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July 2014

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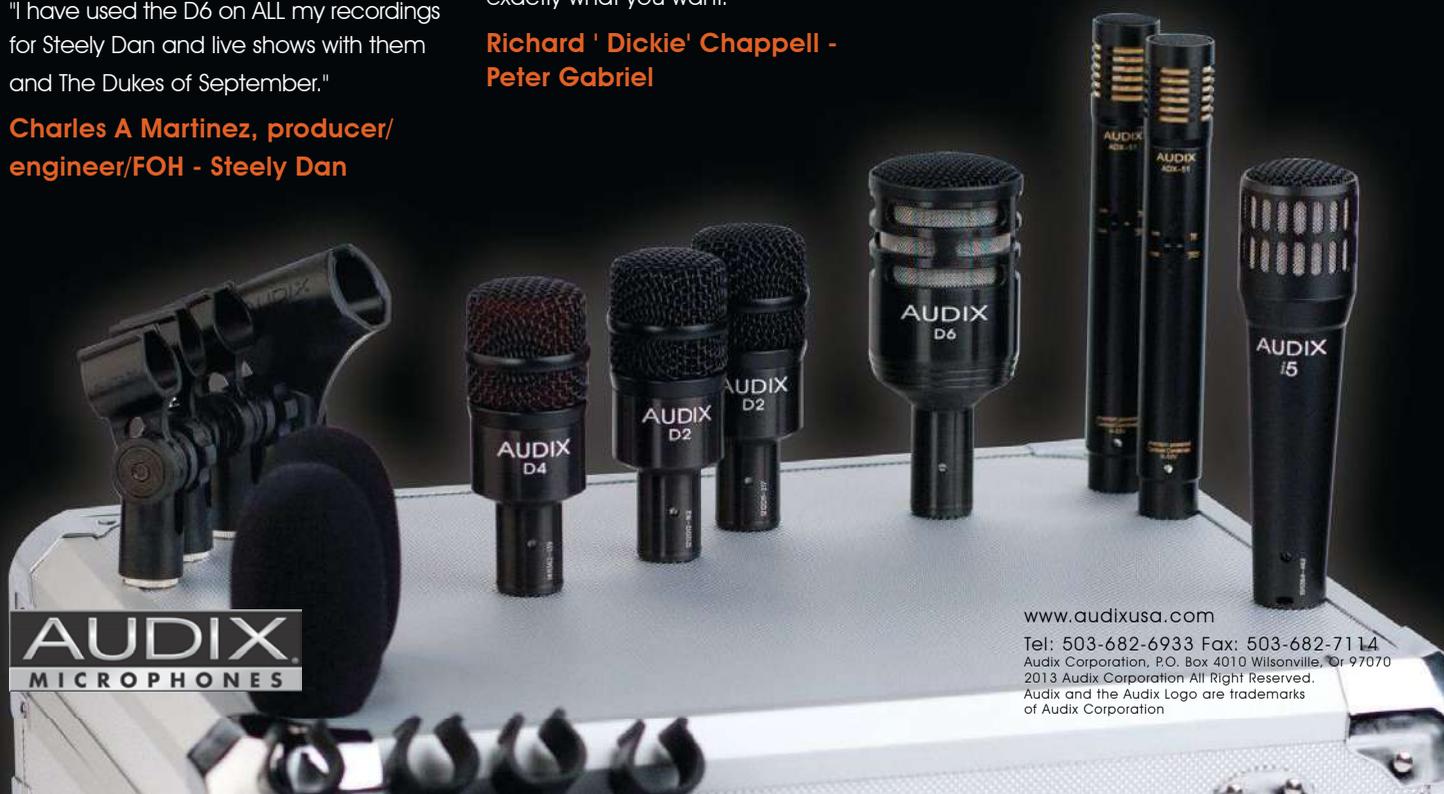
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# The Spice of Life

Part of the fun of creating (and reading) a magazine about drums, drummers, and drumming is being exposed to a wide range of new music, techniques, and gear that would never otherwise cross my radar. This issue is particularly eclectic, as we revisit a few *Modern Drummer* legends, including Omar Hakim, Simon Phillips, and Todd Sucherman, while introducing some hot new talent from very different ends of the musical spectrum, progressive metal drummer Anup Sastry and jazz/fusion band-leader Shirazette Tinnin.



For some heady drum chat, contributing writer Ken Micallef talks with modern-jazz great Gerald Cleaver to contemplate what it means to play “free,” while Jeff Potter sits down with Latin-jazz pianist/composer Arturo O’Farrill to discuss the universal language of swing. Then Will Romano goes “far out” with English drummer John “Twink” Alder, who made his mark during the psychedelic scene of the late ’60s and early ’70s playing with the Pretty Things and Pink Floyd’s “Crazy Diamond,” Syd Barrett, among others. As you’re reading these stories, as well as all the others in this issue, I urge you to check out the music that these inspiring artists have made. I’m sure it won’t fit everyone’s tastes, but that’s kinda the point. You have to try something to see if you like it, right? (Spotify users can get a head start by taking a listen to the editors’ picks included in this month’s playlist, which is posted at [moderndrummer.com](http://moderndrummer.com).)

For all you gear hounds, we’re excited to give you a first look at some smaller custom-shop products, including a high-end Canopus stave bubinga kit and Grover Pro customizable snares, as well as Spaun Drum Company’s new cymbal brand, Scymtek, and a cool new molded-plastic drum case from Gator. Vintage buffs will get a kick out of Mark Cooper’s history lesson on the Slingerland Radio King drumset as well.

If you’re looking for some new ideas to take into the practice room, we urge you to start with Canadian drummer/educator Jayson Brinkworth’s balance exercises. The article may fall under the column header Basics, but I can assure you that the patterns aren’t as simple as they seem. For a serious chops workout, check out the final installment in *Stick Technique* author Bill Bachman’s “Rhythm and Timing” series, which focuses on nailing all of the single 8th-note triplet partials. (If you missed parts one through five, back issues are available digitally from iTunes and print copies can be ordered at [moderndrummer.com/md-shop](http://moderndrummer.com/md-shop).) For a drumkit workout, Jazz Drummer’s Workshop columnist Steve Fidyk offers some challenging yet musical ways to apply the rhythm melodies found in Ted Reed’s classic book *Syncope* in 3/4, and our friend Powell Randolph explains how to build coordination and independence in an Afro-Cuban context. There’s definitely enough to work on in those four columns to keep you busy at least until the next issue hits the shelves.

On a more somber note, the drumming community lost two icons recently, pop/fusion/studio great Ricky Lawson and NYC-based educator/author Sam Ulano. Tributes to each of them are included in this month’s In Memoriam. And to celebrate Lawson’s influential drumming, we dug deep in his discography and grabbed some choice bits from his tenure with the contemporary fusion pioneers the Yellowjackets.

Enjoy the issue!

*Mike Dawson*

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The *Modern Drummer* Pro Panel is an open-ended group of professional drummers who contribute regularly to the magazine’s content. It represents an unparalleled amount of musical experience, which members share with readers across the spectrum of the magazine’s editorial mix. The Pro Panel was established in 2011, with multiple players added to its ranks during each of its first three years. Beginning in 2014, players are being added one at a time.

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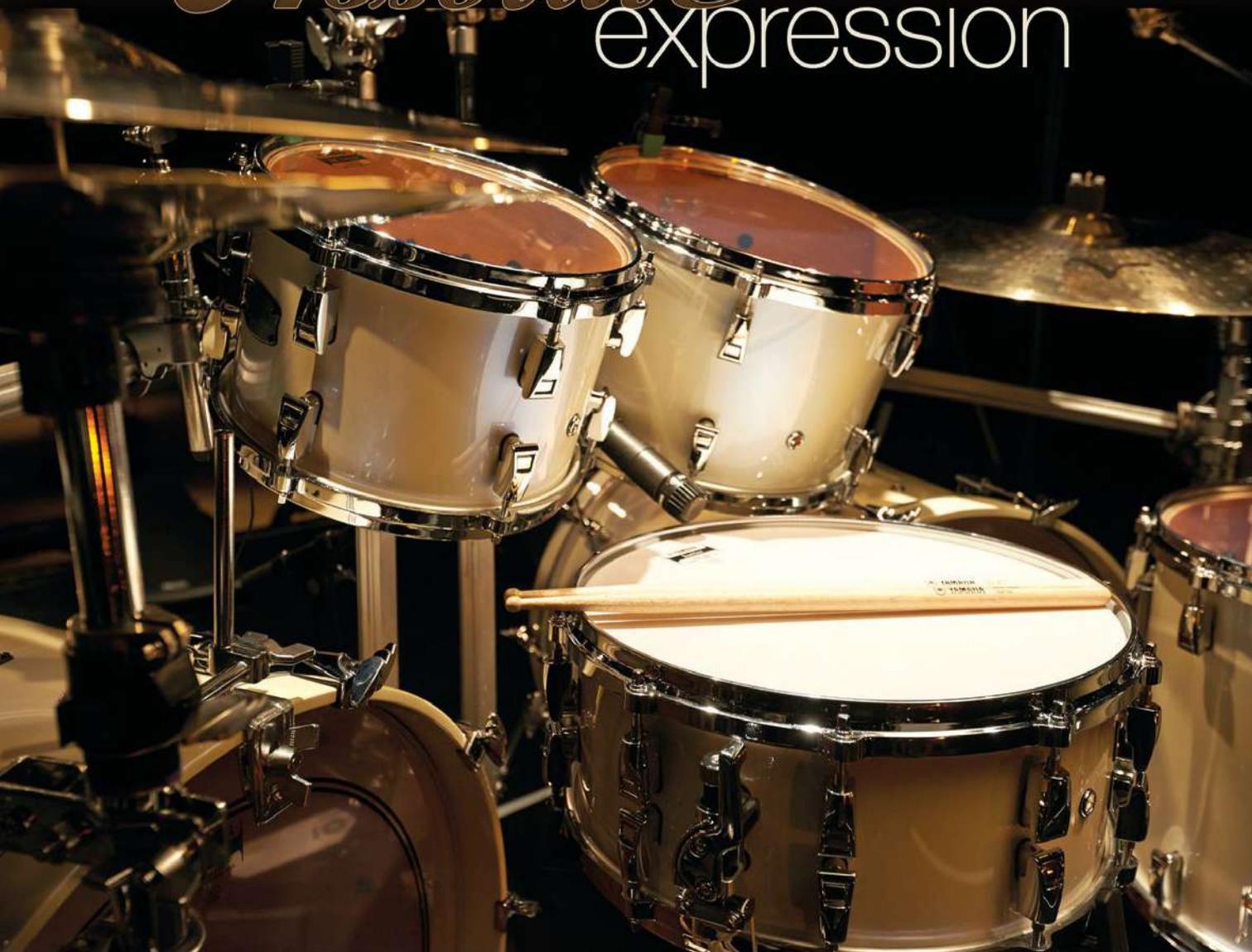
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## READERS' PLATFORM



### Mike Johnston

Thank you so much for your great, comprehensive Mike Johnston feature in the April 2014 issue. I have been fortunate enough to attend Mike's weeklong drum camps for the last two years, and I can tell you firsthand that he is every bit as genuine and real as the person you see on YouTube and in his live lessons. The thing that impresses me the most about Mike is his commitment to spreading the message of positivity in the drumming community. We are all acutely aware of the intense impact that negativity among musicians can have. Mike's positive, "build each other up" attitude is instilled in each of us, and consequently the MikesLessons.com family is the most positive, friendly community of drummers around. It was an absolute thrill to see my favorite teacher on the cover of my favorite magazine.

#### Morgan Neher

Thank you for putting out the issue covering Mike Johnston. Honestly, I'd heard of him and his website, but I didn't know anything about him until I read your article. I have some learning disabilities, and in the beginning of the article, when he said he was struggling when he was younger, I thought maybe he had learning disabilities too. I can relate, because when I attended Drummers Collective I was struggling in the beginning, but I was able to maintain my focus in the practice room despite my ADD, auditory processing disorder, and Asperger's syndrome. By the time I finished studying there, I was able to have a much better understanding of rudiments, learning what other drummers

are playing, technique and groove, etc.

I'm also glad that Mike met that friend who wouldn't put down any drummers. You never know if they haven't worked on their technique, haven't played very long, or haven't had time to practice.

I liked the exercises at the end of the article, and I have a newfound respect for Mike and his love of teaching. Being in a signed band that opens for Limp Bizkit and Korn might be a big accomplishment and a drummer's dream, but enjoying what you're doing and having fun is all that matters. Zakk Wyld once said that when he auditioned for Ozzy, while he waited in line and talked to other guitarists who were more about the paycheck, he knew those guys weren't getting the gig.

#### Andrew Hoxter

### Scott Devours With the Who

Huge thanks to Scott Devours for his First Person account (February 2014) of what went down before, during, and after the Who's show in San Diego on February 5 of last year. The Christmas prior, I splurged and surprised my ten-year-old son with fourth-row tickets and soundcheck access to this show. It was to be his first concert. Day of the show, we gathered in the arena lounge with about fifty other ticket holders, and I shared my enthusiasm about seeing Zak Starkey with my son, who is also a drummer. All of a sudden the band started the soundcheck, but we weren't in there to see it! The group grew restless, and management finally made the announcement that Zak was hurt and the soundcheck was off limits due to the band rehearsing with a fill-in drummer. Bummer. But our initial disappointment turned to pure joy watching Scott's inspired performance. Thanks again to Scott for providing not only a great first concert for my son but an important life lesson: When opportunity knocks, answer!

#### Austin Bunn

### Dropped Beat

In the March 2014 Electronic Review of the Yamaha DTX562K, we said the DTX532K kit has the same cymbals as the DTX522K, but the DTX532K actually comes with upgraded hi-hat and crash cymbals. And in the section on the DTX502 module, we miscounted the internal voices (there are 691) and omitted the module's ability to import new drum samples.

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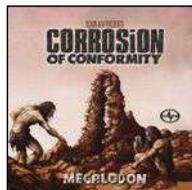
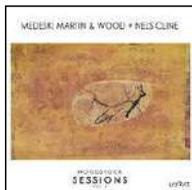
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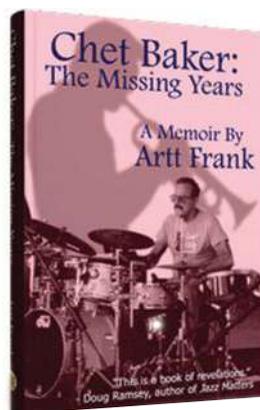
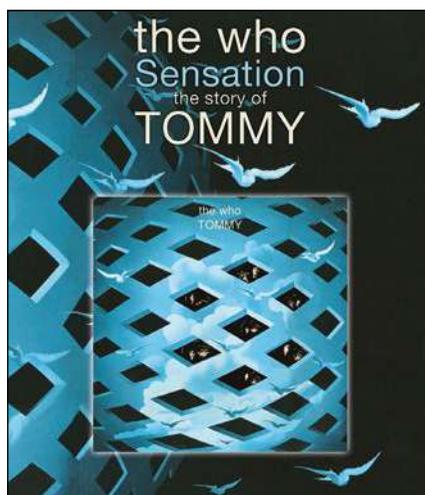


**The Nels Cline Singers** Macroscopic (Scott Amendola, Cyro Baptista, Josh Jones) // **The Pixies** Indie Cindy (David Lovering) // **Danny Fox Trio** Wide Eyed (Max Goldman) // **Little Feat** Live in Holland 1976 (CD and DVD) (Richie Hayward, Sam Clayton) // **Chrissie Hynde** Stockholm (John Eriksson, Niklas Gabrielsson, Nino Keller) // **Glenn Kotche** Adventureland (Glenn Kotche) // **Sheila E** Icon (Sheila E) // **War** Evolutionary (Sal

Rodriguez) // **Medeski Martin & Wood + Nels Cline** The Woodstock Sessions Vol. 2 (Billy Martin) // **Marc Ribot** Live at the Village Vanguard (Chad Taylor) // **Matisyahu** Akeda (Joe Tomino, Mark Guiliana) // **Curved Air** North Star (Florian Pilkington-Miksa) // **Black Stone Cherry** Magic Mountain (John Fred Young) // **Bob Mould** Beauty & Ruin (Jon Wurster) // **Corrosion of Conformity** IX (Reed Mullin)

### The Who: Sensation, the Story of Tommy

"I'm fed up with talking about it," Keith Moon says at one point in this documentary on the Who's breakthrough 1969 double album. "But I'm certainly not fed up with playing it." True to Moon's quote, there's little critical examination here of his drumming on the famous "rock opera." Anyway, talking doesn't do much justice to Keith's style; the copious live footage should do the trick, though.



### Chet Baker: The Missing Years, a Memoir

by Artt Frank  
Bop drummer, composer, lyricist, and vocalist Artt Frank's book provides an intimate portrait of what are considered the missing years in singer/trumpet player Chet Baker's infamous career, along with an insider's view of the West Coast jazz scene of the late 1960s.

## Travis Barker's Seventh Annual Musink



Blink-182 drummer Travis Barker hosted his seventh annual Musink tattoo and music festival at the OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa, California, this past on March 21 through 23. *Modern Drummer* photographer Alex Solca captured the sights.



## Zakir Hussain and Steve Smith to Lead Path of Rhythm Camp



Courtesy of Moment Records

Hussain and Smith at the SF Jazz Center in 2013

This July 14 through 18, Mumbai-born tabla maestro Zakir Hussain and American drumset dynamo Steve Smith will lead the Path of Rhythm music camp (thepathofrhythm.com) at the Full Moon Resort in Big Indian, New York, thirty minutes west of Woodstock. Teaching along with the duo, who recently completed a U.S. trek with Hussain's Masters of Percussion group, will be Antonia Minnecola, a leading dancer in the highly rhythmic North Indian Kathak style.

"Steve and I were talking yesterday," Zakir tells *MD* during the Masters of Percussion tour, "and it occurred to us that what we're doing now while we're in the bus, it's like a rhythm camp. All of us drummers and melody players, we're talking about the mythology and great masters amongst us and clapping and singing rhythms back to each other. This is exactly what we want to do in the Path of Rhythm retreat—envelop people around us with the world of rhythm, like a blanket or a tent."

Given that Hussain is one of the world's greatest percussionists and that Smith is a trailblazer in applying South Indian, or Carnatic, drumming to the kit,

Indian music will of course be covered in the camp—but so will Western styles. "Music finds a way to exist around the world, with the same positive energy," Hussain says. "The way Elvin Jones addressed his drums, or Max Roach did, I can find a hundred similar things between them and how my teacher—my father [Alla Rakha]—found a way to talk through his drums."

Smith has seen both sides of unique educational experiences like this one. As a teenager he studied with a young Peter Erskine at a Stan Kenton camp, and as a pro he's taught frequently at Drum Fantasy Camp. "It can be very inspiring for people to come and spend four days with professional drummers like myself and Zakir," he says. "Just being in that environment, there's a lot of interaction. It happens in the classroom, and it also happens outside the classroom. People can see us play and get some one-on-one time and have an insight into how we relate to music and the type of dedication and work ethic we have. They see that firsthand. And I've personally seen it change drummers' lives."

## Who's Playing What

**Jack Williams** (Nimmo and the Gauntlets), **Chris Wood** (Bastille), **George Daniel** (the 1975), **Tim Trotter** (Feeder), **Adam Topol** (Jack Johnson), and **Tom Wood** (Beasts) are using Protection Racket products.



Williams

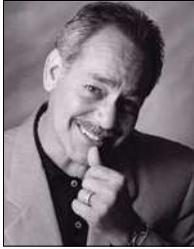


Tim Alexander (Primus) has joined the Vater artist family.

Joey Kramer is now playing Pearl drums. /// Percussion master **Jeff Queen** and Wilco drummer **Glenn Kotche** have joined the Yamaha artist roster.

## Session Percussionist Joe Lala Passes

Joe Lala, a session percussionist credited with playing on dozens of gold and platinum records, died on March 18 after a battle with cancer. Lala was born on November 3, 1947, in Florida, where he cofounded the band Blues Image, whose song "Ride Captain Ride" hit the top ten in 1970. After a short stint in Pacific Gas & Electric (top-twenty hit "Are You Ready?"), Lala recorded and toured with acts including Neil Diamond, Firefall, Dan Fogelberg, the Bee Gees, the Byrds, Rod Stewart, the Allman Brothers, and Crosby, Stills & Nash, and played on the soundtracks to many popular TV shows and films. Lala then found success on the other side of the camera, acting in movies such as *Havana* and *On Deadly Ground* and making guest appearances in television series including *Seinfeld* and *Who's the Boss?* He was also known for his voice-over talents, contributing to the animated series *Pinky and the Brain* and *Johnny Bravo*, among other projects.

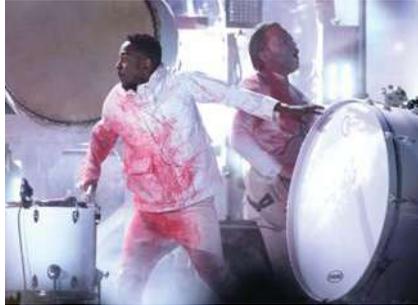


## Roy Burns Presented With NAMM Award

Roy Burns, famed jazz drummer, educator, and founder of Aquarian Drumheads, was presented with the Believe in Music Award at NAMM's 2014 winter convention in Anaheim, California, by NAMM CEO Joe Lamond.

## Imagine Dragons' Infinity Drumworks Bass Drum Donated to Hard Rock

At its Grammys performance with Kendrick Lamar earlier this year, the Las Vegas-based alternative rock band Imagine Dragons featured a 36" concert bass drum. Following the show, Infinity Drumworks donated that drum to become a permanent part of Hard Rock's world-famous memorabilia collection. The drum will be available for fans to visit only at Hard Rock Live Las Vegas, the venue where Imagine Dragons kicked off its *Night Visions* tour in September 2012. In exchange for the drum, Hard Rock International made a donation to MusiCares on the band's behalf. Imagine Dragons is currently on a world tour supporting its platinum-selling debut recording, which includes the hits "It's Time" and "Radioactive." After the tour the band plans to return to the studio to start work on its sophomore album.



## On Tour

**Eric Singer** with Kiss /// **Randy Guss** with Toad the Wet Sprocket /// **Tom Hunting** with Exodus /// **Darren Weiss** with Papa /// **Larry Herweg** with Pelican /// **Wesley Finley** with RebeLution /// **Kevin March** with Guided by Voices /// **Michael Cartellone** with Lynyrd Skynyrd /// **Simon Kirke** with Bad Company /// **Brent Fitz** with Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators /// **Joey Kramer** with Aerosmith /// **Dave McClain** with Machine Head



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# Must-Have Gear

Matt Dr



## The Crimson ProjeKct's Tobias Ralph

I find myself in various situations where I can play my own kit, and others when I have to use a loaner. Regardless of the context, I always bring a couple of things that are essential for me to get my sound.

If my bass drum pedal doesn't feel good, it can really affect my playing as well as my overall mood. I always bring my DW 5000 double bass pedal. I've had this particular pedal for about four years, and I've never broken a spring or a footplate on it. The action is so smooth and seamless, and having the reversible beaters is a major plus, since I often have to play a wide variety of music.

Another must-have is my 20" Paiste Twenty Masters Collection crash/ride. It's an extremely versatile cymbal. I can get a beautiful crash that's warm and not overpowering, as well as a ride that has a lot of stick articulation.

My final must-have piece of gear is my Promark 412 sticks, which are like an elongated 2B. The drumsticks are an extension of my arms. If they don't feel balanced, then the equilibrium of my energy is off and it directly affects my playing. These sticks are the perfect diameter and the perfect weight, and the little bit of extra length makes me feel like I can reach any part of the drumset.



## Back Through the Stack

In May 1985, we asked **Alan Dawson** about his approach to backing a wide variety of jazz greats when he was the house drummer at the legendary Boston club Lennie's between 1963 and 1970.

Well, there are some people who would get a hold of two, three, or even twelve records of someone they knew they were going to play with. I never did that. I had heard their records over the years, but I never did cram for these jobs.

I felt that, in everything you play, you have to have a personal conviction. It has to come from your deepest, innermost being and feelings, and cramming would not do it. Instead, I would think about the things I had heard these people play, rather than thinking so much about what their drummers had done.

What I pride myself on is listening as intently as possible and, in some instances, trying to transcend the feeling that, "I'm the drummer, and that's the piano player, and that's the bass player." I try to say, "Well, now, get in the practice room, and try to get

all the technical coordination together." Then, when I get on the gig, I throw that out of my conscious mind. I've worked on that enough for it to come across at the appropriate time.

And then I forget I'm even the drummer. When I listen to people playing, I try to play some music behind them if that's what's called for—or with them, if that's called for. Hopefully I will inspire them and drive them. I don't have a formula for that.



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# High Blood Pressure and Drumming

by Dr. Asif Khan

**I was recently diagnosed with high blood pressure, and I was wondering if drumming could be used as an effective remedy.**

**C.B.**

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is one of the most common illnesses across the world and especially in the United States. Treatments are many, and there are a number of non-medicinal therapies that include drastic diet changes, herbs, and of course exercise. There seems to be some confusion, however, as to whether drumming helps ease high blood pressure or worsens it. As a clinician and drummer for decades, I have an especially intimate take on this most prevalent illness.

First of all, the most common type of hypertension, involving 95 percent of all cases, is called primary or essential hypertension and has no apparent cause. This frustrates not only the patient but also the physician. Imagine hearing from a doctor, "We don't really know what's causing your blood pressure to be so high—it just is." This is regardless of many risk factors, including obesity, poor diet (especially those rich in sodium), smoking, lack of exercise, and family history. The second most common type is called secondary hypertension and is the result of the risk factors mentioned above and also defects in your arteries, kidneys, or heart.

Now, if you're diagnosed with hypertension, what do you do about it? There are many treatments, but I will focus on the effect of exercise and repetitive movements like drumming. So what exactly or approximately is happening in our bodies when we drum?

The drum is considered to be the first instrument known to man, and its origin may be related to its effect on our minds and bodies. Repetitive rhythms mimic our heartbeat, which may lead to the heightening of our emotional and spiritual states. Rhythmic drumming, like in drum circles, can create altered

states of consciousness, as the brain changes from beta waves (focused concentration and activity) to alpha waves (calm and relaxed), ultimately reaching the theta state, which stimulates mental refreshment, spiritual insight, and a higher state of consciousness.

Research nowadays has ways to measure drumming's powerful positive effect on our immune system. Strong mediators such as endorphins (endogenous morphine) and other things called enkephalins are released throughout the body. This is the "high" that many drummers feel even hours after playing. It translates to reducing our systolic and diastolic pressures and also to reducing or smoothing out our heartbeat. I should add that there are cases of hypertension that are so severe, and possibly related to severe heart disease like atherosclerosis, that any exercise may be quite unhealthy. In these cases, consultation with a physician is warranted to prevent possible devastating consequences.

There are some published studies in health journals outlining the positive benefits of drumming and percussion, but the majority of successful cases are anecdotal. One of the main reasons is the perception from most mainstream medical journals of drumming as being an alternative therapy to help such an established disease. Research dollars are scarce for this type of study. Physicians therefore sometimes rely on case-by-case situations. I've personally seen and felt the effects of drumming and am convinced of the positive power of drumming in our lives.

**Dr. Asif Khan** is a board-certified internist specializing in immune disorders, asthma, and allergies and is currently in private practice in Ohio. He has been an avid drummer for over twenty years. Some of his past work can be heard at [johnnyhi-fi.com](http://johnnyhi-fi.com).



