Eric was born, his family relocated to Honolulu, and it was there that his love for music and drums grew. Eric's younger brother, Peter—nicknamed Bruno by his father—was born in 1985. (The family's musical talent extends to the siblings' four talented sisters, who have their own band, the Lylas, which stands for

"Love you like a sister.")

In his early teenage years, Hernandez became one of the most popular drummers in Hawaii. During the summer of 1995, he left to try his hand in Hollywood, where he did live gigs and session work before joining the alternative pop band Louie Says. By 2002, though, Hernandez had burned out on the music business, and he joined the L.A. police force—until 2007, after Mars himself had made the move to California. The talented upstart began bringing his older brother in on sessions for Travie McCoy and the



producing and songwriting team the Smeezingtons. Mass acceptance followed soon after for Bruno, via a series of hit singles, including “Just the Way You Are,” “The Lazy Song,” “Locked Out of Heaven,” and “When I Was Your Man.”

Today Hernandez and the rest of the Hooligans are touring the world behind Mars’ second multiplatinum-selling album, *Unorthodox Jukebox*, enjoying the fruits of music-biz success that very few musicians ever get to experience. Eric recently took some time to give us a glimpse at music making at the very

height of fame, and to recount his path to the top.

MD: You come from such a talented family, with music all around you throughout your life. What were your early years like?

Eric: It all started when I was four years old. My dad would bring me to his nightly gig in Waikiki. I would sit under his toere stand/percussion rig. A toere [pronounced “toe-eddie”] is a Tahitian percussion instrument that’s used during Polynesian dancing. I’d sit under his setup and literally have rhythm

beaten down into me. [laughs]

I enjoyed what my father did and learned a lot from him, but I always fixated on his drummer. My pops took note of that and bought me my first kit. We set it up at home, and since the age of four I’ve been pounding away. I remember that at first I couldn’t reach the bass drum pedal, because he bought me a legit set and not a toy. But I knew to use the floor tom as a bass drum. So I would play beats with my right hand on the floor tom, emulating a bass drum part.

As long as I’ve been around—to this

day, in fact—my dad has been involved in the music biz. At the age of ten he started a 1950s/1960s revue, covering doo-wop and early R&B hits and groups, including impersonations of iconic entertainers like Elvis, Chuck Berry, Jackie Wilson.... He had a six-night-a-week gig at the Sheraton Waikiki Hotel. A lot of my family members were a part of the show operations. I started out helping in the ticket booth and doing lights. At the time, they had a full band playing along to sequences, but no drummer. My dad would sometimes get behind a stand-up kit and play along with the tracks.

I begged and pleaded with him to let me in the show to play drums. After running lights, learning cues, and listening from the ticket booth, I had all the drum parts memorized. Finally my dad gave me my big break, and I started playing along at the stand-up kit and proved myself. Once I had my pops' and the band's approval, I slowly worked in my own drumset and stopped standing. So there I was at ten years old—ticket seller/professional drummer. **MD:** That had to make you feel good. You were getting your first taste of being a star at a very young age.

Eric: It did. I had a lot of attention every



Eric's Setup

Drums: DW Maple/Mahogany Collector's series in custom black lacquer finish with gold flake and 24-karat-gold hardware. Hoops and snare include custom graphics with gold leaf, painted by Louie Garcia of DW.

- A.** 5x14 VLT snare
- B.** 6.5x14 brass snare
- C.** 7x10 tom
- D.** 8x12 tom
- E.** 16x16 floor tom
- F.** 18x18 floor tom
- G.** 18x22 bass drum

Heads: Remo X14 snare batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, Clear Vintage Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms, and Powerstroke 4 bass drum batter and Powerstroke 3 or Emperor front head; Woodshed Stage Art custom head graphics

- Cymbals:** Sabian
- 1.** 20" Aero crash
 - 2.** 15" HHX Groove Hats
 - 3.** 10" HH Duo splash
 - 4.** 6" AAX splash
 - 5.** 21" Legacy ride (used as crash)
 - 6.** 22" Legacy Heavy ride
 - 7.** 17" Holy China
 - 8.** 22" HHX-Plosion crash

Sticks: Vic Firth custom X5B

Hardware: DW 9000 series in 24 karat gold

Electronics: Roland SPD-SX sampling pad and kick and snare triggers

Drum tech: Jason "J-Bird" Bowers



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Drum Tuning Method & Apparatus US Patent 5,770,810 German Patent 198 82 994 US Patent 2,352,318



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SOUND LEGACY

ERIC HERNANDEZ

night. People were amazed that a skinny ten-year-old boy was playing drums in a band of adults, counting in songs and steering the show. I remember taking pictures with audience members after every show. I almost stole the show.

[laughs] I played this show for years every night after school, and I was on top of the world. I knew that being in the entertainment business, playing live drums, was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I ate up playing in front of people and hearing the roar of an audience, no matter how big or small.

MD: When did Bruno join in?

Eric: A few years into my first real gig, Dad brought my little brother into the show. Bruno had a knack for singing and impersonating Elvis at the age of four. He stole the show every night, and now *he* had all of the attention. [laughs] But I was okay with that, because I was doing what made me happy, and that was playing drums. So he could have the attention; I was still on top of the world. There was really no competition. We were the real-life *Sound of Music* family, in Hawaii.

MD: Did you ever take formal lessons?

Eric: When I was old enough to comprehend, my dad started to show me his favorite drummers to watch, such as Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Ron Tutt, Clyde Stubblefield, and Jabo Starks. So, besides my father and the drummers at his gigs, these were the drummers I first learned from as a young musician.

MD: What was your practice regimen?

Eric: I would play at home in my room along with my favorite cartoons on TV. This is how I initially practiced. I specifically remember playing drums to all the music of *Scooby-Doo*. I'll never forget that. Whenever music was played, whether it was the opening/closing theme or music throughout the show, I was in there playing my little heart out. That was my first gig! Then at night I would play along to the radio or my dad would put on his record player, blasting all of his doo-wop or Elvis favorites. My dad would continue to take me to his gig, and I would study him or the drummer. Then each day I'd try to replicate something I heard the night before, practicing until my cartoons came on.

MD: How do you and Bruno work in the studio? What's the process?

Eric: Bruno has a proven formula when it comes to the studio. He tells me what to do, and I do it! [laughs] Just kidding. But he does have a formula. He works closely with his production team, who've figured out what works for them. A lot of times it's programming, samples, or sound replacements. The first song they put me on was the Travié McCoy smash hit "Billionaire," featuring Bruno. That was my first album credit with Bruno as a producer.

For Bruno's first album, *Doo-Wops & Hooligans*, I would help with drum parts and lay down grooves for them to chop up and piece together for the early writing process. Then it would either be sound replaced or reprogrammed. I'm okay with this, because the early structure of a song is still a part of its development. And I'm proud of the results, which are keeping me employed doing what I love. As much as I love to be heard on a record or on the radio, I've learned that it's about publishing and trying to help write the song, trying to get that lyric in there, which will bring you a nice check—sometimes a nicer check than playing drums will! In a word, *royalties*.

For the second album, *Unorthodox Jukebox*, Bruno had built a small live room at his studio in Hollywood, to track drums in. He and his team brought me and some of the other Hooligans in, and we would jam for hours. Sometimes we'd go in late at night or in the early morning to catch a vibe until a song idea came to life. Then Bruno would take it from there and do his magic. He worked on this album with the mindset of, How will this sound live? To assist on the album he also recruited other producers in New York, who brought in their teams of musicians, so he could give his best effort for his sophomore album.

Even though we are a band, it all comes down to the music and what feels right for each song. There are no hard feelings involved when it comes to who's playing what. It's about making the best album possible, with the hopes of continued success. I worked hard at my contributions to the album, but I really look forward to the live presentation of these songs on TV shows and live around the world. I live for playing live



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and touring. That's me!

MD: The performances are wonderful. Are you using sequences, or is it all live?

Eric: The live shows are where Bruno and the band really come alive.

Performing is in our blood. Trying to give the ultimate presentation to a wide audience is what we do. Our band has developed a reputation of bringing live music back and really utilizing a full band—nine pieces, to be exact.

Since the beginning we've played all live, without the help of a click track. Even the performance that put us on the map, at the 2012 Grammys, was totally live with no click. A lot of people speculated otherwise, because we were blessed with an almost perfect performance. We didn't choose not to use a click or tracks because we think we're too good for it, but because Bruno always wanted to keep an open format while playing live—just like James Brown and Prince. If he's feeling the song and wants to bring back the bridge or the chorus or vamp, he calls an audible. So we've had to be on our toes, because the song will not be played the same as the night before.

On this current tour we may explore some percussive effects and sound samples from *Unorthodox Jukebox*, because there are a lot of cool sounds on the album. I plan to do a bit more triggering to give the best interpretation of this album for the fans. And I'll implement a click at least for myself, because I prefer to be locked in solid.

MD: Which do you prefer, in-ear monitors or wedges?

Eric: I've played in venues ranging in size from lounges to stadiums. Growing up, I always used wedges for monitors. For a long time it was a difficult, less organic feeling transitioning to the in-ear monitor system. Obviously nowadays in-ears have become the norm, so I worked on getting used to them. Now I use what I feel are the best out there, JH Audio's JH16s. I'm really getting that vibe, and even the low end that I was missing. A good monitor engineer is a plus too—especially one that enjoys and is great at mixing drums.

MD: You have a tight relationship with Hooligans bassist Jamareo Artis. Any tips on locking in with a bass player?

Eric: The rhythm section should always be locked in, especially with straightforward pop-rock or R&B music. A great bass player is consistent and knows about getting the right tone for the genre of music you're playing. There is no science to it, in my opinion; it's all about listening to each other.

Whenever I'm in a long-term band situation, I take time to get to know the other members personally, *especially* the bass player. Knowing their personality can help you create a vibe together, and it can help you lock in with each other and also make it fun. Even now I will listen back to live recordings and hear Jamareo and I doing fills together or the same accents, and I realize that I didn't even think about it at the time. We just listened to each other, and we're on the same wavelength whenever we play.

MD: Let's talk gear.

Eric: I'm a proud player of DW drums, Sabian cymbals, Vic Firth sticks, and Remo heads. I bought my first DW set from a drummer in Hawaii by the name of Larry McCracken, back in 1992. Since then I've fallen in love with the quality craftsmanship and the sounds of their products, which have been consistent since I've known of the company. I always told myself that I would work toward being an official DW artist. It took some time, but it's been worth the wait, and I couldn't be happier.

Vic Firth, Sabian, and Remo have been with me since I learned to play the drums, so it's been a natural desire to want to work with these companies. I always said that whatever products you will pay top dollar for on your own, that's who you want to work toward building relationships with. I'm very lucky to be a part of these drum families, and I'm grateful for the relationships I've made



with all my reps.

MD: Any particular players you've been digging?

Eric: These days I take notes from players such as [Madonna/Justin Timberlake drummer] Brian Frasier-Moore, who is on top of his electronic game. He's mastered triggering electronic sounds, integrating the sounds with his acoustic kit, and playing those exact sounds you want to hear from the album live. That shows us that less is more, and that playing what's on the album—what put you in the position in the first place—is important. Brian is a monster player with a monster résumé, and I'll definitely be asking him for advice on my triggering situation.

MD: So what is it that makes Bruno a worldwide sensation?

Eric: Bruno is not only an artist, he's a producer and multi-instrumentalist, including a drummer. So he knows what he wants to hear on his album, and he knows how to tell you to play it. Even if I can play something I think is better than what he describes, if he doesn't feel that it enhances the song, he'll call me on it. He'll say, "Just play it like I said," or "Play it like the recording." And I can't be mad at that. Like I said, he and his music are the reason why I am here and why people are getting to know me—including *Modern Drummer* readers!



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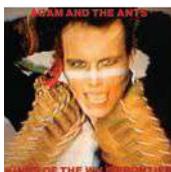


Check It Out Here!

Hidden Gems

As with all instruments, in drumming there are albums of such widely agreed-upon historical importance—*A Love Supreme* by John Coltrane, *IV* by Led Zeppelin, *Joe's Garage* by Frank Zappa, and *Time Out* by the Dave Brubeck Quartet, for example—that we hear their names mentioned all the time. But most of us also count among our personal faves some records that are rarely discussed when the topic of timeless drum performances comes up.

This month seven *MD Pro* Panelists—**Matt Halpern, Pat Mastelotto, Stephen Perkins, Rich Redmond, Steve Smith, Todd Sucherman, and Kenny Washington**—dig deep into their vinyl, cassette, CD, and MP3 collections to share twenty-two of their own favorite hidden gems, which we present here in alphabetical order by artist.



Adam and the Ants *Kings of the Wild Frontier*

Let's start with the fact that there are two drummers—**Terry Lee Miall** and **Chris Hughes, aka Merrick**—and that one of them, Hughes, produced the record. Now add a

Burundi beat, a Bo Diddley rhythm, ancient chants, orchestrated timpani parts, polyrhythmic drum cadences, snare battles, drum-stick conversations, percussive gang vocals, and on and on and on. The drums just can't be stopped! The percussion discussion takes the record into a tribal "East meets West" fireworks display. And then there's Adam—Bollywood moves to Hollywood, born in England and dressed in pirate clothes. **Stephen Perkins**



Bauhaus *Burning From the Inside*

This is the original "dark goth" band, musically and visually. Bauhaus is always suspenseful and intellectual, with a taste of cabaret, opera, and the English countryside, but never lacking raw power.

Kevin Haskins' drum parts are personal, sensitive, and musical, a modern twist on Ringo-like playing. Haskins' playing is unique, leaving air and space that forever leaves you hanging on a cliff. Full of hooks. A combination of odd-shaped beats with a straight-forward feel, using repetitive patterns—but with some seriously unpredictable variations. **SP**

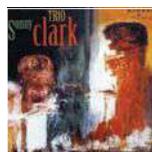


Je Beck Beck-Ola

In eighth grade I loved to play **Tony Newman's** triplet-foot-against-quarter-note-cymbal-bell groove on "Rice Pudding." And "Plynth (Water Down the Drain)"—man, that's desert-island shit for guitar players, but the drums are super-

cool and sloshy. Tony was on David Bowie's *Diamond Dogs* album too. I actually saw him with Bowie at the Universal Amphitheater show that was filmed for the movie/album *David Live*. The concert was in surround sound, and drums and cowbell started the show!

Pat Mastelotto



Sonny Clark *Sonny Clark Trio*

Besides a few classic sessions that **Max Roach** made with Bud Powell, there are precious few recordings of him with a trio. Also, Max is not

really known for his brushes, but on this recording he really takes care of business. He gets a full swinging brush sound and sounds fantastic playing the ensembles. Also, check out how he's using just a snare and bass drum with no toms. This is reminiscent of the sessions he recorded with Charlie Parker for the Savoy and Dial labels in the '40s. [Note: This recording was originally issued by Time Records. There is a Sonny Clark album with Philly Joe Jones on drums that's also commonly titled *Sonny Clark Trio*.]