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# SLINGERLAND

## Radio King Drumsets

by Mark Cooper

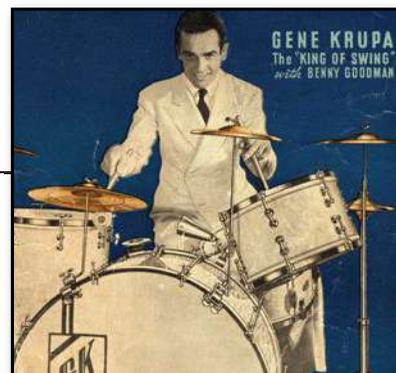
The modern drumset has come a long way from its humble beginnings. Today, drummers can order kits in every conceivable size, composition, and finish. And twenty-first-century drum-building technology has produced instruments with perfectly formed shells, unbreakable hardware, and gorgeous finishes. During the 1920s and early '30s, though, drumsets were rather primitive, consisting primarily of a large bass drum, a snare, and two or three small cymbals.

For adding color and variety to a musical composition, the Depression-era drummer had to be content with cheaply made imported Chinese toms, wood temple blocks, and sound effects like whistles and bells. Even though drumming stars of the day, such as Baby Dodds, Chick Webb, and Zutty Singleton, were able to do amazing things with these archaic outfits, it was obvious that the drumset was in desperate need of a makeover. Enter the adventurous swing drummer Gene Krupa and the forward-thinking company Slingerland.

### The Archetype Endorser

In 1935, the wildly popular Krupa joined the Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company as an endorser. Krupa was pioneering a new, more aggressive drumming style in which toms played an important role. At that time, the only toms that were available had permanently fixed bottom heads that couldn't be tuned. Realizing that he needed an entire drumset that could be adjusted to his liking, Krupa collaborated with Slingerland to produce the world's first fully tunable toms. His first Slingerland drumset was a white marine pearl outfit consisting of a 6.5x14 snare drum, a 14x28 tube-lug bass drum, and matching 9x13 and 16x16 toms equipped with double rows of standard tubular lugs to enable the tensioning of the top and bottom heads. Krupa was known for playing "jungle" rhythms,

and these tunable toms were the perfect instruments for creating that sound. The "King of Swing" and his new setup can be seen on the cover of Slingerland's 1936 catalog (above).



### Outfit Options

With lugs, metal hoops, and flexible calfskin heads on the top and bottom, a tom could now be tuned to produce a variety of tones. In order to achieve a more modern look for these drums, Slingerland needed a new tension-casing design to replace the old-fashioned tubular lugs. Until the company was able to produce a lug exclusively for its toms, streamlined double-ended snare drum casings, which were already in production, were used. Many early Slingerland toms were fitted with these lugs, with the unused threaded inserts still intact. (Can you imagine a modern-day drum company turning out toms with snare lugs?)

With the introduction of these newly designed instruments, proudly called Radio King, the Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company left other manufacturers scrambling to compete. The first catalogued Radio King drumsets consisted of a large double-tension 14x28 bass drum, a solid-maple snare, and two or three toms in sizes 9x13, 12x14, and 16x16, offered in a variety of pearl, sparkle, and painted finishes. Floor tom legs had not yet been invented, so large toms rested in a cradle-style floor stand.

Prompted by the growing popularity of the Radio King, Slingerland added smaller tom sizes, including 5x8, 6.5x10, 7x11, and 8x12. America's Great Depression was in full swing at that time, so money-saving options were also available.

Toms with thick, tacked-on pigskin bottom heads were offered, as were less expensive painted finishes. Single-tension bass drums were added to lower the cost.

Radio King kits changed the way drummers set up their instrument forever. The old-fashioned "traps" and sound-effects configurations, which dominated the '20s, were being

1930s sea green pearl kit



1940s white marine pearl kit

replaced by cleaner, simpler, and less cluttered-looking kits. The kick/snare/toms outfit was here to stay. By the end of the '30s, other major drum manufacturers were offering similar setups.

### Krupa's King Snares

While Slingerland offered a variety of snare drums, the most popular model was the eight-lug Gene Krupa Radio King. This drum featured a solid 6.5x14 maple shell, the "Speedy" snare strainer, and heavy brass hoops that were hand-engraved with "Slingerland Radio King." These snares had gleaming pearl finishes and decorative cloud-shaped brass nameplates. In 1940, another snare model was introduced, called the Super Gene Krupa, which featured sixteen small, art deco-influenced beavertail lugs and a futuristic snare strainer. Today, both models are prized by players and collectors alike.

### Shells and Sounds

Slingerland Radio King toms have a unique sound due to their shell construction. The 3-ply shells comprise an inside ply of mahogany, a center ply of poplar, and either a mahogany or maple outer ply, depending on whether the shells were pearl finished or painted. The roundover bearing edges, combined with the mahogany interiors, produce some very warm tones. Radio King toms didn't have air vents, which may also help account for their distinctive sound.

Depending on the depth, solid-maple Radio King snares are capable of a variety of tunings, ranging from low, fat, and throaty to loud and cracking with plenty of ring. The very tall "stick chopper" brass hoops are perfect for piercing rimshots. Three-ply Radio King bass drums possess a warm tone and can deliver a big, fat punch. Large 14x26 and 14x28 sizes were the most popular in the '30s and '40s for driving a big band. Many of today's drummers revere the Radio King sound, and complete sets are in high demand.

### Changing Times

Slingerland was leading the competition in the '40s, and, largely due to Krupa's influence, Radio King drums were flying off the shelves. Because of the great demand, however, Slingerland's quality soon started to suffer, as many corners of production were being cut. Radio King drums from this time were often crudely built compared with earlier examples. Unsanded interiors, sloppy construction, and improperly installed hardware were common during the early '40s.

With the success of the Radio King line, the Slingerland Banjo and Drum Company was flying high in 1941. But things would change after America entered into World War II in December of that year. Because of newly imposed government manufacturing restrictions, which began in the summer of 1942, drum companies were forced to curtail the use of materials vital to the war effort, such as brass and

steel. As a result, Slingerland began producing the Rolling Bomber line of drums on a very limited basis. Constructed of roughly 10 percent metal, these drums featured wooden hoops and hardware. Lugs, strainers, stands, and pedals were fashioned from walnut and rosewood. Today there are few surviving examples of these unusual drumsets, which are highly collectible. (For more info on the drums of World War II, see the August 2012 issue.)

As the war in Europe was nearing an end in late 1944, metal restrictions were gradually lifted, and American drum companies were free to resume manufacturing with materials they had on hand. Because brass was still unobtainable, all drums were fitted with wooden hoops and pre-war hardware. In 1948, Slingerland changed the design of its lugs and hoops. The company's catalogs boasted that Slingerland snares contained "60% more non-ferrous (non-rusting) metals than the average drum on the market." The streamlined pre-war tom and bass drum lugs were

replaced by larger, heavier beavertail versions. Also new for 1948 were heavy brass double-flange hoops for toms, stamped with the company logo.

Musical trends were changing as the '40s came to a close, and drum sizes changed with them. With the advent of bebop, smaller bass drums were becoming more popular, and Slingerland began listing 14x20 and 14x22 options in its catalogs. Krupa's use of a second floor tom had created demand for larger floor toms, and the company complied by offering sizes up to 20x20. In



1930s sparkling silver Krupa snare

1949, the cost of a Gene Krupa Deluxe Radio King drumset was \$382.

Slingerland Radio Kings hadn't changed much in design since the '40s, but in 1955 the company began outfitting the drums with new Sound King hardware, which included modernistic, rounded solid-brass hoops, curved teardrop-shaped lugs, and push-button leg brackets. The company also added an array of new finishes.

As television began to replace radio as the primary source of entertainment in American homes, Slingerland soon abandoned the Radio King name. In 1963, the line's only mention was on a metal-shell snare. The following year, a solid-maple Radio King snare was back in the catalog. But eventually the solid shell was replaced with a 3-ply version. The Radio King snare was dropped by 1980.

Slingerland changed hands in subsequent years. Radio King drums would be reissued from time to time, but these models bore little resemblance to their classic predecessors. To many of today's top studio drummers and collectors, the Radio King is legendary, representing an exciting and important chapter in drum history. Had it not been for the timely collaboration between Slingerland and Gene Krupa nearly eighty years ago, the look and sound of the modern drumset might have been much different.







# Canopus **Stave Bubinga Drumset**

by David Ciauro

This month we're pleased to spend some time with a high-end stave bubinga kit from the Japanese drum maker Canopus. The company aims to engineer drums that quell unwanted overtones in order to offer the focused sound of being miked up and equalized, while remaining vibrant.

## ***Snappy attack and ultra-clean tones for a precise, cutting, and contemporary drum sound.***

Bubinga has a dark tonality and is a dense wood, and the stave design allows its personality to really shine. Although the term *dark* may make you think of duller or earthier sounds, these drums were exceptionally dynamic. Let's take a closer look.

### **Specs and Aesthetics**

This five-piece kit comprised an 8-lug, 5.5x14 snare; 6-lug, 8x10 (not shown) and 8x12 rack toms with Canopus's DSS tom mounts; an 8-lug, 15x16 floor tom; and a 10-lug, 17x22 bass drum. The drums were outfitted with Remo Clear Ambassador heads on the toms, a Coated Ambassador snare batter, and a Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter. The kit had a classy appearance that would appeal to drum collectors and gear aficionados, but it also begged to be played more than simply admired for its beauty.

When designing this stave kit, Canopus realized that the thickness and density of the shells had an impact on resonance and sensitivity. The solution was to sculpt and shape the inside of the shells to create built-in reinforcing rings that differ in size depending on the diameter of the drum. The end result is said to provide greater transmission of vibration, which increases sensitivity and power while enhancing the fundamental resonance.

### **Spectrums**

We first tuned the kit as low as possible to get a decent grasp of how well the bubinga tone held up to the naturally shortened sustain of loose heads. The batter and resonant heads of the toms and bass drum were all tuned just above wrinkling. The snare drum's batter head

was tuned only about a quarter turn higher per lug. The resonant snare head, however, was tensioned tightly.

The wet attack and deeper tones of the toms made each drum sound about a size bigger, yet the pitch was still focused. Although they played and recorded incredibly well in this tuning

range, the toms felt as if they weren't reaching their truest potential down low. The kick, though,

maintained a composed presence and clarity that hit me nicely in the chest. The snare sounded meaty, and its responsiveness was intact. Yet I felt that it wanted to be cranked up a bit more.

The medium tuning range demonstrated how chameleon-like and musical this kit is. Its sounds would be aptly suited for Motown, gospel, indie rock, hard rock, fusion, or anything in between. The toms were full, the kick was defined, and the snare had a crisp attack and plenty of power and projection, plus an agreeable ring.

High tunings were full of melodic bliss. The drums had clear pitches with minimal overtones, and they didn't become choked. They breathed, even though they were a bit drier, and the presence and liveliness were abundant. The snare drum really cracked and was majestically snappy.

### **Conclusion**

Available as part of Canopus's R&D line, a made-to-order stave bubinga drumset like this will be in limited supply. The kit we reviewed recorded quite well and proved to be very responsive to different playing styles. Its depth was felt more in a richness of tone than in a lowness of pitch. The most beautiful sounds we found were in the medium and higher tuning ranges, where the sustain was more focused and the bubinga's darker character added warmth and clarity. That said, the drums sounded pre-mixed, equalized, compressed, and, most important, balanced at all tunings. They were wonderfully refined, and put together with care, precision, class, and style.

**canopusdrums.com**

# Grover Pro **Custom Snare Drums**

by Michael Dawson

The famed concert-percussion manufacturer Grover Pro recently launched a unique custom snare drum program where customers can log on to the company's website and order a one-of-a-kind instrument made from a variety of shell, hardware, and finish options. Once the drum is ordered, you are apprised of its status through regular email updates and

## **Made-to-order custom snare drums with a plethora of high-end options.**

a personalized video of its construction in the company's state-of-the-art factory outside Boston. Each drum is tuned and tested under strict guidelines before being shipped. We were sent four unique Grover Custom snares for review.

### **All the Options**

Grover Custom snares are available with 8-, 10-, or 15-ply maple or steam-bent solid shells from various domestic and exotic woods. (Curly maple, rosewood, cocobolo, bubinga, and purpleheart are currently offered.) The 8-ply maple model can be ordered in 10", 12", and 13" diameters; 10-ply is available in 13" and 14". The 15-ply maple and all of the solid shells come in 14" sizes only. Depths are from 4" to 8" for the 8- and 10-ply shells and 5.5" and 6.5" for the 15-ply and solid models. Many high-gloss and satin stain, solid, and sparkle exterior finishes are offered. Single and double inlays are also available as an upgrade. And bearing edges can be cut to a double 45 degrees for natural resonance, to a single 45 degrees for a more open and higher-frequency tone, or to a vintage rounded style for controlled overtones and a warmer timbre.

A unique feature of Grover Custom snares is the choice of interior finish, which can be ordered raw or rubbed with tung oil for warmer tones, or you can get your drum with a hard reflective sealer or Sound Mirror silver-colored coating for

a brighter frequency response.

For hoops, you can choose chrome or black chrome 2.3 mm triple-flange versions, chrome or black chrome die-cast, or wood options for the top and/or bottom. Lug choices include chrome or black chrome Toaster, Bow Tie, single or double Classic Tube, and Contempo Tube varieties, and lugs can be ordered

in-line, symmetrically offset, or asymmetrically offset.

To further trick out your drum, Grover provides five throw-off options (Mini, Gladstone-style, and Trick-based G1, G2, and G3). The G2 and G3 are unique in that they come with two (G2) or three (G3) independently adjustable cable and spiral-wound snare clusters. The G1 throw-off has an Extension option where the wires go beyond the bearing edge for increased sensitivity. The G1, Gladstone, and Mini throw-offs can be paired with one of eight snare types (Jazz Dark, Jazz Bright, Club Dark, Club Bright, Club Combo, Stadium Dark, Stadium Bright, and the silver wire/bronze cable SX Combo).

Any head can be ordered, but Grover stocks Remo Coated Diplomat, Coated Ambassador, Coated Emperor, and Renaissance Ambassador batters, along with natural calfskin ones, plus Remo

Diplomats and Ambassadors for the snare side.

The final touch in the Grover Custom program is the option to add a personalized inscription on the interior badge. If you want to bypass the custom builder altogether, there's the option to order a premade drum through the Custom Xpress page on the company's website.

### **Our Review Batch**

The first Grover Custom snare we checked out was a 6.5x14, 10-ply maple drum with a high-gloss ebony finish, Sound Mirror interior, double-45-degree edges, a die-cast top hoop, a 2.3 mm triple-flange bottom hoop, Classic Tube lugs, a G1 throw-off, and Club Bright wires. It had medium sustain, bright overtones, and an open voice at all tunings. This big- and aggressive-sounding drum would excel in jazz (tight tuning), funk (medium-tight), and modern rock (medium).

Next up was a 6.5x14 solid curly maple drum with a high-gloss natural finish, sealer interior, double-45-degree edges, die-cast hoops on top and bottom, Contempo tube lugs, a G1 throw-off, and Club Bright wires. This was the most rock 'n' roll sounding of the bunch, as it possessed a bigger, thicker tone with a powerful combination of focused "crack" and meaty punch.



Maple

The 5x14 solid cocobolo snare also came with a high-gloss natural finish, sealer interior, double-45-degree edges, and a G1 throw-off, plus black chrome die-cast hoops, black chrome Contempo tube lugs, and SX Combo wires. This drum had tons of pop and super-clean articulation. Its tuning range was vast, yet I tended to prefer capitalizing on its crystal-clear tone and fast response by keeping it tuned medium and higher. It also sounded surprisingly fat and focused when detuned. This was my personal favorite drum of the bunch.

The final snare in our review features Grover's flagship G3 throw-off and wires on a 5.5x14 solid rosewood shell with a high-gloss natural finish, sealer interior, double-45-degree edges, and die-cast hoops. This model proved to be the most versatile of the group, dishing up consistently precise, clean, and useful sounds across all tunings, from high and tight to medium and ringing to deep and muffled (my preferred sound). The combination of cable and spiral steel wires created a great blend of tight, dark articulation and sizzling snap. While I might favor the brighter tone of the cocobolo drum for filling out my own collection, this solid rosewood G3 is what I would suggest as a starting point for getting a feel for what Grover Custom snares are all about. The base price for a 5.5x14, 10-ply drum with standard options is \$450.

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



Curly maple



Cocobolo



Rosewood

# Scymtek Xtreme and Modern Series Cymbals

by Ben Lauffer

When drum makers decide to venture into the realm of cymbals, I'm usually a bit skeptical. But I will be the first to eat my words, thanks to Brian Spaun of the Spaun Drum Company. Spaun Cymbal Technologies, otherwise known as Scymtek, has entered the market with five series of handcrafted, hand-hammered, B20 bronze Turkish cymbals. We had the privilege to try a selection of models from the Modern and Xtreme series.

## Xtreme

The Xtreme series includes a total of nineteen cymbals, and we got to play ten of them. As the name implies, the line is geared toward aggressive styles, and these cymbals were capable of delivering a loud sound. A brilliant-finish bow coupled with a raw bell aided in the cymbals' projection and cut. Unlike some other "extreme" cymbals, these had a lot of character and produced complex tones that went beyond the basic bash.

## *A division of the custom drum company Spaun, Scymtek offers old-world Turkish-made cymbals gauged for more contemporary situations.*

The 14" hi-hats (\$550) had a nice, bright tone throughout their dynamic range. When opened, they screamed (in a good way) and were able to cut through two electric guitars without a problem. By contrast, the larger 15" hi-hats (\$575) had a thinner top cymbal than I expected, but it matched well with the heavier bottom. These cymbals were complex with a heavy sensibility. Rather than a typical "chick," they gave off more of a "schig," which I enjoyed. The hats had the richness of old, weathered cymbals. But when I needed extra sonic weight, they delivered.

The 10" (\$200) and 12" (\$225) Xtreme splashes had bright, shimmering tones. The 10" had a quick attack and short decay, while the 12" had a medium-long decay, which was longer than I expected for such a small cymbal. The two models blended well and complemented each other nicely.

The 18" Xtreme crash (\$375) had a clean, clear, but somewhat darker tonality with a full-bodied tone to balance out its brilliance. The bell was articulate, and the sustain had several complementary overtones. The 19" crash (\$425) really lived up to its Xtreme name. It was thicker than the other two crashes and brighter sounding as well. It was a very loud cymbal that cut through with ease, though I found it didn't blend as well with the other models.

My favorite from both series was the 20" Xtreme crash (\$475). It was fairly thin and very complex for a brilliant-finish cymbal. It had mild hints of trashiness but retained definitive crash characteristics. This cymbal was perfect as a secondary washy ride.

The 18" Xtreme China (\$425) had a quick attack and strong cutting power. It boasted explosive qualities with just the right amount of sustain.

The 21" ride (\$525) had great articulation and stick definition, making it capable of handling quick passages. When crashed, it didn't wash out, even at loud and fast tempos. The bell was full of harmonious overtones that allowed it to cut. The 22" ride (\$575) was similar to the 21", but its features were more subdued. There was a little less definition, and the bell didn't cut quite as well. It was still an articulate cymbal but was washier at loud volumes. Even though its features were less pronounced, I preferred this ride to the 22". I could crash and ride on it, à la Thomas Priddgen.





It had a big, loud sound with clear articulation and could also double as a wash ride.

### Modern

Scymtek's Modern series consists of twenty-two cymbals designed for contemporary drummers looking for brighter, fuller tones. These models have a brilliant finish and a tighter lathing process.

The 13" hi-hats (\$475) were crisp and gave off a sharp, quick accent when played open. The open sound had a white-noise effect, which I liked. As with most 13" hats, these were defined and articulate. The 14" hi-hats (\$550) were bright and clear but had a hint of dirt, which added a bit of complexity. They were good, general hi-hats suitable for a wide range of styles.

The 8" Modern splash (\$175) was fairly quiet but blended well with its larger sibling. The 10" splash (\$200) had a quick attack and a bright fundamental tone, but it also carried a lower drone in its sustain.

The 17" Modern crash (\$350) was a nice medium-bodied cymbal

with moderate decay and a long sustain. The 18" (\$425) had a clear, shimmering tone with long decay and sustain. It maintained a consistent and smooth wash at low to high volumes.

Thinner than the 18", the 19" Modern crash (\$425) had more complex overtones. This was the cymbal to go to for extra power, but it did take a split second to open up fully. All three Modern crashes blended well. Playing the 17" and 18" together produced a quick but big crash, while the 18" and 19" combined for a brighter and more powerful sound.

The 18" Modern China (\$425) had a bright and aggressive fundamental sound with a prevalent lower overtone that carried throughout. Its medium-long sustain made for nice barking China/snare accents.

The 20" Modern ride (\$475) had a clear, centered pitch with moderate stick definition. It was a little too heavy to me for crashing or wash riding. When I played on the low-profile bell, the cymbal began to swell up and overpower itself; a larger and more pronounced bell would have minimized that effect. The 21" (\$525) also tended to swell up when I played the bell, but not nearly as prominently. This ride was a tad too thick for crashing as well, but it had a lot of definition and a clear, colorful tone.

### Conclusion

I was very impressed by the Modern and Xtreme Scymtek cymbals. They had some highs and some lows, but what I really liked was how well the models within each series blended with one other. Spaun has definitely done its homework to see what works and—more important—what works well together.

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

# Gator

## Protector Evolution Series Snare Case

by Mark Pry

**G**ator Cases was founded in 2000, and in a relatively short period of time the company has become synonymous with rock-solid reliability. The Evolution series roto-molded snare case we have for review here is no exception.

***A molded plastic shell and foam rubber suspension pads provide the utmost protection.***

and suspended for extra protection. An adjustable 2" nylon strap and strong plastic clips keep the case closed securely, and the straps on the 6.5x14 model can be loosened to accommodate snares up to 8" in depth. The octagonal shape of the Evolution case ensures that your snare will not go for an unwanted roll when placed on its side, and the grooves in the outer shell enable solid, interlocking stacking.

The weekend warrior may be turned off by the weight of this case (around 6.6 pounds), but it offers an exceptional level of protection that is a must-have for traveling drummers at all levels. The list price is \$90.

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

Made of tough plastic and featuring suspension platforms molded to the inside of the lid, with a foam rubber pad glued to each, the Evolution case contacts the drum on the rim only, keeping it centered



# Alesis

## DM7X Drumset

by Ben Lauffer



Most electronic drumkits under a thousand bucks comprise a standard five-piece setup with a crash, ride, and hi-hats. The Alesis DM7X, however, boasts six drum pads (kick, snare, and four toms) and four cymbal pads (hi-hats, ride, and two crashes). The kick has a small rubber pad, roughly the size of a bass drum beater, that sits atop a triangular metal housing unit. Alesis calls this the StealthKick 2. There is also an optional, and handy, .25" input to link a second

### *An affordable option for drummers looking for a decent-sounding, highly functional electronic kit.*

StealthKick for double bass players. Another perk is that the DM7X comes with an Alesis-branded bass drum pedal, so you can start playing the kit right out of the box.

#### The Body

Upon receiving the DM7X, the first thing I noticed was its weight. The entire kit was quite light—maybe twenty pounds. The hardware is a lightweight aluminum with plastic connections and brackets. Unboxing and setting up electronic kits for the first time is usually a real endeavor, and most kits have a bare-bones installation guide; the DM7X is one of them. Each bracket is held together with two drum-key-operated screws, made to fit any standard key. It took a while to get the kit together, but once the pads were

placed where I wanted them they were rock solid.

#### The Boom

The drums are standard rubber pads. They had a little squish to them in the center, but they felt pretty good. All five pads have a full rim trigger that felt fairly realistic. You don't typically see this feature on kits at this price point, so it's an unexpected and appreciated expansion that allows for separate triggering from

the rims and pads. The cymbals triggered well and had an impressively accurate choking feature. The hi-hat pedal was quite responsive as well. Acoustically, the pads were quiet, making this an ideal kit for apartment dwellers or low-volume practice sessions.

#### The Brain

The brain of the DM7X is pretty straightforward. There are dedicated click, tempo, and record buttons, plus individual pad buttons for each part of the kit. The DM7X has twenty-four preset kits and sixteen user kits, with a total of 385 drum and cymbal sounds, plus sixty play-along tracks.

The sounds are pretty eclectic, including classic drums, Latin percussion, electronics, and various other percussive

voices. The cymbal tones, though, left me wanting a bit more. The rides weren't bad, but the crashes were one-dimensional. A more realistic cymbal sound, with greater depth and character, would greatly enhance the usability and professionalism of this brain.

The individual sounds have the typical adjustments (reverb, EQ, volume, pitch, pan, etc.), but they are categorized within a specific family (snare, toms, kicks, etc.) and are searchable only by number. Because I had to dig pretty deep to tweak the sounds, I found it took a bit more time than expected to really dial in my custom user kits.

My favorite features of this module were the learning tools that challenge rhythmic accuracy, from basic snare drum rhythms to advanced full-kit grooves. You can record yourself playing the patterns, and the DM7X will give you a score for your performance. This feedback is very useful, especially for beginning drum students. I was impressed by the progression of basic rhythms to complete grooves. These learning functions really challenge you to use your ears to learn a beat, step by step.

#### The Final Word

The Alesis DM7X has a lot of great features, including a competitive price tag of \$699. So if you want a solid, reasonably priced kit with a full assortment of pads and cymbals, along with helpful learning functions, check this one out.

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



## NORTH AMERICAN TOUR

### AUGUST

- 8.17.14 Phoenix, AZ - MIM Music Theater
  - 8.23.14 Denver, CO - Soiled Dove
  - 8.26.14 Tulsa, OK - The Vanguard
  - 8.28.14 Conroe, TX - Dosey Doe
  - 8.31.14 Austin, TX - One World Theater
- ### SEPTEMBER
- 9.04.14 Orlando, FL - Plaza Live
  - 9.05.14 Largo, FL - Largo Cultural Center
  - 9.13.14 Asbury Park, NJ - The Saint
  - 9.14.14 New York City, NY - Iridium (shows at 8pm & 10pm)
  - 9.15.14 New York City, NY - Iridium (shows at 8pm & 10pm)
  - 9.16.14 Stafford Springs, CT - Stafford Palace Theater **NEW!!**
  - 9.19.14 Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada - Cosmopolitan Music Hall
  - 9.21.14 Buffalo, NY - Nietzches
  - 9.24.14 Nashville, TN - 3rd and Lindsley
  - 9.26.14 Newport, KY - The Southgate House Revival
  - 9.30.14 Little Rock, AR - Juanitas

### OCTOBER

- 10.05.14 Chicago, IL - Marty's
- 10.06.14 Chicago, IL - Marty's
- 10.19.14 Seattle, WA - The Triple Door
- 10.20.14 Portland, OR - Aleccidin Theater
- 10.23.14 Oakland, CA - Yoshi's
- 10.25.14 Los Angeles, CA - Catalina's
- 10.26.14 Los Angeles, CA - Catalina's

Terry Bozzio and his 9000 Series Pedals

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Drum legend Terry Bozzio presents a solo musical performance on the world's largest tuned drum and percussion set.