Kenny Washington



Collins/Shepley Galaxy *Time Space and the Blues*

Mickey Roker was one of the busiest drummers in the New York studios in the late '60s and early '70s. He's best known for his swinging contributions to small-group recordings by Stanley Turrentine,

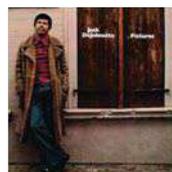
Herbie Hancock, and many others. Most folks don't know that he was also a fantastic big band drummer. This little-known 1970 recording has never come out on CD, but it's worth buying a turntable just to check it out. Mickey was sight-reading and swinging his butt off. He outdid himself on this one. Look on eBay for a vinyl copy of this record; you owe it to yourself. **KW**



The Dear Hunter *The Color Spectrum*

Nick Crescenzo does a fantastic job on this incredible record from 2011. The album spans so many different styles and feels, and Nick is a real chameleon in each different section. If you enjoy

amazing songwriting with the perfect drum parts, I highly recommend this. **Matt Halpern**



Jack DeJohnette *Pictures*

I bought this record on vinyl when it first came out in 1976. Then I bought the cassette when I went on tour with Jean-Luc Ponty. Later, after I hadn't heard the album for a long time, I downloaded it from iTunes. Recently I

found the CD, and then a few weeks later in Switzerland I found a new vinyl copy and bought that too! Essentially this is a **Jack DeJohnette** solo drum album made up of six improvised tracks titled "Picture 1," "Picture 2," etc. On some cuts Jack accompanies himself on Hammond organ or acoustic piano, and on a couple

others John Abercrombie joins in on guitar. The album is quite atmospheric and relaxed, the recording quality is pristine, and Jack's playing is open, probing, lyrical, and creative. While on tour, traveling through airports and on flights, I've listened to *Pictures* again and again, as it both calms and inspires me. **Steve Smith**



The Fixx *Reach the Beach*

This 1983 release was the Fixx's most successful album. These guys were on MTV all day, every day, and I air-drummed incessantly to the hit "One Thing Leads to Another." Also check out "Saved by Zero" and "The Sign of Fire." Drummer/percussionist **Adam Woods**, who's still with the band, laid it down thick, with attitude. At a time when Linn machines and Simmons drums ruled the airwaves, these drums sounded real. Fat snares and punchy kick drums poke through a sea of swirling synths and super-clean guitars. Notice how the hi-hats are always closed and tight, and how there's a very limited use of crash cymbals. This seemed like a conscious production choice. I also dug the very textural and smartly programmed percussion loops. **Rich Redmond**



Genesis *Seconds Out*

I'm surprised that this seminal live record from 1977 doesn't get more accolades. **Phil Collins** is on *ÿre*, and the album captures **Chester Thompson** on his first Genesis tour. **Bill Bruford** appears on one track, "The Cinema Show," which was recorded in '76. A classic progressive-rock record—and the new remixed and remastered version is sonically superior to the original release. **Todd Sucherman**



Jan Hammer Group *Oh, Yeah?*

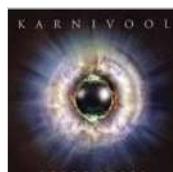
I've recently rediscovered this kick-ass 1976 fusion album, featuring **Tony "Thunder" Smith** on drums. I got the record when it was first released, and I saw the band live at Paul's Mall in Boston. The album is full of high-energy odd-time grooves, and Smith, Hammer (keys), and Fernando Saunders (bass) keep things funky with a forward-motion lean. Special moments include the 7/4 opener,

"Magical Dog," with the groove being laid down by Smith's drums and Hammer's Moog bass. "Twenty One" is another favorite; the title, of course, is the song's time signature, a bar of 4/4 followed by a five. Steve Kindler on violin and Hammer on keys provide the melodies and solos. This group went on to be Jeff Beck's band in '76 and '77. **SS**



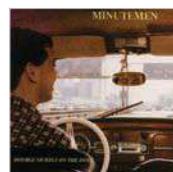
Joy Division *Unknown Pleasures*

Manchester's first band. They stamped the sound with Synare/trap kit infusion, unique production, British homegrown rhythms, sparse patterns, and groundbreaking drum tones. Incorporating cinema and theater into the thought process of the drum parts, **Stephen Morris's** tracks are patient and calculated but somehow reactive. All his grooves are spawned from a simple, primitive idea, but behind it all is a sophisticated, thoughtful beat. Morris is a drumming revelation. **SP**



Karnivool *Sound Awake*

This album has nothing but *groove*, and drummer **Steve Judd** is a master of it. His parts are extremely original and complex, while still supporting amazing melodies and truly adding to the songs. **MH**



The Minutemen *Double Nickels on the Dime*

George Hurley's drumming is funky, stylish, clean, and aggressive, always musical and sensitive. His patterns have the ability to tell a story with each pocket and with phrasing that's sleek and aware. Documenting the band with simple production gives you insight into a great-sounding drumset and someone who plays every part of it. The power-trio lineup gives George space to throw down—on all forty-five songs! Another great Hurley recording: FIREHOSE's *Ragin', Full-On*. **SP**



Maceo Parker *Life on Planet Groove*

I was first hipped to this 1992 album by drummer Joel Rosenblatt when

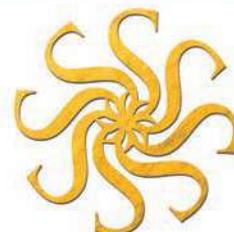
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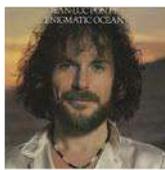
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he did a clinic at the University of North Texas in 1994. **Kenwood Dennard's** drumming is smart and infectious yet primal and "below the belt." This is a live recording that was captured in a way that makes you feel as though you're sitting right there in the club. Listen for Kenwood's solo on "Shake Everything You've Got." So many of us at UNT were digging on his use of space and how he built this solo. Then he and Maceo riff together and build an intense interplay that goes from a whisper to a roar in four minutes. Wow! Also check out how the rhythm section backs up a great vocalist like Kym Mazelle on "Got to Get U" and James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)." **RR**



Jean-Luc Ponty
Enigmatic Ocean

This remains my fusion bible. Recorded in 1977, it features **Steve Smith** in his early twenties.

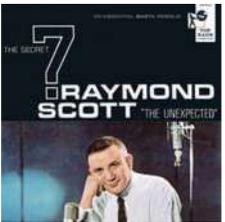
Masterful playing that holds up through the years and *still* kicks your butt. **TS**



Rain Tree Crow
Rain Tree Crow

There's lots of great **Steve Jansen** drumming on albums by the band Japan, but this

1991 record [featuring four members of that group reuniting after their 1982 breakup] is desert-island for me. Great sounds and lean, economical drumming. **PM**



Raymond Scott and the Secret 7
The Unexpected

I've always said that **Elvin Jones** is one of the most misunderstood

drummers in jazz. He is unfairly known for just one thing, and that's being part of the classic John Coltrane quartet of the '60s. There's no doubt that Elvin made some of his greatest records with that ensemble, but it's only one side of his artistry. On this recording he's in a very different setting, playing the music of Raymond Scott, who wrote a lot of the music for the Looney Tunes cartoons. I highly recommend seeking out this recording and listening to how Elvin fits in playing the music while still retaining his style throughout. **KW**



Screaming Headless Torsos
1995

This album featuring **Jojo Mayer** on drums seriously changed the way I looked at drumming. It has some of the best grooves, with a very honest and impressive feel. Jojo really kills it on this record. **MH**



Steps
Smokin' in the Pit

This live record from the early '80s features a swingin' and aggressive **Steve Gadd**. Not much

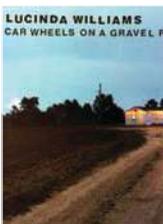
more to say than that. **TS**



Michal Urbaniak
Fusion III

I lived by this 1975 album. It was the first time I heard **Steve Gadd**. Awesome

drumming by **Gerry Brown** too. **PM**



Lucinda Williams
Car Wheels on a Gravel Road

This 1998 record, Lucinda's fifth, won the Grammy for Best Contemporary

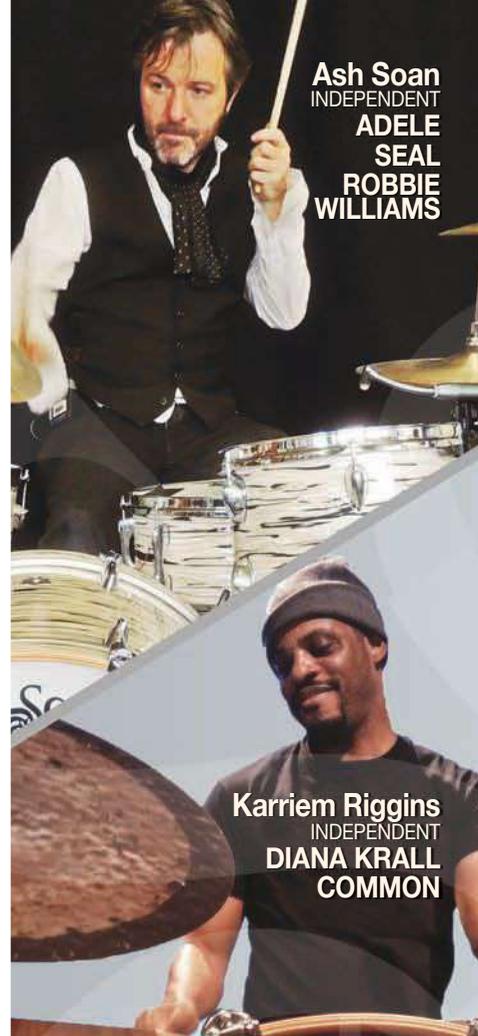
Folk Album and made *Rolling Stone's* 500 Greatest Albums of All Time list. **Donald Lindley**, who also played for Dave Alvin, Rosie Flores, and Joe Ely, held down the drum duties on the project. Donald's style is articulate, thoughtful, soulful, and mysterious. His use of sticks, brushes, and mallets, as well as crisp tambourine punctuation, really makes the music come alive. Check out the tom-tom backbeat on "Lake Charles," the boogaloo tom/maraca groove on "Can't Let Go," the perfect alt-country pocket on "Metal Firecracker," and the macho 12/8 feel of "Still I Long for Your Kiss." Also check out how he plays massive swish/China downbeat punctuations on songs like "I Lost It." Most cats play Chinas with the snare, but Lindley plays them with the kick on downbeats. Brave and bold. **RR**



XTC Nonsuch

Dave Mattacks is masterful on this record of incredible music that commands repeated listening. Great parts,

great songs, great sounds. **TS**



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	Dallas, TX	Sam Ash
September 18	Columbia, SC	Sims Music
September 21	Kansas City, MO	Explorer's Percussion
	Fresno, CA	Bentley's Drum Shop
	Hollywood, FL	Resurrection Drums
	Albany, NY	Parkway Music
	King of Prussia, PA	Sam Ash
September 24	Johnson City, TN	Campbell's Morrel
September 26	Nashville, TN	Fork's Drum Closet
September 28	Tulsa, OK	The Music Store
	Lafayette, LA	Scott's Drum Center
	Dallas, TX	Lone Star Percussion
	Indianapolis, IN	Sam Ash
October 1	Hollywood, CA	Guitar Center
October 3	Chicago, IL	Guitar Center
October 5	Champaign, IL	Skins-n-Tins Drum Shop
	Newbury Park, CA	GoDpsMusic
	Harrisburg, PA	Dale's Drum Shop
October 6	North Wales, PA	George's Music
October 8	Manhattan, NY	Guitar Center
October 10	New Berlin, WI	Cascio Supersale
	Savannah, GA	Portman's Music
October 11	Boston, MA	Guitar Center
October 12	Wichita, KS	Midwest Drum & Percussion
	Reno, NV	Bizarre Guitar
	Louisville, KY	Willis Music
October 15	Dallas, TX	Guitar Center
October 17	Rockaway, NJ	Ritchie's Music
	La Mesa, CA	Guitar Center
October 19	Chicago, IL	Chicago Music Exchange
	Redwood City, CA	Gelb Music
	Pittsburgh, PA	Volkwein's Music
	Tacoma, WA	Ted Brown Music
October 22	Country Hills, IL	Guitar Center
October 24	West Seneca, NY	Guitar Factory
October 25	San Jose, CA	Guitar Center
October 26	Milwaukee, WI	Cascio Drummerfest
	San Antonio, TX	Jeff Ryder's Drum Shop
	Willowick, OH	Stebal Drums
	Richland, WA	Ted Brown Music
	Hollywood, CA	Sam Ash
November 2	Hollywood, CA	Professional Drum Shop

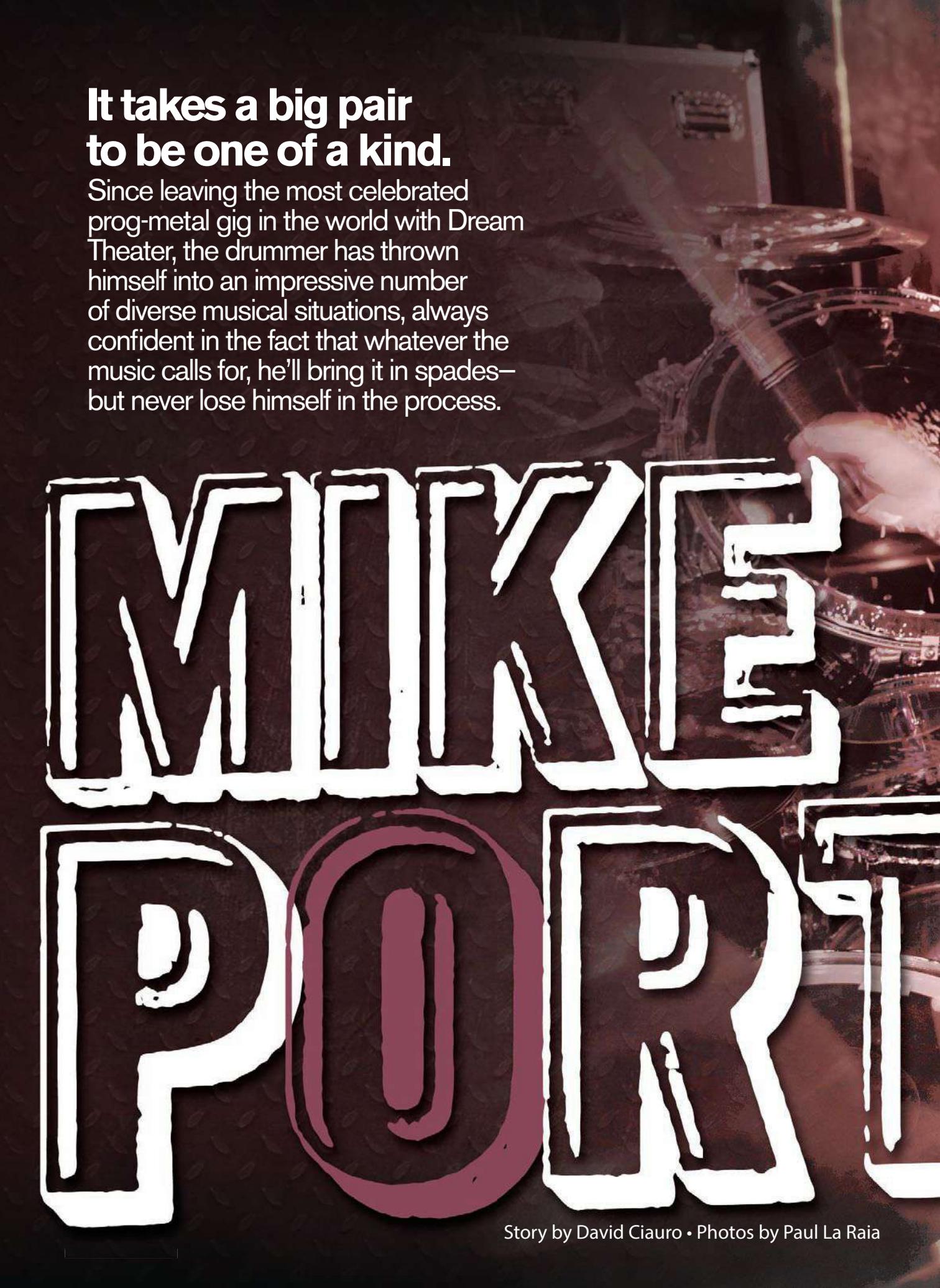


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Since leaving the most celebrated prog-metal gig in the world with Dream Theater, the drummer has thrown himself into an impressive number of diverse musical situations, always confident in the fact that whatever the music calls for, he'll bring it in spades—but never lose himself in the process.

MIKE PORT

Story by David Ciauro • Photos by Paul La Raia



FINDOY

Since leaving Dream Theater in 2010—the band he founded, reached his audience with, and wore so many hats in for twenty-five years—Mike Portnoy has been involved with a slew of projects, either as a hired gun or a collaborating musician. These projects are notably different, from each other, and from the music Portnoy earned his stripes playing.

Portnoy's newest project, the Winery Dogs, is a power trio featuring bassist Billy Sheehan (Steve Vai, David Lee Roth, Niacin) and singer/guitarist Richie Kotzen (Mr. Big, TM Stevens, Greg Howe). The band released its self-titled debut this past May and hit the road in July, waving the flag for a somewhat lost style of music: straight-up rock 'n' roll that puts the song first and the player second. It might not be a direction that casual fans would expect the prog-metal icon to be taking, but longtime observers will recognize it as a logical step along Portnoy's professional trajectory. And really, there's no reason for anyone to panic—the Dogs are providing *plenty* of opportunities for the drummer to squeeze out his notorious rhythmic sparks.



TO THE POWER OF 3

MD: There's a maturity to the songwriting in the Winery Dogs that listeners might not expect from a group of virtuosos playing together for the first time.

Mike: We were totally trying to cop the classic-rock power-trio vibe from the '60s and '70s—that Hendrix, Cream, Grand Funk sound—but with the modern spirit of a Soundgarden or Alice in Chains.

Obviously we've all done the muso technical thing in other bands, but the whole idea behind the Winery Dogs was to have it be about the songs. We're fans of good songwriting, good vocals, and everyone in the band singing—that was the focus. We wanted to write strong songs in a power-trio setting with some shredding sprinkled on top.

First and foremost I'm a music fan, and a good song with a good hook or a good harmony can, to me, be just as moving and powerful as a shredding guitar solo. I don't know if I would ever want to exclusively be in a pop band playing only straight-ahead songs, but [at this point in my career] I'm leaning toward projects that are more song oriented with some occasional shredding, rather than being technical at their core. The Flying Colors record, for example, is very straightforward, almost alternative sounding. That being said, when you're in bands with the likes of Billy Sheehan

and Steve Morse, the songs are going to have some technical twists thrown in.

MD: With so many projects going on at once, was this record written and recorded via file sharing?

Mike: Nope. I've never done that. It's very important to me on any project I'm a part of to get in a room to write and

record together. You can Pro Tools an album, but not a vibe. And that's important not only in terms of performance but from the writing side. I like collaborating with

other musicians. The Winery Dogs was all collaborative writing, and to me that's the beauty of working with these people. It's not just having my name next to theirs in the liner notes. It's getting the chance to play, write, and be creative with these people. You can't do that via email.

MD: In the Flying Colors documentary, you said that the personality of the player should come out even in the most basic grooves. It seems that obsessing over technique runs the risk of having precision take the place of personality.

Mike: I couldn't agree more. I'd much rather hear something that has personality. Within technical music, you reach a point where there's not much room for character. Obviously, my past and present projects are not all straight-ahead music—I just think it's important that when a drummer is laying down a simple groove, you hear

the person. In my case, I want to sound like Mike Portnoy, whether it's Flying Colors, the Winery Dogs, or anything else. When it comes to drumming, it's so important to develop your own voice or personality that comes through when you're playing.

MD: That definitely comes across on

“IT WAS NEVER ABOUT BEING A CONTROL FREAK BECAUSE I WAS AN EGOMANIAC. PEOPLE LIKE ME AND LARS—IT’S JUST OUR PERSONALITY, AND WE HAPPEN TO APPLY IT TO OUR CAREERS, OUR BANDS, AND OUR MUSIC.”

the Winery Dogs album. Even though the drum sound isn't what one would generally characterize as your signature sound, drummers familiar with you will recognize certain choices you made in the parts and fills.

Mike: Well, that's the thing about playing in a bunch of different bands instead of one—I get to approach each musical situation differently, and that also factors into the type of kit I'll use on each project. I design my kit and tune it around the kind of headspace I want to be in for the project. With the Winery Dogs, I used the traditional Bonham-type kit with a kick, snare, one rack, two floors, and a couple of crashes, a ride, and a China. That forced me into a different headspace to achieve that classic-rock vibe. I've used smaller kits before, like when I did the Beatles and Zeppelin tribute bands. But this was the first time I was able to record an entire album with an original project on a

small kit. It inspired me to try different things, especially because there's so much space to deal with, since there's only three of us. Of the dozen or more projects I've been a part of though the years, I believe this is the only trio. That alone made me think about when to fill the space and when to let it breathe.

CHECK YOUR EGO AT THE VCR

MD: Over the years you've consistently said that technique is not your primary musical motivation. Going back to your first *MD* interview, back in 1993, you mentioned that when Dream Theater fans praised your playing, you were quick to put on a video of Dave Weckl or Vinnie Colaiuta to keep your ego in check. You also said that although your technique factored into why you were getting positive attention, you felt that showmanship and the performance were equally important.

Mike: I said that all the way back then? God bless me! [laughs] But it's the truth. I often feel intimidated by the amount of acclaim my playing has received. I feel like some people look at it like it's a competitive thing—you know, “I can outplay him. Why does he keep winning these awards?” There are probably dozens of drummers in the audience every night who can play circles around me, but it's



MIKE'S WINERY DOGS SETUP



Portnoy plays Tama Starclassic Bubinga drums, including an 11x14 tom (in the studio; he uses a 10x13 live), 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, and an 18x24 bass drum, with a 5.5x14 Mike Portnoy Bubinga Signature snare. His Sabian cymbals include 14" AAX V-Hats, an 11" AAX Max splash, a 19" AAX V-Crash, a 22" Custom Shop Artisan Raw Bell Dry ride, a 20" HHX-Plosion crash, and a 21" HHX Legacy ride. His Tama hardware includes Speed Cobra bass drum pedals and hi-hat stand; Roadpro tom, snare, and cymbal stands; and a 1st Chair Round Rider throne.

grunge era, so we were kind of the anti-grunge, and the Internet was not what it is today. Now there's YouTube, which has created a saturation of technique. There are thousands of videos of drummers with technique I can't fathom, but the novelty has kind of worn thin—at least I know it has for me. I'd rather hear a drummer laying down a fat groove and just playing in the pocket of the song—that speaks to me more now.

MATH ROCKS

MD: You've been very open in the past about having OCD. How much of your drive, sense of responsibility, and drumming skills do you think are a positive result of that? For example, going back to when you first started playing, were you obsessive-compulsive about music or drumming?

Mike: Yeah. For the first ten years all I focused on was drumming, and I probably became interested in progressive music because of how the music lined up.

MD: So the mathematical side of music appealed to your obsessive-compulsive nature. Were you always good at math?

Mike: Yeah, math came easy and probably helped my ability to play in odd times. My mind could always process numbers easily.

MD: What about your memory? Neal Morse makes reference to your elephant memory on the Flying Colors DVD. Considering all the projects you're simultaneously involved with now, how does your memory factor into the way you're able to manage that workload?

Mike: I think it's another "gift" of my OCD—though actually I don't know if it's a gift or a curse. [laughs]

MD: Does this gift extend to other

so much more than what you're playing. Music is about touching people, moving them, communicating something—making an impression or having an impact on someone's life. And that doesn't always mean being technically the best. When I got the *Modern Drummer* Hall of Fame award, I was embarrassed by it in a way, because I'm not claiming to be a great drummer.

I think, if anything, it's a sign of having influenced people. Take Ringo, for example. He's not the greatest drummer, but my *God* has he inspired generations of drummers. It wasn't about his technique; it was about making a mark and moving people. And in my case, maybe it was my work ethic that inspired a kid. Maybe the fact that I go beyond the drums and that I'm a lyricist, producer, or director inspires someone to branch out beyond the drums. Maybe it was how I approached odd time signatures or some other aspect I'm not even aware of. Whatever the case, I'm just happy to be a drummer, and I get to

do this for a living.

But I've always viewed myself as a music fan first and a drummer second. The drums just happened to be my instrument, but ultimately I became who I am because I'm a music fan. I love making music in the studio, and I want to be able to write songs, produce records, oversee the merchandise and the websites, and do everything that comes with this job. Drums just happened to be one element. It might be crazy to say that in *Modern Drummer*, but I do believe that's important.

All of my favorite drummers have done more than play drums. Lars Ulrich is a hero of mine. Some people come down on him because they think he doesn't have great technique or whatever, but he's made a mark and he's made a difference, and that's why I love him. I could probably say the same thing about a dozen of my favorite drummers.

When Dream Theater broke in the early '90s, it was the height of the

things you're interested in besides music? You're a movie buff—can you recite every line of your favorite movies?

Mike: Yeah, absolutely! An even crazier gift is that if you give me a date right now, I can tell you exactly where I was and what I was doing. At home, I have everything so meticulously organized alphabetically and chronologically that if somebody goes to my CD collection, which has over 10,000 CDs, and just points to one from across the room, I can tell you which one it is. So OCD applies to everything, though I guess in the end it's a blessing that I'm thankful to have.

MD: It seems that the combination of OCD and having a memory unlike most other people's would make you an obvious choice for taking on more of a leadership role in a band setting. You had many roles in Dream Theater. From the outside, that could be seen as being a control freak. On the inside, some band members—in any group—don't want to take on responsibilities beyond playing their instrument and are glad when someone volunteers to do so.

Mike: With Dream Theater, I very much ran the show because my OCD allowed me to handle the additional roles. Luckily those guys always trusted my direction. OCD can be a detriment, though. I know it sometimes makes my wife crazy, and I'm sure it must have driven the guys in Dream Theater crazy at times too, but they rolled with it.

It was never about being a control freak because I was an egomaniac. It was just my obsessive-compulsive nature. When I first met [future Dream Theater bandmates] John Petrucci and John Myung when we were eighteen years old, I think they immediately recognized that part of my personality, and they were very comfortable with that dynamic. John Petrucci and I balanced each other out through the years with our strengths and weaknesses. He never cared much for all the little details and organizational stuff, and I never cared about the business or financial aspects, which he was very good at. When you're in a band, you have to understand each other's

roles and you have to delegate, and I don't think those guys ever resented the role I played. And to your point, you can't create that type of personality. People like me and Lars—it's just our personality, and we happen to apply it to our careers, our bands, and our music.

I now find that I have to shift and mold with different personalities, and my role changes depending on the particular project. I haven't been in a leadership role to the capacity I was in Dream Theater in anything else I've done since.

STRETCHING OUT—FOR GOOD

MD: Your first side project, Liquid Tension Experiment, came about at a time when Dream Theater was under a lot of pressure from the label to make *Falling Into Infinity* a very commercially accessible album. Was LTE a response on some level to the loss of creative control over something you all held so sacred?

Mike: Liquid Tension Experiment was the very first side project not only for me but for anyone in the Dream Theater camp, and it was definitely the result of being so frustrated by the industry in the late '90s. That album was made in the midst of a difficult point in our

career, because we were being eaten alive by the industry. It almost broke up the band at that point, and LTE was such a breath of fresh air. It gave us an open palette and reminded us why we love playing music—and that was twelve years into Dream Theater's career. That feeling of freedom was so refreshing on a creative level that I never looked back.

I did two LTE albums, and then I formed Transatlantic and started doing all of Neal Morse's albums, the OSI albums—it was basically an explosion of creativity. It showed me that there could be more than just working with one band signed to a label that's telling you what you can and can't do.

MD: When you left Dream Theater, the public backlash was fairly harsh and quick, and one would imagine that it's not an easy topic for you to discuss. But the band was obviously a huge part of your life and career, and there's a lot that happened during those years for you personally and professionally that help paint the picture of where you're at now.

Mike: I feel bad that I can't talk openly about Dream Theater anymore without being torn to shreds. I wish I could without there being a backlash, but it's become the reality that I've now accepted, because I feel it's a



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MIKE PORTNOY

no-win situation.

MD: That's unfortunate, because it seems that over time you naturally grew out of your place in Dream Theater, or perhaps you simply grew apart from where the rest of the band was going musically. And from a fan's perspective, when you love a band and it changes—or you change as a listener and the band stays relatively the same—it's sometimes hard to swallow. There's really no place for fault or blame, though.

Mike: Yes! Thank you! That's a big reason why I left Dream Theater—I changed. I mean this totally diplomatically, but when I heard the new material, it simply wasn't my cup of tea. It's great, but I couldn't relate to it anymore. Like you said, people change, whether it be as a listener or as an artist.

MD: In retrospect, your decision to leave Dream Theater seems like a natural progression. You were never as concerned with the technical side of drumming as people may have perceived, and your personality allowed you to handle wearing multiple hats instead of devoting countless hours to adding chops to your arsenal. Whereas they continued to progress into deeper realms of complexity.

Mike: It was never a conscious decision to play drums less and concentrate more on the other things, but as my career grew and my life developed, I had other interests. All the other areas I took interest in came after we got a record deal. When all of these other roles and responsibilities that needed tending to opened up within the band, I was the one that tended to them. So it may have taken me away from the drums a bit more—and that was just on the career side.

On the personal side, my life was also changing. I got married and had two children, so when I wasn't on the road or in the studio, I wanted to be home with my wife and kids and spend time with them. Or even watch TV. God forbid a drummer just watch TV instead of practicing! [laughs] As life goes on, responsibilities and priorities change. It wasn't a conscious decision to shift my focus from drums to these other things more than it was just how my life

was unfolding.

MD: And what gigs are you not getting right now because you chose to spend time pursuing things outside of drumming?

Mike: That's true! I have everything I can dream of right now. I'm playing in bands with guys like Billy Sheehan, Paul Gilbert, Steve Morse—these are guys that have always been my favorites, and now I'm in bands with them.

THE FREEDOM TO FLY

MD: Your son, Max, plays drums now and has a band. Considering the current state of the music industry, which would you offer as career advice: Stick with one band that you can cultivate, or be a part of as many projects as possible and see which one takes off?

Mike: I suppose the grass is always greener on the other side. It would be hypocritical of me to say it's great to be in a million bands at one time just because that's what I happen to be doing at the moment. Fact is, I spent twenty-five years with one band, and that's what ultimately gave me the ability and the outlet to do the numerous things I'm doing now. So I see the importance of both.

I had a talk with Brian Tichy about this recently. He has spent so many years playing for other artists, like Whitesnake, Ozzy, and Billy Idol. Now he has a band of his own, and he stopped playing with other bands in order to pursue his band. I am on the complete opposite side of that—I spent years with one band, and I now feel like a free bird. I want to sow my musical oats and play with as many people as I can and try as many different musical things as possible.

In a perfect world you could do both. But there's no rule book. There are no laws in rock 'n' roll; it's different for everybody. All I know is that I wouldn't change a thing in terms of my career. It's been a dream career, and I like the fact that I was with one band for twenty-five years. Look at bands like Rush, Iron Maiden, or Metallica—Neil Peart, Nicko McBrain, and Lars Ulrich have basically just played in those bands, and there's definitely something



MIKE PORTNOY IS

OBSESSED



Mike Portnoy is easily Obsessed. It's scary. Case in point: his meticulously organized collection of films (he loves Stanley Kubrick) and magazines (he's got every Modern Drummer ever printed). If you touch any one of them, he'll know! But his biggest Obsession is drums. Like his signature **SABIAN Max Stax**. The perfect combination of a China and a percussive effect cymbal, they always cut through.

Learn more about what makes Mike Obsessed.

See the video at Sabian.com/mikeportnoy 



A SOUND OBSESSION



MIKE PORTNOY

to be said for that.

MD: What do you think are the key things that helped you achieve your level of success, and what motivates you now?

Mike: At the end of the day, perseverance and passion got me to where I am. The perseverance to succeed and to be able to make a name for myself and make a living with what I do took many years. Dream Theater was not an overnight success. It took years before things began to develop. And after twenty-five years and achieving dreams, like playing Madison Square Garden or being on the cover of *Modern Drummer*, I started to ask myself, *What's going to inspire my next wave of dreams?* At that point it became a question of what I want to do rather than what I need to do. That was a big part of my struggle when deciding to leave Dream Theater. I got to a point where I was like, *Should I stick this out or do what my heart is telling me to do?*

At that time, I was playing with Avenged Sevenfold. That was so inspiring and so much fun, and I think

it gave me the balls to make a big change in my life. Since then I've played with about twelve different bands or projects and made about ten albums, which were all things I wanted to do. I didn't have to do them. In terms of my career, what I probably was supposed to do was stay with Dream Theater, but I realized I had lost my passion. Now I have that passion back. If I want to go and do an instrumental project with Tony MacAlpine, Billy Sheehan, and Derek Sherinian, I can. If I want to be a hired gun with Stone Sour or Bigelf, great; I go and do it. And it's such a blessing to have gotten to this point in my life—to be happy! What a concept—to play music for the sake of being happy.

MD: The common analogy of how being in a band is like being married really seems fitting. As time passes, people either grow together or apart.

Mike: It's a perfect analogy—one I've made too—and I'm sorry that some Dream Theater fans get really mad at me for making that analogy. A band is like having multiple spouses, and the

band itself is your baby. Being in a band is hard work, and there's a reason not too many bands make it to that twenty-year mark or beyond. And until you're actually in that position, you can't truly know what it's like.

MD: Right now, if there was a word-association game where people had to say the first thing that came to mind when they heard the name Mike Portnoy, the answer may very well be Dream Theater. But in another twenty-five years, perhaps it will be another band or, maybe even more simply, the word *drummer*. Do you have a preference?

Mike: I would have no problem with Dream Theater being my legacy and being what I'm remembered for, because for twenty-five years I put my heart and soul into that baby. But I think there's so much more for me to do, and I hope that the rest of my catalog will be remembered as well, because it's all important to the big picture.



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A photograph of Mike Portnoy, a professional drummer, playing a TAMA Speed Cobra drum set. He is wearing a blue and white patterned tank top, black shorts, and black sneakers with white soles. He has long hair and a beard, and is captured in a dynamic pose with his mouth open as if shouting or singing. The background is a dark studio with acoustic foam panels. The drum set is a mix of chrome and red finishes. The text 'THE PROOF IS IN THE PORTNOY' is written in red, and 'SPEED COBRA' is written in white with a stylized font.

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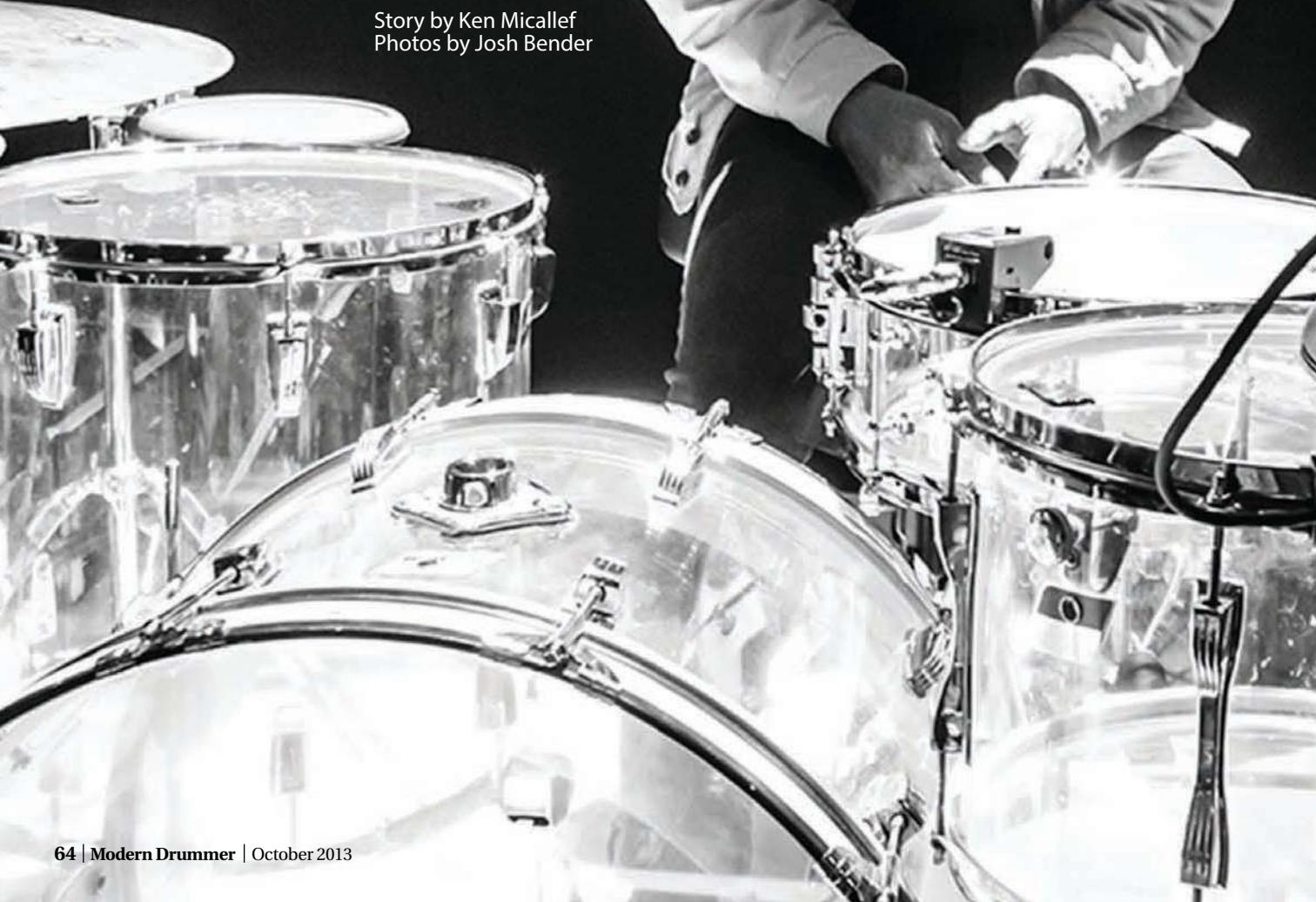
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Thomas Hedlund

The multi-genre groove monster is as happy engineering towering beats with the post-metal band **Cult of Luna** as he is hearing his parts reverse engineered to mind-blowing effect with the sophisticated indie-rock hitmakers **Phoenix**.