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Interview by John Martinez • Photos by Alex Solca

# Capital Cities' Channing Cook Holmes

**Drums:** Masters of Maple Neo-Classical with Siberian burl veneer

- A.** 7x15, 12-ply Neo-Classical snare (8-ply gum outside and 4-ply walnut inside) with Yamaha maple top hoop, rosewood veneer, and vintage white pearl inlay
- B.** 6.5x15 stainless steel snare with Yamaha maple top hoop
- C.** 6.5x14 Bell Brass snare
- D.** 12x14, 9-ply floor tom (6-ply gum outside and 3-ply mahogany inside)
- E.** 16x18, 9-ply floor tom (6-ply gum outside and 3-ply mahogany inside)
- F.** 16x22, 9-ply bass drum (alternating plies of gum and maple) with gunmetal glass glitter hoops and LED lights lining the inside of the shell

**Hardware:** DW, including 5000 series bass drum pedal and hi-hat stand and 9000 series snare and cymbal stands and throne

**Cymbals:** Paiste

- 1.** 16" hi-hats (Signature Traditional Thin crash top and 602 Modern Essentials crash bottom)
- 2.** 20" 602 Modern Essentials crash
- 3.** 20" 602 Classic Sounds Thin crash

**Heads:** Remo Ebony Pinstripe walnut/gum snare batter, Vintage Emperor steel snare batter, and Control Sound Reverse Dot Bell Brass snare batter, all with Hazy bottoms; Clear Emperor tom batters and Clear Ambassador bottoms; and Clear Powerstroke 3 bass drum batter and Suede Ambassador front head

**Microphones:** Shure Beta 98AMP on top of main snare and floor toms, Beta 56A on snare bottom, Beta 52A on bass drum, and KSM32 overhead

**Accessories:** Vic Firth Peter Erskine signature Ride sticks and Stick Caddy (attached to hi-hat stand); Lexdray Tony Royster Jr. stick bag

"The guys [in Capital Cities] had an idea of what they were looking for," Holmes says. "My setup worked out because I can play a minimal kit, and they wanted to have as few drums as possible."

"I try to stay away from electronics and create as much of an acoustic vibe as I can," Holmes adds. "If it's stacking cymbals, putting sizzles on a floor tom, or hitting Jam Blocks for snaps, I want to have a natural approach to simulating and re-creating those sounds."

If you look closely, you'll notice that the cymbal on the far right side of Holmes's setup is perforated. "I modified the Thin crash by drilling holes in it to make it lighter and faster," he says. "It adds my personal touch and has a nice visual effect when the stage lights hit it. I like being able to attack it as a crash but still be on top of it enough to use it as a ride cymbal. The tilted angles allow me to come down on it with a direct attack."

Another peculiarity is the positioning of the hi-hat pedal,

which is angled away from the drummer's left foot. "I keep time off the hi-hat board, using just the heel on the floor," Channing explains. "It just works for me."

One challenge of playing live with Capital Cities is re-creating the various drum tones used on the *In a Tidal Wave of Mystery* album. "We tune as close to the record as possible," Holmes says. "Most of the record has an old-school vibe. We wanted to have that richness but also project enough that it would work in an arena or club. On the first part of the tour we were using Coated Emperors on the floor toms, but they just weren't cutting enough. So we switched those out for the clears, and it sounds so much better."

"On the walnut snare, I added a modified Sound Off pad to give a clean sustain and to dampen it hard. I started with the whole head full of duct tape to deaden it, but this helped us get the tone we wanted without killing it. I can take it off and have a completely different sound."





3

E

D

2

F

C

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# Tama's 40th Anniversary Celebration

January 25, 2014, Anaheim, California

The fortieth-anniversary party for the self-proclaimed “strongest name in drums” was one of the most buzzed-about events at the 2014 NAMM winter convention. The unique, flawlessly produced show, which was held inside the Pacific Ballroom at the Anaheim Hilton, was highlighted by incendiary full-band performances led by the key Tama endorsers Billy Cobham, Lenny White, Simon Phillips, Mike Portnoy, Charlie Benante, George “Spanky” McCurdy, and Matt Garstka. Between sets, video presentations put into perspective the historical events and innovative products that elevated the Japanese drum company from upstart to

industry leader in a few short years.

The SRO crowd was transfixed by the remarkable gathering of talent. And, in a cool twist, those who spent the majority of the show cheering from the back of the room found themselves in the thick of the action during the grand finale. That’s when Blake Richardson of Between the Buried and Me, Prince’s John Blackwell, Billy Rymmer of the Dillinger Escape Plan, and fusion greats Rayford Griffin and Ronald Bruner Jr. battled it out on kits set up in a semicircle toward the rear of the ballroom—making the show that much more unforgettable for those lucky enough to work their way in front of the risers. **Mike Haid**



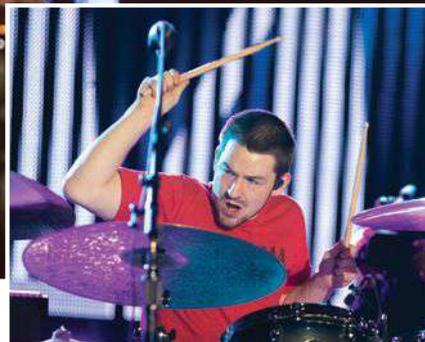
The party kicked into high gear when Charlie Benante and Anthrax took the stage.



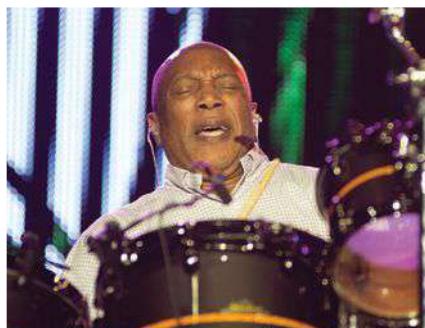
Lenny White helped put Tama on the map with his early endorsement of the brand.



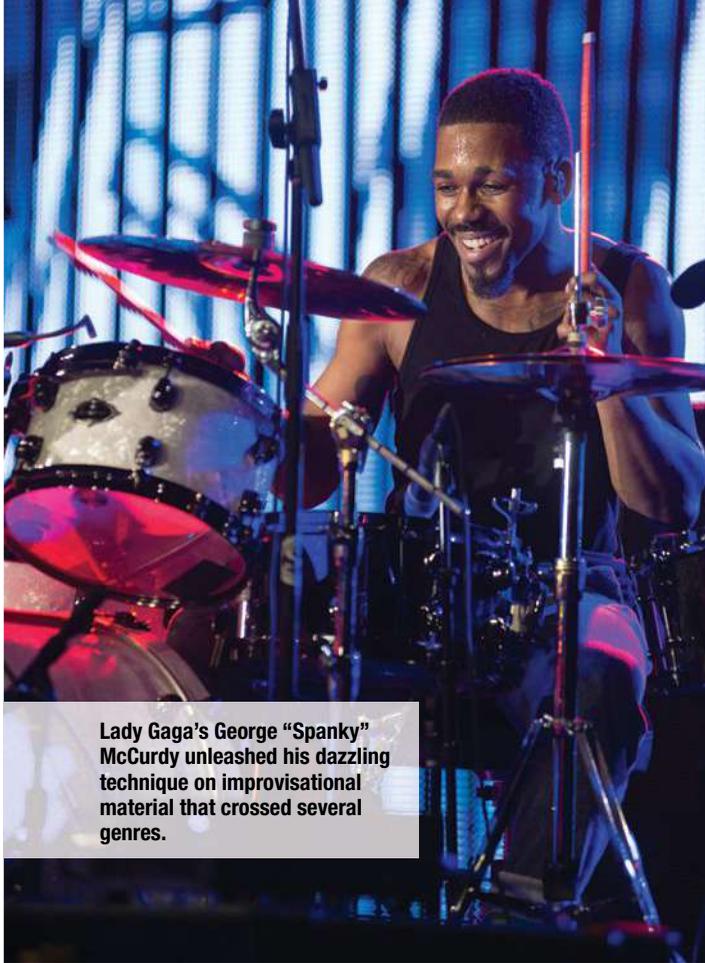
Mike Portnoy tore it up with bassist Billy Sheehan, guitarist Tony MacAlpine, and keyboardist Derek Sherinian.



Animals as Leaders exploded with progressive angst, as Matt Garstka put “the strongest name in drums” to the test.



Tama’s first-ever drum endorser, fusion icon Billy Cobham.

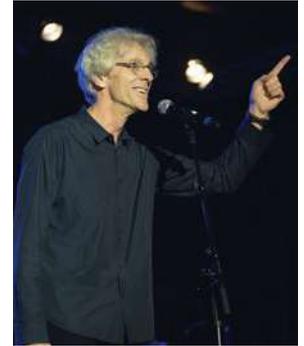


Lady Gaga's George "Spanky" McCurdy unleashed his dazzling technique on improvisational material that crossed several genres.



Longtime Tama player Simon Phillips, who performed with his group Protocol II, was visibly touched by the audience reaction to his presence.

Police drummer Stewart Copeland brought his clever wit to the event, detailing some of Tama's groundbreaking gear innovations and sharing the hilarious tale of how he became an official Tama endorser.



Several industry awards were bestowed upon Tama/Hoshino execs, including a presentation to Ken Hoshino by *Modern Drummer's* Kevin Kearns.

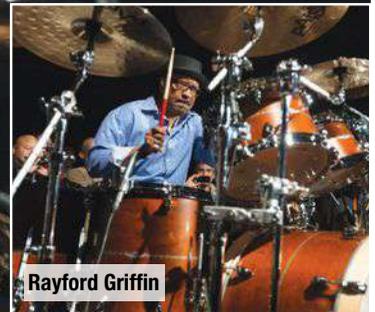
### The Grand Finale



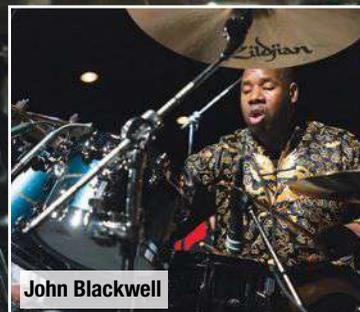
Blake Richardson



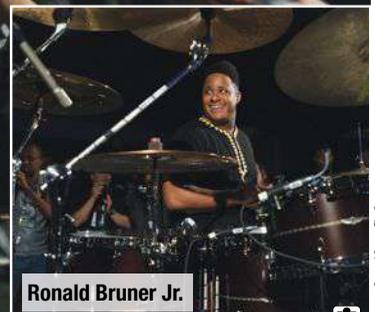
Billy Rymer



Rayford Griffin



John Blackwell



Ronald Bruner Jr.

# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT...?

## John “Twink” Alder

The drummer/sonic explorer details his work with the Pretty Things, Syd Barrett, and a bevy of other quintessential psychedelic acts.

by Will Romano

A key proponent of the British psychedelic rock and early punk movements, drummer John Alder, aka Twink, has performed and recorded with some of rock's most pivotal figures, including Pink Floyd cofounder Syd Barrett, counterculture iconoclast Mick Farren (the Deviants), and the Pretty Things. He also worked with a number of rock icons before they came to fame, including guitarist Steve Howe, in his pre-Yes band Tomorrow, and the group Santa Barbara Machine Head, featuring future Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood and Deep Purple keyboardist Jon Lord.

Taking his nickname from a hair-care product, Alder seemed to embody the ideals of psychedelic-era Britain through his experimentation, free thought, and artistic playfulness. “Twink is like a traveling circus,” says Mark Wirtz, who

produced Tomorrow's debut record and the studio project the Aquarian Age, featuring Twink, piano man Nicky Hopkins, drummer Clem Cattini, and Tomorrow bassist John “Junior” Wood. “Psychedelia was almost *invented* for Twink.”

By indulging his diverse artistic sensibilities, Twink fearlessly explored far-ranging musical genres, and in the 1970s, as a founding member of Pink Fairies (a major influence on the Sex Pistols' John Lydon), he was one of the few British musicians, let alone drummers, blurring the lines between proto-punk and psychedelia. Later in that decade, Alder actively cultivated a garage-band aesthetic as the lead singer for the Rings, whose gritty 1977 ditty “I Wanna Be Free,” on the indie label Chiswick, was an early U.K. punk single.

MD caught up with Twink, who was

living in Morocco at the time of our talk, to discuss his career and some of the iconic personalities he's worked with over the last several decades. Although Alder now identifies himself as Mohammed Abdullah, to avoid confusion we'll refer to him as Twink throughout this interview.

**MD:** At what age did you pick up the drums?

**Twink:** I was twelve or thirteen when I started playing drums. My first instrument was guitar, but when I started to play with the Airliners Skiffle Group, I handed my guitar to a much better player and moved on to washboard. I progressed from washboard to drums via the Black Zillions Skiffle Group, and on to a rock group called the Planets.

**MD:** Did you ever have any formal music training?

**Twink:** I had no formal music training,



although both sides of my family were very musical. There was always music being played and listened to on the radio. I played my drums along with Bill Haley & His Comets, Lonnie Donegan, Little Richard, Gene Vincent, Elvis Presley, and others to get my beats going.

**MD:** What attracted you to the life of a professional musician?

**Twink:** The music, and in particular rock 'n' roll music, attracted me to the professional-musician way of life, along with the veiled promise of girls and money.

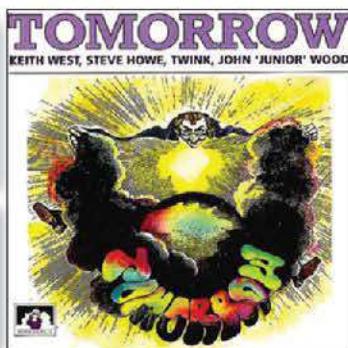
**MD:** You were a member of the Pretty Things when the band recorded the groundbreaking 1968 conceptual work *S.F. Sorrow*, which had a profound impact on Pete Townshend when he was formulating the Who's rock opera *Tommy*. Pretties guitarist Dick Taylor once told me that the band had tracked a version of "Bracelets of Fingers" prior to the sessions for *S.F. Sorrow*. Had you recorded what would be considered demos with the Pretties?

**Twink:** Skip Alan played drums on that wonderful track, and I only heard the final recorded version. It was the first track that the band and [producer]

Norman Smith played to me when I joined the Pretty Things to finish the album. I was blown away when I heard it, and said, "This should be your next single." "I See You" had also been recorded with Skip on drums. I played drums on the rest of the album, and as far as I know there were no demos; some of the songs were unfinished and unwritten [when the band entered the studio].

**MD:** How much did Norman Smith—and the mere fact that *S.F. Sorrow* was recorded at EMI/Abbey Road Studios—contribute to the overall sound of that record? Did you discuss certain percussion ideas with Smith?

**Twink:** Without a doubt Norman Smith and Abbey Road Studios contributed greatly to the finished-product sound. We did have discussions with Norman about ad-libbed, controlled jamming and linking tracks using my drums and multi drummers. Norman was very open to production suggestions. I suggested the bridge from "Private Sorrow" to "Balloon Burning," the ad-lib vocal outro to "She Says Good Morning," the rising oscillator sound leading into the guitar solo on "Old Man Going," and a few other less



# MY 22 YEARS WITH VATER

I gotta say... I've been pretty lucky! Over the years I've gotten a lot of offers from companies asking me to endorse their product. My own rule has always been that I would never endorse any product that I wouldn't buy myself, if endorsements weren't an option. That's exactly how I ended up with Vater in 1992.

Together we developed the Funkmaster model using kick-ass production techniques and great quality control. The sticks always feel good and they never let me down.

I just love how it's still a family business, starting with grandpa Jack, then going to Clary and down to Alan and Ron. No corporate sell-outs here, folks...in fact, they're the only major stick company that isn't owned by a 'parent company' now. Awesome right?

These guys live, sleep, breathe, eat, and dream of drumsticks. They get good wood about good wood and are totally obsessed with making the best sticks possible. They better keep it up, cause I plan to keep playing until the wheels fall off!!

*Chad Smith*

**Chad Smith's Funk Blaster**



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significant parts.

**MD:** “Baron Saturday” from *S.F. Sorrow* is a great song with, again, an amazing drum passage that feels African- and Indian-influenced. How did that section come about?

**Twink:** That drum passage was a joint effort and included the whole band playing drums or percussion. As you probably know, [multi-instrumentalist] Jon Povey is a great drummer; I first saw him playing drums with [the Merseybeat band] Bern Elliott and the Fenmen. Both [singer] Phil May and [guitarist] Wally Waller are great percussionists as well, so we all joined in on that part, trying to create a sort of voodoo music. The verse and chorus are me, alone, on drums just laying it down.

**MD:** In his book *White Bicycles: Making Music in the 1960s*, producer/author Joe Boyd links '60s psychedelic-era musicians and punk rockers of the '70s. There are some connections, but the attitude—in most cases—was different. Yet you're credited with having coined the phrase *acid punk*, having performed not only with the psychedelic group Pink Fairies but with the punk band Rings.

**Twink:** In a commercial sense the 1960s “love and peace” musicians can be linked to the punk rockers by way of the management, record, and music publishing companies, which remained the same. I agree that there's a contradiction in my activities, which I put down to the change in my drug prescription. During the 1960s and very early 1970s I was using hash and other psychedelics—and there's nothing wrong with that in my opinion. However, from 1973 onwards, for about ten years, I used heroin, cocaine, speed, and alcohol—all very negative chemicals in the main.

**MD:** You played for a while in Pink Fairies with a second drummer, Russell Hunter. How did you coordinate your performances?

**Twink:** The double-drummer Pink Fairies was not planned, but once it started it became very organic and not choreographed. I was happy with the

two-drummer thing with Russell. We complemented each other in the sense that when Russell was not available, for whatever reason, I was there for the band to carry on. By the same token, Russell was there for me to step up to the mic and perform some songs.

**MD:** You left the U.K. for Morocco in the early '70s but later returned to rejoin Pink Fairies. Why were you lured to North Africa in the first place?

**Twink:** Friends, who had been there already, told me it was really cool, and *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Joujouka* had a musical influence on me. I wanted to check out the music scene in general.

**MD:** You recently converted to Islam. Why?

**Twink:** My belief has never changed. I simply found a practical way to express gratitude for the abundance of good things in this world that are given to us all freely, and a practical way to express my gratitude to a higher power, which in Islam we call Allah. This includes talent to make music.

**MD:** Were you raised in a religious environment?

**Twink:** In some ways, yes. My school motto was “God first, others second, self last,” and we sang hymns at morning assembly. My father was raised in a Quaker school, but my parents were not religious—just good people.

**MD:** Some of your material borders on the occult, such as Aquarian Age's “Good Wizard Meets Naughty Wizard” and “Dawn of Magic” from your 1970 solo record, *Think Pink*. What fueled your interest in magic?

**Twink:** In my quest for the truth I did read and study the occult during the late 1960s and early 1970s. I visited, but decided against joining, a famous witches and warlocks coven in London, and when I moved to Cambridge I became very interested in the works of Aleister Crowley. That interest remains today. The coven was Alex Sanders', which was in Notting Hill. Alex wasn't in good health at the time, and his wife Maxine would often lead the meetings. The song “Dawn of Magic” paints a

picture of the time when Adam and Eve arrive on earth, closely followed by the devil, after being banished from the Garden of Eden. "Good Wizard Meets Naughty Wizard" is a lighthearted ad-lib B-side for the Aquarian Age single "10,000 Words in a Cardboard Box."

**MD:** Tomorrow's "My White Bicycle" was a kind of unofficial anthem for Britain's underground psychedelic movement. What can you tell us about how this song was recorded?

**Twink:** There were a few new percussion ideas that I proposed—for example, the backwards-tape recording of closed hi-hats in "My White Bicycle" to create the illusion of cycling fast through the streets. And the sped-up drum passages in the song "Revolution" create the illusion of a Cossack dance group performing.

**MD:** In the early '70s you played with Pink Floyd cofounder Syd Barrett in a group called Stars. Is the perception of Syd the spaced-out rocker romanticized or wrong?

**Twink:** When I worked with Syd in 1972 I found him to be no stranger than anyone else around at that time. We had a good working relationship alongside [bassist] Jack Monck. He was always on time for rehearsals and gigs. My theory is that it was good for Pink Floyd to have their "Crazy Diamond," and when Syd did eventually surface with Stars, well, it had to be stopped. They couldn't possibly put up with Syd being seen to be sane, playing in another group with other respected musicians.

**MD:** So you believe Floyd essentially sabotaged Syd's career?

**Twink:** Things had been going very nicely for Stars until we played a high-profile gig at Cambridge Corn Exchange, when everything went wrong that could possibly go wrong. The performance was reviewed in the music press in a negative light. When the review was published, which was after a second show we did at the Corn Exchange two days later, which went very well, Syd was called to his London music publishers' office, who drew his attention to the negative review and

told him to leave Stars. The same music publishers were managing Pink Floyd, and, knowing Syd's vulnerability, they used it as a torpedo to sink the band, because how could someone who is allegedly insane and incapable of performing be actually doing gigs—and good ones at that?

**MD:** You took a break from playing drums in the '90s. Why?

**Twink:** I was very busy with my label [Twink Records]. However, I did play drums on a number of projects during that time. Pinkwind, members of Hawkwind and Pink Fairies, played many shows throughout the '90s and released two live albums. I reunited with Paul Rudolph from Pink Fairies and recorded two studio albums with him in Vancouver, *Pleasure Island* and *No Picture*.

**MD:** Are you playing drums, either on recorded material or on stage, these days?

**Twink:** I have a new CD just out on Sunbeam Records; it's called *You Reached for the Stars* by Twink and the Technicolour Dream. It was recorded in Rome last January and mixed and mastered at Abbey Road Studios in June. For the mixing and mastering I had the pleasure to reunite with Peter Mew, who was the engineer for *S.F. Sorrow*.

**MD:** I heard that the name Pink Fairies is really due to Mick Farren. Is this true?

**Twink:** The origin of the name Pink Fairies begins with my band the Fairies [1964 to 1966]. I was hanging out at Mick Farren's flat in London's West End with Mick and his two roadies, Boss Goodman and Tony Wiggins. Mick said, "Tony has suggested we call our drinking club Pink Fairies," and so it began. [Author/Deviants manager] Jamie Mandelkau then wrote a Tolkien-style short story, "The Pink Fairies," of which the beginning part was used on my first solo album, *Think Pink*. When we came to finish the recording I decided to call it *Think Pink* as a promotional tool for the band project. The band Pink Fairies materialized about six months later, and the rest, as they say, is history.

# NEW PRODUCTS 2014

## HICKORY



### Power 3A

L 16 5/8" • 42.23cm D .600" • 1.52cm  
Wood VHP3AW Nylon VHP3AN



### Heartbeater

L 16 1/8" • 40.95cm D .580" • 1.47cm  
VHHBW

## PLAYER'S DESIGN



### Chad Sexton's Custom Model

L 16" • 40.64cm D .580" • 1.47cm  
VHSEXTON



### Craig Blundell

L 16" • 40.64cm D .540" • 1.37cm  
VHCBW



### Stephen Creighton Pipe Band

L 16" • 40.64cm D .765" • 1.94cm  
VMPBSC-1

## SUGAR MAPLE



### Pianissimo

L 16" • 40.64cm D .635" • 1.61cm  
VSMPIANW

## VIBRAPHONE MALLETS



### V-M9

L 15 1/4" • 48.74cm  
V-M9



IN THE POCKET

# Great Drum Covers



Jackson Browne  
*Running on Empty*  
1977

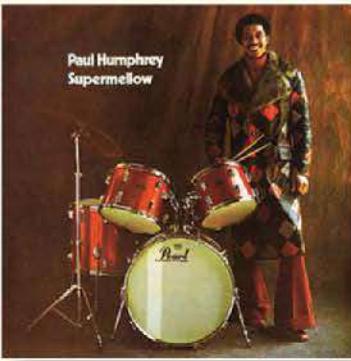


The Rolling Stones  
*Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out!*  
1970

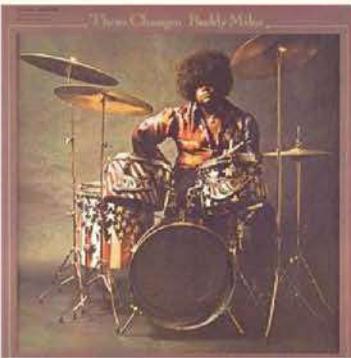
Dave Weckl  
*Master Plan*  
1990



Cozy Powell  
*Over the Top*  
1979



Paul Humphrey  
*Supermellow*  
1973



Buddy Miles  
*Them Changes*  
1970

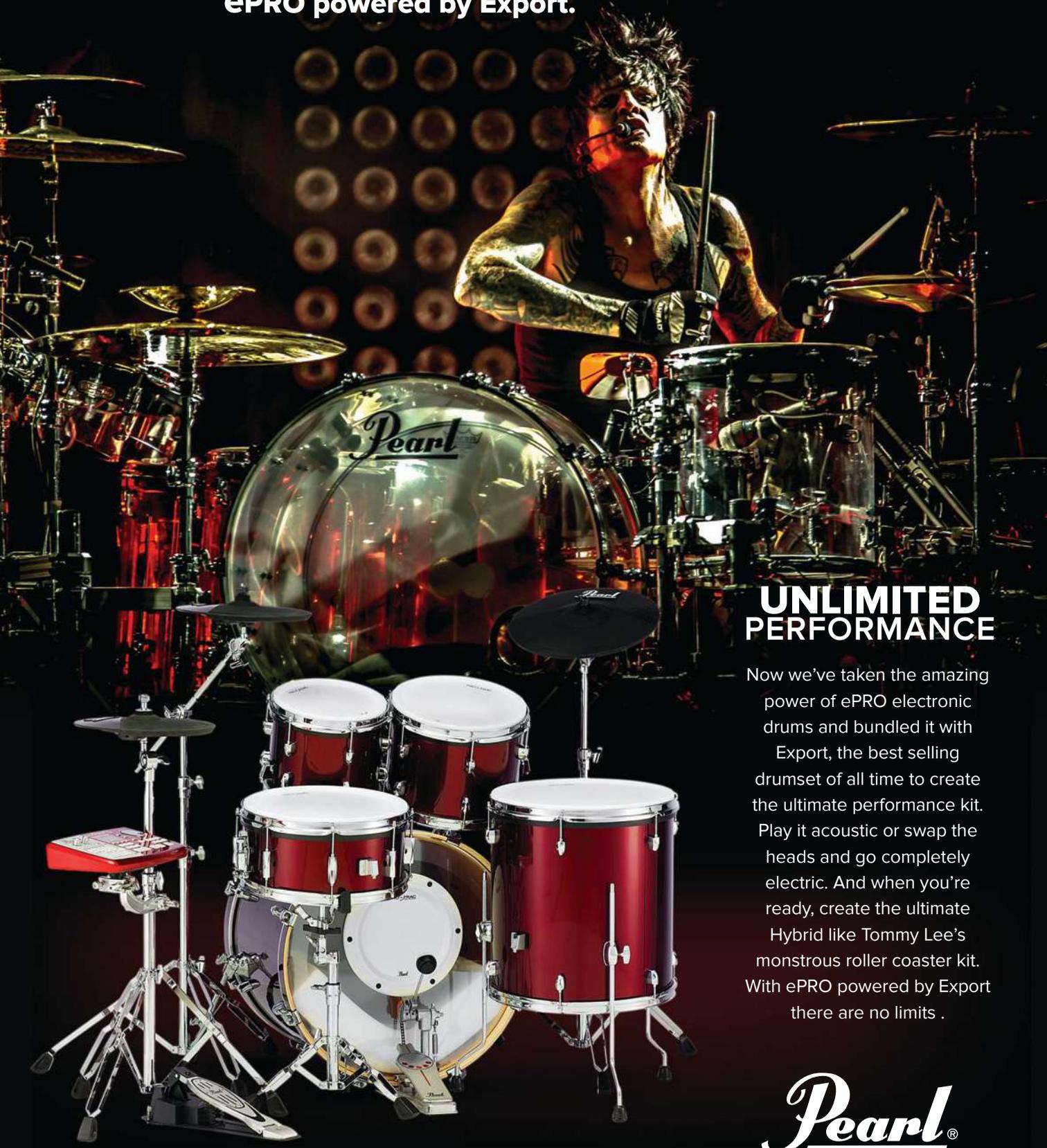


Dickie Harrell  
*Drums and More Drums*  
1961

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# Shirazette Tinnin

by Ken Micallef

This drummer has put no small amount of her rich life experiences into her scalding solo debut.

Shirazette Tinnin's *Humility: Purity of My Soul* is that rare album that arrives with no warning but announces a fresh drumming talent and an equally gifted composer and arranger. Released concurrently (and sharing some personnel) with bassist Mimi Jones' *Balance* and saxophonist Camille Thurman's *Origins*, *Humility* is a complete statement, an album that expresses styles as diverse as Brazilian and Afro-Peruvian music, jazz-funk à la Herbie Hancock's *Headhunters*, and classic straight-ahead. Tinnin has studied orchestral percussion academically and Afro-Peruvian music with a cajon master; her svelte Tony Williams-meets-David Garibaldi style is as compelling as it is fiery.

"My goal for the album was to bring all my influences to bear," Tinnin says from her home base of Brooklyn, New York. "But you're influenced by so many genres as a drummer. I wanted to create a blend and to express the Peruvian rhythms—which are important because of their connection to African rhythms and the blues—and how Peruvian jazz came to be part of

my playing. I love the history of all the drummers like Buddy Rich and Terri Lyne Carrington and Tony Williams and Cindy Blackman. A lot of people are surprised that my album is so melodic; they expect more percussion and for it to be drum heavy. But I'm a very melodic player. If I don't know the melody, I don't feel comfortable playing the song."

Using matched, traditional, and French grip as needed, the ever-versatile Tinnin has developed an interesting series of warm-up and stretching routines, subjects she's explored in *Modern Drummer* Health & Science columns. "I've been focusing on relaxing and breathing," she reports. "I was feeling discomfort in my left hand because I'd been playing so much. One relaxation exercise I've learned is the drop-grab, where you let the stick drop, then you grab it, then repeat. I also do fist squeezes to help my fingers and palms and forearms warm up before I play. I'll squeeze the sticks really hard, then release them. I do that slowly at first, then increase the speed. Then I have another exercise where I crawl up the stick with my fingers in both directions, which strengthens the forearms and the thumb muscles. And I do a lot of bouncing, letting the stick bounce in each hand. I do that while going from alternating singles to doubles to three strokes to quadruples in each hand. Eventually you're playing a buzz roll."

A North Carolina native, Tinnin earned her BA in music industry studies at Appalachian State University, then received her master's in music at Northern Illinois University. Working at a jazz festival in Peru in 2009, she met trumpeter Gabriel Alegría, who invited her to New York to join his Afro-Peruvian Sextet. Shirazette subsequently recorded Alegría's 2013 album, *Ciudad de los Reyes*, and has toured regularly with the group in the U.S. and Peru. Since moving to New York, she has also worked with Alicia Keys, Tia Fuller, Orrin Evans, and Hugh Masekela, as well as playing regular gigs with Camille Thurman and Mimi Jones. The drummer also leads the Shirazette Tinnin Experiment, featuring Thurman on sax, pianists Willerm Delisfort and Rachel Eckroth, guitarist Seth Johnson, and bassist Tom DiCarlo, and she holds down a steady burlesque house gig on New York's Bowery.

"Chicago has a different kind of swing from New York," Tinnin observes. "It's more laid-back, whereas New York is more intense and on fire. I got into free jazz in



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Tinnin plays Canopus Neo-Vintage series drums, including a maple natural oil 6.5x14 snare drum, an 18x20 or 14x18 bass drum, and 8x12 and 14x14 toms. Her collection of Sabian cymbals includes a 21" Will Calhoun Signature Ambient ride, a 22" AAX Omni ride, 13" and 15" AAX X-Celerator hi-hats, 13" Manhattan Jazz hi-hats, a 22" AAX Metal ride, and a 24" AA Bash ride. Her LP gear includes an Udongo II udu drum, Aspire Accents cajon, Aspire tunable djembe, Concert series bar chimes (thirty-six bars), Aspire Trap Table, Hi-Hat Shekere, Vibra-Tone, Multi-Stem Gajate Bracket, Percussion Table Triangle Hook Set, and 5" Pro triangle. Shirazette uses Vic Firth 7A sticks, timpani mallets, and brushes, and Evans EC2 heads.

Chicago, and that really opened me up a lot. But New York is more progressive; jazz is always going somewhere different."

Tinnin's sound, though steeped in the classic jazz-funk drummers—think Ndugu Chanler, Lenny White, Billy Cobham, or Harvey Mason—displays a biting leading edge, her drum strikes especially potent and snappy. Perhaps it's that Afro-Peruvian style coming through, a genre she has worked hard to master.

"When I joined Gabriel Alegría's sextet," Tinnin says, "I studied cajon with the top Peruvian percussionist Freddy 'Huevito' Lobatón. I had to learn all the rhythms on the cajon, then transfer them to the trap set. The band's previous drummer had transcribed all the cajon parts for drumset, but I still had to understand what I was playing. I had to change my drumming from a wet, jazzy approach to a drier one. It made me get drier cymbals. I had to learn the ins and outs of the cajon player, because in Afro-Peruvian music he actually is the lead player and the drums play the supporting role. Then, when the previous drummer left, I became the cajon

and drumset player."

Tinnin cites her *Humility* version of Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance" as an example of her Afro-Peruvian-style drumming. (The track also features her cajon work.) Another cover, McCoy Tyner's "Passion Dance," finds her taking a potent drum solo—one of many on the album. But the bulk of *Humility* features the drummer's own compositions, including "Her Powerful Locs," which is one of her favorite pieces on the recording.

"Her Powerful Locs' has that funk-jazz thing happening," Shirazette says. "Perhaps that comes from my love of the Headhunters records. I'm also into Dave Garibaldi. I recorded with Peruvian percussion player Jhair Sala on that track as well, and hearing what he did with my ideas was beautiful. I felt the song really conveyed what I was trying to say. When I moved to Chicago I started growing my 'locs'—people call them dreadlocks, but they're really locs. It's been nine years, and now they're all the way down my back. They're *connected* to me."



# Anup Sastry

by Ben Meyer

The progressive metal powerhouse knocks it out of the park on Intervals' recently released third album, *A Voice Within*. This, on top of mind-bending work with international metric manipulators Skyharbor, Nevermore lead guitarist Jeff Loomis, and ex-Megadeth shredder Marty Friedman.



Gabriel Rocha

Anup Sastry has come of age as a drummer, recording engineer, and producer, displaying the same kind of multidisciplinary passion that's a hallmark among the other leading

"I posted my first YouTube video a couple of years ago. I purposely haven't taken it down, because I want people to see how I've grown as a drummer."

lights of the burgeoning Maryland/Washington, D.C., progressive metal

scene. The twenty-three-year-old musician created a substantial buzz with his play-alongs and drum covers on YouTube, which led to some pretty heavy drumming gigs. At the same time, he

began operating a busy recording studio in his Frederick, Maryland, home, where

he creates his own very impressive original material and produces tracks for contemporaries like Darkest Hour's Travis Orbin.

Sastry's drumming is equally multidirectional. A fluidity behind the kit, an innovative use of tom and cymbal voices, and an undeniable groove have proven highly effective not only in the company of Anup's fire-breathing bandmates in the Canadian progressive metal band Intervals but also with well-established giants of metal, like Jeff Loomis and Marty

Friedman. "I was really fortunate to be a part of Marty's recent album *Inferno*," Sastry says, "and I'm really proud of my drumming on it, because it's completely different from the progressive/groove metal I normally play."

Beginning his musical journey in middle school band, Sastry became obsessed with drumming with the help of his childhood friend and fellow Maryland native Alex Rudinger (Up & Coming, March 2014 MD). "I took private lessons for several years when I first started playing drums," Anup says. "I had numerous instructors and teachers, all of whom I owe a lot of my growth as a musician to. I also took some lessons with Matt Halpern a few years back, around the same time I studied with Travis Orbin."

Sastry attended community college as a music major and simultaneously took audio engineering courses at Omega Studios in Rockville, Maryland, with a plan to transfer to a university to continue his music studies. "I ended up not transferring," he says, "because things started picking up with studio work and touring."

"It took me two or three years to acquire the gear I have now," Sastry explains, adding that between his own projects and freelance work he's got quite a full between-tours calendar. "I don't have a lot of gear—it's actually a very basic setup. It does what I need it to do, though."

Like Rudinger and Orbin, Sastry has used YouTube to spread the good word on his playing with deadly efficiency.

"YouTube is a huge part of why I play in so many projects," Anup explains. "It's like a musician's résumé. I posted my first video a couple of years ago, and I purposely haven't taken it down from my account, because I want people to see how I've grown as a drummer. I love the fact that I've been able to document it in such an expressive way. YouTube is like the Facebook for musicians."

Another thing Sastry shares with Rudinger and Orbin is his writing approach. Whether creating drum parts for his solo material or for other artists, Sastry maps it all out in Superior Drummer, then learns it on the kit. "Superior Drummer has been a great tool for me to hear decent-sounding drums and still work inside of my DAW," he explains. "I do know how to notate drum tablature properly, but for workflow purposes I enjoy working inside Pro Tools at all times. Hearing a drumset, or at least Superior, makes it much easier for me to learn



## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Sastry plays a Pearl Reference kit in black pearl finish with gold hardware, including a 9x12 tom, 14x14 and 16x16 floor toms, and an 18x20 bass drum, plus a 6.5x14 Reference Brass snare drum. Depending on the application, he chooses from a collection of Meinl cymbals, including 14" Byzance Brilliant Medium hi-hats, an 18" Byzance Brilliant Medium crash, a 20" Byzance Dark ride, an 18" Mb20 Medium Heavy crash, an 18" Byzance Brilliant China/16" Mb10 Medium crash stack, an 18" Mb20 Rock China, an 18" Mb10 Heavy crash, an 18" Classics Custom Extreme Metal crash, an 18" Classics Custom Extreme Metal China, and an 18" Mb8 China. "My basic cymbal setup is two crashes, one China, a ride, a stack, and hi-hats," Anup says. "Live, I tend to use more of the Classics Custom Extreme Metal cymbals and Mb10s because of their durability, whereas I love using more Mb20 and Byzance models for tracking in the studio."

Sastry's Pearl hardware includes an H-2000 hi-hat stand, an S2000/C Eliminator snare stand, a D-1000SPN throne, BC-1030 boom stands, and a Demon Drive direct-drive double pedal (converted to longboards) with Quad beaters. His sticks are the Vic Firth Corpmaster MS2 model. And his heads include a Remo Coated Controlled Sound X snare batter and Hazy Ambassador snare-side, clear Remo Emperor or Evans G2 tom batters and Remo Ambassador or Evans G1 bottoms, and an Evans clear EMAD 2 kick batter and Pearl logo front head.

parts, and I can view the MIDI and figure out placements much faster. Again, I'm used to looking at a Pro Tools grid, so this approach is something that really helps me."

Sastry creates his original material, which can be heard on his full-length album, *Ghost*, and brand-new *Lion* EP, using samples he's created—though you'd never know it from listening. "The instruments in my solo material are all 'programmed,' except for the drums," he reveals. "I basically play and record my own guitar and bass samples using an actual guitar and bass. Some of it I'll play at a much slower tempo and then speed up, and some of it I'll play at the correct tempo. Regardless, it's a lot of editing and studio magic. I compare it to using Superior Drummer, but instead of entering MIDI information to trigger samples that have already been taken and provided for you, I take the samples myself and work with audio regions."

Asked about his feelings on sample enhancement versus replacement, and the current trend of audio purism among drummers, Sastry says, "I support sample enhancement for production purposes. I don't like sample *replacement*, though, because that means there was really no point in putting a mic on the drum in the first place. I do, however, think sample enhancement is very important in metal production. The metal audience today is a very tough crowd, and they can be quick to judge. If something sounds terrible, they won't listen to it. This actually goes beyond the metal community, and sample enhancement on the drums is a very important part of achieving this level of production. In a lot of cases, drums can make or break a mix."

Sastry's home studio features a Pro Tools rig with a standard Avid Digidesign Digi 003 interface. "I'm using an amazing set of boutique mic pre's made by a company called Prodigy Engineering,"

## Anup Sastry

Anup says, "which are running into Lynx Aurora converters. I have a basic mic collection, which consists of Shure SM57s and SM81s, a Beta 52 for the kick, and some 98D/S's for toms. I also use an AKG 414 for tracking vocals or close-miking an acoustic guitar or cymbal, and I have a Fractal Audio Systems Axe-Fx Ultra, which I use for guitars and effects.

"I use a lot of different plug-ins. I'm a fan of mid/side EQ'ing, so I enjoy Brainworx products. I'm also a huge fan of iZotope [audio signal processing gear] and the SSL

buss compressor. And I use a lot of stock EQs that come with Pro Tools. I love how easy it is to get the results you want out of them. I could go on for days about plug-ins!"

Sastry's dexterous use of electronics extends to the live arena, where he employs an Alesis MultiMix 4 USB four-channel mixer and Vic Firth SIH1 isolation headphones for live monitoring purposes. "I use custom clicks for each song," the drummer explains, "which I make using Pro Tools. I prefer the accented

Boss DB-90 click sounds. Intervals and Skyharbor run DAWs live; both bands have a lot of backing tracks along with automated patch changes for their guitar rigs. Skyharbor uses Cubase, and Intervals uses Pro Tools. Both setups output my click to my mixer, which is where I blend my kick microphone and click track to my headphones. With Jeff Loomis I normally play the backing tracks and clicks off an iPod, with the clicks panned hard left for me and backing tracks panned hard right for front of house. For the most part I just monitor kick drum and click."

Sastry, who plays a fairly standard four-piece kit plus the notable addition of a second floor tom to the left of his hi-hat, employs his three toms and a modest complement of cymbals as melodic voices in a manner different from most current players. "To be honest, I didn't get the idea [for the left-side floor tom] from any particular drummer," he says. "It's not a new or revolutionary idea. I just wanted a change in my setup, and I wanted to think about my fills a bit differently and push my left side more." To see some particularly good examples of his unique approach, check out the play-along videos for his original songs "Crystal" and "Ghost."

Admirers of Sastry's tech-metal prowess might be surprised to learn about the source of some of his playing ideas. "One of my biggest influences right now is [R&B/fusion master] Chris Coleman," Anup says. "That guy is an absolute beast on a kit, and I love his approach to playing. Growing up, I listened to almost everything. I did go through a pretty big metal phase when I first started playing drums, but today I don't really listen to metal at all. I enjoy it for sure, but I listen much more to hip-hop and R&B, as well as indie and country music."

Perhaps, then, readers won't be surprised to learn that when asked about his goals moving forward, Sastry mentions, with a chuckle, playing for Beyoncé or Daft Punk. "I don't really have a plan set in place for my future, though," he's quick to add. "I'm still kind of living life minute by minute. I want to continue to improve my style as much as possible, and I want to start practicing more than I already do. I've had the pleasure of knowing and touring with some amazing drummers, and I find it's always inspiring for me to want to go home and just get better. So I guess you could say my goal is to keep staying musically active for as long as I can."

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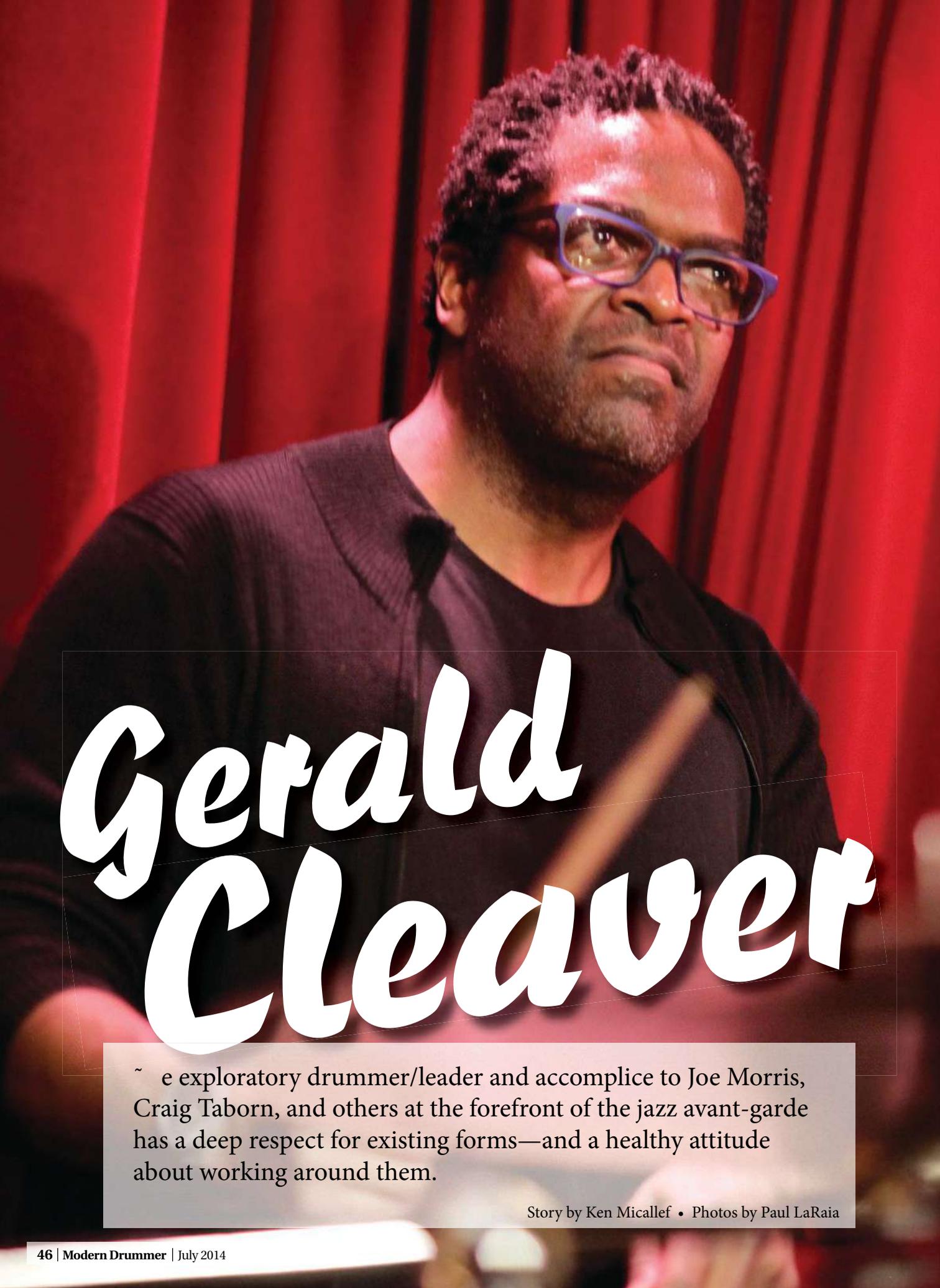


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# Gerald Cleaver

The exploratory drummer/leader and accomplice to Joe Morris, Craig Taborn, and others at the forefront of the jazz avant-garde has a deep respect for existing forms—and a healthy attitude about working around them.

Story by Ken Micallef • Photos by Paul LaRaia

**D**etroit native Gerald Cleaver is that rare drummer for whom the music presents a kind of doorway that he charges through, abandoning almost all sense of self, surrendering to the source. Cleaver has the gift of transparency; his drums move forward with the music, each bar taking on its own meaning with no adherence to past or future tenses.

On recent recordings with the New York improvisers Taylor Ho Bynum, Joe Morris, Craig Taborn, Chris Lightcap, and Ben Waltzer, Cleaver plays pure chameleon. With Waltzer's piano trio on *One Hundred Dreams Ago*, he swings à la Philly Joe Jones. On *Altitude*, by guitarist Joe Morris's incendiary group, he sandblasts the terrain clean. And on Ivo Perelman's *Enigma*, he plays double drums with the equally proficient Whit Dickey. In every guise, on every gig, his drumming exists in the reactive release of sound, each note born anew. Cleaver never repeats himself.

The drummer's own recordings reveal his evolution. On *Gerald Cleaver's Detroit* (2008), you can hear Tony Williams and Elvin Jones streaming out from a low-tuned, resonant kit. But by 2011's *Be It as I See It*, with his Uncle June group, Cleaver has shaken the past, chasing rhythms and setting them free. Book of Three's *Continuum*, featuring Cleaver,

Bynum, and John Hébert, is also fresh, and finds Cleaver juggling, bucking, swinging, darting, and dancing among the intimate yet bold improvisations. What all of these recordings suggest is that the guy is almost impossible to pin down stylistically, and even harder to describe.

Of his latest release as a leader, Black Host's *Life in the Sugar Candle Mines*, Cleaver says, "I just wanted to capture a sound that reflects all my loves at the present moment—the activity and excitement generated in static sound and extreme dynamics, melodicism within heavy texture, deep-rooted groove, unchained abandon, and the power and revelation of recurring form." Joined on the album by Cooper-Moore on piano and synth, Brandon Seabrook on guitar, Darius Jones on alto sax, and Pascal Niggenkemper on bass, Cleaver blends blistering psychedelia, boiling electronic vistas, and heated improvisations that conjure ECM meets *Bitches Brew* via Cecil Taylor. *Sugar Candle Mines* rocks. It swings. It breathes deeply, collapses, and is resurrected.

A former middle school music teacher with serious reservations about the current state of jazz education, Cleaver, now residing in New York City, is a fresh thinker, a bold drummer, and an exciting performer in a town whose clash of cultures and sound is captured perfectly by his mercurial music.

*"I'm a drummer for sure, but I'm applying a harmonic and rhythmic solution to whatever ensemble I'm dealing with."*

**MD:** You play many styles of jazz with such authenticity, from straight-ahead to avant-garde to free, from trio to octet to big band. The path to traditional jazz drumming is well documented, but what do you think about when playing avant-garde or free jazz?

**Gerald:** That could be a daylong conversation. It really is about context. I don't consider free music as being free to play anything you want to play. Of course, you're only bound by your imagination, but it's about making different types of associations. That's why I don't feel bound by swinging. I've taught students where I give them an assignment to, say, transcribe a particular drummer. Some say, "I'm not into that. I don't want to be constricted."

**MD:** What specific transcriptions will you have them do?

**Gerald:** Perhaps a Philly Joe Jones solo. But if they don't want to do it, fine. From my perspective I'm trying to give them something that would allow them to go deeper in forming their own context for that music, which would ultimately be a wellspring for any type of music they would want to play.

**MD:** Don't you have to be able to play "in" before you can play "out"?

**Gerald:** I don't think so. I don't feel like you have to do everything in order to do one thing.

**MD:** You don't have to start at A to get to B?

**Gerald:** No. You can start wherever you are. I'm lucky—my dad, John Cleaver, is a jazz drummer. So I heard the music

from the womb. It was like the paint on the walls; it was part of home. I also liked AM pop music, like the Beatles. I wanted to figure out those beats, and I loved their harmonies. When I was in my teens I got into jazz-rock, then Tony Williams with Miles Davis. So I didn't start loving jazz—I started with a different direction. So you can start off being a classical or rock player.

**MD:** But don't you need to understand "splang-a-lang," as Kenny Washington calls it, before you can play more abstractly?

**Gerald:** That depends on what you are creating. Obviously, in order to communicate you need a language and you need to understand how to use that language. That's as far as I will take it. Some people create their own language,

*“Detroit had a good feeling when I was growing up—anything was possible. I wasn’t into cliques where I was told, ‘We don’t do that kind of music.’”*

like Cecil Taylor. He created his own harmonies and scales. But everyone is using the building blocks of music.

It depends on what you consider necessary. I feel as free as I do within many types of music because I don’t have any preconceived notions of what I’m supposed to do. Detroit had a good feeling when I was growing up—anything was possible there. I wasn’t into cliques where I was told, “We don’t do that kind of music.”

**MD:** Someone like Milford Graves is

renowned for his free or abstract playing from the ’60s. Does he represent free music to you?

**Gerald:** Everyone has their own conception of what free means. If I’m talking about playing free, to me it may mean something completely different, because what I’m bringing to it are the experiences that I’ve had from listening to many different kinds of music, playing with a lot of people, and dealing with a certain number of hours of study. Any human being is capable of making

the music, but they have to communicate some sort of artistic rationale. I feel like I wouldn’t be complete in my conception and vision of the music unless I [understood] the whole history of the music that we call jazz—but that’s just me.

**MD:** Your drumming is very transparent within the music. On *Gerald Cleaver’s Detroit* you can hear your Tony Williams and Elvin Jones influences. But on the new record, that’s all gone—it’s just you. What was the process of finding your



### Recordings

**Black Host** Life in the Sugar Candle Mines  
/// **Gerald Cleaver/Uncle June** Be It as I See It  
/// **Gerald Cleaver’s Detroit** Gerald Cleaver’s Detroit  
/// **Mat Maneri** Sustain  
/// **Farmers by Nature** Out of This World’s Distortions  
/// **Tomasz Stanko** Wislawa  
/// **Craig Taborn** Chants  
/// **Anker/Taborn/Cleaver** Floating Islands  
/// **Jeremy Pelt** The Talented Mr. Pelt  
/// **Ivo Perelman** The Hour of the Star



## Tools of the Trade

### DRUMSETS

**1961 Slingerland 3-ply mahogany in white marine pearl finish**

**9x13 tom** (Remo Fiberskyn 3 batter, Clear Diplomat bottom)

**14x14 floor tom**

(Suede Ambassador batter, Clear Diplomat bottom)

**14x18 floor tom converted to**

**bass drum** (Fiberskyn 3 batter, Coated Renaissance Ambassador front head)

**1962 Slingerland 5.5x14 snare**

(1955 Radio King counterhoops, Aquarian Modern Vintage Thin batter, Remo Clear Ambassador Snare Side)

**1998 Lang 9-ply maple in blue mussel shell sparkle finish**

**10x12 tom** (Aquarian Satin Finish batter, Evans Genera Resonant Clear bottom)

**10x13 tom** (Uno 58 1000 batter, Genera Resonant Clear bottom)

**14x14 floor tom** (Uno 58 1000 batter, Genera Resonant Clear bottom)

**16x18 bass drum** (Evans EQ1 batter, silkscreened Resonant Black front head with Lang Gladstone logo)

**4x14 solid maple snare** (Billy Gladstone three-way tuning, Evans Uno 58 1000 batter, Remo Clear Ambassador Snare Side)

**6x14, 6-ply maple auxiliary snare** (Gladstone three-way tuning, Coated Ambassador batter, Clear Ambassador Snare Side)

### CYMBALS

13" Spizzichino hi-hats

22" Bosphorus Masters series ride

22" Spizzichino ride (or 20" Paiste Light ride)

20" Bosphorus Masters series crash/ride with one rivet (or 20" Avedis Zildjian ride with one rivet)

### MISCELLANEOUS

Two no-name 12" cymbals and two rotors from an electrical motor, applied to cymbals and drums

### STICKS

Vic Firth SD10 sticks, Regal Tip 583R brushes, Ludwig L195 brushes, Vic Firth General timpani mallets, Promark Cool Rods, and various homemade devices

own approach?

**Gerald:** A lot of critical listening. A lot of asking *why*? Why did a certain drummer play that idea at that point in the form over that harmony behind that soloist? Or why did he not play? How does it feel? What did it mean to him or her? What does it mean to me? And a whole lot of hands-on playing.

The other day a student asked me, "How much free playing did you practice?" I told him that I never practiced free playing. It was through the interaction. I feel like it's a conversation.

**MD:** You can practice a Philly Joe-style idea with dynamic marks and tempos, but in freer music perhaps the student needs to interact with other musicians.

**Gerald:** I always want the student to bring a bass player or another musician to play with. Otherwise lessons can become like a postage stamp, like, "Let me apply this beat" or "I will get this coordination thing together." If they bring in a bass or horn player, someone they can interact with, then I can discern what their level of interaction is and how they apply their technique in the service of actually *saying* something to another person and interpreting what they're saying back.

**MD:** Sometimes listening to Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, or even Vijay Iyer, it's like being in the midst of a

constant crescendo.