Story by Ken Micallef
Photos by Josh Bender



There he was, performing on the *Late Show With David Letterman* with the French pop group Phoenix, pounding and pummeling his small drumset with jackhammer force and warfare-worthy intent. Sweat flying, head bent down in concentration, arms slashing the beat to smithereens,

Thomas Hedlund seemed to think he was playing in a metal band, not a sweet groove machine. But then, this thirty-two-year-old native of Umeå, Sweden, has certainly played his share of metal. And pop. And folk. And singer-songwriter, electropop, and experimental music.

While not a charter member of Phoenix, Hedlund tours with the

group and has appeared on its last three albums, 2006's *It's Never Been Like That*; 2009's breakout release, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*; and this year's blockbuster, *Bankrupt!* He's also a first-call European session man for practically any style you care to list. His broad résumé includes the electropop of Miike Snow's *Happy to You*, the post-metal bloodletting of Cult of Luna's *Vertikal*, the progressive metal of Khoma's *A Final Storm*, the sincere folk pop of the Deportees' *Damaged Goods*, and the experimental synth fantasies of iamami-whoami's *Bounty*. And then there are the less categorizable sounds of Adam Tensta, CANT, Rasmus Kellerman, BOY, Void Moon, and the Perishers. But it's with Phoenix that Hedlund has achieved worldwide acclaim, as much for his drumming as for what *sounds* like his drumming.

On Phoenix albums it's almost impossible to tell what's Hedlund and what's not. Some *Bankrupt!* tracks, like "Oblique City" and "Chloroform," are obviously programmed, all swooshing pulse and compressed thwacks. Others, such as "Entertainment," "S.O.S. in Bel Air," "Trying to Be Cool," and "Drakkar Noir," sound like the full-on Hedlund attack of head-butting groove, tom-tom fury, and forward-motion intensity. That's the drummer's operating mode, regardless of the type of music he's playing.

MD: You play in many different bands, in as many different styles. What's key to that versatility? Is there a common thread for you between the styles?

Thomas: In all of these bands I am fortunate to play with people who really care about drumming and are interested in patterns and very specific sounds. I have a style of my own, but it's always sort of a collaboration, and the end result is the meeting between me and the rest of the band. If there's something common in all these styles, I don't know what it is. And it's nothing that I really think about. Also, between the

"I would rather have someone hate on me than not care. If they don't care, I probably played it too safe and didn't put enough into what I was doing."



bands there are a lot of differences in aesthetics, though there is no jazz or anything like that. If you compare Cult of Luna to Phoenix, though, it's pretty different.

MD: Do all these bands offer ideas for patterns that become your drum parts?

Thomas: With Phoenix it's different. The recording process involves the four members working for a long time on the individual songs or snippets of songs and putting them together into whole songs. Then I come into their Paris studio after a few months of their working process, and we record the drums and work with that. Then I return to Sweden. Later I return once more and do that again, recording drums using some of their ideas. But I don't really know what they do with the drums until the album is done.

It's very different from the other bands I work with, where I am more a part of the process from arrangements to performance. With Phoenix albums it's a mix of my drumming, drums they've programmed, and just using parts of my patterns or sample hits. But it's cool

because we are so in sync; when they program drums, they do it thinking of what I would play. And it always makes sense to me. I can hear myself in their programming. They guess what I would do, and it always feels natural to play what they program.

MD: By contrast, how do you work with Cult of Luna?

Thomas: The guitarists—Johannes Persson, Erik Olofsson, and Fredrik Kihlberg—come in with riffs and parts of the song, and then they play the riff and we sort of jam. We improvise over a particular guitar riff, trying to find a pattern.

The songs are very long. The main challenge is to make them feel like songs, not like different long parts put on top of each other. On their last album, *Vertikal*, there's a song that's twenty minutes long, so it was a big challenge to make that feel like one song and not five. I have to pay attention to dynamics and also get into the repetitive vibe of that band. For instance, with Phoenix or the Deportees, if I do a three-minute song, I think very

differently in terms of how the song progresses. But in Cult of Luna we can let a part last for five minutes with very little change. It's about getting into the whole slow vibe of their music.

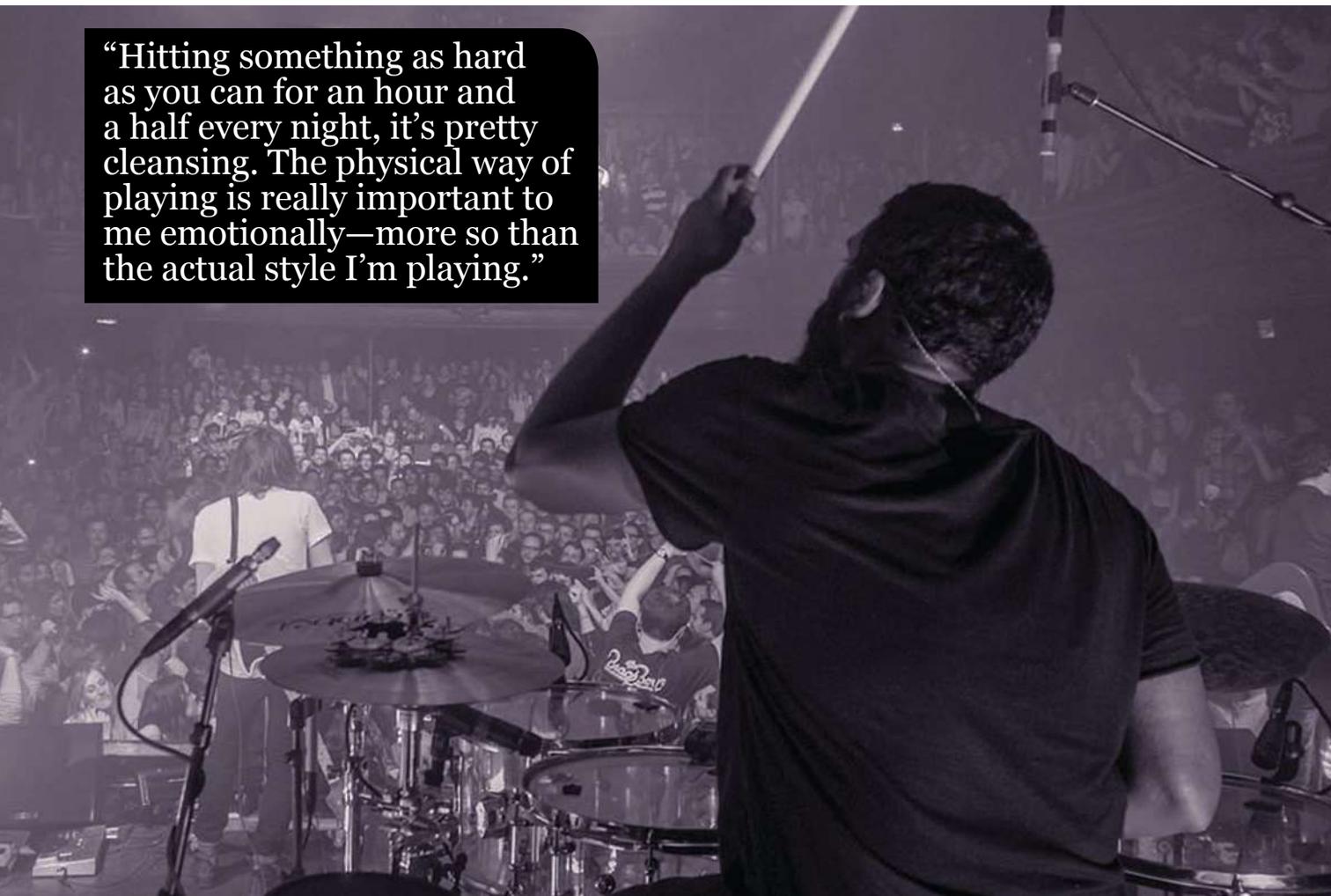
MD: You also play in groups that are more soft-pop oriented, music with a lighter style. In many ways you're like an old-school studio drummer.

Thomas: I have never considered myself a "studio drummer"; I see myself as very much a band drummer who enjoys being in a band and being part of the songwriting and recording and touring process. But I record a few albums every year with different bands. I view myself more as a band drummer because I only work with friends. I rarely do fly-in sessions. I've played with most of these bands for a long time. And I do some studio sessions.

MD: In performance with Phoenix you really bash the drums, the same as with Cult of Luna. You don't seem to change your attack or intensity. And Phoenix feeds off your energy. How do you apply a metal approach to pop music?

Thomas: It seems like Phoenix wants me

“Hitting something as hard as you can for an hour and a half every night, it's pretty cleansing. The physical way of playing is really important to me emotionally—more so than the actual style I'm playing.”



to play harder. I come from the punk scene; I played in punk bands for a long time, where it was all about the energy on stage. I think I've just continued to do that when we play. That's the way I prepare for a show. I do push-ups to get the adrenaline flowing, and it doesn't really matter if it's a soft or rock gig, that's how I prepare. I need that to focus and get into the mood. Obviously when it's a soft song I don't play with that kind of attack, but it's a way of preparing myself.

MD: How do you prepare for a TV performance like the *Late Show With David Letterman* versus a concert?

Thomas: TV is so weird. I do one song and I'm exhausted afterwards. I concentrate all this energy into one song, and I'm almost as tired after one song as I am after an entire show. You give everything you have for three minutes, but it's like giving everything you have for an entire hour. It's sort of cathartic for me. I do a lot of sports—I went to soccer high school—so drumming and sports have always been linked for me.

I love the physical aspect of playing drums, although I am perfectly aware of some people thinking it's not a technically good way of playing. But it's not about that at all for me; it's the emotions I can get out of it by playing, and the emotions we can share on stage as a



band. If we can build something together, that's what is most important. If I am happy or sad, playing drums like this, you can play physically and it can be the most joyful thing, and I can feel so happy with the adrenaline pumping and sweating.

It can also be very therapeutic. I lost my mother a few years ago and I was really afraid—I didn't know whether I would lose my passion for playing the drums. But it's been this amazing outlet. Hitting something as hard as you can for an hour and a half every night, it's pretty cleansing. You can put so much into it. The physical way of playing is

Thomas's Kit

Hedlund plays DW Classics series drums (9x13 tom, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, 16x22 bass drum) with an ultra marine finish and chrome hardware, and a 6x14 SJC acrylic snare. On tour with Phoenix he plays a 1970s Ludwig Vistalite set with a 9x13 tom, a 16x16 floor tom, and a 14x22 bass drum. His Istanbul Agop cymbals include 14" Traditional series Medium hi-hats, a 20" Traditional series Medium crash, a 22" OM ride, and a 20" Xist crash. His hardware is from DW's 9000 series. Hedlund's electronics include a Roland PD-8 Dual Trigger Drum Pad and RT-10T Acoustic Drum Trigger, and his Remo heads include a Clear Ambassador snare batter and Ambassador snare-side, Clear Ambassador tom batters and bottoms, a Clear Emperor bass drum batter, and a clear resonant bass drum head (the model varies). His stick of choice is Wincent's 7A XL.

Influences

Queen A Night at the Opera (Roger Taylor) /// **Yellowjackets** Dreamland (William Kennedy) /// **Rage Against the Machine** Rage Against the Machine (Brad Wilk) /// **Smashing Pumpkins** Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness (Jimmy Chamberlin) /// **D'Angelo** Voodoo (Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson) /// **The Band** The Band (Levon Helm) /// **Deftones** White Pony (Abe Cunningham) /// **Prince** Prince (Prince) /// **Nirvana** Nevermind (Dave Grohl) /// **Toto** Toto (Jeff Porcaro)



Recordings

Deportees Islands & Shores, Under the Pavement: The Beach /// **Phoenix** Bankrupt!, Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix, It's Never Been Like That /// **Rasmus Kellerman** The 24th /// **Cult of Luna** Vertikal /// **Khoma** A Final Storm



very important for me emotionally, more so than the actual style I'm playing.

MD: Performing live with Phoenix, are you sometimes doubling a programmed beat?

Thomas: Certain percussion elements are on the backing track we use. I wasn't playing to a programmed backing track on the last tour, but on the new tour we might add a handclap or something. We've used the MPC before in concert, but it was unreliable. On the upcoming tour we will use Roland triggers and computers.

MD: With Phoenix it's sometimes hard to differentiate between programmed and live drums. The programmed drums sound like you.

Thomas: It's funny, Thomas Mars, the singer in Phoenix who makes a lot of the basic patterns on a synthesizer, was a drummer. He creates drum patterns with his fingers on the keyboard, so the patterns sometimes require more arms than I have! On this recording I played along to a lot of the patterns that Thomas made, and they blended the programmed parts with me playing over them. And my drumming is not two bars looped, for example—it's live drumming, essentially. My takes added an organic feel to the programmed parts. And I don't mind being chopped up if the songs need that. But as a drummer it's fun if there's more me in it, obviously.

MD: Was this process different from the band's previous album, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix*?

Thomas: On the last album they did more looping of my drumming, but I'm not sure on which songs. If we would ask them, they probably wouldn't be able to answer either. It's a chaotic recording process. Very often they don't remember who played what, whether it's guitars or bass. They are really driven by the end results, and it doesn't matter how they get there. No one is precious about what they play individually; they want to make the best album they possibly can.

MD: When did you begin playing drums?

Thomas: I chose drums at ten. In Sweden, that's when we can get one music lesson a week in school. My teacher and I focused on rudiments, and since he was also a percussionist, we

worked on reading music and working with mallets and tuned percussion. He emphasized the joy and the emotional part of playing drums too. He made me love music. He was special that way. Morgan

Ågren and I shared this teacher, Göran Teljebäck.

MD: What else did you and your instructor focus on?

Thomas: He got angry with me when I was fourteen; I wanted to quit drumming because I was so into sports. I didn't think I had time to practice, and I didn't want to do any drumming homework. He said, "Are you kidding? You will never get better. Sports is a waste instead of playing music." Sometimes I regret that I wasn't more ambitious on the drums; I just played for fun. But when I got my first drumset, when I was fifteen, I played at home every night, and mostly to albums. I quit taking lessons when I got my first kit. But that's when I started playing in bands a lot. Göran has followed me ever since—it's fun.

MD: Who were your drumming heroes?

Thomas: I listened to a lot of jazz fusion—that was what you were supposed to listen to and play when studying drums. But I also listened to Rage Against the Machine and hardcore punk. One drummer that meant a lot to me as a teenager was William Kennedy from the Yellowjackets. I still use his hi-hat patterns and his way of playing the ride cymbal, or at least I try. I like their *Politics* album. I played along to their songs when I was in my teens, and I also loved Nirvana and Metallica. My influences and musical interests are all over the place.

MD: What do you practice now?

Thomas: I play along to records like Maxwell's *BLACKsummers'night*, with Chris Dave. I try to keep up. I do have a



warm-up routine. I always bring my practice pad and my headphones and do different rudiments to music. I need to warm up for a long time before a gig, at least an hour before the show. I improvise and play paradiddles and single strokes. I'm not very systematic, I'm just trying to loosen up and get the blood flowing.

MD: What advice can you give to drummers who would like to be as versatile and play as many styles of music as you do?

Thomas: Just find good people to play with. That has been key for me. I've been so fortunate from early on to work with people I love to play music with. But in terms of drumming, be open to inspiration from a lot of different genres, and don't think too much about rules that people set up.

I made the mistake at some point of reading YouTube comments about Phoenix performances, and people were hating on my drumming. I had a hard time dealing with that. You set out to please everyone, but not everyone will like you. I would rather affect someone in some way than not at all. I would rather have someone hate on me than not care. If they don't care, I probably played it too safe and didn't put enough into what I was doing. That can be advice—draw from who you are and go with that.

At the end of the day, if we have this feeling of being able to choose, it's so rewarding, and you will never look back with regret. Whereas if you adapt too much or follow others, you might lose yourself.



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

Check:

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

Check:

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

Check:

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

Now that we have some very useful accent patterns, it's time to add a couple of rudimental variations. While there are dozens of rudiments that we could impose upon these accent patterns, let's look at two very handy ones that use diddles.