**Gerald:** I think I know what you mean. The idea behind the Black Host record is me presenting the beauty and simplicity of my rock influence, from age nine. These are essentially simple songs. The intent is that there are a lot of levels to the music, and it's just the interpretation that varies. They're all very concrete pieces of music, and I want my bandmates to communicate in a specific way and bring out a certain sense of power and even simplicity. Everyone is using extended techniques to broaden the textural palette. All these things are going on, but the most important thing might be the beautiful melody that reaches forward into infinity. That was one idea I had for "Gromek," this voice that you hear that

reaches back a thousand years.

**MD:** The music is always in a state of becoming.

**Gerald:** I was shuffling on my iPod recently, and "On Green Dolphin Street" from *Live at the Plugged Nickel* by Miles Davis came on, with Tony Williams. [Tenor saxophonist] Wayne Shorter just kills me on that record, because he is so profound over a defined structure. You hear infinity in that sense. Then you listen to Tony playing nothing but cymbal, and that rhythm he plays sounds open to all possibilities, even though he's keeping a normal ride pattern. Even the simplest thing can sound super-profound. Paul Motian does that as well. He had that touch. When he plays I hear a million possibilities.

**MD:** How did you develop your touch on the drums?

**Gerald:** By listening to different drummers and trying to get different types of sounds out of the drums, dealing with different techniques. I remember when I was at the University of Michigan, dealing with standard snare drum technique. Experimenting with tension related to technique, how to be relaxed, how to get different sounds, dealing with the brushes, what ultimate sound I want out of the drums, how to go from high to low both in pitch and physically....

## Influences

**The Beatles** "I Feel Fine" from Beatles '65 (Ringo Starr) // **Ornette Coleman** "Una Muy Bonita" from Change of the Century (Billy Higgins) // **Andrew Hill** "Pumpkin" from Black Fire (Roy Haynes) // **Keith Jarrett** "Common Mama" from Expectations (Paul Motian) // **Led Zeppelin** "Black Dog" from IV (John Bonham) // **Miles Davis** "Sivad" from Live-Evil (Jack DeJohnette), "Seven Steps to Heaven" from Seven Steps to Heaven (Tony Williams), "Dear Old Stockholm" from "Round About Midnight (Philly Joe Jones) // **Joe Henderson** "Mode for Joe" from Mode for Joe (Joe Chambers) // **Woody Shaw** "Rahsaan's Run" from Rosewood (Victor Lewis)

## Gerald Cleaver

**MD:** A minute ago you mentioned extended techniques. What do you mean?

**Gerald:** I carry some found things, pieces of metal that I put on the drums or cymbals to extend the sound of the conventional drumset. Percussionists in the orchestra are playing everything. Trap-set drummers used to do that. Look at Sonny Greer behind Duke Ellington—he had all this stuff. That suggests so many possibilities.

**MD:** How does composing affect or change your drumming?

**Gerald:** I use the piano to figure out what I'm already hearing in my head. Hearing those sonorities. Often what I'm hearing from a drumistic perspective is more informed by what is happening harmonically and melodically. I'm a drummer for sure, but I'm applying a harmonic and rhythmic solution to whatever ensemble I'm dealing with. That's why I love texture so much. I love to relate to things harmonically and melodically as well as rhythmically.

**MD:** You also went to Wayne State University in Detroit. But you didn't

enjoy it, correct?

**Gerald:** No, the musicians there didn't really represent the city that I knew. My jazz teacher gave me a D, the lowest passing grade, so I dropped out of the jazz department, knowing I could do better on my own. I had known great players from childhood—Marcus Belgrave, Pistol Allen, Roy Brooks. They encouraged me. I realized that all I really needed was a love for the music, being serious and wanting to learn, and being respectful. And that's still the case.

Something is terribly wrong with jazz education. It costs way too much money, for one thing. If school costs \$60,000 a year, why don't you just get an apartment, tell your parents you won't go wild, buy some groceries, seek out somebody who actually plays this music, practice your ass off, and learn? But you're not screwed if you do go to school. You will go where your heart takes you. Whatever you think you can do, you will do.

**MD:** What practice regimens made a real difference for you?

**Gerald:** A ton of playing with records.

Doing that when I was eight and nine was crucial for my listening skills. James Brown, the Jackson Five's "ABC"—I wanted that muffled drum sound. Led Zeppelin, all the Bonham stuff was very influential. It was also about forgetting the drums and just playing along. The Beatles' "I Feel Fine." Or taking two hours to play free-form, where you don't know what's going to happen. Later I studied with Victor Lewis.

**MD:** How did that relate when you began playing freer music in New York?

**Gerald:** If you're playing with some real fine improvisers, they're going to build some exceptional musical architecture. The idea of building structure is very important to me. It can be stream-of-consciousness playing as well. I relate it to a conversation. That cliché can become stretched, but you can elucidate a thesis in real time if you have enough understanding of your subject. It's like the joy of talking to people who know a lot about a lot of different things and are really passionate. You ask a question and they go off on a tangent and set up something new. *That's* what the music is to me. 

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# Omar

# Hakim

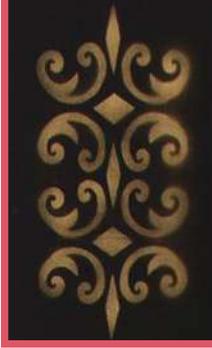
**I**t makes perfect sense that he's among the small group of key musicians **Daft Punk** called on to take the EDM duo's already famous grooves to the next phase. After all, he'd done the same for **Weather Report, Sting, David Bowie**, and *so* many others. Now he's released his first solo album in a decade and a half, yet another wonderful reminder of his elegant feel and kaleidoscopic vision. Longtime contributor **Robin Tolleson**, who interviewed the drummer for his first *MD* feature way back in 1984, catches us up on his latest greatest hits.



**Photos by Rahav**







**Y**ou can drop the needle just about anywhere on Omar Hakim's musical timeline and find a good groove, but now is a particularly fertile moment for the drummer. Hakim is sporting a new self-produced solo album, *We Are One*, which is heavy on both songwriting and instrumental prowess. He's been touring with his wife, pianist Rachel Z, in their project the Trio of OZ. And as we went to press he was preparing for a historic series of sold-out Kate Bush concerts at the Eventim Apollo in London.

This work follows in the wake of a widely seen appearance at the 2014 Grammy ceremonies with the year's big winner, Daft Punk, who from the start envisioned Hakim's buoyant pocket as a key element in the duo's game-changing 2013 album, *Random Access Memories*. If anyone among the several million Grammy viewers wasn't already familiar with the drummer laying down the groove of death alongside Chic's Nile Rodgers, Stevie Wonder, and Pharrell, they sure learned fast.

"At the genesis of *Random Access Memories* was the desire to record live drummers," Thomas Bangalter of Daft Punk tells *MD* in an exclusive interview for this story. "It sounded like an exciting challenge to bring back the human feel in the rhythm section of dance and pop music recordings at a time where it had been gradually and generally replaced by drum machines. So it all started with drum sounds and a certain groove that we had in mind, a certain idea of a unique organic perfection and a genuine personal musicality that drummers like Omar Hakim and JR Robinson [who also appears on the album] have in their performances."

At this point, few human beings *haven't* been exposed to the disco-funk sizzle of *RAM*'s multi-million-selling, Grammy-grabbing lead single, "Get Lucky." But attention should also be paid to Hakim's crisp accents on "Beyond," feathery stickings on "Motherboard," rocket-fuel injection on "Contact," and sure-handed slamming on "Giorgio by Moroder." "Omar is an amazing musician with such a unique, distinctive shuffle," Bangalter says. "He's extremely nuanced and sophisticated yet straight down to the point, which is something [Daft Punk's] Guy-Manuel [de Homem-Christo] and I love about him. Watching him play in the studio was just so infectious. He brought so much to the tracks, with enormous generosity and simplicity."

A good number of the drummers watching the Grammys in January needed no introduction to Hakim's sublime groovesmanship. Many *MD* readers, for instance, associate Hakim with his stint in the pioneering world-jazz group Weather Report in the 1980s, anchoring its great final rhythm section. Omar followed that gig with a seat in the house band on David Sanborn's influential but short-lived *Night Music* show, then touring and recording opportunities with Lionel Richie, Madonna, Sting, Herbie Hancock and

Stanley Clarke, Bobby McFerrin, and the Urban Knights (featuring Grover Washington Jr., Ramsey Lewis, and Victor Bailey), before enjoying a decade-long run in Chic with his boyhood friend Nile Rodgers.

One of Hakim's former Weather Report bandmates, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, once related how so many fans continued to ask about the group years after it had broken up. Shorter would explain that in his and keyboardist Joe Zawinul's subsequent solo material, listeners were getting, in a sense, the "best of" Weather Report. A similar metaphor can be used when discussing Hakim's third solo album, his first in fourteen years.

Listening to *We Are One*, longtime fans will no doubt be reminded of many facets of the drummer's amazingly well-rounded career. And we're not just talking "spot the chop" here. Though Hakim consciously doesn't shy away from drum features this time out, *We Are One* is about much more than flexing musical muscles; it's about *communicating*, which Omar can do so effectively, in so many ways. "Carpe Diem" hits with joyful vocalizing, harmonica, and warm V-Drums sounds. "Listen Up!" raises the bar of smooth jazz several notches. And "With Every Breath" is four minutes of egoless instrumental joy. Meanwhile, the accented hi-hats, cymbal jabs, and tuneful toms on "Remember to Remember" connect many of the dots of Hakim's decades-long creative streak.

Taken as a whole, it's as if Hakim has arrived at a place where he's taking stock of all his skills and interests in order to build upon a total artistic concept. "I'm at a point in my life where I want to spend time working on my own music," he says. "My hope is that people get excited about the project, and I'm psyched to get the band on the road!"

**"Experimenting with other instruments made me a better drummer, because I could connect with the emotion of the music, not just hear it as a rhythmic vehicle."**



## The Journey of the Rhythm—and the Rhythmist

**MD:** Since we last talked, D'Angelo's *Voodoo* record came out and beats got all messed up.

**Omar:** It's true, man, the whole approach to groove drumming has changed, particularly in that kind of hip-hop/R&B vibe. D'Angelo and [producer/drummer] Questlove made a record with genius and vision that influenced a whole new generation of musicians. But then some things haven't changed. Rock 'n' roll hasn't totally changed. In many ways American rock music is still doing its thing. It still has that consistent sound. I'm thinking about bands like Foo Fighters that expand on the rock tradition but in their own unique way. However, it's interesting how certain genres change, morph—disco to dance to house to EDM, soul to funk to R&B to rap to hip-hop to neo soul.

It seems like rock, gospel music, and country music are staying connected to the instrumentalist craft, because they're still keeping it tied to the tradition of actually sitting down and playing an instrument. It's important



that young people are still interested in learning to play and develop skills on an actual instrument. Over the last three decades we've seen interesting leaps with R&B and hip-hop and rap, because the production tools changed, from live musicians to sampling records and drum machines and all that over the years. Drummers that came back into that arena were emulating some of the drum machine stuff. What I remember hearing about [the current approach to R&B grooves] was that back in the day sometimes people were having a hard time getting loops lined

up a certain way. But then they just worked with it anyway, and it's almost like the feel of displaced loops became a happy mistake. This sound influenced a generation of drummers.

**MD:** The hip-hop world has always been open to taking samples from different genres.

**Omar:** It's a different kind of talent to create music as a collage concept—to hear a preexisting piece of music, an idea, a phrase, and in that moment reimagine it into something else, in the same way that an artist would take snippets of pictures from different

### Omar's Setup

Hakim plays Pearl drums and Zildjian cymbals, choosing from various sizes and models to configure the proper kit for the music he's working on at any given time.

From Pearl's Reference or Reference Pure series, he'll pick from 18x20 and

18x22 bass drums; 8x10, 10x12, and 11x13 toms; and 14x14, 16x16, and 16x18 floor toms. His snares include a 6.5x14 Steve Ferrone Signature model, 6.5x14 steel and brass Sensitones, a 5x14 Reference, a 5x14 Maple Free Floating or Brass Sensitone, and a 5x13 Omar Hakim Signature model.

His cymbals of choice include a 20" K Custom Hybrid ride, a 22" K Custom Left Side ride, 17" and 19" A Custom Medium Thin crashes, a 19" K Custom Hybrid Trash Smash, a 19" China Boy, a 13" Thin crash, 10" and 11" Hybrid splashes, and 13" and 14" Mastersound hi-hats.

Hakim's hardware includes a Pearl DR-503C curved ICON rack, a P-2002B belt-drive double pedal with blue cam, and an H-2000 hi-hat stand.

His Remo heads include Coated CS snare batters with a black dot underneath (Coated Ambassador on his signature snare), Clear or Smooth White Emperor tom batters (Coated Ambassadors for jazz) and clear Ambassador bottoms, and Powersonic bass drum batters.

He plays a Roland TD-30KV V-Drums kit with an extra V-Snare and two additional V-Cymbals, as well as a Roland SPD-SX sampling pad, all of which he runs through QSC KW152 and KW181 powered speakers.

Omar plays Vic Firth sticks, mallets, and brushes, including his SOH signature model and the Rhythm Scepter (based on the AJ1).



places and create a new piece of art with it. So I guess at the end of the day that's the beauty of art—there don't have to be rules about how it's created, as long as it comes out the way that you wanted it to come out.

**MD:** You've been able to be creative across a number of different styles.

**Omar:** I've managed to stay very busy because I chose not to be a specialist in one particular field—jazz drummer, rock drummer, or whatever. I've just always followed the music.

Growing up when I did, I was exposed to a lot of music. You know, being a teenager in the '70s, the radio wasn't so segregated into specific genres back then. You could turn on one radio station and hear everything from the Beatles to Motown to Earth, Wind & Fire to Grand Funk Railroad to the Mahavishnu Orchestra to Return to Forever to Miles. All of this music was happening on the radio, and people were exposed to a more interesting and open kind of selection. In many ways maybe the listeners were more sophisticated back then. I mean, you *know* listeners are sophisticated when Columbia Records puts out a 45-rpm single on the Mahavishnu Orchestra.

So it was interesting to grow up during that time period, because I'm absorbing and assimilating all of this musical information, trying to experience it all and add it to my mental tool belt as a musician. Growing up loving rock, funk, R&B, jazz, bebop, fusion, whatever, I was very well prepared for a career that would be eclectic in nature and open, and that's kind of been my

OS throughout my professional life. I wanted to be able to go into different arenas and enjoy the experience and contribute something meaningful to each project that would enhance the artists' vision of their music. I feel like that's my job, that I would show up ready to adopt the idea that's presented at the moment and frame it with the right rhythmic frame. So it's been a beautiful journey, because I've made pop records, jazz records, rock records, R&B records, reggae records. It's been a journey that's kept me on my toes for forty-five years. As a result it keeps me fresh too. I don't have time to rest on laurels. I'm still busy looking ahead in many ways.

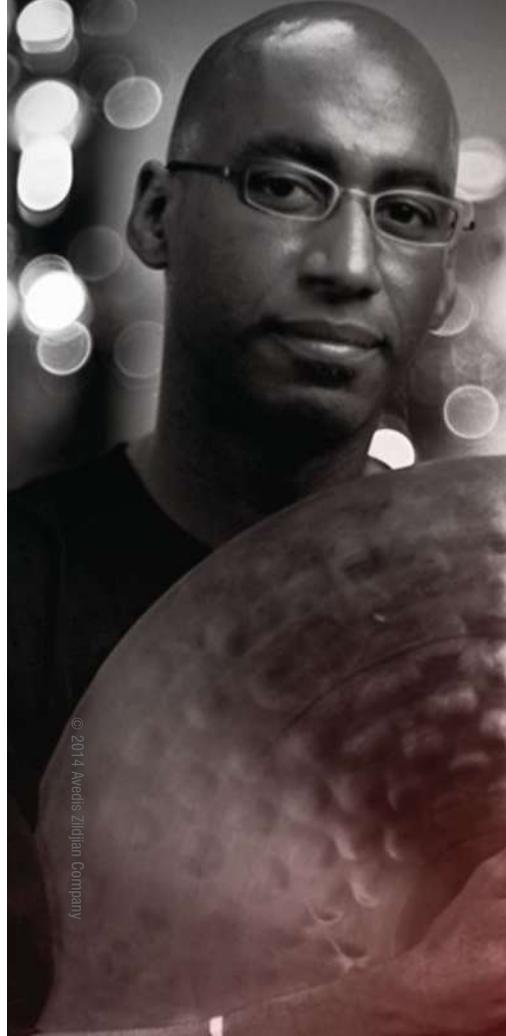
## Not So Randomly Accessing Memories

**MD:** It sure looked like fun playing with Daft Punk at the Grammys.

**Omar:** It's unbelievable, man. People are still talking about it months later. And it *was* fun, a magical night. There was an energy in the room that I can't even explain. It was an interesting flow, and I want to say that, at least for the rhythm section, the take of that song at the Grammys was the best we had done all week. For some reason we were feeling really loose, really in a nice flow with [bassist] Nathan East, Stevie, Pharrell, Nile, [guitarist] Paul Jackson Jr., and [keyboardist/MD] Chris Caswell. Right from the very downbeat of the thing it just felt good to me. And it was



“I don't have time to rest on laurels. I'm still busy looking ahead.”



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## OMAR HAKIM

really cool to look out and see the whole audience at the Staples Center get up and start dancing.

**MD:** Some of the segues between sections were a little tricky. Was there a sequence going through it all, or was it totally live?

**Omar:** Yeah, it was a very deliberate concept to do the mash-up of the Stevie Wonder songs with their hit, and also snippets of some of their other hits that would flow in and out of the mash-up. So the rehearsals were interesting, because I had to play with a click so that certain recorded elements could be flown in—Vocoder effects and other things.

The challenge is to make it not feel like you're playing with a click, like it's just swinging like a live show. You don't want it to have that kind of tense, tight feeling of *I have to be right on the click*. So after rehearsing for a few days and getting comfortable, mission accomplished. We were able to blend the best of a live performance with the technology. These are beautiful experiences, and they definitely keep you on your toes, man. It *was* a little nerve-racking; at one of the rehearsals I remember my monitor system went down, and I was like, *Oh, God, we cannot have this*

*happen on live TV.*

I've been on a lot of these kinds of gigs, so I've definitely had to draw on my experience to get through moments like that. But thank God that one went without a hitch, and it was a huge night for Daft Punk. I think they got every Grammy they were nominated for, and it was fun to be there to celebrate with them.

**MD:** Did you sense that *Random Access Memories* would become so big?

**Omar:** When I made that record with them in the spring of 2012, I honestly didn't see that coming. I was familiar with their music from the radio, and I had seen the movie *TRON* and heard the music they did for that. So when I got a call I was honestly surprised that they were interested in using me, because I was very aware that they were an EDM band, and their way of working is typically with loops and drum machines and samples. So the first thing I thought was that maybe they wanted me to create live patterns using the V-Drums. Then I could pull up sounds that they would want to hear, but I could play with more of a human feel. But they were like, "No, no, that's actually not what we want. What we really want is acoustic drums." I was like, "Really? Okay. Acoustic drums it

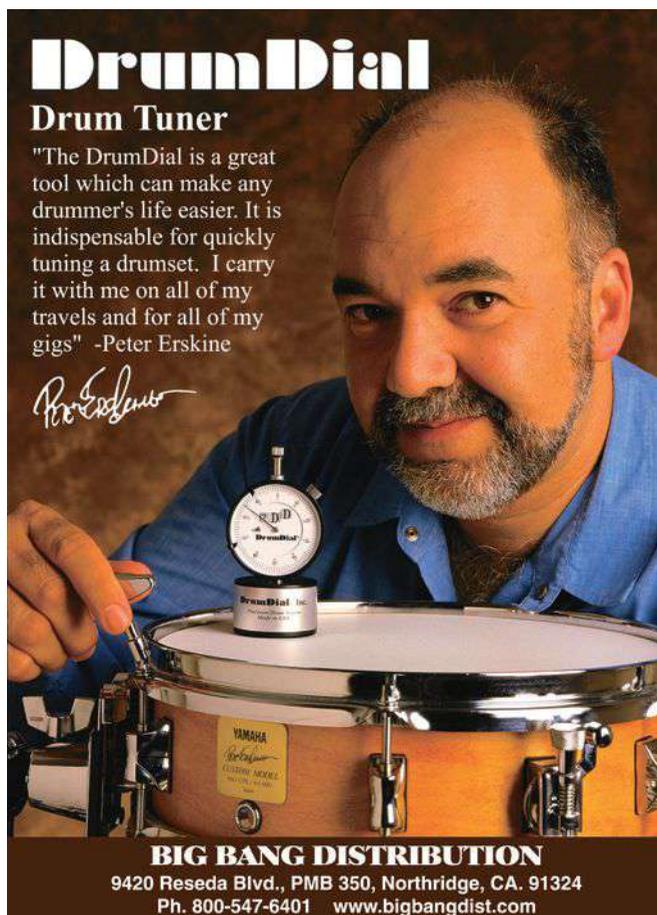
is." So I holed up in a studio in L.A. with them for about a week.

**MD:** How did the session go?

**Omar:** What was interesting about the session was, we didn't play any songs. There *were* no songs. I never heard "Get Lucky" the entire time I was there. What I did hear were really cool four-bar and eight-bar phrases—bass lines, keyboard ideas, grooves—that Thomas would show me. We would find a pattern that felt good, and then we would jam on those ideas for between five and eight minutes or so. It was essentially a live sampling session.

There were two main recording sessions, one with JR Robinson on drums, Nathan East, and Paul Jackson Jr., and one with Chris Caswell, [bassist] James Genus, and me. Nile's parts came after—I didn't actually hear Nile until the record came out. Same with Pharrell. But the genius of the Daft Punk guys is that they would take all of that material and do such interesting things. For instance, for "Get Lucky" they took my drum track and put Nathan East on that song. This was the genius construction of a pop record.

I also thought it was interesting that they wanted to use live musicians to make this record. Thomas is very



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thoughtful about celebrating the process of going into the studio and recording music, and the magic that happens when you pull people together in the recording studio. After the Grammy win I went backstage to congratulate him, and he said, "This isn't just about us—it's about all of you guys." The fact that they actually put a recording studio on the stage of the Grammys was a very deliberate statement from them on the stand-point of showing and celebrating the process. Everybody who was in that room, we all start the process in a recording studio somewhere. To put that on stage, and then have it morph into this kind of dance party, I thought was a pretty genius concept. Those guys are really thoughtful. It was fascinating to observe them, not only during the recording process but also during the preparation for the Grammys. It was a really unusual and fun project to be a part of.

## Making Connections:

### *We Are One*

**MD:** What was the genesis of your new solo album, *We Are One*?

**Omar:** Around 2005 I was doing a lot of clinics for Roland. I've always been into drum technology, and when the V-Drums came out, it was the first time I felt comfortable enough to actually do a gig with an electronic set and leave the acoustic drums home. Before then the instruments weren't expressive enough for me. But I met a guy who worked for Roland, Scott Tibbs, who's an amazing keyboardist, arranger, and orchestrator, and we hit it off. Scott was the first guy on board with my new record. We started writing together.

In 2006 I was commissioned to do a video piece for Digital Theatre Systems, and I wrote a tune called "Listen Up!" and put a band together with Scott, Gregoire Maret on harmonica, Chieli Minucci on guitar, and Jerry Brooks on bass. We flew to Belgium to record at Galaxy Studios, and that sort of kick-started the project. Sometimes Scott would be in New York and we'd work together. Other times we were working with him in L.A. and me in New York. I'd send him ideas, and he'd send me stuff and I'd finish it, put drums on it, and send it back to him.

What's cool about this project is that

it's a collaboration of friends and family in many ways, guys I've known a long time. I worked with Chieli on several Special EFX albums back in the day. Gregoire Maret, I was just a fan of his work. I grew up with the sound of the harmonica; it's a tone that I've always liked, from Stevie Wonder to Toots Thielemans to Lee Oskar. So the combination of Bobby Franceschini on sax and flute, the harmonica, the guitar—I found a nice palette for my music and the way I write melodies.

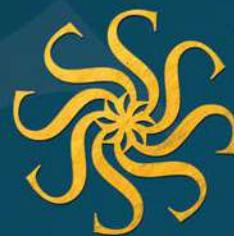
This project means a lot to me because it represents the joy of having total creative freedom. Also, the album was entirely recorded and mixed at my own studio, and it was released on my own label. It's a great time for independent artists to take control of their art.

**MD:** The opening tune on *We Are One*, "Transmigration," is reminiscent of something off Return to Forever's *Romantic Warrior*.

**Omar:** "Transmigration" was written at a Roland event in Japan. I got the idea for the melody right on the spot and said to the guitarist, "I'm going to sing a melody, and I just want you to play it." Then I sang the bass line to Scott and he started playing it and harmonizing it. We did a stripped-down version of it for that event, but then Scott took it home and really developed the idea. "Transmigration" morphed into this sort of epic arrangement with a lot of texture and a lot of excitement. Many of the tunes developed kind of organically like that.

My idea was always to write melodies for instrumental music that are singable, but to make them interesting with the harmony that you layer under them. You can have a group of notes, but the harmony that you put under that group of notes changes the flavor and the mood and the emotional atmosphere of those notes. A lot of times—and I learned this from Zawinul and Wayne Shorter—when I write a melody I might get away from it for a day or two and then go back and experiment with how many different harmonic ideas I can put under it.

Herbie Hancock said to me once, "You know, a lot of my hits are only like four or five notes." We had fun going through them. Take "Chameleon," for example: The main melody is four or five notes, and the same with "Rockit." A person can connect with that melody. So I've always been interested in making melodic statements that people



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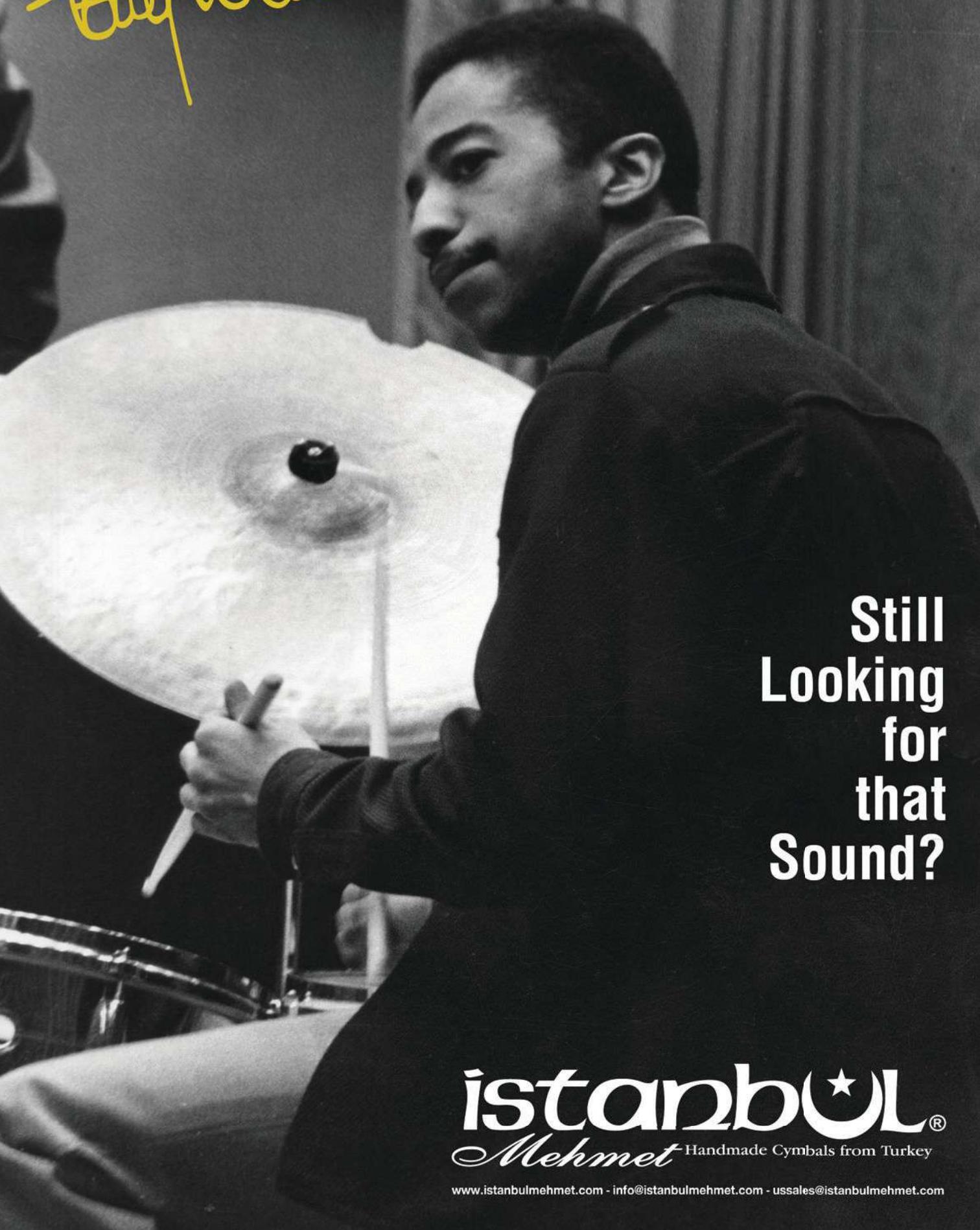
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## OMAR HAKIM

can hook up with, but when you go to play it you find some interesting harmonic content underneath that makes it interesting to listen to.

**MD:** You create a lot of spaces on *We Are One* for the drums to shine.

**Omar:** I used to get criticized for not playing enough drums on my own records. I guess it goes back to the fact that I didn't always think like a drummer. One of the first instruments that I was learning at the time I was getting into drums as a kid was violin. My aunt and uncle had a piano and a guitar lying around at their house, and I was always connecting with harmonic and melodic instruments.

I think that experimenting with other instruments made me a better drummer, because I could connect with the emotion of the music, not just hear it as a rhythmic vehicle. I'm hearing music when I go into a session as the whole picture, the entire story. My job is to respond to that as a drummer, and I think that when you're playing from that place, it opens up your creative thinking to how you would frame the experience rhythmically. I always look at it like: There's a lovely picture, but if you put the wrong frame on it, it doesn't complement the picture.

**MD:** "With Every Breath" is a nice instrumental ballad, and I wouldn't normally expect a drum solo in a track like that. But the way you set up those montunos to improvise over works well.

**Omar:** "With Every Breath" flowed out of me in one afternoon. I've found that some of my best tunes are the ones that just flow out—you sit down at the piano and you're singing and playing the melodic idea right on the spot. I'm not overthinking it; I've got some chord progressions that feel good to me and inspire a nice vibe, and typically how I arrive at the melodies is that I sing them over the harmony. If I can sing them, that means I'm connecting my heart to the intention.

Some melodies are improvisations and they're very abstract, and you're going for something crazy or super-interesting. But then ballads, sometimes they need to just connect. Rachel worked on Wayne Shorter's *High Life* record, and he had reminisced that Miles [Davis] told him to "write something romantic." The idea is that it would get right to the heart.

With instrumental music you have to be careful to balance the yin-and-yang energy. I had a conversation about this

with [bassist and Davis collaborator] Marcus Miller many years ago. The vibe that we came up with is that if you look out and there are no women in the audience, something is missing in your music. And it's not to say that it's not fun to play for the guys that love the kind of sports element of drumming and all that. But at the end of the day, you would hope that your music would connect with everyone on different levels. If I play a gig and have both men and women connecting with the music energetically, then I feel like as a composer I've done the right thing.

**MD:** "Remember to Remember" has a really serious build to it. There's a trick to the build, isn't there, to holding yourself back?

**Omar:** Absolutely, because you don't want to force it; you just want to be on the ride. One analogy is when you take a small snowball and roll it down a mountain, it gets bigger and bigger. Another analogy is that sometimes things that are repeated over and over again gain momentum. It's like a meditation; the mantra gains more power and energy as you keep repeating it.

I've almost always applied that concept to playing grooves, but also to being in the moment and just letting the moment unfold. I don't have to make it *be* something; I just have to be *in* it and then let it unfold, and energetically I start to feel that pulse. It's like the musical moment and the musical energy is much bigger than what you could ever practice. You could prepare for it—but you couldn't practice it. I had a teacher who said, "Some things can't be taught; they have to be caught." And music is very much like that for me.

**MD:** Your tune "Walk the Walk" is almost like a drum 'n' bass/shredder hybrid. There's some great offbeat hi-hat stuff on that.

**Omar:** I keep a V-Drums set in my control room, and one time I sat down and kind of stumbled onto this rhythm. I was like, *Wow, this is fun, and I don't have anything like this on the record.* It's fast, up around 150 bpm, and it's kind of a wacky pattern. I recorded it first on V-Drums and then started improvising the bass line on a keyboard. It's funny that you said drum 'n' bass, because that's actually how it started. I sat down, played the pattern, gave myself a break from it by playing a four-on-the-floor dance thing, and then I went back to the pattern again. So within a



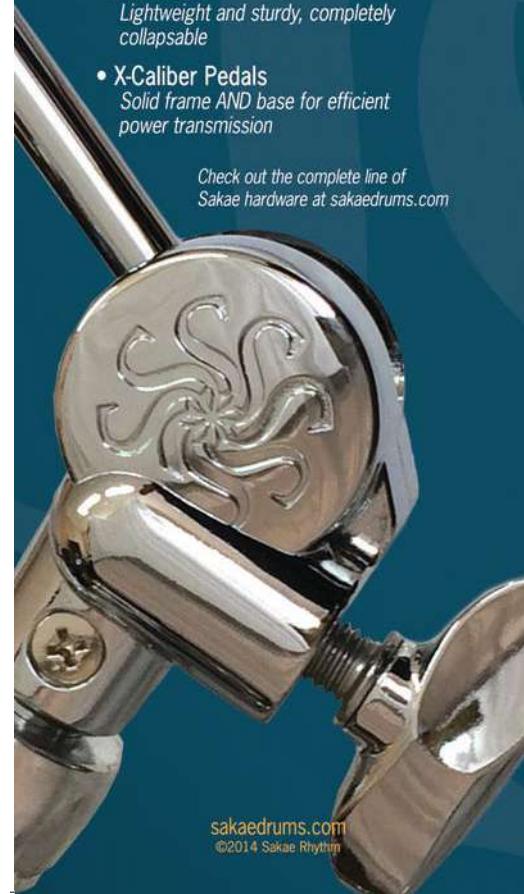
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## OMAR HAKIM

couple of hours I had come up with a form that included this very simple drum solo.

My idea was to make a solo that a little kid could play. When I was a kid there were a few drum solos on pop records that kids would learn. In the 1960s there was "Wipe Out." If you said you played drums, somebody would always ask, "Dude, can you play 'Wipe Out'?" [laughs] Another one was "Frankenstein" by Edgar Winter. That was one of those drum solos—it wasn't really like a Buddy Rich solo or a Billy Cobham solo, but it was an iconic

drum solo that everybody could sort of play. So when I thought of "Walk the Walk," I thought, *What if I had this drum solo that's not so much chops oriented as much as it's sound oriented, with more open space, and it's like you kind of get into the sound of the drum inside this room.* So after I did an improv on V-Drums, I liked it, but then I thought that maybe I needed to really hear some air moving. So I called over my engineer Rich Tozzoli, and I was like, "Rich, help me get a massive sound on this," and I replayed on my acoustic kit what I did on V-Drums

over the bass line.

**MD:** I love how smooth you make the 7/8 feel on "So There."

**Omar:** I always felt like, Why do odd time signatures have to sound hard? There are some cultures where a 7/8 or a 9/8 or an 11 actually inspires people to dance. And so my goal with odd-time grooves is to make the listener forget that it's an odd time signature. If I'm doing it right, they don't feel the stop-and-go that you could get into if you're not careful. In Western music we're so used to 4/4, 2/4, 3/4, that sort of thing, but you know in the Indian culture and in other Eastern music, 9/8, 7/8, 11, 15, it's very natural.

This tune started off as an improvisation at my old studio in Yonkers. Another engineer I enjoy working with, Chase Culpon, would come by the studio on days that I just wanted to improvise drumbeats. We would do a lot of sessions like that. We'd mike it like it was a real session, and we would just capture grooves that I would later improvise on. I would have a lovely multitrack recording of the thing. The idea was that, you know, sometimes you record something and you have demo love, and you can never get back to that original feeling. Having my own studio meant that I could record the original feeling, but as a beautiful hi-res document that would get used in the final production. And so those drums were just me sitting down and improvising.

**MD:** The tunes "Listen Up!" and "Forever Friend" lend a great hip-hop jazz vibe to *We Are One*, and the harmonica is such a great color.

**Omar:** Once again, there's a singable melody on "Listen Up!" And on both of those songs I would say the melodies are playful—the harmonica really gives that spirit. Gregoire Maret can play simple melodies in a super-expressive way, but he can also play the instrument like a jazz saxophonist, harmonically and melodically.

Even though I'm using hip-hop rhythms and simple, expressive melodies, I'm also calling on jazz elements, blending a lot of concepts together. I'll use rock guitar sounds with a harmonica, with a flute, with hip-hop grooves. On "Forever Friend," there's a lot of percussion in the B section, an Afro-Cuban kind of feel for a moment. My hope with this record was to feature the drums in a tasteful way but balance that with interesting

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harmonic information and the use of my voice as a flavor, for texture.

**MD:** I always liked your tune “Molasses Run,” and you recorded a great new version for *We Are One*.

**Omar:** I wrote that song for Weather Report, and it was recorded on the first album I did with them back in '83, *Procession*. I decided to dust it off because when Joe and Wayne did it, they cleared out a lot of the harmonic information so that the harmony was more implied than actually spelled out. It was a very open production, but on this one I decided to go with a more lush harmonic version. Scott did a lovely job, and Chieli played a really interesting statement—it was an unusual solo for him. It's fun to try to get everybody inspired to play different stuff.

**MD:** “Carpe Diem” and the other song titles point to a spiritual meaning in the music.

**Omar:** My idea was that while we are here, the soul feels the urge to make the most of its life, through hope, desire, goals, activity—whatever we're doing. The idea is to hopefully do the

best that we can with our time here. That's why I like the title “Carpe Diem,” as well as the mood of that song. I imagined that if it came on the radio in your car in the morning, it would put you in a lovely space for the day. It's an uplifting kind of feeling, a hopeful feeling—a melodic representation of potential and what we could possibly accomplish.

The sentiment behind the entire project is to celebrate that oneness of people, through melody, music, and rhythm. And hopefully, energetically, they would feel where I was trying to go with this thing. My dad would say the phrase “The creation is one.” He was always interested in spiritual writings. His dad was a Baptist minister, but when he grew up he decided to get into mystic Islam. So I grew up with a family where I would hang out with my Christian Baptist cousins and go to church with my aunts and uncles, and then the other part of the family was Muslim and would attend a mosque. So I was getting an interesting overview, and because my family was essentially two

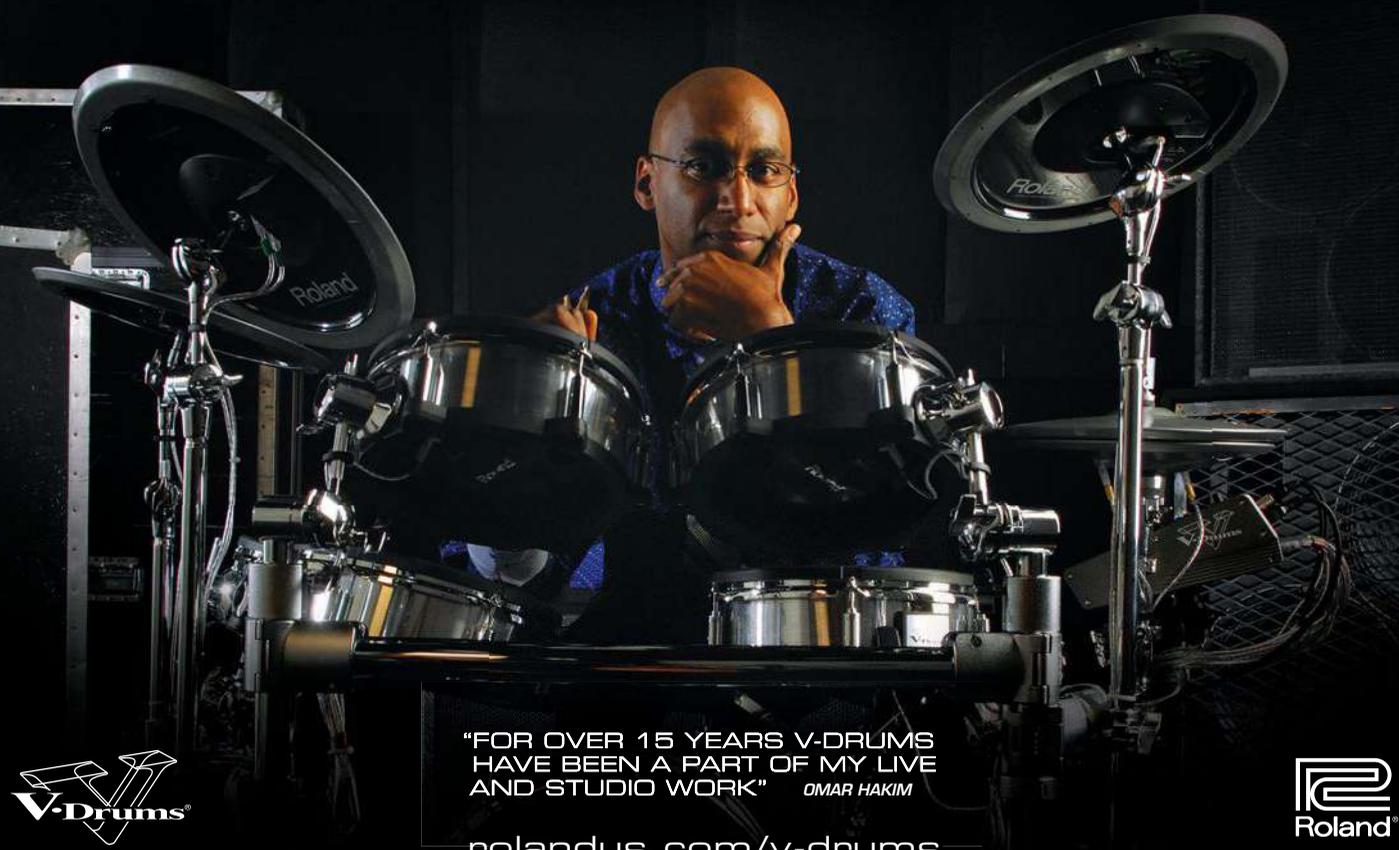
religions, I just got to the point where I would adopt the best of everything that I was seeing. That made sense to me as a young kid. And the more reading I did, the more I noticed that everybody's sort of saying the same thing, just in a different way, and that made sense to me. And then my musical life introduced me to cultures all over the world, so it was very difficult for me to look at the creator and the creation, if you will, based on one religious idea.

When I go all over the world, it doesn't matter who's in the audience—everybody speaks the musical language and understands it. So what I'm seeing, not just as a musician but as a human going through this experience, is that I got a chance to experience the beauty of people all over the world, and essentially everybody wants that connection that makes them feel whole. They want intimacy and love with somebody that matters to them, and with their families.

So that's why it's like, yeah, we *are* one, actually.



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# Get Good: Being the New Guy

by Mike Haid

Your abilities will never be more scrutinized than after you've accepted a job to replace a drummer whose playing helped define the sound of a popular band. Simon Phillips and Todd Sucherman, two monster players who know exactly what it's like to be under the magnifying glass, are here to help you deal.



**H**ow would you approach the opportunity to replace a band's original

drummer? What if that band was a high-profile recording act with hit records? And what if the drummer you're replacing has passed away, leaving behind an indelible mark on the music? How should you prepare—and behave—when entering the band as “the new guy”?

Not every audition you go on will have such heavy baggage attached, but by definition the situation is full of intense potentialities, both positive and negative. It just so happens that the two drummers we spoke with for guidance on the subject—guys who went through the

exact scenario laid out above—earned the respect and admiration not only of their new employers but of legions of loyal fans as well. They graciously share their experiences here, providing serious food for thought for the next time all eyes are on you.

The legendary British session drummer Simon Phillips was already an industry icon when he was invited to join the Who's twenty-fifth-anniversary tour in 1989. Can you imagine having to fill the shoes once worn by one of British rock's most iconic drummers, Keith Moon? Several years later, Phillips was asked to replace the beloved American session drummer Jeff Porcaro in Toto, a role he held until earlier this year.

Clearly, Phillips is unafraid of a

challenge. “My approach to any musical situation,” he says, “is to just play the music. I can't think about what the original drummer played when they recorded the songs. That's not my concern. My only concern is to go on stage and play the music the best I can with the current band. I've been asked to play for a reason, and that's really the way it's always been.

“I can only sound like me,” Phillips continues. “I can't sound like someone else. I'm actually very bad at trying to imitate another drummer's style. I play music very intuitively. Although, when I was learning the Who's music, there were a couple of things that Keith did that would just get me howling, because he was so out there in left field. So I would throw in some of those bits, mainly as a tip of the hat to Keith. Other than that, I just played what I felt best fit the music.”

Todd Sucherman was well known on the Chicago-area session scene when he got his big break with Styx. “I grew up listening to Styx, so their music was part of my early musical DNA,” Sucherman says. “Obviously, when I got the call, the thought of making the music happen was



the first priority. There was no need to write charts or do any extensive research, because I knew most of the material before they ever called me.

"I walked into that first rehearsal completely prepared," Todd continues. "I'd even learned some of the old live-ending arrangements that they had forgotten. Then it became the running joke—whenever someone in the band couldn't remember something about a song arrangement, they'd say, 'Ask the kid!' After that it was just a matter of jelling with the guys during those first few weeks of rehearsals. They hadn't played together as a unit in almost fourteen years."

Asked about his attitude toward interpreting the original Styx drum tracks, Sucherman says, "When it comes to playing the songs like the original records, no two human beings are going to play drums to a song exactly the same. On the other hand, Styx sold 40 million records before I joined the band. I respect that, and I would never put my own musical agenda before that. The material needs to sound the way that Styx fans have come to know and love these songs.

"That being said, John Panozzo was a very interesting drummer in that he was a very active player with limited technique. I mean no disrespect when I say that. He almost had a Keith Moon type of unorthodox approach. So his drum parts were interesting templates for me to examine, to [help me] capture the flavor of certain

passages and fills. I also wanted to try to update them, make them a little more hip with some dense figures that only carefully listening musicians or drummers might notice. But I didn't want to play anything that would particularly draw attention to myself in the ears of the layman."

For Sucherman, fitting in away from the stage was more of a challenge than getting along musically. "The most daunting thing for me," he says, "was the fact that, even though I had never met John Panozzo, everyone in the Styx organization unanimously said that he was the funniest person they'd ever met. So to have that huge personality and entity not there any longer was sort of intimidating. And to hang socially with these guys, who were all very intelligent and quick witted—and me being about twenty years their junior—it was more of a challenge to establish my place within the organization. That was a major learning experience in and of itself, aside from the musical aspects of joining the band."

And what about the fans? Phillips says he experienced a unique transformation in being accepted by Toto devotees. "When we arrived in Holland for our second show," he recalls, "there were people waiting for the band outside the hall when we arrived, and it struck me that this was a big part of the gig that I hadn't considered. The band had a very close relationship with the fans that I had never experienced. I believe this is one of the biggest

differences between English bands and American bands. But as I watched the fans interacting with the band members, I wondered how they were feeling about me being in the band. I'm sure most of them had no idea of my background and really didn't care, because they're not musicians and could care less if I had played with Gil Evans or Jack Bruce or Jeff Beck.

"In the beginning," Simon shares, "the fans were very respectful, but not really sure if this 'new guy' was going to work. And they really missed Jeff. But I remember going back to Holland a year later, doing some drum clinics, and the reception was amazing. When I looked into the audience, I recognized a lot of faces. All the hardcore Toto fans were at the drum clinic. That's when I realized that they had accepted me into the band and had become very supportive of my new role in Toto. Also, when I started taking my own band out on the road in 1997, all the Toto fans were there, listening to my instrumental fusion music. And to this day they still come out and support me on my solo tours and clinics."

Today Sucherman can be proud of his acceptance by Styx fans, but, hearing him talk on the subject, it's clear that he's quite aware of the potential negative aspects of public scrutiny. "I thank my lucky stars that I joined Styx during the pre-Internet days," he says. "I would not want to be the new guy replacing a drummer in a high-profile



band today, having to be subjected to the verbal abuse that's unleashed on Facebook and YouTube. You have to develop a thick skin and understand that everyone has an opinion and not everyone is going to like what you do. You can read a hundred glowing comments, and then there's that one guy that posts a negative comment, which is the one that usually sticks with you. So I don't read them anymore. I focus on the thousands of smiling fans at our shows."

Phillips recalls the day that Toto bassist Mike Porcaro, Jeff's brother, invited him to be a permanent band member. "About two weeks into our second tour," Simon recalls, "Mike asked me how I would feel about joining the band. At this point in my career I had pretty much given up on the idea of being in a band. I had tried being in a few bands in the '70s and '80s, and they had all been disastrous. You'd be amazed at some of the bands I was in for about two seconds. [laughs] That's why I got into

production and studio work. But Toto was a great organization and I enjoyed the music, and I got along well with everyone in the band. So I signed on the dotted line, and for twenty-one years it was a wonderful experience."

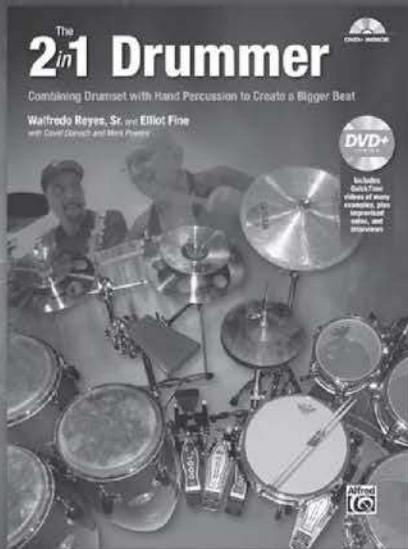
In the end, Sucherman explains, being the new guy is less about the "old" guy than it is about you. "I've always treated every professional situation the same, whether it's a platinum-selling artist or a local bar band," he says. "The best way to approach any gig is to always be on time, be prepared and have the proper tools for the job, nail the music, and leave everybody happy that you were there. If you can do that, you'll find an easier path to success, whether on a local or international level."

"I approached the Styx gig and the Brian Wilson gig in the same way," Todd goes on. "I've been in Styx for eighteen years now. I know I will never be the guy that played on those famous records. But what I *can* do is help bring those songs to life and make them fresh and new, every night. That is my job as the drummer in Styx, and that is what I must deliver on a very high and consistent level, every night."

"There's room to have fun and improvise without sacrificing the integrity of the music. Tommy Shaw plays different guitar solos every night, based around the theme of the original song. That makes it more fun for all of us, because there is an element that we can do whatever we want, within the parameters of the song. In recent years I've been able to step out and surprise the guys with some rhythmic ideas and take some liberties that I may not have been comfortable with in my early years with the band. I know my boundaries within the music, and it's nice when I play something and Tommy turns around and gives me the 'rock nod of approval.' That inspires me to think of other ideas that might work the next night we play. I don't want to get in a routine of playing the same things night after night, because then it turns into *Groundhog Day*."

"I've groomed myself to be well versed in all styles of music and have made a point of being as professional as possible on every gig I've ever had," Sucherman concludes. "And, fortunately, it's paid off when I've put myself in the pathway of opportunity. When preparation is met with a little luck, as the new guy you've got to be ready to go."

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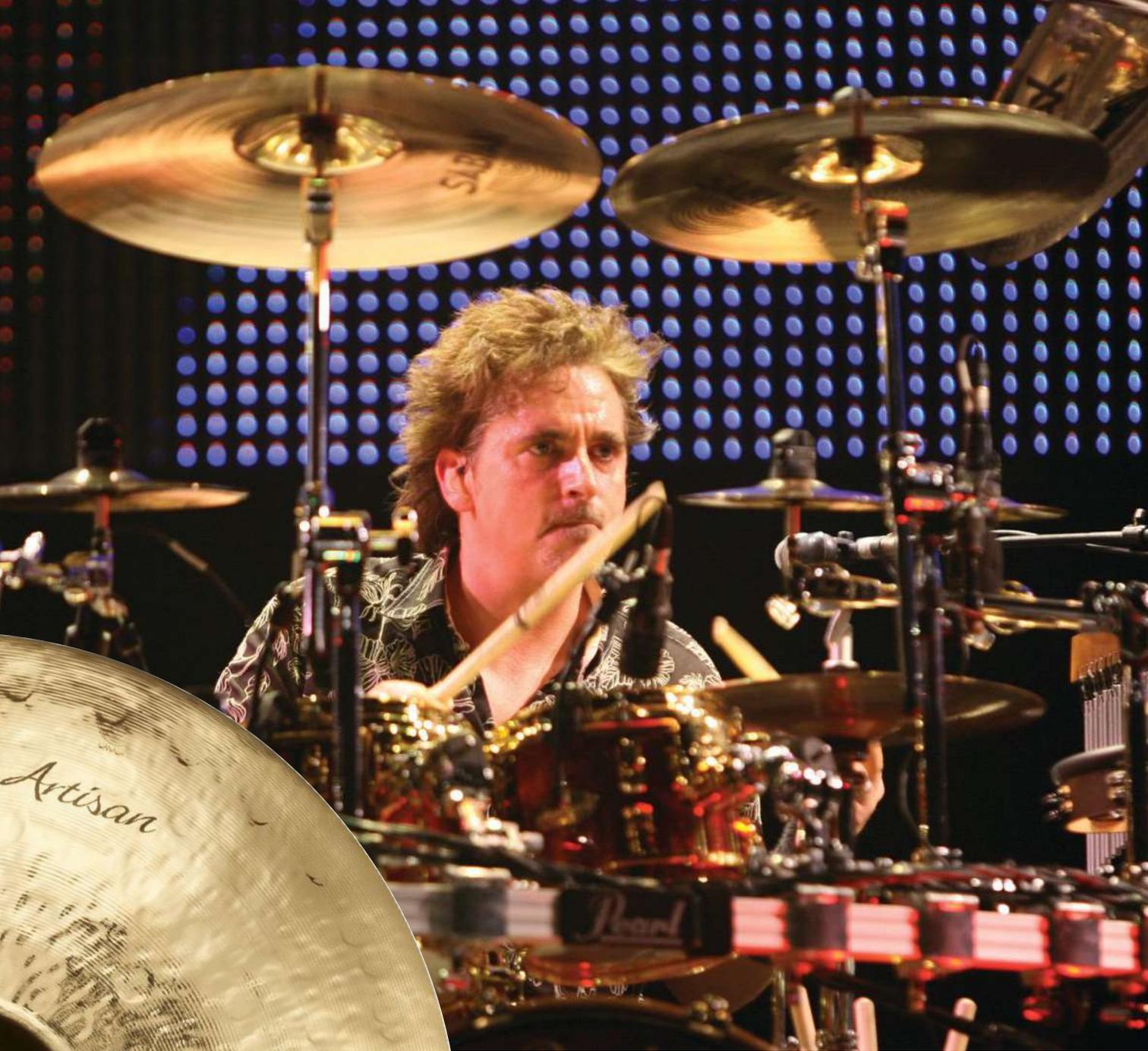
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# Ricky Lawson

## Classic Yellowjackets Tracks

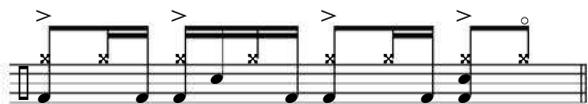
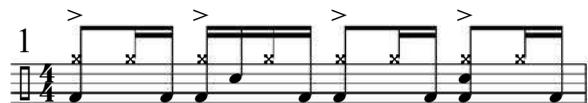
by Mike Casano

Before becoming one of the most sought-after pocket drummers, Ricky Lawson was a key member of the groundbreaking fusion group Yellowjackets. His playing on the band's early records reveals a mature drummer with tons of groove, chops, and musical taste. Lawson expertly guides his mates through the demanding music, which draws from a wide range of stylistic influences.