First we'll add diddles to the accents. When playing the accented diddles, make sure that both beats of the diddle are accented. The first note will be a free stroke played mainly from the wrist, and the second stroke should be a downstroke played mainly from the fingers. Be sure not to attack the accented diddles too high or too hard, or you won't be able to match the second beat's velocity and volume with that of the first. The low taps should be played low and light and should favor finger control. Maximize the stick height and volume differential between the accents and the taps for the most musical contrast. Here's Example 1 played this way. Repeat the process with Examples 2-4.

Check:

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

Check:

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

Now we'll add diddles to the taps only. The accents should be played as strict downstrokes in order to bring down the stick height of the diddles for maximum dynamic contrast. Play the low diddles loosely, using finger control. I like to call this the drop/catch technique, where the hand drops the stick down for the first stroke and then catches it in the palm on the second. The process of catching the stick in the palm with the fingers adds some velocity to the second stroke, which helps it to match the first stroke dynamically.



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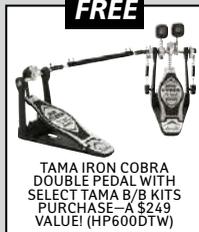
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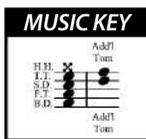
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MELODIC DRUMMING

Tips for Mimicking Guitar Riffs on the Toms by Jeff Salem



In this article we're going to explore a way to represent a melodic guitar riff from a classic-rock tune on the kit, while playing the song's drumbeat at the same time.

MAKING MELODIES WITH THE TOMS

This is something I discovered accidentally one day when tuning my toms. I found that I was able to play the melody of "Mary Had a Little Lamb," which got me thinking about ways to do the same with classic guitar riffs that consist of just three or four notes.

To achieve this, I tune my toms in thirds. Let's say the floor tom is tuned to the note C. The second lowest tom

would be an E, the next a G, and the next a B. (I chose C as my root note, but you can start on any note. Just go up from the bottom in thirds.)

If you have only three toms to work with, don't worry. The riff will sound close enough when you use just one tom to cover the highest notes. If you're right-handed, play the tom parts with the right hand, or vice versa if you're left-handed. Start by getting just the melodic part down. Listen for the riff on the toms. You might have to make some tuning adjustments to get the right tones for the song you're trying to play.

Next, work on playing the drumbeat with just your left hand. (Use your right hand if you're a lefty.) I often have to make slight adjustments to the groove

to be able to play it with one hand.

Once you can play the melody and the groove separately, bring both parts together very slowly. There is some independence involved that will take time to work out. Be patient.

All of the examples below are in 4/4 time. They comprise some of my favorites, including "Peter Gunn" by the Ventures, "Louie Louie" by the Kingsmen, "Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones, "Walk This Way" by Aerosmith, "Smoke on the Water" by Deep Purple, and "Whole Lotta Love" by Led Zeppelin.

You can experiment with hundreds of other classic tunes that use only three or four notes. Have fun!

"Peter Gunn"

Left hand

Right hand

"Louie Louie"

Left hand

Right hand

"Satisfaction"

Left hand

Right hand

"Walk This Way"

Left hand

Right hand

"Smoke on the Water"

RLRRT LRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRLRL

RLRRT LRLRLRLRLRL RLRLRLRLRLRLRL

"Whole Lotta Love"

Left hand

Right hand



Jeff Salem is a freelance clinician and educator, and he's the owner of JS Music Studio. For more information, visit salemdrum.com.



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DOUBLE BASS WORKOUT

Part 3: 16th-Note, 16th-Note-Triplet, and 32nd-Note Combinations

by Todd Vinciguerra

MUSIC KEY

H.H.	x
S.D.	●
B.D.	●

In this lesson we'll mix 16th notes, 16th-note triplets, and 32nd notes on the bass drums and play them along with 16th-note-based hand patterns. Remember to play to a metronome or click track, and start off slowly and master each exercise before increasing the speed.

To take the exercises a step further, instead of just playing the patterns one at a time, turn them into two-, three-, or four-bar phrases. And instead of using what's written for the hi-hat, try using quarter notes, 16th notes, or a combination of your own. Experiment with the bass drum patterns as well. For example, you can switch the lead foot, or you can play the rhythms using double strokes.

For the next set of examples, we'll add a different snare rhythm to the previous ride and bass drum patterns. As always, feel free to experiment on your own, and have fun!

17

18

19

20



Todd "Vinny" Vinciguerra is the author of several drum instructional books. His latest, *Double Basics: Complete Double Bass Drum Book*, is available through Mel Bay. For more info, visit anotherstateofmind.com.



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Part 4: Snare and Bass Drum Interaction

by Mike Adamo

MUSIC KEY

R.C.	×	
S.D.	○	(●)
R.D.	○	
H.H.	○	Ghost note
w/foot		

In the first three parts of this series (May, June, and July 2013), we focused on techniques that develop a tighter groove, deeper pocket, and better feel. The lessons featured exercises containing intricate snare and hi-hat patterns played over steady bass drum rhythms. This month we'll work on developing the interaction between the bass drum and snare, while the right hand holds down a steady rhythm.

This lesson will also increase your awareness of the various 16th-note subdivisions of the measure, while improving the flow of your groove. Again, we'll use the paradiddle and its three inversions as the foundation. Here's what the paradiddles look like when split between the bass drum and snare.

Be sure to pay attention to the accents and ghost notes within the snare pattern. This dynamic contrast adds more depth and flavor to the grooves. You don't have to play the hi-hat with the left foot at first, but keeping quarters going can help you lock into a solid groove.

Now let's start adding the right hand. For this lesson I like to play the right-hand patterns on the ride cymbal, which opens up the sound and feel of the groove and allows you to eventually add the hi-hat with the left foot. We'll start simply. Here's the first set of right-hand patterns.

As you start adding the paradiddles underneath, strive for an even dynamic level in the right hand. Don't let the accents and ghost notes in the snare patterns influence the dynamics of the ride.

Begin with the basic paradiddle, and apply it to each right-hand pattern. Practice each combination twenty times, and then move on to the next one. After you've practiced the basic paradiddle with the four hand patterns, move on to the other paradiddle variations. It may help to write out the ride patterns with the bass and snare exercises so you can see how everything lines up.

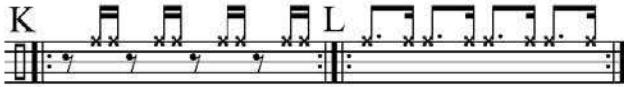
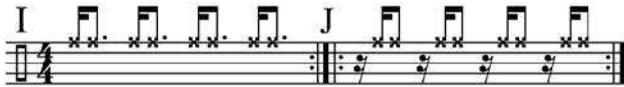
Here's what the basic paradiddle looks like with each of the right-hand patterns.

After you've mastered the paradiddle exercises with the first set of right-hand patterns, you can move on to the second set. These are based on instances of three 16th notes in a row.

Practice those patterns in conjunction with the paradiddle variations in the same manner as before. Remember to start slowly and gradually build up your speed. If you have trouble with any of these, break down the right-hand part by starting

with the first note and then adding one note at a time. Once you have the coordination under control, practice with a metronome.

After you've mastered the second set of right-hand patterns, move on to the third set, which is based on instances of two 16th notes in a row. Practice these in the same manner as before.

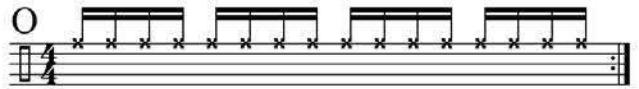


After you've mastered the third set of right-hand patterns, move on to the fourth set. These consist of single notes placed on the "e" and "a" of the beat. Practice them in the same manner as before.

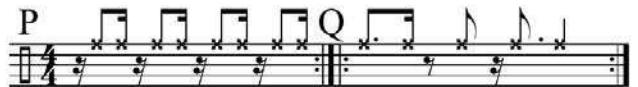


Being able to play steady 16th notes on the hi-hat or ride is a very important aspect of funk drumming. It creates a nice driving feel for slow to mid-tempo funk (75–95 bpm). It also gives the band something to lock in with, so it's very useful in keeping everyone together. Practice the four paradiddle

variations in conjunction with the following right-hand pattern in order to develop a steady 16th-note ride.



Our funk drumming training session wouldn't be complete without a few bonus patterns. Make sure you've mastered the previous exercises before moving on. You probably won't end up playing these parts too often on gigs, but perfecting them will make everything else you play seem that much easier, which will translate into a deeper groove and a more relaxed feel.



Don't forget that you can get an extra coordination workout by playing steady 8th notes or upbeat 8ths (on the "&") with the left foot on the hi-hat. You should also record and analyze your practice sessions so you can make the necessary adjustments to tighten up your playing. Until next time—have fun!



Mike Adamo is the author of the critically acclaimed instructional book *The Breakbeat Bible* (Hudson Music). For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit mikeadamo.com and thebreakbeatbible.com.



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STICK CONTROL REVISITED

Part 2: 3/4 and 6/8 Drumset Applications

by Steve Fidyk

MUSIC KEY

H.H.	Hi-Hat	R.C.	Ride Cymbal
T.D.	Tom Drum	X	Drum
B.D.	Bass Drum	X	Drum
H.H.	Hi-Hat	Rim	Drum
w/ foot		Click	

Welcome to the second installment in our series on drumset applications of George Lawrence Stone's famous book *Stick Control*. (Part one was in the August issue.)

The following variations utilize the "72 Single Beat Combinations" found on pages 5-7.

Let's begin by reading each *Stick Control* sticking pattern around the kit while swinging the 8th-note rhythms in 3/4. Here's Example 3 from page 5.

1

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

Next, try adding the following bass drum and hi-hat rhythms to accompany the hands.

2A

B

C

Once you have control of the previous material, choose a sticking pattern from *Stick Control* and change the subdivision from 8th notes to 8th-note triplets. Here's Example 46 from page 6, with the second bass drum and hi-hat rhythm.

3

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

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

Now try adding 16th-note rhythms to the mix. The next example is a four-measure phrase that makes use of sticking patterns 3 and 5 from *Stick Control*, with rhythmic combinations of swung 8ths, 8th-note triplets, and 16th notes. Play four measures of time between each example.

4

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

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

Continue to experiment with each sticking and rhythmic combination, and come up with your own fill patterns based on the written material. The possibilities are truly endless.

SWING COORDINATION IN 3/4

For independence practice in 3/4, try substituting one of the following seven triplet partials for each written sticking. Each R will be played on the bass drum, and each L will be played on the snare.

5

Now try practicing each sticking substitution with the following ride cymbal rhythms.

6A

B

C

D

E

Here's Example 43 from page 6 of *Stick Control*, using the third triplet as the substituted rhythms.

7

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

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

Once you have control of all seven partials, try reversing the hands so that you're playing the swing pattern with your nondominant hand. Here's Example 53 from page 7, substituting the second triplet partial for every R and the third triplet partial for every L.

8

You can also try practicing the stickings with your feet, as quarter-note triplets, while you read each written L sticking on the snare drum in 3/4. Below is Example 1 from page 5.

9

Finally, try practicing the stickings with your feet while adding a 6/8 bell pattern.

10

Here's that bell pattern over Example 4 from page 5.

11

Next time we'll examine ways to play *Stick Control* in two and five.



Steve Fidyk has performed with Terrell Stafford, Tim Warfield, Dick Oatts, Doc Severinsen, Wayne Bergeron, Phil Wilson, and Maureen McGovern, and he's a member of the jazz studies faculty at Temple University in Philadelphia. For more info, including how to sign up for lessons via Skype, visit stevefidyk.com.



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SEEING SOUNDS

Part 4: Classic Jazz by Donny Gruendler



Small-group jazz drumming is synonymous with legendary players such as Art Blakey, Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, and Tony Williams. Although these five gentlemen had very different approaches to timekeeping, each contributed to the jazz art form and created innovative drum sounds. These include high and articulate tunings, snappy snares, and tom-like bass drums, often recorded using minimal miking techniques. In recent years the classic tones have been explored by today's greats, like Brian Blade, Bill Stewart, Kendrick Scott, Karriem Riggins, and Billy Martin.

Jazz drum sounds are quite different from what we explored in the previous installments of this series, including all-purpose pop/rock, deep and muffled '70s tones, and funk. So if you're looking to achieve a more traditional jazz sound, try the following suggestions.

BASS DRUM

The high-pitched, tom-like bass drum articulation often heard in jazz is

achieved by employing a double-headed 14x18 drum. This is a common jazz size that's made by most companies. An elongated 16x18 or 14x20 drum will work for this sound too, but you may lose some of the desired tom-like qualities that are associated with a 14x18.

The traditional jazz sound employs single-ply drumheads. For this study we chose a coated batter and a black resonant head. (A coated front head works just as well.) The resonant head



should be solid, meaning no mic hole. For muffling, remove the batter head and place a dense felt strip across the shell. It should be placed from 11 to 7 o'clock. Next, place the batter head and

hoop over the shell and tighten the claws until you reach a floor-tom-like tension. The resonant head can be adjusted to control the amount of overtones and overall pitch of the drum. By raising the resonant head's pitch, the drum will sound more tom-like, while lowering it will put you back into conventional bass drum territory.

Place a large dynamic microphone on the outside of the drum, with the capsule pointing between the beater impact point and the shell. A dynamic tom-type mic, such as a Sennheiser 421, works well for this application, because it places equal emphasis on the attack and tone of the drum. For more sensitivity and high-end sibilance, you can try a vocal-type condenser.

You should use a medium-size felt beater and play off the head. (Don't bury the beater.) To soften the attack, you can try a soft wool beater, like Vater's Vintage Bomber. Place the beater so that it strikes the center of the head to create an even, round sound. If you want additional ring and twang to



the note, try positioning the beater so that it strikes above or below center.

SNARE DRUM

The classic jazz snare tone is best achieved by employing a 14"-diameter wood drum in a shallow depth (usually 4" or 5"). The depth of the drum can vary based on the style you're going for. For a '30s big band, Gene Krupa-type approach, many prefer a 6.5x14. For busier mid-'50s, Clifford Brown/Max Roach-style hard bop, a 3.5"- or 4"-deep drum is commonly used.

As in the last few studies, choose a coated single-ply batter and tune it up, but not tabletop tight. While playing, experiment with your stick placement. A stroke in the center of the head will produce a thick attack with drier overtones, while an off-center stroke will sound sharper and will have a lengthier ring.

You can also vary the stick angle for

even more articulation options. For a softer articulation, raise the stick to a 45-degree angle. This angle is also good for playing stick shots, which is a common jazz technique where one stick is held against the drumhead and struck by the other.

TOMS

The high, ringing, attack-laden tom sound heard in jazz is best achieved by employing double-headed, standard-depth drums. An 8x12 rack tom and a 14x14 floor tom were commonly used during the small-group era of the '50s and '60s.

Coated single-ply batters work well alongside single-ply clear or coated resonant heads. Clear bottom heads allow for more sustain, while coated ones will make the drums sound a bit darker. Both toms should be tuned high, with the batter and resonant heads set at about the same pitch.

The heads shouldn't be so tight that the drums sound choked, but the tom pitches will be much higher than they were in our previous articles.

Next, pick one batter-side lug on each tom and gently tighten it to raise the pitch slightly. Not only will this add a bit of an upward bend to the note, but it will also

increase the amount of ring and stick articulation. Repeat this on the resonant head as well.

CYMBALS

For authentic jazz tones, use a medium-thin 20" or thin 22" ride cymbal. It should be dark in tone with an equal amount of wash and stick definition. For a cleaner Philly Joe Jones-type '50s sound, a thin but bright cymbal works best, while a darker and trashier one helps achieve the smokier, grittier sound associated with drummers like Elvin Jones.

To round out our jazz drumkit sound, try medium or thin 14" hi-hats that have a midrange tone, with the bottom cymbal being heavier than the top.

OVERHEAD MICS

In this style the overheads are responsible for capturing the entire kit sound. Unlike in previous installments, where we used a spaced-pair setup, an X/Y configuration works best. This position involves placing both overheads approximately 5' above the floor. From the audience side of the kit, draw an imaginary vertical line that bisects the bass drum and snare. Place both mics at this point, at a 90-degree angle, with the capsules as close together as possible without touching. Double-check that both mics are equidistant from the snare, to ensure that the snare stays in the center of the stereo image.

EXPERIMENT

As in the previous installments, playing the drums is as much about touch, tone, timbre, and aesthetics as it is about licks, patterns, and grooves. Continue to focus on genre-specific sounds within your practices, gig preparations, and recording sessions. Bandmates, employers, and engineers will appreciate your effort, and the music will sound that much more appropriate for the style you're playing.

JAZZ SOUNDS ON RECORD



Classic jazz drum sounds can be heard on hundreds of recordings from the '50s and '60s. For a taste, check out Clifford Brown and Max Roach's self-titled release, Miles Davis's *Milestones*, and Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers' *Moanin'*. More contemporary examples include John Scofield's *Hand Jive* (Bill Stewart) and *A Go Go* (Billy Martin) and Joshua Redman's *Freedom in the Groove* (Brian Blade).



Donny Gruendler is vice president of curricular development at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, California. He has performed with DJ Logic, Rick Holmstrom, John Medeski, and Rhett Frazier Inc. For more info, visit donnygruendler.com.



COLLECTOR'S CORNER



Buyer Beware!

Be Careful What You Bid For

by Harry Cangany

When purchasing collectible instruments, you have to be careful. As the ancient Latin warning goes, *caveat emptor*, or let the buyer beware. Case in point is this month's featured drum, which is a very good counterfeit that I bought from someone in British Columbia.

What I thought I was purchasing was a Rogers Dyna-Sonic, and even up close the drum looked good. But that, my friends, is why you have to take drums apart for extra scrutiny. This snare came with three other Dayton-era (1966–1969) Rogers drums in the very popular 12/16/20 Headliner setup. The drums were advertised as an original 1966 Rogers set that had belonged to the seller's dad. But don't let your eyes well up yet.

The set was up for auction on eBay and was located a third of the way around the world from me, so I couldn't see the drums in person. I decided to watch the auction, and I ended up putting in a halfhearted bid. It was no big deal one way or the other, but there have been times when I've done this and have been surprised to actually win. This was one of those times, and for \$2,800 I got what I thought were four great drums. (The snare alone would be worth most of the cost.) It was a good deal, and the kit seemed to be legitimate.

Shortly after UPS brought the drums to me, however, I got emails from two other Canadians suggesting that I be wary of the seller, whom they both knew. So I went over to my new Rogers set. The bass drum and floor tom looked fine, and the 12" tom had been repainted on the inside. I could see black in places and damage to the internal sticker, but those issues weren't necessarily deal killers.

Then I looked at the Dyna-Sonic snare, and after noticing the following problems, I stopped counting. There was no tone

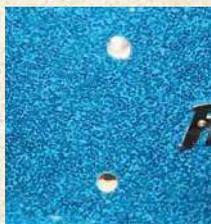


control, which was a possible, but not probable, option. The serial number was too high for Dayton-era drums, and the lug nuts were held in place by C clips. (On



drums made in 1966, the lugs would have had springs.) The drum also had fourteen plies between the shell and reinforcing ring; a wood-shell Dyna-Sonic should be 5-ply with 5-ply rings. And I could smell the stain used on the shell, which seemed unusual for a drum made forty-seven years ago—plus the stain wasn't uniform. (Fruitwood staining from the Rogers factory was always nicely done.)

Then I noticed that the shell appeared to be all maple, yet Rogers used a



combination of maple and birch. When I removed the lugs, I saw that there was no difference in the blue sparkle in the areas under the lugs and the areas that had been exposed to light, yet the sparkle had faded a bit. (Ultraviolet light can't get under lugs!)



My list ends with the fact that the lug and grommet holes weren't perfectly round.

Drum-making professionals use drills and round files, so this anomaly is highly unlikely.

At this point I decided that the drums would be returned, so I filed an eBay claim, boxed the kit, and sent it back to Canada. Of course, during this process I made promises to myself about not buying from a foreign country, not bidding on anything I didn't really want, and inspecting things fully as soon as they arrive.

My conclusion is that since the blue-sparkle plastic used on the fake snare matched the other drums so well, a donor bass drum must have given up its middle covering, which was then glued on a modern shell. Then a '70s metal Dyna-Sonic must have been stripped of its parts, to be mounted on the counterfeit drum. Perhaps the metal donor snare had no tone control (these were frequently removed to minimize rattle), so our forger didn't have one to use on this drum.

Why would someone go to such great lengths to make a fake drum? Well, for \$200 or \$300, this person was able to re-create a wood Dyna-Sonic that he could then sell for \$2,000 or more. How often is this happening? Just look on eBay for Dyna-Sonic and Powertone metal shells for sale without hardware. Somebody took those parts for a reason.

So the next time you're shopping for vintage drums, be sure to examine the shells carefully, count the plies, take off the lugs to check the finish, and get an expert opinion from someone who's familiar with that particular brand. You never know what you may, or may not, be getting.



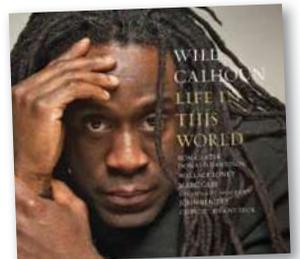
Will Calhoun Is Getting a New Kit, and a Lucky Winner Is Getting His Old One!

This Mapex Saturn "Laser Canary" kit has been around the world and back, serving Will Calhoun, Living Colour, and their fans for years. Now you have a chance to win it. The 8-piece kit features 16x20 and 18x22 bass drums, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, a 6x13 Black Panther Nomad snare, and a 5.5x14 wood snare.



First Prize: Will's Mapex Saturn kit, a dozen pairs of Will Calhoun Living Colour Vic Firth drumsticks, and an autographed copy of Will's CD *Life in This World* on Motéma Music.

Second Prize: A 6x13 Mapex Brass Nomad Signature snare drum, a dozen pairs of Will Calhoun Living Colour Vic Firth drumsticks, and an autographed copy of Will's CD *Life in This World* on Motéma Music.



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1. To enter, visit www.modrnmr.com between the dates below and look for the Will Calhoun/Mapex/Vic Firth Contest button (one entry per email address). 2. ODDS OF WINNING DEPEND ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE ENTRIES RECEIVED. 3. CONTEST BEGINS SEPTEMBER 1, 2013, AND ENDS NOVEMBER 30, 2013. 4. Grand Prize Drawing: Winner will be selected by random drawing on December 11, 2013. Winner will be notified by phone or email on or about December 13, 2013. 5. Employees, and their immediate families, of Modern Drummer, Mapex, KHS, Vic Firth, Inc., Motéma Music, 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: First Prize: One (1) winner will receive Will Calhoun's Mapex Saturn "Laser Canary" drumkit. The kit includes one (1) each: 16x20 and 18x22 bass drums, 8x10 and 9x12 rack toms, 16x16 and 16x18 floor toms, a 6x13 Black Panther Nomad snare, and a 5.5x14 wood snare. The prize includes some Mapex hardware and cymbal stands but does not include throne, bass drum pedals, hi-hat stand, or cymbals. Also included are twelve (12) pairs of Will Calhoun Living Colour Vic Firth drumsticks, and one (1) autographed copy of the Life in This World CD on Motéma Music. Approximate retail value of prize: \$5,365. Second Prize: One (1) winner will receive one (1) 13x6, 2.3mm brass Mapex Nomad Signature snare drum, twelve (12) pairs of Will Calhoun Living Colour Vic Firth sticks, and one (1) autographed copy of the Life in This World CD on Motéma Music. Approximate retail value of prize: \$635. Approximate retail value of contest: \$6,000. 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/Will Calhoun-Mapex-Vic Firth/Official Rules/Winner's List, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009.

NEW
and
NOTABLE



DW Vault Edge Snare Drum

The Vault Edge snare, which is said to have a dark, warm, and musical sound, uses rings made of Sabian B20 bell bronze and a 10-ply lake birch core. Each of these limited edition drums is hand-signed by DW designer John Good. Features include a MAG throw-off system with three-position butt plate, True Tone snare wires, True Pitch stainless steel tension rods, 3 mm steel True Hoops, DW heads by Remo, and custom antique bronze plating. Fifty 6x14 drums will be built; they come in an oversize carrying case. List price: \$2,499.99.

dwdrums.com



YAMAHA Electronic Drums

New DTX502 electronic drumkits feature newly designed tom pads, a lighter-weight steel rack, a new drum trigger module with a streamlined front panel layout, and USB connectivity. Additional upgrades include almost twice the ROM, more than 250 additional sounds, and new training and education functions. Audio samples and MIDI files can be imported for further expandability.

The DTX522K has a three-zone 8" DTX-PAD snare, three 7.5" tom pads, three-zone ride and crash cymbals, and a three-zone hi-hat pad. List price: \$1,507.

Featuring two 13" three-zone cymbal pads, the DTX532K has a vertical-motion hi-hat pad that mounts to the included hi-hat stand. List price: \$1,732.

The DTX562K upgrades the toms to an all DTX-PAD configuration, with three 7" pads, and lists for \$2,637. The new DTX-PAD features a textured-cellular-silicone head that introduces small air bubbles into foamed silicone.

yamahadrums.com



DDRUM Paladin Maple Drumkit

The Paladin Maple drumkit is offered in two new sparkle lacquer finishes. Vintage coral lacquer draws on classic '50s coral with a hint of champagne sparkle. Blue spark is a deep blue on a bed of blue-black that transforms in the light for different effects. Originally built for punk drummer DJ Bonebrake (X, the Knitters, the Flesh Eaters), the blue spark finish is now available worldwide in five different configurations.

ddrum.com

ON-STAGE STANDS DrumFire CB4000 Cymbal Bag

Constructed of 50D nylon, the CB4000 cymbal bag holds up to four 22" models in its primary pocket, while the smaller pocket accommodates hi-hats and cymbals up to 15". Adjustable backpack straps allow for hands-free transport and can be tucked inside a back pocket when not in use. The bag features double-pull zippers, a double handle with a hook-and-loop closure, and an interior felt insert for cushioning between cymbals. A drumstick holder accommodates three pairs of sticks. List price: \$79.99.

onstagestands.com





REMO Pyramid Drum Stand and Powerstroke 3 Black Dot Bass Drum Heads

Remo's Pyramid wire drum stand is designed to lift hand drums off the floor to let the bass tones resonate more fully. The drum stays in place with a nonslip rubber base, which can tilt at any angle. Featuring a patent-pending lightweight three-tiered design, the stand can accommodate drums with an inner diameter opening at the base of 7.125", 5.90", or 5.36". It fits 10" to 18" Mondo djembes, Versa timbaus and djembes, Advent djembes, and more. List price: \$43.

Offered in Clear, Coated, and Smooth White, Powerstroke 3 Black Dot drumheads are said to provide deeper low tones for bass drums, with durability and a focused attack. Inspired by drummer Steve Smith, the P3 Black Dot features one ply of 10 mil film, with a 10 mil inlay ring and a 5 mil dot. Available sizes range from 14" to 32".

remo.com



TOCA Custom Deluxe Congas and Bongos

Toca's Custom Deluxe wood drums are made from Asian oak and are now available in blue wood, dark wood, and natural high-gloss finishes. Custom Deluxe fiberglass congas and bongos feature silver and red sparkle finishes.

The wood congas feature a contemporary Afro-Cuban shape that is said to amplify the volume and resonance, while Custom Deluxe fiberglass congas are made with a larger bowl for deep bass tones. All Custom Deluxe bongos have a contoured shape. The congas are available as an 11" quinto (list price: \$546), an 11.75" conga (\$572), and a 12.5" tumbadora (\$629). The bongos (\$387) feature 7" and 8.5" heads. tocapercussion.com

Bell Brass



Swamp Dawg



Retro-Luxe



Walnut



GRETSCH Snare Drums

The brushed-finish, solid Bell Brass 6.5x14, 10-lug snare drum is said to provide a distinct, cutting tone. It's fitted with twenty-strand snare wires and die-cast hoops. List price: \$1,535.99.

The Swamp Dawg snare uses an 8x14, 6-ply mahogany shell and has eight tube lugs, 2.3 mm chrome triple-flange hoops, 42-strand snare wires, 30-degree bearing edges, and a satin natural finish. This drum is designed to have a throaty, lo-fi timbre. List price: \$615.99.

The Walnut snare has a chocolate-brown wood-grain finish with two bands of maple inlays around the center of the shell. Available in 6.5x14, 10-lug and 7x13, 8-lug models, these snares feature 8-ply shells, 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops, 20-strand snare wires, and a gloss lacquer finish with 30-degree bearing edges. List price: \$460.99.

Made with thirty vertical interlocking staves, as opposed to the traditional method of ply lamination, Gretsch snare drums feature an .875" shell in oak or cherry. Each is supplied with 3 mm chrome triple-flange hoops and a Remo Coated Ambassador batter head. The drum features a satin natural finish and has 45-degree bearing edges on a 6.5x14 shell. List price: \$920.99.

Featuring a 6.5x14 maple shell with sixteen lugs, Retro-Luxe snare drums are available in two-tone pewter and black and two-tone pewter and white, with an embossed badge and metal banding around the center of the shell. The drums are fitted with 2.3 mm triple-flange hoops, 20-strand snare wires, and 30-degree bearing edges. They come with a gloss lacquer finish. List price: \$385.99.

gretschdrums.com



STEFONIK Percussion Practice Sleeves

Stefonik practice sleeves are designed to convert sticks, mallets, and beaters into practice tools. The sleeves dampen the initial attack, which mellows the timbre and provides resistance to help percussionists build speed and endurance. Sleeves are available for sticks, keyboard and marching mallets, and bass drum beaters.

stefonik.com



AHEAD Armor Cases and Practice Pads

Recently introduced Ahead Armor cases include the oversize (21x15x15) cajon case (\$119.99) and the Busi backpack with pockets for sticks, keys, snacks, small accessories, and a laptop computer or tablet (\$109.99). The 16x14 multi-snare case includes two padded fleece spacers and lists for \$114.99. The spacers are available separately for \$24.99.

Ahead has also developed two new practice pads that re-create the performance characteristics of marching snare drums. The full-size 14" S-Hoop marching pad features a hard carbon-fiber surface and a snare effect for a sound and feel similar to that of a tightly tuned head. The pad includes an S-Hoop counterhoop for rimshots and rimclicks and a padded bottom so that it can be placed on top of a standard 14" drum. List price: \$89.95. The 10" marching pad features a white hard-rubber playing surface and built-in snare effect to emulate the sound and feel of high-tension marching drums in a more compact and portable form. List price: \$54.95.

bigbangdist.com



GIBRALTAR Drum Thrones

The Gibraltar 9908 throne features double-braced legs, a four-point base with a spindle height adjustment, and a 17" motorcycle-style seat with contoured lower lumbar support and accent stitching.

GG510T (27") and GG510S (21") stools come with an attached footrest and can be fitted with an adjustable lower-lumbar backrest support (GGSLBR) that accommodates all Gibraltar 13" round pre-drilled seats. The stools are compact yet provide solid construction, with heavy-duty rubber feet, cast-metal parts with no metal-to-metal contact, and tripod memory lock. List prices: \$290 for the Gibraltar 9980, \$165 for the GG510S, and \$169 for the GG510T. The GGSLBR backrest support is \$100.

gibraltarhardware.com



TIKI Custom Drums

Tiki Drums is a U.K.-based company specializing in custom-built instruments inspired by the drums of yesteryear. Established in 2008 by the New Zealand-born drummer and restorer Preston Prince, Tiki merges traditional techniques with a contemporary feel. The drums feature vintage-style bearing edges.

tikidrums.com



SWIRLYGIG SwirlyHook

The SwirlyHook slips on a mic stand or .625" tube and holds headphones, tambourines, cables, or other items around the studio or stage. It has no moving parts, stays in place using friction and gravity, and is sold as a single hook or in a four-pack.

swirlygig.com



SLAP TONE Djembe Accessories

The Djembe Pocket fits over the base of a djembe with a drawstring closure; it extends high enough to be able to hold sticks and other accessories but not so far as to touch the head. The canvas pouch zips closed to protect the contents and fits most drum bases. The Djembe Mute is a practice pad that reduces volume and eliminates bass sounds. It fits drums up to 16".

The Classic djembe bag fits drums up to 15" in diameter and features layers of hard and soft foam for protection. The Premium djembe bag was designed for percussionists who need to carry or check a drum on an airplane. It has 1,000-denier nylon on the outside and .75" of hard foam on all sides. Additional features include side pockets for sticks and bells, a carrying handle, and padded shoulder straps. The bag holds drums up to 16" in diameter.

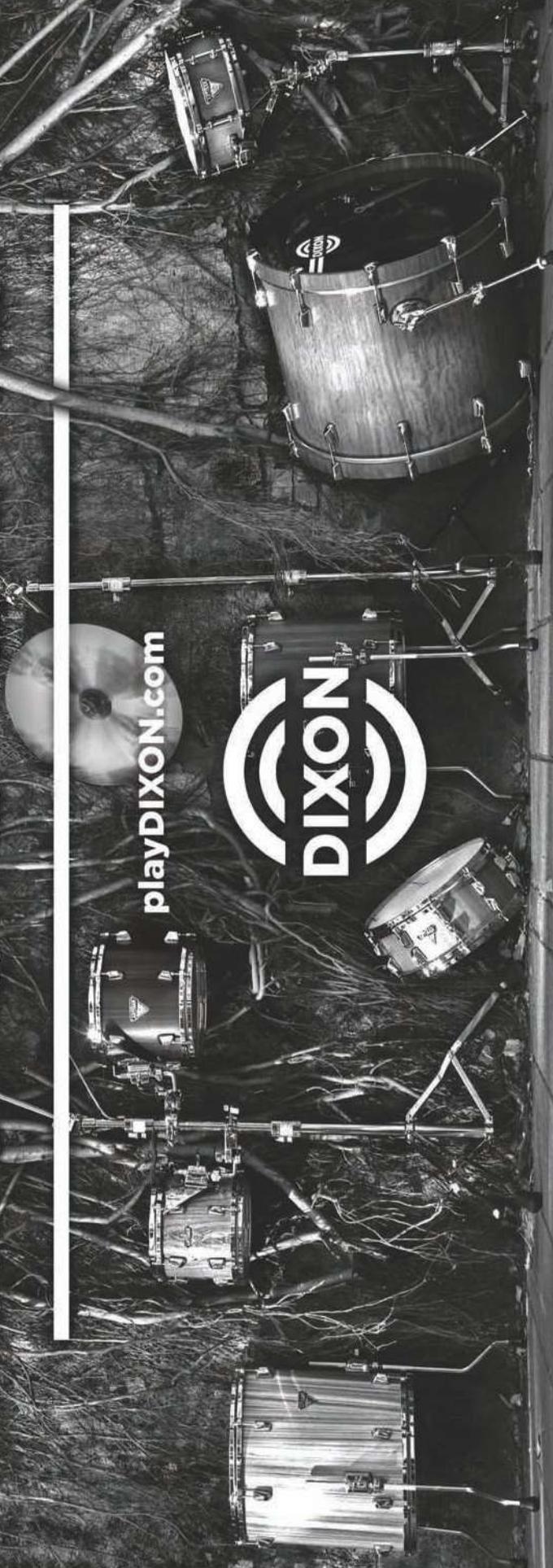
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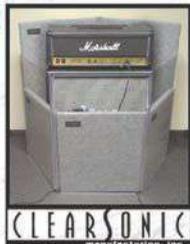
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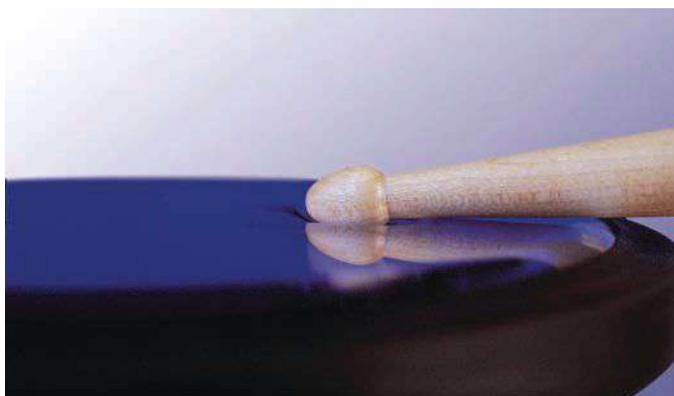
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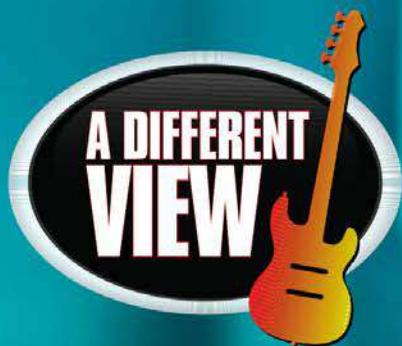
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Meshell Ndegeocello

by Eric Wechter

For some bandleaders, the rhythm section is simply a source of support and little more. For others, the drummer and bass player are the band's very heart and soul—and few artists on the scene today embody this notion as deeply as Meshell Ndegeocello.