In this article we're paying tribute to Lawson, who died last December (see In Memoriam, page 94), by examining his playing on the Yellowjackets' 1981 self-titled debut and on the track "Top Secret" from the band's 1983 release, *Mirage à Trois*.

### "Rush Hour," *Yellowjackets*

This tune features Lawson's signature funk/samba grooves.



@ 00:39



@ 01:10



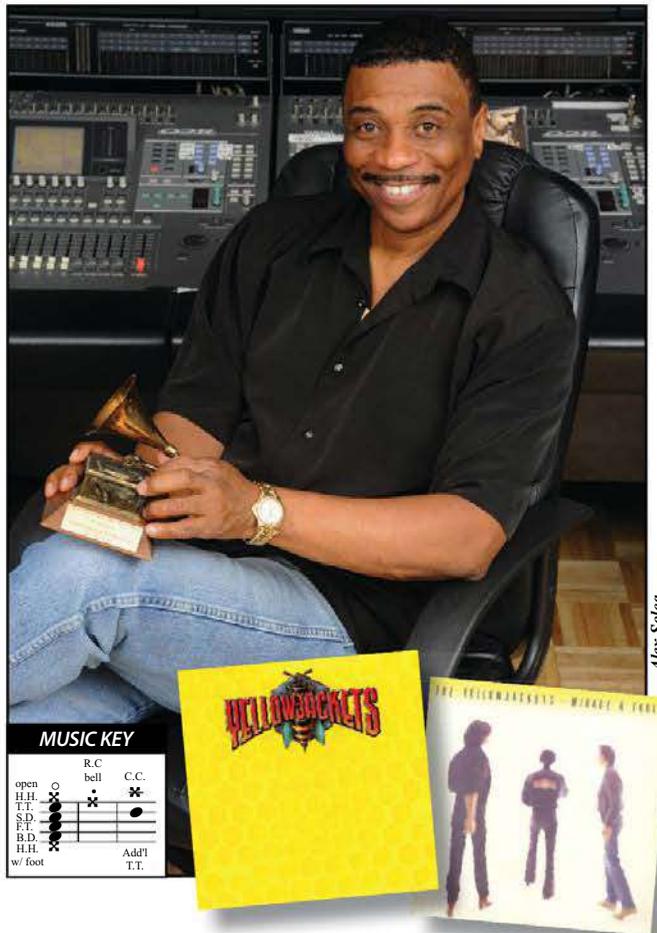
@ 01:41



### "The Hornet," *Yellowjackets*

Here are some funky and challenging beats.

$\text{♩} = 121$   
@ 00:07



Alex Sotoca

**MUSIC KEY**

open	R.C	C.C.
H.H.	bell	
T.T.		
F.F.		
B.D.		
H.H.		Add'l
w/ foot		T.T.

@ 00:44



@ 03:20



### "Top Secret," *Mirage à Trois*

All sorts of rhythmic illusions are happening in this track. The bass and guitar parts during the intro seem to suggest a 12/8 groove. To hear where the time actually is, you have to understand the guitar rhythm part, which starts on the second 16th note of beat 1 instead of on the downbeat. The guitar rhythm is phrased in groups of three 16th notes and extends over the barline. When the full band kicks in at 0:20, the guitar part changes to this two-measure pattern:



Lawson's shifty hi-hat parts in "Top Secret" create the illusion of 7/8. In reality, the entire tune is in 4/4, and the intro is exactly eight bars long.

@ 00:00

9 5

2

L R

L R etc...

Mike Casano is a freelance drummer based in New England. For more info, visit [mikecasano.com](http://mikecasano.com).



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# Balance Builders

## Simple Exercises to Increase Control

by Jayson Brinkworth

**MUSIC KEY**



One thing I've learned from my years of teaching is that drumming is all about balance—just like life. If you feel you're off balance or leaning while you're playing, you need to correct that before you can progress much further. You must be balanced between the hands and feet, especially the hi-hat foot. If you're unbalanced while you play, it will show as inconsistencies in dynamics, tempo, and tone. I've used the following exercises for years and have found them to be very helpful for students and for myself.

### Crossing the Body

The first step in working on balance is to understand that the right and left sides of our body have to get along. What follows is a simple exercise where the hands and feet are playing single-stroke rolls. The catch is that whenever the right hand plays, the left foot plays, and visa versa. You don't need a drumset to work on this exercise, but once you get comfortable with it, sit at your kit and move your hands around the drums. Just make sure that the feet don't change.

1



### The Next Step

The following four exercises, based on the first few exercises from *Stick Control*, change it up a bit, but we're still focusing on crossing the limbs to build balance. Try reversing the stickings as well.

The first measure is 8th notes, with the hands and feet playing together. In the second measure, the feet stay on the same 8th-note pattern, while the hands switch to 16th notes. Go slowly and make sure your hands and feet don't switch where they shouldn't.

2




3




4




5




Focus on feeling balanced while playing each exercise. If you're balanced, your dynamics will remain controlled. Your posture should also be straight, and you should feel centered on your drum stool. Once you get each pattern working on its own, try running all of them together as a single exercise. You can also work them with the right hand on the ride and left hand on the snare, or you can place the hands anywhere you want on the kit. Be creative, go slowly, and have fun!



**Jayson Brinkworth** is a freelance drummer, educator, and clinician in Canada. For more info, visit [jaysonbrinkworth.com](http://jaysonbrinkworth.com).





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# Rhythm and Timing

## Part 5: Single 8th-Note-Triplet Partial and Bonus Exercises

by Bill Bachman

In this final segment we're going to focus on the three different parts of 8th-note triplets ("one-trip-let"). Playing on the downbeats is pretty simple, and the third partial isn't too strange, since we hear it all the time in swing and shuffle patterns. But isolating the middle beat of the triplet might start out feeling a bit awkward.

There's a lot of space between the three partials. The common tendencies are to rush/crush the space between the notes or to stiffen up and drag during more syncopated rhythms. It's very important to be able to feel each individual triplet partial comfortably, especially when you start playing quarter-note triplets and associated rhythms.

The exercises focus first on the partials played as accents among taps, and then the spaces in between are left open. Playing the correct sticking is crucial. The stickings will usually flow into and out of the check patterns, which makes it much easier to play with accuracy. Be sure to also practice

the exercises with the left hand leading (opposite stickings), in order to help maintain balanced hands and develop confidence leading with either hand. Always use a metronome, and tap your foot. Count all of the played notes out loud, and then count just quarter notes out loud. Get in as many repetitions as it takes for these rhythms to feel natural. If you need to think about them, you have not yet fully programmed them into your musical vocabulary.

The first exercise has an accented check pattern leading into the three triplet partials played as accents among taps. The taps will guide the accented rhythms to their correct place. For maximum dynamic contrast and relaxed flow, be aware of which of the four basic stroke types (full, down, tap, and up) is being used. To help, we've labeled each stroke type over the notes (F = full, D = down, T = tap, and U = up). The exercise is in the 4-2-1 format, where you play four of each variation, then two, then one, and repeat it.

1

F F F F F F F F F F F D D U T D U T D U T D U U

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

F F F F F F F F F F D F T D U T D U T D U T F U

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

F F F F F F F F F F D D U T D U T D U T D U U F

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

F F F F F F D D U T D U U F F F F D F

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

T D U T F U F F F F D D U T D U U F

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

F F D D U U F D F T F U F D D U U F

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





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# Afro-Cuban Bell Independence

## Progressive Exercises for Freeing Up the Limbs

by Powell Randolph

MUSIC KEY

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

In this article we're going to work through some independence exercises written for the left hand and right foot (or vice versa if you're left-handed) against a standard Afro-Cuban bell pattern. The bell part is written in 4/4 as a triplet rhythm.

To begin, here are a few exercises that focus on the left hand on the snare.

Now let's focus on variations for the bass drum while the snare plays on beat 3 to create a half-time backbeat. Start with the feet by themselves, to get the balance down. Then add the hands to just the bass drum, and finally add the hi-hat foot. Here are the first three patterns. Once you have them down, work through all of the previous versions we played on the snare.

The final step is to play the snare rhythms from before with the bass drum filling in the remaining notes to create a constant flow of triplets. Take your time, as these exercises can be frustrating at first. Once you get them down, you'll be able to play whatever you hear against the bell pattern. Be patient—I'm still working on these myself. Again, go back and apply this concept to other triplet rhythms.



**Powell Randolph** is a drum teacher at Alpha Music in Virginia Beach, and he plays rock shows with orchestras around North America for Windborne Music Productions. Randolph, a tongue cancer survivor, can be reached through [powellrandolph.com](http://powellrandolph.com).



# Syncopation Revisited

## Part 2: 3/4 Applications

by Steve Fidyk

MUSIC KEY	
R.C.	✕
S.D.	●
B.D.	○
H.H.	✕
w/ foot	○

We continue this month with more of my favorite ways of interpreting the classic Ted Reed book *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. This time we explore ways of converting the written manuscript from its original form to 3/4.

The following applications can be used with any of the seventy-two repetitive one-measure examples from pages 29, 30, and 33–36, or the thirty-two-measure “melodies” from pages 37–44 (of the original printing).

Let's begin by taking a look at Example 1 from page 29.

Example 1: A melody in 3/4 time signature, consisting of two measures. The first measure starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4. The second measure starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes C5, B4, A4.

In converting that phrase to 3/4, three measures of the original manuscript will equal a four-measure phrase in 3/4.

Example 2: A melody in 3/4 time signature, consisting of two measures. The first measure starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes G4, A4, B4. The second measure starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes C5, B4, A4.

There are several ways that you can think about this conversion as you practice. First, try reading the original manuscript and omit the barlines in your mind. Another approach is to write new barlines in 3/4 with a red pen, so you can see each measure clearly in the new time signature. You can also rewrite the example on manuscript paper.

Once you have a grasp of the conversion, the next step is to take any of the one-measure reading examples or thirty-two-measure melodies and play them on the snare with the following five bass drum and hi-hat ostinatos.

3A: Bass drum (B.D.) and hi-hat (H.H.) ostinato in 3/4. Pattern: B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. Repeat sign.

B: Bass drum (B.D.) and hi-hat (H.H.) ostinato in 3/4. Pattern: B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. Repeat sign.

C: Bass drum (B.D.) and hi-hat (H.H.) ostinato in 3/4. Pattern: B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. Repeat sign.

D: Bass drum (B.D.) and hi-hat (H.H.) ostinato in 3/4. Pattern: B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. Repeat sign.

E: Bass drum (B.D.) and hi-hat (H.H.) ostinato in 3/4. Pattern: B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. Repeat sign.

Now let's apply 8th-note triplets, played hand to hand, under the written line in 3/4. Here's Example 8 from page 29.

Example 4: Musical notation in 3/4 time showing two measures of 8th-note triplets with accents. The first measure has three triplets, and the second measure has three triplets.

Once you have that application under control, try leading the 8th-note triplets with accents with your left hand. Here's Example 9 from page 33.

Example 5: Musical notation in 3/4 time showing two measures of 8th-note triplets with accents. Below the notes are stickings: L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R.

Once you have dynamic control with your hands, try adding the previous bass drum and hi-hat ostinatos. Here's the fourth ostinato with Example 33 from page 35.

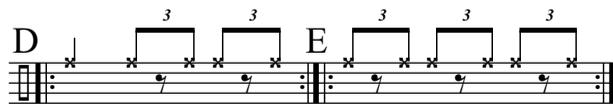
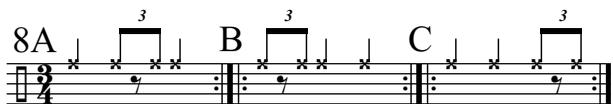
Example 6: Musical notation in 3/4 time showing two measures of 8th-note triplets with accents. Below the notes are bass drum and hi-hat ostinatos. The first measure has B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter. The second measure has B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter, B.D. quarter, H.H. quarter.

Next, experiment with the following triplet stickings: RLL, LRR, RRL, LLR, RLR-RLR, LRL-LRL, RRL-LRR, and LLR-RLL. Here's the LRR-sticking Example 47 from page 36.

Example 7: Musical notation in 3/4 time showing two measures of 8th-note triplets with accents. Below the notes are stickings: L R R L R R L R R L R R L R R L R R.

### Swing Coordination in 3/4

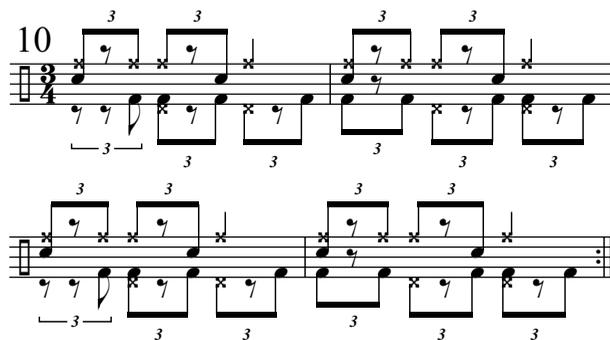
To develop coordination in 3/4, return to the bass drum and hi-hat ostinatos and apply the following ride cymbal rhythms.



Once you've achieved a dynamic balance with your three limbs, try reading *Syncopation* in 3/4 on the snare. Here's Example 4 from page 29 using the second ride cymbal rhythm with the fifth bass drum and hi-hat ostinato.



Also try reading the examples in 3/4 with the bass drum, and substitute the snare for the bass drum ostinatos. In this excerpt, the snare is playing the third ostinato while the bass drum plays Example 4 from page 29.



Next time we'll explore ways to interpret *Syncopation* in 5/4.



**Steve Fidyk** has performed with Terell 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](http://stevefidyk.com).





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# Arturo O'Farrill

by Jeff Potter

Rebecca Meek

On his new album, the Grammy-winning pianist, composer, and arranger makes a strong case for the transformative power and infinite musical potential of the drum.

**A**rturo O'Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra joyously explored cross-cultural connections on their previous three Grammy-nominated albums, including the winning *Song for Chico*. Now, on *The Offense of the Drum*, the eighteen-piece ensemble has taken things further. This expansive and thrilling new recording is an aural historical essay/global rhythmic mash-up that honors the musical and political power of the drum.

The orchestra is augmented by stellar guest instrumentalists, spoken word, and a panoply of percussion—thirty-five instruments in all—including Japanese taiko, African djembe, Puerto Rican barril, Cuban tumbadora, and Colombian bombo, as well as drumset, timbales, cajon, bongos, turntables, and assorted handheld percussion. O'Farrill and his band easily navigate elements from Africa to Scott Joplin to hip-hop. "I see the connections between Albert Ayler and the Wu-Tang

Clan," O'Farrill says. "If you just follow the threads, you will find that we're actually all playing the same great tradition and legacy."

**MD:** What were the special challenges in recording the multi-drum title track?  
**Arturo:** It's funny—we had to be careful with the taiko drum, because it was so powerful that it overwhelmed the isolation booth. The meters were pegging!

Also, whereas percussion tradition in Afro-Latin music is full of short bursts of improvisation, the taiko drummers don't do that. They move slowly, deliberately, in very studied and graceful gestures. So it was interesting for me to ask the taiko drummer to do a cadenza, because it wasn't quite his language. It was an amazing moment, because I found that that slow, purposeful drumming is something we could all learn a lot from.

That piece is very technically challenging, highly stylized, and

politically charged. If the various drummers didn't understand the narrative behind it, it would be hard to know how to play it. So I explained to the soloists the inspiration for that piece: the drum circles in New York City that were shut down by the police during a very unfortunate period in the city's history by a very *mean* mayor. He wanted to protect the gentrifiers who were upset by the sound of "jungle drums."

I grew up in New York. Any time you walked into any park, you heard these groups. It was the soundtrack to our lives! For these drummers to be banished, have their instruments confiscated, and even be arrested, it just seemed unbelievable. But then I thought, *I'm being stupid*. The drum has *always* been a political and informational tool. It has been the target of oppression—and a source of liberation—for millions of people throughout history. It was a revelation to me how fundamentally powerful the drum has been in human history. So I told the drum soloists that it was not so much about groove alone as it was about breaking free, making a statement, being an *activist* on their instruments.

**MD:** The album explores the

intersection and cross-pollination of jazz, Latin, and African music. But in the big picture, it frames the very diaspora of rhythm itself throughout the world.

**Arturo:** A hearty “amen” to that! It’s easy to quantify “swing” as being American; a lot of people have jumped on that bandwagon. But swing is the larger concept that embodies so many aspects of the drum, especially the hand drum. What Americans call swing, Cubans call tumbao. For me, the concept is the same. Therein lies the secret: The freedom that we experience in jazz does come from Africa. And it comes from an African sense of “time.”

African slaves didn’t just land in America—they landed throughout the New World as well: South America, the Caribbean, Central America. Wherever they landed, they intersected with the European world. So there are wild variations of *suppression* and *allowance*—these slaves were either allowed to continue their aesthetic or were suppressed. And that resulted in an incredible mix of places where Africa is more prevalent in musical practices and places where it’s less so. Yet absolutely everywhere this intersection took place, the concept of swing is universal.

**MD:** Are you referring to “an African sense of time” with regard to how notes are placed, as opposed to, say, classical tradition?

**Arturo:** I entered the musical world by learning classical piano. The way we’re taught piano—and ultimately, the way we’re taught jazz—is by fixing a point in space and calling it *time*. I don’t think Africans think in such small increments, because I know that Afro-Cuban music isn’t measured in that way. There is a beat and a pulse. But the way the beat is distributed is very fluid. That fluidity extends to the next larger two-, three-, or four-measure phrases and beyond. Music affected by the African tradition is less rigid. It ebbs and flows, starts and stops.

**MD:** Is it about players not thinking in terms of subdivisions, or are the subdivisions just interpreted differently?

**Arturo:** They think in subdivisions but

place that inside larger entities. And that’s true even of the subdivision of the smaller subdivision. There are “beats,” but they’re less rigid.

**MD:** So it’s those indefinable differences that musicians call *feel*.

**Arturo:** You can write out a very specific notated version of any Afro-folkloric Latino rhythm and people can sight-read it. But even after rehearsing, it never sounds the same as when the cats play it—the guys who grew up listening and dancing to it, loving and living it. It’s vastly different, and that’s always fascinated me. It has to do with a healthy measure of respect for that world, that rhythm, and a healthy

## “The drum has always been a political and informational tool. It has been the target of oppression—and a source of liberation—for millions of people throughout history.”

measure of absorption.

**MD:** Pan-cultural music projects often employ sudden shifts into various grooves. But on your record the grooves are surprisingly seamless and even seem to straddle different feels simultaneously.

**Arturo:** Yes, there are examples out there of what I call “kitchen sink” composing, where the compositions shift violently back and forth, sometimes just to show the breadth of a composer’s skill set. But when a meter or a groove change is forced, you can hear that immediately. It should be a natural outgrowth of the music. My aesthetic is that things are intrinsically interesting on their own. You don’t need to subject them to a comparison to make them interesting.

**MD:** In the number “On the Corner of Malecón and Bourbon”—a very meaningful imaginary intersection—a ragtime piano stride morphs into a salsa montuno, and the connection becomes delightfully clear.

**Arturo:** That transition is actually from kalimba or baliphon—that’s really where it comes from! That raggedy kind of broken arpeggiated sound is from Africa directly.

**MD:** On drumset, Vince Cherico keeps an irresistible groove and never steps on a toe despite all of the multi-percussion activity.

**Arturo:** Vince is an incredible musician. He respects these traditions. More than just learning them, he absorbs all these feels—he *understands*. He’s the perfect drummer for our band, because we’ll play music in 21/8 and then play a mambo. He has the flexibility not only to do that but to take care of business—to play the groove.

**MD:** How did you approach the multi-drum arrangements?

**Arturo:** The most layered part is the second section of “The Offense.” I wrote very simple guidelines for the drummers to play around. They could play around the rhythms, but also, if they stayed within the written figures, they would not clutter.

The only time we ran into a roadblock was on the piece “Mercado en Domingo.” I had to take the Afro-Latin drums out of the mix—through no fault of their own—and leave the Colombian drums in, because that combination did sound cluttered. It wasn’t just a matter of too much sonic space; it’s also that Colombian drumming has a different slant, a very different feel. The Colombian drums and the kinds of rhythms we played—such as porro—have a much more forward and declamatory rhythm. The conga drum lends itself to a sinuous kind of ebb and flow with lots of sounds, while the Colombian drums are very clear, stately, and succinct.

I also love the way the bomba and plena rhythms work with the hip-hop/reggaeton on “They Came.” And I absolutely love DJ Logic on turntables on that. He reminds me of the great percussionists—like Patato [Valdes]—in that he looks for a way to inject without standing out.

**MD:** Those sessions sound like a cross-cultural classroom.

**Arturo:** I’m no expert. There are a lot of us who want to act as spokespeople for rhythms that are hundreds of years old, with thousands of variants. It’s an infinite sea. We don’t own it. We can barely scratch the surface. It’s better to admit that you’re no expert and just a babe. You can live five lifetimes and not know anything about percussion.



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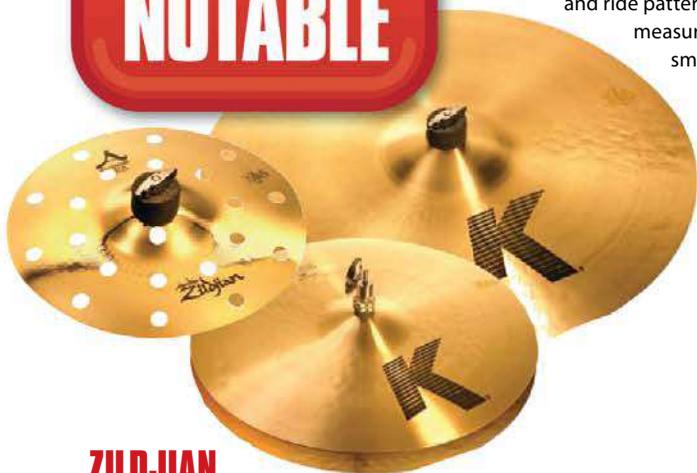


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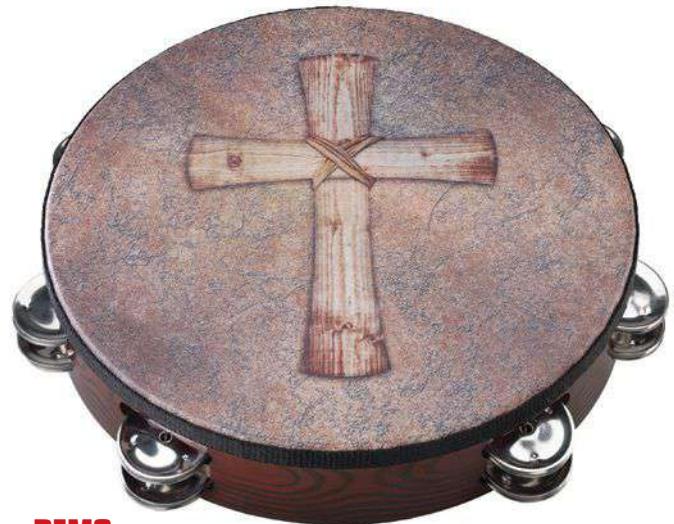
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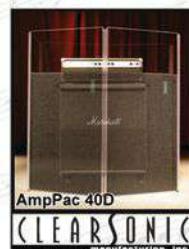
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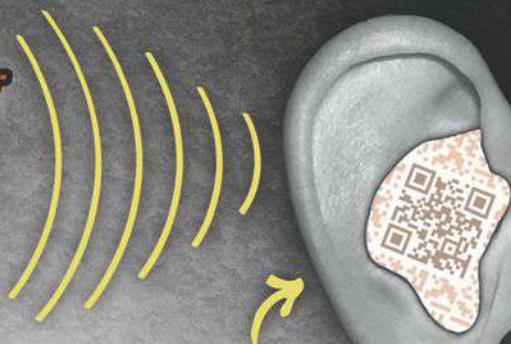
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# Valentino Arteaga

by Stephen Bidwell

Of Mice & Men's drummer takes a step forward on the band's third album, tapping into his nu-metal roots and embracing fresh and fierce sounds.

Of Mice & Men has been on a steady upward trajectory in the metalcore world since forming in 2009, and the popularity of its third studio album, *Restoring Force*, released in January, has the band touring nonstop, selling out venues in the U.S. and Europe months in advance. Valentino Arteaga, who was born in San Diego on Valentine's Day 1986, first came to music through classical and jazz saxophone studies. This provided a good foundation for him to build on in his early teens, when he discovered the drums and heavier sounds. From 2002 to 2008 Arteaga cut his teeth in Lower Definition, playing drums and booking the band's tours while still in his teens. In 2009 he connected with vocalist Austin Carlile and bassist Jaxin Hall in time to record Of Mice & Men's self-titled debut album.

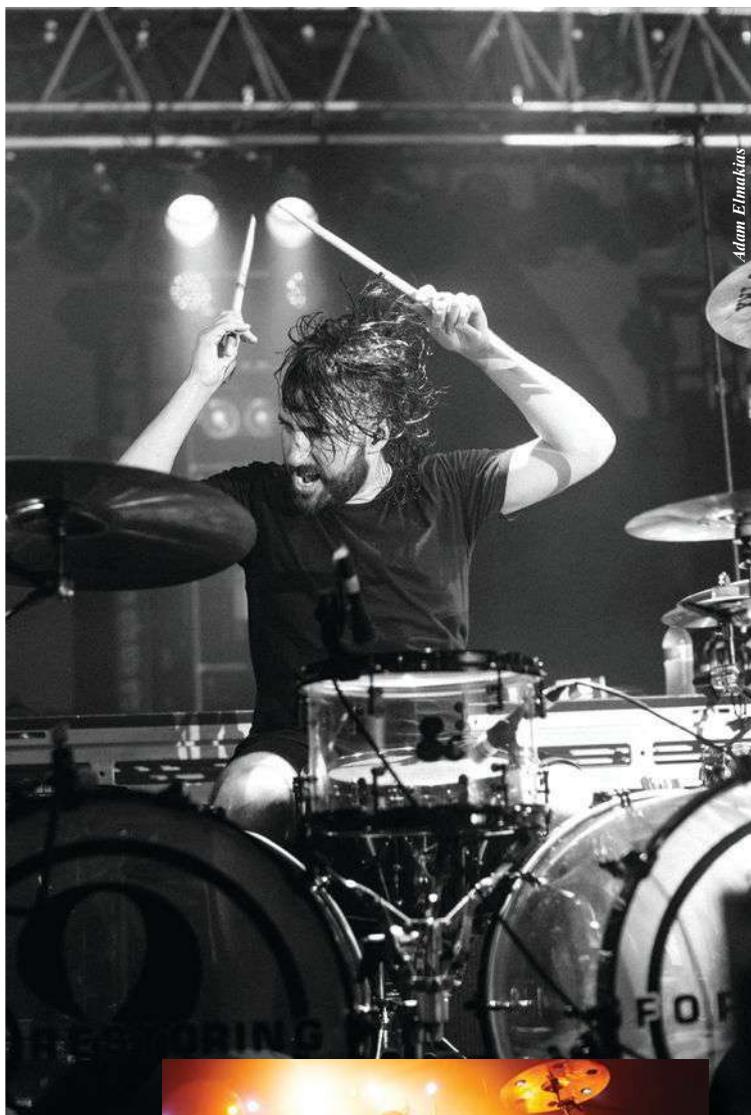
Arteaga cites Rage Against the Machine's Brad Wilk, Green Day's Tré Cool, Led Zeppelin's John Bonham, and Blink-182's Travis Barker, as well as San Diego-area players like Wuv from P.O.D., as early drumming influences. Joey Jordison of Slipknot was an eye-opener when Arteaga got into harder music, as were players associated with nu metal, a style that has had an increasing influence on OMM's sound of late. "That's the music I grew up on," Valentino says, "and [it features] the kind of drumming that I've tried to cultivate in the past few years. It has that heaviness but also a huge amount of groove. It's not just mechanical, in-your-face metal—it's got some groove and style to it."