Meshell Ndegeocello is a bass player with the soul of a drummer—“I’m a drummer deep down inside,” she says—and a bandleader whose heart is lifted by the drums.

“It’s truly the drummer who keeps me buoyant and excited,” Ndegeocello explains. “I may be perceived as the leader, but with every drummer I’ve played with, please know that I am following! The drummer is in fact the emotional guide and leader. In France drums are called *la batterie*, which is interesting because I think they are the energetic foundation of the music. The drummer sets the tone of everything. You think they’re just the background information. To me, they’re the outline, and you just color within.”

For the past twenty years, Ndegeocello has colored bold musical strokes within very broad outlines. She’s recorded stylistically diverse albums with drummers such as Gene Lake, Abe Laboriel Jr., Chris Dave, Charles

Haynes, and Deantoni Parks. Each of these players has contributed what the bassist and vocalist describes as “a very strong individual personality,” to help her create the most meaningful songs possible. “I choose people who are not trying to be like anyone else,” she says. It’s this “sincere sense of self” that helps shape the music’s rhythmic concept and develop its emotional content.

Ndegeocello takes a music-first approach to songwriting, by developing connections with her band based on the players’ musical personalities. “The music inspires my thoughts, inspires what I want people to feel,” she says. “The music is what gets everything going.”

Ndegeocello recalls a discussion she had with a prominent drummer that really cemented this belief for her. “The leader of a jazz ensemble I played with said, ‘When I sit down behind the drums, first and foremost, I’m a black man.’ And I thought, *What are you talking about?* I just don’t think that

way. Music is the only thing that frees me from closed-minded ideas about being human. Ever since then, I’ve been like: You can dress in drag, you can do whatever for a living, but when you’re on stage or recording, what you play sticks out more to me than anything else. That’s the realest experience we can have. The other things are just based on conjecture and generalizations. It takes time to know a person.”

One person whose playing Ndegeocello has gotten to know quite well is Deantoni Parks. He’s been the sole drummer on her last three albums, including her latest, *Pour Une Âme Souveraine: A Dedication to Nina Simone*. “He’s kind of my idol,” Meshell says. “It’s funny, I play differently with him, which is probably why I have such adoration for him. Most people lock me into this thing of ‘You play funk bass.’ Like I’m just a funk-fusion player. But Deantoni brings out all elements in me—electronic music, punk, African, just anything. Often it’s beyond categorization. He is very much based in meter. Even when he gives the illusion that time has stretched or constrained itself, he’s always in time. You could have him play and then set a metronome to it—actually, we have. I don’t record to a click with him. When I play with him,

it's beyond that. I feel like I'm more coloring than a bass player."

Recently Ndegeocello has also been inspired and "humbled by" Charles Haynes. "I wish more people would sing

"Drumming is the most physically demanding gig, the most intellectually demanding gig. The intellect, the physical gift, the endurance—I have the utmost respect for it."

his praises," she says. "I just played something with him, with [pianist] Jason Moran, and that's where I really got to understand Charles' greatness. To me [it's like] he has deconstructed every rhythm within the four-bar pattern. And not only is he technically proficient, but he swings in a way you could never imagine. I've seen him play straight-ahead jazz gigs, and I've seen him play with Kanye West. He has a way of making everything incredibly human and at the same time technically proficient beyond belief."

According to Ndegeocello, Haynes and Parks share an extraordinary ability to mechanically dissect a drum pattern and cling tightly to the time. Yet they play with an open, expansive feel that enables Meshell to find the perfect place to slot her bass line and settle into a deep groove. These dual attributes are what she implies a drummer should strive to attain. "Drummers often believe they've learned the proper drum part," she explains, "but then they've neglected to integrate the subtleties of dynamics and feel. They just play...not with the musicians, but it's as if they are alone. They don't breathe or float or create space. A drummer can never be afraid of space."

Ndegeocello believes that by embracing space and remaining flexible, drummers can develop their feel to deliver anything a song may require. "I am not attached to specific parts," she says. "Feel is what is of great importance. I can only hope that the drummer is interested in many areas of music, not only style but sonics and possibilities. More than once I've had to make the decision [playing live] whether to try to emulate the recording or take a chance and refocus the music,

which requires all involved to listen, adapt, and execute. It's hard if a musician, especially the drummer, can't shift in a way that maintains the needed groove and feel, but instead creates a

part that is singular to him.... And don't slow down."

The right feel was essential for Ndegeocello to capture the quiet urgency of 1999's *Bitter*, which is among her most popular albums. A sharp departure from her earlier, more aggressive, hip-hop-influenced recordings, *Bitter* features string arrangements and acoustic instrumentation. On songs such as "Sincerity," "Faithful," and "Loyalty," Ndegeocello searches for reassurance in the face of the fragile uncertainties of relationships. She needed a drummer who could, as she puts it, "embody the feeling of the songs."

"Abe. No one plays like him," Ndegeocello says of studio ace and Paul McCartney drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. "He's a sonic monster and a drumming monster. His feel was never too slow and rarely too fast. That's what I appreciate about him. And somehow he's a great—and I say this in the best way—actor. But it's not in the viewing; it's in the playing. You feel like you're seeing the song with him. That's what I really enjoyed about him. Everything had this nice circular groove to it. He's a tonal genius. And he's also a superior musician."

The next album that

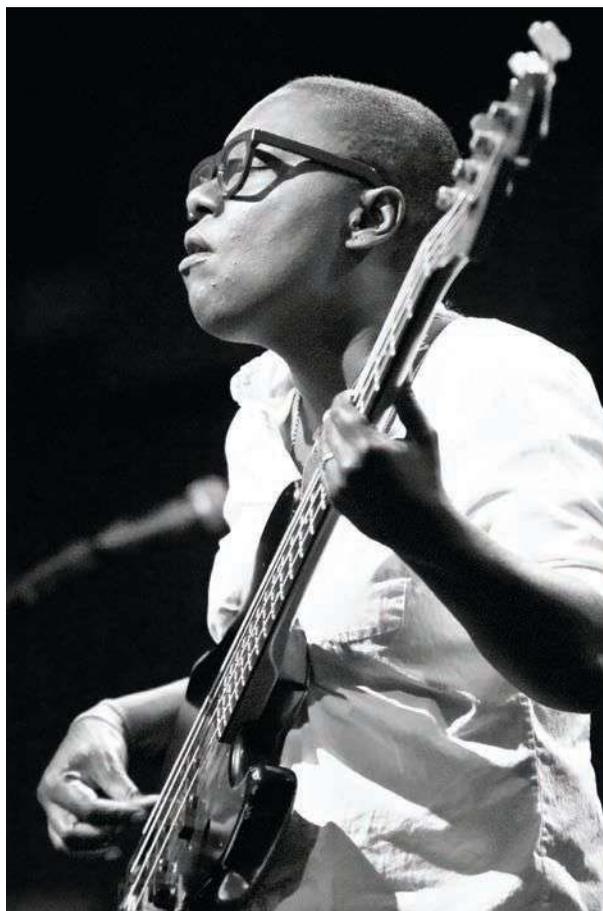
Ndegeocello recorded exclusively with one drummer was 2003's *Comfort Woman*, an astral-funk celebration of love and romance. Gene Lake, Meshell's timekeeper throughout her early years

and her longtime friend, couldn't make the recording. Lake recommended Chris Dave, who was playing with a diverse range of

artists, including jazz saxophonist Kenny Garrett and R&B stalwart Mint Condition. In other words, the perfect choice to help take her listeners into a realm of celestial funk-fusion.

"We played together, and it was immediate," Ndegeocello recalls. "I think I played the best I ever played as a bassist with Chris, because I feel him more than I hear him. In the ether of whatever is your soul or your spirit, I feel him more than I hear him. So playing with him, it was non-intellectual. It was something that was just intuitive."

But before Dave, before Laboriel, Haynes, Parks, and many other drum



titans, there was Lake. It was coming up with Lake and witnessing not only his extraordinary drum skills but also his complete musicianship that helped form Ndegeocello's deep appreciation for drummers. "Drumming is the most physically demanding gig, the most intellectually demanding gig, and you have to have a prowess that allows all four of your limbs to interact separately," Meshell says. "All those things—the intellect, the physical gift, the endurance—I just have the utmost respect for it."

"I met Gene in New York. He played

bass, and keyboards, and everything. He was this really well-rounded musician. He and I played together, and it was instant lock. He really showed me that drummers weren't just meatheads...you know, that kind of perception people have. His harmony and his skills were super-evident. And his musicality—he could learn every part of the song, and I really respected that."

In fact, respect for the multiple talents of the drummers she's worked with is something that Ndegeocello hopes to showcase on a grander scale.

She has a dream project, as she calls it, which, if it comes together, will be nothing less than historic.

"I want to create a new understanding of drums in a recording," she explains. "Something that highlights the drums where they are the forefront instrument, in a way that people don't perceive drums. I would have eight different drummers. It would pay tribute to the greats. I've got two originals, and there are definitely some Tony Williams compositions. And some Max Roach M'Boom stuff. Keyboards, my first choice would be Robert Glasper. Mike Moreno, who's able to whale rhythmically on the guitar, he'd be my choice. Mark Kelly, an amazing bass player, he'd be my upright player. A lot of the vibes and orchestral instruments I would rethink as well."

"Chris Dave, he's definitely Tony Williams. Deantoni is Max Roach in the future. And Charles Haynes is...spiritually, I mean, he's like nobody. He just encompasses a mindset from the past and the future."

Other drummers Ndegeocello has in mind for the project include Damion Reid, Mark Guiliana, Nasheet Waits, and Dafnis Prieto. "I think that right now, Mark is probably one of the greatest drummers out there playing in the jazz genre," Meshell says. "Hands down, he's the one. Nasheet Waits is amazing too—he's definitely stretching the boundaries, finding new things. And Dafnis Prieto blows my *mind*."

Even more so than making the recording, Ndegeocello is excited to take this project on the road. "It'd have to be with all of them," she says. "Could you imagine that? But I'd only have two drummers play at a time. I don't have any favorites. That's the beauty of the music—it would be different every night. I can't wait for people to hear Deantoni play the vibes, or Charles Haynes play the timpani. They just have so many other gifts. I want to take them all, so you could experience all of them playing together."



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BENNY GREEN *MAGIC BEANS*

A 2013 MD Pro Panelist is exactly the right puzzle piece for this on-target reimagining of classic jazz.

Benny Green's inspiration for this set of original compositions was the distinctive trumpet/sax front-line sound of Blue Note's classic '50s and '60s quintets. Here's the rub: No sax or trumpet is included here.

Instead, through his piano playing within a trio setting, Green seeks to imply the harmonic qualities that those instruments would normally provide. He succeeds. As always, Green brings precision and insight to his swinging, purposeful playing. The same virtues shine in master **Kenny Washington's** drumming. There is no better choice of timekeeper for Green's artistry.

Supported by a frequent rhythm mate, bassist Peter Washington, Kenny and his top-shelf swing feel ride the sweet spot from the first bar to the last, always forward moving yet so relaxed. The drummer outlines and punctuates phrases crisply, and his solo spots are mini compositions. And on the ballad "Harold Land," he expresses pulse with the softest whisper of brush dynamics. Sterling straight-ahead. (Sunnyside) **Je' Potter**



1939 ENSEMBLE *HOWL & BITE*

Gamelan-like bell sounds, snippets of electronica, and eerie drones are but some of the sounds employed by this adventurous percussion duo.

Featuring vibraphonist David Coniglio and longtime Breeders kit drummer **Jose Medeles**, 1939 Ensemble operates in a heightened state of musical and rhythmic interplay. On "Sabotage,"

a trance-y, off-kilter stunner, Medeles shadows Coniglio's vibes with bursts of 32nd-note beats, pedal-to-the-metal accented triplets, and occasional drag patterns, single-handedly rocketing the average bpm tally for the record. Throughout this cross-genre effort, Medeles underscores the piano-like presence of Coniglio's resonant tones with playful, witty, and sometimes powerful grooves, even on the gently swaying, cello-centric closer, "Big Sleep," a waltz-like piece in three. (Jealous Butcher Records) **Will Romano**



MIGUEL ZENÓN & THE RHYTHM COLLECTIVE *OYE!!! LIVE IN PUERTO RICO*

This very live date of Latin-ized jazz awakens the brain and the feet.

New York City-based, Puerto Rican-born saxophonist Miguel Zenón returned to his homeland to capture the energetic 2011 performances contained here, with help from a group of Puerto

Rican musicians decidedly on the same page. Tito Puente's classic "Oye Como Va" finds drummer **Tony Escapa** and percussionist **Reynaldo De Jesús** accenting before the main beat and, midway through, locking into the kind of propulsive, infectious rhythm only Afro-Caribbean jazz lifers can pull off. Also dig Escapa's chops-filled solo on "Double Edge" for a lesson in speed and control. (miguelzenon.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



THIEFS *THIEFS*

This adventurous collective, featuring the David S. Ware/Matthew Shipp collaborator Guillermo E. Brown, is determined to move jazz forward.

Comprising the wide-open instrumentation of sax, bass, and drums, and made up of an amalgam of acoustic and electric styles, the debut album from these genre benders features tried-and-true improvisatory performance filtered through modern production. Drummer **Guillermo E.**

Brown, whose understated vocals also find their way onto the disc, cleverly employs electronics as he builds the funky linear pattern on "Doute/s," and lays down a sparse but heavy kick/snare groove on "The Actual Neef." No trading fours 'round these parts, just off-kilter yet danceable new-think. (wethiefs.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER *EVERBLACK*

A new master blaster looks to make his mark with the death-metal vets.

On the Black Dahlia Murder's sixth studio

album, frontman Trevor Strnad continues to make the band's legacy proud, with vicious vocals and lyrics that mine the dark depths of the macabre without ever seeming tired. New to the group's lineup is drummer **Alan Cassidy**, who possesses the necessary speed and brutality, as well as a stylistic range that keeps the songs fresh. This is immediately apparent, as the album commences with a sparsely restrained and musical intro populated mainly by cymbal work. Other percussive highlights include Cassidy's echoing groove under the haunting break/solo section of "Into the Everblack," the cymbal syncopation and kick flurries in the chorus of "Raped in Hatred by Vines of Thorn," and the blast-beat coordination in "Phantom Limb Masturbation." (Metal Blade) **Billy Brennan**



LONG DISTANCE CALLING *THE FLOOD INSIDE*

The incorporation of new sounds does little to dilute the power of this Pelican-esque post-rock group.

The Flood Inside is Long Distance Calling's first release with a full-time vocalist, but the band stays

true to its experimental, atmospheric, and largely instrumental base, employing the talents of singer Martin Fischer as an additional color rather than a new focal point. The album opens with stark sounds accompanied by drummer **Janosch Rathmer's** unfolding tom rolls and slamming snare/kick/hat beats. "Breaker" sees Rathmer travel the expanse from ethereal sparseness to arena-rock bombast, while "Black Hole" closes the set with appropriately spacey electronic experimentation punctuated by more of the drummer's defining tom work. (Superball Music) **Billy Brennan**



GILAD HEKSELMAN *THIS JUST IN*

A series of delicate jazz conversations among the newest crop of young lions.

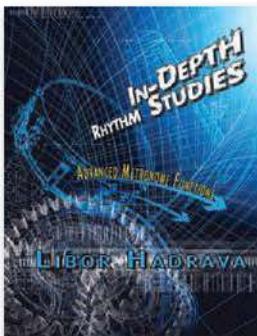
Openness and sensitivity are on full display on the New York-based guitarist Gilad Hekselman's latest vehicle for his introspective tunes.

Album opener "Above" features the continually impressive drummer **Marcus Gilmore** applying his advanced rhythmic conception and extraordinarily musical commentary to a lengthy closing solo filled with hip metric modulation, sizzling snare ruffs, and a beautifully recorded, dark-hued ride cymbal. And on the series of five brief pieces interspersed throughout, named "Newsflash," Gilmore and Hekselman improvise masterful little duo vignettes, ranging from a half-minute bizarre waltz to a distorted rocker of dirty chords and crashes.

(jazzvillagemusic.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

MULTIMEDIA

RATINGS SCALE



IN-DEPTH RHYTHM STUDIES: ADVANCED METRONOME FUNCTIONS

BY LIBOR HADRAVA

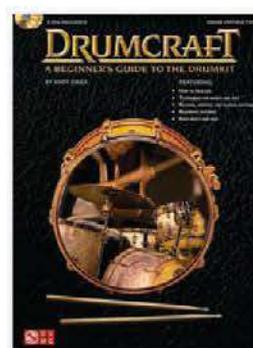
BOOK LEVEL: ADVANCED

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If skipping the training wheels is your style, then dive right into drummer/educator Libor Hadrava's closing suggestion to "play tuplet

subdivisions over an ostinato while singing a repeated melodic phrase in a different time signature against a click marking the 'e' of the beat." Hadrava helps the reader develop "time awareness" through exercises involving complicated things like "repositioning" the metronome and vocalizing rhythmic patterns while already executing four-way independence on the kit, essentially creating five-way independence (see above suggestion). Included are head-scratching illustrations of "Superimposing Different Grids" (like sixteen against nine) and reminders to always relate to Hadrava's Master Code—the "invisible, binding force and main pulse of the music." Be sure to lock yourself away for a while. (liborhadrava.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



DRUMCRAFT: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE DRUMKIT

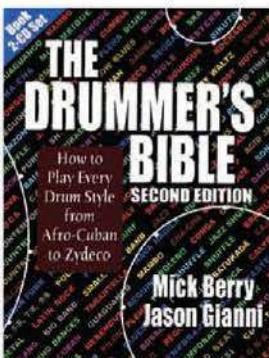
BY ANDY ZIKER

BOOK/CDS (2) LEVEL: ALL \$22.99

There's a lot of ground covered in this jam-packed 138-page instructional. Andy Ziker starts with establishing a goal-oriented practice routine. Next, he explores open-handed versus crossover playing, foot pedal technique, and sticking methods.

The reading portion begins with rudiments, counting, and chart reading with workbook exercises. Rock beats and fills advance quickly into some drumset tricks, before Ziker discusses the various grips (with lots of photo examples). Accents, more rock beats and rudiments, and ethnic patterns lead into jazz, odd-time grooves, and finally double bass basics. Although the audio tracks are fairly well marked in the book, the accompanying CDs could be improved by including vocal cues for each exercise, since multiple examples are played on several audio tracks. Overall, though, there's lots of bang for the buck in this package. (Cherry Lane)

Mike Haid



THE DRUMMER'S BIBLE: HOW TO PLAY EVERY DRUM STYLE FROM AFRO-CUBAN TO ZYDECO (SECOND EDITION) BY MICK BERRY AND JASON GIANNI

BOOK/CDS (2) LEVEL: ALL \$34.95

Recently updated by its coauthors to include nearly a hundred more reference grooves, this ambitious 200-plus-page tome continues to inspire, offering a variety of rhythmic concepts, from polka patterns to reggae beats to variations on the Afro-Cuban mambo. While the book's wide scope will undoubtedly draw criticism from drumming specialists of all stripes, the newly added grooves and historical info included here help forge a more complete guide. Although CD track sequences are (sometimes) out of sync with the text, a "Quick Reference" section and bite-size exercises help users navigate this encyclopedic behemoth. Mix in an intro by Simon Phillips, and beginners and advanced players alike have a credible, valuable, and manageable rhythmic resource. (seesharppress.com) **Will Romano**





Roy Burns' *Relaxed Hand Technique, Solo Secrets of the Left Hand and Bass Drum, and The Creative Drum Set Workbook*

Timeless Insights From a Drum-Education Originator

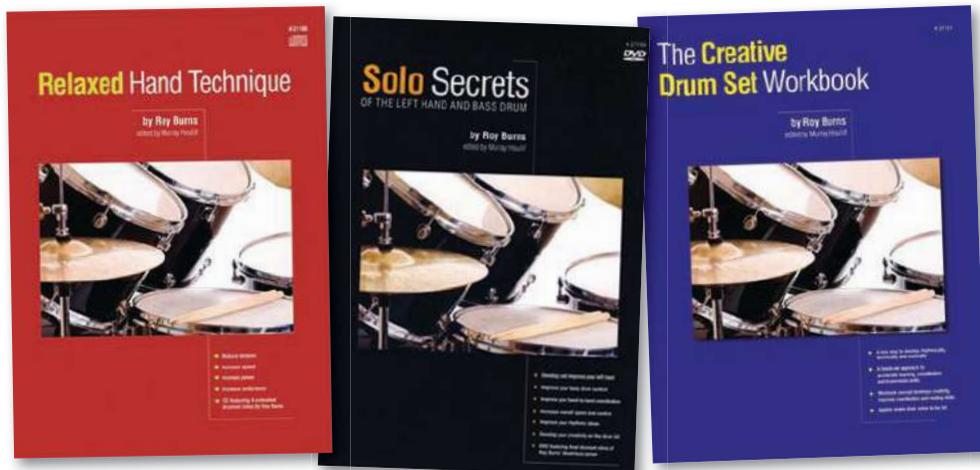
by Rick Mattingly

As a high school student practicing an exercise that his teacher gave him, Roy Burns noticed that the sound changed when he went from 8th notes to 8th-note triplets to 16th notes. While playing on a practice pad, he could hear the resonance in the wood of the drumstick when he played 8ths, but there was less resonance when he went to triplets and no resonance at all when he went to 16ths.

"I didn't think I was doing anything different, but the sound was not the same, so I must have been changing something," Burns says. "I realized I was tightening my grip whenever I went faster, so I slowed the exercise down and concentrated on staying relaxed as I went to the next-faster note value. After about six weeks I was able to play single strokes at any of those note values without any change in the sound, and I felt a lot more relaxed. So I began to practice everything that way."

The exercises Burns wrote to develop his ability to avoid tension no matter how fast or hard he was playing form the basis of his new book *Relaxed Hand Technique*, one of three simultaneously published by Kendor Music. A CD featuring several of his drum solos bears witness to the advantage of relaxation in terms of speed.

"Too many books tell people to try harder, or do more repetitions, or use heavier sticks to build up strength," Burns says. "It only seems to be drummers who are told to practice on something other than what we use to play with. Trumpet players don't practice on a great big trumpet, or stuff rags in it to make it harder to blow, to build up endurance. But drummers will practice with big sticks and wind up with tendinitis from overdoing it. I've even had teachers tell me that they have their students lift weights. I've never seen a fast weight lifter."



Burns says that being a drummer is more like being a runner or a swimmer, noting that those athletes are not muscle bound. He found that playing with a relaxed technique helped his endurance, as well as his speed. "Very rarely when you are playing a gig do you play as fast as you can for three or four hours," Roy explains. "What you need is control and the ability to play rhythms over and over without getting tired, tense, or stiff. That comes from being relaxed."

Burns traces his new books back to a broken pipe in his house that flooded several rooms—while cleaning up, he found notebooks and envelopes filled with exercises he had written for students as well as for himself. He showed the material to Murray Houllif, who organized it into three books, and Kendor agreed to put them out.

One of those new books is *Solo Secrets of the Left Hand and Bass Drum*, which includes a DVD of Burns' last drum clinic. The inspiration for the book came from Burns' early years in New York, watching such masters as Jo Jones, Buddy Rich, and Sonny Igoe. "Those guys did things between the left hand and the bass drum that I didn't see anybody else doing," Roy recalls. "They played so much that by the

end of the evening you were so overwhelmed with ideas that you couldn't develop any of them. So I disciplined myself to focus on a single thing on a given tune, like the right foot or the left hand. I did that for weeks until I recognized the patterns and saw how they were put together. That gave me the idea for this book, and it opens up a lot of possibilities in your playing."

Burns' third new volume, *The Creative Drum Set Workbook*, came from his teaching. He noticed that a lot of students could get around the drumset well during fills and solos but had very little rhythmic variety. So he wrote out some snare drum solos, and once students had mastered one, he had them orchestrate it around the kit, using different sound sources for the accents.

"That also came from listening to the great drummers when I first went to New York," Burns says. "I noticed that all the great players had multiple ways of playing the same rhythms. It was like they had a pool of favorite licks, but they would vary the sound sources so it seemed like they had endless ideas. So once you get the idea behind these solos, you can use them in endless ways."



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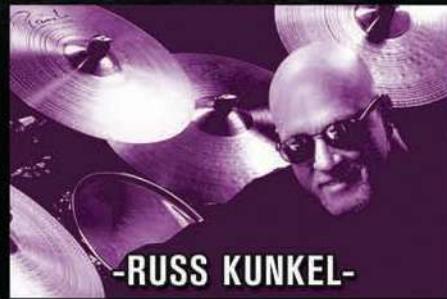
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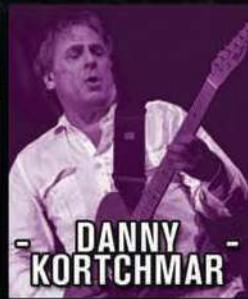
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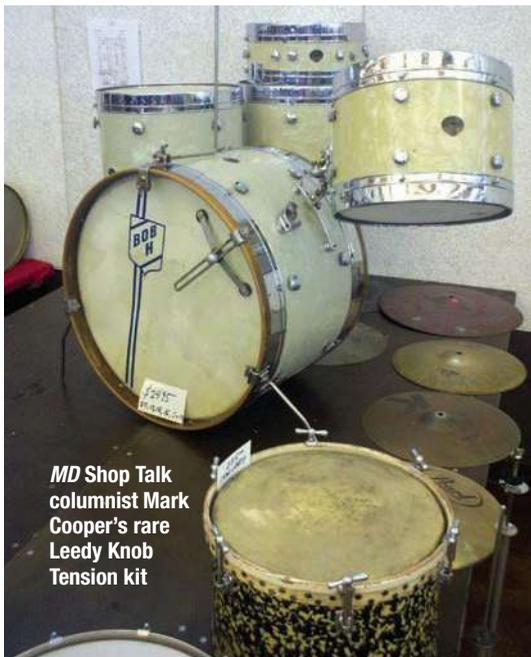


23rd Annual Chicago Drum Show



This past May 18 and 19, hundreds of drum collectors, players, and fans flocked to the Kane County Fairgrounds in St. Charles, Illinois, for the twenty-third annual Rebeats Chicago Drum Show, where some of the most precious custom and vintage drums in the world were on display and up for sale. The first day's festivities included main-stage clinics by the U.K.-born percussionist Jane Boxall, who performed a nice version of Gary Chaffee's drumset duet "Seventh Heaven" with her husband, Michael Allen; jazz/fusion great Paul Wertico, who filled in for cymbal historian Lennie DiMuzio with an excellent workshop on soloing; and swing-rocker Daniel Glass, who spent his allotted hour discussing





MD Shop Talk columnist Mark Cooper's rare Leedy Knob Tension kit



Boxall and Allen

Michael Hascala



Ho Etsu Taiko

Michael Hascala



the evolution of the shuffle. Funk drummer Rick Latham, who closed the show on the main stage, gave a master class at noon on day one. The first day also featured lectures in the foyer between the exhibit halls; Jon Cohan covered drum tuning, and Evans product specialist Dick Markus discussed the Level 360 system. Highlights from the second day included a master class with Glass and a rousing performance by the Ho Etsu Taiko ensemble.

HAPPY 93RD BIRTHDAY SAM ULANO

*Thank you for your dedication as a drummer and teacher. **Keep Swinging!***



Photo by Abdul Barahaha

Standing, left to right: Philip Capadora, Diana Nikkolas, Eddie "Stix" Liotard, Jim Guinere, Dennis Sedeta Jr., Michele Zalkin, Dennis Sedeta Sr., John Sarracco, Caryn Feder, Howie Reider, Peter Greco. Seated, left to right: Edie Reider, Sam Ulano, Nick.



Hoop Dreams

This outfit of vintage single-tension marching drums with calfskin heads was a labor of love for Jeff Sheard, who's from Toronto and now lives in Philadelphia. "All the drums have mahogany shells with maple hoops, with the exception of the first floor tom, which is walnut," Sheard says, explaining that he found the pieces on eBay and refinished them himself. "The bass drum and second floor tom are Ludwig, the 'rack tom' is WFL, the first floor tom is Leedy, the main snare is by an unknown maker, and the piccolo snare is from R.S. Williams & Sons of Toronto.

"All the shells were stripped, sanded, and refinished with twenty coats of gloss tung-oil varnish," Sheard continues. "The hoops were also stripped and treated with tung oil and then coated with polyurethane for durability. I installed new throw-offs on the snare drums to improve their playability. The stands are vintage WFL and Ludwig flat-base models, with the exception of the rack tom stand, and the cymbal stands are from the Gibraltar 8600 flat-base series. I found some vintage bass drum



spurs on Ebay as well."

Sheard, who plays these classic-looking stunners with Beaucoup Blue ("roots Americana") and the Illumination Band ("setting the poetry of Rumi to American folk music"), concludes, "They sound very cool, and our audiences are always intrigued by them."

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.



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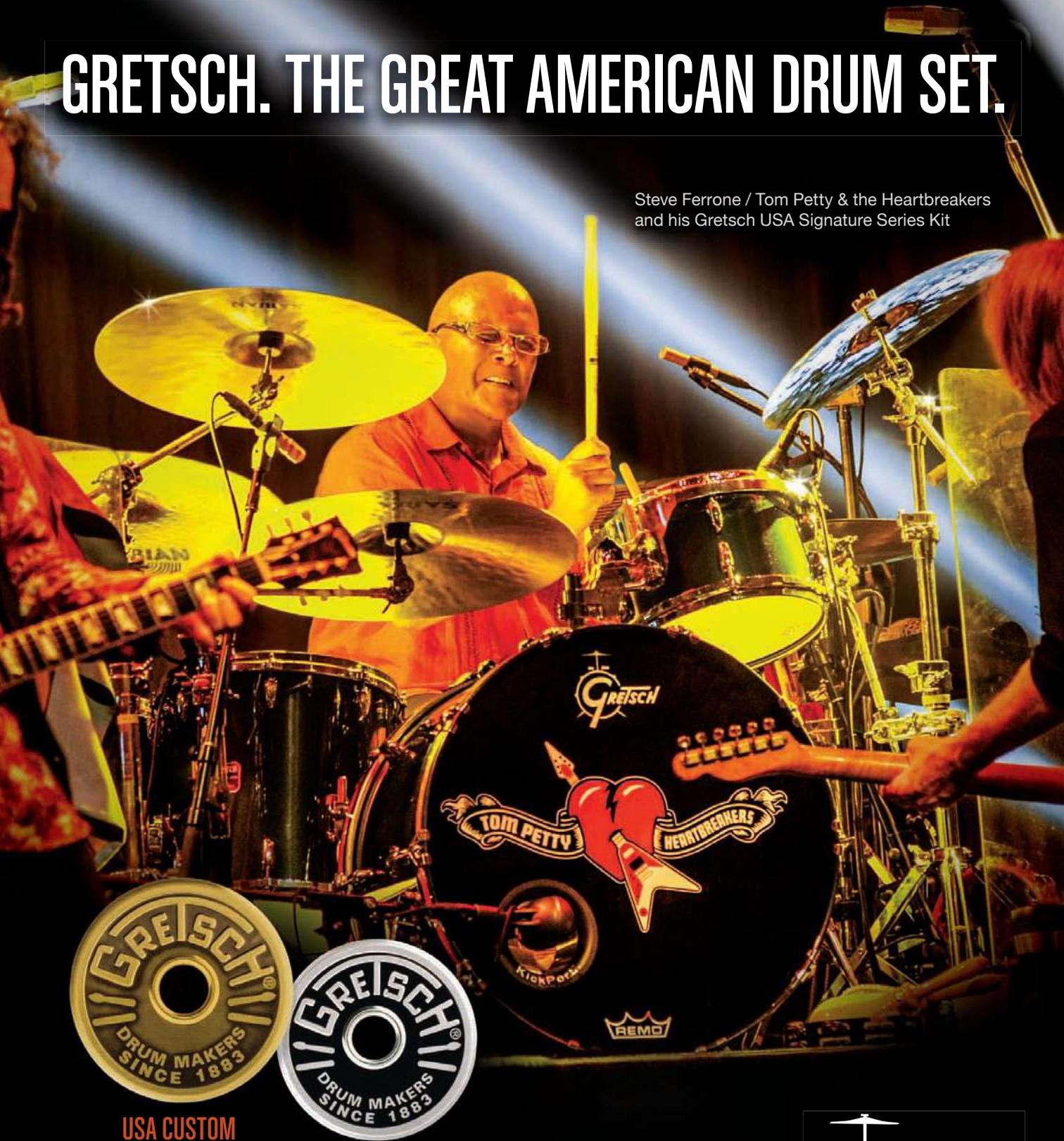


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