While previous Of Mice & Men releases involved a good amount of computer-based editing and mixing, with *Restoring Force* the band members, encouraged by producer David Bendeth, devoted themselves to making a raw, organic rock album. "David stripped all the drums I had written for the album," Arteaga shares. "He really challenged me to step out of the confines of how we had recorded our last two albums. We tried different drums for different song sections and put a lot more thought into all the sounds. This was a much more natural-feeling record, and we've always wanted to do that."

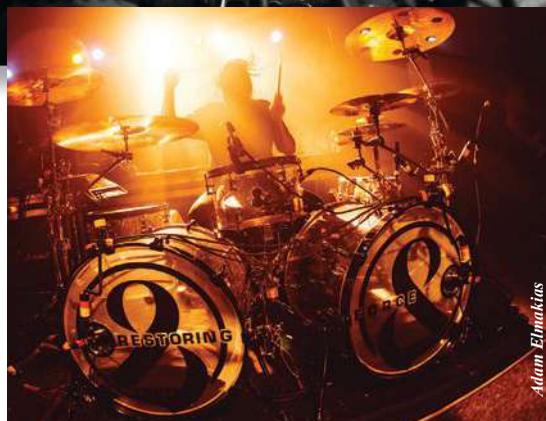
Arteaga is stoked about what lies ahead for the band. "So far the reception [for *Restoring Force*] has been unbelievable," he says, "and we're on huge festivals we never thought we'd be on. And we feel that we have the material to really rock these crowds and gain new fans."

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Though he tracked *Restoring Force* with a double pedal, Arteaga says that he prefers the response of the two Truth acrylic 20x22 kicks in his one-up, two-down touring kit. He recently became a fan of brass snares, and consequently he's been traveling with 8x14 and 4x14 models. Arteaga uses TRX cymbals and Promark Shira Kashi oak 2B sticks.



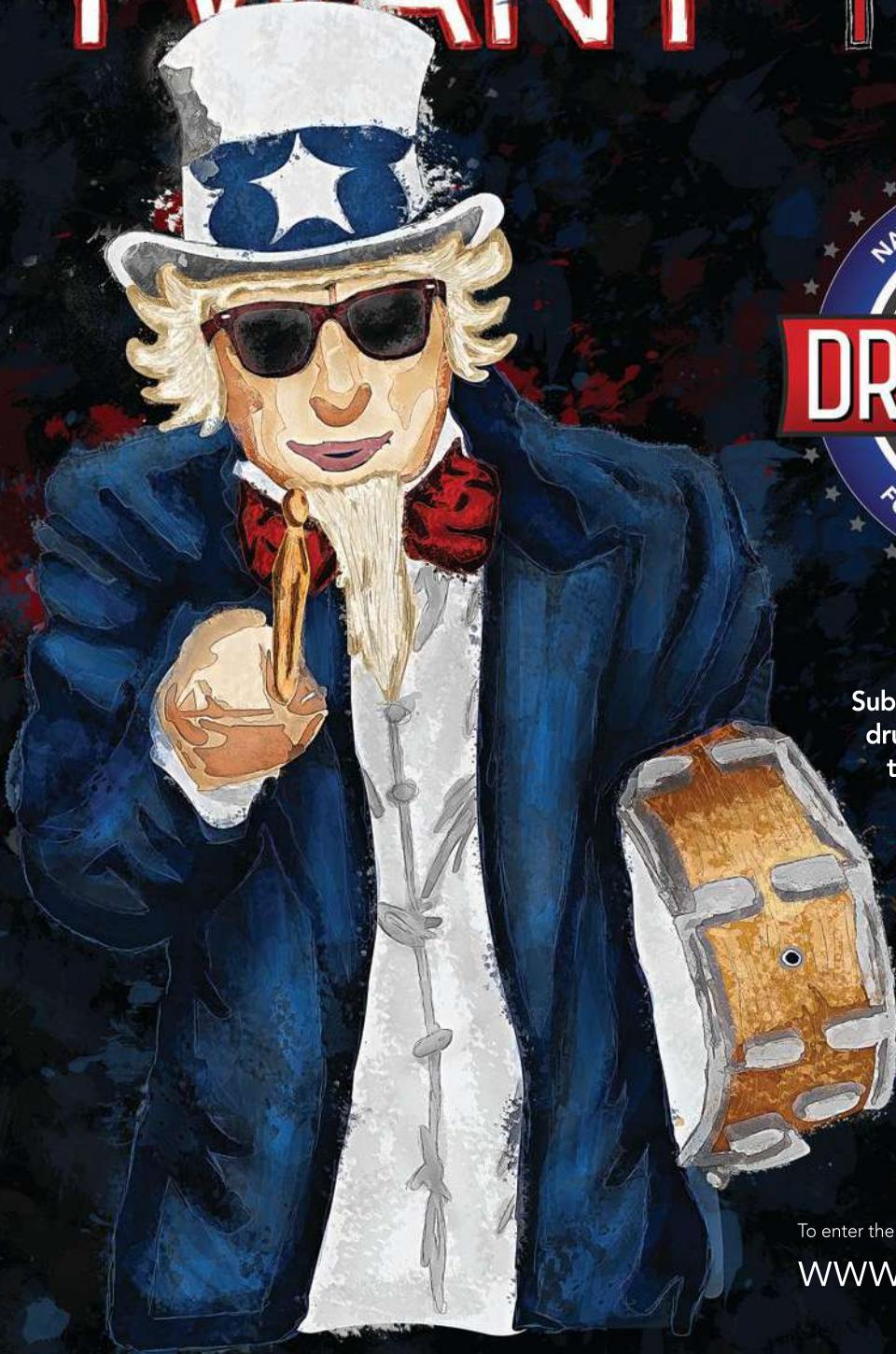
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# CRITIQUE



## The Bad Plus *The Rite of Spring*

**A modern jazz trio is surprisingly faithful to a groundbreaking orchestral work while still taking it to new places.**

In March of 2011 at Duke University, the Bad Plus premiered its version of Igor Stravinsky's legendary score to the 1913 ballet *The Rite of Spring*. The trio has been performing the work periodically since then, growing ever more comfortable with what drummer **Dave King** called in his October 2012 *MD* cover story, with a bit of understatement, "a thorny rhythm piece." The thrilling new album version shows just how deeply the group has internalized the notoriously challenging music.

After pianist Ethan Iverson states the haunting intro melody, atop subtle electronic textures by bassist Reid Anderson, King enters in the "Augurs of Spring" movement and the rhythmic playfulness of *The Rite*—and of the group performing it—jumps to life. King clearly delights in the many possibilities of translating the score to the drumset, honoring Stravinsky's dramatic intent and wide dynamic swings while injecting an element of surprise. And he does not shy away from *playing some drums*. He turns "Spring Rounds," for instance, into a slinky, swingy vamp that grows louder

and more dissonant before erupting in a fury of notes and then settling down peacefully.

As the piece heads toward its conclusion, King leans into silky press rolls, thrashes his cymbals, and navigates tricky meter changes, dancing at the edge of chaos. Dave told *MD* that learning *The Rite*, using the two-piano score, "dominated us" for more than half a year, but this album proves the worthiness of the task, revealing that the Bad Plus and Stravinsky are in lockstep when it comes to a fondness for taking musical risks. (Sony Masterworks)

**Michael Parillo**



## Transatlantic *Kaleidoscope*

**The fourth studio album from the progressive rock supergroup finds the band delivering more of the same—and that's a good thing.**

Fans of Transatlantic's epic half-hour multi-part suites, Roine Stolt's soaring guitar leads, and especially **Mike Portnoy's** unmistakable drumming are well taken care of on the prog group's latest. There's fun stuff aplenty. Portnoy prompts the overture to "Into the Blue" with a frenzy of splashes and double bass as the music crescendos. On "Black as the Sky" he throws down a tight, rolling tom pattern, interjecting polyrhythmic cymbal strikes before locking in with Neal Morse's keyboards. And the title track features Mike's lightning-quick flams and rock-solid support underneath Pink Floyd-style guitar-rock glory. Still, Transatlantic isn't just a steady barrage of notes, and the band's focus on songwriting allows Portnoy to keep time and frame parts with often understated skill—until, of course, it's his turn to let it loose. (Radiant Records) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## Mehliana *Taming the Dragon*

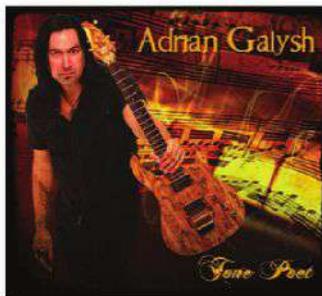
**The union of keyboardist Brad Mehldau and drummer Mark Guiliana is a match made in heaven.**

*Taming the Dragon* eschews Brad Mehldau's usual acoustic jazz leanings and provides **Mark Guiliana** with room to do his thing for his largest audience yet. If you're searching for intricate arrangements and compositional prowess, look elsewhere.

We've entered textural, electro-vamp

"vibe" territory here, and Guiliana is simply astounding throughout, filling in the breaks on "You Can't Go Back Now" with ridiculous metric modulation and mega chops and gliding over the 7/8 of "Hungry Ghost" with effortless offbeat accenting and judicious use of his floor tom. Guiliana is on some future stuff here, inspired by Squarepusher, Autechre, and hip-hop, while possessing a jazzier's ear and fluid touch. Clearly a must-see duo in the live setting.

(Nonesuch) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



## Adrian Galysh *Tone Poet*

**Technical proficiency is alive and well on this offering of half pop-metal songs and half melodic prog instrumental workouts.**

**Todd Sucherman** (Styx) and **Charlie Waymire** (Ultimate Rhythm Studios) supply plenty of muscle on this mix of shredders and power ballads by Los Angeles session guitarist Adrian Galysh. Waymire mostly keeps it spacious and strong on the vocal

tracks that make up the bulk of the album's first half, while on the instrumental tunes, where Galysh's guitar is the focus, Sucherman makes his presence clearly known. On the majestic "Echoes of El Greco," Todd rips staccato toms beneath Galysh's acoustic-picking breakdown before ripping off a 32nd-note hurricane of a fill. Also dig Sucherman's double bass on the title track—never overpowering the music but still providing the perfect prodding rhythmic bed for the guitar to shine over. (bfmjazz.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**

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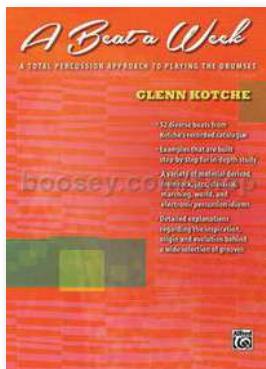
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### **A Beat a Week: A Total Percussion Approach to Playing the Drumset** by Glenn Kotche

In this book, Wilco's Glenn Kotche provides fifty-two examples of varied drum patterns from across his recorded catalog. In his development as a player, Kotche was exposed to rock, jazz, classical, electronica, and many other styles. As he writes in the book's intro, his personal amalgamation of the varied techniques and attitudes of these disparate genres

is what makes his playing approach what it is—and he hopes that by working through the patterns here you'll be nudged closer to finding your own unique voice at the kit. Glenn notes that you can do as the title suggests and work through the patterns in order—he smartly groups the lessons by characteristics ("Beats With Unconventional Hi-Hat Use," "Tom-Centric Beats," and so on)—but says it's also perfectly fine to skip around and work at your own pace.

Beats that Kotche has played with Jim O'Rourke, Loose Fur, the Kronos Quartet, and his duo with Darin Gray, On Fillmore, are included, and of course a good deal of the patterns were created for his main gig, Wilco. Fans of Kotche's drumming in that band will be intrigued and inspired by the evolution of several of the tracks, including the drummer's creative decision to alternate between two distinct approaches on "I Am Trying to Break Your Heart" from *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* and his cool floor tom work and implied meter on "The Late Greats" from *A Ghost Is Born*. Unlike many contemporary method books, a CD containing play-along music is not included here. But most of the tracks are widely available—and if you're a Kotche fan, you probably already own most of this stuff. Throughout the book Kotche provides copious tips, breaking patterns down into smaller chunks and building them up in a progressive fashion. (\$19.99, Alfred) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### **Dubstep Drumming: How to Apply Today's Programmed Grooves to the Drumset**

by Donny Gruendler

Musical fads come and go, so it's difficult to predict whether students will be asking to learn dubstep drumming licks twenty years from now. But knowledge is power, so why not incorporate the wealth of intricate patterns from Donny Gruendler's book into your own bag of tricks today? Gruendler traces the historical origins of dubstep and reviews detailed acoustic kit setups as well as the necessary tone-modification techniques so you can sound authentic alongside that wobble bass. Naturally, there are many different types of dubstep beats, and the written transcriptions and audio examples on the included MP3 disc clarify some of the more complicated material. Watch out, though: Chapters titled Building Sixteenth-Note Kick Drum Combinations and Quarter-Note Triplet Snare Drum Fragments lurk around the bend, so you'll have to quickly get into the headspace that this is music made by drum machines—and your chops *need* to be together to make it work. (\$16.99, Hal Leonard) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



### **Drummer's Guide de la Batterie: First Step to Being a Pro Drummer** by Christian Morissette

Christian Morissette's new book sets out to touch on all aspects of drumset playing, focusing on everything from rudiments to brush technique to blast beats. The layout is a bit disorienting in the way it includes both English and French text on each page, and the grab-bag approach to topics isn't always logical in terms of progression. But as a reference source for specific rhythmic concepts, *Drummer's Guide* does the trick. Big, colorful photos and free audio and video clips at the author's website complete the package, and may take the sting out of the steep price tag. (\$49.95 plus shipping, chrismorissette.com) **Ilya Stemkovsky**



# Ricky Lawson

1954 - 2013



The Remo family mourns the passing of legendary  
Remo artist and friend, Ricky Lawson.  
The fond memories of “Ricky Remo” will always be with us.  
Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ricky’s family.

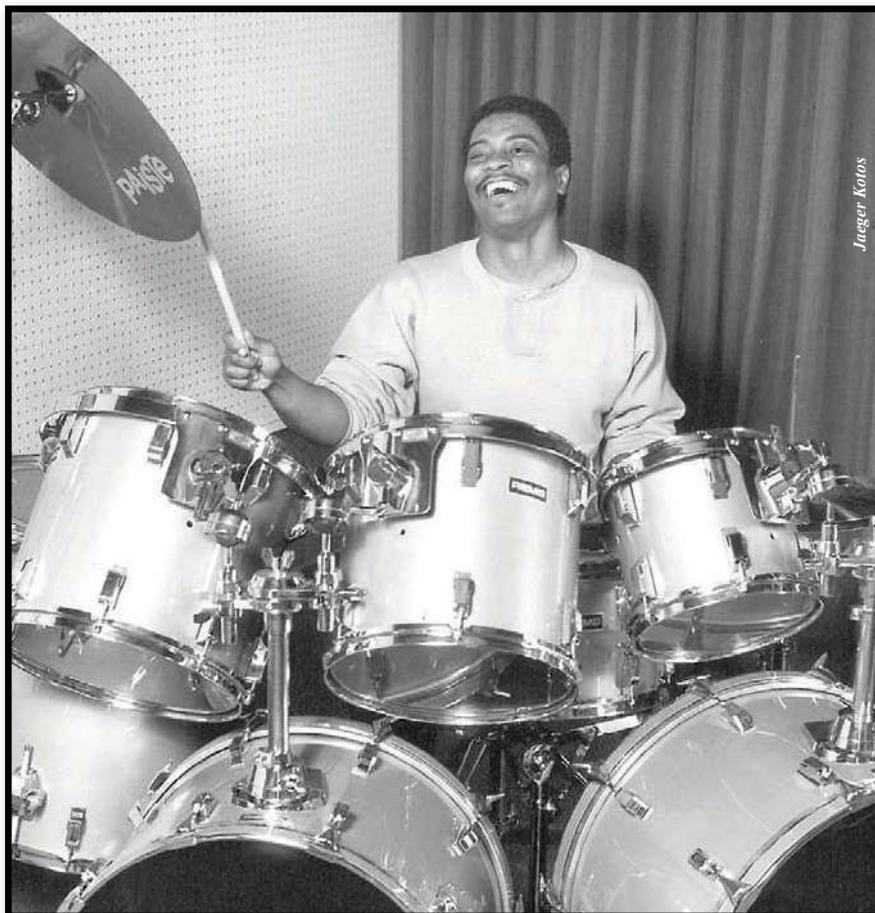


# Ricky Lawson

**M**ichael Jackson. Whitney Houston. Eric Clapton. Lionel Richie. Phil Collins. Steely Dan. What do these artists all have in common? Besides being superstars, they all tapped the tried-and-true drumming services of Ricky Lawson, who died this past December 23 at age fifty-nine, following a brain aneurysm. The ultimate working-man session player and live powerhouse, Lawson had a reputation for being a gentle soul and was a first-call hired gun for musical legends who wanted it done right. Considering he played on Jackson's *Bad* (1988) and *Dangerous* (1992) tours, Richie's *Dancing on the Ceiling* (1986) tour, and worldwide jaunts by Clapton and Collins, Lawson performed for literally millions of people. And if you weren't lucky enough to catch his beautifully restrained but rock-solid kit work on a concert stage, you've heard him on the radio, gracing songs like Anita Baker's "Sweet Love" (complete with an opening drum showcase!) and Whitney Houston's ubiquitous smash "I Will Always Love You."

Born in Detroit, Lawson taught himself to play drums, honing his craft with the help of his uncle Paul Riser, a Motown arranger. Relocating to Los Angeles in 1975, Lawson hooked up with Roy Ayers, Airto and Flora Purim, and the Brothers Johnson, and eventually cofounded the Yellowjackets. In 1986, the drummer got to enjoy his first taste of the spotlight as the Yellowjackets won a Best R&B Instrumental Grammy for "And You Know That," a track Ricky cowrote for the *Shades* album. As word spread of his deep pocket and attention to detail, the pop stars began calling. The Lionel Richie gig was, of course, a big deal. But soon after, Michael Jackson's touring drummer, Jonathan Moffett, had a scheduling conflict where he had to stay out on the road with Madonna, and in came Lawson to the rescue.

In a 1993 *Modern Drummer* cover story, Lawson beamed brightly regarding the Jackson experience. When asked about his favorite songs to play, he mentioned "Rock With You." "It's a very happy, uplifting, spirited kind of song, and that's my thing," Lawson said. "There's so much negativity and sadness around, so I'm really into the stuff that pulls you away from that." Check out the recently released DVD *Live*



at Wembley July 16, 1988 for some Lawson magic supporting the King of Pop. You'll get a sense that it wasn't just about being a machine; the drummer had a chance to put his stamp on things.

"Michael likes people around him who have creative minds and who don't just play the record," Lawson told *MD* in 1993. "He gets people around him he can believe in. One night we were playing 'Billie Jean,' and in the second verse he does a dance move where he drops his hand, and I just decided to hit a low floor tom. I was thinking, *What can I do that doesn't sound too loud yet punctuates him and stays in the groove?* So I nailed it. He went crazy and everybody in the band went crazy, because they didn't expect it. But now they love it; if I don't play it, I'm not playing the song."

In the 1990s Lawson moved from one dream gig to another, bringing a beautiful touch and proud professionalism to each

situation. If a top-tier kit legend like Phil Collins wants you to be *his* drummer, you've got to be doing something right. Speaking with *Modern Drummer* in 1998, Lawson said he learned from Collins that "if you want to be on top, you've got to be dedicated and you have to know what's going on from top to bottom, in terms of your staff and your business. Watching him deal with musicians, the way he treats everybody, and his emphasis, is enlightening." Check out Ricky and Phil doing drum-battle work on the 1997 DVD *Phil Collins: Live and Loose in Paris*.

Then came gigs with Steely Dan and Clapton, neither strangers to employing the world's best drummers. For Steely Dan, Lawson was coming in after stints by Peter Erskine and Dennis Chambers, who had each done a previous tour following the band's early-'90s re-formation. Get a glimpse of Lawson kicking "Josie," "Peg," and other Dan classics on the 2000 DVD

*Two Against Nature: Plush TV Jazz-Rock Party.* And names like Steve Ferrone and Steve Gadd had been associated with Clapton for years before Lawson took over, confidently bringing his own flavor to the music, playing like a clock when needed and busting out blinding chops when given the opportunity. When asked about his biggest strengths in *MD*'s 1993 story, Lawson said "consistency of time. That's a drummer's first job. My other strength is being able to inspire the musicians around me, just in the feel that I give off in the playing—the spirit I give off."

That spirit lives on in many documented performances, thankfully preserved on the aforementioned concert DVDs as

well as numerous studio recordings. And even though Lawson worked with George Duke, Quincy Jones, Kenny Loggins, and Al Jarreau, it's perhaps his presence on Whitney Houston's cover of "I Will Always Love You," one of the best-selling singles of all time, that will stand as his most-heard drumming effort. All the characteristics of Lawson's playing are there: perfect time, understated taste, and that famous one-note hit before Houston's vocal reentry to take the song home. (Lawson jokingly referred to it as his favorite solo of his career.)

As news of the drummer's passing reached the music community, tributes came in, with the Roots' Questlove

tweeting that Lawson was "the master" and Sheila E tweeting, "We lost a great man, drummer, father, brother, and son. Mr. Ricky Lawson. He passed away yesterday. Please pray for his family. We will miss u." Perhaps Lawson himself summed up his musical life best in his July 1998 *MD* cover story, when he said, "If you're talking about trying to be successful in any capacity, you really have to pull out all the stops, and I've been blessed enough that people even want to *talk* to me, let alone hire me. I've been given some great chances in my career. And when you get a chance, you've got to jump on it." **Ilya Stemkovsky**

# Sam Ulano

**W**e lost a legendary New York City drum teacher when Sam Ulano passed away at age ninety-three on January 2 of this year. Ulano was a dear friend of *Modern Drummer*, especially in his vigorously active later years, during which he phoned our offices frequently and mailed us his drum books and his one-page "Foldys" instructional texts, all tricked out with his distinctive home-spun artwork. Ulano also held court at the 2011 Modern Drummer Festival, greeting the crowd from the stage with his metal practice sticks in his hands and taking any opportunity to appeal to the editors to stop promoting the drum rudiments and quit listing stickings in our education articles.

Indeed, Ulano had strong opinions and wasn't shy about expressing them. "Sam had one curse word in his vocabulary," *MD* advertising director Bob Berenson says, "and that was *rudiments*."

"Rudiments don't show up on any big band chart, or on a Broadway theater chart, or in the classics by Beethoven, Bach, or Brahms, or in TV or film music," Ulano told *Modern Drummer* in a 2011 profile. "Rudiments have nothing to do with playing the instrument."

Ulano, who was born in New York City in 1920, started drumming at age thirteen, and at seventeen he was running his first teaching studio. During World War II he served in the army and gained valuable experience playing USO shows for the troops and leading a marching corps.

After the war he gigged regularly at New York's Gaslight club, began making TV appearances, and opened a studio in Times Square. One of Ulano's many achievements was teaching players who would themselves become notable metro-area instructors, including Bill Rotella, John Sarracco, Glenn Weber, and Russ Moy; you can't dig into the world of NYC drum education without encountering Sam's name and influence. Among the famous drummers who studied with Ulano are Tony "Thunder" Smith, Allan Schwartzberg, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, and Art Taylor.

"Sam gave me a crash course in reading," Russ Moy told *MD* in 2006 (Moy passed away in 2011), "and it's Sam who I credit with turning me around as a drummer. Until I studied with him, most of what I did was worrying about chops and that type of thing but really not connecting this with note values on the set and reading. I knew reading was important, but I didn't realize *how* important."

All the while, and to the very end of his long, productive life, Ulano churned out instructional texts with colorful titles like *You Gotta Have a System* and *Insanity Four Drummers*. Readers of *Modern Drummer* will remember the many ads he took out in the magazine to promote his books, which he numbered in the thousands.



"Sam was a great teacher, drummer, and friend to many," Bill Rotella wrote in a note to *MD* after Ulano died. "He will be truly missed, as a great person and a 'modern drummer.'"

"Sam Ulano was a very close friend of mine," says the popular New York City radio/TV talk show host Joe Franklin, whose eponymous television show (1951–93) saw numerous appearances by Ulano. "He was beyond versatile, able to adapt to any style of music. Sam was the driving force behind endless groups. Sam idolized Gene Krupa and remembered watching Gene on my TV program side by side with Sal Mineo, who portrayed Gene in the movie called *The Gene Krupa Story*. Sam Ulano's legacy will forever live on."

**Michael Parillo**





# Ticket to Ride

“I’ve been a huge Beatles fan since November 1963,” says Mick Lumpp, an Ohio native who now lives in the Bronx, New York. “I even saw the Beatles in Cleveland Stadium on August 14, 1966, thanks to my mom, who was a musician too. I always thought of having a Beatles-themed set, but what was the theme going to be? I thought I’d do a different drum for every LP cover, but thirteen covers? No. So I just picked my favorites. For some reason I always knew the bass drum would be the Klaus Voormann–designed *Anthology* covers—all three wrapped around—and the snare would be *Beatles for Sale*.”

“I did this for the fiftieth anniversary of the Beatles coming to America,” Lumpp says, noting that he played the Yamaha Recording series kit, in its original pre-Beatles finish, in various bands for twenty-six years. “As I stripped and cleaned the drums, I would go on eBay looking for posters that were the approximate size

I needed. The posters were laminated with a UV protector, so the colors will never fade, and a strong adhesive was used on the other side. I would hold the drum while a friend of mine stretched the poster on it, carefully, so no air bubbles would appear. He also used a razor blade to cut around the Yamaha badges.

“People have described my basement as a rock ‘n’ roll hall of fame, with all the memorabilia I’ve collected through the years, so I think I’ll just keep the drums there behind a velvet rope, for fear of getting them ruined on a gig. Of course, a gig with the Fab Faux would be fitting! I did play the kit on New Year’s Eve, to show my bandmates, who were blown away.

But I now play a Ludwig 1966 black oyster pearl set, like Ringo’s—so much lighter to lug around.

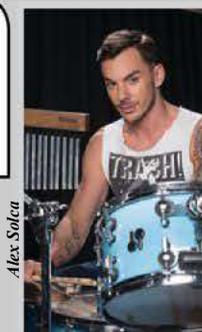
“Did you notice the bass drum head is the Beatles’ *White Album*? Another brainstorm I had trying to go to sleep one night.”



Photos by Beqir Brijr

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

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